PRE-INDUSTRIAL SWANSEA: SITING AND DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This article is an investigation of what, in the eleventh or twelfth century, drew its founders to the location where Swansea grew up, why their successors remained there, and how and why the settlement developed the form it did. Starting with the Norse origins of Swansea followed by its Norman developments, the article draws on what limited evidence is available, including archaeological evidence from recent excavations. The article considers the importance of Swansea's topography as a trading port and discusses some of its important medieval buildings, including the castle and major churches.

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Two things should be borne in mind. In any study of this sort, direct evidence is minimal. To adopt the technique of *reductio ad absurdum* for a moment, there is no extant report made by a steward to the first lord of Gower, Henry, Earl of Warwick, on the best place for his *caput* castle and town, nor, and this is less ludicrous, a burgess minute from the 1640s on where the new market house should go. The evidence is circumstantial; inferences have to be made. Secondly, the richer sources available from about 1550 onwards have been used to help illumine earlier centuries. This method has pitfalls, but is, I hope, used with sufficient circumspection. The result is a series of argued conjectures. Only a little use has been made of comparison with other Welsh towns. I fully accept that this might have been a fruitful approach, but what expertise I have is parochial. My superficial understanding of other places would not necessarily help to unravel what happened in Swansea, but I have tried to lay out my argument accessibly so that others may do this in reverse.

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1   Swansea Museum (SM) SMT 507; reproduced in Ian Soulsby, *The Towns of Medieval Wales, a Study of their History, Archaeology and Early Topography* (Phillimore: Chichester, 1983), pp. 244–45.

Pre-Norman Swansea? The Vikings

It would be simpler if we knew that the town had definitely been founded by the Normans, but the first problem in examining reasons for the choice of the site is that it is unclear when the settlement was founded, and by whom. Though a case has been very well argued for the modern name being of Welsh derivation, and for 'Ynys Waun Isaf' being its original form,[2] it is almost certainly Norse – 'Sweyn's Ey' ('Sven's island').[3] This need not imply that the Vikings settled it. The distinctive islet of Mumbles Head may have become a useful navigational landmark, an 'ey' associated with an unknown Sweyn, especially as, in the lee of the hill of which it was the tip, lay a wide sheltered bay. This might be a useful mooring place for these Bristol Channel and Irish traders, which is what they became. Beyond this, however, a nicely judicious case has been made for the idea that they actually established an eleventh-century trading post in the northern part of the bay, alongside the River Tawe.[4] An important element of this thesis involves a comparison of the early configuration of Swansea and that of undoubtedly Norse settlements in southern Ireland, notably Limerick. One caveat here is, as explained below, there is no certainty over the shape of early Swansea.

Pre-Norman Swansea? A native Welsh settlement

Evidence of the existence of earlier, native towns in pre-Norman Wales is sparse,[5] but there may have been a church and some dwellings on the riverside. The Tawe then flowed just below the scarp on which the castle was afterwards to be built and its bank was probably too boggy to be tilled – 'Morfa bach' (little marsh) became an area name, which even now lingers as Morfa Road, only a little to the north. However, just to the west, where the city centre shops are today, and beyond, ran good farmland which was afterwards tilled and pastured for centuries – the Whitewalls, the Longlands, the Waterleys, the Holywells, the White Stile fields and Pantygwydr. It was very practical ground, sloping gently in the main from the base of the Town Hill down to the sandy coastal strip.

Once the Normans established a borough, it was to be closely confined between the river and its associated streams, but its burgesses were given rights outside the town across a wide stretch of land called the liberty or franchise. Their lordship of Gower was the previous commote of Gŵyr under a new name.[6]

2 Islwyn Davies, 'Swansea, or Lower Meadow Island', *Minerva/Journal of Swansea History*, 9 (2001), 27–29.

3 For exhaustive considerations of the Viking evidence, see Pam Thorpe, *The Vikings, An Account Centring on their Activities in South Wales, especially Swansea and Gower* (Swansea: City & County of Swansea, undated); Gerald Gabb, 'Swansea: The Much-debated Name', *Gower*, 39 (1988), 6–17; Id., *Swansea and its History* (Swansea: self-published, 2007), I, pp. 373–462.

4 Claire Holmes and Keith Lilley, 'Viking Swansea', *City Witness* ('Context', section 2), <www.medievalswansea.ac.uk> [accessed January 2018] – a beguilingly temperate evaluation.

5 Wendy Davies, *Wales in the Early Middle Ages* (London: Leicester University, 1982), pp. 57–58.

6 David Moore, *The Welsh Wars of Independence, c.410–c.1415* (Stroud: Tempus, 2005), p. 22.

Perhaps this 'franchise' within it, too, was a pre-existing, well-established parcel of land. Its limits were the Bwrlais brook, which ran eastward behind the Hill and into the Tawe, a band of woodland to the north called the Weig, and a stream to the west later known as St. David's Ditch. To the north and northwest of this, a block of land known as Millwood (and nowadays comprising the Cwmbwrla, Brynhyfryd, Manselton and Landore areas of Swansea) became the property of the Knights of St. John.[7] It was generally also bounded by streams, like Nant y Ffin (the boundary brook, a tributary of the Bwrlais) and Nant Rhyd y Filais.[8] The latter was the next tributary of the Tawe upstream from the Bwrlais and was to become an important source of industrial power in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[9] Perhaps Millwood too was a pre-existing parcel. Streams made natural boundaries, especially where, as at places still called 'the Cwm' in the Hafod and Cockett areas, they cut deep valleys. So did blocks of woodland. The Normans may simply have accepted these limits, taking over the parcels of land they defined intact. The named watercourses were to provide power for many grist mills, some of which, also, could have been pre-Norman, as suggested by the historian Bryan Taylor, the specialist in this area.[10] Of course, these twelfth-century invaders may have surveyed Gŵyr anew, fixed on streams as boundaries, and built mills; they must have planned out the burgages of the town in a similarly decisive, orderly manner. On the other hand, they may have found the liberty, and perhaps Millwood, as units of land, well-established by long custom, and just taken them over. The preponderance of Welsh descriptors of the boundary features is suggestive, if inconclusive.[11]

A Welsh reference to the site of Swansea occurs as early as 1116, when there was an attack by a prince of Dyfed on 'a castle that was situated near Abertawy'.[12] This was a very new fortification, the symbol of the Welsh commote of Gŵyr

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7   Charles Baker and George Grant Francis, *Surveys of Gower and Kilvey and of Several Mesne Manors within that Seignory* (London: Cambrian Archaeological Association, 1870), pp. 165–74. A 1583 survey of Millwood which shows the lands described were the core of the manor, but that it had a mass of outliers.

8   West Glamorgan Archive Service (WGAS) D/D WCR 72. 'Filias' is sometimes rendered 'Filiast' or 'Viliast' and has been related to 'miliast', a greyhound bitch, and thus an inn name. The area still known as 'Penfilia' lies a little way up the road to Llangyfelach. Nant y ffin flowed from the higher moorland where Penlan housing estates now stand down to Cwmbwrla and is shown on a map of 1641 (Swansea Museum (SM) SMT 648).

9   Stephen Hughes, *Copperopolis, Landscapes of the Early Industrial Period in Swansea* (Aberystwyth: Royal Commission on the Ancient & Historical Monuments of Wales [RCAHMW], 2000), p. 295.

10   Bryan Taylor, 'The Watermills of Gower: An Historical Perspective', *Gower,* 42 (1991), 6–23, at p. 6 ('there were watermills in Gower before the Conquest'); Id., 'Swansea's Corn Grist Mill', *Gower*, 47 (1996), 67–73; Id., 'The Watermills of the Lordship of Gower', *Gower*, 50 (1999), 20–37, at pp. 22 (St. David's), 24–27 (Bwrlais, Filais); Id., *Watermills of the Lordship of Gower,* (Swansea: Brydor Publishing, 2008), pp. 30 (St. David's), 101–13 (Bwrlais, Filais).

11   This point is weakened by the fact that the earliest recorded form of *Bwrlais* is *Burlakes*, an Anglo-Saxon indication of the stream which was the borough boundary in the first known charter, dated pre-1185. The cymricization of this term as 'Burloes' awaited Cromwell's 1655 charter to the burgesses.

12   Thomas Jones, ed., *Brut y Tywysogion: Red Book of Hergest Version* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1973), p. 87.

having become, though tenuously, Norman. The existence of this Welsh name might imply earlier Welsh habitations, though the chronicler may have just been referring to a geographical feature, the mouth (*aber*) of a river, rather than a settlement. The name of the river itself certainly seems of great antiquity.[13] However, in 1188 when he visited, Giraldus Cambrensis definitely equated the two names, referring to 'the castle of Sweynsi, called in Welsh Abertawe, that is, the place where the River Tawe enters the sea'.[14] There is no record of the inhabitants of the town calling it 'Abertawe' until the 1800s, but monkish scribes in other parts of Wales certainly did, and, in doing so, could have been recalling an earlier, Welsh, settlement.

Other Welsh names associated with the vicinity suggest an early church. There was certainly room for one between the known ancient foundations at Llangyfelach four miles to the north and Ystumllwynarth (Oystermouth) five miles to the west. A 'Sein Henydd' (variously spelt, and four times mentioned in chronicles between 1215 and 1221) and 'Llan Geneu' (which occurs just once in 1257) certainly seem to refer to Swansea, all from a period before the Norman parish church, St. Mary's, occurs in any record. Perhaps there was a foundation by the Tawe associated with the sixth-century St. Cenydd.[15] Another possibility is that a pre-Norman church lay a little to the north of the later town. St. Matthew's Church today stands in upper High Street, on the site of St. John's Church which is recorded as a Hospitaller church as early as the mid-twelfth century. It has been suggested that the lands around it, elliptical in shape, are characteristic of holdings from before 1100.[16] One knowledgeable historian, W. C. Rogers, refers to it as 'Capel Ieuan', and there is apparently a precedent for this in the seventeenth-century writings of Edward Lhuyd.[17]

Material evidence of a pre-Norman Swansea came with the discovery, in 1912, of human burials, said to be Christian and to lie, in part, below the oldest sections of the castle. This might be thought conclusive, but there is a suspicion that the archaeologist/historian concerned, Col. William Llewelyn Morgan, usually remarkably balanced and objective, may have been looking, just for once, to back up a preconceived theory. Excavations in 1976, however, did reveal two more such

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13   T. J. Morgan, 'Place-Names', in *Swansea and its Region*, ed. by W.G.V. Balchin (Swansea: University College, Swansea/British Association, 1971), p. 196; Gwynedd O. Pierce, *Place-Names in Glamorgan* (Cardiff: Merton Priory Press, 2002), pp. 25, 181–85. It may seem a splitting of hairs, but the built-up area of the town did not spread as far as the actual rivermouth until the late eighteenth century.

14   Lewis Thorpe, trans., *Gerald of Wales: The Journey Through Wales/The Description of Wales* (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 132.

15   Kenneth Padley, *Our Ladye Church of Swanesey, A History of St. Mary's* (Swansea: The Friends of St. Mary, 2007), p. 7, summarily rejects a Celtic church; Gabb, *Swansea and its History*, I, pp. 374–79, 401–07, explores the theme and sources for 'Sein Henydd', etc., largely the work of W. Llewelyn Morgan.

16   Keith Lilley and Gareth Dean, 'Development of Medieval Swansea', <www.medievalswansea. ac.uk/cy/context/development-of-medieval-swansea-1/> [accessed 6 February 2018] (par. 3/8), citing the work of Jonathan Kissock.

17   WGAS D/D WCR 266 e4.

burials.[18]

Thus, early utilization of the lower west bank of the Tawe may have included a Welsh church and a farmstead or two, but hardly a town. There could have been an eleventh-century Norse trading post, which might explain the continuing use of the name, and might have been one reason the Normans were drawn to the site. Their arrival, however, is an attested and crucial event in this narrative. For them and their Viking cousins one criterion for assessing the location would have been identical – both would value a decent port. However, they were faced with different political situations. In the eleventh century, the impression is of there being no very strong, stable polities across Morgannwg (Glamorgan), the scene of 'political chaos for most of the eleventh century', Gŵyr, and into Deheubarth.[19] Thus a Sweyn and his robust followers might, unhampered, probably just make use of the most suitable havens along the whole coast. Henry de Newburgh, however, was gifted only the confines of Gŵyr by his friend King Henry I; he or his steward had only its shoreline to choose from.

Why was the site chosen? 1. The force of events

We have no account of the Normans taking possession of Gower. There are other possibilities, but they may have arrived overland through the recently established lordship of Glamorgan, crossing the Tawe near its mouth, or may have come by sea, sailed into the sheltering river, and alighted at very much the same place. In either case they were few, expected imminent danger, and would quickly have built a fortification – perhaps roughly on what was to be the site of Swansea. Later, it would have been easier to strengthen this than to relocate, especially once it had seen service as the lord's *caput*. And, alongside this, advantages explained below in respect of a port and river crossing would have asserted themselves.

Why was the site chosen? 2. A port

For Henry de Newburgh, the first lord, military considerations probably came before trading potential. It has been suggested that the Norman forces came by sea from south-west England.[20] There is no evidence on this; they may have, but of the invaders being sustained by seaborne supplies and reinforcements we have record. In 1192 the Lord Rhys of Deheubarth besieged Swansea Castle for ten weeks; relief came in the form of ships from Bristol which brought food, including 'a

18   W. Llewelyn Morgan, 'The Castle of Senghenydd', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 6th series, 12 (1912), 383–390, at p. 390; Id., *The Castle of Swansea* (Devizes, 1914), pp. vi–vii, 19, 21. Some subsequent accounts just ignore these burials; this also seems unsound; *Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust Annual Report*, 1976–77, p. 18.

19   Davies, *Wales in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 103; Alderman Edward Harris, *Swansea, Its Port and Trade and their Development* (Cardiff: Western Mail, 1935), pp. 26–29.

20   F. V. Emery, 'The Norman Conquest and the Medieval Period', in *Swansea*, ed. by W. G. V. Balchin, pp. 147–62, at p. 150.

hundred loads of grain'.[21] Sea trade developed quickly and must have been part of the lord's plan in making his castle-town viable. As early as Swansea's first charter of some time before 1185 he gave the burgesses the right to take 'oak to make their houses and fences and ships, rendering for a ship xii pence'. By the time of the de Breos charter of 1306 there were clauses implying the construction of vessels large and small, their sale, the import of wine, and of Swansea men sailing to foreign parts. In 1297 Edward I expected Swansea to provide at least one vessel capable of carrying forty tuns of wine,[22] and this expectation was repeated under Edward III in 1335.[23]

   The lordship had plenty of wide open beaches from which a measure of trade might take place, but shelter for vessels lying off harbour and good places for loading were desirable. For this, Gower offered only two options – the Loughor estuary to the west or Swansea Bay to the east. The former developed a reasonable trade over the years, but navigating its approaches was a very tricky business.[24] The Bay, on the other hand, offered cover from prevailing westerly and south westerly winds. And within it the Tawe, despite the sand bar at its mouth, gave protection which the older settlement at Mumbles, opposite it, could not match. Nor could what came to be called Fabian's Bay, just east of the rivermouth – a tidal harbour was eventually built in the 1820s, but the approach was shallow and littered with mudbanks. And a complication was that it was not in Gower, but in the separate if associated lordship of Kilvey. Before the advent of floating harbours in the nineteenth century, river-ports were practical and widespread. Swansea became one and prospered.

Why was the site chosen? 3. A river crossing

The Romans built coastal forts in south Wales linked by a road.[25] This route near the shore had the advantage of being level, but disadvantages like the quicksand and fiercely flowing Neath river which Giraldus recorded at Briton Ferry in 1188.[26] It entailed crossing the Tawe near its mouth. By 1306 we know that the burgesses had free use of a ferry for themselves, their servants, and animals, conditional on an annual payment of 'sheaves' to the ferryman – 'ferry corn' was still paid in

21   Bernard Morris, *Swansea Castle* (Swansea: City of Swansea/West Glamorgan County Council, Swansea, 1992), pp. 15–17, with a useful transcription of relevant Pipe Roll extracts for 1192.
22   William H. Jones, *History of the Port of Swansea,* (Carmarthen: Spurrell, 1922), pp. 8–9; Id., *History of Swansea and the Lordship of Gower. Volume I* (Carmarthen: Spurrell, 1920), p. 285.
23   J. R. Alban, 'The Impressment of Two Ships at Swansea for the Defence of South Wales, 1335', *Gower*, 29 (1978), pp. 67–71; William H. Jones, *History of Swansea and the Lordship of Gower. Volume II* (Swansea: Royal Institution of South Wales, 1992), p. 11.
24   Gabb, 'Swansea and the Sea in the Pre-industrial Era', *Maritime Wales*, forthcoming, for a fuller examination of Swansea as a port.
25   RCAHMW, *An Inventory of the Ancient Monuments in Glamorgan. Volume I: Pre-Norman*, pt. 2, 'The Iron Age and the Roman Occupation' (Cardiff: HMSO, 1976), pp. 106–08; Gabb, *Swansea and its History, I*, pp. 253, 256–58, 273–81.
26   Thorpe, *Gerald of Wales*, pp. 130–32.

1702.[27] This boat's significance for travellers is shown by the fact that on one of his strip maps published in 1675 John Ogilby has 'Tawye Ferry' in larger print than 'Swansey'.[28] There were certainly other routes to and from Carmarthen and further west, but this one was well used. King John (1210), Richard II (1399), and Oliver Cromwell (1649) all made Swansea a staging post *en route* to the Pembrokeshire ports and Ireland. Here are some examples of others who passed this way:

In 1322, Edward II, at the behest of his overweening and favoured baron, Hugh le Despenser, ordered Richard de Foxecote to Swansea to confiscate the lordship of Gower, which William de Breos had underhandedly transferred to his son-in-law, John de Mowbray. De Foxecote was thwarted by a force which barred his way at the eastern riverbank, 'near St. Thomas's Chapel'. He was evidently heading for the Tawe ferry or ford, a stone's throw distant.[29]

In 1338, Gilbert de Clare, Earl of Gloucester gave the monks of Neath Abbey the right to travel to the Neath river ferry at 'Briton' (a place still called Briton Ferry today) and on to 'Sweyneseye'.[30]

In 1652, the 'Water Poet', John Taylor, must have crossed this way when, after visiting Walter Thomas, the richest man in Swansea, he went on to call on Walter's son, William, in his house, *Danygraig*, across the Tawe.[31]

In 1656, George Fox, the founder of the Society of Friends, the Quakers, visited Swansea, arriving from the east, crossing by the ferryboat.[32]

In 1684, in the course of his splendid 'Progress' through Wales, the first Duke of Beaufort used the boat in riding from Carmarthen towards Margam, though his chronicler, Thomas Dinely, was one of those sent to a more northerly crossing point to avoid overcrowding.[33]

In 1840, George Nicholson, traveller and guide book author, could still complain 'they have nothing [....] except indeed the worst-contrived and ill-conducted expedient – a ferry, over which neither man, beast, nor carriage can pass with safety or comfort'.[34]

More ordinary people used this route too, sometimes to their advantage. In 1759, Henry Thomas John, Overseer of the Poor, was escorting Mary Richards, termed a vagabond, to her home town of Cardiff. At the Quarter Sessions it was reported that:

27   National Library of Wales (NLW) Badminton Manorial 2612 Rental 1700–1707.
28   Bernard Morris, ed., *Historic Swansea, being the First Part of William Cyril Rogers' Swansea and Glamorgan Calendar* (Swansea: West Glamorgan Archive Service, 2005), p. 100.
29   Jones, *History of Swansea*, I, 333–34.
30   WGAS RISW DOC 1/1, 9 October 1338.
31   Patricia Moore, 'Three Seventeenth-Century Travellers in Glamorgan', in *The Glamorgan Historian*, ed. by Stewart Williams (Cowbridge: D. Brown & Sons, 1971), pp. 13–36, at pp. 22–23.
32   Thomas Mardy Rees, *A History of the Quakers in Wales and their Emigration to North America* (Carmarthen: Spurrell, 1925), pp. 39–40.
33   Richard W. Banks, ed., *The Account of the Official Progress of His Grace Henry the First Duke of Beaufort Through Wales in 1684* (London: Blades, 1888), p. 309.
34   *Nicholson's Cambrian Traveller's Guide in Every Direction Containing Remarks Made during Many Excursions in the Principality of Wales* (London: Longman, 1840).

> At the Boat House [...] [she] [...] called for and Drank a pint of ale
> [...] and [...] the Tide under the passing boat being very High &
> the mare which She Did ride upon behind Henry Thomas John the
> Bearer [...] would not take the Boat, which prevented his passing
> over at the same time as the said Mary; And in the mean time that the
> Boatman went the second time to bring over the said Henry Thomas
> John and swim his mare Cross the River [...] Mary made her Escape
> and cannot be found Notwithstanding a Diligent search has been
> made.[35]

Swansea was to evolve as a centre of defence, administration, religion, trade
by land and sea, and communication. How these and other factors shaped the
settlement will now be examined.

How did the settlement develop? 1. The position of the port

The Norse towns along the coast of Ireland were often built at a point where a
tributary joined a river near its mouth.[36] At Swansea the 'Town Ditch' was a stream
flowing eastward into the Tawe, widening as 'the Pill' just before their confluence.
Possibly, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, small vessels put into it. It is shown
in Samuel and Nathaniel Buck's 1748 engraving 'The East View of Swansea', with,
adjoining it upstream, a small stone walled facility called the Public, Corporation
or Town Quay. It saw long use. The Town Quay was referred to as late as 1882,[37]
and it can probably be associated with construction work in 1583, 1585, 1597, and
1616.[38] The open west bank of the Tawe upstream from this quay was brought into
use, too, from the seventeenth century, particularly for shipping in coal, and in the
eighteenth for importing timber as well. But for general trading the Quay seems
to have been superseded only very gradually. In January 1580, the twenty-four
ton *Mary Davy* unloaded wine and salt from La Rochelle.[39] In November 1669,
the thirty ton *Nicholas* loaded wool, hats, shot, and leather for Padstow.[40] These,
along with consignments of apples shipped in, in 1641, 1642, 1651, and 1656,

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35   Glamorgan Archives (GA) Quarter Sessions Records Q/S/R/1760/B/4.
36   Claire Holmes and Keith Lilley, 'Viking Swansea', <www.medievalswansea.ac.uk/en/context/
      viking-swansea/> [accessed 6 February 2018]; see also Harold Carter, *The Towns of Wales*
      (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1966), p. 26.
37   *Cambrian*, 14 April 1882, p. 3.
38   Jones, *History of the Port of Swansea*, pp. 29–31; Glanmor Williams, 'The Economic Life of
      Glamorgan 1536–1642', in *Glamorgan County History*, IV, ed. by Glanmor Williams (Cardiff:
      University of Wales Press, 1974), pp. 1–72, at p. 63; W. S. K. Thomas, *The History of Swansea
      from the Accession of the Tudors to the Restoration Settlement* (unpublished PhD thesis, University
      of Wales, 1958), p. 97; Id., *The History of Swansea, from Rover Settlement to the Restoration*
      (Llandysul: Gomer, 1990), pp. 71–72, 242.
39   Edward A. Lewis, *The Welsh Port Books, 1550–1603. With an Analysis of the Customs Revenue
      Accounts of Wales for the same Period* (London: Honourable Society of the Cymmrodorion,
      1927), p. 4.
40   The National Archives (TNA) E/190/1277/12 Port Books 1668–69.

and a massive variety of other things must all have passed over the Quay.[41] The confining of sea trade to that small area probably enabled the burgesses to control it, and to levy dues. When the *Mary of Combe* in 1713 took fifty-eight chaldrons of coal to Cork, that was probably loaded at a bank upstream, but the additional bark, old pewter, brass, ironmongery, window glass, clothes, barrel staves, cloth, and table linen she carried must have been picked up from the Quay.[42]

A feature that made this area a stronger focus was the 'passage' of the river. For a long time, just seaward of the Pill, was the ferry, and a little further downstream the ford. When, near here, the Tawe was bridged for the first time in 1851, the boat was sold off.[43] We know it had crossed at this point – maps, drawings, and paintings correlate with documentary accounts, and its departure point is marked by a street still called Ferryside today. A map of 1827 shows ferry and ford with great clarity.[44] Documents from as far back as 1716 referring to 'ye passing Boat Pill', using it as a landmark in locating shipping places, mentioning the boathouse, and ensuring the approach from the town for users is unimpeded, confirm its position.[45] Francis Place's drawing of the town in 1678 seems to show the boat in this general area too.[46] There are clear references, also, to fords at the lower end of Somerset Place, a nearby street which still exists. A John Williams was drowned while crossing there in 1816,[47] and the ford was still noted as a landmark in 1822.[48] Probably dredging of the channel for larger vessels gradually destroyed it.

The 'Sea Fords' (plural) receive mention in 1763 as does 'ye lower ford'/'the Lower Ford' in 1703 and 1775.[49] It seems likely that the riverbed was shifted around by tide and weather, and the description 'the broadford' in 1670 may indicate the indeterminate position of the exact fording point.[50] Beyond this, it is quite possible that over the centuries since we first know of a ferry in 1306, the crossing place had changed completely. There was a service a mile upstream at White Rock, but this is unlikely to predate the copper works in the area which go back only to 1737. There was a ford just above that at Middle Bank.[51] In the 1790s, an 'upper ferry' was just a quarter of a mile distant from the Quay, 'by John Rosser's house'

41   Michael Price, *The Account Book for the Borough of Swansea, Wales, 1640–1660, a Study in Local Administration during the Civil War and Interregnum* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1990), pp. 70, 80, 194, 234

42   D. Trevor Williams, 'The Port Books of Swansea and Neath, 1709–19', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 95 (1940), 192–209, at p. 201.

43   *Cambrian*, 24 January 1851; Jones, *History of the Port of Swansea,* pp. 189–90.

44   Swansea Museum SMT 449 *Improvements in Progress in Port Tennant* (pamphlet).

45   NLW Badminton Manorial 2775 Courts Leet 12 August 1725, undated 1726; WGAS Deeds of Title EA 1/10 4 August 1716.

46   Bernard Morris, 'The Earliest View of Swansea, 1678', *Gower*, 33 (1982), 6–13, at p. 13; Id., *The Pleasure of Unravelling Secrets. Contributions to Swansea and Gower History* (Swansea: Gower Society, 2013), pp. 224–29, at p. 229; The drawing is in the National Museum Wales, Cardiff.

47   *Cambrian*, 9 March 1816.

48   WGAS B/S Corp B9 Hall Day Book, 23 August 1822.

49   WGAS B/S Corp B6 Hall Day Book 1763 Award of Roads to be built on the Burrows, p. 35.

50   WGAS B/S Corp C3 Common Attorneys' Accounts 1669–1670.

51   WGAS D/D WCR 266 e/3.

or 'the Pipehouse'.[52] There was a ford in this area too, crossing to a farm called Tir Landwr.[53] The Romans constructed an impressive fording structure near here too.[54] Thus, when we hear that Hopkin Weithe is paying a rent of 23s.4d. to run the ferry service in 1478, or that 4s.9d. is spent on repairing the boat in 1401–02, there is no way of confirming precisely where the crossing is.[55] However, when the 1764 Quarter Sessions records tell us that 'from the times whereof the Memory of man is not to the contrary there was and yet is a certain common and antient ferry Boat on a certain antient Highway leading from the Town of Neath to the Town of Swansea',[56] it was probably in roughly the place we are considering, close to the Pill and the Quay.

And nearby was an additional feature of note called the Mount. It existed until 1804. In the 1700s it became a platform from which sea pilots might scan the bay for incoming vessels. Its structure and name suggest a sixteenth-century gun platform to protect the harbour. It is first mentioned in documents in 1613, and first features in a drawing in 1748. Such attention was lavished on it after 1600 that one might almost say it was venerated. It was a prized feature of the town. It can be argued that it would have been in exactly the right place, between the Pill and the Quay, and just above the ferry and ford, to have once been an earthwork castle from the twelfth century, possibly where the Normans first established a toehold. The river and the stream would have offered defence on two sides. Its only claim to being this first Swansea Castle is its position, but that is the sort of conjecture this article is built on. And even if this idea is dismissed, this small area on the west bank of the Tawe was an important focus for the town.[57]

How did the settlement develop? 2. The position, shape and size of the castle

Whatever the truth about the Mount, a castle was certainly (afterwards?) built on a ridge above the river. Swansea Castle became the main strongpoint for the Normans in clinging on to the lordship of Gower. It probably fell in 1136, and possibly in about 1403, was closely besieged in 1192, was destroyed in 1212 and 1217, was nearly taken in 1116, 1215 and 1257, and was attacked in 1287. Its defensibility was crucial, and it was built at a point where the ground sloped away from it steeply towards the Tawe, and appreciably to the south and west too.[58]

The castle was not, though, beside the Quay or the ferry. In 1401–02 Sir

52   Jones, *History of the Port of Swansea,* p. 86.
53   WGAS D/D WCR 266 e/3.
54   Gabb, *Swansea and its History,* I, pp. 257, 281.
55   Jones, *History of Swansea,* II, pp. 42, 72.
56   GA Q/S/R 1 July 1764.
57   Bernard Morris, 'The Mount at Swansea: Moving a Landmark in the 1760s', *Gower,* 42 (1991), 24–33; Id., *The Pleasure of Unravelling Secrets,* pp. 256–65; Gerald Gabb, *Swansea Before Industry.* I: *The Town and its Surroundings* (Swansea: Swansea City Council/West Glamorgan County Council, undated), pp. 58–62; and *Swansea and its History*, II, forthcoming.
58   RCAHMW, *An Inventory of the Ancient Monuments in Glamorgan. Volume III, part 1b: The Later Castles,* pp. 346–73; Morris, *Swansea Castle,* pp. 9–83.

Hugh Waterton was a royal official based at the castle, employed in reinstating its neglected defences and making its domestic quarters habitable. He ordered the gathering of firewood at Trewyddfa, two miles upstream, and it to be transported by boat 'to the port of Sweynsey*, and thence to the castle* [emphasis mine]'.[59] They were a brisk five minute walk apart. Before the term 'quay' came into use, the area where ships berthed was called 'the parrog' – by 1583 'the perroge by the pill [...] [was] [...] now called the new quay place'. The word recurs in 1585.[60] Dare I say that where this term is used in west Wales (Goodwick and Newport for example) it indicates a designated area on the shore related to a settlement, but at a little distance from it?[61] The trading and military needs of a town in Wales were diverse, and might lead to separate urban foci.

The castle at its greatest extent covered 4.6 acres. Only about a tenth of this remains. Its probable structure and history have received careful study. No document before 1700 refers unambiguously to any particular part of the castle complex. There is no drawing of it before 1678 and no useful plan before the 1780s. Therefore, the dating below relies mainly on study of what little remains, on observations when building work in the town uncovered some feature, and on the sterling role of Colonel William Llewelyn Morgan who recorded so much when the Castle Street area, previously the north eastern (and oldest) segment of the castle, was cleared for street widening in 1913.[62]

Historians and archaeologists have set out a chronology. Some aspects of this might be debated, but the general pattern is, currently at least, uncontroversial: 1. an earthwork with wooden defences, of a motte and bailey or ringwork style (twelfth century) 2. replaced on the same site above the river by a bigger stone structure, roughly D-shaped, including a large square tower (early thirteenth century) 3. construction of a wide outer bailey and of a domestic range in the south east corner of that (by 1291) 4. impressive ornamentation of that range (between 1331 and 1354).

In the modern town, Caer Street and College Street mark the castle's southern and northern limits, Princess Way, more roughly, its western side. Its south gate was where Caer Street, Wind Street and Castle Lane meet, its north gate was at the current junction of Welcome Lane, High Street and College Street. Thus the modern street pattern owes a great deal to the castle's position and dimensions, but how far did it shape the *earlier* town?

How did the settlement develop? 3. The east-west routeway

One of the travellers we have noted using the ferry might, today, ride up Wind,

59   Jones, *History of Swansea*, ɪɪ, pp. 41–42.
60   Jones, *History of the Port of Swansea*, p. 27; Thomas, *Swansea*, p. 90.
61   Dillwyn Miles, *The Ancient Borough of Newport in Pembrokeshire* (Haverfordwest: Cemais Publications, 1995), p. 1.
62   W. Ll. Morgan, *An Antiquarian Survey of East Gower* (London: Charles Clark, 1899), pp. 87–110; (though note the date) *The Castle of Senghenydd* (1912); *The Castle of Swansea* (1914).

Castle and High Streets to the Carmarthen Road, and on to the west. It is a straight, direct route. This might be seen as the key to Swansea's development, with Wind and High Streets, part of a trunk route, becoming its principal thoroughfares. According to this model, along this routeway lay the market, most of the other places of business, and most of the residences of notables. The corollary to this would be to see Fisher and Goat Streets, on the western side of the town, as later developments and of lesser importance. A very thoughtful section of the City Witness website takes this general line, seeing Wind Street as early twelfth century, with the area to the west, and the suburb which became High Street as planned urban extensions of around 1200.[63] It is an interesting thesis, but raises questions.

Firstly, there are the documents. Having admitted that there is no mention of any Swansea street before 1332, I can find no mention of the name Wind Street until the burgesses banned the winnowing of corn in five areas of the town, one being 'winde strette'. In 1553![64] Also in that list is 'fisher strette', a parallel roadway to the west. It had already appeared in extant documents of 1332,[65] 1400 twice,[66] 1402,[67] 1422,[68] 1460,[69] 1463[70] and 1472.[71] 'Gott Street', its continuation, comes to light in 1498.[72]

It may be that it was just the name rather than the existence of Wind Street which emerged at a late date, and there are fifteenth-century references to a routeway which, from the context, seems to be it. In 1402, it is called 'the road' and in 1400, 1422, 1460 and 1463 'the royal highway'.[73] All the fifteenth-century mentions of Fisher Street and what seems to be Wind Street (except one) concern property transactions; every one relates to plots on Fisher Street, and not on Wind Street, and the owners are named. The earliest inhabitants of Wind Street that we know of are John David Harry of Llansamlet yeoman and John Madocke of 'Swanzey'

63   Keith Lilley and Gareth Dean, 'Development of medieval Swansea, <www.medievalswansea.ac.uk/en/context/development-of-medieval-swansea-1/> [accessed 6 February 2018] (par. 9–10/10).

64   Thomas, *History of Swansea from the Accession of the Tudors*, pp. 7–11; Book of Common Hall 1553.

65   George Grant Francis, 'A Brief Memoir of Henry de Gower, Bishop of St. David's in the Fourteenth Century, with brief notices of his works', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 4th series, 25 (1876), 1–16, at p. 5; G. T. Clark, *Cartae et alia Munimenta quae ad Dominium de Glamorgan/Glamorgancia Pertinent*, 2nd edn (Cardiff: William Lewis, 1910), IV, p. 1181.

66   Jones, *History of Swansea*, II, 28–29; WGAS RISW GGF/3 p. 21, 31 October 1400.

67   WGAS RISW GGF 3 p. 23, 21 March 1402.

68   WGAS RISW GGF 3 Bound Volume of Deeds p. 29; WGAS RISW GGF 3 p. 29; Clark, *Cartae,* IV, pp. 1494–95, 21 April 1422.

69   WGAS RISW GGF 3 Bound Volume of Deeds p. 36, 19 March 1460; WGAS RISW GGF 3 p. 36; Clark, *Cartae,* V, pp. 1644–45.

70   WGAS RISW GGF 3, p. 37, 30 April 1463; Clark, *Cartae,* V, p. 1656.

71   WGAS D/D WCR 131, 21 April 1472.

72   WGAS RISW GGF 3 Bound Volume of Deeds, p. 41, 7 November 1498; Clark, *Cartae,* V, pp. 1754, 1756. It has to be admitted that the ideas advanced here may be influenced by an unrepresentative survival of documents.

73   WGAS RISW GGF 3, p. 21, 31 October 1400; Clark, *Cartae,* IV, p. 1442; WGAS RISW GGF 3 Bound Volume of Deeds c.1220–1891, p. 23, 21 March 1402; Clark, *Cartae,* IV, p. 1651; WGAS RISW GGF 3, p. 29, 21 April 1422, Clark, *Cartae,* IV, p. 1494; WGAS RISW GGF 3, p. 36, 19 March 1460; Clark, *Cartae,* V, p. 1644–45; Jones, *History of Swansea,* II, p. 59; WGAS RISW GGF 3, p. 37, 30 April 1463; Clark, *Cartae,* V, p. 1656.

sailor, in 1585.[74] In 1400 (185 years before), we can read of forty-three burgage holdings in Fisher Street with the names of every owner, including John de Horton, a leading landowner in south Gower as well as the town, and John Fairewode, the portreeve.[75]

The picture which emerges is of Fisher Street as a centre of population, and Wind Street, perhaps as a through route, but with far less evidence of burgess activity. This might make sense. The north-south route through the city today includes the full length of Castle Bailey and Castle Streets on a line which once took you right through the outer bailey of the castle, skirting the walls of the inner bailey. It has been suggested that 'townsfolk using the main street axis through the town traversed thus a route that brought them into close sight of the lord'.[76] Is this an accurate assessment of how the lord might view the 'security situation'? Would he allow the 'hoi polloi' through the bailey of his castle?

Norman Swansea began as a colony of English burgesses subject to periodic and devastating onslaughts from neighbouring Deheubarth, and sometimes from Gwynedd. During an attack in 1135 Norman Gower was, it was said, subjected to 'the slaughter, dispersion and sale into captivity in foreign lands of countless numbers, both of the rich and poor'. The poet Llywarch boasted that when Rhys Gryg attacked Swansea in 1212, 'we made widows of all the wives'.[77] Allowing for exaggeration, there is no missing the fierce enmity. It existed on both sides. On the other hand, the tiny settlement was closely hedged in by a Gŵyr which was far from anglicized, as place names around its fringes make clear: Dyfatty, Hafod, Waun Wen, Brynmelin and Cwmbwrla to the north, Glan-y-bad and Tir Landwr just across the Tawe, and Gors and Pantygwidr to the west. The stream which ran through the Sandfields by the shore and just past the bottom of Wind Street was 'the Cadle'. The townsmen and countrymen would be in continual contact, and had to find a way of getting along. A recent essay asserts 'the integrated nature of the environment of town and countryside'.[78] Trading must have developed. All were Christian, and church institutions might draw people together – in about 1165 *Einon and Goroneu sons of Loarht* endowed with twelve acres of land the (religious) Order of the Knights of St. John, based at the church just outside the town.[79]

In such a world, would the lord have sealed off the bailey entirely? Allowed some transit but kept a close watch on travellers? Or accepted a free flow of people? The William de Breoses, father and son, lords from 1232 to 1326, were inured to ruthless violence, and probably saw displays of this as the way to maintain authority... such

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74   GA DF/D/462, 24 June 1585.

75   Jones, *History of Swansea,* II, 28–29.

76   Keith Lilley and Gareth Dean, 'Development of medieval Swansea', <www.medievalswansea.ac.uk/cy/context/development-of-medieval-swansea-1/> [accessed 7 February 2018] (par. 3/10).

77   Thomas Stephens, *The Poetry of the Kymry* (London: Longman, Green & Co., 1870), pp. 138–39; Jones, *History of Swansea*, I, p. 229, notes 7, 9, 10; Morgan, *East Gower*, pp. 225–26.

78   Ralph A. Griffiths, 'Who were the Townsfolk of Medieval Wales?', in *Urban Culture in Medieval Wales*, ed. by Helen Fulton (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012), pp. 9–18, at p. 10.

79   Jones, *History of Swansea,* I, 220; William Rees, *A History of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in Wales and on the Welsh Border* (Cardiff: 1947); J. Rogers Rees, *Slebech Commandery and the Knights of St. John* (London: Bedford Press, 1900).

that those passing through the bailey, only yards from their solar in the castle, might be cowed by the ferocities associated with the de Breos name. In November 1290 the father ordered the hanging on Gibbet Hill, in plain view of the town, of one William Cragh. His family were told to help in the execution – 'a refinement of brutality […] [and] […] an insult to their kin'. He is said to have hated Cragh, and rejected a substantial ransom offer of a hundred cattle. The younger de Breos called Cragh a 'notorious brigand' and 'malefactor' – he was a probable rebel (or freedom fighter?), implicated in the 1287 rebellion of Rhys ap Maredudd in which Swansea was burnt. Born William ap Rhys in the Gower parish of Llanrhidian, Cragh was a monoglot Welshman, made landless, he said by the lord. John Baggeham, the lord's steward, testified to having encountered him locally many times between the 1280s and about 1305. So did other townsmen. William Cragh evidently roamed Gower, and probably the town, without hindrance. Given the hatred on both sides, would men like this have been allowed, say, to cart goods through the bailey? It is a rhetorical question. We do not know enough, despite the fact that information on Cragh and attitudes towards him survive in unparalleled measure.[80]

The bailey area was not sacrosanct. A series of agreements in 1383 and 1384 show that John de Horton, John de Penres and John de la Bere, knightly landowners, were all in possession of land within it – twice a plot there being described as a place burgage ('placeam burgagii').[81] In 1343 a Peter de la Bere left to his niece Christina 'a plot of land lying within the bailliwick of Swansea'.[82] As early as 1324 a John Pistor of Penmaen granted Thomas Scissor land in the outer bailey – 'in forinseco ballio castri'.[83] Even the defences had been sold off – the South Gate to William ap Ithel, the North to William le Pecar before 1306, a 'Donel's tour' to John Russel a forester. John Iweyn, the lordship steward, acquired 'Eglistour' and de Sengleton's tower by 1319.[84] The last two de Breos lords seem to have raised much needed money by these sales, backing their judgement in identifying knights, burgesses and officials they could trust with property within the courtyard of their caput castle.

However, were the bailey gates firmly closed, blocking their way, or indeed were the approach to them, Wind Street, unbuilt, through travellers might have diverted eastward of the town, up the riverbank, along the Strand (see Fig. 1). It ran from the pill and the Quay to the town's northern limit, the Bwrlais Brook. The name, as "Le Strond", emerges in 1432.[85] In 1765, it was made a turnpike road.[86] There are, though, no earlier signs of its having been a routeway. Nor did it ever become an area where leading burgesses lived – though there were nineteen

80   Robert Bartlett, *The Hanged Man* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 3–5, 31–32, 34–35, 37, 78; Andrew Dulley, *The Mystery of William Crach, the Hanged Man of Gower* (Swansea: self-published, 2014), pp. 25, 31, 33, 40, 51–52, 57, 60, 62

81   Clark, *Cartae,* IV, pp. 1352–56, documents of 5 October 1383 and 10 September 1384; Morris, *Swansea Castle,* 68–70; Jones, *History of Swansea*, II, pp. 31–32.

82   Lewis Weston Dillwyn, *Contributions towards a History of Swansea* (Swansea: 1840), p. 34.

83   Clark, *Cartae,* III, p. 1124; Jones, *History of Swansea*, II, 31.

84   Clark, *Cartae,* III, p. 1071; Jones, *History of Swansea,* II, pp. 324, 327.

85   Dillwyn, *Contributions,* p. 36; WGAS D/D WCR 132.

86   Jones, *History of the Port of Swansea*, 52; Richard Daugherty, 'Swansea's Turnpike Roads', *Minerva / Journal of Swansea History*, 24 (2016/17), pp. 28–42, at p. 32.

houses along it by 1670,[87] not one seem to have been on a burgage plot. Much of the ground was, perhaps, used for stacking cargoes and for workshops, with the flat strip verging on the muddy bank down to the water being narrow in parts. It does not even seem to have thought of as a roadway before the 1700s, a lease of 1680 calling it 'a place [...] [not a street] [...] called the Strand'.[88] So perhaps journeyers passed west of the castle, not east.

In 1927 the knowledgeable local historian W.H. Jones called Fisher Street 'without doubt the oldest street in Swansea [...] for centuries [...] the main thoroughfare through the town'.[89] This opinion might be moderated, but it looks more likely. A traveller would have used Fisher Street, Cross Street (passing between St. Mary's Church and the castle bailey), then Goat Street and College Street, and turned left on to High Street, outside the castle's north gate. The idea of this as a single routeway is reinforced by the fact that the name 'College Street' emerged only in 1759,[90] being previously thought of as just the 'hook' at the top of Goat Street.[91] It was a single route. In 1753 this whole stretch, when it needed repair, was termed 'the causeway from High Street below the gate to Goat Street'.[92]

It is possible, though, that the earliest routeway was not via High Street. In about 1798, Paul Padley drew a view of the town which clearly shows a hedged roadway running directly from the top of Goat Street to the Dyfatty area, whence the Carmarthen road began.[93] This may be the 'Heol las' ("green lane") often mentioned in eighteenth-century documents.[94]

How did the settlement develop? 4. An ecclesiastical quarter?

Fisher Street ran close to the church. Historians have tended to relate the shape of the town to the castle, ignoring any role St. Mary's Church may have played. This is partly because there is no distinct documentary reference to a 'church of Swenesse' until 1291, and explicitly to a church of 'Blessed Mary of Sweinesey' until 1331.[95] Yet, there must have been a church and St. John's, though its attested existence dated from about 1165, seems too far out of the settled area. A reasonable thesis is that a Norman church existed on roughly the site where St. Mary's stands today, its existence too obvious to contemporaries to be noted in the sparse documents before 1300. Most of the chronicle references to the castle refer to attacks on it; perhaps

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87   Elizabeth Parkinson, *The Glamorgan Hearth Tax Assessment of 1670* (Cardiff: South Wales Records Society, 1994), p. 104.
88   Rogers' *Calendar* in Morris, ed., *Historic Swansea*, vol. III, pt. II, p. 18, 22 June 1680.
89   W.H. Jones, 'The Oldest Street in Swansea', *Cambria Daily Leader*, 13 October 1927.
90   Rogers' *Calendar* in Morris, ed., *Historic Swansea*, vol. II, pt. III, p. 333.
91   Morris, ed., *Historic Swansea*, pp. 3, 14–15, leases 4 March 1530, 28 September 1611.
92   NLW Badminton Manorial 2775 Leet Court, 1 October 1753.
93   Bernard Morris, 'Paul Padley's Swansea: A View in the 1790s', *Gower*, 41 (1990), 6–16; *The Pleasure of Unravelling Secrets,* pp. 246–55; the drawing is in Swansea Museum.
94   WGAS B/S Corp B3 Book of Orders p. 112, Hall Day 20 September 1735; WGAS B/S C4 Common Attorneys Accounts 1738–39, etc.
95   Padley, *Our Ladye Church*, pp. 7–8; W. C. Rogers (the effective author), *A History of St. Mary's Church, Swansea, to its destruction in 1941* (c. 1955).
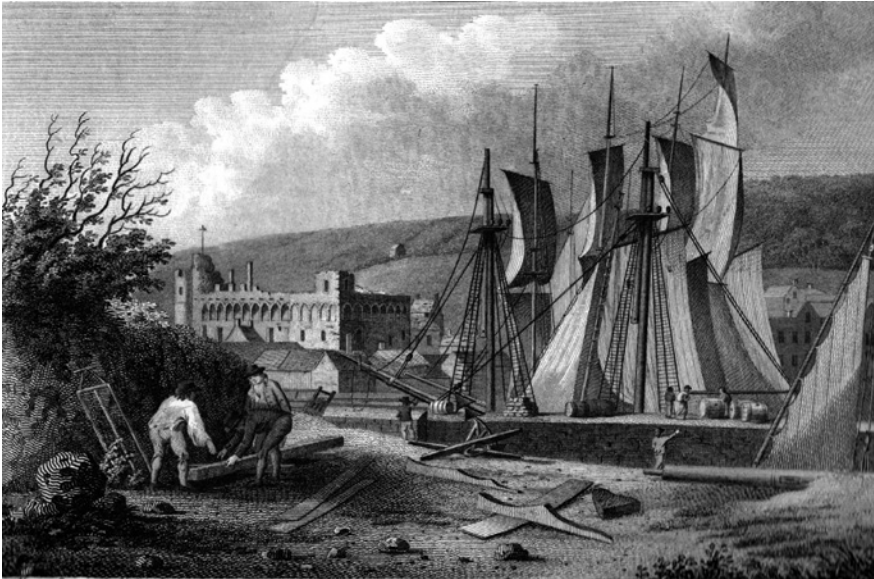
[Fig. 1] *'Swansea', drawn by John Nixon, engraved by J.Walker, published by Harrison & Co., Paternoster Row, London, 1ˢᵗ October 1793. The nearest sail probably indicates a small vessel at the entrance to the Pill. Beyond it, about six more are at the Town Quay, berthed side by side – open 'banks' upstream were obviously better for loading bulky cargoes like coal. Notice that the castle is a little way off, though the artist has not brought out its elevated position. (Author's collection)*

the church was never targeted or damaged, and therefore goes unmentioned. There is a little material evidence. Though St. Mary's today is a rebuilding of the 1950s, replacing a total reconstruction of the 1890s, a number of Victorian experts identified twelfth-century fragments still extant in their day – piers of the chancel arch, part of a tombstone, carvings.[96] They could have been re-used from a former building, but there is no hint of one. The churchyard was walled by 1587, with a tithe barn in its north western corner.[97]

This site for an early church, on the south western edge of the settlement, might be thought vulnerable to attack. In fact its stout, square crenelated tower (which survived past 1890) could have been a military asset. The town walls, probably built in the late thirteenth century, just enclosed it, and, before that, a moderate-sized stream known as the Town Ditch, gave some protection. The limits of the

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96   Morgan, *East Gower*, p. 123; W. H. Jones, *A History of St. Mary's Church* (Swansea: 1879), p. 2.
97   WGAS D/D WCR 265 e/1; GA DBLN/5 Rent roll 1677, the wife of ['ux'] John Morgan renting 'ye great barne' for thirty shillings; a Swansea Museum map of the 1780s, SMT 504, clearly marks the barn.

borough of Swansea were all watercourses – this Ditch ran down the whole western side, then, as it grew and became the Cadle, turned eastward to cover the southern boundary. The North Gate, too, was on the line of a rivulet, and the Tawe was the defence to the eastward. It is arguable that this whole area, marked and defended by natural waterways, was fixed on at a very early stage, but that, within it, burgages were laid out only in stages. There was still a large field behind lower Wind Street in the 1790s and 'waste' at the top of Goat Street into the 1770s.

The earliest known dates for streets leading to and past the church – St. Mary Street 1553, Frog Street 1499 and Wassail Street 1654 – are on a par with the rest of the town. They are probably misleading to a degree because the three streets made up a continuous east-west run from the market place to the Wassail Gate and were sometimes conflated by contemporary clerks under one of the three names.[98] An institution which added great weight to this segment of the town was St. David's Hospital, founded in 1332 under the auspices of Bishop Henry de Gower of St. David's.[99] He and a range of lay people endowed it vastly with land in and around the town, in peninsular Gower and as far afield as Pembrokeshire. There were influential priories and friaries in other Welsh towns;[100] this chantry was Swansea's equivalent, and the bloc of property assembled in its name was a major factor in urban development well into the 1800s. The 'Hospital' was a chantry, housing up to six priests and charged with succouring the aged and infirm. Its warden seems to have easily surpassed the Vicar of St. Mary's in importance, the hospital being awarded two thirds of the parish tithes. It was dissolved in 1550, and a remnant of the building survives, on a corner plot, as the Cross Keys Inn. Its main frontage is in St. Mary Street, but it still includes three fine fourteenth-century windows in what became Cross Street and is now Princess Way.

There are a number of suggestions that the Hospital comprised a wider range of buildings in this area, only just to the east of St. Mary's.[101] Several houses in Cross, Caer and Goat Streets were also church property, and a prominent one on the Fisher Street/Frog Street corner was known as the Rectory or Parsonage. In July 1767, Rees Harris, a Swansea mercer, leased a composite of this property: the rectory, tithe barn, stable and courtyard with adjoining cottage and garden.[102] This district came to be known as 'the Parsonage', a term regularly recorded between 1675 and

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98   Thomas, *History of Swansea from the Accession of the Tudors*, pp. 7–11; Book of Common Hall 1553; WGAS RISW GGF 3, Bound Volume of Deeds, p. 43, 11 November 1499; Clark, *Cartae*, v, p. 1757; WGAS D/D WCR 266g 4 will of Walter Thomas, 19 June 1654.

99   TNA C 143/217/8 Charter of St. David's Hospital 1332, originally Harleian MSS, BM No 1249 f103b; Grant Francis, 'Henry de Gower', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 4th Series, 25–28 (1876), 1–16, 131–35, 191–99.

100   There are hints of such an institution to the west of the town in the St. Helen's area – the name Augustin's or Austin's lane, references to a chapel there, a healing well, and elements of very old ecclesiastical architecture in St. Helen's House. Morgan, *East Gower,* 128–30; WGAS D/D WCR 66, 83.

101   J. Buckley Wilson, 'Hospital of the Blessed David, St. Mary Street, Swansea', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 5th Series, 5.7 (1888), 1–11; RCAHMW, *An Inventory of the Ancient Monuments in Glamorgan. Volume III: Medieval Secular Monuments, pt. II, Non-defensive* (Cardiff: HMSO, 1982), pp. 171–75.

102   WGAS D/D CRJ 23 lease 4 July 1767.
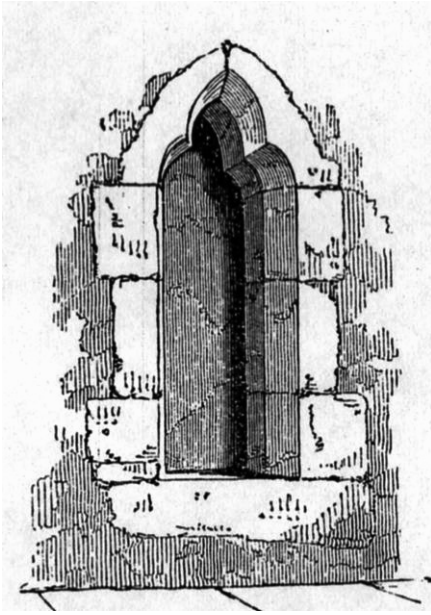
[Fig. 2] *One of the windows of St.David's Hospital, as drawn for Archaeologia Cambrensis (1876) to illustrate an article by George Grant Francis (p. 8). Reproduced with permission of the Cambrian Archaeological Association.*

1778.[103] It is, perhaps, an inflated term, but this might suggest a 'clerical quarter' as a focus of activity on the western edge of the town like that of the port and castle on the east. And perhaps embracing the town's early marketplace.

How did the settlement develop? 5. The market site

The position of the market place, at the top of Wind Street and just outside the castle's South Gate, might seem to reinforce that axis as the primary one in the town. John Nixon's wonderful 1793 painting of the market in full swing[104] clearly shows it to be there, and burgess records corroborate the construction there of the market house he shows between 1646 and 1652,[105] and probably of there being a market in the same area in 1553.[106] Drawings, maps from the 1780s,[107] and a contemporary

103   Instances of the term 'the Parsonage' as an area name: WGAS B/S Corp C3/4 Common Attorneys' Accounts 1674–75, 1757–58; Clark, *Cartae*, VI p. 2247 1693; WGAS RISW GGF 3, p. 86, 1714; NLW Badminton Manorial 2775 Courts Leet, 1 August 1728, 14 October 1733; WGAS D/D CRJ 6, 12 June 1765; WGAS B/S Corp B5 Hall Days Disbursements by Common Attorneys 1768; WGAS RISW GGF 3 Bound Volume of Deeds, p. 79, 22 January 1738/9.

104   British Museum 1923.0714.5 AN 264593; reproduced in Glanmor Williams, ed., *Swansea: An Illustrated History* (Swansea: Christopher Davies, 1990), opp. p. 6.

105   Thomas, *History of Swansea from the Accession of the Tudors*, pp. 170–71; Book of the Common Hall 10 March 1646, 21 October 1647, 20 May, 28 October 1651, 2 November 1652.

106   Thomas, *History of Swansea from the Accession of the Tudors*, pp. 7–11; Book of Common Hall 1553.

107   SM SMT 503 & 504.

model in Swansea Museum also confirm this. What, though, of before the 1550s? Might it have been elsewhere? The Tithe Map of 1843 shows two other possibilities (see Fig. 3). The portion of High Street within the North Gate was broad enough to accommodate a linear market, and there was also a wide triangular space at the junction of Cross, Caer, and Goat Streets. There are examples of both these patterns in Welsh towns.[108] How convincing are the two sites?

High Street was probably not part of the initial town. There are instances of the name being used in 1400 and 1536 (a burgage with 'the Hy street of the north'),[109] but an alternative description – the 'Boveton', 'Le Bove Town' – was more frequent,[110] and phrases like 'the Higher Town Street' lasted until at least 1763.[111] This all creates a picture of a suburb established 'above' the castle, a little later than the laying out of the first burgage plots but perhaps as early as the later twelfth century.[112] The greater width of lower High Street is apparent as late as photographs from the 1960s. It could have served as a marketplace.

The second area has decided points in its favour. It was near the churchyard, and churchyards were often used as a marketplace elsewhere. Fairs were held in Llangyfelach churchyard four miles to the north until 1815. 'Mabsant' (saint's day) celebrations were naturally centred on the church, and were marked with gusto in peninsular Gower, especially Llangenydd.[113] The name 'Cross Street' may easily indicate a long lost market cross; they were common in Welsh towns. And a recent study makes strong links between market crosses and churchyard markets.[114] In addition the churchwardens took dues on stalls at markets and fairs in the town; there is record of this from 1580 to 1829.[115] The reason is not apparent, but it is another hint of an earlier, more westerly, market site.

The suggested routeway through the western streets would have been made redundant with the opening of a thoroughfare through the bailey. 'Baylis Castells

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108   Richard Suggett, 'The Townscape', in *Urban Culture in Medieval Wales*, ed. by Helen Fulton (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012), pp. 51–94, at p. 55; Soulsby, *Towns of Medieval Wales*, 41.

109   Jones, *History of Swansea*, II, pp. 28–29; WGAS RISW GGF 23/6 & 20/12 Lease 1536.

110   WGAS B/S Corp C10, Calendar of the contents of the book of expired leases, p. 47; Morris, *Historic Swansea*, pp. 2–3; WGAS D/D WCR 132, 27 October 1432; W. R. B. Robinson, 'An Analysis of a Minister's Account for the Borough of Swansea for 1449', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 12 (1967), 184–99, at p. 186; WGAS RISW BG 18, 2 November 1609.

111   Rogers' *Calendar* in Morris, ed., *Historic Swansea*, vol. III, pt. II, p. 18, 22 June 1680, p. 120, lease 1 October 1701, p. 121ff, leases 1701–17; WGAS RISW GGF 1.7, 1 October 1701; WGAS RISW JC 4 agreement, 24 March 1717/1718; WGAS B/S C4 Common Attorneys Accounts, rentroll Michaelmas 1746; NLW Badminton Manorial 2775 Courts Leet, 10 October 1748, 11 October 1756, 8 October 1759; NLW (WlAbNL)3540004 will of George Evans of the Town of Swansea ship-wright, 11 December 1753; WGAS B/S Corp B6, p. 35, award of the roads to be built on the Town Hill and the Burrows 1763.

112   Griffiths, 'Who Were the Townsfolk of Medieval Wales?', p. 11.

113   Anon, 'Cambrian Archaeological Association, Report of the Swansea Meeting, *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 6th Series, 20 (1920), 293–385, at pp. 363–64; Annie L. Matthews, 'Ffair Llangyfelach', *Gower*, 11 (1958), 49–50.

114   Robert J. Silvester, 'Welsh Medieval Freestanding Crosses', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 163 (2014), 314–15, 327–31; see also Suggett, 'The Townscape', pp. 57–58.

115   WGAS BS Corp D2/3 Churchwardens' Accounts, 1580, 1585, 1586, 1601, 1603, 1610, 1624, 1687, 1688, 1695; WGAS RISW CO 89, p. 148; St Marys Papers, File of Bequests and Trusts, letter 11 September 1937 (with thanks to Lyndon Morris).
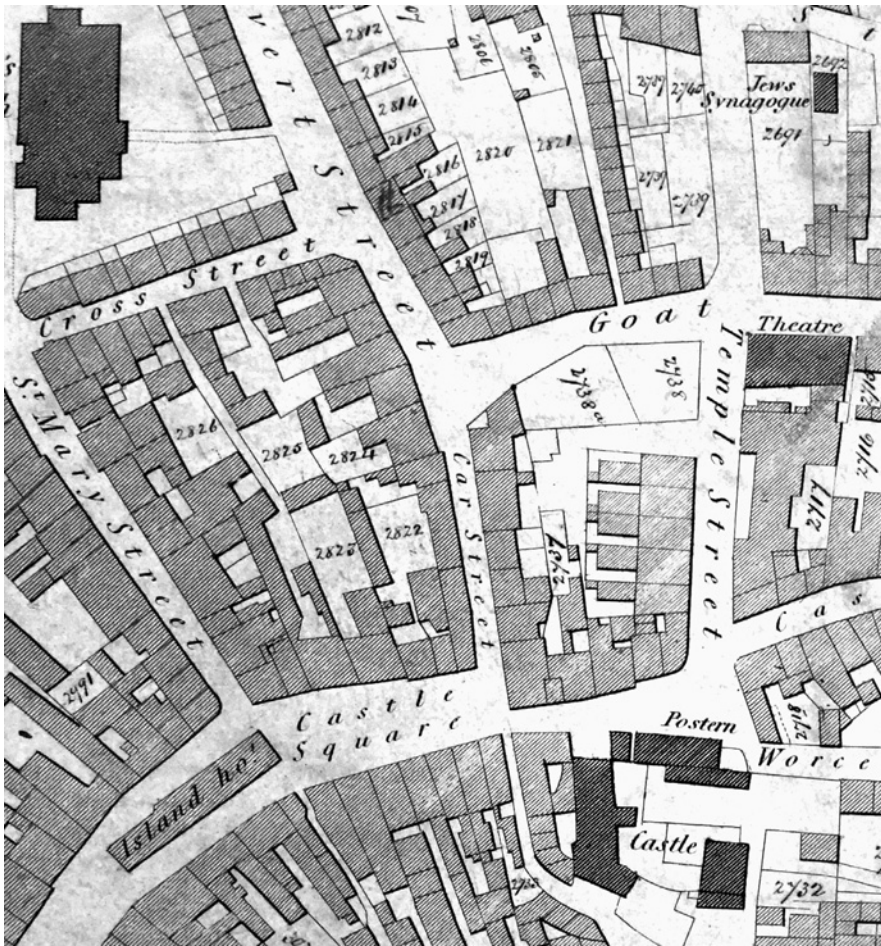
[Fig. 3] *A section from the Tithe Map of the Town of Swansea of 1843. 'Castle Square' as marked was the site of the seventeenth century market house, in use from the 1650s until 1829. Before the 1500s it may be that the triangular expanse at the top of 'Car' [now Caer] Street was the market place, not far from St.Mary's Church, which is the shaded block, top left. The castle remains, bottom right, include a rectangular building under the word 'Postern'-that was the Town Hall, also until 1829. (with permission of West Glamorgan Archive Service, P.123.18.1)*

Street' is not named as such until 1626,[116] but the references to 'the King's highway' from 1417 onwards suggest a proper roadway had been opened up through the castle precincts by then.[117] It seems strange that this should happen so soon after the decided threat posed by Owain Glyndŵr, who probably died in 1415. It could be that this was quickly appreciated as the last Welsh threat to Swansea. Perhaps depopulation caused by the Black Death made the drawing in of new townsmen crucial.[118] On the other side, it may be that there were more people in the Welshry attracted by urban life.[119] From quite early in the 1400s, names suggest such an influx – in 1400, twelve out of seventy-seven listed burgesses had a Welsh element in their name,[120] in 1478, eleven out of twenty-eight prominent townsmen sound decidedly Welsh,[121] and many more instances might be adduced. As a last speculation, is it possible that the re-ordering of the town streetplan might have been done during the royal administration of Gower between 1399 and 1413, during the minorities of John de Mowbray and his brother Thomas?[122] It was, after all, a 'King's Highway' which was created.

Appendix. The archaeology

W. R. B. Robinson, an admirably skilled, thorough, careful, and productive historian declared (in 1978) that medieval documentary sources threw 'little light on the extent and lay-out of Swansea's built-up area'. While accepting that, this article has tried to explore reasonable possibilities. Robinson also commented that the obliteration of its medieval townscape was unusually complete, while lack of archaeological data made 'the town's development particularly obscure'.[123] The entire early town lies below the current city centre, meaning archaeology has played a part only when areas or individual sites have been redeveloped. Thus archaeological insights have depended entirely on the alertness of, firstly, amateur archaeologists like George Grant Francis, William Llewelyn Morgan, and Bernard Morris, and, since 1975, on the professionalism of the Glamorgan-

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116   WGAS RISW GGF 3 Bound Volume of Deeds, p. 65; Rogers' *Calendar* in Morris, ed., *Historic Swansea,* vol. II, pt. III, p. 411, lease 1 May 1626. 'Castle Bailey Street' covered the whole run from the castle ruins to site of its North Gate until after 1800. Today the northern section is just known as 'Castle Street'.

117   WGAS D/D WCR 265 e/1; Clark, *Cartae,* IV, pp. 1482–83; Jones, *History of Swansea,* II, pp. 55–56.

118   R. A. Griffiths, *Conquerors and Conquered in Medieval Wales* (New York: 1994), p. 140; Id., *The Principality of Wales in the Later Middle Ages: The Structure and Personnel of Government. I: South Wales 1277–1536* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press,1972), pp. 53, 55, 56, 71, 110–11, 211, 458, 473; Jones, *History of Swansea,* II, p. 48.

119   Helen Fulton, 'Trading Places: Representations of Urban Culture in Medieval Poetry', *Studia Celtica,* 31 (1997), 219–30 (pp. 227, 229).

120   Jones, *History of Swansea,* II, pp. 28–29.

121   Ibid., II, pp. 70–71.

122   Ibid., II, pp. 53–54.

123   W. R. B. Robinson, 'Swansea', in *Boroughs of Medieval Wales,* ed. by R. A. Griffiths, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1978), pp. 263–86 (pp. 273, 263).

Gwent Archaeological Trust, based in Heathfield House, Swansea – from which they have a fine view over the city. To employees of the Trust we owe an excellent overview of changing attitudes to archaeology locally (Henry Owen-John, 1990), a very useful account of the medieval town (Edith Evans, 1983),[124] and continuing vigilance. The work of these people enriches our understandings, but, even in quite recent work in Wind Street, do not seem to contradict the ideas floated here, though I stand to be corrected.[125]

124   Henry Owen-John, 'From Antiquarianism to Archaeology', in *The City of Swansea, Challenges and Change*, ed. by Ralph A. Griffiths (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1990), pp. 244–59; Edith Evans, *Swansea Castle and the Medieval Town* (Swansea: Swansea City Council/Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust, 1983).

125   These and allied themes are treated more fully in Gabb, *Swansea and its History. Volume II: The Riverside Town* (forthcoming). The following references are intended to give just a sample of the archaeological data available: Bernard Morris, 'Swansea's Medieval Defences – Some Recent Discoveries', *Gower*, 26 (1975), 11–15; Id., 'Swansea Castle Defences – The Western Ditch', *Gower*, 27 (1976), 14–19; Kenneth Lightfoot, 'The Medieval Town Defences of Swansea: The Whitewalls Excavation, 1978–1979', *Gower*, 30 (1979), 76–79; Jo Higgins and Andrew Sherman, 'Swansea Castle's Western Ditch and Goat Street: Archaeological Excavation in 2007', *Gower*, 61 (2010), 65–71. J. K. Howell, '61 Wind Street, Swansea, Archaeological Working Brief', reports a pit with thirteenth-century pottery and a possible cobbled road surface; A. Sherman, 'The Bank Statement, 57–58 Wind Street, Swansea, Archaeological Working Brief', uncovered a medieval cultivation layer; S. H. Sell and A. Sherman, 'Excavations on Land between York Street and Wind Street, Swansea, May 2006', found a Henry I penny minted in Pembroke. These are from *Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust Annual Reports*, 2000, p. 22, 2004, p.43, and 2006, p. 36 respectively.