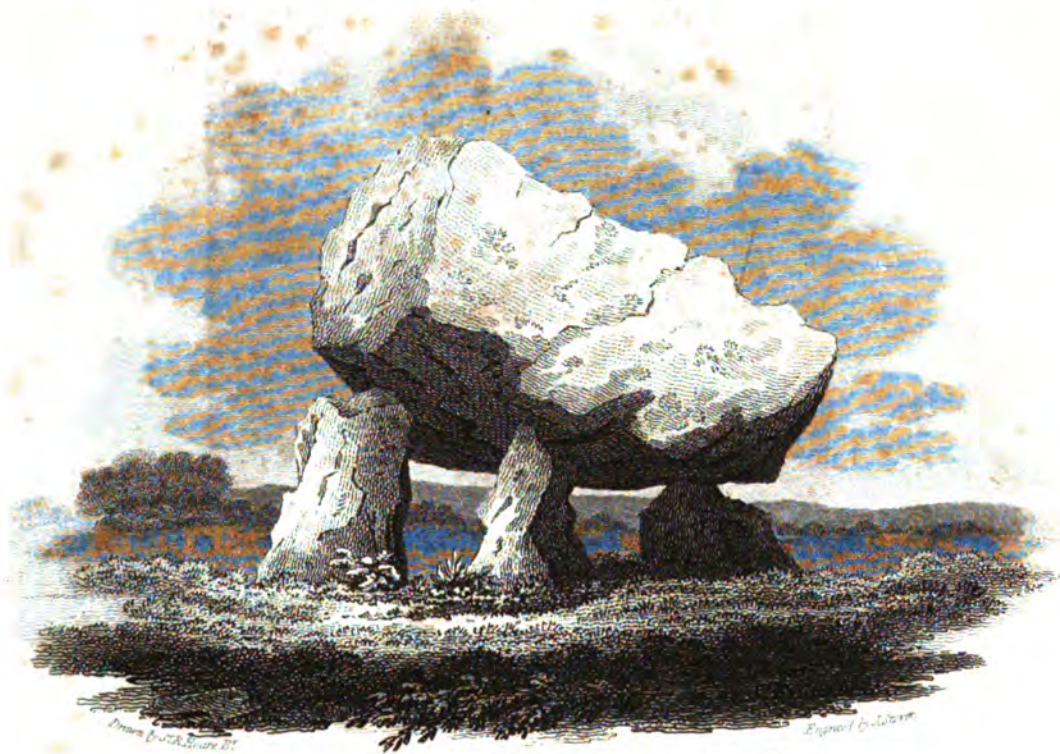


A  
HISTORICAL TOUR  
THROUGH  
PEMBROKE SHIRE,

BY  
RICHARD FENTON, ESQ. F.A.S.



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Esq. who in consequence of his purchasing the valuable estate of Slebech, and thereby becoming entitled to very extensive manorial rights and other interests in the several waste grounds of Narberth, Templeton, Molleston, and Robeston Wathan, to the amount of between two and three thousand acres; in the year 1786 procured an act for inclosing and dividing the same.

In the approach to Narberth, as seen from the mountain, the castle, church, and town, group into no unpleasing picture. A market and post town thus situated in the centre of the county, must of course be a great thoroughfare; and since the establishment of a mail coach running every day through it, and the enclosure of its common, it has increased rapidly in size and opulence.

The ruins of the castle though small are very picturesque; but from the outline of walls that may be traced, it must at one time have been a large pile extending a great way on the ridge it occupies towards the town, and from the nature of its site, as stopping one of the most frequented passes of the county, well calculated for defence, though on that account more exposed to attack. No wonder then that it frequently felt the fury of the Welsh princes in their desultory wars.

On the first introduction of the Normans into Pembrokeshire under Arnulph de Montgomery, this place, with a competent portion of territory round it, fell in the partition then made of the conquered, or rather usurped country, to the share of a knight of the name of Stephen Perrott. Yet there is reason to suppose that the castle whose ruins we now see was not built by him, but that in the hurry of his defensive establishment he contented himself with slenderer and more temporary fortifications on the summit of that mountain ridge between Narberth and the village of Tem-

pleton, an elevated spot in the midst of a deep forest, and most probably of his new possessions, having a command of view all round, less liable to surprise, and therefore better calculated to protect them, where, to this day, slight vestiges of military works still appear, which might have been those the Welsh Chronicle refers to, as situate "over-against Arberth," and having been levelled to the ground by Griffydd ap Rhys, A. D. 1183.

About this time Stephen, by his alliance with Eleanor, daughter and sole heiress of Meirchion ap Rhys, of Jestington, grandson of Jestyn ap Owen ap Howel Dda, had a considerable accession to his property, and a more attractive situation for residence on the haven of Milford, with hereditary power and privileges, long acknowledged and acquiesced in, so that we hear nothing of any effectual and permanent establishment at Narberth till the time of his son Sir Andrew Perrott, who was the reputed and undoubted founder of that vill and church, the church being dedicated to St. Andrew, a circumstance confirmed by the occurrence of other churches in Pembrokeshire, bearing the names of their founders with the title of saint, such as two or three in Castle Martin and the vicinity of Tenby, dedicated to St. Elidur, known to have been founded and endowed by Sir Elidur de Stackpool, as likewise Landawk, Kiffig, and Pendyne, near Laugharne, whose patron is St. Margaret Marlos, the founding of those churches being, on unquestionable authority, attributed to Margaret, daughter of Sir William Marlos, and wife of Sir Huko Howel lord of Woodstock.

Sir Andrew Perrott seeing how inadequate such works as his father had relied on, were for the security of his lately acquired, and still unsettled, possessions, and availing himself of the influx of the Flemings into the country, built a castle which he garrisoned with the new settlers, and collected his vassals and dependents within the pale of its protection, the origin of this as well

as of most of the towns in Wales, though we are justified in supposing that, long prior to this time, there had been something of a princely settlement at Narberth; for in one of the Welsh romances, called the Mabinogion, or the Juvenilities, the earliest probably in Europe, Pwyll Pendevig, Prince of Dyved, is said to set out from his palace at Arberth to hunt in the vale of Cych; so that notwithstanding we owe to Norman architecture most of the venerable piles so numerous scattered over all Wales, and particularly this county, yet it is almost evident that the site of those magnificent edifices had been by the ancient princes and chieftains of the country devoted to defence or residence after the fashion then prevailing, and that the Norman adventurers by their fixing on the same spots, allowed the judicious eligibility of the position.

In consequence of some settlement, I presume, on the marriage of Sir Andrew Perrott with Jonet, daughter of Ralph Lord Mortimer, afterwards Earl of March, we find this castle enumerated among the possessions of Roger the great Earl of March in Edward the Third's time, which on his attainder fell to the crown; but on his attainder being reversed, and his grandson restored, it continued in that family till it came to Richard Duke of York, heir to the last Roger Earl of March. The Duke of York granted it to the Bishop of St. David's and Griffith Nicholas, grandfather to Sir Rhys ap Thomas, by virtue of a license of alienation. It remained in the crown from the first of Edward the Fourth, son to the Duke of York, till the seventh of Henry the Eighth, when it was granted to Sir Rhys ap Thomas "in recompense for his good services in the wars, as well in England and Wales as beyond seas done," but being forfeited by the attainder of Rhys Griffith, it again came to the crown. Sir Rhys ap Thomas either found it in good repair, or put it into such, as old Leland calls it, "a praty pile of old Sir Rees's." It was inhabited as late as 1657, when a

gentleman of the name of Richard Castell lived there, continuing to do so for several years, (as I have seen a bond, dated 1677, to Richard Castle, of Narberth Castle, from one Bernard Howard,) but I apprehend not in his own right, but as (*n*) tenant to Slebech, as it appears to have been part of the immense possessions of that house long before.

In the fourth year of James the Second, Sir John Barlow obtained a patent for holding a market and fairs there, and taking tolls and customs arising from the same. The manor, castle, and all privileges annexed to them, now belong to Nathaniel Philipps, Esq. of Slebech.

The church is a rectory in the gift of the crown. The present incumbent is the Rev. Dr. Symmons, as he likewise is of the adjoining parish of Lampeter, considered two of the most valuable pieces of preferment in the diocese of St. David's.

Leaving Narberth I take the road to Haverfordwest, and pass through the village of Robeston Wathan, situate on an eminence, whose church is always consolidated with that of Narberth. It has a tower like most of the churches in those parts where the Normans or Flemings fixed, an almost certain criterion of the limits of their colony, and by which, better than by any other now existing circumstance, may be traced their progress (*o*).

Descending from this village to Canaston Bridge, I cross the

(*n*) Unless he might have been one of Colonel Horton's brigade, among whom the great estate of Slebech was parcelled on General Laugharne's desertion of the parliament, to whom it was first granted by an ordinance dated March 4, 1645. See Appendix, No. 6.

(*o*) When his grace the Duke of Beaufort, as lord president of Wales, visited this country in 1684, he was complimented in his passage through this village from Carmarthen to Haverfordwest with a singular bonfire and other demonstrations of joy, of which I found a curious memorandum in a MS. journal of a Mr. Dynely who was in the duke's suite, from the Badminton collection, for the inspection of which