

# Great Archaeological Sites in Bridgend



## 6. COITY CASTLE



On the outskirts of Bridgend is Coity Castle (SS 9230 8149), founded by Sir Payn de Turberville, one of the Twelve Knights of Glamorgan who according to tradition were the companions who helped the Norman baron Robert Fitzhamon of Gloucester to conquer lowland Glamorgan. They were each rewarded with some of the newly conquered lands, and the Bridgend area fell to St Payn, who established his centre of power at Coity.

His original castle was a quickly constructed earth and timber ringwork, where all the buildings needed by a Norman lord were enclosed within a rampart and a deep, wide ditch, which can still be seen today. However, over the centuries it was upgraded to fulfil the concerns of the day. At first, this was mainly about improving the defences, to make them proof against any attempt to set them on fire, as well as rebuilding elements that had been damaged by enemy attack. However, as the Middle Ages drew to a close and defence was much less of a priority, the improvements increasingly focussed on making the castle a more comfortable place to live.

The first step, in the late 12th century, was to reinforce the earth and timber of the original castle in stone. This is thought to have involved adapting the ringwork into an inner ward, complete with keep, and making an outer bailey where a bailey had been attached to ringwork. Still to be seen from this period are the keep and more than half of the curtain wall of the inner ward. In the 14th century the keep was partly rebuilt with two vaulted basements below, and a gatehouse was attached to one side of it to control the access between the outer and inner baileys. A new hall and more comfortable rooms for the accommodation of the castle's lords were built against the curtain wall at the other side of the inner ward, whilst in the outer ward the curtain wall was completely rebuilt.

Owain Glyndwr's forces attacked the castle in 1404-5. The fourth period of building in the 15th century was probably made necessary by the damage they caused – a whole section of the curtain wall of the outer bailey had to be rebuilt, and there was a new outer gatehouse which is now the visitor entrance. But there were also other improvements both to the defences and to the more domestic buildings, including the construction of a huge barn in the outer bailey.

By Tudor times when the time the castle had its final makeover, defences were no longer a consideration but comfort was. The domestic apartments in the inner ward were given new windows and fireplaces whose chimney stacks still stand. But the growing emphasis on comfort meant the beginning of the end for castles, and Coity was largely in ruins by the mid 18th century.

The site (at CF35 6BH) is on northern side of Coity village, where there is on-street parking. Coity is a few miles to the northwest of Bridgend town centre and the railway station. Maps: OS Landranger Series sheet 170, Explorer Series sheet 151.

**Timeline** (the asterisk indicate the time-span)



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