

Great Archaeological Sites in Swansea



6. OYSTERMOUTH CASTLE



When the Normans conquered Gower, the manor of Oystermouth ended up in the hands of William de Londres who had already been granted the manor of Ogmores in Glamorgan. His original castle would have been of timber, and it was his son, Maurice de Londres who was probably responsible for rebuilding it in stone around 1140 (SS 6131 8836). By the beginning of the 12th century it belonged to the de Braose lords of Gower who used it as one of their residences when they were in Wales – we know that William de Braose III entertained King Edward I there in 1284. It was attacked on a number of occasions by the Welsh during campaigns and uprisings trying to wrest control of Gower from the Normans.

The earliest part of the castle to survive is the keep, dating to the 12th century and is probably Maurice's work. Early in the following century it was doubled in size and each half was provided with a fireplace backing on to each other. The new part provided accommodation for the lords. Another accommodation block was added to one corner in the middle of the century, along with a building for the more mundane purposes of cooking and storage along one of the walls of the inner ward. These walls were themselves rebuilt at the end of the 13th century as part of an extensive makeover that also saw the construction of a new gatehouse, as well other buildings including a new porch for the hall. Although there are now no towers to the

gatehouse, excavation by the Trust showed that they were part of the original design and their remains were probably removed as part of a conservation programme in the 18th century.

A new tower with a chapel in its upper floor is often attributed to Alina de Braose who was lady of Gower in the early 14th century after the death of her father. We do not have any documents to confirm this, but the tracery in the east window is in the Decorated style fashionable at the time. During major conservation work 2010-2011, traces of painted plaster depicting angels was found in the recesses in the side walls of the chapel.



Oystermouth Castle stands in a small park at the end of Castle Avenue in the Mumbles, Swansea (SA3 4BA). The exterior is always visible; the Friends of Oystermouth Castle manage access to the interior (summer: see the Oystermouth Castle website for opening times and entrance charges). There is very limited short-term free parking in the avenue, and two pay-and-display car parks nearby. Maps: OS Landranger Series sheet 159, Explorer Series sheets 164 and 165.

Timeline (the asterisks indicate the time-span)



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