



ST QUINTIN'S CASTLE



No. 1 in an occasional series

N E W S

A MONUMENT OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE

Standing on a wooded hilltop overlooking the village of Llanblethian in the Vale of Glamorgan are the ruins of St Quintin's Castle.

Although the castle was never completed, its remains show it to have been a fine example of a quadrilateral castle with an impressive central gatehouse. This was officially recognised in 1937 when St Quintin's was scheduled as a monument of national importance. Work began on the castle in the early fourteenth century on the instruction of Gilbert de Clare the younger. His father, Gilbert (de Clare) the Red, Earl of Gloucester and Lord of Glamorgan, was a Marcher

Lord and one of the wealthiest men in the kingdom. It was he who began the vast fortress at Caerphilly. On his father's death, the younger de Clare inherited the title Lord of Glamorgan and continued to develop the formidable defences at Caerphilly. He was to die at the battle of Bannockburn in 1314. The Lordship of Glamorgan passed from the de Clares to the Despensers. Hugh

le Despenser earned the hatred of the local Welsh population when he put their leader, Llywelyn Bren to death in 1318. In 1321, during a revolt against the Despensers and King Edward II, St Quintin's Castle was captured.

There is a brief reference to St Quintin's again in 1375, and it was certainly in ruins by the sixteenth century. Today the medieval ruins testify to St Quintin's being a strong, small castle with a four-sided bailey

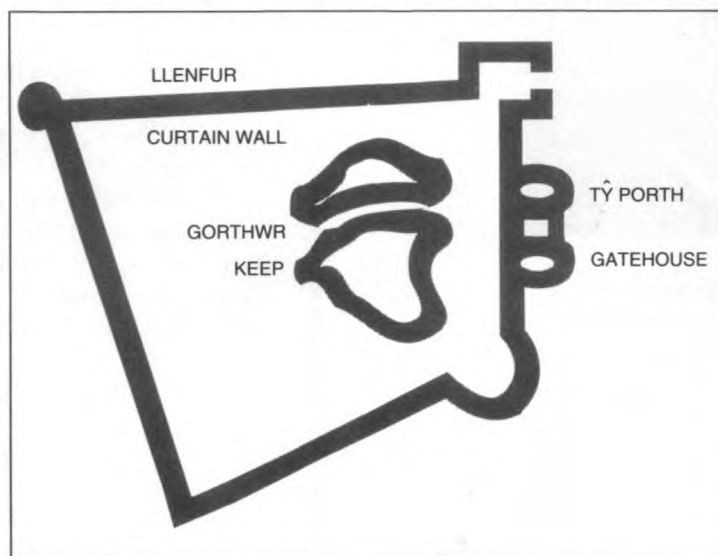
surrounded by curtain walls with round and square flanking towers. A ruined square keep structure stands in the centre and there is a keep-gatehouse built in the style associated with the castles of Edward I.

Although the remaining curtain wall is extremely ruinous for much of its length, having been reduced to about one metre in height, in places it is still some 10 metres tall, as is the twin-towered keep-gatehouse.

A CASTLE IN CARE

Conservation work has started at St Quintin's Castle. The first step was to repair safety fencing and to put up warning notices.

Arrangements have been made to let a contract for the work of cutting back and tidying small bushes and brambles which cover much of the ground in and around the castle. A survey is being commissioned so that an estate fence can be erected around the site. This survey will also plot any remains which are presently hidden by vegetation. The condition of the larger trees will also be assessed as part of the survey.



The conservation programme, which will be drawn up following the preliminary survey work, will aim to prevent further damage to the stonework of the castle and to halt as much as possible the decay in the fabric of the building.

Cadw carried out emergency work to protect the castle's upstanding remains before the site was taken into care. That work will keep them safe for the near future. The upstanding masonry will now be examined



Archway at the castle before (left) and after (right) emergency consolidation work by Cadw.

minutely. The findings of the examination will be recorded in detail and then a phased programme of repair drawn up. This will involve consolidating the loose masonry, generally raking out and repointing the stonework, and rebuilding any unsafe masonry.

With conservation work of this nature it is necessary to proceed cautiously, investigating any medieval work before carrying out repairs. It is likely, therefore, that the phased work will take two to three years to complete. It should be possible, however, to admit the public to the interior of the Bailey before all conservation work is complete.

WHAT IS GUARDIANSHIP?

The first Ancient Monuments Act, enacted in 1882, marked the beginning of national responsibility for the care of ancient monuments in Great Britain. The first monument to be taken into care in Wales was Penre Ifan burial chamber in the Preseli hills in 1884. The Secretary of State for Wales is now able to take monuments into care under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act of 1979 either by buying the site; receiving it as a gift; or by accepting guardianship.

St Quintin's Castle was placed in care when the owners signed Deeds of Guardianship. They still own the freehold of the property but they have given up rights of management and maintenance to the Secretary of State, who now has full control of the castle. Guardianship cannot be revoked by the owner.

The Secretary of State, through Cadw, is responsible for all 131 monuments in care in Wales. Cadw is an Executive Agency within the Welsh Office. Its Welsh name implies "care" - care for each monument; care for visitors to monuments which are open to view; and care for the public interest.