

## HELÔ PEMBROKESHIRE (SIR BENFRO) 2011

### Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> May

My first visit to Pembrokeshire was in 1970, when I stayed at a guest house in Tenby with my parents and an older couple. This second visit (first visit for Alan) promised to be a much livelier affair, with our son Dan, his wife Paula, their 3 year old daughter Willow and their son Piran, who had celebrated his first birthday only the day before.



**Happy birthday to me!**

I say celebrated, although it was slightly dampened by the fact that two days before his birthday, Piran had contracted a stomach bug from Nursery. He recovered quickly, but on the morning we travelled to Wales to stay the night with Dan, Paula, Willow and Piran in Pontardawe, Paula succumbed to the virus. Later that evening, Dan also succumbed. Fortunately, they both recovered quickly and we left their house at 14.30 the following afternoon, in reasonably sunny but somewhat windy weather.

It was a pleasant journey and as we entered Pembrokeshire, the scenery became very green with eye catching amounts of wild flowers, particularly gorse and bluebells. The house we were renting for the week in Dinas Cross seemed spacious and comfortable and there was an attractively planted garden with a wooden bridge, some streams and a fishpond. Unfortunately, although Willow would have been safe enough, it was a danger zone for Piran the supercrawler!



**Bridge over the Pembrokeshire stream**

We had been left some milk and Welsh cakes, so a mug of tea was enjoyed before the inevitable unpacking. The rest of the day was spent exploring the garden, having our evening meal in the conservatory and the necessary washing of dishes and children (but not at the same time or in the same place). It was discovered that the television only has a few channels, which is of minimal importance. The beds are comfortable, which is most definitely of maximum importance!

### **Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> May**

Alan and I slept quite well and awoke to the sounds of an understandably excited Willow. It had been rainy and windy in the night and was still the same while we had breakfast, but the sky gradually cleared to intermittent sunshine, although remaining very windy.

Our first visit of the holiday was to **Pentre Ifan** (homestead of Ivan), known as the best preserved Neolithic burial chamber, or dolmen, in Wales. In 1884, this dolmen was the first monument in Britain to become a Scheduled Ancient Monument. There was roadside parking and easy access along a short path, into an open area where the dolmen presided in all its ruinous glory. After a long session of serious photography on the part of Dan and Alan, Willow was able to run wild and free in and out of the three upright stones, whose narrow tops support a capstone of over 16 tons.



**A dodgy lurking Dan shaped photographer**



**Hail to the ancient Celtic forces of Ifan!**

After visiting Pentre Ifan, we sat in our cars wondering where to go next. While Dan and Paula consulted a map, I looked across the road and spotted a *Cadw Welsh Historic Monuments* sign to another burial chamber, Siambr Gladdu. I told Alan, who looked surprised and then doubled over laughing. It gradually dawned on me that Siambr Gladdu is Welsh for Burial Chamber...

After this hilarity, we drove onwards and upwards to a nearby viewing point that looked out over an impressive expanse of coastline, from Newport to Fishguard. The promontory named Dinas Island between the two looked particularly picturesque. However, it was so windy that the car boot suddenly came crashing downwards in a gust of wind and almost hit Alan's neck/back as he was leaning over into the boot for his camera.

Willow and Piran slept on the short journey back to the house, where we drank coffee and perused guide books, information booklets and leaflets about the area. After a cheese and pickle sandwich lunch and a sudden shower of rain, we decided to start investigating **Fishguard** (Abergwaun, meaning mouth of the river Gwaun). It was only a few miles down the road from Dinas Cross to Upper Fishguard, where it was still very windy. We followed a

coast path to Fishguard Fort, situated on a naturally defensive site overlooking Lower Town Harbour. The fort had been built between 1779 and 1781 to deter privateer invaders and was armed with eight nine-pounder guns. The battle of Fishguard in 1797 is claimed to have been the final invasion of Britain, when 1400 French soldiers landed near Fishguard, only to surrender two days later.



**Surrender!**

Continuing along the coast path that was strewn liberally with bluebells, buttercups, hawthorn, gorse and campions, we stopped at a headland, where the wind was so strong that I was slightly afraid a strong gust would blow Willow over the cliff! She had her hand safely held, though, as we looked across the bay at where the Stena ferry was berthed, preparing for its two hour crossing to Rosslare in Ireland.

We walked further along the coast path, past lots more lovely bluebells. Willow must have been really enjoying it, as when we decided to turn back because the path had become narrower and stonier, she was definitely not happy. We managed to divert her attention as we strolled back by looking at the ferry as it left the harbour and headed out to sea. She was further diverted when Paula later bought her a comic during a visit to a food shop in Fishguard before we drove back to the house. Comics are great, especially with a free gift!

The late afternoon and evening passed as usual with the addition of what was to be a twice daily visit to the fishpond for Paula and Willow to feed the fish. It was unfortunately too windy to enjoy the garden, so we availed ourselves of the comfort inside.

### **Monday 9<sup>th</sup> May**

Unfortunately, very little comfort was enjoyed by Alan from about 01.00 this morning, when he succumbed to the stomach bug - fortunately in the luxury of the en suite bedroom. He hardly slept and was still feeling very rough by the morning. I went downstairs at about 07.00 to impart the news to Dan and Paula, who decided to carry on with the day's plan of visiting St Davids Headland.

I spent a very quiet day in the house, reading a lot. I have to confess the day dragged somewhat until Dan, Paula, Willow and Piran returned mid afternoon. I tried to occupy Willow and Piran, but by about 17.00 had started to feel strangely unwell, so took myself upstairs to join Alan, pretty sure that the axe was about to fall.

It did, quite impressively. All I can say is thank heaven for the en suite...

### **Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> May**

A day spent mostly recuperating in the bedroom - I read almost a whole Maeve Binchy book!

### **Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> May**

Alan and I both slept quite well last night and presented ourselves downstairs at 07.30 for a toast breakfast. We decided to risk an outing and as soon as everyone was ready, drove to **Strumble Head Lighthouse**, located on the rocky St Michael's Island (Ynys Meicel) on the north west corner of Pen Caer, five miles west of Fishguard. Standing at 55 feet high, the attractive white lighthouse was constructed in 1908 and fully automated in 1980.



**The attractive lighthouse**

There was a short, fairly steep walk from the car down to the cliff path below, which we walked along to find the best view for taking photos. It was windy! The flora was as breathtaking as ever, with bluebells, swathes of gorse, a whole hedge of sea thrift and some wild cowslips.



**A whole hedge of sea thrift!**

After Willow had enjoyed exploring the surroundings and we had finished taking photos and being blown around by the wind, our next stop was at **Garn Fawr**, the site of an Iron Age hill fort on a ridge of the highest ground within the Pen Caer peninsula. There was plenty of space in the allotted car park, which opened to a short walk along a pathway within some moorland that was interspersed with pasture fields, one in which a few black cows grazed nonchalantly.

Garn Fawr hill fort itself was at the top of a weathered rocky outcrop. There are smaller hill forts strung out along the ridge, which seems to have been of some prehistoric importance. Apparently, while the Bronze Age is represented by round barrows and standing stones, remnants of the Iron Age are dominant.

I found my energy levels were unfortunately waning at this point, so instead of climbing to the top of the hill fort with the others, I perched on a comfortable grass covered rock in the lee of the wind and gazed at the wonderful view stretching below. Beyond a patchwork of fields, Strumble Head Lighthouse sat on top of its very own island, while the Pembrokeshire coastline swept around to the right as far as St Davids Head. It was warm in the sun amid the wild flowers and singing birds and I felt at peace there - even when a shiny black beetle attached itself to the top of my index finger and was very reluctant to disengage.



**Peace on a rock at Garn Fawr**

It was time to return to the house for lunch, which was just a banana and a biscuit for Alan and me in our still slightly delicate condition (although not in the expectant sense, of course).

We then decided on an afternoon trip to see an Ogham stone at **St Brynach's church in Nevern**. Ogham is an ancient form of writing made by linear cuts and there are at least 35 stones with such writing in Wales, dating to around the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD. For some strange reason I've always been fascinated with Ogham writing, which originated from Ireland in around the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD and fortuitously travelled to Wales along with many Irish settlers in the post Roman era.

As we arrived in Nevern and stepped out of our cars outside the Norman church, our first sight was of a strange freestanding wall that had steps leading up from both sides to a flat top, whereas the back of it went straight down. It turned out to be a mounting block and is one of only two left in Pembrokeshire. It was built for those who used to travel to church on horseback or in carriages, for purposes of mounting and dismounting. Willow enjoyed running up and down the steps and it was a miracle that this photo was taken, as she hardly stayed still for more than a few seconds!



**So where's my horse and carriage?**

On entering the churchyard, I immediately noticed one of the famous bleeding yews that drip a dark red resin from old wounds on their trunks. It did look a bit red and sore - poor yew. A few steps closer to the entrance of the church was the Ogham stone itself, named the Vitalianus stone, dating from around 500 AD. Inscribed in Latin is 'VITALIANI EMERTO' and in Ogham 'vitaliani'. There were supposed to be other Ogham stones inside the church, but we failed to find them - I have since discovered they are embedded in the window sills, which is really rather sneaky.

Just a little further along the path and impossible to miss was the imposing and intricately carved 10<sup>th</sup> century Celtic cross, 13 feet high and cut from local hard dolerite stone.



**Ogham to the left and Celtic to the right**

We spent some time wandering around the churchyard, which surprisingly proved very interesting with a few lovely trees and interesting gravestones. One gravestone in particular caught my eye - there was a sad little rhyme to Anna Letitia and George, two children of the Revd David Griffiths, who had died in their infancy in 1794: *They tasted of life's bitter cup. Refused to drink the potion up. But turned their little heads aside. Disgusted with the taste and died.* I'm sure the churchyard would have revealed plenty more of interest, but it was time to move on...

We headed towards another church, or rather the remains of one, at **Cwm-yr-Eglwys**, a hamlet in a small cove at the north side of the Dinas Head peninsula. In the great storm of 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> October 1859, the 12<sup>th</sup> century church of St Brynach (yes, another one) was almost destroyed apart from its belfry, west wall and part of its graveyard. The storm was the most severe one to hit the British Isles in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with a death toll of over 800. 133 ships sank and another 90 were badly damaged. On the plus side, however, this gave rise to the first gale warning service in 1860 in order to prevent further such tragedy.

As we approached Cwm-yr-Eglwys, we saw that parking would cost £2. Dan and Paula decided to take Willow and Piran to a nearby beach instead, but Alan and I thought we might as well investigate the church. In the car park, we looked for someone to take our £2, but then saw a notice in a small shed, asking us politely to put £2 through a hole in the door. We complied.

The remains of the church were starkly visible as we walked towards the sea. It was really quite cold and very windy, which was a little amusing since the local microclimate is meant to be a few degrees hotter and drier than other parts of the Pembrokeshire coast!



**Like a film set facade, there's nothing behind...**

*Kay Santillo, 2011.*

As it was too cold to enjoy the small cove or walk along the coast path, we decided to drive on to nearby Newport in search of another burial chamber. We found it without much trouble, although it meant parking the car on the roadside and walking a little way through some private housing. Our first impression of **Carreg Coetan** was that it was small, but it was also somehow very pleasing, despite being almost in the back of somebody's garden. It was cloudy when we arrived, but patches of sun meant we stayed there for some time waiting for the sun to appear for photographical purposes, as you do.



**Alan and the magic mushroom of Carreg Coetan**

As all these places were quite close together, it was still only mid afternoon and we wanted to make the most of the day, so decided to further explore Fishguard. On arrival, we located the car park and paid 30p for two hours, which seemed a bargain after Cwm-yr-Eglwys...

After a brief and slightly unedifying walk around the shops, Alan espied a sign that said **Gorsedd**, so with distant memories of blue bards in a 1977 Cornish Gorsedd ceremony just down the road from our house, we followed the sign. The Gorsedd circle was unfortunately right next to a street of houses with an overhead power cable, but it was set upon a large grassy area that overlooked a lovely coastal view, both out into the bay and down on Fishguard Lower Town nestling below. The circle had been built in 1936 for the Eisteddfod, with stones contributed from various parishes.



**The magic circle (minus power cable to the left)**

It was still quite cold and windy and we had finally tired ourselves out, so headed back to the house for some warmth, a spot of food and a lazy evening. Dan decided to go out for a sunset photo shoot, as the cloud cover promised to be interesting. All in a day of the life of a professional photographer!

### **Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> May**

We slept reasonably well and the weather was looking quite promising, so after we'd had breakfast and were ready, we threw together a packed lunch and headed for **St Dogmael's Abbey**, near Cardigan. There was plenty of blue sky and ever changing puffy white clouds, although the wind was still very much in evidence. We parked easily enough in the small car park and entered through the Heritage Centre fully expecting to pay admission, but the abbey was free and the remains themselves looked to be quite extensive. Wales seems to be very reasonable for entrance fees (pity about the bridge!)

We spent a happy half hour or more wandering around in our own time, with hardly any other visitors. St Dogmael was an early Christian saint, who had founded a local monastic church. The present remains, however, are from a priory that was founded in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century by an Anglo-Norman lord, who brought over a small community of monks to Wales from the Order of Tiron in northern France. In 1120, there were about 25 monks from the mother house and the priory was allowed to be raised in status to an abbey. It remained so until 1536 and the Dissolution of the Monasteries, thanks to the infamous Henry VIII.



**A happy ruinous wanderer or two**

Willow seemed to enjoy walking, climbing and running around in freedom, as it was all relatively safe. I learned from strategically placed information boards that the ruins spanned four centuries. Near the end of our explorations, I noticed that some of the original tiled floor could be seen, which somehow brought it all a bit more to life for me, imagining monk-like feet shuffling along in ancient times...



**Willow shows Dad around the old abbey**

After we'd had our fill of remains, we headed back to the Heritage Centre and decided to round off the visit with a mid morning snack at the café there. There was plenty of information to be read and even a couple of strategically placed activity desks for young children, so Willow and Piran were kept amused. I've since found out there are also models and displays, as well as a collection of early inscribed stones that actually predate the abbey - so on a future visit, we shall know better! However, it was a really good visit as it was and everyone left happy.



**Piran teaches Grandad how to play**

Our next stop was at **Castell Henllys** (castle of the old court) between Newport and Cardigan, a reconstructed Iron Age hill fort on the site of an original hill fort dating back 2,400 years. There has been ongoing excavation for over 20 years, with the reconstruction based on archaeological evidence found on site. Historians suggest the settlement probably housed several families, with a population of 100 plus. Four roundhouses and a granary have been reconstructed and it was great! Groups of schoolchildren were there and it was still great!



**A des res at the hill fort**



**A massive thatched mushroom**

I'm sure the weather helped, but we've visited a few reconstructed sites before and this one was by far the best for its intricate detail inside the houses, which was absolutely outstanding.

It was also very much a hands on affair, as when we arrived the schoolchildren were being shown how to make daub (as in wattle and daub) and they were obviously having a great deal of fun being allowed to have a go at mixing the daub in a purpose built pit.



**Decorating the house Celtic style?**

It was a little difficult at times to take photos as the schoolchildren raced around dressed up in Celtic garb, but they were very well supervised and we simply waited around for a while until the view was clear. Besides, it was encroaching upon lunchtime and they soon all gathered around in a circle out of the way to eat their packed lunches. Sorted. There were a few other 'normal' visitors there, but they didn't really cause a photographic problem.

After a while, we took ourselves and our packed lunch to the picnic area, which happened to be in the herb garden - bliss! We were the only ones there - further bliss! I was quite sorry when it was time to go, but even walking away from the hill fort was interesting, coming across what appeared to be an outdoor shrine to a Celtic god or two.

After finally leaving Castell Henllys, we drove along roads with the most fantastic hedges I have ever seen - as well as the usual delightful flowers, swathes of dripping laburnum graced the scene for quite a distance. Then for a while, there were many luscious green ferns that fooled me into thinking I was somewhere slightly tropical. It was like driving through an early summer wonderland and I just wish I could have taken photos...

Our next stop was beside some moorland on which stood the **Gors Fawr** stone circle (one of the best stone circles to be seen in Wales) within view of the Preseli Mountains that are well renowned for being the source of bluestone in the inner circle at Stonehenge. It was a short walk from the road, across some slightly soggy moorland and it was decidedly cold and windy. I have to say that I was a little underwhelmed by the stone circle itself, as the 16 stones were small compared to some of the Cornish circles I know and love (none of the Gors Fawr stones were above a metre tall).

Having said that, it was a delightful stone circle and I did appreciate it. It always seems amazing to me to come across evidence of Neolithic or Bronze Age activity, circa 2300-1200 BC. Also, I have since found out that there are two outlying stones there of nearly two metres tall towards the north east, so good on you, Gors Fawr!

Our final destination was to view an Ogham stone at **Glandwr** church, situated at the foothills of the Preseli Mountains. On approaching the 19<sup>th</sup> century Baptist church, the stone was easily visible in the churchyard, although a little difficult to photograph, as it was standing very close to a similarly coloured wall. I wish I knew what the writing actually said, but just the fact that it was Ogham writing was enough to blow me away. Perhaps tomorrow it will be less windy?



**Who carved you and what do you say?**

It was quite a sunny (if not a little windy) evening, passed in the usual pursuits. Dan departed for a sunset once again, to a likely looking place above us on the craggy moorland that's not very far from the house.

### **Friday 13<sup>th</sup> May**

It was sunny when we woke, but unfortunately the weather forecast was for some rain mid morning, so we made a reasonably quick get-away, complete with another hastily packed lunch. Dan led us to his sunset site of yesterday evening, as it gave a really good view. It was rather windy and it did indeed begin to be quite overcast as we walked from the edge of the moorland up to a rocky outcrop. It's always good to be out, though, and we're used to the vagaries of moorland weather...

As we approached the rocky outcrop, Dan and Alan had already sped ahead to a further one (the one with the best view, I suspect). However, the weather was looking decidedly dodgier by the minute and Paula decided it was best to stay put, sheltering Piran underneath a large overhanging rock. Willow was all for joining Dad and Grandad, but was persuaded to stay behind with us and content herself with exploring all around the rocks where we were. Then it started to rain, so we all walked quickly back to the car - with the exception of Willow, who seems not to mind the wet weather at all!



**Dressed for the weather in Dad's hat**

The rain was fortunately just a passing shower and the sun emerged again as we drove in the direction of Fishguard and on to St Davids. We parked quite close to the cathedral (which I had visited on my first visit to Pembrokeshire) although our current destination was the Bishop's Palace, next to the cathedral that was today sporting a fine coat of scaffolding. As we walked along from the car park, there was an obligingly fine view of the palace and the weather was magnanimously dry.



**The Bishop's Pad**

St Davids has the distinction of being the smallest city in Britain. However, it was the largest and most important diocese in Wales when Bishop Henry de Gower (bishop from 1328 to 1347) had his palace built. It was apparently constructed as partly for his own private use and partly for ceremonial occasions.

As we walked around in the breezy morning under growing cloud cover, it was easy to see that the palace had been built to impress and must have been quite a status symbol in its time. However, little had been done to upkeep or improve the building after Bishop Henry de Gower's death in 1347 and by the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the chief episcopal residence had moved to Carmarthen. By 1678, when St Davids was ransacked by Parliamentary soldiers, the palace was beyond repair.

We all enjoyed strolling around at our leisure with not many other visitors there. As ruins go, it was still quite an attractive building with its arcaded parapets and plenty of attention to detail, including carved stone gargoyles and decorative arches, windows and doorways. The whole building was well endowed with informative notices and a climb up to the belfry revealed a rather splendid view of both the palace ruins below and the nearby cathedral. Willow enjoyed exploring again, walking precariously up steps and peeking through window apertures!



**The nearby cathedral can be seen from the belfry**

It was during one of their chats about the architecture of the palace that Alan remarked innocently to Paula, "You'd think they'd have had more trouble with leaks." It was an answer waiting to happen - and it did with Paula's immediate reply, "Well, this *is* Wales!"



**A handy way of carrying the children...**

We returned to the car park at midday and ate our packed lunch in the cars just as it began to rain again. It was quite heavy rain too, so a spot of really good timing!

Our next stop was near the sea at St Davids Head, along the rocky coastline above St Non's Bay. The others had visited here while Alan and I had been unwell, but Willow seemed perfectly happy to be visiting the well again. This may have been because on the previous visit she had enjoyed throwing a few coins into the well - some old traditions seem inborn?



**Willow follows ancient tradition**

**St Non's Holy Well** was obviously well cared for, built up from its early days (I say this knowingly, having visited a number of holy wells in Devon and Cornwall over the years). A stone vault was added in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and it was restored in 1951 by the Catholic church (who have a retreat on the cliff top, along with a modern chapel). It seems interesting that the Catholic church have taken an overtly pagan site for their own use.

The rather intriguingly named St Non (or Nonna) was born around 475 AD and is said to have given birth to St David. The well is in a pleasant setting and is still visited for its healing properties, particularly on 2<sup>nd</sup> March, which is St Non's Day.

Close by in a field that contained some inquisitive but gentle brown and white cows, **St Non's Chapel** (or the Chapel of Blessed Non) stood ruinously secure in its gated wooden enclosure. The earliest reference to a chapel on this site is apparently in 1335, although stone coffins revealed by excavation may indicate slab lined graves of the early Christian period. Another interesting feature of this chapel is the fact that its alignment is north-south, instead of the usual east-west.



**St Non's Chapel**

The most eye catching part of the chapel, however, was a stone that was propped up in the corner, inscribed with a Latin cross and apparently dating to around the 8<sup>th</sup> century. It is known as St Non's Cross - but I don't see how anyone could be cross in such a uplifting, if not incredibly windy, location.



**St Non's Cross**

After bidding farewell to the cows (I won't say anything about Dan getting close up and personal to take a photo of one) we decided to find one more place to visit, as it was still early afternoon. We ended up at **Solva** (twinned with Da Mystery in Italy - but not really) on the north side of St Bride's Bay and situated along a deep ravine carved out by melting glacial water, at the mouth of the River Solva. The car park for a small fee of £1 was at Lower Solva, which was basically a long street that ended at a small harbour.

Solva had been the main trading centre of St Bride's Bay in the Middle Ages, with one of the most sheltered anchorages between Milford Haven and Fishguard. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century it had around 30 registered trading ships - but today it simply offered us a short coastal walk to view some well preserved lime kilns, some interesting flora, a flavoured ice cream and continuous buffeting from a persistent wind.

I have since learned that the musician David Gray spent a lot of his childhood in Solva, which might go some way to explain his lyrics (I actually like his music, including his lyrics!) I have to say there didn't really seem a great deal going on in Solva, but I can understand that in high summer it's a quaint, picturesque place in which to spend some pleasant time walking along the coast path or exploring the local pubs, eating places and small craft shops. Also, if messing around in boats is your pleasure, the local harbour looks to be ideal.



**Looking into Lower Solva from a lime kiln**

However, being boatless and somewhat tired and cold from the wind, we returned to Castle Dinas and warmed up with some hot tea. The rest of the day was spent amusing Willow and Piran. I managed to impress Willow with my drawing skills, but she's already beginning to look slightly askance at some of my more adventurous attempts. In the meantime, Dan was enjoying a bit of rough and tumble with his son, when Piran accidentally stuck his finger up his father's nose and made it bleed. The joys of parenthood...

After a laid back evening (or a sat back one, to be pedantic) the holiday gradually drew to a close. In view of the days that Alan and I had missed, a cunning plan was hatched to visit a place or two on the journey back to Pontardawe the following day.

### **Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> May**

We had to leave the house by 10.00 and it goes without saying that the leave taking was slightly frenetic - although I always hate packing. Actually, we left at 09.45! It was sunny and it made perfect sense to make the most of the day, so after stopping at the Fishguard Co-op to buy sandwiches, we drove for the last time along roads with such amazing hedges that I never wanted to blink, until we arrived at **Wiston Castle** in Wiston village near Haverfordwest.

There was just a short walk from where we parked to one of the best preserved motte and bailey castles in Wales. It was a very aesthetically pleasing ruin, complete with 49 granite steps (I counted them) leading up to the castle.



**Dan ascends the 49 steps**

The castle is thought to have been built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century on the site of an Iron Age settlement, by a Flemish settler with the somewhat amusing name of Wizo (in Latin) or Gwys (in Welsh). Wizo died in 1130, although the castle is mentioned in documents of 1147, when it was taken by the Welsh. After being captured and recaptured a few times, it seems to have been abruptly abandoned in 1220. There was a strategically good view from the top and we were happily the only visitors on a very fine day - it might have been my imagination, but even the wind seemed to have dropped slightly.

Having seen all there was to see, we descended the 49 steps and drove on to **Llawhaden Castle** (Castell Llanhuadain) three miles away in the quiet village of Llawhaden. A short walk from the car revealed a surprisingly impressive ruin. Llawhaden Castle was the concern of the bishops of St Davids and the first castle on the site was constructed by Bishop Bernard in 1115. Only the moat and earth bank remain from this era, while the majority of the ruins date from the fortified palace built by Bishop Adam de Houghton between 1362 and 1389.



**A deep well supplied the fortified palace**

This castle seemed colder in more ways than one - the wind had sprung up again. Willow enjoyed roaming around, with a sudden particular interest in the garderobes! We all had a good look around and then returned at midday to a handy picnic bench by our cars. It was so windy that we had to anchor down the sandwich packets, etc. However, a windy picnic was a strangely fitting end to a windy week and so we finally took our leave of windy Pembrokeshire.

I would love to return to this gem of a Welsh county and explore much more of what we only really enjoyed a tantalising taster. I would love to return in early May once again, when the hedges are to die for - and when it's hopefully a lot less windy!

