

# MANORBIER



*Naws am Le  
Sense of Place*

## ***Manorbier - the Name***

Manorbier has been identified by Dr. B.G. Charles as a combination of the Old Welsh 'mainaur' or 'maenawr' which was an administrative division, and the personal name 'Pir' or 'Pyr'. The same element occurs in the pre-Norse name of Caldey - 'Ynys Byr' (Pyr's Island). Another explanation sometimes suggested for the second element is that it is derived from an Old English word, either 'bere' meaning corn or barley, or 'baer' pasture. The tithe map of 1840 shows lands called 'Beer.

A popular local tale that the name arose because of a contest between a man and a bear cannot be taken seriously.

## ***Prehistory***

The locality is of outstanding importance in the study of early man (see also Penally leaflet). During Mesolithic times (between 10,000 and 6,000 years ago - Middle Stone Age) and early Neolithic times which followed, the Welsh shoreline gradually advanced landwards - perhaps from the 20 fathom submarine contour to the present coastline. Sometimes the evidence of former forest is laid bare; for example approximately 20 yards seaward of the high tide mark (in the bed of the beach stream) may be seen the remains of trees which are already starting to convert to soft coal. Evidence has been found of tool making in the Mesolithic and early Neolithic periods. Flint microliths from Manorbier can be seen in museums. It seems likely that the flint-working floors were around Manorbier Bay and near the coast to the west and east.

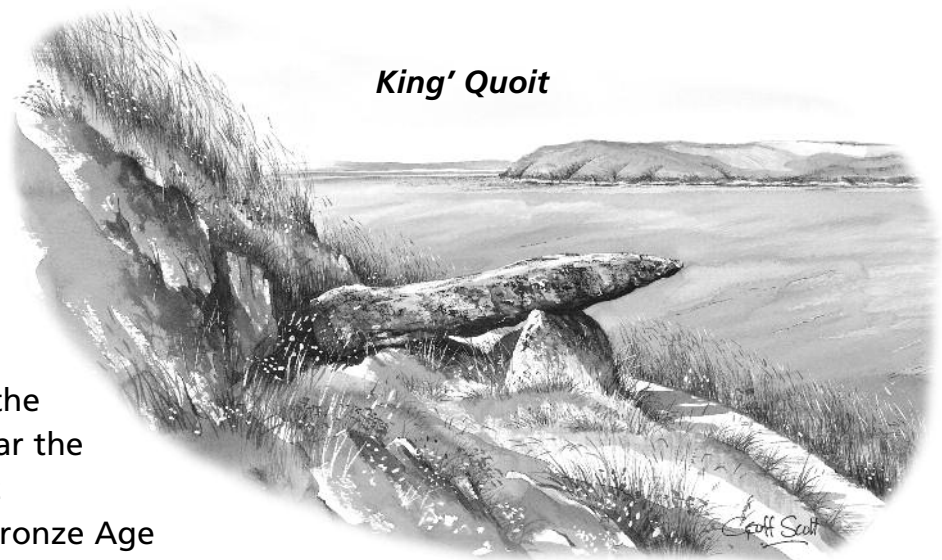
The most dramatic survival from the Neolithic period is the burial chamber, dolmen or cromlech shown on O.S.

maps as the King's Quoit, alongside the cliff footpath to the east side of Manorbier Bay.

There is evidence for the presence of man during the Bronze and Iron Ages which followed. A stone perforated mace head of the Bronze Age was found near the Dak and other artefacts at Swanlake, and there are Bronze Age

burial mounds (tumuli) particularly along the higher ground of the Ridgeway. Crop marks and aerial photography have shown a defended Iron Age enclosure near Manorbier Station, and within the area of the modern Manorbier Camp on Old Castle Head promontory there is a multivallate fort.

Prehistoric cooking places have been identified along the coast near the Dak and at Swanlake. At such sites there was an ingenious system of heating water and cooking meat in a clay-lined pit, by introducing heated stones ('pot boilers').



***King' Quoit***

## **Welsh, Norse and Normans**

The builders of Iron Age Camps like Old Castle Head were Celts and it was from the Celts that the Welsh evolved.

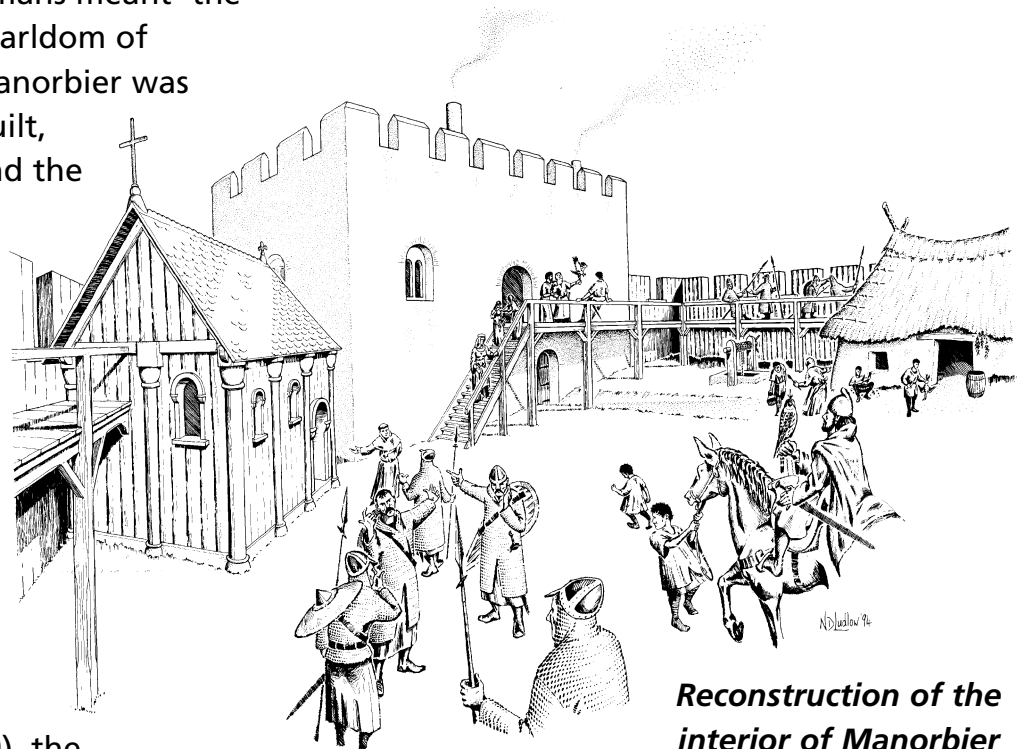
In early historic times they were Christianised and built their first church, probably on or near the location of the present church. The churchyard is circular - a characteristic of early ecclesiastical sites. There is no evidence as yet about the centre of secular power in 'Mainaur Pir', but it is possibly the site of the later castle.

Viking raiders are suggested by such local names as Lydstep and Skomer (not to be confused with the island further west).

The arrival of the Normans meant the establishment of the Earldom of Pembroke of which Manorbier was part. The castle was built, and a stone church, and the manorial system introduced.

From the twelfth to the late fourteenth century the manor of Manorbier was held, with other lands, by the de Barri family.

Amongst later holders were Lady Margaret Beaufort, mother of King Henry VII (period 1487 - 1509), the Bowen family of Trefloyne (1601 - 70) and from 1670 the Philipps family of Picton Castle. The name Park Farm recalls the medieval deer park.



**Reconstruction of the interior of Manorbier Castle**

**Manorbier Castle**

## **The Castle**

Gerald de Barri's childhood home was much smaller and simpler than the castle which evolved over time. The greater part of the castle was built in stages during the thirteenth century. It seems to have been captured as the result of a battle in about 1327, and in the Civil War in September 1656. A guide book is available.



## *Gerald de Barri - Giraldus Cambrensis - Gerald of Wales*

He was born (c. 1146) in Manorbier Castle. A younger son of the de Barri family, descended from the Princes of Wales through his grandmother the Princess Nest, and from the Barons of the March, this distinguished churchman, scholar and commentator has left for us a description of twelfth century Manorbier which includes references to its fishpond, orchard, vineyard, mill and dovecote, and concludes with the statement that Manorbier is 'the most pleasant spot in Wales'.

### *The Village*

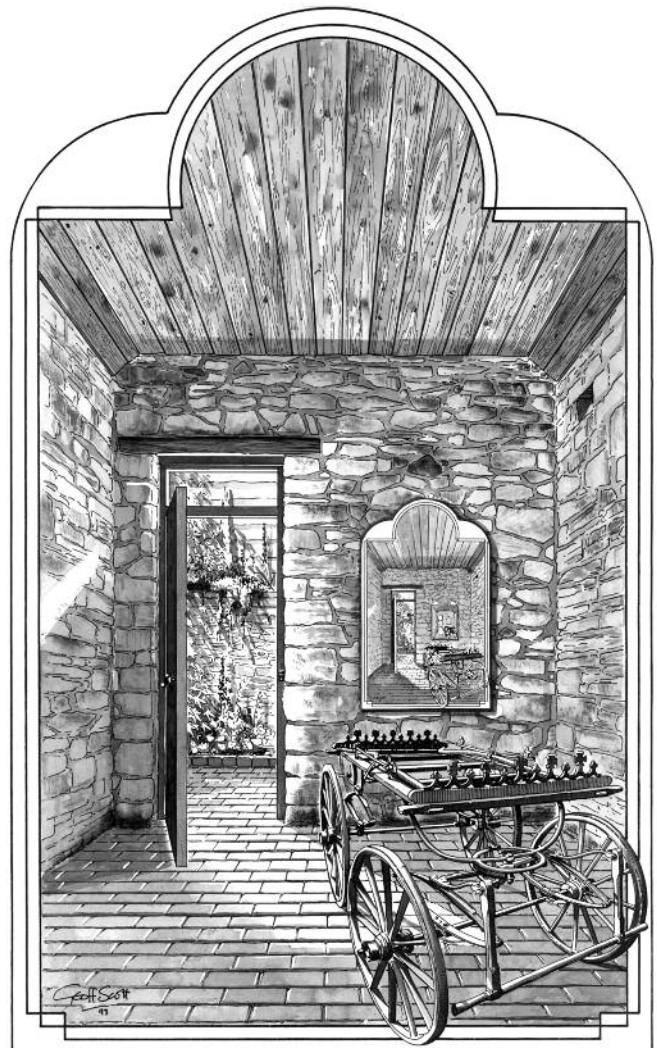
The early inhabitants would have held land. Therefore, many of the properties would have been farmhouses with yards and buildings.

A tourist guide (published in 1872) noting 'fragments of old edifices strewn around' speculated whether the village might once have been bigger. About that time it was attracting an increasing number of visitors '...recently a few excellent houses have been erected in a delightful situation facing the bay. Visitors may therefore now rely on procuring all they require, and at a very moderate cost.' The Pembroke and Tenby Railway was opened as far as Pembroke in 1863 with a station at Manorbier 1 mile north of the village. From 1 July 1897, it became part of the Great Western Railway. The station was linked with the village by horse-drawn vehicles, and later by hired cars. The incomers were summer visitors or people who became residents for a time.

For a long period one of the charms of Manorbier was that its capacity was not large, and so it was a rather exclusive seaside village. It attracted literary persons including members of the Bloomsbury Set, politicians, scholars, people of wealth and high birth, some of whom stayed in the residential portion of the castle.

Manorbier remained essentially rural. A resident recalls: 'Almost within living memory, parties on Sunday School outings came by horse and cart, the farm carts scrubbed and the harness glistening. Water from the stream was heated up in large boilers on stick fires. There were large sand dunes then and the open green made a marvellous games pitch. There was no harbour or quay, but small boats could be beached and there was fishing and crabbing'.

Amongst all the traditions handed down were tales of smuggling in a more disorderly period early in the nineteenth century.



*Interior of the Bier House*

## ***Historic Houses***

Norchard (William Marichurch) and East Moor (Thomas Lort) both had 7 hearths in 1670. Parts of the medieval residence are said to be incorporated in modern Norchard (where there was also a grist mill with pond and sluice).

Manorbier Mansion was a fortified dwelling near Middle Hill.

The Bier House, in the centre of the village, was built in 1900 to house the parish 'bier', used to carry the dead to their burials. The Bier House has been restored and provides an information point relating to the history of the parish.

## ***Public Houses***

The information is fragmentary, but in 1822 Simon Hughes was licensee of the 'Boot and Shoe', appropriately named since he was a shoemaker.

The 'Lion' of which John Hughes, also a shoemaker, was licensee in 1851, was on the site occupied formerly by the 'Boot and Shoe'. The building was razed c. 1890.

During the second half of the nineteenth century there was an Old Castle Inn on or near the site of the present day Cross House, and a Castle Inn.

## ***The Parish***

The northern boundary is the Ridgeway and the southern, the sea. As well as Manorbier village, the parish includes Manorbier Newton, Jameston and Lydstep.

## ***The War Department***

At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, the War Department already occupied 31 acres on the cliff, a foretaste of the part played by the locality during World War II.

## ***Schools***

In 1846 Commissioners enquiring into the state of education in Wales found a schoolroom near the Church, built in 1841. There is now a cottage on the site known as Church Hill.

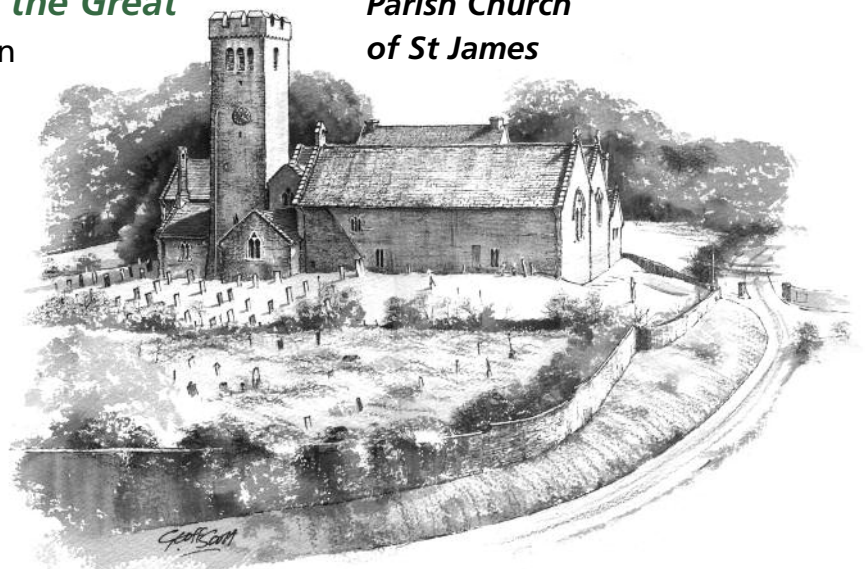
The National School was opened on 13 January 1873. This is still the village school.

Improvements were carried out and the re-modelled school was opened in January 1966.

## ***The Parish Church of St. James the Great***

This was the only place of worship in the village, but there were Nonconformist chapels elsewhere in the parish one of which, Penuel, is still in regular use. In the Middle Ages the benefice was part of the possessions of Monkton Benedictine Priory. A guide book is available.

## ***Parish Church of St James***

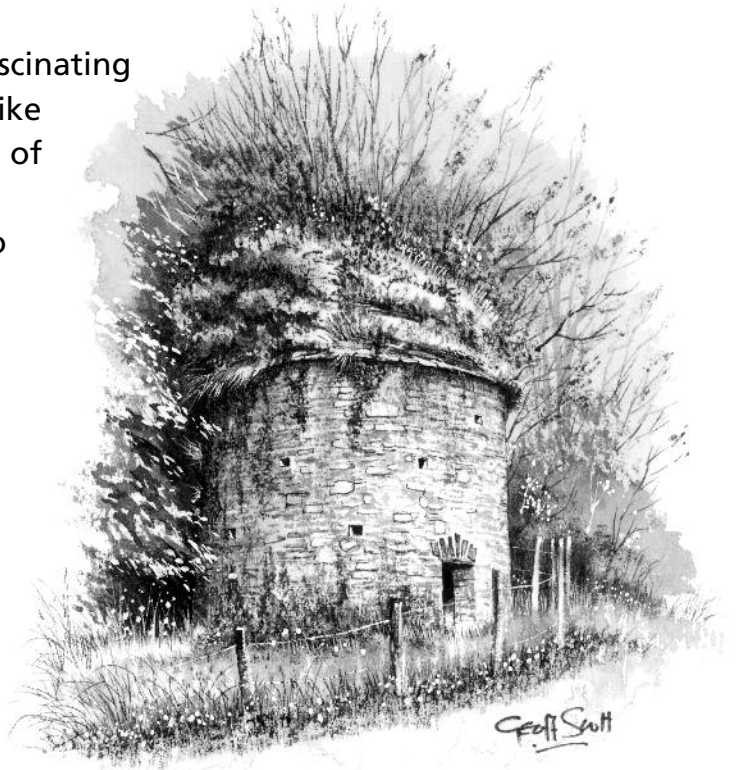


## ***Dovecote***

This circular building with 260 boxes, is a fascinating example of medieval building techniques. Like the fishpond, which probably occupied part of the ground between the dovecote and the castle, it made an important contribution to the diet of the household.

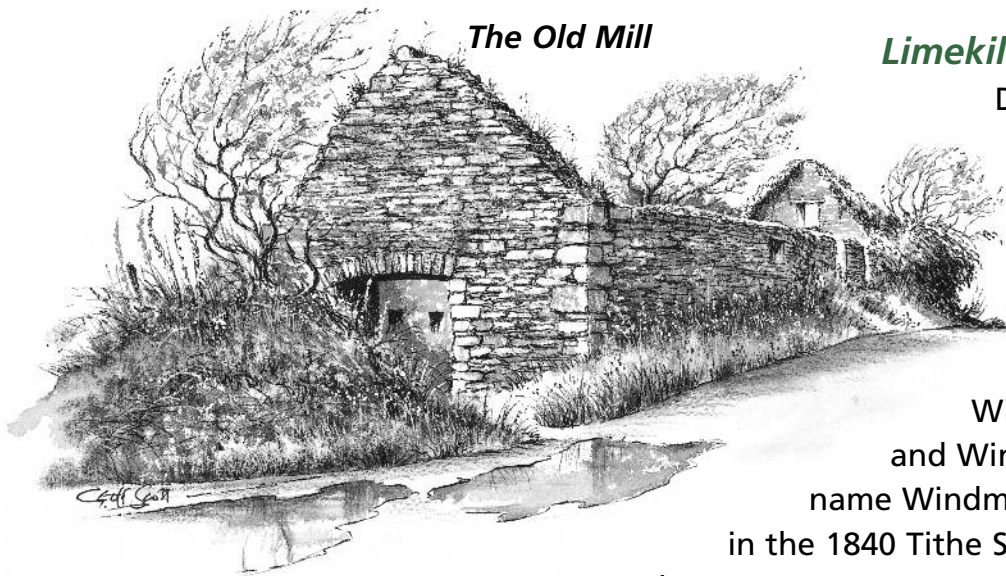
## ***The Mill***

Ruins of a mill may be seen near the dovecote. During the nineteenth century, it was powered by the stream draining from Park Farm, between the castle and the dovecote. This does not seem to exactly agree with Gerald's description of the system in the twelfth century: 'At the east end of the fortified promontory, between the castle, if I may call it such, and the church, a stream of water which never fails winds its way along a valley, which is strewn with sand by the strong sea-winds. It runs down from a large lake, and there is a water-mill on its bank.'



***The Dovecote***

## ***The Old Mill***



## ***Limekilns and Windmills***

Disused limekilns are usually close to quarries. A restored kiln can be seen from Mud Lane.

Wind-power was harnessed for agricultural purposes. The 'Middle

Windemill' is named in 1618 and Windmill Hill in 1701. The field name Windmill Park occurs in Slade Farm

in the 1840 Tithe Schedule, and a windmill is shown on Tarr Farm at the outskirts of the village

on early editions of the OS map. The Tarr mill was a straight-sided tower.

## ***Open Fields***

The great block of hedged strips surrounding the village of Manorbier represents one of the old township fields.

## ***Manorbier ~ Flora & Fauna***

Short waymarked walks take in a variety of wildlife habitats - seashore, sand dunes, woodland, and farmland.

The rocky part of the shore teems with plants and animals; shore crabs, edible crabs, blennies (small rock-pool fish which can change colour to match their background) prawns, sea anemones and the many types of seaweed. Oystercatchers feed on the shellfish on the rocks. An area of sand dunes is fenced off to prevent erosion by trampling feet. The sand is held together by the long roots of Marram Grass. Also on the dunes grows Vipers Bugloss. Along the lanes and footpaths you will see hedgerow birds such as Bluetits, Great Tits, and Hedge Sparrows and maybe a Sparrow Hawk or a Buzzard, also a profusion of wild flowers. In places, the banks are covered with the large heart-shaped leaves of Winter Heliotrope, which flowers in January. In wooded areas, you will notice Wild Garlic or Ramsons.



*Vipers Bugloss*

## Country Code

### Respect • Protect • Enjoy

- Be safe - plan ahead and follow any signs.
- Leave gates and property as you find them.
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home.
- Keep dogs under close control.
- Consider other people.

Text researched and written by Manorbier residents in conjunction with Cambria Archaeology.

Design by Waterfront Graphics

Illustrations by Geoff Scott & Neil Ludlow

SPARC © 2002