



THE NORMAN KEEP

Photo by Valentine, Dundee

CARDIFF CASTLE

ILLUSTRATED HANDBOOK

PRICE SIXPENCE

HISTORICAL RETROSPECT AND DESCRIPTION

by

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THE establishment of a fort at Cardiff dates back to Roman times, for it was the Roman invader, in his advance from the legionary base at Caerleon through South Wales about the year A.D. 75, who first saw the strategic value of the site on the tidal estuary of the Taff, raising here a simple fort with ditch and embankment. In the later stages of the Roman occupation, the fortress was largely reconstructed in stone as part of the defensive system of the frontier, and it is the skeleton of this structure that we see remaining to this day, marking the outline of a walled enclosure of some eight acres which at one time contained the usual complement of Roman military buildings long since in decay.

Of the site of Cardiff after the collapse of Roman power nothing is really known until the coming of the Norman some seven hundred years later, by which time ruined walls and decaying mounds alone remained. It was about 1090, some twenty-five years after the Norman conquest of England, that Robert Fitzhamon, the newly-created Lord of Gloucester, led his private forces beyond the English frontier into South Wales, defeating the last Welsh ruler of Morgannwg and converting this little kingdom into his Norman lordship of Glamorgan. The old Roman fortifications at Cardiff served as a convenient framework for the new defence works, and the Norman *motte*, or mound, hurriedly thrown up in the north-west corner of the fort and crowned with palisade, became the strong point or keep of the Norman castle. It was this early fortress which was stormed by Ifor Bach, the Welsh ruler of Senghenydd, when in 1158 he carried off the Norman lord and his lady to the fastnesses of the interior. Some time after this episode the keep was built in stone, though Giraldus Cambrensis, writing of this incident in 1188, states that the Welsh scaled the *walls* of the castle. The polygonal structure which still remains provides us with an excellent example of a Norman shell keep. Here, in wooden buildings within the shelter of the keep, lived the lord, his household

and his garrison. The buildings were enlarged in the latter half of the thirteenth century by Gilbert de Clare (1263–95), who rebuilt the gatehouse tower of the keep and constructed the great central wall across the interior of the castle linking the keep with the Black Tower, thus limiting the area of close defence to the inner ward in the western half of the fortress. With these changes, the layout of the castle into inner and outer wards was virtually complete, and Speed's plan of Cardiff and eighteenth-century prints illustrate clearly this interior wall and the massive buildings of the keep. The present curtain walls around the castle are of recent construction, but they occupy the line of the Roman wall and mask its foundation, reproducing something of the appearance of the fort in Roman times rather than of the mediaeval castle.

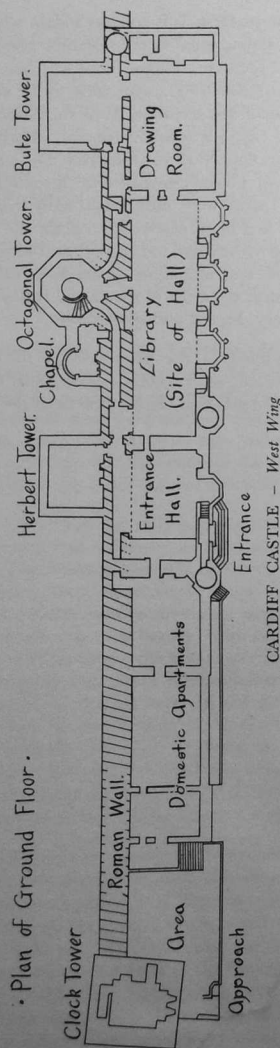
After the conquest of Wales in the late thirteenth century, military conditions were relaxed and, during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the family gradually abandoned the congested quarters in the keep and developed more commodious living apartments along the west wall of the castle. The range of these was extended in Tudor and Stuart times and, with the demolition of the interior walls in the late eighteenth century, the castle took on much of its present form.

The mediaeval castle was not only a place of defence. It was also the centre of government of the entire lordship of Glamorgan and the seat of the courts. The lordship was held by the lord in his own right, the inheritance passing from eldest son to eldest son, or, in default of a male heir, it was divided equally among the daughters. Many noble families, famous in our country's history, have by marriage or direct grant succeeded to the lordship—the Gloucester family in the twelfth century, the Clares in the thirteenth, the Despencers in the fourteenth, and Earls of Warwick in the fifteenth. In the sixteenth century the lordship was granted by the Crown to William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, and eventually, in 1733, it passed to Thomas, Viscount Windsor, by his marriage with the Pembroke heiress. In 1766, John, Lord Mount Stuart (created Marquess of Bute in 1796), married Charlotte Windsor, and in her right succeeded to the property.

Considerable additions were made to the residence after 1780 with the object of improving accommodation in a more spacious age, but the greatest change to the castle was brought about by the removal of the outer buildings of the keep and the ward walls, thus opening up the interior to light and air. Attention was next directed to the renovation of the original Great Hall of the fifteenth century, already much added to by the Herberts in the sixteenth century both on the northern and southern sides. With the coming of the first Lord Bute, the Great Hall was divided and a drawing room built at the north

end, in much the same form as it appears today, while at the south end further domestic apartments were provided where now stands the entrance hall. The greatest changes, however, belong to the period of the third Marquess (1848–1900), especially to the years 1870–75 when, under the direction of the architect, William Burges, the entire south-west sector of the castle was reconstructed, altering the skyline and offering a complete departure in style from the ancient castle on this side. The Octagonal Tower crowned with a spire in wood, the Guest Tower and guest rooms were built, and, most spectacular of all, the Clock Tower, 150 feet high, erected to replace the former small angle turret. The interior decoration, too, almost as if in revolt from the older sombre background, was redesigned throughout to express, in a blend of colour and artistry, the spirit of mediaeval romance, as embodied in its wealth of imagery, legend and symbolism.

The castle remained in the possession of the Bute family until 24th June, 1948, when, with certain reservations, it was conveyed by way of gift to the Corporation for the benefit of the citizens of Cardiff.



CARDIFF CASTLE

Descriptive note of items of interest arranged in the Order of the Tour

A. THE CLOCK TOWER

The Clock Tower, taking its name from the public clock visible from the main street of the city, is a late feature in the building of the castle, dating only from the reconstruction undertaken along the west wall by the third Marquess of Bute during the years 1867 to 1875. It was a major feature in that reconstruction, transforming the appearance of the castle on that side.

Above the arch of the door leading into the Clock Tower is a carved figure of the devil.

Ascending the stairway, we come to

(i) THE WINTER SMOKING ROOM

Here the fireplace, carved on the site from a single block of Forest of Dean stone, bears the Stuart coat of arms, and displays above, as the main feature, the figure of Diana, the Huntress, the Goddess of the Heaven, frequently identified with the Greek Artemis and the Goddess of the Moon. She is here represented as the huntress with bow and arrows. The inscription reads "Love conquers all. Let us all yield to love".

On the ceiling the central boss, symbolising the Sun, stands amid the twelve signs of the Zodiac, and at the four corners are depicted Dawn, Sunrise, Sunset and Moonlight. Around the walls figures represent Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter, and murals depict scenes of mediaeval life, with insets of the smaller native birds and butterflies.

The stained-glass windows portray the gods of the Saxons from whom are derived the names of the days of the week.

The intricate inlay on the interior of the door, and the bronze exterior, are worthy of note.

Above the Winter Smoking Room is the Guest Room, commonly known as

(ii) THE BACHELORS' BEDROOM

On the overmantel is prominently displayed the Crichton-Stuart coat of arms surmounted by the Crown of Scotland, and around the fireplace are insets of the numerous mineral rocks found on the Bute estate.

Inlaid in the wall and in the stained-glass windows are various precious stones, while at the four corners are depicted types of early musical instruments.

The mural paintings include a variety of scenes of mediaeval trades (glassmaking and smithcraft) and of mediaeval romance.

The walls of the adjoining dressing-room and bath-room are of alabaster, and the marble bath, of Roman origin and brought from Italy, is inlaid with designs of fishes.

Ascending to the topmost flight of the Clock Tower, we reach

(iii) THE SUMMER SMOKING ROOM

At the top of the staircase stands the figure of a chained dragon, guarding the door to the chamber.

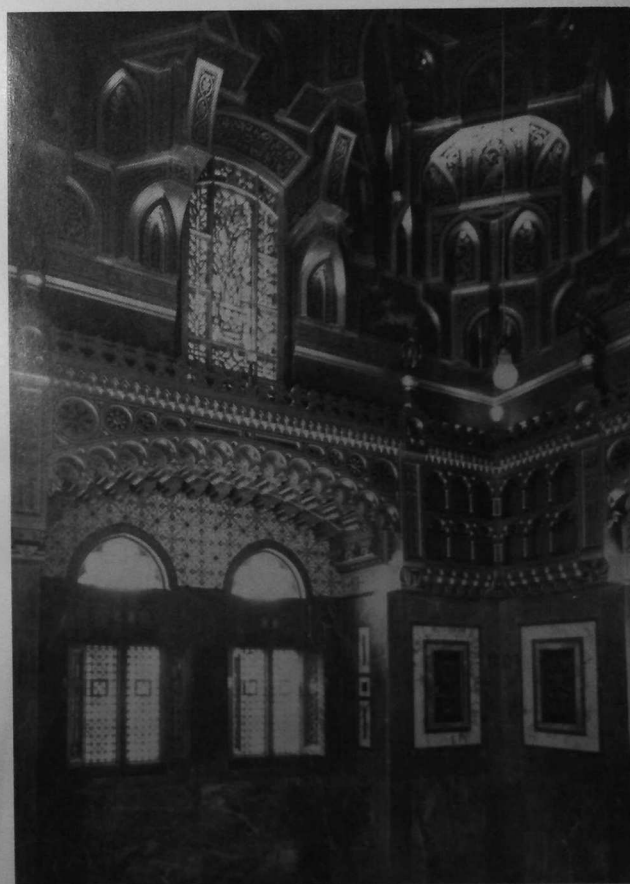
In this room, not inappropriately, the emphasis of the decoration, as also on the balcony above, is on the firmament. In the centre of the floor is inlaid a bronze model of the world (with the words *Globus hic monstrat microcosmum*) and the surrounding spheres, set in enamelled tiles, point to the date 1821. The large chandelier represents the rays of the Sun. The dome is lined with mirrors to reflect its light. The capitals of the pillars supporting the gallery symbolise the Winds coming from the four points of the compass, and the spandrels are decorated with the portraits of the great Astronomers of the past (Kepler, Herschel, La Place, etc.). Above, on the ceiling of the gallery, are represented the four elements of the early world—Air, Fire, Earth and Water.

Over the fireplace is a figure of Cupid with a love bird, and underneath are depicted the summer amusements of lovers, with the inscription "*Aestate viresco*" (In summer I become young again). Courtship leads to matrimony, cynically represented by two dogs pulling in opposite directions and snapping at each other, and by a dog barking at a cat in a tree, signifying, we may presume, a "Cat and Dog" life.

The hand-painted tiles on the wall are a feature of the decoration, illustrating themes drawn from Classical mythology, demi-gods and heroes—Hercules (slaying the lion), the Twins (Castor and Pollux), Ganymede (the Trojan boy carried off by Jupiter in the guise of an eagle), the Princess Europa (carried off from Tyre as a prize of war by the King of Crete in the guise of a bull), Phrixus (the radiant sunlight) and Helle (the twilight sinking into the sea), Psyche the beautiful (opening her eyes on Cupid, so startling him that he wounded himself with his arrow).

Around the walls are represented the various metals—bronze, zinc, iron, lead, etc.

PLATE I



THE ARAB ROOM

Photo by Valentine, Dundee

PLATE II



THE FIREPLACE, BANQUETING HALL

Photo by Valentine, Dundee

B. THE HERBERT TOWER

PLATE I

THE ARAB ROOM

The southern-most of the projecting towers along the west wall is commonly termed the Herbert Tower. It was probably built in the sixteenth century, but the decoration, of Arab design, is modern and belongs to the period of reconstruction, the date indicated on the overmantel being 1881.

The ceiling is richly gilded, and the windows are screened by shutters in the Moorish manner. Inset in the walls are cupboards of cedarwood.

The floor is ornamented in an intricate pattern of coloured marble, but the glory of the chamber is its chimney-piece of white marble inset with lapis lazuli. Above are the arms of the family of Bute in dainty mozaic with the two lions as supporters.

C. THE BANQUETING HALL

PLATE II

The Banqueting Hall is the most important apartment in the castle, and this, together with the Library immediately below, occupies the oldest portion of the domestic buildings which were first built against the west wall of the castle, probably in the first half of the fifteenth century to provide accommodation for the family, to replace the former congested quarters in the keep. These apartments, therefore, lie wholly within the circuit of the original curtain wall, as contrasted with those in the towers, which lie outside the wall.

The mural paintings in the Banqueting Hall have as their main theme the exploits of Robert the Consul (the natural son of Henry I) who, by his marriage with Mabel, daughter and heiress of Robert Fitzhamon, Earl of Gloucester, the first conqueror of Glamorgan, succeeded to the lordship as the second lord about the year 1120.

The chief enterprise associated with his life concerns the succession to the English throne in 1135 of Matilda, daughter of King Henry I. The succession was disputed by Matilda's cousin, Stephen, and a long period of civil war ensued, in which Robert the Consul, despite his promise to Henry, at first participated on the side of Stephen though later he took up the cause of Matilda. It is this story which is illustrated in these murals.

The fireplace with its overmantel is a representation in stone of the gateway of the castle with Robert the Consul riding forth to take part in the struggle, the Countess Mabel (waving a handkerchief) bidding the warrior God-speed. Six heralds proclaim the departure of their lord, and behind the bars of a small grille we see his uncle, Robert, Duke of Normandy, who was held captive at Cardiff Castle from 1126 until his death in 1134.

The paintings portray the following scenes in the life of Robert the Consul:

- (i) *Commencing with the North Wall* at the end of the hall, we see pictured the marriage ceremony (about 1116) of Robert with Mabel Fitzhamon in the presence of Henry I and of Sybil, the bride's mother. The scene takes place before the door of the church, this according to mediaeval custom, whereby the Church acted as witness.
- (ii) *On the East Wall* we trace in turn:
 - (a) Henry I on his death-bed seeking Robert's support for Matilda;
 - (b) Robert and Stephen discussing the taking of the oath of allegiance to Matilda;
 - (c) Robert swearing allegiance to Stephen, despite his promise to Henry I (1135);
 - (d) The arrival of messengers to inform Stephen of Robert's defection and of the transfer of his allegiance to Matilda (1138);
 - (e) Robert and Stephen preparing for war, symbolised by a man carrying spears;
 - (f) A heron swallowing a frog and a dog attacking the heron, symbolic of enmity;
 - (g) Matilda, on arrival from France, being taken by Robert to Arundel Castle (1138);
 - (h) Stephen's candle extinguished at Mass before the battle of Lincoln, considered a bad omen;
 - (i) Stephen, made prisoner at the Battle of Lincoln, being taken before Matilda;
 - (j) Agreement concerning Stephen between Matilda and his brother, Henry, Bishop of Winchester.
- (iii) *On the South Wall.*
Matilda being received at Winchester as Queen, though never crowned.
- (iv) *On the West Wall.*
 - (a) Matilda leaving London in fear of treachery (1141);
 - (b) Robert the Consul being taken prisoner with David, King of Scotland, Matilda's uncle, in the fighting at Winchester (1140);
 - (c) Agreement for the liberation of Robert and Stephen in mutual exchange (All Saints Day, 1141);
 - (d) Matilda, clad in white, escaping from Oxford over the frozen river (1142);

PLATE III



THE STAIRCASE, OCTAGONAL TOWER

Photo by Valentine, Dundee

- (e) Arrival in England of Prince Henry, Matilda's son, from France (1142);
- (f) Successful attack by Robert against Stephen at Wilton (1143); Robert's soldiers forcing their way into the Abbey church in pursuit of prisoners. Nuns weeping.
- (g) Prince Henry being instructed in the ways of England at Robert's castle at Bristol (1144);
- (h) Robert and Stephen engaged in a struggle for Farringdon Castle (1144);
- (i) The burial of Robert at Bristol (1147).

On the ceiling are numerous shields bearing the arms of the families, mainly Scottish, who figure in the Bute ancestry.

Between the two doors at the north end of the Banqueting Hall, the Stuart Arms on an elevated site is surmounted by a crown. The gilded arch above the doors displays the Stuart shield and the Lion of Scotland, while the imposts carry the figures of Prince Llywelyn's dog, Gelert, and the wolf, also the models of a boar and a cuckoo.

The stained-glass windows depict successive lords of Glamorgan and their ladies.

At the southern end of the Hall is the Minstrel's gallery.

The Banqueting Hall lies within the original curtain wall. Outside that wall, and contained within the line of towers projecting from that wall on its west side, are a further series of apartments, approached from the Banqueting Hall by passageways cut through the thickness of the wall. The main and the oldest of these towers is:

D. THE OCTAGONAL TOWER

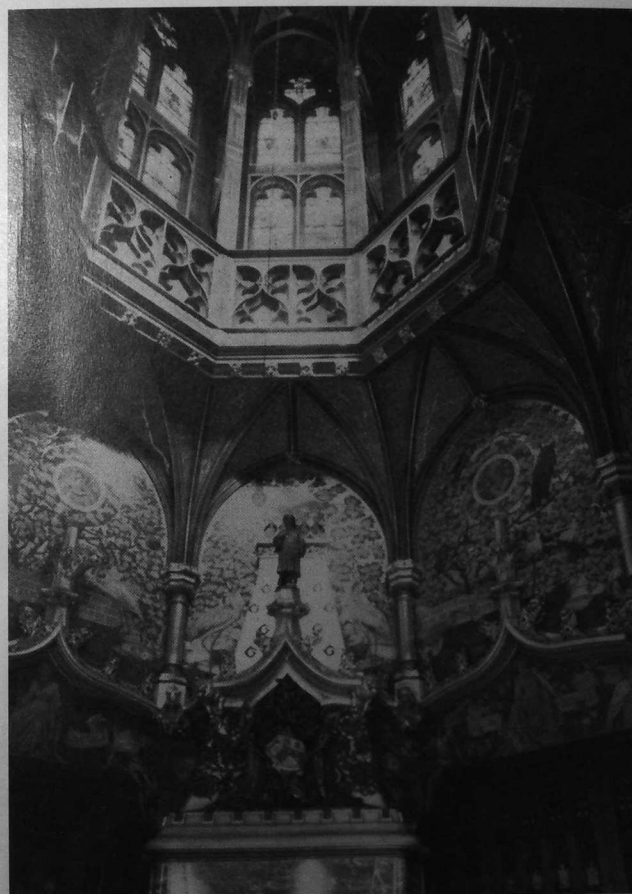
PLATE III

This tower, octagonal in shape, forms part of the mediaeval defences of the castle, erected by Richard de Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, who became Lord of Glamorgan (1423-39) by his marriage with the heiress, Isabel le Despenser. The tower was built here to defend the castle wall on its west side and to strengthen the West Gate of the town at its foot, destroyed by Owen Glyndwr in his attack on Cardiff in 1404. The tower is now surmounted by a steeple, built of wood covered with lead, constructed about the years 1870-75 from a design by William Burges, the architect.

The Beauchamp Tower carries the well staircase which links the lower with the upper apartments. The topmost storey is occupied by the Chaucer Room.

At the foot of the staircase is a figure of the lion rampant of the arms of Scotland. The muzzled lion signifies the bar of the family of Bute to the throne of Scotland, and the coronets the blood royal of the Stuarts. The doors are surmounted by shields, and the painted insets on the staircase represent scenes from Aesop's Fables.

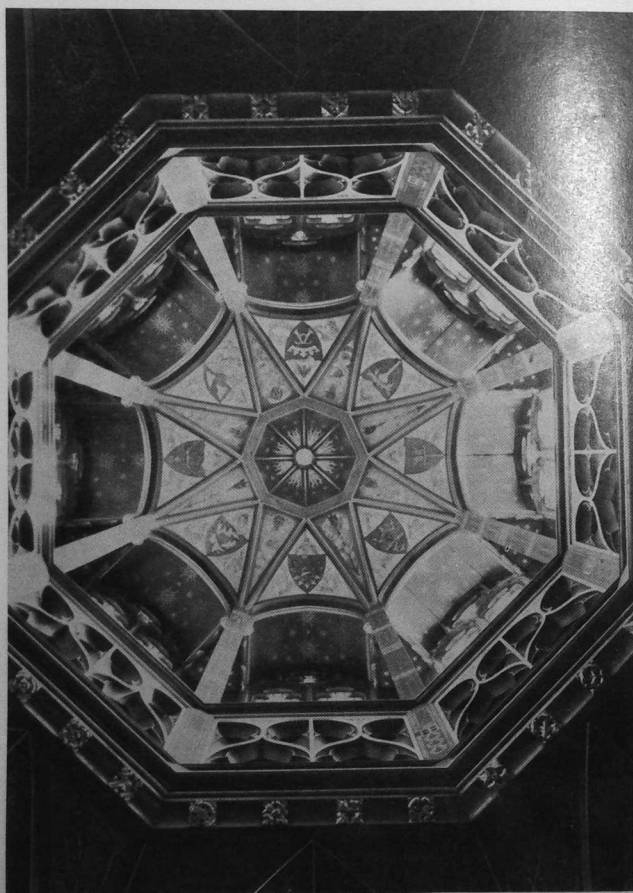
PLATE IV



THE CHAUCER ROOM

Photo by Valentine, Dundee

PLATE V



THE DOME, CHAUCER ROOM

Photo by Valentine, Dundee

At the foot of the stairway are three communicating doors. One leads to the Chapel, and over the entrance is the figure of an angel. A second door gives entry to the Library and over it is the image of a beaver gnawing at the Tree of Knowledge. The third door leads to the servants' quarters.

THE CHAUCER ROOM

PLATES IV AND V

This room, situated at the top of the Beauchamp Tower and approached by a stairway in the wall, forms part of the original fortifications, converted now to domestic use. It is surmounted by a balcony and decorated with scenes from Chaucer and from medieval romance. This work was carried out by Messrs. Campbell, Smith and Co. in 1889.

The stained-glass windows in the balcony illustrate the Canterbury Tales, and the walls above the panelling are decorated with two series of paintings, (i) from the *Legend of Good Women*, and (ii) from the *Parlement of Foules*, with appropriate designs and figures of birds. At the four corners of the room are figures of legendary women—Thisbe, Philomela, etc.

The oak panelling is of special interest, each panel bearing the design of a wild flower, many inlaid with mother-of-pearl.

The chimney-piece of Milan marble is mounted with Stuart and Howard quarterings in a bronze setting, the whole dominated by the figure of Chaucer.

The floor design, in enamelled tiles, takes the form of a maze leading to an octagonal stone centre marking the site of the pillar which originally supported the vaulted ceiling. The floor tiles at the entrance to the apartment display the lion of Scotland and the arms of Stuart.

E. THE CHAPEL

PLATE VI

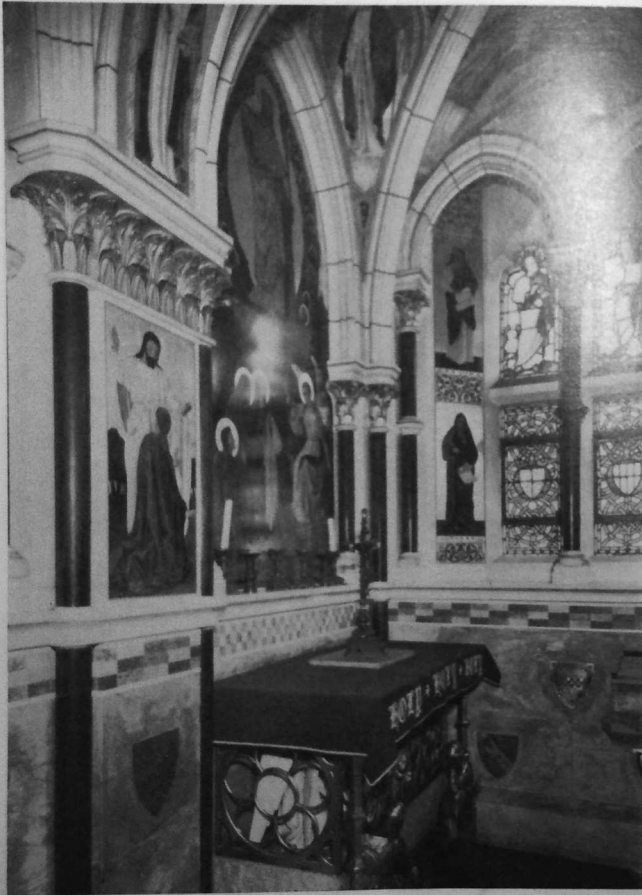
Prior to 1848 this apartment was the dressing-room of John, Second Marquess of Bute, who died here on 18th March in that year at the early age of 54. A bust of the Marquess marks the spot where he died. The room was later converted into a private chapel oratory, and the frescoes on the ceiling and the walls illustrate incidents in our Saviour's life during and after the Passion.

The altar takes the form of the tomb of Christ.

The stained-glass windows carry the figures of Evangelists, and the decorations on the ceiling are based on designs drawn from original paintings of Saints.

On one side of the door is a carving of the Tree of Life, and on the other of a fallen tree, the latter to denote the frailty of life as exemplified by the untimely death of the second Marquess.

PLATE VI



THE CHAPEL

Photo by Valentine, Dundee

PLATE VII



THE DINING ROOM

Photo by Valentine, Dundee

The shields of former Lords of Glamorgan, set in the grey marble surround, edged with marble of various hues, are a feature of the Chapel.

The door, bearing the date 1876, is of solid bronze, engraved with a fine figure of the Virgin.

F. THE DINING ROOM

PLATE VII

This apartment occupies a floor in the Bute Tower, built in the time of the family of Bute. This tower projects from the west wall and is linked with the Octagonal Tower by a passage cut in the original wall.

The ceiling, decorated in gold leaf, is of Moorish design.

The carved figures over the fireplace recall the Old Testament account of the visitation of the angels to Sarah, and underneath is a Greek inscription bearing the meaning "Entertaining angels unawares".

The stained-glass upper panes of the windows contain representations of Biblical incidents.

The dining table is of interest in that a hole in the centre provides for table decoration and lighting.

The jambs of the door and the lintel are decorated with figures of small birds, and the bell-push connected with the servants' quarters is ingeniously designed in the form of a monkey holding an acorn in its mouth.

G. THE LIBRARY

PLATE VIII

The Library, like the Banqueting Hall overhead, was, in part, built during the tenure of the lordship of Glamorgan by Richard, Earl of Warwick, 1423-39. The decorations are modern, having been carried out as part of the plan of reconstruction.

The window bays in the Library were inserted by Jasper Tudor, Duke of Bedford, uncle of Henry VII, when Lord of Glamorgan, 1486-95.

Above the fireplace are carvings of four figures holding tablets, on which are inscribed examples of the Greek, Assyrian, Hebrew and Egyptian alphabets, while a fifth represents a scribe at work in his cell.

The Bute coat of arms occupies the central position on the fire grate, the firedogs, surmounted with a model of a horse and a stag, forming the supporters. The motto on the Bute crest reads "*Avito vires honore*" (He flourishes with ancient honour).

The projecting corbels supporting the ceiling are decorated with the arms, legendary and otherwise, of Roman Emperors and of Welsh



PLATE VIII

Photo by Valentia, Dundee

THE LIBRARY

rulers from the time of Arthur, in the fifth century, to the days of the Princes in the thirteenth. Gilded panels on the walls recall the names of poets and writers.

The stained-glass windows were added by the third Marquess, and they bear the images of the Prophets (Malachi, Hosea, Zachariah, etc.), the Apostles (St. Mark with the Lion, St. John with the Eagle, etc.), and the Kings (Solomon and David).

The doorways are exquisitely ornamented with heraldic emblems or animal figures. Over the central door is displayed the family tree of the Stuarts and of the Dukes of Norfolk. Over the door leading from the Library, near the northern end, chameleons display their varied shades in colour. Over the two doors in the north wall is carved, in deep relief, the Tree of Knowledge with two apes struggling for the Book of Knowledge. The door at the south end is dated 1880.

The panelled doors and book-cases, inlaid with woods of great variety, are worthy of note as examples of fine workmanship.

H. THE ENTRANCE HALL

The windows of stained glass represent those kings and queens of England who have, at various times in the past, owned the castle.

The four chairs, constructed of steel frames with leather seats, are replicas of Norman coronation chairs.

A portion of the original Roman wall on this west side of the Roman fort may be seen uncovered here. This wall follows the line of the outer curtain of the Roman fort and of the mediaeval castle.

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