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# The Manor and Castle of Fonmon, near Barry

*Howard J. Thomas*

## *The St John period*

The manor of Fonmon was one of four fees of Penmark held under the de Umfraville family. It contained 800 acres, most of it good quality arable land, and included the hamlets of Fonmon, East Aberthaw, Burton, and Fontygary. In Despencer's Survey of 1320 the manor was assessed as containing 7 ploughlands.<sup>1</sup>

According to traditional accounts, Fonmon was given by Robert Fitzhamon in 1091 to Oliver St John (one of his twelve knights) as a reward for assisting him in the conquest of Glamorgan. This account is certainly fictitious as also is that of the earlier generations in the descent from Oliver St John given in several sixteenth- and seventeenth-century pedigrees.<sup>2</sup> The St John family are not found in the county before 1200, and the relationship of the Glamorgan line to the older families of St John of Stanton St John (Oxon.) and Langham (Surrey), and St John (or Port) of Basing (Hants.) and Halnaker (Sussex), remains obscure.<sup>3</sup>

The absence of the St Johns in Glamorgan records before this date is puzzling and may indicate that Fonmon in the twelfth century was held by some other family, or that it had not been sub-eneffed by the Umfraville's until the close of the century.

It is interesting to note that de Haia and de Cantelupe heiresses, both members of families with Glamorgan and Gwynllwg connections, intermarried early with the Halnaker Basing line.<sup>4</sup> If the St Johns of Fonmon are cadets of either of the two St John families, then the split must have occurred before the 1280s. However, it is certain that the St Johns of Fonmon were the same family as that which held the manors of Instow (Devon) and East Luccombe (Somerset).<sup>5</sup> The Glamorgan evidence, though scanty, when correlated with the descents of these English manors enable a fairly

reliable succession to be reconstructed from the thirteenth century onwards.

The earliest member recorded in Glamorgan is William de St John who occurs as first witness to a charter of c.1196-1205 issued by Henry de Umfraville, of a grant of land at Lantmeuthen (Llanvithyn, near Llancarfan) to the monks of Margam.<sup>6</sup> This association of William with the Umfraville lords of Penmark, and his position in the witness list, strongly suggests that he was their tenant holding the sub-fee of Fonmon. John Brownbill suggested that it was possible that this William was William de Port, ancestor of the Halnaker-Basing line who adopted the St John surname as early as 1204, but he also drew attention to another William in the Stanton family during the same period.<sup>7</sup> The next member of the family linked with Glamorgan was John de St John, who sat on an inquisition post mortem of Richard de Clare, held at Bonvilston in 1263.<sup>8</sup> This may be the same John who in 1228 acquired lands in Ashleigh (Devon), who in 1234 was pardoned for supporting the rebellion of Earl Marschal, and in 1242-3 held the fee of Instow.<sup>9</sup>

The first St John definitely connected with Fonmon was Sir William de St John, knight, who was living at the close of the thirteenth century. He was present as a witness to the proceedings on the election of the abbot of St Peter's Gloucester in 1284, and was also among a group of Glamorgan landowners who witnessed an exchange agreement between Gilbert de Clare and Neath Abbey drawn up at Usk in 1289.<sup>10</sup> A William St John, alive 1268-78, held manors in Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire. He is said to have married Isabel, daughter and co-heir of William de Combemartin, and is claimed as an ancestor (through a female heiress) of Knightly of Fawsley, but whether he is the Glamorgan William is uncertain.<sup>11</sup>

In *circa* 1290 Sir William de St John as 'lord of Funnemunne' granted a plot of land in the village of East Aberthaw to his brother Philip de St John. This property is described as

a curtilage with all houses built upon it, and with a malting kiln (*turallo*) built against the aforesaid curtilage, lying in the north part of the vill of Abrenthauwe, between the way which leads from Abrenthauwe towards Brittone (Burton) on the east, and the curtilage

of Sibelle Sauerey on the west, as by the same boundaries which were held of the said William by Adam, mason, son of Hawisia Molins.

The grant included a condition that Philip should not be exempt from a tallage of 8d. levied annually on each householder in East Aberthaw towards the maintenance of the chapel of St Cadoc there. The witnesses to this transaction included Thomas Odin, lord of the adjacent sub-manor of Odyn's Fee, Lucas de Barry, lord of West Barry, and Gilbert Spencer, a member of a local family of freeholders.<sup>12</sup> Other deed evidence shows that Philip de St John married Felicia, daughter of Hamelin of Fonmon, by whom he had a son Thomas who entered the church.<sup>13</sup> The latter went to Ireland in 1302 on official business, nominating his father Philip de St John as one of his attorneys for two years.<sup>14</sup> In 1305, Thomas de St John, then a deacon, by deed and letter of attorney to his father, granted Joan the wife of Simon de Raleigh, a messuage in Llanbethery which he had inherited on the death of Felicia his mother.<sup>15</sup> Sir William de St John had a son Henry who figures in a pedigree of 1566 as an eldest son who died without issue.<sup>16</sup> This can scarcely be correct as c.1300 Henry was granted a small parcel of land by Richard Abell of Fonmon, chaplain (doubtless a trustee who made the grant after the death of William, and when Henry came of age), indicting that he was a younger son. The witnesses to this deed were Thomas Odin, William le Spencer, and Henry's uncle Philip de St John.<sup>17</sup> It also appears that Henry de St John became a cleric, was instituted rector of the church of Doddiscombsleigh (Devon) in 1309, but died in the following year.<sup>18</sup>

Various attempts have been made by genealogists and antiquarians to connect Sir William de St John with the main Halnaker-Basing line, the most plausible connection, in the light of William's *floruit*, being that proposed by Arthur Collins in the *Notitia St. Johanniana* (a rare genealogical tract published in 1713). According to Collins, Robert de St John (d.1267), lord of Basing, had two sons by a daughter of William de Cantelupe, namely John his eldest son and heir (d.1302), and a younger son William who had Fonmon in apanage.<sup>19</sup> To avoid confusion, it should be mentioned that members of the Basing family attended a Glamorgan County Court held at Cardiff on 3 August 1299. These were John de St John the younger

and Roger his brother, and also a Hugh de St John. They were present there, not as jurors drawn from local landowners, but as members of the Earl of Gloucester's Council, sent down to settle a dispute.<sup>20</sup>

By 1296 William de St John had been succeeded by John de St John who must have been his eldest son. In that year John was lord of Instow, and attended an inquisition held at Cardiff.<sup>21</sup> In 1301 he was at Llantwit Major where he attested a quitclaim from John Pyers to Simon de Raleigh, of lands in Llancarfan.<sup>22</sup> John still held Instow in 1316.<sup>23</sup> He married Beatrix, daughter of John Broy, who was still alive in 1346 when she presented a priest to the church of Instow.<sup>24</sup>

The next in the line was Alexander de St John (*fl.* 1315-40), lord of Instow. He married Elizabeth (d. 24 August 1345) daughter and co-heir of Henry de Umfraville, lord of Penmark.<sup>25</sup> Their eldest son was Oliver de St John (*fl.* 1339-73), who witnessed charters at Cardiff in 1358 and 1359.<sup>26</sup> Other children were John and Theobald who both died without issue, Henry, and a daughter, Alexandra, who illegally married John, son and heir of Hugh Lucombe, and fled to Wales.<sup>27</sup> Oliver, by his first wife Elizabeth daughter of Hugh Lucombe, lord of East Lucombe (Somerset) had a son John who died without issue beyond the seas *c.*1376.<sup>28</sup> East Lucombe passed after the death of its lord John Lucombe in 1334 to his sister Elizabeth wife of Alexander de St John, and finally upon the death of her son John, to Henry brother of Oliver de St John, from whence issued a branch.<sup>29</sup>

Oliver de St. John's second wife was Elizabeth, daughter of John de la Bere of Weobley Castle, Gower, by whom he had two sons - another John, and Alexander.<sup>30</sup> In the second half of the fourteenth century the St Johns greatly increased their landed interests. The aforementioned Oliver obtained the manor at Barry (another sub-fee of Penmark), possibly by purchase, following the extinction of the male line of its lords, the de Barry family, which occurred *c.*1350. The two sub-fees of Barry and Fonmon were granted to Oliver and his second wife Elizabeth, and afterwards conveyed to a group of feoffees who, in 1370-1, regranted the two fees, now described as a 'moiety' of Penmark, to Oliver and other persons acting as trustees in reversion.<sup>31</sup> Oliver de St John died in August 1373. Before his death he had made provision through his trustees for the settlement of the Penmark 'moiety' upon his eldest son Sir John St John, while Barry was granted to his younger son Alexander in tail male.<sup>32</sup>

In 1387 Sir John St John granted his goods within England and Wales to William Stradling, knight, and Thomas Lyons.<sup>33</sup> He also witnessed several charters issued by the lords of Glamorgan.<sup>34</sup> By 1390 he had married Isabella, daughter and heir of Sir John de Pavely of Paulesbury (Northants.), and widow of Sir Luke de Poynings and Sir John Paule. This Sir John St John had a distinguished career as a knight and trusted crown official who served Richard II, Henry IV, Henry V, and Henry VI. He was appointed steward of Gower in 1397 and 1417, was deputy justiciar of South Wales from 1411 to 1413, and steward of Chepstow in 1414.<sup>35</sup> In 1394 he and his wife were granted the 'moiety' of Penmark in tail male, which grant (by trustees) probably followed the birth of their first son Oliver.<sup>36</sup>

Sir John St John received a royal grant of John de la Bere's manor of Weobley in Gower in 1403, and William de la Mare's property at Llangennydd, also in Gower, in 1406, which had been forfeited by rebellion. John served as sheriff of Glamorgan in 1397. He was in charge of Neath castle c.1402-3 during the Welsh uprising, and in 1403 paid 40 marks for a quarter of the Glamorgan property of Sir John Norreys during his heir's minority.<sup>37</sup>

Sir John St John obtained possession of the manor of Barry, probably due to the death of his brother Alexander without issue,<sup>38</sup> and also held the small manor of Uchelolau (Highlight) near Barry.<sup>39</sup> He was party to a deed of partition with Lady Elizabeth Blount of Calne (Wilts.), probably concerning the future settlement of the lordship of Penmark between the descendants of the two Umfraville heiresses.<sup>40</sup> He inherited the other 'moiety', thus obtaining the whole of Penmark, following the death without issue in 1414-15 of Alice le Blount, daughter of Elizabeth Blount, and granddaughter of Alice de Umfraville the other co-heir of Penmark.<sup>41</sup> Sir John died 2 August 1424 seized in England of 40 shillings rent from Doniford (Somerset) as well as Westbury manor (Northants.). His eldest son was Oliver.<sup>42</sup> He also had a second son, Alexander, who received the manor of Uchelolau and founded a cadet line which survived there until 1728.<sup>43</sup> A daughter, Agnes, married John Rodney (d.1417) and died at Weobley Castle, Gower, in 1420.<sup>44</sup>

Sir Oliver St John (c.1394-1437), married Margaret, daughter and heiress of John Beauchamp, from whom he obtained Bletsoe manor (Beds.) and Lydiard Tregoze (Wilts.). She subsequently married John

Beaufort Duke of Somerset, becoming Duchess of Somerset, and mother of Margaret Countess of Richmond whose son, Henry Tudor, afterwards became King Henry VII. Thus was established a distant kinship with the Tudor dynasty which the St Johns viewed with pride.<sup>45</sup>

Sir Oliver served as sheriff of Glamorgan in 1424, and between 1421 and 1429 witnessed several Glamorgan charters with John de St John, evidently his father (or a son of the same name in the period after 1424).<sup>46</sup> In 'Beauchamp's Survey' of 1429, Sir Oliver St John, knight, is returned as holding the fees of Penmark, Llancadle, Fonmon, and Barry. He is also returned as holding Odyn's Fee, another sub-fee of Penmark, probably in right of wardship as overlord.<sup>47</sup> In 1436 he is described as 'lord of Westpery, co. Northampton, knight, or of Foumonnue in Wales' when he was sued for recovery of debts by several London drapers.<sup>48</sup> Sir Oliver died in 1437 and was the last of the St John family to reside at Fonmon, the family seat thereafter being Bletsoe.<sup>49</sup>

The St John line continued with Sir Oliver's son John who married Alice, daughter of Sir Thomas Bradshawe of Hawe (Lancs.). He had a younger brother, Oliver, who had Lydiard Tregoze (Wilts.), and founded a cadet line there.<sup>50</sup> The Sir John St John of this generation is entered in William Ballard's *Heraldic Visitation of Wales and the March*, compiled c.1480-90:

Johne Saint John beyrithe sylver a bend cheff gowlus & in the sayd cheefe ij mollettis gold, & he holds by knyghtts service the Baronny of Penmawr [Penmark] & the lordschippe of West Barowe [West Barry] by knyghtts service, & he hath iiij sonns.<sup>51</sup>

Next in succession was a son and heir also named John, who married Sibell daughter of Morgan ap Jenkin Philip of Langstone (Mon.); there was a second son, Maurice, who came into possession (probably as lessee for life) of the manor of Barry. John died in 1525.<sup>52</sup> He was succeeded by his son, another John (c.1495-1559), who married first Margaret daughter of Sir William Waldegrave, of Smallbridge (Suffolk); and secondly Anne, daughter of Thomas Nevill of Cotterstock (Northants.).<sup>53</sup> This John is mentioned in the *Itinerary* of John Leland, 1536-9, as owning Fonmon Castle:

The castelle of Fonmone standith on a litle hille in Penmark parochē, a quarter of a mile by est from the mouth of Kensan. This castelle yet stondith and longith to Sir John St John.<sup>54</sup>

Leland also notes that Sir John was lord of the ruined castle at Barry which was formerly owned by his uncle Maurice St John (*fl.*1500). In a survey of knights' fees of the county of Glamorgan, 1546, John is returned as holding the manors of Penmark, Barry, Fonmon, and Llancadle, for 26s. 8d. wardsilver, held of the king, as of Cardiff Castle.<sup>55</sup> In the 1530s he was also overlord of the manors of Moulton (in Llancarfan) and Lidmore (in Wenvoe), occupied by Sir John Ragland, knight. In *c.*1533-8, as guardian to Thomas son of John Ragland, he brought a suit against Thomas ap David, bailiff of Moulton manor, for embezzlement of dues arising from the manor during Thomas's minority. About the same date he brought another action against William Hawkins for the recovery of a small freehold at Rhoose in Penmark, and in *c.*1543-4, sued William Morgan Kemeys and Jenkin Smith for the recovery of a freehold in Barry manor.<sup>56</sup>

Sir John's only son and heir, by his first wife Margaret, was Oliver. The latter was raised to the peerage being created Baron St John of Bletsoe, on 13 January 1558/9.<sup>57</sup> Although living in Bedfordshire, Sir Oliver kept a close control on the management of his Glamorgan estates through his high steward, Sir Edward Stradling of St Donats Castle. These affairs are documented in the Stradling correspondence.<sup>58</sup> An inquisition taken at Sir Oliver's death in 1582 reveals that he was a substantial landowner, seized of estates scattered throughout Bedfordshire, Dorset, Huntingdonshire, Gloucestershire, and Glamorgan, which yielded £418 per annum. His Glamorgan lands comprised the manor of Llancadle valued at £24 17s. 11d., held of the earl of Worcester, as of the manor of Wenvoe, by fealty and suit of court; and the manors of Penmark, Barry, and Fonmon with its castle, valued in total at £93 7s. 8d., held of the earl of Pembroke, as of his castle of Cardiff, by fealty for all services.<sup>59</sup>

In the period of absentee landowners, from the second quarter of the fifteenth century to the early seventeenth century, the castle and demesne lands of Fonmon were probably leased to a succession of individuals, including junior members of the St John family. William Bassett of Fonmon, alive 1533-8, who was assessed at £60 on goods



in the lay subsidies for 1543-5, may have been a lessee.<sup>60</sup> When Richard Bassett surrendered his lease in 1608, a survey by the manorial court found a few defects, namely that 'the loft of the chamber leading from the parlour north way to be ruinous and decayed', and 'all the boords covering the loft floor of the westernmost chamber to be wanting'.<sup>61</sup> In the 1620s Fonmon Castle was leased to Anthony St John, a younger son of Oliver, 3rd Baron St John of Bletsoe (d.1618). Anthony sub-let it for £40 per annum to Reynold Portrey.<sup>62</sup> The latter was certainly living there at the time of his death in 1629,<sup>63</sup> and it is interesting to note that Portrey's tombstone in Porthkerry church records that in his lifetime he 'cured many of severalle infirmities without rewarde'. The castle was afterwards sub-let to Humphrey Hurleston of London.<sup>64</sup>

In 1622 Sir Oliver St John (c.1584-1646), 4th Baron St John of Bletsoe, commissioned Evans Mouse to make a detailed survey of his estates, including his Glamorgan manors.<sup>65</sup> Unfortunately, the survey of Fonmon manor gives no information about the castle buildings, while the illustration of it on the accompanying estate map is only a stylized representation. Sir Oliver was created Earl of Bolingbroke on 28 Dec. 1624. To commemorate this event, the surveyor Evans Mouse composed a panegyric, which he added to the Penmark manorial map, running thus:

Noate that Anno Domini 1091 in ye 4th yeare of William Rufus, on Robert ffitzhamon wan by conflict of battell against Jestyn y sonne of Gungant (being then Lord of the Lordship of Glamorgan) the peaceable possession thereof. The said ffitzhamon in reward of service done in his behalfe gave Sr Oliver St John (one of his twelve knights and assistants) for his part at that tyme the Castell and maner of ffunmun &c in whose name & race it alwaies to this day hath continued to his heires male: and now is by dissent legal to my Lord Oliver Lo: St John Baron of Bletnesho the sole heir and Lord thereof, mence decembris 1624. E M.<sup>66</sup>

By the middle of the seventeenth century the St John family (who had supported the Parliamentary cause) had run into considerable financial difficulties. To satisfy his creditors, Sir Oliver St John 1634-88), 5th Baron St John of Bletsoe and 2nd Earl of Bolingbroke, offered his Glamorgan estates for sale. Fonmon, together with Penmark and Llancadle manors, was purchased by Colonel Philip

Jones in 1656, while Barry went to Evan Seys, Serjeant-at-law, of Boverton, in 1660.<sup>67</sup>

*Colonel Philip Jones and his descendants*

The new owner of Fonmon was Colonel Philip Jones (1618-74), the leading Parliamentarian in South Wales in the period of the Commonwealth. He was born at Great House, Swansea, near his ancestral estates at Pen-y-waun, in Llangyfelach. In 1645 he was captain of the Swansea garrison, and in 1646 was appointed colonel. He was prominent as Horton's chief henchman at the battle of St Fagans on 8th May 1648. Philip Jones subsequently rose to the rank of governor of Cardiff Castle, and hosted Cromwell on his way to capture Pembroke Castle in 1649. He gained a great reputation for his judgement in official committees on matters concerning the clergy and religion in Wales. His enemies, however, accused him of amassing fortunes from forfeited lands of Royalists, which accusations were cleared by subsequent investigations.<sup>68</sup>

Colonel Philip Jones became one of the most powerful men in the country during the Commonwealth. He was member of the Council of State and served on numerous sub-committees. He was appointed Comptroller of the Protector's household, and arranged his funeral ceremonies in November 1658. At the Restoration in 1660 he made his peace with the Crown, afterwards retiring to his Fonmon estate, and in 1671 he was appointed high sheriff of Glamorgan.<sup>69</sup>

It is evident that Colonel Jones did not occupy the castle immediately following his purchase, as he leased it from 25 Oct. 1657 for five years to a William Leicester. This led to a suit in the Great Sessions against Leicester by Humphrey Hurleston (the previous lessee), on grounds of 'Force of Arms' [trespass]. The premises were then said to consist of the castle of Fonmon, two stables and two barns, together with the demesne of 50 acres of land, 40 acres of meadow, and 120 acres of pasture.<sup>70</sup> A particular of Fonmon Manor, compiled c.1660, describes the castle as it was during Hurleston's tenancy: 'the howse & Roomes there is of the old fabrick of the Castle but is noe better than a good farm howse'. Another survey of the same date refers to 'all that Castle or Manor house of ffunmon (much in decay) with two large Barnes and Court yards'.<sup>71</sup> Work on

the refurbishment of the castle as a suitable residence for Colonel Jones must have commenced after the expiry of the lease in 1662. These alterations included the addition of a north wing, which was a compact block, with panelled rooms, including a large kitchen.

Philip Jones's eventual heir was his fourth son Oliver (1654-85), who married Mary Button of Duffryn, St Nicholas. His successors at Fonmon throughout the eighteenth century were four generations each named Robert.

Robert Jones I (1682-1715) married Mary Edwin of Llanmihangel, and was elected MP for Glamorgan in 1712. Robert Jones II (1706-42) served as sheriff of Glamorgan in 1729, and considerably embellished the castle interior with a remarkable collection of paintings, including some purchased on a Grand Tour to Italy. Shortly before his death in 1742 he became a friend of John Wesley and invited him to stay at Fonmon.<sup>72</sup>

Robert Jones III (1738-93) was brought up as a child in the care of his widowed mother. He was educated under a harsh regime at the Wesleys' school in Kingswood, and consequently rebelled and ran away. Upon entering his inheritance Robert III slipped into an extravagant lifestyle. In 1762 he married Jane the daughter and heiress of the Revd Evan Seys of Boverton, Llantwit Major. In preparation for his bride's arrival at Fonmon, Robert completely transformed the castle into a fashionable mansion of castellated appearance, its roofs enclosed with crenelated parapets (doubtless replacing seventeenth-century roof gables and dormers). For this work he employed the Bristol architectural and building firm of Thomas Paty. A spacious staircase hall was created within the east wing, and a first-floor long drawing room or library formed within the old keep. The building was refenestrated throughout with rows of sash windows, and the exterior wall-faces covered with rendering. The interior rooms, notably the library, were decorated with high quality rococo plasterwork which was executed by the Bristol plasterer Thomas Stocking. These alterations are commemorated by a sundial, attached to the south side of the south-east tower, which is inscribed 'Fonmon Castle 1762'. About this period a detached watchtower was built as a folly in landscaped grounds to the south, and stables created out of a former barn lying to the south-west.<sup>73</sup>

Robert Jones's wife Jane Seys, from whom he inherited the Boverton estates including Barry manor, died in 1766. He took for his second wife Joanna Lloyd of Cardiff, by whom he had a son and heir Robert Jones IV (1773-1834), and several other children. In 1784 Robert was forced to take himself and his family to France to escape creditors, and here he lived for six years.<sup>74</sup>

The castle as it appeared after Robert Jones III's alterations was noticed by a tourist, the Revd J. Evans, who passed through the area in 1803:

This is a large but irregular pile; built as a noble residence and place of defence; which is evident from the thickness of the walls, the flat embattled roof, and a high watch-tower at a small distance from it...The castle has been modernised, the windows sashed, and the rooms decorated in the style of the time when the alterations were made. Many of the rooms are lofty and spacious, particularly the saloon, or, as it is called, the Banqueting Room.<sup>75</sup>

A few years earlier, the Glamorgan antiquarian, Iolo Morganwg, in a list of county seats, described Fonmon Castle thus:

a very ancient building modernized in its windows externally and in every thing else internally, [it] has grandeur in its aspect without much elegance, its Kitchen is said by some to be the largest Room in the Kingdom excepting Westminster Hall, this may be saying too much but it may be the very largest Kitchen in the Kingdom. The dining room is a large room with the finest ceilings in the County, probably in Wales. It has a great number of useful rooms, a large library containing valuable ancient Books.<sup>76</sup>

A view by Jeston Homfray, made in 1828, confirms these descriptions (fig.1). It depicts the side of the castle as seen from the east across the ravine, with the dormered roof of the stable block visible beyond.<sup>77</sup>

For much of the nineteenth century Fonmon was the home of Robert Oliver Jones (1811-85), the eldest son of Robert Jones IV. Chairman of Glamorgan Quarter Sessions for over twenty years and a keen local historian, he became a friend of his fellow magistrate G.T. Clark, the antiquary and scholar ironmaster. (Clark dedicated his first volume of his *Cartae et Alia Munimenta quae ad Dominium de*



View of Fonmon Castle by Jeston Homfray, 1828. (fig.1)

*Glamorgan pertinent*, published in 1885, to his friend). In 1860 Jones invited Clark to make a survey of Fonmon and Penmark castles and was himself involved in the project. The findings were incorporated into an article on the parish of Penmark published in 1861 in *Archaeologia Cambrensis* under joint authorship.

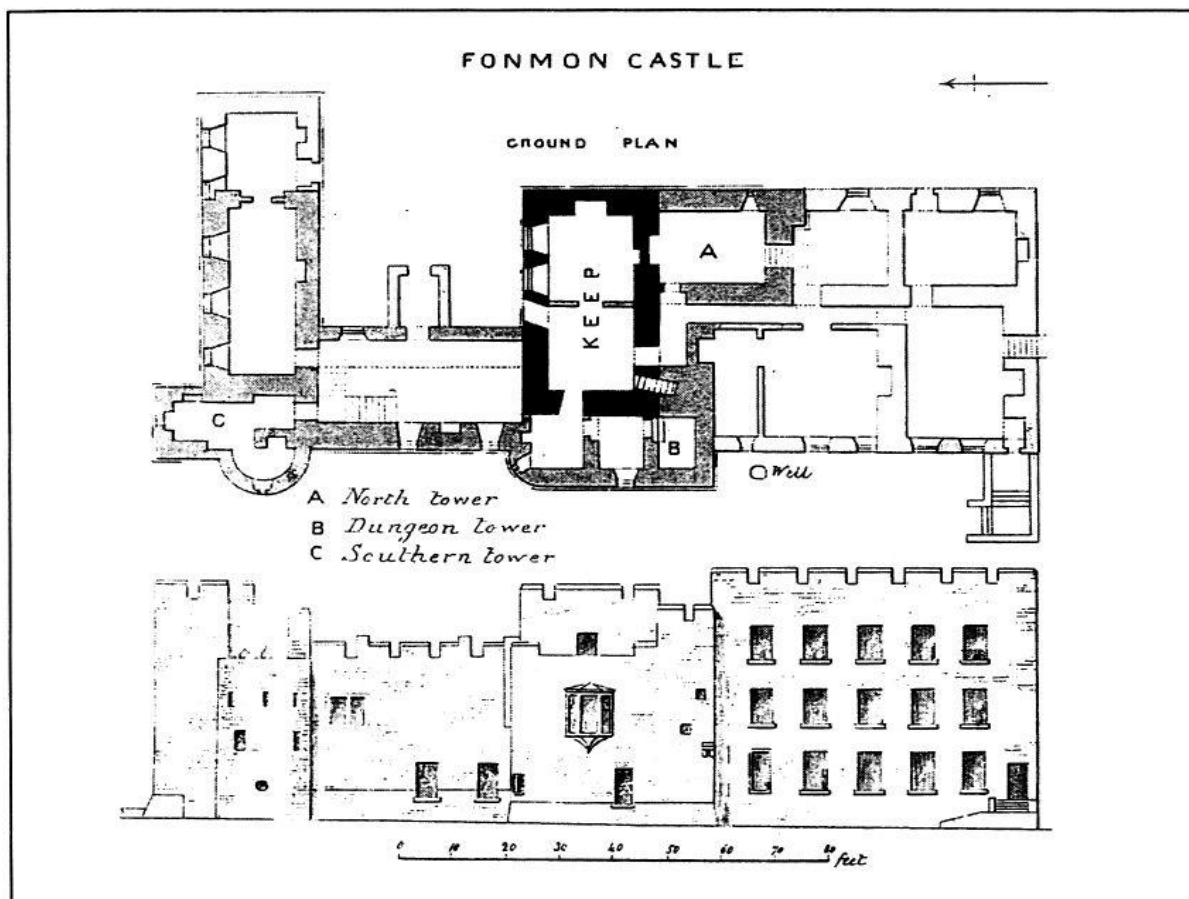
Clark produced a reliable ground plan and east elevation of Fonmon Castle (fig.2). He identified the core of the building complex as the keep,

a rectangular building 45 feet high, and 25 feet north and south, by 43 feet east and west, including its walls which are 5 feet thick, [which] appears to be late Norman...

As to the rest of the castle, Clark went on to say

Additions, probably of early English and early decorated date, enclose it on the north, east and partially on the south sides; on the latter forming a considerable wing, a part of which is a square tower which caps the south east angle, and is a principal feature in the general view of the building. Two bow towers of the same date project from the east front. The principal additions on the north are of the seventeenth century, and were erected without reference to defence.

The outworks, with the exception of one tower which stands alone on the south-eastern front, about 140 yards from the castle, long since gave way to stabling, barns, and formal terraced gardens, most of which have in their turn disappeared. The remaining tower seems to have been the south-eastern termination of the defences of the outer court.<sup>78</sup>



Plan of Fonmon Castle by G.T. Clark, 1860. (fig.2)

The Jones family became extinct in the male line with the death of Oliver Henry Jones in 1917. His sister Edith Alicia married Robert Valpy, their son Oliver Harris Valpy being tragically killed during World War I. The surviving child, Clara Valpy, married Sir Seymour Boothby, who was descended from the ancient family of Boothby of Boothby Pagnell (Lincs.) and later of Ashbourne Hall (Derbys.) who were created baronets in 1644. The family seat was transferred to Fonmon Castle which became their principal residence. The present owner is Sir Brooke Boothby, 16th baronet, son of Sir Hugo Boothby, 15th baronet, and grandson of Sir Seymour. The present condition of the castle remains much as Robert Jones III restored and refurbished it, with a few minor additions of the nineteenth century.<sup>79</sup>

## **Outline Architectural History of Fonmon Castle**

Fonmon Castle is located on the western edge of a small, steep-sided and wooded ravine containing the diminutive Fonmon brook which runs north for a short distance until connecting with the Kenson River. The area is generally a flat plateau of well drained clayey loam soil on lias limestone, and lying at 100ft. above OD.

The castle in its medieval layout consisted of a very compact group of buildings around a small quadrangular court. The largest structure is a rectangular keep on the north, while running parallel with it to the south was a narrower range, the two buildings joined by curtain walls, which now survive only on the east. On the south-east angle of the complex there is a tower, and another stands at the north-east angle close to the keep. The site of the entrance gateway is not known; it may have been in the west side of the court close to the keep (as at Ogmores, St Donats and Coity), or less probably, through the east end of the south range where flanked by the projecting south-east tower. Later additions consist of a sixteenth-century wing added to the north-west side of the keep, this in turn buried in an extensive block of c.1660 which occupies almost the whole width of the north side; also added was a connecting wing built within the east side of the courtyard.

In 1762 the whole building layout was drastically altered in appearance, being transformed into a castellated Georgian mansion and thereby concealing virtually all the medieval architectural features. Subsequent surrounding landscaping has obscured all traces of the medieval ditches. In the area to the west and southwest of the castle was formerly a large outer yard flanked by a pair of late-medieval barns. In the grounds to the south of the castle is a supposed watchtower, built on the edge of the ravine and thought to mark the south-east angle of the outer medieval defences.

Examination of the building plan together with clues afforded by varying wall thicknesses, the few straight joints, and doorways (notably in the towers), suggests that there were four medieval phases, followed by three post-medieval periods.

**Phase I** (probably late-twelfth century). A Keep of rectangular plan. This is assumed to have stood against the north side of a ditched

and embanked earthwork which would have enclosed three sides of the site, the steep scarp on the east being sufficient for defence, but whether of ringwork or quadrangular plan is uncertain. The only hint of these early defences is the outer edge of a rock-cut ditch exposed in the sunken drive immediately west of the open court of the present castle, and the presence of cellars in the seventeenth-century northern extension, these probably excavated into a soft ditch fill.

**Phase II** (probably late-thirteenth century). The area to the south of the Keep was enclosed by a curtain wall, forming a quadrangular court. The wall survives on the east side along the edge of the scarp, and had a round tower where it touched the south-east corner of the Keep (North-east Tower or 'Dungeon Tower'), and a large D-shaped tower projecting east, located at the south-east angle (South-east Tower or 'Southern Tower').

**Phase III** (probably late-thirteenth or early-fourteenth century). A chambered projecture was added onto the south side of the South-east Tower which was contemporary with a range (South Range) bounding the south side of the courtyard; the North-east Tower was extended to the north and converted into a substantial rectangular storeyed and chambered annex, wrapped around the north-east angle of the Keep.

**Phase IV.** A storeyed wing, probably of sixteenth-century date (North-west Annexe or 'North Tower'), was added onto the outer side of the Keep, perhaps extending into the site of the ditch. About this period a large Barn was constructed, which bounded the south-west side of a large outer west court. Documentary evidence indicates the existence of another barn which occupied the north-west angle of this court, demolished in the nineteenth century. The presence of landscaping features of sunken depressions in the ground (on west side of Barn), might suggest that this outer court was ditched.

**Phase V.** A substantial three-storeyed mansion block (North Block), was added c.1660 to the north side of the Keep incorporating its later medieval extensions. About this period a connecting range (East Range), between the Keep and South Range, was inserted along the east side of the court, which incorporated and raised the level of the east curtain wall. It is probable that the defences on the west side of the court were demolished.



**Phase VI.** The castle underwent extensive refurbishment *c.* 1762 by Robert Jones III (see above p.73). A folly in the form of a detached Watchtower was built some distance to the south, with landscaped lawns and gardens, and terraces on the sloping east side. The Barn was converted into a stable block.

**Phase VII.** Some minor additions were made in the middle of the nineteenth century (before 1860); these comprised a room extension to the west end of the South Range, service chambers added to the north side of the North Block, and alterations to the Barn and Watchtower.

(Note: a detailed architectural account of Fonmon Castle will be published in the RCAHM Wales Inventory of Glamorgan, Vol. III, Part 1b, *Later Castles (after 1217)*, publication forthcoming.)

*Acknowledgements:* The author wishes to thank his colleague Mr Jack Spurgeon for his advice and assistance in the preparation of this paper; also Sir Brooke Boothby for his courtesy in allowing him to survey his home, and Victoria Robinson for facilitating his visits to Fonmon.

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NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Glamorgan Record Office, D/D F Vol.44, Evans Mouse Survey of Fonmon, 1622 (typescript copy, National Library of Wales MS 10708C, pp.100-150); Cardiff Central Library MS 3.464, fols. 63, 117.
- <sup>2</sup> G.T. Clark, *Limbus Patrum* (London, 1886), 429-30; Rice Lewis, 'Breviat of Glamorgan', ed. William Rees, in South Wales and Monmouth Record Society. *Publications* no.3 (1954), 113-14; Rice Merrick, *Morganiae Archaio-graphia*, ed. B.Ll. James (South Wales Record Society, 1, 1983), 60, 160-1.
- <sup>3</sup> John Brownbill, 'St. John of Bletsoe', *Genealogists' Magazine*, V (1929-31), 355-6.
- <sup>4</sup> F.T. Smallwood, 'The St. Johns of 1066', *Friends of Lydiard Tregoze Magazine, Report* no.6 (1973), 87-8.
- <sup>5</sup> J. Brownbill, *art.cit.*, 356-7.
- <sup>6</sup> G.T. Clark, *Cartae*, 2nd ed. (Talygarn, 1910), I, 217.
- <sup>7</sup> J. Brownbill, *art.cit.*, 355.
- <sup>8</sup> NLW MS 18500 (Llanmaes 31), David Jones's transcript of I.P.M. of Gilbert de Clare; *The Book of Fees, commonly called Testa de Nevill*, Part II, 1242-1293 (London, 1923), 779.
- <sup>9</sup> J. Brownbill, *art.cit.*, 356; G.T. Clark, *The Land of Morgan* (London, 1883), 102; *Calendar of Close Rolls, Henry III, 1231-1234*, 437.
- <sup>10</sup> *Historia et Cartularium Monasterii Sancti Petri Gloucestriae*, ed. W.H. Hart, Vol.III (London, 1867), 26; G.T. Clark, *Cartae*, 2nd ed., IV, 1205.
- <sup>11</sup> Charles Moor, *Knights of Edward I*, Vol.IV (Harleian Society, LXXXIII, 1931), 174; *Victoria History of the County of Bedford*, Vol.III (London, 1912), 74; W.C. Metcalfe (ed.), *The Visitations of Northamptonshire* (London, 1887), 32.
- <sup>12</sup> College of Arms, Box 36/19, fols.6-7. The author is grateful to Mr Robert C. Yorke, archivist of the College, for supplying a photocopy of this document.
- <sup>13</sup> Somerset Record Office, DD/WO 61/1.
- <sup>14</sup> *Calendar of Patent Rolls, Edward I, 1301-1307*, 98.
- <sup>15</sup> Somerset Record Office, DD/WO 61/1.
- <sup>16</sup> F.A. Blaydes (ed.), *The Visitations of Bedfordshire* (Harleian Society, XIX, 1884), 51-2. This seems to be the most accurate of the extant pedigrees of the St Johns of Bletsoe.
- <sup>17</sup> British Library, Lansdowne 860A, fol.345.
- <sup>18</sup> J. Brownbill, *art.cit.*, 356.
- <sup>19</sup> *Notitia St. Johanniana; or, Genealogical and Historical Memoirs of the Most Ancient and Illustrious and Noble Family of St. John* (London, 1713), 19-20, 27-8.
- <sup>20</sup> G.T. Clark, *Cartae*, 2nd ed., III, 911; J. Brownbill, *art.cit.*, 356.
- <sup>21</sup> J. Brownbill, *art.cit.*, 356; *Cardiff Records*, Vol.I (Cardiff, 1898), 264.
- <sup>22</sup> Somerset Record Office, DD/WO MTD/II/82.

- <sup>23</sup> *Inquisitions and Assessments relating to Feudal Aids...1284-1431*, Vol.I (London, 1899), 372, 375.
- <sup>24</sup> F.A. Blaydes (ed.), *Visitations of Bedfordshire*, 51; J. Brownbill, *art.cit.*, 356.
- <sup>25</sup> *List of Inquisitions ad Quod Damnum* (PRO, Lists and Indexes, XVII, 1904), 366; *Cal. Patent Rolls, Edward III, 1321-1324*, 16; *Cal. Patent Rolls, Edward III, 1338-1340*, 329; *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem, Vol.VIII, Edward III, 412*; *Pedes Finium...Feet of Fines for the County of Somerset...1307-1346*, ed. Emanuel Green (Somerset Record Society, XII, 1898), 206; J. Brownbill, *art.cit.*, 356-7.
- <sup>26</sup> G.T. Clark, *Cartae*, 1st ed., II (Cardiff, 1890), 59, 206.
- <sup>27</sup> J. Brownbill, *art.cit.*, 357; *List of Inquisitions ad Quod Damnum*, 366; Natalie Fryde (ed.), *List of Welsh Entries in the Memoranda Rolls, 1282-1343* (Cardiff, 1974), 79.
- <sup>28</sup> *Cal. Inquisitions Post Mortem, Vol.XV, 1-7 Richard II*, 110.
- <sup>29</sup> *loc.cit.*; *Cal. Patent Rolls, Edward III, 1338-1340*, 151.
- <sup>30</sup> British Library, Lansdowne 860A, fol.345.
- <sup>31</sup> *loc.cit.*
- <sup>32</sup> *Cal. Inquisitions Post Mortem, XV*, 110; Deed abstract quoted in Glamorgan Plea Roll transcripts by David Jones, Cardiff Central Library MS 2.1148, Vol.IV, 63; NLW MS 3738D, I.P.M. of Oliver St John of Bletsho, 1582; British Library, Harley 760, fol.453, Cole's Escheats; PRO, Early Chancery Proceedings, C 1/6/322, 323, *circa* 1425, Joan Trenchemere pl. (descendant and heir of Luke Barry) against Alexander St John def., for the manor of West Barry; Deed abstract quoted in Early Chancery Proceedings, PRO, C 1/1069/ 10-13, namely a grant *tempore* Richard II, by John Hache, parson of South Moltown, and Thomas Mychaell, parson of Porthkyrye, to Alexander son of Oliver St John, knight, (and to the heirs male of his body lawfully begotten, with divers other remainders), of the manor of West Barrye. Attornment by John Andrewes of Rous (lessee for life of the said manor) whereby the said John Andrewes paid one penny to Alexander St John.
- <sup>33</sup> G.T. Clark, *Cartae*, 2nd ed., IV, 1368.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 1411, 1426, 1488, 1490, 1491, 1518, 1519, 1537, 1581-3.
- <sup>35</sup> RA. Griffiths, *The Principality of Wales in the Later Middle Ages, Vol.I, South Wales, 1277-1536* (Cardiff, 1972), 130-1, biography of Sir John St John.
- <sup>36</sup> Deed abstract quoted in Glamorgan Plea Roll transcripts, Cardiff Central Library MS 2.1148, Vol.IV, 63 (from NLW Wales 22/Roll no.73, 25 Elizabeth, Autumn, 16 September 1583), and I.P.M. of Oliver St John of Bletsoe 1582, NLW MS 3738D, namely a grant, dated Monday after S. Lambert, 18 Richard II (21 September 1394), by Thomas Lyons, John Butiler, John Thornton, and John Daukyn, chaplains, to John de St John, knight, and Isabella his wife (and to their heirs male legitimately begotten), of a moiety of the manor of Penmark with the advowson of the church.

- <sup>37</sup> R.A. Griffiths, *op.cit.*, 131.
- <sup>38</sup> PRO, C 1/1069/10-13.
- <sup>39</sup> PRO, C 1/1059/66; NLW Wales 22/Roll 7, Glamorgan Plea Roll.
- <sup>40</sup> British Library Lansdowne 860A, fol.345.
- <sup>41</sup> G.T. Clark, 'Contribution towards a cartulary of Margam', *Arch.Camb.*, 3rd Series, XIV (1868), 40.
- <sup>42</sup> R.A. Griffiths, *op.cit.*, 131.
- <sup>43</sup> NLW MS 7A, fols.273-5; NLW MS 8A, fol.166; Cardiff Central Library MS 5.6, fol.496.
- <sup>44</sup> PRO, PCC Wills, 51 Marche, Agnes Rodney, deposed 5 October 1420.
- <sup>45</sup> J. Brownbill, *art.cit.*, 358.
- <sup>46</sup> G.T. Clark, *Cartae*, 2nd ed., IV, 1519; *ibid.*, 1411, 1426, 1488, 1490, 1518, 1519, 1537, 1581-2.
- <sup>47</sup> Cardiff Central Library MS 3.464, fol.126.
- <sup>48</sup> *Cal. Patent Rolls, Henry VI, 1429-1436*, 487.
- <sup>49</sup> J. Brownbill, *art.cit.*, 357-8; *VCH Bedfordshire*, III, 41.
- <sup>50</sup> J. Brownbill, *art.cit.*, 358.
- <sup>51</sup> M.P. Siddons, *The Development of Welsh Heraldry*, Vol.I (Aberystwyth, 1991), 308, fig.99; M.P. Siddons (ed.), *Visitations by the Heralds in Wales* (Harleian Society, NS 14, 1996), 19.
- <sup>52</sup> St John pedigree in *The Visitations of Bedfordshire*, 53: J. Brownbill, *art.cit.*, 358.
- <sup>53</sup> *Complete Peerage*, Vol.XI (London, 1949), 334.
- <sup>54</sup> L.T. Smith (ed.), *The Itinerary in Wales of John Leland* (London, 1906), 24.
- <sup>55</sup> Cardiff Central Library MS 3.464, fols.135-7.
- <sup>56</sup> E.A. Lewis, *An Inventory of Early Chancery Proceedings Concerning Wales* (Cardiff, 1937), 197-9, 203.
- <sup>57</sup> *Complete Peerage*, XI, 334.
- <sup>58</sup> J.M. Traherne (ed.), *Stradling Correspondence* (London, 1840), 91-137, Letters of Oliver St John and John St John to Sir Edward Stradling.
- <sup>59</sup> British Library, Harleian MS 760, fols.251-2.
- <sup>60</sup> E.A. Lewis, *op.cit.*, 195; PRO, Lay Subsidies, E 179/221/237, 238, 239.
- <sup>61</sup> GRO, D/D F. vol.40.
- <sup>62</sup> Glamorgan County Record Office, *Coronation Exhibition. The Records of Fonmon Castle* (Cardiff, 1953), 17.
- <sup>63</sup> NLW MS 18473B, David Jones's transcripts of PCC Wills, Vol.VII, 53-5, transcript of the will of Reynold Portrey, 24 December 1629, 55 Scroope.
- <sup>64</sup> G.T. Clark and R.O. Jones, 'Some account of the parish of Penmark', *Arch.Camb.*, 3rd series, VII (1861), 16, footnote 1.
- <sup>65</sup> Bedfordshire Record Office, MS GY 10; GRO, D/D F, vol.44.
- <sup>66</sup> GRO, D/D F Manorial.
- <sup>67</sup> The actual purchase deed of Fonmon in 1656 has not been located, but fines relating to the sale occur in NLW, Wales 22/Roll 213, Glamorgan Plea Roll, September 1655; Cardiff Central Library MS 2.1154, 48; GRO,

D/D F vol.26, 119-32, Fonmon Deeds 1514, 2399 and, for Barry, Fonmon Deed 694.

<sup>68</sup> *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*; A.G. Veysey, 'Colonel Philip Jones, 1618-74', *Transactions of the Hon. Society of Cymmrodorion*, 1966 part II, 316-40.

<sup>69</sup> *DWB*.

<sup>70</sup> Cardiff Central Library MS 2.1148, David Jones's transcripts of Glamorgan Plea Rolls, Vol.VIII, 24.

<sup>71</sup> GRO, D/D F M 276; D/D F M 270.

<sup>72</sup> Patricia Moore, *Fonmon Castle, South Glamorgan*, 3rd ed. (Cardiff, 1985), unpagged; Arthur Oswald, 'Fonmon Castle, Glamorgan, part II', *Country Life*, 23 March 1949, 670-3.

<sup>73</sup> Patricia Moore, *op.cit.*, unpagged; Arthur Oswald, 'Fonmon Castle, Glamorgan, part III', *Country Life*, 1 April 1949, 734-7.

<sup>74</sup> *The Records of Fonmon Castle*, 25.

<sup>75</sup> John Evans, *Letters Written during a Tour through South Wales in the Year 1803* (London, 1804), 110.

<sup>76</sup> NLW MS 13123B (Llanover C36), 256.

<sup>77</sup> Jeston Homfray, *The Castles of the Lordship of Glamorgan* (Cardiff, 1828), 40.

<sup>78</sup> G.T. Clark and R.O. Jones, *art.cit.*, 1-22; Clark's original plans and elevation of Fonmon Castle, dated 2 October 1860, are in NLW MS 5214E.

<sup>79</sup> Patricia Moore, *op.cit.*, unpagged.