

MANORIAL HERITAGE REGISTRY HISTORICAL RECORD EXTRACT

MHR-M-0003213 • MANOR
ABERGWILI MANOR

Evidence status: Unverified
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Location: Carmarthenshire
Associated places: Carmarthenshire

LORDSHIP / TITLE ASSOCIATIONS

ABOUT THE MANOR

Abergwili Manor was an episcopal manor at Abergwili, Carmarthenshire, situated at the confluence of the Rivers Gwili and Towy. The manor is described in a 1944 Inland Revenue valuation survey as comprising approximately 600 acres, including demesne lands, the episcopal residence or Bishop's Palace, pasture and meadowland, a water mill, and common lands used by the inhabitants of Abergwili until enclosure in 1855. The estate also supported a weekly Friday market and an annual fair. Abergwili had an ecclesiastical foundation by the late thirteenth century, when Thomas Bek, Bishop of St Davids, founded a college and associated town. The college was removed to Brecon in 1541, and the buildings were subsequently adapted as the principal residence of the Bishops of St Davids. The episcopal residence remained at Abergwili until the twentieth century. Large parts of the demesne were sold between 1886 and 1913. The old Bishop's Palace and its grounds were later transferred to the Representative Body of the Church in Wales and acquired by Carmarthenshire County Council in 1974 for museum use. The evidence establishes the site and its episcopal character securely, but does not provide a complete deed-based descent for every component of the historic manor after the nineteenth-century sales.

OWNERSHIP / HOLDER ACCOUNT

The accessible evidence does not establish a complete medieval chain of title. Abergwili was an ecclesiastical foundation associated with the Bishops of St Davids by the late thirteenth century, but the sources consulted do not provide a sufficiently direct medieval statement that the entire

later manor was then held as a manor by a named bishop. By the sixteenth century, the property is explicitly described as an episcopal manor belonging to the Lords Bishops of St Davids. Bishop William Barlow moved the principal episcopal residence from St Davids to Abergwili after the college was transferred to Brecon in 1541. The manor or estate remained associated with the office of the Bishop of St Davids through the post-medieval period. The 1944 valuation evidence records that substantial portions of the demesne had already been sold between 1886 and 1913 and that the Bishop's Palace had been transferred to the Representative Body of the Church in Wales. This transfer should not be treated as proof that the whole historic manor passed intact to the Representative Body. In 1974 Carmarthenshire County Council acquired the old Bishop's Palace and grounds for use as a museum. The remaining ownership of any surviving manor rights, commons, mills, or detached estate parcels is not established by the sources reviewed.

CONVEYANCE / DESCENT

- 16th century - before 1944 | Bishop of St Davids | Earlier origin and any precise medieval conveyance are not established in the accessible sources; by the sixteenth century Abergwili is explicitly described as an episcopal manor of the Bishops of St Davids. | | Inland Revenue Valuation Office, Survey and Report on the Episcopal Manor of Abergwili in Ystrad Towy in the County of Carmarthen, 1944, as reproduced in the Dyfed Historic Environment Record; corroborated by K. Murphy, The Archaeology of the Medieval Towns of Southwest Wales: Abergwili, Dyfed Archaeological Trust report 2021-11, February 2021, pp. 1-2.
- before 1944 - 1974 | Representative Body of the Church in Wales | The Bishop's Palace was transferred from the episcopal establishment to the Representative Body of the Church in Wales; the precise date and instrument of transfer have not been identified. | | Inland Revenue Valuation Office, Survey and Report on the Episcopal Manor of Abergwili in Ystrad Towy in the County of Carmarthen, 1944, reproduced in the Dyfed Historic Environment Record; modern confirmation that parts of Parc yr Esgob are leased from the Representative Body of the Church in Wales is supplied by PLANED.
- 1974 - 1974 or later | Carmarthenshire County Council | Acquisition of the old Bishop's Palace and grounds from the church for museum use. The precise conveyance date, deed, and extent of land acquired have not been identified. | | Parc yr Esgob, The Old Bishop's Palace: history of the transfer of the old palace and grounds to the local authority in 1974; corroborated by Carmarthenshire County Council's description of the museum at the Old Bishop's Palace, Abergwili.

RECORDED RIGHTS

- Weekly Friday market: The manor or associated estate supported a weekly Friday market.
- Annual fair: The manor or associated estate supported an annual fair.
- Common rights: Common lands were used by the inhabitants of Abergwili until enclosure in 1855.
- Water mill: The 1944 valuation described a water mill as part of the manor or estate.

DISCLAIMER

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