



Life in Windsor, Pembroke or Carew Castles

Gerald of Windsor and Pembroke, his wife and several generations of sons lived in various castles in or near Wales. The castles were originally made of timber (there was a lot of timber at the time) and later rebuilt in stone. Of course, all of the pictures available are of the stone castles. The next few paragraphs describe the layout of the original castles and life within them.

Within the curtain walls of the castle, the living quarters invariably had one basic element, the hall. A large one-room structure with a loft ceiling, the hall was sometimes on the ground floor, but often, it was raised to the second story for greater security. Early halls were aisled like a church, with rows of wooden posts or stone pillars supporting the timber roof. Windows were equipped with wooden shutters secured by an iron bar and in the 11th and 12th centuries they were rarely glazed. By the 13th century a king or great baron might have "white (greenish) glass" in some of his windows, and by the 14th century glazed windows were common.

In a ground-floor hall the floor was beaten earth, stone or plaster; when the hall was elevated to the upper story the floor was nearly always timber, supported by a row of wooden pillars in the basement below. Carpets, although used on walls, tables, and benches, were not used as floor coverings until the 14th century. Floors were strewn with rushes. The rushes were replaced at intervals and the floor swept, but often under them lay "an ancient collection of beer, grease, fragments, bones, spittle, excrement of dogs and cats and everything that is nasty."

Entrance to the hall was usually in a side wall near the lower end. When the hall was on an upper story, this entrance was commonly reached by an outside staircase next to the wall of the keep. The castle family sat on a raised dais of stone or wood at the upper end of the hall, opposite to the entrance, away from drafts and intrusion. The lord (and perhaps the lady) occupied a massive chair, sometimes with a canopy by way of emphasizing status. Everyone else sat on benches. Most dining tables were set on temporary trestles that were dismantled between meals; a permanent, or "dormant," table was another sign of prestige, limited to the greatest lords. But all tables were covered with white cloths, clean and ample. Lighting was by rushlights or candles, of wax or tallow (melted animal fat), impaled on vertical spikes or an iron candlestick with a tripod base, or held in a loop, or supported on wall brackets or iron candelabra. Oil lamps in bowl form on a stand, or suspended in a ring, provided better illumination, and flares sometimes hung from iron rings in the wall.

In the earliest castles the family slept at the extreme upper end of the hall, beyond the dais, from which the sleeping quarters were typically separated by only a curtain or screen. Eventually, a permanent wooden partition was used. Sometimes castles with ground-floor halls had their great chamber, where the lord and lady slept, in a separate wing at the dais end of the hall, over a storeroom, matched at the other end, over the buttery and pantry, by a chamber for the eldest son and his family, for guests, or for the castle steward. These second-floor chambers were sometimes equipped with "squints," peepholes concealed in wall decorations by which the owner or steward could keep an eye on what went on below.

The lord and lady's chamber, when situated on an upper floor, was called the solar. Its principal item of furniture was a great bed with a heavy wooden frame and springs made of interlaced ropes or strips of leather, overlaid with a feather mattress, sheets, quilts, fur coverlets, and pillows. Such beds could be dismantled and taken along on the frequent trips a great lord made to his castles and other manors. The bed was curtained, with linen hangings that pulled back in the daytime and closed at night to give privacy as well as protection from drafts. Personal servants might sleep in the lord's chamber on a pallet or trundle bed, or on a bench. Chests for garments, a few "perches" or wooden pegs for clothes, and a stool or two made up the remainder of the furnishings. Sometimes a small anteroom called the wardrobe adjoined the chamber - a storeroom where cloth, jewels, spices and plates were stored in chests, and where dressmaking was done.

Servants, military and administrative personnel slept in towers or in basements, or in the hall, or in lean-to structures; knights performing castle guard slept near their assigned posts.

Water for washing and drinking was often available at a central drawing point on each floor. Besides the well, inside or near the keep, there might be a cistern or reservoir on an upper level whose pipes carried water to the floors below.. Baths were taken in a wooden tub, protected by a tent or canopy and padded with cloth. In warm weather, the tub was often placed in the garden; in cold weather, in the chamber near the fire. When the lord traveled, the tub accompanied him, along with a bathman who prepared the baths.

The latrine, or "garderobe," not to be confused with the wardrobe, was situated as close to the bed chamber as possible (and was supplemented by the universally used chamber pot). Ideally, the garderobe was sited at the end of a short, right-angled passage in the thickness of the wall, often a buttress. When the chamber walls were not thick enough for this arrangement, a latrine was corbeled out from the wall over either a moat or river.

An indispensable feature of the castle was the chapel where the lord and his family heard morning mass.

By the later 13th century, the castle had achieved a considerable degree of comfort, convenience, and privacy. The lord and lady, who had begun by eating and sleeping in the great hall with their household, had gradually withdrawn to their own apartments.

One of the games played by teenage sons of the lords was called “rock the cat”. To play it, the boys would gather a pile of throwing rocks and place them in a mound in the middle of the hall and then a cat would be locked in the hall so that it could not escape. The boys would take turns selecting a stone and throwing it at the cat. The thrower would have to pay a penny for each stone thrown. The person who succeeded in killing the cat won all of the pennies.

Gerald of Windsor and Nesta

Princess Nesta was a very remarkable woman. It was said that she was the most beautiful woman in England. She is sometimes referred to as the "mother of the Irish invasion" since her sons, by various fathers, and her grandsons were the leaders of the invasion. She had, in the course of her eventful life, two lovers, two husbands, and many sons and daughters. Her father is quoted as saying that she had 10 children as a result of her matrimonial escapades, eight sons and two daughters



Nesta occupied center stage during their marriage. Her beauty continued to excite wonder and desire throughout Wales. At Christmas in 1108, **Cadwgan**, Prince of Cardigan, invited the native chieftains to a feast at Dyvet (St. David's). (See map on the left) for relative locations of Pembroke, St. David's Powys and Cardigan.)

Nesta's beauty was a subject of conversation. She excited the curiosity of **Owen, the son of Prince Cadwgan**, who resolved to see her. She was his cousin, so that the pretense of a friendly visit was easy. Her beauty -- it was even greater than

He successfully obtained admission with his attendants. he expected -- excited his lust. He determined to have her.

Some accounts say that, Owen, in the middle of the night, set fire to the “castle”, and his followers surrounded the room where **Gerald and Nesta** were sleeping. Gerald was awakened by the noise and about to discover the cause, but Nesta, suspecting some treason (or in a conspiracy with Owen), persuaded him to make his escape. She pulled up a board and let her husband escape down a drain by a rope. Then **Owen** broke open the door, seized **Nesta** and two of her sons, and carried them off to Powys, (see map, above) leaving the castle in flames. Of the two sons, one was my direct ancestor, **William FitzGerald**.

Another account says that Owen stormed Gerald and Nesta's Castle at Cilgerran (three miles south of Cardigan) taking Nesta back to his mountain fortress. A picture of the castle at Cilgerran is below.

Regardless, **Owen** had his way with **Nesta**, (historians say that one of her ten children was his), though whether she yielded from desire or force was uncertain. But at her request, Owen hastened to send back the two sons to Gerald. When **King Henry I** heard of Nesta's abduction, he was



furious. He regarded it as an injury almost personal, since **Gerald** was not only his steward, but Nesta had been his mistress.. The abduction of Nesta led to a war, which resulted in her return to her husband, and Owen fled to Ireland. Gerald took a conspicuous role in the fighting.

In 1116, **Owen**, who had returned to Wales seized (stole) some cattle and the owners of the cattle, as they fled, met **Gerald FitzWalter, Constable of Pembroke**. When the cattle owners requested his assistance, he was only too delighted to have the opportunity for revenge for the insult to his honor done by Owen's abduction of Nesta. He lost no time in pursuing Owen, found him, and killed him. Owen was slain by an arrow piercing his heart, and Gerald's honor was avenged.

Gerald and Nesta's Offsprings

Gerald and Nesta had three sons and a daughter. They were:

Maurice Fitzgerald, one of the principal leaders of the Irish invasion in 1169 (see page 16);

William Fitzgerald, ancestor of the families of Carew, Grace, Fitzmaurice, Gerald and Garrett (see page 19);

David Fitzgerald, who became bishop of St. David's (see page 17); and

Angareth, (see page 17) who married **William de Bari**, and was mother of the historian, **Gerald Cambrensis**, known by many names including **Gerald of Wales**. Most of what we know of the Geraldts and the Fitzgeralds and their kin was recorded by **Gerald Cambrensis**. More about them later.

Nesta married again and it is unclear as to whether it was before or after Gerald's death. Her second husband was **Stephen, Constable of Cardigan**, by whom she had one son, **Robert FitzStephen**. Nesta's children and their descendants constituted a menace to the English rule of Wales. Royal Welsh blood mingled with the blood of the nobles of Normandy in all the half-brothers, sons of **Gerald of Windsor and Stephen of Cardigan**, bastard or legitimate, they were turbulent princes in a troubled land. Now fighting the Welsh natives, now allying themselves with their cousin, Nesta's brother Gruffuyd, the unconquered Prince of Wales, they remained a constant source of trouble to the King, an ever-present threat to his security.

And so they fought and they went on fighting. It was not until King **Henry II**, the father of **Richard the Lionhearted** and **John of the Magna Carta**, that a solution to the fighting was found. He was to give them a free hand in Ireland. It was thus that the Norman invasion of Ireland came about, and the Geraldines (descendants of **Gerald of Windsor**) arrived in 1169.

Gerald is the ancestor of the Fitzgerald families, in both England and Ireland, and is also the ancestor of the Earls of Kildare, the Earls of Leinster and the Earls of Offaly. Some descendants of Gerald and Nesta took on the name, “de Carew” since they lived in Carew Castle. So current-day, Carews are relatives.

Gerald and Nesta’s Children Live Through Civil War

Both **King Henry I** and **Gerald of Windsor, Pembroke and Carew** died in 1135. While Gerald’s cause of death is unknown, **King Henry I** died, probably from eating spoiled eels.

When **King Henry I** died his daughter, Maud (Matilda) was supposed to take the throne and become “Empress Maud”. Unfortunately, Maud was in France at the time, was pregnant and unable to travel which opened the door for Henry’s nephew, Stephen (son of Henry’s sister, Adela), to seize the throne.. For the next 12 years there was a constant struggle (civil war) between Stephen’s supporters and Maud’s supporters for the throne. A timeline of events are:

1101 – Henry I become King of England when his brother, King William II is killed while hunting.

August 5, 1102 – Matilda (or Maud) is born to Henry I and his wife, Matilda (or Edith). My ancestor, William FitzGerald of Carew (son of Gerald) is about two years old at the time.

May 22, 1128 – Maud married Geoffrey Plantagenet, the Fair, heir to Anjou, Touraine and Maine.

March 25, 1133 – Maud’s eldest son Henry is born. He will become King Henry II in 1154 succeeding King Stephen.

1135 – King Henry I died. Also, ancestor, Gerald of Windsor (father of William FitzGerald) died. Gerald’s wife, Nesta lives on.

1136 – some nobles (probably including ancestor, William FitzGerald) supported Maud’s claim and fighting broke out in a few locations. The church was backing Stephen.

1138 – Robert, Earl of Gloucester (illegitimate son of Henry 1 and Nesta and half brother to William FitzGerald) joined Maud followers in the effort to unseat Stephen, sparking a full-fledged civil war.

1139 – Maud leaves Normandy and lands in England

February 2, 1141 – Maud’s forces captured Stephen during the battle of Lincoln and held him captive at Bristol Castle.

March 2, 1141 – Maud welcomed to London. Stephen's brother, Henry, switched sides and supported Maud.

1141 – Maud's demands on the City of London so insulted the populace that they threw her out before her formal coronation could happen.

1141 – Stephen's brother, Henry, again changes sides and joined Stephen.

1141 – Maud escaped dramatically from Stephen's forces disguised as a corpse on a funeral bier.

1141 – Stephen's forces took Robert of Gloucester (son of Nesta and half brother to William FitzGerald) prisoner, and on November 1, Maud exchanged Stephen for Robert.

1142 – Maud, at Oxford, was under siege by Stephen's forces, and escaped at night dressed in white to blend in with the snowy landscape. She made her way to safety, with only four companions.

1144 - Geoffrey of Anjou (Maud's second son) won possession of Normandy from Stephen

1147 - death of Robert, Earl of Gloucester (William FitzGerald's half brother). Maud's forces ended their active campaign to make her Queen of England

1148 – Maud retired to Normandy - near Rouen.

1154 – King Stephen's rule ended and Henry II (son of Maud) becomes King. Henry II becomes the first Plantagenet family king.

Henry II became King in 1154. The country had suffered a civil war for almost twenty years before, between Henry II's mother Maud and the old King Stephen. The country was in a terrible mess, villages had been destroyed, crops burnt and many of the Barons would not obey the king's laws.

Henry II is known as a strong king. He was a good soldier and leader. Henry forced the barons to obey him by using his army. For example William Le Gros the Duke of York refused to obey Henry, Henry took his army to meet William on the battle field and it was not long before William gave in.

Once in control, Henry II made sure he knew what was going on in the country he ruled; he traveled about the country visiting the barons. He changed the system of justice to make sure people who were accused of a crime were given a fair trial. During the reign of King Stephen many innocent people had been made to pay fines so that the barons could have the money.

King Henry also introduced a new law for the barons, instead of having to fight for the king they could pay him some money. This was another way that the King could get money to pay his army and other expenses.

My ancestor, **William FitzGerald**, was about the same age as Maud, Stephen and Robert (Earl of Gloucester) and undoubtedly knew them and was most likely involved in the politics of the situation.

Ken Follett has a wonderful book, *The Pillars of the Earth*, which is set in the time that Stephen and Maud are fighting. While it is an historical novel, his extensive research paints an accurate picture of how people lived and died at the time.



Gerald and Nesta's son, Maurice FitzGerald Settles in Ireland

Of Gerald and Nesta's sons, **Maurice FitzGerald**, is considered to be the progenitor of the Irish FitzGerald. He accompanied **Richard de Clare**, Earle of Pembroke, popularly known as "Strongbow", to Ireland, and there highly distinguished himself, having, among other acts of renown, captured the city of Dublin. For 20 generations and until 1641, Maurice's descendants were Lords of Kerry and Lixnaw, Ireland. See map on the left for the location of Kerry (southwest corner). Appendix 4 goes into considerable detail on **Maurice FitzGerald** and the Irish Invasion.

Maurice was also Lord of Naas, Maynooth, Landstephen and Wicklow – all in the vicinity of Dublin..

Maurice FitzGerald was an ancestor of **President John F Kennedy** and (ugh) Senator Teddy Kennedy.

Gerald and Nesta's son, David FitzGerald Becomes a Bishop.



at St Davids ran with wine during his time there. He died on May 23, 1176 and there is a monument to him in the cathedral. The statue has been defaced - probably by Cromwellians, but

Gerald and Nesta's son, **David FitzGerald** became the second bishop of St. Davids. (See map of Wales on page 13 for location of St. Davids. On the left, is a current photo of the church. He was Archdeacon of Cardigan when consecrated bishop on December 19, 1148 at Canterbury by Archbishop Theobald. The writings of **Gerald of Wales (David FitzGerald's nephew)** is the source of this information. The bishopric of St Davids was the largest and richest in Wales. **David FitzGerald** was said to be constantly at loggerheads with his chapter, and spent much of his time in England. It is also recorded that the River Alun

a sketch does exist from earlier documents, of what the face was like. David was described as a greedy man, ambitious and a despoiler of his bishopric. He was involved in the politics of the invasion of Ireland.

Gerald and Nesta's Daughter, Angharat Sires a Historian

Gerald and Nesta's daughter, **Angharat** married very well to **William de Barri** who inherited from his father **Odo de Barri**. Odo had been granted the immense estate at Manorbier (which included the manors of Jameston and Manorbier Newton), as well as the manors of Begelly and Penally, all rewards for his loyal service during the Norman Conquest. It was Odo who built the first castle at Manorbier, an earth and timber fortification which William refortified in stone during the following century. The de Barris maintained control of Manorbier Castle until 1359. The castle was a few miles south of the Carew Castle (See map on page 9). It was in this castle that William and Angharat's son, **Gerald Cambrensis** (known as **Gerald of Wales**) was born in 1146. Gerald of Wales wrote some 17 books about the church, Wales and his relatives but all the time his ambition was to succeed his Uncle, David Fitzgerald as bishop of St. Davids. He was elected twice to be bishop of St. Davids but both times, the King of England and/or competing churchman succeeded in nullifying his election. He spent a lot of time traveling to and from Rome where he was robbed, captured, ransomed, etc. but never lost hope. A picture of Manorbier Castle is below.



The Manorbier Castle is described in one of **Gerald of Wales** books as --

"excellently well defended turrets and bulwarks, and is situated on the summit of a hill extending on the western side towards the seaport, having on the northern and southern sides a fine fish-pond under its walls, as conspicuous for its grand appearance, as for the depth of its waters, and a beautiful orchard on the same side, enclosed on one part by a vineyard, and on the other by a wood, remarkable

for the projection of its rocks, and the height of its hazel trees. On the right hand of the promontory, between the castle and the church, near the site of a very large lake and mill, a rivulet of never-failing water flows through a valley, rendered sandy by the violence of the winds. Towards the west, the Severn sea, bending its course to Ireland, enters a hollow bay at some distance from the castle; and the southern rocks, extended a little further north, would render it a most excellent harbour for shipping... This country is well supplied with corn, sea-fish, and imported wines; and what is preferable to every other advantage, from its vicinity to Ireland, it is tempered by a salubrious air..."

Gerald and Nesta's Son, William FitzGerald is My Ancestor

William FitzGerald, the oldest of Gerald and Nesta's three sons is my direct ancestor. He became Lord of Carew (Curru, Carreu, Caru, Carriou) Castle which means that he owned it by inheritance. He was born, married and died in Carew Castle. He married **Katherine de Kingsley** and had six children. He was less involved in the invasion of Ireland than his brothers and his sons.

Katherine de Kingsley was from the County of Cheshire where the current city of Liverpool is located. It is about 200 miles from Carew Castle -- one wonders how William and Katherine met.

Although Katherine was from Cheshire County, she lived and died with William at Carew Castle in Wales.

William and Katherine had four sons and two daughters. They were:

Otho de Carew (1125-1204)
Raymond le Gros de Carew (1140-1183)
Griffin FitzWilliam de Carew (about 1140-)
William FitzWilliam (about 1140-1192)
Mabila de Carew
Isabel de Carew

Son, **Otho de Carew** inherited his father's castles and manors. His descendants lived and died in Carew Castle or Moulsoford Manor for many generations

Son, **Raymond le Gros de Carew** went to Ireland (the "le Gros" mean large or huge in French). His cousin, **Geraldus Cambrensis** writing in the late 12th century, states in part, that in a battle the Normans were loosing when "Raymond [le Gros] was appointed to the command, and the troops recovering their spirits, made an incursion into the district of Ophelan (Offaly), and carrying of immense booty, obtained means of being fresh mounted and equipped. From thence they marched to Lismore, and having plundered both the city and the province, conveyed their spoils by the coast road to Waterford. With these they freighted some small vessels which had lately arrived from Wexford, and some others which they found in the port of Waterford. While, however, they were waiting for a fair wind, thirty-two ships full of armed men came from the city of Cork, distant about 16 miles westward, for the purpose of attacking them. A naval engagement ensued, the Irish making a fierce attack, armed with slings and darts, and the English repelling it with arrows and iron bolts from their cross-bows, of which they had great store. In the end, the

men of Cork were defeated, their leader Gilbert mac Turger, being slain by **Philip of Wales**, a young soldier of great prowess. Then **Adam de Hereford**, who commanded, having increased his fleet with the ships taken, loaded it with plunder and sailed in triumph to Waterford. Strongbow next directed another invasion force led by **Raymond "Le Gros" de Carew**, Raymond successfully established himself on the Wexford coast after defeating a group of Irish chieftains from Ossory and Idrone. See Appendix 4.

Son, **Griffin FitzWilliam de Carew** also went to Ireland. He became Baron of Knocktopher, Kilkenny, Ireland. Griffin had four sons, Gilbert, Matthew, Raymond and Griffin. Gilbert FitzGriffin is cited as the 2nd Baron of Knocktopher, likely the eldest (surviving) son of Griffin, and the first owner of Knocktopher manor of whom there is certainty. Griffin was sheriff of Dungarvan, where he and Thomas FitzAnthony seemed to have worked together in a high handed way, for between them they relieved the Bishop of Waterford of his property at Lismore, Ardmore, and Ardfinan. They parceled out a great deal of land among their friends -- not forgetting themselves. Gilbert died about 1203. The Knocktopher land stayed in the hands of Griffin's descendants for many years. See Appendix 4.