

Database Exercise : Monastic Wales Activity

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Chosen site Ewenny Priory/Priordy Ewenni



Ewenny Priory

To what order did your chosen monastery? belong, and what do you understand by 'order'?

Ewenny was a house of the Benedictine order, as a cell of Saint Peter's Abbey Gloucester. The term order in this context is used to mean a religious group/society of monks (nuns/friars) living under a common set of regulations and discipline.

Who founded it?

William of London, Lord of Ogmores castle, built a church locally, still believed to be the most complete example of a Norman church in Wales. He presented the Church to the Benedictine abbey of Saint Peter in Gloucester before 1131, and it became a cell of that house. In 1141 his son Maurice de Londres re-founded Ewenny and it was raised to conventual status. However evidence shows that there may well have been an earlier establishment on the site.¹



Ogmores Castle

¹ David Knowles, 1971, *Medieval Religious Houses England & Wales*, London: Longman p65

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Are there any indications of why it was founded?

The database does not provide this information. Having said that, in the relevant period of history the English crown was attempting to pacify, at least, parts of Wales and had settled the fertile, lowland areas of south and west Wales. Hence a Lord, William, from London occupying Ogmores Castle. A further element of control would be to have an English controlled church/priory to exert influence on the local population

What is the significance of its location?

The answer above covers the salient facts involved with English attempts

What recorded events are listed in its history and what are their significance?

Unlike other sites on this database, Ewenny does not have a list of major events other than its founding/re-founding and ultimate suppression. This was a minor house; it only had a prior and two monks at its surrender and a low income level (£59.00 in 1535)². However, one of the associated patrons was Payne de Chaworth, Lord of Kidwelly, he went on Crusade with Prince Edward (later Edward I), he became a captain of West Wales which involved leading a local army in 1 war in 1277 against Deheubarth. Many of the Priors were, unsurprisingly, monks of Gloucester, for most of them that was it, however, two of them went on to become abbot of Gloucester, a major Benedictine monastery.

² Knowles *op cit*