



# MONKTON





**Monkton** is situated to the west of Pembroke on the southern shore of the Pembroke River. A parish of Pembroke yet quite separate from it, Monkton was a close knit community, proud of its independence. The village was self sufficient and boasted numerous shops covering every need from milliners to bakers, but its heart was torn out in the 1960s when a programme of modernisation was enthusiastically implemented. Much of the old village of traditional Pembrokeshire houses and cottages was bulldozed and replaced with a large modern council estate. Monkton is very much a place with a hidden history.



### ***The Priory Farm Cave***

Monkton's story starts some 10,000 years ago in a cave in the limestone ridge bordering the Pembroke River. This cave called Catshole or Priory Farm cave was excavated in 1908 by Dr A Hurrell Style and Mr E Dixon and stretches more than 120 feet into the limestone rock. Finds included human and animal remains, flints and a rare Bronze Age hoard consisting of a saw with ring, chisel and palstave which can be seen in the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff.

### ***The Norman Invasion***

#### **Founding of Monkton Priory**

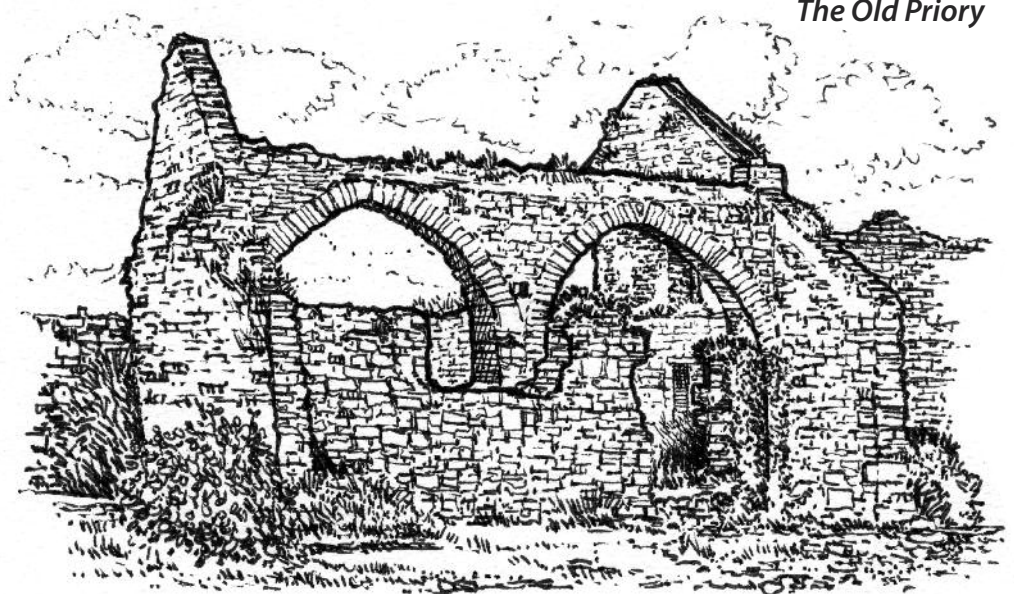
When Arnulf de Montgomery invaded the area in 1093, he erected a fortification on what is now the site of Pembroke Castle. He also occupied the earthwork where Monkton now stands across the southern inlet of Pembroke River. Here was established a church and monastic buildings dating back to the early centuries of the Christian era. This inlet also appears to have been the port or shipping place of the district and was therefore essential to the Norman occupation.

In 1098 Arnulf founded the present Priory making a gift of the Church of St Nicholas 'within his castle' to the Benedictine Abbey of Seez in Normandy. The Priory, as a parish church, became the focus of the settlement of Monkton and gave it its name 'tun of the monks, 'tun' meaning settlement or farm.

The north side of the nave of the present church is the original wall of the ancient church. The only remains of the Priory buildings, other than what was incorporated into the Priory Church, are limited to some freestanding arches and a gable wall. No archaeological work has been done in the area

although aerial photographs and ground forms indicate that extensive foundations remain.

The Priory occupied an important position close to a great castle and on the pilgrim route to St Davids. The young Henry Tudor, who was later to become Henry VII and founder of the Tudor dynasty, was sent to the Priory to be educated by the Benedictine monks. However, it was his son Henry VIII who was responsible for its dissolution in 1535. The Priory continued to be used as a parish church, although its condition gradually deteriorated until there remained only the long narrow nave. The choir and sanctuary became a roofless ruin and remained so until its restoration at the end of the nineteenth century.



***The Old Priory***



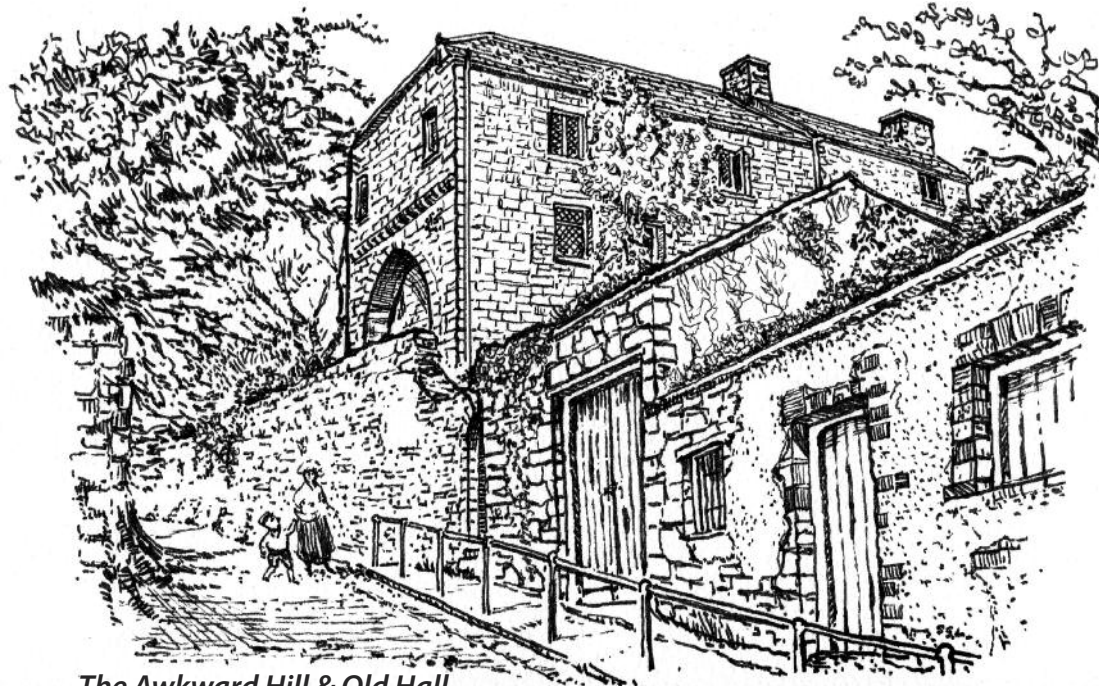
### **Mediaeval Monkton**

A cluster of mediaeval buildings around the Priory fortunately remain and make 'old' Monkton a place of great historic interest.

### **Monkton Old Hall**

is regarded as the oldest domestic dwelling in Pembrokeshire, possibly Wales. Of 14th and 15th century construction it has a vaulted crypt or undercroft, which is much older, and there are many later changes. At

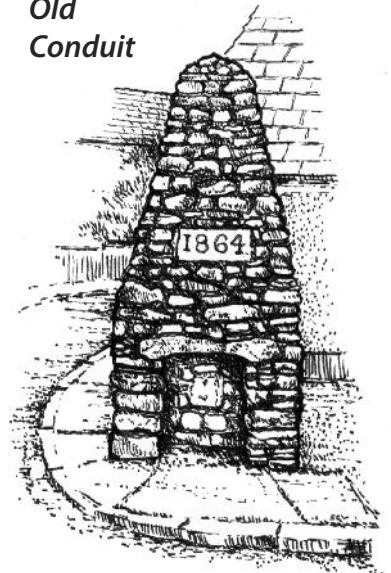
the back of the building is a prominent, round 'Flemish' chimney.



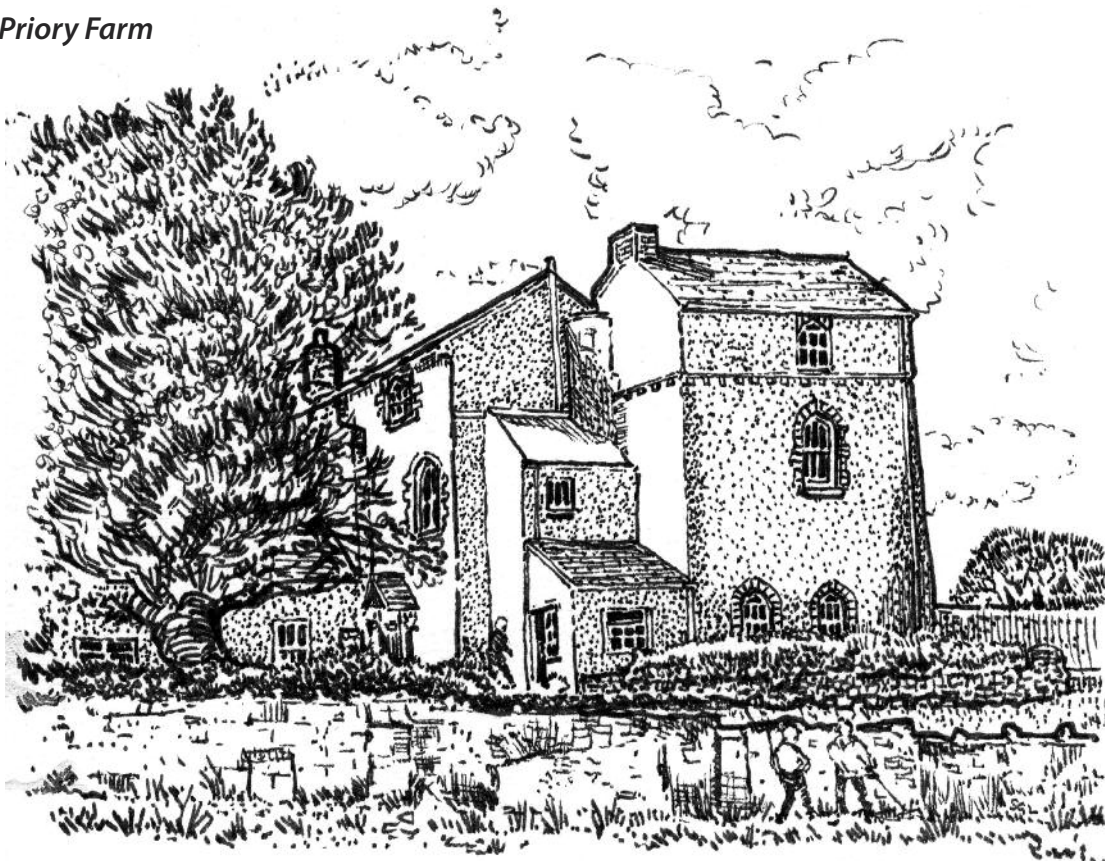
**The Awkward Hill & Old Hall**

The Hall was not one of the main Priory buildings and is thought to have been a guest house for visitors to the Priory: hospitality was a Benedictine rule. Monasteries were almost the only place where travellers could be sure of a night's lodgings and, perhaps appropriately, it is once again a guesthouse owned by the Landmark Trust. It is, however, said to be haunted!

**Old Conduit**



### **Priory Farm**



### **Priory Farmhouse**

was, according to Pembrokeshire antiquarian Richard Fenton, once the Prior's mansion. It has been much restored but the corbels high on the front indicate that parts are mediaeval dating back to the 14th or 15th century. It was originally a fortified manor, or tower house built with the main rooms one above the other and accessed by ladder drawn up at night. The ladder was replaced by a flight of steps as times grew more settled.



In the fields, a short distance west of the farmhouse, is a mediaeval dovecote. This would have been important in providing fresh meat to the Priory during the lean winter months. Please note that these buildings are privately owned and there is no right of access.

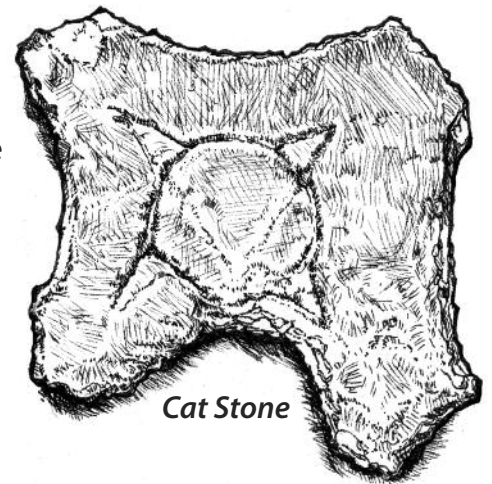
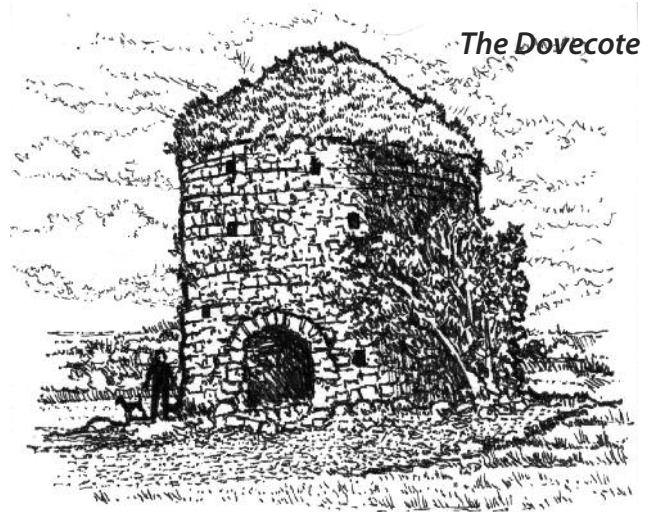
### **17th Century and Civil War**

John Speed's map of 1611 shows the farm complex at Monkton. Monkton was a settlement in its own right, with a market from the late mediaeval period onwards. During the Civil War Cromwell's troops, numbering in the region of 6,000 men, surrounded the Castle and Monkton occupied an important strategic position. When Cromwell besieged the Castle in 1648 he placed a battery of cannon in the garden alongside the Vicarage.

The curate at the time refused to leave his home, preferring to risk the danger and noise. After the siege Cromwell invited him to preach to the officers of his army.

Part of local folklore is the story that Cromwell was able to force Poyer, the Governor of Pembroke Castle, into submission by cutting off the water supply to the Castle which was located in Monkton on Norgan's Hill. A traitor named Edmonds supposedly betrayed the location to Cromwell but he did not benefit from his crime: he was hanged near the spot and a cat stone was placed over his grave.

That stone was later incorporated into the perimeter wall of the old Monkton School and after its demolition taken to the Castle.



### **Nineteenth Century Expansion**

Monkton people engaged in trades connected with shipping, shipbuilding, quarrying and lime working as well as agriculture, but it was in early Victorian times that Monkton rapidly began to spread westwards. Rows of terraced cottages were built to house the workers of the Dockyard as Pembroke Dock increased in size. A rowing boat ferry across the Pembroke River at Colley's Landing brought workers over to Imble Lane within walking distance of the Dockyard. It is said, that to Pembroke townspeople Monkton stretched so far west, it seemed to be at the end of the world. That is why there are such exotic names like India Row, New Zealand and Turks Castle. Monkton developed into a thriving community. In 1910 the population was 1069, compared to the 1688 inhabitants recorded in the United Kingdom Census of 2001.

### **Education**

A growing population demanded more and better schools and in 1866 Monkton Mixed Junior School was built on the sharp bend at the top of Bridgend Terrace. This fine Victorian building was a casualty of road improvement and an empty, grassy space remains where it once stood.

A new Junior School 'Monkton Priory Community Primary School' was built behind the Infants School which was opened in 1899 and remains today. It incorporates a dedicated centre to gypsy travellers known as the 'Monkton Priory School Project'. Monkton has long been associated with the travelling community.

### **Farming and Fairs**

During the mid 19th century Monkton was the first and last port of call for the farmers and drovers herding cattle from Castlemartin peninsula. They watered their animals at the Old Conduit in Monkton Lane, and as the cattle needed a drink, so too did the drovers. Church Terrace has 13 properties and at least 5 of these were pubs at the time.

Monkton hosted 3 fairs including the May Fair and the Holyrood Fair and also various street sales of cattle and horses. Horse racing was also a feature of Monkton life. Before moving to Lydstep, the Point to Point races were held at Priory Fields. The Jenkins family of Priory ran stables and owned a string of successful racehorses including the famous Priory Boy.



**Monkton  
Priory  
Church**



***Victorian Restoration of the Priory Church***

Canon David Bowen came to Monkton in 1877 and was responsible for the restoration of the ruined Priory Church which began in 1882. During the restoration gruesome discoveries were made; hundreds of human bones were found under the floor and a skeleton of a monk was found walled up above the porch, in such a position to suggest he had been interred alive.

King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra visited the Church on Saturday 23rd August 1902 and the great East window was commissioned to commemorate the visit, dedicated by the Bishop of Swansea in August 1904. The Queen Mother was another Royal visitor in 1964.

The Church is well worth a visit. A leper's squint and tombs of the local nobility are among its many interesting features, which are highlighted in the heritage boards displayed there.

***Church Terrace & Priory Church Hall***



Legend has it that the Priory is connected to the Castle by a secret tunnel. In 1885 two brothers Alfred and Tom Davies claimed to have followed the underground passage. They were driven back by the sound of water and the fact that their lamps went out.



## A Walk Through Monkton

Walking the Pembrokeshire Coast Path reveals much about Monkton's history as well as its natural history. From Angle, the path follows the Pembroke River as far as an attractive little inlet, Quoits Mill, which is the westernmost boundary of the parish.

Quoits Mill is of particular interest as the provider of the first electricity supply to Pembroke.

The path proceeds through 'modern' Monkton (where the old street names of India Row and Long Mains have been retained) to the 'old' part, turning left by the Priory Church into Church Terrace, down the Awkward Hill past the Old Hall to Monkton Bridge, the location of the original Quay of Pembroke in use until the 20th century. Turn left onto the Castle Pond walk and you pass beneath the Priory buildings and Farm, a derelict cottage (relic of the shipyard at Cunnigar) and cross a barrage over the Pembroke River.

Continue the Coast Path to Pembroke Dock, which follows the opposite side of the river, and it is possible to take a detour along the shore line at low tide from where Monkton can be viewed. Colley's Landing and old quarry workings can be seen. There are also lime kilns but these are out of sight.

This path is a must for those with an interest in natural history. The Pembroke River is designated an SSSI. Here you will see a variety of birdlife: among them wildfowl, waders such as heron, little egret, curlew and you may even see a kingfisher.



Quoits Mill



## THE COUNTRYSIDE CODE

### Respect - Protect - Enjoy

- Be safe - plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home
- Keep dogs under close control
- Consider other people

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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