



<http://kentarchaeology.org.uk/research/archaeologia-cantiana/>

Kent Archaeological Society is a registered charity number 223382

© 2017 Kent Archaeological Society

THE LORDS AND LADIES OF TONBRIDGE CASTLE

SYDNEY SIMMONS, F.I.C.E.

Shortly after the Norman conquest Richard FitzGilbert raised a motte and bailey castle at Tonbridge. The family he founded became known in English history as the de Clares, and when, two hundred years later, the family's wealth exceeded that of all other magnates, his descendants, the Earls of Gloucester rebuilt the castle. Portraits of the builders and their connections remain on the walls of the now roofless gatehouse.¹

The four external dripstone mouldings of the south-facing top-floor windows once terminated in grotesques. The weather has been unkind to three of them and only the western one is intact. He is a good humoured curly haired male; his right eye is closed and the right hand side of his mouth screwed up in a gap toothed grimace. The stone from which he is carved is deeper than the bed of the adjoining courses which had to be cut to receive him. He is obviously a caricature, perhaps of a master mason whose portrait was inserted as the scaffolding was coming down. The stonemasons who repaired the walls in the 1950s nicknamed him 'Glub' after a Neanderthal character in a World War II newspaper strip cartoon.

The other portraits are within the chamber which occupies the top floor of the gatehouse. The room is 52 ft. long, 28 ft. wide, and about 15ft. high, and is approached by two spiral staircases; one at each end. The centre of the south wall is dominated by a grand fireplace flanked by two large windows with seats commanding a view of the bailey and the distant wooded skyline of Bidborough Ridge. In the north wall are four arrow loops.

The large window openings are splayed and moulded and divided

¹ Sydney Simmons, 'Tonbridge castle. Further observations on an ancient castle', *Arch. Cant.*, cxvi (1996), 101-46

into two lights by tracery. The internal hood mouldings rest on heads carved with such talent and of such high quality and sensitivity that the character and personality of each subject is in no doubt. It is clear these are portraits taken from life, and of people of such importance that they were worthy of special places in such a noble building.

Other carvings adorn the fireplace which is framed by projecting jambs and robust consoles which once supported the lintel of the hood. On each side of the opening is a slim vertical column, simulating a pipe, and at the top of each is a warmly clad youthful head with puffed out cheeks, representing different 'winds' blowing the fire. The boy on the east is wearing a little red-riding-hood type of cowl pushed slightly back over a tight close-fitting inner hood which lets his bubbly curls show around his forehead. His companion is wearing a tight-fitting cap with folds at the back which completely covers his hair. The concentrated effort each boy is bringing to his task of acting as human bellows is emphasised by his puffed out cheeks, heavily creased brows, and tightly squeezed eyes.

Originally, each hood console terminated in a boldly carved portrait head 16 in. wide and 12 in. high; they were, significantly, in the most honourable places in this, the finest room of this impressive castle.

The people portrayed so vividly at the ends of the internal hood mouldings are carved from stones 11 in. square. That at the left of the east window is of a female, and because it has suffered badly from the weather, the age of the lady is difficult to judge. She is wearing a tall ornamental coif held by a crimped or goffered band which passes twice under her chin and covers her ears but allows a little hair to escape on her brow.

Her partner, on the side nearer the fireplace, is a clean shaven, mature male with his brow and eyebrows creased and drawn in a frown, and with deep creases from the inner corners of his eyes to his mouth. With his somewhat sunken cheeks he has a strained, worried or anxious appearance. He is wearing an open necked shirt with folds in the material at the sides of his neck. He has handsome well-moulded lips and chin. His hair, which is held high on his brow by a band or fillet, is dressed in a formal waved fringe and flows back in waves to the level of his ear lobes which are hidden by a stiff curl. The formal hair style is similar to that of Henry III on his tomb in Westminster Abbey, and quite different from the earlier fashion of the straight bob to below the ears of King Henry's father, King John, on his tomb in Worcester Cathedral. Younger characters are portrayed on either side of the west window. The male, as on the east window, is nearer the fireplace. He is vigorous and handsome, and like the older man's, his waved hair is held in a place with a fillet

which allows his curly fringe to cover a little of his smooth brow, while at the sides, his hair falls in formal waves to below his ears which are hidden by final stiff curls. He is clean shaven; his cheeks are smooth and unlined; his eyebrows are well formed and sharply moulded; his chin and nose are pointed, and there is a look of amused arrogant impudence on his face.

His female partner is broader in the face than anyone else portrayed; she has a full bottom lip, chubby cheeks and a suspicion of a double chin. Her head dress is a type of shawl or wimple held clear of her waved hair. Behind her head, framing her face, are draperies hanging in folds. She has a pleasant half smile, and although not lacking in character, appears to have a more amiable, cheerful and easy personality than her partner.

Of the two principal portraits which were once on the consoles of the fireplace hood, the one on the east has gone, and no drawing or description is known.

The portrait on the western console is badly mutilated. Much of the damage has been done in the last ninety years by air gun pellets used in futile attempts to kill the destructive pigeons. It is of a male with his strong neck emerging from an open shirt, his head thrust boldly forward and chin well out. Around his forehead are traces of a raised band and concentric curves which may be the remains of an elaborate fillet, but give the impression of the band of a crown. There are traces of ornamentations surrounding the head. An old photograph shows him to have had a heavy moustache, wide mouth, rounded chin, strong nose, and prominent eyebrows.

The questions are 'Who were these people of such rank that they were given such important places in this noble castle?' and 'When?' and 'Why were they so honoured?'

To answer these questions it is necessary to find a time when such a stronghold was needed, and there was someone with the will and resources to provide it.

The dress and hair styles of such portraits are likely to be those of contemporary high fashion, and, as such, they give a pointer to the period in which the original simple motte and bailey castle was brought to the peak of medieval military architecture. The hair style suggests the reign of Henry III, and the answer to the questions may be found by a study of what was happening in the country in that period.

The de Clares held the castle from the eleventh century until the fourteenth century, and, as the parts they played in medieval history are well documented, significant events in their lives can be set out on a bar chart (Fig. 1).

Some authorities have dated the rebuilding of the castle to

THE LORDS AND LADIES OF TONBRIDGE CASTLE.

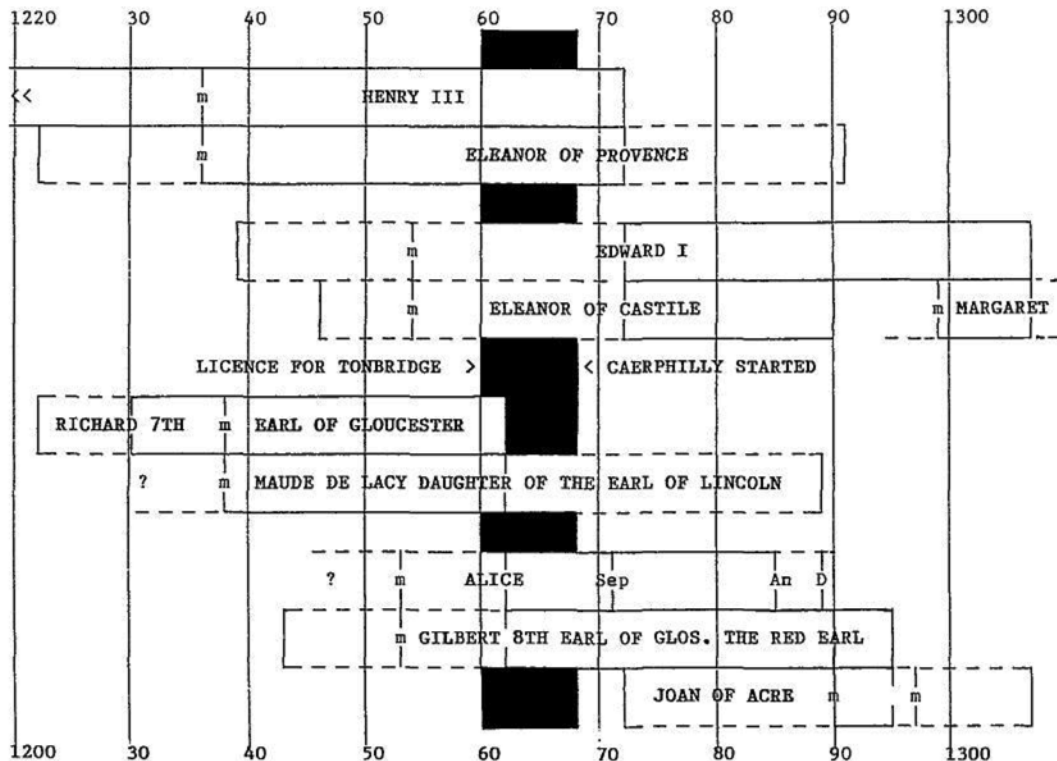


Fig. 1: The Lords and Ladies of Tonbridge Castle

1220-1240, but Gilbert de Clare, the sixth earl of Gloucester, died in 1230, and before 1240, when his heir Richard, became eighteen, no guardian is likely to have spent money on such work unless there was an imperative need. For that reason the time span of the chart has been curtailed and, as in the simplified account which follows² only a few of the complicated political shifts and personal relationships which have a bearing on the work on the castle have been noted.

The following persons are shown on the chart:

Henry III. Born 1207; *m.* 1236; *acc.* 1216; *d.* 1272 and his Queen

Eleanor (of Provence) Born *c.* 1222; married Henry 1236; *d.* 1291

Edward I. Born 1239; *m.* 1254 and 1299; *acc.* 1272; *d.* 1307; and his 'Chere reine'

Eleanor (of Castile) Born *c.* 1246; *m.* Edward 1254; *d.* 1290.

Richard de Clare. Seventh Earl of Gloucester. Born 1222; *m.* 1238; *d.* 1262 and his wife

Maude de Lacy. Daughter of Earl of Lincoln; Born ? *m.* 1238; *d.* 1289

Gilbert de Clare. Eighth Earl of Gloucester. Born 1243; *m.* (1) 1253; *m.* (2) 1290; *d.* 1295 and his two wives

Alice. Daughter of half-brother of Henry III. Born?; *m.* 1253; *sep.* 1271; *an.* 1285; *pap. dis.* 1289; *d.* 1290.

Joan of Acre. *b.* 1272 *m.* (1) 1290; (2) '1297'. *d.* 1307

THE CROWN AND THE CLARES

Among William the Conqueror's companions at Hastings were his cousins Baldwin and Richard FitzGilbert, the founder of the house of Clare. Richard's son-in-law, Walter Tirel, shot the arrow which killed William Rufus in the New Forest in 1100. From then the Clares prospered, and marriages and liaisons with the royal line led to a complicated network of relationships. A favourite mistress of Henry II had been a de Clare. King John had been married in 1189 to Hadwisa or Isabel of Gloucester, sister-in-law of a later Richard de

² The account is based on Sir Maurice Powicke, *The Thirteenth Century*, Oxford History of England, second edition 1962. OUP and Michael Altschul, *A Baronial Family in Medieval England*, Johns Hopkins Press 1962.

Clare, and, after divorcing her married the fourteen-year old Isabella of Angoulême. By Isabella he had Henry III; Richard Earl of Cornwall, who in 1231 married the widow of Gilbert de Clare; Joan who married Alexander II of Scotland; Eleanor who married Simon de Montfort to the displeasure of her brother Richard and the barons; and Isabella who married the Emperor Frederick II.

King Henry III was born in 1207. He was nine years old when he inherited the crown. The year after his father's death his mother, Isabella, married Hugh de Lusignan, the Lord of La Marche, and for years their many children were welcomed to England and provided with rich spouses and offices. After the King married Eleanor of Provence in 1236 her Savoyard family were similarly welcomed and favoured. His partiality to his foreign relatives and their followers was deeply resented by the English barons and the commoners. During his reign the territorial disputes between France and England, which the Truce of Chinon had been intended to settle, intermittently flared into warfare.

Gilbert de Clare, the sixth Earl of Gloucester, who had been a leader of the barons in opposition to King John, was a protector of his young heir, Henry III, and a major figure in the government of the realm during his minority. He died in Brittany in 1230 while on a mission for the king.

After the royal family, Earl Gilbert had been the greatest landowner in the British Isles. He held the honours of Gloucester, Clare and Tonbridge, and had estates in every county of England from the Wash to Devon. His English estates were assessed at 456 knight's fees – more than double that of his nearest competitor. He had estates in Ireland and in the border lands of Wales – the Marches. As lords of Glamorgan it was recognised that the Clares were free of feudal obligation to the crown. They extended their lands from Chepstow to modern Swansea, and had estates in Pembroke. They regarded themselves as lords of the March rather than as English earls and, as with the other great marcher lords such as the Lord Edward, their Welsh interests involved wars with the Welsh chieftains and princes and with their English neighbours.

On the death of Gilbert de Clare, the wardship of his eight-year old heir, Richard, and control of his estates was a prize of tremendous profit. King Henry dismissed the archbishop of Canterbury's claim to the wardship, and put Richard into the care of guardians who were successively disgraced. In 1234, the King himself undertook the responsibility and brought up the boy as part of his own family. While a ward of Hubert de Burgh, Richard had been married secretly to his daughter Margotta; the marriage was annulled by Henry.

Richard found himself in an affectionate and happy family circle which included his mother Isabel and her new husband, Richard of Cornwall, the King's brother; later, the family was enlarged by the Savoyard relatives of the Queen and by the King's Lusignan step brothers and sisters.

In 1238, when Richard was about fifteen, he was married to Maude de Lacy, daughter of the Earl of Lincoln, and in 1243 entered his estates. From then until a settlement in 1247, he was involved in struggles with the Welsh chieftains. Thereafter, he travelled widely in Europe with the King and Queen and their relatives on pilgrimages, to tournaments, to courts and festivities, and on royal missions. With Richard of Cornwall he went to St. James of Compostella and to the Pope at Lyons, and attended the marriage of Lord Edward to Eleanor of Castile in Spain.

Matthew Paris, the contemporary historian wrote that the King said to Richard:

'My dear Earl I will no longer conceal from you the secret desire of my heart, which is to raise and enrich you, and to advance your interest by marrying your eldest son to the daughter of Guy, Count of Angoulême, my uterine brother....'

In accordance with the royal policy of bonding with the Lusignans, Richard, in 1252, arranged the marriage of his eldest son Gilbert, about nine-years old, to Alice, the daughter of one of the King's half-brothers, and in the spring of 1253 Richard and William de Valence (also a half-brother of the King) took Gilbert to Poitou where the marriage was solemnised.

Richard was not only rich and powerful but Matthew Paris reports him as:

'young, handsome, eloquent, prudent and well skilled in the laws of the land; and such a man as in all respects that the hope of all the Nobles of England rested confidently in his bosom, and he possessed the favour and good will of all.'

The favours granted to the waves of foreigners brought into the country by Henry III were not the only grievance of the barons. They considered the king was hopelessly entangled in Mediterranean politics and that his foolish enterprises and ill-managed expeditions into France, which had driven them into debt and the country into near bankruptcy, and his failures against the Welsh, had disgraced them and their country. Throughout the reign, while punctilious in owning their allegiance to the crown, they were determined to protect

their own interests. In 1253, when their grievances led to a solemn confirmation of Magna Carta, the King, as usual with him, immediately sought to be released from his oath.

In 1258 the barons' opposition to the King's style of government and his abuse of their feudal rights crystalized into a full-scale movement with Simon de Montfort and Richard de Clare as leaders. Henry became virtually their prisoner, and in June he and the Lord Edward were forced to agree to the 'Provisions of Oxford' which, among other reforms, set up a Council of fifteen to advise the King and act in his name.

It was not long before rifts began to appear in the Council. Simon de Montfort's excessive zeal for reform threatened the barons' own interest, and the rivalry between de Clare and de Montfort helped the King to attain his object of freeing himself from domination by the Council. The barons had promised reforms which would aid all classes and, when they failed to produce them, the current of popularity turned in the King's favour.

In 1259, Richard de Clare, his rivals, the Lord Edward and de Montfort, swore to support each other, but, despite the agreement, the feelings between the three did not improve, and as Prince Edward drew nearer to de Montfort, the King began to believe the pair were conspiring against him, and he began to place increasing confidence in his protégé, Richard de Clare, who, by November had moved to his side.

In 1257, negotiations had begun with Henry's brother-in-law, King Louis of France, to settle family disputes and the difference arising from the Treaty of Chinon. Terms were agreed in May 1259 and in November, Henry, and Richard de Clare, arrived at what was in effect a gathering of the family in Paris, where, on the 4th December, 1259, a new Treaty was published and Henry did homage to Louis for Gascony.

In Paris alarming news reached King Henry of events in England and at the end of December he gave Richard de Clare the licence to wall and embattle Tonbridge.

The Welsh had raided the Lord Edward's lands. Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, was questioning Henry's right to suspend parliament and was seeking to dismiss the King's uncle, Peter of Savoy, from the Council; he had enlisted the aid of the Lord Edward, and had sent to France for armed men who were expected to land at Sandwich. Edward's friend Roger Leyburn was strengthening his castle at Leyburn ten miles north-east of Tonbridge, and Prince Edward was about to bid for the throne.

The King could not leave France as de Montfort was refusing to

send him money to pay his debts. The news from England meant civil war. The King had need of a strong castle in the south-east to match Roger Leyburn's, and his friend, Richard de Clare, who was with him had the money to provide it.

The King, hearing that Earl Simon and the Lord Edward were to hold a parliament in London and parley with the Earl of Gloucester, sent orders for the feudal host to meet in London and for the Earl of Gloucester and his friends to close the city of London to Edward and Earl Simon. On April 23, the King returned from France and Edward and his father were reconciled.

For the next two years the struggle continued. King Henry gained control of castles in the south-east – both sides brought in mercenaries from France – there were disagreements and attempts at reconciliation. Richard de Clare raised difficulties, but finally a compromise over control was reached and peace was made.

In anger Simon de Montfort left England in December 1261, and in July of the next year the King also left for Paris to revive with King Louis all his personal and political grievances against Earl Simon.

The day after King Henry left, Richard de Clare, his protégé, friend, and companion, died.

Personal animosity to the King had never motivated Richard. His apparent inconsistencies were characteristic of most of the barons who championed or opposed programs of reforms, not in a commitment to any theory of government, but rather moved by personal feelings and the protection of their own interests and powers.

After the settlement of 1261 Richard had taken no part in public affairs. It was said that some time before, in 1258, Walter de Scotney, his seneschal, acting in collusion with King Henry's Poitevin half brothers, had poisoned Richard and his brother William, who died; the earl lost his hair and his nails. It was rumoured his last illness was the result of a second poisoning.

Earl Richard's heir, Gilbert de Clare, though under age, hurried to France to demand from King Henry his estates. The King refused to see him and, to add injury to insult, ordered an inquiry into the possessions of the earldom.

No progress was made towards peace with Earl Simon and in England conditions became chaotic. Prince Edward's former companion Roger Leyburn and his friends, including Gilbert, ran amok, and when, in 1263, Edward returned to England and required all persons of standing to take an oath of allegiance, Gilbert de Clare refused.

Simon de Montfort also returned and began to ravage the lands of those who supported the King; the Londoners attacked the Queen's

barge, and in the hostile atmosphere, King Henry reluctantly accepted terms and Earl Simon took over the government.

Earl Gilbert played no personal part in these events but remained quiet and, in August 1263, took possession of his extensive estates. Earl Simon's victory was an uneasy one. The spoliation of estates had caused anger, and although the Lord Edward and other barons remained fiercely resentful, a form of reconciliation in which Gilbert took part, was reached by the autumn.

The October parliament was a fiasco and the King's promise to Earl Gilbert and others to adhere to the Provisions increased his support sufficiently to enable him to resume control of the exchequer. Earl Simon withdrew to Kenilworth. The King tried to regain control of the castles and, in December, to entrap de Montfort - an attempt foiled by the Londoners.

It had been agreed that King Louis should arbitrate in all the disputes between the King and the barons. At the end of January 1264, he gave judgement for the King on all counts. The de Montforts were outraged, and the King's promise of an amnesty was disbelieved. The King and the Lord Edward landed from France and began manoeuvres which deprived the de Montforts of control of the Severn valley and at Northampton defeated them. Gilbert, who was now firmly on the side of the reformers, remained at Tonbridge where he could watch Roger Leyburn who was holding Rochester for the King.

Earl Simon concentrated his forces on London while Gilbert closed in on Rochester, and, on Good Friday, 18th April, took the city. The next day he took the outer works of the castle and began the siege of the great keep. The king hurried south. The Earls, Simon and Gilbert, fell back to London. King Henry was joined by the Lord Edward near Tonbridge and took the castle wherein he found his niece, Gilbert's Countess, Alice, whose first daughter had been born the previous year.

King Henry moved on to Lewes where de Montfort met him and offered terms which were indignantly rejected. The Earls renounced their oaths of loyalty to the King and battle was joined.

The battle of Lewes was a victory for the reformers. The King surrendered to Earl Gilbert, and the Lord Edward and other royals became hostages for the fulfilment of the terms of the peace. A provisional administration was entrusted to the Bishop of Chichester, Earl Simon, and Earl Gilbert. Earl Simon became sole regent.

In France preparations were made by the royalists relatives for an invasion of England, while in the west the marcher lords retained royal castles and plundered the Severn valley. Acrimonious negotiations between the royalists and the reformers continued until

the midsummer of 1265 when terms of peace were agreed and the hostages were released to the King.

Earl Simon's actions convinced Earl Gilbert and others that the Earl was exercising power to serve his personal ambitions and they defected from the baronial party. Gilbert de Clare refused to attend parliament and stayed in the Forest of Dean.

Attitudes were hardening. The King's relatives from France landed at Pembroke while Earl Simon marched to the Severn taking the King and Lord Edward with him. Earl Gilbert's brother Thomas arranged for the escape of Edward from captivity and they joined Earl Gilbert. On the 4th of August 1265, the battle of Evesham was fought; the royalist's forces routed the reformers and de Montfort was killed.

The death of Earl Simon de Montfort did not restore peace. In the battle he had exposed the King to personal danger and the royalists' revenge was fierce. They seized and plundered reformers' lands and indiscriminately distributed estates among the King's followers. Many of Simon de Montfort's supporters continued to resist the royalists and to hold out in castles, forests and swamps; some in the hopes of help from France, and some for fear of reprisals. There was fighting over the castles and towns still held by the anti-royalists, and there were doubts and distrust about the treatment of victims and vanquished which continued after the Lord Edward agreed fair and moderate terms for peace in the Dictum of Kenilworth of October 1266.

Gilbert, many of his knights, and others on the royalist side, including the Lord Edward, had benefited from the seizures, and had friends among the 'disinherited' whom they did not want to see broken. 'Rebel' was undefined and some confiscated estates of which the ownership was in doubt, had changed hands. There was confusion in the country and in the courts, and despite, Edward's statesmanlike efforts to restore the King's peace the troubles continued.

The Pope's legate was also working to seek a settlement and Gilbert is credited with a determination to break the deadlock by taking direct action to bring matters to a head. Rather than see the rebels broken and his rivals in the royal council triumphant he decided to march on London with his own force of knights and men-at-arms. His wife, Alice, who had by then broken openly with him, warned the King, her uncle, of his intentions. Gilbert camped at Southwark overnight and the next day crossed the river and met with the legate and rebels from Ely and took over the city. The legate renewed the excommunication of the rebels and retired to the Tower. The King, and Prince Edward from the north, with strong support, gathered for the siege of London – a battle which no one wanted.

The concentration of political interest and force in and about London did clear the air. Discussions resulted in a reconciliation between Gilbert and a suspicious and resentful Edward, and on June 18th, 1267, the King entered the city. Gilbert offered 10,000 marks as surety for his good behaviour, a sum which the Pope later doubled and added a condition requiring Gilbert to hand over Tonbridge castle to the King's nephew Henry d'Almain, or Gilbert's daughter Isabella to the Queen. The King later remitted the condition. A few days later a general peace was proclaimed.

Until he left in July 1269, the Pope's legate, Ottobuono had been successfully preaching a crusade, and in June 1268 many took the cross. Among them were Prince Edward and Earl Gilbert. Gilbert was deeply involved in defending his Welsh possessions and in the same year at Caerphilly began to build what became the most elaborate and strongest of medieval castles; a tremendous undertaking requiring great sums of money and resources.

The Lord Edward left England in August 1270 to join King Louis in the Holy Land. Earl Gilbert had made arrangements to follow (sureties had been arranged to ensure his departure) but Llywelyn ap Gruffydd destroyed the work done on Caerphilly and Gilbert had to turn his attention to Wales. The question of his crusade was forgotten.

As a guardian of the realm in Edward's absence, Earl Gilbert co-operated in defending the Welsh borders and maintaining order in the country. He was summoned to the bedside of the dying King Henry III in November 1272, where he swore to uphold the peace and guard the kingdom for Prince Edward. He did so faithfully and firmly, and on King Edward's return from the Holy Land in 1274, he and Queen Eleanor were entertained by Gilbert, The Red Earl, at Tonbridge before their coronations.

Gilbert and Alice though still married, had been separated since 1271. They had two daughters, but no son. As the richest and most powerful nobleman in the country, the question of the inheritance and the possible break up of the earldom was of great political importance.

In May 1283, King Edward had agreed with Earl Gilbert to a marriage with his daughter, Princess Joan of Acre; accordingly, the marriage to Alice was dissolved in May 1285, but papal dispensation for the marriage with Joan was not forthcoming until November 1289.

On April 17th 1290, Gilbert, Earl of Gloucester, aged 47, surrendered all his lands in England, Wales and Ireland to King Edward. The marriage to the Princess was celebrated at the beginning of May, and on May 27 the estates were restored jointly to Gilbert and his new Countess for life. The inheritance was to pass to their heirs, or failing such heirs to Joan's children by any subsequent marriage.

Thus, Edward ensured that all the English estates and the power they gave, and the independent powers of the Welsh lordships, would revert to his own grandchildren. The newly married couple returned to Tonbridge.

Earl Gilbert continued to fall out with his Marcher neighbours and to raise old disputes with his father-in-law, the King, whose realm he had kept faithfully and whose peaceful succession he had assured. Earl Gilbert died suddenly in his castle at Monmouth on the 7th December, 1295, and was buried at Tewkesbury.

The Princess Joan was the second surviving daughter of King Edward I and Queen Eleanor. She was a lively person with a mind of her own; by Gilbert she had a son Gilbert, who inherited the earldom, and three daughters. After Gilbert's death she married again.

The answers suggested here to the questions of 'Who?' and 'When?' and 'Why?' not only fit events before work was begun on rebuilding the castle but also after the work was finished.

There was no need nor inclination to spend Richard's inheritance on a castle before he came of age in 1240. The first time a strong castle in the south-east appeared to Henry III to be needed was at the end of 1259 when, in Paris, without money, and unable to leave France, he was in fear that Edward, aided by his friend Roger Leyburn, was about to make a bid for his crown. It was then that he gave his rich and powerful friend, Richard, seventh Earl of Gloucester, who had been brought up in his family, and had been his companion and adviser, and who was in Paris with him, the licence to wall and crenellate Tonbridge.

It is unlikely that even so wealthy a family as the Clares could have found the money and masons to undertake the building of Tonbridge and Caerphilly at the same time. It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that the major part of Tonbridge had been finished before work on Caerphilly began in 1268.

The castle was occupied by 1264 two years after the death of Earl Richard, when his son Gilbert was at Tonbridge watching Roger Leyburn. Countess Alice, the king's niece had her first daughter about that time, and when King Henry and the Lord Edward captured the castle the Countess was there. Gilbert and Alice were still in the castle in the spring of 1267 when Alice warned Henry of Gilbert's intention to march on London.

The work must have been started in 1260 by Richard, seventh Earl of Gloucester, ambassador, diplomat and statesman, who had been burdened with the cares of state; a man who had survived one poisoning and who died before his great new castle was finished. On his death, not only all his vast possessions, but the completion and



PLATE IB



A) Richard de Clare, Seventh Earl of Gloucester who began to rebuild the castle;

B) Richard's son Gilbert, Eighth Earl of Gloucester (The Red Earl) who completed his father's work.

THE LORDS AND LADIES OF TONBRIDGE CASTLE

PLATE IIA

A) Gilbert de Clare,
Eighth Earl of
Gloucester.

B) This is probably
Gilbert's second
Countess, Joan of
Acre, daughter of
Edward I.



PLATE IIB



embellishments of the castle became the care of his son Gilbert, The Red Earl, young, handsome, hot-headed, vigorous, independent and rebellious, who by 1268 had substantially finished the work. That it was done hurriedly is borne out by the construction of the walls.³

I suggest Richard and Gilbert are the two males, high on the walls of the main chamber of their castle (Plates IA and IB), and that their wives, Maude de Lacy and Alice of Angoulême, were originally their partners. They could only have given pride of place to their Sovereign Lord the King. I suggest the carvings above the brow of the fireplace portrait was a crown, and that it was not the ageing Henry III, but, as is borne out by the power and vigour of the features, his son, Edward I, who was entertained here in 1274.

Accepting King Edward as the central portrait, the missing figure would have been his chere reine Eleanor; probably – with the exception of the beautiful bronze in Westminster Abbey – the only true portrait of his cherished queen.

The plump friendly girl we now see as partner to the youthful Gilbert, is unlikely to be his first Countess, Alice, the niece of Henry III, separated from him since before 1271, and whose marriage was annulled, but his second Countess, Joan, daughter of King Edward and Queen Eleanor, who was brought here by Gilbert after their wedding in 1290 (Plates IIA and IIB). Part of her welcome home may have been to find her portrait had joined those of her father and mother.

Confirmation of the chronology is provided by Derek Renn in his 'Tonbridge and other Gatehouses'⁴ where he gives cogent and well-documented historical and architectural reasons for believing that Tonbridge must have pre-dated and in many respects been the model for Caerphilly, the greatest and most expensive de Clare castle. He has also⁵ described the remarkable similarity between the gatehouses of Tonbridge and Caerphilly. The detailed descriptions of Caerphilly written by C.N. Johns⁶ could be a description of the Tonbridge gatehouse, curtain walls and postern down to the mouldings of the early stop chamfers. There can be little doubt that the military genius that conceived Tonbridge repeated the design at Caerphilly, and saw his concepts rise from the ground in the beautifully worked stones we see today.

³ Simmons, *op. cit.*

⁴ Derek Renn, 'Tonbridge and other gatehouses' in (Ed.) A. Detsicas, *Collectanea Historica: Essays in memory of Stuart Rigold*, Maidstone (1981)

⁵ Renn, *ibid.*

⁶ C.N. Johns, *Caerphilly Castle*, Official Handbook, H.M.S.O. (1978)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I shall always be grateful to Stuart Rigold, who in 1970, when I first told him how I had crudely arrived at the identity and date of the portraits, opened my eyes to many other facets of dating. Fortunately, his tremendous knowledge supported rather than undermined my thought, but did lead me to think again about Countess Alice and Princess Joan. I am also grateful to Derek Renn whose help and encouragement have been a comfort, and who has willingly shared with me his extensive knowledge of castles.

In condensing the tangled events of this period I am bound to have fallen into errors. It would be a kindness, if they were pointed out to me.