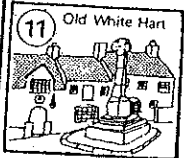


# Llantwit Major history walk

**14 THE RUINS**  
Another 16th century manor house known locally as "The Castle" and which is in a derelict condition. A local legend suggested that it is haunted by a lady in white who was starved to death in this house by her husband.



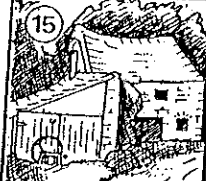
**12 TY MAWR OR GREAT HOUSE**  
This fine example of a 16th century Tudor manor house was carefully restored in 1952. These works revealed a number of hidden chambers which could have been used for fugitives. Local rumour also suggested that an underground passage linked the house with the monastic grange.



**11 LOCAL INNS**  
The original part of the Old Swan was reputed to have been built during the 11th or 12th centuries as a banking house for Iestyn ap Gwrgan, the last Welsh Prince of Glamorgan. Today it shows mostly 17th century features. The Old White Hart was originally built in the 17th century as a house for the local Justice of the Peace.



**15 OLD FORGE (PLYMOUTH HOUSE BARN)**  
These farm buildings are typical of the locality and with the surrounding fields give an insight into the Town's rural origins. Note the abundance in this area of wild Valerian, growing on surrounding walls; this was a plant introduced to Britain by the Romans.



14 Ruins



**16 PLYMOUTH HOUSE**  
Built in the 17th century as the Manor House for Sir Edward Stradling it is rumoured to be on the site of the refectory for the monastic grange. This belief was strengthened in the 18th century by a find in the adjoining field of a medieval coffin lid and effigy.

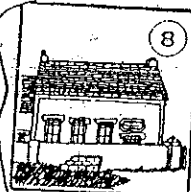
**10 TOWN HALL SQUARE**  
This building was never a Town Hall in the usual sense, since Llantwit Major was never a borough with a charter. Local legend indicates that it was built as a Court of Justice in 1290 by Gilbert de Clare, with the gallows supposedly on Llanmaes Road. The Town Crier's steps where the news and coming events were shouted reminds us of times before modern communications. The war memorial to commemorate the fallen in the Great War of 1914-18 now stands on the original base of a preaching cross which was destroyed during the Puritan rebellion of 1532.



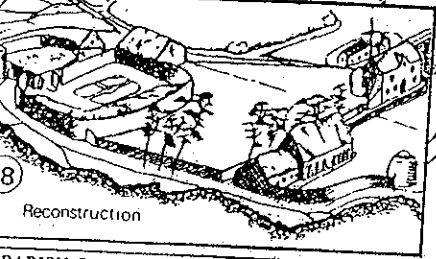
**18 THE MONASTIC GRANGE**  
Excavation of the mounds in the fields to the west of the Church revealed the layout of a typical monastic community of the 12th century. The oldest building in Llantwit Major dates from this period and as a gatehouse controlled the entrance to the Grange. Nearby, the dovecote was used by the monks to provide a source of fresh meat for the winter months. All that remains of the old tithe barn, which was used by the monastery to store a levy of 1/10th of all the neighbouring tenants' produce, is the field wall on the southern side of Church Lane. The barn was dismantled after the Tithe Act of 1836 when tithes in kind were replaced by a financial levy. In 1873 the remaining stone was used to build the vicarage (now the Old Vicarage) on the opposite side of Church Lane.



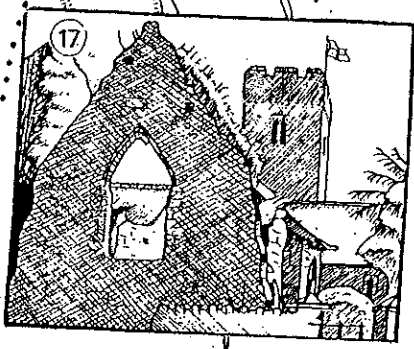
**9 HILLHEAD COTTAGES**  
Across the valley the beautifully restored terrace of cottages were once the almshouses for the poor. The land adjoining the Ogney Brook is thought to have been the location of the thinking cells, or retreats, for the monks who worked on the monastic grange.



**8 METHODIST LANE TABERNACLE CALVINIST METHODIST CHURCH**  
The Calvinist Tabernacle was built after the "Great Revival", non-conformist movement of 1859; over a third of the local population were converted. Outside the chapel, the old horse mounting steps were used by worshippers who journeyed on horseback.



**PARISH CHURCH OF ST. ILLTUD**  
Thought to be built on the site of the famous monastery of Illtud which was founded in the 5th century, it is considered that this churchyard has been used for Christian burials for about 1500 years. Although most of the existing building was erected during the 12th to 14th centuries it is clearly in two sections; the older part is the West Church which contains Celtic crosses and stones. The more recent East Church is used for worship. The relic extension on the western end is the Galilee, or Chapel, which fell into ruin after the Reformation. The original calvary in the churchyard was also destroyed by the Puritans in 1532 but has since been restored. John Wesley preached here in 1777. The Chantry House, a building on the south side of the churchyard was originally the residence of the chantry priest. This was destroyed by a bomb in 1940 and is now used as a resting place for ashes after cremation.

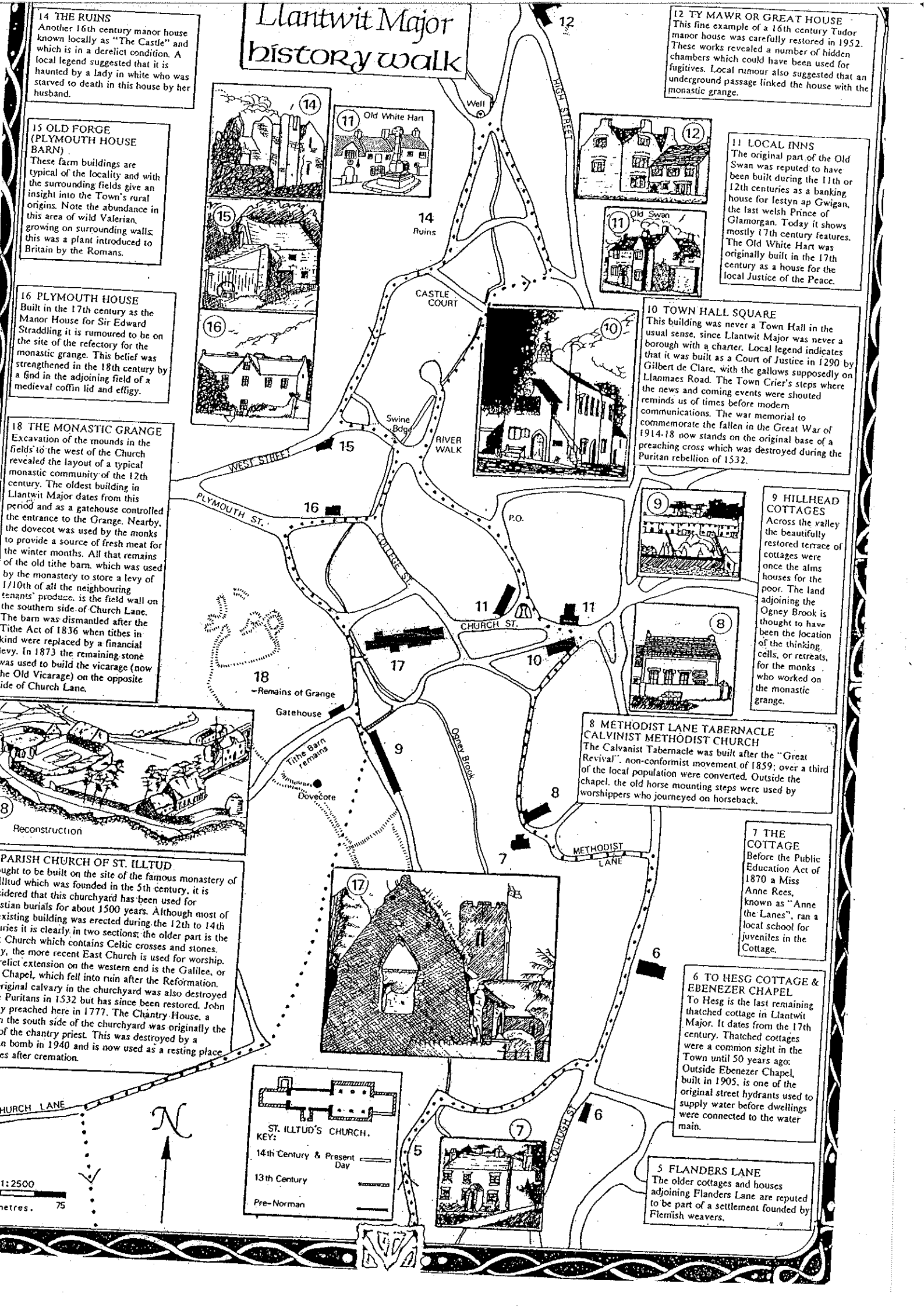
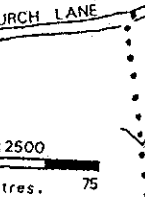
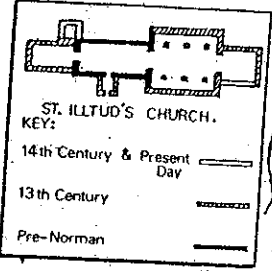


**7 THE COTTAGE**  
Before the Public Education Act of 1870 a Miss Anne Rees, known as "Anne the Lanes", ran a local school for juveniles in the Cottage.

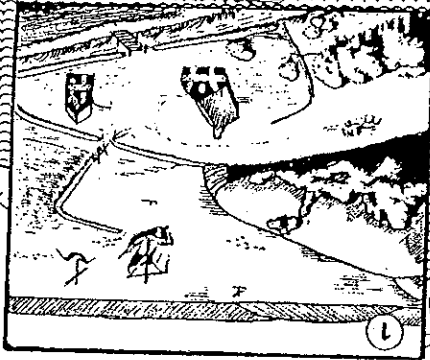
**6 TO HESG COTTAGE & EBENEZER CHAPEL**  
To Hesp is the last remaining thatched cottage in Llantwit Major. It dates from the 17th century. Thatched cottages were a common sight in the Town until 50 years ago. Outside Ebenezer Chapel, built in 1905, is one of the original street hydrants used to supply water before dwellings were connected to the water main.



**5 FLANDERS LANE**  
The older cottages and houses adjoining Flanders Lane are reputed to be part of a settlement founded by Flemish weavers.



# Llantwit Major history walk



**1 THE PORT OF COL-HUW**  
Probably originated during the early 5th century and is reputed to have flourished during the 12th century. It was probably destroyed by storms during the 16th century and was never rebuilt. Evidence of the protective curve of the harbour wall can still be seen by a row of vertical blocks to the east of the "Blackboys" wooden remains of a 13th century sea defence or pier.

One of the first examples of "shuttered concrete" construction a wind operated pump drew water from a depth of 200 ft. into the tank where it was used for irrigation purposes and to provide drinking water for stock. During World War II, pilots returning to local airfields aligned themselves on this prominent water tower to locate their flight paths for landing.

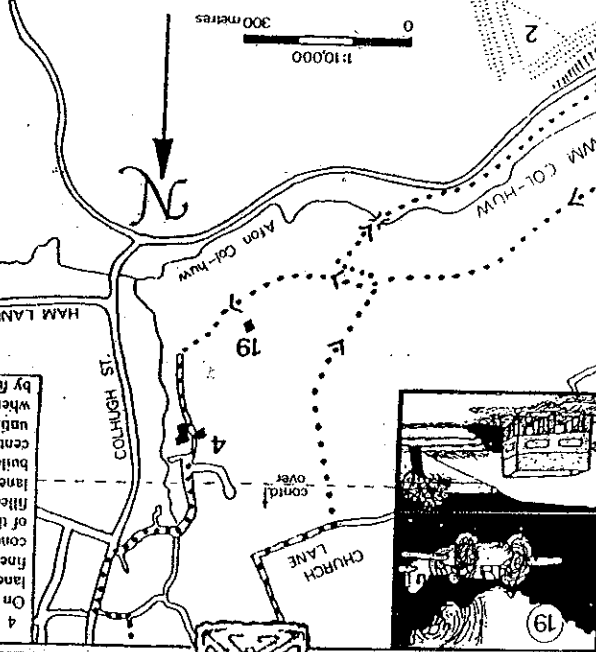


**4 LOWER HOUSE FARM**  
On the right hand side of the lane approaching the farm is a fine example of a shuttered concrete stage tower, the top of this tower, where it was lifted, is at the level of the lane. The original farm building dates from the 16th century and it was thatched until as recently as 1930 when the roof was destroyed by fire.

**3 HAM HOUSE**  
Set in ornamental gardens Ham Manor House was built between 1859 and 1863 on the site of a 12th century Manor House. It was demolished after a fire in 1947 and since 1969 the site has been occupied by the Ham Manor Residential Caravan park.



**2 CASTLE DITCHES**  
An extensive Celtic encampment protected by a series of mounds and ditches; the inner mound bearing a wooden stockade and a parapet to support defending urbanism. The fort probably offered a sanctuary for surrounding farmsteads and as it contained dwellings and stock enclosures, sieges could be withstood for long periods. There is evidence that this fort was used until the 12th century when, as the "Castle of Mairchianu", it offered protection to local inhabitants who repelled plundering marauders. Until last century this event was re-enacted by local people on the 3rd May each year as the Annwy! Day Celebrations on Col-huw meadow.



# history walk

## INTRODUCTION

Professor Glyn Daniel's statement that Llantwit Major is "delightfully set on the shores of the Severn Sea in the fertile and beautiful Vale of Glamorgan" gives an indication of its agricultural beginnings. From early Neolithic times (4000 years B.C.) Bronze Age men exploited the rich soils to grow their crops. Later, in the Iron Age (700 years B.C.) the rural settlements were strengthened by large promontory forts at Castle Ditches and Summerhouse Point. Even in Roman times life near the coast was precarious; coastal raids were common and the ransacking of the Roman villa at Caer Maed has been linked with these insurgencies.



Llantwit Major, however, came to international prominence during the 5th Century when St. Illtud established his church in the valley of the Ogney Brook, at the present church. As a teaching monastery, fame of unilltud Fawr, "the large church of St. Illtud", spread throughout the Celtic church in south west Britain and Brittany. As communication was by sea, the harbour at Col-huw beach was established. Sadly, no trace of the original wooden buildings remains but the location was sufficiently important to the burial site of Celtic chiefs, some of whom are still commemorated by stones and crosses in the church.

When the Normans invaded Glamorgan in 1093, the land around Llantwit Major was retained by Robert Fitzhamon, the Lord of Glamorgan, as a model farm or to supply corn to the garrison at Cardiff. Fitzhamon later gave the manor to the Abbey at Tewkesbury and the settlement continued to thrive as a priory or monastic farm. Twelfth century evidence of its importance can still be seen: the Dovecot, the Gate House, the remains of buildings in the adjoining fields. During the period the port of Col-huw flourished and the Town Hall, the White Hart Inn and the Old Swan Inn had their origins.

The combination of the revolt of Owain Glyndwr and the black death in the 14th Century shook the prosperity of the town and weakened the corn growing manorial system. When the town began to rise again in the 16th century it was as part of an estate with field enclosures. The enormous profits from sheep farming at this time caused the emergence of a class of yeomanry and gentry. To demonstrate their wealth and importance the new gentry began to build large houses. Great House, Plymouth House, Court House, the Swan and White Hart Inns, the Town Hall and Llanilltyd Fawr Primary School, all owe their present appearance to this period.

The years between 1750 and 1900 were settled ones for the town and the buildings of the time are mainly the modest cottages that are now characteristically Llantwit Major. Non-conformism was received with fervour by local people and resulted in the building of several chapels. During this period, Llantwit Major was a quiet, closely-knit agricultural community and remained so until the opening of the Vale of Glamorgan Railway in 1897. This event ended the town's isolation and began the process of settlement by people seeking houses for retirement or as country retreats from which to commute to work. In the late 1930's the eastern part of the town expanded rapidly, mainly due to the development of the R.A.F. base at St. Athan. More recent modern estate development has also been to the east and the old town centre retains much of its historic character and charm.

Most of these older parts of the town are now protected as a "Conservation Area" and the designation of "Heritage Coast" helps to prevent the despoilation of the coastline. For the future there is a growing awareness of the value of our environment and for the need to preserve the best examples of our inheritance from the past.

This self guided walk is one of a series for Llantwit Major which has been produced by South Glamorgan County Council and the Glamorgan Heritage Coast Project.

The walk of 2 to 2½ hours duration is suitable for healthy people of all ages. Walkers are advised to wear strong shoes and to bring a waterproof coat.

