

## 6F SSSI Citation

DYFED

CAREW CASTLE SSSI

South Pembrokeshire District

Date of Notification: January 1995

National Grid Reference: SN045038

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1:10,000 Sheet number: SN00

Site Area: 11.5 hectares (28.4 acres)

Description:

Carew Castle and surrounds lie at the head of the Carew River estuary and provide important transitory roosting and feeding sites for greater horseshoe bats Rhinolophus ferrumequinum and other bat species. The greater horseshoe bat has a predominantly southern Palaearctic distribution, and the Welsh population is at the extreme north-western extremity of the species' range. The British population has suffered a severe decline this century.

Radio tracking during the late 1970s establishment that significant numbers of greater horseshoe bats, including many pregnant females from the Stackpole Courtyard Flats and Walled Garden SSSI nursery roost, habitually utilised Carew Castle and its grounds during the spring prior to breeding. The Castle occupies a prominent and important strategic location, crucially situated within flight range of the bats' two current breeding roosts, as well as numerous hibernacula and key feeding sites. A programme of monitoring of bat activity since 1986 has established that during the spring the Castle regularly holds up to 30 or more (33 maximum) individual greater horseshoe bats at any one time. Smaller numbers utilise the Castle in the summer and also throughout the autumn during dispersal to winter hibernacula. It is thought that there is a rapid turnover of greater horseshoe bats at the Castle and that a high proportion of the estimated 350 individuals present in West Wales make use of the site each year as a transitory roost.

Within the Castle ruins there is an enormous range of undisturbed roosting and hibernacula sites. These include several large capped and uncapped chimneys, a complex of tunnels, crevices in barrel-roofed and vaulted rooms and undercrofts, and numerous crevices in barrel-roofed and vaulted rooms at different levels. These sites are used as day time roosts and/or night time grassland around the Castle combined with the adjacent Carew Millpond and sheltered Castle Lane offer invertebrate-rich bat feeding habitat throughout this period. Prey species include cockchafer and dung beetles, craneflies and the larger moths.

Lesser horseshoe bats Rhinolophus hipposideros also regularly use the Castle as a transitory roost and hibernacula, and feed within the Castle grounds between spring and

autumn. The Castle and its surrounds also provide important regular roosting, hibernacula and feeding sites for moderate numbers of other bat species. These include pipistrelle Pipistrellus pipistrellus, brown long-eared bat Plecotus auritus and Myotis species- notably Natterer's bat (Myotis nattereri) and Daubenton's bat Myotis daubentonii. Other Myotis species present include Brandt's bat Myotis brandtii and whiskered bat Myotis mystacinus. A small nursery colony of Natterer's bats often breeds within roof crevices in the basement of the north-west tower, whilst Daubenton's bats may also occasionally breed in wall and ceiling crevices. Noctule bats Nyctalus noctula, Myotis species and pipistrelles regularly feed over the adjacent Carew Millpond and its vegetated shoreline.

The underlying Carboniferous Limestone and the preponderance of limestone in the Castle walls largely accounts for the occurrence of a number of notable plants. The site holds large stands of the nationally rare compact brome Bromus madritensis, which was first recorded in Pembrokeshire here in the early years of the 19th century. It flourishes on the Castle walls and also in the adjacent calcareous grassland where it could be native. The wall communities are particularly rich in plants and also include the nationally scarce southern polypody Polypodium cambricum, as well as species such as rustyback Ceterach officinarum. Another nationally scarce plant present is lax-flowered sea-lavender Limonium humile in the narrow saltmarsh fringe, which also has sea wormwood Artemisia maritima. Amongst the plants of trampled and disturbed ground are knotted hedge-parsley Torilis nodosa, fiddle dock Rumex pulcher and spotted medick Medicago arabica. Grey sedge Carex divulsa has also been recorded from the small area of calcareous grassland.

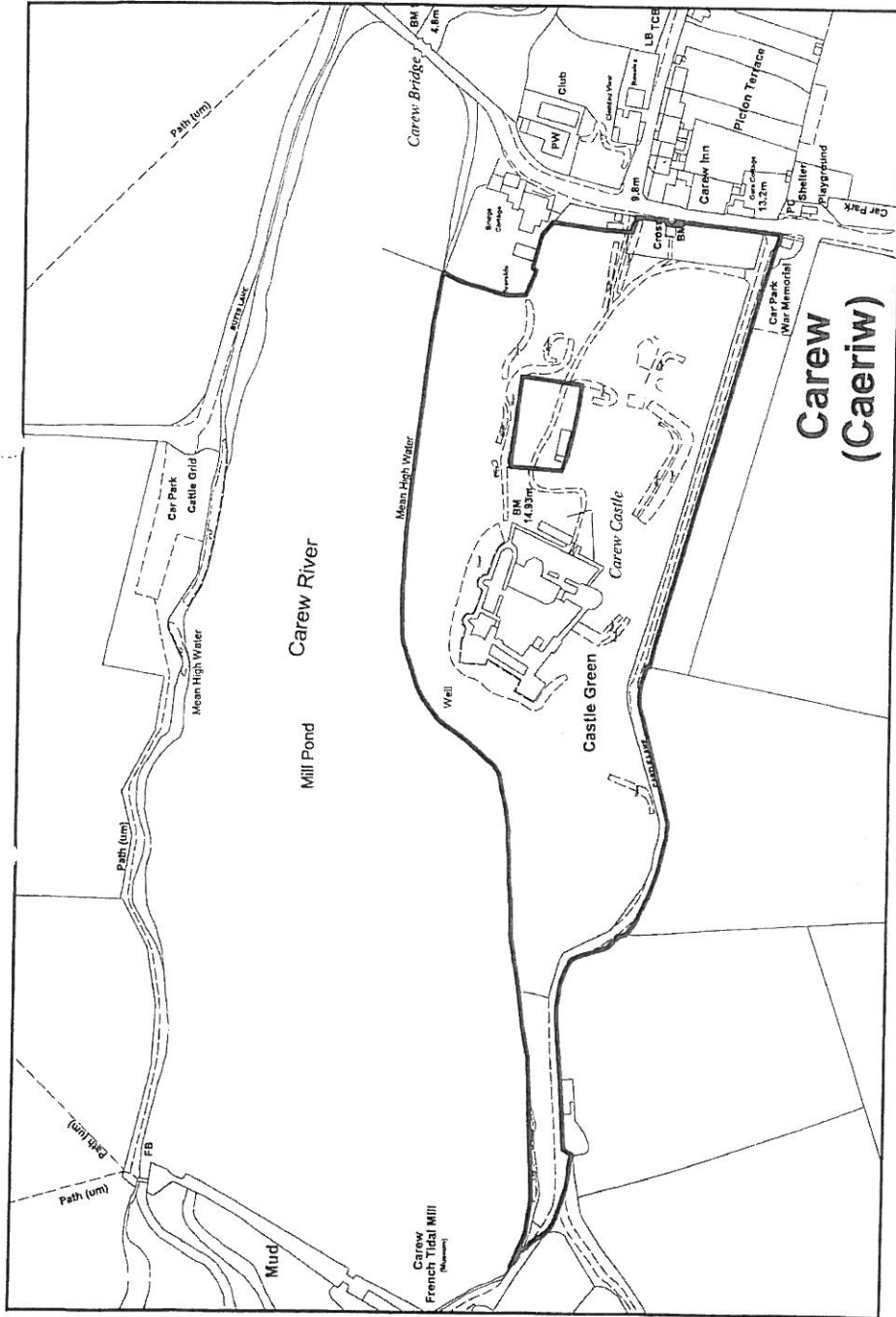
Barn Owls frequently roost within the Castle and breeding occurs regularly. Tawny and Little owls also breed. Peregrine feed and roost within the site. Up to 200 wintering dunlin roost at high tide on the shoreline. Other wintering waders include redshank, greenshank, green and common sandpiper, along with the occasional shelduck.

Remarks:

Within the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

Carew Castle and its grounds are owned by the Carew Estate and leased to Dyfed County Council/Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority. The Castle and grounds are a Scheduled Ancient Monument. An agreed programme of consolidation and maintenance works is being undertaken by the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority funded by Cadw.

Carew Castle SSSI - Amended Boundary, July 12 2002



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