

ALLTYRODYN

Ref number PGW (Dy) 46 (CER)

OS Map 146

Grid ref SN 450 442

Former county Dyfed

Unitary authority Ceredigion

Community council Llandysul

Designations Listed buildings: Alltyrodyn (Grade II*); Stables and coach house (Grade II); Walls to walled gardens including Garden Cottage (Grade II); Bath house (Grade II); Bridge on north drive (Grade II); Entrance gate piers on north drive (Grade II); South Lodge, attached walls and gates with gatepiers (Grade II); Serpentine cascade from lake by South Lodge (Grade II)

Site evaluation Grade II

Primary reasons for grading The survival of an early nineteenth-century ornamental pleasure ground on a grand scale, contemporary with the house, complete with a rare bath house and large, well preserved kitchen garden, which includes a flower garden compartment and an orangery. The wooded grounds contain fine mature trees and look out over an attractive, unspoilt rural valley.

Type of site Pleasure grounds; walled kitchen garden

Main phases of construction c. 1830 - 40

Site description

Alltyrodyn (hillside of the lime kiln) is a substantial early nineteenth-century house situated on the east flank of the Clettwr valley, a few kilometres north-east of Llandysul. The Afon Clettwr is a tributary of the Afon Teifi, which it joins a short distance south of Capel Dewi, south of Alltyrodyn. The south-west facing house is built on a platform, the back of which is cut into the rock of the steeply sloping hillside.

The roughcast, rubble stone house is of a simple, classical design in the style of John Nash, with three storeys, sash windows and a hipped slate roof. The central front door, on the south-west front, has a portico of paired Doric columns and flat roof. At the back of the house a cobbled walk leads to a central, tall bell tower in two tiers over a large archway. Under this is an arched entrance into the enclosed service court at the rear of the house. This formerly housed the coal house, wash house, laundry, dairy, brushing room, engine room and cell room (the last two for the generation of electricity). It is very reminiscent of the service court at Llanerchaeron, designed by John Nash. The north and south sides have elegant verandahs with cast-

iron columns and slate floors. The centre of the courtyard is paved with square tiles sloping down to a central drain. In the south-east corner is a very tall stone chimney stack (raised to prevent down-draught) to the former laundry.

From at least the seventeenth century Alltyrodyn was a property of the ramified Lloyd family of south Ceredigion. It is presumed that the earlier house was on the site of the present one. The 1830 1st edition 1 in. Ordnance Survey map shows a house and a scattering of small outbuildings more or less in the position of the present ones. It is impossible to tell whether or not the house shown is the earlier one but it is clear that the outbuildings are not the present ones as their layout and size is entirely different. The existing house was built either for David Lloyd (1748-1822) or for John Lloyd (died 1841). The latter is slightly more likely as the date stones of 1830 and 1840 (the walled kitchen garden and stables respectively) indicate that John Lloyd was undertaking substantial building works. In 1825 his sole surviving child, a daughter, married John Lloyd-Davies (died 1860) of Blaendyffryn, thus uniting the two estates. Their only son Arthur Lloyd-Davies (died 1852) was succeeded by his son John Davies-Lloyd (born 1850). In the early twentieth century Alltyrodyn was owned by the Stewart family. The oldest son, Alick, was killed soon after his twenty-first birthday at Ypres in 1915 and his brother Douglas emigrated to South Africa. The Stewarts sold Alltyrodyn in 1947 and the present owners have been there since 1969.

The stables and coach house, built of rubble stone with slate roofs, lie to the north-west of the house, at a slightly higher level on the hillside. They are reached by a sloping drive from the north-west side of the house, which is flanked by large yews on its lower side. The single-storey stables lie along the back of a shallow, three-sided court. In the centre is a dressed stone archway over which is a pediment topped with a ball finial. Over the arch is a panel inscribed 'J. Ll Esq AD 1840 AM 5844'. The south range consists of a two-arched coach house; the north range is the contemporary Home Farm house. It faces northwards on to the farm court, which is enclosed by stone farm buildings. This whole complex was built in the same style and materials in the 1830s and 40s.

The pleasure grounds occupy a fairly narrow band of the east flank of the Clettwr valley, about one kilometre long, below the B4459 road. The house lies in the centre and is reached by two drives, one from the north, one from the south. The grounds are largely wooded and slope to the south-west. They are bounded along the road on the north-east side by a rubble stone wall and between the kitchen garden and the dam of the pond at the south-east end by a substantial ha-ha. This has a stone revetment wall and outer ditch into which run-off from the slope drains and is led away towards the north end into a ditch to the Afon Clettwr.

The main entrance is at the south-east end of the grounds and lies just north of a bridge on the B4459 over a small stream, the Afon Geyron. Low, roughly coursed rubble stone walls run from the road to the entrance, that on the east being slightly higher and topped with a horizontal iron railing. The entrance is flanked by dressed stone piers about 3 m high, with tapering tops and ball finials. Between them are two simple iron gates, originally at the north entrance but installed here by the present owners when the original, more elaborate gates were stolen. On the south side the entrance is backed by mature beech trees and laurel; on the north is the South Lodge, linked to the entrance pier on this side by a curving rubble stone wall. Next to the wall a flight of five stone steps leads up to the higher ground on which the lodge is built. To the north of the lodge a similar wall connects the lodge and the boundary wall of the grounds along the B4459.

The South Lodge is a small, square, single-storey rubble stone building, with overhanging eaves and a central chimney set diagonally. It has a central door on the east side and small central windows on the other sides. It does not appear on the 1840 tithe map and was therefore probably built for John Lloyd Davies, owner from 1841 until his death in 1860.

The south drive runs north-westwards along the slope through wooded grounds to the shallow oval forecourt in front of the house. It is flanked for most of its length by clipped laurel backed by mature beech, oak and sycamore trees. Just inside the drive, on the south side, is an opening, flanked by quartz stones, leading to a sloping lawn down to a small pond. This is D-shaped, with a straight-sided earthen dam along its west side. The dam had to be rebuilt after a flood washed it away in January 2000. The pond itself was dredged and restored by the present owners in the late twentieth century, by which time it was almost entirely silted up. There is a small island with *Rhododendron ponticum* on it towards the east end of the pond. The Afon Geyron flows into the pond over a series of concrete cascades under the road bridge. The outlet is at the south end of the dam, where the water is led into an ornamental cascade. This consists of a curving, sunken and steeply dropping channel, floored with large slabs of stone and revetted with dry-stone walling. The water falls over a series of shallow steps down the narrowing channel, which curves around northwards and then continues in that direction in a deeply cut ravine, overhung by trees and laurel, before turning westwards across the valley to join the Afon Clettwr.

Between the pond and the road is a belt of mixed trees and shrubs, while to the south is a shrubbery of rhododendrons and laurel under a canopy of beech, oak and sycamore. An original, stone-edged path winds through the shrubbery from a (modern) wooden bridge over the cascade. The large rhododendrons are mostly *R. ponticum* but there are some hybrids. The walk runs southwards to the end of the shrubbery, where it narrows to a point between the field to the west and road to the east. A circular walk has been made to the east but it is unclear if this is original. Near the cascade an original, stone-edged path runs in a curve past a large cypress tree, over a wooden bridge and then loops back to the first path.

On the north side of the drive a woodland walk branches off from it at an acute angle just inside the entrance. This original path is straight, with some stone edging visible, and rises gently up the slope. It is flanked by clipped laurel, some very fine mature beeches, sycamores and a very large noble fir (*Abies procera*), possibly planted soon after its introduction into this country in 1830. The path runs uphill almost to the boundary wall with the road, then continues north-westwards gently downhill, its upper side cut into the slope. Near the house it runs straight towards its south-east front along the contour as a grass path flanked on its lower side by a laurel hedge. The garden lies below.

The garden occupies level, or gently sloping ground to the south-east of the house, at the foot of the steeper slope to the east. At the south-east end is a gently sloping, irregular-shaped lawn in a glade in the woodland. It is flanked by clipped laurel on its lower side, with a grass walk through to the south drive. There are some fine mature trees around it, particularly beech, oak, ash, sycamore and copper beech. Towards the south-east end is a small pool and modern fountain. A grass walk at this end curves up to join the woodland walk, which can also be reached by log steps up the steep bank on the north-east side of the lawn. At the north-west end the lawn tapers into a path leading to a zig-zag gravel path, edged with stone, which climbs up the steep slope to meet the woodland walk. At this corner the zig-zag path is flanked

by quartz stones. The path is flanked by two large yews, rhododendrons, golden variegated holly and Japanese acers. It continues above the woodland walk and leads to a small wooden summerhouse. This is a modern building but stands on the site of an original summerhouse. The tiled platform on which the present building stands, together with the two stone steps up to it, are original. Beyond this point the path is overgrown and inaccessible. The woodland walk continues north-westwards to a flight of dressed stone, moulded steps, with low, flat parapets and low square piers at either end. This leads down to a gravel path along the side of the house. On the bank next to it is a large, overhanging yew tree.

Next to the house is a level lawn backed on the north-east by a rhododendron bank, behind which are yews and a large sweet chestnut tree. Beyond the lawn, to the south-east, is a small rectangular garden enclosed by low stone walls. This is the memorial garden to Alick Stewart, killed at Ypres in 1915 and created in about 1920. The main entrance is in the middle of the north-west side, facing the house. It is flanked by stone piers, with stepped tops and ball finials; the total height is about 2.5 m. A hinge and bracket remain for a gate, now gone. There is a memorial plaque on the western pier. The flanking walls are lower and there is decorative ironwork at the joins with the piers. The garden is largely lawn, with perimeter and cross random stone paths. In the centre of the north-east side a flight of wide steps leads up to the informal lawn. The upper steps are log, the eight lower of moulded dressed stone, flanked by rubble stone walls. At their foot the steps are flanked by piers of roughly square stone, about 1.8 m high, with stepped tops and bases for ornaments, now gone. In the centre is a small statue, topped with a bowl, standing on a circular moulded bed, with a random stone path around it. The north-east side is bounded by a rubble stone revetment wall about 1.2 m high, above which are some mature azaleas. At each end are square piers, standing about 0.8 m above the wall. That at the north end has a tapering top and ball finial. The south-west wall is only about 0.4 m high and has been partly rebuilt. In each corner is a pyramidal stone plinth; that at the north end has a ball finial, that at the south only an iron spike to hold one. The south-east side is bounded by rubble walls about 0.8 m high, with a central alcove. This is stone-paved and has four square piers, about 2.1 m high, at the corners. In the middle of the north-east side is a narrow flight of four steps up to the higher ground behind the garden; in the middle of the opposite side is a small recess. Behind, and possibly the destination of a path, now gone, from the steps, is a small circle of yew trees. A huge beech tree also stands just outside the garden on this side. Another stood next to the south-west side until Christmas Day, 1999, when it fell, bringing part of the wall on that side down with it.

In front of the house is an oval gravel forecourt with a central circular flowerbed which was formerly a fountain. This is about 4 m in diameter, the sides about 1.2 m high, built of alternating black and yellow brick. The rim is of moulded stone, with four stone plinths with central holes for ornaments, now gone, evenly spaced around it. Below the flowerbed, on the central axis with the front door, is a flight of three shallow steps of moulded stone, with a concrete slope between them, leading down to a steeper flight of stone steps down the ha-ha to the field beyond. Both flights are flanked by flat-topped parapet walls, with square piers at the top and bottom. The lower steps are built on rubble stone walls over the ha-ha, here about 2.2 m high. A hole under the steps allows water which flows in the ha-ha ditch to drain freely. There is now no access out into the field but originally these steps led to a path

across the field to a bridge over the river, leading to another path up to a gazebo, now gone, on the west side of the valley.

The north drive enters the grounds at an acute angle off the B4459 road, about 0.6 km north-west of the house. The former lodge, now a private dwelling (Haulfryn) lies on the opposite side of the road. Initially the drive runs across quite a steep slope and is built up over it on a terrace with a rubble stone retaining wall. The entrance is flanked by dressed stone piers with tapering tops about 3 m high. The west pier is topped by a ball finial. There are hinges for gates (removed to the south entrance). The piers are flanked by rubble stone walls about 1.5 m high. The northern part of the grounds, through which the drive runs, is wooded; to the east of the drive is a conifer plantation, to the west the woodland is mixed, with some mature beech trees along the drive.

The north drive runs along the east side of the kitchen garden and passes over a substantial single-arched stone bridge with parapets about 1.4 m high. An east-west track leading from the Home Farm to an entrance to the fields below the grounds runs diagonally under the bridge. At the north end of the bridge, on its east side, a diagonal opening in the parapet wall leads to narrow steps down to a small platform overlooking the track. This is paved with random stone and with a low backing wall. At its far end is a flight of very steep, narrow steps down to the track. On the west side of the bridge is a diagonal gap to a flight of stone steps down to the entrance to the walled flower garden.

The bridge parapet on the east side continues northwards to an early nineteenth-century bath house next to the drive. This is a small, roofless, single-storey building of rubble stone, its gable ends standing to about 3.5 m. It has two rooms. A gothic arched door facing the drive (west side) leads into a stone-paved room with a gothic-arched window in the south wall. On the north side is an arched opening and a slight step down into the north room. This is five-sided, projecting further west than the south room. Its floor is of large stone slabs and it has a single window in the south-west wall. In the north-east corner is an irregular-shaped but rectilinear pool. Water flows in from a pipe at ground level in the north wall. At the west end two steps lead down into the water. The water for the pool comes from a vigorous spring in the hillside just to the north of the building.

South of the bridge the drive runs through wooded grounds past the Home Farm buildings, stables and coach house to the forecourt in front of the house. Trees in this area include some fine mature limes, beeches and a wellingtonia. West of the drive the ground drops to a boggy area with clumps of bamboos. At the edge of the grounds is a small former pool, now boggy ground, enclosed by low walls on its west and south sides. To its south is a small pond, recreated recently from a larger boggy area, with a wall about 1 m high along its west side and a stony mound to the south. A small, stone-edged, water channel runs southwards to the east of this. A low stony bank next to it has a huge lime tree growing on it. Above, and parallel, is a path leading south-eastwards towards the house; this is currently under restoration.

Running parallel with the drive, to its east, and starting to the north-west of the house, is the servants' walk to the walled gardens. This route crosses the drive south of the bridge and then winds, stone-edged, through the grounds through an area planted with ferns, to a gate on the farm track, opposite which is the entrance to the walled flower garden. Towards the south end of the walk a narrow, stone-lined, sunken path, about 1 m deep, winds north-eastwards from the walk to a small building. This roofless rubble stone building, also sunken below the general ground

level, was a servants' lavatory, with two chambers and a wall between their entrances. To the north-west of this, also below the stable court, is a sunken, stone-lined former pond, with raised banks on its south-east and south-west sides.

The two walled gardens - the flower garden and kitchen garden - lie next to each other below the north drive, the flower garden at the south end of the kitchen garden. The track from the Home Farm to the fields runs along the south wall of the flower garden and the former head gardener's house, Garden Cottage, is built against the outside of the north wall of the kitchen garden. Access is from two paths leading to doorways into the flower garden: one leads from the bridge on the north drive through laurels to a door in the east wall, the other is the former servants' path which crosses the farm track and leads to a door in the south wall. Both doorways have simple iron gates.

The flower garden is a five-sided, irregular-shaped enclosure with rubble stone walls. The walls stand to their full height of about 3 - 3.5 m and have a coping of overhanging stones topped by larger blocks. The north-west wall, which is also the south-east wall of the kitchen garden, is slightly higher, at about 3.8 m, and built of squared stone blocks rather than rubble. It has plum trees trained against it. At its east end it is angled to make a chamfered corner to the kitchen garden, producing an awkward angle in this corner of the flower garden. The south wall rises slightly over the doorway and at its west end it rises to a very short west wall about 3.5 m high. The short east wall is curving. The interior slopes gently to the south-west and is laid out with borders next to the walls, lawns between the paths, a single cypress tree towards the east end and a central pool. There are gravel, stone-edged paths around the perimeter, from the doorway in the short east wall to one through to the kitchen garden in the north-west wall and from the doorway in the south wall to the central pool. Inside the east doorway there are two stone steps down to the path. The pool is circular, about 4 m in diameter, with narrow, tapering stone steps down to the water on the north side. It has a rubble stone edge, on top of which is a hooped iron 'fence' about 0.3 m high.

A flight of steps at the west end of the path along the north-west wall lead to a doorway, at present blocked, into a small walled compartment against the outside of the west wall. This is a former orangery. It is five-sided, extending westwards from the wall and from the chamfered corner of the kitchen garden. It is enclosed by rubble stone walls about 1.3 m high, with tops of dressed stone slabs. In the south-west corner and at intervals along the west and south sides are four piers about 2.5 m high. Beyond the west wall is an outer, parallel, stone wall about 1.3 m high. There is a flight of three moulded stone steps at the west end of the north wall. Inside the compartment is a series of raised beds. Along the west side are two square brick beds, about 0.7 m high; two similar beds are built against the walls on the east side. The orange trees were presumably grown on the raised beds and the piers supported some kind of roof structure, perhaps a temporary winter one to protect the trees from frost.

The kitchen garden is much larger than the flower garden; it is a large rectangular area enclosed by walls of roughly coursed stone blocks. The interior, which slopes to the south-west, is now grassed over, with a few old fruit trees along the south-west side. The cross and perimeter gravel paths can still be made out beneath the turf. The north-east wall is about 4.5 m high, with chamfered corners at both ends. Coping is similar to that in the flower garden. The north-west wall is similar and has a doorway towards the east end. The south-west wall is only about 2.5 m high, has chamfered corners and a central gap which is a widened former doorway.

The main entrance is in the centre of the south-east wall. The doorway has a dressed stone, gently arch, with a panel on the flower garden side inscribed 'J.Ll. Esq. AD 1830'.

Towards the north end of the north-east wall are the footings of a former glasshouse. Stone steps at its south end, with a small, brick former boilerhouse next them, lead up to two brick-walled compartments, which retain their interior fittings of tile flooring, raised, heated beds and heating pipes.

The pleasure grounds, gardens and walled gardens of Alltyrodyn are all contemporary with the present house, dating to the 1830s and 40s. Nothing is known of any grounds attached to the earlier house. The 1830 Ordnance Survey map is too small-scale to show any detail but on it the area of the grounds corresponds more or less to the present-day area. It also shows the drives from the north and south. The kitchen garden is not shown. This suggests that although the grounds were substantially laid out by John Lloyd after 1830, their basic structure was earlier. The date stones of 1830 (kitchen garden) and 1840 (stables) indicate that it was John Lloyd (died 1841) who was their builder and therefore likely to have been creating the pleasure grounds at the same time. The whole ensemble forms a well preserved Regency period piece; there are no later additions to it except for the Alick Stewart memorial garden. The grounds contain some interesting features such as the bath house, the walled flower garden, the orangery and the cascade, all of the same period. The 1947 Sale Particulars indicate that the lawn next to the house was then a lawn tennis court. Both drives were flanked by iron railings, now gone. In recent years some of the mature trees in the woodland have fallen and a conifers have been planted in the northern part of the grounds. The outer ornamental features, beyond the pleasure grounds, have also gone. These consisted of a walk from the garden down to the river, over a bridge over the Afon Clettwr and up the hillside beyond, which in 1947 was a 'hanging belt of conifers' and is now a conifer plantation, to a gazebo, only the footings of which remain.

Sources

Primary

1830 Ordnance Survey 1 in map: Carmarthenshire Record Office.

Tithe map, c. 1840: National Library of Wales.

1947 Sale Particulars (Jackson Stops and Staff): private collection.

Secondary

Nicholas, T., *Annals and antiquities of the counties and county families of Wales*, vol I (1872).