

**CADW/ICOMOS REGISTER OF PARKS & GARDENS
OF SPECIAL HISTORIC INTEREST IN WALES**

REGISTER ENTRY

DOLAUCOTHI

Ref number	PGW (Dy) 7 (CAM)
OS Map	146
Grid ref	SN 6646 4080
Former county	Dyfed
Unitary authority	Carmarthenshire
Community council	Cynwyl Gaeo
Designations	Listed Building: Dolaucothi Grade II; Lodge Grade II
Site evaluation	Grade II

Primary reasons for grading Early nineteenth-century parkland with remnants of possible lime avenue. Walled garden partially intact. A few specimen trees.

Type of site Landscaped parkland with shrubberies and walled garden

Main phases of construction Two enclosed gardens extant *c.* 1770, totally re-modelled *c.* 1790, altered and improved early nineteenth century.

Site description

The house of Dolaucothi stood about a mile to the north-west of the village of Pumpsaint. The house takes its name from the place-name meaning 'the meadows of the Cothi', near which the building stood. The site is reached from the A 482 Llanwrda to Lampeter road which runs north from Llanwrda up the Dulais valley. Just to the west of Pumpsaint, the Cothi and is joined by a major tributary, the Twrch river, before taking its course south-west to Abergorlech.

The area has long been associated with the period of Roman occupation, the gold mines are to the south-east of the house and the course of the Roman road, the Sarn Helen is believed to be just to the north-east. The area is one of rolling upland plateau cut by tributaries and the river Cothi. The house site is on a south facing hillside at about 240 m. AOD. For many years, the house was associated with descendants of the Jones family of Abermarlais, the Johnes.

In 1679, the house was a building of some size, containing at the time six hearths. In a deed of 1704 it is described as the 'capital messuage called Tyddyn Dole Cothy'. Letters held at the National Library of Wales suggest that Dolaucothi was not always a salubrious place. In a letter written in July 1780, Mr J Davies reports that eighty rats had been killed at Dolaucothi, but adds that there were a great number remaining. Mrs Johnes, of Croft Castle, when writing to Mrs Johnes of Dolaucothi notes that Dolaucothi is an 'unhealthy place for dampness which always prevails even in the height of summer and in spite of large fires'. By 1787 John Johnes reported that the 'poor place is going to decay' and in 1789 improvements and repairs were made. Mrs Jane Johnes of Hafod asked her brother not to make any addition to the old house, although she did suggest that a new pigeon house would be very pretty. She was not to get her way and between 1792 and 1796 John Nash carried out further alterations and improvements; the porch and two low wings were added to the house. It would seem that Johnes was not always prompt to pay his bills and Nash had some glass for the greenhouses, redirected to Hafod, presumably because he knew that at least Colonel Johnes would pay for it.

The low, Nash, wings were heightened at the beginning of the next century to hide the new service wings. By 1886 the house appears as a well ordered holding with a small conservatory on the south-east face. To the south-east of the house is the walled garden and well, whilst to the north and north-west are ranges of outbuildings. The Schedule of Apportionments (1841) notes that Dolaucothi house and land occupy some 97 acres, although the total holding was much more extensive, by 1873, the estate comprised 3,172 acres.

In 1876, the last of the family of the male line was murdered by his butler. The estate then passed to his daughter who married General Sir James Hills V.C., who took the surname Johnes. The property eventually passed to the Lloyd family, who took the additional name of Johnes. During the Second World War the house was requisitioned by the Ministry of Supply, but a family dispute left the house empty after 1945. The house, sadly, eventually fell into disrepair, the floors collapsed and the lead was taken from the roof. Dolaucothi became the absolute property of the National Trust in c. 1955-56, but most of the property had already been demolished.

Photographs held at the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth show the house, probably at the beginning of this century, through to its decline in c. 1951. The house now appears as a solid square block, standing in the centre to three floors. To either side of the earlier central block are the fronts of the two wings that were initially the work of John Nash. These sections are topped with balustrading above rectangular recesses. Balustrading is also above the two bay windows, which were also later additions. In the centre of the front face is the classical porch designed by Nash. In the earlier photographs, the drive and lawns are still well maintained. By 1951 the house exhibits signs of dereliction and neglect; the lawns now appear as rough grazing, the drive has become overgrown and the paint-work is peeling from the facade of the house.

All that now remains of the house is the northern section of one of the wings, complete with bell-gable to summon the servants. The coach-house and associated buildings remain with the addition of a large pre-fabricated twentieth century agricultural building.

Recorded on the map of *c.* 1770 is a small barn to the north of the house and immediately to the east of the site of the water mill. It is tempting to suggest the present small barn is the same building. It is the only stone building with a slightly splayed base and simple window openings.

The long, rubble built one and two-storeyed coachhouse runs north-west to south-east behind and to the north of the present dwelling. The two sets of double doors are probably original judging by the hinges. The small gable is off-set to the southern end and the roof is slated. To the south are external stairs and to the rear a newer extension. This building serves two functions. The upper, northern end is retained by the farmer for his use, whilst the lower, southern end is use as a headquarters for the National Trust during their excavation season. This lower end is two-storeyed. The coachhouse was never intended for human occupation and it is understood that the National Trust has spent considerable sums of money trying to resolve the problem of damp.

When Mrs Johnes of Croft Castle wrote her letter in *c.* 1780 complaining that the house was damp, the situation was probably far worse than today. In *c.* 1770, a leat from the north brought water down the hill and across the yard to the south of the barn to the mill. There was also a small stream, probably used to control the flow of water to the mill, that branched off the main leat, ran (apparently) through part of the rear of the house before discharging water into the Cothi; the Cothi at this time ran adjacent to the one of the enclosed gardens. By 1840, the mill had been re-located to a site adjacent to the main road to the west. The leat from Pen Lan-dolau was then diverted so that the course ran to the east of the house, apparently powering a saw-mill. The saw mill was dismantled by the National Trust when they acquired the property as was the dovecote that use to be to the north of the house site. It is believed that the apparatus from the mill is now in the National Museum of Wales.

The park and garden occupy the wide flood plain and valley sides of the river Cothi immediately to the north-east of the village of Pumpsaint. The entrance to the drive is just to the north-west of Pont Pumpsaint. The land rises from *c.* 124 m. on the valley floor to over 200 m. on either side of the valley, which runs north-east to south-west. To the south-west of the house site is the Roman fort whilst to the south are the Roman gold mines, which all formed part of the estate. From the evidence on the ground and from early maps, it is clear that the course of the river meanders has changed through the decades and part of the old course of the river has been used to form a lake within the park.

The National Library of Wales holds several maps that relate to the development of the estate. One of the earliest, believed to be of *c.* 1770, shows a rectangular block of the house, with three extensions to the rear, a barn that is possibly still extant and two enclosed gardens to the west south-west of the house. It also shows a mill and substantial leat, that is still traceable, flowing from the northern hillside. The course of the river is also interesting: it is shown flowing very close to the house site, with an older course marked to the south. In the coming centuries, the river was re-diverted back to its old course, further away from the dwelling and outbuildings. One of the enclosed gardens is almost square in shape and is to the south of the house. Within this garden shrubs or fruit trees are shown around the perimeter, together with three conifers, whilst in the centre are six enigmatic little features whose purpose is not known. To the south-west of this square garden and abutting it, is a rectangular garden in which there is a group of six

conifers, a seventh being shown slightly on its own, away from the main group. To the south-east of this rectangular garden are eight representations of shrubs or small trees.

By the time that the tithe map and schedule of apportionments had been drawn up in 1840, the picture was somewhat different. No walled or enclosed gardens are recorded at all, the drive on the edge of the northern river terrace has appeared, as has the bridge to the south. The river has been encouraged to re-occupy the abandoned river bed recorded in *c.* 1770, presumably not only for aesthetic reasons but also, in view of earlier remarks made by the family, to prevent the house feeling quite so damp. The mill has been re-located away from the house to a site adjacent to the road to the west. At this time the house and parkland are recorded as occupying some 97 acres, although the estate was considerably more extensive.

The survey of 1886 records the extensive development of both house and gardens. To the south-east a large, sub-divided, walled garden is shown, with specimen trees within the parkland and to the rear, north-east of the house is an enclosed orchard and small lake. The house and garden are recorded as occupying some 9 acres.

It is probable that it was only when Judge John Johnes (murdered 1876) took over the running and management of Dolaucothi that the estate really became a well-managed nineteenth century gentleman's property. Not all the developments, of course, can be attributed to him. Within the park are a number of specimen limes, dated by comparison to *c.* 1850. Family correspondence suggests that limes had been on the estate for considerably longer. There is a family letter which suggests that there was, in fact, an avenue of limes, some of which were blown down in the gales of *c.* 1836-37. It is possible that these trees were replaced, if this is the case, the limes that are evident will be from this phase of planting.

The new drive and bridge to the south also probably dates to the 1830s, although the bridge was considerably damaged in *c.* 1950. After the death of the Judge, the estate remained well managed and there is correspondence concerning the forestry in *c.* 1890. Today, some of the features recorded in 1770 can be traced and almost all those recorded in 1886 can be traced or are evident.

By 1840 there had been a considerable amount of enclosure of the Pen Lan-dolau hillside, which the parkland surrounding Dolaucothi house abuts. In 1840 the parkland gave on to the common land of Pen Lan-dolau and it could be viewed as part of the natural, picturesque beauty of the park. Today this vast expanse has been sub-divided into fields, although it maintains something of a wilderness feel.

The main drive from the south-west and the spur leading to the front of the house are shown on the tithe map. Also shown is the drive on the edge of the river terrace overlooking the parkland. The courses of both these drives appears to have altered little since that time although the secondary drive has become somewhat muddy and is poorly surfaced. Both these drives are approximately one mile long. At the entrance to the main drive is a small lodge, Dolaucothi Lodge. This is fairly typical mid-nineteenth century in style. It is rubble built with a slate roof and wide eaves. At the gable ends are decorated barge boards, which were once a feature of the estate. The lodge is single storey with attics in the gable.

After *c.* 1830, there was a drive to the south, which crossed the Cothi via a bridge referred to as the Ogofau bridge. The inscription reads 'Bridge built 1836 Rebuilt 1956', and it is now a utilitarian wooden structure. This drive then curved westwards to meet the minor road at the Ogofau Lodge, dated 1839. This lodge was probably once very similar to Dolaucothi Lodge, but it has recently been extended and modernised. At least two of the diamond casement windows remain as do the rather extraordinary protruding double drip-stones.

To either side of the drive near the Ogofau Lodge are plantings of Irish Yew (*Taxus baccata* cv. 'Fastigiata'), Atlas Cedar (*Cedrus atlantica*), Austrian Pine (*Pinus nigra*), Algerian Fir (*Abies nordmanniana*) and two forms of *Chamaecyparis*, *lawsoniana* and *lawsoniana* 'Lutea'. This drive would appear to be rarely used by vehicles, but it retains its chipping surface.

The main area of the park is, and as far as can be ascertained always was, to the south and south-west of the house, extending to some 60 acres in all. The river Cothi meanders down the length of the park, running at this point somewhat north-west. To the north and south of the flat land of the flood plain are the remains of the river terraces, which today are covered with a mix of

deciduous (mostly beech) and coniferous trees; these appear to be of no great age. It is possible that this river terrace was utilised as a path. Within the parkland, however, are several examples of limes, which are probably those planted after the gales in the mid-nineteenth century. The limes here would not appear to be part of an avenue, if a lime avenue did exist, it is likely to have been associated with the drive and there are some appropriate tree stumps still remaining. In addition to the four large limes, oak, sycamore and beech are also found in the park. The park is separated from the previous forecourt and house area by a stone ha-ha that stands to c. 0.75 m.

Adjacent to the northern boundary of the park (to the south-west of the house) are two small crescent-shaped lakes. It is likely that both these lakes are former ox-bow lakes, improved and maintained by the estate. To the south-west of the most southerly lake is an earth bank, which not only provides a good view of the park, but also helps to retain the water.

The garden area to the south-east of the house and adjacent to the walled garden is now much overgrown, within it however are some fine specimen trees; these include three fine Norway spruce (*Picea abies*) and two large Douglas firs (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*). Within this flower garden and very overgrown, are box shrubs, these presumably once formed formal borders to the plantings and along the perimeter. There was a perimeter path outside this garden boundary, which was probably dressed with quartz chippings and edged with lumps of quartz. Quartz chippings appear in the mole hills and disturbed ground in this area.

To the rear of the Coach-house in a long section of retaining wall, (the ground level behind the wall reaches to the same height), at its southern end is an arched opening. This arched opening gives access to a barrel-vaulted, subterranean tunnel that runs parallel to the retaining wall. It is not known what the function of this structure was. However, it would seem highly unlikely for the mansion to have had cellars in such a wet site, so it may have been used for cool storage; originally it would also have been adjacent to the orchard and near to the vegetable garden. It was apparently used as a potato clamp by a previous tenant farmer.

The enclosed garden areas recorded almost adjacent to the house to the south in 1886, form an irregular rectangle and probably enclose about an acre or just over. These are not the two enclosed gardens shown on the plan of c. 1770, although the area of one of them may have become the small square lawn that was part of the garden in 1886.

The First Edition Ordnance Survey map shows two distinct garden areas separated by a wall against which, and to the north, are a series of small buildings. The southern of the two garden areas is more extensive than the northern area and there was a small glasshouse within it. Within this southern garden was an internal perimeter path, with two further paths running north-east to south-west and north-west to south-east; these paths cross in the centre. In addition to the small buildings within the northern garden there were a further two small buildings to the north, adjacent to the perimeter wall. Within this northern garden a well is also recorded. There was a further enclosed area to the south-east of these gardens, the north-western wall of which was the perimeter wall for the larger enclosed gardens. To the north of this area are two further small buildings, one evidently a Ty-bach.

Today, some of the walls are extant and stand to just over 3 m. The quality of the stone masonry is somewhat shoddy. The materials chosen for the construction of these walls is a mix of pyrites shale, which was waste material from the mine across the river and river/water-worn stone. Although the masons must have used some skill to combine these freely available materials, the walls have little architectural merit and some have since been cleared, presumably because they became unstable. The central, dividing wall has been removed as has a section of wall to the north-east. There has been some collapse in the northern corner and some repairs.

Sources

Primary

Manuscript plan of the house, gardens and water courses, (c. 1770), copy held at the National Library of Wales.

Information from Ms Caroline Kerkham, (1996).

Photographs in the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth, various dates.

Tithe map and schedule of apportionments, (1840), Nos 160, 161 and 163.

Secondary

Jones F, 'The hand of Nash in West Wales, *Transactions of the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society and Field Club*, vol. XXIX (1939), pp. 93-95.

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Lloyd T, *The Lost Houses of Wales* (1989), pp. 56, 121.

Nicholas T, *Annals and antiquities of the counties and county families of Wales*, vol. 1(1872), p. 291.