

CILWENDEG

Ref No	PGW (Dy) 17 (PEM)
OS Map	145
Grid Ref	SN 2233 3870
Former County	Dyfed
Unitary Authority	Pembrokeshire
Community Council	Boncath
Designations	Listed buildings: Pigeonhouse, Shell grotto Grade II*; House, Laundry Counting-house, Bell-house, Stable / Coach-house Grade II

Site Evaluation **Grade II***

Primary reasons for grading Large parkland to the west of the mansion, mostly enclosed by ha-ha. An unusual series of terraced lawns and small arboretum to the front, south-east, of the mansion. Rare and beautiful shell grotto, possibly from the late eighteenth century to the west of the mansion and an extraordinary series of farm buildings, including a flamboyant pigeon house. To the east, woodland paths and walled garden.

Type of Site Landscaped park, with formal gardens associated with the house. Shell grotto and elaborate farm buildings. Small arboretum and walled kitchen garden.

Main phases of construction Late eighteenth century; *c.* 1830s and 880s.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The mansion, farm and gardens at Cilwendeg, which are at *c.* 134 m. AOD, are approached by a drives off the B 4332 between Newchapel and Boncath. Today the main drive is from the west, although there was an earlier drive (now a track) towards the east, immediately outside Newchapel; both drives are over 1.5 km. long. The surrounding countryside is one of rolling hills cut by small valleys, although Trwyn Hwch, to the south-west, rises 395 m. and beyond are the Preseli mountains. The whole area is one of ancient settlement, just to the south of the church and within the lands of Cilwendeg, is Maen Colman standing stone. Cilwendeg is one of the many gentry estates associated with the Teifi valley area, about a kilometre away is Ffynone and other estates include Pantyderi, Cilrhue, Rosygilwen, Castle Malgwyn and Pentre.

The name Cilwendeg means the fair white nook and the first account of it appears in the seventeenth century, when it was owned by descendants of David Llewelin Powell (ap Hywel). It was later sold to Jacob Morgan, the younger, of Vaynor, Manordeifi in about 1699. He had earlier inherited the estate of Pengwern and that was his principal seat.

The family wealth came to Cilwendeg from an unlikely source. One of Jacob Morgan's five brothers was the vicar of Nevern, the vicar of Cilgerran, a chaplain in the Navy and eventually curate of St Margaret's Church, Westminster. He married the only daughter of William Tench. William Tench had built and owned the Skerries lighthouse, from which he received an income of one penny per ton weight from each ship (except His Majesty's ships), that passed within sight of the light. Shipping to and from Cardigan Bay, Dublin, Belfast and Liverpool was expanding rapidly at this time, so it was a substantial income. The only son of the Reverend Morgan died young so the income passed to Jacob Morgan of Cilwendeg.

After Jacob Morgan died, his three daughters, then living at the house, quarrelled bitterly over the division of the estate, one sister ending up in the Carmarthen debtor's gaol. However, in 1734, the youngest daughter, Margaret, married John Jones of Llanbadarn Fawr and they inherited the estate. It was their eldest son, Morgan, who was the creator of the present estate, 'rebuilding a small gentry house probably not larger than a farmhouse to something much more notable' (Orbach, 1995).

Morgan Jones probably built the core of the present house in about the 1780s. Although the architect is not known, AJ Parkinson (mss. 1977) writes 'A splendid eighteenth-nineteenth century house with distinct hints of a derivation from, if not an actual design by, Nash'. Part of the big stable, the coach house, the barn and part of the range to the north-west, with the bell-turret, may also date from this period. Richard Fenton visited Cilwendeg on the tour through Pembrokeshire, but his text relates more to the man than his house: 'After leaving Ffynonau, to the left of my road and of an intervening dingle another handsome mansion of modern growth, Cylywendeg, bursts upon the eye built by the gentleman who now inhabits it, Morgan Jones Esq., owner of the Skerry lighthouse off the north coast of the Isle of Anglesey, a property from which he derives a large income, meriting the wealth he is so good a steward of. Mr Jones is a gentleman of retired habits, universal benevolence and exemplary piety who may well be said 'to do good by stealth'.

The estate was to pass to his nephew, also called Morgan Jones, who set about great alterations and improvements, so that when Samuel Lewis visited Cilwendeg he was able to record in his Topographical Dictionary of Wales: 'the beautiful seat of Morgan Jones Esq., erected within the last fifty years by the uncle of the present proprietor, whose elegant mansion is ornamented with a handsome receding portico recently added by the present proprietor, occupies the centre of an extensive demesne beautifully laid out in plantations and pleasure grounds to which are entrances by two handsome lodges recently added. The lawn in front of the house embraces a view of some of the most beautiful scenery in the county'. This entry is extremely useful in that it is clear that the front, south-east, extensions had already been added. There are two likely candidates for this work, Edward Haycock of Shrewsbury and William Owen of Haverfordwest. The lodges referred to were probably those towards Newchapel, but all four lodges had been built by 1846 and are recorded on the tithe map.

Morgan Jones was also the creator of some splendid farm buildings, this work being carried out from 1826 to 1840, when he died. In 1836, the government had passed an Act to bring lighthouses under the control of the executive and owners of private lighthouses were compensated for their potential loss of income. Morgan Jones and

after his death, his executors, pressed for considerable compensation and on 26 July 1841, the Inquisition at Beaumaris awarded the substantial sum of £444,984 11s 3d to the estate. It would seem that none of this wealth was used to improve Cilwendeg, but family members lived there quietly until 1884, when in November it was sold to the Saunders-Davieses of Pentre, Newchapel for £46,742. It would seem that Fanny Saunders-Davies was a most determined person and commissioned the architect George Morgan of Carmarthen to effect renovations to make the property easier to let. These renovations were considerable, the front projections were replaced using Bath stone topped with balustrades, the Georgian conservatories were replaced with larger Victorian structures and the window surrounds altered. At the same time a large Bath stone porte cochère, displaying the Saunders-Davies's coat-of-arms, was added.

Members of the Saunders-Davies family lived at Cilwendeg for brief periods, but it was often left to agents to run, or the house was let, including to the Colbys whilst Ffynone was being re-modelled at the beginning of the century. In 1936 the house was finally sold to Daniel Daniel J.P.,D.L., who had already acquired Ffynone. The farm was sold to the Bowens and in 1947 they also acquired the house. Shortly after, the house was bought by the Pembrokeshire County Council as an old peoples home; Mr Bowen still retains the farm.

From the outside, the house still appears very much as it would at the end of the nineteenth century. Orientated north-east to south-west, it consists of the central block of three floors, with Bath stone additions and the two wings that stand to two storeys. To either end of the wings are the Victorian conservatories, the one to the north-east is now used as a day room; whilst the one to the south-west is still used for plants.

There are some exceptional outbuildings associated with Cilwendeg and the farm complex, situated less than 60 m. from the house to the north-west.

At Cilwendeg the home farm was a very large and elaborate 'model' farm, part of which was built by the first Morgan Jones, but considerably developed by his nephew in c. 1832 - 35. It is built around a series of courtyards, with the axis of the farm buildings being parallel to the main house. The south-east, front, faces of most of the buildings appear to be more elaborate than the rear of the structures, suggesting that they were an important element of the view from the north-west of the house. Most of the buildings are of slate-rubble construction and there are some extraordinary slate details.

The dovecote is splendidly extravagant for its purpose and a fine example of its kind. It has an extraordinary elaborate facade which is topped with a central pediment, in the centre of which is a circular stone tablet bearing the inscription 'Built A.D. 1835'. Above this, on the top of the pediment is an urn, which is probably of sandstone. The facade itself, which faces south-east and is some 15 m. long, has two raised parapets to either side and a central tower; all have projecting slate sills at regular intervals. There is a semi-circular parapet stopped by two square piers on the central tower and this semi-circular pattern is reflected in the window and door openings and the false, dummy openings. The facade itself is in fact a dummy that conceals three gabled blocks with linking units. Inside are slate nesting boxes on each floor that have been beautifully constructed in sheets of sawn slate. The nesting boxes are graded in sizes that would have been appropriate to the fowls housed.

To the front, south-east of the house, is a small yard separated from an area that used to be a pond (but is now a slurry pit), by a remarkable barrier. Square slate pillars support railings that have been sawn out of and worked in slate; these railings stand on a low slate wall. Each rail is just over 2 inches square, with moulded spear-finials and morticed lock-rail - all of slate.

The stables and coach house is a rather elegant building, to the south-east of the pigeon-house, and may once have served as the gatehouse to the farm complex. From the north-east the building appears as a plain two-storeyed structure, with a central arch below a raised gable. To the north-west is the single-storey wing, that was adapted for Owen Saunders-Davies's motor cars (he raced Bugattis at Brooklands) in the mid 1920s. From the south-west, the building appears much more interesting with two semi-conical slate roofs over semi-circular projecting bays, which flank the central entrance arch. The whole is painted white over rendering. A photograph of *c.* 1906 shows just how elegant this building was. To either side of the projecting bays are two flat-roofed link buildings, with two carriage arches to either side that connected to two further small buildings with gables and pediments. The function of these end buildings is not known, but they may have been the tack-rooms.

At the south-west end of the central range, is the counting-house. The ground floor area appears to have been used as a smoking-room, as there are two open fireplaces and the joists are somewhat blackened. The first floor is reached by a flight of five external steps which lead to the entrance in the south-west gable end. Above the central doorway, which is flanked by two small windows, is a circular stone tablet which reads 'Accounting room, builded, A.D. 1832, for, Morgan Jones Esq^r'. Apparently, prior to 1907, the farm manager lived in the counting-house.

In addition to the buildings mentioned above there are kennels, barns, an engine-house, byres, a trap house, laundry and sundry other buildings all built around the courtyard and with a certain amount of architectural detail; but none are as flamboyant as the pigeon-house.

The park and gardens at Cilwendeg occupy part of the gently south facing plateau above the Dulas valley at an average height of *c.* 145 m. AOD. To the east and south the lands drops away more steeply to the Afon Dulas and one of its tributaries. The various areas of land-use at Cilwendeg are kept separated and are defined by areas of plantation. The park, to the west of the mansion, is separated from the house and formal gardens by planting, likewise, the walled garden, to the north, is reached by a series of paths through woodland. In the plantation that divides the park from the house is a curious and charming grotto.

The area of parkland and gardens would appear to have changed little since it was surveyed by Owen Lloyd of Cardigan in 1848 for the tithe returns. In the schedule of apportionments the main park (No 125), is given as 91 acres 3 rods and 33 perches, including the plantations; by 1889 the acreage is 91.226 acres, again including plantations. The total acreage for the house, gardens, plantations and outbuildings is some 207 acres. All the main buildings are represented, including the walled garden.

Both sets of lodges and the grotto also appear, although the New Chapel lodges are recorded on the Manerdifly returns.

The park is due west of the mansion and is bisected by the main drive that passes through the double Boncath lodges. The entrance, now without its gates, is flanked by curving iron railings and iron piers. The drive was probably created contemporaneously with the park and the Boncath double lodges *c.* 1840. The lodges are single-storey, with slate covered, hipped roofs and recessed doorways. The window and door-heads are square. Both are rendered and grey-painted, with chimneys to the centre and rear (east and west). The entrance railings abut the lodges on the northern sides. From the entrance the drive crosses the park in an almost due east direction before joining with the New Chapel drive to the south of the mansion. The New Chapel Drive, now a track, is probably the earliest drive, its double lodges probably being built *c.* 1830. It sweeps from just outside New Chapel in a westerly and then southerly arc, following the 120 m. contour line. The drive crosses the track/drive from the farm complex to the walled gardens. From this junction, it heads south for another 50 or so m. before swinging westwards, around the perimeter of the terraced lawns and joining with the main drive to the northern forecourt of the house. Prior to 1910, the New Chapel lodges were small, single storeyed classical buildings with timber porticos. Both these lodges now stand to two storeys, with slate roofs and end chimneys. Each lodge has retained the small porticos to the front and the impressive iron railings flanking the entrance abut the buildings on the north sides.

The flat open park is kept grazed by sheep retained by temporary fences. Almost completely surrounding the 79 or so acres of park are the shelter plantations, which retain nearly the same configuration as those shown in 1848. The two 'island' clumps of trees recorded to the north and south of the drive in 1889 are now missing, but an occasional specimen tree still breaks up the pasture.

Separating the shelter belts, that appear mostly to be a mix of native conifers and hardwoods, is an estimated 2,414 m. (1.25 miles) of ha-ha. To the north of the park the ha-ha is almost continuous, but to the south it seems to have been built to protect specific areas of trees and is, therefore, less continuous. The walls appear to be mostly of slate and the ditch still survives, although there has obviously been some silting since its construction. The walls stand to an average of 1 metre and the ditch varies from 0.75 - 0.5 m. Towards the east, where the drive passes through a plantation before sweeping northwards to the house, the ha-ha has been replaced with iron park railings.

Reached by small paths to either side of the house or via the conservatories are the extraordinary series of terraced lawns to the south-east of the mansion. In all there are seven levels to the lawns that extend some 127 m. from the house. At the end of the lawns are two fastigate yews that frame the house from the entrance path off the perimeter drive. The path between these yews gives access to the lowest lawn area that measures some 12.5 x 13 m. It was until recently used as a formal planted area, as the geometric patterns in the grass indicate and this area may be the rose garden described in 1906. To the north-east of this area is a substantial and well kept laurel hedge; whilst to the south-west and two small banks that rise just over 1 metre to the informal lawn and shrub area.

Between this lawn and the next towards the house is a bank that rises about 1 m. The net lawn measures some 32 x 15 m. and there are again banks to the south-west. This lawn is again separated from the next lawn by a bank, but just before the bank are two flights of five steps, one, from the north-east leads on to this area from a perimeter path. The flight to the south-west leads from this level to the informal area above. This second flight is almost obscured by one of the magnificent golden yews that are on the bank between the lawns and the more informal area. The third lawn area measures some 9 x 15 m. Between this lawn and the next is a smaller bank of some 0.5 m. The next lawn is approximately 15 x 32 m. and in a photograph of 1906 this was in use as a tennis court. The next terrace towards the house is on two levels. The first level, which is some 18 x 15 m., is just under 1 m. lower than the other, which measures about 20 x 17 m. This lawn is about 0.5 m. lower than the terrace surrounding the house.

The 1906 sale details of this area suggests that this South Garden (as it was called) 'had wide spreading lawns and flower parterre leading to four sunk croquet lawns and tennis lawns of full-size, and being divided from the main lawns by an apple pergola. Gently sloping grassy banks and lawns lead to a picturesque thatched summer-house'. There was also a 'sunk' rose garden. Sadly the apple pergola and thatched summer-house have both gone, as have the flowers; but the overall scale of the landscaping works undertaken is still impressive.

To the south-west of these lawns is the area of informal plantings which is a mix of woody exotics and shrubs.

In contrast with the scale of the gardens to the front (south) of the house is the small 'sunken' garden across the forecourt from the porte cochère. This again was probably created c. 1830 and was certainly extant by 1889. The garden consists of a semi-circular area that was embanked all round. Into this bank are set flights of five stone steps.. Mapped evidence indicates that there was a circular depression to the north-west of the area, but this has since been filled in. Today this area is lawn into which have been set three small formal beds.

To the east of this small garden is the drive that leads towards the walled gardens through the woodlands and to the west is the path, off the main drive, that leads to the shell grotto. This is a small stone folly in woodland to the west of the house and originally reached from the long, straight path from the main drive. It is built of coursed split slate blocks with the front elevation faced with quartz boulders and slate string-course. There are corner turrets that form part of a stepped parapet that makes the roof-line. The windows and door are to a gothic design. Apparently the roof was once domed, but this was replaced by a flat roof early in the nineteenth century.

Inside, on the walls, are panels that retain the gothic shape, outlined with shells, and infilled with shell patterns. At the centre of each panel is a conch shell with quartz crystals below; there are three panels on each wall and the decoration continues into the window recesses. Across each corner are slate shelves, the spaces in between the shelves being decorated with shells. On the back, north-west, wall a fireplace with cast-iron surround. The floor is also beautifully decorated. The geometric design is made up of slate slabs, set cornerwise, with horse vertebrae, knuckle bones of sheep and oxen and horses teeth set in concrete in the spaces between the slabs.

Although not in excellent condition, it is still an extraordinary garden building of great charm. Jones suggests that it was built sometime in the 1770s or 1780s and that the survival of such a beautiful floor is rare.

To the north-east of the mansion, the perimeter walls of these gardens enclose just over 8 acres, although there were further sub-divisions within the gardens. The external perimeter walls, which are rubble built and capped with slate slabs, stands mostly to just over 2 m. on the western side. In the north-west corner of the garden stands the Gardener's Cottage that was very similar in design to the New Chapel lodges, that is single-storeyed with round topped recessed windows to the ground floor and probably dating from the same period, that is c. 1830. An additional floor has been added and there has been no attempt to keep the fittings in character. Also along the north wall, facing south, was something like 35.5 m. of glass; this has now all gone. Also tumbled is most of the north-south dividing wall, although a section stands to about 3 m. at the southern extreme. The eastern perimeter wall stands, in places, to c.4 m. All the internal paths shown on the early surveys have now disappeared and are overgrown with coarse grass and brambles.

The east-west dividing wall remains mostly intact and in the south-west corner is a delightful pedestrian entrance of carved slate. Again, like the rest of the beautifully carved slate at Cilwendeg, this probably dates to the 1830s. The arch, which is somewhat ivy covered, stands to nearly 3 m. To the east of this area is the brick lined bathing pool, mentioned above.

Sources

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