

**CADW/ICOMOS REGISTER OF LANDSCAPES, PARKS AND GARDENS OF
SPECIAL HISTORIC INTEREST IN WALES**

REGISTER ENTRY

Trevecca-fawr (Trefecca Fawr).

Ref No	PGW (Po) 8 (POW)
OS Map	161
Grid Ref	SO 143317
Former County	Powys
Unitary Authority	Powys
District	Brecknock
Community Council	Talgarth
Designations	Listed Building: Grade I, National Park: Brecon Beacons, Scheduled Ancient Monument: 17/2099/BR087(POW).
Site Evaluation	Grade II
Primary reasons for grading	Important seventeenth-century gentry house with improved utilitarian grounds including fishponds, c. 1600, with remains of an ornamental layout and relict orchards. In addition there is an early twentieth-century stone paved terrace formal garden in Arts-and-Crafts style.
Type of Site	Seventeenth-century gentry house with later formal garden; fishponds; relict orchards.
Main Phases of Construction	House, fishponds and orchards c. 1650, formal garden c. 1920.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Trevecca-fawr, or lower Trefecca, stands back and above the B 4560 road about 4 km south-west of Talgarth and about 1/2km south-west of the small hamlet of Trefeca on a small lane about 100m from the road. It is set on a level terrace below a hill, in rolling pasture, which descends to the west. The house appears exposed on the south and west from the road below to the south-west. A small gravelled forecourt lies on the north front of the house.

The large U-fronted, two-storey house is built of sandstone rubble with a high-pitched slate roof. Two wings on the north entrance front stand proud of a two-bay hall with an arched stone doorway, set with a timber door, which is ornamented with an armorial relief above, displaying the arms of the local landowning Gwynne family, with 20 quarterings, who bought the house in the early 1900s. The fenestration on the north face of the wings is irregular, with six moulded transomed windows on the east and four on the west. On the west of the west wing there is a shallow extension set with two large stone stacks. On the east of the house there is a single-storey service building attached to the main house. Inside the house seventeenth- and eighteenth- century interiors survive, which include some of the finest small scale plaster ceilings in Wales.

The site, described as a 'moated site', in the Scheduled Ancient Monument entry, is believed to have an ancient history, probably with monastic origins. Haslam believes that the house has medieval, possibly religious, foundations and was built around at least two fish ponds; stone taken from this original building being used in the present house. A stone inscribed with the date 1176 was apparently found in the fabric of the house in the late nineteenth century. However, no archive or archaeological evidence has been found to support this. What is clear is that there was a hall house on the site of the present house by about 1650, possibly for the Barber family from Brecon. In the mid seventeenth century, Rebecca Prosser, who was a powerful local landowner, is known to have been in residence and it is her house that constitutes the central block of the present house.

During the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the house was gradually extended to the north, probably by Thomas Harris of Tregunter, a cousin of the Prosser family and the subsequent owner. His brother Howel Harris was the Methodist preacher who established a religious Trevecca College in the hamlet. Thomas Harris let the house to his brother's patron, Selina, dowager Countess of Huntingdon, who, according to Theophilus Jones 'repaired and appropriated (the house) in her time'.

In the early part of the nineteenth century the house was used as accommodation for the college but in 1842 the small estate appears to have been lost in a notorious night of gambling which also saw the Williamses of Old Gwernyfed, Velindre, lose neighbouring Llangoed Castle to the MacNamara family. However, it is unclear if the HARRISES were still the owners at this point. By 1900 the house was bought by a member of the Gwynne family, who were related to the Gwynne-Holford family of Buckland Hall, Bwlch. A formal terraced garden, using stone tiles from the roof of the house, was laid out along the west front, which they extended. The Gwynnes sold in about 1930 and the house and immediate grounds have subsequently passed through several hands until the present owners bought the site in late 1996.

To the south-east of the house and connected to the south formal garden boundary there is a simple rubble stone, tiled building which faces east. This is a double garage with a small service flat above. It appears that the building was originally part of the farm complex which lay to the south of the house and was built in c. 1888, possibly earlier. The garages are believed to date from the time of the Gwynnes between about 1900-30.

To the north of the garage, and linking them to the south wall of the formal garden, there are

two small, stone paved enclosures which appear to have been animal or fowl pens. These were later converted into a small greenhouse, which has since been lost.

To the west of the garage there is a small hardcore yard which is enclosed on the west and east by two modern timber stable blocks. A simple timber fence encloses the area on the south, separating it from the paddock beyond. These stables appear to date from about 1980.

According to a title map of 1842 and the Ordnance Survey maps of 1825 and 1888 the area to the south and south-east of the house contained various buildings which were probably agricultural. The north wall of a barn still comprises part of the south garden wall. It is unclear when the majority of these buildings were lost but most were standing as late as 1903.

The formal gardens of Trevecca-fawr lie to the west of the house but land to the north, which contains the fishponds, also appears to have been ornamented at some period. This land, together with the land to the west and south of the house and garden appears to be utilitarian in origin and contains features which may date back to the medieval period. None of this land beyond the garden boundary was, however, considered to be park.

A pair of wrought iron gates, which are set into a low dry-stone wall, leads into the garden on the north-west of the house. A grass path leads west from the gates for about 10m through a grass area, which appears to be a former 'wild' or 'informal' garden, enclosed on the south by a second low dry-stone wall and on the north by the south hedge of the lane. To the north and south of the path mature prunus trees, flowering shrubs and spring bulbs grow in the grass. There is no formal boundary at the west end of the path, it continues out into the old orchard area which slopes down to the west to the road. In the north-east corner of this area there is a mature perry tree and to the west of the path a few apple trees, marking the relict orchard, also survive. A new area of orchard has been recently planted to the south-west, north of a new vegetable garden.

The gateway in the wall on the south of this area leads through on to the second of three wide, randomly paved terraces which descend from the west side of the house. These terraces are enclosed on the west by a low capped dry-stone wall. Near the gate four mature dwarf Japanese maples grow in planting holes in the terrace. The terraces are mainly planted with drought resistant plants which include lavender, but some azaleas also grow here.

The terraces continue around the south front of the house, where two descend to the west. On the south this area is enclosed by part of the north wall of an old barn. Below this wall there is a narrow stone-edged raised bed containing spring bulbs. Climbers grow against the walls. A Virginia creeper or hydrangea grows against the south-east corner of the house.

At the east end of the south terraces the paving continues around into a small paved courtyard enclosed by walls. A small square dipping pool is set against the wall in the north-east corner. On the south side is the north wall of an old pigsty or fowl house which stands about 1.5m high. Two square holes have been knocked through this wall. During the early 1900s a greenhouse was sited on the south side of this wall, vines being planted on the north, trained through the holes.

Near the south-east corner of the west terraces there is a gap in the enclosing west wall which leads through on to a wide rectangular lawn, which lies north/south, enclosed on the north and west by a dry-stone wall. Two gateways in these walls lead into this area on the north and west, the north having no gate, the west, a small iron gate. The west gate leads through to the new vegetable garden. A large weeping willow grows in the north-west corner of the lawn.

This lawn was the site of a tennis court. A raised bank runs along its southern end, planted up with a screen of Lawson cypress and flowering shrubs. To the south, beyond the terrace gap, the lawn is enclosed by a continuation of the old barn wall. This wall is more substantial than the others on site; it is wider and mortared and appears to be much older, perhaps an original wall of the old barn/fold yard, which lay beyond to the east. From the terrace gap a wide stone-edged bed, planted up with mature prunus, runs along the west side of this wall for about 10m.

On the north front of the house the forecourt and drive are bordered in tree and shrub planted grass. Opposite the north of the house a 1.2m high dry-stone wall runs along for about 30m. In the centre of the wall is a pair of ornamental iron gates. These gates lead into a paddock which covers an area of about 2 acres. A path running north from the gates towards the north pond is visible in the turf. The ground slopes down to the south-west. In the paddock there are various earthworks grouped about two rectangular fishponds which lie to the north and west of the gate. The earthworks include raised banks and two flat rectangular terraces. Both of the ponds contain islands, but only the northern pond presently contains water. A short length of timber decking connects the bank to the small, square grass island in the centre of the north pond. Nearby on the bank stands the base of a small stone pier. In the west pond there is a similar small square island which is connected on the east by a short causeway which dips down in the centre. On the centre of the island a grit-stone has been set into the ground to mark the position of a lost dovecote. The ponds are fed by a stream which enters the site on the south-east and runs along the east boundary before issuing into the north pond.

Outside the paddock, to the north-east of the house, in the corner created by the east end of the fishpond paddock wall, there is a small, single-storey pantiled stone building which appears to have been a store or garden shed. The stream, which feeds the fishponds, runs from the south, behind this building, before continuing into the field along the east boundary. A strip of grass, which separates the stream from the drive, continues south from this building to the garage.

The early history of the gardens is unclear but it seems that the land around the house, despite the sophisticated additions to the house in the seventeenth century, retained an agricultural/utilitarian character with outbuildings and orchards. There is no evidence to suggest that any formal garden was laid out at this time in the immediate vicinity of the house. The only possible area that may have been developed as a sort of pleasure ground is that of the fishponds which may have been 'appropriated' by Selina in the eighteenth century, but there is no evidence to suggest that Howel Harris's eccentric and eclectic gardens, which included a Gothic arch and a Corinthian capital, laid out around his equally architecturally

eccentric college, spread to this adjacent site

By 1842 a drive, or walk, had been created across the fishpond area, running to the west of the ponds, which linked the house with the college to the north. The earthworks around the ponds suggest that a raised walk did run from the present gates to the north pond, creating an axis off-centre with the house. The 1825 25 in. Ordnance Survey map and the tithe map clearly record the two ponds, and the eastern channel, but it do not record an island or dovecote in the south-western pond or give any indication to the purpose of the level terrace to the north-west. The dates of these features remain unclear. Confusingly the Ordnance Survey maps of 1886 and 1903 record the earthworks around the ponds but no water. As there is no record to suggest that the ponds were filled in during this period, it is assumed that they have been omitted due to the scale of the maps.

By 1886 an enclosure had been established to the west of the house outside of the farm complex. A building, probably a barn, was sited here until at least 1903 on the area which became the formal terraced garden. Two further barns, or ranges of farm buildings, lay to the south of the house.

The main remodelling of the south and west area is attributed to the Gwynnes, who dismantled the barns in the early years of this century. Between about 1903 and about 1930 they laid out the formal stone-paved terraced garden, wild garden and tennis court to the west. The paved terraces and their planting reflect the Arts-and-Crafts style popular during that period but it is unknown whether any noted garden designer was involved in their construction. The family also had a house in Malta and most of the ironwork around the site was brought from there during this time.

No significant changes are believed to have been carried out in the garden from the time of the Gwynnes; the gardens have gradually declined to their present condition.

There is no record to suggest that a walled kitchen garden was ever built at Trevecca-fawr. A productive garden would probably have been maintained on the site but its location is unknown. The present owners have recently established a small vegetable garden to the west of the formal garden within the old orchard site.

From at least 1825, and possibly since the medieval period, large orchards of apples and pears were established at Trevecca-fawr. At their height in the mid 1800s they appear to have covered at least 10 acres of ground and, according to Theophilus Jones, were known for their Golden Pippin apples, which date from at least 1629. On the Ordnance Survey map of 1825, and on a tithe of 1842, orchards were recorded to the west of the garden and to the west of the fish ponds. It is understood that a third orchard ran from the west of the road down to the banks of a small stream, the Nant yr Eiddil but no evidence has been found to support this. The orchards to the west of the fishponds appears to have been grubbed up by the late nineteenth century but that to the west of the house was retained well into this century. No real trace of the orchards outside the garden survives, apart from undulations in the ground, but a few trees, including a perry pear and some apples do survive to the garden to the south of the access lane and in the hedge along the south-west of the site. These trees appear to date from about 1900-20 and are, therefore, probably replantings. A new orchard is being replanted in this area.

Sources

Primary Tithe map, 1842. National Library of Wales.

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