

DERWYDD

Ref number	PGW (Dy) 6 (CAM)
OS Map	159
Grid ref	SN 6126 1783
Former county	Dyfed
Unitary authority	Carmarthenshire
Community council	Llanybïe
Designations	Listed Building: Derwydd (Grade II*)
Site evaluation	Grade II

Primary reasons for grading A small late nineteenth-century garden with surviving iron work, topiary, walled garden, walks, croquet lawn, incorporating earlier features including a pre-1809 terrace.

Type of site Pleasure gardens around house; survival of some specimen trees; walled kitchen garden.

Main phases of construction *c.* 1889, with incorporation of earlier features.

Site description

Derwydd, described by Fenton as 'the ancient seat of the Vaughans' is set on a south to south-west facing slope of the small valley formed by the upper reaches of the Afon Marlas. The land within the curtilage extends to the top of the rise so that the road to Ammanford, some six km. away, is just visible. The geology within the area is complex, with the limestone quarries of Pentre Gwenlais, one km. away and possibly also the silica ridge beyond being visible from the upper rooms.

The house itself is complex, with the more ancient L-shaped part to the south. Today it appears as a large, multi-gabled and rendered complex, with stone roofs and brick chimneys. The ridges associated with the northern roofs have decorated ridge tiles and end finials. The nineteenth-century wing, which is more extensive, is apparently built on two levels, reaching the original ground level at the front but being stepped at the rear and north sides. The original house includes stone mullioned windows, a 'Tewdwr' arch and fine stained glass.

In his description of Derwydd, Francis Jones noted in 1987 that 'It is a remarkable fact that the Derwydd estate changed hands six times through the marriage of heiresses, so that the present occupier is a descendant of the earliest known owner of the property'. The first reference occurs in 1550 when Rhydderch ap Hywel ap Bebo and his wife Margaret are recorded as living there. It was their great-great grand daughter, Sage, who married into the Vaughan family of Golden Grove. Three

generations later the niece, Elizabeth, who had inherited, married Sir Thomas Stepney of Llanelli and their daughter married Joseph Gulston in 1767. The present owners, who bought the property in 2000, have no connection with the Gulston family.

Derwydd was not always the principle home of the Stepney Gulstons, for some thirty years from 1852 to 1881 they also lived at Dirleton, (Llwyn y Berllan or Danyrallt Park). During the 1840s Mr Jones Lewis is shown as occupying Derwydd. Alan Stepney Gulston, who commissioned the alterations at Derwydd, was something of a polymath and a romantic. In addition to having many of his paintings accepted for exhibition he was also a keen antiquarian and it is possibly to him the house owes the survival of some of the more ancient features.

The Schedule of Tithe Apportionments of about 1840 shows the Derwydd estate as extending to just over 257 acres with the homestead, garden and orchard occupying some 4 acres. The sale of the property in 1998/99 has resulted in its division into 14 lots, only three of which (amounting to 16.6 acres out of 239.6 acres) were purchased by the present owners of the house. These comprise the house, garden and grounds, Stable Cottage and some pasture land.

To the south-west of the main house is a series of buildings; one is still in use as a dwelling and some have utilitarian uses. The Stable Cottage is a stone roofed, rubble built cottage with a stone roofed porch and two windows at the front. Part of the same structure is in use as storerooms and stables. Abutting to the north-west and built at a slightly different level, are coach houses/garages and adjacent to this are two further units now roofed with corrugated iron. The forecourts to the Stable Cottage and coach house are surfaced with pebbles with kerbs of limestone. These have been laid in straight lines to the front of Stables Cottage, whilst there is a fan pattern to the front of the other. To the south-west of the Stables Cottage is a gateway to the road. The stone gate piers are hung with modern wooden gates and on one of the piers is a bell.

The house and garden are situated at about 80 m. AOD. The site occupies a south to south-west facing slope of one of the small valleys made by the Afan Marlas. Immediately around the house is gently undulating farmland, but to the south the limestone ridge of Pentre Gwenlais rises steeply to about 148 m. About 3 km. to the east, the Black Mountains rise from the Cennen and Loughor valleys.

This ancient site has certainly been subjected to one, possibly two, phases of remodelling. Francis Jones in 'Mr Gulston, Mr Peel, and the Javelin men', (*Carmarthenshire Antiquary*, 1986) quotes a note written by the grandson of Joseph Gulston, Alan Stepney Gulston, which reads 'Joseph Gulston only stayed at his ancestral home of Derwydd for a single period of about three weeks, and upon his departure his orders were carried out for the demolition of some forty or more rooms, part of the old place, which were in very bad repair, and, much to be regretted, a sale of the old furniture in these rooms was ruthlessly effected'. This would have been c. 1827. However, in 'Cadets of Golden Grove' (*Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* 1971) Jones warns against some of the 'lively fictions' produced by Alan Stepney Gulston when he began renovating the house in 1888. There is no documentary evidence to suggest that Derwydd house was ever more extensive prior to 1889, however, as Jones remarks 'Derwydd is interesting enough without recourse to fantasy'.

What is known is that in 1809 Fenton recorded Derwydd as being 'an irregular building, had a large court before it, and gardens behind it on a declivity, with Terraces'. The Tithe map of c. 1840 and the First Edition Ordnance Survey 25 inch map of 1887 confirm this description. In 1887 the drive was a single track that followed much the same course as the present day drive, except that it gave access, via a courtyard, to the

south of the house. The south of the house would, therefore, have been referred to as the front. The area to the north of the house would be described as being 'behind it'. On the First Edition Ordnance Survey map an enclosed area to the north is shown, with steps linking through to the walled garden area. Whilst this cannot be regarded as incontrovertible evidence, it is sufficient to suggest that the terraces that Fenton recorded in 1809 were still in existence in 1887.

Fenton mentions 'An old building, built in 1638, detached from the house, seemed by the lower window being barred with iron, to have been a kind of State prison'. The First Edition Ordnance Survey map does show two large buildings and one smaller building that are associated with the house but that are detached from it, but it is not evident which structure he was referring to. Two of these buildings were in the area that has become the croquet lawn.

The substantial additions to the house, made in 1889, utilised most of the terraced area described by Fenton. The carriage drive and walled garden were also remodelled; the fish pond disappeared as did some of the out-buildings. It is from this period that most of the garden dates.

It has been suggested that the bills (dated 1826-1830) for trees held in the Carmarthen Record Office, refer to a re-stocking of the garden. However, with the exception of the *Castanea sativa* (sweet chestnut) and *Fagus sylvatica* (beech) which are to the north of the present orchard and one or two other large trees, none of the present plantings can relate to these documents. The present plantings are, for the most part, exotics, many of which were not available to cultivation until after 1830. Photographs in the Stepney Gulston private collection and those appearing in the *Transactions of the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society and Field Club* (1907), suggest that Alan Stepney Gulston had a love of exotics. In one photograph he is seen proudly standing by a well grown *Trachyparpus fortunei*, alas no longer there.

The present garden can be divided into several distinct areas. The area to the front (west) of the house and to the north of the upper drive is essentially a pleasure garden. To the north of the upper drive is the orchard. To the east of the orchard and to the north of the house is the walled garden and the remains of the terraces. To the north-east of the house are the woodland walks and 'painting' lawn. Whilst to the south and east is the croquet lawn. Intermittently on the terrace and lawn areas are some fine examples of topiary. At the base of the lower terrace wall is a small rill and kidney shaped pond.

The garden is protected on three sides by a substantial stone boundary wall that stands at its maximum to about 3 m. The wall to the north is partially behind the wall of the walled garden, which it runs parallel to. To the west and south the wall follows the course of the road as it descends towards the ford.

The entrance to the main drive at Derwydd, from the Derwydd Road, is directly west of the house. Mapped evidence suggests that this has been the entrance for the last 150 years. In 1887 the drive headed in a straight line south-east. However after the house was extended in 1889, the opportunity was taken to open up the west of the house by the removal of the courtyard wall and to move the entrance from the south to the west. Presumably contemporary with these changes was the remodelling of the carriage drive. Now there is a lower drive that follows a similar course to its precursor except that there is a carriage circle to the new front (west) of the house. A spur leads off from this drive, south, towards the service area.

At the same time a second, more northern drive was built to give direct access to the west entrance of the new extension, this drive broke through the walls that had

enclosed the terraces mentioned by Fenton. Today the layout of the drives appears much as they did after the remodelling and as they were recorded on the Second Edition Ordnance Survey 25 inch map.

On either side of the drive to the front (west) of the house are plantings of woody exotics, mainly coniferous species including cultivars of *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* and *C. pisifera*, *Thujopsis dolabrata* 'Variegata', *Cryptomeria japonica* and its cultivated sport 'Elegans'. As the drive nears the house these give way to more shrubby, flowering species and formal flower beds. The lawned area to the side (south) of the house is embellished with topiary, the four small 'balls' and the spiral worked in box and the larger examples, slightly further south, in yew. The well is also a decorative feature of this area. Behind (south of) the large topiary is a clump of bamboo that was, apparently, endemic in the garden at one time.

A little south-east of the large topiary is the croquet lawn, which is separated from the grass terrace above by a grassed bank. It is reasonably certain that this terrace was not seen by Fenton. This area was built on at the time and it would have been to the side of, not to the rear of, the house. This grass terrace is separated from the field to the east by plantings of hardy hybrid rhododendrons, cherry laurel and deciduous azaleas. These plants also line the path that leads north-east towards the woodland.

The woodland area was created post 1887 and prior to 1906. The second edition survey of that date shows a radical change in the property boundary in this north-eastern corner of the garden. The alterations to the northern property boundary associated with the walled garden are also contemporary with these changes. The woodland area is separated from the field, of which it was once part, by wrought iron 'park' railings. The path through the woodland passes the circle of 'gorsedd' stones that were placed there by Alan Stepney Gulston prior to 1906. Within the grass are faint traces of flower beds or borders and the occasional horticultural survivor, such as a very healthy yucca. The path divides into two, one spur leading towards the east entrance to the walled garden. The woodland path continues north and then east through the mixed plantings that include a good *Liriodendron tulipifera*, *Aesculus hippocastanum*, variegated holly, *Prunus lusitanica* and *P. laurocerasus*. Box, hardy hybrid rhododendrons, yews and several conifers also grow in this area. At the eastern extreme of the woodland is a small mown lawn, and from here the path heads west so that it eventually rejoins the original route close to the stones and the yucca.

To the north of the house is an extensive sloping grassed bank that is bisected by a fine set of red sandstone steps. These steps give access to a narrow grassed terrace on which there are two further examples of topiary and the vestiges of a herbaceous border. It is most likely that this grassed terrace is all that remains of the earlier terraced garden described by Fenton. The level of the walled garden, which was probably extant when Fenton was writing, is reached by a further set of well cut sandstone steps. The positioning of both these sets of steps relates to the post 1887 remodelling of the gardens, but the stones themselves may have been re-used from the earlier steps. At the top of the steps that lead up to the walled garden was a series of nine wrought iron arches that descended in size from the centre. The central arch, that is effectively over the uppermost step, stood to a height of about 2 m. From either side of the central arch and forming a curved splay, four further arches led off on both sides; each arch decreasing in height so the lowest is only about 70 cm high. Family photographs of about 1903 show these arches covered in roses. They are now in a ruinous state and partly broken.

Immediately to the west are two iron growing frames, one adjacent to the rose arch, the other, of a simpler design, near to the west wall of the walled garden. These growing frames formed three arches, with the tallest, central arch standing to a height of about 1.5 m. They form a structure about 5 m. in length. The exact usage of these frames is not known and they are now in a ruinous condition.

On the walled garden side of the east (pedestrian) entrance to the walled garden is an arrangement of wrought iron arches of a similar design to those already mentioned and also now in ruinous condition. On either side of the entrance two arches come out at right-angles to the wall. Across the centre is a further, fifth, arch that spans the 3 m. of so between the other arches. In family photographs, (about 1903) these arched frames were shown as supporting hops.

One of the walks that winds through the woodland terminates at the 'painting' lawn, so called because from here there is a view across to Trapp and the Black Mountains, a view that the family and friends enjoyed painting. Immediately to the south of this little lawn and now mostly obscured by holly is a ruinous wrought iron arbour about 3 m. long x 2 m. high and 1 m. wide.

It is highly probable that the walled garden existed at the time of Fenton's visit as there is a shared wall between the enclosed terrace garden and the walled garden. The walls of the enclosed garden appear to be of a single phase of construction and are the same in style; they were possibly extant in 1809.

The 1826 survey of Joseph Gulston's Carmarthenshire estates describes the house and grounds. 'The buildings consist of a large Mansion House antiently (sic) built, two large barns, beast-houses, wain-houses, with all the necessary offices conveniently attached thereto. Stone built with slate roofs in tenantable repair. Also two large walled gardens well situated, but no particular attention has been paid to them of late years'. The two walled gardens referred to must be the existing walled garden and the enclosed, terraced garden adjacent.

The present walled garden appears on the 1840 tithe, as does the terrace enclosure. There is no substantial change in the configuration of the walled garden between 1840 and 1887, but the summerhouse has been added at the northern end. By 1906 the enclosed terrace garden had all but disappeared and the new steps inserted into the south wall of the walled garden, part of the wall was seemingly demolished to achieve this. The glasshouse in the south-western corner has appeared and it is likely that all the present entrances were remodelled post 1889.

Today the walls stand mostly to a maximum of 3 m. and are rubble built, incorporating some of the local red conglomerate stone. There are two entrances to the garden, in addition to the entrance via the steps from the terrace garden. One, on the east side, is designed for pedestrians only, whilst the entrance on the west wall, could accommodate carts etc. The stone-work around these entrances is entirely different from the rest of the walls.

The small pedestrian entrance has been incorporated into the height of the wall. Large blocks of dressed limestone have been used to create the sides and arch, which is vaguely Perpendicular in style. The substantial wooden door is shaped exactly to fit the arch. If it is contemporary with the gates to the main drive, this door was probably made in about 1970.

The vehicle entrance on the west side has been constructed of the same type of limestone blocks, but in this instance, the arch is elevated above the level of the wall. Again the gates are substantial wooden structures with, what appear to be original (c. 1889) fittings being re-used.

Photographs in Mr Stepney Gulston's collection show the two intersecting paths to be slightly wider than at present, with a gravel surface and the garden beds full of fruits, vegetables and flowers. Today no fruit or vegetables are grown in the garden but some ancient, cordoned, fruit trees remain against the walls.

In the centre, where the paths meet is a sundial, complete with its gnomon. The inscription reads `Erected 1900. Latitude 51° 50" Longitude 4° 1" W. Height above sea level of the Old Pleasance and sundial 301'. In the opposing quarters are the words `Watch Faster' and `Watch Slower'. The whole sundial stands to *c.* 1.5 m., the brass top-plate mounted on a vase-shaped pedestal set on a plinth.

The front of the summerhouse forms an integral part of the north wall of the walled garden. It would appear to have been constructed between 1840 and 1887. It is not shown on the tithe survey; the only structure associated with the walled garden at that time appears to have been on the outside of the east wall. The summerhouse does, however, appear on the survey of 1887.

This small square structure is rubble built with an arched entrance. The roof is slate clad and pyramidal in shape, topped with a weather vane. The ground floor is lit by two windows to the front (south) and there is a small fireplace and built-in cupboards. The upstairs is reached by a remarkably grand set of wooden stairs which lead to a single room. This room is lit by a window to the south and one to the west. Again there are built in storage cupboards. On the ground floor there is a blocked doorway to the west and there is still an associated lean-to to the west of the summerhouse.

In the north-west corner of the walled garden is the site of the glasshouses; the glass and original timbers have now been replaced. During the refurbishment, care was taken to retain the iron heating pipes (some with humidity trays) and the boiler. Also retained were the under-floor reservoirs and a mature peach tree.

The line of the northern wall of the walled garden was originally extended further west to meet the curtilage boundary wall. During the remodelling of the garden the line of this section of the property boundary was moved further north. A further vehicle entrance was built into the new section of wall. This gateway gave access on to a field but there is no evidence that cultivation continued beyond the gate. This gateway was subsequently blocked with bricks. The original boundary line is represented by a linear mound or bank. Growing in association with this bank are two ancient trees, a beech and a sweet chestnut, these may indicate that a hedge, rather than a wall, previously formed this boundary.

Sources

Primary

Carmarthen Record Office, Derwydd Collection, M. 38.

Photographs *c.* 1903 - 5, in private collection Mr RA Stepney Gulston.

Photographs *c.* 1930, National Monuments Record, NBR AA49/1753 - 1755.

Tithe map and schedule of apportionments, 1840.

Information from Mr H.D. Patel.

Secondary

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Author not given, *Tenby Observer*, (14 March 1889).

Author not given, 'Llandeilo-Fawr Meeting -Report', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, vol. 10 (1893), pp. 154-63.

Author not given, *Transactions of the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society and Field Club*, vol. III (1907-08), photograph.

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Jones F, 'Cadets of Golden Grove - II: Vaughan of Derwydd', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, (1971), part 1, pp. 132-61.

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