

## FISHGUARD BAY HOTEL

<b>Ref number</b>	<b>PGW (Dy) 63 (PEM)</b>
<b>OS Map</b>	157
<b>Grid ref</b>	SM 948 387
<b>Former county</b>	Dyfed
<b>Unitary authority</b>	Ceredigion
<b>Community council</b>	Fishguard and Goodwick
<b>Designations</b>	Listed building: Fishguard Bay Hotel (Grade II)
<b>Site evaluation</b>	<b>Grade II</b>

**Primary reasons for grading** The survival of most of the structure of an extensive terraced and wooded Edwardian garden, laid out to complement the Great Western Railways hotel. Some fine specimen trees and shrubs remain from the Edwardian planting, which included many exotic and tender species.

**Type of site** Informal terraced and wooded gardens, including former orchard, kitchen garden and tennis court

**Main phases of construction** 1894-1906

### Site description

Fishguard Bay Hotel is a substantial three and four-storey mansion situated on a levelled shelf on the steep, rocky slope above the west side of Fishguard Harbour. Immediately below it are the railway and Rosslare ferry terminals. From the hotel and the terrace in front of it are panoramic views across Fishguard Bay towards Dinas Head. The hotel is reached from Goodwick, to the south, by a narrow road cut into the steep slope at the same level as the hotel.

The hotel faces south and south-east, with the main entrance at the south end of the south-east-facing block. The approach road widens to a roughly triangular, tarmacked forecourt on the south side. Both forecourt and house stand on a platform cut out of the rock-face of the steep slope. On the outer side of the platform the ground is built up and retained with a stone revetment wall. A small service drive passes through iron gates at the west end to the rear of the building. The hotel is rendered, with a slate roof and sash windows. The south block is four-storey, with barge-boarded gables over the top windows and balconies with pent glass roofs and iron railings, supported on decorative iron piers, outside the first-floor windows. The south-east-facing block is three-storey, with a taller tower, topped by a flagpole, over the entrance. At its north end a modern block has been added and rooms have been extended outwards from the original front in recent years.

An interesting feature on the back of the hotel, on the west side, which faces the rock-cut slope behind, is the remains of a bridge between hotel and gardens. This ran from the second floor across to the path at the top of the rock face. All that remains are the iron supports and a blocked door.

There has been a house on the site of the present hotel since the eighteenth century. At that time the house was called Wyndcliffe and both house and quay were held under lease by the Rogers family, who were from Minehead in Somerset. In 1805 the property was sold to David Harries, of Dinas Island, to the east of Fishguard. Fenton, in his *Historical tour through Pembrokeshire* (1811), described the house as 'nched like an eagle's nest above the pier'. An 1814 engraving of *Goodwyeh Pier* by S. Daniell is the first visual evidence of the house, which it shows as a substantial house. It remained in the Harries family throughout the nineteenth century and was sold in 1894, in association with the development of the port in the 1890s, to the Fishguard and Rosslare Railways and Harbour Company. On 1 August 1898 Great Western Railways took over the management and appointed the Pembrokeshire Estate Company to furnish and run Wyndcliffe as a hotel. The house was greatly extended; the old house was incorporated into the northern block and a new one was added at the south end. It was finished, to luxurious standards, in 1906. The hotel catered not only for travellers to and from Ireland; until the 1930s the Cunard Line ran transatlantic services from Fishguard.

Trade fell away after the Second World War and in 1951 Great Western Railways closed the hotel. It entered into a period of neglect and in 1959 was leased by a Mrs Burscough as a hostel for men building the Milford Haven oil refinery. In 1967 it reopened as a hotel and since 1974 has been owned by the present owner, who has undertaken an extensive programme of restoration and modernisation.

The gardens lie mainly on the steep slope above the hotel, to its west, with further, smaller areas on the same level, to its south-east and north-east. The ground is largely wooded, both above and below the hotel and to its north the steep slope becomes a cliff. The sheltered, coastal site produces a mild micro-climate, making it possible to grow tender plants such as myrtle, pittosporum, *Trachycarpus fortunei* and *Chamaerops humilis* here.

The forecourt, on the south side of the hotel, is retained by a rubble stone wall on the west side and bounded by looped iron railings on the east. Below is an overgrown, steep drop, with a row of three mature pines along the east boundary. In front of the south-east front of the hotel, facing the bay, are three narrow, modern terraces. The uppermost, on the same level as the hotel, is all that remains of the original terrace in front of the previous house. It is retained by a rubble stone wall. A narrow bed along the top of the wall is planted with mixed specimen trees and shrubs, including a mature *Ginkgo biloba*, *Trachycarpus fortunei*, rhododendrons and fuchsias. The two terraces below are modern, with concrete paving and low brick retaining walls. Along the east boundary is a low stone wall which has been rebuilt in recent years.

At the north end of the terraces a flight of steps, flanked by a *Lonicera nitida* hedge on the east, leads down to a sloping tarmac path, bounded by looped iron railings on the east and a steep, stone-faced bank, topped by rhododendrons, on the west. Below the ground is covered with seedling trees and drops steeply to the ferry terminal. The path runs north-eastwards through the wooded grounds, the wall on the west side merging into the rockface. Eventually it emerges into the open, with a cliff to the north and leads to the ferry dock. A rich, semi-wild profusion of hebes,

fuchsias, valerian and buddleia flanks the path. At the boundary are a modern fence and brick steps.

The main area of the gardens lies on the steep slope to the north, west and south-west of the hotel. It is bounded by a high mortared rubble stone wall and occupies the slope up to the lane to Harbour Village, which bounds its west side. The ground is densely wooded, with some fine specimen coniferous and deciduous trees in the lower part and a deciduous canopy in the upper part. Laurel and rhododendron form an extensive understorey and their unrestricted growth has rendered large parts of the gardens overgrown and inaccessible. The lower part of the gardens is divided into two main areas: the northern half, which was purely ornamental and the southern half, which originally contained the utilitarian gardens and a tennis court. Above is deciduous woodland. A blocked doorway in the centre of the west wall of the garden, at its top, leads to an overgrown, disused path, on a revetment wall, which runs north-eastwards.

The entrance to this area lies on the west side of the forecourt. The forecourt is bounded by a rubble stone wall, above which is a grass slope with a some large pines and a few shrubs. Above this is the slightly battered revetment wall of the south end of the garden, with a clear corner at its south end. An iron pedestrian gate in the forecourt wall, flanked on the south by a substantial dressed stone pier with projecting moulded top, leads to roughly cut, curving stone steps and a path up the steep slope. The steps are flanked by rubble revetment walls and iron 'pipe' railings. The path makes a hairpin bend, flanked by circular stone piers. These have traces of rendering and hinges for a gate or gates. The unsurfaced path runs south-westwards up the slope, flanked by large quartz stones and a mixed planting of laurel, azalea, berberis, holly and lonicera beneath a canopy of pine, sycamore and ash. On the upper side, above the path, is a curved recess, backed by a stone wall. At the end of this stretch of path is a wide flight of slate-topped steps, angled slightly up the slope. On their lower side they are bounded by a low stone parapet. The top of the steps is overgrown with lonicera and griselinia, but a path ahead, leading to the former tennis court, is just about passable.

The main path then makes another hairpin bend, with steps of stone, slate and concrete on the steeper part of the slope. An overgrown, disused path continues northwards at this level and a further flight of steps, this time of rough-cut stone, leads to the next section of path, running back south-westwards. The path then doubles back again and runs northwards, all the while climbing the slope gradually. It is overhung with aucuba and has some mature pines, holm oaks and shrubs such as fuchsia and leycesteria next to its lower side. Above it the slope is retained by a rubble dry-stone wall.

This section of path passes a series of rockwork water features above it. These are all ornamented with water-worn rockwork, parts are concreted and the stones lining the rills are cemented together. There are remnants of iron piping in places, particularly where the streams cross the paths. The most southern one is a small pool, which drains into a culvert, now blocked, under the path. Next, a small stream emerges from a culvert into a stone-lined channel and then passes in a culvert under the path. All parts are ornamented with water-worn stones. The next water feature, which now no longer holds water, is a rill, which passes under a stone wall, over a cascade and into a rectilinear, concrete-edged pool. From the south-west corner of the pool water formerly ran into the previous rill.

Above these water features there is a crossroads of paths. The lefthand path doubles back up the slope, between rocks. A flight of narrow stone steps leads off to the right past another dry water feature. This consists of an oval pool into which water fell under a semi-circular stonework arch. Above this is a rill and another pool and a flight of very steep steps to an upper path. The water features, but no steps, continue above this path, with an artificial cascade of large rocks, pools, and a rill over and under the path. At the top is a stone-lined rill leading to a concrete lip over a splash pool. When water was running over these features the effect must have been delightful. There are remnants of ornamental planting, and the area is surrounded by laurels.

The left-hand path continues southwards along the slope, flanked by rhododendrons and laurels, on a sloping terrace bounded, below the path, with a rubble stone revetment wall. Water rills in stone channels cross the path and some iron piping, now disused, lies on the surface in places. The path reaches a dry-stone wall, with the stones arranged herringbone-fashion, and then doubles back at a higher level. The wall marks the boundary with the former utilitarian section of the garden. The higher path passes more rills, here culverted under it. The path is built out over the slope, bounded by a low revetment wall. Above is a further terrace revetment wall and another, disused path. The path passes the water features mentioned above and then descends to the cross-roads, with stone steps at intervals on the steeper, lower part.

Another path runs north-eastwards from the crossroads, rising steeply, with steps at the steepest parts. A stand of mature pines is situated above it, completely obscuring the path with pine needles. Above this the path passes a large rock and becomes completely overgrown and impassable. This is the oldest path in the garden, in existence before the others, and leads on upwards and originally out of the garden to what an article of 1927 in the *Great Western Railway Magazine* called a 'rocky summit' from which there was a fine view.

The right-hand path at the crossroads runs along the top of the cliff above the hotel. It is bounded by a low wall and rockwork and is flanked by laurel and ornamental conifers, with large pines below. At the north end of this section is a large rock, at which point the path turns down the slope and runs in a rock-cut and dark section through an area of overhanging laurel and rhododendron. It then turns, flanked by a sloping dry-stone wall built in two tiers, and reaches steps which lead down to a wooden pavilion.

The pavilion, named 'The Shack' on its south side, lies to the north-east of the hotel. It is a small building of wooden construction, at present disused, built on a platform facing south-east. It has a pitched roof, a front mostly of glass and a veranda with wooden piers and tiled floor before it. In front the platform projects in a semicircle, with a large pine tree situated off-centre on it. The platform has a concrete edge and steps and from it there is a very fine panoramic view of Fishguard Harbour and Bay.

From the pavilion a path runs south-westwards back to the hotel. It is edged with stones, rhododendrons and fuchsias and a row of beech trees on its lower side. It leads to a gap in a stone wall, below which is a flight of stone steps, flanked by low walls, leading down to the north end of the hotel and the upper terrace next to it. This would have formerly given on to the croquet lawn, now occupied by a modern extension to the hotel. At the north end of the upper terrace is a semi-octagonal corner wall that marks the position of the former octagonal summerhouse.

The former utilitarian part of the garden and the former tennis court occupy its southern end, bounded on the south by the high boundary wall and on the north by a wall dividing the area off from the ornamental part of the garden. At the foot of this area lies the former tennis court, now much overgrown, backed by a high revetment wall. In the north-west corner are the footings of a former small building. Along the lower side is an overgrown *Lonicera nitida* hedge and remnants of iron railings. Above is a series of terraces, revetted with brick walls and with narrow brick steps between them, which are now heavily overgrown. They were formerly mostly used as kitchen garden and orchard and extend up to the level of the top terrace wall of the ornamental garden. An article of 1927 in the *Great Western Railway Magazine* calls this area 'a more orthodox garden', where one of the terraces was devoted to roses and another an 'old-fashioned' fruit and vegetable garden. The only remnants of their former use are a derelict greenhouse above the tennis court, some derelict garden sheds and some old fruit trees.

The gardens were mainly developed in association with the hotel, between 1900 and 1910 and it is said that they were laid out and planted by a well known Cornish gardening firm, possibly Treseders, who were active in Wales. However, the earlier house, Wyndcliffe, had had ornamental gardens. The tithe map of 1845 shows no garden layout but marks the area to the north-east of the house as 'Garden and plantation'. The 1<sup>st</sup> edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey map of 1889 shows informal walks running north-eastwards from the house down to and beyond the pier on the shore. To the west of the house, on the steep slope, three parallel terrace walls, the lowest one discontinuous, are shown on both the 1889 and 1907 maps. These walls remain, but the map shows that the zig-zag paths in the area were not then in existence. The terraced area at the south end of the garden was associated with former small houses in this area, which were removed when the hotel was built.

The new layout is shown completed on the 1937 Ordnance Survey map. It shows the bridge from the second floor to the gardens, a bowling green or croquet lawn north-east of the building, a complete perimeter wall, the removal of enclosure walls at the north end of the terraces and the replacement of a house on the southern terraced area by the tennis court.

Photographs taken between about 1900 and 1937 show the fully developed gardens, including an enclosed garden to the south of the hotel, which has now completely disappeared under the modern forecourt. The photographs show that it was enclosed by a stone wall and railings, with an entrance flanked by stone piers, one of which now stands at the entrance to the main garden area. The layout was informal, with flowerbeds and a curving path. The croquet lawn and its summerhouse are shown in photographs from 1920, as is the tennis court and a waterfall.

## Sources

### Primary

'Goodwych Pier', engraving by S. Daniell, 1814: National Library of Wales.  
Photographs, c. 1900-1937: Public Record Office, refs RAIL 253/216(2), A926, 927, A1090, B3042, B9717-23, B3040-49, C525.  
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**Secondary**

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