

CRESSELLY

Ref number PGW (Dy) 31 (PEM)

OS map 158

Grid ref SN 0641 0653

Former county Dyfed

Unitary authority Pembrokeshire

Community council Jeffreyston

Designations Listed Buildings: Cresselly House Grade II*; Gatepiers and gate to south drive Grade II; Coachhouse and stable range to the east and west of stable court Grade II; North lodge Grade II; Gates and gatepiers associated with north drive and those opposite Grade II; East lodge and the gates and gatepiers associated with it Grade II; West lodge and associated gates and gatepiers Grade II; Gates and gatepiers at the entrance to the former south drive Grade II
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

Site evaluation Grade II

Primary reasons for grading The gardens surrounding the house are now mostly down to lawn and some of the plant interest has been lost. However, the walled kitchen garden, which was extant at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and much of the park, with some fine entrances, remains. The kitchen garden is large and well preserved.

Type of site Landscape park; pleasure gardens; walled kitchen garden.

Main phases of construction Some features, such as the walled garden, were extant *c.* 1840. Substantial re-modelling of the park and garden was undertaken in *c.* 1869 and again between 1875 and 1907.

Site description

Cresselly House is situated near the summit of the west-facing slopes of a small hill, at some 70 m AOD, in rolling Pembrokeshire countryside. The gardens occupy the terrace which surrounds the house, although they lie mostly to the west; the walled garden is to the north and the parkland covers some of the undulating slope to the west of the house. Cresselly House can be reached from either the main road to Pembroke (A 477) or the road to Haverfordwest (A 40) as it lies just to the east of the A 4075 which links these two main routes. The surrounding, undulating countryside is now a picture of tranquil beauty, with the Cresswell river *c.* 1.5 km to the west. However, like much of the wealth of Pembrokeshire, fortunes were made from the extraction of local coal. In this instance it would have been exported from Cresswell Quay, where the remains of the wharfs are still evident.

The house is reached either from the north, past the small lodge (post 1875), or from the south, through the coach and stable yard; this was not always the case. The main, rubble built, block of the house (built 1770) rises to three stories. The façade is broken by band courses and the quoins are dressed. To either side are two-storey extensions (1869), again rubble built, with less elaborate dressings. At some stage, some of the windows appear to have been altered. The main porch, which is to the east of the house, is nineteenth-century and has twinned pilasters, a balustraded parapet and rounded openings. To the east of the porch is a tarmacked forecourt, formerly gravelled, which is surrounded by a border of woody shrubs and trees. Allen photographs of 1871 show the main entrance to the house very much as it appears today, although aspects of the gardens, such as the *Araucaria*, which was growing to the south of the forecourt, have now gone.

Jones (1996) suggests that the earliest known member of the Bartlett family, from whom the present occupiers are descended, was Peter Bartlett, a yeoman, who is recorded as living at Cresselly in 1564. Four generations later John Bartlett became agent for John Barlow of Lawrenny; although his house was still modest, being assessed as having two hearths in 1670. In 1728, John's eldest son left the property to his niece, Joan and in next year she married John Allen of Goodhook. It was Allen's son, also called John, who pulled down the old house which was adjacent to the family owned coal workings and built the new mansion higher up the slope and slightly away from the colliery in c. 1770.

John Bartlett Allen, for whom the house was built, was obviously a man of some wealth and is described as a mine owner. The architect for his new, elegantly proportioned classical villa, is unknown. Possibly Keck could have been responsible, as it is believed he designed the classical stable courtyard at Slebech. However, it is now thought that the architect was William Thomas, who was responsible for a similar house in Pembrokeshire, Brownslade, now demolished. The first substantial changes were made to the house in c. 1817, when the present staircase was built. This was the work of William Hoare, who also designed and built the peach house, now gone, and the glasshouses at Slebech and Lawrenny. In 1869, the house was enlarged with the addition of two wings. This was the work of Clarke and Holland of Newmarket, Suffolk, who also worked for Lady Catherine Allen's brother, the Earl of Portsmouth. It is believed that the park was remodelled at the same time.

The outbuildings are mostly associated with the present south drive, and form an irregular courtyard of stone-built cottages, former stables, possible kennels, a wood-store and sundry offices. Very much later is a large, hipped-roofed building, with brick quoins and window surrounds, that is to the west of the earlier outbuildings. This was used for smoking and curing.

The boundary between the road, to the east, and the estate, is marked by a substantial rubble wall, which continues, in part round the rest of the park. Remaining as features in the landscape, but now serving no purpose, are two impressive dressed and carved stone gateways, one to the west, the other to the south, that indicate the former drives. The parkland slopes gently away from the house to the north-east and is mostly grazed, although the woodland areas of 'The Belts' and the centre of the park, still remain.

The Ordnance Survey map of 1875 shows no grand sweeps of drive or lodged entrances. A modest drive or path is shown giving access from the site of the present North Lodge through to the walled gardens, from here small paths link to the house. Access to the front of the house is from a recessed entrance just above the stable courtyard. This possibly links with an exit just to the east of the walled garden. However, by 1907 there had been several changes, most of which are now disused and neglected.

To the south of the mansion is Cresselly Green and the former school house. Immediately opposite, across the road to the west is the former smithy. Just beyond the smithy, to the north, is a recessed entrance and the start of a former drive which would appear to have been constructed post 1875 and prior to 1907. Some four metres from the road, on the line of the drive, stands an ornate pair of gate piers; a fine black wooden gate, which is strengthened and decorated with metal-work, is hung from the westerly pier. The square stone gate piers stand to a total height of *c.* 3 m, with most of the stonework being dressed except for the three rusticated panels on each side. Rising above the piers are squared plinths and on the top of each plinth a small stone decorated urn or small ball. At some stage heraldic panels were set on the plinths; the stonework is less weathered where they used to hang. They were removed in 1992 after one had been stolen. These gate piers are slightly more elaborate and different in style from the others on the estate.

From this imposing entrance, the drive curved westwards across a 9-acre field to the site of the West Lodge. However, the drive was obviously constructed some time before the lodge, as the only lodge shown on the 1907 survey is the North Lodge. The West Lodge is very much more modest than the North Lodge, but is stone built in a similar style.

From the lodge the drive crossed the lane that leads towards Cresswell and entered the park through a further imposing double gateway which is recessed from the lane. This entrance consists of four square stone gate piers, all of dressed stone with the taller, centre pair, standing to *c.* 3 m. Above the protruding, square capstone of this central pair, are pyramidal stone blocks again topped with a small decorated ball. On the sides facing the road (south) are two shields which, like the other entrance, still have traces of a heraldic motif. Interestingly, the size of stones and the type of pointing used on the outer piers differs from the inner posts; the outer stones being smaller and 'snail' pointed. Linking the outer and inner piers are simple wrought iron screens with spear motifs above the middle horizontal bar and the upper bar. Between the inner piers hang two elegantly simple wrought iron gates, with dipped centres and spear motifs. From this entrance the drive, which still appears on recent maps but which is now only seen as a parch mark in dry summers, curved eastward towards the house. To the south-west of the house, the drive splayed with one fork curved north in front of the house and terrace and eventually linking with the north drive. The other fork linked the drive with the service area.

The 1875 map shows no sweeping driveways to the house, but it does show an entrance to the fields and woodlands to the north of the house. By the beginning of this century, this entrance had been remodelled into the curved, recessed entrance that is extant today. This northern entrance mirrors the style and design of the western entrance with the curved boundary wall (which stands to 1 - 1.5 m) abutting the two, smaller, external square stone gate piers, which flank the taller, internal piers. The types of stone and pointing used also mirror the west entrance. Immediately to the north is the North Lodge. Built prior to 1907 with some flair and attention to detail, this lodge is a relatively large and imposing, two-storeyed 'L' shaped rubble stone building with dressed quoins and window surrounds. To the front (east) is an angular bay window and two of the upper floor windows are set in gables, which, like the main roof, have decorated red, ceramic, ridge tiles and end finials. The windows appear to be the original sash-type and there is a small extension to the rear (west) of the lodge.

Across the road to the east, is a further entrance. This track originally only lead to the holding known as 'Brince'; but again, by the early years of this century alterations had been made and a track is shown leading from this entrance to 'Lanesend' to the east of Cresselly

village.

From this rather grand entrance, the drive swings south-westerly, skirting the walled garden to the east and joins with the west drive to the front of the house. This drive is in good condition and remains in use.

To the north and west of the house is a linear area of native deciduous woodland known as 'The Belts'; through these woods runs a small stream. Ruinous stretches of stone walling to the south of the woodland suggest that it was separated from the park; no traces were found of an accompanying ditch. It is also just possible to discern traces of a small path wandering through the woods, although it is not known whether this was ever part of an informal woodland garden. The path is shown on the 1875 survey. It leads westwards to the South Fishpond, which today remains as a wet depression, which holds some water but which is considerably overgrown. The path continues through the woods, eventually leading to the North Fishpond. This pond formerly covered some 0.258 acre and was sub-rectangular in shape. Today, the margins of the pond have been lost to vegetation, but it would appear still to hold a substantial amount of water. Adjacent (west) of the pond is a dam or causeway, now entirely grass covered, but with the remains of a low stone parapet.

There is a little ornamental planting within the park. In the woodland between the North Lodge and the 'Belts' are cherry laurels, copper beeches and a Douglas fir. Associated with the West Lodge and within the park generally are stands of immature beech.

The Tithe Award map, early Ordnance Survey maps and photographs allow a reasonable history of the landscaping at Cresselly to be established. The mid-nineteenth century Tithe Award map and Schedule show that Henry Seymour Allen owned not only Cresselly house, but much of the surrounding land. The mansion and surrounding plantations (parcel No. 466) is given as some 9 acres. The area which now constitutes the parkland, to the west of the house, (which was then described as 'lawn') is given as just over 24 acres (parcel No. 447). In the westerly corner of the park is a property referred to as 'Midland'. This was demolished prior to 1875, although another building referred to as 'Norton' appears to the east of 'Midland' by the time that the First Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey map was produced. 'Norton Cottage' was still extant in 1907 and the area of parkland is given as just over 23 acres. Today the area of parkish land is probably about the same, that is the two parcels to the west of the house which are given as 15.873 and 7.285 acres. The areas of woodland at the margins of the park appear to have changed little in extent between the tithe survey and today. At the turn of the nineteenth century new drives were constructed, one of which cut across the south-eastern corner of the park.

The garden is mostly lawn, to the west of the house, surrounded by plantings of hardy plants and shrubs. The area occupied by the garden, surrounding the house, has seen some modifications. The tithe map shows to the front (west of the house) an extensive semi-circular boundary between the garden and the park; this may represent the configuration of the terrace at that time. By 1875 this feature has disappeared and the boundary of the formal terrace garden is given as a slightly curved line with a formal rectangle within. By the turn of the century, this area had again been remodelled and extended and the boundary is now shown as a straight line. Allen photographs (1871), show the terrace with formal circular and semi-circular beds planted with annuals. To the south of this terrace was, at the end of the last century, what appears to be a small circular tiered sunken garden, such as appeared at Lawrenny. By the turn of this century a fountain is shown in this area, either associated with the circular garden or immediately to the south of it. This feature has now gone, but a slight circular sunken depression remains within the grass at the correct location.

The stone eastern boundary wall, which separates the garden area from the road, is not uniform in height, being considerably lower to the north of the North Lodge. However, for the most part it stands to just over 1 m. Along the entire length of the wall the irregular courses of un-dressed stone are capped with stones set on edge, giving a castellated effect (cocks and hens).

Around the house and between the house and the North Lodge are mature examples of *Rhus typhina* (Staghorn sumach), Lawson's cypress, Scots pine and rhododendrons including *R. 'Boddaertianum'*.

To the north of the house are the walled kitchen gardens, which cover nearly 1½ acres. In many respects these are the elements of most historical interest remaining in the gardens at Cresselly. In c. 1840 the kitchen garden is shown as a single sub-rectangular area on the tithe map. By 1875 it was divided into two separate gardens and this division remains.

The walls stand, for the most part, to just over 3 m and the internal west and south facing walls are lined in brick. All the walls had originally been capped with slabs, some now held down by bricks, others have tumbled. Also tumbling is the massive wall (running east - west) which divides the garden. The entrance from the south garden to the north garden is through an arched doorway in the centre of the wall, to either side of the entrance on the south side are two brick walls at right angles to the central wall. These walls may have acted as buttresses as well as providing support for ornamental climbers. However, the wall to the east of this door is now crumbling. Within the south garden are old fruit trees and the base of a cold frame or glasshouse. The survival of glasshouses at Cresselly is of interest in that it is known that William Hoare (who may have built the new staircase) also worked at Slebech and Lawrenny, where he was a tenant. Documentary evidence suggests that Hoare was responsible for the original peach house at Cresselly. In 1875, three areas of glass are shown, the small rectangular area within the south garden, a slightly larger rectangular, free-standing glasshouse or cold frame in the north garden and a further much more extensive range along most of the south facing, north wall, in the north garden; this may have been the site of the peach house constructed some 100 years earlier. By the turn of the century, the smaller area of glass in the north garden had been extended.

Today, one smaller range of glass remains along the north wall, although traces of more extensive foundations remain. The plaster, which formerly covered much of this wall has now mostly disappeared revealing an arched entrance that formerly linked the house with the boiler and service buildings which were situated outside (to the north of) this wall. At the turn of the century, a well is recorded in the western section of the north garden. Now standing on a crumbling stone and brick rectangular base is a fine wrought iron hand pump, the whole being about 2 metres tall - it is not known whether the pump still works.

These gardens at Cresselly are mostly under grass or overgrown. However, fruit trees do remain and there are some rows of soft fruit.

Sources

Primary

Harrison-Allen A, letters to J Stokes, (1997).

Lloyd T, letters to J Stokes, (1997).

Tithe Award map and Schedule of Apportionments, (c. 1840) parcels 445, 446, 447, 448

Photographs of c. 1866 and later held in the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth.

Secondary

Dyfed Archaeological Trust, PRNs 6454, 16620, 30670 - 72, 30857.

Jones F, *Historic houses of Pembrokeshire and their families* (1996), p. 46.

Whittle E, *The historic gardens of Wales* (1992), p.52.