

## **LLECHDWNNI**

<b>Ref number</b>	<b>PGW (Dy) 21 (CAM)</b>
<b>OS Map</b>	159
<b>Grid ref</b>	SN 428 101
<b>Former county</b>	Dyfed
<b>Unitary authority</b>	Carmarthenshire
<b>Community council</b>	Llandyfaelog
<b>Designations</b>	Listed building: Old House (Grade II)
<b>Site evaluation</b>	<b>Grade II</b>

**Primary reasons for grading**      The survival of an unusual and early walled garden and formal pool, associated with one of the former most historic houses in the south of the county. The large garden has a long terrace, terminated at each end by projecting, round gazebos.

**Type of site**      Walled garden, including terrace and gazebos; formal pool

**Main phases of construction**      Seventeenth century

### **Site description**

Llechdwnni (Dwnn's or Donne's refuge) is an ancient site, now a working farm, in the rolling hinterland north of Kidwelly, a short distance to the east of the Gwendraeth Fach valley. The present house is reached by a short drive from a minor road to the south, which leads to a parking area on its east side. It is a modest-sized, Victorian, stone farmhouse built into an east-facing slope and orientated north-south.

Immediately to the north lies what remains of the old house, also built into the slope but orientated east-west.. It is two-storey, of whitewashed rubble stone, with a slate roof, large chimney on the east end and an entrance on the south side. The building is now used as an outhouse and is in derelict condition.

The history of Llechdwnni goes back to the medieval period. Before the beginning of the fifteenth century it was a property of the Gwyn-Lloide family. At that time it passed to the Donne or Dwnn family and later to the Bowens. It is one of the few houses shown on John Speed's 1610 map of Carmarthenshire, indicating its importance at that date. In 1626 Mary, daughter of Morris Bowen (died 1615), married John Brigstocke, who bought Llechdwnni. It continued in the Brigstocke family until they sold in 1909. At the time of the sale the tenant was a Mr D. Griffiths. The property was sold again, in 1913, but with less land than previously. During the eighteenth century the Brigstockes lived at Blaenpant, Ceredigion, and Llechdwnni was let as a farmhouse.

The old house is thought to have seventeenth-century origins, although parts may be older. It was formerly more than double the size of the present house, with a large wing to the east and a smaller one extending south from the centre of the south side. These parts were in existence when the 2nd edition 25 in. Ordnance Survey map (1906) was revised in 1905. They have now completely gone. The present house was built in 1854. The 1906 map shows that the main drive to both houses ran past the west side of the new house to a small court between the two. This approach has now gone and the secondary drive, to the east is now the only one.

The former garden of Llechdwnni is situated immediately to the west of both the old and present houses. It lies on a slope rising westwards to a wide ridge top on the east flank of the Gwendraeth Fach valley. There is a small, square compartment to the north of the old house, bounded by banks and a low wall on the south side. This was probably a garden or orchard compartment but is now grassed.

The garden is a large, square area of just over two acres surrounded by rubble stone walls faced on the inside with hand-made bricks. The interior is grassed. The lowest, east wall is the least well preserved. On the outside there is a stone wall, the base of which is a revetment wall, the northern half of which stands to about 1.6 m, tumbled in places, with a gap towards the north end. Further south the wall rises to about 2.5 m, then is tumbled and drops to ground level again. On the inside the wall (brick) stands up to about 1 m. At the south-east corner the wall rises up to about 3.5 m and there is a narrow opening with the remains of an arch over it.

The south wall stands up to its full height of about 3.5 m and has three wide gaps in it. The brick facing has partly come away at the west end. The north wall is similar but better preserved. It stands to its full height of about 2.6 m on the inside (3.5 m on the outside), with its slightly overhanging, horizontal, stone coping still in place. There is a wide gap in the middle and some of the facing bricks have gone. In the north-east corner there is a short return and then the east wall drops to ground level, on a revetment wall.

The top, west wall of the garden is well preserved and stands to its full height of about 3.5 m, complete with its stone coping. Along the length of its foot is a terrace about 8 m wide, with a drop on its east side of about 1.3 m. At either end of the terrace are circular projections of the same width beyond the north and south walls. These were belvederes or gazebos and from them there are panoramic views of the countryside. The south-west gazebo is poorly preserved. Only the stone footings of its curving wall survives, with the broken stubs of its ends on the south and west walls of the garden. The north-west gazebo is much better preserved. On the inside there is a raised platform, about 1.6 m above the level of the terrace, bounded by a curving stone wall standing up to about 1.8 m high. The lining of the wall, where it survives, is of good quality, coursed stonework, with a brick course half way up. There is a gap on the west side. On the outside the circular wall is well built, of the same construction as the outer garden walling, and stands to about 3.5 m.

Outside the west side of the garden, in the middle of what is now a field, is a rectangular pond. This is placed centrally to the west wall of the garden and was undoubtedly a garden feature with, at least in part, an ornamental function. The pond is clearly demarcated and is now full of rushes.

The garden is associated with the old house. The earliest depiction of it appears to be on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition 1 in. Ordnance Survey map of 1830, surveyed by Lt. Col. Colby, which clearly shows it with both gazebo projections. The small compartment to the east is also shown. The 1906 25 in. Ordnance Survey map shows

the terrace and the projections, the south one slightly irregular, suggesting that by this time it was already ruinous. In his *History of Kidwelly* (1908), D.D. Jones has a rather muddled account of the garden, mentioning the terrace and 'round towers at the north-west and south-west angles'.

The family history of Llechdwnni, and the style and construction of the garden, would suggest that it dates to the seventeenth century, during which time the property belonged to and was lived in by the wealthy and influential Brigstocke family. Although they continued to own Llechdwnni in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries they no longer lived there and let it out to farmers, making it unlikely that a grand garden would have been constructed during that time. The size and ornamental nature of the garden, with its grand terrace and gazebos, and with outlying features like the pond, indicate that during the seventeenth century Llechdwnni was an important house, with a grand garden appropriate to the status and wealth of the family.

## **Sources**

### **Primary**

1<sup>st</sup> edition 1 in. Ordnance Survey map, 1830: Carmarthenshire Record Office.

1909 Sale Particulars: Carmarthenshire Record Office, SC 333.

1913 Sale Particulars: Carmarthenshire Record Office, SC 322.

### **Secondary**

Jones, D.D., *A history of Kidwelly* (1908), p. 82.

Jones, F., 'Llechdwnni revisited', *Carmarthenshire Antiquary* XX (1984), 29-49.

Jones, F., *Historic Carmarthenshire houses and their families* (1987).