

KILVROUGH

Ref number	PGW(Gm)51 (SWA)
OS Map	159
Grid ref	SS 559 893
Former county	West Glamorgan
Unitary authority	City and County of Swansea
Community council	Pennard
Designations	Listed Building: Kilvrough Manor Grade II
Site evaluation	Grade II
Primary reasons for grading	A well preserved late eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century park and garden, with some fine deciduous and coniferous trees. The park contains a folly tower.
Type of site	Small landscape park with folly; formal and informal gardens; kitchen garden
Main phases of construction	1770s; 1820

Site description

Kilvrough is a substantial mansion, set in gardens and a small park, situated on gently rolling ground on the southern side of the Gower peninsula, 1 km to the north-west of the hamlet of Pennard. The rough-cast house is three-storey, in plain classical style, with sash windows and a crenellated roofline. The main block is at the west end of the house and has projecting polygonal bays at either end on the west front. There is stone paving along the foot of the north and west walls. The ground floor on the west side is a semi-basement with semi-circular windows. The entrance, with a porch of six cast iron Tuscan columns in front, is on the north front. The main block bears a distinct resemblance to the contemporary Glamorgan houses of Wenvoe Castle and The Gnoll. The service quarters are on the east side of the house, which is less symmetrical and extends eastwards to form the south side of a small service court. To its east is an adjoining stable court.

Kilvrough was a manor in the medieval period and by 1583 it was held jointly by Rowland Dawkins and John Bowen. In 1650 it was still held by the two families, the Rowland Dawkins of the day being a prominent parliamentarian in south Wales. The Dawkins family remained prominent in Glamorgan society during the eighteenth century and by *c.* 1740 an earlier house, of which there is now no trace, had been rebuilt on the site. This survives as the service end of the present house. The house was extended westwards in the late eighteenth century (before 1774) by William Dawkins, who was High Sheriff of the county in 1773 and died the following year. Dawkins was succeeded by his daughter Mary, Marchioness de Choiseul, who took

little interest in Kilvrough and after 1802 let it. In 1820 it was bought by Thomas Penrice of Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, whose family had ancient connections with Gower. He was succeeded by his nephew, who was High Sheriff in 1867. In the early twentieth century Kilvrough was owned by Lady Lyons. During the Second World War it was occupied by troops and since then has been an Outward Bound Centre in the ownership of Oxfordshire County Council.

Behind the house, to its east, is a small court enclosed by a rubble stone wall, *c.* 1.3 m high, along the north side. Along its south and east sides are two-storey ranges. A passage in the east range leads through to the stable court to the east. This is slightly larger, with two-storey ranges on all but the north side, which is enclosed by a rubble stone wall. There are former stables on the east side. Above this court, to the south, is an upper yard with a rubble stone wall along its south side and small stone outbuildings against it. Steps lead to the yard through the south range of the stable court, which is single-storey at this upper level. At the east end of the yard are ruined stone structures which may have been pigsties. A concrete path leads westwards along the south side of the house to steps down to the garden.

There is a very small area of parkland at Kilvrough, occupying a rectangular area to the south and south-west of the house. It is bounded on the north by the A4118 Swansea-Parkmill road and the gardens and on the remaining sides by field boundaries. The ground is rolling, with a general slope towards the south-west. The setting of the park is quite wooded to the west and north but farmland to the south and east.

The main area of the park is a large rectangular field which is ornamented with a few clumps of mixed deciduous trees. At the south end this is flanked by two woods, the western one called Highway Wood. In the north-west corner is a further area of woodland, within which is a rectangular area, aligned north-west/south-east, enclosed by a rubble stone wall. At its south corner is a folly tower. This is a small, circular, roofless, rubble stone building topped by battlements. It is entered by an arched doorway on the north-west side (within the enclosure). Holes in the interior wall indicate that the tower had an upper floor. This has the remains of plastering on the wall and has small, narrow, gothic window openings.

The style of the park would indicate that it is contemporary with the major building phase of the late eighteenth century, instigated by William Dawkins. It is shown with its present layout on the 1848 tithe map and 1877 Ordnance Survey map. The parkland area to the south and west of the house is labelled 'lawn and wood' on the tithe map. The rectangular walled area is called 'Kitchen Garden' on the 1848 map and 'Nursery' on the 1877 one. Its use was clearly utilitarian and may have shifted from being more of a vegetable garden towards being a tree nursery. The 1877 map also indicates that the park at that date extended southwards to the Southgate road and that a track or drive ran from this road northwards along the east boundary of the park to the upper service court. Although this can still be traced it is no longer in use. The park also extended north of the A4118 road as far as Ilston Cwm to the west. This was also laid out as a large unfenced area with a few clumps. It is now fenced farmland. The wider, wooded setting to the north and west contributes to the character of Kilvrough, as A.G. Bradley noted in 1905: 'Mr Penrice of Kilvrough, an old country seat above (Park Mill) whose woodlands contribute liberally to the arcadian charm for which this spot has some local reputation'.

The gardens surround the house and occupy an irregular area of rolling ground, bounded on the north by the A4118 road which takes a northwards curve around them

from the entrance and lodge to the east of the house. The main entrance is on the east side of the site, on the A4118. Iron piers with pyramidal tops flank simple iron gates with scroll panels next to the piers. On the south side is a pedestrian gate. Immediately to the south of the entrance is a two-storey lodge. This is built of roughly coursed stone, with sandstone dressings. The pitched slate roof has two pairs of chimneys and overhanging eaves with bargeboards. The front door is on the west side and both east and west sides have half-timbered central projecting bays. The entrance is flanked by low rubble stone walls. That to the north has iron slag coping, steps up to its full height of *c.* 3.5 m and runs at this height all the way along the north boundary of the garden with the A4118.

The tarmac drive runs westwards straight to a roughly rectangular forecourt north of the house. A branch diverts to the stable court. The drive passes through an area of informally planted wooded grounds, with ornamental deciduous and coniferous trees set in lawns. Near the drive conifer, particularly cypresses, are dominant, with yews on the bank which rises southwards from the lawn south of the drive.

To the south of the drive the grounds are wooded, the trees being mostly deciduous seedlings. Running north-south near the east boundary is a row of four large yews whose lower branches droop to the ground. A rubble stone wall runs along the boundary, with a building set into it about half way along. It has a stone lower storey and a breeze block upper storey and south end. The building is entered from the east, outside the garden.

To the north of the drive is a more open, ornamental woodland area, with cypresses set in the lawn and horse chestnuts and beech next to the boundary wall. A very large, dead beech tree is used as part of an adventure play area. To the west, north of the house, are two distinct rectangular areas, the kitchen garden and the Italian Garden. The kitchen garden lies at the north end, next to the road; the Italian Garden is to its south, between it and the forecourt.

The Italian Garden now consists of a large, rectangular, sunken lawn surrounded by trees and shrubs, particularly rhododendrons. Along the edge of the forecourt is a row of holm oaks, underplanted with shrubs. Central stone steps, with moulded treads, lead down from the forecourt to the lawn. At their top they are flanked by two small stone cones, at their foot by two cypresses. The bank along the south side of the lawn is revetted with a stone wall, parts of which are visible, which tapers down towards the east end. At the north end of the east side of the lawn is a dry-stone wall. On the north side of the lawn is a symmetrical arrangement of two concrete-lined pools. They lie to the east and west of a central ornament. Both have concave sides facing the ornament but are otherwise straight-sided. The west one, being on slightly lower ground, has higher sides than the east. The central reconstituted stone feature was originally a fountain but is now dry. It consists of an octagonal top, at the corners of which are 'gargoyle' faces, with mouth-holes for water. This stands on an octagonal, tapering base on a square concrete plinth. On the south side of the Italian Garden is an area of mixed woodland, with a large golden yew on its edge. There are some fine, mature trees in the woodland, including beech, lime and sweet chestnut. These are underplanted with rhododendron and spotted laurel.

To the west of the house is a large lawn on two levels. On the upper lawn is a fine, stone sundial, with a square, stepped plinth and bulbous column, at the top of which are curving flutes. The top is slightly splayed and the gnomon has been

removed. Towards the south end of the lawn is a large sycamore and there are sycamores and conifers along the boundary fence. The lower lawn is rectangular and was formerly a hard tennis court. The slope on the east side is revetted with a dry-stone wall. At the south end is a cypress and to the west, near the edge of the garden, is a mature *Ginkgo biloba*.

The garden was probably developed in at least two main phases. There would appear to be nothing of the garden of the early eighteenth-century house left. When the house was extended westwards by William Dawkins in the late eighteenth century it is likely that the garden to the west and south of the house was laid out. However, to the north there was little garden at that time as the public road then ran along the line of the present drive. The road was diverted to the north before 1848, when the tithe map shows the present layout.

The removal of the road to the north in the early nineteenth century enabled the garden to be extended. The Italian Garden and kitchen garden to its north, both shown on the 1848 tithe map, were part of this second major phase of development. The tithe map shows both the kitchen garden and the Italian Garden as walled but shows no internal layout. Stylistically, the Italian Garden was Victorian, and there are Edwardian photographs of it in its heyday, showing an elaborate layout of paths and beds, with fountains and much statuary. Some of the layout may be preserved beneath the turf, but the planting and statuary have gone. The tithe map also shows a pond to the west of the kitchen and Italian gardens, but this has also gone.

The lodge is much later than the house: it dates to 1872 and was designed by the architect J.H. Baylis of Swansea.

The former kitchen garden lies at the north end of the site, between the Italian Garden and the road. It is no longer used as a kitchen garden and is incorporated into the ornamental gardens. There are now walls only on the north and east sides. The north wall is the high, curving, boundary wall along the A4118 road. The section of wall in the kitchen garden is faced with large bricks. There is a blocked opening in the wall to the east of the kitchen garden. The east wall is *c.* 2.7 m high, with a flat-lintelled doorway in it.

The interior consists largely of a grass slope planted with five *Trachycarpus fortunei* and magnolias. At the north end is a brick base for frames. Along the east wall is a lean-to ruined glasshouse reached from the north by three stone steps. It has a brick north wall and low front wall with ground-level holes in it. These make it likely that the building was a vinery. The back wall is rendered. The glasshouse is stepped down the slope, with a flight of steps down to the next level, also with ground-level holes. An iron tank is set into the wall next to the steps and there is a slate-edged path between the doors. Three further steps lead down to the next level, which has a small brick-lined pool. Another three steps lead down to the last level, which also has a pool. At the south end two steps lead down to the lawn.

On the south side of the kitchen garden is an isolated stretch of wall *c.* 3.5 m high. The lower part is stone, banded with brick, the upper part is brick. The wall is broken off at the east end. Around the wall are laurel, hazel, sycamore and a large cypress. To the east is a great bank of laurel.

The kitchen garden was created as part of the second major phase of development of the gardens in the early nineteenth century, at which time, or soon after, the earlier kitchen garden, on the west side of the park, was probably converted to a tree nursery. The garden is shown as completely walled on the 1848 tithe map, with a building in the middle of the south side. Part of this remains as a ruined wall.

Sources

Primary

1848 tithe map: West Glamorgan Record Office.

Secondary

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Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales, *An Inventory of the Ancient Monuments in Glamorgan. Vol IV, pt 1, the greater houses* (1981), pp. 287-93.

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