

KILGETTY

Ref number	PGW (Dy) 33 (PEM)
OS Map	158
Grid ref	SN 1336 0844
Former county	Dyfed
Unitary authority	Pembrokeshire
Community council	Kilgetty/Begelly
Designations	None
Site evaluation	Grade II

Primary reasons for grading The survival of the structure of a pleasure garden and enclosed park extant in the mid-eighteenth century and probably dating to the second half of the seventeenth century when the mansion was built. To the east of the garden are the impressive ruins of a classical summerhouse of some sophistication with later belvedere tower. There is archival evidence that the gardens were once ornamented with parterres, water features and statues.

Type of site Formal enclosed garden on a landscaped terrace. Park and paddock to the south and west.

Main phases of construction All features extant in 1743 although some may be earlier. The site was abandoned in the mid eighteenth century

Site description

The site of the mansion is on high ground just to the north of the village of Stepside and *c.* 8 km to the north of the coastal resort of Tenby. Today, the mansion has vanished and the former southern outbuildings have been converted into a farmhouse but the site is of some antiquity. Somewhat misleadingly, the Royal Commission on Ancient & Historical Monuments *Inventory* (1925), refers to Kilgetty as an ecclesiastical residence of Canons of St David's cathedral; this was not so.

The Barlow family, of Slebech, acquired Kilgetty, then a farmhouse, in the middle of the sixteenth century. In about 1620, the Barlow's sold the property to Sir Thomas Canon of Haverfordwest, who died in *c.* 1639 and the estate passed to his nephew Morris. It was either Sir Thomas or Morris Canon who had the mansion built. The family wealth was further added to by coal extraction on the estate; alas in 1655, Morris Canon was killed when he fell into one of the coal shafts. Although his widow remarried, the estate passed to Morris's son, John, who died in 1690, leaving his daughter, Elizabeth as heir. Elizabeth married John Philipps of Picton and Kilgetty became part of the Picton holdings on her death without issue in 1706. The Philipps family improved and enlarged the mansion between 1725 and 1726. In

1743, John Butcher recorded the house and lands of the Kilgetty demesne and in 1810, Fenton noted that 'On a conspicuous eminence stands the old mansion of Cilgetty' and he went on to remark that 'Here is a small deer park, which since Picton has been disparked, is his lordship's principal source of venison'. The tithe map of 1839 records the buildings much as they were in 1743, but the buildings were evidently beginning to decay. Somewhere around the middle of the nineteenth century the mansion was taken down. Remnants of the garden and belvedere still attracted attention in 1852 when Fanny Price Gwynne recorded the remains of the tower, which she refers to as the 'ruins of a temple', the grounds and the belvedere were also described by Mary Curtis in 1880.

Although the mansion was abandoned in the mid eighteenth century and demolished, some of the outbuildings remain. In the National Library of Wales is a plan of the demesne, drawn by John Butcher in 1743, which shows the plan and elevation of the house and includes a sketch of the house and gardens. However, although most of the contemporary surviving physical evidence accords with the plan, it is not known if the two decorative parterres to the front (south-west) of the house were ever created. Jones describes the sketch thus: 'The drawing shows three main buildings and various outhouses in close proximity. The area covered by buildings and courtyard measures 1 acre, 2 roods, 12 perches (taken from the legend). The front elevation of the residence shows it to have been of three storeys, and of medium size; in the centre of the ground floor was the main entrance, flanked by a window on either side, while each of the two upper storeys had a range of three windows. All windows were square-headed, except those in the top storey which were oval-headed. The ground plan shows the house to have been a cube, with a wing on the reader's left (that is to the south-west). Immediately over the entrance door is some decoration, too indistinct for interpretation, but I believe it may well have been a heraldic shield. The pitch of the roof is steep, with a chimney at each gable end. The house was neither large nor imposing, and a tourist (not named by Jones) recorded in September 1767 that he passed 'by Kilgetty the Seat of Sir Richard Philips (*sic*), pretty enough, but very small'.

In front and on either side of the residence, are two long L-shaped buildings, each of two storeys, and with chimneys, which suggest that they might have served domestic purposes. Both 'wings' are still *in situ*, that on the readers left (that is to the south-west) being used as the farmer's dwelling and that on the right as an outhouse. The residence and these two buildings enclose a large courtyard, with pillared entrances on either side, and facing the residence is a third pillared entrance with an iron gate opening to ornamental gardens. Through the centre of this courtyard, a tessellated pathway extends to the entrance door of the residence'.

The present farm would seem to be made up of the outbuilding mentioned by Jones and a further building to the south (which is also shown on the 1743 plan) The farmhouse now has modern windows and is rendered.

All of the outbuildings shown on the 1743 plan are traceable. Some are in use as agricultural buildings or stores, whilst others are extant but extremely ruinous.

Shown on the early plan as a two-storey rectangular block, the range to the north-east of the courtyard has been much altered, if the plan is accurate. This is still a rectangular stone block but now stands to one and a half and two storeys, the lower end being towards the north-west. The roofs are modern and the chimneys have been removed. To the western end of the range is an external stairway with stone parapet. This two-storey section appears to have been altered very little. The north-west end

has been changed considerably, although the sketch may have omitted some features. Facing on to the courtyard are two arched entrances within this section, which appear to be contemporary with the wall, although they do not appear on Butcher's plan. More recent are the two large openings with flat lintels that appear to either end of this section; the most northern opening is in a more ruinous section of the range, which is roofless. It is tempting to suggest that the mid eighteenth-century plan is inaccurate and that this block represents the stables, coach-house and hay-loft, together with accommodation for staff.

The 'chicken house' is a small stone outbuilding. The chimneys have been removed if this is the building represented on the early survey. However, the building shown is of two storeys faces south-east, whilst the chicken house is a single-storey structure facing west.

It is possible that the small cottage shown by Butcher is the structure to the north of the chicken-house, although this has been much altered. Now roofed with corrugated iron and used as a workshop, this small rectangular stone building has a single pitched roof and altered openings.

Shown on the Butcher plan is a series of small rectangular buildings and enclosures to the south-west of the house. Still extant today and also shown on Butcher's plan, is the track from Kilgetty along the northern edge of the deer park. One of the small buildings is to the north-west of the entrance where the track enters the house boundary. It is tempting to suggest that this two-roomed, low stone building was a lodge. The gable ends still stand, but the front and rear walls are tumbled, standing to a maximum of 1 m.

Adjacent and to the north of this small building, linear mounds indicate the course of former walls. To the north again and still part of this complex is a more complete building, again with gable walls surviving. The function of these buildings is not known, but from the remains they would seem to be domestic buildings.

There is one further building indicated on the early plan, within the area referred to as 'The paddock'. Ruinous, but with the gable ends surviving, this stone building is too small for storage and may have been associated with deer management.

The farmhouse, formal gardens and parkland used to occupy some 72 acres about 1 km to the north of the village of Stepside. In the last decade, a cutting to improve the Pembroke Dock trunk road (A 477) has severed part of the park and reduced the total acreage. The house and formal, walled gardens are set on a small plateau about 115 m AOD, whilst the sloping pasture of valley side to the south-west forms the park. To the west and south of the park runs a small stream which eventually enters the sea at Wiseman's Bridge. There are commanding views from the upper floor of the house and, presumably, from the tower within the belvedere. Today the site is reached from the single-track road that leads from Stepside to Ludchurch, but in the mid eighteenth century there was a further lane leading from Kilgetty to the mansion. As with much of Pembrokeshire, the geology of the area is complex, but the wealth accrued from coal extraction on the estate and the number of dis-used mine shafts demonstrates an accessible outcrop.

It is not known who was responsible for the construction of the walled garden; it may have been the work of the Canon family. However, the Butcher print shows that the pillars and gate piers of the entrance to the garden are topped with a lion rampant supporting a shield. Whilst it is not clear if the shields bore the arms of the Philipps family, these motifs appear elsewhere on Philipps family property. The suggestion is, therefore, that the Canon gardens were considerably improved and

altered by Sir John Philipps (died 1736), or his successor. The configuration of the park and garden essentially remained unaltered, although subject to decay, until the construction of the trunk road.

The park and garden formed two discrete entities, the 6 acres of walled pleasure garden being separated from the deer park by a substantial stone wall.

These two areas are, therefore, dealt with separately.

The deer park is shown on the early survey as an area of just over 59 acres to the south of the house and walled gardens. To the north-west is a further area of about 5 acres which is referred to as the Paddock. Both the park and the paddock were enclosed by a substantial stone wall; an area to the south-west of the park has now been taken for the road improvement and the wall is missing in this section.

The 64 acres cover the undulating south-west facing south of Pleasant Valley, that eventually meets the sea at Wiseman's Bridge. The land is presently used for grazing and the turf has been improved in the flatter areas. The southern areas include steeper gorse-covered land and the rock outcrop that was formerly a quarry.

The early survey shows three gates to the park and paddock; two to the west and one to the east. The eastern gate was associated with a fish pond that is now drained. The wall that surrounds the whole area stands to a maximum height of 3 m, although it is considerably tumbled in places. The configuration of the upper (northern) gateway to the east appears to be little changed. The gate piers still stand to over 1.5 m and are set back in an irregular splay. The lower eastern entrance has, however, been moved. The present entrance is *c.* 4 m above (north) of the original. One gate pier remains standing, again, to just over 1.5 m. An ash tree grows within the entrance and the wall is ivy-covered.

The early and later surveys show a wall dividing the park from the paddock, of this, the central section of about 65 m has now gone. Apparently part of it was removed when it became unsafe. The small building in the north-west corner of the paddock, that is shown on the early survey is, however, still traceable but the parkland trees and the three circular plantings have now gone.

Butcher's plan (1743) depicts the walled pleasure garden as an elaborate and geometric pleasure garden divided into several units. Flanking the central compartment are, to the north a rectangular garden area and, to the south, linear terraces. From mapped evidence and the 1743 sketch, both these flanking elements were separated from the central compartment by walls.

The plan shows that the main gated entrance was directly opposite the main entrance to the house, across the courtyard. The sketch shows the north-west wall being higher at its extremities, dipping to pillars *c.* 16 m towards the centre. These pillars marked the start of a lower wall built in a sweeping semi-circle in the centre of which are tall square gate piers supporting fine iron gates. On the top of the lower section of wall are railings, which are interrupted at four regular intervals with pillars, which, like the gate piers, are topped with lions. The garden plan then follows a geometric, but not entirely symmetrical pattern. A linear path leads from the gate towards the small lake and belvedere at the far end, some 241 m away. As late as 1907 the length of the garden was partitioned by a wall. Further walls also separated rectangular areas to the north and south. The garden is shown as divided into rooms, these divisions appear to have been clipped hedges as they fail to appear on subsequent plans. In the centre of the first area nearest to the house (north-west) at the junction of the paths that quarter the area, is a small pond and fountain, which is surrounded by low iron railings of an octagonal pattern. As late as 1889, a small pond

is shown in this location. At the edges of the paths are statues and (possibly) clipped conifers. Clipped hedges separate the walkways from the parterres within. The plan indicates four parterres, which probably would have been similar, if not identical; only two are shown on the sketch. Towards the east of each area, mature trees appear above the clipped hedge. The remainder of the areas are, apparently, given over to a simple geometric design. There is no indication whether the design is, or was to be, executed in plants or in different coloured gravels. In the centre of these areas are statues. The plan indicates that the two garden rooms to the east of this section were probably identical but lacking statuary.

Beyond and to the east of these four gardens would have been a partition wall. In the area beyond the wall and towards the belvedere six further garden rooms are indicated but the sketch does not extend this far and there is no clue on the plan as to planting or internal arrangement. Towards the eastern end two semi-circular features are shown. One is probably the small lake and the other the belvedere. Beyond these structures, further water features are shown. To the north, a serpentine rill is shown flowing through some kind of plantings; this possibly went into a small rectangular pond to the south of the belvedere.

The plan within all this internal section is one of geometric symmetry, with the patterns shown within the garden rooms seemingly owing much to the seventeenth-century fashion of *platte-bandes*. How much was extant in 1743 and how much was intended is unknown, but when Mary Curtis wrote an account of her visit in 1880, she confirmed the existence of at least some of the statues: 'Many statues adorned the grounds, some on the top of the wall which enclosed the court-yard just before the castle (belvedere). One of them I saw lying broken; it was that of a man with a fish which he was either grasping or struggling with'.

To the south of the gardens rooms was a linear terrace that possibly extended the whole length of the garden and to the north was a smaller rectangular enclosure.

The internal network of paths has now disappeared. They may now be under the turf, but it is more likely that they were ploughed out when this area was used for potatoes. To the south of the garden are two terraces which might be regarded as structural features and to the east, associated with the belvedere is a retaining wall braced by three substantial buttresses. Since 1743, it would seem that the wall between the fountain garden has been either allowed to tumble or the stone has been used elsewhere; it had certainly gone by 1889; the sketch clearly indicates that this was a wall, not a hedge and it remains as a stony, rubble bank.

Two terraces, which remain as grass covered earthworks, extend to some 198 m, nearly the length of the garden area and are both *c.* 2 m wide, with a rise of *c.* 0.5 m between each terrace. At the north-west end, the earthworks cease, but this is probably due to earth moving and wall building in the twentieth century. The early plan clearly marks the boundary between the terraces and the park to the south; whether this boundary was a hedge or wall is not known. The parkland turf shows a lack of plant diversity, suggesting 'improvement'; the remains of the boundary were probably, therefore, ploughed out.

To the east and south of the belvedere is a substantial retaining wall that supports the garden terrace at this corner where the natural ground level slopes away. The stone wall currently stands to a maximum of 3.25 m, which is to the ground level of the former garden. Supporting the wall to the east are three massive stone buttresses, each being about 1.5 m wide and decreasing in height from south to north, with the slope of the land. Over the years the stonework has begun to break away and

mature trees are now growing on all the buttresses. It is not clear from the map whether these features existed in 1743, but they are recorded from 1889 onwards.

Several sections of internal compartment wall remain, all but one built of stone. The western, entrance wall is still very similar to that recorded in 1743. It stands to *c.* 1.5 m and a pillar at the start of the semi-circle (north side) stands to 2 m. The splayed, semi-circular entrance remains but all contemporary metalwork has gone and the present gate is utilitarian. At the south end the wall forms part of the boundary to the 'Paddock' and deer park.

The northern partition wall formed the north boundary to two of the compartments. It is now very tumbled and in places no more than an earthwork mound. The south side was brick-faced and one small section stands to 1.25 m high.

The central partition wall is shown on the two early surveys as running from the north boundary of the garden to the first southern boundary of the walled area. In 1907 the southern section of the wall was shown as a dotted line, suggesting partial collapse or removal. Today, much of this wall has been removed and a large entrance made in the northern section. One small section stands to a height of nearly 3 m.

Four water features are shown on the Butcher plan: the fountain; the small semi-circular lake; the rectangular lake and the serpentine rill.

At the intersection of the longitudinal and latitudinal paths to the east of the main garden entrance, Butcher depicts what Jones (1976) suggests is as an 'energetic' fountain. The fountain rises from a small circular pond which is surrounded by low octagonal iron railings. This small feature does not appear on the Tithe Award Survey, but a small pond is shown on both the 1889 and 1907 surveys. Although present the tenants refer to 'wet areas' within the garden there is now no obvious visible trace of this pond.

At the eastern end of the garden and immediately in front of the belvedere was a small semi-circular stretch of water. The mapped evidence suggests that the water levels within the lake fluctuated. The feature was recorded in 1742, but not on the tithe. The First Edition 25 inch map (1889) deliberately shows this as rush or marshy ground around which five conifers are indicated. Mary Curtis (1880) writes of the lake in the past tense so it may not have been extant at that time. However, the Second Edition 25 inch map, does show a small D-shaped, sunken feature; smaller in area than the outline to the marsh of the earlier survey. In 1958, when Professor Grimes recorded the belvedere the lake was still holding water and the modern 6 inch maps also record the lake, but during late 1996 there was no trace of it.

The rectangular lake appears on the 1743 plan and is shown as a raised platform with a conifer and deciduous tree on it in 1889. It is again shown as a small rectangular pond in 1907. Modern surveys record a small pond adjacent to the external, perimeter wall, which may be the remains of this feature. The earthworks have now disappeared, possibly ploughed out, and there was no trace of water. There is now no trace of the serpentine rill.

At the south-eastern end of the garden are the remains of an extraordinary building that, when entire, would have fitted well into any Palladian landscape. A building of some description is certainly depicted in 1743 in the correct position, although whether it is this structure is unclear. Jones (1976) suggests that the present remains formed part of a building constructed by the 1st Lord Milford and that it was probably built during the latter half of the eighteenth century. It is variously referred to as a 'summerhouse', 'castle', the 'site of Kilgetty house' and a 'temple'. It certainly could have served as a summerhouse and a belvedere.

Three classical arches and supporting pillars, in dressed stone recorded in 1958, were attached to the west front.. The arches have now gone but some of the fine stonework remains; especially on the south end. Behind this facade is a semi-circular room, at the rear of which is a tower. The tower, which is square externally and circular within, still stands to two storeys and the inside retains most of its rendering. Within the tower are two square headed windows, which have dressed stone cills and lintels. All but the facade and architectural details are of undressed stone. Abutting the facade at its southern end is a further stretch of rubble walling which stands to 1.5 m. Curiously, it is not keyed into the main structure and may, therefore, represent the later blocking of an original opening. The Royal Commission suggests two phases of building, the main structure they attribute to the eighteenth century, whilst the tower, they suggest, was nineteenth century.

There are many stories associated with this building; one suggests that it was built to watch the sea route on this part of the coast, which would have been visible from the top of the tower. It certainly would have allowed Sir Richard to watch both the sea and the deer park to the south.

In addition to the walled garden to the east of the house, the 1743 map shows an area behind the house which is referred to as the West Garden. This is an area of some '2 rods 27 perches'. Today this area is partly occupied by a large open-sided barn and the boundary walls remain as nettle covered earthworks. No other features were visible.

Sources

Primary

Butcher J, Manuscript map of the 'Demesne of Kilgetty in the county of Pembroke belonging to Sir John Philipps Bart', (1743), copy held in the National Library of Wales.

Tithe Award Survey & Schedule of Apportionments, (1839), Parish of St Issells, copy held in the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.

Secondary

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Fenton R, *An historic tour through Pembrokeshire* (1811), p. 257.

Jones F, 'Kilgetty: A Pembrokeshire Mansion', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, vol CXXV (1976), pp. 127-39.

Jones F, *Historic houses of Pembrokeshire and their families* (1996), pp. 99-100.

National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth, site file, including 1958 photographs.