

CADW/ICOMOS REGISTER OF LANDSCAPES, PARKS AND GARDENS
OF SPECIAL HISTORIC INTEREST IN WALES

REGISTER ENTRY

WARPOOL COURT HOTEL

Ref number	PGW (Dy) 68 (PEM)
OS Map	157
Grid ref	SM 750 248
Former county	Dyfed
Unitary authority	Pembrokeshire
Community council	St David's
Designations	Listed building: Warpool Court Hotel Grade II; Garden terrace, hemicycle and archway Grade II; Walled garden and attached tower Grade II; Pumphouse Grade II
Site evaluation	Grade II
Primary reasons for grading	The survival of an unusual, even eccentric, garden of the beginning of the twentieth century in a fine position overlooking the sea. Loosely Italianate, the garden is characterised by red and black brickwork decoration.
Type of site	Formal gardens; walled kitchen garden
Main phases of construction	1865-70; 1880-99; <i>c.</i> 1900-1914

Site description

Warpool Court is a substantial house, now in use as an hotel, situated a short distance to the south of St David's, between the town and St Non's Bay. The ground drops gently from the house towards the coast to the south and west, giving panoramic views to the sea and offshore islands.

The house is a three-storey building of squared, rubble, grey stone, its long axis orientated east-west. At each end is a taller block with a quite steeply pitched slate roof. The slightly lower third storey between has multiple gables on the north front and dates to the twentieth century. The north front faces the entrance forecourt. The main door is near the east end and has a projecting single-storey, romanesque style, porch with round-arched openings. The arches are lined with black bricks. Over the central arch is a plaque with a motto in Greek on it: 'The stars are my roof, my Lord, my light'. Near the west end of the house is a Jacobean style projecting porch, with a Dutch gable and heraldic plaque over a door. The original south front of the house is obscured by a single-storey, twentieth-century, hotel extension.

There is no record of a house on the site before the nineteenth century. In 1592 the site is mentioned as 'Carnwarb'ro', which by 1838 had become 'Carnwarpool'. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, before 1778, it was part of the estate of John Harries of Priskilly. The first house, named Bryn-y-garn, was built in 1865-70 by the Revd Alfred J.M. Green, Head of the Cathedral School of St David's. The builder was Peter James of Milford Haven. A plaque over a door to the kitchen garden, with the date '1870' on it, is probably not in its original position. Green used the house both as a home and a school building. In 1880 Bryn-y-garn was sold to Charles Morgan, who died soon afterwards. His wife continued with building works, including a Catholic chapel. This was added to the east side of the house and is now converted to domestic use. Mrs Morgan had it built after she fell out with the Dean of the Cathedral and converted to Catholicism. In the 1890s she went bankrupt and the property was sold to Ada Lansdown Miller-Williams in 1899, a wealthy woman of Irish descent.

Ada Miller-Williams and her family gave Warpool Court its present appearance and character in the early twentieth century. At first the name of the house was changed to Dewiscourt, then to Warpool Court, which it was called by 1908. Ada hand-painted some 3000 tiles, which were placed throughout the house and which remain there today. It was her son Basil who was responsible for laying out the formal garden south of the house.

The gardens of Warpool Court lie mainly to the south of the house. The approach, however, is from the north. A straight tarmac drive runs south-west from a crossroads on the small lane from St David's to St Non's chapel to a forecourt parking area in front of the hotel. The drive is flanked by alternating clipped privet bushes and sycamore trees, backed by a tall privet hedge on the east. To the west of the drive is a grass field and to the east a lawn and hard tennis courts, with a row of sycamores along the south side of the area.

To the west of the hotel is a lawn, with a belt of trees and shrubs next to the perimeter wall. Trees include a cedar and holm oak (*Quercus ilex*). The boundary wall is of rubble stone and extends all the way round the property, including the field to the south of the garden and the field and tennis court area to the north.

To the south of the hotel a rectangular area has been laid out as the main garden, the chief features of which are a terrace next to the house and formal lawn below. Red and black brick and red tile are used extensively throughout the garden, while the style and ornaments are Italianate. This combination gives the garden an unusual hybrid character. The situation is scenically very attractive, with sweeping views beyond the garden to the sea and offshore islands.

Nearest the house there are flowerbeds and a small lawn planted with two large yuccas. The lawn is bounded by a terrace wall, the lower, revetment part of which is built of rubble stone. The parapet has wide, shallow arches. The terrace side of these are built of moulded black bricks alternating with red tiles; the lawn side is of red tiles only. Between the arches are piers of alternating bands of red tile and black moulded brick. The wall is capped with red tiles. At the west end the terrace projects further out over the slope, with an arch overlooking the hemicycle below. In the centre of the terrace is a flight of steps down to the lawn below. The steps are flanked at the top and bottom by rusticated piers of narrow red brick. These are also decorated with yellow terracotta scallop shell plaques set into them. All piers are topped by yellow terracotta urns. The parapet bounding the east end of the terrace has more steeply curving arches than the others.

At the east end of the terrace a flight of concrete steps, flanked by low arched walls, leads to an archway through to a small lawn. The red brick pier on the north side of the steps has a scallop shell plaque set into its west side and is topped by a large sundial, consisting of a square stone slab and simple iron gnomon. At the foot of the steps is a rusticated arched gateway of red and black brick, with a red brick stepped cornice and side arches of moulded black brick. The small lawn is flanked by mixed shrubs, including buddleia and euonymus. Its east side is bounded by the kitchen garden, with an entrance into it surmounted by a plaque with the date 1870 on it. Just to the north of this is an ancient fig tree, the sole survivor of several acquired by Ada Williams from Palestine. One other grew in the glasshouse in the kitchen garden. On the north side of the lawn, against the house, is a blocked, round-headed arch, in romanesque style, with a black brick bellcote over it. The apex of the gable top has a red terracotta dragon perched on it. The arch is of red brick, with a band of black brick. Below, the archway is flanked by two short drainpipes serving as columns. The flanking walls are of rubble stone.

Below the terrace is a large lawn, sloping slightly southwards. It is bounded by a privet hedge on its south and west sides and by a small sycamore wood on the east. There is a modern, covered swimming pool in its north-east corner. Along the foot of the terrace wall is a wavy-edged flowerbed. At the west end is a suntrap, called the hemicycle, consisting of a hemispherical area of random stone paving backed by a high rubble stone revetment wall on the west side. The wall has banded red and black brick ends and pilasters and cemented red brick coping. In the centre is a low stone bench seat on black brick corbels, over which are three arches of rounded black brick and a broken pediment above the level of the wall coping. Behind the wall the area is backed by a privet hedge. A scallop shell plaque is set into the terrace wall on the east side of the hemicycle.

Flanking the central vista down the lawn are two Italian marble statues of classical, draped, female figures, standing on tall plinths of squared grey stone. Both figures are seated and looking out to sea. That on the east is 'The Music' and is playing a lyre; that on the west is 'The Song'. Below and to the east of the statues is a large, spreading oak tree.

Against the east boundary wall is a rubble stone tower, now disused, which originally served both as a pumphouse for sewage and as a folly tower. The top projects on red brick corbels. On the west side is a broad low archway of decorative brickwork. The arch has an outer band of black brick, a central one of alternating black and red brick and inner one of red brick. These stand on tripartite jambs, with the black brick band in the middle. On the north side there are eroded steps up to a higher red brick arch on black brick jambs. Inside is a derelict cast-iron pump. Immediately to the south square piers in the boundary wall flank an inverted arched opening in the wall, in which are set spear-headed iron railings.

The north side of the garden, to the east of the house, is bounded by the high rubble stone wall of the kitchen garden. Near its east end is an arched doorway through into the kitchen garden. A yellow terracotta scallop shell plaque is set into the gable over the door. The arch is faced with dark brick and has a simple iron gate and two steps up to the kitchen garden level.

Against the west boundary wall of the garden is an elaborate doorway in gothic style. The doorway has a pointed arch and has a dark brick surround. The rubble stone wall around the doorway has similar brickwork corbelling over the door and wall capping. The top of the wall over the door has mini-battlements and is flanked by two

steeply pitched pinnacles. Projecting piers below them have smaller, matching pinnacles. The heavy door, which is original, is wooden, with heavy iron hinges. On the outside, above the door, is a date plaque of 1902 and a reverse 'swastika' sign, which traditionally denotes welcome. Above the door, to its north, is a small rockery and paved lookout platform next to the boundary wall.

The gardens were developed in two main stages. First, the walled kitchen garden, to the east of the house, was built by Mrs Morgan after 1880. The date plaque of 1870 over an entrance to the kitchen garden is misleading and probably came from the house. The stone for the walls of the kitchen garden is reputed to have come from the ruin of the old Mitre Hotel in St Davids. At this time the drive was further west than at present, approaching from the rock outcrop through a pair of tall gates. The 1891 Ordnance Survey map shows the layout at this time. The kitchen garden, with glasshouses, was in place but the grounds to the south were informal, planted with specimen conifers.

The second stage of development came after Ada Lansdown Miller-Williams bought the property in 1899. It was her son Basil who designed the Italianate garden south of the house and embellished the property throughout with distinctive red and black brick decoration. The drive was re-routed to its present position at this time as well. The date plaque of 1902 over the west doorway to the garden gives an indication of when the garden was made. The gardens have been little changed since this date.

The walled kitchen garden occupies a roughly square area to the east of the house. It is bounded on the west mostly by the house and former chapel and on the remaining sides by rubble stone walls. There is a stretch of garden wall at the south end of the west side. This is about 3.5 m high, with a round-arched doorway at the south end. The arch is of dark brick in alternating short and long bands and above is a tall Dutch gable with a scallop shell plaque set in it. The south wall is similar in height, with a doorway into the main garden at the east end. The north wall is about 2-2.5 m high. Half way along is a round arched doorway. The arch is of moulded black brick alternating with longer dark brick bands. The sides are of roughly squared stone, with a bite out of the lower part of the east side, made in recent years to enable garden machinery to enter the garden. Over the doorway the wall curves up to a table top in red brick, with black brick corbels below. At the east end of the north wall a squat, square tower is built on to its outside. On the west side of the tower the ground floor has a segmental-pointed doorway and small window and outside steps against the kitchen garden wall up to a doorway into the upper floor. Next to this is a larger window. All openings are faced with moulded black bricks. At the top, the tower has a corbelled parapet. The ground floor of this building has been used within living memory to house Great Danes and donkeys. A single-storey lean-to range, in similar style, runs north from the tower. This was originally the pigsties. The east wall is similar in height to the north wall.

The interior of the garden is now largely grassed over. An area of cobbling near the centre is probably all that remains of animal stalls or a gardener's cottage, both of which are known to have existed in the garden at one time. The glasshouses and potting shed shown on the 1891 map have gone. The latter is known to have been decorated with tiles painted by Ada Williams. These depicted fruit, flowers, vegetables and pheasants. In the north-east part of the garden are some old apple trees and a large old mulberry tree.

Sources

Primary

Tithe map, 1840s: National Library of Wales.

Dossier on history of Warpool Court, compiled by Julie Trier, in hotel.

Secondary

Broster, D.K., *Ships in the Bay*.