

PENLLERGARE WALLED GARDEN AND ENVIRONS

NOTES TO ACCOMPANY THE TOPOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Report No. 2004/27

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CAMBRIA ARCHAEOLOGY

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By

K Murphy

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ARCHAEOLEG CAMBRIA
Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed Cyf
Neuadd y Sir, Stryd Caerfyrddin, Llandeilo, Sir Gaerfyrddin SA19 6AF
Ffon: Ymholiadau Cyffredinol 01558 823121
Adran Rheoli Treftadaeth 01558 823131
Ffacs: 01558 823133
Epost: cambria@acadat.com Gwefan: www.acadat.com

CAMBRIA ARCHAEOLOGY
Dyfed Archaeological Trust Limited
The Shire Hall, Carmarthen Street, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire SA19 6AF
Tel: General Enquiries 01558 823121
Heritage Management Section 01558 823131
Fax: 01558 823133
Email: cambria@acadat.com Website: www.acadat.com

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Extent of Survey

The survey included old walled garden at Penllergare, a tract of very overgrown woodland to the north between the walled garden and the mansion site, and a tongue of pasture, bracken and woodland to the south and southeast of the walled garden, including the old quarry, as far as the old Upper Lodge. The eastern boundary of the survey was defined by the carriage drive and the western boundary by modern housing (some under construction at the time of the survey). In total 5.52 ha were surveyed.

Methodology

Survey fieldwork was carried out over about 15 days in January 2004, with data analysis, computation and final map production done in February of that year. A Geodimeter total station theodolite was used throughout; very little additional hand detailing was necessary apart from measuring the heights of walls. It was a free survey – not tied into Ordnance Survey data – and an arbitrary datum height of 100m was assigned to the first survey station. All walls, paths, old paths, breaks of slope, cliff edges, areas of rubble, streams, ponds, stumps and trees were surveyed. Normally only trees greater than 0.5m diameter were surveyed, but trees with a diameter down to 0.2m or less were included in areas where there were few trees or where trees were considered to be planted specimens such as rhododendrons.

In the office the survey data was manipulated using Geosite surveying software, and then converted into MapInfo GIS tables. Prior to conversion, the survey was aligned as close as possible onto the Ordnance Survey date. Registration of the survey data onto OS data was reasonably accurate around the walled garden, but less so to the south and north. A total of 28 MapInfo tables were created, each one containing data on a particular type of landscape component, such as a wall or tree. Further information such as tree species, height of wall etc was added to the tables. Finally photographs taken during the survey were added to the overall archive of modern photographs created for the Penllergare Cultural, Archaeological and Historic Landscape Database.

Results

These notes should be read in conjunction with the survey maps. The detailed descriptions of individual buildings in the walled garden made by Stephen Briggs of the RCAHMW have not been added to, except where new information has been obtained during this survey.

For ease of description the area of survey has been divided into three broad zones: the walled garden; woodland to the north of the walled garden; and the woodland and quarry to the south and southeast of the walled garden.

The walled garden

The walled garden is trapezoid in plan and measures an average of 88m from north to south and 60m from east to west. Its side lengths are: west wall = 97m; north wall = 42m; east wall = 86m; south wall = 89m. The walls are on average 3.7m high and constructed from coursed and squared stone blocks (Pennant Sandstone?) with flagstone capping (now missing in many places). A careful examination of the east wall reveals a butt joint 15.3m south of the northeast corner of the garden showing that the northern section of the walled garden is an addition; the original northern boundary wall would have been the wall that now runs east-west across northern part of the garden dividing the hot-houses to the south from their furnaces and service buildings to the north. The original garden would thus have been a trapezium, with north and south walls parallel and aligned almost exactly east to west on the modern OS grid, measuring 69m from north to south and averaging 69m from east to west. It is worth noting that following scrub clearance prior to the survey garden paths, garden beds and some path kerb stones became readily visible and show a remarkable conformity to those depicted on 19th century Ordnance Survey maps and on post World War 2 aerial photographs. Not mentioned by Briggs is a large 'hedgebank' lying to the north and curving round to the east and southeast of the furnaces/service wing of the hot-houses in the northern part of the garden. It seems to have been a screen, shielding the perhaps unsightly service buildings from the rest of this part of the garden. A similar function is suggested for a bank to the west of the bothys (below).

Two small sub-gardens lie immediately to the west of the walled garden. The more regular and better preserved of the two is known as the Rock Garden. Briggs has described it. It is likely that light clearance of this garden will reveal most of its elements. For instance, in addition to the obvious central pond, rockery beds are clearly visible along the eastern and northern sides of the garden and possible rockery beds against the high south wall. Four blocked arched openings in the wall against which the Heather House is built on the northern edge of this garden indicate some sort of hot-house structure pre-dating the present ruined structure. A path running east to west immediately south of the Heather House passes through a gate in an estate post-and-bar fence 20m to the west. To the north of this path, between the Heather House and the gate, are the low foundations of a previously unrecorded building, perhaps a glasshouse.

The second garden, known as the Melon Yard, is more complex than the Rock Garden, possibly considerably earlier, and in poorer condition. It is defined to the west by the high walls of the main walled garden and elsewhere by lower, partly ruinous, stonewalls of several different phases. Part of this garden is built over a massive earthwork bank (see below). The earliest element consists of a small curving portion of masonry now forming the northwest corner of the garden. This is obviously now incomplete, but could possibly have formed part of a summerhouse or similar freestanding structure. The walls of the garden incorporate this ruined feature. A gateway with masonry pillars lies in the west wall of the garden; this has been blocked and turned into an arbour. A small hot-house, 4m by 2.4m, with a small furnace, had been built against the northern curving wall of the garden, but is now very ruinous.

Two high walls were later added to the south of the main walled garden, one continuing the line of the east wall of the garden and one the line of the west wall, effectively creating an area partially walled on three sides. Ranges of service buildings were later constructed against the western wall, which in the final period of use were bothys or cottages, but blocked openings indicate they may originally have had a different function, perhaps storage sheds. An earthwork bank screens these buildings from the west. Remains of a frame yard, including the Pineapple House, lie immediately to the east of the bothys. The southernmost part of the frame yard has been destroyed by a service yard for the new housing development. The ruined gardener's house lies outside the southeast corner of the frameyard. Garden beds and an orchard are shown to the east of the house and yard on post World War 2 aerial photographs and are known from other sources; all that remains are faint east-west ridges and a single apple tree. A lean-to cottage was built on the east side of the east wall. A blocked gothic window in the wall seems to be an original feature, perhaps pre-dating the cottage as it now stands.

Woodland to the north of the walled garden

This was the most difficult area to survey owing to the dense undergrowth. A particular problem was a clump of rhododendron scrub and other bushes in the centre of the area – it was not possible to survey within this clump.

A terrace of an old road or drive runs parallel to and about 4m higher than the main carriage drive. This terrace is not particularly clear at its northern end, but strengthens in character to the south as it approaches the walled garden where it was reused for the course of a path. A later hollow-way path feeding in from the west interrupts this terrace at its northern end. The western end of this hollow-way path was destroyed during construction of the civic buildings, but sufficient of the remainder survives to provide information on its character. Mature rhododendrons planted on either side suggest that the path may have run through a rhododendron arch/tunnel. Other rhododendrons, azaleas, yews and other trees and bushes show that this area formed part of the planted gardens. A second, slighter path also runs into the woodland from the north. Vegetation prevented the tracing of this path over its full course. Other paths, shown on 19th century maps, were surveyed. An earthwork bank, over 2m high and over 8m wide, parallel and immediately outside the north wall of the walled garden, can be traced from the edge of the steep slope at the northeast corner of the garden an into a tongue of woodland surviving in the new housing development up to 100m to the west of the garden. The function and date of this bank is unknown. The relationship between the northeast corner of the walled garden and the large earthwork bank and the old road is of interest. It would seem that this corner of the garden was built over both the bank and the old road. This leads credence to this northern part of the garden being later than the rest. It may be that the main part of the walled garden and the old road were in use at the same time, and that the garden could only be extended over the road once the current carriage drive was constructed in the 1830s.

The terrace for the old road continues parallel to the east side of the walled garden where a ceramic-pipe drain and a stone-lined culvert (both apparently from the walled garden) empty into it. There are mounds, probably rubbish, immediately outside the east wall of the walled garden, and low earthworks to the east of the 'Gothic' cottage could be the remains of garden beds.

Woodland and quarry to the south and southeast of the walled garden

The terrace of old road continues to run parallel to the current carriage drive up to the quarry, where it has been truncated. The survey showed that its course must originally have kinked slightly to the south, perhaps around a smaller quarry, as one side to the terrace road survives above the south quarry face and a short section of complete terrace is suspended on the thin isthmus of unexcavated rock in the centre of the quarry. The course of this old road is lost to the east of the quarry. Other paths and tracks, some shown on early OS maps, were surveyed in this area. The main feeder stream to the pond in the quarry has been re-excavated and now forms part of the water management system for the new housing estate. A second, new stream also feeds the pond, and a new concrete-lined out flow ditch has been created. These streams only flow in wet weather.

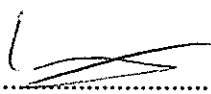
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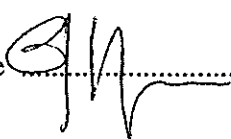
This report has been prepared by K Murphy

Position Principal Archaeologist

Signature  Date 1/3/04

This report has been checked and approved by G Hughes on behalf of Cambria Archaeology,
Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd.

Position Trust Director

Signature  Date 1/3/04

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