

SCOLTON MANOR

Ref number	PGW (Dy) 25 (PEM)
OS Map	157
Grid ref	SM 9898 2204
Former county	Dyfed
Unitary authority	Pembrokeshire
Community council	Spittal
Designations	Listed building: house grade II
Site evaluation	Grade II

Primary reasons for grading Mid nineteenth-century park now used for educational and recreational purposes. Small arboretum adjacent to the house that contains some fine exotic and mature trees.

Type of site Small park with mature shelter belt plantings. Shrubberies, lawns and arboretum.

Main phases of construction c. 1843, after the completion of the new house.

Site description

Reached from the B 4329 some 5 miles to the north of Haverfordwest, Scolton still retains elements of the park and gardens that were created almost at the same time as the new house was built c. 1840. The site is now referred to as Scolton Heritage Park and the exhibitions within the house encourage visitors to imagine life in the mid nineteenth century. Within the park, the new visitor centre contains displays on conservation and renewable energy. The site has an ancient history.

In the *Black Book of St. David's* (1327) Scolton is part of the Knight's Fee of Guy de Brian, who was holder of the Lord Marchership of Laugharne and the property remained in that family until 1572. The property then passed to Sir John Perrot, but in 1594, it reverted to the Crown.

Sometime around the turn of the seventeenth century, the Higgon family became owners of the estate and in 1604 William Higgon is recorded as owning a 'messuage of Scalden (Scolton)'. It is believed that the original house at Scolton was on the site of the present Home Farm. It was probably a dwelling of some substance and in 1670 it is registered as having four hearths. Little is known of the house until the end of the seventeenth century, when it was apparently struck by lightning and burnt down. Over 130 years passed before any attempt was made to replace the house although the land remained in the family. After the fire the family lived in Haverfordwest, with family members taking an active part in local life. John Higgon

(1793 - 1873) was mayor in 1826 and his civic work brought him into contact with William Owen. It was William and his brother James, both local cabinet makers, who were to design the new house at Scolton, which was probably funded by the increased demand for the coal that could be found on Higgon lands in St. Brides.

In 1831, James Higgon commissioned plans for the new house from the Owen brothers, who also worked as architects, contractors and furniture makers. They had been responsible for a number of public buildings and large private houses in Pembrokeshire, which they designed, built and furnished. These included the Market House and the Shire Hall in Haverfordwest, and Avallenau at Merlin's Bridge, which is similar in design to Scolton. The brothers were extremely successful and William Owen went on to acquire the Withybush Estate and Poyston Hall.

The new house at Scolton was completed in 1842 and it remained in the Higgon family until 1974, when it was bought by the (then) Pembrokeshire County Council. Unfortunately this purchase did not include the Home Farm, which was extant in 1839 and possibly served the original house. The farm complex, which includes the small lake or pond, has now been developed privately for holiday accommodation.

The house appears from the southern approach and forecourt as a square block of two storeys, with a small service courtyard to the north. The grey rendering is relieved only by the cream painted loggia, windows and drainpipes. The main entrance, which is reached by a recessed colonnaded loggia, gives access to the hall and inner hall, with all the main rooms being on the south side. The staircase in the inner hall gives access to all the main upstairs rooms. The hipped roof is slated as are the roofs of the service courtyard. To the north of the utility area is the stable block, which was constructed a little after the house.

About 150m to the north-east of the house are the former stable block and smithy, now used for craft exhibitions. The arched entrance stands proud of the of the two-storey structure and has been recently rendered and painted white. Within the stable courtyard are the coach houses, smithy and stables. On the south face are external stone stairs to what may have once been the bothy. To the north of the courtyard, through a modern entrance, is the exhibition centre that stands on the site of the walled garden.

The park and gardens now occupy some 61 acres of mostly south sloping land, the ground rising gently from some 75m AOD. The park is some 24 acres in area whilst most of the rest, excluding buildings, is plantation and shrubberies.

The title of 1839 records five ranges of buildings at approximately the same site as the present day farm; these buildings are described as 'The Homestead', together with the enclosure, they occupied some 8 acres. The lands owned by James Higgon totalled some 210 acres, much of which was agricultural, but some was obviously put down to timber, thus 'Oak orchard' (542), appears on the Schedule. The area that was eventually to become the park is shown as three fields and the Venn Plantation, to the south-west of the house, is recorded only as 'field'.

Between 1839 and the publishing of the First Edition Ordnance Survey *c.* 1880, the landscape changed significantly. The new house was erected to the south-east of the homestead, a walled garden is shown to the north abutting the coach house. Shelter belts and plantations are shown practically surrounding the park which has been created from three fields to the south of the house. Interestingly the wooded area to the east of the house is shown as being divided by a fence, the exotics of the arboretum being separated from the shelter belt that is adjacent to the B 4329 road.

The park prior to 1850 was three fields with a further long strip along the southern edge. By *c.* 1880 the longitudinal (north-south) divisions had been removed, but one east-west

boundary still remained. By the time of the Second Edition Ordnance Survey, *c.* 1905, this boundary had also been removed. Today the 24 acres are uninterrupted by permanent field boundaries, although temporary fences are erected for different events held within the park. Included in the park are two clumps of mostly young beech, these are to replace the earlier coniferous plantings.

There are two entrances to Scolton, both from the B 4329. At the main entrance is a small, single-storey, stone-fronted lodge. The drive links these entrances in a curve via the forecourt to the house. A southward extension has been recently built to link the main entrance with the Visitor Centre and car park.

To the south-east of the park is the new visitor centre, which is hexagonal in design and built of native wood and glazed to maximise the daylight. Associated with the centre are the photovoltaic cells, small wind turbine and water recycling ponds. These ponds are further to the south and outside the park. To the east of the centre is the children's play and amenity area and further east again, towards the margin of the park, is the woodland centre. Towards the north-east of the park is a Japanese pergola (similar to those seen at the Ebbw Vale Garden Festival) that contains an exhibition on conservation.

Practically surrounding the park and gardens are shelter belts and plantations. To the north, around the house is the arboretum and associated shelter belt. This shelter belt extends southwards to join the Long Plantation, which in *c.* 1880 occupied some 18 acres, to the south of the park. To the north-west of the park is the Venn Plantation, of just over 5 acres. Not part of the original scheme, but now linking these areas of woodland is a further coniferous plantation of again just over 5 acres, in the south-west corner of the park. Also not part of the original layout was the Great Western Railway, which was built through the Long Plantation at the turn of the century.

The arboretum extends to both the east and north of the house and includes several fine specimen trees which may relate to the period when the garden was established. Included within the collection are two fine Turkey oaks (*Quercus cerris*), two Holm or Holly oaks (*Q. ilex*), a Western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*), European silver fir (*Abies alba*), an Umbrella pine (*Sciadopitys verticillata*), a *Ginkgo biloba*, sequoiadendron and nothofagus as well as box, limes and horse chestnuts. The trees are underplanted with shrubs, including some mature rhododendrons, mostly hardy hybrids. The design and layout of the paths has changed little over the last one hundred years, although the surfaces are now tarmacked.

The terrace garden, sunken garden and lawn is the area that has probably been changed most during the course of its history, although the layout is still recognisable. The terrace is shown on the early surveys as being adjacent to the south and west faces of the house. This is still the case, however, at some stage in its recent past (presumably post 1974) the original terrace surface was lifted and has now been resurfaced in modern concrete paving stones. The level has been dropped by *c.* 10cm so that the rendering of the house no longer meets the terrace. Modern concrete steps have also been inserted into the bank that links the terrace to the lawn to the south and a small rectangular concrete pond, measuring some 4 x 7m, has been constructed in the sunken garden to the west. The north wall of the sunken garden is probably original and stands to a maximum of 1.5m.

The rectangular lawn to the south of the house is separated from the park by new railings. These have replaced the original iron park railings, that were apparently corroded and dangerous. Growing along the railings is a very mature rose; whilst on the lawn is a vast clump of rhododendrons.

Sources**Primary**

Tithe map and schedule of apportionments, (1839), nos 524 - 551.

Secondary

Dyfed Archaeological Trust, PRN 7240.

Dyfed County Council, *Scolton country park and museum* (undated).

Dyfed Museum Service, *A guide to Scolton House* (undated).