

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

**REGISTER ENTRY**

**CEFN MABLY**

<b>Ref number</b>	<b>PGW (Gm) 11 (CAE)</b>
<b>OS Map</b>	171
<b>Grid ref</b>	ST 223 840
<b>Former county</b>	Mid Glamorgan
<b>Unitary authority</b>	Caerphilly
<b>Community council</b>	Rudry
<b>Designations</b>	Listed buildings: Cefn Mably Hospital Grade II*; Terraces and ornamental structures to SE front of Cefn Mably Hospital Grade II
<b>Site evaluation</b>	<b>Grade II</b>

**Primary reasons for grading** Survival of much of the park, woodland grounds and terraced garden of major Glamorgan house, with features dating from the early eighteenth century to the early twentieth century. The steep slopes and mature oaks of the southern half of the park form a beautiful setting for the house and are visible from a wide area to the south.

**Type of site** Formal terraced garden; informal pleasure grounds; landscape park; walled garden

**Main phases of construction** Late sixteenth century; 1709-35; nineteenth century

**Site description**

Cefn Mably, or Cefnmabli, is one of the largest and most important historic mansions in Glamorgan. It is a long irregular house, built of roughly coursed local rubble stone, with a stone tiled roof and is situated on the east end of a ridge on the west flank of the Rhymney river valley. The house is orientated north-east/south-west, with a wing arranged around a small courtyard projecting northwards at the east end. The present appearance of the house is the result of several phases of building, alterations connected with its use in the twentieth century as a hospital, and a disastrous fire in 1994 which gutted the eastern half of the building.

The central core of the house was built in the late sixteenth century by Edward Kemeys, who inherited Cefn Mably from his father in 1564. This consists of the hall and parlour wing at right-angles to it at its west end. The house was probably

approached from the north at this time, with an entrance through a gateway on the site of the present entrance to the courtyard. In 1637 Cefn Mably passed to Nicholas Kemeys, a prominent royalist, who was created Baronet in 1642 and killed in a siege of Chepstow Castle in 1648. Probably in his time the two-storey gallery wing was added to the west of the parlour to connect the main house by a first-floor gallery with the free-standing buildings to the west, including the building that became the chapel, which extends southwards from the main range. Later in the seventeenth century the house was extended eastwards to its present limit, and the service courtyard may also have been remodelled or built at this time.

The appearance of the eastern half of the house was substantially altered after 1709 by the 4th Baronet, Sir Charles Kemeys. This part of the building is now roofless, windowless, and boarded up, its tall brick chimneys projecting starkly from the ruins, following the fire. Here the 4th Baronet inserted sash windows, a hipped and dormered roof, and brick dressings to make a more fashionable Queen Anne house. When Sir Charles died without issue in 1735 the baronetcy became extinct, and Cefn Mably passed to his sister and then her son, Sir Charles Kemeys Tynte. From this time onwards the property was subsidiary to the Tynte's main seat of Halswell in Somerset. Minor alterations and additions were made to the house in the nineteenth century. Two articles in the *South Wales Daily News* of 1910 recorded the state of the house at that time, during the ownership of Charles Kemeys Tynte, who was said to visit Cefn Mably for a week or so a year. Much money was said to have been spent on the house 'during the past two decades'. The stone roof was renewed, the back restored, and the old stables, which had been close to the east end of the main front, were demolished. The family finally abandoned the house in 1920. It was bought in 1923 by Lord Tredegar for a tuberculosis hospital. It has been unoccupied for some years.

To the north of the house are a number of outlying buildings, all now derelict, some connected with the hospital. These are built of roughly coursed rubble with brick dressings. The main group consists of a two-storey cottage, possibly incorporating an older building, with adjacent garages and other outbuildings. These may be the remnants of the 'new stables and motorsheds' that were said in the *South Wales Daily News* article of 1910 to have been built in the 'past four or five years'. A little way away, to the east, is a small combined mortuary and chapel, the chapel at the east end of the building. This building is associated with the hospital and therefore dates to after 1923.

The park is medium-sized, situated mainly on rolling ground to the south and west of the house. It is now considerably contracted from its maximum extent in the late nineteenth century, large areas of the former park to the north-west of the house now being taken up with forestry plantations.

The main entrance lies on the east boundary just west of the Cefn-Ilwyd bridge over the river Rhymney. In the acute angle between the drive and lane is a small two-storey lodge. It is built in rustic picturesque style, with rubble walls, mullioned windows, and an arched door over which is a heraldic plaque with a horned beast, the Wharton 'maunch', on it. The entrance is flanked by stone gate piers with pyramidal tops and small ball finials. The tarmac drive runs west across the valley floor and then turns south, climbing up the ridge through the wooded grounds. To the east of the house it turns north-west and leads to the north side of the house. The drive is flanked by horse chestnuts and oaks beyond the grounds, with horse chestnuts alone at the east end. A secondary gravel drive leads from the Maes-y-bryn road on the west boundary of the park northwards past a modern covered reservoir to its west and then north-

eastwards through the park and wooded grounds to join the main drive north of the house. The entrance is modern and has no lodge, and the drive is flanked by ash, beech, and horse chestnut trees.

The main area of the park lies to the south-west of the house. South of the house the ground drops steeply from the terraced gardens down towards the Rhymney valley flood plain. To the south-west, a small wood, Coed Cae-bach, and a ribbon of woodland below it run east-west down a slight valley, to the south of which the ground rises again to a narrow ridge. The planting is largely of deciduous trees, the most prominent being a row of clumps of oaks along the top of the ridge. These are visible not only from the house but from a wide area beyond the park to the south. Near the western edge of the field below the house is a copse of very large sweet chestnuts, some of which have fallen. These appear to be of a great age, and there are indications that they are planted in two parallel rows, and possibly form part of a former formal layout of the park. The field to the west, beyond the Gilbert's Well part of the grounds, has some large beeches at its north end and a single mature evergreen oak at its north-west end. Coed Cae-bach and the woodland below it are of mixed deciduous trees, including many seedling sycamores.

To the north of the west drive is an area of open ground, now under cultivation, that retains a few clumps of mixed deciduous trees. To the north is a large forestry plantation, Coed Cae-ffynnon.

The park has probably developed over a long period, although evidence for its early development is scant. A painting of the 'old Tudor mansion', formerly in the house and sketched in 1910, shows a drive approaching the south front of the house from the east, with a straight drive to the front door, a forecourt along the length of the house, and linking parallel drives forming two squares in front of the house. The house is framed by large deciduous trees to the east and west. The painting may be the same one that was copied into an album in about 1837 by Angharad Llwyd of Tyn Rhyl, Rhyl, which purports to show the house in 1630. Some formal tree planting appears to have taken place in the park, probably in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century. This may have been the work of Sir Charles Kemeys, who substantially altered the house at the beginning of the eighteenth century. An estate map of 1767 by William Jones shows the park walled, with some formal clumps (depicted as conifers), a row of conifers running east-west to the south-west of the house, and the park to the west dotted with trees. The original approach to the house is not known, although it is thought that the main entrance was first on the north side. A straight footpath from the Cefn-llwyd bridge over the river Rhymney east of the house may mark the position of a former formal drive. William Jones's map of 1767 shows a road following a course close to the present main drive and continuing south-westwards along the boundary of the park. The entrance was through a gate into a walled court to the north of the house. A track is shown on the course of the western drive, but running to the north of the kitchen garden rather than to the south as it now does. It is still to the north on the 1839 tithe map.

At some stage during the later eighteenth or nineteenth centuries the park was informally planted with deciduous clumps and specimen trees, and probably the present drives were made. Many of the oaks in the park may predate this phase but were incorporated into it. By the time of the 1st edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey maps of 1875-82 the park was fully developed, and far larger than it is now. The general configuration of open ground and woodland was by then established, the main difference from the present being that there were then more clumps and individual

trees. To the north-west of the house the park extended beyond the open ground to Coed Cae-ffynnon and the open ground beyond, which was ornamented with two large clumps and some isolated trees. This area is now under forestry plantation. The two drives were in place by this time, although the main entrance was slightly different, reaching the lane further west than it does at present, with no lodge. The former route is now marked by a path. The lodge, decorated with the Wharton maunch, was probably built in the early twentieth century following the resurrection of the Wharton peerage for the Kemeys-Tynte family.

Cefn Mably is set in terraced gardens to the south-east and wooded grounds to the east and west. To the south and east the ground slopes down away from the house, and the main entrance drive winds through the grounds to the east. To the west wooded grounds extend along the ridge, with an extension southwards down a small valley in which was situated 'Gilbert's Well'. The kitchen garden is within the grounds to the west of the house.

The first main area is the terraced gardens which adjoin the south-east front of the house. Immediately in front of the house, extending from the west end to just east of the front door, is a large square terrace with stone revetment walls and a low parapet along the south side. The terrace is laid out to grass, with tarmac perimeter paths along the east and south walls and west side, where there is no revetment wall. A further path runs west from the west side. The terrace is reached on the east by a wide flight of dressed stone steps, with low flat-topped parapets. The wall on either side is punctuated by square stone piers with concrete-lined beds set into them. The east wall has arched niches built into it. In the south-east corner of the terrace is a small square turret, set diagonally, with concrete steps up to it, a pyramidal stone-tiled roof, and small arched openings near the top of each side, in front of which are small projecting pools. A panel records that the turret was built 'In remembrance of Dr D.A. Powell 1927-1943'.

To the east of the main terrace, below the steps, is a smaller square level area, mostly tarmacked over. At the same level, and half its width, a terrace extends southwards below the east wall of the main terrace to a revetment wall below and just beyond that of the main terrace, which forms the south boundary of the garden. This wall runs from the woodland at the east end of the garden as far as Gilbert's Well wood to the west, well beyond the west end of the house. This middle terrace is closed on its north side by low parapet walls with iron railings above them, terminated by tall piers either side of a central opening and similar ones at the east end and against the main terrace wall at the west end. The piers are tall, square, of coursed stone blocks topped with ornamental concrete finials. A tarmac path runs down the centre of the terrace to a gazebo on the south-east corner. This is a square structure with a stone slate roof and stone walls. The north and west sides are open to ground level, the east and south sides have pairs of stone-mullioned windows. The parapet walls of the terrace on either side have concrete tops. At the same level, lying east-west below the main terrace, is a narrow terrace along the top of the garden boundary wall. An overgrown tarmac path runs its full length, at the west end of which it is flanked by square stone piers with concrete tops and ball finials.

The third and lowest level of the terraces lies at the east end of the gardens, to the east of the middle terrace and south of the square tarmac area, which is bounded here by a low stone parapet wall on its south and part of its east sides. The garden will be referred to as the Winter Garden, as that is what it was known as in 1910. It is reached by a wide flight of concrete steps in the north-west corner. These are flanked

at the top by square piers (the western one being that on the corner of the middle terrace) the same as those of the middle terrace. The garden is a quadrangular level area bounded on the west and north by high stone revetment walls capped with concrete and on the east by a similar sloping free-standing wall with a gateway, flanked by square piers topped by bulbous concrete finials, into the wooded grounds. Along the south side is the boundary revetment wall of the garden with a low concrete-topped parapet. The garden is now overgrown, but some of its layout is visible. There is a perimeter concrete path and concrete paving at the north end. In the middle of the north side, against the revetment wall, is a small single-storey rectangular pavilion. It is built of stone, with concrete window dressings and square concrete columns around it supporting a parapetted flat roof, which was used as a viewing platform, reached via a small gateway flanked by low square piers topped with concrete balls, in the parapet wall of the terrace to the north. In the north-east corner of the garden a circular stone turret with a domed top is built into the revetment walls. Its upper level is pierced with holes similar to those of the turret on the upper terrace, and below is a small arched niche. The west wall also has a small niche built into it. The only planting that remains in the Winter Garden is a large Pampas grass in the middle.

The second main area of the gardens and grounds is the wooded grounds to the east of the house. This is a large area, sloping to the east, which is laid out informally with specimen coniferous and deciduous trees and an underplanting of evergreen shrubs such as laurel and rhododendron. Large mature trees include wellingtonias flanking the drive, a large cedar to the north of the drive, variegated holly to the south of the drive, and further cedars and pines.

The third area is the wooded grounds to the west and south-west of the house. Immediately to the south-west of the house hospital buildings have impinged on the gardens, and although now largely demolished they have obliterated all traces of the grounds here. Beyond this area, to the north and west, are wooded grounds through which run the west drive, and in the middle of which is situated the kitchen garden. The woods contain many large specimen trees, including beech, horse chestnut and pine, with underplantings of rhododendron, holly, laurel and yew, particularly between the house and the kitchen garden. Most former paths have been obliterated, but a circuit path remains, running from north-west of the house westwards and then curving round to the east of the kitchen garden. A dovecote that formerly stood near the east end of the woodland has gone.

To the south of this area is a belt of woodland running southwards down a small defile. It is surrounded by iron fencing, with an iron gate into it at the south end. The wood is of mixed deciduous trees with an underplanting of rhododendrons, and Portugal laurels down the east side. Down the centre of the wood runs a small stream which emerges from a culvert at the north end. There are no traces of paths or steps, and the feature called 'Gilbert's Well' has gone, with only some tumbled stonework to show where it was. At the north-east end of the wood is a group of large conifers, including a cedar.

There are several main phases to the making of the gardens and grounds. The earliest evidence for their appearance is the drawing by Angharad Llwyd in *c.* 1837 probably of a painting of the house in about 1630. This shows a smooth slope terminated by railings in front of the house, with a wide path or drive leading south from the front porch and a pool and fountain towards the west end. A schematic drawing of 1910 (*South Wales Daily News*) of a painting in the house thought to

depict the 'old Tudor mansion' again shows a smooth slope with formal drives and woodland to the east and west. It is probable that the boundary revetment wall along the full length of the garden is a remnant of this phase, built by Edward Kemeys in the second half of the sixteenth century, after he succeeded his father in 1564. The stonework of the wall differs from that of the main terrace above, being in shallower courses, with blocks of red sandstone at the base. Towards its west end it is broken down in places. The ground above it would at this stage have been sloped up to the house, as shown in the drawings. If the Angharad Llwyd drawing is correct, the wall was probably topped by railings.

The second main stage was the making of the remaining terraces. This was probably carried out between 1709 and 1735 by Sir Charles Kemeys, who made major alterations to the house at the same time. The kitchen garden is also likely to date from this time. The revetment walls of the upper terrace and west wall of the Winter Garden probably date to this period. The layout of the gardens is shown on an estate map of 1767. This shows the main terraces in their present form but the area now occupied by the Winter Garden had a slightly narrower terrace, with a smaller one below it. Both are depicted with perimeter paths. Below all the terraces was a further rectilinear area of garden on the upper half of the present sloping field below the garden. This is shown as laid out with perimeter and cross paths lined with trees, and may have been an orchard. The kitchen garden is in place by this time. Although the house became a secondary residence for the Kemeys Tynte family after 1735 improvements to the grounds continued to be made, particularly, it would seem, in the nineteenth century. The planting of specimen conifers, rhododendrons, laurels, and yews in the woodland to the east and west of the house took place in the nineteenth century; the tithe map of 1839 shows woodland, including the Gilbert's Well wood, to the west of the house that does not appear on the 1767 map. By 1875-82 (1st edition Ordnance Survey map) the grounds were fully established, with informal walks and mixed ornamental planting. In the Gilbert's Well wood not only was there 'Gilbert's Well', probably an ornamented spring, but a path with steps at the steep northern end. The terraces were by this time in their present form, with the flights of steps in their present positions, but without any of the turrets, pavilions and piers. A photograph of 1908 in *Country Life* shows the stone steps up to the main terrace, and a photograph of 1910, in the *South Wales Daily News*, shows the Winter Garden with stone steps, without the pavilion, and with an older wall than at present on its north side. It was laid out with geometric beds of bedding plants cut in a central lawn. All the revetment walls visible were clothed with climbers, as were the walls of the house. Large *Magnolia grandifloras* were noted on the south wall of the house in 1910, and four of these survive today, despite the fire, the fifth, at the west end, having been killed in the fire.

The last phase of development took place after Cefn Mably became a hospital in 1923. The middle and lower terrace walls were rebuilt with more regular stonework and concrete capping. This is evident in all but the west wall of the Winter Garden. The stone steps were replaced with concrete. To the east of the gazebo the outer revetment wall of the garden was also rebuilt. The turrets, gazebo and pavilion were added, and the plaque on the upper turret with the dates 1927-43 may date this phase of embellishment to just after the Second World War. The piers, railings, niches in the earlier walls, and square planting piers all date from this phase. There is photographic evidence that at least some of the niches may have contained ornamental

plaques of some kind. To the west of the house hospital buildings were put up on an area that had formerly been laid out informally with scattered ornamental trees.

The walled kitchen garden is situated in the woodland grounds to the west of the house, just north of the west drive. It is square, surrounded by rubble stone walls c. 2.2 - 3.5 m high, with entrances in the east wall and the east end of the north wall. The east entrance is quite narrow, with flanking brick and stone piers set into the walls. There are brick bothies and a ruined gardener's cottage outside the north-east corner. Inside there are ruined glasshouses along the north wall, with a boilerhouse outside. The interior is completely overgrown with brambles and other weeds, and it is not possible to ascertain if any of the original layout is still in existence.

The garden probably dates to the early eighteenth-century building phase of Sir Charles Kemeys. The 1875 Ordnance Survey map shows it laid out with perimeter and cross paths, with a central pool. At that stage there were no glasshouses.

## Sources

### Primary

Bills and receipts for work on Cefn Mably and Penmark estates 1697-1752:

Glamorgan Record Office, D/D KT 87/1-11.

Account of workmen in the garden, 7 July - 3 December 1735: Glamorgan Record Office, D/D KT 88.

Accounts relating to the Cefn Mably estates, 1745-48: Glamorgan Record Office, D/D KT 91/1, 2.

Plans of the estates of the Kemeys Tynte family, surveyed by William Jones, 1767: Glamorgan Record Office, D/D KT E/1.

Album of Angharad Llwyd of Tyn Rhyl, Rhyl, p. 105: National Library of Wales, NLW 781A.

### Secondary

Cefn Mably, Glamorganshire, *Country Life* 28 November 1908, pp. 738-44.

*South Wales Daily News* 29 January, 5 February 1910.

Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales, *Inventory of the Ancient Monuments in Glamorgan*, IV (1981), pp. 159-67.