

DUNRAVEN PARK

Ref number	PGW (Gm) 4 (GLA)
OS Map	170
Grid ref	SS 888 728
Former county	Mid Glamorgan
Unitary authority	The Vale of Glamorgan
Community council	St Brides Major
Designations hillfort (Gm 350)	Scheduled Ancient Monument: Dunraven Castle
Site evaluation	Grade II
Primary reasons for grading	Remains of a deer park; walled garden dating from the sixteenth century, with subsequent alterations to the internal layout. Features within it include an Edwardian summerhouse and a well preserved nineteenth-century tower containing a banqueting room and ice-house.
Type of site	Deer park; pleasure grounds; walled garden
Main phases of construction	Seventeenth/eighteenth century; early nineteenth century

Site description

Dunraven Castle was a large castellated gothic mansion built for Thomas Wyndham, M.P. in 1802-06. It was demolished in 1962 after latterly being used as a guest house, and only the footings of the walls survive. The site is exposed and elevated, on the northern flank of the Trwyn y Witch headland on the Bristol Channel, to the south of St Brides Major. A large Iron Age hillfort occupies the headland, and the house was built within it, destroying the eastern end of the outer ramparts.

The mock castle was built of stone on or near the site of a much earlier mediaeval house, the ancient seat of the Butler and Vaughan families before Humphrey Wyndham or his father bought it in the early to mid sixteenth century. A drawing of this house of 1775 by Francis Grose shows it to have been a relatively unpretentious first-floor hall house. Francis Grose in 1775 called it 'patched on in all directions in the Gothic style'. It was then occupied by a farmer, the rest being in the hands of 'Mr Windham of Cleerwell' who had it 'for a kind of hunting seat' with an agent living in it. The early nineteenth-century mansion followed the design of Clearwell Castle in the Forest of Dean (Gloucestershire), which was by Roger Morris (1728), another Wyndham property. This house is depicted in Neale's *Views of Seats*, (c. 1830), as a compact crenellated mansion with projecting front wings on the south-east side lower than the main block. In 1858 Caroline Lady dunraven removed the

central entrance tower on the south-east side and replaced it with a conservatory. Subsequent alterations in 1886-88, designed by George Devey of Kent, involved the addition of a further wing and tower, and at some stage the side wings were raised to four storeys.

Today there is little left of the house. The oval forecourt on the south-east side is just discernible as a level, partly tarmacked area, Stone footings, flights of steps, and the revetment wall of the platform on which the house was built remain. There are no outbuildings. To the north of the forecourt the former drive from the north passes under a Tudor arch in a short stretch of partly rendered stone wall. The arch is faced with moulded dressed stone.

The park lies to the north, east, and south-east of the house, on the rolling plateau above the sea cliffs. It occupies a roughly rectangular area, wider at the north end, stretching from the Pant y Slade valley in the north to the edge of the Cwm Mawr valley in the south.

The history of the park is not known in any detail. Although it was a deer park none of the sixteenth-century chroniclers mention one here, making it likely to have been seventeenth-century in origin. The fallow deer are said to have been brought from Clearwell Castle by a member of the Wyndham family. The park wall appears contemporary with the early nineteenth-century phase of building, when it is assumed that the park lodges, entrances and drives were also made to go with Thomas Wyndham's new house. As a deer park was already in existence, however, this wall may have replaced an earlier one. The engraving in Neale's *Views of Seats*, although it exaggerates the topography, shows dense woodland around the house, including some conifers, and a ruined octagonal tower on the top of the headland. Most of this woodland was in the grounds, but the 1877 Ordnance Survey map shows that the park beyond, both on the headland south of the house, and on the slope to the north of the house, was planted with trees. Both these areas are now bare. The Earl of Dunraven in his book *Dunraven Castle* (1926) records that the park was heavily planted by his father 'with good results', but little now remains. A painting (frontispiece in *Dunraven Castle*) shows the wooded park, lodge and park wall on the west boundary.

The tower had presumably gone by 1877, when the map marks a circular feature called 'Flagstaff' on the top of the headland. The map also shows the drives and lodges in place, as well as the laundry and Seamount Cottage at the north end of the park. Otherwise the park appears little ornamented, with the only planting being near the east entrance and the belt of trees in the Pant Llawn-dwr valley. .

The park is surrounded by a substantial rubble-built stone wall. Where it stands to its full height it is castellated, but in some places it is broken down or capped with concrete. The walls run right up to the cliff edges, where erosion has gradually reduced them. There are three former entrance drives, of which the northern one now acts as access for visitors to the headland. That from the north, a tarmacked road, enters the park at Dunraven Bay, south of Southerndown, and winds up the hillside towards the house site. Before reaching the walled garden the drive curves eastwards around it. Formerly a branch of the drive ran straight up the slope, through the hillfort ramparts, to the north side of the forecourt (under the remaining arch). Now this section has been reduced to a grass track, and only the branch running around the outside of the walled garden remains. At the north entrance to the park are pierced gothic wooden gates flanked by octagonal stone piers with conical tops. To the east is a small, single-storey gothic lodge of random stone construction with a gabled slate roof, tall chimneys and gothic windows. A little way to the north-east is the former

laundry, a long, single-storey rendered building set against the park wall. Opposite it, outside the park, is Seamouth Cottage, a rustic stone house with a thatched roof, which may have been rendered picturesque as part of the early nineteenth-century landscaping.

The second former drive approached from the east along the Pant Llawn-dwr valley. The eastern end of this drive is now the drive to Durval Farm. It continues westwards as a farm track to the Grand Lodge at the entrance to the park. This is an imposing castellated gothic gatehouse of rubble stone with the remains of rendering in places. The entrance is under a central arch, with a smaller arch to the south. On the south side is a narrow octagonal tower, on the north a wider, lower one with a chimney. Windows are slit, arched and mullioned, the latter appearing older than the rest of the building. There is also a Tudor doorway in the small outhouses behind the north tower. A stream that runs down the valley is culverted under the lodge and park wall. Within the park the drive is a stony track. A further drive approached across the park from the south-east, entering the park on the edge of the Cwm Mawr valley at Cwm Mawr lodge. This is now a ruined stone building, standing to the height of its first-floor windows. The entrance gate is on its north side, flanked by square stone piers, the north one of which is intact. Within the grounds the drive is a gravelled track, but in the park beyond that it has gone.

The park appears to have received very little ornamental landscaping. This may be partly because trees are difficult to grow in this landscape which is so exposed to salt-laden winds. The Pant Llawn-dwr valley, a slight dip in the plateau, has a discontinuous belt of wind-blasted deciduous trees. On the bank to the east of the walled garden is an area of new conifer planting, with two older stunted pines at its north end. The rest of the park is open grassland. The small stream that runs down the Pant Llawn-dwr valley, the Nant y Durval (or Durfol), is ornamented with a series of small cascades between the north drive and the park wall. These are constructed of low curving stone walls, now capped with concrete.

The pleasure grounds of Dunraven Castle were situated on the north-facing slope to the north-west of the house, and to the south and south-east of the house, on ground sloping down from the house towards the sea cliffs that bound them on the south side. The 1877 map shows this whole area bounded by a wall or fence, long since gone, and well wooded. Only the area to the south-east of the house remains wooded, and much of this is with seedling sycamores. The Neale view of c. 1830 shows this area densely planted with trees.

The grounds were probably laid out at the same time as the house was rebuilt, in the first decade of the nineteenth century, by Thomas Wyndham. In about 1840 Lord Dunraven laid out 'cleverly constructed' walks (see *Dunraven Castle*) along the south cliff of the headland leading down to the Witch's Point, 'which are such a feature of the place'. These remain as narrow winding paths, modernised in places. By 1877 the grounds were laid out with informal walks, steps, and several built features, including a fountain south of the walled garden, a conservatory to its south-east, and the flagstaff on the headland top. Of this layout little remains. The only building that remains and may date from this period is a ruined stone structure which is built into the middle of the south-west wall of the walled garden. This may be the remains of the building depicted by Neale below the castle. It is only single-storey, built into the hillside, but its north-east facade rises to twice the height. Overlooking the walled garden it has a round-arched door and flanking similar windows, with a blocked circular window over the door.

The drive from the north curves through the grounds south of the walled garden, and runs up the hill to the forecourt. It has stunted horse chestnuts and sycamores on either side. The area south of the walled garden has been largely taken over by seedling sycamores, with a few young pines and some mature dead trees. Winding tarmac paths following the course of some of the original paths. The fountain has gone, although there is a slight mound in the middle of the area where it probably stood. An ancient yew tree stands near the south wall of the walled garden.

An old photograph of the north-west front of the house shows that the garden immediately round the house was largely lawn, bounded by a stone revetment wall, with a small pavilion in the west corner. Today this area is all grass; some of the revetment wall remains, but the pavilion has gone.

The walled garden lies in the valley bottom to the north-east of the house site. It is a large rectangular area, orientated south-east/north-west, largely enclosed by a high stone wall. The ground inside slopes down towards the middle from the south-west and north-east sides. The garden is divided laterally into three compartments, and its use was not merely utilitarian but also ornamental. The westernmost compartment, in particular, appears to have had an almost exclusively ornamental use.

The garden has undergone several phases of development, which are apparent in its building materials. There have been enclosures here since at least the sixteenth century, when a walled 'paddock' was built in 1543. An engraving of 1776 after a drawing by Francis Grose of 1775 shows the walled garden with plain, uncrenellated walls, and possibly with two low retaining walls supporting two terraces on the south-west side. The 1877 Ordnance Survey map shows the present exterior wall, with a stable block arranged around a central court attached to the north-west end. This was built during the 1803 alterations by Thomas Wyndham. The only part to survive is the remains of its south-east wall, which lies alongside the north-west garden wall. The northernmost compartment is shown with its present walls and pool, but also with glasshouses, only the footings of which remain. The southern part of the garden was planted with trees. The axial path down the centre of the garden, on which the pool is aligned, is shown on the map, and remains. However, the rest of the garden has been substantially altered since 1877, when it was semi-divided into three further compartments by walls from the north-east wall to the central path only. This part of the garden appears to have been laid out with a perimeter path, a few trees in the south-western half, and presumably vegetable beds in the three compartments. The ice-house is shown in the east corner. The removal of the central wall and extension of the southern one to form three compartments overall took place after 1877, as did the laying out of the southern compartment with terracing and the garden pavilion. The garden has recently been partly restored.

The northern compartment is bounded on the north-west side by a rubble stone wall *c.* 3.5 m high on the outside, with gothic doorways with dressed stone surrounds near the east and west ends. The eastern end of the wall has an outer skin which is all that remains of the stable block, with blocked up openings. The remainder of the wall is crenellated and the top is partly ruinous. The north-east wall is *c.* 4 m high on the inside, has internal stone buttresses, and is also crenellated. The centre of the wall, where a glasshouse originally stood, is lined with yellow brickwork with red brick horizontal banding and bluish bricks at the base. In front are the brick footings of the glasshouse, with a row of low arched openings at ground level, indicating that this was probably a vinery. In front is a brick-edged bed with a paved path in front of it.

Inside the former glasshouse is a brick path, the remains of pipework, a water tank, and a small niche decorated with waterworn rockwork opposite the central cross path.

The interior of the compartment is laid out with axial paths, lawns, grass, and the remains of built structures. Parts of the paths and flowerbeds are edged with sea-smoothed stones from the beach. Inside the entrance in the north corner is a paved area bounded by low walls with concrete coping. These may be all that remains of a small building shown on the 1877 map. Against the north side of this walling is a small stone-edged bed of waterworn rocks which may be the remains of a small rockery. The paved area continues next to the north-west wall, with steps down to a blocked archway and curving steps down from it against the wall at its west end. Inside the path is a row of five brick cold frames in front of the footings of former glasshouses. A further path runs in front of the cold frames, and both this and the central cross path are partly grassed over. Two north-west/south-east tarmac paths, one along the north-west side, and one in the middle, lead to gothic doorways in the cross wall. Near the south-east end of the central one it runs around a small stone circular pool. Water runs in at the south-east end and out at the other. Both pool and path are edged with sea-rolled stones. At the south-west end of the compartment the ground rises to a terrace revetted with a wall of roughly coursed stone *c.* 1.5 m high. The path along the north-west wall goes up a flight of uneven stone steps here. On the terrace are piles of stones fallen from the south-west wall of the garden, which is up to 3 m high. Although buttressed it is crumbling and leaning in places, and has a large gap.

The cross wall bounding the northernmost compartment is *c.* 3.5 m high (slightly higher over the doorways), and built of yellow brick in sections stepped up the slopes. The middle compartment is largely grassed over, with the two tarmac paths edged with sea stones continuing across it, the eastern one to a doorway in the next wall. A further path runs along this cross wall. At the south-west end is an area of old fruit trees on the slope, with seedling sycamores to the south, above which is a low stone revetment wall (*c.* 1.2 m) opposite the ruined building set into the south-west wall. Near the south-west boundary are heaps of fallen or dumped stone. The crenellated north-east outer wall continues at *c.* 4 m high.

The southern cross wall is *c.* 5 m high, also of yellow brick, with a rendered and crenellated top. The third compartment is ornamentally laid out with raised terraces at the north-east and south-west ends, and a large lawn in the middle. The outer stone walls are all crenellated and *c.* 3.5 - 5 m high. All have a clear break in the colour of stonework indicating where the tops have been rebuilt. The south-west wall appears more recently rebuilt. At the north-east end is a raised terrace (*c.* 1 m high) with a revetment wall of coursed roughly squared stone. It has a central flight of stone steps and diagonal stone steps flanked by low walls at each end. The terrace is laid out with grass and a wall border. Below the terrace is a narrow grass berm and then a shallow scarp (*c.* 0.4 m) down to a gentle grass slope. Below this is a levelled grass area with scarped sides which may have been a lawn tennis court. Paths runs along the south-east and north-west walls to steps up to the terrace at the south-west end. Another runs along the south-west side of the 'tennis court'. Above it is a low stone revetment wall (coursed next to the steps, the rest rubble built, *c.* 0.8 - 1 m high), with central stone steps similar in style to those of the north-east terrace leading up from it to a small pavilion on a higher terrace against the south-west wall. The pavilion is a small rectangular building built against the outer garden wall, with open front and sides on a stone base and a red tiled pitched roof supported by wooden piers. In front

of it a gravel path leads to doors in the outer and cross wall. That in the outer wall is gothic, and that in the cross wall is round-arched with a dressed stone surround and moulded stone around the arch. The wall here is rendered.

In the east corner of the garden is a round tower built into the walls, with earth heaped up against its base. The tower was renovated in 1987-88. It is of rubble stone construction, with a crenellated and slightly corbelled out top. This is a dual purpose building, its upper floor being a viewing and banqueting room, the basement being an ice-house. Access to the upper floor is via stone steps on the outside to a trefoil-headed doorway on the south-east side. Over the doorway is a new heraldic crest on a corbelled out panel. The room has a stone floor and three trefoil-headed windows. On the north side outside steps lead down to the well preserved ice-house below, which is an egg-shaped chamber lined with brick.

Sources

Secondary

Earl of Dunraven, *Dunraven Castle* (1926).

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