

ST BRIDES CASTLE

Ref number	PGW (Dy) 23 (PEM)
OS map	157
Grid ref	SM 804 107
Former county	Dyfed
Unitary authority	Pembrokeshire
Community council	Marloes and St Brides
Designations	Listed building: House (Grade II) Pembrokeshire Coast National Park
Site evaluation	Grade II

Primary reasons for grading Remains of enclosed garden and water features associated with the possible sixteenth-century mansion which are situated to the north-east of the new mansion. Parkland, terraces, walled gardens and formal gardens surround the Castle that was built on the site of 'The Hill'.

Type of site Early walled pleasure garden separated from later formal terrace gardens by an expanse of open parkland.

Main phases of construction The walled garden appears to be of several phases from the sixteenth century onwards. The gardens associated with the Castle were started in 1833, but the walled garden may incorporate part of 'The Hill'.

Site description

There is evidence for all three houses known to have been associated with the St Brides estate, the earliest known house is usually referred to as The Abbey. There may have been a medieval precursor to the Abbey, but its site is unknown. The Abbey was superseded by The Hill, which was built on a more elevated position to the south-west and this, in turn, made way for The Castle.

The early written sources referring to the history of St Brides relate mostly to the church, the first reference being a Taxatio of Pope Nicholas. Whether this refers to the present church or to a smaller cell that was apparently further towards sea is unclear. There is a possible late twelfth-century arch within the present building, but this could have been moved from a previous structure as happened at Rhossili, Gower. Cist burials are still being eroded out of the cliff and a Carbon-14 date (1985) from a skeleton puts the remains to about AD 1000. It has long been assumed that there was an associated settlement and the present owners of Cranford, the former rectory, believe that they have the buried walls of three or four small dwellings within their garden. Whether the Abbey was extant at this time is not clear. St Brides was certainly a sub-lordship of the Barony of Walwyn's Castle, with the lands being held by de Vales in the thirteenth century, John de St Bride was a witness to a charter at this time.

One of the earliest reference to St Brides within the 'Genealogies of Pembrokeshire Families' (WWHR II), is to Maud 'Who lived in Hen. 4th time' (1399 - 1413) and in the following line is the first mention of the Laugharn(e) family, in whose possession it was to remain until the beginning of the eighteenth century. A recent find of pewter-ware bowls made near the Abbey date to the mid seventeenth century: the initials R.A.L. (Rowland and Ann Laugharne) were stamped on them. Rowland Laugharne was a Major General in Cromwell's army.

The Laugharne family, who had accumulated so much land that it was said you could ride all day and not leave their estates and had produced famous family members, including Major General Rowland Laugharne, were impoverished by war. There is an extremely pathetic petition to the King written in about 1680 by Ann, Rowland Laugharne's widow, but it was apparently unanswered. Their two sons having been killed in the Dutch war, the estates were to pass to John Laugharne. In 1715 St Brides passed from the Laugharne family to the Phillips family. A memorial in St Bridget's Church to Charles Phillips (died 1749) of Hill, makes it clear that the family acquired the property through the marriage of Charles's father William Phillips, of Haythog, Pembrokeshire, to Albina, one of the sisters and coheirs of John Laugharne. 'Phepa' (Philippa) Laugharne is recorded as marrying Charles Phillips of Sandy Haven, Charles presumably being one of the five children of Charles (the elder) and Anne, daughter of Thomas Skyme of Vaynor, Pembrokeshire.

The remains of the house and courtyards are still impressive. The original approach to the gate may have been across a small causeway immediately to the east of the upper of the two ponds that are situated centrally within St Brides Green. Alternatively, the 1874 survey shows a track from what is now the drive to the former rectory (and in the wall of which, a blocked entrance still remains). The gate itself is believed to be no later than about 1600 and its castellated walls stand to a maximum of 4.75m. A corbel table supports the castellations and parapet walk. There are three, possibly four, arrow slits within the castellations of this wall only; the one internal wall with castellations does not have arrow slits. The arched entrance stands to about 2m and it is secured by modern wooden double doors. Within are two courtyards, the smaller one, to the east, is reached from the main gate whilst the larger, to the west, is reached from the first courtyard by an arched entrance in the dividing wall; like the gateway, this wall has a parapet walk.

The first, eastern, courtyard occupies some 0.170 hectares. To the west is a castellated dividing wall, with central decorated arch; both similar in style to the northern gateway. To the south and east the walls, all of which are stone and stand to over 3m, are plain and appear not to have been keyed in, either to each other or to the dividing, castellated wall. The original function of this courtyard is not known; however, there is a photograph of 'The Wood Garden' in the Sale Catalogue of 1926, which shows it beautifully laid out formal rose gardens. Today it is covered by roughly mown grass.

Through the central arch in the western wall, again with corbel table, is the larger courtyard that occupies 0.388 hectares. With this courtyard are two changes in slope. The westernmost lies almost immediately to the west of a fine and ancient mulberry tree. Beyond the mulberry and some apple and pear trees, (there are 25 old varieties of apples growing in this area) is a drop in level of about 1m across the width of the enclosure. A survey by the National Park, in the late twentieth century, revealed that this change of level continued across the Green beyond as an earth bank about 2 m high. To the west of the drop are conifers and within the western wall is another arched entrance, now blocked. This archway has the date of 1729 carved above it and is probably contemporary with the rest of this section of wall, which appears of more recent date than the remainder. A path from the archway leads into the garden of the former vicarage, now a house named Cranford, and to the church door. On the 1846 plan, a

trackway led from this entrance to join the track to the west of the church. At the south end of the wall is another blocked, arched doorway, which may have been an entrance to the enclosure from the beach.

The second level change is associated with a wall some 9 - 9.5m away from the dividing wall and running parallel to it. This wall, which is about 0.74m on the up-slope (eastern) side and just over 1.5m on its western face, retains the terrace that runs the width of the enclosure. At the southern end and partially separated from it by a continuation of this wall, is the Abbey itself. The survey found that the revetment wall continues across the Green and that there is a similar change in level in the wood on the other side of the enclosure.

Today, the remains of the Abbey are usually reached from the drive to the Castle; however, this drive was only constructed in about 1846 and the only track shown on a map of the same date was the one across St Brides Green. A gable wall of the Abbey still stands to three storeys, with substantial chimney to the west rising above the gable. The abbey is, apparently, a tower house of typically Pembrokeshire construction, possibly of fifteenth-century date. Within the rubble walls there are large window openings and small fireplaces. Traces remain of plastering within and stucco work on the outside. In the north-eastern corner is an opening. On the ground floor, the doorway has a wooden lintel that was re-used from a wall plate. There are blocked entrances in the south and east walls. However, as the windows and doors have been stripped of their surrounds and there is little other detail, it is difficult to confidently determine a date of construction. The Abbey was apparently designed as a first-floor building but has subsequently been much altered.

To the south of the tower house and now in woodland and separated from the Abbey by the drive, are further remains. A well-like structure is situated immediately to the south. This is called St Bride's Well on the tithe map and it has been suggested that the name is a corruption of 'Bridewell', an old name for a place of safe keeping, in this case as a cold food store. Beyond are further walled enclosures, again clearly shown on the 1846 plan.

To the north-east of the church, next to the entrance to Cranford, is the Pump House, a small, square, hip-roofed building. This played an important role in the development of the Castle, as from it water was pumped from the springs above the Green to the covered reservoir above the Castle. Water was then gravity fed into the building. The Pump House contains a ram pump, dating to the beginning of the twentieth century, recently restored by the Friends of the National Park. The building is to be opened as a local history interpretation centre.

In 1715, the estate of St Brides passed into the Phillips, or Philipps, family and it is believed that Charles Philipps established the first house, The Hill, on the hill above St Brides bay. It is this holding, described by Fenton in 1811 as 'an elegantly modern structure' that is recorded on the tithe map of 1839, which was based on an earlier survey and not revised until sometime later. Fenton's description also suggests that there had been extensive landscaping to accompany the building of the house. 'On the slope of the ascent to the west of the church stands Hill, the seat of Charles Philipps, Esq. the owner of St Bride's, commanding a most charming view over Bride's Bay and the opposite coast, and though in so bleak an exposure, backed and skirted with a thriving belt of plantation, open only to a beautiful lawn of great extent and gradually sinking to the creek. Behind, to shelter, a little from the violence of the south-west, the ground rises. The peninsular point of land forming one side of the fretum between it and Skomar, belonging to Hill, is converted into a deer park, admitting, from the irregularity of its surface, of much shelter and sweetest herbage, and producing venison of a most excellent flavour'.

Comparison between the tithe map and First Edition Ordnance Survey of 1874/5 (25 inch) suggests that at least part of The Hill was incorporated into the Castle. For example, the east wall of the walled garden appears on both maps, as does part of the stable block and

buildings are shown on the sites of the two glasshouses. There are also some inconsistencies within the building styles and techniques that add weight to this suggestion. From constructional evidence within the roof void it would appear that the area of the hallway and staircase incorporates remains of The Hill.

The lawn spoken of by Fenton is recorded in the schedule of apportionments (No 2). It is an enclosed area of some 6 acres to the north-east of the Hill and the present mansion. The only garden referred to in the apportionments relating to the Hill/Castle is, in fact, the walled gardens of the Abbey, some 1.25 acres. A substantial lake or pond is shown to the east of the Hill, within the lawn area. A winding flight of stone steps has recently been uncovered within the bank, almost opposite the carriage entrance; these are also believed to have been part of the 1715 build. William Philipps died in 1798, leaving his property to his nephew Charles Allen of Gelliswick, who adopted the name Philipps. It was his son, William, who built the new Castle, following his marriage in 1832.

St Brides Castle is set in the beautiful and often dramatic countryside of west Pembrokeshire. The castle is built at about 40m AOD and is only about half a kilometre from St Brides Haven, which it overlooks. The area is one of ancient settlement, with the prehistoric site at Nab Head being less than a kilometre away and a further three prehistoric settlements being 2 - 3 km distance. The Haven itself faces north to north-west, but the castle appears to be sheltered from the worst of the winds. The entrance to the 'new' drive, which sweeps up the landscaped parkland to the Castle, is a short distance south of the un-named road to St Brides church; this small road eventually links up with the B 4327 Haverfordwest to Dale road.

Photographs of about 1880, shortly after the Castle was bought by the 4th Baron Kensington, from the Revd Harries, who had inherited the property in 1864, show a square castellated block of two storeys, with a raised, central block of three storeys similarly decorated. The building appears to be white painted, as do the turned balusters edging the terrace to the east. Beyond the terrace is a large, bow fronted glasshouse, with an ornamental ridge, which is not shown on the 1875 survey. In about 1890 the 4th Baron had the Castle remodelled and enlarged, these additions included the red stone projecting bay windows to the east, ranges to the west and a tower, with look-out, above the northern entrance and towards the centre of the block. The terraces would appear to have re-modelled at the same time. In 1923 the Castle became a hospital, specialising in TB cases; it closed in 1978, when the need for TB beds diminished. Externally, the property, which is rendered with one and two projecting string courses, appears little changed since the end of the last century, although it is understood that there were internal structural alterations made during its use as a hospital.

In 1990 the Castle was acquired by The Holiday Property Bond and after restoring and adapting the main house and converting its outbuildings, it was opened in 1991. In 1993 the restoration was granted a Prince of Wales Award for Architecture. The Castle now consists of 50 apartments and facilities such as laundries, indoor swimming pool and so on.

Immediately to the west of the house, the drive passes through a 'Tudor' arch within a substantial stone built wall contemporary with the building of the Castle. The stone used for this and many other features appears to be the local red stone. The wall stands to about 6m high and is castellated. To either side of the entrance are two projecting square pillars; between the pillars is a small corbel table. Although the idea is similar, the style and execution is rather different from the Abbey entrance. The arched entrance was originally gated. There is apparently a set of large wooden gates within the adjacent farmyard, which are said to have come from here.

The stable block is shown on the early Ordnance Survey maps as enclosing three sides of a quadrangle. Most is contemporary with the building of the Castle. This two-storey building is stone built, with projecting pillars between the windows, in addition there is a wide,

projecting string course. Many of the windows on the northern face are blocked, some during the recent conversion to holiday properties. Set centrally on the northern side is the entrance tower, which stands to three storeys. On the ground floor is the entrance arch, of similar style to the main entrance but standing to about 4m. Above this is a recessed panel in which is the small square window of the first floor and the round window of the second floor. The projecting gable roof of the entrance tower is slated, as is the main roof. On the top is a wooden, white-painted cupola, which probably once housed the estate bell and above that is a weather vane.

Within the courtyard, the stables and coach house have been converted for holiday use with projecting wooden bay fronts. To the southern end of the stable courtyard is a new arched entrance that gives on to the all-weather bowling green in what used to be the walled garden.

The western face of this stable range is interesting. Although now castellated in keeping with many other of the structures, there are two round towers to either end of this range. One of these towers lies at the junction between the stable courtyard and walled garden, whilst the other is adjacent to the house. Along the face of the wall is a change of style and the wall rises to a gable; there is also a 'break' in the masonry; a further break can also be seen in the wall of the walled garden. The physical and mapped evidence together, suggest that this section of walling may have been part of the earlier house, The Hill.

To the south west of the house and stable courtyard are two rows of estate cottages, which are single-storey, rubble built with slate roofs and low stone chimneys. They are contemporary with the building of the Castle. All have recently been converted to holiday apartments. To the southern end of the western row is a two-storey building, which probably housed the estate manager or game keeper. To the front of this cottage was a small enclosed garden.

The parkland now covers an area of about 60 acres, although the field names given on the tithe schedule of apportionments suggest that the park was once more extensive and practically encircled the house. Today the park occupies the north-easterly sloping land to the east and north of the castle. The park is separated from the headland and coastal path by a substantial dry-stone wall that was evidently built in several phases. Originally the wall, which stands to a maximum of 1.5 - 2m, was capped with pitched stones. However, sections of the wall have recently been consolidated and much of this capping has been lost. A further stone wall, which is the continuation of the Castle walled garden wall, runs east to west, parallel with an original drive and separates the remaining area of park from the fields to the south. Within this wall are two circular (Pembrokeshire) gate piers and the 'kissing gate' that gives access to the path from the 'old drive' to the church. This path was created through the bottom (east) of the park in 1846 as part of the landscaping work.

The parkland was the creation of the Philipps family rather than the Edwardes (Kensingtons). The Tithe of 1839 is at least 6 years out of date as the Castle was built around 1832. However, it is extremely useful for just this lack of historical accuracy. Although the field names around the house refer to 'Wall park' to the west, (27) and 'White park' to the south (21), areas of 22 and 17 acres respectively, were large enclosures possibly used for the management of deer (see Fenton). They were not the area of sweeping parkland of today. By 1847, one field boundary to the north had been removed so that 'Upper kiln piece' (31) had been amalgamated with 'Lower kiln piece' (32), making an enclosure of just over 35 acres to the north of the house. However, by the First Edition Ordnance survey map (25 inch) of 1875 a further two fields to the north and east had been amalgamated, giving the huge open sweep of park of some 60 acres that is such a feature of the landscape of today. This feeling has been preserved by the present owners, who have recently removed a fence erected post 1874 and replaced it with a ha-ha at the entrance to the gardens.

The main drive is approached off the Marloes road and past recessed, semi-circular walling, which is all relatively recent. The drive, which has a tarmacked surface, then gently curves through the Abbey woods, with the Abbey to the north and the well to the south. The construction of this drive, which was created sometime after 1847, must have destroyed some of the walling associated with the Abbey. Immediately within the park is a small stone culvert, after which, the unfenced drive swings gently westward to the house. A ha-ha has recently been constructed at the entrance to the garden to maintain this open feel.

For much of its length, which is about 960m, the back, or farm drive runs almost due east - west, following the field boundary wall that would become the park wall. At the western end are the rows of workers' cottages and (today) some agricultural buildings. At the eastern end the drive skirts the woodland associated with the Abbey and emerges on to the Marloes road about 130m south of the entrance to the present main drive.

The map relating to the tracks and paths of the Abbey section of the estate seems to suggest that the drive to the Hill utilised an earlier trackway that ran, initially, in a diagonal line north-eastwards from the church, through the Abbey gates and gardens to a gateway in a similar position to the gate in Cranbrook mentioned above. This being the case, it would seem likely that the date of ?1829, carved over the blocked archway in the west wall of the larger courtyard, might refer to a remodelling of this entrance from a carriageway to a pedestrian route. No land use is given on this map.

The courtyards were described as gardens on the title schedule of apportionments (about 1839). It is possible that they may have been used as such continuously from the fifteenth century until the early twentieth century. Their layout is indicated on the first edition Ordnance Survey map, when perimeter paths and three cross paths are shown. In addition, there appears to have been an orchard in the area to the west, now used for conifers. The area that was later used as a rose garden (about 1920), is only shown as an informal planting of trees.

As far as can be judged, the area around The Hill and the Castle has always been put down to gardens. The 1839 Schedule of apportionments records a lawn (2) to the north. Some of this area remains as lawn, although bisected by the drive. The First Edition shows the curved area of about 3 acres (1.2 ha.) to the north of the Castle as being woodland. This area is still one of trees and shrubs including a fine Holm oak (*Quercus ilex*), hardy hybrid rhododendrons, golden privet, berberis, spiraea and some herbaceous material. Adjacent to and north-west of the house is an embankment and a flight of steps; these have recently been uncovered. The steps give access from the drive to the wooded area.

To the south of the house the early surveys record (in addition to the terraces) a garden area of about 2 acres (0.8 ha), which is mostly tree covered. However, within the woodland are paths and almost centrally a fountain and two small ponds are shown. No area of glass is shown within these gardens on the First Edition survey, (1875), although glass is shown in the Castle walled garden.

By the Second Edition Ordnance Survey, the glasshouse recorded in the early photographs to the south of the terraces, is clearly marked. However, the ponds and fountain are no longer recorded (although the small circular annotation may be a pond), instead a sundial is shown, immediately to the south of the bow-fronted glasshouse.

Today this area is one of informal lawns, to the south is a children's activity area; whilst to the east is a miniature golf course.

The wide terraces are along the eastern face of the house and much of the southern face. The original terraces were somewhat different in style, with turned balustrades and a generally less gothic feel. The width of the terrace varies, but at a minimum, it is *c.* 3m and the surface has recently been repaved with brick pavers. Externally the terraces are buttressed every 4.5m or so. The sloped buttress supports the foundation walls of the terrace, which are rubble.

Above the retaining, foundation walls are the terrace walls and above the sloped buttresses are miniature octagonal, castellated piers, that mimic the design and style of the Castle lookout tower. Each of these towers stands *c.* 0.5m above the level of the terrace wall, giving a total height of *c.* 2m. The terrace wall itself is rendered and capped with moulded stones. A flight of 14 steps leads down to the lawns and the site of the bow-fronted glasshouse which is now a flowerbed.

The walled kitchen garden, which is *c.* 0.75 acres (0.3 ha) in area, is to the south of the house and stable courtyard. The walls, which are rubble, are of varying heights and appear not to be contemporaneous. The northern wall stands to about 4.5m and a new arch has recently been constructed in it, giving access to the stable courtyard. At the eastern end of this wall is one of the castellated, circular towers mentioned above. The western wall would also appear to have been recently consolidated and altered. To either end, the wall stands again to *c.* 3m, towards the middle of the wall, the height is reduced in a series of steps to *c.* 2m. In the centre the walling is arched over a pedestrian entrance, the whole standing again to *c.* 3m. The original vehicular entrance remains, as do the runners for a sliding door. The eastern wall, internally, stands to heights that vary between *c.* 3.25m and just over 3.5m. Externally, the wall is in excess of 4m. The wall appears to have been constructed either in several different phases, or to have been modified and altered during the course of its history. Again, like the other walls it is rubble built and has a central entrance. This entrance, however, is arched with the returns and immediate facings rendered. Again, there is a false keystone but this entrance is wider. Above the arch, and standing to a maximum of *c.* 4.5m, the wall has been constructed in three steps, the central one being the tallest. All the steps are capped with flat flags. The lower of these steps to the south is the same height as this section of the wall, but the clear, unkeyed return, suggests that the height of the wall has been increased in the past. The wall to the south is uncapped. The northern section of the wall is lower and is capped. However, now masked internally, but clearly visible externally, is a further unkeyed return. The mapped and physical evidence suggest that this wall, at least in part, dates from the early eighteenth century and the construction of The Hill.

Within, the ground mostly slopes gently eastwards, and it is divided into four sections by paths of brick pavers. Much of it is down to grass, but there is an all-weather bowling green in flat, north-eastern area. The configuration of the paths is very much the same as that shown on the 1875 survey, although an additional small path is also shown. Also recorded are three areas of glass, one large house where the bowling green now is, and two smaller houses to the south and west. By the Second Edition, these three houses have been replaced with what was probably a rather splendid area of glass. The linear house, which was *c.* 100 feet (30.5m) long, is situated towards the eastern side of the garden and a bowed section (presumably the entrance) is shown in line with the arched entrance through the eastern wall. This is unlikely to have been the glasshouse that now acts as a conservatory in the entrance courtyard. This structure was probably the lean-to glasshouse that is also recorded on the Second Edition against the southern wall. The flight of six steps that allow access through the eastern entrance to the lawned area to the east are not shown on either survey.

Sources

Primary

Map showing the planned alteration of pathways, (1846), Pembrokeshire Record Office, PQ/AH/2/17.

Owen J, 'St Brides and the Barons Kensington', (undated), Pembrokeshire Record Office, Q12/221.
Sale Catalogue, (1920), Pembrokeshire Record Office, HDX/1159/8.
Tithe map and schedule of apportionments, (1839, but from an earlier survey), Nos 2,3,30,27 etc., copy in the National Library of Wales.
Information from Mr Frank Dunn.

Secondary

Fenton R, *Historical tour through Pembrokeshire* (1903), pp. 97-98.
Green F (ed.), *West Wales historical records*, vol. II (1913), pp. 68-71.
Jones F, 'Llanrheithan', *The Pembrokeshire Historian*, no. 3 (1971), pp. 56, 63, 66.
Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments in Wales and Monmouthshire, *Inventory of the county of Pembroke* (1921), pp. 318-19.
Western Telegraph, 'Then and now No 207', (January 4, 1984), part one.
Western Telegraph, 'Then and now No 207', (January 11, 1984), part two.
Whittle E, *The historic gardens of Wales* (1992), p. 15.