

BOULSTON OLD HALL

Ref number	PGW (Dy) 69 (PEM)
OS Map	158
Grid ref	SM 981 123
Former county	Dyfed
Unitary authority	Pembrokeshire (in National Park)
Community council	Uzmaston and Boulston
Designations	None
Site evaluation	Grade II

Primary reasons for grading The survival of a walled and compartmented Tudor garden associated with the ruined Boulston Old Hall. The most interesting and unusual feature of the garden is a substantial, long, walled terrace overlooking the Western Cleddau estuary.

Type of site Walled and compartmented garden, including a long terrace

Main phases of construction Second half of sixteenth century

Site description

Boulston Old Hall is a substantial, ruined house situated on a small inlet on the north shore of the Western Cleddau estuary, to the south of the hamlet of Boulston. The ruined Boulston Church lies above the shore a short distance to the west. Access to the house is now by a stony track from Boulston Farm to the north; another track from the north-west, which may have been an original access route, now stops some distance from the house. The house site lies on the west edge of a wood and is now much overgrown. In 1810 Richard Fenton described the house as large and backed by extensive woods 'some veterans of noble growth still remaining'.

The upstanding remains of the house are of partly rendered rubble stone. Much of the house is reduced to a stony mound but enough remains to show that this was a substantial building. The long axis lies parallel to the shore, east-west, with irregular wings to north and south. At each end are the remains of tall, three- and four-storey towers, standing almost to their full height. That at the east end was a stair tower and some of the stairs remain. At the west end the corners and most of the gable end survives, with a gap in the middle. The stream running through the site is culverted under the west end of the house, suggesting that it was used to flush garderobes. Between the towers a vaulted and quite well preserved room survives at lower ground level, with entrances on the north and south sides. It is thought that this is probably of medieval date and the earliest part of the building. Remnants of windows on the first

and second floors indicate a well lit, probably luxurious, late sixteenth-century mansion comparable to the north range of nearby Carew Castle.

Boulston Old Hall was the home of an important and wealthy branch of the Wogan family of Wiston, a village a few kilometres to the north-east of Boulston. It is possible that its name stems from Adam le Bull, a Norman who gave Clarbeston to the Commandery of Slebech. The founder of this branch of the family was Henry (later Sir Henry) Wogan, son of Sir John Wogan of Wiston. Henry Wogan lived in the mid fifteenth century and although owning Boulston appears not to have lived there but at another family home at Milton. The first member of the family to live at Boulston was his grandson, Richard Wogan (died about 1541), who succeeded to the property in 1499. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that the first major phase of building dates to the early sixteenth century. That Richard Wogan was a man of substance is shown by the costly items bequeathed in his will. Light is also shed by it on some aspects of life at Boulston: maritime interests are indicated by bequests of shares in a barge and a ship called the 'Elbewe'; 'two great gunnes' were to be retained in the house, possibly for defence. Incidents in Richard's son's lifetime indicate that piracy was a fact of life in south Pembrokeshire at this time and that the landed gentry of the county, including Wogans, were themselves embroiled in it.

Richard Wogan's son John (later Sir John, died 1601) succeeded him and was a man of substance and importance in the county. He was Sheriff for Pembrokeshire several times and was knighted between 1584 and 1598. His second wife, Elizabeth, daughter of Robert Byrte, of Llwyndiris in Ceredigion, was a wealthy heiress. It is very likely that it was Sir John who further embellished the house and made the garden terrace and compartments around it. His son John (later Sir John, died 1636), who succeeded him in 1601, was Sheriff in 1606 and 1630 and owned extensive property on his death. Wogans of Boulston continued to provide sheriffs of the county through the seventeenth century and in 1670 Boulston was assessed at 13 hearths, making it a very large house for its day. The house is illustrated on a map of Milford Haven, dated 1689, by Matthew Norwood. This shows a large house with gables at both ends and chimneys on the roof. In 1684 the Duke of Beaufort visited, on his progress through Wales. He returned from Picton to Haverfordwest by boat 'in the cool of the evening having been well collationed on the way by (Lewis) Wogan Esquire, att the seat of Bolston'. When Lewis Wogan died in 1702, his only surviving child, of fifteen children, was a daughter, Anne, who married John Laugharne of St Brides, Pembrokeshire. It is probable that Boulston was abandoned on the death of Lewis Wogan. It was never again inhabited; Fenton (*History of Pembrokeshire*, 1811), said that the house had been disused for 150 years, but this is a slight exaggeration.

On Anne's death in 1715 the Boulston estate passed to a relative, John Wogan of Gawdy Hall, Norfolk. The last male Wogan of Boulston and Gawdy Hall, John Wogan (died 1778) instigated the sale of the Boulston estate in 1773. It was bought some years later by Colonel Robert Ackland, who never lived in the manor house but built a new house on the hill above it. The Sale Particulars indicate that the estate extended at that time to 4,750 acres.

The former gardens and entrance court of the house lie to its north-west, east, west and south. They are now abandoned, ruined and overgrown but their structure and much of the walling remains. There are four compartments, one of which, to the south-west of the house, was probably an entrance court. The principle and most

impressive feature is a long, walled terrace which lies between the house and the shore.

The terrace is over 70 m long and about 8.5 m wide. It is built against the shoreline, with high tides coming almost up to the foot of its outer wall. This is a substantial rubble stone revetment wall, with a parapet wall about 1.3 m high above it. At the south-east corner this rises to about 3.5 m. Towards the west end the wall rises to the same height either side of a wide, arched, entrance opening. The stonework of this gateway differs from that of the terrace walling and there is a straight joint between them, indicating that the gateway was probably inserted after the terrace had been built. The gateway has substantial sides, which protrude beyond the terrace wall. That on the east side has a portion missing in the middle. These support a gently curved arch, built of narrow, vertical slabs, with a keystone in the middle. Above the arch is a large, heavy, tapering stonework lintel, the height of the whole being about 4.5 m. Opposite this entrance, on the north side of the terrace, is a similar but less grand archway, leading through to the walled compartment to the east of the house. From the evidence of the stonework and straight joints, this gateway also appears to have been inserted into the terrace wall.

To the west of the main entrance archway the terrace parapet wall disappears but the revetment wall above the shore continues to a north-south wall along the west end of the terrace. This is about 2 m high, with a tapered top similar to that on the north wall and a gap at the south end. The terrace is backed on its north side by a rubble stone wall about 3.5 m high, with a tapered top. On its north side this wall is about 4.5 m high, with a large buttress near the east end, where the wall leans out (there is a wide crack at the north end of the east wall) and large quoin stones at the corners. The east wall is similar in build and height, with a blocked central doorway.

In the same line as the terrace, to its west, is a smaller walled compartment which may well have been an entrance court. The west and north walls are about 3 - 3.5 m high, with tapering tops. In the middle of the west end is a wide entrance gap with squared sides. The north wall has a gap at its east end, opposite the centre of the house. The south wall, which stands on the revetment wall along the shoreline, stands up to about 1 m for most of its length. The stream is culverted underneath this compartment, emerging from beneath stone slabs about a metre south of the wall and running into the sea a short distance further on.

To the east of the house, north of the terrace, is a walled enclosure. Its east wall, which butts on to the north wall of the terrace, is about 3 m high, with similar block-like masonry to most of the terrace walls, with a hole near the south end. On its east side two loops are visible. At the north-east corner the wall rises to a gable end, indicating a former small building, and there is a short return stretch of wall along the north side, which peters out towards the house. To the east of the compartment the stonework on the north side of the terrace wall is smaller, in thin courses, similar to that of the two gateways.

To the north of the west end of the house are the remnants of one further compartment. These consist of walls on the north and east sides of what would have been a rectangular compartment. The east wall is about 3.5 m high, with tapered coping on top and an opening that might have been a window in the middle. There is a similar wall along the north side, with a gap at its east end. The stream runs down the west side of this compartment to an arched culvert under the west end of the house.

No internal layout or planting survives within the terrace and walled compartments. The whole site is overgrown with seedling trees and undergrowth,

which have obscured or destroyed any features other than the walls, gateways and terrace.

Beyond the immediate confines of the house there are ancillary features linked to it. To the north and east of the house is a wood of deciduous trees with some conifers, Ash Wood. An old, stony track, flanked by low rubble stone walls, runs from Boulston Farm southwards through the wood to the shore, skirting the east end of the terrace. Another, similar track runs south-eastwards and then eastwards at the northern end of the wood, crossing the stream running through it over a small single-arched stone bridge. The stream runs south-eastwards down the western half of the wood, its flow interrupted by two ponds which are probably of ancient origin. The upper pond is the smaller. It is an irregular shape, with an earthen dam along its south side. Although still holding water it is now somewhat silted up and full of bullrushes. A short distance below is the second, larger pond. This is of open water, roughly triangular in shape, with a substantial earthen dam, with a path along it, on its south-east side. There is a small island near the pond's west side. The stream leaves the pond through a broken sluice in the centre of the dam and runs south-eastwards towards the house. Half way between the pond and house a smaller stream enters from the east. This runs in a straight channel between two banks, that on the south side being larger. The stream entering from the north is culverted under the bank on the north side of the channel.

The layout of walled compartments, terrace and ponds probably dates to the Tudor period, during the late sixteenth century. There is a possibility that the ponds may be earlier in origin. The interpretation of the compartments and terrace is difficult but, given the grandeur of the Tudor house and the status and wealth of the Wogan family it is probable that they formed a complex of entrance court and garden compartments, with parts probably for utilitarian use. The probability that the long terrace is a garden feature is strong, although it has been suggested that it was a boatyard. Its extreme length rules it out as an entrance court and in fact the entrance court is likely to be the compartment to its west, with the entrance at the west end. The situation of the terrace, overlooking the Western Cleddau estuary, is a beautiful one and the fact that the parapet wall on the estuary side is low, giving views out, is significant. The high backing and side walls would have provided shelter and support for plants. The grand entrance would have been for access to the house from the sea, perhaps via a slipway or steps, now gone. Boats could have been secured to the foot of the terrace wall, although no mooring rings survive. If there was a slipway below the entrance small boats could have been hauled up on to the west end of the terrace if necessary.

The similarity of the masonry of most of the walling of the courts and terrace indicates that the whole layout is probably of one date. On stylistic grounds this is likely to be the second half of the sixteenth century, when gardens of a similar type were being made throughout the country. Here, the most probable builder of the garden is Sir John Wogan, owner of Boulston from about 1541 until his death in 1601. Differences in masonry show that at a later date the two arched entrances were inserted into the north and south terrace walls and that the east end of the north terrace wall was rebuilt on the outside. Whether this was done in the sixteenth or seventeenth century is not known. After 1702, when Lewis Wogan died, Boulston was abandoned and no more work done on it. The present-day layout of walled compartments is shown on the 25 in. Ordnance Survey map of 1899 (revised 1888).

Sources

Primary

'A Plan of Milford Haven', 1689, by Matthew Norwood. Public Record Office, Kew. Ref. MPH/1/119.

Secondary

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