

ORIELTON

Ref number	PGW (Dy) 38 (PEM)
OS Map	158
Grid ref	SR 9545 9909
Former county	Dyfed
Unitary authority	Pembrokeshire
Community council	Hundleton
Designations	Scheduled Ancient Monuments: eight tumuli scheduled under P 60 (Pembrokeshire), seven within the park Listed buildings: The house Grade II*; dovecote Grade II*
Site evaluation	Grade II

Primary reasons for grading The survival of parkland which was extant in the early nineteenth century, but is probably earlier. The park contains a rare duck decoy lake and a gazebo or belvedere, possibly mid seventeenth-century in date but built on earlier foundations. There are also plantations, woodlands, the remains of a nineteenth-century Japanese garden and a walled garden.

Type of site Parkland and substantial lake to the west. Woodland and garden areas, including water features, to the east; walled kitchen garden.

Main phases of construction Possibly mid seventeenth-century gazebo, the gardens were further developed during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Site description

The history of Orielton reflects the wealth and power of two families and their dynastic marriages over several hundred years, during which time three great houses were built. In 1811 Fenton records: 'Orielton, a mansion that has maintained high rank for centuries.. it is probable that it was originally inhabited by some powerful follower of Arnugh de Montgomery, of the name of Oriel, a name now almost worn out, and only found among the vulgar ... in the reign of Henry the second, it was possessed by a man of note, of the name of Wyrriott, whose descendants continues to occupy it till the reign of Queen Elizabeth, when, by the marriage of Sir Hugh Owen, Knt, wit the sole heiress of that great estate, Elizabeth Wyrriott, it changed the name of its owner. Sir Hugh was the younger son of the ancient house of Bodeon, Anglesea. Orielton continued to be their chief residence, where they intermarried with the first families and shared the highest honours of the county'. The mansion which Fenton saw was probably the third house.

Fenton's pedigrees can, occasionally, be misleading and there appears to be little

evidence for the follower of Arnugh de Montgomery. However, the rest of his account is well documented. In c. 1188, Gerald of Wales visited the house of Stephen Wyrriott and told of the vengeful ghost which haunted the place. Francis Jones details members of the family that held high office; Sir David attended the court of Joan de Valence in 1300, Thomas was Sheriff in 1459, Henry, who was married to the natural daughter of Sir Rhys ap Thomas of Dynevor, led troops in France and was High Sheriff in 1549 and 1559. Elizabeth, who was the daughter of George Wyrriott and Jane Philipps of Picton, married Hugh Owen in 1591. At that time the estate made up four manors, eighty farms, four water corn mills, a fulling mill and 5,200 acres in south and mid-Pembrokeshire.

The Owens, a family of some distinction, were to add further to the estate. In 1670, the house was assessed as having seventeen hearths. This assessment refers to the second mansion that was built for Hugh Owen in 1656, probably on or near the present house site. Pearce (1996) suggests that the banqueting house and belvedere were also built at the same time and that the stone from the Wyrriott house was re-used in both structures. However, information from the Royal Commission of Ancient & Historic Monuments (Wales) suggests that the tower was built in the eighteenth century.

The Owens continued to be successful, to add to the estate and to embellish the grounds. In her article for *Pembrokeshire Life*, Nannette Pearce quotes from a letter from John Wright to Pryce Campbell written in 1736 concerning the visit of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, to Orielton when Sir Arthur was creating plantations around the house; 'We came to Orielton where we dined and Sir Arthur showed us all the rarities of his house. One thing I thought odd, and that was when Sir Arthur called for his horse, I thought it was to send us part of the way home, but that was to ride about the gardens to show (Mr Pitt) his plantations. He was extremely pleased with the Governor and Mr Pitt for approving his designs'. A list of household servants, compiled in 1777 gives insight into the life-style and possible importance of the gardens: 'At Orielton a House Steward, Bailiff, Gamekeeper, two Gardeners, eight labourers to assist in the gardens, hot houses, succession house, melon house, walks and plantation only. Ten household male servants, exclusive of fifty other labourers hired for the day for other business appertaining to out-office and husbandry matters, in addition a cooper, four carpenters and two labourers to attend them'.

In about 1809, John Lord, a cousin of the true heir, Arthur Owen, inherited the estate. He duly adopted the name and arms of the Owens and was created a baronet (of the second creation) in January 1813. It was John Owen (Lord) who built the present mansion. Whether through the expenses connected with the new house or because of his political ambitions, he managed to spend the family fortunes and there were various sales from about 1820 onwards; first the furniture and plate and finally, in 1857, the house. Efforts had been made to sell the house in 1828 when it was advertised in the *Carmarthen Journal* on 1 February: 'Important and impressive Freehold and tithed free estates including the capitol mansion of Orielton with pleasure grounds, gardens, lakes of water and woods. A short remove from the town of Pembroke & the dockyard. The whole estate nearly 9,000 acres divided into arranged farms. The capitol mansion of Orielton with offices of every description, built of stone and equal to the perfect accommodation of a Nobleman's or Gentleman's family. Extensive Walled Gardens with Hot and Succession Houses and Graperies, Orchards singularly beautiful French and American Pleasure Gardens, planted with the choicest shrubs; Lakes of Water stored with fish; woods and plantations abounding in game. 3,000 acres with a ring fence and let except for the mansion and about 300 acres. The tithe return shows that there were some 381 acres within the Orielton Demesne.

In 1857, the property was acquired by M. A. Saurin of Cilwendeg, who made improvements and alterations. Thereafter it was owned by Mr Mackworth Praed and Mr Arthur Gaddum. In 1963 it was bought by the Field Studies Council.

The first mansion is believed to have been sited just to the north-west of the tower at c SR 9553 9880 probably on, or near the summit of the hill at c. 85 m AOD. From here, the highest point of the demesne lands, it is possible to look beyond St Twynnell's, to the sea to the south and west. There would appear to be no remains of this building, although Pearce suggests that the base of the belvedere may have been a contemporary lookout tower. This would be in keeping with the mention by Laws that the Wiriets (*sic*) had a 'stronghouse' at Orielton.

Of the second mansion there are descriptions and part of the cellars remain in the basement of the present house. Although built around 1656, the second mansion is described as Tudor in style and was a mixture of grey stone and red sandstone, built partly from the stone of the Wyrriott house and stone quarried from a site immediately to the north of the first house site. This area later became the 'American' garden.

The third mansion was originally much more extensive than the present structure. Built in c 1809 with apparently as many windows as there are days in the year. It is shown in a view from the east by J. P. Neale (1822) as being a large rectangular Georgian block with the square-headed windows gradated in size. Each floor is separated by a projecting stone course. Neale's view also shows two entrance porticos on the east face, linked by a verandah; the windows to the basement are also just visible. The listed building information suggests that the house was remodelled in 1970. This work, following a fire, removed one of the porticos, the verandah and part of the house to the north. However, mapped evidence indicates that this work was undertaken prior to the survey published by the Ordnance Survey in 1908 as the portico had been removed by this date and the house reduced in size. The present, northern, small three-storey extension has been built in the last decade or so and is a shower block for the Field Studies Centre. The south-facing side is now much covered with Virginia creeper, but a recent view by Claire Dalby shows the architectural detail that the creeper now masks. In the upper floor are four, swept-topped sash windows; below them on the first floor are four splendid windows each with a semi-circular top and fan lights; these are separated from each other by three rounded stone columns, so from the inside nearly the whole wall would seem glazed. This pattern is repeated on the ground floor but the openings are larger to allow for doors. Again, in recent years, three of the windows have been lost and the openings have been filled, only one is now a door.

The house is now painted cream with the windows and columns of the remaining portico being painted white.

Comparison between the tithe map, early and later Ordnance Survey maps suggests that, over the last 150 years or so, there have been considerable alterations in the relative importance and size of the outbuildings associated with Orielton. In the mid nineteenth century, East Orielton (not included in this survey as beyond the park and garden boundary), appears to have been the home farm and West Orielton is recorded on the Schedule of Apportionments only as 'Building & yard' occupying 2 rods and 26 perches. Orielton Home Farm is not recorded on the tithe map. By 1875, West Orielton had become very much more extensive, with a yard to the east and north of the farm house and a range of buildings to the west. This re-modelling incorporated the dovecote.

Dating for the dovecote is uncertain, its construction being placed somewhere in the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries, although one source suggests that it might be sixteenth-

century. It may have been contemporary, therefore, with the second mansion, which would have been a few hundred yards to the north-west. This six-sided structure, with very oblique angles, has been built into the slope of the hill and part of the floor is exposed bedrock. The stone roughcast and lime-washed walls stand to about 6 m and there is a slate covered, conical shaped, roof which has been much repaired. The lantern has now gone but there is a change in slate type where it once was. Inside, the central support and ladder are gone but the nesting boxes, of slate and brick, remain. There are approximately 26 rows, each with about 60 nests.

The entrance to the stables and yard is through a rather flattened arch in the two-storeyed block to the west of the courtyard. To either side on the ground floor are two windows of 12 lights and sash openings. On the first floor are three windows, two with 12 panes and one with four. Above is a hipped, slated roof, in the centre of which is a lantern topped with a metal dome and weathercock. To either side are chimneys. The buildings within the courtyard have now been converted for use as classrooms and the doors and windows have all been replaced. Most of the structures are roughcast and are painted white. The mapped evidence again suggests that the buildings date from different periods. The tithe map of *c* 1830 - 40 appears to show a stable block at the northern end and to the east of the mansion, this structure is three-sided with the open face to the north. The First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1875 shows a three-sided block to the north of the mansion, with the open side towards the west. In the centre of the open side is, apparently, the present entrance block. This would date these buildings to *c* 1860.

A park of nearly 50 acres was extant in *c*. 1830 as was the walled garden and the 'American' garden; all probably predate the tithe survey. The 'Japanese' garden was created about 1919, which may also be the planting date for the small acer avenue.

The park and garden mostly occupy gentle south-facing slopes of the undulating land which makes up the Pembrokeshire peninsula. Orierton is about 3 km to the south-west of Pembroke, which is the nearest town. The major structural elements of the park and gardens are recorded on the tithe map, many of which remain unchanged. The parkland is to the north-east of the mansion, with the fishpond or decoy lake towards its northern end. Separating the park from the minor road to Angle are very rectangular fields, all averaging about 10 acres. In the westernmost of these fields, adjacent to the west lodge, known locally as 'The Images', are the five tumuli or 'Dry Burrows' that are Scheduled Ancient Monuments. To the east of the mansion are the plantations and the gardens. Separating these areas are walls, ha-has and drives.

The main entrance to the mansion and Field Centre is now from the north, with the North Lodge at its entrance. This was not always the case and drives used to link the house with the West Lodge, the lodge known as 'The Images', a lodge adjacent to West Orierton, a South Lodge and an East Lodge. To the north-east, on Bowett Lane, is another small house that also has the appearance of having once been a lodge. Although water occurs with the park and garden, the boundaries are entirely man-made. The wall which forms the southern boundary to the plantations and 'American' garden, may well have once formed the curtilage wall of the first mansion, which would possibly give a construction date in the first half of the seventeenth century. The 'American' gardens, formed on the site of the first mansion, are noted as 'gardens' in the mid nineteenth century. The walled garden is also extant at that time, as are the ponds to the west of the walled garden and the lake to the north of the park.

Two of the original drives remain usable for cars and the others are now farm tracks. The straight north drive, leading off a minor road to the north, is still well maintained and

mostly tarmacked. It crosses a small stream that eventually feeds the decoy lake in the park. Further on the drive forks, with one fork leading around to the north of the walled garden. Orierton Home Farm and West Orierton Farm. The main drive continues south and from it there would have been views of the mansion across the lawns. The drive sweeps westwards to either the forecourt to the front (east) of the mansion or the rear and the stable block to the north.

The entrance to the west drive, which is from the minor road to the north of the park, is marked by a lodge. It runs almost due south before dividing. The eastern track leads to the rear of the stable block; whilst the second fork heads due west then swings south to West Orierton Farm. Where a view across the park from the house was required the boundary to the drive is a wall about 0.75 m high and a ditch. This is almost a ha-ha, although the ground level on the road side is not quite that on the garden side. Near to West Orierton, the boundary is again marked by the substantial wall about 3 m high, that forms the southern garden boundary. The surface of the drive is tarmacked and well maintained.

There are three ornamental lakes recorded in the mid nineteenth century to the east of the house. One remains recognisable; the two to the north are now very silted and invaded by ground cover and young saplings.

The lake which remains recognisable is the southernmost one, described on the 1875 survey as 'The Lily Pond'. The Neale view of Orierton (1822) is from the east of the lily pond, which is shown as clear water. To the north and south of the lily pond are mature trees and beside the pond three, apparently deliberately planted, shrubs. The area of clear water, even allowing for some artistic licence, was probably about 2.5 acres. By 1875, some silting is shown associated with the pond margins to the south and by the Second Edition Ordnance Survey map of *c* 1905, most of the southern end is shown as marshy ground. Today, the area of clear water has diminished further, willows and alders surround the margins as do the rushes and rough grass. A wooden boardwalk now extends from the eastern side which almost reaches the open water in the centre. To the north are the remains of a stone sluice which are set into a raised causeway. The causeway is about 5 m wide and separates this southern pond from the middle pond. Along the top is a path.

The middle pond was originally some 0.307 acres and is again shown as partly silted by 1875, but the northern pond is shown as clear water into the twentieth century. Again, this has become invaded with weed species and saplings.

A further small pond is shown on the twentieth century surveys to the south-east of the walled garden. This feature does not appear on any previous surveys and is only visible today as a marshy area.

The fishpond or decoy lake is recorded as extant in the early part of the nineteenth century. This impressive stretch of water probably originally extended to over 14 acres. On the early surveys it is shown as extending eastwards up to the drive to West Orierton Farm. Towards the eastern end, a small island is also shown. By *c.* 1905, the eastern end has been re-configured, probably to allow for field sports and to make a duck decoy. The island has vanished but three channels, two to the east and one to the south, are shown. This 'starfish' pattern of channels, which decrease in size away from the main body of water, is typical of duck decoys. Few decoy lakes survive and only one other example has been recorded in Wales, at Lymore Park (Powys). Apparently the number of wintering ducks used to exceed 10,000 birds, of which about 90% were widgeon. The lake was used from 1934 for bird ringing, but now the numbers have decreased to a paltry few. The area of the lake is probably still around 13 acres and the substantial earthen dam to the west still retains sufficient water

to classify this lake as a reservoir under the 1975 Act. To the southern end of the dam is a sluice which links an overflow stream to the Mill Pond (probably post 1840) to the west. The Mill Pond is outside the area of this survey.

Set at the highest point of the park and just to the east of the American gardens is a tall, somewhat enigmatic, three-storeyed, roofless tower. In plan, this feature appears as a skewed square, but the reason for this eccentricity is not known. To the north and south on the ground floor are arches tall and wide enough to accommodate a carriage and a certain amount of stonework is incorporated at this level. The first and second floors appear to be built entirely of brick with a relieving arch across the south-western corner which supports a diagonal, vertical, brick partition wall. Within this wall a fireplace has been set on both the first and second floors. On each floor and on each face are large, square-headed windows, although the one to the east on the first floor is obscured by ivy. Externally, the windows are decorated with sandstone blocks, which project alternately and the lintel appear to consist of two rectangular sandstone blocks abutting the keystone. The quoins to each corner are also detailed in sandstone.

Within, the rendering has mostly been weathered away but sufficient remains to suggest that the decoration had once been elaborate. The ground floor appears to have been rendered with one layer that was probably plain. However, the first and second floors were rendered in two layers; the first been plain and hatched or scored to take the second covering that was worked in panels with raised bands between. The rubble stonework of the ground floor is in marked contrast with the well cut sandstone blocks of the window details.

There was once a building against the east face of the tower and the shape of the gable end is clearly marked in lime-wash. However, the boundary wall, which probably would have formed the rear wall of this building, is neither rendered or painted.

Pearce suggests a date of *c.* 1656 for the gazebo and mentions that it may have been constructed on the remains of an existing look-out tower. There is a parallel for this conversion or re-use at St Donat's Castle in the Vale of Glamorgan, where the medieval Watch Tower was later used as a gazebo and banqueting house. The present owner is in agreement that it may have served as a banqueting hall and that the small building to the east was connected with this function.

Just under 200 m to the south-east of the mansion is the site of the American Gardens. These gardens are referred to in the sale details of 1828 and are recorded on the tithe survey as being a garden of some 5.2 acres. The garden is believed to have been created on the site of the first mansion and the rectangular enclosure is surrounded by walls that still stand mostly to nearly 4 m. Whether these walls were deliberately built to shelter exotic plants or date from a previous enclosure is not known. Mid nineteenth-century sale details describe this area thus: 'on the south side of the mansion is a beautiful wood through which extensive walks are cut leading to a singularly beautiful pleasure garden of about four acres, walled around, in American and French gardening, planted with the choicest flowering and other shrubs in great profusion with gravelled and grassed walks and to the south is a raised terrace with rustic summer house'. The garden area is now very much overgrown. The ground cover is mostly ferns, ivy and brambles and self-sown saplings of between twenty to thirty years are everywhere. No remains were found of this 'singularly beautiful' garden or of the rustic summer house.

Possibly created at the same time as the Japanese garden and just a little to the west of it, is a rather eccentric garden feature, called The Squeeze. A line of five stone pillars has been set across the course of a path that leads from the lily pond to the west of the walled

garden. The pillars stand to about 0.75 m high and three are linked by semi-circular cap stones; the gap between the remaining pillars is just sufficient for the slim or agile to pass. At its eastern end, The Squeeze joins with an earlier wall that is at right-angles to the wall of the walled garden. It is tempting to suggest that the pillars used in the creation of this feature came from the second entrance portico to the house, when it was remodelled in either 1880 or earlier.

Shown on the Neale engraving as a rolling lawn between the house and the lily pond, this area is now much altered. Much of the lawn has been enclosed as temporary grazing for sheep and is now rough pasture. Further west, towards the house, the grass is mown and there are some small wooden benches and tables. To the north of the mown area is a small avenue of eight acers, running east - west. At the eastern end are three, now rather mature, rhododendrons. These plantings and the magnolia just to the north, may be contemporary with the Japanese garden.

Also on the mown area and to the south of the acers, at SR 9545 9903, is a sundial which consists of a single bulbous pillar, standing to about 1 m, on top of which is the plate and gnomon. The style of the base-pillar suggests a possible date in the early eighteenth century, but the plate is later. The *c.* 1905 survey of Orierton shows a sundial within the walled garden, to the north, next to a range of glass. It is possible that this feature was moved to the lawn earlier this century.

Possibly also of the same period is the small stretch of water between the lawn and the forecourt to the house. This slightly formal pond is retained by shuttered concrete walls that stand to a maximum of about 40 cm. A large stone slab has recently been laid across the pond to act as a bridge and there is an overgrown border to the south of this bridge. Within the border are stretches of looped iron railing standing to less than 0.5 m; sections of this railing appear elsewhere within the grounds such as around the dog's grave.

Situated about 200 m to the north-east of the mansion, the walled garden is recorded on the tithe map as being a 'Garden & shrubbery of 4 acres, 3 rods and 26 perches'. Also shown on this map is a rectangular building against the outside of the north wall. This garden enclosure was then, and has remained, a rather irregular shape. It is a hexagon, with the longest sides being the north and south walls, the east and west ends are made up of three stretches of walling that form a regular, but uneven, pattern. By 1875, the garden is shown as containing lines of fruit trees, mostly to the south, but two avenues of trees extend across the whole width. Around the perimeter and bisecting the centre are paths; there is also an elaborate pattern of two semicircular paths towards the north, just to the south of a range of glass. Interestingly, two ruins are also shown, one within the garden against the north-west wall and one just on the outside of the south wall. Neither appear to exist today. In addition to the central range of glass against the north wall, two further ranges are shown. There is a further linear range against the north wall and a range just outside the north-west facing section of the west end. The *c.* 1905 survey shows all these ranges to be extant and an additional range of glass has been added to the small one outside the west end. The sundial is also noted to the north of the garden, adjacent to the central range of glass.

Today, the walls stand mostly to about 4 m and are stone on the outer face and brick within. During the 1990s, the whole area was cultivated intensely by Mr Garlic, who worked it as large rectangular plots. The glass to the greenhouses has been replaced by plastic and there is a small, wooden framed glasshouse in the north-east corner. All the paths have gone and sections of the wall are now much ivy covered. However, the small rectangular building abutting the north wall remains. This is a rubble stone, single-storey, structure, with three

windows to the north (almost at ground level) and a door. The sloping roof is slate covered and there are brick chimney stacks to the ends and centrally. This structure is back-to-back with the central range of glass within the garden. The heightened brick wall of the glasshouse, with rectangular vents, rises above the roof level of the lean-to.

In the south wall is an arched pedestrian entrance that stands to just over 2 m. Running south-east from this entrance, to either side of the woodland path, is an iron pergola which consists of four metal arched supports which give a maximum height of about 3 m. Stabilising the arches lengthwise are metal rods which run the entire length.

In addition to the entrance in the south wall there is an arched vehicular entrance, which may be original. The arch, which is in the north-east corner, stands to a maximum of 3 m and there is a pair of wooden slatted gates hung from either side. Within this entrance is a smaller example of a rose arch or metal pergola than the one mentioned above.

Sources

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