

GREAT HARMESTON

Ref number	PGW (Dy) 19 (PEM)
OS Map	157
Grid ref	SM 9250 0899
Former county	Dyfed
Unitary authority	Pembrokeshire
Community council	Tiers Cross
Designations	Listed buildings: the house, cartsheds, outbuildings and food processing stores Grade II
Site evaluation	Grade II

Primary reasons for grading Within the much overgrown garden orchard are the tumbling remains of an arbour or grotto, which probably dates from *c.* 1800. To the south of the garden orchard are two garden mounts and a small lake. Evidence from the trees suggest that these mounts date from at least 1800, but are very probably earlier.

Type of site Small enclosed garden associated with a home of minor gentry.

Main phases of construction The garden mounts may be early eighteenth century, whilst the garden building is probably from *c.* 1800.

Site description

The site of the house and gardens is reached off the A 4076 Milford Haven road to the south of Haverfordwest; it lies just over 1.5km south of Johnston. The topography of this part of Pembrokeshire is one of gently rolling hills, Great Harmeston being at about 45m AOD. The land is mainly south-facing, falling to *c.* 40m AOD at the end of the garden, which is to the south of the house.

The track that leads to the house is relatively recent, the Tithe map of *c.* 1843 shows that Great and Little Harmeston shared an access road, but this had disappeared by the First Edition Ordnance Survey of 1861. This re-alignment may have been the result of the construction of the Great Western Railway, which runs to the south of the garden.

Little documentation remains relating to the early history of the house; it is known that the property was called Hermaston in the sixteenth-century and that Thomas Jones of Hermaston was sheriff in 1589. The property then passed by the marriage of Jones's daughter to the Tankard family.

The house, outbuildings and walls formed an enclosed unit, with the house to the east, the store and cart-shed to the north, a yard wall and possible garden wall to the west and the garden wall to the south. The house is aligned north-south, with the main entrance facing the wide, straight drive to the east.

The house is two-storeyed, limewashed rubble-built, six-bay structure with bracketed eaves. The windows are mostly sashed, many retaining the original ovolo-moulded glazing bars. The door is a little off-set to the south, and there was originally a gabled porch. There is a rubble lean-to the south and further additions to the rear (west) of the house. The present structure probably belongs to the early eighteenth-century, with later additions in the middle of that century and further later additions. It is believed that the house is on or near the site of an earlier house.

The outbuildings are to the west of the house and form an L-shaped range.

The store, cart-shed and barn range runs east-west and the main front faces north. To the east of this main building is a secondary, lean-to garage with brick quoins and stone walls. The store and cart-shed is a lower building than the barn to which it is attached; together they form a unit of some 30m in length. The store and cart-shed have a stone gable, to the west, in which is a carved stone, reused as a window sill and above it, a further segment of carved stone has been used to block a vent. The main walling of the cart-shed is of brick and there are three openings. The opening to the west appears to have been reduced in size at about 1.5m above ground level. Supporting the double cart-shed entrances is a central ashlar pillar, that appears to have been constructed from re-used stones. Over the stone keystones of each of these entrances are two small carved stone heads, on circular plates; again, probably reused.

Adjacent to this building and possibly a later addition, is a further building that has been described variously as a barn, cart-shed or food processing unit; in fact it probably was a stables and a further cart-shed. The walls are rubble masonry, with segmental brick arches to the openings and there is a loft over. The gable to this building is of roughly coursed rubble masonry above a plinth. The quoins are squared and at least one is probably reused. The gable end does not appear to be homogenous, the upper part is less well laid and the lower courses include levelling-courses of flagstones.

The rear (south) elevation appears to be in at least two phases. At the base are large blocks, there is then thin coursed rubble above and above again, the masonry is larger and coarser. There are several blocked openings.

Abutting the cart-shed at its western end and orientated north-south, is a further outbuilding which was probably once a barn. This building is of random rubble in sandy mortar, with vent-slits and brick jambs. In the western elevation was a very wide doorway, that was subsequently partly blocked with a narrow brick-arched entrance. To either side of the original, very high, entrance are reused and chamfered dressed stone jambs. The southern jamb has a diagonal stop at the foot and both have run-out stops towards the top. The quoins of this building also include reused masonry and one block is chamfered with an elaborate broach stop that was probably once part of a door or fire-place jamb. Again, the east wall of this building contains reused masonry.

It has been suggested (A.J. Parkinson) that the outbuildings are of several dates, interlocking with the date of the house. However, the amount of reused masonry suggests that there was a building of some quality on or near the site in the early seventeenth century. Mr Parkinson has suggested that the original house was a building of some quality and that it was heavily altered in the eighteenth century when the outbuildings were added.

The present drive from the north passes through fields that are recorded on the Schedule of Apportionments as 'White Lady' and 'Bushy Park' which were both about 10 acres; the use of the word park in this context would date these enclosures prior to the eighteenth century and may relate to the more common use of the later medieval period.

In the mid nineteenth century, the homestead and garden areas occupy just under five acres, with a further 14 acres being recorded as the garden meadow. (The tithe map incorrectly records this field as 462, which is actually the green, this field number should read 461.) Both

Little Harmeston and Great Harmeston are recorded as belonging to Thomas Davies, with William Dymmech the tenant at Great Harmeston. The total holding associated with Great Harmeston was a little over 143 acres.

Mapped evidence shows that the area occupied by the garden altered somewhat between c 1840 and 1906. The tithe map shows that to the east of the house, the short drive was flanked by a wide splay of garden. By 1862, this area is shown as tree-lined with a small formal bed to the front (east) of the house. The 1906 revision shows that the configuration of the area adjacent to the front of the house has been lost to the garden and has been subsumed in the meadow. The configuration of the garden area to the south of the impressive barns has changed little over the centuries. The tithe map records no features in this area, except for a small building in the north-eastern corner. The 1862 survey shows a rectangular enclosure of about half an acre, with a central path leading to what was probably the small lake at the bottom (south) of the garden. In the north-east corner is a small square building. Within the field to the west is a large ditch and a small enclosure is shown to the north-west of the outbuildings. The revision made at the beginning of this century shows little change, except for the addition of a rectangular milking shed to the south of the outbuildings, abutting the wall of the rectangular enclosure.

Today, the garden areas are very similar to those shown in 1906, with the main area of interest being the enclosed area to the south of the property. The plantings of yucca and the like immediately around the house suggest that there was a small garden here until recently but little of real horticultural or historical merit remains.

The southern enclosed garden, or garden orchard, is a rectangular area of about half an acre enclosed by a wall to the north, earthen banks to the west and east and the railway line to the south, although a boundary is recorded here prior to the construction of the Great Western Railway. The area is now one of rough grass, brambles and the vestiges of an orchard. In the north-east corner is a small, almost square garden ruin. To the south are two garden mounts, which terminate the earthen banks immediately prior to the tiny lake or pond which occupies 0.116 acres.

The two mounts to the south of the garden appear to be identical in construction, being more or less circular and standing about 3m high from the garden side and some 5m high from the lake. The diameter of both mounts at the base is about 8m and there is no clear platform at the top. Around the base of the mounts, at ground level, are two paths. The southern face of the mounts forms part of the northern edge of the small lake, at this point the strata of the underlying bed-rock is exposed.

Neither of these mounts appear on any of the surveys so far studied and there is no documentation to assist with dating these features. However, on the summit of the western mount is an ancient ash. Using the method outlined by Mitchell (1974) this tree was given an age of some 180 years; a very conservative estimate bearing in mind that the top of a mount would be very dry and not provide ideal growing conditions. To date, there is no way of verifying whether this tree was planted at the same time as the construction of the mounts. Garden mounts generally went out of fashion somewhere around 1700, but Charles Bridgeman was still including them on his plans as late as 1720. Using the evidence from the tree dating, all that can be said is that they were probably extant c. 1800 but that they are probably earlier.

Immediately to the south-west of the western mount and overlooking the western side of the small lake is an almost circular level area with a diameter of about 4.5m. This platform is now grass-covered and there is no evidence of any structures. However, it would have been an idyllic spot for a summerhouse and if constructed of timber at the turn of the nineteenth century, it is unlikely that any remains would show above ground.

To the south of the garden orchard and adjacent to the mounts is a small lake that occupies 0.116 acres. It is almost rectangular in shape except that the northern side is somewhat curved. This shape appears consistently on the early surveys.

In the north-eastern corner of the garden orchard is an enigmatic little structure, with the north and south upright walls being built of a mix of stone and brick, with the upper most courses of brick in the configuration of the beginning of simple barrel vault. The structure measures some 2.4m on its east-west axis and 2.8m north-south. The surviving walls stand to 1.67m, but they have tumbled towards the east end. The western and eastern ends are open and there is no evidence that the building was ever completely enclosed. Within are six niches set *c.* 60cm above ground level. These recesses have a slab base and are plastered.

The brickwork suggests a date of somewhere around 1800 and this little building is recorded on the tithe of some 40 years later. It is definitely extant by 1862 and this survey shows a path entering the building from the west. There are several possibilities as to its function. The first suggestion is that it served as an arbour, with the niches forming seats. Another suggestion is that the niches were bee boles. This is unlikely. Most bee-boles, which were constructed to hold the bee-skeps, face south so that the bees warm up as soon as possible and begin working early in the day and continue for as long as possible. Bees are also protective of their skeps and hives and a situation that encourages a confusion of different flight paths between skeps is unlikely. The most plausible suggestion is that this little building was a grotto, in the sense that objects of some beauty or importance were housed in the niches within. The open east and west ends, which may have been protected by metalwork grills or gates, would allow a limited amount of light in.

To the north of the main garden area and entered from the 'new' drive, is a small enclosure of *c.* 0.314 acres. This enclosure does not appear on the tithe survey, but it is recorded by 1862. The wall facing the road is brick built, with an entrance about half way along its length. It is so overgrown that its function is difficult to determine, but its size suggests that it had a horticultural rather than agricultural use.

Sources

Primary

Author not stated, Listed Building notification, Cadw (1989), copy held at the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth.

Tithe map and apportionments, (*c.* 1830 - 40), nos 460, 461, 459 etc.

Parkinson AJ, Descriptive field notes (1991) copies held at the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth.

Secondary

Dyfed Archaeological Trust PRNs 10502 and 24598.