

ST DONAT'S CASTLE

Ref number PGW (Gm) 30 (GLA)

OS Map 170

Grid ref SS 934 680

Former county South Glamorgan

Unitary authority The Vale of Glamorgan

Community council St Donat's

Designations Listed buildings: St Donat's Castle Grade I; Parish church Grade I; Medieval cross in churchyard Grade I; East Lodge Grade II; NE outer forecourt wall and arches of castle and northern part of NW boundary wall Grade II; Staff house adjacent to outer NE forecourt wall Grade II; SW outer forecourt walls of castle Grade II; Former coach house Grade II; Former forecourt stables Grade II; Tithe barn Grade II; Outbuilding on SE side of Sir Val Duncan Memorial Garden Grade II; Walls and steps of gardens, terraces, pavilion, summerhouses and cottages Grade II; Cottage against SE churchyard wall Grade II; House at NE end of NW range of Cavalry Barracks Grade II; Sea walls and towers Grade II; Watchtower Grade II; Old Rectory Grade II; North Lodge Grade II. Scheduled Ancient Monument: Medieval cross in churchyard (Gm 361)

Site evaluation Grade I

Primary reasons for grading The rare survival of a complete, large-scale Tudor terraced garden, attached to a mediaeval castle, partly restored and added to in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The size, complexity, state of preservation and rarity make these gardens of outstanding value. Two walled deer parks attached to the castle also remain and an unusual tower stands in the wooded grounds. Randolph Hearst's occupation in the 1920s and 30s gave the castle and gardens a renewed opulence that has in part survived to this day.

Type of site Terraced formal gardens; former deer parks; wooded grounds; walled kitchen garden

Main phases of construction Second half of sixteenth century; *c.* 1862; 1901-09; 1925-30

Site description

St Donat's Castle is an essentially complete mediaeval castle that has been continuously occupied since the twelfth century. It is situated on the southern edge of the Vale of Glamorgan, on the eastern edge of a steep-sided combe, to the south of the hamlet of St Donat's. From the north it is approached by a gentle south-facing slope, but to the south the ground drops steeply down to the Bristol Channel, giving a

beautiful view from the castle over the terraced gardens to the sea. From 1962 the castle has been occupied by Atlantic College, the first of the United World Colleges founded by the German educationist Kurt Hahn.

The grey, stone built castle gives a compact and sturdy, rather than forbidding impression from the outside. Its crenellated buildings are ranged around two multi-faceted concentric curtain walls, some of them occupying the entire space between them. The drive approaches the castle from the north-east and enters a rectangular forecourt through an arched entrance in a crenellated wall. This is flanked by two evergreen oaks on the outside. Inside the drive runs straight to the outer gatehouse entrance to the castle, which is reached by a walled causeway over a dry moat. The drive is flanked by lawns, with a large evergreen oak on the east side. A two-storey stone range bounding the east side is a former barn converted to an Arts Centre. A stone wall bounds the southern half of the west side, with a service drive leading to a small service court beyond it. The south side is closed by a stone wall, with a Tudor doorway near the east end which leads to a path around the outside of the curtain wall to a doorway into the gardens. A gothic arched doorway leads through into the service court.

The castle is enclosed by crenellated curtain walling, with a dry moat around the east side, pierced by windows of various dates, either gothic or Tudor in style. Inside, the layout appears chaotic, but in fact the buildings are ranged around and between the two curtain walls. The south front is dominated by the four-storey crenellated Lady Anne Tower, which projects from the south-west corner and by the long, high crenellated wall of the Bradenstoke Hall, inserted between the two curtain walls. Four gothic windows are inserted into the wall, above which it is slightly corbelled out. On the west side the ground drops steeply below the outer curtain wall. In the centre is an irregular inner court, with a narrow arched entrance on the north-east side, flanked on the east by the earliest building in the castle, the three-storey Mansell Tower. The court is laid out to lawn, with paved paths to doorways. A manuscript plan of the castle, probably of mid nineteenth-century date, shows the court laid out with perimeter and crossing paths, with a central circular feature. This is shown on a drawing by G.T. Clark of 1871 to be an octagonal structure, probably a well head, with a splayed base. It may have been re-erected in the of the Tudor Garden at the beginning of the twentieth century, as the upper part of the central seat, which bears some resemblance to it. Terracotta busts in roundels, similar to the early sixteenth-century ones at Hampton Court, are inserted in the walls.

The building of the castle falls into three very different main phases - mediaeval, 1901-09 and 1925-30. The mediaeval phase was initiated by the de Hawey family in the late twelfth century. They built a stone castle with a faceted curtain wall. This survives in part in the inner curtain wall of the present castle and in the Mansell Tower. The Stradling family acquired the castle through marriage in 1298 and continued in occupation until the eighteenth century. The family became one of the most powerful in the county and most of the remaining fabric, including the outer curtain wall, was built by them in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The castle was altered in the late sixteenth century but the main addition, a range on the west side of the inner court, has been almost completely rebuilt in mediaeval style. The roundels were probably inserted in the walls at this time. On the death of Sir Thomas Stradling, sixth baronet, in a duel in France in 1738, the castle fell into the hands of absentee owners and was neglected. In 1862 it was bought by Dr John Whitlock Nicholl-Carne

of nearby Dimlands for £55,000. Although attempting some restoration, his impact on the castle was minimal.

The second major phase came in 1901, when the estate was bought by Morgan Stuart Williams, of the Williams family of Aberpergwm, who was a keen antiquary. Between 1901 and 1909, when he died suddenly, he undertook extensive, scholarly restoration work. His chief architect was Thomas Garner, and when he died in 1906 the work was finished by his partner G.F. Bodley.

After 1909 the castle was again neglected. Eventually, in 1922 an American, Richard Pennoyer, bought the park and castle but not the remaining estate. Soon afterwards it was on the market again and the castle and 111 acres were bought in 1925 for 130,000 dollars by the American newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst. Hearst had hankered after a British castle along the lines of Caernarfon or Conwy 'only smaller and more domestic'. St Donat's fitted the bill perfectly. Aided by his architect Sir Charles Allom, he embarked on a rapid and ruthless programme of alteration to convert the castle into a luxurious mansion without destroying its ancient character. Mains water and electricity were laid on. The main structural alteration was the building of Bradenstoke Hall between the two curtain walls on the south side. Many interior fittings, including the ceilings of Bradenstoke Hall and the banqueting hall are mediaeval imports bought and brought in by Hearst from elsewhere in Britain and France. From 1931 to 1936 St Donat's Castle was used by Hearst and his Hollywood friends for lavish summer holiday parties, but in 1937 his overspending, including an estimated £250,000 on improvements to the castle, caught up with him and severe cut-backs forced him to put St Donat's on the market. It was still for sale on his death in 1951 and remained so until 1960, when it was bought by M. A. Besse for the foundation of Atlantic College.

At the foot of the gardens, on level ground between them and the sea, is a long stone range known as the Cavalry Barracks. It lies along the north side of a rectangular court bounded on the east by a high revetment wall and terrace, on the south by a raised terrace and sea wall and on the west by modern buildings. The court is occupied by a lawn in the northern half and an open-air swimming pool and indoor pool in the southern. The Barracks, of rubble stone with a pitched tiled roof, consist of a two-storey range, with arched doorways and small square windows on the ground floor and mullioned windows above. At each end is a three-storey block with crow-stepped gables.

The Cavalry Barracks date to the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. Their purpose was probably that of stables, with accommodation over, but it is unclear why they are called barracks. The 1877 25 in. Ordnance Survey map shows them as ruined and in a photograph in *Country Life* of 1907 they are complete but roofless. They were partly restored by Hearst in the 1930s in a different style but in 1978-81 they were fully restored, and Hearst's work was removed, by Alex Gordon and Partners in the original style. Both swimming pools are also the work of Alex Gordon and Partners and were built in 1981, the outdoor one replacing Hearst's pool of the 1920s.

There is a great number of further buildings at St Donat's Castle, some grouped to its east and some scattered in the grounds and former parkland to the east and north-east. Most are modern and relate to the school. They were built by Alex Gordon and Partners in the 1960s. Near the castle are administration and teaching blocks; further away residential houses. Buildings belonging to the original Home Farm, a former barn and stables, lie to the east of the castle, along the north-west and

south-west sides of an east-facing open court. They were restored in 1973-77 by Alex Gordon and Partners. The 'tithe barn' is a fine rubble stone barn with central arched openings. It is now used as a theatre and is part of the St Donat's Art Centre. The stables were converted for use by the school.

At the foot of the steep slope to the west of the castle is the parish church of St Donat's. A steep lane runs south-westwards down to it from the drive north of the castle: it lies completely within the grounds of the castle. It is a small stone church dating to the twelfth to fifteenth centuries, with restoration work of 1878 and 1907. The church contains monuments to several members of the Stradling family. In the churchyard is a complete fifteenth-century calvary cross. The churchyard is walled, with a doorway in its south side through to the long garden terrace at the foot of the slope.

The main entrance to St Donat's Castle is on a sharp bend in the Llantwit Major-St Donat's road, at the south end of the hamlet. A tarmac drive runs westwards through the grounds to the forecourt, with a row of evergreen oaks along the west side. A branch drive leads to houses to the east. Towards the castle there are more trees, especially horse chestnut, beech and lime. Another drive runs northwards, branching from the main one in front of the forecourt. This leads up the east side of the combe, flanked by mixed trees, including pine, evergreen oak, yew and horse chestnut, past modern school housing and an older house (Primrose Cottage) to another, less used, entrance. There are lodges at each entrance. The main one lies to the north of the entrance, which has no gate. It is a two-storey small stone building with arched mullioned windows, a stone-tiled pitched roof and a small porch on the east side. Its small garden has a curving low stone wall around it on the east. Between the lodge and the entrance is a low stone wall with fossils set into it. The second lodge is very similar in style and lies to the west of the west entrance, closed by gates. To the south-east the grounds are bounded by a high rubble stone wall, with some large beech and horse chestnut trees next to it.

The entrance arrangements were altered in the second half of the nineteenth century. The 1843 tithe map shows the public road running right up to the castle forecourt, with a cross, possibly that now in the churchyard, in a wider space in front. The road corresponds roughly to the present drives, with cottages along the present north drive. This arrangement was altered before 1877 (Ordnance Survey map), probably by Dr Nicholl-Carne after he bought the estate in 1862. He moved the road in front of the castle so that it curved around Somerset Farm, on the north side of the open space. The cross was removed and the space planted up with mixed trees, with a drive running from the road to the castle and the Home Farm. During the first decade of the twentieth century Morgan Stuart Williams pushed the road further north-eastwards, cutting off the corner and leaving the former road as drives. The lodges were built at this time. Somerset Farm, now gone, Primrose Cottage, the old Post Office and the Smithy all found themselves within the grounds of the castle.

In 1536-39 John Leland recorded that there were two deer parks, one for red, one for fallow deer, at St Donat's Castle. These can still be traced to the east and west of the castle.

The east park occupies a roughly rectangular area of ground sloping gently down to the south-west. It is bounded on the north by a rubble stone wall along the St Donat's to Llantwit Major road and by the present-day drive to the castle. The wall continues, *c.* 2-2.2 m high, with a cemented 'cock and hen' top of large blocks, along the east side. On the south the park is bounded by sea cliffs and on the west by fencing

along the school grounds boundary, with a stretch of rubble wall at the south end. The park has an open, grassland centre, fringed with mixed deciduous woodland on the north and east sides (Park Wood) and in the south-west corner (Barracks Wood). Both woods are mainly of sycamore, with beech and ash towards the north end of Park Wood. Modern staff housing has been built on the southern fringe of the woodland along the north side, with a tarmac drive leading to it off the main drive. A house called Summerhouse, *c.* 1 km to the east, on the Llantwit Major road, is a converted and extended hunting lodge to St Donat's Castle. The lodge consisted of an octagonal stone tower, now embedded in the house.

The west park is much larger than the east. It occupies a rectangular area of flat plateau to the west of the valley west of the castle and its two branches to the north, Cwm Hancorn and Llys Weirydd. It is bounded on the south by sea cliffs, on the east by woodland and on the north and west by rubble stone walls now in use as field boundaries. The west wall, *c.* 1.6 m high, with a cemented top, repaired with cement in places and broken down in others, runs straight northwards from the clifftop at SS 927677 for *c.* 650 m, then turns eastwards and runs to Parc Farm, where it abutts farm outbuildings. It then continues from the north garden wall of the farmhouse eastwards past Wilde's Covert, stopping at the top of the west side of Llys Weirydd. This section is *c.* 1.5 m high, built of large blocks, with a similar top. Towards the east end it is higher (*c.* 1.8 m), with no coping. The interior is divided into large fields and is under pasture and cultivation. Wilde's Covert, created between 1886 and 1914, is a copse mainly of sycamore on very bumpy ground suggesting a former quarry. This could be related to the site of a lime kiln just to the south-east.

The east boundary of the park divides the parkland from woodland to the east. From the clifftop to the top of Cwm Hancorn, just south of Parc Farm, it is a rubble stone wall *c.* 1.5 m high, built in about 1909. The earlier, probably original, park wall, shown on the 1877 25 in. Ordnance Survey map, was further east and ran north and south from the Watch Tower, now within the wood. This wall can be traced: to the south of the tower it is a stony bank, to the north it runs as a low stump of wall, *c.* 0.7 m high, for a short distance, and then continues as a stony bank along the edge of the valley. The park boundary continues from the north end of Cwm Hancorn as a fence around the south and east sides of the field to the north. This boundary was moved eastwards and northwards between 1886 and 1914.

The steep-sided valley and its branches to the west of the castle are an integral part of the castle grounds but were not incorporated into the deer park, from which they are walled and fenced. They are entirely wooded, giving an air of secrecy to the castle from this direction. The deciduous woodland is semi-natural, with stunted sycamores and ash at the seaward end and some mature beech, oak and a clump of pines further north.

At the north end of Llys Weirydd is a mill pond from which a disused leat runs along the west side of the valley ending in the stump of a wall leading to a ruined overshot mill. Below it is the arch of a ruined bridge over the stream. A ruined wall runs down the west side of the valley, curving round by the ruined mill and continues up the other side, ending at the foot of private gardens. The stream continues southwards, passing along the west side of the walled kitchen garden, which occupies the floor of the valley to the north of the castle.

Below the kitchen garden is a steep bank down to a boggy area where there was formerly a small pond. This is bounded on the west by a substantial stony bank, formerly a wall, with the stream flowing in a straightened channel beyond it. The

stream then runs into a small pond, partly overgrown, with a straight concrete dam on its south-west side. The dam appears to be for a much larger pond than the existing one or than that on the 1877 map. A narrow, unsurfaced path runs up the east side of the valley but is impassable through overgrowth in places. Running parallel with it is a low stony bank that is the remains of a stone wall. A small single-storey stone building with a door and wide window opening lies to the east of the path and opposite concrete tanks. To its north-east a long flight of stone steps leads up to castle level. Neither the building nor the steps are shown on the 1877 map. What this does show is two small buildings and semi-walled enclosures that have gone. These have been covered by a large amount of tipping which took place during the 1920s alterations. The car park is situated on top of the tipped material.

At the foot of the road to the church are three large yew trees. The stream passes under an arched bridge then curves westwards around the churchyard and runs in a straightened channel along the west side of the lawn in the valley floor. A track branching off the lane to the church runs over the bridge and leads to two ruined two-storey stone cottages. The stony track then continues northwards up Cwm Hancorn to Parc Farm. From the south-west corner of the churchyard a rubble stone wall up to c. 2.2 m high runs across the valley, with a hole over the stream, and continues up the steep slope on the west side to the north end of a small stone building called the Watch Tower. This is a building of two very different halves. The northern end is a roofless two-storey stone building with gable ends on the north and south sides. It has stone-framed mullioned windows and doors in the north end, the upper one reached by external stone steps. The south end consists of a very tall, narrow tower, its top half corbelled out. Concrete spiral stairs lead to stone steps at the top up to a small platform from which there is a panoramic view of the castle and surroundings. There is a low, flat parapet and a hole for a flagpole. The tower is thought to be fifteenth-century in date, built by Sir Henry Stradling (1423-76), its purpose that of a look-out seawards. The building on its north side may be slightly later and the tower has been renovated, either by Morgan Stuart Williams or Hearst, to allow access to the top. The tower, much as it is today, and the adjacent park wall, are depicted on a drawing of 1776 in Francis Grose's *The Antiquities of England and Wales* and in an early nineteenth-century oil painting. At the south end of the wood, near the east side, is a tall, disused, stone chimney with a brick-lined flue running down the slope below it. This may have been connected with heating the swimming pool. To the north of the tower there is a large quarry hole in the wood.

The deer parks of St Donat's Castle are probably mediaeval in origin and were recorded by Leland in the 1530s. Although some of their walling has been reduced to banks, some rebuilt or repaired, it is probable that much of that of the west park is mediaeval or Tudor in origin. The parks were already famous in the days of Sir Edward Stradling, in the second half of the sixteenth century, when venison from them was highly sought after. The deer are mentioned in a poem about St Donat's Castle addressed to Sir Edward Stradling by Sir John Stradling (1563-1637). The poem was probably written before Sir Edward's death in 1609.

A plan of St Donat's dated to c. 1818 labels the west park: 'This park is subdivided and let to John Ockwell'. The 1843 tithe map also shows it divided into large fields and bounded by walls. A wall along the south side divided it from The Warren, a narrow strip of land along the sea cliff. The present west and north walls of the park were in place, one field adjacent to the north wall being called 'Cae Wall y Park'. The east side differed from today in that the southern half of the wall, now a

low bank in the wood, ran further east, to the Watch Tower. This is shown in Francis Grose's 1776 drawing. The present wall was built by Morgan Stuart Williams between 1901 and 1909. To the north of the tower was a walled enclosure, partly open on the north, bounded on the south side by the wall between the Watch Tower and the churchyard. The east wall, now gone or reduced to banks, then continued around a number of smallholdings in the valley to the north-west of the castle and round the east side of the lower pond, making it available for animals in the park. East of the pond the remains of the wall are visible as a stony bank. The wall, now a large bank, then ran around the west side of the upper pond and then continued as the west side of the present kitchen garden, then an orchard. It then ran up the east side of the stream to the mill in the corner. By 1877 this layout had changed on the east side by the fencing or walling in of Cwm Hancorn and the Llys Weirydd valley. The whole valley is now wooded, Cwm Hancorn and Llys Weirydd with mixed deciduous and coniferous trees, which suggests deliberate planting. The southern end of the valley is already wooded in 1843, with a small croft against the park wall towards the southern end. By 1877 this has gone, the southern end now open. A drawing of 1871 by G.T. Clark (no. XI) shows the bareness of the hillside, with the Watch Tower standing out starkly. The wood to the north had conifers planted in it and the existing clump of pines is probably a remnant of this planting. The jumble of cottages and their gardens in the valley bottom, to the north of the church, shown on the tithe map, has been reduced by 1877, although the garden and park walls are still shown, as is a lime kiln. Now only two ruined cottages remain.

The east park may at one time have been considerably larger than at present, as the *c.* 1818 plan shows it, let to Matthew Dunn, who also had the castle, extending to the lodge (Summerhouse) in the north-east corner, beyond the Tresilian valley. The 1843 tithe map shows the north wall continuing to Cwm Tresilian. In 1843 the area of the present park looked rather different, divided into four large fields. Those nearest the castle were called 'The Upper Lawn' and 'The Lower Lawn', those to the east 'Nine Acres' and 'The Four Acres'. There was no sign of Park Wood, the east boundary of 'The Four Acres' following the west side of the southern end of the wood. On the other hand, Barracks Wood was in existence. Between 1897 and 1914 it was extended eastwards to its present boundary and northwards to the second garden terrace. On the north side, near the castle, a small rectangular area is marked on the 1843 map as 'Old Plantation'. This is shown on the 1877 map as a row of trees. This map also shows that a clump of mixed deciduous and coniferous trees had by then been planted in the 'Upper Lawn'. The 1897 Ordnance Survey map shows the park still divided into four fields, but by 1914 the field boundaries have been removed, Park Wood planted, and the present park boundaries made.

It would appear, therefore, that although there was a mediaeval or Tudor park here the present one was created at the beginning of the twentieth century by Morgan Stuart Williams by rebuilding the north park wall, building a new one on the east side and planting Park Wood. The park was stocked with deer from Dunraven Park (PGW (Gm) 4 (GLA)) but on Williams's death in 1909 they were all shot.

The 1843 and 1877 maps show that some landscaping took place between these dates. This was almost certainly the work of Dr Nicholl-Carne, who bought the estate in 1862. Before that it had been tenanted. The valley was enclosed and planted, most of the cottages removed, the road in front of the castle pushed further away and the approach planted up, and a clump was planted in the Upper Lawn. An estate map

of 1862, surveyed by William J. Rees for Dr Nicholl-Carne, is annotated with planting dates of 1863/64.

The gardens lie to the south of the castle on ground sloping southwards down to the sea and south-westwards down to the valley floor. Running south from the castle is a series of five terraces bounded by a rubble stone wall, stepped down the slope, on the east and by a substantial rubble stone revetment wall on the west, below which is a steep wooded slope.

The top terrace is entered through a Tudor doorway with dressed stone surround at the north end of the east wall, which is *c.* 3 m high, stepped up over the doorway. This leads to a modern path along the north wall of the terrace and the south side of the castle. Beneath the terrace, next to the castle, is a large underground water tank. The wide terrace, from which there are fine views out towards the Bristol Channel, is grassed, with a low, flat parapet wall along the west side. At the north end narrow steps lead down to a landing and a flight of stone steps down the slope below. A narrow walk, at present rather neglected, runs along the west side of the castle, between castle and parapet, leading to a door in tower. A short way along, a small four-sided stone pavilion projects out from the parapet, buttressed on its lower side. It is single-storey, with a pyramidal slate roof topped by a small ball finial. It has a doorway on the east side and mullioned windows on the west and south. At present its roof is in poor condition and it is disused. Below it a ruined wall runs down the slope to join the south wall of the churchyard.

A flagstone path runs along the west, south and east sides. On the west side stone paths and flights of steps with flat parapet walls lead down the upper three terraces. The terrace is bounded on the south side by a stone revetment wall *c.* 2 m high, with three projecting buttresses, the middle one wider than the others. This is occupied by a flowerbed, the other two by small cannon. The flat parapet is only one block high. In the middle of the east wall is a Tudor arched doorway, fronted by stone setts, with a dressed stone surround and simple iron gate. In appearance it is older than the doorway to the north. Curving stone steps at the east end lead down around the buttressed end of the revetment wall and under a narrow arch at the bottom, in front of which are more setts.

The second terrace is the same length as the first and slightly wider. It consists of a gently sloping lawn with a flagstone path along the west side and vines on the east wall, in the middle of which is an arched doorway without surround and with stone setts below it. The revetment wall on the south side of the terrace has no parapet. A flight of stone steps, flanked by low parapet walls and with an ancient vine trailing over it, descends along the east wall to the next terrace, turning away from the wall at the bottom.

The third terrace is backed by a revetment wall *c.* 2.2 m high, with a wide grass walk at its foot. A shallow alcove, with a cast iron pipe near its top, is set in the wall and there is another similar one in the Blue Garden wall. The grass walk continues along the east side, flanked by a flowerbed against the wall. The remainder of the terrace is taken up with a yew-hedged enclosure, the 'Tudor' garden. This is laid out to lawn, with crossing flagstone paths and an oval rose bed in each quarter. The paths meet in a paved square in the centre of which is a circular wooden seat around an octagonal dressed stone pier *c.* 1.5 m high, with a lipped soil-filled top. The seat has four scrolled supports. This is evidently a composite structure and the central pier, or part of it, may be the well-head from the Inner Court. Flanking the paths and at the angles of the central octagon are twenty Tudor-style 'king's beasts'. These stand *c.* 2 m

high and consist of mythical beasts, squatting upright, on slender octagonal stone piers set in square concrete bases. Eight of the beasts are holding copper pennants and all have holes for them in the plinths on which the beasts sit. At the end of each path are openings in the yew hedges. On the east side the path is then flanked by junipers, beyond which is a shallow flight of steps, flanked by low parapets, up to dressed stone gate piers, topped by ball finials, set in the wall. Between them is a pair of wrought iron gates. The flagstone path continues eastwards beyond the terraces, with similar steps down to the school tennis courts. A narrow flagstone path runs along the south side of the terrace, between the yew hedge and flat-topped parapet wall, which is *c.* 1 m high.

In the south-east corner of the terrace a small Italianate pavilion is built into and out from the terrace wall. All but the northern end stands on a protruding section of revetment wall on the east side of the Rose Garden. The pavilion is a small, single-storey building of dressed stone, with a clear join where it meets the rougher stone at its foot. It has a hipped slate roof and is open on the garden, west-facing side, with three round-arched openings supported on slender round columns. The northernmost is a doorway, the others windows on a raised parapet, overlooking the Rose Garden. The interior is bare, with a floor of bricks set in a herringbone pattern. A glazed gothic window is set in the south wall, with a similar small one in the east wall, which also has a central door. The building is fitted with electricity and it also had a telephone connection in Hearst's day. To its south is a narrow grass terrace, reached by a narrow entrance at the north end of the east side, bounded by stone walls on the east and south and with the high revetment wall of the Rose Garden on the west. The top of the wall is uneven, with virtually no parapet, and a wooden fence has been erected in front of it for safety.

Below the third terrace there are two more terraces, side by side, the west one at a lower level than the east. Steps at the west end of the third terrace lead down to a narrow terrace occupied by a flagstone walk and border along the foot of the buttressed revetment wall, here *c.* 5 m high. The walk is bounded by a parapet wall *c.* 1 m high on the south side, and overlooks the lower terrace. A large *Hydrangea petiolaris* is growing against the revetment wall. Half way along, three steps lead down to the east terrace, the Rose Garden. The walk continues along its north side, with a large *Magnolia grandiflora* on the wall, which is lined with brick to the top of the buttresses (ground level). This is where there was a glasshouse in the nineteenth century.

The Rose Garden is bounded on the south and west by walls *c.* 2.5 m high and on the north and east by much higher revetment walls. These make it clear that this level was cut into the hillside. The terrace is laid out with a wide, octagonal, central flagstone paved area with a central octagonal arrangement of eight octagonal stone columns, their tops linked by iron chains. Two chains are missing. At the feet of the columns are small beds with raised stone edges, with climbing roses planted in them. Eight flagstone paths, with raised edges, radiate out from the centre, and between them are rose beds. Perimeter paths flanked by borders run round the outside. In the southern half of the garden are two pyramidally clipped large yews. Their unsymmetrical positions suggest that they predate the very symmetrical layout of the Rose Garden. In the south-west corner, built into the terrace walls, is a small open pavilion on a raised stone plinth. It is hybrid in style, with the front supported by classical columns, a pyramidal slate roof topped by a small ball finial, narrow gothic

windows and a blue-painted wooden bench around the back. From the outside the change in stonework makes it clear that the pavilion has been inserted into the walls.

On the south side a dressed stone Tudor doorway at the east end of the wall leads to a flight of stone steps to the sloping area below. An arched doorway at the north end of the west wall, with the wall stepped up over it, leads to an elaborate series of landings and steps, flanked by low parapets, which turns four right-angle bends before emerging in the north-east corner of the lowest terrace in the series, called the Blue Garden. This is a square terrace, simply laid out to a lawn. It is bounded on the east by a high buttressed revetment wall with a flagstone path at its foot. Next to the steps is a small, raised, rectangular pool built against the wall. On two sides its stone walls are topped by dressed and roll-moulded stone which is probably reused. On the south side is a parapet wall *c* 1.1 m high on top of a massive battered revetment wall. At the east end is a Tudor doorway with steps down to the path below. On the west side is a rubble stone wall *c*. 1.8 m high punctuated by higher square piers of coursed blocks, between which are wooden beams. There is an entrance gap at the north end with an old wisteria next to it. At the foot of the wall is a flower border. Along the north side of the terrace is a long, open-fronted loggia built against the revetment wall. It has a hipped stone slate roof supported in four octagonal stone columns, with two more attached to each end wall. In front is a flagstone path and two steps up to the floor level of the loggia.

The remainder of the gardens lies to the south and west of the terraces. On both sides the ground slopes down quite steeply; on the south to the sea and on the west to the valley.

To the south is a triangular slope, with its highest point in the north-east corner. It is bounded on the east by a high rubble stone wall with a dressed stone doorway, with blue-painted wooden door, at the top. This leads through into a small kitchen garden area. At the bottom a small two-storey stone pavilion is built into the wall, its front flush with it. It has a Tudor door and small rectangular window at ground level, with a diamond-paned window above and another door at first-floor level on the south side reached by a flight of steps and doorway through the south boundary wall of the garden. This is of rubble stone, *c*. 1.8 m high, and runs westwards as far as the foot of the terrace below the slope.

The north side is bounded by the great battered retaining wall at the foot of the terraces, with large fig trees planted against it. As the ground drops steeply so this rises in height to the south-west corner. Paths, with flights of stone steps at intervals, run down the slope at the foot of both walls. That leading southwards is of concrete, edged on the west by a low clipped yew hedge, and that to the west gravel. The slope is informally planted with ornamental trees and shrubs, including pine, holly and laurel and flowering cherries. Four large juniper bushes overhang the top wall. A raised terrace walk runs along the foot of the slope, bounded by rubble stone revetment walls, with no parapets, *c* 1.7 m high. Steps at the ends lead down to a triangular level lawn with two large beech trees on the west side a sundial in the middle. This was once called the Harp Garden, a term which may have extended to the slope above as well. The sundial has an octagonal base in two steps, an octagonal panelled column on a moulded base and an octagonal top with sides carved with stylised foliage.

The slope below the west side of the terraces is densely planted with trees and shrubs, with conifers dominant. A gravel path, with flights of steps at intervals, descends the slope north-westwards from the third terrace. Towards the north end it is

lined with alternating cypress and Irish yew. A long, curving flight of steps at the north end leads to the north end of the upper of two long terraces at the foot of the slope. To the north of the steps is a small pet cemetery, with low revetment walls at its back and front, and then the south wall of the churchyard, with a doorway through into it.

The terraces, both grassed, stretch the full length of the slope. The upper terrace is bounded on its east side by a low, ruinous, stone revetment wall and on the west by a rubble stone wall, *c.* 2 m high, with triangular coping. The wall has three rounded projections, two near the south end, one near the north. A short distance from the north end is a narrow arched opening with steps under it leading to the lower terrace. The wall is raised over it. A little way further south a cross wall with central arched opening, again with the wall raised over it, subdivides the terrace. The doorway has a hinge on its north side for a door.

The lower terrace is wider. Here, the flat-topped revetment wall on the lower side only projects *c.* 0.7 m. On its lower side it is *c.* 2.7 m high, with a few fruit trees growing against it. At the north end, against the churchyard wall, is a small, single-storey, stone building. It has a pitched slate roof, an arched doorway with wooden door at the east end and two small, narrow windows. In front is a flight of steps, flanked by a low wall, leading to an arched doorway in the terrace wall which gives access to the large, level grass area in the valley floor. At the south end of the terrace there are also steps down to the valley floor. The upper wall extends further south, stepping down at its end to a square pier topped by a water-worn limestone rock.

The valley floor at the foot of the terraces is a large rectangular grass area, running from the churchyard in the north to the Cavalry Barracks in the south. The only planting is three *Trachycarpus fortunei* in a row at the north end. The stream is canalised along the western side of the area, strongly suggesting that this is a designed feature and an integral part of the garden layout. There are remnants of a stone wall along the west side. The area is backed on the west by the wooded side of the valley. At the south end are two large horse chestnut trees.

The Cavalry Barracks should also be thought of as an integral part of the gardens. The court south of the main range of the barracks has a lawn in its northern half, divided by a low stone wall from a modern open-air swimming pool and covered pool in its southern. At its south end is a substantial, crenellated, stone sea wall with small towers at each end. In front of it is a raised terrace with concrete steps up to it. At the north end of the east side is a paved area with a modern barbeque. This is higher at its west end, with a curving stone path up to it and wide stone steps down from it at the north end. A flight of stone steps against the barracks leads up to a cobbled landing with a projecting platform leading off from its south side. This is rectangular, with a low, flat parapet, and gives a good view out over the court. A row of fig trees is growing in a raised bed against its south wall. A further flight of stone steps leads to an upper terrace along the east side of the court, above the high revetment wall (*c.* 5 m) that bounds it on this side. The terrace has a concrete path and a row of tall beech trees in grass. It is backed by a buttressed revetment wall *c.* 2.2 m high. Set in one of the buttresses is a worn ammonite fossil. Beyond the wall, which stops short of the south end of the court, is Barracks Wood. At the south end concrete steps descend to the court.

To the east of the terraces there are a few further garden areas. At the north end is a wide, slightly uneven grass slope. At its west end an underground stone culvert runs parallel with the garden wall. Below the lawn is a large levelled area occupied by hard tennis courts built by Hearst in the 1920s. Below them, opposite the

Rose Garden, is a small four-sided utilitarian enclosure backed by a high stone revetment wall. It is occupied by modern glasshouses, brick cold frames and lean-to stone sheds along the outside of the Rose Garden wall. A blue-painted door leads into the garden at the top of the triangular slope. In front of it is an area of cobbling. To the east is a yard.

These great gardens were originally built by Sir Edward Stradling (1529-1609) in the second half of the sixteenth century. Sir Edward was a renaissance man, a prominent courtier, well travelled, cultured and scholarly. His gardens are known to have included a rose garden, a herb garden and a vineyard. Sir John Stradling's poem about St Donat's Castle describes the walled and terraced gardens and another by Thomas Leyshon, dating to the late sixteenth century, indicated that they were sheltered, planted with flowering plants (some of which were tender) and vines: 'Neptune and Thetis the sea-goddess and other creatures of the underworld give up the deep to dwell in the garden (lines 83-85). It was Sir Edward who also built the sea wall at the head of the beach. The majority of the surviving garden layout and walling date from Sir Edward's time.

The earliest depiction of the gardens is an engraving of 1740 by Samuel and Nathaniel Buck. This shows the castle, the Watch Tower and the top terrace. It describes the gardens as 'Pleasant Gardens descending in Terrasses from ye Castle Wall to ye Severn Sea'. Next is a schematic plan of c. 1818, which shows three terraces, the orchard in the bottom of the valley and the long terraces above it, and the enclosure to the south of the Cavalry Barracks, labelled 'garden'. An early nineteenth-century oil painting of the castle from the north-west shows the west revetment wall of the terraces, with a bare slope below, and the ruined Cavalry Barracks are visible.

The 1843 tithe map shows the layout in more detail, with the main structure much as it is today. The main exception is the second and third terraces, which at that time were a single unit. The top terrace is shown as stopping short of the west retaining wall and the angled terraces at the foot of the triangular slope at the bottom of the main terraces are not shown. To the east, the small walled enclosure that now contains glasshouses is present. The slope to the west of the terraces is labelled 'Wood', as is the slope to the west and north-west of the castle. The valley floor, now a grass area, was an orchard, and is still shown as such on the 1877 25 in. Ordnance Survey map, which also shows the long terrace above it as planted with trees, probably fruit trees. This would explain the height of the wall at its back: it had to be high enough to grow fruit against.

The 1862 estate map shows all five main terraces south of the castle, the top terrace extended to the west wall, with steps down the west side. A small building is shown in the middle of the south end wall of the terraces and the pavilion to the west of the castle is shown. The diagonal terraces below are not yet made. The map also shows the terrace along the east side of the Barracks garden.

The 1877 map shows further changes that took place between 1862 and 1877 and were thus the work of Dr Nicholl-Carne. In 1877 the top terrace, with perimeter and central paths, was bounded by a scarp on the south side. This was replaced by the present wall between 1897 and 1914 (2nd and 3rd editions of Ordnance Survey maps), and was therefore the work of Morgan Stuart Williams. By 1877 the next terrace has been divided in two. The second terrace has a fountain in the middle and the third, now the Tudor Garden, is laid out informally, with curving paths and informal planting. On the 1897 map (2nd edition) the paths are not shown. The flights of steps between these terraces feature in a drawing of the castle (no. X), dated 1871, by G.T.

Clark. The steps and path down the slope to the west are also shown, with the slope only lightly wooded. Another drawing (no. XI), showing the ruined barracks, appears to show the terraces completely tree-covered.

On the 1877 map the Rose Garden has a glasshouse against its north wall and a curving path across it. The pavilion is not yet in existence at this time, but the buildings against the outer side of the east wall are. The pavilion is first shown on the 1914 Ordnance Survey map and was therefore built by Morgan Stuart Williams between 1901 and 1909. During this period five glasshouses were also built in the yard to the east. In 1877 the Blue Garden has a glasshouse where the loggia now stands. To the east of the terraces is a strip of ornamental woodland, the northward extension of Barracks Wood, now gone. The layout of the slope to the south of the terraces is now the same as today, except that a path crosses the lawn to a fountain with a circular pool instead of the present sundial. The slope and terraces to the west are shown as they are now, except that the lower terrace is planted with trees, and the north end of its lower wall appears to be derelict. The valley floor below is an orchard. The Cavalry Barracks are shown ruined, but the projecting platform and terrace on the east side are present. On the south side of the court there is no raised terrace, nor corner towers, but only a wall and single central small building, perhaps a tower. Photographs of the sea wall, dating to *c.* 1901, show a rubble stone wall with ragged top and now crenellations or turrets. The little pavilion on the west side of the castle is probably at least eighteenth-century in origin, as it, or a very similar one, is shown on the engraving of the castle by the Buck brothers of 1740. However, a drawing of 1828 by Jeston Homfray appears to show only the stump of one, implying that the original was ruined and rebuilt between this date and 1907, when it is shown in its present form in a *Country Life* photograph. A building is shown in this position on the 1862 estate map.

Morgan Stuart Williams made further alterations between 1901 and 1909. The most important was the making of the Tudor Garden, with its central seat and kings' beasts. The quarters were laid out with elaborate compartments of formal beds. The yew hedge was added in the early 1920s and the present layout is much simplified. *Country Life* photographs of 1907 show that the terraces were shaggier than at present, the walls overgrown with ivy and the planting much looser. They also show that at that time some of the paths, at least, were gravelled, not stone paved, as now. The paving must have been done during the 1920s. The pavilion overlooking the Tudor and Rose Gardens was not in existence; in its place were steps between the terraces. As the pavilion is shown on the 1914 Ordnance Survey map its probable date is 1907-09, made by Morgan Stuart Williams.

An aerial photograph of *c.* 1926 shows the changes made by Hearst in the 1920s: a yew hedge has been planted around the Tudor Garden, the Rose Garden laid out and the loggia in the Blue Garden built. Also, the large area of tennis courts to the east has been constructed. In the Cavalry Barracks court, converted by Morgan Stuart Williams to tennis courts, Hearst built a swimming pool. This was replaced by the present one in 1981.

The walled kitchen garden lies in the Llys Weirydd valley, to the north of the castle. The part of the valley it is situated in is called Perllan (orchard) yr Afal, indicating that the garden has an orchard as its origin. It is shown as such on the 1843 tithe map.

The garden is a long, rectangular area, bounded on the west by a wall *c.* 4 m high, heavily overgrown with ivy in places, and with serious cracks and a hole

towards the south end. On the south side the garden is bounded by a steep bank down to the valley bottom. The south end of the garden is planted with rows of fruit trees, including some recently planted plums. A central north-south path is flanked by some old trees and a row of three piers on its west and the base of another on its east. Further broken pieces of pier are scattered down the slope bounding the garden. The stone piers are *c.* 2.2 m high and consist of slightly tapering round columns on rectangular panelled bases, with flat square tops. Climbing roses growing next to them suggest that originally there were arches between them to support climbers. A small modern glasshouse on a brick base is situated nearby and there are some small gardened plots.

The remainder of the garden is grassed over, with a few recently planted fruit trees. The north side is bounded by a whitewashed stone wall *c.* 4 m high with a derelict glasshouse, dating to the 1920s or 1930s, running the full length of it. This stands on a low stone wall with brick infilling at intervals suggesting former vine holes. The superstructure, now without its glazing, is a curving iron framework. A concrete paved path runs along the foot of the outer wall and at the east end are boiler pipes. The glasshouse remains in productive use. To its east is a raised area with single-storey bothies, the lower parts stone, the upper glazed and wooden framed, with corrugated iron roofs. The east side of the garden has no wall but is bounded by a low scarp, above which is a disused track running the length of the gardens and giving access to the garden from the drive.

The origin of the garden is as an orchard and it has continued partly to be used as such to this day. The 1862 estate map shows the area as open, with no buildings, and marked 'gardens' in pencil. By 1877 it had become a kitchen garden, the 25 in. Ordnance Survey map showing it divided into many compartments by crossing paths, still without glasshouses. Plans for proposed glasshouses by Messenger & Co. Loughborough, James Crispin & Sons, Bristol, and Skinner, Board & Co., Bristol, date to 1914-16. During the 1920s and 1930s the garden was in productive use as a kitchen garden, with a large glasshouse. Since that time it has largely fallen into disuse.

Sources

Primary

Plan of St Donat's estate showing tenants' lands, *c.* 1818: Glamorgan Record Office, D/D MS 13.

Photographs of an early nineteenth-century oil painting (artist unknown) in private collection: Glamorgan Record Office, D/D Cr F/49/1-4.

St Donat's tithe map and schedule (1843).

Plan of 'St Donat's estate, property of J.W. N. Carne 1862, surveyor Wm J. Rees': Glamorgan Record Office, D/D AbD.

Photographs of St Donat's sea wall, *c.* 1901: Glamorgan Record Office, D/D AbD 16, 1-4.

Proposals for glasshouses, 1914-16: Glamorgan Record Office, D/D AbD.

'New gardens at St Donat's', n.d.: Glamorgan Record Office, D/D AbD.

'Plan of proposed road diversion', n.d.: Glamorgan Record Office, D/D AbD.

Secondary

Grose, F., *The Antiquities of England and Wales* (1786).
Homfray, J., *The castles of the Lordship of Glamorgan* (1828).
Clark, G.T., *Thirteen views of the castle of St Donat's* (1871).
'St Donats Castle, Glamorganshire', *Country Life*, 24 August 1907, pp. 270-79.
Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales, *Inventory of the Ancient Monuments in Glamorgan*, IV (1981), p. 351.
Davies, C., *Latin writers of the Renaissance* (1981).
The story of St Donat's Castle and Atlantic College, ed. by R. Denning (1983).
Newman, J., *The buildings of Wales. Glamorgan* (1995), pp. 552-57.
Whittle, E., 'The Tudor gardens of St Donat's Castle, Glamorgan, south Wales', *Garden History* 27.1 (1999), pp. 109-26.