

CADW/ICOMOS REGISTER OF LANDSCAPES, PARKS AND GARDENS
OF SPECIAL HISTORIC INTEREST IN WALES

REGISTER ENTRY

PENARTH, WINDSOR GARDENS

Ref number	PGW (Gm) 36 (GLA)
OS Map	171
Grid ref	ST 187 712
Former county	South Glamorgan
Unitary authority	The Vale of Glamorgan
Community council	Penarth
Designations	Conservation Area: Penarth
Site evaluation	Grade II

Primary reasons for grading A well preserved late Victorian public park laid out not only for the benefit of the general public but also of the villas that were built adjoining it, all of which originally had private access to the gardens. The park is in a magnificent position on the cliff top and has remained substantially unaltered.

Type of site Public urban park

Main phases of construction 1880-85

Site description

Windsor Gardens occupies a long narrow strip of land at the top of the cliff above the Esplanade on the sea front of Penarth. From it there are extensive views out to sea. Except at the south end it is backed by the gardens of grand seaside villas on Bridgeman Road and Marine Parade. These date to the 1880s, 1890s and 1900s and all have, or had, private pedestrian entrances into the Gardens, for the privilege of which the owners paid half a guinea. Many of the grander gardens on these roads were designed by a local landscape gardener, Charles Jones. At the south end the houses are more recent, and the grandest villa, Holme Tower (1901) has been demolished and replaced by a modern building.

The Gardens date to the 1880s, the northern half being completed first, in 1880 and the southern half in 1885. The land was Lord Windsor's and it was his agent, Robert Forrest and architect, Henry Snell, who designed the gardens. The lodge at the lower end of Bridgeman Road was the home of the garden superintendent, who collected the entry money of one penny. It later became the Piermaster's house. The northern half of the gardens extended southwards to a dingle in which was a path

down to the Lifeboat Station, and this was retained, with a puzzle gate into the dingle. It was laid out with a central drive and parallel path along the west boundary, with cross paths dividing the garden into four sections, at the centre of one of which is the bandstand. Planting appears to have been a mixture of the existing trees and shrubs, particularly hawthorn, gorse and broom, and newly planted ones. Some of the holm oaks and yews in the gardens may date to the 1880s. One of a pair of Monterey cypresses (*Cupressus macrocarpa*) survives from this period.

The southern half of the gardens, opened in 1885, had a similar layout but were more exposed. It followed the construction below it of Cliff Hill Road, which was cut out of the cliff in 1880. This enabled the esplanade to be extended southwards and provided a circular route for carriages. The south lodge was built soon after the garden opened. The western boundary was probably similar to that in the northern part of the gardens, but has now been altered. Before the south garden opened a wooden bridge had been thrown across the deep cutting at the seaward end of the dingle separating the two halves of the gardens. This was replaced a few years later by a cast iron bridge designed by Henry Snell but this in turn was removed in 1937.

The gardens remained part of the Windsor estate until 1932, when they were handed over to the Urban District Council. Interestingly, one of the conditions was that trees and shrubs be kept trimmed in order not to obstruct the sea view from the villas adjacent to the gardens. They were also to be allowed to keep their private gates. During the 1930s it appears that plants were removed for ease of maintenance and that the gardens took on a more open appearance. In 1933 steep steps down from the north garden to the beach shelter on the esplanade were built. They fell into disrepair after the Second World War and were replaced in 1977. Since the 1930s parts of the path system have been simplified and some mature trees on the cliff below the south garden have been removed.

The entrance on Bridgeman Road, at the north end, is through simple wooden gates flanked by brick piers. A two-storey red brick lodge, now a private home, stands to the east. A wide tarmac path runs the full length of the gardens, which are laid out largely to lawn with island beds and borders. At the north end a low *Lonicera nitida* hedge backed by iron railings runs along the west boundary. Mixed trees, including oak, ilex (holm oak) and copper beech, and shrubs are planted along the east side, which is bounded by a simple iron fence and an ilex hedge. A flight of steps leads down the cliff to the esplanade. Further south the path divides, with a central lawn in which there is a bandstand. This is octagonal, with a brick base and a gently pitched roof supported on iron columns. It has an entrance on the west side and a stone paved floor.

South of the bandstand the paths join again and there is a wide shrub border along the west side. The gardens are divided into two halves by a public path running east-west from Marine Parade to the Esplanade, with pedestrian gates from both halves to this path. It is here that there was a bridge, linking the two halves of the gardens, and a puzzle gate. Only the southern footings of the bridge remain.

The southern half of the gardens is laid out and planted in the same style as the north. At its north end the path is revetted with a low dry-stone wall on the west side. A narrow stone-edged path in an ilex grove leads off westwards to a gate into a villa garden. The wide path runs along the east side of the garden with a lawn backed by a wide shrub border to the west. On the east is a short row of yews and then a single tall Monterey cypress (*Cupressus macrocarpa*). Beyond this a low hedge and iron fence run along the east boundary on top of the cliff, giving fine views out to sea. The iron

fence is original and was supplied by D. Evans & Co. of Llandaff. Towards the south end the gardens are bounded on the west by a privet hedge with modern houses behind it. Until the Second World War this section of the gardens was overlooked by a single villa, Dros-y-mor. The present concrete wall on the garden boundary replaced the original stone wall topped with iron railings.

At the south end are similar entrance gates and piers to those at the north end, with flanking low curving red brick walls. Just inside, on the west side, is a small two-storey red brick lodge, with a side gate leading to it. The lodge garden is separated from the public garden by a low looped iron fence. Opposite is a triangular island bed set in the lawn to the east of the path, with a weeping ash on the south boundary.

Sources

Primary

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Map of Windsor land in Penarth, 1820-40. Glamorgan Record Office: D/D Pl 7/3536.

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