

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

LISTED BUILDING	Penrice Castle (Mansion), Penrice, Swansea
Grade:-	I
Date of Notification:-	06.09.52 amended 29.10.99
National Grid Reference:-	SS 4967088382
O.S. 1:10,000 Sheet No.:-	SS 48 NE
CADW Reference No.:-	11531
C & C of S Reference No.:-	LB:023

Notes:-

Location:-

100m south of Penrice Castle Ancient Monument, reached by a private drive from the A4118.

History:-

Built in 1773-7 for Thomas Mansell Talbot, to the design of Anthony Keck, architect, of King's Stanley, Gloucestershire. Keck had a thriving practice mainly in the Welsh Marches, producing houses with plain exteriors and with interior designs in the Adam tradition. Records refer to Bath stone and stone brought from the quarries at Margam. The masonry is by William Gubbings and the plasterwork by Thomas Keyte. Two chimney pieces acquired by Talbot while travelling in Italy were installed in 1780. That in the Drawing Room is signed 'Cesere Aguatti Romano', that in the Dining Room is by Carlo Albacini, with gilt bronze garlands by Louis Valadier. The planning of the house is based on a spine corridor which is apparent at basement level and on the upper floors, but not on the ground floor where the entrance axis, with vestibule and drawing room, dominates instead. The staircase has been relegated to a minor position. There are similarities with the planning of the more ambitious house for John Symmons at Slebech Park, Pembrokeshire, the design of which is also credited to Keck. The house was considerably extended in the C19, but the extensions were demolished in 1967-8.

Exterior:-

A house of three storeys in fine ashlar masonry, plus an attic in the roof and a basement. The house faces north to level ground, but at the rear the land falls sharply and there the basement is fenestrated as an additional storey beneath plinth level. The roof is of slate and lead, behind a low parapet. The chimneys are in two transverse pairs of brick stacks. The front is of five windows with the central three grouped in a slightly projecting pedimented bay. The plinth, a string course at first floor level and the cornice are all continued around the house. At the centre there is a small Roman Doric porch of two columns, with pilasters and a pediment. Two pedimented dormer windows. Sash windows throughout with concealed frames and in diminishing tiers. The ground-storey window to the right is blind. Those to the ground and first storey are hornless sash-windows of twelve panes; the second floor has similar windows of six panes, except at left where the opening contains two sash windows of four and four panes with a mullion. The basement is lit by a narrow semi covered area. The south (rear) elevation is also of five windows, with the central

three grouped in a bold semi circular bay. The ground storey windows to south and west have top sashes of four panes plus margins, and bottom sashes of a single pane plus margins. Both end elevations are of three windows. The basement windows to the south have cambered heads, and are of six panes. The west elevation includes two original blind basement windows; the central blind basement window is recent. The service wing to the east is of two storeys at front, in line with the main elevation. The plinth and string course of the main house are continued around it, and it has its own cornice similar to that of the main house. Three windows, the right and middle bays being part of the original design; the left bay was added to make good after the demolition of the 1960s. nine-pane hornless sash windows to the first storey, twelve pane to the ground storey. Security bars to the front. At rear this wing has a large basement porch with two Tuscan columns supporting a balcony with stone balusters. The windows and door overlooking the balcony are round-headed with margin panes to the sashes and keyed architraves.

Interior:-

The ground storey is entered by a vestibule. Mahogany double external doors, each of three panels. Flanking windows with shutters. A fireplace and symmetrical doors to the left, a door ahead to the drawing room, and a door to the right into the dining room. These doors and the fireplace have friezes with paterae in square headed frames alternating with blocks of fluting. The door cornices are also finely fluted. The windows in the bow of the drawing room have original drop cresting for curtains. The joinery is formed on the curve. The doors to the vestibule at north and to the dining room at west have fielded panels set in rectangular frames of fluting with corner paterae and scallop edging; guilloche architrave; frieze decorated in low relief with candelabra and anthemion; fluting, scallops and bay leaves to the cornice, urns at ends; pilasters with scallops and caps with palm leaves. The same design of candelabra and anthemion as on the frieze is used as beneath the cornice of the wall. Moulded dado. This room sets the decorative Adamesque theme followed with less elaboration throughout the rest of the main rooms of the house. The drawing room fireplace is Italian, very ornate with a Bacchus or Orpheus on a floral mosaic frieze with leopards. The dining room doors have moulded and fluted architraves with fluted paterae, plain pilasters carrying enriched brackets, a frieze with low relief anthemion and vessels, flanked by urns, and a fluted cornice. White marble fireplace also of Italian workmanship, with scrolled brackets, elliptical centre medallion with Venus and Cupid; a bronze garland extends over the medallion and the flanking parts of the frieze. The ceiling frieze has similar anthemion and vessels. The study, south of the stair-hall, has a fireplace with a low relief of alternating acanthus and anthemion, flanked by urns over enriched pilasters. The main staircase to the east side of the house rises in two flights with quarter landings, opening into the spine corridor in the floor storey. Moulded mahogany handrail on three plain balusters per tread, fluted newels of column form, oak treads with scrolled brackets on a moulded string. The sitting room on the first floor has a fireplace with a low relief frieze of anthemion flanked by urns. Highly enriched cornice. Similar ceiling frieze.

Listed:-

Listed at Grade I as a regionally important house with outstanding interiors.

Reference:-

H Colvin, Biographical Dictionary of British Architects (1995)

S Lewis, Topographical Dictionary (1833), 'Penrice'

J Newman, Glamorgan (Buildings of Wales, 1995) pp. 508-9

RCAHM Inventory of Ancient Monuments in Glamorgan. Vol IV pt. 1. The Greater Houses (1981) pp 293-303.

NMR File Domestic SS48NE