

Nostalgia

Looking back at Pembrokeshire
of yesteryear

Send your tales of life in the county to Western Telegraph, Western Tangles, Fishguard Road, Haverfordwest, SA62 4BU

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Just traces of long-gone glory



The Steward's Tower is the most complete part of the ruins
PICTURE: Western Telegraph

LOCATED to the south of Haverfordwest on a slope rising from Merlins Brook, Haroldston Ruins is what remains of the ancestral home and probable birthplace of one of the county town's most famous sons, Sir John Perrot.

Currently owned by the Gild of Freemen of Haverfordwest, the five acre site surrounding the 13th century scheduled ancient monument and Grade II Listed ruins could be yours at the "agricultural value" of £30,000.

For many years, the site has been used for grazing sheep. And what was once one of Pembrokeshire's grandest residences has continued to collapse.

All that is left is part of a stone entrance structure, an L-shaped raised walk, a three-quarters-ruined Steward's Tower, a mostly intact vaulted undercroft and sections of wall that appear to be held up by nothing more than thick swathes of ivy. A recent photogrammetric survey of the site revealed the unmistakable skeleton of formal Tudor gardens, now completely hidden beneath the pasture.

Still, it's an intriguing place to visit, although you approach the ruins at your own risk. Like most long-settled sites, it has an indescribable feeling of substance, belied by its ruinous state.

Broken bottles and squashed cans are littered

about, giving a clue to Haroldston Hall's current use as a secret drinking spot and probable bolt-hole for love-struck teens seeking a bit of privacy.

Given the site's historic significance, it seems odd nothing has been done to arrest its decay. During my visit, a group of baffled tourists asked me what the ruins were, and I gave them the little information I knew.

"There aren't any signs anywhere," said one gentleman. "It's weird. This place must have been quite something in its day."

He had a good point. From the mid-15th century until the late 17th, Haroldston was the home of the Perrots, a powerful and influ-

ential family that spawned Sir John. Mayor of Haverfordwest, MP, high sheriff of Pembrokeshire, vice-admiral for West Wales, lord president of Munster and one of the wealthiest subjects of the Crown, John was known for his aggressive manner, uncontrollable temper and great physical strength.

He was also rumoured to be the illegitimate son of Henry VIII, to whom he bore a remarkable resemblance in both appearance and temperament.

Whatever he was, Sir John loved Haverfordwest. If he knew his family home had been left to rot, and - possibly worse - to rot in obscurity, I dread to think of his rage.



This arch leads to the undercroft, which has yet to cave in
PICTURE: Western Telegraph



Who will buy the historic site? PICTURE: Western Telegraph



Trees grow from the ruined walls of the once-great residence