
An overlooked gem in Llandaff, Cardiff: Rookwood Hospital history and heritage significance

Uma joia perdida em Llandaff, Cardiff: história e importância patrimonial do complexo Rookwood Hospital

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to register for the academic community the uncertain future of the historic site of the former family home, then rehabilitation house - Rookwood Hospital. The Rookwood Estate comprises a complex of buildings arranged in a 26 acres' site, Grade II listed land located on Fairwater Rd, Llandaff, Cardiff. The buildings date from the 19th century to prefabricated wooden buildings from the 20th century. In addition, the Hospital Gardens are a CADW Register of Landscape Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales Grade II. The methodology consisted of a detailed desktop research and literature review in scientific databases, followed by documental research in the archives and repository of Glamorgan, in search of maps, drawing plans and photographs. Then, site visits were carried out to record the state of the buildings. All of these steps provided the basis for this article, which includes a historical appraisal, a study of the morphology of the complex and a visual record and description. Finally, considering its rich and complex history, this article aims to give visibility and raise awareness about the importance of Rookwood Hospital to the community of Llandaff.

Keywords: Rookwood Hospital; Welsh Heritage; Llandaff; Heritage significance

RESUMO

O objetivo deste artigo é registrar para a comunidade acadêmica sobre o futuro incerto do sítio histórico da antiga casa de família, então casa de reabilitação - Rookwood Hospital. A propriedade de Rookwood é formada por um complexo de edifícios dispostos em um terreno de 26 acres, classificado como grau II, localizado em Fairwater Rd, Llandaff, Cardiff. Estas construções datam do século XIX, até edifícios pré-fabricados de madeira do século XX. Além disso, os jardins do Hospital são um Registro CADW de Parques Paisagísticos e Jardins de Interesse Histórico e Especial no País de Gales Grau II. A metodologia consistiu numa detalhada pesquisa e revisão de literatura em bases de dados científicas, seguida de pesquisa documental nos arquivos e repositório de Glamorgan, em busca de mapas, desenhos técnicos e fotografias. Em seguida, foram realizadas visitas ao local para documentar fotograficamente o estado dos edifícios. Todas essas etapas fundamentaram este artigo que conta com uma apreciação histórica, um estudo da morfologia do conjunto, registo visual e descrição dos seus edifícios. Finalmente, considerando a sua rica e complexa história, este texto pretende dar visibilidade e sensibilizar a comunidade de Llandaff sobre a importância do Rookwood Hospital.

Palavras-chave: Hospital Rookwood; Herança galesa; Llandaff; importância do patrimônio

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INTRODUCTION

Rookwood Hospital has had a varied meaning to the community of Llandaff, as a regional neurorehabilitation and geriatric day hospital, an intermediate care facility and medicine rehabilitation ward. Also, it is one of only twelve spinal rehab units in the United Kingdom, and the Cardiff's Parkinson's Disease services is based at Rookwood Hospital too (RADIO CARDIFF, 2018). Thus, the hospital is an important part of Cardiff's Health services.

Rookwood Hospital Grounds is arranged in a 26 acres' site, grade II listed, located in Fairwater Rd, Llandaff, Cardiff. The buildings are mainly formed by a Gothic Summer House, a Victorian main house, a Lodge and 8 wards. These constructions date from the early 19th century, to wooden prefabricated buildings from the 20th century. In addition, the gardens of the Hospital are a CADW² Register of Landscapes Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales Grade II (PARKS AND GARDENS, 2016), as the ornamental garden includes many specimen and historical trees.

From 2015 to 2017, it was claimed that plans for investments in new facilities to replace Rookwood rehabilitation hospital were in discussion by the Welsh Government and Cardiff and Vale University Health Board. However, after celebrating its 100-year anniversary, the closure of the site, which has been described by the Health Board as “outdated and no longer fit for purpose”, was planned to cease in 2020 (BBC, 2015; SMITH, 2015; SMITH, 2018; WALESONLINE, 2010). For this reason, this article is concerned about the uncertain future of the historic site of Rookwood Hospital. Considering its rich and intricate layers of history, different and adaptations of usage, from a private house, to a rehabilitation hospital, this text aims to give visibility and intends to raise awareness about the importance of the complex of buildings to the community of Llandaff, its heritage significance and to record the condition of the structures.

First, to consider and discuss about Rookwood history and heritage significance, since Rookwood is located in an important historic setting, its Main Building, Summerhouse and Underground Vaulted Chamber grade II listed in 1975, and its former Lodge grade II listed in 1998 (CADW, 2017). A historic appraisal and morphology study helped to achieve this purpose and to briefly illustrate its present state of conservation and recommend further investigation.

In terms of methods of research, a thorough desktop research and literature review were conducted in scientific databases, followed by documental research in the repository of Glamorgan archives, in search of maps, drawing plans and old photographs. Then, site visits

² CADW is the Welsh historic environment organization. The word **CADW** (emphasis added) is Welsh for keeping, preserving. Amongst many other historic assets Cadw manages and protects four World Heritage Sites in Wales: The Castles (*Beaumaris, Caernarfon, Conwy and Harlech*) and Town Walls of King Edward in *Gwynedd*, the *Pontcysyllte* Aqueduct, the Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales, and the *Blaenavon* Industrial Landscape (CADW, 2022).

assisted in recording the state of the buildings. All of these cited steps provided the basis for this article, which includes a historical appraisal, a study of the morphology of the complex and a visual record of Rookwood Hospital grounds.

The Historical Appraisal and the morphology study comprise the historic background of Rookwood Estate, from a family home to a hospital, then, the study of the morphology of the buildings, identifying and describing feasible additions and modifications to its historic structure and considering this fact to be related to its heritage significance, due to the changes of use occurred in the buildings. This part will include a comparison between recent and old maps and photographs to reveal the background of the building at present time, and key changes in its history. The second part is a visual record and description of its structures. This section includes site plans, aerial views, photographs, among other drawings that aided to understand and describe the architectural style and condition of the constructions.

Finally, a brief Condition Survey, where it will contain a short and factual summary of the general condition recognizing areas of concern regarding needs of repair and maintenance, the key idea is to analyze if it is in poor state of repair and if so, prove that Rookwood exhibits a reason for intervention. For instance, the Summerhouse is a grade II listed building, but it is in a dilapidated state and is covered with fences and has been subject to decay since 1960 (Llandaff Society, 1995).

HISTORICAL APPRAISAL

Rookwood main building was built in 1866 by the Colonel Sir Edward Stock Hill, as a private house for his family (Fig. 01). Sir Edward was responsible for shipbuilding trades in Cardiff and Bristol, was a High Sheriff for the County of Glamorgan and member of the Parliament for the South District of Bristol (Llandaff Society, 1996). He died in 1902, but his wife, Lady Hill, lived at Rookwood House until 1917 (Cardiff & Vale NHS Trust, 2017).

Figure 1 – From left to right, Colonel Sir Edward Stock Hill, Lady Hill, and family at Rookwood House, late 1800s.



Source: Llandaff Society (1996).

According to records at Glamorgan Archives, Peters (2018)³ writes that the house “was one of the better examples of the grand mansions erected by families that had prospered from the economic boom in South Wales in the latter half of the 19th century”. In terms of architectural style, Rookwood house was of English Gothic design. Peters (2018) adds that an important architect contributed in 1881 - “Mr. John Prichard well-known as the Architect employed in the restoration of Llandaff Cathedral and the erection of many important Gothic Houses in the locality”. It is believed that the origin of the name **Rookwood** (emphasis added) was given by Lady Hill. She visited the premises during its construction where she saw plenty of rooks flying in the air, so it is said that she decided that **Rookwood** (emphasis added), should be the name. (Cardiff & Vale NHS Trust, 2017).

From the 20th century onwards, Rookwood became a rehabilitation hospital (Fig. 02) arranged in a 26 acres’ site, grade II listed located in Fairwater Rd, Llandaff, Cardiff, mainly formed by a Gothic Summer House (1), a Victorian main house (2), a Lodge (3) and 8 wards (4). These constructions have a great variety of architectural styles in the same location - from the Gothic style of the 18th century, to the Victorian style from the 19th century, to wooden prefabricated buildings from the 20th century, respectively (CADW, 2003a; 2003b).

Figure 2 – Contemporary Ordnance Survey map of Rookwood Hospital and its buildings



Source: Digimaps (2017, edited by the author).

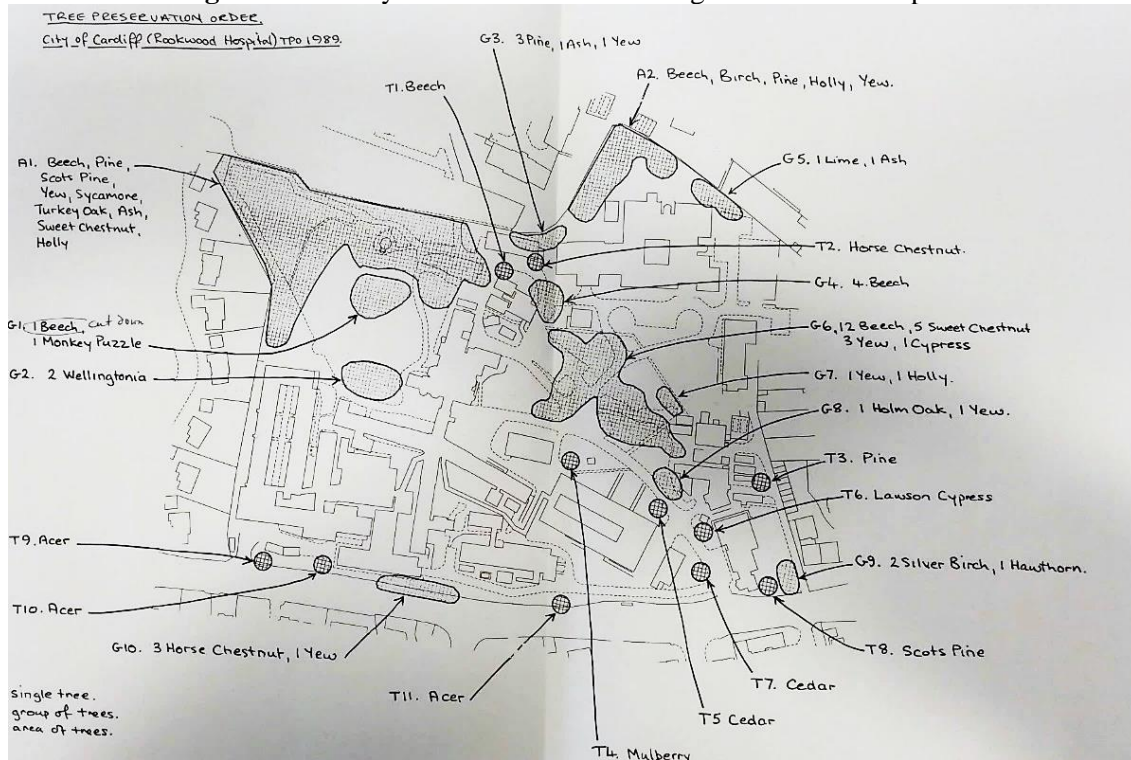
The gardens of Rookwood Hospital are a CADW Register of Landscapes Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales Grade II⁴(Parks and Gardens, 2016). The ornamental garden includes many specimen trees, such as Camellia, Rhododendron, Azalea, and

³ The records of Stephenson and Alexander, Auctioneers and Chartered Surveyors of High Street, Cardiff at Glamorgan Archives.

⁴ Cadw Parks and Gardens Register text description of Rookwood Hospital Garden, Register Number PGW(GM)028(CDF). Available at: <https://coflein.gov.uk/media/16/275/cpg216.pdf> Accessed in: 02 January 2023.

Japanese Maples in its extensive grounds (Fig.03) (LIVING MAGAZINE CARDIFF, 2015). There are two larger trees (Figs. 04 and 05), which are a special attraction, and it is believed that it was planted to mark the birth of Sir Edward and Lady Hill’s sons.

Figure 3 – Survey of the trees found in the gardens of the Hospital.



Source: (Glamorgan Archives, 1989).

Figures 4 and 5 – Southeast view (on the left) of the Main building with the trees (right side, a zoomed view) that symbolize Sir Edward and Lady Hill’s sons.



Source: Author’s own (2017).

In 1918, Rookwood was borrowed for use as a hospital. It was the Ministry of Pensions Hospital for South Wales and was securing ex-service men from the First and the Second World war, as a supplementary hospital supervised by the British Red Cross Society. It became known as Rookwood Officer’s Hospital (Davies, 1959) (Figs. 06 and 07, p.06).

Figures 6 and 7 – Left, Rookwood Hospital Staff during the Second World War. Right, Hospital’s Occupational Therapy Workshop, demolished in the 1950s.



Source: (Llandaff Society, 1996).

After the war, it was bought by Sir Lawrence Phillips, MP, and presented to the nation as **Paraplegic Home or Hospital for disabled naval and military Pensioners** (emphasis added), a home for wounded ex-servicemen, and afterwards, for the use of the University of Wales (CADW, 2000; Llandaff Society, 1996). In 1953, the Ministry of Health endorsed it, and built extensions to change it to a general hospital (Fig. 08) (ibid).

Figure 8 – On the wards celebrating the Coronation, 2nd of June 1953.



Source: Llandaff Society (1996).

Currently, the future of the hospital is uncertain. According to the project, its neurological and spinal rehabilitation facilities will be moved to the University Hospital *Llandough*, and a series of other changes will occur (SMITH, 2018). The question that remains is if there is any plan to the historic site of Rookwood Hospital as organizers from the Cardiff and Vale Health Board stated that the location and its current facilities are old and inappropriate, therefore, modern, and advanced care is needed (SMITH, 2015). According to the words of the First Minister of Wales, he recognizes the importance of the Hospital:

Rookwood hospital has played a vital role in delivering rehabilitation services over many decades. From the soldiers returning from conflict during the Second World War to the patients there today, generations of people from across Wales have relied on Rookwood's hardworking and dedicated staff to

help them recover from often life-changing injuries. I'm very pleased to be able to approve initial plans for a £16.3m investment that will allow the re-location of these services to modern facilities, realizing the ambition of delivering a truly modernized and patient centered service. – Carwyn Jones, First Minister of Wales (SMITH, 2015, online).

In spite of everything, little is known about the future of the old premises.

THE RELATION BETWEEN ITS SIGNIFICANCE AND MORPHOLOGY OVER TIME

In the late 18th century, the land that today is Rookwood Hospital, belonged to the Estate of Thomas Edwards of Llandaff House. Figure 9 is a map from 1869, the small building above Rookwood house is the summer house, which is believed to be built in 1776 (Llandaff Society, 1995).

Figure 9 – Map of Llandaff from the District Plan of Cardiff & Penarth, 1869.



Source: Waldron (1989).

In the 19th century, the property was sold to Col. Sir Edward Stock Hill, who built his house in 1866. A report on (Llandaff Society, 1995, p.03) proves this fact “new houses have been erected in Llandaff within the last three years [...] One of them by my friend Edward Stock Hill, near the old Summer House where Dean *Conybeare* wrote his sermons, which with the Rookery now form part of the grounds of Rookwood House”. When built, Rookwood was a large Victorian residence (Figs.10) situated in wide meadows and surrounded by pine trees (DAVIES, 1959).

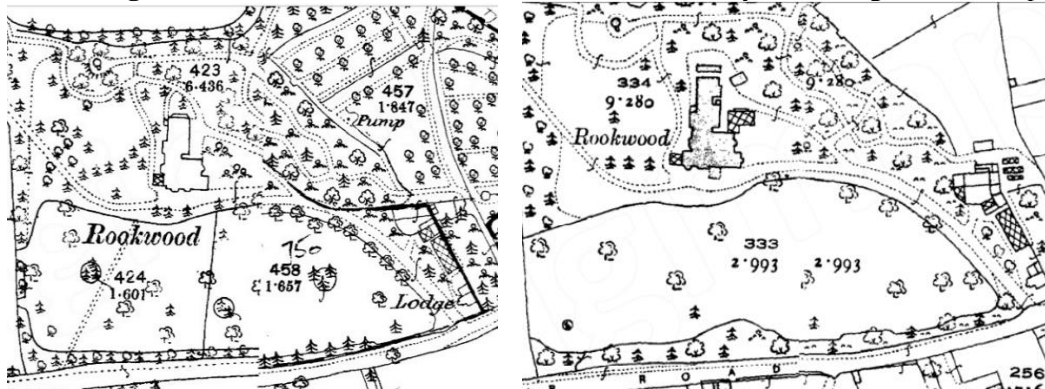
Figures 10 and 11 – On the left, Rookwood House in the 1880s. Right side, black arrow points Camellia House and Porte Cochere on the left side, now it is used as an aisle to the wards.



Source: Fig. 10, (LLANDAFFSOCIETY, 1996); Fig. 11, (Author's own, 2017).

Rookwood was extended in 1881, by John Prichard, the major architect throughout the Victorian restoration and, the one responsible for the restoration of *Llandaff* Cathedral (Waldron, 1989). Extensions were a Porte Cochere, a Lodge (Fig.14, p.08) and The Camellia House, extending the eastern part of the historic structure of the main house (PETERS, 2018). Camellia house was built of teak with panels of mosaic and originally had a glazed roof (Fig. 10). Figures 12 and 13 on the next page, depict changes occurred from 1880 to 1900:

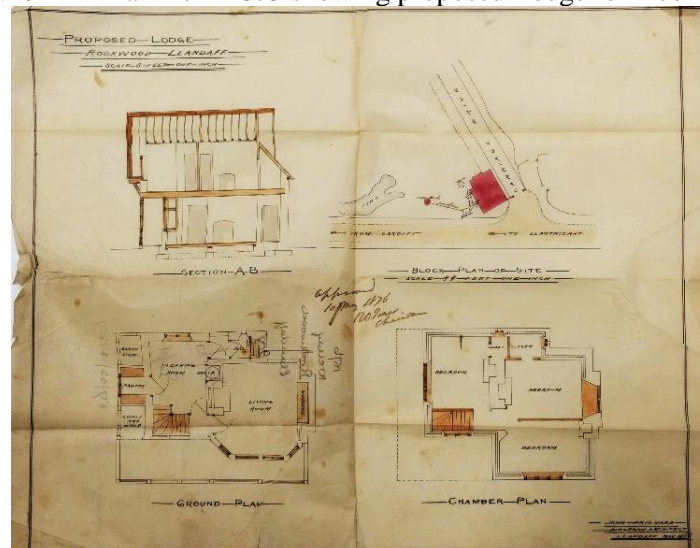
Figures 12 and 13 – on the left, 1880 Ordnance Survey, on the right, 1900 Map.



Source: (Historic Digimaps, 2017).

The Figure below shows original drawing plan from 1875:

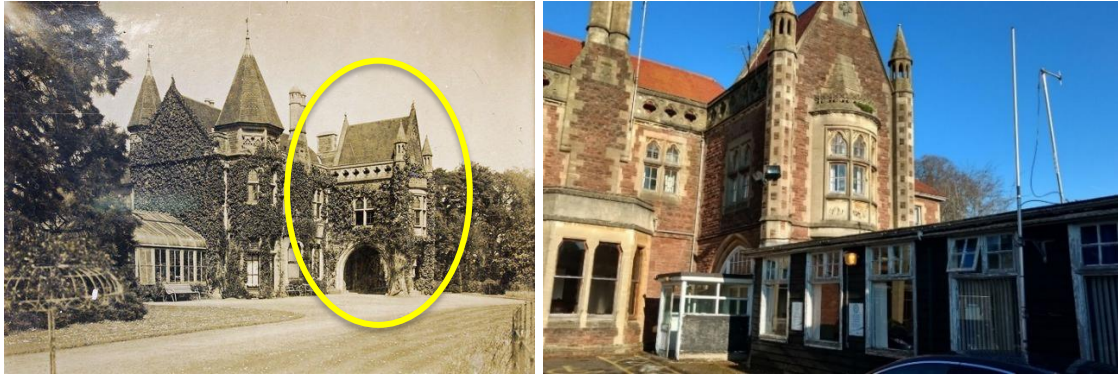
Figure 14 – Plan from 1875 showing proposed Lodge for Rookwood.



Source: (Glamorgan Archives, 1875).

In the 20th century, after the First World War, initially, the main house was meeting the demands of an auxiliary hospital. However, the work increased and a set of pavilion wards, with 250 beds, were built in front of the Porte Cochere (Davies, 1959). Today, it is used as an aisle that connects the old House to 1930's part of the Hospital.

Figures 15 and 16 – On the left, Main Building in the 1900s; On the right, ward in front of the old Porte Cochere.



Source: Left, Glamorgan Archives (n.d.), right, Author's own (2017).

Because of this connection, one may not notice the view of three 1881's carved stone panels that relates to Sir Edward's activities (CARDIFF & VALE NHS TRUST, 2017):

Figures 17 and 18 – carved stone panels, a ship at sea, a gun team and the House of Commons.

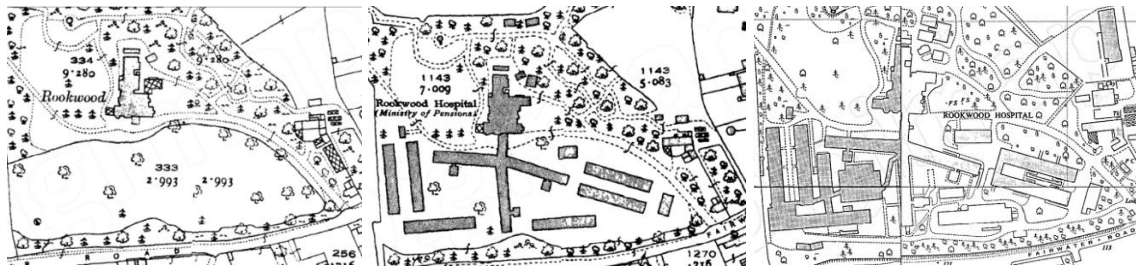


Source: (Author's own, 2017).

The set of pavilion wards were built in 1932, adapting the House to become a general hospital, consequently being used again during the Second World War, to assist injured men (CARDIFF & VALE NHS TRUST, 2017). In 1940s, after the war, Sir Lawrence Phillips MP bought the property for £25,000 from the Statutory Committee, organization responsible for the Hospital during that time. Then, Rookwood was passed to the Ministry as a home for Welsh Paraplegic Pensioner cases. Between 1940 and 1955, five more wards and extensions were built, a Pharmacy and Physiotherapy block, a service room, office extensions and others were built in 1955. By the end of the 20th century Rookwood had eight wards, and people with spinal and brain injuries, stroke, Parkinson's and among other diseases were being treated (NEWMAN, 2001).

The relation between Rookwood's significance and its morphology is the integration between the historic fabric and subsequent additions in the complex, the buildings evolve and complete each other. In terms of intangible heritage aspects, it is meaningful to note how the complex relates to the First and Second World War, once understood its history and relationship with its context. Below is a summary of its evolution over time:

Figures 19, 20 and 21 – Morphology of Rookwood over time, from left to right, 1920, 1940 and 1960 maps.



Source: (Historic Digimaps edited by the author, 2017).

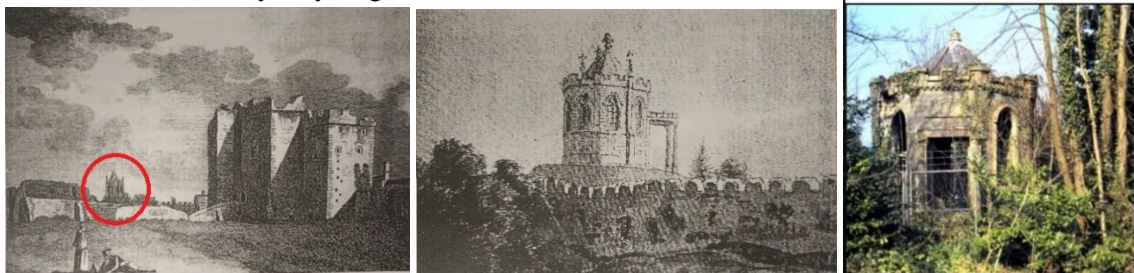
OBJECTIVE RECORDING

The aim of this section is to record with photographs the historic buildings of the complex with a brief description of them. Due to the focus of this article on historic heritage aspects, the buildings on this part are the Main building and the Gothic Summerhouse.

THE GOTHICK SUMMERHOUSE AND VAULTED CHAMBER

Waldron (1989, p.30) writes about the building that “the old Summer House – formerly a focal point in the grounds of Llandaff House (built about 1764), was included in the curtilage of Rookwood House in 1866 and is now, under the Health Authority, in poor condition”. The **Gothick** (emphasis added) Summer House dates from the 1770s and is located on the northwestern side of Rookwood Hospital grounds, behind the Main building. There is a mystery regarding the true history of the Summerhouse as if it originally belonged to the Marquis of Bute's gardens of Cardiff Castle and it was placed resting on an existing icehouse. Unfortunately, there is no scientific evidence to prove the authenticity of this fact, only pictures of the grounds of Cardiff Castle with a similar building which either disappeared or was demolished afterwards (LLANDAFF SOCIETY, 1995).

Figures 22, 23 and 24 – Pictures from Cardiff Castle from the 1700s. The similarity to the old Summerhouse is a fact, whether it was moved to the grounds of Rookwood Hospital remains a mystery. Fig. 25 is of the Summer House from the 2000s.



Source: Figs. 22 and 23, Llandaff Society (1995); Fig.24, Welsh Historic Gardens Trust (2011).

The structure is a 6.5m in height octagonal single story in Gothic style and material of external walls are Bath stone. Underneath, there is a chamber, which was believed to be an icehouse (LLANDAFF SOCIETY, 1995). The basement measures 2.4m high and, 3.2mx3m its base. The decline of the summerhouse began in the 1960s and its current state is deteriorated, the windows and door frames vanished and, there is no roof (CADW, 2003b; LLANDAFF SOCIETY, 1995):

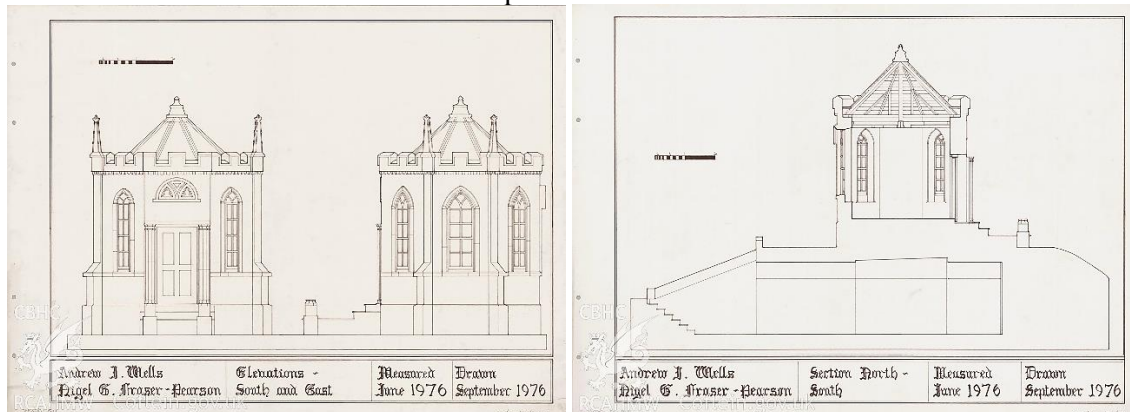
Figures 25 and 26 – Photos from site visits showing the poor condition.



Source: Author’s own (2017).

Figures 27 and 28 are drawing plans from 1976, found on *Coflein*, the online database for the National Monuments Record of Wales (NMRW):

Figures 27 and 28 – Fig. 27 shows south and east elevation view of the summerhouse, and Fig. 28 north-south section, all produced by Nigel G. Fraser-Pearson and Andrew J. Wells, September 1976.



Source: COFLEIN (n.d.).

ROOKWOOD MAIN HOUSE

The main building is in Gothic style, a two-story house, the material of external walls is Radyr stone with Bath stone facings and red tile roofing (PETERS, 2018). The ground floor has transomed windows and typical gothic trefoil-headed windows on the first floor.

Figures 30 and 31 – Fig. 30 shows the photo views taken to describe the Main Building, on the right, View A.



Source: Digimaps (2017, edited by the author) and Author’s own (2017).

The main access is through the south-eastern corner (see letter A on the Figure above), where a projecting Porte Cochere designed by John Prichard is located (CADW, 2000). Its arches cannot be seen anymore because of the single-story modern buildings that are connecting the old house to the hospital wards. The Camellia House (Fig. 32 and 33) is located on the east front and is a single-story L-shaped half-timbered and brick building. Today, it is the Psychology Department, its façade is built with teak and has panels of flower mosaic. (CADW, 2000).

Figures 32 and 33 – The Camellia House, View B, on the left front of Camellia House and on the right, back of the Camellia House.



Source: Author's own (2017).

Figure 34 shows view C, it is important to draw attention to the possible decay hazards posed by the utilization of the site. For example, the garbage bins below pose significant abrasion and fire risks.

Figures 34 – View C, back of Rookwood House



Source: Author's own (2017).

Figures 35 and 36 show view D, west part of Rookwood House, while, 37, the southwestern part:

Figures 35, 36 and 37– View D, west part of Rookwood House



Source: Author's own (2017).

Regarding the interior of the house, internal ornaments, decorations, and painted ceilings, they were designed by J.O. Grace, artist of the Great Stair in the National Gallery. The material is polished wood of Gothic design and teak doors. Most of the interior of the house is still in good condition (CADW, 2000).

Figures 38 and 39 – Internal painted ceiling and decoration in polished wood.



Source: Author's own (2017).

This report regards the hierarchy of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, which is first maintenance, then repair and, if necessary recorded alterations (SPAB, 2009). Also, (English Heritage, 2012, p.46) guidelines on how surveying stone buildings:

Stone may be a metaphor for performance and durability – solid as a rock or set in stone – but once exposed it starts to deteriorate [...] many sedimentary rocks such as limestone and sandstone are more susceptible to decay. When used in a building, stone is subjected to many environmental and structural problems. [...] The deterioration of stone buildings and buildings elements is almost always a complex combination of several factors.

Rookwood main building is built in Radyr and Bath stone, sedimentary rock, and limestone about 160 million years old, which are commonly found in northwest of Cardiff (RCAHMW, 2000). After site visits it was noticed: poor rainwater goods, resulting in blocked gutters and growth of vegetation inside, leading moisture to leak on the walls. Old drainpipes,

slimes on walls. Also, self-clinging vegetation on walls, it roots into voids or cracks and allow water penetration.

Figures 40, 41 and 42 – Old drainpipes and self-clinging vegetation, slime on walls, and blocked gutters and growth of vegetation inside.



Source: Author's own (2017).

Stone deterioration can happen in many ways depending on the decay process, therefore investigating the type of stone is crucial when trying to find solutions and repairing it. Correctly diagnosis in a historic building requires more time and monitoring for an extensive period, up to 1 year (English Heritage, 2012). Specific expertise advice should be sought.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this article was to be an analytical interpretation of the current condition of Rookwood Hospital, concerned about the skeptical future for its historic site, due to the decision of its closure. Rookwood has been part of Llandaff history for more than a hundred years; therefore, one should raise awareness about the importance of the complex of buildings to the community and its heritage significance.

In the first part of the text, its history and heritage significance were discussed in a historical appraisal, also its morphology was analyzed over time, which helped linking and understanding that its significance is connected to changes occurred in its historic fabric following important historic events (1st and 2nd World Wars). A comparison between recent and old maps and photographs revealed key changes in its history. In summary, the background of Rookwood House: It was built in 1866. In 1881, the northeastern part was extended, John Prichard designed the Porte Cochere, Camellia House, and a Lodge. In 1918, the building was rented to use as an auxiliary hospital. Consequently, wards, pharmacy, among other extensions were built between 1940s – 1955s, until it became one of only twelve spinal rehab units in the United Kingdom.

The second part, Objective Recording, tried to visually describe the historic complex with plans and photos taken during site visits to illustrate its current condition and areas of concern, to briefly recommend further investigations. Diagnosing and determining if a historic building needs intervention requires assessment to guarantee that there is a thorough analysis of the problems before providing interventions and decisions. English Heritage (2012, pp.138-39) suggests “The

best decisions will [...] take into account all the potential effects on the building fabric and its historic significance". Regarding Rookwood, the first part has already been done.

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