

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

LISTED BUILDING	The Culver Hole, Port Eynon, Swansea
Grade:-	II
Date of Amendment:-	24.01.00
National Grid Reference:-	SS 448108895
O.S. 1:10,000 Sheet No.:-	
CADW Reference No.:-	22791
C & C of S Reference No.:-	LB:405

Notes:-

Location:-

On the west side of Port Eynon Point, facing the open sea; only accessible from the sea.

History:-

The structure within the Culver Hole rock cleft is now generally referred to in authoritative sources as a dovecote, but its primary purpose has been debated for many decades and cannot be regarded as settled. The presence of a large number of nesting recesses integral to the structure in the interior, and the traditional name of the site ('culver' may signify pigeon) are evidence in favour of this as at least a secondary purpose; but its massiveness, its unsuitable location, its inappropriate window or door openings, and its inaccessibility in winter, make use as a dovecote unlikely as a primary explanation. The openings seem to imply the presence of lost internal floors and the hoisting of goods. The impracticality of the stone stairs in the lower part of the interior also implies the presence of floors, though beam sockets have not been noted. It is probable that it had an original purpose for which massiveness, storage, defensibility and inaccessibility apart from connection to the sea were desirable. No evidence of alteration has been noted. This structure has been hypothetically associated with the lost Port Eynon castle, mentioned in documents in the late C14, the location of which is unrecorded but might have been on the nearby cliffs. This assumes a lost upper access at the Culver Hole, enabling it to have served some storage, defence or escape function. If the Culver Hole structure was related to a cliff-top stronghold, a very good precedent exists in the 'cave' of Carreg Cennen castle (Carmarthenshire), a rock-face structure linking the castle ward to a water cistern beneath it, also secondarily used as a dovecote.

Exterior:-

A masonry structure about 20m in height, built across a natural cave, with possible evidence of associated quarrying to improve sea access or make land access more difficult. The wall is about 3m thick at base, narrowing as it rises. Axe-dressed limestone masonry with five surviving door or window apertures arranged roughly vertically following the incline of the cave. The lowest opening, about 4m above the beach, is about 1.5m in height, with segmental stone arch, capable of use as a doorway; above this is a smaller and narrower opening of similar form and above that a circular opening about 1m diameter. Another circular opening exists at high level where the natural cleft of the rock opens out, and on straight side of a top opening remains with part of its segmental head. The top of the structure is lost.

Interior:-

The inner face of the wall has a narrow staircase in three irregular flights near the foot and about 30 tiers of nesting boxes in the manner of a dovecote.

Listed:-

Listed for its special interest as a highly unusual medieval structure accessible from the sea and containing nesting boxes.

Scheduled Ancient Monument GM 325 (SWA).

Reference:-

R L T Lucas, The Pirates of Porteynon, Gower, XXXI (1980) pp.11-22.

P J Williams reported at Swansea Meeting, Archaeologia Cambrensis 1920 pp. 339-44.

RCAHM, Glamorgan vol III ii. pp. 362-3.

NMR File Glamorgan Domestic Additional.