

# Creedy Park

## Heritage statement

### Summary

Creedy Park House, 1916-1921 by Walter Sarel, now subdivided. Formal garden features including terracing, balustrades, steps and water features designed by WA Nesfield in around 1850. Game larder and drying-lawn wall probably dating to the mid-C19.

### Reasons for Designation

Creedy Park House, formal garden features, drying-lawn wall and game larder are listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

Architectural interest: \*for the house's good Tudor design with Arts & Crafts influences by Walter Sarel, including the asymmetrical front, tall brick stacks and gables, and double-height windows; \*despite subdivision, for the survival of decorative and architectural features in the principal rooms of the house, particularly the great hall, and the internal joinery throughout; \*for the quality of the materials and the execution of the decoration both externally and internally; \*the retention of the formal gardens to the south of the house with balustrades, terracing and water features as designed by WA Nesfield add to the architectural interest of the house.

Historic interest: \*for its association with the historic Davie (later Ferguson-Davie) family for over 300 years; \*as a cohesive reflection of the changes which occurred at Creedy from the mid-C19 to the mid-C20.

Group value: \*with the Grade II-listed former stables (Rafters) to the west.

### History

In around 1600 John Davie (1541-1611) of Exeter, Crediton and Creedy built a new mansion called New House set in parkland on the Creedy estate. Over the next 150 years the house and its land

passed through the family to sons and male relatives, most with the name John. Of these John Davie (d1654) became a baronet in 1641, and again the estate passed through the generations until 1846. In 1765 the house was shown on Donn's map of Devon and a few years later in 1773 and 1793 the park and house were plotted on a map of the Barton by Law & Ballment. This map shows projecting wings, or pavilions, at the east and west ends of the south-facing house, ancillary buildings to the west and a walled garden to the north-west. In 1793 the house was described by Polwhele as being 'delightfully situated in a large park'. Reverend John Swete noted three years later that the house had, although retaining parts of the original fabric, probably been altered. His watercolour of 1797 show the house had two storeys plus an attic, with two projecting bays at the west end of the front. The painting depicts the house as being set within a Picturesque park, as was the fashion of the day.

In the late-C18 the coach house and stables (Grade II-listed) were built, and by the early C19 the east and west drive gate lodges (both Grade II-listed) were also in place. The first significant change occurred in 1819 when the house was extensively refurbished in the Regency style by craftsmen from London. In 1824 the house was inherited by Humphrey Phineas Davie (1775-1846). The 1843 Tithe survey shows that the house retained the projecting wings to the south front, with the stables and service buildings attached to the west and the walled garden behind. Other alterations to the estate buildings at this time included the removal of one wing of the stable block, and the demolition of a cottage on the western boundary of the park. Sir Humphrey Davie died unmarried in 1846 and the baronetcy died with him. Sir Humphrey's niece Frances Juliana (1802-1882) inherited Creedy; her husband General Henry Robert Ferguson (1797-1885) adopted the Davie name and became a baronet in 1847. At that time he also rebuilt Creedy Park House to the designs of the Scottish architect William Burn (1789-1870), who had rebuilt Cliveden in the 1820s. Contemporary commentators noted the 'frequent' alterations to the house, and an 1850 engraving of Creedy Park by JT Wood shows the house much as previously depicted on maps and in illustrations, with end pavilions to the principal front, but these having porches. In 1852 Lady Davie allowed for Crediton Fancy Fair to be held at Creedy Park House, and it was noted in the press that the beautiful grounds had French, American and English gardens with conservatories, fountains and gardens from designs from the 1851 Great Exhibition. Formal gardens including a terrace at the front of the house, a parterre with a central fountain in front of a new conservatory to the west of the house, and low stone walls with

ball finials, and balustrades and water features were laid out by William Andrews Nesfield (1793-1881) who worked regularly with Burn and at that time was at his most influential. The 1890 Ordnance Survey map shows a house of similar plan to pre-1847, but with shorter projecting front wings and what appears to be a small courtyard off-centre within the house. Alterations were also made to the park (which had been disparked in 1867) and its buildings at this time. The conservatory screened the stable wing and attached service buildings, and the front drive was diverted around the formal garden terraces in front of the house .

Having passed through two further generations of the Ferguson Davie family, in 1915 Creedy was inherited by William Ferguson Davie (1863-1947) – that November Creedy Park House was destroyed by fire, along with the family archives, although some parts of the service buildings survived. Between 1916 and 1921 the house was rebuilt to designs by the London architect Walter Sarel (Henry Walter Molyneux Sarel, 1873-1941) by the contractors Dart & Francis. This re-build reinstated the two front projecting wings, but reduced the rear half of the house, linked here to partially-rebuilt service buildings (ground floor laundry, kitchen and scullery with servant's accommodation above) and the stable block to the west, which survived the fire. Surviving standing fabric from the ground and basement levels of the service buildings was incorporated in their rebuild (these buildings today are known as The Archway, The Bell Tower, West End and The Limes). Nesfield's formal gardens were retained, creating an architectural setting for the new Arts & Crafts house. Little is known about Sarel's designs for the interior, but many features from this period survive today. The conservatory in front of the stables, which had survived the fire, was demolished in 1921

The 5th baronet, Arthur Ferguson Davie, inherited Creedy in 1947 and carried out some works to the park, including the formation of a cricket ground, a reservoir in the Rookery, a new house and larger glasshouses around the walled garden and two conifer blocks north and east of the Rookery. Nesfield's western parterre was also removed at some point after 1940. By 1976 Davie could not afford to remain at Creedy and put the 4000 acre estate up for sale. In 1982 Creedy Park House and the former service range and stables were converted into 13 residential units by Lucas, Roberts & Brown and 15 acres of communal woodland was retained. The remainder of the park was split into different ownerships.

Details

Creedy Park House, 1916-1921 by Walter Sarel, now subdivided. Formal gardens including terracing, walls, balustrades, steps and water features designed by WA Nesfield in around 1850. Game larder and drying-lawn wall probably dating to the mid-C19.

**MATERIALS:** the house is built of red sandstone with buff sandstone dressing, under slate roofs and brick chimneys. Windows are mostly metal framed and leaded in various patterns. The attached wing to the west is of brick and stone construction, with partial roughcast render on the north elevation.

**PLAN:** the principal garden front of the house faces south into Creedy Park; the main entrance is on the rear (north) side. The house is a loose H-plan, and has an attached wing to the west stepped back from the main house; the part known as The Limes is stepped back again.

**EXTERIOR:** the house is characterised by its tall stone elevations, with prominent gables, tall chimneys and dressed stone openings, all in a general Tudor style with elements of the Arts & Crafts style. Windows throughout are generally mullioned and transomed of varying sizes, and there are continuous stringcourses at the first and second floors around parts of the house. Bay windows around the building are surmounted by ornamental balustrades.

The south-facing garden front has projecting gables which flank the recessed central block. There are large, twelve-light windows to each gable front, and at the western end of the central block are two full-height windows (one below a gable) which rise the height of the building, related to the hall within. Adjacent to these is a central door in an arched surround. At attic level above this section are three uPVC dormer windows. On the west elevation is a two-storey canted bay and a square bay with a gable. The attached wing (Bell Tower and West End) has a steeply-sloping roof with dormer windows, a pavilion at the west end, and a bellcote. At the west end of this range, and stepped back, is a two-storey building (The Limes) with half-dormers, south-facing gable and end stack.

At the east end of the house there are two projecting square bays with gables adjacent. The northern side of the house contains the original main entrance in a projecting full-height porch. This has a moulded arched opening and carved panel above with the Ferguson Davie coat of arms. Adjacent to this is a full-height window which signifies the principal stair within. This north side of the building forms

a loose courtyard enclosed on its west side, where there is a wide moulded-arch opening providing access to a small service yard beyond. Above the arch is a carved panel which bears the inscription WJ & PFD / 1921; this commemorates William [John] Ferguson Davie and his wife Phinia (m1891) and the date of the house's completion. There is a single storey brick porch adjacent which is understood to date from the C20 conversion.

Through the arch, a secondary door gives access to one of the subdivided units in the former service wing; this has a moulded surround in an Arts & Crafts style. The ground floor of the former service wing incorporates surviving fabric of the C19 house, apparent on the north elevation by exposed sandstone, although that to the far west (The Limes) is roughcast rendered, possibly to pull-together the C19 and rebuilt elements of this part of the building. Windows to the former service wing appear mostly to be late C20 replacements.

**INTERIOR:** although only partially inspected, the interior of the building is understood to retain many of its historic features, such as doors and moulded timber door-surrounds, plasterwork and some fire surrounds. The entrance hall has dado panelling with carved detailing, moulded ceiling beams with wide stops and a plasterwork frieze.

The great hall is a double-height room with large timber ceiling-beams supported on thick corbels, and a large fireplace with stone bolection-moulded surround. It has a screen at one end with minstrels' gallery above with carved balustrading and tall finials. The double-height windows contain heraldic stained glass in their central panels. The principal stair rises in a wide dog-leg and has a balustrade in the same style.

Other rooms at ground and first floor appear to retain much timberwork and plaster friezes in similar styles. The western end of the building retains a secondary stair in an Arts & Crafts style.

**SUBSIDIARY FEATURES:** low stone garden walls with ball finials surround the house on its south, east and west sides. The formal gardens at the front of the house are situated on a rectangular platform with curved corners on the south side; retained by a stone wall. In the centre of this defined garden is a stone fountain (originally located in the west parterre), and stone steps lead centrally up to the terrace in front of the house. Square, stone gatepiers with ball finials supporting decorative iron gates flank the entrance forecourt on the

east side of the house, which is partially surrounded with balustrading. To the north-east of the house are two flights of stone steps with balustrading (partially missing) flanking a small water feature; these give access to the Rookery beyond. To the west the walls curve round to the area in front of the stables, interrupted centrally by a decorative wrought-iron pedestrian gate set in a segmental recess.

To the rear of the house is what is assumed to be a drying lawn, bounded on the north side by a tall, curving rubble sandstone and brick wall with terracotta copings. On the north-west interior side of the wall is a square game larder with a brick base and timber louvered walls, a pyramidal slate roof and louvered timber cupola; it retains its internal fittings including ceiling hooks.