

## **Rompney Castle PH, Rumney, Cardiff - Assessment**

### **Background**

We have been asked to consider the Rompney Castle PH for listing. A number of requests have been received and supporting information on the historic background of the pub supplied. These requests are in response to suggestions that there are plans to demolish the building and construct flats in its place. Cadw's inspector of historic buildings conducted an external assessment on 8 November 2021, and an interior inspection on 4 March 2022.

### **Historic Interest**

There has been human settlement in Rumney since at least Roman times, and the Rompney Castle appears to lie on or near a provisionally identified branch of the *Via Julia Maritima* Roman Road. However there is no evidence that this building is earlier than the C19.

The public house is thought to have been constructed by 1871 and was originally known as the Pear Tree Inn. By 1881 it had been reportedly acquired by the American Consul in Cardiff, Harry Harris Davies, and had been renamed the Rompney Castle, "Rompney" being an alternative spelling of Rumney. Davies extended the building and carried out a number of alterations. Upon his death in 1890 the pub was sold, passing through a number of hands before further extensive changes in 1932 (likely by Brains – some early "Brains" branded stained glass survives in a lean-to on the left hand side). A lot of late C19 architectural detail was removed at this point, and the surviving mock half-timbering added. Local folklore has it sited over illicit tunnels leading to waterways used to traffic goods, but there was no evidence of this at the inspection.

### **Architectural Interest**

#### Exterior

Within the surviving building there is clearly an earlier 3-bay structure on the left hand side, with gable stacks and central door. The rest of the building was probably added by Davies and from illustrations and historic photographs this included a tall round-headed window in the early part, the round tower / turret of the extension and a 2-storey orné porch, cusped window heads, leaded windows and gabled dormers, and tall stone neo-Tudor chimney pots. Much of this picturesque detailing was wiped away in the Brains refit of the early 1930s. The basic form of the building survived with window and door openings, stacks etc. intact but the windows of the upper storey were largely removed/altered and mock half-timber cladding added to the facade. Gables and rear elevations are concrete rendered. There is clear evidence of phasing and development in the main elevation: insertion of wider windows into part-existing openings either side of the main bar entrance, and a building break to the right of the right hand window; sockets for the timber canopy shown in the pre-1932 illustrations are also visible. The external character that survives today is largely from this inter-war period, but windows largely replaced with upvc units in late C20 and tiled canopy (smoking shelter) added in early C21. There is a skittle alley to the rear, attached to the left hand side of the building and accessed from the stage

area of the bar. It has not been in use for some time and survives only partially intact.

### Interior

Internally the pub is largely devoid of anything historic - the bar is now one single space with suspended ceiling from the turret to the left hand gable. To the right of the turret is a door to an upstairs flat, this retains some historic fabric (incl. stair, roof trusses) but this is typical late C19 / Edwardian and not unusual. The ground floor of the right hand part is modernised and featureless. The following are points of note from the follow up visit:

- There are no visible fireplaces. It was suggested that there had once been an original ornate stone fireplace. The left hand part of the bar, where it would probably have been, has been opened up and now has a stage installed.
- There is no below ground cellar visible within or immediately outside the building. The current "cellar" is in a modern brick built structure to the rear.
- The ceiling in the bar is false, above this a coved framed ceiling survives (with the lath and plaster panels knocked out). The framing has reeded moulding and there is some decoration on the bosses. This probably belongs to the Davies expansion and refurbishment.

### Assessment

The Rompney Castle was assessed and rejected in the 2000 resurvey of the Rumney Community. No new information was provided with the latest listing requests that would cause us to reconsider our view that the building is of limited architectural and historic interest.

It survives as an inter-war remodelling of a late Victorian inn with earlier origins. It has some external architectural character that is very distinctive, albeit with some relatively minor alterations, but there is nothing distinctive enough that relates to planning or function of an inter-war pub for it to be listed as a good example of that type of building. There is some historic interest but this does not directly survive in the character of the building. It might be considered to be of local interest, which could acknowledge its community value.

Cadw

14 March 2022