

**CADW/ICOMOS REGISTER OF LANDSCAPES, PARKS AND GARDENS
OF SPECIAL HISTORIC INTEREST IN WALES**

REGISTER ENTRY

COURT COLMAN

Ref number	PGW (Gm) 7 (BRI)
OS Map	170
Grid ref	SS 883 818
Former county	Mid Glamorgan
Unitary authority	Bridgend
Community council	Newcastle Higher
Designations	Listed building: Court Colman Grade II
Site evaluation	Grade II

Primary reasons for grading

An eclectic Victorian garden and small park containing many of the typical elements of such gardens, including conifer and rhododendron planting, an informal woodland area with artificial waterfall, ferns and bamboos, and some formal features including Italian marble ornaments.

Type of site	Victorian formal and informal garden with small park; walled garden
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Main phases of construction	1830s-40s; 1870s-90s
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Site description

Court Colman is a large nineteenth-century house situated on elevated ground a few miles to the north-west of Bridgend. The house faces south, with a fine view out over unspoilt countryside, and grounds running down to the main line (Great Western) railway at the foot of the slope. It is a plain three-storey house with Italianate overtones, built of stone painted white, with a pitched slate roof, sash windows, and a central section of seven bays flanked by two-bay wings projecting slightly forward. On the third storey of the central bay and at each end are Venetian windows with pediments topped by stone urns over them. In the centre of the south side is the main entrance, a single-storey projecting stone porch with a round-arched door flanked by two similar windows and balustrading on top. At the east end of the house is a single-storey ballroom extension in similar style, with round-arched doors and full-length windows, between which are flat pilasters. The roof is balustraded, with urns on top.

The property belonged to Margam Abbey in the mediaeval period, passing through several hands from the sixteenth century until 1837, when it was bought by a branch of the Llewellyns of Baglan Hall. The Llewellyns built a house on the site, but it is not known how much of a previous house may have been incorporated. By 1876 (1st edition Ordnance Survey map) a house which formed the central core of the present house (seven bays) was built. Contemporary photographs show it to have been a two-storey stone house, with a simple glass porch and a Venetian window and pediment over the central section. To the east was a single-storey extension joining the house to a stone barn. To the west was a lower two-storey extension, and what may have been an older part of the house at right-angles to it. Not long after 1876, perhaps in the 1880s and 90s the house achieved its present appearance when it was raised to three storeys, given side wings, the front porch and the ballroom extension to the east.

The 1876 Ordnance Survey map shows a service court to the west of the house, but this is no longer in existence, the area now serving as a car park. After this date a service court was built in the northern end of the walled garden at the north end of the property. This is now partly converted to a separate dwelling.

The grounds of Court Colman occupy a roughly triangular area, with two lanes along the east and west sides and the Great Western railway line along the south side. The ground slopes down from north to south, with the house and garden occupying the higher ground at the north end. The garden is bounded to the south of the house by a ha-ha, giving a wide-ranging view from the house and garden across the park to the countryside beyond. The park is small and very rudimentary, with a few specimen trees and a clump ornamenting two or three fields between the garden and the railway line. Below the house are isolated limes and sycamores and a clump of youngish trees, a leaning spruce and rhododendrons within a circular iron fence next to an oak. To the west there are Scots pines and a row of beech trees along the western boundary. To the south-west of the house a fishpond was converted into an ornamental lake, partly within the garden, partly in the park. It has a concrete dam at its southern end with two overflow shutters. The lake is fringed with thick banks of rhododendrons within an iron fence boundary. At the northern end and along the east side are some large wellingtonias and pines. Below a stream runs southwards, under a stone-arched culvert, and joins the mill race on the far side of the railway line.

The garden lies all around the house, each aspect with a different character. The ground slopes gently from north to south except on the west side where there is a steep drop from the house down to a small valley which contains the feeder stream for the lake. The drive enters the grounds from a lane to the west of the house. A single stone pier flanks the entrance, on the south side of which is a two-storey lodge in vernacular style, with stone (painted) and rendered walls and a pitched roof to ground floor level. The tarmac drive winds up through mixed woodland, across a sloping lawn south of the house, to a wide tarmacked terrace in front of the house.

The terrace is bounded by a low curving revetment wall, the central section of which projects forward. The wall is topped by low stone balustrading with flat coping and square piers at intervals. In the centre a flight of stone and concrete steps leads down to the sloping lawn below. At the upper end of the lawn are two large Irish yews, a large magnolia at the west end, and a large beech tree opposite the east end of the house. On the edge of the lawn near the east end of the house stands an oval marble bowl, painted white, on a rectangular white-painted base. Below is a level lawn bounded by a curving stone ha-ha. A tall baluster sundial of white-painted stone stands on the lawn. The ha-ha gives wide views out over the park and beyond.

To the east of the house is an area of highly ornamented formality. Immediately east of the ballroom is a narrow lawn bounded on the south by crude modern concrete balustrading. Along its east side is a narrow raised terrace reached by a wide flight of stone steps in the middle and steps at the south end. The low outer revetment wall of the terrace is of stone with brick piers at intervals topped by bases for piers that have now gone. The terrace is backed by a high revetment wall of stone with brick piers at intervals which continue above ground level at the top. Next to the steps at the south end is a stone niche and opposite the central steps is a wide rectangular recess of the same width. This is all that is left of an elaborate pergola with barley-sugar columns and wooden superstructure, the protruding piers at the back topped with large vases. At the north end of the lawn concrete steps lead up to a wooden-framed summerhouse on a raised stone base. It has a shallowly pitched roof and a stained glass panel over the door. Between the summerhouse and the ballroom is an ornamental wrought-iron gate leading through into a small yard and brick steps up to the garden north of the house.

To the east of the former pergola the sloping ground is laid out with flights of steps, a pool and a fountain. From the east end of the forecourt stone steps, flanked by square piers with marble vase bases on top, lead up to a raised paved platform with balustrading along the west side, a low curving wall along the south side, and a low rough stone revetment wall on the east side. In the middle is an oblong pool with indented corners, in the centre of which is a marble fountain on a stone base. The fountain consists of three cherubs on a rock holding a fourth sitting on a swan or goose. At the north end of the platform two wide flights of stone steps, the lower one flanked by balustrading, lead up to a path to the garden north of the house. At its south end is a wooden trelliswork frame, on either side and over the path, covered by wisteria. To the east is a sloping lawn backed by large oak and beech trees, with a revetment wall at its north end in which is an opening to an overgrown path through impenetrable woodland beyond. The lawn is bounded on the east by the west wall of the walled kitchen garden, along which a sloping path with a stone revetment wall on its outer side runs down to the level lawn.

The narrow flagstone path above the pool leads to the garden north of the house. It is bounded on the east by a low revetment wall and dense woodland, including rhododendrons. At its north end is a shallow flight of steps leading on to a gently sloping lawn planted with specimen trees and shrubs, including lime, beech, holly, magnolia and various conifers. At the west end of the lawn is a level, slightly sunken area, now gravelled, which was originally laid out as tennis courts. Parallel with its east side is a long straight path leading from a small paved area at the back of the house to an ironwork arbour near the north end of the garden. This path is now grassed over but its stone edges are visible and it is lined with pairs of tall ironwork rose supports, each composed of four uprights and a crown-shaped top. The uprights of the arbour are similar, with an arched superstructure springing from them. The south end of the path is stone-paved, and at the north end of this section stands an ornamental Italian marble wellhead on a circular stone plinth. At the north end of the garden is an octagonal stone pier and an overgrown path running from it along the western side of the area, which is fringed with trees, rhododendrons and laurels.

To the west of the house is an informal woodland area of garden, partly now in separate ownership. Immediately west of the house the terrace level continues, revetted with a stone wall with a former building, now roofless and filled with rubble, against it. To its north narrow steps in a curving defile between two high revetment walls, with a brick and stone arch over them, lead down to a path running down into the valley below.

To the south of the building the wall is crenellated to give 'windows' overlooking the valley. Immediately below them is an artificial waterfall which descends the steep slope in a series of steps and pools. The steps are built up of large boulders, and the waterfall is surrounded by bamboos, ferns and laurels. Below is the drive, with a large wellingtonia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) on its west side. The valley is largely wooded, with mixed deciduous and coniferous trees. The stream in the bottom of the valley passes under a single-arched bridge carrying the drive, above which it falls over two shallow steps. Beyond the drive, to the east, is an area of lawn, with isolated conifers including wellingtonias, deciduous trees and rhododendrons. This area is now the private garden of the lodge.

The garden appears to have been developed in two main phases. The first phase was probably contemporary with the rebuilding of the house soon after the Llewellyn family bought it in 1837. This garden is shown in the 1876 Ordnance Survey map and in early photographs. The main elements of the present garden were established at this stage - the drive, the lawn and ha-ha to the south, an informal area of lawn with scattered trees to the north, and a woodland area with winding walks in the valley to the west. Walks ran from the garden south-west of the house to the lake. At this stage there was no terrace, no formal area to the west, no waterfall, and no formal walk or tennis courts to the north. Late nineteenth-century photographs show the garden at this stage, with young specimen trees, both deciduous and coniferous, and island beds on the lawn south of the house. They show that the east bank of the lake was free of planting except at the north end, where there were dense banks of rhododendrons and conifers that had already attained considerable height. At one stage a wall continued the ha-ha down to the lake and there was a small triangular walled garden against it next to the lake, with some terraced beds and a glasshouse. The east end of the garden south of the house is shown planted up with trees, including a monkey puzzle (*Araucaria araucana*), shrubs, beds, and with a winding gravel path through it.

The next phase came when the house was enlarged in the late nineteenth century. The formal elements of the garden were then added - the terrace, the steps, pool and fountain, the walk to the north, and much Italian marble statuary, of which some remains. Photographs show that the marble vase bases that survive were topped by large elaborately decorated vases, with further urns and bowls placed at intervals on the balustrading. The oval bowl on the lawn probably came from one of the piers on top of the pergola. Another feature shown is a formal flight of steps leading down to the lake from the field below the ha-ha. Since this time the gardens have undergone little radical alteration. The shrubbery to the east of the house has gone, as have the winding walks through the woodland to the west and much of the statuary. Some of the specimen trees have also been removed. However, enough remains to give a flavour of an eclectic late Victorian garden.

The walled garden is situated to the south-east of the house, on ground sloping to the south. It is square, surrounded by walls c. 2-3 m high of roughly coursed blocks of stone with flat stone coping except on the south side, where the wall is of brick. The interior is grassed over, with no sign of any paths. Near the north end of the west wall is a Tudor doorway set into the wall. The door surround is of good quality dressed and moulded stone, with small heraldic panels in the spandrels. In it is a plain wooden door of no great age. Along the north side of the south wall is a range of lean-to outbuildings, and along the south side is a long lean-to glasshouse with a central projecting section. In the east corner stands a two-storey stone house that has been extended in recent times. Below the garden the west wall is continued down the slope by a stepped modern brick

wall. On the east side there is only a short stretch of corresponding wall. The area partly enclosed is a grass slope.

The walled garden is of uncertain date, but is probably early nineteenth-century at least. It is shown on the 1876 map as being laid out with perimeter paths and one cross path, with a fountain near the east side. The long glasshouse is not shown, only two small ones in the north-west and south-east corners. The house in the east corner, probably a gardener's cottage, is shown on the map and in a late nineteenth-century photograph half its present size. The Tudor doorway appears to have been inserted in the wall, and its origin is obscure.

Sources

Primary

Late nineteenth-century photographs and early twentieth-century postcards: private collection.

Secondary

Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales, *Inventory of the Ancient Monuments in Glamorgan*, IV (1981), p. 336.