

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

SITE DOSSIER

SITE NAME Penhein

REF. NO. PGW (Gt) 53

OS MAP 171

GRID REF. ST 450933

FORMER COUNTY Gwent

UNITARY AUTHORITY Monmouth B.C.

COMMUNITY COUNCIL Caerwent

DESIGNATIONS

SITE EVALUATION Grade II

Primary reasons for grading

Well preserved small landscape park, in superb position

TYPE OF SITE

Small landscape park; small garden; walled garden

MAIN PHASES OF CONSTRUCTION

1813

VISITED BY/DATE Elisabeth Whittle/March 1992

HOUSE

Name Penhein

Grid ref St 450933

Date/style 1813/Regency villa

Brief description

Penhein is a large two-storey rendered stone house, standing on level ground at the northern end of its park, to the north of the village of Llanfair Discoed. From it there are panoramic views to the south over the coastal plain, Bristol Channel and beyond. The house is a Regency villa, built in 1813 by Samuel Brookes, possibly on the site of an earlier house. It is aligned north-south, with an octagonal projection in the south-east corner. The forecourt and front door are on the east side, with a two-storey porch over the front door. To the north of the forecourt is a lower stone wing projecting eastwards. On the west side of the house is a small flat-roofed conservatory.

OUTBUILDINGS

Name Various

Grid ref ST 450933

Date/style, and brief description

To the north of the house is a cobbled courtyard with an entrance on the east side flanked by square stone gate piers. It has stone outbuildings ranged around it, including workshops, stores, and potting shed. In the south-east corner of the walled garden is a two-storey stone cottage, formerly the stables, and now converted into a garage (ground floor) and cottage (first floor). Along the north side of the walled garden is a ruined two-storey stone building which was originally the servants' quarters.

To the north-east are various farm buildings including a large stone barn, and a small detached brick house built in the 1930s.

THE PARK

Central grid ref ST 450933

Date/style 1813/landscape

GENERAL DESCRIPTION, HISTORY AND LAYOUT

The park of Penhein lies on a south-facing slope to the north of Llanfair Discoed, with woods and pasture land all around it, and panoramic views from it to the south. The park was made at the same time as the house was built, in 1813, by Samuel Brookes. It is about 40 acres in extent, stretching from Cuhere Wood in the south to the house and gardens in the north. Along the western end of the boundary between the park and Cuhere Wood is an old, ruinous stone wall.

Access is via a long winding tarmac drive from Llanfair Discoed. In the park, from Cuhere Wood northwards, it is flanked at intervals by deciduous trees. In the south-west corner of the park, just north of the drive, are two pairs of well preserved stone lime kilns. The drive passes the south front of the house and enters the gravel forecourt on the east side of the house. A track continues to the farm buildings.

The park was laid out with shelter belts along the north and west sides, and the north end of the east side, with trees flanking parts of the drive, and isolated trees. Most of the planting was done in the western half of the park. Much of this planting survives, with isolated mature trees including beech, oak, sycamore, horse chestnut, sweet chestnut, pine, Monkey Puzzle, and American red oak. Many of the trees are particularly fine specimens, including the beeches south of the house, the Monkey Puzzle west of the house, a clump of beech, horse chestnut and sycamore south of the house, and horse chestnuts and sycamores in the south-west part of the park. The north end of the west boundary shelter belt has gone. Along the north end of the east boundary, inside the shelter belt, is a short avenue of oaks.

STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

The drive to Penhein starts on the east edge of the village of Llanfair Discoed, and runs northwards, skirting Cuhere Wood to the west, and swinging north-eastwards into the park. It is tarmacked for its full length. It winds up through the park, entering the forecourt to the east of the house. The forecourt is roughly oval, gravelled, and a track continues northwards to the farm buildings.

WATER FEATURES

None

BUILT FEATURES

On the boundary between the park and Cuhere Wood, at its western end, is a stretch of ruinous stone walling c. 1.2 m. high.

At ST 449930 are two pairs of lime kilns, built into the slope one pair above the other. They are built of stone, with rounded arches, and stone-lined feeder funnels above. Behind them are small quarried areas.

PLANTED COMPONENTS

The park is laid out to permanent pasture, with shelter belts along the east, west and north boundaries, and isolated mature trees scattered throughout the park, mainly in the western half.

In the north-west part of the park there are isolated sycamores and oaks, and to the west of the house a large isolated Monkey Puzzle tree. Near the house is a group of mature trees including four pines. The shelter belt along the west side consists of mixed deciduous and coniferous trees (mainly larch), none of which appear very old. There

are similar belts along the north side of the park, and the northern end of the east side. Inside the east belt is a short stretch of oak avenue. The east side of the park is sparsely planted, with a few isolated trees. It is the south-west quadrant of the park that is most heavily planted with ornamental trees. These include some very fine beeches, one of which stands just south of the forecourt. Beyond this is a clump of beech, horse chestnut and sycamore. Isolated deciduous trees include oak, beech, sycamore, horse chestnut, sweet chestnut and American red oak. The southern end of the drive in the park is flanked by oaks, and also has oaks along its south side to the west of the lime kilns.

BOUNDARIES

South: Cuhere Wood (stone wall and fence)
West: fence
North: fence
East: fence

ESSENTIAL SETTING, VIEWPOINTS AND CONTINUATIONS OF FEATURES BEYOND THE PARK, EYECATCHERS ETC.

Essential setting: farmland to west, north and east; woodland to south
Views: south from park across coastal plain to Bristol Channel and beyond (A on map)

LAND-USE

Permanent pasture; unmanaged woodland

ELEMENTS OF BOTANICAL OR OTHER NATURE CONSERVATION INTEREST

Fine mature trees

SURVIVAL OF INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS

Structural components: all
Water features: -
Built components: most
Planted components: most

THE PLEASURE GARDEN

Grid ref ST 450933

Date/style 1813/informal

GENERAL DESCRIPTION, HISTORY AND LAYOUT

The small garden lies mainly to the south and west of the house, with a small area to the east of the forecourt. It is laid out mostly to lawns, and is bounded on its south side by a well built stone ha-ha, giving panoramic views from house and garden across the park and beyond. The garden was made in 1813, at the same time as the house was built. In the 1870s (OS map) the west side was divided into three distinct areas: the southern lawn, a rectangular area bounded by trees or shrubs to the north, and the 'Nuttery' at the north end. The two southern areas are no longer separate, but the line of division is visible as a faint scarp in the lawn. The bounding trees or shrubs have also gone. The 'nuttery' remains, but is now neglected. It is a rectangular area of coppiced hazels, planted in rows, and part has been fenced off and now lies in the field. Tumbled stone around its outer boundaries suggests that it was originally walled in, and a tumbled rubble wall continues westwards from the ha-ha around the garden boundary. The only feature in the garden west of the house is a 20th-century overgrown rockery near the west boundary. The grass path running through the middle of it is flanked by two yews.

East of the forecourt is a small area of lawn, with rockwork stone walling at its northern end, bounded on its east side by a curving holly hedge.

STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

The garden to the south and west of the house is levelled, and bounded on its south side by a ha-ha. This is well built, of rubble stone construction, and runs from the forecourt gate almost to the south-west corner of the garden. The wall is c. 1.2 m. high, and there is little ditch outside it. Near its west end stone steps are set in it. A slight scarp, running east-west, near the north end of the house, indicates a former garden boundary.

BUILT COMPONENTS

A rubble stone wall, partly tumbled, continues along the garden boundary where the ha-ha stops. Along the west and north sides the boundary is a fence, although there are signs that there was once a wall around the 'Nuttery'. The rockery to the west of the house is 20th century in date, and is now much overgrown.

ARCHITECTURAL ORNAMENTS

None

PLANTED COMPONENTS

The garden is mostly laid out to lawn. Two yews flank the grass path through the rockery. At the north end is the 'Nuttery', a rectangular area of coppiced hazels planted in rows. It is now neglected, but appears more or less complete. This is thought to be an original feature of the gardens. To the east of the forecourt is a small area of lawn bounded by a curving holly hedge.

Reconstructions of original planted features

None

Special collections of garden plants

Coppiced hazels (the 'Nuttery')

Documented living plants

None

Other (including elements of nature conservation interest)

None

ESSENTIAL SETTING AND VIEWS BEYOND THE SITE

Essential setting: parkland to west, south and east of garden

Views: south from house and garden across park and beyond (A on map)

ANY SPECIAL FEATURES

None

SURVIVAL OF INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS

Structural components: all

Built components: some

Architectural ornaments: -

Planted components: some

UTILITARIAN GARDENS

NAME Kitchen garden

Grid ref ST 450933

Date/style 1813/walled

DESCRIPTION

The walled kitchen garden is situated to the north of the forecourt north of the house. The stone walls about 2.2 - 3.5 m. high (north and west walls highest), of rubble construction, with doors on the east and west sides. A ruined stone building stands against the north side. The garden is no longer in use, and most of its internal layout is obscured, although the remains of some paths can be seen. A small area is walled off next to the stable block to form a separate garden.

SOURCES

Primary

Sale Particulars (Knight Frank and Rutley, 1992)