

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

SITE DOSSIER

Llanover Park

REF. NO. PGW (Gt) 41

OS MAP 161 GRID REF. SO 315086

FORMER COUNTY Gwent UNITARY AUTHORITY Monmouth B.C.
COMMUNITY COUNCIL Llanover

DESIGNATIONS Listed building: Ty Uchaf Grade II*

SITE EVALUATION Grade II*

Primary reasons for grading

Landscape park surviving in its entirety, with planting mainly from 1830s on; well preserved water and walled gardens of 1790s

TYPE OF SITE

Landscape park; abandoned formal gardens and pleasure grounds; informal water and walled gardens; walled kitchen garden

MAIN PHASES OF CONSTRUCTION

1790s; 1830s

VISITED BY/DATE Elisabeth Whittle/June 1991

HOUSE

Name Ty Uchaf and Llanover House

Grid ref SO 317083 and SO 316087

Date/style Ty Uchaf: c. 1792 front on older house/Georgian and vernacular. Llanover House: 1828-39/neo-Elizabethan

Brief description

Ty Uchaf

Ty Uchaf, the home of the present owner, is the older of the two houses in the park, and parts of it date from the 15th century. It lies near the south-eastern boundary, on level ground, with a gentle slope rising away from it to the south-west, and level ground to the north-east. It is approached from the south-west by a drive from the village of Rhyd-y-meirch (Llanover). The main front is on the north-east side.

In about 1620 the heiress of the Ty Uchaf estate, Barbara Prichard, married Walter Rumsey, a learned royalist. In the early 18th century it passed to the Cecil family, and in about 1792 was bought by Benjamin Waddington, from Nottinghamshire. He added the Georgian north-east front to the house, and laid out the gardens and grounds. The north-east end of the house is three-storey, built of red brick. Behind, to the south-west, the older house remains. It is of stone, L-shaped, two-storey, and partly rendered.

Llanover House

The estate went to Waddington's youngest daughter Augusta, who married Benjamin Hall of Hensol Castle (Glam.) and Abercarn in 1823. Hall, who became Lord Llanover, bought the adjoining Llanover Court estate in 1826, and amalgamated the two estates. The house of the Llanover Court estate was the 16th-century house near the NW corner of the park now called Cwrt Porth-hir. In 1828 Hall began building Llanover House in neo-Elizabethan style. The architect was Thomas Hopper. The family left Ty Uchaf and moved in in 1837. The house was a huge, rather gaunt mansion situated on level ground to the north-west of Ty Uchaf in the centre of the new amalgamated park. The main approach was from the north (the Porth-mawr entrance), with the entrance front on the east and the garden front on the west. To the north were service courts and a large stable court (still standing).

Lord Llanover died in a gun accident in 1867, leaving a widow and one daughter, Mrs Herbert, widow of John A. Herbert of Llanarth Court. Lady Llanover died in 1896, and Mrs Herbert continued to live at Llanover House at least until 1911. The house was partly demolished in 1935 as being of inferior stone and too expensive to maintain. Parts of its walls survive, ruinous and overgrown, and the stable block to the north remains.

OUTBUILDINGS

Name Stable court of Llanover House

Grid ref SO 306087

Date/style, and brief description

1830s/neo-Elizabethan

To the north of ruined Llanover House, a square court surrounded by twoj-storey farm buildings and stables. A tall arched entrance on the east side, topped by two tall pinnacles with cupolas and weather vanes on top.

Ty Uchaf has a court of outbuildings to the west of the house. It is closed on the NE side by a wall.

THE PARK

Central grid ref SO 317087

Date/style 1790s and 1830s/landscape park

GENERAL DESCRIPTION, HISTORY AND LAYOUT

Llanover Park is situated in the Usk valley, on gently rolling ground to the west of the river. Only near the west boundary does the ground start to rise above the river's flood plain. The park is rectilinear, and is bounded on the east, west and south by public roads and on the north by field boundaries (along which there is a public footpath) and a public road.

Parts of the park are wooded, with some recently planted coniferous plantations as well as deciduous woodland; parts are open grassland with scattered trees and clumps. Most of the woodland is near the western boundary, with the area around the ruins of Llanover House also densely wooded. There is one small pond near the kitchen garden, in the south-eastern part of the park, and the Rhyd-y-meirch stream runs through the park near the south-eastern boundary. For most of its length it is within the gardens of Ty Uchaf.

Until 1826 the present park was divided into two estates, that of Ty Uchaf, to the south-east, and Llanover to the north-west. In the 1790s Waddington laid out the park and gardens of Ty Uchaf. He planted many trees, including larches, which were recorded as 'mature' by Bradney. He made two carriage roads, one from Rhyd-y-meirch, which is still the main drive, and the other from Pen-y-parc, on the western boundary, which has gone. There appears to have been no landscaping of the Llanover estate prior to 1826.

Benjamin Hall (Lord Llanover) amalgamated the estates, and did further tree planting in the park. The main phases of tree planting in the park, after amalgamation, were the 1820s-30s, the 1880s, and the 1960s-70s. In the 1830s the park was enclosed by a stone wall along the west boundary and part of the south-east boundary, with three entrance gates and lodges. Porth-mawr, in the north-west corner of the park, was the main entrance, with Welsh inscriptions inside and out. Next, southwards, was Pen-y-parc, and the third was Rhyd-y-meirch. A further gate was made on the south-east boundary just east of the kitchen garden, called Porth-y-gwenynen, a reference to the bardic name of Lady Llanover, the 'bee of Gwent'. Carriage drives led from each to Llanover House.

STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

Drives

All drives except the Pen-y-parc one are still in use. The main drive is now that from Rhyd-y-meirch to Ty Uchaf, made in the 1790s. It is straight and is tarmacked. There is a curving drive, part tarmacked part metalled, between Ty Uchaf and Llanover House.

The drive from Porth-mawr is a winding metalled track, and the branch of it which led to the stable court and service courts is now disused and partly grassed over.

The drive from Porth-y-gwenynen is a winding unfenced tarmacked track.

WATER FEATURES There is a small pond to the north-west of the kitchen garden, at SO 319086. It is of irregular outline, built up above the natural ground surface, with a dam at the north-east end. It was in existence by 1886 (OS map).

The lake north-west of Llanover House, now incorporated into the park, will be considered in the GARDEN section, as being part of the gardens of Llanover House.

BUILT FEATURES

Lodges and gates

The main park lodge is Porth-mawr at SO 307093. It is in neo-Elizabethan style (? by Hopper) and dates from the 1830s. It lies just within the park, and consists of a round-arched two-storey gatehouse built in stone (the central part is ashlar) with crenellations on top. Flanking the arch are single-storey extensions and the park wall. This entrance is no longer used, and the lodge is a private house. The gate is a simple wooden one.

Rhyd-y-meirch lodge at SO 315080, to the north of the main entrance, is a small stone two-storey house of simple vernacular design. The entrance is flanked by simple square stone gate piers and iron railings on a low stone wall to the north, and a high stone wall to the south with a pedestrian gateway in it (with an ironwork gate). The tall entrance gates are wrought-iron, with some decorative scroll-work.

The Porth-y-gwenynen lodge (20th-century) at SO 322086 is situated to the south of the entrance on the south-east side of the park. It is a simple small two-storey stone building of vernacular design, with a steeply pitched roof. The gate and gate piers are of iron, and there are iron railings to the north-east of the gate.

A little way along the drive from this entrance, to the north of the kitchen garden, is the gardener's cottage. This dates from the 19th century, and is a small two-storey stone house of simple vernacular design, with elaborate wooden barge boards and a tall (? neo-Elizabethan) chimney.

Park wall

The park wall was built in the 1830s by Benjamin Hall. It runs from Porth-mawr to Porth-y-gwenynen. It is a well built rubble stone wall with a roughly crenellated top, higher (c. 1.8 m.) on the west side, along the Pontypool-Abergavenny road, than along the minor road on the south-east side of the park. On the latter side there are two gateways with simple wooden gates, as well as the Porth-y-gwenynen entrance. The eastern end of the wall here becomes ruinous near the end.

Iron railings

The park abounds in iron railings. Some of the plantations and clumps are fenced with them, they flank parts of the drives, and some of the fields are bounded by them.

PLANTED COMPONENTS

The park is partly wooded and partly open grassland with scattered isolated trees and clumps. In the centre, to the west of Llanover House, is the area of former garden and pleasure grounds, now reverted to unmanaged woodland. This will be dealt with in the GARDEN section. There appear to be trees (oaks in the northern part of the park in

particular) that pre-date the landscaping of the 19th century. Most of the planting appears to be 1830s and later.

The two main areas of woodland apart from this central part are near the west boundary - Coed y Cwrt at the north end of the park, and Coed y Kennel at the south. Coed y Cwrt is a managed wood of mixed deciduous and coniferous trees, with a fringe of rhododendrons. Within the wood are some large mature conifers including pines. Coed y Kennel is similar, with many pines. In the north-east corner of the park is a modern plantation of conifers.

The grassland in the western half of the park is dotted with specimen trees, both coniferous and deciduous. The grassland in the northern part of the park has some isolated old oaks. The drive from Porth-mawr to Llanover House is flanked by a few mature specimen trees including horse chestnut, oak and lime. East of Llanover House is a plantation of young conifers, beyond which the park is open grassland with isolated deciduous trees, and some distinct clumps surrounded by iron railings. The clumps are of mixed deciduous trees, and one includes a copper beech.

Inside the Porth-y-gwynnen gate is an area of mature conifers, including two large wellingtonias, on either side of the drive. There are also Portugal laurels and a magnolia in this area.

The area to the north-east of Ty Uchaf is open grassland with scattered isolated trees (mainly oak, with some lime, horse chestnut and plane).

The drive from the Rhyd-y-meirch gate is flanked by large sweet chestnuts.

BOUNDARIES

North: minor road and field boundaries

West: park wall along A 4042 Pontypool-Abergavenny road

South: minor road with park wall along western half

East: minor road

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

Essential setting: farmland to N and E of park

Viewpoints: A - from NE front of Ty Uchaf NE across park

LAND-USE

Permanent pasture; managed woodland (deciduous and coniferous); unmanaged woodland (former garden of Llanover House, see GARDEN section)

ELEMENTS OF BOTANICAL OR OTHER NATURE CONSERVATION INTEREST

None known

SURVIVAL OF INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS

Structural components: most (Pen-y-parc drive gone)

Water features: all

Built components: all

Planted components: some

THE PLEASURE GARDEN

Grid ref Ty Uchaf: SO 317083; Llanover House: SO 316087

Date/style Ty Uchaf: 1790s/informal water gardens, walled garden; Llanover House: 1830s/formal gardens, pleasure grounds

GENERAL DESCRIPTION, HISTORY AND LAYOUT

Ty Uchaf

The gardens of Ty Uchaf lie along the watercourse of the Rhyd-y-meirch stream, which runs SW-NE near the SE boundary of the park. They stretch in a narrow band from the park boundary at Rhyd-y-meirch to the walled kitchen garden, with the house in the middle. The area slopes gently down north-eastwards.

The gardens were laid out by Benjamin Waddington after he bought Ty Uchaf in 1792. It is of interest that his wife, Miss Port, was the great-niece of Mrs Delany, who brought her up. Bradney reported that Waddington's gardens 'have been allowed to remain unaltered'. Waddington made the ponds and cascades, and did much tree planting (in both park and gardens). In the grounds was an enormous rhododendron (*ponticum*) (160 ft in diameter as reported by Bradney) 'planted in 1800 as a seedling from New York' (Baroness de Bunsen, sketch 11 June 1864).

The gardens can be roughly divided into three sections: the south-west third is an undulating area of rough grass and specimen trees and shrubs, through which the stream winds naturally. In the middle section, below a low arched stone bridge, the stream becomes canalised, and splits, one branch leading to a circular pond via several small weirs. An artificial cascade links the pond with a lower, boomerang-shaped one, at the outlet of which is a further cascade. This pool forms the southern side of a roughly circular garden, walled on its other sides with a high brick wall, in the middle of which is a circular dovecote. The two branches of the stream, canalised and lined with stone, continue north-eastwards through an area of lawn to the south-east of the house, with a number of stone flag bridges over them. To the north-east of the house is a sloping lawn down to a ha-ha, beyond which is the park. There is a narrow raised terrace on the south-east side of the house.

The two branches of the stream rejoin and continue through the third section of the garden, a wilder area of rough grass and specimen trees and shrubs, through which the stream winds naturally, with further stone flag bridges. The garden ends just short of the south wall of the walled kitchen garden, where the grass path crosses the stream and returns on the other side. Much of the planting in the garden is modern, but there are some old trees, some of which may date from the original landscaping in the 1790s.

Llanover House

The former gardens and pleasure grounds of Llanover House are situated on level ground to the south, west and north-west of the ruined Llanover House, to the north-west of Ty Uchaf. When the house was abandoned, early in the 20th century, the gardens were left to go wild, and they have now reverted almost completely to the wild, with only a few specimen trees to show that this area was once ornamental gardens and grounds. The area is roughly rectilinear, bounded by the Porth-mawr drive on the north, the service drive and house on the east, and field boundaries on the south and west.

These gardens and grounds were laid out in the 1830s by Benjamin Hall, after he bought the estate in 1826. The site of Llanover House, close to the boundary with the Waddington estate, was chosen as it was on the edge of a large natural woodland that could be adapted for gardens and grounds. This gave the gardens a canopy of mature trees, in particular oaks. The gardens immediately around the house were formally laid out, with wide gravel paths bordered with flowerbeds, with lawns and specimen trees in the rest of the space. The focus of the garden to the west of the house, at the crossing of the central axes, was a large circular pool and fountain. To the north of it was a wide straight walk cut through the woodland. There were further paths through the wood, in the middle of which was a large naturalistic pond with a path round it. In it was a small island reached by a rustic bridge, and beside it was a rustic summerhouse. Along the western edge of the garden were a series of natural springs or wells, one of which was called the 'Nine Wells', which were heavily planted with ferns, bamboos etc. The gardens were noted for their many rare and beautiful plants (see *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 1911). The gardens were abandoned early in the 20th century, and reverted to the wild.

Almost nothing of the original layout of the gardens is visible today. All paths near the house have gone, and the position of the pool and fountain is marked by a patch of nettles. The long allée running N from the pool is still open, but has lost its formality and is partly overgrown. The lake and island still exist, but all built structures have gone. The gardens and grounds are generally overgrown. Some of the trees, for instance cedars, still exist, as does the deciduous woodland in which the grounds were made, but most ornamental planting has disappeared.

Ty Uchaf

STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

The sloping lawn in front of the north-east front of the house is bounded by a curving ha-ha which runs from the drive to Llanover House at the north end south-eastwards to the eastern edge of the lawn. It consists of a curving stone wall c. 1.5 m. high with a water channel outside it.

On the south-east side of the house is a small narrow terrace. The revetment wall is of stone with red tile bands. The wall is topped with iron railings, with rusticated stone piers at intervals. At the western end is a semi-circular projection and steps up to the terrace at the end. The terrace is paved with stone flags.

On the north-east side of the house the drive to the house expands to a gravel circle. Beyond is a gently sloping lawn.

The water gardens in the central section of the garden are man-made. Below the bridge at the south-eastern end of the first section (see above) the stream splits into two channels (with a sluice), both of which are canalised into narrow stone-lined channels. The southernmost channel runs along the garden boundary and rejoins the other branch in the third section of the garden (see above). The northernmost channel runs north-eastwards over a series of shallow weirs, where the water is constricted to the centre of the channel by low stone walls topped with stone flags. The channel continues down to a circular pool which is dammed with a bank lined with a stone wall. Along the south-

east side a straight stone wall separates the pond from the southern branch of the stream which runs the other side of it. The pond outlet is a cascade in the middle of the north-east side. This consists of a stone slope between low stone revetment walls in the dam bank. The slope is smooth except for protruding stones built into it, for additional picturesque effect. A further overflow runs from a grating in the dam down a narrow channel underneath the cascade. The channel continues under a bridge to a further pool below. This pool is boomerang-shaped, and has two small islands. The curving edges are lined with stone.

The lower pond outlet is again a cascade, similar to the higher one but with a low brick bridge over it. The channel then continues, canalised, through the walled garden and leaves it under an arch in the brick wall on the north-east side. The channel, still stone-lined and canalised, emerges into the open area of lawn to the east of the house, where it is joined by a smaller channel from near the house. The channel winds across the lawn, with stone flag bridges over it and a small weir, and rejoins the southern channel in the third section of the garden (see above). The stream then continues naturally to the end of the garden, and beyond carries on through the park.

BUILT COMPONENTS

There are many bridges in the gardens. The southernmost crosses the Rhyd-y-meirch stream just above the point where the channels diverge. It is a low, arched stone bridge, the arch lined with brick. It has low stone parapets and is cobbled on top.

Between the two ponds is a flat bridge of large stone flags with two central V-shaped stone cutwaters. In the walled garden are two brick bridges over the same channel: the upper one is a shallowly-arched bridge with very low brick parapets over the top of the cascade at the outlet to the boomerang pond. The lower one is a similar bridge near the north-east end of the garden.

In the lawn area to the east of the house the water channels are crossed by several small flat stone flag bridges, and there are further similar stone flag bridges in the lower part of the garden to the north-east.

The wall of the walled garden is a curving brick wall c. 2 m. high, which encloses the north-eastern and south-eastern half of this garden (the boomerang pond encloses the other half). The wall is higher (c. 3.5 m.) along the south-east side of the garden. In the east corner of the boomerang pond is a small stretch of stone wall which may be part of an older garden wall. Around the wall's inner side is a wide border edged with stone, which is flanked by a gravel path. There are arched entrances near the north-west and south-east ends of the wall, and the stream leaves the garden under a high brick arch (at the top of the wall). The wall stands to its full height. In the middle is a circular dovecote, set just inside the brick wall, with an entrance on the north-east side. It is rendered, with a conical stone tile roof topped by a weather vane. There are three rows of small circular 'windows' in the dovecote wall.

The terrace on the south-east side of the house has steps down from it at its western end.

ARCHITECTURAL ORNAMENTS

The terrace on the south-east side of the house is paved with stone flags, and is surrounded by iron railing balustrading. On the terrace is a lead cistern with geometric patterns and the date 1739 on it.

PLANTED COMPONENTS

The first, upper section of the garden is laid out informally, with rough grass, grass paths, and ornamental deciduous and coniferous trees and shrubs. This area contains many rare trees and shrubs, planted in the 20th century. The oldest trees are oaks, sycamores, horse chestnuts and pines.

In the second, central section of the garden, there are further mature trees - limes, beeches, and horse chestnuts - north-west of the circular pond. The planting in the walled garden is modern. On the lawns to the east of the house are several large mature trees (2 lime, one plane). Next to the drive north of the house is a large mature plane.

In the third, wilder section of the garden, the planting is informal, with winding grass paths through rough grass planted with mixed deciduous and coniferous trees and shrubs. At the end of the garden are a large plane, pines, yews and rhododendrons.

Reconstructions of original planted features

None

Special collections of garden plants

Very good collection of rare trees and shrubs

Documented living plants

Other (including elements of nature conservation interest)

None known

ESSENTIAL SETTING AND VIEWS BEYOND THE SITE

Essential setting: park to NW and NE of gardens

Views: A: NE from house across lawn and ha-ha to park

ANY SPECIAL FEATURES

None

SURVIVAL OF INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS

Structural components: all

Built components: most

Architectural ornaments: most

Planted components: some

Llanover House

STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

None of the paths of the garden are visible. The main north-south axis, an allée through the wood, remains open.

The lake, at SO 313087, remains. It is an irregular small lake overhung with trees and shrubs, in particular rhododendrons. Its bank is edged (where visible) with drystone walling. The island is completely overgrown with trees.

BUILT COMPONENTS

There are no built components remaining in the gardens. The position of the pool and fountain, at SO 3150086, is marked by a large patch of nettles. The area of the wells is completely overgrown.

ARCHITECTURAL ORNAMENTS

None

PLANTED COMPONENTS

The area of the gardens, originally woodland, has now more or less reverted to wild woodland, with very little ornamental planting left. The former lawns to the south of the house have been planted with conifers. To the west of the house, parallel with and at right-angles to the south-west wall of the service court, is an overgrown yew hedge on a raised bank. Beyond, to the south-west, there are further modern conifers and an area of rough grass with scattered mature trees, both deciduous and coniferous, including two large cedars. There are also some rhododendrons.

The woodland to the north-west, around the lake, is dense, with a canopy of mature oaks and an understorey of smaller trees and shrubs, including rhododendrons. There is one very large cypress.

Reconstructions of original planted features

None

Special collections of garden plants

None

Documented living plants

None

Other

None

ESSENTIAL SETTING AND VIEWS BEYOND THE SITE

Essential setting: park all around

ANY SPECIAL FEATURES

None

SURVIVAL OF INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS

Structural components: very little (lake)

Built components: none

Architectural ornaments: none

Planted components: very little

UTILITARIAN GARDENS

NAME Kitchen garden

Grid ref SO 321085

Date/style 19th century/walled kitchen garden

DESCRIPTION

The walled kitchen garden is situated next to the south-east boundary of the park, to the south of the Porth-y-gwenynen entrance. It is a large rectangular garden bounded by brick walls. These are c. 3.5 m. high (the NW wall is higher - c. 5 m.), with a stone capping, and stand to their full height all around. The main central gravel cross-path (NW-SE) survives. Parts of the interior are used for vegetable and soft fruit production, and there are a few scattered fruit trees, some old. Along the NW wall are ranged several glasshouses. These are somewhat neglected, but retain their glass and are still partially in use.

SOURCES

Primary

National Library of Wales:

Watercolour sketch of garden, 1880 (Drawings vol 165 f4)

Watercolour sketch by B.H. Johnes of garden (Drawings vol 165 no pag.)

Photo c. 1860-80 of house from park (Photo albums 123 f2)

Pen drawing of house by S. Rovere, c. 1843 (NLW MS 781A f47)

Photos, late 19th-early 20th century, and 1922-3 postcard (Llanover Photo File)

Gwent Record Office:

Photo showing Llanover House wells garden (D 554.181)

Newport Reference Library:

Watercolour sketches by Frances de Bunsen (xM416.6 758.1):

Circular pool with waterlilies (3 Sept 1852)

Circular pool, fountain, urns, paths (Aug 1852)

Part of grounds near house (3 June 1864)

Rhododendron planted in 1800 (11 June 1864)

Lake and rustic bridge (11 June 1864)

Grounds and peacocks, cows, trees (11 June 1864)

Ash and thorn growing together on lawn (13 June 1884)

Secondary

The Gardeners' Chronicle 6 May 1911, pp. 273-74.

J. Bradney, A History of Monmouthshire, Part II (1906).

South Wales Daily News, 'Welsh Country Homes' 19 Aug 1911.

AP

BKS Survey no 157782