

LLANGOED HALL

Ref No	PGW (Po) 12 (POW)
OS Map	161
Grid Ref	SO 120400
Former County	Powys
Unitary Authority	Powys
District	Brecknock
Community Council	Bronllys
Designations	Listed Buildings: Hall Grade II*, Engine House Grade II, Stables Grade II, Cottage Workshop (Laundry) Grade II, Laundry Wall Grade II.
Site Evaluation	Grade II
Primary reasons for grading	The first major architectural commission in the career of Sir Clough Williams-Ellis, worked around the core of an earlier house, and one of the last Edwardian Country Houses to be built. The structure of Williams Ellis' Edwardian garden, which incorporated existing nineteenth century features, also survives intact.
Type of Site	House with large, formal Edwardian garden; paved terraces and sunk lawn; wild garden; incorporated nineteenth century tree planting and ha-ha; recently remodelled walled kitchen.
Main Phases of Construction	House c. 1633, Williams-Ellis' work c. 1913-1919.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Llangoed Hall is an imposing Arts and Crafts style country house in an Elizabethan style built around the shell of an earlier Jacobean house which is believed to date from about 1633. The original drive, which has recently been replaced, enters the site, to the south of a lodge, from the west, off the present A 470. The Hall lies on the west side of open farmland, below the A 470, on the level flood plain of the River Wye, which flows around the east boundary of the old park/pasture area about 0.3 km to the east. The Hall is hidden from the recently upgraded road above by a thick mixed woodland which covers the ground that rises from the floodplain to the west of the Hall. On the west of the road the ground continues to rise into low hills, covered in

commercial conifer plantations. To the north and south of the site depleted, or unwooded ground, allows for clear views of the Hall from the A470.

The large three-storeyed, E-plan stone house has a hipped, stone-tiled roof and faces south-east. The third storey is lit by dormers. Five symmetrical bays define the west and east fronts. Large brick stacks stand at the ends of the north and south west wings and on the main roof ridge. The symmetrical five-bay west entrance front has a half hipped roof and a central full height entrance tower which has a seventeenth-century type window and balcony on its first floor. On the east garden front three three-sided Edwardian double-storey bays, set with stone mullioned and transomed windows, define the first, third and fifth bays, while two sets of French windows lead on to the garden terrace from the ground floor of the second and fourth bays. The central third bay has an additional storey containing a Venetian window and small balcony, which overlook the garden. A two-storey service range, containing the present dining room, attaches to the east front on the north. On the south front of the house the original two storey projecting porch survives. A set of seven semi-circular steps connect it with the garden below. The heraldic crest of the Williams family, the builders of Hall, is set above the main curved arch. Four symmetrical pairs of narrow leaded windows, on either side of the porch, light this front. The interiors of the house are executed in the Edwardian Italianate style and contain a galleried staircase which is ornamented by a wall mural by Rex Whistler.

A new restaurant/ function room extension, 'The Orangery', was completed in a similar style to the Edwardian house, to the north in about 1994.

Llangoed Hall was originally known as Llangoed Castle, remaining so until at least 1913, but no reference has been found to determine why the house has this title. Williams-Ellis believed that a house had stood on the site since 560 and that the site itself had been the venue of the first Welsh parliament (Hotel leaflet), but the source of his information is unknown. It is known that an Episcopal grange existed on the site during the medieval period when the lands were owned by Llantonny Abbey. Until at least 1888 the remains of a chapel, later used as a family burial ground, survived north-east of the site on the bank of the Wye (not recorded).

The core of the present house was built in about 1633 by the wealthy and politically powerful Williams family of Old Gwernyfed, the major mansion house of the area, who owned the majority of the surrounding land. From 1730 the family increasingly used Llangoed as a main residence and moved in permanently following a fire at Old Gwernyfed in about 1780, which subsequently became a tenanted farm. Their house, which faced south, survives in the south front of the present Hall, their arms of three cocks and a chevron set above the old doorway.

At about the turn of the nineteenth century the property was lost from the Williams', in a notorious night of gambling when several of the small estates and houses in the area were forfeit, to the MacNamara family. The castle the MacNamaras took on appears to have experienced a period of decline as the Tourist Henry Skrine had noted it languishing 'in undeserved neglect' in the 1790s. According to Theophilus Jones, the

MacNamaras quickly built a new house, which incorporated some of the existing house, and began to plant extensive shelter belts along the west and east sides of the surrounding farm/park, 'generally improving' the property. Samuel Lewis also noted Arthur MacNamara's wish to 'erect on a more eligible site a mansion of more stately magnificence than the present edifice and more in harmony with the incomparable beauties of the scenery'. However it seems that MacNamara kept the castle as the principal house and the only new building which took place within the immediate estate was that of 'New Gardens' to the far north of the house, a productive garden and orchard.

In 1847 the estate was bought by Joseph Bailey of Glanusk and Hay Castle and it remained within the Bailey estates until its purchase, much reduced in acreage, by Mr Archibald Christy, the London hatter, in about 1860.

The house was remodelled by Clough Williams-Ellis for Christy by 1914, his brief had been to remodel the existing south-facing house in the contemporary Edwardian style. Williams Ellis created a new entrance front and forecourt on the west, remodelled the previous entrance front on the south and created a new east front and formal garden. The final house differed slightly than the plan exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1913 but the architectural detail, reflected in the considerable cost, was retained as Williams-Ellis persuaded the family that the quality of craftsmanship would probably not be seen again.

Following Christy's death in 1920s the Hall was sold to Gerald Chichester, a relation, who continues to own Llangoed Farm and the surrounding land to the present day. Christy's widow remained in the Hall until her death in the 1960s, during which time the Hall and grounds declined. The Chichesters briefly occupied the Hall in the late 1970's when they moved to a neighbouring house, New Llangoed, near the site of the earlier 'New Gardens', that they had renovated and partially rebuilt between 1977 and 1978. The Hall deteriorated to such an extent that it was at risk from demolition when Sir Bernard Ashley and the Ashley House Hotel group bought the site in 1987 and began a programme of extensive restoration which culminated in the opening of the Hall as a luxury hotel in June 1990.

The stable block, coach house and service court lie about 50m to the north-west of the Hall and date to c.1913-19. The buildings were remodelled from existing, possibly early nineteenth century buildings by Williams-Ellis who added Edwardian/ Arts and Crafts detail, such as the coach house central white wood lantern and bell tower, to the stone and pantiled hipped roof buildings.

The coach house (garage) and stable block adjoin one another creating the west and north boundaries of the service court respectively. The doors survive in the three coach/garage bays and the loose boxes in the stables. Both these service buildings were centrally heated. Both are now used by the garden staff as office, common room and for storage.

The servants' accommodation dates to c. 1913-19 and consists of an Arts and Crafts

stone three storeyed house with north-west corner tower topped with large bronze salmon weather vane. This building marks the south-west corner of the service court and adjoins the coach house/garage. It probably contains the core of an earlier ancillary building. It is severely styled in an eccentric Italianate manner, and differs greatly in appearance from the softer stone and hipped buildings around. It was built to accommodate the house staff and it still serves this purpose, as well as housing the Estate Office.

In 1888 a kennel block was recorded on the Ordnance Survey map in this area but its exact location is unclear. It had been lost by 1902.

The generator house dates to c. 1913-19 and is a detached Arts and Crafts pastiche cottage style building, stone with a hipped pantile roof, central doorway and pair of symmetrical lattice windows on its north front. Small, ornamental lead lantern on the centre of the roof line with decorative finial. This building marks the south-west extent of the service court. It was built to house the electrical generator for the property and is now offices.

The laundry dates to c. 1913-19 and is a detached Arts and Crafts style building with an open two-arched loggia at its south end. This building was positioned to hide much of the service court from the forecourt but to be close to the house for convenience. It is still used as a laundry.

No actual parkland remains attached to the site and it is unclear if any open park ever existed on the site. The earliest known record of the area is the Ordnance Survey of 1809 which does record open park, but its small scale could have prevented detail such as field boundaries. Field boundaries are clearly marked on a tithe map of 1842 and these boundaries survive, generally unaltered, in the present farmland. Therefore it would seem more appropriate to describe the land around the Hall, from 1842 at least, as ornamented pasture rather than actual park.

The farmland around the Hall extends in a long, linear line from about 1/2 km to the north of the Hall to about 1 km to the south. The land reaches its widest point in the area of the Hall which is set about halfway down. Plantations, including 'Crow Wood', which in form date from at least 1809 and 1842, lie on the north west boundary of the site, to the west of 'New Gardens' and, in a more depleted form, a belt runs along the east boundary, the west bank of the river. These plantations are now either commercial forestry, or mixed woodland. However a few mature nineteenth century oak, lime and sweet chestnut, survive within them. A few of these trees stand isolated in the farmland but these planting are more probably representative of lost field boundaries than of deliberate isolated park planting. In the field immediately to the south of the Hall there is a small pond, of uncertain date, surrounded by willow and poplar.

The land around Llangoed Castle was part of a large estate, of uncertain origin. It appears that the Williams family bought the land, later erecting, or remodelling, a house although it is unknown if they were responsible for any ornamentation of the

surrounding land beyond the immediate garden area. Woodland on the site at this time could have been of ancient origins. The earliest known written descriptions of the land at Llangoed are found in Henry Skrine's Tour and Samuel Lewis' topographical dictionary which noted the 'rich groves' in the 'extensive domain' and 'extensive' grounds respectively. Lewis also noted that the River Wye 'skirts the demesne for nearly 2 1/2 miles', that there was a walk, parallel to the river, that ran 'through the grounds' and that the 'the surrounding eminences, of which some are very lofty and are clothed with stately and valuable timber'.

From map evidence it appears that the present form of the land around the house, the plantations and the woodland belts, had been established by 1809, probably by the MacNamara family who both Skrine and Lewis record as the owners. The tithe map of 1842 provides a clearer record, a belt along the west boundary being conifer, that along the east broadleaf. Tree planting enclosed the house on the west and east with some isolated park-style planting being recorded in the east and south fields. The area is clearly divided up with field boundaries and the planting and fields are simply recorded as 'plantation' and 'pasture'. One of the more interesting features recorded on the tithe map is a peculiar, isolated 'avenue' to the north of the house. No reference to this planting has been found and it appears to have been lost by 1888. The MacNamaras probably also constructed a ha-ha on the east and south of the garden/pleasure ground as there appears to be a clear demarcation between garden and path on the 1842 tithe map.

The proximity of the Hall to the River Wye, its fertile flood plains and the attached forestry interests made the site a good investment for the Bailey family of Glanusk who purchased in it 1847, but the actual history of the site during their tenure and any changes that they may have made to the park are unknown. In about 1860 the Glanusk Estate sold a much reduced estate (beyond the immediate site boundary) to Archibald Christy. (The Baileys retained much of the land to the north and south of the Hall as pasture until the Bailey estates were gradually broken up from the late nineteenth century, this land being bought by the Chichester family prior to their purchase of the house). Interestingly on the 1888 Ordnance Survey map the small field to the south of the Hall which abuts the road (A470) was shaded as parkland but by 1902 this had resumed its previous unshaded status. Christy's land included a right of way across the park to the river bank, probably to fish in the productive Llangoed Pool. Most of the Glanusk Estate had been sold off by 1924 and the farmland at Llangoed is presently owned and managed by the Chichesters. The private right of way between the Hall and the river is retained by the Hotel. It links up with the public Wye Valley Walk on the west river bank. A standing stone stands in the farmland to the south of the Hall.

The garden surrounds Llangoed Hall on all sides. The formal garden created by Clough Williams-Ellis lies immediately to the east of the Hall, a paved terrace connecting it to the house. A wild garden, also attributed to Williams-Ellis, created around a stream descending from the north-west lies approximately 250m to the west of the Hall. On the north of the Hall a walled enclosure has been laid out as a formal garden since 1990 and on the south, lawns and a mature cedar of Lebanon provide a

record of an earlier nineteenth century layout.

The drive enters the site from the south-west, running along a strip of land taken from the southern farmland. It approaches the forecourt on the west front of the house from the west, running downhill past the new car park which lies to the north of the drive in an area of open woodland. About 10m to the west of the forecourt the new drive is intersected by the line of the original drive which entered the site, to the south of a lodge, in the north-west. This drive crosses a stream over a stone bridge, to the south of the farm, inside the grounds. The stream continues to the south between the open woodland of the car park and a denser western planting; a small arboretum which contains a small, and now abandoned, water garden.

The rectangular forecourt on the west front of the house is enclosed by a wall on the north and by high yew hedges on the west, on either side of the drive where it enters a gravel turning circle. A pair of seventeenth-century stone gate piers, which join to the hedges, stand on either side of the drive at this point. On the south of the forecourt there is a low stone wall with a central gateway, set with a iron rose arch, which leads down a set of stone steps into the south garden. Between the gravel turning circle and the walls and hedges there are small areas of grass which have been planted up with sorbus. A narrow border, edged in low box hedging, runs along the west front of the house.

The south garden, reached by six stone steps from the forecourt above. It comprises of a lawn which is dominated by a mature Cedar of Lebanon. The lawn is uneven which suggests a previous planting or building. On the south the lawn is enclosed by a stone ha-ha, set with a reproduction nineteenth-century iron fence, which continues around along the eastern boundary of the formal garden. Just inside the ha-ha traces of an old metalled drive survive.

A gravel path leads from the forecourt steps east towards the old front porch on the south front which connects to the path by a flight of seven Edwardian circular stone steps. The path continues along the south front of the house to a circular sundial base near the south-east corner. A narrow, box edged flower border runs along the south front of the house, between the path and the wall.

The sundial also marks the south-west corner of the east terrace garden which runs the length of the back of the Hall, for approximately 100m, before reaching six stone steps on the north, which lead up to the Orangery.

The stone paved terrace stands on the west side of the east garden. The east garden is rectangular and comprises of a continuation of the terrace, as a raised walk, which surrounds a sunken croquet lawn. The Croquet Lawn is reached on all four sides by three central, stone steps from the surrounding walk. On the south, the area is bordered by four mature Irish yew, to the east by a grass terrace 4m wide, retained by the ha-ha and to the north by low planting along the north edge of the sunk lawn which is separated from a pair of wide herbaceous borders by a gravel path. These borders are backed by the wire fence of a tennis court.

The stone terraces comprise of a small, central upper terrace, approximately 12m long and 3m wide, which is reached from the Hall by the drawing, dining and reception rooms and connected to a second level by two symmetrical flights of stone steps. A central flight of ten wide steps then descend again to the terrace proper. This main terrace can also be reached through the Venetian window and accompanying stone steps at its northern end. The terrace is ornamented with various container plantings and with two narrow, box edged borders in front of the walls, each side of the upper terrace steps.

The area to the west of the Orangery, a rectangle of approximately 12 x 5m, which separates it from the tennis court, is laid out in a simple design of stone slab paving path and grass, which echoes the design of the terrace. A new yew hedge has been replanted around the tennis court. At the north-west edge of this area a short length, approximately 3m, of mature yew hedge stands, which marks the edge of the site of a vegetable garden. From the Orangery a path leads to the west into the north garden, created on the site of an earlier kitchen garden.

The earliest clear record of an ornamental garden occurs on a tithe map of 1842 (the 1809 Ordnance Survey map having too small a scale for detail) which records wooded grounds around the house, a clear boundary on the south and east, possibly the ha-ha, and a circulatory drive on the south of the house. Most interestingly a 'canal' is recorded on the east of the house, a formal rectangular basin. This is the only known reference to this feature and may have been contemporary with the original house of about 1633. To the north-west of the house a second water feature, a circular pool, is recorded in a mixed woodland.

By 1888 the form of the present garden had been established; the south and east boundaries were similar, if not identical to those of 1842 and the circular drive lay to the south of the house on a lawn. Noted additions to the grounds by this date included the lodge (although a datestone suggests that it was in place from 1632), and a square enclosure on the east of the house, later the site of the croquet lawn, which had four large trees planted along its northern side. The south and west grounds still appear to have been heavily planted at this date, the conifers, 'arboretum' to the west of the house probably having been established.

An undated photograph from the late nineteenth century records the south front of the Bailey house which had a small Victorian conservatory attached to its south-west corner. The date of the erection, and final demolition, of this feature is unknown and it is unclear if it is marked on either the 1888 or 1902 Ordnance Survey maps.

The 1903 Ordnance Survey map records an almost identical arrangement in the grounds to that of 1888. However, some of the planting had been depleted and a footbridge is recorded in the area of the arboretum suggesting that an ornamental woodland/water garden may have been begun.

The form of the present garden is, however, attributed to the architect, Clough

Williams-Ellis, who developed an existing lay out of lawns, which may have already included a croquet lawn on the east of the house, with stone terraces and new planting in addition to resiting the entrance of the house from the south to the west front. The wide terrace steps and north doorway are recorded on the 'East Elevation' of his proposed plans of 1913. Mature trees, such as the cedar of Lebanon, which appear to date from the early nineteenth century were also retained by Williams-Ellis. Sadly no plans, notes or sketches of the garden features, apart from the terrace, are known to have survived.

In the arboretum it also appears that Williams-Ellis probably augmented an existing layout but one that he extended. Photographs dating from about 1920 record a pool and plantings on the south edge of the east lawn, not recorded on the 1903 Ordnance Survey, suggest that the wild garden was extended.

In about 1920 the Castle employed at least 20 groundsmen. The structure of Williams-Ellis's garden remained, but following the decline in availability and the rise in cost of garden staff during and after the two World Wars the gardens gradually declined, becoming totally overgrown by 1990. The hotel has restored the east garden, planting typical Edwardian plants and replanted the forecourt and tennis court yew hedges.

Lying immediately to the north of the Hall is the old walled kitchen garden which covers approximately 1 acre. It is walled on the north, west and east the south side opening on to the Hall. The walls are of stone rubble and were originally copped, little of which survives. They stand approximately 2.5m high, graduating up to 3.5-4m on the north side, are in good condition but do have signs of repair. On the south face of the east wall iron pins and hooks for securing fruit trees survive. Three mature espalier fruit trees also survive on this wall.

The central area of this garden has been developed as a series of four interconnecting themed gardens, a herb garden, a roserie, a maze and a bedded out parterre since 1990. The four are divided by cruciform paths, in gravel, the north/south of which is bordered with mature standard fruit trees. To the west of these gardens a path runs from north to south down the garden, bordered in its middle section by a mature nut walk. At the northern end there is a stone Arts and Crafts-style arched door, ornamented with key stone detail, containing an old wooden door. At the southern end of the walk there is a second Arts and Crafts doorway containing a formal Edwardian iron gate, set in a screen.

On the west of this path there is a new area of garden, abutting the stable block wall which forms the garden boundary. A pair of symmetrical curving herbaceous borders surround a lawn in this new garden. The area is bordered to the south by a double arched iron pergola which divides the garden from a utility area. There is no evidence of any glass ranges in this walled garden, and no evidence of bothies or utility buildings on the south face of the north wall. The only surviving evidence of a range is outside the boundary of the site along a short wall, a continuation of the north garden wall behind the coach house. To the north of the tennis court, east of the

walled garden, there is a second square enclosure, now grass, which contains a second helipad.

The walled enclosure of the kitchen garden is marked in its present position on the 1809 Ordnance Survey map. It appears to have been planted up as an orchard. In addition, a second square, possibly walled, enclosure, known as 'New Garden' in 1842, is marked to the north of the house. By 1842 the garden was recorded divided into two halves by a central path and the 'New Garden' with what appear to be ancillary buildings/bothies on the north and west. A substantial orchard had also been laid out to the north of this garden by this date. According to the tithe map this area of the property had already been sold off to the Chichester family by this date.

By 1888 the walled garden had an additional division on the west side and a few trees on the east of the central path. However, by 1902 the central area appears to have declined as it is recorded blank. The enclosure to the east, previously planted up, also appears to have been bought into the productive area by this date, possibly incorporating a frameyard in the section marked off on the map in the north-west corner.

In 1888 the 'New Garden' appears to have been partly abandoned, the walls, or boundary, have been lost and the area informally planted. This decline continued as in 1902 only part of the buildings, which were clearly marked in 1888 remained and the planting in the enclosure area was further degraded.

The northern orchard however, appears to have experienced a Renaissance by 1903. Having progressively declined in the late nineteenth century from being lost through interplanting recorded in 1888 the orchard is clearly recorded with ranks of trees in 1903.

The Arts and Crafts stonework incorporated into the north and south walls of the walled garden suggest that this area was partly, or wholly, redesigned by Williams-Ellis in about 1913. The fruit trees along the central west/east path could date from that time. However, no other record of the appearance of the garden at this time is known to have survived. From about 1920 the area to the east of the walled garden was known as the vegetable garden and vegetables were cultivated here until the 1960s on a gradually diminishing scale until the area was abandoned and grassed over.

There is no record of any glass houses having been erected in the walled garden. It is also unclear when the glass house to the west of the garden was erected and dismantled. All that survives is an area of whitewash and some brick footings.

Sources

Primary Tithe map, 1842, National Library of Wales.
Photographs c. 1900 and 1985, Royal Commission for Ancient Historic Monuments in Wales.
Original architectural drawings of Hall, Clough Williams-Ellis, 1913.

Held at Hotel (reproduced in Haslam, Clough Williams-Ellis, below).
Late nineteenth century of the south front of the house, private collection.

Photographic record of the Ashley restoration of the house and garden c. 1990, held at the hotel

- Secondary** Ashley House Hotels History of Llangoed Hall and Fact Sheet , (1990), (leaflet).
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