

## MAESLLWCH CASTLE

<b>Ref No</b>	<b>PGW (Po) 18 (POW)</b>
<b>OS Map</b>	148
<b>Grid Ref</b>	SO 174404
<b>Former County</b>	Powys
<b>Unitary Authority</b>	Powys
<b>District</b>	Radnorshire
<b>Community Council</b>	Glasbury
<b>Designations</b>	Listed Building: Castle Grade II, Gate piers, gates and screen, east drive Grade II, Gate Lodge Grade II.
<b>Site Evaluation</b>	<b>Grade II*</b>
<b>Primary reasons for grading</b>	A large-scale nineteenth-century park and garden forming the picturesque setting to a grand Victorian mock castle, in an outstanding situation.
<b>Type of Site</b>	Grand baronial 'castle' house and services, partly demolished; arboretum; kitchen garden with internal gardener's cottage and early nineteenth-century iron espalier rails; water garden; parkland planting and plantations.
<b>Main Phases of Construction</b>	c. 1829-40; late nineteenth-century; c. 1955

## SITE DESCRIPTION

Maesllwch Castle is sited on a terrace on the north-west flank of the Wye valley, overlooking the valley, the village of Glasbury and the Black Mountains beyond. It is a grand and imposing house, a romantic 'medieval' castle with many towers, and was built for Walter Wilkins (later de Winton) by Robert Lugar (1773-1855) between 1829 and 1840, using a fortune made in India. The ground-floor plan was identical to that of Lugar's Glanusk Park ( PGW(Po)3(POW)), executed for the Bailey family, and the interiors reflected the eclectic Victorian taste; Norman, Regency and gothic styles being among them. The 'Bachelor Tower' on the eastern end of the castle, separated from the other formal rooms by a top lit gothic billiard room, was added in 1872 in the same style as the castle, by E. H. Burnell and H.S. Legg.

Lugar's house was apparently the third to have been built on the site. The first was a hall house owned by William Vaughan (died 1582). On William's death the property passed out of the Vaughan family and, through one of his daughters, to Charles Lloyd (died 1698). His daughter and heiress married Humphrey Howarth, who built the second house in 1729. A drawing of this house, which was known as Maeslough House, records a two-storey, five-bay house, with a hipped roof, in the Queen Anne style. It had a belvedere balcony on the second storey. It is believed that this house was sited further north, up the hill behind the present house, and that it possibly incorporated part of the original house, as the drawing records two styles of window, lattice and sash. The Howarth family were bankrupted in c. 1750 and the estate was bought by the Clive family, from which it was bought, before 1773, by John Wilkins (died 1784), a banker and solicitor from Brecon. Walter Wilkins, his eldest son, inherited the estate and was MP for Radnorshire in 1796-1828. It was for Walter and his son Walter (Walters I and II) that the present house was built.

During the Second World War the house was requisitioned for a Canadian hospital and in 1942 by the Land Army. It was derequisitioned in 1951, when most of the western end of the house, including the large circular porte-cochere on the north-west side. Partial rebuilding by 1955-56 created a flat for the present owner's mother and a terrace garden which, through design, illustrates the position of the lost towers and the porte-cochere. The family now live in the central block and the eastern end, including the Billiard Room, is not in use.

The stables and coach houses, dating to c. 1829-40, are contemporary with the house and in the same style and materials. They connect to the eastern end of the main house, creating an L-shape which forms the eastern end of an entrance court to the rear of the house. In the centre of the northern range there is a gate tower with a slate clock set on its western face. The eastern drive, the main drive, leaves the entrance court by way of the arch of the gate tower. On leaving the gate tower the eastern drive passes a carriage court to the south which is surrounded by high stone wall on the east and north, creating a triangular court. Four carriage bays lie on the south side of this area, some bricked up. In the north-west corner of the area there is a wartime nissan hut, now a garage. The enclosing walls connect to a pair of high, capped stone gate piers but no gate survives.

The stables lie on either side of the gate tower and are entered by way of the arch. Tiled floors and walls survive showing the position of the loose boxes. The stables are now used as workshops/storage. Connecting to the northern end of the stables there is a small, two storeyed range which proceeds to the east for about 20m. This was the accommodation for the stable staff.

The park at Maesllwch is roughly square in shape and covers an area of about 300 acres. The park is set on the south and eastern sides of a hill, below the small settlement of Ffynnon Gynydd. The northern and southern boundaries of the park are created by the steep roads leading to and from this settlement. The park is split into two areas by the east and south-west drives. The degree of the ground slope increases

below the drives as the ground descends towards the floodplain of the river Wye. Within the park there are three main areas of woodland: Castle Wood, behind the house, the Nursery, which created the western boundary of the park and a woodland bordering the east drive near Gas House Cottage. Parkland planting, predominantly of oak, survives, some of the trees appearing to be relics of old field boundaries. Along the south-western drive more ornamental planting occurs including exotics and an avenue.

The early history of the park is unclear but it appears that part was taken from the common of Ffynnon Gynydd prior to the main enclosures of the early 1800s. Certainly the park was in existence by 1775, when a survey suggests that the extent of the park was much the same as it is today, possibly already having incorporated earlier open fields on the western banks of the river. This would suggest that it was the Howarths who first made a part here in the first half of the eighteenth century.

A ha-ha which survives around the north-west and north-east perimeter of Castle Wood is believed to predate the house of 1829 and relate to the second house. The drawing of the old house(s) appears to have been made from the east, with the belvedere looking south towards the river. This suggests that the east front was the entrance front at that time, perhaps making the eastern drive the original formal access to the site. The second house is recorded on the sketch Ordnance Survey map of 1809, which shows an established park to the south of the house, enclosed on its east by a plantation. Two oval features, possibly pools are recorded to the south of the house. The south drive, which was later ornamented by an avenue, appears to have been a public road at this time, connecting Glasbury with the Common above. The south-west drive is also recorded as another road, which passed through Cwmbach woodlands on the west of the present park, to connect with a track, or drive to the east of the house that ran down to 'Llanhenwy' (present Glan-hen-Wye, the track probably being the present east drive), before continuing to Maesyronen.

Between a title of 1847 and the first Ordnance Survey map of 1888 some of the parkland trees were planted and the park was laid out in its present form. This followed the resiting of the Glasbury to the Common road further west and the creation of the three drives from the south, south-west and east from the previous public roads. All of these improvements were probably contemporary with the erection of the new house between 1829 and 1840 for Walter Wilkins I.

By 1903 both of the elm avenues, which had been planted along the south-west and south drives had lost trees, although the south avenue remained largely intact. One elm was recorded at 125ft in 1931. In the 1970s the remaining elms on the south drive were lost to disease. The south-east side of the south-west drive was replanted with oak and horse chestnut. The only other significant development in the park between 1888 and 1903 was the creation of a drive, or track, from the house to the riding stables on the southern boundary. Hunting was an important feature of life at Maesllwch Castle in the nineteenth century. After the Second World War this site was developed as a Home Farm.

The south drive, which was partly abandoned by the late 1960s, ran south from the south-west of the house across the park, entering Glasbury to the rear of the inn, the Maesllwch Arms. A lodge, Harrow Lodge, stands to the north of this entrance. In 1991 a fine pair of ornamental iron gates, by then derelict and dangerous, were relocated from here to a position north-west of the south-west end of the house, between modern gate piers. The gates had been erected in 1914 as a memorial to Walter de Winton VI, who died in that year in the First World War, aged 21. They were re-erected in commemoration of the present owner's father.

Trees are dotted throughout the open parkland, some of them in rows suggesting former field boundaries. As well as the larger plantations there is a large clump, the 'round-about' clump, in the southern park, where a natural pool was surrounded by trees between 1857 and 1888. An undated sketch survives in the archives suggesting that similar circular plantings were planned for the northern park but this appears not to have taken place. Planting has continued in a smaller way to the present. The parkland was traditionally tenanted pasture, a system which was only changed in 1946.

The situation and picturesque quality of the park were appreciated throughout the nineteenth century by travellers and writers, including Henry Skrine, J. C. Loudon and S. Lewis who recorded its 'fine situation', 'respectable structure' and its 'extremely beautiful' position respectively. Lewis also noted 'a beautiful lawn (which) declines to the water's edge' (of the Wye). However, this is poetic license as the park did not extend beyond the south side of the present A 438, although the estate did. The appeal of the site is captured in an undated sketch at the National Gallery of Wales, c. 1850, which shows the south drive lined with generously mature trees and wooded parkland, creating a secluded, romantic appearance, heightening the fairy-tale aspect of the castle.

During the Second World War the park suffered some damage. Concrete hard standing remains to the east of the coach houses. The park plantations and planting were depleted and large areas of the park were cultivated for crops for the first time. The park was taken in hand in 1946 and the family returned to live at Maesllwch Castle in 1955, having been based at Glan-hen-Wye, a secondary house opposite the eastern entrance, during the war. The main addition to the park since the Second World War has been the Home Farm complex off the main A 438 on the eastern boundary of the park, built in the 1950s. New farm tracks were made at this time.

The Ordnance Survey map of 1903 records the creation of a cricket pitch/sports ground and pavilion in the south-west corner of the park, near Glasbury. The pavilion survives. Below the castle terrace a hard tennis court, which survives, was created in about 1936.

The east drive is now the main approach to the castle. This enters the site approximately half way down the eastern site boundary opposite Glan-hen-Wye. The drive proceeds through a formal entrance. The lodge stands to the north of the drive set on a raised, level plot which curves to the north-east to accommodate the

entrance. It is a single-storey stone and slate roof buildings with a large gable, an extended porch on the south, and latticed windows. It is attributed to Lugar, being built in about 1829. Below the south front of the lodge there is a low stone wall set with iron railings. A flight of three, narrow stone steps connects the porch with the drive. A small enclosed garden lies to the rear of the lodge.

The entrance is set off the road and it comprises a screen, a pair of curved dressed stone walls, set with iron railings with fleur-de-lys terminals, of a total height of about 2.5m, which connect with rougher stone estate walls to the north and south. Between the estate and the dressed stone wall there are a pair of terminal piers of rough octagonal stone which are about 2m high. On either side of the drive, connected to the terminal piers by the screen, there is a pair of fine, dressed sandstone octagonal gothic piers of about 3.5m high. A pair of nineteenth-century iron gates stands between them.

The drive is about 1 km long and is metalled in a variety of surfaces. It proceeds west into the park before heading up hill to the north-west where it enters a small plantation characterised by commercial and ornamental conifers of mixed date, from c. 1890/1900 to the 1960s. At this point the drive splits and a branch to the south-west connects to Gas House Cottage, which is hidden within the wood. The main drive proceeds uphill to the north-west before levelling out and heading west across the park. After about 200m the drive enters the approach to the house, enclosed to the north by the eastern end of Castle Wood, itself enclosed by a ha-ha. The drive concludes in the entrance court, reached through the gate house arch. There are no gates but a bell used to announce arrivals.

On line with the eastern drive the south-west drive proceeds out of the entrance court in roughly a straight line for about 1 km to the south-west where it exits the park beside the church. The south-western entrance is less formal than that on the east and is defined by a continuation of the estate wall which curves inwards, on the south. The churchyard is separated from the drive by a low stone and rail wall, which is set with two foot gates. A George V postbox is set into the western end of the estate wall near the road. About 3m off the road there stands a pair of narrow dressed stone piers with pyramidal finials. No gate survives but there is a nineteenth-century iron foot gate on the southern side between the pier and the wall. The drive becomes increasingly rough the further south-west you proceed and is used as a farm/service track. The line of the south drive is still discernible. It exits in the village at the rear of the parking area of the Inn. Harrow Lodge stands to the north of the drive at this point.

All of these drives were recorded, as public roads, on the 1809 Ordnance Survey map. It is believed that they were rerouted and upgraded during the 1830s, contemporary with the building of the castle. The route of the Glasbury to Clyro road, now the A438, which bounds the east side of the park, has shifted since the mid nineteenth century, when it took a slightly more westerly route to the north of the present Home Farm, running past Glan-hen-Wye to the lodge. It was moved eastwards in the second half of the nineteenth century and later was straightened to by-pass Glan-hen-Wye and

the lodge altogether. Despite the road, the view from the house and park across the Wye valley to the Black Mountains remains beautiful and unspoilt.

To the south of the main east drive, set in woodland, there is a stone and brick house - Gas House Cottage - dating from about 1840. The house faces south. There is a small garden to the west and a kennel block to the east. Low brick walls set with high iron railings surround the runs. To the north-east of the kennels there is an abandoned building of brick with a slate roof with large openings on its southern face. This was the Gas House, the site of a gas holder which produced gas for the house from the mid-1800s. This was marked 'Gas works' on the 1903 Ordnance Survey map, which also shows a pheasantry to the south.

Surrounding the park from the eastern entrance to the south-western drive are stretches of stone wall, fence and hedge. The wall stands about 1.2m high and is coped in rustic stone. Along the A438 a concrete block wall was built in the 1970s, contemporary with the latest road improvements.

The Nursery creates the western boundary of the park, bounded on its south-west side by a stone wall. It is the largest plantation on the site. It appears that this plantation was established by the mid-1800s possibly as a nursery for trees elsewhere in the park as well as in the wider estate, hence the name. Much of the plantation was clear felled during the First World War and is now a mixed commercial and ornamental woodland with a high percentage of conifers. Some mature conifers, nineteenth-century plantings including Scots pine, have survived.

Gas House Cottage Wood, which borders the eastern drive in the vicinity of the Gas House Cottage, contains various examples of nineteenth-century planting including Monkey Puzzle, Douglas fir and pine. The majority of the wood dates to after 1949-50, when replanting started after the Second World War. A well established shrub layer of laurel and rhododendron was also recorded and is probably contemporary a late nineteenth/ early twentieth addition to the woodland planting.

In 1948 one of the oaks in the park was recorded as having a girth of 21ft. Black poplars were also recorded in the park in 1907 and one remains below the castle. To the south of the eastern end of the south-western drive there are various ornamentals including deodar cedar, horse chestnut, lime and copper beech. Horse chestnuts and holm oaks are also to be found in the fields below the house terrace. One notable find was a particularly mature Yellow Buck-eye (*Aesculus flava*) with a graft about 1.2m above ground level to the south-west of the house. This tree appears to be at least 120 years old. No trace of the elm avenues along the south-western or south drives survives. A new avenue of oak and horse chestnut has been planted (1992) along the south-western drive.

The pleasure grounds and gardens lie to the north, north-west and south of the house. To the north and north-west the pleasure grounds occupy a south-east sloping area called Castle Wood which lies to the north of the main west/east drive and the entrance court. This area is bordered to the north by a stone ha-ha which runs from

the east drive around to the north of a frame yard, to the north of the kitchen garden. On the north-west edge of the area there is an ice-house and near it a circular Victorian reservoir surrounded by iron railings, with an associated rock pool and waterfall. The ice-house faces south-east and the dome is partly incorporated into the ground slope to the north. The entrance to the ice-house is sealed off but at least four narrow steps descend to the site of the door. The date of this structure is unclear but it is recorded on the 1888 Ordnance Survey map.

From the north-west of the entrance court a flight of stone steps connects to a path which winds through an area of ornamental beech and oak woodland, which includes an unusual larch plantation, to the walled kitchen garden, lying within the pleasure grounds. Paths in the wood date to the 1890s or earlier and were metalled so that they could be negotiated by goat-carts. To the south-west of the kitchen garden there is the site of an abandoned rose garden, enclosed by yew hedging. To the south of this, and the kitchen garden, there is an abandoned water garden which was created along a stream that runs from south-west to north-east through the area. Below the water garden there is an area of mature ornamental trees and shrubs planted on a rough lawn, which is bordered on the east by banks of rhododendron. An ornamental iron and stone gateway stands at the foot of this area, connecting it to the south-west drive below. A main south-west/north-east path runs between the eastern wall of the kitchen garden and the water garden before concluding in a gate at the north-east corner of the kitchen garden. Along the eastern length of the kitchen garden this path is bordered on the west by a narrow box hedged border in which a mature jasmine and wisteria are planted, trained against the garden walls. A service track surrounds the entire area on the west and north which continues in form only to the entrance court on a south-east diagonal from the rear of the kitchen garden.

On the site of the south-west part of the house - the drawing room, library, central hall, ante-room and dining room - a new garden was created from the 1950s. The walls on the north-west side were kept higher to screen the garden from the drive. Gerald de Winton sought the advice of the eminent garden designer Russell Page in the garden's layout and planting. This was given but not entirely followed, the design and planting owing more to Mr de Winton's wife. Russell Page's sunken area was rejected and box balls and a statue were substituted. The rose garden was a failure and was replaced by four small borders, a seat and copper tub. Later one of the borders was paved.

The garden is formal in design, bounded by the stumps of the outer house walls. It has a central path bordered with pairs of clipped box and a small swimming pool on the south-western side. In the middle of the south-east side a flight of wide, dressed stone steps descends from the garden (formerly from the ante-room) to a long grass terrace which is about 150m long and runs the length of the house front, continuing around the south-western end. The terrace is bounded by a low balustraded wall, the ground below falling steeply to the park below.

The early history of the pleasure grounds is unclear but it appears that the original sixteenth-century house was built within them, in woodland. By 1775 it appears that

gardens had been created near the second house as a survey of that date clearly records 'gardens' below the house to the south-east, together with a water feature that may be a canal and orchards to the west and north-east. The north boundary of the grounds was similar in shape to the present northern boundary of Castle Wood suggesting that the ha-ha was in place by that date.

In 1809 the Ordnance Survey map recorded 'Maeslough House', the second house within a circular enclosure. A track, or drive, ran south-west off the Maesyronnen road to reach the house on the east. The small scale of the map makes it difficult to distinguish detail but it seems that woodland lay to the north and a large orchard along the east park boundary. Two large oval features are also recorded below the house in the park. In view of the 1775 map one of these features could have been the canal or pond.

However, the overall appearance of the pleasure grounds today dates from the Victorian period, following the rebuilding of the house in the 1820s and 1830s. It is possible that the older beech and oak woodland may be a remnant of early nineteenth-century planting, with ornamental paths winding beneath, along with other individual specimen trees including the ginkgo, Cedar of Lebanon and mulberries to the south of the kitchen garden. The ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*) dates to 1796 and is contemporary with a Clive family one at Whitfield Court, Herefordshire. Certainly from the mid century the woodland seems to have been augmented with other ornamental plantings, the larch being established from 1890, the wellingtonias from about 1888, with the Asiatic and American rhododendron and azalea introductions increasing towards the end of the century.

Within the pleasure grounds the rose garden and water garden are also probably late nineteenth- or early twentieth-century additions. Photographs dating from the 1930s record the formal rose garden with beds and pillar roses in a style contemporary with the turn of the century. In the centre of the rose garden the photographs record a bronze Hermes statue on a stone pedestal which has since been relocated to the new terrace garden near the house. The channel in the water garden is now largely dry, although it does fill up in wet weather. Water was brought to it in a long leat, in a tunnel for part of the way, from the valley to the west.

The walled kitchen garden lies about 150m to the south-west of the house set within the western pleasure grounds. The garden covers about 1 acre and is set on the slope of the hillside, facing south-east. A service track runs along the north-west of the garden separating it from a now abandoned frame yard, to the west of which there is a narrow laurel and sweet chestnut plantation which separates this area from the north-western park beyond.

The four walls of the kitchen garden remain largely intact and consist of red brick on a stone base. This stone base runs at various heights around the area and may be the remains of an earlier garden, predating the rebuilding of the house from about 1829. The interior of the walls are characterised by a red brick skin, of bricks of different ages, and all the walls are coped with stone. The north-west wall stands to about 4m



high and the south-east to about 2.5m. Entrances are set in all of the walls, those on the south-west and centre-west being service doors. Formal entrances are found on the north-west and south-east and are defined by fine nineteenth-century iron gates.

The interior of the garden is laid out in quarters, the areas being defined by central and peripheral gravel paths edged by mature box hedges. The central south-west/north-east path is the widest at about 1.2m and is lined with rough stone edging and espalier fruit trees some of which appear to date from at least 1900. A few bronze fruit labels survive, 'Charles Ross' being noted. These apples are supported by ornamental cast iron espalier railings which continue along all the paths. According to an article of 1836 the railings were erected in 1834 and originally ran to at least 1200 ft.

At the south-western end of the central path there is the Head Gardener's house. This is a two-storey red brick, slate roof, cottage which straddles the south-western wall. On the north-eastern side a central porch and two windows characterise this charming building. A wooden doorway is located in the wall to the north of the cottage which connects to the area to the south-west. One of the last head gardeners was a Mr H. G. McCormack who came from the royal gardens at Windsor and Sandringham and who retired in c. 1936. Another retired in 1943.

Along the south-east face of the north-west wall there were greenhouses, one of which was a vinery. All that remain of these structures are the brick footings which extend about 3m into the garden along a level terrace, whitewash along the wall, a central chimney built into the west wall, and iron clamps, nails and hooks in the brick work. East of the glass house site there is a sundial set on moulded stone plinth which is about 1.2m high. Nearby there are iron drainage grills set beside the paths indicating a sophisticated drainage system. The central portion of the garden has been used to cultivate Christmas trees since the 1960s.

Along the outer face of the north-western wall is a series of derelict bothies and storage areas. Doorways connecting this area to the garden below have been bricked up. Separated from them by a service track there is a derelict frame yard which is bordered to the north-west by a freestanding brick wall about 4m high and 12m long which supports a glass house, now abandoned, which had been rebuilt in about 1960. Between the glass house and the track there are at least two brick based cold frames, or pits, about 12m long. Other frames are hidden in the undergrowth around. A stone lined culvert to the south-west of the track may have supplied water to the area.

The Ordnance Survey map of 1809 records a large enclosure, probably an orchard, to the east of the house, running south down the east park boundary. At this date, and on the 1775 survey map, there is no kitchen garden on the present site. The garden as it is now probably dates from the time of the main building, 1829 on. The author of the 1836 article was James Alexander, the then Head Gardener, who was a pupil of Paxton at Chatsworth and responsible for the design and erection of the iron espalier rails. The 1857 estate map shows the garden, two small enclosures to the north-west, the gardener's house, a glass house against the north-west wall and two ranges of bothies behind it.

The garden probably began to decline following the First World War and subsequent reduction of manpower. This decline was probably hastened with the Second World War when the glass houses and frame yard began to be dismantled. However, the replacement of the frame yard glass house does show that this building at least, was in use until the mid 1980s. The Head Gardener's cottage was renovated in the 1980s/90s. The hedges and simple border plantings, along the south-east wall, are still maintained and the espalier apples are pruned.

## Sources

- Primary** De Winton archive, private collection. Includes the Clive survey of 1775, undated tree planting sketch, eighteenth-century drawing of old house, 1840/70 tithes, 1857 survey, family photographs.  
 Undated and unidentified view up south-west drive. National Gallery of Wales.  
 Sketch Ordnance Survey map, 1809: National Library.  
 1847 tithe map. The National Library of Wales.  
 Photograph of park, c. 1930, included in bound, mostly unidentified, photograph albums, National Library of Wales.  
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- Secondary** Alexander, J., 'Cast-iron Espalier Rails at Maeslaugh Castle' 1836 Gardener's Magazine, v. 13 (1837) pp. 205-06  
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