

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

REGISTER ENTRY

LLANHARAN HOUSE

Ref number PGW (Gm) 16 (RCT)

OS Map 170

Grid ref ST 007 832

Former county Mid Glamorgan

Unitary authority Rhondda, Cynon, Taff

Community council Llanharan

Designations Listed buildings: Llanharan House Grade II; Gate piers, gates and railings on road at end of drive at Llanharan House Grade II

Site evaluation Grade II

Primary reasons for grading A well preserved, small eighteenth-century landscape park provides a beautiful setting for the fine house.

Type of site Small landscape park; terraced garden; walled kitchen garden

Main phases of construction Mid eighteenth century; early nineteenth century

Site description

Llanharan House is a large classical mansion situated on a south-east-facing slope to the east of the village of Llanharan. The stone built house has a central three-storey block flanked by two- and three-storey wings on the west and east respectively. The main south-east front is ashlar-faced and symmetrical, with five central bays and two each on the projecting pedimented wings. Two flights of stone steps lead up to the central pedimented doorway which is flanked by Tuscan columns. The house has regularly spaced sash windows and slate roofs.

The earliest record of Llanharan House occurred in 1750, at which time it was in the possession of Rees Powell, a lawyer, into whose family the property had come at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The main block and flanking single-storey wings are thought to have been built by Rees Powell in the middle of the century. No further work took place until the fine circular cantilevered staircase was built in about 1800. The Revd Gervase Powell (died 1795), one of Rees Powell's thirteen children, built up the estate but spent much of his time in Bath. His wife Margaret may have been the original of Sheridan's Mrs Malaprop in *The Rivals* and she is credited with

remarking that: 'A turpentine walk through a scruberry was a very nice reproach to a house'. In 1806 the estate was sold by Gervase's four daughters to Richard Hoare Jenkins, a keen sportsman who enlarged both estate and house and founded the Llanharan Hunt. On his death in 1856 the property passed to his sister and later to John Blandy-Jenkins in whose family it remained until 1954. There were several phases of alteration during the nineteenth century; the wings were altered in 1870-71 and again in 1897-98, when they were raised to their present height.

Immediately to the east of the house is the substantial stable block, orientated south-west/north-east like the house. It is built on a slight west-facing slope, with two storeys at the upper end and three at the lower. The local stone walls are of rubble construction, with a hipped slate roof and central gabled projection containing the front door on the south side. In the gable end is a sundial, probably the one mentioned in the accounts for 1897-98. Windows are sash on the main floor and semi-circular above. The two arched windows at ground level at the west end denote former coach-houses. Shallow stone steps lead up to the front door, with walling in front of their upper end, in front of the door. The stables were entered from the small cobbled court to the north of the building.

It is thought that this building may have been the original house on the site, converted to a stable block when the present house was built. It has recently been converted for use as a private dwelling.

At the west end of the stable block is a high curving stone wall of late nineteenth-century date between the block and the house, closing off the west end of the courtyard. At its east end, in front of the stable block, it incorporates a coped gable end terminated by piers topped by ball finials. At the apex is a stone running fox on a plinth, and below it a heraldic panel is set into the wall. This bears the arms of John Blandy-Jenkins, with the mottos EX URNA RESURGAM and FE DAL YN DARLUN.

The courtyard to the north is narrow and slopes steeply to the west. A series of two-storey rubble stone outbuildings are ranged along its north side. These include stables and a laundry. These buildings have been, or are in the process of being converted to dwellings. To the north is a further irregular, partly cobbled yard with stone outbuildings in similar style set against the slope. A coach-house with round-headed doorways has been converted into garages, and to the west are disused kennels against a revetment wall.

The park occupies a roughly triangular area, with the house at the apex of the triangle. The ground slopes down from the house to the valley floor, where the park is bounded by the A473 Llanharan to Llantrisant road, with the railway just beyond it. The house is backed by a belt of deciduous woodland and conifer plantation on the hill behind it, while in front a ha-ha on the garden boundary gives a fine view over the bulk of the park. To the south-east of the house is a large smooth grass slope planted with a few isolated oaks and a cedar. On its northern edge, to the south of the stable block, are two large copper beeches with iron fencing around them. The valley bottom is planted with banks of rhododendrons in front of a boundary belt of trees.

To the west of the house the park runs to the edge of Llanharan village. The open grass slope is ornamented with a single *Robinia pseudoacacia* with iron railings around it and is crossed by a path (part public), now turfed over but still visible, leading from the village to a door in the wall on the west boundary of the garden. This wall runs down to the road and is flanked on its west side by a row of hornbeams planted by the present owner. At the south end of the row is a large beech tree.

The main entrance to the park is in the middle of the south side, off the A473. The entrance is flanked by low curving stone walls of dressed stone blocks, scalloped at each end, with corresponding simple iron railings above them. They are terminated at each end by tall square piers of similar stonework topped by large ball finials. The east gate pier was accidentally demolished in May 1995, and the gates temporarily removed. High rubble stone walls continue to the east and west along the park boundary. Inside the boundary is a belt of deciduous trees, mainly beech and sycamore, with one large beech tree outside the wall to the west of the entrance. At a point south of the house the boundary wall turns north-west and runs up the slope in a straight line, forming the west boundary of the garden further north.

A gravel drive from the entrance bifurcates immediately, the west branch curving north-westwards and sweeping round in front of the house, the east branch running northwards up the slope and then north-east to the courtyards at the rear and to the east of the house. A branch leads past the south side of the stable block to the slightly wider forecourt in front of the house. At the start of each drive is a pair of simple wooden piers, that on the east branch having a wooden gate. The drive immediately inside the entrance and the west drive on its north side are lined with iron fencing.

In the south-east corner of the park, to the east of the entrance, are two rectangular fishponds orientated on a roughly east-west axis. The larger pond is the upper, western one. This holds water and is dammed at its east end with a stone built dam with a concrete top and sluice. At intervals along the top of the dam are square stone plinths that originally held statues. The southern side of the pond is tree-fringed, and the northern side is bounded by iron railings. The lower pond to the east is partly silted up and has bamboos and some rhododendrons growing around it. To the south of the ponds is a lawn with some ornamental tree and shrub planting. To the north of the ponds is an east-west row of oaks that may represent a former field boundary. The east boundary of the park is also marked by oaks.

The main drive to the house runs through an ornamentally planted area along the valley floor and running up the slope towards the house. This area is bounded on the west by the stone wall mentioned above and on the east and north by iron fencing. It is largely planted with hybrid rhododendrons, azaleas and Japanese acers with some large beech trees along the southern side. One bank of rhododendrons lies to the north of the drive, but most planting is to the south. Two level lawns lie one above the other to the north of the drive (former tennis courts), with five standard clipped hawthorns flanking the drive next to them. Towards the north end of the drive this area merges into the garden, with a stone-edged shrub bed and then a lawn and two further clipped hawthorns. A stone paved and edged path runs along the inside of the wall for part of its length.

The park was probably originally laid out as a landscape park in the middle of the eighteenth century, when the present house was built by Rees Powell. It is not clear, however, how much of this phase survives. It is probable that much of the present layout and planting was the work of Richard Hoare Jenkins (died 1856), who bought the estate in 1806. The 1875 Ordnance Survey map shows the layout of curving ha-ha, drives, ponds, walls and planting much as it is today. The ponds are likely to be earlier features in origin, probably having a utilitarian function well before the landscaping phases. It is known from early photographs of around the turn of the century that the upper pond was ornamented with statues on the plinths along the dam. In 1875 the belt of woodland to the east of the wall to the south of the house was

divided from the garden proper by a cross wall between wall and drive. Now there is no division, and the two areas merge into one another. The last major phase of landscaping took place in about 1910 when the rhododendrons, azaleas and Japanese acers were planted flanking the drive.

The main part of the garden lies to the west and north-west of the house, on a south-east-facing slope. The drive enters the garden to the south-west of the house and sweeps round in front of it. On the garden boundary next to the stable block to the east of the house the drive is closed by an iron gate flanked by square piers with stone sitting hounds on top. These come from Clytha Park (Gwent) and originally belonged to the Herbert family. To the south of the drive, in front of the house, is a grass slope bounded by a curving stone-built ha-ha, with iron railings flanking the drive from its west end southwards. Between drive and house is a raised terrace bounded by a steep grass slope. A wide flight of stone steps flanked by iron railings curving outwards at the bottom leads up to the terrace, and a further small flight, with similar railings, leads to the front door of the house. The terrace against the house is a lawn, with two stone benches standing against the wall between the house and the stable block.

To the west of the house, is a sloping lawn narrowing at its southern end where the drive sweeps round in front of the house, and merging into the shrubbery to the south. The garden is bounded on the west side by a straight wall with two doors leading through into the kitchen garden to the west.

The lawn area to the west of the house is laid out with perimeter gravel paths on the north and west sides. A flight of stone steps flanked by iron railings leads down from the house to the lawn. At the west end is a small levelled terrace against the wall bounded on the east by a low stone wall and gravel path. The terrace is laid out with a central circular stone-edged pool and fountain surrounded by a flagstone path and with flanking lawns. A magnolia stands against the wall. The terrace is entered by a central flight of steps flanked by square piers topped by ball finials. These are also repeated at the corners of the terrace. The south side of the terrace is bounded by a stone wall and a gravel path leading to an iron gate in the west wall which gives access to the park. At the northern end of the terrace is a sloping path leading to a door into the kitchen garden, also flanked by piers with ball finials. Above this, in the corner between the west wall and the terrace revetment wall, is a small terrace bounded by a stone revetment wall on which stands a rectangular iron-framed greenhouse formerly with a barrel-vaulted perspex roof. This was built by the present owner's father, George Williams. Piers similar to the others flank the entrance at the east end.

At the west end of the revetment wall is a square-headed doorway flanked by a pier topped with a ball finial. To the north is a flight of stone steps and a sloping gravel path running along a border next to the west boundary wall to a further flight of steps up to the upper terrace. The path is bounded on the east by a stone wall revetting the lower terrace.

The upper end of the garden, to the north-west of the house, is divided into two long terraces bounded by high stone revetment walls. The lower terrace is wider, with a lawn at its west end and the remainder behind the house gravelled over. At its west end a slope (possibly former steps) leads down between low walls with ball finials at the corners to the sloping path along the west wall which is lined with brick in this section. At the east end of the terrace is a short raised terrace bed against the revetment wall of the upper terrace, bounded by a low stone wall with flat coping. At its east end are two steps up to a door in the east wall of the terrace and at its west end

is a narrow flight of steps with iron railings on its east side leading to the upper terrace.

The upper terrace is narrow, with a large central semi-circular projection. At the west end the brick boundary wall curves round the corner. The high north revetment wall continues in brick, with some sections in stone, for a short distance and is then stone-built. In the centre are some low shallow arches and a small niche at ground level. The purpose of these is obscure but the arches may be relieving arches. The terrace has a low parapet wall with flat coping stone in the western half, with a higher wall around the semi-circular projection and in the eastern half. In the centre of the projection is a circular stone plinth with a pineapple finial on top. At the east end of the terrace is a small gravel area with a large ornamental stone seat on a concrete base against the east wall. This has a high back, stepped up in the middle, with a heraldic panel in the centre containing the mottos 'Ex urna resurgam' and 'Fedal yn darlun'. The sides of the seat are enclosed and have curving ends on the front carved with spirals at the top. The revetment wall is even higher at this end, with a low blocked arch at ground level and a niche over it. The terrace is closed by a wall along the east side.

To the north-east of the house, above the yard containing former coach-houses and other outbuildings, is a further garden terrace. As this is separate from the rest of the garden, away from the house and near outbuildings it may originally have had a utilitarian function. It is at present neglected and overgrown. It is orientated north-west/south-east, and is bounded next to the yard by a high stone revetment wall. Along its upper side it has a stone revetment wall with a slight dry-stone revetment wall, broken down in places, with a laurel hedge along the top of the east end. The north-west end wall is free-standing, with a door in it giving access to the woodland above. At the east end of the lower wall is a gate leading to a sloping path (possibly originally steps) up to the terrace. In the lower eastern corner is an outside privy.

The garden was probably largely built in two main phases. First, the drive, sloping lawns and ha-ha were constructed in the middle of the eighteenth century by Rees Powell, at the same time as the house was built. The second phase dates either to the first half of the nineteenth century, when Richard Jenkins was the owner, or the second half, during the ownership of John Blandy-Jenkins. This phase encompassed the building of the terraces and the boundary wall. The terraces were certainly in place by 1875 (1st edition Ordnance Survey map). The Blandy-Jenkins mottos on the end wall of the stable block and on the stone seat at the east end of the upper terrace indicate John Blandy-Jenkins' work.

The kitchen garden lies to the west of the pleasure garden, on ground sloping to the south. A four-sided area is enclosed by stone and brick walls of varying height. The east wall (west wall of the pleasure garden) is *c.* 5 m high, the north and west walls *c.* 3 m high, and that on the south side is a modern wall *c.* 1.8 m high, with flat concrete coping. There are two doors into the garden on the east side. The interior is very overgrown, partly planted with Norway spruce trees, and has an overgrown ruined glasshouse near the east side. The garden is not shown on the 1875 Ordnance Survey map, and probably dates to the Edwardian period.

Sources

Secondary

Francis, D.J., 'A brief account of ... Llanharan', *Glamorgan Historian* VII (1971), pp. 214-20.

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