

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

REGISTER ENTRY

Llwynywormwood

Ref number	PGW (Dy) 71 (CAM)
OS map	146
Grid ref	SN 7701 3156
Former county	Dyfed
Unitary authority	Carmarthenshire
Community council	Myddfai
Designations	Listed Building: Barn (Grade II)
Site evaluation	Grade II

Primary reasons for grading

Late eighteenth or early nineteenth century landscaped park created out of rolling countryside. There are scenic drives which maximised the picturesque views, not only of the park, house, stream and a lake but also of the Brecon Beacons beyond.

Type of site	Landscaped park with drives remaining, vestigial lake and walled kitchen garden
---------------------	---

Main phases of construction	Mostly between 1785 and 1809
------------------------------------	------------------------------

Site description

The dramatic ruins of Llwyn y Wormwood house are situated at the top of the southern slope of the Afon Ydw valley overlooking the parkland to the north.

James (1991), suggests that the origins of a homestead at Llwyn y Wormwood, or Llwynywormwood, are certainly early seventeenth century at the least. For several centuries it was the seat of the Williams family. William Williams, who died in 1686, owned land in Myddfai which was later to become part of the estate. In 1720, David Williams of Llywn y Wormwood is recorded as being buried at Myddfai on July 1st. In 1751 Daniel, his son, (although some sources give David's son also as David) Williams married Anne Griffies of Coed. Their only son, Erasmus, died, without heir, at the age of thirty two in September 1783. Some two years later, Daniel, his father, died and the estate passed to his nephew George Griffies. Jones (1987) states that on

inheriting George assumed the additional surname of Williams by Sign Manuel dated 21 May 1785.

With his inheritance, George Griffies-Williams set about creating a fine mansion and a landscape which would complement it. The estate obviously flourished and by the time of the Tithe Award Survey of 1839, Llwyn y Wormwood estate includes 31 properties, nearly 15% of the parish. With the improvements to the estate came visitors and commentators including Richard Fenton. The family were also socially elevated and in 1815 George Griffies-Williams was created a baronet. Sir George married three times and he had eleven children by his second and third wives. When he died in 1843 the estate passed to his second son, the Reverend Sir Erasmus Henry Griffies-Williams. Sir Erasmus had married Caroline Grubb in 1819 and had been ordained in 1821. The family spent much time away from the family home, which was rented to such notable families as the Crawshays and the Clives. Such families would have demanded and received all available comforts and the house was undoubtedly grand with well appointed rooms and a belvedere on the roof.

Family misfortune precipitated the forced sale of the estate in three stages in 1879, 1909 and 1912. The house was used as a school and later as a billet during the war. Finally it was used as a source of building material for the local area. Today the ruins represent three of the external walls, with window openings and chimney stacks. The addition of the square, Victorian, bays to the front, south, face becomes evident where the rendering has been eroded away, as are changes to some of the openings. Jones (1987) quotes from a sale catalogue which describes an entrance hall, library, dining and drawing room, in addition to a conservatory. There were eight bedrooms, a nursery and bathroom on the first floor and five bedrooms and a lumber room above. Although this once fine house has now gone, its landscaped setting remains evident.

Set into the slope to the north-east of the house remains is a lower rubble stone rectangular building. This, apparently, was the original medieval house, later converted into the outer kitchen for the mansion at an early stage of its development. Structurally, it has remained more intact than the house. Within, most of the features have gone except for the beams for pot-hanging.

At a discrete distance to the south of the house site is the stable and farm courtyard. The buildings all appear to be of rubble stone. The house, which now occupies the south end, has had its render removed, revealing that it was originally a three-bay carhouse with loft over. To the west is a massive barn still with its vast and impressive doors for cereal wagons. To the east is the dovecote set into the south gable of this range. In the centre of the yard is now a modern utilitarian building which is used as a garage.

Llywnywormwood park is some 3 kms due south of the ancient settlement of Llandoverly. To the south of the park is the village of Myddfai, home to the legends of the Welsh physicians and beyond are the dramatic hills of the Brecon Beacons. The 62 or so acres of park and woodland occupy both sides of a small valley, which runs almost east to west. The Nant Ydw meanders along the valley floor before joining a tributary of the Afon Tywi some distance away, to the east of Llangadog. The average height is about 100m AOD. The rolling parkland with extant scenic drives, picturesque lodges, bridges and lake is still embellished by careful, deliberate plantings.

The approach to the present house, which was once a utilitarian building within the stable courtyard, is now from the east, off one of the many single track lanes which criss-cross the countryside. However, the early surveys show this route as

a small trackway. The original intention was that the house and parkland should be approached from the north. From this direction the house, park and lake would have been seen to the best advantage. No descriptions have yet been found of any garden surrounding the house, but evidence remains of landscaping and water features close by.

The park was created after 1785 by George Griffies-Williams. Richard Fenton visited the house at the turn of the eighteenth century and he probably would have approached the house from Llandovery, that is, from the north, although there are two other drives or tracks. He records 'charming situation, grounds very parkish ornamented with fine masses of old wood. To the back, a noble view of the mountains. A stream dammed up into a large pond'. Fenton's description is still pertinent and the three Brownian elements of grass, wood and water remain the dominant elements of the park. Today the parkland is grazed, all the fences are of a temporary nature and the tree clumps remain, although there has been commercial planting to the west of the park and in Penhill wood to the east. In 2000 conifer plantation was removed from Penhill Wood and the fringe replanted with broad leaf trees. At the same time the rocky outcrop at the north end of the park was replanted with parkland trees. The Nant Vdw now flows into a marshy area of just over 3.5 acres which was once the lake, but the small island, dam and overflows are still discernible. Also extant are the bridges on the east and west sides of the park.

There are three approaches to Llwynywormwood, from the north, south and east. All remain passable although, sadly, the northern drive is no longer a permitted access. The two extant lodges are in different ownership from the park and are not included within the main Register area. However, the Round lodge was probably built as an eyecatcher and is, therefore worthy of note. The east, Penhill, lodge has been much altered and the lodge to the south is little more than a tumble of stones.

The north drive, which is reached from the Llandovery to Myddfai road, is some 3km long. From the lane the drive, which is still partially gravelled, follows the course of a ridge for about 1.5km. To either side there is now commercial forestry, but when it was constructed views towards the house may have been possible. Probably deliberately placed as an eyecatcher from the house, the Round Lodge is situated just as the former drive curves around to descend the northern side of the Ydw valley. This charming little eight-sided, double pitch roofed structure, was probably rendered and painted when it was first constructed. Today the stonework has been exposed and there is a small conservatory to one side. The ground floor window, facing the drive, has pointed arch over; with the exception of the door, which is arched, the rest of the openings appear to be rectangular. This building was probably important as much for its position in the landscape as well as serving as a lodge. Just beyond the Round Lodge, the drive turns down the northern slope of the Nant Ydw valley. From here until it was nearly reached, the house could have been seen across the lake. Just to the north of the lake, the north and south drives meet at about SN 7685 3192.

A small lane winds up the Nant Ydw valley from the south-west. Initially the valley is open with water meadows to the south. Later the valley becomes steep sided, tree covered and picturesque. Just to the north of this change in topography, to the left (north) of the drive, are the remains of a small lodge; it is assumed that this lodge marks the beginning of what was considered a private drive. Referred to in the sale particulars as the 'main lodge' and associated with the southern drive, the slight remains of this building are still extant within the undergrowth. From these it would

appear to have been smaller in plan than the other two lodges. Also just visible leading from the drive is a flight of four or five steps. A little further on is a fork in the route; one, possibly secondary, drive crossing the Nant Ydw by a small bridge, the other route continuing to meet the northern drive to the north of the lake. The bridge is currently in poor condition, having been damaged by floods and falling trees in 1999 – 2000.

The secondary southern drive follows a meandering course. From the bridge it heads almost due south, up the valley side and away from the house. At the top of the slope it turns north and west, through mature woodland and over a meadow to reach the south of the park and house site past a silted pond. Once in the park, to the north of the drive where the parkland slopes down, is a stretch of walling, which may be the remains of a revetment wall or the back to a seat or summerhouse.

In addition to these drives, the park is crossed by several small trackways and footpaths. One of these paths led from the house down to the stream, which was apparently crossed by a ‘Swiss’ or rustic bridge just to the east of the lake. The path remains as a slight earthwork but all that remains of the bridge are the ramped earthen approaches and a few stones, which were part of the abutments.

The meandering stream, the Nant Ydw, was an important element in this landscape. There is no evidence to suggest that it was ever straightened or canalised. The earliest large-scale survey available from the National Library of Wales is the Second Edition (1906) 25 inch Ordnance Survey map. This shows the course of the stream very much as it appears today, gently meandering across the lower meadows. At about SN 772 317 the stream enters the lake immediately below (to the west of) the site of the footbridge.

The lake may well have been created during the last few years of the eighteenth century; it was certainly extant prior to 1810. James (1991) includes an entry from a Women’s Institute scrap book and, included under ‘Miscellaneous Items’ it records ‘That Mr T. L. Morgan, then residing at Llwyn y Wormwood had the lake basin excavated to provide employment for the people of Myddfai during a year of great poverty and unemployment’. This entry is not dated and, as yet, it is unclear when Mr Morgan was in residence. However, this entry may refer to a re-excavation of the lake during the depression years earlier this century. A survey of the lake has indicated that it existed at two different levels during the course of its life.

The area flooded is to the west of the park at the western end of the water meadow, immediately before the stream heads southwards down the picturesque valley. The area of water was probably about 3.662 acres which was retained by an earth dam which remains mostly to 1 – 1.5m. The central section of the dam, where there may have been a sluice or small bridge, has been swept away, but masonry, probably associated with the overflows to either end of the dam, is still evident. Also evident as a dry mound amidst the rushes, is the island on which ancient rhododendrons, (probably *R. ponticum*) are still growing and flowering well.

To the west of the house site and adjacent to one of the southern drives, a small pond has been created by damming the steep gully. Even in 1906 this is recorded as being silted, but some of the stonework is still evident and this deliberate use of water may have been an important design element when the park was landscaped.

Within the park are two bridges which carry drives over the Nant Ydw. One is to the west, within the picturesque valley, the other at the eastern end of the meadow.

The lower bridge is a fine little single arch bridge which carries the fork from the south drive across the stream. The top of the arch, which is all constructed of similar size stone, is some 4 metres above the water, the opening being about 3.5 metres wide. The whole structure has been taken over by ivy and weed species, but just discernible on the north side are the remains of a parapet. To the south a large section of masonry has fallen; this probably represents part of the parapet or revetment wall on this side. Above the arch on the down stream (south) side is a carved stone with the date '1812'. This would suggest that the drive was a later addition or that the bridge replaced an earlier ford.

The upper bridge is a small single arched bridge of relatively simple construction. This bridge is lower above the water than its counterpart, which it possibly pre-dates. Again, there is no keystone but there are dressed stones in the adjacent field which may give an idea of its original design. To either side of the bridge are rubble splays, which were probably rendered. At each end was a pyramidal slab of dressed stone, one stone remains in situ. These splays and the parapets were about 1.25 metres high. In the centre of the bridge the parapets have vanished which has led to the suggestion that these were of less solid construction, possibly with an opening within the parapet to afford views or maybe a section of balustrading. There is, as yet, no evidence for this.

To the west of the house and adjacent to the outer kitchen is a rectangular depression cut into the bedrock, which apparently represents the remains of an ice-house. Presumably the ice could have been brought from the silted pond just a short distance away to the west.

Within the park are strategically placed clumps of trees. All of these clumps and the woodland adjacent to the walled garden contain oaks with extremely large leaves, something similar in size, if not in shape to *Quercus rubra*. However, identification is still awaited. Also within the park and woodlands are English oaks, ash and hawthorn. Two exotic conifers also remain - a *Sequoiadendron giganteum* with its top blown out and a leaning larch in poor health.

Set some distance away to the south-west of the house is a small playing card-shaped walled garden. This is probably contemporary with the house or soon after, dating to the turn of the nineteenth century. The area enclosed by the rubble stone walls, which stand to about 3 m, is some 0.586 acres. In the westernmost corner are the remains of a building, discernible by the traces of mortar on the wall which marked the roof line; there is also a small window. Around the inside of the are ancient fruit trees. The top of the walls are now covered with ivy and other invasive species. The present owners believe that the top of these walls were not flat but scallop-shaped. At the moment this is difficult to verify.

The main entrance to the garden is along the south wall and there is a further entrance in the north-west corner. The present owners have erected a glasshouse towards the south end of the garden and are bringing the area back into cultivation.

The early survey shows a second boundary around the garden, but from the evidence on the ground, this second boundary was probably a hedge rather than a wall. Also shown on this survey is what would appear to be an orchard to the south. This has now gone.

Sources

Primary

Tithe Award Survey and Schedule of Apportionments; Myddfai (1839), National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.

Secondary

James DB, *Myddfai, Its land and peoples*, (1991).

Jones F, *Historic Camarthenshire homes and their families* (1989), p 122.

Lloyd T, *The lost houses of Wales*, (1989), p 60.