

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

SITE DOSSIER

SITE NAME Llanfihangel Court

REF. NO. PGW (Gt) 14

OS MAP 161 GRID REF. SO 327204

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

DESIGNATIONS Listed building: Llanfihangel Court Grade I
Stables, grade II; Barn, grade II; Guard house, grade II

National Park (Brecon Beacons) AONB SSSI NNR ESA GAM SAM
CA
TPO no. 28 (except avenue of sweet chestnuts)

SITE EVALUATION Grade I

Primary reasons for grading

Survival in entirety of well built 17th-century garden terracing and
steps, 17th-century pavilion; 17th-century avenue of sweet chestnuts.
A rare survival of good quality

TYPE OF SITE

Late 17th-century formal garden, remains of late 17th-century formally
laid out park; early 20th-century conifer plantation; 18th-century
walled kitchen garden

MAIN PHASES OF CONSTRUCTION

1670s; 18th-20th century

VISITED BY/DATE Elisabeth Whittle/October 1990

HOUSE

Name Llanfihangel Court

Grid ref SO 328204

Date/style 1520/1559/1640-50; Tudor/Jacobean manor house

Brief description: main building periods, architects, style, present state

The house stands on levelled ground on the east side of the Honddu river valley, to the SE of the village of Llanvihangel Crucorney. It is essentially Tudor in appearance, and is stone built on a H-plan, incorporating several building phases.

The house undoubtedly stands on the site of a medieval house (small parts of which are incorporated). The oldest main part of the house is the east wing, built in about 1520. The E front was remodelled in 1559 by Rhys Morgan. In 1608 the house was sold to the earl of Worcester, and before 1627 (sundial on wall with initials N.A. and 1627) was sold again to Nicholas Arnold of Llanthony, a noted horse breeder. In about 1640-50 the interior was remodelled and some of the Tudor windows were replaced by long mullioned windows. Nicholas Arnold died in 1665 and was succeeded by his son John, a rabid anti-catholic and Whig politician. He moved the main door to the middle of the north side (and at the same time made the terraces and planted the avenues). In about 1673 the southern annexe (with the yew staircase) was added. In 1726 his daughter sold the Court to Edward Harley (in 1741 his son became 3rd earl of Oxford). The 5th earl sold the Court to Hugh Powell in 1801 (d. 1821), who left it to his godson William Powell Rodney (d. 1878). Since then several owners.

To the south of the house are various outbuildings including early 17th-century stables and a large mid 17th-century barn, and to the south of these is a walled kitchen garden.

OUTBUILDINGS

Name Stables, barn, coachhouse

Grid ref SO 328204

Date/style, and brief description

Stables: early 17th-century, brick, to S of house. Stalls still intact

Barn: mid 17th-century, timber-framed, some brick walling still in place, otherwise ruinous, at right-angles to stables

Coachhouse: brick, to NW of house, below terraces, next to entrance gate

THE PARK

Central grid ref SO 328204

Date/style

1670s/formal

General description, history, and layout

The park originally extended from the old A465 Abergavenny-Hereford road on the W to a small stream to the E of the house, and from the old Hereford road to the N to the end of the sweet chestnut avenue to the S. It was relatively small (37 acres in the sale particulars of 1924), and has now reverted to farmland, except for the sweet chestnut avenue to the south. Originally there was a deer park, enclosed by a stone wall (recorded by Bradney, 1906), which was probably medieval in origin, but it has now disappeared.

It is thought that John Arnold laid out the park with axial avenues in the 1670s (he succeeded his father in 1665). A painting in the house dated to about 1680 shows the house and park in a bird's-eye view. The house is in the centre, with the Skirrid mountain in the background, the Honddu river on the right, and the Abergavenny-Hereford road next to it, forming the western boundary of the park. A straight drive in an avenue leads from the centre of the north front of the house to the main park entrance off the road, where there are gates flanked by piers with ball finials. A wall runs eastwards from the gate, marking the boundary of the park. There is no carriage drive west of the house to the village. The park is shown laid out with formal groves of trees to the NE, NW and W of the house, and with a further large wood to the east, further away from the house. As well as the north avenue there are two further ones to the south of the house - one running south (the sweet chestnut avenue that survives) and one running diagonally off to the south-east and then bending to the east. It appears to have gate piers on either side of it just short of the bend. The straight drive from the village E to the entrance at the foot of the terraces is also shown on the painting, with formal groves of trees on either side.

The rest of the park appears in the painting to be open grassland apart from some faintly drawn conifer plantations at the north end, to the east of the drive. Although crudely painted there is no reason to doubt the rough accuracy of the painting, which therefore gives a very good idea of what the park looked like in the 1680s.

After this there appears to have been very little alteration to the park. The W carriage drive was bisected by the new A465 in the 1970s, and the western half is no longer in use. A small amount of landscaping took place probably between 1796 and 1822 (a 1796 engraving shows the walled garden still in existence to the E of the house, whereas an 1822 estate plan shows it gone and the ha-ha and lake in place). This took place mainly to the E of the house, where a ha-ha was made roughly on the line of one of the walls of the earlier formal gardens here, and a small lake was made below (to the E). This, combined with the destruction of the walled garden on this side, opened up the view of the park from the house on the east side. The park wall remained in existence, although by 1906 (Bradney) it was dilapidated.

The avenues to the north and south of the house (north: pine; south: sweet chestnut) were the principal features of the park. The north avenue survived until the 1940s, and was said not to have been Scots pine but a more unusual variety. The carriage drive that accompanied it had already gone when a map of the park was made in 1822. The avenue to the south still survives, as does the grove of sweet chestnut trees to the west of the north end. However, the trees appear to be coming to the end of their lives, and some are already dead. The avenues to the south-east have gone.

Apart from the south avenue and grove, the park today consists largely of pasture, orchard and isolated deciduous trees (mainly oak).

STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

To the west of the house is the main drive, which dates from before the 1680s. It runs from the churchyard of Llanvihangel Crucorney to the house, and is now bisected by the new A465 (1970s). The western half is now disused. The eastern half is tarmacked, and runs straight to the gates into the garden to the north of the house (former main entrance). It then turns a right-angle bend to the south and continues southwards to the back (south) of the house and to the outbuildings to its south.

WATER FEATURES

A small stream enters the garden from the pasture to the E of the house.

BUILT FEATURES

At the original entrance to the park, opposite the churchyard of Llanvihangel Crucorney, are the entrance gate piers (now the entrance to the disused part of the drive). These are stone, square, and have no finials. The entrance gates which originally stood at the N end of the N avenue have gone, but low dry-stone walling remains along the N boundary of the park on either side of the original entrance (now walled across).

PLANTED COMPONENTS

The former park is now mostly pasture, with a limited amount of woodland and orchards (to the N of the house).

The drive to the W of the house is lined with Scots pines (of no very great age). At the western end of the drive (now disused) are several much older, larger Scots pines - five on the south side and two on the north. These may be all that remains of the grove which existed in the 19th century (1822 map and 1880s OS map) on either side of the drive.

The 17th-century avenue of pines to the north of the house has now gone ('nearly dead' in 1936). The S avenue of sweet chestnuts, also planted in the late 17th century, still survives. It runs from the track S of the kitchen garden to a field boundary c. 400 m. to the S. The trees were pollarded at an early stage in their lives. Most are still alive, but some are dead and one or two are fallen. At the avenue's northern end there are a few further sweet chestnuts in a line to the E (S of the track), and to the W is a small grove of sweet chestnuts (said to have been planted as replacements for failures in the avenue). These are all contemporary with the avenue and are in a similar state of advanced old age.

In the pasture to the E of the house there are a number of isolated oaks.

BOUNDARIES

W side: A465 Abergavenny-Hereford road
N side: dry-stone walling along the Llanvihangel Crucorney-Grosmont road
E side: ditch and field boundaries

S side: field boundaries

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

Essential setting: Pasture fields and woodland to E

View N (A) and E (B) from the house across the park.

LAND-USE

Pasture; orchard; a little woodland

ELEMENTS OF BOTANICAL OR OTHER NATURE CONSERVATION INTEREST

None known

SURVIVAL OF INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS

Structural components: W drive: good
N drive: gone

Built features (gates): W drive: partial (piers only)
N drive: gone

Planted components: N avenue: gone
S avenue: good (but reaching end of life)
S grove: good (ditto)
Grove either side of W drive: gone

THE PLEASURE GARDEN

Grid ref SO 328204

Date/style 17th-20th century/terraced; informal

GENERAL DESCRIPTION AND LAYOUT

The gardens lie to the N and E of the house. Aligned on the centre of the N side of the house are three terraces with stone revetment walls, some brickwork walls, and a wide flight of steps down the middle ending in semi-circular steps at the bottom. These are thought to date from the 1670s, when John Arnold owned the Court. The first documentary proof of their existence is the painting in the house dated to the 1680s, which shows the terraces to the N and further formal walled gardens to the E divided into square compartments. Below the terraces the painting shows a walled enclosure and the N drive and avenue leading off from a central path. The enclosure remains, without a wall on the N side, but the central path and drive have gone, and the area is now level lawn flanked by woodland with a gravel forecourt at the foot of the terraces. On the W side of this is an entrance gate with piers topped by stone eagles (stolen 1991). Just outside this gate, to the S, is a brick coach-house. Some of the stone piers in this part of the garden have been rebuilt in the early 20th century.

To the E of the house the garden is now largely lawn. The formal walled gardens shown in the painting were removed between 1796 (Williams engraving) and 1822 (Davies map) and replaced by a level lawn next to the house bounded by a ha-ha, and then a further sloping lawn beyond, up to the park boundary. A small lake was probably made at the same time at the foot of the slope (1822 map). All that is left of the original formal garden on the E side is the circular 'Guardhouse', a two-storey pavilion of stone, brick and slate now standing on the northern edge of the lawn, S of the lake. Originally it formed the NE corner of the walled garden on this side, and there were at least two more (shown on the painting), one in the SE corner and one in the NW corner of the lower (sloping) compartment. This one is shown on an engraving in Williams' History of Monmouthshire (Pl XXVII), which shows it to have been a similar circular structure built into the garden wall, with single-storey outbuildings to its W (also shown on an engraving in Coxe's Tour Both engravings also show the N terraces. The lawn is bounded on its N side by an area of mixed woodland and the sinuous lake. The woodland to the E of the lake has been planted (probably early 20th century) with mixed conifers and rhododendrons.

To the SE of the house the ground slopes up steeply above the level terrace, and is partly revetted in stone, with stone steps up the slope near the house. At the foot of these is a small lily pool (1930s). The ground beyond is informally planted with mixed trees and shrubs.

The walled kitchen garden (on 1822 map) lies beyond to the S.

STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

N terraces

The terraces are built in stone, with some brick walling at the sides. There are three, extending slightly beyond the full width of the house on the E side, and flush with the corner of the N front on the W side. Leading from the central door in the N front of the house down the middle of the terraces to semi-circular steps at the bottom is a stone-flagged path with steps, flanked by low parapet walls with piers topped by large ball finials on the edge of each terrace. The piers have been rebuilt in stone, in narrow courses, probably in the early 20th century.

The top terrace is narrow, with a stone-flagged path along it, and with a low parapet wall c. 0.8 m. high. The second terrace is wider (grass), with a stone parapet wall c. 0.6 m. high on the

edge. There are brick walls at either end c. 2.2 m. high, with ball finials at their S ends. The E wall has a round-arched opening leading to a path sloping down to the foot of the terraces. This path is cobbled at the top, with very shallow steps of edging stones at intervals. Central steps in two flights lead down to the lower terrace (grass). This is backed by a 4 m. high revetment wall (stone) with a brick extension c 2 m. high above it at its W end (beyond the house). Towards the W end there is a doorway with steps down to it in the revetment wall. The terrace is edged by a revetment wall c. 1.3 m. high (no parapet wall) with six semi-circular steps in the middle. Below is a rectangular gravel forecourt.

N side below terraces

A level rectangular area, divided into gravel forecourt and grass lawn. Between the forecourt and the ditch on the N edge of the garden there is a distinct scarp c. 0.3 m. high running E-W across most of the width of the area (near the E end it turns 90 degrees northwards for a short distance). On the N edge of the area is a ditch with a retaining wall on the garden side. On the E side it is culverted underneath a wall.

A path leads E from a gap in the wall on the E side of the area to the lawn to the E of the house. It is flanked by a wall on the N and a revetment wall on the S and at its E end are piers and three steps.

Ha-ha

On the E side of the house, between the level lawn near the house and the sloping grass below it is a curving ha-ha. This is revetted with a stone wall c. 1.2 m. high.

Lake

To the E of the house, at the N end of the garden, flanked on E and W by woodland. A small sinuous lake fed by a small stream entering at the S end. A small bridge over it near S end. At present most of water gone due to exceptionally dry summer. Probably contemporary with ha-ha (on 1822 map).

W of house

Garden is bounded by a high buttressed stone revetment wall, below which is the drive.

S of house

A stone-flagged path runs E-W from the ha-ha to the house at the foot of the slope to the S of the house (and carries on round the E side of the house to the top terrace to the N). To the S of this is a low revetment wall c. 0.7 m. high. The path along the E front of the house is continued up the slope in two flights of steep steps leading to a small level stone-paved terrace backed by stone revetment walls and fronted by a very low parapet wall. Next to the S side of the house is a paved courtyard in which is a rectangular lily pool. Above it is a further steep flight of steps up the slope leading to a cobbled path to the open courtyard at the back of the house.

BUILT COMPONENTS

N side

Brick walls c. 2.2 m. high on either side of the middle terrace, the E one with a round-arched opening and continuing at right-angles (eastwards) for a short distance. Ball finials at their S ends and at the N end of the W one.

At the W end of the top terrace is a flight of stone steps flanked by low parapet walls down to slightly lower ground. Low piers at their foot are topped by ball finials.

Below the terraces the rectangular lawn is flanked on E and W sides by a wall of stone and brick c. 1.5 m. high. On the E side there is an

opening for a path. On the W side at the foot of the terraces is an entrance gate. This has a wooden gate topped with iron spikes and square gate piers c. 2.2 m.high surmounted by stone eagles. Outside the entrance, to the S, is a simple rectangular brick coachhouse with entrances on the N and W and cobbling around it.

E side

The 'Guardhouse'

This small circular pavilion (G) now stands isolated in grass to the S of the small stream running into the lake. It is two-storey, with an octagonal conical roof of stone slates topped with a small ball finial. The lowest part of the wall is stone, with brick above, and there are several stone buttresses. The entrance door is a simple rectangular opening on the SW side. Above it is a small window. There are two small slit windows in the lower part of the wall on the NW and SE sides (that on the SE side is larger). Inside there is a stone 'bench' on the E side.

S side

2 sets stone steps up slope (see above), with piers and ball finials on those to the E.

W side

Steps from drive up to garden half-way along revetment wall.

ARCHITECTURAL ORNAMENTS

Paving

Stone paving on steps, paths (upper terrace, E side, S side) and small terrace on S side.

Ornaments

On the edge of the gravel forecourt on the N side (at C) is a composite stone ornament, made up of a cylindrical pillar with a ball on top set on two circular steps (bottom one broken). The whole is c. 1.5 m. high and c. 1.5 m. in diameter at the base (indeterminate date).

There are two sundials, one in the angle of the brick wall at the E end of the middle terrace, and one on the S edge of the E lawn. Both are of moulded pillar type (indeterminate date). On the S house wall is a further sundial inscribed 'N A (Nicholas Arnold) 1627'.

On top of the wall on the E side of the steep steps up from the lily pool are two old stone urns (one broken).

In the courtyard to the S of the house are the remains of a lead cistern with the letters A, J and M cast in it (John and Margaret Arnold), with the Arnold arms and the date 1673.

There are numerous ball finials on the parapet walls of terraces and paths: on either side of the central path of the N terraces, on top of the brick walls of the N terraces, at the foot of the steps down from the top terrace, on either side of the steps on the S side of the E lawn.

Iron gates

Low wrought iron gates at W end of top terrace and top of path above steep steps above lily pool.

PLANTED COMPONENTS

N side

Top terrace: grass and paved path

Middle terrace: grass, circular rose bed in eastern half

Lower terrace: grass

Below terraces: grass and gravel. On the E and W sides of the gravel forecourt are roughly ball-shaped clipped yews c. 1 m. high., already in existence in 1924 (sale particulars). On either side of the lawn, to the E and W, are trees, including yews, cedars, firs, pines and cypress

E side

E of house: lawn W of ha-ha, rough grass to E.

To the E and W of the lake is an area of ornamental woodland.

Ornamental conifers and rhododendrons have been planted (? early 20th century) to the E of the lake (it would appear with a view to colour and shape contrast). Examples include two blue firs and a swamp cypress.

S side

Lily pool (1930s) with water lilies

Informal planting between E lawn and kitchen garden: mixed deciduous and coniferous trees (mostly coniferous) and shrubs. Path S of small terrace flanked by very old clipped box.

In area of outbuildings to S of house several mature trees:

 a copper beech near the stables

 a plane ditto

 2 Scots pines next to drive, NW of barn

Reconstructions of original planted features

None

Special collections of garden plants

None

Documented living plants

None

Other (including elements of nature conservation interest)

None known

ESSENTIAL SETTING, LANDSCAPE AND VIEWS BEYOND THE SITE (Where important as the backdrop to garden. As for park, mark viewpoints on map, and refer to A, B, etc.)

Essential setting: park all around garden

Same as for park (A and B on map): views from the N and E fronts of the house

ANY SPECIAL FEATURES

None

SURVIVAL OF INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS

Structural components: good (terraces on N side)

Built features: partial (good on N side, partial on E)

Architectural ornaments: good

Planted components: good (mostly 20th-century. A few older trees)

UTILITARIAN GARDENS

NAME Walled kitchen garden

Grid ref SO 328203

Date/style 18th-century/walled

DESCRIPTION (categories as for the pleasure garden)

The walled kitchen garden lies S of the various outbuildings to the S of the house. It was in existence by 1822 (on Davies map). It is square, aligned NW-SE. On its NW side there is a stone wall between it and the track to it, against the inner side of which is a barn. At the wall's N end is a brick cross wall with a ruined glasshouse against its S side. To the N of this is a former gardener's cottage, now converted into a modern house. The kitchen garden itself has 2.5 m. high brick walls and an entrance on the NW side. The walls are overgrown but intact. The interior is now used as a market garden and the original layout has gone.

SOURCES

(Primary and secondary. For primary, give location. Aerial photos (AP): ref. no and collection)

Primary

Oil painting at Llanfihangel Court c. 1680

Estate plan 1822, by David Davies: Gwent Record Office, ref.

D.Pa.6.62

Sale particulars, 1924: Gwent Record Office, ref. D 591.32A.15

Estate collection 1667-1924: Gwent Record Office, ref. D 591.32A

Secondary

Bradney, J., A History of Monmouthshire Pt. II (1906), p. 215.

Evans, C.J.O., Monmouthshire, pp. 382-3.

Avray Tipping, H., 'Llanfihangel Court', Country Life May 1916.

Hyde, H.A., Welsh Timber Trees, pp. 37-8, 53.

Williams, D., A History of Monmouthshire (1796), pl XXVII

Guidebook to Llanvihangel Court (held there)

To be appended: 1:10,000 map of site, marked with boundaries, viewpoints etc.; colour photographs of site, photocopies of relevant material, where available.
