

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

SITE DOSSIER

SITE NAME Bryn Glas

REF. NO. PGW (Gt) 20

OS MAP 171 GRID REF. ST 311902

FORMER COUNTY Gwent UNITARY AUTHORITY Newport B.C. COMMUNITY COUNCIL
Newport

DESIGNATIONS Listed building: Brynglas House Grade II
Brynglas Gardens Cottage: Grade II

National Park AONB SSSI NNR ESA GAM SAM CA

SITE EVALUATION Grade II

Primary reasons for grading

Survival within urban area of late 19th century large garden with
ornamental tree and shrub planting.

TYPE OF SITE

Late 19th century formal and informal garden, 'pleasure grounds' and
remains of walled kitchen garden

MAIN PHASES OF CONSTRUCTION

Late 19th century (pre 1885)

VISITED BY/DATE Elisabeth Whittle/October 1990

HOUSE

Name Bryn Glas

Grid ref ST 311902

Date/style c. 1870s/neo-classical

Brief description

A two-storey substantial late Victorian house in neo-classical style built for Mr. T. Cordes. Situated on a hilltop above the W bank of the river Usk, originally in open countryside, but now surrounded on the W and S by housing. To the NE and E the ground slopes steeply down to the river Usk. The main entrance to the house is on the S, the garden front on the E. The conservatory that was attached to the W end of the S side has been demolished and replaced by a modern extension.

The house is now used as a Community Centre by Gwent County Council.

OUTBUILDINGS

None

Name

Grid ref

Date/style, and brief description

THE PLEASURE GARDEN

Grid ref ST 311902

Date/style c. 1870s/late Victorian informal/pleasure grounds and wild garden

GENERAL DESCRIPTION AND LAYOUT

The gardens and pleasure grounds are laid out to the S and E of the house on gently sloping ground at the top of the hill. The wild garden, known as the 'wilderness' lies on the steep wooded slope below the gardens on the E side. The walled kitchen garden is to the N of the house. The whole covers an area of c. 21 acres.

The gardens were made at the same time as the house was built, in about the 1870s, for Mr. T. Cordes. Although built on in part of the S sector, and within the kitchen garden, they remain largely intact. In a Particulars of Sale of 1890 (Newport Reference Library) it was said that the Pleasure Grounds were beautifully laid out with great taste. Beautiful clumps of rhododendrons and other shrubs are mentioned, as is the wilderness which was 'laid out in numberless zig-zag Walks, forming a most delightful place for a ramble in the Spring and Summer, when the whole Ground is covered with a profusion of Wild Flowers'.

The entrance is off Brynglas Road to the W of the house, from which a drive winds up to the S side of the house. To the S is a sloping informal area of grass and ornamental trees. To the E of the house a wide terrace runs the whole width of the house, with steps at either end. Below is a level lawn flanked by large conifers. Below is the wilderness, an area of unmanaged deciduous woodland, with a canopy of mature oaks and some underplanting of rhododendrons and laurels. A winding path SE of the house leads to two paths into the wilderness, within which a few of the original paths can be traced, and a few are open. There is also a way into the wilderness at the north end of the garden. To the N of the terrace are further lawns, ornamental trees and a tennis court. The kitchen garden lies to the N of the house.

There are some fine mature coniferous and deciduous trees in the gardens. On the edge of the lawn E of the house are a wellingtonia, a coast redwood, an evergreen oak and a cut-leaf beech. The lawn to the N is flanked on its W side by a row of 6 wellingtonias and one Japanese red cedar.

STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

Terrace

Along the E front of the house is a wide terrace (tarmacked) with a gentle grass slope below it down to a level lawn.

E lawn

Roughly U-shaped levelled lawn on E side of house below terrace. Steep drop below it to the E (wilderness)

N lawn and tennis court

To the NE of the house is a levelled rectangular lawn (to the E of the kitchen garden), and to its E a hard tennis court (disused).

Paths

Winding path to the SE of the house (tarmacked) leading down to two paths into the wilderness.

Grassed over path skirting E lawn.

Paths (tarmacked) around N lawn and to tennis court

Paths in the wilderness:

dirt. The southernmost one v. overgrown. Middle one still open, but side paths disused and overgrown. Northernmost path from garden clear.

Drive

Winding drive up to S front of house from Brynglas Road to the W

BUILT COMPONENTS

Steps

Stone steps at either end of the terrace: 2 steps at S end, 8 at N end. Low stone parapet walls on either side of N steps. Square stone stops at top and bottom originally held ornamental vases (1890 Sale Particulars).

Red brick steps from path at S end of tennis court down to the court.

Iron fencing

Remains of iron fencing and gate on the boundary between the gardens and wilderness to the NE of the house.

ARCHITECTURAL ORNAMENTS

None

PLANTED COMPONENTS

Lawns

Large c. U-shaped lawn to E of house, smaller rectangular one to NE. Sloping lawns with ornamental trees to S of house.

Trees

There are some fine mature coniferous trees in the gardens. In the 1890 Sale Particulars these are depicted in a drawing as already being quite substantial trees. On the N and S edges of the E lawn are two large conifers (S - Wellingtonia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*), N - Coast redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*)). The lawn is bounded by the trees of the wilderness to the E, and ornamental trees and shrubs to the S, including an evergreen oak and a cut-leaf beech.

To the N the levelled lawn is bounded on its W side by a row of 6 Wellingtonias and 1 Japanese red cedar (*Cryptomeria japonica*), planted along the E side of the kitchen garden wall. To the E of the lawn are further conifers including a pine, a cypress and a Wellingtonia. The N end of the lawn is bounded by a belt of trees and shrubs (in particular laurels and a row of pines behind).

To the S and SE of the house is an area of sloping grass and specimen trees, mostly conifers (various), with some hollies near the E side. The boundary with the wilderness is fringed with large rhododendrons.

The wilderness wood is mostly semi-wild, unmanaged deciduous woodland. Scattered throughout it are some large mature trees (mainly oaks), and some plantings of rhododendrons (or self-seeded) and laurels.

Reconstructions of original planted features

None

Special collections of garden plants

None

Documented living plants

None

Other (including elements of nature conservation interest)

None

ESSENTIAL SETTING, AND VIEWS BEYOND THE SITE

Not applicable

ANY SPECIAL FEATURES

None

SURVIVAL OF INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS

Structural components: most (a few paths gone)

Built components: most

Planted components: most trees, some shrubs (rhododendrons, laurels).

Some modern building on S part of garden removed some trees.

UTILITARIAN GARDENS

NAME Kitchen garden

Grid ref ST 310902

Date/style last quarter 19th century/walled kitchen garden

DESCRIPTION (categories as for the pleasure garden)

The walled kitchen garden lies immediately to the N of the house, on ground sloping gently down towards the E. It is rectangular, bounded on its N, E and part of its W (N end) sides by a stone wall c. 3 m. high. The wall, which is overgrown with ivy in places, survives to its full height on the N, but stretches of the top on the E side are ruinous. A whitewashed stretch in the middle of the E side (interior) indicates where a greenhouse formerly stood. There is a door in the N side. A modern school building stands along the S and W sides.

The 1890 Sale Particular plan shows the garden divided into four quarters by paths (gravel), with glasshouses along the inside of the N wall (outside were garden sheds and a gardener's house, now a private house), and outside the W wall. These have all disappeared, as has the interior layout.

SOURCES

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

Secondary

Pettigrew, A., 'Bryn Glas', Journal of Horticulture and Cottage Gardener, 26 November 1885, pp. 472-74.

Particulars of Sale 1890 (Osborn and Mercer) (Newport Reference Library, px M466.3 910).

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