

LLANTRITHYD PLACE

Ref number	PGW (Gm) 43 (GLA)
OS Map	170
Grid ref	ST 0435 7275
Former county	South Glamorgan
Unitary authority	The Vale of Glamorgan
Community council	Llancarfan
Designations	Listed building: Llantrithyd Place Grade II
Site evaluation	Grade II*

Primary reasons for grading The remarkable survival unaltered of the structure of an important sixteenth-century garden and of a mid seventeenth-century deer park, belonging to prominent Glamorgan families. The garden is of some complexity, with terraces, ponds and walks, including an unusually sophisticated raised walk up to a look-out mount or gazebo. The walled deer park is exceptionally complete.

Type of site Walled deer park; formal gardens with terraces, ponds, raised walk and gazebo

Main phases of construction Mid sixteenth century; late sixteenth century-early seventeenth century (garden); mid seventeenth century (deer park)

Site description

Llantrithyd Place is a large, ruined sixteenth-century house situated just to the south-west of the church in the small hamlet of Llantrithyd, in the Vale of Glamorgan. It stands on ground sloping to the east down to a small stream, the Nant Llantridddyd, which runs through the gardens. The house, built of local lias limestone with sandstone dressings, is now reduced to roofless, partly ivy-covered ruins, with only parts standing to their full height. It has three ranges around a central courtyard, open to the south-west. The north-west range is the best preserved. The central range, on the north-east side, had a storeyed porch in the centre and contained the principal rooms - a hall and parlour on the ground floor and a long gallery over it. This range was extended outwards in the early seventeenth century for a further parlour and well-stair. The south-east wing, now reduced to two walls only, contained the kitchen; the north-west wing a further parlour and chambers. On the south-west side are the remains of a walled forecourt, with its south-west and south-east boundary walls partly standing. The entrance was on the north-west side, on the lane between Llantrithyd and Tre-Aubrey. All that remains of it are two dressed stone plinths set in

the boundary wall along the lane, but in 1867 (Clark and Jones) there were 'heavy stone piers'.

The house was supplied with water from three stone-built, hooded wells at Ffynnon Echo in Coed Horseland, to the south. These still stand, two above ground and one sunken, so that only the domed roof is above ground level. The route of the ditch or pipe (probably stone-lined) that carried the water to the house can be seen as a slight depression, running northwards from the edge of the wood across the field to the Nant Llantrithyd. Where it crosses the stream the remains of a stone culvert have been discovered.

Llantrithyd Place was one of the most important sixteenth-century houses in Glamorgan. It was probably built by John Thomas Basset (sheriff in 1546; died 1551) in the mid sixteenth century. The Bassets were a junior branch of the Bassets of Old Beaupre and had held Llantrithyd since at least the early sixteenth century. John Basset left his property to a daughter, Elizabeth, who married Anthony Mansel (sheriff 1591), younger son of Sir Rice Mansel of Margam. The Mansels lived at Llantrithyd for the remainder of the century and in 1586 their heiress, Mary, married Thomas Aubrey. The wealthy and influential Aubreys became one of the leading families in the county in the seventeenth century, with both Sir Thomas and his son Sir John serving as deputy lieutenants and as sheriffs (in 1603 and 1634 respectively). Sir John was an active royalist in the Civil War, suffering sequestration of his estates and then being elevated to a baronetcy afterwards. John Aubrey (died 1697), famous antiquary and author of *Brief Lives*, spent much time at Llantrithyd, especially in later life. The Aubreys continued to live at Llantrithyd until the late eighteenth century, although they were frequently absent from the late seventeenth century onwards. At the beginning of the nineteenth century they removed to an inherited property, Boarstall, Buckinghamshire, after which Llantrithyd was finally abandoned, dismantled and fell into ruin. In about 1832 the roof fell in and the stairs came down between then and 1867, when the house was described in some detail by G.T. Clark and R.O. Jones in *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, when it was much better preserved than at present. Two drawings of 1846, by Mrs J.M. Traherne of Coedarhydyglyn, show the richly decorated long gallery and the courtyard, already in a state of neglect and decay.

The service court lies on sloping ground to the south-east of the house. It is roughly rectangular, enclosed on the north-east by the raised walk and on the north-west by the kitchen range and the ruined wall of the outer court. Along the south side is a ruined rectangular barn. It is roofless, its walls standing partly to their full height, with a wide entrance on the north side. On the south-east side are the remains of several buildings, the most complete being at the northern end. This is a roofless, ruined building, with a gable end containing a large fireplace and chimney. A wall runs northwards from it to the west side of the bridge gap in the raised walkway.

A survey of 1788 by J. Stone details the outbuildings then present: 'a Dairy and Cheesechamber over, A Brewhouse, Wash House, Malt House, and a Cider Mill House, one eight stalld Stable, one Six Stalld Stable, and one other Stable for six horses with a Granary over, a Wain House, Slaughter House, a Dove House, Ox House, and other necessary out Buildings'. It is not possible to identify the ruins of all these buildings, and some of them must have disappeared, but the 1867 description identifies a brew- and bake-house on the south-east side of the court. This can probably be identified as the building with the fireplace and chimney. Other outbuildings lie to the north of and within the gardens. Their position makes it unlikely that any of them were stables.

The exceptionally well preserved deer park of Llantrithyd Place lies on rolling ground *c.* 1 km to the north-east of the house and garden. It is *c.* 80 acres in extent, occupying a four-sided area, with a minor road along the north boundary and the Llantrithyd - Greenway road along the south and east boundaries. The park is entirely bounded by a mortared rubble stone park wall. The interior is largely open, unfenced grassland, the highest ground being towards the south end of the east side of the park. Running north-south down the centre is a belt of woodland, Beech Hanger Wood, to the west of which the ground drops quite steeply to a flat-bottomed valley, called the Upper Valley in the northern half of the park and the Lower Valley in the southern. To the west of the valley the ground rises again. The park is an actively managed deer park, with two herds, one of fallow deer and one of red. Deer fencing has been erected around the perimeter and there is a modern collecting paddock at the north end of Beech Hanger Wood, to the north of which is the park manager's modern bungalow.

The north wall of the park is well preserved. The eastern half stands to its full height of *c.* 2.7 m and is partly concrete capped. At the west end it is slightly lower and of a slightly different build. At the north end of the east wall is a fine, well preserved entrance gateway flanked by square piers *c.* 3.5 m high. That on the north side has a pyramidal top with a small rounded finial on top. Only the base of a similar top survives on the south side. The north pier also has its original hinges. The east wall is similar to the north but is broken down in places. The coping at the north end is of upright stones. Towards the south end is a stretch of well preserved, lower wall in a different style, using larger stones, with concrete capping. In places a belt of deciduous trees runs between the wall and the road outside it. All along the wall a modern shelter belt of mixed deciduous trees has been planted. At the east end of the south side is another gateway flanked by square piers with pyramidal tops. That on the western side is ivy-covered and original, that on the east was rebuilt in original style by Mr Ron Lloyd of Pentre Farm. It was moved slightly to the east at the same time, to widen the entrance. In the south-west corner is the entrance to a culvert, an iron-grilled hole at the foot of the wall, which was collapsed and has been rebuilt. The stream runs through the culvert under the road. Immediately to the west is a small, walled enclosure, the culling pen. This is a funnel-shaped area, the narrow neck at the north end. On its east and west sides are overgrown walls, that on the east having a wide gap where the wall has fallen or been removed. In the outside wall there is an opening without piers. The west side of the park is bounded by a rubble stone wall.

The eastern half of the park, to the east of Beech Hanger Wood, is open grassland. A ditch runs east-west across it from the north end of the wood. The highest ground in the park is to the east of the wood and in a strategic position on the ridge top are the ruins of the park lodge. This was a small stone rectangular building which once had a lean-to section and a wall around it. These have completely gone and all that is left now is part of the south gable end and the stumps of the other walls. The southern part of this side of the park is dotted with huge old pollarded oaks, beech, sycamore and a few ash. Two particularly fine pollarded oaks stand on lower ground to the north of the lodge. Trees were traditionally pollarded in deer parks to provide winter browse.

The west side of the park is different in character, with the small stream running north-south down it, through a shallow valley. For most of its length the stream runs in an artificial channel to one side of the valley, leaving the flat valley floor as uninterrupted meadow. The valley divides into two separate areas, the Upper and Lower Valley. In the Upper Valley the stream runs down the west side, with a

gently grass slope with a few trees on it bounding the east side. At the north end the stream runs into a small, ash-fringed pond. Some stone revetment is visible in the sides and the stream runs out over a stone sill. At the south end of the Upper Valley are two small quarries. Water runs into the stream from the east-west ditch under two stone culverts.

To the south the valley narrows and then opens out again into the Lower Valley, flanked on the east by Beech Hanger Wood and a grass slope and on the west by a bracken-covered slope on which there is a very fine old oak. The valley floor is flat and the stream is channelled along the west side. At the top of the west slope is the east wall of a long, funnel-shaped area called the Stallion Paddock. The wall is ruinous and of varying height. It runs north-south, enclosing an area next to the west boundary that narrows towards the south and leads to the culling pen. The ground within the Stallion Paddock is rolling, grass and bracken-covered, and drops towards the south end. On the west boundary are further large old oaks.

Just beyond the north end of the Stallion Paddock wall is an ancient pond with stone revetment walls and ramped entrances on the north, west and south sides. The ramps are of stone, with sills at their foot. The pond holds stagnant water.

Llantrithyd deer park was the park of the Aubrey family of Llantrithyd Place. It was created by Sir John Aubrey, probably after the Restoration in 1660. His estates had been returned to him, having been sequestered in the Civil War, in 1650. The park is not shown on a map of 1645 but does appear, as 'St John Aubry Park' on the 1675 map by John Ogilby. A survey of 1788 by J. Stone lists a 'walled park' of 77 acres. A note adds: 'There is nearly 20 acres of the Park covered with Groves of Trees the Herbage under which is not worth 5^d per acre'. The park was stocked with fallow deer and was only disparked in *c.* 1900. It is remarkable in retaining its walls and much of its internal layout, all probably dating to the mid seventeenth century. Parts of the boundary walls have been repaired or rebuilt, but all internal structures are unaltered. These are mostly connected with deer management. For sorting and culling, deer were herded into the Stallion Paddock and thence into the small culling pen at its southern end. The name 'Stallion Paddock' is traditional, but would appear to have no connection with deer. The keeper's lodge was strategically placed in the centre of the park, and at its highest point, and was a complete building with a thatched roof within living memory. The removal of the stream to a channel down the side of the valley is of interest. The purpose was probably to maximise the grazing area in the valley floor, but there might have been an aesthetic element as well, as the resulting valley is extremely attractive. It would appear that the valley floor, particularly in the Lower Valley, may have been levelled to provide a flat surface. Since 1990 the park has again been used as a deer park, with two herds, one of red and one of fallow deer.

The gardens lie mostly to the east and south-east of the house, in the small valley of the Nant Llantridddy. The ground slopes down to the valley floor from the house and churchyard on the west and then rises more steeply on the east side of the valley. To the south, at the south end of the gardens, the valley widens out, with woodland on the slope to the south-east and pasture to the south-west.

The main entrance to Llantrithyd Place was off the road which bounds the north-west side of the property, to the west of the house. This led to an outer court or garden terrace to the south-west of the house, bounded on the south-west and south-east by a wall, now ruinous. To the north-west of the house, between it and the road,

was another rectangular terrace, described in 1867 (Clark and Jones) as being bounded by a revetment wall on the south-west.

The gardens have a complex formal layout of terraces, walks, water channels and ponds. From the house they were reached by a wide walkway leading south-eastwards from a doorway in the early seventeenth-century extension to the house. Before the building of this north end of the house the area it now covers must have been part of the garden. This walkway is the backbone of the whole garden, running straight from the house down into the valley and up the other side to a look-out mount or gazebo. To the north of the walk the garden is laid out with two terraces below the churchyard, buildings and ponds below and a further terrace to the east of the canalised stream. To the south of the walk is a large garden enclosure, through which the canalised stream runs, that may have held a further fishpond. The two halves of the garden were connected by a walk which ran underneath the raised walk, opposite the second terrace.

The northern end of the garden is bounded by a low, partly ruinous wall extending eastwards from the north-east wall of the churchyard. Inside it, next to the churchyard, is a small walled compartment containing the walls of a small ruined building. This probably had a utilitarian purpose. The stream enters the gardens to the north-east of the churchyard, running in a canalised stream with a low revetment wall on its west side and a higher one on its east, now topped by the cypress hedge of a private garden. The wall then runs east and south to enclose a roughly rectangular area that was originally a pond. It is now partly water-filled, partly boggy, with the stream running along its west side and another, smaller one joining it from the east. The pond is dammed at its south end by a straight earthen dam, with a walk on it, bounded by low walls and with trees on it. The stream runs through a gap in it.

To the south is a second pond, now a grassy, partly boggy rectangular area, dammed on the south side by a low earthen embankment, with some stone facing on its north side, and with a walk along it. A low peninsula runs southwards from the upper pond's dam along the east side, with the canalised stream running along its east side. In the centre is a small island. At the south end of the pond this joins the outlet from the pond to flow in a culvert under the dam/walk. Just to the north-east of the join in the two streams is a rubbly mound that might represent the remains of a small building. The stream continues southwards in a narrow, straight stone-lined channel with a raised walk along its west side. To its east is a wide level walk, running parallel with the stream, with a scarp above it. Above this is a narrow walk backed by a rubble stone wall *c.* 2.5 m high, beyond which is the natural slope. At the north end of the wall is a cross wall, the lower part projecting out over the slope to support a small raised platform. To the north is a hollowed out quarry with rock-cut sides on the south and east. At the south end, the wall terminates just short of the main axial walkway and between them is a short flight of stone steps leading to the field to the east.

To the west of the canalised stream and adjoining raised walk is a four-sided area, grassed over, bounded on the north by the second pond and on the south by the main axial walkway. It is probable that this was not a pond but a garden compartment. The canalised stream widens towards its south end and runs over a small formal cascade. The raised walk along its west side becomes higher towards the south end to maintain its horizontal surface. In the south corner of the compartment, to the west of the walk, is a small pond with an outlet in the corner to the stream. The 1878 Ordnance Survey map shows a similar pond in this position, with an outlet under the raised walkway to a channel in the enclosure to the south.

The terraces lie to the west of the second pond and larger garden compartment. The upper terrace is adjacent to the churchyard, with the churchyard south-east wall forming the back revetment wall of the terrace. This wall is of mortared and dry-stone rubble, standing up to *c.* 3.5 m high. Near its south end there are two square bee hole niches and a further two that have been filled in, placed approximately half way up the wall. Half way along a 3 m stretch of wall the same height protrudes at right-angles. The 1878 Ordnance Survey map shows the wall extending right across the terrace, dividing it into two halves. The northern half of the churchyard wall has partly collapsed and built into it are three arches over a line of protruding lintel stones, below which there appear to be blocked openings. As there is a graveyard above these features are curious. The terrace is bounded on the north by the small compartment wall and on the south by the raised walkway. Its surface is flat and grassed over, with no visible layout. On the east side there is a low parapet wall in places, the highest section towards the north end, with a gap towards the south end. The drop to the second terrace is *c.* 1.3 m.

The second terrace, of the same length, is narrower. It is bounded on the upper, west side by a rubble stone wall up to *c.* 2.5 m high in the northern half, *c.* 1.3 m high towards the southern end. It bears the remnants of rendering in places. At its northern end there is a ruined barn on its eastern side. Only parts of the west and north walls survive; the south gable end is the most complete. To its south are the remnants of a larger, square building. Its east wall stands to *c.* 3 m and has a corrugated iron shed built against its west side. The south wall to its west is low and ruinous. To the south the terrace is bounded by a ruinous wall for *c.* 5 m which then drops to ground level. A lot of stone on the scarp which then bounds the terrace indicates that the wall here has fallen. Opposite the dam/walk between the second pond and garden compartment a roofless building stands against the terrace revetment wall. This is a substantial building of rubble stone construction, its south wall *c.* 4.5 m high, with two round-arched openings. The east one has been crudely blocked in its lower half. The north wall is lower and part of the building has been given a sloping corrugated iron roof. From the south wall a high wall, lower than the building's wall, extends eastwards, with a slightly smaller round-arched opening at its west end. After a wide, ragged-edged gap the wall continues for some 6-7 m along the north side of the second pond dam, getting lower at its east end and finally petering out.

The main axial walkway starts at a doorway in the south-east wall of the northern end of the house. At its upper, west end, it is bounded by ruinous dry-stone walls, with gaps, standing up to 2.5 m high. The west end of the wall on the north side is also the churchyard wall. The walk is built up above ground level on an embankment revetted with dry-stone walling up to *c.* 3 m high. Opposite the second terrace, to the north, is a gap *c.* 2.5 m wide, lined with dry-stone walls and with much fallen stone on the ground, which is where the walk originally continued on a bridge over a walk at ground level, running north-south. The raised walk continues the other side, descending the slope in a series of steps, whose remains are visible. On the edges, their roots in the stonework, are three yew trees, probably the remains of formal planting. The walk now runs across the valley floor, where it is slightly raised above the adjoining level, with stone facing to its sides and remnants of a parapet wall on the north side, the rest being broken down and littered over the ground. A row of large sycamore trees flanks the south side of the walk. At the east end of the valley floor the walk crosses the canalised stream on a flat stone bridge with a single shallow arch.

The walk then climbs the east side of the valley steeply up a series of five steps, running the full width of the walk. The remains of these are visible, set at wide intervals. Where their construction is visible it is of dry-stone walling. To the south the walk is raised above ground level. Its revetment wall has all but disappeared beneath the turf and is only visible at the highest, east end. On the north side the walk is at first at ground level, then is bounded by a dry-stone wall partly revetting slightly higher ground to the north, and only at the east end does it rise above ground level.

The climax of the walk is the raised view-point, or mount, or gazebo, at its south-east end. This is a square mound, standing *c.* 5 m high, revetted with slightly battered dry-stone walling on the south-east and south-west sides. The north-east side was originally walled, but its wall is now poorly preserved. The south corner is butted up against the east stone wall of the southern enclosure of the gardens. A hole at the bottom of the south-east wall has revealed that the walling is in two parts, an inner and an outer skin, the inner skin corresponding to the enclosure wall. This suggests that the gazebo may post-date the enclosure. The top of the mound is level, with a yew and some seedling trees, including a large ash, growing on it. There is no sign of any building on the top. From it there are fine views out over the gardens and the valley beyond.

To the south of the raised walkway is the final area of the gardens, the former orchard. This is a large rectangular enclosure surrounded by rubble stone walls. That on the west has been partly rebuilt, with a concrete capping. In the centre is an opening with an original gate pier, taller than the wall, on the north side. The wall was rebuilt in the 1920s. The east wall has been rebuilt in places and in others is broken down. A semi-circular apse in the wall marks the position of a cherry tree, now gone. At the south end is a wide entrance, which is modern. Inside it the footings of gate piers have been found. The south wall is largely ruined; it partially collapsed in 1947 as a result of flooding during a thunderstorm. The western part was rebuilt in the 1920s. The arch in the wall where the stream leaves the garden remains but two other features - another apse around a tree, now gone, and a drain hole in the base - have gone.

The stream continues southwards in a slightly wider, straight, canalised stone-lined channel. Half way along, there is a stony-surfaced stone bridge across the channel. This also acts as a dam; beneath it is a square-sectioned channel with a sill half way up it. The sill has a small drain hole in it. In times of high water, or by blocking the drain hole, the level of water in the channel to the north can be raised, thus forming a gently flowing or still canal, rather than a stream. This is a complicated piece of water management to produce an ornamental effect and is another demonstration of the sophistication of the garden. There is a possibility that a similar arrangement originally existed at the south end of the garden, enabling the south half of the channel to be dammed as well. The fact that the channel walls and adjacent walk are built up towards the south end of the garden so as to remain level would tend to support this idea. Now only an arch remains at the south end of the channel, allowing the water to flow unimpeded out of the garden.

A wide, raised walk runs along the west side of the channel, bounded on the west by a slight ditch. The 1878 Ordnance Survey map shows this as another, smaller, water-filled channel, fed by the small pond to the north of the raised walkway. The inlet for this channel, a culvert under the raised walkway, is now blocked. The ground within the orchard is more or less level, sloping very gently to the south. Along the west wall there is another broad, slightly raised walk.

The gardens are very probably sixteenth-century in date, although exactly when they were created is hard to determine. It is likely that, as at the contemporary house of The Van, Caerphilly, gardens were made when the house was built in the mid sixteenth century by John Thomas Basset. These could well have been just the terraces adjacent to the house. The remainder of the gardens - the terraces, ponds, walks, gazebo and orchard, were probably the work of Anthony Mansel, who is credited by Rice Merrick in *c.* 1578 with the making of the fishponds, an integral part of the layout. This would date the garden's creation to before 1578. In style the gardens are of this period and are quite sophisticated in layout; the raised walkway to the gazebo is a particularly unusual and advanced feature for a provincial garden such as this.

A survey of 1788 by J. Stone gives a helpful description of the gardens and their use at that time. There were two kitchen gardens of about an acre; these can probably be identified as the upper terrace, then divided into two halves, as shown on the 1878 Ordnance Survey map. There were also 'Two other gardens with a large Green House with stoves etc and a room over for seeds or fruit'. These are probably the lower terrace and the level rectangular area below. The 'Green House' can probably be identified as the tall building with round arches against the lower terrace. The gardens were 'walled in and the walls pretty well covered with Trees (presumably fruit trees)'. The canalised, stone-lined stream was there. To the south was the walled orchard with two stone-lined canals. The eastern one remains; the western one, although still visible, is now reduced to a ditch. The orchard was 'part planted with choice Fruit Trees'. The canals were supplied with water from fish ponds. It would seem from this evidence and from the 1878 Ordnance Survey map that the lower two compartments, to the north and south of the raised walkway, were not ponds but a garden compartment and orchard respectively. As the Aubreys used Llantrithyd only intermittently from the late seventeenth century onwards it is unlikely that the gardens were altered after that time. At the beginning of the nineteenth century it is said that a member of the family cut down 'the avenue' but it is not certain where that was.

Sources

Primary

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