

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

SITE DOSSIER

SITE NAME Cefn Tilla

REF. NO. PGW (Gt) 31

OS MAP 171 GRID REF. ST 406028

FORMER COUNTY Gwent UNITARY AUTHORITY Monmouth B.C. COMMUNITY
COUNCIL Raglan United

DESIGNATIONS Listed building: Grade

National Park AONB SSSI NNR ESA GAM SAM CA

SITE EVALUATION Grade II

Primary reasons for grading

Well preserved mid 19th-century small landscape park and garden, with remnants of formal 17th-century garden

TYPE OF SITE

Landscape park, terraced and informal gardens, walled kitchen garden

MAIN PHASES OF CONSTRUCTION

17th century; c. 1856

VISITED BY/DATE Elisabeth Whittle/April 1991

HOUSE

Name Cefn Tilla

Grid ref ST 406028

Date/style 1620; 1856/Jacobean; Victorian Jacobean

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

Cefn Tilla is a large three-storey stone house. It stands in a northward-facing hollow on the north side of the Olway valley. The first house on the site dates from about 1616 (on overmantle in principal room). In the Civil War it was the seat of Roger Oates, and was used by General Fairfax as his headquarters during the seige of Raglan Castle in 1646. By 1856 the much decayed house was the property of the industrialist Crawshay Bailey, from whom it was purchased in that year and given, with a modest amount of land, to the second lord Raglan by friends and well-wishers after the Crimean War, as a memorial to the first Lord Raglan. Over the front door is an inscription: 'This House with 237 acres land attached was purchased by 1623 of the friends, admirers and comrades in arms of the late Field Marshall Lord Raglan GCB and presented by them to his son and his heirs for ever as a lasting memorial of their affectionate regard and respect'. About half the fund for the purchase of the house was subscribed to in 1853/4, before the Crimean War; it was intended as a gift to the 1st Lord, but became a memorial to hime. The house was rebuilt and extended for the 2nd Lord by Matthew Digby Wyatt, and gardens and pleasure grounds were laid out on the site of farm buildings.

The main entrance is on the north side, where there is a balustraded forecourt (1856) and a Jacobean-style porch (1856).

OUTBUILDINGS

Name Outbuildings; stables

Grid ref ST 406028

Date/style, and brief description

The stable block is to the W of the house, in similar style (c. 1856), and there are various outbuildings, also of stone, running S from the SW corner of the house.

THE PARK

Central grid ref ST 406028

Date/style Mid 19th century/landscape park

GENERAL DESCRIPTION, HISTORY AND LAYOUT

The park is a long narrow strip of land lying mainly to the north and south of Cefn Tilla, bounded on the east by the Gwernesney-Llandenny road. It is a landscape park in character, with grassland and isolated trees. The ground is rolling, on a westward-facing slope, with Cefn Tilla situated in a hollow. The main entrance is at the southern end, and the tree-lined drive runs along the western boundary of the park up to the north side of the house. To the north there is a secondary drive which crosses the park NE-SW from an entrance on the Gwernesney-Llandenny road.

The park was created in 1856, when the house and some land were bought for the second lord Raglan. At this time the house was reached by a drive/track to the west. When the park was created a new drive was made, with an entrance at Gwernesney, on the Usk-Chepstow road, which led to the house and also along the east side of the park to the Llandenny road. This drive, formerly private, became a public road in 1933, when it was fenced from the park. The southern section of the drive, to the S of the park, was tree-lined, with clumps on either side (most of these trees have now gone), and trees were planted along the park side of the northern end of the drive (most of these are still there).

STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

Drives

S drive.

This is the main drive, and enters the park through a simple gateway at the south end of the park. The drive is tarmacked, and winds through narrow bands of semi-natural deciduous woodland, curving round NW of the house to enter the forecourt on the N side of the house.

N drive.

This is the secondary drive which runs from the forecourt northeastwards across the park to the Gwernesney-Llandenny road. (This road was formerly a private park drive, but in 1933 was made into a public road.)

WATER FEATURES

None

BUILT FEATURES

There is iron fencing along the S drive (E side), and along the E boundary of the park (1933), beside the Gwernesney-Llandenny road.

PLANTED COMPONENTS

The park is largely pasture, dotted with a few small clumps of deciduous trees, and isolated deciduous trees (mainly oaks). On either side of the S drive are narrow belts of semi-natural deciduous woodland. Along the W side of the Gwernesney-Llandenny road, to the NE of the house, is a row of alternating limes and chestnuts, planted 1856-80s (on 1880s 6" OS map).

BOUNDARIES

W side: field boundaries

N side: field boundary and public road

E side: public road

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

Essential setting: pasture fields to W of park

LAND-USE

Permanent pasture

ELEMENTS OF BOTANICAL OR OTHER NATURE CONSERVATION INTEREST

None known

SURVIVAL OF INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS

Structural components: complete

Water features: -

Built components: Most

Planted components: Most

THE PLEASURE GARDEN

Grid ref ST 406028

Date/style 17th century; 1850s/formal terraced; arboretum

GENERAL DESCRIPTION, HISTORY AND LAYOUT

The garden lies to the NE, E and S of Cefn Tilla. It was made in two main phases - in the 17th century, and soon after 1856. The rectangular area enclosed by dry-stone walling S of the house probably represents the extent of the original 17th-century garden. The rest of the garden layout - the terracing and topiary walk E of the house, the arboretum, the outer paths, and forecourt - belongs to the mid 19th-century phase, as does much of the tree and some of the shrub planting. The topiary walk to the E of the house was planted then.

Immediately to the N of the house is a rectangular gravelled forecourt surrounded by low balustrading of red semi-circular tiles with a stone plinth and coping. To the NE and E of this the ground slopes upwards, and was planted as an informal arboretum in the late 1850s. The area retains some of its Victorian feel, with more recent planting of trees and shrubs. A small ornamental pond in this area was enlarged by the present owner's father, and was further enlarged and deepened in the 1980s and 90s by the present owner. Some of the largest trees date from the 1850s, and a few Victorian rhododendrons remain. Old photographs indicate that there were many more, right the way along the N boundary of the garden. There is evidence (from the excavation of the pond, and from a 17th-century drawing of the N front of the house) that the ground to the north of the house was originally sloping, and that it was raised and levelled in the 1850s, using a considerable depth of rubble and soil. The E boundary is fringed by a yew hedge within which is a grassed-over gravel path (1850s). To the W of the forecourt the ground slopes up; formerly it was terraced, but it was levelled by the present owner in 1965.

A gravel path and raised grass walk run parallel with the E side of the house, and the walk is planted with yew topiary (mid 19th century). The dry-stone revetment wall of the walk was built by the present owner's father in the 1930s. To the S are two grass terraces with a low dry-stone wall on the S and E sides, with arched doorways in the E side (modern) and S side, which has two gateways - 'Fairfax's Gateway' at the E end, which probably dates to the 1850s, and the 'Worcester Arch', which was built in 1968. To the S of the house are a cobbled yard and outbuildings, separated from the garden by a stone wall topped by semi-circular red tiles similar to those of the forecourt. To the S is an informal shrubbery called 'The Dell'.

STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

To the N of the house is a large level rectangular gravel forecourt. This area is thought to have sloped downwards (17th-century drawing of N front of house, and evidence from excavation of pond). Large quantities of material were used to raise and level it in the 1850s (an overburden of up to 2.5 m was found when excavating the pond, with c. 0.3 m. of stone rubble at the base). To the E of the house a gravel path runs N-S below the topiary walk, a level grass path c. 0.8 m. above, with a dry-stone retaining wall, built in the 1930s by the present owner's father.

The rectangular garden to the S of the house is on two levels - next to the house is a rectangular lawn, and to its S is a similar raised lawn, separated from the lower one by a grass slope. Gravel paths run along the N, E and W sides.

Along the E boundary of the garden, inside the yew hedge, is a grassed-over gravel path.

On the W edge of the arboretum, to the NE of the house, is an informal pond. A small ornamental pond was in existence here earlier

this century, when it was enlarged by the present owner's father. The present owner has further enlarged and deepened it (1980s-90s).

BUILT COMPONENTS

The forecourt is surrounded by low balustrading consisting of stone plinths and coping, with semi-circular red tiles between. There is a wide opening on the N side, and two small pedestrian openings on the E and W. All are flanked by square stone piers, and the side openings have small iron gates in them.

On the E side of the house there are three flights of stone steps down from the topiary walk. These were made up from stone found on the premises by the present owner.

The garden to the S of the house is surrounded on the E and S sides by low dry-stone walling. In the middle of the E side is a modern archway, a rough copy of the 'Worcester arch' at the W end of the S side, which has a round arch with a tiled gable over it. This was built in 1968 (under the supervision of F. Pemberton). At the E end of the S side is 'Fairfax's arch', a similar gateway (repaired) c. 2.5 m. high, with a small copper portcullis set over the middle of its N side (the arms of Margaret Beaufort). This archway probably dates from the 1850s. It has a low iron gate in it, similar in style to those of the forecourt, and therefore probably mid 19th-century in date.

ARCHITECTURAL ORNAMENTS

The flowerbed in front of the N side of the house is bounded by twisted-top slate edging. Two slatted garden seats in the S garden have been made up using the cast iron supports from earlier seats (shown in old photographs).

PLANTED COMPONENTS

The main planted components of the gardens are lawns, the arboretum, and the topiary walk.

The slope to the NW of the house is grassed, with a few mature trees, mainly coniferous. The arboretum to the NE and E of the house contains some trees planted in the mid 19th century (after 1856), including wellingtonias, Californian redwoods, and a weeping beech. Other trees are mainly deciduous, but include two pines (Scots and Corsican) and some yews. Clumps of rhododendrons on either side of the N drive are all that is left of the original bank of rhododendrons along the N boundary. Along the E boundary is a yew hedge. 'The Dell' is a grass area with specimen trees and shrubs (20th-century). A single large mature pine tree against the S wall of the terracing is all that is left of a former row which ran right along the wall.

The topiary walk along the E side of the house is grassed, with alternating clipped golden (ball-shaped) and Irish (inverted funnel-shaped) yews.

To the S of the outbuildings is a grass path flanked by yew hedges leading towards the kitchen garden.

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

Essential setting: park to the N
Views: N from the forecourt over the park

ANY SPECIAL FEATURES
None

SURVIVAL OF INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS
Structural components: all
Built components: little (17th century); most (1856)
Architectural ornaments: some
Planted components: some

UTILITARIAN GARDENS

NAME Kitchen garden

Grid ref SO 407027

Date/style 1856/walled kitchen garden

DESCRIPTION

The disused square kitchen garden is situated about 100 m. S of the house, on ground sloping down from W to E. It dates to the mid 19th century. Its brick walls stand to their full height of c. 3.5-4 m., with a stone capping. There are doorways in the centre of each wall, the one in the west wall being vehicular. Against the outside of the N wall are lean-to bothies of brick and slate, in reasonable condition. To the N is an outer garden, also of 19th-century date, originally enclosed by stone walls (using stone left over from the main building work), which are now very ruinous and discontinuous. The W wall has mostly been demolished, the N wall is partly standing, but has gaps. There is no wall at the E end. Within this area were several hot-houses, but little remains of them.

SOURCES

Primary

? Early 20th-century pen sketch of house by Norman Keene: National Library of Wales (Mon A P.D. 7823)

Early 20th-century postcard: Gwent Record Office (Misc mss 1296)

Photographs and 17th-century drawing of the N elevation of the house: at Cefn Tilla.

Secondary

AP: BKS Surveys no. 157886

J. Bradney, A History of Monmouthshire Vol II (1914)

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