

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

SITE DOSSIER

SITE NAME Clytha Park
REF. NO. PGW (Gt) 15
OS MAP 161
GRID REF SO 367090
FORMER COUNTY Gwent
UNITARY AUHTORITY Monmouth B.C.
COMMUNITY COUNCIL Llanarth

DESIGNATIONS Listed building: Clytha Park Grade II*;
Lodge and gateway grade II; Clytha Castle grade II

SITE EVALUATION Grade I

Primary reasons for grading

Well preserved very fine late 18th-century landscape park with outstanding well preserved folly; structural remains of contemporary ornamental garden and kitchen garden

TYPE OF SITE

Medium sized late eighteenth-century landscape park, ornamental garden (part twentieth-century) and kitchen garden

MAIN PHASES OF CONSTRUCTION

1790s; 1821-28

VISITED BY/DATE Elisabeth Whittle/October 1990

HOUSE

Name Clytha Park

Grid ref SO 367090

Date/style 1821-28/Neo-classsical

Brief description

The present house is a two-storey neo-classical building of Bath stone, built for William Jones the younger by Edward Haycock of Shrewsbury between 1821 and 1828. It stands to the north-west of the site of the previous house, now completely gone, which was an early Georgian brick house built by the Berkeleys of Spetchley Park, who owned Clytha for most of the eighteenth century. Towards the end of the eighteenth century William Jones (d. 1805), brother of Philip Jones of Llanarth Court, bought Clytha. After his wife's death in 1787 he made the park and built the entrance gates and folly (Clytha Castle) in her memory.

The present house was built for William's nephew, William Jones, who had inherited Clytha from his uncle. The house is built on an artificial mound (within which are cellars) to prevent flooding, and is a square neo-classical building of Bath stone, with a two-storey portico of Ionic columns on the south-west side (the entrance). In the middle of the north-west side is a curving verandah of Doric columns. There was originally a small orangery on the south-east side, but this has been demolished. Behind the house, to the north-east, are two cottages, all that is left of the old kitchen court of the house which had to be demolished after the house's occupation by troops in the Second World War.

OUTBUILDINGS

Name Stables

Grid ref SO 368091

Date/style, and brief description

The stable court, built of red brick and stone, stands to the north-east of the house, and was originally built in the 1820s, at the same time as the house. It was burnt down in the 2nd World War, and has been reconstructed. The courtyard has an arched entrance on the south-east side. The north range is of stone, with a clock lantern and a dovecote in the gable end.

To the north-east are kennels and a small single-storey brick cottage in a yard between the stables and the kitchen garden.

THE PARK

Central grid ref SO 365090

Date/style 1790s;19th century/landscape park

GENERAL DESCRIPTION, HISTORY AND LAYOUT

Clytha park is a medium-sized landscape park lying to the north and south of the A40 road, to the south of the village of Llanarth, and just to the east of the river Usk. The northern part lies on low-lying gently undulating ground in the river valley, the southern part on higher ground above it, culminating in the knoll on which Clytha Castle stands. A small water course crosses the northern part of the park, which is otherwise without water. The main entrance lies on the north side of the A40 road, and a winding drive leads north-eastwards to the house, which stands in the northern part of the park.

There may have been a park here in the eighteenth century in association with the earlier house of the Berkeleys, but there is no evidence for one. The present park was largely made by William Jones the elder in the 1790s. David Williams (1796) says of it 'The improvements in the farm, plantations, and gardens, are conducted with taste, spirit, and expence'. A considerable amount of work was carried out for William Jones on the grounds and garden in the early 1790s by John Davenport, a landscape gardener from Shropshire. He provided both plants and plans, including that for the walled garden.

William Jones's work includes the Gothick gateway, screen and lodge at the entrance to the park, and Clytha Castle, a fine Gothick castellated, largely two-dimensional eye-catcher folly on the top of the hill at the south end of the park, built in memory of his wife. The castle was probably designed by Davenport. It is known that John Nash did some work at Clytha in about 1790, and there is indirect evidence that he designed the entrance gateway, screen and lodge.

Jones also did a considerable amount of tree planting, some of which survives, including beeches at the north-west end of the park, the cedar in front of the house, and possibly the plane trees in the southern part of the park. The perimeter of the 1790s park was planted with trees, and much of this perimeter woodland survives. The north-west boundary of the park at this time was the track which runs north-east/south-west across the north-west sector of the park, and this was still the boundary when a map of the estate was made in 1862. A carriage drive was made from the house to the folly, and this survives south of the A40.

Between 1800 and 1820 the main road (A 40) was moved to its present position (original position not certain), the park wall along its north side was built, and the deep cutting to the south of the house was made, which necessitated the building of a suspension bridge to take the carriage drive over it to the folly. This bridge lasted until 1975 when it was demolished as being unsafe.

It is assumed that the ha-ha to the south and west of the house was built at the same time as the new house in the 1820s. Further tree planting took place in the nineteenth century, including limes, Spanish chestnuts and horse chestnuts. Many of these trees survive as fine mature, mostly isolated specimens. The southern part of the park is particularly well wooded. The strip of woodland to the south-east of the house, along the east boundary, was called the 'shrubbery' in a map of 1862.

STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

Drives

The main entrance drive lies to the SW of the house, entering the park at the Gothick gateway on the A40. Now tarmacked as far as the house, it curves up to the SW front of the house, continuing round the E side to the stables, the E side of the kitchen garden, to an exit into a lane leading to Chapel Farm.

The former drive from the house to Clytha Castle branches off the main drive to the E of the house and runs southwards through woodland up to the edge of the A40 cutting. It is now reduced to an earthen path, but its course is still clear. To the S of the cutting it continues southwestwards as a slightly levelled green track across fields (it crosses the present drive to Clytha Castle and Ffynnonau), rising up the hill to arrive just E of the folly. The drive continues round the back of the folly, making a wide loop through woodland to its W, and returning to join the first one to the NE of the folly. Through the woodland this is an earthen track, and in the field a levelled grass track. The present drive to the farm (Ffynnonau) and Clytha Castle is a gravel track from the A40 W of the cutting. It was in existence in the 1880s (OS map), and may have been used as an alternative route to the folly.

Clytha Castle ha-ha

A ha-ha separates the high ground Clytha Castle (the folly) stands on from the field below. This runs from where the drive emerges from the wood to the NW of the folly up the edge of the wood, across the front of the folly and along the N edge of the trees bounding the drive to Ffynnonau as far as the field boundary running S. This has recently been completely renovated by the National Trust, and consists of a drystone wall and ditch.

WATER FEATURES

A small watercourse crosses the northern half of the park NE-SW, from the NW end of the lake (in garden) to just W of the entrance gateway, where it forms an elongated pond.

BUILT FEATURES

Entrance gateway SO 363089

On A40, SW of house. Light, elegant stone Gothick gate screen, with side pedestrian entrances. Central ogee arch, small crocketed pinnacles above the four gate piers, with shamrocks over the pedestrian entrances. Simple iron gates with concave curving tops. Low curving stone wall on either side topped by iron railings. On the E side is a small single-storey Gothick stone lodge, contemporary with the gateway.

Park walls

Along the N side of the A40 road, built at the same time as the road, 1800-1820. Curving stone wall from just W of Rose Cottage to E of entrance gateway, where it is sunk to give an uninterrupted view of the S end of the park from the house.

Clytha Castle SO 364084

Clytha Castle, or the folly, stands right at the southern end of the park, on a hilltop. It faces N and NW, from which sides there are magnificent views across the park and central Gwent to the Skirrid mountain and the Black Mountains beyond. The folly is backed by woods, and the uninterrupted view to the NW is achieved by a ha-ha which runs E-W just to the N. It was designed not only as a place to look out from but as an eyecatcher to look at, and is visible from the northern end of the park, and can be glimpsed from the house (tree growth having obscured some of the view).

The folly is a large L-shaped castellated Gothick building consisting of three towers, one square and two round, linked by curtain walling.

The round tower on the E end is hollow, and the walls are facades only. The square two-storey tower in the NW corner, with an attached circular stair turret, was originally used as a lunch room for shooting parties and a retiring room for ladies, but is now converted by the Landmark Trust into a holiday cottage for short lets. The third tower was originally a caretaker's cottage.

The folly was built in 1790 by William Jones the elder in memory of his wife, who died in 1787. A plaque on the wall explains this dedication. The architect of the folly was probably John Davenport. Items in the William Jones Account Book 1771-92 for 1790 and 1791 relate to Davenport's bills for work on the castle. Furniture for the folly was ordered from Mayhew and Ince.

Railings

Iron fencing from lodge along SE side of drive to edge of ha-ha in front of (SW side of) house. Near the N end is a small iron gate. Iron gates on opposite sides of the drive half way along, that on NW side over a bridge (agricultural).

In the southern sector of the park (S of the A40) there is iron fencing along the E side of the road to Bettwys Newydd as far as Hillgrove, and also along the S boundary S of the drive to Clytha Castle from the E corner of the park (Ffynnonau) to the cross fence (cattle grid), where there is a small iron gate in the fencing.

PLANTED COMPONENTS

The park has many fine specimen trees in it, and the southern sector, in particular is very well wooded with mature deciduous trees (mainly beech, lime, sweet chestnut and oak). These plantings date from the 1790s and the 19th century. (Some of the oaks may be older).

Between the lodge and Rose Cottage, along the N side of the A40, is a belt of deciduous trees. Flanking the drive just W of the house is a large mature Cedar of Lebanon on the N side (probably 1790s) and a large mature lime on the S side.

The NW sector of the park is dotted with isolated specimen trees, mainly oaks, with some limes and Scots pines. There is a clump of limes in the middle. The old park boundary, now a track across the park near its NW end, was planted with beech trees in the 1790s, and many of these have fallen and been replaced. The present park boundary is formed by natural deciduous woodland (Twyn y Cregan Wood).

The central sector of the park, S of the drive and house, has further isolated deciduous trees, mainly oaks and planes, and some new planting. There are two clumps, one of Scots pines and one of mixed deciduous and coniferous trees. The linear belt of woodland along the E boundary is of mixed deciduous trees with a few conifers. There are some mature sweet chestnuts, horse chestnuts, beech, lime and sycamore interspersed throughout. Near the southern end the path through it is flanked by laurels.

The southern sector of the park, S of the A40 road, has many fine specimen deciduous trees, mainly sweet chestnut, plane, lime, beech and oak, on the slope below the folly. These are mostly fully mature trees, and some have fallen in the recent gales. On the lower part of the slope they are well spaced out; higher up, on the steeper slope, is a belt of trees, including huge sweet chestnuts, beeches and limes. In the field to the E of the track to Ffynnonau and the folly huge beeches, sweet chestnuts and limes flank the course of the old path to the house (also two large stumps). Mature limes and beeches line the SW boundary of the park (along the field boundary to the SE of the road to Bettwys Newydd).

To the SW of Ffynnonau the drive (present-day) to the folly is flanked by trees - mature sweet chestnuts, sycamores and limes at the E end, younger mixed deciduous woodland at the W end. Immediately to the E of the folly is an enormous sweet chestnut, with another similar one on the other side of the drive (in the wood). The southern boundary of the park, behind the folly, is well wooded with mixed deciduous semi-natural woodland (unmanaged), interspersed with a few mature conifers.

BOUNDARIES

W side: wall along A40 road; iron fencing along Bettwys Newydd road
S side: field boundaries (E end iron fencing)
E side: field boundaries and drive (N end)
NE side: garden boundary (ha-ha and fence), farm track and field boundaries
NW side: field boundaries

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

Essential setting: open pasture land to the W of the park.
Viewpoints: A: N and NW from Clytha Castle, across park and mid Gwent to the Skirrid, Sugar Loaf and Black Mountains.
B: S and SW from house across park to Clytha Castle
C: NW from house across park, with Blorenge mountain and the Skirrid mountain in the background.

LAND-USE

Agricultural, mainly pasture, some arable.

ELEMENTS OF BOTANICAL OR OTHER NATURE CONSERVATION INTEREST

Mature deciduous trees

SURVIVAL OF INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS

Structural components: most
Water features: all
Built components: most
Planted components: most trees

THE PLEASURE GARDEN

Grid ref SO 367092

Date/style 1790s; 1820s/informal; 1930s/formal (Avray Tipping part)

GENERAL DESCRIPTION, HISTORY AND LAYOUT

The gardens lie immediately around and to the north-east of the house. To the south and west of the house are lawns sloping gently down to ha-has. To the north-west is an area of mostly informal tree and shrub planting around a roughly rectangular small lake. Paths are mostly informal and grassed, with a few gravel paths, including one that leads to a stone-arched gateway topped by a medieval stone cross (found on Perthir Farm) known as the Perthir Gate, on the north boundary of the garden. To the east of the house a ridge of higher ground is planted with deciduous trees and evergreen shrub understorey (the 'shrubbery'), and a path winds through it to the edge of the road cutting (A40), where there used to be a suspension bridge.

The gardens were laid out in several stages. William Jones the elder, with the help of John Davenport in the early 1790s, is known to have laid out gardens which went with the previous house, but there are no discernible traces of them, except possibly one or two trees. A lake is known to have been in existence in the eighteenth century (and probably earlier) on the site of the present one, but it was dug out further and given a more picturesque outline in the 1820s, when material from it was used to build up the mound that the house was built on. The D-shaped kitchen garden in the east corner of the garden was designed and built in the early 1790s by John Davenport.

When the new house was built in the 1820s the area around it was laid out with sweeping lawns separated from the park by a ha-ha. Apart from the removal of a central path to the ha-ha on the south-west side of the house, and a curving path to the north-west of the house this area is unaltered. A photograph of circa 1860 shows the central path (as does the 1880s 6" OS map), and also a fountain (gone) and remnants of the old house (gone).

The area between the house and the lake, and around the lake, was planted with trees, shrubs, and flowers, and some of the trees remain. In a map of 1862 the lake was described as the 'pond in flower garden', and on its south-west side is a cast-iron boat shelter probably of nineteenth-century date. There were lawns to the south-east and north-east of the lake, and towards the end of the nineteenth century that to the south-east was planted with conifers, most of which remain. To the south-east of the house was a wooded area called the 'shrubbery' in the 1862 map.

Various alterations were made to the gardens under the direction of H. Avray Tipping in the 1930s. The basic structure remained unchanged, but some more formal elements were added near the lake: a lawn bounded by a clipped yew hedge at the north-west end (the 'secret' garden), formal walks flanked by fastigate yews along the north-east side, and a similar formal walk to the south of the south-east end of the lake.

STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

Ha-has

There are two ha-has, on the S and W boundaries of the garden immediately around the house. It is assumed that they are contemporary with the building of the house in the 1820s. Both are curving and have a stone wall c. 1 m. high. That to the S of the house runs from the end of the drive to the edge of the woodland on the E boundary of the garden. That to the W is the continuation of the ha-ha along the W

side of the drive, and runs northeastwards along the edge of the garden up to the edge of the wooded surroundings of the lake.

The lake

The lake is roughly rectangular, orientated NW-SE, and lies to the N of the house near the NE boundary of the park. A pond was already in existence when the new house was built in the 1820s, but it took its present form then, when material was taken from it to build up the mound the house is built on and when it was given a more picturesque outline. It is dammed at its NW end, with a stone-lined overflow channel in the N corner. There is a stone slab bridge over the channel. Near the dam is a small island.

Paths/walks

Most of the walks are informal and grassed. There are a few gravel paths: a straight path flanked by fastigate yews (Tipping, 1930s) along the S edge of the lawn at the SE end of the lake; a path around the outside of the kitchen garden, which is joined by the first; a path off this path at the NW corner of the kitchen garden, which crosses the lake inlet stream (over a wooden footbridge) and winds to the boundary of the garden (NE side) where there is a stone-arched gateway (the Perthir gate) with a medieval cross on top.

On the NE side of the lake, between the lawn/shrub area next to the lake and the woodland on the boundary of the garden, is a straight grass walk flanked by fastigate yews (Tipping, 1930s), which may formerly have been a gravel path.

To the NW of the house, half way down the sloping lawn, a former curving gravel path is visible as a shallow berm in the slope.

BUILT COMPONENTS

Walls

Stone wall c. 1.2 m. high running eastwards from the Perthir Gate along the garden boundary to the NE corner as far as the entrance gate.

Steps

Stone steps below dam at NW end of lake.

Gates

Ironwork gates on S boundary of wooded area around lake.

The Perthir gate

On NE boundary of garden, opposite road to Chapel Farm, at end of gravel walk, is a simple stone-arched gateway, built in the 1790s, with a simple iron pedestrian gate in it. The centre of the top is stepped up, and in the middle is an ornate medieval stone cross found on Perthir Farm.

In the NE corner of the garden, N of the kitchen garden, is a wide gateway (off the road to Chapel Farm) with simple square stone gate piers and wooden gates.

Boat shelter

In the middle of the SW side of the lake is a rectangular cast-iron boat shelter, probably of 19th-century date. Plain corner posts supporting shallow pitched roof with decorative gable ends and finials.

ARCHITECTURAL ORNAMENTS

In the 'secret' garden at the NW end of the lake is a rustic bench with stone slab sides and wooden seat and back. In front of it is a small paved area.

At the S end of the wooded area to the S of the lake, underneath beech trees, is a dogs' graveyard, with stone headstones.

PLANTED COMPONENTS

Immediately around the house, to its S and W, are wide lawns sloping down to the two ha-has. The only planting is the two mature trees - the Cedar of Lebanon (probably 1790s) to the W of the house, and the lime (?1790s or 1820s) to the SW, on the other side of the drive. At the N end of the lawn to the W of the house is a large yew tree.

Around the lake is an area of informally planted ornamental trees and shrubs, grass paths and lawns. The trees are both deciduous and coniferous, and some date back to the 1790s or earlier; many are 19th-century in date. Along the NE boundary is an area of semi-natural deciduous woodland.

On entering the area through iron gates at the S end a grass path winds through clipped rhododendrons north-westwards to an area of grass, shrubs (many rhododendrons) and some mature trees including an evergreen oak, a large oak (possibly pre 1790s) and some conifers on the SW side of the lake.

At the NW end of the lake, to the NW of the dam, is the 'secret' garden (Tipping, 1930s) - a level lawn bounded by a rectilinear clipped yew hedge on all but the SE side where there are some overgrown yews (? formerly clipped) along the edge of the ditch to the NW of the dam. Behind this garden, to the N, is an area of deciduous woodland including large white poplars.

The island in the lake is planted with deciduous trees (mainly birches) and shrubs.

The NE side of the lake is an area of grass, shrubs and trees (mixed deciduous and coniferous) informally planted. There is a bank of shrubs along the edge of the lake, behind which are deciduous trees and some large mature conifers including an Atlas cedar (at the NW end of the yew walk). Other notable trees in this area, near the S end of the lake, are a large cut-leaf beech and a large moribund tulip tree (SE of the path to the Perthir gate). Behind the ornamental planting, on the boundary of the garden, is an area of semi-natural deciduous woodland, and on its edge is a straight grass walk (Tipping, 1930s) flanked by paired fastigate yews. To the S of the Perthir gate this woodland continues to the NE corner of the garden, with a woodland walk (grass), and underplanting of laurels and rhododendrons.

At the SE end of the lake is an area of lawn planted with about 12 cypresses (? end 19th-early 20th century). Two have been cut down (stumps remain). At the S end of this area is a gravel path flanked by paired fastigate yews (Tipping, 1930s), leading from the kitchen garden towards the exit to the lake garden NE of the house. Between this walk and the back walls of the kennels and stables are some mature trees (mainly conifers, and including an old yew and a large pine) and rhododendrons.

Reconstructions of original planted features

None

Special collections of garden plants

None

Documented living plants

None

Other (including elements of nature conservation interest)

Notable specimen trees (Atlas cedar, tulip tree, cut-leaf beech, pine, evergreen oak, and cypresses)

ESSENTIAL SETTING AND VIEWS BEYOND THE SITE

Essential setting: park to the W and S of the garden, with views (B and C) from the house across the ha-has.

ANY SPECIAL FEATURES

None

SURVIVAL OF INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS

Structural components: most

Built components: most

Architectural ornaments: most

Planted components: most trees, some shrubs

UTILITARIAN GARDENS

NAME Kitchen garden

Grid ref SO 368091

Date/style 1790s/walled kitchen garden

DESCRIPTION

The walled kitchen garden lies to the north-east of the house, in the north-east corner of the garden. It is on level ground, and is D-shaped, which is unusual (the straight side being the north side). This may have resulted from the garden being fitted into an existing space, with the lane to Chapel Farm curving around its east side. There is also some evidence on the west side that the wall of the garden, at least on this side, stands on the footings of an older wall. The garden was designed and built by John Davenport in the early 1790s (including hot-houses). The internal layout, however, with its curving cross paths, is gardenesque in style, and may date from the 1830s (contemporary with the building of the present house).

The wall, which stands to its full height and is well preserved, is c. 3.5-4 m. high, of red brick, with a flat stone capping and flat shallow buttresses at intervals on the outside of the wall. The lower half of the wall is wider on the outside. There is some evidence (on the south side) that the wall was once rendered on the outside. On the west side the brick wall stands on a stone footing c. 0.8 m. high, which appears to be of an older wall. A gravel path skirts the outside of the wall on the south, west and north sides.

Ranged along the outside of the north side are several lean-to stone buildings - a central cottage and flanking sheds. There are doorways into the garden on all four sides, with two on the north side, one near the west end and one near the east end from the potting shed. That on the south side is blocked, and a new, wider entrance has been made to the east of it. The original entrances are arched. All have wooden doors.

Inside the original layout of paths has remained. There is a straight path parallel to the north side, with two lean-to glasshouses (vineries) between it and the wall. These glasshouses are complete, and are in use. There were further glasshouses to the west of the present ones, but these have now gone. The interior is divided into four quadrants by curving paths which meet in the middle at a small circular pool edged with large stones and lined with bricks. This layout is shown on the 1880s 6" OS map. The path from the pool to the south wall has been grassed over (its course shows in the grass as a slight dip), but the others are gravel. The east-west path is flanked by clipped beech hedges. There is an extra path, parallel to that along the north wall, in the north-west quadrant, which gives access to cold frames.

The north-west quadrant of the garden is partly in productive use. The north-east quadrant has a hard tennis court on it. The south half of the garden is grassed over and fenced off. Parallel with the south wall, on the inner side of what was the perimeter path (now grassed over) are three very old espalier apples against intermittent iron railing, which must have lined the path. There are more espalier apples and iron railings in a similar position along the north half of the west side.

SOURCES

Primary

William Jones Account Book 1771-92: Gwent Record Office (M413/2114).
Plan of lands in hand (1862): at Clytha Park.
Photograph c. 1860 of SW front: at Clytha Park.
Map of park, including old house (1823), by Henry and Charles Price:
at Clytha Park.
Pen sketch of house, by Norman Keene (National Library of Wales: Mon A
PD 7811).

Secondary

Haslam, R., 'Clytha Park, Gwent - I', Country Life 8 December 1977.
Williams, D., A history of Monmouthshire (1796), pl. XXII.