

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

SITE DOSSIER

**SITE NAME** Glen Usk

**REF. NO.** PGW (Gt) 36

OS MAP 171 GRID REF. ST 364 927

FORMER COUNTY Gwent UNITARY AUTHORITY Monmouth B.C. COMMUNITY  
COUNCIL Llanhennock Fawr

DESIGNATIONS Listed buildings: Glen Usk Grade II;  
Garden temple to W of Glen Usk (Grade II); Gate piers to road, N of  
Glenusk (Grade II)

National Park AONB SSSI NNR ESA GAM SAM CA  
TPO no. 72

SITE EVALUATION Grade II

Primary reasons for grading

Survival more or less intact of Arts-and-Crafts terraced gardens,  
incorporated into less formal Regency layout.

TYPE OF SITE

Regency villa garden; Arts-and-Crafts garden

MAIN PHASES OF CONSTRUCTION

1820s; 1920s

VISITED BY/DATE Elisabeth Whittle/June 1991

## HOUSE

Name Glen Usk

Grid ref ST 364927

Date/style c. 1820/Regency villa

### Brief description

Glen Usk is a square, stuccoed, three-storey Regency villa situated in a small sheltered hollow just N of the river Usk. It is approached from a small road on its N side, with a forecourt in front and steps leading up to an entrance portico with two Doric columns. The south front, facing the garden and the river, is bowed at both ends, and a very well preserved cast-iron verandah contemporary with the house runs the full length of the front.

Immediately to the W of the house is a free-standing building in the form of a classical temple. It also is stuccoed. Attached Ionic columns run the length of the E and W sides, and on the S side there is a portico with four free-standing Ionic columns, a central door and two flanking niches containing copies of classical statues. This building was constructed as a picture gallery, and still has skylights in the roof. At one time it was attached to the main house by a service wing, but the present owners demolished it and have replaced it by a simple paved court with stone balustrading along the S side.

The house was built c. 1820 by Sir Digby Mackworth (4th Bt. d. 1852), possibly on the site of an earlier house. At a slightly later date the house was enlarged by the addition of two rooms on the ground floor on the north side, and the entrance portico. The temple was probably built at the same time. Later a service wing was added between the house and temple (demolished by the present owner). The Mackworth estate in the area was considerable, and included all the adjacent land. A lodge c. 1 ml. to the W was on the boundary of the estate. On Sir Digby's death it was let to Samuel Homfray, who lived there until his death in 1883. In 1903 the Mackworth estate was sold as a whole. The sale particulars include an octagonal glass-roofed building attached to the E side of the house, which had been used to house monkeys. This building had been demolished by 1925, when the estate was sold again, this time being broken up.

### OUTBUILDINGS

Name Stable block

Grid ref ST 364927

### Date/style, and brief description

The stable block lies to the NE of the house, with which it is contemporary. It consists of a rectangular court entered through stone gate piers and simple iron gates on the W side. The buildings around the court (both single- and two-storey) are stuccoed and utilitarian in style. In the NW corner is a taller square tower with a dovecot on top and a clock face (recently erected, from Bertholey House) on the S side.

## THE PLEASURE GARDEN

Grid ref ST 364927

Date/style 1820s and early 1920s

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION, HISTORY AND LAYOUT

The grounds are entered down a curving drive with two exits to the small lane to the N of the house. The drive leads to the forecourt to the N of the house. The gardens lie mainly to the S and SE of the house on ground that slopes quite steeply southwards down towards the river Usk, which is visible from the gardens at the foot of fields to the S of the garden. There are picturesque views from the S front of the house and from the gardens across the Usk valley. Behind the house, to the N, the ground slopes up steeply into a small cwm in which is a small artificial lake, used as a reservoir. The cwm is planted with mixed woodland trees, and was originally laid out with picturesque walks, now very overgrown.

The gardens were laid out in two distinct phases, in the 1820s and in the early 1920s. In the 1820s the drive, forecourt, walled garden S of the stable block, and lawn to the S of the house were made by Sir Digby Mackworth. The lawn was bounded by a low wall with urns on and a ha-ha, which corresponded to the edge of the present lawn. Further features of the 19th-century garden which were included in the 1903 Sale Particulars were octagonal conservatory/monkey house to the E of the house, a tennis court, and an orchard. The area to the N of the road was also already developed, with a reservoir with fountain, woodland, and a kitchen garden at the SW end of the wood.

In the early 1920s the gardens were extensively remodelled and extended to the S and E, with a series of terraces linked by stone steps. These gardens survive more or less intact. There are three terraces to the E of the house. At the lower level are two large terraces, the W one formerly grass tennis courts, now a lawn, the E one formerly hard tennis courts, backed by a high stone wall with central pavilion, and surrounded on the other three sides by a stone pergola. The formal terraced gardens are flanked by slopes planted with mixed trees and rhododendrons, through which are woodland walks, that to the E always known as 'Judy's Walk'. A further feature of the gardens is a sunken rectangular area, formerly a formal rose garden, now grassed over, with a massive rockery at its E end. At the top of a flight of steps at its E end is a large stone statue of an archer, nick-named 'Robin Hood', which originally came from Llantarnam Abbey, Gwent.

Apart from yew hedges, the woodland areas, and a few trees, most planting in the gardens is relatively recent.

### STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

To the N of the house a curving tarmacked drive, with two entrances from the road, leads to the forecourt (also tarmacked) in front of the house. The forecourt is revetted on its N side by a dry-stone wall. Steps lead down from the forecourt, to the E of the house, to the formal rose garden, a rectangular terrace E of the house, revetted on its S side by a stone wall. A central stone flagged path leads to steps down to a larger lower terrace to the SE of the house, on the E side of which, at right-angles to it, is the sunken garden. This is a rectangular level area slightly below the level of the terrace, surrounded by stone 'crazy' paving. At its E end steps lead up to the beginning of a winding walk (earthen), known as 'Judy's Walk', through the woodland to the E of the formal area of garden.

On the S side of the house is a large level lawn (formerly the croquet lawn), bounded by a stone revetment wall with a very low parapet more or less flush with the lawn. There was formerly a gravel path around the edge, but this has now been grassed over. At the W end

steps lead down to a wide walk of 'crazy' paving stones running parallel to the edge of the lawn. On its S side it is revetted by a stone wall with a low parapet, with a large central semi-circular projection. Below is a steep bank down to a large terrace, formerly grass tennis courts, which has a grass bank on its W side, above which a 'crazy' paving stone path runs down from the upper level to the terrace. A further path (earthen, with stone steps at each end) runs from the S end of this path through the woodland to the W of the terraces, ending just S of the Picture Gallery.

To the E of the 'grass tennis court' terrace two long borders flank a central grass walk leading to steps at the N end up to the higher terraces. To the E is a large rectangular terrace, formerly hard tennis courts. At its N end is a revetment wall c. 4 m. high, with shallow buttresses at intervals. In the middle the parapet is pierced by three holes, below which is a shallow arch flanked by two slit windows leading to a small alcove, called the 'Garden House'. N-S grass paths run along the E and W sides of the terrace, the rest of it being taken up with an earthen area (former courts).

The S boundary of the garden, below the terraces, consists of a ha-ha of dry-stone wall and outer ditch. It runs along the line of an old field boundary, and dates from after the 1880s.

To the N of the road is a roughly circular reservoir dammed on its S side with a large earthen bank. The overflow channel is in the SE corner. Winding earthen paths led through the wood and round the lake, but these are now impassable.

#### BUILT COMPONENTS

##### Lodge

At the W end of the road that leads to Glen Usk is a lodge that marks the western boundary of the original Mackworth estate. It is a small simple two-storey building, with a pitched roof, on the E side of which is an octagonal stone tower higher than the house with a steeply pitched octagonal roof.

The garden is bounded along the road (N) side by a wooden fence. The N side of the road, opposite the garden, is bounded by iron railings. The E entrance has a simple wooden gate, the W entrance has a wooden gate with iron bars and is flanked by square rusticated stone piers topped with stone acorn finials. The forecourt is bounded on its SE side by a low stone wall, with a central low iron gate flanked by square stone piers at the head of a flight of stone steps down to the formal rose garden. At the E end of the wall is a small paved area with stone trough and dripping fountain (recent construction). The central stone and concrete feature in the rose garden is likewise a recent construction (by the present owner), but utilises a cider millstone brought here from the middle of the sunken garden.

At the far end of the rose garden are steps flanked by ball finials down to a lower terrace, at the far end of which is a flight of steps flanked by yew hedges down to the long borders. On the W side are steps up to the lawn to the S of the house. These are flanked by two pairs of square stone piers topped by ball finials at the bottom and urns at the top. These steps, piers and finials date from the 19th century. A square pier and balustrading run from the top of the steps to the E side of the house, and there is further stone balustrading between the W end of the house and the Picture Gallery.

At the W end of the S lawn three shallow steps lead up to a slightly higher level in front of the Picture Gallery. The wrought-iron verandah in front of the house is stone paved, a step up from the lawn. Around the foot of the iron supports are low semi-circular lattice-work plant guards. In the SW corner of the lawn is a flight of stone steps down to the lower stone path, at the E end of which is a further flight of steps down to the lawn to the E. Steps also lead to the path to the grass terrace below. At the W end of the S lawn are curving stone steps leading up to the woodland walk, at the S end of which are stone steps (in need of conservation) down to the grass terrace.

The sunken garden is bounded by stone 'crazy' paving, with a similar stone path around it. In the middle of each side is a flight of three steps bowed out in the middle on the N and S sides. At the E end is a long flight of steps at the top of which is the 'Robin Hood' statue, beyond which is the woodland path known as Judy's Walk. On the N side of the garden is a wide, gently sloping rockery, between the path and the S wall of the walled garden. At the E end is an artificial rock bank of large chunks of stone, with a small recess in the NE corner. Stone steps flanked by low stone parapets lead down from the middle of the S side of the sunken garden to the top of the wall above the hard tennis court terrace.

The hard tennis court terrace is bounded on its E, S and W sides by a stone pergola consisting of square stone piers with low walls between, topped by oak beams. There is an entrance in the middle of the W side.

#### ARCHITECTURAL ORNAMENTS

##### Robin Hood statue

This stands at the top of the flight of steps at the E end of the sunken garden. It was brought here from Llantarnam Abbey (where it stood in the middle of a field, and was being vandalised), and may well be contemporary with the other statues there, which are thought to be 17th-century in date.

The stone statue is of an archer, firing behind him, with a galloping dog at his feet. It stands c. 2.3 m. high, including the separate stone plinth (c. 0.2 m. high). The statue is very worn, and most of the right arm is missing. The archer wears a head-dress, a thigh-length tunic, breeches, and has a rosette at his right knee. The statue has been known for a long time locally as 'Robin Hood'.

##### Urns

At the top of the steps at the E end of the S lawn are two stone urns on top of piers. These may be the only survivors of the urns that originally stood on the wall bounding the 1820s lawn. They are tall and narrow, slightly flared at the top.

##### Millstone

In the middle of the rose garden is a large millstone, now incorporated into a modern central feature, which originally stood in the middle of the sunken garden.

##### Stone lion

The recumbent stone lion on the top of the SW corner of the walled garden originally came from Llanwern House.

##### Fountain

In the reservoir is a single jet iron fountain, which is marked on the 1880s OS map.

#### PLANTED COMPONENTS

To the N of the road is a belt of dense woodland surrounding the reservoir. This is mixed, with recently planted larches predominating, and an underplanting of rhododendrons and laurels. There are some large mature oaks along the road.

The sloping ground to the N of the house is laid out partly as lawn, partly with ornamental trees and shrubs, including rhododendrons. The W entrance is flanked by a yew hedge and two fastigiata yews on the S side. The E entrance is flanked by a row of two golden and four Irish yews on one side and one Irish yew on the other. All are mature, and possibly date from the 1920s. To the E are

a large mature blue cedar and copper beech, with a further blue cedar N of the house.

The formal rose garden to the E of the house contains a formal box-edged square with rosebeds in it. In the garden are six large yew topiary 'cottage loaves' (four along the N boundary and two flanking the path). The yews were in existence when the present owners arrived c. 20 years ago, but have been clipped into shape by them.

The terrace below is laid out mainly to lawn, and the terrace to the S of the house is lawn, with one clipped yew bush (pyramid) near the Picture Gallery. Climbers are trained up the supports of the verandah, including a mature wisteria at the E end.

The centre of the sunken garden is lawn. Rock plants and ferns are grown on the rockery and rock bank. On the S side two mature wellingtonias flank the central steps, and there is a mature cedar in the NE corner, above the rock bank.

The grass tennis court terrace is now lawn, and is bounded on the S and E by tall clipped hedges. Below it is a grass bank with ornamental shrubs down to the edge of the garden. Continuing the axis (from the steps down from the terrace) from the edge of the garden to the river is a poplar avenue planted in 1975. To the E are two long herbaceous borders running N-S up the slope flanking a central grass path. At the N end is a square of clipped box hedges in a rectilinear pattern with a circle at the centre. Yew hedges and a yew archway flank the steps up at the N end of the path (now encroaching on the steps so that there is only a very narrow path left between them).

To the E and W of the formal gardens are areas of more natural woodland of mainly deciduous trees, with some evergreens, underplanted mainly with rhododendrons.

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 AND VIEWS BEYOND THE SITE

Essential setting: pasture fields and water meadows to S of house, between house and river Usk, and on the S side of the river.

Views: S from house and gardens, as above (A on map).

#### ANY SPECIAL FEATURES

#### SURVIVAL OF INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS

Structural components: all  
Built components: all  
Architectural ornaments: some  
Planted components: some

UTILITARIAN GARDENS

NAME Kitchen garden

Grid ref ST 364927

Date/style 1820s/walled

DESCRIPTION (categories as for the pleasure garden)

The original kitchen garden lay at the SW end of the woods to the N of the road. It was never walled, only hedged, and is now a rough field with some old fruit trees in it.

The present kitchen garden is the walled garden to the S of the stable block. This was originally a nursery garden, built in the 1820s. The ground slopes down E-W. The garden is rectangular, with stone walls c. 3.5 m. high on all but the N side, which is bounded by the stable block. Against this wall are two lean-to brick and wood glass-houses. There is a door into the stable court. The interior is laid out with cross paths, with a circular pool surrounded by a low stone wall with dressed stone top (flat) in the middle. The beds in the E half are surrounded by wide box edging. In the middle of the S side is a yew arch with an iron gate under it and steps down to the sunken garden.

SOURCES

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

Primary

1903 Sale Particulars (at Glen Usk)

1925 Sale Particulars (at Glen Usk)

Secondary

J. Bradney, A History of Monmouthshire (1923), III, pt. II.

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

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