

## LLANMIHANGEL PLACE

<b>Ref number</b>	<b>PGW (Gm) 34 (GLA)</b>
<b>OS Map</b>	161
<b>Grid ref</b>	SS 9810 7195
<b>Former county</b>	South Glamorgan
<b>Unitary authority</b>	The Vale of Glamorgan
<b>Community council</b>	Llanmihangel
<b>Designations</b>	Listed buildings: Llanmihangel Place Grade I; Terrace and steps Grade II; Barn and stables Grade II. Conservation Area: Llanmihangel

**Site evaluation**                      **Grade II\***

**Primary reasons for grading** Exceptionally rare survival, intact and largely unaltered, of a formal garden and orchard of the seventeenth century, probably with earlier, sixteenth-century elements. It is complete with terraces, steps and yew-lined walks. The situation is unspoilt and remarkable, in a hidden valley with adjoining outbuildings, church, stream and former fishpond.

**Type of site**                              Walled and terraced formal garden and former orchard.

**Main phases of construction** Mid sixteenth century; late seventeenth century.

### Site description

Llanmihangel Place is a picturesque Tudor mansion built into a south-facing slope in the small valley of the Nant Llanmihangel, which runs west-east, in the Vale of Glamorgan north of Llantwit Major. Reached by a very minor road, the small complex of house, contemporary outbuildings and mediaeval fortified church, set down in the bottom of the valley, has an isolated and timeless quality.

The two, three and four-storey house is built of local lias limestone rubble, with a pitched slate roof, and is irregular in plan. Although now mainly Tudor in appearance, an earlier house remains embedded within the present structure up to gable height. The sixteenth-century work involved alteration and addition. The main block is aligned east-west along the slope, with the main entrance in the middle of the south side. In its present form it is mid sixteenth-century in date. It has four-centred arched doorways, mullioned and transomed windows and a first-floor hall. The windows of the hall were altered, probably by John Franklen in the second half of the eighteenth century, to form small-paned sash windows. These are shown in an 1880 sketch by Daniel Jones. In the second half of the sixteenth century a short two-storey wing was added on the south side, to the east of the entrance, with a taller polygonal stair-turret in the angle. A larger three-storey wing was added at the north-west end,

with a taller tower, later crenellated, at its south end. The gable end on the north side of this wing has a dovecote built into it. A further wing, dating to the early seventeenth century, projected south from the west end of the house, but was demolished after 1877, when it is shown on the 25 in. Ordnance Survey map. At the south end of this wing it is thought that there was a small earlier gatehouse, parts of whose walls remain.

Estate maps of *c.* 1770 and *c.* 1779 show a small walled forecourt south of the house, its outer wall on the line of the present garden terrace wall, and two further walled courts to the west, the 'court' and the 'yard', with outbuildings on their west sides. Only the north walls of these courts remain. A small outbuilding built by the present owners in 1992-94 stands on the site of one shown on the maps on the north side of the 'court'.

There has been a house on the site of Llanmihangel Place since the mediaeval period, and remnants from this phase are visible to gable height. In its present form, however, the house is largely sixteenth-century in date. The main block, which shows some signs of fortification, is the work of James Thomas, owner from *c.* 1528 to after 1559. He was a man of some social standing, being a JP from 1548 to 1559 and sheriff in 1551. It was probably his son John who added the south-east and north-west wings. Llanmihangel continued in the Thomas family, passing at one point through the female line, until it was eventually sold by Sir Robert Thomas, between 1673 and 1681 to Humphrey Edwin (died 1707), a London merchant. Sir Edwin, as he became in 1687, was a prominent London figure, Sheriff of London in 1688 and Lord Mayor in 1697. It is not clear how much time Sir Humphrey spent at his Glamorgan property: twice he was excused service as sheriff of the county. However, an impressive wall-monument to him, his wife and son, was erected in the church after 1722. In the first half of the eighteenth century the property passed through marriage to Thomas Wyndham and became part of the Dunraven estate. Thereafter it was tenanted, in the second half of the century by John Franklen, under-agent of the Dunraven estate. It is thought that he was responsible for the removal of the forecourt, which he replaced by a lawn, and gatehouse. The house was restored between 1869 and 1882, with alterations including the renewal of the chimneys, the addition of buttressing and new windows. An etching of the house, dated 1831, shows that the battlements were already in place on the tower at that date.

To the east of the house, and separated from it by a minor road, is a large stone barn, with a stable block to the south. The seven-bay barn is well preserved and is thought to be contemporary with the sixteenth-century house. It is aligned north-west/south-east and is set back from the road. The four-bay stable lies to the south and was probably added in about 1600. It is in poor condition. A high rubble-built stone wall encloses this service area along the lane, with two doorways opposite the house. One has a flight of stone steps up to it, and the other is arched. The maps of *c.* 1770 and *c.* 1779 show the present stone outbuildings to the east of the house, labelled 'barn' and 'stable'. Just to the west of the north end of the barn a small building is shown that no longer exists. This is thought to have been a dovecot and would have been reached through the arched doorway in the wall.

The maps of *c.* 1770 and that of *c.* 1779 show the land to the east of these buildings as the park, a roughly rectangular area of open ground, in which old field banks are marked. This area has now reverted to farmland and had done so by the time of the 1877 Ordnance Survey map. In the valley to the south of the house is the boggy site of a long, rectangular fishpond to the south and south-east of the church, with a

substantial earthen dam at its east end. The stream is canalised along its south side. Below the dam are the remains of a mill building, and a mill race channel is visible along the north side of the former pond. The eighteenth-century estate maps show the pond, but label it 'an old fish pond'. There is no mill at this date. The 1877 map shows the (corn) mill and mill race leading from a small mill pond at the head of the former fishpond.

The main garden and former orchard occupy a rectangular area of *c.* 8 acres on the south-facing slope to the north and north-west of the house. The garden lies to the north of the house, bounded on the east by the lane which runs through the hamlet, and the larger former orchard area lies to the north-west. The whole is encompassed by a rubble-built stone wall of varying height. To the south a grass slope runs down to the lane, with a small terraced garden, bounded on the south and west by the lane, to the south of the house.

The rectangular garden occupies the eastern third of the walled enclosure. It is divided into three terraces of unequal size, the largest furthest from the house and occupying most of the garden. The garden is bounded on the east side by a rubble stone revetment wall *c.* 3-3.5 m high running along the lane. It projects *c.* 0.5 m above the ground level in the garden, with a rounded top. This low height would have allowed the deer park to be viewed from the garden. The garden has a strong central north-south axis of a yew-lined walk. The walk is now grassed but beneath the turf are stone setts. Two broad flights of stone steps lead from one terrace to the next.

Next to the house is a level grass terrace with three yew trees on it, two close together, aligned north-south, near the east end, and a single one to the west. The pair near the east end lie on a former garden boundary wall that enclosed a small rectilinear area in the south-east corner of the site. This has now gone. To the west, opposite the north-west wing of the house, is a flat-topped mound projecting from the next terrace, with a well in front of it. At the south end of the terrace is a drop to a passage along the east end of the house. To the west of the house the garden is bounded by a rubble stone wall similar to the east wall, with dog-leg steps leading down from the terrace to a door in the foot of the wall. Further west is a single-storey modern stone outbuilding set at right-angles to the wall.

The terrace is bounded on the north by a grass scarp *c.* 1.8 m high, with a row of yews along the top, one with an ash growing in it. Next to the mound a flight of eleven roughly cut stone steps on the central axis leads up to the next terrace. To the west of the steps the yews are more closely set and the scarp is much lower (*c.* 1 m). A gateway in the wall has one square pier flanking it on the west side.

The second terrace is a wider, level platform, with a grass scarp on its north side *c.* 1.5 m high. This scarp too has a row of yews along the top. On the west side of the central north-south walk, is a large yew. A further yew stands on the west side of the walk, in the middle of the terrace. This was originally matched by one on the east side of the walk, but it has fallen and been removed. The walk is carried up the terrace scarp on a wide flight of fourteen dressed stone steps. These have moulded ends and the flight is flanked by low flat parapets. At the ends of the parapets are low square piers, those at the base not matching those at the top. The steps appear more sophisticated and recent than those below, and it is probable that they date to the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, whereas the lower flight may be earlier and date to the sixteenth century.

The third terrace is on gently rising ground, and occupies the greater part of the garden. Along the west side is a discontinuous row of yews on or near the garden

boundary. The wall shown bounding the garden on this side in the 1779 map has now gone. The central walk dominates the terrace. It is *c.* 7 m wide and is flanked by rows of large, well spaced yew trees (15 ft centres north-south and 10 ft centres east-west). To the west of the steps, near the top of the scarp, are two large box trees and there is another at the west end of the garden. The walk was formerly flanked at the south end by two variegated hollies, but only that on the east side remains, now a very tall and spindly tree. To the east of the walk are some yew stumps and a short row of small damsons. Along the east side of the garden are the remnants of a double row of yews (only two left on the inside) running parallel to the boundary. The eight remaining on the outside are not in an exact line. Outside them is a holly. The terrace is divided into four quarters by a cross walk, now grassed over. This is of about the same width as the main walk and is also flanked by yews, although only a few remain. There are two further yews aligned north-south and some scattered deciduous trees to the west of the main walk.

At the north end of the main walk is a rebuilt gateway in the boundary wall on the site of an original one. The north wall has been rebuilt to a height of *c.* 1.5 m, with no coping. The gate is a simple opening with square piers projecting above the wall. In the north-west corner of the garden is a ruinous short section of north-south walling standing to a height of *c.* 3 m. The purpose of this is not clear, although it may be all that remains of the west wall of the garden.

The former orchard occupies approximately two thirds of the walled enclosure. As well as having a general slope to the south the ground slopes down to a small central north-south stream which emerges from an arched stone culvert near the north boundary. The whole area is lightly wooded with deciduous trees. These include some large oak, sycamore and ash, and towards the south end is an area of old coppiced hazel, the trees planted in rows. In the north-west corner and down the west side are some large ancient sycamores that were planted as a windbreak. An L-shaped area of planting outside the wall, around the north-west corner, shown on the 1779 map, has gone, although a slight dip in the ground along its former boundary may indicate a former drainage ditch or robbed out wall.

Along the north side of the former orchard is a slightly raised and levelled broad walk between the boundary wall and a row of yews on a slight bank along the south side. The west wall is slightly higher than the north and is undergoing repair work where it is broken down in places. The south wall is also tumbled in places, has been repaired at the foot of the valley, and stands up to *c.* 1.8 m. The small stream runs in a stone-lined channel for a short distance below the culvert before continuing in a natural channel. Near the south end of the area it runs into two rectangular culverts under a causeway across the valley. The causeway has stone side walls. To the east is a rectangular stone-lined tank or cold bath set into the side of the valley. It is *c.* 4 x 2.5 m in size, with a depth of *c.* 2.5-3 m. The top has been rebuilt recently. Set into the middle of the east side is a carved stone panel, set upright at the back of the wall, with water emerging from a vertical slit at its base. The water runs over a sill and into the tank below. Carved on the panel is the figure of a woman, arms akimbo, down to waist level. The upper half of her face is gone, and there are two holes in place of nipples. The panel has a raised edge and is mostly moss covered. This panel is very similar to, and probably contemporary with, that set into a wall of the small stone-lined spring called St Anne's Well, which is situated a short distance to the west of the church. A visit to the church, reported in *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 1888, included St

Anne's Well, and a drawing of it shows the panel, with water running out of the nipple holes. It remains, but is now much overgrown.

Below the causeway the stream emerges from the two culverts and runs into a small pond that is slightly wider at the south end. In the middle of its south side is a brick-lined overflow drain in front of a projecting brick wall over a culvert which takes the water under the boundary wall. This was part of the water supply system for the mill in the valley, to the east of the church and ponds. There are two rectangular holes in the boundary wall opposite which were added for extra drainage after flooding caused the wall to collapse. Below the wall the stream emerges briefly from a hole in a low stone wall, runs into an underground channel, and emerges again further down from a similar hole and wall into a narrow channel in which it runs southwards out of the grounds towards the stream in the valley below.

To the south of the walled garden and orchard area the slope is contained in a rebuilt boundary wall *c* 1.2 m high. To the west of the house is a grass slope, with a modern gravel drive sweeping from an entrance in the south-west corner up the slope and around eastwards to a small parking area at the side of the house. To the south of the house the slope is divided into two halves by a repaired and rebuilt east-west terrace wall punctuated by higher square piers topped by modern ball finials. A pedestrian gate in the east boundary wall is flanked by similar piers. The upper terrace was originally a stone-paved courtyard, the terrace wall being its boundary wall. A path of worn stone setts (imported to the site by the present owners) runs from the east gate along the foot of the terrace wall to a gateway flanked by piers and ball finials. Rebuilt steps lead to the upper terrace and a stone sett path to the front door. On the west side of the upper terrace are the remains of a glasshouse, probably on the site of the former gatehouse. The remains include the footings of the outer south wall, against the terrace wall, with three vine holes in the base (three vines survive, draped over the wall), a red and black tile path next to it, with a low brick-edged bed to the north backed by a high stone wall, which is the rebuilt south wall of the demolished west wing. The tile path possibly marks the former entrance passage of the gatehouse.

The history of the gardens is somewhat obscure, but on stylistic grounds they probably date to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The earliest record of their existence is an estate map of *c.* 1770 which shows the layout in detail. From this and a subsequent map of *c.* 1779 it is apparent that little has been altered since then, and that the layout survives remarkably intact. Both maps show the garden with its terraces, steps, axial and perimeter walks. The perimeter walks are the main feature that has more or less gone, along with the wall between the garden and orchard. The orchard area is shown as formally planted in rows, with a perimeter walk around it. Neither pond nor cold bath are shown on either map, although this may be for reasons of scale. The stream is shown running through a yard to the south of the orchard, where it now runs through and under a lawn. The planted area around the outside of the north-west corner, shown on both maps, has now completely gone. The maps also show a small park to the east, with trees along the lane. This is now pasture fields.

The main area of change is to the south of the house, where a small forecourt has been replaced by a terraced garden, the terrace wall on the line of the forecourt wall. The 1770 map shows an entrance in the east side, to the north of the present gate, and another in the south wall of the court to the west.

It seems likely, therefore, that the gardens were probably begun by James Thomas in the mid sixteenth century. He or his son may have built the walled enclosure and terraces. The steps between the two lower terraces may date to this era.

It is likely that the garden took on its more sophisticated appearance, with the yew-lined axial walks, in Humphrey Edwin's time in the late seventeenth century. The upper steps probably also date to this period. The layout of the garden and orchard bears a remarkable resemblance to one suggested by John Parkinson in *Paradisi in sole, paradisus terrestris* (1629). Only the kitchen garden, which Parkinson placed on the other side of the 'garden of pleasure' from the orchard, is missing. The yew avenues were noted as venerable and magnificent by antiquaries and other visitors in the nineteenth century.

## **Sources**

### **Primary**

Estate map of the Llanmihangel demesne, c. 1770. Glamorgan Record Office: D/D xgc 36.

Estate map of the Llanmihangel demesne, c. 1779. Glamorgan Record Office: D/D Dun E/1 map XVI.

### **Secondary**

Lewis, S., *A topographical dictionary of Wales* (1833).

Report of the Cowbridge Meeting, *Archaeologia Cambrensis* V, 5<sup>th</sup> series (1888), pp. 407-09.

Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales, *Inventory of the Ancient Monuments in Glamorgan*, IV (1981), pp. 89-100.

Newman, J., *The buildings of Wales. Glamorgan* (1995), pp. 393-94.