

# SITE DOSSIER

VISITED BY/DATE Elisabeth Whittle/February 1991

## HOUSE

Name Llangibby House

Grid ref ST 366974

Date/style Late 17th-early 18th century/Restoration classical

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

The environs of Llangibby House have an ancient history: to the E is a large motte (12th century; SAM Mn 110), and to the W is the medieval Llangibby Castle (SAM Mn 109), which appears never to have been used until garrisoned in the Civil War.

The house was originally built in the 16th century by the Williams family. It was altered in the late 17th-early 18th century, possibly by Sir Trevor Williams. In 1749 the heiress married William Addams of Monmouth, and the family name was changed to Addams-Williams. In 1824 the house was extended northwards with a courtyard block. The family continued to live there until 1861, when the park was disparked and the house let. It was demolished in 1951/2. It was a two-storey building facing south, and stood just S of the track to the castle, to the E of the walled garden remains. A small ruined cottage stands where its south-west corner was.

## OUTBUILDINGS

Name Stables and kennels

Grid ref ST 368974

Date/style, and brief description

To the east of the house site stand two large rendered utilitarian two-storey buildings on either side of the drive. They were originally stables (to the S) and kennels (to the N), but have since changed uses, and the N range is now a private house.

## THE PARK

### FORMER PARK

Central grid ref ST 366974

Date/style (Grid refs. for individual features, date or period of construction if possible)

Medieval-1861/deer park

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION, HISTORY AND LAYOUT

The deer park is no longer in existence, having been disparked in 1861 (when the deer were killed and the house was let). It was probably medieval in origin, was enclosed by cleft oak paling, and probably extended as far as the farm called Clawdd-y-parc to the W, Pen-y-parc to the SW, and the parish road to the E. It was reduced in extent in the 18th century, and near the end of its life it was reduced to less than 100 acres to the N of the house.

The area of the park is agricultural (mainly pasture and woodland).

Within it lies the drive to the house, which runs west from the Usk-Llangibby road, on which are gates and a lodge. The axis of the drive is continued east from the road to the river Usk by a great Scots pine avenue known as Llangibby Walks. This was originally planted in about 1707 by Sir Hopton Williams, and stretches from the road all the way to the river Usk. Continual replacement has retained its original line and character.

### STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

#### The drive

The drive to the house (now tarmac) starts at the Llangibby-Usk road and runs almost straight westwards up the hill to the stables and kennels. This is as far as the drive now goes: the former drive continues as a curving track to the N of the house site (it was formerly straighter). The axis of the drive is continued eastwards by the avenue.

### BUILT COMPONENTS

#### The lodge

On the S side of the entrance; a small single-storey rendered building.

#### Gates

The entrance is flanked by simple square stone piers topped by ball finials. The gates are of wrought iron, and on either side of the entrance is low iron fencing.

### PLANTED COMPONENTS

The drive is flanked by two rows of trees (mostly oaks) which are not aligned with the Scots pine avenue. Some of the trees are large and mature, others, particularly on the N side, appear younger.

To the E of the Llangibby-Usk road is a wide avenue of Scots pines almost a mile long, stretching from the road to the river Usk. The ground between is pasture, and is uninterrupted, and the trees are planted on hedge lines. The trees are of varying ages, as this avenue has been continually renewed since it was originally planted in c. 1707 by Sir Hopton Williams. There are no original trees in it.

## THE PLEASURE GARDEN

Grid ref ST 366974

Date/style Late 17th-early 18th century/terraced; walled

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION, HISTORY AND LAYOUT

The gardens lie to the W, S and E of the site of the house, to the W of the stables and kennels, and to the S of the track leading to Llangibby Castle. The ground slopes to the S and E, and to the S and SE of the house site it has been levelled into two rectangular terraces. To the E is a sloping grass area planted with ornamental trees and shrubs, and to the W is a natural grass slope bounded by a wall at its W end, and to its N a walled garden with all but its E wall standing. To the W is a small area of formal beds on small terraces, and beyond that the wooded hill on which Llangibby Castle stands.

It is assumed that the gardens are contemporary with the late 17th-early 18th century rebuilding of the house. A map of 1758 refers to orchards, fishponds, garden, fir trees (to the W of the garden), and coneygre, but does not show them in any detail. Williams (1796) states that 'the gardens or grounds ... are not assimilated with the country. They are formal, compared with those in England ...'The structure of the gardens remained unaltered, while planting of trees and shrubs appears to have continued into the 20th century: ornamental conifers and rhododendrons in particular have been planted on and below the terraces.

The motte to the E of the stables and kennels should be considered as an outlier of the garden, as it was planted with yews, pines and rhododendrons (probably in the 19th century) and Bradney (1921) records its flat top as having been used 'for many generations' as a bowling green.

The gardens were probably less actively managed after 1861, when the Addams-Williams family moved out of the house. The 1880s 6" map shows them laid out with straight paths, with an orchard to the S. It also shows the E boundary of the garden to be nearer the house site than at present, with the drive (now track) taking a straighter course from the stables to the house site than it does now. This would suggest that the eastern part of the garden, informally planted with specimen trees and shrubs (mainly rhododendrons) was created after the 1880s. The gardens are now derelict and abandoned, grazed by sheep, and used in part (the walled garden) as a conifer nursery. A silage pit has been carved out of the SE corner, and barns stand on the house site and to its E.

### STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

#### Terraces

Two rectangular earthwork terraces to the SE of the house site, on ground sloping W-E. They are bounded by steep earth scarps, with no sign of walling. Below the terraces is a gentle natural slope. The lower terrace scarp is c. 1.5-2 m. high (maximum). Between the two terraces the scarp is c. 2.2 m. high, with a sloping path cut across it near the top, sloping down from N to S. The upper terrace scarp is c. 1.5 m. high. Above it is a gentle natural slope.

To the S of the stables is a levelled grass platform extending out over the slope, bounded by a grass scarp. This does not appear to have been part of the gardens, and may be related to 20th-century farming.

#### Bowling Green

ST 369974

The top of the motte is known to have been used, at least in the 19th century and probably earlier, as a bowling green. From its appearance

it would seem that it was levelled for this purpose (a bank surrounds the top, but the interior is suspiciously flat).

#### BUILT COMPONENTS

##### Walls

(It is assumed here that the walled garden to the W of the house was a utilitarian garden, and it is therefore described in that section.)

A ruinous stone revetment wall c. 1 m. high runs along the S boundary of the garden. At its W end, above the terraces, is a ruinous stone wall with a maximum height of c. 2 m. The S wall of the kitchen garden (c. 3 m. high) forms the N boundary of the garden at its W end.

A large pile of stones in the middle of the grass slope at the W end of the garden probably indicates a small ruined building.

Just beyond the SE corner of the kitchen garden stands a small abandoned cottage, now very overgrown. This appears to have been built on the site of the house (SW corner).

#### ARCHITECTURAL ORNAMENTS

None

#### PLANTED COMPONENTS

The garden is abandoned, and is now a field, grazed by sheep. Planting consists of grass and ornamental trees and shrubs.

The terraces and slopes above and below them are largely open grassland, with trees planted informally in the slope below and along the S boundary of the garden. The trees are mixed coniferous and deciduous, with some large specimen conifers, including cedar, fir, cypress and yew. There is a large yew to the S of the terraces next to the sloping path between them. To the S of the terraces, between them and the garden boundary, is a row of five large mature horse chestnuts (the row continues to the E of the lowest terrace). To the N of the terraces is a large mature cedar of Lebanon, and to their NE a large fir. The N boundary of the garden, to the E of the house site, along the track to the castle, is planted with rhododendrons. Just beyond the wall at the W end of the garden are two large mature yews.

#### 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: area to S of garden: pasture  
area to W of garden: woodland

ANY SPECIAL FEATURES (e.g. continuation of avenues, belts, clumps, eyecatchers, e.g. church spire)

None

SURVIVAL OF INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS

Structural components: most  
Built components: some  
Architectural ornaments: none  
Planted components: some

UTILITARIAN GARDENS

NAME Walled garden

Grid ref ST 366974

Date/style Late 17th-early 18th century/walled garden

DESCRIPTION (categories as for the pleasure garden)

The walled garden lies immediately to the W of the house site, just S of the track to the castle. The interior slopes gently W-E, and the W wall is a revetment wall. N, W and S walls remain, enclosing a rectangular area. As the house stood to the E there may never have been an E wall. The walls are stone, standing more or less to their full height (c. 2-3.5 m. high). At the E end of the N wall there is a short stretch of wall along the E side, sloping down to c. 2 m. high. There is a similar wall projecting a very short way just to its W. The outside of the S wall is rendered. All walls are much overgrown with ivy and other climbers. There are doorwayss in the N and S walls, both with rounded arches. The arch of the doorway in the N wall has a brick surround. The S doorway has a wooden door.

There are no vestiges of the interior layout of the garden. It has been ploughed and planted with young spruce trees.

Above the W retaining wall of the garden is a small area laid out in shallow rectangular terraces, with brick-edged paths. The area is now much overgrown with self-seeded trees. At the S end of this area the S wall of the walled garden continues W for a short distance, and there is a door in it leading to the area to the W of the pleasure garden.

## SOURCES

### Primary

Map 1758 of park: Gwent Record Office (D43.3385)  
AP: BKS Surveys no. 167088 and no. 167045  
R. Colt Hoare, Tour 1796 (National Library of Wales: MS 16989C, p.398)

### Secondary

D. Williams, A History of Monmouthshire (1796), pl XXVI  
J. Bradney, A History of Monmouthshire Vol III, pt. I (1921)  
T. Lloyd, Lost Houses of Wales, (1986), p. 98.

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