

## **PENPONT**

<b>Ref No</b>	<b>PGW (Po) 21 (POW)</b>
<b>OS Map</b>	160
<b>Grid Ref</b>	SN 971 288
<b>Former County</b>	Powys
<b>District</b>	Brecknockshire
<b>Unitary authority</b>	Powys
<b>Community Council</b>	Trallong
<b>Designations</b>	Listed buildings: Penpont Grade II*; Betws Penpont church Grade II; The Lodge Grade II*; Stables Grade II*; Old Granary and Laundry Grade II*; Dovecote Grade II*
<b>Site Evaluation</b>	<b>II*</b>
<b>Primary reasons for grading</b>	The survival, in a highly picturesque situation, of an early nineteenth-century park and garden, influenced by Repton, with remains of an earlier formal layout, including some of the first larch trees in Britain.
<b>Type of Site</b>	Small landscape park; formal and informal gardens; walled kitchen garden
<b>Main Phases of Construction</b>	c. 1660; c. 1740s-81; 1781-1830s

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

Penpont is one of the most historic and important houses in Brecknock. It lies in the picturesque Usk valley, a few miles west of Brecon, on the south bank of the river. The house is a large three-storey building, the main front facing east down the valley. The main, five-bay, block, at the east end, is neo-classical in style. It is faced in Bath stone, with a hipped slate roof and sash windows. A classical colonnade of paired, unfluted Tuscan columns is built out from the ground floor of the east front, extending one bay beyond it at each end. There is a central projection and corresponding raised pediment opposite the front door. The floor of the colonnade is stone paved. At the rear of the house an older, rubble stone wing projects westwards, joined at its west end to a stone outbuilding along the east side of the service court.

Attached to the south side of the house is a very fine rectangular conservatory. It has an unusual domed roof of fish-scale panes and is wooden framed, with French windows opening in the centre on to a paved and gravelled terrace. The full-length windows have narrow panels of stained glass down the sides. Inside, a polychrome tiled path runs round the room, flanked on its outside by iron grilles over heating pipes.

Penpont was built in three main phases. First, there is a substantial Tudor or earlier farmhouse, the present west wing. In c. 1666 the present double-pile main block, then with dormer windows in the roof, was built by Daniel Williams (1642-1707), who acquired Penpont through marriage. The former Tudor farmhouse, called Abercamlais-Isaf, became the kitchen and servants' quarters. Daniel was the son of John Williams, second son of Daniel Williams of next-door Abercamlais. The Williamses were an up-and-coming gentry family with claims to ancestral connections to a Norman knight, Sir Thomas Bullen (or Boleyn) and the family have remained in possession of Penpont ever since. Daniel Williams entertained the Duke of Beaufort and his retinue to a banquet of sweetmeats and wine at Penpont in 1684.

The last main building phase came in the early nineteenth century, when the house acquired its present form. The building works were undertaken by Penry Williams III, son of Philip Williams; the latter had inherited the property and married Elizabeth Osborne in 1781. In 1802 the main block was raised to three storeys. A Cheltenham architect, Henry Underwood, undertook further work in the 1820s and 30s; his conservatory was built in 1828 and the Bath stone facing and colonnade were added in the mid 1830s.

To the west of the house, reached by a narrow walled lane to the west and an extension to the drive along the north side of the house, is a small, cobbled service court. The buildings around it are probably late seventeenth- or eighteenth-century in date but some may have earlier origins as farm buildings. The present layout of outbuildings is shown on the 1794 estate map by M. Williams. The entrance at the south end has iron gates. Along the west side is a two-storey rubble stone stable block with arched windows and a central archway leading to a passage through the building. Opposite it, attached to the house, is a rubble stone outbuilding with an arched door and to its south a small stone building with a door into the yard and another into the garden on the other side. The north side of the court is closed by a free-standing, tall, rubble stone coach house. This has a wide central arched doorway with wooden doors and a wooden clock face in the pediment over it on its south side. In the centre of the roof is a lantern containing a bell, with a weathervane on top. On the east side outside stone steps lead up to the first floor. The coach house is now used as a workshop.

To the north of the coach house, next to the river, is the former laundry, now a dwelling. It is a two-storey rubble stone cottage with small windows that have been gothicised, probably in the early nineteenth century. The cottage has a small garden, with a sloping lawn surrounded by high box hedges on the east and a small area of beds, winding path and one or two mature trees, including a large yew, on the west.

To the west of the stable block, reached by a passageway through it, is a grass yard with single-storey outbuildings along its north side and a stone barn along its south side, next to the back drive to the stable court. At its east end a wall with a blocked arched doorway encloses a small yard between the barn and the stables. The west side is open and is bounded by the road to the bridge over the river Usk. To the west are further farm buildings.

There is now only a very small park at Penpont, between the A40 and the river. However, there was once an extensive park to the south of the road, where the ground rises towards the Brecon Beacons. This is attested by place-names such as Parkside and Pen-y-parc, now a roofless ruin, the boundary wall and a large pond, the Great Pond, at the top of what was the park. In the valley below the Great Pond was a string of five small ponds, and one lower one. These smaller ponds are overgrown and no longer hold water. There is also some relict parkland tree planting, including beech, oak, pine, horse and sweet chestnut and a wellingtonia. Beech remain along the boundary wall and in a clump on the high ground east of the Great Pond. Some beech trees are the remnants of an avenue which ran from Pen-y-parc to the mountain gate.

The existing parkland is in three areas, to the east, south and west of the house and grounds. The area to the east comprises two gently sloping pasture fields between the A40 road on the south and the river Usk on the north. A long, curving ha-ha was made on the eastern boundary of the gardens, allowing views out over the park and landscape, and there is no barrier between the main lawn in front of the house and the river along its north side. Two large, mature trees, the northern one an oak, with iron railings embedded in its trunk, the southern a horse chestnut, stand at the western end of the parkland. More trees have been planted recently. The 1891 Ordnance Survey map (surveyed 1886) shows that at that time this area was undivided and had many more trees scattered through it. The drive runs westwards from a recently made entrance on the A40 across the southern end of the parkland and into the grounds. The earlier entrance lies to its west, within the grounds. The parkland is bounded on the west by the ha-ha and then by a stream and revetment wall bounding the lawn. The ha-ha has a dry-stone wall and external ditch and runs north-westwards from near the south boundary, to the south of the new drive, which crosses its ditch over a small recently built bridge. It continues, broken down in places, to the stream, which runs northwards to the river Usk and which forms the remainder of the park boundary. The revetment wall runs north from the bridge carrying the drive, near The Lodge. It is a substantial rubble stone wall, which forms the eastern edge of the garden. At its northern end the wall curves around to the west and terminates shortly afterwards, its line continuing as a low scarp bounding the north side of the garden lawn.

To the south of the house and garden the ground slopes up gently from the house. Here there is a narrow area of parkland up to the A40 and bounded at the north-west end by the lane leading to the service court and the Home Farm, to the north of the river. The area is pasture dotted with large, mature deciduous trees, particularly oak, sweet chestnut and sycamore. Next to the road is a small plantation of mature beech. Winding through this area is a grassed over drive, leading to gates, known as the 'Carmarthen' gates, on the A40. A wooden gate is flanked by a pair of squared stone piers with tapered tops, similar to those at the entrance to the churchyard (see below). The gate is actually hung between one of these and a wooden pier. On either side are the rubble stone boundary walls, with dressed stone coping for a short distance.

To the west of the house the park boundary wall continues around two further fields between the A40 and the river Usk. The west boundary wall, which is lower than that on the road, divides the property from Abercamlais. The fields are pasture, the only trees being along the river. At the east end is a large stone barn and adjoining farm buildings. To their west is a square dovecote, of late seventeenth- or eighteenth-century date, on

stone stilts, with timber-framed, brick-nogged walls now clad in rendering, a door on the east side and a stone tiled roof topped with an octagonal lantern with gothic windows.

The main ornamenting of this part of the park is a picturesque, unsurfaced walk along the river bank. This starts at the road to Abersefin Farm, next to the bridge, with an iron pedestrian gate at the entrance. It runs through yews, next to the farm buildings, and on westwards through a now incomplete avenue of closely planted oaks of considerable size and height. More trees remain on the south side than on the north. Two-thirds of the way along the oak avenue stops and water issuing from the hillside is dammed into a pond, with raised dams along its north and west sides. At the east end of its long, straight north side water from the pond once ran via a channelled stone into a stone basin, set in the side of the dam in a rough, dry-stone alcove. This system no longer works and the pond is silted up and partly overgrown. The north dam is breached in the middle. The path continues through a narrow belt of natural trees to the boundary and then runs on along the river in Abercamlais property.

The early history of the park is unclear. A survey of 1738 by John Withy is the earliest documentary evidence. This shows the grounds and lands to the west of the stream that runs northwards from Mynydd Iltyd, south of the A40, and which bounds the garden east of the house. The map also has an enlarged inset plan of the garden. At this stage there was no park to speak of, the land being divided into small fields and smallholdings. At this time the old road, predecessor to the A40, ran further north than at present, following the line of the eastern drive as far as the Lodge and then continuing straight westwards along the southern side of the garden to where the 'Carmarthen' gate now stands. A drive ran from the south-west corner of the garden along its west side straight down to the stable yard. To its west was an orchard. The chapel lay to the south of the road. Some of the present Penpont land belonged to the Talbot estate at that time, including the present parkland east of the stream, 'Castle Field'. However, an avenue parallel to the river, where the present one stands, the pond near the river and the dovecote are all present. Some features on the map, such as a long avenue running southwards from the garden to a circle on Mynydd Iltyd, may have been projections only.

The park was initially laid out by Penry Williams II (1714-81) after 1738. Penry II was a keen agricultural improver and is known to have carried out a considerable amount of tree planting around the house in the mid eighteenth century. The oldest trees in the parkland may date to this period. By 1770 the park, with trees planted, ponds and a mountain boundary wall, had been extended up the hill to the west of the stream, south of the present A40 road. The road to Mynydd Iltyd, which formerly ran south from the public road at the south-west corner of the garden, was moved westwards in 1773 in order to allow for landscaping.

Penry Williams II's diary for the years 1770 to 1781 is a fascinating source of information on the park and garden at that time. It indicates that much levelling work was undertaken and work was carried out on the fish ponds and the Great Pond. The Lodge was also built at this time, on the site of a group of buildings, shown on the 1743 map, including a smithy. Work, probably drainage, was carried out in the field behind, now a garden.

Further changes were made by Philip Williams (died 1794) after 1781. An estate map of 1794 shows the road still on its old course, the main entrance still straight down from the road, but a more mature park, with fields reduced, woods and copses, fish ponds and the Great Pond marked. The map shows some smallholdings, which later disappeared, still surviving. The field to the west of the entrance drive is now 'in hand', with trees dotted about. To the east of the house four fields have been bought and the chapel and churchyard are included in the Penpont lands. Interestingly, the present informal drive is shown, although not quite on its present alignment. This was at a time when part, at least, of the formal gardens still remained.

Henry Skrine, in *Two successive tours throughout the whole of Wales* (1798), praised the park and situation: 'the opposite hill ... appeared finely clumped and ornamented with the groves of the park of Penpont'. The house 'fronting the vale, appeared to command all its beauties as far as the mountains beyond Brecknock'. Skrine goes on to describe an interesting juxtaposition of old, formal gardens with modern informal landscaping: 'Penpont has the happy effect of uniting the somewhat formal magnificence of the ancient style of gardening with the easy disposition of modern improvement, which was most judiciously introduced by its late worthy possessor (Philip Williams), who removing all obstructions towards the vale, confined the walls and clipped hedges within a narrower compass, and allowing one great avenue to intersect the park, clumped the rest, and formed intermediate lawns with great taste and elegance'. He also mentions an ornamented tract of ground around a little chapel (the church) and cemetery. The avenue that Skrine mentions is problematical. A long avenue is shown running southwards across what later became the park on the 1738 map but is not shown on the 1794 one. The only avenue shown on this map is the one along the river, but this hardly intersects the park. The mention of 'removing all obstructions towards the vale' implies that the east garden wall was lowered to ground level by Philip. As will be seen below, a short stretch of walling on this side was left standing.

Philip's son Penry III, who succeeded in 1794, continued the family's interest in landscaping; Humphry Repton's *Observations on the theory and practice of landscape gardening* (1805 edition) was given to Penry by his wife Maria in March 1806 and probably helped to inspire further developments in the grounds, which coincided with the improvements to the house. It was the moving of the road further south in 1806 (Maria Williams mentions in her diary that it was opened on 1 January 1806), by Penry III, that opened up the possibilities for landscaping in the Reptonian style. The grounds were now greatly increased in size. The formal gardens were finally removed and the lawns created in their place. The remainder of the grounds were informally planted. As well as the recently made informal east drive a new, curving drive was made to the west, from the house to the point where the public road was diverted. The east drive joined a section of the old road, near The Lodge, the road becoming part of the private drive. The curving ha-ha was built between grounds and park. The church and churchyard, which was given a new exit to the new road, were now completely incorporated into the grounds. Penry Williams III's layout is shown on the 1891 Ordnance Survey map and survives to this day.

The garden and grounds lie mainly to the south and east of the house on ground sloping up to the south. They are largely informal, with the remnants of an early formal layout. They are particularly notable for three ancient larch trees, the only survivors of larches

planted in the mid eighteenth century by Penry Williams. There are two main areas south of the river: the wooded grounds at the eastern end, through which a stream runs northwards, and the open lawn to the east and south of the house. A further area of ornamental garden lies to the north of the river.

The tarmac-surfaced drive enters the grounds at their south-east end. Here the grounds are wooded, with beech and Scots pine, underplanted with some rhododendron and box, to the south of the drive. To the north the beech plantation continues along the eastern edge of the grounds, with some oak. Soon after entering the grounds the new drive joins the earlier one which runs southwards, grassed over, to the earlier entrance, where there is a wooden gate between low splayed rubble stone walls. A little further westwards a branch runs westwards to Betws Penpont church. The drive continues north-westwards, carried on a single-arched rubble stone bridge over the stream, past The Lodge, around the northern end of a ridge and then straight across the main lawn in front of the house to a gravel forecourt on the east front. On the edge stand two reconstituted stone bowls on rectangular bases that were brought here in 1940. A tarmac drive continues around the north side to the service court, while the former drive, now grassed over, runs westwards up the garden to the south of the house.

The churchyard, within which Betws Penpont church stands, occupies a roughly circular area to the east of the stream valley, between the drive and the A40. There is an entrance gate, flanked by piers of squared stone similar to those of the 'Carmarthen' gate, on the A40, to the south-west of the church. The church is a small, simple building in Early English style, of rubble stone, with an apsidal east end and a circular tower with conical roof at the west end. The churchyard is walled with a low and ruinous rubble stone wall on the north and east. On the west there is a steep drop to the valley. The churchyard is planted with yews around the perimeter and also has an extremely large, multi-stemmed yew on a low mound just beyond the east end of the church. Most of the graves are to the north of the church.

The church was originally a chapel-of-ease to Llansbyddid parish church, probably founded in the thirteenth century. By 1738 it was ruinous. It was then repaired but became ruinous again by 1789, when Philip Williams paid for its restoration, the building of the churchyard wall and the planting of the yews and also flowering shrubs. In 1865 the church was altered by Sir Gilbert Scott, who built the apsidal end and the round tower. In 1880 Capel Bettws became the parish church of Betws Penpont.

To the west of the church, in an overgrown part of the churchyard, is a large vault of the Williams family. It has iron railings around it on the east, south and part of the north sides; the remainder has fallen. The vault consists of a high, rectangular base on top of which is a large fluted urn, part of which has broken off. Inscriptions on the sides record the members of the family buried here or in the church and that the urn was erected in August 1777 by Penry Williams II in memory of his father, Penry I. The urn arrived on 15 August in two wagons from Painswick, Gloucestershire. The last member of the family to be interred here was Maria, widow of Penry Williams III, who died in 1855.

Two paths in the churchyard lead to the drive. One, shown on the 1891 Ordnance Survey map, used to lead westwards near the south boundary to the stream. It has now mostly disappeared but leads to the point where the stream emerges from a tunnel under

the A40 road. Here the road is revetted with a high stone wall in which there are two arched tunnels, which were extended southwards when the road was widened. That on the east is for a footpath, which then runs up the small valley, crossing the stream in several places over stone footbridges, now collapsed, to a small, ruinous building, similar to, but much smaller than, The Lodge in the grounds. The tunnel on the west is for the stream. Where it emerges it falls over two steps then angles eastwards into a culvert, a short stretch of which has collapsed. It emerges from this under a stone arch with dressed stone surround and flows over a smooth slope built of stones, with a lip at the end. Beyond this it flows naturally.

To the west of the stream, near the south boundary, is a small, partly silted pond, in woodland, with some rhododendrons on its west side. Here the ground rises and on the slope is sparse woodland, with beech, oak and some conifers. A footpath can be traced along the upper part of the slope. The boundary of the grounds, a field fence, lies at the top.

Just past the drive bridge over the stream, on the south side of the drive, is the building called The Lodge. This is an unusual, small rubble stone building with rounded ends and a large wooden pediment in the centre, carved with the coat of arms of the Boleyn family. On the north side it is two-storey, on the south three, with irregularly spaced windows, descending to a small, cobbled, sunken court. On the east side a door leads to sloping stone paths and steps down to the stream and a small cobbled area, backed by a stone wall, above the bridge. An arched doorway below the door is thought at one time to have allowed water from the stream to pass through the building. The building has had a varied history. In the eighteenth century it was known as 'The Shop', signifying a utilitarian use. In 1770-1780 it was given its present appearance, with rounded ends and pediment, by a well known local builder, Andrew Maund, from Llangattock. After Philip Williams's daughters rejected it as a home, preferring to live in Worcestershire, it was lived in by the coachman. Maund and other members of his family did further building work at Penpont. At the same time as The Lodge was being created much work was being done in the area, then known as Smith's Field, to its south.

Opposite The Lodge, on the north side of the drive, is a small, sunken, rectangular garden. It is bounded on the east by a high dry-stone wall which continues as a revetment wall down to the stream. On the west is a lower, similar, revetment wall topped by a box hedge along the drive. A low cross wall extends from it for a short distance. The north wall is of different construction, being mortared, from the others, but is the same height as the east wall. The garden is largely grassed, with a few irregular, modern beds, and contains a few large old *Rhododendron ponticum*. These are relics of its use as a rhododendron garden. Just outside the north-west corner is a clump of large beeches and holes in the top of the east wall were caused by a falling beech. To the north-east, in the valley below, are further large rhododendrons.

The wooded slope to the west of The Lodge ends in a knoll to its north-west, where it is skirted by the drive. This bluff is known as 'The Mount', signifying perhaps that it was one of the early features of the landscaping of the grounds, even though it is natural. It is planted with beech and yew trees, box and rhododendron, with a large yew near the foot of the slope. On top of the knoll is a huge old larch tree with a contorted base, indicating that it was probably originally grown in a pot. This is one of the c. 1743 larches. On the

north slope of the knoll a path can just be made out, curving down the slope. Another leads gently down towards the valley to the south of The Lodge and another runs westwards, near the boundary fence, through the trees and rhododendrons, emerging at a group of large yew trees on and below a high scarp that bounds the south side of the lawn from the yews eastwards to the edge of the wooded knoll. Just east of the yews is a small pets' cemetery with three headstones, two dated 1905 (Neb) and 1917 (Jim).

A narrowing wooded belt continues north of the knoll and drive, along the eastern edge of the lawn. This includes a huge yew and, to the south, the second of the eighteenth-century larches, similar in size to the first and with the same contorted base. Further large trees from this area have fallen, their stumps lying in the stream below.

The second main area of the garden is the large area of open lawn to the south and east of the house. To the east it is level, separated from the river on the north only by a low scarp. To the south the ground rises and in this part there is a large semi-evergreen oak (a Lucombe oak, *Quercus lucombeana* (raised 1762) or similar) which may be the 'Red or evergreen oak by the little house' which Penry Williams II 'sowed' on 5 April 1773. Nearer the house, a huge, spreading larch growing on a low mound. This is the third of the eighteenth-century larches. It has layered itself in a circle around the main trunk and makes an arresting sight. A young *Cedrus libani* just north of the drive is a replacement for a huge old specimen which blew down in c. 1989. Further east is a huge, unusual, variegated sycamore (another, of a similar age, is planted near Brecon cathedral). The straight south boundary of the lawn is formed by a substantial grass scarp at the eastern end and a stone ha-ha and outer ditch at the western end, petering out before the south-west corner. On top of both is a levelled, raised walk.

The south and west sides of the lawn meet at a right-angle, in which stands a summerhouse, known as the 'moss hut'. This is set at an angle to the corner and consists of a rubble stone alcove, open to the north-east, its interior lined with rustic wood in geometric patterns, on pine panels. The slate roof is presently dismantled. The interior has a raised flagstone floor. To its west is a large beech, to its south-east the stump of a conifer. In the north-west corner of the lawn is a group of conifers, including cedar, fir and cypress. More, closer to the house, were cut down in the early 1990s. The line of the old drive, visible in the turf, runs along the north side of the large area of lawn to the south of the house to an iron gate into the parkland.

To the north of the old drive is a small lawn, bounded by a beech hedge, with the house and conservatory below. A sundial on an octagonal base and a vase ornament stand on the lawn. To the west is a group of box, bamboo and a clipped yew bush. To the west of the lawn and house terrace the ground rises and has been laid out relatively recently as a rock garden, with winding paths and narrow water channels. The area is bounded on the west and north by a stone wall and building next to the service drive. Higher up the slope is a circular feature with a central stone, with socket, on a cylindrical column, standing on a raised circular base. Around it is a circular, stone-rimmed flowerbed. A mossy path leads from here up to an iron gate into a narrow strip of trees, in particular yew, along the north side of the parkland, next to the lane to the Home Farm.

The ornamental gardens continue on the other (north) side of the river, reached by a magnificent stone bridge situated to the north-west of the house. The rubble stone bridge

is gently arched, with four arches, cut-waters and parapet walls with flat stone coping. The flanking walls continue, that on the east side stopping after a short distance, that on the west side rising over two arched doorways. The first leads to a riverside walk, the second, which is slightly grander, with dressed stone surround, keystone and pediment, leads to the Rose Garden and then, beyond, to the kitchen garden. On the north side of the bridge the lane runs northwards to the Home Farm, flanked on the west by a low wall, which bounds the east side of the rose garden, and on the east by a row of limes.

The riverside walk runs along a raised terrace outside the south wall of the rose garden. It is flanked by mature beech and lime trees. Below is a slope down to the river. A gap in the wall leads through to the Rose Garden. At the west end is a cross wall with a broken archway leading to an L-shaped area to the south and west of the kitchen garden. At the south end is a grass area and a tennis court; to the west are a commercial tree plantation and a number of wood sculptures, created in 1994-96 by Morag Colquhoun, including the large, circular Forest Garden. In the north-west corner is a stand of tall, mature Scots pines.

The Rose Garden, which no longer has roses in it, occupies a roughly rectangular area to the west of the Home Farm lane. Its layout, which has not been altered, consists of curving stony paths around an open lawn, with ornamental trees and shrubs around the perimeter. These include rhododendrons, box, holly, horse chestnut and other deciduous and coniferous trees. In the centre is a circular path around a small brick-lined oval pool, with steps down into it on the south side. Another circle towards the north end of the lawn has a large millstone, probably from a Penpont cider press, in it. In the lawn formal rose beds, now turfed over, can be made out around the central pool. To the north is a small field, now being replanted as an orchard, between the kitchen garden and the lane.

The gardens have been developed over a long period, since 1660, and features from all phases remain. The earliest structure is the bridge, built in c. 1660 by Daniel Williams. Although primarily functional, this forms an important and picturesque element in the landscape of Penpont. The first documentary evidence for a garden comes in the survey of 1738 by John Withy. On it an enlarged plan of the garden shows formal, walled gardens to the south and east of the house. These were probably laid out at the time of the rebuilding of the house in 1660. To the south of the house is a quartered square garden, planted with rows of trees, with cross paths and a central circular feature. To its south, on the garden boundary, is an apsidal feature, bounded by what appears to be a fence or railings (the avenue runs southwards from this). A building is shown in the position of the present moss hut and another in the centre of the west side. To the east are three further formal compartments, that to the east of the house having a central path, a green circular feature and a smaller green circle on the east boundary, projecting beyond the boundary wall, with a fence round it. The garden wall here has urns or vases at intervals along its top. East of this, beyond the garden and stream is an area called 'green'. The compartment to the south-east of the house is shown with green cross lines which may be hedges, a central path ending at a gazebo on the east boundary and a building just to the south of the path. This enigmatic structure, drawn with two windows and a door, does not fit into the formal scheme of the gardens and may be an older building, possibly over a well. It may also be the 'little house' mentioned in his diary by Penry Williams II in 1773. Of these gardens the south side retains its main outlines, the present west and south boundaries of the present lawn being those shown on the survey.

Along the south side, the raised terrace walk probably dates to c. 1660. The structures and formal planting have all gone but some of the ancient yews in the garden may be relics of this era. The existence of a building on the site of the moss hut at this time may indicate that the stone walls of the present building date back to the early eighteenth century or even earlier.

The next phase of development came in the mid eighteenth century, when Penry Williams II planted trees, and in particular European larches (*Larix decidua*), in the grounds. The larches, possibly planted in the 1740s, were among the first to be planted in Wales and some of the earliest in Britain. Three survive, all magnificent, huge specimens. In the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century Iolo Morganwg described the Penpont larches as fine and straight, with girths of up to 8 ft and height of up to 60 ft. Penry Williams's diary frequently refers to gardening activity and refers to features in the garden, including Great, top and bottom gravel walks, Great, East and Flour borders, a 'border at the top of the garden and each side of the road'. He also mentions the 'bowling green', probably the 'green' beyond the stream, the 'yew edge corner', the 'Persevin garden' and 'Persevin dingle'. Specific flowers are mentioned, including marigold, thrift and hollyhock; in 1778 Penry 'set new edgings of thrift' and 'set the evergreens that came from London' and in June of that year a sundial was put up.

The removal of the road to the south by Penry Williams III in 1806 heralded a new, informal phase in the development of the grounds. The formal gardens, described by Skrine in 1798, were finally removed in this phase, although it would appear that Philip Williams, Penry's father, had begun the process: he removed 'all obstructions towards the vale, confined the walls and clipped hedges within a narrower compass'. The 1794 estate map gives little detail of the garden, labelling it 'Green, Walk etc'. However, it does show a building on the site of the moss hut and that shown off-centre on the 1738 map. The larch to the south of the house is drawn in and labelled 'larch' (this labelling may be a later addition). The pond in the grounds is not shown but the walled garden opposite The Lodge is. The wall along the west side of this garden, next to the drive, is probably the last remnant of the east wall of the formal gardens, the remainder having been taken down to ground level by Philip Williams. The retaining wall along the boundary of the garden with the stream was probably built at this time or when the ha-ha was built. On 8 February 1806 Maria Williams noted that 'The Yew Hedges at the top of the Garden were taken down', suggesting that some formality, perhaps confined to the south side of the garden, remained at that date. The gardens were made informal by the creation of the large lawn, with its fringing trees and shrubs, and the wooded area to the east. The large trees, in particular the beeches, probably date from this phase. An engraving of c. 1822 (Neale) shows no formal features and a painting of 1805 shows that the east lawn was in existence by this time.

The stream and its valley above The Lodge were further landscaped at this time, with the building of the tunnels under the road. In the early to mid nineteenth century woodland walks up the valley were created or extended. The garden layout is shown on the 1840s tithe map, which calls the gardens 'shrubbery, walks, lawn'. Both the tithe map and the 1891 Ordnance Survey map show the moss hut surrounded by a circular boundary wall or fence, open to the terrace walk to the east. This has now gone. The 1891 map also shows more conifers, presumably larches, in the garden than there are now, with a group around the moss hut. A sketch of 1831 shows a vista cut through the

screen of trees on the east boundary, opposite the centre of the east front of the house. Sketches and photographs from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries show iron railings on the north, south and east garden boundaries.

The kitchen garden and associated nurseries appear for the first time on the 1794 map. The area shown as 'New Nursery' was later mostly incorporated into the Rose Garden and the walled garden is called the 'New Garden'. Development continued in the nineteenth century with the planting of trees and shrubs, including rhododendrons, and the creation of the Rose Garden, in place by 1886. At this time it was more densely planted. The areas to the north and west were orchards in 1886 and two old fruit trees still stand in the conifer plantation at the west end of the garden.

The kitchen garden lies on the north side of the river, to the north-west of the Rose Garden, on ground rising gently to the north. The present garden dates from c. 1794 and was built partly on land purchased since the estate map book of 1744. Earlier, in the eighteenth century, there may have been a simple garden, perhaps the 'Persevin Garden' mentioned in the 1770s, here. Certainly in the 1770s there was kitchen gardening activity, but where it was located is not clear. There were asparagus beds, raspberries, an artichoke garden, a melon ground, in which two brussels apricot standards were planted, a nursery and a 'little garden' where seed was sown 'in the boxes'. There were frames, a melon frame, gooseberries, carrots and hot beds. The 1794 map, calling the kitchen garden the 'New Garden', shows it more or less in its present form, but with a stream running next to its east side, separating it from the 'New Nursery' and running into the river Usk upstream of the bridge. The stream was later diverted to the east, downstream of the bridge, possibly to create a pool above. The 1891 Ordnance Survey map shows the present form, with perimeter paths.

The garden is reached by a path from the Rose Garden, which enters through a doorway at the east end of the south side. This is the most ornamental of all the doorways, with a dressed stone, pedimented, arched surround. The garden is five-sided but roughly rectangular and divided into two unequal halves, the northern being the smaller, by an east-west cross wall. The outer walls are high and stand to their full height of c. 3.8-4 m. They are of varied construction: the south wall is of brick on the outside and stone on the inside, the north and west walls the reverse and the east wall is of brick. The walls are topped by flat stone coping, that on the north and west walls overhanging. There is one arched doorway in the west wall, one at the east end of the north wall and a former doorway, now a wide gap, in the east wall at the north end of the southern compartment.

The interior of the south half of the garden is grass, with a small vegetable area. A perimeter path along the east side is visible in the turf and its stone edging is showing. Along the north wall are two glasshouses. The eastern is the larger. This has a brick base and wooden frame with narrow panes. Only the framework of the roof remains. The interior is divided in two. The eastern half is largely occupied by two large raised beds with heating pipes under them and steps to an upper path at either end. Paths are stone paved. In the early 1800s and into the 1830s there are references to pineapples grown at Penpont and they may well have been grown in these beds. The western half has a vine in it. The eastern glasshouse, with wider panes, has vines in it and has lost much of its glass. In front of it is a stone-lined circular pool and a stretch of box hedge. Between the glasshouses is an arched doorway in the cross wall. At the west end is a doorway in the

cross wall, once arched and a small bothy in the corner. At the east end, in the corner, is an iron framework, possibly for training a plant over, with a door in the cross wall next to it.

The northern half of the garden, which is five-sided, is on sloping ground and is largely occupied by a conifer plantation. A flagstone path, flanked by a box hedge, runs along the east side, from the door in the cross wall, to Garden Cottage. This is a former gardener's house, a small, rendered, stone cottage, its front flush with the east wall of the garden. Along the south wall are a number of lean-to stone buildings, including boilerhouses for the glasshouses on the other side of the wall. To the east of this part of the kitchen garden is a small grass enclosure bounded on the south by the former orchard, on the east by the lane and on the north by Garden Cottage, which has a single-storey stone extension to its west, with an open, arched south front. In this enclosure are some sunken stone frames.

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