

Conservation Management Plan

Llanelly House

Revised February 2009



Prepared for Carmarthenshire Heritage Regeneration Trust

By

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Acknowledgements

This Conservation Management Plan has been developed over the course of many years and has been edited in this form in February 2009. Contributions are acknowledged in the text but they come particularly from Professor Warwick Rodwell, consultant archeologist, and conservation architect Craig Hamilton Architects.

Summary

This document is a Conservation Management Plan for Llanelly House, which is an outstanding historic building in the heart of the town of Llanelli. The building is Grade I listed, and is considered to be one of the most important early Georgian town house in Wales. It is listed by CADW as the most outstanding domestic building of its type to survive in South Wales and is described as 'an extraordinary house' in Pevsner 'Buildings of Wales' (Thomas Lloyd and others, 2006).

The house has had a chequered history and has been misused for nearly 100 years, suffering from multiple occupancy, unsympathetic commercial use, poor maintenance, inappropriate alterations, and even the threat of demolition. Once home to the Stepney family, by the mid 19th century it was in multiple use with shops on the ground floor. The extensive gardens behind the house were developed to become part of the town centre.

The main elevation of the house is on Bridge Street and consists of three stories and seven bays. Two wings extend back towards what was once the garden. The eastern, or service wing, is two storeys, as is the west wing, which contains the dining room and small parlour. On the ground and first floors the quality of the building is such that it could become a serious visitor attraction for the people of Wales and the UK

The house is a prominent feature of the town centre, but it is currently inaccessible to the public, in disrepair and in need of urgent restoration in order to create what could be an outstanding asset for the local community, and assist in the urgently needed regeneration of Llanelli town centre.

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Introduction to the Conservation Management Plan for Llanelly House

The Conservation Management Plan for Llanelly House is the product of many years work and has been commissioned by Llanelli Town Council with assistance from the Carmarthenshire Heritage Regeneration Trust for submission to the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Plan has been prepared by William Wilkins Associates, with specialist input from Professor Warwick Rodwell, consultant archeologist, conservation architect Craig Hamilton Architects, Veryard Opus Ltd, structural engineers, Robert Bloxham-Jones service engineers and Parry and Dawkin, quantity surveyors. Further specialists have been consulted in its development and their papers are included and acknowledged in the appendices.

Llanelli Town Council propose to sell a 99 year lease for the house to Carmarthenshire Heritage Regeneration Trust (CHRT). CHRT is an independent Carmarthenshire based charitable organisation established to deliver economic growth through heritage conservation, cultural tourism and training. CHRT will act as the charitable organisation to deliver the restoration of Llanelly House, and assist in the management of Llanelly House on completion of restoration works.

The Conservation Management Plan explains why Llanelly House is of such great importance to people from surrounding areas, Wales and the United Kingdom. It sets out why the building should be restored, how it will be restored and how it will be maintained.

The house was in a state of serious disrepair when it was bought in 1998 by Llanelli Town Council. The Council's intention was to prevent further decay and to organise its restoration. After its acquisition the Council commissioned a scoping study from Stevens Associates which served to highlight the acute financial and environmental problems associated with the property. But the Council were nonetheless determined to seek a solution and appointed William Wilkins Associates (WWA) to lead the project in 2001.

Parallel with the preparation of pre-feasibility and feasibility studies, WWA worked with Carmarthenshire County Council to create the necessary environment for the Grade 1 house if it was to be restored or have any kind of future and in 2003 the County Council took the decision to re-design the Gellienn Road and gyratory system and pedestrianise Bridge Street. In 2006 it was announced that a grant of £1.29 million had been obtained from the Physical Regeneration Fund administered by the Welsh Assembly Government, with this transformation of the environment it is possible that Llanelly House has a future.

Two other significant developments have taken place. First, in 2003 Llanelly House won the Welsh round of the first BBC 2 programme 'Restoration'. Huge support was engendered in Llanelli and across Wales. This carried it into a very creditable performance in the final round. Second, there has been a steady decline in the economic fortunes of Llanelli town centre. (It has recently been announced that Marks and Spencer, Top Shop, Burtons and Savers are leaving) The County Council are investing heavily in plans to regenerate the town centre, and the restoration of Llanelly House is seen as a potentially iconic contribution to this campaign.



Bridge Street, Llanelli; pedestrianisation feasibility study.

1. Stakeholders and Team Members

As far as possible all potential stakeholders have been identified. They include many of those who have an interest in Llanelly House, whether they have been directly involved in the planning process, or are to be consulted about the plans, kept informed, or are affected by the proposals.

A Project Consultation Group has been set up, which consists of Llanelli Town Council and Carmarthenshire County Council officers, representatives of the CHRT and external consultants. Once the lease for the house has been signed CHRT will lead the project and the project team will be made up of CHRT staff, consultants and contractors. CHRT works very closely with Carmarthenshire County Council, Llanelli Town Council, Trinity College Carmarthen, the National Trust and local community heritage organisations.

CHRT and Llanelli Town Council strongly believe that there should be the greatest possible community involvement in the project. Prior to CHRT involvement, the Town Council has already held discussions with officers & members of a large number of Llanelli community, historical and cultural societies. Great enthusiasm for the project has been expressed and there is widespread willingness to play a role in the regeneration of the house and the creation of the heritage centre.

CHRT intends to develop the involvement of the community in a substantial way in running the Centre. The objective will be to give the community 'ownership' of the heritage interpretation and ancillary facilities in a way which brings them real rewards and real responsibilities.

The discussions have been held with:

1. The Friends of Llanelli Museum
2. Llanelli Civic Trust
3. Llanelli Art Society
4. Llanelli Photographic Society
5. Llanelli Music and Drama Club
6. Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society
7. The Llanelli Forum
8. The Workers Educational Association
9. Llanelli Historical Society
10. Bynea Historical Society
11. Kidwelly Civic Society
12. The University of the 3rd Age
13. Citizens Advice Bureau
14. Vicar & Church Wardens, St Elli's parish church

After initial discussions, a further round of meetings has been held with many of the organisations, formally and informally, and with a range of community organisations and their representatives, as well as making initial contacts with Communities First, Foothold and others

Further input and advice on the development process has been gathered from local authorities, heritage agencies and other relevant organisations:

- CADW
- Welsh Assembly Government – Economic Regeneration, Social Justice and Inclusion, Lifelong Learning groups
- Royal Commission On The Ancient And Historical Monuments Of Wales
- Architectural Heritage Fund
- CCC Chief Executive, plus Economic Regeneration, Planning & Conservation and Lifelong Learning departments
- Society For The Protection Of Ancient Buildings
- The Georgian Group
- The Civic Trust For Wales
- Arts Council of Wales
- Cambria Archaeological Trust
- Council for Museums in Wales
- Trinity College Carmarthen;
- UWIC;
- Coleg Sir Gar
- University of Wales, Lampeter
- Glamorgan University
- National Museum Wales

2. Understanding the Place

2.1 Topographical and Historical Setting

Llanelli is a sizeable market town in southern Carmarthenshire, 15 km west of Swansea. Prior to the Act of Union in 1536, when the county was created, the area lay in the Welsh kingdom of Deheubarth. The town lies on the north side of the Burry Inlet, close to the mouth of the river Loughor, but is a few hundred metres inland on a tiny tributary known as the Afon Lliedi. Consequently, there are two components, which have effectively coalesced: the ancient nucleus of settlement and the much later river port which in the past has been of great benefit to the local economy. The fabric of the town today is almost entirely of late 19th and 20th-century date, the result of a period of considerable prosperity, but the site is one of great antiquity and historic interest.

Prior to 1966, when the then Borough Council formally readopted the correct Welsh spelling – *Llanelli* – the name of the town was usually recorded in documents in its Anglicized form, *Llanelly*. The great house which is the subject of this study is still known as Llanelly House (Fig. 2.1).

Llanelli was not always a substantial town, or even a settlement with urban pretensions: down to the beginning of the 19th century it would have been more accurately described as a large village. Like so many coastal settlements in Wales, its origins lie somewhere in the post-Roman Celtic era, the so-called ‘Dark Ages’. Unfortunately, there has been no serious attempt yet to elucidate the archaeology of the settlement, and many opportunities for excavation have been lost during development in recent decades. However, it seems clear that the principal focus was the parish church of Saint Elli, the dedication of which points to a pre-Norman foundation. Very little is known about Elli – and nothing with certainty – although he receives mention in the 11th-century *Book of Llandaff*. There is every likelihood that the origins of the church here lie in a small early Celtic monastery (a *Llan*), around which a village settlement grew up. The place-name ‘Llanelli’ itself provides strong support for such an origin.

Llanelli was also the site of one of the many 12th-century earthwork (‘motte-and-bailey’) castles of Wales, and its presence is still recalled, *inter alia*, by the name ‘Old Castle Road’. Nothing remains of the castle today, although its site is supposed to be a tree-covered island surrounded by water in People’s Park, 700 m west of the parish church. Another location, 400 m south-west of the church, has also been claimed as the site of the castle on the evidence of an estate map of 1761 which shows a square feature which it labels ‘Old Castle’. A field in this area was also known as ‘Pencastell’. On cartographic evidence, the site could be interpreted as that of a medieval semi-fortified courtyard house, a potential successor to a Norman earthwork castle. The rebuilding of the fortification as the ‘new castle’ – perhaps on a fresh site – is enigmatically recorded in the early 14th century. Wherever it was, the castle seems to have disappeared by or soon after the end of the Middle Ages. Although not firmly attested by historical evidence, its demise is likely to have been part of a continuum in the development of settlement, the next stage of which saw the emergence of a substantial ‘mansion-house’: that was to become Llanelly House.

That Llanelli was still only a village in the early 16th century is clear from the description by John Leland, the King's Antiquary. In the 1530s, he reported that the only market town in the county was Carmarthen itself, and 'At Llanelthle, a village in Kidwelli lordship the habitans digge coles ...' This indicates that coal mining, which was later destined to become a major industry, was already underway. The small size of the settlement was confirmed in 1566, when Llanelli was described in a Commission report as 'a village of 12 houses on a creek of Burry', and that it possessed only one small ship. The houses were clustered around the sizeable triangle of land upon which the parish church stands. This lay adjacent to the northern boundary of what was almost certainly a medieval park associated with the former castle.

The size and importance of Llanelli increased markedly in the 17th century, largely, it seems, as a result of the development of the port. The Hearth Tax Returns for 1676 recorded 188 houses, although this total would have included outlying hamlets and farms, as well as the emergent town. It was probably also in the 17th century that the seat of the local lordship was moved from the former castle to a new location immediately opposite the church, on the northern boundary of the park. Hence, the church, village and mansion-house became a close-knit group. Part, if not all, of the old park comprised the grounds of the new house, which had seemingly been built by 1616. The substantial Vaughan family were then in possession. In 1714 the Jacobean residence was remodelled on a grand scale, and became known as Llanelly House.

Soon afterwards, descriptions by topographers and historians make it clear that Llanelli was a small but prosperous town and that a regular market was held. Thus, in the early 18th century, it could be described as 'a pretty Town of Resort for Sea-Coal, with a Market plentifully supplied with Provisions'.

As the 18th century wore on and the Industrial Revolution gained pace, so the town continued to expand: it was now the centre of a thriving coal mining industry, with a busy port. Trade brought prosperity and that in turn led to the meteoric expansion of Llanelli during the 19th century. In 1815 it was reported to be 'one of the most thriving places in South Wales. The neighbouring country abounds in coal of the best quality ... there are here an extensive Iron Works ... lately erected some lead works ... and there are also some copper works ...' In 1849, it was observed that 'Respectable houses have been erected in almost every direction; as have others of inferior character, which are occupied as soon as they can be finished'; in 1858 it was noted that 'of late years this town has greatly increased in importance, both as respects trade and population; and the improvement in its appearance has kept pace with its prosperity'; and in 1875 it was claimed that Llanelli was 'one of the most flourishing towns in Wales'. The manifestation of this prosperity and the associated building boom is everywhere in evidence today in the town, which has many fine Victorian structures.

Coal was not the only commodity to be exported: heavy industry followed, which included ship-building and the establishment of the Morfa tinsplate works in 1851. In the domestic market, Llanelli achieved fame for the production of its distinctive pottery between 1839 and 1923. The prosperity of the town began to dwindle after the First World War, although heavy industry continued until the end of the Second. Thereafter, serious decline set in, which was not arrested until the 1970s. Since then, considerable effort and funding has been directed towards turning around the town's fortunes, so that it is once again thriving. It is in the context of this renaissance that we now turn to Llanelly House itself.

2.2 Llanelly House Today

Llanelly House is the major historic building in the centre of the town of Llanelli, and is Grade I Listed. It is acknowledged as probably the most important early Georgian town house in Wales, but has had a chequered history, and throughout much of the 20th century it suffered from multiple occupancy, unsympathetic commercial uses, poor maintenance, inappropriate alteration, and even the threat of demolition. The house was rescued from developers by Llanelli Town Council, which purchased the property in 1998, and William Wilkins, C.B.E., was appointed as Project Director for its restoration. The Council also assembled a team of professional consultants to investigate the history and archaeology of Llanelly House, to report upon its structural condition, to draw up a viable scheme for its restoration, and to secure a long-term, beneficial use within the local community. That process has been proceeding steadily since 2001.

In 2003 Llanelly House was chosen to appear in BBC2's, *Restoration* series, where it was voted the winning entry for Wales.

(i) The Building

Llanelly House is a complex structure dating from the 17th and 18th centuries and is squarish in plan. The accommodation is situated on two principal floors, and attics. Physically, the house comprises several distinct elements, which in this study are referred to as follows:

North range – the main block, with a north-facing elevation

West wing – the range which returns southwards from the west end of the north range

East wing – the L-shaped range which is attached to the east end of the north range

Staircase hall – the squarish block containing the principal stair, which lies in the 'armpit' between the three ranges just described

Courtyard – to the south of the staircase hall, and lying between the east and west wings, was a small, enclosed rectangular yard which is now occupied by a modern lavatory block

(ii) Location

Llanelly House is situated in the heart of the town, at the corner of Vaughan Street and Bridge Street, an area which is now totally built-up, but once comprised an extensive private park and gardens (Fig. 2.4). Vaughan Street is part of the central pedestrian precinct, while Bridge Street is currently a component of a gyratory system used by heavy traffic, but this is due to change in 2007–08, when it too will become pedestrianised.

The overall footprint of the house is essentially square in plan, although the two principal ranges (north and west) form an 'L' shape, with the imposing front elevation facing north, on to Bridge Street (Fig. 2.14). This is one of the medieval streets of Llanelli, taking its name from Falcon Bridge which crossed the Lledi just beyond the south-east corner of the churchyard. There has never been a garden or other form of enclosure on the north side of the house, the façade rising from the edge of the pavement. Directly opposite, on the north side of the street, is the medieval parish

church of St Elli, which is situated in an elevated churchyard, bounded by a stone wall and iron railings. The impressive gates and piers to the churchyard stand exactly opposite the site of the original front door of the house, thus emphasizing the physical and social relationship between the church and the mansion-house.

The west range of the house is bordered by Vaughan Street, which was newly created in 1864 and once accommodated the market place (Fig. 2.2). An estate map of 1761 (Fig. 2.5) shows that there was then an enclosed yard on the west side with a building range across the north end (that had mostly been demolished by 1815). The southern end of the west range is now abutted by Victorian shop premises (no. 18, largely rebuilt in recent times), whereas previously the house had windows here overlooking gardens.

The east end of the main north range is abutted by modern shops, facing onto Bridge Street (nos. 6 and 8). They replaced a row of 19th-century cottages, and those in turn occupied the site of the former gated entrance to the stable yard which adjoined Llanelly House (Fig. 2.3). The extensive stable yard and all the structures associated with it have long since disappeared. Gone too is most of the service range which extended southwards from the internal angle of the 'L' plan; a surviving low wing here is a remnant. There is still a slight re-entrant between the ranges, which is part of the property, has a tarmac surface and is currently used to park three cars. Access to this area is from a cul-de-sac which was created in the late 20th century to service the shops and business premises in Bridge Street, Vaughan Street and the town centre precinct. There is thus permanent vehicular access to the rear of Llanelly House, and a small area for car parking, but no gardens or yards.

(iii) Recent Use and Condition

Until the mid-19th century Llanelly House was solely a residence but, by degrees, the interior became subdivided into tenements and business premises. Part was reclaimed for domestic use in 1910, and various internal changes effected. Much of the ground floor of the north range was converted into a shop in the mid-19th century, and was in part provided with large windows in place of the domestic sashes. That the alterations occurred after 1854 is attested by a painting of that date. A shop door was installed at the corner of Bridge Street and Vaughan Street. The windows and this doorway remain, although partly reconstructed in the mid-20th century. The whole of the ground floor of the west range of the house was converted into shops in the early 20th century, but the shop-fronts were renewed in the 1980s, when large sheets of plate glass were installed. The remaining part of the north range (*i.e.* the eastern end) was also converted into a shop in the early 20th century. Ultimately, the premises comprised nos. 2 and 4 Bridge Street and nos. 20, 22 and 24 Vaughan Street.

Thus the whole of the ground floor was progressively given over to merchandizing. In 1992 two large rooms on the first floor, on the north side, were thrown into one and became a tearoom. Other rooms remained in domestic use, including those on the second floor. In June 1966 the house was Listed Grade II, and in 1992 it was relisted as Grade I, 'for the unique quality and importance of this townhouse'. Refurbishment of the shops in the west wing occurred in the 1980s, when the shop-fronts were completely renewed, internal partitions were repositioned, and a new staircase to the first floor was installed. The process of unsympathetic 'modernisation' led to the loss of some original internal fabric, but much more was simply covered up: sheets of plywood and hardboard were nailed over Georgian

panelling, and suspended ceilings were installed in several of the principal rooms. Gradually, the visual integrity of the historic interior disappeared from view as more and more features were covered over.

Llanelly House thus changed hands, and uses, several times between the 1930s and 1990s, ending up in the control of a development consortium (Llanelly House Properties Ltd). In 1947, a proposal that Llanelli Borough Council should buy the property was turned down. In 1975 demolition appeared to be a distinct possibility, and as late as 1984 one Town Councillor was still calling for the house to be razed. A proposal to gut the entire ground floor and rebuild it as a series of modern shops was defeated at the Planning stage. Various short-term tenancies were granted and parts of the building were used commercially, while others were effectively abandoned. In 1991, Bridge Street, Church Street and part of Vaughan Street were designated a Conservation Area (Fig. 2.4), and when it was clear that consent for demolition or massive alteration would not be forthcoming, the last commercial owner embarked upon a 'restoration' scheme which was ill-conceived, poor in quality, and lacked appropriate professional input. Moreover it was begun without Listed Building Consent, and in 1991 Llanelli Borough Council instructed the developers to stop work and submit an application. In the following year, the roofs were repaired, the exterior was inappropriately re-rendered (using Portland cement) and a modern flat was created on the second floor of the north range. Fortunately, the majority of the historic interior was still untouched when the scheme foundered. After several more years of indecision, and considerable public pressure to rescue the house, the developers agreed to sell the property to Llanelli Town Council in 1998.

2.3 Researching the History and Context of Llanelly House

Historical Sources

Primary sources for the history of Llanelly House and its environs are both few and inexplicit. While the property receives copious mentions in local histories of 19th and 20th-century date, as well as passing references in more general works, the volume of substantiated fact is disappointingly modest. By contrast, a good deal is recorded about the families that successively owned or occupied the house. Small collections of original documents relating to these are held by Llanelli Public Library, Carmarthenshire County Records Office at Carmarthen and the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth.

There are no mentions in the records predating 1910 of the names of the persons responsible for building or rebuilding the house, or for decorating it. Nor are the names of any architects, builders, landscape contractors or suppliers of materials recorded. Were it not for the rainwater hopper-heads bearing the Stepney crest and the date of 1714, we would not know when this magnificent house was rebuilt in its present form. The survival of that evidence is critically important.

No drawn surveys of the building are known, even though it is likely that these were made when the house was improved or changed hands. However, two inventories of the rooms and their contents are preserved, dating from 1764 and 1776, respectively. An advertisement published in the press in 1787, when the house was empty and available to let, provides a useful general description of the accommodation in what it called a 'Capital Mansion-House'.

On the Ground Floor there are four exceeding large handsome Rooms, a Stone Hall, together with a Kitchen, Servants Hall, Housekeeper's Room, Butler's, and other Pantries, Brewhouse, and Laundry, and other conveniences of all Sorts; above is a Gallery 75 feet long, with four very handsome large Bed Chambers and four smaller Rooms and Closets; on the Attic Story are four good Bedchambers, with five smaller Rooms for Servants. There are two large Court-yards, with stabling for a great Number of Horses; a large Coach-house, Wash-house, Pidgeon-house, Dairy, Larder, Malt-house, and Kiln Floers and Granaries, Store Rooms and Chambers; a large Walled Garden, with all sorts of Fruit Trees in Perfection, with a Green-house, together with an Orchard, Pleasure-Ground Walks, and with or without a Pinery full of Fruiting Plants, with Vines trained in, and as many Acres of Land as the Tenant pleases. ... The House is furnished, and would be let to any responsible Person who would be desirous of opening it as an Inn ...

The earliest surviving plan of central Llanelli is the Stepney estate map of 1761, which shows the streets, cottages, church, footprint of Llanelly House, and the layout of the associated yards, gardens and surrounding features (Fig. 2.5). A less detailed plan survives from 1815, and there is another of the churchyard of 1817 (Figs. 2.6 and 2.7). The latter shows the northern frontage of Llanelly House, which is labelled 'Stepney Palace'. The earliest complete map showing the streets and properties of Llanelli dates from 1860 (Fig. 2.8), and the first edition of the Ordnance Survey map was surveyed in the 1880s.

Drawn and photographic depictions of the house prior to c. 1900 are remarkably few in number, and most occur incidentally in views that were prepared for other purposes (Figs. 2.9–2.12).

Archaeological Investigation and Research

When Llanelli Town Council acquired Llanelly House it was believed to be a building that was newly constructed by Sir Thomas Stepney in 1714, that being the date displayed on the ornate rainwater hoppers. The architectural form and detailing were in accord with that supposition. However, no detailed historical or architectural research had been carried out on the property, and there was no measured survey. An initial assessment of the historical, archaeological and architectural interest of the building was commissioned in 2001 from Richard K. Morriss & Associates. This study confirmed the importance of the house, not only in terms of local history, but also regionally. Moreover, it identified the two rear wings (east and west) as survivals from the pre-1714 Vaughan house, thereby establishing that the present structure was not built *de novo* by the Stepneys. At the same time, other elements were identified as clearly being introductions of the later Georgian era.

Thus, Llanelly House was not a single-period construction of 1714, but a complex structure which had evolved and been remodelled on several occasions. The only way to elucidate this, and thus reliably to inform restoration, was through a programme of systematic archaeological investigation, which was accordingly put in hand in 2002 under the supervision of Professor Warwick Rodwell.

The interior of the house presented markedly contrasting aspects, resultant upon activities over the previous quarter-century. It has already been noted that the ground floor rooms had been converted into shops and offices and much of the historic fabric was concealed behind modern fittings, wall-linings, inserted partitions and false ceilings, and the second floor at the east end of the house had been unimaginatively refitted as a modern flat. In these circumstances it was impossible to ascertain just how much of the historic interior survived, and in what condition.

Consequently, archaeologically controlled 'unpicking' of the interior was carried out in three stages, with Listed Building Consent. In the first phase (November 2002), all intrusions and as many surface finishes as possible which dated from the second half of the 20th century were removed, with the exception of the 1980s lavatory block that had been built in the small courtyard between the two rear wings. The interior was recorded at this stage. In the second phase (September 2003), most of the intrusions dating from the first half of the 20th century were removed, it having been agreed by all parties concerned that these were of no intrinsic merit. Also, the heavy cement rendering that covered the internal walls of the staircase hall was stripped. Finally, in the third phase of investigation more of the modern finishes were cleared and targeted opening-up operations were carried out in order to examine the structure, for example by carefully removing sections of panelling, lifting floorboards, etc. An unexpected revelation was the survival of much 17th-century fabric in the walls of the main range, which was hitherto presumed to be wholly of 1714.

Once the surviving historic fabric was fully exposed and accessible for recording, an accurate set of floor plans and wall elevations to a large scale was commissioned from On-Centre Surveys Ltd, and the rooms were numbered and prefixed according to the floor level on which they occurred: thus B(asement); G(round); F(irst); S(econd) (Figs. 2.19–21). A full photographic record has also been made, both before and during the process of stripping modern accretions.

At the same time, three small trial excavations were undertaken beneath the timber floors, so ascertain whether archaeological deposits were present. Remains of the 17th-century house were encountered, including much moulded plasterwork from a highly ornate ceiling. In June 2006, another excavation was carried out under the pavement of Bridge Street, in front of the original main entrance, to determine whether there had ever been a portico; the result was negative: see Appendix 8.5 for a detailed report.

When strengthening of the floors was carried out in 2007–08, the opportunity was taken to make an archaeological record of the construction of the floor framing at first and second floor levels. Several periods of construction were observed. While much of the framing was in oak and dated from the early 18th century, substantial areas of later repair and replacement in deal were noted. In many areas the original floors had sunk as a result of structural settlement, and some of the major beams had bowed; to counteract these effects, a major re-levelling operation had taken place in the 19th century. In addition to the later materials, in places the floors incorporated reused timbers of the 17th century. Dr Nigel Nayling from the Dept. of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Wales, Lampeter, paid several visits to Llanelly House while structural work was in progress, and took many timber samples for potential dating by dendrochronology. These are currently being worked upon in the laboratory.

The roof structures of the east and west wings clearly pre-date the general rebuild of 1714. Both roofs are probably 17th century, although of different constructions. The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monument of Wales (RCAHMW) has offered to undertake a programme of dendrochronology on these two roofs, with a view to establishing their ages. Richard Suggett of the Commission is currently organizing this, and visited in February 2009 to take timber samples for analysis.

The principal area where early 18th-century fabric has been lost through later alteration is in the ground floor elevations on the north and west, where doors and shop windows have been installed. Consequently, it was deemed essential to carry out a detailed study of the surviving evidence (as revealed archaeologically) and of such documentary and pictorial evidence as is available, in order to establish whether the restoration of these damaged elements can be achieved with integrity and authenticity. The study was carried out in 2004, and confirmed that restoration is possible: see Appendix 8.4 for a full report.

A further investigation of these panels by scanning is to be undertaken by Professor Timothy West at the Dept. of Optometry, University of Cardiff. He will also investigate a selection of other panels in the house, in an attempt to discover whether there are any elaborate schemes of decoration concealed beneath modern overpainting.

In order to understand the history of decoration in the house, Lisa Oestreicher (historic paint specialist) was commissioned to conduct an extensive programme of sampling and analysis. Her research has provided a thorough understanding of the sequences of decoration in all the principal rooms. The two surviving overmantel panels bearing painted scenes have been removed for safety and study: they were taken to the National Museum and Gallery of Wales, Cardiff, where they have been subjected to infra-red photography and reports prepared on their condition (2003/4).

During the removal of modern finishes, remnants of Regency, Victorian and later wallpapers were discovered in numerous places. These have been photographically recorded and samples of all have been taken for preservation and further study (Fig. 2.13).

Thus proposals for the repair and refurbishment of Llanelly House have been advanced, confident in the knowledge that as much archaeological information has been amassed as can reasonably be obtained. Nevertheless, there are still important outstanding questions, the answers to which can only be sought when the house is scaffolded, the cement rendering is stripped from the exterior, and further opening-up of the interior takes place. Also when floors are renewed at ground level, there will be opportunities to study the buried archaeology of the 17th-century house, and perhaps recover its complete layout.

Continuing archaeological involvement is therefore essential, and this will lead to the preparation of a definitive account of the history, archaeology and architecture of Llanelly House by the end of the restoration project. A substantial archive of photographs and drawings is steadily being amassed as research and investigation proceed. That archive will provide a unique educational resource for students in the future. Moreover, the ultimate aim, at the end of the restoration, should be the publication of a full written and illustrated account of Llanelly House, covering its architectural and social history, together with an account of the project itself. There will be ample material for a major monograph, and such a publication would ensure wide dissemination of the knowledge gained, as well as contributing to the study of local history and providing an invaluable long-term educational resource.

2.4 A Brief History of the House and its Owners

It has already been posited that Llanelly House is the lineal successor to the medieval castle, which lay to the south-west of the parish church, and that the seat

of power was relocated sometime between the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the 17th century.

Little is known about the early history of the house, but the estate was held in the late 16th century by the wealthy landowner Thomas Lewis. His daughter inherited, and in 1605 she married Walter Vaughan; by 1616 they are recorded as living in Llanelly House. The Vaughans were a family of substance and Walter was High Sheriff of Carmarthenshire in 1626. His second son, John, inherited the property. Despite backing the Royalist cause during the English Civil War, John managed to hold on to his estates in Llanelli, and himself became High Sheriff in 1659.

The estates remained in the Vaughan family until another Walter, the last in the male line, died in 1683, and they were thereafter divided between his four sisters. Llanelly House passed to Anne Vaughan, who died childless and left the property to her sister Margaret. In 1691 she married Sir Thomas Stepney, baronet, of Prendergast, Pembrokeshire. The couple presumably moved forthwith into Llanelly House, since their eldest son was baptized in the parish church in 1693. Sir Thomas became Member of Parliament for the county in 1697. The Hearth Tax returns in 1670 suggest that Llanelly House had twelve hearths, which implies a very substantial residence.

To the south of the house lay an extensive garden and park. The boundaries of the latter have not been determined, but the walled and formal gardens adjoined the house and stable yard, and the stream, the river Lliedi, ran through their midst. The estate map of 1761 clearly shows a large, rectangular walled garden adjacent to the house on the south-west, and beyond that the remains of an abandoned 17th-century formal garden with long, straight gravel paths intersecting at right-angles. The map also indicates that disparkment was well advanced by 1761 and what remained was only the rump of something that was once much more extensive. Progressively, the estate was developed during the 19th century, the stream was culverted, and streets and properties were laid out where the gardens had been.

The Stepney family of Prendergast, Pembrokeshire, were descended from Alban Stepney, a lawyer from St Albans, Hertfordshire, who had moved to Wales in the mid-16th century. The baronetcy was conferred in 1621. Sir Thomas, the fourth baronet, clearly took a great interest in Llanelli and lavished a considerable amount of money on rebuilding the house in 1714. It is to him that we owe much of the present structure. Llanelly House descended through several more generations of the family, and their memorials in the church constitute one of the finest groups in South Wales.

Ironically, it was prosperity that brought about the decline of Llanelly House as a desirable residence, and in any case the heyday of the Stepneys was over. The death of Sir Thomas, sixth baronet, in 1772 effectively marked the end of the family's interest in Llanelly House. Two years later it was put on the market, but no buyer was found, and so it was leased. Further unsuccessful attempts to sell the property were made in 1787 and 1791, whereupon the house and ancillary buildings were subdivided and tenanted. A newspaper article of 1802 described the house as 'The venerable old mansion of the Stepney family, long without its respectable owners, is now dividing into tenements, which are much needed in the town'. The stable yard was converted into a small square surrounded by shops, and the town's first Post Office was set up there in 1811; and the conservatory, which was on the west side of

the house, was converted into a market-house. The property was described in 1815 as 'an old deserted seat of the Stepney family, which is now let out in apartments to the poor'.

Fortuitously, there are two surviving inventories of the contents of the house, made in 1764 and 1776, respectively, which give the names of all the rooms, although not all can now be identified with certainty. The named rooms and their identities are listed in Appendix 8.2.

The baronetcy became extinct in 1825, and Llanelly House underwent a partial revival when William Chambers inherited the Stepney estates in 1827. Chambers evicted tenants and removed the market from the conservatory. His son, also William, established the famous Llanelli Pottery in 1839, which continued in production until 1923. As well as domestic wares, the factory made architectural ceramics. Llanelly House was once again occupied as a family seat, and grand functions took place there. However, the revival was short-lived, and upon William's death in 1855 the estate reverted to the Stepney family who again converted the house into tenements. Within two years the rooms on the ground floor were given over to commercial activity, and sash windows were superseded by shop-fronts. Pressure for building land led to the sale of the gardens which, in the mid-19th century, were rapidly disappearing beneath sprawling developments of streets and houses. Llanelly House enjoyed a second, very brief renaissance in 1910, when Miss Catherine Stepney took up residence. A year later she was married and moved to a newly built house at Cilymaenllwyd.

The Victorian prosperity of the town led to the rebuilding of the medieval parish church in 1845–46 by E. Bagot, the town surveyor. Plans for another rebuilding in 1902 by G.F. Bodley were rejected, but in 1904–06 E.M. Bruce-Vaughan remodelled the church into its present form. Only the massive west tower has survived from the Middle Ages. The medieval church was most unusual in that it had a small turret and spirelet rising above the crossing, in addition to the west tower. Demolition and rebuilding inevitably gave rise to the displacement of all the internal monuments. However, the magnificent series of marble memorials relating mainly to the Vaughan and Stepney families, and ranging in date from the late 17th to the early 20th century, has been preserved: they were carefully dismantled and re-erected in the new building. They commemorate:

Walter Vaughan (d. 1673)
Margaret Vaughan (d. 1703)
John Vaughan Stepney (d. 1732)
Eleanor Stepney (d. 1733), by William Palmer
Lady Margaret Stepney (d. 1733), by William Palmer
Sir Thomas Stepney (d.1751), by Benjamin Palmer
E. Mansel (d. 1809), by Tyley
Mary Stepney (d. 1816)
Emma Chambers (d. 1838), by Orton Rossi
Col. J.C.M. Cowell (d. 1854); bronze relief
Sir Stafford Howard (d. 1916)
Margaret Cowell Stepney (d. 1921)

The Palmers, father and son, were London sculptors of note and have several commissions in Westminster Abbey. The Tyley firm operated from Bristol.

There were doubtless other members of the families who inhabited Llanelly House interred in the church, and who were not accorded prominent memorials. Equally,

some were buried elsewhere (e.g. George Stepney, diplomat and poet, was buried in Westminster Abbey in 1707). The monuments in the parish church are not only important as funerary sculptures, but also serve as a tangible reminder of those who built, adapted and inhabited Llanelly House.

2.5 Basic Architectural Description

A general architectural description is given below: for a complete schedule of the rooms, notes on them, and illustrations, see Appendix 8.1.

The house has two main floors and attics, and comprises four elements (Fig. 2.14):

- (i) The main north-facing range, which fronts Bridge Street, contains some of the principal rooms. Behind this are the three further components.
- (ii) The west wing, fronting Vaughan Street, which contains the remainder of the principal rooms.
- (iii) The L-shaped east wing contains service rooms. The northern part has three floors and includes a service staircase; there is also a small cellar. The southern arm of the wing comprises ground floor and attic only, and is the rump of the lost service wing which once extended further south.
- (iv) Lying between the east and west wings is the staircase hall, and south of that is a small courtyard which was formerly open. A single-storied lavatory block was built in the yard in the 1980s.

Exterior

The north façade is of seven bays, three stories high, and the whole of the exterior is of rendered rubble. There is a plain parapet with sunken panels, surmounted by a row of large, gadrooned limestone urns (Figs. 2.1, 2.15 and 2.16). The parapet returns around the ends of the block, where there are tall, rendered chimneys (now reduced in height), and there is another rising from the centre of the house. The roofs, which have multiple pitches of small scale, are concealed from view by the parapets. On the façade, the central and two outermost bays break forward slightly and carry elaborately moulded timber cornices between first and second floor levels. These cornices now 'float' meaninglessly in a sea of modern cement render (Fig. 2.17), but would originally have articulated with window-heads modelled in lime-render. The division between the ground and first floors is marked by a simple stone string-course, and there is a plain stone plinth at ground level. There were large sash windows at all three levels, but those on the ground floor have variously been mutilated, or lost entirely, when shop fronts were installed. The front door was located in the central bay and had a moulded and Corinthian pilastered doorcase. One pilaster remains *in situ*, and the other has been repositioned at the west end of the Victorian shop-front. Similarly, the original eight-panelled door survives, but has been relocated west of its original site. A second doorway has been cut into the elevation, again for access to commercial premises. Running down the elevation are two highly ornate lead downpipes and hoppers bearing the Stepney crest and the date '1714'. This leadwork is of exceptional quality and ranks amongst the most ornate and important of its period anywhere in Britain.

For a detailed archaeological study of the shop fronts, assessment of their significance and reconstruction of the destroyed elements of the original north and west elevations, prepared in 2004, see Appendix 8.4.

The rear wings are lower, without parapets or embellishments, and have visible slate roofs. The sash windows are smaller and not all uniform. The west wing lost its sashes at ground level to Edwardian shop-fronts, which in turn were replaced by

plate glass in the 1980s (Fig. 2.18). Both rear wings retain oak roof-framing which probably dates from the 17th century.

Interior

Internally, the house retains much of interest, despite the unfortunate history of commercial use. On the ground floor at the east end is a fine, fully panelled room with antechamber, which was probably Sir Thomas Stepney's study (G2A/B) (plan, Fig. 2.19). The large overmantel panel contains a maritime scene painted in oils: it shows the British fleet anchored off an idealized coast. The painting appears to be original to the panel, and should therefore date from c. 1714. There was an oak-panelled entrance passage (G1A) and dining room (great hall, G1B) in the north range, now much damaged by shops. Behind is the part-panelled staircase hall (G4) which rises through the full height of the house; the stair however goes only as far as the first floor. The present oak staircase is Edwardian, but the arrangement of the original has been elucidated: it too rose no higher. Lighting the half-landing is a monumentally tall sash window (originally of 64 panes, but now substantially reduced partly blocked), and there is a small 'balcony' from which the hall below can be viewed from the first floor. For a house in Britain, this is an exceptionally rare feature.

The west wing contained the drawing room (G6) and best parlour (G5), both lined with painted pine panelling. The overmantel and overdoor panels in the parlour almost certainly bore painted scenes: they have been removed and replaced with plain panels. The east wing contained the common hall (G3), service stair and another parlour (G8–9).

There is a good series of panelled rooms on the first floor in the north range and west wing, all accessed from the Great Gallery (F4) which runs the length of the house (75 feet) (plan, Fig. 2.20). This gallery is fully panelled and in it were once hung twenty-two portraits of the Stepney family. The panelled Best Chamber (F10) had a large integral painting over the chimneypiece and two small ones above the doors. These were removed in the 1930s, but two of the three were recently rediscovered in the storeroom of Llanelli Museum. The overmantel painting is a view of the old Llangennech Park (demolished), which was Lady Stepney's former home (7 km east of Llanelli). The extant overdoor painting is a riverine landscape. The date of these paintings is uncertain, but they have been compared to work of the peripatetic artist John Lewis, who was active in the middle decades of the 18th century. He is known to have painted Lady Stepney's portrait in 1744 (for an essay on John Lewis, see Appendix 8.3). The panelled antechamber (F9) to the Best Chamber was also decoratively painted, and the three overdoors still bear theatrical masks in grisaille. Investigation of the large wall panels has demonstrated that beneath modern paint layers is more grisaille decoration. The complete painted scheme in this room could be revealed.

Along the north side of the house, on the first floor, was a range of chambers and closets, mostly panelled (F1–3), and in the attic room at the back lay a nursery (F7).

The second floor contains a series of relatively plain attic rooms that would have been mainly occupied by staff and children (plan, Fig. 2.21). They are accessed from a long corridor (S4) that also opens onto a gallery which projects nearly halfway across the staircase hall (S7). The 18th-century staircase connecting the first and second floors is, however, in the east wing, where it has always been. Some of the rooms contain panelling which has been relocated from elsewhere. One section (in

S3, east) is of particular interest, being a chimneypiece bearing a painted scene; it is likely to have come from a small room on the ground floor, potentially the antechamber to Sir Thomas Stepney's study (G2B).

2.6 Architectural Development of Llanelly House

Llanelly House is an extraordinary building for which there is no close architectural analogue. That fact is widely acknowledged, and it is often described as the most important Georgian town house in South Wales. Outwardly, the building is obviously early Georgian, and the elaborate lead rainwater heads are dated 1714. These provide testimony to the ownership and rebuilding of the house by Sir Thomas Stepney, fourth Baronet. Unfortunately, we have no hint as to the identity of the architect who designed the house, or of the builder who executed his plans. It was possibly a creation by a talented regional builder, rather than an architect of national standing. But whoever the designer was, he was undoubtedly inspired.

There is one other building which shares certain critical aspects of the architectural detail of Llanelly House, but not the overall design. That is the Great House in King Street, Laugharne, which is also in Carmarthenshire, 22 km north-west of Llanelli. The richly moulded doorcase on the Great House has much in common with the moulded cornices on the façade and in the staircase hall of Llanelly House. Almost certainly, the same builder was at work in both places. Persistent research may yet yield further clues relating to the originator of Llanelly's design.

Moreover, it is now clear that the house was not rebuilt *in toto* in 1714, but was a drastic remodelling of a Jacobean or even earlier building. That was not previously known, or even suspected. The architectural form of the 17th-century house has yet to be established, but the western two-thirds of the present north range, and the whole of the west wing, embody earlier masonry. The floor level of that building was c. 60 cm lower than in the Georgian period. It is likely that this was raised on account of the very damp ground conditions here. The 17th-century house was of two stories with attics; this can be seen from the scars of its multi-gabled roofs which are visible where wallplaster has been removed in S3.

Insofar as the evidence goes, the 17th-century house was L-shaped in plan, but there could have been another wing on what is now the site of no. 18 Vaughan Street. If so, it had a classic 17th-century half-H plan, with the central range facing west. Then there is the problem of the present east range to consider. It is no more than a fragment of what once existed, but it has a massive and now-infilled fireplace which points to its origin as a kitchen. It could have been a detached kitchen behind the house or, just possibly, it was part of an integral range. In which case, Llanelly was a courtyard house. The estate map of 1761 makes it clear that there were late 17th-century formal gardens and a park to the south of the house.

We are on much firmer ground when we come to 1714 and the refurbishment of Llanelly House by Sir Thomas Stepney. He did two things: he completely remodelled the north range, both inside and out; and he rearranged and expanded the accommodation within the shells of the existing east and west wings behind. Thus the house was given a magnificently impressive classical north front of seven bays, with matching returns on the east and west ends. This was the public front of the house, past which ran the principal thoroughfare of the town (Bridge Street).

The back of the house now faced south, overlooking the gardens on the west and south, and with views across the park to the south-east. Consequently the principal entertaining rooms were sited in the west wing: the drawing room on the ground floor and the best chamber on the first floor. The service functions were consigned to the east wing, and beyond that lay the stable yard.

The internal layout of rooms can be reconstructed with confidence, based on the archaeological investigation and supplemented by the inventories of 1764 and 1776. The front door did not lead into a Palladian-style hall, as it might well have done at this date, but instead into a relatively narrow oak-panelled *Entrance Passage* (G1A), reminiscent of the screens passages in houses of the pre-Georgian era. That led, via a broad, panelled arch of classical design, to the *Staircase Hall* (G4), a mightily impressive, tower-like space which rose through the full height of the house. It too was oak-panelled at ground level. A generous stair rose first to a half-landing, and then to the first-floor gallery.

The entrance passage also provided access to two other rooms, without proceeding as far as the staircase hall. A door on the left (east) led into a small *Antechamber* (G2B), and from that into Sir Thomas Stepney's *Study* (G2A). This was the business heart of the house, and the room was designed to impress. The pine panelling was painted, and on the overmantel was depicted the English merchant fleet in an estuarine or harbour scene. The small chimneypiece in the antechamber was probably decorated with a related scene (the panel is now in a room on the second floor). The paintings were executed *in situ* and are certainly primary; the identity of the artist has not been discovered.

On the right of the passage lay a door that opened into the *Great Hall* (G1B), which was also oak panelled. At the far end was the fireplace, which may have been fitted with a seriously impressive chimneypiece. A door in the south side of the hall led to the *Best Parlour* (G5), another fully panelled room with a pilastered chimneypiece. The panelling was painted and there were apparently scenes depicted on the overmantel and on the overdoors. Again, this was a room designed to impress. Beyond the parlour lay the *Drawing Room* (G6), with its painted panelling and windows overlooking the gardens to south and west.

Returning to the staircase hall, a second broad arch of classical design led eastwards into the *Common Hall* (G3), adjoining which lay the *Common Stairs* and the *Breakfast Parlour* (G8–9). Beyond that, in the lost south wing, were the *Kitchen*, *Larder*, *Servants' Hall*, *Steward's Hall*, *Butler's Pantry* and other service rooms. In an adjoining yard lay the *Laundry*, *Dairy* and *Brewing Kitchen*.

On the first floor, in the heart of the house, was the 75 ft-long *Great Gallery* (F4); this was one of the most notable features of Llanelly House, and in it hung 22 portraits of members of the Stepney family. It harked back to the concept of the 'long gallery', which was an essential feature of all significant Elizabethan houses. The great stair stopped at this level, and did not continue up to the second floor, and there was no ceiling directly above the central section of the great gallery. It, like the stair, was open to the top of the staircase hall. It is very likely that the upper part of the hall was hung with tapestries, and it was surely intended that the ceiling should be decorated with a sumptuous painting. Specialist investigation has not revealed evidence of one on the present plaster soffit.

The gallery provided individual access to all the principal chambers. On the north, these comprised the *Yellow Room* (F1A), the *Blue Room* (F1B) and the *Red Cotton Room* (F3), together with two closets (F2). The west wing contained the *Best Chamber* (F10) and its *Antechamber* (F9), but the *Closet* (F8) was probably formed a little later. This was a luxurious suite, with fully panelled rooms.

The east wing contained the back stairs: the descending flight being primarily a service stair, while the ascending flight provided the sole means of access to the second floor. The latter may be what was referred to in the 1764 inventory as the *Best Stairs*. In the attic above the southern part of the east wing was probably the *Old Nursery* (F6–7).

The second floor provided a series of smaller and less well appointed rooms, mainly for the accommodation of servants and children. They were accessed by another 75 ft long corridor (S4), which the inventories refer to rather grandly as the *Upper Gallery*. The chambers had low ceilings (some with cants), and their walls were not panelled by design; some partitions were nevertheless of timber. The four best rooms were on the north, and all had sash windows and fireplaces (S1–3A, B). They are probably identifiable from the 1776 inventory as the *Tapestry Room*, *Blue Room*, *Papered Room* and *Red Room*.

In the higher part of the east wing were two more rooms, as well as the stairs (S8, S9). The identification of these chambers is less certain, but they are likely to have been the *Wrought Room* and the *Plad Room*. The attic over the west wing contained two sizeable rooms with exposed roof framing (S5, S6), and the latter had a fireplace. These two rooms are identifiable as the *Yellow Garret* and the *Blue Garret*, respectively. It is worth noting that these were descriptive names relating essentially to the decoration which was current in the 1760s and 1770s, and were not necessarily the same in 1714. It is, for example, most unlikely that any second-floor room would have had wallpaper before the 1760s.

So much for the initial Stepney house; decorative changes were made in the third quarter of the C18. The two surviving panel paintings – now at Parc Howard – which have been identified as coming from the Best Chamber (F10), are almost certainly the work of John Lewis, which dates them to before 1772 when he died. It is argued by Peter Lord that Lewis probably visited Llanelly House and painted these panels in 1767–68 (see Appendix 8.3). The possibility of a somewhat earlier date cannot however be discounted. Almost certainly the same artist was responsible for the decorative scheme involving masks and swags in the antechamber (F9). This was potentially also the moment at which the antechamber was subdivided into two compartments, but since it is clear from the 1764 inventory that the *Dark Closet* (F8) was already in existence, this might point to a pre-1760s date for the painting.

Also belonging to the later C18 is the insertion of the upper gallery within the staircase hall (S7), and the associated division of the ceiling into two compartments by the addition of plaster mouldings to the soffits. There is nothing specifically identifiable with this gallery in either of the inventories, but that is not conclusive evidence for its non-existence. A *terminus ante quem* for the mid-Georgian improvements is provided by the death of Sir Thomas, the sixth Baronet, in 1772. After that, Llanelly House lay in decline – as numerous contemporary accounts

attest – until William Chambers inherited the property in 1827. That seems too late for the construction of the gallery in the staircase hall.

Chambers undoubtedly set about repairing and modernizing the house, and a date around 1830 would suit the plasterwork in the great hall (G1B), the various semicircular and elliptical archways and recesses, and the introduction of the small staircase linking the first and second floors in the west wing. Accommodation on the second floor seems to have been improved, and this may be the period when various pieces of C18 panelling were recycled there, including the pilastered chimneypiece with the riverine scene (in S2). The several Regency hob-grates may be assigned to this era too. The same is most likely true of the addition of the conservatory in the small yard between the east and west wings. Chambers is also credited with having rebuilt the stables, and the sole surviving photograph of these provides supporting evidence.

Evidence for the decline in the house's fortunes, following the death of William Chambers, Jun. in 1855, is plentiful. From the late 1850s onwards, the house was again converted into tenements and business premises, resulting in the introduction of shop-fronts and internal alterations, as described elsewhere. However, the photograph of Llanelly House from the south-west, taken in 1863, shows that the west wing had not yet been mutilated and the gardens were still in existence (Fig. 2.12).

The brief return of the Stepneys in 1910 led to structural and decorative works being carried out. Their accommodation was mainly on the upper floors. The shops remained on the ground floor of the Bridge Street and Vaughan Street frontages, but a squarish entrance hall was created behind the front door. The panelling and mouldings of the timber archways here and in the staircase hall had been damaged, and a good deal of repair was necessary. The great stair itself must either have been destroyed, or was in a seriously dilapidated condition, since it was replaced by the present one. The archway leading eastwards from the half-landing (to F7) was constructed (or reconstructed) and the mouldings of the small gallery overlooking the stair from the west were renewed. Little was done, it seems, by way of structural alteration on the first and second floors.

2.7 Management Information

- Llanelly House is currently watertight but uninhabitable. There are no users or occupants.
- Llanelly House is listed Grade I and is within the Llanelly Conservation Area.
- As a Grade I house listed building consent must be obtained for all alterations. All necessary consents have already been obtained for the restoration of the exterior (Appendix 8.8). (Applications have been made for listed building consent for alteration to the interior). Planning consent will also be required for change of use to cover public access, café and restaurant and offices. Consents are anticipated within the next two weeks.
- The house faces the parish church of St. Elli (substantially rebuilt by E. M. Bruce-Vaughan in 1904-06 with fine Stepney family monuments and two windows by Burne-Jones). It is separated from the church and its historic churchyard by the southern section of the Llanelli gyratory system, also known as Bridge Street. Several years of work have gone into obtaining a decision by the County Council to close and pedestrianise Bridge Street and re-design the remaining traffic system. This work, costing £1.5million has now been funded by the Welsh

Assembly Government and work will start in January 2008. It will transform the environment of the house.

The west side of the house faces onto Vaughan Street at the northern end of the town centre. On the opposite side of the road is the fine late 19th century town library, including the Nevill Gallery. This building and its facilities are to be the subject of a separate bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund by the County Council.

The house is in the Llanelli Conservation Area which is to be expanded in order to help preserve and develop the setting of the house. There are public car parks close by, both to the north and to the west.

- The house is owned by Llanelli Town Council which is responsible for the house. For maintenance purposes their retained architects are The Lewis Partnership of 13, Park Crescent, Llanelli. Day to day decisions are taken by the Town Clerk on behalf of the Town Council.

Information is available to the public electronically via a variety of websites, for instance the Llanelli Town Council www.llanellitowncouncil.gov.uk/llanellyhouse updates the site regularly with information on the progress of Llanelly House, as does the BBC www.bbc.co.uk/wales/southwest/sites/local_history/pages/llanelly which take an active interest in the progress of the restoration, after the house appeared on the BBC2 Restoration program in 2003. Literature can also be obtained on the restoration (see appendix 8.17) from Llanelli Town Council. Press, radio and television are regularly informed of significant developments.

2.8. Gazetteer

The gazetteer is to be found in Appendix 8.1

2.9 Typology

Panelling and Panel-Paintings

Llanelly House contains much very fine wall-panelling, most of which dates from the early 18th century, although some is a few decades later. Oak was used for the formal entrance and reception spaces on the ground floor, and painted Baltic pine for the more intimate domestic rooms at all levels.

Thus oak panelling in two registers, with a moulded dado rail, is found in the entrance passage (G1A), the Great Hall (G1B) and the Staircase Hall (G4). The chimneypiece in the Great Hall was flanked by fluted pilasters, and the two large archways in the Staircase Hall are also entirely of oak, as would have been the original Great Stair (its later replacement is of oak too). The dark colour and large size of the panels imparted as suitable sense of *gravitas* to these rooms. The finish would have been wax polish.

Painted pine panelling is present in the other principal rooms on the ground floor, in the Great Gallery (F4) and in all the chambers and closets on the first floor; there is also some to be found in rooms on the second floor. Virtually all of this is full-height panelling, arranged in either two or three registers: *i.e.* it is not just dado panelling. Two contemporaneous designs of panelling are represented: the bold, bolection-moulded type which was particularly popular in the Queen Anne era; and the flatter and more streamlined fielded-and-bevelled type which was the hallmark of 18th-

century interiors. On the first floor there are also some plain timber dados with formal panelling above (e.g. in F8–10). Different combinations of design, number of registers and size of panels provide variety from room to room, but at the same time maintain a general sense of unity throughout the house.

Bolection-moulded panelling is found in two of the more important rooms on the ground floor: the Study (G2A) and the Best Parlour (G5). In the former, it is arranged in three registers, and two in the latter. The Drawing Room (G6) has fielded-and-bevelled panelling in three registers.

Panelling on the first floor is entirely arranged in two registers, and is all of fielded-and-bevelled type. The Great Gallery and associated Landing (F4) is impressively panelled from end to end, and incorporates two classical archways which define the limits of the landing. In the chambers, the wall panelling continues seamlessly into the window reveals and shutters. The Best Chamber (F10) and its Antechamber (F9) are outstanding.

On the second floor, some of the rooms contain one or more walls which are essentially simple panelled partitions, but there are also some sections of fielded-and-bevelled panelling which have been repositioned from elsewhere: particularly noteworthy is the chimneypiece in S2.

A rich variety of panel and framing detail is found on the chimneypieces. Some have fluted pilasters, as in G1B, G5 and F1A, either with or without moulded bases and capitals. Others are framed with a border of very narrow panels (F1B), or flanked by a pair of upright panels which encompass two registers of the normal arrangement in the room (G2A). Finally, a few chimneypieces lack flanking embellishment altogether (e.g. F3).

While the panelling in Llanelly House is of fine quality, it is elevated into a class of its own by the fact that the overmantel and/or overdoor panels in at least some of the principal rooms were painted *in situ* with landscapes, river and harbour scenes. The paintings (all in oils) belongs to two separate periods, both datable to the 18th century. The first phase can be assigned to 1714, and one large panel remains in its original position, over the fireplace in Sir Thomas Stepney's Study (G2A). It depicts an estuary or bay with classical buildings and ships of the English Merchant Navy. A second overmantel painting of smaller size is in the same style and is now in S2, but it may have come from the Antechamber to the Study (G2B). The artist responsible for these works has not yet been identified.

In addition to these, there is clear evidence that both the overmantel and overdoor panels in the Best Parlour (G5) also originally bore paintings. The panels were removed in the later 19th century and, for a time, hung as decorations in one of the shops facing onto Bridge Street. When a drapery shop was opened there in 1857, it was 'decorated with some very excellent oil paintings, which formerly graced the drawing rooms of the mansion, and they add an air of excellency to the establishment'. These panels are now presumably somewhere in private ownership, and may yet be tracked down.

The second era of panel painting in Llanelly House belongs to the third quarter of the 18th century, and the artist has been plausibly identified by Peter Lord as John Lewis, a notable painter of Irish and Welsh scenery (see Appendix 8.3). As far as can be ascertained, the paintings were all in first-floor rooms. The Best Chamber

(F10) was endowed with three paintings: on the large overmantel was a very fine scene depicting the old hall at Llangennech, and on one of the overdoors was a riverine landscape. The second overdoor probably bore a related scene. The three paintings were removed from their setting in the 1930s, and two of them are now in Llanelli Museum at Parc Howard. Cleaning and conservation of these panels has recently been carried out. The whereabouts of the third panel is unknown.

The Antechamber (F9) to the same room contains three doors, and the panel above each carries a *grisaille* painting of a theatrical mask, four swags and bows. These have always been exposed to view, but the remainder of the room's panelling has been overpainted on numerous occasions. A trial investigation of the paint layers on one of the long panels of the east wall, by Lisa Oestreicher in 2003, revealed another bow, which is probably at the bottom of an elaborate pendentive. There can be little doubt that a complete scheme of decoration survives in this room beneath layers of modern paint, and that it could be fully uncovered by a paintings conservator.

Finally, it may be noted that large overmantel panels have been removed, again probably in the 1930s, from F1A and F1B. Thus at least two more painted panels of the later 18th century may yet await discovery.







2.10 Gaps in knowledge and further work

There are four principal areas where more research is required: -

- Archaeology: dendrochronology of the roof timbers and certain floor beams in the east and west wings would help to establish a more precise date for the earlier house on the site, and perhaps enable a determination as to which member of the Vaughan family built it.
- Paint analysis. Further sampling of the historic paint sequences, in both the principal and minor rooms, is desirable to compile as full a record as possible of the decorative history of the house.
- Pictorial research: the survival of two over-mantel paintings as part of the original decorative scheme of the early 18th century is of great importance and research needs to be undertaken into these paintings and the location of the five or more paintings of this period which were apparently removed from other principal rooms in the 1920's or 30's.

Research also needs to be undertaken to locate the missing John Lewis over-door painting originally in "The Best Chamber" and research will be needed into the painted antechamber next door to, possibly, confirm the attribution of its decoration to John Lewis and to put this extremely important survivor into the context of his career and similar decorative schemes of the period in Britain.

The final area of pictorial research relates to the original furnishing of the first-floor gallery with family portraits. (A painting of Sir John Stepney, attributed to Reynolds, is currently on the London art market).

- Architectural research: further work needs to be done to try and identify the architect and architectural sources of the design.

3. The Significance of Llanelly House

- Llanelly House is recognised as a building of national importance by being listed Grade I. It is generally held to be the finest early Georgian town house in south Wales. It is one of only two Grade I houses in Carmarthenshire. It is within the Llanelli Conservation area.

Architectural and historical qualities

- Architecturally its style is unique. A full assessment of the architectural and historical qualities of the house today is contained in the forgoing chapters.

The effect of changes

- While there have been minor positive changes made to the house in the mid 18th century, subsequent changes, to a greater or lesser extent, have been damaging, some highly damaging. These are fully considered in 'Understanding the place' (2.2, 2.5 2.5) and in the Gazetteer (Appendix 8.1) but it is worth highlighting the insertion of 19th century and 20th century shop front on ground floor level and an inappropriate staircase.

Collections etc

- The house once played a major part in the cultural, economic and social life of Llanelli and Carmarthenshire. Unfortunately all the collections and artefacts associated with the house and family have been dispersed. However, some small, but significant, holdings of material exist in the County Council's collection and that of the National Museum Wales.

Of particular importance are the two paintings by John Lewis (fl.1736-1776), one an overmantle, the other an overdoor, from the 'Best Chamber', currently in Parc Howard Museum. When these are added to the overmantles still in situ and the painted antechamber, also probably by John Lewis, they make an impressive collection. Other paintings which probably hung in the first floor gallery are in existence, as are examples of the Stepney Chinese export porcelain dinner service and large quantities of Llanelly pottery which was founded by William Chambers junior, a member of the Chambers/Stepney family (see Appendix 8.15) and owner occupants of Llanelly House.

The funerary monuments in the church, themselves of high quality, provide a tangible reminder of many generations of the owners of the house and their roles in the town and county.

Archive material is contained in the collections of the National Library, the County archives and Llanelli library.

Community valuation

- Community valuation of Llanelly House can be summarised by reporting the huge support Llanelly House received to enable it to win the first Welsh round of

the BBC2 television programme 'Restoration' aired in September 2003, (we have understood that it also did very well in the final round).

Local press, radio and television interest has remained considerable despite the long delays in bringing the restoration forward. Local groups have been active in organising support and in assisting with the development of the project.

It should not be forgotten that the Town Council purchased the house in the first place in order to save it and this Town Council is itself as closely connected to the grass roots of the community, as is possible. Their support and determination to see the project to a successful conclusion, despite several setbacks, is exemplary evidence of the depth of the community's concern.

Social values

- The house currently has negative social value. Its decay symbolises the current decline of the town centre and the loss on a large scale of the heritage and wealth of 18th and 19th century Llanelli.

Important associations

- As the Llanelli town house of successively two of the major families of Carmarthenshire it has been a place of significant importance. The Vaughan's in the 17th century and the Stepney's in the 18th century were Members of Parliament, High Sheriffs, courtiers, ambassadors, businessmen, ship owners and industrialists. Sir John Stepney 8th baronet was ambassador in both Dresden and Berlin. William Chambers junior founded Llanelly Pottery and John Wesley, who preached from the market cross outside the house, was entertained by the butler!

Important views

- The house is the architectural masterpiece of the town and a potent visual reminder of its origins. Once the pedestrianisation of Bridge Street has taken place the important views of the house from the church and churchyard will be restored and transformed. Likewise critical views from the front of the house will largely be restored.

The house and St Elli's form a closely linked pair, physically and historically, reflecting the medieval settlement pattern, which has otherwise been eclipsed by subsequent development.

- The views from the staircase, gallery, small parlour and bed chamber have been lost forever due to the 19th century development of part of the commercial heart of Llanelli on the site of the 18th century garden. However with the aid of interpretative technology it is intended to conjure the original vistas into some ghostly presence on the basis of the schematic estate map of 1761.

The feelings it creates

- Until the BBC 'Restoration' programmes took place the vast majority of the people in Carmarthenshire were totally unaware of the house. Even those who lived in Llanelli were probably only aware of the curious, decaying Bridge Street elevation which they saw briefly and obliquely as they negotiated the gyratory road as rapidly as possible.

Viewed from the sanctuary of the churchyard the Bridge Street façade makes a grand impression despite numerous brutal interventions, principally on the ground floor. The great and unexpected carved cornice above the first floor, the urns along the parapet and the prominent cast lead down pipes, combine with the scale of the house, seven bays and three storeys, to offset the environment and the shallow frontage appropriate to a town house.

The entrance to the house is currently somewhat baffling as one wall of what should be a dark panelled, rather narrow entrance hall has been taken down. But even without the correct access and dramatic contrast, the transition into the great stairwell, three storeys high with a window rising from the half landing between the first and ground floor to the full height of the ceiling, is an architectural coup of great drama. It is one of the most exciting architectural moments in south Wales.

Public reaction to the other spaces is one of delight and amazement at the wealth of panelling, the survival of paintings and the carved cornice of the staircase ceiling. When these are added to the effect of the fine first floor gallery and the painted ante-chamber the overall impression it creates is one of excitement and delight.

Use

- For a long time it has been unused, but it will become a major educational resource for students of local history, architecture, craftsmanship, interior decoration etc.

Physical record of the past

- This is fully set out in 2.2 and 2.6

Sensitivities

- There are no landscape or ecological sensitivities to the Llanelly House scheme. All archaeological sensitivities are being addressed within the management plan.
- Community sensitivity is confined to anxieties about the uncertain future of a major feature of the town centre where dilapidation is a cause of concern.

Conflicts between different types of heritage

- None

Relationship of the parts to the whole

- Llanelly House is remarkable in that it has many of the characteristics of essentially a fine country house which has survived amidst rapid industrial growth and housing development, but the building itself is a highly coherent whole and it makes a distinctive contribution to the townscape. The principal elevations form the prominent corner junction to Bridge Street and Vaughan Street, with aspect to St Elli's church and the War Memorial. A distinctive sense of place will be created after the restoration and with the completion of the County Council's pedestrianisation of Bridge Street.

Features that detract.

- The existing main staircase is very poorly designed and not contemporary with the building. Its removal and replacement with the original format is essential to the quality of the restoration.

- The shop fronts to Bridge Street and Vaughan Street are highly damaging to its importance and consent has been obtained for their replacement.
- The roofing in of the small courtyard blocks the lower part of the great staircase window

Areas of possible compromise

- There are very few areas where compromise is possible or necessary as this is a Grade I building of exceptional interest. The only area where modern interventions might have required compromise take place where all historic fabric is missing and restoration would be almost impossible.

4. Vulnerability and related issues

Conflicts between past and future

- There are almost no conflicts between the historic features of the house and its future role. The proposed new uses can be described as passive in character as they are accommodated within the existing layout. However it is possible that visitor access to the proposed café restaurant may require modification of a window on the ground floor of the Vaughan Street elevation

Sensitivities

- Effects of past management systems, lack of planning control and piecemeal vision by previous owners has resulted in alterations that have destroyed the coherence of the elevations and ground floor layout. A combination of very poor maintenance and disregard for planning controls have had a further damaging effect on the house, reducing a large part of it to a state of dilapidation. The present owners, Llanelli Town Council, have sought to restore the house and to that end have now decided that the best way to ensure its restoration and future maintenance is to sell a long lease to Carmarthenshire Heritage Regeneration Trust. The conservation proposal will not only restore the integrity of Llanelli House but it will also have the further safeguard of planning legislation now in place.

Pressure

- The pressure on the house comes solely from the acute danger of rapid deterioration unless restoration begins very soon.
- Due to timber rot infestations and under - designed beams the building is displaying signs of progressive movement; as decayed timber is compressed and beams further deflect. Since the principal floor beams are bracing the external walls the whole structure is at risk of losing stability. Increasing signs of distress have been noted since the initial stages of the project and although some temporary structural propping has been carried out, it is not sufficient to safeguard the structure for the near future.
- External timber cornicing is showing signs of instability and may soon be a risk to the public.
- Internally measures have been taken to safeguard features / fittings by putting them into storage. Cornicing has been taken down in anticipation of a collapse. Such measures are stop gap and are not an efficient use of public funds when more wholesale action is necessary. The aforementioned structural movement is continuing to cause distress and damage to internal linings and finishes. To prevent loss of further historical fabric urgent action is required.

- The Town Council bought the house in 1998 after a succession of owners had allowed it to slip into a parlous state. But the combination of the very poor setting (Bridge Street as a gyratory road) and the very modest financial resources of the Town Council have meant that its restoration must depend on grants from external bodies.
- Should the house not benefit from substantial grants in the near future it is difficult to see what could become of it. It has no straightforward commercial future, if any, and no other public body stands willing to step in. It would be a disaster for Llanelli and for the heritage of Wales if the house were to continue to deteriorate. It would also be a rebuff to the huge number of people who voted for it in 'Restoration'.

New uses and better uses of space

- New and imaginative use of the house is fully described in the end use Business Plan and in the Audience Development Plan.
- The restored spaces will be used for a range of purposes, many having a clear use of function plus interpretation.

Public expectations

- Public expectations of the restoration of Llanelly House are high. On the one hand there is considerable pride that Llanelly has a house of national significance that won first Welsh place in the final of BBC Television's 'Restoration' programme and the public expectation is of a high quality restoration that will bring credit to Llanelli. On the other hand there is the belief that the restored house will significantly benefit the economy of the town. It is expected to be an icon for Llanelli as well as bringing jobs and visitors to the town centre which is currently in crisis with major chains leaving. (BBC Wales, responsible for the hugely successful television series on Aberglasney, have agreed to do a series following the restoration of Llanelly House.) Llanelly House is expected to provide an important new attraction to the town.
- Community groups expect it to be an important new focus that will cater for a range of interests and skills within the cultural and heritage spectrum.

Access and mobility problems

- At ground floor level, access and circulation to areas intended for public use are easy for those with mobility problems. A disabled lift is to provide for access to upper floors and will occupy low grade space at the back of the house. Since little or no original historic fabric remains in this area, the impact on the historic fabric will be minimal

Health and Safety issues

- Under Health & Safety legislation, the design team will instigate pre-tender investigations for contaminants. As standard procedure an asbestos survey will be carried out; the building has been substantially opened up and no trace of this material has been found to date, its presence is therefore assumed to be low or unlikely. Lead based paint is present, but is considered of historical value and will therefore be retained. Small scale stripping will only be carried out in areas of extensive damage and the relevant safety precautions will be taken
- There is no vandalism to date

Gaps in knowledge

- There are no gaps in knowledge that pose a risk to the project. Many studies have been completed including those into the geophysics and structural timbers

(See Appendix 8.10). In addition in depth archaeological investigations have been carried out and the information obtained is adequate to enable the project as planned without any damage to the structure or the restoration programme.

Different types of heritage management

- Currently the building is not open to the public and consequently it is not managed, but as the nature of the project is fundamentally about the built heritage and related elements no conflict is anticipated. The end use Business Plan sets out the proposals for future management.

Organisational skills

The membership has extensive, relevant experience including:

- Sir Roger Jones OBE – former chair of WDA; Chair of National Trust Wales; entrepreneur
- Thomas Lloyd OBE – member of AHF; Chair of BART; past Chair of HBAC Wales; renowned author on heritage matters
- Richard Keen – heritage consultant; Chair of HBACW; former National Trust Historic Buildings Advisor; past member of HLF Committee for Wales
- William Wilkins CBE – visionary and instigator of the project; Project Director to date; Project Director of several major projects of a similar size; Chairman of Artes Mundi
- Venerable Randolph Thomas - Randolph is the Archdeacon of Brecon, Chair of Estates Committee for Trinity College Carmarthen, Chair of Gwalia Group Tai Cartrefi; a magistrate, Chaplain to the Mid and West Wales Fire Brigade and a School Governor for Christ College, Brecon.
- Robert Parker – heritage consultant; CHRT Secretary; experienced Project Manager; former Asst Chief Executive Carmarthenshire County Council

Robert Parker BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI AIBA will lead on behalf of the CHRT from the date of completion of the lease agreement; the CHRT will appoint a new suitable qualified and experienced Project Manager from April 2008 for the duration of the restoration project.

William Wilkins CBE, DL, A.R.C.A., Hon FRIBA – the current Project Director for Llanelli Town Council will continue to advise and guide the scheme at a strategic level on handover to the CHRT

Craig Hamilton ARIBA Conservation Architect - Craig Hamilton is based in Mid-Wales. His practice undertakes a range of architectural work and specialises in progressive classical design. He has received 3 natural stone awards in the new building category for various projects and has been the winner of two RIBA competitions - one for a new country house in Gloucestershire and the second for the restoration of Lowther Castle, a Grade I 19th Century castle near Penrith. He is also working on another Grade I house, namely Trefecca Fawr in Talgarth and is the conservation architect for Aberglasney.

High standards will be maintained through adhering to the following core values:

1. use of experienced, qualified and highly recommended professionals, staff and contractors

2. careful use of design, selection, procurement and planning processes
3. adoption of highest levels of conservation, heritage and interpretation standards
4. use of rigorous standards and project management methodologies
5. adoption and implementation of established and tested QA processes
6. careful measurement of staff and contractors; performance against expectation
7. careful application of building management, health and safety policies and our equal opportunities, training and other policies.

Ownership

There is only one owner of the 99 year leasehold – the CHRT; the exact terms of the lease are clear (copy made available under separate cover). There are no unusual clauses in the lease. The freeholder – Llanelli Town Council is an active and positive partner in the overall project

Other pressures

- There is one other major pressure on the house. The Welsh Assembly Government has made a grant to the County Council (£1.29million of the estimate of £1.39million) to enable the pedestrianisation of Bridge Street to go ahead. The County Council has some reservations about implementing the scheme if Llanelly House is not to be restored. The grant programme requires commencement of work in January 2008. Should this application be unsuccessful it is possible that the environmental improvement would be lost which would not only be damaging to the house (continued traffic vibration) but the continuation of the dreadful environment would be terminal to all hope of restoration.

5. Conservation and Management Policies

- Llanelly House is listed Grade I. Planning and listed building consents have been obtained for the proposed external works. The proposals are all in line with government guidelines. These consents were obtained after extensive archaeological investigations and pre-application consultations with the planning department District Conservation Officer and CADW Heritage Organisation. Further applications will be made for the necessary consents for change of use, and alterations to the interior, including insertion of the lift, and the return of the rooms to their original form and the restoration of the staircase.

The proposal has also taken account of the following Carmarthenshire County Council policies:

Unitary Development Plan

Community Strategy and Llanelli Community Area Plan

Economic Development Strategy

Arts Strategy

Conflicts between modern use and historic fabric

- There are no conflicts between modern use and the historic fabric. With the exception of service spaces which will be located in low grade areas, the

proposed uses for the building can readily be accommodated within the historic layout without the need for alterations.

Management and community involvement

- Llanelly House will be managed by the CHRT (or a subsidiary Trust wholly 'owned' by the CHRT) in accord with the After Use Business Plan. This clarifies the role of the Director of Llanelly House Centre and there is a clear line of management from that person up to the overall Trust Board and down to the team members (see the After Use Business Plan for full details)

The community will be involved directly and indirectly through at least five means:

- (i) Full and ongoing consultation on the restoration, interpretation and after use with a wide range of community and special interest groups and individuals
- (ii) A new Community Partnership: meeting regularly to bring together, discuss and take in all interested community organisations to be consulted on and included in the planning for restoration and after use of the Centre
- (iii) The proposed 'Friends of Llanelly House' organisation. As a source of support, fund raising, dialogue with the community and general advice and guidance they will be invaluable.
- (iv) A Community Heritage Programme of annual events that draws on the knowledge, inherent memory and skills of the community to create a principal public offering.
- (v) The inclusion of community participants in a wide range of opportunities for community involvement, 'ownership' and training experiences.

Maintenance

- Responsibility for maintenance will be with CHRT or its subsidiary, wholly controlled trust. Details of the approach to maintenance can be found in section 6, Maintenance Plan. Further development of the Maintenance Plan will take place during the final pre tender stages and in discussion with the conservation architect; the highest recommended standards will be adopted to reflect the significance of the asset. A budget has been identified for maintenance in the After Use Business Plan – and an enhanced sinking fund will be created based on the QS estimate budget of £9,300.00 per annum from 2011. Maintenance costs are invariably lower in the initial years after restoration but the challenges and unique features of a 300-year-old Grade 1 listed building always merit special budgeting arrangements.

Restoration and alteration

- The approach to the restoration and re-use of Llanelly House will be carried out in accordance with the framework of the established conservation policy.

Since architectural heritage is a non-renewable resource the best way to conserve it is to find practical and sustainable use. The proposal to operate Llanelly House for tourism and cultural purposes will ensure preservation of this historical asset without compromising the character of the building, by their very nature these new uses will not impose demands on the original floor plan.

The policy for conservation is based on the following sequence of action which has been followed up to the present point at Llanelly House

	Record building as found	
	Obtaining	
Investigate significance of site	Physical Evidence	Investigate condition of site
	Archival Evidence	
	Formulate statement of cultural significance	
	Prepare conservation plan	
	Record any interventions for archives	
	Prepare plan for end user continued maintenance	

- The above courses of action incorporate the following principles:

Where evidence exists, features and fabric will be restored using extant archaeological evidence and, where missing, using precedents of the same period.

The retention of as much of the existing fabric as possible. Structural repair and reinforcement will be done in parallel to existing members rather than by substitutions. Rot / insect infestation are to be treated by minimal interventions based on specialist knowledge of the biological agents involved rather than by wholesale removal of suspect material.

The building will integrate new services discreetly, where possible concealed within existing voids. For the benefit of the fabric, environmental conditions near to the original will be created by the use of natural ventilation, facilitated by fenestration and venting through chimney stacks.

Interventions such as the disabled lift and toilets will be located in low grade areas where existing fabric, or evidence thereof, is totally absent. Such additions will be designed to have low impact and be fully reversible.

Where possible sustainable principles will be applied to up grade the fabric. Breathable lime plasters and renders will be used as dictated historically, and organic insulants such as sheep's wool will passively control humidity. Window shutters will be fully reinstated and will provide a traditional thermal control.

In summary, based on the research which has already been undertaken and that which will be ongoing parallel to conservation works, it is anticipated that the majority of both the internal and external fabric will be restored to its original condition.

New features

- The proposals are to restore the building to its original format, this will come within the scope of present planning legislation. All new features are designed to enhance and complement the historic character of the house. These include the restoration of original features where verifiably missing and the provision of new services to serve access and interpretation. Planning legislation should protect the building against any inappropriate development in future.

Protection of setting

- It is the initiative of the Town Council's team that has led to the proposal to pedestrianise Bridge Street and transform the setting of the house. None of this setting is within the control of the Town Council (or CHRT) but close partnership working with the County Council will ensure that the setting is protected as suitable to both the Grade I house and the parish church and its churchyard.

Management of different types of heritage

The CHRT has a series of plans and policies to assess the need of the different heritage item elements that make up Llanelly House and to co-ordinate, implement and monitor accordingly. These are:

1. The Conservation Management Plan
2. The contracts for restoration and for interpretation – which will be developed, implemented and managed to the highest recognised standards under an overall PRINCE 2 umbrella approach to project management
3. The Restoration Plan – that determines the overall approach of the CHRT to the conduct of the restoration management
4. The After Use Business Plan from 2011 – to determine and manage the ongoing use, interpretation, maintenance and access to Llanelly House
5. The Interpretation Plan (drawing on the Heritage Interpretation brief supplied)

The Project Management Team (and ultimately the CHRT) will ensure that these are all co-ordinated and implemented in harmony with the needs of the building

Traffic and access

- Traffic will be excluded from Bridge Street and is already excluded from Vaughan Street. Deliveries will be via a courtyard to the rear of the house from the southern end of Thomas Street.
- Access for pedestrians will be excellent. There are public car parks both to the rear of the house and north of the church. There are no impediments to disabled access on the ground floor and the provision of a lift for the disabled will allow access throughout the house.

Interpretation and communication

- Due to the derelict state of the house current communication of its significance depends on the media, television, radio and newspapers, with all of whom the project team has worked closely and successfully. 'Restoration' and its updates, news and magazine programmes, have all shown great interest in the house and its significance. The newspapers, *Western Mail*, *South Wales Evening Post* and *Llanelli Star*, have also all been responsive and willing communicators of its importance.

In addition the Project Director has addressed a large number of meetings in Llanelli and Carmarthenshire to talk about the significance of the house. These talks have been supported by an extensive collection of slides and the publication of the brochure 'The Restoration of Llanelly House'. The Town Council also maintains a website with information about the project.

- In future the interpretation of the house will be of critical importance to the project, both in helping to justify the large sums of money to be spent on its restoration and in attracting the visitors needed to make the business plan work and contribute to the regeneration of the town centre.

To this end the project team has developed a two part strategy in order to raise the profile of the house and town. BBC Wales television has been approached, and agreed, to make a series of programmes documenting the restoration of the house. Both BBC Wales and the project team hope that on the back of the success of the Aberglasney series this series also would be taken up by network television, particularly in view of 'Restorations' continued interest in Llanelly House as 'news'.

- The second part of the strategy requires an unusual approach to heritage interpretation. The project team has been working with two specialist professional groups to develop an approach to interpretation which is neither dependant on large numbers of artefacts nor on large areas of fixed display. The essence will be to bring the original spaces alive through interpretive technologies using cutting edge techniques to produce, amongst other things, 'walls that whisper', windows on the virtual 18th century garden. vistas of the house, and 360° virtual rooms. It is also proposed to bring the first floor gallery 'alive', where the family portraits once hung. The intention is to combine the excitement of historical discovery and understanding with the excitement of the latest media skills and, for the young, interactive media. (We are fortunate in having these resources available locally, both at Swansea Institute of Higher Education and at Tinopolis, (based in Llanelli), who have experience of collaborating with another of our partners, Trinity College in Carmarthen).

Because it is the project team's intention that many spaces will be in dual use, the modern space requirements and flexibility of interpretative technologies are perfectly suited to the situation. In addition to these elements it is proposed to mount cabinets in each room that will amplify the interpretative themes i.e. food and eating in the 18th century dining room, with displays of cutlery, china etc.

Management and interpretation skills

- A wide range of skills will be required to manage, maintain and interpret Llanelly House. They fall into two categories, maintenance and management of the fabric and infrastructure (see Business Plan and Training Plans) and the interpretive elements (See Outline Interpretation Brief et al.) the Training Plan lays the foundation for a staff skills audit and a process of job appraisal and personal development plans to supply and enhance the skills identified. These are reflected in the After Use Business Plan prepared for the period 2011. The current Conservation Management Plan and Training Plan will provide an ongoing input to the development of these matters in the period leading up to the completion of the restoration process.

Services

- The house has no parking facilities of its own.
- Existing services and toilet facilities are not contemporary with the building and are of no significance. They are also completely inadequate and will be replaced entirely in a more discreet fashion and to anticipate flexible modern use.

Control of future works

- On completion of the works, the consultants will provide an 'as built' set of drawings. These will act as a guide for any future intervention; they are also now a legal obligation under current Health & Safety legislation.
- Further work would be undertaken by the Board of CHRT after receiving suitable professional advice and following consultation with all relevant bodies and authorities.

Community concerns and views

- The project will encourage public participation, through consultation on the development of the project with stakeholder and community groups. Events will be organised, targeted at specific audiences.

1. Volunteers

A significant number of volunteer supporters will be involved in undertaking operational support (e.g. guides, participants in exhibitions and in the interpretation). They will be fully consulted on their role and on their perspective on the project – in order to contribute to its success

2. Stakeholder and Community Groups

To ensure the continued success and sustainability of the after use the Trust will work closely with partners, clients, users and the community. In order to deliver this it is intended to develop two groups that will meet regularly and which will be made up of representatives from stakeholders and the local community.

These are, respectively:

Community Partnership: a bringing together of all interested community organisations to be consulted on and included in the planning for after use of the Centre

Stakeholder Partnership: a quarterly working party of the key stakeholders to plan, implement and review development of the after use project

Both of these groups will be set up later in 2007 in shadow form.

3. Events

To broaden the visitor base we will sponsor, arrange and attend others events that will target elements of the community that may not normally consider visiting the building. There will be a full and comprehensive range of feedback, monitoring and testing that is documented in the Audience Development Plan.

Areas of individual character

- The house is a remarkably cohesive building and research has enabled the team to be confident of restoring the historic character of both the exterior and interior. Re-decoration will be based on the paint analysis that has taken place. Essential

interventions such as electric lighting or signage will be designed in a literate historic manner by the consultancy.

- Given the cohesive period character of the house, no special management issues are anticipated.

Areas of change

- The house is fundamentally being restored to its 18th century form. The only changes from that form will occur through the installation of a lift for the disabled, new toilets and the kitchens, all of which can be located in areas where no historic features survive.

Priorities

- The main priorities for repair are to stabilise the structure. There has been failure of the primary floor beams which brace the external walls. The building is essentially on the move as progressive beam deflections result in wall displacements. Emergency repairs carried out to date have addressed weather tightness and areas of rot to some extent, but not enough to ensure stability. A holistic approach to repair and restoration is now necessary to prevent further loss of important historical fabric

6. Maintenance Plan 10 Year Cycle

	<u>Estimate Cost Per Annum</u>
EXTERNAL DRAINAGE	
Clear Parapet and Eaves Gutters. Clean Out Gullies – Twice Yearly	£ 800.00
Clean Out Yard Gullies – Twice Yearly	£ 250.00
Empty Grease Trap – Twice Yearly	£ 220.00
Clean & Remove Organic Growth from Building Curtilage & Courtyard – Twice Yearly	£1,500.00
EXTERNAL BUILDING FABRIC & SERVICES	
Gutter Trace Heating, annual test	£250
Lightning Protection, annual inspection	£500
Re-paint Render Work – 10 Year Intervals	-
Re-paint Windows & Doors, Repair Pointing & Putty Work – 7 Year Intervals	-
Re-paint Downpipes & Gutters – 10 Year Intervals	-
Doors – Replace Worn Seals – 10 Year Intervals	-
INTERNAL	
Lubricate Locks & Hinges - Annually	-
Contract Clean Carpets Twice Yearly	£300
Contract Floor Clean & Wax Boards Twice Yearly	£600
Lubricate Locks and Hinges Annually	-
MECHANICAL & ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS	
Clean Extract Filters to Kitchen Monthly	-
Boilers, Pumps, Controls, HWS, etc	£1,300.00
Clean Cooker Hood Extract Ductwork	£ 500.00
Fire Alarm system, assuming in house weekly testing of break glass call points	£ 780.00
Emergency Lighting, individual battery replacement every 5 years	£ 700.00
Intruder Detection system	£ 550.00
Platform Lift	£ 750.00
Electrical Installation 5 year test & Inspection	£ 300.00
	TOTAL
	£9,300.00

- The majority of the work would be sub contracted out and a maintenance record kept, depending on the end management in a general log book. However, for alarms and electrical services a mandatory log book will be kept by a dedicated member of staff managing the maintenance and responsible for ensuring the log is kept up to date.

7. Heritage Impact Assessment

- New work will be kept to a minimum, as it is intended to restore the integrity of the structure and return the house to its original historical format by removing damaging later alterations. All work undertaken will retain as much of the original fabric as possible and will be supported by full archaeological watching brief including specialist paint analysis.
- Based on archaeology and extant fragmentary architectural detail the façade will be returned to its original pattern of fenestration and the original entrance will be reinstated. In a similar way the main stair will be reconstructed and the great staircase window reinstated to its former height.
- Where architectural detail has been lost, replacement will be based on precedents to restore the integrity of the building. Traditional materials will be employed and the craftsmanship will be of the highest standard.
- The intended use of the building is for tourist, community and cultural facilities and as such the historic structure and layout will be preserved. New work to accommodate the new role of the building will allow for:
Ground floor - Café /restaurant, with function room, exhibition spaces and tourist information point. Kitchens and toilets will be located in the east wing in an old service area devoid of any architectural quality. The disabled lift is likewise in an area devoid of architectural significance.
- First floor – County Council cultural heritage use and public visitation.
Second floor – Accommodation for heritage business development.
Structural Integrity: an assessment of the structure has been carried out by Veryard Opus, structural engineers, and repairs are proposed that will address present instability and ensure safe loading capability for the intended new usage. The policy adopted for repair will ensure the maximum retention of historic structure and fabric.

Brief For Development Work to RIBA Stage E

Building Fabric

External:

Repair, restore and reinstate using archaeological evidence, roof and elevations to original format. The modern shop fronts are to be removed and the elevations and roofscape are to be reinstated to their original format using contemporary 18th century materials and finishes.

Interior:

In connection with elevational reinstatement all ground floor interiors are to be reinstated on the ground floor and the main stair replaced with one of early 18th century design. With the exception of service space to rear, all 1st and 2nd floor interiors are to be fully restored using contemporary materials and finishes.

All conservation work is to be carried out to the highest standards appropriate to the Grade 1 listing of the house. SPAB principles are to be employed ensuring as much as possible of the original fabric is retained. Wholesale replacement of defective existing elements is not to be carried out; instead careful repair is preferred to preserve all historical material.

Allowance is to be made for the development of the design as further archaeological investigation is carried out.

All design, specification and production information is to be carried out in accordance with, and with reference to, the following:

i) With reference to the below noted and listed building consents and according to the conditions stated therein. Carmarthenshire County Council Listed Building Consent 5/08929 – 4th May 2005 Re: Alterations to external facades of Llanelly House, Bridge Street/Vaughan Street, Llanelli Listed Building Consent – 5/13868 – 11th December 2006

ii) With reference to archaeological report prepared by Professor Warwick Rodwell on investigation, 2004- 04, July 2006.

iii) With reference paint analysis report prepared by Lisa Oestricher dated 26th January 2004

iv) With reference to and by use of measured survey information produced by On Centre Surveys Ltd and as listed on the appended drawing issue sheet

v) In accordance with recommendations contained in Ridout Associates report on decay of structural timbers dated 2006.

Rooms G2A & B

Tourist Information Area:

Provide: Telecom – 12 line system

2 no. IT points

Power points adequate for A/V display, requester, pc task light,

Ground Floor:

Rooms G1, G5 & G6

Restaurant:

Provide of 150m², Dining Area for 60 covers max

Room G9

Kitchen:

Provide to commercial standard capable of preparing and serving cooked meals

Finishes:

Walls – seamless welded vinyl wall covering with coved corners.

Floors – non slip quarry tile / rinse down trench gullies. External grease trap.

All worktops and splash backs to 600mm in stainless steel.

- i) Double tub stainless steel with rinse basin
- ii) Waste disposal macerator
- iii) 8 ring gas hob
- iv) 2 no. double ovens
- v) Overhead grill rack
- vi) 2 no. deep fryers
- vii) 4m³ stainless steel cabinet fridges
- viii) 4m³ stainless steel freezer
- ix) 2m² dry goods store
- x) 2m² perishable goods store
- xi) Staff changing and toilet facilities

Room G3, F5, S6

Service Area

Provide 8 no. person hydraulic lift suitable for wheelchair access to 1st and 2nd floors. Over-run to be contained with roof profile.

Provide adequate sanitary accommodation, including disabled wc to service restaurant in accordance with part G1 of the Building Regulations and Offices, Shops and Railway Premises Act 1963.

Provide accommodation for cleaning equipment / material including sink with h&c water supply.

Provide wall mounted exhibition cases & lighting to each wall bay of non-service areas

First Floor

Rooms F1, F2, F3, F4A, B, C, F8 F9 & F10

Wall mounted exhibition cases & lighting to each panel bay

Provide adequate power points for task lighting and electrical equipment

Provide networked IT facility to each room.

Second Floor

Rooms S1, S2, S3, S4C,D,E, S5 & S6.

Provide networked IT facility to each public room..

Provide adequate power points for table lighting & electrical equipment.

Room S8

Provide sanitary facilities. 1 Unisex & 1 Disabled w.c.

Provide utility area with sink

Services-Performance Requirements

Introduction

It is recognised that some contemporary energy saving measures, such as double glazing can be detrimental to the character of historical buildings; building control dispensations are available for Grade 1 listed buildings.

The requirement of the brief is to maintain the historical integrity of the fabric and such dispensations, where required, should be used. Nonetheless all measures should be taken to ensure energy efficiency of heating, lighting and plant. Where the building fabric allows, insulation should be installed. Windows and doors should be draught proofed & shutters rendered operational for thermal protection.

Heating and Hot Water

Maintain internal design temperature of 21° to main rooms, 18° to serviced areas & circulation, with ambient external temperature of -3°C. High efficiency boiler, flue to utilise existing masonry stack.

Insulation standards

- i) Insulate ground floor where lifted to 0.17 w/m²K
- ii) Insulate roof/ceiling to 0.16w/m²K.
- iii) Where possible and not in conflict with historic panelling & plaster work, insulate to 0.25 w/m²K.

Ventilation

All principal spaces to be naturally ventilated using fenestration and chimney flues fitted with register plates. Mechanical ventilation only to:

- i) Toilets @ 15 litre/sec – discharge through masonry stack or slate vent.
- ii) Kitchen @ in accordance with CIBSE guide B
- iii) Kitchen extract hood system with filtration system.

Lighting

Lighting in non service areas to be period pendant or wall sconces.

Ambient illumination levels:

Ground Floor

Restaurant	Low energy lamps	75 lux
Tourist Information	Low energy lamps	50 lux

First Floor

County Council Heritage use low energy lamps		100 lux + supplementary task lighting
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Second Floor

Community Groups etc. -	Low energy	100 lux + supplementary task lighting
Kitchen	Flourescent Luminaires	200 lux
Exhibition Display	Fibre Optic with halide source	150 lux

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