

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

REGISTER ENTRY

Llanarth Court

REF. NO. PGW (Gt) I3

OS MAP 161 GRID REF. SO 380103

COUNTY Monmouthshire

COMMUNITY COUNCIL Llanarth Fawr

DESIGNATIONS Listed building: Llanarth Court Grade II*
Church of St. Mary and St. Michael II

SITE EVALUATION Grade II

Primary reasons for grading

Well preserved early 19th-century landscaped park, with possible work by Samuel Lapidge and J.C. Loudon

TYPE OF SITE

Early 19th-century landscape park; 19th-century terraced garden

MAIN PHASES OF CONSTRUCTION

Early 19th century (park)

Mid-late 19th century (garden)

Site description and history

There has been a house on the site of Llanarth Court since at least the 17th century, when William Jones of Treowen moved there and changed the name from Hendre-obaith to Llanarth Court. The only remains of the earlier house are in the cellars of the present one.

The house is a large Palladian three-storey mansion situated on a slight rise to the SE of Llanarth village. It is orientated SW-NE, with a terraced forecourt and the main entrance on the NW side. On the SE side there is a central portico with Ionic columns flanked by semi-circular bays. The whole clad in concrete. The main part of the present house was built in about 1770 for John Jones. The architect was probably Samuel Wyatt. In about 1851 the house was remodelled and extended to the north-east by W. and E. Habershon. This part of the mansion is lower and less imposing than the main block.

To the N of the house is the small Roman Catholic church of St. Mary and St. Michael built in about 1780.

Further to the N is the single-storey stable block, arranged around three sides of a courtyard (originally - now the fourth side is enclosed).

There are former school buildings (20th-century) between the stable block and the house.

There is a 19th-century single-storey plain stable block to the N of the house, around three sides of a courtyard. Entrance on SW side, with family crest (stone) over.

The park is a medium-sized landscape park lying in rolling countryside to the SE of Llanarth village. There are two present-day entrance drives, one from the village, and one from the Llanarth-A40 road to the W of the house. The latter is now the main drive, with an ornate 'French chateau'-style lodge at the entrance. A further drive originally entered the park from a gate on the S boundary and ran across the park to a stone bridge over the small stream at the W end of the lake and then joined the main W drive. This is now disused and is mostly grassed over, but the bridge remains.

The parkland is gently rolling and is mainly given over to agricultural use (pasture and arable). Between the W entrance and the house is a narrow strip of mainly deciduous woodland either side of the drive called The Grove. There are a few isolated mature trees in the NW half of the park, but the main ornamental park is to the SE of the house. Along the SE edge of the gardens is a long sinuous narrow lake (now more or less silted up and overgrown) and beyond, on the gently rising ground, are numerous isolated ornamental trees, both deciduous and coniferous, including wellingtonias. Along the SE boundary are several mixed plantations.

When John Jones rebuilt the house in the 1770s he also made major alterations to the surroundings, and it is recorded that no expense was spared on house or grounds (Mavor). Williams (1796) recorded that the grounds' formality was being removed, but enough was then left to give an idea of it. He also stated that 'The grounds around it are susceptible of pleasing and beautiful rather than picturesque improvements'. Loudon stated in his Encyclopaedia that it was Lappige (or Lapidge) who designed the lake (Samuel Lapidge, 1744-1806, a draughtsman who worked for Capability Brown, and after his death worked on his own in the same style). Lapidge was working on the park in 1792. Bradney noted some huge mature sycamores in The Grove to the W of the house, which evidently pre-dated the present house. The park was then altered for Jones by J.C. Loudon in 1805. He gives a 'before' and 'after' illustration of the park (Pl. XV) in his Treatise on forming, improving and managing country residences, Vol. 2 (1806), with titles 'The View at Llanarth as it appeared in August 1805' and 'The effect intended to be produced by the alterations at present executing'. The main differences are in the alteration of the lake and the additional tree planting in loose groups. A print in Williams' History of Monmouthshire (1796) shows the park sweeping right up to the house on the SE side, with only a narrow curving gravel strip in front of it.

The conclusion is therefore that John Jones swept away all there was of any pre-existing formal gardens and landscaped the park at the very beginning of the 19th century in the style of Capability Brown, with the park coming right up to the house. Loudon later softened this with more planting and a more picturesque lake, and later in the 19th century further specimen tree planting took place.

The garden lies mainly to the S and SW of the house, between the house and the lake. Its main components are two large terraces in front of the house, the upper one revetted in stone, the lower one edged by a steeply sloping grass bank. These are now grassed over, but early 20th-century photographs and early aerial photos (1946 and 1948) show two formal beds on the lower terrace, a short narrow canal to the SW of the house,

and gravel paths. When the present house was built in the 1770s the park swept right up to the house on this side, with only a narrow gravel strip around the house and a sloping grass sward. The terraces were probably made at the time of the alterations to the house in the 1850s (they are shown on the 1880s OS map). They are now entirely grassed over, except for a narrow bed at the foot of the revetment wall. A school swimming pool has been inserted W of the lower terrace. To the W is an area of lawn, a few shrubs and isolated trees, between the woodland to the N and the lake to the S. This area tapers to a narrow point at the W end.

To the N of the house, below the wide terraced forecourt, is a grass walk parallel to the forecourt wall, at the W end of which are some ancient stone steps up to the drive. This walk and the steps may be all that is left of the formal gardens of the previous house, which were swept away by John Jones.

To the E of the house, just below the lower terrace, is a short walk flanked and covered by pleached limes, and nearby, on the edge of the lake, a roofless stone boathouse. Maps and photos show that there were further gardens (a gravel path, informal planting) to the E of the house, but they have been replaced by lawns and tennis courts (school).

A trapezoidal walled kitchen garden (K on map) was built in the 19th century to the north of the house, between the house and the stable block. The 1880s OS map shows it divided into four quarters by cross paths, and with a perimeter path. All paths were tree-lined. To the east was an orchard. Aerial photos taken in 1946 and 1948 show a formally laid out vegetable garden.

The garden has been almost completely demolished, its site now being open lawn and a modern school block (at the south end). One 8 m. section of its walling remains on the west side. It is brick, and c. 1.8 m. high, and extends southwards from the W end of the stable block. The site of the garden is level, but the central E-W path can be made out as a parch mark in the grass. Its E boundary is visible as a slight rise in level and parch mark.

To the NE of the stable block, N of the kitchen garden site, is a small brick outhouse and short stretch of brick walling similar to that of the kitchen garden. Within the angle formed by the outhouse and the wall there are the remains of brick paving.

SOURCES

Primary

National Library of Wales:

H. Wood, pencil drawing c. 1821 (Drawings vol. 128, no page)

Mrs A.L. Lewis, Tour, c. 1889 (Drawings vol. 306 f.29)

Secondary

Williams, D., A History of Monmouthshire (1796), pl. XXI

Bradney, J., A History of Monmouthshire (1906), p. 301

Loudon, J.C., A Treatise on forming, improving and managing country residences, vol. 2 (1806), pl. 15

Neale, J.P., Views, vol. 2 (1819)

AP: BKS Survey no. 167057

AP: CPE/UK/2472, 9 Mar 48, no. 4120

AP: 106Q.UK 1355 2 Apr 1946, no. 7229