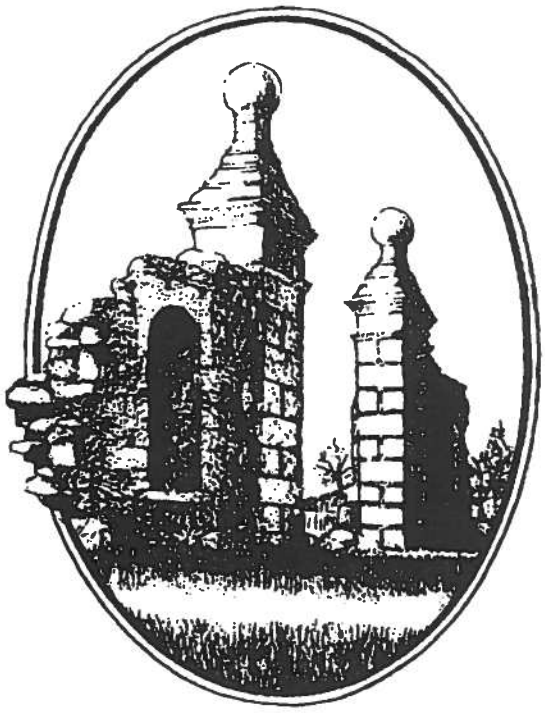
GERDDI

THE JOURNAL OF THE WELSH HISTORIC GARDENS TRUST



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FOREWORD

BETTINA HARDEN
CHAIRMAN OF THE WELSH HISTORIC GARDENS TRUST

As my predecessor, Professor Tom Pritchard said in the first edition of *Gerddi,* the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust provides a focus for enthusiasm and knowledge among people who own, study, care for, or enjoy historic gardens and landscape in Wales. I feel that this edition of our Journal truly reflects this and broadcasts enthusiasm, scholarship and knowledge about Welsh gardens to all who turn its pages.

When we went to press with the previous edition, we were delighted at the thought that David Jeffreys would become the Editor of *Gerddi.* Sadly for us, his talents were claimed by Oriel Plas Glyn-y-Weddw in Gwynedd where he is now Director, heavily involved in establishing an exciting programme of exhibitions and carrying this important centre for culture in north-west Wales into the 21st century. This meant that this edition has been edited and produced by the Publications Committee of the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust as a joint effort. I would like to thank all of those concerned, in particular John Borron, Chairman of the Publications Committee, and Anne Carter, for their hard work. Remarkably, in spite of the several hands on the editing pen, I think you will find that this Journal has emerged with a strong theme. Although unplanned, serendipity has brought about the fact that the articles presented for inclusion in this issue have all centred on the Picturesque in one form or another.

Those of us who attended this year's Annual General Meeting at Penpont had the privilege of hearing one of the best lectures on garden history heard for a long time. Christopher Dingwall's subject was *A Bard in the Bush - Picturesque Landscaping and Tourism in Eighteenth Century Scotland.* Fascinating and erudite, it provided a clear view of the Scots 'poets and landscape designers of the eighteenth century who found beauty in nature'. It was of especial interest to those of us who had fondly thought that Wales had had a particular lien on the Picturesque. This, of course, is wonderfully expressed in Thomas Johnes's creation in upland Cardiganshire - Hafod. Jennifer Macve's *History of the Hafod Estate,* prepared for presentation to the Heritage Lottery Fund, sets out its development with great clarity. The HLF also provided the genesis of Kim Auston's article on *Plas Tan-y-Bwlch.* This delightful site, 'embosomed in woods' is a good example of a smaller Picturesque setting in the Vale of Maentwrog here in Gwynedd. This is the subject of a major restoration scheme and the diligent research carried out by Peter Hayden for his papers, published here as *Elements of the Picturesque - Some Contemporary Advice,* will be germane to the work on the Ravine there. It is so important that paths in the landscape are undertaken with thought and sympathy for their site. With public access it is not always possible to create paths for visitors that look as though they have been created over generations by the repeated passage of men and cattle, but anything that can be done to prevent the sort of visual anarchy created by the black ribbon of tarmac that now runs through some of the most beautiful parts of Glynllifon should be done. Careful planning for the future so often depends on careful research of the past. Caroline Palmer's work on Nanteos and, more recently on Llanerchaeron, has taught her a great deal about the reliability or otherwise of sources, passed on here for all of us who squirrel away in archives discovering facts, figures and fiction about the historic parks and gardens of Wales.

1999 is our Tenth Anniversary year and the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust has much to look forward to. The articles in this edition of *Gerddi* represent past history and endeavours but also serve to carry us forward with the restoration work and new research which always awaits us just around the corner.

A BARD IN THE BUSH
PICTURESQUE LANDSCAPING AND TOURISM IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY SCOTLAND

CHRISTOPHER DINGWALL

This paper is the text of the Lecture to the Annual General Meeting of the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust delivered at Penpont, Brecon, on 8 May 1998.

In the literature of gardens the words of the English poet and politician Joseph Addison, first published in ***The Spectator*** in 1711, are often quoted as marking the beginning of a swing of the pendulum of taste away from the formality which so dominated seventeenth and early eighteenth century garden design, through the more naturalistic English 'landscape garden' style of the mid-century, to the opposite extreme by the end of the century, which was marked by a taste for picturesque and sublime scenery. In Addison's words :

There is something more bold and masterly in the rough careless strokes of nature, than in the nice touches and embellishments of art ...[for] in the wide fields of nature, the sight wanders up and down without confinement and is fed with an infinite variety of images.[1]

I want to suggest in this presentation that the taste for 'natural' scenery in the context of the garden was already well-established in Scotland by this early date - largely because there was an abundance of such scenery near to the main centres of population, some of it in close proximity to the houses of those who were in the business of laying out their grounds. I also want to demonstrate the strong links which existed between Scottish poetry and the taste for natural landscape throughout this period - beginning my paper with some of the words which were inspired by these landscapes and ending it with a landscape which can safely be said to have been inspired by poetry.

My journey begins in Roslin Glen on the steep, tree-clad banks of the River North Esk, not far to the south of Edinburgh, where lived the early-seventeenth century melancholic poet William Drummond. It was here in 1618, in the grounds of his beloved house at Hawthornden, that Drummond walked and talked with the London-based playwright Ben Jonson during the latter's six month stay in the land of his birth - a landscape of which Drummond was moved to write :

Dear wood, and you, sweet solitary place
Contented more, where from the vulgar I estranged live,
With what your shades can give,
Than if I had what Thetis doth embrace ...[2]

The young Walter Scott, too, was to write fondly of Roslin Glen when he lived at nearby Lasswade for some years at the end of the eighteenth century :

Sweet are the paths, O passing sweet,
By Eske's fair stream that run,
O'er airy steep, through copsewood deep,
Impervious to the sun.

Who knows not Melville's beechy grove
And Roslin's rocky glen,
Dalkeith, which all the virtues love,
And Classic Hawthornden. [3]

There were many country houses in Scotland built on steeply rising ground or in sight of gorges, cliff-tops and mountains. Early visual evidence for the deliberate incorporation of such features into much more formal garden layouts is to be found, for example, at Culross Abbey House where John Slezer's view of c.1700 shows a rustic stone bridge spanning a natural, albeit dry, gully which forms part of a natural rock outcrop and - a seventeenth century 'picturesque' feature which still survives to this day.

It was around 1707 that the English agent Daniel Defoe visited Drumlanrig, near Dumfries, in the course of a tour of Scotland during which he sought to cultivate those Scots who were in favour of the then embryonic political Union with England. Seen from Defoe's rather English perspective Drumlanrig

was like a fine picture in a dirty grotto ... environ'd with mountains, and that of the wildest and most hideous aspect in all the South of Scotland.

while the garden terraces, under construction at the time of his visit, prompted him to remark that

the house stands at the top of a rising ground, which at its first building, lay with steep and uncouth descent to the river, which made the lookers on wonder what the Duke [of Queensberry] meant to build in such a disproportioned place. [4]

Yet, at the very same moment that the Duke of Queensberry was smoothing out the irregularities which surrounded his house at Drumlanrig, some fifty miles to the north Sir James Carmichael was building a view-house expressly designed to exploit the dramatic views which were to be had from one corner of his park over Cora Linn, one of the three spectacular waterfalls which punctuate the course of the River Clyde near Lanark - a scene which was sandwiched between his own estate of Bonnington and that of Corehouse on the opposite side of the river. The lintel above the door of the view-house records the date of its building as 1708. Little, apart from some additional planting and the cutting of steps and paths, was done to alter the wild character of a scene which, by the late eighteenth century, was to become a regular stop or 'station' on the increasingly popular tour of Scotland - what the Welsh traveller and writer Thomas Pennant described in 1769 as the *'petit tour.'* [5]

Cora Linn was depicted by the Scottish landscape painter Jacob More in the 1760s [6], and described by local poet John Wilson of Lesmahagow at about the same time in his poem ***The Clyde*** *:*

Where ancient Corehouse hangs above the stream
And far beneath the tumbling surges gleam,
Engulphed in crags the fretting river raves.
Chafed into foam resound his tortured waves.
With giddy heads we view the dreadful deep
And cattle snort and tremble at the steep ... [7]

But I am in danger of running ahead of myself.

At the same time that Sir James Carmichael was building his view-house at Bonnington overlooking the River Clyde, the Scots poet James Thomson was growing up as a young boy in the depths of the

countryside not far from Jedburgh in the Scottish Borders, amidst a landscape which was a very long way both physically and spiritually from the great metropolis of London where he chose to live and make his living from the age of twenty-five, and where he was to write his influential landscape poem ***The Seasons*** between 1727 and 1730. In ***The Seasons*** Thomson applauded

The negligence of nature, wide and wild
Where undisguised by mimic art, she spreads
Unbounded beauty to the boundless eye [8]

The author Mary Jane Scott makes a convincing case for much of the imagery in Thomson's poetry having come from his Scottish boyhood [9] - not least the vivid descriptions of torrents and floods which can hardly have been inspired by his experience of the River Thames at Richmond ! Like most educated Scots, John Wilson of Lesmahagow - whose description of Cora Linn I quoted earlier - is likely to have had a copy of ***The Seasons*** on his bookshelf, in which he would have been familiar with Thomson's own description of a waterfall which might so easily be Cora Linn - a passage on which Wilson may even have modelled his own :

...Swift shrinking back
I stand aghast and view the broken scene.
Smooth to the shaggy brink a spreading flood
Rolls fair and placid, till collected all
In one big glut as sinks the shelving ground
Th'impetuous torrent, tumbling down the steep
Thunders and shakes th'astonished country round ... [10]

If we are in any doubt about the extent to which such scenes were integrated into designed landscapes in Scotland at this time, we need look no further than the poem ***A Country Seat***, written by Sir John Clerk of Penicuik at the same time that Thomson was writing ***The Seasons***. Mention of Sir John Clerk, incidentally, brings us back to the banks of the North Esk, near Edinburgh, where he was involved in laying out and planting his own estate at Penicuik. Among the many types of landscape which Clerk considered to be appropriate embellishments for a Scottish gentleman's estate were those produced by nature. As he wrote :

Still other harsh and frightful objects be
Which not a little grace a Country Seat
If only brought within the bounds of sight.
Deep rapid rivers, wide extended lakes,
High tow'ring rocks and noisy cataracts.(...)

Rocks with tumultuous noise will echo forth
Loud peals of thunder from the cataract.
But yet all these tho' Nature's spots and stains
Or of the delug'd world the dire remains,
With wondrous beauty variegate the plains . [11]

With this passage in mind, it is interesting to speculate on how Clerk, as one-time factor for the Duke of Queensberry at Drumlanrig, may have viewed the creation of the formal terraces so admired by Defoe.

Clerk's words were written more than a decade before the young Horace Walpole and his friend Thomas Gray embarked on their Grand Tour together in 1739. Writing back to their friend Richard West from among the Grande Chartreuse in the Alps the Walpole described the thrill of seeing

> *...a torrent breaking through cliffs and tumbling through fragments of rocks ! Sheets of cascades forcing their silver speed down channelled precipices, and hasting into the roughened river at the bottom (...) If I could send you my letter post between two lovely tempests that echoed each others wrath, you might have some idea of this noble roaring scene as you were reading it.*[12]

while the equally enthusiastic Gray made the observation that

> *not a precipice, not a torrent, not a cliff, but is pregnant with religion and poetry.*[13]

It was to be more than twenty five years before Thomas Gray was to realise a long-cherished ambition to visit Scotland - this time on his own - on a journey which was to rekindle old emotions. As he travelled among the Grampian Mountains in 1765 Gray suffered what must be one of the worst fates to befall a writer or poet, one which has deprived posterity of his thoughts. As he wrote at the time

> *... my paper is deficient, and I must say nothing of the Pass [of Killiecrankie], the Black River Garry, the Blair of Atholl, Mount Beni-Gloe, my return (by another road) to Dunkeld, the Hermitage, the Stra[th] Braan and the Rumbling Bridge. In short, since I saw the Alps, I have seen nothing sublime till now.* [14]

On his return to England, the poet wrote of his Scottish tour to his friend William Mason, concluding his remarks with a wonderful little polemic on English gardens of the period. The Scottish mountains, he says

> *are ecstatic and ought to be visited in pilgrimage once a year. None but these monstrous creatures of God know how to join so much beauty with so much horror. A fig for your poets, painters, gardeners and clergymen that have not been among them ; their imagination can be made up of nothing but bowling greens, flowering shrubs, horse-ponds, Fleet ditches, shell grottoes and Chinese rails.*[15]

Among the list of places visited (but sadly not described in detail) by Gray in the course of his Highland tour was the Hermitage at Dunkeld, a picturesque designed landscape developed around a natural cascade known as the Black Lynn Falls on the River Braan - a site which, not long after his visit, was to become closely associated with one of Scotland's most notable bards - the figure of Ossian.

It was among the hills of North Wales and on the banks of the River Conway that Gray had set his own poem ***The Bard - A Pindaric Ode***, written in 1755 as a defiant lament for a proud Celtic people conquered by King Edward I. Edward is reputed to have carried out a ruthless campaign to rid the country of the bards in whose lays the history of the Welsh people was recorded. For Gray's bard there was a certain triumph and joy in death as he evaded the usurper's army by hurling himself into oblivion - a moment captured vividly in Thomas Jones painting of ***'The Bard'*** which hangs in the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff :

> *On a rock whose haughty brow*
> *Frowns o'er old Conway's foaming flood,*
> *Robed in the sable garb of woe*
> *With haggard eyes the poet stood*
> *(Loose his beard, and hoary hair*
> *Streamed like a meteor, to the troubled air) (...)*

The Bard by Thomas Jones. 1774.
Reproduced by kind permission of The National Museum of Wales

He spoke. and headlong from the mountain's height
Deep in the roaring tide he plunged to endless night.[16]

A similar mixture of Celtic pride and melancholy permeates the poetry of Ossian - or perhaps I should say his translator James Macpherson.[17] In a series of epic poems which was to take Europe by storm, the blind bard Ossian grieves for the loss of his people and the passing of an era. While clearly borrowing from ancient Celtic legends, there is no doubt that the greater part of these poems was really written by Macpherson as a lament for the death of a vibrant Gaelic culture which he had seen perish with the defeat of the Jacobite clans and their brutal suppression after the battle of Culloden in 1746. Unlike Gray's bard, whose end was swift and defiant, Macpherson's Ossian lived on to produce a series of epic poems gloomy enough to drive even the most optimistic of readers into a melancholic frenzy

By the side of a rock Old Oscian sat on the moss;
The last of the race of Fingal.
Sightless are his aged eyes ;
His beard is waving in the wind.
Dull through the leafless trees he heard the voice of the north.
Sorrow revived in his soul ;
He began and lamented the dead.[18]

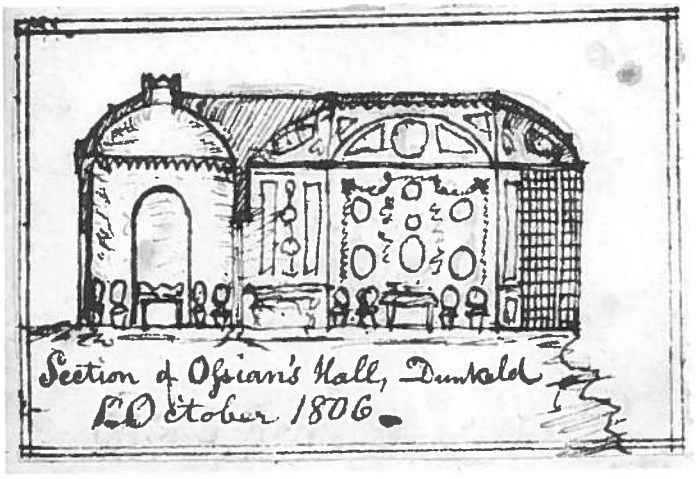
Engraving of the blind bard, Ossian, from the title page of ***Fingal. An Epic Poem*** *by James Macpherson 1762.*

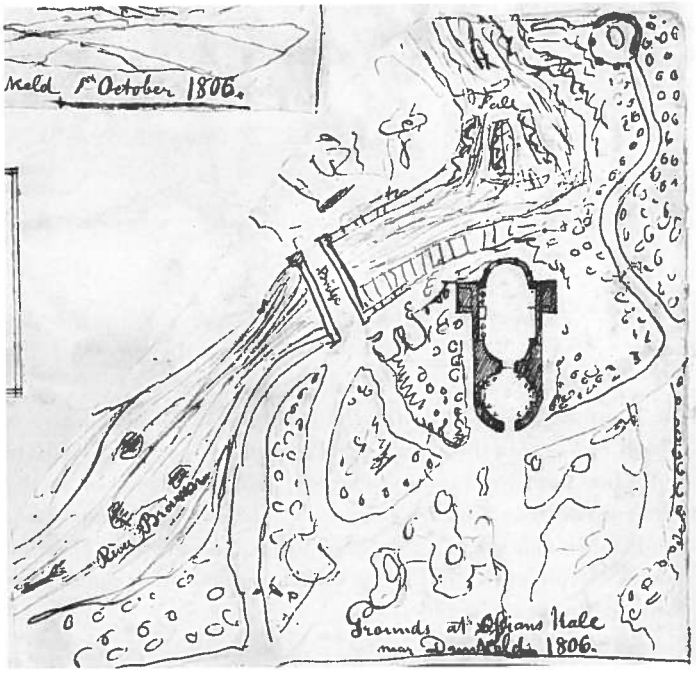
There can be no doubting the influence of Thomas Gray's work on the young Macpherson, most clearly reflected in the latter's own Pindaric ode on ***'The Earl Marischals Welcome to his Native Country'*** published just three months before he launched Ossian on an unsuspecting public in his ***Fragments of Ancient Poetry*** in 1760. Nor was it an accident that Thomas Gray was among the first to receive a copy of Macpherson's works when they were published. That the controversy about the authenticity of the poems was already in full swing within weeks of their publication is clear from Gray's letter written to William Mason at the time.

> *I continue to think [the poems] genuine, though my reasons for believing the contrary are rather stronger than ever ; but I will have them antique, for I never knew a Scotchman of my own time that could read, much less write poetry ; and such poetry too !* [19]

The intriguing story of the Dunkeld Hermitage and its evolution from simple view-house into Ossian's Hall is one which could easily fill an hour or two on its own. Suffice it to say that, by the time of Reverend William Gilpin's visit in 1776 the landscape had already come to be associated with the poems of Ossian, though it was to be another seven years before the original Hermitage was redecorated as Ossian's Hall. Its completion in 1783 was marked by James Macpherson's return from England to Scotland after an absence of more than thirteen years, a visit during which we know that he spent several days in Dunkeld. He can hardly have done so without walking the few hundred yards up Strathbraan to see the newly redecorated Hermitage which had been inspired by his - or should I say his translations of Ossian's - poems.

Ossian's Hall at Dunkeld.
The Grounds of Ossian's Hall at Dunkeld, 1806 (below).
National Monuments Record of Scotland.





Yet the figure of Ossian painted on the sliding door which gave visitors access to the view house over the Black Lynn Falls is likely to have had another meaning, given the complex history of the Atholl dynasty in the eighteenth century - for the Fourth Duke of Atholl, who rebuilt the Hermitage with the help of his Gaelic speaking friend the architect George Steuart, was descended not from the Hanoverian Second Duke, James Murray, but from his younger brother Lord George Murray who had served as Bonnie Prince Charlie's principal campaign manager for much of the ill-fated 1745 Rising. There can be little doubt that the Hermitage was also intended as a thinly veiled tribute to Lord George Murray who had died in exile - and maybe at the same time to his eldest brother, the so-called 'Jacobite Duke' William whose own exile after the first unsuccessful Jacobite rising of 1715 had prevented him from ever inheriting the title. Macpherson's words seem to hint at this veiled tribute :

Where are all my race ? Alas ! in the earth they lie.
I feel their tombs with my hands.
I hear the river below murmuring hoarsely over the stones.
What dost thou, O river, to me ?
Thou bringest back the memory of the past (...)

My life flieth away like a dream ; why should I stay behind ?
Here shall I rest with my friends by the stream of the sounding rock.
When night comes upon the hill ; when the wind is upon the heath ;
My ghost shall stand in the wind, and mourn the death of my friends. [20]

The Hermitage employed that well-tried eighteenth century device of concealment and surprise to present the Black Lynn Falls to the visitor, deliberately screening the waterfall from view with its painted panel bearing the image of Ossian, before presenting it with a dramatic flourish as the panel was withdrawn, with the visitor being ushered into a chamber carefully shaped so as to focus the sound, and lined with mirrors which served to amplify and multiply the image of the waterfall. Here we can see in reality the procedure which is so vividly described in the anonymous tribute to Charles Lord Viscount Irwin, in ***The Rise and Progress of the Present Taste in Planting Parks, Pleasure Grounds, Gardens etc.***, first published in 1767.

Here bursts a cat'ract o'er a rocky steep,
Whose falls a dreadful thundering, clamouring keep (...)
Dubious we stand what winding walk to take
As rambling waves the earth beneath us shake.
In vain we try the torrent to explore
That rolls along with loud tremendous rore (...)

At length a darksome cave impedes our way.
We enter quick impatient for the day ;
When low ! a prospect opens to our view
Richer than poet feigned, or painter drew.
Beneath the grove the torrent rolls concealed
To raise surprize and be with joy reveal'd.
Behold the streams in one tumultuous rage
Down dashing headlong, pointed rocks engage,
Here foaming flash around their sparkling spray ...

Today's visitors to the Hermitage can enjoy the same views as their eighteenth and nineteenth century predecessors, where Ossian's Hall still overlooks the Black Lynn Falls on the River Braan which still form the focus of the landscape, and which still attract thousand of visitors every year. Sadly, the image of Ossian, along with the mirrors and other decorations was blown to smithereens in 1869 by a barrel of gunpowder placed inside the door of the Hermitage - but that, as the saying goes, is another story.

Among the almost innumerable tourists who visited the Hermitage before this debacle were the poet William Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy. While Dorothy's journal suggests that they, like many other visitors, were entertained by the Duke's little conceit and "both laughed heartily", William's ***Effusion in the Pleasure Ground on the Banks of the Braan near Dunkeld*** tells a rather different story, of his dismay at finding the blind bard Ossian associated with such a place.

What He - who, mid the kindred throng
Of Heroes that inspired his song
Doth yet frequent the hill of storms.
The stars dim-twinkling through their forms !
What ! Ossian here - a painted thrall
Mute fixture on a stuccoed wall ;
To serve - an unexpected screen
For show that must not yet be seen ;
And when the moment comes, to part
And vanish by mysterious art
Head, harp and body split asunder,
For ingress to a world of wonder (...)

What pains to dazzle and confound !
What strife of colour, shape and sound
in this quaint medley that might seem
Devised out of a sick man's dream (...)
Thus (where the intrusive pile, ill-graced
With baubles of theatric taste,
O'erlooks the torrent breathing showers
On motley bands of alien flowers
In stiff confusion set or sown,
Till nature cannot find her own,
Or keep a remnant of the sod
Which Caledonian heroes trod),
I mused ; and thirsting for redress
Recoiled into the Wildernes. [21]

There is good reason to believe that the young Thomas Johnes may have visited the Hermitage at Dunkeld in the course of a brief tour of the Scottish Highlands made from Edinburgh in 1768, some twenty years or more before he went on to create his own exotic 'paradise' at Hafod in the Ystwyth valley, among the wilds of the Cambrian Mountains. At Hafod, too, we see same device of concealment and surprise exploited to the full - with Thomas Johnes creating a subterranean passage to introduce his visitors to a startling view of the so-called Cavern Cascade. It is interesting, surely, that George Cumberland, in his ***Attempt to Describe Hafod*** [22] , finds himself speaking in what he describes as the 'language of Ossian' rather than that of a Welsh bard when he contemplates the surrounding scenery.

What then must be the effects of sun-shine - vapours - autumnal foliage - a fine aurora - or a clear moon light ! ... for here, on this promontory, a bard might indeed sit, and draw all his fine images from nature.

Another unattributed passage used by Cumberland to augment his text has a familiar ring to it, too :

Dark the gigantic rocks projecting hung,
Crowned with gray oaks, in rude disorder slung ;
Thund'ring and hoarse, a smoking torrent fell,
Spreading a dingy wave and foamy swell ;
Whose rushing streams in whirling eddies sweep,
Loud-sounding, rapid, turbulent, and deep.

In fact, there are much stronger similarities between Thomas Johnes' rock-hewn tunnel and another Scottish hermitage and pleasure ground at Acharn near Kenmore, some twenty miles west of Dunkeld, which he may also have visited in the course of his brief tour of the Highlands. Here an artificial mound was constructed by the Third Earl of Breadalbane in the 1760s, incorporating two subterranean passages which combined to lead the visitor to a view-house or hermitage carefully placed so as to get the best view of the picturesque Falls of Acharn - the only 'hermitage' in Scotland, incidentally, where I know that the guides dressed up in animal skins to play the part of the hermit !

Both the Acharn hermitage and Ossian's Hall near the Dunkeld were visited by the last of my subjects today - Scotland's national bard Robert Burns. He visited both in the course of the only tour he ever made in the Scottish Highlands, which took place in the late summer of 1787. At the Falls of Acharn Burns - like Walpole and Gray among the Alps fifty years before - felt his senses overwhelmed by the grandeur of the scene, and was moved to write the following words :

Poetic ardours in my bosom swell
Lone wand'ring by the Hermit's mossy cell.
The sweeping theatre of hanging woods,
Th'incessant roar of headlong tumbling floods.
Here poesie might wake her heav'n-taught lyre
And look through nature with creative fire. [23]

Burns' subsequent journey north towards Inverness took him via Blair Atholl, where he spent two nights in the company of John Murray, Fourth Duke of Atholl and his young family. His journey onwards from Blair to Inverness was interrupted by a brief pause on the banks of the Bruar, at another fine series of waterfalls which tumbles down the side of Glengarry a few miles to the west of Blair Atholl. These, too had become a regular 'station' on the northern tourist circuit by this time. Here Burns' poetic ardours were rekindled by the scene - though he lamented the lack of trees to shade the river and provide shelter for wild animals and birds - indeed, even for passing bards ! Taking on the character of the river Burns penned his ***Humble Petition of the Bruar Water to the Noble Duke of Athole*** : [24]

Last day I grat' wi' spite and teen
As poet Burns came by
That to a Bard, I should be seen
Wi' half my channel dry
A panegyric rhyme, I ween,

Even as I was he shor'd me
But had I in my glory been,
He, kneeling, wad adored me

Would then my noble master please
To grant my highest wishes ?
He'll shade my banks wi' tow'ring trees
And bonie spreading bushes.
Delighted doubly then, my Lord,
You'll wander on my banks
And listen mony a grateful bird
Return you tuneful thanks.

Burns goes on to list the creatures which will join in the chorus of approval - the lark, the goldfinch, the blackbird, the thrush and the mountain hare; the shepherd and the 'loving pair', even the poet ...

Here haply, too, at vernal dawn
Some musing bard may stray
And eye the smoking, dewy lawn
And misty mountains grey.
Or, by the reaper's nightly beam,
Mild chequering thro' the trees
Rave to my darkly dashing stream,
Hoarse swelling on the breeze.

Let lofty firs and ashes cool
My lofty banks o'erspread,
And view deep-bending in the pool
Their shadows' wat'ry-bed
Let fragrant birks in woodbines drest,
My craggy cliffs adorn ;
And for the little songster's nest
The close embow'ring thorn.

The Duke did respond to Burns' petition, though it took the poet's untimely death in 1796 to spur him into action. Planting began that same autumn and within a year paths and bridges were under construction, carefully designed to conduct visitors to the best viewpoints overlooking the falls. Among the early visitors to the Duke's improvements were William and Dorothy Wordsworth who were following the Scottish Bard's footsteps.

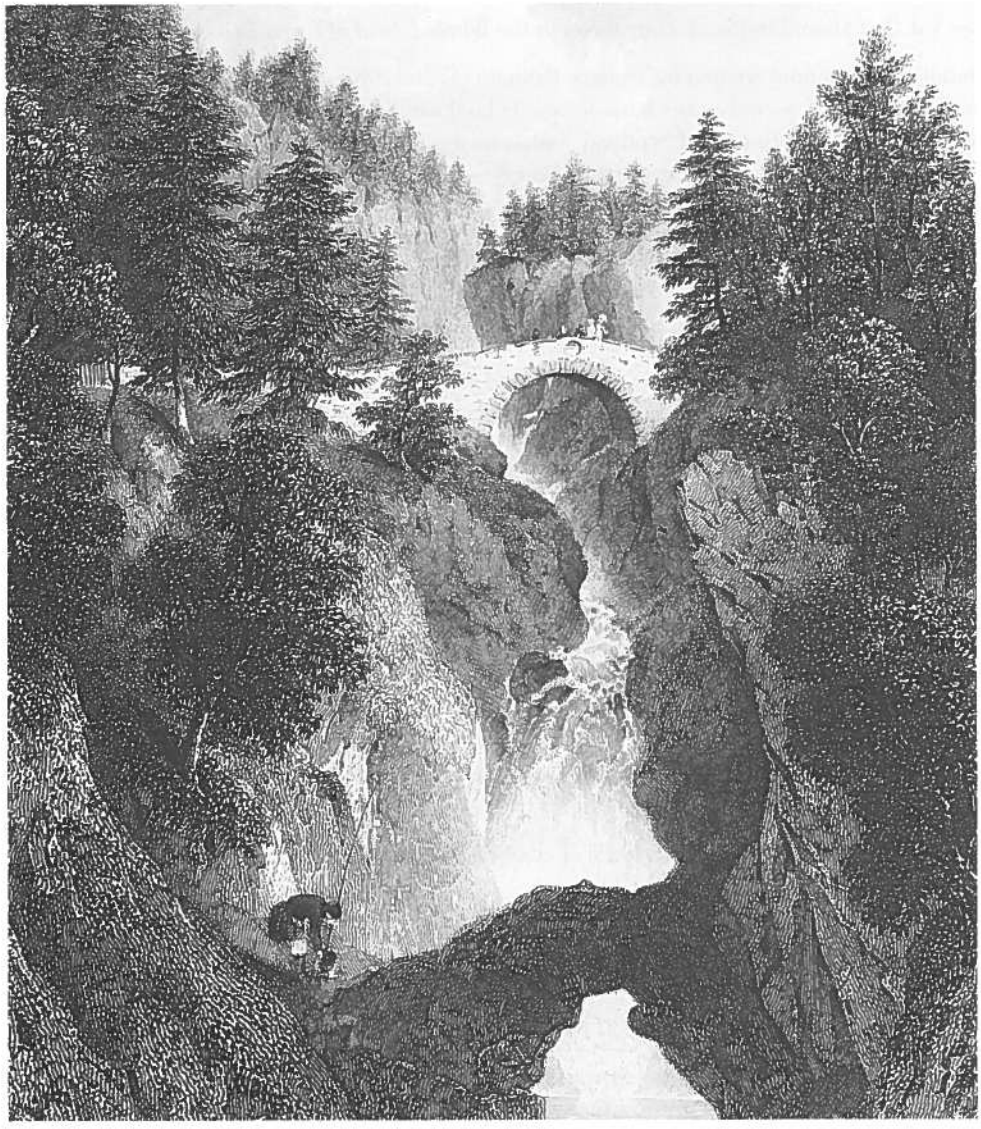
Dorothy's journal records that she and William found little enjoyment in

> *...the whole chasm of the hillside with its formal walks ... a pleasure path leading to nothing up a steep and naked hill in the midst of an unlovely tract of country...*

Yet she was able to see that, given time, the firs and larches with which the banks had been planted - what she described as the 'children of poor Burns's song' - would soon grow up

For his sake we wished that they had been the natural trees of Scotland, birches, ashes mountain ashes etc., however sixty or seventy years from now they will be no unworthy monument to his memory.[25]

And so it is that the spectacular designed landscape which still surrounds the Bruar - a scheme which must mark the apogee of picturesque and sublime landscaping in this country - can serve as a memorial not only to Robert Burns, whose own poetic vision led to its creation, but to all of those poets and landscape designers of the eighteenth century who found beauty in nature, and who succeeded in incorporating it into their works - whether in words or on the ground.



An nineteenth century engraving of The Lower Falls of Bruar, by A.F. Smith, A Donaldson, published by A. Fullerton and Co., c.1865.

Notes and References

1. See Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, No.414, 25 June 1711.
2. William Drummond, quoted on p.302 of *The Book of Scottish Poetry*, ed. Sir George Douglas, 1911. Drummond (1585-1649), though well-educated, well-connected and widely travelled, forsook public life to devote himself to literary pursuits and the secluded life of a country gentleman. His naturally melancholic nature was exaggerated by the tragic death of his first love.
3. These lines, with additional remarks on Scott's links with the Esk Valley and Lasswade, are to be found on pp.6-8 of Vol.2 of J.G. Lockhart's *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott*, 1848.
4. See Vol. 3 of Daniel Defoe, *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, first published 1724.
5. Detailed descriptions written by Thomas Pennant (1726-1798) of his two extensive tours in Scotland in 1769 and 1772 served as the basis for guide books to Scotland well into the nineteenth century. Remarks on the '*petit tour* of Scotland' - what he described as "a tract unparalleled for the variety and frequency of fine and magnificent scenery"- can be found on p.105 of the Fifth Edition of *A Tour in Scotland 1769*, published 1790.
6. Jacob More (1740-1793) painted at least two versions of Cora Linn, one of which is in the collection of the National Gallery of Scotland.
7. See especially Chapter 5 of Mary Jane W. Scott's biography *James Thomson : Anglo-Scot*, 1988.
8. John Wilson's '*The Clyde - A Poem*' is to be found on pp.31-107 of John Leyden's *Scottish Descriptive Poems*, 1803
9. See ll. 464-466 of James Thomson's poem '*Spring*' from *The Seasons*, 1730 - Thomson replaced 'boundless' with 'roving' in later editions of the poem.
10. See ll. 490-496 of James Thomson's poem '*Summer*' from *The Seasons*, 1730 - these lines, too, were substantially revised by Thomson in later editions.
11. Sir John Clerk (1676-1755) wrote *The Country Seat : A Poem* in 1727, though it was never published. There is a full transcript of the poem in the Scottish Record Office - GD18/4404/1.
12. See pp.246-247 of *The Correspondence of Gray, Walpole and Ashton, 1734-1771*, ed. Paget Toynbee, 1915. This letter was written in September 1739.
13. See pp.44-45 of *Letters of Thomas Gray*, ed. John Beresford, 1925. This letter was written from Turin in Italy in November 1739.
14. See p.286 of Beresford, op.cit., 1925. Letter was written from Glamis in Scotland in September 1765.
15. See p.288 of Beresford, op.cit., 1925. This letter, too, was written in 1765, on Gray's return from Scotland.
16. The formative stages of Thomas Gray's '*The Bard : A Pindaric Ode*' are to be found in Beresford, op. cit., 1925 in a letter written by Gray in August 1755. The final version is to be found in most editions of Gray's works. Thomas Jones' painting of *The Bard*, dated 1774, is in the collection of the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff.
17. For an account of the life and literary work of James Macpherson (1736-1796) see Fiona Stafford's *The Sublime Savage : James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian*, 1988.

18. See *Fragment VIII* of James Macpherson's *Fragments of Ancient Poetry,* which was published anonymously in 1760.

19. See p. 216 of Beresford op. cit, 1925. This letter was written in August 1760.

20. See *Fragment X* of James Macpherson, op.cit.1760.

21. See Dorothy Wordworth's description of their visit on p.210 of her *Recollections of a Tour in Scotland A.D. 1803,* ed. J.C. Shairp, 1875. William's '*Effusion in the Pleasure Grounds on the Banks of the Bran, near Dunkeld*' is reproduced as Appendix E, on pp.294-297 of the same volume.

22. See George Cumberland's *An Attempt to Describe Hafod,* 1796. His reference to "the language of Ossian" is on p.31, while the fragment of verse is to be found on p.34.

23. See lines 2 '*Written with a pencil over the chimney piece in the parlour of the inn at Kenmore, Taymouth*' on 29 August 1787, and published on pp. 218-219 of Vol. 2 of *The Works of Robert Burns,* ed. Charles Annandale, 1887.

24. See Burns' '*Humble Petition of Bruar Water to the Noble Duke of Athole*' on pp. 220-223 of Vol. 2 of Annandale, op.cit., 1887. Burns' brief journal of his 1787 tour of the Highlands is published on pp.180-182 of Vol. 1 of the same edition. See also Christopher Dingwall's historical account of the Fourth Duke of Atholl's landscaping scheme in *The Falls of Bruar : A Garden in the Wild.*1987.

25. Dorothy Wordsworth's description of the Falls of Bruar is on pp.201-202 of J.C. Shairp, op.cit. 1875.

A HISTORY OF THE HAFOD ESTATE

JENNIFER MACVE

In support of the Hafod Partnership's application to the Heritage Lottery Fund, the author undertook an historical research project. Well-known primary sources were revisited and collated with some less familiar texts, images were assembled and analysed, and earlier research re-examined. An index to landscape references within the material, covering some eighty different categories, and a detailed chronology were prepared. Finally, drawing on the evidence within these documents and the findings of other researchers, a history of Hafod was compiled, and forms the basis of this article.

The great estate of Hafod Uchdryd occupied one of the remotest and least productive parts of inhabited Wales, on the eastern margin of Cardiganshire. Comprising hill pasture, a small amount of valley land, and intervening steep slopes around the upper Ystwyth, the estate had its origin in the creation of an administrative unit within a medieval, monastic economy. Five miles south of Hafod lay the Cistercian abbey of Strata Florida (Ystrad Fflur), founded in 1164, which derived much of its wealth from agriculture, in particular sheep farming. Its extensive land holdings were organised into large farms known as granges, of which one, the Cwmystwyth grange, covered territory that would later form the core of the Hafod estate.[1] With the Peiran Mill (1/2 mile east of Hafod mansion) lying roughly at its geographical centre, the grange was subdivided into many smaller farms, each of which probably consisted of a farmstead encircled by small, cultivated enclosures which in turn were surrounded by rough pasture with open sheepwalk on the highest hills. Also within the grange were the lead mines at Cwmystwyth. It is often alleged that the presence of these and other mines was to blame for the treeless aspect of the uplands in north Cardiganshire. However, clearance of woodland long pre-dated the appearance of large-scale mining operations, and was more likely to be the result of the deliberate creation of sheepwalks.[2] Similarly the survival of woodland in sheltered valleys, such as Hafod, should be attributed to sensible management rather than historical accident. Maps of three Crosswood estate farms (later Hafod farms) in 1781 show that each possessed a reserve of woodland, amounting to between 5% amd 11% of the farm's total area.[3]

When, in the 1530s, Strata Florida abbey was dissolved and its lands confiscated, the Cwmystwyth grange came into the possession of the Earl of Essex. A rent roll of c.1540 shows that the grange then consisted of some thirty tenements let to an assortment of tenants; among the properties listed are Upper and Lower Hafod Uchdryd and several other names which would later become estate farms. A century later, the former grange land was sold to John Vaughan of Trawscoed, who almost immediately sold a large part of it to Morgan Herbert, the occupant of Hafod and nearby Dolgors.[4] The Herberts established themselves as the squires of this small, remote estate, almost certainly financing their lifestyle from mining interests. Nothing is recorded of their development of Hafod other than the building of the first church (Eglwys Newydd) in 1620;[5] the exact site of their house has not been discovered. It seems reasonable to assume that the house was surrounded by pleasure grounds and that the woodland was well managed, perhaps with some new ornamental plantings.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Hafod passed by marriage to the Johnes family, minor Welsh gentry who owned a number of small estates scattered across Cardiganshire and Carmarthenshire. They chose not to live at Hafod but in more favoured, lowland places such as Dolaucothi and Llanfair Clydogau, leaving Hafod to tenants. In about 1745 the senior member of the family, Thomas Johnes

(?1721-1780), made a good marriage to an English heiress, Elisabeth Knight of Croft Castle, and took up residence in the richer pastures of Herefordshire, where their four children were raised. Nevertheless, Johnes continued to take seriously his official duties and landlordly responsibilities in Wales, and introduced his elder son Thomas to them.[6] Evidently their visits to Cardiganshire included at least one call on their tenant at Hafod, John Paynter. Paynter, a mine manager, had a thoroughly bad reputation in the district, but his letters to the Bishop show that he was captivated by his surroundings at Hafod.[7] The younger Thomas Johnes fell under the same enchantment and by 1771 was telling his friend Robert Liston that he had found "Paradise".[8] One can only guess at how and when, over the following decade, he began to entertain detailed plans for a life at Hafod. It is clear that his first wife, Maria Burgh, whom he married in 1779, was acquainted with Hafod - in 1782 she presented a set of communion plate to the church[9] - and possibly they considered living there, once Johnes had inherited his father's estates in 1780. Maria's declining health, though, would have been a discouraging factor, and in 1782 she died. By the end of the following year Johnes was remarried (to his cousin, Jane Johnes of Dolaucothi), and had taken up residence in the Herberts' old house by the Ystwyth.

The Hafod estate in 1783 was an awkwardly shaped holding of about 7,000 acres, with inliers of property belonging to other owners. It included two large farms adjacent to the demesne - Pwllpeiran to the north of the river and Bwlchgwallter to the south; also the Herberts' original home, Dolgors farm, to the north-west, three remote sheep farms in the hills to the east, and a detached fragment at Ffair-rhos, four miles south.[10] Much of the land was unenclosed and treeless, ranging in quality from good hill pasture to bleak peat bog. However, the valley slopes near Hafod were well wooded, as the 1786 sketches by Thomas Jones show, with moss- and ivy-covered oaks, old coppices, large mature trees, and straight-stemmed, young standard trees.[11] Here, in the core of what would become Johnes's designed landscape, there were important differences between the north and south sides of the Ystwyth, evident in the Jones sketches.

On the north bank, the relief was very varied and the landscape domesticated, with large expanses of grassland. Two ridges, Middle Hill and Cefn Creigiau, projected towards the river and were covered with wood and pasture. The area may have been in use as pleasure grounds for as much as two centuries; there were no obvious traces of medieval field systems and no old field names survived.[12] On its northern edge the demesne was bounded by a steep wooded slope, Coed Hafod, curving in the west to pass closer to the river from which it was separated by long, narrow meadows. The parish road from Pontrhydygroes to Cwmystwyth ran at the foot of this slope, straight through the centre of the demesne, to join the turnpike to Rhayader (created 1770) a mile east of the church. The main buildings in this area were Hafod house, the church, and the old mill on the Peiran, though the last did not belong to Hafod when Johnes inherited (he acquired it from Lord Lisburne in 1790). Drives, tracks and paths must have connected these buildings with each other and with surrounding farms, and there may also have been some ornamental walks around the grounds. There is no record of any minor buildings pre-dating the arrival of Johnes, though the turret on Middle Hill, the Alpine bridge, and a cottage at Pendre are possibilities.[13]

To the south, the dominant topographical feature was Allt Dihanog, a steep, wooded, north-facing slope along the river. The 1832 Sale Catalogue describes it as "part of Bwlchgwallter Farm": in other words, historically it had always fallen within that tenanted farm's land and the distinction continued to be made long after Johnes had taken it in hand. The whole slope was wooded, with the exception of a small, clear enclosure called Cae Gwartheg (= cattle field) which had a slightly gentler gradient and more open aspect making it suitable for improved pasture or cultivation. Bwlchgwallter, south of the crest of the slope, had long been a Hafod farm and would have been connected to the house by a path or track, which may have crossed the river by a bridge and/or ford in the vicinity of the present Alpine Bridge.[14] At its eastern end the slope retreated from the river and here were located several small-holdings and

farms - Penpompren, Tyloge, Nant y Cae - which Johnes acquired and incorporated into his estate. Paths would have linked these cottages, and one track crossed the river by Pompren Mawr (= big wooden bridge), the predecessor to Dologau bridge and shown on a map of 1781;[15] the northern arm of this track, passing close to the Peiran mill, is marked on Cumberland's map of 1796 (see below). It is unlikely that there were any "pleasure" paths on the south side of the Ystwyth, and this would seem to be confirmed by Cumberland's remark that the "principal part of the artificial improved paths" were to be found here. The implication is that, on the north side, Johnes had been able to create a circuit walk by linking up and remodelling existing paths.

Thomas Johnes rationalized the Hafod estate into a more coherent shape by exchange and purchase of land, and increased its size to nearly 13,000 acres. Much of it was tenanted but, according to Warner, Johnes had nearly 5,000 acres in hand,[16] and here he was able to pursue three interrelated interests: planting, farming, and landscape design. As regards the last of these, he had achieved great changes within the first four or five years, but tantalizing little can be gleaned from documentary sources about his methods and intentions, or by whom he was influenced. He was very well-read and widely travelled, having toured Europe with Robert Liston and, when an under-graduate at Edinburgh, explored the Scottish Highlands. Having been brought up in Herefordshire as a friend and neighbour of the two great Picturesque theorists, Richard Payne Knight (who was Johnes's cousin) and Uvedale Price, he must certainly have absorbed many of their ideas, but one could argue that equally he may have influenced them through his activities at Hafod. There is no evidence that Johnes employed a landscape gardener as such, but one acknowledged source of guidance was William Mason's lengthy poem, *The English Garden* (2nd Ed. 1783). Mason was informed by William Gilpin that Johnes had taken his book in hand and "wanted no other direction" when laying out the paths and lawns at Hafod.[17] Johnes had visited Gilpin in 1787 to show him the sketches by Thomas Jones of Pencerrig and to urge him to include a description of Hafod in the next edition of his "Wye Tour". Gilpin duly obliged in his second edition, published in 1789, and we therefore know that by then the two main circuit walks - Lady's and Gentleman's - had been laid out, with all the necessary excavation (including the Cavern Cascade) and construction of supporting walls and bridges, and also a longer "riding" devised.[18] From Jane Johnes's letters we know that the kitchen garden and flower garden had been created, two fishponds made, and of course the new house (designed by Thomas Baldwin of Bath) built and ready for occupation in 1788.[19] The Jones sketches and Crown Derby "Hafod service" views show the Alpine Bridge and Cold Bath to be in existence by 1786-7.[20]

A second important reference point comes with the publication, in 1796, of George Cumberland's *An Attempt to Describe Hafod.* This contains the earliest detailed description, and the only map, of Johnes's principal walks and the features and views along them. By this time Johnes had acquired from Lord Lisburne the farms on the east banks of Nant Peiran and Nant Gau, north and south of the river respectively, which opened up new possibilities for extended walks and link paths.[21] A new, stone-arched bridge, which would become an important practical and visual focal point in the enlarged demesne, was built at Dologau, and a start made on the New Walk along the south side of the Ystwyth gorge. After 1790, a new road was constructed north of Coed Hafod, enabling Johnes to close the parish road past his house and thus enhance his privacy.[22] To emphasise the point, lodges were built at either end of the old road; known as Arch Uchaf and Arch Isaf, these may have been designed by John Nash, who was making alterations to the mansion in 1793-4. They have long since been demolished and only one image of Arch Isaf (west or lower lodge) survives.[23] A new main drive was made (in existence by 1795) from an entrance just east of the church, where a third lodge, "Iron Gate" (now Upper Lodge) was built. This drive was important to the experience of visitors, bringing them into the demesne through beautiful woods, where paths could be seen winding through the trees and glimpses and sounds of water were discernable, and finally rounding an "careless and elegant bend" to a suddenly revealed view of the mansion in the midst of its lawns.

Johnes's experimental and innovative work in the fields of planting and farming has been well discussed in a number of published sources. Of the two activities, he regarded planting as the more important and his commitment to it was unwavering, in spite of a high rate of losses caused by climatic conditions, depredations by sheep, and poor quality plants. Johnes holds a place of honour in the history of forestry for his attempts to convert large areas of low-grade hill pasture into productive plantations. At the time there was considerable concern in Britain about the country's depleted woodlands, particularly with regard to timber reserves for ship-building (as compared with the enemy, France), and Johnes was rewarded for his efforts with Gold Medals from the Royal Society of Arts (RSA), prizes from the Cardiganshire Agricultural Society, and the sobriquet "the patriotic Mr Johnes" from visitors. His records of trees planted before 1807 were destroyed in the mansion fire of that year and later ones have not survived, so evidence is rather imprecise and anecdotal. Although figures and species are given in the RSA returns, no locations are named nor any indication given as to whether old woods were being restocked or virgin sites planted. The numbers are impressive, and suggest that Johnes may have planted between three and four million trees in total, but this should be placed in perspective against high failure rates and a dense planting regime of 4,000 trees to the acre.[24]

As a result of the above circumstances, two misconceptions have arisen. The first is that Hafod was devoid of woodland when Johnes acquired it, whereas, as we have seen, the demesne was well wooded. The second is that he covered thousands of acres of former sheepwalk with flourishing plantations: but the area described in the 1832 Sale Catalogue as "plantation" amounts to only 473 acres and a surveyor noted that the trees were far from flourishing.[25] For the most part these were larch plantations covering the higher slopes to the north-east of Hafod, formerly parts of Pwllpeiran and Bodcoll farms, and the hills east of Nant y Cae. The type of ground chosen and the fencing methods used to protect the plantations from sheep are described in Johnes's correspondence with the RSA[26] The 1832 Catalogue lists a further 331 acres of woodland and 103 acres of wood with pasture; much of Johnes's broad-leaved plantings must have taken place here, in the form of underplanting or restocking. He is known to have clear-felled in Coed Hafod and replanted with oak and beech and is considered to be responsible for the fine beeches which still adorn Pants Melyn hill and Allt Dihananog.

Johnes's farming activities were subject to alternating bouts of enthusiasm and disappointment. In such a remote location, a mixed home farm was important to ensure a year-round supply of produce, especially meat, but in common with many of his class and generation Johnes went further, using his farm to try out new methods and to instruct others. Until 1806 he farmed an area (of unspecified size) covering the fields and wood-pasture of the demesne and probably most of Pwllpeiran, Cefn yr Esgair, Gwaryrallt and Tyn y Clyttie farms, with a farmstead at Pendre, near the mansion. The buildings at the farm were designed by Johnes and described in his own book, *A Cardiganshire Landlord's Advice to his Tenants* (published in English and Welsh, 1800); a good eye-witness account is given by Thomas Martyn.[27] Warner states that Johnes owned 200 cattle and between 2,000 and 3,000 sheep of assorted breeds.[28] To feed animals kept through the winter, hay was produced from the riverside meadows (of which some were water-meadows), and turnips, potatoes, oats, barley, and even wheat - of which Johnes was especally proud - were also grown. Exotic (for Cardiganshire) breeds of both cattle and sheep were introduced, and equally exotic cheeses made.

By 1806 Johnes had decided that he could no longer justify the high capital input and poor returns of this farm. He demolished the buildings, taking care to recycle the materials, and let out the most of the land to tenants, keeping in hand only the meadows and wood pasture of the demesne, lying between the river and the parish road to the north. He then turned his attention to developing the New Farm, with a purpose-built farmstead, known as Gelmast, located about 1/2 mile north of Pwllpeiran, and 2,000 acres of land reaching from there far into the hills to the east. The layout of the fields and shelter belts

in the vicinity of Gelmast is described by Davies and Malkin.[29] Johnes's intention was to improve poor hill-grazing and peat bog by draining, paring and burning, and laying down new grass, and then to use the new grassland for sheep. Presumably this involved putting into practice his sheep regime, described in 1801. However, by 1812 he had once again become disillusioned and had disposed of his sheep flock, largely because of the difficulty of preventing their invasion and destruction of his plantations. In the meantime he had found a new enthusiasm, for fiorin grass (*Agrostis stolonifera*), by which he hoped to develop good upland pasture for cattle.[30]

Sketch of the Peiran Cascade, by William Owen (Pughe), c.1800. From NLW Volume of Drawings 57.
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Thomas Johnes set the seal on his various landscape improvements by ensuring that Hafod would be visited, admired, and commented upon by people of influence and discernment. Particular friends stayed with him at Hafod, but other accommodation was needed for the increasing number of people taking "picturesque tours" of Wales. In 1790 Johnes acquired a farm adjacent to the Devil's Bridge, where the wild and sublime scenery provided an exciting complement to Hafod. Here he selected a spectacular site for a "little public cottage", which in 1795 was enlarged into an inn, the Hafod Arms. The publication in the following year of *An Attempt to Describe Hafod* did much to persuade tourists to include Hafod and the Devil's Bridge in their itinerary, and when some of these visitors then published their own accounts of the landscape, Hafod's fame spread further and each successive summer saw greater numbers arriving. By 1800 the extent of walks available to them had, according to one tourist, been reduced, though no explanation or details are given.[31] Certainly Cumberland is the only visitor to describe the "return"

sections of the two main walks - i.e. the Lady's Walk from the church to Pendre and the mansion, and the Gentleman's Walk western extremity with flying bridge to the kitchen garden - and only Cumberland and Smith[32] (and writers copying from them) describe the Maen Arthur Walk on Lord Lisburne's land west of Pontrhydygroes. The reasons for shortening the walks were probably logistical, as most visitors came only for a few hours and expected to be shown around by the gardener. The usual pattern was for visitors to arrive from Devil's Bridge by post-chaise and begin by viewing the interior of the house. They might then take a look at the kitchen garden before being conducted by the gardener along the north bank of the river to the flower garden. From there they could proceed to Dologau bridge and either ascend to the south to see the Cavern Cascade or take the New Walk along the Ystwyth gorge to the chain bridge and back (post-1805). Some did both but others did neither, simply following the Lady's Walk up to the Peiran Falls and then to Upper Lodge where their post-chaise awaited them. Johnes regretted that visitors allowed so little time for enjoying his landscape, and for those guests who, like Smith and Malkin, were privileged to stay with him, more extensive walks and a tour of the farm were available.

Perhaps more than any of his "picturesque" generation, Johnes recognised that the landscape was a living entity, constantly subject to renewal and decay, and that it could not be tied down to sterile, prescriptive rules. He also expected it to be a working environment, and to provide an outlet for his restless creativity. *An Attempt to Describe Hafod* captured the landscape at a moment in time, as the product of Johnes's initial vision, but in the twenty years that followed he made continual modifications to its design. Among the features added were a pensile garden for his daughter, Mariamne (1795), the nearby Bedford Monument and walks to the garden (1805), a walk on the east bank of Nant Gau (late 1790s), the New Walk, of a very different character to earlier ones, along the gorge to the chain bridge (1805), the replacement of the "rude" Alpine Bridge by a double-arched wooden structure (by 1812), the rebuilding of the church to a design by James Wyatt (1802-3), picturesque houses for the gardener and bailiff at Pencreigiau and Pendre Uchaf (by 1803), the Arch on the road to Devil's Bridge (1809), and a new east drive to Cwmystwyth, crossing the Peiran by Pont Newydd (1813-14). Features were also erased: certain buildings shown on Cumberland's map, including the old mill and several farmsteads and cottages, simply vanished from the scene over the next few years. As well as documented alterations to the landscape, there are many that can only be discovered from field evidence: viewing platforms and spur paths, significant plantings, manipulation of streams to create water features.

After Johnes's death in 1816, his widow resided in Devon until her own death in 1833. Hafod was left furnished and visitors were still admitted to the house and grounds; at the very least a housekeeper and a gardener or bailiff must have remained in post. For a time the mansion was occupied by tenants, the Churchills, though the only record of their presence is parish register entries showing that three children were baptised, 1820-24. Sale of the estate was held up by two circumstances: the uncompleted purchase by Thomas Claughton, initiated in 1814 but then stalled, and the complex problem of Johnes's encroachments on Crown land.[33] Once these matters were resolved, the estate was put up for auction in 1832.

The purchaser was Henry Pelham, 4th Duke of Newcastle (1785-1851), who in August 1834 paid £62,038.16s.8d for Hafod. It was presumably at his behest that the estate plan of 1834 was drawn up, showing the precise extent of the estate and its subdivision into demesne and tenanted farms. It records a great deal of information about the distribution of woodland, buildings and roads, but is at too small a scale to show paths. The Duke also bought two smaller estates in mid-Wales: Cwm Elan near Rhayader and Dolclettwr near Machynlleth. During his ownership of Hafod he added properties to it by purchase, mainly to the west around Pontrhydygroes and in the hills to the south-west, and by leasing, notably Tynllwyn at Devil's Bridge and Pentre Briwnant (Cwmystwyth) village.[34]

It is often alleged that the Duke bought Hafod as a retreat, to escape the many enemies he had made through his vigorous opposition to Parliamentary reform, but the evidence does not support this. He retained his main residence at Clumber, Notts. and a house in London, using Hafod rather as a holiday home. He would visit for several weeks in the late summer and autumn, usually accompanied by some of his adult children, and would enjoy shooting, making excursions, visiting Aberystwyth for the theatre and sea-bathing, and riding around the estate making plans for improvements. At first he was full of ambitious schemes, including a proposed new village, and he spent generously on a major renovation of the mansion, enlarging the Hafod Arms at Devil's Bridge, converting the Cwmystwyth lodge into a school, and repairing or replacing estate buildings, both those in hand and those on tenanted farms. But by 1841 he was experiencing financial problems and became acutely aware that Hafod brought in insufficient income to pay for its day-to-day running. By 1843 he was looking for a purchaser.[35]

The Duke employed four successive agents, of variable quality, to manage the Hafod estate. The third of these, Hall Keary (in post April 1839-?1841), was by the far the most efficient. Keary's arrival brought to an end a period of protracted and unseemly bickering between various employees and contractors, some of whom he summarily dismissed. Keary kept meticulous accounts, of which one set survives - Lady-day 1840 to Lady-day 1841. The estate was managed in a conventional manner, with none of the experimentation and risky capital ventures which characterised the Johnes years. Even so, in an area of marginal farmland and low rents, it was not a profitable concern. The Duke had hopes of discovering mineral wealth on his land, but his explorations came to nothing. The woods and plantations were one aspect of the estate that provided a reasonable return. For instance, Keary's accounts (see above) show that, for the twelve months in question, the cost of labour and sundries was £144 while the income from sales of poles, firewood, etc. was £214. A saw pit, workshops, and sheds were constructed at Pendre yard in 1837. In the early years of the Duke's ownership a full-time woodman, Alexander Williamson, was employed, but Keary appears to have dispensed with his services. There are regular references in the Duke's papers to work on plantations, but it is rarely made clear whether they are new plantations or those inherited from Johnes. It would appear that, in late 1837, a new area of plantation was created at Allt yr Dafarn, and in 1845 four acres were planted at Devil's Bridge. Some areas of woodland were managed as game coverts, as the Duke was a keen sportsman. A gamekeeper was employed and casual labour taken on to keep watch against poachers and to repair fences. A number of letters refer to the problems caused by sheep getting into coverts.

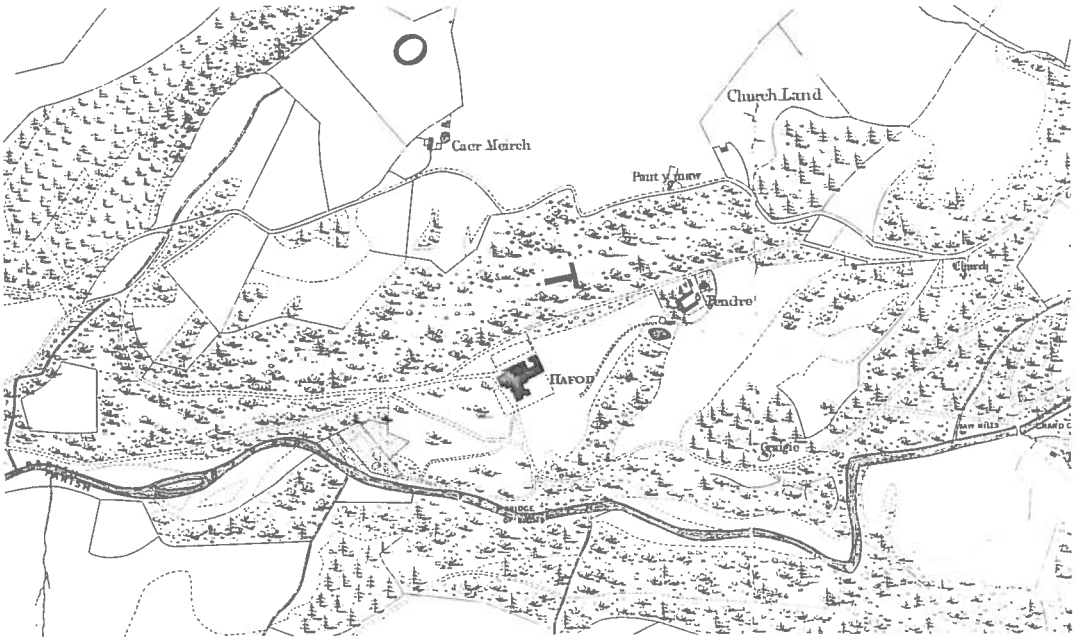
Under Newcastle the home farm was based at Pwllpeiran. The papers do not specify the total acreage in hand. The greater part of the Duke's sheep flock (1,300+) was kept on the Glanhiran hill farm, part of the Cwm Elan estate but run in conjunction with Pwllpeiran. On Hafod land a few hundred sheep were kept and about twenty dairy cows, whose offspring were sold locally or for fattening in England. There were occasional transfers of stock between Hafod and Clumber. The bailiff at Hafod was John Lown, whom Keary described as "extremely honest and faithful" and "a thoroughly practical farmer". References to building and repairing fences are scattered through the letters, and also the accounts include a section on "Gates and Fences" though with no details of location or work done. A considerable amount was spent on draining. In 1840 the Duke decided to reduce the size of the home farm, though again the acreage is not stated. The old farmhouse at Pwllpeiran, together with what was probably the lion's share of the land (the rent was 100 guineas p.a., the highest on the estate), was let to John and Peter Nicol, from Derbyshire.

Although the grounds at Hafod were open to visitors in the Duke's time, the fashion for taking tours to wild places in pursuit of the Picturesque had waned. Hafod became a place to be visited on a day out

from Aberystwyth; descriptions of its grounds are few, not very detailed, and not always favourable. The Duke was criticised for neglecting the walks and gardens in favour of raising pheasants.[36] One full-time gardener was employed at a yearly salary of £62.10s, and casual labour taken on when required. The gardener's duties were probably mainly concentrated in the kitchen garden, where a vinery was being either built or restored in 1837-8. By 1845 the gardener, James Lister, was also covering the woodman's duties. There is very little to be gleaned from the Duke's papers about maintenance and improvements in the grounds. In the area around the house, the "Duke's Drive" was built (1837), crossing the lower lawn and acting as a by-pass to the house. Planting and other landscape changes may have been executed, or at least planned, as part of this scheme, perhaps by William Sawrey Gilpin (who had worked for the Duke at Clumber) but as yet the details are unclear. In the following year the Duke created a pond in an upland hollow ¾ mile north of the mansion, but whether its purpose was primarily recreational or practical (i.e. for water supply) is not explained. There is nothing to suggest that the Duke made any significant alterations to the walks and views in the demesne, other than one brief reference to improvements being made around the Peiran Falls in 1843.

In 1846, having finally paid the settlement for the Crown lands and seen off a railway scheme that threatened Hafod, the Duke succeeded in selling the estate. The buyer was Henry Hoghton, heir to a baronetcy with wealthy estates in Lancashire. Hoghton's brief time at Hafod, which was marred by scandal and tragedy in his personal life, is very poorly documented. Soon after his arrival, in 1847, the Tithe Survey took place and recorded the pattern of fields and woods, but it is of limited help in assessing the details of the demesne landscape and contains a number of errors, notably a wild miscalculation of the extent of woodland. There is no documentary evidence that Hoghton made changes to the landscape, other than in the curtilage of the house. He engaged the architect Anthony Salvin to enlarge the house by building a huge extension in an Italianate style, complete with campanile. In doing so, he sowed the seeds of the mansion's destruction by making it unmanageably large. It is probable that he intended to demolish all or part of Johnes's house but this was not done, nor was the new wing completed. The westward expansion of the building necessitated levelling the ground; a drawing of 1848 by the architect's wife, Anne Salvin, shows earth piled up on the west lawn.[37] Hoghton was almost certainly responsible for re-routing the main drive, so that its gently curving dip and ascent was replaced by a straight, level section passing through a new rock cutting. Probably at the same time a ha-ha was constructed and formal beds laid out east of the house, which may be the work of W.A.Nesfield or his son A.M.Nesfield.[38] At Pwllpeiran, Hoghton built a new house for the agent, again designed by Salvin, but now demolished.

In 1855 the Hafod estate was sold at auction. The new owner was William Chambers (1809-1882), a prominent liberal and industrialist from Llanelli.[39] Having the misfortune to have been born illegitimate, he was unable to inherit his father's properties in South Wales and Kent, and therefore bought Hafod as a country residence where he could raise his large family and, he hoped, derive an income from the natural resources. Chambers was a member of the Scottish Arboricultural Society and his returns to that body show that he found an abundance of young and mature timber at Hafod, from 20 to 70 years old, including "700 acres of larch" (probably an exaggeration).[40] A water-powered sawmill was built beside Nant Peiran, and over a 12-year period Chambers felled, processed and sold both soft and hardwoods. From an examination of an estate plan of 1864 it would appear that the plantations were thinned rather than clear-felled, and that at least one new area of plantation (on Cefn Dyris) was created. Chambers also granted leases to mining companies and engaged in some exploration himself, though only vestiges of this work can be traced in the demesne.



Hafod Estate Plan (detail) of 1864, showing the layout of the estate buildings, woodland and kitchen garden. The Alpine Bridge is labelled "Bridge of Sighs".
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Severe financial difficulties obliged Chambers to put Hafod up for auction in 1864, but only some outlying parts were sold, including the inn, farm, and embryonic village at Devil's Bridge. Another auction was planned in 1870 but did not take place. Eventually, in 1872, Hafod was sold to John Waddingham of Guiting Grange, near Cheltenham, and a long period of stability and wise investment began. Very little documentation survives, but it is known that Waddingham reorganised the house, completing some (though not all) of the rooms left unfinished by Hoghton, demolished superfluous outbuildings and constructed a new stable block, which still stands (dated 1882). Changes made to the curtilage - perhaps following a plan by Nesfield - included a conifer avenue planted along the front drive and a terrace wall built to the south and west of the house. A new west lodge was built, new buildings erected in the kitchen garden and the gardener's cottage enlarged. Farther afield, Waddingham made improvements to estate farms, and created new plantations of European larch.[41] The Devil's Bridge portion of the estate, sold by Chambers, was bought back. An important occurrence during this period was the survey (1885-7) for the First Edition, 25 Inch Ordnance Survey plan, which provided the first detailed record of demesne features, including the network of paths and tracks. Some 70% to 80% of the walks described by Cumberland in 1796 can be traced with certainty on the plans, and many other paths make their first documented appearance. A ford is shown crossing the river in the Ystwyth meadow.

After John Waddingham's death in 1890, Hafod passed to his younger son, T.J.Waddingham. He and his wife took a particular interest in Church matters; under their direction Eglwys Newydd was restored, a mission church built at Devil's Bridge, and both Hafod and Devil's Bridge provided with a vicarage. It

is believed that the grounds and gardens were well maintained during this period but no records survive. A small area behind the mansion (described as the "drying ground" on the Tithe Survey) was planted with shrubs and possibly ornamented with built features, and became known as the Japanese Garden. In the early part of the twentieth century the estate derived a steady income from the sale of timber and wood products, and T.J. Waddingham was active in encouraging the Vale of Rheidol Railway scheme (opened 1903), which reduced transport costs. However, with no direct heir and in the knowledge (confirmed on his sister's death in 1918) that Hafod would be have to be sold when he died, Waddingham's motivation for investing in the estate's future was much diminished, and after his wife's death in 1910 he became something of a recluse.42 The estate, by now extending to 16,000 acres, was reduced in size in 1929 when over 5,000 acres of upland in the north-east, including much of what had formerly been Johnes's experimental farm, were leased to the Forestry Commission. In 1933, Pwllpeiran, Prignant, and Nantrhys farms, totalling 3,000 acres, were rented to the University of Wales under the Cahn Hill Improvement Scheme (named after the benefactor who financed it, Sir Julian Cahn).[43] In the 1950s this area was purchased by MAFF and became the Experimental Husbandry Farm, now ADAS.

After Waddingham's death in 1938, his nieces arranged an auction of the mansion's contents and sought a buyer for the estate. In 1940 it was bought by W.G.Tarrant, a timber merchant and master builder from Surrey.[44] Although possessed of ambitions to restore the house and make the estate a flourishing concern, Tarrant was short of money and started the process of large scale clear-felling, justified by the demands of the war effort. He also made vigorous efforts to interest the Ministry of Supply in Hafod's mining potential, and opened up some of the old levels on Allt Dihanog. One substantial landscape feature was created: the barrage across the river at Dologau, which supplied hydro-electric power to the house, estate cottages, and buildings. Tarrant, who was the last to use the mansion as a permanent home, died suddenly in 1942, and subsequently Hafod was owned by a succession of timber merchants. With each change of ownership the estate was reduced in size, as farms were sold to tenants, and in 1949 the house was gutted when an auction of its fixtures and fittings was held. In 1950, most of the demesne and some outlying areas were acquired for the Forestry Commission.

The early years of the Forestry Commission's custodianship of Hafod were not happy ones. No means of rescuing the dilapidated house could be found and its destruction began, first by piecemeal demolition and finally, in 1958, by dynamite. Dense softwood plantations appeared on the sides and floor of the Ystwyth valley, where formerly there had been mixed woodland or open meadow. To facilitate forestry operations, a concrete bridge was erected across the river in the heart of the demesne, and new roads made on either side, obliterating some lengths of old path and part of the Flower Garden. Historic built features, such as the Alpine Bridge, were allowed to decay.

In the 1980s there was increasing public awareness and concern for Hafod, and a local voluntary society, the Friends of Hafod, was formed. This, combined with the presence of a sympathetic forest manager and availability of limited public funding for restoration, gave rise to a scheme for opening up and restoring parts of the demesne. Two new trails were created, almost entirely along the routes of old estate paths, and the Flower Garden and Mariamne's Garden were cleared and their walls and gateways rebuilt. Unfortunately very little attention was given to systematic archaeological recording or to historical authenticity. The restoration of the Bedford Monument (1988) was carried out in a more considered way.

In 1989 a new charitable body, the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust, came into being. Following a generous offer of grant aid for Hafod from a private benefactor, the Trust entered into negotiations with the Forestry Commission, and in 1992 a Hafod Heritage Partnership Agreement was signed. Documentary and field research by landscape consultants Landskip and Prospect, assisted by the Friends of Hafod and other interested parties, culminated in the production of a Conservation Strategic Plan for the demesne.[45]

Work began on planning the restoration of the Alpine Bridge, starting with a detailed archaeological survey of its extant structures, and on clearing and reconstructing a section of the Lady's Walk from the Flower Garden to the church. Forest Enterprise (part of the Forestry Commission) began the gradual process of restoring the landscape by clear-felling or thinning plantations along the route of the walk, and produced a Forest Design Plan for Hafod. In 1994, the WHGT transferred its responsibilities for the Hafod project to the newly formed Hafod Trust which continued the work in progress and fund-raising. In 1996 the rebuilt Alpine Bridge was opened, the post of Hafod Warden was created, and a bicentenary edition of An Attempt to Describe Hafod was published by the Hafod Trust. In the same year the results of a sites and monuments survey, commissioned by the Hafod Partnership from Cambria Archaeology, were made available as the Hafod Archaeological Database, to which new data is added as research and fieldwork continues. In 1997 two interim circuit walks were devised and waymarked, and a guide leaflet produced jointly by the Trust and Forest Enterprise.

At the time of writing, work is expected to start in the near future on the last major constructional section of the Lady's Walk, along the river bank upstream from the Alpine Bridge. Further archaeological and ecological surveys of parts of the demesne are in preparation. An application to the Heritage Lottery Fund, based on the Hafod Management Guidelines produced by the Partnership in 1998, has been made and other work at Hafod awaits the result of this bid. If successful, this will make possible the employment of a full-time estate manager, with office and research facilities on site from which further studies, forestry, and conservation work can be supervised. A phased approach will be adopted to the renewal of the estate, with surveys, fine-tuning and implementation of the forest design, repair of paths and other historical features, and decisions on land management being co-ordinated within each of five landscape zones. It is hoped that this will enable the vast, complicated, but exhilarating and precious landscape at Hafod to once again do justice to the vision of Thomas Johnes and be a source of delight to all who wish to visit it and experience its unique character.

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29. Walter Davies's diary, NLW Ms 1755Bii (1813); B.H. Malkin, as note 14 above but 2nd Ed. (1807), pp.93-94.

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31. York City Record Office, Acc. 5 & 6, T/3 a & b (*A Tour of Wales*, by Jonathan Gray). I am grateful to Thomas Lloyd for this reference.

32. J.E. Smith, *A Tour to Hafod* (1810).

33. The Crown claimed an interest in 7,438 acres of sheepwalk at Hafod, of which Johnes had enclosed and planted or improved 606 acres. See "A Return.." at note 25 above.

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THE GARDENS OF PLAS TAN-Y-BWLCH

KIM AUSTON

*In 1996 the Plas Tan-y-Bwlch Gardens Trust decided to make an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for grant aid that would secure the long-term future of the gardens. The Trust appointed Nicholas Pearson Associates to carry out a Historic Landscape Survey and make proposals that could be put forward to the Lottery Fund [1]. In 1997 the Lottery Fund awarded the Trust a substantial grant to help restore the gardens and create a Visitors' Reception on the site of the Walled Garden (demolished in the 1960s). **The historic landscape survey was crucial to the success of the bid, in that it demonstrated to the Lottery Fund that the gardens possessed considerable historic, as well as aesthetic, interest. In particular, the research drew attention to a possible connection with Humphry Repton. It is a summary of this work which is presented here.*

Plas Tan-y-Bwlch is a big castellated house, the larger part of which is of nineteenth century origin, which rises up on a hillside overlooking the Vale of Ffestiniog and the village of Maentwrog. Until 1961 it was a private house, surrounded by gardens and woods extending to many acres. Today it is owned by the Snowdonia National Park and is run as a field studies centre. The gardens are cared for separately by the Plas Tan-y-Bwlch Gardens Trust. The gardens are open to the public, attracting 4,000-5,000 visitors a year.

Early Tourists

During the second half of the eighteenth century, the popularity of North Wales as a destination for those refined members of society in search of stimulating landscapes was rapidly increasing. The growth in tourism was particularly marked during the frequent periods of political unrest, when it became impossible to undertake the Grand Tour. Plas Tan-y-Bwlch, a substantial but by no means grand house, lay on one of the routes most frequented by travellers and tourists. The house and its grounds began to appear regularly in the background of views painted by these cultured visitors, many of whom put up for the night at the Tan-y-Bwlch Inn (now the Oakeley Arms) below the Plas. In one such view, probably drawn by Moses Griffith during Thomas Pennant's tour of Wales in 1770, the public house occupies the foreground, with the Plas shown behind, clinging to a wooded hill; you can also note a small tower on top of the hill, the significance of which will become apparent. Pennant, like other tourists, was much taken with the situation of the Plas which he described as *a house, embosomed with woods, most charmingly situated on the side of the hill.* As an aside, he noted: *This seat, from the quick succession of owners by the fatal attachment to the bottle, has occasioned many a moral reflection from the English traveller.*[2]

Craddock was one of many travellers who followed in Pennant's footsteps. In his *Account of the Most Romantic Parts of North Wales*, published in 1777, he records:

I was much struck with the situation of Mrs Griffith's house at Tan y Bwlch, - at first sight it somewhat resembled Matlock Bath, but the hills in front are thrown to a fine distance, and behind the house they are covered in wood; - through a very spacious valley the river Dyryd runs, and from the tops of the mountains are frequent and not inconsiderable cataracts, - indeed most of the romantic prospects of North Wales, taken separately, are infinitely superior to those of Derbyshire; but where shall we find within the same distance, such amazing contrast as the high polish of Keddleston, opposed to the bleak horrors of the peak .[3]

The Vale of Plas Tan-y-Bwlch by Fancis Towne, 1777.
Reproduced by kind permission of The National Museum of Wales.

Francis Towne's view of the *Vale of Tan y Bwlch*, painted in 1777, shows the house in the distance, sitting above a great terrace (not visible in Moses Griffith's slightly earlier view, but almost certainly present then) surrounded by dense woods (Pennant's *'embosomed with woods'*); no other detail of the grounds is given.

Not every tourist was as complementary about the Plas as Pennant and Craddock. The Honourable John Byng, later Viscount Torrington, paid a visit to the area in 1784 and wrote: *The Vale has (in my opinion) been puff'd off beyond its deservings, by the pens of fanciful writers; and is in fact not worthy of such fiction, being very inferior to some spots we have lately seen; for the river is meanly-meandring and so shallow, and full of shoals at low water, that a lady might cross it on foot. Mrs Griffids house is surrounded by beauties it does not enjoy; as it takes the worst part of the view, and there are no walks or rides, cut in the wood.*[4]

The outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 made it impossible for young gentlemen to travel in Europe and the steady stream of visitors to North Wales soon became a positive torrent. However, away from Europe, a matter of far greater significance to the household at Plas Tan-y-Bwlch was taking place, namely the marriage between Margaret Griffith and William Oakeley.[5]

Improvement and Beautification

William Oakeley began making improvements to the estate in 1791, shortly after his marriage; the improvements included building, clearing and fencing of uplands and woodlands, as well as improvements to moorlands (by which was meant the low-lying parts of the valley, subject to flooding). Oakeley was, in fact, awarded a gold medal from the Society for the encouragement of Arts for his embanking and draining[6]. None of this impressed the irascible John Byng, who returned to the area in 1793: *Mr Oakeleys house who to his woods surrounding - and to the stream rattling down the hill has added neither walks, nor improvements, altho the stream might be view'd - and impeded most advantageously.*[7]

However, within three years, Sir Christopher Sykes was able to record a transformation: *I wandered upon a Hill beyond Mr Oakleys beautifull Wood and walks and have a fine view of this Vale and the Bays formed by the Rivers which fall into the Sea between Merionethshire and Carnarvonshire, and behind of all the Mountainous Country we had passed. Mr Oakeley is a Shropshire Gent: who has married an heiress of the Griffith family. He has improved this Vale by embanking out the River and underdraining in the Meadows or Marshes as they were, for this vale is of the same nature as all the other we have passed, large flat marshes from 1/4 of a mile to 1 wide, in which the Rivers take their many Courses. He has also made many fine Walls in the Woods, and constantly employs from 30 to 40 Hands. He will be of infinite use to this Country by shewing the Welsh Gent en, what their Country is capable of.*[8]

The practical improvements to the estate undertaken by Mr Oakeley, particularly the embanking of the river, might be thought to conflict with the Picturesque ideal that drew travellers to this part of Wales. However, the Reverend John Skinner, who was touring the area in 1800, does not seem to have been aware of any such conflict; he enthused both about the 'natural' scenery and Mr Oakeley's practical improvements to it:

...as we approached the place of our destination, the Country if possible became more striking. Immense rocks in the foreground appeared starting from the heath clad soil, whilst distant hills filled up the intervening spaces in the grey mists...all is rugged and steep, vast and gigantic...but the scene is now changed: the fertility of the much renowned Delta in Egypt could scarcely surpass the prospect we observed in looking down on the vale beneath; here the most luxuriant meadows just mown, stretched like a green carpet the whole length of the valley: mountains clothed with the richest foliage bounded it on all sides; a clear river ran through the midst; whilst the elegant mansion of the fortunate possessor of this beautiful domain, rose like a Queen, on a lofty eminence, to receive hommage from her surrounding vassals.[9]

Skinner took the opportunity to explore the grounds of the elegant mansion and was highly gratified by what he saw: *The house is surrounded by a grove of oaks and timber trees, rising quite to the summit of the hill, intersected at intervals by a variety of winding walks, every where diversified by rocks, cascades, rustic seats, and bridges. Whilst we ascended the hill, there was sufficient to occupy the attention near at hand, in different views of the vale beneath; but when we gained the summit, a prospect of another kind at once arrested our attention. Here the wide Ocean appeared before us; a chain of mountains rising one above another, filled the other parts of this grand Panorama*[9].

What a transformation had been effected. It was only sixteen years earlier that John Byng had criticised the Plas for having *the worst part of the view* and for the absence of *walks or rides, cut in the wood...*

Headlong Hall and Humphry Repton

1811 and 1812 are significant years in the history of the Plas. In 1811, Thomas Love Peacock met Jane Griffith, his future wife, the daughter of the rector of Ffestiniog. The rector was a cousin of the Griffiths of Tan-y-Bwlch; moreover, his first wife was the widow of Evan Griffith of Tan-y-Bwlch; the families must therefore have been close.[10] In the same year, 1811, William Oakeley died and was succeeded by his son, Willliam Griffith Oakeley (1790-1835). In 1812, the last known view of the tower on the hill above the Plas was painted.

W.G. Oakeley was as much of an improver as his father had been: he bought more land;[11] he also built or rebuilt several houses in Maentwrog village; he altered the Tan-y-Bwlch Inn; and he opened a quarry. Such energy is likely to have found expression in the grounds around the Plas, but what alterations were made are not recorded; at least, they are not recorded in the conventional illustrative and documentary record. On this occasion, however, fiction may be of some assistance.

In 1815, Thomas Love Peacock published, anonymously, ***Headlong Hall***, in which he lampooned fashionable taste and, probably, his future wife's family and friends. For those who do not know the book, it is a satire upon the dispute between the practitioners of the Picturesque and, in particular, the conflict between Humphry Repton (Marmaduke Milestone) and Uvedale Price (Sir Patrick O'Prism). The following excerpts give some idea of the flavour of the book:

Mr Milestone was a picturesque landscape gardener of the first celebrity, who was not without hopes of persuading Squire Headlong to put his romantic pleasure-grounds under a process of improvement, promising himself a signal triumph for his incomparable art in the difficult, and, therefore, glorious achievement of polishing and trimming the rocks of Llanberris...

The object that most attracted Mr Milestone's admiration was a ruined tower on a projecting point of rock, almost totally overgrown with ivy. This ivy, Mr Milestone observed, required trimming and clearing in various parts: a little pointing and polishing was also necessary for the dilapidated walls: and the whole effect would be materially increased by a plantation of spruce fir, interspersed with cypress and juniper, the present broken and rugged ascent from the land side being first converted into a beautiful slope, which might be easily effected by blowing up a part of the rock with gunpowder, laying on a quantity of fine mould, and covering the whole with an elegant stratum of turf...

...the explosion took place, and the shattered rock was hurled into the air in the midst of fire and smoke.

Mr. Milestone had properly calculated the force of the explosion; for the tower remained untouched: but the Squire, in his consolatory reflections, had omitted the consideration of the influence of sudden fear which had so violent an effect on Mr Cranium, who was just commencing a speech concerning a very fine prospect from the top of the tower, that, cutting short the thread of his observations, he bounded, under the elastic influence of terror, several feet into the air. His ascent being unluckily a little out of the perpendicular, he descended with a proportionate curve from the apex of his projection, and alighted not on the wall of the tower, but in an ivy-bush by its side, which, giving way beneath him, transferred him to a tuft of hazel at its base, which, after upholding him an instant, consigned him to the boughs of an ash that had rooted itself in a fissure about half way down the rock, which finally transmitted him to the waters below.[11]

Headlong Hall itself has traditionally been considered to be an artistic amalgam of properties, but there is a body of circumstantial evidence which makes an attribution to Plas Tan-y-Bwlch worthy of serious consideration:

- the geographic location of Headlong Hall/Plas Tan-y-Bwlch between Caernarvon, Beddgelert, Capel Curig and Tremadoc, all locations which appear in the book;
- Peacock's familiarity with the Plas and the Oakeleys, through his marriage to the rector's daughter; Peacock is known to have stayed in Maentwrog in about 1811-12;
- the length of Peacock's courtship with Jane Griffith (they finally married in 1820) suggests a stronger connection with the area than implied by a single visit;
- the artists' record of a ruined tower in the woods at Plas Tan-y-Bwlch until 1812, but not afterwards, suggesting its sudden (explosive?) removal, paralleling the explosion in the vicinity of the tower recorded in ***Headlong Hall***.
- the 22 year interval between the anonymous publication of ***Headlong Hall*** and its publication under Peacock's name; were the circumstances described and the characters portrayed too easily identifiable? It may be significant that William Griffith Oakeley/Squire Headlong died in 1835, and the novel, bearing Peacock's own name at last, was republished (with other works) in 1837.[12]

'A little ruin in the wood of Plas Tan-y-Bwlch', P.E. Becker, , 1812.
Reproduced by kind permission of The National Library of Wales.

If Plas Tan-y-Bwlch is the model for Headlong Hall and Marmaduke Milestone is the model for Humphry Repton, does this mean that the Plas can be added to the list of Repton commissions in Wales? At present, only three commissions in Wales can definitely be attributed to Repton: Rûg (Clwyd) 1793, Plas Newydd (Anglesey) 1798-1803, and Stanage Park (Powys) c.1803.[13] Nevertheless, it has long been thought that there might be more Repton landscapes in Wales, and the following contemporary observation indicates that Repton was giving advice to quite a number of potential clients in north Wales:

We passed some Gentlemens houses which seemed good, & Comfortable from additions which have been made to them as family seats, but I do not believe we were near any fine places between Langollen and Barmouth tho' I heard of some that are likely to become so from Mr Reptons improvements... the family seats in Wales were not attended to in former days as they were with us, & I should suppose but little was ever done in countries where there are so many Natural advantages.[14]

Entertaining though it is to indulge in speculation that the Plas might be a 'lost' Repton commission, the fact is that the evidence remains entirely circumstantial. There is little on the ground that is obviously Reptonian, the most notable exception being the picturesque drive that winds up to the house via a bridge, giving the visitor an unexpected close-hand view of a cascade tumbling down the vall

Slate Quarries and Shady Walks

During the nineteenth century the Oakeleys became very wealthy. Slate quarries were developed on land they owned higher up the valley. In 1824 -25 alone, slate royalties paid to W.G. Oakeley amounted to £25,000. Although geographically distant, the exploitation of the slate had a direct impact on the Plas with the construction of the Ffestiniog railway through the grounds. W.G. Oakeley was closely involved, having laid the foundation stone of the railway in 1833, and he was in a position to insist on a number of privileges, including the erection of a high screening wall. He died in 1835 but his widow lived on at the Plas until 1868, remaining its legal owner until her death in 1878. In its principal features, the layout of the grounds during the mid-nineteenth century seems to have remained unchanged, with the wooded slope rising above the Plas (albeit with the railway line now running through it) and a more open piece of ground below the house which was probably by this time planted as a pleasure ground. The detail of the planting however was beginning to alter; Japanese Red Cedars and other exotic species were being introduced into both the woodland and the pleasure ground; mature and over-mature specimens from this period form a significant proportion of the trees today. The character of the grounds can be glimpsed from a line in a letter written by W.E. Oakeley in 1868 to his mother: *The children are wild with delight at all the shady walks.*[15]

W.E. Oakeley inherited the estate in 1878 and immediately embarked on a building programme, enlarging the Plas, adding castellations and constructing a bridge to the servants' quarters. He may also have built the lodge, opposite the Oakeley Arms, and the walled garden, both of which were erected some time between 1844 and 1888. His initials, and those of his wife Mary, form part of the design of the ornamental iron gates leading onto the terrace, and were repeated on a massive scale, using evergreens, on sloping woodland overlooking the Vale of Ffestiniog. Such grandiose ideas were also expressed in the gardens where, in the 1880s, a team of eight gardeners and four under-gardeners was employed under the energetic direction of John Roberts, the Head Gardener.[16] Choice and rare trees were ordered from around the country. Money, it seems, was no object; a note added to a list of trees and shrubs from the Fulham Nursery stated that *These would include many of the rarer and more expensive varieties.*[17]

Vegetables, fruit and flowers were grown in the walled gardens west of the Plas. Bedding was a major feature of the gardens; in 1885 John Roberts valued his bedding plants at £1000, the equivalent of about £50,000 at today's prices.[18] But from 1883 there was a major slump in the slate trade which must have hit the Oakeleys hard. We learn that in 1887 John Roberts was trying to off-load unwanted bedding plants onto Arthur Dickson and Sons who replied that they were *much obliged by the offer of the carpet bedding plants, but there is so little demand for these just now - this style of bedding have almost died out.*[19] *Nevertheless, the description of the grounds which appeared the following year in the* ***Journal of Horticulture and Cottage Gardener,***[20] conveys a sense of opulence and thus of confidence in the future. We learn that *Cryptomeria japonica*, oak, silver fir, *very fine* lime trees, *hardy palms*, bay, *Camellia, Rhododendron, Azalea, Magnolia, Wisteria* and myrtle were planted. There is also a reference to the herbaceous borders, which are a grand feature here. However, chastened perhaps by Arthur Dickson's comments, carpet bedding below the terrace was in the process of being turfed over.

If confidence in the future was indeed what John Roberts wished to convey to the correspondent of the *Journal*, his faith was sadly misplaced. Continuing problems at the slate quarries led to a dramatic fall in income and by 1889 John Roberts had been restricted to an annual allowance of £500, half the value of his bedding plants alone just four years earlier. The decline of Plas Tan-y-Bwlch was unremitting: in 1897 the estate was mortgaged; between 1908 and 1910 the slate quarries were working a four day week; in the early 1900s the house was let; and finally, in 1910, the mansion, grounds and 2,700 acres of land was offered for sale. The estate agent's encomiums were perhaps more justified than they usually are.

A view of part of the pleasure ground, c.1890, showing the area below the terrace, possibly by Mary Inge, née Oakeley.
Reproduced by kind permission of the Snowdonia National Park

The pleasure grounds were: *Most beautifully wooded and exceptional in the variety of their natural features, the Shady Walks with which they are traversed in circuitous and zigzag courses occasionally unfolding delightful vista, while the Ornamental Woods contiguous are clothed with fine Forest Timber and intersected by extensive Rhododendron Walks.*[21]

The hoped-for sale did not take place and when W.E. Oakeley died in 1912, the estate was divided between his son and his daughter. The daughter, Mrs Inge, and her family bought out the son's portion and the estate was briefly reunited again under one ownership. In 1961 however, following the death of Mrs Inge, the estate was sold and broken up. An ill-judged time-share development, only 50 metres from the house, received planning permission, but fortunately was only ever part-built. Much of the wider estate was planted to commercial forestry. In 1968 the Snowdonia National Park Authority purchased the house and grounds, including 100 acres of woodlands. The future of the gardens had to wait until the formation of the Plas Tan-y-Bwlch Gardens Trust in 1994 in order to be put on a more secure footing.

Conclusions

Plas Tan-y-Bwlch is not one of the better known gardens of Wales and yet it offers rich rewards for all those who care about gardens, whether their interest is as historians, designers or plantsmen. Key phases of garden design have been represented here: the landscape ideals of the Picturesque; the triumphant vulgarity of carpet bedding; the planting of exotic trees and shrubs; even the recent period of post-war decline followed by *fin-de-siecle* garden restoration is typical of trends elsewhere. Of all the qualities and interests of the grounds, the ***Headlong Hall*** and Humphry Repton connection is perhaps the most tantalising but, given our present state of knowledge, it also remains one of the most difficult to substantiate.

Editor's Note

At the time of going to press the fate of the gardens at Plas Tan-y-Bwlch and of the Plas Tan-y-Bwlch Gardens Trust itself hangs in the balance. It is profoundly to be hoped that the enterprise of this hard-working, effective small organisation lives on.

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PATHS IN PICTURESQUE PARKS: SOME CONTEMPORARY ADVICE

PETER HAYDEN

The following compilation of contemporary advice on elements of the Picturesque landscape was originally prepared for the Hafod Advisory Committee in 1996/7. At that time recent excavations in the Alpine Meadow revealed accumulations of stone, which seemed to have been placed there for path drainage, but there were no indications of a continuous stone-surfaced path. This prompted me to look through the relevant contemporary literature - Gilpin, Price, Knight, Loudon &. - for references to paths in Picturesque parks. I found a number of useful examples, both prescriptive and descriptive, which I brought together originally in the hope that they might prove useful to members of the Committee when considering future proposals for paths at Hafod.

Part of this work appeared in Friends of Hafod Newsletter 15 (1997). *I am grateful to Forest Enterprise for suggesting the publication of the complete article here so that it may inform others interested in the study, restoration and conservation of Picturesque parks and gardens.*

In this compilation I have included references to paths in George Cumberland's *An Attempt to Describe Hafod* (new ed., 1996, The Hafod Trust), but do not find them particularly helpful. He says that stone was used for paths, but does not say how it was used. Where he refers to the paths as artificially improved one assumes that the artifice was concealed. Tantalisingly he appears to have reservations about some of the paths, but does not tell us why. One has to look beyond Cumberland for more substantial information. In addition to references to paths I have included a passage from Uvedale Price on the distinctions between the beautiful and the Picturesque as a reminder of what features in scenery were considered Picturesque.

One would not expect Thomas Johnes to have been far out of step with other devotees of the Picturesque, and I believe that the advice of J.C. Loudon, Uvedale Price &c., could safely be followed at Hafod except where there is incontrovertible archaeological evidence that Johnes's approach to the making of a path differed from theirs. I suggested that future specifications for paths at Hafod would need to be rather different to those adopted so far. Stone ribbons may be acceptable in Country Parks, but they don't capture the spirit of the Picturesque. Time, no doubt, will soften them and blur the edges, but they may need a little help.

I asked Christopher Dingwall if he could provide information about paths in Scottish Picturesque parks and particularly in parks which Thomas Johnes might have visited. He sent me several visitors' descriptions which are of considerable interest. Some of the paths evidently failed to measure up to Picturesque expectations and drew critical comments. If Thomas Johnes ever made 'ell-wide gravel walks' (Wordworth's phrase) at Hafod, perhaps influenced by Scottish models, it would have been in his early attempts at landscaping and would surely have been modified as the Picturesque movement developed and as Johnes progressed with it.

J.C. Loudon

[Walks] "Their margins, and the surface and colour of the materials, are what chiefly concern picturesque effect. Where the scene is avowedly artificial, the margins must be parallel to each other,

and accurately defined; as in that part of the approach road which comes within the parapet or fence that incloses the mansion, or in those walks which are within the bounds of either the ornamental or useful garden. Where the road is not in these scenes, but is either in picturesque or natural pleasure-ground, pasture fields, park, forest, or dingle, the edges must be irregular, and more or less rough or smooth, blending or ragged, as we see takes place in paths through similar scenery in wild nature... In thickets or woods, whether of natural trees and undergrowth, or of exotics, as in the full grown shubbery, the edge of the path should often be totally annihilated on both sides, and bounded only by the irregularity of the lowest growths. In walks, the excellent effects and superior *economy* resulting from these principles is excellently illustrated at Foxley and Dunglass; and in roads it may be seen in those parts of much frequented approaches which it is not judged necessary to subject to the paring-irons and formal trimming of gardeners.

"The formal, stiff, and harsh edges of made roads and walks, is one of the most striking deformities in picturesque scenery. Though every other part of the scene should be perfect, or though they lead through a natural copse or an unfrequented dell, their *edginess* and formal manner powerfully distract the eye of the spectator, and frustrate the genuine effect of the scenery. Indeed, the wilder and more natural the ground which the walk passes through, the more anxious is the gardener to shew his labours, either by frequent addition of fresh gravel, when mosses, weatherstains, or any such picturesque appendages begin to appear; or with the scythe and paring-irons divesting their edges of the intricacy which vegetation, during a slight relief from his operations, has a continual tendency to produce."

A Treatise on Forming, Improving, and Managing Country Residences, *1806, vol II, pp. 414-416.*

Sir Uvedale Price

[Of Painshill] "Among many circumstances of more striking effect, I was highly pleased with a walk, which leads through a bottom skirted with wood; and I was pleased with it, not from what *had*, but from what had *not*, been done; it had no edges, no borders, no distinct lines of separation; nothing was done, except keeping the ground properly neat, and the communication free from any obstruction. The eye and the footsteps were equally unconfined; and if it is a high commendation to a writer or a painter, that he knows where to leave off, it is not less so to an improver."

An Essay on the Picturesque, *1796, pp.376-7.*

"All highly ornamented walks, such as terraces, &c. of course can only have place near the house: in the more distant parts of the garden, the gravel walk is in like manner, a proper gradation from them to the simple pathway...The garden scene at Blenheim may also be cited for the gravel walk in perfection: the sweeps are large, easy, and well taken; and though in wild and romantic parts such artificial bends destroy the character of the scenery, yet in gardens, where there must be regular borders to the walks, an attention to the different curves is indispensable; and the skill that is shewn in conducting them, though not to be rated too high, is not without its merit.

Essays on the Picturesque, *vol. II, 1798, pp.177-9.*

"In this climate, particularly, gravel walks are indispensable; and neatness and symmetry require, that in the most dressed parts they should be of uniform breadths, and consequently between two regular borders. On that account, however useful and even ornamental, they cannot have the playful variety of a path; which, in my idea, is owing, not merely to the variety of its curves, but to the lines of those curves being softened into the untrodden grass, and the transitions being insensibly made; for thence proceed, what Hogarth calls the waving lines that lead the eye a kind of wanton chase, and to which distinctness puts an immediate end. Were a gardener, for instance, to copy, as nearly as possible, *all* the waving lines of a path, and to make them as distinct as those of a gravel walk, nothing could be more absurd and unnatural...

"The gravel walk, from its symmetry, its neatness, and its dressed appearance, accords much more with what is soft and beautiful, than with what is rude and picturesque. For example, were the simply beautiful scene which I have just described close to a gentleman's house, he would very naturally make a gravel walk through it, and he would do very right; for convenience, neatness, and a dressed appearance are, in such cases, among the first considerations. But then, according to the doctrine I have endeavoured to establish, such a walk would not improve the *beauty* of the scene, though it would give it what, on another principle, is highly pleasing. On the contrary, however well it might be managed, however artfully carried among the trees and shrubs, and partially concealed and broken by them, still the lines of it would cut across every thing, and never, like those of the pathway, play as it were into the other objects, and insensibly steal among them. It was on that account I observed, that near the house picturesque beauty (for in that early part of my Essay I had made no objection to the term) must often be *sacrificed* to neatness: but that it was a *sacrifice*, and one which should not wantonly be made. Now, I believe, there are a number of persons who, were they rich enough, would have regular gravel walks in every part of their whole place; and should they make them in such a scene as I have been mentioning, at a distance from the house, I should consider it a wanton sacrifice; for a dry path without borders would answer every purpose of convenience, without taking off from the retired character of the place. In a *rude* scene, the sacrifice would be much greater, for symmetry and regularity are particularly adverse to the picturesque.

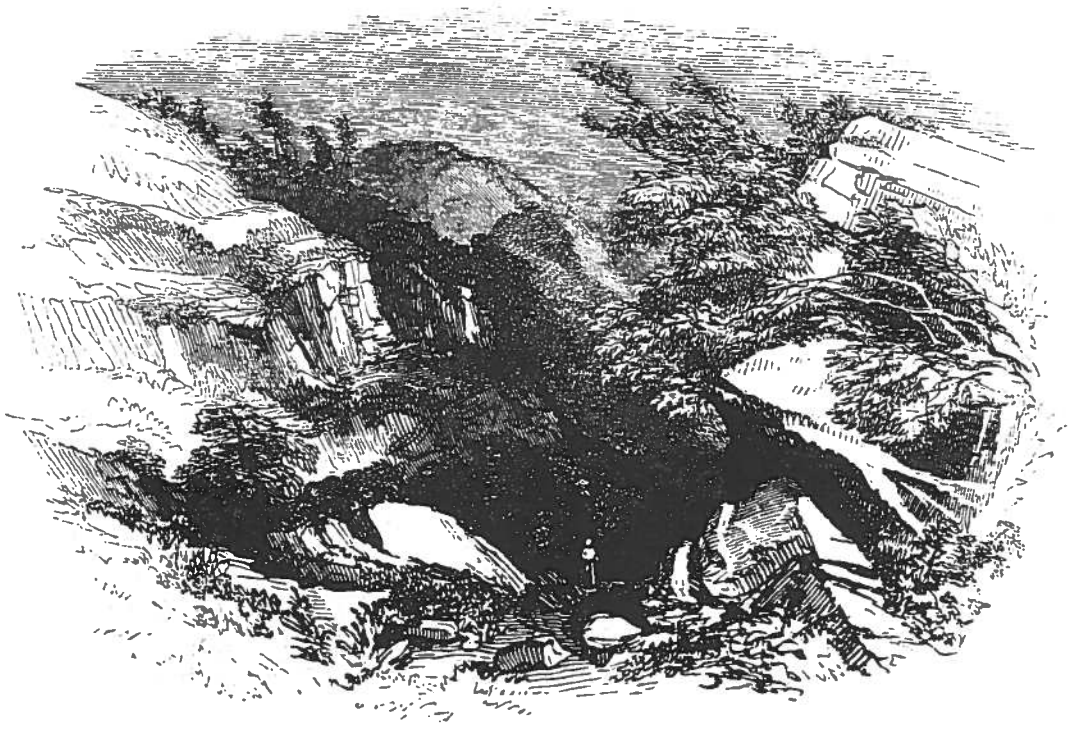
"With regard to a natural path, either through a meadow, or across more intricate ground, it is, I believe, very popular; a by-road, from an idea of ruts and mire, very naturally much less so; though the principal distinction between both of them, and whatever has a regular border, is the same. There are, however, by-roads in dry soils, upon a level surface, and where there are few heavy carriages, that to me have a remarkably cheerful look; and so far are they from giving an idea of anyting slovenly, that the manner in which the soil (whether sand or gravel) and the grass are pressed and blended together, has rather the appearance of great nicety and attention. I should think, therefore, that in all scenery at some distance from the house, (particularly of the wilder kind) such roads and paths would answer every purpose of comfort and convenience, without formality; they might be dug out and stoned just like any other gravel walk or road, only have no distinct borders; and what would be a great additional motive, they would give an idea that the *general* soil was dry; whereas the *borders* always seem to indicate that the gravel extends no farther, and was brought there on purpose."

From **'Letter to H. Repton'** *in* ***Sir Uvedale Price on the Picturesque,*** *edited by Sir Thomas Dick Lauder, 1842, pp. 465-6.*

Sir Thomas Dick Lauder [editorial comment on the above passage]

"These remarks on roads and walks are extremely sensible, and well worthy the particular attention of all landscape gardeners. Formality and great precision of finish, as I have already hinted, are not only allowable, but quite necessary in the immediate vicinity of the mansion. But as you depart from it into the grounds, though the roads and paths should be uniformly firm and dry, so as to secure such delicate persons as may frequent them from rheumatism or sore throat, any labour that has been bestowed on them should always be less apparent. The character of the road or foot-way should be at all times in harmony with the scene through which it leads, but still there is no necessity for keeping up a bog, or a quagmire, for any such purpose of preservation of character. I have seen a secluded ravine, so wild, with fallen rocky fragments tossed down all over the bottom, and so overgrown with weeds and brambles, that the angular holes existing between the masses were perfectly invisible, so that it became almost impossible to scramble through it without the imminent risk of grazing the shins, if not breaking a leg; whilst in other parts, there were swamps which were almost impassable. What was to be done in such a case as

this? At the expense of much gunpowder, a smooth gravel walk with regular and equidistant edges, would have been constructed by a disciple of the smoothing and shaving school of gardening, whilst those of an opposite school might have said "let it not be touched at all". The plan followed was different from either. Covered drains, at a very considerable expense, were put into all the boggy places, so that the ground was not only rendered perfectly firm, but the grassy surface was improved in quality, and thus it was left untouched and natural looking, whilst all appearance of art was hid below ground. Then as to the stony parts - the smaller fragments were removed irregularly, and thrown aside in such a manner as to leave a naturally winding passage among the larger masses, the great, deep, and dangerous holes were filled up with fragments of stone, and so the weeds were allowed to rise again among them, in such a manner, as to give the whole the perfect effect of accident. There was no one who afterwards made his way through that ravine, who did not congratulate himself that he had had the good luck to find out a natural passage which fortunately conducted him safely and without broken bones, through all the intricacies occasioned by the obstacles which lay in his way. On no occasion could anyone have suspected that this path had been smoothed by the hand of man, and at a considerable expense. Had the work been so ill done as that the art employed had been permitted to have exposed itself, the whole of



The Ravine as described by Sir Thomas Dick Lauder, from his edition of ***Sir Uvedale Price on the Picturesque****, 1842.*

the sentiment of wild and savage loneliness with which this ravine, that led to nothing, was filled, would have fled. I have brought forward this example, because the case was an extreme one, and because I think it proves that if a difficulty of so great a magnitude as this, was thus so happily and completely overcome, there can be no doubt, that paths may be made through every variety of scenery, so as perfectly to preserve the appearance of untouched nature. In the case I have adduced, it was essential that the passage should be made safe and easy, but at the same time it was also essential that no path should appear at all. But in other cases, where paths come naturally in, the only thing that requires to be provided for, is, that they shall not have an artificial appearance, or at least, that they shall not have a more artificial appearance, than the nature or character of the scene may warrant."

Ibid. pp. 467-8

Humphry Repton

[Downton] "It is impossible, by description, to convey an idea of its natural charms, or to do justice to that taste which has displayed these charms to the greatest advantage,

'With art clandestine, and conceal'd design.'

A narrow, wild, and natural path creeps under the beetling rock, close by the margin of a mountain stream. It sometimes ascends to an awful precipice, from whence the foaming waters are heard roaring in the dark abyss below, or seen dashing against its opposite banks; while, in other places, the course of the river Teme being impeded by natural ledges of rock, the vale presents a calm, glassy mirror, that reflects the surrounding foliage. The path, in various places, crosses the water by bridges of the most romantic and contrasted forms; and, branching in various directions, including some miles in length, is occasionally varied and enriched by caves and cells, hovels, and covered seats, or other buildings, in perfect harmony with the wild but pleasing horrors of the scene."

The Landscape Gardening and Landscape Architecture of the late Humphry Repton, Esq. *edited by J.C. Loudon, 1839, pp. 102-3.*

"The Walks within that inclosure which is called the dressed lawn, and thro' the plantation round the Kitchen-garden, must of course partake of the neatness which ought to reign in the neighbourhood of a house; but when they quit this lawn they may take a milder form or become mere foot paths leading to various objects."

Antony House Red Book, *Basilisk Press, 1976.*

A.J. Downing

"*Walks* are laid out for purposes similar to Drives.... They are intended solely for promenades or exercise on foot, and should therefore be dry and firm, if possible, at all seasons when it is desirable to use them.... It should, however never be forgotten, that the walk ought always to correspond to the scene it traverses, being rough where the latter is wild and picturesque, sometimes scarcely differing from a common footpath, and more polished as the surrounding objects show evidences of culture and high keeping."

A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening adapted to North America, 1849, p. 342. [Although Downing was an American, his book is based largely on British practice, and he was much influenced by J.C. Loudon.]

"A very thin coat of gravel will render a walk superior to a path which consists only of the natural soil, and such surfacing, in our dry climate (though it frequently requires renewing), is often sufficient

for distant walks, or those little used except in fine weather. But the approach road and all walks immediately about the dwelling, should be laid at least a foot thick with gravel, to insure dryness, and a firm footing at all times and seasons. The lower six inches is better executed when filled with small stones - placing the six inches of gravel on top of these..."

Ibid., p. 530.

F.L. von Sckell

"Broad, frequented, and beautifully formed paths should not lead to ruins, because they would be in contradiction with the uninhabited and long deserted structures. Traces of carriage roads, and narrow footpaths winding about through thickets, which lead the traveller with much difficulty to these venerable remains of antiquity, are much more suitable."

The Landscape Gardening of F.L. von Sckell of Munich. Translated from the German. ***Gardener's Magazine,*** **Series III,** vol I (1841), p. 542.

Sir Uvedale Price

[While this passage relates to lanes rather than paths it provides a good illustration of picturesque principles.]

"Upon the whole, it appears to me, that as intricacy in the disposition, and variety in the forms, the tints, and the lights and shadows of objects, are the great characteristics of picturesque scenery so monotony and baldness are the greatest defects of improved places.

"Nothing would place this in so distinct a point of view as a comparison between some familiar scene in its natural and picturesque, and in what would be its improved state, according to the present principles of gardening. All painters, who have imitated the more confined scenes of nature, have been fond of making studies from old neglected bye roads and hollow ways; and, perhaps, there are few spots that, in so small a compass, have a greater variety of that sort of beauty called picturesque; but, I believe, the instances are very rare of painters, who have turned out volunteers into a gentleman's walk or drive, either when made between artificial banks, or when the natural sides of banks have been improved...

"Perhaps, what is most immediately striking in a lane of this kind is its intricacy; any winding road, indeed (especially where there are banks) must necessarily have some degree of intricacy; but in a dressed lane every effort of art seems directed against the disposition of the ground: the sides are so regularly sloped, so regularly planted, and the space (when there is any) between them and the road so uniformly levelled; the sweeps of the road so plainly artificial, the verges of the grass that bound it so nicely edged; the whole, in short, has such an appearance of having been made by a receipt, that curiosity, that most active principle of pleasure, is almost extinguished.

"But in these hollow lanes and bye roads all the leading features, and a thousand circumstances of detail, promote the natural intricacy of the ground; the turns are sudden and unprepared; the banks sometimes broken and abrupt; sometimes smooth, and gently but not uniformly sloping; now wildly overhung with thickets of trees and bushes; now loosely skirted with wood; no regular verge of grass, no cut edges, no distinct lines of separation; all is mixed and blended together, and the border of the road itself, shaped by the mere tread of passengers and animals, is as unconstrained as the footsteps that formed it; even the tracks of wheels (for no circumstance is indifferent) contribute to the picturesque effect of the whole; the lines they describe are full of variety; they just mark the way among trees and

bushes, while any obstacle, a cluster of low thorns, a furze-bush, a tussuck, a large stone, will force the wheels into sudden and intricate turns, at the same time those obstacles themselves, either wholly or partially concealing the former tracks, add to that variety and intricacy... "

An Essay on the Picturesque, *1796, pp.26-31.*

George Cumberland

(p.11) ...there are four fine walks from the house, chiefly through ways artificially made by the proprietor; all dry, kept clean, and composed of materials found on the spot; which is chiefly a coarse stone of a grayish cast, friable in many places, and like slate, but oftener consisting of immense masses, that cost the miner, in making some part of these walks, excessive labour; for there are places, where it was necessary to pierce the rock many yards, in order to pass a promontory, that jutting across the way, denied further access....

(p.11) ...As it is, the walks are so conducted, that few are steep; the transitions easy, the returns commodious, and the branches distinct. Neither are they too many, for much is left for future projectors... All that is here done, has been to remove obstructions, reduce the materials, and conceal the art...

(pp.14-15) ...a flower and shrub garden; surrounded by a rude stone-fence, of irregular form, nearly concealed by ivy; the plats of which are curved out of a fine shaven turf, and the whole circumscribed by a smooth gravel walk...

(p. 19) Entering the brushwood, a rural pathway now carries you speedily to a very delightful little promontory...

(p.20) The walk will take a full half hour; there is another, in the same direction, which branches from it, fit only for those who can climb, as it is not yet entirely traced; but which, on that very account, may have inducement for the curious...

(p.23) There are walks of great extent, on the opposite side of the river from the house, which take up to three hours to trace, returning again to the mansion, and these are what are considered as the principal part of the artificially improved paths.

A pencil/wash sketch of a path at Hafod by Walter Herbert Johnes-Lloyd, January 1853.
Reproduced by kind permission of the National Library of Wales

Whether they might have been better laid out, I shall not attempt here to enquire; for indeed I was too much delighted with the accommodation they afforded me, to think much of criticising their lines, if I had been possessed of the requisite abilities...

(p.26) Ascending this brook the path is at first scooped into the rocky sides of the ravin....

Ascending still in a tortuous path, eaten as it were into the bank, and frequently sustained from beneath....

(p. 29) It is possible, I believe, to return on the opposite side; but, as no walk is yet marked out, I should rather recommend returning across the rude bridge.

(p. 40) Thus continuing to explore the right-hand side of this acherontic stream, by following the sheep-paths through the wood, you find the means of frequently approaching the promontories of its banks...

(p. 42) Wandering down these woody dells, you at length come to a winding path that leads to a rustic bridge of three trees and a rail...

An Attempt to Describe Hafod, 1796.

Sir Uvedale Price - On the distinction between beauty and the Picturesque:

"According to Mr Burke, one of the essential qualities of beauty is smoothness... Another essential quality is gradual variation...

"I am therefore persuaded, that the two opposite qualities of roughness, and of irregularity, are the most efficient causes of the Picturesque...

"A temple or palace of Grecian architecture in its perfect entire state, and with its surface and colour smooth and even, either in painting or reality, is beautful; in ruin it is Picturesque. Observe the process by which time (the great author of such change) converts a beautiful object into a Picturesque one. First by means of weather stains, partial incrustations, mosses &c., it at the same time takes off from the uniformity of its surface, and of its colour; that is, gives it a degree of roughness, and variety of tint. Next, the various accidents of weather loosen the stones themselves; they tumble in irregular masses upon what was perhaps smooth turf or pavement, or nicely trimmed walks and shrubberies; now mixed and overgrown with wild plants and creepers, that crawl over, and shoot among the fallen ruins...

"Symmetry, which in works of art particularly, accords with the beautiful, is in the same degree adverse to the Picturesque, and among the various causes of the superior picturesqueness of ruins, compared with entire buildings, the destruction of symmetry is by no means the least powerful...

"But among all the objects of nature, there is none in which roughness and smoothness more strongly mark the distinction between the two characters, than in water. A calm, clear lake, with the reflections of all that surround it, seen under the influence of a setting sun, at the close of an evening, clear and serene as its own surface, is, perhaps, of all scenes, the most congenial to our ideas of beauty in its strictest and in its most general sense...

"On the other hand, all water whose surface is broken, and whose motion is abrupt and irregular, as universally accords with our ideas of the Picturesque; and whenever the word is mentioned, rapid torrents and cataracts, and the waves dashing against rocks, are among the first images that present themselves to our imagination...

"Among trees, it is not the smooth young beech, or the fresh and tender ash, but the rugged old oak, or knotty wych elm, that are Picturesque; nor is it necessary they should be of great bulk; it is sufficient if they are rough, mossy, with the character of age, and with sudden variations in their forms. The limbs of huge trees, shattered by lightning or tempestuous winds, are in the highest degree Picturesque."

An Essay on the Picturesque, 1796, pp. 60-70.

TAILPIECE: A Picturesque view may be taken of quite unlikely subects !

"I remember a picture of Wovermans, in which the principal objects were a dung-cart just loaded; some carrion lying on the dung; a dirty fellow with a dirty shovel; the dunghill itself, and a dog, exhibited in an attitude that promised to add to it. These most unsavoury materials the painter had worked up with so much skill, that the picture was viewed by every one with delight"

Essays on the Picturesque, *Vol. II, 1798, p. xiii.*

Richard Payne Knight

We require, immediately adjoining the dwellings of opulence and luxury, that every thing should assume its character; and not only be, but appear to be dressed and cultivated. In such situations, neat gravel walks, mown turf, and flowering plants and shrubs, trained and distributed by art, are perfectly in character; although if the same building were abandoned, and in ruins, we should, on the same principle of consistency and propriety, require neglected paths, rugged lanes, and wild uncultivated thickets; which are, in themselves, more pleasing, both to the eye and the imagination, but, unfit accompaniments for objects, not only originally produced by art, but, in which, art is constantly employed and exhibited. Nevertheless a path with sides shaggy and neglected, or a picturesque lane between broken and rugged banks, may be kept as clean, and as commodious for the purpose of walking, as the neatest gravel walk...

An Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste, *1808. pp.157-58.*

If a comfortable and convenient walk or ride can be so conducted through wood, or forest scenery, as to appear a mere sheep-track, or accidental opening, it will be the more pleasing to the imagination.

Ibid., p. 230.

J.C. Loudon

"A hollow winding DELL, or DINGLE, containing a brook or rill overhung with wood, and its banks diversified by broken ground presenting various coloured earths, and among the low growths old trunks of trees, roots, and stones, - or, dells of a grander character, containing bold, perpendicular projecting or irregular massive rocks, overhung with huge trees, bushes, ferns and creepers, grouped and combined in an infinite diversity of ways - the stream interrupted by the rocks tumbling over in roaring cataracts, foaming cascades, or interrupted only by gentle falls, - and perhaps in some places (where the dell widens into a valley), spreading itself into chrystal lake, varied by little islands and woody projections, all heightened by the usual appendages of animation, the singing of birds, the fragrance of flowers, form what I consider to be among the most enchanting kinds of recluse pleasure-ground scenery. When a place is furtunate enough to have such a romantic chain of picturesque beauty as this, it should seldom be touched by the hand of art. It may happen, that some improvement may be made, by shewing in a partial manner, rocks, roots, or stones, that are perhaps totally concealed; by augmenting a natural cascade, or by supplying ivy, or some creepers or evergreens &c.; but in general little more can be attempted with propriety. The principal operation that in any case can be undertaken in such a scene, is where it may require to lead a walk, or road, either to observe its beauties, or as an approach to some other part of the residence. The difficulty of executing either of these will be great to those who think of nothing but undulating sweeps, shaven lawns, and serpentine gravel walks; but by those accustomed to admire this kind of scenery, the operation will be easily accomplished *.

"Many dells of the most exquisite kind occur in Scotland and Wales. At Valleyfield [Perthshire], one of the finest sort, and in the grandest style, was treated lately in a manner which will hardly be credited by those who have not seen it. The occasion of this barbarous treatment was, that the approach to the house should be conducted through it; which might have been done by forming a good gravel road, and leaving everything in its natural state ? but, in place of a natural or irregular margined road, the most formal, high-finished narrow gravel walk that can be imagined was carried stiffly along its banks, while the wood was thinned - all the undergrowth, creepers, ferns &c..., were cut down and every broken or abrupt part of the surface was taken away.... [various other atrocities are described]. The proprietor has thrown away an immense amount of money in counteracting nature, and deforming his grounds; and as all this is finished from the plan and red-book of Mr. Repton, and approved of by him in a late work, it confirms me in my opinion of landscape gardening, and its champion and defender against the introduction of the Picturesque.

Far hence! let REPTON, BROWN, and EAMES,
Zig-zag their walks, and torture streams;
But let them not my dells profane,
Or violate my Naiad train;
Not let their arrogance invade
My meanest Dryad's secret sgade,
And with fantastic knots disgrace
The native honours of the place;
Making the vet'ran oak give way,
Some spruce exotic to display.
Their petty labours be defy'd
Who taste *and* nature *would divide."*

Lines which were left writted on a seat at Havod.

A Treatise on Forming, Improving, and Managing Country Residences, *1806, pp. 435-439.*

When Loudon wrote the above in 1804 he was an enthusiastic supporter of the Picturesque movement. His approval of the walks at Hafod seems to be firm evidence that Thomas Johnes closley followed Picturesque principles in making them.

* The works at Piercefield, Havod, Birchhill, Dunglass etc. afford examples in proof of this.

CAN YOU TRUST YOUR SOURCES ?
EXPERIENCES FROM CARDIGANSHIRE

CAROLINE PALMER

A major ambition of the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust is the recording of historic gardens. In doing so volunteer researchers draw on a wide range of material, maps, books, county directories, estate documents, newspaper cuttings, sale catalogues, picture postcards, photographs, oral history and site visits. In a perfect world we should read and record everything, and on ordering our observations systematically upon a time line stretching from the mists of the past to the present day we compile a sequential account which has few gaps and no major inconsistencies. Would that it were that simple! Any researcher who has performed this exercise then finds it necessary to perform some judicious weeding to create a plausible whole. What is important is that when this exercise is done it should be done openly. Some observations may have to be dismissed in the light of other evidence. This should not be done by omission. We must own up to the inconsistencies and justify the route we have taken through the maze. Otherwise other researchers may have to explore all the same ground again, believing they have found new evidence which has been overlooked.

It is probably true to say that all sources are flawed. My own and Ros Laidlaw's experiences in researching some historic gardens in Ceredigion, provide a selection of examples of such problems which may offer comfort to other workers in the field.

Estate maps.

Estate maps rarely date from before the mid-eighteenth century, but from this time onwards they are likely to exist or have existed for most medium and large estates. Often they were commissioned at a time of change in an estate's history, perhaps the death of the life tenant, the need to raise funds by sale or mortgage, or when a major change in the landscape, such as the laying out of a park was envisioned or recently completed. Sometimes they were drawn up for insurance purposes. The reason for an estate map may thus throw light upon the aspects emphasised in the map, and the level of quality and detail. At best, estate surveys are an expression of the wealth and substance of the owner and were beautifully executed by professional surveyors. Signed, dated, and exquisitely detailed, such professional surveys produced for a wealthy owner are works of art. Not uncommonly the client's house is represented pictorially whilst the other buildings are represented in plan and this may well be the first visual record of a house. While pictorial representations of the house itself are likely to be firmly rooted in fact, the same cannot be assumed for the setting, especially when the motive for the plan was to accompany particulars of sale. At the small estate of Aberllolwyn, Llanfarian, an illustrated survey and sale particulars from the mid-nineteenth century is embellished by a cameo portrait of the house, set amid towering hills more than twice as close and craggy as the actual countryside just south of Aberystwyth and the drive is flanked by a neat square lodge which never existed.[1] The commercial motive for such a distortion is obvious.

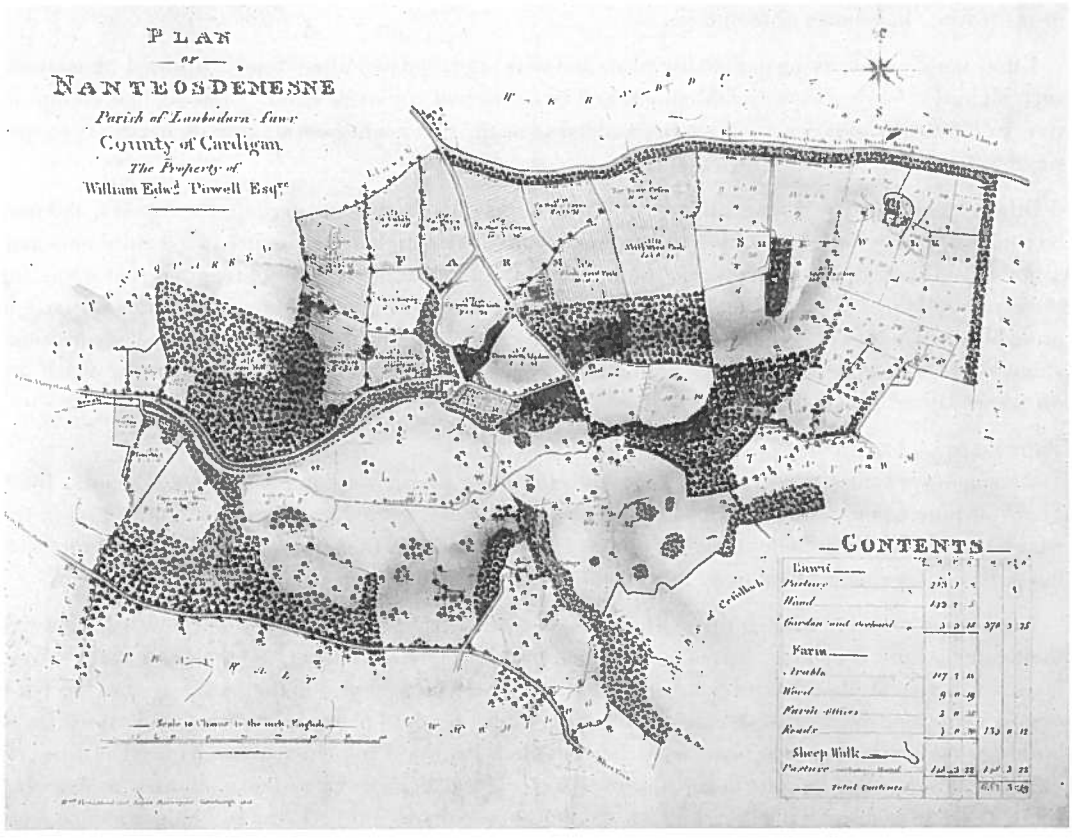
The cameo view of Aberllolwyn showing considerable artistic licence.
Reproduced by kind permission of The National Library of Wales

The distinction between ground plan and elevation may also be adopted to identify minor buildings of purely ornamental function. At Nanteos, an exquisite bound estate survey was produced in 1819.[2] This followed ten years of William Edward Powell's squiredom, a period when, despite very severe financial problems, the young M.P. and Lord Lieutenant of the County carried out substantial renovations to his severely dilapidated estate and contemplated yet more extravagant designs.

The surveyor William Crawford[3] of Edinburgh produced an exceptionally fine survey of all the 26,991 acres of the Nanteos estates in Cardiganshire and Breconshire. The detail is exceptional, and even gives indication of relief. The demesne and its park and ornamental planting are carefully delineated and each tenant farm aquatinted to indicate the landuse of each field. No change of ownership was in prospect, so it was probably commissioned to record the quality of the estate with a view to raising further mortgages against the security of the land. It is significant that whilst all tenant farms were represented in ground plan and named in Welsh, a single building in a pretty dingle on the slope facing the mansion is represented in elevation as a little round structure with a thatched roof and is labelled as "Cottage" . Moreover, unlike every other property on the map, no marked track approaches it. Here is strong circumstantial evidence for the existence in the early nineteenth century of a Cottage Ornée,[4] a feature which is indicated today only by the name of the little wooded valley in which it stood, now a commercial conifer plantation, as 'Cottage Dingle'.

Some experts are reluctant to express confidence in estate maps, because the conventions adopted are seldom set out in a key, and different surveyors may use colour, shading, and symbolic tree or shrub outlines to quite different purposes. However I believe quality land surveyors were true to their own, albeit not universal conventions. These maps repay very careful study, and where several examples of a surveyor's work are known, study of one will greatly assist the full interpretation of others. On first looking at an earlier estate survey of Nanteos lands drawn by John Davies[5] in 1764, one might assume that giant spiky deer fences marched out in many directions across the landscape. Only as a result of

closer inspection of not just the demesne map surrounding Nanteos but the maps of the adjoining tenant farms did it become apparent that these massive fences were not continuous with one another, or indeed in any way exceptional structures on the ground, they simply defined the boundary between two tenancies when both were represented on the same map. Where a single map showed only one holding, all boundaries, including its circumference were illustrated as simple hedgerows. This survey, in common with others of this period, omits to follow the later convention of orienting the plan so that North is at the top of the page, but instead oriented the map to best fit the manuscript. This eccentricity makes the interpretation of contiguous survey pages an exercise in jigsaw puzzling.



The Nanteos demesne, surveyed in 1818 by William Crawford
Reproduced by kind permission of The National Library of Wales.

Provided sufficient attention is given to studying the conventions adopted by the surveyor, estate maps are riches indeed to the researcher. Land details such as field boundaries, woodland and positions of gates are represented with the utmost accuracy. Where cottages or extent of gardens is indicated there is strong reason to believe that these details are precise and accurate. After all, the client, the landowner knows what his land and tenancies look like and is likely to be displeased at, for example the schematic representation of a cottager's garden as larger or differently orientated from the truth. Such deviations could set a dangerous precedent. Cartographic evidence can lead to discoveries on the ground which might otherwise have gone un-noticed on the site visit. Following the evidence of William Crawford's

survey of Nanteos lands in the Ystwyth valley, I have examined field sites where clom[6] cottages would have stood. At precisely the point occupied in 1819 by a row of three attached labourers' dwellings, I found irregularities on the ground, and a rich growth of nettles. In the adjoining hedgerow grew an English yew and the only hop in any hedgerow in the vicinity. While this is scant reconstruction of the detail of a cottage garden, it gives great confidence in the accuracy of the work of this surveyor. The deeper soil skin left by the collapsed building, and richer nitrogenous traces derived from human and animal excrement would favour the abundance of nettles. Hop and yew are rare as hedgerow plants in this locality and likely to represent traces of a long-gone garden. Elsewhere cottage gardens may be indicated by long-surviving naturalised garden plants, such as snowdrops, daffodils, montbretia, hellebores or fruit trees.

Estate maps were working tools of the estate and were often updated when changes occured. Sometimes such alteration were obviously subsequent and in a different colour or hand. However new clumps of trees or altered boundaries may have been added so neatly that near-forensic skills are necessary to spot small differences in script or ink colouring.

Other estate maps are scrappy indeed, drawn by a more amateur hand, perhaps the Agent's, and may be concerned only with boundaries. It is an important principle that the absence of a feature on a map is not definitive evidence that it wasn't there. Presence of a feature is not absolute proof that it was, for projected buildings or plantations could have been pencilled in in anticipation. The latter scenario is probably rarer in view of the importance of the estate survey as a working document from which decisions about management were derived. Careful attention to the annotation may reveal features which are proposals rather than extant.

Tithe maps

Tithe maps give complete coverage of Wales on a parish by parish basis and bear dates of around 1840. Their purpose was to establish extent and ownership and tenancy arrangements for all the land in the parish to enable the equitable collection of tithes for the Church. For many farms and smaller properties not part of large estates these maps may be the first field by field map available.

Tithe maps hold out a false mirage of consistent quality mapping over the whole country. However their value is limited by their purpose, which was to define land ownership. Where estate maps existed for an area, it seems that in Cardiganshire at least, they were often copied in their entirety onto the Tithe map, an enormously easier task than re-surveying. Features not of prime relevance such as the form of buildings may be transcribed from an earlier estate map without reference to the passage of time. A building of particular interest to the author, Plas Crûg Castle near Aberystwyth appears in plan on a Nanteos estate maps of 1764 as a four-square, four-towered structure. There is ample evidence from many sources: engravings, watercolours, and travellers' accounts that by the early nineteenth century it had become a farm cottage with one tower attached. Despite this it is depicted on the tithe map of 1845 in all its four towered symmettry, a castle apparently, while in the accompanying tithe schedule it is is listed as Plas Crûg House, a humble tenancy of some forty-one acres in the occupation of farmer Lewis Pugh.

Copies of tithe maps can be inspected at the National Library of Wales and at County Record offices. It is usual to be shown a microprint duplicate of the original and its accompanying tithe schedule. However where detail is difficult to discern it may be worthwhile to ask to see the original, held in the National Library of Wales, for it may reveal nuances of colouring and shading which could help in distiguishing linear features such as walls from watercourses, or even to reveal that putative building as a dust speck on the photocopying plate! To see the correct tithe maps it is necessary first to establish in what parish the land under investigation lay. While in some cases this may be quite straightforward, an invaluable aid to tricky problems is the Ordnance Survey Index to Tithe Survey Maps, prepared by

Robert Davies, which may be inspected in the Print room of the National Library of Wales. This is a bound set of First Edition O.S. one-inch maps of Wales on which the precise outlines of the tithe map boundaries have been laboriously superimposed. Some parishes occupied very strange shapes, or even, as in Llanbadarn Odwyn or Bettws Bledrws, several separate islands of land inset within other, wealthier parishes.

Ordnance Survey Maps

Systematic surveying that led to the publication of O.S. Maps of the entire country began, around the coastline, in the early nineteenth century and survey notes for Wales, in the form of two-and-a-half-inch to the mile manuscript maps can be seen in the National Library of Wales. Further surveys led to the production of the Old Series one-inch to the mile Ordnance Survey sheets which were published in this area around the 1840's, (but took 80 years to achieve national cover). They can be seen at Libraries and Record Offices. For editorial reasons not all details on the notes made their way onto the final copy, and in some cases interpretation reared its head. Returning to the example of Plas Crûg Castle, the site on the one inch map of 1834 has acquired some celtic lettering and schematic earthworks not closely resembling the irregular site outline surveyed in the notes. Its status at the time as an antiquity influenced its cartographic representation. As already discussed, the structure present by this time was the decayed and secondarily converted remains of an eighteenth-century folly probably contructed by Thomas Powell of Nanteos.[7] While other historians may debate whether the site was of greater antiquity and the stronghold of Owain Glyndŵr during a skirmish with the Normans, it seems that oral history was the only source leading to the application of the celtic lettering and tidy earthworks not represented on the working surveyor's notes.

Greater scale, and therefore detail is supplied by the 25 inch to the mile Ordnance Survey sheets which were commenced in 1863 following the Land Registration Act of 1862. Field boundaries and acreages are individually identified, but while spot heights are recorded, contour lines are not. Most sheets in Cardiganshire were published in the 1880's . (Their accuracy and detail is perhaps responsible for an excessive spate of proposals to restore gardens to 1888!) The same information, with the addition of contour lines is also available at a reduced scale as six inch to the mile sheets.

O.S. First Edition 25 inch maps are an invaluable souce of information on walled gardens and on parkland trees. Trees with a small horizontal bar projecting to the right of the trunk base are accurately surveyed in place, and correctly indicated as conifer or deciduous. As positive information, this is first rate, and some of these trees may be identified alive today. However negative evidence is valueless. I have found instances of parkland oaks in the field undoubtedly as old as those which have been surveyed but unaccountably absent from the map. In woodland, the trees are represented schematically as coniferous, deciduous or mixed but no individual trees are surveyed. It is valuable to refer to the detailed key to the First Edition 25-inch series maps to interpret all the vegetation types and other details marked thereon.[8]

Kitchen gardens on the first editions usually have their internal division by pathways recorded in detail, and often show details of glasshouses, cold frames, orchards or individual fruit trees. Sadly, the Office of Works Committee of 1870 criticized the inclusion of what it deemed excessive details such as field names, details of hedgerow timber, individual trees and interior features of gardens. First Edition maps after 1892, and all Second Edition O.S. maps (c. 1905 in our area) deleted much of this information, marking only the outlines of the enclosures.[9] It is valuable, if a First edition map is not accessible, to at least look at it on microfiche, and sketch such crucial details of garden layout onto a photocopy of a second edition. The O.S. has re-issued the complete first edition series on microfiche, but since the material is again under copyright, reproduction is very costly. Changes in detail of masonry garden buildings may be detected between first and second editions and can be a valuable aid in charting the

evolution on Victorian gardens. Pheasantries and summer houses also make an appearance in the first edition and may be found to have been superceded by later structures by the second edition. However the absence of transient structures such as glasshouses may not be meaningful.

It is tempting to use the second edition to provide an update of an estate. However caution in interpretation is essential, for not merely within the walled gardens, absence of a feature shown on the first edition cannot be wholly relied upon. Our scrutiny of the maps around Lodge Park south of Machynlleth revealed at least one corner of the second edition where the cartographer had an 'off day' totally overlooking a cottage, waterwheel and mining installation undoubtedly present by 1905, and quite possibly before the publication date of the first edition.

Other late eighteenth or nineteenth century maps.

Enclosure awards, whereby former commons and wastes were fenced into fields and assigned to landowners under Act of Parliament needed accompanying documentation. So also did the trustees of the turnpike trusts charged with improving Wales' horrendous road system. Both initiatives generated maps and written Minute Books which can be a valuable source of information on the location of boundaries, and the re-routing of roads. Major landowners normally sat on the turnpike committees and often used their influence to re-route roads in such a way that their own estates would benefit, often by moving the road further from their own front doors and enabling improvements or radical redesign of their parks. The maps and minutes can provide valuable information, but tend to be highly inconsistent in the features recorded. Where boundaries and road routes are the purpose of the cartography, only a limited number of key features such as buildings, bridges or mileposts needed to be included to render such a map comprehensible. Absence of such a feature cannot be considered meaningful. Such maps may be located in County Record Offices or the National Library of Wales.

Books

Antiquarian books could be considered above reproach, but the views illustrated are highly selective and may be limited by both artistic skill and the artist's motivation to make a pleasing picture. Dinely,[10] who toured Wales with the Duke of Beaufort is characterised by an unreliable sense of scale and perspective which has fuelled much debate about the interpretation of his drawing of the old Elizabethan mansion at Trawscoed. Though the term 'sponsorship' had yet to be coined, the concept was alive and well by the time the Buck brothers toured the country engraving castles, monasteries, palaces, cities and towns and gaining subscriptions in return for a handsome dedication.[11] Notwithstanding the need to gratify the patron, these fine prints (executed in Monmouthshire in 1732 and in the rest of Wales in 1740-42) offer a high level of realism and accuracy, often detailing formal gardens around mansions such as Picton Castle or small town gardens such as the south-facing vegetable gardens east of Carmarthen castle. Sadly, in Cardiganshire, only three sponsors were forthcoming, Powell, Pryse and Stedman, who respectively sponsored Aberystwyth Castle, Cardigan Castle and Strata Florida Abbey. Only the last shows any traces of a garden.

There is a proliferation of sources for the nineteenth century, but one soon realises that the authors of the popular tourists' guides to Wales borrowed shamelessly from one another's work and probably few researched all the features they described themselves. The description of the Aeron valley approach to the estate of Llanerchaeron reads informatively in ***The Cambrian Travellers' Guide*** by George Nicholson (1813):[12] "*The cottages are frequently very picturesque, but some of them are absurdly whitewashed on*

the outside. Even the beautiful blue slate does not escape this bedaubing custom." One would readily accept this as a first-hand description were it not that closer inspection reveals that this entire section is transcribed with a few phrases transposed, from William Fordyce Mavor's 1805 description first published in ***The British Tourist or Traveller's Pocket Companion*** (3rd edition, improved and much enlarged).[13] Mavor actually wrote: "*Some of the dwellings of the peasantry were extremely picturesque and happily situated; but we could not help observing in several instances the singular absurdity of whitewashing the slates which in themselves are beautiful beyond what most countries produce.*" A specific description probably applying only to a handful of improved estate cottages associated with "*the elegant modern seat of Colonel Lewis*", has, in the re-write, become a general assessment of the locality, and the criticism of whitewashing slates has been transferred to the entire cottages.

Meyrick's Cardiganshire[14] is said to have been composed largely by remote information gathering while he was in Oxford[15]. About authors such as T. Nicholas of *County Families of Wales*[16] little is known, and the illustrations which accompany his work are unattributed. There was certainly scope for the engraver's improving pen. Authors of Picturesque tour were far from steeped in the history of the area which they described. A letter from Thomas Johnes of Hafod to James Edward Smith on Sept 22 1803[17] sums up his reservations about another well respected source: "*I have had another Tourist since my letter to you who intends publishing his Tour thro' South Wales, a Mr Malkin*[18] *who lives near Hackney. If I may judge from what I remarked of him the world will not be much enlightened, but he means to attempt it in one or more volumes 4to with well engraven prints. Anything now sells with prints.*" Conversely some landowners, such as Thomas Johnes, may have actually modified their estates to fit published descriptions. In a letter to George Cumberland expressing his satisfaction with the book *An Attempt to Describe Hafod,*[19] Johnes expressed the intention of doing just that.[20]

Pictures.

Original artworks are invariably an interpretation of the landscape they depict, and influenced by both the technical competence and the artistic school of the author. They are a valuable source but one which must be treated with caution. Naïve artists may have problems with scale and perspective but are often more useful in depicting interpretable tree species than artists of the Claude Lorraine school such as Richard Wilson, whose trees tend to resemble olive trees. Buildings are more likely to be correctly depicted than their setting, which is very likely to have been rendered tidier or more picturesque. The tendency to exaggerate the vertical dimension has already been remarked upon, and is also expressed in "Warwick" Smith's famous depictions of the waterfalls at Hafod. Nineteenth-century amateurs such as W.T.R. Powell at Nanteos, and Mary Ashby Lewis' niece, Miss Pearson at Llanerchaeron strove for an accurate likeness and are among the most valuable resources as to what a place actually looked like at the time. Miss Pearson shows ornamental planting of specimen larches, and the traditional Cardiganshire cottage thatching in which a crate-like frame enclosed the smoke hole in the roof and the whole was thatched with straw laced with horizontally coursed braids of the same material. W.T.R. Powell recorded otter hunts in the lake, pheasant shooting in the woods near the kennels, the cascade, the parkland oaks, and the Italianate lodge. Powell's dated pictures show regularly spaced exotic conifers, probably Wellingtonias, breaking out through the canopy of decidous woodland, but cast the researcher into despair by representing the lodge with its tower on the wrong corner, a confusing error best explained by the fact that the artist executed the picture from memory whilst on holiday in the south of France.

W.T.R. Powell's drawing of the lodge at Nanteos (left) differs in the position of the tower from the postacard drawing (right), which more closely reflects the actual structure.
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Photographs and Picture Postcards

With the advent of photography a multiplicity of accurate images becomes available. Attribution of date and even place however, may be problematic. If only people would write on the back of their pictures when they first take possession of them! Failing that, if only those who pencil identifications later upon a photograph would identify themselves and their sources! Recent researches in the Arthur Lewis photographic collection in the National Library of Wales, revealed, scattered within the collection, ten photographs of a gentleman with his dog, in each of three different rooms, and reclining on the grass in a garden. These pictures were variously identified: "George V visits Aberystwyth", "Lord ? at Hafod Cwmystwyth", "Lord Lisburne, Trawscoed". Undoubtedly these attributions were inconsistent. John Vaughan, younger son of the eighth Earl of Lisburne, instantly identified the gentleman as 'Uncle Anthony'. It is essential never to take such an honorary appellation too literally. "Uncle Anthony " was in fact known to The Hon. John Vaughan's *Grandfather* as Uncle. He was Anthony Crawley-Boevey who married the widowed countess' sister, Blanche Probyn, in 1904 and lived at the Dower House, Birchgrove, after the death of the sixth earl and during the infancy of the seventh earl. The garden photographs were taken at Trawscoed, and the interiors at Birchgrove.

There are many collections of photographs, and any may chance to contain pictures relevant to the house under research, so the more catalogues scanned the greater the chance of reward. Obvious resources include the Country Life Picture Library, and the Victoria and Albert Museum, but any regional collection may also chance to have relevant material. The National Library of Wales makes a policy of purchasing photographic material and postcards relevant to Wales, so these collections are an excellent starting point.

Newspapers

These are indeed likely to be a good source in matching events to dates, especially where the events involved fire, flood or other disaster. However the distrust of journalistic accuracy has probably always been well founded, and precise accounts must be viewed with some caution. The sources used by journalists have always most frequently been oral histories and as such they must also take a large share of the responsibility for elevating an assertion to the status of a widely repeated truth.

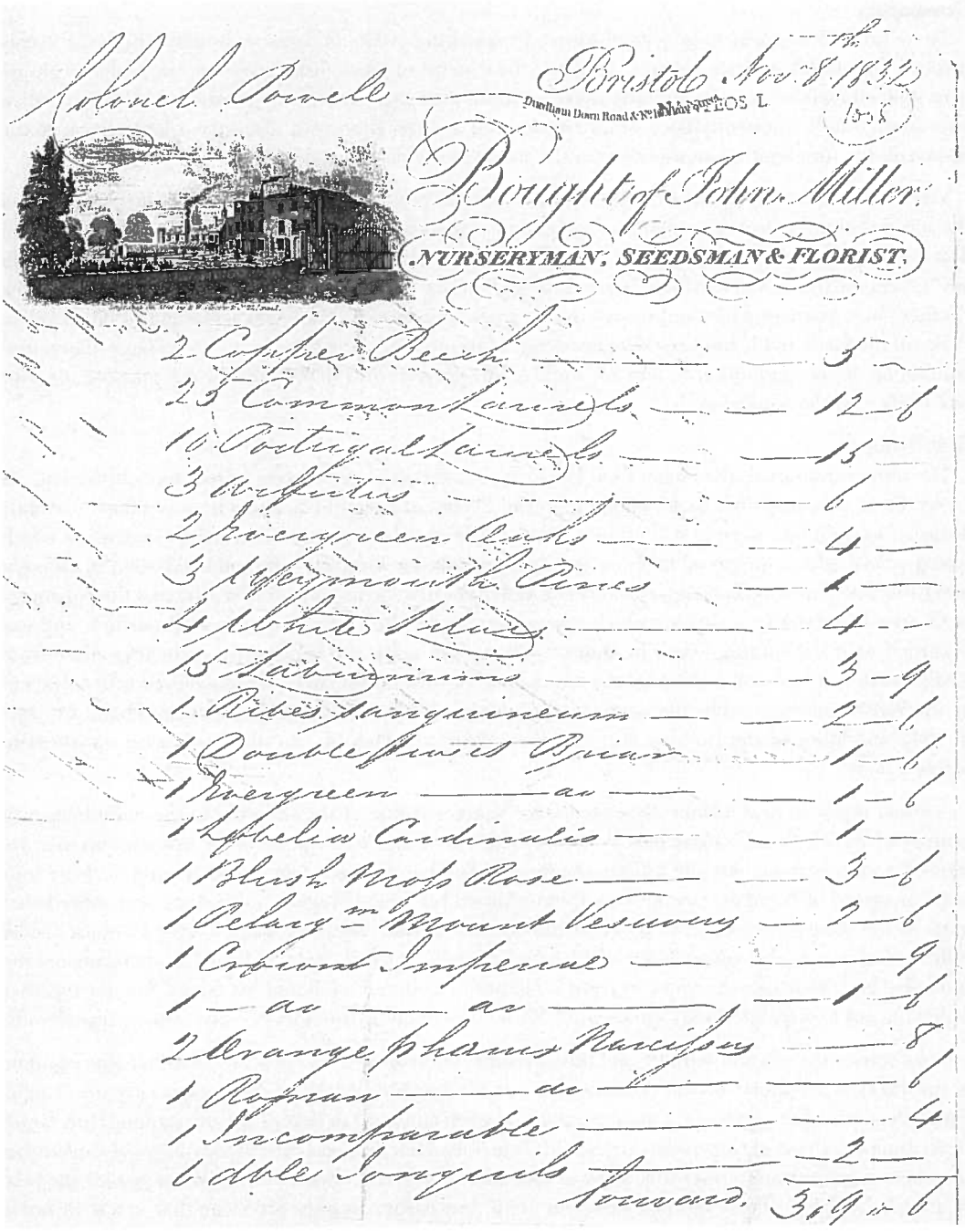
Victorian accounts of significant deaths and marriages may include useful details to be gleaned from the account of the speeches given on such occasions. Advertisements can provide invaluable evidence of date and extent of timber sales which often dramatically altered the landscape setting. One such is an advertisement in the Carmarthen Journal of 18 January 1839 for an auction sale to be held at The Feathers Inn, Aberaeron of standing oak timber trees, individually numbered 1-146 and 1-283, at Ciliau Park, on 13 March 1839. Implied is clear evidence of the quality of the trees, being "*—of large dimensions containing 40 feet and upwards, and are equal to any purpose for the Navy, or for any purpose superior oak timber can be applied to—*".[21]

Oral Histories

The more sensational, the longer-lived the story, but this does not protect it from embellishment. At Lodge Park, a former deer park belonging to the Pryses' of Gogerddan someone was almost certainly drowned in what has come to be known as Bushell's Well. Much greater uncertainty surrounds which spring or well, (there are several likely candidates), and who was drowned (wife and maid occur in different oral histories). Thomas Bushell was an artistic and innovative man who had first attracted the patronage of Charles I by devising a masque which was performed for the king and queen at Woodstock, and was rewarded with the mining leases in Wales.[22] He ran the mint at Aberystwyth, extracting silver from locally produced lead ore, and leased the mines and house at Lodge Park. He was viewed with suspicion by the Welsh and harassed by the landowner, Sir Richard Pryse for twenty years before he left the area in 1642 and followed the Royalist mints to Shrewsbury and Oxford. An obvious person on whom to blame a body?

A much repeated oral history associated with Nanteos is that of the shooting in the mid-nineteenth century of W.T.R. Powell's prize bull by his aesthete son George as a riposte to the exhortation to prove himself a man by going out and killing something. Another disputed tale is that, during his brief four years as squire of Nanteos, George Powell entertained his friend Wagner at Nanteos, and indeed that parts of the Ring Cycle were composed at the Nanteos piano. However when Trevor Fishlock visited Nanteos last year in the course of one of his televised walks through Wales[23], he deftly amalgamated the two tales, both probably spurious, to paint a picture of George Powell and his friend Wagner together frolicking out to dispatch Daddy's prize bull! With every retelling the story becomes more preposterous.

Good stories survive and mutate, and time becomes telescoped in the process. Another fine example is the printed account[24] of the reminiscences of the last Mrs Powell of Nanteos, a lady who single-handedly elevated the status of a wooden medieval wych-elm bowl to that of the miraculous Holy Grail. Describing her Pryse of Gogerddan ancestors, she extolled her forebear Sir Carbery Pryse of Gogerddan as so keen a fox hunting squire that he once rode non stop from London to Gogerddan just for the sake of a day's hunting. The ride took place, in 1693, but earlier sources are clear that it was in order immediately to stake his claims, having succeeded in bringing to the statute books the Mines Royal Act of 1693, whereby landowners, rather than the Crown, would have the right to extract metallic ores, including gold and silver on their own land.[25]



A plant order for trees, shrubs and bulbs placed with John Miller, nurseryman of Bristol, in 1832.
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Correspondence, bills, tradesman's books, and estate accounts

The prosaic is often not preserved. At Hafod, where almost all the contents of the mansion were destroyed by fire in 1807, obviously much of the early records went up in smoke and subsequent frequent ownership changes further depleted these dull but dependable historic resources. At Nanteos, Gogerddan, and Trawscoed, where uninterrupted ownership spanned several centuries, much more material has survived. Exceptionally useful material at Nanteos has included bills from seed merchants and nurserymen. Masons' account books have thrown incontrovertible light on the construction of an ice-house and greenhouse in 1831, and on the materials being used.

Written instructions to the agent include evidence that an ice house, (the location of which is today unknown) was undoubtedly functioning in 1843, for two men were instructed, in the January, to fill it with ice. Gardeners' account books detailing the income from sale of surplus vegetables and fruit from the vegetable garden give a useful annual calendar of gardening, and the sale of the occasional melon reveals the staggering insight that in 1842 a melon retailed for two shillings, equivalent to the weekly wages of a female weeder in the garden.

Architects' plans

At Nanteos, the archive is particularly rich in architects' designs for estate improvements. It includes a great wealth of plans both by the famous and the more obscure. Among them are plans by John Davenport to remodel the park in 1791;[26] by John Nash and George Stanley Repton for extension of the mansion, and for picturesque lodges and garden buildings, drawn in 1812;[27] designs for mansion alterations, icehouse, cottages and lodges by Aberystwyth architect William Ritson Coultart[28] and by Shrewsbury architect Edward Haycock; and for elevations and plans for cottages by unsung local builders such as John Lumley[29] and Roderick Williams.[30] Where an architect's name may be discerned two valuable reference sources to their other work are Colvin[31] and Joyner.[32] Both works are inevitably subject to update as more information emerges. Undated plans and letters of specification are often on paper bearing a dated watermark which can be inspected by holding the plan up to the light. While not necessarily a date for the structure, this represents an incontrovertible 'drawn-after' date.

Armed with this material the challenge was to look at the Nanteos buildings with new eyes, trying to identify whether plans were carried out, in their entirety, in spirit, or not at all. However what one sees is influenced by what one is looking for and the three interrelated facets of understanding a garden or demesne are a prior knowledge of the maps, plans, pictures and literary sources, field experience of other parks and gardens, and a comprehension of historic trends in landscape design.

Acknowledgements

Most of the examples described have been encountered in the course of research on various sites in collaboration with Ros Laidlaw. Robustly scrutinizing each other's every conclusion, we have learnt to avoid some pitfalls of the credulous researcher. We are also convinced that the history of an estate cannot be safely unravelled without reference to the family fortunes of the owners. When an estate undergoes extensive change the reasons are frequently inheritance or marriage; major alterations are unlikely to have been carried out when an estate is rented out or in chancery. In unravelling the sequence of estate change, plausibility in relation to the human history of the property is an important factor to consider.

Notes and References

1. Plan of the Aberllolwyn Estate in the Parish of Llanychaiarn in Cardiganshire. Lithographers M. & M.W.Lambert, NLW Gogerddan Box 81.
2. N.L.W. Nanteos, Vol 45.
3. I know of no other surveys by Crawford in Cardiganshire.
4. A cottage ornée would be a picturesque conceit, a pretty cottage probably gothic in style, situated to complement a view and not necessarily built for the use of a tenant. It could alternatively function as a picnic house on a walk in the grounds.
5. Nanteos estate survey by John Davies, 1764. NLW. Nanteos 311, 319, 321, 325, 326, 333, 355 et al.
6. Clom cottages are of mud walled construction, protected by a straw thatched roof. Once roofless they collapse very quickly into their constituent mud and rubble.
7. C.Palmer, in *Nanteos* edited by Gerald Morgan, in preparation.
8. Ordance Survey key. This is a single sheet, printed contemporaneosly with the First Edition.
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22. Carr and Schone, *Pigs and Ingots,* Y Lolfa 1993.
23. H.T.V. Wales, 1987.
24. Newton Wynne Apperley, *A Hunting Diary,* Nisbet and Co, London, 1926.

25. John Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Landed Gentry*, 1838.

26. Plan of Intended improvements at Nanteos, the seat of Thomas Powell Esq. by John Davenport, 1791, NLW Map 76.

27. Suggett op. cit.

28. Although other authors spell Coultart with an h (Coulthart) the signed plans and baptismal records of his several children at Aberystwyth clearly show that the more improbable spelling is the correct one.

29. C. Palmer op. cit.

30. NLW Nanteos, map 123.

31. H. Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840*, 3rd Ed., Yale University Press, 1995.

32. P. Joyner, *Artists in Wales c.1740-1851*, National Library of Wales Press, 1997.

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