

SUMMARY

Ref number	PGW (Gm) 65 (BRI)
OS Map	170
Grid ref	SS 894 852
Former county	West Glamorgan
Local authority	Bridgend County Borough Council
Community Council	Llangynwyd Lower and Ynysawdre
Designations	None
Site Evaluation	Grade II
Primary reasons for grading	<i>The survival, more or less intact, of a late eighteenth-century and mid-nineteenth-century landscape park, in an attractive wooded setting, contemporary with the building of an important country house. An important and unusual feature of the site is its well-preserved, large-scale, late eighteenth-century walled and terraced gardens.</i>
Type of site	<i>Landscape park; garden; walled garden.</i>
Main phases of construction	1772–97; 1843–59

Site description

Coytrahen House, originally called Goetre-hen House, is a five-bay, single-storey, pebble-dashed house, built of Quarella stone, with dormer windows in the pitched slate roof. It is situated on the east flank of the Llynfi valley, to the south-east of the village of Coytrahen. Behind it, to the north-east, is a wooded slope; below, to the west, the open parkland slopes down to the river.

The main front faces south-west and is approached by a tarmac drive from the north-west. It has a central door and flanking pairs of mullioned and transomed windows, all set in round-topped blind arcades. A flight of three stone steps leads up to the door, which is original. Under the house are extensive cellars with brick vaulting, and a large drain around them.

The history of Coytrahen House extends back at least to the seventeenth century, when it was a small farmhouse belonging to Howell ap Rees, and then a larger house, with a storeyed porch, belonging to the Powells of Llwydardh, a minor gentry family. By about 1700 the family had amassed an estate of about 1,000 acres. At the time of Anthony Powell (d. 1772) the house had fifteen rooms, a brewery, a dairy, a granary, a larder and a cellar. Anthony Powell died childless and Coytrahen then passed to the Popkin family of Knapcoch. This was through the marriage of Anthony's elder sister Mary to John Popkin (d. 1797), whose son, Morgan, inherited Coytrahen. Morgan died in the same year as Anthony Powell and left Coytrahen to his son, John. It was John who built a much more substantial and modern manor house on the cellars of the previous one; these survive below the present house. This house (the present house is the truncated central block) is shown on the tithe map of 1843. It had a tall, three-storey main block, with flanking, single-storey service wings. The service wings had blind arcading on the main front, matching that of the central block. On stylistic grounds, including the Classical decoration of the interior (some of which survives), the architect of the house is thought to have been Anthony Keck, who also designed Penrice House, on Gower.

John Popkin had no immediate heirs and Coytrahen passed to the Trahernes through the marriage of his sister, Frances (d. 1807), to Edmund Traherne of Castellau (d. 1795). John left Coytrahen to

Frances and eventually it was inherited by her third son, Morgan Popkin Traherne (d. 1859), who was high sheriff in 1812. Morgan could not take over the estate until the death of John Popkin's widow, Elizabeth, in 1808. Between 1837 and 1843 Morgan lived in Boulogne and Bristol and rented the house out; a notice dated 2 September 1837, in the *Glamorgan, Monmouthshire and Brecon Gazette*, said that it was 'to be let ready furnished'. On Morgan's death in 1859 his son, John Popkin (d. 1901), inherited Coytrahen. John only lived there until 1864, when he left with Helen Brogden, wife of James Brogden, of nearby Tondy House. The last member of the Traherne family to own Coytrahen was Onslow Powell Traherne (d. 1950). He lived at Bryngarw, the other family property nearby. After 1901 the house was occupied by estate agents and the manager of Messrs Baldwins Ltd, the firm that acquired the Coytrahen Park Colliery which opened in 1905. In 1914–18 the house was rented by the Red Cross for use as a wartime hospital. It was abandoned in 1928, after which it suffered from two fires. In 1948 Onslow sold the house and the Bryngarw land to a Mr Hurley, a timber merchant, who stripped the land of good quality wood. Later in the same year he sold 70 acres to Mr Aston, including the woods and drives, and the Home Farm. In 1950 Sheppards Property Ltd bought the house. It was sold in 1969 to Alex Evans and in 1971 to Mr and Mrs Beynon, the present owners. The house was reduced to its present size after 1948, having deteriorated seriously from 1928 onwards. To the north of the house a garage stands on the site of the north wing; the site of the south wing is now a garden.

The remaining outbuildings lie in a group about 200m to the north-west of the house. They consist of the former laundry, now converted to a house called the Home Farm, an extension to Home Farm on the site of the coach house, the probable former brewhouse and a range of garages and sheds. The Home Farm, the extension and garages and sheds lie on three sides of a small courtyard reached by a short drive at the west end of its north side, leading off the minor road from Coytrahen village to Brynmenyn. A large beech tree stands above the east side of the entrance. The drive is now concreted but used to be stony and descends a steep slope between high, rubble, drystone walls. The wall on the south-west side is about 3.5m high and belongs to the walled garden; that on the north-east side is a revetment wall, about 4m high, for the steep bank behind. It has a stone-edged flowerbed at its foot and continues round the back of Home Farm. The outer parts of the courtyard are concreted; the centre used to be grass but it is now paved in random stone. A small area of cobbling survives on the east side of the courtyard, next to the site of the coach house. At the foot of the east wall of the walled garden is a brick-edged flowerbed.

Home Farm, on the north side of the courtyard, is a two-storey stone building with a pitched slate roof, in the centre of which is a dormer with a circular window. This is an original feature of the laundry; the remaining windows are modern. On the east side of the courtyard, on the site of the coach house, is a single-storey stone building, used as an extension to Home Farm, with a pitched slate roof and a modern door and windows. The garages and sheds on the west side of the courtyard are single-storey modern buildings, built against the east wall of the walled garden. A small, square, single-storey building, whose walls may be those of the former brewhouse, lies to the east of the building on the site of the coach house. It has been converted for recreational use and has a modern swimming pool to the east of it. The ground in this area has been considerably built up in modern times above the original ground level.

The outbuildings in their original form are thought to have been contemporary with the rebuilding of the house by John Popkin

between 1772 and 1797. Today little trace of their eighteenth-century form remains. A notice of 2 September 1837 offering Coytrahen to let, in the *Glamorgan, Monmouthshire and Brecon Gazette*, mentioned that 'adjoining the House are good coach houses and stabling'. The 1843 tithe map shows the laundry and a substantial coach house at right angles to it. Beyond, to the east, is a small building that may have been the brewhouse. It also shows a building in the stable yard, probably stables. All these buildings are also shown on the 1877 Ordnance Survey map. By the time of the second edition of the map in 1897, the small building is not shown. Ownership followed that of the house until 1948, when Home Farm was sold first to Mr Hurley and then to Mr Aston. The coach house was still standing in the 1950s but the brewhouse is thought to have already been derelict by this time. In 1959 Home Farm, together with that part of the park to the west of the house, known as John Jeremy's Fields and Park Field, were sold to John V. Thomas. It then passed through several other owners before being bought by the present owners in 2001. The coach house was demolished in the 1970s.

Coytrahen House lies towards the northern end of a small landscape park which occupies the east side of the Llynfi valley between the villages of Coytrahen and Tondy. Except at the south (Tondy) end, where a small area of parkland lies to the west of the river, the Llynfi — running southwards and then south-eastwards — forms the west boundary of the park. The park is bounded to the north by a rubble-stone wall running along the lane between Coytrahen and Brynmenyn. On the east it is bounded by field boundaries. The ground slopes down to the west, with a steep drop to the flood plain at the north end of the park and gentler slopes elsewhere.

There are two drives to the house: one from the south and one from the north. That from the north is the only one now usable. The original main drive is from the south, off the A4063 at Tondy. No lodge remains. The drive runs eastwards, passes through housing, over the railway line that runs up the valley, and then enters wooded parkland. Here the stony drive curves round northwards and is flanked by rows of closely planted yew trees; these were probably originally hedges. The drive then passes over a substantial bridge over the river Llynfi. The carriageway has gone, making the bridge impassable, but the abutments and framework remain. The abutments are high walls of coursed stone with splays at either end. The carriageway supports are single, exceptionally long wooden beams of French oak, which remain in a good condition. Between the beams is a concave iron girder. The wooden handrails survive, except for a missing section on the downstream side. At either end the bridge is flanked by rectangular piers of large squared, roughly cut, stone blocks with tapered dressed-stone tops. On the north side of the river the approach to the river is embanked.

The drive then continues northwards as a stony, sometimes waterlogged track for about 400m through deciduous woodland. Near the bridge it is flanked by close set yew trees as on the other side of the river. Within the wood are the remains of coal workings; there is some drystone revetment walling and the drystone abutments of a tramway bridge next to the drive. At its north end where it adjoins the garden, the wood opens out and is planted with conifers, including a large cedar and rhododendrons as well as mixed deciduous trees, in particular large ash and beech. In this area the drive is grassed over, having formerly run across the garden to the house.

The north drive enters the park off the Coytrahen to Brynmenyn lane, just east of the railway line. The entrance piers are modern. The drive is retained by a revetment wall along its south-west side. Below

is a steep bank planted with mature trees, including holly. The drive, now tarmacked, follows the contour south-eastwards, flanked initially on the east by the west boundary wall of the walled garden. Three large Scots pines flank the drive on its south side. Beyond the walled garden the ground flanking the drive is open grassland. Two mature sweet chestnut trees flank the drive; that on the north side is particularly large and of great age. Large stumps indicate the former existence of more sweet chestnuts here. At the house the drive divides, leading to the north-east and south-west fronts. The circular gate piers at the entrance to the garden are modern.

Leading off the north drive, before reaching the house and garden, is the former service drive to the Home Farm and other outbuildings. This is now a disused, grassy track running north-westwards. On the approach to the Home Farm courtyard the drive is bounded on the north side by a stone revetment wall about 1.5m high, terminating in a slightly higher pier with a pyramidal top. On the south side the track is bounded by the stable yard, the wall of which is broken down at the east end. Closer to the courtyard the south wall is about 1.7m high, with a blocked entrance. The wall was originally higher. There is a gap at the west end of the wall and part of it has fallen here. Opposite, on the north side of the drive, there is a blocked entrance and then a modern breeze-block wall.

The park has two main areas of open grassland: to the south-west and east of the house. To the south-west the house looks out on pasture fields leading down to the river, with a discontinuous belt of small deciduous trees along the field boundary at the foot of the slope down to the flood plain. To the west is a large clump of deciduous and coniferous trees. Beyond the river is a wooded slope, forming the background to the park. To the east of the house is open parkland, fringed on its east side by deciduous woodland, rhododendrons and Scots pines. In the open ground stands a solitary oak tree. Behind the house and Home Farm, along the north side of the park, is an area of hanging woodland. Many of the mature trees in this wood were felled in the twentieth century. It is now predominantly of birch, with some oak and a few limes and horse chestnuts.

There is no evidence for a park at Coytrahen before the ownership of John Popkin, between 1772 and 1797. It is probable that he laid out the park as the setting for his new house. In order to make a park he had to move the coal workings, which had been nearer the house, to their present location further away. In his *Topographical Dictionary of Wales* (1833), Samuel Lewis described Coytrahen as 'a handsome mansion, occupying a retired, but agreeable situation on the declivity of a hill, surrounded with luxuriant plantations ... [commanding] a beautiful view of the surrounding country'. This is the first hint of a park. The 'to let' advertisement of 1837 does not refer to a park as such but mentions '80 acres of rich Pasture land adjoining'. The tithe map of 1843 shows the extent of John Popkin's landscaping. There is only one drive — that from the north; the present area of park to the south of the house is fenceless and described as parkland ('lawn'). Between this and the river are three large fields, which, together with the fields to the east of the house are all part of 'Coytrehen Farm', let to a Mr Charles Maud.

According to the 1877 25in Ordnance Survey map the layout of the park was more or less the same as it is today. The south drive is in place, as is the Great Western Railway Maesteg branch line, cutting a swathe across the western end of the park. The woodland at the north end of the park, between the railway line and the drive, has been planted. There were no lodges at either entrance and both drives were as they are now. There were more individual trees than now, dotted about the open areas of the park, to the south and east

of the house. An area flanking the south drive, towards the river, that is now wooded, was open ground. This second phase of landscaping must have been the work of Morgan Popkin Traherne.

By the time of the 1897 Second Edition Ordnance Survey map some minor changes had occurred. The previously open area to the east of the drive was wooded, but that to the west was still open. The wooded area to the north, now called Coed Cae-bryn, had been planted with more conifers. To the south of the north drive, below the walled gardens, a small building divided into six compartments, perhaps indicating pens or kennels, had been added. It has now gone.

The estate of Coytrahen reached its zenith in the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1873 the estate of John Popkin Traherne was over 3,600 acres in extent and its mineral wealth was bringing in a large income. However, the family's wealth began to decline towards the end of the century. The Coytrahen Park Colliery was allowed to open on demesne land, towards the south end of the park, in 1905. After the First World War Onslow Powell Traherne began selling parts of the estate. When he sold Coytrahen in 1948 to the timber merchant, Mr Hurley, the park was stripped of many of its mature trees; much of the present-day woodland is relatively young seedling regrowth.

The garden lies mainly to the south-west and south-east of the house. Although there are some traces of the earlier layout, which the present garden overlies, it is mostly twentieth-century in date. The drive from the north circles the house.

To the south-west of the house is a level lawn overlooking the park, bounded by a high stone revetment wall. A flight of stone steps leads down to the park below. The wall was built initially by William Aston in about 1948, and altered in about 1976 and 1998. On the south-east side of the house is a small lawn and a stone-paved area bounded by a low stone parapet wall. This area was made in the 1970s and stands on the site of the billiard room. To the north-east of the house the drive is flanked by a stone revetment wall about 1 m high. This may be an original wall, but the coping is modern. Behind is a bank of rhododendrons and azaleas backed by deciduous woodland, three wellingtonias and an evergreen oak.

To the south-east is a lawn, swimming pool and tennis court, laid out in the 1970s. The site of a former lily pool in this area is now grass, with a large copper beech and rhododendrons to the south, and the course of the former main drive to the west. To the east of the former lily pool rhododendrons grow on the site of a walled garden that was removed in the 1950s and 60s. A ha-ha runs east-west, south of the lily pool site. It is revetted with a drystone wall up to about 1.2 m high. Water flows westwards down it and is taken under the drive in a stone culvert. The bank on the south side of the ha-ha is of modern construction. Beyond the former lily pool, to the east, the ha-ha makes a right-angled bend to the north and the revetment wall continues for a short distance, bounding a grass track on the boundary of the garden. This continues northwards through the park to the park boundary.

The first evidence for a garden is in the 1837 'to let' advertisement, which mentions 'Pleasure Grounds, and well-stocked Gardens'. These were probably made by John Popkin as an adjunct to the house that he built in 1772–97. The tithe map of 1843 shows the garden confined to the area immediately around the house, but including the pond. The drive divided, as now, at the entrance and swept round to both fronts of the house. There has been no change to the north and south boundaries of the garden since then.

The 1877 25in Ordnance Survey map shows a slightly extended layout, to the east of the house. The pond is shown as slightly more rectilinear than on the tithe map. The new south drive enters the

garden to its south, and to the south-west is a rectangular area on the site of the present-day tennis court. This may well have been a croquet lawn. To the north and east of the pond the garden has been expanded into an area of mixed deciduous and coniferous trees. There is no change in the 1897 edition of the Ordnance Survey map. A photograph dating to about 1910 shows a grass slope in front of the house with a simple fence at its foot. The house is flanked by large deciduous trees that are probably oak. Another photograph of the same date shows the lily pond. It is serpentine, with stone edging, and flanked by rhododendrons. It was filled in in the 1950s–60s. The current owners made most of the present-day garden during the 1970s.

The walled gardens lie on ground sloping north-south to the west and south of Home Farm, at the north end of the park, between the Coytrahen-Brynmenyn road and the north drive. There are five walled compartments: those at the west and south ends are on the natural slope and the other three are terraced. All walls are of local rubble stone, mortared and roughly coursed.

At the top of the gardens, west of the courtyard of Home Farm, is the square upper terrace. Its east wall, which has lean-to sheds against its outside, has been lowered to about 2.5 m behind them. To the north of the sheds is a wide, modern entrance, north of which the wall stands to its full height of about 4 m, with a rounded top. Towards the south end of the wall is an original doorway with a wooden door and a lintel of upright stones. A stone-edged flowerbed runs along the foot of the wall. The north wall is about 4 m high. Two plants, which may be of some antiquity, grow against it — a *Hydrangea petiolaris* and a fig tree. The west wall is about 2.5 m high; its south end is broken down. In the wall is an original doorway with a slightly curved lintel of stone blocks. The south revetment wall of the terrace stands to about 0.7 m above ground level. There is evidence that this wall was once much higher. The interior of the upper terrace is mostly lawn. Recently, some of the path layout has been recovered through excavation. A path along the east wall and an east-west cross path has been unearthed. These appear to have had crushed brick foundations and brick surfaces above them at one time, although only a row of brick remains. There are traces of a similar path along the west wall. The path edging is of stone.

In the north-west corner of the terrace is a small, single-storey lean-to building of narrow-coursed stone and brick, against the north wall. It has a single central window, at one time larger, and a door in the west wall. In the east wall is a blocked entrance or window. Inside, there is a drain next to the east wall and the back wall is plastered. There is evidence that the side walls have been raised. The purpose of this building is obscure, but was probably utilitarian.

Below the upper terrace is a much longer one, about twice its length, extending eastwards below the Home Farm courtyard and other outbuildings. This is divided into two compartments, the west one being the larger. This terrace is backed by a revetment wall about 3 m high, with iron spikes near the top; these may have served as supports for netting or awnings for wall fruit. No fruit trees remain, but at the foot of the wall is the stump of a large pear tree. The west wall is a continuation of the west wall of the upper terrace, rising to about 3 m high towards the south end where there is a gap. The entrance to the terrace from the west compartment was probably here. The wall has a large apple tree growing against it. In front of the wall is a row of four hazel trees that were probably originally part of a Victorian nuttery. The south revetment wall stands up to about 1.5 m above ground level and has two flights of dog-leg steps down it. That near the west end has been cleared of vegetation and has low parapet walls. That further east is overgrown, with its lower flight of steps

facing the same way (east) as the more northerly steps. It is better preserved, with higher flanking walls standing to about 1.6–1.8m.

Towards the east end of the terrace the backing revetment wall is topped by the south wall of the sheds in the Home Farm courtyard, making the wall much higher. At the foot of the wall here there is an ancient vine that may originally have been in a glasshouse, which is now gone. To the east is a modern, breeze-block wall and modern steps up an earthen slope to the courtyard; the slope is of recent origin as well. Originally there was a high revetment wall here, with figs growing against it. The east wall of the compartment is incomplete. At its north end the wall stands to about 2.5m, with the slightly arched top of a doorway visible above the earthen slope. This would have led through to the tack room and stables in the stable yard. At the south end of the line of the wall is a collapsed archway, with the springing remaining on the south side. No internal layout is visible on this terrace, which is largely overgrown but in the process of being cleared.

The smaller compartment on this terrace level, to the east of the larger compartment, was the stable yard. This is bounded on the north by a wall about 2.5m high and on the south by a wall about 1.5m high. In the middle of the east wall is a wide entrance, the east side of which is broken, with square lintel stones lying on the ground. To the north of the entrance the wall is about 1.2m high and to the south, 1.8m high. Against the north wall are brick lean-to piggeries. Against the west wall is a further brick building, possibly a tack room or stables, with a stone cross wall and a doorway into it.

To the west of the upper and lower terrace is a largely unterraced, sloping compartment occupying the corner between the road and the north drive. It is partly wooded and at present heavily overgrown, with some mature deciduous trees at the west end and a large sycamore next to the north wall. Near the east end of the compartment are three shallow terraces and the footings of some cold frames. On the south side is a revetment wall extending about 1m above ground level. It has trees growing on top of it and there is a gap in the wall. The north wall is a continuation of the north wall of the upper terrace to the east, forming the boundary of the garden with the road. Here it is capped with concrete. Near the entrance to the north drive is a blocked entrance. In the north-east corner is a small brick, single-storey building, with two windows on the south side and a door and small flue or chimney on the west. Inside the floor is brick-paved, with an air hole in it. The purpose of this building is uncertain, but it may have been a generator house. Outside, a narrow path bounded on the west by a stone wall about 1m high, leads northwards to the door. To the east of the building the west wall of the upper terrace compartment meets the north boundary wall along the road at a strange, acute angle.

Running below the west compartment, the main lower terrace and the stable yard is a long, gently sloping compartment, also walled on all sides. Its upper, revetment wall is about 3m high and has a cherry tree growing against it. The east wall is up to 2.5m high and has a narrow entrance towards the north end. To its south the wall is built up in three distinct levels: the two lower levels curve up to the entrance and the second level has coping of upright stone blocks. To the north there is a straight joint at the corner. These features suggest a complex building history for this wall. The south-east corner of the compartment is curved. The south wall, next to the north drive, stands up to 2m high, with some sections lower. One part fell in February 2002 and has been rebuilt. There is an original wide gateway (the east side of which has been rebuilt) into the compartment off the drive near the west end. This end of the wall is in good condition and stands to its full height of about 1.7m. There is no internal layout

visible in this compartment, which has recently been cleared of overgrowth.

The walled gardens are probably contemporary with the new house and park of John Popkin, dating to 1772–97. The 'to let' advertisement of 1837 mentions 'well-stocked Gardens', which probably refers to these compartments. It is probable that they were of mixed use and purpose, containing ornamental plants, vegetables and fruit. The high revetment walls were certainly used for wall fruit and it is probable that the lowest compartment was an orchard. The upper terrace may have been laid out as an ornamental garden. The tithe map of 1843 shows the walled gardens with their present layout. No details of paths are given and only one building — the presumed stable block — is shown. In the tithe apportionment the gardens together with outbuildings are referred to as 'Garden & Yards'.

A detailed picture of the layout of the gardens is given by the 1877 25in Ordnance Survey map. The 1897 map shows the same general layout, but omits the paths.

The 1877 map shows that the compartments existed at that date as they are now. The upper terrace is shown with perimeter paths only and with a glasshouse on the site of the present lean-to building. The lower terrace had perimeter paths and a central, north–south path. There was a small glasshouse towards the west end of the north wall. This is not shown on the 1897 map. The compartment to the west had perimeter paths, except on its west side, and another glasshouse against its north wall; a small building is also shown in the north-east corner, on the site of the present brick one. There was also a small building against the east wall of the compartment, just east of the glasshouse. This is not shown on the 1897 map. The lowest compartment is shown planted with trees, suggesting an orchard. It had a single path along the foot of the north wall, which continued to the drive beyond the east wall. The map does not show the two flights of steps, but this does not necessarily indicate that they were not there.

The stable yard is shown, approached by a track or drive to the east, off the service drive. In its centre is a small, square pool. Buildings are ranged along the north side; on the west side is an open walled enclosure with a small building to its south.

Photographs of about 1890–1900 show the gardens (then called 'The Gardens') from the south-west, but little detail can be made out. A small square building to the east of Home Farm is probably the brewhouse, and the building at the west end of the top terrace is present with smoke issuing from a chimney. The piggeries in the stable yard were in existence at that time.

Sources

Primary

Tithe map and apportionment, 1843: Glamorgan Record Office.
 Photographs, about 1910: private collection.

Secondary

Glamorgan, Monmouthshire and Brecon Gazette, 2 September 1837.
 D. R. L. Jones, 'Coytrahen: the families, estate and houses', *Morganwg XXXIV* (1990), 39–77.
 S. Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of Wales* (1833).
 T. Lloyd, *The Lost Houses of Wales* (1986), 94.
 Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales, *An Inventory of the Ancient Monuments in Glamorgan, vol. IV: Domestic Architecture from the Reformation to the Industrial Revolution, Part 1: The Greater Houses* (1981), 336.
 M. Williams, *Coytrahen Photos and Memories* (n.d.).