

Field Walk Report

- **Llanerchaeron Woodland Walks**
- **Grid Reference SN475600**

Llanerchaeron is a Georgian Villa with expansive grounds of approximately 8.88 ha (21.94 acres), located in the Aeron Valley and owned by the National Trust. The grounds include the aforementioned villa with landscape gardens, a lake, walled garden, working farm and a large area of managed woodland (National Trust 2019, Woodland Trust 2019). Historically the site is known to have housed many buildings for different uses including a church, a long house and multiple huts and cottages as well as the villa itself that was designed by John Nash and built in 1794 (Coflein 2019). Many of these buildings are listed on CADW's listed buildings record.



The woodland at the park is managed in part by The National Trust, but also with the assistance of Natural Resources Wales (National Trust 2019, Natural Resources Wales 2019). The woodland is dominated by high canopy oak, but also features areas managed to house other species such as beech and sweet chestnut (Nayling 2019). This area is open to the public and has a number of features that encourage engagement with the forestry and wildlife surrounding the cleared path routes, including plaques, fairy doors, carvings and bird boxes. Using tools like these to engage customers and visitors to woodland sites has become an important part of the woodland management at heritage sites, and *'peoples' understanding and enjoyment of woodland'* has become a key principle for conservation charities such as The Woodland Trust (Woodland Trust, 2019). Rackham reminds us that engagement with forestry has always been part of the 'landscape-park tradition' when he cites Peterken's observations on the Queen of France being taken for a picnic 'Under the Oaks' at Staverton Park, when visiting England in 1528.

The woodland walk paths of Allt Lanlas are a key feature of the park, encouraging visitors to follow a route planned by the park management. This has arguably developed from a more rudimentary form of the special accessibility analysis' that museums take part in today, allowing the park to take in data on its visitors and control their movement around the woodland (Tröndle, 2014). This not only safeguards the wildlife living deeper in the woodland but also makes managing the woodland safer for the public, and easier for the woodland conservationists (National Trust Brecon Beacons Blog, 2017).

Methods of Woodland Management are clear at Llanerchaeron, designed to protect and maintain its ecosystem, longevity and cultural benefits (Department of the Environment, 1994). This is particularly important at the woods at Allt Lanlas as a number of tree ring chronologies date the woods that currently exist back to 1779 (Bale, 2005). These methods have been developed over the last 40 years, due to issues with mass deforestation post World War II (Rackham 1976, Davies 2010). Coppicing was widely evident and had been used as a forestry management technique long before the Department of the Environment made any recommendations, however 'coppicing-with-standards' has replaced the previous clear-felling and planting technique of the post war period (Kirby, Watkins, 1990). This technique is vital in oak heavy forests, as the undergrowth can be adversely affected when the growth of oak has not been managed well in the past (Rackham, 1980). Equally there is evidence of undergrowth management, design to safeguard the micro-ecosystems in those areas, and to support the habitats of animals, flora and fauna, whilst simultaneously clearing enough space for reforestation when felling occurs (Watkins, 1990).

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