

Field Walk Report

- **The Ladies Walk, Hafod Estate.**
- **Grid Reference: SN7590673247 (Grid Ref for Mansion remains in centre of estate)**

Hafod is a large managed estate, anywhere between 200 and 400 hectares in size (accounts from reliable sources differ), located in Mid Wales, between the small villages of Ysbyty Ystwyth and Pontarfynach, Ceredigion (see pic 2 + 3). Historically, Hafod was a gentrified estate but today it is preserved primarily for its landscape and historical significance by Natural Resources Wales (Natural Resources Wales 2019, Hafod 2017, Coflein 2011, Dyfed Archaeological Trust 2001).

Hafod was designed specifically to house a number of landscapes and conforms to the 'picturesque' ideal of landscape and art popular in the 18th Century (The National Trust 2019, Gilpin 1973).

The site itself houses a number of different managed landscapes, designed to reflect Gilpin's vision of the picturesque, which he first experienced in this region when he did a tour of the River Wye and South Wales in 1770. Gilpin reflects on the picturesque quality in existing landscapes and begins the conversation about artificially recreating these landscapes in managed areas (Exploring Mid Wales 2019, Gilpin 1973, Gilpin 1972). In the 1780's Thomas Johnes, the first permanent resident at Hafod, took Gilpin's ideas and actualised them, creating an alpine waterfall (pic 5 + 6) , managed gardens (pic 7 + 12), and overseeing the management and rehabilitation of the woodland on the estate after moving into the mansion on the site, built by Thomas Baldwin in 1876 (Coflein 2011, Cumberland & Johnes 1996).

The woodland, as mentioned by Johnes in his commentary (Cumberland & Johnes 1996), is designed to portray traditional alpine scenery (pic 5, 6+8), and is heavily managed by Historic Gardens Wales and the Woodland Trust (The Hafod Project 2017). There is clear evidence of the felling of mature pine to make way for new

growth, and strategic felling to make use of the trees as borders to the pathways (see pic 8, 9 + 10). Johnes himself keenly comments that he has “*neither shorn or tormented it*” when he went about “*beautifying*” the estate (Cumberland & Johnes 1996).

Specialist ‘walks’ were devised to fit societal norms, and allow visitors to appreciate the best of the scenery (Hafod 2017, Inglis-Jones & Brothers 1960). Grottos were also created for this purpose, creating natural resting places at areas that had been, as Johnes would put it, beautified (see pic 11).

All indications from Johnes’ writing is that Wales lent itself to this manipulation, having already a natural wilderness that reminded him of different areas of Europe that he had visited as a younger man (Cumberland & Johnes 1996, Inglis-Jones & Brothers 1960).

Despite a history of arable farming, and much enthusiasm for introducing flora and fauna and techniques such as drainage and ash spreading that improved the soil conditions at Hafod, like many other large estates, Rhododendrons were eventually introduced to the landscape (Moore-Coyler, R.J. 1992). Their durability under harsh weather conditions and fast growth create a dense undergrowth that destroys the natural habitat of the woodland floor, negatively impacting the natural biodiversity of woodlands and its wildlife (Forestry and British Timber 2006). We still see evidence of this problem at Hafod today (see pic 11).

Pictures

Picture 1: View of river in the Ystwyth Valley that runs through the Hafod Estate.

Picture 2: Hafod boundary lines map.

Picture 3: Location of Hafod in Wales – Bing Map.

Picture 4: Hafod Land Map drawn in 1796.

Picture 5: Hafod waterfall plate 1810.

Picture 6: Hafod waterfall present day.

Picture 7: Mr's Johnes' Garden present day.

Picture 8: Tree stumps from felling.

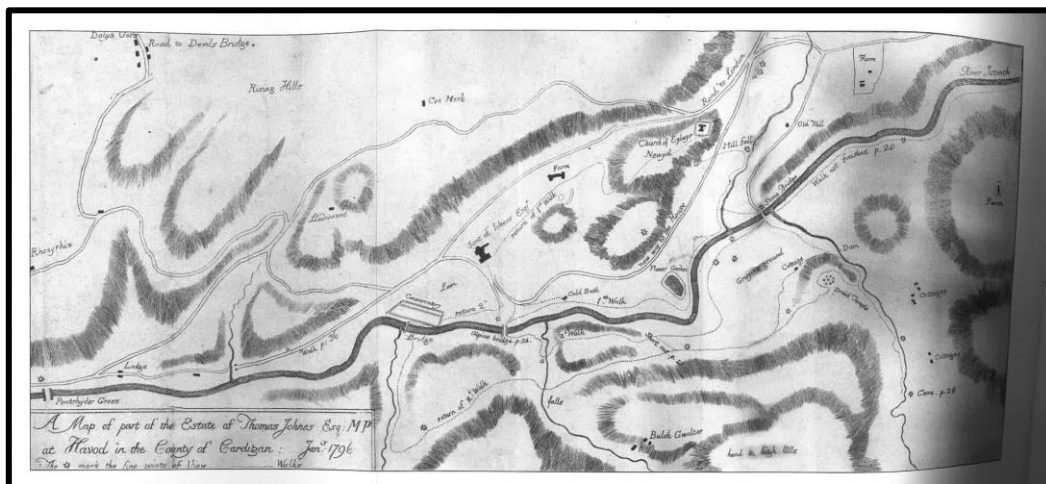
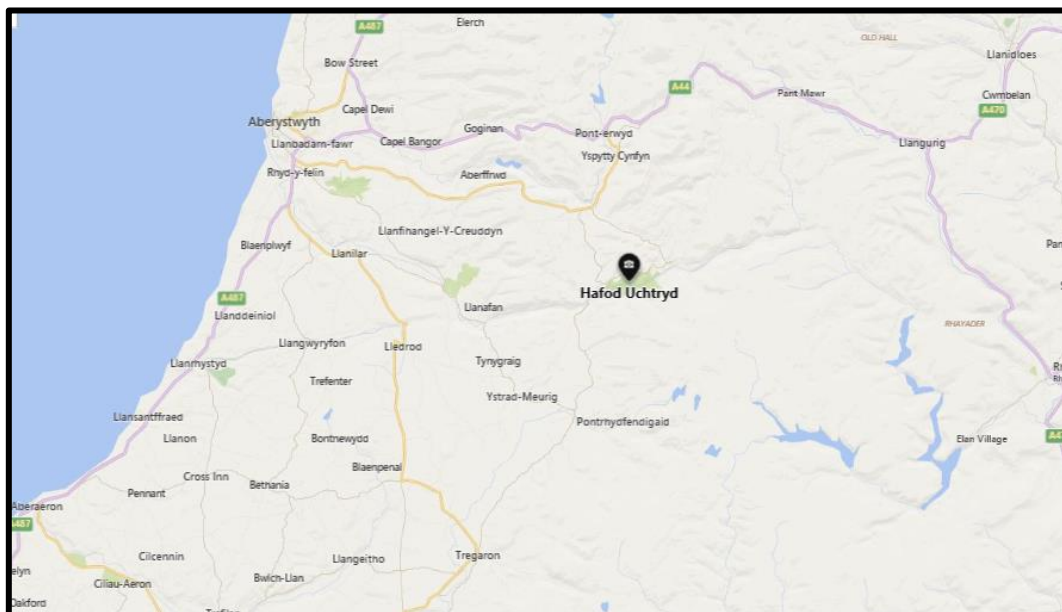
Picture 9: Felling used to border the pathways and enhance natural landscape.

Picture 10: Tree marked for felling.

Picture 11: An example of the 'grotto's' created in the landscape.

Picture 12: Hafod at its prime, with managed lawns and vista around the mansion.

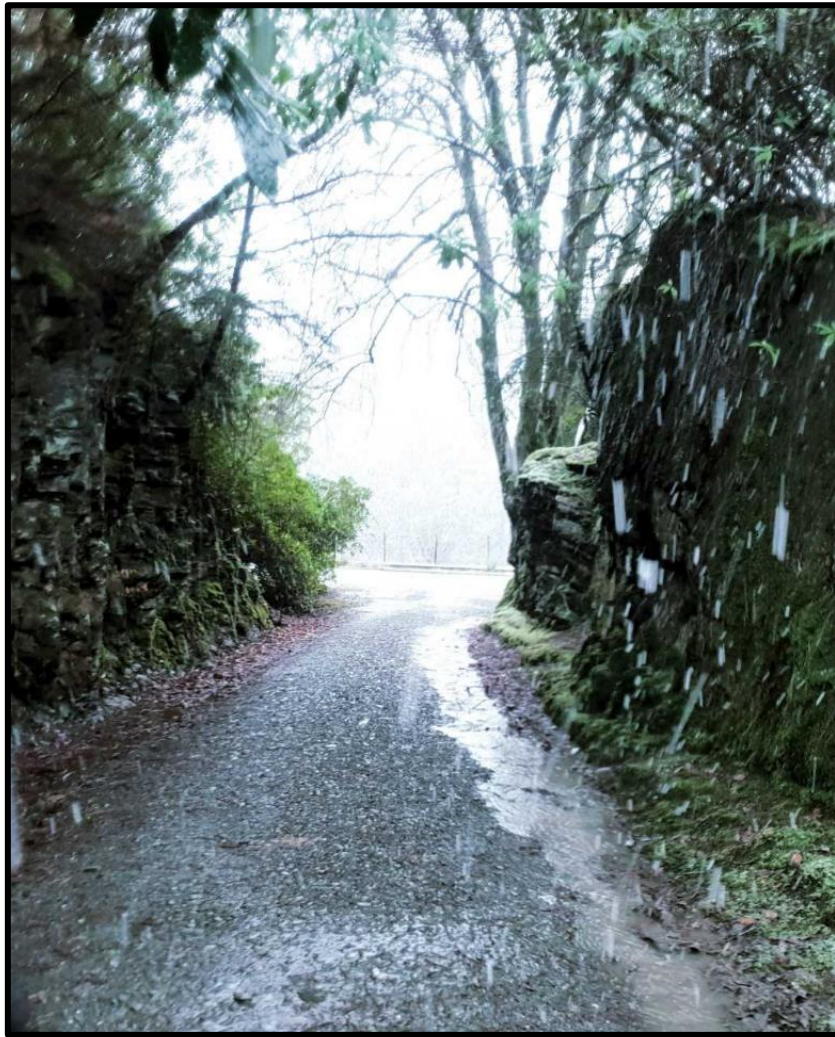












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