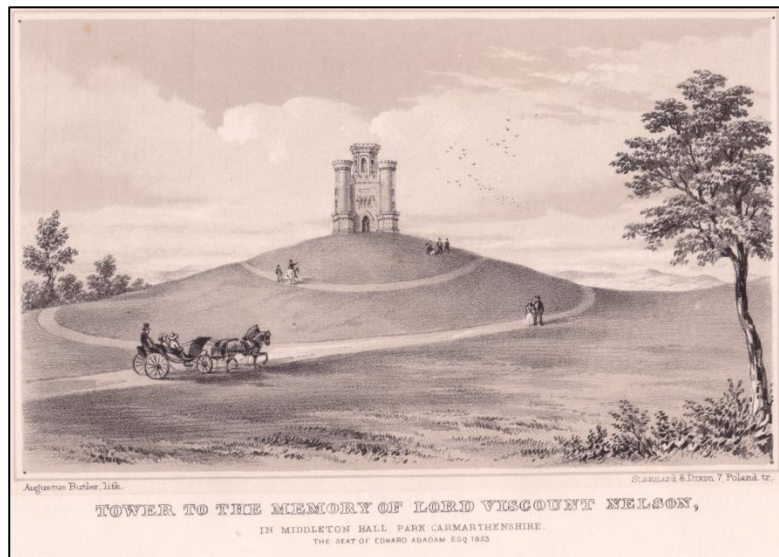


The Landmark Trust

PAXTON'S TOWER LODGE History Album



Written and researched by Charlotte Haslam

Re-presented in 2016

The Landmark Trust Shottesbrooke Maidenhead Berkshire SL6 3SW
Charity registered in England & Wales 243312 and Scotland SC039205

Bookings 01628 825925 Office 01628 825920 Facsimile 01628 825417
Website www.landmarktrust.org.uk

BASIC DETAILS

Built:	c.1810–40 (Paxton's Tower c.1808–12)
Architect for Paxton's Tower:	S.P. Cockerell)
Bought by the Landmark Trust:	1966
Architect for the restoration:	L. Beddall Smith
Builder:	JG Rees & Sons
Work completed:	1967

Contents

Summary	5
Introduction	7
Paxton's Tower Lodge	9
The Repair of Paxton's Tower Lodge by the Landmark Trust	12
Paxton's Tower	14
Middleton Hall	20
More about the owners of Middleton Hall	26
Some places of interest nearby	31
Further Reading	35
Extract from <i>The South Wales Squires</i> by H. M. Vaughan, 1926	36
<i>The Middleton Legacy</i>	46
<i>The National Botanic Garden of Wales</i> by J. Wynford Evans	47



Paxton's Tower Lodge & Tower

Summary

Paxton's Tower Lodge was probably built to house a caretaker for Paxton's Tower, possibly by Sir William Paxton who built the tower, else or by his successor at Middleton Hall, Edwin Adams. It no doubt went with a small tenant farm or smallholding, but continued to house the custodian as well, as by the following letter from Dorothy Stroud to *Country Life* shows, drawing attention to Paxton's Tower in 1954 on the bicentenary of the birth of its architect, S. P. Cockerell. She describes the approach to it thus:

'After climbing a steep lane the visitor stops just short of a farmhouse by a notice which reads 'To Trespass 3d.' Having settled this little matter at the farm, or by perching coins on the gate-post, a further climb of a hundred yards or so brings him to the tower and the magnificent views by which it truly earns its original title (The Prospect House). '

Paxton's Tower Lodge is typical of the kind of housing that was built in the counties of West Wales in the late-18th century and throughout the 19th century to accommodate the rapid rise of the rural population. The popularity of Classical architecture for gentry houses meant a taste for symmetry filtered down to humbler dwellings. Windows were now placed on either side of central doorways and chimney stacks at the end, rather than centrally. After the Industrial Revolution, new materials such as finely worked slates and iron bolts replaced oak pegs in the construction of roofs and these were both used at Paxton's Tower Lodge, built in the first half of the 19th century. However, some late 18th-century fashions persisted in more rural areas of West Wales.

Paxton's Tower itself was designed by Samuel Pepys Cockerell, probably before 1805. It was still incomplete by 1822. There has been some speculation whether Cockerell's son could have been the designer of the tower, after the discovery among C.R. Cockerell's drawings of a faint, unsigned pencil drawing dated 1803, together with another sketch and a plan. It might therefore be the work of Cockerell the son and not the father. This seems unlikely, however, if only because the younger Cockerell did not enter his father's office until 1805.

Theories on Paxton's motives for building the Tower range from a reported obsession with watching a favourite pair of greys drive all the way to Tenby, to proving his honour to the neighbours, having failed to win a seat in Parliament on the promise of building a much-needed bridge across the Tywi between Carmarthen and Clandeilo. Or he may have wished simply to 'improve' the scenery with the addition of a tower from which one could view an ideal Picturesque landscape. It was also suggested at the time that he did so in memory of Admiral Nelson.

Contemporary writers saw the point at once. *Carlisle's Topographical Dictionary* (1811) gives this description:

'To heighten the natural Views of this delightful Vale, Sir William is now erecting on a conspicuous Eminence, within his Domain, a grand Castellated Edifice, designed to honour the Memory of the Immortal Nelson: And from which the Prospect will be most extensive and rich.'

Sadly, by the 1960s the tower had become badly dilapidated, and it was just in time that Lord Cawdor bought it and gave it to the National Trust, since almost immediately afterwards it was struck by lightning and extensive damage done. A lengthy programme of repair restored it to its original state, however, so that the view could once again be enjoyed from its summit 'to the greatest advantage.'

Restoration of Paxton's Tower Lodge

The Landmark Trust bought Paxton's Tower Lodge in 1966 as part of a scheme with the National Trust to preserve the Tower and its surroundings. It was then in a very dilapidated state, with a corrugated-iron lean-to against one end and a tatty porch. These were taken down, so that only the original structure was left. This was probably much as it had always been, at least in the 20th century, with two rooms on the ground floor (kitchen/living room and parlour) divided by a central passage with board partitions. Above was the single loft bedroom, reached by a ladder-like stair and lit by one small window which, as can be seen on the plan, we enlarged. The wing running out behind was added by Landmark to increase accommodation and incorporate services.

The walls of the cottage are built of rubble masonry with a lot of clay, which is easily washed away in bad weather. To prevent this happening, and in accordance with local tradition, the exterior has to be limewashed. In spite of this the west gable still let in the wet, and a solution was only found in another local practice, that of slate-hanging which, although it had not actually been done on the Lodge before, we felt to be in sympathy with it.

The fireplace originally had a wide opening under an oak lintel with an oven tucked in one side, as one would expect to find in an old cottage or farmhouse. Later a range had been inserted, and the intention was to remove this and have once again a large open fire. Unfortunately this turned out to smoke so badly that it could not be left; instead the small fireplace there now was fitted, and this has proved more successful. The slate flagstones making up the hearth are also new, but are similar to what might originally have been there. The new floorboards in the sitting room are of Cilgerran oak, replacing the tiles that were there before.

The most endearing characteristic of Paxton's Tower Lodge is its straightforwardness, its no-nonsense, Industrial Revolution lack of fuss. We have tried to honour this quality in the methods and materials used for its repair and ongoing maintenance.

Introduction

In the middle of the 18th century the rural population began to increase quite rapidly. At the same time a new approach to the housing of this population began to take tangible shape as benevolent landowners sought to improve their estate workers' dwellings. The result was the kind of cottage of which Tower Hill Lodge is a very good example, whose brothers and sisters were built in great numbers in the later 18th century, and throughout the 19th century, in the counties of West Wales.

The change was not absolute, of course, and in the poorer and more remote areas of Carmarthenshire, for example, the older vernacular tradition continued well into the 19th century. Smallholders building a house and byre for themselves would still use the thatch, wattle chimneys and rounded quoins that had been characteristic of the area for centuries. But closer to the industrial centres and on the estates of improving landlords, especially those who had undergone an education in Classical architecture, a more progressive attitude towards cottage building prevailed.

In this change we can see the result of two rather different forces. The first of these was the natural and eventual effect of improvements in the planning of houses for the gentry two centuries earlier, through which symmetrical designs, with end chimneys, central doorways and evenly spaced windows, became popular, and these gradually worked their way down through society. The second force was that of the Industrial Revolution, seen in new materials such as finely worked slates, and the use of iron bolts rather than oak pegs in the construction of roofs. Sawn slates and iron bolts are both found at Paxton's Tower Lodge, which was built in the first half of the 19th century, and it is not unlike the lower half of an urban house, transported and given some saving rural touches.

The comparative modernity and generous proportions of these buildings also reflects a conscious desire for more permanent structures, for greater security and comfort. This is borne out by the fact that while relatively few traditional peasant dwellings survive in occupation, the Welsh countryside is heavily populated with the square, solid, stuccoed farmhouses and cottages of the 19th century, still agreeable to live in a century or more later. The continued use of stucco'd window openings with iron glazing bars found in the windows of Paxton's Tower Lodge, is particularly characteristic of West Wales where late 18th-century fashions lasted well into the following century, until they almost constituted a revival.

Who built the Lodge?

It seems reasonably certain that the main purpose for building the Lodge was to house a caretaker for Paxton's Tower. This could have been done at the instruction of Sir William Paxton, who built the tower; or by his successor at Middleton Hall, Edwin Adams. We know Adams employed seventy to eighty carpenters in 1841, and he built a large number of new houses on the estate. It probably went with a small tenant farm or smallholding, but it continued to house the tower custodian as well, as is shown by the following letter from Dorothy Stroud to *Country Life*, drawing attention to Paxton's Tower in 1954 on the bicentenary of the birth of its architect, S. P. Cockerell. She describes the approach to it thus:

'After climbing a steep lane the visitor stops just short of a farmhouse by a notice which reads 'To Trespass 3d.' Having settled this little matter at the farm, or by perching coins on the gate-post, a further climb of a hundred yards or so brings him to the tower and the magnificent views by which it truly earns its original title (The Prospect House).'



Sir William Paxton



Paxton's Tower Lodge before restoration. In the 1950s the Morgan family lived in the cottage with 17 children, cooking on an open fire in the today's living room. The boys slept in the loft above.



In the 1950s at least, the layout was a little different from today, as a Log Book entry in August 2016 on the Morgan family makes clear. This was written by Shirley Morgan and her family (Richard Phillips, Avril Crosland and Andrew Crosland)

'I last stayed at Paxton Lodge Cottage in the 1950s when it was occupied by my Granny Morgan and in its original state and known as Tower Hill Farm.... Mary Morgan had 17 children in the cottage. The boys would sleep upstairs. The current living room was the main living space with a large table and lots of chairs. There were kerosene lamps and everything was cooked on an open fire....My father, John Morgan, left aged 14 to join the Merchant Navy.'

Photos of Mary and Tom can be found *Llanarthney Past and Present* in the bookcase.

The Repair of Paxton's Tower Lodge by the Landmark Trust

The Landmark Trust bought Paxton's Tower Lodge in 1966 as part of a scheme with the National Trust to preserve the Tower and its surroundings. It was then in a very dilapidated state, with a corrugated-iron lean-to against one end and a tatty porch. These were taken down, so that only the original structure was left.

This was probably much as it had always been, at least in the 20th century, with two rooms on the ground floor (kitchen/living room and parlour) divided by a central passage with board partitions. Above was the single loft bedroom, reached by a ladderlike stair and lit by one small window which, as can be seen on the plan, we enlarged. The wing running out behind was added by Landmark to increase accommodation and fit in the necessary services.

The walls of the cottage are built of rubble masonry with a lot of clay, which is easily washed away in bad weather. To prevent this happening, and in accordance with local tradition, the exterior has to be limewashed. In spite of this the west gable still let in the wet, and a solution was only found in another local practice, that of slate-hanging which, although it had not actually been done on the Lodge before, we felt to be in sympathy with it.

The fireplace also presented problems. This originally had a wide opening under an oak lintel with an oven tucked in one side, as one would expect to find in an old cottage or farmhouse. Later a range had been inserted, and the intention was to remove this and have once again a large open fire. Unfortunately this turned out to smoke so badly that it could not be left; instead the small fireplace there now was fitted, and this has proved more successful. The slate flagstones making up the hearth are also new, but like much else in the house, are similar to what might originally have been there.

The new floorboards in the sitting room are of Cilgerran oak, replacing the tiles that were there before.

The most endearing characteristic of Paxton's Tower Lodge is its straightforwardness, its Industrial Revolution lack of fuss; and it is this quality that we have tried to honour in the methods and materials used for its repair and ongoing maintenance.



Paxton's Tower seen from Middleton Hall, whose grounds now hold the National Botanic Garden of Wales.

Paxton's Tower

'Among the numerous improvements made by the late proprietor is an elegant tower.'

Lewis's Topographical Dictionary 1845

Paxton's Tower, the Prospect House, or Nelson's Tower, as it has variously been called, was designed by Samuel Pepys Cockerell (1753-1827), probably before 1805, and it was his only such work. The tower may not have been started until 1808, however, and it took some years to build. Various sources describe it as still incomplete even in 1822 but this probably applies to detail only, such as the stained glass windows depicting scenes from the life of Nelson (now in Carmarthen Museum), and the inscriptions over the entrances.

As is usual with such buildings, several stories have grown up about it, and about its builder Sir William Paxton (1744-1824). There has also been some speculation as to the tower's designer since the discovery of a faint, unsigned pencil drawing of the tower dated 1803, together with another sketch and a plan, among the drawings of Samuel's son Charles (C. R.) Cockerell (1788-1863). C. R. Cockerell trained with his father from the age of sixteen and became a renowned architect in his own right, but it seems unlikely he designed the tower since he did not enter his father's office until 1805.

Sir William Paxton made his fortune as an East India merchant and as S. P. Cockerell was appointed Surveyor to the East India Company in 1806, it was perhaps in these circles that the pair first encountered each other. Various motives have been attributed to Paxton for building the tower: one is that he was obsessed with a desire to watch a favourite pair of greys drive all the way to Tenby. Another suggestion was that having failed to be elected Member of Parliament for Carmarthen in a famous election in 1802, and subsequently been refused permission by the County Magistrates to build a much-needed bridge across the Tywi between Carmarthen and Llandeilo, he turned his energies

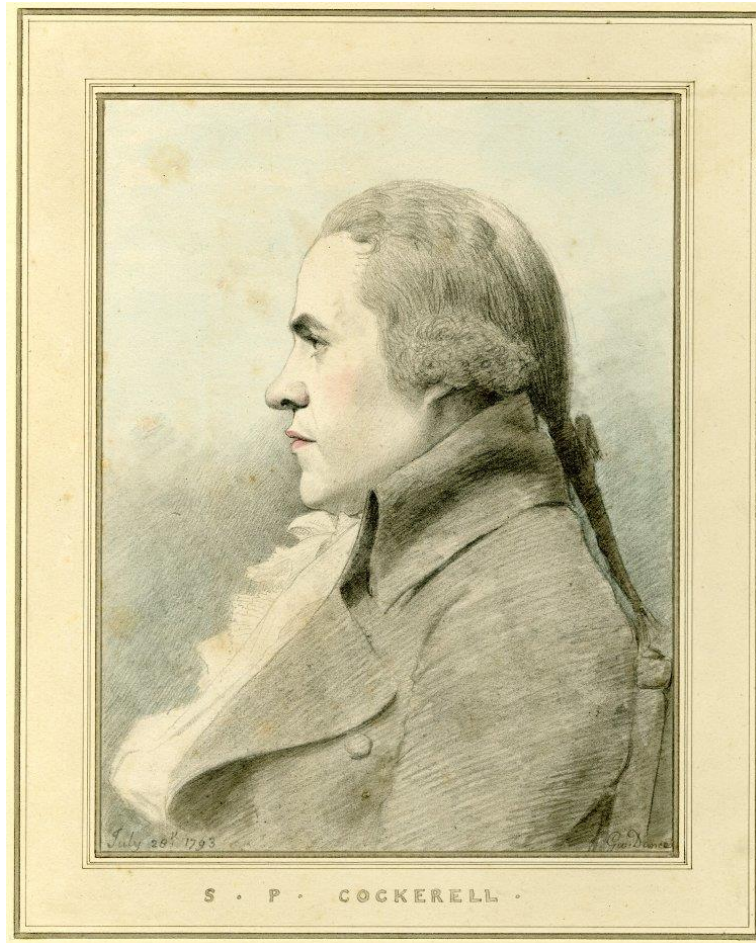


Standard & Dixon, 7, Poland St.

TOWER TO THE MEMORY OF LORD VISCOUNT NELSON,

IN MIDDLETON HALL, PARK, CARMARTHENSHIRE.
THE SEAT OF EDWARD ABADAN, ESQ. 1855

Augustus Eudler, lith.



**Samuel Pepys Cockerell by George Dance,
1793, British Museum**

elsewhere. Perhaps Paxton decided to spend an equal amount of money upon a different scheme in order to prove himself a man of honour.

To discover the real reason for the tower's existence you have only to walk up to the top of the hill and look at the view, and remember that Paxton was a rich and cultivated man bent on 'improvements' of all kinds - to the scenery as well as everything else. Both he and his architect were fully acquainted with the principles of the Picturesque movement, and knew personally two of its foremost protagonists, Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight.



There was a fashion for such Picturesque belvedere towers in the Regency period. Broadway Tower in Worcestershire (top) was Capability Brown's idea, and designed by James Wyatt in 1794 as a 'Saxon' tower for the 6th Earl of Coventry. Haldon Belvedere in Devon (or Lawrence Castle as it was originally known after the friend it commemorated - below) was designed in 1788 for Robert Palk, another East India man.

Above all Paxton himself had come, intentionally, to inhabit an ideal Picturesque landscape. It is quite in character with such a man that he should do what many in the 18th century and later were doing and build a Gothic tower, ostensibly in honour of a hero - and he had met and admired Nelson - but really for pure visual pleasure and fun. The list of similar edifices is long but one, triangular Haldon Belvedere in Devon, is particularly close in design and Cockerell may well have seen it; similarly Broadway Tower by James Wyatt in collaboration with Capability Brown may be another source and is closer in date of construction.

Contemporary writers saw the point at once. *Carlisle's Topographical Dictionary* (1811) gives this description:

'To heighten the natural Views of this delightful Vale, Sir William is now erecting on a conspicuous Eminence, within his Domain, a grand Castellated Edifice, designed to honour the Memory of the Immortal Nelson: And from which the Prospect will be most extensive and rich.'

The Reverend T. Rees in the *South Wales* volume of *The Beauties of England and Wales* considers that

'The tower lately erected there ... is entitled to particular mention.' He agrees that the view is prodigious and continues, in admiring tones: *The exterior form of the building is triangular ... On the ground floor are three spacious arches, one in each front, which admit the passage of carriages. The next storey is a lofty and sumptuous banqueting room: and the upper storey is taken up by a large apartment, designed for a Prospect room, whence the surrounding country may be viewed in every direction, to the greatest advantage.'*

Sadly, by the 1960s the tower had become badly dilapidated, and it was just in time that Lord Cawdor bought it and gave it to the National Trust, since almost immediately afterwards it was struck by lightning and extensive damage done. A lengthy programme of repair restored it to its original state, however, so that the view could once again be enjoyed from its summit 'to the greatest advantage.'



Stannard & Dixon, 7, Poland St.

MIDDLETON HALL,
 FRONT VIEW
 THE SEAT OF EDW^d ABADAM ESQ.
 1855.

Augustus Butler, lith.

Middleton Hall

Middleton Hall was also the work of S.P. Cockerell, and was built for Sir William Paxton between 1793 and 1795. In the chronology of Cockerell's buildings it came just after Daylesford, built for Warren Hastings, and before Sezincote, commissioned by his youngest brother Sir Charles Cockerell. All three patrons shared a connection with India; Paxton certainly knew Hastings, and had him to stay at Middleton, and it is likely that he knew Charles Cockerell as well.

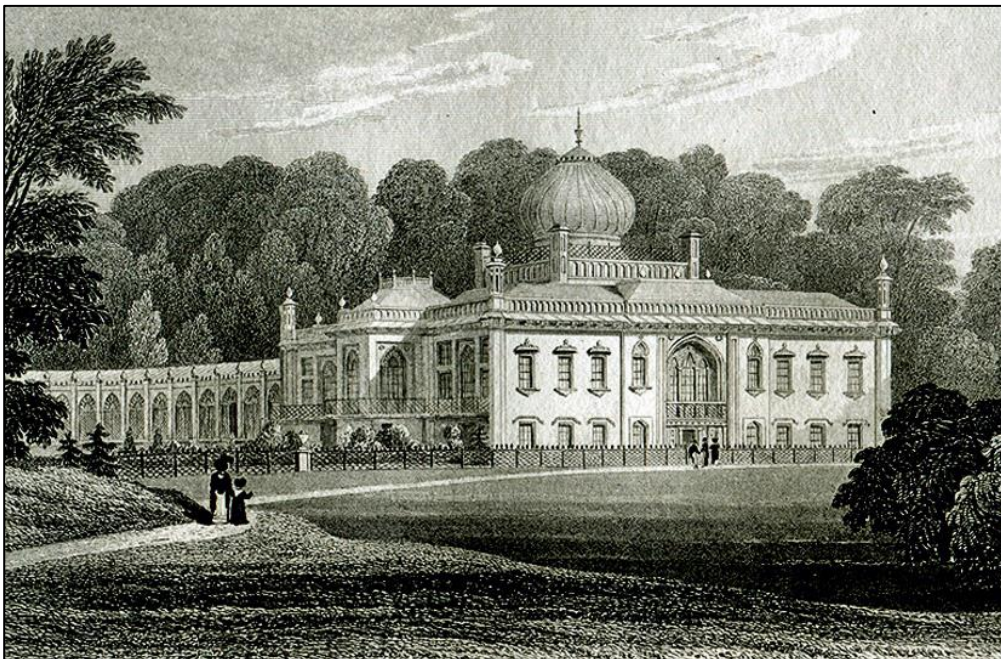
Paxton was entirely typical of the retired 'nabob' (a conspicuously wealthy gentleman who had made his money in India) in his desire to invest in land, to improve the value of his new estate through building, draining and planting, and to secure a place in local and national government. Also typical was the antagonism that he aroused among established families in the pursuit of these ends, especially since in Paxton's case they must rather have felt that they had been hit by a whirlwind. No doubt his employment of a London architect, instead of a local man, added to the resentment.

Cockerell was already a successful architect in the 1790s. He had been a pupil of Sir Robert Taylor, and gone on to obtain good jobs, such as the house for the First Lord of the Admiralty, and Daylesford. He had also built several churches, and was a founder member of the Architects' Club.

The hall he designed for Paxton was a typical late 18th-century mansion, Neo-Classical in its simplicity of proportion and detail, but with the influence of Palladianism showing in the rusticated basement, the portico and the steps. It was built of stuccoed brick (a fairly early use of this) with Bath-stone for the architectural detail, and was situated on a slight rise in a park landscaped with a series of lakes and clumps of trees. All in all it was a very fine building for Carmarthenshire, the best of its period in the area. Topographical writers were quick to agree.



Daylesford (above) and Sezincote (below) were also the work of S.P. Cockerell and commissioned by owners who had spent time in India.



The Reverend T. Rees was among the first to acclaim it in about 1815 as 'perhaps the most splendid mansion in South Wales.' J.P. Neale in 1822 gives a fuller description:

'The present mansion was built by Mr Cockerell, the architect, and is highly creditable to his taste and professional talents. It is a large quadrangular edifice, having two principal fronts, the one on the eastern side, the other, which is ornamented with a magnificent portico, facing the west. The interior is judiciously arranged and comprises several spacious apartments, the decorations of which are in every respect highly elegant and appropriate.'

The comprehensive Lewis (1845) also gives it due honour:

'Middleton Hall ... occupies an eminence at a short distance from the Vale, commanding an extensive and magnificent Prospect over the surrounding countryside and is an elegant and spacious structure of Grecian architecture, with a noble portico. The grounds are very extensive and laid out with great taste.'

By 1840, tastes have changed and Nicholson's *Cambrian Traveller's Guide* has reservations:

'Middleton Hall is unoccupied and situated south of the valley towards Carmarthen, but commands none of its beauties. The mansion was built a few years since by Mr Paxton, formerly a banker at Bengal, and has been pronounced one of the most splendid specimens of modern architecture in Wales; but being unfavourably situated, it is much neglected.'

Elsewhere in the same volume, suffering from a slight misapprehension as to its style Nicholson declares that the Hall:

'Far eclipses the proudest of the Cambrian mansions in Asiatic pomp and splendour. This structure deserves admiration for its external beauty, as well as for its internal elegance and decoration; yet our tourist thinks the style of its architecture but ill comports with the imposing, though simple, majesty of the surrounding country.'

The mansion and its setting were not the only topics available for comment: in the park were chalybeate springs (rich in iron, which often produced spectacularly coloured rocks), dear to the hearts of travel writers of the period. The Reverend T. Rees declares that they are as good as, if not better than, those at Tunbridge Wells; he praises Paxton (somewhat unwisely as it turns out) because he had

'with a laudable attention to the accommodation of the public ... erected here warm and cold baths, with every suitable convenience for valetudinarian visitors.' He lists the illnesses for which the waters are generally recommended: scrofulous complaints, scurvy and other skin diseases, hypochondria, epilepsy, paralytic affections, consumption, weakness of the digestive organs and other 'disorders attended by the prostration of strength'; and also those ailments for which such waters were positively forbidden: all inflammatory disorders, acute rheumatism, dropsy 'when the strength of the patient is much reduced' and fixed gout. He states that the springs are already much frequented and that their popularity would no doubt increase.

Only a few pages later he is, with some embarrassment, taking most of this back: he had made a mistake, due to misinterpreting a verbal communication. In reality:

'The baths which are there mentioned proved to be but one bath, which may, however, be used hot or cold, as it is furnished with the necessary convenience for heating the water. This bath is situated within the wall of Middleton Hall park and is designed merely for the use of the family. The water is however conveyed from the spring in stone pipes to the outside of the wall, where there is a house for the accommodation of visitors, and where baths may easily be constructed, should the influx of valetudinarians be such as to call for them.'

Unfortunately such baths were not constructed, and there remained only the one private bath, which had become overgrown by the beginning of the 20th century.

When Paxton died in 1824, the estate was bought by Edwin Adams who, with his son and successor Edward (who added the Welsh 'ap/ab' to his name, becoming Abadam), carried on the work in the grounds and added extensively to the house. A black marble bridge was erected over the lake in 1841, and other landscape improvements had been made before then.

The Hall itself was vacated for workmen in the early 1840s, to the displeasure of the new agent, Thomas Cooke, who was told to move his family into the butler's quarters, instead of his own promised house, so that he could supervise the

alterations. These probably consisted mainly of redecoration, with some rearrangement aimed to create extra bedrooms, a billiard and smoking room, or whatever conveniences were considered essential for comfort at the time.

Also, perhaps, the improvement and enlargement of the kitchens and the annexe 'quite near the house' which, according to Edward Abadam's daughter, Miss Alice Abadam, was where the household staff were accommodated. It also contained the estate office and was topped by 'the great bell, which rang at 6 a.m. to assemble the workmen.' The most extraordinary innovation, however, is described by HM Vaughan in *The South Wales Squires*:

'Amongst other modernities that he [Edward Abadam] introduced in his time at Middleton Hall was a lift, but I only learned of its existence by a curious chance. As a young fellow, very shy and callow, I went to stay at Middleton, and whilst I was dressing for dinner was startled by an awful crash resounding through the house. Rushing out into the passage, I was informed by one of the servants that the lift had just broken and fallen from top to bottom of the house. Luckily it only contained a mass of luggage, so no bones were broken. I do not think it was ever used after that, but at that date I am pretty sure it was the only lift in domestic use in Wales.'

The agent, Thomas Cooke, in spite of being so disgruntled with his living arrangements, still allowed the Hall to be beautiful, 'surrounded by the endless diversity of hill and dale, wood and water, walks, shrubberies and waterfalls.' In the Reverend J. Jenkins' *Llanarthney; The Parish, its People and Places* (1939) Miss Alice Abadam gives the following evocative description of the house as it was in her childhood:

'The reception rooms at Middleton Hall opened each into the other by folding doors, so that when occasion required it, the chain of rooms made an attractive feature. One or two of them call for special mention.

'The Dining Room was of a soft pastel green, and round the walls were fourteen mural paintings in shades of grey and umber, surrounded by raised mouldings of Della Robbia garlands of fruit and flowers, lightly touched with gold.

'The chandelier, with its tiers of crystal pendants, sent out prismatic colours of ruby, indigo, emerald and amber, harmonising admirably with the pale green walls and the umbered paintings. At each end of the long room were

sideboards, filled with white and green cut glass, silver bowls, wine-coolers and ebony candlesticks, whilst above hung oil-paintings.

'On the walls of the alcoves each side of the fireplace were moulded designs of thyrsi, [staves twined with ivy] enclosing a medallion. The white marble mantelpiece continued the thyrus design with its pine-cone terminals, and beautifully carved garlands of vine leaves and bunches of grapes. I have seldom seen a more beautiful room.

'The windows opened on a wide balcony, from which the view made a perfect picture. Beyond the terrace, gay with flowers, the ground sloped down to the water's edge, where the trees were reflected. In the middle distance rose the hill, crowned with Nelson's Tower, and beyond the woods could be seen the far banks of Towy, with further still, the blue hills of the horizon.

'The Drawing Room, which had windows looking, on one side, to the Park, and on the other to the water and woods, was a long room in pale amethyst colour. Here hung many family portraits. The spaces between the windows had medallions of the Graces.

'The Library, which contained a fine collection of books in several languages, was a room of quiet and study, with glass-fronted bookshelves under alphabetical letters to aid the researcher, and a set of broad, tall steps to enable him to reach the highest shelves. Above the bookshelves were some twenty busts of notabilities. The white marble mantelpiece calls for a word. On one side was Hermes with his winged cap and caduceus, on the other Pallas Athene. In the centre, in high relief, was Urania, observing the starry heavens and making calculations, with instruments by her side. On a tall mirror over the mantelpiece was a painted scene of the various gods and goddesses assembled on Olympus.

'In the Front Hall was a marble bust of my grandfather; it stood on a marble table, and I remember being lifted as a child to kiss it on his birthday. The Hall was very lofty and ended in a circular glass opening at the top of the house.

'The roof was more or less flat, and the view therefrom was very fine. It was one of my pleasures to creep up to the top of the house to watch the sunset, and see the rooks leaving our rookery and winging away to the Cawdor woods for the night.'

Sadly, all this was sold by the Abadam family at about the time of the First World War, and according to H. M. Vaughan passed 'to some speculators in real estate, is now (1926) uninhabited and falling fast to decay.' Decay became destruction

when a fire gutted the building in 1931. Carmarthenshire County Council bought the remains in 1932, and the estate was sold off in separate lots. What was left of the house went to more speculators before the Second World War, who let it decline further into ruination, and it was finally razed in the 1950s or early 1960s. The two detached blocks of the stables and the servants' annexe, both converted into cottages and flats, are now all that survive of Cockerell's work at Middleton Hall.

More about the owners of Middleton Hall

Rees, as ever, provides the necessary information concerning the earlier owners of the Hall, who gave it its name:

'The present mansion of Middleton Hall is built near an old family residence bearing the same name, but now converted into a farmhouse. The Middletons of this place were descendants of David, one of the brothers of Sir Hugh Middleton, who settled here. They were of considerable respectability in the county and connected themselves by marriages with the Rices of Newton, the Vaughans of Golden Grove, the Gwyns of Taliaris and the Barlows of Pembrokeshire. The family has long been extinct in the male line.'

Sir Hugh and his brother David were the sons of Richard Myddelton of Chirk, Governor of Denbigh Castle in the mid-16th century. Sir Hugh is famous for having provided London with its water supply, for which act a monument dedicated to him stands in Islington. A neat link is thus established with Sir William Paxton who bought the estate in 1786 from descendants in the female line and who installed a new water supply for Carmarthen in 1802, at his own expense.

William Paxton was born in 1745 and came from Edinburgh. He went to India in 1767, becoming in due course Master of the Calcutta Mint. There, according to one commentator, he made 'a princely and honourably acquired fortune.' He returned to Britain while in his forties intent on becoming a country gentleman and, according to the same source, 'happily for this county, had the good taste to

be enamoured of it, where he chiefly resides.' *Carlisle's Topographical Dictionary* pays him this tribute:

'It must be acknowledged that Llan Arthney, formerly so entirely neglected, owes its present state of Cultivation and Beauty to the highly meritorious and unwearied Efforts of Sir William Paxton.'

No doubt he had plenty of ideas about Government, formed while he was in India, and he was keen to enter the British political field immediately. In 1790 he was High Sheriff of the County, by 1794 he had been elected a Burgess of Carmarthen, and he was Mayor of the Borough in 1802. This was also the year of the Lecsiwn Fawr (Great Election) when Paxton contested the county seat for the Whigs against the Tory Sir James Hamlyn Williams.

Political antagonism was already strong in Carmarthenshire, with the principal families ranged against each other: Dynevor (Tory) against Golden Grove (Whig) and so on down the social scale. They carried the feud so far as to hunt separate packs: the Blue Coats for the Whigs, the Red Coats for the Tories. When the Whigs produced a new candidate in 1802 in the form of Paxton, the struggle was epic, often breaking into actual violence in the streets.

The Poll lasted fifteen days and at the end of it the two candidates were borne in chairs to hear the result. A very biased correspondent in *The Times* states that Williams' chair was a miserable affair, whereas Paxton's was 'a very elegant thing, covered with sky-blue satin, and decorated with oak leaves, gilt tops and blue streamers, very tastefully displayed'; also that Paxton was cheered and Williams was not, but neither this, nor the astronomical sums of money he is reputed to have spent on the campaign, could prevent him from being defeated by 1,217 votes to 1,110.

His bill is supposed to have come to £15,690, a huge sum, but understandable given that constituency public houses were thrown open for the duration of the Poll. Itemized were 11,070 breakfasts, 36,901 dinners, 684 suppers, 25,275

gallons of ale, 11,068 bottles of spirits, 8,879 bottles of porter, 460 bottles of sherry and 509 bottles of cider. Milk punch cost 18 guineas and even ribbons added up to £786. Paxton appealed against the result but without success. However, a year later he fulfilled his ambition when J. G. Philipps resigned the borough seat to him. In 1806 he transferred to the county seat, only to lose it again the following year. He did not regain either seat thereafter.

Besides his work in politics and on the improvement and adornment of his estate, Paxton found time to be a director of the Gaslight and Coke Company in London, where he also owned property in Piccadilly. Another venture, typical of him and of his age, was his attempt to transform Tenby into a thriving seaside resort. He once again employed Cockerell as his architect, commissioning him to build a Public Bath-House there; he also established a water supply, generally improved the streets and built a theatre, which failed, as did ultimately the whole scheme, in spite of warm recommendations by visiting writers.

This public-spirited, adventurous and imaginative man died in 1824 and was buried in St Martin-in-the-Fields, London. He is remembered in Llanarthney Church by a tablet dedicated to him and to his wife.

The next owner of Middleton Hall was Edwin Hamlin Adams, whose family came originally from South Wales, but who had been brought up in the West Indies. He was considered an eccentric and a radical thinker, although he played a suitably conventional role in the county, serving as Sheriff and later as MP. He was succeeded in 1842 by his son Edward, who changed the family name to Abadam. If the father was thought to be eccentric, the son was genuinely odd, at least in the eyes of his land agent Thomas Cooke who, taking up his position in 1841, worked under both men. He wrote regularly to his family, describing in detail his life in Carmarthenshire, and the miseries of his existence there. The land and farms, he said, were run down, in spite of much building and activity, and neither landlord nor tenants were prepared to modernise or make improvements. He felt

himself ignored by sullenly unco-operative Welsh-speaking farmers and peasantry, was exasperated by his employers' idiosyncrasies, had no permanent home and worse still, became involved in the rick-burning and greater dangers of the Rebecca Riots (brought about by economic depression and most famous for the attacks on the turnpikes, toll-roads that had been introduced to the county by, among others, Sir William Paxton). After six years he could take no more and left for a secure job as Steward at Berkeley Castle in Gloucestershire.

The slightly self-righteous tone of these letters, which have mostly survived and are now in the National Library of Wales, is portrayed very well in the following one written to his brother, when he thought that his post was in jeopardy:

'My reasons for thinking so are that the life of the elder Mr Adams hangs as it were by a mere thread; then I may mention to you, the somewhat extraordinary character of his eldest son, the one with whom I have every sort of business to contract; he knows but little or nothing of business, detests farming, is meanly suspicious of every living creature, is an infidel and frequently a scoffer at all religion, is fickle and capricious in the extreme and exceedingly irritable - he is all smiles one day and perhaps in a few hours will be just the reverse. Judge then, if I hold my situation by any very certain tenure. I am however bound to say that he has invariably treated me with respect, but if he treats me as I have seen him treat others I would leave him, even if I and all my family were driven to the workhouse the very next day. He is certainly the most difficult subject that you can well imagine or that I have ever had to deal with. He has a younger brother (in Florence) with whom he is at 'daggers drawn', has a married sister and an unmarried one. The whole family believe that there is no punishment hereafter - they evidently do not know Sunday from a weekday and never go to any place of worship whatever. In politics they are all extreme radicals, violent enemies of the Church and particularly to tythes and parsons, never paying any taxes but such as they are well aware would soon be enforced.'

However, H. M. Vaughan, who lived nearby, goes some way to counteract this extreme view of Edward Abadam, and even has a good word to say for him in his book about the area, *The South Wales Squires*. In this he describes Abadam as 'a remarkable man and in many respects far ahead of his own generation. He had a considerable knowledge of archaeology, of heraldry and foreign literature; he insisted on French and German tutors and governesses for his family; he was also

(rare everywhere in those days and almost unique in his own class) a 'vegetarian', which no doubt shocked the staid Mr Cooke even more.

Edward Abadam's sons died young so that on his death in 1875 the estate passed to a grandson, Major William Hughes, who later sold it to a Colonel W. N. Jones, the last recorded owner before the estate was broken up after the fire of 1931. Curiously, Middleton Hall had itself served as a refuge from the aftermath of a fire when the Bishop of St Davids stayed there for two years while his own Palace at Abergwili was rebuilt after being burned down in 1903.

Some places of interest nearby

Carreg Cennen

A very satisfying castle, on a crag south-east of Llandeilo. It is pure fairy tale from a distance and surprisingly well-equipped on closer inspection, even boasting a tunnel going down through the rock to a small natural well in a cave. The remains are mostly of the late 13th/early 14th centuries, replacing a 12th-century Welsh structure. The castle was partly demolished in the Wars of the Roses and does not seem to have used for military purposes again, having lost its strategic importance perhaps.

Dryslwyn

The romantic ruins of a 13th-century Welsh castle built on the site of a prehistoric hill-fort. It was much celebrated for its situation by painters, writers and travellers of the 18th century and later; the overgrown fragments of masonry perched on a steep hillock to the north of the river Tywi conformed to all their requirements of the Picturesque.

Dinefwr (Dynevor)

Symbolic stronghold of the Lords Rhys, Welsh princes of the Middle Ages, who descended from Rhodri Mawr, ruler of much of Wales in the 9th century. It lies just west of Llandeilo and is mainly of the 12th and 13th centuries, with 16th-century additions by Sir Rhys ap Thomas, supporter of Henry VII and builder of Carew Castle in Pembrokeshire. In the 17th century a new house was built nearby, now also called Dynevor but formerly also known as Newton to distinguish it from its predecessor - until this ceased to be more than a picturesque ruin in a park landscaped by Capability Brown, with a pavilion for picnic parties built on to one of the towers and artistically clipped festoons of ivy. New Dynevor was refaced by R. K. Penson in 1856. The present Lord Dynevor

sold the estate in about 1975; the deer park and house now belong to the National Trust, while Cadw looks after the castle ruins.

Golden Grove (Gelli Aur)

Designed by Sir Jeffry Wyattville and built between 1826 and 1832, it can be seen to the south of the road from Llanarthney to Llandeilo. It is now an Agricultural Training Institute but was historically the seat of the Vaughan Earls of Carberry, one of the richest and most powerful families in South Wales in the 17th and 18th centuries. Richard, the 2nd Earl, was a friend of Jeremy Taylor, author of *Holy Living and Holy Dying*, and sheltered him during the Commonwealth years at Golden Grove, where he started a school for the sons of local Royalist gentlemen. The last of the line, John Vaughan, died in 1804 leaving everything to his friend John Campbell, 1st Baron Cawdor, whose son, created Earl of Cawdor, commissioned the present mansion and in whose family it has since descended.

Grongar Hill

Grongar, in whose silent shade,
For the modest Muses made,
So oft I have, the evening still,
At the fountain of a rill,
Sat upon a flowery bed,
With my hand beneath my head;
While stray'd my eyes o'er Towy's flood,
Over mead and over wood,
From house to house, from hill to hill,
Till contemplation had her fill.

Standing out to the north of Dryslwyn and the river Tywi is the hill thus celebrated by the 'native muse' of John Dyer in 1726. The poet lived at nearby Aberglasney, which can be seen from the hill and is now deserted. To all appearances a Georgian house; it incorporates the 16th-century palace of Bishop Rudd, whose fine tomb is in Llangathen church. In the early 19th century Aberglasney was owned by a Mr Phillips, another East India man, but one who

did not make such an impact upon his surroundings as did his neighbour, William Paxton.

Llanarthney Church

The base of the tower is 13th-century and some of the rest of the building is 15th-century, with a slight reconstruction of 1682. It was then much restored and altered in 1826 when the south arcade was removed and the aisle became one with the nave, forming an unusually wide, conventicle-type chamber. The furniture and windows were renewed in 1877. The stone slab in the porch is incised with a wheel cross and dates from the 11th or early 12th century; it is inscribed in French and Latin and possibly commemorates a border chief of that period called Moreiddig Warwyn. In the church is a medallion on which are the heads of Sir William and Lady Paxton.

Llandeilo

The market town of the Vale of Tywi, dominated by the park of Dynevor. Pleasant terraced houses and lots of chapels. It boasts a bridge by the Shrewsbury architect, Edward Haycock, completed in 1848 at a final cost of £22,000. Haycock was called in after the County Bridge Surveyor had run into difficulties over it. The span is 145 feet, the whole achieved in a fine single arch which rises to a height of 38 feet. The church has a 13th-century tower, but was restored rather dully by G. G. Scott in 1850.

National Botanic Garden of Wales

This, the first national botanic garden to be created in the UK for more than 200 years, opened in May 2000 in the grounds of Middleton Hall. Twice the size of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, its centrepiece is Norman Foster & Partners' Great Glasshouse, the world's largest single-span construction, which provides a Mediterranean-type climate for some of the planet's most endangered species.

In 2017, the Heritage Lottery Fund awarded the National Botanic Garden of Wales £6m towards the restoration of the Grade II listed Regency landscape to its 18th-century design by Samuel Lapidge. He had worked for Capability Brown as a draughtsman and surveyor and was commissioned by Sir William Paxton in the 1790s to design the landscape and gardens with interconnecting lakes, cascades, bridges, sluices and dams. These innovative water features will be brought back to life for today's visitors to enjoy.

Further reading

The Beauties of England and Wales: South Wales, Reverend T. Rees

Views of Seats, volume 5, J. P. Neale (1822)

Nicholson's Cambrian Traveller's Guide (1840)

Topographical Dictionary Carlisle (1811)

Topographical Dictionary for Wales, S. Lewis (1845)

History of Carmarthenshire (Lloyd)

Houses of the Welsh Countryside, Peter Smith (1975, 2nd edition 1988)

The South Wales Squires, H. M. Vaughan (1926, reprinted 1988)

The Rebecca Riots, David Williams (1956)

Llanarthney; The Parish, its People and Places, Reverend J. Jenkins (1939)

The Carmarthenshire Historian volume IV (1967): 'Samuel Pepys Cockerell',

P. K. Crimmin

The Welsh History Review (1977): 'The land agent in 19th-century Wales',

R. Colyer

Extract from *The South Wales Squires*, H. M. Vaughan, 1926

ODDITIES AND QUIDDITIES 89

almost unique in his own class) a vegetarian. Amongst other modernities that he introduced in his time at Middleton Hall was a lift, but I only learned of its existence by a curious chance. As a young fellow, very shy and callow, I went to stay at Middleton, and whilst I was dressing for dinner was startled by an awful crash resounding through the house. Rushing out into the passage, I was informed by one of the servants that the lift had just broken and fallen from top to bottom of the house. Luckily it only contained a mass of luggage, so no bones were broken. I do not think it was ever used after that, but at that date I am pretty sure it was the only lift in domestic use in Wales.

From the novel and cultivated life of Middleton Hall it was a long step to the simple existence of such a house as Pantyderi in North Pembrokeshire. Here the squire, Mr. Thomas Colby, one of the Colby family of Ffynone and Rhosygilwen (and the son of old General Colby, an austere, distinguished soldier who refused a baronetcy), presided over a household that had many points in common with the establishment started by Count Tolstoy in Russia. All was simple to the verge of discomfort. Pantyderi was, in short, a mansion run on the lines of a farm-house, where all the men and maids dined with the family and all partook of the same coarse but abundant fare. A friend told me that many years ago she went to a luncheon-party at Pantyderi, and she could clearly recall the experience. She remembered how the trees on the drive, untrimmed for ages past, met overhead, and overshadowed the house. The meal itself consisted of a huge dish filled with some sort of stew, and this was followed by an equally enormous suet-pudding stuffed with stringy sour rhubarb. For dessert a blue-paper parcel of gingerbread, old and musty, was handed round to the guests. Another feature of the place that struck my informant was the dining-room itself, naturally a fine

CHAPTER IX

ODDITIES AND QUIDDITIES

"He had wisely seen the World at home and abroad, and thereby observed under what variety men are deluded in the pursuit of that which is not here to be found."

Sir Thomas Browne : "A Letter to a Friend."

IN a whole class such as the squirearchy of Wales there was naturally space for many diverse types of the squire. As I make this simple statement, there occur to me two extreme cases of such diversity. There was Edward Abadam, son of Edward Hamlyn Adams, M.P. for the county soon after the Reform Act, and the purchaser of the fine place and estate of Middleton Hall in Carmarthenshire from the Paxtons. Middleton Hall, a large white mansion in the pseudo-classical style, with its park and its three lakes and its conspicuous sham castle, known as "Paxton's Folly" (built to commemorate Nelson's victories), was at that time perhaps the finest modern seat in all South Wales. Sold a few years ago to some speculators in real estate, Middleton Hall is now uninhabited and falling fast to decay, but I can remember it when it still retained some of its splendour. Edward Abadam, who "adopted this form of surname by prefixing to his paternal name the Welsh patronymic *ab*," was a remarkable man and in many respects far ahead of his own generation. He had a considerable knowledge of archæology, of heraldry and of foreign literature; he insisted on French and German tutors and governesses for his family; he was also (what was rare everywhere in those days and

88

the male line, eventually became extinct, the female branch removing to Pembrokehire, where it became linked, by marriage, with the Barlows of that county. Middleton Park was then sold, and the mansion converted into a farm-house. We now come to Richard Gwyn of Gwempa, who became possessed of the estate in the right of his mother, Elizabeth Middleton. Subsequently, in 1776, the property was conveyed to John Gawler, who sold it in the same year to Sir William Paxton. Soon after the death of Paxton, in 1824, Middleton Hall and the estate were disposed of to Edwin Hamlin Adams, whose eldest son, Edward, assumed the name Abadam, and descendants of whose family lived at the Hall until recent times, when the property was sold to the late Col. W. N. Jones. Sad to relate, this historic mansion was completely destroyed by a terrible fire on November 10th, 1931, and the estate has since been parcelled out in the form of small farm holdings by the Carmarthenshire County Council.

In passing, it may be mentioned that the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society visited Llanarthney Parish in 1934, and took occasion to refer to the deep gratitude owing to the old families of the house of Middleton—the Paxtons and the Abadams—for the great care they had taken in treasuring things which otherwise would long ago have been lost.

CHAPTER X.

THE ABADAMS FAMILY.

THIS very old and distinguished family settled at Middleton Hall in the year 1825, during the lifetime of Edward Hamlin Adams, who a few years later was appointed High Sheriff for the County of Carmarthen, afterwards representing the county in Parliament. His son Edward assumed or adopted the surname Abadams, by affixing to his family name the Welsh patronymic ab (Abadam), meaning, literally, son of Adams.

Edward Hamlin Adams was born at Kingston, Jamaica, on April 30th, 1777, where the family had a large residence, a picture of which illustrated an article appearing in *The Times* in 1871. This article gave an account of the family, and also a description of the mansion and a picture of the slave quarters on the estate. There is also quite a lot about the Adams's of Jamaica in a book named "West Indian Tales," which was obtainable some time ago at most circulating libraries.

Previous to this period the family had, however, a distinguished record in the country extending over several centuries, and the following interesting particulars are taken from an article which appeared in the *Western Mail* some time ago. Edward Abadam traced his descent from Johannes ab Adam, who died in 1310, Lord of Beverstone and Tidenham, who was called to Parliament as Baron of the Realm, from 1296 to 1307. He was buried at Tidenham Church, near Chepstow, where an old Gothic window still shows his name, date, and armorial bearings.

Mr. Abadam's mother was Amelia Sophia Macpherson of Cluny, and his great-grandmother was Margaret, daughter of the Hon. Thomas Maxwell, of the family of the earls of Nithsdale. During the Civil Wars Mr. Abadam's family were devoted Cavaliers and made substantial sacrifices in the Royal cause, Beverstone Castle being sold. Subsequently they received grants of estates in the West Indies (as did many other adherents of the Stuarts), and at the Restoration Charles 2nd granted them as a recompense the addition of a ducal coronet to their arms. In later years a Miss Adams married into the Cuffes, another distinguished English family, this branch becoming known as Cuff-Adams. Further information relating to the family is to be found in "Burke's Royal Descents," published in 1870.

The Edward Hamlin Adams, who settled at Middleton Hall in 1825, was the second son of William Adams by his second marriage with Elizabeth Ann Coxeter, both of Barbadoes, West Indies. On January 5th, 1796, at Philadelphia, U.S.A., he married Amelia Sophia Macpherson, who died in 1831. He died in 1842, at the age of 65, and was buried in a vault which he had directed his eldest son to build under the large yew tree, on the north side of Llanarthney Parish Church.

We may be pardoned if we mention here the name of the distinguished authoress, Miss Violet Paget, who died a few years ago, and who was known the world over under the pen-name "Vernon Lee." She was the only daughter of Mr. Paget and his wife Matilda, who was the daughter of Edward Hamlin Adams of Middleton Hall. She was also a first cousin of Miss Alice Abadam, well-known feminist lecturer, now residing in London.

The writer thinks that it might be of importance to record, at this point, the names of those buried in the Abadams' Family Vault at Llanarthney. These were copied before the steps were replaced after the burial of Evodie Constance Hughes, some time ago. The eleven names, as inscribed on their respective coffins, are as follows:—

- 1.—Edward Hamlin Adams. Died June, 1842. Aged 65 years.
- 2.—Edward Abadam (son of above). Died November, 1875. Aged 66 years.
- 3.—Caroline, widow of Captain Charles Augustus Brooks (daughter of Edward Hamlin Adams). Died April, 1874. Aged 62 years.
- 4.—Conrade Maxwell Macpherson Middleton Abadam (second son of No. 2, above). Born at Clifton, March, 1845. Married in August, 1868, Susanna Mary, eldest daughter of Francis David Saunders, of Tymawr, Cardiganshire, and Glanrhyd, Carmarthenshire. He died near Jefferson, Green County, Iowa, U.S.A., on September 3rd, 1875, from the effects of an accidental gunshot wound, aged 28 years. He left two daughters, Elma Alice Maude, born May 14th, 1869, and Geraldine Mabel, born December 7th, 1872. His remains were brought home and buried here by his father, on Saturday, Oct. 25th, 1873.
"He cometh up and is cut down like a flower."
- 5.—Edward Hamlin Middleton, eldest son of Edward Abadam. Born April 3rd, 1843, and died March 21st, 1886. Aged 23 years.

- 6.—Edward H. M. Abadam, son of Conrade M. M. M. Abadam. Died September 16th, 1871. Aged 5 months.
- 7.—Lucy C. A. Lawrence, daughter of Edward Abadam, and wife of Rev. R. G. Lawrence. Died June 3rd, 1902. Aged 62 years.
- 8.—Louise Abadam, wife of Edward Abadam. Died June 16th, 1866. Aged 66 years.
- 9.—Adah Constance Hughes, daughter of Edward Abadam, and wife of Captain J. W. Hughes. Died May 16th, 1914. Aged 72 years.
- 10.—Rev. Richard Gwynne Lawrence. Born March 9th, 1835. Died February, 1923.
- 11.—Evodie Constance Vernon Hughes. Died June 14th, 1925. Aged 43 years.

There is a tablet in the Parish Church, erected in 1843, by the children of Edward Abadam. The Altar Cross is the gift of Elma, in memory of her father, Conrade Maxwell Macpherson Middleton Abadam, and was given in 1909.

CHAPTER XI.

MISS ALICE ABADAM'S
MEMORIES OF MIDDLETON HALL.

WE cannot leave the story of Middleton Hall without some attempt at a description of the old mansion and its surroundings, and in this respect we are most fortunate in being able to give a picture of the house from the pen of Miss Alice Abadam, now residing in London. Miss Abadam has very graciously written a detailed description of her old home as she remembers it, and we can do no better than let her story be told in her own words. She writes:—

“It was with pleasure that I accepted as a privilege the invitation of the Rev. J. Jenkins to contribute to his monograph on Llanarthney, a description of my old home as I knew it in my childhood and girlhood. In recalling my impressions, I will begin with the Park, which owed its special character and beauty to five sheets of water linked together by waterfalls spanned by bridges, and surrounded by woods. The trees swept their branches to the edge of the water, and were reflected in the dark depths of the ‘Black Lake’ (Pond du). There were four entrances to the Park, and the avenues from these, finely timbered, met at the House.

In the Llanarthney Lodge lived an old woman who, dressed in full Welsh costume, punctually fulfilled her office of lodge-keeper, and opened the iron gates when carriages required it, giving the Welsh curtsy (which included bending of the knees) with considerable pride. Old Hannah was a great character, and faithfully adhered

to her national costume, the *pais a gan bach* (petticoat and little dress), the skirt being cut at the half to show a gay petticoat, over which was a large apron. The bodice was cut low, with a white kerchief tucked into it, and buckled shoes showed her neat Celtic feet. She wore a snowy white cap, goffered around the face, and over this the well-known, tall beaver hat, now very rare. Welsh women used to buy a new one when they married, and that lasted them to the end of their days.

The House (Renaissance) had been built by Sir William Paxton, from whom my grandfather, Edward Hamlin Adams, bought it. Paxton also erected a tower to the memory of Nelson, on a hill bordering the higher ground of the Park, and overlooking the Vale of Towy. This hill had been named by the people in old times *Golwg y Byd* (the Sight of the World), and on still higher ground there was a spot which they called *Llygad y Byd* (Eye of the World). The Tower is triple in form, and the narrow windows were filled with stained glass, depicting scenes from Nelson's life. His face is remarkably fine, and may be seen at the Carmarthen Museum, to which the glass was presented by Major William Hughes, Mr. Abadam's grandson.

The reception rooms at Middleton Hall opened each into the other by folding doors, so that when occasion required it, the chain of rooms made an attractive feature. One or two of them call for especial mention.

The Dining Room was of a soft pastel green, and round the walls were fourteen mural paintings in shades of grey and amber, surrounded by raised mouldings of Della Robbia garlands of fruit and flowers, lightly touched with gold. The subjects of these paintings were various. Four

were scenes from Druidic life, the human sacrifice being led to the stone altar, the cutting of the mistletoe with a golden sickle, a banquet, and the gathering of the autumn fruits. Besides these there were symbolic human figures of the cardinal virtues, Justice, Temperance, Prudence, and Fortitude. The four seasons were represented by the heads of a child, a youth, an adult, and an elder, in medallion form.

The chandelier, with its tiers of crystal pendants, sent out prismatic colours of ruby, indigo, emerald, and amber, harmonising admirably with the pale green walls and the umbered paintings. At each end of the long room were sideboards, filled with white and green cut glass, silver bowls, wine-coolers, and ebony candlesticks, whilst above, hung oil-paintings of Edward Hamlin Adams and his wife, Amelia Sophia MacPherson, daughter of Capt. John MacPherson, brother of MacPherson of Cluny, chief of the clan. My grandfather was in court dress with powdered hair, and his wife in white muslin and broad blue sash, with her long, fair hair, in ringlets; a fine couple. On their birthdays and at Christmas time special candles were lit beneath their pictures; a never-failing ceremony of homage.

On the walls of the alcoves each side of the fireplace were moulded designs of thyrsi, enclosing a medallion representing, on the one side, Health in the person of Aesculapius, and on the other, Hygeia, a young girl feeding a temple serpent from a shell. The white marble mantelpiece continued the thyrus design with its pine-cone terminals, and beautifully carved garlands of vine leaves and bunches of grapes. I have seldom seen a more beautiful room.

The windows opened on a wide balcony, from which the view made a perfect picture. Beyond the terrace, gay with flowers, the ground sloped down to the water's edge, where the trees were reflected. In the middle distance rose the hill, crowned with Nelson's Tower, and beyond the woods could be seen the far banks of the Towy, with further still, the blue hills of the horizon.

The Drawing Room, which had windows looking, on one side, to the Park, and on the other to the water and the woods, was a long room in pale amethyst colour. Here hung many family portraits, among which, Mrs. Conrade Adams (17th Century) by Lely, held pride of place. Dressed as a Shepherdess, she holds in one hand a crook, whilst with the other she caresses a lamb at her knee. Lely's sitters were always given the beautiful hands for which he was celebrated; the composition is masterly, the colour scheme executed in shades of vandyke brown and pale yellow. The spaces between the windows had medallions of the Graces. The family portraits have now been distributed by Major William Hughes among members of the family.

The Library, which contained a fine collection of books in several languages, was a room of quiet and study, with glass-fronted book-shelves under alphabetical letters to aid the researcher, and a set of broad, tall, steps, to enable him to reach the highest shelves. Above the book-shelves were some twenty busts of notabilities, Eve, Newton, King Alfred, Shakespeare, Milton, Byron, Pope, Chaucer, Wordsworth, Moore, Bacon, and many others, and in two central alcoves, Seneca and Cicero. The white marble mantelpiece calls for a word. On one side was Hermes (Mercury) with his winged cap and caduceus on the other,

Pallas Athene (Minerva), goddess of wisdom, with helmet, ægis, and golden spear. In the centre, in high relief, was Urania, observing the starry heavens and making calculations, with instruments by her side. On a tall mirror over the mantelpiece was a painted scene of the various gods and goddesses assembled on Olympus.

In the Front Hall was a marble bust (now in Carmarthen Museum) of my grandfather; it stood on a marble table, and I remember being lifted as a child to kiss it on his birthday. The Hall was very lofty and ended in a circular glass opening at the top of the house.

The roof was more or less flat, and the view therefrom was very fine. It showed, on one side, Clearbrook, the Dower House nesting in the woods bordering the Park, and on the other side, the agent's house, Bryn Hawddgar, and towards Llanarthney, another dependency, Gwynnon-dale.

It was one of my pleasures to creep up to the top of the house to watch the sunset, and see the rooks leaving our rookery and winging away to the Cawdor woods for the night; the sound of the many wings made a sort of 'hu hu' in the air, and it has been said that this was the origin of the Welsh name, Hugh. It is notable that the crest of the Hughes family of Tregib shows a raven. There is a story that the bailiff from a neighbouring estate came on business to see our man, there being no love lost between these two of the same trade. The visitor, on leaving, asked to be allowed to see the view from the top of the house. They ascended; 'And now,' said the stranger, 'how far does this estate extend?' 'As far as you can see,' said our man, with an all-embracing sweep of his arm. The stranger was awed; and thus did our man abash a hated rival!

Quite near the house was an annexe, in which the household staff were accommodated, as well as the secretary, who kept there his books, files, and estate papers. Over this building swung the great bell, which rang at 6 a.m. to assemble the workmen, who answered to the bailiff's roll-call. The women workers came at 8 a.m., their work being to keep the avenues and pleasure-walks free from weeds, and the offices and chicken-houses clean and orderly. This was an opening in the labour market, much appreciated by the thrifty widows and unmarried women of the neighbourhood. The big bell rang also at 1 p.m., 2 p.m., and 6 p.m., to warn the workers of the hours which concerned them. It also rang certain numbered clangs to call up the gardener, the stables, the bailiff and others. It had a fine mellow tone and was heard for miles through the countryside, a welcome time-keeper, for those were the days in which wrist watches were unknown.

The front of the house faced south-west, and gave an outlook on the jagged outline of the limestone rocks, making a fine bit of landscape. In the direction of these lime rocks was a lake called 'Llyn Llech Owain Llaw-goch' (Lake of the flat stone of Owain of the Red Hand). The name itself gave a hint of its weird history. We children used to ride our ponies the intervening four miles leading to it, and much we enjoyed the wild beauty of the place; at the water's edge was silvery, white sand, where a heron, in a thoughtful attitude standing on one leg, statue-still, would watch the water playing in wavelets, giving one a feeling of complete solitude. All around was a mass of purple heather, with here and there a bluebell, whilst on the lake there floated beautiful

white water-lilies. The good farmer's wife, of the Llyn Farn, would bring us glasses of fresh milk, and tell us the history of the place.

It seems that Owen was one of King Arthur's knights of the Round Table, who, after a festive supper when he had looked too often on the wine when it was red, had ridden away. Coming presently to a spring, on which was a flat stone, he dismounted in order to water his horse, and forgot to replace the stone. In the morning there was spread out a large lake, of which no one to this day has ever found the source! And what of the knights of the Table Round? Of course, we had heard the saying that King Arthur and his knights are sleeping under the Black Mountains, and that when the hour strikes he will arise and claim his land.

No picture of Middleton would be complete without a word about two characters who were great favourites with us children. One was the old antiquary, John Griffiths, bookseller by trade and antique dealer by temperament. He searched the county for ancient objects and brought them in triumph to my father, who put great value upon them. His most treasured find was, perhaps, an Ogham Stone about three feet high, with well-marked characters cut across the edges; this attracted many antiquarians, who came to examine it and take rubbings of the characters. Another relic was a Danish hatchet-head of some hard metal, with the Danish raven rudely carved on it. This was found in a field named after a battle which had been fought there. From Friars' Park, in Carmarthen, a silver medal was dug up, bearing on one side, a well carved head, with the inscription 'Salvator Mundi,' and on the other, a beautiful head

led the 'horse,' and did most of the singing of an interminable series of verses, first in Welsh, then in English for the unlearned. The whole proceeding is an interesting survival of the pagan worship of Saturn, which was celebrated in December, and during the Saturnalia, a horse was sacrificed. The horse would be gaily decorated, and the sacrificing priest clad in white, the long series of verses being the remains of the traditional elegy which was chanted over the victim. In the course of the verses the history of the 'horse' is recounted, and at the most pathetic passages he would be wire-pulled to champ his jaws together. Here and there came a deep refrain of 'Poor old horse; let him die.' This, I think, would be an antiphon sung by the crowd of worshippers, to signify their share in the act of worship. It is curious to reflect that this sharing in the worship and sacrifice has a dim reflection in the Christian Liturgy. We were thrilled and a little frightened, especially when the horse's jaws would snap together.

It is a remarkable testimony to the retentive memories of Welsh people, that this ceremony, carried out by the soldiers of the Roman occupation some two thousand years ago, with its accompanying religious devotion (we were all pagans then), should have so impressed itself on their minds, that to-day, the essential features of it should still be fresh enough to become the basis of a popular repetition such as 'Mari Llwyd Llawen.' Certainly the Welsh have a genius for religious emotion. The air of the elegy is traditional, and I can supply it to any one who is interested.

Once a year the Guilds and Clubs of working people came, with a brass band, to demonstrate in front of the

with the inscription 'Mater Dei.' Cannon balls dug out of the ground at Dryslwyn, used by Cromwell in his destruction of the Castle, were less important items.

Old Giovanni, the Italian organ-grinder, was another favourite with us all, including Mr. Abadam, who came out and held long conversations in Italian with this very intelligent man; we children listened, awe-struck, fascinated by the sonorous music of the language of Dante. Giovanni was short and dark, a man of abounding gestures and mellifluous speech; his hat was tall and large, and presumably had started life black, but had attained by age to a sturdy green. It must have been strongly built, for he lifted it frequently to emphasise his emotion on every point, especially his devotion to the family. We always received him with great cordiality, and brought him cake and sherry, which he would take, sitting on the steps of the porch. When he rose to leave, I was commissioned by my father to give him a handful of half-crowns. He would then call down blessings on the 'Signor' and all belonging to him, with glowing words and sweeping gestures, and tramp away, waving his green hat and playing a concluding pæan of thanks. His end was very sad. At an inn not far from Carmarthen, where he passed a night, he was robbed of his life's savings, and sorrowfully crept back to Carmarthen, where, broken-hearted, he died soon afterwards in the house of his old Italian friends, Mr. and Mrs. Podesta.

Still another hero of our nursery days was the Christmas horse, called 'Mari Llwyd Llawen.' This consisted of the skull of a horse dressed up with flaunting ribbons, and fixed on a pole. The man who held it was entirely hidden and enveloped in a long white robe, while a second man

House. They sang several choral pieces in the usual fine style of our Welsh singers, made one or two speeches, and were then given beer from large jugs, and cakes. After this, they produced two swords, put point to point, to make an arch, beneath which the members passed two and two, saluting as they went, then returning whence they came, with banners and music.

Talking of Christmas reminds me of some of our customs at that season. There was a great influx of 'Duty' turkeys, geese, ducks, and chickens, these being part payment for rent from tenants. The 'Duty' fowls were packed into gift hampers, together with plum puddings, cakes and mince pies, to be sent to the clergy, the doctors, friends and relatives at a distance, to help their Christmas cheer.

I recall a sad event which was a grievous blow to us all. My eldest brother, Edward Hamlin Abadam, caught a fever and died in his early twenties. A brilliant student, giving highest promise, he was a most lovable character and mourned by all who knew him. A room was set aside as a *chappelle ardente*, hung with black from ceiling to floor, the coffin set on a catafalque, and brilliantly lit with large numbers of candles. Men took it in turns to watch until the funeral.

My second brother, Conrade Maxwell Macpherson Abadam, married Miss Saunders of Court Henry and had three children, two daughters, and a son who died in infancy. Elma married Major Bernard Morland and had one son, Conrade. Mabel married Capt. George Pryse, son of Sir Pryse Pryse, Bart., of Gogerddan, and has one son and one daughter. My third brother, Francis Walrond Abadam, married Helen Ramsay Schultz, and

had four daughters, and one son who died in infancy. My sister, Lucy Caroline, married the Rev. Richard Gwynne Lawrence, but died without children. Adah Constance married Capt. John Hughes, and had two sons and one daughter, William, Charles, and Evodie; Major William Hughes inherited Middleton Hall. Edith married Edward Harold Morris of Bryn Myrddin, and had two sons and two daughters, the eldest, David, dying in childhood. The second son, Ryle, married the Countess Alice Margit, daughter of Count and Countess Hoyos of Castle Soos in Austria; they have three daughters, Elaine, Margaret, and Mary Agnes. Of the two daughters of Edith and Edward Morris, Mary Edith is unmarried and Vida Emily is a nun. The writer of this little article is Alice, the youngest daughter of Edward Abadam. I have been asked to add a few words in explanation of my father's change of name from Adams to Abadam.

It is said that an English judge, who found the 'ap' and 'ab' before Welsh names tiresome and confusing, gave an order that this prefix should be abrogated and the names simplified. Hence ab Evan became Evans (the 's' standing for 'son of') ap Rhys, Pryse; ap Rosser, Prosser; ap Howel, Powell; ab Owen, Bowen; ap Harry, Parry; ab Adam, Adams; ap John, Jones; ap Richard, Pritchard; ap Stephen, Stephens; (the 'ab' is taken before a vowel, the 'ap' before a consonant). John Ab Adam, who married Clara Powell, another victim of the judge, had to effect the required change, and his descendants were called Adams, until my father, Edward Abadam, resumed the old prefix 'Ab' by legal deed.

Some names that were unpronounceable to an English

tongue, such as Lloyd, formerly spelt Llwyd, in the case of the Lloyds of Mostyn Hall, were ordered to drop the Lloyd altogether and to assume the name of their residence. The Mostyns have later resumed the Lloyd and joined it to Mostyn, making Lloyd Mostyn. There is a passage in a letter from Mrs. Frances Sedgewick, daughter of Judge Thomas Adams, in which she shows that the original name of the family was Ab Adam. She was great-aunt to Edward Abadam, and wrote as follow on February 1st, 1808: 'The Adams family were of a Welsh family in South Wales, Adam ap Adam, and great friends of King Charles the First in his troubles. One of our ancestors lent the King above £10,000 in his exile, from which act of kindness he granted our family the crest to our arms, which we now have. It is a lion rampant rising out of a Ducal Coronet, and I have often heard it mentioned by the elder part of the family.'

I must not forget to mention the stables, which were at a little distance from the house, and had a very large clock over the iron gates. Horses played a considerable part in our daily life, as we each had our riding horse; the carriage horses were always *de rigueur* bright bay with black points. They were housed with some degree of luxury, and each horse had hanging over his head in the stall a wooden label setting forth his name, height, birth date, and parentage. When any tenant, cottager, or workman was ill or had met with an accident, he could always rely on it that a groom on horseback would be sent post haste to Carmarthen to fetch our family doctor, a matter of grave necessity in the days before telegrams or telephones. We had special ponies, which fetched our posts from Llandilo, our nearest post town, and later in

the day took our post bag back with the letters. When our horses ended their lives of service they were given honourable burial in a part of the Park called Waunlas (Blue Meadow), because of the masses of wild blue hyacinths that grew there.

My memory carries me back to an incident which may be of interest to many who cannot count as many years into the past as I can. I was quite a small child when I was called up to join my elders, assembled at the top of the house to observe a rare and beautiful phenomenon, the Aurora Borealis. There was a broad band of colour stretching across the heavens from the north-east to the south-west, and forming over our heads an exact circle, in which light, fleecy clouds moved restlessly. The whole of the rest of the sky, although it was night, was a lovely bright rose colour, and I can still see, in my mind's eye, the effect of the Pleiades, sparkling like diamonds in that rosy setting.

These are a few of the impressions of my early life, spent amongst the unforgettable beauty of my old, beloved home.'

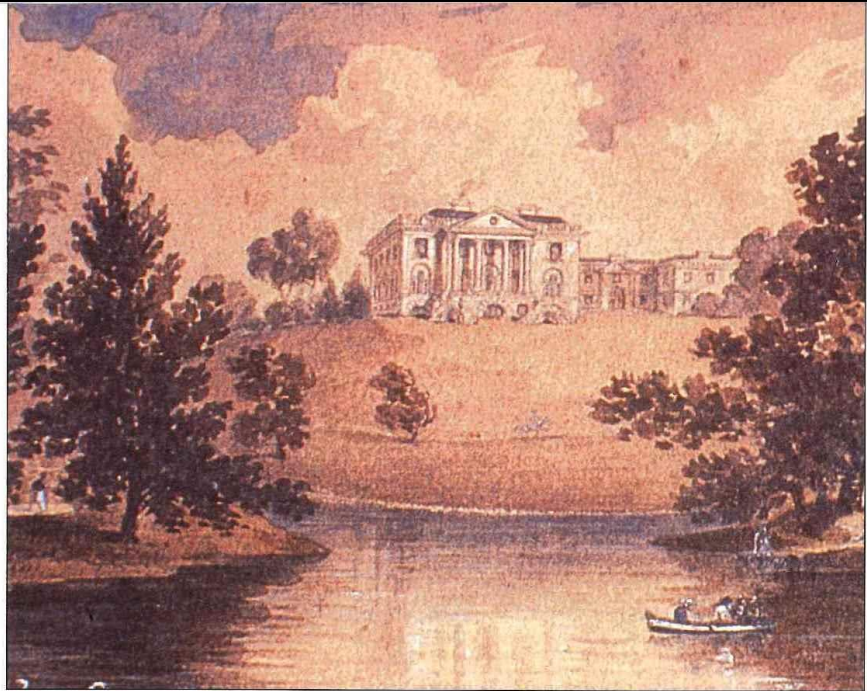
History

THE MIDDLETON ESTATE

The Great Glasshouse, like its illustrious predecessors on this 568-acre Estate, is highly innovative and ahead of its time. As early as 1664, Henry Middleton - the High Sheriff of Carmarthenshire, and after whom the Estate is named, constructed a mansion which contained seventeen hearths. But Middleton's heirs lived beyond their means, and by the end of the eighteenth-century, debts of £336,900 forced the sale of Middleton Estate, which was later bought by one William Paxton for the sum of £40,000.

The old mansion was converted into a home farm and Paxton commissioned Samuel Pepys Cockerell to design a new hall and invited Samuel Lapidge to help in the design of the gardens.

The new Middleton Hall,



Above: Original print of Middleton Hall.

Below: Illustration of Paxton's Tower.

The Middleton

Legacy

positioned at the heart of the Estate, was a quadrangular mansion of neoclassical design built in stuccoed brick with a grand ionic portico. It took two years (1793-95) to build. Attached to the Hall by a corridor was another building which housed the kitchen, housekeeper's storeroom and four more servants' rooms. Beyond was a much larger building featuring an arch-way and clock tower. It was used to have stables for 22 horses, two large coach houses, a harness room, lofts and four lodging rooms. The archways between the stable-block and the Hall were positioned so that from his residence Paxton could have a clear view of his beloved horses.

The gardens were characterised by a necklace of lakes and many other water features. Plants from across the world were introduced and the Estate assumed the mantle of true Regency beauty.

When Paxton died in 1842, the Hall and Estate was bought by Edward Adams, brother to the second President of the United States of America, John Adams, for £54,700. It stayed in his family until Col William Jones bought it in 1919. The lakes were drained in 1930 and a year later disaster struck when fire gutted the Mansion. In the 1950s the derelict walls were pulled down.

It was in the 1980s that the painter, William Wilkins, first conceived the idea of a National Botanic Garden of Wales. Now, almost out of the ashes of its eventful history and under the watchful eye of Paxton's Tower, rises one of the United Kingdom's greatest landmark Millennium projects. 🌿



THE TRUTH ABOUT PAXTON'S TOWER

Different stories exist about the reasons for building the Tower, which was originally called 'Nelson's Tower'.

- The Tower was built to prove to the Carmarthenshire voters that Paxton had not been ruined by the hefty expenditure incurred during the 1802 parliamentary election campaign - he bought the voters

36,901 dinners and 25,275 gallons of ale. Paxton lost by 46 votes.

- It was built with the money and materials originally committed (as a pre-election ploy) to the building of a bridge across the River Tywi. When Paxton failed to secure a parliamentary seat he built the Tower instead of the bridge and it became known as the "Tower of Spite".
- The Tower provided a viewing

platform from which Paxton liked to watch his favourite horses racing from Tenby to Middleton.

- The most likely explanation is that it was a decorative feature - the height of fashion at the time. It was probably built as a venue for Paxton's guests to visit and dine and take in the panoramic views.

The Tower was dedicated to Admiral Nelson, a friend of Paxton, after his death at Trafalgar in October 1805. The dedication read: "To the invincible commander, Viscount Nelson, in commemoration of deeds most brilliantly achieved at the Mouth of the Nile, before the walls of Copenhagen and on the shores of Spain; of the empire everywhere maintained by him over the sea; and of the death which in the fullness of his own glory, though untimely for his country and Europe, conquering he died; this tower was erected by William Paxton".

The Tower is now in the care of the National Trust.

A Rural Renaissance The National Botanic Garden of Wales

J. WYNFORD EVANS

Chairman of the Bank of Wales and Council Member of Europa Nostra

The historic Tywi Valley, two hundred miles west of London, is a scene of pastoral beauty. Salmon and sea trout flash silver up the river, passing a necklace of Welsh and Norman castles, dairy farms and cottages, and occasional grand houses.

Late in the 18th century, William Paxton, son of an Edinburgh Wine Merchant, made his fortune in British India through trading and banking during the Anglo-Dutch wars. A chance meeting led him to this idyllic spot, where he bought estate and built Middleton Hall as his home. He surrounded it with cascades of water, a chain of five lakes, grottos and a

double walled garden, and created there a pleasure palace of renown.

The estate passed out of family hands a hundred and more years later, eventually falling into decay, the house severely gutted by fire in 1930. The great formal gardens were lost, the dams between the lakes destroyed, and the place virtually forgotten. It was now in the protective ownership of the County Council which finally had to demolish the mansion for safety in 1950.

Over thirty years later, a party of naturalists went to explore this site, virtually untrodden during that time. One lady recognised that the underlying

*The Great Glasshouse
designed by Lord Foster
© The National Botanic Garden
of Wales*

*La Grande Serre signée Lord
Foster*



••• TOMORROW'S HERITAGE



Interior of the Glasshouse
© The National Botanic Garden
of Wales

Intérieur de la serre

pattern of the garden still existed, and called in William Wilkins, an eminent painter and lover of historic gardens who lived only a few miles away, but who (like me) was quite unaware that anything of merit had survived.

The idea of rescue grew. Could it somehow be made into a Botanic Garden which would not only conserve the plant heritage of Wales, but also entice visitors to this area where farming was now in financial difficulty?

Support grew including the Director of The Royal Botanic Garden at Kew and the President of the Royal Horticultural Society. Eventually, despite strong competition elsewhere, William decided to go for the concept of a National Botanic Garden of Wales, to be the first of this calibre to be opened in the United Kingdom in two centuries.

The question of finance loomed large! It was going to cost some £43.3M. The Millennium Commission disposing of National Lottery Fund monies was prepared to match independently raised funds up to £21.7M. The task of raising matched funding in Britain, where so many charitable sources had been drained to build the unloved Millennium Dome in Greenwich, was challenging, but both business and charitable trusts as well as individuals turned up trumps. One business contributed £1 M for the development of a Water Discovery Centre within the Garden. A charitable trust gave £1 M on the strength of its belief in the quality of what was to be done. Individual founders gave £10,000 each and the site was donated by the County Council.

Entering the Garden at the foot of a long broad walk, one passes small rippling ponds, a lake, and then through the centre (fortunately dry) of a fountain set in two separate quadrants of a circle, and upwards along a twisting, turning rill. Slowly the prospect opens, the floral and botanical interest matching the beauty of the Carmarthenshire landscape and the drama of new architecture.

The Great Glasshouse (designed by Lord Foster), now the icon of the Garden, smoothly swells out of the green hillside, its shape echoing the rounded tops of Carmarthenshire hills. It covers a 3,500 sq. m. ellipse, 100 m. long and 16 m. high. It has depth as well through a ravine (designed by the American Katherine Gustafsson), the rock lined interior of which contrasts with the geometric simplicity of the dome itself, and through which water trickles gently into quiet pools.

Within, the Great Glasshouse areas show plants of Australia, Chile, South Africa, and so on, as the original concept of protecting the flora of Wales was now not enough for the huge task being undertaken.

The landscape outside is also growing in scope and interest. Not to be seen in their full glory for



another fifty years are the groups of trees known as Woods of the World, as the site, with its hills and dales, allows a wide variety of climates. The demolished lakes are being cleaned out and re-dammed, so that Paxton's original necklace is coming into being once more.

Another enticing treasure yet to be developed is the double walled garden. The double wall allowed two centuries ago a wide range of micro climates, so that fruit and vegetables could be grown over an extended season. This is the only surviving specimen in England and Wales.

The hillside above it is wild woodland, but a Science Research Centre will be built there, to allow the fundamental botany, which is the ethos of a Botanic Garden – and which distinguishes it from just a pretty park – to be carried out on a very high level. Even today there are some 50 accredited Doctorate Students working with the Garden from various University Colleges.

A winter-view of the Garden with its Great Glasshouse
© The National Botanic Garden of Wales

Le Jardin Botanique sous la neige

The old stable block has been converted into a catering centre and a gallery for art displays. Art will be reflected in the Garden itself, with sculptures set in the landscape. The first of these, Pi, by Rawleigh Clay, already tops the mound where the old mansion stood and frames a tower on a nearby hill built by Paxton to commemorate British Naval victories. (Pi was not designed with this prospect in mind, but it is a very happy marriage of widely different cultural objects).

The science programme of the garden lies in the field of Systematics, that side of botany which seeks to understand the relationships among plants and accords to each species a place in the universal classification. Barely 15% of the worlds species have been properly codified in this way, so the potential task ahead of the garden is effectively unbounded!

A genetic garden to show the evolution of plants has been constructed in memory of Wallace, the Welsh biologist who ranked with Darwin in uncover-

● ● ● TOMORROW'S HERITAGE

ing the history of the earth. On the other hand production of genetically modified plants in the modern sense is distinctly not acceptable!

The impact of the Garden on its rural environment is obviously very material. Local shops, pubs and hotels now have an additional influx of custom, as over 140,000 people visited the Garden in the first three months. The environmental impact of this is quite small, as it can be reached within a kilometre of a specially built motorway junction.

The National Botanic Garden of Wales, led today by Dan Clayton-Jones as its Chairman and Professor Charles Stirton, a South African who was previously Deputy Director of Kew, is already of international repute and continues to grow in importance, month by month. It is wonderful to see now. I hope to have the chance to see it in twenty years time!

After 11 years of thinking and hoping, the last three of which were spent in actual construction, the Garden opened its gates to the public in May 2000, a fitting celebration of the millennium. It was formally opened in June by HRH Prince Charles, Prince of Wales, its Patron, whose own views of ecologically sustainable development and recycling are reflected closely by the Garden's own philosophy.

This bold venture has taken a forgotten part of the history of Wales, and recreated it in modern form which preserves our heritage and adds to it the excitement of science, research and up to the minute technology.

Une renaissance rurale – Le jardin botanique du Pays de Galles

En juin 2000, au terme de onze années de réflexion, d'édification de plans, de recherche de financements (le budget total a dépassé 40 millions de livres) et finalement de construction, le Jardin botanique national du Pays de Galles a été inauguré par S.A.R. le Prince de Galles.

Situé dans une belle vallée du Carmarthenshire, et construit sur le site d'un jardin abandonné - créé par William Paxton, un riche marchand du XVIII^e siècle - le Jardin Botanique devait, selon l'idée originale contribuer à la sauvegarde de la flore régionale. Mais devant le succès inattendu du projet on décida d'en faire un réel Jardin botanique d'allure internationale.

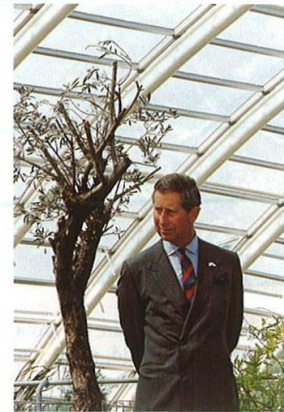
Le point de convergence du nouveau jardin est constitué par une gigantesque serre ellipsoïdale, de 100 mètres de long et de 16 mètres de hauteur, conçue par Lord Foster, qui abrite des espèces végétales en provenance du monde entier. Autour de la serre s'agence une multiplicité d'éléments éducatifs et culturels. On y trouve un pavillon comprenant une galerie d'art et un restaurant, un centre de recherches scientifiques (en cours de construction et destiné à la taxonomie botanique), une «forêt du monde» composée d'essences de tous les continents, un verger entouré par un double mur qui lui confère un microclimat favorable et les éléments paysagistes originaux du parc (chutes d'eau, grottes, plans d'eau artificiels) auxquels on a rendu leur splendeur d'antan.

Visitors enjoying the garden in springtime
© The National Botanic Garden of Wales
Photo: Steve Benbow

Les visiteurs admirant le jardin au printemps

HRH The Prince of Wales at the formal opening of the Botanic Garden
© Ralph Carpenter

SAR le Prince de Galles lors du vernissage du Jardin botanique



For further information:
Pour plus d'informations:
The National Botanic Garden of Wales
Middleton Hall, Llanarthne
Carmarthenshire SA32 8HW
South Wales, United Kingdom
Fax: +44 1558 608 933
e-mail:
thutton@gardenofwales.org.uk
www.gardenofwales.org.uk