

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

CAERHAYS CASTLE

Auteur(s) : Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/>

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**CAERHAYS CASTLE**

Name: CAERHAYS CASTLE

District: Cornwall (Unitary Authority)

Parish: St. Goran

District: Cornwall (Unitary Authority)

Parish: St. Michael Caerhays

label.localisation: Latitude: 50.243628  
Longitude: -4.8496390  
National Grid Reference: SW9691442068  
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden  
Grade: II\*  
List Entry Number: 1000448  
Date first listed: 11-Jun-1987

## Details

Early C19 landscape associated with a house designed by John Nash, perhaps with advice from Humphry Repton, together with a late C19 and early C20 woodland garden.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In the early medieval period the manor of Caerhays belonged to the Arundell family, passing by marriage c 1379 to the Trevanion family, with whom it remained in direct succession until 1767. John Trevanion, who inherited the estate in 1703, improved an existing house and developed gardens, thus creating 'a pleasant romantic seat' (Lake 1867). When William Trevanion died in 1767 the male line of the family became extinct, and the estate passed to his sister's son, John Bettesworth, whose son adopted the additional name of Trevanion when he inherited Caerhays in 1801. John Bettesworth Trevanion commissioned John Nash (1752-1835) to build a new house in 1807. It is possible that at the same period Humphry Repton (1752-1818) may have advised on the development of the grounds; correspondence from Mr Pole-Carew of Antony, Cornwall (qv) suggests that he had introduced Repton to Trevanion, but there is no further documentary evidence relating to this possible connection (Stroud 1962), and contemporary descriptions do not refer to Repton's involvement here. Partly as a result of the escalating cost of building the new mansion, the Trevanions found themselves in increasingly straightened financial circumstances, and in 1840 the family departed for Paris leaving the estate in the hands of creditors who offered it for sale in 1842. It failed to sell, and was again offered for sale in 1852 before finally being purchased in 1853 by Michael Williams, a wealthy banker, mine owner, and iron master of Scorrier and Burncoose. Michael Williams undertook the repair and improvement of the house and made significant changes to the pleasure grounds which are recorded on a plan of 1858 (private collection), the year of his death. Michael Williams was succeeded by his son, John Michael, who continued the improvement of the grounds. J M Williams died in 1880 and was succeeded by his son, John Charles, who c 1885 began the woodland garden for which Caerhays has been noted in the C20. In the late C19 and early C20 J C Williams supported expeditions by E H Wilson (1876-1930) and George

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Forrest (1873-1932), which provided new introductions which were planted at Caerhays; J C Williams was also undertook significant work hybridising camellias, rhododendrons, and daffodils at Caerhays.

J C Williams died in 1939 and was succeeded by his son Charles, who continued to hybridise rhododendrons and who managed, despite a busy political career as MP for Torquay and Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means during the Second World War, to maintain the gardens during the war. Following Charles Williams' death in 1955 the estate passed to his nephew, F Julian Williams who has overseen the restoration of the gardens in the late C20. Today (2000) the site remains in private ownership.

**DESCRIPTION**

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Caerhays Castle is situated to the north of Veryan Bay, c 12km south-west of St Austell and c 6km south-east of Tregoney. The c 120ha site comprises some 20ha of gardens and pleasure grounds, and c 100ha of parkland, a lake, and ornamental plantations. To the south the site adjoins the coast at Porthluney Cove, while to the north and east it is bounded by agricultural land. The north-west boundary also adjoins agricultural land, and is formed by a deer-park pale of C15 origin (Colson Stone 1994). To the west and south-west the site adjoins a minor road which leads south-east from St Michael Caerhays to Porthluney Cove, passing through the site c 320m south of the Castle. The site has a varied topography with the steep-sided valley of the River Luney running from north to south through the site, and a further steep-sided valley extending east from the western boundary of the site to join the valley of the River Luney c 550m north of the Castle. To the west and south-west of the Castle high ground extends south to Watchhouse Point to the south-west of Porthluney Cove, while to the south-east of the Cove similar high ground extends south to Black Rock. There is a complex system of inter-related vistas within and beyond the site with significant views of the Castle from the south-east park across Porthluney Cove, and of the sea from the north-west drive and high ground above the Castle. The principal view of the coast from the Castle and pleasure grounds was created c 1858 by removing an intervening hillside.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** Caerhays Castle is approached from the minor road which forms the western boundary of the site at a point c 430m south-west of the parish church of St Michael Caerhays. The entrance is marked by Higher Lodge (listed grade I), a picturesque gothic structure of asymmetrical plan comprising a two-storey circular turret to the north, and a larger, octagonal two-storey tower and circular stair turret to the south linked by a gothic carriage arch. The two towers and the linking arch have crenellated parapets, and the circular turret is ornamented with blind cruciform arrow loops and lancet windows. The larger, octagonal tower to the south has casement windows and to the east, beyond the entrance arch, a residential range. The carriage arch is closed by a pair of timber gates, while the north turret is flanked by a crenellated quadrant wall. The design of Higher Lodge is attributed to John Nash (listed building description) in 1808, but map evidence indicates that it was constructed after 1858 when John Michael Williams inherited the estate.

The drive extends c 400m east-north-east along the north-facing slope of a valley which extends east from Higher Lodge to join the valley of the River Luney north of the Castle. The slope above and to the south of the drive is planted with mixed woodland, while there are views north across the valley towards St Michael Caerhays church. The drive turns north-east and continues through mixed plantations and evergreen shrubbery for c 400m before sweeping east and south-east round a spur of high ground at the eastern end of the valley. Some 750m north-east of Higher Lodge the drive passes above and to the south of two stone and slate-roofed cottages and outbuildings known as Hovel; these were constructed for John Trevanion, possibly to a design by Nash's office, before 1841 (Colson Stone 1994). The high ground to the south of Hovel and the drive is known as Castle Wood and forms the woodland pleasure grounds developed by the Williams family from c 1885, the drive forming their boundary to north and east. Continuing c 270m south-east and then south-west, the drive passes to the east of a rocky quarry which is planted with a group of specimen tree ferns. As the drive sweeps round the spur of high ground views south-east down the Luney valley to the sea are revealed; some are today (2000) partly obscured by late C19 and C20 specimen trees and shrubs. Some 130m north-east of the Castle the drive divides, one fork leading south-west to pass through a crenellated gothic arch (listed grade I) to enter the walled garden enclosure (listed grade I) north-west of the Castle. Within this enclosure the drive passes below terraced lawns and walks which are retained by a low stone wall, to reach the porte-cochere. The drive continues c 50m beyond the porte-cochere to pass through a similar gothic carriage arch (listed grade I) to the north-west of the early C19 stables (listed grade I) which adjoin the south-west end of the Castle. The north-west drive is shown in its present

form on the Tithe map (1841), and appears in part to make use of a track shown on an estate survey of 1802; the north-west drive formed part of John Trevanion's early C19 improvements associated with the construction of the Castle in 1808.

A further drive, in the early C19 the principal approach to the Castle (Colson Stone 1994), enters the site from Lower Lodge (listed grade I) which is situated on the minor road adjacent to Porthluney Cove c 370m south-east of the Castle. The picturesque Lower Lodge comprises a pair of circular turrets ornamented with blind cruciform arrow slits and lancet windows, which are linked by a segmental arch bearing a carved stone coat of arms. The turrets and arch are surmounted by crenellations, while similarly crenellated stone quadrant walls flank the lodge to west and east, the latter terminating in a square crenellated tower; accommodation is situated behind each turret. Lower Lodge is attributed to John Nash (listed building description), but map evidence indicates that it was not constructed until 1851-8, replacing an earlier single lodge on approximately the same site which was built c 1808 for John Trevanion as part of a scheme of improvements which included diverting the coast road to a course c 250m south of its previous line. To the east the Lodge adjoins a picturesque stone bridge (listed grade II) with a crenellated parapet terminated to east and west by octagonal piers on the downstream side; the bridge is dated 1910 and may incorporate elements of an earlier structure built as part of Trevanion's early C19 improvements to the road (Colson Stone 1994). From Lower Lodge the south-east drive, now (2000) a track, ascends gently north-west through the park for some 370m before entering the pleasure grounds c 50m south of the Castle and turning north-north-west for c 50m to reach a forecourt to the south-west of the early C19 stables. To the north-west of the stables the drive passes through the gothic arch at the south-west end of the garden enclosure north-west of the Castle to reach the porte-cochere.

The south-east drive was constructed for John Trevanion in the early C19 as part of a scheme of improvements associated with the construction of the Castle by Nash in 1808; it is shown in its present form (with the exception of Lower Lodge) on the Tithe map (1841). It replaced an approach to the earlier manor house which led north from the old coast road; this approach is shown on the 1802 estate survey.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Caerhays Castle (listed grade I) stands on an artificially levelled terrace on a south-east-facing slope above the River Luney which is dammed to form a lake. The Castle is asymmetrical on plan and has a picturesque outline with crenellated parapets, towers, and turrets. The Castle is constructed in slatestone rubble with granite and Pentewan stone dressings, with the lead roofs concealed behind the parapets. Approximately L-shaped on plan, the Castle comprises a range running from north-east to south-west which is terminated to the north-east by a massive circular tower with an attached, higher, circular stair tower. A further range extends south-east at the south-west end of this block, and has a circular turret to the south. The entrance or north-west facade has a centrally placed, two-storey, crenellated porte-cochere. To the south-west of the main building lie the contemporary service quarters and stable court (listed grade I).

Caerhays Castle was designed in 1808 by John Nash for John Trevanion, and occupies the site of an earlier manor house which is shown on an estate survey of 1802. Nash's Castle remained incomplete due to the financial difficulties experienced by the Trevanion family, and after its purchase in 1853 by Michael Williams a comprehensive programme of restoration was undertaken. Further additions and alterations were undertaken by John Michael Williams in the late C19.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The formal gardens are situated to the north-west and south-east of the Castle, while the informal woodland pleasure grounds are situated on rising ground to the north, west, and south-west of the Castle.

The formal gardens comprise a series of terraces to the north-west of the Castle, and a single terrace to the south-east. These are enclosed to the north-west, north-east, and south-west by partly crenellated stone walls, while to the south-east the terrace is retained by further crenellated stone walls which are battered and supported by buttresses, and which break forward in two small square bastions (walls all listed grade I). Below, the retaining wall is planted with mature evergreen magnolias. At the north-east corner of the south-east terrace stands a stone folly tower (listed grade I) which rises in two graduated stages. The south-east terrace is laid to lawn with a small late C20 timber summerhouse c 20m east of the Castle. The lawn is enclosed to the north-east by evergreen shrubs. The two north-west terraces are retained by a low rubble-stone wall, and are separated by grass banks. The terraces are planted with specimen shrubs, and to the north are connected to the drive by stone steps and a ramp. Stone steps ascend north-west from a square tower c 10m north-west of the Castle (listed grade I) towards the south-west end of the garden. A stone arch in the north-west corner of the garden leads to a nursery area with late C19 brick and timber glasshouses.

The formal terraced gardens form part of the scheme designed by John Nash for John Trevanion in 1808. In part the enclosing and retaining walls coincide with walls shown enclosing gardens around the earlier house on the 1802 estate survey; it is unclear to what extent Nash incorporated these into the surviving structures (Colson Stone 1994). A formal rectangular pond shown on the 1802 survey to the south-east of the manor house was removed in the early C19. The terraced gardens are shown in their present form on the 1841 Tithe map.

To the north, west, and south-west of the Castle the north-, east-, and south-east-facing slopes are terraced into a series of grass and gravel walks which follow curvilinear courses through Castle Wood, eventually joining the north-west drive to the south of Hovel. Castle Wood is planted with mixed mature trees including rare specimen subjects planted by J C Williams in the late C19 and early C20. The trees are underplanted with a significant collection of rhododendrons, magnolias, camellias, and other ericaceous ornamental shrubs, many being derived from the early C20 plant-hunting expeditions by E H Wilson and George Forrest with which J C Williams was associated (Gardeners' Chronicle 1939). The woodland garden is divided by a series of tall laurel hedges which serve to provide shelter for the plants; these were originally planted by J C Williams in the early C20. Similar areas of early C20 woodland garden were developed by J C Williams in Old Park Wood c 670m north-north-west of the Castle, and in Forty Acre Wood to the east of the River Luney c 400m north-east of the Castle. The network of early C20 walks and rides through these woods is shown on the 1907 OS map, and partly survives today (2000). Castle Wood and Old Park Wood were originally planted as plantations by John Trevanion in the early C19; they are not shown on the estate survey of 1802, but appear on the 1841 Tithe map. Castle Wood was considerably extended to the south and south-west of the Castle and Forty Acre Wood was planted as a plantation by Michael Williams (d 1858); these are shown on an estate survey of 1858. A pleasure-ground walk extends south from Kennel Close Wood, descending a flight of stone steps to cross the minor road to Porthluney Cove c 270m south-south-east of the Castle. To the south of this road the walk, known as the Battery Walk, passes an early C19 stone gothic arch; this was constructed c 1808, possibly to a design provided by John Nash's office, to cross the coast road on its early C19 alignment (Colson Stone 1994). The castellated arch and adjoining tower formed part of John Trevanion's scheme of improvements associated with the diversion of the coast road, and the construction of the former lower lodge and south-east drive. Beyond the arch the Walk continues through mixed woodland to reach Watchhouse Point where there are dramatic views of the coast, sea, and Porthluney Cove.

To the north-east of the Castle and immediately below the walls of the formal garden, an informal rock garden constructed in a mixture of stone including white quartz descends the south-east-facing slope to the north-west and south-east of the principal drive. The rock garden is planted with a mixture of azaleas and other ornamental shrubs, and was constructed by J C Williams in the early C20. Below the lower drive a walk leads south-south-east through an area of lawns planted with large groups of bamboo and rhododendrons, together with other specimen trees and shrubs, to reach the west bank of the lake c 130m east of the Castle. The lake is irregular on plan with three islands situated towards its northern end; to the south-east it flows into a canalised stream which in turn flows into Porthluney Cove. The lake is formed by damming the River Luney, and in the valley to the north of the lake the river is controlled by a complex system of sluices and drainage channels. Remains of C19 metal cattle guard rails survive in sections around the lake (1999), as do the remains of a C19 boathouse at the north-west corner of the lake. The lake was formed by John Trevanion in the early C19 and replaced an earlier mill pool. The plan of the lake was modified by Michael Williams between 1854 and 1858 (Estate survey, 1858), while the drainage channels to the north were constructed by J M Williams between 1858 and 1880 (Colson Stone 1994). The informal pleasure grounds to the west of the lake extend c 500m north-north-west parallel to and below the north-west drive; this area was planted as woodland by Michael Williams in the mid C19.

**PARK** The park is situated to the south-east and east of the Castle, and is divided into two sections by the canalised River Luney and the public road south and south-east of the lake. The south-east park comprises south-east-facing sloping pasture planted with scattered ornamental trees. Some 200m south-east of the Castle, a mid C19 circular brick cow byre with a conical tiled roof (listed grade II) stands on the site of the earlier water mill which is shown on the 1802 estate survey and the 1841 Tithe map. An early C19 bridge which carried the south-east drive across a service drive leading across the park to the mill was removed in the mid C19. The western boundary of the south-east park adjacent to Kennel Close Wood is formed by a wide

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*Inventory of Great Britain*  
**CAERHAYS CASTLE**

grassy cutting dug c 1858 for Michael Williams in order to reveal a view of the sea and Porthluney Cove from the Castle. These improvements entailed the demolition of a cottage which is shown on the Tithe map (1841) and a mid C19 engraving by Dr Drake. The south-east park was initially developed in the early C19 by John Trevanion and formed part of the improvements associated with the construction of Nash's Castle in 1808.

The east park comprises a west-facing slope to the south-east of the minor road which passes to the north of Porthluney Cove. The park remains pasture with clumps of ornamental trees including a large number of mid and late C19 Monterey pines; adjacent to one of these clumps is a C19 deer barn. To the east and south-east the park is bounded by a mixed plantation, while to the south the headland east of Porthluney Cove is planted with deciduous woodland. The land which now forms the eastern park was purchased by Michael Williams between 1854 and 1858 in order to create a deer park.

The mid C19 deer park replaced an earlier park of C15 origin created by the Trevanion family which was situated in the Luney valley to the north of the Castle, and included the areas today known as Old Park Wood to the west of the River Luney, and Brownberry Wood and Forty Acre Wood to the east. Park pales survive to the north, west, and south of Old Park Wood, and further walls and banks in Castle Wood may also be related to the development of this area as a deer park in the C18 and early C19 (*ibid*). Gilbert noted that the area north of the Castle remained in use as deer park in the early C19: 'the northern side of the house is backed by a ridge of hills, chiefly used as a deer park, and falling into a winding declivity on the west and north, becomes connected with Trevanion Park [to the north]' (Gilbert 1820). The northern park was gradually abandoned in the mid and late C19 following the construction of the eastern deer park c 1858 and the development of the woodland gardens c 1885.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The kitchen garden is situated c 670m north-west of the Castle on the south-facing slope of the valley which ascends west from the River Luney to Higher Lodge. The garden is approximately wedge-shaped on plan and is enclosed by stone walls with wide slate coping. The garden is no longer in cultivation and is now (2000) planted with conifers. The walls were constructed for John Trevanion before 1841, in which year the garden is shown in its present form on the Tithe map.

This list entry was subject to a Minor Amendment on 20/06/2014

## Legal

This garden or other land is registered under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 within the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens by Historic England for its special historic interest.

## Bibliographie

### Books and journals

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[Archival items] Planting books and associated garden records (private collection)

[Illustration] C S Gilbert, View of Caerhays Castle from the north-east (published in Gilbert 1820)

[Illustration] H H Drake, Watercolour view of Caerhays Castle from the coast road to the south-east, c 1840 (private collection)

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*  
*Inventory of Great Britain*  
**CAERHAYS CASTLE**

[Illustrations] T Willement, View of Caerhays Castle from the south-west (published in Neale 1818)

[Map] OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1879

[Map] OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1907

[Map] Sale plan, 1842 (Cornwall Record Office)

[Map] Sale plan, 1852 (private collection)

[Map] T Corfield, Plans etc of Carhase manor ... in the County of Cornwall the Property of John T P Bettesworth Trevanion Esqr, 1802 (private collection)

[Map] Tithe map for St Michael Caerhays parish, 1841 (Cornwall Record Office)

[Map] W Smith, Book of Maps of St Michael Caerhays and other land in the County of Cornwall, the property of Michael Williams Esqr, 1858 (private collection)

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N Pearson Associates for the Caerhays Estate, Heritage Management and Parkland Plan (2011)