

# NANTEOS

## THE POWELL FAMILY

Nanteos, a large, square, Georgian building, surrounded by the unspoilt beauty of the Welsh countryside, lies in the Paith Valley, near Aberystwyth. The site has a long history of occupation: an earlier dwelling known as Neuadd Lawdden existed there for many centuries before Nanteos was built. The present mansion being built in 1739.

Colonel John Jones, who raised the Cardiganshire Militia in support of King Charles I during the Civil War, was the earliest known inhabitant of the Nanteos estate. He had three daughters, Mary, Anne and Elinor. Anne succeeded on her father's death in 1666.

Anne Jones of Nanteos married Cornelius Le Brun, who was born in Cologne, Germany. He came over to Wales to work on the lead and silver mines as a mining engineer. After making his fortune later became High Sheriff of Cardiganshire in 1674. When he died in 1705, Nanteos was left to his only issue, Averina (1675-1738). She married William Powell (1658-1738) of Llechwedd Dyrys, which was situated across the Paith Valley from Nanteos. William was the only son of Sir Thomas Powell K.C. who was knighted by King James II in 1688 and was one of the Judges of the King's Bench.



Sir Thomas Powell K.C.

William and Averina Powell lived at Nanteos and had five children, Thomas, William, John, Anne and Elizabeth. When William died in 1738, the estate was passed on to his eldest son, Thomas who immediately began to build the present house at Nanteos. He was married Mary Frederick, granddaughter of Sir John Frederick, Lord Mayor of London in 1622 and it was her wealth that built Nanteos. Sadly, before completion of the mansion and while attending Parliament, Thomas died of an apoplectic fit in a London street. He left no legitimate issue but he did have an illegitimate son who lived at Nanteos, though not much is known about him.



Thomas Powell 1699 - 1752

Nanteos was left to Thomas' brother, the Reverend William Powell, who took over the estate in 1752. William carried on with the building of Nanteos, completing it in the late 1750s. His initials, W.P., can be seen on the lead drainpipe heads, dated 1757. He married Elizabeth Owen, eldest daughter of Athelstan Owen of Rhiwsaeson, Montgomeryshire. William was ordained deacon of Lincoln in 1731 and was made Doctor of Civil Law in 1763. He died in 1780 leaving a son, Thomas, and daughter, Corbetta Williamia, who married Colonel William Lewis of Llanerchaeron, Cardiganshire.



Reverend William Powell  
1705 -1780

Thomas (1745-1797) married Eleanor Maurice Corbett of Ynysmaengwyn, Merioneth and became High Sheriff of the County of Cardiganshire in 1785. When he died in 1797, aged 52, the estate was left to his eldest son, William Edward, who was then only nine years of age and too young to take over. In the interim Eleanor took her four children to France and Nanteos was let out until 1809, when finally William Edward took over the estate at the age of 21. By 1810 he was High Sheriff and married Laura Phelps, eldest daughter of James Sackville Tufton Phelps of Coston House, Leicestershire. They had two sons, William Thomas Rowland and Cornelius. Laura died in 1822 and in 1841 William remarried to Harriet Dell, widow of George Achers of Moreton Hall, Cheshire.



William Edward Powell  
1788 - 1854

William Edward Powell seems to have lived a double life! He had a long-term liaison with Miss Mary Selina Genet of Britannia Street, London, which spanned both his marriages. They had four children; Edward William (1816), Frederick James (1819), Henry James (1825), and Emma Mary (1830). William Edward Powell was named as being the father on all their baptism records.

Not much is known of their situation but Mary Genet and her family were well educated and provided for and it clearly states in William Edward's last will and testament in 1853 that all the Genet family received £50 each. They later emigrated to New Zealand, where the descendants of the Genet family still live.

William Edward Powell died aged 66 and the estate was left to his eldest son William in 1854.



William Thomas Rowland Powell  
1815 - 1878

William Thomas Rowland Powell married Rosa Edwyna Cherry, eldest daughter of William George Cherry of Buckland, Herefordshire, in 1839. They had a very rocky marriage, which ended in separation in 1854. They had two children, George and Harriet. Harriet sadly dies of consumption at the age of 13 at Nanteos. George never got on with his father. Their relationship got off to a bad start when William Thomas Rowland presented his young son with a shot gun and told him to shoot the first thing he saw. He shot his father's best prize bull.

William Thomas Rowland Powell was a Member of Parliament from 1859 until 1865, when he had to resign due to ill health. In later years he was confined to a wheelchair. In fact four wheelchairs were ordered at one time, presumably one of each floor of Nanteos and one for outdoors. An annual event, which Colonel Powell orchestrated from his wheelchair, was the great battle that took place on the front lawn of Nanteos. Hundreds of people would gather, mostly servants and tenants, and following the commands of Colonel Powell, wage war on each other. He was a keen artist and drew many humorous pen sketches while and around Aberystwyth, and on his travels to Nice, France and many other places. He died in 1878 leaving the estate to his only son.



George Ernest John Powell  
1842-1882

George Ernest John Powell, the most interesting character of the Powell family, was educated at Eton and then Oxford, where he met the poet Algernon Swinburne, his close friend for many years. George, himself, published a few poetry books, his most famous publication being the *Icelandic Translations*. He was also a collector of many rare objects, books, and manuscripts, including volumes of Shakespeare, a fragment of Schumann's coffin and many other strange and wonderful items. George Powell attended the first performance of Wagner's *The Ring of the Nibelungs* in 1876 and was later invited to dinner at Wagner's home.

In 1878, after the death of his father, George returned to run the family estate. In 1880 he became High Sheriff of Cardiganshire, with a lavish ceremony in Cardigan. He married Dinah Harris from Goodwick, Fishguard, but sadly dies a year later, childless at the age of forty.

He had tried to establish a free library and art gallery at Aberystwyth which would have contained some of his personal collection but there was always much argument over its location and, ironically, on Tuesday 17th October 1882, at the very moment one of his fund raising concerts for the free library would have begun at Aberystwyth, he developed violent stomach cramp and died. Swinburne is noted for saying after the death of Wagner (who died 3 months after George), that George Powell had died and gone to heaven to announce the arrival of the greatest composer, Wilhelm Richard Wagner.

The estate was left to his father's cousin, William Beauclerk Powell (1834-1911), who inherited Nanteos in 1882. His wife was Anna Maria, the third daughter of David Lewis, of Bronavon, Cardiganshire. They married in 1864 and had one son, Edward, born in 1870. A photograph of the couple exists, taken with their grandson William at his christening in 1899, has had William Beauclerk's nose shaded out because of a deformity. They lived at Nanteos until 1911, when William and Anna Maria died within days of each other and Nanteos was left in the hands of their only son Edward.



Edward Athelstan Lewis Powell  
1870 - 1930

Edward Athelstan Lewis Powell (1870-1930) married Margaret Lousia Joan Pryse of Gogerddan, another one of the largest estates in Cardiganshire. Sadly, their marriage was scarred by tragedy. Their only son William (born 1899) was killed in action in Buvignies, France during the First World War on the 6th November 1918, five days before armistice. Nanteos was in full victory celebration when the telegram with the news of poor William arrived.



Margaret Louisa Joan Powell  
1862 - 1951

Margaret Powell had a close relationship with Matthew Vaughan Davies, Lord Ystwyth of Tan y Bwlch, Aberystwyth. There was a flag-pole on the roof of Nanteos, and when Edward Powell was away or intoxicated, Margaret Powell would raise a bed sheet on the flag-pole, as an all clear for Lord Ystwyth to call. He would stay in the Blue room on his regular visits. After the death of Edward Powell in 1930, she stayed at Tan y Blwch each August, when Nanteos was let out. After the death of Lord Ystwyth, at the age of 95 in 1935, she carried on with her August vacations, staying at 38 Marine Terrace, Aberystwyth, believing the sea air to be good for her health.

Margaret continued to live at Nanteos until her death in 1951 at the age of 89. She was a great character and would often be seen in Aberystwyth in the Milk Bar in Terrace Road, Aberystwyth on her daily visits for tea, with her ear trumpet swinging on her arm. She was, in fact profoundly deaf. Guests calling at Nanteos would sometimes wait for over half an hour, while Maggie, the maid, would look for her (it was pointless calling her), and if she was unsuccessful in locating her, they would leave and call again.

If Mrs. Powell wanted to summon Maggie, she pulled a bell-pull at the bottom of the kitchen stairway. The bell would ring on the top floor. Mrs. Powell would place her hand on the banister to feel the vibrations. Then she knew that Maggie was on her way.

All the Powells are buried at Llanbadarn Fawr Church. Their memorial plaques are situated near the altar. Edward and Margaret Powell are buried unmarked in the same grave as his parents, William Beauclerk and Anna Maria Powell. Their son William E. G. P. W. Powell is buried at Maubeuge Centre Cemetery, France.



William Edward George Pryse Wynne Powell  
1899 - 1918

Edward Powell was the end of the male line at Nanteos. In Margaret Powell's will, the mansion and dwindling estate was bequeathed to Mrs. Elizabeth Mirylees, a distant relation of Edward Powell.

Major Mirylees, his wife and five children moved into Nanteos in 1956, but sold eleven years later. The new owners were Geoff and Rose Bliss and their two children, Tony and Michael. They opened Nanteos to the public as a stately home. Hundreds of people came through the doors during the sixteen years that they were open. During the 1970s many television programmes were filmed at Nanteos. In 1983 they, in turn, sold the mansion. After the Bliss family, there were many occupiers, but today Nanteos is undergoing some major changes.

### The House, Gardens and Staff

In all there are 69 rooms, in the grand Georgian mansion. During the 19th century Nanteos had alterations done. William Powell, (1788-1854) added new wings which included butler's quarters, housekeeper's quarters, a larger kitchen and billiard room. Various grand plans were drawn up at the time but only the basis plans are used.



Music Room 1970s

(Reproduced with kind permission of T. Bliss)

The music room is one of the most lavish rooms at Nanteos with its Italian Aesop's Fable fireplace and ceiling depicting the four seasons entwined with musical instruments. The mirrored walls enhance the decoration of the room. A Broadwood grand piano sat proudly in the music room for over a century. When George Powell purchased the piano he wrote to his father stating that no one was to tamper with it until he arrived at Nanteos. He practiced for his many public appearances with his special Broadwood. Many famous musicians, including George's friend Wagner, are said to have visited Nanteos.



Guests were received in the morning room. Once a year the century old wallpaper was washed with bread containing no yeast. There are a few marks on the marble surround of the fireplace. The story goes that a servant girl was tending the fire when the butler walked in and jokingly pretended he was going to shoot her with a gun he was holding from the collection in the next room. She screamed and fainted. As she fell, the gun went off and the shot scarred the marble.

The largest room in the house is the dining room (41 feet x 22 feet). During the hunt and on other special occasions the room would seat over 100 people.

The cellar is roughly the length of the morning room, entrance hall and study, 60 feet. There is evidence here of an older house suggesting that the Georgian mansion was built on the foundations of Neuadd Lawdden. During the Powell time it was full of wine, spirits and beer all labelled in their compartments. In later years they grew mushrooms in the damp, dark rooms.

When the Powells went away or stayed at their London abode, it has been said that the servants held wild parties at Nanteos. The butler had the keys to the cellar, so the wine flowed! William Edward Powell got to hear of these parties and the key was confiscated.

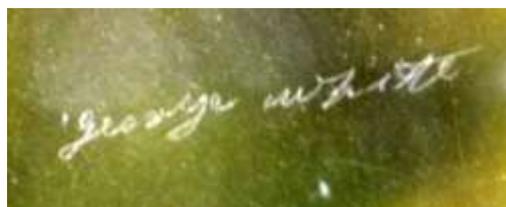
There was a peephole in the bathroom, on the first floor. The peephole was made in the inner door of the linen cupboard, which could be entered by another door in the corridor. Could the notorious Butler, George White, have made it? Employed at Nanteos during the mid 1800s, his time at Nanteos was certainly remembered. He is noted in the *Welsh Gazette* in 1905 for saying:

‘Nanteos ale both strong and stale,  
Keeps my nose from looking pale’

When leaving Nanteos, George White asked Mrs. Powell for a reference. She abruptly wrote:

‘George White only stayed one night’

Recently, three unopened bottles of Champagne from the cellar still wrapped in straw were found hidden in the attic of the water closet in the butler’s quarters. He enjoyed more than strong ale! Today, the memory of him still lingers at Nanteos. He etched his signature on a window in the butler’s quarters sitting room; he certainly left his mark.



## Christmas

At Christmas the entrance hall and main stairway were decorated with holly from the estate. The Christmas room was situated on the second floor, the furthest room from the stairway. The second floor was closed off during the cold winter to conserve heat, although entry was possible through a side room near the stairway. But it was opened up for Christmas and the Christmas room decorated with Christmas cards all over the walls. A Christmas tree was purchased and £1 was Calennig, the tradition of giving money to children in the New Year. Carol singers were giving four shillings and even beggars calling were given a few shillings.

In 1940 Margaret Powell received a telegram on Christmas Day:

*'Oh Missie Dear,  
I greatly fear  
Of cards I have none  
I wish to you  
And servants too  
Good luck and lots of fun ~  
Lew'*

Servants and labourers were treated with ale. In 1910 the bill for ale in December came to £63.8s.6d. December was a busy time of year for the servants and Christmas day was the busiest day of all, with the preparations for the Boxing Day hunt. A turkey was bought from Cefnllech farm. A couple of days before, a pig that was kept in the Dove Cot was killed. Half the pig was pickled for the following year; the rest of it was eaten during the festivities. Other meat came from Scotland and hamper arrived from Harrods, containing ham, silverside, tea and other treats. Other foods cooked for Boxing Day were game pie, rabbit pie, turkey, beef, ham, meringue and a large pot of rice boiled on the fender. With the return of the hunt on Boxing Day, well over a 100 people gathered at Nanteos, hungry after their day of hunting. Half sat in the dining room and the other half in the servant's hall.



Stables 1970s  
(Reproduced with kind permission of T. Bliss)

The stable yard, situated north of Nanteos, was built in Roman style architecture in 1837, possibly Cockerill. An ornamental cupola stands on top of the far roof. On the arched entrance there once stood a bronze horse and two stone eagles, which sadly flew many years ago.

The stable has a cobbled floor and holds up to 10 horses. There are eight large entrances for carriages. Two Victorias, a Phaeton, a Brougham, a Station -wagon, and in later years a Model T Ford with the number plate EJ 1071, were all housed there. The smaller doorways lead to the stable blocks and saddle room. Above the carriage compartments were the living quarters for some of the staff.

During the 1800 and 1900s the large estate had many working hands; and domestic life at Nanteos was hectic. In the 1920s 10 members of staff worked outside; 3 in the stables, 2-3 in the walled garden, 3 in the sawmill and there was also a carpenter. Servants' quarters were on the third floor, which was demolished in the 1950s to make way for a new lead roof.

The day began very early for the stable staff. They would regularly spend a week scrubbing the cobbled stable yard with boiling water until it was spotless. During the hunting season work would begin at 4am. preparing the horses for the hunt. The hunt lasted most of the day; going as far afield as Bow Street and Trawscoed, then back to Nanteos for food prepared by the kitchen staff.

For the kitchen staff, the day began at 6am with the preparation of breakfast for the outdoor staff at 7am. They were called in by a bell, which once stood in a tower by the courtyard. Sadly, the tower is long gone, as is the game larder that stood 15 feet high in the courtyard until it was demolished in 1971 for safety reasons.



Servants at Nanteos (1904)  
Henry Joel (Middle back row)  
Mary "Oit" Davies (front row on right)

#### **Wages at Nanteos in the early 19th century**

Valet £50 per annum  
Butler £40 per annum  
Cook £30 per annum  
Groom £20 per annum  
Housemaid £16 per annum  
Kitchen maid £16 per annum  
Stable boy £11 per annum



Maggie Williams on the roof of Nanteos

Numerous members of staff passed through Nanteos throughout the centuries. Maggie Williams the maid began working at Nanteos in the early 1920s, at the age of 14 and stayed until the late 1950s when the Powell line came to an end. Her mother Mary 'Oit' Davies worked there before her. They lived above the stables. Oit worked outside feeding and preparing the hoses. Maggie worked for Mrs. Powell in the house doing all chores, including repairing holes in the leaking roof.

Towards the end of the 1930s Maggie was the only member of staff in the house and would clean from top to bottom. During the summer months extra staff were employed for the annual spring clean.

The 2.185 acres walled garden, surrounded by red brick and stonewall, with its four greenhouses and a glorious vinery (built 1893) once flourished with colour. Gravel paths flowed around the beds, and originally the garden had seven entrances leading in from all corners of the estate.

An underground boiler heated all the greenhouses, which grew peaches, figs, artichokes and asparagus, as well as all the usual vegetables and fruit. Everything was used in the house. When work had finished for the day the key was kept in the yew tree, at the entrance nearest the house.

In the early 1930s, after the death of Edward Powell, the garden began to deteriorate. Then, by chance Reg Newman from New Castle Emlyn, came to hear of the garden being put out to let. He moved into the Woodlands (Home Farm) and transformed it back into its former glory.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, with the help of the Land Army Girls, two front fields of Nanteos were turned into crop fields of cabbage, Cauliflower, Brussel sprouts, lettuces and potatoes. One year during the war, the whole country suffered with a plague of caterpillars destroying all crops. Mr. Newman came up with a solution, sheep-dip, which cleared all the caterpillars. He sold onions under the clock tower at Aberystwyth and made one hundred pounds in one day. He also sold to many other needy places as far as Birmingham.

Nuns stayed at Nanteos, during the Second World War. They were evacuated from St. Margaret's Bay in Kent, in 1941 and lived on the second floor. The room in the centre was used as their chapel. A Canon accompanying them slept on the first floor. They made medicine from various plants that grew around the lake and near the Buildings Home Farm.

During this time, Reg Newman had moved from the Woodlands and was living at the Lodge, west of Nanteos. He would travel to work on his bicycle and the Canon would scare him half to death by jumping out of the woods in his white robe. The canon also accidentally set fire to the chimney in his bedroom while staying at Nanteos.

Today the walled garden is being renovated. The apple trees have gone and the greenhouses and vinery are in ruins. Only three entrances remain, one of which has been enlarged for modern day tractors. After the death of Margaret Powell, Reg Newman left Nanteos and became a very successful grocer in Aberystwyth. There is still a family business running today.

Past the east wall of the walled garden is the shrubbery. It was once paved with gravel and full of beautiful plants. There was also an aviary. It is almost deserted now except for a lonely pets' grave yard, dating back as far as 1865\*

One of the head stones in the grave yard, adapting part of the 'To be, or not to be' speech from the Third Act of *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, reads:

*"Traveller*

*A favourite retriever*

*That undiscovered Country from whose borne*

*No traveller returns."*



Pets' Grave yard

During the 1930s and 40s a white Malaccan Cockatoo terrorised the staff of Nanteos, especially if they were wearing Wellington boots! He was named Stewart lived in and around the courtyard, and would lie in wait for an innocent by passers and then pounce on his victim. He originally came from the Buildings (Nanteos Home Farm). His favourite food was scrambled egg, but flew in rage when given porridge. He is buried in the pet's graveyard.

Horses were a very important issue at Nanteos. Many horses are buried in the wood, but having said that, several horses were slaughtered and fed to the hounds.

*\*Stones in the Pets Grave yard: Traveller 1865, Grandeur 1929, Rags, Hermit, Old Curate, Roman, Vagrant, Gin, Pet of Pets, Mayfly, Prince, Bellman, Poor Jack the coon and Jenny his wife, Playmate, Penelope, Jack, Pilgrim, Nelson, Sponge, Restless, Rufus, Trim, My White Muff, Fan (stone missing), Freckles (stone missing) Mooney 1925 (wooden plaque with poem, missing), Lady (unmarked).*

The hounds, namely the 'Nanteos Harriers' were housed across the Paith valley south of Nanteos. The kennel's original size and shape is not known, but was of architectural design, and now stands in ruin. The hounds had to be moved because the dampness of the marshy ground caused ill health. The moved to a smaller domain east of Nanteos with improved access, plus a cottage for the handler. In 1865, 80 hounds made up the 'Nanteos Harriers'. Most of the name began with P (for Powell).

The old kennel ruin was once used for target practice. A large wooden plank with a bell in the centre was nailed to the ruin. Everyone, including the servants, would gather outside the front door of Nanteos, using pistols, would aim at the target. If they shot a bull's eye, the bell would ring and the lucky contestant would have a tot of whisky. Margaret Powell, not being a good shot, used a small cannon.

Coming up the drive from Penparcau, surrounded by lush trees, there is a large lake with an ornamental island in the centre. Two dilapidated boathouses stand at the far end. During the Powell period the lake was kept in pristine condition with regular maintenance. Two boats rowed around the lake in tandem with a sharp blade between them to cut all the lilies, plants and weeds.

Across the drive from the lake is a bridle path that begins at the Lodge and ends up at the mansion. There are many other paths through the woods but this is the most glorious. Myrtle bushes grow along the front wall of the mansion. Sprigs were taken from the bouquet of every Powell bride at Nanteos and were planted near the windows of the mansion.

On the front lawn of Nanteos, below the large two beech trees lay the tennis court surrounded by a high fence. An Ayres Patent Championship tennis post held the tennis nets. Maggie Williams' brother was the all-important boy-ball every August when the Burman family from Birmingham rented Nanteos for their annual holiday during the 1930s. They would travel to Nanteos in a bus together with over 20 guests. One year the Lord Mayor of Birmingham (an uncle of the Burmans) travelled over in his Rolls Royce. One of the maids that came with them to Nanteos fell in love with and married the carpenter, Vernon Rowantree. They lived at Nanteos, and then later moved to Piccadilly Terrace, Penparcau.

### Cwpan Nanteos

The Cup, said to be The Holy Grail used by Jesus Christ in the last supper, came to Nanteos with seven monks from Strata Florida Cardiganshire, on the dissolution of the Abbey in the region of Henry VIII. The Powell family was left in possession of the sacred vessel after the last of the seven monks died.

The Cup stayed at Nanteos throughout the centuries, and attached by a belief in its healing powers, people from all over travelled to Nanteos to drink from this sacred cup.

During Margaret Powell's time there was a routine to the Cup lending, which was as follows:

The Cup was kept in the library, locked in a cupboard. The caller would be sent into the Morning room to be greeted by Margaret Powell. Maggie would be in the Library placing the Cup on the display table between the two windows. She would fill it up with water, and then Mrs. Powell would enter the room. The visitor drank from the Cup. The Mrs. Powell took them into the Dining room and slammed the door loudly so Maggie could hear. Maggie would then take the Cup and replace it with a replica in case anyone tried to steal it. This was done every time.



The Holy Grail (Cwpan Nanteos)

The Cup is made of olive wood or wych elm and originally measured approximately 12cm by 12cm. However, severe usage over the centuries the old artifact has wrought great damage: much of the Cup has been nibbled off by the sick in their hope of a miracle cure.

The Cup now measures only 10cm by 8.5cm, is held together by wire staples and fits comfortably in the palm of the hand.

Today the Cup is no longer at Nanteos but it is in safe keeping, not too far away.

Here are a few examples of the Cup lending, taken from old receipts:

27th November 1857

Cup loaned this day to Wm Rowland Ystrad Tregaron for his sister .....wholly cured left one pound returned 2nd January.

May 1858

Cup lent this day to Evan Evans Pantyfynnon for his wife ..... left a watch.

26th July 1860

Cup lent this day to James Morgan ..... Left a sovereign.

20th January 1860

The Cup lent this day to Rich Jones Labourer, Llangonsen for the use of his wife ..... Left a watch, bleeding stopped. Returned 7th March 1860

3rd August 1862

The Cup lent to Wm Jones Llanbadarn ..... left silver watch. Returned 4th September 1862. Case cured.

## GHOSTS

### The Lady in Grey

I visited Nanteos one day  
And I went to the lounge to wrong way.  
As I turned back ,A voice said "Hello Jack",  
And there stood the Lady in Grey.

She said "Don't be scared Come with me,  
Sit down on the velvet settee."  
Before I came out I had a bottle of stout,  
A chat and a nice cup of tea.

But the lady so charming and gay  
So suddenly vanished away: I shall never forget  
That beautiful Lady in Grey.

Jack Oliver

(This poem is reproduced with the kind permission of the family of The late Jack Oliver)

Nanteos with its long dark corridors and large imposing room does attract the mind to think of ghostly thoughts, and Nanteos does not fail, in that respect.

Firstly, we will discuss the ghosts that haunt the grounds of Nanteos, we begin in the woods. On a still peaceful night, Gruffydd Evans can be heard playing his beloved harp deep in the Nanteos wood. Every Christmas the highlight at Nanteos was Gruffydd Evans's playing beautiful harp. Every year for 69 Christmases he played in the Music/Salon Room (he was known as the Official Harper to the Powell Family). He was a relative of the Powell family and lived to a grand age of 92 and is buried at Llanbadarn Fawr Church, near Aberystwyth.

The Stable yard at Nanteos has been a hive of activity for centuries and horses and voices have been heard in the stable yard. On two consecutive nights at about 4.00am, voices were heard in the yard, but as soon as the listener looked, the noise

abruptly stopped. A baby has also been heard crying in the Stables Apartment on a number of occasions. Also horses have reacted nervously to something the horse handler couldn't see.

Another ghost that can be named is that of William Griffiths the Groom, who was killed by Rice Walters the Head Gardener by a garden rake on 12 October 1782, occasionally he can be seen standing in the shrubbery, as if waiting for someone.

On another occasion a horse and carriage was heard in the Court Yard at the back of the mansion. Then heavy footsteps were heard entering through the back door, and walking towards the kitchen, dragging what sounded like heavy chains.

We will now venture in the mansion where many apparitions have been witnessed.

There are numerous ghost stories associated with Nanteos. The most well known haunting is Elizabeth Owen (The Grey Lady), wife of Reverend William Powell, who lived at Nanteos during the mid-1700s. Her husband dearly loved her and showered her with jewels. She could not bear to be parted from her treasured jewelry and dreaded to think what would happen to them after her death. Knowing that she was dying, she rose from her deathbed and hid her jewels. Later that night she died, and now it is said that her ghost haunts the corridors of Nanteos searching for them, her ghost, shrouded in a long flowing gown, still wanders like a lost soul searching for her hidden jewels. BE WARNED - she will haunt anyone that dares to find her treasure.

In the 1800s a young nursery maid, Mary, who had been working at Nanteos for 6 months had to sleep in the Pink Dressing Room as the mistress of the house was sick in the next room. One night Mary was suddenly awakened by a figure leaning over her bed. Startled by what she saw she screamed. The figure then stood upright and walked straight through the closed door. Mary never slept in that room again.

This is very similar to the story of two American ladies staying at Nanteos in the 1920s. One stayed in the Pink Room and the other stayed in the Damask Room. After going upstairs to dress for dinner there was a commotion. The lady in the Pink Room ran out and crossed the corridor carrying her belongings to her friend's room shouting "I'm not gonna stay in THAT room". However, she never revealed why.

A young girl read to Margaret Powell every night at her bedside in the Macaw Room until very late. Edward Powell warned the girl to leave at 11:30pm, never to stay until midnight. One night she did read over the specified time, realizing this she ran downstairs, on the stairs to her disbelief she saw a ghostly figure, she screamed and fell in a faint down the stairs, hitting her head on the grandfather clock at the bottom. Edward Powell who was sleeping in Col. Powell's bedroom rushed to her side on hearing her screams. After checking she was all right, he told her never to speak of this ghost that she had seen. She was confined to her bed for three weeks after her fall. She never spoke of the incident until many years later.

Parties were (and still are) held at Nanteos. One evening the house was full of

guests, an army officer present went to dress for dinner. Ascending the stairs to his room, he met a striking woman in evening dress, holding a strange looking candlestick. Thinking she was one of the guests, he bowed and bade her good evening. The lady did not answer but carried on down the stairs as if she had not seen him. He thought it strange but continued up to his room.

On returning to the party, he gazed around looking for the lady. Eventually he asked if anyone has seen this woman. Immediately, he was taken to one side and told never to speak of the lady with the candlestick or there would be a death in the family. THAT NIGHT A POWELL DIED. A couple of weeks later the very same strange candlestick was found in a dusty disused -top shelf corner of the Silver Vault room, in the Butler's Pantry.

A tilting chair has recently been seen by numerous people, in one of the bedrooms, when approached the chair will either fall back on its four legs or topple over.

The most eerie sighting at Nanteos was a sighting seen from the front door, and was that of what was thought to be smoke in the inner hall. The witness stared in disbelief as the smoke transformed in a figure of a woman dressed in a long flowing dress. She began coming towards the front door through the Entrance Hall, terrifying the onlooker so much that he ran to Aberystwyth, not daring to look back.

There are noises in most old houses, whether it is just a door slamming or the wind howling. A lot of rumblings have been heard since the hotel has opened; noises, which sound like moving furniture being dragged on the floor, all these noises are heard through the house on all floors and are still unexplained.

Recently, a gathering of people has been heard, the sound of the voices was carried up to the first floor. Thinking they were visitors in the entrance hall, the witness, half-asleep thought no more, until morning when someone else had heard the very same voices, and stated that the time was 3:45am and that no one was visiting the house at the time of morning?

A young girl aged about 7 - 8 years has been seen running through the kitchen, and "Hello Cook" was heard, chef gave chase and she disappeared, when he asked the whereabouts of the girl, to the kitchen staff no one else had seen her. Two other members of staff have seen a shadow of a small child in the kitchen area at different times. Who this ghostly child is remains a mystery.

One night the Night Porter was seated in the Entrance Hall and could hear marbles or pebbles being rolled in the Inner Hall on the stone slab floor and then continued to roll onto the wooden floor going into the Library, as this rolling continued, he checked to CCTV cameras and saw nothing so he walked into the Inner Hall from the kitchen door, hoping he'd catch someone rolling them into the Inner hall but saw no one, he turned on the lights and there was no evidence of marbles or pebbles on the floor.

Sometime during the mid-1970s, a lighted candle had been left in the entrance hall

window, next morning it was found in an upstairs bedroom with the flame blown out. How is got there no one knows.

A Newspaper reporting of ghostly going on at Nanteos is an incident in the early 1980s when a television company was making a production for a Welsh film company S4C. It was reported in the Western Mail that a two-day filming schedule was disrupted by 'strange experiences' - doors opening and closing, on their own accord. A broken musical box suddenly started playing, movement of a heavy four poster bed and it is believed that a cloaked figure disrupted a video unit sent to shoot several TV scenes here to such an extent, the crew refused to work after dark. Sian Phillips one of the actresses involved said that she would not doubt the supernatural again.

During the early 1990s, the mansion was empty but was managed by a caretaker. Permission was granted for the Fire Brigade and Police Force to train in the empty house at regular intervals. The Police would train their dogs, to retrieve hidden substances throughout the house including the cellar, hardened police dogs trained to deal with all sorts of dilemmas, were nervously cowering and whimpering at the top of the cellar door and refusing to enter.

Nanteos is now a grand hotel, and there has been many unexplained happens going on, hopefully the spirits of Nanteos, will not frighten too many guests away, and they are only there to make sure that all is well at Nanteos.

In the mid 1980s Nanteos was left empty and neglected for years, boarded up and decaying.

### **POSTSCRIPT**

Today, Nanteos is owned by Shane and Carolyn Liscombe and, after much restoration in keeping with its historical origins, is being run as a luxury hotel and restaurant. Its setting and grandeur have also attracted the film world as an ideal location venue, and many a happy wedding reception has taken place here. It also has a conference room and is available for varied events.

Once again this grand old mansion is full of life.

### **APPENDIX**

#### Fact and Figures

1644 - The Cardiganshire Militia was raised by Cononel John Jones of Nanteos

1675 - Ty Mawr in Pier Street Aberystwyth, which was owned by the pryses of Gogerddan, was let to Thomas Powell of Llechwedd Dyrys.

1687 - Thomas Powell was knighted (Knighthood fees £86.11s.6d.).

1739 - A foundation stone was laid on the right hand side of Nanteos: 'This stone

was laid 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1739 by direction of Thomas Powell and Mary his wife".

1745 - Thomas Powell inherited the whole Strata Florida Estate after the death of his brother in law, Richard Stedman. By the end of 1745, Anne Stedman had remarried to Herbert Lloyd of Peterwell.

1748 - Thomas Powell gave £50 to help with restoration of Cardigan Church.

1753 - Herbert Lloyd of Peterwell and William Powell of Nanteos, both magistrates, led an armed mob of several hundred people to Esgair Mwyn mines, held a pistol to Lewis Morris' head and invited him to transfer possession of the mine. Shaking with fear, Morris submitted and was incarcerated in Cardigan Goal for six weeks.

1762 - Strata Florida was sold from the Nanteos Estate.

1770 - The Tollgate Houe in Penparcau was built. It now stands in St. Fagans, Museum of Wales, Cardiff.

1788 - The College Theatre, Aberystwyth was under patronage of the Powells of Nanteos.

1788 - 5<sup>th</sup> February, Jenkin Joel was paid £4.3s.2d. for some masonry work done in the kitchen at Nanteos.

1800 - The Nanteos Estate totalled 31,000 acres.

1807 - William Edward Powell graduated from Christchurch, Oxford.

1812 William Edward was stationed in Ireland with his regiment.

1815 - 4<sup>th</sup> August, William Thomas Rowland was born in Swansea.

1819- 19<sup>th</sup> August, William Thomas Rowland and Cornelius Powell were christened at Llanbadarn Fawr Church.

1821 - The eastern part of the Cwmystwyth mines were leased by the Nanteos Estate.

1830 - The Nanteos Estate totalled 21,900 acres.

1834 - William Thomas Rowland Powell was in Jamaica with his regiment.

1837 - The bill for ale given to the Nanteos labourers on the Coronation of Queen Victoria came to £4.16s.0d.

1839 - William Thomas Rowland Powell returned from his regiment with the rank of Captain to marry Rosa Edwynna Cherry.

1840 - Richard Owen Powell became Mayor of Aberystwyth.

1840 - There was a fire in the servants' hall at Nanteos.

1843 - Lovesgrove was sold from the Nanteos Estate for £7.500 to John Evans.

1847 - The portico and new wing were completed.

1859 - The present Lodge at Nanteos was built.

1859 - William Edward Powell retired from Parliament two months before his death.

1861 - 30<sup>th</sup> March, Margaret Evans and others were paid £1.5s.0d for spreading dung over the lawn for 30 days.

1861 - 2<sup>nd</sup> July, Robert Williams was paid £0.14s.8d. for catching 92 moles in the lawn and about the shrubbery.

1863 - George Powell went to Iceland for six months.

1864 - Trees from the Nanteos woodlands were planted in North Parade, Aberystwyth.

1865 - 10<sup>th</sup> February, 6 shillings were paid for nuts for squirrels.

1865 - William Thomas Rowland Powell retired from Parliament due to ill health.

1866 - October, Swinburne visited Aberystwyth with George Powell and stayed in

the Queen's Hotel. He was banned from staying at Nanteos by George's father.

1866 – William Thomas Rowland Powell went touring in Nice.

1871 – William Thomas Rowland Powell built Capel Seion School. The architect was Mr. Thomas from Liverpool.

1872 – Nanteos Estate totalled 21.993 acres.

1876 – 11<sup>th</sup> September, George Powell was invited to dinner at Wagner's house.

1881 – 3<sup>rd</sup> February, Nanteos surrounded by snow. There was an accumulation of 15 feet at Devil's Bridge.

1891 – The Nanteos Estate owned parts of Aberystwyth and the surrounding countryside – a total of 369 acres.

1901 – 16<sup>th</sup> December, Mrs. Powell paid £1.2s.6d for a Christmas tree.

1905 – 5<sup>th</sup> July, Henry Joel purchased firewood from the Nanteos Estate for £.2s.6d., to warm the house for the birth of his grandson David.

1909 – 28<sup>th</sup> July, gipsies were paid £0.3s.1d. for the purchase of a donkey.

1919-20 – Electric lights was installed at Nanteos. The generator room had 100 volts with cells of 50.

1930 – 15<sup>th</sup> January, The National Library of Wales borrowed the Holy Grail. The Cup was carefully wrapped in a rug and placed in the safe hands of Maggie Williams, the housekeeper. David Walters, the groom, used the quietest pony to pull the cart to take Maggie to Hen Cwrt, the home of the Librarian, Sir John Ballinger, who would be responsible for the Cup while it was away from Nanteos.

1939 – 1<sup>st</sup> December, the re-anactment of the Llanbadarn Fawr Court Leet was held at Nanteos.

1945 – Men were hired to clear the trees at Nanteos that were damaged in a storm.

1950 – The Nanteos Estate totalled 4,000 acres.

1957 – 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> October, an auction was held at Nanteos. Many furnishings and household items were sold.

1958 – October, the Nanteos Estate was given a grant of £10.400 for a new roof.

1967 – The Nanteos Estate totalled 2,600 acres, and purchased by Rose & Geoff Bliss.

1989 – September Nanteos mansion and 26 acres were sold to Gary Hesp.

1995 – 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 'Powells' restaurant was opened at Nanteos Mansion.

2004 – Purchased by Shane & Carol Liscombe with 30 acres

2012 – Grand opening of Plas Nanteos Hotel

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### **Occupants of Nanteos**

Col Jones 1600s  
Powell 1699 - 1951 (252 years)  
Mirylees 1956 - 1967 (11 years)  
Bliss 1967 - 1983 (16 years)  
Colgate 1983 - 1988 (5 years)  
Rayner 1989 (6 months)  
Gary Hesp 1989 - 2000 (11 years)  
Tim Gwyn Jones 2000 - 2004 (4 years)  
Liscombe 2004 - Present.

### **Bedrooms**

Colonel Powell / Col Powell Bedroom  
Dyfi / Macaw Room  
Dylan Thomas / The Den  
Edda / Estate Office  
Elan / Generator Room  
Formosa / Cook's bedroom  
George Powell / Laundry Room  
Hafod / Bakery  
Japan / Linen/China Store Room  
The Lord Byron / Damask Room  
The Nightingale / The Pink Room  
Ynyslas / The Boudoir  
Ystwyth/ Lord Ystwyth's Blue Room  
Wagner / Chauffeur's Bedroom

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