

= Newton House , Llandeilo =

Newton House is a Grade II \* listed country house situated just to the west of the market town of Llandeilo in Carmarthenshire , Wales . It is owned and maintained by the National Trust and lies within Dinefwr Park ( sometimes anglicised as " Dynevor " ) and the grounds of Dinefwr Castle . The original house was built during the Medieval period on a site which has been occupied for at least two millennia . The current house was built by Edward Rice in the Jacobean style in 1660 , though extensive changes were made in the 1850s in the Venetian Gothic style . The house played a role in the Rebecca Riots of 1843 , when the occupant of the house at the time , Colonel George Rice , received a death threat with an empty grave dug in the ground . After 1956 the property fell into turbulent times when two owners died within the space of a few years . It was sold in 1974 , and later fell into disrepair ; it was occupied by squatters and thieves who removed beams and furniture .

The house , along with Dinefwr Castle , have since been restored by the National Trust and Cadw respectively . It is a three @-@ storey castellated structure , built from grey stone , with four tall towers in each corner , with sloping slate roofs . The front features a grand central porch . Two rooms are open to the public , including a tearoom and exhibition in the basement and ground floor which contain numerous displays related to the history of the estate and occupants . The deer park which surrounds the property was landscaped by Capability Brown in 1775 . The surrounding woodland consists mainly of oak and wych elm . Newton House is cited as one of the most haunted houses in Wales , noted in particular for its ghost of Walter the Butler , a former employee whose tobacco smoke purportedly wafts through the air .

= = History = =

Dinefwr Park has a history of occupation spanning at least two millennia . A polished stone axe dated to the Neolithic period was unearthed on the site in 1976 , and during the Iron Age , a farm existed on the property . The Romans later built a pair of forts here , with one partly overlying the other . There are traces of Roman roads and tracks , some of which may have been part of the Carmarthen @-@ Llandovery Roman road . A Roman milestone and a coin hoard were unearthed near Dinefwr Castle , and pieces of amphorae and Samian items have been excavated near Dinefwr Farm .

During the 12th century , Dinefwr Castle was built by Lord Rhys . The castle and grounds were seized by Henry VIII in 1531 , and the estate owners , who changed their family surname to Rice , subsequently had to buy back their property from the Crown . The family were elevated to the peerage of Great Britain as Baron Dynevor . Mary I is documented to have restored some of the land back to the Rhys family , but it was not until the reign of Charles I that the family fully regained their properties .

Newton House was originally built during the medieval period at some distance from the castle . It is documented to have been later modified in 1595 and 1603 . The current Newton House was completed in 1660 under the command of Edward Rice . In the late 1700s , George Rice and his wife Cecil began the construction of a landscape garden , and hired eminent architect Capability Brown in 1775 to assume responsibility for the development . Turrets and battlements were added between 1760 and 1780 , giving the property a more romanticised appearance . During the Rebecca Riots of 1843 , Colonel George Rice was awoken one night in September and found an empty grave dug in the grounds , warning him that he would be buried in it by October 10 .

Newton House fell into a turbulent period after the death of the 7th Baron Dynevor in 1956 . His son Charles Arthur Uryan , the 8th Baron , died just six years later , and most of the estate and a number of family 's assets had to be sold off to pay duties . In 1974 , the property was sold by the current Baron Dynevor , and later fell into disrepair : it was occupied by squatters and thieves who removed beams and furniture . The house , along with Dinefwr Castle , have since been restored by Cadw and the National Trust respectively . The National Trust acquired the deer park in 1987 and Newton House three years later .

## = = Architecture = =

Edward Rice ordered the construction of a Jacobean house on the site of an earlier medieval mansion in 1659 , and it was completed the following year . Turrets and battlements were added between 1760 and 1780 . Though the property remains Jacobean , around 1856 , there were significant changes made in the Venetian Gothic style , which today emanate the ambiance of the Victorian period . The tower was added , and alterations were made by R.K. Penson of Oswestry . The National Trust writes of it : " Most of what you see of the grand building today dates back to the 1850s , when it was given a fashionable Gothic facelift , with stone cladding and four impressive turrets " . A limestone refacing occurred at the same time . Newton House is a Grade II \* listed property , as are its summer house and the inner and outer courtyard ranges . The nearby dairy cottage , ha @-@ ha , dovecote , fountain , deer abattoir , icehouse , home farmhouse , corn barn and byre / stable range are Grade II listed in their own right .

Newton House is a three @-@ storey castellated structure , built from grey stone , with four tall towers in each corner , with sloping slate roofs . The front features a grand central porch . The authors of Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion consider the heavily decorated late 17th @-@ century ceilings of the house to be " the finest single architectural legacy among the country houses of the region " . As in Plas Taliaris and several other country houses in the county , the ceilings are panelled , with " thick moulded beams and wreaths in the panels and winged cherubs ' heads in the corners " . The entrance hall contains a columned Doric screen with a 19th @-@ century ribbed and bossed ceiling . The old dining room to the right of this features a coffered ceiling dated to the 17th century , containing " low plaster relief mouldings including guilloché , acanthus and egg and dart " . The chimney piece has been removed . The drawing room to rear of the property also features a richly adorned coffered ceiling with " frieze bearing rosette bands " and a " centre oval with bay leaf design " . The 17th @-@ century staircase features thick balusters and prominent finials , with foliage patterns ingrained in the plasterwork of the handrail . A billiard room was added to the house in 1896 . A strongroom with 18 @-@ inch @-@ thick ( 46 cm ) walls and heavy steel fire @-@ proof doors was added in 1914 , for the Dynevors to keep their important documents and valuables . On the upper floors are rooms with 18th @-@ century fittings , including " panelled dados , lugged architraves , low relief plaster ceilings and closets within angled turrets " . The bedroom on the northeast of the house features a particularly detailed coffered ceiling with floral patterns .

The house contains several paintings of note , including William Powell Frith 's Mary , Queen of Scots Bidding Farewell to France ( 1561 ) and Godfrey Kneller 's portrait of the Bishop of Salisbury , William Talbot , dated to 1718 . Two showrooms at the house are open to the public . Aside from the tearoom , the exhibition in the basement and ground floor contains numerous displays related to the Rhys family , the history of the estate and World War II , and is designed as if the year is 1912 .

## = = Park and garden = =

The house is surrounded by a deer park which was landscaped by Capability Brown from 1775 . He established a winding path , known as Capability Brown path , through the park and planted deciduous trees in key places to frame the house and castle . The deer park contains notable herds of rare White Park cattle and fallow deer . A small garden behind the house , overlooking the deer park , Moorish in style with a central fountain , has been restored to its former glory . Brown 's beech clumps survive in the present day .

Writing in 1862 , Benjamin Clarje considered the park to exhibit " perhaps a richer display of varied landscape than any spot of similar size in the kingdom " . He notes that the surface in the upper area of the park is " diversified by gentle undulations and has been planted with great judgment and taste " and that the River Towy flows in the vicinity . The Wildlife Trust West Wales acquired the nearby woodland in 1979 . The BBC 's Peter Crawford wrote of it in his book , The Living Isles : " The woodland is primarily oak and wych elm , " he writes . " The shrubs and ground cover are outstanding with cherry , holly , spindle , dog violet and the parasitic toothwort . Lichen communities

are of importance and include the rare lungwort . Overlooked by the romantic Castle of Dinefwr the fine old parkland has a herd of fallow deer . The mature trees attract woodpecker , redstarts and pied flycatchers . In winter , the water meadows draw large numbers of ducks " .

= = Haunting = =

The National Trust states that Newton House is " thought to be one of the most haunted houses in Britain " , and Wales Online cites it as one of the most notable ghostly houses of Wales . Over the years , many ghost sightings or paranormal activity have been allegedly witnessed at the house . The servants ' basement is one of the purported centres of activity , with numerous sightings , particularly of a ghost known as Walter the Butler who worked at the house . People have reported smelling his tobacco smoke in the room , muffled voices and lights eerily turning on and off on their own accord . Visitors have reported feeling as if they are being choked when walking up and down the cantilever staircase ; this is believed to be related to the strangling of Lady Elinor Cavendish , the cousin of the lady of Newton House in the 1720s , by a lover whom she had rejected . The alleged hauntings at the property began to be investigated by television journalists in the 1980s , and on one occasion crewmen mysteriously fell ill one after the other while shooting there . During one investigation , the spectre of a young , beautiful girl was said to have glided across the room and disappeared through the cupboard door . The house was later the subject of an investigation in the 11th and 15th series of the Most Haunted programme .