

Great Porthamel, Talgarth, Brecon Beacons

Teasdale
Environmental Design

Client: G P Services Ltd
Solicitor: Burges Salmon, Bristol
Project date: 2009

The manor house of Great Porthamel was founded in the late 15th century by Sir William Vaughan, the first sheriff of Breconshire. It was built in the rich agricultural lowland of the Wye valley and was unusual in being protected by a fortified precinct with a tower gatehouse. In the 16th century, the manor was surrounded by a deer park which can be seen on several maps of the early 17th century.



View of the Great Porthamel gatehouse and former manor house

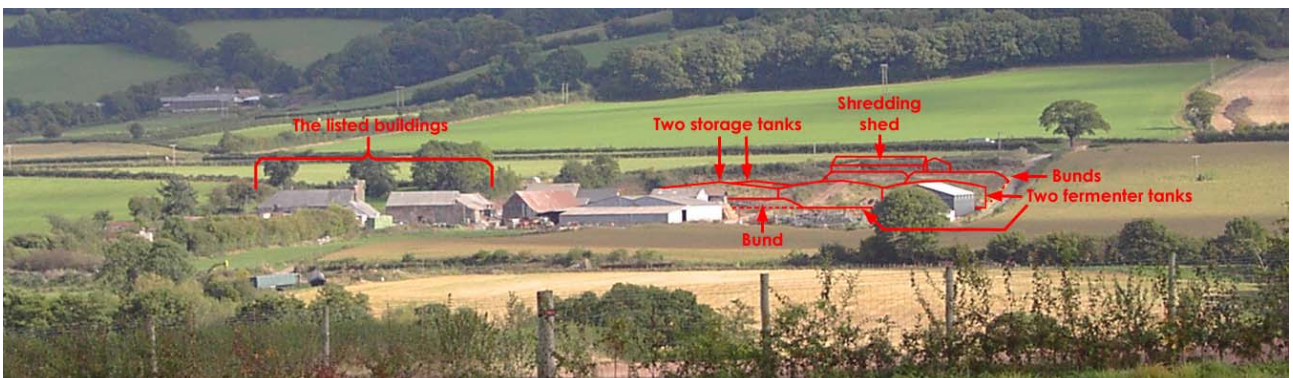
Today, the precinct walls have gone but the tower remains. The medieval hall house is also intact, although altered externally. The house, the tower and a nearby 18th century stone barn are all listed buildings. The tower is also a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Great Porthamel is working farm. In addition to arable farming, the business also accepts and composts slurry waste from other farms. In 2009, in response to EC waste management initiatives, the farm applied for planning consent to install an anaerobic digester complex close to the existing farm buildings. This gave rise to concerns about the potential impact of the new installation on the setting of the three listed buildings and consent was refused.



Detail of map by John Blaeu dated 1645 showing a park around Great Porthamel

Teasdale Environmental Design was commissioned to prepare an independent assessment of the impact on the historic buildings, to be submitted as supporting evidence to an Appeal. The study concluded that the immediate setting would not be affected but that there would be an adverse impact on the wider setting of the buildings. This had already been compromised by the existing modern farm structures, but the effect would be exacerbated by the additional mass of the proposed digester complex. However, a bold, well-designed planting scheme would not only mitigate the effects of the new development but would enhance the whole complex of modern farm structures.



View of Great Porthamel with superimposed outlines of the main structures and bunds of the proposed digester complex