

Woodland @ Nevill Hall

Nevill Hall Nature Spaces

Jan 2026



Overview

A Memorial Woodland was planted as part of the Millennium Project in 2000, comprising 600 native trees. But now the woodland is in need of pro-active management to thin the 'nurse' trees and create a biodiverse understorey. There is potential for creating glades to add to bio-diverse eco-systems as well as providing a more visitor and user-friendly, accessible nature space. There are some benches and existing paths but both are in need of care and attention.

History

Much of the woodland surrounding Nevill Hall was planted with the original development of the estate in the 19th century and many trees date back to that time, some maybe earlier. There have inevitably been changes with the building of the District General Hospital in the '60s. Most recently with the Radiotherapy Unit development some ancient trees were taken down for the new building, but importantly two major trees in that area retained – a Giant Redwood and Scots Pine.



Nature has also taken its course with several losses, notably the enforced removal of a major cedar in front of the Hall in the winter of 1996 when branches, laden with snow fell, squashing several cars but no occupants. A new cedar was planted nearby.



In 2021 a specimen Black Poplar was brought down by Storm Henry into the pond behind the Hall.

Many of those original trees around the area are really impressive, including giant redwoods, massive oaks, ashes, pines, chestnuts and many more. Some are now of an age pending change, but with good management could well be retained for a very long time.

New trees have also been planted in several places, often to commemorate significant people or events. As part of the Millennium Project (1998-2001) a new wood was created at the eastern end of the hospital site, on a slope which was originally part of a pasture that served the Home Farm, behind the Hall. That farmhouse and buildings were demolished with the DGH construction in the '60s, and that land had gone to scrub.



A major success of the project was to clear the site and plant 600 new trees, all native species. The funding for the Millennium Project came from a dedicated charity, the Branching Out Appeal, and work was largely provided by volunteers, mainly from Rotary



and Young Farmers, supervised by Monmouthshire Forestry dept, and the hospital gardeners that were then employed.

The new trees were planted by school children from eight primary schools: Llanfair Kilgeddin, Clydach, Llanvihangel Crucorney, Ysgol Gymraeg-y-Venn, Garnsach, Park Street and Waun-Lwyd.

Concurrent with tree planting new paths were created, through the woodland and around the pond

Many of the trees in the Millennium Wood are in memory of friends and relatives whose names were recorded on plaques in the site and a map at the main entrance of the hospital.

There are many other memorial plantings around the hospital, notably an Atlantic Cedar planted adjoining the Sensory garden for Gareth Jones, the chairman of the Nevill Hall and District Trust whose leadership initiated the Branching Out Appeal.



Active care of the Millennium Wood continued from the hospital gardening team for ten years but sadly ceased with diminishing health service resources. There is currently no contracted management for that wood, but some tree management has happened elsewhere on the site, largely dictated by safety.



Map in NHH Main entrance area.

True arboreal care, and creative redesign is now being planned. Along with a twenty-year long-term maintenance plan.

Opportunity and Potential

The trees of the hospital provide a wonderful, uplifting surround. Their presence in all the different locations of the site complements the outstanding views. Much research has now shown the real therapeutic benefits of seeing, walking among, and even touching of trees, especially of old established giants. Nevill Hall is privileged to have many, and they need recognising and treasuring for their therapeutic value for patients, visitors, staff and the local community... forever. Their role for Nature is vital!

The Memorial woodland has complemented the exiting treescape but, with pro-active management, much more could be achieved. For example, access, information and signage must be improved to enable many more people to benefit.

Future plans include:

- (1) Detailed Arboreal Assessment** A fuller identification and condition survey of existing trees is required. A preliminary visit with representatives of MCC and the Woodland Trust has been undertaken. More detailed assessment is planned.
- (2) Creative re-design** A landscape architecture is required to create an overall plan based on consultation with stakeholders. The themes should provide for both nature and people. In the woodland space some tree thinning is required to bring in more light with some glades being created.
- (3) Tree works** Major arboreal work will be required to ensure tree health, related to the re-design. New interplanting is needed to allow an understorey to grow.
- (4) Signage** Information boards should be provided to describe the natural site and benefits for health. Where appropriate damaged memorial plaques should be restored.
- (5) Seating** existing memorial benches need cleaning and some need to be renewed. New seating should be considered.
- (6) Access improvements**
 - a) The existing footpaths need improving with borders cleared to allow existing daffodil growth, with some replanting.
 - b) In the original Millennium plan there was to be a new footpath connecting the pond – woodland – orchard. Planning is required on the access paths linking with work on the pond and orchard.
 - c) Existing entry points need revision, particularly for disabled visitors.
 - d) New entries from the eastern border through to Castle Meadows industrial Parc and toward the Llanfoist bridge need consideration in the arboreal plan. Their construction will be part of an additional project.
 - e) Paths@ Nevill Hall document describes proposed path developments.
- (7) Ecological Enhancements** Bat Boxes, Bird Boxes and piles of brash should be added in appropriate locations.
- (8) Information** The woodland is unknown to many people. Even amongst staff few know of its existence. More publicity is required for patients, visitors, staff, the local community and the general public.

Funding for a Landscape architect to create a Green Infrastructure Management Plan to guide the work and other related capital funding is available through a Local Places for Nature bid.