BODYSGALLEN

Ref No	PGW (Gd) 7 (CON)
OS Map	116
Grid Ref	SH 798 793
Former County	Gwynedd
Unitary Authority	Conwy
Community Council	Eglwys-yn-Rhos

Designations Listed Buildings: Bodysgallen Hall, Grade I; Stable block, Grade II; Cottage & dovecote, Grade II; Walls & gateways N.W. & N.E. of courtyard, Grade II; Terrace wall to N.W. & N.E., Grade II; outbuilding, Grade II; N.W. & S.W. garden walls, Grade II; walls & terrace walls of water garden, Grade II; rose garden walls, Grade II; walls of Dutch garden, Grade II. Site of Special Scientific Interest: parts of woodland.

Site Evaluation Grade I

Primary reasons for grading Exceptional terraced and walled gardens on several levels, with early origins; long terrace walk giving superb view; large and basically unchanged rose and kitchen gardens partly dating to eighteenth century; remains of landscape park and large areas of oak woodland.

Type of Site Formal terraced gardens; walled rose and kitchen gardens; park with woods; woodland walk and terrace walk.

Main Phases of Construction <u>c</u>. 1620; eighteenth century; late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Bodysgallen, now a hotel, occupies an elevated site with good views on the east side of the Conwy estuary, near Llandudno. The house is built in a prominent position on top of a rocky hill, facing north-west towards Conwy, which is no doubt part of the reason that the early tower at the core of the house was at one time thought to have been a lookout for Conwy Castle. The main original part of the house dates from 1620, the tower probably earlier, perhaps the sixteenth century. There are many later alterations and additions, especially of the eighteenth, late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the house was comprehensively altered and enlarged after it was bought by Lady Augusta Mostyn as a wedding present for her second son. This work removed inappropriate eighteenth- and nineteenth-century detail and broadly followed the seventeenth-century style of the original building with its mullioned windows and leaded lights. The two-storey main front, on the north-west, is attractive, with a large off-centre main entrance door. The house is built of a uniform pinkish stone and the new work is carefully matched to the old. The quarry used lies in the park, to the north-west of the house.

The house belonged to the Mostyn family from at least the sixteenth century, passing to the Wynnes by marriage at the end of the century. It returned to the Mostyns, again by marriage, in 1776. It has never been the chief seat of either family and has generally been inhabited by a succession of younger sons, spinsters and widows, and has also been let at times. It was heavily mortgaged when Lady Augusta Mostyn redeemed it in 1881.

The stables, which lie just below the house on the west, are of similar stone to the house and have been converted to hotel use. Their date is uncertain; they may be contemporary with the early seventeenth-century house or date to the late eighteenth to mid nineteenth century.

The bailiff's house and two adjoining cottages form part of a square of buildings surrounding a yard to the east of the main house. The house is early to mid nineteenth-century, the two cottages adjoining undated, though all appear on the 1889 Ordnance Survey map and there are buildings on the same site on the 1846 tithe map. The cottages have been recently refurbished, however, and the centre cottage, linking the other two, was rebuilt in 1982. The bailiff's house has a dovecote attached at the back. All the buildings are of stone, with slate roofs.

The Garden Cottage is a small cottage close to the stables, west of the house. This also appears on all the early maps and is probably of the same date as the stables. It has been rebuilt within the last 15 years.

The mill cottage and former cowshed, both stone cottages adjoining the yard to the east, are not shown on the earliest maps but had appeared by 1889. The more northerly is a former sawmill, the other was the cowshed. Both have been refurbished.

Two greenhouses stand near the house, replacing earlier similar structures. They were re-erected here in 1982, having been moved from Gorddinog, Llanfairfechan. One is a lean-to type facing south-east. It contains vines, and there are two large frames in the yard in front of it. The other, also lean-to and facing south-west, has been added at right angles, adjoining the northern end of the other.

The building attached to the back of the bailiff's house is now thought to be a chapel, although it was previously described as a game larder. However, a small building to the south-west is now thought to have been the game larder. The former has a triangular window.

The outbuildings to the south and east of the house consist of continuous ranges round the yard and some outliers, and there are several small buildings in addition to those mentioned separately above, mostly stores and sheds and probably all nineteenthcentury in origin, although a few changes are evident on twentieth-century maps. The most interesting are the possible game larder mentioned above, an outlier at the west corner of the box parterre, and an underground building nearby, on the northwest of the water garden. This forms the north-west wall of this garden, with slit windows, and the terrace adjoining the house above continues over its roof. As the water garden terrace was constructed early in the twentieth century, it is probably of this date, but may be older.

The main areas of parkland which are important to the house and garden at present are to the south-east, where a small area of parkland is enclosed by a wall and surrounded by woods, and to the north and north-west, where the unfenced drive crosses pasture fields planted with groups of trees, mostly oaks. The former area is an integral part of the immediate grounds, the latter is not but was clearly intended to enhance the approach to the house, and some of the trees at least were probably planted when the drive was made, in perhaps the 1830s or 1840s. Fields stretching further to the north were probably once part of the park, retaining boundary and some 'dot' oak trees.

There is very little available information about the park, but it is likely to have been developed in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but having earlier origins. Fenton, in 1810, said that the house was ' embosomed in Woods of Noble growth, which are suffered to luxuriate their own way'. The home farm is very close to the house, and the parkland has presumably always been farmland first and foremost, although it is dotted with mature hardwood trees which were probably originally planted to improve the surroundings of the house and garden. Much of the near part of the estate is planted with woodlands, presumably mainly for sporting purposes, as the name 'Eastern Covert' suggests.

The original drive approached the house through the farm, but this evidently came to be considered unsuitable, and a new drive was made, swinging round to the north and meeting up with the original drive immediately north of the house. The exact dating of this is problematical, although it was clearly done in the nineteenth century. It is not shown on the manuscript survey map, dated about 1820, made for the first edition of the Ordnance Survey one inch to the mile map, but by the time this was published, in 1840-41, it had appeared. Two later maps show it in a different place, and the tithe map of 1846, while marking a track and field boundary on its line, seems to indicate the farm drive as the main approach to the house. A later copy of this, however, shows the track complete. By 1889 it is clearly shown following its present route. Both drives survive, the 'new' one still being used as the main approach to the house.

The pink-washed lodge, at the point where the two drives diverge, is modern, being absent from maps up to and including 1937. The gates at the entrance are now also modern. Where the old and 'new' drives meet again, north of the house, is a pair of stone gateposts topped with small urns, without gates.

The siting of Bodysgallen, with the ground dropping steeply below it to the south and east, has influenced the layout and style of the gardens, there being no naturally level ground in the immediate environs of the house. The kitchen gardens were laid out to the south-west, at the foot of the slope, and the craggy hill has been sculpted into a series of terraces. Despite Bodysgallen's history as a secondary house, until late in the nineteenth century neither house nor garden appears to have been neglected. The gardens are likely to have their origins in the early seventeenth century, contemporary with the building of the house. There are references throughout the eighteenth century to gardeners, seeds, fruit trees, vines, the flower garden and so on - 'raisons' were grown for wine in 1755. Late in this century and early in the next the terrace walk overlooking the Conwy valley was remarked on by travellers of the period (Pennant, Fenton), and described as being 'in disuse' by that time - implying that it was not a recent feature; but there is no suggestion that areas nearer the house were not cared for (Fenton mentions 'good gardens'), and the woods were praised. The large kitchen garden was not mentioned, but this was not the kind of feature to interest travellers in search of the picturesque.

The estate became embarrassed and the house was let in 1861; it was eventually rescued from mortgagors by Lady Augusta Mostyn in 1881. She gave it to her second son, Col. Henry Mostyn, on his marriage to Lady Pamela Douglas-Pennant in 1883, and at this time numerous changes and improvements were made to both house and garden. It has been said that Lady Pamela was responsible for the creation of the entire garden, and her son believed it; but this is clearly not the case, as most elements are shown on maps before this date. However, it is probable that the existing garden was somewhat overgrown following at least twelve years' neglect, requiring extensive reclamation and much new planting, so that if she herself said that she had made the garden, it was not an unreasonable claim, although misleading.

The top of the hill, around the house, forms one large terrace, now mostly lawn; this runs round from the south-west, where there is a natural, quite gentle, slope away to the Spring Garden, to the north-east, where there are retaining walls. The immediate outbuildings are mostly to the east of the house, and to the south-east are two massive terrace walls. The terraces they support are relatively narrow. At the foot of the lower wall is a small terrace with an elaborate box parterre. This, walled on all sides, gives the impression of being sunken, although in fact its floor is level with the ground surface to the south-east, outside.

There is an additional terrace to the south of the house, with a rectangular pool, which was added early in the twentieth century. Previous to this there were greenhouses in this area, which must therefore have been terraced in some way, as the natural slope is extremely steep. Below are the walled rose garden and the present kitchen garden, stretching away to the south-west. The walled garden, formerly the kitchen garden, is a large enclosure covering about two acres, now laid out mainly as lawn, with formal rose beds and box hedging; the furthest area has been recently reclaimed, having been completely neglected for many years. It has paths all round the outside and crossing in the middle, dividing it into four quarters. There is a box-edged walk outside the south-east wall, where once there was an outer fruit wall. Entrances are at the north and east corners, either end of the north-west to south-east cross path, and in the middle of the south-west wall. The doorways in the south-east and north-west walls have recently been provided with stone gateposts beyond to act as focal points when looking through the arches.

There is a roughly rectangular area beyond the south-east wall of the rose garden which clearly was not included in the original layout of the garden. It now consists of several discrete areas, including a tennis court, an area with two formal borders, an area of shrubs and an experimental formal hedge of a deciduous shrub. Two of the divisions between the separate areas consist of a yew hedge with central arch, and a hedge of mixed shrubs forms the south-east boundary. There are references to the use of this area for fruit cages around the turn of the century, but the present arrangements were laid out in 1982/83..

The rockery, planted with shrubs, herbaceous plants and bulbs, is relatively small, fitting into a corner between the south-west approach to the house and the rose garden. It has informal steps, a seat at the top and an artificial cascade down the north-west side.

The terrace walk is certainly one of the oldest surviving elements of the garden, mentioned by Pennant and Fenton. It is located a short walk away to the south-west, to take advantage of the view over Conwy and the river estuary. At the time Pennant wrote (1782) this view could be appreciated 'over the tops of trees'; it is now a question of peering through the branches. The walk consists of a grass terrace, over 100 m long, with a mortared stone parapet wall about 1 m high. This has been recently rebuilt on the foundations of the original wall. The back of the terrace is defined by a bank and dry ditch; a few trees obviously of a good age grow on the bank. Fenton, in 1810, mentioned the 'fine grassy terrace', at one end of which was a covered seat 'formed out of an old bed of Oak, inlaid with other wood, in a compartment of which I observe the date of 1581, with the initials, R W'. Of this there is now no sign. To the south of the main terrace is a small 'extension', which may in fact possibly be an earlier, shorter terrace. In this area are two large rustic stone seats.

The area between the terrace and the garden proper is partly wooded, and the size of the wooded area varies between maps of different dates. It was planted with timber during the Second World War, and is now partly clear again in order to reopen the view of Conway Castle from the house and top terrace. Some of the trees certainly pre-date this planting.

The area west of the walled gardens, south-west of the house, is now extensively planted with bulbs and is known as the Spring Garden. It is now quite informal, but may once have been more formal. In the past it was planted with mixed deciduous and coniferous trees, but these have recently been removed. There is a level area at the top, with a large stone urn; the ground drops away quite sharply to the south-west, with grass paths leading down and, to the north, a flight of stone steps. These were built in 1983.

There are now very few mature trees in the garden proper. One or two yews, including a pair of Irish yews (*Taxus baccata* 'Fastigiata'), survive on the bank beyond the kitchen garden, and there is a large yew at the top of the rockery. A rather fine mature pine grows on the terrace north-east of the house.

The outline of the top terrace around the house and of the garden containing the box parterre is shown on the tithe map of 1846. The terrace walk is also shown, and

three further garden areas, one of which, to the extreme south, is no longer part of the garden. The other two enclosures are on the site of the walled garden (the present kitchen garden is not shown), but are only half the width of the present walled area.

A sale catalogue of 1870 (the house failed to reach its reserve of £25,000) contains an excellent map, and a description of the garden. By this time the southernmost garden area had been abandoned and the present kitchen garden created, the area now known as the Spring Garden to the south-west of the house (north-west of the walled garden) planted with trees and shrubs, with walks, and the walled garden increased to its present size. Island beds, presumably for bedding plants, are shown on the top terrace, by the house. Later Ordnance Survey maps show only minor alterations to this layout.

If the maps of 1846 and 1870 are to be relied on, therefore, it is clear that the earliest parts of the garden which still survive are the terraces around the house from south-west to north-east, the 'sunken' garden which now contains the box parterre, the terrace walk, and the south-east wall of the walled garden. This latter is stone, where the other walls of the garden are brick, and it appears to be continuous from where it forms the outer wall of the 'sunken' garden to the southern corner of the walled garden. These features are likely to be contemporary with the house, dating to the early seventeenth century.

Between the two dates quoted above, the following features must have been constructed: the brick walls on north- and south-west of the walled garden, the present kitchen garden, with grotto, the shrubbery with walks in the area of the present Spring Garden, and the first glasshouses, on the site of the present water garden. The boundaries of the old, smaller walled gardens, presumably stone walls, must have been demolished (except for the south-east wall), and the fruit wall which used to run parallel to this wall, outside it, was probably also constructed. This is definitely shown on the 1870 map, but it is impossible to tell from the much smaller-scale tithe map whether it was *in situ* in 1846.

The timing of these improvements may be narrowed down even further, as the property was let in 1861, and after this was in decline until 1881. It is unlikely that major improvements would have been made by a tenant, and the rental agreement of 1861 contains mention of the gardens and pleasure grounds, with instructions for their use and maintenance. It is likely therefore that the work had been done before 1861. An inventory in 1856 lists so many tools that it is clear several gardeners must have been employed, and there was a gardeners' room and 'garden parlour'.

After 1881 many of the alterations are recorded in documents, maps and photographs. A photograph of about 1890 shows that the outer fruit wall was still in position, as were the greenhouses south of the house. The eastern part of the walled garden at least does not seem to have been kitchen garden at this date, but improvements and additions to the house in 1894 meant that it came into view from the main apartments, and it was certainly made over to ornamental use thereafter, a further area to the south-east being taken in for fruit and vegetables instead. The glasshouses were demolished and the steps down to the water

garden terrace made at this time, necessary alterations to the terrace presumably also taking place. The steps in the Spring Garden were built in 1983.

Photographs of around 1900 show the box parterre in the 'sunken' garden, obviously quite newly planted; the additional kitchen garden area to the south-east is shown, and the outer fruit wall has been reduced to a dwarf wall (this was still in place about 15 years ago). A small greenhouse is shown at the west corner of the 'sunken' garden, and a pergola with vines takes the place of the glasshouse in the east corner of this garden shown on the 1889 Ordnance Survey 25 in. map. In 1904 and 1905 new plans were drawn up for the garden (the former at least by William Goldring, a landscaper who had previously worked at Kew and as an editor on *Kew Gardener* and *The Garden*), but neither of these seems to have been fully implemented, although elements of both were used. The cascade and rockery were built in 1913, and further work may have been done to the water garden at this time; the pool however is not shown on the 1937 25 in. Ordnance Survey map, so may have been a late addition. A greenhouse is shown on the 1913 Ordnance Survey map just to the north-east of the 'sunken' garden, where it still remains; it was probably built when the one at the east corner of this garden was demolished around 1889 or 1900.

In 1933 the 'Jubilee Gate', a wrought-iron gate on the front steps, was erected to commemorate the golden wedding of the Henry Mostyns. The gardens were probably at their peak at this time, with a staff of 13 gardeners, but after the deaths of the elderly couple decline set in. Their son Ieuan was a rather eccentric bachelor who did not attempt to maintain the gardens at their best. During the second world war only one gardener was employed, and timber was planted in the area behind the terrace walk. Ieuan Mostyn died in 1965 and left the property to a niece, who sold it in 1969, when its career as a hotel began. It was sold to the present owners in 1980.

Since this time great efforts have been made to reclaim and restore the gardens, with significant success. Where possible the original plantings have been rescued and retained, and elsewhere new plantings have been as far as possible of the same type as those lost. Restoration is not quite finished, but the terraces and walled gardens have been fully restored, only the less formal areas awaiting completion.

The present kitchen garden is undoubtedly an extension of the main walled garden, but is shown on maps back to 1870 and cannot be much more recent than the nineteenth-century part of the main garden. The wall round the south-east and south-west sides is dry-stone, between 1.5 m and 2 m in height, and that on the north-west, also stone, is higher, and mortared. The north-east wall is the brick south-west wall of the main garden. There are entrances in the centre of this wall and at south (leading to the terrace walk), east and north corners, the latter apparently inserted into a formerly much wider gap. The east corner has two doorways, one leading back to the walk outside the south-east wall of the main garden. However, the tithe map of 1846 shows a further garden area beyond this to the south, and there may have been a path leading to it. This area had ceased to be part of the garden by 1870, so the presence of this last doorway might be seen as further confirmation of an early date for the south-east wall, which appears to continue up to a point just past this doorway, beyond which there is a complete change of character,

to a lower, dry-stone wall.

Within the kitchen garden there are two distinct areas. The larger, north-eastern part is almost rectangular and almost level, divided into two by a box-edged path from north-east to south-west. There are also box-edged paths all round the outside and a new path, without box, crossing the middle lengthways, from north-west to south-east. All are gravelled. The 1889 Ordnance Survey 25 in. map shows this area planted around the edges with fruit trees, as it is today, and the central area was doubtless also used as today for growing vegetables.

The south-western part is irregular in shape, and slopes fairly steeply, being on a rocky outcrop. The path along the south-east side, up to the door in the south corner, has two flights of steps to ascend this bank. It was planted originally with trees and shrubs, including many yews, which may have been intended to provide shelter as well as being ornamental, but it has clearly always been part of the pleasure garden. Most of the large trees have now been felled and the slope has been planted with shrubs, but one or two yews remain, including two Irish yews guarding the entrance to a small grotto. There is a path round the top of this area from which an excellent view of the house and terraces is obtained; a shelter with a seat here was obviously intended to take advantage of this, but its view is now blocked by a large yew. There is also a diagonal path from the south corner which meets the south-west end of the central cross path; this is revetted and has low walls both sides and shallow stone steps at intervals. The paths are gravelled.

The former orchard is located some distance to the south-east of the house. An enclosure of the same shape is shown on the 1889 25 in. map, and on the 1913 version it is shown as partially planted. On all subsequent maps, up to and including the current Ordnance Survey 6 in., it is shown as an orchard, but there is in fact now nothing there but a field, still preserving the same shape. Irregularities clearly show where the trees have been removed.

The date of the orchard suggests that it was planted to replace some of the fruitgrowing space lost when the greater part of the walled garden became ornamental following the enlargement of the house in the late nineteenth century.

Due to the distance from the main site and the fact that the trees are no longer present, the former orchard is not included within the garden boundary, but as part of the essential setting.

Sources

Primary

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Secondary

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