

## **GWRYCH CASTLE**

<b>Ref No</b>	<b>PGW(Gd)58(CON)</b>
<b>Former Ref No</b>	<b>PGW(C)30</b>
<b>OS Map</b>	116
<b>Grid Ref</b>	SH 928 775
<b>Former county</b>	Clwyd
<b>Unitary authority</b>	Conwy
<b>Community Council</b>	Llandulas and Rhyd-y-foel
<b>Designations</b>	Listed building Gwrych Castle Grade II
<b>Site Evaluation</b>	<b>Grade II*</b>

### **Primary reasons for grading**

Spectacular and romantic flight of gothic fancy, with picturesque gothic park walling, lodges, and towers, around the prominent picturesque landmark of Gwrych Castle, with a large-scale walled and turreted terraced garden.

### **Type of Site**

Picturesque park walls, lodges and estate buildings; picturesque terraced garden

### **Main Phases of Construction**

1819-1830s

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

Gwrych Castle and its accompanying outbuildings, towers, terraces and park walls spread themselves along a wooded hillside to the west of Abergele. The whole ensemble can be thought of as a gigantic folly, and forms a prominent and picturesque landmark, visible from Abergele and the A55 road.

The nineteenth-century gothic castellated mansion makes up a relatively small part of the overall complex of buildings at Gwrych. It is situated on a north-facing slope to the west of Abergele, and from it there is a panoramic view out to sea. The mansion is a square block of grey stone, started in 1819 after Lloyd Bamford Hesketh had inherited the estate in 1816. The design was executed by Thomas Rickman in consultation with Hesketh. The mansion was probably finished by 1822, as this date appears on the Hesketh tower just to the right of the entrance gateway. No conclusive finishing date has been given to the rest of the buildings, but Hesketh himself continued to produce picturesque drawings of

castellated buildings until 1853. Nearly all the windows on the house and ancillary buildings are of cast iron in a gothic traceried pattern by Thomas Rickman.

The stables lie to the west and behind the main building. They are reached by their own entrance archway. They consist of a simple block built of the same stone as the castle. They contain the usual complement of carriage horse standings and loose boxes.

The park lies to the north and below the castle, bounded on the north by the old A55. The eastern end of the park is now the Abergele and Pensarn Golf Club, whilst the western end of the park is farm grazing land. The park is small and lies on land which slopes gently towards the sea. There is no evidence of an earlier park than that of the nineteenth century, except for a lone lime tree, which hints at earlier planting. The nineteenth-century plantings mostly took the form of shelter belts running east-west across the park, with denser planting on the southern side of the park nearer to the castle. The western side, beyond the walled gardens and Hen Wrych (SH 927780), appears to have had little done in the way of planting.

A stone wall partly encompasses Gwrych and its associated lands. The most impressive part is the northern boundary wall alongside the B5443. The wall is not of one build, and is punctuated by several arched doorways, now blocked.

The main driveways cut across the park east to west, keeping to the south side of the park. The drive from the Abergele Lodge on the eastern extremity of the park is the only one in current use. It leads to the forecourt on the west side of the castle. A short service drive leads south from Hen Wrych, joining the main drive west of the castle. The drive from Tan-yr-ogof, to the west of the castle, follows the northern boundary line of Gwrych Castle Wood, just inside the wood and also joins up with the main drive to the west of the forecourt. There are two subsidiary drives from the south, at Bettws Lodge, and south-east, at Nant-y-bella Lodge.

The six lodges date to the 1830s, are built in the same theatrical, castellated manner as the castle, and were probably designed by Hesketh. The three main lodges punctuate the boundary wall that runs along the old A55. At the east end is the Abergele Lodge, the main entrance, consisting of a gatehouse with two round towers and an inner barbican enclosure. To the north of the castle is Hen Wrych Lodge, which is castellated, with square towers and fake machicolated curtain walls on the roadside. At the west end of the park is Tan-yr-Ogo gateway, flanked by curtain walls and set back between round towers. Nearby are further castellated estate buildings. Nant-y-bella Lodge is a square castellated block with a round corner turret. The entrance gateway here has a castellated tower. A former lodge, Mountain Lodge, is situated on a minor road to the south. Bettws Lodge to the north-west has turrets and screen walls. To the west of the castle is Lady Eleanor's Tower, a simple square castellated folly tower, sited on hill overlooking the Irish Sea.

The garden at Gwrych was built in the 1820s, at the same time as the castle. It consists of two walled pleasure gardens attached to the castle on its eastern side. Like the rest of the design the walls are castellated and punctuated with machicolated turrets. The tops of the towers in the western enclosure form viewing platforms. The eastern enclosure has a

castellated screen wall with a large gothic window. To the east of the walled garden the garden becomes more wild and by ascending steps a series of terraces are reached. The lowest terrace above the walled gardens is faced with stone. The slopes between the terraces are densely planted with shrubs.

A series of nineteenth-century walled kitchen gardens and orchards lie just to the west of the Hen Wrych Lodge and alongside the old A55. They consist of a castellated stone outer wall with castellated corner bastions which have four-centred arch doorways, and cast-iron small pane windows. Within this stone perimeter wall are two brick walled gardens. The smaller lying on the western side of the complex is joined to the perimeter stone wall. To the south lies another walled garden this time of stone, with the inner walls castellated. The main walled garden is irregularly placed within the stone perimeter walls, obviously arranged to face due south. The north wall at one time supported a range of glasshouses but these have gone. The arrangement of these gardens has left large odd shaped spaces between, which have in the past been planted as orchards.

There are two small walled gardens, with castellated walls, opposite the estate manager's house at Tan-yr-ogof, built for the manager's use. The outer one has a well and small building with the remains of cold frames. The rear garden contains pigsties and a fake tower in the south-western corner.

## **Sources**

### **Secondary**

Pratt, D., and A.G. Veysey, A Handlist of the Topographical Prints of Clwyd (1977), nos 156-62.

Hubbard, E., Clwyd (1986), pp. 175-78.