

**RHUAL**

**Ref No** PGW (C) 45  
**OS Map** 117  
**Grid Ref** SJ 221 648  
**Former County** Clwyd  
**Unitary Authority** Flintshire  
**Community Council** Mold Rural  
**Designations** Listed building: Rhual Grade II\*  
**Site Evaluation** Grade II\*

**Primary reasons for grading**

Rare survival of an unaltered seventeenth-century forecourt layout, with walls and alcoves decorated with contemporary ornamental iron plates and tulips. Survival of seventeenth-century bowling green. Association with Stephen Switzer, who may have been responsible for some early eighteenth-century landscaping.

**Type of Site**

Small landscape park; formal layout of forecourt and garden; informal grounds.

**Main Phases of Construction**

c. 1660s; c. 1739; nineteenth century

**SITE DESCRIPTION**

Rhual is a modest Jacobean house situated about 1 km north-west of Mold. It lies on gently rolling ground above the valley of the river Alun, with a steep slope rising behind it to the west. Its main front faces east.

The oldest part of the house is a two- and three-storey block at the north end, whose origins may be medieval, but which has been much altered subsequently. It is lower than the main block, and set back from it. The main part of the house was built in 1634 by Evan Edwards, in whose family's hands the house had been for a long time. Evan Edwards was a royalist who had earlier lived at Knole in Kent and had been secretary to Richard, earl of Dorset. Rhual is a gabled double-pile three-storey house built in brick on an H-plan. It is symmetrical, with the front door, flanked by Doric columns, in the centre of the east front. The east and south fronts were rendered between 1815 and 1832.

In about 1730 Rhual passed to the Griffith family through marriage, and the last male Griffith at Rhual, Edwin, was killed at the battle of Waterloo (1815). In 1832 Rhual was bought for Col. Frederick C. Philips, a relation of the Griffith family, and since then it has passed down the Philips family, and through marriage to the Heaton family.

To the north-east of the house lies a court of stone farm buildings, including a fine medieval cruck barn.

Little remains of Rhual's park, which is shown as extending as far as the Rhyd-y-goleu road to the east, the Gwernaffield road on the south, and The Grove wood to the north-west on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map

(1870s). However, it appears never to have been extensively landscaped, and the general configuration of woodland and open ground remains as it was in the late nineteenth century.

The park lies on gently rolling ground above the river Alun, with the highest ground at the west end. At the northern end of the former park the ground drops steeply (in The Grove) to the Alun valley. The remains of landscaping consist of a clump of four mature lime trees in the field to the east of the forecourt, which is separated from the grounds by a ha-ha. There are isolated trees, mainly oak, scattered throughout the fields to the east of the house, some of which lie on present or possibly former field boundaries. Most are probably not of ornamental origin. A narrow strip of modern forestry trees running north from the farm yard to The Grove marks the former Grove Walk, and at its northern end are the remains of a stone monument dedicated to Thomas and Henrietta Maria Griffith, dated 1788. The walk has disappeared, as have those in The Grove. The Alleluia Monument, in the field to the south of Rhual, erected in 1736 by Nehemiah Griffith to commemorate a battle of AD 420 in which Britons routed an invading army of Picts and Saxons, lies just outside the park.

It is not known if there was a park at Rhual before the eighteenth century. At some stage in the eighteenth or early nineteenth century the east wall of the forecourt was lowered and a ha-ha made to give views from the house and garden out into the park. It was probably at the same time that a small amount of landscaping took place in the park, including the planting of the clump of limes. The Grove Walk may have dated to the time when the monument was erected in 1788.

The forecourt, gardens and grounds of Rhual lie to the east, south and west of the house. To the east the ground slopes gently away from the house; to the west it rises steeply behind it to a level plateau above. There are three principal areas: the forecourt to the east, the gardens to the south-east, south and immediately west of the house, and the grounds on the plateau to the west. The whole area is bounded by a brick and stone wall along the Mold-Gwernaffield road on the south side. To the east there are views across a ha-ha to the park; to the north lie farm buildings and the kitchen garden.

The entrance to Rhual is off the Mold-Gwernaffield road, to the south-east of the house. It is flanked by curving brick walls and simple stone gate piers, between which is a wooden gate. The gravel drive, flanked by lawn set with ornamental trees and shrubs, curves around the forecourt and runs up to the north end of the house. Between the drive area and the farm buildings is a curving brick wall. Immediately north of the forecourt wall are some pets' headstones dating to the 1880s, and a brick mounting block. To the east is a dry-stone wall ha-ha between grounds and park. The wall at the entrance continues westwards along the road, forming the south boundary of the gardens and grounds.

The forecourt is aligned symmetrically on the main east front of the house. It is seventeenth-century in date, and has undergone virtually no alteration since it was made. It is thought to have been built by Evan Edwards, the builder of the house, after the Restoration (post 1660). The forecourt is bounded by brick walls of seventeenth-century date. At its western end, nearest the house, the forecourt is marginally wider than the house front, and is laid out with two grass rectangles surrounded by wide gravel paths. The south wall and north corner pier are rendered (probably at the same time as the house, in the early 19th century), and the tops of the walls at this end are decorated with ornamental iron plates with scrolled edges and pointed, roughly triangular tops. The forecourt widens about one third of its length along, with stone vases set over the corners of the walls. In the right-angled corner formed by

the walls at this increase in width lie two brick corner pavilions with gently arching openings and gabled roof at the apex of which ornamental wrought iron finials of vases and three tulips are set. Inside faceted wooden benches line the walls of both pavilions, and both have small niches set in their sides (north pavilion in north side only). A wide gravel path runs between the two.

A grass scarp, with ramps in the centre (gravel) and at either end (grass), then leads down to a lower level laid out as lawn with a wide circular gravel walk in the middle of which is a stone sundial set in turf. The side walls maintain their height in this lower part, and near the east end of the north wall three arched bee hole alcoves are set into the wall. The side walls end with piers topped with stone cornices and ball finials. The east end is closed by a low brick wall, central gates flanked by stone piers with ball finials, outside which is a ditch. Although there is a causeway across the ditch leading to the gates the gravel 'drive' within does not extend beyond the gates, where there is merely a lawn flanking the drive, which skirts the forecourt.

An iron gate in the south forecourt wall near the house leads through into a garden area of level lawn backed by a steep grass bank to the west. In the corner where the forecourt widens is a stone urn on a rectangular base with coats of arms, Latin inscriptions, initials ('A.S.' and 'N.G.') and a date, 'MDCCXXXV' (1735). N.G. is probably Nehemiah Griffith, uncle of Thomas Griffith, and builder of the Alleluia Monument.

As in the forecourt, there is then a grass scarp down to a lower level, laid out as a parterre of box-edged rose beds set in gravel. In the middle is a stone octagonal raised bed (formerly pool and fountain). At the east end is an enormous and ancient yew hedge, clipped but of irregular shape, in which is cut a narrow opening into a small sub-rectangular enclosure bounded on all but the east side by similar yew hedges, and on the east side by a high brick wall.

A gravel path leads around the south and west sides of the house to a doorway into the kitchen garden to the north. Near the south end of the slope to the west of the house a stepped gravel path winds up into the woodland area on top of the plateau. This is an area of mixed woodland, with some large mature deciduous and coniferous ornamental trees, beneath which is dense undergrowth. At the near (east) end a straight wide gravelled path flanked by large yew trees on its west side runs north-south from end to end of the plateau. This is thought to be a former bowling green, probably of seventeenth-century date. Beyond and parallel to this is a further, earthen path, described in as a former skittle alley. This is flanked by alternating yews and pines. A substantial linear trench of unknown purpose (perhaps a former canal?) runs parallel to this, to its west, and is now filled with rhododendrons. Within it, at its northern end is a subterranean brick-lined ice-house with an entrance on the south side flanked by dry-stone walling. A curving earthen path flanked by wellingtonias on its inner side forms a loop around the wood.

There are several phases to the making of the gardens and grounds at Rhual. First, the forecourt, the general layout of the garden, and probably the bowling green were made in the seventeenth century, probably after the Restoration, by Evan Edwards, builder of the main block of the house. The second phase may have taken place in the late 1730s or early 1740s: Stephen Switzer wrote a letter to Sir George Wynne of Leeswood in 1739, outlining his plans for the Rhual garden for Nehemiah Griffith. From the letter it is clear that although he had not seen the site he made a drawing of his proposals, which included the building up of the north end of the slope behind the house to make it 'handsome', the earth for which was to be obtained by making a 'Hollow in the Front'. It is difficult to ascertain if this was done, and if so the location of the

'Hollow'. Switzer also recommended a wall to the north of the forecourt (possibly the existing curving wall), and a list of fruit for the kitchen garden.

At some stage in the eighteenth or early nineteenth century the east wall of the forecourt was lowered and turned into a kind of ha-ha, and a ha-ha proper was made between the drive and the park. A possible date is when the house was rendered, between 1815 and 1832. The parterre is probably of late nineteenth-century date, and is not shown on the 1871 Ordnance Survey map, which shows the layout of the rest of the garden much as it is now. The pool and fountain have subsequently been filled in to form a flowerbed.

Although some structural elements dating to the seventeenth century (the bowling green) have been retained in the woodland area, most of its features are nineteenth-century in origin. These include most of the ornamental planting, including the wellingtonias, the walk and the ice-house.

The kitchen garden lies to the north-west of the house, on ground sloping down towards the north. It is an irregular pentagonal shape. Its walls are of brick on a stone base, with a stone coping, and stand to their full height (c. 2.2 m on the outside). At the south end of the east side is a stone and brick wall between the kitchen garden and a small cobbled court north of the house. The original layout of the interior has gone, except perhaps for a short stretch of path inside the south doorway. The 1871 Ordnance Survey map shows a perimeter path and cross paths. The garden is now laid out mainly to grass, with a tennis court and swimming pool. To the west of the doorway in the south wall is a small roofless lean-to building.

There is known to have been a kitchen garden at Rhual, probably on this site, in 1739, when Stephen Switzer mentioned one in his letter to Sir George Wynne about the gardens. He also provides a list of fruit to be grown in the kitchen garden. During the Second World War the garden was highly productive.

## **Sources**

### **Primary**

Letter from Stephen Switzer to Sir George Wynne, dated 1739: Clwyd Record Office, Hawarden D/HE/313.

National Library of Wales:

Pencil and wash sketch by Moses Griffith, c. 1812, of house and surrounds (drawings vol. 38, insert).

### **Secondary**

Leslie, C.H., Rambles round Mold (1869).

Hussey, C., 'Rhual, Flintshire', Country Life 93 (25 June 1943), pp. 1144-47.

Pratt, D., and A.G. Veysey, A Handlist of the Topographical Prints of Clwyd (1977), no. 842.

Hubbard, E., Clwyd (1986), pp. 397-98.

Plumptre, G., 'No generation gap', Country Life (12 May 1988), pp. 142-43.

## **TOWER**

**Ref No** PGW (C) 46  
**OS Map** 117  
**Grid Ref** SJ 240 620  
**County** Clwyd  
**District** Delyn BC  
**Community Council** Nercwys  
**Designations** Listed building: Tower Grade I  
**Site Evaluation** Grade II

### **Primary reasons for grading**

Park and garden with features of the seventeenth century onwards, providing attractive setting for ancient house of outstanding historic importance.

### **Type of Site**

Small park and garden of medieval origin, with remnants of seventeenth-century features and later landscaping.

### **Main Phases of Construction**

Late seventeenth - early eighteenth century; nineteenth - twentieth century.

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

Tower is a composite house of stone and brick standing on a ridge just to the south of Mold. The core of the house is a late medieval stone tower built in about 1445 by Rheinallt Gruffydd ap Bleddyn (d. 1465). Attached to the east side of the tower is a lower, two-storey house of brick, probably of the late seventeenth century, with an early eighteenth-century facing of stone on the south side. Later in the eighteenth century (probably mid 1770s) a major restoration in gothic style was undertaken, when machicolations and crenellations were added. The medieval part of the house is aligned north-south, the later addition east-west, with the main front on the south side.

From the sixteenth to the late eighteenth centuries Tower belonged to the Wynne family, from whom it passed to the Wynne Eytons of Old Leeswood Hall, nearby. In the early nineteenth century the house had a brief period as a tenanted farmhouse, but thereafter has been occupied by the Wynne Eyton family. The first Wynne Eyton at Tower (inherited by his wife) was the Revd Hope Wynne Eyton, vicar of Mold for 32 years.

A circular stone dovecote stands in the field to the west of the house. Thought to be of fifteenth-century date, it is ruinous, with no roof and a gap on the south side.

The small park of Tower lies to the north-east and south-east of the house. To the north-east the ground slopes away to a small valley at the north end of the park, while to the south-east the ground rises slightly to the top of the ridge. The main entrance is at the northern corner, off the Mold-Nerquis road, with a small nineteenth-century lodge on the north side. The lodge is a gabled two-storey stone building in vernacular

style, with a steeply pitched roof. The entrance is closed by massive ornamental wrought iron gates known as the 'Black Gates'. These were brought here from Leeswood Hall, nearby, in the 1980s. They date from the late 1720s or early 1730s, and may have been the work of the Davies brothers of Bersham.

The park is divided into two large fields of permanent pasture, with scattered isolated trees. These are mainly oak, although there are holly trees and a solitary pine in the field to the south-east of the house, and a large lime and pine immediately outside the entrance to the garden. The drive winds up the slope to the entrance to the garden, east of the house. A secondary track leads from here south-eastwards to a simple gate on the Mold-Nerquis road. Earthworks in the area north-east of the house may indicate a former pond next to the garden, a drainage ditch running northwards down the slope from it, and a faint U-shaped feature with scarped sides either side of the drive.

The dating of elements in the park is problematical. The present layout was certainly in place by the 1880s, at which time the lake (then only the western end of the present lake) and small pond south of the house were not incorporated into the garden, but were within the park. There is a possibility that the secondary track was the original drive, and that the northern drive was added, with the lodge, in the 19th century. It may be that most of the tree planting in the park dates from this time.

The garden of Tower occupies an irregular area to the south, west and east of the house. The drive enters the garden between stone walls on the east side and leads up to an oval forecourt in front of the south front of the house. Immediately around the house the garden is laid out to lawn, with a former tennis court or croquet lawn cut into the slope to the south-west. On the east the lawn is bounded on its north side by a stone wall next to the house, and then by the walls of the former kitchen garden.

On the central axis of the south front is a tall composite sundial consisting of millstone base, rectangular plinth, classical column, on which is a cubical sundial with gnomons and carved numbers on each vertical face, above which is a ball finial. This originally stood in the centre of the bowling green at Leeswood. It was erected here (not on its original base) by the present owner.

Below the lawn, to the south-east, are rough stone steps and a grass bank down to an irregularly-shaped small lake, the western end of which is roughly rectangular, aligned with the south front of the house. The lake has a small island and a substantial dam at its eastern end. The west and north sides are straight, and a sloping path runs the length of the west side down to a path along the rim of the lake on the north side. To the south, west and east of the lake is an area of mixed informal planting of deciduous and coniferous trees and shrubs, some of which are mature. Along the west side of the lake is a bank of rhododendrons. At the south end of the garden is a smaller linear pond. Along the west boundary of the garden is a row of mature pines, inside which is a linear depression marking the position of a perimeter path.

The history of the garden is one of alterations over four centuries, but vestiges remain from several periods. It is not known what gardens, if any, went with the fortified tower house of the late medieval period. It is possible that the western, rectilinear end of the lake has its origins in this period. When the house was added to in the late 17th century it is likely that gardens were added as a necessary adjunct to a gentleman's residence. A drawing of 1776 by Moses Griffith (for Pennant's Tours in Wales) of the south front of the house shows the garden bounded by large gates at the east end of the house, a gravel circle or oval in front of

the house, with topiary and a sundial within it, and a formal, rectilinear lake with scarped edges and ramps down to a walk along its northern edge. The style of this garden is formal, and would date from the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century. Vestiges of this period remain today in the rectilinear shape of the western end of the lake, its scarped northern end, and its perimeter paths. The drawing shows a row of trees, possibly pines, along the west boundary: the present ones may be replacements. The gates have gone, and the garden has been extended to the east. The 1st edition Ordnance Survey maps show that in the 1870s the lake and smaller pond were not incorporated into the garden, and that only the western, rectilinear end of the lake was in existence. The present-day area of trees and shrubs along the southern side of the garden was then unplanted field. The southern end of the garden, therefore, has been radically altered since the 1870s by the extension eastwards of the lake and the planting of most of the trees and shrubs. The tennis court/croquet lawn has also been added since this date.

The kitchen garden lies to the north-east of the house, on a gentle north-east-facing slope. It has a trapezoidal shape, dictated by the topography and pre-existing layout of drive to the south and (possibly) farm track to the east and north. Only the west wall and a stub of the north wall remain. The walls are of stone and brick, c. 2 m. high, with a gateway in the west side from the garden into the kitchen garden near its south end. Against the outside of the west wall are stone and brick pent outhouses. The interior layout of cross and perimeter paths has gone: all that is left is a few fragments of box edging.

## **Sources**

### **Primary**

'The Tower': drawing by Moses Griffith, c. 1776. In the Extra Illustrated edition of Pennant's Tours in Wales (National Library of Wales).

### **Secondary**

Williams, J., 'Tower, near Mold, Flintshire', Arch. Camb. (1846). pp. 55-60.

Leslie, C.H., Rambles round Mold (1869).

Smith, P., and Hayes, P., 'Llyseurgain and the Tower', Flints. Hist. Soc. J. 22 (1965), pp. 1-8.

Hubbard, E., Clwyd (1986), p. 397.