

PLAS HEATON

Ref No PGW (C) 28
OS Map 116
Grid Ref SJ 033 690
Former County Clwyd
Unitary Authority Denbighshire
Community Council Henllan
Designations Listed building: Plas Heaton Grade II*
Site Evaluation Grade II

Primary reasons for grading

Complete example of nineteenth-century woodland circuit walk on a very ancient site

Type of Site

Landscape park; informal woodland garden with circuit walk

Main Phases of Construction

1805; 1860s

SITE DESCRIPTION

Plas Heaton is situated on the western edge of the Vale of Clwyd, to the north-west of Denbigh. The Heaton family have lived in the area for some 708 years, and the present house is a remodelling of an early eighteenth-century house, with an even earlier sixteenth- to seventeenth-century house underneath, carried out in 1805. The Heaton family bought the property in 1807, having rented it from 1805. They renamed it Plas Heaton after their previous home to the north. Plas Heaton Farm to the east is the site of two earlier manor houses. One, now a farm building, was a two-unit house with the remains of a moat.

Plas Heaton is a nine-bay two- and three-storey classical stone house with a recessed south front which contains a Doric loggia. The older house lies behind the centre and right front, whilst the left front wing is entirely of the 1860s, with a segmental bow on the the west front.

A line of south-facing cartsheds is situated in the yard to the rear of the house. The western end of the building is of a much earlier build than the rest of the sheds. The early building consists of a two arched shed on the ground level with living accommodation above reached by an external stone stairway. The roof at this end has coped and kneelered gables, possibly of eighteenth-century date. The next five bays are nineteenth-century, with the central bay arch higher than those on either side. An extra bay has been added with a straight beam entrance.

A large barn faces these sheds on the south side of the yard, built of stone with coped, kneelered and finialed gables, and is probably of the same date as the western end of the cart sheds. Attached to the rear of this barn is a nineteenth-century Dutch barn, with another farm building set at right angles to it. The three buildings form a square C, with the central area now covered to form a sheep shed.

A narrow lane, the entrance to the farm yard, separates these buildings from a barn and stables on the west, also in a square C arrangement, with a small cobbled yard.

The park was probably made in the early nineteenth century at the time of the re-modelling of the house. A map of 1812 shows a narrow band of perimeter planting running from lodge to lodge (SJ 033 697 and SJ 688 030). The belt turned south away from the road between fields, and then veered in a south-westerly direction. This has nearly disappeared, but probably marked the area known as the 'park'.

There are two drives, approaching the house from the north and south, off the B5428 road. Both have lodges, gates and gate piers at the entrances. The north lodge is contemporary with the rebuilding of the house; the south lodge is late nineteenth-century. The northern drive is now unused and grassed over. It divides, the eastern branch leading to the farmyard, the western sweeping round to the west of the house to link up with the south drive and arrive at a small gravel forecourt to the south of the house. The south drive is tarmacked, and divides in the same way as the north drive. The park is partly bounded by a dry-stone wall contemporary with the rebuilding of the house.

There are several small ponds of a utilitarian nature in the park. The planting has thinned considerably and any group plantings there may have been are now undefined. Isolated deciduous trees, particularly oaks, are dotted about the park. The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map shows tree groupings to the north of the house.

The main areas of garden lie to the west and south of the house, and apart from small areas of lawn in the immediate vicinity of the house, the garden comprises woodland, with a circuit walk. Little seems to remain of a designed garden that belonged to the eighteenth-century house.

Like the park it is thought that the garden layout belongs to the time of remodelling of the house in the 1860s. This includes a ha-ha which surrounds the entire pleasure garden. Photographs of the 1860s show many more flowerbeds than now exist.

The main part of the garden is the woodland which lies to the south of the house, behind the farm yard. It is now largely taken over by secondary woodland, with the remains of ornamental planting, many spring bulbs, and underplantings of laurel, Portuguese laurel and box. Tree planting is mainly of ash and sycamore, with some oak and birch. The woodland is reached by crossing the lawn on the south front of the house and crossing the farm drive on a cobbled path between two stone arches. Within this area are two walled gardens, one to the south of the house, and another some distance away, at the southernmost tip of the wood.

Some terracing has been cut into the natural limestone that the woodland area is composed of, although this is largely overgrown. The southern end of the wood contains the remains of some kind of grotto or garden building. This is marked by a sunken area, with a platform on one side on which are the remains of brick walling faced with tufa. An early nineteenth-century icehouse is built into the north-west retaining wall of the wood, next to the back drive.

An informal walk circuits the perimeter of the wood, with a path cutting across it. A circular group of yews marks the start of the walk. The grand finale of the walk is the terrace on the north side of the wood which has views towards the Irish Sea and the Clwydian Hills.

The walled garden to the south of the house is situated just inside the stone wall on the eastern side of the farm drive. It is a six-sided brick walled garden, with matched walls. A small conservatory cum vinery, with canted front under a slate roof, is situated on the south-facing wall. The brick walls stand to their full height, with flat stone copings. There is a wrought iron gate in the southern wall dated 1907. A door in the eastern wall leads into the woodland area. The back of the north wall has a line of stone framed potting sheds, tool sheds and head gardeners office. The latter still contains a head gardener's high desk and a set of seed drawers. Many of the trained fruit trees have aluminium labels. There are also four Victorian iron framed glass cloches.

Outside the walled garden is an area with utilitarian glasshouses and fruit cages plus more trained fruit trees on the outside of the wall. The glasshouses are Victorian. A ha-ha runs along the southern side of the walled garden and then turns into a subterranean passageway running under the farm drive.

At the southern tip of the pleasure garden is what is thought to be a walled orchard. Referred to by the family as the 'Hen Ardd', it is possible that it is nineteenth-century in date. The dry-stone wall has large capping stones, and is about 3 m in height. Part of the south-facing wall is brick lined with the remains of a flue system. There had at one time been an extensive range of glass but none survives today. The remains of a small nineteenth-century brick dwelling house is situated midway along the flued wall. The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map shows this garden planted up as an orchard.

Sources

Primary

1812 estate map: Clwyd Record Office.

1860s photograph album: private collection.

Secondary

Hubbard, E., Clwyd (1986), pp. 180-81.

FFERM

Ref No PGW (C) 29
OS Map 117
Grid Ref SJ 278 704
Former County Clwyd
Unitary Authority Delyn BC
Community Council Leeswood
Designations Listed building: Fferm Grade I; Barn Grade II*
Site Evaluation Grade II

Primary reasons for grading

Nearly complete seventeenth-century walled gardens attached to fine late sixteenth- or early seventeenth-century house

Type of Site

Formal garden

Main Phases of Construction

Seventeenth century

SITE DESCRIPTION

Fferm lies just off the A541 Mold/Wrexham road at Pontblyddyn, the approach being down a part cobbled farm lane. The approach was altered at the time of the road widening in the 1950s: the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map (1871) shows the gate at right angles to the road, whereas the gate is now directly at the end of the track, north of its original site.

Fferm is a late sixteenth- or early seventeenth-century stone manor house with stone mullioned and transomed windows, and coped and finialed gables. Originally built on a traditional E-plan (without the central projection) it was reduced in size between 1766 and 1811 by the demolition of the parlour wing on the west side. A storeyed porch on the north side of the house bears the coat of arms of the Lloyd family. Although this in fact came from Llywn Ynn at Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd, after the house was demolished, it is correct. An anonymous watercolour of 1840-50 shows a date of 1589 on the house.

The courtyard to the north of the house was originally walled, and footings in the line of its north wall may indicate that the archway now incorporated in the north wall of the orchard may originally have stood here. A cobbled path leading to the front door incorporates the initials R, M and LL (Rhys Lloyd of Fferm and Margaret Ellis of Althrey) and a jumbled version of the coats of arms of the Ellis and Lloyd families, and would seem to commemorate the marriage of Rhys and Margaret, which probably took place in 1642. An old well was formerly sited just to the east of the path.

Lying at right angles to the house is a stone domestic building, the brewhouse, also with coped and finialed gables under a slate roof. This is thought to have been the steward's house originally. Adjoining the brew house are stone pigsties. Over one section of the pigsties is a

hen house with slate roof, and wooden nesting boxes. Other outbuildings include a stone barn and a brick nogged building of uncertain purpose.

Two walled gardens are situated on the south and west sides of the house. They are shown in both eighteenth-century surveys (c. 1721-42 and 1766), with few differences from the present layout. The main alterations have been the demolition of the north courtyard wall and the east wall of the orchard, which ran flush with the demolished parlour wing. Although the walls contain no dateable features they are presumed to be contemporary with the house. This would seem to be confirmed by the use in them of a type of lamellar limestone found in the gazebo and parts of the house of Plas Teg, nearby, which dates to the early seventeenth century.

The compartment lying immediately behind the house is the smaller, with a low stone wall on two sides. A discontinuity in the east wall suggests that the garden might have been extended southwards at some stage. The garden here is at a higher level than the adjacent field. A stone stile is situated on the north-eastern wall, with a possible goose hole next to it. A former central path, now grassed over, leads from the door of the house to a wicket gate in the south wall, which is probably a late feature.

The second walled compartment, the orchard, lies to the west of the small garden, between it and the road. It is roughly rectangular in shape, the south-western corner having been cut off by the widening of the present road in the 1950s. The stone walls are about 2.5 m in height, topped by nineteenth-century coping of upright stones. A linking doorway between the two gardens is situated in the south-east corner. There is a dilapidated earth closet outside the wall in this corner, with a blocked door into the orchard. In the north-west corner is an arched entrance, dating to 1590-1690, which was probably originally sited in the north wall of the forecourt. The wall has been made higher here to accommodate the archway, which is a simple round-headed arch with dressed light coloured sandstone details. The archway and north-east corner of the orchard wall are not shown on the 1811 survey, but are present in the anonymous watercolour painting of 1840-50, giving an approximate date for the archway's insertion in the wall. The orchard is still planted with fruit trees.

Sources

Primary

Survey, undated, but 1721-42, for Madam Puleston, heiress of the Lloyds: Clwyd Record Office (Hawarden).

Survey, 1766: Clwyd Record Office (Hawarden).

Survey, 1811, for Gwyllym Lloyd Wardle: at Hartsheath.

Watercolour, 1840-50, anon.: at Hartsheath.

Llwyd, E., 'Parochialia'.

Secondary

Hubbard, E., Clwyd (1986), p. 378.

Heaton, R., Report on the Restoration of Fferm, Pontblyddyn (1980).

GWRYCH CASTLE

Ref No PGW (C) 30
OS Map 116
Grid Ref SH 928 775
Former County Clwyd
Unitary Authority Colwyn BC
Community Council Llandulas and Rhyd-y-foel
Designations Listed building Gwrych Castle Grade II
Site Evaluation Grade II*

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 turretted 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.