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# SUMMARY

*Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT) was asked by Cadnant Planning, on behalf of the Rhug Estate, to conduct an archaeological watching brief of ground works associated with the construction of a tennis court within the western half of the former walled garden at Rhug (PRN 80574) located to the immediate south west of the Grade II\* listed Rhug Park House, Corwen, Denbighshire (PRN 25660; centred on NGR* ***SJ0554 4400****).*

*The archaeological watching brief identified and recorded two garden paths, contexts [003] and [004] that were associated with the walled garden and documented the sections of the walled garden that will be partially obscured by 3m high chain link fencing erected around the perimeter of the tennis court.*

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT) was asked by Cadnant Planning, on behalf of the Rhug Estate, to conduct an archaeological watching brief of ground works associated with the construction of a tennis court within the western half of the former walled garden at Rhug (PRN 80574) located to the immediate south west (Figure 01) of the Grade II\* listed Rhug Park House, Corwen, Denbighshire (PRN 25660; centred on NGR **SJ0554 4400**). The archaeological watching brief was undertaken as outlined in the approved GAT project design (Appendix I).

The archaeological watching brief was conducted on 10th and 11th September 2015.

The scheme was monitored by the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) Development Control Officer Mark Walters.

The works conformed to the guidelines specified in *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 1994, rev. 2001, 2008 and 2014).*

# 2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

A brief examination of the regional Historic Environment Record (held jointly by the Denbighshire Archaeology Service and the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust) andCofleinrevealed that the proposed tennis court is situated within the western half of the former walled garden at Rhug (PRN 80574) which was attached to Grade II\* listed Rhug Park House (PRN 25660; Figure 02), in the parish of Corwen.

The present house (PRN 25660) is late 18th century in date, possibly being constructed in 1798. It replaced an earlier house of medieval date (possibly 16th century) which may have been located on the north side of the castle mount (MPRN 306598). The Coflein entry for Rhug references a map which suggests a pair of buildings to the west of the walled garden with a possible access drive passing through, or near to, the later walled garden. These buildings may represent the remains of the earlier hall and the former access drive may be encountered during ground disturbance in the tennis court area.

The origin of the walled garden is poorly documented. It is first clearly depicted on the 1840 tithe map and again on the First Edition Ordnance Survey 25” County series (Merioneth. VII.16 1875) map. As such, it is possible that the walled garden dates from the early 19th century.

To the immediate south of the walled garden and proposed development, situated along the western edge of the fish pond, there is the castle mount (MPRN 306598). The mound originated as a Bronze Age burial cairn which was enlarged as a castle motte in the 11th century. It formed the nucleus of the original estate of Rhug. An ice house was constructed in 1878, and it was during the associated excavation work that the Bronze Age origins of the mound were discovered. The mound is a scheduled ancient monument (ME 019). A standing stone near the mound (NPRN 306599) is probably a relatively recent garden feature.

At the southern entrance to Rhug Hall, there is a gate lodge (NPRN 265144), depicted on the First Edition Ordnance Survey County series (Merioneth. VII.16 1875). A single storey building of two ranges set at right angles. The main north-south range has an attic. Both ranges have north-facing porches. The walls are of roughly coursed stone blocks under slate gabled roofs.

The lodge stands beside the wrought iron gates brought to Rhug in about 1740 (NPRN 28724). They have been attributed to the Davies brothers of Croes Foel, although their style is rather more reminiscent of the work of Robert Bakewell of Derby. The gates consist of square-section piers with shallow pyramidal copings flank the entrance gates, and terminate the low quadrant walls to either side. Railings with scrolled arrow heads raised on quadrant plinth walls. Gates have enriched overthrow and side panels, with wave-bar pattern to overthrow support and lock bar, and arrow head dog rails.

# 3. METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 Archaeological Watching Brief

Based on the GAT project design (Appendix I), the following actions were undertaken as part of the archaeological watching brief:-

* The ground level was reduced by a tracked 360˚ excavator, fitted with a toothless bucket under the supervision of a GAT project officer, to the formation level of the tennis court;
* A photographic record was maintained throughout the archaeological watching brief, using a digital SLR camera set to maximum resolution in RAW format;
* GAT pro-formas were completed during the archaeological watching brief;
* Archaeological features were documented on GAT context record forms and recorded in scaled photographs using a digital SLR camera set to maximum resolution in RAW format.

The archaeological watching brief was conducted on 10th and 11th September 2015. A total of 40 photographic images were taken during the course of the watching brief (GAT photographic archive reference numbers G2434\_001 to G2434\_040; archive metadata reproduced as [Appendix II](#_APPENDIX_II)).

# 4. RESULTS

#### ****4.1 Walled Garden****

The tennis court is situated within the western half of the former walled garden at Rhug (PRN 80574). The northern, eastern and southern walls of the garden are extant, with an opening and reinstated brick arch at the centre of the eastern wall and a square in plan building, with a slate pitch roof, incorporated within the south west corner of the garden. The walls and building are brick built, with the average brick measuring 0.25m in length, 0.13m in width and 0.06m in depth. The garden walls appear to be of English bond style, with a distinct step-out or plinth at the base of the wall, which varied in height from 0.50 to 0.65m. The garden walls have a maximum height of 3.0m.

The northern (Plate 01) and eastern (Plate 02) walls have been restored, predominantly re-using the brick that have been bonded with pink cement. At the base of the eastern garden wall there is a row of tree stumps (Plate 03), which maybe the remnants of fruit trees that were once splayed against the face of the wall.

The arched entrance at the centre of the eastern wall is defined by two weathered grey, rectangular schist stones set vertically, which form the footing for the brick arch with a yellow sandstone keystone at the centre of the arch (Plate 04). The schist stones and keystone appear weathered and maybe original features or have been re-used from elsewhere in the estate grounds. The arch is comprised of modern red bricks bonded with grey cement. There are three weathered stone steps at the base of the arched entrance. The entrance has a maximum height of 3.0m and span of 2.85m.

The majority southern wall of the garden appears to be original (Plate 05), as it is in a more dilapidated, weathered state than the other sections of the garden wall, retains original features such as cast iron and round headed nails used to secure the splayed branches of trees and the brick is bonded by coarse light grey lime mortar. A section of this wall, adjacent with the slate pitch roof building in the south west corner of the garden, has been restored (Plate 06) in the same manner as the northern and eastern garden walls. This section of the southern garden wall may have been restored as it doubles as a wall of a corrugated roof outbuilding on the southern exterior of the walled garden.

The square in plan building located at the south west corner of the walled garden is predominately of red brick and lime mortar build with remnants of light grey lime mortar (Plate 07). At the time of the watching brief, the building appeared to be in the process of being renovated, as it had a new slate roof with black plastic guttering and down pipes. The building had an estimated height of 3.5m to the eaves of the roof and was 3m wide. The northern face of the building had a single glazed window set within a wooden window frame, which measured 1.28m in height and 0.95m in width. The brick below this window were larger than those used in the rest of the building measuring 0.22m in length and 0.12m in width.

The interior of the walled garden is quite even, being covered by long, rough grass, intermixed with weeds (Plate 08). There were indications of a bon fire (Plate 09) at the centre of the garden, presumably to clear the area in advance of the ground works for the tennis court. The northern half of the garden included three rows of solar panels, set on top of railway sleepers (Plate 10).

#### ****4.2 Watching Brief****

The area cleared for the tennis court had a length of 35m and width of 19m. The area of the tennis court was reduced using a 360° excavator fitted with a wide, toothless bucket (Plate 11). The spoil was loaded onto a front loading dumper, with the topsoil and subsoil being deposited in separate piles along the north eastern edge of the excavation. The topsoil consisted of a fine, cohesive mid brown silty clay that was mixed with moderate small rounded stones. It varied in depth, being 0.20m along the southern and eastern edge of the excavation and much deeper, at 0.40m, along the centre, western and northern edge of the dig. Sherds of glazed earthenware and flower pots were retrieved from the topsoil during the strip. The presence of the sherds was noted but they were not retained. During the removal of the topsoil two gravel paths, contexts [003] and [004] were uncovered along the southern and close to the northern limit of excavation.

Context [003] was a garden path that consisted of a loose light greyish blue fine gravel mixed with frequent small to moderate sized cobbles. The path had a south eastern-north western orientation, being parallel with and within 3.0m of the southern garden wall (Figure 03 & Plate 12). The bulk of the path was composed of cobbles, which was overlaid by a layer of ‘pea’ gravel, which formed the surface of the path. Context [003] had an exposed length of 16.5m, width of 0.80m and maximum depth of 0.20m (Plate 13). The path was laid on top of the subsoil, context [006]. Perpendicular to [003] was another stone path, context [004] which was composed of loose light greyish blue fine gravel mixed with frequent small to moderate sized cobbles. Context [004] was set on a northeast x southwest axis (Plate 14), with an exposed length of 19m, width of 1.10m and depth of 0.20m. It was within 7.0m of the western limit of excavation (Figure 03). The path overlaid context [005] a compact, fine orange clay with no inclusions and appeared to be bedding for context [004]. The paths appear to be contemporary, given their near identical composition and stratigraphy (the paths were below the topsoil and laid on top of the subsoil). No artefacts were recovered from contexts [003], [004] or [005].

Contexts [001], [003-005] overlaid subsoil, context [006] a loose fine mid-greyish brown clayey gravel mixed with frequent small stones and moderate small pebbles. It was present across the whole area of excavation with an average depth of 0.20m. The subsoil was removed entirely within 12m of the western edge of the limit of excavation and this exposed the underlying natural, context [002], a loose, coarse orange clayey gravel mixed with frequent small to moderate sized pebbles (Plate 15). In the remainder of the excavated area, the ground level was reduced to within but not below the level of the subsoil. Most of the subsoil that had been stripped off the western edge of the excavation was deposited, levelled and then compacted at the eastern limit to ensure a more level surface across the length of the tennis court (Plate 16). The site contractor then excavated a narrow and shallow pipe trench (maximum depth of 0.20m) along the perimeter of the tennis court to allow the insertion of a drainage pipe. This pipe trench was excavated through exposed natural or re-deposited subsoil. Based on the lack of significant archaeological remains and following consultation with the development control officer, it was determined that this work did not need to be monitored as part of the watching brief.

# 5. DISCUSSION

Further to the archaeological watching brief additional research was undertaken to provide context to the features uncovered and more information on the walled garden. The earliest depiction of the walled garden that was sourced during this research was of an estate map of Rhug dated to 1791 (Figure 04). The walled garden is clearly depicted on the estate map, with a cruciform layout of paths and an apparent structure located in the south-eastern corner. Notably the walled garden had been constructed while the earlier estate house was still extant and prior to the construction of the present house (PRN 25660). It has been suggested that the walled garden was constructed for Edward Vaughan after 1780 (Haslam R., Orbach J., Voelcker A., 2009). This would place the creation of the walled garden to the late 18th century.

The walled garden is depicted in a detailed manner on the 1860 Map of Part of the Rug Demesne (Figure 05). There are 3 summerhouses at the corners of the garden, one of which survives into the present day as a square in plan brick building in the south west corner. There are also entrances within the eastern and western walls the former corresponds with the arch described in section 4.1. The interior of the walled garden has been divided into a grid pattern by 1860.

By the time of the First Edition 25” County Series Ordnance Survey of 1875 the range of farm outbuildings to the west of the walled garden have increased in number and the western wall of the garden has apparently been demolished to make way for the new buildings (Figure 06). The interior of the garden has changed from a grid pattern to a cruciform pattern along with paths parallel with the boundaries of the garden wall. This layout corresponds with the position and location of contexts [003] and [004], which would imply that these paths or at least their layout dates from the late 19th century.

# 6. CONCLUSION

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT) was asked by Cadnant Planning, on behalf of the Rhug Estate, to conduct an archaeological watching brief of ground works associated with the construction of a tennis court within the western half of the former walled garden at Rhug.

The archaeological watching brief of the ground works uncovered the remains of two garden paths, contexts [003] and [004]. While no artefactual evidence was retrieved from the paths, given their position within the garden and an examination of a selection of historic estate maps and the First Edition 25” County Series Ordnance Survey Map, these paths are contemporary with the use of this part of the Rhug Estate as a walled garden. The paths, contexts [003] and [004] or at least their layout, date from the late 19th century, as they clearly match the routes of the paths depicted on the 1875 First Edition 25” County Series Ordnance Survey Map. Aside from the paths and bedding associated with context [004], no further archaeological deposits were found during the course of the watching brief.

The research conducted on the grounds of this part of the Rhug Estate revealed that the walled garden pre-dates the construction of the present house, as it is present on the estate map dated to 1791. This evidence along with the assertion of Haslam R., Orbach J., Voelcker A., that the walled garden may have been created after 1780, would suggest that it came into being at same stage between 1780 and 1791. The walled garden may well have been part of the re-development of the Rhug Estate in the late 18th and early 19th century, which included the replacement of the 16th century house (visible on the 1791 estate map) by the present Neoclassical mansion and extension of the fish pond. On this basis the walled garden forms an important development of the managed landscape of the Rhug Estate in the late 18th and early 19th century.

The archaeological watching brief of ground works associated with the construction of a tennis court, revealed limited evidence of the internal use of the area as a walled garden in the form of garden paths. As the majority of the interior of the tennis court was not reduced to the surface of the natural clay, there is still the potential of uncovering further archaeology in association with the walled garden. The watching brief also highlights that there may be further surviving elements of the interior of the walled garden which may be uncovered if there are additional development within the boundary of the garden.

# 7. SOURCES CONSULTED

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. 1994, *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief* (revised 2014);

First Edition 25” County Series Ordnance Survey Map. 1875;

Haslam, R., Orbach, J. and Voelcker, A. 2009, *The Buildings of Wales, Gwynedd;*

Map of the Lordship of Glyndyfrdwy and Manor of Rug, belonging to Edward Williams Vaughan Salesbury. 1791;

Map of part of the Rug Demesne. 1860.

# Appendix I

**Reproduction of Gwynedd Archaeological Trust Project Design for an Archaeological Watching Brief (July 2015)**

# Appendix II

**Reproduction of Gwynedd Archaeological Trust Photographic Metadata**

| **File reference** | **Project name** | **Project phase** | **Description** | **View from** | **Scale (s)** | **Date** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| G2434\_001.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Arch within southern wall of kitchen garden. | NW | 1m | 10/09/2015 |
| G2434\_002.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Southern wall of kitchen garden. | NW | 1m | 10/09/2015 |
| G2434\_003.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Southern wall of kitchen garden. | NW | 1m | 10/09/2015 |
| G2434\_004.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Corner building, kitchen garden. | N | 1m | 10/09/2015 |
| G2434\_005.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Corner building & door, kitchen garden. | N | 1m | 10/09/2015 |
| G2434\_006.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Western wall, kitchen garden. | NE | 1m | 10/09/2015 |
| G2434\_007.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Western wall, kitchen garden. | NE | 1m | 10/09/2015 |
| G2434\_008.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Western wall, kitchen garden. | NE | 1m | 10/09/2015 |
| G2434\_009.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Kitchen garden, pre-ex view of tennis court. | NW | - | 10/09/2015 |
| G2434\_010.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Kitchen garden, pre-ex view of tennis court. | NW | - | 10/09/2015 |
| G2434\_011.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Kitchen garden, pre-ex view of tennis court. | SE | - | 10/09/2015 |
| G2434\_012.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Location of bon fire. | SW | 1m | 10/09/2015 |
| G2434\_013.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Solar panels in kitchen garden. | SW | 1m | 10/09/2015 |
| G2434\_014.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Solar panel attached to eastern wall of kitchen garden. | W | 1m | 10/09/2015 |
| G2434\_015.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Re-built section of wall in SE corner of kitchen garden. | NW | 1m | 10/09/2015 |
| G2434\_016.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Tree stumps along the southern wall, kitchen garden. | NE | 1m | 10/09/2015 |
| G2434\_017.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Close-up of tree stumps. | NE | 1m | 10/09/2015 |
| G2434\_018.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Mound/ice-house. | N | - | 10/09/2015 |
| G2434\_019.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Mound/ice-house. | N | - | 10/09/2015 |
| G2434\_020.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Close-up of southern wall (re-built), kitchen garden. | NW | 1m | 10/09/2015 |
| G2434\_041.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Area stripped of subsoil. | W | - | 11/09/2015 |
| G2434\_042.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | View of tennis court area. | SE | - | 11/09/2015 |
| G2434\_021.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Dressed stone base of arch in southern wall, kitchen garden. | NW | 1m | 10/09/2015 |
| G2434\_022.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | View of Rhug Hall. | SW | - | 11/09/2015 |
| G2434\_023.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | View of Rhug Hall. | SW | - | 11/09/2015 |
| G2434\_024.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Topsoil strip of tennis court. | SE | - | 11/09/2015 |
| G2434\_025.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Topsoil strip of tennis court. | SW | 1m | 11/09/2015 |
| G2434\_026.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Topsoil strip of tennis court. | NW | - | 11/09/2015 |
| G2434\_027.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Topsoil strip of tennis court. | SW | - | 11/09/2015 |
| G2434\_028.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Section of path [004]. | NE | - | 11/09/2015 |
| G2434\_029.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Route of path [004] (portrait view). | SW | 1m | 11/09/2015 |
| G2434\_030.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Route of path [004] (landscape view) | SW | 1m | 11/09/2015 |
| G2434\_031.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Close-up of disturbed surface of path [004]. | NW | 1m | 11/09/2015 |
| G2434\_032.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Layer [005]. | NW | 1m | 11/09/2015 |
| G2434\_033.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Shot of path [003]. | SE | 1m | 11/09/2015 |
| G2434\_034.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Close-up of path [003]. | SE | 1m | 11/09/2015 |
| G2434\_035.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Subsoil strip of tennis court. | NW | - | 11/09/2015 |
| G2434\_036.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | NE facing section through [003]. | NE | 1m | 11/09/2015 |
| G2434\_037.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | NE facing section through [003]. | NE | 1m | 11/09/2015 |
| G2434\_038.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | NW corner of the tennis court stripped. | SE | 1m | 11/09/2015 |
| G2434\_039.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Subsoil strip of the tennis court. | NW | - | 11/09/2015 |
| G2434\_040.jpg | Rhug Hall Corwen | Watching Brief | Subsoil strip of the tennis court. | NW | - | 11/09/2015 |