

## PLAS GWYN

<b>Ref No</b>	PGW (Gd) 47 (ANG)
<b>OS Map</b>	114
<b>Grid Ref</b>	SH 529 782
<b>Former County</b>	Gwynedd
<b>Unitary Authority</b>	Anglesey
<b>Community Council</b>	Pentraeth
<b>Designations</b>	Listed buildings: House II*, rear wing II. Environmentally sensitive area.
<b>Site Evaluation</b>	<b>Grade II</b>

**Primary reasons for grading** Eighteenth-century site with nineteenth-century alterations which retains much of its original style and atmosphere.

**Type of Site** Terrace and lawn with shrubbery, woodland walk, walled garden, set in parkland with woods.

**Main Phases of Construction** Eighteenth century, nineteenth century.

### SITE DESCRIPTION

Plas Gwyn, which lies in its park in the angle of the Bangor and Beaumaris roads at Pentraeth, is a three-storey, red brick house with a shallow-pitched slate roof. It faces slightly east of north, and has a typical Georgian facade, symmetrical with a central door with classical columns either side, and a pediment; there is also a plain brick pediment at roof level. The central third of the facade projects slightly, and there is one window either side of the door at ground-floor level in this portion, with a further two windows beyond on each side; the remaining two floors each have seven windows, those on the top floor being only half the size of the others. All the windows are white-painted sashes. There is a date-stone of 1742, and the house was built for William Jones.

The east, or garden, front has a three-sided projecting central bay, and seven full-height windows at ground floor level; the windows on the other floors are as on the north front. The building is clearly of one period, and seems to have been the first house on the site, although two outbuildings, perhaps belonging to an earlier farm, have dates in the 1730s. The Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales describes the house as 'a unique example of a brick-built Georgian mansion of English type in Anglesey'.

At the rear (south) of the house is a square cobbled yard, mended with concrete, the west side of which is formed by a long, narrow outbuilding joined to the house at the north end. The yard is reached by steps (made of stone, slate and concrete) down from the south, and the shrubbery east of these is at a higher level than the yard, behind a retaining wall with iron railings; clearly the site for the house and yard must have been levelled, cutting into the ridge behind. There is a small brick building (former WC?) in the corner of the yard, and a large coal bunker by the steps, with a chute down from above them.

All the rest of the buildings, including the farm buildings, are very close to the house, to the west. The non-agricultural buildings, except for the stables, are in a long range running almost north-south, separated from the west side of the house by a narrow and irregularly-shaped yard, now mostly concrete and rough gravel, but with bedrock showing through in places and some areas of cobbling remaining. On the other side of this range is a triangular yard between it and the farm buildings, which is sloping, and the surface is bare rock. The building on the south-west of the range is rounded off, so as not to protrude into the drive space.

At the entrance to the long, narrow yard from the south, where the drive formerly came in, there is one large sub-square gatepost built of dressed stone, and with gate fittings still attached. The other side of this gateway seems already to have been removed by 1919.

The stable block is a detached, stone-built, rectangular building with a shallow-pitched slate roof and sash windows, dated 1777. It is two-storeyed and the style is very similar to that of the house; the stables were clearly deliberately designed to sympathise with it. There is a wide central arch on to a recessed porch, with doors off either side into the harness room and stables. There is a central room at the rear which was probably a groom's room, and living quarters upstairs. The stables are at the northern end, on the west side, of the long yard west of the house, where the original drive from the north came in.

A plaque over the door bears the inscription 'Paul Panton 1731 - 1797 Hynafiaethydd (Antiquary)', and must obviously have been added later; Paul Panton (son-in-law of William Jones, who built the house) was, however, the builder of the stables. There is a mounting block outside at the foot of the steps to the upper floor, which are on the south end of the building.

The kennels are at the north end of the main range, separated from the stables by an alleyway. There is a small yard within a stone wall with iron railings on top attached to a small stone building with a slate roof with skylights let in. The yard is also subdivided by railings, and there are small entrances without doors from the building to the pens thus created. There is brickwork around these entrances, and the kennels are probably a conversion, rather than being purpose-built. They are still in use.

The rest of this range, south from the kennels, consists of, first, cottages, and then a cart or carriage house with two double doors and a lean-to on the end with another double door. The cottages are rendered and are very regular, but may have been converted from farm buildings.

The carriage house, formerly stables, has brick over and between the doors, which are very close together, but stone above that. The lean-to is pebbledashed and, like the cottages and kennels, painted white; all the roofs are slate. In front of the carriage house and lean-to extension, a good cobbled surface with drain remains on the yard. There are further extensions on the back of this range, which is dated 1734 (the lean-to at the end is early nineteenth century).

The alleyway between the kennels and the stables leads through to a small raised yard behind, from where there is a view down into a small garden belonging to the cottages. In this is a twisted iron rose arch which must have come from the walled garden.

An eighteenth-century barn, which is long, stone-built with slate roof and slit windows, and in very good condition, lies between the house and the walled garden, south-east of the rest of the farm buildings, and is linked to the range of buildings attached to the walled garden. This slightly anomalous position probably does not imply anything other than normal agricultural use, although the barn may be older than the rest of the agricultural buildings; but it brings it into a relationship with the house, garden and other outbuildings which is different from that of the other farm buildings. The tithe map (undated, but probably of the 1840s) appears to show the walled garden and this barn, but not the present range of garden buildings, although one of these is dated 1737 on a beam.

The park is roughly triangular, and the house lies near the centre of it, facing north. The geography of the site is a kind of stepped ridge, with a dip or shallow valley in the middle; on the west is a fairly steeply sloping area, with outcropping rocks and vegetation including gorse and other heathy species, which narrows to a point at the village of Pentraeth, between the Bangor and Beaumaris roads. Despite the somewhat unpromising terrain, this has been made into fairly successful parkland, with mixed deciduous trees planted in groups in the lower, more sheltered places, and dotted about even on top of the ridge. It is, however, somewhat divorced from the house and garden, being screened by a belt of trees all along the west side of the rear drive, which runs along the dip or little valley.

There are two main drives, from the south (Bangor to Amlwch road) and the east (Beaumaris road), and a rear drive to the farm from further west on the Beaumaris road. The south drive is the older of the two main drives, and originally ran straight for a short distance, heading north-east, then zig-zagged around internal boundaries within the park to approach the house from the back. During the 1840s this was changed, a new, smoothly curving drive almost 1 km long being laid out, which swept round the lawn on the east to approach the front of the house; the old drive gradually fell out of use.

At about the same time the original drive from the Beaumaris road, which was roughly parallel with the farm drive but further east, was abandoned and the lodge demolished, and a new, longer drive with a more elaborate lodge and gates made from a point near the north-eastern corner of the park. This met the south drive on the north edge of the lawn. A loop was constructed north of the house, utilising the end of the former north drive, to allow access to the stables, which remained in their original position on the west side of the long yard where both old drives terminated.

The drive from Beaumaris lodge is now disused, and it is not even easy to see where it branched off, at the house end. From the other end, it is tarmac-surfaced into the lodge garden, then there is a gate across it and beyond this it can be seen crossing the park as a grass-surfaced track. The former north drive does not show up in the grass, but the gateways at either end of it survive.

The south drive remains in use, and is tarmac-surfaced from the entrance to the gravelled area around the house.

The lodges are dissimilar in style, though both are single-storey, rendered buildings with slate roofs and central chimneys, painted white. The older south lodge, known as Bangor Lodge, was built before 1818 and has plain gables with decorative barge-boards and a small porch.

Beaumaris Lodge has curly 'Dutch' gables and the porch is in the middle of the side facing the road.

Both entrances are flanked by low walls with white-painted iron railings on top and simple, square, dressed stone gateposts with low pyramidal caps. The entrance to the rear drive now has no gate, but retains its plain stone gateposts, each cut from a single block. The former entrance to the north drive has similar gateposts, and an iron gate similar to the one at the other end of the former drive, leading into the park north of the house. There is also a gate from the garden area into the park at the point where the old drive from the south used to come in. These three are all attractive iron gates, in two different styles, painted black, but are probably fairly modern.

East of the farm drive, filling the rest of the dip, are two small fields, and, at the south end, the orchard area (now a vegetable garden) immediately north of the farm buildings. These two fields are not visible from the house because of the lie of the land and the woods to the north, and do not appear ever to have been treated as part of the park; their close relationship with the farm buildings makes it likely that they have always been paddocks.

East of the dip is another, fairly sharp, ridge, which then levels out into a gentle slope, but still with occasional outcrops in the northern part. The house is built on top of this, and east of it is a large circular lawn surrounded by shrubberies, which is skirted by the drive from the south; the drive from the east came in on the north side of this lawn. North of the house, the top of the ridge is deciduous woodland, and the former north drive used to approach along the eastern edge of this wood.

East of the house, garden and wood there is more parkland, of a gentler, greener kind. The area of this to the north-east is overlooked by the house, but to the south, where it cannot be seen, part of it has become regular fields. All the parkland is still grazed by sheep and the survival rate of the specimen trees is good, replacements presumably having been regularly supplied, so that the park retains its original appearance. The parkland rises towards the east, and as the slope becomes steeper it is crowned with more woods.

William Jones, who built the house, was descended from an ancient, local Welsh family; the

surname Jones had become fixed by the seventeenth century, when a Rowland Jones is recorded. William's new house passed to the husband of his daughter Jane, Paul Panton of Bagillt, in 1755, and subsequently to their second son Jones Panton, following the death of his elder brother Paul. Jones Panton had a large family of sons and daughters but the line failed in the next generation, and Plas Gwyn eventually went to a granddaughter, who married a Captain Thomas Webb, and to her descendants.

A series of maps dated from 1822 to the present day show how little the site has changed during that period. During the 1840s the route of the south drive was altered, to remove some sharp corners and give a more pleasingly curved approach, sweeping round the lawn to the front of the house. The original route is now disused but the end of it, which came to the back of the house, still gives access to the park. At the same time the east drive was constructed and Beaumaris Lodge built, replacing a shorter drive from the north. Some of the woodland was probably also planted during this period.

By 1891 the range of buildings attached to the walled garden had been built, and it may have been between the 1840s and 1891 that the western area of park was developed, as some field boundaries were removed in this area. It was certainly parkland by 1891. A pheasantry is indicated on the far side of the main road from Bangor Lodge at this time, but this seems to have gone already by 1900. By 1914 further shrubberies had been added round the lawn and a small field north of the farm buildings had become an orchard. A small part of the park east of the walled garden had been taken into the garden, and had a walk along it, with a sundial. Numerous glasshouses had been built in the walled garden.

Today the glasshouses are gone again, and the strip of garden on the east has had a tennis court built on it, which in turn has become disused. The orchard has become a vegetable garden and the walled garden a nursery, and much of its internal layout has been lost. However, the boundaries of the site and the main elements of the layout within them remain the same.

The woodland to the north of the house (shown on the 1822 map) may originally have been planted as shelter for the drive, which at one time approached the house along its eastern edge, following the ridge on which the house stands. After the drive was moved further to the east, the woodland was retained as part of the garden, with a path offering a circular walk within the woods, and another leading off to the north. These paths do not appear on the 25-in Ordnance Survey map of 1919, but a path at least partly following the same route can be traced today. There is also an ice-house in the wood, built into the side of the ridge.

The lawn east of the house has always been surrounded by shrubberies, with a circular walk round the lawn. Late in the nineteenth or early in the twentieth century further bands of shrubbery were added to the outside, although no new paths were made. The path around the lawn has by now almost disappeared, although the way through to it from the direction of the kitchen garden remains in use. The shrubberies are very dense, mostly evergreen, and now contain self-sown trees, but have not been allowed to escape control and so probably still look much as they were intended to. Some conifers survive in the southern part of this area.

Across the lawn, opposite the house, there are ornamental trees with rhododendrons below. From the terrace in front of the house these fill a large part of the view, the rest being over the parkland to the north-east. The terrace is a simple grass one, with a shallow flight of steps up its grass slope and a central path across it from the house.

The area east of the walled garden, which was fenced off from the park between 1891 and 1919, is now rather neglected, with a disused tennis court occupying about half of it. There is also some shrubbery and a few trees, but the path which used to run along the outside of the garden wall has gone.

The ice-house, which is well preserved, is dug into the side of the ridge to the north of the house and faces north. It has a brick tunnel entrance with an arched roof, with soil mounded over the part of it which is built above ground. The passage originally had three doors, and the chamber is circular or oval. Although it is mostly underground, there is a circular built-up area on the side of the ridge, which clearly marks its site. It has a small rectangular forecourt with two or three slate steps down to the entrance.

The walled garden to the south-west of the house, over an acre in extent, was obviously once an important part of the garden, with an ornamental function almost as important as its practical one. It is now used as a nursery and its function as a kitchen garden has been taken over by the smaller area north of the farm buildings which was formerly an orchard.

The walled garden is about twice as long as it is wide, orientated almost north-south. The eighteenth-century hand-made brick walls still stand to a height of about 3.5 m, with a flat slate coping. They have been altered in places at the north end, but the walls are in remarkably good condition.

There are entrances in the centre of the south wall, off-centre in the west wall and near the north end of the east wall; all have wooden doors and all look as if they have been inserted, or altered.

There is a range of buildings along the north end of the garden, and the original wall remains only on the east side of them. The range includes the gardener's cottage and a small barn and other outbuildings, and its south wall was used to lean the glasshouses against; this is clear both from the 1919 map and from the design of the wall itself. However, the 6-in. Ordnance Survey map of 1861 shows the range of buildings, but no glass, so the buildings probably had their back (south) walls altered between this date and 1919, to accommodate the glass. The small barn to the west of the cottage is dated 1737 on a beam, but as it does not appear to be shown on the tithe map of the 1840s, it is possible that the beam is not in its original position. The boiler house was at the west end of the glasshouses, and its end wall and chimney remain. This wall is of hand-made brick like the garden walls, but as it is much later perhaps brick from the north wall was re-used.

A door through the wall east of this range leads into a little, odd-shaped smithy with its own small yard on the north side; west of the range there is a gap, partly filled by a greenhouse. The

top of this is entirely modern but the base, with brick raised borders inside, is much older, and presumably belongs to the glasshouse shown in this position on the 1919 map.

The space filled by the main range of glasshouses along the north wall was later occupied by modern greenhouses which could be slid along on rails, so there is little left of the original footings, and these greenhouses have also now gone. The area is used partly for plant storage and also has paths and plantings.

South of this area is a large brick frame base, of different and more recent brick than the garden walls; this is shown on the 1919 map. The lights are now missing. The same map shows a long range of glasshouses occupying almost half of the west wall and a fairly large, square glasshouse to the north of them; whitewash on the walls and footings on the ground confirm the positions of all of these. The area of the square glasshouse is now occupied by a recently-made pond and a frame which still has its lights, and part of the long range was made into a modern greenhouse about 30 years ago, but this too has now lost much of its glass.

The original layout, shown on the 1891 map, is quite well preserved by surviving box hedging, with cross and perimeter paths. The paths are now grassed over but may have been gravelled, and there is a very good survival rate of box - there were hedges both sides of the paths and along the north edge, south of the glasshouse range (possibly planted later, after this range was erected). The northern part of the outer hedge of the path along the west edge must have been removed when the glasshouses there were built, and there is no box along the southern edge of the garden.

Where the central paths cross there is just a simple cross-roads, but there are two old twisted iron rose arches, one very bent, on the west arm of the cross path. There is another of these where the north-south central path meets the hedge along the north end, and a fourth in a small garden belonging to the cottages west of the house; possibly they were originally all four at this crossing, one over the entrance to each path.

The box edging the northern part of the central north-south path has survived less well, but what remains here suggests that it curved out round the brick-lined well which is about half way between the central cross and the edge of the glasshouse site. The well still holds water, and there is a slate water tank partly over it. The brick of the lining is the same as that of the garden walls.

Apart from the box, there seems to be little old or original planting. One fairly old fruit tree survives in the orchard area, but none against the walls, although a tall walnut tree leans over from outside - there is a wooded area beyond the garden which does not appear to have any footpaths. The garden was used as a pheasantry before it became a nursery, which would have been detrimental to any surviving plants.

North of the range of buildings there is a further small area of garden contained within a curving stone wall which runs westwards from the end of the long barn and meets the brick wall of the garden, curving round to the east. There is another greenhouse against this wall, again on the

base of one shown on the 1919 map, with a stone-edged path leading to it. To the east of it is the main entrance gate, wrought iron under a brick arch in the stone wall; a wide gravel path leads from this to a gravel area around the gardener's cottage, with a small lawn to the east where the sundial plinth now is. Beyond this is another stone wall with eyes for climbers separating this small garden from the gravelled yard in front of the smithy, to the east; there is a gateway through.

The cottage is two-storey, brick, rendered and whitewashed with a slate roof and a verandah along the north and west sides supported on elegant pillars. There is slate and concrete paving under this. The barn to the west and sheds and smithy to the east are single-storey, also whitewashed.

The former orchard area, north of the farm buildings, is an irregular shape and is shown on the 1919 map as orchard, but appears blank on the 1891 map. It has a collapsing field wall on the north, between it and the neighbouring small field, but a wall about 2.5 m high on the farmyard side, and a lower one with a doorway through it leading out to the farm drive on the west (now disused). Access now is via a modern wooden door from the farmyard, and the layout as a vegetable garden is modern, with narrow gravelled paths. There are no orchard trees remaining, but one mature cypress. In the north-east corner is a small derelict building through which a disused yard and more derelict buildings can be reached; one of these may perhaps have been a fruit store. There are also the footings of a brick building within the garden space, but this is not shown on the 1919 map.

## **Sources**

### **Primary**

Information from Ms M. Prendiville

Ordnance Survey 2-in. manuscript map for 1st edition 1-in. map

Tithe map (1840s), Anglesey Archives, Llangefni

Ordnance Survey National Archaeological Record cards, Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

Panton papers in Flintshire Record Office, Hawarden

### **Secondary**

Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments, *Inventory*, Anglesey (1937)