

GLYN CYWARCH

Ref No	PGW (Gd) 28 (GWY)
OS Map	124
Grid Ref	SH 608 343
Former County	Gwynedd
Unitary Authority	Gwynedd
Community Council	Talsarnau
Designations	Listed buildings: house Grade II*, gatehouse Grade II; Snowdonia National Park
Site Evaluation	Grade II*

Primary reasons for grading A fine early seventeenth-century manor house with contemporary gatehouse and terraced garden. An adjacent walled garden may also be contemporary in part. The situation of the house and surrounding parkland takes full advantage of the natural scenery, which is enhanced by ornamental planting and can be enjoyed from a nineteenth-century lookout tower.

Type of Site Small semi-formal garden, walled kitchen garden, park and extensive woodland.

Main Phases of Construction Seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, twentieth-century plantings.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Glyn Cywarch lies on the edge of the hills to the west of the Morfa Harlech plain, a few miles to the north-east of Harlech. It is situated towards the north-east end of the valley which forms the core of its park. The house lies on a fairly level site which allows it to look down the valley and also have a view to the west. The house receives some shelter from higher ground to the south-west. This and the presence of a good water supply may have been the chief reasons for the choice of site, but there is little doubt that aesthetic considerations were also involved.

The present house was built in 1616 and has massively-built stone walls and a slate roof. It is three-storeyed, the top floor being lit by mullioned dormer windows with ball-topped finials; the rest of the original windows are mullioned and transomed, with sandstone surrounds.

The main facade is on the south-east, facing a gatehouse, and there is a north-west wing at

right-angles, which appears to be later, and a two-storeyed extension to the north-east which has a dormer similar to those on the main house. This, however, is probably copied, and the extension is likely to date from the 1870s, when the dormers were also copied on the stable buildings. A drawing of the south-east front by Moses Griffith, dated 1805, does not show this extension, but the gable end of a taller building behind, which must have been demolished. Interestingly, at this time there were also walls joining the house on either side, continuing the line of the main front, each with a door through near the corner of the house.

Restoration work done in 1870-76 was carried out fairly sensitively, and apart from this the original building has largely escaped alteration, so preserving most of its original features. It is comparable with the house of almost exactly the same date at Plas Berw on Anglesey, and the marked similarities have led to the suggestion that the same person may have been involved in the design, though the two houses are geographically quite well separated.

The house was originally approached from the south-east, via the gatehouse, but later a new drive was made on the west and the north-west became the entrance front. This was probably to avoid the walk from the gatehouse to the house, as the original entrance was not designed for use by vehicles.

The gatehouse, which has an off-centre passage through with three floors above, is contemporary with the house, which it faces across a garden courtyard south-east of the house. It has a slate roof with gables on all four sides and two chimneys, and the windows are mullioned in sandstone. There is also a room on the ground floor, beside the passageway. Either side is a two-storey wing, providing stables on one side and coach house on the other; these do not appear to be original, having more regular stonework, but have the same dormers as the house - clearly copied as they contain date-stones of 1871 and 1877. Because of these dates the wings have been described as having been added during the restorations of the 1870s, but in fact they are shown in a drawing by Moses Griffith dated 1805, though with a lower roofline. It is more likely therefore that they were added in the eighteenth century and altered in the 1870s.

In front of the gatehouse (on the south-east) is a rectangular forecourt, now unsurfaced but with some remaining areas of an old surface of stone setts. The forecourt is stone-walled to north-east and south-west, and along the south-east side runs the drive, with a stone edging on the far side, amounting to a low retaining wall in places. The north and south drives meet here but are continuous.

There is a stone mounting block either side of the passageway through the gatehouse, and a wooden door on the outer end, matching the doors of the coach house and possibly dating from the 1870s.

Glyn Cottage is a fairly large, plain, two-storey house built of random rubble, with a slate roof, which appears to be of some age - perhaps eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century. It appears to be shown on the 2-in. manuscript map for the first edition 1-in. Ordnance Survey map, which was surveyed in about 1819. It lies in the park to the south-west of the house and was probably the gamekeeper's house. Some disused buildings just to the south-east of it are

the remains of a pheasantry. The house is surrounded by its own garden, which has a low dry-stone wall with a slate coping along the front. There is also some old box hedging behind.

The home farm is of nineteenth-century date, and may have been built at the same time as the new drive was made. It is sited conveniently close to the house, but almost out of sight, at the foot of a fairly steep slope immediately to the north.

The estate originally belonged to a branch of the Wynn family. The house was built by William Wynn in 1616 (his initials and those of his wife Katharine, together with the date, are over the door), but was probably not the first house on the site as Robert Wynn, who died in 1592, is mentioned in documents as 'of Glyn'. William's granddaughter Margaret, who was his eventual heiress, married Sir Robert Owen of Clenenney and Brogyntyn, whose mother was Catherine Anwyl of Parc. At the time of Thomas Pennant's *Tour in Wales* (1784), a grandson of this marriage, Robert Godolphin Owen, was in residence at Glyn, and entertained Pennant, who calls him a 'kinsman'. Pennant describes Glyn as being in a well-wooded 'Romantic bottom', a perfectly valid description today. For most of the eighteenth century, however, the family were resident at Brogyntyn, and Glyn was used by their local agent. From early in the nineteenth century, it began to be used for summer visits.

The Robert with whom Pennant stayed and his two brothers all seem to have died childless, and it was their sister, another Margaret, who inherited the combined estates. She married Owen Ormsby of Dublin, whose mother was a member of the Wynn family of Gwydir. Once again the property descended to a daughter, Mary Jane Ormsby, who married William Gore. Their children were known as Ormsby-Gore, and the eldest son was created Baron Harlech in 1876, which may suggest that by this time the family were living at Glyn for at least part of the time, particularly in view of the fact that restoration work was carried out during the 1870s. This, however, seems to have been done with a light hand, and with care to remain in keeping with the original buildings. Little had been done during the eighteenth century, when the family were not using the house, and as a result the seventeenth-century house has survived remarkably unchanged. The first Baron Harlech's heiress was his daughter Fanny, and although she could not inherit the title (which went to her uncle), she inherited Glyn, which remained separated from the title for some time. House and title are now reunited under the present Lord Harlech.

The park lies in and around a steep, narrow valley orientated south-west/north-east and is more than half wooded. There are three drives, from the north, south-west and west, of which the first two are in fact continuous, running past the yard in front of the gatehouse. The unsurfaced west drive is clearly much later, but had been made by 1900, and is likely to be contemporary with the restorations and improvements of the 1870s. It branches off a track leading to Glyn Cottage and into the park, and this track and its entrance from the road were almost certainly pre-existing.

The north drive, now disused and partly overgrown, leaves the road just south of the bridge over the Afon Glyn. Its entrance gates are set back in a semi-circular bay off the road. There is a single red-painted central gate, with a pedestrian gate each side; the gateposts, of single

slabs, are decoratively finished and have chapel-window tops. The gates are set in a curving mortared wall of roughly-dressed stone with a flat slab coping. The drive heads eastwards and then swings round to the south-west, skirting an area of woodland, including a fine stand of cypresses, north of the home farm. The other side is open to the park, with iron fencing. A few specimen trees are planted next to the drive and there are flanking plantings of rhododendron, laurel and box. Passing the back entrance to the farm, the drive ascends gently, going due south, to the yard south-east of the gatehouse. Next to the drive is a huge, ancient oak. Here there is a wide grass verge on the west with a little stream flowing along it, which emerges at the edge of the rose garden after running under it and the forecourt. It has several small artificial waterfalls, which create a pleasant sound. The stream runs away to the west, towards the farm buildings.

From the far side of the forecourt by the gatehouse the stony-surfaced south-west drive leads out, skirting the walled garden (at a much higher level and curving around the south end of the tennis court area on a causeway, the ground being very damp in the bottom of the valley). On the other side of the valley a track branches off back towards the glasshouse area. The drive runs south-westwards along the north-west side of the valley bottom for over 1 km, flanked in places by rhododendrons and conifer plantations, until it finally reaches the road, where the valley widens out. The last stretch is also the beginning of a track up to some disused mine buildings and adits. The drive is cut into the slope where necessary, with a retaining wall around 1 m high on the lower side, planted with a row of mature beech trees, for some distance. The lodge at the entrance is L-shaped and two-storeyed, built of roughly-dressed dark grey stone and dated 1878. The gateposts are square-sectioned and unadorned, each cut from a single slab of stone. The gate, of wood and iron and painted dark red, is of the same design as that at the entrance to the north drive. There is a pedestrian gate on the lodge side.

The 1900 25-in. Ordnance Survey map shows an extensive system of tracks in the large forested area south-west of the house, some of which were undoubtedly service tracks, although others may have been rides. Few of these now remain, and the forestry tracks which do exist only partially utilise the earlier layout. Several paths which formerly crossed the park are also now disused, but one leading south-eastwards from the gatehouse forecourt remains, as does the path up to the lookout tower, leading off the south-west drive. This is quite narrow but well built, zig-zagging on the steep slope to preserve a reasonable gradient, and cut into the hillside to offer a level surface. There are steps at the steepest points, and this steeper top part remains very clear, although lower down the path is harder to follow and difficult to pick up coming up from the drive. There is also a rough path from the gate to the lookout tower to a gate into the park on the far (west) side of the relatively recent plantation on the top of the hill just above the tower.

The parkland is divided into two separate areas: between the top of the ridge on the north-western side of the valley and the road, and to the east of the house. The management of these two areas is quite different. The former, which is much the larger area, is divided into roughly rectangular enclosures and is regularly ploughed for re-seeding; there are no trees dotted around it, and none are indicated on the 1900 map. There are, however, trees on the field boundaries and the road edge. The smaller eastern area is on a steeper slope, except for the northernmost part, by the Afon Glyn, which is rather boggy, and is used for grazing, rarely

being ploughed. There are specimen trees scattered over it, of several different sorts, both coniferous and deciduous.

The wooded part of the park occupies the valley south-west of the garden, the steep slopes up both sides and much of the hillside away to the south-east. The part nearest the house is full of ornamental plantings and forms a backdrop to the garden, while much of the rest is now commercial conifer plantations.

On top of the ridge to the south-west of the house, in the edge of the woodland, is a look-out tower dated 1881. It is stone-built, circular, about 4 m in internal diameter and 6 m high. There is a viewing platform on the top with a low, battlemented parapet, which is reached by stone steps and wooden stairs at the back; the lower floor is open-fronted, facing south-east. It is whitewashed inside, including the floor, and has green-painted iron pillars supporting the roof on the open side. There are a couple of steps down from the interior to a path around, with a low curved parapet wall of mortared stone. There is a small wooden gate in the wall from the park, but the main route to the tower is by a footpath leading up from the south-west drive.

The view from the tower is panoramic and magnificent. To the south Harlech castle is visible over the woodland; to the east and north the woods clothe the valley side and hill slopes; to the west and north-west what is potentially the best view, over the park to the sea and the Dwyryd estuary, with the hills of Llyn beyond, has been obscured by a plantation of trees. The whole plantation is post-1900, and it looks as though a gap was originally left so as not to block the view from the tower, but a row of conifers has since been planted across this, and there are some self-sown deciduous trees.

The oldest part of the garden is undoubtedly the terrace along the south-east front of the house, and the associated areas to the south-east of it. These are probably contemporary with the house. The nearly square lawn between the gatehouse and the house, bisected by the main approach path, has been levelled, and its relationship with the two buildings means that it must be contemporary. The rose garden to the north-east, at a lower level, seems to be tightly tied in with this area and the terrace, and is therefore probably also original, although the present layout is much later.

The kitchen garden to the south-west may also be early, though possibly not at its present size. Its north-east wall retains the levelled area between house and gatehouse, and though this has been rebuilt there must have been a retaining wall from the start, which would have encouraged the development of a walled garden on the lower, south-west-facing, side.

These areas comprise the main part of the garden, but there is an especially attractive feature in the treatment of the small stream entering the garden from the park to the south-east, and flowing down its little valley opposite the gatehouse forecourt; this has been judiciously dammed to create a series of small waterfalls, and there is an ornamental bridge and a rockery (possibly later), together with plantings of trees and shrubs. This seems likely to have been done in the later nineteenth century, but it could be earlier if the rockery is not contemporary.

A small rockery at the back of the main terrace, which blends into a shrubbery to the north, has a nineteenth-century look to it, and the shrubbery south-west of the lawn on the north-west side of the house seems to have been laid out after the 1900 map was drawn, but looks Victorian, so probably dates from the early years of the twentieth century. Later twentieth-century additions have been made to the south-west, in almost the only remaining available space, where there is a tennis court and a now overgrown rhododendron dell. New planting continues, however, and the garden has not stagnated.

The broad, gravelled, terrace walk extends some distance to the north-east of the house, stopping where the ground begins to fall away. There are steps down from it into the rose garden and on to another wide walk leading to the gatehouse, aligned on the house front door and the passage through the latter.

On the north-west side of the terrace walk is the garden front of the house, with a narrow slate-edged border along it, and to the north of the house a grass slope down to a small lawned area in front of the extension, which is set further back. Beyond this is an offset cross path, leading north-westwards around the back of the house, and to a path along the front of the extension to a door in the corner. In the opposite direction it leads down steps into the rose garden. Beyond this is the small, rather overgrown rockery. The south-east side of the terrace is defined by a grass slope the whole way along, which runs down to the top of a retaining wall above the rose garden and, to the south, to a lawned area in between the house and gatehouse.

The kitchen garden wall runs along the south-west side of the lawned area between house and gatehouse, and there are borders along this wall and along the back of the coach house and stables either side of the gatehouse. On the north-east side there is a retaining wall (with no parapet), the rose garden being at a lower level. There is a border below this, on the rose garden side, but not at the top.

The rose garden is sub-square and is lawned, with rose beds laid out in a square pattern of four shaped beds around a central circle. A path from the small gate to the garden off the north drive leads along the south-west side of the garden to the steps up to the terrace. There was also a path around the east side of the rose garden, meeting up with one coming down off the rockery, but this is now disused. The rose garden appears sunken, and this effect is achieved by levelling down to the level of the drive to the east.

The stream from the little valley with waterfalls runs under the courtyard and most of the rose garden and reappears at the north-east corner of the latter. The 1900 map seems to show it simply reappearing in a normal-width channel, but an attempt has been made since to create a pool by widening this, and the edges have been decorated with stone and quartz. There is a sluice where a leat leads off towards the farm, just within the shrubbery.

Beyond the walled kitchen garden, to the south-west, is a tennis court, which, like the kitchen garden, takes advantage of the flat floor of the valley. It is hard-surfaced and disused. The area to its south-west, on the other side of the drive, now somewhat overgrown, was formerly a

shrubbery planted with many species and varieties of rhododendron, and other shrubs. It lies in the valley bottom where a small stream makes the ground boggy, and to make it both more suitable for planting and more attractive, several small water channels were created, with planting in between. The remains of some of these can still be seen, although they are no longer fully functional; much of the planting survives. This feature is not shown on the 1900 map and, like some of the other areas of planting, is probably relatively recent.

In front of what is now the entrance front of the house, on the west, not aligned with the house, is a lawned area beside the gravelled drive and turning space. This is enclosed on all sides - by the house and the wall linking it with the greenhouse area on the east; a shrubbery on the south; a holly hedge separating it from the park on the west; and, beyond the drive on the north, a row of young cypresses, which replace a strip of shrubbery indicated on the 1900 map. One or two quite young ornamental trees are planted in the lawn.

The shrubbery area to the south is stone-edged, and there is an edged path leading into it. In 1900 this shrubbery seemed to be only an extension of the plantation to the south, and the flowering shrubs probably date from after this time, but within it then was a small building, perhaps a summer house, to which the path led. There seems to be nothing left of this now, but the path quickly becomes overgrown and impassable, and it may be that the foundations of the building survive in the depths of the undergrowth.

At the back of the house (the north-east side), the ground falls away rather sharply, and there is an awkward little area here which is mostly on a very steep slope. Extensions or outbuildings may have been demolished at the top. At present it is accessible through a modern archway and door from the turning space in front of the north-west side of the house, and via a path running north-west from the terrace walk on the other side.

At the top of the slope, along the back of the house, there is a rough but level revetted walk, and the path coming round from the terrace is stone-edged. A sloping, box-edged path leads off this, northwards down to the farm, and a flight of steps from the back door goes down to join this path. North-west of the house there is a slightly curved wall retaining the area in front of the north-west side of the house; this probably dates from the same period as the west drive. The slope down to the farm was wooded in 1900 but has since been cleared and is now overgrown with scrubby vegetation. No features, other than the path, are visible.

To the south-west of the house is a small rectangular lawn, level and revetted with brick and stone walling, skirted by the path leading round from the north-west side of the house. This is the site of a large conservatory shown on the 1900 map. There is now a border against the rear wall, containing shrubs and climbers.

The rectangular kitchen garden lies to the south-west of the house and covers about three-quarters of an acre, occupying the flat bottom of the valley. It is stone-walled all round, the walls on the north- and south-east being retaining walls for most of their height; the levelled area between the house and gatehouse is to the north-east and the inner end of the south-west drive to the south-east. The site is very sheltered.

The kitchen garden has been altered at various times but part at least is likely to be early. On the 2-in. manuscript map for the Ordnance Survey 1-in. first edition, dated about 1819, the garden appears to be smaller, extending less far to the south-west; but obvious rebuilding is visible in the walls at the north-eastern end of the garden.

The main entrance is via a wrought-iron gate at the south-west end of the terrace, hung on slim stone posts each made from a single block of stone, with an integral stone ball on the top. The gate is fairly modern but the posts are probably much older. Within this gate is a flight of steps down to the level of the interior of the garden. There are other entrances in the east corner, from the gatehouse forecourt; in the north-west side, from the glasshouse area; and at the end of the central path, in the south-west wall, from the tennis court area.

The walls have clearly undergone alteration at various times, and several different styles of building are visible. What is probably original walling at the north-east end consists of fairly thin, grey, mortared slabs with a flat stone coping. There is a clear joint either side of the main entrance gate, and to the east of this the wall is higher and built of a redder stone with more rounded shapes, and has a machined slate coping. Towards the east corner it is different again, built of large, regular dressed stone blocks with an overhanging flat stone coping; this is like the masonry of the stable wing and may be contemporary with it.

The south-east wall is about 2.2 m - 2.5 m high and is dry-stone, built of random shaped stones. It is very thick at the bottom, no doubt due to the fact that it acts as a retaining wall for the drive above. The south-west wall is also dry-stone, up to 2 m high, and with flat stones laid on top as a rough coping. The north-west wall is about the same height as the south-east, but in a different style, being mortared and built of thinner slabs, with a flat coping. It has, however, been rebuilt towards the north-east end, where it is higher, around 3 m. There are young fruit trees against it here.

The garden is divided into four sections. There is a central path running north-east to south-west, and parallel paths at either side of the garden. There are also paths along the north-east and south-west ends, and a cross-path leading to a door in the north-west wall, all of which are probably original. These paths are all gravelled, though somewhat grown over, except for the one down the north-west side of the garden, which is stone-paved. Other cross-paths are grass-surfaced and may be modern.

The paths around the outside of the garden are well in from the walls, except on the south-west, allowing for wide borders. At the north-east end of the garden there is a stone-paved area with borders around it which is planted as a herb garden. To the south-east of it are some garden buildings, still between the path and the wall; the path eventually leads to the door in the east corner.

There is a border about 4 m wide all along the north-west edge of the garden, which is planted with flowering shrubs and herbaceous plants, one espalier remaining on the wall. The narrower border along the south-west end also has ornamental plantings, mainly hydrangeas. There is a

gap in the border at the end of the outer path on the south-east side, and it is possible that there is a blocked doorway here. On the south-east side of the garden the strip between the path and the wall is occupied by buildings near the east corner. The beds and borders are edged in places with stone, slate or quartz.

The two wider strips between the central north-east to south-west path and the outer ones either side are differently treated. On the north-west the strip is lawned except for an area at the south-west end, which is a vegetable bed; on the south-east the whole strip is dug for vegetables. Beside the outer path, at the back of the vegetable beds, there is a row of espalier apple trees, some of which are ancient.

The central north-east to south-west path has wide grass verges either side, and beyond these, on each side, a row of pleached limes. These are fairly young but this avenue is the dominant feature of the garden. Towards the south-west end a single row of similar limes crosses the garden, terminating the avenue. There is a small modern pergola at the end of the avenue. There is another small, square modern pergola where the cross-path crosses the outer lengthwise path on the north-west.

The garden contains several buildings, grouped around the east corner. Against the north-east wall is a slate-roofed stone building in two parts, of which the north-western part has a large downstairs room with a loft above, reached by wooden steps, and no windows other than a small one in the loft - former windows in the rear wall have been blocked. The large doorway faces south-west but the door is missing; there are a few slate steps up to the threshold and a slate-paved floor inside. This is likely always to have been used, as now, for storage. The other half of the building has an upper floor and windows on each level, and is reached from the stable building behind; this was probably the bothy.

Against the south-east wall is a small single-storey stone building with a slate roof, again used for storage. An area partitioned off south-west of the central door has shelving for fruit storage. South-west of this building is an open-fronted lean-to store, and beyond this, discreetly hidden behind a hedge, two earth closets.

The orchard is to the south-west of the house, above the valley on the north-west side, and is reached from the lawned area on the west side of the house. It is stone-walled on three sides, and the wall, which is fairly low, arches up over a wooden door at the entrance. Within this a stone-edged path leads at a slight diagonal across the orchard, heading for the pheasantry, but is soon lost as the area is completely overgrown beyond the first part, which is grassy and used as a drying green.

Towards the farther end there are fairly mature trees of various sorts, including pine, spruce, ash, holly, larch, sycamore and cypress. There are a few rather elderly apple trees in the open area, which is terminated by a plantation of cypress to the south-west. A path which used to run out towards the park has disappeared. The orchard is impossible to date, but it was shown on the 1900 map.

The glasshouse area is an oddly shaped narrow strip between the wall of the garden and the steep slope to the north-west. It is shown, with some of its glasshouses, on the 1900 25 in. Ordnance Survey map. It has a stony, gravelly surface, and is entered by a small gate from the site of the old conservatory, or through a door from the kitchen garden. It contains, at the north-east end, an open-fronted, stone-built shed with a slate roof, and immediately south-west of this, an unheated lean-to glasshouse built against a free-standing, whitewashed wall. The base of the glasshouse is stone-built and it has a tiled floor, staging, and a disused border.

Both of the first two buildings were shown on the 1900 map. The next, a stone-built potting shed with a central door, has another glasshouse at the south-western end, which has a boiler house at the back and retains its brick raised borders and heating pipes. It contains a vine. These buildings were not shown on the 1900 map, but appear to be of a similar age to the others and were probably added very early in the twentieth century.

Next, further to the south-west, is a row of cold frames, some of which at least were in situ in 1900. These are built of brick and concrete and some of the lights survive. The surface of the area beyond this point is grassy, and the entrance to the kitchen garden is on the south-east. There is a slate water tank beside it, and next to this the remains of a box cross-hedge which probably once marked the south-western end of the area.

The final building is a very modern, free-standing cedar-framed greenhouse, and just beyond this a gate leads on to the track which runs along the north-west side of the tennis court. If this track once led up to the house, the glasshouse area is built over it.

Sources

Primary

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