

ARGOED HALL**Ref No** PGW (C) 42**OS Map** 117**Grid Ref** SJ 268 414**Former County** Clwyd**Unitary Authority** Denbighshire**Community Council** Llangollen Rural**Designations** Listed building: Argoed Hall Grade II**Site Evaluation** Grade II**Primary reasons for grading**

Remains of Victorian garden and extensive woodland grounds laid out with numerous walks on steep slope above the river Dee and with a lake on the flood plain.

Type of Site

Formal terraced garden; informal woodland grounds

Main Phases of Construction

c. 1840-1900

SITE DESCRIPTION

Argoed Hall is a substantial two-storey stone house situated on the northern edge of the village of Froncysyllte, between the canal and the river Dee. The house is aligned north-south, with the main entrance on the south, and the ground drops steeply to the west down to the river. It was first built in the early Victorian period in neo-Elizabethan style (south and east front), and was later enlarged and remodelled with both Elizabethan and 'Queen Anne' classical elements. This was done for Robert F. Graesser, founder of the Wrexham Lager Brewery. Over the front door, on the south side, is a coat of arms featuring an anchor.

The stables lie to the north of the house. They are built of orange brick and terracotta, with a wide arch on the east side into a central court, and an octagonal tower in the north-west corner topped by a weather vane. The entrance front has two circular windows either side of the arch, over which is balustrading with ball finials at intervals. To the south is a small brick-walled kennel court. The stables and kennels would appear to belong to the late Victorian phase of building, as the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map shows a slightly different arrangement of outbuildings.

The gardens of Argoed Hall can be divided into two main parts: the formal terraced garden immediately around the house, and the extensive woodland grounds on the slopes above and below it. The whole occupies a roughly triangular area, elongated to the north and west, with the house in the centre. Most of this layout dates to the early Victorian period, and is presumed to be contemporary with the first phase of the building of the house. Minor alterations were made to the garden at the end of the nineteenth century, and it is probable that some paths and steps were remade with bricks and concrete slabs at this period or later.

The entrance to Argoed Hall is off the Froncysyllte-Trevor road, to the east of the house. It is flanked by low stone walling and simple square gate piers. The gently curving drive runs westwards to a roughly oval forecourt on the south side of the house. A back drive originally led off the road further north directly to the stables, but these are now reached by a branch running north from the main drive. An area originally part of the grounds but not landscaped, along the Trevor road, has been built on.

The formal gardens lie on gently sloping ground to the south-west and east of the house. To the south-west is a small lawn, formerly with a fountain in the middle, with steps up the forecourt, and remnants of box hedging around it. It is bounded along its north-west side by a substantial curving crenellated revetment wall, which runs all the way to the stables. Below is the steep slope down to the river Dee. Paths and steps lead from here into the woodland area.

The main formal gardens lie to the east of the house, immediately in front of which is a low dry-stone edged terrace of crazy-paving stone paths and flowerbeds. A large terracotta clam-shaped bed, probably a former fountain (possibly from the lawn), stands on a cylindrical stone base on the terrace. This terrace appears to have been made post 1880s: before that there was a straight path along the east front of the house leading to straight steps down at the north end. Below the terrace is a roughly square lawn bounded by the drive on the south side and a rockwork slope at the north end. At the north end stands a large deodar cedar (*Cedrus deodara*), and the east side is bounded by a row of false cypresses, with a large wellingtonia at the south end. Wide shallow concrete steps near the south end of the east side lead down to a rectangular terrace backed by a stone revetment wall around its eastern end. This terrace is now grassed over, but three circular slightly raised beds are visible down the centre. Yew hedging runs around the east end, with a narrow path between two hedges leading off from the steps round to a central alcove. Along the west side are two wide beds of trees and shrubs, backed by low dry-stone walls. Two large pines stand at the north and south ends of the upper one. Below, along the length of the west side, is a wide terrace walk of concrete slabbing, with a brick-topped stone revetment wall. Concrete and brick steps lead down from it to the middle of the terrace and to the garden at its north end. At the north end of the walk a semi-octagonal brick summerhouse stands against its west wall. It is single-storey, with a terracotta tiled roof and terracotta finial. Wooden and 'gothic' glazed windows and central doors take up three sides. Inside is an encaustic tiled floor. Along the east side are four large false cypresses, and along the north side is a *Lonicera nitida* hedge.

To the north is a roughly rectangular level area, now grassed over, with a large cedar on its north side. Around the west end is a low brick revetment wall. The west half of the south side is bounded by a rockwork slope c. 3 m high, with narrow stone steps up it leading to the lawn east of the house. At the west end is a small rectangular pool. It appears that the layout of this area was very different before the 1880s, when it is shown as a roughly square area of woodland or shrubs with a central, irregular pool.

The kitchen garden was situated to the north, beyond the stables, with glasshouses along its south side. Both garden and kitchen garden have been destroyed, and replaced by a Community Centre. A short stretch of yew hedging marks the former south boundary of the kitchen garden.

The outer parts of the garden, or grounds, lie to the south, west and north of the house, for the most part on the steep south bank of the river Dee. To the south of the drive is an area of mixed deciduous and coniferous woodland with laurel underplanting on a steep slope running up

to the A5 Llangollen road. Near the foot of this slope a path, now rather overgrown, is cut into the bank. Along its outer side is a row of overgrown yews, probably formerly clipped. The path runs along the contour to the lip of the steep slope down to the river, where the concrete footings of a small square building stand. Here the path splits, one branch running westwards through the woodland, with lumps of slag along its upper side. The other branch of the path winds down in steps, past the concrete footings of a small square building, through evergreen trees and shrubs back to the lawn. A branch then leads south-westwards, bounded by an overgrown yew hedge on its outer side and large lumps of slag on the bank above it, to the edge of the garden, marked by iron gateposts.

The woodland area on the steep slope below is largely of deciduous trees, with some ornamental coniferous trees such as pines, cypresses and a wellingtonia interspersed among them. There is a little patchy laurel and box underplanting. The path runs south-westwards from the garden gate through the woodland, curving gently downwards, with lumps of slag along its upper side. After a short while the upper path joins it, and it continues almost to the end of the woodland, zig-zags down to the river and returns along its bank. Two contour paths branch off the upper part, running north-eastwards through the woodland below the house. The upper one turns into a wider terrace below the house, and below the stables two paths run down from it to the lower level. The lower path branches, with a narrower path running diagonally down the slope from it, and then doubles back. All these paths end up at the foot of the slope, below the house, at river level. A series of steep narrow flights of concrete slab steps lead straight down from the garden west of the house to the same spot. These are flanked by iron pipe railings, with similar hooped arches over at intervals. At the foot of the slope is a prow-shaped platform, revetted in stone, built up above ground level. On it is a circle of small stones set in the turf. Brick and concrete steps lead down to the river bank. The platform is backed by rhododendrons and yews.

The woodland grounds continue on the steep slope to the north, above the flood plain of the river. Two paths run through the woodland, one at the foot of the slope, and one higher up, with a semi-circular alcove built into the slope half-way along it; both lead to a long narrow lake of irregular outline, which runs northwards, curving round to the west at its north end near Argoed Farm. The south end is now entirely silted up, and the lake is much overgrown. A much degraded, and in places impassable path runs along its east bank. A former footbridge has gone.

Sources

Secondary

Hubbard, E., Clwyd (1986), p. 167.

GWYSANEY

Ref No PGW (C) 43
OS Map 117
Grid Ref SJ 227 665
County Clwyd
District Delyn BC
Community Council Mold Rural
Designations Listed building Gwysaney Grade II*
Site Evaluation Grade II*

Primary reasons for grading

Park with origins as seventeenth-century deer park, with some contemporary walling and trees, including magnificent sweet chestnuts; fine nineteenth-century arboretum with many unusual mature specimen trees; Victorian/Edwardian garden layout

Type of Site

Landscape park (part former deer park); arboretum; formal garden

Main Phases of Construction

c. 1664; 1821-1950s

SITE DESCRIPTION

Gwysaney is a large two and three-storey stone house standing on the edge of a plateau to the north of Mold. The ground drops steeply to its east, and from the house there are fine views north-eastwards to the Dee estuary.

The first phase of building was by the son or grandson of John ap David (who took the surname Davies) in 1603. This house, as shown by a watercolour by Moses Griffith of about 1790, was a tall, rather gaunt house on an H-plan, with two gabled wings. From the late seventeenth century to 1821 Gwysaney was neglected and leased as a farmhouse, the family having inherited Llannerch in the mid seventeenth century and moved there. In 1789 the estate was divided between two daughters, and Gwysaney came to Mary Puleston. Soon after Gwysaney came to Bryan Cooke, of Owston, Yorkshire, through marriage to Frances Puleston, and from then until 1888 the owners (from his son, Philip's time onwards called Davies-Cooke) lived at Owston.

Philip Davies-Cooke, who inherited in 1821, energetically set about reviving the Gwysaney estate, despite living in Yorkshire. He pulled down the east wing, by then unsafe, in about 1823, and made minor structural and internal alterations. In 1863-65 his son Philip Bryan built a two-storey western extension in similar style, designed by Pearson. Further minor additions were made in 1906 by Philip Tatton Davies-Cooke, designed by F.A. Roberts.

The stables are situated to the north of the house, and date from the seventeenth century. Built in stone, they have mullioned windows and stepped gables, and are arranged around a courtyard. The north side is shown as open on a map of 1757. Other, later outbuildings lie to the

west, and were built with matching stepped gables; the range closing the north side of the stable court may have been built at the same time.

The park lies between the Mold-Rhydymwyn road in the south and the house in the north, on rolling ground with a general slope up from south to north. This area represents about a third of the former area of parkland, which stretched further westwards and eastwards down into the valley below the house. These parts are now purely agricultural. The remaining parkland is permanent pasture with isolated mature trees, mainly oak, but with some lime and very ancient sweet chestnut. These lie roughly in line, north-south (two are within the garden area, to the west of the house). Just east of the drive, in the middle of the park, is an evergreen oak.

The drive winds up a small valley from the main entrance on the Mold-Rhydymwyn road to the higher more level ground to the south of the house, where it enters the garden through gates to the south-west of the house. The entrance is flanked by curving stone walls and square stone gate piers topped with ornamental coping. A small lodge in simple Tudor style, built in 1841 and attributed to Thomas Jones, stands to the west.

The first mention of a park at Gwysaney is in 1664, when Anne Davies (d. 1690), wife of Mutton Davies of Llannerch and Gwysaney, recorded that the park wall was finished and deer put in, costing #200. The 18th century was uneventful. A map of the deer park of Gwysaney, dated 1757, by John Roberts, shows its layout. The deer park was considerably smaller than the later park, and was bounded by paling on its eastern side and walling on its western. The wall bounding the western edge of the arboretum is part of this park wall, and probably dates to c. 1664. The park is shown as dotted with trees, with an area of woodland in the eastern section. To the south of the house is a wide avenue; the sweet chestnuts that remain are probably remnants of this avenue. To its west the map shows an area of woodland corresponding with the present-day woodland in the same place. By the time Philip Davies-Cooke inherited in 1821 Gwysaney was run down. He set the estate in order, and began the tradition of tree planting at Gwysaney, with the planting of 15,000 trees in 1823-24 alone.

The gardens of Gwysaney lie to the south, east, and north of the house, on the level plateau on which the house stands. The ground drops precipitately away on the east side, from which there are fine views out over the valley and to the Dee estuary in the distance.

The drive enters from the south, through simple iron gates flanked by openwork iron piers, passes the west end of the house, and opens out into a rectangular forecourt in front of the north side of the house. In the middle stands a sizeable Ginkgo biloba, a Quercus petraea, and on the north side a large Pinus nigra var. nigra. Stables and other outbuildings lie at the west end of the north side of the forecourt.

To the south of the house the garden is divided into two parts: to the west of the drive is an area of informally planted mixed woodland, including a large ancient sweet chestnut. To the east is a wide gravel walk in front of the house, around which are four large clipped Irish yews. Beyond this is a lawn, part of which has been levelled to make a croquet lawn or tennis court. On the edge of the lawn, at the east end, stands a large stone vase on a rectangular plinth, moved from elsewhere in the garden to its present position by the present owner's parents. The lawn is bounded by a dry-stone wall ha-ha, giving fine views out over the park to the south. Between the south garden and the east terrace are a fine low wrought iron screen and gate, attributed to the Davies brothers of Bersham. They are of relatively simple design but with an ornate overthrow to the gate.

To the east of the house is a wide gravel walk, outside which is a level lawn bounded on the edge of the plateau by a low stone wall decorated with stone vases at intervals. The steep slope below is planted with rhododendrons.

The garden to the north of the house is divided into several small compartments by stone walls and hedging. Immediately east of the forecourt, and divided from it by a stone wall, is a small area known as the chapel garden. The north side is composed of two three-light windows in Jacobean Perpendicular style from the demolished east wing of the house, with a sundial set into the wall between them, while to the east are some ruined walls of an old cottage. The area is roughly paved with irregular flags, and ornaments include an old chimney pot mounted on a stone plinth, two lead vases and a stone trough. The chimney pot came from a family house, Hafod-y-Wern, Wrexham (demolished).

To the north of the forecourt, bounded on the south and west sides by stone walls and the stables, is a small formal garden with a rectangular parterre in clipped box, bounded by a gravel path. In the middle is a low stone circular plinth on which stands a small bell under a stone arch. To the west of the parterre is a small lawn with staddle stones around the edge, with a small paved area to its west, against the wall. To the north is a small area laid out with four geometric island beds around a central stone baluster sundial on an octagonal plinth. The west side of this part is bounded by a yew hedge in which there is a simple iron gate leading to a grass path in the arboretum. The east side of this whole area is bounded by a yew hedge, which forms the west side of a narrow compartment bounded on the other side by a beech hedge. Along it is a long border and grass walk, at the north end of which is a wrought iron gate into the arboretum. Both gates into the arboretum are attributed to the Davies brothers of Bersham.

From this walk a steep stepped path bounded by a yew hedge leads down the steep slope to the north-east to the woodland below the arboretum. A short way along the stone path skirts a small pond with bamboos around it, below which is a further small square pond (undergoing restoration). The walk continues as a rough track through the wood.

The arboretum lies to the north of the garden, at the south end of a large wood (Ram Wood). It is laid out with one long straight path continuing the axis of the east terrace, an east-west path, and a curving path along the west side of the wood, forming an elongated triangle. The trees are both deciduous and coniferous, and some have reached a considerable size. Planting, some of which is in straight rows, has continued ever since the arboretum was begun in the 1820s, and there are some notable rarities, including a large spreading form of Luccombe oak (Quercus cerris 'Foordii Diversifolia'). Other trees include many pines, spruces, firs and cedars. At the southern end, next to the stable courtyard wall, is an underground ice-house. Its entrance (now blocked) is on the south side, and over it is a low grass mound with a yew tree on top.

The earliest evidence for the garden is the 1757 map of Gwysaney Park, which shows a walled enclosure to the north of the house, with a small cottage built into the south wall and a dovecote in the north-east corner. The present garden north of the house more or less corresponds with this area, although most of the walls have gone, as has the dovecote and most of the cottage. The area of the arboretum is shown as a field, while to the south of the house the avenue runs right up to the house, with no intervening garden. The present layout was probably begun in the 1820s, when Philip Davies-Cooke was undertaking restoration and tree planting at Gwysaney. The terrace and ha-ha are likely to date from this time, as is the basic layout of the garden, and of the arboretum and its

paths (all shown on the 1870s Ordnance Survey map). The planting of the arboretum was also begun by Philip Davies-Cooke. The next major phase of alterations was undertaken by Philip Tatton Davies-Cooke in 1906, when the garden to the north of the house assumed its present general form, including the making of the chapel garden. At this time the sundial garden was an elaborate maze of box-edged beds; its layout has since been simplified. The long border was known as the autumn border, being filled with autumn-flowering herbaceous plants. The parterre, known as the rose garden, retains its original layout, except that the central feature - the bell - was only installed in 1970 (having been stolen from the local school, for which it was made in 1873, dropped in a field, and re-erected here). The gate and screen closing the south end of the east terrace, and the two gates into the arboretum, were brought here from Mold church, at the time of the 1850s restoration. They were part of the ironwork made for the north aisle of the chancel in about 1726, by Robert Davies of Bersham, and for the south aisle in 1732 by Thomas Cheswise. The gate and screen were not erected in their present position until the present century (the gate was elsewhere in the garden before that). After the Second World War the garden was restored by Philip Ralph Davies-Cooke and his wife Kathleen, a keen gardener.

The trapezoidal kitchen garden is situated to the north-west of the house. The garden was in existence in its present shape in the 1870s, but its remains are very partial: the only wall still standing is the west wall, which stands to its full height and has a stepped top. It was rebuilt at the beginning of the twentieth century. The north and east sides are demarcated by yew hedges, and the south side is open, the line of the boundary marked by a slight drop in level. Within the garden all traces of the original layout have gone, most of the area being turfed, with a former tennis court, and a large pine tree in the north-east corner. Towards the east side are two relatively modern free-standing greenhouses on brick bases and cold-frames.

Sources

Primary

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Tree Register of the British Isles: Survey of the trees at Gwysaney (September 1990).

Secondary

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Usher, G.A., Gwysaney and Owston (1964).
Hellyer, A., 'Victorian outlines amid trees', Country Life 174 (6 October 1983), pp. 900-01.
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LLANRHAIADR HALL

Ref No PGW (C) 44

OS Map 116

Grid Ref SJ 085 635

County Clwyd

District Glyndwr DC

Community Council Llanrhaeadr yng Nghinmeirch

Designations Listed building: Llanrhaidr Hall
Grade II; Stables grade II; Barn grade II; Barn grade II; Laundry grade II

Site Evaluation Grade II

Primary reasons for grading

Walled kitchen garden and surrounding area of 1770s, probably designed by William Emes; survival of 1840s layout by Thomas Penson

Type of Site

Landscape park with formal approach; small garden

Main Phases of Construction

1770s; 1840s

SITE DESCRIPTION

Llanrhaidr Hall is situated on level ground on the western edge of the flood plain of the river Clywedog, in the Vale of Clwyd. The house is composite, with three main phases of building. First, the south-western half of the building is an E-shaped stone house, facing south-west, dating principally from the late sixteenth century. This was originally a simple gabled house with mullioned and transomed windows, built for the Lloyds of Bodidris, who owned Llanrhaidr until the 1690s. The second building phase was in the 1770s, when the owner, Richard Parry, built a Georgian extension on to the north-east side of the house, a Georgian porch on the south-west front, and also new stables and outbuildings. The interior of the house was remodelled at the same time. The architect is unknown, but several have been suggested, including Robert Adam, and Joseph Turner. The house at this period is shown in a drawing by Moses Griffith (1812). There is evidence that Parry originally intended to build a new and much grander house to the south of the present one (position shown on the William Emes plan of 1771): there are 11 drawings by Robert Adam for a Palladian mansion in the Soane Museum. Nothing came of this plan.

The present-day appearance of the house resulted from the third phase of building, when Thomas Penson, County Surveyor of Denbighshire and Montgomeryshire, remodelled the house in neo-Jacobean style for John Price in 1842. He faced the older part of the house in ashlar, adding taller scrolled gables, entrance porch and loggia (since demolished). Penson also re-landscaped the drive and built a lodge on the Denbigh-Ruthin road.

To the west of the Hall is a group of stone outbuildings, some of which have been converted to separate dwellings. The stables, and possibly the

others, date to the 1770s. The stables, now disused, are on a large scale, of considerable grandeur, with two blocked carriage openings beneath a central pediment with circular window and a cupola on top.

The former park of Llanrhaidr Hall lies to the east of the Denbigh-Ruthin road, to the south and east of the house. Originally, the park extended west of the road, south of the village of Llanrhaeadr. The flat pasture land of the park is divided into a few large fields, with a drain along the east boundary, and a small lane along the south boundary. The only remnants of landscaping are isolated deciduous trees scattered throughout the park, and the approach from the Denbigh-Ruthin road. This is a wide straight strip of drive flanked by grass and trees, bounded by iron fencing. It leads from the road north-eastwards to the main front of the house. Flanking the tarmac drive are the stumps of an avenue (of elms) and a few limes (and some recently planted limes). A row of five mature limes lies just to the north-west of the approach. At the entrance simple iron gates are flanked by low stone walls and tall gate piers with neo-Jacobean decoration, with similar piers flanked by iron fencing at the entrance to the forecourt.

The park was first landscaped for Richard Parry in the 1770s. There is a plan by William Emes dated 1771 which shows a winding approach from the road, planting in clumps and isolated trees, and a long, narrow, sinuous lake with two islands to the east and south-east of the house. The plan also shows the house and kitchen garden surrounded by shrubberies with winding paths, and a proposed new house to the south (not built). A contemporary map also shows the lake, which no longer exists (and is not shown on the Ordnance Survey 1870s map), and describes it as acting as a drain to the wetlands above it. It is uncertain how much of Emes's proposed landscaping was carried out, but even if implemented very little remains: the clumps have gone, there is no sign of the lake, and the winding drive has been replaced by the straight approach. John Byng, who toured north Wales in 1784, thought that Parry's 'plantations and the laying out of his grounds bespeak him a man of taste', which lends weight to the argument that some landscaping was undertaken in the 1770s.

In 1842 Thomas Penson remodelled the house in neo-Jacobean style, and at the same time gave it the formal approach that remains today. He designed the entrance gates at both ends of the approach, and a lodge, in similar style. In 1971-2 the Llanrhaeadr by-pass was built, cutting off the lodge and western end of the drive. The lodge was demolished in 1976, but the gate piers and walls were re-erected at the new entrance.

The garden of Llanrhaidr Hall is small, and lies to the south, east and north of the house. The drive enters the garden on the south-west side of the house, opening out into a square tarmac forecourt with a hexagonal stone-edged pool in the centre, in the middle of which is a small lead fountain of a cherub holding a shell. To the south-east and north-east of the house are level lawns, with a large oak tree and a fallen pine near the southern corner, and a wellingtonia on the south-east side. To the north-west of the forecourt is a levelled lawn, possibly a former croquet lawn or tennis court, with a raised triangular area of lawn and mature specimen trees to the north-west, bounded by a disused drive and access to the stables. The south-east and north-east sides of the garden are bounded by a beech hedge and iron fence, the south-west side by an iron fence alone.

The walled kitchen garden to the north of the house is surrounded by a wooded area bounded by a curving ditch. Most of the woodland is modern, but there are some yew trees along the inner side of the ditch, and on the east side of the garden which may originally have been clipped.

The basic present-day layout of the garden around the house dates from the 1840s, when Thomas Penson laid out the drive and forecourt. Much of the planting is more recent, but some of the trees date to the Victorian period. Nothing remains around the house which bears any similarity to the layout given in William Emes's plan of 1771. However, the layout around the kitchen garden does appear similar, with a wooded area and winding walks (gone) bounded by a ditch. Although the planting has changed the general layout remains. The small triangular raised area west of the house is also shown on Emes's plan, as a wooded area: this also may be a remnant of the 1770s, although most of the planting is more recent. The pool and fountain in the forecourt date from the 20th century.

The walled kitchen garden is situated to the north-west of the house. It is rectangular, aligned east-west, and has high brick walls standing to their full height (c. 4 m), capped with stone coping, and with shallow buttresses at intervals on the outside. To the south is a yard bounded by a barn on the west, stables on the south and a stone wall, part ruined, on the east. There is a wide opening in the middle of the south side. There is no trace of the original layout in the interior, which has recently been completely cleared of vegetation. The walled garden is shown in its present position on William Emes's plan of 1771, and it is assumed that it was built then.

Sources

Primary

'A Plan of the Demesne Lands at Llanrhaider the Seat of Richd Parry Esq. with Alterations by Wm Emes 1771': Clwyd Record Office D/DM/162/58.

Map of Llanrhaidr c. 1770: Clwyd Record Office D/DM/136/39.

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Secondary

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