

LLANTYSILIO HALL

Ref No PGW (C) 60

OS Map 125

Grid Ref SJ 192 436

County Denbighshire

District Denbighshire

Community Council Llantysilio

Designations None

Site Evaluation Grade II

Primary reasons for grading

Fine axial arrangement of house, walled garden and avenue, of eighteenth and nineteenth century date, in picturesque location in the Dee valley

Type of Site

Park; informal garden; walled garden; avenue

Main Phases of Construction

Eighteenth century; 1870s

SITE DESCRIPTION

Llantysilio Hall is a large, rather gaunt stone house situated on level ground on the east side of the Dee valley about four kilometres west of Llangollen. To the south and west the ground drops quite steeply to the flood plain and river. The situation is a beautiful one, with fine views across the valley. It was built so that its south front is aligned on the walled garden and avenue to the south.

The first house on the site dated to 1723. It was built for the Jones family, whose tomb lies in the nearby churchyard. The house was of brick, and was situated at the foot of the slope to the south of the house. In the mid 1860s the German engineer C.F. Beyer, a partner in the locomotive-building firm Beyer, Peacock & Co, bought the house, demolished it, and in 1872-74 had a new one built in neo-Elizabethan style by S. Pountney Smith. The house is three-storey, aligned north-south, with the servants' quarters, billiard room and a walled yard at the north end, and with the main entrance on the east side, consisting of a porch with the initials 'C F B' over it. Over the back door is a sandstone carving of three stallions' heads, the crest of the Jones family. Beyer bequeathed the house to his godson Sir Henry Beyer Robertson, in whose family it remained until 1994.

The stables and coach house lie on the lane to the north-east of the house. They were built at the same time as the present house by the same architects. The stables and tack room have been converted into a house. Brynteg Cottages, on the same lane, were built by S. Pountney Smith at the same time as temporary accommodation for the hall's builders.

A small area around the house and garden has been landscaped with tree planting. The earliest part is the lime avenue which runs southwards from the centre of the walled garden down the slope below to the river. This is probably early eighteenth-century in date (with some replacement trees), contemporary with the original house. The 1872 OS map shows a further row of trees parallel to the avenue, to its west, and parallel rows at an angle to it, which may also have been of this date. These have now gone. The back drive, which leads from the road to the walled garden, and which may have been the drive of the original house, is flanked at its western end by limes.

The present entrance is to the north-east of the house. It is flanked by low, curving stone walls and plain gate piers, and there is a two-storey stone lodge of the same date and style as the present house on the north side. To the north are a group of horse chestnuts, while to the south is an area of woodland, including yews and copper beech, on ground dropping down to a small stream. The drive curves across a level grass area, ornamented with a few isolated trees, to the forecourt and garden on the east side of the house.

In the two fields to the east and south-east of the walled garden there are a few isolated specimen conifers, probably planted by Beyer in the late nineteenth century.

The garden lies to the east, west and south of the present house. To the east and west the ground is level, to the south it drops steeply down to the walled garden. This part of the garden is contemporary with the house, c. 1872-74, although some of the trees may be older. In front of the house, to its east, is a rectangular gravel forecourt in a rectangular area bounded on the north and east by a shrub border with a few ornamental trees. A gravel path leads round the house to the garden west of the house, which has a rectangular lawn bounded by a bank of rhododendrons on the north and by an unkempt shrub and woodland area to the west.

To the south of the house is a steeply sloping lawn, on either side of which are informal groups of large trees, including lime, beech and oak, with some laurel and holly underplanting. At the foot of the slope the ground levels out on the site of the former house. The south boundary of the garden is formed by a substantial stone revetment wall, with central steps down to the secondary drive. At the west end of the wall a small ashlar stone pavilion is built into the wall.

The 1872 map shows the garden layout much as it is now, with more paths, along the south side of the house, around the west lawn, down the east side of the slope, and along the foot of the slope. It also shows an L-shaped conservatory at the west end of the foot of the slope. This has gone, although an overgrown paved area and small pool may be all that is left of it, and the pavilion in the wall may have been part of its basement. From the style of the pavilion this feature appears to date from the Victorian phase.

The walled garden lies to the south of the house, below the grass slope, in the middle of the north-south axis with the house and avenue. It was built as an adjunct to the earlier, eighteenth-century house, and was incorporated into the late nineteenth-century garden. It is square, sloping to the south, with composite walls of stone outside, brick inside, on all but the south side. This is bounded by, from the outside, an iron fence, ditch, and stone revetment wall, which is topped by a box hedge. In the middle is an iron gate leading to the avenue. The walls are about 3.5 m high, topped with stone coping, and mostly stand to their full height. There is a ragged gap in the middle of the east side. The entrance is in the middle of the north side, with a wooden gate and stone steps flanked by two golden cypresses and box edging, leading down to a central gravel path, now partly grassed over. Further gravel paths run along the north, east and west sides.

The main feature of the walled garden is two enormous yew hedges, about five metres high, which run parallel with the central path half way down the garden. Most of the rest of the garden is rough or mown grass, with old espalier apple trees lining the paths. There is a large bay tree in the north-east quarter of the garden. There were originally diagonal paths across the two halves of the south end of the garden, but these have now gone. In the centre of the south-eastern quarter is a very old mulberry tree, said to be of a special variety. It has long since fallen on its side, but is still alive. Some old pear and plum trees still line the walls.

In the south-west corner of the garden is a small brick pavilion, with an arched opening on its east side, over which is a decorated stone gable top. Inside is a curving wooden bench. There is a lean-to glasshouse against the west end of the north wall, outside which are some glasshouse footings. In the north-west corner is a potting shed. There is a small rectangular pond in the middle of the north-south central axis.

Sources

Primary

Plan of Llantysilio Hall and adjoining lands, the property of C. Beyer, 1869: Clwyd Record Office (DD/LH/52).

Secondary

Bersham through the eyes of a traveller: 'Llansillio' (line engraving by J. Walker, after W. Evans, London. 23 April 1796).

Hubbard, E., Clwyd (1986), pp. 198-99.