

GLODDAETH (ST DAVID'S COLLEGE)

Ref No PGW (Gd) 6 (CON)

OS Map 115

Grid Ref SH 805 805

Former County Gwynedd

Unitary Authority Conwy

Community Council Llandudno

Designations Listed buildings: Hall, Grade I; eighteenth- and nineteenth-century wings, Grade II; lodges (two now cut off) Grade II; stable block Grade II; garden cottage Grade II; dovecote Grade II*; bothy cottage Grade II; garden walls Grade II; statue of Hercules Grade II.

Site Evaluation **Grade I**

Primary reasons for grading Well preserved terraced gardens and formal canal of seventeenth century onwards; extensive eighteenth-century plantations and parkland, including the possible site of a large maze. The survival of an early eighteenth-century plantation laid out with formal rides radiating from a central statue is of exceptional interest.

Type of Site Formal terraced gardens with canal; informal rockery with grotto; several areas of woodland walks, with possible maze, statue, viewpoints etc; parkland and fish ponds.

Main Phases of Construction Late seventeenth century; early eighteenth century; nineteenth century.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Gloddaeth, now a school, is superbly sited on a shelf in a fairly steep south-east facing slope, on the outskirts of Llandudno. It has extensive views over the surrounding countryside and is protected from the north-west by the wooded hillside at its back. The oldest part of the house is of the early to mid sixteenth century, a perfect example of a hall-house, with a hammer-beam roof and minstrels' gallery; rambling extensions include a late seventeenth- or early eighteenth-century wing to the north-east, eighteenth-century additions for domestic offices, and two nineteenth-century extensions, by W. E. Nesfield and J. Douglas respectively, to the south-west. A modern extension to the south-west of these has recently been completed.

The house is generally two-storeyed, and the more recent wings have attics; it is stone-built

with slate roofs. The original hall-house has exceptionally well-preserved wall-paintings and unusual oak panelling, and the Nesfield wing has a fine dog-leg staircase, copied at Bodysgallen later.

Gloddaeth came to the Mostyn family by a marriage in 1460 between Margaret of Gloddaeth, heiress of Gruffydd ap Rhys, and Hywel ap Ieuan Fychan of Mostyn. The existing hall is thought to have been built by the same lady during her second widowhood, in the early decades of the sixteenth century. Thereafter generations of the family lived at Gloddaeth, but it was often a second house, with the head of the family living at Mostyn Hall.

Hyde Hall, writing at the beginning of the nineteenth century, particularly mentions the outbuildings - 'a collection of old-fashioned buildings' - implying that they add to the attractions of the setting. The 1889 Ordnance Survey 25-in. map names a saw pit, now gone, and there may have been other estate buildings to the north-east of the house which are no longer there, or the use of which is not apparent. Most of the remaining buildings have now been adapted to school use, and all but the garden cottage lie in a crowded complex immediately to the north-east of the house.

The stables are stone-built with a slate roof and have a Diocletian window in the centre of the main facade. They date from c. 1830, and are now used as changing rooms, although some of the stalls remain in place. The stone barn, probably originally built in the seventeenth century, was remodelled and made into a garage by Lady Augusta Mostyn in the later nineteenth century.

The garden cottage, which lies to the south-west of the terraced gardens, is dated 1881 and resembles the contemporary lodges, which are perhaps by Douglas, being of stone with a black-and-white mock Tudor upper storey with decorative plasterwork. However, a building on the same site appears to be shown on the 1840 Ordnance Survey one-inch map, so the present building may be a replacement or remodelling of an older one. The dovecote is rectangular in plan and late seventeenth-century in date, built of stone with crow-stepped gables. It is now used as a gymnasium.

The water tower, on the hillside slightly above the rest of the buildings, is similar in appearance to the dovecote, with stepped gables; it may be of the same date. It still holds water tanks. A small rectangular building close to the wall of the track behind the house is known as the Beehive, but was probably originally a fruit store.

A fairly large barn lies at the south corner of the terraces, near the ponds. Its gable end forms part of the wall of the enclosure south-west of the canal, and the building, which is outside the enclosure, is older than the rest of the wall. It is shown on the 1889 Ordnance Survey 25-in. map, which also shows the enclosure, but neither is on any of the earlier maps. There are some pigsties opening on to the same small paddock which fronts the barn. Some modern cottages occupy the site of former glasshouses to the south-west of the terraced gardens, and a prefabricated classroom is situated on the north-east end of the top terrace.

The house lies roughly central to its park, which rises up behind it as a wooded hill and spreads

out below with a roughly square open area, almost a lawn, partly surrounded by plantations and with further parkland enclosures beyond, blending into the surrounding agricultural land. Much of the parkland to the west and south-west, and two of the lodges, has now been cut off by the new A470.

Of the park and garden relating to the original house little is known, though the small courtyard immediately in front of the old part of the house may occupy an original garden area, and the most likely site for a larger garden is the area now used for car parking, above the terraces, although it would have been sloping at the time. Sir Roger Mostyn, third baronet (an earlier Roger Mostyn was made a baronet in 1660, for his efforts in the Royalist cause during the Civil War), was responsible for planting the woods, early in the eighteenth century.

The somewhat unusual layout of the park and gardens must have been guided by the topography of the site. The steeply-sloping craggy limestone hill above the house could only be improved by planting trees; the immediate gardens, below, could only be terraced, and even so the lower levels remain steeply sloping. At the bottom of the hill, however, the ground flattens out sharply, and here a canal was constructed, and, beyond, an almost rectangular apron of parkland - almost a large lawn - on the level ground, with plantations surrounding it on the three sides away from the house. This area is in the foreground of the view from the house, and must have been designed to be primarily ornamental. It is separated from the plantations to north-east and south-east, and the fields to the south-west, by a ha-ha; this is a simple ditch with the sloping side towards the parkland. There is further parkland beyond to north-east and south-west. This must have been in part obscured from the house once the plantations were mature, but the area to the south and west provided the setting for the various drives at different periods.

The woods were, according to Thomas Pennant in the late eighteenth century, planted by Sir Roger Mostyn in the early part of the same century, and laid out with walks and rides. By the 1780s they could be described as 'successful', but clearly did not obscure views of the surrounding countryside and Conwy from the hill behind the house, as Pennant remarks at some length on these views. Today the trees have reached such a size, and any deliberate gaps have closed up so much, that there is very little in the way of views from the walks within the woodland. Several of the walks are now more or less impassable, but parts of the routes are clearly visible due to trees planted either side, and some are cut into the side of the hill and revetted to level them; the main routes are fairly wide. Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century photographs show some of the main paths still maintained and gravelled. The paths are mostly now unsurfaced, but some have a hard surface due to the natural rock outcropping.

The two main areas of woodland, on the hill behind the house and the level plain in front, with their straight and zig-zag walks, are an important part of the designed landscape and remain largely intact. They are chiefly composed of beech, lime, yew, chestnut and oak, and some of the existing trees, such as yews, limes and perhaps some of the older oaks, may be survivors of the original plantings. Walks are flanked by trees, notably yew and beech. Both areas were described in some detail by Pennant, and clearly have not greatly changed since, except for the loss (during the nineteenth century) of the plantation to the south-west of the apron of parkland

at the bottom of the terraces, and the obstruction of views and choking of some paths by the growth of trees and undergrowth. Pennant writes of '...straight walks, intersecting each other, or radiating from a center, distinguished by a statue.' The statue (of Hercules) remains in situ, and the pattern of radiating walks, shown on several maps, can still be seen on the ground. Hercules is an over life-sized standing figure in lead, set on a tall, rectangular dressed sandstone plinth. Initials (JN FLR) carved in the top of the plinth indicate that the statue is by the famous early eighteenth-century sculptor John van Nost (died 1729). A similar statue of Hercules by van Nost, originally at Condover Hall, Shropshire, has stood since 1851 in The Quarry, Shrewsbury.

On top of the hill behind the house is a large, roughly level area which may be the site of a maze. The dating of this feature is problematic. There is one modern reference to a seventeenth-century maze. Two nineteenth-century maps (one probably derived from the other) show a maze, with its zig-zag walks, but others, earlier and later, do not, and the Moses Griffith engraving of 1792 shows no gap in the woodland on the hill. Pennant mentions the walks but not the maze. There is nothing to be seen at the site, which has been planted over with commercial conifers and clear-felled, now, except a boulder which might possibly have marked the centre of the maze. Beech trees which seem to outline one edge of the site are of an age to be consistent with a mid to late nineteenth-century date.

Not far from the site of the possible maze, is a 'Druidical' stone circle, a typical piece of Victorian whimsy probably constructed by Lady Augusta Mostyn. It consists of a double ring of stones, natural limestone boulders set on edge, about 1 m apart; the diameter of the whole is about 11 m. There are two entrances, not directly opposite each other, flanked by taller stones.

The earliest maps all show drives to the north-west and south-west, the latter probably the main drive as the former passed by the farm. No lodges are shown. The 2-in. manuscript map for the Ordnance Survey 1-in. first edition, made from a survey about 1820, shows a south-eastern drive skirting the woodland area north-east of the central rectangle of parkland, and by the time the first edition was published in 1840-41, the plantation seems to have expanded to enclose this. Later maps suggest that this ceased to be used as a drive and became merely one of the paths through the woodland. It is now a public footpath.

Lady Augusta Mostyn, who came to live at Gloddaeth as a young widow in 1861, made many improvements, one of which was to create a new drive to the west. This was constructed between the two existing drives, and branched north and south beyond a lodge which was built about two-thirds of the distance from the house to the road. On the Ordnance Survey 25-in. map of 1889, this is shown as completed, with a lodge (which is dated 1881) at the entrance to the northern branch and the one part-way up the drive (1884); the lodge at the end of the southern branch may have been planned or under construction at the time of survey, as an open square is shown. It is dated 1894. The 1881 and 1894 lodges have now been cut off by the A470 link road.

The new drive was intended to replace both existing drives; the south-west one, to Gloddaeth Lane, became disused, and now survives only as an earthwork, flanked by the survivors of its avenue of trees. The stone gates and piers of this drive may have been erected in about 1830,

when the stable block was built and other improvements made. There is a similar pair of gate piers leading on to farmland north-east of the house.

The north-west drive presumably remained in use for access to and from the farm, and perhaps as a tradesman's entrance; it is still used by vehicles. By 1937 the southern branch of the new drive had also gone out of use, and the northern branch has been cut off by the new A470, bringing the entrance close to the lodge which used to be a third of the way to the house. This is of stone and black-and-white timbered construction, and may have been built by J. Douglas, the architect of the later nineteenth-century wing of the house. The entrance just below it is new, following the building of the A470, and has stone gate piers and iron gates. The gateway nearer the house, inserted into an older wall, has a single white-painted wrought iron gate and terracotta lions on its square-sectioned, stone-built piers (the lions added fairly recently), and is now known as the Lion Gate.

In some of the parkland to the south-west, especially the small field adjoining the south-west edge of the rectangular area in front of the house, traces of ridge-and-furrow cultivation can be seen. This field was a plantation in 1792, mirroring the one on the other side, but by the middle of the nineteenth century it was open ground. Other marked irregularities in this field are probably due to the removal of trees. Photographs and maps show that at different times various areas of park and garden have been used for growing vegetable and arable crops. Earlier features may include the fishponds near the south corner of the terraced garden, and the probably seventeenth-century water tower falls just within the park, in the plantation behind the house.

At present the woodlands and gardens are preserved, the level area immediately in front of the house is the school playing fields, having had hard tennis courts added in the north corner, and the rest of the park is pasture.

The gardens, on the steep slope below the house, with a canal at the bottom, consist of formal terraces of various dates, the earliest of which probably existed before the woods were planted. There are four main terraces, the upper one, created in the later nineteenth century, now tarmac-surfaced and used for car parking. The second is divided into three small grass terraces at the south-west end, but at the north-east is wider and in only two parts. The size of this part of the terrace necessitates a very high retaining wall. These top terraces were all one, and not level, until they were divided by the relatively low nineteenth-century retaining wall, but the high main wall ensured that the combined terrace was much less steep than the two lower ones. These, especially the lowest, must always have been, as they still are, very steep, being divided by only a low wall and having no retaining wall at the bottom.

There are level walks along all the terraces, the one below the highest wall being the widest, especially at the south-west end. Borders containing shrubs front the walls of the upper terraces, and the central areas are lawned (rather rough grass on the two lower, sloping, terraces). On the small grass terraces at the south-western end of the upper terrace are some island beds, probably created after 1875 as they do not appear in a painting of that date.

The area known as the Rose Garden, immediately beyond the north-east end of the main terrace, is now paved and partly occupied by temporary buildings. It was not shown on the 1889 map but had appeared by 1937. It is rectangular with an apsidal end on the north-east, and a stair with three right-angle bends descends from it, leading to the woodland walks. The sundial which had been on one of the grass terraces was moved to a position in the centre of the Rose Garden, and was shown there on the 1937 map, but has now gone. The garden was paved over in the 1970s.

It is clear from maps and pictures that the exact layout of the terraces has altered, and it is probable that the sloping lower terraces were added later and the topmost terrace created last, but the doorway from the present main terrace to the former Rose Garden bears the date 1680 (with the initials T.B.M. - those of Sir Roger Mostyn's predecessor, Sir Thomas). Another early doorway, at the opposite end of the terrace, may be contemporary or a little later in date. By the end of the eighteenth century the terraces were complete but for the topmost, although not laid out quite as they are today, as can be seen in an engraving of 1792.

The terraces are mentioned by Fenton in the early nineteenth century as having very high walls, but the 1792 engraving shows the walls as continuous from south-west to north-east, not divided as at present with a wide terrace with massive wall to the north-east and a greater number of shallower terraces to the south-west. The 1846 tithe map shows a different division, with the north-eastern part divided off into a single enclosure right down to the canal, but this may not be accurate and it is possible that the present layout was created between these two dates - perhaps before Fenton's description was written, as the wall of the wider terrace to the north-east is much the highest. The 1889 Ordnance Survey 25-in. map shows the arrangement almost exactly as it is today, indicating that by this time the top terrace had been created. Photographs and sketches previous to this show a wider top terrace sloping gently and evenly down to the main wall, but now a retaining wall divides this widthways into two, with steps leading down in the middle and at either end, and the terraces above and below are both level, though the lower one has some additional scarping to achieve it. This is almost certainly the work of Lady Augusta Mostyn, but only the central flight of steps is shown on the 1889 map.

At some point after the construction of the main, highest terrace wall, gun emplacements were created on the terrace and replica cannon pointed through gaps created in the parapet of the wall. This is also likely to have been done by Lady Augusta, and the guns were copied from a genuine ship's cannon which is similarly placed in the small forecourt immediately in front of the house, and which may have been present much longer than the copies. The flagpole on the terrace is probably contemporary with the replica guns.

The upper terraces were probably always ornamental, lawned, with steps and gravel walks; paintings, drawings and photographs throughout the nineteenth century all show that this was the case at that time, although much of the topmost terrace became a forecourt after it was separated from the main terrace and levelled. The lower terraces, however, were undoubtedly once used as kitchen gardens - the 1889 map shows fruit trees along the walls (one apple tree survives), and greenhouses on an area to the south-west of the terraces (now built over); in

the 1792 engraving they are clearly broken up into small plots. Later they may have been taken into the ornamental garden, as later maps show further enclosures at the bottom of the slope (one remains), suggesting that the kitchen garden was extended into the parkland. An undated estate map, which shows an arrangement of paths or enclosures in the garden which is difficult to interpret in the light of the existing terrace walls, shows the area to the south-west of the garden (now pasture, alongside the south-west boundary of the central area of parkland) as being planted with vegetable crops.

The canal, at the foot of the terraces, off-centre to both them and the north-west edge of the rectangle of parkland, on which it lies, is an important element of the garden's design, but its position was probably dictated by practical considerations. The remainder of the north-west edge of the parkland rectangle is closed off by a wall, but the canal forms a less intrusive but equally effective stockproof barrier. It has apsidal ends and vertical sides and still holds water. At one time there was a small boat house near the south-west end, and steps down to the water can still be seen. The canal does not appear to be present on the 1792 engraving, although it would scarcely be visible in any case, but is shown on maps from the 1840s onwards.

There are certain clearly Victorian additions and alterations to the pleasure grounds, most of which were probably the work of Lady Augusta Mostyn. In the space between her new drive and the old one to the north-west, at the house end, is a magnificent Victorian rockery, complete with grotto and water feature, recently cleared by the school and by late 1996 open to view. It is built of large blocks of natural, water-worn limestone, with narrow winding paths, water channels and a seat. The small white-painted fountain on the second grass terrace probably dates from after 1875, as it is not shown in the painting of that date. It does, however, appear in later nineteenth-century photographs. The Rose Garden, beyond the north-east end of the main terrace, is also likely to be late nineteenth- or early twentieth-century; after 1889 as it is not shown on the map of that date.

There is a formal box parterre in the small raised courtyard under the windows of the hall, which is certainly at least nineteenth-century as it appears in several photographs and sketches, and may be earlier.

Below the terraces is another long, narrow enclosure, first shown on the 1889 map, filling the space between a barn and the south-west end of the canal. This has stone walls on all four sides and entrances at south-west and north-east; there is also a stone-lined tank in the ground at the canal end which was clearly designed to fill from the canal and provide water for agricultural or horticultural purposes. Further enclosures south and east of this are shown on later maps, but do not survive. All of these enclosures may have been used as kitchen gardens if the original kitchen gardens on the lower terraces were taken into the ornamental gardens; fruit trees are shown in the walled enclosure and the one south of the canal on the 1937 Ordnance Survey 25-in. map, but none of these now remain.

Behind the house is some terracing, without revetting walls, which was probably done mainly to level the site for building but which may also have been planted at one time. North of this is the wall along the track behind the house, and a flight of stone steps leads up to a blocked

opening in this wall.

Sources

Primary

Information from Mr Colin Williams and Mr Kevin Crowdy, St David's School

2-in. manuscript map for 1-in. Ordnance Survey 1st ed. (1820), University College of North Wales archives, Bangor

Estate map (undated), University College of North Wales archives, Bangor (Mostyn MSS 8506)

Estate map (undated), County Archives, Caernarfon

Eglwys-yn-Rhos tithe map (1846), County Archives, Caernarfon

Photocopies of estate map, c. 1849, and hand-drawn map of Llandudno area, by Williams (1860s), probably partly copied from above, St David's College collection

Collection of many postcards, photographs, engravings etc. in County Archives, Caernarfon

Aerial photograph, Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (1995)

Secondary

Pennant, T., *A Tour in Wales* (1782)

Griffith, M., 'Gloddaeth', Plate 12 in *Number 1. of a Collection of Select Views in North Wales* (1792)

Hyde Hall, E., *A Description of Caernarvonshire, 1809-11* edited from original manuscript by Jones, E. Gwynne (1952)

Fenton, R., *Tours in Wales 1804-13*, supplement to *Archaeologia Cambrensis* (1917), pp. 200-01.

Photograph of painting by Henry Sykes, 1875, from sale catalogue, and other illustrations, St David's College collection

'Gloddaeth Hall', *Proceedings of Llandudno and District Field Club* (1907-08)

Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales, *Inventory*,

Caernarvonshire Vol. I (1956)

Haslam, R., 'Gloddaeth, Gwynedd', *Country Life*, December 1978

Briggs, S., 'William Latham in North Wales', *The Bulletin* (Welsh Historic Gardens Trust) (Spring 1997)