

VALLE CRUCIS ABBEY

Ref No PGW (C) 17
OS Map 117
Grid Ref SJ 205 443
County Denbighshire
District Denbighshire

Community Council Llantysilio

Designations Guardianship Ancient Monument (De3)

Site Evaluation Grade II

Primary reasons for grading

Eighteenth-century summerhouse aligned on monastic fishpond, in response to Picturesque taste of the day

Type of Site

Summerhouse; fishpond

Main Phases of Construction

Mediaeval period; mid-late eighteenth century

SITE DESCRIPTION

The summerhouse is thought to have been built in the mid to late eighteenth century by Sir Watkin Williams Wynn 4th Bt, of Wynnstay. The main evidence for this is an account of 1781 by John Byng: 'he has built a green and white summerhouse, at the end of a spruce fishing canal; and from this well-fancy'd retreat, the abbey is conceal'd by the apple trees in a cabbage garden. What charming elegance! How worthy of Clapham or Hackney'. He went on to say that if the abbey were 'properly embellish'd it would form one of the most delightfully romantic spots in the world: surely Browne never saw the place, or he wou'd have gone wild to have handled it'.

The placing of such a building was in reponse to the recent appreciation of picturesque ruins often incorporated into landscape layouts. It is situated on the eastern side of the abbey ruins, with the river Eglwyseg bounding it to the east. To its north is a small rectangular pond, thought to be a monastic fishpond.

The summerhouse is a two-storey stone and brick rendered cottage, with a hipped slate roof on its northern end. It has a central chimney stack and an exterior stack on the south end, with casement windows either side. The north end has a shuttered canted window, which looks down the axis of the fish pond. Entry into the upper floor is by a flight of stone steps and a door on the western side of the cottage. A datestone over the door reads J.L. 1773. This is John Lloyd of Trevor who acquired the Valle Crucis lands from the Wynnstay estate. It is assumed he added the date himself. In the interior of the lower level is a cooking range, and one half of the building has a cobble floor.

Sources

Secondary

Byng, J., The Torrington Diaries, Containing the Tours through England and Wales of the Hon. John Byng between the years 1781-1794.

Pratt, D., and A.G. Veysey, A Handlist of the Topographical Prints of Clwyd (1977), nos 420-507.

Whittle, E., The Historic Gardens of Wales (1992), p. 56.