

BROOM HALL

Ref No	PGW (Gd) 22 (GWY)
OS Map	123
Grid Ref	SH 412 372
Former County	Gwynedd
Unitary Authority	Gwynedd
Community Council	Llanystumdwy
Designations	Listed buildings: house and stable clock tower, both Grade II.
Site Evaluation	Grade II

Primary reasons for grading Original park and garden contemporary with 1790s house, park later enlarged and terracing added in garden; some excellent trees and other plantings; double drive.

Type of Site Park with woodland and double drive, terraced gardens, shrubberies, kitchen garden.

Main Phases of Construction Late eighteenth/early nineteenth century; early twentieth century.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Broom Hall is situated very close to the south coast of the Llyn peninsula, between Pwllheli and Cricieth, and is built on a slight rise, facing south-east. The coast is only just over a kilometre away but there is no view of the sea, as the site is not sufficiently elevated; however, at one time a flag was flown from a flagstaff at a certain high point in the park to summon home members of the family who were out sailing. A small rocky ridge between the park and the sea evidently provides some shelter, and the position is not an exposed one, as can be clearly seen by the size and quality of the trees.

Broom Hall is the largest and grandest of the three Llyn houses thought to have been designed by the Shropshire architect Joseph Broomfield, and was built in the 1790s, after Plas Bodegroes in 1780 and before Nanhoron in 1803. Like the other two houses, it has a symmetrical garden (south-east) front with a central doorway; it is plain except for a curved pediment over the central window on the first floor. Also like them there is a verandah along this front, returning at the sides, and the main approach is not to the front, where it would spoil the relationship between house and garden, but to the side, in this case the north-east.

The verandah is supported on iron pillars as at the other two houses, but at Broom Hall these are large, cylindrical and hollow, giving the appearance of classical columns, rather than delicate and decorative like those at Plas Bodegroes and Nanhoron. The main block of the house is three-storeyed, with five sash windows on each floor on the main south-east front. The house is covered with cream-painted stucco and has a low-pitched slate roof with wide eaves. There are extensions at the rear.

A lawyer called Rowland Jones bought the township of Botach in 1773. He died soon after, when his son, also Rowland Jones, was a baby, and nothing was done until Rowland the younger came of age, when he immediately took an interest in his Botach property. The township was by this time reduced to two cottages, which were swept away to create the park, and Broom Hall, at first called Werglodd, was built. Fenton, in 1804, noted 'modern plantations'. Rowland Jones remained a bachelor and added to the estate by purchase rather than by marriage; after a long life he left his property to his cousin's son, who died only a year after inheriting and left it to his own son, who suffered a similar fate. Margaret, wife of Owen Evans and sister of the previous owner, thus unexpectedly became an heiress, at the age of 50.

Margaret Evans's husband also added to the estate and, outliving her, he left it to their son Col. Owen Lloyd Jones Evans, who was born in 1846 and later married the daughter of John Savin of Bodegroes. He bought yet more property, building the estate up to be the largest in the area, and was well liked by his tenants. His eldest son inherited the estate but was killed in a flying accident, and the younger son never lived at Broom Hall and began to sell off parts of the estate. Eventually he decided to sell it all, and did so in 1945 - 46, most of the lots going to the tenants; Broom Hall was bought by the last owner's father.

A date on the arch of the clock tower, which forms the entrance to the stable-yard from the direction of the house, suggests that it was built for Rowland Jones in 1830, some years later than the house. It is an impressive structure with three storeys above the arch, with a pair of round-headed windows on each floor; the lower two are glazed sash windows and the upper louvres. The clock face is just beneath the highest pair of windows. The tower is detached from any other building, linked to the range of stables and carriage sheds only by the wall surrounding the stable-yard. It is built in a similar stone to the other buildings but has a different-coloured mortar, and is probably not contemporary. Until the drive was doubled, the main approach to the house was via this arch, but the house drive now passes to the west.

The stable-yard adjoins and is linked to the two yards of the home farm. There is an archway through a building to the middle yard, which also has another arch through a building giving on to the drive leading out to the road. It seems to be a sort of half-way house between farm and stable-yard. The stable-yard has a neatly built, curving wall topped with a dressed slate coping and decorative iron railings on the garden side. The buildings here consist of a north-west to south-east range of carriage sheds and stables which forms the north-east boundary of the stable-yard, with the arch to the next yard through it, and a shorter building adjoining at right-angles (on the north-west edge of the yard), perhaps a tack room. A window and doorway in the longer building, nearest this extension, are blocked, and differ from all the other doors and

windows in both buildings by having round arches rather than the flattened ones found over the rest of the openings.

All the buildings are similar in style and construction, most being built of shaped blocks of grey stone, but some different colours of stone are in evidence in the farm buildings and these may represent different building periods. All have slate roofs.

The park, of about 30 acres, lies to the south and south-west of the house. It consists of a larger, northern, and a smaller, southern, enclosure, sloping gently to the south and north respectively; there is a low-lying, damp area between them which is now somewhat overgrown with scrubby vegetation, through which runs a small stream. There is an extensive belt of mixed, but mainly deciduous, trees along the south-west boundary, and another belt of trees flanking the drive on the north-east; the latter contains a wide variety of trees and varied underplantings, especially of rhododendrons. The north-western and south-eastern boundaries are also mostly screened by trees, and further mature trees, including some conifers, dot the parkland. Both areas are maintained by light grazing, the larger area by geese at present.

The garden area is separated from the park by a ha-ha, and lies in the north-east corner. Next to it, to the south-west, low, straight banks can be seen, defining another rectangular enclosure, which has been at different times a garden extension and a pheasantry. The 1918 25-in. Ordnance Survey map shows two enclosures which would have fallen within this later, larger one (shown on the modern 6-in. map), and the south-eastern boundary of one of these would have been in the same place as that of the larger enclosure; this is where the bank is clearest. The area has now been returned to parkland.

The park was laid out when the house was built, the two cottages called Botach being demolished in the process. The parish boundary between Llanystumdwy and Llannor crosses the park, and its line is marked by irregularly-placed large natural boulders. These formed the boundary of the original park, as can be seen from the tithe map of the 1840s. By 1889 it had been enlarged to the south-west, incorporating an extra strip almost as large as the original park, with a straight boundary along which the trees are planted. Some of the boundary stones were moved fairly recently to facilitate ploughing (for re-seeding) but have been replaced in approximately their original positions. Several of the trees in the park, of various ages, are also ranged along this boundary line. These include several large ashes, a pine, and a purple sycamore (*Acer pseudoplanatus* 'Purpureum'). The trees may perhaps date from the period when this was the park boundary.

Straddling the boundary are the earthwork remains of the medieval township of Botach, still visible despite the demolition of the cottages and the subsequent planting and felling of a copse on the spot (this is shown on the tithe map). There are two curving banks with a depression between them, following the line of the parish boundary, and further banks and depressions to the south-east. When the grass is short, the traces of possible ridge-and-furrow cultivation can be seen beyond.

The drive runs close to the north-eastern boundary of the park, and is unusual in that there are

two parallel lanes, one curving round to the east, to the farm, and the other to the west, to the house. The two are divided by walls and a belt of trees and shrubs and, although they run very close together for most of their length, a glimpse from one to the other is relatively rare, at least in summer. The second drive was added at some time between the 1840s and 1889, and it appears to be the farm drive which is more recent, although the main drive has been re-routed at the house end. It used to approach the house through the clock tower arch, but now passes to the west of this. The main drive has very large, imposing cylindrical stone gateposts and wrought-iron gates, and a single-storey stone-built lodge either side, while the farm drive has a plain gate and simple stone gateposts.

Broom Hall is built where the ground levels out at the top of a gentle slope, and faces south-east across its terraced garden, with the kitchen garden behind it. On either side are shrubberies, now full of mature trees, and the drive approaches from the side so as not to detract from the garden front. The stable-yard is hidden away among the trees to the east.

The main feature of the garden is the terraces on three levels south-east of the house. These are shallow, as the site slopes only gently, and they are lawned, with plantings only down the sides and under the retaining walls. Once there must have been a view across the ha-ha into the park, but this is now closed off by the growth of trees and shrubs planted along the ha-ha at the far edge of the bottom terrace. Even so, the view over the simple terraces to the planting beyond is a pleasant one.

The areas to the south-west and north-east of the house which are now more or less wooded probably started out as shrubberies, with walks through them which have in many cases survived. The area now occupied by the terraces seems to have previously had a similar layout, with shrubs and curving paths, though it was probably more open - a sloping lawn with groups of shrubs. To the south-west, between the house and woodland, are some smaller, more intricate enclosures which are now overgrown and difficult to interpret, but one was planted, with roses especially, as a garden of remembrance for a previous owner who died in a flying accident.

The gardens laid out around the time the house was built probably survived to be shown on the tithe map of the 1840s; they consisted of a large area of shrubbery to the east-south-east of the house with lawns on the south and south-west, while against the ha-ha at the lower end of the garden was a small formal area. This was reached by an indirect path crossing the lawn, and was almost square, with three north-west to south-east paths, defining the edges and dividing it in half. One half contained a circular feature. By 1889 the sloping lawn crossed by curving paths had replaced this, and continued to be shown on 25-in. maps up to 1918, but some small changes had been made by this time, and the terraces may have been constructed soon after.

Many of the trees are probably the original plantings made at the time of the first change of design, which have now reached maturity. They include some magnificent beeches and two enormous conifers near the stable-yard. Other varieties include oak, various pines and firs and exotic conifers, and there are smaller ornamental trees such as magnolia, maple and bay (*Laurus nobilis*). There are one or two fine specimen trees. On the low grassy terrace next to the paved

courtyard is a large, mature cork oak. At the far end of the lowest terrace, near the ha-ha, is a magnificent monkey-puzzle (*Araucaria araucana*).

Most of the shrubby underplantings are more recent than the major trees, but may well date from an early twentieth-century phase of garden redesign. They include many different azaleas and rhododendrons as well as camellias, laurustinus (*Viburnum tinus*), fuchsias, bamboos and escallonias. The planting at the bottom of the terraces, which cuts off the view across the ha-ha, probably also dates from this time, as only scattered trees are shown here on the early maps.

The areas of shrubbery and woodland are not defined except by meeting the edges of other features, such as paths or drives or the terraces. Elsewhere they blend into neighbouring areas without a sharp break.

The walled kitchen garden is the least well preserved part of the garden, having fairly recently been ploughed up, and it is also extremely overgrown. The 1889 25-in. Ordnance Survey map shows a path all round the outside, one slightly south-east of centre running from south-west to north-east, and another at right angles to this bisecting the larger, north-western division of the garden. It is probable that all these paths were edged with box, and the outgrown hedges, up to 3 m high, flanking the central path do remain, but all the rest, except for a short stretch in front of the glasshouses in the north corner and one isolated bush near the south corner, has been grubbed up to facilitate ploughing. The ploughing has also obliterated the paths, apart from the central one, which was gravelled.

As well as the box, a double row of fruit trees (shown on the 1889 map but not necessarily the same trees) either side of the central path has largely survived; they are mostly apples, but of several varieties, and there is at least one pear. One plum survives against the north-west wall, and there is a fig against the north-east wall near the north corner.

The wall round the garden still stands, but is in poor condition. It is of stone on three sides, around 2.5 m high, and the north-west side is lined with hand-made brick; the north-east wall is brick throughout. There is slate or brick coping in places. The entrance in the south-west wall, opposite the end of the central path, has been bulldozed to admit the tractor for ploughing; the entrance opposite this, in the north-east wall, has a pair of narrow wooden doors. There is also an entrance near the east corner, a narrow doorway with a couple of steps and a wooden door in place, which is the one now used, and one near the south corner leading into the 'garden of remembrance'; the glasshouse in the north corner also provides a way in, having doors both into the garden and to the outside.

On the north-west wall, near the north corner, are three derelict glasshouses, one still containing vines but completely overgrown. Glasshouses are shown in this area on the 1889 map, but the plan does not seem quite to correspond with the surviving structures, so these may be later versions. The boiler-house, brick-built and partly sunken, is on the outside of the north-west wall, next to another small lean-to building; both are derelict. There is a gap about 6 - 8 m wide between the north-west garden wall and the park wall, but this does not seem to have had a path

through it or to contain anything other than the buildings mentioned.

There are two other small buildings against the outside of the north-east garden wall, one of which is brick-built and accessible only through a door from the garden. It contains various items of rubbish including some inscribed pieces of Victorian ironwork. The other, stone, building is accessible only from outside the garden.

On the south-eastern edge of the garden are several more buildings, with some small enclosures outside the garden wall. Some of these buildings are still used but others are not, and it is difficult to guess their original functions. The rear wall of what seems to be an extension to the house forms part of the south-west garden wall, and west of this is the overgrown enclosed area which used to be the 'garden of remembrance'; there is a building against the outside of the garden wall on the north-west edge of this, and another at right angles a little further west, against the inside of the south-west garden wall. This latter has a small wire run in front of it, indicating that it has recently been used for animals, as has the 'garden of remembrance'; it has a floor of large bricks, and may perhaps originally have been a fruit store. There is an internal division, and the two halves do not communicate, both being reached from outside.

On the east of the house extension is an enclosed courtyard of a similar size to the 'garden of remembrance', reached from the yard beside the house through a wide, arched doorway with a wooden door in place. This has a slate-paved path along the back of the house and a stone retaining wall about 1 m high north-west of this, to cope with a change in level. The courtyard also contains a small building against the outside of the garden wall, which may have been an aviary. At the other end of this enclosure, just beyond the door leading into it from the yard, is a very small animal stall with a hay-rack, and beyond this, reached via some slate steps and a path round to the east, a square building which may be older than the rest, now used for animal sheds, and further lean-to sheds. The square building has a chimney, and may once have been domestic, or have been a pigs' kitchen; oddly, the 3 m high wall forming the south-east edge of the small court (north-west wall of the yard beside the house) meets the facade of this building at right-angles part way along, dipping to fit under the eaves. There is yet another lean-to building, very ramshackle, against this wall on the yard side. The 1889 map shows a pump in this yard and a water tank in the garden, but both of these have disappeared.

Sources

Primary

Information from the late F. R. Bond, Esq.

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust report no 2020: Broom Hall, Abererch

Tithe map, copy in above report

Secondary

Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales, *Inventory*,
Caernarvonshire Vol. II, p. 115 (1960)

Gresham, C. A., *Eifionydd*, pp 366-69 (1973)