

PLAS BODEGROES

Ref No	PGW (Gd) 15 (GWY)
OS Map	123
Grid Ref	SH 355 353
Former County	Gwynedd
Unitary Authority	Gwynedd
Community Council	Llannor
Designations	Listed building
Site Evaluation	Grade II

Primary reasons for grading Garden and remains of park probably contemporary with late-eighteenth-century house; 400 m beech avenue.

Type of Site Informal garden with beech avenue; ha-ha; kitchen garden, lake and woodland.

Main Phases of Construction Probably late eighteenth century.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The house is situated on flat land just north-west of Pwllheli, not far from the coast and in an area of favourable climate. It faces south-west, looking down a long beech avenue which adds interest to an unpromising site.

Bodegroes was built in 1780, possibly incorporating part of an earlier house, and was the first of the three Llyn houses thought to have been designed by Joseph Broomfield. Like the other two, Broom Hall and Nanhoron, it has a verandah along the garden front, returning up the sides, supported on iron pillars, and a drive which does not directly approach the front of the house, but comes in from the side instead - in this case the north-east.

The house is rendered and painted white and is of two storeys, with attics. The symmetrical facade is less austere than that of either of the other Broomfield houses, all the windows on the first floor having curved pediments, and all those on the ground floor being full-length. The iron pillars supporting the verandah are rather elegant, each consisting of a group of four very slim pillars bunched together.

The front half of the house, containing the main rooms, is very distinct in plan from the rear,

service, block, but there seems no reason to suppose they were not built at the same time.

Hyde Hall, writing in about 1810, describes the house as belonging to a Mr Griffiths, probably William Griffith (1748-1816), for whom the house was no doubt built. At this time there were already 'protecting' trees around the house, but Hyde Hall also mentions new planting and fencing. The estate was sold in 1846, at which time it was very extensive, owning farms in several parishes. Towards the end of the nineteenth century it belonged to John Savin, whose daughter married Col. Owen Lloyd Jones Evans of Broom Hall. A new house in similar style to Plas Bodegroes was built for the owners in about 1990, west-south-west of the main house, near the farm buildings.

A good-sized stone-built shed of indeterminate age, with a low-pitched slate roof, is in the yard at the rear of the house. It does not quite reach the wall at the south-east end of the yard, and through the north-east wall in this corner is a doorway, and a small glazed window, not now part of any building. A building about the same size is shown on an estate map of 1836, with the gap in the corner, but an apparently larger building is shown on early 25-in. Ordnance Survey maps. The existing shed therefore seems to represent a return to something more like the original structure.

An enigmatic two-storey building, shown on the 1836 map, with a bell turret on top (the bell has gone) looks as though it should be a cottage or dormitory, but appears not to have a chimney or fireplace. It may have been a fruit store, but although close to the house is some distance from the kitchen garden. It is stone-built with a slate roof, and the window in the front has been reduced in size; there is a wooden lean-to on the north-west side.

The yard behind the house, in which these buildings are situated, is walled, partly gravelled and partly cobbled. Between the two existing buildings the site of what may have been a large water tank can be seen (a structure of some sort is shown in this position on early 25-in. Ordnance Survey maps, and a building on the 1836 map).

Bodegroes Cottage may have been the original farmhouse, though it is small and is perhaps more likely to have been an estate cottage. It is now in separate ownership. It is stone-built, single storey but with a window to the attic on the south-west gable; there are extensions to north-east and north-west, in place by 1889. The cottage appears on the 1836 estate map, possibly already extended. What was probably a yard, to the south-east, is partly cobbled and partly walled, and has been made into a garden.

A stone-built cart shed, perhaps also barn, presumably originally part of the farm buildings but now a garage/store used by Bodegroes Cottage, is early nineteenth-century or earlier, as it appears on the 1836 map. It has three arched entrances, the central one higher, and the easternmost partially blocked.

The park, which surrounds the house and garden, was once quite extensive and was probably laid out when the house was built. Hyde Hall's reference to 'new planting and fencing' in the early years of the nineteenth century suggests that work was still continuing at that time, but

the layout was complete by 1836. Hyde Hall also mentions trees which were obviously mature. On maps of 1836, 1889 and 1901 the park was almost exactly the same, and filled most of the large triangle between Efailnewydd to the north-west, the road junction by Pensarn farm to the south-east and the river to the south. Though many of the plantations (all of which were in place by 1836) and some of the parkland trees survive, as does much of the boundary wall, this area now has the character and appearance of farmland rather than parkland.

There is really only one area which is not strictly part of the garden and which does retain some of its original character, although now under farm ownership and not maintained. This is the area beyond the farm and kitchen garden, consisting of woodland and a small lake.

The house drive is tarmac-surfaced, sweeping round in a curve across the parkland. It originally approached the main, south-west front of the house by curving round from the north-east, but has now been altered to give a delivery access at the rear, and access to a car park on the east side of the house. The farm drive has a part tarmac, part rough stony/gravel surface, and has been fenced at least since 1836.

The lodge is located between the farm drive to the west and the house drive to the east. It is shown on the 1836 map and mentioned in the 1846 sale catalogue and is probably contemporary with the house, but has been modernised and altered. The windows are new but have drip-mouldings over; the walls are rendered and painted cream, and the roof is slated.

The gateposts at the entrance to the house drive are simple, square stone structures with flat stone slab tops, one completely overgrown with ivy. The gate is a single, wide, one in white-painted decorative wrought ironwork. The farm drive has no gateposts or gates.

A track from Bodegroes Cottage and the farm drive passes along the north-west side of the lake, round to join a disused farm track which eventually meets the far end of the beech avenue south-west of the house. Access to the parkland field south-west of the house and the kitchen garden is also off this track.

The lake, north-west of the kitchen garden, is small and partly silted up, with an artificial island at the north-east end. It is in an area which is now more wooded than it appears on early Ordnance Survey maps, but is still partly open at the south-west end. The island was not present in 1836 but had appeared by 1889.

Further to the north-west, beyond the track, is another wooded area, surrounded by a wall. A second lake is shown here on the current 6-in. map, but does not appear on the 1836 map and was only a very narrow pond, in a different position, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It now seems to be more or less overgrown.

The fields which surround the house are remnants of the original park, although they have been repeatedly ploughed and have lost most of their trees. They are now used for pasture and silage production.

A ha-ha forms the southern boundary of the garden, either side of the beech avenue. At one time it continued down both sides of the avenue, but this is now fenced and the ha-ha just follows the south-west edge of the lawn. To the west, it becomes a fence alongside the orchard, and to the east, a fence and ditch.

The remaining parkland trees, although few, are of several varieties and various ages. One or two are over-mature and could be early plantings; others have certainly been planted this century. The 1836 estate map shows fewer scattered trees than are indicated on the later Ordnance Survey maps. The survivors include oak, beech, ash and horse chestnut, and there is at least one stand of conifers. The trees planted along the park boundaries, particularly along the roadside, have had a better rate of survival than those dotted about. There is a row of four enormous limes just outside the north-west garden wall, opposite the southernmost farm buildings. The 1836 map clearly shows five, and these were all still present in 1889.

The garden seems always to have been small when compared with the extensive park. It is also largely informal, and appears to have consisted originally of shrubberies and a large lawn. The main feature remaining is the impressive avenue of beeches leading away to the south-west, and though it seems likely that the garden was laid out at the time the house was built there is some reason to think that the avenue could in fact pre-date the house.

The house is situated more or less in the middle of its gardens, which consist of a wooded area backing the house to the north and east, lawns and shrubberies laid out in front, to the south and south-west, and the avenue, about 400 m long, leading off to the south-west from the far side of the lawn.

North-west of the house a small area has been made into a vegetable garden, as the kitchen garden is now in separate ownership, and some alterations have recently been made to the drives east of this. Spaces have been cleared amongst the trees north and east of the house to create car parking areas. This area still has some very fine trees, though some have been felled.

Some other recent additions include a raised rose-bed and a circular herb garden, both in the lawn area. A new house with a moat-like pond is the most recent of all, in the western corner of the garden.

The gardens and park are described in glowing terms in the sale catalogue of 1846; what is particularly interesting, however, is that the avenue of beech trees is described as 'venerable' - an odd term to use for hardwood trees only 60 - 70 years old, as they would have been had they been planted at the time the house was built. It is therefore possible that the avenue was already in place, aligned on an earlier house, and the new house was built aligned with it. At the far end of the avenue, either side of the gate to the track beyond, there are arched alcoves built into the wall, presumably for seats; a view up the avenue back to the house would have been obtained from here.

In the 1940s the house belonged to a former 'Gaiety Girl', who made some changes to the garden and is probably responsible for the semi-wild or Japanese garden area to the west of the

house. It is quite likely that the gravel walks made after 1917 also date from her time.

The present owners have made several minor changes, but the basic layout seems to remain much as it was in 1836, when a very clear estate map at 25-in. scale was made. The one interesting feature shown on this map is a circular mound in the east corner of the garden, which appeared to form a focus for the path layout in the shrubberies. No structure is indicated on the mound, and it may have been intended as a viewpoint; although it would only have overlooked the back of the house, which in any case must have been hidden by shrubberies, it would have offered a 270-degree view over the park. The large enclosure (all one at the time, though now divided up) thus overlooked was called Cae'r Mount. It looks from the Ordnance Survey map as though the mound had been destroyed by 1901, possibly earlier, and all that remains today is a small remnant, no more than 1.5 m high but nevertheless quite noticeable. A new branch of the drive cuts through its site.

The main tarmac drive enters the garden from the north-east, and, becoming gravelled, curves round westwards to approach the south-east side of the house. It then loops right back in a circle and rejoins the tarmac drive. The parking area, north of this, consists of several gravelled bays made amongst the trees east of the house. There is another, new, branch of the drive, for deliveries, which leads off to the north and comes into the yard at the rear of the house from this direction.

A gravelled footpath leads from the parking area under a new laburnum arch to approach the house from the east. There is a gravelled walk all around the house, from the turning circle on the south-east across the front and back round to the north-east, through the wall into the yard. Part of this is the old route of the drive leading to the south-west front of the house. Other routes, formerly gravelled but now lightly grassed over, cross the lawn - one towards the new house to the west, which was originally a drive leading out of the garden south of the farm, and then turning sharply back to the north-east to join up with the farm drive. The recently constructed herb garden now interrupts this close to the house. A branch off it led across the site of the new house to the orchard, the gate of which is now beyond the moat, and right through the orchard to the far side, but this has disappeared under the moat and the rampant growth in the orchard. Another walk runs south-west from the south corner of the house, curving gently across the lawn and then continuing down the beech avenue. Although this was never a drive, there was probably once a wide gravelled walk the length of the avenue, where now there is a narrow, unsurfaced path.

A third formerly gravelled walk echoes the curve of the last-mentioned, on the other side of the lawn, running from the west corner of the house to meet the other walk at the entrance to the avenue. This, however, is not contemporary with the others, all shown on 1836, 1889, 1901 and 1917 maps, as it does not appear on these maps but is shown on the current 6-in. map. Another more recent, but still grassed-over, gravel path leads into the semi-wild garden area west of the house. This garden was not laid out as at present until after 1917, and the two later paths may be contemporary with this development.

On the 1836 estate map a fairly simple layout of paths is shown in the shrubberies to the north-

east of the house, and coming down to join the drive at the south corner of the house. This is not shown on later maps except for one straight path running north-west from the mound to the farm drive, and as the rest of the layout appears to be drawn on the estate map in a different medium, it may have been an idea which was never executed.

There is a level lawn to the south-west of the house, over which the vista down the avenue is obtained. There are several trees, of various sizes and ages, planted in the lawn, most round the edges so as not to interfere with the view to the avenue. A recent, heart-shaped raised bed with stone revetting wall is in the middle of the area of lawn between the two walks leading to the avenue.

A small semi-wild garden is tucked into the corner of the walls bounding the garden on the north-west and the rear drive on the north-east. The farther into the corner one goes the wilder it becomes, with the gravel paths becoming grass and wild flowers superseding garden varieties. There are several narrow paths, and though it is a very small area, it is possible to feel perfectly secluded.

A wooded area is probably the remains of an original mixed plantation and shrubberies, though some of the planting has been renewed. There are now several different areas within it, including a largely unmanaged section north-west of the house, the car park area to the north and east, and an area on the east corner which contains the remains of the mound and the various branches of the drive.

The orchard, on the south-west side of the kitchen garden, is now completely overgrown with impenetrable undergrowth; protruding from this, one apple tree and a bay can be seen. It is an irregular shape, with (formerly) one path across, and several different types of wall and fence enclosing it. The entrance from the garden is inaccessible, but has a pretty gate; the entrance from the park side is through a gap in the wall probably made to admit a tractor, which has destroyed the original entrance. It is highly likely that both this and the kitchen garden have been ploughed. The orchard is probably contemporary with the house, although there is no indication of fruit trees on the estate map of 1836; it was in existence at any rate by 1846, when it was mentioned in a sale catalogue.

Like the orchard, the square kitchen garden, which lies to the west-north-west of the main house, beyond the new house and adjacent to the farm, is completely overgrown, except for a strip along inside the north-east wall. It is probably contemporary with the house and was in existence by 1836.

The wall round the garden is more or less intact. On the south-west, dividing the garden from the orchard, it is stone-built and low; there is a gap at the west end. On the south-east and north-west the wall is also stone, but higher. The north-west wall is collapsing in places; there appears to be a blocked door near the west corner, which would have given access to the area between the wall and the lake (also shown as planted with fruit trees on the 1889 map, but not by 1901). This must have been blocked for a long time, judging by the size of the sycamore against it on the outside. The south-east wall seems to be better built, and has a slate 'string

course' with a top course of stones on edge above this, although much of it is missing. Towards the south corner the gable end of a building in the farmyard the other side forms part of the wall, and beyond that the height of the wall drops to about the same as the south-west wall, about 1 m. There is an iron gate through it, without an arch over, near the corner. Another entrance through this wall, with a wooden door, is close to the east corner, and remains in use. The north-east wall is brick, about the same height as the taller stone walls, but rising behind the glasshouse, which is built against it near the east corner. The wall is whitewashed where it forms the back of the glasshouse.

The garden is clearly shown on the 1836 estate map with perimeter and cross paths dividing it into four equal sections, with wide borders all round the edges. There is no indication of fruit trees, but the 1889 Ordnance Survey map shows these lining all the paths; not a sign of any of this layout remains.

The long glasshouse, with curving eaves, is first shown on the 1917 25-in. Ordnance Survey map, but the small stone-built boiler house, outside the south-east wall in the east corner, is not. A long building against the outside of the north-east wall is shown on the 1836 estate map, and half of it was still in place in 1889 and 1901, but it had been demolished by 1917. The glasshouse retains much of its glass, and still contains heating pipes and the workings of the ventilation system. There are battens and wires on the rear wall, and the remains of vines which have been grubbed up hang from the roof. There is an internal division, and the glasshouse is partly in use. Some tools probably as old as the building are lying about inside, and a large rhubarb forcer outside.

A strip of ground north-west of the glasshouse, against the north-east wall of the garden, has been cleared and is in use for growing vegetables. There is a single remaining vine against the wall (with no indication that it was ever enclosed by glass), and the trunk of a dead fruit tree. Near the north corner is a doorway through the north-east wall, with wooden door in place, but disused.

Sources

Primary

Information from C. Chown, Esq.

Estate map drawn by R. Lloyd Ellis (1836), County Archives, Caernarfon (XM/MAPS/6145/5)

1846 sale catalogue displayed on the wall inside the house (original in County Archives, Caernarfon)

Secondary

Hyde Hall, E., *A Description of Caernarvonshire (1809-1811)*, edited from the original manuscript by Jones, E. Gwynne (1952)

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Gresham, C. A., *Eifionydd* (1973)