

Conservation Area Appraisal Beddgelert



Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

Conservation Area Appraisal Beddgelert

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1. Introduction

This report contains the results of an appraisal of the Conservation Area of Beddgelert undertaken by Adam Voelcker and Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT) on behalf of the Snowdonia National Park Authority (SNPA).

The aim of the appraisal is to describe and explain the historic character of the settlement in order to inform and support positive conservation and regeneration programmes. This will help improve the quality of planning advice, and contribute to local interpretation strategies. The survey will define the distinctive historical character of Beddgelert, and identify the variety of character within it. The aims of the survey are based upon the understanding that the variety of character identified during the survey is fundamental to local distinctiveness and pride of place, and these are to be seen as assets within the process of regeneration.

1.2 Acknowledgements

Mr Gwilym Jones, Snowdonia National Park Authority, instigated the project, and generously provided help and information to aid the project. Margaret Dunn kindly gave help and advice during the course of the project.

2. Methodology

2.1 Introduction

A brief was provided by the SNPA. The methodology employed to answer the brief is based upon that developed by Cadw following initial urban characterisation projects undertaken by Welsh archaeological trusts. These in turn were based upon a methodology developed in England for urban characterisation and assessment, but also include English Heritage guidelines for Conservation Area Appraisal (English Heritage 2006).

The following methods were used to achieve the stated aims.

Data Collection

This phase included the collection of data from regional and national historic environment records, including those kept at GAT, RCAHMW, Cadw and National Museums and Galleries of Wales. Archive records were obtained from Gwynedd Archives, Conwy Archives, University of Wales, Bangor and National Library of Wales.

The records were entered onto a database that was compatible with the regional Historic Environment Record, and their location identified through a geographical information system (MapInfo). Additional records and information sources were identified from historic maps, prints and photographs, and literature sources, including early antiquarian works.

Characterisation

The characterisation process combined the understanding gained from the desk-based phase with comprehensive fieldwork and a visual assessment of the surviving historic fabric. The development of the topography of the settlement was noted, and phases of historic change identified. Distinctive architectural forms, materials and significant elements of town and streetscapes were recorded. This process allowed the identification of areas of distinctive character, and these formed the basis of the character areas presented in this report.

2.2 Bibliographic Sources

A list of works consulted, combined with bibliographic references is given at the end of this report.

2.3 Previous Archaeological Work

Excavations have been undertaken around the church and in the cemetery in an attempt to locate remains of the priory buildings. A full description and the probable location of the former priory buildings is given in Bott and Dunn.

3. The Planning Background

Details of the planning process and how it affects management of the Conservation Area can be found in Appendix 1.

There are no scheduled ancient monuments with the Conservation Area, and none lie immediately adjacent.

There are a number of listed buildings within the village, one of which lies outside the Conservation Area; these are listed in Appendix 2.

4. Physical Setting

4.1 Extent Of Area

The extent of the area included within this study is shown on Figure 1. It includes the Conservation Area and adjacent areas.

4.2 Landscape & Setting

Beddgelert sits at the confluence of two rivers, the Afon Colwyn which arrives from the north-west and the Afon Glaslyn from the north-east, joining to flow due south towards the Aberglaslyn Pass. Hemmed in on all three sides by steep hills (Moel Hebog, 782m, to the west; Mynydd Sygun, 300m, to east; Craig Wen, 587m to north), the village feels higher and more Alpine than its actual altitude of only 40m above sea-level.

The village is small and compact, most of its buildings lining the three roads into the village. The roads from Caernarfon (A4085) and Capel Curig (A498) follow the two incoming rivers, the road to the south (A498) rejoins the Afon Glaslyn after skirting around a 180ha area of flat land south of the church. The main road bridge crosses the Afon Colwyn north of the church.

The flat land including and just south of the church is the key to the village's development. Pennant thought that this 'beautiful tract of meadow [...] was the fittest in the world to inspire religious meditation, amidst lofty mountains, woods and murmuring streams'.¹ Indeed, it inspired the establishment of a Celtic clas and an Augustinian priory, and later, a mound in the same meadows inspired the creation of a romantic myth that would popularise the village and make it the important tourist destination it has remained ever since.²

5. Historical Development

5.1 Early History, Up To 1800

Traces of a Roman road to the west of the village, probably linking Segontium and Tomen y Mur, suggest a presence in the area in the late Roman period (third and fourth centuries) and it is quite possible that copper was mined here at the time. Excavation work in 1954-5 at Dinas Emrys (2km east of Beddgelert) indicated occupation of the area in Roman and Early Medieval times.

Right:

Plate 01 -

The settlement developed on an area of flat land alongside the confluence of two rivers. The church, centre, was the initial focus.





Left:
Plate 02 -
The church
of St Mary,
formerly a
Celtic mon-
astery which
developed into
an Augustinian
Priory. After
the dissolution
it became the
parish church.

Of particular importance are the fragments of pottery from a sixth century amphora bearing the chi-rho symbol. This indicates trade with the eastern Mediterranean, and the presence of a high status Christian family who were able to afford exotic goods. It is likely that the stone ramparts which defend the hill date from this period. Dinas Emrys is the setting for the story of the meeting of Vortigern and Ambrosius as given in Nennius *Historia Brittonum* in the 9th century.³ Also within the ramparts are the stone foundations of a rectangular keep. There are no contemporary references to the tower, but from its style it is likely to be of late 12th or early 13th century date. Llywelyn ap Iorwerth is known to have possessed large areas of upland grazing here, a valuable resource which, in 1199, was largely granted to the Cistercians as part of the Nanhwynan grange. Llywelyn may have been responsible for building the tower, which is sited on one of the principal north-south routes and at a significant point of access to the areas of upland grazing.

Although Celtic hermits may have settled at the confluence as early as the sixth and seventh centuries when the first Christian missionaries arrived in Eifionydd,⁴ the earliest historical reference to this small community dates from the first quarter of the thirteenth century when Gerald of Wales recorded seeing a religious

settlement 'located at the foot of Eryri, not far from the so-called court of Merlin Ambrosius (Dinas Emrys) and fairly close to the Irish Sea coast'.⁵ Gerald also referred to attempts by the Cistercians of Aberconway to take the community of hermits under their control but this was resisted after an appeal to the Pope. Around 1220 the community came under the Augustinian order (Ynys Enlli and Ynys Seiriol, two other communities of culdees, were also taken into the Augustinian Order at about the same time) and shortly after, maybe around 1230, the priory was built, its grit-stone perhaps quarried from land that the Augustinians owned on Anglesey and transported by boat to Aberglaslyn (where the sea reached before Madocks' reclamation of the Traeth Mawr, the estuary of the Glaslyn).

Disaster struck in 1283 when the priory - or as Bishop Anian of Bangor called it, 'The House of the Valley of St Mary of Snowdonia' - was damaged by fire. Edward I helped to fund the rebuilding but it would seem that the church was little damaged since there is no evidence of any rebuilding at this date. From the mid-fourteenth century, the priory's fortunes declined, perhaps due to the Black Death; it was in dire financial straits in 1399 and around 1432 there was possibly a second fire. When the last prior died in 1535, the buildings and adjacent land passed to the

Crown. In 1536 and 1537, they were granted successively to the abbeys of Chertsey (Surrey) and Bisham (Berkshire) before being dissolved and returned to the Crown again, and then sold.

At this time the settlement must have been tiny and considerably smaller than the former priory which probably now lay in ruins except for its church which was retained as the church of the newly-formed parish (**Plate 02, see page 03**). Only a handful of dwellings probably existed. The prior's house (later called Tŷ Isaf, now Llewelyn Cottage), first recorded in 1573, is likely to pre-date the dissolution of the priory. On the north side of the river a house on the site of the present Saracen's Head Hotel existed, originally part of the Glasdraian farm and then an inn called Tŷ Uchaf from the late eighteenth century. A timber screen in the inn dates from the 16th century. Routes to the settlement no doubt arrived from three directions following the rivers. The track along Nant Colwyn came along the west side of the river, through the Prior's Land, and the track south met the sea at Aberglaslyn. The earliest record of the bridge is dated 1623 when repairs were required, so a bridge connecting the land of the Augustinians to that of the Cistercians probably existed long before.

Records for the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries are scarce. A complaint

by twelve parishioners in 1637 (to the Bishop, about the shortcomings of the incumbent) and fifteen christenings in 1734 indicate some sort of community but it cannot have been a large one. In 1775 the village was described 'miserable' by one traveller.⁶ But at the turn of the century, its future began to change.

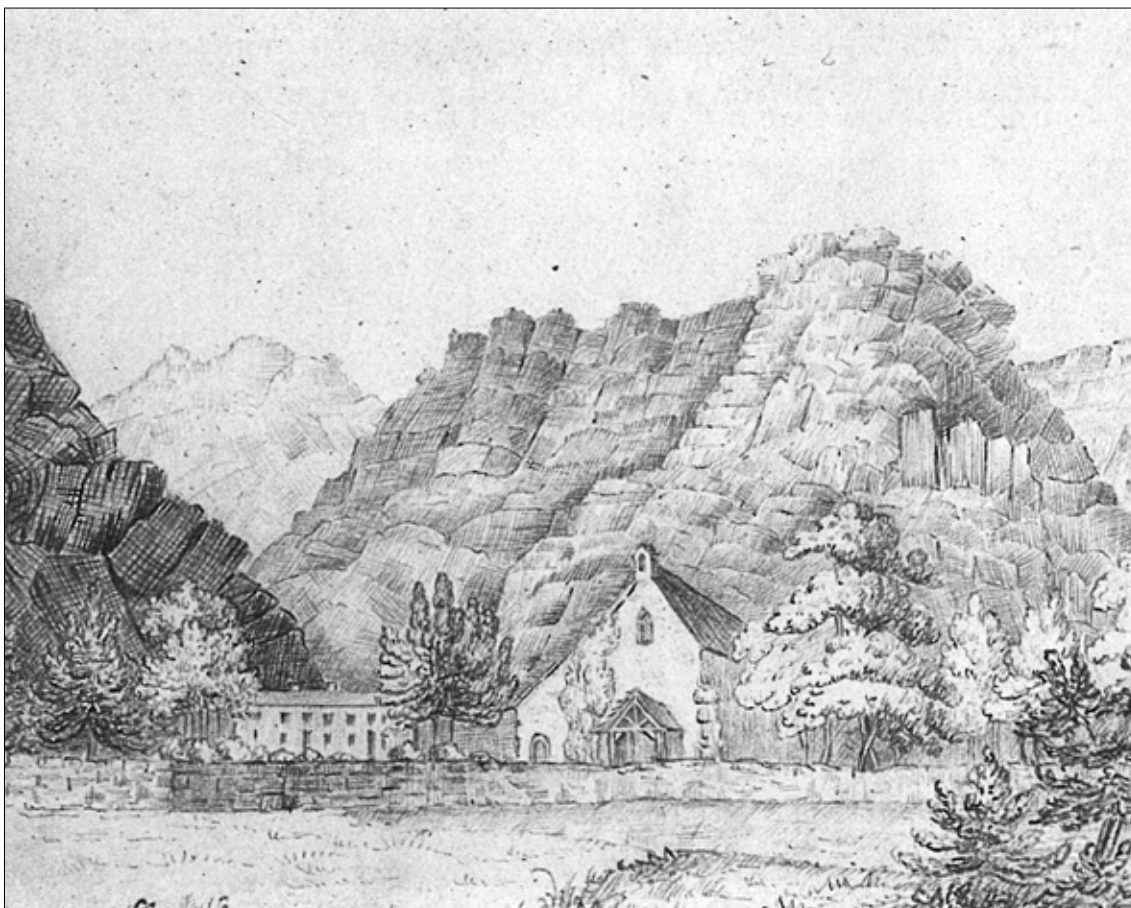
5.2 From 1800 To The Present Day

North Wales started to open up to the world in the mid-eighteenth century as Snowdonia was discovered by travellers and artists (such as John Boydell and Richard Wilson) in search of romantic landscapes. When the Napoleonic wars effectively put a stop to Grand Tours of the continent, Snowdonia provided a very acceptable alternative, as the dramatic engravings in Thomas Roscoe's *Wanderings and Excursions in North Wales* advertised (1836). This surge of interest in the wild, natural world coincided with the Act of Union of 1800 placing Snowdonia in a strategic position along the routes from England to Ireland.

Beddgelert stood to gain on all fronts. The turnpike roads improved communications, copper from the handful of mines in the area fetched a high price and wealthy incomers such as Daniel Vawdrey, who bought the Plas Gwynant estate in 1803, carried out improvements to agriculture in the area. W. A. Madocks had more

Right:

Plate 03- The outbreak of war with France in the late 18th century encouraged more travellers, many of whom recorded the landscape in pictures and sketches, to replace the Continental tour with one in one in the remoter regions of the British Isles. Beddgelert Church from the south-west, Matilda Corbett, 1822 (NLW, 90/24 P 3680).





ambitious plans which would push back the sea from Aberglaslyn and reclaim a vast tract of land in the Glaslyn estuary, and it may be he who first suggested to Thomas Jones (who had inherited the priory land on the west side of the river) the building of a hotel in Beddgelert.⁷ The Bedd Gelert Hotel was built in 1800 much to the appreciation of travellers who had previously made do with the uncomfortable village inns.⁸ E. Hyde Hall noted six new houses when he visited in 1809-11, and Wordsworth commented on 'new and formal houses [which] have in a great measure supplanted the old rugged and tufted cottages' when he came to the village in 1824. These may be the houses in Church Street, the first of the village's terraced streets. Soon after, the north side of the river was developed, new houses and small hotels in part replacing much older houses to the north and west of the bridge, and to the east, terraces for the copper and slate workers (Smith Street and Gwynant Street). The village continued to expand modestly through the nineteenth century, serving the resident population with two chapels (Calvinistic Methodist and Congregational, in addition to the Anglican church), two schools (National and British, both opened in the 1850s), shops and further terraces, and also serving the

intermittent visitor population with further hotels (new or conversions). In 1876 the Royal Goat Hotel could stable 33 horses and offer standing space for 13 carriages, an indication of its popularity.

The village today is physically not very different from how it was towards the end of the nineteenth century. Socially, the heyday of community life was probably during this period, though, with very limited potential in the local copper mines and slate quarries, it was never a wealthy community. Tourism, which put Beddgelert on the map in the early 1800s, would seem to be the one constant that has remained, but latterly second-home-ownership has made the village more a museum than a viable local community.

5.3 Economic Activity

Agriculture, minerals and slate - and later, tourism - have been the mainstays of the village's economy. It is likely that copper and other minerals were mined by the Romans. Mines at Aberglaslyn, Brynyfelin and Sygun were worked well before the mid-sixteenth century, and veins of lead, zinc, iron, ochre and manganese have also been worked. Brynyfelin was doing well in

Above:
Plate 04 -
The houses in
Church Street
may be the ear-
liest terrace,
developed c.
1810.

Right:

Plate 05 -
The Royal Goat
Hotel, opened
in 1802, is the
focus of one
end of the main
street. Its de-
velopment may
have been influ-
enced by Ma-
docks.



the 1760s, and Pennant noted the workings at Aberglaslyn in 1810, but generally the material was never pure enough to be commercially successful, and when efforts were made to re-open mines in the nineteenth century, they mostly failed. Narrow-gauge railways were laid in the hope that better transport would improve markets but this proved a false hope.

There were slate quarries at Bronheulog and Cwmcloch (both south-west of the village), and the largish quarry at Glanyrafon near Rhyd Ddu employed 500 men around the end of the nineteenth century, 30 of them living in Beddgelert. But slate quarries fared no better than copper mines, again because the quality of material was never high.

Small-scale agriculture had always been important, particularly on the fertile area of flat land to the south and west of the priory. The Celtic hermits and later the Augustinian monks tended their meadows and reared sheep and cattle for meat, butter, cheese and wool. The hills around were less amenable to cultivation but at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when Improvement was in vogue, wealthy incomers such as Daniel Vawdrey spent large sums on planting trees and cultivating the lower slopes. A photo in

Jenkins' book 9 shows the hills west of the village bare of trees, presumably late in the nineteenth century, but they must have been forested throughout the previous centuries as indeed they were again after 1927 when the Forestry Commission planted on the west side of Nant Colwyn.

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the nearest market towns were Caernarfon and Llanrwst, reached by bridle-path until the turnpikes were made. In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries numerous houses in the village incorporated shops or workshops on the ground floor, and the community was largely self-sustaining. Today only one general store and a small post office remain; most of the other shops are for the tourist trade. Current planning policy generally deters new development, especially if it introduces new buildings into the village and its surroundings, but the re-opening of the Welsh Highland Railway is an exception as the route mostly uses the bed of the former track. The railway opened in 1922 but was never a financial success; it closed in 1937 but from 1997 to 2011 it was re-opened for tourist traffic in stages between Caernarfon and Porthmadog. The new station in Beddgelert, behind Oberon Wood, was opened in 2009.

6. Topographical Development of the Settlement

The meeting of routes along the three valleys rather than the confluence of its rivers (which were largely unnavigable) led inevitably to settlement, by the Romans perhaps, by Celtic culdees and then by Augustinian monks. Initial development was to the south-west of the confluence, on flat land that was suitable for building on and cultivating. Crossing-points over the rivers were made where routes, depth and width dictated, and a stone bridge over the Afon Colwyn facilitated communications in the north-south direction, linking with Caernarfon to the north-west and later to Capel Curig and Llanrwst to the north-east. The settlement developed as a proper village (rather than just as an appendage to the priory) at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Although there was at least one inn on each side of the river by then, the Revd W. Bingley found one of them 'the worst and most uncomfortable house[s], in which necessity ever compelled me to take up my abode', and was relieved when, on a

subsequent trip, he found a smart new hotel, opened in 1802. This elegant stuccoed building was located at some distance west of the church on an eminence that afforded an attractive view of the village and of the mountains beyond, and was safely away from the river that had swept away the bridge the preceding year. Its position on the road out of the village towards Madocks' 'borough' at Tremadog (begun c.1805) and thence to the packet-port for Ireland, then planned at Porth Dinllaen, may also have been intentional. There was also ample space for pleasure-gardens, which show clearly on the O.S. map of 1889.

The six new houses that E. Hyde Hall reported being built in the first decade of the nineteenth century and the 'new and formal houses' Wordsworth saw in 1824 may be one and the same, the plain-looking terrace on the east side of Church Street which also appears in an engraving by Matilda Corbett, dated 1822.¹⁰ This row appears to have been built in at least two stages as the stonework of the north half is different to that in the south half. There is then no further development south of the church (apart from extensions to the churchyard in 1848 and 1884), which Gresham explains was probably due to Frank Jones Walker-Jones (who inherited the priory land from Thomas Jones,



Left:
Plate 06 -
The terrace in
Church Street

Right:

Plate 07 -

The land south of the church remains largely undeveloped.

**Far right:**

Plate 08 -

Erw Fair built in 1842

the builder of the Royal Goat Hotel) holding it in trust for his son. And to this day the land remains undeveloped, apart from a handful of dwellings along the street (including Walker-Jones' own house, Erw Fair, built in 1842) and Coed Gelert, an estate of new detached houses on the site of the hotel's gardens, built in the 1990s.

**Far right:**

Plate 09 -

Plaque recording the construction of Club Street in 1841 by the 'Benefit Society of the Men of Eryri'

The most intensive development took place along the north side of the rivers on Bulkeley land to the west (beyond Plas Colwyn) and on land belonging to Robert Morris to the east (that is, east of and including Plas Colwyn). Smith Street and Gwynant Street comprise mostly two-storey workers' terrace-houses, many of them incorporating shops or workshops later in the century and during the early part of the twentieth. The likely date is c.1830, but clear structural breaks occur mid-terrace (e.g. between Nos 8 & 9 Gwynant Street), evidence that the units were not all built in one go. Slightly later is the row sometimes called Club Street, erected by 'The Benefit Society of the Men of Eryri in Beddgelert. Established January 1832. This House was Built AD 1841' (inscribed on a plaque on No.6, the 'club-house').

On the north side of the main bridge and to its west, old houses were gradually replaced by (or incorporated in) elegant new buildings,





mostly hotels, some reaching three, even four, storeys. From Plas Gwyn to the Prince Llewelyn Hotel, the buildings are joined (though their roofs are stepped, indicating different dates) but Plas Colwyn stands back, an attractive Regency villa set apart from the row.

Later developments took place either on vacant sites within the village or at the periphery. In the mid-nineteenth century, the British school was built near the present Saracen's Head Hotel on land given by the Bulkeley estate, and the National School near the church on land given by Mrs Walker-Jones. The Calvinistic Methodist

Far left:
Plate 10 -
Coed Gelert, a
new estate built
in the 1990's



Far left:
Plate 11 -
Plas Colwyn, an
attractive Re-
gency villa

Left:
Plate 12 -
The Method-
ist chapel was
demolished in
1987, but the
school building
remains.



Left:
Plate 13 -
The develop-
ment on the
north side of the
river is largely
continuous, but
with a varying
roofline.

Right:
Plate 14 -
The rebuilt
Congregational-
ist chapel de-
signed by T.
Taliesin Rees in
1903



chapel was west of the Saracen's Head Hotel, originally built in 1794 and then altered successively through the first half of the century. Its handsome flanking towers and its Arts and Crafts appearance were the result of the last facelift, carried out in 1907 by Rowland Lloyd Jones, the county architect,¹² but the chapel was demolished in 1987, leaving the Sunday School standing to its west. The Congregationalists built their chapel on the north side of Smith Street in 1852, and moved to a new building (Cysegr) nearer to the Royal Goat Hotel in 1903 (designed by T. Taliesin Rees). A few houses and shops were built in the 1870s to 1890s on the street south-

Right:
Plate 15 -
The original
Congregation-
alist chapel
built 1852



Far right:
Plate 16 -
Late 19th cen-
tury housing on
the south-west-
of the bridge

Right:
Plate 17 -
The Vicarage
built 1851 lies
west of the
main village
above the road.





Left:
Plate 18 -
Glasfryn
Terrace built
in the 1890's



Sygun corn mill, which had been here since at least the end of the eighteenth century.¹³

A significant expansion of the village took place on land, hitherto undeveloped, to the east of the confluence. This was in the 1860s, carried out by John Ormsby-Gore, MP for North Shropshire (1859-76) and first Lord Harlech. Ten houses were built at Sygun Terrace, overlooking an attractive green that converged towards the footbridge to the village centre, and three at Meirion Terrace, just south of the bridge, expectantly waiting to be extended further along the river. Indeed, plots stretching south along the river, and also behind Sygun Terrace, were sold by the Harlech estate in 1911 but were never developed, probably because of the war. Plas Tirion and Bryn Eglwys (now a hotel), detached houses sitting on higher ground further east of the river, were built around 1871.

Development in the twentieth century took place chiefly on Royal Goat Hotel land. The county elementary school was built in 1911, on land opposite the CM chapel and approached by footbridge over the Afon Colwyn. It was designed by the county architect Rowland Lloyd Jones following the same 'open-air' principles that guided

Far left:
Plate 19 -
Two terraces on
Gwynant Street
built in the
1980's to match
the existing ver-
nacular

west of the bridge. Further west, and surprisingly far out of the village on the Caernarfon road, was the vicarage, built in 1851. In the last decade of the century, the road between it and the CM chapel was developed on the north side: Ael y Bryn (the chapel manse) and Glasfryn Terrace just beyond; the south side was built on later. Further east, along Gwynant Street, there were a slaughter house, bus garage, stables, smithy and coal year in the early twentieth century, later the Riverside Garage, and in the 1980s all were replaced by two new terraces. Beyond was the

Right:
Plate 20 -
Sygun Terrace
built in the
1860's by Lord
Harlech



Far right:
Plate 21 -
The Green at
Sygun Terrace

his two pioneering schools at Brynaerau and Four Crosses (also 1911) but his proposed south-facing veranda and marching corridor were deemed unacceptable for Beddgelert's exposed situation, and a more conventional school was built. A police station was provided near the Cysegr chapel in the 1930s; council housing was inserted at Dolfair in the 1950s, the main part overlooking a green area reminiscent of Sygun Terrace, Oberon Wood behind the hotel in the early 1970s and Cae Morys, housing association dwellings built north of the hotel in 1992. Oberon Wood was designed by Phillips Cutler Phillips Troy, one of a number of award-winning housing schemes carried out in North Wales by this Midlands firm of architects.¹⁴



Far right:
Plate 22 -
Meirion Terrace
was developed
alongside Sy-
gun Terrace,
with the inten-
tion of further
expansion, but
this never took
place.

7. Character of Building

7.1 The Style And Development Of Building

Beddgelert is predominantly a Regency village - not the classical, genteel sort of Regency that characterises a town like Aberaeron, rather a more vernacular and less sophisticated sort that might be called 'rusty rustic' Regency. Although older buildings such as the C16-C17 Llewelyn Cottage (Tŷ Isaf) or the Royal Goat Hotel of 1800 are clearly evident, others will lie less obviously within or below the ones that replaced them in the 1830s





and subsequent decades.¹⁵ Assuming that Robert Morris's development from Plas Colwyn to the east end of Gwynant Street is all approximately of the same date, there is an interesting contrast between the plain workers' houses one end, and the more picturesque hotels for visitors nearer the bridge, indeed sited prominently facing the bridge. In the later 1800s the more dour style of the Victorians was introduced, with steeper roofs and more vertical proportions, and features such as gabled dormers.

Little building was carried out in the war and inter-war years (1914 to 1945). The 1950s council housing behind Cysegr Chapel is in a quiet,

Far left:
Plate 23 -
Houses built
by the council
at Dolfair in
the 1950's



Far left:
Plate 24 -
Cae Morys built
1992.

Left:
Plate 25 - Ober-
on Wood built
on rising land
behind the
Royal Goat Ho-
tel in the 1970's



Left:
Plate 26 -
Lywelyn Cot-
tage (Ty Isaf) is
one of the older
buildings to
survive. It is one
of the original
farmhouses,
and is of late
16th or early
17th century
date.

Right:
Plate 27 -
Bedw Arian,
built 1972 at
the east end
of Gwynant
Street.



Far right:
Plate 28 -
An example
of the Ordovi-
cian stone used
for much of the
building in Bed-
dgelert. Ele-
ments of rust
colour from iron
content is typi-
cal.

unpretentious style, built of rendered brick and totally acceptable in design, its catslide dormers even picking up a traditional Welsh feature not prevalent in the village but seen elsewhere. The 1970s housing at Oberon Wood, again rendered but with token areas of stonework thrown in for contrast, is a good attempt at a local vernacular without aping the older buildings. After this, the hand of the planning authority is evident and new buildings regurgitate form and features of the old ones (e.g. the 1980s terraces at the east end of Gwynant Street, with their elongated hood-moulds) or of an accepted developers' style (e.g. the 1990s houses at Coed Gelert). The exception is Bedw Arian (built in 1972 at the east end of Gwynant Street, north side) which is Scandinavian in style, neither pastiche nor uncompromisingly modern, but at the same time using traditional slate-hanging as a wall material.

7.2 Wall Materials And Finishes

Almost without exception, the pre-twentieth-century buildings are built of stone, undoubtedly quarried locally. The stone is characteristically rust-coloured owing to its high iron content and is geologically of the Ordovician period, igneous in lithology and consisting mostly of dolerites and rhyolites. The stone is not so hard that it cannot be worked, and can be seen laid semi-dressed and coursed as well as uncoursed. It can also be used for lintels.



Parts of the church dating from c.1230 are built of gritstone from Anglesey, a Carboniferous sandstone used in the dark bands visible in the outer walls of Caernarfon Castle. The Augustinians owned estates on Anglesey so it is not surprising if the priory buildings were built of stone quarried on their land and transported by boat to Aberglaslyn. One might expect to see remnants of the stone in some of the village's buildings but none is evident, probably because the demolished priory's stone was taken elsewhere to be used, long before the village started to grow. An alternative theory is that the priory was not built of stone at all, or not of Anglesey gritstone.

Modern buildings are more likely to be built of brick and covered with render or pebbledash. An exception are the 1980s terraces at the east



end of Gwynant Street, where Nanhoron stone has been used, not a bad alternative to the local stone as it is also iron-rich. Brick is not evident in the later Victorian buildings as it is in Betws-y-coed since the main railway did not extend to the village as it did in Betws in 1868.

It is quite possible that the Regency buildings were covered with stucco, as they were at Aberaeron in the 1830s, for example. Early pictures of the Royal Goat Hotel indicate a stuccoed finish, and the elegant Plas Colwyn might well have had the same treatment. However, the fashion for exposing the stonework took hold early and indeed prevails today, and it is fortunate that the underlying stone is so handsome. Victorian and modern finishes are generally of painted render - not an unsuitable imitation of stucco - or pebbledash.



Far left:
Plate 29 -
Gothic tracery
can be found
on many of the
houses, partic-
ularly in Stryd
Gwynant

Left:
Plate 31 -
Fanlight in Stryd
Gwynant

7.3 Roofs

Cottage roofs may have once been thatched (Wordsworth described them as 'tufted' when he visited the village in 1824) and possibly slated with rough, local slates, but at a later date regular machine-produced slates from the Blaenau Ffestiniog and Bethesda quarries were used as a better-quality product, and those are what we see today.

7.4 Architectural Detail

The early cottages in Church Street are almost featureless, but once the village started expanding in earnest in the 1830s, architectural features were incorporated in a plain and unsophisticated way. Lintels were edged with strips of regular dressed slate to form a simple hood-mould and window-heads were given Gothick tracery. Windows are mostly of the vertical sliding sash type, but some of the original horizontal sliding 'Yorkshire' windows survive at upper-floor level, as do fanlights above front doors. There are good examples of all of these in Club Street.

Roof shapes were kept simple in the first half of the nineteenth century, with the slopes running parallel with the street, though sometimes a cross-gabled roof appears as at Plas Gwyn. Later in the century, roofs became steeper, and gables and gabled dormers became more

Far left:
Plate 30 -
Horizontal slid-
ing windows in
Stryd Gwynant

Far right:

Plate 32 -
First floor windows are often placed immediately below the eaves.

widespread. Decorated barge-boards are seen in roofs of both periods. Eaves overhangs are generous, but only one house has an eaves soffit supported on brackets (Plas Colwyn). Upper floor windows (in two-storey houses) are usually placed immediately below the eaves, giving the windows plenty of shelter but less daylight.

7.5 Streetscape

Like Betws-y-coed, Beddgelert derives much of its character from the relationship of streets to the rivers. Betws is very much a single-street village built up on one side with the river on the other; Beddgelert's streets are generally built up on both sides, making those places where the rivers are visible particularly special. Another aspect that gives character to the village is the ever-present back-drop of hillside, visible in almost every direction.

The green space, surely planned, in front of Sygun Terrace is particularly attractive.



Right:

Plate 33 -
The streets in Beddgelert are generally built up on both sides, which obscures views of the river





Left:
Plate 34 -
The river from
south-west of
the bridge

Modern pavements now delineate the roads more rigidly than in the past, when the pre-tarmac streets meandered in a relaxed way through the village, sometimes narrow, sometimes widening to follow a set-back in building line.

Little survives of pre-twentieth-century street furniture. There are surviving lengths of iron railings in front of the former CM chapel and Sunday School, and in front of the Club Street terrace. Old gas lamps survive on and adjacent to the main bridge.

8. Statement of Significance

Beddgelert is an example of a fairly compact Regency village developed mainly for visitors in the early nineteenth century. Its character derives from the simple buildings, constructed in an attractive rust-coloured stone, from the relationship of the buildings to the rivers and the bridges, and from the surrounding hills which provide vistas with an ever-present backdrop. None of the buildings are architecturally exceptional, but Club Street and parts of Gwynant Street have merit, particularly where original doors and windows survive, and Plas Colwyn has a rustic elegance. The stepped row that includes Plas Gwyn and the Prince Llewelyn Hotel presents an imposing elevation as one crosses the bridge.

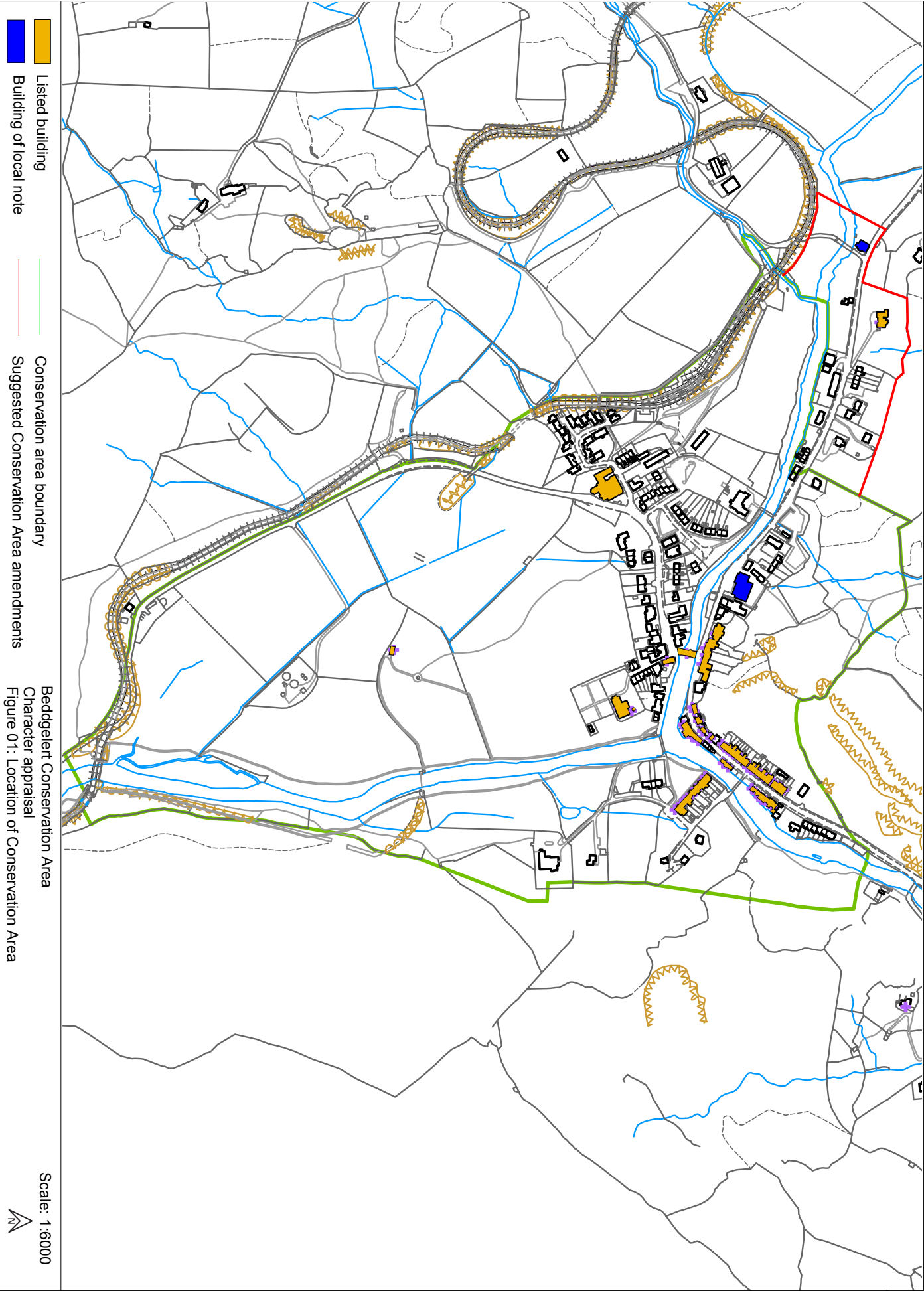


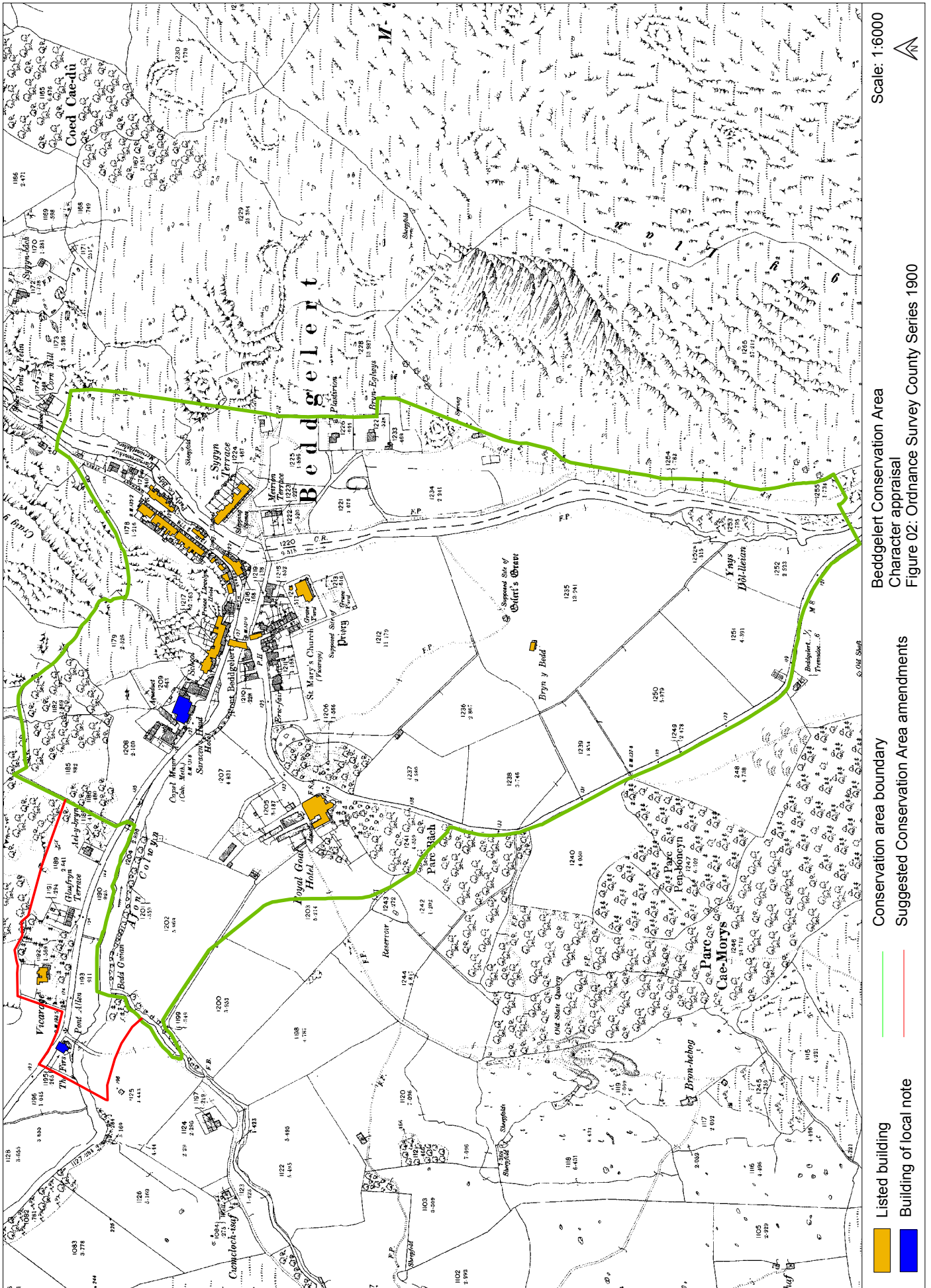
Left:
Plate 35 -
An example of
iron railings in
Stryd Gwynant

9. Management Recommendations

9.1 Conservation Area Boundary

Consideration might be given to extending the area at its north-west corner. Whilst the area would then include non-descript modern buildings on both sides of the road, it would at least include the listed vicarage on the north side and Pont Alyn (formerly The Firs) on the south. Whilst the latter is not listed, it nevertheless has charm, as does the immediate area around it, including the bridge.





9.2 Listed Buildings

See Appendix 2 for a list of the listed buildings.

The only building which is not listed but might be considered for listing Grade II is Pont Alyn (formerly The Firs), built c.1885 and still with its original cast-iron windows. It surely has no less character than the nearby vicarage, listed Grade II.

10. Sources

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Appendix I

The Planning Process

Current legislation

The local Planning authorities are recognised and identified as having the key role in protecting our archaeological heritage. Government advice and planning case law clearly establish archaeology as a 'material consideration' in the planning authorities' assessment and determination of a planning application. This is seen both in national and regional policy documents and guidelines.

The protection of the vulnerable historic environment falls into two broad categories: Statutory protection and non-statutory protection.

Statutory protection is provided by the following Acts and Orders:

The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, as amended by the National Heritage Act 1983
The Town and Country Planning Act 1990
The Planning and Compensation Act 1991
Statutory Instrument 1199, the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988
Statutory Instrument 1995 No. 419, The Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995

Designations arising from these Acts and Orders are Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas.

Non-statutory protection is provided by national policies and guidelines contained within:

Planning Policy Wales, March 2002
Welsh Office Circular 60/96, Planning and the Historic Environment: Archaeology, December 1996
Welsh Office Circular 61/96, Planning and the Historic Environment: Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas, December 1996.

The key document in Wales which expands on the legislative background and provides detailed guidance on the handling of archaeology within the planning process is Welsh Office Circular 60/96 - Planning and the Historic Environment: Archaeology (1996). This Welsh Assembly guidance expands on Planning Policy Wales (March 2002), Chapter 6 'Conserving the Historic Environment; particularly paragraphs 6.5.1 to 6.5.6 (see Appendix I for extracts from 60/96).

Local Plan Policies

The town lies entirely within the Snowdonia National Park. Current regional and local plan policies are defined in Gwynedd Structure Plan (adopted 1993) and Eryri Local Plan (adopted 1999). The plan can be consulted in the offices of the National Park, or online at http://www.eryri-npa.co.uk/images/eryri_local_plan/elp_english.pdf. Policies concerning archaeology, including historic towns, are given in section 5, policies AR 1-4. Policies concerning the built heritage, including listed buildings and conservation areas, are given section 6, policies TA 1-12.

Conservation Areas

The 1990 Town and Country Planning Act defines a conservation area as 'an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'.

Heritage & Local Planning Context

Advice on the management of the archaeological heritage is provided by the National Park Archaeologist, who, together with the Park's building conservation and planning officers contribute to the decision making processes to inform on the likely impact of development on the historic environment and how best to mitigate the impact. Advice on Conservation Areas and the Built Heritage is given by the National Park Planning Department through their Building Conservation Officer.

Archaeology is the process by which we can understand past societies through their material remains. These archaeological remains are a finite and non-renewable resource. They are vulnerable to modern development and can, in a short space of time, be entirely destroyed by modern machinery and building methods.

The level of archaeological response is guided by the nature of the archaeological remains and the significance of the impact. Archaeological mitigation is usually imposed through planning conditions, and a relevant programme of archaeological works is advised by the National Park archaeologist. On occasion a programme of assessment and evaluation may be required prior to the determination of a planning application, so that the appropriate mitigation can be advised.

Regional Historic Environment Record

The regional Historic Environment Record (HER) is a database of archaeological sites and finds

with details of interventions (surveys, excavations, previous work etc) and references. It consists of both a computerised record and a paper record, and is maintained at the offices of the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust in Bangor. The digital record combines database and GIS functionality, and forms the key component of the planning and archaeology decision making process. The experience and knowledge of the development control archaeologists is used to interpret the record, and provide relevant advice to the planning officers.

Extracts From Welsh Office Circular 60/96

Archaeological remains are a finite, and non-renewable resource, in many cases highly fragile and vulnerable to damage and destruction. [Paragraph 3]

Archaeological remains are part of our cultural heritage, not least in terms of the information they provide about the past, valuable both for their own sake, and for their role in education leisure and tourism. [Paragraph 3]

The key to the future of the great majority of archaeological sites and historic landscapes lies with local authorities, acting within the framework set by central government, in their various capacities as planning, highways, education and recreational authorities. [Paragraph 7]

Local planning authorities should expect developers to provide the results of such appraisals, assessments and/or evaluations as part of their applications for sites where there is good reason to believe there are remains of archaeological importance. [Paragraph 14]

Authorities will need to consider refusing permission for proposals which are inadequately documented. [Paragraph 14]

When planning applications are made without prior discussion with the local planning authorities, the authorities should seek to identify those applications which have archaeological implications, and to assess their likely impact by consulting the local authority Archaeological Officer, National Park Archaeologist or regional Welsh Archaeological Trust. [Paragraph 15]

In the case of a development proposal that is likely to affect the site of a scheduled ancient monument, planning authorities are required to consult the Secretary of State (Cadw). [Paragraph 15]

Where nationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, and their

settings, are affected by proposed development there should be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation in situ i.e. a presumption against proposals which would involve significant alteration or cause damage, or which would have a significant impact on the setting of visible remains. [Paragraph 17]

It may be possible to preserve important archaeological remains where developers prepare sympathetic designs using, for example, foundations which avoid disturbing the remains altogether or minimise damage by raising ground levels under a proposed new structure or by careful siting of landscaped or open areas. [Paragraph 17]

Archaeological investigations such as excavation and recording should be carried out before development commences, working to a project brief prepared by the planning authority (with reference to their archaeological advisers). [Paragraph 20]

It is open to the local planning authority to impose conditions designed to protect a monument. [Paragraph 22]

Appendix II

Listed Buildings In Beddgelert (see also Figure 0 1)

where terraces are shown, each house is individually listed

St Mary's Church
Group of three railed tombs in the churchyard of St Mary's Church
Gelert's Grave
Beddgelert bridge
Llewelyn Cottage (Tŷ Isaf)
The Royal Goat Hotel
Vicarage, Caernarfon Rd.
Nos 1-7 (consec) Club Street
(Benefit Society Cottages)
Talaŷon, Gwynant St.
Meirionfa, Gwynant St.
Nos 1-9 (consec) Gwynant St.
Nos 10-17 (consec) Gwynant St.
Nos 18-21 (consec) Gwynant St.
Plas Colwyn, Smith St.
Plas Gwyn, Smith St.
Colwyn Guest House, Smith St.
Waterloo House (Beddgelert Antiques and Tea Rooms), Smith St.
Prince Llewelyn Hotel, Smith St.
Tŷ Popty, Smith St.

Frondeg, Smith St.
Renig, Smith St.
Abercolwyn, Smith St.
Colwyn Cottage, Smith St.
Pensarn, Smith St.
Glan-Awen, Smith St.
Three Rivers, Smith St.
Clydfan, Smith St.
Tegfan, Smith St.
Nos 1-10 (consec) Sygun Terrace

(Endnotes)

1 Pennant, p.184

2 Much has been written about the origin of the village's name but this is not included here - see Jenkins, Bott & Dunn etc.

3 Morris, 1980.

4 Gresham, 1973, p.xvi

5 from *Speculum Ecclesiae*, c.1220, following Gerald's visit in 1188.

6 Wyndham

7 Jenkins, p.45

8 Later named the Goat Hotel, and after a visit by Queen Victoria's third son, Prince Arthur, the Royal Goat Hotel.

9 Jenkins, p.21

10 Bott & Dunn, p.35

11 Coflein gives 1780 as the date of the first building

12 R. Lloyd Jones styled himself 'county architect' as he designed many of its buildings, particularly the schools, but the official post of County Architect was not established until later (when his son Westbury Lloyd Jones became the first).

13 Griffith, p.13

14 The others are in Porthmadog, Harlech and Y Felinheli, all built in the 1970s.

15 An example is at the Saracen's Head Hotel, where an oak screen, probably late C16, was recently discovered. There may well be other remnants waiting to be uncovered elsewhere.



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