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Parc Ty Mawr, Penmaenmawr

Archaeological assessment phase II -  
survey and interpretation

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Report 272 GAT Project G1503

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*Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd*  
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

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Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 Conwy County Borough Council, employing consultants Bridget Snaith Landscape Design, is in the process of designing a country park to be called Parc Ty Mawr on the site of the gardens and the now demolished house of Plas Mawr in Penmaenmawr.
- 1.2 Plas Mawr is situated on the south side of the former main Bangor to Caernarfon road (by-passed by the expressway in recent years) at SH713762. The garden occupies a fairly small, roughly rectangular area, and was formerly associated with a mid nineteenth-century house, Plas Mawr. The garden has been neglected for some time but never subjected to an alternative use. A bid for funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund to develop the area as a country park for public benefit has been successful, and Gwynedd Archaeological Trust has been asked to carry out the next stage of archaeological and historical assessment work prior to work beginning on site. The following report includes a survey of the visible remains relating to the house and the structural element of the garden, with comments, where relevant, on other features and planting, a brief photographic record and a series of recommendations for further evaluation and future management. The agreed project design is included as appendix I.
- 1.3 The work was carried out in November and December, 1997. Andrew Davidson and David Thompson (Gwynedd Archaeological Trust) undertook the measured survey, and the detailed interpretation of the garden features and plant evidence was sub-contracted to Margaret Mason (*Gerddi Gwynedd*): her report has been integrated into the text of this report which has been compiled by D Thompson.
- 1.4 As this is the second stage of a rolling programme of archaeological work, some of the information contained in the earlier report (GAT report no. 215) is directly relevant to points raised in this report, and some has inevitably been repeated here (see sections 4.1 – 4.3).

## 2 Methodology

- 2.1 Further archive searches were carried out in the Caernarfon Record Office (henceforth CRO) of the Gwynedd Archives Service, and in the library of the University of Wales, Bangor (henceforth UWB). A number of new documents and photographs were discovered, and some photographs were re-examined following the survey to aid interpretation.
- 2.2 The site was initially visited by the author of the report and the garden historian, when the existing survey (by NGR Surveys) was compared with both earlier 25" Ordnance Survey maps (1889 and 1913) and the evidence on the ground. This provided the basis for the detailed EDM survey and the garden historian's detailed descriptions and interpretation.
- 2.3 The EDM survey recorded all visible features identified during the initial visit which had not previously been recorded. Details were subsequently added, and the photographic record was carried out separately.
- 2.4 The 1889, 1913 and 1912 Ordnance Survey maps were digitised in Fastcad and used as underlays to the measured survey to aid interpretation and orientation.
- 2.5 Finally, the gazetteer and map were checked and revised, and a final version of the report produced.

The entries in this gazetteer follow this model

**Gaz. no.**      **Feature type/name/interpretation**

Free text description

*Recommendation for future management (including further evaluation)*

*Recommendation for interpretation/presentation*

The gazetteer number is cross-referenced to plan 1.

The management sections are cross-referenced to section 5.

The interpretation sections are cross-referenced to section 6.

### 1 Wall

Boundary wall on east side of site. Dry-stone wall with top course of stones set on edge. Natural and roughly-shaped stones. On the north it forms the inner side of the culverted ditch, up to 1.3m high on the ditch side but with only a low parapet (c. 0.3m) on the garden side. Further south the boundary runs to the east of the ditch and the wall is less well preserved.

#### *Management*

The wall should be retained, and repaired as necessary

#### *Interpretation*

It should be shown on any accompanying site plan.

### 2 Drive

The original main approach drive (after widening of the road and demolition of the lodge an alternative drive from the east replaced it). The drive takes a sharp curve up the steep slope from the road but at the top of this the later approach is causewayed across it, joining up with the straight, east - west, upper part of the drive, and obscuring a short stretch of the original drive. Below the causeway traces of tarmac remain; above it the drive is now unsurfaced and may have been gravelled - tarmac was possibly only used for stability on the steep curve. The drive is wide (4-5m) and well levelled into the slope. There is no evidence of flanking walls, fences or hedges but some impressive trees, planted informally and not as an avenue, line it, mostly pines but including horse chestnut, grey poplar and yew. There are fewer of these towards the house. The trees seem to have been underplanted with rhododendron (ponticum) and holly.

#### *Management*

The drive should be retained for use as a path. Gravel would be the most appropriate surface but might not be appropriate on the steep curve; however, tarmac along the whole length should be avoided. The causeway should be reduced and the original line of the drive reinstated if possible.

#### *Interpretation*

It should be shown on any accompanying site plan where it should be identified as the former drive.

### 3 Path

A footpath leading from the former lodge towards the house, taking a more direct line than the drive. It is now unsurfaced but may originally have been gravelled. The path seems to have been disused for some time and is quite heavily overgrown with rhododendron and holly in places. The route is not obvious for the whole length. A branch (3a), shown only on the late (1913) map, is more distinct, and appears to be more obviously levelled into the slope. This runs off to the north west about half way up, and originally ran along below the main terrace in front of the house. This part is now obscured by the tip of debris from the demolition of the house. However, up to the point where the path disappears there is some natural-

stone revetting in the lower edge. A later concrete wall (9) has been built just below the terrace, and this more or less follows the line of the path.

3a is cut through by a casual footpath/gully, and between 3 and 3a is a small water course, probably originating from a spring. This does not appear to have been controlled in any way or bridged.

The paths probably had a maximum width of about 1m.

#### *Management*

Unless the concrete wall is to be removed 3a could probably be abandoned, unless a different route is made at the top - up on to the drive. It would be better to open up 3 along its original route, though this would involve more work.

#### *Interpretation*

A site plan should probably show original features now lost, and 3a should appear on this. 3 would presumably be shown as an original footpath, still in use.

### **4 Path**

A short length of path leading from path 3a down onto the levelled area (5) below the terrace. There is a revetting wall in the lower edge which is partly mortared, partly dry-stone, of cut and shaped blocks. The path has a very even gradient, like a ramp. It is not shown on either of the old maps and is probably a late addition. The surface is fairly hard.

#### *Management*

The path is in good condition and is irrelevant to the garden layout; it needs no special management.

#### *Interpretation*

It should be shown on any accompanying site plan.

### **5 Possible tennis court**

A large levelled area below the main house terrace (to the north), now largely obscured by the pile of débris from the house. The 1889 map suggests that this would have been a sloping lawn; by 1913 it had been levelled into a roughly rectangular shape, possibly used as a tennis court, although it may have been merely a level lawn. As well as the escarpment on the north, east and west created by the levelling, it had a wall or fence along the south and north and part of the other two sides. The escarpment remains clear, obscured only on the west by the débris heap, but the wall or fence has disappeared. There are one or two trees of some age on the top of the escarpment, which may have been planted when the levelling was done, and a row of much younger Lombardy poplars along the base. All the trees on the level area ( and the débris pile) are self-sown, but include oak and ash as well as sycamore.

Towards the north-west corner a small area of the escarpment has been quarried away.

One photograph only in the family album appears to show this area. The wall on the south side seems to be surprisingly high, with an open parapet on top, and the path (3a) presumably ran along behind the parapet; above was more or less a cliff up to the terrace wall. This gives a good idea of the amount of effort involved in creating the level area.

#### *Management*

Ideally the débris pile and self-sown trees should be cleared off: however, this would be costly. If the pile is to remain removing the trees and planting native shrubs would be preferable to allowing the trees to become more established. The original very flat (grassed?) surface of the court should be reinstated and maintained. Further research amongst locals might determine its original purpose.

#### *Interpretation*

The original outline could be shown on any accompanying site plan.

## 6 Path

There is a path along the road (north) edge of the garden, which partly more or less follows a path shown on both old maps and is partly new. In the absence of later large-scale maps it is impossible to say whether the path was altered and extended in a post - 1913 phase of the garden's development, or has been altered recently by public use. Even the part of the path which follows the old route is not obviously levelled as some other paths in the garden are, and it is unsurfaced.

6a is the original last stretch of the path which, instead of going to the north-west corner, turned sharply back to the south east along the edge of the levelled area 5. This is now obscured by the débris tip and undergrowth.

### *Management*

This path, including the recent extension which conveniently leads to the north-west corner where an entrance will presumably be made, should be consolidated and maintained. 6a could be recovered if the tip were removed.

### *Interpretation*

An accompanying site plan should probably show which part of the path is original and which not.

## 7 Walls

An interesting short stretch of wall alongside path 6, composed of large natural boulders set on end or edge. There is a gap in it where path 6a turned back to the south east, and just beyond this it comes to an end. There was evidently a similar stretch of wall opposite, on the other side of the path, but this is in poor condition, largely due to the presence of a self-sown sycamore.

The size of this tree argues for the walls being old features, and they may well be original.

### *Management*

The walls should be retained; that on the south probably requires little attention. That on the north should be reinstated following felling of the tree (1298) and removal of the stump.

### *Interpretation*

It could be shown on any accompanying site plan.

## 8 Main terrace and steps

The 1889 map shows the drive passing in front (north) of the house with a steep scarp on its north side, but that is all. By 1913 it had been widened into a (still fairly narrow) terrace with a wall on the north, and a steeper scarp below due to the, presumably contemporary, levelling of the possible tennis court (5). Steps descended through the wall opposite those down from the front door of the house.

The wall is of roughly-dressed dark stone (like the revetment of 4), mortared, and it acted as a retaining wall for the terrace, with a parapet. Unfortunately most of the wall is now obscured by a débris pile and the parapet has been demolished (presumably to facilitate tipping débris on the pile). The height of both is therefore at present unclear, but the parapet is likely to have been around 0.6m - 1m high, based on analogy with similar sites.

The steps are hidden by the débris but had a concrete surround at the top; any piers (likely) have been demolished. The wall is more or less straight in front of the house but curves at the east end, probably mainly due to the contours. A yew hedge, also curving, runs on westwards from the end of the wall.

At the extreme east end of the wall is a semi - circular niche, of inferior masonry and not shown on the old maps. This is likely to have been a later addition, perhaps for a seat.

The terrace is about 5m wide and there is a large cedar in the middle of it which leans over the house site. This was probably planted on the outer edge of the original drive and retained when the terrace was made. It does not now seem possible that a vehicle could pass between it and the house, but when it was smaller



and upright there would have been less of a problem. The stables and any later garage were presumably to the west of the house.

One old photo shows the steep scarp and the wall at the bottom (see 5) but not much of that at the top; the parapet may have been open like the lower one.

#### *Management*

Ideally the débris pile should be removed (see above) and the wall cleared and repaired if necessary and the parapet rebuilt. Even if the débris remains, the parapet should be rebuilt to say 0.6 – 0.8m high, carefully matching existing masonry. The cedar should be retained but requires surgery. The yew hedge (to the west) could be recovered if overhanging self-sown trees (including 409) were removed, the yews cut back and dead ones replaced. A seat in the curved niche (east end) would be a nice touch.

#### *Interpretation*

If the débris is to remain, a sign with a drawing showing how the terrace might have looked would be helpful.

### **9 Wall**

A short length of most incongruous concrete wall following part of the line of path 3a. As it is pretty unsightly and does not fit in with the terrace etc, its purpose is hard to understand, but it is probably practical - *e.g.* shoring up the footpath. It may possibly be a replacement for the wall along the south side of 5, shown in an old photograph, which looks as though it may have been rendered or concrete-faced. It had an open parapet on top.

#### *Management*

As it is unsightly, it would be best removed if this can be done safely, unless it was part of the early 20th century terracing wall. Further research may be required.

#### *Interpretation*

It could be shown on any accompanying site plan.

### **10 House platform and steps**

The house platform has been roughly levelled and the débris tipped over the terrace. Wall footings and areas of damaged flooring remain. The area is covered with self-sown trees.

In the centre of the north side was a flight of steps, leading, presumably, up to the front door. The steps have been removed but the flanking walls remain. In the south-west corner there is a little walled culvert or gully which seems to have run along the back of this part of the house (probably kitchens etc.). An irregular area to the west appears to be where outbuildings (also demolished) once stood, but according to the old maps these were relatively small and few. The amount of disturbance visible suggests larger later buildings were present.

There is a flat yard area to the north-west of the house site, more or less an extension of the terrace, and a small brick ?cistern just to the south of this. Some short lengths of stone edging of paths around the house remain.

There was a conservatory on the back of the house at the south-east corner, shown on both maps but not present in some surviving photographs, therefore probably quite new in 1889. This does not appear to have had a boiler-house. The main path away from the back of the house led from this.

#### *Management*

Earth and rubbish should be cleared from around the edges of the platform to define the house, and the plan should be revealed by exposing wall footings (internal and external) – see section 5.1. The steps should be replaced. The trees, of course, should be felled. The outbuilding area is probably too confused for similar treatment and should be made safe by levelling (but this should be discussed before work begins – see again 5.1.3).

### *Interpretation*

A plan of the house indicating which rooms were which would be good if the information can be found (see section 6.2.2). If the outbuilding area ends up featureless, something to indicate the former outbuildings would be desirable.

## **11 Path**

The 1889 map shows a path coming from the gate in the north-west corner to the outbuildings to the west of the house. This is not shown on the 1913 map so was presumably already disused. Another path now runs from this corner, but it does not follow the old route as the iron umbrella and associated walling (12) are in the way. It runs further to the west and continues up the west side of the garden to join the top path, which it did not do in 1889 or 1913.

A short path (11a), retaining some concrete and some gravel surfacing, runs from the point where the old route of 11 came in (at the end of the hedge on the west end of the terrace) along in front of some building remains (13) to join the new route of 11. It has changed its route slightly due to the demolition of the buildings. It previously ended at the stream, and strangely is not shown on the 1913 map (but is on the 1889 one). It may therefore have had a period of disuse.

### *Management*

Being a recent path this is not very well defined, but as it follows a useful route it should be retained and properly laid. 11a should also be retained, and properly defined where it joins 11; also a branch could be defined leading to 12.

### *Interpretation*

It could be shown on any accompanying site plan as a modern feature.

## **12 Iron umbrella and walling**

To the west of the terrace, in an area which was woodland in 1889 and 1913, is a large iron umbrella in a concrete base, with a terracing wall running east from it. The umbrella spins round and could evidently be raised and lowered on a central pole. The wall is in a gentle S - curve and links up with the hedge at the west end of the terrace; it is rough dry-stone walling with concrete capping. There was probably a path along the base of it. The purpose of this arrangement is unknown: it does not appear to be a garden feature.

### *Management*

This is undeniably interesting although it appears to sit uneasily in the surrounding garden context, and it should be retained and the wall tidied up. It probably isn't necessary to reopen the path below but a path at the top should probably be defined, leading off the path (11a) from the terrace to the path (11) on the west. Further research, probably most effectively amongst local people who remember the house and gardens, might elicit its function.

### *Interpretation*

If the umbrella's purpose can be discovered, an explanatory sign is clearly needed and the feature should be shown on any accompanying plan.

## **13 Small buildings/enclosures**

South of path 11a is a mortared wall c. 1m high retaining a flat area above it on the south. On the 1889 map this appeared to be an area with 3 or 4 enclosures but by 1913 only one remained and there was a building on the west part of the area. At both dates there was a small building north of the level platform at the west end of the wall; this was larger in 1889 than 1913.

The platform now has a concrete surface and building rubble; the foundations of the (brick) building on it are visible. This does not appear to be a garden feature.

### *Management*

Clearing and tidying up is probably all that is needed, as full investigation would be costly (this can be discussed).

### *Interpretation*

Unless the history/use of the structures can be determined, there is little point in doing anything with this. Information obtained during the survey from a local person who remembers the site suggests that the former stable block was situated in this area.

## **14 Terrace walls in former orchard**

Behind the raised area with building remains (13) is an area which appears to have been gravelled until fairly recently, defined on the south by a curving, mortared stone wall. On top of this wall are two layers of dry-stone wall, with a concrete surface on top of the upper one and extending over the ground surface behind it (the walls are retaining walls). There may have been a path to the south of the concrete surface, but this is not shown on the 1913 map.

In the area above and to the south of this 3-tier wall, which seems to have been an orchard (according to the convention used on both 1889 and 1913 maps), are two further stretches of walling. One (14a) is a short length of revetting wall which ends on the west at the modern path (11), and tails out into the slope on the east. It looks as though it might once have edged a path but there is no evidence, on the ground or on maps, for such a path. The other, 14b, higher up and further east, is a well-made, isolated stretch of dry-stone walling of roughly dressed blocks like those used in the main terrace wall (8). It has concrete capping and is a retaining wall, with a level platform behind it. Below it some metal grilles set in the ground to help retain the soil look like greenhouse floor grilles.

A greenhouse is shown on the 1913 map west of this, but there is no sign of it now (unless one vertical piece of piping belongs to it) and the site is partly overlain by later cold frames. It is possible that 14b represents the base of a later greenhouse which replaced it.

There are no remaining fruit trees in the orchard area but in the north-east corner is some outgrown privet hedging and some raspberry canes, both probably fairly recent.

### *Management*

The walls should be retained, consolidated as necessary and the junction of 14a with path 11 sorted out. The orchard area is messy and would benefit from clearing, but if it is to be kept as woodland perhaps some native ornamental shrubs could be planted under the trees.

### *Interpretation*

An indication on any accompanying site plan that this area is a former orchard would be beneficial.

## **15 Greenhouse and frames**

At the point where a greenhouse is marked on the 1913 map there is very little to see, except for one vertical length of iron piping. The greenhouse must have been unheated as there is no sign, on map or ground, of a boiler-house. The stone wall (14b) to the east may be the base of a later greenhouse.

Apparently partly overlying the site of the greenhouse are two, possibly three, later concrete - brick cold frames, not shown on the 1913 map. The larger (middle) one is partly covered by a heap of stones (?dredged from the stream) and is larger than indicated on the modern plan. The lights are not in evidence but their remains may be hidden by undergrowth. The southern one is almost completely buried at the foot of the slope below the railway line. All three cold frames are situated on a deliberately-levelled platform just below the railway, two entrances to which (in the northern side and at the (tapered) eastern end) are still discernible.

### *Management*

If the greenhouse site (*i.e.* the level platform) is capable of being cleared and displayed as a floor plan this would be the best option. Undergrowth should be kept off the greenhouse site and the frames.

### *Interpretation*

An indication on a site plan of where the greenhouse(s) lay and the relative dates of the greenhouse(s) and frames would be useful.

## **16 Stream**

The stream down the west side of the garden runs in a deep culvert which has walling and concrete in its sides. It was probably never intended to be a visible garden feature (there are signs that at certain times large amounts of water rush down, hence the deep culvert) and the path alongside (11) is modern, but the stream was certainly supposed to create a sound. There are traces of artificial waterfalls (although these have been much damaged by floods, and in one area at least by dredging of the stream) and there is some concrete in the stream bed. Even without the waterfalls the water sound is audible throughout the W part of the garden.

### *Management*

The culvert will have to be maintained to prevent flooding. Spoil from dredging should be dumped off site. Repair of any or all of the artificial waterfalls would help recreate the original sound of the stream.

### *Interpretation*

Signs drawing attention to the way the stream was used, *i.e.* not as a visible but an audible feature, would increase the interest of this part of the site.

## **17 Garden railway**

This is of great interest as a most unusual garden feature. It was built around by 1905 by Colonel Darbishire. The track has gone but the route can be traced throughout its length and the track bed probably remains. The engine house by the west garden wall (beyond stream 16) is a heap of rubble, but the small concrete bridge remains and is both attractive and interesting (although it is possible that the current structure is later, as it appears to be on a slightly different alignment). The lower branch or siding which stops just east of the stream is not at present clear, although the terrace is probably sufficiently wide here to have had two tracks. The main route runs in a more or less straight line along a terrace levelled into the slope of the hill, defined for most of its length by escarpments above and below.

The central section (17a) is interesting. The original slope has had to be severely terraced (part of it was already a path as shown on the 1889 OS map, and there is now a substantial revetment wall) to allow a level run, which has resulted in the southern side of the track rising up steeply to a small level area between the railway and the Miners' path, which contains a substantial concrete pillar (for a flagpole?). Opposite this is a curious linear arrangement of huge boulders, only one course high, which have been deliberately laid alongside the track almost as if they formed a platform. A footpath (22d) crosses the railway just beyond the eastern end of the boulders, as shown on the 1913 map, while the place where another, earlier, path (22h), again shown on the 1889 map, joined the Miners' path around here is still just discernible. It seems likely that this central area may have served as both a train platform and viewing platform. Interestingly, the northern edge of path 19 along this section is made of concrete. There is a stretch of edge-set stones in front of and below the boulder 'platform' which is probably a kerb defining the edge of the former track.

Towards the east end of the railway, a section (17b) runs along an embankment.

Remnants of decorative features alongside the route survive. Slightly to the west of curve, on the north side, there is an area where laurel (uncommon in this garden) and roses have been planted on the trackside adjacent to the putative 'station' (17a). At the east end a pile of rubble may be the remains of something, or just a sump. At the west end, up between the railway and path 19, more rubble and a slab of concrete with iron edges may be railway-related.

### *Management*

The route is clear but partly overgrown, and should be clearly defined and completely opened up (retaining planted trackside trees/shrubs). Ideally the railway should be reconstructed, but if this is too ambitious, then clearing of undergrowth and rubble and maintenance of the track bed, bridge, walling *etc.*

should be the minimum. Before any work is undertaken, the nature of the buried remains should be evaluated by trial excavation (see section 5.2.4).

#### *Interpretation*

Sign boards should definitely be erected to give as much information as possible about this feature, including archive photographs if any can be found.

### **18 Wall**

The garden boundary wall on the west, beyond the stream. It is dry-stone, of natural and partly shaped stone, probably averaging around 1m high but now in poor condition and much collapsed.

#### *Management*

The wall should be repaired, using the original stone where possible in the original style. It should not finish up looking new.

#### *Interpretation*

It should be shown on any accompanying site plan.

### **19 (Miners') Path**

This straight, wide path along the top of the garden, running round at the east end past the railway and alongside the culvert, still follows the route shown on the 1889 OS map. Where the stone edging survives both sides it can be seen that the path was about 2.5m wide (now about 1m), and it was probably gravelled. The width and its position at the top of the garden suggest that it was the main promenade, no doubt offering a good view over the house and garden and out to sea. It is thus one of the most important surviving features of the site, although no information regarding its name as shown on the consultants' plan (*i.e.* the Miners' footpath) has been found. Good specimen trees, mostly oak and sycamore, and some of the former certainly older than the garden, flank it on both sides. It has been slightly levelled where necessary, and in places had rough revetting or boulder edging in the lower (north) side. There was also an edging of small stones either side of the path of which some stretches remain.

At one point the path has concrete revetting on the north side; this is presumably connected with a nearby concrete plinth and an odd small enclosure shown on the 1913 map (see possible explanation under feature 17 above – this is probably connected with the railway).

At the west end the path ends rather abruptly in a pile of rubble (possibly associated with the railway), but the maps show it always came to a dead end in around the same place.

#### *Management*

The full width of the path should be cleared and re-gravelled. Where the stone edging survives it should be revealed. If large-scale cleaning and opening up of the site is not to be undertaken, then at least one or two viewpoints on this path should be selected and opened up.

#### *Interpretation*

A viewpoint on this path would be a good place for a correctly - orientated site plan.

### **20 Wall**

An L-shaped stretch of walling south of path 19 near its east end is part of the north boundary wall as in 1913 (in 1889 there was a path on the outside of it which can still be traced, but this was not shown in 1913). The area north and east of this wall was clearly part of the garden in 1889 and 1913 (wooded, as now) and the area to the south and west was not, though the status of the strip on the north edge of the western area is not clear. The garden area within the wall and downslope of it (20a) contains a number of possible stretches of walling which need further investigation, and a circular path is shown at the west end of the area on the 1889 OS map (see also feature 28).



Above this stretch of wall (*i.e.* to the south of it) the path shown on the 1889 map leads up-slope from the west at least as far as the remains of a slight brick-built rectangular structure (20b), probably a greenhouse, not shown on the map and probably later. (The area beyond this was not investigated.)

The wall is dry-stone and has partially collapsed; it is similar to wall 18.

#### *Management*

The wall is not now an effective boundary but it should not be removed and would look better for at least the removal of collapse, and preferably consolidation. The former path to the north could be investigated further by clearance work.

#### *Interpretation*

The features here should be shown on any accompanying site plan.

### **21 Garden area to the south of the house and lawn to east**

The terraced area to the south of the house is criss-crossed with paths - the terraces are in fact all created for paths - and was originally open, although in 1889 a central strip seems to have been planted with fruit trees. The rest of the area is likely to have been planted up as a large rockery, with shrubs etc. (typical of the period), and all the trees currently present are self-sown except for a couple of pines near the north east of the area, and possibly one or two of the larger sycamores (these show in photographs).

Near the south-east corner of the house, a large, isolated boulder may have been retained as a garden feature. North and east of this was open lawn.

NB. Old photos confirm that the area was open, with a few shrubs, but mostly grassy; now too shaded for this. The boulder appears in several photographs (one shows somebody leaning over it) and evidently was treated as a garden feature.

Areas either side of the main path from the back of the house (22d), on the level ground near the house, look as though they may have been borders, but photographs do not show borders in this position (nor flower beds on the lawn). If the borders did exist, they may have been of a later date.

There are small areas of piled-rock rockery at the back of the house, near the south-west corner (flanking the entrance to path 22b), now too much overshadowed for growth. There is limited planting space on these and if planted at all they probably supported dwarf shrubs.

#### *Management*

Ideally the self-sown trees should be cleared from the whole area and grass encouraged to re-establish. Failing this, the lawn at least should be cleared and re-grassed; the sloping area could be thinned and retained as woodland, with native or ornamental shrubs, but leaving viewing gaps.

#### *Interpretation*

The original nature of this part of the garden, if not reconstructed, should be indicated.

### **22 Path system and terracing**

There is a system of terraced footpaths crossing the sloping area south of the house (21). This was essentially the same in 1889 and 1913, though the upper part of the system had been modified by the later date by the garden railway. The paths are now mainly unsurfaced (although their original surfaces may be simply buried) but were probably originally gravelled.

22a is the westernmost, leaving the outbuildings area (where its beginning is concreted) and climbing to the south east. It passes through a gap in a terrace wall and is then walled either side for a short distance, with mortared stone one side and natural boulders (*c.f.* wall 7) the other. The line of the mortared wall (south- west) is then continued by a yew hedge, which is in poor shape but could be recovered. This hedge is along the east edge of the former orchard area (14). On the path side of it is a walnut tree. This path originally continued to join path 19, but its route was curtailed by the railway (as is shown on the

1913 map where it runs up to meet the letter at a sharp angle, supported by revetting wall), although it again now links to path 19 at the original place (as is evidenced by edge-set stones).

22b is the main path of the system, beginning with broad steps near the south-west corner of the house, curving round and running east, with a symmetrical curve linking it to the path round the pond (24). Half way along it is crossed by the path coming from the south-east corner of the house. The path is about 1.5m wide and well levelled into the slope, with dry-stone walling above on the south and on escarpment with some boulders below on the north. The steps at the south-west have gone but the flanking boulder walling survives.

22c is a branch off 22b from near the top of the steps, running south-west to link up with 22a. It retains some stone edging.

22d is the path from the conservatory at the south east of the house which crosses 22b half way along. It has an edging of brick and concrete to start with (and may have been flanked by borders); it reaches 22b via a flight of brick steps, narrower than the steps at south-west of 22b. Above the 22b path a similar flight of steps carried 22d on up; these have been partly destroyed but the dry-stone edging walls survive. The path then followed a gentle s - curve to the south east and then south west, and some revetting in the upper, south-west, side survives, but the modern path runs along the top of this instead of below. The stone edging is very clear in the inside of the curve back to the south west, and opposite this path 22e leads off to the east. 22d continues upwards and crossed the railway; its route after this is post-railway and heads south east with a revetting wall on the north-east side. 22e runs almost due east from 22d but is not very clear. It meets 22f just below the former steps up to the railway.

22f is the easternmost path of the system, leading off 22b at its junction with the path round the pond and climbing more or less straight up to join path 19 near the southern edge of the garden. It is rather badly eroded due to its steepness and the steps below the railway have gone; those leading up to path 19 are partly present (they are stone). The flanking walls survive, as does part of the path's stone edging.

22g runs parallel with the railway, just below it, linking 22c and 22d. This is disused but the stone edging is clearly visible. A path parallel with and above 22g in 1889 was not present in 1913, and was almost certainly utilised as part of the route of the railway.

22h is the end of a short path leading to path 19 which is shown on the 1889 map but was truncated by the railway and is not on the 1913 map: its edges are just visible now as two short parallel lengths of edge-set stones. 22i, similarly, is part of a network of paths in the south-east part of the garden (see also feature 20a) which appear on the 1889 but not the 1913 map, and were presumably dis-used after the building of the railway. 22i originally swept downhill to meet the junction of 22e and 22f.

All the revetting walls are stone-built, mostly dry-stone, and while none are in perfect condition most are fairly well preserved.

### *Management*

This path system, one of the major features of the garden, should be reinstated, with repairs to revetting walls where necessary, and re-surfacing (gravel). The modern paths which threaten or ignore the system should be removed, as they serve no purpose not served by the old paths if opened up. Self-sown trees should be removed to restore views and allow regeneration of the yew hedge. Walnut tree 1494 must be retained. Work on clearing-re-instating them should ideally be accompanied by an archaeological watching brief.

### *Interpretation*

A site plan should show the pre-railway layout and it could be stressed that the restored layout is 'original', as post-railway.

## **23 Woodland/shrubbery area**

A fairly large area, later divided by the garden railway, in the south-east part of the garden, south of the pond, is shown on both old maps as woodland. In 1889 it was mixed woodland but by 1913 the coniferous element had been felled, opening up the area to more undergrowth. It remains much like this, still with a few pines, and some oak and sycamore of which the former at least must pre-date the garden;

fairly open, with thick natural undergrowth amongst which the planted elements of holly and rhododendron (ponticum) still survive.

The area contains at least two possible banks or terraces. One edges an artificial and reasonably well-defined level terraced area just below the railway (its rear may even have been truncated by the latter), while the other runs down the slope and contains two or three mature trees.

#### *Management*

This should be maintained as woodland, perhaps with some tidying up of the undergrowth and selective new planting.

#### *Interpretation*

Probably not applicable.

### **24 Path**

A loop of path round the pond branches off the drive east of the house and continues south around the lawn, east across the slope where it is terraced in parts, and then south again to join up with the path along the top of the garden (19). This is clearly one of the major original paths and was probably gravelled, but now has a tarmac surface (at least in parts). Its route is the same on both 1889 and 1913 maps, but a linking path along the east side of the pond had gone by 1913.

#### *Management*

Ideally the tarmac surface should be replaced with gravel. It is probably not necessary to restore the path on the east side of the pond but this could be done.

#### *Interpretation*

A site plan should make it clear that this is an original path.

### **25 Pond**

The pond was entirely artificial and was rather long and narrow, but curved round at the west end so as to present the broadest possible dimension when seen from the house, and appear bigger. It is now more or less dry, and soil and building rubble has been dumped into it, masking details of construction and the actual line of the western edge. The pond appears to have been dry-stone -walled, and embanked on the lower side. The walling consists of shaped stone but is in poor condition in the few places where it is visible.

A tiny humped-backed bridge of stone and concrete crossed the tail of the pond, and to the east of this is some deep culverting. However, the actual level of the bridge seems to be rather low in comparison to the edge of the pond, and this, plus the fact that neither bridge nor culvert (which now holds water, in an area where no water was shown on the old maps) are indicated on the old maps, suggests that these may have been relatively-recent, post-1913, additions. It is possible that the culvert may have been constructed to extend the pond and turn the partly artificial rocky hump in the centre (which has a short flight of steps) into an island, but it may have had more to do with the water supply.

Water which currently leaks onto the road from a ?spring below the drive may once have contributed to filling the pond, but the main source of water was presumably from the stream to the east, via an underground culvert. The outflow would probably have been directed back to the stream, and there is a sluice gate or similar, of brick construction, at the eastern end of the lake.

The pond seems always to have been surrounded by trees and shrubbery but is now probably too overgrown. It appears (from the lawn by the house) in some old photographs.

#### *Management*

The pond should certainly be cleared out, rebuilt and refilled. It is important that this is accompanied by an archaeological watching brief to ensure that the original depth and edges are defined and that other features (e.g. the sluice at the east end) are not destroyed. It might be nice to reinstate the little bridge, but a decision must be made on the 'period' for reconstruction (the bridge and island are post-1913 and not



original). Surrounding woodland should be opened up (removing self-sown sycamores and some undergrowth but retaining pine, horse chestnut, oak and any large sycamore, and elements of planted undergrowth - rhododendron, holly etc.).

#### *Interpretation*

The feature should be included on the overall site plan, showing the original layout if not reconstructed. Eventually it may be possible to reintroduce small boats on to the pond.

### **26 Area at south-west of garden**

An area south of path 19 now falls within the garden boundary (which is park fencing on the south side of it) but was outside the garden in 1889, when a boundary ran very close to path 19. In 1913 this area contained 4 square enclosures, three with a tiny building, and a sundial. This last is a clue that the enclosures were some kind of garden feature, but it is extremely difficult to say, now, what they might have been (although a local informant remembers grapes and such like growing in glass houses there around the middle of this century). They are opposite the other, contemporary, possible viewing area with the concrete plinth, and there was a tiny glass-roofed structure (cold frame? summer house?) near this.

The fact that the boundary present in 1889 has been completely removed also suggests that this area was firmly part of the garden.

The site of the enclosures is still visible as a rectangular hollow, but the area, formerly open, is now covered with self-sown trees. At least two paths are visible running east – west parallel to path 19 (26a and 26c): these are defined by stone edges and a slight break in slope. The western ends of these paths could not be defined, but the southernmost (26a) bifurcates at its eastern end to head north to both path 19 and a level area containing the remains of a brick-built glass house (26b – presumably post-1913 as the level area is empty on the OS map of that date). The line of this path marked the southern edge of the garden on the 1913 OS map. Now, however, it continues up-slope from area 26b to the edge of the present garden where it turns westwards to run inside the hedge line.

#### *Management*

Unless definite information about the former status of this area can be obtained, there seems little point in trying to reinstate it. This information could be obtained from a combination of further research (some local knowledge has already been forthcoming) and careful clearing/excavation under archaeological supervision. It could be retained as woodland, with selective felling and replanting, and would be a good place to concentrate on native species.

#### *Interpretation*

A site plan should show the layout of this area as on the 1913 map or later if it can be ascertained and is more interesting.

### **27 Entrances**

The original main entrance, where the drive came in, has been lost due to road widening. The entrance for the later drive is a field gate leading onto the causeway which carries the end of the new part of the drive, and is more or less irrelevant. There is also an ungated entrance in the south-east corner which is not original.

The two pedestrian gates at the north-east and north-west corners both had paths leading from them in 1889 but the north-east one was then as now outside the garden and the path was a public footpath which passed on the east. This path still exists but a new one, into the garden, has been made across what must have been part of the lodge garden. The gate, which is approached by concrete steps, is a standard council public footpath iron gate.

The gate in the north-west corner was, apparently, disused by 1913 as no path to it is shown on the map of that date. A path exists once again now, reached by climbing over the wall.

#### *Management*

The north-west gate should be reinstated and the path made up. The north-east gate is convenient and access from here should continue, with a proper path being made following the original line where possible. The entrance in the south-east could also be retained, but a gate should be installed at the entrance to the garden.

#### *Interpretation*

Probably not applicable.

### **28 Area north of path (19)**

An area just below (north of) the eastern end of path 19 appears to contain arrangements of boulders as well as dumps of stone (similar to 20a across the track). The area is defined by a low but substantial dry stone wall to the west, and a poorly-preserved boulder rubble wall to the north. Neither the 1889 nor 1913 map shows any garden features in this area and at present nothing further can be said about them.

#### *Management*

Further investigation of the area is required if it is to be disturbed, possibly by maintaining an archaeological watching brief.

#### *Interpretation*

Not applicable at present.

### **29 Pond (?)**

A small sub-circular stone-built feature has been built along the edge of the railway (17). Although overgrown, it appears to have both an outer retaining wall built up against the slope (the northern edge of which co-incides with the edge of the railway) to create a level area inside, as well as a stone-built inner face. The interior is very boggy and is silted up. Despite its proximity to the railway, it does not appear to be directly linked with it and is probably an ornamental pond. The feature is not shown on either the 1889 or 1913 OS map.

#### *Management*

The feature should be cleared, defined and retained as part of the layout of the park.

#### *Interpretation*

It should be shown on any site plan.

## 4 Development of Plas Mawr

### 4.1 The house

- 4.1.1 It is likely that Plas Mawr formed part of the demesne of the older dwelling, Ty Mawr, and was carved out of it between c. 1830 and 1847. Ty Mawr itself appears to have been the original focus of an estate which became centred on the new house of Pendyffryn in c. 1810.
- 4.1.2 Though the farm of Ty Mawr is the older settlement, in that it is shown on Lewis Morris' map of 1748, Plas Mawr was in existence by 1847, when it is shown as a separate dwelling named Plas Ty Mawr on the Dwygyfylchi tithe map in the Caernarfon Record Office. The owner was then George Thomas Smith, and the tenant Thomas Williams, who also occupied Ty Mawr. The immediate holdings around Plas Ty Mawr, more or less corresponding to the present garden, were Berllan and Perllan Isa, "Orchard" and "Lower Orchard".
- 4.1.3 The house itself underwent some changes during the nineteenth century. The tithe map shows a building orientated east-west with a projecting L-shaped wing on the south-east corner, and the estate survey of 1873 shows a house very different to the one shown on the 1889 Ordnance Survey plan, with a building apparently comprising several wings in an asymmetrical plan, set around an open central court. Photographs from the Darbishire family albums confirm the plan of this later house, and show a building on the same alignment as previously (*i.e.* along the contour), but with a substantial two storey extension to the east side, with a bow window and a conservatory. The western part of the structure appears in its origin to be a two-storey dwelling, to which a larger two-storey house with an attic floor has been added some time between 1847 and the late 1890s.
- 4.1.4 The Smith family is said to have built Plas Mawr as a speculative venture (*ex info.* Richard Peckham), which suggests a date after 1830 and the completion of the Telford Road and definitely before 1847 for the original structure, and between 1847 and 1887 for the additional building, perhaps after the arrival of the Darbishes in 1854. No building plans or other documentation survives in the Darbishire papers at the CRO nor at UWB, and no more definite dates can as yet be ascribed to these structures. Interestingly, the 1873 plan clearly shows the garden belonging to the house extending to the north of the turnpike road.
- 4.1.5 Of the house itself nothing now survives above floor level, and its site is largely covered with a vigorous growth of trees and obscured by rubble, but it is evident as a raised platform approximately 1m high. The site of the foundations is visible at a number of points along the front and rear walls. The remains of a patterned floor of encaustic tiles survive opposite the steps up from the driveway, suggesting that this might have been the entrance hallway. The outbuildings have also been demolished. Excavation should reveal the floor plan and further details.

### 4.2 The garden

#### 4.2.1 Introduction

- 4.2.1.1 The garden appears to be typical of villa gardens of the period, copying Victorian country house gardens on a smaller scale and incorporating as many design elements typical of the latter as possible in the available space (e.g. a lodge (now demolished), areas of woodland and shrubbery, lawns, water features, an extensive system of paths and walks, viewpoints). There is nothing to suggest that any professional garden designer was employed, but the layout appears to have been planned carefully in advance and is probably, in the main, more or less contemporary with the house. The present garden perimeter can for the most part be traced on the 1847 map, with the exception of the southern (up-slope) boundary) and the 1873 plan shows a garden surrounding the house, although the only feature depicted is the pond. Comparison of the 1889 and 1913 25-in. Ordnance Survey maps shows that later amendments were made.
- 4.2.1.2 Some of the oak trees in the garden are clearly more than 150 years old, and must therefore pre-date the garden. Whether the garden was carved out of woodland or made from farmland in which these trees survived, they may well be remnants of the original natural woodland of the area, although it is also a possibility that they are remnants of planting associated with the older house of Ty Mawr. Other trees are clearly survivors from the original garden planting, but the majority, including some large sycamores, is self-sown. These trees give the whole garden a woodland character, whereas originally the central zone,

including the house and areas north and south of it, would have been largely open, offering views both within and beyond the garden.

#### 4.2.2 *Garden structure and features*

- 4.2.2.1 All visible surviving features have been identified and numbered and the gazetteer (section 3) gives details of each. The structure of the garden and some of the more significant features are briefly discussed here.
- 4.2.2.2 The house lay near the centre of the site and faced north, looking down over the northern part of the garden towards the sea. There were lawns to the north and east, a mainly open area with an intricate path layout to the south, and an orchard to the south-west. The drive approached the house from the east, via a hairpin bend just above the lodge by means of which sufficient height was gained to allow the rest of the drive to be level. The perimeter wall of Plas Mawr remains intact, constructed of the Penmaenmawr stone from the quarry.
- 4.2.2.3 As has been mentioned, the plan is that of a Victorian country house garden in miniature, and proportionately large areas of woodland are therefore included. These were concentrated along the east and west sides of the garden, particularly the former, and to a lesser extent along the northern boundary, where a strip of woodland along the roadside ensured privacy. The house site was probably sufficiently elevated to look over the tops of these roadside trees, even when fairly large, and the main walks higher up the garden would certainly have offered seaward views. There do not appear to have been any summer houses sited to take advantage of these views, however, which is surprising. The long, straight walk along the top of the garden is clearly so placed to give views down over the house and out to sea, and was probably the main promenade of the garden.
- 4.2.2.4 The pond, in the wooded eastern part of the garden, has the character of a miniature lake, and represents a good deal of effort in digging, walling, embanking and organising a water supply. As has been mentioned, it is the only garden feature depicted on the 1873 plan, and had been modified by 1889. Its shape was clearly dictated to some extent by the terrain, but it is well laid out to look as large as possible from the house, although the view from this direction is perforce along its length rather than across its maximum width. The surrounding woodland may have permitted only glimpses of water from some directions and, again, given the impression of the pond's being larger than it actually is.
- 4.2.2.5 The pond has already been mentioned, and the main walk is another original feature, shown on the 1889 map, but by 1913 two major structural additions had been made. Towards the top of the garden a narrow-gauge railway had been laid out (c. 1905) by Colonel Darbishire, no doubt indulging a particular interest of this family's, but nevertheless an unusual garden feature. The 2' line was approximately 200 yards long in a simple end-to-end arrangement, and was dismantled in 1921, when the family made its home at Trefor. This relatively new form of garden embellishment was, perhaps not surprisingly, particularly popular with those whose wealth originated in industry, such as the quarry-owning Darbishires of Plas Mawr; but garden railways never became common and were certainly very unusual in gardens of this size. Although the track has been taken up the track-bed is still clear, and a small bridge over one of the streams survives. (The railway's one locomotive, *Redstone*, was based on the design of the Caernarfon-built vertical boiler locomotives in the quarry. It was named after its builder, Thomas Redstone, whom Ivor E. Davies describes as "a skilled fitter and a clever engineer", who was appointed at a wage of 7s a day, and remained at work until 1921 (Davies 47). The locomotive is still in existence, on the Brecon Mountain Railway (Bradley 169-170).
- 4.2.2.6 Another improvement was the creation of a level lawn below the house, on the north, with terrace walls. There must always have been a fairly steep slope down to the north, and the 1889 map suggests that there was an escarpment with a sloping lawn below. By 1913, however, the lawn had been made level, creating a much steeper slope, almost a cliff, below the house, with retaining walls at top and bottom, and a lesser escarpment on the north side of the lawn. This can be deduced from the map, but the sheer scale of the work is more easily appreciated from the one photograph in the family album which shows this area. Unfortunately it cannot be seen on the ground as the rubble from the demolished house has been tipped over it. The new lawn would have been large enough for use as a tennis court, and this may be sufficient explanation for the effort and expenditure involved.
- 4.2.2.7 There does not seem to have been a kitchen garden, and an apparent reduction in orchard area by 1913 may indicate limited interest in home production of fruit and vegetables. There was, however, a small area of glass (apart from the conservatory attached to the house) at this later period, which was apparently

unheated and is therefore more likely to have been used to extend the season for flowers for the house than for raising exotic plants of any kind. It is possible that an increase in enthusiasm for exotic crops later resulted in new glasshouses *etc.* being installed at the top (southern end) of the garden.

#### 4.2.3 Planting

- 4.2.3.1 Almost nothing survives of non-woody planting, largely, probably, because most other plants (including grass) have been shaded out by the thick growth of self-sown trees. However, the original 'country house' character of the garden would have concentrated on woodland and lawns, and maps and photographs give no hint of herbaceous borders or flower-beds full of summer bedding plants. Flowering shrubs do appear in the photographs, and these are mostly lost, although a few roses survive alongside the railway track.
- 4.2.3.2 Perhaps more surprisingly, the woodland areas are not thickly underplanted with laurel and *Rhododendron ponticum*, the standard Victorian shrubbery mixture; elements of both these survive, with rather more holly, but the bulk of the undergrowth at present is natural. As the evergreens are all very tough and extremely good survivors, it is likely that they were never extensively planted, and that the original undergrowth consisted of more decorative and less tough shrubs, or possibly even grass. Natural undergrowth as at present may have been tolerated further from the house, and the idea of 'wild gardening' was gaining ground early in the twentieth century. This idea was enthusiastically endorsed by H. L. North, the well-known architect who lived at Llanfairfechan, and whose influence might well have spread to Penmaenmawr.
- 4.2.3.3 A number of the trees which were planted in the garden originally, or fairly early on, has survived. The old trees which pre-date the garden are mostly found in the wooded areas to west and east, where they would have formed a framework; softwoods were added to these but by 1913 had mostly been felled (except around the pond and drive, where many pines still stand). The place of the softwoods has largely been filled by sycamores, which may have been allowed to regenerate naturally, although some good specimens were probably originally planted.
- 4.2.3.4 Drive-side plantings consist of pines, with, near the lodge, horse chestnut, and, near the house, yew and grey poplar. The latter is an unusual choice for garden planting and these trees are therefore of particular interest. On the terrace immediately in front of the house site is a large cedar, now much too large for this position (if the house still stood), but probably originally planted of the far side of the drive, which crossed in front of the house. There are also two lengths of yew hedging near the house, which probably date from between 1889 and 1913.
- 4.2.3.5 In the southern part of the garden there are a few more pines, and a walnut, but apart from this most of the trees are a 'natural' mix of oak and sycamore, with ash and other elements. Many of these are self-sown but there are oak and sycamore which were clearly present in the garden's heyday, and the composition of the woodland since the felling of the softwoods has probably not changed greatly, although in recent years it has been completely unmanaged.
- 4.2.3.6 The only trees which are clearly planted, and which do not appear to be at least a century old, are some Lombardy poplars in the northern part of the garden. These are a bad choice for this position as they would eventually have blocked the view from the house, and there is no obvious reason for their having been planted here.



## 5 Summary recommendations for further evaluation and management

### 5.1 *The house*

5.1.1 What we know of the development of the house from historical sources has been summarised above (section 4.1) and in the previous report (GAT report no. 215).

5.1.2 In order to uncover what remains of the house and to prepare it for consolidation and interpretation, the following course of action is suggested:-

- i) Cut trees by hand to low level, poison remaining trunks:
- ii) trowel and clean over surface to outside edge of walls at least:
- iii) plan, photograph and record patterns of tiles, position of internal walls *etc.*:
- iv) try to identify functions of rooms:
- v) excavate trial trenches out from west, east, north and south sides of exterior walls to define the level of the old ground surface around the house, and to ascertain whether there is any archaeological potential in the accumulated deposits:
- vi) prepare a report with recommendations for subsequent consolidation and interpretation.

5.1.3 A decision must be made as to whether (and to what extent) to include the adjoining and other outbuildings to the west side of the house.

### 5.2 *The garden*

#### 5.2.1 *General*

5.2.1.1 As the framework and structure of the garden is surprisingly well preserved, under the thick growth of trees and the dumping of rubble, it adds much to the interest of the site. Restoration of most of the features would be relatively easy, although unfortunately this is not true for some of the most important features, e.g. the railway, the level lawn and the pond. Depending on the extent of work envisaged, it should be possible to restore all or most of the garden to something close to its original state, and this is highly desirable. The original attractions of the garden - pleasant walks, good views, shady woodland, sunny lawns - would then be available to the public. Additional attractions which may be envisaged should be fitted around surviving features and without breaking up any of the original coherent areas of the garden layout.

#### 5.2.2 *Paths*

5.2.2.1 There is a very good path system, mostly dating from before 1889, and mostly still in reasonable condition. One or two new paths, probably on the routes of casual paths which have developed, need to be made, but apart from these (which are in areas previously without paths), the old system should be used. It serves almost all parts of the garden and was well laid out in the first place. The paths are mostly level and sufficiently wide; they would need careful clearing of vegetation and re-surfacing (with gravel, not tarmac), preferably under archaeological supervision, and in some cases steps need replacing and revetting walls repairing. These should be in character with the originals.

#### 5.2.3 *Walls*

5.2.3.1 The original garden wall should be repaired and retained as the boundary. An effort should be made to retain the original style and prevent repaired lengths from looking too new. Revetting and terracing walls within the garden need repair in some cases, and the same applies to these. There is probably sufficient material available within the garden. The obvious use of modern materials (block, concrete, tarmac etc.) should be avoided.

#### 5.2.4 *Railway*

5.2.4.1 The railway is an important feature of the garden and merits careful conservation and interpretation. At present, although the route of the railway can be followed relatively easily on the ground, there is no information regarding its state of preservation below ground (for example can the actual lines of the rails be traced, is the 'siding' shown on the 1913 map towards the western end at a higher level than the rest of

the track). It is important that this is established so that appropriate conservation measures are put in place so that in future the railway could be re-instated should that prove desirable.

5.2.4.2 To this end the following programme of further evaluation is suggested:

- i) Excavate two or three trial trenches across feature (say, at the west and east ends and in the vicinity of 17a) to define its current state of preservation, condition, depth *etc.* before proceeding with clearance work;
- ii) clear undergrowth either by hand or by machine under careful supervision;
- iii) the trackbed should not be planted but left as an open walkway.

#### 5.2.5 Pond

5.2.5.1 The pond is another important feature. Probably the best way of managing this would be to clear it carefully under archaeological supervision (a watching brief) so that the original depth and sides are retained, and an associated features (such as the sluice gates) are recorded and preserved. It would be useful to discover how the water system worked (*i.e.* how it filled: there is a sluice at the east end, and possibly a spring or other source of water somewhere within it). Details will almost certainly come to light once clearing begins.

#### 5.2.6 Other features

5.2.6.1 The level area around the greenhouses ought to be cleared carefully, recorded and retained. Ideally this should be done under close archaeological supervision.

5.2.6.2 Further investigations into the function of the iron umbrella (12) should be carried out.

5.2.6.3 The ?pond (29) needs further investigation: again careful clearing and recording should be carried out under archaeological supervision in the first instance.

5.2.6.4 The attached forms contain recommendations for each individual feature (1 – 29, some of which have been sub-divided into component parts). The general rule should be, restore where possible and maintain the *status quo* where not, except in a few cases where virtually nothing is left and tidying or levelling is necessary for safety.

#### 5.2.7 Planting

5.2.7.1 This is potentially the trickiest area. Ideally clearance should be fairly drastic, sparing of course all trees as old as the garden or older which remain in good condition, but removing the bulk of the self-sown trees, including, especially, those large ones which threaten particular features. It is important to open up the central zone of the garden to recover the original design, and to restore the views. As cutting trees down is now deemed 'politically incorrect', this may be difficult to implement, but is definitely the best option. In particular the temptation to leave seedling trees in areas not to be restored - *e.g.* on the spoil heap, if it cannot be cleared - should be resisted, as trees grow, and this is not, therefore, maintaining the *status quo*, but is making matters worse, as larger trees will be more difficult to deal with if further restoration should ever become possible.

5.2.7.2 New planting should also be appropriate, which means that in areas where planted trees survive the same or similar species should be used, not indiscriminately chosen native species. Necessary new planting is probably fairly limited, and overall a reduction rather than an increase in the number of trees is desirable, both to recreate the original character of the garden and to increase its attractiveness as a varied wildlife habitat.

5.2.7.3 There are, however, areas where new native trees can be planted. The existing areas of 'natural' woodland in the garden are probably best managed by retaining the best of the self-sown trees, and thinning out the rest; but there is a large area in the south-west part of the garden which was originally open and is now full of seedling trees. If the features here are not to be restored (difficult unless more can be found out about them – see recommendations for feature 26), much, if not all, of the sycamore could be removed from here and replaced with native species. Other, smaller, areas could be similarly treated (*e.g.* the south-east corner).

- 5.2.7.4 The undergrowth over the whole site is mostly natural at present, but thin because of the dense shade. The remaining planted undergrowth (rhododendron, holly and laurel) should not be removed but could be cut back where necessary. If the canopy is opened up, native and ornamental shrubs could be established to help control the inevitable spread of brambles, nettles *etc.* Both types of shrub would increase the value of the garden for wildlife, and native types would be more appropriate in the 'natural' woodland, with ornamental varieties nearer the house site, around the pond *etc.* Recently introduced exotics or new varieties should be avoided, to keep the 'period' feel of the garden. Perhaps replanting some fruit trees could be considered for the orchard area - or possibly carefully selected varieties of ornamental crab apples instead, which would give much the same effect, especially when in blossom in spring.
- 5.2.7.5 The two stretches of yew hedging (part of features 8 and 22a) are badly neglected but could be recovered. Yew will re-shoot following drastic cutting-back, but it will be necessary to remove many of the overhanging trees, which create too much shade. Dead yew bushes (not many) will need to be replaced, and the hedges maintained fairly carefully initially to encourage them to thicken up.
- 5.2.7.6 The photographs in the family album, and other archive photographs, should prove useful for a general guide to the appearance of the garden, and also for some of the species of trees and shrubs grown.
- 5.2.7.7 The plants identified within the garden which should definitely be retained are :-
- pinus (quite a few, mostly in north-east area; some are in poor condition and need felling);
  - horse chestnuts (north-east corner and by pond);
  - grey poplars e.g. no 1254 (along north side of drive);
  - walnut - number 1494 (by east hedge of orchard, on path side);
  - cedar (on terrace north of house site - this needs attention);
  - old oaks inc. no 1575 (around the garden, mostly in 'natural' woodland; any oaks over 300mm should be retained);
  - good specimens of sycamore, which may be planted (around the garden, mostly in 'natural' woodland);
  - yews (near the house);
  - roses (on the north side of railway track bed - feature 17a); and
  - the planted undergrowth (*rhododendron ponticum*, laurel, holly).
- 5.2.7.8 The lombardy poplars (north of the level lawn) should also be retained if possible, although these are not original and are therefore less important.
- 5.2.7.9 Particular trees which ought to be felled are :-
- sycamore on damaged wall (1298)
  - sycamore threatening planted tree (1255)
- 5.2.7.10 One of the interpretation drawings (drawing 2) refers to the creation/restoration of a Japanese garden at the western end of the lake and a 'fern border' south of the house. We have not found any evidence for these in the original garden.
- 5.2.8 *Other*
- 5.2.8.1 The amphitheatre as it is currently planned would involve the demolition of a substantial part of the structure of the garden (features 13 and 14) which should, perhaps, be retained and incorporated into the park (possibly as the site for the artist-in-residence). We propose that it be moved northwards down the slope to a part of the garden where there are not currently, and apparently never have been, any built features (west of path 6a, and below the yew hedge and umbrella). The natural contours here should enable it to be constructed relatively easily without any damage to the fabric of the original garden.
- 5.2.8.2 The construction of the new pedestrian ramp in the north-east area of the garden as shown on the drawings would involve damage to the original path layout in this area (see paragraph 5.2.2.1). As this does not appear to be a necessary development (the existing paths (3 and 3a) could be suitably adapted), we would recommend that this proposal be reconsidered.
- 5.2.8.3 Drawing 2 also shows the new road-level cutting into the 'tennis court' (feature 5), and we suggest this be avoided if possible. Could not the existing lawn/court be used as it is for this lawn, with steps/ramp leading up to it from the road as shown on the drawing.



5.2.8.4 The working name for the park, Parc Ty Mawr, would appear to have no basis in historical fact. Ty Mawr appears to have been the predecessor of Plas Mawr and stands outside the borders of the current garden (see section 4.1). It would be incorrect, therefore, to name this park after it and we would suggest changing the name to Parc Plas Mawr.

### 5.3 *Summary*

5.3.1 Three further stages of archaeological involvement in the project are envisaged, although the level of each will be subject to discussion.

5.3.2 **Stage III** should comprise detailed evaluation of a small number of individual features to allow for their correct identification, management and interpretation. These are -

the house (feature 10) – see section 5.1

railway (feature 17) – see section 5.2.4

the outbuildings (feature 13) – see section 5.1 (the scale of work here needs to be determined)

the iron umbrella (feature 12) – establish its function and decide on management and interpretation

5.3.3 Features which ideally should be evaluated before work on the site begins, but which could be dealt with by a carefully-monitored archaeological watching brief include -

orchard walls (feature 14) – these need to be cleared, defined, recorded, interpreted and managed

greenhouses (feature 15) – this area needs to be cleared, defined, recorded, interpreted and managed

Miners' path (feature 19) – the full width of the path and the level of survival of the stone edging needs to be established

square features etc. (26) – the area around these needs to be cleared, defined, recorded, interpreted and managed

possible pond (29) – this feature needs to be cleared, defined, recorded, interpreted and managed

5.3.4 It is thought that a programme of interviews with local people who can remember the site before it became 'disused' would be very beneficial as part of this stage of work

5.3.5 Following this, it will be necessary to undertake a watching brief (**stage IV**) during works on-site to create the park (such as tree removal, machining *etc.*), (i) to ensure that known features are safeguarded; (ii) to record information which will inevitably come to light as work progresses; (iii) to help co-ordinate and direct operations in sensitive areas; and (iv) to aid management and interpretation. Details of this will be subject to further discussion and findings. At this stage a watching brief on the following features is thought necessary –

pond (feature 25) – see above section 5.2.5

wall / steps (feature 8) – to safeguard features and record details

paths (feature 22 *etc.*) – see section 5.2.2 - to safeguard features and record details  
areas 20a and 28

5.3.5 Finally, it is envisaged that there will need to be specialist input (**stage V**) to subsequent interpretation and management of the site, mainly in an advisory capacity. Most of the management recommendations are included within individual feature entries in the gazetteer (section 3).

## 6 Summary of recommendations for interpretation and display

### 6.1 Context

- 6.1.1 The wealth of archaeological and historical evidence from Penmaenmawr allows for the inclusion of an interpretative and educational element within the proposed country park. It has already been suggested that this could include information on the geological background, the neolithic axe-factories and bronze age funerary monuments above the park (and possibly the wider archaeological background to the area), the development of the modern Penmaenmawr quarries, the development of Penmaenmawr as an industrial community, the house and gardens at Plas Mawr, personalities connected with the place.
- 6.1.2 The house foundations and garden remains constitute the most obvious visible and usable assets of the park; limited excavation and clearance followed by consolidation would result in a clear appreciation of the remains. Leaflets, information boards, waymarkers and possibly school packs could then be used to explain not only the house and garden, but also the links between it and various other themes as outlined above.
- 6.1.3 What is being suggested here is a set of off-site leaflets, distributed through schools, libraries, tourist information offices *etc.* to promote the site and attract visitors, with on-site interpretation (comprising a series of information boards and waymarkers) to inform and add to the enjoyment of the visitor. These will concentrate on six themes: (i) Plas Mawr as a typical Victorian house and garden; (ii) the family who lived there and the community which shared it; (iii) the house and family in the context of the development of the 19<sup>th</sup> century quarrying community; (iv) the site in the historic (archaeological) context of the Penmaenmawr area; (v) the restoration (before and after) of the site; and (vi) what's new to the park.
- 6.1.4 Possibly the best way of presenting the house and garden would be to have two plans (and/or photographs) side by side, one showing old features and the other the garden as it is (or will be); alternatively, one could be superimposed on the other, if this could be done without causing confusion. A way should certainly be found of clearly identifying original garden features (*i.e.* features introduced at any time while the garden was still being used as a garden by the inhabitants of Plas Mawr), both on a site plan and 'on the ground'. While an overall site plan is vital, some areas or features would be best interpreted by larger-scale plans, with a short text, on the spot (suggestions for these are outlined below).

### 6.2 Suggested scheme

#### 6.2.1 Leaflets

- 6.2.1.1 A series of three leaflets is suggested:

L1 – links the site to other tourism opportunities of the Conwy County Borough area;  
L2 – contains information on Plas Mawr, the Darbishes, and Penmaenmawr; and  
L3 – site specific on what can be seen at Plas Mawr (possibly a site plan on one side, with drawings and text on individual features on the reverse).

#### 6.2.2 Information boards – at the house

- 6.2.2.1 It is suggested that the house is presented as an outline with walls standing perhaps .30m high (exterior) and .15m high (interior). If information is forthcoming, the tile pattern of individual rooms could be recreated, and the function of each room identified (possibly written on the sill in the doorway to each room). At present, five information boards are envisaged in the house

HB1 – a version of the overall plan of the house and garden (also placed at the entrance (GB1) and on the Miners' walk (GB2):

HB2 – a plan of the layout of the house (if possible to reconstruct, perhaps illustrated):

HB3 – a board concentrating on the Darbshire family, with anecdotes and illustrations:

HB4 – a board explaining the house and garden as a former social centre of Penmaenmawr; and

HB5 – a board containing the 'old' view looking from the house towards the lake.

### 6.2.3 *Information boards – around the garden*

- 6.2.3.1 There are a number of features around the garden which would benefit from enhanced interpretation. These would form part of a garden trail which could be shown the overall plans, with individual boards at each feature. It is suggested that the boards have an identical 'corporate' layout, with a drawing of the feature, a text explanation of what it is, and a photograph (from the family album) if relevant. These would be supplemented by additional information on three other boards. At present it is envisaged that up to twelve 'feature' boards would be used as follows:-

- GB1 - a version of the overall plan of the house and garden at the entrance (also placed at the house (HB1) and on the Miners' walk (GB2):
- GB2 - a version of the overall plan of the house and garden placed on the Miners' walk (also placed at the entrance (GB1) and at the house (HB1):
- GB3 - a general information board about Victorian gardens, possibly placed again on the Miners' walk where the best view down is to be had):
  
- GB4 - by the pond (feature 25):
- GB5 - by the railway (feature 17):
- GB6 - by the Miners' walk (feature 19):
- GB7 - in the rear garden looking at the back of the house (feature 21 – upper):
- GB8 - on the main lawn looking at the east side of the house (feature 21/24):
- GB9 - on the 'tennis court' (feature 5):
- GB10 - by the stream, explaining it as an 'audible' part of the garden layout (feature 16):
- GB11 - near the main terrace and steps (feature 8):
- GB12 - by the iron umbrella (feature 12):
- GB13 - possibly by feature 13:
- GB14 - possibly by feature 14:
- GB15 - possibly by feature 15.

### 6.2.4 *Waymarkers*

- 6.2.4.1 A number of different walks of varying lengths could be colour-coded and small, discreet painted signposts could direct visitors accordingly around the garden (routes would be shown on the overall plans)

### 6.2.5 *Schools*

- 6.2.5.1 A schools pack could link in Plas Mawr and associated historical and archaeological sites to the relevant key stages of the national curriculum.

## 7 Bibliography

### 7.1 Maps

Tithe map of parish of Dwygyfylchi (CRO tithe map 27)  
Estate plan of S D Darbshire's Dwygyfylchi Estate, 1873 (CRO X/Penyrorsedd/380(b))  
Ordnance survey 25" of 1888 and 1913 Caernarvonshire IV 13 and 14.  
Ordnance Survey 1/10,000 - 77NW

### 7.2 Manuscript sources

#### 7.2.1 Caernarfon Record Office

XM 4046 (Ivor E. Davies papers)  
X Poole 4018, 4020  
XQA LT 4 2  
XM Maps 680 37, 92.  
XM 55 63

#### 7.2.2 University of Wales (Bangor)

Bangor MS 25617-25629, 25700, 25705 (Darbshire papers)

#### 7.2.3 Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

Report on G1105  
Report on G1432 (no. 215)

### 7.3 Published Sources

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*Dictionary of National Biography*  
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vol. 35, 27-72.  
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*(Registrum Vulgariter Nuncupatum) The Record of Carnarvon è Codice Msto Harleiano 690 (1838)*  
Sivewright, W J, 1986, *Civil Engineering Heritage*.  
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Williams, J G, 1985, *The University College of North Wales: Foundations 1884-1927*.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX I

Project design

## **PROJECT DESIGN FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT AND SURVEY AT PARC TY MAWR, PENMAENMAWR (G1503)**

**Prepared for Conwy County Borough Council 15/09/97**

### **1. PROJECT BACKGROUND**

It is intended to create a country park, to be called Parc Ty Mawr, on the site of the gardens and the demolished house of Plas Mawr in Penmaenmawr.

An initial archaeological assessment of the site was carried out in August, 1996 (GAT Report No. 215), which included a history of the site and an archaeological description, but no survey work or recommendations. Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (Contracts Section) have been asked to submit a project design and quotation for carrying out the next phase of archaeological work which will involve carrying out a measured survey of the site to identify remaining above-ground features of archaeological interest, and making recommendations for the subsequent management of those features.

### **2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AIMS**

The aims of this phase of work are to record the archaeological features on the site by measured survey; to compile a gazetteer of those features, which will include a categorisation of their importance; and to provide recommendations for their subsequent management. It is possible that certain features on the site will need further evaluation before full management recommendations can be made, in which case recommendations for further evaluation will be made in the report.

### **3. PROGRAMME OF WORK**

#### **3.1 Desktop**

This will phase will build on work already carried out for the assessment, and will involve obtaining copies or details of maps, documents and photographs from archive repositories. The maps will then be digitised so that they can be overlain by one another and by the survey. Photographs will be used to aid interpretation of the existing remains.

**Time: 2 man-days**

**Staff: 2**

**Grade: Project officer, project assistant**

#### **3.2 Survey**

This will involve surveying the proposed park using an Electronic Distance Measurer, and processing the resulting data to produce a topographic survey and plan of the identified features. Photographs will be taken of the principal features where possible, and a description of the site and each of its features will be compiled. A garden historian will be employed to record the plant evidence and to advise on the interpretation of the features recorded in the survey.

**Time: 10 man-days**

**Staff: 2**

**Grade: Project officer, project assistant**

### **3.3 Further evaluation**

The further evaluation will be the subject of a subsequent project design, which will incorporate the recommendations made in the report which will follow the measured survey.

### **4. FINAL REPORT**

Following the completion of the fieldwork, a report will be produced for submission to the clients. The report will detail and synthesise the results of the survey and will comprise:

- a) a copy or details of the agreed Project Design;
- b) a scale plan showing the location of features recorded and described;
- c) other illustrations as appropriate;
- d) a description of the features of archaeological and historical interest, including their extent and character, an interpretation and date, and an assessment of their importance and condition (quality and state of preservation);
- e) recommendations for further evaluation and/or management;
- f) a full bibliography of all sources consulted.

The client will be supplied with two copies of the report with further copies at cost (a copy of the report can also be supplied on disc if required). A copy will also be lodged with the Gwynedd Sites and Monuments Record on the understanding that this will become a public document after an appropriate period of time (generally not exceeding six months).

**Time: 8 man-days**  
**Grade: Project Supervisor, Illustrator**  
**Staff: 2**

### **5. DEPOSITION OF ARCHIVES**

A full archive including plans, photographs, written material and any other material resulting from the project will be prepared. All plans, photographs and descriptions will be labelled, and cross-referenced, and lodged in an appropriate place (to be decided in consultation with the Site and Monuments Record) within six months of the completion of the project.

**Time: 1 man-day**  
**Grade: Project Supervisor**  
**Staff: 1**

### **6. PERSONNEL**

The work will be supervised by the Trust's Projects Manager Mr Andrew Davidson. The work will be undertaken by one of the Trust's Archaeological Field Officers experienced in the relevant skills/periods required, aided by trained Project Assistants.

### **7. TIMING**

Should the project design and costings be judged acceptable by the client, The Trust would be able to make personnel available to carry out the work programme identified above after Monday, 3 November.

**A report will be available four weeks after the end of the fieldwork**



## **8. HEALTH & SAFETY**

The Trust subscribes to the SCAUM (Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers) Health and Safety Policy as defined in **Health and Safety in Field Archaeology** (1991; 1993 supplement)

## **9. INSURANCE**

The Trust holds public liability insurance with an indemnity limit of £2,500,000 through Russell, Scanlon Limited Insurance Brokers, Wellington Circus, Nottingham NG1 5AJ (policy 01 1017386 COM).

## **10. OTHER**

Any queries concerning the above should be directed to Mr Andrew Davidson at the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust Offices, Craig Beuno, Garth Road, Bangor LL57 2RT. Telephone (01248) 352535.

## APPENDIX II

### Short list of house and garden features

1. Boundary wall on east side of site.
2. The original main approach drive
3. A footpath leading from the former lodge towards the house
4. A short length of path leading from path 3a down onto the levelled area (5)
5. Possible tennis court
6. Path along the road (N) edge of the garden
7. Walls An interesting short stretch of wall alongside path 6
8. Main terrace and steps
9. Wall A short length of most incongruous concrete wall following part of the line of path 3a.
10. House platform and steps
11. Path The 1889 map shows a path coming from the gate in the NW corner to the outbuildings
12. Iron umbrella and walling
13. Small buildings/enclosures.
14. Terrace walls in former orchard
15. Greenhouse and frames
16. Stream down the west side of the garden
17. Railway
18. Garden boundary wall on the W, beyond the stream
19. Miner's Path - straight, wide path along the top of the garden
20. Wall An L-shaped stretch of walling N of path 19 near its E end
21. Garden area to S of house and lawn to E
22. Path system and terracing
23. Woodland/shrubbery area
24. Path
25. Pond
26. Area at SW of garden
27. Entrances
28. Area north of path 19
29. Pond (?)

## **PHASES**

An attempt has been made to phase the different elements of the gardens, based principally on the two Ordnance Survey maps (1889 and 1913). Further relationships may be established during work on creating the park, but as far as current knowledge permits the features can be phased thus -

### **Features pre 1889**

1 2 3 6 (part) 10 11 (part) 13 (1<sup>st</sup> phase) 16 18 19 20 20a 21 22a (not hedge) 22b 22c  
22d (not steps) 22e 22f (not steps) 22g (and higher, parallel, path) 22h 22i 23 24 25

### **Features post 1889 and pre 1913**

3a 5 8 13 (2<sup>nd</sup> phase) 14 14b 17 22a (hedge) steps in 22d and 22f 26

### **Features post 1913**

4 6 (part) 9 (probably) 11 (part) 12 15 (probably) 29 modifications to 2 and 25

### **Undated features**

7 14a 28

## APPENDIX III

Example of site recording form

Project	Area	Feature no.
Type/Interpretation		
Level of certainty	<i>poss / probable / definite</i>	Date / Period
		Shown on map <i>1889 / 1913 / na</i>
Material <i>stone / brick / concrete / glass / iron / natural / other</i>		
Description		
Sketch / cont. over		
Further evaluation <i>Y / N</i> Type		
Condition	<i>good / fair / poor / destroyed</i>	Site category <i>A / B / C / D / E / F / L</i>
Management		
Interpretation/signage		
Name	Date	

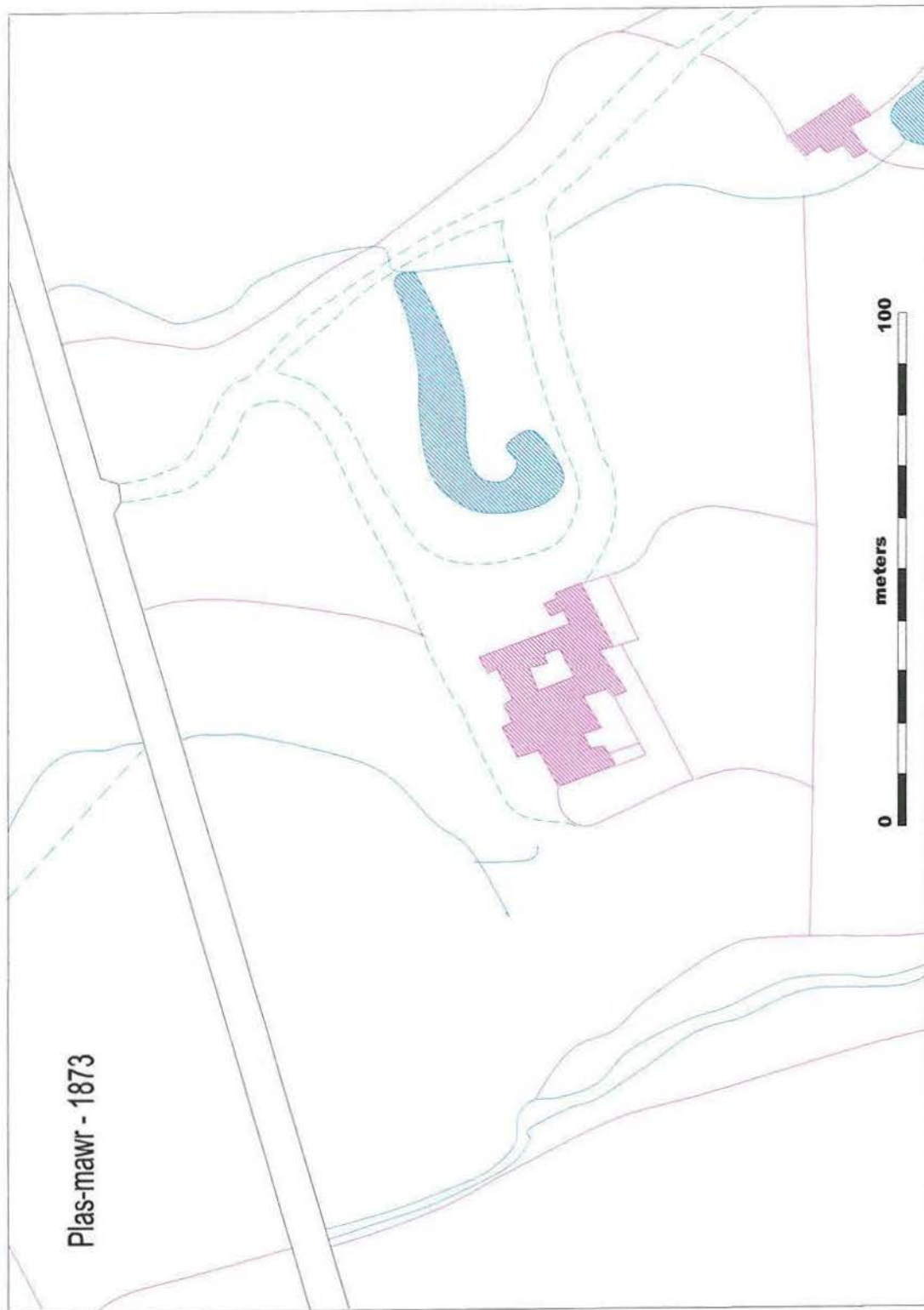
## APPENDIX IV

Digitised archive maps showing principal features -

1873 Estate survey

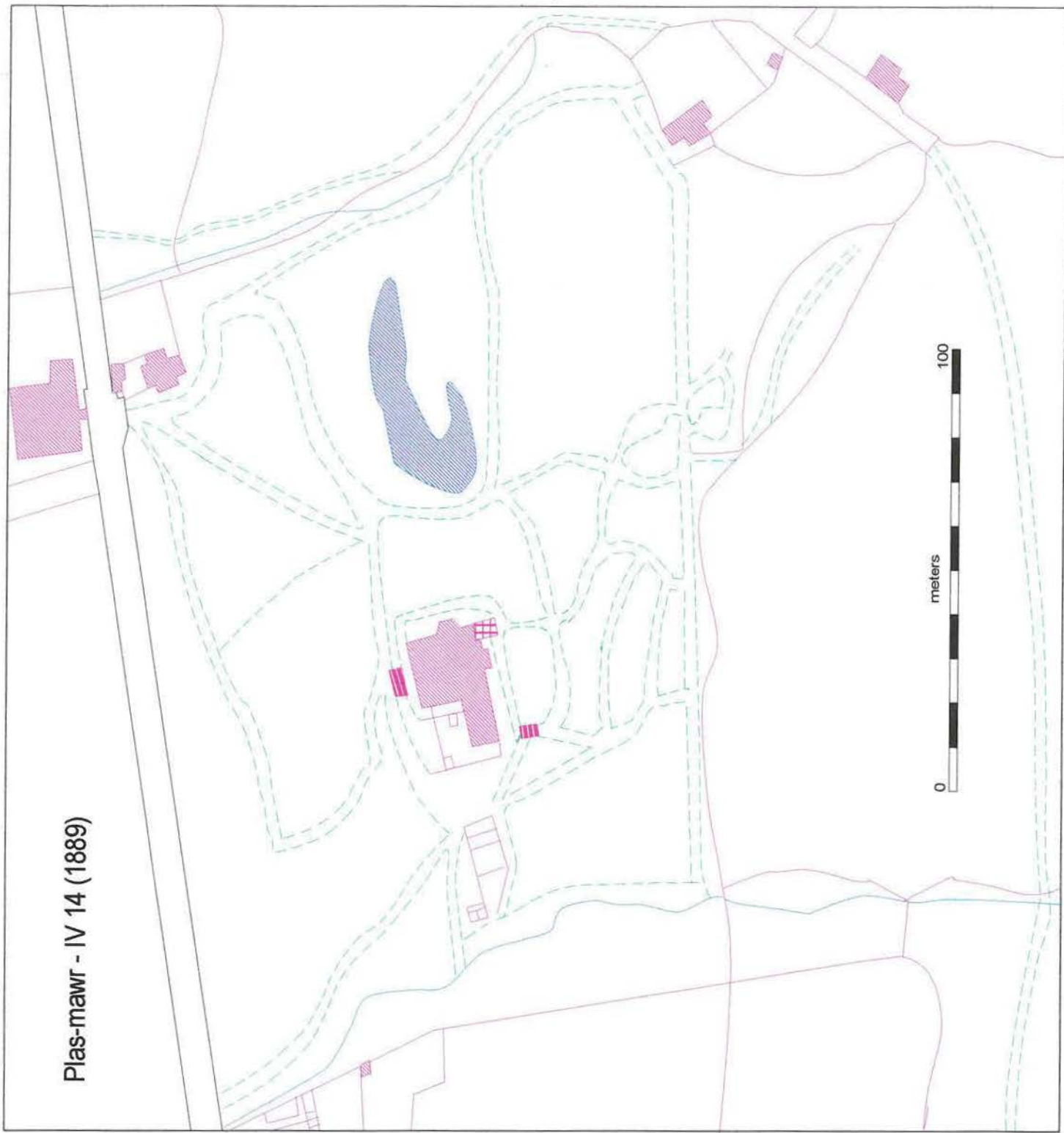
1889 Ordnance Survey map

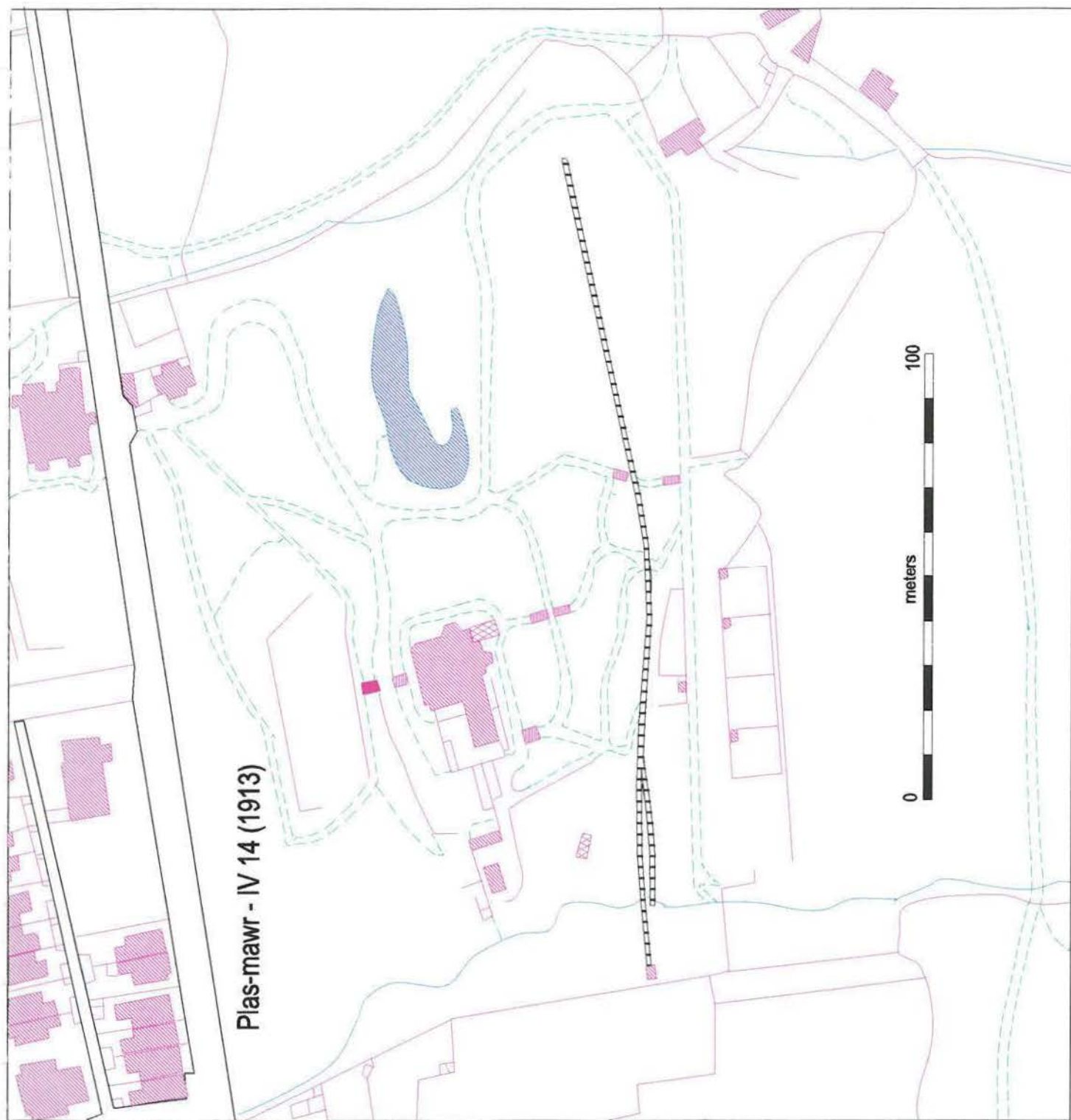
1913 Ordnance Survey map





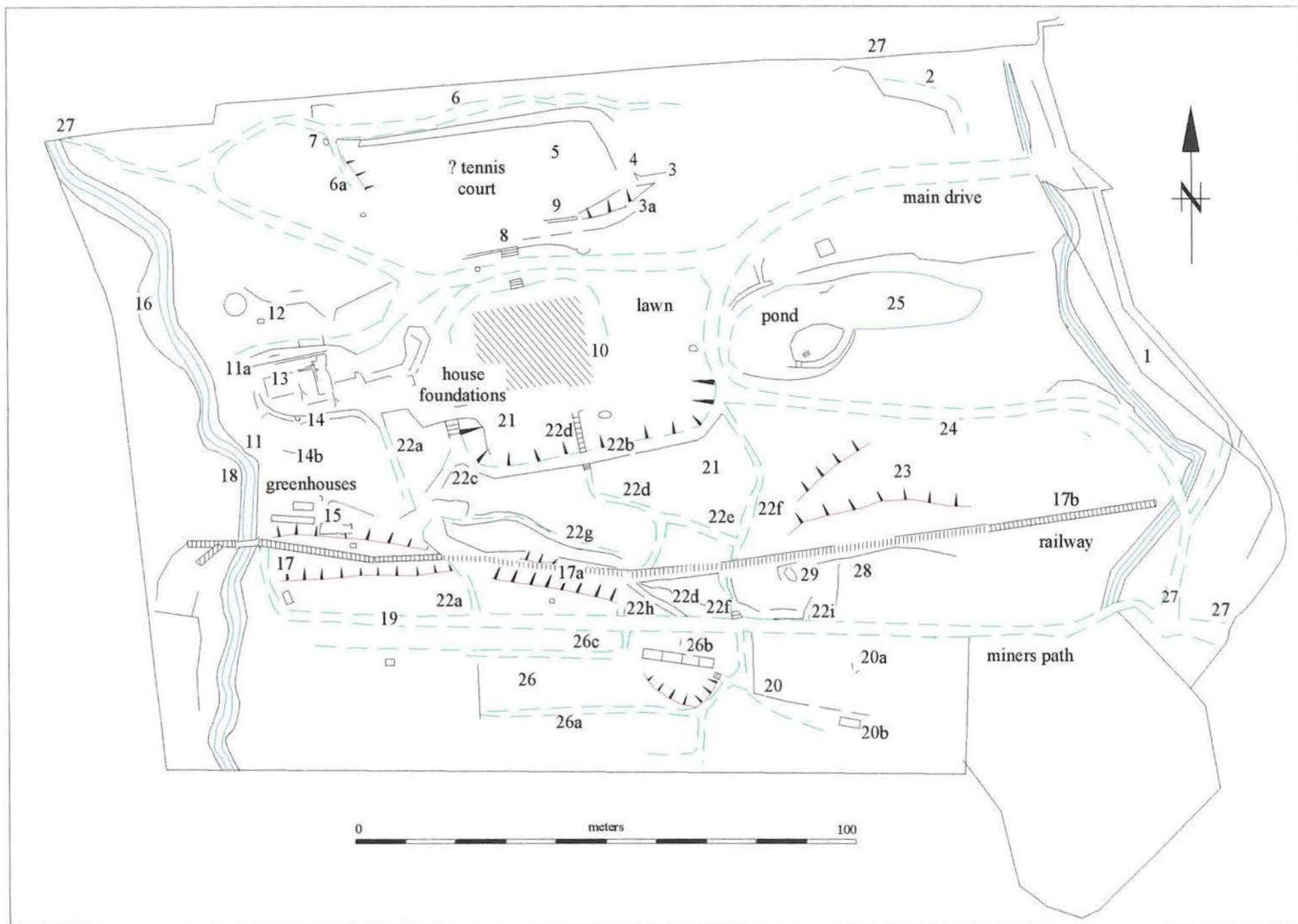
Plas-mawr - IV 14 (1889)





## APPENDIX V

Plan 272/01 showing location of all features (numbered and cross-referenced to gazetteer)



*Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd*  
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