# WALLED GARDEN, HENLLYS, BEAUMARIS

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING AND EVALUATION

### G1776

Report number : 485

Prepared for

John Moore and Partners

MAY 2003

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

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By

**David Hopewell** 

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#### **1. PROJECT BACKGROUND**

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust have been asked by John Moore and Partners to carry out an programme of archaeological recording and evaluation of the walled garden at Henllys, Beaumaris in advance of development of the area. The works include a detailed photographic record of the garden wall, geophysical survey and trial trenching.

The area involved comprises the former walled garden measuring some 220 square metres in extent.

The project design, based upon the requirements of a brief from Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Services and conforming to the Institute of Field Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for Field Evaluation, is included as Appendix 1.

#### 2. KNOWN ARCHAEOLOGY

Previous work has shown that Henllys Hall is located on or close to the site of a medieval *llys* (court) (Johnstone N, 2000, Llys and Maerdref: The Royal Courts of the Princes of Gwynedd). Excavations carried out at a comparable site at Rhosyr, Newborough, revealed an enclosure some 60m by 45m containing a large hall and ancillary structures. In later medieval time Henllys was the home of the Hampton family, who retained the house and estate into the nineteenth century. The garden was created at least by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and would have formed an integral part of the house and gardens created by John Hampton Lewis in 1852-3. The anticipated archaeological remains will comprise those elements that formed the walled garden during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and earlier remains which may relate to the use of the site as a Llys in the medieval period.

#### 3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AIMS

Field Evaluation is defined as "a limited programme of non-intrusive and/or intrusive fieldwork which determines the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater. If such archaeological remains are present field evaluation defines their character, extent, quality and preservation, and enables an assessment of their worth in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate" (IFA Standard and Guidance 1994 revised 1999).

The aims of the evaluation are:

- to identify and record the cultural heritage of the area;
- to assess the importance of what has been identified;
- to recommend ways in which impact upon the cultural heritage can be avoided or minimised.

#### 4. METHODOLOGY

The aims of this phase of the work are to build upon the findings of the earlier archaeological assessments at Henllys by using field evaluation techniques to determine the presence or absence of archaeological remains and to assess their extent and significance within the area of the walled garden. An additional requirement involving the production of a photographic record of the inner face of the garden wall was also specified in the brief.

Two principal techniques were used to undertake the Field Evaluation. The first, non-intrusive, phase consisted of a fluxgate gradiometer survey. This is the preferred method for area survey (*Geophysical Survey in archaeological field evaluation*, English Heritage, 1995), and previous experience of its use within the area, shows the technique to be effective within the geological and soil conditions which exist. This was followed by a programme of trial excavation, details of which are given below.

#### 4.1 Photographic recording

The photographic survey was carried out using a levelled 35mm Pentax K1000 camera with a 28mm Pentax shift lens, thus allowing correction of parallax errors due to sloping ground. The photographs were taken as an overlapping series, with scales at 10m intervals, from a standard distance of 15m with the film plane parallel to the wall. Additional details of interest were recorded from an appropriate distance. Selected photographs are included in this report and the rest are retained in the site archive (see below) in both standard and digital formats.

#### 4.2 Magnetometer survey

This survey was carried out using a Geoscan Research FM36 Fluxgate Gradiometer. A gradiometer survey detects variations in the earth's magnetic field caused by the presence of iron in the soil. This is usually in the form of weakly magnetised iron oxides which tend to be concentrated in the topsoil. Features cut into the subsoil and back-filled or silted with topsoil contain greater amounts of iron and can therefore be detected with a gradiometer. Strong readings can be produced by the presence of iron objects, and also burnt objects such as hearths or kilns. The survey was carried out in contiguous areas of 20m by 20m, and readings were taken every 0.5m along parallel traverses at a 1m spacing, giving 800 readings per grid. The data is presented as a Grey-scale plot, and location of each of the grids will be shown on a map at a scale not less than 1:2500.

#### 4.3 Trial excavation

The trial trenches were machine dug using a Hitachi/Fiat tracked excavator with a toothless ditching bucket. The topsoil was removed and the trenches were hand cleaned. Further excavation was carried out both by hand and using the machine. All features encountered were recorded in plan, and sectioned but not excavated fully unless further evaluation was thought necessary. The brief indicated two 10m long and 2 m wide trenches set within the foundations of the proposed buildings. The excavated trenches were actually 1.8m wide thus allowing the tracked excavator to straddle the trenches in order to gain access to the deeper deposits. An additional 10 x 1.8m trench was excavated in order to investigate a feature at the north of the site.

Site plans were at a scale of 1:20, and section drawings at a scale of 1:10. A photographic record was made of the excavations and all photographs are retained in the site archive at Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, Craig Beuno, Garth Road Bangor LL57 3TW.

#### 5. RESULTS

#### 5.1 Documentary and cartographic evidence

The garden is first recorded on a map of the Henllys Demesne of 1830 (UWB Henllys MS 1191). The garden is subrectangular in plan with curving north and east walls (Fig. 1). A path is shown running around the inside of the wall. The garden is bisected in an east/west direction by another path and two additional paths run north and south from this. A small building is shown abutting the outside of the eastern end of the southern wall. The garden is next portrayed in detail on the 1889 first edition 1:2500 OS map (Fig 2). A new building is shown on the outside of the north-eastern apex of the wall along with what appears to be a glasshouse in a corresponding position on the inside of the wall but offset slightly to the east. The paths have been modified and now run to three entrances; one in the southern corner, one in the western corner and one in the north east wall, to the west of the glasshouse and running into the building on the outside of the wall. Two east/west paths are shown along with deciduous trees. The layout is unchanged on the 1900 1:2500 map although the trees are not shown. The 1919 map shows no details of the interior apart from the glasshouse outline. Discussion with a local gardener suggests later use as a vegetable garden and the presence of peach houses on the north-western wall.

#### 5.2 Description of the standing remains (Fig. 3)

The garden retains its subrectangular plan, with dimensions of 68m x 54m, as shown on the 1830 map. The wall is of lime mortared, local, undressed stone and stands to a height of around 3.5m. The top of the wall is built to an inverted V-shape in section. The building shown at the south of the garden on the

1830 map is still standing (Plate 1). The building incorporates the garden wall and may be contemporary with it. A change in the masonry style beneath the eaves suggests that the roof line has been lifted. The building is currently of two stories with a door in the west wall along with a window and door facing into the garden. A small fireplace and chimney can be seen in the eastern gable.

The two buildings at the north of the garden are now lost. An increase in the height of the wall presumably marks the position of the building to the outside and brick foundations mark the site of the glass house. The site of the peach houses is marked by mortar marks on the west wall and the remains of wire espaliers.

All three entrances shown on the 1889 map are still visible. The two southern entrances have been widened in recent years by demolition of lengths of the wall (Plate 2) but enough of the masonry surrounds have survived to suggest that all three were of a similar construction. The northern entrance (Plate 3) is a 1.8m high and 0.7 wide doorway constructed from dressed sandstone. This originally appears to have held a wooden frame and door but numerous holes and minor modifications suggest that a series of different gates have subsequently been used.

A prominent straight joint can be seen in the masonry close to the north-east corner of the garden (Plate 4). The upper half of the wall shows signs of repair with patches of reused dressed sandstone and brick. The function of the straight joint is open to debate. It may be one side of an early blocked entrance, the pattern of paths on the 1830 map do not respect the current entrances and these may be later insertions suggesting remodelling in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. It could alternatively represent the inclusion of an earlier masonry feature; the stonework to the north is more massive than to the south. This change in masonry style, however, continues for some distance and is more likely to represent two phases of garden wall. The eccentric shape of the garden suggests the reuse of earlier field boundaries or a modification of a more conventionally shaped enclosure. There is a slight break of slope running across the garden from the straight joint and it is possible that this represents an earlier line of the wall or a boundary predating the garden. This hypothesis was tested using a trial trench (see below).

#### 5.3 Geophysical survey (Fig 4)

The entire interior of the garden was surveyed. A series of strong anomalies (1 and 2) masked the survey results around most of the outside edge of the survey. These are not consistent with buried ferrous pipes etc., which tend to produce a strong alternating positive/negative signature. The anomalies are most likely to have been produced by ferrous stone in the walls. Elsewhere patches of increased noise (random signals) along the western wall (3) could best be interpreted as demolition debris from the peach houses. A line of noise (4) across the north of the garden could also be demolition debris but roughly corresponds to the break of slope in this area. High readings in the south-west corner (5) appear to be of geological origin. The central part of the garden produced fairly even data. A series of weak, very diffuse anomalies, one running north to south (6) and three running east to west (7-9) are difficult to interpret but could be deeply buried drains or horticultural features.

#### 5.4 Trial trenches

Three trenches were excavated, two within the proposed foundations of the new buildings and one to investigate the break of slope at the north of the garden.

#### Trench 1

Dark brownish grey topsoil (01) containing late 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery, fragments of coal and pieces of burnt limestone was excavated to a depth of 0.3 m revealing featureless mid-brown sandy loam (02) also containing burnt limestone. One large piece of 19<sup>th</sup> century Buckley ware was recovered from this context. This context was carefully removed by machine revealing another mid brown loam (04) containing no inclusions and little sand at a depth of 0.7m. The two contexts were separated at the south of the trench by a thin layer of loose gravel (03) which petered out 2.2m along the trench. Context 04 was again very uniform and featureless. This was excavated down to a diffuse interface with undisturbed natural reddish-brown, fine, silty sand at a depth of 1.25m.

The presence of burnt limestone in contexts 01 and 02 suggest that they are both garden or agricultural soils, the limestone presumably being the incompletely burnt parts of agricultural lime. Nineteenth century pottery demonstrates that both date from or were cultivated in this period. The absence of 19th century debris in context 04 could indicate that it is a buried soil that predates the garden. Some of the garden soil could be derived from 19<sup>th</sup> century landscaping thus accounting for the unusual depth of loamy soil in this location.

#### Trench 2 (Figs 5 and 6)

Topsoil (05) was removed to a depth of 0.2 to 0.3m revealing a brown loam (06) similar to that seen in trench 1 (02). This was again fairly uniform and featureless. This context however became more mixed with depth, containing patches of dark loam that eventually resolved into linear features (context group 07) at a depth of 0.55m (Fig. 6). These were found to be a series of round bottomed linear trenches filled with humic soil that was very similar to the topsoil. They were overlapping in places and the cuts could not be traced through upper part of brown loam 06. It was noted that 06 was much more mixed above the trenches than elsewhere. The bases of the features were cut through fairly clean brown loam (08). The features terminated in a straight line close to the south-east side of the trench. This series of parallel trenches are probably best interpreted as being the base of a bed in a vegetable garden. Their depth suggests a root crop such as potatoes was grown here. Later cultivation presumably disturbed the upper part of the trenches.

#### Trench 3 (Figs 7and 8)

This trench was excavated in order to investigate a linear break of slope in the northern part of the garden. The topsoil was removed down to a depth of 0.4m revealing a brown loamy soil (10), similar to contexts 02 and 06 in trenches 1 and 2. A series of features could be identified, cut into this deposit. Feature 11 was a 0.2m wide slightly curving linear slot. This had a flat bottomed U-shaped profile, was 0.1 m deep and was filled with dark humic soil. Running parallel to and to the west of feature 11 was a further linear cut (12). The full width of this could not be seen as it extended beyond the edge of the trench. This was also flat bottomed and 0.1m deep and was filled with dark humic soil. A further feature (13) running parallel to, and to the east of feature 11 was found to be a very shallow spread of humic soil, perhaps representing the truncated base of another linear feature. No dating evidence was recovered from these features but all were cut through context 10 which contained burnt limestone, presumably indicating 19<sup>th</sup> century soil improvement. These features can thus be assumed to be 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> century garden features. All three features terminated about 2.5m from the northern end of the trench at a point level with the break of slope.

Two further features could be seen at this level, both extending under the northern end of the trench. Feature 14 was an irregular deposit of coal ashes in dark humic soil and feature 15 was a 0.2 m deep pit filled with loosely packed, broken cow and pig bones. Both features were cut into context 10 and can thus be interpreted as  $19^{\text{th}}/20^{\text{th}}$  century rubbish pits.

Two ceramic land drains were identified at a depth of 1m, one running along the western edge of the trench and one 2m from the north. The cuts for these were not visible, presumably because the trenches were immediately backfilled with the excavated material.

The trench was excavated down to the level of the subsoil at 1.1m below ground level. The limestone inclusions in the brown loam could not be traced below 0.75m suggesting a similar soil profile to the other trenches with a buried soil (16) overlying the subsoil. Three small patches of charcoal flecks (17, 18 and 19) amongst a few small stones was identified at the interface between context 16 and the subsoil. This area was carefully excavated but no artefacts or further features could be identified. The origin of the charcoal could not be determined and there was no evidence for *in situ* burning. The charcoal could have come from a nearby hearth but could equally be natural in origin.

One of the main functions of this trench was to investigate a linear break of slope running across the garden. It had been hypothesised that this feature represented the line of at an earlier phase of the garden wall or possibly the line of a field boundary pre-dating the garden. No evidence was found to support this hypothesis and the depth of agricultural/horticultural soil makes it unlikely that an earlier boundary would survive as a surface feature. The break of slope did however correspond to the end of

a series of horticultural trenches and the beginning of deposits of domestic rubbish, perhaps indicating that it marked an internal division in the use of the garden.

#### 6. CONCLUSIONS

The three trenches produced evidence for horticultural use of the walled garden. The surviving features in the upper contexts produced evidence for use as a vegetable garden in the late 19<sup>th</sup> early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Over 1m of loamy soil was identified in all three trenches possibly representing two phases of deposition. The upper 0.7m or so contained lime and occasional 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery and the lower part yielded no finds apart from some charcoal of uncertain origin in trench 3. A layer of gravel between the two contexts in trench one suggests that the difference between the two contexts may not simply be the effects of horticulture in the upper part of an unusual depth of humic soil. Trench one revealed two clearly defined contexts suggesting that there has been a substantial amount of soil brought into this area, presumably during landscaping before or at the time of the construction of the garden. It should be noted that dating evidence, even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century contexts was sparse and wider excavation would be needed to confirm the presence of landscaping at this time.

The excavations uncovered no evidence for earlier use relating to the medieval activity in the area. All residual finds in the agricultural soil, with the exception of a single flint core, related to 19<sup>th</sup> century and later activity.

#### 7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MITIGATORY MEASURES

All archaeological features with the exception of the garden wall itself and the charcoal in trench 3 should be classified as category D – *Minor and damaged sites*. The charcoal deposit is of unknown significance and thus should be assigned to category E – *Sites needing further investigation*. In this case, it appears that there will be little disturbance within the garden area at this depth. The lack of any higher category sites or other residual material of interest suggests that further evaluation would be of little value. A watching brief is, however, recommended on any excavations, such as building foundations that extend to the depth of the subsoil (about 1.0m).



Plate 1 The building at the south of the garden



Plate 2 Detail of the south-eastern entrance



Plate 3 The northern entrance



Plate 4 The straight joint in the eastern wall



Fig. 1 Excerpt from the map of Henllys Demesne in the parish of Llan-faes (UWB Henllys MS 1191) (1830)

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Fig. 2 Excerpt from the OS first edition 1:2500 map ,1889



Fig. 3 Henllys Walled Garden showing trench locations









Fig. 6 Trench 2, ESE facing section



Fig. 8 Trench 3, plan of charcoal feature





GWYNEDD ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

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