

Conservation Area Appraisal

Mynydd Llandygai, Gwynedd



Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust



The two streets and plots are clearly visible in this aerial view, looking NW

Conservation Area Appraisal

Mynydd Llandygai, Gwynedd

Project No G2675

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I. Introduction

1.1 General Introduction

This report contains the results of an appraisal of Mynydd Llandygai Conservation Area which lies west of Bethesda. It has been undertaken by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT) on behalf of Cyngor Gwynedd Council.

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty upon all local planning authorities to determine areas which it is desirable to preserve and enhance to designate them as conservation areas. The Act also states that local authorities should review their past activities in this area and to add more conservation where

appropriate.

The appraisal evaluates the existing conservation area, providing an overview of its history, architecture and condition and suggests appropriate recommendations.

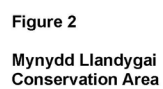
1.2 Acknowledgements

Eryl Williams and Hannah Joyce, Cyngor Gwynedd, instigated the project, and generously provided help and information to aid its progress. Dr John Llywellyn Williams kindly gave help and advice during the course of the project.

01

Garden plots behind Tan y Bwlch separated by slate fences (crawiau). Looking north-west.





2. Background history

Until the advent of large-scale slate quarrying in the area the mountain was inhospitable moorland with evidence of prehistoric hut groups, enclosures and cairns in the lower cultivated land.

During the Napoleonic war the land was partially enclosed for the quarrymen to grow potatoes, whilst much of the surrounding moorland was a turbary.

The settlement was begun in the 1840's to provide homes for quarry workers working at the nearby Penrhyn Quarry. Plots were leased to workers on the understanding that they built the houses to the Penrhyn Estate approved design and at the end of the 30 year lease the house and land would transfer back to the landowner unless an alternative agreement was reached.

It can be regarded as an early form of model village, created in the 1840's - 1860's by the Penrhyn Estate and drawing on an older model of houses with substantial allotments. An important predecessor was the row at Tai'r Mynydd, designed by Benjamin Wyatt and built by Richard Pennant in 1798 and destroyed recently.

Although the estate was building quarryman's houses from the 1790's onwards, construction at Mynydd Llandygai appears to have started when Llwybr Main was laid out in 1843, and later Tan y Bwlch in 1862. The settlement forms an interesting contrast with the estate model village being built at the same time at Llandygai, adjacent to Penrhyn Castle, and created for estate workers. Llandygai is a good example of an estate village built in picturesque style, and designed to impress the visitor. Mynydd Llandygai is a model village, designed in vernacular style, and intended to provide quarrymen with land for cultivation and stock rearing.

3. The Character of Settlement

3.1 Location

The village of Mynydd Llandygai lies approximately 2.5 Km west of Bethesda, on an exposed area of open moorland at a height of just under 300m, overlooking Penrhyn Quarry. It is exposed to winds from all directions, mitigated slightly by the shelterbelt of trees to the south west. To the south lies the moorland of Gwaun Gynfi and Parc Drysgol, cut by the Marchlyn and Galedffrwd rivers, whilst to the west is the rounded hill of Moe-lyci. East is the vast quarrying landscape of Penrhyn slate quarry.

3.2 Character

The settlement is roughly rectangular, consisting of two parallel streets - Llwybr Main to the north and Tan y Bwlch to the south. They are joined at the north west end by the road between Tregarth and Deiniolen and at the south east end by Hermon Road (Hermione Road on the earlier maps) which was originally not settled but now contains the church and later development. The Hermon Road settlement is not included in the Conservation Area. Tan y Bwlch continues beyond the junction with Hermon Road and the four pairs of cottages on this stretch are included within the Conservation Area.

The two main streets, Tan y Bwlch and Llwybr Main, descend downhill from the north west to south east with a grid of long thin allotments running between the streets. Cottages on Tan y Bwlch have an allotment across the road, with a smaller area behind, and surrounding the cottages. Those on Llwybr Main cottages have a single longer plot, originally divided into a long and short portion by a continuous slate fence (*crawiau*) and a ditch. The plots are divided from each other lengthways, at the S. E. by slate fences (and to the N.W. by stone walls). Stone outbuildings were built behind the cottages, visible between the pairs. *Images 1, 2.*

03

Aerial View of the village showing the moorland around, and the regular layout of the settlement.



Mynydd Llandygai was designed as a dispersed village with no social focus and when originally constructed, had no services, shop, church, hall, or public house.

The later development, cut into the first four allotments along Hermon Road, contains both church and chapel, and two other chapels lie to the north-west and south-east of the settlement. A school was also built on Hermon Road.

An acre of land was provided for each property, with the long allotment suitable for keeping a cow and the smaller plot around the house, for vegetables. Substantial outbuildings were also built to the rear and good examples of these can still be seen, the best being shared between Nos 32 and 33. *Images 05, 06.*

An outside toilet would also have been a feature of each cottage but the only remaining good example noted is behind No 7 Lwybr Main.

The cottages were built to the estate design and the best examples are listed. There are small differences in symmetry and in the positioning of the outbuildings. The cottages are pairs of single storey two-room cottages, double fronted, with an internal crog loft. There were chimneys at each gable end, and a shared central chimney. They followed the design originally developed by Benjamin Wyatt, Agent to the estate, who used the regional crogloft cottage as the basis for new building.



04
Looking south-east
towards Penrhyn
Quarry from Tan y
Bwlch.

05
Plots are also
divided by stone
walls.

06
No. 7 Llwybr Main
outbuildings

23403 No. 24 Tan y Bwlch
23445 Outbuildings to No. 24 Tan y Bwlch
82290 No. 25 Tan y Bwlch
23443 Boundaries to Nos 24 and 25

23409 No. 7 Llwybr Main
23410 No. 8 Llwybr Main
23442 Privy to No. 7

23407 No. 23 Llwybr Main
23408 No. 24 Llwybr Main
23440 Privies to Nos 23 and 24
23441 Boundary to Nos 23 and 24

3.3 Designations

The Conservation Area lies within the wider World Heritage Site, and also within the designated Historic Landscape of Arfon. The following fourteen cottages, outhouses and boundaries are listed, all at Grade II.

23405 No. 3 Tan y Bwlch
23406 No. 4 Tan y Bwlch
23446 Boundaries to No's 3 and 4



7
No's. 3 and 4 Tan y
Bwlch

8
No's 5 and 6 Tan y
Bwlch

9
Original gate to No.
10, Tan y Bwlch

4.0 Description of Conservation Area

The village is no longer home to quarry workers and every cottage has been developed in some way, from a minor change in windows through to complete courtyards of extensions. Those cottages designated as Listed Buildings were altered prior to listing and therefore were chosen as the best available examples rather than being in original condition. This means that only one cottage in a pair is in listable condition, but the designation applies to the whole block. Although many cottages were already significantly altered at the time of designation, the changes since then have been much greater.

Starting from the top of Tan y Bwlch, No 1 has an altered access, with the garden wall set back to provide off street parking. This is the first view of the street and therefore unfortunate. No 2 has a wide tarmac area between it and No3 with partial demolition of the outbuilding.

Nos. 3 and 4 are listed but with modern changes. No. 4 has an original slate porch but new white UPVC windows to an original shape, two skylights and ribbon pointing. No 3 has the original door and window plaster moulding but lacks a chimney. It appears to have a complete separate house directly behind. *Image 7.*



The Listed Building description describes them as a 'pair of quarryman's cottages, each of single-storey 2-room plan with loft, aligned north-west to south-east. Roughly coursed and dressed rubblestone blocks, rendered and painted to gable ends, slate

roof. Each cottage has 3-light windows with slate cills on either side of a slightly offset entrance, integral end stacks and a shared ridge stack at the centre between the cottages. There are windows in the gable ends lighting lofts and catslide lean-to's at the rear. C20 windows flank a C20 panelled door with integral "fanlight"; an integral end stack has been removed. There is a large C20 extension to rear'. The boundaries are in good condition, and are also listed grade 2.

Nos. 5 and 6 are severely over-extended, both with large full height wings at the rear and with the forecourt of No 6 altered to form a more imposing entrance leading to large outbuildings that extend to the back of the plot, beyond the line of development. A large double garage has recently been con-



structed. The extension is very prominent with an upright pitch to the roof and three large Velux windows. *Image 8*

A good original outbuilding lies to the side



of No 9. An original slate fence divides the two front gardens, and both have original wrought iron gates. *Image 9.*

No 14 has been heavily extended and has a large double garage set in a substantial area of tarmac. Pavers mark the area between the road and the gateposts, an unnecessary



change in materials but most unfortunately, across the road, a rectangular area of parking has been tarmacked and edged. *Image 7.*

The dividing wall between allotments of Nos. 13 and 14 has been replaced with a wire fence for some of its length. The roadside wall has been lowered in part and topped with post and rail fencing. The rest of the wall has been removed altogether. This parking area is large enough for at least 8 vehicles and should be removed if at all possible, as it alters the character of the road and sets an extremely bad example.

The opportunism associated with car parking on the allotments is illustrated by the smaller but still significant encroachments on surrounding properties including Nos. 13, 15, 17 18 and 20.

Opposite No 18 is a compacted rectangle of parking behind a wall, reached through a farm gate. This area also acts as a stable yard and has a pitched roof stable built in the corner. The yard is enclosed with post and rail fencing.

Nos 19 and 20 have only a central chimney remaining. The outbuilding between Nos 20 and 21 is in good repair but with 3 large roof lights added. A small less official car parking place is present on the opposite side of the road from No 20 but it has involved the removal of a large stretch of wall.

Nos 21 and 22 have no chimneys but 21 has an original entrance. However, opposite these a pile of rubble has replaced the allotment wall.

No 24 has a levelled and paved parking area opposite, for at least 3 vehicles. The paving is also used to the side of the cottage, around a garage and with access to buildings behind.

The listed building description for Nos. 24 and 25 Tan y Bwlch, shown as one each in adjoining pairs on the Cadw map, are , a single pair, there is also a possibility that both pairs are listed. The description as given for No. 24 is as 'Pair of quarryman's cottages, each of single-storey 2-room plan with loft, aligned north-west to south-east. Roughly coursed and dressed rubblestone blocks, rendered and painted to gable ends, slate roof. Each cottage has 3-light windows with slate cills on either side of slightly offset entrance, integral end stacks and shared ridge stack to centre between cottages. Windows to gable ends lighting lofts and catslide lean-tos at rear. 3-light windows flanking C20 half-glazed door.' Only the cottage on the right (from front) has 3-light windows. The left end chimney is missing. It was not possible to establish the detailed condition of the listed outbuildings, but those visible appeared to be in a poor state of repair.

No 25 has an unaltered small walled driveway to the back, with an iron gate. This acts as access to the front door and there is no longer a front gateway, just a path. The land to the side has been cleared to be a walled area of rough hard standing in front of the outbuildings.

No 26 has a new dark wood glazed porch with pitched roof, replacing the previous flat roofed example. The latest windows are dark wood top opening casements, and since the CgMs assessment the stonework has been exposed. This has resulted in a more harmonious frontage although the lack of the third chimney on No 26 is still jarring.

Two new timber buildings have been constructed between No. 26 and No 27, these are side on to the road and parallel with each other. The dividing wall has been replaced by a picket fence, and a conifer hedge masks this and a flat roofed rectan-



10

Large area of tarmac laid opposite No. 14 Tan y Bwlch

11

Area opposite Nos 26 and 27.

gular building from the road. This would appear to be a holiday development. Nos 27 and 28 appear relatively well presented but with garden gateways missing from the roadside. This pair are situated on the dead-end road that extends beyond the junction with Hermon Road.

Opposite the wall has been rebuilt to form an interned gateway with double gates. A shed has been built and the area occupied for storage, parking etc. The boundary with Hermon road consists of dilapidated wooden fencing giving way to a wire fence. *Image 11*

Nos. 28 and 29 have been modernized with features in common, projecting square bay windows and only the central chimney retained. A good outbuilding remains to the side of No 29. The plots opposite have been turned into gardens and it is possible that this pair has been converted into one house.

A footpath runs between No 30 and No 31, vehicle width and leading straight to the far side of the shelter belt and beyond. It is bounded by a mixture of stone walls and slate fences for the first stretch, but the slate is very unstable. Wire fences divide the path from the shelterbelt, which is pasture at this point. At this point it contains no trees so the views from the path are good. An interesting collection of foundations directly to the south west of the point where the track meets the outer boundary of the shelterbelt might indicate an earlier settlement.

Nos. 31 and 32 are unremarkable but have also been reduced to a central chimney but the best-preserved outbuilding lies between No 32 and No 33. Across the road from No 32 is a hedged enclosure with extended gateway for caravan and cars. This is neat and unobtrusive but still an encroachment into the allotments.

The last pair of cottages Nos. 33 and 34 have side entrances to the front gardens and 34 has the more appropriate three glazed element windows.

The conservation area ends with the plot of No 34 but the lane continues to serve a two-storey cottage.

The allotment plots belonging to cottages No 26 to No 34 have a more irregular north eastern boundary, partially due to encroaching gardens from the later Hermon Road

settlement.

The conservation area boundary curves behind the new settlement of Hermon Road, excluding the newer houses and their gardens. It re-joins Hermon Road just before the junction with Lwybr Main.

Thirteen pairs of cottages line the south western side of Lwybr Main with allotments behind, subdivided into the vegetable growing and pasture sections. These extend to the slate fence boundary with the Tan y



Bwlch plots.

No 26 has lost its allotment to later development. Its pair retains the plot with its slate fencing (crawiau) dividing the two. *Image 12*

Nos. 23 and 24 have been listed and No 24 has original 4 pane windows a stone- built porch and both chimneys. Recently a concrete ramp has been laid from the road leading to a compacted driveway. No 23 was altered before listing.

No 22 has a new back wing with the ridge higher than the front elevation and very heavy new ribbon pointing. The roofline is affected in No 21, a large rear dormer having been constructed by increasing the ridge height. The front elevation has been very badly treated by the removal of the door and the window openings enlarged and misplaced.

Nos. 19 and 20 have front stone and pitched roof front extensions, no 20 in the form of an extended bay but No 19 has lengthened the front of the cottage by several metres with the forward extension containing French doors.

Nos. 17 and 18 face the small farmstead of Tyddyn Canol. A large back wing has been

constructed behind No 18 and the garden wall of No 17 has a concrete moulded capping.

Nos. 15 and 16 have changes to the front wall, No 16 has been rebuilt slightly taller and with a side entrance. No 15 has extremely unsuitable columns and concrete balls set on a flat-topped rendered wall. The front door has been replaced by a window and the roof raised to accommodate a rear extension.



Nos 13 and 14 are unremarkable except for the substitution of a window for the front door on No 13 and the historic blocking of the front gateway. No 14 has recently removed unsuitable gate piers and low railings, restoring the walls to their original height.



No 12 is possibly one of the more jarring properties on the road, having a brown wood dormer window on the front aspect and the overlarge pointing has been painted white, giving a piebald effect to the façade. The door is replaced by a window, the garden walls are topped with flat concrete. No 11 is flat rendered, the door replaced by a window and end chimney removed. *Image 13.*

No 10 is better presented, with a small porch

added to the side. However, the front has been subtly altered by removing the side wall of the front garden. No 9 has a very unfortunate high set forward facing dormer window, one enlarged front window and a side extension two thirds the length of the cottage. The end chimney is also missing. *Image 14.*

The next pair Nos 7 and 8 are listed. They have all their chimneys and No 7 has original windows, without internal glazing bars. This cottage has recently undergone modernization and the decorative plaster surround to windows and door has been removed. Both garden walls have been altered by blocking the front gateway and moving the entrance to the side. The CgMs report stated that this cottage had an original garden gate, but this is not the case now. No 8 has replaced the front door with a third picture window. Both have been extended greatly at the rear.

No 6 has not been touched recently, there are remnants of a dismantled porch and the windows still have a plaster surround. No 5 is in the process of being modernized and has new plastic door and windows. It does retain a magnificent garden gate and possibly this was the one referred to in the CgMs report, relating to No5 rather than No7.

This pair retain most important elements including three chimneys, No3 has recently had 4 pane timber windows fitted and a timber door, the yellow wall paint taken back to stone greatly improving its appearance. There is a large two stage rear extension the second part of which is rather tall.

No 2 has recently been turned into a very different property with a large two window stone extension added to the side, with a



13
No. 12 Llwybr Main
with dormer window

14
No. 9 Llwybr Main
with dormer window
and extension

15
No. 2 Llwybr Main
with new extension

16
No. 1 Llwybr Main

17
No. 1 Llwybr Main

stepped down roofline and an inappropriate eaves overhang. The large-windowed stone porch is out of scale with a cottage of this type and has helped to gentrify this property. *Image 15*

No 1 has lost its door and access is via a garden gate and path, to a side door. A back extension protrudes sideways, with a long catslide roof. This is unfortunate as it is, with an added conservatory, bigger than the cottage itself and a dominating feature from the corner with the road to Deiniolen. This visual intrusion is compounded by a side vehicular entrance with interned walls, into the allotment where a tall garage and dog enclosure have been built in a large area of hardstanding. The lack of any planting to mute the view of the additions makes it all the more obvious. *Images 16, 17*



5.0 Recommended improvements

Of all the improvements suggested in the CgMs Ltd appraisal, none have been addressed except that Gwynedd Skips appear no longer to have a presence in the settlement.

At the junction between Hermon Road and Tan y Bwlch, the insensitive road improvements remain, including angular modern wall cutting off the corner of the first allotment. The wire boundary between the allotments and the road is out of keeping. The leylandii hedging that was growing out of scale on this boundary has recently been removed and that is an improvement. If at all possible, this corner should be improved with more sensitive material. The original boundary line may have been deemed a hazard to motor vehicles, but this unsympathetic treatment is a poor example to set.

Many residents in conservation areas are entirely unaware that they live within one. There seems to have been little or no correspondence with residents since the areas were established and early correspondence has often not been passed on to later owners. This has contributed to a proliferation of unfortunate extensions, inappropriate windows and doors and lack of understanding of the essential character of the area.

Community involvement is crucial to the success of a conservation area. It might be helpful to provide owners with planning guidelines clearly stating what is acceptable within a conservation area, particularly for doors and windows. In most cases the windows were altered before the area was designated but since then many of these windows have been replaced, often several times. This is an opportunity to guide property owners to a more acceptable alternative. Most windows are now UPVC and this now seems the norm even though these windows are a glaring intrusion in an old building. The material is environmentally unfriendly and deteriorates within a few years. The most important matter to address when windows are replaced is retaining the dimensions of the original opening and the glazing pattern. Most owners are unaware of the significance of their choices, so

guidelines would be helpful here.

The extensive development of cottages, particularly at the north western end of Lwybr Main, has led to a distinctive change in character, a gentrification and suburbanization of the settlement. This should be discouraged, and particularly by not allowing infill between pairs of cottages. Development behind properties although intrusive in a different way does not destroy the rhythm of the street view.

Many front doors have been blocked up, taking access round to the side, and changing the street frontage. The removal of chimneys is particularly damaging to the rhythm of the street view as is unsuitable wall finishes. Extensions, when not visible from the street are permitted within a conservation area but many are entirely visible, changing a small two window and door frontage to complicated courtyard shapes. Once again, clear policies distributed to the occupiers may help here, otherwise they are ignored or, if planning is denied, resented.

Some effort has been made to stop the development of the allotment plots, but this has not been altogether successful as new tarmac parking spaces continue to be constructed.

A planning guide created as a supplementary planning document, discussed by the community and acted upon, has been suggested before and it needs to be implemented so that the existence of the conservation area is taken seriously. Grants to support recommendations would be a useful way of ensuring compliance and should be aimed at preserving the layout, unique features, boundary walls, slate fences and gates, outbuildings, and the integrity of the allotment plots.

In the CgMs Ltd appraisal it was suggested that the tree cover on the shelter belt behind Tan y Bwlch should be restored to its full length. Grants for the sympathetic replanting of the shelterbelt could be made available and the planting of suitable trees encouraged. It might be possible to establish a community woodland project.

The development of Hermon Road should not be allowed to encroach any further into the allotments. The existing settlement, however, is becoming more consolidated

with extensions overshadowing the cottages on Lwybr Main especially No's 25 and 26 and this should be discouraged.

The allotments are becoming overgrown with trees. This is particularly noticeable in the southern plots and is a difficult problem to deal with as tree planting is generally encouraged and trees within a conservation area protected. However here the growth of trees obscures the essential pattern of the settlement and the boundaries between plots. It is difficult to know how the plots can be used today as the obvious, carparking and gardening, are detrimental to survival of the layout. They are too small to be used as pasture except for ponies and hobby livestock. However, the character is being eroded in small ways, by boundaries not being kept up, by rubble piles and most of all by car parking. The boundaries are significant in forming the character of the settlement and it is important that these are maintained in their original form.

6.0 Recommended changes to the Conservation Areas

The shelterbelt (Parc Tan y Bwlch) behind Tan y Bwlch should be included in the Conservation Area as it is integral to the design of the settlement and still provides very necessary shelter. In the CgMs report it was stated that this might cause problems because existing low-quality conifers would then be covered by a tree preservation order. However, these would be subject to natural wastage and could be replaced by more suitable varieties when necessary. The benefit in re-establishing a complete tree coverage would far outweigh any aesthetic problems caused by poorly sited conifers. *Image 18*

7.0 Sources

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