

Conservation Area Appraisal Tanysgafell, Gwynedd



Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust



Cottages at Tanysgafell

Conservation Area Appraisal Tanysgafell, Gwynedd

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I. Introduction

1.1 General Introduction

This report contains the results of an appraisal of Tanysgafell 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 formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these conservation areas from time to time.

The appraisal evaluates the existing conservation area, provides 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.



2
Map of actual and proposed Con-
servation Area

3
Aerial view of the village and wooded cemetery (Copyright
Map data 2021
Google).

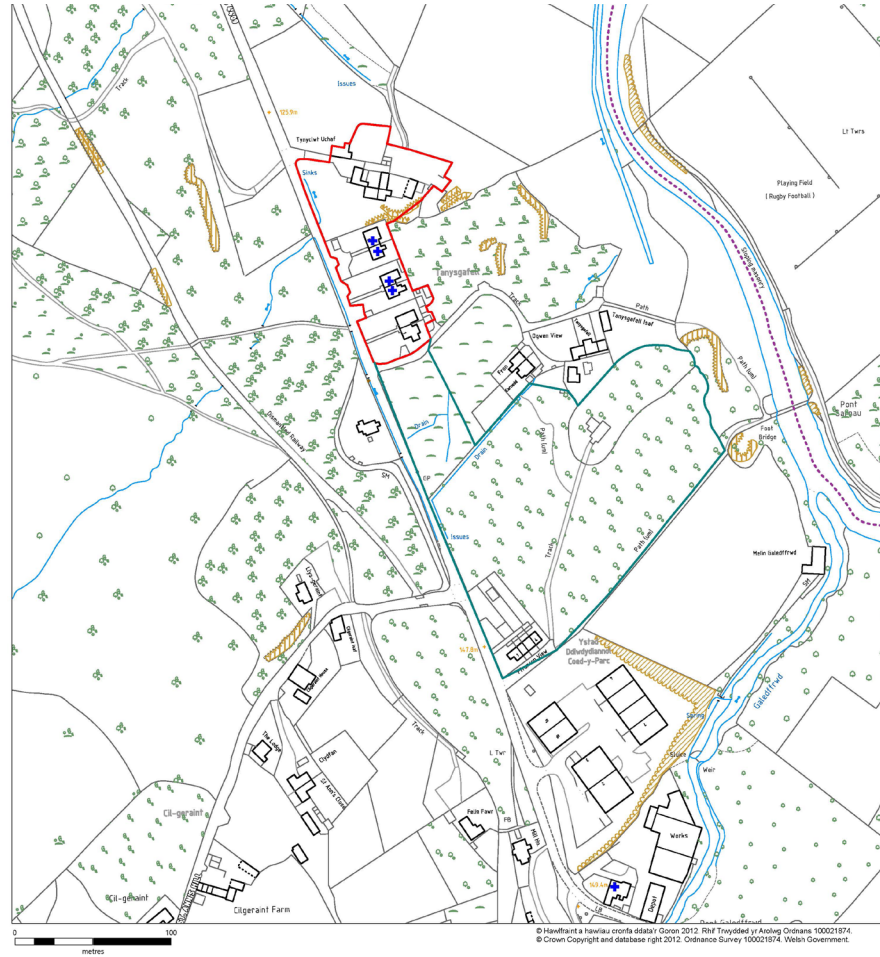


Figure 2

Actual and Proposed Conservation
Area at Tanysgafell



2. Background history

This small settlement lies west of Bethesda, on the far (west) side of Afon Ogwen. It includes the farm of Ty'n y Clwt Uchaf to the north and a former church to the south (the latter outside the conservation area).

There are no recorded prehistoric or medieval sites in the immediate vicinity of the village, though a Neolithic burial chamber lies some 800m to the west at Sling. Other prehistoric sites have been recorded in the same area, and many more prehistoric sites lie east of Bethesda.

The only buildings of any significance shown on the 1840 tithe map are on the farm of Ty'n y Clwt, the lands of which include the site of the later cottages and church which make up Tanysgafell. Further south, alongside the Afon Galedffrwd, is a complex of buildings associated with the burgeoning slate industry and the extraction of ochre at Yr Ocar. The large complex of Felin Fawr Slate Works lies less than 500m to the south.

It was the increase in slate production which led to the construction of workers cottages by Penrhyn Estate. These lie scattered in groups across the hillside. The small settlement at Tanysgafell consists of the church, a row of six pairs of cottages, and another small group of buildings between the cottages and the church. The cottages are typical of Edward Douglas-Pennant's considerable efforts to improve the Penrhyn Estate, to which he had succeeded in 1840. The church was built in 1848, and served the surrounding settlements in conjunction with that at St Ann's. The pairs of cottages north of the church are thought to be of a similar date.

3. The Character of the settlement

3.1 Location

Tanysgafell is a small isolated roadside development, adjacent to the B4409, which runs along the western edge of the Ogwen valley. The land rises steeply to the west of the road and forms a flat fertile plain to the

east.

The steep slope to the west is densely wooded. The settlement sits on the valley floor, surrounded by pasture with a sizeable wooded area approximately 100m to the south, containing the ruins of the church of Tanysgafell. On the opposite side of the road the steep slopes contain many remains of quarrying, including large revetment walls tracks and inclined planes.

3.2 Character

Within the conservation area are the earlier farm of Tynyclwt Uchaf and a small planned group of 3 pairs of cottages. The farmhouse, representing the pre-industrial agricultural era, has been rendered (pebble-dashed), but the window spacings suggest it may have 18th century origins. The farm buildings are clustered together creating a small farmyard, and are rubble built with hipped slate roofs. A hay barn stands at the rear, with a cartshed and granary in front. The three pairs of cottages represent the mid-19th century industrial period, and were built for workers at the nearby Penrhyn Slate Quarry, working either in the quarry or in the slate mills. The cottages are likely to have been built between 1840 and 1850 and as such are typical of Edward Douglas-Pennant's estate improvements. They are attractive 2-room cottages with slate-hung walls and bay windows.

The associated church was built to the south east, and was located on a cramped site, in the shadow of a large rock and now in dense woodland. The abandoned graveyard remains, but only small lengths of standing masonry mark the church. It can be conjectured from the position of the church that it was originally intended for Tanysgafell to become a larger settlement.

3.3 Designations

The two northern pairs of cottages (No's 4-6 Tanysgafell) are Listed Grade II. The Conservation Area lies within the wider World Heritage Site, and also within the designated Historic Landscape of Arfon.

4
No. 6 Tanysgafell.

5
No. 4 Tanysgafell.

6 & 7
Parking areas detract
from the view of the
cottages.

4.0 Conservation Area

The Conservation Area consists of the group of six planned cottages and the adjacent farm of Tynyclwt Uchaf.

The six cottages in three paired groups are set back from the road behind substantial front plots, with smaller plots behind. They are possibly the most elegant of all the mid-C19th Penrhyn workers cottages with the walls slate hung and delightful bay windows. The two northern pairs are listed.

They consist of a symmetrical single-storey pair of 2-room cottages constructed of slate-hung rubblestone, with a slate roof. Each cottage has a central entrance with an open hip-roofed slate porch flanked by small hip-roofed canted bays with slate cills supported on carved slate brackets, each with a 4-pane window to front. There are slate slab end chimneys and ridge stack to each cottage, all with stepped capping and slate-sheeted bases. There is a continuous single-storey lean-to on the rear. No.6 has been extended to the left with a C20 stained French window in the front wall (Cadw listed building description).

No 6, since the listed building report, has acquired a very out of character timber porch and all the windows in the row appear now to be plastic. *Image 4*



No's 3 and 4 retain the majority of original features, and are in good repair. No 4 has a particularly fine garden. *Image 5*.

The third block No's 1 and 2 are not listed, possibly due to the size of the back extensions, which completely fill the smaller back plots. No 1 has recently replaced

the brown windows with white plastic, better for colour but no glazing bars. No. 2 has lost the bay windows, replacing them with three-pane plastic ones.

The front plots have been much altered, to allow for the parking of cars, including the building of garages and sheds. Much of this development runs across the plot, where a lengthways axis would be more fitting. This has fragmented the foreground, distorting and detracting from the view of the cottages. *Images 5, 6, 7*

Beyond the cottages, to the north is the farm of Tynyclwt Uchaf, this is set at an angle to the cottages and back from the road. It was built earlier than the cottages. The farm buildings and house are well maintained and the former are largely unmodernised. *Images 8, 9*





8
The farmstead at
Tynyclwt Uchaf

9
The farmhouse at
Tynyclwt Uchaf



to conservation areas. In many cases the windows were altered before the area was designated but since then some of these windows have been replaced, occasionally several times. Future changes would provide an opportunity to guide property owners to a more acceptable alternative. Most windows are 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. It would be helpful to encourage the owners to retain the dimensions of the original opening, and also the glazing pattern. Most owners are unaware of the significance of their choices, so informing them of the significance of these would help ensure retention of the character of the settlement.

The road past Tanysgafell, the B4409, is relatively wide and straight and the traffic speeds up along this stretch. It might be beneficial to introduce a speed limit or a form of traffic calming.

5.0 Recommended improvements

Further development of the front plots should be closely monitored and homeowners should be made aware of appropriate guidance.

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, in part, led to a proliferation of unfortunate extensions, inappropriate windows and doors and lack of understanding of the essential character of the area.

It might, therefore, be helpful if community involvement is encouraged, and owners are reminded of the guidelines which apply

6.0 Recommended changes to the Conservation Area

The only desirable change to the Conservation Area would be to include the abandoned churchyard within the conservation area. It is in an area of mature woodland and does not appear to be threatened unless further development is planned at the Coed y Parc Industrial Park. However, there is still plenty of evidence amongst the trees including a complete circuit of yew trees, a substantial graveyard including graves of former inhabitants of Tanysgafell, and the ruins of the former church. The latter does not survive much above foundation level, but contains a significant amount of fallen masonry alongside. *Image 10*.

In addition to the church and cemetery, the wider area of woodland could also be included. This would require the inclusion of the row at an angle to the main road, Trem Ffrancon, a pair of two storey houses, which are slate hung on the front and roadside gable. These have an interesting range of outside toilets and sheds behind them and face the track leading past the church.

7.0 Sources

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