

## **BRYNBELLA**

**Ref No** PGW (C) 23

**OS Map** 116

**Grid Ref** SJ 080 724

**County** Denbighshire

**District** Denbighshire

**Community Council** Tremeirchion

**Designations** Listed building: Brynbella Grade II\*

**Site Evaluation** Grade II

### **Primary reasons for grading**

Late eighteenth-century small park and informal garden, with later overlays, built for Mr and Mrs Piozzi. Mrs Piozzi, previously Mrs Thrale, was a friend of Dr Johnson, who visited Brynbella. The setting of the house and views from it and the garden out over the park and Vale of Clwyd make this an exceptionally attractive site.

### **Type of Site**

Landscape park; informal garden

### **Main Phases of Construction**

Late eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

Brynbella is situated on the east side of the Vale of Clwyd, at the foot of the Clwydian Hills. It is a neo-classical Georgian mansion built by Mr and Mrs Gabriel Piozzi in 1792-5, and designed by Charles Mead. Mrs Piozzi, born Hester Lynch Salusbury, and previously Mrs Thrale, was a friend of Samuel Johnson, who was a visitor to the house. The Piozzis were also great friends of Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby, the 'ladies of Llangollen'.

The house consists of three blocks, a central block with two wings. The east-facing entrance front is two storeyed and stuccoed, with a Doric sandstone doorcase and fanlight above. The west front is ashlar with neo-classical detailing including a four-column Doric porch with balcony over. The side wings have niches and three-bay pediments. The upper storey was added in the mid nineteenth century.

The brick stable yard lies to the north of the house, and was also designed by Mead, in 1795-96. The buildings are around three sides of a central courtyard. The east-facing portion has a wooden bell tower with lion rampant weather vane. The outward face of this section has a brick pediment with stone copings and a central clock.

The area to the west of the house cannot truly be called a park, being very small and more the adaption of fields to provide a better setting for the house. It incorporates some old hedgerow trees, and a dried up stream bed. The park is divided from the

garden by a ha-ha running the length of the west side of the garden. Mixed deciduous trees are scattered throughout the area, with a few specimen oaks in the eastern part. On either side of the view from the garden front of the house are clumps of mixed deciduous trees, and in the western end of the area is a similar clump around a dew pond.

The architect of the house Charles Mead is said to have had a hand in the design of the original garden, but it is not clear if any of his work remains. The pathway system and woodland planting may have been his work. Apparently Gabrielle Piozzi vetoed a plan for an ornamental canal.

There are two drives, one to the north and one to the south both with lodges. The house is well protected from the road by a belt of trees. The drives meet at a sweep on the east side of the house. Woodland with some walks, now rather overgrown, occupies the area to the south of the house.

The west front of the house is planted with a shrub border obscuring the basement level of the house. A paved terrace leads down to a croquet lawn, which is a twentieth-century addition. The croquet lawn has shrub borders on the north and south and a path leads from here to the rest of the garden.

The main part of the garden lies to the north of the house and consists of shrubberies of twentieth-century origin plus a small area of woodland. Just outside the walled garden is a small area enclosed with yew hedges utilizing the walled garden wall as a background for a herbaceous border. Running east-west behind this enclosure a twentieth-century yew walk with herbaceous border leads back to the house via the stable yard.

The west side of the walled garden is also planted up as a herbaceous border, with views west to the park over an area of lawn with a formal pond. North of the walled garden is another area of woodland providing a buffer between the garden and boundary. This area, though rather overgrown, has a walk along its edge to a gate at the end of the ha-ha which leads into the park.

A square walled kitchen garden of nineteenth-century date lies at the north end of the garden. It is bounded by brick walls standing to their full height of c. 5 m., with overhanging coping stones. Half of the garden is taken up with a tennis court, otherwise it is maintained as traditional fruit and vegetable garden. A border dissects the garden and is planted with roses and dahlias.

## **Sources**

### **Secondary**

Howell, P., 'Country houses in the Vale of Clwyd - I', *Country Life* 22 December 1977, pp. 1906-09.

Hubbard, E., *Clwyd* (1986), pp. 450-51.