

TOWER

Ref No	PGW (C) 46
OS Map	117
Grid Ref	SJ 240 620
County	Flintshire
District	Flintshire

Community Council Nercwys

Designations Listed building: Tower Grade I

Site Evaluation Grade II

Primary reasons for grading

Park and garden with features of the seventeenth century onwards, providing attractive setting for ancient house of outstanding historic importance.

Type of Site

Small park and garden of medieval origin, with remnants of seventeenth-century features and later landscaping.

Main Phases of Construction

Late seventeenth - early eighteenth century; nineteenth - twentieth century.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Tower is a composite house of stone and brick standing on a ridge just to the south of Mold. The core of the house is a late medieval stone tower built in about 1445 by Rheinallt Gruffydd ap Bleddyn (d. 1465). Attached to the east side of the tower is a lower, two-storey house of brick, probably of the late seventeenth century, with an early eighteenth-century facing of stone on the south side. Later in the eighteenth century (probably mid 1770s) a major restoration in gothic style was undertaken, when machicolations and crenellations were added. The medieval part of the house is aligned north-south, the later addition east-west, with the main front on the south side.

From the sixteenth to the late eighteenth centuries Tower belonged to the Wynne family, from whom it passed to the Wynne Eytons of Old Leeswood Hall, nearby. In the early nineteenth century the house had a brief period as a tenanted farmhouse, but thereafter has been occupied by the Wynne Eyton family. The first Wynne Eyton at Tower (inherited by his wife) was the Revd Hope Wynne Eyton, vicar of Mold for 32 years.

A circular stone dovecote stands in the field to the west of the house. Thought to be of fifteenth-century date, it is ruinous, with no roof and a gap on the south side.

The small park of Tower lies to the north-east and south-east of the house. To the north-east the ground slopes away to a small valley at the north end of the park, while to the south-east the ground rises slightly to the top of the ridge. The main entrance is at the northern corner, off the Mold-Nerquis road, with a small nineteenth-century lodge on the north side. The lodge is a gabled two-storey stone building in vernacular style, with a steeply pitched roof. The entrance is closed by massive ornamental wrought iron gates known as the 'Black Gates'. These were brought here from Leeswood Hall, nearby, in the 1980s. They date from the late 1720s or early 1730s, and may have been the work of the Davies brothers of Bersham.

The park is divided into two large fields of permanent pasture, with scattered isolated trees. These are mainly oak, although there are holly trees and a solitary pine in the field to the south-east of the house, and a large lime and pine immediately outside the entrance to the garden. The drive winds up the slope to the entrance to the garden, east of the house. A secondary track leads from here south-eastwards to a simple gate on the Mold-Nerquis road. Earthworks in the area north-east of the house may indicate a former pond next to the garden, a drainage ditch running northwards down the slope from it, and a faint U-shaped feature with scarped sides either side of the drive.

The dating of elements in the park is problematical. The present layout was certainly in place by the 1880s, at which time the lake (then only the western end of the present lake) and small pond south of the house were not incorporated into the garden, but were within the park. There is a possibility that the secondary track was the original drive, and that the northern drive was added, with the lodge, in the 19th century. It may be that most of the tree planting in the park dates from this time.

The garden of Tower occupies an irregular area to the south, west and east of the house. The drive enters the garden between stone walls on the east side and leads up to an oval forecourt in front of the south front of the house. Immediately around the house the garden is laid out to lawn, with a former tennis court or croquet lawn cut into the slope to the south-west. On the east the lawn is bounded on its north side by a stone wall next to the house, and then by the walls of the former kitchen garden.

On the central axis of the south front is a tall composite sundial consisting of millstone base, rectangular plinth, classical column, on which is a cubical sundial with gnomons and carved numbers on each vertical face, above which is a ball finial. This originally stood in the centre of the bowling green at Leeswood. It was erected here (not on its original base) by the present owner.

Below the lawn, to the south-east, are rough stone steps and a grass bank down to an irregularly-shaped small lake, the western end of which is roughly rectangular, aligned with the south front of the house. The lake has a small island and a substantial dam at its eastern end. The west and north sides are straight, and a sloping path runs the length of the west side down to a path along the rim of the lake on the north side. To the south, west and east of the lake is an area of mixed informal planting of deciduous and coniferous trees and

shrubs, some of which are mature. Along the west side of the lake is a bank of rhododendrons. At the south end of the garden is a smaller linear pond. Along the west boundary of the garden is a row of mature pines, inside which is a linear depression marking the position of a perimeter path.

The history of the garden is one of alterations over four centuries, but vestiges remain from several periods. It is not known what gardens, if any, went with the fortified tower house of the late medieval period. It is possible that the western, rectilinear end of the lake has its origins in this period. When the house was added to in the late 17th century it is likely that gardens were added as a necessary adjunct to a gentleman's residence. A drawing of 1776 by Moses Griffith (for Pennant's Tours in Wales) of the south front of the house shows the garden bounded by large gates at the east end of the house, a gravel circle or oval in front of the house, with topiary and a sundial within it, and a formal, rectilinear lake with scarped edges and ramps down to a walk along its northern edge. The style of this garden is formal, and would date from the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century. Vestiges of this period remain today in the rectilinear shape of the western end of the lake, its scarped northern end, and its perimeter paths. The drawing shows a row of trees, possibly pines, along the west boundary: the present ones may be replacements. The gates have gone, and the garden has been extended to the east. The 1st edition Ordnance Survey maps show that in the 1870s the lake and smaller pond were not incorporated into the garden, and that only the western, rectilinear end of the lake was in existence. The present-day area of trees and shrubs along the southern side of the garden was then unplanted field. The southern end of the garden, therefore, has been radically altered since the 1870s by the extension eastwards of the lake and the planting of most of the trees and shrubs. The tennis court/croquet lawn has also been added since this date.

The kitchen garden lies to the north-east of the house, on a gentle north-east-facing slope. It has a trapezoidal shape, dictated by the topography and pre-existing layout of drive to the south and (possibly) farm track to the east and north. Only the west wall and a stub of the north wall remain. The walls are of stone and brick, c. 2 m. high, with a gateway in the west side from the garden into the kitchen garden near its south end. Against the outside of the west wall are stone and brick pent outhouses. The interior layout of cross and perimeter paths has gone: all that is left is a few fragments of box edging.

Sources

Primary

'The Tower': drawing by Moses Griffith, c. 1776. In the Extra Illustrated edition of Pennant's Tours in Wales (National Library of Wales).

Secondary

Williams, J., 'Tower, near Mold, Flintshire', Arch. Camb. (1846). pp. 55-60.

Leslie, C.H., Rambles round Mold (1869).

Smith, P., and Hayes, P., 'Llyseurgain and the Tower', Flints. Hist. Soc. J. 22 (1965), pp. 1-8.

Hubbard, E., Clwyd (1986), p. 397.

