

TREVALYN HOUSE

Ref No PGW (C) 74
OS Map 117
Grid Ref SJ 368 565
County Wrexham
District Wrexham

Community Council Rossett

Designations Listed building: Trevalyn House Grade II

Site Evaluation Grade II

Primary reasons for grading

Survival of nineteenth-century pleasure grounds, including a substantial rockery and some fine mature trees, both coniferous and deciduous; well preserved walls of kitchen garden.

Type of Site

Informal pleasure grounds; formal garden; rockery; walled kitchen garden.

Main Phases of Construction

1754; nineteenth century; c. 1900

SITE DESCRIPTION

Trevalyn House is a brick house with stone quoins and other dressings, built in Georgian style. It is situated on the level plain of the river Alyn, between Marford and Rossett, to the south-east of Trevalyn Hall. The main block is of three storeys and seven bays, with the central three bays of the main south front deeply recessed. This recess is now enclosed in a modern hospital extension, which takes in the Doric porch at the original main entrance. The gently pitched slate roof is more or less hidden behind a high parapet. At right angles to the main block, on its east side, is a two-storey later extension in a different brick.

Various hospital extensions have encroached on the former gardens on the west side of the house.

The house was built in 1754. A series of photographs from the 1880s, when the Townshend family lived here, show the house without the extension on the east side and the ground floor bay windows on the south front, which were added in about 1900. The doric porch is shown, with an ironwork balcony over it. All along the west side of the house is a portico or verandah with trelliswork cast iron piers. At its north end is an open-fronted conservatory.

The stable block lies to the north-east of the house, against the west wall of the kitchen garden. It is well preserved, with many of the original fittings surviving. It consists of a cobbled yard surrounded by stable and coach house (on the south side) ranges on all but the west side, which is closed by a high wall with central iron gates.

The buildings are of brick with stone window dressings and string course. In the centre of the east side is an archway with a circular blank hole over (? for a clock face) and a weathervane on top. At the back of the top of the arch are the nesting holes of a former dovecote. To the north is a cobbled yard surrounded by a high brick wall.

The pleasure grounds and kitchen garden occupy a rectangular area around the house, with the kitchen garden on its east side. The grounds are approached by a lane from the north, with the main entrance (now exit only) off it in the north-east corner. The entrance is flanked by dressed stone walls with square rusticated piers at either end. On the north side is a small single-storey stone lodge with a pitched slate roof, verandah, and the date 1862 carved over a canted window. A tarmac drive lined with oak trees runs westwards through an area of rough grass, curving round southwards to arrive at the south front of the house. A back drive (now entrance only), flanked by a low stone wall on the north side, runs along the north and west sides of the kitchen garden, past the stable block and along the east side of the house, to join the main drive south of the house. Originally there was a further approach to the house from Cox Lane to the south, with a lodge (now modernized and in separate ownership) on the boundary of the grounds. This approach is now disused, but there is still an old entrance, with an iron gate flanked by curving stone walls, to the south of the old orchard.

The grounds consist largely of informal woodland and lawn, with more formal areas to the south and west of the house. Along the north boundary is a narrow belt of deciduous trees. A much broader belt of woodland runs down the west boundary, dominated by mature oak, sycamore, ash, beech, and horse chestnut trees, with an understorey that includes holly, yew and bamboo. To the south of the main drive is a further belt of trees, here including some large conifers, in particular pines. A stone wall runs east-west through this area from the east boundary as far as the rockery, to the west of which an iron fence continues the line to the drive, with a further short stretch to its west. This line may mark the former northwards extent of the grounds, which may have been enlarged when the lodge and entrance were built in 1862.

To the south of the house is a lawn bounded on the south by a well built straight ha-ha of dressed stone topped by a low wall with flat coping. The ha-ha extends from the woodland boundary to the west (where the woodland area continues southwards for a short distance beyond the line of the ha-ha) as far as the point where the lawn widens, to the east of the house. From here the boundary extends as a holly hedge as far as the area of woodland on the east boundary. The ha-ha affords views from the garden out across the unornamented fields beyond. A wide gravel path (now used for car parking) leads from the centre of the house to the ha-ha, with stone steps up the parapet wall at its end. On either side of the path are square stone piers with splayed bases on top for statuary. A narrower gravel path runs beside the parapet wall with a row of widely spaced tapering cypresses next to it. Between these are two further statuary bases similar to those flanking the central path. At the west end of the path are two chunky stone vases on square bases, one of which is fallen and partly broken.

The lawn extends to the south-east of the house, with an old gravel path, now grassy, continuing the line of the drive to the east. Near the house is a large wellingtonia, and in the lawn the stump of a large horse chestnut. Further east, in the wider lawn, is a large cedar in a circular bed edged with stones. The lawn is bounded on the north by a belt of mixed trees including a row of yews now grown into large trees. At the east end is an area of woodland with a large hickory and a cypress on its edge, and a huge oak further east. The garden is bounded on the north side here by a high brick wall dividing the pleasure grounds from the utilitarian area to the north. Against its south

side are wide stone footings which may mark the edge of a former conservatory or glasshouse. A doorway leads through into the annexe to the kitchen garden.

Opposite the stable block, at the south end of the back drive, an old wooden gate stands at the entrance to a gravel path that leads between laurels to the formal garden to the north-west of the house. The path, which is stone-edged, continues along the south side of a small lawn bounded by a bank of conifers on its north side and laurels on the south. At the junction with a north-south path stands a large urn of reconstituted stone on a tapering rectangular plinth. The urn is decorated with a scrollwork pattern and has one intertwined handle (the west one is missing). At the west end of the path is a smaller similar plinth. To the south is a lawn with five narrow island beds. Along its east side is a path of contrasting bluish stones set on edge and quartz pebbles in various diagonal patterns, with stone and concrete edging. Half way along it are stone steps flanked by square statuary bases, with steps leading up to a slightly wider section of the path with a circular pattern. A further step leads to a higher level with a different pattern flanked on the east by a brick wall. At the south end of the wall is a former conservatory facing west. It has a raised tile floor, plastered walls, a sloping slate roof, and narrow strips of wooden trelliswork on the side walls. In front it is flanked by square statuary bases (there is a stone vase lying on the ground next to the modern hospital building to the south). New hospital buildings have impinged on this part of the garden, to the west of the house.

Photographs of the house and garden from the 1880s show that this part of the garden was then a highly elaborate formal garden of island beds with raised stone edgings. These have all completely disappeared. Against the house was a long verandah with trelliswork cast iron piers up which climbers were growing. The conservatory lay immediately to its north. It had an open front, enclosed at its foot with low wooden trelliswork. This too had climbers growing up it. A tall pergola extended northwards along the line of the verandah: its extent is marked now by the upper level of the stonework path. All along the path, pergola and verandah were low beds edged with dressed stone, with vases on low bases or plinths at intervals. Next to this axis ran a broad gravel path.

To the west of the new hospital wing is a twentieth-century feature consisting of a circular stone path, and a central raised area with limestone rocks set in gravel, in the middle of which is an octagonal concrete pillar. This is backed on the west by a semi-circular yew hedge, with straight extensions to the north and south. Just to the west of it is a large copper beech tree.

To the west of the formal lawn is a large rockery consisting of large mounds of rockwork with narrow winding paths between them. This was already in place when photographs were taken of it in the 1880s. Much of the rockwork is water-worn limestone, with one large piece set upright as a pillar next to a path. The paths are edged with large boulders, and one path leading off the lawn has a stone archway over it (the mortaring suggests that this has been recently rebuilt). Some of the paths are overgrown and disused. Paths lead to a wider paved area with a stone edging. Photographs taken in the 1880s show that at that time a rustic summerhouse with an open front stood on this spot. The rockery is planted with mixed trees, including copper beech, birch, conifers, acers, magnolias, a ginkgo, dwarf conifers, laurels, and bamboo.

Although there is little information about the history of the gardens, it is clear from the age of some of the trees that some planting must have taken place in the eighteenth century, probably when the house was built in the 1750s. However, there

are many large conifers in the grounds dating to after their introduction to Britain in the middle of the century. These include cypresses and a wellingtonia. Photographs of the 1880s show some of these trees as large specimens already. These photographs also show that the layout of drives, lawns and paths to the west and south of the house was already in existence, as was the rockery. The row of large cypresses along the edge of the south lawn were then small specimens. To the south of the garden the ground appears more park-like than it is now, with isolated specimen trees, now gone. The major loss to the garden has been the formal beds, verandah, conservatory and pergola to the west of the house shown on the 1880s photographs. Only traces of this layout survive today.

The kitchen garden lies to the north-east of the house, with a walled annexe to the south and an old orchard to the east. It is probably contemporary with the stable block, thought to be early Victorian. The garden is rectangular, bounded by brick walls with flat stone coping c. 3.5 m high on all but the north wall. This is lower, with a wide central opening, and is built of a different brick, suggesting that the wall was added or rebuilt at a later date to the rest. There are doorways in the south wall and at the south end of the east wall. That on the south side has a stone surround. Against the east end of the south wall is a small brick building.

The garden is now largely disused and covered with rough grass. The remains of perimeter and central paths can be discerned, with some of their stone edging surviving. The central north-south path is flanked by some old espalier apple trees.

To the east is an old orchard with some fruit trees remaining. To its south-east is an overgrown area in which there is a ruined and partly demolished vegetable clamp sunk into the ground.

To the south is a walled annexe to the kitchen garden. Against the east wall is the flooring of a former glasshouse and an ancient fig tree. A doorway with a stone surround leads through into the orchard. On the outside of the wall is a row of old brick bothies. Against the north wall of the annexe are a glasshouse and bothy, and to their west whitewashing, timbers set in the wall, and low footings, indicate former glasshouses. Several vines survive, although now outside. Running the length of the garden, parallel with the wall, is a stone flag path leading to the entrance at the west end. Just to the south of this is an ancient mulberry tree. The west end of the garden is wider, with whitewashing on the south wall of the stable block indicating another former glasshouse. In the corner, next to it, is an old subterranean boiler house, still with some of its machinery in situ. Next to this is a door with a stone surround into the kitchen garden. Next to the door into the south garden is a small tufa bed.

Sources

Primary

Photograph album of 1880s: private collection.

Secondary

Hubbard, E., Clwyd (1986), p. 289.