

# Historic Wales Report

## Dataset Cadw Listed Buildings

Title	Gwrych Castle including attached walls and towers and Stable Block.
Type	Listed Building
Dataset UID	231
Community	Llanddulas and Rhyd y Foel

## Location

About 2km W of centre of Abergele, set dramatically against a wooded hill slope; set back from and above B 4553.

Date Listed	10/27/1950
Last Amendment	11/12/1997
Grade	I

## History

Extremely complex building history covering over a century. A castellated scheme was prepared by the architect C A Busby as early as 1814, though this was abandoned by the owner, Lloyd Bamford Hesketh, in favour of his own designs. Thomas Rickman, architect and architectural theorist, was consulted from 1816 onwards, producing a full scheme in 1817. The foundation stone was finally laid 1819. Cast iron Perpendicular-style windows from John Cragg's Mersey Iron Foundry (where Rickman had collaborated on his iron churches at Liverpool), were incorporated in the scheme.

Part of E front and upper courtyard by Henry Kennedy (1840's & 1850's), alterations by C E Elcock (c1914) for Lord & Lady Dundonald (Hesketh's grand-daughter married 12th Earl of Dundonald). Interiors by same architects are now much decayed but include grand classical treatment of Dining Room, and Entrance Hall chimneypiece by Elcock. Stained glass (virtually all lost) was by George Lyon (c1837), J Alexander Forrest (c1846), Ward & Nixon and Ward & Hughes.

## Reason for Listing

Graded I as a magnificent large scale example of a Romantic castellated mansion; particularly important for its relationship with its site and its spectacular and extensive Picturesque composition, one of the finest examples of its date in Britain.

## History

Hubbard E, Clwyd, Buildings of Wales series, 1986, pp175-178;

Hitchcock, H-R, Architecture, Nineteenth & Twentieth Centuries (Pelican History of Art), 1977, pp143-144.

## Interior

Interior has suffered much from neglect and vandalism. Some floors and flooring, most fireplaces, doors and panelling and some ceilings have been removed, and virtually all stained glass is lost. Several rooms retain early C19 treatment in mixture of Gothick and Regency Classical. Entrance hall has to R, elaborate stone chimneypiece (1914) imitating early C17 vernacular Classicism. Grand staircase of 52 steps in 3 flights has lost marble dado and wrought iron balustrade. Dining Room in heavy late C17 Classical style (1914) has splayed bay window, coved ceiling with moulded

plaster garlands.

#### Exterior

Immense castellated mansion in local grey limestone, slate roofs, most windows in cast iron. The nucleus has large tracery windows mainly of Perpendicular style, and is broken up by towers and turrets, chief of which is the 30m. high Hesketh tower, the whole embattled and machicolated. It is surrounded by a conglomerate of towers and turrets, both round and square, on extensive curtain walls. These towers are set at random for pictorial effect, and many of them are shells. In all there are eighteen towers. The total frontage, including terraces either side, is said to be over 1,300 metres in length.

Main block at nucleus is U-plan with rear (S) set into hillside, 3 storeys over basement to front, single storey to rear, small interior courtyard. North elevation has central projecting bay with deep buttressed arch at basement level, large traceried window to ground floor, blocked windows at first floor. To L of this, 3 window block with traceried windows on 4 levels. To R of centre, engaged circular tower, machicolations, 3-light windows at several levels, above tower, higher range of battlements with turrets; to R of tower, block with 2 windows to top floor, 3 to first floor, large Decorated style window at entrance level.

East elevation of main block has square turret and full-height splayed bay window. West elevation (entrance) of 3 storeys, Gothic entrance doorway to L, generally Perpendicular glazing, but 3 Decorated windows to first floor (R). To W of main block curtain wall with turret behind which is crenellated block with 2 Decorated windows (rear of stable yard). Walls then turn to N; Curtain wall links with square tower with Decorated windows; lower screen wall has turrets and tower to rear, and drops down to large round tower with machicolations and thence to gateway.

From this gateway, walls drop down to Gate tower whence low buttressed curtain wall with low tower runs back to join NW angle of main block forming bailey. To rear of main block, porch with, to R, single storey block of 2 windows (Y-tracery) flanking doorway. From this, wall runs approx 80m to E, turning to become gate tower which itself is linked to circular tower built into rock some 35m W of gateway. To East of main block, low curtain wall with buttresses, crenellations, round and square low towers runs downhill linking with block with traceried windows and turret, and into trees.

To SW of main block, stable yard with buildings in similar style arranged in quadrangle has, in E range, square gateway tower (advanced block to its L) with turret Perpendicular first floor window, broad 4-centred archway to yard. South block has 2 broad cart entrances with Tudor arches. North block has advanced bay with large Tudor-arched coach entrance. West range has block with 5 deep round-arched recesses. At NW corner, passage drops down between 2 blocks to Gothic archway and castle bailey.