

PLAS NEWYDD

by *Gervase Jackson-Stops*

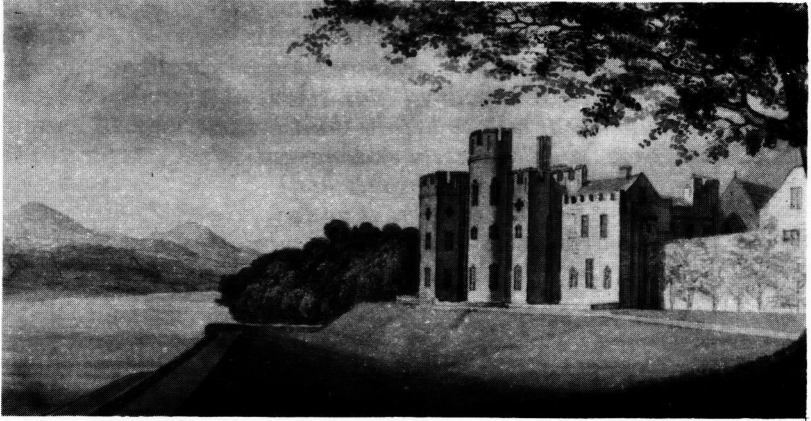
*To preserve
A Druidical Monument
which is of a date before the Christian Era
(Tho' lately endangered
by wanton mischief)
this support is added
by order of the Earl of Uxbridge
in the year of Christ
1799*

Repton's suggested inscription for the "wedge of marble" used to repair the cromlech at Plas Newydd may never actually have been carved, but it illustrates that romantic passion for the past shared by so many of Lord Anglesey's Bayly and Paget ancestors. This sense of history is expressed too in the architectural development of Plas Newydd.

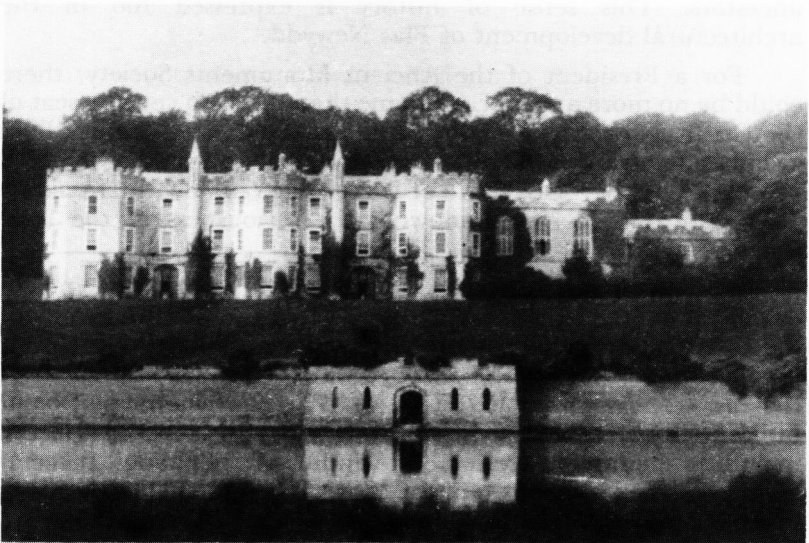
For a President of the Ancient Monuments Society, there could be no more appropriate home than the 15th century seat of the Griffiths, enlarged by Sir Nicholas Bayly along Gothick lines even before Strawberry Hill, and completed at the end of the 18th century by the 1st Earl of Uxbridge in an increasingly ecclesiastical style, foreshadowing the seriousness of the later Gothic Revival.

The name Plas Newydd, or "new place", is itself of ancient origin, already in use by about 1470 when the Griffith family of Penrhyn first acquired the property¹. Little is known of the early form of the house, beyond what can be seen in a watercolour of the east front made in 1776 (fig. 1). This shows a mass of older buildings behind Sir Nicholas Bayly's new castellated facade, including the large traceried east window of the chapel. It seems likely that the latter was built by Lewis Bayly, Bishop of Bangor, in the early 17th century, and if so it must have been an interesting example of "Gothic Survival", comparable with college buildings at Oxford in the same period.

Sir Nicholas's alterations are better documented, despite the fact that no plans or drawings have survived. His correspondence with the agent Cartwright shows that he undoubtedly acted as his own architect. In a typical letter of November 1753, he promises to "send you a ground plan to work by and desire you will send by return of the post the drawing of that front which I left with you in order to be more correctly drawn"². Sketches were sent down



1. The east front of Plas Newydd, from a watercolour by Moses Griffith, 1776.



2. The east front of Plas Newydd, c.1900, showing Potter's chapel on the right.



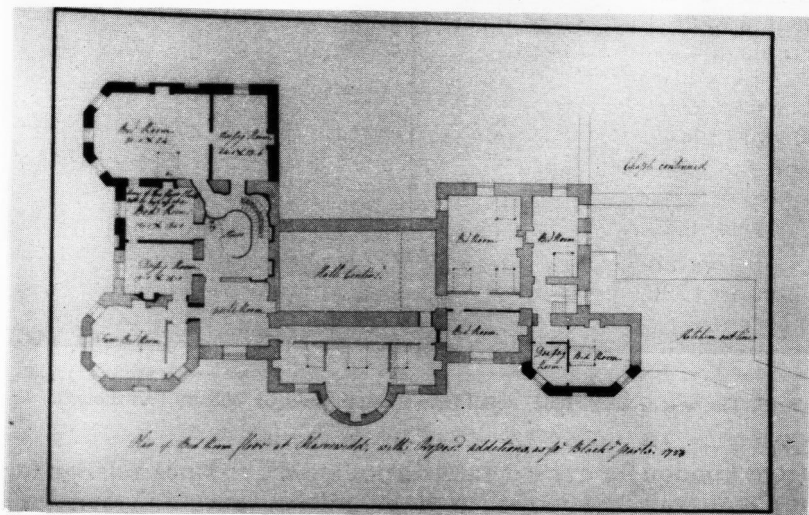
3. The west front in 1802, detail from a watercolour by William Fernyhough.

from London for every detail — including for instance a design for a chimneypiece, which Cartwright was to forward to the Irish sculptor James Rooney of Clarendon Street, Dublin³. This chimneypiece was intended for the hall, which was given a new cornice and ceiling in 1751, presumably below the open timber roof of the 16th century great hall. In July of the same year, a section was sent “with Doors and Sides of the Hall Coloured”, and with the recommendation that for the walls “all you need do is to mix a small quantity of yellow oaker in the last coat of stuckoe near the Colour of the Drawing but rather lighter”⁴: a type of decoration more usually employed in Italy than in this country.

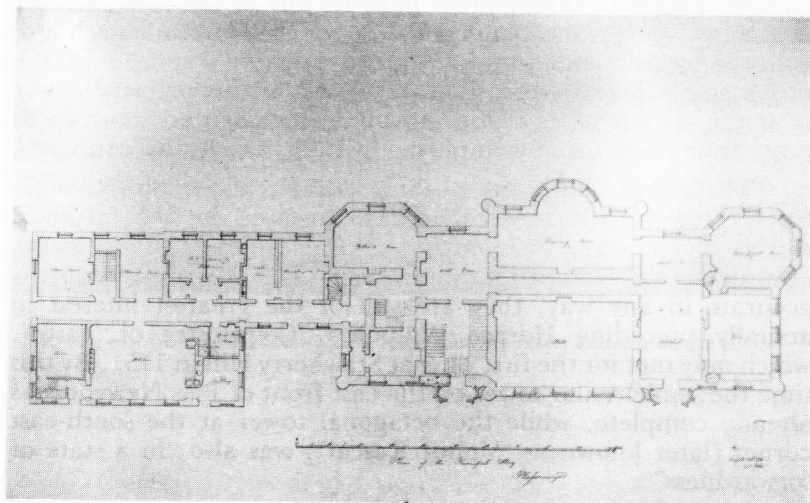
There was, however, nothing Italian about Sir Nicholas Bayly’s towers, which were perhaps inspired by the medieval castles of Conway, Beaumaris and Caernarvon, guarding the entrances to the Menai Strait. Obviously not archaeologically accurate in any way, they are still of the greatest interest in actually preceding Horace Walpole’s “Committee of Taste”, which only met for the first time at Strawberry Hill in 1751. By this time the semicircular tower on the east front of Plas Newydd was already complete, while the octagonal tower at the south-east corner (later known as ‘Mount Rascal’) was also “in a state of forwardness”⁵.

It is indeed surprising that the view over the Menai to the mountains of Snowdonia was appreciated at this early date, when

the taste for the picturesque had not yet embraced the "horrid" prospects of Scotland, the Lake District or the Alps. The old house at Plas Newydd must certainly have faced inland, with the great hall on the west side, sheltered by the rising ground, which makes Sir Nicholas's decision to build a new and assymmetrical east front still stranger.



4. Proposed first-floor plan by John Cooper, 1783. The extension to the south-west (top left) was never executed. (RIBA Drawings Collection)



5. Ground floor plan by Joseph Potter, c. 1793, as executed. (RIBA Drawings Collection)

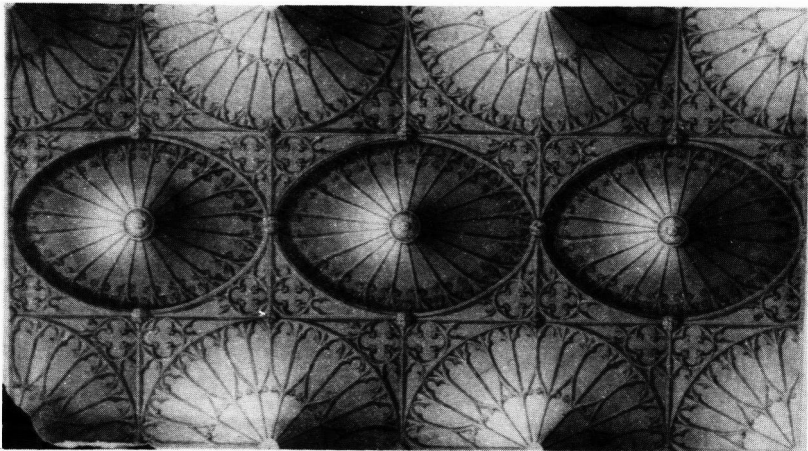
Sir Nicholas died in 1782, and his son Henry, who had already inherited Beaudesert and the ancient barony of Paget through his mother, became 1st Earl of Uxbridge two years later in 1784. This "whimsical, unambitious man", as Lord Anglesey has described him⁶, shared his father's passion for building and for the Gothic style, and immediately set about enlarging and regularising Plas Newydd. Despite the fact that he had already employed James Wyatt at Beaudesert ten years earlier (the architect's first Gothic commission), the initial alterations to Plas Newydd were entrusted to a local master-mason John Cooper of Beaumaris, who also worked at Bodorgan for the Meyrick family, and later designed the Adam-style dining room and staircase at Chirk⁷.

Cooper's first task was to build a new octagonal tower on the north-east corner of the house to balance "Mount Rascal", and then, in 1786, to heighten both the earlier towers by about seven feet and to provide new garret rooms for servants in each of them⁸. A scheme to add another octagon at the south-west corner, thus making the south front regular, is shown in a group of Cooper's drawings, now on loan to the R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection⁹ (fig. 4), but this was never achieved.

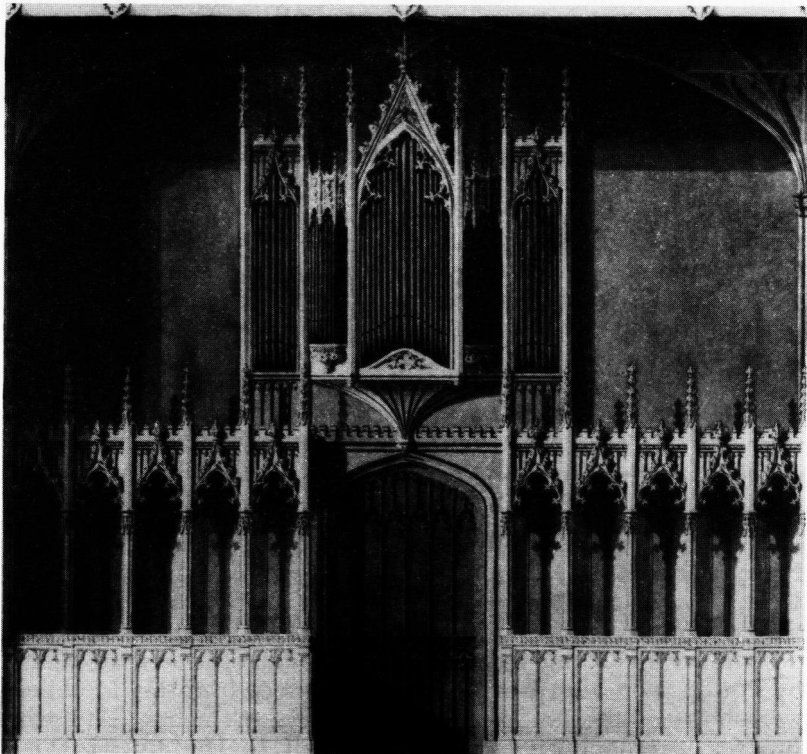
Cooper cannot entirely have fulfilled his patron's expectations, for in 1793, ten years after his first attack on the house, Lord Uxbridge finally called in James Wyatt and Joseph Potter, who had spent the previous five years collaborating in the restoration of Lichfield Cathedral. Between them, these two entirely rebuilt the west front of the house, creating the large vaulted music room in the centre with a corridor behind it—in place of the old recessed great hall seen on Cooper's plans. All the other ground-floor rooms were remodelled at the same time, including the staircase, which was moved to the north of the music room and which was replaced by a new entrance hall on the south. As it was impossible to provide a central door or portecochère, twin Gothic porches led into each of these two new rooms (figs. 3 and 5).

There has been much argument as to whether Wyatt or Potter was primarily responsible for this major work completed by 1799. Wyatt's surviving drawings, dated 1795, are solely for the classical rooms on the south and east fronts, while the elaborate designs for the Gothic hall and music room on the west are signed by Potter, who also provided all the joinery from his Litchfield workshop—from the "rich canopy heads to niches . . . with Buttresses and Pinnacles" in the hall to the fluted Doric "Columns in the Best Staircase"¹⁰.

Potter is actually given as the architect of Plas Newydd in



6. Preliminary design for the fan-vault in the chapel by Joseph Potter, c.1805.
(Sheffield City Library)



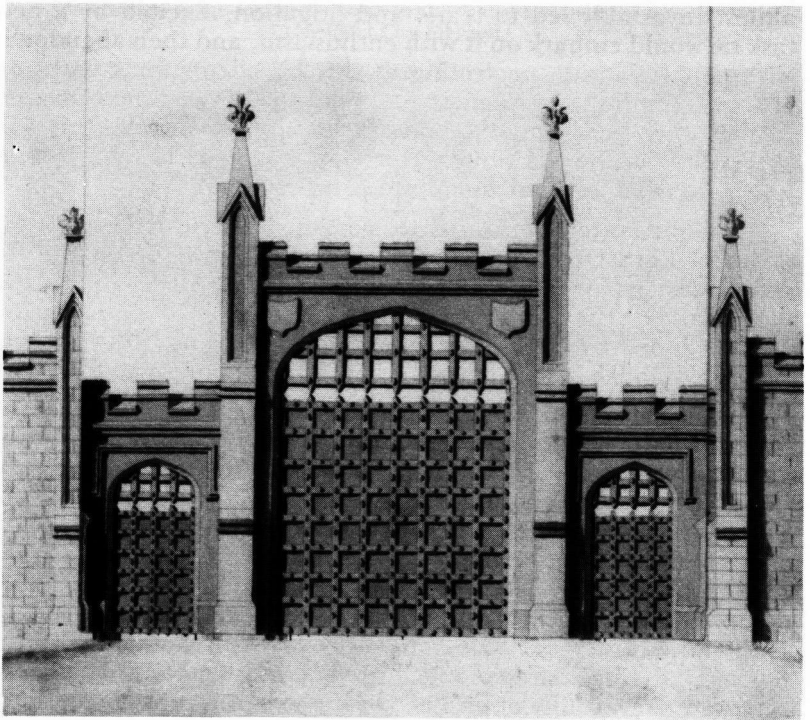
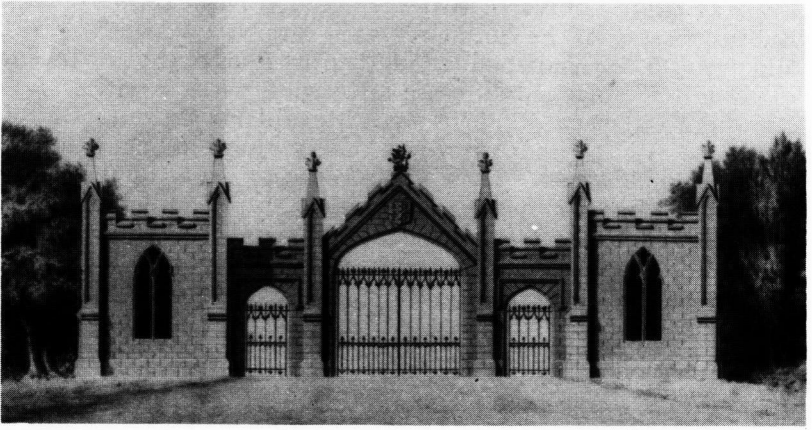
7. Design for the organ and stalls in the chapel by Joseph Potter c.1805.
(RIBA Drawings Collection)

Evans's *Beauties of North Wales* (1812) and Neale's *Seats* (1822). But his designs for the Gothic rooms at Plas Newydd in the 1790s, and even for the chapel added on the first floor of the north wing in 1805-09, have such close affinities with Wyatt's work elsewhere—at New College and Magdalen, Oxford, Bishop Auckland, Wilton and Ashridge—that it is hard to believe he was acting independently. Even the eccentric facade of the stable block, built in 1797, has parallels with Wyatt's Sandlesford Priory in Berkshire, of the previous decade. It is only in designs for the lesser buildings on the estate such as the octagonal game larder (fig. 9) or the gate-screen on the main drive, with its Reptonian flap showing alternatives (fig. 8)—forbidding portcullises or spindly ironwork gates—that Potter's own, much less assured, hand can be traced¹¹.

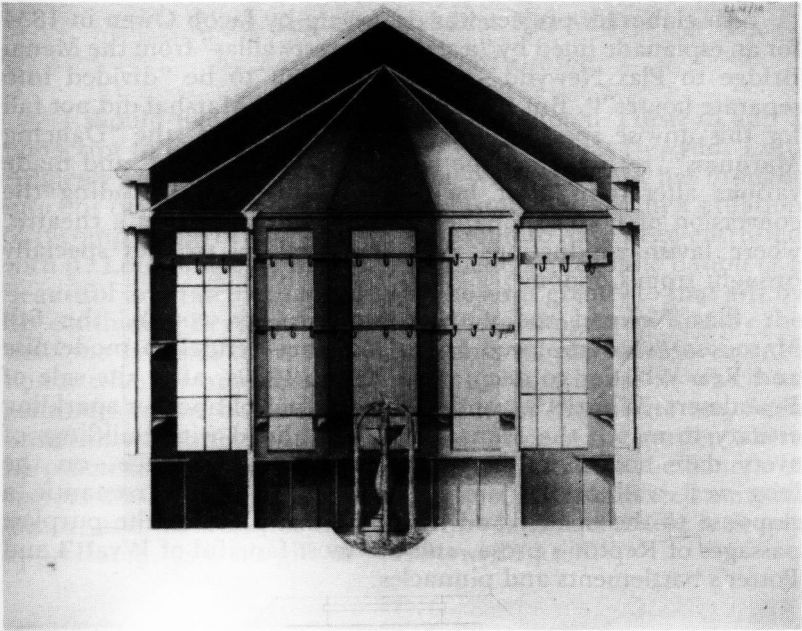
Lord Uxbridge was wise to take this course, for Wyatt's private commissions undertaken without an executant architect almost invariably led to tears, and litigation. Excited by a new task he would embark on it with enthusiasm, and then abandon it with equal alacrity, neglecting to visit his clients for months on end and sending the vaguest messages to the workmen on site. Things only went smoothly when a capable local surveyor, like William Atkinson in Country Durham, was there to interpret his hastily sketches and put them into practice.

Joseph Potter continued to work at Plas Newydd after the death of Lord Uxbridge in 1812, and of Wyatt in 1813. But his simple designs for Druid's Lodge in the park, in 1819, and for the classical Baths and Assembly Rooms at Caernarvon commissioned by the 1st Marquess of Anglesey in 1822¹², do not help to establish his reputation as an architect of great skill.

Another reason for seeing Wyatt as the moving force behind the improvements at Plas Newydd is the arrival of the landscape gardener Humphry Repton in 1798, just as the main work on the house was nearing completion. Repton had already worked with Wyatt at Sheffield Park and Cobham, and always went out of his way to praise that architect's work in the Gothic style. The manuscript text of his 'Red Book' for Plas Newydd was found comparatively recently among uncatalogued material in the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth¹³, though sadly the fourteen original watercolours described in it had long since been removed. Never fully published before now, it is reproduced as an appendix to this article, with the two surveys maps of 1798 and 1804 which show how many of his recommendations were acted upon, and the engraving of a Gothic pavilion from Repton's *Observations* of 1803, obviously based on "sketch no. 13" of the manuscript, and described in the published text in almost identical terms.



8. Design by Joseph Potter for the gatescreen at Llanfairpwll, c.1805, with a flap showing alternative treatment of centre section. (RIBA Drawings Collection)



9. Cross-section of a proposed game-larder by Joseph Potter, c.1816.
(RIBA Drawings Collection)

This charming little building was to be added to the south-east corner of the house, and to have glass frames put into the sides—“at those seasons when the lofty summits of the mountains are enveloped in black clouds, or only gleams of snow are seen to chill the dark horizon; when the water is no longer of a scene of delight, and when a man can hardly stand against the gale”. In the *Observations*, Repton describes the central pillar and the ribs of the vault being made of cast iron and the rest of the roof of glass, though the “hint” was “taken from the chapter rooms to some of our cathedrals”. This combination of technology and nostalgia, typical of its time, shows that Repton had considerable architectural skills.

Few important alterations were made to the house after Lord Uxbridge's death. The great Doric column commemorating the 1st Marquess of Anglesey's heroism at Waterloo was erected “by the nobility and gentry of Wales” in 1817 outside the entrance gates at Llanfairpwll, and in 1821 George IV was entertained at Plas Newydd on his way to Ireland. But subsequently Lord Anglesey and his family spent most of their time at Beaudesert, and the house was let.

An elaborate project was drawn up by Jacob Owen in 1834 for an esplanade lined by "a series of pretty villas" from the Menai Bridge to Plas Newydd—which was itself to be "divided into separate houses"¹⁴. But fortunately, the Field Marshal did not fall for this unwise speculation. His great-grandson, the "Dancing Marquess", rechristened the house "Anglesey Castle" and made various alterations after he inherited in 1898, including the conversion of Potter's Chapel in the north wing into a theatre, where lavish productions were mounted by troupes specially brought from London.

Plas Newydd today owes more to his cousin, the 6th Marquess, who employed H.S. Goodhart-Rendel to modernise and Rex Whistler to decorate it in the 1930s, after the sale of Beaudesert. Whistler's wonderful evocation of another sparkling estuary to match the Menai Strait, but lined with buildings of every date and style—Norman, Gothic, Renaissance—on the long west wall of the dining room, is as deeply romantic a response to the beauty and magic of this place as the purplest passages of Repton's prose, and the most fanciful of Wyatt's and Potter's battlements and pinnacles.

FOOTNOTES

1. A fuller architectural history of Plas Newydd is given in the present author's series of articles in *Country Life*, June 24, July 1 and September 16, 1976, and August 4, 1977. This account, concentrating particularly on its place in the history of the Gothic Revival, uses some additional material from the family papers deposited in the library of the University of North Wales, Bangor (see references to series and item numbers below). For further information, see also Christopher Hussey's articles on Plas Newydd in *Country Life*, November 24 and December 1, 1955, and the *Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments in Wales: Anglesey*, 1937.
2. Series VII, 570
3. Series VII, 563
4. Series VII, 566
5. Series VII, 558
6. 'The Griffiths, Bayly and Paget Families' in the National Trust guidebook to Plas Newydd, 1978.
7. The latter described by Sir Christopher Sykes in his *Tour of Wales* (ms. at Sledmere).
8. Series I, 3315
9. R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection Catalogue, James Wyatt II [12] 2-7, p.40. These drawings, initialled J.C., are wrongly attributed to John Carter, one of Wyatt's draughtsmen.
10. Series V, 1241
11. R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection Catalogue O-R, Joseph Potter entry, [1] 21 and 27.
12. *Ibid.* [2] and [3], and the following "design for a public building" attributed to Potter.
13. NLW 205213
14. Series VII, 2384

Lord Anglesey and Plas Newydd

by The Rt. Hon. Lord Gibson

I should like, as Chairman of the National Trust, to add a postscript to Gervase Jackson Stops' essay on Plas Newydd. Lord Anglesey's gift of Plas Newydd to the National Trust has brought into our care a house of exceptional historic interest in a situation of incomparable beauty and we are proud to have been entrusted with it. Lord Anglesey has not only made a gift to the nation of a beautiful and fascinating property, he adds greatly to that gift by his continuing devotion to its care and arrangement and by the welcome he gives to its many thousands of visitors. Moreover, I doubt whether any donor to the Trust of a house in which he continues to live has ever kept less of it for his private use. Such unselfishness applies with even greater force in the garden where he practises his considerable horticultural skill for the benefit of visitors who are excluded from no part of it. He is indeed a model donor, and his work for the Trust in Wales as a whole is deeply appreciated, as is his gift of Plas Newydd itself.

APPENDIX**Plas Newydd**

in the isle of Anglesey

North Wales

A Seat of

The Rt Honble the Earl of Uxbridge.

H. Repton Landscape Gardner, Hare Street, nr. Romford, Essex.

Introduction

My Lord

I have the honour to submit to your Lordships consideration the result of my visit to Plas Newydd, & tho' my hints for the improvement of the place include a great number of points yet I trust your Lordship will find that a certain degree of simplicity & facility of execution, with great attention to economy, prevails thro' every part of my plan.

The drawings will, I hope, serve to convey some idea of the scenery to those who may not have sufficient resolution to make so long a journey; & thus the beauties of Plas Newydd are in a manner brought into the library of Uxbridge house. If this were the only use of these drawings, I should have cause to regret the

insufficiency of my pencil: but their chief use is to explain circumstances & stations, better than any map, & far better than more words. In this light, I hope they will be considered as the sketches, not of a landscape painter, but of a landscape improver; not as pictures, but as hints from original scenery, beyond the power of painting to represent.

I ought perhaps to apologise for the freedom with which I may have occasion to mention some few things that have been done wrong: but had your Lordship had leisure, or the persons you employed had skill to direct the improvements, there wd have been no necessity to ask my opinion, & therefore I venture to deliver it without fear of giving offence. I have the honour to be

Your Lordship's most obdt. humb. servt
H. Repton

At Plasnewydd in Nov 1798

Hare St. near Romford, Essex, Jany 1799

Character

The stile of the mansion of Plas Newydd determines the Character of the place; since it is as absurd to suppose a palace in the midst of a farm, as to surround a cottage with an extensive park and pleasure-ground: yet such mistakes are not uncommon. I wd not be understood to mean, that the lawn of a palace may not be turned to advantage by feeding cattle, or that a park my not have many cottages for game keepers of even labourers within its walls: but that the ground immediately contiguous to, & in view from a Nobleman's residence, shd appear to be a park of the magnificent abode, where beauty & not profit is to take the lead. The difference betwixt a park & a farm consists less in the kind of animals by which the ground is fed, than in the extent & apparent liberty with which they feed; for where the land is interrupted with hedges, & divided into separate enclosures, we annex the idea of fattening cattle for the butcher. And however fashionable it may be to possess great knowledge in this lowest of all trades; I hope the good taste of the country, will soon again rise above the sordid habits of graziers' ideas, & restore our parks to their original use; that of a free range over unconfined lawns, where not only deer, but cattle & horses and sheep may sport & enjoy themselves in a state more like that of nature in a forest, than the mere drudges & victims of man's tyranny & avarice.

It is very remarkable that those of the higher ranks in society, who are the most strenuous advocates for *Confusion*, or as they

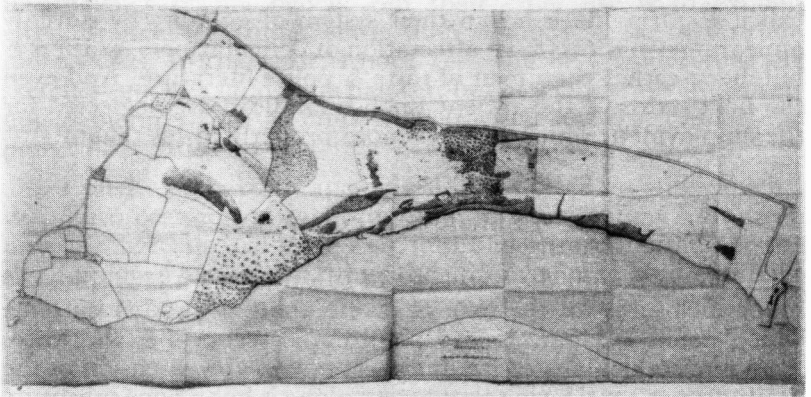
call it *Reform*: have began their system of equality by slovenly appearance in dress, & an affectation of being farmers, graziers & butchers: rather than men of taste & polite literature. And even the field sports of the antient English landlord are neglected for the employment which belongs more properly to his tenant.

Extent of the Park

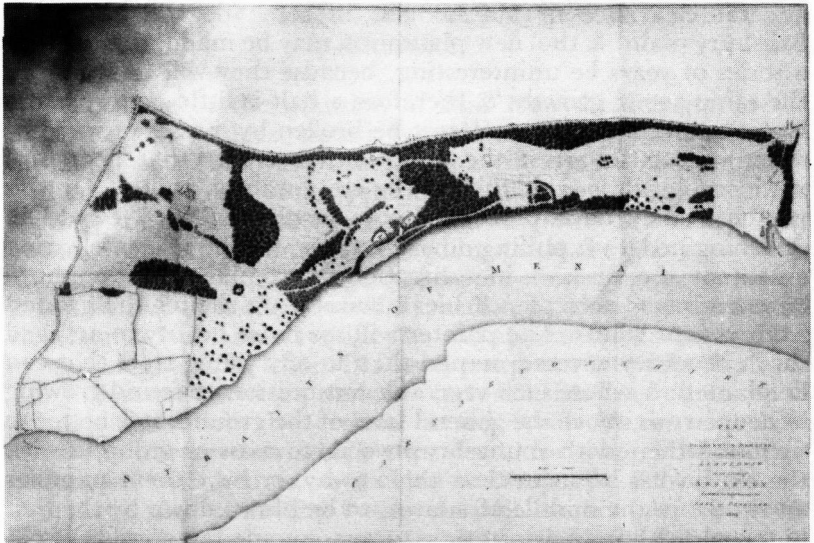
Having mentd the bad taste of sub-dividing a lawn into too many inclosures for the sake of profit; there is another extreme which is not less injurious to picturesque scenery, & this arises from a mistaken idea of producing greatness, by extension of the grounds; not considering that extent alone is but a poor substitute for beauty. There can hardly be a more uninteresting country than Salisbury plain (as it is called) tho' the ground is far from a plain surface, but the view is uninterrupted by hedges or trees or woods; yet every park where improvement is attempted by a general clearance of old hedges, in some degree, resembles Salisbury plain: & tho' new plantation may be made, they will for a series of years be uninteresting, because they will be nearly of the same age & growth; & therefore a halt is little better than a hedge round the park, unless it be broken by masses of wood or other objects to arrest the attention, & create that degree of intricacy which is said "to lead the eye a wanton chase". On this principle they have proceeded too hastily at Plas Newydd in grubbing hedges & pulling down cottages, for the sake of clearing an extent of open lawn in a direction where plantations ought to be encouraged to screen a bleak country, & shelter the ground from violent winds. The painter will see more beauty in an aged thorn or an ivy-covered maple; than in any young trees that can be planted: & where such vegetable antiquities are found growing in hedge-rows above the general level of the ground, it is better to surround them with young brushwood, to mass or group in with the old bushes, than to clear them away, or have them standing on tip toe in the middle of a lawn, to be blown down by the first high wind. I hope I was in time to rescue some few corners of old hedges in part of the grounds, but there is still a vast expanse of open lawn which requires to be clothed by new trees, since the old ones have been removed with the hedges.

The Principle of Improvement

Altho' I have asserted that beauty shd take the lead of profit, yet convenience might so take the lead of beauty, in every place



10. Survey map of Plas Newydd, 1798.



11. Survey map of Plas Newydd in 1804, after Repton's improvements.

where the comfort of residence is more to be studied than the parade of external grandeur. And tho' the character of Plas Newydd might warrant its being treated with more attention to magnificence, than domestic habitation; yet I trust my plan will be perfect in proportion as it best arranges those several objects of comfort & convenience, which contribute to the pleasures of the country at all times & in all seasons of the year.

It is very essential that the kitchen garden shd be as near the house as possible, without being seen from it: & that it shd have a connection with the stables for a supply of manure; yet that walks shd lead to it without being exposed to the heat of the sun in summer, or the power of the west winds in winter. The farm may be more distant: & indeed the farther it is removed from the pleasure grounds, the less offensive will be the dirt & litter which ought to attend a farm, & which ought not to be known near the mansion: these reasons have determined the situation of farm & kitchen garden, as far as relates to convenience; but in point of beauty they will also be found to be placed in their proper situations. After duly attending to the comfort & convenience of Plas Newydd, or what may be technically called "putting its several parts together", & giving them a commodious connection with each other: it is the duty of the Landscape Gardener to display all the leading features of the place to the greatest advantage, & hide whatever may be deemed defective.

If we form our judgement from the map only, we shd say that the breadth of the Domain (the word Domain as here used in the sense which is generally understood in Wales, in Ireland, & in some parts of England, to include so much of the estate as the proprietor keeps in hand near the house, whether it be park, or gardens, or pleasure grounds, or farm for the immediate use of the mansion) is not in proportion to its length; but in reality this is no defect, since there is sufficient breadth to hide the boundary by plantations, if they are not merely carried close to the wall like a narrow stream or hill, but brought boldly forward to the edge of the road, & across it, as I shall shew in speaking of the approach.

The greatest beauty of Plas Newydd consists in the concave wings of wood on each side, forming a grand amphitheatre, which is hardly to be seen except from the water, or from the opposite shore, yet as many persons may not have an opportunity of viewing the place from there, it becomes a very essential part of the improvement to bring these woods into notice from the grounds at Plas Newydd. I shall therefore frequently call the attention to the several different spots, from which I mean to take advantage of these magnificent features.

The Approach

Notwithstanding the ridicule which some late fanciful writers (Messrs. Knight & Price) have attempted to throw on all improvements that tend to increase the importance of a place; I still hope the good taste of the country will support my opinion, that the approach to a nobleman's house shd bear some relation

to the dignity of the mansion, or its proprietor: & therefore I conceive the approach to Plas Newydd shd in some degree announce its magnificence, or at least take advantage of those spots from whence the natural beauties of the situation may be displayed with good effect: & this shd not be confined merely to the boundary of the Domain, it may begin on the summit of the hill, where the house & grounds are first seen in the road from Bangor ferry.

As this spot is not within the compass of the map, I have described it by the Frontispiece at the beginning of this small volume, which represents a group of the natives of Anglesey in their costume, & a distant view of the straights of Menai, to give a general idea of the situation of Plas Newydd. This part of the road being remarkably bleak & naked it wd be a great improvement to make a plantation on the west side of the road, which wd shelter it from the violent winds, & by shutting out a very uninteresting view over the narrow part of the island, direct the eye towards the straights & make Plas Newydd the leading feature in the landscape.

The natural boundary of the path seems to be the brook or rather the road of Pwllfanogle, which may be brought much nearer the brook as described on the map at A & particularly marked on the spot with stakes.

A large old mass of thorns, which I have shown in the sketch No 2 is fortunately placed for dividing the roads, & a few trees in the present hedgerow will be of great use to form an immediate accompaniment to the entrance, of which I give a hint, rather to mark the situation, than to dictate to Mr. Potter the stile of the building. But this lodge will not have a good effect till it is amply backed by the plantation described in the map No 1 thro' which the approach is supposed to pass for some distance till it suddenly bursts on a lawn beautifully sloping towards the water. The particular spot where the road breaks out from the wood to the left, is carefully marked by stakes & ascertained by a large group of beech stems, arising from one old root in the hedge-row marked B in map No 1. I have farther endeavoured to fix it by the sketch map No 3 which gives a very faint idea of the scene supposing the cross hedge & some of the brushwood to be removed to let the eye down towards the water, where the terrace is all that can be seen to give notice of the house, & prepare the stranger for its general situation. The road now sweeps to the right into a wood of beech, part of which may be converted into a more open grove, for the sake of variety: & tho' the ground is in some places very rotten & wet, yet it may easily be drained near the sides, & the brushwood will hide the more distant parts, if

open drains shd be deemed necessary. In this copse, I have, in the course of the road, taken advantage of several old thorns, & crabtrees, which every where tend to justify their curvatures, that may not appear so easy & natural on the map as on the ground: but when the road crosses the open lawn, there is no other curvature than what the shape of the ground makes necessary.

It is in this part, where the hedges having been removed without mercy, the expanse of lawn will require to be broken by masses of plantation, one of which I suppose to surround the cottage at C, & either the front may be decorated by Mr. Potter to form a keepers lodge, or it may be turned the contrary way, & the side towards the road wholly concealed by plantations: perhaps the latter wd be most advisable, as I mean to take advantage of the next cottage to vary the objects in the course of this approach, which will by this time have passed over a considerable extent of open lawn.

Kitchen Garden

The part of my plan which will be most open to criticism, is that which I am now to explain. The approach will be said in some degree to interfere with the situation proposed for the kitchen garden; but this, so far from being an objection, may be converted into a very pleasing source of variety; as the plantations described on the map will completely hide every wall from the road, & only shew the front of the gardner's house: this being decorated with trelliage and creepers, will mark its character & make a cheerful object that may interest the attention after so long a road over the open lawn. A few laths painted green will produce the effect required, & shown in the sketch No 4. But the plantations near this house shd be of the more curious flowering plants, & such as the gardener may be supposed to nurse with peculiar care, among these I think fir, & ever-greens will not be out of character, & will tend to hide the walls in winter.

To those gardeners or nursery-men who are used to consider a kitchen garden in a flat country, or in the neighbourhood of great cities, it will seem strange that I shd not have fixed upon some open spot, where one large square area might be appropriated to the kitchen garden: but in a mountainous country, where strong currents of wind are the greatest enemies of vegetation, it is far better to have ten gardens of half an acre each, than one garden of five acres; & if the walls are built so near each other as not to shade the borders in which the fruit trees are planted, they will produce more certain crops, in proportion as they break the power of the winds.

It is not only by the walls that the mischief of winds will be counteracted, it is also by plantations surrounding those walls; and, therefore, two or three small gardens, so sheltered, are preferable to one large one subdivided. I suppose I have made ample provision of walls by one to the west, & four cross walls with south exposure in the present garden D to which may be added the little garden E, & also an additional garden at F, if it shd be deemed necessary: & the forcing houses may be placed either in D or F or both. Those walls will furnish a great quantity of fruit, & with very broad borders they will bring forward early vegetables; but a large area in the nursery G may be cleared for other fruits & common garden stuff. This kitchen garden will be one of the greatest luxuries of Plas Newydd, but had it been placed near Llanedwin it wd have been farther from the house, & much farther from the stables, which have a natural connection with the kitchen garden, which the farm, on the contrary, is always jealous of it, & grudges every load of manure that is not laid on the land: but besides the distance of Llanedwin, the line of connection with the house wd never be so pleasant & interesting, as the walk thro' the wood, which has been so happily begun by the good taste of Lady Uxbridge. Some of these circumstances will require to be explained on the following map No 2 which includes only the ground near the house, but on a larger scale.

The Walks

No walk, however beautiful, is long frequented unless it leads to some interesting object, & this is perhaps an unanswerable argument in favour of the situation proposed for the kitchen garden. Lady Uxbridge's walk becomes the great line of connection between the house & the garden, while the approach road, which may be considered as a grand walk, affords a new line to return from thence to the house. The long straight avenue is so much in character with the stile of the house, that it ought to be preserved to a certain distance, especially as there are few points of view in which the house appears to more advantage than from the mouth of this walk, as represented in sketch No 5. I have therefore marked a cross walk to branch from Lady Uxbridge's towards the spot which seems best calculated for a dairy H because the cows may be milked in a spot I, to which the dairy maid will have a straight walk from the office court. This dairy may have an ornamented front towards the walk with a scalding room on one side and a staircase on the other, to communicate with the stable court, for Lord Uxbridge's own private use. Lady Uxbridge's walk may be highly dressed with flowering shrubs & neat borders of turf, but I also described on

the spot, & on the map, a narrow path of milder character, leading to a tree on a bold promontory at X where a covered seat wd give a view of the woods beyond the terrace, which shd (as I have already observed) be brought into notice. There is near this spot a rill of water which might be heard to fall among the rocks, & increase the interest of the scene. From this path another might be continued to some rocks, from where a few rude steps wd descend to the beach, where the sands at low water present another source of variety & pleasure, & where the situation of the terrace forms the kind of picture attempted in sketch No 6.

The Approach Resumed

There are very few instances in which it is allowable for the road to pass the front of the house before it arrives at the door; but the shape of the ground at Plas Newydd renders it absolutely necessary: since the descent from the hill at the Cromlech, notwithstanding the art that has been used to make the road, is too steep to be either safe or pleasing: & besides, a number of circumstances combine to justify the lines described on the map No 2. The approach passes from the gardener's house over a small lawn more richly decorated with trees, & by keeping the screen low & narrow at the corner K the eye will be led to a wood, & some grass fields beyond the high road, which wd look like a continuation of park if one cross hedge were removed. It then winds thro' a wood of large trees romantically covered with ivy, & bursts out on a spot so rich in variety of objects, that it has at present one feature too much. We see at once an ample range of lawn to the right, & a magnificent pile of stable buildings to the left, while the situation of the cromlech in front is another interesting object: but from this spot is also seen, tho' not to advantage, the top of the house, & from the comparative magnitude & elevated station of the stables, the mansion, which ought, on its first appearance, to be unrivalled, appears depressed & insignificant. I therefore suppose the screen of plantation which surrounds the offices to be brought so forward at L, that no part of the house shd be visible from the approach, & therefore the eye will be more at leisure to road over the great plain to the right, where a lawn enriched with large trees, furnishes an extent of park of which we have no idea from the road as it now descends to the house.

The Cromlech

This rare Druidical remain is too curious to be passed in

silence, in a plan which professes to show every object at Plas Newydd to the greatest advantage. I am sorry to remark that one of the supporters has been forced by violence from its bearing, & a large piece of the great stone has been broken off, yet to insert a new stone, or drive in a common wedge, might mislead future antiquaries, therefore I shd rather advise, that the necessary repair be made with a wedge of marble, on which the date & circumstance may be explained in something like these words

To preserve
A Druidical Monument
which is of a date before the Christian Era
(Tho' lately endangered
by wanton mischief)
this support is added
by order of the Earl of Uxbridge
in the year of Christ
1799

The sketch No 7 is inserted to show the situation of the Cromlech under a venerable ash whose large branches are still covered with ivy: but I was sorry to see many very large trees had been robbed of the mantling ivy, which forms one of the most picturesque circumstances of aged trees; & is a provision of nature to fill up those vacancies in very old trees, that in winter wd make them unsightly. It is a mistaken idea that ivy draws any nourishment from the bark of trees, it only wants support, & tho' it may be injurious to young growing timber, by confining the trunk, & preventing its swelling; yet when the body of the tree is never likely to grow much larger, the ivy can do no harm; on the contrary I believe it checks the growth of those sprays which wd draw nourishment from the upper branches.

Ground near the House

The stile & character of the house is admirably adapted to its situation, & tho' I have heard it remarked that it is too near the water, yet I am of a contrary opinion; since the water is doubtless the leading feature, & the house cd not have been placed farther from it without being more exposed to the western winds. The circular form of the windows toward the water, is not only very picturesque on the outside, but it gives a view both up & down the straights of Menai, & draws the attention from the shore immediately opposite, which is less interesting. If I were allowed to give my opinion concerning the house, I shd acknowledge great

merit in several parts where the Gothic character has been chastely observed, but the entrance front is defective in that irregularity of outline, which is so well preserved in the stables, & which indeed constitutes one great beauty in Gothic architecture, & makes it so proper for those situations where the top of the house is more seen than the lower storey.

It was on this principle that I recommended Earl Moira to build a Gothic house in the valley at Donnington Park, because the turrets & pinnacles wd be more beautiful than the plain flat roof of a Grecian building. But by the plantations already mentioned, & by the line of road proposed from the Cromlech, the house will be only seen thro' the stems of trees, & under their branches; which will hide the defecting straight line of roof & battlements, till we enter the dressed lawn near the house, & from where the descent is very gradual. Another advantage arises from the horses coming to the door with their heads towards the stable, to which the road will pass thro' the plantation, & the ground may be considerably lowered in this hollow way to make the ascent easy.

Other Approaches

Having given so much attention to the principal approach, or that from Bangor ferry, I will acknowledge that there seems little or no occasion to make any other except that from Llanedwin, which is in fact the road to the farm & which falls into the principal approach at the gate M, for the approach from Caernarvon being made on the water it is as easy of the boat to land at the Henbarth as at Mael y dom ferry, and therefore the road from the latter will be merely a drive over the grass. But a landing must be had near the house for fishermen & vessels to bring coals, etc. and this, with a little management, instead of a nuisance will be the means of keeping the back road farther from the windows of the house. The road must be excavated at first so deep that walks and shrubberies may be made over it, & afterwards being kept below the lawn, & surfacing round to ascend more gradually in the direction at N it will be almost as near for people who are going to the offices, by the time it reaches the gate M, as if they were to cross the dressed lawn, which I have described on the map by darker green, & which is to be surrounded by an iron or wood fence painted green. This lawn may be enriched with more choice plants & shrubs, & occasionally fed in the day time by sheep, but no larger cattle. In the sketch No 8 I have given a hint of the mouth of this supposed souterrein, which may be ornamented with a front like the

bastions on the terrace, but as the pier is a spot from where the sweeping line of wood may be seen, I shd advise a rude covered seat (of this seat a hint is given in the sketch No 6 as it is seen from the shore at low water) to be erected at the end of the pier, from where this scene will make a pleasing picture, if care be taken to preserve all the rock & brushwood, & cover the bald masonry with ivy near the little rill which falls from a spring in the banks.

The Farm

It has already been observed that the farm yard shd not be too near the mansion, & having no natural connection either with the stables or the kitchen garden, it may with propriety be on the contrary side of the house. And as I conceive every plan to be more perfect in proportion as it is simple & done with little expence, so the house at Llanedwin, may easily be converted into a spacious farm-house, & if it be too large it may also be divided into separate tenements for those favourite servants or labourers whose homes shd be near their work. But as this building stands very high, & is seen from many parts, it ought perhaps to assimilate more with the lawn & stables, by partaking of the Gothic character: this I conceive might be readily effected by taking away the farther wing, & making an arched gate as the entrance to the farm-yard & adding a tower at the corner, in which a staircase might lead to the top, from whence, I believe, the Paris mountain wd be visible, at least the half of Caernarvon, & the whole course of the straights of Menai and form part of the panoramic view.

The sketch No 9 shews this change in the character of Llanedwin, & I have also in the genl. view of Plas Newydd No 1 given a hint of the same building on the hill above the house. The park wall must be continued round the farm for the safety of the woods, which I observed were shamefully mutilated by the natives, & also for the preservation of game, but I do not advise the destruction of any hedges in that part which I consider as the farm: on the contrary, the fields will be more sheltered, & the game more plentiful, by encouraging hedge-row timber & brushwood. The wall is described on the map No 1 as excluding the parish church, & cutting off a piece of the field which may be necessary to the ferry-man & farm adjoining. But instead of aiming at extent of lawn or park on this side of the house, I think more beauty & variety may be obtained by preserving all the irregular forms or hedges, & planting others where the fields are too large, that rides & walks may be made with more intricacy, & form a pleasing contrast with the park scenery on the other side of

the house. The walk to the farm may go along the approach thro' the gate at M, & other paths may lead over the wild ground about the lime kilns & thro' the Nursery to return to the house, & join the terrace by a path over the souterrein already mentioned. The walk will burst on the terrace at a very interesting point of view, between a group of young beeches & an oak growing on the rock, which together frame the opposite wood as represented in the sketch No 10, in which I have imported a hint of the covered seat proposed in page [blank].

Views from the House

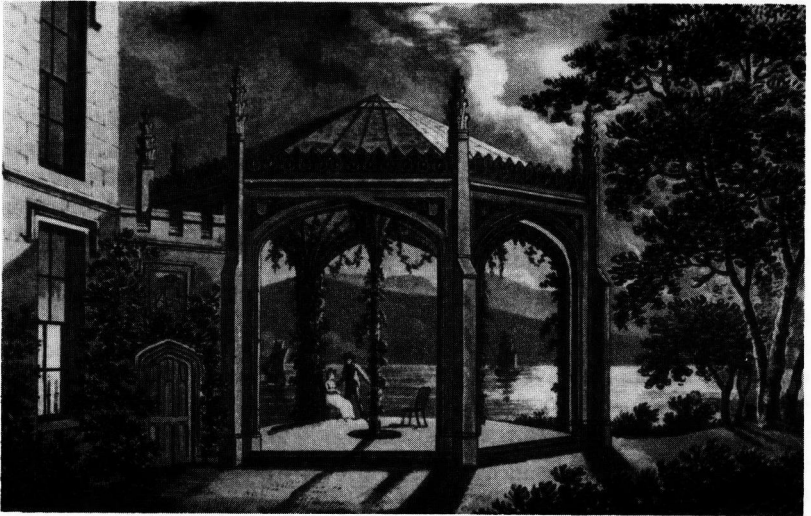
Except from the great Gothic hall or eating room the water & opposite mountains are the leading features of the place; it is therefore with less hesitation, that I venture to propose what may be thought in some measure to interfere with the view from the library: but having observed that the chasm betwixt the plantation & the end of the house exposes the library to a most violent current of wind from the S.W., I have endeavoured to counteract this inconvenience by an expedient which will not only add great comfort to the house, but I trust is in unison with its' general character & magnificence.

The principal apartments are all en suite & by large folding doors a very fine enfilade is preserved thro' the whole building, which I suppose was to be increased in the usual way by a large looking glass; but instead of this, I think a small conservatory or greenhouse might be added to the end drawing room in the manner here described.

The Conservatory

This green house wd exclude nothing from the library but what is seen from every other room on that side the house. The view towards the lawn and Llanedwin wd still be open, unless it was thought advisable to bring the plantation forward, to skreen the west winds, but I conceive that the green house by filling up the chasm, wd tend to check the current, & make the upper terrace, near the house, much more comfortable. Those who only see Plas Newydd in calm weather, & in the height of summer; will exclaim at my task in advising this obstruction to the view of the water from the library: but those who live there in winter, may often speak of this view as Horace does of Pyrrha, convinced from the "*aspera Nigris aquera aventis*" that he must not hope to see this prospect "*Semper vacuam semper amabilem nescius aura*

Fallacis" and at those seasons when the lofty summits of the mountains are enveloped in black clouds, or only gleams of snow are seen to chill the dark horizon; when the water is no longer a scene of delight, & when a man can hardly stand against the gale; we may prefer the artificial summer of a green house, without any impeachment of our taste: & this I have endeavoured farther to elucidate by the two sketches Nos 11 & 12.



12. Plate from Repton's *Observations* of 1303, based on a watercolour from the Plas Newydd 'Red Book'.

The Green House

In the sketch No 12 I have shewn the effect of this appendage, while the plants are in it; but the glass frames & wood work may be so contrived as to be all taken away in summer; leaving only the piers & roof, in the centre of which may be a large skylight. This building is purposely varied in the several hints given of it, because I do not presume to dictate to the architect how it is to be done, but its' character, & where it may be placed: with this intent I have shewn its effect on the scenery in the view of the house from the avenue or long walk in sketch No 5. But it may be variously constructed & of this I give another specimen in sketch No 13, where I suppose it seen from the library in one of those warm summer evenings, when such a pavilion wd tempt us to walk out by moonlight, to enjoy the murmur of the waves, & the perfume of those plants which are most fragrant at that time. In this sketch I have supposed the

skylight to be supported by a slender iron pillar, with an open tracery of Gothic work in the form of an umbrella, and such a building wd exclude very little of the view from the library in summer; but on the contrary, the straights of Menai & the mountain of Snowdon, wd be presented under the arches in a more singular manner.

Conclusion

Many circumstances of improvement are suggested by the maps of which it is however necessary to say, that no map alone can give sufficient instructions. There is a drive described on the small map by a green line, which takes in many interesting points of view, & no where interferes with the approach. I have also shewn many more buildings than actually exist, at Melin Pwllfanogle because I suppose that to be a proper situation for rebuilding all the cottages which have been destroyed: but if a bold pier were also made at this place, it might become a safe harbour & port of considerable trade; the end of this pier might have a light-house or tall building, which together with the houses & plantations scattered on this bank, & Col. Peacock's house rising above them, wd greatly tend to enrich the view, especially as the whole wd be to the north, & therefore lighted up by the sun. I need not add, that every thing which induces vessels to pass the straights of Menai improves the scenery of Plas Newydd, & therefore if the rocks (it is very remarkable that the whirlpools in these straights are called the Swells [?] in English, & the *Charrys* in Welsh. Are not these a corruption of the famous Scylla & Charybdis of Messina?) could be removed which make the passage dangerous, it wd by both a national advantage & a material improvement to the beauty of this place.

The right of road on the opposite shore makes another very striking approach from the London road. I shall therefore conclude these remarks with a vignette representing in miniature the general appearance of Plas Newydd from that side of the water: to which I have added an emblematic design to shew how the genius of painting & gardening may hope to flourish under the Palm of peace, if crowned with success.

(The text of Repton's *Red Book* for Plas Newydd has been reproduced by kind permission of the Chief Librarian, National Library of Wales.)