THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Former North Wales Mental Hospital, Denbigh

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

CPAT Report No 870

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Former North Wales Mental Hospital, Denbigh

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

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Report for Freemont (Denbigh) Ltd

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In March 2006 the Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (henceforth CPAT) were invited to prepare a specification of works for undertaking an archaeological assessment in connection with proposals to develop the site of the former North Wales Mental Hospital in Denbigh. The Denbighshire Archaeology Service, acting as archaeological advisors to the local planning authority, determined that a programme of archaeological investigation and recording should be undertaken. Planning permission had already been granted for the conversion of the hospital buildings (Application no. 01/2004/1445/PO), to which various conditions were attached, including conditions for archaeological investigation, recording and a watching brief.

1.2 The site is a significant 19th and early 20th-century hospital and has considerable architectural and historical importance, such that the main range of the hospital is listed as grade II*, while other buildings are listed grade II, including the Chapel, Nurses Home, Isolation Hospital and Erddig Ward.

2 LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

2.1 The former hospital is situated on the south-west outskirts of Denbigh, and set within its own grounds (SJ 050650). The development includes an area of around 20ha, including the hospital, although much of the area has been landscaped, with one pasture field on the northern side. There has been some recent clearance of minor buildings to the south of the hospital.

3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 The first stage of the assessment comprised a desk-based study of all the readily available primary and secondary documentary, cartographic, pictorial, and photographic sources at the following repositories: the County Records Office, Hawarden; the County Historic Environment Record, held by the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, Welshpool; the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth; and the National Monuments Record at Aberystwyth. Unfortunately, it was not possible to access a number of documents held at Denbighshire County Records Office, Ruthin, which are likely to form the bulk of the surviving hospital records and are listed in the References section of this report. The results from the desk-based study have been used to produce the following summary which is largely based on material held in the NMR and from a published volume, *The North Wales Hospital, Denbigh, 1842-1995*, by C Wynne (1995).

3.2 The North Wales Hospital at Denbigh was founded as part of a national reform movement to improve the conditions and treatment of the mentally ill. In particular, there was great concern for Welsh paupers who were suffering appalling conditions under the existing system. In 1842 the Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy began an inspection of all types of institutions which highlighted the situation in Wales.

3.3 It was against this background that a Committee of local landed gentry, clergy and businessmen met in the Board Room of Denbigh Infirmary in October 1842 'for the purpose of calling the attention of the public to the importance of establishing a hospital for the insane in some central part of Wales.' Among the resolutions which resulted from the meeting was a demand for the counties of North Wales to unite and establish a Welsh hospital, to which end an application was later made to the Quarter Sessions. The application was rejected, however, and in November 1842 the Committee agreed to launch and appeal to raise the necessary funds.

3.4 The appeal gained Royal patronage with donations from The Prince of Wales, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. The land was donated by Joseph Ablett of Llanbedr Hall, and by February 1843 over £4,000 had been raised through donations. However, the problem remained of uniting the counties of North Wales behind the project. Denbighshire and Flintshire agreed in August 1844, although there was further disagreement over funding for the next eighteen months. Meanwhile, Anglesey had refused to take part unless Caernarfon and Merioneth also agreed. It was not until 1847 that all five counties were finally in agreement (Olsen 1974).

3.5 The hospital was designed by Thomas Fulljames of Gloucester and opened in 1848. Built in Jacobean style using limestone from the Graig Quarry in Denbigh, the original design comprised three wings around a quadrangle with a central clock tower, the latter donated by the widow of the principal benefactor, Mr Ablett, who died before its completion. Until the erection of its own gas works the hospital was lit by candles and oil lamps, and heated by coal fires.

3.6 Male patients occupied the north-west side of the hospital and those who were able were employed in the gardens, on the hospital farm, and in tailoring, joinery and shoemaking. Female patients occupied the south-east side and worked in the laundry, sewing room and wash house. In the early days patients were also employed as labourers in preparing the bowling green, skittles ground and laying out the airing courts. These last were attached to a group of wards, and patients would be sent out to wander aimlessly from morning until night in all weathers.

3.7 In 1862 a new chapel was built in the grounds, replacing the original chapel which was sited in the clock tower. The design, by Lloyd, Williams and Underwood, was in an eclectic gothic style with traceried windows, a scissor-braced open roof and a polygonal east end with a projecting chancel. Interestingly, the Ordnance Survey mapping suggests that the original chapel was hexagonal, with projecting a chancel and nave, which was enlarged to its present form by 1899. The chapel was probably never consecrated and does not have a graveyard. Originally, patients were buried at Llanfarchell and from the 1880s at Denbigh town cemetery.

3.8 Overcrowding soon became a problem and new wings, designed by Thomas Lockwood, were added to the main block in 1862-5, with accommodation for an extra 150 patients, and a separate residence was built for the Medical Superintendent.

3.9 The additional accommodation proved to be insufficient and a further extension was opened in 1881 with a new male wing for 160 patients and a dining hall for 440. This was followed by a major programme of enlargement between 1895 and 1910, based on plans by Ellison and Son of Liverpool, with additional plans by Thomas Lockwood and Sons. Planning and building the new extensions proved very complex, including as it did a new heating system and water supply, both installed in older buildings.

3.10 The 49th Annual Report for the year 1897-98 (FRO D/BC/2861) records the progress of the new building programme. A temporary building in galvanised iron and timber had been completed adjoining the Female Wing, which provided additional accommodation for 100 patients. The Laundry, Wash-house, and Boiler and Engine Houses were roofed and ready for the machinery to be installed, the Isolation Hospital was under construction and work had started on the 'Chronic' Block for Females. There were also proposals to convert the whole hospital to electric lighting since the existing gas works was inadequate. The report also listed the numbers of patients, as follows:

County	1897	1898
Denbighshire	177	176
Flintshire	153	144
Anglesey	80	78
Carnarvon	163	173
Meirioneth	76	80

	Greatest no.	Smallest no.
Males	315	296
Females	337	322
Both sexes	642	621
Boarded out	22	15
In Asylum and boarded out	658	643

3.11 The buildings included new wards for 350 patients, male and female attendant blocks, a dining hall, kitchen, laundry, boiler and engine room and an isolation hospital. The new water supply was fed from Llyn Brân, and was completed in 1900. Several buildings were demolished to make way for the improvements, including the bakehouse and the Annexe, which had housed 100 patients.

3.12 The final additions to the main building consisted of two blocks which were added in 1908 to accommodate 78 males and 74 females and in 1913 the old female work room was converted into a ward.

3.13 Two detached villas for 50 patients were built in 1931 in neo-Georgian style to designs by Lockwood, Abercrombie and Saxon. A further four villas were planned but never built. A year or so later further buildings were added to the complex including a Nurses Home, Gwynfryn Reception Hospital for convalescent patients, and a Female Convalescent Home, all built in neo-Georgian style to designs by Lockwood, Abercrombie and Saxon.

3.14 By the 1960s patient numbers were declining, although a new kitchen and cafeteria for staff was opened in 1976 and a new training school for nurses was opened in 1969.

3.15 The hospital was visited by the RCAHMW shortly before its closure in 1995 to make a photographic record of the most significant buildings and copy any plans and photographs which might be available. A number of important plans were photographed and later accessioned by the National Monuments Record, along with photographs taken of the buildings. From the material made available during a recent visit to the NMR it is clear that the main 19th-century hospital building was the subject of a detailed external photographic survey, together with the chapel, which also has a detailed interior record. There were, however, few photographs of the other buildings, the later phases of the hospital, and internal views. A catalogue of the photographs which were made available at the NMR is provided in section 7. A series of more recent digital photographs has been made available by the client which provide a good general survey of the hospital, although not at a high resolution.

Phasing

3.16 The following phasing of the hospital is largely based on records made by RCAHMW. The hospital's development can be traced through cartographic sources, principally the Ordnance Survey mapping, which provides a series of 'snapshots' at specific dates, which broadly chronicle the main phases of development (Figs 1-2).

1848

The original design comprised a U-shaped range with central administration block (including a basement kitchen and first-floor chapel), flanked by male and female wards with accommodation for 200 patients.

1862
A new free-standing chapel was added in the grounds, replacing the earlier chapel in the main building.

1862-5
A new wings were added to the main block and a separate residence was built for the Medical Superintendent.

1881
New male wing for 160 patients and a dining hall for 440.

1895-1910
A comprehensive scheme for enlargement included new wards for 350 patients, an isolation hospital, kitchens, laundry and other services, an elaborate dining and recreations hall, boiler house and workshops. Several buildings were demolished to make way for the improvements.

1931
Two detached villas were built in neo-Georgian style.

1932-3
A Nurses Home, Gwynfryn Reception Hospital for convalescent patients, and a Female Convalescent Home were built in neo-Georgian style.

mid-late 20th century
Addition of a new kitchen block at the south-east of the corner of the main complex.

4 FIELD ASSESSMENT

4.1 The site was visited on 26 April 2007 in order to assess further the phasing, significance and condition of the various hospital buildings. In general the visit was restricted to the exterior of the buildings, although parts of the main building were entered with the assistance of Mr E Pierce. The visit clearly demonstrated the poor internal condition and structural problems associated with vandalism and the ingress of damp. It was also evident that few, if any, internal fixtures and fittings remain, the buildings apparently having been stripped after the closure of the hospital in 1995.

4.2 From an external assessment of the earlier buildings it is clear that they represent a complex of some architectural and historical significance, a position which is reflected in the Grade II* and Grade II Listed status of the various buildings. The later 20th-century additions to the main complex are generally without character and have little architectural merit.

4.3 The opportunity was taken during the visit to make a general photographic record of the exterior of all the surviving buildings, subject to access. At the time of the visit it was not possible to gain access to the exterior of the Infectious Diseases Ward and the north-west side of the Assembly Hall. The photography was in digital format with a resolution of 3 mega pixels. An index print of the photographs is provided in Appendix 1, together with a photographic catalogue. A copy of the images has been provided to the client and lodged with the regional Historic Environment Record.

5 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

5.1 The development proposals involve the conversion of most of the main 19th-century buildings to residential use, maintaining their external appearance. It is, however, intended to demolish a number of buildings, as indicated in Fig. 3. These include late 19th-century and early 20th-century additions including the Infectious Diseases Ward, Assembly Hall, Laundry and Boiler House, and structures in the main courtyard, as well as the villa (Erddig Ward) built in 1931 and more recent additions such as the kitchens.

5.2 There are no proposals to demolish the original 1840s' buildings, or the 1860s' extensions and to a large extent the proposed demolition will take the building back to its pre-1870s appearance, albeit with the inclusion of some of the more architecturally significant later additions.

5.3 Of the peripheral buildings, the Chapel, Isolation Hospital, Nurses Home, Gas Works and Gardener's Shed are all to be retained.

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The surviving buildings of the former North Wales Mental Hospital form a complex which has significant historical and architectural significance. The main range of the hospital is listed as grade II*, while other buildings are listed grade II, including the Chapel, Nurses Home, Isolation Hospital and Erddig Ward.

6.2 The assessment has identified the main phasing of the complex, based on surviving plans, Ordnance Survey mapping and field evidence. Although some 19th-century buildings were demolished during later phases of the hospital's development, their position and outline are already known and it is considered unlikely that further significant details will be revealed during the demolition process.

6.3 The desk-based study has demonstrated that only a small portion of the hospital records survive and it was fortunate that copies of some plans were made by the RCAHMW in 1995. The photographic record made at that time also provides valuable information from a period when the buildings were still intact. Unfortunately, this record did not extend to all of the buildings in the complex.

6.4 The exterior of the surviving buildings was the subject of a general photographic survey as part of the present study and this is considered to provide a good overall record, although it was not possible to record the exterior of all of the buildings which are to be demolished. The interior is now in such a poor state that any further internal recording would be severely limited by health and safety considerations, and the stripping out and subsequent damage has left little of interest intact.

6.5 The study has not revealed any evidence for activity on the site before the construction of the hospital. It is always possible, however, that earlier buried features survive which may be impacted on during groundworks within the development area. It is considered unlikely that any significant buried features will survive within and around the main buildings, owing to the extensive landscaping and general ground disturbance which has taken place, although other 'green field' areas appear to be relatively undisturbed.

7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

7.1 The writer would like to thank the following people for their assistance during the project: Mr Colin Hayes and Mr Elwyn Pierce; the staff of the Flintshire County Record Office, Hawarden; the staff of the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth; and the staff of the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth.

8 REFERENCES

Published sources

Olsen, M R, 1974. The Founding of the Hospital for the Insane Poor, Denbigh. *Denbighshire Historical Society Transactions* 23, 193-217.

Wynne, C, 1995. *The North Wales Hospital, Denbigh, 1842-1995*. Denbigh: Gee and Son.

Cartographic sources

1840 Tithe Survey of Denbigh Parish
1875 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 1:2,500 Denbighshire 13.8
1899 Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 1:2,500 Denbighshire 13.8
1910 Ordnance Survey 3rd edition 1:2,500 Denbighshire 13.8

Records held by Denbighshire County Record Office, Ruthin (not presently available)
HD/1 Records of the North Wales Mental Hospital 1842-1961
BD/A/792 annual reports 1849-61
DD/PH/155 Reports 1849-55
DD/DM/315/1 Block plans of the new heating system *c.* 1900
DD/DM/47/7-8 Annual Report 1916-17
HD/6/45-55 Records 1934-76

Records held by Flintshire County Record Office, Hawarden
D/BC/2861 Annual Report 1897-98

Photographs held by NMR
NB The following is a list of prints in the NMR archive file for the North Wales Hospital. The numbering sequence clearly indicates that there are more negative in the collection.

Photo num	Date	Description
9500265/1	1892	Sketch of Denbigh Asylum
9500265/2	nd	Proposed Mens Villa – section
9500265/3	nd	Detail of proposed new steps from Nant-y-Glyn Rd to grounds of Reception Hospital
9500265/4	nd	Proposed Nurses Home
9500266/1	1878	Design for increased accommodation
9500266/2	1879	Design for proposed new wing for males
9500266/3	1905	Alterations to Administrative Buildings
9500266/4	1914	Proposed alterations and additions – plan and elevation of Sanitary Tower
9500267/1	1905	Second floor plan
9500267/2	1905	Second floor plan
9500267/3	1878	Design for increased accommodation
9500267/4	1879	Design for increased accommodation
9500268/1	nd	Chronic and Quite Block for Females – four elevations

9500268/2	1875	Ground Floor plan
9500268/3	1928	Block Plan
9500268/4	1878	First Floor plan
9500269/1	1905	Chronic and Quite Block for Males – elevation facing old work room
9500269/3	Nd	Alterations to administrative block
9500269/4	1880	Design for proposed new wing for males – roof plan
9500270/3	nd	Proposed Mens Villas, elevation and cross-section
9500270/4	nd	Proposed Mens Villas, elevation and cross-section
9500271/1	nd	Chronic and Quite Block for Females – Ground and First Floor plans
9500271/1	nd	Proposed Mens Villas – section
9500271/2	1929	Superintendent's Residence – proposed alterations and additions
9500271/2	nd	Proposed Mens Villas – section
9500271/3	1915	Plas showing proposed arrangement of beds in Dayrooms 1 and 6 and on Verandah
9500271/3	nd	Proposed Mens Villas – section
9500271/4	1926	No. 5 Ward – proposed alterations to Sanitary Block
9500317/28	1995	Lodge
9500333/11-2	1995	Chapel stained glass
9500334/1	1995	Chapel stained glass
9500334/2	1995	Plaque inside Chapel
9500334/4-6	1995	Chapel stained glass
9500334/8	1995	Chapel exterior
9500339/1-4	1995	Hospital main elevation
9500340/1-2	1995	Hospital main elevation
9500344/1	1995	Nurses Home – main external elevation
9500344/2-3	1995	Chapel exterior
9500344/4	1995	Chapel interior of chancel
9500345/1-4	1995	Chapel interior
	1995	Series of detailed views of main building exterior
	1995	Views from roof and tower
	1995	Detail of clock mechanism
	1995	Internal roof detail

Plate 1 Main elevation of the original 1848 hospital building. Photo CPAT 2355.003

Plate 2 The south-east, female wing, added in 1867. Photo CPAT 2355.007

Plate 3 The Chapel, erected in 1862. Photo CPAT 2355.081

Plate 4 Main courtyard. Photo CPAT 2355.058

Plate 5 The new male wing erected in 1881. Photo CPAT 2355.043

Plate 6 Late 19th-century Laundry and Boiler House. Photo CPAT 2355.032

Plate 7 The Nurses Home. Photo CPAT 2355.064

Plate 8 The villa (Erddig Ward), erected in 1931. Photo CPAT 2355.086

Plate 9 Hiraethog Ward. Photo CPAT 2355.024

Plate 10 20th-century kitchen block. Photo CPAT 2355.028

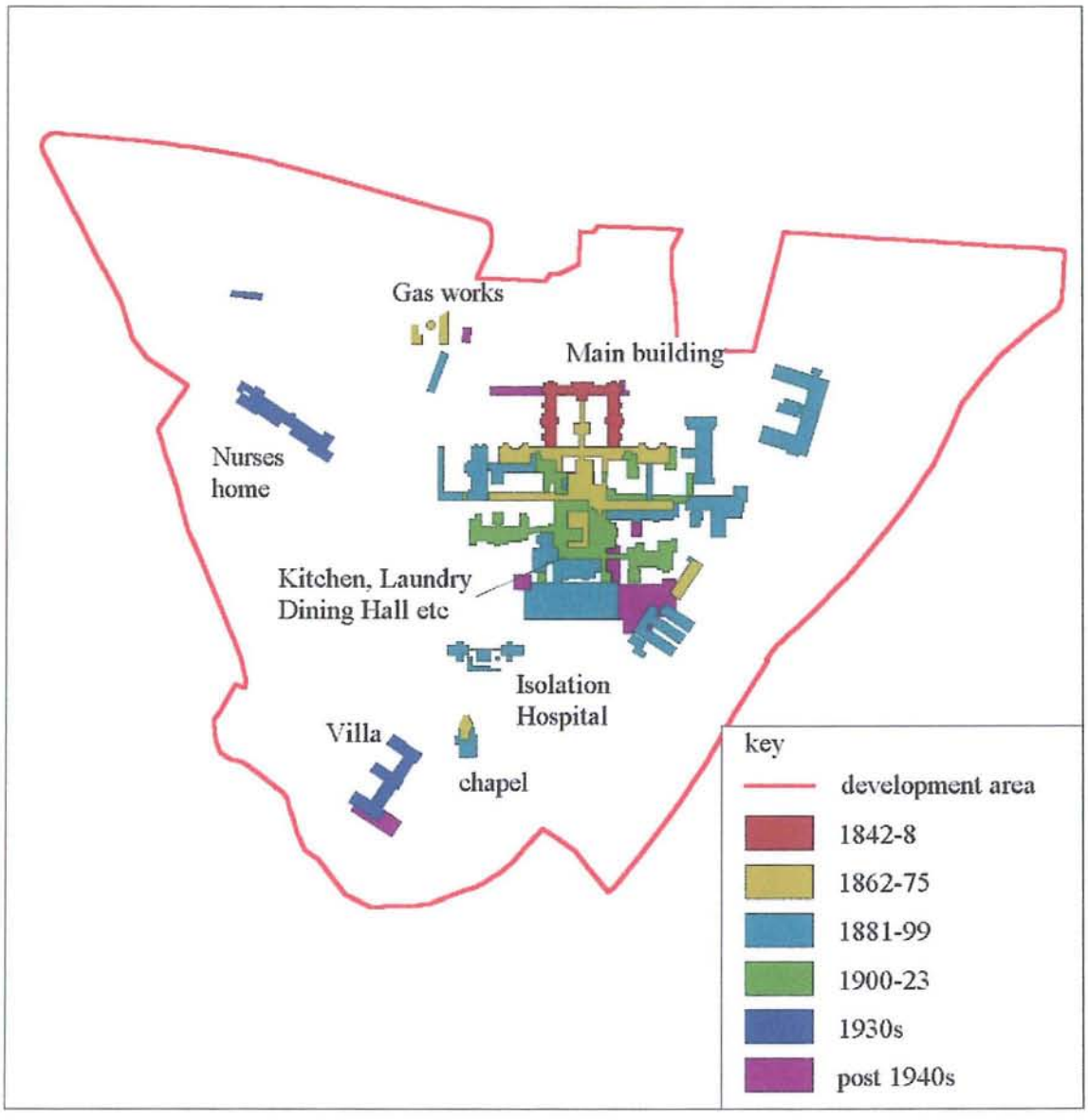

Fig. 1 Development area showing main buildings and phases

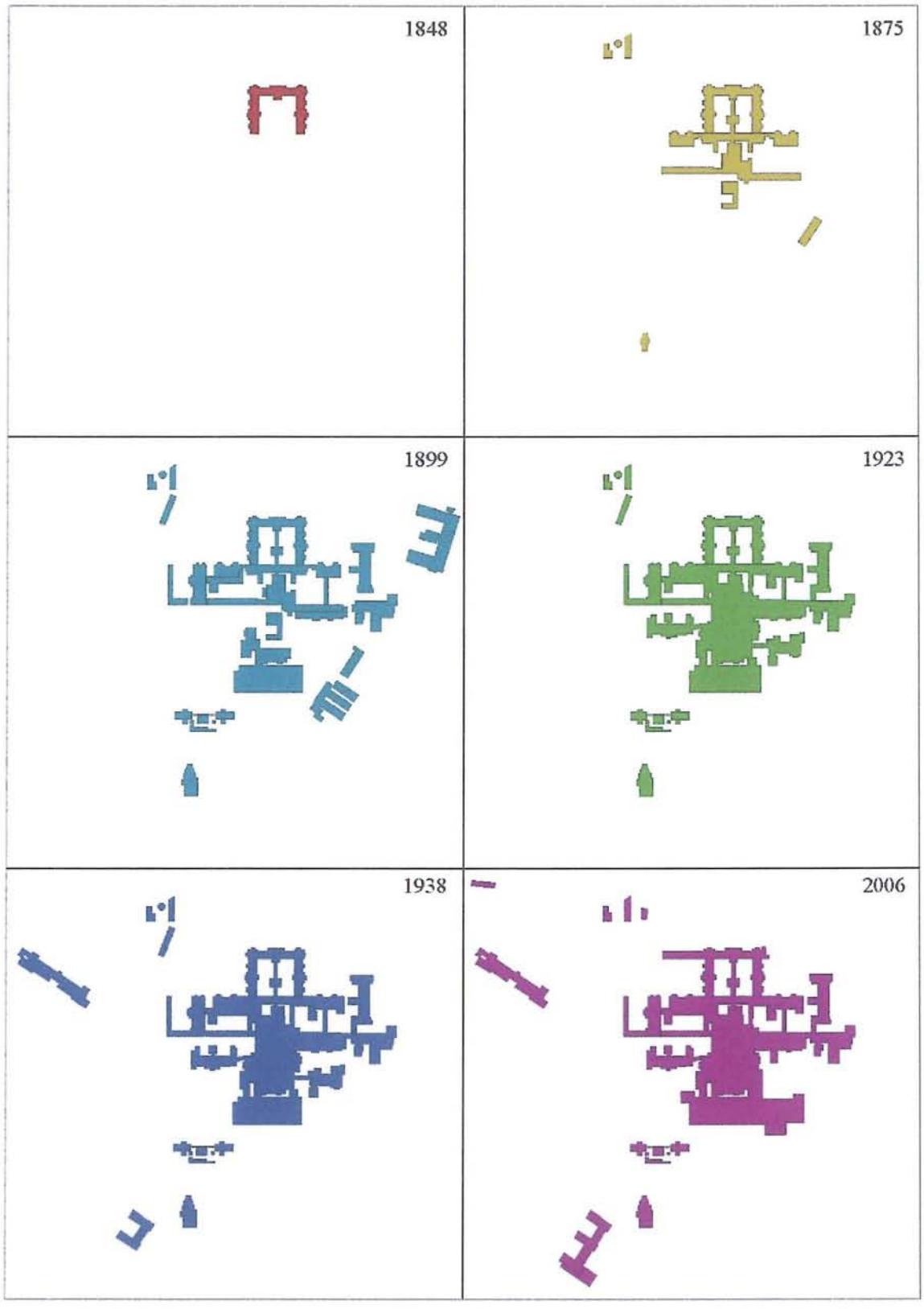

Fig. 2 Chronological development of the former North Wales Mental Hospital, Denbigh, based on cartographic sources

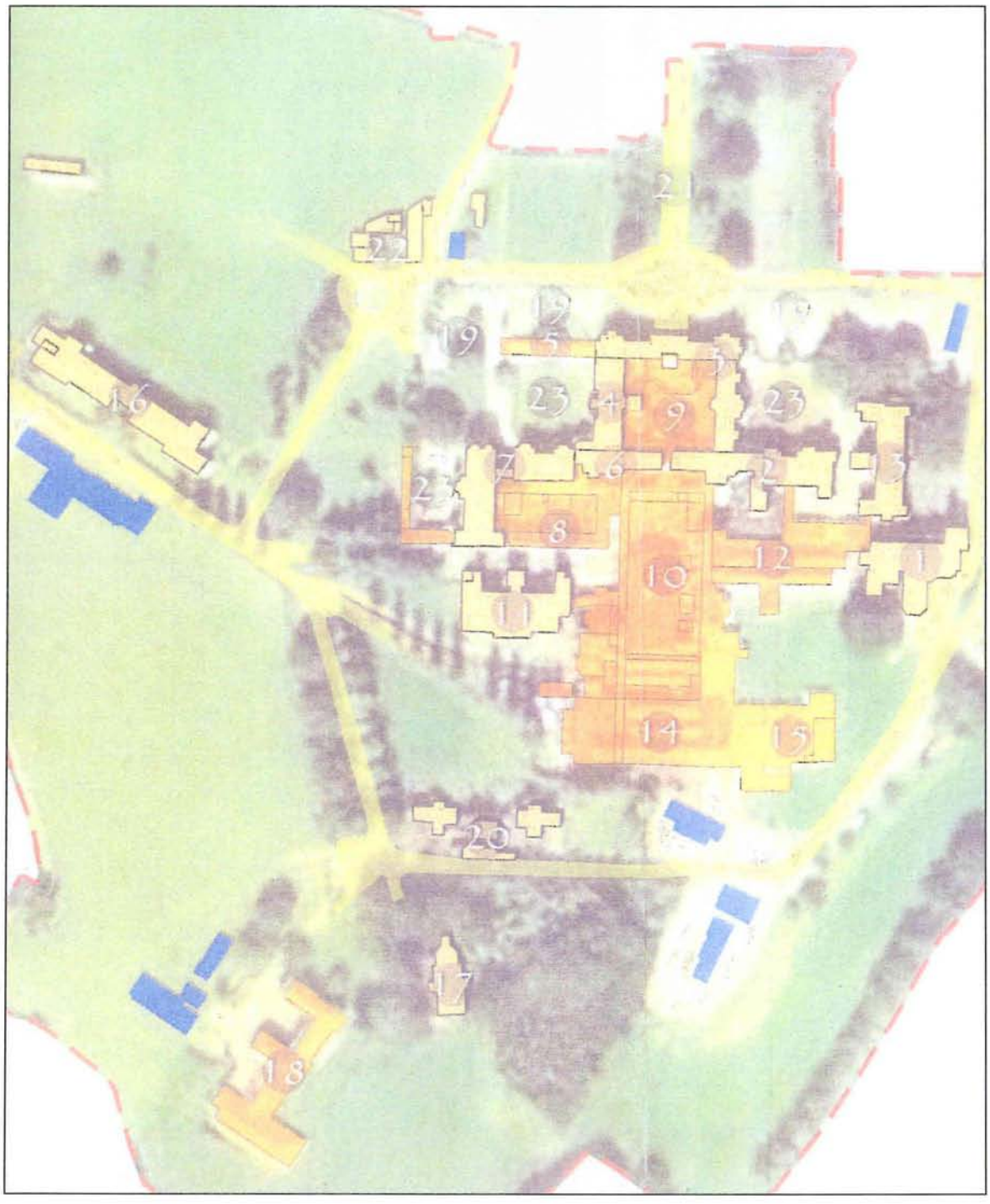

Fig. 3 Development proposals

Buildings to be retained	Buildings to be demolished
Main range and Clock Tower (nos 3, 4)	20th-century wing (no 5)
1867 wings (nos 2, 6 and 7)	Infectious Diseases Ward (no 8)
1881 extension (no 23)	Courtyard and corridor (no 9)
Aled Ward (no 13)	Assembly Hall (no 10)
Hafen Ward (no 11)	Hiraethog Ward etc (no 12)
Nurses Home (no 16)	Late 19th-century Laundry / Boiler House (no 15)
Chapel (no 17	20th-century kitchens (no 15)
Isolation Hospital (no 20)	1931 Villa (Erddig Ward) (no 18)

APPENDIX 1

2007 PHOTOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Photo no	View from	Description
2355-001	NE	Plaque over main entrance
2355-002	NE	Plaque over main entrance
2355-003	NE	Main elevation, 1848
2355-004	N	Main elevation and airing court
2355-005	E	Main elevation and airing court
2355-006	SE	SE elevation, 1848
2355-007	NE	SE Wing 1867
2355-008	NW	Aled Ward
2355-009	NNE	Aled Ward
2355-010	N	Aled Ward and modern extension
2355-011	WSW	Aled Ward
2355-012	S	Late 19th-century extension to SE Wing
2355-013	E	Hiraethog Ward
2355-014	SE	Aled Ward
2355-015	SE	Ogwen Ward
2355-016	SE	Aled Ward
2355-017	SE	Ogwen Ward
2355-018	SE	Steps and mound SE of Ogwen Ward
2355-019	SE	Aled Ward
2355-020	SSW	Ogwen Ward
2355-021	S	Area SW of Ogwen Ward
2355-022	SE	Kitchens etc
2355-023	W	Ogwen Ward
2355-024	SW	Hiraethog Ward
2355-025	S	Late 19th-century Assembly Hall complex
2355-026	SE	20th-century addition S of Assembly Hall complex
2355-027	NE	Kitchens etc
2355-028	SSW	Kitchens etc
2355-029	SW	Kitchens etc
2355-030	S	Kitchens and Laundry
2355-031	S	Late 19th-century Laundry and Boiler House
2355-032	S	Late 19th-century Laundry and Boiler House
2355-033	SW	Late 19th-century Boiler House
2355-034	SW	View towards main range from Boiler House
2355-035	N	Boiler House and Weighbridge
2355-036	N	Boiler House
2355-037	NW	Hearth inside Boiler House
2355-038	NW	NW elevation of Assembly Hall complex
2355-039	SSW	Hafan Ward
2355-040	WNW	Hafan Ward
2355-041	SW	SW elevation of 1881 NW extension
2355-042	N	NW elevation of 1881 NW extension
2355-043	NE	NE elevation of 1881 NW extension

2355-044	ESE	Lean-to opposite 1881 NW extension
2355-045	NNE	NW elevation of 1881 NW extension
2355-046	NE	NE elevation of 1881 NW extension
2355-047	NE	NE elevation of 1867 NW Wing
2355-048	NW	NW elevation of main range 1848
2355-049	ESE	NW Wing and 1881 extension
2355-050	SW	20th-century ward NW of main range
2355-051	NW	20th-century ward NW of main range
2355-052	NNE	20th-century ward NW of main range
2355-053	ESE	20th-century ward NW of main range
2355-054	SE	Gas Works
2355-055	E	Gas Works
2355-056	N	Gas Works
2355-057	SW	Main Courtyard and Clock Tower
2355-058	SW	Main Courtyard and Clock Tower
2355-059	S	Main Courtyard
2355-060	SW	Main Courtyard and Clock Tower
2355-061	SW	Main Courtyard and Clock Tower
2355-062	NE	Main Courtyard
2355-063	NE	Main Courtyard
2355-064	NE	Nurses Home
2355-065	SSW	Gardener's Shed
2355-066	ESE	Gardener's Shed
2355-067	NW	Gardener's Shed
2355-068	NE	Nurses Home
2355-069	NE	Nurses Home
2355-070	S	Nurses Home
2355-071	W	Nurses Home
2355-072	NE	Isolation Hospital
2355-073	NW	Isolation Hospital
2355-074	NW	Isolation Hospital
2355-075	S	Isolation Hospital
2355-076	S	Chapel
2355-077	NW	Chapel
2355-078		Chapel interior
2355-079		Chapel interior
2355-080		Chapel interior
2355-081	NE	Chapel
2355-082	NE	Chapel
2355-083	E	1931 Villa (Erddig Ward)
2355-084	NE	1931 Villa (Erddig Ward)
2355-085	NW	1931 Villa (Erddig Ward)
2355-086	SW	1931 Villa (Erddig Ward)
2355-087	S	1931 Villa (Erddig Ward)