

VIII *Gorddinog – Colonel Henry Platt*

The Gorddinog estate which John Platt had bought, like Bryn-y-Neuadd, was in a state of some neglect, it had been the ancestral home of a long-standing Welsh family which had died out. In the interim, a Mrs Crawley had occupied the House before she married the Rector of Llanfairfechan, Mr Vincent, who, later, was to become the Dean of Bangor. John Platt had regarded the House to be antiquated and had decided it had to be demolished and replaced with a befitting new mansion. The new mansion was built entirely from local granite with an air of the Elizabethan style of architecture. It had been realised, if the new mansion was positioned further up the natural slope of the ground, than where the original house had stood, the area then made available, in front of the new mansion, could be landscaped. However, to do this required the course of a small river (*Nant y Felin fach*) to be diverted from a point behind the intended site for the new mansion. Additionally, John Platt had decided that if the diversion of this river was continued all the way to the sea, a distance of almost three quarters of a mile, such that it passed through the western end of Bryn-y-Neuadd Park, the Park would be enhanced. A granite lined open culvert was constructed (on a line to the east of the river's natural course) which ran through Gorddinog land until it reached the Turnpike road, thence under the road into Bryn-y-Neuadd Park, close to Grand Lodge, where natural looking ponds were made in its course. The acreage of the Gorddinog estate was far greater than the acreage to which John Platt had developed the Bryn-y-Neuadd estate, respectively some 1100 to 330. Not only did Gorddinog contain more pasture and arable land but it had a large expanse of hill land over which a substantial flock of the native Welsh sheep could be run. The lower hillsides, directly behind the House, were planted as woodland in which was included a cluster of exotic trees from overseas, as was the then fashion, and masses of rhododendrons, in a variety of colours, which in the spring and early summer formed a breathtaking backdrop to the House. In every respect, Gorddinog was a superior estate to Bryn-y-Neuadd.

There was no park, in the classic sense, at Gorddinog, the immediate grounds to the House, as intended, took every advantage of the



Gorddinog, Abergwyngregyn.

natural slope of the land for rolling lawns, studded with trees, and formal gardens to be laid out which had, as the centre piece, a large pond, stocked with trout, set in the course of the diverted river. Walks were made through the woodland and, to cap all, a grand carriage drive was constructed through the woodland and out onto the open hills such that it wound round the crest of the highest hill, resulting in a circular tour, of close on two miles, offering splendid views of the sea and mountains from every direction. The drive was known as John Platt's Walk. At one point, when constructing the drive, the carriage way had to be hewn through solid rock which, it was noticed, was iron ore bearing. Conscious, as ever, of the need for Platt Brothers & Company to be, wherever possible, self-sufficient in all things John Platt had a business-like sampling shaft sunk into the hillside. The analysis of the samples showed the ore to be of insufficient grade for commercial exploitation and no further interest was taken, but the shaft and spoil heaps remain, albeit now shrouded in bracken.

From 1872, while indifference and uncertainty surrounded Bryn-y-Neuadd, Henry Platt was busily engaged in developing and consolidating the estate at Gorddinog. He concluded arrangements, with his fellow trustees, for some of the best agricultural land at the western end of the Bryn-y-Neuadd estate to be transferred to Gorddinog, so that slightly more of that estate came to lie in Llanfairfechan (the