

Architecture and the development of Beaumaris in the nineteenth century

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Beaumaris was a creation of Edward I, part of his scheme to build a defensive ring around the North Wales coast from Aberystwyth to Flint. Beaumaris Castle was begun in 1295 and a year later the borough received its first charter. The new town superseded the neighbouring old town of Llanfaes, hitherto the most populous borough in Anglesey. Beaumaris became Anglesey's principal town. According to a survey of 1305 it had 132¼ burgage tenements, which also made it the largest of the North Wales boroughs founded after 1278. In the later medieval period it was the commercial capital of North Wales, just as Caernarfon was the administrative capital.¹

Beaumaris continued to flourish as a port and commercial centre in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It had no permanent harbour, but its sheltered position in the Menai Strait was ideal for transhipment from ocean-going to coastal vessels. The town stood close to the place where travellers to Ireland were ferried across the Menai Strait at low tide. The landing place was south-west of Beaumaris, in which direction the town gravitated beyond its medieval confines. Beaumaris was well-placed to

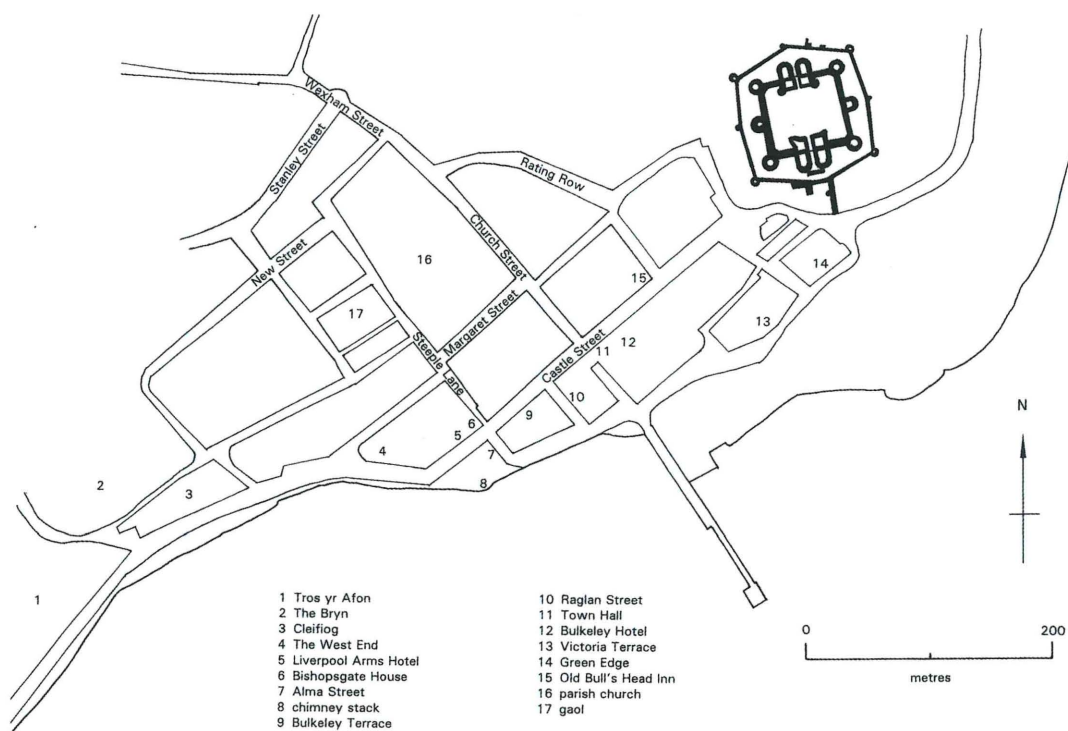


Fig. 1. Beaumaris town plan.

exploit the growing trade with the West Indies and American colonies, but by the late eighteenth century its port was in decline, largely a victim of the rise of Liverpool. Its fishing industry also declined in the early nineteenth century. When the Menai Bridge, just over 4 miles (7 kilometres) south west of Beaumaris, was completed in 1826, the town became more isolated as it was no longer on the principal route from Chester to Holyhead. All of these factors influenced the conscious re-invention of Beaumaris as a coastal resort.

Land ownership in Beaumaris, and by extension the development of the town, was dominated by the Baron Hill estate of the Bulkeley family. Originally from Cheshire, the family are a prime example of how settler families could further territorial, political and social ambitions in North Wales by holding various offices in the borough and at the castle. Members of the Bulkeley family had been senior officials at Beaumaris Castle from the fifteenth century. During the Civil War the castle was held for the king by Thomas, Viscount Bulkeley, who is said to have spent £3,000 on repairs, and his son Colonel Richard Bulkeley. The family gradually acquired land in Beaumaris over succeeding centuries. The family's principal seat was Henblas on Church Street until, in 1612, a new house was built outside of the town at Baron Hill, in an elevated position overlooking the castle, by Sir Richard Bulkeley (d. 1621). Although this original house was apparently never finished, Baron Hill became the family's principal residence after it was enlarged and redesigned by Samuel Wyatt of London in 1776–79.² The family's grip on the

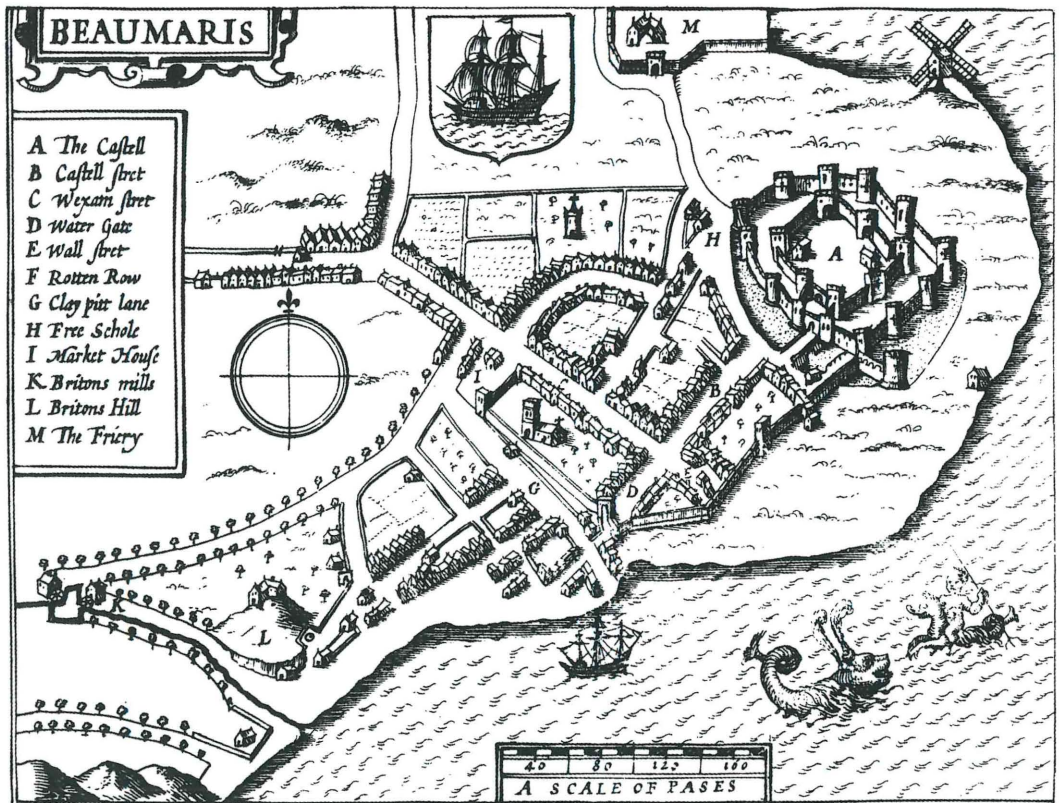


Fig. 2. Beaumaris in 1610, from John Speed's map of Anglesey.



Fig. 3. The Old Bull's Head Inn. The oldest part of the present building is the left-hand section, which in its present form is dated 1766, although later heightened. The right-hand section was added in the early nineteenth century, as were the lean-to shops at either end.

town increased when the 7th Viscount Bulkeley (1752–1822) purchased Beaumaris Castle from the Crown in 1807. The 7th Viscount had no direct heir and the Baron Hill estate was inherited by his nephew, who took the name Sir Richard Bulkeley Williams-Bulkeley (1801–75). The latter was the most influential figure in the redevelopment of Beaumaris in the nineteenth century. A plan of the town surveyed in 1829 shows that the family already owned most of the properties in the town's main streets.³

That the structure of nineteenth-century Beaumaris was based upon the layout of the medieval town is apparent from John Speed's 1610 plan of Beaumaris (Figs 1–2). The plan is an important source in two other respects: It shows the extent of the town wall as it then existed (although with some inaccuracies), and the extent to which the town had already spread south westwards beyond its original boundary. Unlike Conwy and Caernarfon towns, Beaumaris was not walled at the same time as the castle was built. The town wall was only built in the second decade of the fifteenth century, and after the castle was besieged during the Glyn Dŵr revolt of 1403. The wall was maintained by the Crown up to 1540 and afterwards by the Corporation, whose repairs were mainly focused on the sea front, since the wall acted as the town's sea defence.⁴

Within the medieval town the main streets were Castle Street leading south-west direct from the castle (Castle Street and Water Gate on Speed's plan), Wexham Street and Church Street at right-angles to Castle Street (Wexham Street on Speed's plan), and the curving Rotten Row (now known as Rating Row) between Wexham Street and the castle. Further south west, Claypitt Lane (G on Speed's plan) is now known as Steeple Lane. It has three streets on its south-west side, now known as Chapel Street, Rosemary Lane and the approximate line of New Street, with another street at right-angles, Gaol Street.



Fig. 4. Liverpool Arms Hotel and Bishopgate House, now also a hotel.



Fig. 5. No. 13 Castle Street, an eighteenth-century 3-bay house characterised by its steep roof and tripartite sash windows. The entrance left of centre, and the shop front to the right, were added in the late nineteenth century, dividing the house into two premises.

BUILDINGS IN BEAUMARIS BEFORE 1800

The earliest surviving buildings in the town are found on Castle Street and Church Street. No. 32 Castle Street is late medieval and remains partly timber-framed, but was subdivided as early as 1829.⁵ The George and Dragon Hotel (dated 1610) is a timber-framed building concealed by its twentieth-century neo-Georgian front.⁶ Two other large seventeenth-century houses in Church Street were Henblas—the main Bulkeley residence before Baron Hill—and Plas Coch, both H-plan houses of stone and timber-framing. They were subdivided into tenements by the early nineteenth century and were demolished in the final quarter of the century.⁷ Later seventeenth-century buildings, such as 10 Castle Street described below, were of stone.

The town's stock of eighteenth-century buildings reflects its importance as a port, commercial centre and crossing point on the road from London to Holyhead. Buildings in the main streets—Castle Street, Church Street and Wexham Street and Rating Row—were mostly houses. Commercial buildings were mainly inns and public houses. These included the Old Bull's Head Inn, of seventeenth-century origin, rebuilt in 1766 and extended later, and Liverpool Arms Hotel, a 7-bay Georgian hotel at the west end of Castle Street and beyond the medieval town wall, its earlier origin preserved in its seventeenth-century stairway (Figs 3–4). The town hall, completed in 1785, contained a shambles and market house at street level, and in 1826 a new open-air market was begun in Church Street.⁸ The market provided the only permanent retail outlet. Other shopkeepers were domestic-based.⁹ The *Universal British Directory* of 1790 lists for Beaumaris only three butchers, a merchant, hatter and saddler, almost certainly an underestimate. Pigot's 1828 directory lists 30 shopkeepers, of which 12 were butchers trading from the market place.¹⁰

Behind Rating Row and close to the former castle moat, was a grammar school built in 1603, which continued to be a school until 1962 although it was much rebuilt in 1926 (Fig. 2). Next to it stood a charity school, probably the Dean Jones Endowed School built *c.* 1716, that has long since been demolished.¹¹ A Georgian-style National School was built in Steeple Lane and is dated 1816. Chapels were built in the inconspicuous locations that would be expected before the mid nineteenth century—in Chapel Street, a side street on the west side of the town, and behind Castle Street. Not until the final quarter of the nineteenth century was there a chapel on a main street, although the former English Presbyterian Chapel (now apartments) in Church Street is an unworthy building for so conspicuous a location, and an unworthy successor to Henblas which it replaced. The town's other surviving chapel buildings are all late nineteenth century and make only a minor contribution to the town's architectural character. By contrast, the large medieval parish church stands in an elevated position near the upper, north end of the medieval town (Fig 1).

Beaumaris has eighteenth-century houses in the vernacular and polite traditions, although in all cases they have been embellished with later Georgian or Victorian improvement. Baron Hill once dominated the hillside above the town, but this massive three-storey house was not to everyone's taste. 'Nothing to me so hideous as a high house crowded with windows', complained Richard Colt Hoare in 1801. 'Such a building gives me always the idea of a cotton or silk manufactory, or an hospital'.¹² The Bryn is on an eminence which is shown with a house as Britons Hill on Speed's plan (Fig. 2). The present house was probably built in 1712, the date on a tablet re-set on the front of the lodge. Its symmetrical front with steep roof, end chimneys and rear stair turret conceal what was probably a traditional hall plan, obscured when the house was remodelled in the early nineteenth century. Tros yr Afon was a lobby-entry house and is shown on Speed's plan, but was transformed by Georgian remodelling and addition of three more houses to create a short irregular terrace. Cleifiog on Townsend to the west of the main town is a mid eighteenth-century house with single-depth plan and rear stair turret. In 1829 it was, with the adjoining

building, the Custom House. No. 13 Castle Street is another eighteenth-century house with symmetrical front and steep roof, one of the few such houses remaining in the centre of the town (Fig. 5).

Larger houses were built after 1750. Bishopsgate House, once the home of the vicar of Beaumaris (who left the Rectory in Church Street to his curate) but now a hotel, is a 5-bay house dated to the third quarter of the eighteenth century by its Chinese Chippendale staircase (Fig. 4). It also differs from earlier Georgian houses in having a double-depth plan. Nos 2–4 Castle Street, two brick late-Georgian houses close to the castle, also have double-depth plans as well as three storeys (Fig. 6). They are characterised by their tripartite windows, one of the most familiar motifs used in late-Georgian Beaumaris. No. 10 Castle Street, a seventeenth-century house known as *Ty Mawr* in 1829, was subdivided into two properties in the early nineteenth century (Fig. 7).¹³ It originally had a three-unit plan with lateral fireplace and rear stair turret, but to Castle Street the two houses were given a conventional late Georgian 1-bay and 3-bay frontage incorporating tripartite sashes. A corner site allowed the entrance to the smaller house to be built in the return elevation.¹⁴

Surviving vernacular houses are smaller and lower, sometimes one storey with attic, with steep roofs and chimneys in one or both gable ends. Offset openings, particularly the entrance, characterise this class of house. Good examples, both of which underwent later improvement, are 26 Church Street (Fig. 8), which was the Prince of Wales public house by 1849, and 48 Castle Street, a late eighteenth-century house on the site of the former Water Gate.¹⁵ No. 19 Wexham Street, a post house until 1833, retains its simple Georgian character with sash windows in dormers.¹⁶ The Baron Hill estate also improved many of its stock of older cottages in the nineteenth century. Nos 2–10 Wexham Street form a row of single-storey cottages that were given a regular appearance by inserting sash windows and sashes in gabled and



Fig. 6. Nos 2–4 Castle Street, both of which were houses converted for commercial use in the second half of the twentieth century.

raked dormers (Fig. 9).¹⁷ The uniform appearance belies the probable piecemeal development of the row, in which the houses differ in size. Although it is reasonable to assume that they originally had *crogloffs* reached by ladder stair, the end house (No. 10), the largest in the row, has a gable-end stair light that suggests an original fireplace stair.

BUILDING MATERIALS

By the eighteenth century locally quarried rubble stone and roof slates were the principal building materials. Throughout the nineteenth century it was the norm to render the exteriors with scribed roughcast and paint. Masonry was also shipped from quarries at Penmon, approximately 7 miles (11 kilometres) to the north-east of Beaumaris, but most of the Penmon stone buildings are by a single firm of architects, Hansom and Welch. Speed's plan shows a Claypitt Lane leading to an area to the west of the town (Fig. 2). Bricks were first used in the second half of the eighteenth century. The clay pits were in the same general area as Speed suggests, on land that was known as Cae Bricks before the present Maes Hyfryd housing estate was built in the 1950s. Baron Hill was rebuilt in brick from 1776, but the earliest identified brick house in the town is 30 Wexham Street, dated 1772. Two Baron Hill estate houses already noted, 2–4 Castle Street, were built in brick *c.* 1800 in a conspicuous position opposite the castle (Fig. 6).



Fig. 7. No. 10 Castle Street, formerly a single house known as Ty Mawr, but converted into two premises by the early nineteenth century: a three-bay house facing Castle Street and a house with a single bay to Castle Street but the entrance in the return elevation to Rating Row. The corner premises was a tea rooms in the early twentieth century, when a balcony, taken down *c.* 2000, was added to the Rating Row elevation.

In spite of its ruinous appearance, archaeological evidence has shown that Beaumaris Castle was never finished, and that comparatively little of its masonry has been lost since building work ceased *c.* 1330. A more likely quarry for building stone was the medieval town wall, although re-used dressed masonry has been found at only one house, 48 Castle Street. This house was built nearly on the site of the Water Gate, which is said to have been taken down *c.* 1785.¹⁸

TOURISM AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SEA FRONT

Development of Beaumaris after 1820 was initiated by Sir Richard Bulkeley Williams-Bulkeley and the Corporation. Beaumaris and its castle were not much favoured by the Celtic grand tourists, lacking the dramatic setting of Caernarfon or Harlech. 'Beaumaris is too low to be a striking object' was Richard Fenton's curt observation in 1810.¹⁹ Few people, bar travellers to Ireland, would have seen it, although Turner sketched the ruins in 1798. Nevertheless, by the 1830s Williams-Bulkeley had 'made great improvements in the grounds' of the castle 'by laying out walks, ornamented with plantations and shrubberies, and has thrown them open to the public as a promenade'.²⁰ The castle was the venue for a Royal Eisteddfod held in 1832, when Williams-Bulkeley was host to the Duchess of Kent and her daughter, Princess Victoria. The event was nearly a disaster, coinciding as it did with a cholera outbreak that swept across North Wales.²¹

The castle also stood by one of the approaches to Baron Hill, and was used by Williams-Bulkeley to enhance his own status. At the end of Castle Street were two round castellated lodges that acted as the entrance to the castle, but also marked the entrance to a circuitous but undeniably impressive drive to Baron Hill. They were built in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century and are shown on the 1829 town plan.²² The lodges were taken down in the mid twentieth century when they were replaced by the present kiosk, but two matching lodges have survived at the former west entrance to Baron Hill, albeit roofless with blocked windows and painted glazing bars.

The first major building development of the 1820s was initiated by the Corporation. Green Edge, a terrace of seven houses, was built in 1824–25 on the sea front for renting to middle class and professional people (Figs 1, 10). John Hall of Bangor was architect, who in 1825 was also working on the restoration of the parish church and rebuilding of its tower. Green Edge was the earliest purpose-built terrace in Beaumaris. It was intended to provide an elegant counterpoint to the castle and coincided with reclamation of land on the sea front now known as The Green. One of the original tenants of Green Edge was the Beaumaris Book Society, which ran the Beaumaris News and Billiards Room in No. 6.²³ But the Beaumaris sea front was at this time hardly a salubrious resort. Surviving sections of the medieval town wall now became the wrong type of barrier, cutting a view of the sea off from the main town. On its outer side buildings included a prison and, further west, a small cluster of humbler dwellings.

The next phase of development would radically alter the appearance of the sea front and make crucial inroads in the gentrification of the town. Joseph Hansom and Edward Welch, architects of York, were responsible for all the major buildings erected in Beaumaris from the late 1820s to the early 1830s, working for both the Corporation and the Baron Hill estate. Although there is no documentary evidence linking them with the building, Hansom and Welch almost certainly built the public baths at the west end of the town, which are first mentioned in 1828.²⁴ This was another development initiated by Sir Richard Bulkeley Williams-Bulkeley but leased to a private company. Although the baths were demolished in the final quarter of the nineteenth century, the boiler stack for the hot baths has survived on the sea wall (Figs 1, 11). It remains a prominent landmark on the western side of the town. Its architectural character and high-quality masonry strongly resemble the water tower at Hansom and Welch's next major commission to be completed, Beaumaris Gaol.



Fig. 8. Nos 24–26 Church Street. No. 26 on the left was the Prince of Wales public house by 1849. No. 24 on the right was built *c.* 1830 by Hansom and Welch, architects of York, and was one of the earliest houses in Beaumaris to incorporate a shop in the lower storey.



Fig. 9. Nos 2–10 Wexham Street, photographed in the 1930s. The vernacular cottages were improved by the Baron Hill estate in the nineteenth century, giving them a regular appearance that belies their probable piecemeal development. No. 4, second from right, was the Duke of Wellington public house by 1828. *Crown Copyright: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales.*



Fig. 10. Green Edge, 1825, by John Hall, architect of Bangor. The verandas are a later addition.

The old prison on the sea front closed because it failed to comply with the provisions of the 1823 Prison Act. It was replaced in 1829 by a new gaol and house of correction, on a less conspicuous site on the west side of the town beyond the former town wall (Fig. 1). Hansom and Welch provided an ambitious gaol of rugged character that was a remarkable building and is a remarkable survival, but its specification exceeded the requirements of a small borough and it closed in 1878. Hansom and Welch were also commissioned by the Corporation to design a new, much more opulent terrace on the sea front. Victoria Terrace, completed in 1833, is a Regency terrace emphatically urban in its inspiration—Nash's Regents Park is the most obvious direct source (Figs 1, 12). Unlike Green Edge, which was built to incorporate lodging houses, Victoria Terrace was designed to attract people of independent means. Among its earliest inhabitants were Dr Owen Owen of Haulfre, Llangoed, who used it as a town house; Samuel Butler, later Bishop of Lichfield; and Sir John Jervis, barrister and later MP for Chester and Solicitor General. Victoria Terrace therefore marks a new period in the town's architectural history and the rising social status of its inhabitants.²⁵

Victoria Terrace was complemented by a new hotel on Castle Street, also by Hansom and Welch, and built of the same Penmon ashlar. The Bulkeley Hotel was built on the site of the former Crown Inn and Manchester Hotel, as well as humbler buildings including coach houses and stables, at least two dwellings, two smithies and a currier's storehouse (Figs 1, 13). The 1829 town plan shows multiple ownership of the site, and so Williams-Bulkeley was required to buy up all of the properties before replacing a knot of older buildings with a single coherent architectural statement. A considerable portion of the town wall also had to be demolished to make way for the hotel. According to Samuel Lewis the stone was re-used to provide materials for the Bulkeley Hotel. If this was so then it could only have been for the rendered side walls, as it has ashlar elevations to both Castle Street and the sea front. Its austere

but distinguished entrance front to Castle Street has a portico with Soane-type decoration—square columns relieved only by an incised key pattern—while its scale gives it a commanding presence in the street. Its opposite front is a part of a visual group with Victoria Terrace and Green Edge, although the original effect has been altered by the (albeit well-handled) additions to the hotel, first *c.* 1899 by P. Shearson Gregory of Bangor, and then by S. Colwyn Foulkes of Colwyn Bay in the 1930s.²⁶ Between hotel and terrace is one of the other, smaller Baron Hill estate houses by Hansom and Welch. Now known as Chantry House, it is also ashlar fronted, incorporating the signature motifs such as tripartite lintels and panelled aprons adopted for Victoria Terrace.²⁷

The final major development along the sea front was to fill the space between the Bulkeley Hotel and the public baths. The 1829 town plan shows this section of the sea front to be occupied by houses built against inner and outer sides of the town wall, and in multiple ownership. Purchase of all the buildings, demolition of the town wall and land reclamation to extend the sea front outwards, were therefore a



Fig. 11. Boiler house stack on the sea wall, part of the former hot baths and built by 1828, probably by Hansom and Welch, architects of York.

precondition of development, just as it had been with the Bulkeley Hotel. Alma Street, Raglan Street and Bulkeley Terrace are three terraces forming a three-sided rectangular block facing the sea front but backing on to Castle Street (Figs 1, 14). This was another Baron Hill initiative, a development of houses sold on 80-year leases. The work has been attributed to Weightman and Hadfield, Sheffield architects who rebuilt the neighbouring Llanfaes church in 1846.²⁸ A rival scheme was put forward by David Roberts, County Surveyor, who proposed to build 26 houses on the site instead of the eventual 21.²⁹ It is self-evident that Alma Street could not have been built before 1854 and the battle from which it took its name. The first of the houses were probably built *c.* 1857, and a plan of Baron Hill property surveyed in 1861 shows Alma Street to have been completed, 1–5 and 8 Bulkeley Terrace completed, and Raglan Street laid out but not yet begun.³⁰

The terraces remain late Georgian in style, but in the smaller details are characteristic mid-nineteenth century features such as the dressed stone plinth incorporating basement windows, dressed stone doorway surrounds, and some chamfering to the windows and doorways. Bulkeley Terrace, which has six 3-bay houses and two 2-bay houses, has a relatively plain elevation to Castle Street, but more variation in the rear where display was concentrated, including moulded architraves, some with pediments. All of the houses are three-storey and have a strong vertical emphasis, contrasting with the horizontal emphasis characterising the eighteenth-century town houses already described. Alma Street and Raglan Street feature oriel windows to first-floor drawing rooms—the first floor afforded much better views of the sea front than the ground floor—a feature inserted into many Beaumaris town houses in the nineteenth century, superseding the earlier fashion for tripartite windows. Three permanent shops were an integral part of the development. No. 3 Bulkeley Terrace has a replaced shop window but is otherwise well-preserved. The others, at 8 Bulkeley Terrace and 33 Castle Street, occupy preferred corner



Fig. 12. Detail of Victoria Terrace, completed in 1833, by Hansom and Welch, architects of York.

sites. No. 33 Castle Street, which in structural terms formed the north end of Raglan Street, retains the shop front of its original tenants, Staples Grocer & Tea Dealer, but with re-painted fascia. It is well detailed, with round arches on colonnettes and etched glass in the spandrels (Fig. 15).

Alma Street, Bulkeley Terrace and Raglan Street completed the visual clarification of the Beaumaris sea front, transforming it from its relatively utilitarian appearance in 1820 to the elegant coastal town of the 1860s. By means of a pier, said to have cost about £5,000 when it was constructed in the mid 1850s, passengers now embarked direct from steam vessels on to the promenade.³¹ The next major development was built slightly further to the west, again on Baron Hill estate land and replacing a cluster of humbler dwellings and a weaver's shop. The West End is a terrace of six houses dated 1869, with a seventh added soon after (Fig. 1). It completed the shift in the social geography of the town, by removing the small pre-existing community and reserving the sea front for incomers and temporary visitors. Architecturally, the West End contributes little to the sea front. It stands in a prominent position as the town is approached by road from Menai Bridge, which only serves to highlight the sudden decline in quality that it represents. It has simpler 4-pane sash windows with no enrichment to its windows and minimal doorcases. It marks the end of Beaumaris' reinvention as a seaside town.



Fig. 13. The Castle Street front of the Bulkeley Hotel, c.1829–31 by Hansom and Welch, architects of York



Fig. 14. Alma Street, on the left, and Bulkeley Terrace, on the right, built mostly in the period 1857–61.



Fig. 15. Shop front to 33 Castle Street, originally Staples Grocers and Tea Dealers, of the early 1860s.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOWN

Significant rebuilding occurred in the nineteenth century in the town's main streets. This encompassed new houses, but also the first permanent retail outlets, tea rooms and hotels. Beaumaris demonstrates well the nineteenth-century growth of permanent retail outlets on the main street, replacing the market as the principal point of exchange. Hansom and Welch built 24 Church Street for the Baron Hill estate, which uses their signature motifs of a Penmon ashlar front incorporating tripartite lintels and panelled aprons (Fig. 8). The house was one of the earliest buildings in Church Street to include a shop in the lower storey. In an adjoining Baron Hill development of the 1850s numerous shops were now introduced to Church Street. Nos 12–22 Church Street are mainly 2-bay terraced houses with a stepped roof line (Fig. 16). Still firmly in the Georgian tradition, in the lower storey were simple shop fronts, all now altered, with separate doors to shop and house. No. 14 Church Street is larger, a 3-bay house of *c.* 1853 that might originally have been a house, but was the National and Provincial Bank in the latter half of the nineteenth century, before it became the Old Bank Hotel, a temperance hotel and tea rooms, in the early twentieth century. Nos 12–24 Church Street are three-storey buildings with a strong vertical emphasis, contrasting with the earlier and lower 26–30 Church Street with their horizontal emphasis.

Shops also appeared in Castle Street. The best preserved is probably 34 Castle Street, remodelled from an eighteenth-century house and occupying an ideal corner site (Fig. 17). Its scribed roughcast fronts with rusticated quoins, sill bands and sash windows in architraves are typical of the strong architectural detail found in mid and later nineteenth-century Beaumaris. The shop has fronts to Castle Street and Church Street featuring colonnettes with arches, plastered relief foliage in the spandrels, and a doorway in the splayed corner. Other mid nineteenth-century shops on Castle Street appear to have been purpose built, including Nos 7 and 40, which have roughcast fronts and rendered classical detail. Smaller shops are represented by lean-tos against the Old Bull's Head Inn, now incorporated into the hotel (Fig. 3).

New streets included Stanley Street of the mid nineteenth century and Margaret Street of the 1890s, both west of Church Street and Wexham Street. Stanley Street has brick terraced houses built in a simple classical style (Fig. 18). Its origin may have been in re-housing the denizens of the poorer classes of building, including the tenemented Henblas, but it provided a further opportunity to regularise the appearance of the town.

Beaumaris remained important to the setting of Baron Hill and vice versa. By the 1870s its extensive park, which had been laid out in the eighteenth century by William Emes, remained open to the public four days a week.³² Sir Richard Bulkeley Williams-Bulkeley employed Henry Harrison to alter Samuel Wyatt's house, completed in 1838, following which a new drive was created that completely bypassed the town. The earlier approach to Baron Hill from Beaumaris Castle was diverted in 1862, in a convoluted attempt to re-integrate Baron Hill with the town. It now crossed Wexham Street and continued along Stanley Street, at the end of which is a repositioned late eighteenth-century gateway, through which the drive continued across the park and eventually doubled back to join the main drive south of the house. Harrison, and later David Moore, modified Wyatt's house and created a different, Italianate character that was also used for a now ruined lodge on the approach to Baron Hill west of the town, and for Tunnel Lodge, built where the approach from Beaumaris Castle crossed Wexham Street.

From the 1860s a proliferation of styles was adopted for new buildings in the town—Italianate for Capel Drindod and Capel Seion, town houses in simple late Victorian classical, Queen-Anne revival style and even some indifferent Tudor Gothic. None of this has significantly affected the architectural character of the town, which is dominated by the consistency and commanding presence of its well-mannered Georgian-style houses, and to which the castle ruins provide a romantic counterpoint. As has already been noted, in the nineteenth century narrow three-storey houses, often with heavy architraves

outlining the openings in bold, predominated, to contrast with the lower two-storey eighteenth-century houses, with steeper roof lines and tripartite sash windows to define their horizontal emphasis. It was this large-scale tightly controlled redevelopment of Beaumaris from the 1820s to the early 1860s, and the longevity of the Georgian tradition, that has given the town its strong and coherent architectural character.

BEAUMARIS AS A SEASIDE RESORT

Beaumaris is distinctive among British seaside towns because of its history, topography and land ownership. Nineteenth-century urban history is usually written in terms of growth, but in that period Beaumaris scarcely expanded at all. Despite the building boom, Beaumaris in 1900 had extended little beyond its boundaries of 1800. The 1841 census recorded 2,229 inhabitants, rising to 2,558 in 1861, and then falling off to 2,291 by 1901. The presence of the castle on the east side of the town and of Baron Hill to the north-west inhibited its outward spread. Ironically, the town's most significant area of expansion was the relatively narrow stretch of reclaimed land on the sea front. Suburban development of Beaumaris did not occur until the mid twentieth century. In this it can be contrasted with the other medieval boroughs of North Wales. Conwy maintained its town wall and the physical integrity of its medieval borough, but after 1850 it experienced suburban development to the west and south-west in Cadnant and Mount Pleasant. Caernarfon, while also retaining its town wall, expanded much further. Whereas the trade of Beaumaris declined in the nineteenth century, Caernarfon became the principal mercantile centre of north-west Wales. It has suburban villas of the mid nineteenth century along the



Fig. 16. Nos 12–22 Church Street, houses with shops built in the 1850s.

Bangor Road, and to the south west of the town above the lower reaches of Afon Seiont, where the castle provides a spectacular backdrop. The commercial centre of the town shifted beyond the town wall, largely due to the expansion of its port, namely the early nineteenth-century Slate Quay, and Victoria Dock, built in 1874 to handle the general trade. The thriving port limited the town's prospects for reinvention as a seaside town.

Beaumaris belongs to a phase of resort development in the early-nineteenth century made possible by the growth of steamboat services from major ports such as Liverpool, London and Bristol. Among the burgeoning resorts served from Liverpool were Rhyl on the North Wales coast, Lytham and Southport on the Lancashire coast. With the exception of Beaumaris, however, these small resorts expanded after the arrival of the railway in the 1840s, which significantly altered their appearance. Subsequently they competed for a larger market and consequently attracted a lower social status of visitor than they had in the early nineteenth century. Beaumaris was never served by the railway and remained a small upmarket resort throughout the nineteenth century. In common with other early resorts, Beaumaris made much of Princess Victoria's visit in 1832, royal patronage that had also been enjoyed in the late eighteenth century by Brighton, Worthing and Southend.³³

The closest parallel among Welsh seaside towns is probably Tenby, a medieval town with a ruined castle on the headland. It developed as a resort from the 1780s, mainly under the initiative of Sir William Paxton of Middleton Hall, Carmarthenshire, who began leasing land in the early nineteenth century. In 1805 he built the public bath-house just outside the old town wall, close to the harbour. Unlike its



Fig. 17. No. 34 Castle Street. Its house and shop are the result of remodelling an eighteenth-century house.



Fig. 18. Stanley Street, a Baron Hill estate terrace of the 1850s.

Beaumaris equivalent, the bath-house has survived. In terms of physical structure, Tenby soon expanded beyond its medieval walls although, like Beaumaris, demolition of part of the town wall was needed to better integrate the town with the harbour. Larger-scale growth beyond the town walls occurred after the arrival of the railway in 1863. Architecturally Tenby has much in common with Beaumaris—in its persistence of the Georgian tradition well into the nineteenth century, and the consistent use of stucco and bay windows.³⁴

Beaumaris was not an estate town, although it demonstrates how concentration of social and economic power was important in the creation of a clear and unequivocal townscape. This was a common factor among nineteenth-century seaside towns. Torquay was developed as a resort in the early nineteenth century on land divided among the Cary and Palk families. Concentration of land ownership allowed controlled development that in turn created a consistent architectural character—mainly urban Georgian, with Italianate preferred for detached villas. Further expansion occurred from the 1840s with the arrival of the railway, but it was not until the 1890s, after the Palk family estates were sold off, that more haphazard development took place.³⁵ There is a clear similarity in the development of Torquay and Beaumaris, where prominent landowners influenced the architectural style and therefore the social structure of the town without necessarily retaining long-term control over it. Bournemouth provides another instructive case, especially when compared to the Beaumaris sea-front development of the 1850s. Bournemouth was built from the 1830s on land owned by three main parties, initially to cater for affluent visitors. Building leases were strictly supervised by the estate offices to ensure that houses and villas were of a suitable architectural character, while the inclusion of restrictive covenants ensured a high standard of maintenance.³⁶

Equally instructive is the contrast with Llandudno, the nineteenth-century seaside town par excellence which, unlike Beaumaris, was a product of the railway age. The North Wales coast became accessible

after the opening of the Chester-to-Holyhead Railway in 1848, providing the impetus for development of seaside towns such as Prestatyn, Rhyl and Colwyn Bay. Llandudno was by far the most grandly conceived, a planned town laid out on Lord Mostyn's Gloddaeth Estate. Its two main streets form concentric arcs following the curving shoreline, with intersecting streets forming a regular grid pattern. The controlling interest of the Mostyns ensured generous street width, a consistent scale to its buildings, and an architectural character that has more in common with Regency Brighton than it does with the native Georgian tradition.³⁷

There was a common pattern of landowner control behind resort development in the nineteenth century. One of its consequences was the creation of a consistent architectural style. Beaumaris nevertheless retains a unique character. It remained a seaside town catering for affluent visitors, mainly because it was not affected by the railway, like most comparable towns. Beaumaris was a medieval town with a medieval street plan and, despite significant redevelopment within the town, its medieval castle gave Beaumaris a strong historical dimension unmatched by any comparable resort of the period.

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NOTES

1. A. Taylor, *Beaumaris Castle* (5th edn, 2004), 36.
2. T. Lloyd, *The Lost Houses of Wales* (1986), 12–13. The house has been uninhabited since the early 1920s and its decline accelerated when troops were stationed there in the 1939–45 war. It is now a ruin.
3. University of Wales, Bangor, Archives Department, Baron Hill 6496 and 8211, plan and schedule of Beaumaris by Richard Yates, 1829.
4. RCAHM Wales, *An Inventory of Ancient Monuments in Anglesey* (1937), cxlviii–cxlix.
5. P. Smith, *Houses of the Welsh Countryside* (2nd edn, 1988), maps 19, 21, 43, plate 70.
6. *Ibid.*, maps 19, 20, 28, 43, 49, 52. A more recent survey is in RCAHM Wales files.
7. Henblas is illustrated in Smith op. cit. (note 5), fig. 60; Plas Coch is illustrated in *Architects Journal* (3/3/1878). Henblas is also described by Richard Fenton in *Tours in Wales, 1804–13* (1917), 259.
8. H. Owen, 'Beaumaris Bailiffs Accounts, 1779–1805', *Transactions of the Anglesey Antiquarian Society* (1929), 76; J. B. Cowell, 'Anglesey shops and shopkeepers', *Transactions of the Anglesey Antiquarian Society* (1984), 36; S. Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of Wales* (1833), vol. 1.
9. The 1829 town plan and schedule shows only one shop on Wexham Street, two shops on Church Street and one shop on Rosemary Lane.
10. Cowell op. cit. (note 8), 45, 70; *Pigot's National Commercial Directory* (1828), 687.
11. 1829 town plan; A. Carr, 'The free grammar school of Beaumaris', *Transactions of the Anglesey Antiquarian Society* (1962), 1–22; M. Seaborne, *Schools in Wales 1500–1900* (1992), 27, 32, 71.
12. M. W. Thompson (ed.), *The Journeys of Sir Richard Colt Hoare through Wales and England 1793–1810* (1983), 183.

13. 1829 town plan.
14. The corner dwelling was later converted to tea rooms with first-floor balcony, taken down after 2000. A survey of the house is in RCAHM Wales files.
15. *Slater's Royal National Commercial Directory, North Wales* (1849), 1.
16. J. B. Cowell, *The Postal History of Beaumaris* (c. 1980).
17. The row is on the 1829 town plan. No. 4 was the Duke of Wellington public house as early as 1828 and remained so for much of the nineteenth century.
18. RCAHM Wales op. cit. (note 4), cxlix.
19. Fenton op. cit. (note 7), 256.
20. Lewis op. cit. (note 8).
21. G. Penrhyn Jones, 'Cholera in Wales', *National Library of Wales Journal*, 10 (1957–58), 285. Despite a claim in the *North Wales Chronicle* on 14 September that 'the population of this part of the Principality has never been more healthy', a few days later the Reverend Robert Humphries was advised not to travel beyond Bangor. He ignored the advice, caught cholera and died in Beaumaris on 31 September. The princess attended on the 28th.
22. 1829 town plan. The lodges are also shown in photographs, including in RCAHM Wales files.
23. The society became the Royal Anglesey Yacht Club in 1885.
24. *Pigot's National Commercial Directory* (1828), 687.
25. L. Nottingham, 'Victoria Terrace, Beaumaris', *Transactions of the Anglesey Antiquarian Society* (1994), especially 40–41.
26. Anglesey Record Office, W Maps 103 (Colwyn Foulkes Collection).
27. Nottingham op. cit. (note 25), 32.
28. In DoE listing survey, dated 1978. The source of this information is not known.
29. University of Wales, Bangor, Archives Department, Baron Hill 6516.
30. University of Wales, Bangor, Archives Department, Baron Hill 8224, Plan of Baron Hill estate properties in Beaumaris, by John Haslam, 1861. The date of Alma Street is indicated in title deeds of present owners. Raglan Street was named after Lord Fitzroy Somerset, first Baron Raglan (1788–1855), commander of British forces in the first part of the Crimean war, until his unexpected death from natural causes after the failed siege of Sevastopol.
31. *Slater's Royal National Commercial Directory, North Wales* (1866), 21.
32. *Journal of Horticulture and Cottage Gardener* (21/8/1873), 137.
33. P. J. Waller, *Town, City and Nation: England 1850–1914* (1983), 133.
34. T. Lloyd, J. Orbach and R. Scourfield, *The Buildings of Wales: Pembrokeshire* (2004), 468–69, 476–85.
35. B. Cherry and N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Devon* (2nd edn, 1989), 844–45.
36. H. Carter and C. R. Lewis, *An Urban Geography of England and Wales in the Nineteenth Century* (1990), 157–58, 162–63.
37. J. Hilling, *The Historic Architecture of Wales* (1976), 155–56; H. Carter, 'A decision-making approach to town plan analysis: a case study of Llandudno', in H. Carter and W. David (eds), *Urban Essays* (1970), 66–78.