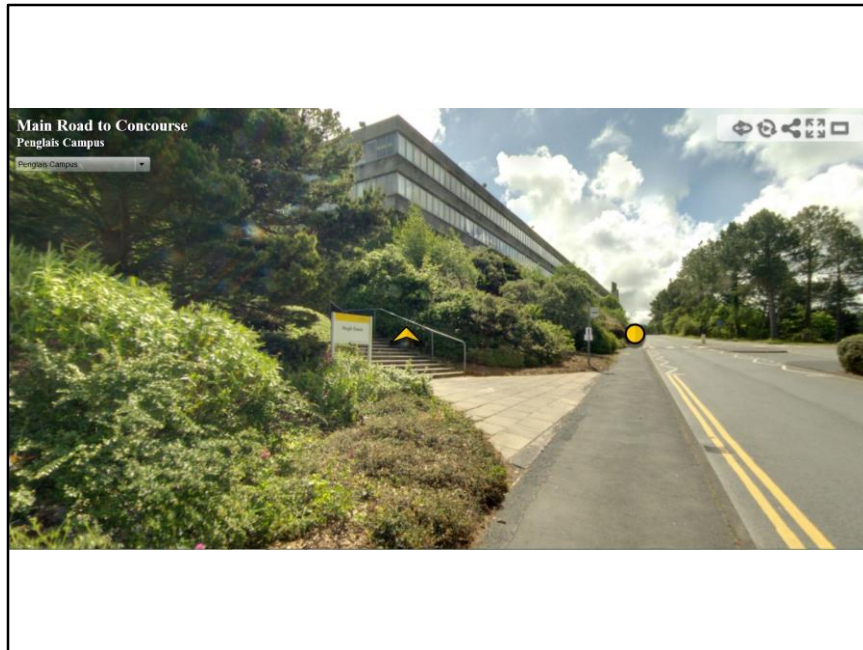


## Two twentieth century gardens in crisis:

Aberystwyth University Campus and the John  
Summers garden at the Shotton Steel Headquarters  
building.

Caroline Palmer and Glynis Shaw  
Welsh Historic Gardens Trust

The Aberystwyth campus is listed II\* by Cadw. It is "*of exceptional historic interest as one of the most important modern landscaping schemes in Wales*". The Cadw Register notes *unusually choice and varied planting and sophisticated layout sensitive to the character of the site*. The campus was designed by the Percy Thomas Partnership and landscape architect John Ingleby. Planting mainly took place 1963-1973, the oldest part of the campus according to plans by Brenda Colvin. Later planting was under the direction of successive Professors of Botany and Curator Basil Fox, and much expertise went into collecting and trialling plants for this coastal site. Acquisitions came from nurseries and botanic gardens all over the country. The top of the site, and halls of residence were planted in the same style in the 1980s.



A clip from the Virtual Tour of the Penglais Campus, Aberystwyth as it appears on the University website today. This shows the luxuriant shrub planting alongside the road below the Hugh Owen building.



A photograph showing the diversity of this planting. From left: *Pyrus salicifolia* 'Pendula', *Olearia*, *Embothrium coccineum*, *Symphoricarpos*, *Hebe*, *Cotoneaster microphyllus*.



Two details of the steps up to the Hugh Owen building. Continuous cover was achieved by dense planting of Hebe, Cotoneaster, Griselinia and Fuchsia.

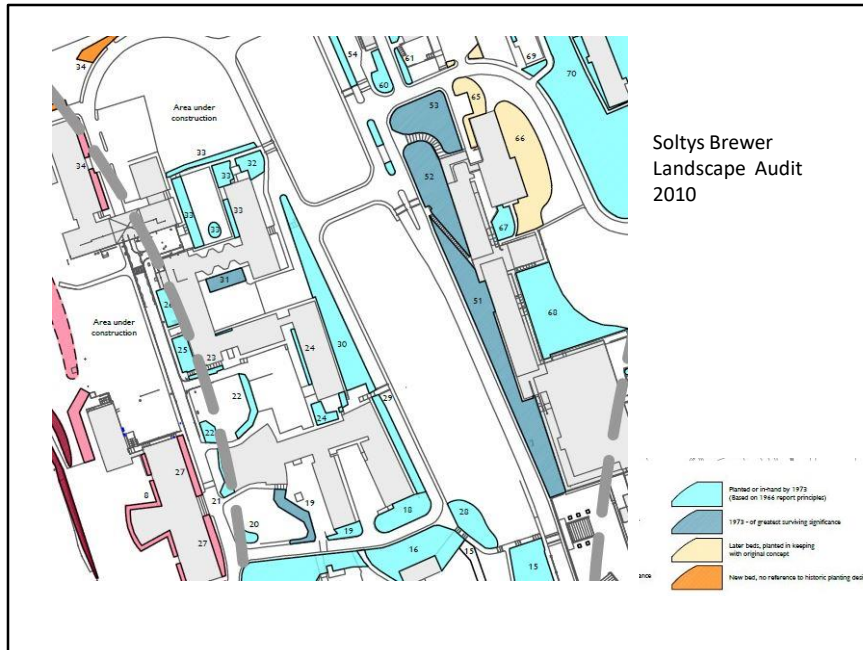


Under the direction of a newly-appointed Head of Estates, the shrubs shown here were all cleared away and replaced with bark chippings or turf. Most of the retained trees in the bark island were weed trees which had seeded in amongst the shrubs. The *Pyrus salicifolia*, though retained, was damaged and subsequently removed.



The new appearance of the setting of the Hugh Owen building.





The Shrub Audit performed for the University by Soltys Brewer in 2010. Dark blue areas are designated c 1973 plantings “of greatest surviving significance”. The areas we have seen are 51, 52, 53 representing more than 90% of the best planting. Their removal was ordered without awareness that this is a Cadw II\* Listed garden. Two other small dark blue areas (31 and 19) will be described next.



This is area 31, a shrub bed in the Llandinam Court with tall *Pittosporum tenuifolium*. It had been neglected in the last six years and was choked with brambles and seedling ash trees. The Estates Department planned to root it all out, but as a result of Welsh Historic Gardens Trust representation and public rage at the earlier destruction it was saved. Weeding and bramble removal revealed very choice plants, including *Colletia armata*, *Bromelia balansae*, yucca, choisya and two camellias.





This is area 19. The original paving needed replacing. Shrubs including *Cotinus americana*, myrtle, *Olearia*, *Callistemon*, *Eurya japonica*, and *Viburnum rhytidophyllum*. There was a small square pond set in an area of beech cobble paving and a dwarf conifer. An island bed of Fuchsias.



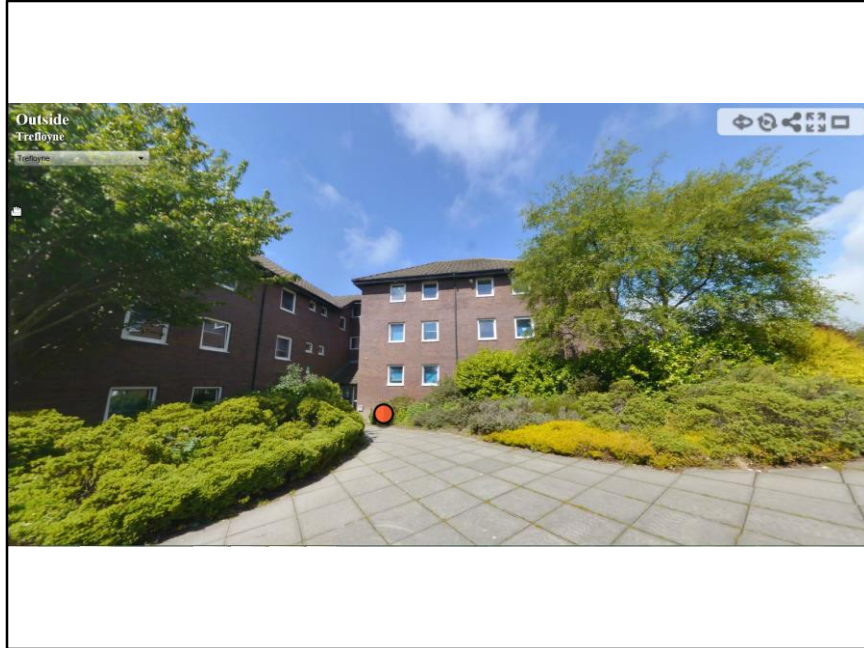
A new paving scheme, not sympathetic to the 1970s design was introduced in summer 2018. The island bed was removed.



While many of the shrubs in area 19 were retained, the character is very different, and the setting of the formal pond drastically changed.



Another area where mature shrub and herbaceous planting was removed. Two phillyreas and a griselinia are retained, but the new turf beneath them is unlikely to thrive in their shade.



Another clip from the Virtual Tour on the University website. Prospective students in the halls of residence might expect to find this luxuriant garden setting.





The same view in Autumn 2018 with the planting largely reduced to grass.



Autumn 2018. A devastated border of mature olearias and azaleas being grubbed out by student residences.



The philosophy is to retain just one tree.



Another clearance near the student halls



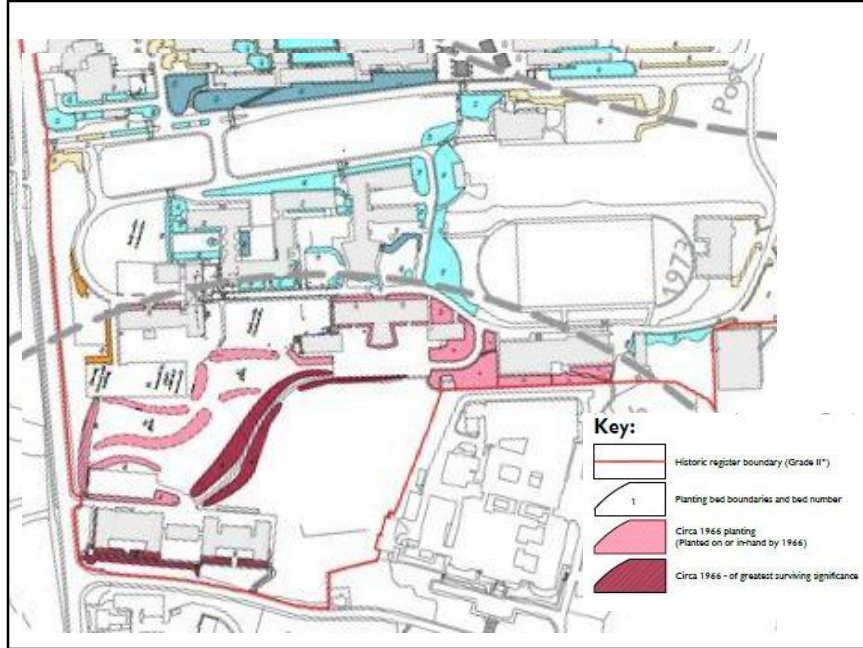


The new turf.

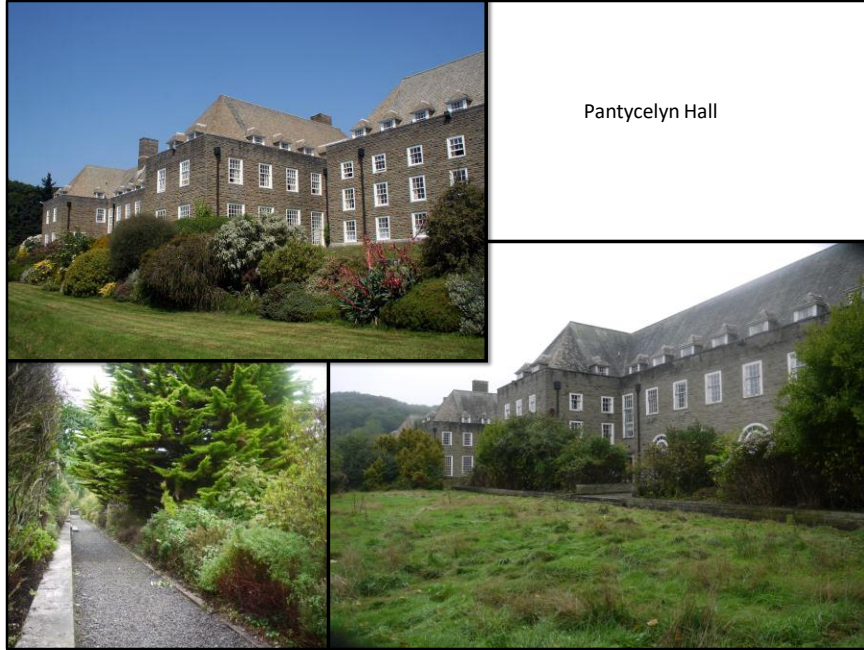


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19



Soltys Brewer identified the most important areas of the early planting. Two are shown in dark red.



Pantycelyn Hall

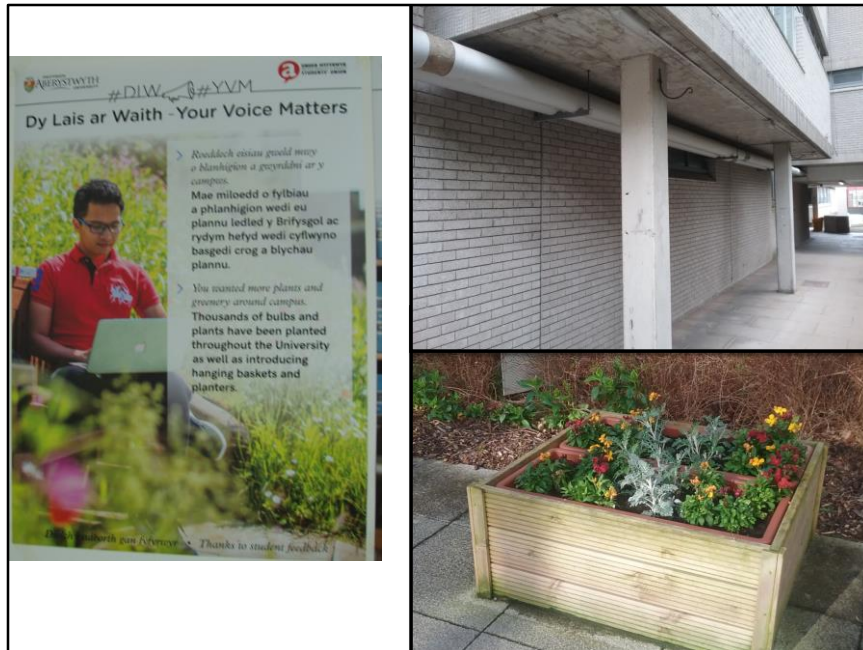
One of these is the border below Pantycelyn Hall, shown top left. Unfortunately when the Hall fell out of use five year ago all grounds maintenance ceased. Now that the building is being repurposed, some very crude hedge cutting techniques have been applied to these shrubs.



Brenda Colvin's curved path used to be bordered with heathers and genistas and hypericum. This is now lost.







A PR poster aimed at the students. The introduction of hanging baskets and planters on a domestic scale is entirely inappropriate to the design ethos. Many were placed by maintenance staff in shaded or inaccessible places where the plants cannot thrive. The lack of garden expertise is both disastrous and costly.