

## **BRONLLYS HOSPITAL**

<b>Ref No</b>	<b>PGW (Po) 9 (POW)</b>
<b>OS Map</b>	161
<b>Grid Ref</b>	SO 135354
<b>Former County</b>	Powys
<b>Unitary Authority</b>	Powys
<b>District</b>	Brecknock
<b>Community Council</b>	Bronllys
<b>Designations</b>	Listed Building: Chapel Grade II, Basil Webb Hall Grade II
<b>Site Evaluation</b>	<b>Grade II</b>
<b>Primary reasons for grading</b>	Purpose-built tuberculosis hospital, with associated landscaping, set within earlier eighteenth- and nineteenth-century parkland.
<b>Type of Site</b>	Early twentieth-century hospital set in eighteenth-/nineteenth-century grounds.
<b>Main Phases of Construction</b>	Park and mansion from at least late nineteenth century. Hospital 1913-20

### **SITE DESCRIPTION**

The original house at Bronllys Hospital, Pont-y-Wal, is a three gabled, two-storeyed late nineteenth-century house, built of local stone. The house is situated on the brow of a gentle hill and faces south, looking over sloping parkland with extensive views of the Brecon Beacons. A 3m high, walled service court lies to rear west of house. The stable block lies to the north of the site boundary, Pont-y-Wal Lane, in the vicinity of Pont-y-Wal farm. This house replaced an earlier house built on the same site by Howel Harris in 1759 which was recorded on the Ordnance Survey map of 1809-36. By 1910 the estate was owned by the Powell family and it is believed that they sold the estate in 1913 when it was bought by the Crown Estates as a hospital site. The house is enclosed to the west and east by woodland. It is now the offices of the Dyfed/Powys Health Authority.

The hospital is arranged on a widely spaced pavilion-system plan. It was built by Edwin T. Hall and Stanley Hall in c. 1913-20, on open land descending to the south. Built as a TB sanatorium, many of the south-facing sides of the wards open on to

verandahs. A central corridor, running north-south, links the wards. The central western pavilion is notable in being built on a butterfly plan. The hospital remains in general use but is no longer a sanatorium.

A sophisticated Arts and Crafts chapel with modernist influences lies in its own grounds some 50m south-west of the main hospital. It was built in c. 1920, following a £5000 gift from Sir David R. Llewellyn and H. Seymour Berry (Lord Buckland of Bwlch) and was dedicated in July 1920. It is not in use at present.

The Basil Webb Hall was a recreation hall, a memorial to Tom Henry Basil Webb, funded by Lieut. Col Sir Henry Webb at a cost of £5,000. It was opened by King George V and Queen Mary on 17th July 1920. A similarly styled building to the chapel, with a slate hung gable, it lies 50m to the east of the main hospital. A croquet/bowls lawn lies immediately adjacent to and above it on the east. This building is now the Finance Department of the Powys Health Trust.

The park at Bronllys descends south across rolling parkland to the southern boundary, the A438. On the 1888 Ordnance Survey map the park was recorded as being semi-circular in shape and of approximately 200 acres. Woodland plantations surrounded the house to the west, enclosing the drive, and to the east. A lake lay in the south-west corner. Within the parkland, to the south of the house, a square plantation lay centre-west. The drive reached the site from the south-west, a lodge lying at the junction of drive and road. Near the house unidentified buildings lay on the edge of the park, south of a plantation which enclosed the drive. The appearance of the park in 1888 suggests an early nineteenth-century landscape which could be the remains of a park planted around the first recorded house of 1759. Indeed the 1809 25 inch Ordnance Survey map appears to record the plantations around the lake in the south-east corner of the estate. Certain mature trees still on site, with respect of their size, girth and condition, could be about 200 years old which may make them the relict planting of this first park.

A tithe map of 1809 also recorded a 'Gardener's Meadow' within the park along the eastern boundary of the site, but the full implication of this description is unknown.

The rebuilding of the house in the late nineteenth century seems to have had more of an influence on the gardens than on the parkland. The addition of larch and other conifers in the belt plantations and as features around the site (the group of three larch south-east of the Estate Office) could be late nineteenth century additions but the 1903 Ordnance Survey map records no major changes since 1888. A photograph, dating from about 1910, records a stone ha-ha, which appears to have been entirely lost, separating the park from the garden along the line of the southern most garden terrace.

Major changes to the park came with the building of the hospital following the sale of the estate in 1913. The centre parkland was lost to development, the lake filled in and the new east drive established, changing the orientation of the estate. Small orchard areas were established to the north of the hospital and east of the new Estate Office. Before 1913 a cricket pitch had already been established in the western area of the

park, to the west of the drive.

Since 1920 little new woodland planting seems to have taken place and the woodlands, and isolated trees seem to look after themselves. Natural regeneration, windblow, fallen limbs and lying dead wood were all noted in and around the woodland areas on site during the course of the survey.

The pleasure grounds and gardens at Bronllys are composed of a series of historic overlays. No obvious evidence remains of any eighteenth century pleasure grounds unless the woodlands immediately to the west and east of the house are included. An unidentified feature, possibly a pond, also lay to the east of the house. This is recorded on both the 1888 and 1904 Ordnance Survey maps but could be earlier.

In front of the Victorian house there is a level, asphalt terrace/ carriage turn, approximately 8m wide. This is bordered on the south by at least two, steep ornamental grass terraces which descend the hill side. There is no evidence of flower beds or planting on the terraces apart from a group of mature rhododendrons, which may cover a third terrace below. While the 1888 Ordnance Survey map does record a slope in this area it is not until the 1904 Ordnance Survey map that the actual form of the terraces is recorded. The date of their construction is unknown but it seems that they were certainly remodelled, if not created, after 1888.

The 1888 Ordnance Survey map records what seems to be a walled kitchen garden in the woodland to the north-east of the house and an aviary south-west of terraces below the house end of the drive, which had disappeared by 1904. Neither of the early maps record any rides or walks in the woodlands near to the house, or within the park.

On the east side of the house a set of concrete, utilitarian steps descend to the south-east on to a narrow path which descends towards the north side of the hospital. Immediately to the east of this path and bordering a woodland is a mature yew hedge of indefinite age.

The path towards the hospital descends through the northern section of the park in which there are two small orchards of approximately 1/4 acre each, to the north east and west of the hospital. They appear to date from around 1920. Photographs of this area during construction, from 1920, record cabbages being grown in what would become the orchard site. The north-west orchard is bordered to the north by a 2m wide path, which runs from the east edge of the western wood, to the south-west of the house to intercept the path mentioned above. At a central point along the west-east path is a small raised seating area, with a modern seat, looking south towards the Brecon Beacons. This path appears to be on, or near, the site of the ha-ha. The southerly path, on its immediate approach to the hospital, is bordered on either side by shrubs including lilac and viburnum planted in about 1920.

Photographs in the main north-south hospital corridor record the building of the hospital and suggest that no contemporary 'garden' was created around the site until well after the opening. The level of design in the terraces between the wards is low

and there is little indication that it was ever sophisticated. Several terraces are planted with rows of mature shrubs, which from their size suggest that they could date from about 1930. More ornamental planting, low shrub hedges and simple flower beds are found around the ambulance access, centre east, and the main access at the south end of the corridor. Whether these areas date, in design, from 1920/30 is unknown.

The areas south and west of the main hospital, around the hospital service buildings are ornamented with hedges, laurel, *Lonicera nitida*, various conifers, sorbus and prunus trees and some rose beds. There does not appear to be any definite overall design.

The chapel area is defined by a rectangular yew hedge, approximately 1.5m high, in each corner of which is a standard Irish yew. East of the chapel a tennis court is surrounded by a small area of woodland, containing walnut, yew and Lawson cypress, around a small, raised brick seating dais overlooking the court. A formal garden lies centre west of the main hospital where a rectangle of yew hedges, with abandoned narrow, cross paths converge on a rectangular fish pond, containing fish and water lilies, approximately 1.5x3m.

A croquet/bowls lawn lies adjacent and above the Basil Webb Hall. This area, a level rectangular lawn of approximately 1/4 acre, is bordered on all sides by a raised asphalt path, 0.5m wide. A slide has been recently been incorporated into the north-east corner, a small pond into the south-east and a ruined wooden shed stands centre north. However, the area is now abandoned. The date of all the formal features above are unknown but it is believed that they are contemporary with the opening of the Hospital.

The Estate Office is surrounded to the south and east by a fine example of a 1920s garden. French windows on the east of the house lead out on to a narrow 'crazy paving' terrace, which continues along the east side, connecting with the large, south patio. Below this terrace is a large 8 x 15m sunk lawn, possibly the site of a sunk flower garden. At its eastern extent a wooden wicket gate leads to a fruit orchard of about 1/4 acre. Several of the fruit trees remain. The south front of the house is ornamented by a large, paved patio which descends on to a level lawn, which slopes to the south. The southern boundary of the garden is a mixed hedge, in the south-east corner of which are three parkland larches. In the south-west corner a mature copper beech overhangs what appears to be an abandoned wild or pool garden of about 2 x 4m. Steps descend on the west side, down into undergrowth, rocks are scattered around. Ferns, small azaleas and Solomon's Seal were recorded.

A walled kitchen garden was recorded to the north-east of the house on both the 1888 and 1904 Ordnance Survey maps. All that survives of this feature is a length of red brick skin along the south face of the northern stone boundary wall. The area is now a staff car park and store area.

The 1913 Sale Catalogue recorded the kitchen garden as having walls and a greenhouse. The 1888 Ordnance Survey map shows internal cruciform paths within

the garden and an enclosed orchard immediately to the east. By 1904 the internal paths/divisions had been lost and the orchard appears to have been depleted.

## Sources

- Primary** 1809-36 6 in. Ordnance Survey map. The National Library of Wales.  
Postcard of south front of Pont-y-Wal, undated. Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales.  
Photographs of the construction of the hospital c. 1920, displayed at hospital.  
Sale Catalogue 1913. The National Library of Wales.
- Secondary** Haslam, R., Buildings of Powys, (1979), p. 303.  
Jones. T., A History of Brecknockshire, (Glanusk edn 1909), pp. 38, 232