

**CADW/ICOMOS REGISTER OF LANDSCAPES, PARKS AND GARDENS OF
SPECIAL HISTORIC INTEREST IN WALES**

REGISTER ENTRY

Bodynfoel Hall

Ref No	PGW (Po) 42 (POW)
OS Map	125
Grid Ref	SJ 176203
Former County	Powys
Unitary Authority	Powys
District	Montgomeryshire
Community Council	Llanfechain
Designations	None known
Site Evaluation	Grade II
Primary reasons for grading	Good example of a medium sized early Victorian mansion in a fine location with small formal grounds, woodland and small area of parkland, which was the second, and new, home of an important Montgomeryshire family, the Bonner-Maurices (Trevors).
Type of Site	Medium sized house and small formal gardens, semi-natural woodland and a small area of park to the south. The garden has been partially restored and two lakes have been added since about 1980.
Main Phases of Construction	c. 1846, restoration and remodelling c. 1980.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Bodynfoel Hall is sited on a level terrace just below a wooded ridge set back from the Llanfechain to Talwrn road on the north side of a small compact park. To the south, the house looks out over the wide, and extremely picturesque, Cain valley. The house, sited on a land which was previously pasture, was built in 1846. It is a medium sized house in a neo-Jacobean style, of grey roughly dressed stone with pale sandstone dressings, a slate roof and

end stacks. The house has two storeys and five bays, each of which is set in a gable. The windows are mullioned and the centre ground floor French windows also have a crenellated parapet. A small, narrow formal stone porch lies on the west front of the house, but entrance to the house is now gained through the old servant's door on the north underneath a glassed-in passage. A *Magnolia grandiflora* and ivy grow on the south front of the house.

Bodynfoel Hall was built by Robert Bonner-Maurice following his inheritance of the old family home of Bodynfoel farmhouse, a red brick seventeenth-century house, now subdivided into two Council small holdings, which lies about 1 km to the north-east, in 1828. Bonner-Maurice changed his name from the family name of Trevor, adopting that of his uncle. By 1846 (some references suggest that the building of a new house had started as early as 1832) Robert Bonner-Maurice had built the Hall, in 'a very charming prospect', and laid out the surrounding land. The house and park has remained in the family, the present owner inheriting in the late 1960s.

To the east of the house there is a small two-storey rendered building of unknown date which appears to have been used for accommodation. This slate roofed building connects to the house by a 3m high stone capped wall. On the west front of this building there is a lean-to wood store and garage. The building stands on the east side of a narrow service area to the rear of the house. The terrace on which the house was built was apparently dug out of the hillside and this service court is enclosed on the north and west by a 3-4m high dry-stone retaining wall and earth bank. Opposite the back door of the house a set of ten slate steps zig-zag up the steep bank on to the service drive. The service court is metalled and to the west of the house it opens up into a small circular parking area which merges into a slightly larger parking area on the west front of the house. Above this area the bank is planted up with mature rhododendrons and bamboo growing on the edge of the Ty-du wood.

The U-shaped stone stable block dates to c. 1850 and lies about 100m north-east of the house set into the rising stony ground in what may have been a quarry. The stables face south and surround a central yard on the north, west and east. Hipped slate roofs cover the two-storey ranges. At the centre of the north face of the north range there is a small single-storey extension with a hipped slate roof. Open lights occur on the second storey. The interior has been partially modernised and new boxes and a workroom/office have been built in concrete block on the south-west and south-east. The northern part of the courtyard has also been covered over by a corrugated iron roof. A lean-to horse trailer shelter abuts the stables on the east side. To the south of the stables there is a rough yard. A service drive runs through this area on the south connecting the house with the Bron Haul farm and riding school. This yard is enclosed, like the stables, by high raised banks which are partly supported by dry-stone retaining walls. Simple entrances flanked by stone piers, with a timber farm gate on the west and a modern metal farm gate on the east, lead in and out of the yard on the line of the drive.

Above and to the west of the stables there is a small red brick rectangular building with a window on its north-east side. The building has no roof and is in a partial state of collapse. A rough path leads diagonally down hill from this structure to the back of the house. Apparently this was a kennel block but the date of its construction, and of its abandonment, is unclear.

The Hendre was the farm/Bailiff's house for the Hall and it lies about 150m to the east of the house. It is a large south facing U-shaped red brick farm house dating to c. 1850. Two gabled wings extend on the west and east to the north. The two-storey house has a slate roof and a simple porch on its west side. A small garden lies to the north of the house, which opens on to the eastern service drive, and a larger area of garden lies to the south. A large metalled yard lies immediately to the west of the farm house. This is separated from the east garden by a large prefabricated agricultural building dating from the 1980s which is in use as a riding school.

Bron Haul lies about 50m down the east service drive to the east of the Hendre. This small two-storey red brick and slate roof house lies to the south of the drive in a small area of garden. It would have accommodated staff.

The park lies to the south and east of the house on either side of the main drive which enters the site off the Llanfechain road to the west of the lodge. The park is compact and relatively small, covering an area of approximately 20 acres. The survival of the area to the west of the drive, and of park plantings in fields to the west of the house, suggests that the park was once larger. The parkland slopes down from the house in the north, at first quite steeply before becoming more gentle, and runs south to the Llanfechain road. A small belt of trees grows along a ridge, which marks the boundary of the park to the west of the drive and, in the east, the park is dotted with isolated trees. Two small water courses run through the east park on the west and far east sides. In the north the park is separated from the garden above by a stone ha-ha. Just within the park at this point there is a large rectangular level platform which is raised above the surrounding land and connected to it by three ramps on the east and west. This was a tennis court. To the north-west of the tennis court site, tucked into the curve of the garden drive, there is a small linear lake which is retained on the south by a high earth dam. New cross-country horse jumps occur throughout the park and continue up into the western farmland.

According to a tithe map of 1840, prior to the building of the new Hall in 1846 the parkland was, like the site of the house, 'pasture'. The park is believed to have been laid out by Robert Bonner-Maurice soon after his new house was built. It was noted in a contemporary account that 'the adjoining land (to the Hall) is well and judiciously laid out, and every natural advantage is turned to good account'. It is not, however, thought that any earth moving was carried out at Bodynfoel and, like many neighbouring houses, Bonner-Maurice simply took advantage of the particularly picturesque glacial landscape of northern Montgomeryshire. Originally two drives entered the site, the existing formal drive from the south, and a now abandoned drive from the west, approaching the house, through a chestnut avenue in what is still called 'chestnut field'. Both of these drives are recorded on the 25in. Ordnance Survey Map of 1886. The line of the drive is still partly visible on the ground between the surviving trees. Narrow belts of trees were also planted on the east and west sides of the south park with a few clumps in between. The planting largely survived until this century when it was gradually felled during the two World Wars. To the north of the Hall a large proportion of Ty-du wood is also believed to have been planted from 1840, but it is unclear whether this was thought to be a part of the park. The Ordnance Survey maps of 1889 and 1903 record only the area to the south of the house, on both sides of the drive, as 'park'. A watercolour

dating from the 1860s records the park much in its present form, but with more planting. In about 1920 a tennis court was constructed in the northern area of the park. Sets of steps connected it to the surrounding park. In the mid-1970s two small lakes were created in the west garden and the north-west park. These lakes flow into one another and they are bisected by the garden drive. Since about 1980 the park has been used as a Hunter Trials course and it now contains several large, timber hazards.

The gardens lie to the south, east, west and north-west of the house on sloping and level areas of ground. Immediately to the south of the house there is a small circular lawn, which is about 10m wide and which is separated from the house by a 3m wide, partly planted, random paved terrace. Stone steps lead down on to this terrace from the French window. Opposite these steps a flight of seventeen stone steps descends to the south between two planted banks of mixed herbaceous borders. A pair of small stone finials ornament the top, northern step. The steps connect to a circular grass walk which runs around the base of these borders to the west and east. The walk is slightly uneven and this suggests that other walks, or features, preceded it. A low dry-stone retaining wall supports the walk on both sides but on the west this wall is overhung with a semi-mature shrubbery of laurel and yew. To the west of this small area of shrubbery a tree and shrub planted lawn descends towards an laurel hedge which creates the garden boundary. Beyond this hedge is the park lake. About 6m to the east of the central steps a curving flight of about thirteen rough stone steps descends down a semi-circular sloping lawn to the ha-ha. To the west this lawn merges into the tree planted lawn above the lake.

On the east of the house a new door opens on to a short length of pergola which is planted up with roses and clematis. This abuts the southern wall of the service court behind. About 4m to the east of the end of the pergola there is a small stone sundial, outside a ground floor door set in the south face of the staff accommodation at the eastern end of the service court. To the east of this door a short flight of steps leads up to the service drive above. The sundial is set in a lawn, which continues from the east side of the south circular lawn, gently sloping to the east. About 4m south-east of the sundial the east walk connects with this lawn. At this point there is a large and very old yew tree growing on the ridge of a steep planted bank which drops away, beneath the east walk, to a curving, sunken lawn in the east. The bank is richly planted with shrubs and perennials. The curving east lawn covers about 1/4 acre and it is separated from the stable yard above by a small arboretum which contains many young conifers, acers and ferns growing beneath some older broadwood trees. Informal grass paths run through this area and a rough west/east axis is formed by a path which enters the area to the east of the garden /service drive steps. On the east side of this lawn there is an extensive rock garden which appears to date from the late nineteenth century. This has been largely replanted but it still contains a stream, with small cascades, and sets of stone steps. The feature is bisected by a path which runs along parallel to the garden's east boundary about 4m inside the garden. A small area to the east of the boundary has been brought into the garden, but screened from it by a wooden fence, and this is used as a small vegetable garden.

The main south drive continues from the park through a pair of formal gates into the garden area. The drive runs along a cutting, overhung by laurel and oak trees. After about 15m the drive changes direction and heads north-east towards the house. It passes over a dam which separates the two lakes. The garden lake is smaller and triangular. On the west a wide mown

tree-planted grass walk runs along besides it, separated from the park above by a high earth bank. To the north and east Ty-du wood, which may have had an ornamental role, over hangs the lake. Near the south-east corner of the lake there is a large golden larch growing on the edge of the wood. Beneath the larch the ground is lost beneath a dense layer of rhododendron. The drive continues from the dam up to the house and the rhododendrons cover the higher ground to the north. A small wicket gate leads off the drive up into this area and into a small area of grass. Other irregular paths lead on through the shrubbery to the north of the house where they open on to a rectangular area of tree-planted lawn and the line of an abandoned service drive, which runs along above the service court at the rear of the house. Opposite the top slate step a set of eight straight steps and a second set of thirteen steps curve around to the north-east, lead up into the Ty-du wood and towards the site of the kitchen garden.

The garden at Bodynfoel Hall dates from about 1846 when the house was built. The appearance of the original garden is unclear but from a watercolour painted in the 1860s it seems that sloping lawns descended to the ha-ha, unadorned apart from an area of shrubbery on the east side. During the late nineteenth century other trees, including conifers, appear to have been added to the garden and walks possibly added in the shrubbery and wood. The small area of lawn to the north of the house is known as the 'archery lawn' and this could also date from this period when archery was a popular pastime, but this is unclear. More work took place in the 1920s when the rock garden was apparently constructed. The rhododendrons were probably introduced at this time, as were the magnolias which grow on, or near, the east lawn. The gardens seemed to have declined from the Second World War until the mid-1970s when the present owner decided to try to restore and improve them. Much of the present garden, the south borders, the east borders, the arboretum and the replanting of the rock garden dates from that time. To the north of the house, on a steep, rocky bank, between the parking area and the rhododendrons, heathers, heaths and berberis were also established at this time. The upper lake, and some of the shrubbery walks, are the work of the present owner. The creation of the lakes is believed to have destroyed the line of the old service drive.

The walled kitchen garden stood above and to the north of the stables. The garden, according to the 1889 Ordnance Survey map, covered an area of about 1 acre. Only the walls are marked on this map. The garden did not appear to contain any glass ranges or houses or an internal path system. Soon after the Second World War the garden walls were taken down and larch planted on the site. These larch partly remain and form a solid rectangular block within Ty-du wood. A small area of vegetable garden is now cultivated on the eastern boundary of the garden.

Sources

Primary 1840 tithe map. National Library of Wales
Bodynfoel Collection. National Library of Wales
Watercolour. View of the south front and park of Bodynfoel by Dorothea Cripps. 1860-65. National Library of Wales, PA 4527.

Secondary Anon., 'Bodynfoel', The Montgomeryshire Collections vol. V.(1872), pp. 261-68.
Haslam, R., The Buildings of Powys (1979), p. 131