

## **BOULTIBROOKE**

<b>Ref No</b>	<b>PGW (Po) 23 (POW)</b>
<b>OS Map</b>	148
<b>Grid Ref</b>	SO 312656
<b>Former County</b>	Powys
<b>Unitary Authority</b>	Powys
<b>District</b>	Radnorshire
<b>Community Council</b>	Presteigne
<b>Designations</b>	Listed Building: Boultibrooke House Grade II, Coach house and service range Grade II, Lodge Grade II.
<b>Site Evaluation</b>	<b>Grade II</b>
<b>Primary reasons for grading</b>	Survival of attractive early nineteenth-century pleasure grounds and gardens in the picturesque Lugg valley contemporary with the additions to an older house by the famous orientalist Sir Harford Jones Brydges.
<b>Type of Site</b>	Georgian house; wooded Victorian pleasure grounds to north and east of house; walled kitchen garden set in pleasure grounds to west.
<b>Main Phases of Construction</b>	c. 1812 on.

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

Boultibrooke House is set within wooded grounds, secluded from the B4355 on the west, on a wooded terrace which faces south overlooking fields which run down to the river Lugg, 'a conspicuous object', according to Lewis in 1842. A horseshoe-shaped drive runs from the road and a lodge in the north-west to curve around to the house in the south. To the east of the house the ground descends sharply into a natural stream valley which marks the Wales/England border.

Boultibrooke is a composite house consisting of a main square, stucco fronted, two-storeyed, three bay block between two low wings of five bays. The main block dates from the late eighteenth-century, possibly earlier. The stone east front of the east wing suggests an earlier building but the central stone porch, now restored, and Gothic

sash windows are probably contemporary with the time of a single-storey extension to the north, dating from about 1872, which is now the kitchen. The roofs are of slate and are hipped, with end stacks.

To the rear of the main block, extending into the service court, there is a large, single-storey red brick extension. This is the library, an elongated octagonal, which was added in 1812-15 by Robert Smirke for Sir Harford Jones Brydges. It has a single circular light in its northern wall and top-lighting inside.

The earliest known reference to a house at Boultribrooke occurs on a map of 1587 by Christopher Saxton, which recorded a farm called 'Fuldibrok'. By 1784 a lease concerning the farm, 'on a piece of land in Norton', besides the turnpike road, recorded the present spelling of Boultribrooke. At this time the Manor of Presteigne, which included Norton and Boultribrooke, was owned by the Price family, who's daughter, Anne, married Belle Lloyd of Bodfach Hall, Montgomeryshire in 1762. The occupiers of the earlier farm house are unknown but were probably tenants of the Prices. The core of the present house and the east wing are later, believed to date from the early eighteenth century when it was built for a Colonel Lloyd, a local squire who had purchased the site.

In the early nineteenth century Sir Harford Jones Brydges, Imperial officer and orientalist, bought the house and surrounding estate and awarded the architect Robert Smirke one of his few Welsh commissions for the library in 1812. It was designed to hold Jones Brydges's extensive collection of foreign manuscripts and books. The new south façade and west wing are also believed to have been added at this time.

By the late nineteenth century Boultribrooke had become established as the 'manor house' of Presteigne and the annual town fêtes and shows were held in its grounds. The Jones Brydges family retained the house until the Great War since when it has passed through various ownerships. The bulk of the farm land was sold in 1926, the walled kitchen garden in 1976. The present owners have been in possession of the house since 1995.

The coach house and service range surround the service court to the rear of the main house and almost connect to the west end of the western wing which, with the 1872 extension to the house on the east, creates a U-shaped arrangement. The coach house is of stone with two storeys and three bays, a pediment over the centre with a small bellcote above, set on the slate roof. A metal faced clock on the wall below the bell has recently been restored. There are two carriage entrances on the east front and double wooden doors. The interior has been reversed, suggestion that the building is earlier than the early nineteenth century but was refronted then. Immediately in front of the carriage house there is a small area of cobbled paving, the area of the service court nearer to the house on the east has been tarmacked.

The two-storey service range connects to the coach house on the south and is a simple, rendered, slate roofed building with three bays. This range and the west wing offer additional accommodation for the house. Another range connected to the west wing

but this was removed in 1950 and an access out of the service court is now in its place. To the rear of the buildings on the west of the court is a stone retaining wall, up to 4m high to the north of the coach house. The wooded ground continues to rise above the wall but recedes away to the west.

The garden surrounds the house on a ground slope that gradually increases to the east where the ground falls quickly into a small stream valley. The house and ancillary buildings are set into the ground. In total the garden covers about five acres. The tarmac drive runs east and then south from the main entrance, which is flanked by stone piers and a stone wall on the north side. An early nineteenth-century, single-storey gothic lodge stands on the south side of the entrance. The drive crosses the former turnpike road, which was moved to the west in the mid nineteenth century, on a single-arched stone and concrete bridge.

To the north and west of the house the garden could be interpreted as pleasure ground as the drive curves through an area of semi-natural woodland, though which a public footpath runs. This informal woodland continues to the east of the drive and descends a steep slope into the stream valley below. A lush, narrow water meadow runs between the wood and the stream, which is edged with alder and hawthorn. To the east of the stream a path runs alongside the water beneath mixed woodland which changes to conifer planting to the east, beyond the site boundary. This Hereford Wood, in England, was originally deciduous and coniferous. It was felled and replanted with larch and Douglas fir in 1950. On the west of the stream there are some notable Victorian tree plantings.

About 30m before the drive reaches the house it splits, one branch going west into the service court, the other east to enter a wide tarmacked parking area along the east front. At the point where the drive splits there is a small formal, tear-shaped garden, edged with iron railings with a triangular pond at its centre. A second small garden continues behind this to the south, above the service court. To the east of the drive at this point there is a shrubbery of laurel, rhododendron and box and a laurel hedge which runs along the east side of the parking area. Behind the laurel hedge there is a steep rocky bank on which ferns are growing. A mature oak marks the south-east corner of the parking area and a set of stone steps that curve down the hillside to connect with new, or repaired, walks through an area of recently cleared former shrubbery which leads down to the meadow. Plants in this area include box, laurel, rhododendron, bladder nut (*Staphylea*) and philadelphus.

Along the south front of the house there runs a split level grass terrace. At the eastern end the dimensions of a grass croquet or tennis lawn are still apparent and in the centre of this area a new, rectangular pool has recently been installed. Traces of a gravel path run south from the glass porch and intersect the remains of a cross path, the eastern section of which was eradicated by the making of the croquet/tennis lawn. A paved terrace along the eastern south front of the house, shown in a photograph of c. 1930, was extended in the second half of the 1990s. The path to the west continues at a higher level to the pool area and disappears into an area of overgrown shrubbery to the west of the house which leads into the woodland.

Immediately in front of the west wing there is a vegetable garden, in existence since c. 1950, and a new glass greenhouse. The terrace runs south from the house for about 15m before descending down a steep slope to the field below. The slope is now obscured by natural woodland interspersed with a few notable mature ornamental trees.

The early history of the grounds at Boultibrooke is unclear. According to Howse, (Presteigne Past and Present) the gardens and grounds date back to the reign of Henry VIII but presumably as a reference only to land attached to the original farm recorded in 1587. An area of pleasure ground may well have been laid out around the house of the early eighteenth century but most of the gardens as they survive today appear, from the age of the ornamental plantings, to date from about the early or mid nineteenth-century, therefore during the tenure of Sir Harford Jones-Brydges. In the woodland there are some notable beech and oak trees whose size indicates that they are of great age. By 1822 the grounds, divided by the road, were developed enough to attract the attention of John Claudius Loudon and, in 1842, S. Lewis described them in his topographical dictionary as 'beautifully disposed'. In 1840 the grounds merited an article in the *Gardener's Magazine* when they were under the care of Mr Weatherston, the head gardener. According to the article the area around the house were relatively simple; the designed woodlands and south lawn which were recorded on the 1843 tithe map. The ornamental pleasure grounds, which included pools and flower beds, lay to the west of the road to the south of the kitchen garden .

The area of the shrubbery, the eastern valley slope and the small formal gardens to the north of the house have no distinct design period but probably date from the late 1800s or the early part of this century. The croquet lawn dates from after 1928 as it is not shown on an Ordnance Survey map of that date. The terrace is probably contemporary with the main building period of the house in the eighteenth century, perhaps being the site of an earlier garden laid out by Colonel Lloyd. It is clearly recorded on the tithe map of 1843. At the foot of the terrace there is at least one massive Cedar of Lebanon which, in size, appears to predate Harford Jones Brydges's tenure and may be a relic of an earlier landscape design.

In the river valley there is a wellingtonia, believed to have been planted around 1870, which could possibly suggest a date for the footpath along the eastern side of the stream. The path runs between small areas of dry-stone retaining wall, on the eastern side, and is also edged in carefully placed stones. The 1888 Ordnance Survey map recorded a foot bridge over the stream near the wellingtonia. The bridge has recently been reinstated by a rustic tree trunk bridge.

## Sources

- Primary** 1843 tithe map. National Library of Wales  
1587 Ordnance Survey (1607 Ed.) Christopher Saxon. Private collection.  
Bodfach Papers, p. 6, items 142-143, National Library of Wales.

Kentchurch Court Documents, vols I-IV, vol. IV p. 160. National Library of Wales.  
Postcard of the interior of the walled garden, 1904. Private collection.

**Secondary** Anon., 'Boultibrook', Gardener's Magazine vol. 16 (1840) pp. 379-80.

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