

## **BROOKLAND HALL**

<b>Ref No</b>	<b>PGW (Po) 37 (POW)</b>
<b>OS Map</b>	126
<b>Grid Ref</b>	SJ 215100
<b>Former County</b>	Powys
<b>Unitary Authority</b>	Powys
<b>District</b>	Montgomeryshire
<b>Community Council</b>	Guilfield
<b>Designations</b>	Listed Building: House and Stables Grade II
<b>Site Evaluation</b>	<b>Grade II</b>
<b>Primary reasons for grading</b>	Good example of mid-Victorian house and small park. Very fine approach, curving drive through ornamental park.
<b>Type of Site</b>	Modest gentry house with relict formal and walled kitchen gardens. Mature compact parkland.
<b>Main Phases of Construction</b>	c. 1860 on

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

Brookland Hall is hidden from view, near the summit of a small hill, behind rising parkland on the west of the A 490 road, to the north of Welshpool. A pair of ornamental stone gates leads off the road on to a drive which curves up and around the southern end of the park towards the house in the north-west. The parkland curves down towards the drive in a series of elegant, natural undulations which are highlighted by well positioned trees, planted singly and in groups.

Brookland Hall is a yellow and red brick gentry house with sash windows and a steep pitched slate roof in a French manner built by the Shrewsbury architect W.H. Hill from about 1860. The two-storeyed house is modest in size. The west entrance front is dominated by a large recessed Italianate porch, with a balcony above, inside which there is a pair of panelled, partly glazed doors. To the north of this there is a single storey circular library, which was a later addition, dating from about 1886. The principal reception rooms of the house lie on the south and south-east overlooking the formal garden. The south-east corner of the house is a two-storey octagonal bay. A conservatory once connected to the house to the north of the

octagonal bay, but this has been removed. An external door which connected the dining room with the conservatory survives. A simple two-storey red brick and slate roof staff wing connects to the house on the north-west behind the library. This connects to the stables. On the west of the house there is a rectangular, tarmacked turning and, now, parking area. This area is bordered on the west by a high evergreen planted bank which separates the site from the farmland beyond.

Brookland Hall was commissioned by the Curling family of Maesmawr Hall, Meifod, as a stopping place between Welshpool and the family home. The house was later extended and improved in the late 1860s and 1870s by a cousin, the Hon. Senator W. Rupert Davies, who made a fortune in Canada. In the 1950s the house and grounds passed out of the family, who had moved to Leighton Hall on the opposite side of Welshpool. It first opened as a school in 1964 when the present owner was a member of staff. The Golf Academy opened in the early 1990s and is affiliated to the school.

The stables at Brookland Hall connect to the north-west corner of the house. The yellow brick and steep pitched, slate roof stables and service buildings are grouped around a central bricked yard which is entered by a gateway framed by simple, square dressed stone piers, which are about 2m high, set in the north-west corner. No gate survives. A formal carriage gateway with a pair of blue painted double boarded doors is sited in the centre of the main west range which contains a low second storey, above the site of the carriage sheds. Above the carriage gateway on the west front of the building is a date stone of 1867.

A straight service drive runs from the north-east stable yard gates up the hill to the north for about 50m to access on to Cloddiau lane, which forms the northern boundary of the site. Where it meets the lane the drive is enclosed by a stone capped retaining wall, standing to about 1.6m high, which curves in from the lane on either side by about 2m. Connected to the inner ends of this wall there is a pair of simple rubble stone piers which stand about 1.8m high. Iron gate pins survive but there is no gate. To the west of the entrance, inside the site, there is a small two-storey red bricked and slate roofed cottage, 'The Cottage', which is attached to the school. It faces north. A small area of garden is fenced off from the school grounds to the south of the cottage.

The park at Brookland Hall runs south-east downhill from the house and garden, and from a high bank above Shade Oak in a gentle undulating valley. It covers about 40 acres. The park is entirely in the ownership of the school apart from about 2 acres of land in the north-west corner which is divided off from the rest of the park by a modern stock proof fence. The drive curves around the park inside the southern boundary, rising to the north towards the house. Mature trees, including Scots pine, cedar, oak and beech grow near the drive. Set below the drive, in the gently sloping valley, there is a cricket pitch at the west end of which there are a group of mature lime. At the top of the high bank above Shade Oak and on a rise about mid way along the eastern boundary of the park, there are two mature plantings of beech and oak. The park is now used as a golf course and bunkers have been sympathetically incorporated into the landscape.

Brookland Hall is believed to have been built on a green field site on land already in the ownership of the Curling family. It is understood that no major earth-moving was necessary

as the natural contours of the land, which are characteristic of the surrounding area, created an elegant and picturesque setting for the park. The peaks and troughs of the natural landform were highlighted through clever tree planting; the groups of lime, oak and beech. It is not known who was responsible for the siting of the trees. No significant changes are believed to have taken place within the park until a cricket pitch was marked out on a north/south alignment within the central valley in the 1980s. In the early 1990s a golf course was created in the park.

The formal gardens at Brookland Hall lie to the south and south-east of the house on at least four different levels. The garden area, which covers about two acres, consists mainly of lawns and there is little ornamental planting. A wide tarmacked walk runs along the south side of the house above a rectangular terrace lawn, which is about 12x6m, and which is enclosed on the south by a line of trees, including a mature copper beech growing inside the garden fence boundary. Dressed stone steps at the east end of the walk connect down to this lawn which is about 2m below the level of the terrace. The walk runs around the east front of the house, to the west of a putting green, and continues around to the north as a wide concrete slab path which separates the putting green from a recently erected single-storey building adjacent to the house and from southern wall of the walled kitchen garden. Below the putting green the ground drops sharply by about 2m to a hard tennis court. The lawn on the south of the house also connects to this feature by way of a third, uneven grass level. A set of zig-zag rustic stone steps lead down from the concrete slabs path to the level of the tennis court. On the east side of the tennis court the ground rises sharply again to a roughly level lawn which is planted with a pair of mature thujas and a yew. This lawn is bordered to the east by a mature shrubbery. The land to the south-east rises to the park boundary, which is defined by a group of Scots pine. To the east of this shrubbery there is an abandoned area of rough grass which may have been a continuation of the garden, but this is unclear. A simple, modern metal farm gate connects this area to a triangular lawn, which slopes to the east, to the north of the tree planted lawn. This is bordered along the north by an overgrown hedge interplanted with yew. A steep bank separates this lawn from the continuation of the garden walk, now as a 2m wide straight path, which runs along the outside of the walled kitchen garden. On the triangular lawn there are what appear to be the relics of earlier round flower beds. There is also a mature prunus in the north-west corner of this area. On the south the garden boundary is created by a nineteenth-century iron fence. This connects to an ornamental, painted iron bared gate on the drive in the south-west, which separates the garden from the park.

The formal gardens are contemporary with the house, dating from about 1860. It appears that they were designed as a group of terraces around the walled kitchen garden and ornamented in a High Victorian manner. A conservatory connected to the house on the east front, abutting the external face of the south wall of the kitchen garden. Within the house there is a picture which contains five views of the park and gardens in about 1870. The putting green appears to have been a formal parterre containing small geometric beds of low bedding plants. It is unclear what edged the beds, or what material the beds were set in. The tennis court appears to have been built on the site of lawn ornamented by a sand or gravel path running inside of the immature shrubbery. Low, formal flower beds were incorporated into this lawn. The south lawn appears to have been a croquet lawn. No garden buildings are recorded in the photographs. Apparently about seven gardeners were employed at Brookland

Hall in about 1900. It believed that the parterre was lost by about 1920 as no reference to it occurs in the sale catalogue of 1931. At this time the gardens included two grass tennis courts, a croquet lawn and an 'easily maintained' herbaceous border. The conservatory was also recorded in the sale catalogue but it is unknown when it was removed. Some later plantings, including a prunus and a hedge of *Lonicera nitida* also survive in the gardens but these probably date from the 1920s or 1930s. The tennis court was incorporated into the garden in the 1980s and the spoil from its construction possibly accounts for the uneven ground to the south-east.

Immediately to the north-east of the house and connecting to the service wing, is a walled kitchen garden. The garden covers about 1 acre and is on two levels, the ground rising by about 1m in the centre on a west/east line. Only the east and part of the south walls still stand. Both rise to about 2m and are built of stone rubble with an interior brick skin. The walls are capped. One doorway survives in the centre of the east wall and it contains a wooden door. The west wall descends the ground slope to the south in seven irregularly spaced steps. On the south, the wall has been roughly broken off to the east of the golf shop. A doorway did appear to be located here as on the west side there is a stone pier set with an iron pin. The north and west sides of the garden wall have been lost beneath additions built from the 1960s for the school. On the west there is a two-storey flat roofed rendered accommodation block with steel framed windows. On the north there is a single-storey range of classrooms with an open south facing veranda. Neither of these buildings appears to be in use. The garden interior is grassed over with the exception of a small strip of vegetable and soft fruit garden adjacent to the west wall door. A small modern timber garden shed and a bee hive stand to the north of this area. A single mature fruit tree survives on the east face of the west wall and a cherry and two plums survive on the north face of the south wall. Near the external north-east corner of the garden there are at least two abandoned pigsties, now used for compost and rubbish. At the north-east corner the wall almost overhangs the Cloddiau Lane, only being separated from it by a line of mature yew trees which continue along to the north to the service entrance. To the north of the kitchen garden there is a triangular area of rough grass, bordered on the north by scrub woodland and the yews mentioned above and, on the west, by the service drive. Immediately behind the north wall of the classrooms there is a steep bank of between 1-1.5m which contains the lower courses of a red brick wall. It is unclear whether this is the remains of the north wall of the kitchen garden or of a bothy, or other service building.

The kitchen garden is believed to be contemporary with the house and sited near it for convenience. No formal records of the internal layout of the garden are known to have survived and so it is unclear whether the garden also served an ornamental purpose. In 1931 the garden still contained a peach house and a vinery but it is unclear if one of the walls was heated ( no evidence of a heated wall survives). The garden probably declined during the early part of this century as walled kitchen gardens were traditionally labour intensive areas and staff levels declined during this time. The major alterations are, however, believed to have taken place during a relatively short period between 1950 and 1970.

## Sources

**Primary** Five photographs of the house, garden and park dating from about 1870.  
Private collection.  
Sale catalogue, 1931. The National Library of Wales. No. 37.

**Secondary** Haslam, R., The Buildings of Powys, (1979), p. 110