VAYNOR PARK

Ref No PGW (Po) 32 (POW)

OS Map 136

Grid Ref SJ 173003

Former County Powys

Unitary Authority Powys

District Montgomeryshire

Community Council Berriew

Designations Listed Building: House Grade II*, Garden

Terraces Grade II.

Site Evaluation Grade I

Primary reasons for grading Well preserved and outstanding early

nineteenth-century parkland of ancient origins in magnificent situation. The seventeenth-century entrance court and garden terrace survive, overlain by Victorian and early twentiethcentury features. Both park and garden contain

some fine mature trees.

Type of Site Landscape park; formal and informal garden

Main Phases of Construction <u>c</u>. 1640; <u>c</u>. 1840.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Vaynor Park is situated on steeply rolling ground to the south-west of the village of Berriew. The house lies on high ground in the centre of its landscape park, the ground dropping steeply below it on all sides but the west, from which it is approached. The house is a substantial three-storey mansion, its long axis orientated north-south, with the entrance front on the west, facing a walled courtyard closed on the west side by the gatehouse and stables range. Access is through a central archway in this building, the drive sweeping up to the front door around an oval lawn. The house is built of a mellow red brick, with sandstone dressings and slate roof. All surrounding outbuildings are of the same materials and in the same style, making a very aesthetically satisfying complex. The style of the house is Jacobean, both original and of the nineteenth century, with mullioned and transomed windows, Dutch gables, clusters of tall chimneys and a projecting, single-storey stone entrance porch with classical details, dating to the mid nineteenth century.

A house has existed on the site of the present house since the medieval period. In the mid fifteenth century a hall was built for Edward ap Hywel ab Ieuan Lloyd. No illustrations of this house are known to have survived but it is recorded as having been built of timber and stone. In his <u>Tour</u>, on passing in 1783, Pennant noted it as 'once the property of Princes'. In 1633 George Devereux acquired the house through marriage and is believed to have rebuilt it in brick by about 1640. This Jacobean house forms the core of the present house. The earliest clue to its appearance and the layout of the courts and buildings around it is in an estate map of 1746, bound into a 1764 volume of estate maps. The west front is recorded in a watercolour by John Ingleby of about 1800. This shows the house with the same plan as today, having projecting wings, a central classical porch and dormer windows in the roof. The house is flanked by pavilions and the courtyard is formal (see below).

In 1785 the estate was inherited from Lord Hereford by Robert Moxon. It then passed to the Winder and then Lyon families and Edmund Henry Lyon (born 1795) took the name Winder on succeeding to the estate. There were thoughts of altering and enlarging the house in the early nineteenth century: plans exist (for a gothic extravaganza) by Hopper 'for John Winder' of *c*. 1810 and by P.F. Robinson 'for Hayes Lyon' of *c*. 1820. The Shrewsbury architect Edward Haycock was also involved at this time, sending plans in 1816 for a farmyard. In 1840-53 the house was remodelled and enlarged in the Renaissance Revival style by the architect Thomas Penson, the County Surveyor for Montgomeryshire, for John Winder Lyon-Winder. Many drawings by Penson for the house, outbuildings, farm cottages, lodges and ancillary features such as gates survive. Penson submitted accounts in 1839 and was paid £6808 17s. The south and east fronts were remodelled, the east front being extended with three projecting bays. A kitchen wing was added to the north, part of which was subsequently demolished in 1960.

The gatehouse and stables, also of brick with stone dressings and Dutch gable ends, is a long, two-storey building closing the west side of the entrance court. The drive swings round from the north to run under the central archway into the court. In about 1840 Thomas Penson, while working on the house, remodelled this building, which was first built in the early seventeenth century. It was originally two separate blocks. These were shown, with a cupola, on the estate map of 1746. The 1840 alterations involved joining the two, lowering the gables, and adding windows and a bell lantern. In 1853 the architect S. Pountney Smith, of Shrewsbury, added an elaborate stone Elizabethan facade to the west side of the archway. Inside, there are former stables and a tack room on the ground floor. At the north end three arched, former coach houses open on the north side.

To the north of the gatehouse is a small service court, reached by a branch of the drive which enters through imposing brick piers with five horizontal bands of stone and tapering stone tops. These are flanked by brick walls joined on the south to the gatehouse range and on the north to a small, single-storey coach house with Dutch gables and three arched entrances on the south side, mirroring those opposite. This building, the walls and piers date to the 1840s improvements by Penson. The north side of the court is open, with a steep drop to the park on its edge. At the east end there is a group of outbuildings. Lean-to, single-storey brick buildings are attached to the north wall of the entrance court, which bounds the south side of the court. To their north is a small, two-storey building with a Dutch gable on the west end.

This is the former laundry. To its east is a larger, taller two-storey building, on slightly higher ground, which is reached by a flight of stone steps. This is part of the nineteenth-century extensions and was attached to the house until the intervening block was demolished in 1960.

Farm buildings and a yard are shown on an estate map of 1746, to the west of the stables. This also shows a small house to the north of the service court. All have gone, but the farm buildings and yard were still in existence when the tithe map was produced in 1844. They had gone by 1889 and were probably removed in the improvements of 1840-53.

The park occupies a roughly oblong area of rolling ground, bounded on the south and southeast by the Berriew to Bettws Cedewain road, on the east and west by field boundaries and on the north by a former lane, now a hollow way. The main drive enters the park in the east corner. To the south of the entrance is a small, single-storey brick lodge of cruciform plan with a slate roof and central tall chimney. It was designed by Thomas Penson and is contemporary with the alterations to the house in c. 1840. There is no entrance gate, the elaborate wooden one, with flanking piers, designed by Penson, having deteriorated and been removed. The tarmac drive climbs westwards through the park, curving round to the north of the house, then southwards to the gatehouse. A large walnut tree stands in a grass island between drive branches, in front of the entrance. A branch continues south-westwards to run past the kitchen garden and then as a farm track westwards on a ridge top across the park. Before the kitchen garden another branch runs southwards to farm buildings and then southeast along another ridge top to a secondary entrance on the south boundary of the park. A track which branches north-eastwards off the main drive, to the south of Crane Coppice, is the eastern end of the original drive. It skirts the south-east side of the wood, in a small valley and then turns northwards to run along the east boundary of the park to a former entrance in the north corner.

The park can be divided into two main areas, which correspond with its main phases of development. First, the oldest part of the park is the largely wooded, steep-valleyed northern half, to the north of the house. Secondly, there is the more open area to the south and east of the house, which was added later.

The northern half consists mainly of a steep-sided valley, orientated south-west/north-east. To the west of the house is a high ridge of rolling pasture above the valley, with some hedge-line oaks on former field boundaries and a few isolated oaks. To the west of the kitchen garden is a mostly open area, shown on the 1889 Ordnance Survey map as a field and orchard, bounded by oaks, hollies and a few firs. To the north of the ridge the ground begins to drop steeply and the whole of this side of the valley, to the west of the house, is occupied by Kennel Wood, consisting mainly of oaks. North-east of Kennel Wood the slope is planted with conifers. Tracks in the wood lead down to an old quarry and the valley floor.

The valley floor is largely open pasture, the upper end wider and flatter than the lower. A small stream runs down the valley, recently dammed into three small ponds at its upper end. Lower down the stream runs in a small ravine and into three larger ponds. The first two have been remodelled recently. The uppermost is oblong, with steep sides, an earth dam and a sluice at the north end. A channel leads to the second, which is similar, with one small and one larger island. The third is the largest. It too is oblong, with a central island with three oak

trees and rhododendrons on it. The northern side of the valley is wooded and called Pen y parc. Trees are mainly oaks, with some conifers, yews, box and rhododendrons at the top of the slope, where it levels out near the north boundary. At the east end of the valley, where the ground on the north side lowers, there are more conifers, including redwoods. A steep track runs up the slope about half way along. Next to it, at the top, are a levelled platform and scattered stones on the site of the former Keeper's Lodge. A short track, probably at least eighteenth-century in date, leads from here to a gate on the boundary.

To the south of the third pond a track runs up a narrow dry valley on the south side of Crane Coppice, a plantation mainly of larch, with some oaks on the edge, on a large rounded knoll. It is joined by another from the south-west and a higher, now disused, path branches off it higher up and leads across the slope south-westwards to the drive. The track leads to the south side of Crane Coppice, where it joins the drive. The former drive leads off northeastwards from here.

The southern half of the park occupies rolling ground to the south and east of the house. Two small but steep-sided valleys run east and south-east from the higher ground near the house. The easternmost one, running east, issues from a pond, with a rhododendron-covered island, in the dip to the north-east of the house and runs into another, smaller pond further down. A large proportion of this part of the park is open grassland, dotted with specimen trees and a few clumps. Trees are mostly oak, beech and cedars, with some other conifers, including wellingtonias. There are five cedars along the north-east boundary. Isolated cedars dominate the east end of the park. There is an area of open oak woodland to the south-east of Crane Coppice, a belt of mixed woodland on the south boundary and part of the way up the western valley, and woodland on the ridge on the south-west boundary and on the ridge to the north-east of the house. A knoll to the south-east of the house is planted with a clump of oaks and one pine. Between the knoll and the house are some large isolated oaks and next to the garden a belt of mixed trees, including wellingtonias, cedars and oaks. The ridge to the west, on the park boundary, is planted with mixed deciduous and coniferous trees, including cedars.

The northern half of the park, encompassing Kennel Wood, Pen y Parc, Crane Coppice and the valley, is the oldest part of the present park. It may have origins as a medieval deer park, but there is no definite evidence for this; the park was probably developed as such in the early seventeenth century, when the house was built. The earliest plan showing the park is the estate map of 1746 for Lord Hereford. On this, this northern area is the park, with only one pond in the valley (the uppermost of the lower present-day ponds) and a lodge, called the Keeper's Lodge on the 1764 map, above it, near the boundary. All that remains of this is a platform and a few stones. The Pen y parc and Kennel woods are shown as they are now. The park boundary ran along the west side of Pen y Park wood and Kennel Wood, along the ridge to the south of Kennel Wood, around the south side of the garden and then north-eastwards across what is now the park. The north and north-east boundaries were the same as today. The drive followed the same course from the house as it does now until it reached Crane Coppice, when it followed the present-day track to the north corner of the park.

The 1764 map, for Robert Moxon, shows the same area as park, but the valley now has three ponds. In 1793 and 1796 the estate had contracts to supply ship-timber for the navy. A watercolour view of the park by John Ingleby from about 1800 records what appears to be an

avenue along the main drive, but this is the only known reference to such a planting and its authenticity is uncertain. Another watercolour, from 1831, recorded a more densely wooded park and, significantly, deer. It is not known when the deer were lost. By 1842 the woodlands, or parkland planting, appear to have diminished as Samuel Lewis commented that the park was only 'tolerably well wooded'. By 1844 the present drive had been constructed and the park extended southwards and eastwards to its present boundary on the road. Whether this was done in the early 1840s by John Winder Lyon-Winder, at the same time as the major alterations to the house, or whether it dates to the late eighteenth-early nineteenth century is not known. The 1889 and 1903 Ordnance Survey maps show the park layout much as it is today. In the early twentieth century exotic introductions, including redwood, firs and cedars were planted in the park and walks were established in the woodland to the west of the gatehouse. A flight of stone steps leading off the drive to the kitchen garden leads to one of these walks and others survive. The small, disused quarries and two small ponds in the southern part of the park are both believed to date from at least 1800. The quarries almost certainly provided stone for the house and estate buildings. The tennis court, which is cut into the slope to the west of the gatehouse, originated in the Edwardian period.

Most of the garden occupies an L-shaped area to the east, south and south-west of the house, bounded on the east and south by a steep, curving scarp. The entrance court to the west of the house forms the remainder. This slopes up towards the house and is bounded on the north and south by high brick walls with bevelled brick coping. That on the north is stepped down the slope and has a door at the west end. In the middle is a recessed modern conservatory converted from a lean-to outbuilding containing lavatories. The south wall is in three sloping sections; at its east end it is topped with stone balustrading and is built of newer brick than the rest. The court is laid out with a central grass oval, planted with two weeping birch trees, around which is a gravel drive. On the south edge of the lawn is a low, circular, scalloped stone ornament. The outer parts are lawn, with a large Scots pine tree in the south-west corner.

To the east of the house is a gravel terrace next to the house and a level lawn, below which is a grass slope, planted with shrubs, to the boundary. On the north edge of the garden is a belt of mixed trees, including two large cedars of Lebanon. A stony walk starts in the north-west corner and runs along the perimeter of the garden. From it a flagstone path leads to a flight of brick steps down the boundary bank to the park, where there is now no gate. At the top of the steps they are flanked by low brick piers topped with iron, cone-shaped finials. At the western end of the walk it runs as a grass path through rhododendrons to a gate on to the service drive.

The south side of the garden has both formal and informal areas. Next to the house is a stone paved terrace with short stretches of stone balustrading, in a fretwork pattern, at the east and west ends. The terrace is revetted with a high brick wall, the top few courses of which have been rebuilt with slightly different bricks. The top of the wall has flat stone coping almost flush with the terrace surface. On top of it are five artificial stone vases at intervals. At the west end of the terrace is a stretch of balustrading on the north side, with a gap through to the entrance court and dog-leg steps of dressed stone down to a grass walk. Four vases similar to those on the terrace stand on low piers flanking the steps. In the angle between the steps and terrace wall is a small area paved with Victorian glazed tiles.

Below the terrace, and continuing westwards to the garden boundary, is a wide grass walk. To the west of the terrace it is bounded on the north by the high wall of the entrance court (partly a revetment wall), at the foot of which is a long border and flowerbeds in the grass. The wall abuts the south end of the gatehouse range, which has two blocked openings. Beyond this the boundary is continued on the same line for a short distance by a high brick wall, with flat stone coping, in which is a pedestrian gateway flanked by brick piers with tapering stone finials. The walk continues into a plantation of tall Douglas firs underplanted with mainly evergreen shrubs, in particular rhododendrons and azaleas. At the end of the walk the ground rises. Except at the west end, where the ground rises, the walk is bounded on the south by a steep grass scarp.

To the south of the grass walk the character of the garden is different: it consists mainly of lawn planted with ornamental trees and shrubs, with a formal, semi-circular arrangement of beds cut into a semi-circular levelled area of lawn below the house. This can be reached by a flight of stone steps, flanked on the west by three columnar cypresses, which descends the grass walk bank opposite the terrace steps. Beyond the beds, but still on the levelled area, two groups of shrubs flank the central axis, on which there is a Coade stone sundial. This consists of a three-sided, scalloped base on which three classically dressed ladies hold up the circular stone table on which the gnomon stands. The plinth is decorated with three rams' heads. A cedar and two oak trees also stand on the levelled area. Below is a slope down to the walk and boundary, where there are further mature specimen deciduous and coniferous trees, including cedars. There are two groups of cypresses and one of wellingtonias. Large old rhododendrons grow on the steep slope down to the walk and towards its west end a flight of rough stone steps, flanked by rhododendrons and hydrangeas, curves down to the walk. Beside it is a stone bowl on a plinth. A further flight of stone steps leads from the walk down to the boundary.

The west end of the garden is taken up with the Douglas fir plantation and, to its south, a bank of rhododendrons, with a grass path through it, parallel with the service drive. At the end of the grass walk is a gate on to the drive, and the plantation continues in the area between it and the kitchen garden to the west. At the end of the grass walk, on the north side, a narrow, curving path leads off eastwards, past rhododendrons and through a short yew tunnel. From here there is a short, stone-edged, branch back to the grass walk. The path winds along the north side of the garden, through conifers, emerging, grassed over, near the gate in the brick wall next to the gatehouse. The garden is bounded here by a wooden picket fence.

The final part of the garden is a small, sunken area at the north end of the house, enclosed on the west by a two-storey block and on the north by a brick parapet wall above a steep drop to the garden boundary and park. This area was created when the former kitchen was demolished in the 1960s. It consists of a rectangular paved area with a central, tiered, clipped box feature, two clipped box bushed and two clipped yews in the corners and brick-edged borders. Two flights of dressed stone steps on the east side lead up to a small brick paved area with four beds and a central sundial on a circular base. In the north-east corner a curving gravel path, flanked by brick walls, leads down to the garden boundary.

The earliest evidence for a garden at Vaynor Park is the 1746 estate map, which shows a formal layout, parts of which survive. The main feature is the entrance courtyard, bounded

then as now by house, stables and walls. At that time, however, it was laid out formally in an upper and lower terrace, with a central axial walk to the front door and a flight of steps up the terrace. Flanking the house, against the north and south walls, were two, square pavilions. To the south was a semi-circular apron of grass and four rectangular features, possibly flowerbeds, around it. To the east was an 'old hopyard now orchard' and woods. Both stylistically, and in its integral relationship with the house, the entrance courtyard is likely to be contemporary with the house, dating to *c*. 1640. An undated drawing of the house and court shows this layout, with path, steps and two brick pavilions. It also shows mushroomshaped stone ornaments along the top of the terrace wall, one of which survives on the courtyard lawn. Another drawing shows the steps as semi-circular, with straight steps at the top. A John Ingleby watercolour of *c*. 1800 shows the same basic arrangement, including the pavilions, with pyramidal roofs topped by ball finials, but by this time the terrace wall has become a grass bank and the central steps are straight.

The terrace to the south of the house would also appear to be part of the original, seventeenth-century garden, although it was later modified. By 1764, when the next estate map was drawn, changes had been made in the outer part of the garden. The apron of grass to the south is called Bow Green and to its west there is now a fenced ornamental area which was probably a maze. A drawing by Charlotte Laura Knowles, niece of Christiana Winder, dating to the early nineteenth century, shows the old house, pavilion and the green walk.

Major alterations, designed by Thomas Penson, were made to the garden and entrance court in the 1840s, the layout of the present garden appearing on the tithe map of 1844. Penson altered the terrace, made the green walk and altered the entrance court. A plan of proposals for changes, dated 1841, shows the new layout for the entrance court, with no pavilions, no terracing and a central oval, as it is now. An undated, but near contemporary, map shows this oval layout, still with a pavilion, a square garden to the east of the house, with a semi-circular area below, the south terrace and a grass area to its south with perimeter planting. This interesting map therefore shows an interim stage, with the first change - the alteration of the entrance court - already done, but the rest of the garden in a pre-Penson state. Many drawings and plans of this period survive, showing the layout then existing, including pavilion. One, which includes the 'garden house' on the south side of the court, shows it opening on to the terrace to the south of the house, with a wall between it and the house, at the back of the terrace. A letter of 31 October 1843 from Mr Lyon-Winder's clerk of works, Mr Jones, gives details of proposed balustrading in alternative materials - artificial stone from Messrs Austin and Seely or freestone, which he recommends. Vases from Austin and Seely are also recommended and a drawing of one is attached. An undated but near contemporary drawing shows the balustrading and vases in place. The terrace was gravelled at this time.

The semi-circular parterre of flowerbeds was planned in 1867, when a layout for a 'Flower Garden' was produced, with the beds planted with annuals. Another plan of the same beds, with different annual planting, dates to 1888. A photograph of 1875 shows the green walk and lower walk very much as they are now. A drawing of a proposed rustic garden seat, 8 ft in diameter, exists, but it appears not to have been made. Most of the ornamental trees in the lower part of the garden must date to the mid nineteenth century. The 1889 Ordnance Survey map appears to record three large oval flower beds on the east lawn and a footpath running from the east steps into the park.

Further changes occurred in the early part of this century with the creation of the woodland area at the west end of the garden and the addition of Asiatic introductions including azaleas, rhododendrons and hydrangeas. The planting in the entrance court dates from after 1900. The oval lawn in the entrance court once contained flowerbeds but these had been grassed over by 1996. Some alterations have been made since the late 1980s, including the paving of the terrace on the south front of the house and the creation of the formal garden north of the house.

The walled kitchen garden lies about 250m south-west of the house on a south-facing slope. The garden covers about 1 1/2 acres and is surrounded by high red brick, stone capped walls which stand up to 4m high. There are entrance doorways in the east and west walls. The interior of the kitchen garden has been recently remodelled. The northern half of the garden is now laid out with a swimming pool in the north-east corner, with a new flower and vegetable garden to the west. The larger southern part is pasture. There is a gap, the site of an old gateway, in the centre of the south wall which leads directly into the farmyard beyond. Traces of whitewash and roof lines show the position of lost greenhouses and ranges. A door leading through to a bothy, or boiler house, on the north still survives in the wall to the west of the two-storey gardener's house, which stands in the middle of the north wall. There is a second doorway to the east. This leads to a lean-to brick bothy which now serves as a pool house. New stone steps lead down into the garden from the east door and the few surviving trained fruit trees, which grow against the wall in this area, are set in raised, stone edged beds. On the north side of the north wall are two former bothies, one the pool house and that to its west now an open fronted store and garage. Built into the bank on the opposite side of the drive, which runs beside the north wall, near the gardener's house, is a horizontal tunnel, thought to have been a root vegetable store. To the west is a small, circular pond.

On the 1746 estate map the area of the kitchen garden is labelled 'New Orchard above barn'. It is not clear if it was walled at that time. The tithe map of 1844 shows it transformed into a walled kitchen garden. The map also records a small area of orchard to the north-east. The 1889 Ordnance Survey map shows the interior divided into six rectangular compartments each surrounded by paths. A substantial greenhouse, with a projecting central section, stood on the south face of the north wall. A strip, possibly for soft fruit, lay to the east of the garden. Undated, but nineteenth-century papers exist which contain details and drawings for heated frames, cold frames, a 'Plant House' and a forcing house by a Mr J. Weeks, Horticultural Builder, of the Kings Road, Chelsea. The greenhouses are believed to have been taken down by the 1960s. The present owner has renovated the northern part of the garden from about 1990.

The history of the area to the west of the kitchen garden is more uncertain but it would appear that it was always a utilitarian area. The pond is known to date back to at least 1844 when it was recorded as 'fish pond' on the tithe map. The Ordnance Survey map of 1889 records the pond being greater in size than today and surrounded by a path but does not record the presence of an ice-house. Although two plans for an ice-house exist none is known.

Sources

Primary

'A Plan of Vaynor Hall and Park in Montgomeryshire Belonging to Lord Hereford. Surveyed by Thomas Cottedge October 1746. Private collection.

'Vaynor Demesne (formerly owned by Pryce Lord Viscount Hereford and now of Robert Moxon). 1764 by S. Probert. Estate survey. Private collection.

'Proposals for changes 1841'. Private collection.

Map of park and garden (undated but early 1840s). Private collection.

Corbett-Winder Collection. The National Library of Wales.

The Gee-Mont Collection. The National Library of Wales.

Private papers including Thomas Penson correspondence and drawings and other papers including \underline{c} . 1860 sketches and planting lists for flower garden, sketches of garden buildings, the ice-house, estate buildings and lodge, and late nineteenth-century photographs. Private collection.

1844 tithe map. The National Library of Wales.

John Ingleby, watercolour of west front of the house and entrance court <u>c</u>. 1800. The National Library of Wales (PD 9205).

John Ingleby, watercolour of view across park to south-east (PD 9204). The National Library of Wales.

Dorothea Parker, watercolour of the park at Vaynor from the terrace, 1831. The National Library of Wales, Drawings Vol. III, 329 folio.

Secondary

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