

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

**SITE DOSSIER**

**SITE NAME** Bedwellty Park

**REF. NO.** PGW (Gt) 39

OS MAP 161 GRID REF. SO 143085

FORMER COUNTY Gwent UNITARY AUTHORITY Blaenau Gwent B.C.  
COMMUNITY COUNCIL Tredegar

DESIGNATIONS Listed building: Bedwellty House Grade II

SITE EVALUATION Grade II

Primary reasons for grading

Early 19th-century urban landscape park, with interesting contemporary features,  
including rockwork and an unusual and very well preserved ice-house

TYPE OF SITE

Urban landscape public park

MAIN PHASES OF CONSTRUCTION

Early 19th century; 1910-32

VISITED BY/DATE Elisabeth Whittle/June 1991

## HOUSE

Name Bedwellty House

Grid ref SO 143085

Date/style Early 19th century/neo-classical

### Brief description

Bedwellty House stands in the middle of its park in the centre of the industrial town of Tredegar, in the Sirhowy valley. It is approached by drives from the north and south, with an entrance front on the east side, and main garden front on the south. The house is a stuccoed, two-storey neo-classical building, with a bow front on the south side. There is a stable court to the north.

A farm originally stood on the site of the house, and this, together with the surrounding land, was bought by the ironmaster Samuel Homfray of Penydarren in 1800, who built the existing house. There is a date of 1825 on one of the columns in the basement, and the house and grounds are shown on the 1839 tithe map of Tredegar. Further work was done on the house by Homfray's son when he became manager of the Tredegar ironworks, and the house had assumed its present-day layout by 1842 (shown on survey by William Adams of the Ebbw Vale and Sirhowy Ironworks).

In the second half of the 19th century the house passed to the Morgans of Tredegar Park (Newport), and the house underwent several phases of modification. The Morgans did not live there themselves but reserved the house for the managers of the Tredegar Iron and Coal Company. In 1901 the Morgans gave the house and park to the people of Tredegar, to be used for public recreation. From 1901 to 1974 the council offices of the Tredegar Urban District Council were housed in the house.

## OUTBUILDINGS

Name Stables

Grid ref SO 143085

### Date/style, and brief description

To the north of the house is a stable court, with 19th-century utilitarian brick stable buildings set into the hillside around the west and north sides of the court.

## THE PARK

Central grid ref SO 143085

Date/style First half of 19th century; early 20th century/Regency landscape park; Edwardian and 1930s public park

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION, HISTORY AND LAYOUT

Bedwellty Park is situated at the southern end of the centre of the town of Tredegar. It is a roughly oval area of about 26 acres on ground sloping down from north-west to south-east. The main entrance is at the north end, at the south end of the main town axis of Morgan Street, and the park was thus closely integrated into the layout of the town.

The park was made from agricultural land bought by Samuel Homfray, the ironmaster, in 1800. Homfray and his son built the house and laid out the park in the first half of the 19th century; both house and park are shown on the 1839 tithe map of Tredegar, recorded as 'House, Pleasure Grounds, Plantations, Gardens etc. of 15 acres', and 13 acres of pasture. The basic structure, most of the built features, and most of the tree planting from this period survive. Two curving drives were made, to the north and south of the house. The area around and to the east of the house, between the two entrances, was planted with ornamental trees, mainly sycamores, with an underplanting of shrubs, the west boundary was given a screening belt of deciduous trees. The southern end of the park is landscaped with specimen coniferous and deciduous trees, most of which were planted in the 20th century. The clumps of beeches in this area, however, date from the early 19th century, and are planted on raised mounds (a method advocated by J.C. Loudon). To the west of the house a series of five ponds were made, four of them one above the other, linked by narrow rockwork channels, and surrounded by rockwork and with dense planting of coniferous and deciduous trees and rhododendrons on their south and east sides. Both the planting and ponds are shown on the 1839 tithe map. Water for the ponds and fountain was brought from two ponds on the ridge to the south-west of the park, via a drain from the lower pond (see HLW (Gt) 17). These ponds (at SO 138078) are still in existence, and water from them still reaches the ponds in the park, although the flow is now reduced to a trickle.

To the north-west of the house a small kitchen garden was made, with an unusual ice-house to its east. This is a small, single-storey stone building, entered on the north side, and with a window in the south side, and a chimney and fireplace on the east wall. On the gable end of the roof is a small belfry. Inside is a single room, with an opening (now perspex) in the centre at the top of the egg-shaped, brick-lined ice chamber, which is built into the raised terrace. Half-way down its south side is an opening, which emerges half-way down the south revetment wall of the raised terrace.

To the west of the house is a garden area composed of a series of linked circular compartments surrounded by water-worn rockwork, with a rockwork fountain and arch at the southern end. At the north end is a small ruinous circular stone pavilion reached by a rockwork-lined path, which may originally have been a grotto. The water-worn rockwork is a great feature of the park, and is continued along paths to the north-west of the house, and along a path to the south-west, which is flanked by individual water-worn rocks. South of this area was a rectangular levelled area shown on the 1875 6" OS map as the 'croquet ground', which was converted into tennis courts in 1910. The north-west

quadrant of the park was left open in the 19th century, and the southern end was only planted with the beech clumps.

In the second half of the 19th century the ownership of the park passed to the Morgans of Tredegar Park (Newport). The period of Morgan ownership, when it was tenanted by Tredegar iron managers, probably saw little change. In 1901 the Morgans gave the park to the people of Tredegar, and it was converted for use as a public park. Some changes were made to the structure: a new secondary entrance was made on the west side, with a straight drive to the house, and an elaborate system of winding paths was laid out in the southern half of the park. Various recreational features were added: (grass tennis courts and Long (originally Jubilee) Shelter 1910; hard tennis courts and swimming pool 1932). The Long Shelter is a verandah backed by a stone wall overlooking the tennis court terrace. Further additions were the octagonal bandstand, to the south of the house, the circular garden to the east of the house, built in about 1901, the War Memorial to the east, and the 2nd World War Memorial Gates (1951) at the north entrance to the park. The Upper (north) Lodge was rebuilt in 1911, and the park was surrounded by iron railings in 1925.

## STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

### Drives

The house is reached by two curving drives, the main one from the north, which leads to the east front of the house, with a branch to the stables court, and a second one from the gates at the south-east corner of the park, which leads to the east front of the house. This has flanking drains and decorative tile edging. Both are now tarmacked. A further straight drive from gates on the west side of the park was made in the early 20th century to give access to the recreational amenities (swimming pool, tennis courts, bowling green).

### Paths

The area of the park to the south-west and west of the house is laid out in an intricate pattern of curving and straight paths, which date from the early 20th century. Only paths in the eastern area and around the house follow the lines of 19th-century ones. The paths in the rockwork area to the west of the house, which are in a series of linked circles, are of concrete crazy paving. All other paths in the park are now tarmacked.

### Terracing

To the south-west of the house, below the Long Shelter, is a rectangular grassed terrace, which was formerly lawn tennis courts. This is the earliest terrace, and dates from c. 1910.

To the north-west of the house is a terraced area on which are the recreational facilities added to the park in 1932: the swimming pool, hard tennis courts and bowling green. Near the west entrance are further terraced areas for a modern car park and play area.

### Artificial mounds

In the southern part of the park small clumps of beeches, dating from the 19th-century landscaping, are set on low artificial earthen mounds.

## WATER FEATURES

To the west of the house, on ground sloping quite steeply to the east, are a series of artificial pools, made during the 19th-century landscaping.

At the top is a large, roughly rectangular pool bounded on the west by iron railings and a path, and on the other sides by trees and shrubs. It is lined by stone walling. Two narrow stone-lined channels and an overflow channel run between it and a smaller pool to the north. This has an irregular stone edging, a straight stone and brick dam at the east end with an overflow channel over which is a small stone arch. There is also a naturalistic rock arch on the dam and naturalistic stone overflow channels over the rockwork dam below.

Below is a series of three further similar stone-edged pools, with stone-lined inlet channels on their south sides (that of the third pool is dry) and naturalistic overflow channels over rockwork dams between them. The bottom pool is rectangular, with a small rockwork island. The whole series is bounded on the north by iron railings and a path, and on the south by trees and shrubs.

In the rockwork area immediately west of the house the centre of the largest circular area is formed by a circular pool (now dry) with a concrete base and rustic stone edges, with a rockwork conical mound in the centre, in the middle of which is a simple jet fountain (now disused, but pipes lead east and west from it).

In the lawn immediately to the south of the house is a quatrefoil flowerbed bounded by roll-moulded stone edging. In the centre is a small stone bowl on a pedestal surrounded by four dolphins. This feature was originally a pool with central fountain, and dates from the 19th century.

## BUILT FEATURES

### Lodge

The Upper Lodge stands on the west side of the main (north) entrance. A lodge was built here in the 19th century, and was rebuilt in 1911. It is a two-storey brick building, partly rendered.

### Boundaries and gates

The east boundary along Morgan Street and the Promenade consists of a stone wall topped by iron railings, built in 1925. The south and west boundary consists of a modern fence on a wall, and the north-west of modern railings, with a stone wall near the north end.

The main entrance at the north end of the park is aligned on the clock in the middle of the central square of Tredegar (The Circus). It is a wide entrance, flanked by square stone gate piers. Between are two wide iron gates flanked by small side gates, all of which were given in 1951 as a 2nd World War Memorial. The entrance at the south end of the park has curving stone walls leading up to simple iron gates and a small side gate, with stone gate piers set diagonally. A plaque on the gate records the gift of the park to the Urban District of Tredegar on 18 April 1901.

The west entrance is 20th-century, with square stone gate piers and a simple iron gate.

### Rockwork and circular pavilion

There is a considerable amount of 19th-century water-worn rockwork in the park, chiefly in the series of circular enclosures just to the west of the house. This area has been called the 'grotto', but the term cannot be justified.

The path along the south front of the house is flanked by isolated large upright water-worn rocks, some of which have rusty iron supports. The flowerbed next to the house is lined with similar small stones. This path leads, to the west of the house, to a stone-edged path which runs northwards under a round rockwork arch (all rockwork is water-worn) c. 3.5 m. high. The arch is highly irregular, with pieces sticking out in all directions, some large stones stuck on top, and jagged bits sticking out into the archway, which is c. 5 m. wide.

To the north of the arch is a series of four linked circular areas enclosed by banks of rockwork on which are flowerbeds divided into compartments by more rockwork. On top are trees and shrubs. The circles are of varying size, the two northernmost being the smallest. The southernmost one has a large circular bed with rockwork edges in the middle. The second circle is the largest, with the pool and fountain in the centre (see above). The third and fourth circles have central circular stone-edged beds. The whole area is paved with concrete crazy paving.

At the north end, reached by a narrow path flanked by high stone walls on its west side, is a small stone circular pavilion. It is of rubble construction, with mortared walls c. 1.8 m high, and with a collapsing octagonal roof, all that is left of which are the wooden supports and central king post. This structure may originally have been some kind of grotto. When the park became a public park (1901) it was converted into a urinal, and the interior was lined with glazed red brick, with a pointed arch entrance and a concrete floor.

A path next to the pavilion, lined with rockwork, leads to a straight walk along the east side of the kitchen garden along whose west side is a raised bed also edged with rockwork.

Further similar rockwork in the park includes some stones on the top of the dam of the uppermost pond (smaller), and rocks in a raised circular bed in the centre of the path to the east of the bandstand.

### The ice-house

This is a small, single-storey stone building, standing to the east of the circular pavilion. It dates from the early part of the 19th century, and is very well preserved. The entrance is on the north side, and it has a window in the south side, and a chimney and fireplace on the east wall. On the gable end of the roof is a small belfry. Inside is a single room, with an opening (now perspex) in the centre at the top of the egg-shaped, brick-lined ice chamber, which is built into the raised terrace. Half-way down its south side is an opening, which emerges half-way down the south revetment wall of the raised terrace.

### Circular garden

Immediately to the east of the house is a circular garden made c. 1901. It is surrounded by a low stone wall and concrete path, with cross paths and a central feature. In the

quadrants are four circular raised beds in the middle of which are stone plinths and small stone statues donated c. 1901.

#### Long Shelter and tennis terrace

Originally called the Jubilee Shelter, this long free-standing verandah was built to the south-west of the house in 1910, overlooking the grass tennis court terrace to the south-east. It has recently been restored. It has a stone back wall, stone floor and wooden piers along the front. Immediately in front of it is a path, and below the centre concrete steps flanked by concrete parapet walls and piers lead down to the former tennis courts. Similar steps on the opposite side of the terrace lead down to the sloping garden below. In the centre of the terrace is a circular brick-edged bed with a square brick pedestal in the centre.

#### Bandstand

The bandstand is another feature of the post-1901 park. It is situated to the south of the house, reached by paths from N, S, E and W. It is a light octagonal structure, with slender iron piers on a stone plinth supporting a two-stage octagonal roof. It is bounded, between the piers, by decorative iron railings, with steps up to it on the north side.

#### PLANTED COMPONENTS

The park is informally planted with trees and shrubs, some of which date from the 19th century. Beneath them is mown grass, with an underplanting of shrubs in some parts. The northwest quadrant of the park is open grass, and contains the recreational amenities (swimming pool, tennis courts etc.).

The eastern side of the park is fairly densely planted with mature deciduous trees, mainly sycamores, with a shrub understorey. Oaks, horse chestnuts and sycamores grow along the south-west side of the park, and the northern end of the path along this side is flanked by mature limes.

The path along the west side of the ponds is lined with a row of sycamores and horse chestnuts. The ponds themselves are surrounded on all but the west and north sides by dense coniferous and deciduous trees and rhododendrons.

The area to the south of the house is planted with individual coniferous and deciduous trees in grass. There are also several clumps of mature beeches on artificial mounds.

The rockwork area is shaded by mature deciduous trees, and is planted with mixed shrubs and some conifers.

#### BOUNDARIES

East: iron railings on stone wall (1925)

South-west: modern fence on wall

North-west: modern railings

ESSENTIAL SETTING, VIEWPOINTS AND CONTINUATIONS OF FEATURES  
BEYOND THE PARK, EYECATCHERS ETC.

Not applicable

LAND-USE

Public park

ELEMENTS OF BOTANICAL OR OTHER NATURE CONSERVATION INTEREST

Ornamental water fowl on large top pond

SURVIVAL OF INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS

Structural components: most

Water features: most

Built components: most

Planted components: some (trees)



## UTILITARIAN GARDENS

NAME Kitchen garden

Grid ref SO 143085

Date/style 19th-century/formal

### DESCRIPTION

To the north-west of the house, just above the stable court, lie the remains of a small kitchen garden. It was made in the 19th century (shown on 1880s 6" OS map). It is a small rectangular area surrounded by a stone (outside) and brick (inside) wall, now only c. 1-1.5 m. high. Inside are the footings of glass-houses, ruined cold frames and concrete paths. Beds are edged with rocks and bricks.

There is a ruined glass-house just to the west of the south front of the house.

## SOURCES

(Primary and secondary. For primary, give location. Aerial photos (AP): ref. no and collection)

### Primary

Tithe map of 1839 of parish of Bedwellty (Gwent Record Office).

### Secondary

Jones, B., Follies and Grottoes

Blaenau Gwent Borough Council, Bedwellty Park, Past, Present, Future

Probert, W., 'Tredegar in 1839', Gwent Local History 68 (1990), pp. 35-42.