

## MAESYCRUGIAU HALL

**Ref Number** PGW (Dy) 3 (CAM)

**OS Map** 146

**Grid Ref** SN 4774 4048

**Former County** Dyfed

**Unitary Authority** Carmarthenshire

**Community Council** Llanllwni

**Designations** None

**Site Evaluation** Grade II

### **Primary reasons for grading**

Remains of extraordinary Edwardian summerhouse in a somewhat neglected contemporary garden with some pre 1891 features.

**Type of Site** Formal terrace, pond and garden area immediately in front of (to the south of) house; ponds, summerhouse and woodland walks. Reasonable survival of woody species.

### **Main phases of construction**

Earlier features pre 1840s; c. 1904 utilising wall of previous mansion.

### **Site description**

Maesycrugiau Hall, formerly known as The Manor Hotel, is about one mile south of the village of Maesycrugiau. Translated, the name Maesycrugiau, means the field of the small hillocks or tumuli and this area, which is one of hills flanking the Teifi Valley, has long been an area of settlement. About 1.5 km (1 mile) south-west of the Hall is Castell Pyr hillfort and maps record a megalith in the fields of the Hall itself. There is also a tumulus within the gardens, but the origins of this are not known.

The first family of note to live at the Hall were the Lloyds and David Lloyd entertained Dwnn, when he was recording the family pedigree and arms in 1609. When David Lloyd's grandson died without heir, the property passed to the Thomas family. In 1735, Thomas Thomas is known to have been living here and when his granddaughter married in 1792, the prenuptial settlement, drawn up on the 21 July, shows just how extensive the Maesycrugiau estate had become. By 1862 the estate had passed to the Jones family, John and Elizabeth. One of their three daughters, Maud Margarete, married Sir Richard Mansel in 1878. In all, four generations of Mansels were to live at the Hall before it was sold to become a Country Club and Restaurant. From 1994 onwards, the present owners have been restoring the Hall and it is once more a family home.

The present Hall is a comparatively recent structure. On 28 January 1902 fire damaged the old Hall so badly that it was mostly dismantled and the stones used to build the new Hall to

a design by JC Mitchell in 1903-04. Sir Courtenay Mansel also took this opportunity to substantially re-design the gardens, although some of the original features were retained.

At the turn of this century, the Hall could be reached by one of four drives, two on the east, one on the north and the original main drive to the west. The property is now reached by one of the drives to the east. Although now much overgrown by laurels, the low red stone walls to either side still exist as does some of the herbaceous material. There are paths leading from the drive to garden areas and walks, all of which may be a little overgrown but still remain. The Hall is masked from view by a bamboo hedge until the final sweep round from the drive to the forecourt. There is a substantial difference in level between this forecourt and the formal garden, from its construction it would appear that this retaining terrace wall was part of the earlier house.

The formal garden is to the front (south) of the house and below the forecourt terrace. It is best viewed from the massive tower that dominates the entrance to the Hall, as from here the original geometric design becomes clear. This formal area is essentially in three sections. To the east is a paved area with circular beds edged with box and the whole being divided diagonally by a concrete rill that feeds the pond. Next is a central area that consists of a massive pond and the third area, to the west, is lawned. The three areas are linked by flights of stone steps. Japanese Cedars (*Cryptomeria japonica*) and Western Red Cedars (*Thuja plicata*) were planted in this lawn, again in a geometrical pattern. There are two further grassed terraces to the west and these are reached by a set of steps that the Mansel family have always referred to as the 'Elizabethan steps'.

The walled garden and formal walks that were shown on Ordnance Survey maps of 1891 to the south-east of the Hall, had disappeared by 1905. They were replaced by a level area which was used for tennis, a rockery, built entirely of quartz, and an arrangement of two towers and two ponds, one formal the other less so. Now only the rockery, one of the ponds and one of the towers, or belvederes, remain. This tower is a remarkable structure; it stands to about 10.5 m (35 ft) with the central stone core built to a five sided plan. The octagonal-shaped room that was 'hung' on to the central core is built of wood with windows all round. From it, most of the estate lands within this valley would have been visible.

To the south of the tower and across the drive is a further large pond that again appears on the earlier maps. The water is retained by an extensive red stone wall so that the water lilies would have been almost at eye-level.

## **Sources**

### **Primary**

Photographs c. 1930-50 in the Mansel family collection. There is also a photograph of the early house probably dated c. 1890.

Notes taken during conversations with Mr Mansel and Mr and Mrs Blackburn during August 1995.

Cawdor Golden Grove Books, vol 1, Tydwal and Tewdur Mawr, Carmarthen Record Office, Acc 269.

Tithe Map, Llanllwny, (1840) Schedule Nos 307 & 308.

Dyfed Archaeological Trust, PRN 18177.

### **Secondary**

Burke A, *Genealogical and Heraldic History of Great Britain and Ireland*, (1860).

Jones F, *Historic Carmarthenshire Homes and their Families* (1987), p. 128.

Lewis S, *Topographical Dictionary of Wales* (1833), Llanllwny.  
Lloyd T, *The Lost Houses of Wales* (1986), p 61.  
Meyrich SR (ed.), *Heraldic Visitations of Wales* vol. 1 (1846), pp. 238-39.  
Nicholas T, *County Families of Wales* vol. 1 (1872), p. 203.