

LYMORE PARK

Ref No PGW (Po) 14 (POW)

OS map 137

Grid Ref SO 232 963

Former county Powys

Unitary authority Powys

District Montgomeryshire

Community Council Montgomery

Designations None

Site Evaluation Grade II

Primary reasons for grading A well preserved and attractive deer and landscape park, dating to at least the late seventeenth century, with magnificent ancient oaks and sweet chestnuts. The park contains a rare decoy pond dating to the late eighteenth-early nineteenth century.

Type of Site Deer and landscape park; walled garden

Main Phases of Construction circa 1675; 1786-1828

SITE DESCRIPTION

Lymore is a medium-sized park situated on rolling ground just to the east of Montgomery. The half-timbered house that was formerly the focus of the park no longer exists, having been sold for demolition in 1931. The house lay on level ground on the western edge of the park, the main drive approaching it from the west. Now nothing remains. The site lies at the western end of the overgrown walled garden.

The house was a huge, symmetrical, square, three-storeyed, half-timbered building, with a central tower, with pyramidal roof, protruding for a further storey. The roof was many-gabled and dominated by the tower and tall chimneys. The main entrance was an open three-bay loggia in the centre of the north front, approached by a straight path to the drive running along the north side of the garden. A separate, small building lay immediately to the west.

Lymore was an ancient house, rebuilt in 1675 for Edward Herbert, 3rd Lord Herbert of Chirbury, after the family lost Black Hall and Montgomery Castle in the Civil War. Called Lymore Lodge, it lay in a deer park. The north front of the house is depicted in a drawing in a book of estate maps and drawings of 1786. It appears much as it did in twentieth-century photographs, with trees around it and a half-timbered stable building to the north-east. Both Edward and his brother Henry died childless, the

estate remaining in the family by the marriage of their sister to the heir, Francis of Dolguog. The marriage of their son, Henry Arthur, to his cousin Barbara Herbert, united the Lymore and Powis estates and during the mid eighteenth century Lymore was little used by the family, who moved to Powis Castle. After 1886 it was abandoned and a Royal Commission survey in 1927 found it unsound.

To the west of the house site are two semi-detached cottages in a symmetrical U-shaped block, with east-west wings protruding westwards at either end. They are built of brick, painted white, with pitched slate roofs. In front, to the west, is a small garden bounded by a low brick wall topped by a holly and thorn hedge and to the south a fence. To the north is a short high brick wall joined to a stretch of stone wall of large rubble blocks. This is probably related to the old house. The cottages were built for farm workers in the 1930s.

To the west, on the west side of a former pond, is a complex of farm buildings, bounded on the east side by a rubble stone wall. The buildings are of mixed ages and styles and are mostly arranged around a rectangular court with a stone barn at its north end. Other buildings are of brick and wood. A small derelict brick cottage, 'The Cottage' stands just to the south. The 1785 survey map shows a single building, orientated north-south and the area is designated 'buildings, fold, dogkennel, pool and plantation'. The same arrangement is shown on the 1828 survey, but by 1901 the present arrangement is in existence.

To the south-east of the cottages are a few isolated farm buildings, now in a rough grass area but formerly in a small rectangular enclosure. These consist of a single-storey brick range, a wooden shed and a barrel-roofed brick building. Nothing is shown here until the 1901 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map, which shows the enclosure, to the south of the house, with trees and two small buildings in it. One corresponds to the low brick building; the two others are later.

To the north-east of the house site, outside the north wall of the garden, is a small two-storey cottage built of brick, partly painted white, with a pitched slate roof. It has its own small garden, bounded on the north by a hedge, between the drive and the garden wall. This was probably the gardener's cottage. A building in this position is shown on the 1786 map, shown from the drawing of the house in the same volume to be stables. These had gone by 1828. The 1901 Ordnance Survey map shows a building here, thus probably dating the cottage to the Victorian period.

Lymore Park is a medium-sized park situated just to the east of Montgomery. In character it is a landscape park, with informal tree planting, ponds and woodland. The present circuitous drive from the west is designed to give good views of the park as it approaches the park. The park is also used for sporting purposes and has been for a long time. It is bounded on the east by the low bank of Offa's Dyke, which runs north-north-west/south-south-east in a straight line. The park lies on gently rolling ground, with higher ground to the west. It is laid out with isolated trees and woods of varying ages, with a string of ponds along its western side. The main approach to the park is along a winding road and drive off the Montgomery to Chirbury road, the B4386, which starts just east of Montgomery. The tarmac drive enters the park at its north-west corner, turns south and skirts the west side of the park, passing a large pond, the

Lower Pool, before swinging eastwards towards the former house. A short branch leads south to the farm buildings and the drive continues over a causeway dam between two former ponds, now dry, to the north-west corner of the former garden. Here a branch runs southwards past the cottages and divides, one leading westwards along the dam of the Upper Pool, which lies to the south, the other running southwards through the park. Both are farm tracks. The main drive continues eastwards through the park, initially along the north side of the former garden and then past a cricket ground to the north. It continues straight to the boundary of the park, bounded on the south side by iron fencing, and then on to Whitley farm. There are no formal entrances to the park.

The eastern side of the park is an area of open grassland, divided into large fields by fences, and several discrete woods, the largest of which are Dudston Covert, in the north-east corner, and Boardyhall Wood, to the south of the drive. To the south is a further wood, New Plantation, which lies beyond the park. Dudston Covert and the woodland to its south, both of which lie to the north of the drive, are mixed deciduous woods containing some very large oaks. Boardyhall Wood is a sparse mixed wood containing poplar and beech. In the centre is an irregular pond with a central island. The pond is home to numerous ducks. The western edge of the wood is bounded by iron fencing. To the west of the woodland is open grassland, dotted to the north of the drive with fine, mature, isolated parkland trees. These are mostly oak but include horse chestnut and two copper beeches. To the north are three further, smaller woods of deciduous trees, two close together and one on the north boundary. On a gently rise to the south of the drive, south of the cricket ground, is a very ancient clump of huge sweet chestnut and oak trees. The sweet chestnuts are ranged around the outside, with most of the oaks in the centre. There are also some stumps, indicating that the clump was originally bigger. From here there is a fine view of Montgomery to the west. The field to the south contains a few old oaks.

The cricket ground lies immediately to the north-east of the former garden, with slightly rising ground to its east and west on which there are old oak trees. There is a small pavilion on the east side.

The ponds and former ponds occupy a slight dip running north-south along the western side of the park. Three of a former five survive, two to the south of the house site and one to the north. The southernmost pond is the decoy pond. This is situated in mixed woodland and plantation and is surrounded by dense undergrowth on boggy ground. At the south end there is a plantation of poplars and the undergrowth is being cleared. On its banks are poplars, willows and laurels. It is a classic decoy pond, circular in shape, with five curving inlets extending outwards from its banks. These are quite narrow and decrease in width towards their ends. Although some of the channels are largely without water they are all well preserved. The pond is dammed on its north-east side and a bypass channel runs along its western and northern sides into the Upper Pool below. To the west are tall ash trees and on the east side there are remnants of ornamental planting of bays and hollies.

A narrow channel links the decoy pond with the next one, the Upper Pool. This is a larger, irregularly shaped pond, fringed with alders and inhabited by ducks. A short arm extends westwards and it has a straight earthen dam along its north side with

alders and a track on it. To its east are two old oak trees. At its west end is a sluice and overflow channel. In the field to the east are two old fruit trees, indicating that this was once an orchard.

Below, to the north, is a sunken grass area that formerly held a small pond known as the Dog Kennel pond. At its north end is a reedy area below the earthen dam, which carries the drive. The area contains a grate with a culvert under it, taking water from the Upper Pool to the stream below, a concrete platform and, on the east side, a brick structure carrying a raised rectangular water tank. The structure is built into the slope and on top of it are some large dressed stone slabs which probably came from the house. At the west end of the dam is an overflow of curved brick steps narrowing into an underground culvert. These are flanked by splayed red brick walls with stone tops. The brick arched culvert has stagnant water in it.

To the north of the drive is a further sunken grass area that was originally a small pond. In the south-west corner water runs in from the culvert from the Upper Pool to a broken down entrance with tumbled brick sides and stone top similar to the overflow above. Next to this is a small concrete dam with a pipethrough it and a dished overflow channel. Below this is a stream running along the west side of the former pond. Along the north side is a straight earthen embanked dam. Three large oaks stand in the field to the west. To the north and north-east is an area of oak woodland.

The stream continues north from the west end of the dam and runs into the Lower Pool, which is about the same size as the Upper Pool. It is roughly circular, fringed with alder and willow. Along its north end is a substantial, straight, earthen dam, with a considerable drop to the natural ground level on its north side. Along the foot of the inner side of the dam the tops of wooden stakes are visible in the water. The sluice and overflow channel are at the east end. The channel is wide, flanked by brick walls topped by large stone slabs similar to those on the other overflows. A sloping channel leads down to the natural stream. To the east of the sluice are some rhododendrons. Two large oaks, one dead one and one stump lie next to the north-west corner of the lake. Along its west side a raised stony track is visible in the turf.

The park has a long history bound up with that of Montgomery Castle and Powis Castle. A branch of the Herbert family was established in Montgomeryshire in the early sixteenth century. They gradually built up the estate during the sixteenth century and had acquired all the land now in Lymore Park by the time that the new house was built in 1675. The size of some of the oaks and sweet chestnuts in the park would suggest that they were planted at this time, when the park would have essentially been a deer park. The name of the house, Lymore Lodge, would suggest a deer park. In 1838 Thomas Roscoe noted 'an extensive park, containing some large pools, well stocked with fish, and, also, with wild fowl during the season. From this place there is a picturesque and striking view of the town of Montgomery ... The church and ruins of the castle form prominent objects in the scene'. The same holds good today.

The first documentary evidence for the park comes in a volume of estate maps dating to 1785. This shows a simple park to the east of the house, dotted with a few trees. The large clump of sweet chestnuts and oaks to the south-east of the house is shown. The drive at this time was a direct one from the south end of Montgomery, running

eastwards to join the present drive just north of the farm buildings. It is now a farm track. On the hillock to the north of the house a building in an octagonal enclosure is shown, but this is no longer in existence. It could have been connected with the management of deer. To the north-west of the house is a fenced area called 'hither part of park', with to its east the 'Further part of park'. To the north-east was the 'upper paddock and nursery'. Three of the five ponds were then in existence. The large pond (Upper Pool), then called the 'Great Fish Pool', to the south of the house, is shown with a small island planted with conifers. There was a smaller pond to the south, where the larger decoy pond is now, called the 'Little Fish Pool'. A track ran east-west across the dam between the ponds and the 'Little Fish Pool' and the area to its south were wooded. The small pool to the west of the house is shown, with the drive running along its dam. Around the house the drives were as they are now and that to the east appears to have run further south than the present one. A 1786 survey shows the same layout.

The next evidence for change is a survey of 1828. This shows that between 1786 and 1828 some important landscaping had taken place, notably the creation of the Lower Pool, then called the 'Inclosure Pool' and the 'Decoy Pool'. The small pool to the north of the drive, then called the 'New Stews', had also been made, with a small plantation on its dam. By this time the building to the north of the house had gone. Also newly created was the pond in Boardyhall Wood, called 'Boarded Hall Pool'. The new planting around it is shown in red, probably indicating that it was proposed, not existing. The small pond to the west of the house is called 'Dog Kennel Pool'. There is a marked increase in tree planting to the south of the house, around the two ponds, and that around the Decoy Pool is called the Decoy Plantation. To the west of the pools are two enclosures called 'Old deer paddock' (to the north) and 'New deer paddock', suggesting that by this time the deer were reduced in number and confined to these fields. Dudston Covert was largely planted during this period, the northern end having been in existence in 1786.

Between 1828 and 1901 (2nd edition Ordnance Survey map) further minor changes had taken place. Several woods in the northern part of the park were created; the present drive was made; an orchard was planted on the east side of the Upper Pool; the two small pools - Dog Kennel Pool and the New Stews - were drained. By 1901 the east drive followed its present line. Since that time several tracks across the park have gone, some field boundaries have been added, the orchard has gone, the cricket ground has been created, and there has been new tree planting in Boardyhall Wood (in 1933) and in the wood around the Decoy Pool.

The former garden lies to the east of the present cottages, the site of Lymore House being at its west end. It is a large, rectangular enclosure, mostly surrounded by red brick walls, orientated east-west. On the north and east sides these stand up to 2.5 m high; the south side is similar but tumbled in places. A fence divides the overgrown part of the garden from the garden of the cottages. The west side of the garden, to the west of the cottages, is formed by a fence and a low brick wall topped by a hedge. At the north-west corner is a section of curved brick wall topped by a wooden fence with carved finials on its posts. A fence of this kind is shown in a 1920s photograph of the north front of the house, along the north boundary of the garden. Above the fence, on the corner, are some large yew trees.

The interior is now heavily overgrown and planted with oaks. No internal features are visible but a little ornamental planting of box and yew survives, much overgrown. Outside the north wall is an overgrown box hedge and on the east side is a plantation of oaks. Near the west end of the south wall is a small building. Its south wall, built into the garden wall, has a central round-arched window with a wooden surround. Behind, the building is boarded, with a pitched slate roof. It is now derelict and unused. The south wall of the garden continues westwards, stepping down the slope and enclosing the garden of the present cottages.

To the south of the enclosure is a grass area of former garden or orchard use. It has a box hedge along its west side and part of its south side, the remainder with an iron fence on a brick base. In the west side is an iron gate. Beyond the barrel-roofed building are two parallel box hedges and some old fruit trees. Along the south side there is an old thorn hedge.

The first evidence for a garden comes in the 1786 survey, which shows a rectangular garden enclosure to the east of the house, divided into six unequal compartments by cross paths. Around it is a narrow outer strip. The area within the walls is called 'house, offices, yards, gardens and orchard'. This layout has remained remarkably constant and can still be made out today. To the north and south of the house were courts with central paths. On the east the house looked straight out on the garden. The drawing of the north front in the 1786 volume shows railings in front of the house, much as they were in the twentieth-century photographs. A clump of trees stands in front of the house (to its north-west) and the background is shown heavily wooded. If this is accurate, it must mean that the garden was wooded as there appear to have been few trees in the park at this time, except for the large clump to the south-east of the house. The 1828 map shows much the same layout, now with a belt of planting down the east side. The 1901 map shows no change, but calls the strip to the north of the garden the Nursery. The enclosure with the farm buildings in it has appeared to the south-west of the garden and the small building in the south-west corner is shown for the first time, dating it to the nineteenth century. The trees were planted in the interior in 1933, soon after the house was demolished.

SOURCES

Primary

'A Survey and Valuation of the several Estates belonging to the Rt. Hon. The Earl of Powis ...' 1785. Private collection.

'A survey and valuation of the several estates belonging to the Viscount Clive ...'. 1828. Private collection.

Annotated 1901 (2nd edition) 25 in. Ordnance Survey map. Private collection.

Secondary

Roscoe, T., Wanderings and excursions in north Wales (1838, republished 1973), p. 260.

Haslam, R., Powys (1979), pp. 170-71.

Lloyd, T., The lost houses of Wales (1986), p. 41.

