

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

SITE DOSSIER

SITE NAME Itton Court

REF. NO. PGW (Gt) 21

OS MAP 162 GRID REF. ST 494954

FORMER COUNTY Gwent UNITARY AUTHORITY Monmouth B.C. COMMUNITY
COUNCIL Devauden

DESIGNATIONS Listed building: Itton Court Grade II*

National Park AONB SSSI NNR ESA GAM SAM CA
TPO 3

SITE EVALUATION Grade II

Primary reasons for grading

Park and garden surviving in entirety, with remnants from 17th, 18th
and 19th centuries

TYPE OF SITE

Remnants of formal 17th-century layout; 18th-century landscaping;
19th-century ornamental tree planting

MAIN PHASES OF CONSTRUCTION

17th, 18th, 19th century

VISITED BY/DATE Elisabeth Whittle/November 1990

HOUSE

Name Itton Court

Grid ref ST 494954

Date/style 14th century; early 18th century; 19th century/medieval;
Queen Anne; Victorian Tudor

Brief description

The only part of the medieval Itton Court still standing is the 14th-century gatehouse which is incorporated into the present-day house on the E side of the forecourt, with an inner court to its E. In the early 18th century the owner, John Jeffreys (who had bought the house in 1701 from Sir Rowland Gwynne), pulled down the medieval house and built a Queen Anne one, now forming the E and N wings of the present house. The formal layout of avenue and groves to the E and N of the house respectively was already in existence in 1695 when a plan of the grounds was made by Thomas Crofts (copied in 1782). In about 1749 Jeffreys sold the house to John Curre of Rogerston Grange, and the house remained in the possession of the Curre family until 1930.

In 1830 the two wings of the Queen Anne house were extended to join up with the medieval gatehouse, thus forming a small courtyard. The rest of the house was added in 1894, including the SW corner, formerly a billiard room, which is built in Tudor style (architect E. G. Dawber, 1861-1938). The lane to the west was probably moved further away from the house at the same time. The last Curre owner, Sir Edward Curre made substantial alterations: the gatehouse became the entrance, and a courtyard was made in front. The S wing became the great hall and the E front the reception rooms, and new stables and kennels were built, the kennels to the NW of the house, the stables some way from it to the S.

OUTBUILDINGS

Name Stables

Grid ref ST 493952

Date/style, and brief description

Late 19th/early 20th century stables. Built in brick with a slate roof, square, arranged round a courtyard with an arched entrance on the W side. Utilitarian in style. Now part converted to private houses.

THE PARK
FORMER PARK

Central grid ref ST 496955

Date/style

Early 18th century/formal; 19th century/landscape park

General description, history, and layout

The small early 18th-century park lay to the N and E of the house on ground sloping gently to the N and E respectively. A 1782 map ('A map of the manor of Itton ... copy'd from an old survey by Tho. Crofts in 1695 ...') shows the layout in 1695, with parallel rows of trees beyond the formal garden to the N, and a short avenue to the E terminating with two transverse double rows of trees on either side. This pattern of planting can be discerned on the 1880s 6" OS map, with some of the rows to the N and the N side of the short avenue and both transverse rows shown. Also shown is the great horse chestnut avenue which continues from the outer ends of the transverse rows eastwards for c. 750 m. It is probable that the avenue was planted at the same time as the house was rebuilt, in the early 18th century. The avenue was broken up in the 1950s, with only a few trees remaining on the north side, but more on the south, particularly near the east end (possibly later replacement trees). To the N of the house the garden has been extended to take in the area of the park which was planted originally as a grove. The original trees have gone, but the area has continued to be planted with trees, mostly in an informal manner (but there are some rows remaining).

The park is now entirely agricultural pasture land. It can be viewed from the house and garden, from which it is separated by a ha-ha. The lines of the avenue can best be discerned from the east end. Immediately to the S of the S side the slightly sunken line of the old road can be made out in the grass. This public road was diverted to the N (? in the 18th century) and it became a private drive, now grassed over.

Later post-1880s (OS map) landscaping, in picturesque style, probably part of the changes of Sir Edward Curre (? 1920s) involved the making of a long winding drive from the S, now disused and reduced to a track, which entered the park at Wellhead Lodge on the Usk-Chepstow road, and the building of a lodge (Howick Lodge) at the E end of the drive to the E (now a public road).

STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

South drive from Wellhead Lodge, made post 1880s (? 1920s). This winds up a narrow valley, and then cuts across farmland northwestwards, entering the grounds to the E of the church. It is now reduced to a forestry and farm track.

E drive from Howick Lodge. The east end is now a public road. The rest is no longer in existence, but is visible in the fields as a slightly sunken grassed over track.

WATER FEATURES

None

BUILT FEATURES

Howick Lodge (ST 502954)
Two-storey small rendered house, post 1880s (? 1920s)

Wellhead Lodge (ST 502943)
Two-storey small stone house, post 1880s (? 1920s)

Stone gate piers at Wellhead Lodge entrance: tall plain square gate piers topped by large ball finials, with plain iron gates. Low stone wall on either side.

Iron railings on W boundary and part of park/garden boundary (S end).

PLANTED COMPONENTS

A few scattered trees (deciduous) plus one large cedar near the E side of the house.

There are remnants of the horse chestnut avenue to the east of the house, with very few trees remaining on the north side, but more on the south side, particularly near the east end.

BOUNDARIES

N: road/field boundary
S: field boundary
W: road/park railing

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

Essential setting: pasture fields to E and W
View E from E side of house down former avenue (A on map)

LAND-USE

Pasture (sheep and cows)

ELEMENTS OF BOTANICAL OR OTHER NATURE CONSERVATION INTEREST

None known

SURVIVAL OF INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS

Structural components: some
Built features: most
Planted components: little

THE PLEASURE GARDEN

Grid ref ST 494954

Date/style 18th/19th century/formal/informal

GENERAL DESCRIPTION AND LAYOUT

The gardens lie mainly to the N, S and E of the house. The earliest evidence of a garden at Itton Court is the 1695 plan (copied 1782) which shows a rectangular formal garden to the N of the house. Its N end was apsidal, with a central feature (? pavilion). This area appears on the 1886 6" OS map, flanked by rows of trees and without its apsidal end. It is now a lawn, and the only trace of the 17th-century layout is the grass bank along its E edge, which extends southwards to form the E boundary of the upper terrace to the E of the house.

The approach to the house is through the garden, to the W and S of the house. Both drives arrive at the walled forecourt to the W of the house built in the late 19th century.

To the E of the house are two long terraces, the upper one with a path, flanked on the E by a clipped yew hedge, leading northwards to a semi-circular arbour of clipped yew which formerly surrounded a large curving stone seat supported by winged lions, with a statue of Mercury on top in the middle. On the E edge of the lower terrace is a ha-ha, beyond which is the park.

To the S of the house the ground slopes gently southwards and most of the area is laid out as lawn with specimen trees (coniferous and deciduous). There is a small formal terraced garden next to the S end of the house, laid out largely with lawns and paths. Along the E side of the churchyard (now in the church's extended cemetery) is a row of large wellingtonias, which becomes a double row S of the churchyard. To the S is a large walled kitchen garden.

STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

Terraces

To the E of the house are two terraces. The upper one immediately in front of the house is narrow, with central steps down to the lower terrace. In front of the house it is bounded by a rendered revetment wall c. 0.8 m. high. The terrace continues N of the house, where it is bounded on the E by a low grass bank which forms the E edge of a large level lawn. This may be the only remnant of the 17th-century formal garden on the N side of the house. The lower terrace on the E side is wider and is now a level lawn. It too continues to the N of the house, ending where the upper terrace ends, in a clipped yew hedge. (This no longer forms the N boundary of the garden, which now extends informally on the sloping ground to the N).

At the S end of the house, in the angle between the E-W and N-S Victorian extensions, is a small garden with two shallow rectangular terraces orientated N-S. They are revetted with low stone walls.

Paths

The upper terrace on the E side of the house has a gravel path running its full length, ending in a yew arbour to the N of the house.

A gravel path runs round the edge of the upper terrace at the S end of the house and along the E side of the lower terrace.

Ha-ha

This runs along the E boundary of the garden from S of the house (opposite the horse chestnut tree) to the N end of the terraces. It has a rubble stone wall c. 0.8 m. high (above present ground level - ditch filled in to some extent with weeds etc.).

BUILT COMPONENTS

Steps

Between upper and lower terraces to E of house, central to E front.
Modern replacements/concrete.

Modern steps below lower terrace (central) S of house and shallow flights between upper and lower terraces on E side, and up to lower terrace on E side (N end).

There are stone steps on the S side of the forecourt down into the garden.

Gates and railings

At S end of lower terrace E of house: square stone piers c. 2 m. high with ball finials with double iron gates between (plain).

S of house, on park/garden boundary iron park railings with iron gate where old road crossed the boundary (between house and church).

S entrance, next to churchyard, has simple stone gate piers and iron gates.

ARCHITECTURAL ORNAMENTS

The ornaments are confined to the small terraced garden to the S of the house. Flanking the lower steps are two stone statues (pastoral, female) on square stone plinths. At the S end of the path at the E end of the lower terrace is a stone seat, and in the middle of the terrace is a millstone.

PLANTED COMPONENTS

The gardens are largely laid out to lawns and specimen trees, many of which are 19th-century, a few of which could be earlier.

The narrow area to the W of the house, between the house and the road, is laid out as lawn with some ornamental trees (recent). Along the road is a grown-out yew hedge. To the SW of the forecourt is an ancient yew tree, and to the S an area of old laurel trees (? former shrubbery).

To the S of the house is a sloping grass lawn with scattered ornamental trees including a large wellingtonia, beech, pine, and evergreen oak. The course of the old road (now grassed over) through the garden is flanked by a large evergreen oak on its S side and a yew and weeping fir on its N. At the S end of the garden is a row of large wellingtonias (now in the extended church cemetery, but formerly in the garden), which to the S of the churchyard becomes a double row. Also in this area, just N of the kitchen garden, is a thicket of bamboos.

The small terraced gardens are laid out mainly to lawn.

To the E of the house the gardens are largely lawn (lower terrace all lawn). Along the E edge of the path along the E side of the N lawn is a clipped yew hedge with yew trees clipped into cones above it at intervals. The path ends in a semi-circular clipped yew arbour with further smaller cones above it. A clipped yew hedge runs E from here most of the way across the lower terrace, marking the old garden boundary.

The garden to the N of the house is laid out with a sweeping central lawn flanked by trees to the E and W. These are informally planted for the most part, although there is some evidence of rows. Both deciduous and coniferous trees are present, including mature cedars and beech.

Reconstructions of original planted features

None

Special collections of garden plants

None

Documented living plants

None

Other (including elements of nature conservation interest)

None known

ESSENTIAL SETTING AND VIEWS BEYOND THE SITE

Essential setting: park to N and E of garden

View across park to the E of the garden (A on map), beyond the ha-ha.

ANY SPECIAL FEATURES

None

SURVIVAL OF INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS

Structural components: pre 18th-century: very little
18th-19th century: most

Built features: most

Planted components: pre-19th century: very little
19th-century: some (trees)

UTILITARIAN GARDENS

NAME Kitchen garden

Grid ref ST 493952

Date/style ?18th-19th century/walled kitchen garden

DESCRIPTION (categories as for the pleasure garden)

The walled kitchen garden lies to the S of the pleasure garden (S of the church). It is large, rectangular, orientated NNW-SSE, surrounded by stone walls c. 3 m. high which stand to their full height. The interior is now mostly grassed over and grazed by sheep. No original paths or beds are visible. Against the N wall (inside) are derelict glasshouses, overgrown, without their glass but with their superstructure intact and still with interior fittings such as cast iron staging and grills for underfloor heating. Along the outside of the N wall is a long row of brick lean-to outbuildings (formerly potting sheds etc.) which are more or less intact.

SOURCES

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

Primary

1782 map (copy of 1695 survey) of 'lands belonging to John Curre Esq.'
(Gwent Record Office: Man/F/45/0001)

AP: BKS Survey, no. 158032

Secondary

Bradney, J., A History of Monmouthshire Vol IV, pt. II
South Wales Daily News 4 March 1911

To be appended: 1:10,000 map of site, marked with boundaries,
viewpoints etc.; colour photographs of site, photocopies of relevant
material, where available. _____