

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

SITE DOSSIER

SITE NAME Chapel House

REF. NO. PGW (Gt) 43

OS MAP 162 GRID REF. SO 509132

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

DESIGNATIONS Listed building: Chapel House II*; railings, gates,
and garden walls of Chapel House II

National Park AONB SSSI NNR ESA GAM SAM CA

SITE EVALUATION Grade II

Primary reasons for grading

Rare survival of substantial terraced town garden of about 1700

TYPE OF SITE

Formal walled terraced town garden

MAIN PHASES OF CONSTRUCTION

c. 1700

VISITED BY/DATE Elisabeth Whittle/October 1991

HOUSE

Name Chapel House

Grid ref SO 509132

Date/style 1720s/Georgian

Brief description

Chapel House (formerly The Chantry, then St Brides) is a substantial Georgian town house on the west side of North Parade, in the centre of Monmouth. The main part was built in the early 18th century, attached to an older house on its N side. In one room is a fireback of 1720 with the initials of William Rea, an ironmaster and former mayor of Monmouth. According to Charles Heath the house was given its Georgian appearance by another ironmaster, William Tanner. The house is rendered, with a pitched roof with dormer windows. There is a small forecourt on the E (street) side, and on the W are the gardens between the house and the river Monnow below.

OUTBUILDINGS

None

Name

Grid ref

Date/style, and brief description

THE PLEASURE GARDEN

Grid ref

Date/style

GENERAL DESCRIPTION, HISTORY AND LAYOUT

The garden of Chapel House lies to its west, on the steep slope between the house and the river Monnow. There is a small forecourt with iron railings on the street boundary and a wide central flagstone path to semi-circular steps up to the front door of the house. The garden to the west of the house is bounded by high brick walls, and there are two small garden compartments on either side of the house also bounded by high brick walls. At the top of the garden a wide terrace, built out over the slope, runs the full length of the garden, parallel with the west front of the house. It is revetted by a substantial buttressed brick wall, capped with stone. Next to the house a wide gravel path runs the full length of the terrace, and another runs from the central door of the house to the steps down to the slope below. The rest of the terrace is lawn, except for a semi-circular flowerbed at the south end, and the brick footings of a greenhouse or orangery against the boundary wall at the north end. Central stone steps lead down to a path running along the foot of the revetment wall. A semi-circular alcove is built into the south end of the revetment wall, its original purpose obscure. Below is a steep tree- and shrub-covered slope, with two paths which run diagonally down it from the steps. Below is more gently sloping ground next to the river, which was formerly an orchard. At the north end is a levelled area of lawn which was formerly a lawn tennis court. The river runs immediately below the garden, which is bounded here by iron railings. There are some substantial trees, both deciduous and coniferous, in the garden, and particularly on the slope below the terrace. Near the north end is a fine old tulip tree.

The garden was probably laid out at the same time as the house was built in about 1700. In the early 19th century it belonged to a Mr R. Williams, and the garden was described in 1804 (Heath) as spacious, with lots of fruit and an extensive lawn. A map of 1835 shows the present layout, plus the orangery, which was a substantial building, and a further area of garden, probably an orchard, to the north.

STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

The forecourt has a wide central flagstone path leading from the street to the front door of the house.

On the W side of the house is a long wide terrace, running the full length of the garden (c. 80 m. long). The house stands roughly in the centre of the E side of the terrace. A wide gravel path runs the full length of the terrace on its E side, and another runs from the central door in the house to steps leading to the garden below. At the S end is a large semi-circular flowerbed with a tufa-edged bed behind it. The terrace wall is built of brick capped with stone, and is c. 2.2 m. high. It is buttressed at intervals (later than wall) and is rebuilt to the S of the central steps. A gravel path runs the length of the garden at its foot.

From the central steps two paths branch out and lead diagonally down the steep slope to the N and S ends of the garden. Their original surfaces of gravel and stone half paces is showing in places. Near the river, at the N end of the garden, is a levelled grass area that was formerly a lawn tennis court.

BUILT COMPONENTS

The forecourt is bounded on the E side, next to the street, by low iron railings. The entrance is through a double ironwork gate in the

same style, with curving tops. Three semi-circular stone steps lead up to the front door. The N and S boundaries of the forecourt are brick walls c. 3 m. high.

On the garden front of the house four stone steps lead down from the door to the terrace. The bottom one has scrolled ends projecting beyond the upper steps.

The walls of the garden are brick and for the most part stand to their full height. They are mostly capped with stone tiles. To the S of the house is a walled compartment reached from the street and terrace by arched doorways. The walls are c. 3 m. high, and there is a blocked arched doorway in the S wall. Near the N end of the terrace is an arched doorway into a side garden N of the house. This has brick walls around it, two (? modern) entrances, and a blocked arched doorway in the N wall, and is now used mainly as a car park.

At the N end of the terrace is a brick wall c. 4 m. high with two curving arches built into it. To the W is a slightly lower blocked arch. The wall ends at the edge of the terrace, and on it are traces of rendering. In front are the brick footings of a rectangular building. They are capped with stone, and just inside is a narrow semi-circular drain. This structure is thought to be all that is left of an orangery.

Central steps lead down from the terrace to the garden below. The steps are of stone, and about a third of the way down divide and run parallel with the wall, curving round at the bottom. They are flanked by low parapet brick walls capped with stone. The upper steps are flanked by iron railings.

At the S end of the terrace wall is a barrel-vaulted alcove built into the wall. There are no signs of any internal features, and it is now used as a garden store (? originally a grotto of some kind).

The N wall of the lower garden is c. 3.5-4 m. high, descends in steps, and is capped with rounded tiles. It runs down almost to the river bank, and in it are several blocked arches. The S wall is only c. 1.5 m. high at the bottom of the garden, and is capped with stone. The diagonal path running southwards leads to a blocked archway in the S wall. The garden is bounded along the river bank by iron railings.

ARCHITECTURAL ORNAMENTS

The path in the forecourt is of flagstones, as are the steps down from the terrace. The diagonal paths below the terrace are in places edged with slate.

PLANTED COMPONENTS

The forecourt is largely lawn, with a hedge along the front railings, and a few evergreen shrubs.

The terrace is largely lawn, with narrow peripheral borders, that on the E being edged with clipped box. At the S end is a large semi-circular flowerbed, and behind a bed edged with tufa in which stand some large trees (coniferous and deciduous).

The steep slope below the terrace has some large mature trees growing on it, including a yew and a tulip tree near the N end and a large yew near the S end. The slope is densely covered with shrubs. The N diagonal path is bordered in places by the remnants of box edging.

Below the ground slopes more gently, and is largely rough grass, with scattered fruit trees (formerly an orchard, with eating apples at one end and cookers at the other). The river bank below is tree covered.

Reconstructions of original planted features

None

Special collections of garden plants
None

Documented living plants
None

Other (including elements of nature conservation interest)
None

ESSENTIAL SETTING AND VIEWS BEYOND THE SITE

Essential setting: watermeadow to the W of the river Monnow
Views beyond site: from garden W, across watermeadows of the river
Monnow

ANY SPECIAL FEATURES
None

SURVIVAL OF INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS

Structural components: all
Built components: most
Architectural ornaments: some
Planted components: some

SOURCES

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

Primary

Plan of Monmouth (1835) by John Wood

Secondary

C. Heath, Historical and Descriptive Accounts of the Ancient and Present State of the town of Monmouth (1804)

K. Kissack, Monmouth, the making of a county town (1975)

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