

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

SITE DOSSIER

SITE NAME The Kymin

REF. NO. PGW(Gt) 5

OS MAP 162

GRID REF. SO 527125

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

DESIGNATIONS Listed building: Naval Temple Grade II

Tower or Belvedere grade II

National Park AONB SSSI NNR ESA GAM SAM CA

SITE EVALUATION Grade II

Primary reasons for grading

Fine example of picturesque taste and landscaping c. 1800

TYPE OF SITE

Circular belvedere and commemorative temple on summit, with
picturesque landscaping and views

MAIN PHASES OF CONSTRUCTION

1793/4; 1800

VISITED BY/DATE Elisabeth Whittle/June 1990

THE PARK

Central grid ref SO 527125

Date/style

1793/4: Round House or belvedere built and hilltop woods around landscaped in picturesque style.

1800: Naval Temple built

GENERAL DESCRIPTION, HISTORY AND LAYOUT

The Kymin is a high hill (250 m.) to the E of Monmouth, with a precipitous slope down to the Wye valley on its W side. At the top of this slope, in natural deciduous woodland, are situated two small buildings, the Round House, or belvedere, and the Naval Temple. The views to the W from the Round House are spectacular and far-reaching. The buildings are reached by a winding path through the woods, from the S (where there is now a small National Trust car park). On the E side of the summit is a large level lawn which was laid out at the end of the 18th century as a bowling green. It was subsequently used for other sporting purposes in the 19th century, including hockey in the 1860s.

Towards the end of the 18th century the summit of the Kymin was a favourite resort of the Monmouth Picnic Club, to which some of 'the first gentlemen in Monmouth' belonged, and in 1793 it was decided to erect a building on the spot. The Round House is a two-storey circular belvedere in picturesque style, with a crenellated roof, and windows in the upper floor from which the views could be admired. It was built in 1794, and immediately became very popular. It is built on a raised platform with a low parapet wall on the west. Walks were cut through the fine woods at the summit, then called Beaulieu Grove, now Beaulieu Wood, which led to spots on the edge of the hill from which there were spectacular views.

The Naval Temple is a small square single-storey classical building topped by an arch on top of which is a statue of Britannia on her rock. It is surrounded by a low stone wall, and is situated some 60 m. to the S of the Round House. It was erected in 1800 and dedicated on 1st August, the second anniversary of the Battle of the Nile, by the Duchess of Beaufort (daughter of Admiral Boscawen, one of the naval commanders commemorated by the temple), who was responsible for the 'fine carriage road' up to the summit (now the public road). In 1802 Nelson visited Monmouth, and made a visit to the Naval Temple and Round House, where he had a meal. The temple was restored in 1882, when a sloping roof and rustic canopy were added. These have now gone, and the National Trust has recently restored the temple (in 1987) to its former state, although the paintings that adorned its walls (the Standard of Great Britain waving over fallen and captive flags of France, Spain and Holland on the W front, and another of the Battle of the Nile) have gone, as has the gate on its N side.

All through the 19th century the summit was a showground, with bowling green, swings, donkey rides etc. It was used for any important Monmouth celebration, and in 1905 there were huge celebrations there for the centenary of the battle of Trafalgar.

STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

The Bowling Green

Grid ref: SO 528125

To the E of the Round House is a large levelled rectangular terrace, formerly the bowling green, built out over the slope, with a retaining wall on the E and S sides forming a parapet wall c. 1 m. high on the inside. Along the W side the terrace is backed by natural rocks. The E wall is substantial, c. 3.5 m. high on the outside, and is buttressed. The terrace is turf-covered, with a large beech tree in the middle of the E edge and another in the SW corner, with a low dry-stone wall around its foot.

Both the Round House and the Naval Temple are built on artificial terraces raised above the W side of the hill and bounded by retaining walls.

WATER FEATURES

To the W of the path from the car park to the Naval Temple is a small informal pond surrounded by large rocks.

BUILT FEATURES

The Round House

Built 1793.

A two-storey circular tower on the top of the Kymin, from which there are panoramic views to the W. It is built on a level platform (turf), with a curving revetment wall, continued up as a low parapet, on its W side. Low iron railings and a white paling fence surround the tower. It is whitewashed, with a battlemented flat roof, and has a small single-storey rectangular extension on its E side. The windows of the tower were so positioned as to frame a good view. The ground floor was used as a kitchen and the first floor as a banqueting room. It had a powerful telescope on the roof, presented by Sir Charles Thompson, MP for Monmouth. It is now used as a private house. A raised path leads S from the tower to the Naval Temple.

The Naval Temple

Built 1800. (The design was taken very seriously: the National Library of Wales has a set of 13 drawings for it.)

The temple is a small square classical structure, c. 3.5 m. across, standing in a roughly circular level enclosure surrounded by a revetment wall which extends into a low parapet wall. This is high on all but the N side, where the raised path from the temple leads to the entrance. This is now a gap in the wall, but used to be an elegant gate 10 ft. high.

The roof rises in gentle steps to a stone arch on which sits a statue of Britannia on a rock. In the corners of the arch are two roundels with 'Feb 14 Vincent 1797' and 'Aug 1 Nelson 1798' on them. On the W side is an alcove flanked by Tuscan columns. Above, on the cornice, are three roundels with 'June 1 Howe 1794', 'June 16 Cornwallis 1795' and 'June 23 Bridport 1795' on them. The N side is blank, with a marble slab with an inscription on it. Above, on the cornice are three roundels with 'Nov 20 Hawke 1759', 'December Gell 1793' and 'Dec 18 Hood 1793' on them. The E side is the same as the W, with an oval inscription in the alcove recording the reconstruction of 28th July 1987. On the architrave is carved 'GLORIOUS VICTORY'. On the cornice above are three roundels with 'June 18 Keith 1799', 'Aug 28 Mitchell 1799' and 'April 2 Parker 1801'. On the S side, which is the same as the N side, is an oval marble slab with the inscription 'The Figure which crowns the temple exhibits Britannia, seated on a rock: The painting in front, represents The Standard of Great-Britain, Waving Triumphant over The fallen and captive flags of France, Skpain

and Holland: The opposite side, The Glorious and Ever-memorable Battle of the Nile'. These paintings have gone. Above, on the cornice, are three roundels, with 'Oct 11 Duncan 1797', 'April 12 Rodney 1798' and Oct 12 Warren 1798' on them.

PLANTED COMPONENTS

There is mature natural deciduous woodland (oak, beech, ash etc.) on the slope to the W of the buildings, and to the N and S. The path between the temple and Round House is lined with beech trees on its W side. On the E side of the summit the area around the bowling green is more open, with a large beech tree in the middle of its E edge and another in its SW corner, with a low dry-stone wall around its foot.

The woodland and scrub has been cleared from in front of the Round House (on the steep slope below it) in order to keep the view from it to the W.

BOUNDARIES

On the E side the Kymin's boundary is the bowling green retaining wall and field boundaries extending to the N and S. To the W it is bounded by the public road.

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

Panoramic view from the Round House (A) westwards to Monmouth and the hills beyond.

land-USE

Public park; woodland (natural, lightly managed).

ELEMENTS OF BOTANICAL OR OTHER NATURE CONSERVATION INTEREST

None known

SURVIVAL OF INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS

Structural components: bowling green and terracing - good; woodland walks - poor

Water features: good

Built components: good

Planted components: little original left

SOURCES

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

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

Secondary

Monmouth Museum display

Barber, J.T., A Tour throughout South Wales and Monmouthshire, 1803.
Kissack, K., Victorian Monmouth.

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