

## **GREDDINGTON PARK**

**Ref No** PGW (C) 57  
**OS Map** 126  
**Grid Ref** SJ 445 386  
**County** Wrexham  
**District** Wrexham

**Community Council** Hanmer

**Designations** Listed building: Gredington lodge gates Grade II

**Site Evaluation** Grade II

### **Primary reasons for grading**

Landscape park in attractive rolling countryside; Japanese garden

### **Type of Site**

Landscape park; informal garden with some formal elements; Japanese garden; walled kitchen gardens

### **Main Phases of Construction**

Early nineteenth century; late nineteenth-early twentieth century

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

Gredington is a modern, two-storey brick house, built in plain Georgian style in the early 1980s to replace the original house, by then demolished. The house is situated on a west-facing slope towards the south end of Gredington Park, to the south-west of the village of Hanmer. The forecourt and main entrance are on the north side, which has a stone porch with a heraldic panel from the old house over it.

The present house lies just to the south-west of the site of the old Gredington, a large brick house in classical style which was demolished in about 1958 and 1980. Parts of this house may have been seventeenth- and eighteenth-century in date, but the main block was built in 1808-11, for the second Lord Kenyon. The main entrance front was on the east side. Further building work took place in the time of the fourth Lord Kenyon, who succeeded (as a minor) in 1869. Nothing is now left of this house, the site of which is largely grassed over.

Various brick outbuildings are situated to the east of the present house, on slightly higher ground. The stables form a three-sided cobbled court, open on the south side. They are two-storey, with an arched and pedimented entrance in the middle of the north side, over

which is a clock and a cupola, and the date 1886. In the middle of the south side is a square dovecote. The court is thought to date mainly to the 1808-11 building phase. To its south is a range of single and two-storey outbuildings against the kitchen garden wall, parts utilitarian and parts converted to modern use. The windows have round heads and are similar to those in the stable court.

To the east, against the east wall of the north kitchen garden, is a two-storey small brick house in simple classical style. This has traditionally been the home of a senior estate worker.

Gredington Park is a medium-sized landscape park situated on rolling ground to the south-west of the village of Hanmer. It is bounded on its east side by the natural lake of Hanmer Mere. There are two entrances, both on the north side of the park, off the Hanmer-Overton road. The easternmost one, next to the Mere, has a fine ironwork gate with openwork piers and a half-timbered lodge on the west side. This entrance and drive is now disused, and the drive is grassed over. Further west is the present main entrance, with iron gates flanked by octagonal brick piers and curving brick walls topped with iron railings. To its east is a brick lodge with a classical front. A winding tarmac drive runs southwards to the house, which is situated towards the southern end of the park. In the angle between the junction of the two drives, to the north-east of the house, is a small single-storey square pavilion, faintly oriental in style, with overhanging eaves supported by iron piers.

The park is largely pasture, managed as parkland, with many isolated mature deciduous trees, mainly oak, scattered throughout. Some of the oaks are in lines, suggesting former field boundaries (there is also some relict ridge-and-furrow in the park). Most of the woodland, both semi-natural deciduous and planted coniferous, lies around the western and southern fringes of the park (Scrape Wood, Long Wood, Mount Pleasant). On the slope below the house, to its north-west, is a small wood, Fir Orchard, which contains some mature conifers.

From the house there are fine views out across the undulating ground of the park to the west. On the crest of a ridge to the south-west a small ruined brick building is visible. This is the 'chapel', so called because high on its east side are two pointed arched windows. The building is plain, gabled, with further blocked arched windows and doors. Its roof is now collapsed. Whatever its original purpose, it was later converted into a rackets court. The ground drops steeply to its south down to the valley of the Cumber's brook.

The park was initially laid out for the second Lord Kenyon in the early years of the nineteenth century, probably at about the same time as the house was being rebuilt in 1808-11. During the time of the first Lord Kenyon (1732-1802) it was said that 'The country, which is singularly beautiful ... was in those days, even more than at present, thickly studded with magnificent oak timber' (Kenyon, 1873). The landscaping may have entailed little more than the making of the drives, all of which are shown on the 1841 tithe map, and the removal of field boundaries. The 1841 map shows some still in place that had been removed by the time of the 1871 Ordnance Survey map, leaving hedgerow trees as isolated specimens. By 1871 the small pavilion, called 'lodge', on the drive to the north-east of the house, had been added. The lodges on the road do not appear on the 1871 map, and were probably the work of the 4th Lord Kenyon, who inherited Gredington in 1869. The

'chapel', however, does appear on the 1841 tithe map. By 1871 walks had been made from the southern end of the garden through the wood to the south and into the Long Wood in the valley below.

The garden lies mainly to the south and north-east of the house, on ground sloping gently to the south and west. Beyond the garden the ground rises to a gentle ridge-top to the east and drops to the west and south. The position of the house near the west side of the garden gives fine views from it out across the park to the west.

The core of the garden area is taken up with three large walled enclosures, formerly kitchen gardens, to the north of which is the stable court. The pleasure garden thus skirts the walled gardens, stable court and house.

The main drive enters the garden in its north-eastern corner. The entrance is flanked by low curving brick walls terminated by ornamented piers. The drive curves down a wide lawn bounded on the east by large clumps of shrubs, chiefly rhododendrons, and at the north end by the Spinney, a small plantation of mixed trees and shrubs, with an ancient sweet chestnut on the boundary. The drive leads to a small forecourt on the north side of the house and on to the outbuildings to the east (also reached by a back drive which enters the garden further south). Yew hedging bounds the drive to the east of the house.

The spacious lawn continues around the west side of the house, bounded by a curving sunk fence, and iron fencing at the north end. The only adornments are a few shrubs, an oak tree west of the house, and a croquet lawn. Between the house and the stable court is a small sunken formal garden, with stone steps at its south end down to a wide central path of flagstones.

To the east of the stable court and kitchen gardens is a narrow strip of garden. The northern end is informal, with shrubs and a large mature beech tree. Along the outside of the southernmost kitchen garden is the 'Boar Garden', consisting of a levelled lawn, with a low scarp at its north end up to a slightly higher lawn, in which is set a small concrete-lined pool of curving outline. This was originally ornamented with a copy of the boar of Florence. Along the east side of the lawn are trees and shrubs, including two large Irish yews and rhododendrons, and against the kitchen garden wall is a large magnolia. A gravel path leads south through an east-west yew hedge to a small circle enclosed by yew hedging. The cobbled surface is patterned with white quartz stones. Narrow gently stepped paths flanked by yew hedging lead east to the stone base of a statue and west to a gravel path leading down the slope towards the Japanese garden.

The area to the south of the kitchen gardens is largely informal, with widely spaced trees set in rough grass carpeted with bulbs in spring. There are some fine old trees in this area, including a group of pines in the south-east corner, oaks, and some huge ancient sweet chestnuts along the south boundary. Old fruit trees suggest that this area might at one time have been an orchard.

In the angle between the two southern kitchen gardens is a small rectangular formal garden, the 'Blue Garden', bounded on the south and west sides by an overgrown yew hedge. The interior is now overgrown, but there are traces of a central path of bricks set in

a herringbone pattern. This leads at the east end to a brick alcove, the interior of which is also in herringbone pattern. It has a marble surround and a small fountain set in it.

The western end of the south part of the garden is more densely wooded, with some large conifers, and in places an understorey of rhododendrons. The gravel path leads to the Japanese garden in the south-west corner. This consists of a roughly circular pond with a gravel path around it and with a small island near the east side reached by an arched wooden Japanese bridge. Planting around the pond includes bamboos, an acer, a large birch and a weeping ash.

Just to the south of the pond is a well preserved ice-house covered by an earthen mound. Steps lead down to an arched passage leading to a domed brick-lined chamber.

To the north of the pond gravel paths pass through an area of rhododendrons under a canopy of oaks, to the north of which is a smaller pond with stone steps down to it, a rockery bank on its east side, and rockwork on the slope to its south. A row of yews screens this part of the garden from the kitchen garden to the east.

The last part of the garden is a small enclosure on the west side of the main kitchen garden, known as the 'Rose Garden'. This is a rectangular area surrounded by brick walls, with doorways on the south and west sides. The east side has a pergola supported on iron piers at the south end and a half-timbered single-storey store room at the north end. The garden is laid out mainly to lawn, with wall borders, and two old magnolias in the lawn. Outside the garden walls are informally planted shrubs. A former gravel path to the west, now grassed over, is visible in the turf.

The history of the garden follows that of the house. The basic form of the garden probably dates to the 1808-11 building phase. However, there are elements in the garden, in particular the ancient sweet chestnuts on the boundaries, that predate this phase and must have been part of a park or garden of the earlier house. The 1841 tithe map shows that the early nineteenth-century garden was smaller than the present one; on the south side it extended little beyond the walled gardens and did not include the area of woodland with the large pond which later became the Japanese garden. On the west side the garden boundary was further east (nearer the house) than it is now. The drive swept in to the east side of the house, and round to the east side of the stables, where there was a pond. A further pond, also gone, was situated to the south of the western walled garden. The outer walled enclosure on this side was not in existence, and this area appears to have been merely fields at this stage. By the time of the 1871 map walks have been made right around the outside of the walled gardens and into the wood to the south-west. They extended into the park across the field to the west and through the wood to the south. The field to the south of the walled gardens still has not been incorporated into the garden, although a walk has been made through it, a field boundary removed, and a copse in the middle turned into a clump, with the addition of coniferous trees. The third walled enclosure still has not been built, and the garden is not yet extended westwards at this stage. The late nineteenth-century to early twentieth-century Edwardian phase included the making of the Japanese garden, the extension of the garden southwards and westwards to its present limits, and probably the making of the 'Boar Garden', 'Blue Garden' and 'Rose Garden'. The site of the former house is now grassed over, only a slightly levelled area showing its position.

The kitchen gardens lie to the south of the stable court, east of the present house. There are three brick walled enclosures superimposed on each other. The northernmost, opposite the stable court, is square, with curved corners. The walls stand to their full height of c. 3.5 m, and are topped with flat stone coping. The north wall is buttressed, and in the middle is a cobbled path to an arched doorway with an ornamental stone surround and a wrought iron gate similar in style to the gates of the disused entrance to the park. The interior layout of cross and perimeter paths, with a sundial (now in the sunken garden) in the middle, has gone; it is entirely grassed over, grazed by horses and hens.

To the west is a narrow area occupied by the dog kennel yard and the 'Rose Garden'. To the south-east is a trapezoidal enclosure, its north-west corner taken out by the south-east corner of the northern garden. This garden has similar walls and a new entrance on its north side. The north end of the interior is used as a yard, the rest is grass, with bothies, greenhouses, and sunk glasshouse footings within it. In the middle of the east side is an arched doorway with wrought-iron gate and stone steps. On the south side is a doorway with an iron gate flanked by piers and stone ball finials.

The third enclosure lies to the west of the previous one, south of the square garden. This is the most recent part of the walled gardens, dating to after 1871. Its east wall (the west wall of the previous garden) has been rebuilt. The south wall is c. 1.5 m high, and is stepped down the slope. A simple iron gate in the middle has an angular ironwork overthrow, and the wall steps up to it on either side. The west wall is of similar height. The interior is grassed over and grazed, and has an old fruit store in it which was originally thatched.

## **Sources**

### **Primary**

Plan of the gardens (n.d., nineteenth century) (private collection).

1841 tithe map: Clwyd Record Office (Hawarden), NT/M/81.

### **Secondary**

Kenyon, G.T., The Life of Lloyd, First Lord Kenyon (1873).

Pratt, D., and A.G. Veysey, A Handlist of the Topographical Prints of Clwyd (1977), nos 717-18.

Hubbard, E., Clwyd (1986), pp. 361-62.