

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

SITE DOSSIER

SITE NAME Mounton House

REF. NO. PGW (Gt) 8

OS MAP 162 GRID REF. ST 514930

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

DESIGNATIONS Listed building: Mounton House
Grade III

National Park AONB SSSI NNR ESA GAM SAM CA

SITE EVALUATION Grade II*

Primary reasons for grading

Second, and grandest, home of H. Avray Tipping in Gwent. An integrated
Arts-and-Crafts layout of approach, formal gardens, and wild garden,
all by Tipping.

TYPE OF SITE

Arts-and-Crafts Edwardian garden, with formal and wild element

MAIN PHASES OF CONSTRUCTION

1907-1912

VISITED BY/DATE Elisabeth Whittle/September 1990

HOUSE

Name Mounton House

Grid ref ST 514930

Date/style 1911-12/Arts and Crafts/Vernacular

Brief description: main building periods, architects, style, present state

A large stone and timbered house in Arts and Crafts/Vernacular style designed by H. Avray Tipping in collaboration with the architect Eric Francis, and built in 1911-12. It stands on a level plateau to the SE of the hamlet of Mounton, with a precipitous slope below it to the NW. It is approached by a long drive from the village of Pwllmeyric to the SE. Near the house the drive enters a wide approach between buttressed stone walls, which is flanked by outbuildings and cottages. The house is set back from this approach on the left-hand side at the end, with a square forecourt with circular drive in front of it. The main facade has projecting gables and a central timbered section.

Avray Tipping lived in the house from 1912 to 1922, when he gave the estate to his brother's godson, Major H.C.L. Holden of Brasted, and moved to High Glanau, near Trelleck. The house subsequently had several private owners, and was bought by the present owners (then Monmouthshire County Council) in 1951 for use as a special school. It is used at present as a school for emotionally disturbed children.

OUTBUILDINGS

Name Various

Grid ref ST 516930

Date/style, and brief description

Outbuildings are ranged on either side of the wide approach, with retainers' cottages on the N side. Same date and style as the house

THE PLEASURE GARDEN

Grid ref ST 513930

Date/style 1900-1912/Arts-and-Crafts; wild woodland

GENERAL DESCRIPTION AND LAYOUT

The gardens have two main components: the formal gardens, which lie mainly to the SW and SE of the house, and the wilder parts which lie in woodland to the SW of the house, on the steep slope of the gorge to the NW, and in the bottom of the Mounton valley to the NW.

The formal gardens consist of the approach, forecourt and pergola on the N side of the house and a long stone terrace and formal grass areas to the S. The approach has a tarmac drive with wide grass verges and fruit trees trained on the high flanking walls. The forecourt has a central grass circle and is separated from the approach by a low wall with urns on pedestals either side of the entrance (one has gone). Opposite the entrance are broad steps up to a level grass area (now with an adventure playground at its N end). At the NW end of the approach, on the edge of the gorge, is a stone pergola from which there is a view of the unspoilt valley below. A winding track leads down the side of the gorge from the NE end of the pergola.

To the SW and SE of the house is a formal garden in a series of rectilinear compartments. Immediately in front of the house is a long stone terrace, below which is a long grass bowling green surrounded on all but the NE side by clipped yew hedging. This is rectangular, with apsidal NW and SE ends. It runs parallel to the terrace and extends southeastwards beyond it. To the SE of the terrace is the cruciform pergola garden with simple stone piers surrounding a rectangular pool. This was a tribute to William Robinson, and was originally planted with roses (Dorothy Perkins, Lady Gay et al.) and wistarias (which survive), which were trained along the beams of the pergola. In the E corner of this garden is a two-storey timber-framed pavilion, called the tea-house, which overlooks a rectangular lawn to the SE. The lawn is surrounded by walls on the NW and SE sides and by a yew hedge on the SW side. To the NE is a raised, stone-flagged area, called the parterre garden, with walls around it on all but the SW side. There were originally beds of roses, delphiniums and *Aster thomsoni* in the paving, but these have now gone. To the SE of the lawn and parterre garden are two grass tennis courts (disused) surrounded by low clipped yew hedging.

To the SW of the formal gardens is an area of semi-natural woodland, the fringes of which were planted with mixed deciduous and coniferous trees. This was originally part of the wild garden, and was laid out with planted rockeries and paths. A small pool and rockwork around it survive near the top of this area.

In 1907 Tipping bought some land beside the stream at the foot of the Mounton gorge and constructed a water garden in natural style around the winding stream. This area (now in separate ownership) is now mostly grassed, the only landscaping left being a small pool, small arched bridge, and a few trees and shrubs, including a Portugal laurel next to the pool. The stream is partly canalized between stone walls. The woodland on the slopes above and to the south-west of the house have now reverted to unmanaged woodland, and the valley bottom has been incorporated into private gardens.

The original kitchen garden was on the NE side of the approach, opposite the parterre garden. Only the walls remain.

STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

Terrace

This runs the length of the house on its SW side, is stone paved, with a parapet wall c. 0.3 m. high with a narrow flower bed in front of it. At the SE end is a wall and an arched doorway and wooden door and steps down to the pergola garden. At the NW end is a wall and an

arched doorway and a loggia on the end of the house (facing the terrace).

Parterre garden

To the NE of the lawn is a raised rectangular area paved with York stone flags. This was called the parterre garden and originally had flower beds in the paving. It has a retaining wall along its SW side.

Track

A winding track leads down the side of the gorge from the NE end of the pergola at the end of the approach. It is revetted with stone on its lower side, although much of this is ruinous.

BUILT COMPONENTS

Walls

There is a considerable amount of walling in the garden: all garden compartments are surrounded by yew hedging and/or walls. The walls are high (c. 2.7 m.) and are well built of stone, topped with stone tile 'roofs'. (Much of this 'roofing' is in poor repair and many of the slates have fallen.) There are buttressed walls either side of the approach, walls around the lawn and parterre garden and walls around the pergola garden. A low parapet wall revets the terrace and SW side of the pergola garden. There is a low wall on the NE side of the forecourt.

Pergolas

There are two pergolas, one at the end of the approach, overlooking the Mounat valley, and one in the pergola garden S of the house. The first spans the end of the approach and stands on the very edge of the steep slope of the gorge. It has square stone pillars, a low wall between them, a stone slate roof, and a higher 'bus shelter' in the middle. Its floor is paved with stone. There is a view (A on map) from it to the valley below.

The pergola of the pergola garden has two rows of square stone pillars (c. 4 m. high from bowling green level) on either side of the pool. A further pair on each side of the pool form a cruciform shape. There are no connecting beams.

Tea-house

This is a wooden-framed, black-and-white two-storey pavilion between the pergola garden and the lawn. Its SE side has open verandahs on both floors. It has a pitched roof and entrances on the SE and SW sides.

Steps

There are stone steps between all levels of the gardens. To the NE of the house there are wide stone steps up to the grass area opposite the forecourt. There are steps at the doorway between the tennis courts and the lawn; up to the parterre garden (at either end); up from the lawn to the pergola garden; up from the pergola garden to the terrace; down from the terrace to the bowling green (in the middle of the terrace), and down from the bowling green to the wild area (semi-circular), opposite the terrace steps.

Pools

In the middle of the pergola garden is a rectangular pool, c. 2.2 x 8 m. It is concrete-lined and c. 0.8 m. deep (no water in at present).

Below the bowling green, in the wild part of the garden, is a small artificial naturalistic pool, lined with concrete, set in a small rock garden.

In the Moun-ton valley is a small arched stone bridge over the stream, which is partly canalized between stone revetment walls. To the north-west of the stream is a small pool.

ARCHITECTURAL ORNAMENTS

Paving

The terrace, pergola garden and parterre garden are all stone paved. The pergola garden has four square flower beds on each side of the pool set into the paving. (Paving in the pergola garden in poor condition.)

Ornaments

The forecourt gate piers are topped by stone urns (one missing). The apsidal ends of the bowling green each contain a large stone urn on a raised plinth. These were brought from the family home of Brasted in Essex.

PLANTED COMPONENTS

The approach to the house has wide grass strips on either side. Fruit trees are trained up the walls lining the approach. A row of six large birch trees opposite the cottage (SW side of approach).

The dominant components of the formal gardens are lawn and clipped yew hedges. The tennis courts (disused) are lawn with yew hedges on the SW and SE sides. The lawn has a yew hedge on its SW side which continues at its NW end to form the apsidal end of the bowling green.

The bowling green, which runs NW-SE below the terrace and pergola garden, consists of a long rectangular lawn surrounded on all but the NE side by yew hedges. It has apsidal ends in which are the two urns (see above), and a semi-circular alcove in the SW side opposite the centre of the pergola garden. Opposite the centre of the house, where steps descend to the bowling green from the terrace, are four Irish yews lining this central axis and a gap in the hedge on the SW side where there are semi-circular stone steps into the wild area of the garden.

Within the formal gardens there is little planting of note. Against the SE side of the house is a mature *Magnolia grandiflora*, and against the terrace wall, near its SE end, is a mature *Magnolia* (? species). A large wisteria grows up the wall to the NE of the tea-house, and *Vitis coignetiae* and other vines grow up some of the pillars of the pergola garden.

The wild garden beyond to the SW is open semi-natural woodland (deciduous and coniferous) with some ornamental shrubs near the bowling green. There is now a sewage works in the woodland to the S of the garden. At the foot of the wood, in the Mounton valley, there are traces of box hedging along the boundary.

The area of former water garden in the Mounton valley is now mostly grass, with a few trees and shrubs which may date from Tipping's time, including a Portugal laurel next to the pool.

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: wooded Mounton valley to the NW and woodland and fields to the W and SW.

Views:

1. View from the pergola at the end of the approach (A on map). View to the NW up the Mounton valley and into the gorge below.
2. View to the SE from the SE end of the approach and the tennis courts (B on map): now open fields and playing fields.

ANY SPECIAL FEATURES

None

SURVIVAL OF INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS

Structural components: complete

Built components: most - some in need of restoration (tops of walls, tea-house, pool, some paving)

Planted components: most trees, some shrubs and climbers

UTILITARIAN GARDENS

NAME Kitchen garden

Grid ref ST 514930

Date/style 1907-1912

DESCRIPTION (categories as for the pleasure garden)

The former kitchen garden lies to the NE of the approach. It is a rectangular level area surrounded by walls (similar to the garden walls), and now grassed over. There are a few old trained fruit trees left on the walls.

SOURCES

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

Secondary

- H. Avray Tipping, *Country Life* 37 (1915), pp. 208-17, 233-4
H. Avray Tipping, *Country Life* 42 (1917), pp. 84-91.
R. Haslam, *Country Life* 13 Dec 1979, pp. 2270-73.
G. Jekyll and C. Hussey, *Garden Ornament* (1927), pp. 325, 338.
H.G. Singleton, 'H. Avray Tipping in Monmouthshire', *Severn and Wye Review* 1, no. 2 (1970-71), pp. 43-7.

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