

ROSEHILL

Ref No PGW (C) 72
OS Map 117
Grid Ref SJ 349 427
County Wrexham
District Wrexham

Community Council Erbistock

Designations None

Site Evaluation Grade II

Primary reasons for grading

Landscape park in picturesque location overlooking the river Dee, surviving in its entirety. House and garden in fine situation overlooking the park and river, with the unusual survivals of a box-edged Edwardian parterre and a well preserved and fully productive walled kitchen garden.

Type of Site

Landscape park; formal garden; walled kitchen garden.

Main Phases of Construction

Late eighteenth to early nineteenth century; early twentieth century.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Rosehill is a substantial late Georgian brick house situated on elevated ground to the west of the river Dee. From the east front of the house there are panoramic views over the park to the river Dee and beyond. The house is approached from the north by a drive and forecourt. The main entrance on the north side has a pedimented porch, and in front of the central window on the east side is a small two-column portico. The three-bay centre of the house is three-storey, the flanking wings two-storey. The service court lies to the north-west of the house. Rosehill has long been a property of the Kenyon family, and was the home of the renowned archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon. It is now divided into flats.

The former stables are situated to the north of the west end of the house, to which they are joined by a brick arched arcade open to the east. The stables are a compact two-storey brick building with a blocked archway on the west side and a blank Venetian window in an arched recess on the east side. They appear contemporary with the house. To the north a high brick wall extends for a short distance, dividing the front drive from the service area. The wall ends at a small square two-storey brick pavilion set at an angle to the stables. Steps lead up to a first-floor door on the west side.

To the west of the house is a range of outbuildings of brick and stone. The north end, now used for garages and storage, is of brick and appears younger than the stone south end, which appears to have been a small cottage at one time. It is now used as an outbuilding.

Ranged along the minor road which bounds the property on the west side is a fine long barn. Its north end is of stone, the rest is half-timbered and brick. It is set in an enclosure bounded by a low stone wall.

Rosehill has a small landscape park situated on a rolling slope on the west flank of the Dee valley. The house stands on the western edge of the park, at its highest point, with fine views out over the park to the river Dee and the countryside beyond. The park was probably made at the same time as the house was built, in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. Many of the trees in the park are mature, and could date from this period.

The park is square in shape, bounded by roads on the north, east and west sides, and by a belt of deciduous woodland in a small valley on the south side. A path originally ran through this woodland from the garden to the river at Overton bridge, but it is now disused and mostly impassable. The park is bounded by a stone wall of rubble construction along the A539 on its east side and east end of its north side, with iron railings on a low stone wall in the north-east corner. There are narrow belts of mixed woodland along the west boundary, and at the west end of the north boundary, but the rest of the park is open unfenced grassland dotted with single mature trees. These include two large cedars, sweet chestnuts, horse chestnuts, oaks, sycamores, beeches, and pines. The park is separated from the garden by a simple iron fence, in places replaced by a modern fence.

The entrance is on the west side, through simple wooden gates, with a winding gravel drive leading to a small forecourt on the north side of the house. The drive divides near the entrance, the west fork leading to the service area. There is a grander entrance, now disused, on the A539 on the east side of the park. It is set back from the park wall by curving walls of dressed stone, and consists of square stone piers flanking simple iron gates. A drive originally wound across the park to the forecourt, but it is now disused and grassed over, visible in places where it is sunken. Near the entrance it is flanked by deciduous trees. Just inside the entrance, to the north of the former drive, is a small pond.

The garden lies mainly to the east and south of the house, on gently sloping ground that has been levelled into shallow terraces. In its present form the garden appears to be of Edwardian character, although the terracing may be earlier.

To the north-west of the house the drive is flanked by an area of horse chestnuts underplanted near the house with evergreen shrubs such as holly and laurel. The drive leads to a small rectangular gravel forecourt. To the west of the house and outbuildings is a small pond of utilitarian character.

The garden east of the house is bounded on the north and east sides by a yew hedge. The garden and park are separated by a simple iron fence (replaced partly by a modern fence). An iron gate in an archway cut in the north hedge, with topiary over it, leads to a gravel

terrace along the east front of the house. This is bounded by a grass bank down to a rectangular lawn. A flight of stone steps leads down from the terrace opposite the central window to the lawn, at the south end of which is a large cedar tree. The terrace continues along the south front, where it is wider. The terrace extends west of the house, backed on the north by a high brick wall, in front of which is an area of stone paving. The garden south of the house is divided into several small areas of different character linked by a central north-south gravel path. This starts with a flight of stone steps down the grass bank bounding the terrace. Below the terrace is a level rectangular lawn cut into the slope at its west end. In the corners of the west end of the lawn are two topiary yews clipped into domes. To the west is a small area of specimen trees, including cypresses, beeches, and a sweet chestnut, beyond which is a bank of rhododendrons, flanked by a gravel path, along the garden boundary. The path joins a gravel path along the south side of the lawn, which leads to a door in the kitchen garden wall.

The central gravel path leads via a flight of stone steps down to the next compartment, which consists of a formal parterre. The steps are flanked by a pair of clipped yew domes. The parterre is a rectangular area laid out in formal box-edged beds with narrow gravel paths between them. It is divided into two parts by the north-south gravel path. The west end has a diamond-shaped bed in the middle, the east end an oval bed. The beds are planted with small shrubs, roses, and herbaceous plants. There is a cypress in the south-east corner and another on the south side, to the west of the path. At the east end of the parterre a flight of stone steps lead down to an earthen path to a small iron gate into the park. The central path leads to a lower sloping area via stone steps under an arch in a topiary yew, and there is a similar arch over the gravel path along the south side of the parterre. The north-south path continues through an informal area of rough lawn and shrubs, bordered by rhododendrons on the east and the kitchen garden on the west. It passes between another pair of clipped yew bushes and then winds to a disused gate into the woodland bounding the south side of the park.

Rosehill has a well preserved walled garden, situated on sloping ground to the south of the house and garden. It is probably contemporary with the house, dating to the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. The garden is square, with brick walls standing to their full height of c. 3.5 m (c. 4 m at the lower, south end) and topped with stone coping. There are two doors in the north wall, the east one leading to the garden, the central one to brick lean-to outhouses standing against the outer side of the wall. A door at the south end of the east wall leads to a former path to the park and woodland.

The interior is laid out with perimeter earth and gravel paths and a central north-south path. All these paths retain their box edging. Near the north end of the central path is a stone baluster sundial c. 1.7 m high, standing on a circular plinth. Against the north wall is a brick-based glasshouse without its glass, and with a ruinous superstructure. The vine inside, however, survives. To its east are several brick cold frames.

The garden is still in productive use, and no part of it is derelict. There are some old fruit trees trained on the walls, and one or two isolated fruit trees. The central path is flanked by old espalier apples.

Sources

Secondary

Hubbard, E., Clwyd (1986), p. 160.