

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

SITE DOSSIER

SITE NAME Dingestow Court

REF. NO. PGW (Gt) 1

OS MAP 161 GRID REF. SO 450097

FORMER COUNTY Gwent

UNITARY AUTHORITY Monmouth B.C.

COMMUNITY COUNCIL Mitchel Troy United

DESIGNATIONS Listed building Dingestow Court Grade 11

SITE EVALUATION Grade 11*

Primary reasons for grading

Late 19th-century garden layout by a well-known designer (Edward Milner), with survival of its main features.

TYPE OF SITE

Mid 19th-century medium-sized landscape park with mid and late 19th century garden layout, part formal, part informal. Some surviving earlier features

MAIN PHASES OF CONSTRUCTION

c. 1845; c. 1883

VISITED BY/DATE Elisabeth Whittle/June 1990

HOUSE

Name Dingestow Court

Grid ref SO 450097

Date/style Tudor/Jacobean core; Georgian N front; mid 19th century
Tudor S front

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

A large stone L-shaped mansion, the main section of which is orientated E-W on a gentle N-S slope. Access via two drives, to the E and W. The park and gardens lie mainly to the S and E of the house.

The N-S block containing the archway to the stables has pre 1500 origins and was the Elizabethan farmhouse. A range of buildings extended southwards (now gone) and included stables. They are shown on a 1882 drains plan and a pencil drawing of 1879 or 1819 (writing faint). The E-W main block was first built on the site of an earlier house in 1623 by Sir Philip Jones. The Jones family lived there until the 1760s, when the house was bought by James Duberley (d. 1791). He gave the N front its Georgian facade. In 1801 the house was bought by Samuel Bosanquet (1744-1806). There were no known changes until the succession of Samuel Bosanquet IV in 1843, who instigated major alterations:

1845 S front rebuilt (L. Vulliamy)

1859 W end of S front (J.P. Seddon)

1870 Porch on N front added (B. Lawrence)

1877 E end addition of Withdrawing room and Smoking room

(Lawrence

and Goodman)

There were further internal changes, and in 1925 the Kitchen Wing was added at the E end. An 1883 inventory mentions a 'greenhouse next to the house', which contained 77 pot plants, and a 'conservatory'. The former was probably on the south side of the house, immediately outside the garden door towards the west end of the house. It is shown on the Milner 1883 plan, but is now gone.

OUTBUILDINGS

Name

Grid ref SO 449097

Date/style, and brief description

Gothic style stables to the W of the house, by J.P. Seddon, 1859.

Now converted into a school (Seddon House)

THE PARK

Central grid ref SO 452096

Date/style

Mid 19th century landscaped park

GENERAL DESCRIPTION, HISTORY AND LAYOUT

A small picturesque park in rolling agricultural landscape, sloping down from the house to a 4-acre artificial lake in the valley bottom, and rising up beyond to a view of woodland on a ridge (called The Park, this was originally incorporated into the estate but was sold in the 1950s). An uninterrupted view of the park from the garden is achieved by a ha-ha on the edge of the garden (pre-1789). The park ends on its SE side at the A449 dual carriageway. Land use is chiefly pasture and arable, with some individual trees, including cedars planted in the 19th century (originally four, now one remains), and clumps of deciduous trees (oak, lime, horse chestnut). At the N end of the park there are two drives to the house, from the E and W, with a lodge at each entrance. The E drive is the main one, and its western end, where it approaches the house, was designed by Edward Milner in a sweeping curve through an area of specimen trees and shrubs.

The park was landscaped after the 1760s, when James Duberley bought the estate. At this time (1789 plan) the public road to the north of the house ran immediately north of it, partly along the line of the present east drive. The road was moved northwards to its present position in the middle of the 19th century by Samuel Bosanquet IV (line shown pencilled in on 1840 and 1844 plans). The ornamental lake also dates from the mid 19th century (also pencilled in on the plans), but may have replaced earlier fishponds drained in the 17th century. Much of the planting of the park dates from the 19th century.

STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

There are two drives to the house - the main drive to the E of the house, and the secondary one to the W, the entrance to both of which is off the Dingestow-Tregaer road. Both are now tarmacked. The E drive is straight until it enters the gardens, where it makes a sweeping curve before arriving at the forecourt on the N side of the house. This part of the drive was designed by Edward Milner. The W drive follows a curving route to the stable yard on the W side of the house, and enters the forecourt through an archway in the W wing.

WATER FEATURES

The 4-acre lake in the valley bottom to the SE of the house was originally created in the mid 19th century. When the present owner took over in the 1970s it had been allowed to fall into disrepair, and had largely silted up. In 1979 it was dredged out and the dam was enlarged to its wide flat present shape (it is 100 ft. wide at the base). It is an informally-shaped lake, created by damming the valley bottom at a point where it is at its narrowest. It may be on the site of the fishponds which existed in the 17th century (drained when troops billeted at the Court in the Civil War). Its dam is pencilled in on the c.1840 plan, and the dam and lake are pencilled in on the 1844 plan. It is fed by streams from the W. There is a small island towards the W end. The dam is a wide, level grassed earth bank. Below it is a small wooded area, and oaks are planted around the edge.

BUILT FEATURES

There is a lodge (19th-century), Upper Lodge, at the W end of the W drive. It is a small cottage, and is lived in. Also a lower lodge at the E end of the E drive.

PLANTED COMPONENTS

In the field between the house and lake is a row of large old oaks, running NW-SE down towards the NE end of the lake (shown on 1844 plan). To their SW are two large horse chestnuts, and along the W boundary are newly planted red oaks.

In the field to the W is one large cedar (mid 19th-century), planted near the line of a proposed drive (never built). A second cedar in the vicinity fell in the January 1990 gales, and two others had been lost in earlier gales.

In the field to the E are two clumps of limes (mid 19th century).

In the field to the SE of the lake are four large clumps of oaks. Three of these had small ponds within them (now filled in and/or drained), and these are pre 1789 in origin. A fourth clump, that nearest the SW end of the lake was enlarged from three trees to a larger clump in the mid 19th century (proposed enlargement shown on 1844 plan).

The E drive is lined with young lime trees planted in the early 1970s.

The field between the house and the public road to the N has large oaks (pre 1880s) and Scots pines lining the S side of the road (pre 1880s).

BOUNDARIES

Boundaries are formed by field boundaries (mostly fences) and the public road to the N. The area of the park is virtually unchanged since it was formed in the mid 19th century. The main entrance is at the E end of the E drive, off the road to Dingestow, with a secondary entrance off the same road at the W end of the W drive.

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

Essential setting: farmland all around the park
The principal view is that from point A, the terrace on the S side of the house. This takes in the sloping field down to the lake, the lake, the field with clumps on the far side of the lake, and the wood known as The Park on the ridge beyond the A449.

LAND-USE

Fields in the park are in agricultural use, for pasture and arable.

ELEMENTS OF BOTANICAL OR OTHER NATURE CONSERVATION INTEREST

None known

SURVIVAL OF INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS

Structural components: all
Water features: all
Built components: most
Planted components: most

Most of the trees planted in the mid 19th century, and some of the earlier ones survive. The recent gales (Jan 1990) have brought down one of the cedars at the W end of the park.

The present owner has revived the lake by dredging it out (1979), and it is now in excellent condition.

THE PLEASURE GARDEN

Grid ref SO 451096

Date/style mid 19th century/1883/20th century; formal terrace, late Victorian picturesque

GENERAL DESCRIPTION, HISTORY AND LAYOUT

The gardens lie to the N, SE and E of the house. There are three main components: the formal terrace along the SE front of the house, lawns, and trees, which lie mainly in the eastern half of the garden. Within this framework are further features - a ha-ha along the SE edge of the garden, gravel paths, a mound in the N corner, next to the E drive (called 'Happy Dick's mount' after Richard Jones, the last Jones to live here, who died in the 1760s), a small pond to the NW of it, on the opposite side of the drive, and a long straight grass walk lined with nut trees, Scots pines, sweet chestnuts and other trees, called 'The Vista', which runs eastwards from the E end of the house.

This layout is the result of an overlay of several periods of construction and planting, the main ones of which are the mid 19th century and the mid 1880s. Further alterations have been made in the 20th century, although the 1880s phase is the most important as far as the present-day appearance of the gardens is concerned.

A 1789 plan shows the public road running near the N side of the house, following the line of the E drive until the mound, and then curving gently northwards. Between it and the house was a forecourt with straight drive finishing in an oval next to the house. To the E was a walled rectangular garden bisected by straight paths. The garden to the S and E occupied roughly the area it does now, with the ha-ha marked along the SE side. A wiggly path runs from the wall on the W side of the garden past the house to Happy Dick's mount. The area between this and the walled garden is called the 'Wilderness', and appears to have been planted with trees. To the W of the garden a small orchard is marked. The only survivals from this period are the ha-ha and the mount.

The next recorded phase of development is the mid 19th century, coinciding with the alterations to the S front of the house. Samuel Bosanquet IV was responsible for these. Two plans, one of about 1840 and the other of 1844, show the proposed changes. The main road is diverted to its present position, well to the N of the house, and the line of the new drive is pencilled in. By this time some of the formal elements to the N of the house have gone, but the oval and part of the walled garden remain. To the S of the house a terrace is proposed, with a straight walk aligned on the central doorway leading, via steps, to a straight path parallel with the ha-ha. A c. 1860 engraving, a pre-1870 painting and a 1877-1883 photograph show that both these paths and the terrace were made, although by the time the photograph was taken the central path and steps had gone. The painting and the photograph disagree as to the nature of the terrace: the painting has it gravelled, with a stone revetment and urns at the corners, while the photograph shows it grass banked, with no urns. The urns are in place in the engraving, which shows the terrace edged with grass banks. There are further paths and trees marked on the plans at the eastern end of the garden, and cedars are marked along the E end of the SE edge. A rectangular kitchen garden is pencilled in on the 1844 plan, to the W of the garden. Survivals from this period are the terrace, although this was later modified, and the cedars (one of which fell in the Feb 1990 gales).

The next recorded phase of development is the mid 1880s. In 1883 Edward Milner prepared a plan for proposed changes to the gardens. This shows his proposals in colour, existing features and planting in black and white. There is evidence that all his proposals were implemented except for the elaborate parterre to the SE of the terrace. By the time he drew up the plan (1883) a Wellingtonia had been planted to the N of the house. This is still there. To the N the

oval is swept away and in its place is a wide gravel area. New trees are proposed to the S of the E drive. The terrace along the S front is modified with a wide gravel walk, grass banks, steps at the E and W ends of the S side leading to an elaborate semi-circular parterre and curving paths to E and W. The E path leads eventually to a circular area beyond the cedars, labelled the 'seat'. A circular rustic summerhouse, now gone, was placed here, with steps up to it (photograph). To the E of the house were further winding paths, a circular feature, and a straight walk ('The Vista'), which incorporated some existing planting on the S side (sweet chestnuts and Scots pines). To the W of the garden a rectilinear fruit garden and to the S of it a curving kitchen garden surrounded by a hedge were proposed. Survivals of this plan are the terrace and steps, part of the curving path to the E (as far as the ha-ha, where there was a bridge, now gone), 'The Vista', tree planting in the E part of the garden, especially of conifers, the 'Fruit Garden' with its 'Vinery', now the kitchen garden, and the 'Kitchen Garden', now an orchard. Late 19th-early 20th century photos show most of the Milner garden in place, plus the urns on the terrace (also shown on an engraving of c. 1860), five clipped laurel bushes below the terrace, the bridge over the ha-ha, and formal island beds in the lawn to the E of the terrace. Photos also show that there were once flowerbeds and Pampas grass to the S of 'The Vista'. These were then turned into a rockery. Photographs and the Garden Book kept by the present owner's grandmother (M.A. Bosanquet) between 1926 and 1936, show that there were many island beds in the lawn to the E of the terrace, and that these were changed quite frequently: some were grassed over, some were amalgamated. A few survive, with some of the original 1930s shrub planting.

There have been a few changes in the 20th century. In the 1920s the lawn in front of the terrace was levelled to form a lawn tennis court, and at about the same time the steps near the W end of the terrace were removed (these have now been replaced). In 1933/34 the grass bank of the terrace was replaced by a stone wall, and in 1934 the narrow bed below it was planted (MAB Garden Book). At some stage all the curving paths except that from the E end of the terrace to the ha-ha became grassed over through neglect. The ha-ha has been remade as a grass bank and fence. A new raised gravel walk with retaining wall below has been made (1988) running eastwards from the E end of the house to a modern stone statue of a lighthouse (by Philip Chatfield). A gravel path in exactly this position is proposed on the Milner plan. At the E end of the garden the boundary (fence) has been pushed further out (c. 1982) and a hard tennis court added, and a circular stone garden ornament (a large urn on a plinth) has been brought in to terminate the S end of the yew walk.

STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

Terrace

Along S front of house. Mid 19th century and 1883 (E. Milner). Low terrace, grass banked until 1933/4, when the retaining wall was built. Milner paths on and below it still there. Two sets of steps down from it, towards the E and W ends of the long S side, and two steps down at W end.

Paths/walks

Gravel paths on and below terrace, and curving from its E end to the ha-ha (all E. Milner). The extension to this path, eastwards, as shown on the Milner plan and some early photographs, shows clearly in the turf (slightly sunk, and grass lighter in colour than the surrounding turf). Straight gravel path (Milner) running SE parallel to the W side of the garden, from the path to the kitchen garden to a gate into the field to the SE. New raised gravel path running NE from E end of S front.

'The Vista': a grass walk running from the E side of the house to S of 'Happy Dick's Mount'.

Ha-ha

Pre 1789. Reconstructed 20th century. Now a steep grass bank and fence.

Runs along the SE edge of the garden, giving uninterrupted views of the park.

'Happy Dick's Mount'

Pre 1789. A roughly circular mound c. 2.5 m. high, steep-sided on all but the N side. Situated in the N corner of the garden, on the S side of the E drive (formerly the public road). Rough grass. Origin uncertain, but possibly an ornamental prospect mound. In Richard Jones's ('Happy Dick') time (2nd half of 18th century) there was a summerhouse ontop of it, where he used to sit.

Pond

N of the E drive, just inside the entrance to the garden, a small, roughly oval pond of uncertain age. A stone retaining wall along its S side. Pre 1789.

Other

On the N side of the house, to the N of the lawn, is a long levelled grass area with a low mound at its W end, originally (pre-War) used as archery butts.

The levelled grass area to the SE of the terrace was formerly a tennis court (1920s).

BUILT COMPONENTS

Steps

Three sets of steps down from the terrace, the two on the SE side having stone urns on either side. At the W end are two steps down leading to the entrance to the kitchen garden, flanked by stone balls on plinths.

Walls

Low retaining wall to terrace (1933/4), recently rebuilt and repointed.

Short isolated stretch of wall S of 'Happy Dick's Mount'. Another on S side of E drive, at entrance to the garden, with ball finial (recent).

Ironwork

Iron railings, gate and curved archway over (Milner, 1883) at S end of gravel path at W end of garden.

ARCHITECTURAL ORNAMENTS

Urns

Six stone urns on terrace. Mid 19th century.

Cistern

Lead cistern against S side of house on terrace. Date 1734 on it, and initials A.P. This was brought to Dingestow Court from Bosanquet property in Lincoln's Inn.

Sculpture

Stone lighthouse at end of straight walk E of house (Philip Chatfield, 1990)

Large circular stone ornament at S end of Yew Walk - large urn on plinth - uncertain date, brought into garden 1989.

PLANTED COMPONENTS

Lawns

Extensive lawns to S, E and N of house

Trees

The oldest recorded trees in the garden are the two Cedars of Lebanon to the E of the house, near the garden's SE boundary. These are mid 19th century. A third blew down in the January 1990 gales, and will be replaced. This one was tree-ring dated to 1830. Nearby, to the N, is an old holm oak.

The Wellingtonia to the N of the house is recorded as being there on the 1883 Milner plan. In a photograph dating from 1877-1883 it is already quite tall.

Other trees already in existence in 1883 are some of the Scots pines and deciduous trees in the eastern part of the garden (oaks and sweet chestnuts, incorporated into 'The Vista'). Further trees were planted between 'The Vista' and the drive (including Lawson's cypresses, shown on late 19th century photographs) and further E, according to the Milner plan. Many of these survive - mixed deciduous and coniferous, including yews.

'The Vista' is lined with hazel trees, with sweet chestnuts and Scots pines on the S side (some now unsafe after the Feb 1990 gales, and will be removed). At the western end, on the N side, is a large old oak.

To the S of the W end of the terrace is a large copper beech of uncertain age, but possibly from the 1910s.

Running NW-SE at the eastern end of the garden is the 'Yew Walk', a grass walk lined by unclipped yews. This does not appear on the Milner plan, and therefore post-dates it.

E drive lined with young lime trees.

Shrubs

Some shrubs planted in the 1930s (MAB Garden Book) still survive, mostly in beds to the SE of the house. A few of the rhododendrons planted in the 1930s (a 'peat bed' is mentioned in the MAB Garden Book) survive.

Reconstructions of original planted features

None

Special collections of garden plants

None

Documented living plants

Against wall W of garden door on S side of house: 1931: *Akebia quinata*, *Olearia haastii*.

Bed S of copper beech: 1934: *Exochorda alberti*, *Cydonia* (*Chaenomeles*) *japonica* Maulei, *Berberis thunbergii* minor, *Colutea arborescens*.

Near ha-ha, further E: 1934: *Aesculus parviflora*, *Crataegus orientalis* (*laxiniata*).

Island bed at E end of terrace: 1934: *Exochorda grandiflora*.

Near door into old Kitchen Wing (E side of house): 1930s: *Prunus subhirtella autumnalis Miqueliana*

Against E wall (study): 1935 (moved there): *Celastrum orbiculatus*

At W end of 'The Vista': 1934: *Lonicera Maackii*

Other

None

ESSENTIAL SETTING AND VIEWS BEYOND THE SITE

The view from the terrace on the SE side of the house (A on map) is the most important one. From here there is an uninterrupted view over the park to the SE, down to the lake, with The Park woodland (no longer in Bosanquet ownership) as a backdrop. Although traffic on the A 449 can be heard it is not visible.

ANY SPECIAL FEATURES

None

SURVIVAL OF INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS

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

UTILITARIAN GARDENS

NAME KITCHEN GARDEN

Grid ref SO 451097

Date/style 1883 (E. Milner); rectilinear, walled

DESCRIPTION

To the W of the house, with an entrance into the garden on its E side (iron gate)

A medium-sized rectilinear walled garden, called the 'Fruit Garden' on the Milner plan. Wall around stone on outside, brick on inside. Gravel perimeter path and cross paths, lined in places with original slate roll-topped edging.

Along the southern side is an original glasshouse/vinery, with lean-to sheds on its N side. It faces S, the N wall being brick, pierced near the top by ventilation holes. There are chimneys at each end.

There were originally three greenhouses, but two have gone, replaced by a large modern greenhouse towards the E side of the garden.

The garden is in use as a kitchen garden, and the glasshouse is still used.

OLD ORCHARD GARDEN

Grid ref. SO 451096

Description

To the S of the kitchen garden, a balloon-shaped area, designed by E. Milner in 1883. It is designated 'Kitchen Garden' on his plan, has a perimeter path and is divided into four segments by two intersecting paths, and is surrounded by a hedge.

This survives as rough grass with a few fruit trees. It is surrounded on all but its E side, which has been straightened and given a fence, by park railings and a privet hedge. There are a few espalier apples down the E side of the site of the central path. All paths have gone. Three big old apple trees stand in a line parallel with the kitchen garden wall.

Three cast iron arches (with roses on) stand SW of the entrance into the kitchen garden, and one spans the entrance to the garden in the N corner.

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, labelled, and photocopies of relevant material, where available.

Primary

At Dingestow Court:

'Plan of the Estate of Ja[mes] Duberly Esq. 1789'
Plan c. 1840
Plan 1844 'with surrounding fields ... and proposed drives...'
Parish Map, c. 1850
Plan of drains layout, 1882
Inventory of house contents, 1883
Plan of Grounds, Dingestow Court, by Edward Milner, Oct. 1883

c. 1852 print, showing terrace
1853 watercolour of S side of house
c. 1860 engraving of S side of house
pre 1870 painting of S side of house
Pencil drawing, either 1879 or 1819, showing farmhouse and stables range

Late 19th century photographs
Glass slides, probably v. early 20th century
1920s photographs
1930s glass slides
Postcard, 1910

M.A. Bosanquet's Garden Book, 1926-36

Gwent Record Office:

Map 1810: 'Plans for the Improvement of Dingestow Court'
Sketchbooks of Anna Maria Bosanquet (1815-92)
Two pencil drawings in sketchbook of S.R. Bosanquet (pre-1845)

Secondary

S. Wales Daily News, Sat. 31 Dec, 1910
Bradney, J.A., A History of Monmouthshire, 1904-33.
