

ISCOYD PARK

Ref No PGW (C) 16
OS Map 117
Grid Ref SJ 505 420
County Wrexham
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Community Council Bronington

Designations Listed building: Iscoyd Park Grade II*

Site Evaluation Grade II

Primary reasons for grading

Complete small eighteenth-century park with fine specimen trees and boundary oak paling

Type of Site

Landscape park; informal pleasure garden

Main Phases of Construction

Eighteenth century and nineteenth century, possibly on the site of an earlier park.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Iscoyd is an eighteenth-century brick house with nineteenth-century additions. The house has a five-bay south facing front with a parapeted roof. The two main eighteenth-century blocks that constitute the house were built for the Hanmer family when they moved here from Fenns Old Hall. The front was built by William Hanmer in 1747, and the back is thought to pre-date it by about thirty years.

In the first half of the nineteenth century the estate belonged to the Revd Richard Congreve, who carried out improvements to the park. In 1843 the estate was sold by the Congreve family to Philip Lake Godsall of Cheltenham. Several additions were made to the house in the nineteenth century including the pedimented and pillared porch, and a single-storey dining room was added on the left hand side of the main block, thought to be existing by 1854. Other additions, this time by Philip William Godsall in 1872-73, included a canted bay with stone quoins on the south-west side of the house overlooking a garden terrace. A bathroom extension in similar style was added on the north-west in 1893-4.

Set back slightly from the drive is an eighteenth-century three-bay coach house contemporary with the house. It is of brick with a slate roof, stone kneelers and stone finishes to the gable ends. There is a granary above with a hipped dormer window, and a window in the gable end. On either side of the coach house are curved brick walls with copings and pillars on the end of each curve.

Also contemporary with the house and coach house is the laundry, a rectangular brick building situated on the side of the back drive. The detailing is similar to the coach house with stone kneelered corbels, and convex stone finishes on the gable ends. There is a Venetian window on the south-east end of the building.

A converted range of eighteenth-century brick stables, with a nineteenth-century addition on the north-west end is situated to the north of the house. It has a bell tower with lead cupola and wind vane on the south-east end.

There are two courtyards of farm buildings and stabling on the left hand side of the drive. Some of the buildings are contemporary with the house, others are nineteenth-century additions including dog kennels. Some of the stone cobbling survives.

The park at Iscoyd is small and the main part lies to the south-east of the house with a small section to the north-east. Ostensibly the park is eighteenth-century but given its siting next to the English border, plus the drop on the north-east and south-east boundaries, which give it a strategic feel, it is possible that this could be the site of a much earlier park. References to substantial houses on the site go back to the twelfth century.

The main drive enters the park to the south-west of the house, and takes a curving route to the south-west front of the house. It passes through a small boundary wood, Fir Coppice, which screens the house from the road. At the entrance are eighteenth-century rusticated stone gateposts with ball finials. The present route was made after the Second World War, and is more circuitous than the original line.

In the north-west corner of the park is a rectangular pond with a mount at its south-east end. Both pond and mount are shown on eighteenth-century plans, and stylistically would date to the sixteenth or seventeenth century. There is another small pond near the west boundary of the park, to the west of the house.

The park contains some fine specimen trees, particularly oaks and sycamores. Towards the south-east end there are also some fine mature beeches. The planting has thinned, particularly in the area immediately to the south-east of the house, as a result of an army camp (subsequently a hospital for Polish refugees, cleared in 1957) being built over this part during the last war. The planting is more concentrated in the south end of the park and the perimeters. A cricket pitch is situated directly in front of the house.

The park boundary changed under the ownership of the Revd Congreve, with the re-routing of the public road on the west. The road was moved over to the west and cut through a small wood according to a plan by Thomas Richardson of 1781. This enlarged the park, and the earth thrown up from the making of the new road created a raised boundary bank. The park boundary is defined by an oak pale.

A plan by William Emes exists, dated 1780 and described as showing 'some alterations'. This was followed by a survey in the following year by Thomas Richardson. The prime reason for these surveys seems to have been the siting of a new drive. William Emes's plan indicates a much longer drive starting well before Fir Coppice and the present drive entrance. This is accompanied by perimeter tree planting to shield the house from the road. Emes's plan did include another entrance nearer to the present main entrance site. Thomas Richardson's plan in 1781 suggests moving the by-road to the west away from the house, and another sketch plan shows a

similar re-routing. It seems that Revd Congreve settled for the the plan of Thomas Richardson, although the latter seems to have adopted some of Emes's ideas.

The pleasure garden lies on the north-western side of the house with a terrace immediately around the house on the north-western and southern sides. A small enclosure was built at the same time as the house, incorporating the dovecote, known as Pigeon House, into the north-eastern boundary wall. The wall was brought forward, bringing it level with the wing wall of the coach house, probably in the nineteenth century, leaving the dovecote standing free in the pleasure garden. The dovecote is a square brick building with pyramidal slate roof. Brick gate piers with stone ball finials were inserted in the wall opposite the dovecote, making the dovecote part of the pleasure garden layout, rather than just functional as it had been previously. Earlier maps including the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map show a substantial garden building situated immediately behind the dovecote, and at one time incorporating a glasshouse or conservatory. The formal garden is roughly on the site of this building of which nothing remains.

Today the pleasure garden is roughly circular in shape, with a circuit path and tree and shrub planting at its western end. This was a result of moving the road in the late eighteenth century, which gave room for expansion in this area. The boundary with the road is a brick wall which has a door leading on to the road. The terrace and forecourt walls were added in the nineteenth century by the Godsals. These are low brick walls, in part topped by railings. The terraces are laid out to lawn, with roses and lavender in the round flowerbeds. The north-west side of the garden is planted informally with mixed deciduous and coniferous trees.

The walled kitchen garden lies to the north-east of the house and is walled on three sides only, the south side being fenced with an iron paling only to allow maximum sunlight into the site. The walls are of brick and stand to their full height. The remains of a nineteenth-century glasshouse range remain on the north wall. There was a separate free-standing range to the south, and potting sheds at the rear, but nothing of the original glasshouses survive in this range. There is a twentieth-century glasshouse on the site.

Sources

Primary

Shropshire Record Office:

NT/M/143: Plan of the park at Iscoyd, the seat of the Rev Richard Congreve with some alterations by William Emes, 1780.

Plan of Iscoyd Park and Lands adjoining the estate of the Rev Richard Congreve by Thomas Richardson, Surveyor. July 1781.

Plan of the present road in front of Iscoyd Park with a proposed deviation.

Secondary

Hubbard, E., *Clwyd* (1986), pp. 379-80.