

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

SITE DOSSIER

SITE NAME Bellevue Park

REF. NO. PGW (Gt) 19

OS MAP 171

GRID REF. ST 307872

FORMER COUNTY Gwent

UNITARY AUTHORITY Newport B.C.

COMMUNITY COUNCIL Newport

DESIGNATIONS Listed building: Drinking fountain, Friars Road Grade II

SITE EVALUATION **Grade II**

Primary reasons for grading

Late 19th century public park by Thomas Mawson, remaining more or less intact

TYPE OF SITE

Urban, public, late 19th century landscape park.

MAIN PHASES OF CONSTRUCTION

1893

VISITED BY/DATE Elisabeth Whittle/October 1990

THE PARK

Central grid ref ST 307872

Date/style

1893/Victorian landscape park (public)

General description, history, and layout

The 35 acre park lies in the middle of Newport, on a south-facing slope. It occupies a triangular area, with its apex in the north, bounded by the Royal Gwent hospital on the E, the A48 road on the S, and housing on the W.

The site was given to the town in 1891 by Lord Tredegar of Tredegar House for a public park, the construction of which would relieve unemployment. A competition for its design was won by Thomas Mawson (who was given plans for a different field, and had to adjust his design accordingly, after he had won), and work on the park was completed in 1893. The park was opened in 1894. The park was laid out informally, with sweeping walks, grass and ornamental trees, a small valley with rockwork, a stream, pools and cascades, and an ornamental pool (now a herb garden). Slightly later a tea pavilion with terraces below it, conservatories and public amenities such as bowling greens, were added. There are lodges at the N and S entrances, which were built from stone quarried from the park during construction. The tea pavilion was also built from this stone in 1910 (also to relieve unemployment). Near the western end of the park is a circle of stones, known as a Gorsedd circle, which was erected in 1897 for the National Eisteddfod. The park now has the status of a 'borough park'.

The park is bounded by stone walls, and the main entrances are on the N and S sides, each with wrought iron gates and half-timbered lodges. Winding paths (tarmacked) criss-cross the park and lead to all the main features. In the middle is a small narrow ravine which Mawson turned into an ornamental water garden, with rockwork, pools and cascades, with paths winding through it and over the stream. At the north end of the park is a gravelled circular area which was originally a pool.

To the west of the water garden is the two-storey tea pavilion, built of stone and tile, flanked by conservatories. Below is a series of terraces built out over the slope on massive stone revetment walls. At the top are two narrow terraces separated by a grass slope, below which is a large rectangular terrace with a low stone parapet and circular bastions in the two outer corners. In the middle of this is an octagonal bandstand (modernized).

The park is well planted with ornamental trees dating from all periods from before the park's creation to the present day. At the top of the park are some fine mature beech trees, and below the terraces is a row of large yew trees, with Atlas and Lebanon cedars on either side. Recently planted ornamental trees include *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*, *Gingko biloba*, and *Liquidambar styraciflua*.

STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

Below the tea pavilion, to its SE, are a series of terraces built up above the surrounding slope. The pavilion stands on a terrace supported by a high stone revetment wall. Below this are two further narrow terraces separated by a grass slope c. 1.5 m. high. About 0.8

m. below this is a large rectangular terrace (tarmacked) with a low stone parapet wall around it and circular bastions in the two outer corners. The terrace is supported by a high stone revetment wall.

Paths

The park is criss-crossed by winding paths (all tarmacked now), which lead from the entrances to all features, and lead the visitor on gentle gradients all around the park.

WATER FEATURES

In the middle of the park, to the W of the terraces, is a small narrow ravine at the head of which is a spring. This Mawson turned into an ornamental water garden, with much rockwork, pools and cascades (his original plan was for a lake, but when he saw the site he rapidly changed his mind!).

The whole area is surrounded by low iron railings. The stream winds southwards, and is crossed three times by paths, the lowest one of which has concrete balustrading on either side. The lower part of the ravine has larger pools, and the water finally goes underground near the S lodge. The whole ravine is planted with trees and shrubs (mostly modern), with ferns near the water.

At the N end of the park, S of the entrance, is a circular area which used to be a pool. It has now been filled in and has a gravel surface. It has a brick and moulded stone rim, with a central circular stone-edged flowerbed (? formerly fountain) with a small stone urn in the middle.

BUILT FEATURES

Boundaries

The park is bounded by walls of stone capped with red curved tiles and in places by iron railings. On the E side there is a blocked entrance. The main entrances are on the N and S, and there is a further lesser one on the W.

The N entrance consists of double wrought iron gates (mostly plain, with some scrollwork) flanked by square stone gate piers topped by ball finials, with pedestrian gates (also wrought iron, similar in style) on either side. To the W is a half-timbered lodge (private house). To the E is a tiled drinking fountain (disused).

The S entrance is similar, with double wrought iron gates, side gates, and a half-timbered lodge to the W.

Terraces

The walls of the terraces are stone, topped by red tile coping. The top terrace, on which the tea pavilion stands, has red terracotta balustrading and ball finials (similar throughout). The main terrace below has a low parapet wall with balustrading and tile coping. Two flights of steps lead down from the top terrace on either side of the pavilion, below which are three round-arched openings (shut with doors). They have balustrading and ball finials (part missing on the S side). The main terrace is reached from above by four flights of steps (two at each end) down the two narrow terraces. The upper ones have only low parapet stone walls, the lower ones balustrading and ball finials. In the middle of the lower terrace's E side are two sets of concrete steps down to

the park, which curve round and join together halfway down. They are flanked by balustrading and tile coping.

Tea pavilion

This is a two-storey stone and tile building set in the middle of the upper terrace. It has a balcony on the first floor overlooking the terraces (gable end).

Conservatories

Flanking the tea pavilion are two conservatories. They stand on a stone and tile plinth, and the superstructure is wooden. (Both in good repair and in use.)

Bandstand

In the middle of the main lower terrace is an octagonal bandstand. The low plinth is red brick and the superstructure appears modern.

Wooden pavilion

To the SW of the tea pavilion is a small wooden pavilion. It is single-storey, rectangular, with open lattice wooden panelling on its sides. On the SE side this comes only halfway up in order to give a view out. Entrances on NW and SE sides.

Gorsedd stones

A small circle and three outliers of low undressed stones in the western end of the park. Erected for the National Eisteddfod in 1897.

Water garden

Low iron railings around it.

3 small bridges, lowest with concrete balustrading and coping.

Rockwork on either side of ravine and across it to make small cascades and pools.

Circular pool

At N end of park (now gravel). Edged with stone and brick (brick modern), with a raised bed around it. Circular bed in centre edged with stone and with small stone urn in centre.

PLANTED COMPONENTS

The park is liberally planted with ornamental trees, both deciduous and coniferous. They are scattered throughout the park, and are of all ages: some predate the making of the park (some deciduous), some were planted when it was originally made, and some are more recent. In most parts of the park new planting is mixed with old.

On either side of the steps down to the former circular pool at the N end of the park are large old beech trees.

In the water garden planting is mixed coniferous and deciduous (mostly recent).

Below the terrace is a row of large yew trees (unclipped), while either side (N and S) are cedars (Atlas and Lebanon).

The W end of the park has mainly deciduous trees, including a circle of oaks planted around the Gorsedd stones.

Ornamental trees in the park include *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*, *Ginkgo biloba* and *Liquidambar styraciflua*.

Triangular area to SE of terraces laid out with formal island flowerbeds (bedding plants).

BOUNDARIES

Stone walls and railings

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

Essential setting: not applicable

View from the terraces E out over Newport to the Bristol Channel (A on map)

LAND-USE

Public park

ELEMENTS OF BOTANICAL OR OTHER NATURE CONSERVATION INTEREST

Some unusual trees (mostly recent planting)

SURVIVAL OF INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS

Structural components: complete

Water features: complete

Built features: Most. Some rebuilding and restoration (conservatories, bandstand).

Some change of use (circular pool filled in).

Planted components: some trees lost in recent gales. Original elms gone. Some new planting, especially of trees and in water garden.

SOURCES

Information from Newport Borough Council

Secondary

Mawson, T., The Life and Work of an English Landscape Architect (1927).