

Upton Country Park Walled Garden Project 2006-2008

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Background

The colourful and fascinating history of Upton Country Park dates back almost 250 years to when wealthy Poole merchant and banker William Spurrier purchased the 100 acre estate on the shores of Poole Harbour.

William had amassed a fortune from the trade between Newfoundland and Poole, and went on to be elected Mayor of Poole on four separate occasions between 1784 and 1802. On his death the estate passed to his son Christopher Spurrier who built the relatively modest but elegant Upton House in 1818.

The Walled Garden is one of the key features of the original landscape of Poole's only Country Park, and an important element in the ongoing programme of the Park's restoration.

The Friends of Upton Country Park have long had an aim to restore the Walled Garden to its former glory and a comprehensive public consultation exercise was undertaken as part of the development of the 1999 Upton Country Park Management Plan which included a proposal that the garden be used for '*... the development of a high quality horticultural attraction*'. Of the 356 consultees that commented on the proposal 83% approved of it.



The Walled Garden pre-1977



Walled Garden 1977

History of the Walled Garden

Before the growth of international trade and modern food preservation techniques walled kitchen gardens were found in the grounds of most large country houses in Britain, designed to provide a continual supply of fruit, flowers and vegetables.

A garden of one acre was expected to provide for the needs of twelve people and would have required two or three gardeners to maintain it.

The kitchen garden would be carefully sited, taking into account the need for fertile, well-drained soil. Often a little way from the main house in its landscaped park setting, screening was also important – not only to provide shelter from the worst of the weather, but to conceal the “working” garden from view of the gentry.

The importance of such gardens would have reduced in the 20th Century, brought about by a shortage of labour as a result of two world wars, and the growth in availability of imported and preserved food.

The Walled Garden at Upton lies to the south of the main house, adjoining the old stable block – now the Peacock Tea Rooms & Gallery and Heritage Centre. It was included in the original 55 acres of land gifted to the Borough of Poole by the Llewelin family in 1957.

By the time the Park was opened to the public in 1976 the entire estate was in dire need of restoration, but within two years the newly-formed Friends of Upton Park oversaw a Job Creation Scheme with the Manpower Services Commission. The scheme employed three bricklayers from the unemployment register for a period of 9 months, and at a cost of just £300 to the Friends, repaired the walls to safeguard the garden’s future. The bulk of the £10,000 cost of relaying bricks, repointing and rebuilding turret roofs was covered by the Commission.

By March 1979 the overgrown garden had been cleared and laid to grass, and new gates hung, some incorporating Poole’s dolphin motif. Two months later the project was complete and a handing over ceremony conducted by Major Graham Yeatman in the presence of the Mayor of Poole.

Since it has been opened to the public the Walled Garden has proved a popular venue for a



Restored Turret



North east corner

number of events, including outdoor picnic concerts by the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. The Education Resource Centre and Kingston Maurward College has used the garden as a training facility since 2002, and the Friends of Upton Country Park hold an Annual Plant Fair within its walls.

Historical References

Relatively little information is available on previous features of the garden. The earliest detailed Ordnance Survey map records a water storage tank in a location subsequently marked as a pond (see 1950s O.S. map, right). The collection and storage of rain water would have been an important function of gardening in an era that pre-dated a mains water supply.

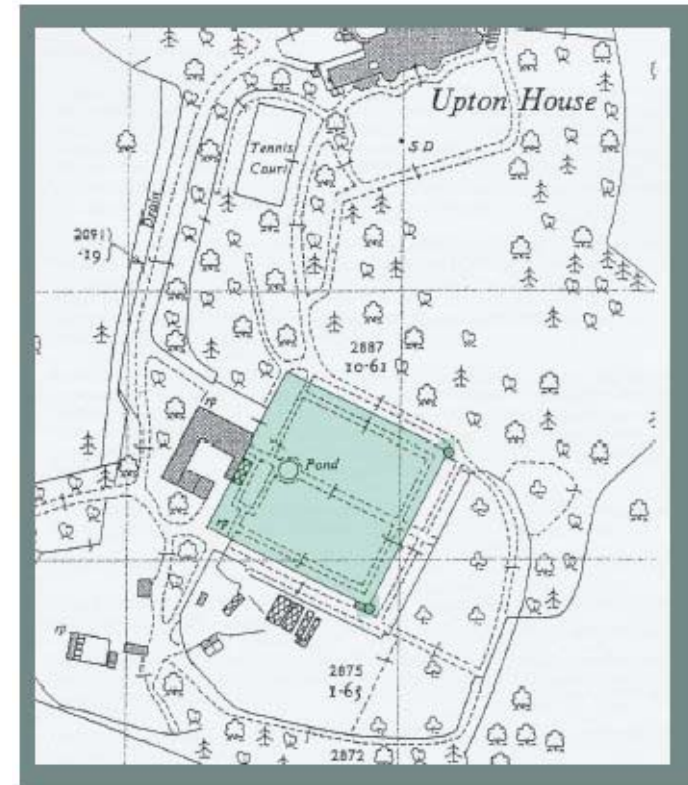
Llewelin family photographs, possibly from the 1930s or 40s, reveal a fountain and suggest an ornamental garden, but give little detail. It's possible that the fountain was created on the site of the water storage tank.

The 1950s O.S. map also shows a rectangular network of perimeter and central paths, but an earlier sale catalogue (1899) shows an additional path running roughly north-south, effectively dividing the garden into four equal quarters.

A more substantial archive of family documents was acquired by Poole Museum Services in 2000 and it's hoped that more detailed information can be found amongst them.

Archaeological Investigation

Future decisions will depend on past use, and it is important to record what exists within the walls of the garden. With this in mind a sub-surface survey was carried out in July 2006 by [Context One](#) Archaeological Services, using resistivity and magnetometry procedures, with further investigations carried out in 2007. The survey results provide clues to activities of the past, and give an idea of the position of old footpaths and of a glasshouse, and the size and position of the pond.



*O.S. 1:2500 map (1950s)
Historic Layout of the Walled Garden
Constructed early 1820s
2006 survey area coloured green*

Proposals for the Walled Garden

In its current state the one acre Walled Garden fails to reach its potential as a key component of the historic landscape.

Concepts

- ⊙ To restore the garden's old footpath network as an expression of its former function, as a historic record and as a way marker for historical records.
- ⊙ To superimpose a design which is appealing yet modern, expressing modern needs and aesthetics.
- ⊙ To represent the trading origins of Upton House, and indeed of Poole itself, thereby creating a garden that is unique to Upton House and Upton Country Park.
- ⊙ To create a garden that is flexible, that accommodates a multitude of uses – gardening, horticulture, art, music, education, nature and leisure, and that offers scope for a range of seasonal events.

Considerations

- ⊙ Design of the garden needs to provide opportunities for the involvement of the partner organisations, notably Kingston Maurward and Social Services.
- ⊙ Design needs to be maintainable with likely resource levels.
- ⊙ Design needs to allow for phased completion subject to resources whilst permitting public use as soon as possible.

Inspiration for the layout of the Walled Garden has been drawn from historical trading links of the estates past owners and inhabitants. Connections with lands as diverse as South America, Africa, Australia, Newfoundland and the Mediterranean will be hinted at with the planting of fragrant herbs, olive trees, lemon trees and vines, all of which takes advantage of the shelter provided by the walls.

Other plans include paths, the reintroduction of a fountain, a greenhouse, and a shelter intended for outdoor music or theatre performances. A terrace will link the garden with the Peacock Tea Rooms.



Walled Garden (north side)



Walled Garden (west side)

Plans

The design below draws together a lot of ideas generated during the development of this project. It fulfils the aims of a contemporary design based on a traditional layout, and is unique to Upton House.



The numbered elements shown (left) are described below:

1. **Walls & Gates** - the walls have recently been repaired. The existing espalier fruit trees are an appropriate and attractive use for the walls and will be retained.
2. **Footpaths** – the historic footpath layout is reinstated. Broad paths suitable for wheelchair access and with plenty of seats.
3. **Fountain** – reinstatement of the circular pond/tank in its original position. A modern shimmering fountain will suggest sea trawling and surf.
4. **Glasshouse** – reinstatement of a traditional glasshouse in its historic position (although increased in size to suit operational need). This may be developed to provide teaching facilities space for Kingston Maurward as well as the propagation of plants for the garden.
5. **Pavilions** – the old corner pavilions can be used for exhibition space (e.g. garden tool exhibition), seating, stories, sculpture, etc.
6. **Terrace** – a new paved terrace outside the Peacock Tea Rooms and Heritage Centre for outdoor eating and entertainment.
7. **Peacock Tea Rooms** – the south eastern elevation of the Heritage Centre will be improved allowing a better link and providing light, attractive, all season views from the Tea Rooms. A small 'step outside balcony' will open up views from the Gallery on the first floor. The improved elevation will form an attractive focal point within the garden and punctuate the view along the principal axis.

8. **The Walk** – the main walk along the central axis. There is potential to enhance the view through the iron gate from the adjacent herbaceous border walk; the view would be framed with a pergola focusing along the central walk to the fountain and the Tea Rooms.
9. **Garden Walks** – a series of garden walks will be themed and relate to the lives of past residents and their links with Newfoundland, Africa, Australia and the Mediterranean. Walks will include food crops and herbs to reflect the walled garden's intended original use, and will be edged with grass.
10. **Lawns** – grassed areas that might be used as small scale event and recreational space. Planted with olive trees to reflect former trade links with the Mediterranean. 'Islands' of bedding plants reflect the growing interest in annuals and bedding schemes of the period and provide colour in the high season.
11. **Shelter** – the provision of an open fronted shelter would provide a lot of opportunities to increase the use of the Walled Garden. It might provide the venue for sculpture or art workshops or demonstrations, outdoor classroom space, covered display space, a stage for small music groups, or performance or as a covered outdoor work area.



North east turret

Planting

A detailed planting list has yet to be drawn up but historic links will be made with lands as diverse as South America, Africa, Australia, Newfoundland and the Mediterranean. The range of species will also take advantage of the shelter provided by the walls, to include fragrant herbs, olive & citrus trees, and vines.

Box hedges, designed in 'waves' to represent the sea, will provide a strong structure ensuring that the garden will be interesting even in winter.

Costs & Timescale

The total cost of the scheme outlined above (probably in excess of £250,000) exceeds the funding currently available for it so work will be phased. Each phase will represent a marked improvement in its own right, one that can be enjoyed by visitors while additional funding is sought to complete the project.

This first phase will cost around £120,000 and comprises:



The garden is presently laid to grass with borders

- ⊙ Footpaths (walks)
- ⊙ Pond (for the fountain which will form part of a future phase)
- ⊙ Terrace outside the Tea Rooms
- ⊙ Planting of beds, lawn & trees
- ⊙ Irrigation system
- ⊙ Lighting

Early in 2006 the Council commissioned a Landscape Architect to “reinstate or reinterpret” the garden’s historic landscape design, and to extend the existing opportunities for educational use and community involvement.

A period of consultation followed which included the Friends group and other interested parties; detailed plans have now been drawn up, planning permission granted and in July 2007 the Council began a tender process that will identify a best value contractor to take Phase One of the project forward. It is anticipated that work will start on site in the autumn.

The fountain, glasshouse and shelter are planned for future phases.

Contacts

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Peacocks roam freely in the gardens