

Report on Cornwall Gardens Trust visit to Ince Castle

27 April 2017

Nothing remains of the garden that would have graced the new brick fortified house built for Henry Killigrew in the 1640s. Indeed, although the landscape has an open vista to the east of the house that was undoubtedly intended from the start, there is little surviving of the garden layout before Viscountess Boyd bought the property in 1960, and Prideaux's early eighteenth century sketch of the house shows no more than a lawn with a central drive approaching the house from the west, with a suggestion of trees to the east.

Despite this, there are two sources for the layout of the garden in the first half of the nineteenth century. The later of these is the Tithe Map of 1841, which is so often the earliest pictorial evidence to survive. This shows the 'House and Circle' (520), with a 'Plantation and Bowling Green' (517) to the north (the bowling green is apparently grown in), a 'Lawn' (518) to the east and an 'Orchard and Shrubs' (523) and 'Garden' (524) to the west. However, there is also a series of drawings of the house and grounds dating from around 1805, made by Mary Smith, the owner at the time. This fantastic resource is held at the Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester and merits a study on its own.



"The Bowling Green and Avenue taken near the large American Trees."
D.216, 1926.
Presented by Ince Wood - B.



"The Garden with the Vine House and the Pond at the Back of the Stables."
D.227, 1926.

Among the things the many drawings show are the Circle, with a rectangular court partly of stone walls and partly of post and rail fencing, a vine house, stables, cloches, a rectangular pond and a good view of the bowling green with a small pavilion. For the next

150 years there was a series of owners, none of whom seem to have focussed their attention on the gardens. This was to change in 1960 with the arrival of the Boyds.

On a lovely April afternoon, we were greeted by Alice, Lady Boyd. She showed us first around the woodland garden to the north of the house in the area that was once the bowling green. Her mother-in-law, Patricia, Lady Boyd, created this garden, planting magnolias, camellias, and many other shrubs, including a lovely *cercidiphyllum* and some wonderful acers. This has been continued by the present generation since 1994, and a lovely vista has been opened up beyond the pair of square standard *magnolia grandiflora*. Here, as throughout the garden, sculptures and stone features have been carefully placed to provide focal points.



Throughout the garden are spring bulbs, which bring interest from early February. The earliest daffodils may be from the 1930s but the majority were planted by the Boyds and include a wide variety of daffodils.

We moved around to the east of the house, passing two superb *magnolia* - 'Limelight' and 'Yellow Bird' - just at the edge of the woodland garden (which one is this - Yellow Bird?).



The east front of the house has two large wisteria - a *w. floribunda* and a *w. sinensis*. Looking out from this, the east lawn has spectacular views over the Lynher river. In 1960 this was an enclosed garden, which was then changed into a series of island beds. The current Boyds reduced the ground to give a clear view, emphasised by adding sculptures of sphinxes at the far end of the lawn, drawing the eye and guarding the view. The lawns are differentiated but cutting some areas short and leaving others long, giving a sense of manicured informality.

To the south of the house is an area known as the Castle Garden, consisting of a secluded court surrounded by a young (10 years) but surprisingly mature castellated hornbeam hedge. Beyond this we passed though to the south lawn, which has two circular beds containing a *w. floribunda* and a *w. sinensis*, reflecting the south front. Passing between these, is a cobbled sundial garden with a lily pond beyond. Next to this is a Shell House, built by the first generation of Boyds and continued by the present generation, adding 2500 scallop shells to decorate the outside.

From here, we passed the swimming pool, with further views over the Lynher river, and then past an ilex walk, to the orchard. Here, there are more of the spring bulbs including Tamar Double White daffodils and *narcissus x medioluteus* a natural hybrid dating from the 17th century.

We then passed by the west front of the house, which boasts an astonishing Turkey oak (*quercus cerris*) which may well date from the eighteenth century, and from there to a lovely tea, where the Boyds showed us a book with copies of Mary Smith's early nineteenth century illustrations of Ince. This was a wonderful end to a fantastic visit, and we are most grateful to Lord and Lady Boyd for their hospitality and knowledge.

