



ULSTER
ARCHÆOLOGICAL
SOCIETY

Survey Report

Reference: **Survey Report No. 59**

Author: **June Welsh & Kate Crane**

Location:

**Windsor Garden
Castle Ward
County Down**

In association with:

 **THE NATIONAL TRUST**



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First published 2018

Ulster Archaeological Society

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Cover illustration: Artist's impression of Sunken Garden. *Mary Ward 1864*

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Figure 02: Aerial view of the Windsor Garden, looking north

1.2 Aims

In order to enhance the archaeological record of this site, the aims of this survey were to produce accurate plan drawings of the monument and carry out a photographic survey. This information was compiled into a report and copies submitted to the National Trust and to the archives of the Ulster Archaeological Society.



Figure 03: Members of the Survey Group at work in the Sunken Garden

1 2. Introduction

2.1 Background

The survey of the Windsor Garden was undertaken on Saturday 30 April 2016. It was carried out by members of the Ulster Archaeological Society, in response to a decision taken by the committee of the society to extend an opportunity to members to participate in practical surveys of archaeological monuments, which had not previously been recorded. This followed a bequest to the society from the late Dr Ann Hamlin, from which the items of survey equipment were purchased. During discussions with Malachy Conway, Archaeologist of the National Trust in Northern Ireland, it was noted that many archaeological sites on National Trust property had not been subject to a detailed archaeological survey. It was therefore agreed that members of the society would commence a programme to survey these sites and the Windsor Garden was subsequently chosen to be the fifty-ninth of these.

2.2 Previous archaeological surveys

As far as it is known, there has been no previous archaeological survey at this site.

2.3 Cartographic Evidence

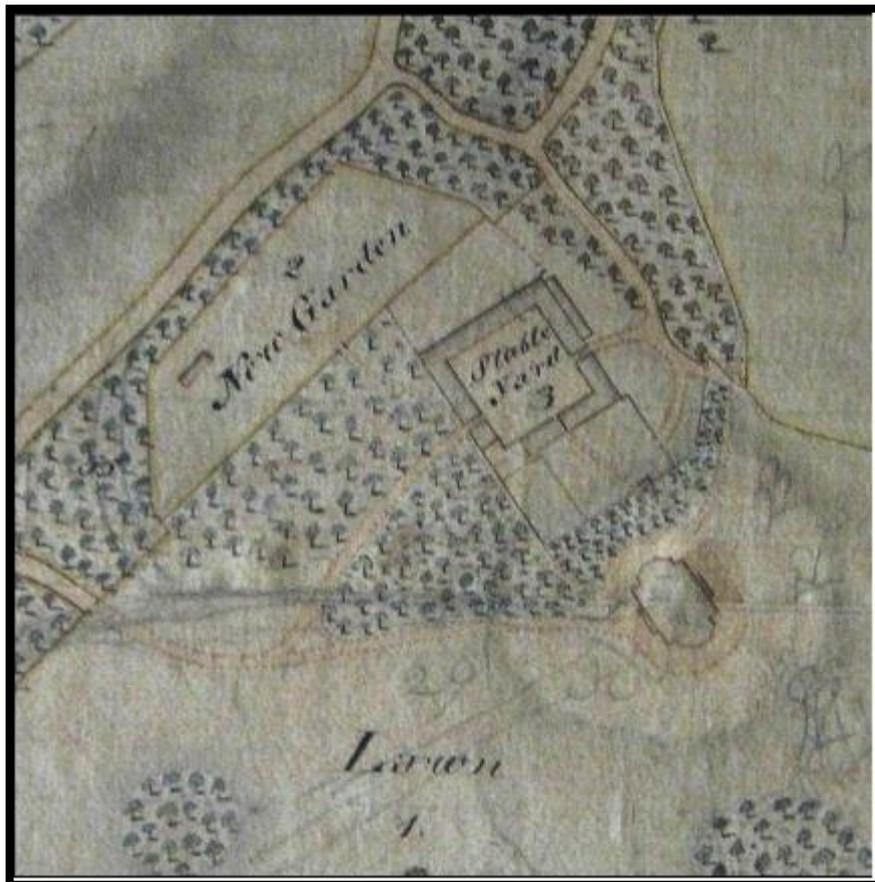


Figure 04: Estate map (part of) 1813, showing the 'New Garden'. *National Trust*

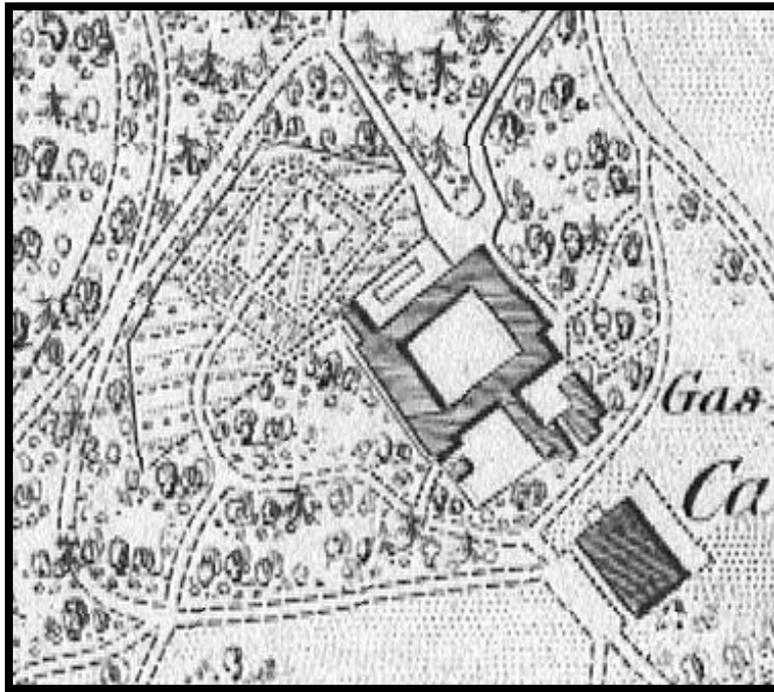


Figure 05: OS County Series, Down, Second Edition, Sheet 31 (part of) 1859

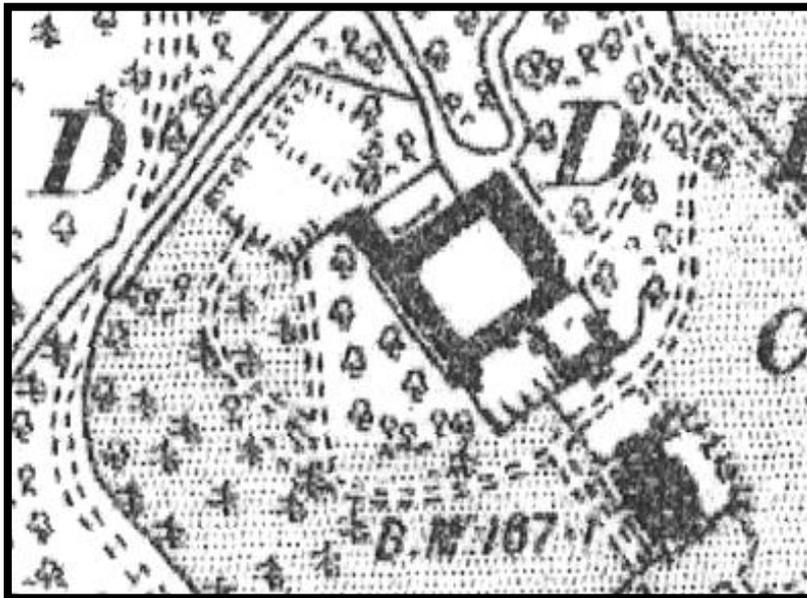


Figure 06: OS County Series, Down, Third Edition, Sheet 31 (part of) 1901

2.4 Archiving

Copies of this report have been deposited with the National Trust and the Ulster Archaeological Society. All site records have been archived by the National Trust at Rowallane, Saintfield, County Down.

2.5 Credits and Acknowledgements

The survey was led by Harry Welsh and included Colin Boyd, Hilary Boyd, Michael Catney, David Craig, Kate Crane, Ian Gillespie, Lee Gordon, Alan Hope, Liz McShane, Ann MacDermott, Pat O'Neill, Ken Pullin, George Rutherford, Randal Scott and June Welsh. The Ulster Archaeological Society is particularly grateful to Malachy Conway, Archaeologist of the National Trust, who worked closely with the survey team in choosing the site and facilitating access.

3. 2016 UAS Survey

3.1 Methodology

It was decided that the survey would take the form of the production of plan drawings, accompanied by a photographic survey. This report was compiled using the information obtained from these sources, in addition to background documentary material.

3.2 Production of plan drawings

Plan drawings were completed, using data obtained from the field survey. Measurements were obtained by using the society's *Leica Sprinter 100* electronic measuring device. Sketch plans at 1:100 scale were completed on site, by recording these measurements on drafting film secured to a plane table and backing up the data on a field notebook for subsequent reference. Field plans were later transferred to a computer-based format for printing.

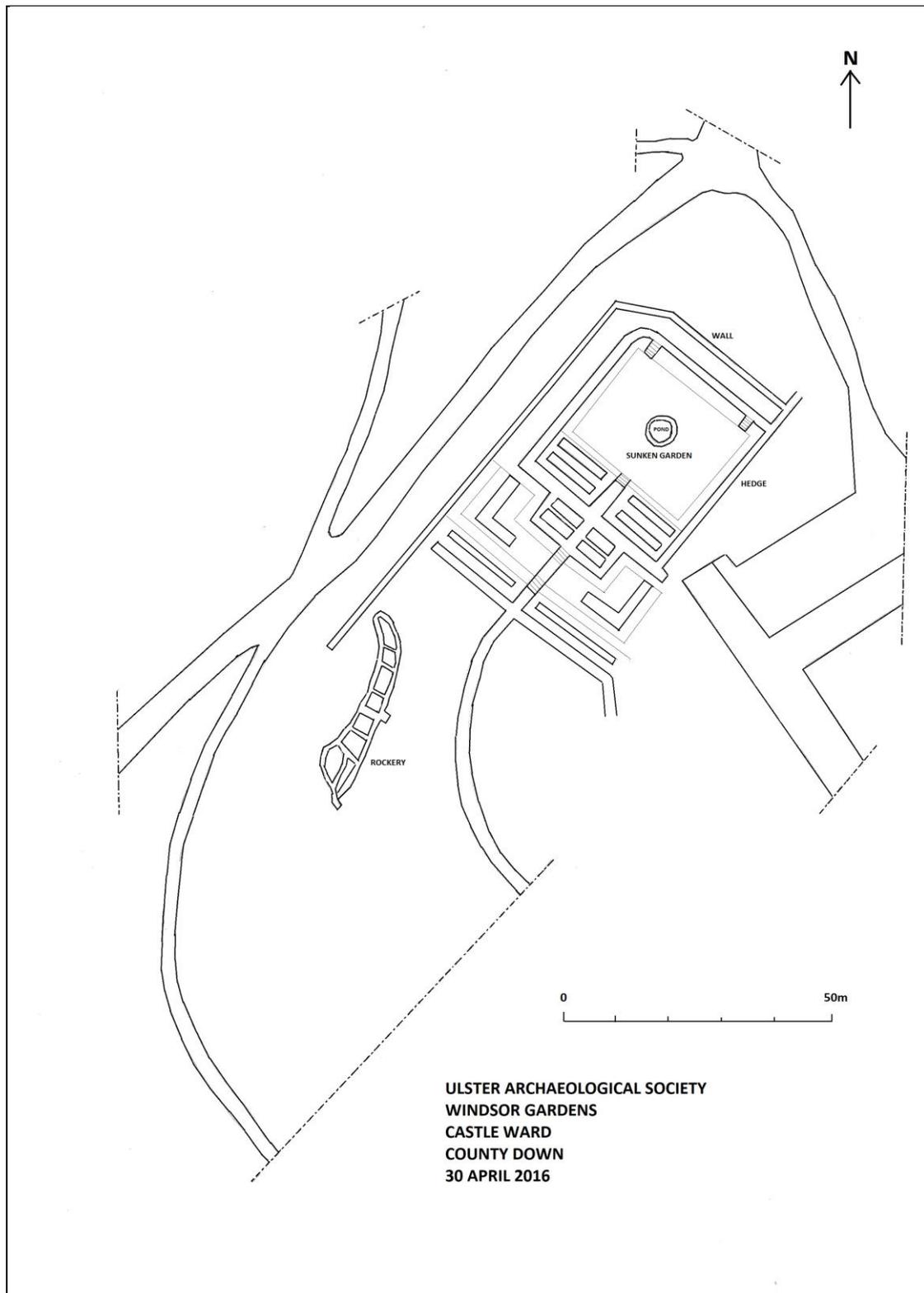


Figure 07: Plan of Windsor Garden

3.3 Photographic archive

A photographic record of the site was taken by using a *Ricoh G600* 8 megapixel digital camera, and others. A photographic record sheet was employed, corresponding to photographs taken during the site survey. The archive has been compiled in jpeg format and saved to compact disc.



Figure 08: Aerial view of Rock Garden, looking west



Figure 09: View of Sunken Garden and terraces, looking south-east



Figure 10: View of Sunken Garden and enclosing walls, looking north-west



Figure 11: View of Sunken Garden and parterres, looking north-east



Figure 12: View of Portland stone statue of Neptune, looking north-east

3.4 Site description

The Walled Garden is situated on four levels. On the north-west there is a substantial red brick wall, built with gently sloping courses and standing approximately 3m high. The base of the wall is comprised of rubble stone and the top of the wall is coped with unshaped local stone. This wall is supported by two buttresses: the northern buttress measures 1.4m wide by 0.95m projecting and by 2.8m high, while the southern buttress measures 1.3m wide by 0.9m projecting and by 3.5m high.

The lowest level of the garden is a rectangular grass lawn, with a circular pond with a stone statue of Neptune at its centre. The pond measures 4.96m in diameter and is edged with a double row of red brick. On the north-eastern bank of the Sunken Garden, there are two separate flights of steps, leading to a surrounding gravel path. On the south-eastern side of the garden there is a yew hedge, consisting of thirteen trees, which effectively closes the south-western side of the garden.

On level two there are four large and four small rectangular beds, each enclosed by a box hedge, which stands at 0.3m high. The flower beds are symmetrically designed on either side of the path leading from level one. A further flight of red-bricked steps connects levels two and three.



Fig. 13: View of parterres on the intermediate level, looking east

Level three consists of a grass lawn with two L-shaped flower beds, which are edged with box hedging. Each flower bed has a pillar centrally placed and topped dramatically with a Portland stone eagle, with wings outstretched.



Figure 14: View of Portland stone eagle, looking south-east

This level three also has four planted stone urns. Two are circular with opposite lugs and two are octagonal, with garlands in high relief. A cordyline australis is planted on either side of the central path, at the top of each flight of steps.

4. Discussion

4.1 Introduction

In 1762 Mrs Delany, the wife of the Dean of Down, wrote that the setting of Castle Ward 'hath every advantage from nature that can be desired' (Rutherford 2010, 186). Castle Ward lies at the southern end of Strangford Lough, with commanding views over the Narrows towards Portaferry. The natural drumlin landscape, enhanced throughout the centuries, provides an ever-changing scene with fine views towards both architectural and natural focal points, in addition to the diverse waters of the Lough.

Throughout its long history, Castle Ward has been continually altered, but somehow, it remains one of the best surviving examples of an eighteenth century Irish demesne, which is quite remarkable. The demesnes of Ireland have played a crucial role in the evolution of the landscape, providing unique areas of exceptional architectural, archaeological and wildlife importance. This landscape shows evidence of occupation from the Neolithic period, no doubt due to its proximity to the Lough, with its abundant supplies of fish, shellfish and also birds. Tower houses of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, guarding the passage of the Narrows, indicate the strategic importance of this area. One of those tower houses was actually the first home of the Ward family and it still survives, as part of a farmyard complex. The many different habitats, found throughout the demesne, provide an abundance of flora and fauna.

4.2 Background to the Ward family

Originally from Cheshire, the Ward family purchased the estate from the Earls of Kildare in 1570 and served as high-ranking members of the establishment, becoming Surveyor-General of Ireland, High Sheriff of County Down and also Members of Parliament. Castle Ward reflects those individual interests and the influence exerted by individual family members. The family owned several residences, but Castle Ward remained their principal home. Judge Michael Ward (1683-1759) was probably the most important man in County Down, during the first half of the eighteenth century. He contributed greatly to the development of the demesne, building a fine house, two large formal canals and also introducing the Yew Terraces, which still remain in evidence today (Welsh 2008). He was instrumental in introducing extraordinary garden features on a lavish scale. From 1781-1827 the demesne was placed in chancery, due to the insanity of the second Viscount. During this period, the house and parklands suffered considerably and by 1835 everything seemed to be 'totally out of order' (Rutherford 2010, 26). The third Viscount began a programme of improvement, which sadly was ended by his premature death in 1837. When his widow married Major Andrew Nugent in 1841, a dramatic programme of landscaping began. Nugent proved able and willing to consolidate his predecessor's work, extending the parkland eastwards over Audleystown and beyond. He created the demesne we recognise today.

Close to the house, in the area occupied by the old Georgian kitchen garden, a formal Victorian terraced garden was generated, the focus of which was an ornate sunken parterre called the Windsor Garden. Subsequent developments were limited, but they did include the Rockery and the Pinetum.



Fig.15: View of garden terraces, with Castle Ward House in the background

4.3 National Trust involvement

The decline of the demesne came earlier in Ireland than in Britain, due to land redistribution after the Famine of the 1840s. Tenants were encouraged to buy out their farms, with funds provided by the Treasury. The effects upon demesnes, including Castle Ward, were disastrous. Many were sold, often leading to the houses demolished, ornamental trees felled and the land divided into farmland. Castle Ward was most fortunate to be acquired by the National Trust in 1950, following the death of the sixth Viscount Bangor, when the demesne was accepted by the government in part-payment of death duties. Castle Ward had suffered neglect, but it had been spared the ravages experienced by so many and its future was assured.

It is significant that McErlean and Reeves-Smyth (*Castle Ward Demesne, National Trust*, 2 volumes, 1985) have stated that the land within the park is not of high agricultural value, if left unimproved. This is borne out by a survey of the various townlands within the estate, commissioned by Judge Michael Ward in 1707, where Castleward shared the lowest valuation per acre, based on its agricultural potential, of any townland on the estate. Its unique natural advantage is its stunning scenery, which was fully exploited by its innovative landscaping, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and indeed beyond.

4.4 The Climate

Castle Ward's position is maritime, due to its location at the southern end of Strangford Lough, alongside the tidal Narrows, which connect the lough with the Irish Sea. Generally, the climate is mild, fairly sunny, wet and windy, as it is along much of the east coast. The close proximity to the lough and the sea results in a warm, moist microclimate. Winters are usually mild, but occasional severe cold spells can be experienced. Summers are often cool. The acidic soils are dispersed over rock, with poor drainage in places. Such conditions work well for native woodland trees, including beech, yew, sycamore, oak and pines, especially Scots pine and also for exotic plants and flowers, which necessitate a mild climate and the ability to tolerate acidic conditions. Indeed, it has been said that those responsible for the many phases of the gardens at Castle Ward intentionally took advantage of the climate to pursue a sub-tropical theme.

4.5 Gardens around the House

One of Judge Michael Ward's first plans in 1713 was to build a new house on a low plateau, north-west of the tower house. This became known as the Queen Anne House. It seemed a natural progression to surround this new house with beautiful gardens and that work continued for many years, creating parks, gardens and canals to transform the landscape. By the middle of the nineteenth century, reorganisation took place around the Queen Anne house. The large lawn, which was linked by a shrubbery screening the stable block to the walled garden, remained unchanged.



Fig.16: View of walkways and also steps into the Sunken Garden, looking north-east

A new formal Victorian garden, with a collection of trees and shrubs, was created. Within the old walled garden, a terraced garden was designed, which would be dominated by a sunken parterre, with an ornate kaleidoscope of bedding plants between gravel paths.

A Pinetum was established within the shrubbery. This comprised exotic trees recently resourced from distant lands, especially the Pacific coast of North America. A rockery, a fashionable feature of the period, was established against the wall of the garden. Individually, none of these three innovations are highly significant, but together, they came to be regarded as a magnificent and trendsetting showpiece.



Fig.17: View of Rockery, looking south-west

4.6 The Windsor Garden

The precise date for the creation of the Windsor Garden is unclear, as by 1813 the walled enclosure was being referred to as the *new garden* (Fig. 4), in contrast to the old garden, which had surrounded the Queen Anne House. By 1834 rectangular beds and paths with terracing had been constructed, but 1864 highlights the garden when fully established. The focal point of the formal Windsor Garden was the elaborate parterre, with gem-stone like flower beds set in gravel, but enclosed by terraces. A 1902 article in *The Irish Farming World* (cited in Rutherford 2010, 58-59) explained that it was given this name, Windsor Garden, because of the design of the sunken parterre, which was based on one at Windsor Castle. Although the two locations do share a sunken parterre, the actual flower beds and paths are remarkably different. At Castle Ward four levels form three terraces, which lead to a rectangular sunken domain. Centrally located steps have been set into the steep-sided banks and provide access to the different levels. Brick and stone walls from the old garden enclose this area on two sides, while a line of Irish yew trees forms a third side.

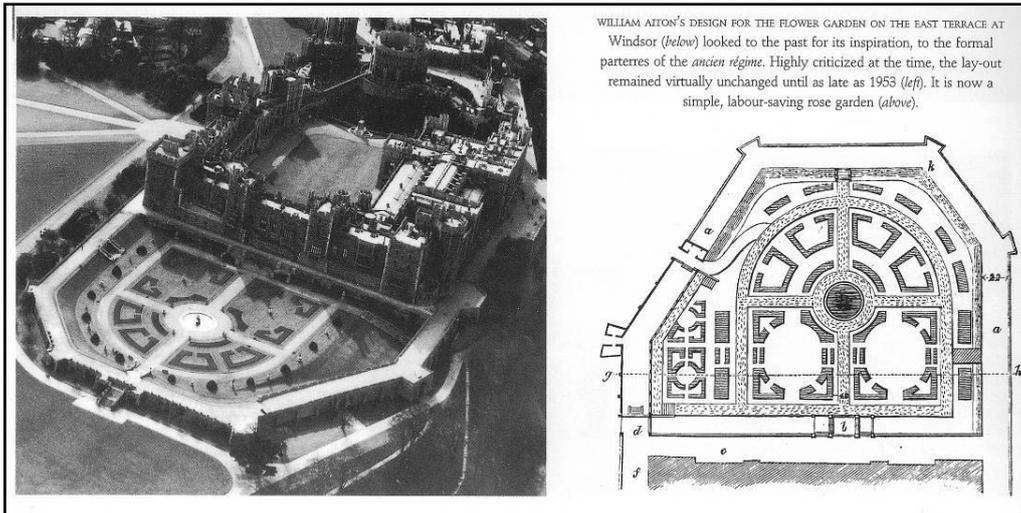


Fig. 18: William Aiton's Flower Garden on the East Terrace, Windsor Castle

The 1864 watercolour by Mary Ward displays the established garden at its colourful best, with sixty-one beds undergoing three colour changes for Spring, Summer and Winter. That year of 1864 was dominated by red, with white and yellow, defined by green box edging, which was clearly not a subtle colour scheme. This Windsor Garden was designed to impress.

The 1902 article (*ibid.*) provides details of the species planted: geranium, calceolaria, tuberous begonia, blue lobelia and yellow pyrethrum. It also marvelled at the mildness of the climate at Castle Ward, as such species were rarely seen outside of Devonshire or Cornwall. On the terrace above, stood standard shrubs and trees, notably *cordyline australis* and an arbour trellis of sweet pea, roses and *escallonia* formed a delightful archway.



Fig.19: Close-up of the Portland stone eagle, following restoration

In 1858 stone sculpture, which included two planted urns and also two eagles, were sited on the terrace above the garden. These disappeared in the twentieth century, but fragments of the stone eagles were excavated in the vicinity and have been restored. They were replaced as recently as 2009. The urns were probably those now sited at the front entrance to Castle Ward House. The Castle Ward Windsor Garden has been recorded in the National Trust record as NT 131520 and is described thus:

The Windsor garden is a formal High Victorian (& into Edwardian period) garden laid out on four different levels, forming three terraces and a rectangular sunken area and is characterised by seasonal bedding and formal yews set within a formal structural framework. It lies adjacent to the Pinetum and the rockery. The garden is enclosed on three sides by the brick and stone walls of the old Georgian flower garden, and on the fourth side by a line of Irish or upright yews.

Few details are available relating to the late C18 garden. On the 1813 estate map, the area is designated as the 'new garden' with two structures, probably hothouses are mentioned in 1783. By 1834 (OS), these buildings had disappeared and a series of rectangular paths is shown, some of which may be terracing. Few details are available relating to the old Georgian garden on the site. On the 1813 demesne map, the area is designated as the 'new garden' and two structures are shown which probably represent the hothouses mentioned in 1783. By the time of the 1834 OS 6 inch map these buildings had disappeared and a series of rectangular paths is shown, some of which may represent terracing.

The garden was fully established, probably by Major Nugent, and in 1864 was depicted by Mary Ward in a fine watercolour. The central feature of this garden by Victorian times was the sunken parterre which is said to have consisted of 61 beds and is depicted in its full bedded-out state in Mary Ward's watercolour. The beds immediately above were apparently planted with roses and the surrounding beds were planted with woody subjects (see photograph). The garden is mentioned in the 1902 article in *The Irish Farming World*.

After the Great War, the Windsor garden was converted into a rose garden by the 6th Countess. In the 1970s the Trust rebuilt the steps in brick, turned the parterre area into a lawn and at the centre created a pond placing the figure of Neptune in the centre of the pond, which was originally acquired for Cothele, Cornwall, was transported to Castle Ward in the 1970s.

This garden area is sheltered and is therefore ideal for tender subjects. The Cordylines flanking the main axial path are not shown by Mary Ward in the mid-C19, and probably date from the late C19 or early C20, the time of the 5th Viscount. They are of similar size to those by Temple Water.



Fig. 20: View of the ornamental pond, with Neptune at its centre

The Windsor Garden lies to the west of the stable yard and mansion house. It consists of a range of garden features, including the Rockery and Sunken Garden, a linear setting of yew trees to the south of the Sunken Garden, screening this part of the garden from the remainder of the features to the south-west. These consist of the rockery, paths and occasional mature trees. The Rockery lies approximately 60m to the south-west of the Sunken Garden. The garden is bounded by stone walls to the north-west (which extends to include the rockery) and north-east and by a large hedge

to the south east. Within the Sunken Garden, there are six palm trees, regularly spaced, with two on each level. The sunken garden is approached centrally from the south-west and descends in three stages to its lowest level at the north-east. Here, a small pond is located centrally and is provided with a decorative statue. At the next level, there are eight parterres, with two more on the next level, each of which contain a stone eagle on a column. Two further parterres are located at ground level.

Gravel paths are provided around the perimeter of the sunken garden and to access the remainder of the gardens. The gardens are contained within an area of approximately 75m north-west/south-east, by 130m north-east/south-west.

The rockery is kidney-shaped in plan and rises gently from ground level in the gardens to meet the enclosing wall to the west. It is provided with a range of small paths from which to view the rock plants. It was sparsely planted at the time of the survey.



Fig. 21: UAS Survey Team members relaxing within the Windsor Garden

5. Recommendations for further work

The Windsor Garden is a beautifully-designed formal garden, with elegant terraces and stone ornaments. It was originally constructed in the early nineteenth century and evolved continually, until the demesne suffered from neglect, before it was acquired by the National Trust in 1950.

The National Trust currently has plans to restore the Windsor Garden to its former glory. The aim of the Ulster Archaeological Society survey was to assist in this process by carrying out a detailed survey of the garden as it appears today. It was noted during the survey that current planting was sparse, but this is understandable due to the pending restoration.

We look forward to seeing the garden restored and becoming another important visitor attraction to this fascinating property.

6. Bibliography

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Appendix

PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD FORM

Site: Windsor Garden, Castle Ward, County Down

Date: 30 April 2016

Make and model of camera...*Ricoh G600W*

Frame no	Looking	Details
	N	Aerial view of the Windsor Garden
DSC 5497	N	Members of the Survey Group at work in the Sunken Garden
	W	Aerial view of the Rock Garden
DSC 5459	SE	View of Sunken Garden and terraces
DSC 5464	NW	View of Sunken Garden and enclosing walls
DSC 5477	NE	View of Sunken Garden and parterres
DSC 5483	NE	View of Portland stone statue of Neptune
DSC 5488	E	View of parterres on the intermediate level
DSC 5480	SE	View of Portland stone eagle
DSC 5486	E	View of garden terraces, with Castle Ward House in the background
DSC 5493	NE	View of walkways and also steps into the Sunken Garden
DSC 5476	SW	View of Rockery
DSC 5495	N	Close-up of Portland stone eagle, following restoration
DSC 5482	N	View of the ornamental pond, with Neptune at its centre
DSC 5543	SE	UAS Survey Team members relaxing within the Windsor Garden

Note – Many more photographs were taken apart from those recorded here. The remainder are available in the site survey archive.