

CARDIFF CASTLE AND BUTE PARK

Ref number	PGW (Gm) 22 (CDF)
OS Map	171
Grid ref	ST 181 765
Former county	South Glamorgan
Unitary authority	The City and County of Cardiff
Community council	Castle

Designations Listed buildings: Cardiff Castle, Grade I; Animal Wall Grade I; West Lodge Grade II*; Stables of Cardiff Castle Grade II*; Blackweir Cottage Grade II.
Scheduled Ancient Monuments: Cardiff Castle (Gm 171); Remains of Blackfriars Dominican Priory (Gm 173; also listed Grade II)
Conservation Area: Cathays Park (Cardiff Castle and part of Bute Park)

Site evaluation **Grade I**

Primary reasons for grading

Bute Park is one of the largest urban parks in the country, and with Pontcanna Fields and Sophia Gardens to the west forms a huge open space open to the public within the centre of Cardiff. The park's designer and planter, Andrew Pettigrew, was one of the most important park designers of the second half of the nineteenth century, and the open, flowing informal design allowed a smooth transition from a private pleasure ground to a public park. Much of the Victorian planting, particularly of ornamental trees, survives. The grounds of Cardiff Castle have a long history of landscaping, going back to the mediaeval period. The grounds owe their present day appearance to late eighteenth-century landscaping by Capability Brown and late nineteenth-century alterations by the 3rd Marquis of Bute. The park became a public park after 1947.

Type of site Urban public park

Main phases of construction 1778; 1867-1900; 1920s

Site description

Cardiff Castle has a long history. It is situated on the northern edge of the centre of the city, with streets to the south and east, and Bute Park to the west and north. Its position was always a strategic one, astride the main east-west route across southern Wales, and this is attested by its long occupation. The Castle contains elements from the Roman, Norman and mediaeval periods, and from the eighteenth and late nineteenth centuries. In its present form it is largely a reconstruction and rebuilding of the late nineteenth century. It comprises a square enclosure surrounded by a high crenellated stone wall, inside which there is a large Norman motte and shell keep in

the north-west corner. The Castle buildings, in a variety of styles and dating from the mediaeval period to the twentieth century, lie along the west wall of the enclosure. The entrance is in the middle of the south side, through an archway next to the thirteenth-century Black Tower.

The Castle precinct wall is built on the foundations of the walls of the fourth Roman fort to be built on the site, dating from *c.* AD 276-285. From the 1890s the 3rd and 4th marquises of Bute excavated the Roman remains and then built the present wall, said to be much higher than the original Roman wall, on top of them. The gate towers in the middle of the north side are a conjectural reconstruction. The motte was built in 1081 at the instigation of William the Conqueror, and under Robert Fitzhamon Cardiff Castle became the administrative centre of the lordship of Glamorgan. It remained so throughout the mediaeval period. The shell keep was added by Robert, Earl of Gloucester in the first half of the twelfth century. The polygonal walls of the keep stand to their full height; the gate tower and steps on the south side were added in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries by the de Clares and Despensers. In the second half of the thirteenth century Gilbert de Clare added the Black Tower by the south entrance and a massive cross wall between the tower and the keep, which was demolished in the eighteenth century and whose foundations were revealed when the interior of the precinct was lowered in the late nineteenth century.

In the fifteenth century the castle was turned into a stately palace by the Beauchamp family, who built new residential quarters and the octagon tower on the west side of the precinct. A flower garden, or 'plaisance' was made south of the great hall. In the sixteenth century Cardiff Castle was granted to William Herbert (died 1570), and it remained in the Herbert family until the eighteenth century. William's son Henry (died 1601) extensively altered the castle after 1574, building more apartments, the Herbert Tower, and moving the garden to the north end of the buildings, below the Ladies Walk on the parapet of the west wall. In 1703 the Herbert estates in Glamorgan passed by marriage to Thomas, 1st Viscount Windsor, and in 1766 the lands and the castle passed by marriage to John Stuart, heir to the Earl of Bute, who was created Baron Cardiff of Cardiff Castle in 1776.

In 1778 the 4th Earl of Bute commissioned the famous landscaper Capability Brown and the architect Henry Holland (Brown's son-in-law) to modernise the castle and grounds. Holland altered the Tudor additions and built two new wings, incorporating the hall, in gothic style. After 1814 the 2nd Marquis of Bute (died 1848) and then his widow, Sophia (1809-59), carried out further restorations and restored the South Gate and Black Tower. The castle took on its present form after 1868 largely as the result of the partnership between the 3rd Marquis of Bute (1847-1900) and his architect William Burges (1827-81). Between them they transformed the castle, building the Clock Tower in the south-west corner, and giving the interior its highly decorated gothic character. One of Burges's additions is a fantastical sunken roof garden, reached through a bronze door dated 1876. The roof garden is a marble-lined rectangular court surrounded by covered walks with mosaic tiling and classical bronze columns. The garden is highly decorated, with a bronze fountain, bronze statue of the Virgin and tile-paintings. From the garden there are panoramic views, including Castell Coch to the north. Work continued on the castle in the same style after Burges's death. In 1947 Cardiff Castle was given to the people of Cardiff.

The stables, or Castle Mews, lie to the north of the Castle, on the eastern edge of Bute Park. They are reached by a straight tarmac drive from the south. They consists of a quadrangular stone building of two storeys, with a slate roof. The gabled

entrance is in the middle of the south side under a pointed arch, with flanking smaller arches. There is a corresponding central arch in the north side. The south side has mullioned and transomed windows. On the inside the upper floor is gabled and half-timbered, with a timber gallery supported by wooden uprights running around it. The interior surface is partly of stone setts and partly of concrete. The stables were designed by William Burges for the 3rd Marquis of Bute and are one of only two stable blocks the architect designed. The north and east wings were built in about 1874, the south and west remained incomplete until 1927, when the scheme was finally finished by the estate architect, J.P. Grant. The original work included an impressive turret on the south-east corner, which served as a dovecot and dominated the whole design. This was removed in 1958, when it had become dilapidated. In 1998 the Castle Mews was renovated for use by the Welsh College of Music and Drama.

Cardiff Castle

The grounds of Cardiff Castle are enclosed in a high, crenellated stone wall, with a wall walk around the top. The space within the wall is roughly square and flat, with a large earthen bank against the wall on the north, east, and part of the south side. The level area is laid out to a large lawn, with grass and mixed trees on the banks. A cobble path leads from the south to the north gates. A concrete paved path leads eastwards from the entrance in the middle of the south side to the foot of the bank on the east side. Here it gradually ascends the bank up to the wall walk with a small semi-circular stone single-storey building set into the bank near the top. It has a central gothic door and two slit windows and is now part of the Regimental Museum. The south bank has oak and lime trees growing on it. The east bank is largely tree covered, with sweet chestnut, sycamore, beech and ash predominating. The wall walk is a broad path with a grass verge, with small projecting turrets at intervals. In the north-east corner the trees are thickly planted and include evergreen oak, Portugal laurel, beech and flowering cherry. The north bank has evergreen oak and beech growing on it, with a large sweet chestnut on the upper edge and another below it.

The motte is a circular, steep-sided mound, with a stone shell keep on top. Its sides are covered in rough grass. A spiral path, now disused but clearly visible, winds up it, starting on the west side. Around the foot of the motte is a wide water-filled moat, with a steep bank on its outer side and a stone bridge over it on the south side giving access to the steps up to the keep. On the west side is the stump of a wall running east-west near the foot of the mound.

In the south-west corner of the lawn, near a well, are a huge, spreading evergreen oak tree and a horse chestnut to its west. Towards the north end of the west side are further evergreen oaks, one next to the castle wall in a raised bed, with a lime next to it. The north-west corner of the enclosure is not open to the public.

The present-day appearance of the castle grounds is largely due to late eighteenth-century and late nineteenth-century alterations and planting. Of the mediaeval and Tudor gardens nothing remains. In 1778 Capability Brown undertook a limited amount of landscaping in the grounds for the 4th Earl of Bute. He cleared the interior by removing the buildings from the former outer bailey, in the eastern half of the enclosure, and by demolishing the cross wall. He stripped the ivy off the keep, cut down the trees growing on the motte, made the spiral walk and filled in the moat. In 1794 Robert Clutterbuck noted in his journal that the green walks of the castle 'owe their disposition to the celebrated Brown'. The layout was very simple: there was a

single gravel walk around the edge on two levels. On the north and east sides it was along the top of the ramparts, on the south and west at ground level. The remainder of the interior was a 'fine level lawn', described in 1804 (Donovan, *Excursions through South Wales*, vol. 1) as 'a smoothly mown-grass plat'. Donovan also mentioned the spiral path 'that thrice encircles the lofty mount'. In 1797 Henry Wigstead commented that: 'a very fine gravel walk is raised all round the walls, which is a public promenade' (*Tour to North and South Wales*). A map of 1824 shows a belt of trees around the edge of the interior.

A gothic summerhouse appears to have stood in the south-east corner of the castle ward, on top of the bank. It is shown in a painting by Paul Sandby published in 1775 but dating to 1773 and another by S. Mazell of approximately the same date. This octagonal building is very similar in appearance to that at Rookwood Hospital, Cardiff, and there exists a hypothesis that the Cardiff Castle summerhouse was dismantled and re-erected in the grounds of Llandaff House (later the grounds of Rookwood Hospital), then owned by Thomas Edwards, steward to the castle estate. However, if so, the date of removal remains uncertain (there are no depictions of the building at the castle after 1776, but the 1776 map of Llandaff House only specifies a 'Summer House', giving no details) and could be later, in the early nineteenth century. Certainly by 1830, the date of the Woods map of Cardiff, there is no building in the south-east corner, only a circular mount. Further nineteenth-century maps, and an oil painting of 1826, also show this mount, with a level observation platform on top and a spiral walk up it. The site of the mount remains today, although it was probably altered in the rebuilding of the south wall in 1914-23.

The grounds of the castle appear to have been open to Cardiff residents from the late eighteenth century until about 1868, when the 3rd Marquis came of age. By 1854 (William L. Jenkins, *History of the town and castle of Cardiff*) many trees and shrubs had been planted, and the motte was 'thickly planted with various trees'. Early nineteenth-century records suggest that the public went to the grounds after church on Sundays, and that there was sometimes a band. After 1858 the use of the walks was restricted to Sundays only and after 1868 the castle grounds were for the private use of the family only. The layout of the grounds in the 1870s is shown in the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map (1879). The mediaeval bank, topped by a wall, runs from the north-west corner along the north and east sides, and half the south side. A walk runs inside it, following the course of the present-day walk. The eastern half of the moat is occasionally water-filled; the western half remains filled in, with a drive from the castle following its course around to a gate in the wall to the north of the motte. The spiral path up the motte is shown, as is a wall walk along the top of the west curtain wall.

In the 1890s the Roman fort walls were discovered and the mediaeval bank was cut away to reveal their foundations. The present walls were built on the Roman foundations, leaving the interior half of the mediaeval bank against them. The outer half was removed. The surface of the interior was lowered and William Burges's former assistant, William Frame, built the North Gate, in the middle of the north side, on Roman foundations. Frame's version was lowered in height and altered by J.P. Grant in 1922.

Bute Park

Bute Park is a large public park on the east bank of the canalised river Taff, between the Western Avenue at the north end and Cardiff Castle and Castle Street at the south

end. The ground is level and is laid out with winding walks and drives leading through areas of specimen trees, woodland and open grass spaces. The park has a particularly fine collection of specimen trees, many of which are now reaching maturity.

The park was laid out ornamentally on the land of five farms, part of which is known as Cooper's Fields, as part of the pleasure grounds of Cardiff Castle, the seat of the Marquises of Bute. The 2nd Marquis moved into the castle in 1814, and until the 1850s the castle grounds were open to the public. In 1858 his widow opened Sophia Gardens, on the west bank of the river Taff, to the public to compensate for the closure of the castle grounds, which then became the private grounds of the castle. It was the 3rd Marquis who began laying out the gardens and grounds in 1871. These were in the charge of Mr Andrew Pettigrew, who was brought down from Dumfries House, a Bute property in Scotland. Pettigrew was a highly skilled and influential gardener and landscaper, and was responsible for much of the layout and planting. In 1877 it was stated that: 'The grounds are extensive; many trees have been planted in them lately, and groups and long borders of various kinds of choice shrubs formed, lawns laid down, and narrow and broad walks made. A stone-crushing machine is employed to prepare the metal for these walks' (*Journal of Horticulture and Cottage Gardener* 27 September 1877). The ground was 'so low as to be little better than a swamp', and in order to raise it above flood level much soil was brought in from building sites in the town. The lawns were later referred to as 'like a billiard table'.

Further pleasure grounds, Cathays Park, lay to the east (acquired by the city in 1898), and the walled kitchen gardens lay to the south of Cathays Park (now gone). By the time of the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map (1879) the bones of the present-day layout of the park were in place. Much tree and shrub planting was to follow. After Burges's death in 1881 his former assistant, William Frame, built the animal wall that Burges had designed to the south of the castle grounds, enclosing a narrow strip of sloping ground that was laid out with formal flower beds. In 1925-30 the 4th Marquis's architect, J.P. Grant, moved the animal wall to its present position along the south boundary of Bute Park, where it was extended, with further animals being sculpted by Alexander Carrick. A new entrance was made just west of the castle. The dock feeder canal that ran along the east side of the castle grounds was culverted to allow road building and there is no longer water in the moat along the west side of the castle. On the death of the 4th Marquess in 1947 the castle and park were presented to the city and were opened to the public.

The park is elongated north-south, bounded on the west by the river Taff, and on the east, for most of its length, by the dock feeder canal, which runs from a lock gate at a weir on the river near the north end of the park to the south end, where it turns a right-angle bend to run along the north side of the castle and out of the park. The character of the park is of informal, spacious grounds, laid out with winding walks (now tarmac or concrete) and areas of open grass alternating with specimen trees in grass, borders, and less manicured woodland. It has been said that there are fourteen miles of drives and walks throughout the park. There is a general progression from the more highly ornamented southern end through the specimen tree area in the centre to playing fields and woodland at the more 'natural' north end.

The south end of the park is bounded by the castle walls and by the animal wall to the west. A newly restored castellated lodge, the West Lodge, lies at the west end of this wall, with an entrance archway on its west side. As built in the late 1860s the south boundary wall was further to the south than the present wall. The lodge was set back from the wall, which curved inwards on either side of the entrance. In 1924

the boundary was moved northwards, the animal wall being moved from in front of the castle, and extended, to take the place of the original wall.

Next to the castle are wrought iron gates from which a tarmac path leads to a pebble-stone bridge under a pebble-stone arch over the dried up moat and to an archway in a cross wall, beyond which is a small area of lawn between the west wall of the castle and the moat. The archway and wall are the reconstructed west gate and town wall, rebuilt by J.P. Grant on the original mediaeval foundations in 1921. The pebble roadway under the arch is mediaeval, dating to before 1404, and the gate, line of wall and arch are all on fourteenth-century foundations. To the south of the bridge over the moat are three parallel pebble walls, the outer ones widening to line the moat further south. These were built at the same time, when the moat was drained, on the foundations of mediaeval walls which probably served to channel water for the mill to the south, the foundations of which were also found at this time.

Just to the north of the West Gate was the 3rd Marquis's double-decker 'Swiss bridge', which William Burges designed and Mr Estcourt, of Gloucester, built in *c.* 1875. This was a rustic bridge and summerhouse combined, raised on wooden stilts, which connected the park with the castle through a new entrance near the small dining room. This door remains but only some footings remain of the bridge. It had a pitched roof with overhanging, swept eaves and a small pavilion at ground level on the west side. It was modelled on a thirteenth-century bridge that Burges noted on Lake Lucerne and the estimate for building it was £1,108. Pettigrew planted the area around the bridge with weeping willow and bamboo. The Swiss bridge was taken down by the 4th Marquess in 1927, soon after the rebuilding of the West Gate, and rebuilt across the feeder canal, from the castle mews to the park. Much of the wooden support structure of the bridge was replaced with ferro-concrete, much favoured by the Marquess. The bridge was finally demolished in 1963.

The area to the west of the castle is one of specimen trees and shrubs in grass, with some large plane trees at the northern end. A Gorsedd circle stands in an opening. In the north-east corner is an upstanding circular well (dry). A low iron bridge takes an east-west path over the dock feeder canal. To the west of this is an area of lawn and deciduous trees, with a Gorsedd circle of stones set in the grass.

Immediately to the north, at the south-west end of the central open grass space known as Cooper's Fields, are the footings and some flooring of Blackfriars Dominican priory set in a formal garden of island beds with the base of a former fountain in the centre. This is a large circular flowerbed with roll-moulded stone sides. The mediaeval priory remains were excavated and displayed by the 3rd Marquess of Bute, who built up the walls to three feet above ground. In 1893 it was stated that: 'It is now intended to place a fountain in the largest room - the chapel; and the tops of the walls are so made as to hold a good quantity of soil, in which flowers will be planted, and the whole made to look as much in keeping with the grounds as is possible' (*Gardeners' Chronicle* 9 September 1893). To the west of the priory a path leads parallel to the river past two long herbaceous borders backed by beech hedges to the east and a lawn and island beds to the west.

To the north of the castle a drive flanked by plane trees leads to a simple entrance gate on the east boundary. A modern house stands adjacent to the entrance, on the site of the North Lodge. The area to the north is now tennis courts, but is shown as open ground on the 1879 map. A straight drive, flanked by rows of young ginkgo trees and by a row of mature horse chestnuts on the west, leads to the former stables. A path along the dock feeder canal is flanked by a row of lime trees.

To the north of the long borders the park is planted with an area of specimen trees and shrubs. Particular features of this area are the pines, with Japanese maples and camellias below. A cross path is flanked on the north by limes, with a group of pines on the south side. Further north is an area of cherry trees, and the woodland area is bounded by an east-west row of conifers. A lawn lies to the north, and beyond it a square nursery/glasshouse area. This has a high north wall of stone on the outside and brick on the inside, with lean-to stone bothies along its outside. The west wall is mostly brick, and the other sides are bounded by modern fencing and hedges. Inside are ranges of modern glasshouses. To the north of the nursery is an area of specimen trees set in grass. Paths that had been running up the east and west sides of the park converge here and then separate again, skirting a large open grass area used as a sports ground. The western path is flanked by evergreen oaks at intervals, with a belt of woodland between the path and the river. Along the east side the dock feeder canal and path are flanked by woodland underplanted with rhododendrons. On the eastern edge of the sports ground is the modern ambulance station, adjacent to a terrace of four mid nineteenth-century stone cottages (Blackweir Farm cottages) which used to house Bute family employees. To the south is a small Victorian cottage, Blackweir Cottage, next to the canal. A single clump of two beech and two horse chestnut trees stands towards the north end of the open grass area, just above a straight scarp that divides it into a higher (east) and lower (west) section.

To the north is an area of less tended woodland, with undergrowth rather than mown grass beneath the trees. This is dominated by a planting of wellingtonias, now of considerable size. The two paths lead to the end of the dock feeder canal at a weir and modern footbridge across the river. Beyond, to the north, the path continues through woodland, flanked by large limes. To the east of the weir there is a particularly notable planting of copper beeches, now of great size. From this point there is a good view of Pontcanna Fields on the other side of the river. Further north the park narrows to a thin strip next to the river.

Sources

Primary

Oil painting, 1826, of Cardiff Castle grounds, from the south-east. Cardiff Castle.
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