Iford Manor Garden

Bradford on Avon, Wiltshire, UK

Photographs by Alan Ward 1997, 2014

Notes on the Making of the Photographs

Iford Manor reflects the personal and idiosyncratic tastes of its owner, Harold Peto - a prominent architect, as well as landscape architect of the Edwardian era. Iford Manor is in a valley at the bottom of a south-facing hillside, that rises steeply from the River Frome. There is evidence of Roman settlement on the site, and the Domesday book records two cottages previously at this location along the river. A stone bridge from around 1400 leads to the entry court of the manor house - built beginning in the fourteenth century (1-2), however, the residence mostly dates from the 1730s (2-4).*

Peto purchased the deteriorated property in 1899, and over a forty-year period, rehabilitated the house and redesigned the landscape. He was inspired by Italian villas and gardens, that were well suited for adaptation to sloping sites like Iford Manor. On his frequent travels to Europe, Peto accumulated fragments of antiquities that he integrated into Iford Manor by positioning them on a series of walls and terraces built into the slopes, as well as on building facades (7-8,11,13-17). Steps begin at the lower elevation, near where a chapel and conservatory once stood, and extend up the hillside linking the terraces (5-6). Garden spaces are defined by an architectural framework of columns, beams and stone walls, while sculpture and planting draw visual connections between the levels (7-10). The Great Terrace completes the sequence of architectonic levels stepping up the hillside, before becoming more naturalistic further up the slope (14-18). The eighteenth-century Garden House is the visual terminus at the eastern end of the Great Terrace (18). The Cloisters built by Peto in 1914 is east of the Garden House, and was designed as a repository for Peto's growing collection of antiquities. These buildings reflect Peto's theory that garden designs should incorporate architecture into the composition (18-20).

The photographs are in a sequence beginning with the approach to the site crossing the stone bridge, proceeding to the arrival court, and then ascending the sequence of terraces built into the hillside (1-6). Arriving at each terrace, and each turn in the route, reveals Peto's taste for constructing a scene composed of an intermingling of walls, columns, other architectural fragments, sculpture, urns and planting (11). The images are framed in a manner that leads the eye from the elements in the foreground to those in the background. I used direct shots along the terraces to give the facts in a rather straightforward way, without distorting the scale, to portray Peto's complex, layered approach to design.

List of Photographs

1. River Frome bridge, circa 1400, 2014
2. View of house, figure of Britannia added by Peto, 2014
3. South front of house, showing two periods of building, 1997
4. Entry to house, 2014
5. Loggia and steps to terraces, 1997
6. Steps to terraces, 1997
7. Conservatory terrace, 2014
8. View south to conservatory terrace and loggia, 2014
9. Terrace and court beyond, 2014
10. Former workshop and court, 2014
11. Small court at west end of terrace, 2014
12. Steps to upper terraces, 1997
13. View through architectural fragments at top of steps, 2014
14. Lilly pool, 2014
15. View east of Great Terrace, 2014
16. West end of Great Terrace and casita, 1997
17. Overview of casita garden, 1997
18. View west on Great Terrace, 1997
19. View west on Great Terrace, colonnade and hounds, 1997
20. View east on Great Terrace to garden house, 1997
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22. Cloisters and meadow sloping down to the river, 2014
23. The Loggia gallery, 2014
24. View south to River Frome valley, 2014
25. Sculpture and wall at the Loggia, 2014
26. View south of steps to Great Terrace, 1997
27. Steps to King Edward VII Column, 2014























































Notes

* This brief historical summary is derived from *The Peto Garden at Iford Manor*, edited by E. C-H., 1999, which contains detailed information on the site and the collection of antiquities collected by Peto.

All Photographs © Alan Ward