

Walled Garden Conservation Assessment

Kilanerin Ballyfad Community Development Association CLG with the permission of the Esmonde family and the support of the Heritage Council has commissioned a conservation assessment of the historic walled garden at Ballynestragh Demesne. The purpose is to investigate the feasibility of conserving and developing the garden for social enterprise projects focussed on heritage, horticulture and sustainability. The report was funded by the Heritage Council under the Community Heritage Grant scheme and carried out by 7L Conservation Architects.

Walled gardens are a feature of most country house demesnes, as well as farm estates in Ireland, and hundreds can be found across the country but few remain in productive use. Constructed to provide sheltered microclimates free from vermin; walled gardens allowed fruit, vegetables and flowers to flourish. Being labour intensive to maintain and cultivate, many walled gardens have fallen into disuse.

County Wexford has many walled gardens. Close to Ballynestragh are three walled gardens at Courtown House, Borleagh Demesne, and Hyde Park House. In south Wexford Colclough Walled Garden at Tintern Abbey is an example of community-based restoration of a historic walled garden through volunteerism and grant funding.



View over restored walled gardens at Colclough Walled Garden, Tintern Abbey, Co Wexford and Phoenix Park Dublin.

Ballynestragh House is shown on the 25-inch OS map (1888-1913) with the present walled garden shown to the northeast. The walled garden is constructed almost entirely in red bricks, most likely produced on the estate at the 'Brickhole Field' or nearby while some bricks appear to be wire cut industrialised types, possibly sourced from the nearby Courtown works. A castellated 3 storey tower was added later.

The Walled Garden survives in a good state of preservation but has been overgrown by encroaching vegetation since it was last used over fifty years ago. The enclosed area extends to c.1.5 acres with the surrounding walls 2.6 m high. The remains of some sheds and garden structures are still visible.



Entrance and present interior of garden.

As well as reviewing the present structure and condition of the garden the assessment discusses possible options for future use and development, the outline cost of such work and deals with possible access and security matters. Future work would consist of surveying, clearance, conservation and restoration which could be funded by schemes such as LEADER 2023.

Kilanerin Ballyfad Community Development Association would like to thank Bartle and the Esmonde family for their interest and co-operation. The Association also extends sympathy to the family on the recent sad loss of Dr Sir Tom Esmonde who had taken a keen interest in the project before his untimely death.

