

CARADOC COURT

Article prepared by Philip Anderson and researched and written by Heather Hurley for Landscape Origins of the Wye Valley 2005

On a very wet Saturday in September 2005 the Civic Society arranged for the public opening of Caradoc Court with the kind permission of the owner. This was part of the annual nationwide Heritage Open Days week-end. In spite of the atrocious weather over a 100 people came to visit the property during the two hours it was open. Heather Hurley had prepared the following history of Caradoc.

"The origins of Caradoc are legendary. Its name suggests an ancient encampment reputedly constructed by Caractacus when resisting the Roman invasion, but the site has never been properly investigated. It lies in the parish of Sellack, which was recorded as Baisson (Baysham) at Domesday.

Although the de la Mare family were at Caricradok from at least 1281, it was Roger de Somery who died "seised of the manor" in 1291, when it reverted to the de la Mares. In 1308 the property consisted of a messuage, garden, dovecote, 2 ploughlands of 80 acres each, pastures and woodland occupied by the de la Mares until the 1440s. The Abrahalls acquired Carrycradok possibly through marriage, and were paying wool tithes in 1568. During the next decade Carycradock was sold to Richard Mynors, a large estate of a messuage, toft, 2 gardens, 40 acres of land, 50 acres of meadow, 600 acres of pasture, and 120 acres of wood. It appears that John Abrahall retained an interest in the property because it was John Abrahall who sold Gary Craddock to Rowland Scudamore in 1594.

Rowland was the brother of Sir John Scudamore of Holme Lacy, who received legacies from the family which may have funded the purchase of Baysham and the remodelling of Craddock. When he died in 1630 the newly built mansion consisted of a hall, great parlour, little parlour, cellar, dairy, at least eight bed chambers, servants quarters, kitchen, an old hall and a mill housing cider, an assortment of agricultural implements and livestock. It is understood that part of the earlier house still stood containing a kitchen, hall and chamber together with a barn. Near the church was the Canons Barn full of rye and barley, and beyond the church was Baysham with its barns, sheepcotes, cow houses and outhouses.

After Rowland's death Cradocke continued to be owned by the Holme Lacy Scudamores, and in 1639 a curious agreement was made between Viscount Scudamore and Richard Phelps for a lease allowing the tenant of the new house to brew in the old house, but to move to Baysham if the Scudamores needed to return to Cradocke. During the Civil War in 1644 it has been suggested that when a party of parliamentary soldiers came to Sellack to destroy the church cross and chancel window, they were entertained at Caradoc and forgot their evil intent.

During the late 17th and early 18th centuries Craddock was occupied by various members of the Scudamore family, and it may be during this period that another story became legendary. Apparently a mentally unstable Scudamore was kept locked in an

attic room, and to relieve his boredom he painted pictures on the walls with his own blood. When John Scudamore of Cradock died in 1714 the estate passed to his elder brother the third Viscount, who died two years later leaving Cradock to his wife's father Lord Digby, but John Scudamore's wife was allowed to remain at Cradock after her second marriage to William Dew.

The Dews leased the Caradoc estate of 322 acres from the Digbys until 1863 when the house with its courtyard enclosed by lofty stone walls was offered for sale. Craddock then contained a hall, dining room, parlour, kitchen cellars, six bedrooms, a drawing room, attics and the farm premises. It was purchased by Elisha Caddick of Leadon Court, who dramatically altered the mansion. His son advertised the Caradoc Estate for sale in 1904 and by 1910 it had been purchased by Colonel Heywood. After the death of the Heywoods the property passed to their married daughter Katie Gaze, a race horse trainer, and in 1978 was sold to another race horse trainer, John Edwards, who kept the estate and sold the court to John Onslow Edwards. In 1986 at the time of a later sale a fire gutted the building, which at present is being sympathetically restored."