

People are starting to pay for their lunch, and one or two (or perhaps three) have also taken the opportunity to have coffee in the garden. Time to round you up and on to our next stop, Usk Castle. We walk past Twyn Square and onwards until, just opposite the town's Fire Station we see this sign. Up the lane we go arriving at the gates marking the edge of the castle estate. In we go passing passing a few houses until



The Castle House is a Grade I listed building, listed building in its own right and was constructed in 1368-99. For many years, it was the residence of the castle's steward. While the castle declined in the later medieval period and was slighted during the English Civil War, Castle House underwent considerable expansion and was described as a "gentrified town house" in the early twentieth century. In 1925 Castle House, and its grounds including the castle ruins, were purchased for £525 by Rudge Humphreys, whose family still own the estate. Humphreys undertook major excavation and restoration of the grounds.

The building is of three storeys, in stucco and with a slate roof. Its gabled rear range incorporates the inner half of the late fourteenth century gatehouse to the castle. The house is a Grade I listed building, its historic listing recording the reason for the designation; 'listed as a major historic building, in particular for the importance of its medieval gatehouse'. The building is now a private home.



We continue to walk towards the castle, passing some rather pleasant buildings whose gardens are opened locationally to the public under the National Garden Scheme. These buildings are often used for the many weddings which are held at the castle.

Having passed Castle House and outbuildings, we come to the path leading to the edges of the castle itself. Here we come across its novel entry scheme.

No custodian to guard the entrance, no gates, no one way system, just a sort of tiled and slightly ramshackle-looking half-shed decorated with a number of posters. Under its shelter and on a ledge, rests a box and two pottery pots. The pots are important. As the castle is in private hands the owner finds it necessary to ask for donations all of which go towards the upkeep of the estate. One pot is for your donation. Another is filled with small pebbles. You make your donation into the (locked) box; you pick a pebble from another pot and place it in the third pot so keeping a record of visitors!



"Please note the disclaimer notice, and take care when we go up the steps to the castle walls". Which we then proceed to do safely.



We are heading for that small gate that you can just see as we turn a corner on the path. Past that there are steps which are quite steep or you can take the longer path alongside.



Both ways bring us outside the inner ward Gate house, and a gate.

"Take care, this gate has a strong spring closer, mind your fingers please".

In we go. I notice one or two allow others to open the gate for them.

Just in case.





Having assured the castle defenders that we come in peace and mean them no harm, we can start to explore the grounds. On the castle green is the process of a large marquee being set up for an imminent wedding.

There are some imposing stone structures around the green. "Please take care of climbing any of the steps as they are a little worn in places as well as some still being renovated. We have an hour here so could we please meet at the Inner Ward Gatehouse at 4.00 please,



and look out for the chickens, some of them are very territorial".





Here's Marilyn walking away from Linda and Colin (shock horror ... NO TIE) but Linda confides it he was just having a short break and it is in his pocket. Just in case!



And Pat walking away from Marilyn, I wonder if they are playing some sort of game?



Of course, it's ... 'Follow my Leader'



Steve has just appeared from around the corner, and is busy looking for, and is just about to find, the chicken coop; and rather a superior one at that.



Now I wonder what Brian and Sue are talking about, if I edge a little closer perhaps?



There are some stunning views over the countryside.





Marylin would have liked to have taken this photo of this damaged arrow slot, methinks (notice the period vocabulary).





All too soon it's time to go. Let's hope everyone's watch is more reliable than these clocks.

However everyone is making their way to the gate.

Now we are all here, we are going to retrace our steps past Castle House and the estate buildings and back to the main road. Please be careful and stop at the main road once you arrive. When it's safe please cross the road and wait for everyone please.



All assembled we walk back towards Twyn Square.



Which we start to recognise by the bank building on its corner.

Not far now, please wait just around the corner.