

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

MALLORY COURT

Auteur(s) : Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/>

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*  
*Inventory of Great Britain*  
**MALLORY COURT**

Name:	MALLORY COURT
County:	Warwickshire
District:	Warwick (District Authority)
Parish:	Bishop's Tachbrook
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.256552 Longitude: -1.5306120 National Grid Reference: SP 32137 62146 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001669 Date first listed: 17-Mar-2003

## Details

Early C20 formal gardens designed by Percy Morley Horder to accompany a country house built to his design.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Mallory Court was constructed on a previously undeveloped site comprising part of the Upper Broad Leasow, an old enclosure which had belonged to the Grove House estate at Bishop's Tachbrook since the medieval period. Grove House was acquired by the Wagstaffe family in 1613, and remained in their hands until 1708 when it was sold to Edward Bagot of Blithfield, Staffordshire, whose descendants sold the property in 1804 to the Earl of Warwick (Hodgetts pers comm, 1998).

In May 1914, the Earl of Warwick sold c 9 acres (c 3.5ha) to James Thomas Holt, a retired cotton-bleacher from Manchester, whose cousin, Sir Edward Holt, had recently commissioned Baillie Scott to build a country house at Blackwell, Cumbria (qv) with gardens by Thomas Mawson. The purchase contract made between the Earl of Warwick and James Holt stipulated that the designs for any house to be built on the site should be submitted to the Earl's land agent, Godfrey Payton, for approval. Plans for a house by Percy Morley Horder (1870-1944) dated May 1914 were submitted and approved in June 1914, and construction appears to have begun almost immediately. The new house was occupied in 1916 (Spennells Directory, 1914-16). While Horder's plans do not show details of the proposed gardens, the elevations, which were also submitted for approval, show the principal garden compartments as realised, together with the formal garden to the south of the house in broadly the form which was implemented.

James Holt died in April 1936, and in July that year the estate was sold for £11,000 to Capt John Black (1895-1965), a director of the Hillman Motor Company and the Standard Motor Company in Coventry. During the Second World War, Black served as chairman of the Joint Aero Engine Committee, and was knighted in 1943. As early as July 1936, Black sought to purchase additional land from the Earl of Warwick to extend the Mallory Court estate and 'to preserve the amenities' of his property (Letter, 27 July 1936, WCRO). By the time Sir John Black offered Mallory Court for sale by auction in 1950, the estate extended to 571 acres (c 231 ha). The 1950 auction catalogue (WCRO) includes photographs of the gardens, indicating that they have changed little since the mid C20.

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*  
*Inventory of Great Britain*  
*MALLORY COURT*

The house and its immediate grounds were sold in 1950 to Automotive Products, which used the house as its company headquarters, while in 1956 it was purchased by the Lucas family, and reverted to being a family home. In 1976, Mallory Court was sold to Alan Holland and Jeremy Mort, who converted it into a country house hotel (Brain Partnership 1997), in which use it remains (2003).

**DESCRIPTION**

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Mallory Court is situated c 3km south of Royal Leamington Spa and c 0.75km north-east of Bishop's Tachbrook, to the east of the B4087 road. The c 4ha site is adjoined to the north-east by Harbury Lane, a minor road which leads south-east from the B4087 road to join the B4455 Fosse Way c 2.5km south-east of Mallory Court. The north-east boundary is marked by a mixed hedge. To the south-east, south and west the site adjoins agricultural land, from which it is separated by early C20 metal estate fences, and, on the south-east boundary, a clipped privet hedge. The house stands on an artificially levelled terrace, from which the ground falls away gently to the south and east, allowing extensive views across the surrounding country.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** Mallory Court is approached from Harbury Lane to the north-east, at a point c 0.75km south-east of its junction with the B4087 road. The entrance comprises a simple opening in the boundary hedge, which leads to a tarmac drive extending south-south-west for c 50m through an avenue of mature grafted horse chestnuts, to reach the carriage court below the north facade of the house. To the west of the drive, an area of mid C20 tarmac car park is situated beneath mixed mature trees and conifers, while immediately north-west of the carriage court, a track leads north-west from the drive to provide access to an area of paddock to the west of the gardens. The carriage court is approximately rectangular on plan, and is enclosed to the north-east, north-west, and west by low stone walls; to the east and south it is enclosed by wings of the house. The entrance to the carriage court from the drive is adjoined by a pair of squat stone piers surmounted by ball finials, while to the north-west a similar opening provides access to the gardens. The centre of the carriage court is occupied by a geometrical panel of lawn with a centrally placed stone urn; this arrangement accords with that shown in a photograph of 1950 (Sale catalogue, 1950). From the carriage court a service drive leads south-east to provide access to the service wing, and to the early C20 stables and motor house which formed part of Horder's design for Mallory Court (Plan, WCRO), and the kitchen garden and frame yard (Plan, WCRO; OS 1939). The arrangement of the carriage court broadly corresponds to that shown in Horder's perspective drawing of 1914 (WCRO).

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Mallory Court (listed grade II) stands on an artificially levelled terrace towards the centre of the site. The building comprises two storeys with an attic, and is constructed in rendered brick with stone dressings and details under steeply pitched tiled roofs with many gables. The C17 vernacular-style building is approximately L-shaped on plan, with the principal rooms being situated in the west and south ranges, and the service quarters to the north and east. The house is lit by leaded mullion casement windows set in stone frames, while the skyline is characterised by tall, diagonally placed brick chimneys. Mallory Court was constructed in 1914-15 to the design of Percy Morley Horder for James Holt. There is a late C20 extension, constructed in a style matching that of the original building, to the south-east of the early C20 house; this forms an internal courtyard to the east of the original service wing.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The formal gardens are situated to the west, south, and south-east of the house, with areas of informal pleasure ground to the south and west.

From the carriage court an entrance leads west to the rose garden. Approximately rectangular on plan, the rose garden is enclosed to the north by a hornbeam hedge, and to the west by a belt of evergreen shrubbery which screens it from the paddock beyond. To the south the garden is bounded by a low stone and brick retaining wall, while a gravelled walk extends below the west facade of the house, which encloses the garden to the east. The rose garden comprises a level lawn in which is set a series of geometrical beds planted with roses. The centre of the garden is marked by a circular stone-edged pool with a centrally placed art deco-style stone fountain. The north-east, south-east, and south-west corners of the lawn are marked by mature specimen flowering almond trees. The area occupied by the rose garden corresponds to a garden enclosure shown on Horder's garden plan (Plan, 1914), and remains little changed from the layout shown in a photograph of 1950 (Sale catalogue, 1950).

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*  
*Inventory of Great Britain*  
*MALLORY COURT*

To the south of the rose garden, and at a slightly lower level, a level terrace is laid out as a double tennis lawn enclosed to the south by a yew hedge, and to the west by a raised, semicircular viewing terrace backed by a topiary Portugal laurel hedge. To the east the tennis lawn is enclosed by a plain stone balustrade which forms the west side of the formal garden south of the house. The formal garden is screened from the tennis lawn by a bank of mixed ornamental shrubbery and specimen conifers planted immediately beyond the balustrade, while there is a reciprocal vista eastwards across the tennis lawn to a flight of stone steps descending to the formal garden. The tennis lawn corresponds to a further garden compartment shown on Horder's plan for the site (Plan, 1914).

The stone steps to the east of the tennis lawn descend in a single flight to a stone-flagged landing before dividing into three flights, the outer two being curved, to reach the level of the formal garden. A similar arrangement of steps descends from the east side of the garden, at a point opposite the western steps, to give access to the croquet lawn. The formal garden is adjoined to the north by two terraces retained by stone walls. The upper terrace, immediately below the south facade of the house, is flagged and allows views across the formal garden below. Stone steps descend from the east and west ends of the terrace to the lower terrace, which comprises a narrow, stone-flagged walk with a stone bench seat placed against the retaining wall at its central point, opposite a flight of stone steps descending to the garden. The formal garden is laid out with a cruciform arrangement of stone-flagged walks dividing four panels of lawn. The central point of the garden is marked by a square, stone-edged fountain tank, while to the south the garden is enclosed by low stone walls flanked by stone seats set in stone-walled recesses. Openings to the south-west and south-east allow access to the rock garden and pleasure grounds beyond. The formal garden is screened to east and west by mature, mixed ornamental planting, some of which appears to be original. The garden formed the centrepiece of Morley Horder's garden scheme, and corresponds in broad outline to the garden shown in his perspective drawing and plan (Plans, 1914). Photographs taken in the 1930s (private collection) show topiary birds and a large stone sundial at the southern end of the garden, while the photographs in the sale catalogue of 1950 indicate rectangular panel borders set in each lawn. These features have been removed during the late C20.

The steps to the east of the formal garden descend to a further approximately rectangular terrace, today known as the croquet lawn but marked on Horder's garden plan as a tennis lawn. The lawn is enclosed to the west by brick and stone walls which retain a planted bank, and to the north, east, and south by yew hedges. To the north of the croquet lawn, and approached by steps descending from the east end of the south terrace, is a long grass walk flanked by deep herbaceous borders which are backed to the south by yew hedges, and to the north by espalier fruit trees, separating the herbaceous walk from the kitchen garden. The herbaceous walk corresponds to a modification of a proposed terrace walk shown on Horder's plan projecting from the south-east corner of the house.

An opening cut in the yew hedge to the south of the tennis lawn leads to an area of informal lawns planted with specimen trees and shrubs. Immediately south of the tennis lawn is an art deco-style swimming pool, comprising a rectangular pool lined with green tiles set in a paved surround, with an octagonal, two-tier fountain to the west. The swimming pool is shown on the 1939 OS map, and in a photograph of 1950 (Sale catalogue, 1950); it appears to have been constructed for Capt Black soon after he purchased the property in 1936. To the south-west of the swimming pool the ground falls away gently towards a tennis court and a timber and brick shingle-roofed garden house. Constructed between 1939 and 1950 (OS 1939; Sale catalogue, 1950), the garden house contains a living room, bedroom, and kitchen, and was originally covered with a thatch roof. To the south-east of the swimming pool the informal lawns sweep round the southern end of the formal garden. A rocky outcrop is planted with shrubs and specimen conifers, to form a transition to a more extensive rock garden incorporating a pool and watercourse immediately south of the formal garden. The rock garden was laid out in 1947 to the design of Sidney Lillim (Plan, private collection). A further area of lawns planted with specimen trees and standard fruit trees returns north-east, providing access to the croquet lawn and kitchen garden. There are extensive southerly views from the informal pleasure grounds across the surrounding country.

**PARK** An area of paddock is situated to the west of the gardens. Approached from the pleasure grounds to the south-west of the house, and by a path leading through the shrubbery west of the rose garden and tennis lawn, the paddock is laid to grass with scattered specimen trees, including a large mature sycamore to the north-west. The paddock formed part of the land acquired

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*  
*Inventory of Great Britain*  
*MALLORY COURT*

by Capt Black c 1936, which, together with the farmland south of the house and gardens (outside the registered area) and an adjacent farm, was intended to protect and enhance the amenities of his property (Letter, 27 July 1936).

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The kitchen garden is situated below a late C20 terrace walk extending beneath the east facade of the house. This terrace replaces an early C20 terrace situated slightly further west, which was covered by the late C20 hotel extension. The kitchen garden is laid out to a late C20 scheme as an ornamental potager, with rectangular vegetable beds separated by grass and gravel walks, some of which pass beneath early C20 metal rose arches. To the north the garden is enclosed by a wall constructed in distinctive narrow, plum-coloured brick. Fruit trees are trained against this wall beneath early C20 cast-iron and glass fruit-tree protectors. To the south the garden is adjoined by the herbaceous walk, while to the east it adjoins an area of orchard and lawns, in which are set further C20 vegetable and fruit borders. To the north-east of the kitchen garden, some similar brick walls survive from the former frame yard, the site of which is now partly occupied by late C20 staff accommodation.

#### REFERENCES

Spennells Directory (1914-16) Mallory Court design statement, (David Brain Partnership 1997) Mallory Court, Bishop's Tachbrook, Warwickshire, (site report for English Heritage 1998)

Maps OS 25" to 1 mile: 1939 edition

Archival items P Morley Horder, Plans and perspective views for Mallory Court, 1914 (CR1886/M47 [partic plans 12, 13, 14]), (Warwickshire County Record Office) Correspondence between Capt Black and Godfrey Payton, land agent to the Earl of Warwick, regarding purchase of additional land, 1936 (CR1886/Box 749/12), (Warwickshire County Record Office) S Lillim, Plan of the rock garden, Mallory Court, 1947 (private collection) Photographs of the gardens, 1930s (private collection) [copies on EH file] Photographs of house and garden, included in 1950 Sale catalogue (EAC 482), (Warwickshire County Record Office)

Personal communication from Dr Christine Hodgetts on manorial history of Bishop's Tachbrook.

Description written: March 2003 Register Inspector: SR Edited: June 2003

## Legal

This garden or other land is registered under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 within the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens by Historic England for its special historic interest.