

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

Dartington Hall

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

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
Dartington Hall

Name:	Dartington Hall
County:	Devon
District:	South Hams (District Authority)
Parish:	Dartington
label.localisation:	Latitude: 50.450786 Longitude: -3.6910126 National Grid Reference: SX8004362583 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.localisation:	[50.4584905767466,-3.70041555271394], [50.4584905345385,-3.7004153638217], [50.4584908963263,-3.7004154092017], [50.4584905767466,-3.70041555271394]
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000453 Date first listed: 12-Aug-1987 Date of most recent amendment: 03-Jul-2014 Location Description: Dartington Hall, South Hams, Devon

Historique de la conservation

Dartington belonged to the Martin family from the early-C12, but in 1386 it passed to the Crown. Nicholas Fitz Martin obtained the right of free warren at Dartington in the early-C14, and in 1326 his enclosed deer park covered some 100 acres. In 1388 it was granted by Richard II to his half-brother, John Holand, Earl of Huntingdon and later Duke of Exeter. The first Duke was executed for treason in 1400, but Dartington continued in the family until the death of the fourth Duke in 1475. Between 1487-1509 it was owned by Lady Margaret Beaufort, the mother of Henry VII, after which it reverted to the Crown. In 1525 it was given to Henry Courtenay, earl of Devon; it reverted back to the Crown upon the earl's execution in 1539. In 1559 the estate was sold to Sir Arthur Champernowne, Vice Admiral of the West, and continued in the ownership of his descendants until 1925, when it was purchased by Leonard and Dorothy Elmhirst (Pevsner). By the mid-C19 Dartington had become an agricultural estate, with the medieval structures partly serving as farm buildings (as noted in the Tithe map and apportionment, 1840). The Elmhirsts undertook a major programme of restoration under the supervision of William Weir from 1927 to 1938, while at the same time establishing The Dartington Hall Trust in 1932, which promoted experimental approaches to rural reconstruction and progressive education. The Trust was an amalgamation of three specialist Trusts. New buildings were built to accommodate the Trust's activities, but no overall development plan for the estate was made. At the same period Leonard and Dorothy Elmhirst commissioned designs for the gardens around the Hall from H. Avray Tipping in 1927, followed in 1932-35 by Beatrix Farrand. From 1945 to 1968 Percy Cane advised on the design of the garden. Dorothy Elmhirst recorded the development of the gardens in a series of notebooks from 1943 until her death in 1968. Following the death of Leonard Elmhirst in 1974, Dartington has continued to be administered by The Dartington Hall Trust as a centre for its educational, sociological and artistic activities.

Details

Early and mid-C20 gardens principally designed by H Avray Tipping, Beatrix Farrand and Percy Cane, with a walled medieval deer park and a wider early-C20 landscape surrounding early 1930s International Modern-style buildings.

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Dartington Hall is situated circa 2km north of Totnes, to the east of the A384 road which leads from Totnes to Buckfastleigh. The circa 75ha site comprises some 10ha of gardens and pleasure grounds, together with circa 65ha of parkland. To the north, north-east and east the site is bounded by the River Dart, while to the west the site adjoins agricultural land which forms part of the wider Dartington Hall Estate. Dartington Hall stands on high ground towards the centre of the site, from which the land falls to the north and east to the River Dart. To the south of the house the gardens occupy a steep-sided west-east valley. The site enjoys long views to the north and east across the Dart valley, and to the west across agricultural land and woodland beyond the site boundary.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Dartington Hall is approached from a minor road that leads north from the A385 to the south of the site. North-east of the junction of this minor road with the A385, the site is entered through a pair of simple railed cast-iron gates supported on square section stone piers with stepped caps and ball finials. To each side the gateway is flanked by similar pedestrian gates supported by similar, but lower, stone piers.

The entrance is flanked by stone wing walls. To the north of the entrance stands a mid-C19 lodge (listed Grade II), originally a pair of attached, thatched lodges with an open east-facing loggia, but now (2014) converted into a single, slate-roofed structure. The lodge was occupied by the playwright Sean O'Casey circa 1938 (listed building description). The tarmac drive is carried across the Bidwell Brook on a mid-C19 stone bridge (listed Grade II) which was altered in 1931 by Oswald Milne, and continues circa 130m north-north-west across level ground east of the water meadows to reach woodland on an east-facing slope above the River Dart. The drive ascends circa 400m on a gentle gradient, bounded for circa 240m on the west by Dartington Hill Copse before entering parkland where the drive passes through an informal avenue of oak and sweet chestnut. A low stone wall encloses the drive to the east, and there are views east across the River Dart, and south to Totnes. Turning north-north-east, the drive continues to ascend through parkland for circa 350m, before turning north-west for circa 130m and then sweeping north and north-west for circa 270m to reach a forecourt to the north-east of Dartington Hall. The forecourt was laid out in its present form with two terraced lawns and borders retained by stone walls to the west and decorative patterned paving circa 1995, replacing previous schemes by Beatrix Farrand (1933-39) and Percy Cane (circa 1950). Mid- and late-C20 car parks have been constructed opposite the forecourt. Park Road turns south-west for a further 270m to reach Aller Park School. A further drive approaches Dartington Hall from the west, leaving the A384 immediately south of the parish church and to the west of the Hall. A spur leads north-east from this drive at a point circa 270m south-west of the house, to approach the former private wing of the Hall through the woodland gardens. The present pattern of drives reflects that shown on the Tithe map (1840).

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Dartington Hall (listed Grade I) was built between 1388 and 1399 for John Holand, Earl of Huntingdon and later Duke of Exeter. The building follows a courtyard plan, with a hall range to the south. To the east of the hall is a three-storey block, which is connected to the large, formerly detached later kitchen block. West of the hall, the high end chambers were remodelled in the mid-C16, and again in the mid-C18, and were occupied as a private house by Dorothy and Leonard Elmhirst in the early and mid-C20. The west side of the courtyard comprises a range of ten pairs of lodgings; while to the east is the remains of a range of fourteen pairs of lodgings. These were detached from the hall range by partial demolition in the early C19. The north range comprises an arched entrance connecting the courtyard to the forecourt, with a large C15 barn to the east, which was converted into a theatre in 1933-38 by R Hening and Walter Gropius. South of the hall range, a wall from a south courtyard survives in the gardens. Dartington Hall was the subject of a major programme of restoration under the supervision of William Weir between 1926-38 for Leonard and Dorothy Elmhirst.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens and pleasure grounds lie principally to the south-west, south and south-east of the Hall. The central courtyard is also treated as a garden, with an oval flagged and cobbled walk enclosing a central lawn, laid out to a design of 1933 by Beatrix Farrand, which was inspired by a study of the courts at Trinity College and King's

College, Cambridge (qqv). Existing planting, including a mature swamp cypress and a group of Scots pines, was preserved by Farrand, while the walls of the courtyard were extensively planted. The gardens are approached from the south-east corner of the courtyard, where a gateway in a low stone wall is flanked by lead urns. To the east of the Hall, the Great Lawn extends circa 50m to a group of ornamental trees, partly introduced in the 1930s by Beatrix Farrand to screen the early-C20 Dance Studio to the east. A drive, remodelled by Percy Cane (circa 1950), extends circa 100m east across the Lawn to join the main drive. Between the Great Lawn and the Dance Studio, a terrace overlooking tennis courts and retained by dry stone walls was laid out as a rose garden. This was re-planned by Graham Gammin in 1997 with herbaceous borders to the west of a grass walk. Some 80m south-southeast of the Hall, a stone and timber summerhouse (listed Grade II) with a thatched conical roof was built by Rex Gardner in 1929 to overlook the valley south-east of the Hall. Built into the south-facing slope below the Great Lawn some 130m south-east of the Hall, a further two-storey timber, stone and thatched bothy with a first floor timber balcony (listed Grade II), built by Rex Gardner in 1929, intended as a gardener's bothy but used temporarily as a nursery school, stands on a terrace with a pergola to the west and cottage-style garden to the east. Farrand provided designs for a children's garden in 1939, but these were not implemented (Snell).

A flagged walk on the west side of the Great Lawn leads to terraces south of the Hall. The upper terrace, an area of lawn with specimen trees and pines enclosed to the east by yew hedges and bounded to the south by a stone retaining wall and a short arcade of ruined masonry surviving from the former south courtyard, was, with the lower or Bowling Green terrace, designed by H. Avray Tipping in 1928. An early-C20 loggia at the south-west corner of the Hall overlooks the upper terrace. The Bowling Green is enclosed by a yew hedge to the east, and has a border of lavender to the south and a narrow border below the retaining wall to the north. The high stone retaining wall south of the Bowling Green backs the 'Sunny Border' on the third terrace, an herbaceous border originally laid out by the head gardener Stuart Lynch and Dorothy Elmhirst circa 1930 and remodelled in 1985 by Preben Jackobsen. A broad stone flagged walk extends circa 80m west along the 'Sunny Border' to a flagged terrace designed by Percy Cane, enclosed to east and west by yew hedges, which overlooks the narrower west end of the Tiltyard. This terrace is terminated to the south by a stone bench seat. A wedge-shaped valley broadening to the east, the Tiltyard is enclosed to the north by two ramped grass terraces, on the lower of which stand twelve early or mid-C19 Irish yews (Currie, 1993), known as the Twelve Apostles. To the south, there are five ramped grass terraces, above which stands a row of seven sweet chestnuts, some of which are estimated to be 300-400 years old (Currie, 1993). To the south-east the wide opening at the end of the Tiltyard is closed by yew hedges arranged to frame an opening leading to stone steps descending to lawns in the valley below. The level floor of the Tiltyard is connected to the yew-hedged terrace at its west end by three flights of wide, stone steps. The Tiltyard assumed its present form in 1954-55 under the guidance of Percy Cane, when an open-air theatre designed and constructed at the east end of the site by Stewart Lynch circa 1930 was levelled. A design for the open air theatre by Walter Gropius (1935) was not implemented (Snell). The theatre had itself replaced a parterre 'Dutch' garden at the west end of the area, and an overgrown rose garden to the east (Snell). The Elmhirsts believed that the area had been formed into a tiltyard in the C14, and that the work of 1954-55 restored it to its original form. Archaeological evidence suggests that the terraces enclosing the Tiltyard were constructed in the C16 or C17 (Currie, 1993), although it never actually function as a tiltyard.

The flagged terrace west of the Tiltyard connects to a circular enclosure with patterned stone flags, from which two flights of stone steps ascend west to a further circular paved area. The steps are overhung by Japanese maples and ornamental trees and shrubs, and a grass path leads south to a small pond at the centre of the Azalea Dell. Further steps ascend to the former west drive, from which a flight of stone steps ascends west to the woodland garden. Three north-south walks, the Rhododendron Walk, Camellia Walk and Spring Walk were developed from existing paths in an area known as the Wilderness circa 80m west of the Hall by Beatrix Farrand in 1933-35. West and south-west of the woodland garden, informal planting of specimen trees and shrubs was developed by Percy Cane from 1946. Some 190m south-west of the Hall, Cane's Hydrangea Walk is terminated to the north-west by a C17 lead statue of Flora, erected in 1967, and to the south-east by a pair of stone piers whose monumental ball finials were designed by Cane, also in 1967. A terrace walk extends south-east from the Hydrangea Walk through informal woodland gardens to the north-east end of the Glade, an area of informal ornamental planting developed by Percy Cane from existing woodland circa 1955. The Glade rises to the south-west and is terminated by a single-storey, circular, classically-

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
Dartington Hall

inspired summerhouse designed by Robert Hening in 1960 (Snell). From the summerhouse there are views north-east down the Glade, across the Valley Field and bothy, to open countryside beyond the River Dart. To the north east the Glade is terminated by Henry Moore's sandstone Reclining Figure of 1946 (listed Grade II*) which stands on the upper terrace overlooking the Tiltyard some 160m south-south-west of the Hall. Separated from the terraces and statue by yew hedges, a stone flagged area and steps at the north-east end of the Glade lead to a circular, low stone-walled and flagged bastion with a timber bench seat some 170m south-south-west of the Hall. This was designed in 1947-48 by Percy Cane to exploit wide views north-east across the Dart valley. A monumental flight of stone flagged steps arranged in nine flights of varied length descends the slope below the Glade through mixed ornamental planting originally conceived by Beatrix Farrand as a heath bank, to reach the Valley Field. The steps were designed by Cane in 1947-48 and replaced an earlier path or 'goat track' laid out by Farrand circa 1933. The lower, or north-east end of the steps joins a curved, stone-flagged walk which links the steps at the east end of the Tiltyard and further steps ascending the south-facing slope of the Valley Field to walks and terraces leading to the Great Lawn. Developed as a rock garden in the 1920s, this slope was re-planned as a peat garden by Dorothy Elmhirst from 1941 (Snell) and includes a sculpture, Jacob's Pillow (2005) and a garden bridge (2011) created by Peter Randall-Page. A statue of a donkey by Willi Soukop was placed circa 100m south-east of the Hall in 1935. The Valley Field was developed in the late 1950s under the supervision of Percy Cane as an area of mown grass, with specimen trees and shrubs particularly concentrated on the ridges to the south and north. To the east the Valley Field terminates in a mid-C20 ha-ha allowing views across adjacent parkland.

THE PARK The park lies to the south-east, east and north of Dartington Hall, comprising the east-facing slopes to the east and west of the south drive, together with further areas on the western bank of the River Dart to the north-east of the Hall, and an area of mixed plantation to the north of the Hall and south of the River Dart. These areas are today laid to pasture, and retain scattered mature specimen trees, some of which appear to date from the early C19, when this area was developed as parkland (Tithe map). Parkland south-east of the Hall adjoins the principal drive, and comprises pasture with groups of ornamental trees, including a significant group of stone pines circa 400m south-east of the Hall, which are visible from the drive and gardens. The park is brought into visual relationship with the gardens by a mid-C20 ha-ha at the south-east end of the Valley Field. Further development, including the creation of a vista east-south-east from the drive circa 90m south-east of the Hall is attributed to Percy Cane (pers. comm. G. Gammin), and is associated with the early and mid-C20 development of Dartington.

Some 300m south-south-east of the Hall, a track leads north from the south drive, following the west bank of the River Dart. The steep slope above this track and below the drive remains in use as pasture, and retains scattered ornamental trees. The track, corresponding to the course of a late-C18 or early-C19 carriage drive, follows the river, sweeping north and north-west, before reaching the remains of a gateway set in an early-C18 stone wall (listed Grade II) which encloses Staverton Ford Plantation, Park Copse and Thistlepark Plantation circa 300m north of the Hall. This area is today predominantly mixed plantation, but retains a series of groins, built for fishing, which project into the River Dart, together with the site of an C18 summerhouse or belvedere circa 350m north of the Hall. This structure, which stood at the summit of a steep-sided hill, is shown in the Rev'd Swete's late-C18 watercolour views of Dartington (DRO), and is described in several visitors' accounts (Nicholas Pearson Associates, 2002). These features, together with the riverside carriage drive, appear to have formed part of a late-C18 picturesque landscape developed by Arthur Champernowne (1767-1819), utilising part of the area occupied by the early-C14 deer park, and walls built by his grandfather, also Arthur Champernowne (d 1766), in 1738 (Nicholas Pearson Associates, 2002). The remainder of the medieval deer park lies to the north-west of the Hall, and is today largely woodland and arable farmland; this area is outside the registered site.

THE KITCHEN GARDEN Lying circa 160m south-east of the Hall, the kitchen garden occupies the south-east facing slope below the Great Lawn and early-C20 Dance Studio, and is enclosed by rubble stone walls circa 3m high, with timber doors in the north, south, east and west faces. The kitchen garden has been used (1999) as a nursery stock ground. Land to the south-east which is separated from the drive by a hedge, and which was formerly cultivated as fruit and vegetable gardens, is no longer in cultivation (1999). The arrangement of the kitchen garden reflects that shown on the 1840 Tithe map. South of the

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
Dartington Hall

kitchen garden and some 200m south-east of the Hall, Gardens Cottage (listed Grade II) is a mid-C19 two storey gothic-style cottage, originally the gardener's house.

Summary

Early and mid-C20 gardens principally designed by H Avray Tipping, Beatrix Farrand and Percy Cane, with a walled medieval deer park and a wider early-C20 landscape surrounding early 1930s International Modern-style buildings.

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.

Reasons for Designation

Dartington Hall is included on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest at Grade II* for the following principal reasons:

* Representative example: it is a particularly important and largely intact example of a C20 designed landscape incorporating the remains of an earlier medieval landscape;

* Association: the C20 garden was principally designed by H Avray Tipping, Beatrix Farrand and Percy Cane, nationally and internationally renowned landscape architects and designers;

* Artistic interest: the garden includes high quality sculptures by Willi Soukop (statue of a donkey, 1935), Henry Moore (Reclining Figure, 1946; listed Grade II*), and Peter Randall Page (Jacob's Pillow, 2005);

* Documentation and influence: the site is particularly well documented and as evident from contemporary articles the qualities of its design and planting scheme were well respected;

* Group value: it has particularly strong group value with, and provides an important context to, the listed buildings that form part of Dartington Hall (including Grade I, II* and II), as well as the remains of the deer park and the medieval hall (both scheduled ancient monuments).

Bibliographie

Books and journals

Bonham Carter, V, *The Story of Dartington*, (1957)

Brown, J, *Beatrix The Gardening Life of Beatrix Jones Farrand 1872-1959*, (1995), 149-68

Cane, P, *The Creative Art of Garden Design*, (1967), 91-92; pI. 53-55

Cane, P, *The Earth is My Canvas*, (1956), 79-93

Cherry, B, Pevsner, N, *The Buildings of England: Devon*, (2004), 308-15

Emery, A, *Dartington Hall*, (1970)

Emery, A, *Dartington Hall*, (1970)

Gray, T, *The Garden History of Devon An Illustrated Guide to Sources*, (1995), 85-87

Hellyer, AGL, *English Gardens Open to the Public*, (1956)

Snell, R, *From the Bare Stem: Making Dorothy Elmhirst's Garden at Dartington Hal*, (1989)

Taylor, G C, *The Modern Garden*, (1936), 15

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
Dartington Hall*

Webber, R, Percy Cane, Garden Designer, (1974), 94-99, 179

'Country Life' in Dartington Hall, 152, (6 July 1972), 6-9

'Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society' in Dartington Hall, (1954), 246-56

'Gardener's Chronicle' in Dartington Hall, Gardener's Chronicle Volume II, (1962), 404-05

'Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society' in Dartington Hall , (1996), 571-75

Country Life, , 'Country Life' in Dartington Hall, 73, (27 May 1933), 548-553

Country Life , , 'Country Life' in Dartington Hall, 83, (4 June 1938), 590-91

Country Life , , 'Country Life' in Dartington Hall, 73, (11 February 1933), 144-49

Duterloo, F, 'Tuinhunst. Nederland Jaarboek voo de Geschiedenis van Tui' en Landschpsarchitectun' in William Lescaze (1896-1969) And The Modem Landscape, (1997), 176-205

Other

Champernowne family and estate papers, ORO 2874 and Z15,

Currie C K, An Archaeological Evaluation of the gardens at Dartington Hall, 1991,

Currie C K, Excavations in the gardens of Dartington Hall, 1993,

Dartington Hall A Guide, (guide book, Dartington Hall, n.d.),

Dartington Hall archives including papers relating to the development of the gardens and wider landscape from 1925, with photographs, plans and correspondence, Dartington Records Office, High Cross Hill House,

Duterloo F, IOAAS University of York , Modernism and Landscape in the Devon Countryside, unpublished MA dissertation, 1995,

Nicholas Pearson Associates, Historic Landscape Survey and Management Plan, 2002,

Revd John Swete, watercolour views of Dartington, 1797, 1801 (DRO),

The Gardens at Dartington Hall, guide book (Dartington Hall 1961),

The Gardens at Dartington Hall, guide book (Dartington Hall, new edition 1987),