

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

LITTLEWORTH CROSS (FORMERLY HETHERSETT)

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Name:	LITTLEWORTH CROSS (FORMERLY HETHERSETT)
County:	Surrey
District:	Guildford (District Authority)
Parish:	Seale and Sands
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.203451 Longitude: -0.71648239 National Grid Reference: SU 89767 45698 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000279 Date first listed: 01-Apr-1988

Details

A woodland garden containing notable late C19 rhododendron hybrids, and the site of the first meeting of Gertrude Jekyll and Edwin Lutyens.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

A new country house was built at Littleworth Cross, an open heathland site, for Harry Mangles in 1873. His brother James, who lived at nearby Valewood, Haslemere, was one of the earliest rhododendron collectors and hybridisers. When James died in 1884, most of his plant collection was brought to Littleworth Cross and Harry continued hybridising and exhibiting rhododendrons, with the help of his sister Clara. Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932), who lived nearby at Munstead, knew the Mangles family and was visiting one afternoon in May 1889 when she was introduced to a young architect, Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944) who was designing a gardener's cottage and some garden buildings for Harry Mangles. The meeting was important for both Lutyens and Jekyll: she discovered someone with a similar love of the vernacular architecture of south-west Surrey, who would design her new home, Munstead Wood (qv), and through her, he was introduced to many potential clients. Lutyens and Jekyll began a collaboration of building and garden design that would last until her death in 1932.

Harry Mangles died in 1908 and his sister lived on at Littleworth Cross until 1931. The property was then purchased by Mr R E Horsfall, an azalea enthusiast who planted many new varieties in the woodland. During the Second World War the house was used as a boys' preparatory school and the gardens were badly neglected. After the war the property was divided into two but some 8 acres (c 3.5ha) of the rhododendron wood was purchased by Mrs Douglas Gordon in 1947. As Violet Streatfeild she had lived nearby at Fulbrook (designed by Lutyens for her parents) in her youth and had visited frequently and so was aware of the rhododendron collection. She began to clear the scrub and trees which were taking over the site, and in 1958 was joined in the task by her son and his wife who had acquired the eastern half of the house. The family have continued to look after the important plant collection, adding to it with sympathetic planting. Badly damaged by the storms of 1987 and 1990, the original rhododendrons have been propagated and young plants are now in the Savill Gardens, Windsor (qv) and the RHS Garden, Wisley (qv) as well as in the garden at Littleworth Cross. The site remains (2000) in divided private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

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LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The house originally known as Littleworth Cross lies 5km east of Farnham and 1.75km south of the village of Seale in an area of mixed woodland. The name Littleworth Cross relates to its position at the south-east corner of the crossing of Littleworth Road, which runs east/west, and Seale Lane, which runs north/south, these two roads forming the north and west boundaries respectively of the site. Woodland abuts the site on the eastern and southern boundaries. The registered site of c 5ha slopes gently towards the south and is made up principally of pine and birch woodland, underplanted with rhododendrons. The approximately triangular site is enclosed by wire fencing. The house is situated to the west of centre of the site, with the garden front facing south across a sloping lawn. To the north of the house are three separate dwellings, including a lodge and the original gardener's cottage.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The access to Littleworth Cross is from Seale Road, c 20m south of its junction with Littleworth Road. A large lodge is situated on north side of the entrance. The drive runs south-east and then south for c 140m where it divides, the western arm giving access to the dwelling known as Littleworth Cross and the eastern to that known as Hethersett. A secondary drive which formerly ran south-west from Littleworth Road c 175m east-south-east of the crossroads now gives access only to the former gardener's cottage which lies c 25m north-north-east of the house.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING The original house (listed grade II), dated 1873 on the main entrance and extended in the C20, is now subdivided into two, Littleworth Cross (to the west) and Hethersett (to the east). The house has been attributed to R Norman Shaw on stylistic grounds (listed building description) but there is no conclusive evidence to prove the attribution. The irregular two-storey building has decorative half timbering on the first floor, plain tiled roofs of varying heights, and tall ribbed chimney stacks. The original entrance front lay to the north-west and there was a series of outbuildings immediately to the east (OS 1916).

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS Immediately to the south of the house is an area of sloping lawn set with large shrub beds which runs down to a c 1ha meadow, fringed by woodland. On the southern edge of the meadow, c 150m south-east of the house, stands the Fowl House designed by Lutyens. Clad in timber, it has a tiled roof on which stands a rectangular pigeon house. It differs somewhat from the architect's drawing (reproduced in Brown 1982) in that it is not raised from the ground by staddles, and now has double doors.

To the east of the house a path leads into the woodland, passing on the south an open glade containing a rectangular tank. North of the path, c 100m north-east of the house, are the remains of the walls and foundations of a number of glasshouses (OS 1916) where in the late C19 rhododendrons were propagated and the less hardy varieties were grown (Adam Gordon 1976). The timber donkey shelter which was also designed by Lutyens has been re-erected 200m north-east of the house. Within the woodland, which was badly damaged by the storms of 1987 and 1990, are a number of specimen trees as well as the unique collection of rhododendrons and azaleas, some early introductions from seed, others hybrids.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden lies c 45m to the north-east of the house, adjoining the gardener's cottage.

REFERENCES

F Jekyll, Gertrude Jekyll, A Memoir (1934), p 7 N Pevsner et al, The Buildings of England: Surrey (1971), p 449 Rhododendrons, (RHS Yearbook 1976), pp 13-17 Country Life, 159 (10 June 1976), pp 1582-3 J Brown, Gardens of a Golden Afternoon (1982), pp 28, 31-2, 95 W Bean, Trees and Shrubs Hardy in the British Isles III, (1987), pp 824, 836-7 J Davey, Nature and Tradition. Arts and Crafts Architecture in and around Guildford (1993), p 21 J Brown, Lutyens and the Edwardians. An English Architect and his Clients (1996), pp 25, 47, 70-1
Maps OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1897 3rd edition published 1916
Illustrations E Lutyens, Drawings (RIBA Drawings Collection)
Description written: February 2000 Amended: May 2003 Register Inspector: BJL Edited: September 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.