

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

DEANERY GARDEN

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Name:	DEANERY GARDEN
District:	Wokingham (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Sonning
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.474265 Longitude: -0.91173235 National Grid Reference: SU 75680 75595 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000445 Date first listed: 30-Sep-1987

## Details

An early C20 house by Edwin Lutyens surrounded by a contemporary formal and informal garden by Lutyens, with planting plans by Gertrude Jekyll.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Edward Hudson bought a walled orchard in Sonning in the 1890s, employing Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944) to provide a survey and plan, dated June 1899, for the proposed house and garden. The Deanery Garden house and garden were finished by 1901. In 1907 Hudson sold the property, it being sold again in 1929, subsequently changing hands several times and remaining in private ownership (1998).

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Deanery Garden lies at the centre of Sonning village, 4km north-east of the centre of Reading. The 0.75ha garden is bounded to the north, east and south by the broad, C16 brick wall with brick coping (listed grade II) which enclosed the orchard which occupied the site before 1900. To the north, east and along the eastern half of the south boundary, the site is bounded by village lanes, and to the south-west by the parish churchyard. The west side is partly bounded by a later brick wall, and beyond this village gardens. The ground slopes down from the north boundary to the south-west, with views of the church tower to the south-west. The garden is set within the picturesque village of Sonning, above the River Thames which passes c 150m to the west.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The entrance approaches off the main village lane, Thames Street, to the north. A recessed brick doorway with a wooden door set into the north boundary wall gives onto a covered cloister in Moorish style which leads directly to the front door. Two arcades to the west open into an enclosed rectangular courtyard, the Tank or Fountain Court, bounded to the north by the boundary wall and on the south and west by the house. The Tank Court is dominated by a small, circular central pool, with a statue on a pedestal at the centre, surrounded by stone paving. This is in turn surrounded by further stone paving stepped up in an octagonal fashion to the outer edges. A small fountain positioned at the centre of the north wall feeds a lead cistern below, which in turn feeds a shallow zig-zag rill cut into the surface of the paving leading south to the pool. Early C20 photographs (CL 1903; Weaver 1913) show this area to have been ornamented with terracotta pots of agapanthus and other plants.

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The Tank lies on an axis with the east arm of the cloister, this providing a glimpse of the garden from the Tank Court and front door as it runs east from the front door, giving access to the north-east corner of the garden.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Deanery Garden (E Lutyens 1900-1, listed grade I) stands at the north boundary of the site, overlooking the contemporary garden to the west, east and south. It was built for Edward Hudson, the owner of Country Life, and extended by Lutyens to the west several years later. Built in Lutyens' Tudor Arts-and-Crafts style, it is of two storeys, in brick with exposed timbers, and surrounds the Tank Court to the north. A door in the long south front opens directly onto the garden.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The garden is divided into a formal layout surrounding the house to west, south and east, and an informal grassed orchard beyond this to the south. The structure was laid out by Lutyens, with planting plans by Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932), whose recommendations have been largely restored.

The east arm of the garden is entered from the front door and Tank Court via the east arm of the entrance cloister, which emerges through an archway into the Pump Court. A pump (C19, listed grade II) stands on the north side of a paved court, backed by a raised brick bed running along the north wall, the paving being flanked to north and south by herbaceous borders. To the south of the Pump Court lies the Rosary, overlooked by the bay window of the drawing room in the east wing of the house. It contains a small, formal enclosure with rose beds laid out between stone paths. The Pump Court and Rosary are linked by a pergola to the east which encloses a stone path leading south from a garden door set into the boundary wall to the north. The pergola, built of alternate cylindrical and square brick piers, linked overhead by wooden beams, is flanked to the east by informal lawns and shrub planting. At the south end of the pergola the path extends south from the south-east corner of the Rosary, terminating the east end of the main west/east axis of the south arm of the formal garden, flanked by a clipped yew hedge to the east and the Quince Lawn to the west. At this point the path terminates at a small paved court enclosed by clipped yew hedges and a further pergola, overlooking the orchard to the south and the south arm of the formal garden to the west. From here a cross path leads west into the south garden and east down to the orchard.

The south garden, in addition to being entered from the east garden, is entered from the arched garden door recessed into the east end of the south front beside the tall, projecting bay window of the hall to the west. The doorway, linked via a passage north through the house to the front door, opens onto a stone path extending south, flanked by the Quince Lawn to the east and, at a lower level, the Rill Garden to the west. A cross path leads east from the door to the Rosary and pergola. The path, bounded to the west by a pierced, terracotta balustrade and open to the Quince Lawn to the east, is terminated to the south by a flight of semicircular brick and stone steps, flanked by brick retaining walls with further pierced, terracotta balustrading, projecting down to a small, lower terrace. From this terrace, laid to lawn, three adjacent flights of low, circular steps lead down to the orchard beyond. The Quince Lawn, enclosed by paths and borders and planted with quince trees at the east end, overlooks the orchard below to the south, raised above it by a drystone wall which runs along the whole of the south side of the formal garden. The balustrading along the west side of the path leading south from the garden door is broken at either end by two flights of right-angled brick and stone steps leading down to a stone terrace at the east end of the Rill Garden. The east side of this lower terrace is bounded by the wall on which stands the balustrading, this wall also forming a mock bridge with a brick arch which supports the path from the garden door above. A circular pool lies half recessed below the arch, the western half projecting into the paved terrace. From here a brick-lined rill (intended originally for irises) extends west, parallel with the south front of the house, planted with native water plants and *Iris pseudo-acorus*. The rill is flanked to north and south by panels of lawn, in turn flanked by herbaceous borders. The north side of the Rill Garden is bounded at the east end by the south front of the house, and the west end by a raised, clipped yew hedge, planted above a drystone wall, dividing the Rill Garden from the Bowling Green beyond. The south side of the Rill Garden overlooks the orchard, raised above it by the drystone wall which extends along the whole south edge of the formal garden.

At the centre of the Rill Garden the rill opens out into a small, square pool, lying on an axis with two flights of circular stone steps on the north and south edges of the Rill Garden, giving access to the Bowling Green and orchard respectively. The rill continues west across the lawn from the square pool, opening at the west end of the Rill Garden into a circular pool bounded to the west by a double flight of steps leading up to a pergola with wooden piers joined by iron half hoops and lengths of chain.

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The pergola, set in stone paving, is backed by a brick wall and clipped yew hedging to the west, and overlooks the garden along the main axis to the east.

From the pergola a path leads north behind the yew hedge. A spur west leads into a late C20 terrace with a circular swimming pool set in lawn, enclosed by brick walls and hedges. The path continues north, opening into the west end of the narrow Bowling Green, laid to lawn and flanked by tall, clipped yew hedges, being aligned at the east end on the former dining room (now a study) window on the west front of the house. The lawn and hedges are broken towards the east end of the Bowling Green by the steps leading up from the centre of the Rill Garden to a paved area, and beyond this further steps up to the later extension of the house west along the north boundary, and remains of the Herb Garden to the west of this. The path crossing the west end of the Bowling Green continues north, opening into the Herb Garden, where a central stone path extends west to east, flanked by vegetable and herb beds.

South of the house and formal garden lies the orchard, laid to rough grass with scattered fruit and ornamental trees, crossed by several mown paths between the trees. The three main paths extend in patte d'oie form from the three flights of circular steps leading down from the main path from the garden door. At the south-west corner lies a croquet lawn, bounded to south and north by flower borders, reached from the circular steps at the centre of the south side of the Rill Garden. Lutyens and Miss Jekyll were careful to preserve the existing orchard trees in this area, which has subsequently been replanted with trees as the older ones have died.

#### REFERENCES

Country Life, 13 (9 May 1903), pp 602-610; 141 (12 January 1967), p 54; no 34 (26 August 1993), pp 46-9 L Weaver, Houses and gardens by E L Lutyens (1913), pp 53-61 N Pevsner, The Buildings of England: Berkshire (1966), pp 220-1 J Brown, Gardens of a Golden Afternoon (1982), pp 66-9 J Brown, The English Garden in our Time (1986), pp 54-6

Archival items Copies of Jekyll's planting plans are held on microfiche at the National Monuments Record (originals held at Reef Point, USA). Sale particulars, 1907 (Reading Local Studies Library) Sale particulars, 1929 (Reading Local Studies Library)

Description written: September 1998 Amended: September 1999 Register Inspector: SR Edited: March 2000

## 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.