

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

STOKE POGES GARDENS OF REMEMBRANCE

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

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Name: STOKE POGES GARDENS OF REMEMBRANCE

District: Buckinghamshire (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Stoke Poges

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.533056
Longitude: -0.59606171
National Grid Reference: SU 97478 82506
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: I
List Entry Number: 1001255
Date first listed: 12-Dec-1995

Details

Memorial gardens laid out in the 1930s, with informal lawns surrounding a central avenue and formal garden, designed by Milner, Son and White, Landscape Architects.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1928 Sir Noel Mobbs (d 1959) gave a piece of gently sloping open parkland, part of the east side of Stoke Park (qv), for a garden of remembrance. The garden was laid out by Edward White of Milner, Son and White, Landscape Architects, during the early 1930s, when it was illustrated as an example of modern design in *Landscape and Garden* (Summer 1934), then the journal of the Landscape Institute. In this publication it was described as 'An idealistic memorial garden to be made on the site of the meadows immortalised by the poet Gray, Stoke Poges Gardens'. Thomas Gray was the predominant poetic figure of the mid C18 and a forerunner of the romantic movement. In 1750 he finished the poem for which he is best known, "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard", written supposedly in Stoke Poges churchyard, and sent it to his friend, the author Horace Walpole, at whose insistence it was published in 1751. Its reflective, calm and stoic tone was much admired at the time and has continued to be so since, together with its evocation of the essence of idealised English rurality.

The layout of the garden of remembrance was completed in November 1937, and the site was subsequently passed to South Buckinghamshire District Council's ownership. Edward White (c.1873-1952) wrote in 'Landscape & Garden' 1934 of his design intention: 'The gardens are intended for the repose of the ashes of cremated persons and will be designed and maintained in a fashion for which there is no existing precedent. In particular, there will be no buildings, erections or monuments of any kind likely to remind one of a cemetery. A large area has been planned on a generous scale as a complete garden and divided into a series of characteristic features, formal and informal. Inside them there will be designed in detail an indefinite number of small gardens which will become the private property of persons who wish to acquire them. The small gardens will be planned as far as possible to suit individual taste and will be maintained in perpetuity exactly as agreed by the society responsible for the undertaking'.

White was a distinguished landscape architect who joined H E Milner's firm Milner, White & Sons (founded by Milner's father, Edward Milner). As well as undertaking designs for country houses and public schemes, he had an interest in the cremation movement and the development of Gardens of Remembrance where ashes could be scattered or buried. He developed further in 1938 the gardens established at Golders Green Crematorium (qv) with work by William Robinson, the West London

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Crematorium at Kensal Green Cemetery (qv) in 1939, the Gardens of Rest at Chipperfield Church, Herts. but his greatest scheme of this type was the Stoke Poges Garden of Remembrance (early 1930s). He lectured at Cremation Society conferences and wrote for their publications.

It was an early and pioneering example of a garden of remembrance. It abandoned entirely and deliberately the established Victorian cemetery model in order to provide a new type of funerary landscape to accommodate a rapidly developing type of disposal method, cremation.

The garden has had further memorial features added over the years and remains a garden of remembrance, in which the ashes of Sir Noel and his wife, Helen, were interred. It underwent a major restoration programme, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, in 2002-04.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Stoke Poges Gardens lie at the southern end of the village of Stoke Poges, adjacent to the C18/C19 landscaped Stoke Park, 3km north-east of the centre of Slough. The c 9ha roughly triangular site is bounded to the east by Church Lane from Stoke Poges to Slough, to the west by the east drive to Stoke Park House leading off this road north-west, and to the north by the north lake of Stoke Park and parkland to the east of it leading to the parish churchyard. The land slopes gently down to the north-west, the setting being largely rural and that of designed parkland, with views west from the north side of the Gardens over the north lake and parkland to the east front of Stoke Park House, and north towards the C16 Manor House. To the north stands the parish church, within the churchyard immortalised in Thomas Gray's mid C18 Elegy in a Country Churchyard.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main entrance, off Church Lane, lies at the east corner of the Gardens, set slightly back off the road and flanked by brick piers supporting iron gates. The piers are flanked by low brick walls on which stand iron railings extending to north-east and south-west along the roadside. From here a path leads north-west, passing a pond set in lawn to the east and arriving at the two-storey brick Penn Gray cottage with single-storey wings and a porch, from which the Gardens are managed. White intended this building having 'been shorn of its Victorian features', together with its garden to herald 'a simplicity which it is hoped will remain the keynote of the whole scheme'. ('Landscape & Garden')

A further entrance to the east of the cottage gives pedestrian access from the path to the church, running north-west off Church Lane. From the cottage, an avenue which bisects the site extends westwards through lawns to a circular stone pool set in a ring of lawn, with a central fountain of cherubs with a swan. Continuing past this the walk leads up a flight of stone steps, edged by balustrading and decorated with four urns showing the Four Seasons, to the area of Formal Gardens.

GARDENS The main path continues west from the circular pond and the steps up to the entrance to the Formal Gardens. Three paths extend off each side of the main walk, to north and south, providing access to the yew-hedged areas which line either side of the central path. They are intricately planned and are kept as memorials to individuals or family groups. At the eastern end of the northern panel of Formal Gardens is the memorial to Noel and Helen Mobbs, entered through an elaborate iron gate. It is balanced at the eastern end of the southern panel of Formal Gardens by a memorial to the Gurkhas.

The walk continues through a second ironwork gateway, past the raised Parterre Gardens on either side, each one a knot garden worked in low box hedges woven between stone paths, enclosed by clipped yew hedges. From here the main path, at this point sunken between raised yew hedges, reaches the entrance to the Colonnade Garden. This is a square, sunken water garden surrounded on all four sides by a raised pergola of stone piers on low brick piers linked overhead by wooden beams. The central parterre, segmented by box hedging into a number of small compartments, is divided by a cross of rills which flow from semicircular pools at the corners of the garden, to meet in an octagonal basin at the centre of the design. Between the cross rills lie broad stone paths with central lawn panels, extending from the centre of each arm of the pergola to a stone path encircling the central octagonal pond. Rills running adjacent to, and at the upper level of, the inner side of the pergola also ring the central area, separating it from the pergola walk and the bays, divided off by iron fencing to give another set of small memorial gardens beyond. A series of fountain jets are set along the length of the channels.

Paths lead out from the north, west and south sides of the Colonnade Garden. That to the north takes a route through an extensive area of Rock and Water Gardens which slope down to the north, overlooking lawns sloping down to the north lake of Stoke Park

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and with views beyond this into the north park. From here the path curves east through a series of Heath and Informal gardens which flank the north side of the Formal Gardens off the central walk, to arrive back at the circular pool. Beyond this path to the north the land slopes gently down to the Stoke Park lake. The southern and western routes off the Colonnade Garden pass through a grassed area planted up with flowering trees and shrubs, particularly rhododendrons, set in lawn, the paths leading to a circular rose garden to the south. Leading from the east side of this feature, the path passes between more informal plantings, some set on mounded ground, and so also back to the circular pool. The outer edges of the Garden, apart from that bounded by the lake, are largely screened from its surrounds by mature tree and shrub belt plantings.

REFERENCES

Landscape and Garden, (Summer 1934), col pls & p. 17 Stoke Poges Gardens, guidebooks, (nd)

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION Stoke Poges Garden of Remembrance is designated at Grade I for the following principal reasons:

* A C20 funerary landscape (mid-1930s) of the highest design quality with a complex and innovative design by a nationally renowned landscape designer and specialist in memorial gardens, Edward White. * A unique example of a garden of remembrance unattached to a crematorium in England, set in a rural situation, being only for the burial of ashes (no scattering). * The design is based on the burial of ashes in small individual gardens, reflecting White's belief in the British passion for domestic horticulture, set around a complex formal ensemble of canals and pergolas around lawns. * The site survives complete and in excellent condition. * A variety of notable people are interred here, its exclusivity arising from high charges being a feature. * It adjoins and has cultural association with Stoke Poges churchyard, subject of the poet Thomas Gray's 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard' (1750).

Description written: September 1998 Amended: April 1999 Register Inspector: SR Edited: September 2000 Upgraded: November 2009

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.