

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

HIDCOTE MANOR

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

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*  
*Inventory of Great Britain*  
**HIDCOTE MANOR**

Name:	HIDCOTE MANOR
County:	Gloucestershire
District:	Cotswold (District Authority)
Parish:	Ebrington
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.084456 Longitude: -1.7443475 National Grid Reference: SP 17615 42931 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: I List Entry Number: 1000768 Date first listed: 28-Feb-1986

## Details

A complex and influential Arts and Crafts-style garden by Lawrence Johnston, from 1907, with varied enclosures off two main vistas.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Hidcote Manor was owned by the priory of Bradenstoke until the Dissolution, then passed through various hands. By the late C18 it belonged to the Freemans of Batsford. The American Gertrude Winthrop bought Hidcote Manor (then a farm) and the hamlet of Hidcote Bartrim from the Freemans, for her son, Major Lawrence Johnston, in 1907, when he was thirty-six. Her inheritance from her two husbands funded the acquisition and meant that Johnston never had to earn his own living, though he had been a soldier, fighting in the Boer War and the First World War. There was no notable previous garden on the site and Johnston created the gardens here from 1907 to 1948. Johnston was a keen plantsman and took part in many plant-hunting expeditions, especially in the 1920s and 30s, to Europe and beyond (K Fretwell pers comm, 2000).

After they had become run down during the Second World War, Johnston gave the gardens to the National Trust in 1948 and went to live permanently at La Serre de la Madone, in the south of France, where he already spent most of his winters. Hidcote became the first property to be acquired by the Trust specifically for its garden. A number of changes were made, including the removal of the large planthouse and redesign of its site (K Fretwell pers comm, 2000). In the mid 1950s, Graham Stuart Thomas became the National Trust's Gardens Adviser and greatly influenced the development of the Hidcote gardens. The gardens remain in the hands of the National Trust who are undertaking the restoration of some of the features and planting lost during the early years of Trust ownership (K Fretwell pers comm, 2000).

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** The registered area of 4.5ha lies to the north and west of the village of Hidcote Bartrim, which is 12km east of Evesham and 13km south of Stratford-upon-Avon. The neighbouring estate of Kiftsgate Court (qv) is less than 1km to the west. The gardens at Hidcote are bounded by hedges along minor roads to the north and east, and by a ha-ha to the south and west. The Manor stands at the middle of the east side of the gardens. The site is located on the northern edge of the Cotswold Hills, on a plateau on the side of a hill which rises from west to east. To the south

of the Manor, the gardens slope gently southwards. There are extensive views from the gardens, over the arable and pasture fields to the south and west, beyond Kiftsgate.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The main approach to the Manor is from the minor road to the east which runs south towards Hidcote Bartrim. Before reaching the village, the road passes two sets of solid wooden gates (C20 replicas of the originals), 50m north-east and 10m east of the Manor, hung between high, square ashlar piers with stone vase finials (C18, listed grade II). West of these is the Courtyard: an enclosed, rectangular gravel forecourt, with the Manor at its south-west corner and a former barn/stable (late C18/early C19, listed grade II, now used as a ticket office and shop) along its north and west sides. A small, ashlar former chapel (converted by Johnston from an C18 barn, now used as a store, listed grade II), with a large stained-glass window at its north end, stands in the south-east corner of the Courtyard, just south of the southern set of gates. A second, gravel and grass courtyard, the Garden Yard, lies to the west of the first. An early C20 barn (Johnston, listed grade II) stands in the centre of the Garden Yard and other garden buildings stand along the west side. Paths lead from the south-west and north-west corners of this, between blue-painted wooden gates, to the gardens.

Other, minor approaches to the gardens are from the road which forms the northern boundary of the site. Some 200m north-west of the Manor, a blue-painted double wooden gate, set into a holly hedge, stands at the northern end of the Beech Avenue. A second entrance is marked by a small wooden late C20 gate at the north-east corner of the gardens, c 150m north of the Manor. **PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Hidcote Manor (listed grade II) was built in the late C17, altered in the C18, and enlarged in the early C20. It is a Z-shaped building, consisting of two linked, two-storey ranges with attics: the late C17 block, to the east, is of ashlar limestone with a tiled roof and flat coped gables; the western, C20 block, is of squared limestone with a limestone slate roof, flat coped gables and ball finials. This block was built in C17 style for Gertrude Winthrop.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The gardens are divided into two main areas by the Theatre Lawn, a sub-rectangular lawn c 140m long running west from the Manor. The Lawn is enclosed by c 2m high yew hedges. At its west end, ornate stone steps, topped by vases, lead up to a raised circular lawn planted with young beeches (originally just one mature beech) and enclosed by a yew hedge. At the east end of the Theatre Lawn is a gravel semicircle, backed to the east by a group of Irish yews, and a path to the Manor.

To the north of a small gap in the north hedge of the Theatre Lawn, stone steps lead through a wrought-iron gate (probably early C20) to a grass walk along the Beech Avenue. This continues north for 170m, to the gate on the northern boundary of the gardens. To the west of the Avenue is Beech Wood, a c 1ha rectangle of beech trees. To the east of the Avenue is a hedged square of c 1ha containing the kitchen garden, orchard, Rose Walk, and various compartments. The kitchen garden is in the north-west corner of the square. To its east is the Rose Walk, a surfaced path running north/south for c 90m between shrubs and 3m high Irish yews, with a wooden bench at the north end and a mature willow at the south end. The Walk is enclosed by a holly hedge to its north and east. Some 20m south of the end of the Rose Walk is a gap in the hedge, south of which is the Manor-house complex. East of the Rose Walk, in the north-east corner of the square, is the orchard, along the eastern boundary of which stand three mature cedars of Lebanon. A gate leads from the north-east corner of the orchard to the road. The three compartments are linked by a walk along their southern edge.

At the south end of the Rose Walk is the Pine Garden. This contains a sub-rectangular formal pool, to the west of which is a central circular bed surrounded by a surfaced path. Several young pines stand in scattered, irregular beds. At the east end of the pool is a row of three clipped, standard Portuguese laurels. A path leads south, between blue-painted wooden gates, from the south-east corner of the Pine Garden to the Manor. To the west of the Pine Garden is the Paeony Garden, a small rectangular lawn enclosed by hedges. West of this is the Old Tennis Court, a similarly sized area of grass with temporary polytunnels, enclosed by yew hedges, with an open, thatched wooden pavilion set into the west hedge. South of the Old Tennis Court and Future Paeony Garden is a strip of grass running east/west with mature trees, including a huge cedar at the west end, growing on earthwork mounds.

South of the Theatre Lawn, and running parallel with it, is a c 90m long, narrow compartment, divided in two by a central flight of steps. The western half of the compartment is known as the Stilt Garden and the eastern half as the Red Borders. At the west end of the Stilt Garden is a pair of 2m high, square brick piers, crowned by busts, supporting a wrought-iron gate

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*  
*Inventory of Great Britain*  
*HIDCOTE MANOR*

and overthrow. A low brick wall, topped by railings, continues south-east from the southern pier for c 6m. A gravel path leads east from the gates and is edged by low yew-hedged compartments. The path continues as a grass strip between two rows of pleached hornbeam 'stilts'. At the east end of the Stilt Garden, steps lead down to the Red Borders. To each side of the path, at the top of the steps, are twin, single-storey summerhouses (Johnston early C20, listed grade II), of brick with limestone slate roofs curving to a point with ball finials at the top. The northern building has a decoratively tiled interior and the southern has two sets of double glass doors in opposition, making it possible to look through the building, along the vista of the Long Walk. This, a c 200m long, straight grass walk, enclosed by hornbeam hedges, forms the backbone of the southern gardens. Steps lead from the south side of the southern summerhouse, down to the Long Walk. Looking west from the summerhouses, there is a magnificent view through the gate at the west end of the Stilt Garden to the countryside beyond. The Red Borders are enclosed by a coursed drystone wall, with a yew hedge on top, to the north, and by an open wooden trellis to the south. A grass walk leads east, between broad herbaceous borders, to the Circle, a circular lawn surrounded by a brick path, herbaceous borders, and a hedge (mixed beech and holly to the south and west and yew to the north).

The line of the path through the Stilt Walk and Red Borders continues east, across the Circle, leading through wrought-iron gates between c 2m high, square ashlar piers with ball finials, with a c 1m brick wall on each side, into the gardens south of the Manor. Here the path terminates at a large cedar, planted on a box-edged raised lawn. The gardens south of the Manor are enclosed by a brick wall to the north and west, by a stream to the south (beyond which is a thatched cottage, a visual element of the garden scheme), and by a wall and hedges to the east. The grass path leads east from the gates, between wide herbaceous borders, then turns south, then east, into the White Garden, a yew-hedged compartment south of the cedar. The White Garden is quartered by stone-flagged paths and the four resulting beds are edged by low box hedges and topiary. The Maple Garden, to its east, is also yew-hedged and contains two rectangular box-edged beds. A gravel path leads east/west, south of the two compartments, between them and the stream.

A brick path leads south from the Circle, down stone steps, into the Fuchsia Garden, a box knot garden with fuchsias planted in the knot. The central brick path is the line of symmetry for this garden compartment, which is enclosed by a 3m high brick wall to the east and a holly hedge to the west. Its southern boundary is a 1m high box hedge and the path leads through this, down more steps to the Bathing Pool Garden, which is enclosed by yew hedges to its south, east, and west. The garden has two triangular beds in its northern half, between which runs the path, and a circular, stream-fed, stone-edged raised pool in its southern part. The gravel path surrounds most of the pool and a branch off the path leads east into a small yew-hedged compartment containing a wooden, thatched lean-to shelter, presumably for bathers. Another path leads south from the pool, through a hedge to the Poppy Garden, a small circular lawn enclosed by yew hedges. One exit from this leads north-east to the bathing shelter and another leads west, to the Back Border.

The southern part of the gardens is divided in two by the Long Walk, across the top (north) of which run the Terrace Garden (to the west) and the Winter Garden (to the east). The Terrace Garden has three tiers of drystone walls to the north and a beech hedge to the south. A gravel path leads south from it to the Pillar Garden, which contains many tall, clipped English yews, on three levels. There is a lawn on the middle terrace and rose beds on the lower. To the west of the Pillar Garden, Stilt Garden, and Theatre Lawn is an area of grass, bounded to the west by a 1m deep ha-ha, over which there are views over farmland to the Vale of Evesham. Several large holm oaks grow on either side of the ha-ha.

To the south and west of the Pillar Garden are woodland gardens: the Rock Bank and the Spring to the north of the stream and the Central Stream Garden and Lower Stream Garden to the south of the stream. These gardens are divided into sections by many winding gravel or stone-flagged paths. There are occasional rustic stone bridges or stepping stones over the stream, which runs south-west from the Bathing Pool Garden and crosses the Long Walk under a bridge, south of a ha-ha. At the south-west end of the Lower Stream Garden there is a view over the ha-ha to the farmland beyond.

To the east of the Long Walk, Mrs Winthrop's Garden stands south of the Winter Garden and is a small, brick-paved square compartment with beds around the edges. From a seat at its north side there is a view south, through woodland, to the countryside beyond. This vista was probably developed in the 1970s by Graham Stuart Thomas. East of Mrs Winthrop's Garden, a lime arbour runs north/south, with the small Fern Dell to its east. South of Mrs Winthrop's Garden and the Fern Dell are the Upper

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*  
*Inventory of Great Britain*  
*HIDCOTE MANOR*

Stream Garden (north of the stream) and the Back Border and 'Westonbirt' (south of the stream). Westonbirt, named after Westonbirt Arboretum (qv) is c 0.75ha of mixed tree and shrub planting, divided by broad, winding grass paths. Earthwork banks and ditches running east/west in the woodland may be the remains of ridge and furrow. Westonbirt is bounded to the east by wrought-iron railings and to the south by a wire fence. At the south-west corner of Westonbirt a path leads to the south end of the Long Walk where two square brick piers with pineapple finials (together 4m tall) support two wrought-iron gates. South of the gates is a small strip of grass, enclosed to the south by a wire fence, from which there is a wide view of farmland to the south. The first part of the garden to be developed by Johnston, from 1907 to 1914, was that south of the Manor. This area comprises the Old Garden, the White Garden, the Maple Garden, the Circle, the Red Borders, the Winter Border, the Fuchsia Garden, the Bathing Pool Garden, and the Poppy Garden. Next, from 1914 to 1920, Johnston laid out the gardens to the west of the house: the Theatre Lawn, the Stilt Garden, and Mrs Winthrop's Garden. Finally, from 1920 to 1930, he simplified some of the existing gardens and developed the Long Walk and the woodland and stream gardens off it. It is likely that Johnston's designs were influenced by his friends Norah Lindsay and Edith Wharton, and by Alfred Parsons, who worked in nearby Broadway (K Fretwell pers comm, 2000).

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The kitchen garden, which lies c 100m north of the Manor, is bounded by a holly hedge to the west, a yew hedge to the south, a belt of trees to the north (running along the south side of the road), and the Rose Walk to the east. It is divided by gravel paths edged by beech screens and lines of espaliered fruit trees, into four rectangular compartments in which spare plants are grown for the gardens. An orchard occupies the north-west compartment. Two late 1940s brick greenhouses stand in the south-west corner of the plot. The kitchen gardens were originally used as allotments by the villagers of Hidcote Bartrim (Peter Blades (NT) pers comm, 2000). During the Second World War, Hidcote supplied four hospitals with produce from its kitchen garden.

**OTHER LAND** A 300m long grass avenue, between Turkey oaks, hornbeams, and limes (originally Huntingdon elms) extends north from the north-east corner of the gardens, between arable fields, continuing the line of the road which forms the eastern boundary of the gardens.

#### REFERENCES

Country Life, 67 (22 February 1930), pp 286-94; 184 (8 February 1990), pp 72-3; no 10 (9 March 2000), pp 118-21 C Thacker, The History of Gardens (1970) D Verey, The Buildings of England: Gloucestershire The Cotswolds (1970), p 237 L Fleming and A Gore, The English Garden (1979), p 210 J Sales, West Country Gardens (1981), pp 67-71 G Jackson-Stops, The Country House Garden: a Grand Tour (1987) Hidcote Manor Garden, guidebook, (National Trust 1988) C Thacker, England's Historic Gardens (1989) D Ottewill, The Edwardian Garden (1989) E Clarke, Hidcote: the making of a garden (1989) Hidcote Manor Garden, guidebook, (National Trust 1993), pp 132-3 B Elliot, The Country House Garden: from the archives of Country Life 1897-1939 (1995) K Fretwell, Hidcote Manor Garden Survey 1999-2000, (National Trust 2000)

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1883, published 1886 2nd edition published 1903 3rd edition published 1924

Description written: January 2000 Amended: February 2001 Register Inspector: TVAC Edited: April 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.