

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

CASTLE DROGO

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Name:	CASTLE DROGO
County:	Devon
District:	West Devon (District Authority)
Parish:	Drewsteignton
National park:	DARTMOOR
label.localisation:	Latitude: 50.696361 Longitude: -3.8024332 National Grid Reference: SX 72797 90074 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000452 Date first listed: 12-Aug-1987

Details

Early C20 formal gardens with elements designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens and George Dillistone of R Wallace and Co, for an early C20 castle designed by Lutyens for Julius Drewe. Gertrude Jekyll advised on the planting for the approach, and the formal landscape around the house is linked to the adjoining managed moorland and steep river valley by a series of walks which allow dramatic views of the wider landscape, and of Castle Drogo itself.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Castle Drogo was constructed from 1910 on a previously undeveloped site. The Tithe map (c 1840) indicates that the site was marginal grazing land on the upper slopes of the steep valley of the River Teign, with an area of woodland, Twenty Acre Plantation, 200m north of the river, and an area of poor pasture, Piddledown Common, extending some 1.5km along the valley. To the east Hunting Gate gave access to Drewston Common, while the walk now known as the Hunters' Path was established by the late C19. The 1st and 2nd edition OS maps (1885 and 1906) show that the site remained substantially unchanged when it was acquired by Julius Drewe in 1910.

Julius Drewe (1856-1931) founded the Home and Colonial Stores in 1883 and rapidly amassed a considerable fortune; in 1899 he bought Wadhurst Hall, Kent, establishing himself as a landed gentleman. Soon after, a genealogist persuaded Drewe that he was descended from the Norman Drogo family, one of whom gave his name to Drewsteignton in the C12. Changing the spelling of his name from Drew to the more authentic Drewe, Julius recovered family property in East Devon, and subsequently decided to establish an estate at Drewsteignton. The site chosen for the proposed Castle was glebe land, but as Drewe's cousin, Richard Peek, was rector of Drewsteignton, he was able to purchase it in 1910. Further land was acquired, including Whiddon Park, a C16 deer park on the south side of the Teign gorge. By the time of Drewe's death in 1931 his estate comprised 1500 acres (625ha). Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944) was commissioned to produce plans for a castle and gardens in August 1910. The new house was to have genuine defensive characteristics, and was intended by Drewe as a commemoration of his Norman ancestry. The initial scheme with a courtyard plan and a massive barbican to the north-east was modified several times from

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late 1911, and progress on the building was delayed by the outbreak of war in 1914. It was finally completed in its present reduced form in 1930. Lutyens produced a scheme for formal terraced gardens on the east side of the Castle in 1915, which was further elaborated in 1921 with a rill, pools and a circular lawn, all enclosed by yew hedges. This scheme was abandoned as Drewe was unhappy about the terracing it entailed, and because he felt that the garden would be overlooked by the service quarters. A new plan was obtained in 1922 from R Wallace and Co of Tunbridge Wells, whose partner, George Dillistone, had previously worked for Drewe at Wadhurst Hall. A new secluded site to the west of the Castle was chosen for the formal terraced garden, and the area to the east was allowed to merge gradually with the surrounding landscape. The plan and some of the details of the formal garden at Castle Drogo is recalled at the slightly later Castle Tor, Torquay (qv) where Dillistone is believed to have worked with Lutyens' pupil Fred Harrild from 1929.

Drewe's eldest son had been killed in Flanders in 1917, and Castle Drogo was inherited by his second son Basil in 1931. It remained in the family until 1974, when Anthony Drewe and his son, Dr Christopher Drewe gave the Castle and 600 acres (250ha) to the National Trust.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Castle Drogo is situated c 2km south-west of the village of Drewsteignton and c 3km north-east of Chagford, to the east of the A382. The 60ha site, which comprises c 3ha of formal gardens, c 12ha of informal grounds around the Castle and principal drive, and c 45ha of managed landscape within the Teign gorge, is principally enclosed by traditional banks and hedges to the north, east and west, and by the River Teign to the south.

The Castle and formal and informal gardens occupy a level spur of high ground which drops sharply to the west and south allowing dramatic views to Dartmoor and into the Teign valley. To the south the River Teign runs in a deep gorge with a rocky outcrop, Sharp Tor, some 700m south-east of the house, while Whiddon Wood and the C16 deer park, Whiddon Park, outside the site boundary on the north-facing slope of the gorge, are significant in creating views from the Castle and informal grounds.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Castle Drogo is approached from a minor lane to the north. About 1km west of Drewsteignton the lane reaches a roundpoint formed by clipped beech hedges which enclose areas of mown grass planted with groups of ilex oak to the north-west and south-east of the road. The gravel and tarmac drive ascends south-east for 190m between grass verges with mature beech to reach a simple barbican formed from clipped yew. Continuing for a further 270m with a series of vistas through the beeches north-east to Drewsteignton below, the drive reaches an open grassy summit planted with specimen ilex oaks. Turning south and south-west there are significant views across the Teign gorge to Whiddon Park and the rural landscape beyond before the drive falls slightly and passes through an area of light woodland for c 530m. The planting to the north-west screens the formal gardens, while that to the south-east controls views to the wider landscape and heightens the effect of the open lawns adjacent to the house. A gravelled carriage court lies to the north-west of the Castle and is enclosed to the south-west and north-west by low granite parapets which allow wide views over the surrounding landscape to Dartmoor. The entrance to the service quarters north of the Castle is concealed by high clipped yew hedges which suggest fortifications or the plan of the projected great hall. The stables, coach house and garages built c 1930 (listed grade II) lie c 50m north-east of the Castle. The planting scheme for the drive and approach to the Castle was planned by Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932) in 1915 (Brown 1982).

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Castle Drogo (listed grade I), described as 'one of the finest C20 houses in Great Britain' and 'a perfectly preserved architectural masterpiece' (listed building description), is built at the south-west end of a rocky spur high above the Teign gorge to the south. The Castle was originally designed in 1911 by Sir Edwin Lutyens, who was then at the height of his career (Hussey 1950). Possibly inspired by Norman Shaw's earlier building at Flete, Devon (qv) (guidebook), the design underwent extensive revision between 1911 and the completion of the final, considerably reduced building, in 1930. Traditionally built with battered, solid walls of locally quarried granite, the construction was undertaken by Bearne of Newton Abbot. The massive structure is principally of three storeys with a varied roof line composed of battlemented turrets, while large mullion and transom windows light the asymmetrical facades. The main entrance to the house is through a monumental octagonal-turreted gatehouse to the north-west, with a first-floor oriel and a relief of the heraldic Drewe lion carved by Herbert Palliser (1883-1963); the gatehouse also contains a working portcullis. At the south-west corner of the structure a low chapel

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projects, rising from the emerging rock and enclosing a small garden court. The monumental quality of the architecture ensures that the Castle is assimilated into its rugged moorland landscape.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The formal gardens and pleasure grounds lie to the north and north-west of the Castle. A gravel terrace walk extends c 150m north-north-east from the carriage court, and is enclosed to the north-west by a yew hedge. The steep bank below this terrace is planted with mixed mature trees, under which a collection of rhododendrons, magnolias and camellias was established by Mr and Mrs Basil Drewe in the 1950s.

The formal terraced gardens c 100m north-east of the house are screened from it and from the drive and north-east terrace walk by belts of deciduous trees. A gravel walk which leaves the north-east terrace c 75m north-east of the carriage court runs c 50m east-north-east before entering the formal gardens through a pair of timber gates and a flight of stone steps to become the axial walk running south-west to north-east through the gardens. The lower terrace forms the Rose Garden with raised terraces to north and south planted as herbaceous borders, the slate-edged gravel paths following a geometric Indian pattern copied by Lutyens. At each corner of the terrace yew-hedged arbours enclose late C20 cast-iron frames covered by parrotia, which replace the original arbours of weeping elm. The lower, central area of the terrace comprises a lawn with square rose beds and flagged paving forming a chequered pattern at each corner. Below the random granite stone retaining walls of the upper terrace walks are mixed borders derived from Dillistone's 1927 planting scheme (garden guide). Stone steps to the north-east of the Rose Garden are flanked by wisteria and yuccas, and ascend to the second terrace which is enclosed by yew hedges with recesses for timber seats to the north-east. Slate-edged beds are planted with herbs and lavender. A double flight of stone steps leads up to the sloping shrub borders which were designed by Dillistone in 1927. Some 50m north-east a further flight of stone steps flanked by specimen conifers leads to a circular lawn c 55m in diameter and enclosed by yew hedges c 3m high which was originally used as a tennis lawn. The terrace walls, steps and other structural elements of the formal gardens are all listed grade II.

Some 10m south of the steps leading to the Tennis Lawn is a small, rustic, timber and thatched building known as the Luncheon Hut, which was used by the family for meals on visits to the site before the house was completed. In a corresponding position c 15m north of the steps is The Bunty House, a 1930s children's play house set in a pale-fenced garden of herbaceous plants with a crazy-paved path leading to the door. The Bunty House stands at the east end of a woodland walk which returns through mature beech trees underplanted with shrubs outside the north-east side of the formal gardens to a yew arch at the end of the north-east terrace walk. Another late C20 walk leads east from The Bunty House to the late C20 visitors' reception building designed by Anthony Hollow and extended by Anthony Harrison adjacent to the car park which has been planted with specimen trees and which is enclosed by beech hedges.

The chapel garden at the south-west corner of the house is enclosed to the south-west by the low stone structure of the chapel, and to the south-east and north-east by the towering walls of the Castle. A curved edge upper lawn is reached by stone steps below the gatehouse; further steps descend to a patterned stone-flagged path and further lawns. Flanking borders are simply planted with box topiary, and a fig and other shrubs are trained on the walls. To the south-west and south of the Castle areas of mown grass merge with groups of pines, hazel and other apparently natural planting as the ground drops away. South-east of the house a level terrace known as Mr Drewe's Walk leads some 400m east through the light screen of woodland south of the drive, and has views south across the Teign gorge.

KITCHEN GARDEN The early C20 kitchen garden lay c 400m south of the house in the valley near Coome. No longer surviving, the site of the kitchen garden is outside the registered site.

OTHER LAND To the west, south and south-east of the Castle and gardens the steep south- and west-facing slopes of the Teign gorge were marginal grazing land up to the Second World War. No longer grazed, these areas are managed to preserve the open landscape which contrasts with the areas of oak woodland outside the site, and which allows significant views to and from the Castle. Existing footpaths including the Hunters' Path and the riverside Fisherman's Path were retained by Drewe as part of a network of relatively level terraced walks on the south-facing valley side.

REFERENCES

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Maps Tithe map for Drewsteignton parish, nd (c 1840), (Devon Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1884, published 1889 2nd edition revised 1904, published 1906 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1884, published 1885 2nd edition revised 1904, published 1905

E Lutyens, Plans for Castle Drogo, (RIBA Drawings Collection) [copies at West Country Studies Library, Exeter] G Jekyll, Planting scheme for the drive at Castle Drogo, (Reef Point Gardens Collection, Folder 128, University of California, Berkeley) [copies at Lindley Library, London]

Illustrations C Farey, Perspective views of Castle Drogo, 1923 (at Castle Drogo 1998)

Description written: October 1998 Amended: May 1999; May 2000 Register Inspector: JML Edited: July 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.