

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

BARLEY WOOD

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

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
BARLEY WOOD

Name:	BARLEY WOOD
District:	North Somerset (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Wrington
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.363864 Longitude: -2.7478722 National Grid Reference: ST 48029 63021 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001404 Date first listed: 20-Mar-1998

Details

Pleasure grounds and a small park laid out to accompany the cottage orné built for Hannah More in 1801, with formal gardens by Thomas H Mawson added in 1911.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The Barley Wood estate was owned by the social reformer and authoress, Hannah More (1745-1833) from 1784 onwards until she moved to Bristol in 1828, the house being built for her in 1801 on a new site within farmland and pasture. While it was her home, shared with her four sisters, all also unmarried, the property became well known and the Mores received frequent visits from many eminent persons.

The house was purchased by William Henry Harford in the late 1820s, later passing to his son, also William. In 1897 it was sold to Henry Herbert Wills, director of the Imperial Tobacco Company, and his wife Monica (later Dame Monica). Following a major extension to the house in 1901, in 1910, Wills called on Thomas H Mawson (1861-1933) to work on the gardens. On his arrival, Mawson records finding a lovely retreat 'which was so happy and appropriate' that he limited his recommendations to a little touching up in parts where the original intention had been lost, and to the addition of a rose garden at the lower part of the site (Mawson 1927). Captain Douglas Wills (d 1973) became the owner following the purchase of the estate from his kinsman in 1921. In 1974, the house was purchased by the HAT Group Limited with c 2 acres (c 0.8ha) of adjoining land. In 1975 part of the walled garden including the potting sheds and main greenhouses was sold to a private owner. In the early 1990s, the HAT Group Limited sold its headquarters and Barley Wood is now (1998) part of a residential centre for the charity 'ADAPT'.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Barley Wood occupies a steeply sloping 1.1ha site, part way up the south-facing hillside to the north-east of the village of Wrington. The public road, Long Lane, forms the southern boundary of the site except for the area of kitchen garden and orchard which lies to the south of this. Elsewhere, the site adjoins the surrounding agricultural land which forms the setting of the estate. The site offers extensive and panoramic views out over the broad vale of Wrington to the south, to the steep northern escarpment of the Mendips.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Some 350m from Branches Cross, east along Long Lane, stands Barley Lodge, now (1998) fenced off within its own grounds. From here, a drive curves north-eastwards to arrive at the west, service side of the house. The main entrance however lies 350m further along the lane, marked by a second lodge, East Lodge, from where a

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
BARLEY WOOD

drive leads north-westwards, climbing gently through parkland, cutting across the steep gradient of the hillside to the tarmacked turning circle below the east, entrance front of the house. Some 20m to the east of the East Lodge entrance, and on the opposite, south, side of Long Lane, stand the stables, dated 1901; now (1998) in use as a commercial office, these are outside the area here registered.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Barley Wood house (listed grade II) is an extended cottage orné with several canted bays, its two storeys and attics rendered, with plain roof tiles. The cottage as built was originally thatched. Along the east and south fronts runs a single-storey round-arched conservatory on openwork piers.

The house stands towards the western side of its grounds, its pleasure grounds lying to north and south and the parkland extending eastwards from the east front. Built in 1801 for Hannah More, it was enlarged a century later, c 1900, by Ernest George for H H Wills, and again in 1933 by Chester H Jones, also for the Wills family.

Its elevated position, part way up the side of the valley, provides extensive views over the falling land to the south whilst being below the brow of the hill, it is afforded shelter from the steeply rising, wooded ground to the north.

Following the change of ownership in 1974, the house was redesigned by Moxley Jenner and Partners, the work being completed by the end of 1975.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The house stands on a paved and balustraded terrace which lies below the south front, and on which stands a sundial and two memorial urns (listed, with the house, grade II), the urns moved here from the wooded pleasure grounds north of the house where they had been placed by Hannah More. The limestone urn in Neoclassical style, with fluted neck and guilloche frieze, is to the memory of the philosopher John Locke, born in Wrington, and was given to More by Mrs Montagu in 1789 and moved to Barley Wood in 1802. The bulbous urn, also of limestone, is to the memory of More's friend Bishop Beilby Porteus, Lord Bishop of London, and was erected by More in 1805.

A flight of steps, parallel to the stone terrace retaining wall, leads down c 2m to the second terrace level, laid out as a formal lawn and bounded by yew hedging. At the base of the retaining wall is set a small fountain and accompanying low basin; at its eastern end, a flight of steps with a stone seat adjacent leads to the informal lawns. Two breaks in the line of the yew along the southern edge of this terrace open onto a grass bank, below which is a gently sloping lawn.

A path from the east front leads across the lawns to the formal garden created by Thomas Mawson in 1911 and described by him as a 'quiet panel rose garden' (Mawson 1927). This is entered through the now open back of a tiled stone pavilion, panelled inside, the open front supported by four columns and curving wing walls set back to either side providing shelter. From here there are fine views over the central compartment of the garden below, and across the kitchen garden to the valley and the hills beyond. The sundial which stood on the pavilion steps has recently (post 1987) gone. A short flight of steps leads down from the pavilion to a paved platform from which semicircular steps give off to west and east. To the south, a double staircase leads down to a rectangular lily pond, sunk into the surrounding paving, which forms the centrepiece of this compartment; a statuette of a girl holding up a shell which formed the central feature has recently (post 1987) been lost.

Yew hedges separate the central area from the compartments to west and to east with a crazy-paved walk marking the west to east axis through the centre of the garden. From the lily pond, this leads east through an arch cut through the yew hedge, across the east compartment, laid to lawn and backed to the north by a retaining wall behind which stands the north wall of the garden.

A stone seat, set in front of the yew hedge which forms the east boundary of the garden, stands in front of a high statue base which once held a bust of Hannah More. From the west side of the pond, the central walk leads through an arch in the yew hedge into the west compartment, also laid to grass, to an ironwork gate set into the yew hedge, cut as alcoves to either side, which forms the western boundary of the garden. A pergola with wooden beams supported by stone piers surmounting a stone wall along its northern side, with brick piers forming the southern side, runs the whole length of the south side of the garden, on a lower level to that of the of the lily pond and flanking compartments. Access to it is from steps at the eastern end and from a central flight down from the pond compartment. The paved walk through the pergola is bordered to either side with beds for planting within the span of the piers. It leads, at the western end, to a wooden gate in flanking stone walls which opens out onto the lower lawns to the south of the house. The pergola, forming the southern edge of the formal garden, is itself substantially above the level of the public lane and is supported by a c 2m retaining wall with the road running immediately below.

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
BARLEY WOOD

From the west side of the house, and off the north side of the court below the east front, steps and paths lead through lawns and up the steep hillside. Within this area of wooded pleasure grounds, which runs as a strip along the hillside north of the house, is a system of winding paths. Here also is the levelled platform of the former tennis courts, the yew-hedged rectangular area accompanied by a small pavilion (in poor condition, 1998). South of this is the former swimming pool. From the tennis courts, an iron- and wood-framed gate in the yew opens eastwards onto a lime avenue through the woodland. At its eastern end, a path returns south back down the hillside to the east front of the house, another continuing along the wooded brow of the hill to Tucker's Grove, retuning down the hillside through Whitley Coppice. (Both areas of woodland are outside the site here registered.)

PARK The house stands centrally within its former parkland which stretched from Branches Cross, east for c 1km along the north side of Long Lane, to Whitley Coppice, divided in two by the formal gardens which lie to the south of the house and the wooded pleasure grounds to the north. It is planted with a sparse scattering of parkland trees, the eastern area carrying more exotic species. Prestow Wood forms the backdrop to the west park while the wooded pleasure grounds Tucker's Grove and Whitley Coppice enclose the eastern area.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden and accompanying orchard to the west lie behind a high stone-faced wall with central gateway and wooden doors, on the gently sloping ground falling from the south side of Long Lane, immediately to the south of the formal gardens. Attached to the outside of the east wall stands the substantial Garden Cottage, brick-built like the interior of the walls. A row of lean-to glasshouses survives within the gardens against the north wall, to either side of the entrance gateway. Through the garden on its central north/south axis, linking the main entrance in the north wall to that in the south, runs a path flanked by yew hedges; the single wooden door placed centrally in the stepped west wall is also linked by a hard path to that in the stepped east wall, the latter now (1998) bricked up. The garden is part laid to grass and part cultivated.

REFERENCES

T H Mawson, *The Life and Work of an English Landscape Architect* (1927), p 185 B Little, *History of Barley Wood*, guide leaflet, (1978)

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 2nd edition revised 1901, published 1904

Description written: March 1998 Register Inspector: HJ Edited: January 2004

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.