

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

BRECCLES HALL

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

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**BRECCLES HALL**

Name: BRECCLES HALL

County: Norfolk

District: Breckland (District Authority)

Parish: Stow Bedon

label.localisation: Latitude: 52.512855  
Longitude: 0.88886258  
National Grid Reference: TL 96129 94474  
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden  
Grade: II  
List Entry Number: 1001003  
Date first listed: 18-Sep-1987

## Details

An early C20 garden partly designed by Edwin Lutyens, set within the framework of a C16 manor garden, beside an early C20 woodland garden.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1469 the manor of Breccles was purchased by Sir Edward Woodehouse of Kimberley and in c 1550 his grandson John Woodehouse began construction of Breccles Hall, a work which was completed by his son Francis in 1583. Two garden courtyards to the west of the Hall were constructed at this time. In 1599 Francis' son, Edward Woodehouse, sold the Hall to Sir Richard Gardiner, Queen Elizabeth's chief justice in Ireland. From there it passed to the Webb and Hewyt family before being purchased by Wormley Hethersett, Mayor of Thetford. Following his death in 1709 the house and grounds fell into a state of disrepair and in 1832 the property was purchased by Matthias Kerrison and used as a farmhouse at the centre of a large estate. Thus it remained until his great grandson the Hon Charles Hanbury inherited in c 1900. Hanbury employed the Arts and Crafts architect Detmar Blow to completely renovate the Hall and the estate became well-known as a historic, residential, and sporting seat.

Following the restoration work the Hon Edwin and Mrs Montagu purchased Breccles in 1910 and employed Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944) to make additions to the interior and to add a new service wing. Edwin Montagu, a Liberal MP, came from a prominent Anglo-Jewish financial and political dynasty, and became the third Jew to serve in the British cabinet. Mrs Montagu developed the grounds within the old C16 walls and, with Lutyens' help, developed new garden areas, including a new walled enclosure to the north of the C16 wall, in front of the service wing. The Montagus entertained many notable guests at Breccles, including members of the royal family, Noel Coward, and Winston Churchill. During the Second World War the Hall was used as a school although Mrs Montagu remained in residence, and after the war was purchased by Mrs Garnier, whose daughter and son-in-law took over residency in 1953. The Hall remains (1999) in private ownership.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Breccles Hall sits between the villages of Breckles and Lower Stow Bedon, c 4km east of the A1075, midway between Watton and Thetford. The 5ha site lies in a rural part of Norfolk on

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the edge of the Brecklands with its characteristic open moor and pine landscape, Breckles Moor being just to the south of the site. The land all around this area is very flat, as is the registered site, and is given over mainly to farming and forestry. An opening in the woodland along the southern boundary gives views over the farmland beyond. Breccles Hall is surrounded by farmland, its eastern boundary being formed by a small tributary of the Breck whilst to the north-west lies St Margaret's church. The east, north and south boundaries of the site are enclosed by woodland and the west by the high C16 garden wall. To the north are service buildings and a small paddock.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** Breccles Hall is approached from the west along a straight drive lined with oak (mid C20). At the end of the oaks it turns north for c 50m and then east to run outside the garden wall, terminating at the stable block to the north of the Hall. As laid out in the C16, this drive entered the main courtyard through wrought-iron gates in an arched gateway (listed grade II) in the C16 wall. The gateway has a semicircular rebated arch flanked by pilasters on a plinth and a serpentine overthrow punched with oval lunettes. The alignment of this drive has altered over time ( the OS 1st edition map of 1883 shows that at that time the west drive entered further south off the village road and then turned north to run along the outside length of garden wall before turning east to enter the gates of the courtyard. A further tree-lined drive from the north, now (1999) a grass track through a paddock, which runs to the service buildings and stables was also in use at that time.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Breccles Hall (listed grade I) is a multi-gabled, small-scale, red-brick Elizabethan manor house built to an E-shaped plan, facing west. To the north is a service wing, built in the Elizabethan style with a single storey and attics, attached to the laundry, game larder, wine room, foodstore, and stables, all in the same style. The Hall was built by John and Francis Woodehouse between c 1550 and 1583 and completely restored in 1900 by Detmar Blow, who also added the front porch. In c 1908 Edwin Lutyens made further alterations, including the enclosure of an open gallery on the top floor. He also added the service wing and working buildings to the north, on the east side of which a late C20 conservatory has been added.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The main garden areas lie to the west of the Hall, with additional areas to the south and east. The west gardens are enclosed by C16 brick walls (listed grade II) with an early C20 matching wall making a further enclosure to the north. The walls are constructed of red brick and have ornamental castellated tops and the garden compartments are connected by cross axes which run west from the front door and north/south through each compartment at the Hall ends. At the beginning of the C20 these compartments were planted as parterres but they are now (1999) laid to grass with a row of cherry trees lining the north/south path in the northern compartment. To the south is a large expanse of lawn bounded to the south at the eastern end by a low wall cut in the centre by steps down into the woodland beyond. The eastern boundary of this area is marked by a moat which continues parallel to the length of the east front of the Hall, said to have been dug during the C16 to make bricks for the Hall (present owners pers comm, 1999). The western boundary of the south garden is defined by the garden wall and it is here that Lutyens is said to have designed a further small garden area (CL 1938) of which no trace remains. On the east front is another large lawn area running down to the moat, defined on its north side by a fence with roses extending from the Hall at the point where the service wing begins. Beyond this lies a further grass compartment also running down to the moat, on the banks of which stands a very large mature field maple. This compartment contains a late C20 conservatory and is enclosed on the north side by a wall and a box hedge cut centrally by a set of circular steps leading down to another grassed area. There are no visible remains of the detail of the gardens described in the 1910 sale catalogue (NRO) as being 'beautiful old world gardens, a feature of the property, laid out with considerable taste'. These gardens, which once adorned the south, west and east fronts, were further developed by Mrs Montagu.

Beyond the garden areas to south and east is a woodland garden also developed during the early years of the C20. Running south from the small steps at the end of the south lawn is a cobnut walk which extends almost to the southern boundary, at the end of which to the east is a pine planted by Princess Mary in 1911. Close by is a clump of pine painted by Winston Churchill on one of his visits to Breccles in the first half of the C20. To the west of the nut walk lie the remains of an orchard which extends down to the southern boundary. Beyond the moat and nut walk to the east is an area of woodland garden cut through with little streams fed from the Breck tributary along the eastern boundary. The wood is planted with mixed ornamentals and has a number of cherries and pines underplanted with rhododendron, viburnum, and bamboo, with a carpet of bulbs, foxgloves, and ferns. Within this wood, some 50m east of the moat, stands the simple circular stone grave of Samuel Montagu which was

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designed by Lutyens in 1924. Beside the east boundary and level with the service wing is an overgrown beech hedge which marks a swimming pool enclosure, constructed after 1910 and fed from the adjacent stream.

To the north of the Hall is further woodland and a horse paddock, with the early C20 stable block located beside the service wing of the Hall and connected to it by a garden wall with gateway.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** To the north-west of the Hall, immediately to the west of the stables is a walled kitchen garden constructed on a flint base. Parts of the wall retain the original clay lump upper construction whilst in other parts the clay lump has been replaced by brick and in the south-east corner there is a breach in the wall. The garden is entered on the east face from the stable yard through a simple wooden field gate and is currently (1999) unused apart from a small area under vegetable production. According to the present owners this walled garden replaces an earlier one which was situated further to the north and is now under fields. The origins of the present walled garden are not clear but it was certainly in place in its present shape by 1883 (OS).

#### REFERENCES

Country Life, 26 (13 November 1909), pp 670/8; (20 November 1909), pp 706/13; 83 (19 February 1938), pp 194/9 G Jekyll, Garden Ornament (1918), p 33 N Pevsner, The Buildings of England: North-west and South Norfolk (1962), p 96 J Kenworthy-Browne et al, Burke's and Savills Guide to Country Houses III, (1981), p 94 J Garden History 11, (1991), nos 1 and 2, pp 23/5 Breccles Hall, guide leaflet, (nd)

Maps OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1883 2nd edition published 1906

Archival items Sale catalogue, 1910 (BRE658.844 BRE), (Norfolk Local Studies Library)

Description written: January 1999 Register Inspector: EMP Edited: February 2001 This list entry was subject to a Minor Amendment on 28/09/2020

## 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.