

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

BORDE HILL

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Name:	BORDE HILL
County:	West Sussex
District:	Mid Sussex (District Authority)
Parish:	Ansty and Staplefield
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.021961 Longitude: -0.12086903 National Grid Reference: TQ 31891 26412 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000274 Date first listed: 01-Jun-1984

Details

A late C19 to mid C20 plantsman's and collector's garden, laid out by Colonel Stephenson Clarke, set within early C20 park with mid C19 origins.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The first record of the Borde family at Borde Hill is of Stephen Borde in 1534. On his death in 1567 the estate passed to his son George, then to his grandson Stephen, who built the present house in 1598. The house and estate remained in the Borde family until the death of William in 1720 after which it passed through many hands including, in 1743, those of the Gatlands who owned nearby Nymans (qv) in the C17. During the mid C19 the estate was divided and the north and south halves let to two tenants by the owner, Frederick Wakes. In 1892, the whole estate was bought from a Mrs Cunliffe Lister by Colonel Stephenson Clarke who largely laid out the present gardens and parkland and planted the woodlands with ornamental trees. In 1948 he was succeeded by his son, Colonel Ralph Stephenson Clarke, who restored the gardens and parkland following wartime neglect and in 1965 established a company registered as a charity to manage the garden, which from 1970 was run by his son, Robert N Stephenson Clarke. Through the company, the garden is now (1998) managed by Mr and Mrs A P Stephenson Clarke while the majority of the surrounding estate woodland and parkland is in private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Borde Hill is situated to the immediate north-west of Haywards Heath, on the west side of a minor road (Borde Hill Lane) leading northwards to Balcombe village. The c 155ha registered site, comprising c 9ha of ornamental gardens set within wooded parkland, occupies a central, east to west ridge which falls away northwards to undulating ground and southwards to an east to west stream valley, the south side of which rises to a further crest on the southern boundary. The site is bounded along the east and south sides by minor roads and enclosed partly by a dense mixed tree belt (along the southern half of the east boundary) and by intermittent trees (along Hanlye Lane to the south). To the north and east, the site's parkland and woodland merge into the adjacent undulating, wooded farmland.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Borde Hill is approached from Borde Hill Lane on the east side, a drive entering between stone gate piers on the south side of East Lodge (the site shown occupied by a lodge in 1874), running westwards for 70m then

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swinging north through the gardens and west to the grassed turning circle on the north, entrance front of the house. From spring 1998, it is intended to close this entrance to all traffic and to open a new entrance off Borde Hill Lane some 260m further south, which will be linked with the present drive to the house by a drive running due north from the new entrance, along the west side of the walled garden. This drive serves a public car park and new plant centre (to open spring 1998) built on land to the west of the walled garden. A secondary drive to the house from the south-west, shown on a sale plan of 1870 as lined with avenue trees (gone by 1909), runs through Lullings Farm past a lodge (50m north-east of the farm) erected between 1909 and 1937. In the extreme south-east corner of the site, entrance gates with stone piers beside the two-storey, sandstone and tile-hung South Lodge (first recorded on the OS map of 1937, listed grade II) lead to a track running north-westwards across the park.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Borde Hill (listed grade II) stands on the crest of the ridge, towards the centre of the park and commands extensive views north and south over the park and also, northwards, to the more distant surrounding landscape and the Ouse Valley railway viaduct (some 200m beyond the northern site boundary). The two-storey, sandstone ashlar house, with three gables topped by finials, stone-mullioned windows and a tiled roof, was built between 1583 and 1590 by Stephen Borde, the present west front surviving from this period. It was enlarged shortly before sale in 1870 and considerably extended further, at the east end, at the beginning of the C20.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The ornamental gardens surround the house but are most extensive to the west, south and east. The south front opens onto a paved apron enclosed by low curved walls, beyond which an open lawn, levelled in 1895, extends 90m south to an east to west path running along the top of a sandstone ha-ha which separates the garden from the park. Immediately east of the house and laid out on the site of a late C19 kitchen garden area, is a range of greenhouses (currently, 1998, under restoration) and a Mediterranean garden laid out at the same time. South of the greenhouses and a trellis-work screen is the Rose Garden, laid out in the 1990s in a series of geometric, lawn-edged beds on either side of a north-west to south-east axial brick path and featuring a central bed, to be replaced with a fountain later this year (1998). On the south side of the Rose Garden is the Herbaceous and Shady Garden, laid out in the mid 1990s on a former nursery area (guidebook c 1970s) with long borders set in lawn and, facing into the garden from the south side in a tile-roofed shelter, a statue entitled the Veiled Lady (also known as the Bride) by Antonio Tantarini. East of these gardens the main path leads into the Old Rhododendron Garden, planted largely with Himalayan hybrids, and to Jack Vass Walk, a grassy glade flanked by further rhododendron plantings and designed by Vass while head gardener in 1971-2. Eastwards, between the main drive to the house and the site boundary, is the Azalea Ring, laid out by 1902 as a west-facing horseshoe of island beds of azaleas and other trees and shrubs around lawn.

West and south-west of the house, on land shown enclosed as garden by 1874, the west side of the South Lawn is contained by rising ground planted at the north end as a rock bank with low-growing shrubs and at the south end with newly laid out azalea beds backed by timber-edged, terraced shrubberies. From the south-west corner of the lawn the Long Walk, enclosed by sandstone walling, leads westwards to give access up steps on its northern side to the rectangular Bride's Pool, laid out with a stone-paved surround and mixed planting in 1982 on the site of a former tennis court. This area is currently being redesigned as an Italian garden to open in spring 1998. West of the Bride's Pool is the Round Dell, containing a central informal pool, its surrounding slopes planted with trees and shrubbery threaded by winding rockwork paths and steps. The Long Walk terminates at the Old Potting Sheds, the roofless walls of which are planted with climbers and which enclose a herb garden. A path leads north-eastwards to the Long Dell, a former quarry planted with Sino-Himalayan species, to the east of which is the West Garden Lodge, a former estate office. On the south side of the Lodge, the raised paved and planted West Terraces (which overlook the Bride's Pool) were formerly occupied by the Veiled Lady statue. North and east of the Lodge are further plantings of mature oak with an understorey of exotic trees and shrubs, from which steps lead down a steep bank on the north side of the house into the North Garden or Garden of Allah, planted from 1925 (LUC 1992) around a central lawn with shrubbery and ornamental trees including pine, birch and sorbus. The current guidebook to Borde Hill provides a full and detailed description of the plantings in the garden.

PARK The park, presently extending west of the gardens and some 0.7km to both their north and south, was developed by Colonel Stephenson Clarke between the late 1890s and the mid C20, from an existing c 20ha park (immediately surrounding the

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house) which had been laid out on former agricultural land between 1845 and 1874 (Tithe and OS 1st edition map). The North Park, laid to grass and permanent pasture, is extensively planted with clumps and individual trees including many exotics and varieties of oak, the present pattern established by 1909. A pinetum, also established by 1909 and replanted following storm damage in 1987, encloses the northern boundary of the park while more immediately to the north-west of the house, Warren Wood and Little Bentley Wood (shown as woodlands by 1874) contain exotics, including conifers and rhododendrons, the planting dating from 1905 and 1910 respectively. Some 300m east of Warren Wood is Naldred Farmhouse, a C17 or earlier timber-framed building (listed grade II).

West of the gardens and on the slopes to the south towards Lullings Gill, the parkland is more open in character, a number of trees on the south slopes having been lost in the 1987 storm. The eastern end of Lullings Gill now contains a chain of two ponds and an informal 1.5ha lake, laid out in the early 1990s. The South Park, extending as pastureland up the rising valley side from Lullings Gill to the southern site boundary, is also less extensively planted with parkland trees than the North Park. It contains several small woods or copses including Lullings Gorse, planted in 1934 and now (1998) in poor condition, Spring Copse and Stone-pit Wood (adjacent to South Lodge) with mixed exotics and the Cedar Plantation on the southern boundary (now, 1998, with three remaining cedars).

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden lies south of the present main entrance at East Lodge, on the south side of the restaurant and conference centre which was converted from former stables in c 1987. The southward-sloping, 65m x 52m rectangular garden, built in 1906, is enclosed by high sandstone walls planted with climbers and wall shrubs and is entered by gates on the west side. The garden is laid to lawn quartered by brick paths with a tunnel arbour covering lengths of the north to south path and with a lily pool in the south-west quarter.

REFERENCES

Country Life, 12 (27 December 1915), pp 840-5; 165 (15 March 1979), pp 702-4; no 24 (16 June 1994), pp 68-71 I Nairn and N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Sussex* (1965), p 479 T Wright, *Gardens of Britain* 4, (1978), pp 121-4 The Borde Hill Restoration Study, (Land Use Consultants (LUC) and Lear Associates 1992) *Borde Hill*, guidebooks, (various dates from late 1970s to 1997)

Maps Tithe map for Cuckfield parish, 1845 (West Sussex Record Office) Sale catalogue plan, 1870 (private collection)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1873-4, published 1879 2nd edition published 1899 3rd edition surveyed 1909, published 1912 1938 edition OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1874 3rd edition published 1910 [part of site only] 1938 edition

Description written: January 1998 Amended: January 2000 Register Inspector: VCH Edited: June 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.