

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

REDLEAF

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

Name: REDLEAF

County: Kent

District: Sevenoaks (District Authority)

Parish: Chiddingstone

County: Kent

District: Sevenoaks (District Authority)

Parish: Leigh

County: Kent

District: Sevenoaks (District Authority)

Parish: Penshurst

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.186847
Longitude: 0.17461001
National Grid Reference: TQ 52071 45316
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1000409
Date first listed: 01-Mar-1990

Details

Gardens, pleasure grounds, and a park laid out in the early C19 to the designs of the owner William Wells, and admired by J C Loudon.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The Redleaf estate was purchased c 1800 by William Wells (1767-1847), a retired shipbuilder and enthusiastic art collector who was a trustee of the National Gallery between 1835 and 1847. He made alterations to the existing brick house, extended the small park, and developed an extensive area of dressed ground which in 1839 was the subject of a detailed and enthusiastic account by J C Loudon (*Gardener's Mag* 1850). On Wells' death in 1847 the estate passed to his great nephew, William Wells II MP, who retained ownership until at least 1861, when he is named as the owner in another detailed horticultural account (*Cottage Gardener*); during his ownership the Fernery was created. In 1870 the property was put up for sale and was purchased by F C Hills. The old house, which was located just to the south-east of 'Wells View', was demolished in 1883-4 and a new house erected in 1884. At the same time the kitchen gardens were extended. The break-up of the estate began in the 1920s as outlying parts of the property were sold to meet death duties although further work on the landscape surrounding Redleaf

continued into the mid C20. Following demolition of the house and stable block in the 1950s, the remaining estate was divided up and a number of new detached houses were built on the grounds. The site remains (2001) in private divided ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Redleaf is situated c 10km to the north-west of Royal Tunbridge Wells in a rural part of Kent. The c 73ha site is bounded to the west by the River Eden, to the north and south by farmland, and to the east by the B2176, Penshurst Road. The house stood on a south-west-facing hillside towards the eastern edge of the undulating site, the land falling to the west and south. The site offered fine views out over the countryside, particularly to the west.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Two drives, both accompanied by lodges, led to the east front of the house from Penshurst Road, one to the north-east of the house at North Lodge (mid C19, listed grade II), the other at South Lodge (listed grade II) to the south-east. A new entrance between the two lodges leads to Wells View, the mid C20 house built on the site of the original mansion.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS To the south of the house site, an area of turf slopes down to the Rocky Lawn. A natural rock face was partially excavated to form its northern edge. Beyond this are masses of rock arranged in the turf, some forming free-standing raised beds, with rustic steps and a stone-paved walk leading through them. To the east of the Rocky Lawn in the area now (2001) forming part of the gardens of Hideaway House, was the English Garden, a roughly circular turfed space surrounded by a circular walk. The summerhouse at the end of the raised walk was removed in the 1960s when the new house was built. To the west of the Rocky Lawn is a small pond where the engine house which pumped water to the house stood. Further east again is the Fernery, a sloping bank with large stones jutting from it and with an irregular-shaped basin of water at the centre. A walk, spanned by an iron trellis, curves along its base linking the English Garden to the Dutch Garden. The Dutch Garden is enclosed from the rest of the grounds by a high screen of American shrubs. It is formally laid out with a pattern of diamond-shaped beds divided by brick paths. The billiard room which marked one side has gone and the cottage-style thatched conservatory, which stood at right angles to it, has been rebuilt as a house, known as The Orangery.

William Wells created a larger pond on the southern edge of the gardens where they merged with the park. From the house site there is a view across the lawns to this water. A formal pond garden was constructed in the early C20 at the end of the walk which forms part of the gardens of Redwood, east of the large pond. Two further mid C19 features survive within the grounds of Redwood: an octagonal rustic seat (listed grade II) and a well-house, with rustic seat (listed grade II). The spring stands in the centre of the covered seat, with a fountain lined in tiles and a stone rockery above.

PARK On the west front of the house site, the lawn merges with the park which lies in a valley between flanking timbered ridges to north and south. The western boundary of the park is marked by the River Eden. A small park existed when William Wells purchased the property c 1800, and he enlarged this by putting arable fields down to pasture and removing existing hedgerows. At the same time, in order that the water should be visible from the house, Wells widened the river and altered its course. Along the northern edge of the site is a substantial rocky outcrop of red sandstone which rises steeply above the level of the park. This is planted with deciduous trees and evergreens. Much survives of the rich plantings put in throughout the estate by William Wells, and by F C Hills when he acquired the estate in 1870.

KITCHEN GARDEN The walled kitchen garden complex, with the remains of the glass ranges and ancillary buildings, lies towards the south-east corner of the site, close to the eastern boundary. Lilac Cottage (listed grade II) was built as the head gardener's house in 1825 to Wells' designs. Redleaf Cottage, a picturesque two-storey, Tudor-style building (listed grade II) c 100m north-east of Lilac Cottage on the east side of Penshurst Road (outside the area here registered) was erected as a bothy by Wells in 1826.

REFERENCES

C Greenwood, *An epitome of county history* 4, vol 1, County of Kent (1838), p 111 *Gardener's Magazine* 15, (July 1839), pp 353-79 J C Loudon, *Villa Gardener* (1850), pp 299-315 *Gardener's Magazine of Botany* 2, (1850), pp 140-4, 164-6; 3, (1851), pp 44-5, 171-3 *Cottage Gardener* 26, (2 April 1861), pp 4-5, 26-7, 64-6 *Gardeners' Chronicle*, (1867), pp 572-3; ii (1875), pp 324-5 J Greig (ed), *The Farrington Diary* (1922-8), pp 1-8 [diary of J Farrington] *Architectural Review* 82, (1937), pp 203-06

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C Tunnard, *Gardens in the Modern Landscape* (1938), pp 41-6 *Country Life*, 160 (23 December 1976), pp 1923-4 A Forsyth, *Yesterday's Gardens* (1983), p iv, pl 57 B Elliott, *Victorian Gardens* (1986) L Biddle, Leigh in Kent 1550-1900 (1991)

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1866-9

Description rewritten: April 2001 Amended: May 2001 Register Inspector: EMP Edited: November 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.