

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

MOTTISFONT ABBEY

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

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MOTTISFONT ABBEY

Name: MOTTISFONT ABBEY

County: Hampshire

District: Test Valley (District Authority)

Parish: Mottisfont

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.043183
Longitude: -1.5371666
National Grid Reference: SU3254427194
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1000864
Date first listed: 31-May-1984

Details

A largely mid to late C20 garden, although with C18 origins and C19 additions, with formal features designed by Geoffrey Jellicoe and Norah Lindsay, which surrounds an C18 house formed from the buildings of a C13 priory.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The manor of Mottisfont was recorded as the property of William the Conqueror in Domesday Book. By the end of the C12 it was owned by William Briwere or Brewer, who founded a priory of Austin Canons in 1201 which he, and later his son and daughter, endowed with land. When the priory was dissolved in 1536, the lands at Mottisfont were given to William, first Lord Sandys, the owner of another Hampshire estate, The Vyne (qv). On completing his house at The Vyne, Sandys spent his last five years until his death in 1540 forming a second home from the buildings at Mottisfont Priory. On the death of the eighth Lord Sandys and the extinction of the title in 1684, Mottisfont passed to his nephew Sir John Mill. Sir John's second son, Richard, who succeeded in 1706, altered the Tudor house to its present form, carried out planting in the park, and also appears to have been the first to use the name Mottisfont Abbey. The property descended through the Mill family, being inherited in 1884 by Mrs Vaudrey Barker-Mill. In c 1900, following it being tenanted for a few years by the Meinertzhagen family, she renovated the estate and house and made minor alterations to its exterior. From 1922 until 1934 Mottisfont was unoccupied but was finally purchased in 1934 by Gilbert Russell, a great-grandson of the sixth Duke of Bedford. Russell and his wife Maud, who was a patron of the arts, again renovated the house, added a wing, and made major alterations to the garden for which they commissioned the garden designers Norah Lindsay and Geoffrey Jellicoe. Gilbert Russell died in 1942 and in 1957 Mrs Russell conveyed Mottisfont Abbey to the National Trust, continuing to live there until 1972. The site remains (1998) in the ownership of the National Trust.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Mottisfont Abbey is situated c 1km west of the A3057, Romsey to Stockbridge road, immediately adjacent to the east side of Mottisfont village. The 18.5ha registered site, comprising c 12ha of formal and informal gardens and 6.5ha of parkland, occupies the level floor and lower, western slopes of the valley of the River Test, one of its channels flowing southwards through the east side of the gardens. The site is bounded to the west and

south by minor lanes (Oakley Road to the west) and village housing, from which it is variously enclosed by lengths of clipped hedging, fencing and, in the north-west, by the outer walls of the walled garden. To the east lie the tree-fringed water meadows of the Test and to the north, open farmland and pasture with small woods.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES There are two entrances to the site, each with a lodge and gateway. On the west side, opposite the junction of Oakley Road with Benger's Lane, stands Upper Lodge, built of flint with stone dressings and with, on its south side, two pairs of stone gate piers surmounted by carved stone bears and hung with wrought-iron gates with flanking iron screens (ensemble of lodge and gates listed grade II). Although this entrance was established by 1724 (Estate plan), the lodge dates from c 1900 and replaces a flanking pair of square, flat-roofed lodges, presumably erected by Richard Mill in the C18 (guidebook). A drive, lined by cedar trees, runs due eastwards past the Stables towards the west, entrance front of the house. Close to the house and standing on the north edge of the drive is an C18 statue of a young man with a hunting dog and three Istrian limestone benches backed by a low stone wall (all listed grade II). A further entrance to the site is in the south-east corner at Lower Lodge, this also built in flint with stone dressings and having a similar gateway of two pairs of stone gate piers with wrought-iron gates and screens (ensemble listed grade II). The drive from Lower Lodge follows a north-westerly course across the Test and the south lawns to the west front of the house. The present public entrance to the Abbey lies just to the east of Lower Lodge (outside the registered site), the drive serving as a pedestrian route to the gardens and house.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Mottisfont Abbey (listed grade I as Mottisfont Abbey House) stands south-east of the centre of the site, some 40m west of the channel of the River Test. Constructed partly in ashlar stone and partly in brick with stone dressings and with a plain tiled roof, the three-storey south front is U-shaped in plan, with a pedimented, brick-built central section and projecting stone wings with canted bays at either end, the whole front reflecting the easterly drop in ground level. The wings incorporate below them the south transept (below the west wing) and the chapter house and cellarium of the former priory (below and immediately south of the south wing, this latter remnant listed grade II). Following the Dissolution, Lord Sandys transformed the entire priory buildings during the late 1530s into a Tudor house, centred around two courtyards and shown in outline on a garden plan of 1724. This was then remodelled to virtually its present form by Sir Richard Mill from c 1740, the south front being almost entirely his creation. The present north front, apart from its C16 and C18 fenestration, survives as the north wall of the nave of the original C13 priory church, inside which Lord Sandys formed his main living accommodation. Adjacent, and within the north end of the west range, is the gothic room decorated by Rex Whistler for the Russells in 1938-9. To the immediate north-west of the house is the Stable Block courtyard (listed grade II*), built in 1836 (date plaque) in red brick with stone dressings, its two-storey central block on the north side topped with a pediment and a wooden cupola.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS Mottisfont Abbey is surrounded by its gardens, with the formal layout on the north side largely the work of Geoffrey Jellicoe (1900-96) in 1936-7 (drawings reproduced in NT Survey 1991).

The north front overlooks a paved walk and a rectangular level lawn laid as a bowling green which is enclosed on the east side by a low ashlar wall topped by a line of fastigate yews. The wall continues as a line of coping set in gravel to form the north side of the green, with a break at its centrepiece framed by a pair of urns (wall and urns listed grade II). The west side of the green is enclosed by a 1.5m high ashlar stone retaining wall topped with lead urns and is planted with an avenue of pleached lime trees. This terminates at the south end in steps which lead down into an octagonal enclosure of high clipped yew hedges with, at its centre, a stone baluster pedestal (lead finial missing, 1998, listed grade II). Beyond the bowling green, the lawn extends further to a C20 curved ha-ha wall which forms the northern boundary of the garden with the park. Further lawns extend north-eastwards and eastwards to the edge of the Test, these being planted along the north side with trees and shrubberies and embellished with garden statuary bought by Maud Russell c 1936. This includes a marble statue of St George, a lidded urn on a plinth, and a semicircle of four herms standing against a hedge in the north-east corner of the lawns (all listed grade II). A small summerhouse built of knapped flint and with a pointed gothic arch opening which stands enclosed within the shrubbery (100m north-east of the house, listed grade II) dates from Sir Richard Mill's work in the mid C18. North-eastwards from the gardens, a walk to the site boundary follows the west bank of the tree-lined River Test, passing, some 450m from the house, a circular thatched Fisherman's Hut which appears to be shown on the 1st edition OS map of 1871.

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The entrance apron to the east front of the house is framed by a pair of Coade stone urns (listed grade II). On the south side, the house overlooks an extensive sweep of sloping, open lawn, dotted at the edge with a few isolated trees including a massive London plane. On level ground within the U_l formed by the wings of the house is a box parterre in the form of a knot, designed by Norah Lindsay (1866; 1948) in 1938. The south lawns extend south-westwards beyond the drive to the site boundary and are planted with a good scatter of mature trees in grass, including exotics. Immediately beyond the drive, some 70m south-west of the house, a spring of medieval origin flows into a 3m wide font in the form of a bowl constructed of rubble flint (C18, listed grade II). The water flows southwards into the Font Stream which follows a serpentine course, edged with waterside plants, over an eight-stepped stone cascade (listed grade II) to join the Test. Its lower course is tree-lined and embellished with two further C18 sandstone urns on plinths (listed grade II) 150m south-west of the house. North of the drive from Upper Lodge to the house are further lawns dotted with trees including a beech circle planted in the 1960s to replace a former one which encircled the icehouse. This C19 feature (listed grade II), which stands 100m north-west of the house and is now partially enclosed by a ring of holm oaks, comprises a brick chamber and vault which is approached through a cutting from the north-west corner of the stable block.

PARK A small area of parkland (6.5ha) extends northwards from the gardens. Shown as parkland in 1871 (OS), its present open character, with one or two individual trees and one large clump which is recorded in 1871 as The Rookery, is unchanged from its late C19 appearance.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden lies on the north side of the main entrance at Upper Lodge, some 200m west-north-west from the house, and comprises a series of three interconnected walled compartments (walls listed grade II) running north to south. The central, almost square, compartment is quartered by paths edged with low box hedges and is laid out with a collection of old and species roses mixed with herbaceous plants and with broad herbaceous borders lining the central walk, the design and planting of the garden carried out in 1972 by the National Trust's Gardens Advisor, Graham Stuart Thomas. An enclosed garden is shown on this site on the garden plan of 1724, the present three compartments being established by 1839 (Tithe map). The rose garden is recorded in the Tithe Award as the kitchen garden while the triangular compartment to the north, also now planted with roses centred on a circular frame of climbing roses, is the 'new garden'. The southern compartment, adjacent to Upper Lodge, is in use for plant sales.

REFERENCES

Victoria History of the County of Hampshire III, (1908), p 392; IV, (1911), pp 503-06 Country Life, 50 (19 November 1921), pp 653-70; 115 (29 April 1954), pp 1310-13; (6 May 1954), pp 1398-1401; 167 (20 March 1980), pp 822-4 N Pevsner and D Lloyd, *The Buildings of England: Hampshire and the Isle of Wight* (1967), pp 340-2 G Stuart Thomas, *Gardens of the National Trust* (1979), pp 174-6 Mottisfont Abbey, guidebook, (National Trust 1985) *Mottisfont Abbey, Historical Survey of Park and Garden*, (National Trust 1991) *Mottisfont Abbey, guidebook*, (National Trust 1996)

Maps Estate plan, 1724 (reproduced in NT Survey 1991) Tithe map, 1839 (reproduced in NT Survey 1991)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1871 3rd edition published 1910 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1897 3rd edition published 1909

Archival items G Jellicoe drawings, 1936-7 (reproduced in NT Survey 1991)

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