

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

ARLEY HOUSE

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

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**ARLEY HOUSE**

Name:	ARLEY HOUSE
County:	Worcestershire
District:	Wyre Forest (District Authority)
Parish:	Upper Arley
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.424722 Longitude: -2.3496722 National Grid Reference: SO 76319 80806 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000872 Date first listed: 28-Feb-1986

## Details

C19 arboretum and landscape park, and gardens redeveloped since 1965, associated with a private house.

**HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT** Between the C15 and later C18 the manor of Upper Arley was owned by the Lyttelton family. On the death of Thomas Lord Lyttelton in 1779 the manor passed to his sister Lucy Fortesque, wife of Sir Arthur Annesley, Viscount Valentia. On her death in 1783 the manor passed to her son, who in 1816 succeeded his father as Earl of Mountnorris. He died in 1844, the year Arley Castle was rebuilt, when the manor passed to his nephew, Arthur Lyttelton MacLeod, who assumed his mother's family name Annesley. In 1852 the estate was sold to Robert Woodward (d 1882), in whose family it remained until 1959 when it was purchased by R D Turner. It remained in private ownership in 1997.

**DESCRIPTION LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Arley House stands above the east bank of the River Severn c 6km north-west of Bewdley and Kidderminster and c 13km south-east of Bridgnorth. The House occupies high ground north of Arley village, and commands a good view of the Severn Valley and Wyre Forest. From the House the parkland (c 35ha) again rises gently to the north, its highest point lying east of Pickard's Farm. The Severn Valley top forms part of the southern edge of the site, while to the south-west and south-east the boundary is streams draining to the Severn. Field boundaries define the northern limits of the park.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The principal approach to Arley House is along a curving drive through the park, which leads off the minor road leading south to Arley village. There is no lodge, and only modest stone gate piers. After crossing the park the drive divides, to approach the north, rear side of the House and the main, east entrance to the kitchen gardens.

A second approach is via a gate on the southern boundary of the site, at the north end of Arley village close to St Peter's church. This gate adjoins a castellated gatehouse of the 1840s (listed grade II). From the gate a drive leads along below the terrace east of Arley House before turning to approach the House from the north.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Arley House is a low, two-storey house of c 1965, extensively glazed and with its main front to the south. It replaced Arley Castle, which was greatly enlarged in sandstone in 1844 in the Gothic style from a C16 and C17 building. As rebuilt in 1844, Arley comprised a huge square tower, with lower towers flanking a great gateway and with a monumental wing stretching away at the rear. The house was demolished in the early 1960s. **GARDENS AND PLEASURE**

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**GROUND**S Around Arley House are c 2ha of gardens laid out in the later C20, of terraced lawns, flower beds, and a rockery. The main gardens lie south of the House, being bounded and separated from the churchyard to the west and a tall hedge of yew and leylandii. To the east, and overlooking the wooded dingle of Naboth's Vineyard, they are bounded by the terrace wall of the 1840s' Castle, at the south-east corner of which there is access to the castellated gatehouse at the south entrance. From the terrace there are views ahead over Naboth's Vineyard, and to the north over the park. To the south the ground falls away to the Severn, and there are views over Arley Village to the wooded high ground beyond.

North-west of the House are the C18 and C19 kitchen gardens, divided into four main compartments. That nearest the House was developed c 1965 as the walled Italian Garden. The walls are planted with camellias with heather in front. A wide gravel path runs in front of the heather beds, with pleached limes running the length of the garden parallel with the walls. The central part of the garden is mostly taken up with water. An octagonal pool at the west end dominates the view as the garden is entered at that point. Beyond, in the centre, is a square pool with an elaborate rocky fountain. Short rectangular pools run off from the square one to the north and south and a longer one to the east, the last leading the eye to a small but elaborate wrought-iron topped rotunda.

Abutting the north side of the kitchen gardens is the Magnolia Garden. This is a shallow, semicircular area defined to the north by a yew hedge, and with a yew arbour to the east side of the north entrance into the garden. A cruciform arrangement of broad box-edged grass paths divides the garden, with wide borders of magnolias to either side.

West of Arley House, and principally west of the kitchen gardens, is a 7.6ha arboretum. Flagged stone paths define routes through it. A bog garden and well chamber, the latter present by 1904, lie near the southern edge of the arboretum. Planting was started in the early C19, that initial phase reaching its peak c 1820. Trees introduced at that stage included American oaks, caryas, thujas, junipers, pines, cedars, maples, and taxodiums. After the Woodward's purchased the estate in 1852 they added substantially to the tree and plant collection; *Hortus Arleyensis* (1907) lists 424 specimens, mostly over 300 species of trees planted over the previous century. Most celebrated is the only surviving *Sorbus domestica* tree grown (c 1820) from the only specimen recorded wild in Britain. C20 additions include, in addition to new and replacement specimen trees, a laburnum arch, a heather garden and a camellia avenue.

**PARK** The park, presumably laid out when Arley Castle was built c 1840, occupies the rising ground splaying out to the north of the House, and extends east of the minor road leading to Arley village from the north. The central and western parts of the park were under arable cultivation in the late C20. The eastern part, through which the drive runs, was improved grassland, and as well as some such older specimen trees also contained numerous additional plantings of the later C20, as did that part east of the Arley road. A small private golf course was laid out north of the House in the 1990s.

To the south-east the ground falls away into the dingle known as Naboth's Vineyard, the name of which is believed to derive from its long retention by a previous owner against the desire by Lord Mountnorris who wished to buy it and add it to his estate. This contains numerous mature specimen trees. Paths run through the dingle, in the bottom of which is a stream, bridges, and pools with cascades. Built into the bank against the north-east corner of the dell is a substantial icehouse, possibly of c 1800, with some rockwork at its entrance. In 1905 the park extended across the road at this point to Arley Mill, which was presumably treated as a building within this landscape.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The walled garden lies north-west of the House, and comprises four main brick-walled compartments of C18 and C19 date. The entrance front (listed grade II), which incorporates accommodation, comprises a castellated facade in brick of c 1840 which echoes the architectural vocabulary adopted for Arley Castle. A turret on the north-east corner of the garden is probably also of c 1840. A melon house and one other glass-roofed range survive in the first compartment beyond the entrance; otherwise all the glass had gone by 1997. In the second compartment, west of the first, is a range of mid C19 storage sheds along the south wall. Otherwise this compartment is given over to late C20 greenhouses, with fruit trees beyond. The south-west compartment is grassed and contains aviaries; that to the south-east is the Italian Garden.

**REFERENCES** R Woodward, *Hortus Arleyensis* (1907) *The Victoria History of the County of Worcester* 3, (1913), pp 5-6 P Reid, *Burke's and Savills Guide to Country Houses: Volume II, Herefordshire...* (1980), p 192

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Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: Worcestershire sheet 7 NE, 1st edition published 1890 OS 25" to 1 mile: Worcestershire sheet 7.8, 2nd edition published 1904 Worcestershire sheet 7.8, 1927 edition

Description written: 1997 Register Inspector: PAS Edited: August 1999

## 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.