

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

KEARSNEY COURT

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

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**KEARSNEY COURT**

Name:	KEARSNEY COURT
County:	Kent
District:	Dover (District Authority)
Parish:	Temple Ewell
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.148157 Longitude: 1.2660544 National Grid Reference: TR 28524 43838 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001696 Date first listed: 15-Mar-2007

## Details

The landscape around Kearsney Court, laid out about 1900, was one of the first independent commissions by Thomas Mawson, the leading landscape designer of the early C20. It was designed to provide an appropriate setting - almost a park in miniature with ambitious terraced gardens, wider park-like grounds, a kitchen garden and appurtenances like stables and lodges - for a manufacturer's new residence in the countryside just outside Dover. Clearly Mawson himself viewed the commission as a success, including several plates of the landscape in his *The Art & Craft of Garden Making*.

**HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT** Kearsney Court was planned in 1899 for Alfred Leney, a brewer and drinks manufacturer. The site chosen was on rising ground above the hamlet of Kearsney, the northern half of which was occupied by Palmtree Hill Plantation and the lower open ground. However, the project was soon sold on to Edward Percy Barlow, the owner of Wiggins Teape, a paper manufacturer. The house was completed about 1900, and at about the same time - the Canal Pond summerhouses were still under construction in 1902 (*Builders Form and Architectural Record* 1902, 371) - the grounds were laid out by Thomas Mawson (1861-1933), perhaps the leading, and certainly the most prolific, landscape designer of his day. This was probably one of Mawson's earliest independent commissions, and it was probably an erroneous attribution, a decade later by the *Gardeners' Chronicle* (28 June 1913, 438), to Messrs. Mawson Bros. of Windermere, the family firm he had recently broken away from. Several set-piece photographs of Kearsney were included in Mawson's main account of his life's work, *The Art & Craft of Garden Making* which appeared in five editions between 1900 and 1926. On Barlow's death in 1912 the property passed to Mr. Johnstone, a London newspaper man, and was later a nursing home and, in the Second World War, a military hospital. About 1950 the whole estate was bought by a development company; the main house was split into seven residential freeholds, and later several new houses were erected off the main drive. Part of the grounds (including the lowest third of the formal gardens) was acquired by the local authority for a park (now known as Russell Gardens), but overall the essential character of the site remains unaltered.

**DESCRIPTION LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Kearsney Court stands in above the hamlet of Kearsney in Temple Ewell, on the north-west fringe of Dover. The site, as here designated, occupies a site running uphill to the north from a valley-bottom stream, its northern half steeply so. The boundaries of the site follow the B2060 Alkham Road

to the south; fence lines running through the steeply sloping woodland to the north of the house; and to the west again a fence line. From the house, close to the north edge of the site, there are views of about 2km across the valley, originally to farmland but now to secondary woodland. The setting remains fairly rural, certainly that is the sense within the grounds, although there has been some piecemeal development around and within the edge of the site. The last comprises six detached houses built off the south side of the drive to the west of South Lodge in the mid-late C20. They are excluded from the designated area.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The grounds are entered from an entrance at their eastern extremity. This is marked by two pairs of sturdy, square-sectioned 2.5m high brick and tile gate posts with concrete half-ball tops incised to resemble ashlar. The piers define the main vehicular access (the gates across which are lost) and pedestrian wicket gates to either side. The wickets have identical white-painted wooden gates, either those shown in a c.1907 photo (Mawson 1907) or close copies. Behind, a pair of identical two-storey, L-plan lodges, North Lodge and South Lodge, of about 1900 face each other across the start of the drive. These are two-storey L-plan buildings in a simple Arts and Crafts style each with a large bay window projecting, toll house-style, towards the drive. From here the drive curves upwards for 150m before levelling out and straightening for the final 80m approach to the house. The drive now stops short of the house at a row of C20 garages (not of historic interest) and a parking area. Originally it continued to a porte cochere (removed) on the north side of the house. **PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Kearsney Court (not listed) is aligned east-west close to the northern boundary of its grounds, which fall steeply away to the south. The original plans, which were for a rather severe gothic house, were amended and softened by a local firm of architects, Worsfold and Hayward of Dover. It comprises an irregular, two-storey, 50m-long building. On the main south front three short gabled wings project forward at either end of the main house and at the centre; west of the west gable is the former service wing. Architectural detailing includes full-height bay windows to the central and eastern gabled wings, and a balcony supported on wooden pillars between the central and western wings. The latter has a large ground-floor bay window. At the north-east corner of the house is a three-storey turret with an elaborate conical roof with dormer windows from an observation room. Internally the house was well-appointed with good quality carpentry and fittings. Inevitably various alterations were made when the house was subdivided c.1950 but its external appearance and essential character remains little altered.

150m east of the house is its former stables, built c.1900 and converted in the C20 to The Gables, a substantial two-storey ashlar and flint house with decorative timber-framed gable.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** Mawson's plan for the gardens and grounds was apparently executed as intended, and comprises a series of formal terraces dropping steeply away from the house to a lower pleasure ground with a large formal Canal Pond. The grounds are arranged about a central axis aligned on the balcony between the central and western gabled wings of the house.

A narrow terrace runs along the south front of the house, now mainly of grass and partly subdivided by hedges planted since the house was split up c.1950. The terrace is bounded by a balcony of arcaded brickwork, topped with half-round bricks in which are set short iron rods supporting a chain. The rods and chains do not appear on early photos of the gardens (e.g. Mawson 1907) and were presumably introduced in the C20 as a safety feature. From the centre of the terrace angles flights of stairs lead left and right down to the next terrace, with a seating alcove between them. The wall which supports the uppermost terrace stands some 3m tall, and is broken into bays by buttresses. Originally both it and the other terrace walls were planted with pear trees grafted on to quince stock (Gardeners' Chronicle 28 June 1913, 438). At either end bastion-like sections with angle buttresses project slightly forward. As part of the subdivision of the property c.1950 additional access was provided between the uppermost terrace and the next by means of two steel fire escape-like stairs, one either side of the main flight of stairs. The second terrace is again narrow, and was fronted by white-painted wooden rails and balusters (both missing) set between brick buttress piers rising from the terrace wall. From this terrace the main flights of stairs angle back to the third terrace which is broad, grassed, fronted by a golden yew hedge and with clipped yew balls against the brick terrace wall behind. The central path leads via steps to the fourth terrace, to the rear of which is a shallow-ramped flower bed and to the front stubby brick piers with stone ball cappings linked by chains. This terrace overlooks one of the centrepieces of the garden, the Bastion, a semi-circular garden with central pool again supported to the front by a substantial 2m high brick wall. The interior of the Bastion is now lawned, although the lines of its original gravel paths and flower beds can still be clearly made out.

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The view from the Bastion south is now lost, as tall secondary woodland has been allowed to grow up immediately beyond along what, since 1950, has been the boundary between the grounds of Kearsney Court and the Russell Gardens public park which now occupies the lower southern part of the pleasure grounds. The axial steps lead first to a rectangular formal pool (now dry and somewhat dilapidated) set between fenced grass tennis courts. These occupy an area intended by Mawson to be divided between tennis courts and slightly larger croquet lawns. South of the tennis courts is one of the main features of the grounds, a long, formal canal, the Canal Pond, made by Mawson along the swampy ground of a stream bed. Measuring 160m long from east to west and 15m wide and with an expanded circular central section, the Pond is closed at either end by ornamental covered bridges (or summerhouses; early C20 accounts vary in their terminology), Arts and Crafts interpretations of Palladian antecedents. That to the west carries the stream into the Pond via a 'chute', a shallow flight of semi-circular steps. At the centre of the south side of the Pond is a boathouse of identical character comprising a summerhouse with white-painted pillars to the front and a hipped timber roof over a simple brick basement with arched boat entrance to the front. East of the Canal Pond was what in 1902 was described as a bog and rock garden (Builders Formal and Architectural Record 1902, 371).

West of the tennis courts is a children's playground with apparatus and a brick public lavatory of the mid C20, while immediately south-west of the courts is a shelter, rebuilt in the late C20 as a pergola-like structure with brick piers.

To either side of the tennis courts and the Canal Pond are informal lawns and paths with, especially in the western half of the grounds, mature specimen trees presumably mainly introduced c.1900.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** Mawson's design included a substantial walled kitchen garden, located on south-facing ground to the south-east of the house and aligned on it and its gardens. Measuring 90m east-west by 40m it is surrounded by tall, well-detailed, brick walls with angle buttresses with an ornamental entrance with double wooden doors under a pedimented arch in the west wall. The garden was divided into four, with an ornamental water tank at the centre. At the east end of the garden there were extensive glasshouses including vinery, peach house and heated pits; the Gardeners' Chronicle in 1913 recorded that previously (suggesting that Mawson's scheme was already being simplified) 8,000 bedding plants were raised each year including 3,000 *Perlargoniums*. Against the inner face of the east wall is a modest gardener's cottage or bothy. Presumably when the house was subdivided the kitchen garden lost its original function and became the private garden of the former gardener's cottage, which it remains in 2006. The head gardener's house of c.1900, a single-storey part flint-walled house with a timber-framed gable and red tile roof (originally The Bungalow, now Courtland Cottage), stands 50m north-east of the cottage.

**REFERENCES** Builders Formal and Architectural Record (1902), 371 T.H. Mawson, *The Art & Craft of Garden Making* (1907 edn) Architectural Review (August 1910), 71-2 Gardeners' Chronicle (28 June 1913), 438 G. Jellicoe et al, *The Oxford Companion to Gardens* (1991), sv Mawson, Thomas Hayton Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, sv Mawson, Thomas Hayton

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition, published 1867; 2nd edition 1899; 3rd edition 1908; 4th edition 1938 Site plan published in Mawson 1907

Description written: November 2006

## 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.