

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

IFORD MANOR

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

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**IFORD MANOR**

Name:	IFORD MANOR
District:	Bath and North East Somerset (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Freshford
District:	Wiltshire (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Westwood
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.330998 Longitude: -2.2890661 National Grid Reference: ST 79957 59140, ST 80123 58850 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: I List Entry Number: 1000438 Date first listed: 01-Sep-1987

## Details

An early C20 formal garden laid out by Harold Ainsworth Peto surrounded by a late C18 or early C19 park.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

During the C14 Iford Manor was owned by the Carthusian priory at Hinton Charterhouse and leased by the Horton family, clothiers from Lullington in Somerset, who purchased it at the Dissolution. Part of the house was their dwelling and part was a workshop for finishing cloth.

During the late C17 Iford Manor was owned by William Chandler, a local salter and mill owner. In c 1730, under the ownership of the Chandler family, the manor house was altered and improved and given its classical south-west front. In 1777 Mr John Gaisford bought the estate and he, and later his son Thomas, developed the estate further, creating pleasure grounds including an octagonal gazebo and a small park with woodland walks (CL 1907). In c 1820 the Gaisford family bought and demolished the substantial earlier house, located in what is now (2003) the walled garden, in order extend their grounds (Andrews and Drury, 1773). The Gaisford family owned the estate until 1853.

In 1899, the architect Harold Ainsworth Peto (1854-1933) visited Iford Manor with his friend, the garden designer and writer H Avray Tipping. Peto bought the estate that same year from Captain Rooke, who had lived at Iford Manor from 1855 and had purchased it from the Gaisfords. Peto had been looking for a suitable country house for some time, which would give him the opportunity to design his ideal garden.

After the dissolution of his architectural partnership with Sir Ernest George in 1892, when it was decided that Peto would no longer take on any architectural commissions within England, he decided to become a garden designer. Subsequently he was asked to create various gardens in England, such as Easton Lodge, Essex (qv) in 1902 and Buscot Park, Oxfordshire (qv) in 1904-13. He also created gardens on the Continent, such as at Villa Rosemary and Villa Maryland on the French Riviera. Shortly after the purchase of Iford Manor in 1899, Peto started to create a terraced garden on the site of the former pleasure grounds. He moved the C18 octagonal gazebo from the walled garden to the main terrace and he adorned his new garden, laid out in the

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Italian style, with antiquities including sculptures and artefacts collected during his numerous travels to the Mediterranean. By 1907 the garden was largely complete and was described by H Avray Tipping in *Country Life*. Works to the garden continued however until at least 1917, the year Peto wrote his journal *Boke of Iford*, in which he describes the history of the Manor and the development of his garden.

After Peto's death in 1933, Iford Manor was inherited by his nephew, who passed it to his daughter. In 1965, then in a state of decline, it was bought by Miss Elizabeth Cartwright (now, 2003, Mrs Cartwright-Hignett) from Aynho Park in Northamptonshire (qv). During the late 1960s and early 1970s she restored the garden and introduced new planting with advice from the landscape architect Lanning Roper. The latter wrote an article on Iford Manor in *Country Life* in 1972. The garden restoration continues under the direction of Mr John Hignett. Since the late C20, the garden (except for the kitchen garden) has been open to the public and is used for concerts and opera performances.

The site remains (2003) in private ownership.

#### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Iford Manor, a site of c 21ha, is enclosed by a stone wall and situated in a rural area between the villages of Freshford c 1.5km to the north-west and Westwood 0.5km to the north-east. The site lies on a steep hill which slopes down in a southerly direction to the River Frome, which runs to the south of the site. The north-east boundary is formed by the road between Freshford and Westwood. The south-west boundary is formed by Iford Lane, and the south-east boundary by Iford Hill. To the west the site is bounded by Shrub Down, which contains various private dwellings and former estate cottages.

From the site there are fine views to the south and south-west of the Frome valley below, and the hills beyond it.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The main entrance to the site is in the far north-east corner c 290m east of the Manor, where two square posts with metal gates give access to a drive. This entrance is flanked to the north-west by a C19 lodge (OS 1884), now (2003) in use as a private dwelling with a small garden to its north-west. From the entrance, the drive runs in a south-westerly direction for c 100m and then sweeps around in a north-westerly direction, leading through Iford Wood, after which it turns sharply in a south-easterly direction and then leads towards the forecourt immediately west of the Manor. As this drive follows the hillside contours it offers extensive views of the Frome valley to the south of the site.

The site can also be approached directly from the south via Iford Bridge (outside the area here registered), which leads over the River Frome. To the north of the bridge and Iford Lane is an entrance leading straight to the forecourt of the Manor. This entrance is marked by a set of four square gate piers set in a semicircle.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Iford Manor (listed grade II\*) is situated in the southern part of the site, set into the hillside. It mainly dates from the late C17, except for the three-storey south-west front of c 1730 which has five large windows. The Manor was further extended in the late C19, and restored and added to by Peto in the early C20, including a loggia and conservatory attached to the south-east front.

Immediately north-west of the Manor, on the other side of the courtyard, are the former coach house and stables of Tudor origin. They were converted into a house in the 1930s and are now (2003) in use as guest accommodation. Attached at the far north-west end is an C18 barn.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The garden, which covers an area of c 1ha, is situated immediately to the north of the Manor, with a small formal garden to the south-west front. The garden to the north is enclosed to the north-east by Iford Wood. It is centred on a rectangular lawn which slopes gently in a south-easterly direction. At its north-west side is a broad walk called the Great Terrace, which forms part of a perimeter walk that surrounds the lawn. The garden is bounded to the north-west by a wall separating it from the park. The Great Terrace and the perimeter walk and steps pass various features including fine garden buildings and sculptures, and offer extensive views of the Frome valley below to the south, and the hills beyond it. Views from walks at Iford Wood were renowned during the late C18, as confirmed by Collinson in his *History of Somerset* (guidebook 1999).

The garden is entered via a flight of steps (listed grade II) rising from the south-east corner of the Manor. It passes the loggia and, higher up, the conservatory, both of which are attached to the south-east front of the Manor. They each have enclosed

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terraces (listed grade II) extending from them, which are mainly laid to lawn. The terrace in front of the loggia has a small square pond at its south-east end, and at the far south-east end of the main terrace, adjacent to the conservatory, stands a C15 Italian well-head. The steps continue up the hill in a north-easterly direction and lead to the main lawn, which is scattered with mature trees. Aligned with the steps is a circular stone lily pool, created by Peto from an earlier pond (OS 1901).

In the south-east corner of the site, at the south-east end of the main lawn, is the Cloisters (listed grade II\*), completed by Peto in 1914. The building has a square ground plan enclosing a courtyard with a cloister arcade on all four sides. In the centre of the courtyard stands a well-head from Aquilegia, Italy. The single-storey building has a central doorway on the north-west front with round-headed niches on either side containing statues. The Cloisters was built by Peto as a garden feature in Italian medieval style.

The north-west end of the lawn is bounded by a series of steep terraces with stone retaining walls, linked to their north-west with steps that lead up the hill from the north-west corner of the Manor. These steps are bounded to the north-west by a stone wall. In the early C20 the terraces were laid out as a pergola and rose garden by Peto, and before that they formed part of a vegetable garden. Near the bottom of these steps is the Patio Garden, which is characterised by a small balcony lined with columns in the Classical style. The balcony overlooks the area of a former orchard (OS 1884, 1901, 1924), of which now (2003) only a few fruit trees remain, but replanting is in progress.

The steps lead further up the hill towards the Blue Pool in its small enclosed garden. There are two yews cut as the crest of the Chigi family of Siena, introduced in the late C20 as a memorial to the present owner's grandmother who was a Chigi. On the terrace above is a C6 Byzantine capital from Ravenna (listed grade II), reused by Peto as a well-head and placed here by him c 1907. Beyond this to the north is the Casita, a Spanish-style loggia with three bays, introduced by Peto c 1910, reusing C13 marble columns from Verona. Immediately south of the Casita is a small late C20 knot garden centred on large terracotta pots from the Chigi family's Villa Vicobello outside Siena. This knot garden replaced a series of flower beds introduced by Peto. Behind the Casita, to its north, lies the Japanese Garden, including a pool, waterfall, a triangular rock, a small mound with a pagoda, and a rustic hut. These features were introduced in the late C20 and follow the outline of Peto's iris pool, small lawn, and perimeter path situated in this area.

To the south of the Casita, the c 50m long Great Terrace runs north-west to south-east. The far north-west end of the Great Terrace is closed off by a pair of reused gate piers (listed grade II), introduced here by Peto c 1907. The piers were probably erected elsewhere at Iford Manor by the Rooke family in the C19. The Great Terrace is lined on either side by a limestone colonnade (listed grade II), linked by chains or balustrading, with planted borders beyond. The Great Terrace was formerly fully paved with York stone by Peto, but in the 1960s this was partly replaced by gravel. Halfway along the length of the Great Terrace stands a C2 or C3 Greek sarcophagus (listed grade II). A little further to the north-east, steep steps lead from the Great Terrace up the hill into Iford Wood towards a limestone column (listed grade II) introduced by Peto and dedicated to 'Edward VII, The Peacemaker 1916'. The south-east end of the Great Terrace is marked by an C18 octagonal stone gazebo (listed grade II) with a pyramidal roof. This was restored by Peto and moved by him to the Great Terrace from the bastion at the far end of the walled garden. Beyond the gazebo the walk continues along the north-east end of the lawn and leads to the Cloisters. From here the perimeter walk continues south along the south-east side of the lawn, where halfway along its length a small path leads off it to a wooden door in the boundary wall at the south corner of the garden. This door opens onto Iford Lane and gives access to the entrance to the kitchen garden situated on the other side of the lane.

**PARK** The park, now (2003) grazed by sheep, covers the north-west part of the site. It has a thin belt of trees planted along the boundary wall to the west and north-east. A woodland walk (OS 1884), now partly overgrown, runs from Iford Wood in the south-east part of the site in a north-westerly direction across the park, dividing it into two sections. The walk runs to the boundary wall at the west end and continues to run through the tree belt along the north-eastern perimeter of the park. This area is currently (2003) being restored.

A large sheep shed, completed in 2000, stands halfway along the north-east boundary wall of the park, c 3m south of it. It is close to, or possibly covers, the site of a former early C20 building (OS 1924), now (2003) no longer extant.

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**KITCHEN GARDEN** The walled kitchen garden (listed grade II) dates from the C18 and covers an area of c 0.5ha. The walls are constructed of rubble stone with flat copings. The main entrance, introduced by Peto c 1905, is situated in the north corner, on Iford Lane, where a wooden door, topped by a life-size bronze statue of the Dying Gaul, gives access to a triangular section of the garden. The latter forms one of the four sections into which the garden is divided internally by stone walls. The triangular section is laid to lawn with ornamental topiary work introduced in 2000. Along its walls are some mature espalier fruit trees, and a doorway at its south-east end gives access to the adjacent second section of the garden. This garden is planted with vegetables, and plants for future use in the pleasure ground. In its far north-west corner stands an early C20 greenhouse. A central walk leads to the south-east end of this garden, where a small rounded bastion (the site of the C18 gazebo on the Great Terrace) offers views over the fields to the south and east of the kitchen garden. A small doorway in the far north-east corner gives access to the upper level of the walled garden. In the 1960s three gardens were created in this area with advice from Lanning Roper; these were altered in the late C20. A doorway at the end of the north-west wall of the lower walled garden leads to the first garden area, named the Puzzle Garden. This was laid out in 1997 and contains a triangular-shaped chequerboard design made with box hedges and tiles containing a poem; formerly this area was laid to lawn. A doorway in the north-west wall leads to the middle garden containing shrub borders and a lawn. A doorway in the yew hedge leads to the final garden with a fine view of the Manor. A small summerhouse was built against its north wall in the 1960s. This was altered in the late 1990s and its interior was adorned with a mosaic and shell design of the Green Man.

#### REFERENCES

Country Life, 22 (28 September 1907), pp 450-62; 52 (26 August 1922), pp 242-8; (2 September 1922), pp 272-7; 151 (18 May 1972), pp 1214-16; no 4 (24 January 1991), pp 52-6 Architectural Review 33, (1913), pp 11-14, 28-30, ills 5, 6, 10, 11 H A Peto, *The Boke of Iford* (1917) (published, with introduction by R Whalley, in 1993) G Jekyll, *Garden Ornament* (1918), pp 144, 175 W Dotesio, *A Short Account of Iford Manor, Wiltshire* (1927) B Cherry and N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Wiltshire* (2nd edn 1975), p 276 L Fleming and A Gore, *The English Garden* (1979), pp 212-13 J Sales, *West Country Gardens* (1980), pp 218-21 D Ottewill, *The Edwardian Garden* (1989), pp 147-50 *The Peto Garden, Iford Manor, guidebook*, (8th edn 1999) Maps G E Peto, *Iford Manor Estate, May 1933* (Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office)  
OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1884/6 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1901 3rd edition published 1926  
Description written: July 2001 Amended: October 2001, November 2003 Register Inspector: FDM Edited: November 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.