

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

GRAVETYE MANOR

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

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Name:	GRAVETYE MANOR
County:	West Sussex
District:	Mid Sussex (District Authority)
Parish:	West Hoathly
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.090324 Longitude: -0.057437239 National Grid Reference: TQ3613934129 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000158 Date first listed: 01-Jun-1984

## Details

Formal and informal gardens, set within a landscape of woodlands and lakes, which were laid out between 1885 and 1935 by the horticultural writer and gardener William Robinson and which survive largely intact.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The manor house at Gravetye was built in 1598 by a local iron-master, Richard Infield, and remained in his family until the late C17 when it passed to the husband of his grand-daughter, Henry Faulconer and eventually into the hands of trustees. No records survive of the Manor's history between the last recorded reference to the trustees in 1784 and its purchase in 1884 by the horticultural writer and gardener William Robinson (1838-1935). He restored the house and laid out the present gardens and much of the surrounding woodlands, leaving these to the nation on his death. A charitable trust was set up to manage the estate, the house being privately occupied until taken over by the army for wartime use and the woodlands being managed by the Forestry Commission. Following a period of neglect in the mid 1950s, the house and gardens were taken over by Mr Peter Herbert, who in 1967 was granted a ninety-nine-year renewable lease. The house and gardens are now (1998) run as a country house hotel and the surrounding estate is managed for the William Robinson Trust by Forest Enterprise for the Forestry Commission.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Gravetye Manor is situated 1.5km east of the B2028 Ardingly to Turners Hill road and c 0.5km north of West Hoathly village, the 65ha registered site comprising 9ha of formal, informal and kitchen gardens and 56ha of surrounding woodland, farmland and lakes. The southern half of the site lies on the steep slopes of a west to east-running stream valley, while northwards the ground rises more gently to form a broad-backed ridge. The boundaries are largely enclosed by agricultural fencing and the whole site is set within a landscape of well-wooded, small-scale valleys and ridges.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The site is entered at the north-west corner from Vowels Lane, which runs north-east from the B2028. A drive entering through timber gates leads c 700m eastwards through The Alders and Drive Shaw, mixed woodland shown established by 1874 (OS 1st edition) and restocked in the mid C20. It then swings south, enjoying distant views

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eastwards before passing through Warren Wood and entering the gardens c 150m north-east of the house, through wrought-iron gates hung on stone gate piers. A further curve to the west brings the drive onto the rectangular walled forecourt on the east, entrance front of the house. The approach to the house in the mid C19 (Tithe map of 1841) appears to have been from the south-west, from a lane or drive which ran along the east side of the present Moat house and along the south side of the gardens to a courtyard on the south front. By the late C19, the present entrance off Vowels Lane was established but the drive then followed a route directly south-south-east towards the house, the present route being formed in 1889 in association with the gateway and forecourt designed by Ernest George.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Gravetye Manor (listed grade I) stands centrally within the site on the crest above the north-facing side of the valley and enjoys views southwards over the lake and to the northern edge of West Hoathly village and eastwards over the wooded ridges of the surrounding landscape. The house, built in 1598, is of two storeys with an attic and gabled dormers and is constructed in ashlar with a roof of Horsham slabs. An entrance porch was added by Henry Faulconer in 1603 (P Herbert pers comm, 1998) and in 1885 the house was extended with a two-storey gabled wing to the north-east and a porch on the west side, both in matching style, by the architect Ernest George (1839-1922). The north-east wing was further enlarged, again in matching style, in 1990-2.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The formal and informal gardens surround the house, their present structure and built features surviving largely intact from the layout created by Robinson from 1885 to 1935.

On the west front, the porch opens onto a large rectangular terrace, its outline existing in plan by 1841 (Tithe map) and laid out by Robinson as a flower garden on the site of a former lawn. The terrace, which is enclosed by sandstone walls, is laid to a central lawn, formerly occupied by rectilinear flower beds, and is quartered by York stone flag paths with, at the centre point and on the axis of the porch, a stone sundial. The lawns are bordered by rectangular beds of mixed herbaceous plants and shrub roses, a flagged path on the perimeter and further borders along the foot of the north wall, at the centre point of which, on the axis of the sundial, is a stone lily tank. In the north-east corner, adjacent to the north wing of the house, a small paved area was planted in 1998 with clematis bred by Ernest Markham (1881-1937), head gardener to Robinson from 1914 until 1935. In the south-west corner and shaded by three mature yew trees is a square, oak-framed summerhouse designed by Ernest George and erected on the site of an existing garden building (OS 1874) in 1900-1, while in the north-west corner are three restored bays of a brick and timber pergola (rebuilt 1980) which was originally constructed in 1898-1900 (Patterson nd) and at that date ran southwards to enclose the entire west side of the terrace.

From the south-east corner, stone ramps built by Robinson lead from the terrace down into a further walled courtyard on the south front of the house which is laid out to an asymmetrical design of rectangular beds and paving with a stone pedestal fountain.

On the north side of the terrace, and reached by a winding staircase of flights of stone steps and landings, the gently rising ground formerly laid out by Robinson as the Azalea Bank is now planted with azaleas mixed with heaths, other shrubs and herbaceous planting. At the top of the bank and extending c 90m east to west is the Long Lawn which is enclosed by low stone walls with a stone table and seating at the west end and a summerhouse at the east end. This was originally levelled by Robinson as a tennis lawn and replaced a former fernery, rockery and rosery (Herbert and Greenwood 1989). Northwards from the Long Lawn, the rising slope to the fenced boundary of the gardens is planted as a Wild Garden with an informal scatter of ornamental trees and groups of mature Scots pine, underplanting of shrub groups, bulbs and mixed native and exotic herbaceous species in grass, the few groups of heaths reflecting its former layout by Robinson as a heath garden. At the far east end of the Wild Garden is the Nursery which contains a range of Dutch lights, greenhouses and stores, and an 18m long, lean-to peach house, erected in 1906 by W Richardson & Co and now (1998) under restoration. South of the Nursery and west of the terrace is the Orchard which is dotted with fruit trees of mixed ages in grass and which formerly incorporated an east to west rose walk (now gone) to a stone-built bower and seat. The Orchard slopes steeply south-westwards to meet the gardens surrounding the Moat (listed grade II), a timber-framed house dating from 1500 and restored by Robinson in 1887.

On their south side, the house and terrace garden are flanked by the gravelled Broadwalk, created from the former drive in 1890. Southwards, the valley side, which drops steeply down to Upper Lake and which was originally cultivated by Robinson

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as an alpine meadow with bulbs, is now also colonised with a wide range of native plants. Upper Lake, which was formed by Robinson by 1887 but later filled in and planted, was re-excavated and refilled in 1980. Below the dam at the east end of the lake the stream follows a winding course over a waterfall and through massed bamboo plantings while the east side of the alpine meadow is enclosed by a brick ha-ha, built in 1886, which runs northwards to the gateway at the entrance to the gardens. West of the ha-ha, on the east side of the house, is the East Garden which is laid out to a cruciform design of grass paths and planted with tall, dense islands of largely rhododendron shrubbery which are edged with herbaceous plants and contain a scatter of small, ornamental trees. The site was formerly a kitchen garden (OS 1874) which Robinson planted as an orchard before developing the present rhododendron shrubbery.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The kitchen garden lies to the immediate north of the ornamental gardens, c 80m north of the house. It is laid out on a south-east-facing slope to an oval plan which measures some 85m at its broadest and is enclosed by high sandstone walls planted with espaliered fruit trees. Built from 1898 to 1900, after a period of disuse the garden was restored in 1980 to its present use for fruit and vegetable production.

**OTHER LAND** To the south and south-east of the gardens, both the north- and south-facing slopes of the valley are laid to open grassland, with boundary tree belts formed by Tile Barn and Jarrett Shaws, these being shown as woodlands on the Tithe map of 1841 but subsequently replanted by Robinson and restocked later by the Forestry Commission. Lower Lake, which was constructed from a former hammer pond, the dam wall at the north end dating from 1889 (Patterson nd), is completely fringed with trees, the belts containing mature exotics including conifer groups. Further mixed woodlands enclose the north side of the house and gardens. Warren's Wood to the north-east was established by 1841 but planted with pines by Robinson in 1890 while to the north-west he planted Pine Wood on a former open field in 1892 and Cedar Grove in 1904. Further restocking took place in the mid C20 and following extensive storm damage in 1987 and 1990, all the site's woodlands are now (1998) undergoing restoration and replanting.

#### REFERENCES

Country Life, 32 (28 September 1912), pp 409-11; 43 (23 March 1918), pp 294-301; 57 (25 April 1925), pp 650-3 William Robinson, Home Landscapes (2nd edn 1920) I Nairn and N Pevsner, The Buildings of England: Sussex (1965), pp 627-8 P Herbert and H Greenwood, Gravetye Manor, A Short General History of the Site, guidebook, (1989) G Patterson, A Scheme of Restoration, prepared for the Forestry Commission ... (nd, but post 1990)

Maps Tithe map for West Hoathly, 1841 (West Sussex Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1874, published 1879 2nd edition published 1899 3rd edition published 1912 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1874 3rd edition published 1910

Description written: April 1998 Amended: January 2000 Register Inspector: VCH Edited: June 2000

## 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.