

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

BAYFORDBURY

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BAYFORDBURY

Name: BAYFORDBURY

County: Hertfordshire

District: East Hertfordshire (District Authority)

Parish: Bayford

County: Hertfordshire

District: East Hertfordshire (District Authority)

Parish: Brickendon Liberty

County: Hertfordshire

District: East Hertfordshire (District Authority)

Parish: Hertford

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.774486
Longitude: -0.098411898
National Grid Reference: TL3129510134
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1000906
Date first listed: 11-Jun-1987

Details

A mid C18 and C19 landscape park with pleasure grounds and a notable mid C19 pinetum, surrounding a mid C18 and early C19 country house.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Jane Cottrell and Harriet Baker, daughters and co-heiresses of Jane Aldemare from whom they inherited Bayford manor, sold the estate to Sir William Baker (d 1770) in 1758 (VCH). Sir William was one of the richest and most successful businessmen in England at the time, and was engaged particularly in American trade. He made an advantageous marriage to Mary Tonson, the daughter of Jacob Tonson, a well-known and prosperous publisher and Chairman of the East India Company (1749/50, 1752/3), and co-founder of the Kit-Cat Club in 1700.

Sir William built a house on the former farmland, 1759-62, surrounding it with a landscape park in which a collection of cedars of Lebanon were planted in 1765 as nine-year-old saplings (CL 1925). After Baker's death his son, William II (d 1824), inherited the property, carrying out improvements to the grounds, including the creation of the lake in 1772, and major alterations to the house, 1806-12. Upon his death, William II's grandson, William Robert (d 1896), inherited the estate, creating a pinetum

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in 1837, with advice from John Claudius Loudon. Many of the early plantings came from noted plant collectors including David Douglas and Hartweg. Further plantings of newly introduced species were made c 1900, many coming from collections by Maries and Captain L Clinton-Baker. Many of the specimens are featured in H Clinton-Baker's *Illustrations of Conifers* (1909-12).

In 1945 the Baker family divided and sold the estate. The John Innes Institute bought the house and surrounding parkland, building various research blocks in the grounds and setting up horticultural trials. In 1967 the house was acquired by Hatfield Polytechnic, and sold again in 1986 as a company headquarters, in which use it remains (1999).

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Bayfordbury lies 2km south-west of the centre of Hertford, at the north edge of the village of Bayford. The c 130ha site is bounded to the north-west by the B158 Lower Hatfield Road, and on the other sides largely by agricultural land. The house and pleasure grounds occupy the north end of a plateau which slopes down across parkland to the north and west, and east into a valley through which the Bayford Brook runs from south to north. The east side of the valley and the level high ground beyond is occupied by further parkland and the pinetum.

The setting is largely rural, with the main London to Hertford railway line close by to the east, and the landscape parks of Panshanger (qv) and Balls Park (qv) lying 2km away to the north-west and north-east respectively. Panoramic views extend from the north-west, entrance front of the house and the west and north parkland, across the agricultural land of the shallow River Lea valley.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main approach enters the estate off the Lower Hatfield Road, 600m north of the house, at the north tip of the park. Here formerly stood a lodge to the west and an orchard to the east (OS 1883). From here the north drive curves through the park up a shallow hillside, overlooking the park and the Bayford Brook valley to the east, with the pinetum standing on the far hillside, and to the west the west park, with views extending north-west across the Lea valley. The drive passes between two large cedars of Lebanon before arriving at a carriage sweep, set in lawn, overlooked by a portico enclosing the entrance on the north-west front of the house. Further Lebanon cedars flank the house, these probably being part of the 1765 planting. Panoramic views extend north-west across the park and Lea valley from the house.

The west drive enters the park 600m west of the house, off the Lower Hatfield Road, at the two-storey River Lodge (C19), built of red and yellow brick. From here the drive extends east and ascends the hillside overlooking an area of parkland to the south (estate map, 1807, HRO). Some 175m west of the house a spur extends 75m south to the former stable block. The drive continues east, with views north-west from its eastern half, to arrive at the carriage sweep on the north-west front.

A south drive formerly entered the park from the north end of the village of Bayford (OS C19), this drive being now (1999) partly lost and partly used as a farm track. The south drive entered 1.3km south-south-west of the house at a lodge (now gone), extending north to Hook's Grove, an oval area of C18 woodland. Having passed through Hook's Grove, the drive continues north as a track, passing to the east of the lake 250m from the house, before joining the west drive 75m from the house.

In the early C19 (estate map, 1807) the north drive followed a similar course to now (1999), entering at a gateway set back off the road where the Brook widened into a pond, and on the other side of which stood an extensive kitchen garden (now gone). The west drive followed a course at some distance further north than at present (its earlier course still present in the late C19, OS). The south drive also occupied a different course, entering the park south-west of Hook's Grove at the south end of Broadgreen Wood. By the late C19 (OS 1883) the drives had assumed their present courses.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Bayfordbury (1759-62, altered by Francis Aldhouse 1809-12, listed grade II*) stands towards the centre of the site, surrounded by pleasure grounds. The white-painted and stuccoed house, built in Neoclassical style, consists of a two-storey plus attics central block flanked by single-storey link pavilions in turn flanked by low, two-storey service wings. As built, the central block, of red brick, was flanked by separate service pavilions (originally stables to the south-west and kitchens to the north-east), the gaps being filled in in the early C19 by Aldhouse, when the house was faced in stucco. At that time the single-storey orangery was added to the north-east end of the house, attached to the former kitchen range.

On the south-east, garden front a single-storey portico is flanked by a railed balcony, raised on short iron columns, which extends out along the length of the single-storey links, ending in stairs sweeping down to the garden. A flight of stone steps leads down

from the central garden door beneath the portico to the garden. The garden front overlooks the parkland of the wooded Bayford Brook valley to the south and east, with a view of the monumental column at the top of the far hillside in Sailor's Grove.

The stable block (c 1812, probably Francis Aldhouse, converted to domestic accommodation 1990s, listed grade II) stands 150m south-west of the house, on lower ground. The two-storey block of yellow brick surrounds three sides of the stable yard, which is entered via an archway in the north-east range. The yard is closed on the south-west side by a brick wall with piers at intervals, pierced by a central narrow gateway which gives access to a square lawn lying adjacent to the south-west, and beyond this the kitchen garden.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The pleasure grounds surround the house to the south, east and north, enclosed by the remains of a ha-ha or sunk fence. A broad gravel terrace, overlooked by the balcony, extends along the whole of the south-east, garden front, which it links to the main lawn, which in turn extends south-east to the remains of the ha-ha. The lawn is planted with clumps of shrubs and overlooks the valley and Brook to the east, with a view to the monumental column in Sailor's Grove. The lawn is flanked by the remains of wooded groves containing mature trees and shrub borders which are encircled by paths. The trees include specimens of Atlantic and Lebanon cedars, Wellingtonia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*), Japanese red cedar (*Cryptomeria japonica*), Chinese lace bark pine (*Pinus bungeana*) and many mature yews.

The remains of a rock garden constructed by James Pulham, 1845(6 (Garden Hist 1984), lie in the grove to the south-west of the house. The rock garden was formerly planted with a large collection of alpine plants and was very highly cultivated (Gardener's Mag 1909). The John Innes Institute removed much of the rockwork from the rock garden after the Second World War, and since then a car park has been constructed over part of it. Some of the paths still remain winding amongst mature ornamental specimen trees and shrubs. An extensive rose garden which formerly lay close by (*ibid*) has also gone.

The house in the early C19 (estate map) was enclosed by an oval pleasure ground, including the present area of lawn to the north-west by the entrance front, so that the main fronts of the house overlooked broad lawns with long views across the valleys beyond. The house was flanked by densely planted groves, as now (1999), with winding paths through them.

South of the kitchen garden lies the lake, laid out in 1772 by William Baker II when it stood within parkland (estate map), and partly set within early to mid C19 woodland (OS 1883). Several exotic mature specimens stand in the area, including *Liquidambar styraciflua*, *Taxodium distichum* and *Libocedrus decurrens*. The lake contains several islands, and is overlooked by the former south drive to the east. A boathouse formerly stood at the south end of the lake (OS 1925). Home Farm stands to the south-west of the lake.

PARK The park surrounds the house and pleasure grounds to the north, east and south, being divided into two unequal halves by the Bayford Brook valley to the east. Much of the park is laid to open arable and has lost its former planting of single trees and clumps, although the areas east of the north drive and east of the Brook are laid to pasture retaining some parkland plantings. A path leads north-east around the south-east side of the former ha-ha, turning east to continue down the hillside to the Brook, which is crossed by a brick bridge 300m north-east of the house. The Brook is largely enclosed by trees. The path, having crossed the Brook, turns north into the informally planted Clinton-Baker Pinetum, which covers part of the hillside and is encircled by a footpath. A shelter belt of Scots, Austrian and Corsican pines (1840s) extends along the top of the hillside on the east boundary, with a yew thicket (1840s) to the north above the Chalk Dell (formed from a quarry). The collection of fine specimen trees stands between these and the Bayford Brook in the valley, and includes a collection of unusual *Pinus* species, various *Abies*, *Larix* and *Picea* species, and many other conifer species which were recorded in detail by the Clinton-Bakers. Some of the trees are of importance, either because of their size or date of introduction (Hatfield Polytechnic 1980).

A further arm of the path crossing the Brook turns south up the wooded hillside to a plateau, laid largely to pasture divided by overgrown hawthorn hedges and surrounded by woodland, that marking the east boundary being called Sailor's Grove. A 10m high monumental column (c 1804, listed grade II) stands 600m south-east of the house, set a short distance into the Grove and flanked by several mature cedars of Lebanon. It is a stone, fluted Doric column with an urn at the top, standing on a tall pedestal, with many memorial inscriptions to members of the Baker family, in particular Edward Baker (d 1796), Henry Baker (d 1804) and Charles Adolphus Baker (d 1822). From the column a view extends north-west across the plateau and valley beyond to the garden front of the house.

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The park was laid out initially in the mid to late C18, and is shown in completed form (except for the Pinetum) in the estate map of 1807. A perimeter path running through shelter belts at that date encircled the park to the west, south and east, the park itself being planted with many clumps, copses and single trees.

KITCHEN GARDEN The octagonal, brick-walled kitchen garden (early C19, listed grade II), presently disused (1999), lies 250m south-west of the house, beyond the stable yard, with which it is contemporary, and from which it is separated by a square lawn. At the centre of the lawn lies a circular stone pond with a central stone fountain basin, probably the work of the Pulham company, 1845/6 (Garden Hist 1984). The lawn is bounded to the south-west by the kitchen garden, to the north by ground formerly occupied by orchards, with long views across the Lea valley, and to the south by the lake. The kitchen garden is entered from the stable yard lawn via a gateway, flanked by brick and flint piers and set centrally in the north-east wall, which is aligned with the gateway in the south-west wall of the stable yard. Three doorways in similar style are set into the other long sections of the walls. Formerly (OS C19) the kitchen garden extended beyond the west and north walls, and the present stable yard lawn was also cultivated around the central pond. A range of glasshouses stood against the outer side of the south-east wall, with further glasshouses sited east of the stables and against the south-east wall of the stable block. By the early C20 the stable yard lawn had been laid out with a rose garden (CL 1925), and by the late C20 the glass had gone.

REFERENCES

Gardener's Magazine, (11 December 1909), pp 969/70 H Clinton-Baker, Illustrations of Conifers (1909-12) Country Life, 57 (17 January 1925), pp 92-9; (24 January 1925), p 125 JF, The Clinton-Baker Pinetum, (January 1978) [copy on EH file] Conifers at Bayfordbury, (Hatfield Polytechnic Field Station 1980) Garden History 12, no 2 (1984), pp 140/1

Maps A map of an estate belonging to William Baker esq ..., 1758 (Hertfordshire Record Office) Dury and Andrews, A topographical Map of Hartford-shire, 1766 Map of estates situate in ... Hertingfordbury, Bayford, ... belonging to William Baker, 1807 (Hertfordshire Record Office) A Bryant, The County of Hertford, 1822

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1883 2nd edition published 1899 3rd edition published 1925 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1898 3rd edition published 1923

Description written: August 1999 Register Inspector: SR Edited: October 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.