

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

LAVINGTON PARK

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

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Name:	LAVINGTON PARK
County:	West Sussex
District:	Chichester (District Authority)
Parish:	Duncton
County:	West Sussex
District:	Chichester (District Authority)
Parish:	East Lavington
National park:	SOUTH DOWNS
label.localisation:	Latitude: 50.940985 Longitude: -0.65503098 National Grid Reference: SU9459316588 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001213 Date first listed: 01-Jun-1984

Details

A late C18 and C19 garden, laid out on the site of a former late C16 house and garden and further altered in the C20, set within a park largely planted in the C19 but of C18 origin.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The Lavington Park estate was bought in 1589 from the executors of the last Earl of Arundel by Giles Garton, who shortly afterwards built a house. The property passed by the marriage of his grand-daughter to Robert Orme and, through their descendants, to John Sargent, MP for Seaford and Queensborough, who rebuilt Giles Garton's house in 1790-4. In 1841 Lavington was inherited by Sargent's eldest grand-daughter, who in 1833 had married Samuel Wilberforce, later to become Bishop of Oxford and then of Winchester. A younger grand-daughter married Henry Edward Manning, the Archdeacon and Rector of Lavington who later became Archbishop of Westminster and Cardinal. In c 1900, following the deaths of Bishop Wilberforce in 1873 and later of his wife, the estate was acquired by James Buchanan, later ennobled as Lord Woolavington, who extended the house. The estate was sold again in 1936 to the Wallace family, Mrs Wallace being a daughter of Sir Edwin Lutyens. The property served as Commando headquarters during the Second World War and in 1946 was bought by the Rev C E Johnson for the present (1998) owner, Seaford College, which was founded as a school in 1884.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Lavington Park is situated on the west side of the A285 Petworth to Chichester road, immediately to the south-west of Duncton village. The c 61ha registered site, which comprises c

5.5ha of formal and informal gardens and a 55ha park, is enclosed by agricultural fencing and, in the south-west corner, west of St Peter's church, by high flint walls. East and south of the church, the boundary abuts a short length of Beechwood Lane and a track runs north to south along the west boundary. The site's gently undulating ground rises in the south-west corner onto a knoll, from which there are extensive views northwards over the surrounding wooded farmland of the Sussex Weald towards Surrey and the North Downs. The heavily wooded scarp of the South Downs rises steeply immediately above the site's southern boundary.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The site is approached from the A285 to the east, a drive entering through gate piers flanked by curving wing walls of checkered stone and flint (listed grade II). The drive follows a south-westerly course towards the house passing, 150m beyond the entrance gate, through a further gateway flanked by a pair of single-storey stuccoed lodges (known as East Lodges, listed grade II), each with a wide portico of Ionic columns and a triangular pediment facing inwards onto the drive. Although this approach was laid out between 1795 and 1813 (county maps of those dates), the ensemble of gateway and lodges and the straightening of the drive's easterly 250m, was to a design by Detmar Blow for Lord Woolavington in 1903. Some 130m east of the house the drive forks, one arm passing through tall square gate piers and continuing south-westwards to ascend the steep grassy knoll to the forecourt on the north-facing entrance front. The northern foot of the knoll is enclosed from the park by a curving brick wall topped by a balustrade, this and the entrance gate piers probably also by Blow (listed building description), although a wall or a fence on the line of the present wall is shown established by 1874(5 (OS 1st edition). The other arm of the drive, also laid out between 1795 and 1813, leads west-north-west along the north side of the balustraded wall to the site boundary and then continues westwards towards the village of Graffam. Prior to this date, the site of the house appears to have been approached both from the north, by the present track which follows the western site boundary, and from Beechwood Lane to the south.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Lavington Park (listed grade II*) stands on a knoll in the south-west corner of the site, in the lee of the South Downs, the extensive views to the north featuring the tower of Petworth church and, in the far distance, the crest of the North Downs at Leith Hill. The house is built to a half H in plan, two storeys high with an attic and basement and is constructed in white stock brick and Portland stone with a balustrade parapet and a hipped slate roof. The original portion, built in 1790(4 by James Lewis (c 1751-1820) to replace Giles Garton's former red-brick mansion of c 1589 which stood on or near the same site, consists of the present east wing, with an entrance on the south side, and central portion, the latter built as a service wing. The house was enlarged in 1903 by the architect Detmar Blow (1867-1939) by the addition of a billiards room at the west end with its own porticoed entrance on the south side and with curved bays added to the north elevation of Lewis' east wing. A further north-west wing, to balance the east wing, was added in 1912-13 by Owen Carey Little (CL 1925), the south front apparently remaining as the entrance front until the addition of the present, rectangular, entrance porch to the centre of the north front sometime after 1936 (CL sale advertisement).

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens cover a sloping, roughly rectangular area of c 3.5ha to the south and south-west of Lavington Park and are enclosed on all sides by a high wall. Doors from the porticoed porch on the south side of the house open onto a paved terrace walk, south from which a broad lawn, framed by trees, slopes gently upwards. The upper, southern half of the lawn is cut to form two levels of terrace, the lower level first shown on the OS edition of 1910 and probably cut to form tennis and croquet lawns (Gardeners' Chronicle 1914). Above these, and extending south to the surrounding garden wall, two further terraces, which may be features associated with the late C16 house, are cut into the rising slope. These are covered by light woodland comprising young trees and a number of mature yews, the terraces being shown established on the OS 1st edition surveyed 1874(5 and planted with deciduous and conifer trees. At the south-east corner of the garden (120m from the house) and built into the surrounding wall stands a small, square, brick building with an entrance arch facing north and with a pitched tiled roof. This dates from the late C16 and is probably the bottom storey of the former gatehouse to Giles Garton's house of 1589 (CL 1925). Westwards from the lawns and covered by a canopy of mixed woodland, the slope is cut into two levels of terrace, each with an east to west axial walk. The upper walk leads from the gatehouse to a wrought-iron gate in the west wall of the garden while the lower walk, broader and laid to grass with flanking yew hedges now (1998) considerably out-grown, descends from the lawn by a flight of stone steps to run parallel. The walks are shown on the OS 1st edition, the

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LAVINGTON PARK

lower walk being known as the Bishop's Walk and ornamented in the early C20 with carved marble seats, now (1998) gone (Gardeners' Chronicle 1914).

From the west end of the house, the terrace walk leads west and descends to the east wall of the kitchen garden via two long flights of stone steps flanked by brick walls with built-in planting beds and passing, on its north side, a swimming pool now (1998) with a domed cover. The pool, probably designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens for his daughter Mrs Wallace (Canon Johnson pers comm, 1998), stands on the site of a former fountain (first shown on the OS edition of 1910) and a rock garden laid out by Joseph Cheal (Gardener's Chronicle 1914).

PARK The parkland extending north from the house to the site boundary and c 500m north-eastwards to the line of the entrance drive, is laid out to sports fields with only a few isolated trees and one conifer clump surviving from the extensive pattern of planting shown on the OS editions from 1875 until at least 1910. Many of these trees were planted by Bishop Wilberforce (ibid). The south-west corner of the park is largely occupied by mid to late C20 school buildings, these incorporating (200m west of the house) the C18 brick and flint stable courtyard (listed grade II) altered by Detmar Blow in 1903 and now (1998) in school use. East of the drive, the park is laid to grass with, towards the north-east corner, a number of mature oak trees and, 500m from the house, a yew clump which stands on the line of the parish boundary.

A park is shown established at Lavington in the late C18 (named as Woolavington on Gardner and Gream's map of 1795) which extended some distance to the west of the present west boundary. By 1813 (OS Old Series 1" map), it had diminished to roughly its present size although the late C19 (between 1875 and 1896) saw the temporary re-imparking and planting of a few fields to the west and the north, these having been returned to agricultural by 1910.

At the far eastern end of the park is an area of orchard which was laid out by Bishop Wilberforce in c 1841 (Canon Johnson pers comm, 1998) on the site of former nursery grounds (Tithe map). It is intended to restore the orchards in the late 1990s. On the southern edge of the park, some 220m east of the house, stands Beechwood House (listed grade II) which is surrounded by informal gardens and, on the south side of Beechwood Lane, a former kitchen garden. The former Dower House to Lavington Park, Beechwood House, was possibly built by James Lewis in 1794 (listed building description) and was the home of the Rev Henry (later Cardinal) Manning from 1833 to 1851. The house was later altered by Sir Edwin Lutyens, who may have lived there himself sometime after 1939. East of Beechwood House, on first the south and then the north side of the lane, a spring-fed stream lined with wooded banks flows eastwards and then northwards (along the south and east boundaries of the orchard) through a series of large ponds and over several small waterfalls. Now in use as a trout fishery, several of the ponds appear to have been established by the end of the C18 (Gardner and Gream, 1795) and in 1910 the stream valley, known as Botany Bay, was described as 'a delightful valley with a stream meandering through its length with here and there miniature waterfalls', the pond at the entrance (west) end planted with waterlilies and its banks with flowers and shrubs and weeping willows (Gardeners' Chronicle 1914).

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden lies to the immediate west of the house, on the north-west-facing slope below the wooded terraces. The c 130m x 70m rectangular garden, which appears to be shown in plan on Gardner and Gream's map of 1795, is enclosed on the west and north sides by brick walls, on the east by a flint wall and by an open mesh fence on the south side. A line of three greenhouses, first shown on the OS of 1910, stand against the north wall. The ground, now (1998) laid to grass with a central sundial, was planted as a flower and vegetable garden in 1910 (ibid) with the lines of former quartering paths, shown established in 1874-5, still (1998) visible beneath the grass.

REFERENCES

W T Pike (ed), *Sussex in the Twentieth Century: Contemporary Biographies* (1910), p 176 *Gardeners' Chronicle*, i (13 June 1914), pp 410-11 *Country Life*, 58 (25 July 1925), pp 130-5; 80 (28 November 1936), sale advertisement I Nairn and N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Sussex* (1965), p 215

Maps W Gardner and T Gream *A Topographical map of the County of Sussex..., 1" to 1 mile, 1795 Tithe map for Duncton parish, 1837* (West Sussex Record Office)

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Inventory of Great Britain
LAVINGTON PARK

OS Old Series, 1" to 1 mile, published 1810-13 OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1874-5, published 1880 2nd edition surveyed 1896, published 1898 3rd edition surveyed 1910, published 1914 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1875 3rd edition published 1912

Description written: May 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.