

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

BEARWOOD COLLEGE

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

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BEARWOOD COLLEGE

Name: BEARWOOD COLLEGE

District: Wokingham (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Arborfield and Newland

District: Wokingham (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Barkham

District: Wokingham (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Winnersh

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.412641
Longitude: -0.88561642
National Grid Reference: SU 77598 68769
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II*
List Entry Number: 1000414
Date first listed: 30-Sep-1987

Details

A C19 landscape park and woodland surrounding a Victorian country house standing on formal terraces, with a Pulhamite rock and water garden of c 1ha. William Sawrey Gilpin was employed here c 1820.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1816 John Walter II (d 1847), the chief proprietor of The Times newspaper, bought the Bearwood estate, employing J W Sanderson to build a modest classical villa (complete by 1822) and enlarging the lake to c 20ha. Around 1819-20 William Sawrey Gilpin (1762-1843) worked here whilst still employed as a drawing master at the nearby Royal Military College, Sandhurst, this being one of his first landscape gardening commissions. By 1822 David Stewart was directing the work (Piebenga 1993), to whom John Claudius Loudon attributed the layout in 1833 (Gardener's Mag). John Walter III inherited the property and his father's interest in The Times. He rebuilt the house, 1865-74, using the architect Robert Kerr to design the massive pile, and employed James Tegg as Head Gardener. 'Of the many new features added during Mr Tegg's charge was the planting of the Wellingtonia Avenue, the layout of a new kitchen garden, the sunken hardy plant garden [rock garden] near the mansion, and the gradual extension of the pleasure grounds in various directions' (The Garden 1902). The rock garden was in fact built by Pulham and Company from 1879 to 1885. Large portions of the estate were sold in 1911, but the house failed to find a buyer, becoming a military convalescent home during the First World War. In 1919 Sir Thomas Devitt and Sir Alfred Yarrow bought the house and c 250ha, presenting them as a new home for the Merchant Seamen's Orphanage, which subsequently developed into a boarding school, in which use the house and immediate grounds remain. A large portion of the park is given over to playing fields and two golf courses (1998).

DESCRIPTION

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LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Bearwood College lies 3km west of the centre of Wokingham, at the southern edge of the small village of Sindlesham. The c 195ha site is bounded to the west largely by the B3030 Mole Road, to the east by Bearwood Road, and to the north by the lane connecting Mole and Bearwood Roads. Two green lanes bound the south-west and south sides, respectively Gravelpithill Lane and Coombes Lane. The undulating ground slopes generally from south to north, the setting being largely agricultural and wooded, with the village of Barkham lying at the south-east corner and Sindlesham adjacent to the north. The small parks of Newlands and St Catherine's Lodges lie to the south-west and east respectively, with the Gothic Revival parish church of St Catherine, built by John Walter II (J H Good 1846, listed grade II) standing opposite Church Lodge on the east boundary, the west door of the church aligned on the drive to the west.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main drive enters off the north end of Bearwood Road, 500m north of the house, past Main Lodge, formerly known as Sindlesham Lodge, a single-storey brick building with an octagonal wing lying adjacent to the drive (mid C19, listed grade II). The drive extends south from here, initially flanked by banks of evergreen shrubs, opening out 400m north of the house from where it is flanked by broad open lawns and a 250m long Wellingtonia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) avenue. Some 75m north of the house the drive enters the entrance court, between brick and stone gate piers flanked by pedestrian gateways. The large, open court, laid largely to tarmac and now (1998) a car park, is dominated on its south side by the north front of the house, entered via a large porte-cochère. The court is bounded to the east by a C19 service wing, to the west by the school chapel (Sir H Baker 1934-5, listed grade II), and to the north largely by a late C20 theatre. A broad gateway at the south-west corner, flanked by brick and stone gate piers, gives direct access to the west garden terrace.

The west drive enters at the single-storey, brick Arborfield or Park Lodge (mid C19, listed grade II), standing 700m west of the house. Set back off Mole Road, this has been extended and is now (1998) used as a golf clubhouse. From here the drive extends south-east (this short section disused) through parkland now part of a golf course, turning north 500m south-west of the house and curving north-east through woodland alongside the western pleasure grounds, passing the stable block standing 250m north-west of the house, and joining the north drive 100m north of the house. A spur from the south joins the west drive 500m from the house, having entered the park at Mole Lodge, a small, single-storey brick lodge standing 950m south-west of the house, the spur extending east and north along the east side of the former walled garden to join the west drive.

The east drive enters 500m south-east of the house at Poulter's Lodge, a single-storey brick lodge in similar style to Main Lodge. A spur south leads to the Bearwood Lakes Golf Club clubhouse (1996), standing 900m south-east of the College. The now disused east drive curves north along the outer, eastern edge of the eastern pleasure grounds' boundary ditch, joining the north drive 100m north of the house. A short spur, aligned on the west front of St Catherine's parish church, enters 200m north-east of the house adjacent to Church Lodge, running through trees to join the main east drive 40m west of this entrance.

These drives existed in the 1870s (OS 1877), being part of a complex network of drives, now somewhat simplified.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Bearwood College (Robert Kerr 1865-74, listed grade II*), now a school, stands in the northern half of the park, at the south end of a plateau, overlooking woodland to the south and the north-east arm of the lake to the south-west. The massive, Jacobean-style country house, built of red brick with stone dressings, is largely of L-plan, with the main domestic wing facing south, and a service wing attached to the east end extending north along the east side of the courtyard. A further service courtyard lies to the east of this.

The U-shaped brick stables (mid-late C19), standing 250m north-west of the house, surround a stable yard, entered off the west drive between brick gate piers.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens lie to the west and south of the house, consisting of formal terraces adjacent to the house extending out to informal lawns and pleasure grounds within woodland beyond, with an extensive rock garden.

The garden is entered from the south front of the house, from the garden door set into a recessed porch, down a short flight of stone steps to a broad terrace which overlooks the north-east arm of the lake across informal lawn flanked by woodland. The terrace extends along much of the south front, turning north along the west front, and is laid largely to a broad gravel path flanked by lawn. At the east end, bounded by a low, curved brick wall, a flight of steps descends to a level lawn, now largely

covered with late C20 accommodation blocks, through which a path, the former Long Walk (CL 1902), extends east, giving access to the eastern pleasure grounds.

A cross path from the garden door in the south front leads south to the edge of the terrace, bounded by a brick retaining wall, from which a sweeping double flight of stone steps with stone balustrade curves down to a broad gravel path, extending west to east across the lower terrace and flanked by lawn. The lower terrace gives access to the pleasure grounds to west and east, also benefiting from views down to the lake to the south-west.

From the west arm of the upper terrace, adjacent to the west front, a central flight of stone steps leads down to a large, open lawn enclosed largely by trees, bounded, on the north side, by the Headmaster's House (Prentice, 1921) lying 100m north-west of the house, and the rock garden lying adjacent to the west of this. The extensive rock garden by Pulham and Company, 1879-85 (Garden Hist 1984) is sunk into a former clay pit, reached via several entrance paths. It is dominated by an artificial stream which widens out into pools with islands at various points, overhung by artificial rockwork and surrounded by mature trees and shrubs. The rock is chiefly Pulhamite, in boldly imitated naturalistic formation with a very coarse simulated conglomerate alternating with a fine-grained layer. Several rocks are spectacularly tilted in imitation geological fault, and there are rough concrete Pulhamite pathways' (ibid).

The pleasure grounds lie in two separate sections to the south-west and south-east of the house, beyond the gardens. They consist largely of informal paths extending through woodland, that to the south-west bounded to the west by the west drive and to the south by the lake, and that to the south-east bounded by the remains of a ditch and bank and containing the remains of notable ornamental specimen trees, particularly conifers, within later forestry planting. The northern end of the south-east section formerly contained further ornamental features (OS 1912), now lost beneath C20 school buildings.

PARK The park encloses the house and gardens, being dominated by the c 20ha lake with several islands which lies 500m south-west of the house. Much of the park is given over to woodland, a large proportion being coniferous, separated by open areas of parkland. The area north of the stables is now playing fields, that to the south, running down to the lake, being given over to a golf course, with a second golf course lying south and south-east of the lake. Further open areas of parkland are planted with singles and clumps of trees. Several C19 drives formerly extended through the park, parts of which remain.

KITCHEN GARDEN The rectangular, brick-walled kitchen garden lies 800m south-west of the house, formerly containing glasshouses against the inner side of the north wall (replaced by stabling), now largely used as paddocks and containing an indoor riding school. A low range of service buildings stands against the outer side of the north wall, with the remains of a former frame yard standing adjacent to the north, and a group of associated houses and a farm to the east. An orchard lies adjacent to the south.

REFERENCES

Gardener's Magazine 9, (1833), pp 679-83 The Garden, (19 July 1879), pp 53-4; (15 March 1902), p 170 Country Life, 11 (15 March 1902), pp 336-42; 144 (17 October 1968), pp 964-7; (24 October 1968), pp 1060-3 N Pevsner, The Buildings of England: Berkshire (1966), pp 79-84 M Girouard, The Victorian Country House (1979), pp 263-72 Garden History 12, no 2 (Autumn 1984), pp 140, 146-7 In Search of English Gardens: The Travels of John Claudius Loudon and his wife Jane, (National Trust Classics 1990), pp 109-10 S Piebenga, William Sawrey Gilpin (Designer theme study for English Heritage 1994)

Maps J Rocque, Map of Berkshire, 1761 T Pride, A topographical map of the Town of Reading and the County adjacent to an extent of 10 miles, 1790

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1877 2nd edition revised 1913-14 3rd edition published 1931 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1912

Archival items Sale particulars, 1911 (Reading Local Studies Library)

Description written: August 1998 Amended: September 1999 Register Inspector: SR Edited: March 2000

Legal

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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.