

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

MUNSTEAD WOOD

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

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Name:	MUNSTEAD WOOD
County:	Surrey
District:	Waverley (District Authority)
Parish:	Busbridge
County:	Surrey
District:	Waverley (District Authority)
Parish:	Godalming
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.174679 Longitude: -0.59617196 National Grid Reference: SU 98233 42652 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: I List Entry Number: 1000156 Date first listed: 01-Jun-1984

Details

The late C19/early C20 home and garden created and lived in by Gertrude Jekyll for over fifty years, the house designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Historically the site now occupied by Munstead Wood was part of the former open common of Munstead Heath, comprising typical Surrey heathland on poor acid soil. Early maps show the general form of the common, and document progressive encroachment on it by roads and enclosed plots through the early and mid C19. The large, elongated triangle that became Munstead Wood appears as two closes totalling c 6ha on the Godalming Tithe award map of 1844. The unnamed close to the north-west is thought to have been in arable cultivation, while the larger one to the south-east shown with scattered coniferous tree symbols is named 'Munstead Heath' and described as 'firs and rough'. In 1872 (OS) the eastern end of the site was still dense pine woodland.

Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932), the artist and craftswoman who in later life became famous as a garden designer and author, moved to the newly erected Munstead House (listed grade II) with her mother in 1878. In 1882 she purchased the c 6ha of Munstead Wood which lay across the road from Munstead House to the west and began to lay out the garden for her future home. Her meeting with the young architect Edwin (later Sir Edwin) Lutyens (1869-1944) took place at nearby Littleworth Cross (qv), near Farnham in 1889, at the home of Harry Mangles, the rhododendron hybridiser. Lutyens had been working for the firm of Ernest George and Peto for two years and was engaged in designing domestic buildings for Mangles. Miss Jekyll recognised a kindred spirit in Lutyens, who also loved the local materials, buildings, and landscape of south-west Surrey, and it was the start of a collaboration that was to continue until her death. Miss Jekyll commissioned Lutyens to design her own

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home, Munstead Wood, following the construction of the Hut in 1894-5, a cottage designed by Lutyens for Miss Jekyll on her plot of land. After the death of her mother in 1895, Gertrude's brother Herbert and his family moved to Munstead House and the completion of Munstead Wood became more urgent. The 2nd edition OS map published in 1897 shows the Hut, the stables (called the Quadrangle after 1948), and the potting shed, together with rides running east into the woodland. Munstead Wood itself was constructed 1896-7. Lutyens also designed a cottage for Miss Jekyll's Swiss Head Gardener, now called Munstead Orchard, which was built 1894-5.

Miss Jekyll lived at Munstead Wood and continued to develop the garden until her death in 1932. Her nephew, Francis, lived on at the property after her death, during which time he wrote her biography, making use of her papers and drawings. The property was owned by the Jekyll family until 1948. Since that time the site has been subdivided into six individual, privately owned properties: Munstead Wood, Munstead Wood Hut, the Quadrangle, Munstead Wood Cottage (formerly the potting shed), Munstead Orchard, and a new house, Heath Lane House. The majority of Miss Jekyll's garden still belongs to Munstead Wood and a programme of restoration has been carried out by the present (1999) owners in the 1990s. A separate programme of restoration was carried out by the owners of Munstead Wood Hut in the late 1990s.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Munstead Wood lies c 1km south-east of Godalming, on a north-facing slope of the valley of the River Wey. The ground is generally level but slopes gently down towards the north-west of the site. The original c 6ha site of Munstead Wood is triangular in shape, forming an acute angle at its western end. It is bounded along its south-west side by the B2130 Brighton Road and along the south-east side by Munstead Heath Road, the triangle being closed along its north side by the partly unmade Heath Lane. The western tip of the triangle, which was never part of the Munstead Wood grounds and is occupied by a house called Crossways, is excluded from the area here registered.

The western part of the north boundary along Heath Lane is formed by a Bargate stone wall (listed grade II) with an average height of 2.3m. From Munstead Orchard at the western tip of the site, the wall continues south-east along Brighton Road as far as Munstead Wood Cottage, the former potting shed. The construction of the remainder of the boundaries is less formal, most of the garden being surrounded by an earthen bank c 1m in height, topped by wooden panelled fencing, chestnut paling, and in some places such as the eastern corner by an outgrown holly hedge. The western third of the site is occupied principally by residential properties, with the gardens and woodland to the east. Views at the site are all internal which led Miss Jekyll to construct a raised gazebo, the Thunder House (see below), at the west end of the garden to allow views out.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The present (1999) access to Munstead Wood is via a vehicular driveway from Heath Lane c 40m north-north-east of the house. This was installed in 1933/4 so that the property could be let. Screened by a 2m hedge to the west, the gravelled drive becomes a turning circle at the east side of the house. The drive continues past the north-east corner of the house, with the reinstated Primrose Garden to the north, to a timber garage block situated c 30m north of the house. The house was originally 'approached by a footpath from a quiet shady lane, entering by a close-paled hand-gate. There is no driving road to the front door' (Jekyll 1900). This 'gave the impression that Munstead Wood was merely a cottage set in a wooded clearing' (Tankard and Wood 1996).

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Munstead Wood (listed grade I) was designed by Edwin Lutyens in collaboration with Miss Jekyll and was constructed in 1896-7 by a local builder, Thomas Underwood. It is a two-storey, U-shaped Tudor-style house of Bargate stone with some half timbering and has plain tiled roofs and prominent brick chimney stacks. The garden was already partly laid out when the house was built so it was positioned to take advantage of views within the garden. The garden front faces south-east towards the woodland, with the paved garden court to the north-west.

Munstead Wood Hut (listed grade II) is situated 50m south-west of Munstead Wood. This single-storey building of whitewashed roughcast with plain tiled roofs was designed by Lutyens in 1894-5 and was Miss Jekyll's home while the main house was constructed. The former timber potting shed, which is situated on Brighton Road c 90m west of Munstead Wood, has been converted to a residential property known as Munstead Wood Cottage. The former stables (now known as the Quadrangle) are located on Heath Lane, c 80m north-west of Munstead Wood. Built of Bargate rubble stone, they form a courtyard open to the east; they were converted to a residential property in the mid C20.

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Lutyens was also commissioned to design a house for Miss Jekyll's Swiss Head Gardener. Munstead Orchard (listed grade II*) lies on the west boundary of the site, c 230m north-west of Munstead Wood. Built in 1894-5, it is a two-storey house of Bargate rubble stone with timber framed/plaster and hanging tile elevations.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS Immediately to the north of Munstead Wood, west of the entrance drive, lies the reinstated Primrose Garden. On the north-west of the house is a formal paved court with steps leading down past a tank surrounded by ferns. This was designed to provide a shady seating area. Gravelled paths edged with borders planted with sun-loving aromatic plants run along the south-west and south-east fronts of the house. From the garden court, the Nut Walk, flanked by shrub borders, leads 35m north-west to a modern swimming pool. Beyond this lies the Bargate stone pergola. The Nut Walk and shrub borders, including the Michaelmas Daisy Border, have only recently (1990s) been reinstated, the area having been grassed over in the mid C20. To the south-west of the pergola runs the Hardy Flower Border, backed by a 3m high, c 60m long wall of Bargate stone built c 1892-3. Behind the wall lay the Spring Garden and Old Peony Garden, which became the Annual Garden in 1900.

At the south-west end of the Hardy Flower Border are a number of original glasshouses, immediately to the north of Munstead Wood Cottage. Some 50m west of the main house lies the restored Sunken Rock Garden. Munstead Wood Hut, c 35m to the south-east of the Cottage, is now in separate ownership but the gardens around the Hut have recently (late C20) been restored. To the south-east of the Hut is the site of the Hidden Garden and to the west the Early Bulb Border. A former area of woodland along the south-west boundary of the site, abutting Brighton Road, is now caged for growing fruit and vegetables.

The principal views east and south from Munstead Wood house are of the woodland itself, which occupies more than half of the total garden area. The woodland was originally divided into four distinct areas: silver birch and holly, beeches, Scots pine, and Spanish chestnuts, each with different shrub and flower underplanting. Badly damaged in the storms of 1987 and 1990, the woodland still contains mature oaks and sweet chestnuts, as well as young replacement trees. The area contains a number of linear hollows thought by Miss Jekyll to be packhorse ways which she planted with daffodil bulbs. Several wide walks and numerous smaller paths radiate from the lawns to the south of the house, the principal one being the Green Wood Walk which is terminated c 120m south-east of the house by the Forked Scots Pine, a relic of the dense pine woodland which originally (OS 1872) covered this part of the site. The Green Wood Walk is lined with rhododendrons, the original colours being pink, salmon pink, and white. Further to the east is the azalea garden, Miss Jekyll preferring to keep the two genres separate. From the end of the Green Wood Walk, a further wide walk, the Second Avenue, leads north-east, roughly parallel with Munstead Heath Road. A minor path which branches east near the northern end of the Avenue leads to a gate which gave access to a post box and a direct link to Munstead House, the home of Miss Jekyll's brother Herbert and his family. Further paths lead west from the end of Second Avenue, back towards the house via the former Fern Garden.

KITCHEN GARDEN The productive gardens at Munstead Wood lay to the west of the main garden, beyond the wall of the Hardy Flower Garden and the Spring Garden. The principal yard lay around the potting shed (Munstead Wood Cottage) but further glasshouses were located near the stables (Quadrangle), where the Nursery and Kitchen Gardens were situated. To the south of the Quadrangle were various borders including the Summer Border and the Grey Garden. Between the Kitchen Garden and the gardener's house (Munstead Orchard) on the west boundary were the orchard, the soft fruit bed, and the hen run. The gardens of Heath Lane House and Munstead Orchard still contain fruit trees from Miss Jekyll's orchard. The present (2003) owners of Munstead Orchard are renewing the orchard with a programme of pruning, removal of diseased trees and replacement planting. They have also reinstated a large vegetable garden along the Heath Lane boundary.

In the north-west corner of the boundary wall at Munstead Orchard is a triangular garden building known as the Thunder House (listed grade II). Built in 1894, this raised gazebo built of Bargate stone with a tiled roof contains a plaque with initials and the date. It was designed to provide a look-out point over the valley of the River Wey to the hills beyond, 'for the region of the house and garden is so much encompassed by woodland that there is no view to open country' (Jekyll and Weaver 1912). It was used principally for watching thunderstorms, hence its name.

REFERENCES

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Maps Tithe map for Godalming parish, 1844 (Surrey History Centre) *Munstead Wood Survey*, (RCHME 1991)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1920 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1870, published 1872 2nd edition published 1897 3rd edition published 1916

Illustrations Helen Allingham, *Watercolours* (Godalming Museum)

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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.