

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

TITSEY PLACE

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TITSEY PLACE

Name: TITSEY PLACE

County: Surrey

District: Tandridge (District Authority)

Parish: Limpsfield

County: Surrey

District: Tandridge (District Authority)

Parish: Titsey

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.275281
Longitude: 0.011475412
National Grid Reference: TQ 40402 54825
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1000121
Date first listed: 23-Aug-1988

Details

Mid C19 gardens surrounding a country house, set in parkland laid out mainly in the mid C19.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The Titsey estate was acquired by Sir John Gresham, one time Lord Mayor of London, in 1534 from his son-in-law. Gresham had moved to London from his birthplace, Holt in Norfolk, and became a member of the Mercer's Company. He traded with the Middle East, and founded the Russia Company, and like others at the time, invested his wealth in land. Sir John bought the manors of Titsey, Tatsfield, Westerham, Lingfield, and Sanderstead on the Kent/Surrey border as well as other properties in Norfolk and Buckinghamshire. The family continued to prosper: in the C17 they were MPs and in return for supporting the Royalist course, Marmaduke Gresham was created a baronet. In the early C18 the family fortunes declined, but in the 1750s John Gresham married an heiress and inherited a fortune from his mother's family. The old house was largely demolished c 1775-80 and replaced with a brick one on the same site, the nucleus of the present house. The village of Titsey, including the church, then situated to the south of the house was demolished and moved to the other side of the turnpike (Titsey) road in 1776. Sir John's only child was a daughter, Catherine Maria, the last of the Greshams, who in 1804 married William Leveson Gower (d 1851), a younger son of Admiral the Hon John Leveson Gower and first cousin of the Marquis of Stafford, later the first Duke of Sutherland. His eldest son, also William (d 1860), inherited the Titsey estate and, it is said, an income of £10,000 a year. He was succeeded by his eldest son, Granville Leveson Gower, who was squire of Titsey through most of the second half of the C19. In 1861 Granville had the C18 church rebuilt to the design of J L Pearson, a Gothic Revival architect. The park and garden were largely the work of William and Granville, William being responsible for the hillside beech plantation behind the house (guide leaflet). A well-known archaeologist, Granville was responsible for excavations on the site of a Roman villa in

the park. After the death of Granville's eldest son in his twenties, Titsey was inherited by the second son, Granville Charles. He had four sons, none of whom married, and the eldest, Richard, who served in both World Wars, lived at Titsey with the third son, Thomas, a keen gardener. In 1979 they established the Titsey Foundation to preserve the house and garden and open them to the public. Thomas Leveson Gower, the last of the family, died in 1992. The house is now (2000) the home of the Governor of the Titsey Foundation, and the house and grounds are accessible to the public on a limited basis during the summer months.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The site lies at the eastern border of Surrey, less than 2km from the Kent boundary, c 3km east of the village of Woldingham and c 2km north of Limpsfield village. The major part of the estate lies north of the M25 which cuts off the southern tip of the park. The c 125ha site is bounded on the north and east by the B269, Titsey Hill, to the south by Titsey Road, and to the south-west by Pitchfont Lane. To the north it is sheltered by the steep wooded scarp of the North Downs, through which run a series of rides. The park falls gently away to the south.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES There are two main points of access to the estate: from the west at the junction of Water Lane and Pitchfont Lane, past Limpsfield Lodge on the north side of the drive, and from Titsey Hill in the east. The main west drive enters the park c 750m south-west of the house and runs in a gentle arc north and then north-east across the parkland to a point immediately north-west of the stable block; the views are controlled by the landform and tree clumps. The east drive, which enters almost opposite St James' church, is tree-lined and runs c 200m north-west to the rear of Titsey Place, emerging at the stables to the north of the house. There are three other entrances to the site: towards the southern end of the site on Titsey Road, South Lodge (1868, listed grade II), designed by George Devey, stands on the west of the south drive. The drive runs north through the park for c 1km, crossing the stone bridge between the lakes c 180m south-south-west of the house, before joining the west drive to the north of the stable block. Howards Lodge stands north of a drive which enters the site off Titsey Hill, c 110m south of the east drive. The drive runs west-south-west to join the south drive at the bridge over the lakes. The kitchen garden is served by a back drive which enters the site c 175m north of the main drive.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Titsey Place (listed grade II) was built in the late 1770s for Sir John Gresham; it was enlarged in Gothic style in 1826 to the design of William Atkinson, a pupil of James Wyatt, who covered the two-storey house built of brick with stone surrounds with a patent Roman cement. It was further enlarged in 1856 by the addition of a three-storey tower on the north side designed by Philip Hardwick. The present house is square on plan with an attached stable block to the rear (north). Rocque's map of 1768 shows the earlier U-shaped house, with projecting wings to the south; this was demolished in c 1775 but some of the internal features were reused in the present house.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS A ha-ha separates the c 3ha formal gardens at Titsey from the park to the west, the principal gardens lying to the south and east of the house. The ground is terraced and laid out with winding walks through pleasure grounds planted with ornamental trees and shrubs. Adjacent to the south wall of the house is a linear box feature in a scrollwork design. A large yew tree and some gravestones are all that remain of the graveyard from the earlier church of St James, built in the later C14 by Sir Thomas Uvedale and his fourth wife. The church, which stood c 30m south-east of the house, was demolished c 1775-6 and replaced with a new building outside the park, to the east of Titsey Hill. Some 80m east of the house is the site of an icehouse (OS 1871). The gardens were primarily the work of William Leveson Gower, a keen horticulturalist, who was responsible for laying them out during the mid C19. Prior to this, only the area between the house and the old kitchen garden to the north had been treated ornamentally. Loudon records the introduction by Gower of plants from New Zealand to Titsey in 1832 (Loudon 1844). Several features, including the rose garden and herbaceous borders, were added in the mid C20 by Thomas Leveson Gower who was also responsible for extending the plantings round the banks of the two small lakes which lie to the south of the house.

PARK The c 100ha park lies mainly to the west and south of the pleasure grounds and is now principally meadowland. The fields still contain scattered trees including lime, beech, and horse-chestnut dating from the early C19, but the site was badly affected by the storms of 1987 and 1990. Sometime between 1762 (Rocque) and 1776 (Robinson), the earlier field system was removed and the road which crossed the park from east to west, to the south of Titsey Place, was diverted. At the same time the two small lakes situated c 100m south of the house were developed from a series of ponds, probably fishponds, shown on

Rocque (Phibbs et al 1988). A stone bridge spans the dam, fashioned as a rockwork cascade, between the two pieces of water. The northern lake is small and linear while the southern one is larger and more serpentine, with a small island near the south end. By 1843 (Tithe map) the landscape was virtually complete (Phibbs et al 1988). Within the park, c 500m to the south-west of Titsey Place are the remains of the Roman villa (scheduled ancient monument) excavated by Granville Leveson Gower in the 1860s; the site is now surrounded by trees.

To the north of the parkland are the wooded slopes of the North Downs. The Titsey Plantation, which covers an area of c 20ha, was created between 1807 and 1840 when c 500,000 trees were planted. Many of these were felled in the Second World War for aircraft manufacture, but some replacement planting took places in the 1950s and 60s (guide leaflet).

KITCHEN GARDEN North of Titsey Place are the remains of the small, sloping, possibly C17 walled garden which now (2000) contains a tennis court. To the north-west, c 80m north-west of the stable block, is the newer, rectangular kitchen garden, enclosed by brick walls, in the south-east corner of which is the Head Gardener's House (George Devey 1868, listed grade II). The c 0.5ha kitchen garden continues to produce flowers, fruit, and vegetables. It contains two modern (late C20) south-facing glasshouses on the north wall which replaced earlier but not original houses; these are still used for peaches. North of the kitchen garden is a melon house and accompanying outbuildings, all part of the development built for William Leveson Gower in 1855. A roofless stone dovecot (?late C19, OS 1914) stands on rising ground c 10m north-east of the north-east corner of the garden.

REFERENCES

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Maps John Rocque, Map of Surrey, surveyed c 1762, published 1768 Richard Budgen, Estate plan, 1773 (2186/31/1), (Surrey History Centre) William Robinson, Estate plan, 1776 (2186/31/2), (Surrey History Centre) Tithe map for Titsey parish, 1843 (Surrey History Centre)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1871 2nd edition published 1898 3rd edition published 1914

Description written: February 2000 Register Inspector: BJL Edited: December 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.