

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

FARLEY HALL

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Name:	FARLEY HALL
District:	Wokingham (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Swallowfield
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.376673 Longitude: -0.93192141 National Grid Reference: SU 74436 64721, SU 74882 64803 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000526 Date first listed: 30-Sep-1987

Details

A country house surrounded by gardens and a landscape park, incorporating the remains of an early to mid C18 formal layout. Bridgeman produced a design C1730 for Farley Hall, but it is uncertain how much, if any, of the design was executed.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT Farley Hall was built in 1729 for John Walter, on what was probably a new site (CL 1943), in a detached portion of Wiltshire which was not absorbed into Berkshire until 1844. At about the same time (C1730) Charles Bridgeman (D 1738) drew up a complex garden plan, but the extent to which this was implemented is uncertain. The site passed through several ownerships, remaining in private hands (1999).

DESCRIPTION LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Farley Hall lies at the western edge of Farley Hill and the scattered village of that name, 8km south of the centre of Reading. The 23ha site is bounded largely by public lanes, including, to the south, Bungler's Hill. The area east of the house is largely level, that to the west falling gently away. Long views extend west and north-west from the west front and adjacent terraces over the nearby Swallowfield Park (qv) to distant hills. The setting is rural, with the scattered village buildings set largely amongst woodland to the north, east and south of the site.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main entrance lies c 200m east of the house at the southern end of the east boundary, marked by a late C20 lodge. From here the east drive curves north-west through woodland underplanted with rhododendrons, turning south close to the stable block lying north of the house. The drive arrives at a gravel carriage sweep lying adjacent to the east front, bounded on the north side by a 2m high, 5m long, C18 brick garden wall (listed grade II) extending east from the north wing of the house. North of this lies a garden (C20) within a former courtyard enclosed by further brick walls which separates the stable yard from the north wing. The carriage sweep is set at the edge of a level lawn extending 75m east to the surrounding woodland, from which the lawn is separated by a c 2-3m high earthen bank. The bank, with a level walk running along the top and arranged in a V-shape, is broken by a gap of several metres at the apex of the V which is aligned on the main entrance at the centre of the house. This gap formerly (OS 1877, 1911) provided access for a drive (largely lost) which spurred off the present main drive C120m east of the house, crossing the lawn to enter the carriage sweep at its north end. The north-west drive enters at a point 400m north-west of the house, off the Swallowfield to Farley Hill lane, formerly the site of a lodge (OS 1877). The drive curves up the wooded hillside, arriving at the north front of the stable block in which a carriage arch gives access to the stable yard. The drive continues east to join the main east drive at the east end of the stables. A further drive formerly entered the site 400m north of the house at the single-storey brick lodge which stands at Holly Corner. This

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drive,now(late C20)a path,extended south to join the north-west drive 300m north-west of the house.A southern drive enters the estate 150m south of the house, leading north to the gravel carriage sweep on the east front,passing adjacent to the east of a brick-walled former kitchen garden attached to the south wing of the house.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Farley Hall(1729,listed grade I)stands at the western edge of Farley Hill,towards the eastern end of the site.The two-storey,brick-built house comprises a central block surmounted by a cupola,with later,lower flanking wings.The east,entrance front overlooks the level east lawn.The west,garden front overlooks the garden terraces and parkland as it drops away to the west,with extensive views across the countryside to the west.The stable block (C18 and C19,listed grade II;now converted to accommodation) stands 50m north of the house.At the centre of the two-storey,brick building three archways surmounted by a pediment formerly gave access to the stable yard to the south,two of the three archways having been filled in with garage doors.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens and pleasure grounds lie largely west of the house.The garden door at the centre of the west front leads out onto an 80m long grass terrace,supported at the centre of the west side by a brick retaining wall(wall mid C20),overlooking the lake below to the west,with long views extending westwards over the countryside beyond this.Steps at the centre of the wall lead down to a large lawn broken into a series of broad,symmetrically arranged earthen terraces leading down the hillside to the west,which could date from the mid C18,and on stylistic grounds may possibly be part of Bridgeman's scheme.An earthen ha-ha(C20)crosses the lawn c 100m west of the house.The lawn,flanked by ornamental woodland,is bounded to the north and south by two earthen banks,each with a broad walk running along the top,the inner slopes planted with mature specimen trees.The northern bank,formerly planted with a mature hedge along its northern edge,extends c 80m west from the stable block,overlooking the lawns to the south and west,and a swimming pool immediately to the south surrounded by C20 planting.The bank terminates at a circular mound standing adjacent to,and on the south side of the west end of the walk,100m north-west of the garden door.The mound is encircled half-way up by a path,and has a level viewing platform at the top,reached by a connecting bank projecting from the bank to the north.Several mature yews stand on the sides and top of the mound,those to the west obscuring former views from the mound out of the park.At one time (OS 1911) an avenue extended from the south-east side of the mound,aligned on the north wing of the house,and paths extended into the adjacent woodland to the north-west,which may have been part of the pleasure grounds.The southern earth bank extends C70m west from the brick-walled garden attached to the south wing of the house,terminating C100m south-west of the garden door.Formerly (OS 1911)a path led from the south end of the house giving access to the east end of the bank.A further path extended south-west from the south end of the house,flanked by an avenue,leading to a path extending west through the woodland to the south of the bank,which continued north-west through a narrow belt of trees adjacent to the boundary with Bungler's Hill lane.The remains of this belt are represented by an overgrown evergreen hedge including holly,yew and Portuguese laurel running along Bungler's Hill.A domed brick structure with north-facing entrance,which may have been an icehouse,lies within the trees 150m west of the house.The east ends of the banks flanking the west lawn,if extended eastwards,would meet the west end of the two arms of the V-shaped bank which bounds the east,entrance lawn.It is possible that the banks to the west and east of the house were intended to be linked in some way to facilitate a raised walk encompassing three sides of the house.The line of the northern arm of any such walk would at present be divided by the stable block,that to the south by the walled garden.

PARK The present park,laid to pasture and partly encircled by mature trees,extends west down the gentle slope from the ha-ha 150m west of the house.Bounded by public lanes to the south and west,it is dominated by a lake lying c 300m west of the house.The lake is aligned on the centre of the west front, and has a small island at the south side.To the north lies woodland enclosing former gravel pits.

KITCHEN GARDEN The 1.5ha kitchen garden lies at the foot of the hill 550m west of the house.It is separated from the park to the east by Swallowfield Road where it meets Bungler's Hill lane.A two-storey brick gardener's cottage is set into the centre of the brick north wall (late C18/C19, listed grade II),flanked by single-storey wings, probably former outbuildings.The area was formerly divided into three walled compartments(OS 1911).

REFERENCES Country Life,93(4 June 1943),pp 1012-15;(11 June 1943),pp1056-9 N Pevsner,*The Buildings of England:Berkshire* (1966),pp 142-3 P Willis,Charles Bridgeman (1977),p 178,pl 52

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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 3rd edition published 1932 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1911 Description written: May 1999 Register Inspector: SR Edited: March 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.