

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

SWAINSTON

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Name:	SWAINSTON
District:	Isle of Wight (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Calbourne, Newtown and Porchfield
label.localisation:	Latitude: 50.690736 Longitude: -1.3793508 National Grid Reference: SZ4393788082 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000930 Date first listed: 09-Jan-1987

Details

A mid to late C18 woodland garden with intersecting avenues, pools and a stream laid out on, and incorporating, probable fishponds and parkland from the site's ownership by the bishops of Winchester and the Crown; later in the C18 both garden and park were informalised, with additional tree and shrub planting occurring in the C19 and C20.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Land at Swainston was granted to the Winchester monastery of St Swithin as early as AD 735, and by the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086 the manor of 'Swainston-in-Calbournes had become the largest on the Island' (Winter 1984). The bishops of Winchester built a manor house at Swainston, parts of which survive within the present complex. It was surrendered to King Edward I in 1285 and from then until the mid C16 it was both gifted and repossessed by the Crown a number of times. Mary Tudor granted Swainston to Winifred, daughter of Henry, Lord Montague and with her marriage to Sir Thomas Barrington, stability of ownership returned to Swainston. Sir Thomas' son, Francis, was created a baronet in 1611 but it was not until the early years of the C18 that the seventh baronet, Sir John Barrington, built the present house and Swainston became the family's permanent seat. In the mid C19, the manor passed by marriage to Sir Richard Simeon, Bart, and the Simeons lived there until 1941. Alfred, Lord Tennyson was a close friend of Sir John Simeon and is reputed to have composed part of his poem *Maud* in Swainston's garden. In 1941, during the ownership of the last Simeon, Sir John Walter Barrington Simeon, the house was destroyed by an incendiary bomb and fire. Reconstruction was completed in 1951 and Swainston became a school and then a country club. It lay empty for two years from 1980 until the manor and immediate gardens were purchased and refurbished as a hotel by the Woodwards. The woodland and meadowland to its north, and the land to the south of the B3401, including the site of the Temple, are in separate, divided private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Swainston lies some 6.5km west of Newport, on either side of the B3401 running west from Newport to Calbourne village. The c 46ha site comprises, on the north side of the road, 33ha of informal gardens and ornamental woodland laid out on level ground surrounding the house, while to the south the steeply rising slopes of the chalk downland ridge are laid to 13ha of pasture bordered by High Wood. North of the road, the site is enclosed largely by a combination of hedgerows and agricultural fences; to the south it is bounded by similar fences or, as on

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the east side, by a farm track. The surrounding landscape is one of cultivated fields, hedgerows and copses to the north, and downland with copses, some land in cultivation and some in set-aside, to the south.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main entrance to Swainston is via a drive which enters off the north side of the B3401, on the east side of the site. The drive runs due north for some 200m before curving north-west and crossing between the two ponds on an early C19 bridge of tooled ashlar with stone balustraded parapets (listed grade II). Some 30m beyond the bridge, the drive forks to give access to a turning area on the south front of the house and, via the north-running fork, access to a large, open gravelled turning and parking area on the north front. The present approach over the bridge appears to have become the main one in the early C19, the section of the drive from the road previously (OS 1813) continuing north as a lane. The northernmost pond appears recorded on Milne's county map of 1791, the southern, elongated pond on the Tithe map for Shalfleet of 1839/40. A further drive enters from the road on the west side of the site. This is shown on C18 county maps (Taylor, 1759; Milne, 1791) and by the early C19 (OS 1813) it also served the present coach house (50m south-west of the Manor) as well as the Manor itself and the gardens beyond to its north.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Swainston Manor (listed grade II*) stands some 300m north from the road, from which it can only be glimpsed. Its main, western block, incorporating basement walls from an earlier C16 house, comprises a two-storey Georgian house of c 1750 constructed in ashlar with nine bays. On the south front, the outer three bays on each side project as pedimented wings with a curved bay at ground-floor level. It is attached at its eastern end to a single-storey Great Hall and chapel, probably erected by Richard of Ely (bishop 1268-80, Winter 1984) and built from a mixture of stone rubble and flint with a tiled roof. Its south front has both C13 lancet and C18 pointed arched windows. Behind it to the north is a further three-storey wing with double lancet windows, of C12 origin. The north front of the Georgian house has French windows to the ground floor opening onto a terrace with cast-iron balustrading and a projecting porch with columns. Its east front has an C18 stable range attached.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens immediately surrounding the Manor are contained within a ha-ha to the north, west, and south although on the latter side, where it encloses a gently southward sloping lawn, it survives only as a surface depression. The gardens are planted informally with a range of ornamental trees of mixed age set in lawns and rough grass with occasional groups of understorey shrubs. Some 150m east of the Manor is a range of now (late C20) derelict glasshouses, shown on the OS map of 1862. North from these, light mixed woodland extends c 550m in a north-north-easterly direction as a broad belt, still contained by the ha-ha on its west side for the first c 120m and on the east side by the site boundary. The belt extends around the northern boundary of the site where it is referred to as Lady Wood from the late C19 (OS 1898). It contains remnants of garden features including, running northwards from the derelict glasshouses, a line of some twenty-five mature yew trees on a raised bank, a few of these now (late C20) fallen. The bank forms part of a former parish boundary. North from the yews a tiny stream with occasional stone edgings and waterfalls runs north through undergrowth to and beyond the site boundary. Further west in Lady Wood (some 430m from the house) is a circular pool and a summerhouse floor of knuckle bones (IOW Gardens Trust 1995). These features all appear to be surviving remnants of an extensive mid to late C18 woodland garden comprising woodland compartments, intersecting rides, and formal lines of trees (OS Surveyor's drawing, 1793). This garden then extended some 200m further south towards the Manor, into the area of Willy Wood which is now open arable fields. Its C18 trees had largely been removed by the late C19 (OS 1862), the current hedge running west to east c 200m north of the Manor marking its previous southern limit. South of Willy Wood, an open grassed field, similarly open in the late C18 layout, forms the immediate setting to the Manor.

PARK The parkland straddles the Newport to Calbourne road. On the north side, its grassed slopes rise gently up towards the Manor and are open in character with only occasional trees, including mature oak. South of the road the parkland is similarly under permanent grass and of open character. The ground rises steeply up the lower slopes of the Downs, with one large tree clump some 50m up from the road. A late C20, newly planted wood encloses the western end of the park's boundary with the road. On the southern edge of the parkland, some 210m from the road against a backdrop of woodland (Temple Plantation), stands the Temple (listed grade II), built in the form of a Doric temple c 1790 but possibly reusing the foundations of an existing estate building (listed building description). The frontage, which survives intact, has a deep plinth of stone rubble with three steps up and six ashlar Greek Doric columns surmounted by an entablature with pediment and triglyph frieze. Its view from

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the Manor now largely obscured by trees, the Temple was drawn by Humphry Repton for Peacock's Polite Repository of 1809. The building was used as a cottage in the late C20 but it is now (1999) roofless and its side walls only partially standing.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden lies to the north-east of the Manor, extending some 240m from north to south along the track marking the eastern boundary of the site. It comprises several compartments enclosed from the garden by, and internally separated by, fences and hedge lines and, about midway along its western side, a 27m length of brick wall. The garden is shown established in this location on the OS surveyor's drawing of 1793 while by 1862 (OS) a path system lined with trees had been laid out. In the late C20 the garden was in use as a nursery but the glasshouses shown on OS maps of the mid C20 are now (1999) derelict. To the east of the southern end of the garden, on the east side of the boundary track, is a pair of late C19 or early C20 (pre 1908, OS) brick cottages known as Nursery Cottages.

REFERENCES

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Maps Isaac Taylor, *Map of Hampshire*, 1" to 1 mile, published 1759 J Andrews, *A topographical map of the Isle of Wight in Hampshire*, 1769 (Isle of Wight Record Office) Thomas Milne, *Hampshire or the County of Southampton*, surveyed 1788-90, published 1791 C Greenwood, *County map of Hampshire*, published 1826 Tithe map for Shalfleet parish, 1839/40 (Isle of Wight Record Office)

OS Surveyor's drawing, 2" to 1 mile, surveyed 1793 (British Library Maps) OS Old Series 1" to 1 mile, published 1813 OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1862 2nd edition published 1898 3rd edition published 1908/09 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1862 3rd edition published 1908

Description written: May 1999 Register Inspector: VCH Edited: January 2005

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.