

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

WARBROOK HOUSE

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

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
WARBROOK HOUSE

Name:	WARBROOK HOUSE
County:	Hampshire
District:	Hart (District Authority)
Parish:	Eversley
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.349777 Longitude: -0.89689195 National Grid Reference: SU7691961766 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000249 Date first listed: 31-May-1984

Details

Formal pleasure grounds and a geometric designed landscape with long axial vistas, laid out c 1724 by the architect John James to his own design around his small country villa, according to the principles of d'Argenville.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

John James (c 1673-1746), surveyor of HM Works, is well known for *The Theory and Practice of Gardening*, published in 1712. He translated this from a French book by A J Dezallier d'Argenville (1680-1765) and the two hundred subscribers who contributed towards the costs of its production included many landowners whose own landscape gardens subsequently became renowned and influential. After a successful and lucrative career in which he succeeded Wren as Surveyor to the Fabric of St Paul's in 1723, James purchased land at Warbrook in 1724. This enabled him to fully implement his ideal of a country estate using the theories propounded in d'Argenville's text and his experience gained through his various architectural commissions and appointments. The latter included Orleans House, Twickenham for James Johnston, Secretary of State for Scotland under William III, and Appledurcombe, Isle of Wight (qv) for James Worsley, and between c 1700 and 1705 he was working at nearby Herriard Park (qv) for Thomas Jervoise.

Following the loss of his son and wife in the 1730s and financial loss after the failure of his brother's printing business in 1738, James moved back to Greenwich. After his death in 1746 the Warbrook estate was sold to maintain his widowed daughter-in-law. The ownership passed through a rapid succession of ownerships: James Comyn, then Sir George Nares and his son, and, during the late C18, John Bishop. James' layout of field boundaries, axial drives, and canals seems to have changed little by the mid C19 (OS), with many of these features surviving into the mid C20.

Augustus Stapleton, Private Secretary to Lord Canning, acquired Warbrook in 1838, introducing changes during his period of residence which made the grounds more informal and private. The most significant changes were the closing of the major north to south and east to west drives and the construction of a new lodge on Reading Road. Ancillary buildings and stables (and possibly a farm) south of the house were removed and Warbrook Farm was laid out on the north-west boundary of the estate.

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
WARBROOK HOUSE

During the early C20 the house was let to Lady Glass. In the 1920s the Stapletons sold the estate to the artist William Ranken who undertook extensive restoration work to the house, but the gardens seem to have remained unchanged (Architectural Review 1923).

Mrs Humphreys-Owen had bought the property by 1935 and made substantial alterations to the house, commissioning Lord Gerald Wellesley and Trenwith Wells to build an extension to the north and a double-height sleeping loggia to the south. The work included changes to the formal gardens, a sunken garden, and an octagonal lily pool. The new gardens were designed and constructed by William Wood of Taplow.

The site has undergone major changes in the mid C20 with the conversion of the house to a conference and business centre. This has involved major building additions and the introduction of service areas and other facilities. The site remains (1999) in private corporate ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Warbrook House lies directly to the west of the A327, Reading to Farnborough road, at the south end of Eversley village, some 500m from the village centre. This road forms the north-east boundary to the site, with St Neot's Road to the west and the Bramshill to Eversley road to the south. The house was built on what was originally heathland, an expanse of low, flat acidic land which was part of Eversley Common. Warbrook lies 2.5km west of the village of Eversley Cross along a direct line with the Cross and Eversley Centre, this axis continuing through the formal gardens and to the west of St Neot's Road through woodland. This extensive design links Warbrook out into the landscape and countryside, beyond the estate and the modern ownership boundaries. The water table lies close to the ground surface and the site is crossed by a network of ditches and small streams, hence its name Warbrook.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The entrance drive leads off the A327 180m to the north-east of the house and leads south-south-west across the site, passing some 40m to the east of the house before meeting a drive which runs from west to east from Park House, a late C20 residential block, to a point where the drive turns southwards to run parallel to a stream to the lodge on the south boundary of the site. The present drive alignments are the result of C19 and C20 alterations to the original drives which constituted the axis lines of James' C18 formal geometric layout. James' north to south axis ran south for c 1km from the junction between Eversley Street and Warbrook Lane while the east to west axis ran for 2.35km from Eversley Cross, across Eversley Centre, Eversley Chase and an area of common known as the Great A. These two lines, which set up the main organising principles for the entire landscape, were lined by oak avenues and met at the head of a large oval coach sweep which led to the east front of the house (OS drawing, 1792; Parish map, 1837; Tithe map, 1842). Thus the original view of the entrance front to Warbrook was framed through a grid of oak trees but approached on a more gentle oval sweep. Both axes can still (1999) be discerned in the field, and the line of the avenue across the Great A survives.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Warbrook House (listed grade I) sits at the centre of the landscape, aligned with James' east to west axis and, prior to the alteration of the drives, the major north to south axis. The central surviving section of James' Warbrook house is a prime example of a small Palladian villa or 'box' set within a geometric landscape layout.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The original forecourt to the east front survives, flanked by walls and defined on its eastern edge by the balustraded C18 ha-ha. The front door is reached by a short flight of eight stone steps from the forecourt, with the William Collier sundial, the only surviving garden ornament from James' layout, set axially across from this main entrance. To the east of the house, on the main entrance front, field evidence including surviving trees indicates that the area around the oval coach sweep was laid out as an elaborate oak grove.

The main east to west axis continues through the house and extends westwards to form the axis of symmetry around which the formal gardens on the west side of the house are laid out. The principal features surviving from James' original layout are the canals, although these have changed in size over the centuries. The principal long canal lies on the central design axis with groves of trees on either side. A vista along this canal through the flanking groves of trees extends from a raised entrance door on the garden front of the house, and the return view from the far end of the canal focuses on the house. This central canal is linked by a perpendicular canal issuing into two further basins, one which lies to the north and the other to the south. The feeder stream for this system bounds the lawns on three sides.

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
WARBROOK HOUSE

By 1898 (OS) the formal canals had been partially filled in, with the southern basin truncated and the northern basin and north-east section of the perpendicular canal removed. The two basins seem to have originally extended up to the level of the house. They were reinstated early in the C20, although not back to their original lengths (they remain 4m short). There is now (1999) a small fountain at the eastern end of the central canal. The Tithe map (1842) shows a rectangular pond (stew pond?) lying at an oblique, north-west angle to the north basin and although this is not extant, some areas of open water and marsh indicate its position and extent.

The outer edges of the canal arms, which delineate the area in which the former parterre garden was set, seem to have been lined with a 1-1.5m yew hedge some 2.5m from the water. Some of these yews have survived and now appear as mature trees (1990s). The woodland groves to either side of the long canal are pierced by vistas which radiate from the house. Field evidence and the surviving symmetrical pattern of the layout suggest that there were originally three radiating vistas forming a *patte d'oie*. Only two of these remain, that down the central canal and the south-west diagonal alley through trees with its surviving vista to the house. The alignment of the north-west vista can be traced but as it would now terminate on the C19 Warbrook Grange farm, it may be that this vista was removed in the C19. The woodland groves are mainly oak with hazel coppice and late C19/early C20 group plantings of rhododendron, bamboo, and poplars. A perimeter walk still leads around the outer extent of the grove. Between the canals and the house, the broad open lawn area leading up to the west front and surrounded on three sides by the canals was originally the site of a parterre garden. It is not known when this was grassed over but its existence can be deduced from the principles of garden layout presented in *The Theory and Practice of Gardening* as well as from archaeological survey. A series of gardens was added to the south of the house on the site of the stable (and farm?) buildings (Tithe map, 1842). Initially the area had been laid out very simply with a path running through the area from the south-west corner of the house (OS 1910). This was developed during the 1930s by Mrs Humphreys-Owen as a series of formal gardens including a sunken garden and a lily pool (photographs of 1939 in guidebook). The lily pool has been redeveloped (mid C20) as a swimming pool with new facilities. The sunken garden survives and provides an area for formal bedding.

PARK In the fields west of the house there are surviving clumps of pine and oak composing views from the formal gardens and remnants of C18 boundaries. The woodland groves are separated from this area by a section of curved balustrade which terminates the western end of the long central canal. This balustrade was supposedly acquired during the 1930s from the demolition of Waterloo Bridge; another section stands at the end of the Great A, against the parkland boundary on the east.

To the east of the house, parkland extends right up to the A327. Originally this area directly to the east of the ha-ha fronting the house was laid out with axial avenues and an oak grove set within a small trapezoidal area of parkland. This then gave out directly onto Eversley Common. In 1868 (Inclosure map) parts of Eversley Common were formally enclosed as part of the estate; prior to this they had been a 'borrowed' landscape. Alterations to the drives were accompanied by a new footpath curving through Eversley Green, allowing pedestrians access through the estate from north to south, in compensation for the enclosure of the north to south drive. Probably also as part compensation for the loss of common land, the Great A was designated for recreation. The formal eastern approach leading from Eversley can still be discerned across this area. The formation of the road along the western boundary of the estate also took place at this time. Thus although these 1868 changes altered the layout of the park, the basic principle of grazed parkland remains today (1999) and the outlying field boundaries and general configuration of the area survive, or can be traced archaeologically.

To the south of Warbrook House a ha-ha separates the lawns on which Park House Training Room (1980s) now stands from farmed parkland to the south.

REFERENCES

Architectural Review, (May 1923) *Country Life*, 85 (11 March 1939), pp 250-4 H M Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of English Architects 1660-1840* (1978), pp 536-40 K Bilikowski, *Historic Parks and Gardens* (1983) Warbrook House, *Landscape Restoration and Management Plan*, (Debois Landscape Survey 1991) Warbrook House, *Landscape Restoration and Management Plan*, (Kim Wilkie Environmental Design 1991) *A History of Warbrook*, guidebook, (Style Conferences nd)

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
WARBROOK HOUSE

Maps OS Surveyor's drawing, 1792 (British Library Maps) Map of the Parishes of Eversley and Bramshill in the County of Hants, 1837 (Hampshire Record Office) Tithe map for Eversley parish, 1842 (Hampshire Record Office) Eversley Inclosure Award, 1868 (Hampshire Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1871-2 2nd edition surveyed 1898 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition surveyed 1894

Archival items Photographs, 1939 (in guidebook)

Further research on Warbrook House has been undertaken by the Hampshire Gardens Trust and is deposited with the Hampshire Historic Environment Record, site ref. 1834 (January 2013)

This list entry was subject to a Minor Amendment on 09/01/2013

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.