

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

BOWOOD

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

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Name: BOWOOD

District: Wiltshire (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Calne Without

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.426203
Longitude: -2.0364694
National Grid Reference: ST 97561 69689
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: I
List Entry Number: 1000336
Date first listed: 01-Sep-1987

Details

Bowood contains extensive and complex pleasure grounds and a park. Its main phases of development date from the C18 and C19, including mid C18 work by Lancelot Brown and Robert Adam, late C18 work by Charles Hamilton and Josiah Lane, early C19 work by Robert Smirke and Charles Barry, and mid C19 work by John Spencer and George Kennedy.

NOTE This entry is a summary. Because of the complexity of this site, the standard Register entry format would convey neither an adequate description nor a satisfactory account of the development of the landscape. The user is advised to consult the references given below for more detailed accounts. Many Listed Buildings exist within the site, not all of which have been here referred to. Descriptions of these are to be found in the List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest produced by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The first Earl of Shelburne purchased Bowood in 1754 and completed the house started in the early C18. An early C18 park is recorded in a contemporary painting and maps. In 1755-60 the first Earl commissioned the architect Henry Keene to enlarge the house and in 1757 he asked Lancelot Brown (1716-83) to give advice on a landscape garden to complement the new house. Brown was not formally commissioned however until after 1761 when the first Earl died and his son, the second Earl, later first Marquess of Lansdowne, inherited the estate. Brown's ideas for the park at Bowood are shown on his plan dated 1763 and include extensive tree planting and the creation of a large lake. At that time, the second Earl had also commissioned Robert Adam (1728-92) to undertake further alterations to the house. The latter designed a mausoleum in the park to commemorate the first Earl and this is shown on Brown's plan. In c 1785 a picturesque cascade and grotto with extensive rockwork were added to the head of Brown's lake, with advice from Charles Hamilton. The latter was the owner of Painshill, Surrey (qv) where Josiah Lane created similar extensive rockworks. In the late C18 (before 1801), Humphry Repton (1752-1818) possibly advised on landscape works at Bowood (Carter et al 1982). In 1817, under the ownership of the third Marquess of Lansdowne, Robert Smirke (1780-1867) constructed an upper terrace outside Robert Adam's mid C18 orangery, which connected the pavilions of the main house. Later, in 1848, the third Marquess introduced a large pinetum, laid out by John Spencer, head gardener at the time. In 1851 Robert Smirke's terrace was complemented by a formal garden on the lower terrace created by George Kennedy.

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In 1955 the house was demolished except for the service courts and orangery, which were converted into a new house by the architect F S Samuels. Bowood remains (2001) in private ownership. There are currently plans to build a new hotel and conference centre near the golf course that was laid out in the park in the late 1990s.

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

Bowood, a site of c 550ha, lies south of the A4 road between Chippenham and Calne. The western boundary of the site is formed by the A342 road between Chippenham and Devizes. To the north of the site lie the villages of Derry Hill and Studley, with to the south-west the village of Sandy Lane. To the east the site is bounded by agricultural land. The site falls gently from the south-west in a north-easterly direction, with a stream, the Whetham Brook, flowing from south to north. The latter is joined by another stream from the south-west, the Wash Way. Both streams feed Bowood Lake situated in the eastern part of the site. The main approach to Bowood is a late C18 drive that leads from the Golden Gates (Charles Barry 1834-8, listed grade II*) at Derry Hill to the north-west, in a south-easterly direction. It passes Home Farm (converted in the late 1990s into a golf clubhouse) and continues through Lodge Plantation and Monk's Hill Wood. In Monk's Hill Wood it turns in a north-easterly direction towards the south front of the house. At Studley, to the north of the site, stands Studley Lodge (early C19, listed grade II), which marked the entrance to a former drive, now (2001) no longer visible. This approach passed Queenwood (early C19, listed grade II), an estate house in the centre of the north-west park, and then joined the main drive from the Golden Gates. The house can also be approached from the east at Pillars Lodge (c 1840, listed grade II), 1.9km to the east. From here a drive (late C18/early C19) runs along the south-east boundary of the site, crossing Pond Tail Bridge (C18, listed grade II) with its adjacent lodge (early C19, listed grade II) c 1.8km south-west of Pillars Lodge. From here the drive curves first in a north-westerly direction and then north-north-east towards the south front of the house. The site can also be entered from the south-west at Sandy Lane, this entrance marked by The Lodge (early C19, listed grade II), and from the west-south-west along the A342, at a point marked by Kennels Lodge (c 1840-50, listed grade II).

Bowood consists of a formal garden, pleasure ground, park, and woodland, all dominated by Bowood Lake (Brown c 1760-5) which was created from the two streams that run through the site. The current house (C18 and mid C20, listed grade I), built as a service court and orangery to the former house demolished in 1955, lies near the centre of the site. Immediately south and east of it lies the formal terraced garden (Smirke and Kennedy C19, listed grade II). Immediately to its north lies a rectangular walled garden of c 2.5ha (c 1760-5, listed grade II), with the pleasure ground (C18 and C19) lying beyond it.

The c 40ha pleasure ground is laid out informally and is surrounded to the north, west, and south by a ha-ha which separates it from the park. To the south-east it is bounded by Lake Field, a lawn laid out on the west side of the northern arm of Bowood Lake. Along the lakeside in the south-east corner of Lake Field, c 200m from the house, stands the Boathouse (mid C19, listed grade II). In the centre of the pleasure ground lies the Pinetum (mid C19). In the south-west corner of the pleasure ground, immediately west of the house and kitchen garden, is an adventure playground (late C20). A circular walk that runs through the pleasure ground leads to a cascade and grotto (Hamilton and Lane c 1785, listed grade II*) and a hermit's cave (Hamilton and Lane c 1785-7, listed grade II) at the far northern tip of Bowood Lake. The walk continues to the Doric Temple (c 1800, listed grade II), situated at the far north-east end of the Lake and moved here in 1864 from another site within the pleasure ground. From the Doric Temple the walk enters Dunn's Lane Wood, where it curves around the northern tip of the Lake. Formerly the walk continued on from here to Icehouse Ride (now, 2001, no longer used), and Lakeside Cottage (late C18/early C19, listed grade II) on the east side of the Lake.

The park (late C18/early C19) lies to the west, south, and south-east of the house, with Bowood Lake as its main feature, and is scattered with individual mature trees and clumps. It is bounded by various woodlands and plantations, including Bassett's Moor to the north, Derry Hill Plantation to the west, Pilpot Wood and Great Wood to the south-west, and Holland's Moor, Coombe Grove, and Hill-top Plantation to the south and south-east. Through the woodland belts runs a ride (Brown 1763-5), overgrown and no longer visible in places (2001), which surrounds the park. In the centre of Pilpot Wood, on a small hill, stands the mausoleum (Adam 1761-5, listed grade I), surrounded by a rhododendron garden (C19/C20). From the mausoleum there are extensive views of the park and the house to the north-east, now (2001) partly obscured by vegetation.

During the late 1990s the north-west corner of the park was laid out as an 18-hole golf course and driving range.

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REFERENCES

Note. There is a wealth of published material about this site. The key references are listed below.

Country Life, 17 (28 January 1905), pp 126-36; 151 (8 June 1972), pp 1448-51; (22 June 1972), pp 1610-13; 152 (7 September 1972), pp 546-9 B Jones, Follies & Grottoes (1974), p 165 D Stroud, Capability Brown (1975), pp 90-2 B Cherry and N Pevsner, The Buildings of England: Wiltshire (2nd edn 1975), pp 121-3 C Thacker, History of Gardens (1979), pp 226-7 J Sales, West Country Gardens (1980), pp 193-4 G Carter et al, Humphry Repton (1982), p 163 T Hinde, Capability Brown (1986), pp 85-7 M Batey and D Lambert, English Garden Tours (1990), pp 225-30

Maps John Powell, Topographical map or plan of Bowood..., 1763 (private collection) Lancelot Brown, Plan for Bowood, 1763 (private collection) A Plan of Bowood Park, 1778 (private collection)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1889 2nd edition published 1902 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1887 2nd edition published 1902

Description written: April 2002 Amended: November 2003 Register Inspector: FDM Edited: November 2004

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.