

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

EASTBURY

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**EASTBURY**

Name:	EASTBURY
District:	Dorset (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Tarrant Gunville
District:	Dorset (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Tarrant Hinton
label.localisation:	Latitude: 50.916657 Longitude: -2.0955285 National Grid Reference: ST9338113026 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000549 Date first listed: 19-Dec-1986

## Details

The principally archaeological remains of early C18 formal gardens and parkland designed by Charles Bridgeman.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In about 1709, George Dodington, one of the Lords of the Admiralty under William III and Queen Anne, and a cousin of Viscount Cobham of Stowe, Buckinghamshire (qv), purchased the farmland which was to become the site of Eastbury (Oswald 1959). In 1716, Dodington commissioned plans for a new mansion from Sir John Vanbrugh (1664-1726), which in scale was only exceeded by Blenheim Palace and Castle Howard (qqv). Plans for elaborate formal gardens and for the surrounding park were provided by Charles Bridgeman (d 1738) c 1717; these survive in the Gough Drawings at the Bodleian Library. Both Vanbrugh's plans for the mansion, and a modified version of Bridgeman's plans for the gardens and park were subsequently published by Colen Campbell in *Vitruvius Britannicus* (1725).

Work began on the house in 1717, but by the time of Dodington's death in 1720, only the forecourt and wings had been constructed. Eastbury passed to Dodington's nephew, George Bubb, who assumed the additional name of Dodington. The son of a Weymouth apothecary, George Bubb Dodington pursued a political career and served as ambassador in Madrid from 1717 to 1719; he was finally created Lord Melcombe towards the end of his life. Bubb Dodington resumed work on the construction of the mansion in 1724, with Roger Morris supervising the work after Vanbrugh's death in 1726 (Willis 1977). The house was completed in 1738, at a reputed cost of £140,000. Here, and at Eastbury, Bubb Dodington gathered around himself a circle of writers, poets, and artists which included Henry Fielding; Edward Young, author of *Night Thoughts*; Sir James Thornhill; the Rev Christopher Pitt, Rector of Pimperne; and Voltaire. The poet James Thomson, author of *The Seasons*, dedicated *Summer* (1727) to his host at Eastbury, and described the gardens in *Autumn* (1730), praising the 'green delightful walks' and the diverse vistas across the surrounding landscape. Bubb Dodington, Lord Melcombe died in 1762 and Eastbury was inherited by Earl Temple of Stowe (qv), who, failing to find either a purchaser or tenant for the estate, c 1782 demolished the majority of the mansion, removing marble to Stowe and leaving only the kitchen wing and the eastern end of the kitchen court to the north of the

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main house still standing (CL 1948; Oswald 1959). This remnant of the mansion was let to a series of tenants, including, from 1800 to 1805, Josiah Wedgwood II (Oswald 1959). In 1806, the estate was sold to the noted sportsman, James John Farquharson, with whose descendants it remained throughout the C19 and C20 (ibid). Eastbury remains (2004) in private ownership.

#### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Eastbury is situated immediately north-east of the village of Tarrant Gunville, and c 6km north-east of Blandford Forum. The c 135ha site comprises c 15ha corresponding to the site of the early C18 formal gardens, and c 120ha of parkland and ornamental plantations. The western boundary of the site is marked by a minor road which leads north-west from the A354 road to Tarrant Gunville, and by the Tarrant stream. To the north and south the site adjoins agricultural land, while to the east it adjoins further agricultural land, and Little Wood, part of the landscape associated with Chettle House, an early C18 mansion designed by Thomas Archer, situated c 3km east-north-east of Eastbury. The site rises steadily from the Tarrant stream on its western boundary, while a ridge of higher ground extends along the northern boundary. Designed vistas extend north and south from the site of the gardens across the park to surrounding agricultural land; these were noted as part of the early C18 layout by Thomson in *The Seasons* (1730):

'And every view, Diffusive, spreads the pure Dorsetian downs, In boundless prospect; yonder shagged with wood, Here rich with harvest, and there white with flocks!'

To the east, the plantations associated with Chettle form part of the setting of Eastbury.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** Eastbury is approached from the minor road forming the western boundary of the site at a point c 120m south-east of the Bugle Horn public house. The entrance is marked by a monumental early C18 gateway (listed grade II) which is approached by an early C18 rusticated, single-arched bridge (listed grade II). The bridge is linked by chains to a series of stone bollards on the verge of the road. The gateway itself comprises a pair of rusticated ashlar piers surmounted by ball finials which are flanked by rusticated ashlar wing walls surmounted by further ball finials. Low brick walls surmounted by iron railings set at right angles to the outer ends of the wing walls are terminated by a further pair of smaller rusticated stone piers with ball finials. The gateway and bridge are attributed to Vanbrugh and appear to have formed part of the original scheme for Eastbury. From the gateway a tarmac drive ascends steadily eastwards, passing for c 480m through a shallow artificial valley c 50m wide (RCHME 1972), to reach a monumental arch immediately west of the House. The arch (listed grade I) is constructed in ashlar and comprises a single round-headed arch with plain plinths and string courses to the piers. Buttresses on each side of the arch are surmounted by stone scrolls, while the archway itself is surmounted by two mature pine trees. It is unclear whether these trees are self-set or were a deliberate attempt in the C19 to create a picturesque effect; they do not appear in an C18 painting of the west facade of Eastbury House (CL 1948; Oswald 1959). The archway was designed by Vanbrugh and originally led to the kitchen court, part of which survives as the carriage court to the north and west of the present house. A further entrance is situated at the south-west corner of the park at a point opposite the junction of the minor road leading to Tarrant Gunville and a track leading south-west to Barton Hill. This entrance is marked by a pair of ashlar piers (listed grade II) with vermiculated rustication, surmounted by pedimented finials and carved swags of drapery. The piers are of early C18 construction and may have formed part of Vanbrugh's scheme for Eastbury. From this entrance a drive leads north-north-east for c 180m to reach The Kennels.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Eastbury House (listed grade I) stands on an artificially levelled terrace towards the centre of the site. The House is constructed in ashlar under slate roofs, and comprises two and three storeys. The principal facade to the south is a symmetrical composition with a ground-floor arcaded loggia. Above, a central three-bay, three-storey section is lit by tall round-headed windows, while the flanking wings are lit at first-floor level by three bull's-eye windows. This facade would originally have formed the north side of the forecourt of Vanbrugh's mansion, and is shown on the C18 painting of the west front of the house (CL 1948; Oswald 1958). The pyramidal-roofed pavilion shown in this painting at the south-west corner of this range does not survive.

The present house comprises the kitchen and service quarters of Vanbrugh's mansion, and represents the portion of the original house retained by Earl Temple when the mansion was demolished c 1780.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The site of the early C18 formal gardens lies to the east of the site of the mansion, and to the east and south-east of the present Eastbury House. The central and southern sections of the garden site are laid principally to grass, with an area of woodland to the north. Immediately north-east of the present house, three early C18 walled garden enclosures (listed grade II) survive. Constructed in brick with moulded stone copings and rusticated ashlar quoins, the enclosures correspond to those shown on Bridgeman's garden plan (Gough Drawings) and on the plan published in Vitruvius Britannicus (Campbell 1725). The western, triangular-plan compartment was adapted in the later C18 as a stable yard, while the interior layout of the two eastern, rectangular enclosures does not survive. Further ha-ha walls marking the northern boundary of the garden survive, together with those on the southern side of the garden. These ha-has enclose an approximately parallelogram-shaped area, within which archaeological survey has revealed earthwork features which correspond to those shown on Bridgeman's plan and the Vitruvius Britannicus plan. The early C18 garden was laid out with a central axis extending c 550m east-north-east from the house, and a cross axis extending from north to south c 200m east of the house. The intersection of the axes was marked by an elliptical pool, traces of which remain today (RCHME 1972), while the eastern axis was terminated by a circular pool and a series of terraces ascending to a monumental Corinthian temple (Campbell 1725), designed by Vanbrugh and inspired by the Temple of Fortune at Praeneste (Palestrina), Italy (Ridgway and Williams 2000). The circular pool survived to be recorded on the late C19 OS map (1886), but today (2004) only slight earthwork traces of these features survive (RCHME 1972; Mowl 2003): this area was ploughed in 1958. The cross axis was intended by Vanbrugh to be terminated to the south by a bath house or Bagnio, while Bridgeman's plan shows a semicircular bastion and viewing mount surmounted by a small building; neither scheme was implemented. To the north, the cross axis was terminated by a terrace overlooking the park, which in turn was flanked by a pair of massive octagonal viewing mounts. These features survive among trees and scrub (Mowl 2003). The wooded areas to the east and south-east of the present house correspond to the rectangular blocks of trees cut by straight walks shown on Bridgeman's garden plan (Gough Drawings; Campbell 1725).

**PARK** The park surrounds the House and the site of the formal gardens on all sides. Today (2004) the majority of the park is in arable cultivation, with areas of pasture remaining to the west and south-west of the House. Some 100m north of the House, an approximately rectangular plantation, Solomon's Quarter, corresponds to a plantation shown on Bridgeman's plan (Gough Drawings; Campbell 1725). The tree-lined grass walks which Bridgeman shows dividing the plantation into square blocks do not survive. A similar plantation, Kennel Quarter, extending south of the site of the C18 mansion to the kennels, also corresponds to the site of one of Bridgeman's formal plantations. Some 80m north-west of the House a further plantation, School House Quarter extends to the boundary of the site, approximately corresponding to the site of a formal plantation shown on Bridgeman's plan which, with a similar plantation to the south, framed the west drive and formed a formal approach to Vanbrugh's mansion. Two small plantations, the Lamb House Woods, c 190m south-west of the House, occupy part of the site of the southern plantation framing the drive. Avenues extending parallel to the south-west boundary of the park, and between School House Quarter and Solomon's Quarter parallel to the north-west park boundary, correspond to features shown on Bridgeman's plan (Gough Drawings; Campbell 1725).

Some 250m north-east of the House, and originally extending the northern cross axis of the formal gardens, an avenue formed from pairs of artificial earthwork mounds extends to the park boundary. Several mounds have been ploughed out (2004), while Bridgeman's plan, the Vitruvius Britannicus plan (1725), and the Tithe map (1840) all show further mounds at the southern end of the avenue forming a semicircle framing the entrance to the vista; these had been lost by the late C19 (OS 1886). To the north-east and south-east of the House, earthwork banks mark the boundaries of the formal plantations shown on Bridgeman's early C18 plan, while plantations extending south from Chettle Long Barrow at the north-east corner of the park along the eastern boundary of the site, and Ninety Eight Plantation on the south-east boundary of the site, correspond to the site of early C18 plantations. Some 670m north-east of the House, a circular plantation, Zareba Clump, survives in agricultural land. To the south-east of the House earthworks indicate the boundary of the balancing circular plantation which survived to be recorded on the late C19 OS map (1886). The pair of circular plantations is not shown on Bridgeman's early C18 plan.

#### REFERENCES

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OS Old Series, 1" to 1 mile, published 1811 OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1886, published 1889 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition revised 1900, published 1901

Illustrations View of the west facade of Eastbury, C18 (private collection) [reproduced in CL 1948] View of the east facade of Eastbury, C18 (private collection) [reproduced in CL 1948]

Description written: November 2004 Amended: December 2004 (PAS) Register Inspector: JML Edited: May 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.