

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

LAINSTON HOUSE

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

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Name:	LAINSTON HOUSE
County:	Hampshire
District:	Winchester (District Authority)
Parish:	Sparsholt
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.082646 Longitude: -1.3640444 National Grid Reference: SU 44643 31673 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000862 Date first listed: 31-May-1984

Details

Formal terraced and walled gardens of C17 and early C18 origin, the principal features being laid out axially to east and west of a small country house dating largely from a similar period set within an early C20 park. Gertrude Jekyll prepared plans for the gardens in 1923.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Lainston was part of the manor of Chilcombe in the C10, later becoming a manor in its own right and also, following a law suit in the C12, a separate civil and ecclesiastical parish from Sparsholt in which it formerly lay. A house, mentioned in taxation records in 1334, was acquired by the Skylling family c 1445, along with c 100 acres (c 40ha) of land. Tradition claims that the present house was in progress of being built in 1683, at the same time as the 'King's House', a palace for Charles II in Winchester (CL 1919). Lainston then belonged to Henry Dawley, whose grandfather, Anthony, had bought it from the Skyllings in 1613. Henry had inherited in 1645 and after his death in 1703, the House was sold by his son to Sir Philip Meadowes, brother-in-law to Sir John Evelyn who was the grandson of the diarist and gardener, John Evelyn. In 1721, Lainston was sold again, to John Merrill, whose additions to the property may have included the Dovecot and formal entrance court (ibid). Merrill's granddaughter married the Rev Robert Bathurst in 1759 and following the death of her two sons, Lainston passed to the Hervey Bathurst family. The estate was tenanted for most of the C19, the period from 1825 to 1846 seeing it occupied as a lunatic asylum. When Sir Charles Hervey Bathurst put the estate on the market in 1897, it was bought first by Mr Samuel Bostock who restored the House and added a further wing, and then in 1921 by Mr John Craig Harvey (Lainston through the Ages, nd). Plans commissioned for Lainston from Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932) in 1923 are held in the Reef Point Gardens Collection. In 1980, the House and 63 acres (c 25ha) of land, including the gardens and Lainston Avenue, were sold for use as a hotel; a new access drive was constructed and an extension made to the House. The hotel changed hands in 1983 and, with the addition of a restored barn and rooms in the stable wing, has since been run as the Lainston House Hotel and Restaurant. The remaining parkland is in private hands (1999).

DESCRIPTION

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LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Lainston is situated immediately north-west of the village of Sparsholt, on the south side of the A272, Stockbridge Road some 3.5km from the centre of Winchester. The 40ha registered site, comprising c 6ha of gardens and c 34ha of parkland with avenues, lies on the slopes and crest of a chalk downland ridge which forms a central north to south spine through the site. Stockbridge Road, fringed by hedges and trees, bounds the site to the north, while to the south, a block of farmland including the buildings of Lainston Dairy separates the site from a minor lane which runs north-east from Sparsholt and cuts across the line of Lainston Avenue before joining up with Stockbridge Road at a crossroads some 750m north-east of the House. Along the west boundary, a line of trees and woodland belts encloses the site from the surrounding ridges and valleys of wooded farmland.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The principal entrance to Lainston House is from the lane to the south, a drive entering the park to the east of Lainston Farm, c 520m east of the House. The entrance comprises a gateway with wrought-iron gates hung on round-section red-brick piers with stone finials. The drive crosses Lainston Avenue to its north side then runs westwards and parallel to it before joining the route of a secondary drive 150 m north-east of the House. This secondary drive, which enters from the north at a brick-built lodge on Stockbridge Road, was established with the lodge between 1871 and 1897 (OS editions) and was replaced as the principal entrance and approach in 1981 by the present southern entrance and drive. The combined drives continue along the north boundary of the gardens before turning south past an C18 octagonal brick dovecote (listed grade II*) and then east through the gateway into the forecourt on the principal, west front of the House. Taylor's county map of 1759 shows approaches to the House from both the north-west and south-west corners of the registered area, these partly surviving now (1999) as tracks lined with remnants of avenue trees. They converge on the entrance forecourt gateway and, with an additional central arm axial on the walled garden to the west, form a patte d'oie or goose-foot arrangement. These two routes remained as the principal approaches to the House until the late C19 when the northern drive and lodge were built. Neither Lainston Avenue, nor the avenue running north from its western end, would appear to have been designed as anything other than vistas.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Lainston House (listed grade II*) stands towards the west end of the park, on the crest of the ridge and with the east front aligned on Lainston Avenue. Built in dark-red brick with raised quoins, the H-plan house, which stands two storeys high and has a tall hipped and tiled roof, dates from the late C17, although elements on the garden front, such as the mullioned windows in the basement, survive from an earlier building (CL 1919). The west, entrance front opens into a forecourt with a grassed turning oval. The forecourt is formed by flanking loggias of twelve-bay arcades along the north and south sides and by a low brick wall extending beyond the arcades and around the western side. The central gateway in the west wall is composed of round, rusticated brick piers with stone caps and finials and wrought-iron gates (wall and gateway listed grade II). The forecourt arcades and wall were added in the early C18, possibly by John Merrill, although the gateway and the entrance porch on the west front, a garden house on the south side of the southern loggia, and a large wing on the north side of the House, are early C20 additions. Since its establishment as a hotel in 1981, further rooms have been created in the garden house and stable buildings and a late C17 barn (listed grade II) north-west of the House converted for additional accommodation.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The east, garden front of the House opens onto a paved apron from which a long, grassed concave slope, on the axis of Lainston Avenue, descends in a series of six terraces, each retained by a grassed bank. To north and south, above the terraced slope, the ground is planted with a loose line of mature beech and lime trees. The topmost terrace level is enclosed to north and south by a yew hedge and bisected by a flagged path, flanked by two symmetrical rose beds, which leads to stone steps at the head of the descent. The lowest level contains a circular grassed depression, 25m across, which is noted on an illustrative plan of 1919 as the site of a pond (CL). The terraces and pond are shown on the OS map of 1874, but their form suggests a late C17 or early C18 origin. They are not referred to by Sir John Evelyn in his diary, which records a visit made on 5 July 1714, where he notes only that, in relation to the House, the garden 'which is small lies to ye north'.

The pond acts as a pivot for two axial avenues which run east and north to the park boundaries. The principal one, known as Lainston Avenue, continues east from the foot of terraces in a broad, smooth slope lined by an avenue of mature limes which are backed to north and south by a narrow belt of mixed woodland. The Avenue descends c 300m to the point where it is crossed by the lane from Sparsholt and then follows gently rising ground to the eastern site boundary where it terminates in

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an enclosing 'U' of deciduous and yew wood. Sir John Evelyn records being received by Sir Philip and Lady Meadows 'in the Avenue, a green ascent of near three-quarters of a mile' (Diary), which suggests that it was an established feature by 1714. Its tree-lined route is shown on county and OS maps from the mid C18, although it seems never to have served as a formal entrance approach. In the mid to late C19 it is shown planted as a double avenue with the second line comprising conifer trees, these being recorded in 1919 as 'Scotch Firs' which had 'mostly died out' (CL 1919). The backing woodland belts in 1919 were composed of a mature mixture of beech groups interspersed with cedars, these latter now gone. In the mid C20, double rows of beech were planted each side of the limes within the woodland, in the eastern half of the Avenue (Colvin and Moggridge 1988). North from the site of the pond, a second broad avenue, grassed and planted as a double avenue of limes, runs c 270m to the northern site boundary. Established by 1871 (OS 1874), the outer line consists of mature trees while the inner line was largely replanted in the late C20.

The main ornamental gardens lie south of the House, their boundary with the park following the line of a ha-ha, shown on the 1874 OS map, which continues north-east and northwards to enclose the lower end of the terraces on the east front. A small rectangular garden, with a lawn and paving enclosed by shrubbery, lies immediately under the south wall of the House, its outline appearing on the OS map of 1910. Southwards beyond this and the garden house attached to the south side of the forecourt loggia (built by 1919 on the site of a former greenhouse), a broad lawn, level with the topmost terrace on the eastern front and laid out for croquet, stretches 70m southwards. Its southern edge is cut into two or three further terraces, open in character and sharply delineated in 1871 (OS 1874) but with the lower ones now (1999) overgrown with trees and shrubbery. The west side of the lawn rises in a further grassed bank, above which mature trees of mixed ages and species, planted informally in grass with spring bulbs, shelter the south side of the ruins of St Peter's church (listed grade II). Dating from the C12, three walls of the nave, constructed in flint rubble with brick dressings, have survived following the removal of the roof in the mid C19 (Lainston through the Ages, nd). Between the north side of the church and the south wall of the entrance forecourt, massive sculpted yew hedges topped with topiary enclose a rectangular lawn which is planted with specimen trees and with further topiary yews. The outline of this garden first appears on the OS map of 1910. The north side of the House, noted by Sir John Evelyn as the site of the garden in 1714, is planted informally with mature trees up to the boundary with the drive.

PARK The principal area of park lies north of the House, bounded to the east by the north avenue, to the west by the line of the former C18 approach drive, and to the north by Stockbridge Road. It is open in character and (1999) is partly laid to grass and partly under arable cultivation. A further small area, also open in character, lies south-west of the House, between the walled garden and the former south-western approach drive. Both these areas, together with two fields south of the House and gardens, formed the park in the late C19 (OS 1874). It remained unaltered in size until between 1897 and 1910 (OS editions) when a considerable expansion took in fields west to Wately Lane, north-east between Lainston Avenue and Stockbridge Road, and south beyond the Avenue and the south boundary lane. Apart from a few sparse trees in the southern fields, these additional areas never appear to have been planted and by 1932 (OS) they were no longer depicted as parkland.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden stands 110m due west of the House and is centred on the continuation of the east to west axis of Lainston Avenue. Its hexagonal form is constructed in high red-brick walls (late C17/early C18, listed grade II*) and is bisected by a broad gravelled walk which offers a vista from the entrance porch of the House through gateways in the east and west walls. These were shown hung with ornate wrought-iron gates in 1919 (CL), now (1999) gone. The garden is laid out with a central enclosure of yew hedges and with beds of mixed herbaceous and shrub planting either side of the central walk. This enclosure is surrounded by a further gravelled area, in use (1999) as a car park, and by a band of lawn planted with fruit trees against the inside of the perimeter walls. A single-storey engine house (listed grade II), formerly a well house, is built against the outer side of the north-east wall; it is now in use as a gardener's bothy.

REFERENCES

Country Life, 45 (8 March 1919), pp 252-9 N Pevsner and D Lloyd, *The Buildings of England: Hampshire and the Isle of Wight* (1967), pp 314-15 Lainston House Hotel, *Landscape Appraisal and Recommended Policy*, (Colvin and Moggridge 1988) Lainston Through the Ages, guide leaflet, (Lainston Hotel and Restaurant, nd)

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Maps Isaac Taylor, A Map of Hampshire ..., 1" to 1 mile, 1759 Thomas Milne, Hampshire or the County of Southampton ..., 1" to 1 mile, 1791 C and J Greenwood, A Map of the County of Southampton ..., 1" to 1 mile, 1826
OS Old Series 1" to 1 mile, published 1810 OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1871, published 1874 2nd edition published 1897 3rd edition published 1910 1930 edition OS 25" to 1 mile: 3rd edition published 1909 1932 edition
Archival items The Diary of Sir John Evelyn of Wotton, Surrey, Bt, 1714 (typescript extracts on EH file)
Description written: March 1999 Amended: June 2000 Register Inspector: VCH Edited: January 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.