

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

MISERDEN PARK

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Name:	MISERDEN PARK
County:	Gloucestershire
District:	Cotswold (District Authority)
Parish:	Winstone
County:	Gloucestershire
District:	Stroud (District Authority)
Parish:	Miserden
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.780211 Longitude: -2.0836772 National Grid Reference: SO 94324 09064 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000772 Date first listed: 28-Feb-1986

Details

Largely C20 gardens in framework of C17 date associated with C17 and later country house, encompassed within probably C17 deer park.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Sir William Sandys came into possession of Miserden in 1620 and almost immediately began building. This house, set on a bluff overlooking the River Frome, and its terraced gardens, are shown on Kip's view published in 1712 (Atkyns 1712). In 1833 Sir Edward Baynton Sandys sold Miserden to his son-in-law, who six years later sold it out of the family to James Wittit Lyon, a London banker. In 1874 the house was sold to E A Latham, in whose time much building work was carried out. In 1914 it was purchased by Capt F N H Wills (d 1927). It was under him and his wife (d 1980), who after his death married W/Cdr H M Sinclair, that the house and gardens took on their present (late C20) form, Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944) being employed to help remodel the house and its surrounds after a major fire of 1919. The Miserden estate remains (1999) in private hands.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Miserden Park stands on the north-east side of the small village of Miserden, spectacularly sited on the west side of the valley of the River Frome. Miserden is reached by unclassified roads, and although the A417 from Cirencester to Gloucester passes 4km to the east the village is relatively isolated. Stroud lies c 12km to the west. The area here registered is c 100ha.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The principal approach is from the village of Miserden, past a T-plan lodge (listed grade II) of 1864 in a modest Tudor-Gothic style, of ashlar and with a stone slate roof. This may have been part of the extensive work

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at Miserden by Alfred Waterhouse (d 1905) during 1864-8. From here a tree-lined drive runs in a straight line 150m north-east, passing the stables on the right hand and looking left across the park, to the main forecourt on the north-west side of the house. The other main approach is from the east, via a drive which runs from a substantial two-storey stone lodge of 1864 (again perhaps by Waterhouse; gates and piers listed grade II) on a minor road west of the hamlet of Winstone. From the lodge the drive, here tree-lined, runs roughly west for 800m before curving sharply north to pass gate piers which mark the entrance to the park. The drive here drops steeply downhill as it enters woodland, running north for 300m before turning sharply west, crossing the River Frome, and then south around the substantial earthworks of a castle (scheduled ancient monument). The drive here climbs uphill once more, passing through a grove of *Thuya plicata* (planted 1926) north-east of the house before arriving at the north forecourt.

Kip's view (Atkyns 1712) shows the final approach to the house as via a straight drive from a small gatehouse to its south-west. This apparently stood either close to the site of the tall stone gate piers with iron gates which stand at the south-west end of the Hazel Avenue, or at the south-west end of the present yew-hedged walk.

The many tracks through the park allow access from several other directions for agricultural traffic.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Sir William Sandys' house, begun in 1620, forms the core of the present house (listed grade II*).

Kip (Atkyns 1712) shows Sandys' house to have a main, south-east, garden front of two-and-a-half storeys, topped with five equally spaced roof gables. Beneath the central three gables were projecting two-storey bays, that in the centre with the main door out into the gardens. This front is still recognizable today, although the most prominent feature is a loggia at its north-east end, part, with the adjoining wing, of Edwin Lutyens' work of 1920-1 which followed a serious fire in 1919. This was but one of five major remodellings recorded at the house between c 1820 and the 1990s (others being c 1850, 1874-8, 1914), the house having been said c 1775 to wear 'the aspect of desertion and decay' (Kingsley 1989).

On the west side of the house, against the north-east corner of the walled garden, is a large stables and coach-house complex, of stone and largely C19. This today (late C20) provides accommodation, offices, and garaging.

On sloping ground below and 50m north-east of the north-east end of the house is a chapel-like C20 squash court, gabled and of stone.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The most striking feature of the gardens at Miserden comprises the York stone-flagged Terrace (the flags introduced in the 1930s in place of gravel) along the south-east front of the house, opened onto by Lutyens' five-arched loggia. From the Terrace, which has four large, four-sided clipped yew bushes in the narrow border along its front edge, there are expansive views across the park and into and along the partly wooded valley of the River Frome. Steps opposite the garden door from the house lead down past the Blue Border to a lawn. This slopes down to the south-east, where it is bounded by a 1m high yew hedge. On the axial line from the steps off the Terrace tall iron gates give access to the park, with a view down the first section of the 400m long beech avenue of 1936 which continues the axial line. Kip (Atkyns 1712) shows the area of the Terrace and lawn occupied by a simple quartered lawn, with terraces dropping away to the north-east and south-east, and a steeper terrace leading up to the main gardens south-west of the house.

Towards the north-east end of the Terrace steps (these and the other features to the north-east of the house may also be by Lutyens) descend, via a small sunken lawn, to the Butler's Walk which runs in a straight line up the north-east side of the house (with a gate giving access to the stairs down to the squash court) and its forecourt. The walk is yew-hedged, and against the forecourt hedge on a rock bank are clipped, mushroom-shaped hornbeam trees. The forecourt itself is bounded by further clipped yew hedges.

At the south-west end of the Terrace steps lead up to a shorter terrace, which lies below (south-east of) the Silver and Grey Borders which occupy stone-walled terraced beds against the southernmost corner of the house. Steps rise through the centre of these to a 60m long lawn, with a linear rill running from north-west to south-east down its centre and a circular pillared summerhouse (like the rill, installed 1998-9) at its north-east corner. This lawn forms the north-east end of the main pleasure gardens. These occupy the rising ground south-west of the house, in a main, roughly square, compartment c 130m long from north-east to south-west and a maximum (at its far, south-west, end) of 70m wide. This is bounded to the north-west, south-west, and south-east by a 2.5m high stone wall. This compartment is bisected by the Yew Walk, an alley of clipped yew hedges,

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with large, semicircular, drum-like battlements, which runs south-west to north-east down its centre, ending at steps which lead down to the compartment with rill and summerhouse. To the north-west of the alley is, nearer the house, a circular parterre planted 2000. The other two-thirds of this half of the compartment are occupied by the vegetable and fruit garden (see below). To the south-east of the yew alley the ground is divided into four broad linear strips, with herbaceous borders between grass walks. This compartment appears to be shown on Kip's view of 1712, and its walls may, at least in part, be C17.

Outside, south-east of, the main walled pleasure garden are further lawns, well planted with shrubs and specimen trees. Running through these, parallel with the south-east wall of the garden, is the 170m long Hazel Avenue, a broad, straight gravel walk along which Turkish hazels were planted in the later 1990s with tall gate piers at its far (south-west) end. South of the gates is a shrubbery. Another, narrower, walk runs parallel to and south-east of the Hazel Avenue. Immediately south-east of this walk the ground falls sharply away, and walks descend through shrubs and specimen trees to the park below.

Little, apparently, is known of the garden's development in the C20. The yew topiary around the north forecourt, and the Butler's Walk, are said to be influenced by Lutyens, while much of the present layout within the rest of the gardens was established in the 1930s under the guidance of Mrs Wills (guide leaflet).

PARK The park, which is surrounded by a stone wall, extends east/west across the Frome valley. The house lies in the west part of the park, on a spur. North and south (the area known as Francombe) of the house are small subsidiary valleys running downhill to the east. These are permanent pasture with a few parkland trees. Otherwise, the park is almost wholly wooded. On the north side of the north subsidiary valley is Furze Wood. The whole of the valley bottom is wooded, although from the small bridge across the Frome there is a view north up a clearing (outside the registered area). This woodland extends up the east side of the valley and onto Winstone Hill.

In the valley bottom, on the west side of the river, are the wooded earthworks of a substantial motte and bailey castle. This was in existence by the mid C12 and was abandoned some time between 1266 and 1289 (VCH 1976). Presumably this was so sited (a curiously low position) to control the river crossing, and represents the early medieval predecessor of the present house. Some 200m south of the castle the river is dammed to form a 200m long lake with island. It is possible that this represents an adaptation of fishponds noted in 1233 (ibid).

A park was recorded at Miserden from 1297. In 1331 there were 60 acres (c 24ha) of pasture and 40 acres (c 16ha) of great timber in the park, and in 1535 Henry VIII had a day's hunting here. In the C18 its circumference was said to extend to 7 miles (c 11km); it then included part of Winstone, the manor which lies east of Miserden (ibid).

KITCHEN GARDEN The former walled kitchen garden lies 300m south-west of the house, beyond the main pleasure gardens. Along its north-west side is a 5-6m high stone wall, against which are two large lean-to greenhouses. Five other span houses run in a line south-east of these, with frames to the south-west. All the glasshouses are of 1926. Outside the north corner of the garden is a cottage. In the late 1990s the recently restored glasshouses and kitchen garden were run as a nursery.

In the C20 (and still in 1999) the main vegetable and fruit garden occupied the north-west part of the main pleasure gardens to the south-west of the house. Box hedges line the paths which divide up the garden, some backed with old cordoned apple trees.

REFERENCES

R Atkyns, *The Ancient and Present State of Gloucestershire* (1712), pl following p 50 *Victoria History of the County of Gloucestershire XI*, (1976), pp 49-50 D Verey, *The Buildings of England: Gloucestershire The Cotswolds* (2nd edn 1979), p 322 J Sales, *West Country Gardens* (1981), pp 90-2 N Kingsley, *The Country Houses of Gloucestershire, Volume One, 1500-1660* (1989), pp 133-4 *Country Life*, no 10 (5 March 1992), pp 60-3 Miserden Park, guide leaflet, (1999)

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1881-2, published 1884

Description written: March 1999 Amended: May 2001 Register Inspector: PAS Edited: April 2003

Legal

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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.