

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

HOMWOOD

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

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HOMEWOOD

Name:	HOMEWOOD
County:	Hertfordshire
District:	North Hertfordshire (District Authority)
Parish:	Knebworth
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.863567 Longitude: -0.20287409 National Grid Reference: TL 23844 19858 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000911 Date first listed: 11-Jun-1987

Details

An early C20 modest country house with contemporary formal and informal gardens, the whole designed by Edwin Lutyens, c 1901.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The Dowager Countess of Lytton employed Sir Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944) c 1901-2 to build Homewood (referred to by Lutyens as 'Homewards') as a modest dower house for her, siting the house and accompanying formal and informal gardens at the southern end of Park Wood, then part of the Knebworth estate. The garden plan by Lutyens (dated 5 December 1901) does not appear to have been carried out exactly, and the layout was later developed somewhat. The participation of Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932) in Lutyens' layout is a possibility, although no formal input is known of, and her work at nearby Knebworth House (qv) did not occur until 1907. The exuberant herbaceous border shown in Weaver's account of Homewood (1913) is characteristic of her style. The house remains (1999) in private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Homewood lies 500m south-east of the centre of the village of Old Knebworth, 4km south of the centre of Stevenage. The c 3ha site is bounded to the north by Park Wood, to the west by a track known as Dowager's Lane which provides access from the village of Old Knebworth, and to the south and east by open agricultural land. The land is largely level, falling gently away at the eastern boundary. The setting is rural, with several C20 dwellings set in the northern half of Park Wood, screened by woodland trees. Views extend across the agricultural land to the south and east, overlooking the A1(M) to the east and beyond this towards distant hills. Views from the western boundary overlook fields to the west and the back of the village. Knebworth House lies 1km to the north-west, with its associated gardens and parkland.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main approach from the village turns south off Park Lane, 500m north of the house, and extends south along Dowager's Lane to a small brick and weatherboarded lodge (c 1920) lying 150m north-west of the house. From this entrance a drive runs south-east through deciduous woodland, arriving at the square, gravel forecourt surrounded by informal panels of lawn, overlooked by the front door at the centre of the main, north-west front of the house. The doorway

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is reached via a tunnel arch. Stone paths lead from the north-east and south-west sides of the forecourt, giving access to the service court and garden respectively.

It appears that originally Lutyens intended the forecourt to be hedged on the outer sides of the lawns, to create a formal enclosure (Lutyens plan, 1901).

A spur off the drive c 50m north-west of the house extends south-east, giving access to the north-east, service front of the house, and to the garage.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Homewood (Sir Edwin Lutyens 1901(2, listed grade II*) lies towards the southern corner of the site, surrounded to the north and east by woodland. The two-storey house, built by Lutyens for the Dowager Countess of Lytton, is in vernacular and Georgian styles, with the ground floor in whitewashed brick and the upper floor weatherboarded, with prominent red-brick chimney stacks. The main garden elevation, on the south-east front, is largely in Classical style. The white-painted, recessed centre, with applied loggia of four Ionic pilasters and arched french windows (giving access from the dining room), is flanked by single-storey side wings, their inner parts open loggias, giving access to the garden from the sitting room and kitchen at the south and east corners of the house respectively.

GARDENS The garden is divided into two major sections, both incorporating terracing. The main formal garden compartment is reached principally from the dining room via the french windows at the centre of the south-east front. The windows, together with the side wings, open out onto a stone-flagged terrace flanked by c 2.5m high clipped yew hedges, leading to a gravel terrace walk running parallel with the garden front. The yew hedges continue from the flagged area to terminate at either end of the walk, where niches are cut into them. Box-edged beds lie adjacent to the walk on its outer, south-east side, above a low brick retaining wall, flanking a central flight of broad stone steps extending south-east from the gravel walk, on an axis with the french windows. A further gravel walk runs along the bottom of the retaining wall, giving access at its south end to the kitchen garden in the southern corner of the site. This walk lies adjacent to an informal lawn planted with mature trees leading to the south-east boundary. Views extend from the centre of the garden front across the terrace and lawn to the agricultural land beyond, and a range of distant hills beyond this.

It seems that Lutyens intended a further formal hedged compartment to be constructed beyond the north-east end of the upper gravel terrace, perhaps enclosing a formal pond (Lutyens plan, 1901), but this was probably not constructed. He also intended an apple orchard to lie in the area presently occupied by the informal lawn, flanking a straight path leading to a small garden building, lying on an axis with the french windows. The remains of the foundations of a small building which may be the proposed garden building lie close to the south-east boundary.

From the north-east end of the upper gravel walk on the terrace, a gap in the yew hedge gives access to the service front. At the south-west end of this walk a gap in the yew hedge gives access to the south-west, garden front of the house (in similar vernacular style to the north-west, entrance front), via a gravel path running along the house. The path encircles a rectangular lawn, formerly crossed by two parallel gravel paths leading away from the house, these having been grassed over but their course still being visible. At the south-west side of the lawn a central flight of stone steps leads up to an open, rectangular croquet lawn, bounded to the north by woodland, to the west by agricultural land, and to the south by a slope down running parallel to the south-west end of the lower gravel walk extending from the main, south-east garden area. Views extend south-west over the agricultural land towards New Wood. It appears that Lutyens intended the croquet lawn to be hedged along the boundaries, creating a formal enclosure (Lutyens plan, 1901).

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden, still under cultivation, lies at the southern tip of the site, adjacent to open fields and partly hedged. It is reached from the service area on the north-east front via the lower gravel walk below the south-east front, and also from the gravel walk adjacent to the south-west front, giving direct access from the forecourt.

REFERENCES

L Weaver, Houses and gardens by E L Lutyens (1913), pp 63-6 B Cherry and N Pevsner, The Buildings of England: Hertfordshire (1977), p 221 J Brown, Gardens of a Golden Afternoon (1982), p 165
Maps E L Lutyens, Homewards Site Plan, 5 December 1901 (private collection)

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OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1884 2nd edition published 1899 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1881 2nd edition published 1898

Description written: February 1999 Amended: October 2000 Register Inspector: SR Edited: November 2000

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.