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Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

The park and garden to Brislington
House (known as Long Fox Manor)

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Name:	The park and garden to Brislington House (known as Long Fox Manor)
District:	City of Bristol (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.429789 Longitude: -2.5289267 National Grid Reference: ST6332570220 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1001529 Date first listed: 25-May-2001 Date of most recent amendment: 15-Sep-2017 Location Description: Statutory Address 1: Long Fox Manor, Bath Road, Bristol, BS4 5RT

Historique de la conservation

Brislington House was established as a private lunatic asylum on a previously undeveloped site by Dr Edward Long Fox (1761-1835) in 1804-06. Edward Fox, a Quaker and member of the Fox family of Falmouth, Cornwall, practised in Bristol as a physician from 1786. He was attached to the Bristol Royal Infirmary from 1786 to 1816.

The site purchased by Fox had formed part of Brislington Common, which had been enclosed in 1780 (Enclosure map, BRO). The site was chosen partly for its location close to the cities of Bath and Bristol which could provide a supply of affluent patients. The asylum, the first purpose-built establishment in England, was opened in 1806. A prospectus published around 1809 (SRO), explains that the asylum's distinctive plan was intended to allow Dr Fox to implement his therapeutic theories of segregation and classification by gender, medical symptoms, and social and financial background. Each block had access to its own designated airing court, beyond which was a range of cells for the restraint of refractory patients. This arrangement is shown on a plan probably published in about 1809 (Huntington Library, CA), while the main buildings are shown in an engraved view which accompanied the prospectus.

In addition to the airing courts, pleasure grounds with an extensive system of walks were laid out around the House; further walks led through the parkland and agricultural estate, while a cliff-top walk led through woodland above the River Avon. The grounds and agricultural estate were used for therapeutic purposes; pauper patients being employed on manual work and those of middle and upper-class backgrounds taking walks and exercise in the grounds under the supervision of attendants (Greenwood 1822). This regime was noted with approval by the House of Commons Committee appointed to consider the 'better regulation of Madhouses in England' in 1815. By the 1830s a move away from rigid classification by social and economic circumstances allowed gentlemen patients to work in the pleasure grounds forming walks and performing other tasks; these are described in an account of his treatment at Brislington in 1830-1832 written by John Perceval (Bateson 1961). In 1816, a detached cottage called Lanesborough Cottage, was built in the grounds to accommodate Lord Lanesborough, while in 1819 the Swiss Cottage was built for Lord Carysfoot. Two further detached villas, The Beeches and Heath House, were built on the western boundary of the site in the 1820s, the latter being occupied by Dr Fox from 1825. In addition, Heath Farm (now

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Heath Court), then known as Heath Cottage, was in use by 1836 as a fifth detached picturesque residence for patients (Fox and Fox 1836). By the mid-1830s Brislington House was 'placed in the centre of what is now become a well wooded estate' (ibid). The location of the asylum within a landscaped park setting (now mostly developed) was intended by Dr Fox both to create reassuringly genteel surroundings for his patients and their relatives, and to provide 'abundant occupation for those who are able to engage in agricultural or horticultural pursuits' (Fox and Fox 1836). The park provided facilities for cricket and football, and at certain seasons, greyhound coursing (ibid). Exercise, including walking in the grounds, was seen by Dr Fox and his successors as an essential part of the treatment offered at Brislington House.

Dr Edward Fox retired from the direction of the asylum in 1829, passing its management to two of his sons, Dr Francis Ker Fox and Dr Charles Joseph Fox. At Dr E L Fox's death in 1835 the property was inherited jointly by the two brothers. In 1840 a detached Private House for the proprietor was constructed to the south of the original building, while in 1850-1851 a major programme of alterations was undertaken. This included merging the three male and female divisions into a single unit for each sex, the extension and remodelling of the airing courts, and the construction of a chapel (Fox 1906).

Heath House was destroyed in an air raid in 1940. The asylum continued to be run by the family until the 1950s when it was sold and converted into a nurses' home. At this time the estate was fragmented, a school being constructed to the south-west of the asylum (St Brendan's Sixth Form College), since much expanded, and all weather sports pitches with flood lighting being laid out in the park to the west around the Beeches, now a training centre, with associated car parking (not included in the area registered here).

In 2001 the former asylum building was converted into apartments (Long Fox Manor). The site is in divided, multiple ownership (2017).

Details

An early-C19 garden and pleasure ground, laid out to accompany Brislington House, a purpose-built private lunatic asylum, used for therapeutic purposes.

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM AND SETTING Brislington House (now Long Fox Manor) and its gardens are located north of the A4, Bath Road, in Brislington near Bristol. The site is bounded to the south by Bath Road, and to the north by Broomhill Road. To the west the site is bounded by former parkland, now forming its immediate setting, that has now been mostly developed, and includes St Brendan Sixth Form College, the Beeches Training Centre, Harlequin RFC and Goals football centre. North-west of Ironmould Lane lie fields leading up to Heath Court and the river Avon, land which formerly was part of the agricultural estate used by the asylum.

The site is generally level to the north, west, and south of the asylum which stands on an artificially levelled terrace, beyond which the land falls to the east, allowing wide views across surrounding agricultural land to Lansdown Hill north of Bath.

The site's wider setting comprises a large C20 industrial area to its north-west, a late-C20 Park and Ride to its south-west, and a C20 housing estate to its north, all replacing former farmland. Farmland survives to the south, the south-east and east, and to the north-east, up to the River Avon (see above).

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Brislington House is approached from Bath Road to the south. The entrance lies towards the centre of the southern boundary. It is marked by a pair of tall, square-section ashlar piers, from which low quadrant walls extend back to a pair of low, square-section stone piers with domed caps. The early-C19 gates do not survive. Immediately within the site the tarmac drive divides to pass to the east and west of the lodge built in 1804-1806 as part of the original scheme (listed grade II). Beyond the lodge the drive sweeps north and north-east for about 200m through mixed ornamental shrubbery on the western boundary of the pleasure grounds, before emerging onto lawns before the west elevation of the asylum. The drive extends the full length of the building to reach the early-C19 stables to the north. A mid- or late-C20 service drive leading south-east from the former stables to Ironmould Lane, provides access to a light industrial area covering about 1.5ha, situated in and around the stables.

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Continuing about 320m north of Brislington House through the grounds of Swiss Cottage, built in 1819 (listed Grade II), the principal drive reaches an entrance from Ironmould Lane to the north. The late-C19 OS map (1881-1883) shows this drive passing through an avenue which then extended across the field north of Ironmould Lane; this avenue does not survive.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Brislington House (listed Grade II, now known as Long Fox Manor), represents the mid-C19 remodelling of Dr E L Fox's original asylum building of 1804-1806. It stands on an artificially levelled terrace towards the centre of the site. The building comprises two three-storey wings which flank a taller, central three-storey block to form a long, approximately rectangular range extending from north to south, the various blocks being linked by a spine corridor. The building is constructed in rendered stone under a slate roof, with Palladian-derived details. The west porch is flanked by a balustrade surmounted by urns which extends the full width of the central block. The central block to the east elevation has a pair of full-height semi-circular bays and a centrally placed porch which gives access to a semi-circular basement extension. To the north-west the mid-C19 chapel breaks forward from the west facade.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The informal pleasure grounds are situated principally to the west, south, and south-west of Brislington House (now Long Fox Manor). To the rear or east of the asylum is an area of formal gardens and lawns which represents the site of the former patients' airing courts.

A gravel terrace returns around the southern end of the building to give access to a terrace below the east facade of the former private house. A conservatory shown on the 1881-1883 OS map forming the northern termination of this terrace does not survive. A flight of stone steps flanked by balustrades, descends east to an area of lawn planted with specimen trees and conifers and bounded to the east and south-east by mixed shrubbery. To the north, the lawn is bounded by a stone wall about 3m high, in which are set a pair of wide C20 wooden gates which give access to a terrace about 65m deep which extends the full length of the east facade of the asylum. The terrace is enclosed to the west by the former asylum buildings, and to the north and south by high stone walls. To the east it is retained by a further wall which is lower than those to the north and south, its down-swept parapet allowing views out across the surrounding country. The terrace is laid to lawn with late-C20 island borders, three mature weeping ash planted on symmetrically arranged mounds, and a pair of mature hollies. To the north there is a late-C20 swimming pool surrounded by paved seating areas and several late-C20 greenhouses. The east terrace occupies the site of the airing courts laid out in 1804-1806 as part of Dr Fox's original asylum scheme. As first constructed, the terrace was divided into six rectangular enclosures, each separated by stone walls and bounded to the east by a continuous range of cells to accommodate refractory patients. This arrangement is shown on the plan of about 1809 (Huntington Library, CA), which notes that: 'Each of these Six courts has an elevated Plane of Grass occupying the middle, and a walk round it under the Walls. From these mounts the Patients can view the surrounding Country. Each Court is appropriated to a distinct Class of Patients and accessible to them at all times under the care of separate Keepers'.

In 1815 a Parliamentary Visitor noted that silver pheasants and doves were kept in the courts for the diversion of the patients (quoted in Fox 1906), while in 1836 it was noted that an arcade extended the length of each court to allow patients to exercise in wet weather (Fox and Fox 1836). These arrangements are shown in an engraving published in 1836 (ibid), which also indicates that the airing courts were planted with trees and shrubs. The plan of 1843 (SRO) shows the ornamental layout of the airing courts with walks, lawns, shrubbery, and mounts, while a further plan of 1850 indicates the amalgamation of the three airing courts for each gender into two; the ornamental layout appears to have been simplified at the same period.

In 1875, S C Fripp prepared plans for a pair of ornamental summer houses to be constructed adjacent to the ladies' and gentlemen's sitting rooms in the central block; these are shown on the late-C19 OS map but do not survive today. By 1881 (OS) the layout of the airing courts had been further simplified with the removal of the internal division on the male and female sides. A central dividing wall was retained and the two airing courts were laid out with cruciform walks dividing areas of lawn planted with specimen trees (OS 1881-1883). The range of cells to the east of the airing courts was removed between 1846 (Tithe map) and 1881 (OS), at which time their site, and an enclosed garden to their east, were incorporated into the airing courts. The east terrace thus attained its present area.

To the west of the house is an area of informal lawns planted with specimen trees including mature cedars, and evergreen shrubbery. Some 50m west and on the axis of the centre of the asylum, a slightly raised level terrace, partly occupied by a

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C20 hard tennis court, corresponds to the early-C19 bowling green constructed by Dr Fox for the recreation of patients (Fox c 1809). The pleasure grounds west of the House are separated from the park beyond by C19 metal estate fencing, and to the north connect with the pleasure grounds associated with Swiss Cottage (listed grade II). The latter extend west of the north drive leading to Ironmould Lane, and include walks leading through mature trees and mixed shrubbery with a small pond. Their present arrangement corresponds closely to that shown on the 1846 Tithe map.

South of the asylum an area of lawn is bounded to the south-east and south-west by further areas of informal pleasure grounds. The lawn is now enclosed to the south by a late-C20 hedge, but formerly connected with parkland to the south-east of the asylum. To the south-east of the lawn a belt of mature trees and evergreen shrubs screens the south wall of the kitchen garden. A mid-C20 drive leads through this planting to reach Ironmould Lane, while a mid-C20 single-storey sports pavilion stands on the site of a small conservatory which is shown on the late C19 OS map about 80m south-south-east of the asylum. To the south-west of the lawn curvilinear walks extend through a belt of mature trees, conifers, and evergreen shrubbery which extends parallel to the principal drive. One walk leads about 260m south-south-west to emerge onto the drive adjacent to the lodge, while another walk, partly edged by rustic stones and boulders, leads about 60m south-south-west to reach a flight of rustic stone steps which ascends to a rustic style viewing platform and alcove dating from around 1820 (listed Grade II). The feature is marked on the OS map of 1881-1883, and the park enclosure to the south is described as 'Grotto Field' on the Tithe map (1846). To the west and south-west of the alcove, a walk follows a low stone retaining wall or ha-ha; this is now set back from the boundary between the pleasure grounds and park, but in the C19 would have allowed views east across the park from the walk (Tithe map, 1846; OS 1881-1883).

The remaining parkland to the north-east of the house is partly occupied by late-C20 industrial units, covering about 1.5 ha. The remainder of this area is pasture and with two late-C20 bungalows set within their own gardens, Re Nova and Perlos, and Orchard Cottage, also built in the late C20. A belt of plantation extends parallel to the northern boundary; this is indicated on the 1846 Tithe map and formerly contained a boundary walk.

The parkland to the south-east of Brislington House (now Long Fox Manor), is laid out as low-key sports fields and is enclosed to the north by shrubbery which serves to screen the south wall of the kitchen garden, and to the south-east by a stone wall fronting Ironmould Lane.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden is situated to the east of the former airing courts and is enclosed to the north, east, and south by high stone walls. To the west it is enclosed by the retaining wall of the airing court, which is partly screened by a line of overgrown fruit trees. Today (2001) the kitchen garden is laid out as sports pitches. The early-C19 layout of the kitchen garden is shown on a plan of c1809 (Huntington Library, CA), and on the Tithe map of 1846, although at that date the kitchen garden is described as a yard. The Tithe map shows three further enclosures, one a garden and orchard, the other two being arable fields occupying the site of the present kitchen garden. The present arrangement was achieved between 1846 (Tithe map) and 1881 (OS) when the cells were demolished, the airing courts extended east, and the three garden or arable enclosures thrown together to form a kitchen garden. In 1881 the OS shows the kitchen garden divided into rectangular sections by walks, with a concentration of fruit trees in the south and south-east sections.

Summary

Early-C19 garden and pleasure grounds, laid out to accompany Brislington House; a purpose-built private lunatic asylum, and site used for therapeutic purposes.

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.

Reasons for Designation

The early-C19 garden and pleasure ground at Brislington House (now Long Fox Manor), laid out to accompany a purpose-built private lunatic asylum, is listed at Grade II* for the following principal reasons:

* Date & rarity: it is a particularly early and important survival of a C19 asylum garden; * Influence and reputation: the therapeutic use of the gardens at Brislington House and their layout were particularly influential on the development of later C19 establishments for the treatment of mental illness.

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Brislington House Ground Plan, 1850 (Q/RLu 42/2), Somerset Record Office

Brislington House near Bristol, Somersetshire, engraving after SC Jones. View of the west front as remodelled in 1850 (BB72/4645), NMR, Swindon

Brislington House Prospectus (1902), copy held at Bristol Reference Library

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Engraved view of Brislington House, c1809 (in Fox, c 1809)

Engraved views of Brislington House, airing courts, Heath Farm, Swiss Cottage, and entrance lodge, c1836 (in Fox and Fox, 1836)

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Tithe Map for Brislington Parish, 1846 (Bristol Record Office)