

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

PYRFORD COURT

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

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Name:	PYRFORD COURT
County:	Surrey
District:	Woking (District Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.311722 Longitude: -0.52011006 National Grid Reference: TQ 03243 57996 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000229 Date first listed: 01-Jun-1984

Details

An early C20 garden designed by Lady Iveagh, strongly influenced by the writings of Gertrude Jekyll, surrounding a contemporary country house.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Pyrford Court was built on land formerly part of Woking Park, lying within the southern area of Windsor Forest. The land came into the ownership of the earls of Onslow during the C17 and remained so until 1902 when lands adjoining Pyrford Rough (the home of Sir Charles Dilke, the Liberal Cabinet minister ruined by a notorious divorce), near the northern edge of the park, were offered for sale by auction. It had been intended that the area would be developed for exclusive housing (Crosby 1982) but the auction did not take place, and Lot 55, a 'very attractive, freehold site for residences, ... adjoining Pyrford Common and having a frontage thereto of about 1,020 ft with sandy soil adjoining the grounds of a good House picturesquely planted with Fir and other trees, on a high level and commanding beautiful views' (Sale particulars, 1902) and Lot 56, further to the west, were acquired by the Hon Rupert Guinness, the fourth Earl of Onslow's son-in-law. A new house, Pyrford Court, designed by Clyde Young and later enlarged by the local architect John Hale to the designs of Guinness (created second Earl of Iveagh in 1919) was built in grounds that eventually totalled over 400ha. Lady Iveagh (the former Lady Gwendolen Onslow), whose mother gardened at nearby Clandon Park (qv), laid out a series of gardens and pleasure grounds surrounding the house and developed the ornamental woodlands. In the late 1940s the Head Gardener commanded a team of eighteen gardeners (B Strudwick pers comm, 1999). Lady Iveagh was very influenced by the writings of, and may have consulted Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932) who lived not far away at Munstead Wood (qv) near Godalming.

During the Second World War Pyrford Court was used by the Headquarters Staff of the 20th Guards Brigade. After the death of Lord Iveagh in 1966, the estate passed to the three daughters who became trustees of the Burhill Estate Company. The outlying farmland as well as the golf course which occupies the park remain in corporate ownership. Pyrford Court was sold off separately and, after a period of use as an old people's home, is currently (2000) privately owned, being part office and part single residence. The large stable block to the north-east, known as The Bothy, has been redeveloped as twelve residential units; this also remains in corporate ownership as does the garden to the east. The easternmost lodge is in separate private ownership.

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DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Pyrford Court lies on the south side of Pyrford Common Road, c 3km east of Woking town centre. The c 50ha site, of which c 8ha comprises ornamental gardens and the remainder woodland garden and an ornamental lake, is situated on a sandy ridge south-east of Pyrford Common, with views south across dry valleys towards the water meadows of the River Wey and beyond to the ridge of the North Downs. The site is bounded on the west by pine woodland surrounding The Rough, the property built and landscaped in the late C19 for Sir Charles Dilke. To the north the site adjoins Pyrford Common. To the north-east a 4m brick wall screens the site from Pyrford Common Road, but is set back from it giving a wide grass verge. On the east boundary, woodland fringes the driveway and is separated from the adjacent farmland by parkland railings. The ornamental woodland to the south of Pyrford Court merges into the tree belt around the adjacent golf course. The lake and its surrounding woodland are bounded to the north-west by the golf course, to the south by a sewage works and on all other sides by farmland. The house is situated at the highest point of the site, the grounds sloping gently to the north towards Pyrford Common Road and steeply on the south side into the woodland.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Today (2000), Pyrford Court is approached via a drive from Pyrford Common Road (built 1920-34) at the north-east corner of the site, opposite Upshot Lane. The single-storey Stone Lodge stands to the west of the drive, c 250m east of the house. The drive runs south-west through a belt of woodland, then swings north-west to a cross-roads c 30m east of the house. It then passes the north facade under an ornamental Venetian footbridge to arrive at the west, entrance front. The former principal entrance to Pyrford Court lies 180m north-west along Pyrford Common Road where early C20 ornamental gates with a two-storey brick lodge on the east side lead to a drive which runs through the central arch of The Bothy. The drive, flanked by rhododendrons and with a large terracotta planter forming a focal point to the south, now terminates after a short distance due to changes in ownership.

Two further drives give access to Pyrford Court: the first runs south-west from Pyrford Common Road along the edge of the Common, passing the Head Gardener's house on the east before turning south-east to approach the west front. The second enters the site off a short access road from Old Woking Road, c 800m west of the house, and runs east through The Rough woodland, passing to the south of the property known as The Rough, and approaches the house on the west, entrance front.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Pyrford Court (listed grade II) is a two-storey with attic, red-brick country house in Neo-Carolean style, designed by Clyde Young (1871-1948) and begun c 1907. The house was not completed for some twenty years as between the wars wings and other extensions were added, designed by John Hale of Woking working closely with Lord Iveagh. An orangery projects onto the east end of the terrace below the south front, with a conservatory and a swimming pool at the west end. The former stable block, The Bothy (c 1910, listed grade II), stands c 100m north-east of the house. It was also designed by Clyde Young in similar style to the house. The symmetrical two-storey brick building with a plain tiled roof has a central arch topped by a square clock tower. The Bothy is now converted for residential use.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The ornamental gardens lie mainly to the north and east of Pyrford Court. From the north front a Venetian footbridge crosses the drive to give pedestrian access to a large, c 1.5ha lawn, running gently down to the north where it is enclosed by the perimeter wall in which is set an open-fronted summerhouse or loggia which affords a view of the house, partially screened by mature trees. A row of pear-shaped yews runs east across the lawn from the loggia. To the west, a pergola constructed of stone columns and oak cross beams and clad with wisteria and ornamental vines runs due west for c 85m to the west boundary wall; it then turns and runs c 100m south-east towards the house. A pink marble dolphin fountain is set on the lawn in the angle of the pergola. Pyrford Court has always been famous for its wisterias, the originals being imported from Yokohama, Japan in 1910, and today (2000) the National Collection is held here. Further examples are to be found on the north perimeter wall, and the house itself, which was described in an article in *Country Life* (1964) as being 'draped on every side [with wisteria]'. The yew-enclosed Jester's Garden lies north of the north arm of the pergola while to the south-west there is a water-lily garden and further small enclosures. These gardens are illustrated in a series of photographs by Newton taken c 1920 (NMR).

A narrow stone-flagged terrace, from which there are outstanding views of the woodland garden and the hills of the North Downs beyond, runs below the south front of the house. In 1907, Rupert Guinness wrote to his father-in-law, Lord Onslow

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requesting that the proposed plantations at Clandon, designed to screen possible buildings, be done in such a way that he might 'still get glimpses of the views from my new drive' (letter, SRO). The dry retaining wall of the terrace is planted with a variety of rock plants. Below the wall a lawn slopes south to merge with the rhododendrons and woodland.

The gardens to the north-east of Pyrford Court are now in separate ownership. The Italian, or Tank Garden, which has recently been restored, is situated c 80m east of the house. A series of three tanks are set in areas of herringbone brickwork, edged with beds of lavender. This garden is typical of those designed, or inspired by, Gertrude Jekyll. Immediately to the east of The Bothy is an area of rough lawn surrounded by narrow yew enclosures. This was the site of Lady Iveagh's five colour gardens (Gardeners' Chronicle 1924), only two of which now survive. At the north-west corner is a semi-derelict (2000) timber summerhouse. On the south the lawn is bounded by the remains of the Gold Garden; some conifers of appropriate colour have survived, as has the golden privet and a golden catalpa. To the east are the remains of the Silver Garden, terminated at the north-east corner by an early C20 brick summerhouse. These gardens were designed using almost entirely coloured foliage and were again inspired by Miss Jekyll. Beyond the colour gardens lay a large rose pergola built of larch, bordered by beds of iris (*ibid*), a plant used extensively at Pyrford Court. The pergola was demolished before 1973 as it was too labour intensive (Wallington and Carshalton Advertiser, 29 June 1973).

To the south of the east drive is a waterfall created in the early C20 where the ground drops steeply away to a valley planted by Lady Iveagh with pines and silver birch and underplanted with rhododendrons and azaleas, although heeding Miss Jekyll's advice these have been kept separate. Like Miss Jekyll, Lady Iveagh also grew *Lilium giganteum* in the woodland.

To the south of the house is an area of mixed woodland with an understorey of rhododendrons and azaleas and a ground flora of plants such as primroses and bluebells. The planting has been added to in the late C20 by introducing a grove of acers to extend the autumn colour. West of the house is an area of pine woodland, within which is a miniature Japanese Garden and a rockery. The mixed woodland continues west to the boundary of the site here registered. A track running south-west from the house through the woodland is all that remains of a ride shown on the OS map of 1920 which ran through the park to Monument Hill, some 1.6km away.

PARK Lord Iveagh's estate extended to over 400ha and included a small private golf course. A path leads south from the south-east corner of the woodland down the valley through an area known as The Hanger to the linear spring-fed lake situated c 800m south-west of the house. Here was the Japanese Iris Garden, noted for its *Iris kaempferi*, and a variety of ornamental specimen trees and shrubs including *Spirea gigantea* and Bamboos (Gardeners' Chronicle 1924). The land to the north-east of the lake was used to grow a variety of moisture-loving plants (B Strudwick pers comm, 1999). Much of the area between the woodland garden and the lake is now occupied by the enlarged golf course and few garden features remain; this area is excluded from the site here registered.

KITCHEN GARDEN The Head Gardener's house is situated at the north-west corner of the site, backing onto the west boundary wall of the north lawn. There was an extensive range of glasshouses, some of which remain, as does an area of fruit trees. A vegetable garden is situated between the eastern boundary of the north lawn and The Bothy. It is thought (B Strudwick pers comm, 1999) that the lawn bounded by the colour gardens may at one time have been used as a productive garden. The small herb garden was situated in this area also (Gardeners' Chronicle 1924).

REFERENCES

Gardeners' Chronicle, (19 July 1924) pp 45-6; (22 November 1924), p 347; (31 August 1957), pp 150-1 E Parker, Surrey Gardens (1952), pp 206-8 Country Life, 123 (13 March 1958), p 496; 135 (7 May 1964), pp 1118-19 P Coats, Great Gardens of Britain (1967), pp 252-6 'Country home with a three acre lawn!', Wallington and Carshalton Advertiser, 29 June 1973 A Crosby, A History of Woking (1982), p 134 A Forsyth, Yesterday's Gardens (1983), pp iv, 46, 53-4, 74

Maps Norden, Map of Windsor Great Park, 1607 (copy held at Surrey History Centre)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1870, published 1872 2nd edition published 1897 3rd edition published 1920 1934 edition
OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1870-1, published 1874 2nd edition published 1895 3rd edition published 1915 1934 edition

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Archival items Collection of 17 photographs of Pyrford Court taken by Newton, c 1920 (NMR, Swindon) Sale particulars, 1902 (Surrey History Centre) Letter from Rupert Guinness about planting belts of trees (1320/308/32), (Surrey History Centre) Information from Bob Strudwick, gardener at Pyrford Court in 1970s.
Description written: January 2000 Amended: May 2003 Register Inspector: BJL Edited: October 2002

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.