

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

COMPTON BEAUCHAMP

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**COMPTON BEAUCHAMP**

Name: COMPTON BEAUCHAMP

County: Oxfordshire

District: Vale of White Horse (District Authority)

Parish: Compton Beauchamp

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.580271  
Longitude: -1.5974271  
National Grid Reference: SU 27992 86900  
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden  
Grade: II  
List Entry Number: 1001091  
Date first listed: 01-Jun-1984

## Details

A C16 and early C18 country house on a moated site, with early C18 formal garden remains incorporating later features.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Sir Thomas Fettiplace acquired Compton Beauchamp shortly after 1500, at which time he probably erected the core of the current house around the courtyard within the moat, this being substantially altered in the late C16. The property passed to Edward Richards in 1694 who rebuilt the entrance front in Baroque style c 1710, disguising the older wings from the approach to the house, which was probably laid out at this time, together with the enclosed garden and terraces. The site passed through the hands of several owners during the succeeding centuries, and remains in private ownership (1998).

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Compton Beauchamp house lies c 10km east of Swindon within the small village of Compton Beauchamp. The c 4ha site is bounded largely by agricultural land, with the parish church and churchyard adjacent to the west and the rectory adjacent to the north-east. The house and garden nestle in a combe towards the bottom of the north slope of the Berkshire Downs, with valley sides rising to the west and east. The setting is rural and agricultural, with extensive views north along the drive and from the forecourt across the country towards Faringdon, and views to west and east from the garden up the adjacent hillsides, particularly to the west where the land has been ornamented with some clumps and single trees.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The house is approached via a drive entering the site 100m to the north, off the Compton to Watchfield lane. The drive runs south off the lane, flanked by lawns and an avenue of closely spaced mature lime trees, formerly known as Wig Avenue (CL 1899), passing through a gateway formed of stone gate piers and iron gates standing c 75m north of the house, these flanked by low walls supporting iron railings.

An avenue (replanted 1990s) present in the C18 and C19 (Rocque, 1761; OS 1880), extends c 100m north across the field from the drive entrance off the Compton lane, framing the view from the north front beyond the line of the lime avenue flanking the drive.

The drive continues south, in line with the north, entrance front of the house, arriving at the entrance to the forecourt 20m north of the house. The drive passes between fine wrought-iron gates with an overthrow, these supported by tall stone gate piers flanked by attached, low stone walls swept round in an elliptical curve to outer piers. The walling is divided by narrow stone piers supporting iron railings (the whole c 1710, listed grade II\*). The rectangular forecourt is flanked to west and east by two long, low, chalk ashlar, former coach houses, with a central, circular stone basin containing a small fountain set in a circular lawn (probably C19, OS 1880). The south side of the forecourt is bounded by the north arm of the moat, with railings at the edge terminated at the west and east ends by stone piers. The moat is crossed centrally by an early C18 bridge (c 1710, listed grade I as part of the house) with balustraded parapets swept round to a wall terminated by square piers where the bridge meets the forecourt. The bridge leads to the front door, placed centrally in the baroque, c 1710 facade, beyond which lies a passage through the north range giving access to the central courtyard.

A further drive leaves the Compton lane adjacent to, and to the west of, the main drive, continuing south-west past a pond adjacent to the east, lying 50m north of the house. The drive divides such that the east arm enters the former stable yard situated 25m north-west of the house, and the west arm continues south to give access to the church standing 50m west of the house.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Compton Beauchamp house (C16, late C17, c 1710, listed grade I) stands on level ground towards the north of the site, at the north end of the valley which runs down from the Downs through the garden to the south. The house, enclosing a square courtyard, lies on an island, the latter supported by brick and stone retaining walls and surrounded by a rectangular moat. The west, east and south ranges, built of brick and of two storeys, date from the C15/C16, with the north, ashlar-faced range having been reconstructed in Baroque style c 1710 by Edward Richards, who raised the central bays to three storeys crowned by a balustraded parapet.

Some 50m north-west and north-east of the house stand the two one-and-a-half storey, chalk ashlar former coach houses (c 1710, listed grade II), facing each other across the forecourt and forming its west and east boundaries.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The gardens lie south and east of the house, reached from the south corners of the forecourt via two paths running south along the edges of the west and east arms of the moat. The garden is reached directly from the house via the garden door in the centre of the south front. From here a path crosses a small lawn to the edge of the moat, carried across by a temporary bridge to a narrow lawn running parallel with the south arm of the moat. An icehouse stands at the east end of the lawn, close to the south-east corner of the moat, set into the north-facing hillside. The lawn ascends a grass terrace to the south to an open rectangular lawn, bounded to the south by a second grass terrace with a central flight of steps leading up to the top terrace, through which extends a central path flanked by topiary specimens, lawns and borders, leading to the garden gateway at the south end of the garden. The gateway (c 1710, listed grade II\*) stands 200m south of the house, in line with the south front, with stone gate piers set into stone walls flanking a wrought-iron gate and screen with overthrow. Views extend west from the garden to the adjacent hillside, and south from the gateway across the Ashbury lane up the hillside beyond. A path (removed late C20) formerly bisected the two lower terraces, completing the central axial line by linking the bridge across the moat with the central path on the top terrace, the whole path being formerly known as the Cloister Walk (OS 1912). The lower two terraces are flanked to the west by a brick garden wall, below which lies a border separated from the lawns by the garden path. The path originates at the south-west corner of the forecourt, extending along the west side of the moat and continuing south, bounding the garden for c 130m. Some 100m south-west of the house the garden wall turns west for c 25m, returning south to the south-west corner of the garden, partly enclosing a separate garden area bounded to the east by a clipped yew hedge. Probably formerly kitchen garden (OS 1880), this now contains a swimming pool, rose garden with raised brick beds, and canal garden (all late C20). The garden wall turns south-east 150m south-west of the house, continuing for 100m along the south side of the garden, broken by the garden gates, terminating 50m to the east of them and some 200m south of the house. East of the formal axial terraces the ground rises up the hillside to the east, cut into by further terraces with paths running along the tops of them. The terraces are largely enclosed by mature trees and shrubs, in particular a line of mature yew trees running north/south along the outer edge of one of the upper terraces, possibly that formerly known as the Monk's Walk (CL 1899). The land east of the terraces levels out towards the east boundary of the garden, which is marked by a fence line and line of trees separating the garden from the paddock beyond. A white limestone rotunda with a wrought-iron top (late C19,

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listed grade II), probably built for Judge Bacon, a former occupant, stands 90m south of the house, set on one of the lower terraces overlooking the open lawn on the second formal terrace. A west-facing sloping paddock situated on the hillside north of Monk's Walk overlooks the house and forecourt to the west, formerly being associated with the terraced pleasure grounds (Rocque, 1761; OS 1880).

In the mid C18 (Rocque, 1761) the formal garden seems to have been divided into four quarters by a path on the line of the Cloister Walk, bisected by a cross path running roughly along the line of the current (1998) bank dividing the central and upper terraces. A boundary separated the formal garden from the terraced area on the hillside to the east, possibly marked by an extension north of the present southern boundary wall. A central path ran north/south through the eastern terraced area, possibly on the line of the former Monk's Walk, these terraces separated from the area to the north, now a paddock, by a path running east from the south-east corner of the moat. A road running north-east from Ashbury, now moved further east, appears to have passed by the southern boundary of the garden. This was reached by a path south from the garden gates, continuing the axial line of the main garden path. The road continued north-east, clipping the south-east corner of the garden, running along the east boundary, this possibly explaining why the informal terraced area is of an irregular triangular shape. A small enclosed area west of the formal garden appears to have been the kitchen garden, separated from the formal garden possibly by a brick wall. By the late C19 (OS 1880) the formal garden had lost some of its detailed formality, retaining a formal rectangular area of beds and paths towards the south end, flanking the axial path, but having lost the division between the formal garden and the terraced area to the east which then contained two straight paths running along the length of the terraces.

#### REFERENCES

Country Life, 5 (24 June 1899), pp 784-9; 44 (30 November 1918), pp 484-91 Victoria History of the County of Berkshire 4, (1924), pp 523-5 N Pevsner and J Sherwood, *The Buildings of England: Berkshire* (1966), p 121

Maps J Rocque, *A topographical survey of the county of Berks ...*, 1761 C and J Greenwood, *Map of the county of Berks ...*, surveyed 1822-3, published 1824 Tithe map for Compton Beauchamp parish, 1839 (Oxfordshire County Record Office) Pre-enclosure map of parish, c 1770 (Oxfordshire County Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1883 2nd edition published 1900 3rd edition published 1925 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1880 2nd edition published 1912 3rd edition published 1925

Description written: July 1998 Amended: April 1999 Register Inspector: SR Edited: January 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.