

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

WILBURY HOUSE

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

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**WILBURY HOUSE**

Name:	WILBURY HOUSE
District:	Wiltshire (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Cholderton
District:	Wiltshire (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Newton Tony
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.170305 Longitude: -1.6828620 National Grid Reference: SU 22269 41277 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001245 Date first listed: 01-Sep-1987

## Details

Parts of an early C18 pleasure ground set in an C18 park, improved in the C19, mid C20 and early C21.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Wilbury House was built c 1710 on the site of Newton Toney Manor, which was the childhood home of the traveller and author Celia Fiennes. Wilbury House was designed by its owner Sir William Benson, MP for Shaftsbury, who was an amateur architect and a patron of literature. A park was laid out around the House, with avenues, vistas and woodland mainly to the north and north-west (VCH 1995). After 1729, Sir William sold Wilbury House to his nephew Henry Hoare II, who sold it on in 1742 to Fulk Greville, MP for Monmouth. Willis (2002) suggests that Sir William Benson, or possibly Henry Hoare, may have asked the landscape gardener Charles Bridgeman (d 1738) to design the landscape at Wilbury, as they would probably have known him and his work through their mutual friends.

The formal park to the north and west of the House survived into the 1770s, by which date an ornamental tower called Benson's Folly had been constructed on nearby Tower Hill, which formed the focal point of a southern vista (Andrews and Drury, 1773). By the mid to late C18 the park also included an octagonal summerhouse to the north of the House, a grotto beside the River Bourne to the south-west, a distant temple on a hill in the park to the south-east, and a formal garden north-east of the House (VCH 1995).

Fulk Greville sold Wilbury House to Thomas Bradshaw c 1783. Under Bradshaw's ownership, the north elevation became the entrance front, and the east wing was used as a Roman Catholic chapel from 1797 to c 1800 (ibid). The estate was sold in c 1803 to Sir Charles Malet, in whose family it remained until 1925.

By 1813 alterations had been made to the House which included the extension of the south portico and pediment to the length of the principal room. Between 1773 and 1817 the park was enlarged to the south, and a fence of oak palings erected around its perimeter (Hoare 1822). By 1817, the distant temple in the park and Benson's Folly had been demolished, and soon after much of the park was turned over to agriculture (OS Drawings 1807-08). During the late C19 the South Western Railway Line was

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built, cutting through the southern half of the park extension (outside the area here registered). In 1918, the War Department occupied part of the estate, which they eventually bought from Sir Harry Malet in 1925 when the latter sold Wilbury House to Mr J Despencer-Robertson. The latter sold the House in 1939 to Edward Grenfell, Lord St Just, who was succeeded by his son Peter. Between 1941 and 1959 a formal garden was laid out south of the House, with a sloping lawn leading to an evergreen parterre and a central pool (CL 1959). After Peter Grenfell's death in 1984 his wife became the owner; after her death the House was sold in 1996. Wilbury House has been restored recently (2002) and new gardens have been laid out to the south, replacing the formal gardens of the 1950s.

Wilbury House and its estate are now (2002) in divided private ownership.

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Wilbury House, a site of c 140ha, is situated immediately to the south-east of the A338 between the villages of Cholderton and Newton Tony, the latter abutting the south-west boundary of the site. To the north the site is bounded by an area of wetland. From here the River Hourn and its carrier streams enter the site to the north-east and run in a south-westerly direction before turning southwards towards Newton Tony village. To the south-east, east, and west the site is bounded by farmland.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The main approach to the park is from Newton Tony village to the south-east. Here a gate, flanked by Newton Tony Lodge (1909, listed grade II), gives access to a drive that runs north-east along Cleve Hill Plantation to Three Corner Hat. Here it turns north and crosses two early C19 bridges over the carrier streams of the River Hourn before making a curve in a westerly direction to the turning circle at the north front of the House.

The park can also be entered at Buckles Lodge (OS 1876) in the south-east corner of the site, where an avenue leads north-westwards to Three Corner Hat; here it links up with the main drive from Newton Tony Lodge. A further entrance lies at Grateley Lodge to the north-east, where a gate gives access to Pit Walk, a drive that leads westwards to the north front of Wilbury House. Pit Walk crosses two late C18 or early C19 bridges built over the carrier streams of the River Hourn which enter the park here. Formerly there was also an entrance from the north-west off the A338, 800m north-west of the House, at Salisbury Lodge (OS 1879), now (2002) ruinous. From here a drive, now partly overgrown and out of use, leads eastwards through the northern park tree belt, passing the archaeological remains of a tumulus (scheduled ancient monument) before turning south towards the north front of Wilbury House.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Wilbury House (listed grade I) stands just east of centre in the northern part of the site. The early C18 house, designed by William Benson in the Palladian style, is built of flint and brick and lime rendered, with a rusticated stone basement and a slate roof. In the late C18 an additional storey and wings were added. The design of the south elevation is based on John Webb's Amesbury Abbey of 1661 (qv, replaced in the early C19). This south front is two storeys over a basement and has seven bays, the central three having a large Corinthian tetrastyle portico with a stair leading into the garden. The north front has eight window bays, and the west front has a bow window with sliding shutters. A service wing is attached to the north-east of the House.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The gardens and pleasure grounds cover an area of c 16ha to the north, east, and south of the House. To the south front of the House is a lawn, introduced in the early C21, with C18 sundials (each listed grade II) at the south-east and south-west corner. The lawn is separated from the park by a stone ha-ha built in the early C21. The lawn covers the site of the former parterre garden, created in the 1950s (CL 1959). Adjacent to the lawn, on a lower level, c 150m to the south-west of the House, is an informal pond (early C21), screened to the west by Grotto Wood and to the north-west by Tree Ground. In Grotto Wood, c 200m to the south-west of the House, is an early C18 flint grotto (listed grade II). It consists of a square chamber set into the earthen bank, with a short entrance passage. A passage curves round inside the grotto, entering from the east and rising to an exit into Tree Ground to the north. From the south entrance of the grotto are extensive views to the south-east of the park and Tower Hill in the distance. In Tree Ground, to the west of the House, a network of paths leads to a C19 limestone monument (listed grade II) consisting of an Ionic column supporting a large handled decorated urn. Immediately north of the House, in the middle of the turning circle of the main drive, is a circular pond with central fountain, introduced in the early C21. Beyond it lies Grove Wood, through which a vista is cut (C19) in a north-westerly direction, lined by a yew hedge (partly replanted early C21), aligned on the central axis of the north front of the House. At its south end the

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vistais to a commemorative column of 1897 (listed grade II) marking the end of the vista on the northern edge of the site. Some 20m south-east of the column a walk (early C21) through Grove Wood runs eastwards to the Temple (listed grade II\*). This early C18 octagonal summerhouse (restored 1899 and early C21) stands c 200m to the north-east of the House. It is built on a grotto entered through a passage from the east. East of the Temple lies the Eastern Plantation, and from the south front of the Temple a walk runs in a southerly direction towards the kitchen gardens and stable block c 250m east of the House. The walk passes the former Pump House (restored early C21), situated to the west. The Pump House is enclosed to the west by the remains of a mature plantation called The Grove (OS 1880).

**PARK** The park extends to the west, south, and east of the House and pleasure grounds. The park to the west is bounded by a thin belt of trees, and in the centre is a rectangular enclosure created by Millborough Wood. The level park to the south is scattered with mature tree clumps and individual specimen trees. To its east it is enclosed by Cleve Hill Plantation. The east park, situated north-east of Three Corner Hat, gently rises in south-easterly direction and is also scattered with mature tree clumps. Carrier streams of the River Hourn meander through the south and west parks, leaving the parks in the south-west corner at Newton Tony.

By the early C19 the park to the south-east had been extended as far as Tower Hill Plantation, the site of Benson's Folly (demolished by that time), and to the south-west it had been extended beyond Newton Tony, as far as Allington village (outside the area here registered). By the late C19, after the introduction of the railway line which cut through the southern half of the park, the majority of this new park extension had been returned to farmland. A ride or walk, called Long Walk (OS 1876), ran from Wilbury House along its eastern boundary to Tower Hill; this is now (2002) only partly intact and lies outside the area here registered. In the park to the south-west was another ornamental ride or walk, called Littletdown Walk (OS 1876), of which only parts now survive (outside the area here registered).

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The site includes three brick-walled kitchen gardens situated immediately east of the House. The rectangular enclosures cover an area of c 1ha and are linked by the stable block. Along the north wall of the western enclosure stands an early C20 greenhouse which replaces an earlier one (OS 1880). The greenhouse has recently (2002) been restored and a terraced flower and vegetable garden has been laid out in front of it. The two walled gardens further east are now (2002) laid to lawn scattered with a few mature fruit trees. Formerly the walled gardens had a formal layout with the paths dividing them into quarters (OS 1880). During the late C18 (Andrews and Drury, 1773) a formal garden was situated in this area.

Immediately to the south-east of the kitchen gardens, c 250m south-east of the House, lies Home Farm (formerly called Wilbury Farm, OS 1876).

#### REFERENCES

R C Hoare, *The History of Modern Wiltshire* (1822) *Country Life*, 71 (23 January 1932), pp 96-102; 126 (3 December 1959), pp 1014-18; (10 December 1959), pp 1148-51 B Jones, *Follies & Grottoes* (1974), p 408 B Cherry and N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Wiltshire* (2nd edn 1975), pp 573-4 Wilbury Park, Wiltshire: Inspector's Report, (English Heritage 1990) *Victoria History of the County of Wiltshire XV*, (1995), pp 146-9 P Willis, *Charles Bridgeman and the English Landscape Garden* (2nd edn 2002), p 54, note 52

Maps Andrews and Drury, *Map of Wiltshire, 1773* (Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office) C Greenwood, *Map of Wiltshire, 1820* (Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office)

OS Surveyor's Drawings, 2" to 1 mile, 1807; OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1876 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1880

Description written: October 2002 Amended: January 2003, December 2003 Register Inspector: FDM Edited: December 2004

## 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.