

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

WARMLEY HOUSE

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

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WARMLEY HOUSE

Name: WARMLEY HOUSE

District: South Gloucestershire (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Oldland

District: South Gloucestershire (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Siston

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.454986
Longitude: -2.4780253
National Grid Reference: ST 66882 72998
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1000356
Date first listed: 26-Aug-1988

Details

Mid C18 grounds around a mansion using features of earlier industrial works.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Warmley House was built in c 1750 for William Champion (1709-89), a Quaker industrialist who had moved his brassworks (founded 1742) from Old Market, in the centre of Bristol, to Warmley in 1746. The gardens around the House were laid out from 1746 to 1769, with much of the work taking place at the beginning of this period. They were closely associated with the early zinc smelting processes invented and patented by Champion and were intimately linked to the large industrial complex (scheduled ancient monument) he developed to the south of Warmley House. Many features had a dual purpose, being both ornamental and of use in the industrial processes. Champion's brassworks were driven out of business by competitors in 1768, bringing about the ruin of his main investor, Norborne Berkeley, Lord Botetourt of Stoke Park, Avon (qv). Thomas Goldney III of Goldney House, Avon (qv) and Charles Bragge, later Lord Bathurst, also lost significant sums of money. The works were auctioned in 1769 following the collapse of the business and sold to the Bristol Brass Company. Activity on the site was gradually wound down but the manufacture of brass pins continued to after 1835, under the ownership of George Madgwich Davidson. The pin-making business was sold to Joseph Haskins in 1881, when the property consisted of a dwelling house, coach house, yard, lawn, gardens, pleasure grounds, and ponds. The building known as the Summer House, in the north of the site, was sold in 1918 (Pearson Assocs 1997). Warmley House and its garden was bought by Warmley Rural District Council for use as offices in 1941. In the 1960s most of the Pottery Works adjacent to south-east of the site were demolished, leaving little more than the Clock Tower (c 1746, listed grade II) and associated buildings, formerly the pin factory. A lake, which formerly occupied the northern and eastern areas of the site, became silted up in the early C20 and the area was occupied in the 1970s by a mobile home park following the culverting of the Siston Brook. A boathouse situated c 70m north-west of the House was burnt out before 1984. In 1984 Warmley House was sold and became an old people's home and the grounds were opened as public open space. The site remains (2002) in divided public and private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Warmley House is situated c 9.5km east of the centre of Bristol in Warmley, part of the suburb of Kingswood, and the grounds cover 4ha. The boundaries of the registered site are formed by the western boundary of the caravan park to the west; the rear of properties off Tower Lane to the south; the rear of properties off Tower Road North to the east; and the garden boundary of the Summer House to the north. The landform is mostly flat, being in the broad valley of the Siston Brook, but rises to the east where the House stands. The site is bordered by suburban housing and a horticulture enterprise to the east, residential and commercial development to the south, and fields to the west.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Warmley House is approached from the east, along a short c 50m drive off Tower Road North, through ornamental gates and gate piers (1830s, listed grade II). There is a turning circle north of the House and attached stable block. A steep incline leads c 15m north from the head of the drive into a small walled area now used as a car park. The gardens are entered through a doorway in the wall to the west of the car park. There is a pedestrian access from the south, next to the former Warmley Works buildings on Tower Lane, 150 south-west of the House. This access links to the southern end of the Laurel Walk which leads approximately north/south through the gardens. The Summer House, which is located 300m north of the House, has its own access drive to the east off Tower Road North.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Warmley House and stable block (c 1750, listed grade II*) were built for William Champion who lived on the site of his brassworks. The three-storey ashlar and slate-roofed building occupies the east of the grounds on a low eminence, its main, north front overlooking the grounds to the north and west. The House has a central block with a rusticated ground floor and central pedimented porch. The west elevation has a two-storey semicircular bow with a balustraded parapet. The east side of the north elevation has a set-back two-storey wing connecting to the stable block which is of colour-washed brick and stone with a late C20 tile roof. The House is currently (2002) used as an old people's home.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens lie to the west of the House and extend for c 300m to the north and c 100m to the south. The House terrace and immediate surrounds are planted with mature evergreen trees such as holm oak and monkey puzzle dating from the C19. South-west of the House the ground slopes away down a grassy bank to a line of mature perimeter trees on the southern garden boundary 100m away. Warmley's most intricate garden area lies c 50m to the west of the House. An ornamental gateway (mid-late C18, listed grade II) flanks steps leading to the northern entrance to the interior of the Grottoes (mid-late C18, listed grade II). These underground structures, thought to originate in industrial workings (Bryant and Howes 1991), are built into the rising ground upon which the House stands and consist of passageways built from stone, clinker, and slag blocks which link a central, formerly domed but now open, area to four axial vaulted chambers, some with water basins and waterfalls. The interior is liberally decorated with black slag and clinker, by-products of the smelting processes, and niches and shelves are cut into the walls. The water features were probably powered by the steam engines which raised water for the industrial works (ibid). The Grottoes have several openings which pierce the gardens walls. South of the Grottoes are a series of walled enclosures of varying heights and construction, forming a chain of outdoor rooms with shrub beds against the walls. One of these enclosures, the Chequered Walled Garden, is set into the hill on which Warmley House stands and has a wall punctuated by arched openings, subsequently infilled in a chequerboard pattern of black slag blocks. Some 20m south of these enclosures is the Mount, covered with holly and a ring of oak trees, which overlooks to the south the site of the former Works and remains of the Windmill Tower and associated buildings, now housing the Industrial and Local History Museum. At the west foot of the Mount is the southern end of the Laurel Walk, bounded on its west side by the remains of the lake edging and aligned to the south with the Windmill Tower (C17/C18, listed grade II), situated outside the gardens. Also outside the public gardens to the south and in divided ownership is the Icehouse (C18, listed grade II). The lake which covered the entire western half of the site no longer survives: two thirds of its former area at the southern end is occupied by a mobile home park and the remainder, to the north, by an abandoned tree nursery. The Laurel Walk runs 100m north-east to a roofless boathouse at the southern end of the semicircular Echo Pond, a small body of water backed by a 3m high curved wall and framed by alder trees. A 50m path follows the line of the straight wall at the garden front of Echo Pond and leads to the southern end of Elm Walk, a slightly curved path, 200m long, which passes between poplar and lime trees and elm scrub to the northern boundary of the gardens. Elm Walk is bounded on its eastern edge by a dried-up canal which formerly fed Echo

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Pond. The canal has been encroached upon by extensions to the rear gardens of neighbouring houses in Tower Road North. The Summer House (mid-late C18, listed grade II) lies 30m west of the end of Elm Walk and marks the former northern boundary of the lake. The castellated Summer House, now a residence with C20 extensions, was built for Champion from slag blocks. To the east of the Summer House, at the junction with Elm Walk, were the sluices for regulating the flow of water from Siston Brook into the lake. South of the Summer House is an abandoned nursery, home to a range of semi-mature trees. A massive statue of Neptune (mid-late C18, listed grade II), c 8m tall and decorated with clinker and render, stands 120m due south of the Summer House, formerly in the lake but now incongruously visible above the roofs of the mobile homes to the south (2002).
KITCHEN GARDEN No evidence of a kitchen garden survives at Warmley. It is possible that any productive gardens were in the area north of the House, outside the site here registered, which is now used as a horticultural enterprise.

REFERENCES

H T Ellacombe, *History of the Parish of Bitton* (1883) Warmley Gardens and Grotto, guide leaflet, (Kingswood Borough Council 1987) Avon Gardens Trust Newsletter, 2 (1987); 22 (2000), pp 14-19 A Bryant and L Howes, *Warmley Historic Gardens* (1991) Warmley Historic Garden Management Plan, (L Howes 1993) S Harding and D Lambert, *Parks and Gardens of Avon* (1994), pp 48-9 Warmley Historic Garden Management Plan, (Nicholas Pearson Associates 1996) Warmley Gardens Landscape Conservation Plan, (Nicholas Pearson Associates 1997)
Maps Sale particulars plan, 1918 (9492(70)), (Bristol Record Office)
OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1881
Illustrations S Loxton, pen and ink drawing, Warmley House and Gardens, 1907 (Bristol Reference Library)
Description written: September 2002 Register Inspector: SH Edited: January 2003

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.