

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

THE HILL (INVERFORTH HOUSE)

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Name:	THE HILL (INVERFORTH HOUSE)
County:	Greater London Authority
District:	Camden (London Borough)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.565382 Longitude: -0.18268230 National Grid Reference: TQ 26060 86732 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000244 Date first listed: 01-Oct-1987

Details

An early C19 garden, redesigned by Thomas H Mawson in early C20 with colonnaded pergolas extending over two further gardens.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Hill House was built in the early C19 and is shown on the 1st edition OS map of 1866 on the same site and orientation as the present mansion. The gardens lay to the west and consisted of scattered trees on a large lawn and boundary shrubberies and walks. On the west side was a double shrubbery with an open area (probably kitchen gardens) between. A walk led from the gardens through this area out onto Hampstead Heath. Hill House was remodelled in 1896.

Sir William Hesketh Lever (later Lord Leverhulme) purchased Hill House in 1904. The house was extensively rebuilt and enlarged for him, after which it became known as The Hill. The architects included E A Ould, William and Segar Owen and James Lomax-Simpson and the work included the addition of north and south wings to the garden front, by Grayson and Ould, c 1905; a terrace along the garden front by Grayson and Ould, to which Thomas H Mawson added an Ionic Verandah, c 1910; a library wing added to the entrance front, by William and Segar Owen, 1913-14; alterations to the terrace by Leslie Mansfield, who added a ballroom underneath it, 1923; and the extension and remodelling of the south wing by Mawson in conjunction with T H Mawson & Sons, 1924-5.

The gardens were laid out in three phases, each following the purchase of the three separate properties that make up the present site (Hill House, Heath Lodge and Cedar Lawn. The first and second phases were designed by Thomas H Mawson (1861-1933), who had already worked for Lever on his properties in Lancashire (Thornton Manor (qv), Lever Park (qv) and Rivington Gardens (qv).

When Lever purchased Hill House, the garden was on steeply sloping ground and Mawson levelled the site into terraces, providing terrace gardens in front of the house, a level lawn, and a pergola around the west and south sides of the garden in 1906. The terraces were constructed with the spoil from the Hampstead tube excavation. The kitchen gardens were laid out between the pergola and the south-west boundary of The Hill garden. In 1911 Lord Levehulme purchased Heath Lodge (the neighbouring property to the north-west) and demolished that house. Mawson extended the pergola across a bridge over the

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public road that separated the two properties to a circular Garden Temple and then after a long stretch of pergola to a Belvedere at the western end, overlooking the Heath and the former Heath Lodge gardens. A conservatory on the west side of the original pergola was demolished in the process and replaced by a Pergola Temple. Service buildings were built on the eastern portion of the newly acquired land and the two-acre gardens were incorporated within the scheme.

During the First World War Leverhulme purchased Cedar Lawn (the neighbouring property to the south) and in 1922 that house was also demolished and the pergola and garden were extended to the south.

Lord Leverhulme died in 1925 and the property was acquired in 1926 by Andrew Weir, first Baron Inverforth. Lord Inverforth lived at The Hill until his death in 1955, leaving the property to Manor House Hospital, who renamed the house 'Inverforth House' in his memory.

The property was divided in 1960 when the London County Council purchased the western part of the site and the north-western part of the pergola. The pergola and gardens were restored and opened to the public in 1963 as 'The Hill Gardens'. The southern part of the pergola was made available for public access in 1971 but was later closed after its condition became unsafe. In 1991 the Hospital offered their part of the pergola to the Corporation of London, who had owned the north-western part of The Hill Gardens since the abolition of the Greater London Council. The Corporation restored the pergola and laid out further gardens to the west of it (on the site of the kitchen garden) in the late 1990s. Inverforth House and gardens was sold to developers in the 1990s and is being developed as private residences (1998).

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The Hill, c 3ha, is located to the north of Hampstead, on the eastern edge of the West Heath area of Hampstead Heath. Inverforth House and The Hill gardens are bounded by North End Way to the east, Inverforth Close to the north and the Heath to the north (beyond the Close), west and south. The gardens are enclosed by fences. The site slopes down from Inverforth House to the west, with exceptional views to the west and south-west from the gardens and the pergola over the Heath and beyond.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES There are three entrances to the gardens: from Inverforth Close to the north; from the Heath onto the middle of the north-western portion of the pergola; and from the Heath to the southern end of the pergola. Inverforth House is approached from North End Way to the east and has its own entrance to the gardens from the east side of the pergola.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens are in two parts: the Inverforth House gardens (private) of c 1ha; and The Hill Gardens of c 2ha, including the pergola (listed grade II), which are open to the public.

The Inverforth House gardens can be seen from the original part of the pergola, which wraps around the west and south side of the gardens. A broad terrace extends for c 150m along the west and south-west fronts of the House. From the terrace a curved double flight of steps (listed grade II), by James Lomax-Simpson, leads down to a formal garden. This garden consists of a paved rectangular pond (listed grade II) with fountain, surrounded by classical urns and pedestals.

To the west of the gardens is the main part of the pergola, which is cruciform in shape and orientated west/east on the steps and pond. From here there is a short arm leading north to Inverforth House, west to The Hill Gardens, and south to the Heath and one of the approaches to the kitchen gardens. To the south the pergola continues for c 40m, before turning east for 35m, and then south for c 80m. In the centre of the southern arm is an octagonal summerhouse and the southern end is terminated with a circular belvedere.

To the west the pergola crosses the public road by a bridge and leads to a central temple summerhouse, from which there are steps down. The pergola then runs west for c 100m to a rectangular belvedere summerhouse from which there are good views of the public gardens. This west/east section from the bridge to the west summerhouse, added c 1911-12, has a wall along the north side (the rest of the pergola is open on both sides).

The balustraded and colonnaded pergola is largely raised on brick arcading, the elevated position giving good views of the Heath, Inverforth House and gardens, The Hill Gardens, and the new gardens. Portland stone columns (double and single) support the wooden pergola, together providing the framework for wisteria, roses and other climbing plants, with herbaceous planting at the foot of the columns.

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From the western end of the pergola, steps lead down to further gardens. On the eastern side of these gardens there is a formal rectangular pool, running north/south, with a pavilion to the east, from which there are good views to the west. The pool is directly aligned on the western extension of the pergola. Shrubberies run around the north and west boundaries and the pergola along the south boundary. A path runs around the gardens, within the boundary shrubberies and enclosing a large lawn, flanked by further shrubberies and with mature trees, including large beech trees. The lawn slopes down to the west with good views over the Heath.

KITCHEN GARDEN From the southern end of the pergola there are steps down to ground level and one of the entrances to the gardens from the Heath. The steps also lead to an area of new gardens, which have been laid out in the two triangular spaces formed by the pergola. This area was formerly the kitchen gardens but the glasshouses had fallen out of repair and in the 1990s they were removed. The gardens laid out in their place consist of formal arrangements of trees, large planted pots, and a geometric arrangement of beds, planted with herbaceous plants and shrubs, including herbs and ornamental vegetables. At the northern end a path leads under the pergola (immediately to the east of the bridge over the public footpath) and from here there are steps back onto the pergola.

REFERENCES

T H Mawson, *The Art and Craft of Garden Making* (1907), pp 272-7 *Gardeners' Chronicle* ii, (1912), pp 482-3 *Architectural Review* 34, (1913), pls 12-13 *Country Life*, 43 (23 February 1918), pp 186-93 T H Mawson, *The Life and Work of an English Architect* (1927), pp 129-30, 179-80, 189 G Beard, *Thomas H Mawson* (1976), pp 20-1, 55 B Cherry and N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: London 4: North* (1998), pp 217-19, 235
Maps Cruchley's *New Plan of London and its Environs*, 1835
OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1866 2nd edition published 1894-6 3rd edition published 1914
Description written: September 1998 Register Inspector: CB Edited: May 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.