

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

TINTINHULL HOUSE

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

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Name:	TINTINHULL HOUSE
County:	Somerset
District:	South Somerset (District Authority)
Parish:	Tintinhull
label.localisation:	Latitude: 50.975232 Longitude: -2.7105596 National Grid Reference: ST 50209 19776 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001156 Date first listed: 01-Jun-1984

Details

Formal gardens developed in the early C20 to a scheme in part attributed to Harold Peto, which were expanded and planted from 1933 by Phyllis Reiss and subsequently by Penelope Hobhouse.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

At the Dissolution of the Cluniac priory of Montacute in 1539, the manors of Montacute and Tintinhull were granted by the Crown to Sir William Petre. Secretary of State to king Henry VIII. In 1546 part of the Tintinhull property was let by him to Edward Napper, whose descendants prospered in the local clove-making trade. By 1630 the Nappers had constructed the east range of the present house, and this was extended by Andrew Napper in 1722 when the classical west facade and forecourt were built. The prosperity of the Napper family declined in the mid C 18, and by 1746 Tintinhull House was being let to the Pitt family. When John Napper died in 1791 his debts forced his widow to sell the property. Passing through several hands in quick succession, it was acquired in 1839 by Jeremiah Penny, whose family remained in occupation until 1898 when the house was purchased by Arthur Cobbett. Cobbett emigrated to South Africa c 1900 and at the same time sold Tintinhull to his tenant, Dr S J M Price. Dr Price, an amateur botanist, developed the west forecourt as a garden, laying the distinctive diamond-patterned flagged walk and planting the flanking clipped domes of box, perhaps following a scheme provided by Harold Peto (1854-1933), whose sister was a friend (guidebook). In 1933 Tintinhull was sold to Capt and Mrs F E Reiss, who had formerly lived at Dowdeswell Manor. Gloucestershire (qv), not far from Hidcote Manor (qv). The influence of Hidcote in Mrs Reiss' development of the gardens at Tintinhull is evident in the use of garden enclosures linked by carefully designed vistas and rich planting (ibid). Between 1933 and 1947 Mrs Reiss extended the garden. creating the Middle Garden and Fountain Garden which continue the western axis of the early C20 garden, and the Cedar Court, Pool Garden, and kitchen garden to the north. In 1954 Mrs Reiss gave the house and garden to the National Trust, but continued to live in the house and care for the garden until her death in 1961. After Mrs Reiss' death the house was let by the Trust to a variety of tenants, including between 1980 and 1993 the garden designer and writer Penelope Hobhouse, and her husband Prof John Malins. During her time at Tintinhull, Mrs Hobhouse developed the planting, particularly that of the terracotta pots which had originally been placed in the garden by Mrs Reiss, while Prof Malins established an arboretum in the orchard to the north of the kitchen garden.

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Tintinhull House remains (2002) the property of the National Trust.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Tintinhull House is situated to the north of Farm Street which leads east from the centre of the village of Tintinhull, c 5km north-west of Yeovil. The c 2.5ha site is adjoined on all sides by agricultural land and orchards from which it is separated by C20 fences and hedges. The site is generally level and there are few views extending beyond its boundaries; the tower of the parish church to the south-west of the site can be seen from the Fountain Garden.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Tintinhull House is approached from Farm Street which extends from west to east through the site, dividing the house and gardens to the north from an area of orchard, developed in the late C20 as a car park, to the south. A stone wall extends east from the south-east corner of the house separating a courtyard from Farm Street. Some 10m east of the house a pair of brick quadrant walls fronted by specimen purple-leafed Cotinus flank a pair of square stone piers under domed caps which support a pair of mid C20 wrought-iron gates (all listed grade II). The eastern pier records that the gates were erected in memory of Phyllis Reiss after her death in 1961. The entrance leads directly to a cobbled courtyard east of the house, which is enclosed to the north by the C 18 stone stables and barn (listed grade II), to the east by stone walls and a further outbuilding, and to the west by the house (listed grade I). To the northeast a gate leads from the courtyard to a service area north-east of the stables, while to the north-west a door leads to the garden. The walls of the buildings surrounding the courtyard are planted with climbing subjects, while specimen trees are planted to the north-east and south-east and a mixed border extends along the south-east boundary wall. The courtyard was developed in its present form by Mrs Reiss from 1933 and reflects her belief that the approach to a garden should be understated, giving little or no hint of what was to come (guidebook).

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Tintinhull House (listed grade I) is constructed in local Ham stone ashlar and comprises two stories and an attic under stone slate roofs. The east facade, which since the early C20 has been the entrance front, has irregularly placed mullion and transom windows under hood mouldings, while dormer windows light the attics. A centrally placed single-storey flatroofed extension forms the entrance hall. The east facade dates from the original construction of the house by the Napper family in 1630, while the single-storey extension was built for Arthur Cobbett c 1898 (ibid). The west facade, today overlooking the garden but originally constructed as a new entrance façade, is a symmetrical composition comprising five bays, the central three of which are placed beneath a pediment supported by plain pilasters with Tuscan caps. The corners of the facade are articulated by rusticated pilasters, while there is a deep rusticated basement. A centrally placed doorcase comprising a segmental pediment supported by engaged Tuscan columns is approached by a sweeping stone staircase, while the facade is lit by tall mullion and transom windows. The attics are lit by dormers, while a circular attic light is placed in the central pediment. The west facade was built by Andrew Napper in 1722 (ibid). The north facade overlooking the Cedar Court, and the south facade abutting Farm Street are both irregular in form and reflect the construction of the west range in the early C18.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS A timber door set in a stone wall at the north-west corner of the east courtyard leads to a small stone-flagged terrace enclosed to the east by stone outbuildings and to the north by mixed shrubbery. A stone well-head stands immediately north-west of the terrace, while angled stone steps descend to a straight flagged walk which extends c 100m west through the garden to reach a stone bench seat backed by a clipped yew hedge. Two mature specimen yews rise from this flagged walk, while the course of the walk is broken by a further shallow flight of steps marking the division between the Cedar Court and the Pool Garden to the west. To the north of this walk the Cedar Court comprises an approximately square area enclosed to the east and north by stone walls and to the west by a yew hedge. Stone-flagged walks extend along the north and east sides of the Court, separating the central square lawn from deep mixed borders. The junction of the walks is marked by a paved terrace set with a square ground-level bird bath and a seat. The north border is planted with a red scheme while that to the east comprises mixed specimen shrubs. A further, similar mixed border planted with a purple scheme extends along the west side of the lawn. The purple border was the first border to be created by Mrs Reiss at Tintinhull (ibid). To the west of the eastern walk there is a further narrow stone-edged bed which was originally planted with bearded iris. The west and north borders reflect the planting used by Mrs Reiss, while the north border is to be restored to her scheme of musk roses in 2002-03; the restoration of the iris border to Mrs Reiss' scheme is also planned (Floyd Summerhayes pers comm, 2002). Mature specimen magnolias

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are planted at the north-east, south-east, and south-west corners of the lawn, while a young specimen cedar at the north-west corner replaces a mature specimen lost in 1994. The Cedar Court was developed by Mrs Reiss from a paddock in 1933.

To the south of the flagged walk enclosing the south side of the Cedar Court lawn a brick wall (listed grade II) fronted by a border of hardy fuchsias separates the Cedar Court from the garden enclosures aligned on the west facade of the house. A timber door set in this wall leads to the west terrace, a stone-flagged terrace extending the full width of the house, on which are placed large stone pots planted with lilies, following the scheme devised by Mrs Reiss (guidebook). The terrace is separated from the Eagle Court to the west by a low rendered wall which supports further pots. The Eagle Court is enclosed to the north and south by stone-coped brick walls (listed grade II), and to the west by further brick walls with ogival stone coping (listed grade II). This wall is broken by a pair of tall, square stone piers surmounted by carved stone eagles, while a further, lower pair of stone piers (all listed grade II) flank a walk aligned on the west facade of the house. This axial walk comprising stone flags laid in a diamond pattern and flanked by low domes of clipped box extends through the Eagle Court and the adjacent Middle Garden, allowing a reciprocal vista to extend from the central door in the west facade of the house to a white-painted cast-iron bench placed to the west of the Fountain Garden. The Eagle Court is laid out with rectangular panels of lawn to each side of the axial walk, while mixed borders planted by Mrs Reiss extend below the north, south, and west walls. Young specimen flowering cherries in the south border replace trees planted in the 1930s which were lost in 2001. A border of lavender extends along the west side of the low wall separating the terrace from the Eagle Court. The Eagle Court was originally constructed as an entrance court in the early C18 and was first developed as a garden c 1900 by Dr Price, possibly following a scheme by Harold Peto (*ibid*). The garden achieved its present form under Mrs Reiss.

Immediately west of the Eagle Court, the Middle Garden is enclosed to the south by a stone wall (listed grade II) and comprises two rectangular panels of lawn flanking the axial western walk and box domes. At the south-west corner of the Middle Garden is a group of mature ilex oaks, while borders extend along each side of the lawns. The north-facing border to the south of the garden is planted with an early C21 scheme of Kurme azaleas, heathers, and flowering cherries, replicating that planted by Mrs Reiss in the 1930s. To the west, below the mature trees, shade-loving plants are employed, while to the north an informal border of shrubs forms a screen for the Pool Garden. A copy of an C 18 William Kent stone urn placed towards the western end of the south border forms one end of a reciprocal vista to the summerhouse in the Pool Garden to the north. The Middle Garden was developed by Mrs Reiss from a paddock in the 1930s.

At the western end of the Middle Garden the early C20 diamond-pattern walk terminates in a short flight of stone steps which descends to the Fountain Garden. The axial walk is continued by a crazy-paved stone walk which extends between a pair of borders planted with shrubs and backed by yew hedges. To the west, a square area enclosed by yew hedges has as its focal point a circular pool with a central jet d'eau. The crazy-paved walk encircles the pool, while each corner of the enclosure comprises a border planted to a predominantly white scheme. To the west of the Fountain Garden a late C20 white-painted wrought-iron seat donated in memory of Prof Malins stands in an arbour of clipped hornbeam. An opening on the north side of the Fountain Garden allows a view through the kitchen garden to the gate leading to the north orchard, while a similar opening on the east side allows a view of a stone urn placed on a pedestal which forms the eastern termination of this reciprocal vista. A stonepaved walk extends between the eastern yew hedge and the eastern boundary wall of the garden, with a border of foliage plants below the wall. A similar walk passes behind the western hedge allowing access to the kitchen garden.

To the north of the Middle Garden and to the east of the kitchen garden, the Pool Garden comprises an approximately rectangular area enclosed to the north by a stone wall, and to the east and west by yew hedges. To the south a shrubbery border separates this garden from the Middle Garden. A rectangular stone-edged canal extends along the north/south axis of the enclosure, and is terminated to the north by a rectangular paved area, beyond which stands a classical summerhouse. The summerhouse is flanked to east and west by mixed borders, while the adjoining walls and the summerhouse itself support climbing plants and roses. The corners of the canal are marked by large terracotta pots with seasonal planting and it is flanked by rectangular panels of lawn, beyond which are deep mixed borders backed by the yew hedges. The western border is planted with a scheme of 'strong' colours including yellow, red, orange, and purple-blue, while the east border has a scheme of soft' colours including silver, pink, and blue. Each border is divided into two equal sections: the division in the centre of the western border allows a

vista through to the kitchen garden and western orchard. while the division in the eastern border shelters a seat. The Pool Garden was created by Phyllis Reiss in 1947 on the site of a tennis court, and the summerhouse was constructed to commemorate her nephew, Michael Lucas, a Fleet Air Arm pilot who was killed on one of the Malta convoys in 1945 (inscription: guidebook). The planting schemes in the borders reflect those devised by Mrs Reiss, while the planting of the terracotta pots is inspired by that used by Penelope Hobhouse in the 1980s (guidebook).

The southern end of the Pool Garden is crossed by the stone-flagged walk which extends west from the garden door along the south side of the Cedar Court. A similar stone-flagged walk at the northern end of the Garden, passing in front of the summerhouse, connects the kitchen garden to the west and the Cedar Court to the east.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden is situated to the north of the Fountain Garden and to the west of the Pool Garden, and is approached from both. An entrance placed on the north/south axis of the Fountain Garden leads to a low raised terrace planted with two rectangular beds of roses. A sloping stone retaining wall descending from the terrace to the level of the kitchen garden was originally planted with alpine strawberries (restoration planned 2002-03). The kitchen garden is laid out to a cruciform plan with gravel walks extending from north to south and east to west dividing four stone-edged beds. The walk extending from the Fountain Garden north to the gate leading to the north orchard is edged with catmint, while the walk extending south from the Pool Garden to the south orchard is edged with roses, behind which pears are trained on espaliers. The intersections of the walks are marked by metal tree guards on which are trained honeysuckle. A further walk extends along the western boundary of the garden where metal estate fencing separates the garden from the orchard, while to the north-east an entrance leads from the kitchen garden to a service area with greenhouses and a frame yard. Today (2002) the kitchen garden remains in full cultivation, partly under the Henry Doubleday Heritage Seed Library scheme (ibid).

The kitchen garden was laid out in its present form by Mrs Reiss in the 1930s, with ornamental planting lining the principal walks and contributing to vistas extending from other areas of the garden.

OTHER LAND To the west of the kitchen garden is an area of traditional orchard planted with a mixture of mature and young Somerset apple varieties. To the north of the kitchen garden, and entered from it through a traditional five-bar timber gate placed on the central north/south axis, is a further area of orchard which was partly replanted as an arboretum by Prof Malins in the late C20. This area retains some earlier ornamental planting, including spring bulbs, which may indicate that Mrs Reiss intended to develop it as a 'wild' garden (Floyd Summerhayes pers comm, 2002).

To the south of Farm Street another area of orchard has been partly developed as a late C20 car park with mown grass walks leading to Farm Street.

REFERENCES

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Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 2nd edition revised 1901

Description written: July 2002 Register Inspector: JML Edited: May 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.