

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

Garden at Three Gables

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Garden at Three Gables*

Name:	Garden at Three Gables
District:	Bedford (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Biddenham
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.139547 Longitude: -0.49686329 National Grid Reference: TL0296750093 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1430989 Date first listed: 02-Feb-2016 Statutory Address 1: Three Gables, 17 Biddenham Turn, Biddenham, Bedford, MK40 4AZ

Historique de la conservation

Three Gables and its garden were designed by Charles Edward Mallows (1864-1915) in 1900 for his father-in-law, Henry John Peacock, a wealthy Biddenham farmer. In 1905 Mallows moved into the house with his wife and young family and he died there in 1915. Mallows studied at the Bedford School of Art and after several apprenticeships, including one at the offices of William Wallace and William Flockhart, set up his own practice in London. After travelling and producing measured drawings of English and French cathedrals, which won him the RIBA Pugin travelling scholarship in 1889, he returned to Bedford where he opened an office with George Grocock in 1895. Mallows also designed garden ornaments and pergolas for The Pyghtle Works, the acclaimed joinery firm for whom Lethaby and Bailie Scott designed furniture. In 1898 John Parish White, the son and business partner of the owner of The Pyghtle Works, asked Mallows to design King's Corner in Biddenham, which was the first of his garden houses. It was through White that Mallows received the commission for Three Gables, and presumably thus met his future wife.

Three Gables was the first house built on Biddenham Turn which was then known as New Road. The first edition Ordnance Survey (OS) map of 1884 shows the road with fields on either side. The area that was later to become the plot for Three Gables is on the north side of the road and has a field boundary running across the western side in a north-west direction. The map shows that the corner formed by the road and field boundary has a few deciduous and coniferous trees, and there is also a deciduous tree in the north-west corner and another mid-way along the southern boundary. Mallows' original plan for the garden has a straight drive aligned north-south between the road and house but this was adjusted in order to preserve the spinney as well as the field hedge and entrance. The second edition OS map of 1901 shows the house in the middle of a rectangular plot with the retained field boundary and spinney. The third edition OS map of 1926 depicts the curved driveway and two small outbuildings along the western and northern boundaries. These no longer exist. Three Gables was the subject of an article in *Country Life* (29 Jan 1910) which featured drawings by F. L. Griggs who had been articled to Mallows' office in 1895-96. The article included a plan of the garden – 'a rectangular space of about an acre' – which shows the house near the middle of the plot with the south-facing elevation looking over a 'bottle neck' shaped flower garden (adapted from the original rectangular shape to accommodate the field boundary). To the right there is a tennis lawn bounded along the eastern edge by a pergola, and there are two small orchards in the north-east corner. To the left of the house, a spinney with a meandering path occupies the

south-west corner, and the rest of the plot is taken up by three kitchen gardens. A perspective drawn for exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1903 shows a garden shelter and lily pond that was intended to separate the tennis lawn from the orchards but this part of the design was never realised. Three Gables was also chosen by Gertrude Jekyll for inclusion in *Gardens for Small Country Houses* (1912) as an example of the 'close connection between house and garden.' After the success of Three Gables, Mallows received further commissions for houses with integrated gardens, notably at Tirley Garth in Willington, Cheshire West and Chester, which he designed in the early C20. The house is listed at Grade II* and the garden is registered, also at Grade II*. Mallows has one other garden on the Register (formal gardens added to the C18 landscaped park at Canons Park, Harrow) and twelve other listed buildings, mostly houses, all at Grade II. In 1908 he designed a third house in Biddenham – White Cottage, 34 Days Lane – for his brother Ernest Richard Mallows but this is not listed.

The garden at Three Gables has undergone some changes, the most significant being the loss of the northern part of the garden, containing two kitchen gardens and an orchard, when it was sold for development in 1986. A garage was built in the north-west corner of the garden in the 1990s using bricks and roof slates from the various outbuildings taken down when the kitchen garden was sold. The only other notable changes are the creation of the herbaceous border along the eastern edge of the tennis lawn in place of the pergola, and the replanting of the flower garden with roses, which both probably took place in the 1930s.

Details

LOCATION, SETTING, LANDFORM, BOUNDARIES AND AREA

Three Gables is located on the east side of Biddenham, a village on the western outskirts of Bedford. The garden is situated on the north side of Biddenham Turn. It is on level ground and occupies an area of roughly three quarters of an acre. The rectangular plot is c60m in width and 50m in length, and the house is set back from the road by c25m. The garden is bounded on the south (front) side by a yew hedge with topiary at irregular intervals which was planted c10-15 years ago. The east side is bounded by a wooden post and rail fence and tall yew hedge, except for the south end which has a holly bush. The north and west sides are bounded by a paling fence.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The garden is approached from the south through a wide wooden gate in the yew hedge slightly to the left of centre in the position of the original field entrance.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING

The Grade II-listed Three Gables is an Arts and Crafts house constructed of local red brick with a clay tile roof covering. It has two storeys with steeply pitched roofs and varied elevations, the principal south elevation being distinguished by three prominent gables. The house has an asymmetrical plan with loggias on the south, east and west sides.

GARDEN

The garden is divided into sections which all have a different character. The layout of the western side was influenced by the existing field pattern. The drive therefore follows the original curve of the boundary as it winds northwards to the house, and is lined on the left with shrubs, including buddleia, hydrangea, and box, some cut into topiary. Roughly parallel to the drive on the west side is a tall hawthorn hedge, probably the original field hedge, which continues in a north-westerly direction almost to the end of the plot. At the northern end an archway has been cut, aligned with the north wing of the house. To the right of the drive, in front of the house, is a rose garden in the shape of a bottle neck which has intricate shaped beds divided by narrow lawn paths. The rose garden is lined on the east and west sides by holly hedges with bee hive domes cut at regular intervals. The unusual shape was adopted in order to accommodate the field boundary on the left and the mature cypress tree on the right. At the southern end of the rose garden a stone bird bath is set in a square of low box hedge. At the northern end there is paving in front of the house which contains two millstones and continues around the east side of the house featuring another millstone at the northern end. The paving is original but was relaid c20 years ago.

To the left and right of the rose garden are grass paths along the southern boundary lined with shrubs and trees, including box and silver birch. To the left, the spinney in the south-west corner contains some mature trees predating the garden, including sweet chestnut, oak and hornbeam, as well as shrubs and topiary planted at a later date. A grass path meanders through the spinney. The south-east corner of the garden is occupied by a long rectangular tennis lawn which has flower borders along the north and west sides and a herbaceous border along the east side (which replaced the original pergola). A tall yew hedge at the northern end divides the lawn from the orchard in the north-east corner. The orchard retains original apple, plum and pear trees, and in the middle has four borders divided by stone paving which were created in the late C20/ early C21. On the west side of the orchard the flower border in front of the house is edged with a low box hedge and original shaped ceramic tiles.

Along the west side of the garden, to the north of the spinney, there is a kitchen garden which has partly been laid to lawn. The garage built out of the materials from the outbuildings occupies the north-west corner, and just in front there is a mature oak tree that was retained from the former field.

Summary

Arts and Crafts Garden laid out in 1900 to the designs of Charles Edward Mallows.

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.

Reasons for Designation

The Arts and Crafts garden at Three Gables, laid out in 1900 to the designs of Charles Edward Mallows, is registered at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

- * Designer: it is by an accomplished garden designer and architect of national repute whose work is well represented on the List;
- * Design interest: it is a highly significant work that embodies Mallows' fundamental ideas about garden design and is one of his earliest designs for a 'garden house', an integrated approach to planning in which he evinced great skill. The design of the garden is carefully integrated with that of the house to create an open and dynamic relationship between the inside and outside space;
- * Intactness: with the exception of the kitchen garden in the northern section, the garden encompassing the rose garden, spinney, tennis lawn and orchard, together with the paths, boundaries and trees, survives in the same form as depicted on the original plan;
- * Rarity: it is not only a rare and important survival of a suburban Arts and Crafts garden but is the only known example of a garden of this scale by Mallows to have survived in anything like its original condition;
- * Influence: it was featured extensively in the contemporary architectural press and, together with the house, forms an ensemble of considerable importance as the best surviving example of Mallows' influential 'garden houses';
- * Historic interest: it has a particularly close association with Mallows as not only did he design it for his future father-in-law but he came to live there himself: his son remembers him working extensively from home. Mallows also died at Three Gables, being prematurely cut off in his prime;
- * Group value: it has strong group value with the Grade II listed house and forms part of an important cluster of five Arts and Crafts houses in Biddenham by Mallows and Baillie Scott, three of which are listed.

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