

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

THE PLEASAUNCE, OVERSTRAND

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| Name: | THE PLESAUNCE, OVERSTRAND |
| County: | Norfolk |
| District: | North Norfolk (District Authority) |
| Parish: | Overstrand |
| label.localisation: | Latitude: 52.918570 Longitude: 1.3411409 National Grid Reference: TG 24716 40910 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF) |
| label.overview: | Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001013 Date first listed: 18-Sep-1987 |

Details

An early C20 Arts and Crafts-style architectural garden by Edwin Lutyens in collaboration with the owners Lord and Lady Battersea, originally covering c 20ha, now reduced to c 2.5ha.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Up until the middle of the C19 the coastal village of Overstrand had a population of less than 250 and the site of The Pleasaunce consisted mainly of sandy cliffs and open land. In 1888 Cyril Flower, first Lord Battersea and his wife, Constance, purchased 3 acres (1.25ha) of land with two small dwellings on it known as The Cottage from the local landowner Lord Suffield, to develop as a holiday home. Temporary additions and extensions were built to accommodate guests, but in 1897 Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944) was commissioned to join the two villas together to make one large house which became known as The Pleasaunce. He added a clock tower to the east and a covered cloister to enclose a garden terrace on the west. The gardens were developed between 1898 and 1930 by the owners themselves, with some advice from Edwin Lutyens, and by 1911 covered c 50 acres (c 20ha) (*Gardeners' Chronicle* 1911). Lord Battersea died in 1907 but his widow continued to stay at The Pleasaunce until her own death in 1931. The property was then split up and sold as separate lots. The house, together with c 2.5ha of garden, was purchased in 1937 by Christian Endeavour Holiday Homes Ltd who run it as a holiday centre for Christians from all over the world. The remainder of the site was largely developed for housing. The site remains (1999) in corporate ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The Pleasaunce lies in the heart of the fashionable Edwardian holiday village of Overstrand, c 2km east of the main resort of Cromer on the north Norfolk coast. It enjoys a clifftop coastal setting with the north front of the house being in view of the sea. The house stands in the centre of the village, surrounded to east, south, and west by housing. To the north, a flint pebble and tile boundary wall runs alongside a minor road beyond which the land drops away to the sea. The wall extends around the eastern boundary which is formed by a road that divides the house from its stable/garage block and Lutyens' Clock Tower to the east. A section of brick and flint wall also encloses part of the south boundary with Harbord Road. The land is generally flat with a slight fall northwards towards the sea. The low boundary

wall to the north allows views both into and out of the site, giving glimpses of the sea through shelter-belt trees from the north terrace, and glimpses of the house from the road.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The entrance to the side is from the south, past a late C19 brick and stone-dressed curved wall (listed grade II) with a large opening to the drive and a small iron gate into the gardens. The drive runs east for c 10m before turning north past a large early C20 gateway on the right (listed grade II), possibly by Lutyens. The gateway is built of rendered and pebble-dashed brick under a tiled roof overthrow and has pyramidal buttresses to support the piers. The drive arrives at the Porch on the east front, opposite which stands Lutyens' Clock Tower (listed grade II) with flanking loggias to north and south. The roughcast brick and tile central tower is square in plan and tapers at the top to a pyramidal roof. North and south ranges have three bays with open semicircular arches, originally used for tea parties but now given over to garages.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING The Pleasaunce (listed grade II) is a large house constructed around two earlier cottages or villas. The rendered and tile-hung brick house sits to the east of centre of the registered site and follows a regular ground plan with irregular facades of two and three storeys with oriel windows, tile-hung upper floors, and a gabled, hipped and pyramidal roof. The arched entrance porch stands on the east front whilst the tile-hung upper-floor bay on the west front shelters a loggia on the first floor. On the north-east corner stands an octagonal open loggia on the ground floor, with Doric columns supporting a pyramidal roof. On the south-west corner is a later (mid C20) single-storey extension. The house was designed by Edwin Lutyens between 1897 and 1899 to bring two existing cottages together into one holiday house for the first Lord and Lady Battersea. The Pleasaunce and its neighbour Overstrand Hall were Lutyens' first commissions outside the Home Counties. Extensions have been added post-1937 by the Christian Endeavour Holiday Homes.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens lie to the north, west, and south of the house. To the north is a long terrace, terminated on the eastern boundary wall by a covered loggia known as The Love Seat. A low retaining wall with steps leads down to an area of informal lawn bounded by trees and shrubs. Incorporated into the boundary wall in the north-west corner of the site, c 100m from the house, is a flint, brick, and stone two-storey Gazebo (listed grade II) with a hipped pantile roof. It was designed by Lutyens with doorways leading both into the garden and out onto the road and it is reached through a glade of pine and holm oak under which lie the remains of a rock garden. The main garden to the west is bounded on the west side by a c 70m long L-shaped covered walk known as The Cloister (listed grade II). Its twelve bays run north/south parallel to the house and are open to the east, overlooking the garden enclosure. The roughcast white-painted buttresses which form the arches sit on low brick plinths and are decorated with bands of tile. At the northern end is an open circular loggia with pyramidal tile roof. The return at the southern end originally housed a bakery and laundry. The house and Cloister enclose a paved terrace with a sunken pool lined with blue tiles, now (1999) filled with plants rather than water.

Immediately to the west of The Cloister, aligned on the loggia at the northern end, steps lead down into a sunken, paved rose garden. Its brick and stone walls support raised beds around the perimeter, currently (1999) filled with conifers and low maintenance shrubs rather than roses. Immediately to the north of this is a hard tennis court (mid C20). To the south of the house are lawns, set on two levels with a path leading into a woodland garden and shrubbery. This is cut through with flagstone paths lined with rock and tufa which lead to a second rose garden situated on the southern boundary.

The surviving architectural elements are attributed to Lutyens and although hearsay suggests Gertrude Jekyll worked here, there is no evidence to suggest that was formally involved in the planting which elsewhere has been attributed to the Batterseas themselves (Gothien 1928; Ottewill 1989). The gardens were very much more extensive and famous in the early years of the C20. Although now developed for housing, it is possible to find within the boundary of the original garden a number of individual surviving features: part of the water garden, now incorporated in the garden of the house on the western boundary; the walls and gateway leading into the kitchen garden (now a property called The Garden) south-west of the Rectory; a range of gardener's stores and early C20 glasshouses on the south side of The Garden; scattered sections of wall and various gates posts, piers and garden buildings; the Cricket Ground and pavilion; the Guest House on the southern boundary (now thatched). These lie outside the registered boundary.

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KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden is traceable amongst the housing development, with the main gate piers and part of the surrounding wall surviving. A large modern house now stands within the garden. This area stands outside the registered boundary.

REFERENCES

Gardeners' Chronicle L, (7 October 1911), pp 259-61 L Weaver, Houses and gardens of Sir Edwin Lutyens (1913), pp 51-2 M-L Gothien, The history of garden art (1928), pp 403-5 N Pevsner, The Buildings of England: North-east Norfolk and Norwich (1962), p 296 J Brown, Gardens of a golden afternoon (1982), p 164 R Gradidge, Edwin Lutyens Architect Laureate (1982), pp 17-19, 95-6 D Ottewill, The Edwardian Garden (1989), pp 70-1 Elizabeth Jones, Poppyland in Pictures (1993), pls 44(8 [contemporary postcard illustrations]

Maps Tithe map for Overstrand parish, 1838 (Norfolk Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1886 2nd edition published 1906 OS 25" to 1 mile: 3rd edition published 1928

Description written: May 1999 Register Inspector: EMP Edited: March 2001

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.