

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

**BIDDESSEN HOUSE**

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

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**BIDDESSEN HOUSE**

Name:	BIDDESSEN HOUSE
District:	Wiltshire (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Ludgershall
County:	Hampshire
District:	Test Valley (District Authority)
Parish:	Appleshaw
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.258316 Longitude: -1.5820152 National Grid Reference: SU2926451100 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001228 Date first listed: 01-Sep-1987

## Details

An C18 and C19 park including remains of an C18 terraced garden, an early C19 garden and shrubbery, and a garden dating from the early 1930s.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1693 the Biddesden estate was bought by General John Richmond Webb, then a young army officer. General Webb was a senior officer under Marlborough and fought at Blenheim 1703, Ramilles 1706, Oudenaarde 1708, and Wynendaele 1708. On his retirement he built Biddesden House between c 1711 and 1724, replacing an earlier manor house mentioned in the C16 and C17. General Webb probably created a series of formal terraced gardens to the west of the House (VCH 1995), including a walled kitchen garden and stable yard. The estate remained in the ownership of the Webb family until the early 1780s, when it was sold to Thomas Everett. The Everett family owned the estate throughout the C19. By 1841 the landscape surrounding Biddesden House included a park, an orchard, and a flower garden and shrubbery (Tithe map, 1841). In 1908 the estate was sold and had a series of different owners until 1931, when it was bought by Bryan Walter Guinness (from 1944 Lord Moyne). The latter improved the House and gardens in the early 1930s.

The site remains (2003) in private ownership.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Biddesden House, a site of c 26ha, is situated in a rural area east of the village of Ludgershall. It lies on the Wiltshire side of the county boundary with Hampshire. To the west and north-west the site rises slightly and to the south it rises steeply up Lambourne's Hill. The park boundaries are lined with woodland belts to the north, west, and south. The north-east and east boundary is formed by the road known as Biddesden Bottom. To the east of the site lies Chute Lodge, Hampshire and to the south farmland, with Redenham Park beyond.

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**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The main approach to Biddesden House is from Biddesden Lane, a public road that runs from east to west through the southern half of the site from Biddesden Farm to the junction with Biddesden Bottom. Two pairs of square stone gate piers with bollards mark the points where Biddesden Lane, a public road, enters the park. From Biddesden Lane a straight drive runs in north-easterly direction to an C18 entrance screen and gate (listed grade II) c 50m south of the House. The gate gives access to an oval forecourt with a central lawn with at its centre an early C18 rectangular limestone pedestal adorned with a later bronze sundial (listed grade II), the latter possibly a replacement of a former statue.

Biddesden House can also be entered from the north, where a straight avenue, planted with horse chestnut, runs from the public road to the north-east in a southerly direction along the east side of the House. There it turns westwards and leads to the stable yard immediately to the south of the kitchen garden.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Biddesden House (listed grade I), of Flemish bond brick with stone dressings, is situated in the north-east corner of the park and built on the site of a spring. Each elevation is three storeys high and has seven bays with the entrance front to the south, overlooking the forecourt. On the east side of the House is a tower. A library was built over the billiard room on the west elevation c 1910, in matching early C18 style. The west elevation has a window painting of 1931 by Dora Carrington and the east elevation has similar window paintings of 1935 by Roland Pym, restored in the 1950s.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** From the west front of the House, a series of four C18 grassed terraces with central stone steps lead up the hill in a westerly direction. Above the terraces lies a grassed area screened by a belt of mature trees, with a walled garden to its south-west. Near the House, to the north-east of the C18 terraces, stands a group of large mature yew trees, with to the north a mature, c 10m long serpentine hedge running east to west. This area was formerly called the Flower Garden and Shrubbery (Tithe map, 1841). From here a path, now (2002) no longer visible, used to lead to an orchard which occupies the far north-west corner of the site (Tithe map, 1841). In the north-west corner of this orchard, of which now (2002) only a few fruit trees remain, stands a temple. The latter incorporates an early C19 wooden portico that formerly adorned the south front of the House.

To the north-east of the House, beyond the drive, is a lawn screened by shrubs and mature trees. At its north end stands an early C20 wooden temple with portico.

**PARK** The park of c 12ha lies both to the west of the House, and to the south of Biddesden Lane. It is surrounded by a thin belt of trees, with Chapel Copse in the north-west corner, and is adorned with a scattering of mature individual trees and circular clumps. From the park to the west, formerly known as Back Meadow (Tithe map, 1841), there are fine views of the kitchen garden and gazebo, and the parkland on the other side of Biddesden Lane. The park south of Biddesden Lane rises gently towards Lambourne's Hill to the south of the site, offering fine views of the House and gardens to the north-east.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** There are two walled gardens at Biddesden House. The first, and smaller of the two, lies immediately north of the House and is used as a kitchen garden. The second, larger garden lies c 200m to the south-west of the House.

The latter is almost rectangular in plan and dates from the early C19. There are three doorways on the east wall, one on the south wall, and two to the west. Two C18 parallel walls along its west side (listed grade II) create an alley subdivided by yew buttresses at its northern end. The two walls are approximately 2m high and 130m long. The inner wall has four openings. The outer wall is built of cob on flint footings with a thatched coping, the inner wall of flint on a brick base, with the top courses also of brick with stone copings. At the north-west corner of the walled garden stands a gazebo (listed grade II), decorated with a mosaic by Boris Anrep and flanked by a swimming pool in the shape of a moat. This was introduced in 1933 to designs by George Kennedy; from that date the garden was primarily used as an ornamental garden.

To the south of the walled garden are an C18 stable block and cottages (both listed grade II), and an C18 dovecote (listed grade II), previously used as a generator house and now (2003) in use as an electric sub-station.

#### REFERENCES

Country Life, 45 (28 June 1919), pp 782-90; 74 (19 August 1933), p 184; 83 (2 April 1938), pp 352-6; (9 April 1938), pp 376-80 B Cherry and N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Wiltshire* (2nd edn 1975), p 110 Victoria History of the County of Wiltshire XV, (1995), pp 133-4

Maps Tithe map for Ludgershall parish, 1841 (Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office)

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OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1873-9, published 1883

Archival items Aerial photograph, 9 August 1995 (NMR 15364/05), (NMR, Swindon)

Description written: April 2002 Amended: November 2003 Register Inspector: FDM Edited: November 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.