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Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

REDLYNCH PARK

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

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Name: REDLYNCH PARK

County: Somerset

District: South Somerset (District Authority)

Parish: Bruton

County: Somerset

District: South Somerset (District Authority)

Parish: Shepton Montague

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.088935
 Longitude: -2.4438275
 National Grid Reference: ST6901232274
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

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 Grade: II
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 Date first listed: 01-Jun-1984

Details

Formal gardens of C18 origin, with early C20 elements designed by Edwin Lutyens, set in a park which was first enclosed in the C17 and landscaped in the mid C18.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In the mid C12, Redlynch belonged to Henry Lovel of Castle Cary (d 1194). The estate continued in the possession of Henry Lovel's descendants until the late C14, when it seems to have been acquired by James FitzJames (d c 1391) (VCH 1999). James FitzJames' great-grandson, Sir John, Chief Justice of the King's Bench, owned a house at Redlynch which in 1538 included a great chamber over a parlour. Sir John FitzJames died c 1542, and was succeeded by his cousin, Sir Nicholas, who improved the house. In 1617, Sir Nicholas' nephew, John FitzJames, sold Redlynch to Sir Robert Gorges of Bristol, with whose family the property remained until it was conveyed in 1672 to Sir Stephen Fox in settlement of a debt (ibid).

In 1688, Sir Stephen Fox undertook an extensive programme of repairs to the house, which was described as large, while in 1708-09 he commissioned Thomas Fort to design a new house which was built on a site adjoining the C16 mansion. Fox died in 1716 and was succeeded by his son, also Stephen, who assumed the additional name of Strangways on his marriage in 1735, and was created Lord Ilchester in 1741 and Earl of Ilchester in 1756. Lord Ilchester was responsible for considerable changes and improvements to both the house and landscape at Redlynch. In 1729 work began on building garden walls, while in 1738 E Grant produced a plan of the park, perhaps a proposal, which indicated shrubberies north of the house, a formal lake to the south, and a serpentine walk to the south-east (E Grant, 1738). Between 1740 and 1762 the park was increased in size and a series of ornamental features including cascades, a great pond, wilderness, temple, Chinese seat, and a menagerie aviary, while in 1755 Henry Flitcroft designed a new gothic entrance on the west side of the park. These improvements are recorded on a map of 1762 by Benjamin Donne. Lord Ilchester entertained George III at Redlynch during the King's visits to Weymouth.

Lord Ilchester died in 1776 and was succeeded by his son, Henry Thomas, second Earl of Ilchester. The second Earl made his principal residence at Melbury, Dorset (qv), and in the 1790s proposed to return the park at Redlynch to agrarian use. This policy was implemented by the third Earl, who inherited in 1802. By the 1830s parts of the C18 mansion had been abandoned, while in 1851 it was partly occupied as a farmhouse. In 1901, the fifth Earl, who had succeeded to the estate in 1865, commissioned Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944) to convert the C18 service block to residential use, and this subsequently served as the principal residence on the estate. In 1912 the sixth Earl sold the estate to the Cavendish Land Co, who quickly sold it on to a series of speculative purchasers. In 1914 however the converted service range was seriously damaged by a fire started by Suffragettes; the building was repaired and the C18 mansion demolished at about the same time. The house was again sold several times, before being acquired in 1935 by Margaret, Countess of Suffolk and Berkshire, who continued to live at Redlynch until her death in 1967. The property subsequently passed through several ownerships and between c 1971 and c 1982 served as a school.

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In 1985 the house and stables were converted into apartments, while the Orangery was sold for residential use and the park continued in agricultural use. The site remains (2003) in divided ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Redlynch Park is situated c 3km south-east of Bruton, to the west of the B3081 road. The c 319ha site comprises c 10ha of gardens, pleasure grounds, and walled gardens, together with c 309ha of parkland. The site is enclosed by a stone wall c 3m high, completed for the first Earl of Ilchester in 1748-50 as part of his scheme of improvements (VCH 1999). The site is bounded to the east by the B3081 road, and to the south-east and south by a minor lane which leads west from Stoney Stoke to Shepton Montague. To the south-west the site adjoins agricultural land, while to the west and north-west it is bounded by a further minor road which leads south-west from Redlynch to Ilchester. The site slopes from north to south towards a stream which flows from east to west roughly parallel to the southern boundary of the park. Beyond the southern boundary of the site the ground rises, affording extensive northerly views across the park towards Redlynch House.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Redlynch Park is approached from the B3081 road to the north-north-east at a point c 100m south-east of Redlynch Cross. The entrance is marked by C19 stone quadrant walls surmounted by metal railings, these flanking a pair of cylindrical, banded stone piers surmounted by domed caps which support a pair of wrought-iron gates. A C19 two-storey stone lodge stands immediately south of the entrance. From the entrance a tarmac drive leads west for c 250m, affording south-easterly views across an area of parkland, before turning south-west and south for c 400m, passing through an area of shrubbery and plantation to the north and north-west of the walled garden and service court. Turning east, the drive extends c 250m to pass south of the west block of Redlynch House (listed grade II) before entering the carriage court situated between the east and west blocks; an elliptical gravel carriage turn encloses a central lawn. The carriage court is enclosed to east and west by the two blocks of the house, while to the north it is enclosed by an C18 rubble-stone wall (listed grade II), the central point of which is marked by an elaborate wrought-iron gate set in a rusticated stone arch surmounted by a pediment (all listed grade II). The design of the gateway is attributed to Lutyens and formed part of his scheme for remodelling the house and gardens in 1913.

A further entrance is situated on the minor road which leads south-west from Redlynch Cross to Shepton Montague, at a point c 270m south-west of the mid C18 parish church of St Peter (listed grade II*; outside the site here registered). A pair of C18 rusticated square stone piers (listed grade II) flanked by return walls marks the entrance to a drive which leads c 160m south-east, passing to the north-east of the C18 Home Farm (listed grade II; outside the site here registered), to join the principal drive c 250m west of the house. The line of the west drive and the principal drive south of the house correspond to the course of a public road which was stopped-up by Lord Ilchester in the mid C18. The road was converted into a private carriage drive which extended across the park to the east of the house, emerging on what is today the B3081 road at a point c 530m south-east of Redlynch Cross marked by the mid C18 Fox Gate. The Fox Gate gave access to a series of rides cut through Moor Wood to the east of the B3081 road. A similar private carriage drive, today surviving as a track, leads east from a point opposite the principal entrance to the site. Constructed by Lord Ilchester in the mid C18, this road linked Redlynch and neighbouring Stourhead (qv) and was used by George III; an C18 stone pillar (listed grade II) serves as a milestone on this road.

A further entrance is situated on the minor road leading from Redlynch Cross to Shepton Montague at a point c 1.5km south-west of Redlynch Cross. This entrance, known as The Towers, is marked by a tall gothic arch flanked by a pair of circular stone gothic towers (all listed grade II*). This entrance was built to the designs of Henry Flitcroft (1679-1769) in 1755 (VCH 1999) and led to a drive which swept north-east and north through the park to join the principal drive west of the house. Sections of this drive, which existed by 1738 (Grant, 1738), survive as tracks within the park (2003).

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Redlynch House stands on an artificially levelled terrace in the north centre part of the site, with extensive southerly views across the park. The house comprises two blocks (each listed grade II) separated by a central carriage court. Each block is constructed in stone under hipped slate roofs and comprises two storeys with attics lit by dormer windows. The blocks are U-shaped on plan with open courts to the north and shallow projecting wings balancing the south facades. The blocks were originally constructed by Nathaniel Ireson of Wincanton for Lord Ilchester in the first half of the C18 as stables and

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carriage houses; they were remodelled for domestic use in 1913 by Edwin Lutyens. The C18 mansion, which was destroyed by fire in 1913, stood to the south of the present house; no trace of this building remains above ground.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The formal gardens are situated principally to the south and east of the eastern block of the house, with a further area of informal pleasure grounds to the north-east. A timber gate set in an arch at the south-east corner of the carriage court leads to a broad stone-flagged terrace which extends beneath the south facade of the east block. The terrace is flanked to the south by an area of lawn which is retained to the south by a stone wall which breaks forward in a centrally placed semicircular bastion. The terrace is terminated to the east by a quadrant wall and a yew hedge flanking a pair of stone piers which mark an opening leading to the eastern gardens. Beneath the south terrace, a level area of lawn separated from the park to the south by late C20 post and rail fences corresponds to the site of the C18 mansion. A late C20 swimming pool is situated at the eastern end of this lawn.

The stone-flagged terrace returns beneath the east facade of the house, while a stone-flagged walk flanked by an avenue of tall, cylindrical drums of golden Irish yew extends east from the central point of the facade through an area of lawn enclosed to the north and south by clipped yew hedges. To the south of the walk, a slightly sunken area of lawn surrounds a square, stone-edged lily pool, while further level lawns extending south-east are separated from the park by low stone walls and clipped yew hedges. A wrought-iron gate set in the southern wall leads from the garden to the park. To the north of the east lawns a series of narrow terraces ascends a south-facing slope, terminating to the east in a large summerhouse of stone, timber, and glazed construction (listed grade II). Probably constructed in the early C20 to the design of Lutyens, this building may incorporate earlier elements. A timber door set in a stone wall to the north of the upper terrace leads to an area of informal pleasure grounds known as The Shrubbery. The formal gardens were developed in their present form by Lutyens in 1913 as part of his scheme for the conversion of the former stables to domestic use.

The Shrubbery is situated on the south-facing slope to the north-east of the house and comprises an approximately rectangular plantation, adjoined to the north, east, and south-east by the park, with mature specimen trees and areas of evergreen shrubbery adjoining a series of walks, some of which appear to have originated as C18 terraces. The plantation is shown on the 1762 estate plan, where it is named 'Terras Wood' (Donne, 1762), and appears to have assumed its present form by 1800 (Richardson, 1800). The medieval parish church was situated on the northern boundary of this plantation, approached by a road which corresponds to the course of the surviving track on the north boundary of the wood. The church was removed c 1750 when the present church was built by Ireson to the north of the house, beyond the park boundary.

PARK The park is situated principally on undulating ground to the south, east, and north of the house and gardens and is enclosed by C18 stone walls which are screened to the north, west, east, and south-east by boundary plantations. The area within the walls is today (2003) in mixed agricultural use, with scattered parkland trees surviving in many places. A ridge of high ground to the east and south-east of the house is planted with specimen trees including mature cedars, while an extensive mixed plantation, Park Wood, is situated c 550m south-east of the house. To the north-west, Park Wood is adjoined by an approximately square-shaped pond, while c 1.4km south-west of the house, The Aviaries (listed grade II) comprises a mid C18 Gothic-style lodge and associated farm buildings. A stream to the south of The Aviaries flows west through the southern section of the park.

The park was enclosed in its present form by Lord Ilchester in the mid C18. A plan of c 1700 shows Redlynch set in an agricultural landscape with avenues extending to the north and south of the house, and the village to the west. An area of woodland corresponding to Park Wood is shown, while a deer park lay to the south-west of Park Wood. Grant's plan of 1738 shows that the agricultural enclosures had been thrown together to form the park, the avenues had been removed, and the formal lake formed. Grant also records the formation of a series of formal walks or rides within Park Wood, linked to the gardens around the house by a serpentine walk. Estate accounts indicate however that Grant shows features which were not constructed until the period 1740-55, including the lake which was formed in 1741. By the mid C18 an elaborate rococo landscape had been developed (Donne, 1762) within the framework of the early C18 scheme indicated by Grant. In Park Wood new serpentine walks had been laid out with shrubberies, a Temple Flower Garden and a Ladies' Flower Garden had been formed, and several structures erected including the Chinese Seat (1756) and a temple (1762). Elsewhere in the park, The Towers entrance is recorded, together with The Aviaries, described as 'The New Lodge', which corresponds to the menagerie

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described by Walpole in 1762 and the sale particulars of 1794 (Laird 1999). The stream is dammed by a series of cascades, while gateways and clairvoies set in the southern park boundary wall allow vistas over the surrounding land (Donne, 1762). Horace Walpole, visiting Redlynch in July 1762, noted the house 'surrounded by a Park, & with a large piece of water in the bottom, & a small wood cut into walks, a flower garden, & handsome menagerie' (Walpole, quoted in Laird 1999). By 1800 much of the mid C18 rococo landscape had been removed (Richardson, 1800), with only the lake, Park Wood, The Towers, and The Aviaries surviving. An area of the western park had reverted to agricultural use, a process which continued during the C19 so that by 1912 (Sale plan) most of the ground to the south and west of the lake and Park Wood had returned to agricultural use.

KITCHEN GARDEN The walled gardens are situated on the south-facing slope to the north of the house. Approximately rectangular on plan, the gardens comprise three compartments enclosed by early C18 stone and brick walls (listed grade II). The eastern compartment is entered from the carriage court by an early C20 gateway designed by Lutyens (listed grade II). A flight of stone steps ascends from the gateway to reach an area of gently sloping lawn surrounded by ornamental shrubbery, to the north of which stands an C18 orangery (listed grade II). Of brick construction under a hipped slate roof, the orangery is lit by three full-height sash windows set in the south facade beneath a pediment; its design is attributed to Nathaniel Ireson (1686-1769). A terrace extends beneath the south facade, while the orangery is adjoined to the west by a timber-framed glasshouse. The orangery was converted to domestic use in the late C20. The terrace leads to a doorway which gives access to the central walled compartment. This is terraced and laid out with a chain of three linked pools which form the focus of an early C20 Japanese garden. To the north of the pools a further area of sloping lawn extends to the northern boundary wall. A brick and timber shelter stands towards the upper end of the lawn affording southerly views towards the house and park. A further large walled compartment lies to the west of the Japanese garden. This area has been developed as the garden for a late C20 house built within the walls.

The walled gardens are not indicated on the early C18 estate plan, although an open area shown to the west of the house corresponds to the site of the present walled gardens. The two eastern compartments and a chain of four linked pools are recorded on Grant's plan of 1738; the orangery however is not marked. Donne's mid C18 plan (Donne, 1762) similarly shows the eastern compartments and pools, but not the orangery; Walpole, visiting in 1762, refers to the 'large Kitchen garden', but not the orangery (Laird 1999). Sale particulars of 1794 describe 'a Flower Garden, capital Green House, and a small Hot House', together with 'The Kitchen Ground, protected by lofty Walls, and several Fish and Stew Ponds'. The western walled compartment appears to be of late C18 construction, and is first shown on Richardson's plan of 1800 together with the orangery.

REFERENCES

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Maps Part of the Manor of Redlynch Belonging to the Honble Stephen Fox Esqr, c 1700 (D/FSI, box 191), (Dorset Record Office) E Grant, plan of Redlynch, 1738 (Gough Maps, 29 f 21), (Bodleian Library) B Donne, Map and Survey, 1762 (Dorset Record Office) R Richardson, A Map of the West Part of Redlynch Estate in the County of Somerset, 1800 (D/FSI A/11 D124), (Dorset Record Office) Tithe map for Shepton Montague parish, 1839 (Somerset Record Office) Plan of the Redlynch Estate, Bruton, Somerset, sale particulars, 1912 (Dorset Record Office)

OS Surveyor's Drawing, 1809 (British Library Maps) OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1885-6, published 1889 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition revised 1888, published 1903

Illustrations W Wheatley, Redlynch, House now used as Farmhouse, 1851 (Dorset Record Office)

Archival items The Ilchester estate records, including accounts and plans, are held at the Dorset Record Office (D/FSI). Estate accounts, 1740s (D/FSI box 188), (Dorset Record Office) The Particulars &c Redlynch Mansion House, 1794 (Dorset Record Office) J Riley, Gardens and Park at Redlynch, Somerset, (manuscript notes) [copy on EH file] Sale particulars, 1912 (Dorset Record Office)

Description written: December 2003 Amended (PAS): April 2004 Register Inspector: JML Edited: September 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.