

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

PAINSWICK HOUSE

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

Name: PAINSWICK HOUSE

County: Gloucestershire

District: Stroud (District Authority)

Parish: Painswick

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.792651

Longitude: -2.1986500

National Grid Reference: SO 86396 10463

[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden

Grade: II*

List Entry Number: 1000123

Date first listed: 28-Feb-1986

Details

Landscape garden of later 1730s and 1740s, painted by, and possibly in part designed by, Thomas Robins, and landscape park, associated with gentleman's house of 1730s.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1733 Charles Hyett bought an ancient copyhold estate called the Herrings from the Adney family and built a gentleman's residence, Buenos Ayres, on the site. From Charles (d 1738) the estate passed in turn to his sons Benjamin (d 1762), under whom its rococo landscape garden was laid out and paintings by Thomas Robins commissioned, and Nicholas (d 1777) and then to Nicholas' son Benjamin. The last (d 1810) devised Painswick House and lands adjoining to his wife's cousin, Mrs. Frances Adams (d 1828), for life with reversion to her son William Henry, who assumed the surname Hyett in 1813. He, MP and agricultural scientist, much enlarged the estate in the early and mid C19, and in 1847 acquired the freehold of his properties. On his death in 1877 the estate passed to his son Francis Adams Hyett (kt 1919, d 1941). His three daughters and heiresses made over the estate to their kinsman Lord Dickinson. The main part of the site remains (1999) in private hands while since 1988 the valley pleasure grounds have been vested in the Painswick Rococo Garden Trust.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Painswick House stands within its park on the west side of the B4073 to Gloucester, 1km north of the centre of Painswick town. To the south-west the ground falls away into a valley; Painswick's landscape garden lies behind, north-west of, the House in a small subsidiary valley. The north-west side of the valley provides the boundary of the landscape garden and the registered area. To the south the park boundary follows the footpath from Butt Green west to Holcombe. The area here registered is c 25ha.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main approach is off Gloucester Road, past a stone, cottage-like lodge which stands 300m east of the House. This drive gives access to a public car park on the north side of the drive and to the turning circle against the east side of the House. A drive of c 1865 which formerly ran 400m northward across the park from a limestone ashlar lodge (listed grade II) at The Green, an addition of 1881 to a C17 house (itself listed grade II), had fallen out of use by the mid C20.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Charles Hyett demolished the old farmhouse on the site c 1735 and built a limestone ashlar house, since the late C18 known as Painswick House (listed grade I), with a south front of five bays. Here the rooms are of almost double height, and are thought to have occasioned its original name, Buenos Ayres. To the north, rear, of the House the rooms are more conventionally proportioned and there are four storeys. The architect is thought to have been the Bristol architect John Strahan (d c 1740). The House was considerably extended c 1830 by W H Hyett's brother-in-law George Basevi (d 1845), a pupil of Soane's, who added east and west wings in the Greek style.

Stables (listed grade II) of the 1730s, now (2000) occupied as a house, stand 100m to the north-east with, to their east, a C19 carriage house (listed grade II), now a tea room and shop.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS Simple grass terraces lie against the south side of the House, from which there are views to the Pigeon House and across the park. These terraces are probably of Victorian date and represent the remodelling of a pair of walled courts present in 1748 (Robins painting).

In 1738 Benjamin Hyett began to lay out the small combe or valley (c 2.4ha) behind (north and west of) his House as a pleasure ground or landscape garden. In 1748 this was painted by Thomas Robins (d 1770) of Bath (J Garden Hist 1984); it is suspected that the landscape, and certainly many of its buildings and other structures, had been designed by him during the previous decade. Proof, however, is lacking. Since 1984 the landscape has seen extensive restoration. The original scheme had survived relatively well until the 1960s when a coniferous plantation was imposed on the valley. Its removal was the first element of the restoration. Most of the main buildings and seats shown on Robins' 1748 view survive, although many minor ones have disappeared.

The valley slopes downhill from north-east to south-west; springs are gathered in conduit heads at its wooded, combe-like north-east end and carried underground downhill to the Swimming Bath and Pond. Paths wind along the valley sides forming a circuit walk. The public entrance is via the former melon ground; access from the House was via a pair of mid C18 wooden chinoiserie gates (listed grade II*) 30m west of the stables. Some 20m north, past an urn (listed grade II*), is the Eagle House (present 1748, rebuilt 1991, listed grade II*), an octagonal, gothic, battlemented summerhouse. Set into its basement is an alcove seat. From this, and the main summerhouse room, there is a view north-east across the valley to the Doric Seat; the original main focus of the view, a pedimented arch on the opposite side of the valley, shown on Robins' painting of 1748, is, however, lost. From the Eagle House the path runs uphill and north-east through woodland to the Red House (present 1748, listed grade II*), an elaborate gothic garden pavilion with ogee-headed cusped openings and rendered, red-painted stone walls; inside is a fireplace. From the pavilion's door there are glimpses of other structures and a view down the axial hedged alley down the upper part of the valley. This is straight, whereas some of the other paths, including one which bisects it, are serpentine. From the Red House the circuit path leads west, curving round a slight bluff with mature beech woodland rising behind, to the Exedra, a white-painted wooden screen with gothic arches and surmounted with battlements and pinnacles. This was built in the 1990s, based on a structure shown on Robins' 1748 painting. To its front (south-west) is a small formal garden with pool. South-west of this, and occupying the grater part of the upper end of the valley, is a kitchen garden comprising symmetrically disposed wedge-shaped beds arranged around a small circular pond. South-west of the kitchen garden is a grass slope running down to the Bowling Green.

From the Exedra the circuit path proceeds along the north-west side of the valley, passing first the Doric Seat (listed grade II*), c 100m south-west of the Exedra, a limestone ashlar seat with vermiculated Doric columns supporting a pediment, also with vermiculation. This looks eastward across the valley, along one of the main valley-bottom paths. This was moved here probably in the C19; in 1748 it stood against the north side of the Pigeon House, looking to Painswick House. Next, c 35m to the south-east of the Doric Seat, is a mid C18 limestone well or spring head (listed grade II*). Some 50m beyond is a plunge bath or pool (present 1748, listed grade II*), rectangular, c 5 x 3m, and fed from a spring in an adjacent alcove to the north-west. Originally a lead statue of Pan, possibly by the Van Nost workshop, stood by the pool. East of it is a rectangular Bowling Green. To the south of the Bowling Green, across the bottom of the valley, is a wedge-shaped pond, 40m long from north-west to south-east. Close to the north corner of the pond is a barrow-like mound which conceals a ram house (listed grade II*); facing the pond

is a limestone ashlar entrance portal. An arched pergola carries the main path along the south-west side of the pond, and from this there are views up the valley to the Red House and Exedra and the beech wood rising above them.

Below the pond the valley-bottom stream, now at the surface, falls down a narrow cascade and then south-west to the end of the valley garden, here wooded, 150m south-west of the pond. The path is carried south-east across the head of the cascade and then south-west to a triple-arched gothic seat, the Gothic Alcove (present 1748, listed grade II*), at the southern extremity of the valley. This looks north-east, up the straight and uphill-sloping Beech Walk (replanted after the original beeches were felled in 1977) which runs up the south-east side of the valley. In 1748 the rustic Hermitage stood in the woodland below (west of) the north-east end of the Walk; a slight platform probably marks its site.

In 1998 a maze was laid out on the north side of the valley, 75m west of the Exedra. Designed by Professor Angela Newling, it is based on the figure '250' and was constructed to mark the 250th anniversary of Thomas Robins' painting.

PARK The House stands against the north-west edge of a park which extends for c 300m to its north, east, and south. The ground falls away to the south-west of the House and there are extensive views across Painswick Valley. The park is permanent pasture, and is well studded with mature parkland trees including oak and lime. Near the House are some mature coniferous specimens including cedar of Lebanon and Wellingtonia. In 1748 Robins' painting indicates that the House's gardens stood within an agricultural landscape, and it seems likely that the park developed an ever-more designed aspect during the late C18 and early C19 as trees were planted, culminating in the laying out of the drive leading south from the House c 1865.

Standing 150m south of the House, above the south-west end of the valley garden, is the Pigeon House (listed grade II*). A path leads to it from the Beech Walk. This is a mid C18, ashlar limestone structure, with a square, rusticated base supporting an octagonal upper level with a window on each side from which panoramic views are obtained. Above this is a hexagonal louvred crown and cupola. A scar on its north side marks the original position of the Doric Seat.

A gothic summerhouse, Pan's Lodge, was built for Benjamin Hyett near Bull's Cross, 2km to the south-east (outside the registered area), in the mid C18. From this it was possible to see Painswick House and the town, a view recorded by Thomas Robins in another of his Painswick paintings (J Garden Hist 1984). It was probably demolished before 1824.

KITCHEN GARDEN Behind (north of) the stables is the former Melon Ground (now lawns and flower beds), the C18 brick north-west and north-east walls of which survive. Across the apex is the brick and stone rear wall of a former glasshouse (floor area now a paved terrace); behind this are semi-ruinous stone sheds.

A diamond-shaped kitchen garden formed the central component of the valley garden, lying north-east of the Bowling Green between it and the Exedra Garden (see above). This was restored in the 1990s.

REFERENCES

Victoria History of the County of Gloucestershire XI, (1976), pp 68-9 D Verey, The Buildings of England: Gloucestershire The Cotswolds (2nd edn 1979), pp 363-4 J Garden History 4, no 2 (1984), pp 163-78 Country Life, no 24 (15 June 1989), pp 156-61 M Symes, The English Rococo Garden (1991), pp 1, 4, 8, 30, 32, 39, 62-6, 69 N Kingsley, The Country Houses of Gloucestershire, Volume Two, 1660-1830 (1992), pp 197-200 The Sunday Telegraph, 17 January 1999, p 18 Painswick Rococo Garden, guidebook, (Painswick Rococo Garden, nd)

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1881-2, published 1886

Description written: April 1999 Amended: May 2001 Register Inspector: PAS Edited: April 2003

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.