

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

CHAWTON HOUSE

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Name:	CHAWTON HOUSE
County:	Hampshire
District:	East Hampshire (District Authority)
Parish:	Chawton
County:	Hampshire
District:	East Hampshire (District Authority)
Parish:	Farringdon
National park:	SOUTH DOWNS
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.126942 Longitude: -0.98859254 National Grid Reference: SU7087436893 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000421 Date first listed: 31-May-1984

Details

This list entry was subject to a minor enhancement on 6 July 2017.

Formal and landscape gardens associated with a late Tudor manor house, set within a landscape park developed from the C13 but now largely late C18 to early C20 in appearance.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The first recorded house on the site was built by William de St John in 1224. In 1252 free warren was granted to Robert de St John in his demesne of Chawton and by the early C14 the property consisted of a capital messuage with a garden, with 400 acres (c 162ha) of land including 95 acres (c 38ha) of wood.

The manor was important in medieval times when there were two gardens and two parks, and the property was visited regularly by Henry III and Edward I. Some earthworks and the possible remains of a moat date from this period (Wade notes, 1998).

By the mid C16 the property was in the possession of Thomas Arundel, whose son, William, sold it in 1578 to Nicholas Knight, whose family had been lessees of the manor house since 1524 and owners of the site of the manor house since 1571. The manor remained in the Knight family until 1679, when Sir Richard Knight left it to Richard Martin, the son of his cousin Michael Martin. Richard Martin took the name of Knight, as did his brother Christopher on succeeding him. When Christopher Knight died without an heir, the property passed to his sister Elizabeth, and then in 1737 to her cousin, Thomas Brodnax, who assumed the name of Knight. He was succeeded by his son Thomas, who died without an heir in 1794, leaving it to his cousin, Edward Austen, who assumed the name of Knight.

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The present house was built at the end of the C16 and the associated gardens included formal terraced gardens with topiary, a wilderness, two avenues, and a kitchen garden. The formal gardens, one of the avenues, and the kitchen garden were removed between 1763 and 1785 but the wilderness was retained and new informal gardens were laid out (ibid). A new walled garden was built in 1818-22 and the park was expanded to the north and south of the House in the early to mid C19. This work was carried out by the owner, Edward Austen Knight, who was the brother of Jane Austen. Jane Austen lived in a cottage in the village from 1809. In May 1817 she moved from the cottage at Chawton to Winchester for treatment for a short illness, from which she died on 18 July 1817. Further work was carried out on the garden in the late C19 and early C20, including work on the Library Terrace and Upper Terrace, possibly the work of Edwin Lutyens (ibid), and the alteration of the walled garden from a kitchen garden into a flower garden.

The property is now (2000) in divided private ownership and Chawton House is used as a private study centre for an American charitable foundation.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Chawton House and its associated landscape of c 111ha is located on the south-east edge of the village of Chawton, 1.5km south of Alton. The estate is bounded by open farmland to the north, east, and south, and the road running through Chawton village to the west, with the village houses to the north-west and open farmland beyond the road to the west. Chawton House stands on the south-west slope of a hill which occupies the centre of the northern part of the park. From the hill the ground falls northwards to Chawton village and gently southwards to the southern boundary of the estate and then rises again beyond the boundary. The Lavant stream flows from south to north along the west side of the park. There are good views from the House to the south, and from the higher ground in the north of the park, looking west and south over the park and pleasure grounds. The boundaries are mostly marked by fences and hedges.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The approach to Chawton House is from the village of Chawton to the west. A straight formal drive leads east-south-east for c 100m from the village road to the walled enclosure of St Nicholas' church, and then continues for a further c 80m to a gravel forecourt on the south-west side of the House; this approach was laid out by 1741 (Randall). A further drive from the west, c 130m to the north of the C18 drive, leads east for c 140m and then south-east to provide the access to the Home Farm buildings and to the Gardener's Cottage. This drive was laid out by 1870 (OS) and replaced an C18 drive from the north-west (Randall, 1741).

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Chawton House (listed grade II*) stands in the centre of its landscape, with gardens to the south and east and park to the south and north. It was built in the 1580s and extended in c 1655, with several phases of additions and restorations in the C18 and late C19. The walls are of flint with stone dressings, topped by an C18 brick parapet and a gabled tiled roof. The main elevations are to the west (the entrance front, which has a three-storey porch) and to the south (the garden front, of two storeys and an attic, with three gables), the other sides of the building having a complex series of projecting two- and three-storey gabled units of various dates.

Chawton House Stables (listed grade II*) stands c 60m north-west of Chawton House. It has flint and stone walls with brick dressings and a tiled roof. Built as a stable block in the late C16, the building was altered in the C17 and again in the C20 when it was restored and converted into a dwelling. Adjoining it to the north is an C18 former dovecote and barn (listed grade II), converted in the C20 into a store and garage range.

The flint-walled St Nicholas' church (listed grade II) stands c 50m west of Chawton House, set within a walled enclosure bordering the entrance drive to the north and parkland to the west and south. Built in 1871 by Sir Arthur Blomfield, it replaced the medieval church on the same site which was destroyed by fire in 1871.

The C18 Home Farmhouse (listed grade II) stands c 40m north of Chawton House. It is a two-storey brick building with a tiled roof, extended in the C18 and C19. The late C17 brick Home Farm Barn (listed grade II) stands c 40m west of Home Farm and was converted into a house in the C20.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The garden front of the House faces south-west with views across open, sloping lawns to the south. The lawn is slightly terraced in front of the House and then rises to the east and falls to the south-west. There is a vista through a break in the shrubbery and along a lime avenue stretching southwards across the park. A ha-ha which runs

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along the south-west edge of the pleasure grounds continues to the north around the south and west sides of the churchyard. The south side of the lawn is backed by the Wilderness, now overgrown shrubbery and woodland.

Against the south-east corner of the House is the Library Terrace, below the east window of the library. The terrace is on three levels with three flights of steps and is laid out as stone paths and lawn, enclosed by a low stone wall. The terrace was built c 1905-06 on the site of an early C19 conservatory and is traditionally attributed to Edwin Lutyens (Wade 1996).

To the south of the Library Terrace is a lawn which is bordered to the east by a long terraced walk known as the Upper Terrace. This is retained along the west side by a brick wall with a balustrade of semicircular tiles and there are views to the west over the lawns and pleasure grounds. Along the east side there was a rockery and herbaceous planting but only a few rocks remain within the undergrowth of the woodland along the east side of the garden. The terrace was laid out in its present form in the early C20 but was developed from features existing in the C18 and C19. The walk leads south past the west wall of the walled garden and then continues into an area of overgrown woodland, the remains of a shrubbery laid out with walks in the early C19. The planting around the east side of the gardens is former pleasure grounds laid out in the early C19, now (2000) overgrown woodland but with some fine trees.

In the north-west corner of the pleasure grounds is the church and churchyard, set in a walled enclosure bordering the park on the west and south sides. There is tree and shrub planting within the churchyard on the south and west sides, and Church Copse surrounds the churchyard on the north and east sides and has some fine trees including ancient yews and an C18 lime.

PARK The South Park is pasture, bounded by plantations around the south and east sides (Noar Copse, Holm Wood, and Broadlands Row), and with the Lavant stream running north along the west side of the parkland. To the west of the stream the western edge of the park is planted with mixed shrubs with some trees, an area of ash coppice, and a stretch with small groups of oak. A late C19 lime avenue runs south from the pleasure grounds, across the park along a ridge of ground. This is continued at the southern end by a narrow plantation which joins onto Noar Copse. There are large C19 clumps of trees (predominantly beech with lime, ash with oak, or beech with pine), which were replanted or reinforced in the late C20. There are also some smaller clumps and scattered trees, mainly lime, oak, and chestnut, with pines and cedars in key positions. The ancient coppice row which runs north-east from Broadlands Row supplied Jane Austen with the setting for the conversation between Captain Wentworth and Louisa Musgrove, 'in the hedge-row behind [Anne], as if making their way along the rough wild sort of channel, down the centre' (Persuasion, Chapter 10).

The North Park is pasture with large plantations around the north and east boundaries (Mingledown Plantation to the north, and Eastfield Plantation and Adela Copse to the east). Two large copses (Silver Wedding Copse (mainly beech) to the north, and Knickerknocker Copse (beech mixed with oak) to the south) stand in the centre of the park, with further small clumps and a few scattered trees (mainly lime). A cricket ground lies on the level low ground on the west side of the North Park, to the east of the Lavant stream and within former parkland. Knickerknocker Field and Windmill Field lie on the higher ground on the east side of the park and are now in arable use (2000). The southern end of Knickerknocker Copse is an area of older woodland which includes the remaining trees of a C19 beech avenue, known as the Beech Walk. At the eastern end of the Walk there are good views east and the western end of the Walk leads back to the shrubbery walks to the south of the walled garden.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden is laid out as a parallelogram, of which the external walls were built between 1818 and 1822. The surviving dividing wall, running approximately north/south, was added in 1909 when the walled garden was converted into a flower garden. During the second half of the C20 the garden was converted into an orchard and is now (2000) laid out as a lawn with a few remaining apple trees. On the inside of the north wall are the bases of the glasshouses and the remains of the potting sheds stand on the outside of the north wall. An outer kitchen garden lay to the east and this is now (2000) the garden of Gardener's Cottage, which stands on the north side. The garden is laid out as a lawn with beds and shrub groups.

REFERENCES

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OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1870-1 2nd edition published 1897 3rd edition published 1911 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1870 2nd edition published 1895-6 3rd edition revised 1909, published 1910

Archival items Description and notes by Sybil Wade, Hampshire Gardens Trust Research Project, 1998 (Copy on EH file)

Description written: October 2000 Amended: November 2001 Register Inspector: CB Edited: January 2004

This listing was enhanced in 2017 to mark the bicentenary of Jane Austen's death.

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.