

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

CLAVERTON MANOR

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

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Name: CLAVERTON MANOR

District: Bath and North East Somerset (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Claverton

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Parish: Non Civil Parish

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.375953
Longitude: -2.3115755
National Grid Reference: ST 78410 64146
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1000564
Date first listed: 30-Apr-1987

Details

Gardens and pleasure grounds of 1820-30 in early C19 park, around a country house, incorporating remains of terraced gardens of c 1580 associated with the former manor house.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT Claverton manor house, in the village of Claverton, was built c 1580 and completed in 1625, probably for William Basset. The old manor was purchased by John Vivian in 1816 and demolished in the 1820s, when the present house was built c 400m to the south-west. The terraced gardens of the manor were left in place. The present classical house was built and parkland laid out c 1819-20, with gardens and pleasure grounds laid out between 1820 and 1830. From 1961 the manor became the American Museum in Britain, founded by Dallas Pratt and John Judkyn, in which use it remains (2002). The Mount Vernon Garden was laid out in the 1960s.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The historic landscape at Claverton Manor covers c 35ha and is situated 3.5km east of the centre of Bath, near the crest of an east-facing hillside overlooking the steep-sided valley of the River Avon, through which also runs the Kennet & Avon Canal. The southern boundary is defined by the eastward section of the public highway called The Avenue which runs from Bath University in the west to Claverton village in the east. The other boundaries are determined by tracks, paths, and fence lines, comprising a field boundary and track to the west and north and field boundaries to the north-east and south-east. The eastern boundary runs round the rear of properties in Claverton village, but includes the terrace gardens of the former manor, now part of the grounds of Manor Farm. To the north and south are dense deciduous woodlands on the steep valley sides. To the west and south-west the surrounding topography is fairly level and to the north-west the land rises to the summit of Bathampton Down 1.5km distant.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Claverton Manor is approached from the west, the drive passing the Late Gothic-style West Lodge and gate piers (early-mid C18, listed grade II) situated c 300m west of the house. The drive, cut into a south-facing slope, has a bank with mature trees, notably oak, beech, lime, and holm oak, backed by evergreen shrubs and woodland

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to the north and provides limited views to the south between trees and shrubs. A wooden pay kiosk stands 25m inside the entrance, with a car park to the north-east. The drive runs south-east and east around a south-facing bank and turns north to arrive at the least ornate, west facade of the house which is the entrance to the museum. Opposite the west front of the Manor is a steep grass bank with specimen trees including a notable cedar of Lebanon. The drive continues north, past the exhibition hall (c 1980s) to the east, through woodland where it continues as a woodland track through Hengrove Wood, mostly outside the area here registered. Former parkland to the north and east of this track is now incorporated into the woodland but retains many C19 ornamental trees, including a high proportion of conifers. The south service drive enters the site through Conygre Plantation 230m south-east of the house and turns west along the northern edge of the plantation to the complex of buildings which includes South Lodge, the stables, and a walled garden 150m south-west of the house.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Claverton Manor (1819-20, listed grade I) is situated at the centre of the park and was designed for John Vivian by Jeffrey Wyatt, later Sir Jeffrey Wyatville (1766-1840), to replace the Jacobean manor in Claverton village. Constructed of Bath stone, the house is neoclassical in style with Ionic pilasters and a pediment on the south facade, and two semicircular projecting bays on the east facade. High screen walls of c 7m, topped with stone balustrades with vases, adjoin the house to the north and south and visually separate the south-eastern and eastern prospects from the landscape and drive west of the house. A single-storey building of Bath stone with a balustraded roof with urns extends from the north of the house. The gardens and pleasure grounds are reached by passing from west to east through the cafe. Paved terraces, with planted urns, run around the south and east fronts of the house, from which there are extensive rural views south and east over the house lawn of the Limpley Stoke Valley (of the Avon) and Warleigh Woods on the opposite hillside.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS To the east, south-east, and south of the house is the house lawn which slopes away from the house in these directions, beyond which are views over the eastern parkland and the arboretum to the south which fall down the valley sides. An orangery extends eastwards into the garden at right angles to the cafe on the north front of the house and forms the northern boundary of the lawn. To the north of the orangery is a reproduction of a Cheyenne Indian tepee and the observation platform from a Pullman railway carriage (c 1900), beyond which is the New Gallery (1986-8), containing a book shop, research library, and exhibition hall. Immediately south of the orangery, on the terrace, is the Colonial Herb Garden (1964) arranged in a square of dwarf box-edged beds, with a paved circle in the centre containing a bee skep. Some 25m east of the east front of the house is an armillary sundial on an ornate stone pedestal in the lawn, and c 15m south of the sundial is a stone well-cap. The east boundary of the lawn is marked by a very ornate iron fence and gate (c early C19). An outdoor entrance to the lawn is through a gate at the south-west corner of the south screen wall, south-west of which is a white curved wooden bench in the Chinese style set against an evergreen shrubbery which forms the west boundary of the lawn. The 'Milliner's Shop', an ornate wooden Dutch summerhouse (C19) backed by a shrubbery, faces south-east from a kink in the western boundary of the lawn, c 40m south-west of the south front of the house. A stone-built niche, with a basin, called the Grotto (c 1820, possibly earlier, listed grade II) is located c 80m south of the house near the south-west edge of the lawn, set into a 4m high south-east-facing retaining wall. The lawn terminates c 100m south of the house at a bank overlooking the arboretum to the south-east. Set into the bank are stone steps, descending between pedestals supporting stone urns, to a pair of stone gate piers supporting eagles which mark the entrance to a small enclosure made by a curved beech hedge and containing a curved stone seat. A path leads south-east from this enclosure into the arboretum, containing trees, shrubs, and plants imported from America to England; this was established from c 1980 and formally opened in 1984 in a formerly overgrown area. West of the top of the steps a lawn with ornamental trees curves round to the west, onto a south-east-facing terraced bank with gardens on different levels. An ornamental iron gateway (c 2000) set in a balustraded wall 10m west of the steps leads south-west to stone steps down into the Mount Vernon Garden (1960s), a replica of part of George Washington's 1784-5 flower garden in Virginia; this was laid out by Ian Mylles on the site of a former rose garden. The roughly triangular formal garden is contained on its south and east sides by a white picket fence and is planted with trees, roses, and other flowers available to Washington, the beds defined by gravel paths, many enclosed by clipped box hedges. A north-east/south-west axial path is terminated by an octagonal garden pavilion, a copy of one at Mount Vernon. North-west of the axial path is a 1m high retaining wall with central steps up to a 20m wide level grass terrace containing a yew tree with curved Chinese wooden seat beneath. At the west end of this terrace

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is an oblong pool dominated to the north by the convex side of a semicircular screen wall, c 7m high, topped with urns. In the centre of the terrace, stone steps lead north-west past a shallow circular stone pool, c 2m diameter, and up through a gap in a clipped yew hedge into a small pebbled courtyard with metal seat and planted urn on pedestal. This courtyard leads north-west to meet a service drive north of the range of buildings comprising South Lodge, the former stables, and coach house (c 1820, listed grade II), all currently used as accommodation for estate staff (2002). The service drive leads north to join the main drive from the west 40m south of the house, and south through a stone archway into the stable yard. The yard is enclosed to the west by South Lodge, the stables, and coach house, and to the east by a folk art exhibition, housed in lean-to and glazed buildings built against the concave face of the semicircular screen wall which projects into the Mount Vernon Garden. South-west of the service buildings, the drive leads through a stone arch to the productive gardens to the west.

In the village of Claverton, 400m to the east of the present Claverton Manor, are the remains of the terrace gardens (early C17, listed grade II*) associated with the earlier manor house, parts of which may have been incorporated into Manor Cottage (early-mid C19, listed grade II). The walls enclose an outer eastern court and two terraces at the west end. The east court is c 60m by 60m and the terraces c 60m by 10m. The north and south walls are of rubble with coping; the south wall is stepped up at intervals towards the west, and the north wall is completed at the east end by the rear of Manor Farmhouse and its outbuildings. The manor house was built on the central platform of five terraces, two to the east (lower) and two to the west (higher), cut into a steep slope. The lower terraces still have fine garden walls, in pierced strapwork stone, two with balustrades, with gate piers with later iron gates and pierced stone obelisks, and steps connecting the levels (Harding and Lambert 1994).

PARK Parkland extends to the north, east, and south of the house and blends with the wooded nature of the valley. To the east the parkland falls to the site of the former manor house in Claverton village and to the south falls steeply to the wooded boundary formed by Conygre Plantation. The park contains a wide variety of mature trees, including notable oak, beech, lime, holm oak, and cedar, many dating from the C18 and early C19.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen gardens are situated south-west of the stables and coach-house complex (c early C19) and are sheltered from the north by the wooded bank south of the west drive. They are bounded to the south and west by 1m high walls and scrub. The gardens contain propagation beds, modern greenhouses and polytunnels, and the gardeners' bothy.

REFERENCES

N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: North Somerset and Bristol* (1958), p 168 *Country Life*, 147 (19 March 1970), pp 682-4

J Sales, *West Country Gardens* (1980), pp 139-40 S Harding and D Lambert, *Parks and Gardens of Avon* (1994), pp 5, 18-20

The American Museum in Britain, guidebook, (1998)

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1904 1930 edition

Illustrations The terraced gardens at Claverton Manor, zincograph of c 1840 (Collection of William McNaught) [reproduced in Harding and Lambert 1994]

Description written: November 2002 Register Inspector: SH Edited: September 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.