

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

BRIDEHEAD

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Name:	BRIDEHEAD
District:	Dorset (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Littlebredy
District:	Dorset (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Winterbourne Abbas
District:	Dorset (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Winterbourne Steepleton
label.localisation:	Latitude: 50.703443 Longitude: -2.5670994 National Grid Reference: SY6004989465 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000712 Date first listed: 19-Dec-1986

Details

An early C19 park and garden incorporating an ornamental estate village created by Peter Frederick Robertson and added to by Benjamin Ferrey.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT The Bridehead estate was bought by Robert Williams, a banker from London c 1797. Williams' main estate was Moor Park (qv) in Hertfordshire, so building activities at Bridehead were limited at first. Nevertheless, he visited frequently and in the early C19 he started alterations to the house and the surrounding landscape. The latter included the planting of various clumps and belts of beech trees (Pearson Assocs 1994). After Robert Williams' death in 1814, his son Robert II inherited both Bridehead and Moor Park. The latter was sold in 1825 following a crisis at the bank, and subsequently Bridehead became the family's main residence. The architect Peter Frederick Robinson (1776-1858) was commissioned to work at Bridehead c 1830-3. Robinson was profoundly influenced by Sir Uvedale Price's theories and in 1823 he published *A Series of Designs for Ornamental Cottages*, with landscapes redrawn by J D Harding. This was followed in 1830 by *A Series of Designs Illustrating the Observations contained in the Essay on the Picturesque* by Sir Uvedale Price, and in 1833 by *Designs for Lodges and Park Entrances*. At Bridehead, Robinson rebuilt the house and designed both the entrance lodge to the park and probably several cottages in the model village of Littlebredy (Pearson Assocs 1994). In 1836, Arthur Acland, Robert Williams II's son-in-law, had made a survey of Bridehead and Littlebredy (Dorset County Museum), showing part of the completed pleasure grounds and various views across of the landscape. In 1838, a series of watercolours with views of Littlebredy was produced by an unknown artist. In the same year, a new stable block in the Gothic style was built to designs by the architect Benjamin Ferrey, who later extended the house and rebuilt the village church and various cottages. By 1842 (Tithe map) the

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landscape of Bridehead and Littlebredy had been completed. During the late C19 and C20 its layout and character remained largely unchanged, as illustrated by the OS map of 1886 and a series of watercolours painted by Moule in 1884-6.

The site remains (2000) in private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Bridehead and Littlebredy, a site of c 132ha, is situated to the south-west of Winterbourne Abbas on the A35 between Dorchester and Bridport. The site, situated in a rural setting, lies in a steep-sided valley, sloping down from the south-east to the north-west, with high ground to the north and south. The River Bride flows west out of Bridehead Lake situated to the south-west of the house, through the kitchen garden and village. The north-east boundary is lined by Longlands Lane, and the south-east boundary by Sheep Down, an area of farmland that contains various earthworks and medieval field systems. At the far south corner of the site lies Littlebredy Farm, with to its west the Old Warren (outside the area here registered) which includes earthworks and series of strip lynchets. Similar features are located along the north-west boundary of the site. From various places within the site are extensive views of the hills to the south and the downland to the south-east.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main entrance dates from the early C19 and lies in the far north-east corner of the site along the A35, giving access from Dorchester and Bridport. It is flanked to the south by The Lodge (listed grade II), a castellated lodge of c 1837 designed by Peter Frederick Robinson, situated c 2.6km north-east of Bridehead house. It is screened by Lodge Wood to the south-east and Wherry Pit to the north-west. To the north-east of The Lodge lies Nine Stone Wood, within which lies The Nine Stones, a prehistoric stone circle (scheduled ancient monument). In the centre of the monument is a beech tree dating from the early C19. Immediately to the south-east of The Lodge, a wooden gate, hung between early C19 gate piers, gives access to the long east drive which runs in a south-westerly direction to the house. It first passes Wherry Pitt and Lodge Wood before running through open pasture into Big Wood, a C20 plantation of beech and conifer. To the south lie arable fields and open downland (Tithe map, 1842), with Horse Clump to the north, containing mature ash, larch, and beech. From here the east drive leads to a second lodge, called Big Wood Lodge, built in 1872 and situated c 1.3km north-east of Bridehead house. The drive kinks sharply south of White Hill Barn and then continues south-west through White Hill Wood towards the east front of Bridehead house. From the drive in White Hill Wood there is a distant view of the house situated to the south-west in the valley below. The north-east entrance and drive are now (2000) no longer used, the current main approach entering c 500m further west along the A35. This approach runs south and then south-west along Longland's Lane, which forms the north boundary of the site, into Littlebredy. From the village a short drive leads in a southerly direction to the east front of Bridehead house.

The village of Littlebredy (see below) can be approached from the north-west corner of the park. Here the road passes a pair of stone gateposts, with to its north The Cottage or West Lodge (listed grade II), a mid C19 lodge designed by Benjamin Ferrey, marking the entrance to Littlebredy and Bridehead

To the south the site can be approached via various footpaths which link up with the South West Coastal Path that leads in a southerly direction to Abbotsbury (qv).

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Bridehead house (listed grade II*), is situated in the western half of the site. It was rebuilt by Peter Frederick Robinson in 1831-3 and extended westwards by Benjamin Ferrey in the 1850s. A view of the east front of the house before the remodelling is provided by the painting by R R Reinagle (1822). In the 1960s part of the west wing was demolished. The two-storey house has rendered brick and stone walls with string and crenellated parapet tops and a hipped clay-tile roof. The entrance front to the east has a central wooden porch resting on two columns. The south elevation has seven bays with tall cross-transom windows, with a large conservatory attached to the west, from where there are views of Bridehead Lake and the park beyond it, situated to the south-west.

An early C19 stable block and barn (1850s, listed grade II), designed by Benjamin Ferrey, stands 150m north-north-west of the house. Adjacent to the east stands the mid C19 Dairy Cottage (listed grade II).

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The pleasure grounds are situated immediately to the south, east, and north-east of the house and comprise lawns scattered with specimen trees including holm oak and a cedar of Lebanon, and denser plantations of mixed trees. The pleasure grounds are dominated by Bridehead Lake, situated c 50m south-west of the house and separated

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from the park and land to the south by a ha-ha. Bridehead Lake is almost rectangular, with a small island in the centre. Through the pleasure grounds runs a network of paths leading from the house to the village and the church of St Michael and All Angels. One of the walks leads around the Lake, passing the site of a former boathouse (Lake survey, 1872; OS 1886) situated halfway along the west side of the Lake. The building is screened by The Rookery and Stone Hills Plantation beyond it. In the late C20, The Rookery was extended to the south, covering former parkland in this area. Halfway along the east side of the Lake is the site of a former rustic summerhouse (Pearson Assocs 1994). The River Bride flows out of the northern tip of the Lake via a small waterfall or cascade created with steps and ornamental rockwork. A spur of the circuit walk around the Lake extends from the northern tip in a north-westerly direction and leads to a small rustic footbridge which provided access to the village of Littlebredy. The footbridge is now (2000) closed and in the process of being replaced by a new bridge a short distance upstream.

PARK The park occupies the south and south-east parts of the site. The southern part of the park is situated on the north-facing slope of the hills bounding the south side of the site and forms a backdrop to Bridehead. In this area, south of the Lake, is a small combe known as Cricket Bottom, referring to its former use as a cricket ground.

The south-east park is called Bolter's Mead and is crossed by a track which runs to Little Bredy Farm to the south of the site. Bolter's Mead has small clusters of trees including sycamore, ash, and beech. To the north it is screened by White Hill Wood, also known as Two Gates Plantation, which was regenerated in the 1970s with beech, ash, and sycamore. To the east of the track that runs through Bolter's Mead, the park is characterised by a steep downland slope, scattered with ash and hawthorn, that leads up to Heart Clump, a mature clump of sycamore and beech first shown on Acland's survey of 1836. In the north-west corner of Bolter's Mead lies a cricket field with pavilion of c 1900 which is depicted in David Inshaw's painting, *The Cricket Game* (1976). Cricket was established at Bridehead before 1820, and was formerly played at Cricket Bottom to the south of the house.

KITCHEN GARDEN The early C19 kitchen garden (Tithe map, 1842), later called 'nursery' (OS 1903), is situated in the north-west corner of the site, separated from the park by the village of Littlebredy. Immediately to the north of the kitchen garden is Garden Cottage (OS 1886), now (2000) a private dwelling. The kitchen garden contains a walled Inner Garden (Tithe map, 1842), which is still (2000) in use as a garden. Attached to its south-west corner are the former Gardener's House and Cottage, now (2000) derelict. Within the Inner Garden are two early C19 greenhouses (Tithe map, 1842). The walls of the Inner Garden are largely built of brick with stone copings and dressed door jambs. The River Bride flows through Littlebredy in a westerly direction and into the kitchen garden and Inner Garden, where it is channelled and dammed. In 1889, the kitchen garden and its produce, then under the management of the gardener Mr Birkenshaw, were extensively described in *Gardening World*.

The land immediately south of the kitchen garden, now (2000) much overgrown with scrub, was formerly in use as an orchard (OS 1886, 1901). It contains Yew Tree Cottages (listed grade II) and Stone Hills Cottage, both dating from the early C19 (Tithe map, 1842).

OTHER LAND The model village of Littlebredy is situated in the north-west corner of the site, between Bridehead house and Bridehead Lake to its south-east and the kitchen garden to its north-west. The village green, with in its far north-east corner an octagonal shelter of 1932, lies in the north-west corner of the site, close to The Cottage or West Lodge. The parish church of St Michael and All Angels (listed grade II*) stands c 200m north-west of Bridehead house on Church Walk. The church originates from the C13 but was largely rebuilt by Benjamin Ferrey before 1842. Immediately to its north-west stands The Old Parsonage (listed grade II), now (2001) a private dwelling. Along Church Walk and the River Bride, which runs through the village, stand various early to mid C19 cottages (mostly listed grade II), several of which have been attributed to the architect Peter Frederick Robinson. The River Bride is channelled from Bridehead Lake through the village to the kitchen garden.

The layout and landscaping of the model village of Littlebredy, completed by 1842, followed the principles of the Picturesque style and was heavily influenced by the architectural and landscape theories of Sir Uvedale Price and Peter Frederick Robinson.

REFERENCES

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Inspector's Report: Bridehead, Littlebredy, Dorset, (English Heritage 1990) *Bridehead and Littlebredy: Historic Landscape Survey and Restoration Plan*, (Nicholas Pearson Associates 1994)

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Maps [All reproduced in Pearson Assocs 1994] Isaac Taylor, Map of Dorset, 1765 Greenwood, Map of Dorset, 1826 Tithe map for Littlebredy parish, 1842 R Field, Robert Williams Esq: Ornamental Water at Bridehead, 1872 (Survey incl proposals) OS Old Series, 1" to 1 mile, published 1806-07

Illustrations [All reproduced in Pearson Assocs 1994] R R Reinagle, painting showing east front of Bridehead, 1822 A Acland, sketches and surveys of Bridehead and Littlebredy, 1836 Two watercolours of Littlebredy, annotated on reverse `RC to JG 1838' H Moule, series of watercolours of Bridehead, 1884-6 J G Jackson, Bridehead, The Seat of Robert Williams, Esq, MP, c 1850 D Inshaw, The Cricket Game, 1976

Description written: August 2001 Amended: October 2001 Register Inspector: FDM Edited: April 2005

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.