

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

GOLDINGS

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

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Name: GOLDINGS

County: Hertfordshire

District: East Hertfordshire (District Authority)

Parish: Bramfield

County: Hertfordshire

District: East Hertfordshire (District Authority)

Parish: Hertford

County: Hertfordshire

District: East Hertfordshire (District Authority)

Parish: Stapleford

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.809986
Longitude: -0.10228544
National Grid Reference: TL 30925 14075
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1001380
Date first listed: 24-Feb-1998

Details

A C19 park and pleasure grounds contemporary with the 1870s Tudor-style country mansion. Elements from the C18 survive in the landscape.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The Hall family owned the estate from the late C17 until it was sold in 1770. A house, surrounded by farmland, seems to have been built c 1700 by Thomas Hall, during his ownership from 1695 to 1748. When the property was sold in 1770 the particulars described 'a large and elegant mansion house built on arches with three fronts and farm of 210 acres' (quoted in HCS Newsletter 1978). A garden and meadows adjoined the house. No park existed, but the particulars suggested that the farm could be converted into one.

Following several owners after 1770, Robert Smith, a wealthy banker, inherited the estate c 1861. Smith demolished the old house c 1870 and built the present mansion further north, up the hillside, with a commanding view south across the estate to Hertford. He carried out landscaping work to the park and enlarged it. Smith's son Reginald inherited the estate in 1894 and

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sold it to Dr Barnardo's Homes in 1921. In 1969 it was sold to Hertfordshire County Council, and has since (late 1990s) been sold on for conversion into residential units. The southern part of the site is in divided ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Goldings lies 4km north-west of Hertford, on the southern edge of Waterford village. The c 100ha site is situated on a south-facing slope of a range of low hills north of Hertford. It is bounded to the east by the busy A602 North Road from Hertford to Stevenage, to the south and west by Bramfield Road, and to the north by Waterford village and land used for mineral extraction. The setting is largely agricultural.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main entrance to the site is from North Road, 500m south-east of the house, at the east end of the east drive. On the north side of the entrance is the single-storey, brick and half-timbered, Tudor-style Goldings Lodge (George Devey 1870, listed grade II), now with a tiled roof but originally thatched. The drive is sunk between banks on either side as it descends to the water meadows, with mature conifers on the banks. These conifers are part of the south park belt which runs adjacent to North Road. The east drive curves north-west, crossing the Mole Wood mill race via a brick bridge with cast-iron balustrade (1869, listed grade II). Some 10m north-west of this bridge the drive crosses the River Beane via a bridge of red and yellow brick (1869, listed grade II). The drive then traverses the water meadows on a causeway before crossing a stream at the head of Goldings Canal via a similar bridge (1869, listed grade II). This group of three bridges is part of a series of six built by Robert Smith. Three further bridges (1869, listed grade II) in very similar style carry North Road across these water courses as they continue east beyond the estate. From the stream the east drive continues north, curving south through a lime avenue towards the main entrance on the north front of the house. This is approached through a large archway to the entrance forecourt sunk into the hillside.

The north drive gives direct access from Waterford and North Road at the north end of the site. The drive leaves North Road by the graveyard and church of St Michael and All Angels, 500m north of the house. A two-storey brick and timber lodge (Devey 1870, listed grade II) is situated c 50m along the north drive on the east side, where the drive enters the park. The land at the north end of the drive has been developed with C20 housing. The drive south of the lodge is lined by a lime avenue which meets the avenue of the east drive.

A third Victorian lodge, Windyridge Farm (Devey 1870, listed grade II), lies on the south-west boundary of the park, at the entrance to a disused south drive from Bramfield Lane, and is now a farmhouse with surrounding farm buildings. The OS map of 1878 shows the course of the south drive running north across the southern park to meet the east drive east of the house.

When Robert Smith inherited the Goldings estate in 1861 he diverted and reconstructed the Watton Turnpike from its line west of the River Beane to the present position of North Road. He built the series of bridges to carry the road, and the new east drive to Goldings. Smith also diverted Bramfield Lane in 1870 to bring more land into the park to the south and west.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING The house (Devey 1871-7, listed grade II*) lies towards the north of the site, near the top of the hillside. Built for Robert Smith, it is a very large, red-brick mansion in free Tudor style, with two wings; the west, principal wing is attached at an angle to the larger, rambling east service wing with a turret and large square tower. Linked to the west end of the house is a brick orangery/conservatory with a cast-iron trussed roof; the roof material is now slate rather than glass. The forecourt and the north front of the house are set into the hillside, with stone steps leading up the steep slope to the pleasure grounds beyond. The south front is the garden front which enjoys views south down the gentle hillside over the garden, park and out to Hertford in the distance. The south-facing conservatory also overlooks the garden and the view south, although here this is partly obscured by mature ornamental trees.

A water-colour view of the earlier house of c 1800 (reproduced in East Herts Archaeol Soc Newsletter 1958) shows the meadows east of the River Beane (then outside the park) running up to the old mansion: a square, compact, two-storey house with dormers in a deep-hipped roof. This house stood c 200m south of the current house, south-west of the stables with which it seems to have been closely linked both physically and visually. It is possible that it stood where the grass tennis courts lie, south of the stables. The stables (c 1830, listed grade II) lie 150m south-east of the house and form a courtyard (largely built in). They may incorporate the structure of an earlier stables, of c 1700. The building is constructed of yellow brick with a stuccoed, castellated south-east front incorporating a gothic entrance arch. The stables form an important element in the setting of the current house.

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GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The garden lies south of the house, aligned with the south, garden front. A raised terrace with retaining walls of grey stone runs along the south front of both wings. A gravel path bisects the terrace, parallel with the west wing of the house, and a path extends from the garden entrance to the steps down to the lawn below the terrace. At the extreme west end is the red-brick, Jacobean chapel (Walter Godfrey 1923, listed grade II). An almost square terrace sits in front of the east, servants' wing. The terraces are mostly laid to lawn. South of the terraces an informal lawn slopes south towards the valley. The lawn is bisected by a path running south-west to north-east across it. South of this path are the remains of a rectangular levelled area with a grass slope from the path down to it. It is now partly tennis courts. The south boundary of the garden is formed by a largely straight, steep grass bank, c 1.5m high. South of this is a large open lawn, used as playing fields. West of the house is a wooded area of pleasure grounds. North of the house a belt of mature trees separates it from the park beyond. Some of the north belt area is used for car parking and a C20 wing extends north from the house into this area. The garden and pleasure grounds have many fine specimen trees including cedars and Wellingtonias.

PARK The park surrounds the pleasure grounds. The north park is open playing fields with sparse trees and clumps. It is bounded by agricultural hedges to the west and north, and by the north drive and its lime avenue to the south and east. The east park is agricultural land sloping east and south to water meadows and the River Beane and the Mole Wood mill race which run through the south end of this area. There are views across the east park to the wooded hillside east of the River Beane.

The south park is the largest and most ornamental park area. It contains several stands of woodland, belts of trees along its perimeter and clumps and single trees. It is largely pasture. The land undulates and, together with the effect of the carefully sited plantings, the eye is drawn across the park towards Hertford. Goldings Canal is prominent west of the River Beane. The 'canal' is a broad stretch of running water, sometimes seasonal, which extends south from the east drive to where it joins the River Beane and leaves the park close to the southern tip, under North Road. The bridges which carry the east drive are also ornamental features in the landscape. An icehouse exists in Ice House Wood.

The sale particulars of 1770 state that 'the situation of the [earlier] mansion is upon a gentle eminence. Before it lies a beautiful vale enriched with a serpentine river, fed by a trout stream, called Beneficial River. The lands are happily varied, the hills are adorned with dropping woods and the town of Hertford perfects this pleasure-giving view'. Comparing the site in 1766 (Dury and Andrews) with the OS 6" series, it appears that Smith used the old Watton Turnpike road as the bed of his Goldings Canal. He tapped the Mole Wood mill race to feed the new, wide, meandering 'river' which was constructed to enhance the view south from the house and garden across the park.

KITCHEN GARDEN Two walled gardens exist, adjacent to each other, situated c 20m east of the house. Initially they related to the earlier house. The northern walled garden (early C19, listed grade II) is surrounded by 3m high red-brick walls with stone copings. Two large, Tudor-style arched gateways are cut in the south and east walls. A range of C19 gardeners' bothies run east from the south-east corner of this walled garden. The southern walled garden is slightly longer, c 100m, and attached to the northern one by its shared north wall. It is enclosed by similar red-brick walls to the north, west and east and is probably C18 or early C19 in origin. Set into the east wall is the gardener's cottage Wych Elms (H S Goodhart-Rendel 1912, listed grade II). This is a red-brick cottage in Vernacular Revival style, single storey with dormers, and an interesting west elevation with a window overlooking the south walled garden. Neither walled garden is under cultivation. Remains of a small orchard exist east of the southern walled garden.

REFERENCES

East Hertfordshire Archaeol Soc, Newsletter 9, (1958) M Girouard, *The Victorian Country House* (1971), pp 84/5 Hertford Civic Society, *The Newsletter* 2, (1978), p 2 R Bisgrove and Hertfordshire Gardens Trust, *Hertfordshire Gardens on Ermine Street* (1996)

Maps Dury and Andrews, *A topographical Map of Hartford-shire, 1766* A Bryant, *The County of Hertford, 1822*

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1878 2nd edition published 1899 3rd edition published 1925 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1898

Description written: 1997 Register Inspector: SR Edited: October 2000

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.