

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

AVINGTON PARK

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

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Name:	AVINGTON PARK
County:	Hampshire
District:	Winchester (District Authority)
Parish:	Itchen Valley
National park:	SOUTH DOWNS
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.082807 Longitude: -1.2528575 National Grid Reference: SU5243131764 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000529 Date first listed: 31-May-1984

Details

A park of medieval and C17 origins, laid out and landscaped to its present extent in the mid to late C18 by the third Duke of Chandos, surrounding informal C18 gardens with C19 and C20 planting.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Land at Avington, afterwards known as St Swithin's Priory, was given in AD 961 to the monasteries of St Peter and St Paul at Winchester. Following the Dissolution, it was granted to John or Edmund Clerke who built a house there (Hants Field Club & Archaeol Soc articles, HRO). In 1634, Avington passed from the Clerke family to Sir Nathaniel Napper and was then bought, in 1664, by George Rodney Brydges, a descendant of Thomas, brother to the first Lord Chandos (ibid). Brydges married Anna Maria Brudenell, Countess of Shrewsbury and from the early 1680s undertook a massive remodelling of the house (CL 1922). Following his death in 1713 and that of his son George in 1751, Avington passed through the elder branch of the Brydges family to James Brydges, third Duke of Chandos. Having sold Canons (qv) in Middlesex in 1747, he made Avington his principal residence and prepared plans for extensive improvements and enlargement of the house. He also created the park and laid out its avenues and Avington Lake. On his death in 1789, the estate passed, through the marriage of his daughter, to Richard Grenville, Earl Temple, at that time also the owner of Stowe (qv), Bucks, who assumed the name of Brydges and was created Duke of Buckingham and Chandos in 1822. Earl Temple made further improvements to the house but following his death in 1839 and that of his son in 1848, Avington was sold to John Shelley, younger brother of the poet, whose son inherited the baronetcy in 1889 (CL 1922). In 1952, following the death of Sir John Shelley-Roles, the majority of the house and immediate grounds were sold to Colonel and Mrs Hickson and these remain (1998) in private ownership. The remaining estate was divided in 1954 and sold as farmland to four private owners, the major, eastern portion of parkland being purchased by Mr D H Stent and the western portion by Captain Impey. This latter portion, with land to the south through which the drives run, changed hands and was further divided in the late C20, but all remains in private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

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LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Avington Park lies c 4km east of Winchester, on the south side of the B3047 and Itchen Abbas, and is centred on the village of Avington. The c 270ha registered site comprises c 5ha of informal gardens and a park of c 265ha laid out to farmland, woodland, and a golf course. Its northern section occupies the level valley floor of the River Itchen, from which it extends southwards up the rising, undulating slopes of the south side of the valley. The northern site boundary is enclosed from the adjacent meadowland of the Itchen by an internal fringe of trees along the edge of Avington Lake. The farmed park forms two large blocks to the south-west and south-east of the village. These areas are separated by open arable farmland (outside the area here registered). The park boundaries are largely formed by woodland and linear tree belts, the latter threaded by former drives, although the south-west block is enclosed from Avington village by its partly walled main street. The park's farmland and woodland merges, on its eastern and western boundaries, with a surrounding landscape of similar character. Several minor public lanes cross the park.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The site is approached from the north along a minor lane which runs south from Itchen Abbas and crosses Avington Lake on a brick bridge with timber railings (early C19, listed grade II) above a waterfall. Some 100m south of the bridge, on the south side of Avington Lodge (early C19, listed grade II), a drive turns west off the lane through wrought-iron gates hung on stuccoed brick piers (ensemble listed grade II). The gates are of C18 origin but were moved to this location c 1850 from their former position at Duke's Lodge on the A31 to the south. The drive runs for 230m south-westwards along an avenue of mature limes, established in 1780 and replanted in the 1920s (Hants Field Club & Archaeol Soc articles, HRO), then sweeps north-west to the north of the house, its route marked by three early C19 cast-iron lanterns (listed grade II), before turning south to arrive at the west front. This appears to have been the principal front from medieval times (guidebook), an approach from the south-west through the park being indicated on Taylor's county map of 1759. A further, tree-fringed drive from the south, which enters some 1.8m distant at Duke's Lodge on the A31 and which now, 1998, partially survives as a track, is shown established by 1826 (Greenwood).

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Avington Park (listed grade I) stands at the centre of the site on level ground, with vistas west over the lake and eastwards along the line of the lime avenue into the park. Built largely of red brick with a slate and lead roof, the principal two-storey western block is a half 'H' in plan with thirteen bays, the central five being recessed and filled with a massive Tuscan portico of four columns and a pediment surmounted with lead figures possibly brought from Canons (CL 1922). The major portion of this block, and the service courtyard to the east of its northern end, represent the extensive remodelling and enlargement of the C16 house carried out by George Brydges c 1680, the design probably his own and the portico modelled on that of St Paul's, Covent Garden (CL 1922; Pevsner and Lloyd date the house to 1705-15 and note its attribution to John James (c 1673-1746) made by John Harris). Its south wing was extended, and the house refaced, as part of a larger but uncompleted plan to create a new, south entrance front by the third Duke of Chandos in the late C18. Extending eastwards from the centre of the west block and forming the south, garden front, is a wing containing a library, also added by the Duke, which leads to a pair of early C19 semicircular cast-iron conservatories (listed grade II) built against a high brick wall and linked by a colonnaded orangery which incorporates parts of Brydges' C17 banqueting hall.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS Informal gardens lie to the south, west, and north-west of the house, between the lake and the church. The entrance front opens beyond its forecourt onto open level lawns with a central axial sundial (c 1760, listed grade II) which extend 50m westwards to a brick-walled ha-ha (late C18, listed grade II). North-westwards, the lawns extend beneath a canopy of mature trees including copper beech to the southern edge of Avington Lake, a narrow piece of water running for 2km along the northern boundary of the site, parallel to the River Itchen, which was constructed between 1759 (Taylor) and 1780 by the third Duke of Chandos (CL 1922). Some 70m due north of the house the lake is spanned by the arch of a late C18 cast-iron bridge with bronze decoration (listed grade II).

The conservatories and orangery on the south front open onto an east to west gravelled walk which terminates at its eastern end at a stone seat. Some 20m east of the easternmost conservatory, and linked to it by a brick wall, stands an early C18 pavilion, square in plan and constructed of moulded rendered bricks with a south-facing portico of four Doric columns (listed grade II) which was extended in the C19 and C20 and now forms living accommodation. Southwards from the walk, an extensive lawn rises gently at its southern edge to an east to west belt of evergreen trees and shrubs which screens the church (outside

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the registered site). The lawn features a late C18 octagonal fountain bowl of Coade stone with a central foliage fountain head (restored 1883, listed grade II), brought from Canons by the third Duke (guidebook) and flanked by a pair of circular flower beds. On its eastern side, tree groups on the lawn frame a view eastwards into the park while to the south-west, mature tree belts enclose the lawns from the site boundary wall with the village street and, 90m south-west of the house, from the mid to late C18 brick-built Old Coach House and Old Stables courtyard (converted, with additions to the south side, to residential and commercial use in the C20, listed grade II*, outside the area here registered). Some 10m north-west of the west corner of the courtyard stands a further early C19 carriage lantern, now painted white (listed grade II).

PARK The parkland extends east and west from the house and gardens as two virtually separate areas, linked by the lake and by vistas from the house. It appears to have been largely the creation of the third Duke of Chandos from 1765, he being recorded then as having enclosed some 400 acres (c 162ha) and also enlarged the park by 1785 (Crawford document in HRO; see Hocking 1990).

Eastwards from the main entrance gates, on the opposite side of the lane, a second set of wrought-iron gates hung on stuccoed piers (early C19, listed grade II) marks the continuation eastwards of the lime avenue lining the drive, the first 200m forming part of the 1780s design replanted in 1930 by Sir John Shelley-Roles and the furthest 250m newly planted by him in 1930 (Stent 1990). South of the lime avenue and of the lane running east from Avington village, the central 16ha of this eastern section of the park is laid out to a nine-hole golf course which is dotted with clumps and individual mature and newly planted trees. The golf course was constructed in 1994 on land shown as parkland in 1791 (Milne) which by 1897 had become densely planted with scattered trees. The south side of the golf course abuts an east to west earthwork (scheduled ancient monument) with, on its north side, remnants of a line of mature yew trees, damaged in the storm of 1987. Open arable land surrounds the golf course to the west, south, and east, a few tree clumps, partly replanted in the 1990s, and two small copses surviving from the more extensive scatter of trees and woodland shown in 1826 (Greenwood) and still in existence in 1910 (OS). The western boundary of this section of the park is enclosed by the trees of Temple Drive, a mixed belt of mature and late C20 replacement trees with a now-disused track, the drive shown on Greenwood's map of 1826. From the late C19, OS editions show both Temple Drive and a second north to south drive or ride continuing southwards alongside and through Hampage and Little Hampage Woods to the A31 (beyond and outside the registered site and now, 1998, virtually gone).

West of the house and beyond the ha-ha, open meadowland extends down to the southern shores of the lake which, at its broadest here and fringed with tree groups, forms the focus for a long vista from the house. South-westwards, the park extends into a combe under arable cultivation and dotted with a few clumps and individual trees which is known as the Low Grounds. Its south-east boundary is enclosed by the trees of Duke's Drive (recorded on the OS as Alresford Drive up to the early C20) while on its western side, the valley side rises through the wooded slopes to Beech Hill, the woodland here shown established by 1826 (Greenwood) and extended to the northern site boundary by 1869 (OS). At the western end of the lane which runs west from Avington village, across the combe at the western end of the lake, stands Easton Lodge (C19, listed grade II).

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden opens off the south-west elevation of the Old Coach House and Stables courtyard and lies outside the area here registered. It comprises a c 140m long wedge-shaped enclosure surrounded by 3m high brick walls and is laid out as a private ornamental garden with three terraces and planted with exotic trees. The walled enclosure was established by 1787 (plan of that date, see Hocking 1990).

REFERENCES

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Maps Isaac Taylor, A Map of Hampshire, 1" to 1 mile, 1759 Thomas Milne, Hampshire or the County of Southampton ..., 1" to 1 mile, 1791 C and J Greenwood, A Map of the County of Southampton ..., 1" to 1 mile, 1826

O S 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1869 2nd edition published 1897 3rd edition published 1910 OS 25" to 1 mile 3rd edition published 1910

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Archival items O G S Crawford [?], Untitled and unreferenced document in the Hampshire Record Office, pp 3-8 [Copy included in Hocking 1990.] Hampshire Field Club and Archaeol Soc articles from 1913, 1948 and 1950 (HRO 72.83 Mansions), (Hampshire Record Office)

Description written: July 1998 Amended: May 2000; July 2001 Register Inspector: VCH Edited: January 2004

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.