

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

HECKFIELD PLACE

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

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Name:	HECKFIELD PLACE
County:	Hampshire
District:	Hart (District Authority)
Parish:	Heckfield
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.344057 Longitude: -0.94861671 National Grid Reference: SU 73326 61077 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001379 Date first listed: 24-Nov-1997

Details

Early C19 garden terraces and pleasure grounds forming the setting for a country house, the site being famed for its horticultural displays and gardening traditions in the 1870s and 1880s.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

John Lefevre, a wealthy London property owner, acquired the farmhouse known as 'Bakers' as a country residence for his daughter Helena in 1784. The following year he purchased 'The Grove', a Jacobean house standing in parkland situated approximately halfway between the present Reading Lodge and Church Lodge. He started building a new house to the south-east of Bakers which was completed by 1790 and thereafter Bakers formed the servants' quarters; The Grove was demolished. In 1789, Helena married Charles Shaw who added her name to his and took the arms and motto of Lefevre. On John Lefevre's death in 1790 the couple inherited his estate and continued to add to it, until it reached its maximum extent of over 4000 acres (c 1620ha). The pleasure grounds and park were laid out and the house was extended by the addition of two wings c 1818. As part of these improvements, Charles Shaw-Lefevre negotiated with the owners of nearby Heckfield Manor for them to change the name of their property (to Highfield Park) in order to avoid any possible confusion with his own estate. When Charles Shaw-Lefevre died in 1823, his son, also Charles (b 1794), inherited the estate and like his father he entered Parliament, serving as Speaker of the House of Commons from 1839 to 1857. On his retirement he was raised to the peerage as Viscount Eversley. In the 1870s and 1880s William Wildsmith (1837-90), 'one of the most able, active, persevering, and successful workers of the day in the ancient industry of horticulture' (J Horticulture 1883) was employed as head gardener, overseeing a staff of thirty men. He wrote a series of articles on the gardens and grounds for *The Garden*, and many other articles about Heckfield Place also appeared in the horticultural press at this time.

Lord Eversley died in 1888, his estate passing to his eldest daughter, the Hon Emma Laura Shaw-Lefevre. She sold the estate to Lieut-Col Horace Walpole in 1895 and in 1919 the estate passed to his daughter, Dorothy Walpole. The house has been a training and conference centre since 1983.

DESCRIPTION

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LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Heckfield Place lies 1km to the north-east of the village of Heckfield, 6.5km north-west of Hartley Wintney and close to the Hampshire/Berkshire county boundary. The Reading to Odiham road (B3011) forms the southern boundary of the site.

Heckfield Place is situated on high ground, the lower slopes of the estate facing north-east over the River Whitewater valley. On the north, east, and west sides the grounds are separated from the surrounding farmland by estate fencing, while the south boundary is screened from the B3011 by woodland.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main entrance to Heckfield Place is from the west by way of a drive leading eastwards off the public road (B3011) which enters the grounds at Church Lodge (early C19). This drive continues in an easterly direction up to the west front of the mansion. Previously the main drive entered by way of Reading Lodge, which is situated 800m to the north-west of Heckfield Place at Heckfield Heath. Reading Lodge (early C19, outside the area here registered) stands at the junction of Odiham Road (A32) with the lane leading to Riseley Mill. In the C19 and early C20 this drive led through parkland and the pleasure grounds before joining the west drive.

A third, subsidiary C19 drive led in from an eastern lodge which stands on Bramshill Road at the east end of Wiggins Copse. Although no longer in use, its route remains distinguishable, winding through the woodland before curving round to arrive at the west, entrance front. A fourth drive from the north-east corner of the park, also marked by a lodge (outside the area here registered), led off the Hartley Wintney road 1.6km north-east of the mansion, crossing southwards over the north-east parkland to the eastern lodge at Wiggins Copse.

A fifth lodge was added in the 1840s or 1850s and marks an entrance into an area which was previously the most southern area of parkland, extending to the south of Wiggins Copse. From this lodge, situated at Grouse Green 700m south-east of the mansion on the B3011 (outside the area here registered), the drive led through parkland and was carried over Bramshill Road on a substantial brick bridge to join with the east drive. The bridge was demolished in the 1980s as it had become unstable and the drive was no longer used.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Heckfield Place (C18, restored extensively in the mid C19, listed grade II) stands on a knoll, west of centre of the site. To the north the building has been substantially extended for office and conference use; to the north-east stands the detached stable block also converted as part of the business complex.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The formal garden terraces retained by substantial balustraded walls lie against the east and south fronts of the house. A circular bastion stands at the south-east corner of the retaining wall where the terraces meet. On the east front of the house an orangery stood at the northernmost end of the terrace and at right angles to the mansion. In the 1880s it was described as a fernhouse and used as a summer breakfast room. It was taken down in 1961 and replaced in the late C20 by a modern extension. The formal gardens on the east side are set on an axis central to the house with steps leading down from the upper terrace onto a broad main terrace with a central pool and fountain (repaired 1997). This central axis then continues off the broad terrace, down steps which lead to the lawns and pleasure gardens below. On the south front of the mansion there is no access directly onto the broad terrace but a short flight of steps at the western end of the terrace leads down from the upper terrace directly to the lawns and pleasure gardens below the south front.

On the east and south fronts the broad terrace is a set with a series of raised basket beds and urns made in artificial stone. Several of these have been moved (C20) onto the lawns which extend below the formal terraces. The formal terrace was part of the landscaping scheme of 1818 and is shown clearly on Prosser's engraving of 1833, accompanied by his description:

A terrace, with elegant parterre and jet d'eau, has recently been formed before the park front, which adds much to the comfort of the residence, and at the same time offers to view the varied and beautiful prospect, which extends over the undulated and well-timbered surface of the park, with its highly ornamental pieces of water, into portions of Berkshire, Wiltshire, Oxfordshire and Surrey.

The terraced flower garden was well praised throughout the mid to late C19, as being 'well and skilfully carried out' (The Garden 1875) and 'one of the most beautiful and best kept of its kind in the kingdom' (J Horticulture 1883).

A large expanse of lawn surrounds the mansion, below the south and east terrace and to the west of the house, lauded in the mid C19 for its extent and quality. The lawns lead out onto a wooded area to the south-east, Wiggins Copse, which is furnished with

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winding, informal paths and the former carriage drive. Towards the southern woodland edge the ground rises up to the public road, with limes predominant in the perimeter planting. The wood itself comprises a variety of broadleaf and coniferous trees, including a conifer collection described in the mid C19 as a pinetum (Gordon's Pinetum 1858). The understorey is made up of evergreens, primarily rhododendrons, holly, and yew. Within Wiggins Copse there is a small brick summerhouse (roofless, 1997) with a coloured-tile floor and the remnants of rustic twig-work panelling. Nearby is an icehouse, the entrance tunnel running under the route of the carriage drive and its entrance decorated with artificial stone.

The pleasure grounds also extend 700m beyond the lawns to the north-east of the mansion, encompassing two lakes formed in the valley. The upper lake has an island at its southern end and is divided from the lower lake by a 3m high dam set with a rockery and a cascade and crossed by a wooden bridge. A view by Prosser (1833) is from this upper lake, looking south-west to the house. The lakes were constructed as part of the early C19 improvements on the site of a farm pond. On the west side of the lakes the valley is lightly wooded with a path circuiting the water's edge. This area was a sub-tropical garden in the mid to late C19 (The Garden 1875).

PARK The well-wooded park has been steadily reduced in extent throughout the C20 and the area now lies largely outside the area here registered. Arable farmland (late C20) surrounds the lakes and pleasure grounds, which are demarcated by estate fencing on the C19 park/pleasure ground boundary. This was previously the north-east park where Park Farm (formerly Home Farm) stands, some 700m north-east of the mansion. The wooded boundary of the north-east park stretched along the Riseley Mill lane, eastwards as far as the river.

The estate fencing along the north-west edge of the grounds is light and decorative in style; the parkland beyond is now arable. Two large cedars in the fields to the north-west of the house probably survive from the ?C17/C18 landscape associated with The Grove which also stood in parkland.

To the south of Heckfield Place the parkland stretched to the south of Wiggins Copse as far as Grouse Green and was separated off from the main park by the Bramshill to Hartley Wintney road.

KITCHEN GARDEN The brick-walled kitchen garden lies to the north of the mansion and in the late C19 was used mainly as a games area. It is divided into two sections: the southern half is partly occupied by mid C20 buildings associated with the conference centre; that to the north is down to grass, with a cross-walk through a tunnel of espalier apples and pears and a fruit room or summerhouse at its south-west corner.

In the mid 1870s, Heckfield Place was particularly known for its fruit production and its extensive range of glass was renowned. A pair of gates in the west wall stands at the end of the former flower walk across the kitchen garden and lead through into an area now used for car parking (1997). From this enclosure a second set of gates lead through to the western drive. To the east of the garden is a free-standing bothy, formed out of what was previously the north section of a lean-to vinery. A water tower stands 120m to the west of the walled garden.

REFERENCES

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Maps Tithe map for Heckfield parish, 1839 (Hampshire Record Office) Sale plan, 1896 (Hampshire Record Office)

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Description rewritten: March 2000 Register Inspector: KC 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.