

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

MARBLE HILL

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**MARBLE HILL**

Name:	MARBLE HILL
County:	Greater London Authority
District:	Richmond upon Thames (London Borough)
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.449694 Longitude: -0.31258915 National Grid Reference: TQ 17353 73651 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000400 Date first listed: 01-Oct-1987

## Details

Remains of C18 garden and park created for Henrietta Howard, Countess of Suffolk by, amongst others, Alexander Pope and Charles Bridgeman.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The land which made up the Marble Hill estate was gradually acquired over a period of forty-seven years between 1724 and 1771. Building work on the house began in June 1724 and in September of the same year Charles Bridgeman (d 1738) visited the site with Alexander Pope (1688-1744) and the owner, Henrietta Howard (c 1688-1767, becoming Countess of Suffolk in 1731). A few days after the visit, Bridgeman wrote to Pope saying that he had 'begun on the plann [sic]' (quoted in Potter 1995). The architect Roger Morris supervised work on the house and Pope was involved with ordering works in the grounds including planting trees on neighbouring land. In October 1724 Lord Bathurst sent lime trees to Twickenham, possibly for Marble Hill. Henrietta Howard took up full-time residence at Marble Hill when she retired from court in 1735 and lived there until her death in 1767.

Although Marble Hill is shown on of John Rocque's 1746 Survey of London and his Survey of Middlesex in 1754, the first plan with clear details of the landscape was drawn up in around 1749 (Hotham papers).

After Lady Suffolk died Marble Hill passed to her nephew, the second Earl of Buckingham, who immediately took up residence. When he died in 1793 Marble Hill was inherited by Henrietta Hotham, Lady Suffolk's great niece, who did not live there but let it to, amongst others, Mrs Fitzherbert.

Henrietta Hotham died in 1816 and the fifth Earl of Buckingham inherited the estate. He first let it out and then, in 1824, sold the estate to Timothy Brent who in turn sold Marble Hill house and most of the land to Jonathan Peel, the younger brother of Sir Robert Peel. By 1876 Jonathan Peel had reunited the estate and when he died in 1879 his widow continued to live at Marble Hill until her death in 1887.

Marble Hill was unoccupied from 1887 until 1898 when it was purchased by the Cunard family who planned to develop most of it as housing but their plans were thwarted. An article in *Country Life*, dated 1900, described the gardens and groves as overgrown and neglected. In 1902, the Marble Hill estate was purchased by LCC, Richmond Corporation, Surrey County Council, and Twickenham District Council and in the following year the park was opened to the public. In 1965 ownership passed to the Greater London Council, and since 1986 the house and park have been in the care of English Heritage.

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## DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Marble Hill is situated on the north bank of the River Thames c 1km upstream from Richmond Bridge and on the opposite bank to Ham House (qv). The park is separated by iron railings from Warren Path, an asphalted footpath which runs alongside the river to Richmond. Richmond Road and the backs of houses in Cambridge Park provide the boundary to the north and east, Montpelier Road and Orleans Road the boundary to the west. Richmond town is c 2km to the north-east and Twickenham c 1km to the south-west. The c 27ha site slopes gently from north-north-west to south-south-east, towards the Thames.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The main entrance to Marble Hill is in Richmond Road, through a gate c 100m to the west of the C20 Beaufort Lodge entrance. Now guarding a pedestrian gateway in the north-east corner of the site, Beaufort Lodge stands on the site of the original C18 entrance which led past the old stables and the kitchen garden to the mansion. When a new entrance, the White Lodge (in the north-west corner of the site), and new stables were built c 1827, the old entrance was adapted to give access to Little Marble Hill which was separated from the main estate c 1825. The asphalt drive from the current (1998) main entrance allows vehicular access to the site and runs north-east, parallel with Richmond Road, for 100m, with the wide level expanse of the North Lawn to the south. At Beaufort Lodge the drive turns south and after 100m divides, the east branch leading to the car park. The main drive continues 200m south along slightly raised ground, probably the line of the original C18 entrance, between the lawns to the north and east of the mansion.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Marble Hill house (listed grade I) lies roughly mid-way between the Thames and Richmond Road and overlooks the pleasure grounds and the River Thames to the south, and to the north the turning circle, the main drive, and the North Lawn. The house was begun in June 1724 when the Earl of Ilay instructed Roger Morris to build the 'naked carcass' (quoted in Banks 1985). In June 1729 Morris received what appears to be his final payment from the Hon Mrs Howard, for finishing all work done at her house in Marble Hill. The resultant three-storey, stucco-faced Palladian mansion is rectangular in plan, the main elevations facing north and south having five bays with the centre three bays projecting and pedimented. There are low wing walls on either side of the west front.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The pleasure grounds form the core of the Marble Hill estate and include part of the original land purchased for the Countess of Suffolk. Flanking the mansion and extending c 50m to the south are four areas of shrubberies enclosed within wooden palisade fencing; these are left (1998) unmanaged to allow for the development of wildlife habitats. On the north-west edge of the shrubberies, within the wooden fencing, is the C18 brick-built icehouse (listed grade II). To the south of the shrubberies the South Lawn slopes gently down to boundary railings which separate the garden from the riverside. Three shallow terraces run east/west across the Lawn. A gate in the boundary railings, c 300m to the west of the eastern boundary, leads onto an asphalt path running north, the route of the original eastern boundary of the pleasure grounds. The path is lined with an assortment of trees including a black walnut reputed to have been planted in the C18 and one mature chestnut. Some 100m south of the mansion and c 20m west of the eastern pleasure-ground boundary a flight of steps leads west, down to the remains of the grotto. The brick-built grotto, now (1998) enclosed within evergreen and deciduous shrubs, was one of two made by the Countess of Suffolk, and was shown in the survey made in around 1749 survey (Hotham papers). The second had gone by 1816 and its site is not known. In 1739 the Countess was working on her grotto and wrote to Lord Pembroke, 'I am at this time over head and ears in shells' (quoted in Banks 1985), work continuing until two years or so before her death in 1767. The surviving grotto, which by 1816 was already 'forsaken and dilapidated' (Brewer 1816), was excavated in 1983 and afterwards consolidated.

The western boundary of the South Lawn is marked by an avenue of immature trees which runs north from the boundary railings to the shrubberies and the C19 entrance drive and the North Lawn. A C20 Chinese-style shelter is situated at its junction with a tarmacked path which runs along the south side of the mansion and divides the shrubbery.

Rocque (1746) and Sauthier (1786-7) show the east and west boundaries of the South Lawn as double avenues of chestnut trees extending from below the mansion to the riverbank, with the second Earl of Buckingham's summerhouse shown near to the river to the south-west. Three east/west terraces, attributed to Bridgeman, c 1724 (Banks 1985), are shown on a view of Marble Hill from the river (Heckell, 1748). The three terraces, which level the slope of the lawn, rise like wide steps from the

river to the house. The terraces, the avenues of trees, and the wilderness are also shown on a plan made in around 1749 plan (Hotham papers). By the early C19 the pleasure grounds had become less formal. In an engraving in Brewer's *The Beauties of England and Wales*, published in 1816 the terracing has lost its definition and the avenues of trees their formal lines. By 1850 the pleasure grounds were known as the 'Quarters' and were the work of Jonathan Peel who planted them up as a backdrop to his rectangular formal flower garden set to the south of the mansion below the 'Quarters' (Banks 1985). The 1st edition OS map of 1865 shows the wooded areas around the mansion bounded by, to the north, the entrance forecourt and to the south by a wide strip of lawn. The area was further divided with an east/west path which crossed immediately to the south of the mansion. The 1890 Sale catalogue refers to the 'Broad gravelled walks skirted by luxuriant shrubberies and flower beds', while to the south front was, 'a fine expanse of lawn with Italian Garden' (Peel's formal garden). The divisions of the Quarters remain (1998) the same with asphalt replacing the gravel paths. The site of the Italian Garden has been grassed over.

**PARK** The land to the east, west, and north of the pleasure grounds is laid to grass. The East Meadow, grassland bordered to the north by the car park and the children's play area, is now (1998) bare except for a few trees near to the river boundary and football posts in the centre. In the far south-east corner a small gateway leads to Warren Path which is separated from the park by iron railings. A difference in levels part-way across the East Meadow probably represents an old track or path which ran east from part-way along an avenue which branched off the east drive and led to Little Marble Hill (OS 1865). The grounds of Little Marble Hill became part of the Marble Hill estate c 1751, were separated from it in 1824, and were finally reunited with the main estate c 1876, two years after Little Marble Hill house had been demolished. In 1890 (Sale catalogue), the area adjacent to the eastern boundary wall was described as an enclosure of shrubbery and ornamental grounds.

The meadowland to the west of the pleasure grounds is also used for sports pitches. Trees surround the meadow on all four sides. To the north the West Meadow is divided from the North Lawn by the west drive from White Lodge to the mansion. A play area enclosed with wooden fencing has been created in the north-east corner.

The plan of around 1749 (Hotham papers) shows the West Meadow divided into three fields, planting being restricted to the boundaries, but by 1865 (OS) the West Meadow appears as a single area.

The North Lawn is largely used for recreation: cricket nets and hard tennis courts to the north-west impinge on the view back to the house. A mainly pedestrian path, formerly the west drive, leads west from the mansion to the C19 stables (listed grade II) which house the tea room and other facilities. Alongside the stables, the path turns to the north and continues between the North Lawn to the east and a small mounded rockery before exiting the park at White Lodge gate. To the east of the White Lodge an asphalt path runs east, parallel with the northern boundary, to the main entrance. Like the ground alongside the western boundary this area is slightly higher than the North Lawn and here the grassed area is planted with mature trees. More or less opposite the mansion is a group of evergreen oaks. A minor gate part-way along the boundary with Richmond Road gives a good view of the house, framed by shrubberies.

The western and northern boundaries of the North Lawn were laid out in the late C18 as a winding elbow of planting (Sauthier, 1786-7), but it is probable that Countess of Suffolk had already started planting up this area (The Sweet Walk) before this date (Banks 1985). According to papers in the Norfolk Record Office (Potter 1995), the second Earl of Buckingham entertained a special liking for this area which was later described by William Keene (1850) as containing 'evergreen oaks, elms, and other forest trees'. The 1st edition OS map (1865) shows a raised area, well wooded, with the drive from the White Lodge winding through to the stables. Today (1998), the shrubberies to the west of the path are enclosed within wooden fencing.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The car park and the children's play area to the east are on the site of the C18 (Rocque, 1746) kitchen garden. This was still flourishing in 1890 when it was described in the Farebrother, Ellis Clark & Co Sale Catalogue as 'The Extensive Kitchen Garden, well stocked and partly walled in, contains Range of Cucumber Pits, Green-house, Tomato-house, Vinery, Potting shed and Tool-house'. The kitchen garden had been abandoned by 1902.

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Description written: September 1998 Register Inspector: LCH Edited: September 2003  
This list entry was subject to a Minor Amendment on 21/02/2019

## 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.