

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

EAST LAMBROOK MANOR

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

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Name:	EAST LAMBROOK MANOR
County:	Somerset
District:	South Somerset (District Authority)
Parish:	Kingsbury Episcopi
label.localisation:	Latitude: 50.967157 Longitude: -2.8113052 National Grid Reference: ST 43126 18951 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: I List Entry Number: 1001247 Date first listed: 09-Apr-1992

Details

An influential mid C20 garden developed in 'cottage garden' style by Margery Fish.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

East Lambrook Manor was, until the early C20, a typical manor farm with only a small garden which was laid largely to lawn (Bond 1998). A large farmyard or barton was situated immediately to the north of the house, while the remainder of the site comprised two orchards (OS 1904).

In 1938 East Lambrook Manor was purchased for £1000 by Walter and Margery Fish. Margery Fish (1892-1969) had lived in London up to her marriage in 1938, working as secretary to Lord Northcliffe and successive editors of the Daily Mail. Initially Walter and Margery Fish worked on the restoration of the house, while at the same time paving the small front garden with stone and laying out a lawn to the north. In late 1938 Mrs Fish had a series of terraces constructed on the slope to the west of the house, and subsequently an area of orchard above the terraces was absorbed into the garden. A further area of adjacent orchard was purchased, and a ditch which formerly marked the garden boundary was developed as a bog garden.

Walter Fish died suddenly in 1949, but his widow, always the driving force behind the creation of the garden, continued its development up to her own death in 1969. In the years following her husband's death, Margery Fish made several visits to the United States where she was introduced to the work of Beatrix Farrand, which was to be influential on her own gardening (Bond 1998). Mrs Fish also developed contacts with other leading British gardeners and plantsmen including Lawrence Johnston (1871-1958) of Hidcote Manor, Gloucestershire (qv), Nancy Lindsay (d 1973), and her neighbour, Violet Clive (1875-1952) of Brympton d'Evercy, Somerset (qv), from whom she obtained rare, old, and neglected plants. During her widowhood Mrs Fish published articles in *The Field* and *Amateur Gardening*, together with eight books which drew upon her gardening experiences at East Lambrook Manor. The books, particularly *We Made a Garden* (1956), *An All the Year Garden* (1958), and *Cottage Garden Flowers* (1961), popularised her 'cottage garden' style of planting and revived interest in many of the neglected plants which she had preserved. A small nursery was established adjacent to the garden at East Lambrook Manor, from which some of these plants could be obtained.

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Following Mrs Fish's death in 1969, East Lambrook Manor passed to her nephew, Henry Boyd-Carpenter, who, with the assistance of his parents, continued to maintain the garden until 1985, when it was sold to Mr and Mrs Andrew Norton. The property was again sold in the late C20, and today (2002) remains in private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING East Lambrook Manor is situated c 7km west-north-west of Yeovil and c 2km north of the village of South Petherton. The c 0.5ha site is bounded to the east by Silver Street and to the south by Middle Street, from which it is separated by stone walls. To the west the site adjoins domestic properties and gardens from which it is separated by stone walls and hedges. To the north the site is bounded by hedges which separate it from Owl Street. The site slopes gently from east to west and there are limited views south-east from the garden towards Brympton Hill and Chinnock Hill.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES East Lambrook Manor is entered from Silver Street to the north-east at a point c 50m north-west of its junction with Middle Street. The entrance comprises a simple timber gate set in the stone boundary wall (listed grade II*) and supported by mid or late C20 concrete posts. The entrance leads into the 'Barton' which comprises a gravelled area enclosed to the south by the Malthouse, to the south-east by a stone wall separating the Barton from the garden, and to the north-west by further stone walls which separate it from further garden areas. Below the north-west walls, areas of naturalistic rockwork are planted with alpine subjects, while to the east of the Malthouse a circular lawn edged with random stones is planted with a mature specimen mulberry. To the east the Barton is adjoined by the lawn north-west of the house. The Barton was, until 1938, the farmyard associated with the Manor. It was laid out as an ornamental area by Margery Fish soon after she and her husband acquired the property (Fish 1956).

A pedestrian entrance leads into the site from Silver Street at a point c 30m north-west of the principal entrance. A gravel walk extends from this entrance through an area of orchard to enter the Barton c 10m north-east of the Malthouse. This approach was developed in the mid C20 to allow visitors to the garden access from the original car-parking area. A further timber pedestrian gate set in the stone boundary wall (listed grade II*) leads from Middle Street to the front door of the Manor which is set in the south-east facade of the building. A path leads through a small, predominantly paved garden enclosure planted with specimen shrubs, roses, and herbaceous plants.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING East Lambrook Manor (listed grade II*) is constructed in ashlar and rubble stone under tiled roofs and comprises two storeys. The building has an asymmetrical plan with a projecting wing to the east of the principal block. The house is lit by timber and stone mullion windows which contain leaded lights. The house was originally constructed as an open hall-house in the C15, and was subsequently divided by a floor and extended with a lateral wing during the C17 and C18. Further alterations were made in the C19, while the building was restored by Walter and Margery Fish in the late 1930s.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens are situated principally to the south-west, north-west, and north of the house, and are laid out to a partly formal design which is to some extent masked by dense planting in 'cottage garden' style.

The gardens are today (2002) entered through a single wrought-iron gate situated on the south side of the Barton c 20m south-east of the Malthouse. To the south-east of the gate a small stone and pantile-roofed summerhouse looks south-east along a stone-paved Stone Terrace which forms the west side of the Lawn to the north of the house. The Lawn is level and bordered to the east by a mixed border backed by shrubs and the stone boundary wall. Trees are planted on the grass verge outside the wall to give height to the border (Fish 1956). A mature specimen variegated sycamore is planted on the west side of the Lawn. The Lawn was developed by Walter Fish soon after the couple acquired the property, and was remodelled by Margery Fish after his death in 1949.

To the west of the house two informal terraces rise above the Stone Terrace. A slightly curved flight of stone steps links the Stone Terrace to the White Garden and Top Lawn which are laid out on level ground at the top of the east-facing slope. The terraces are planted with a profusion of predominantly herbaceous and alpine subjects, while the flight of steps is lined by an avenue of clipped specimen *Chamaecyparis Lawsoniana* 'Fletcheri'. The present specimens, planted in January 2000, replace those originally planted by Margery Fish and known affectionately by her as the 'Pudding Trees' (Fish 1956). To the south-east

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of the terraces, an area known by Mrs Fish as the 'Colosseum' contains architectural fragments and was originally planted with Euphorbia 'Lambrook Gold' which was raised in the garden.

The White Garden to the south-west of the terraces is enclosed by low clipped Lonicera hedges and comprises an approximately square lawn surrounded by borders planted with predominantly white-flowered or variegated subjects. Specimen trees including silver birches are planted in the lawn. From the White Garden a stone-paved path descends south-south-west to the Silver Garden which is situated on a south-facing slope above Middle Street, immediately west of the house. The Silver Garden is conceived as a series of informal borders divided by stone-paved paths. These borders are planted with predominantly silver-leaved plants which Mrs Fish found suited to this dry, sunny situation. A path leads north-east from the Silver Garden to return to the Colosseum and terraces.

To the north-west of the terraces, the Top Lawn comprises an approximately rectangular area of lawn planted with specimen trees and enclosed by low clipped Lonicera hedges. It is adjoined to north and south by mixed borders. A grass walk extends north from the Top Lawn along the west side of the Malthouse, leading to an area known as the Lido. This comprises a steep-sided rocky declivity extending west to the boundary of the garden. This declivity is richly planted with foliage plants and shade- and moisture-loving subjects. A grass walk extends along the north side of the Lido; this is adjoined to the north by late C20 borders planted with scented plants. The declivity and the grass walk extend north, parallel to the west side of the Malthouse, to reach the northern boundary of the garden. This northern extension of the Lido, known as the Ditch, is similarly planted, while the grass walk, known as the Strip, is bordered to east and west by mixed borders. To the west of the western border a late C20 wattle fence separates the Strip from the plant sales area. The Ditch and Lido were developed by Margery Fish from an existing wet ditch, but the source of water dried soon after this work was completed and today (2002) the feature is dry. The grass walk returns round the northern end of the Ditch and continues parallel to its eastern side. To the east of the walk an area of specimen trees known as the Wooded Helleborus Garden is underplanted with an extensive collection of hellebore hybrids and other shade-loving plants. This garden is divided from the Orchard to the east by a gravel walk, while to the south-east an area of mature trees and shrubs corresponds to Mrs Fish's Green Garden, specially created for the cultivation of green-flowered plants. To the west of the Green Garden, adjacent to the east wall of the Cowhouse, the Sundial Garden comprises an informal group of herbaceous plants and a specimen conifer.

OTHER LAND To the north-west of the garden a plant sales area is adjoined to the north by a more extensive area of nursery ground. This area, bordered to the north by Owl Street and to the east by the Orchard, was developed by Mrs Fish in the mid C20 as a place in which to propagate and from which to sell the rare plants she had collected and obtained from her gardening friends and neighbours.

The Orchard to the north-east of the garden is the surviving remnant of the extensive orchards which formerly covered most of the site (OS 1904). A small collection of mature standard fruit trees support roses trained through their branches.

REFERENCES

M Fish, We Made a Garden (1956) *Country Life*, 122 (14 March 1957), pp 466-8; 177 (7 February 1985), pp 314-15; no 41 (8 October 1987), pp 100-01 M Fish, An All Year Garden (1958) M Fish, Cottage Garden Flowers (1961) *Gardener's Chronicle*, i (1961), p 383; 166, 12 (1969), pp 13-15 J Bond, *Somerset Parks and Gardens* (1998), pp 140-1

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1904

Description written: July 2002 Register Inspector: JML Edited: May 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.