

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

KIFTSGATE COURT

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

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Name: KIFTSGATE COURT

County: Gloucestershire

District: Cotswold (District Authority)

Parish: Ebrington

County: Gloucestershire

District: Cotswold (District Authority)

Parish: Mickleton

label.localisation: Latitude: 52.084996
Longitude: -1.7573183
National Grid Reference: SP1672642988
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1000456
Date first listed: 28-Feb-1986

Details

Late C19 and, principally, earlier C20 plantsman's garden on steeply sloping Cotswold edge site associated with country house.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Kiftsgate Court was built between 1887 and 1891 for Sydney Graves Hamilton of Mickleton Manor. It was purchased in 1917 by Mr and Mrs J B Muir as a base for hunting. Mrs Heather Muir began to expand and develop the gardens c 1920, much of the work being done in conjunction with Lawrence Johnston from nearby Hidcote Manor (qv). Later changes were made during the ownership of Mrs Muir's daughter, Mrs Dian Binney. Kiftsgate Court remains (1999) in private hands.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Kiftsgate Court stands on Glyde Hill, on the lip of the Cotswold scarp looking north and west over the Vale of Evesham. Below it, 1km to the north-west, is the large village of Mickleton, while 500m to the south-east is Hidcote Manor. The unclassified road along the Cotswold edge from Hidcote Boyce to Lower Quinton forms the south-east boundary of Kiftsgate's park, separating it from Hidcote's grounds. To the south-west the park is partly bounded by Baker's Hill, the road down the edge to Mickleton. The northernmost point of the park, adjoining Kiftsgate Cottage, is the spring where the Gran Brook rises. Also included within the registered area of c 25ha is the line of an avenue planted in the mid C18 from Mickleton to the Cotswold edge.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The house is approached from an entrance on the Hidcote Boyce to Lower Quinton road to the east, at the south-east corner of the kitchen garden. Here there is a two-storey stone lodge of c 1890, adjoining tall, balled stone gate piers. The drive is carried into the grounds via a causeway across the head of the combe which runs down the centre of the park, and down which from the entrance there are long views across the Vale of Evesham. The drive then runs in a

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straight line along the south-west side of the kitchen garden before curving west through to the forecourt on the east side of the house. East of the forecourt is a coach park, built on the site of a courtyard pulled down in the late 1950s. The drive is now broad and airy; laurels were cleared in 1932, and only three of the limes which originally lined the drive survive. The latter are believed (guidebook) to have been among the planting around Mickleton inspired by Shenstone (see below).

A second, service drive enters the grounds via a gate, again with lodge, at the north-east corner of the kitchen garden.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Kiftsgate Court stands on a bluff between the main Cotswold edge and the combe which forms the dominant feature of the park. It was built between 1887 and 1891 in the C17 style. It has an irregular L-plan, arranged around the north and east sides of the main formal gardens. On the main garden front there are two pedimented porticoes. One (listed grade II), of the late C18 and moved here c 1890 from Mickleton Manor, occupies the centre of the south wing. The other, which runs across the west end of the north wing and serves as a broad terrace, was added in the 1920s.

On the north-east side of the house is a service courtyard of c 1890.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS South-east of the house is its gravelled forecourt. South of this, and running along the south-west front of the house, is a small area of formal lawn.

To the north-west of the house, in the angle between it and its service courtyard, is the sunken, square, White Garden (1972-3), with flagstones and informal planting (no longer all white) around a central octagonal basin with a fountain springing from a Romanesque-style well-head. A yew hedge bounds the north-west and north-east sides of the garden. Beyond the latter is the Bridge Border, either side of a path which slopes downhill to the north-west giving access, via a rustic stone arch, to the park. On the north-east side of the Bridge Border is a high hedge, largely of beech. A gap in this gives access to the rectangular Rose Border, 50m long from south-west to north-east and 20m wide, which, apart from the beech hedge, is surrounded by a 3m high yew hedge. At the south-east end of the garden is the white Kiftsgate rose (*Rosa filipes* Kiftsgate), planted in 1938 and claimed (guidebook) to be the largest rose in England. The garden is bisected by an axial path of blue-brick sets, at the north-east end of which is a statue seat by Simon Verity, created in the 1970s. Immediately north-east of the Rose Border is the yew-hedged hard tennis court, no longer in use in 1999 when its conversion to a further garden compartment was being contemplated.

A gap in the hedge alongside Verity's statue gives access west to the Yellow Border (so-called from the colour of its clayey soil), which runs parallel with and along the north-west side of the Rose Border. Along the front of the border is a grass walk which begins c 30m to the north-east, at a rustic summerhouse which forms the south-west, gable end of the tennis court shelter. The grass walk runs along the crest of the Cotswold edge, divided from the steep and wooded slope beneath by a 1m high box and yew hedge. From the walk there are glimpses through the trees of the panoramic views across Mickleton and to the Vale of Evesham beyond. At the south-west end of the Yellow Border the walk is carried by a small stone bridge over the Bridge Border path, dividing to run around the North and Wide Borders which lie along the edge crest to the north-west of the house. Doors from the main portico and from the west wing lead out to the quartered Four Squares garden, which fills the south-west angle between the two main wings of the house. The paths across the garden are broad, flagged, and edged with box, and at its centre is a sundial. The planting within the beds is informal. Steps from the north-west side of the garden lead down to the south-west end of the Wide Border. A few metres south-west of this, set at the top of the steep slope below the house, is a small, rough-flagged circular terrace. From the terrace there are views outward, through the trunks of Scotch firs which are planted along the upper part of the slope, across the Vale of Evesham.

The steep slope south-west of the house is heavily planted with a wide variety of trees and shrubs including, on the lower slopes, tree peonies brought from Japan in 1935. Dominating the planting, however, are the later C18 Scotch firs. Flights of steps carry paths down the slope. Halfway down the slope is a main terraced path on which there is a long, verandah-like summerhouse of the 1930s, beneath which, on the middle bank at the bottom of a stone terrace wall, is a small circular pool. At the bottom of the slope is a crescentic lawn, on a projecting apron behind a concrete retaining wall. The crescent shape of the lawn is mirrored by that of its central, now (1999) black-painted, swimming pool (1962). At the north corner of the lawn is a small, colonnaded, temple-like changing room (1984). From the summerhouse, and especially from the lawn, there are views over the park, the Vale of Evesham, and beyond to Bredon Hill and the Malverns.

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When the Muirs came to Kiftsgate in 1920 the only garden was the formal Four Squares. Beyond was a grass field with wooded banks. In the 1920s the gardens (what are now the Yellow Border, the Rose Border, the connecting bridge and the yew and copper beech hedges) north of the house were planted, followed in the 1930s by the steep slopes and the lower garden south of the house, the same decade also seeing construction of the hard tennis court and the planting of the yew hedge around its edge. The swimming pool was added in the 1960s, the White Garden in the 1970s, and the pool changing room in 1984.

PARK The Court and its gardens look west and south over a small park, largely permanent pasture with occasional parkland and specimen trees. The main topographical feature of the park is the combe which runs downhill and west through it. On the south side of the combe are Old and Bath Coppices (the latter on a spring line), while along its north side, below and south of the drive, is the Bluebell Wood. As well as native species the Wood contains specimen exotic trees, and there is an understorey of laurels and rhododendrons. A path runs through it, from the gardens south of the house to steps which lead up to the east end of the drive, opposite the lodge.

William Shenstone (d 1763), landscape theorist, is said (guidebook) to have stayed at Mickleton Manor c 1750 and to have inspired schemes of tree planting around it. One involved the planting of the Scotch firs rising on the Cotswold edge which are now within Kiftsgate's grounds. A second scheme saw a straight elm avenue (lost to disease in the early 1970s) planted along the path or track which runs from close to Mickleton church, which adjoins the Manor, south-east to the Cotswold edge. Also said to have been planted under Shenstone's influence are the lime trees, now largely gone, along what became Kiftsgate's drive. The park was mapped by the OS in 1883, before the house was built; this suggests it may have originated as a deer park for Mickleton Manor.

KITCHEN GARDEN Some 200m east of the house is a walled kitchen garden. It is rectangular, and 95m long from north-west to south-east and 45m wide. Its walls are internally of brick, externally of stone, with raking buttresses alongside the drive. At the east end of the garden are several lean-to and span greenhouses, as well as frames and pits. Most of the glass is probably of c 1918. New Cottages, against the garden's north wall, were built in the 1950s.

Outside the north-west end of the kitchen garden is Stable House.

REFERENCES

J Sales, *West Country Gardens* (1981), pp 79-81 A Lees-Milne and R Verey, *The Englishwoman's Garden* (1981), pp 35-40
Kiftsgate Court, guidebook, (c 1998)

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1883, published 1886

Description written: March 1999 Amended: May 2001 Register Inspector: PAS Edited: April 2003

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.