

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

CORNWELL MANOR

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

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Name:	CORNWELL MANOR
County:	Oxfordshire
District:	West Oxfordshire (District Authority)
Parish:	Cornwell
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.943897 Longitude: -1.6049186 National Grid Reference: SP2725427340 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001093 Date first listed: 01-Jun-1984

## Details

A C16/C17 manor house with formal water garden by Clough Williams-Ellis (1937-9) within a garden and pleasure grounds, enclosed by a landscape park. The gardens form part of his scheme for a model village and landscape.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Cornwell Manor, mentioned in the Domesday survey, was owned by the Annesleys in the C16, being sold to the Penystones in the early C17. Much of the house dates from these two centuries, with the refacing of the south and east fronts in the 1750s. By the late C18 (Davis, 1797) a small park, containing a string of ponds, existed east of the house, being gradually extended during the C19. The manor and village were sold in 1937 to Anthony Gillson, whose American wife employed the architect Clough Williams-Ellis (1883(1978) to restore the house and village buildings and add various garden features. The garden work was carried out by landscape contractors William Wood and Son of Taplow, Bucks. The house and village remain (1998) in private ownership.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Cornwell Manor lies adjacent to the village of Cornwell, 5km west of Chipping Norton, close to the boundary of Oxfordshire with Gloucestershire and Warwickshire. The c 33ha site is surrounded largely by agricultural land, with the village forming part of the west boundary and a drystone wall marking the south boundary between the pleasure grounds and the road from Chipping Norton. The site, which straddles two small valleys containing streams which are tributaries of the River Evenlode, lies on high ground (150m), surrounded by rolling hills.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The main approach enters the site 100m south of Cornwell Manor, off the minor road giving access off the B4450 from Chipping Norton to the east. The entrance to the main drive, set back off the road, is flanked by decorative wrought-iron gates supported by stone piers with ball finials, in turn flanked by drystone quadrant walls terminated by an outer pair of piers in similar style to the inner ones (piers late C18, included with Clough Williams-Ellis' work of 1939, the whole listed grade II). The drive, lined by pleached limes, runs across an embanked bridge, with an extended stone parapet to the east and a short balustrade to the west, carrying the level drive across the steep little stream valley below. West of the bridge a former orchard (OS 1885), largely enclosed by ornamental drystone walls, contains the upper canal, conducting the stream

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from the village to the west to the bridge to the east and so down to the lower canal in the main water garden. The stone-lined canal, flanked by informal lawn, is headed at its west end by a low, stone and turfed bridge from which the stream emerges, the water course widening at the centre and narrowing again before disappearing under the bridge through the embankment carrying the main drive. The drive continues north, rising up the valley side, passing the stable yard to the west and curving east to arrive at the level, rectangular gravel forecourt lying adjacent to the south, main front of the house. This forecourt, bounded by a stone balustrade (the whole by Williams-Ellis), projects out across the south-facing hillside.

A second drive gives access directly from the village to the west. The village street spurs north-west off the road from Chipping Norton, c 40m west of the main gates, running down between two rows of cottages to the stream which crosses the road over a cobbled ford. The ford is flanked to the west by an informal lawn, entered at its west boundary off the lane to Chastleton via wooden gates set between stone gate piers with ball finials. The lawn is bounded to the north by a small stone canal carrying the stream (which rises in the field to the west) to a small round basin, before running beneath a cobbled path and out into the ford. East of the ford the stream continues in a canalised channel between stone walls, emerging into the upper canal running down to the main drive. South of the ford an apsidal extension of the former school house extends close to the water, while immediately to the north, two stone piers with ball finials flank the lane, being linked by low, curved quadrant walls to outer piers in similar style (all by Williams-Ellis). The lane continues north, bounded to the east by a grass playground surrounded by stone walls, with an entrance off the lane flanked by low stone piers. The lane turns east, entering the service drive, this being flanked by an avenue of pleached lime trees, passing the playground and upper canal lawn to the south and the stable yard to the north. The drive then joins the main drive c 50m south-west of the house.

In the late C19/early C20 (OS 1885, 1900, 1922) a further drive (now (1998) gone) entered off the Chastleton lane, 200m north-west of the house. This approached around the north side, through the north park, then ran south along the east front, with a spur west to the enclosed central courtyard, before emerging by a narrower forecourt at the south front.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Cornwell Manor (C16/C17, 1750, listed grade II\*) stands towards the west side of the park, on a hillside sloping sharply away to the east and south. The stone-built, two-storey, L-shaped house, probably standing on medieval cellars, surrounds two sides of a small courtyard, with an L-shaped service wing forming the west and north sides. The enclosed courtyard is entered from the garden to the east via ornamental iron gates flanked by stone gate piers and stone walls connecting the gateway (?Williams-Ellis) with the adjacent buildings. Adjacent to the north stands the stone ballroom, added by Williams-Ellis during restoration and extension work carried out by him c 1939.

The stable yard, standing c 50m south-west of the house, is bounded to the west by a low range of stone stables (?C20), to the east by a stone coach house and to the north and south by stone walls. At the centre stands a square stone dovecote (late C17, listed grade II), with a pyramidal roof surmounted by a wooden lantern.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The main garden lies east and south of the house. A small, informal woodland garden north-east of the house runs south into the formal flower garden: a terraced area of lawn and clipped evergreen specimens within beds surrounded by low clipped box hedges, bounded to the east by a stone ha-ha overlooking the series of lakes in the pleasure grounds to the south-east. Steps at the centre of each low, stone terrace wall give access to the adjacent levels. At the bottom of the terraces the lawn opens onto the forecourt to the west, where a set of stone steps stand at the centre of the balustrade along the south side, on the main south axis.

An informal lawn runs south from the bottom of the steps down the hillside, flanked by young specimen yews, at the bottom of which is a second flight of stone steps, set in grass, leading to the central pool within the canalised stream in the valley. Climbing the hillside beyond are five sets of stone steps separated by panels of lawn, terminated at the roadside by a decorative wrought-iron screen within which is set a small gate, flanked by stone piers with ball finials, set into the stone boundary wall (Williams-Ellis 1939, listed grade II). South of the road a further set of steps leads up to a simpler wrought-iron screen flanked by stone piers with ball finials (Williams-Ellis 1939, listed grade II), beyond which the south park rises. Looking from the north side of the forecourt, only the central basin of the canal and the steps beyond are visible, with the iron screens and park beyond standing adjacent to the lane to the south; neither the lawn below the forecourt nor the road surface are visible.

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The main axis is bisected at the bottom of the valley by the canalised stream, emerging from the tunnel through the embanked bridge carrying the main drive via a small, semicircular cascade into a stone-lined canal, in similar formal style to the upper canal. The canal widens out as it approaches a pool (75m south of the house) with a central fountain. This pool, lying on the main axis from the house, is flanked to west and east by stone slab bridges. Situated at the corners of the pool are pairs of weeping willow trees and *Acer griseum*. East of the pond the canal continues for 30m before the water is culverted beneath the lawn, only to re-emerge and descend a Westmorland stone rock garden via pools before continuing as a broad stream to the first of three lakes. South of the stream stands a small square pump house (?Williams-Ellis) with an ogee-shaped pyramidal roof. In the early C20 (OS 1922) the stream running through the orchard west of the main drive terminated in an irregular pond, culverted beneath the drive and lawn where the main canal now runs, emerging around the site of the present rock garden at the top of the slope. The lawn below the house (to the south) was informally laid out with shrubs and trees planted to the west and south around an irregular lawn. The drive from the north ran through the area east of the house, now terraced, curving south-west to the forecourt.

The three lakes, formed from the enlarged course of the stream, descend the valley with paths around them. There are views to the garden to the west, from where the separate ponds appear almost as one sheet of water. The lowest, easternmost lake opens out to the north, being surrounded by a belt of trees, with a small island and a punt house set into the west bank approached via a curved set of broad stone steps. A series of three lakes existed in the late C18 (Davis, 1797), apparently in open parkland.

West of the house lies the triangular Pool Garden (Williams-Ellis 1939, within an existing compartment), approached from the main drive via low iron gates set into the adjacent yew hedges. The garden, bounded to the west by the high, stone east wall of the kitchen garden (with a doorway giving access from there) and to the south and east by tall, clipped yew hedges, is dominated by a rectangular swimming pool with an apsidal north end. The pool is set on a level grass terrace, with, at the north end, a circular stone terrace with steps leading down from the stone pool house beyond. The south end of the pool terrace is terminated by a stone retaining wall with central semicircular steps leading down to a lawn with lavender-edged beds and the path to the house.

**PARK** The park is divided into two sections. The south park, which lies south of the Chipping Norton road, is laid to pasture with single trees, important in the main view south from the house as the land rises in that direction. This area appears not to have been parkland in the late C18 and early C19, but was planted up by the late C19 (Davis, 1797; Bryant, 1826; OS 1885). The north park, north of the pleasure grounds and house, is bounded to the north-west by Park Copse, a belt of mixed woodland, and to the east by a line of mature beech trees along the lane to Park Farm. The area is bisected by the stream valley running north/south towards the east side, feeding the lakes below. The north park is partly laid to pasture, with a recent planting (c 1997) of woodland trees covering much of the area west of the stream and east of the church, and contains mature single trees and clumps. St Peter's, the Norman parish church, stands towards the south side of the north park, surrounded by a churchyard with several mature yews and other trees, enclosed by an iron fence. The church is approached from the house to the west by a narrow, iron-fenced path flanked by a lime avenue.

In the late C18 (Davis, 1797) the north park was less extensive, running east from the house, bounded to the south by the road, possibly enclosing the series of lakes and continuing north around the east side of the churchyard. By the early C19 (Bryant, 1826) the north park covered a similar area to now (1998), its main features having altered little since the late C19 (OS 1885).

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The c 0.5ha kitchen garden lies 100m west of the house, on level ground. Surrounded by stone walls to the west, north and east, it is bisected by a central east/west path, terminated at the west end by a small summerhouse (C18) set into the west wall. The facade of the summerhouse contains an arched classical doorway with a prominent keystone, flanked by two windows in similar style to the doorway. The kitchen garden is still cultivated, with fruit trees both trained against the walls and free-standing. At the north-east corner stands a small, square, stone building, adjacent to the pool house in the Pool Garden, with exterior steps up to the roof which acts as a viewing platform across the kitchen and pool gardens towards the house and village.

REFERENCES

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OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1885 2nd edition published 1900 OS 25" to 1 mile: 3rd edition published 1922  
Description written: February 1998 Amended: March 1999; April 1999 Register Inspector: SR Edited: January 2000

## 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.