

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

BARRINGTON COURT

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Name:	BARRINGTON COURT
County:	Somerset
District:	South Somerset (District Authority)
Parish:	Barrington
County:	Somerset
District:	South Somerset (District Authority)
Parish:	Shepton Beauchamp
label.localisation:	Latitude: 50.960557 Longitude: -2.8614397 National Grid Reference: ST3959718257 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000505 Date first listed: 01-Jun-1984

Details

Early C20 formal gardens designed by J E Forbes and partly adapted and planted to a scheme by Gertrude Jekyll.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The site of Barrington Court has been occupied since at least the mid C11. The present mansion was begun c 1538 by Henry Daubeney, who had inherited the estate in 1514 and had recently been created Earl of Bridgwater for his service to King Henry VIII. The Earl's lavish spending led to his bankruptcy, while in 1541 he was implicated in the disgrace of Queen Katherine Howard. He died in 1548, and in 1552 the estate was sold to William Clifton, a London merchant. The house was completed by 1559, but in 1605 the property was sold to Sir Thomas Phelips of neighbouring Montacute House (qv). Phelips sold Barrington to William Strode, a clothier from Shepton Mallet, in 1625. William Strode is said to have restored the house (guidebook), while in 1674 his son, also William Strode, built a large stable block adjacent to the mansion. William Strode II served as MP for Ilchester in 1679, and from 1680 gave his support to the Duke of Monmouth. Barrington continued to be owned by the Strode family until 1745, after which it passed through many hands and declined to the status of a let farmhouse. By the mid C19, many internal fittings had been removed, and in the late C19 the house sank into a state of near dereliction. At the same time, antiquarian interest in properties such as Barrington was growing, and in 1907, on the recommendation of Canon Hardwicke Rawnsley, the estate was acquired by the National Trust. The National Trust had only been in existence for twelve years and Barrington was the first country house and garden to come into its care.

The National Trust undertook a programme of repair, much of it funded by Miss J L Woodward, but the cost of maintaining the property remained a problem, so in 1920 it was let to Col Arthur Lyle, a director of the sugar-refining company Tate & Lyle. Col Lyle's architect, J E Forbes of the partnership Forbes & Tate, prepared a master plan (dated 1917) for transforming

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the property into a model Arts and Crafts-style estate with new farm buildings, workers' cottages, and extensive formal walled gardens around the house. The C17 stables were converted to domestic use under Forbes' supervision and renamed Strode House. Forbes consulted Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932) about the planting of the proposed gardens, and Col Lyle's wife visited Miss Jekyll at Munstead Wood, Surrey (qv) (ibid). The only elements of Forbes' and Jekyll's scheme to be implemented in full were the formal gardens to the west of Strode House; other elements of Forbes' master plan were implemented including a new north approach and forecourt, and the model farm buildings and estate cottages.

Col Lyle died in 1931 and was succeeded as tenant at Barrington by his son Ian, who served as Chairman of Tate & Lyle and was knighted in 1959. During the Second World War the house was occupied by a boys' preparatory school but the gardens continued to be maintained. In the mid C20, Sir Ian and his head gardener, Harry Burton, developed an arboretum to the east of the house. Sir Ian Lyle died in 1978 and the lease passed to his son, Andrew. With his head gardener, Christine Brain, Andrew Lyle continued to develop and restore the gardens, using Forbes' and Jekyll's plans as a basis for the work (ibid).

In 1991, Andrew Lyle relinquished the lease of Barrington Court, the management of which reverted to the National Trust. The site remains (2002) in the ownership of the National Trust.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Barrington Court is situated c 3.5km north-east of Ilminster. The c 32ha site comprises c 4ha of formal gardens and pleasure grounds, together with c 28ha of park and other land. The site is adjoined to the north, east, and south by agricultural land, from which it is separated by a variety of fences and hedges; to the west it adjoins gardens and orchards associated with properties in the village of Barrington. The site is generally level, with a slight rise towards the south-east boundary allowing views across the park to woodland on the higher ground.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The principal entrance to Barrington Court is from Eastfield Lane to the north-west, at a point adjacent to its junction with Broadmead Lane. Simple stone piers and quadrant walls supporting an early C20 timber gate lead to a tarmac drive which extends c 100m north-east to join the formal north drive, which comprises a broad tarmac drive flanked by lawns planted on each side with a double avenue of horse chestnuts. To the south the drive and avenue are aligned on Barrington Court, while to the north they are aligned on Barrington Court Cottages (listed grade II), a terrace of six thatched, Tudor-style cottages designed c 1920-5 by Forbes as part of his master plan for the estate (Forbes, 1917). The picturesque cottages are set behind cottage gardens enclosed by topiary hedges and overlook an area of mown grass which is enclosed by a carriage circle forming the northern termination of the drive. From this carriage turn the drive extends c 150m south-south-east to reach a junction from which secondary formal drives lead east to Beachams (listed grade II), an early C20 farmhouse designed by Forbes, and west to Barrington Court Farmhouse (listed grade II), which was also designed by Forbes as part of his master plan for the estate. These secondary drives are planted with single avenues of horse chestnut, while to the south-west the western drive is adjoined by the buildings of the early C20 model farm (listed grade II) and a symmetrical range comprising a motor house and two cottages (all listed grade II) which screens the kitchen garden. These buildings form part of Forbes' 1917 scheme for the estate. Service drives extend north to Eastfield Lane and south to Water Street from the farm and motor house. From its junction with the east and west drives, the north drive continues south-south-east through the double avenue of horse chestnuts for c 80m to reach the forecourt to the north of Barrington Court. The drive crosses an early C20 ornamental stone bridge (listed grade II) to enter the forecourt which is enclosed to the north by a low stone parapet (listed grade II) separating it from a pair of rectangular pools that form an artificial moat to the north. To east and west the forecourt is enclosed by yew hedges, while to the north-west a square pond feeds the 'moat' below through a series of ornamental spouts set in the retaining wall. Within the forecourt the drive leads south to an approximately square carriage turn below a flight of stone steps which ascend to the principal door set in the north facade of Barrington Court. To the north of the carriage turn, the drive is flanked by rectangular lawns, each planted with a single specimen cedar. The lawns are retained above the level of the drives by low stone walls. Service drives lead east and west from the carriage turn, each terminating in a pair of elaborate wrought-iron gates supported by a pair of stone piers (all listed grade II); the western gateway leads to a further drive which passes to the north of Strode House, and thence north-west to reach the motor house. The drives, avenues, and forecourt all formed part of Forbes' scheme for Barrington (Forbes, 1917).

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Today, visitors to Barrington Court approach the site from Water Street to the south-west, joining the service drive at a point c 150m south of the farm buildings. This drive leads north to a C20 car park to the south of the farm buildings and adjacent to the early C20 kennels, c 200m west of Barrington Court.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Barrington Court (listed grade I) stands towards the centre of the site and comprises two storeys and an attic constructed in Ham stone under stone-tiled roofs. The house is E-shaped on plan, with gabled wings projecting south at the east and west ends of the south facade flanking a centrally placed full-height gabled entrance porch. The house is lit by mullion and transom windows and ornamented with pinnacles, finials, and tall chimney stacks. The house was constructed c 1538 for Henry Daubeney and completed in 1559 by William Clifton. The house declined in status during the C18 and C19, and following its acquisition by the National Trust in 1907 was the subject of a major restoration programme under the direction of J E Forbes, partner in the practice Forbes & Tate. Forbes formed a new entrance approached by a monumental flight of stone steps on the north side of the house.

Immediately west of Barrington Court, and linked to it by an early C20 single-storey corridor, Strode House (listed grade II*) comprises two storeys under a hipped tile roof. Constructed in red brick, the building is rectangular on plan with four wings arranged around a central courtyard. The lower storey is lit by tall, arch-headed windows with Ham stone dressings, while the upper storey is lit by square windows with Ham stone keystones and dressings. The north facade has mullion and transom windows. Originally constructed in 1674 (inscription) as stables for Barrington Court, Strode House was converted to domestic use by Forbes in 1921-5. The north facade facing the Lily Garden was constructed by Forbes, closing-off the original open side of the stable court. The central court was laid out by Forbes with a central rectangular pool and a fountain set into the north wall.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The formal gardens are situated to the west of Barrington Court, and immediately west of Strode House. The gardens are enclosed to the south, west, and north-west by early C20 brick and stone walls (all listed grade II) which incorporate elements of earlier walls. To the north-east the gardens are bounded by the Bustalls (listed grade II), a range of C19 single-storey calf-shelters constructed in brick and rubble, while to the east the gardens are bounded by a further brick and stone wall, a C17 single-storey stone outbuilding lit by oval leaded windows facing the garden (listed grade II), and by the west facade of Strode House itself. To the north and west the garden enclosure is encircled by a canalised stream which forms an artificial moat. The garden enclosure was constructed by Forbes in 1921-5, as was the moat, which was originally intended to enclose the gardens on all sides; only the surviving west and north sections of this scheme appear to have been constructed in accordance with Forbes' plan.

The garden enclosure is subdivided into four smaller areas by walls and hedges. From the C20 visitors' car park and the West Orchard the gardens are entered through a timber door designed by Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944) set towards the northern end of the western boundary wall. The door is approached across the moat by an early C20 ornamental timber footbridge and leads to a brick-paved path which extends east across the garden enclosure to reach a door set in the north-east wall leading to the service drive. The brick walk is flanked by mixed rose and herbaceous borders, that to the south backed by a box hedge; this planting reflects Mrs Lyle's use of this area for growing cut flowers in the early C20 (guidebook). The eastern half of the walk passes beneath a brick and timber pergola constructed in 1981 to the design of Andrew Lyle and Christine Brain (ibid). The pergola is separated from the Bustalls to the north by an area of lawn.

To the south of the Pergola Walk are two further garden enclosures of approximately equal area. That to the east, the White Garden, is enclosed to the south and west by early C20 stone walls (listed grade II), and to the north by a single-storey stone outbuilding. Stone steps ascend at the south-east corner of the garden to reach a wrought-iron gate (listed grade II) leading to a terrace below the west facade of Strode House. The garden is laid out with a series of segmental beds and four quadrant corner beds divided by grass walks. The segmental beds radiate from a central stone pedestal supporting a lead figure of a dancing faun, relocated in the early C20 from the Lyles' previous home, Beel House, Buckinghamshire (ibid). The White Garden was designed by Forbes in 1917 and planted to a scheme by Jekyll which used roses and peonies. Following the failure of the roses, the original beds were replanted to a plan inspired by Jekyll's Colour in the Flower Garden (1908) in 1986 (ibid). The western enclosure, the Rose and Iris Garden, is separated from the Pergola Walk to the north by a box hedge and is enclosed to the west and south by brick walls (listed grade II). To the east the enclosure is adjoined by a brick-paved walk leading south from the

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Pergola Walk to the Lily Garden, from which it is separated by a low box hedge. The Rose and Iris Garden is laid out with perimeter borders surrounding a rectangular lawn in which are set four L-shaped beds surrounding a centrally placed stone sundial pedestal (sundial absent, 2002). The borders are planted with a late C20 scheme of roses, irises, and herbaceous plants which closely follows the planting plan made by Jekyll in 1921 (*ibid*).

The Lily Garden to the south of the White Garden and the Rose and Iris Garden is enclosed to the north, west, and south by brick walls, while to the east a raised stone and terracotta tile-paved terrace extends below the west facade of Strode House. This terrace is approached by a broad flight of stone steps placed on the central axis of the house and garden. The garden and house walls are planted with climbing subjects, while perimeter borders are separated from a central rectangular lawn by herringbone-paved brick paths. The centre of the lawn is occupied by a rectangular stone-edged lily pool with segmental ends to the east and west, and a series of rectangular raised beds retained by low brick walls mark the outer edges of the lawn. There are vistas west from the terrace below Strode House across the lily pool, and from south to north through the gardens contrived by means of a sequence of wrought-iron gates and entrances. The Lily Garden was conceived by Forbes and Jekyll as a sunken garden, but on grounds of economy and the prevailing high water table, was constructed with raised beds (C Brain pers comm, 2002; guidebook).

The wrought-iron gate (listed grade II) placed at the central point of the south wall of the Lily Garden leads to the South Lawn, an approximately rectangular area separated from the park to the south by a ha-ha and enclosed to the east by yew hedges. Tall wrought-iron gates set in this hedge and supported by stone piers surmounted by obelisk finials (all listed grade II) lead from the South Lawn to the East Orchard. To the north the lawn is bounded by Barrington Court, Strode House, and the south wall of the Lily Garden, while to the north-west the lawn is enclosed by a stone wall (listed grade II). Some 150m south-west of Barrington Court a pair of tall wrought-iron gates, set in the boundary wall and supported by tall stone piers surmounted by obelisk finials (all listed grade II), leads to the West Orchard. From this gateway, a stone-flagged and brick-paved walk leads north before turning sharply east to extend parallel to the south facades of Strode House and Barrington Court. The walk returns below the east facade of Barrington Court to reach a flight of stone steps which descends to the forecourt north of the house. The walk encloses mixed borders below the south wall of the Lily Garden and the wall to the north-west of the lawn. Some 20m south-west of Barrington Court, a tall, multi-faced heraldic sundial stands on a circular stone-flagged base reached from the east to west walk by a further stone-flagged path. A group of mature specimen trees to the south-west of Barrington Court and Strode House frame a view south towards the park. The South Lawn was developed in the 1920s by Col Lyle as a foil to the elaborate south facade of Barrington Court, in preference to the formal garden proposed by Forbes (Forbes, 1917; guidebook). A narrow slip of lawn extends around the east side of Barrington Court, enclosed to the east by yew hedges and to the west by the house. A broad grass walk flanked by pleached limes extends on an axis with the east facade of Barrington Court and is adjoined to the north by the arboretum, an area of grass planted with specimen trees and conifers, and to the south by the East Orchard. The Lime Walk and arboretum were developed in the mid C20 by Sir Ian Lyle on the site of an earlier cider orchard. Traces of terraces extending from north to south across the Lime Walk may relate to C17 formal gardens associated with Barrington Court (C Brain pers comm, 2002).

PARK The park is situated to the south and south-east of Barrington Court and is separated from adjacent agricultural land by hedges and plantations. To the north the park is separated from the South Lawn by a ha-ha. The park remains pasture planted with scattered specimen trees and rises gently to the south-east. The park appears to have been developed in its present form in the early C20 from agricultural land, the C16 deer park shown on Saxton's map of Somerset (Saxton, 1575) having been long disparked (Bond 1998).

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden is situated c 200m north-west of Barrington Court and Strode House and is enclosed by rubble-stone walls under pantile copings (listed grade II). To the north the garden is adjoined by the motor house, cottages, and a frame yard (all listed grade II), from which it is entered by two large arches closed by tall, elaborate wrought-iron gates made by Singers of Frome. Arched entrances closed by timber doors are set in the east and west walls; these arches have ornamental carved keystones. A further entrance at the central point of the south wall comprises a timber door set within a heavy, ornamental neoclassical architrave. The garden is laid out with rubble-stone-edged perimeter borders and a central group of

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four beds separated by gravel walks. The cruciform walks converge at a central circular stone-edged pool containing a fountain comprising a figure of a boy and a swan. The walks leading east and west from the central pool are surmounted by metal arches. The kitchen garden remains in full cultivation with fruit trees trained on the outer walls. To the south, the main kitchen garden is adjoined by a further rectangular walled enclosure which is divided into two equal sections by the walk running south from the main garden to a door set in the outer southern wall. The eastern section is laid out as a late C20 plant sales area and is terminated to the east by a hipped-roof raquets court (listed grade II), while the southern section is a frame and glasshouse yard retaining three ranges of brick and timber frames and a brick and timber glasshouse. An herbaceous border, originally planted in the early C20 by Elsie Lyle, wife of Col Lyle, extends below the outer face of the south wall of the frame yard (guidebook). The kitchen garden, frame yards, and squash court were constructed by Forbes in 1921-5.

The East Orchard c 20m south-east of Barrington Court is separated from the South Lawn by yew hedges and is entered by ornamental wrought-iron gates (listed grade II). It retains standard fruit trees and ornamental trees and shrubs planted in grass. The West Orchard, immediately south of the kitchen garden, similarly retains a collection of standard fruit trees set in grass. To the west it is adjoined by the service drive, while to the east and south it is bordered by the early C20 canalised stream or moat. Wrought-iron gates at the south-east corner of the West Orchard lead to the South Lawn, while an ornamental high-arched timber bridge crosses the south moat to reach the Cricket Ground.

OTHER LAND The Cricket Ground is situated c 300m south-west of Strode House and is separated from the West Orchard by the early C20 moat. An irregularly shaped grass area is bounded to the west, south, and south-east by mixed ornamental plantations and is overlooked by a picturesque single-storey timber and thatch pavilion set in the western boundary plantation. The Cricket Ground and pavilion were developed in the early C20.

REFERENCES

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Maps C Saxton, *Map of Somerset*, 1575

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

Archival items J E Forbes, Garden Plan, Barrington Court, Somerset for Lieut Col A Arthur Lyle, 1917 (private collection)

Description written: August 2002 Register Inspector: JML Edited: September 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.