

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

MOOR PARK

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

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MOOR PARK

Name: MOOR PARK

County: Surrey

District: Waverley (District Authority)

Parish: Farnham

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.209119
Longitude: -0.76779069
National Grid Reference: SU 86172 46267
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1001173
Date first listed: 01-Jun-1984

Details

Remains of late C17 formal garden layout by Sir William Temple, extended early C18, set in informal grounds with C19 planting.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

There had been a manor house at Compton since the C14 but the hamlet lay on the other side of the River Wey. The property was acquired before 1632 by a Sir Francis Clarke, who probably built the early C17 house which was located on the lower slopes of the wooded ridge or moor and known as Compton Hall. Sir William Temple (1628?99), statesman and writer, bought the property in c 1680, and renamed it Moor Park after the Hertfordshire seat of that name (qv, owned by the cousin of Temple's wife, Dorothy Osborne), the garden of which Temple admired and wrote of in 1685 (*Upon the Gardens of Epicurus* or, *Of Gardening in the Year 1685*, published 1692). Temple lived in the house for fifteen years and his secretary from 1689, Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), was also a resident for several years between 1689 and 1699. Swift started to write *A Tale of the Tub* and *The Battle of the Books* at Moor Park and it was also there that Swift met Esther Johnson, the daughter of Temple's housekeeper and the Stella of his poems and his *Journal*. Temple was responsible for laying out the formal gardens to the west and south of the house.

In 1699 the estate passed to one of Temple's granddaughters, who married her cousin, John Temple. She survived him and their children and on her death in 1770 left the property to her nephew, Basil Bacon. Bacon and his son were responsible for the late C18 improvements and alterations to the house and gardens. The house was leased by the Bacon family from 1796 to a Mr Timson, and it was later sold, after which the property passed through various hands. Charles Darwin (1809-1882) was a frequent visitor to the house and worked on *The Origin of the Species* there. The property continued in private ownership into the early C20, when it became the residence of Field Marshall Earl Roberts. In the 1940s it became the Moor Park College for Adult Christian Education and is now (2000) the Constance Spry Flower School.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Moor Park, c 5ha, is located on the eastern edge of Farnham, in the county of Surrey. The site is bounded by former parkland (now farmland) to the west and south, Moor Park Lane to the

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east, and by the lane which runs between Moor Park Way and Moor Park Lane to the north, with farmland beyond. Moor Park is set within the valley of the River Wey and the ground slopes gently from the west and east down to the River Wey, which meanders from north-west to south-east through the site. There are views along the valley and within the gardens and pleasure grounds. Areas of higher ground lie immediately outside the registered boundary to the west and east. The boundaries of Moor Park are marked by a mixture of walls and fences.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Moor Park is approached from the west side by Moor Park Way (past a mid C20 building on the west side of the site, which replaced an earlier lodge) or from the east by Moor Park Lane. The northern part of Moor Park Lane is now a private road (outside the boundary of the area here registered) but from the C17 to C19 formed the main approach to the house from the north. The house is now approached from the road which runs from west to east between Moor Park Way and Moor Park Lane and then continues to the east to join the Runfold to Waverley road. From this road, the southern part of Moor Park Lane leads south past outbuildings to the west and an icehouse, set in the bank on the east side, to the entrance forecourt on the east front of the house. To the east of Moor Park Lane there is a bank with large oaks and hollies and, to the north of the house, a line of limes and planes along the west side, marking the former approach (both outside the area here registered). **PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Moor Park house (listed grade II*) was built c 1630 and altered c 1680 for Sir William Temple, then extensively altered in the late C18 and again in the 1890s and 1930s.

The house is now stuccoed and the exterior is effectively late C18. The three-storey garden front has a taller central motif of a wide angular bay with slightly projecting centre, with two-bay wings. The entrance front has symmetrical flanking wings and a later arcaded porch. A range of two-storey brick outbuildings and stables adjoin the house to the north-west forming a courtyard, with an arched clock tower at the north end.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS Running along the garden (west) front of the house is a late C17 terrace walk, the retaining wall of which is now obscured beneath the turf bank along the western edge. The walk is terminated to the north by the remains of the foundations of a banqueting house or gazebo. This house had been demolished by the early C20 and the site was then laid out as an Italian garden with a pond and vines on wires overhead (CL 1902; Rachel Gosling Notes). Near the south-west corner of the house there is a large specimen cedar below the terrace. Two small flights of steps lead down from the upper level, one set either side of the centre of the house. A second terrace runs parallel, with a smaller bank leading down to the lowest level. The terrace and banqueting house are both shown in a late C17 view attributed to Kip (Harris 1979), which shows only one set of steps, centrally placed on the house. These steps were aligned on a broad walk which ran east/west through the gardens and continued to the west of the gardens as an avenue.

To the west of the terrace there are lawns with informal plantings of specimen trees, on the site of Temple's parterres, two to the north of the broad walk and a parterre and a bowling green to the south-west. There are shrubberies along the northern edge of the lawns, with the walled gardens beyond. On the west side of the gardens, at the point where the broad walk would have terminated, there are the remains of a late C17 canal. The feature now consists of a circular pool with small arms to the north and south. The circular section had a jet d'eau fountain in the late C17 (still working in the early C20) and the arms then continued to the north and south, forming the west boundary of formal gardens and running parallel to a canalised stretch of the River Wey to the west. The canal appears to have been reduced in size by the mid C18 (Rocque, 1768) and is shown in its present form by the late C19 (OS 1870, 1895). The line of the canal is now open lawn stretching the length of the garden and backed to the west by trees along the River Wey.

The terrace walk continues to the south and to the east of the walk and at the same height are further gardens to the south of the house. These now consist of lawn with scattered trees and a shrubbery along the east boundary, with a late C20 conservatory against the wall of the outbuildings which adjoin the south-east corner of the house. In the late C17 there was a parterre on the west side, with a sundial in the middle, under which Temple's heart was reputedly buried ('And I desire and appoint that my heart may be interred six foot underground on the South East side of the stone dial in my little garden at Moreparke' quoted from Temple's Will of 1695 in Scott-James 1984); the sundial no longer exists. By the early C20 there was an altered version of the parterre with the sundial, and a scented garden against the eastern boundary.

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To the south of the lawns are further garden areas which lie along the southern end of the gardens. In the C17 a wall marked the northern edge of these southern gardens, which consisted of smaller parterres, divided by the terrace walk, the line of which continued southwards as an avenue. The line of the terrace walk continues through this area as open lawn and terminates at the southern boundary of the gardens. There are two hard tennis court to the east, with shrubberies along the west and east sides. To the west of the terrace walk are various enclosures with tall yew hedges, the first now enclosing a Second World War gun position, and the second, to the west, a rectangular pond, in the mid C20 a swimming pool. In the early C20 there was a rose garden surrounded by yew hedges occupying the site of these enclosures. The south-west corner of the gardens is open lawn. Along the southern edge of the garden there is a grass walk, bounded by a park fence to the south and overlooking the meadows and former parkland along the River Wey valley.

In the south-west corner of the gardens there is an area of former pleasure ground, consisting of an island surrounded by the River Wey and a canalised channel along the east side. The island is now inaccessible and no features remain, but it is shown in the view attributed to Kip (Harris 1979) laid out with serpentine paths and circular openings within the wooded island, with small buildings and reached by bridges. Thatched summerhouses, the bridges, and a crayfish pool, operated by sluices, all survived into the C20 but no longer exist. This is the area of the gardens as then depicted, which most closely matches Temple's term 'Sharawadgi' (Temple 1692), which he used to describe a supposedly Chinese concept of irregularity in garden design.

PARK To the north and south of the gardens, along the River Wey, are areas of former parkland (OS 1873), now farmland, which are outside the boundary of the area here registered. The land to the north of the gardens has trees in a belt along the west side, along the river edge and in a few clumps or small groves but otherwise the ground is open and grazed by sheep and horses. The land to the south of the gardens is also grazed by sheep and horses and has a broad tree belt along the south-east section, with further trees along the river edge and in clumps and groves. Part of the southern end of the former park is a nature reserve, Moor Park Reserve (c 8ha), with alder swamps, which was described by William Cobbett in *Rural Rides* (1853) as 'a poor, ragged-looking Alder-Coppice' which had in the 1770s been 'a grove, chiefly of laurels, intersected by closely mowed grass-walks'.

To the east of the site, also outside the boundary of the area here registered, there is a wooded ridge which formed part of the late C17 and C18 park. The park is shown on Rocque's plan (1768) with scattered trees and two avenues leading from west to east, the northern one aligned on the house. By the early C20 the area was described on the OS map (1916) as 'nursery' ground and it was developed from the 1930s with large detached houses, this development retaining the name Moor Park.

KITCHEN GARDEN The walled kitchen garden, c 0.5ha, lies across the north end of the garden, and was shown here in the late C17 view (Harris 1979). There are entrances in the centre of the south and east sides, with two straight paths leading from these entrances and crossing near the centre. The west wall was demolished by the mid C20 and a fence now marks the boundary. A further stretch of wall runs parallel with the southern wall along part of its length and there is a gun position in the south-west corner. The additional length of wall along the south and the removal of the west wall probably date from the establishment of defence positions during the Second World War. The four quarters of the walled garden were recently replanted as a flower garden to provide flowers for the Constance Spry Flower School. On the east side of the garden is a late C20 glasshouse. There is a glasshouse against the west section of the north wall, a remnant of the range of glasshouses which stood along the north wall in the C19 and early C20. To the west of the glasshouse, in the north-west corner of the garden, are some potting sheds.

REFERENCES

- W Temple, *Upon the Gardens of Epicurus or, Of Gardening in the Year 1685* (1692) W Cobbett, *Rural Rides* 1, (1853, reprinted 1912), p 28 *Country Life*, 11 (28 June 1902), pp 832-4; 106 (25 November 1949), pp 1578-81; 118 (22 September 1955), p 598
N Pevsner et al, *The Buildings of England: Surrey* (1971), pp 372-3 *Garden History* 2, no 1 (1973), p 70 J Harris, *The Artist and the Country House* (1979), p 323 A Scott-James (ed), *The Language of the Garden. A Personal Anthology* (1984)
Maps John Rocque, *Map of Surrey*, surveyed c 1762, published 1768
OS Old Series 1" to 1 mile, published 1816 OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1873 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1870 2nd edition published 1897 3rd edition published 1916
Archival items MS description and notes by Rachel Gosling (nee Soames) who lived at Moor Park from 1919 to 1934 and at Stella's Cottage from 1934 to 1937. [copy on EH file]

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Description written: February 2000 Amended: March 2003 Register Inspector: CB 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.