

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

THE HOO

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

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Name:	THE HOO
County:	East Sussex
District:	Eastbourne (District Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
County:	East Sussex
District:	Wealden (District Authority)
Parish:	Willingdon and Jevington
label.localisation:	Latitude: 50.799177 Longitude: 0.25329262 National Grid Reference: TQ 58887 02377 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000236 Date first listed: 25-Mar-1987

Details

A garden of lawned and paved terraces with gazebos, designed in a formal C17 style in conjunction with the remodelling of the house in 1901-2, by Sir Edwin Lutyens and with an associated commission by Gertrude Jekyll.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

At the end of the C19, The Hoo comprised a simple rectangular house with its garden behind to the south covering the area of the present upper lawn. In 1901-2, Sir Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944) extensively remodelled and enlarged the house for Alexander Wedderburn QC. Further land was added to the south and east of the existing garden and the whole laid out to a new design, in a formal C17 style with terraces, lawns, a pair of gazebos and associated steps and walks. The extent of Gertrude Jekyll's (1843-1932) involvement in the planting of the garden is not known and there appear to be no surviving plans (Brown 1982). After the death of Wedderburn's son-in-law, Stuart De La Rue, the house was occupied by a ladies' college before being sold to Col Mardon. In 1955 it was purchased by Hoo Properties and converted into flats. Much of the garden and the outbuildings were sold on and in 1956 a housing terrace called The Court was built on the former lower lawn to the south and a further terrace of three houses built in the former orchard to the east of the present garden (these are known as The Orchard and lie outside the registered site). Minor alterations also occurred to Lutyens' terraces within the garden. The freehold of The Hoo is now (1999) owned privately by the residents.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The Hoo stands directly on Church Street in the centre of Old Willingdon village, c 150m west of the junction with the A21 running south into the centre of Eastbourne. Its c 0.25ha registered garden lies on the south side, on three level terraces cut into ground which slopes away to the south and which looks

out over post-war housing to a glimpse of the sea. The garden is enclosed from adjacent houses to the west and east by high flint walls with tiled copings (listed grade II*), the eastern wall being pierced by arched openings to allow a view into the garden from the three late C20 houses known as The Orchard. A similar wall, some 2.5m high but faced with coursed pebbles, forms a curtain wall along Church Street on the north boundary, while to the south the garden is enclosed by a hedge and a section of iron balustrade which run along the top of the c 3m high wall retaining the grounds of The Court below.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The garden can be entered both from individual ground-floor apartments on the south side of the house and directly from Church Street, through a timber door in the flint wall a few metres east of the house. A brick path from the door leads through a small courtyard between the house and, on the west side, The Barn, the latter a former barn altered by Lutyens and subsequently converted to the present two late C20 houses. The courtyard is laid to lawn and borders and forms the private garden of The Barn (the building itself lies outside the registered site). At the south end of the courtyard, the path passes under a pointed, flint and tile-roofed archway in its south wall and onto the strip of lawn with fruit trees lying on the west front of The Orchard. The main terraces of The Hoo are entered through one of the arches pierced in garden's east wall.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING The Hoo (listed grade I) stands on the highest point of the site, looking west to the South Downs and south over the terraces to a distant glimpse of the sea. Faced with pale-pink, painted brickwork with red-brick dressings and quoins, the north, entrance front onto Church Street is designed to appear as an intricate group of buildings with hip-roofed wings projecting to enclose two small, paved courts, the principal eastern court embellished with a covered stone seat and a well-head. The courts are entered through ornate, wrought-iron gates. The south, garden front is symmetrical, the central two-storey block, with weather-boarded gables containing attic windows, being flanked by projecting wings with hipped roofs and dormers. The core of the building, shown on the OS edition of 1899 as a rectangular block set back from Church Street, is Georgian (Darwin, nd); its transformation by enlargement and remodelling was carried out by Sir Edwin Lutyens in 1901-2 (Weaver 1913). The Hoo was converted to eleven self-contained flats in 1955.

GARDENS The garden, which is laid out on three levels of terrace, was designed by Lutyens in association with the remodelling of the house. The south front opens onto an upper terrace, paved with sawn flags in the central apron between the flanking wings. The terrace extends c 12m south, where it is retained by a low brick wall. It is laid to lawn with borders along the top of the wall and against the house and with informal mixed planting at the west end. The central axis is marked by three descending flights of semicircular and circular stone steps which lead down from the paved apron onto a large rectangular lawn with narrow borders at the foot of the enclosing walls to east and west. The original arrangement, shown on a drawing by Lutyens (Butler 1950) and in a photograph of c 1913 (Weaver 1913), contained three further circles of steps radiating in a trefoil pattern out onto the lawn, and the retaining wall was sited some 5m closer to the house. The present simplification dates from the conversion of the house in 1955. At the east and west ends of the terrace, further steps lead down to the lawn; these too have been realigned and simplified in construction from the symmetrical flights shown on Lutyens' drawing.

The south end of the lawn terminates in rose borders against the low parapet of a massive flint-rubble retaining wall. Between the rose borders, on the central axis, the parapet wall is pierced by a wrought-iron balustrade and a narrow paved balcony, which overlooks a further level of terrace below. This is reached by two long, stone staircases which descend, against the face of the retaining wall, from the south-west and south-east corners of the lawn. The head of each staircase is flanked by a square gazebo which is faced in flint with red-brick dressings and quoins and topped with a hipped tiled roof (gazebos, steps and walls listed grade II*). The lower terrace is laid out with a broad, west to east gravelled walk which terminates in further enclosing garden walls. The north side of the walk is flanked by bands of lawn and by borders of mixed planting against the wall of the lower storey of each gazebo. Set into the retaining wall beneath the balcony, and again on the central axis of the house, is a circular lily pool with a domed hood of red brick; a stone sundial on the lawn opposite the pool was moved in 1955 from its original position at the east end of the walk where it stood on a circle of brick backed by a semicircular stone seat (removed in 1955). The south side of the terrace is enclosed by a line of trees and a hedge, with a further section of iron balustrade in the centre. A double flight of stone steps, part of Lutyens' original design, descends the steep bank below the balustrade to the grounds of the houses of The Court which stand on the former lower lawn.

REFERENCES

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Country Life, 33 (10 May 1913), pp 7-11 L Weaver, Houses and Gardens by E L Lutyens (1913), pp 118-20 A S Butler, Architecture of Sir Edwin Lutyens ii, (1950) p 14 I Nairn and N Pevsner, The Buildings of England: Sussex (1965), p 629 J Brown, Gardens of a Golden Afternoon (1982), pp 122, 166, 178, 186, pls 17, 18 J Darwin, The Architecture, History and Gardens of The Hoo (nd, post 1987) [copy on EH file] D Ottewill, The Edwardian Garden (1989), pp 71, 75, 222

Maps OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1899 1932 edition

Description written: April 1999 Amended: June 1999 Register Inspector: VCH Edited: March 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.