

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

SUNNINGDALE PARK (CIVIL SERVICE COLLEGE)

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

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**SUNNINGDALE PARK (CIVIL SERVICE COLLEGE)**

Name: SUNNINGDALE PARK (CIVIL SERVICE COLLEGE)

District: Windsor and Maidenhead (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Sunningdale

District: Windsor and Maidenhead (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Sunninghill and Ascot

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.401389  
Longitude: -0.63914200  
National Grid Reference: SU 94762 67807  
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden  
Grade: II  
List Entry Number: 1001667  
Date first listed: 18-Feb-2003

## Details

This list entry was subject to a Minor Amendment on 07/11/2011

A C19 park, garden, and pleasure ground, with origins in the late C18 and further developments in the 1890s and early C20. In particular, the gardens contain extensive Pulhamite rockwork of the 1890s.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

A house designed by James Wyatt (1747-1813) existed at Sunningdale Park c 1785. The estate was sold in the early C19 to James Stewart, whose brother, the Rev Charles Stewart, curate of Sunninghill, built a house on a new site (that of the present house). Sir Charles Crossley bought the estate c 1855, and upon his death, it was bought by Mr Mackenzie who enlarged and altered the house, selling it to Major Joicey in 1890. In this year the stable block was built, and the following year North Lodge was added, alongside a new entrance from Silwood Road. The garden was described in the *Journal of Horticulture and Cottage Gardener* in 1899, which report remarked upon the horticultural beauty of the whole estate, including rhododendrons lining the drive from the South Lodge and the development of the pleasure grounds around the existing lake (Bird 1995). As part of this development it referred to a 'very considerable piece of work [which] was placed in the hands of Pulham and Son' whose work included edging the water with rock and the formation of cascades and pools, this work being significantly visible from the southern carriage drive.

Major Joicey died on 23 Jan 1912 and in 1930 Sir Hugo Cunliffe-Owen (1870-1947, cr Bart 1920) bought the estate, commissioning in 1931 W E Lord to rebuild the house to an enlarged plan. Following Sir Hugo's death the estate was sold to the Crown for a residential educational establishment, becoming in 1970 the Civil Service College (ibid). Parcels of land from the south-west side of the parkland were sold and developed as housing and buildings connected with the College were erected on the parkland adjacent to the west boundary. The remainder of the site remains (2003) in the ownership of the Cabinet Office and is used for College activities.

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**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Sunningdale Park lies between the villages of Sunningdale to the south-east and Sunninghill to the north-west. The c 30ha site is bounded to the north-east by Silwood Road, to the east by Station Road, and to the west by former parkland which is now (2003) occupied largely by College buildings and beyond this Larch Avenue. To the south-west the site is bounded by a network of late C20 residential roads leading down to Rise Road, which occupy a further area of former parkland. The land slopes north-east down from a ridge on the south-west boundary to a valley descending from west to east in which the ponds lie. From the valley the land rises to the north to a plateau which the house (now, 2003, known as Northcote House) occupies. Views extend from the plateau, as well as from the elevated land close to the west and south-west boundaries, eastwards across Coworth Park towards distant hills, beyond which lies Windsor Great Park (qv).

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The main approach enters the site at the north corner, at the junction of Silwood Road and Larch Avenue, c 150m north of the house, giving access from Sunningdale to the south-east and Sunninghill to the north-west. The gateway is set back off the road, flanked by stone piers supporting ornamental iron gates, these in turn flanked by red-brick walls. West of the gateway stands a red-brick lodge, known as North Lodge (1891), decorated with ornamental terracotta panels, overlooking the drive, its garden enclosed by an extension of the brick wall which leads from the northern gate pier. From here the north drive leads south through coniferous woodland, flanked largely by evergreen shrubs, principally rhododendrons, and in places opening out into car parks (late C20). The serpentine drive descends to a broad forecourt on the west, entrance side of the house, partly enclosed by mature rhododendrons, with a circular carriage sweep enclosing formal box-edged rose beds. A spur leads north off the north drive 75m south of the main entrance, returning sharply northwards to a two-storey gateway at the entrance to the stable yard which stands adjacent to the south-west of North Lodge.

A further vehicular gateway, in similar style to the main gateway next to North Lodge, stands 10m south-east of the main gateway, giving access to a service drive which leads southwards through the woodland to the service court and service entrance to the main house, which occupy its north-east corner. Formerly (OS 1920) an icehouse lay north of the house, between the main drive and the service drive; this area is now (2003) occupied by an outdoor swimming pool (1970s).

The south drive enters the park c 650m south-east of the house, at the south-east tip of the park, giving access from Sunningdale via Station Road. This approach is marked by an entrance and lodge adjacent to the lane, which form a less imposing entrance than the group at North Lodge, although the subsequent approach to the house is much longer and more circuitous. Wooden gates are supported by low, rendered piers, these in turn flanked by low brick walls with stone copings and wooden fencing above. South Lodge (c late C19), which stands in its own garden, adjacent to the north of the entrance, is a two-storey building of brick in vernacular style, with late C20 extensions. From South Lodge the south drive extends south-west flanked by mature conifers underplanted with rhododendrons. Some 200m south-west of the Lodge the drive turns north-west, from here flanked by rhododendrons interspersed with mature deciduous trees, running through the park on elevated land overlooking the parkland falling away to the north and east, with views of the countryside beyond. On the east side of the drive, c 250m south-west of the house, stands the 1970s College restaurant, set into the hillside overlooking the pleasure grounds, house, and park below, and at this point the drive turns north-east. The drive turns east 100m west of the house, to enter the forecourt on the south-west side. Some 200m west of South Lodge a service drive leads north past the home farm buildings, including Farm Cottage, standing 350m south-east of the house at the top of a north-facing hillside overlooking the park to the north. From here a further service spur leads east to emerge back on Station Road 100m from the farm. The drive continues north from the farm down a gentle slope to give access to the kitchen garden and Bothy to the west, situated 150m south-east of the house, before emerging on Silwood Road 200m south-east of the house.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Northcote House (W E Lord c 1931, listed grade II, formerly known as Sunningdale Park) stands close to the north tip of the site. Built in Classical style by Rowland Paul of Cheltenham, it is of painted render, and stands on a plateau above the parkland and pleasure grounds which largely slope down to the east and south. The main entrance at the centre of a portico on the west front overlooks the forecourt. The garden fronts are to the south and east overlooking formal terraces, and below these, informal pleasure grounds, and beyond these, parkland. Views extend from the house eastwards towards Coworth Park, and to the hillside behind, beyond which lies Windsor Great Park (qv).

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The former coach house and stable yard stands 125m north of the house. Situated adjacent to Larch Avenue, it is of two storeys and built of red brick, with the main ornamental entrance front to the south. It encloses a yard, the entrance to which is to the south off the north drive, marked by a two-storey gatehouse, dated 1891. The ground floor of the gatehouse is given over to a large archway, surmounted by a first-floor room with decorative window treatments, this in turn surmounted by a cupola housing a clock set into the roof.

The present house occupies the site of the previous house, built in 1830 by a Mr Stewart and altered by a Mr Mackenzie in the 1880s, which in turn superseded the first house which occupied the site of the present stables (Glass 1984).

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The gardens and pleasure grounds are divided into two main sections: an informal lawn leading south-east down from the east front of the house, and informal pleasure grounds below the house to the south centred on a series of three ponds, this area embellished with a significant amount of Pulhamite rock work (JHCG 1899).

The house is surrounded to the south and east by a formal cream-painted stucco terrace into the walls of which the basement windows of the house are set, its upper level flagged. This terrace is reached via the forecourt to the west, at the south-west corner of the house, and also via doorways in the south and east fronts. From the centre of the east arm of the terrace a flight of steps flanked by stucco walls leads down, dividing into two to north and south, to a second, informal grass terrace which gives onto a broad lawn sloping away to the south-east. This lawn is flanked to north and south by mature trees, predominantly conifers, which are underplanted with mature evergreen shrubs, including many rhododendrons. A serpentine path curves around the north side of the lawn, leading south-east to the south-east tip of the lawn, which is terminated by a wooden summerhouse (late C19) with a balcony facing north-west back up the lawn. This summerhouse appears on the 1920 OS map. The lawn is graded to slope at several different gradients, at one point levelled to form a sports lawn overlooking the summerhouse. Formerly a summerhouse or similar building, now (2003) apparently gone, stood at the north tip of the lawn (OS 1920).

From the west end of the south arm of the upper, formal, terrace a path leads south via an extensive Pulhamite rock outcrop down to the second, informal, terrace. The Pulhamite outcrop, which links the south side of the forecourt with the lower terrace, contains several mature woody plants including a Japanese maple. At the centre, overlooking the lower terrace and pleasure ground and the parkland beyond to the south, is a rustic alcove, entered from the terrace lawn via a Pulhamite rock arch. From here a path runs along the lawn to the east lawn.

A further flight of stone steps from the Pulhamite outcrop at the west end of the south terraces leads south to the series of ponds which runs from west to east below the south terraces. These ponds are set in undulating lawns planted with scattered mature trees and shrubs. In particular a line of mature Wellingtonias runs from west to east along the south boundary of the lawns. The uppermost of the series of three ponds lies 50m south-west of the house, set into the steep hillside. This pond empties into a second, smaller pond to the south-east, from which it is separated by a dam which carries a path. The second pond in turn leads into the third, largest pond, from which it is separated by a further earth dam, and which runs east across the valley for c 100m surrounded by informal lawns. All three ponds are embellished to varying degrees with Pulhamite edging and rockwork. At the west end of the lowest pond a boathouse is set into the banked dam between this and the middle pond. The boathouse is entered from the water via a rustic, Pulhamite-faced arch and reached from the bank via a set of steps leading down from the path which runs across the top of the bank. The entrance to the boathouse is flanked by further Pulhamite rockwork as outcrops on the dam. These lower two ponds are divided from the terraces above to the north, on which the house sits, by a steep bank planted with shrubs. The steps from the north, at the west end of the terraces, lead down to join a path which encircles the lower two ponds, and from which a spur leads north-west then north-east around the uppermost pond back up to join the south drive as it reaches the forecourt. From the east end of the largest pond a path leads back up to the lower terrace at the south-east corner of the house; a further path leads east through a shrubbery to the kitchen garden, its west end being enclosed by a hooped iron pergola. The ponds and surrounding lawns are separated from the east lawn by a large clump of mature deciduous and coniferous trees which extends south-east from the terraces to the kitchen garden. This clump also masks the kitchen garden from the view south-east from the house and terraces.

**PARK** The parkland lies to the south and east of the house and is laid to pasture, divided into several large paddocks, and is largely enclosed by belts of mature, mixed coniferous and deciduous woodland. The park is planted with many scattered trees

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as singles and clumps, with a block of woodland occupying high ground at the south-east corner beyond the farm. The park occupies undulating ground, but generally rises up to the west and south of the southern pleasure grounds, its highest open areas overlooking the house and pleasure grounds and enjoying extensive views east and north-east towards Coworth Park and the hillside beyond. The area of former parkland beyond the west boundary (outside the area here registered) which is largely occupied by College buildings still (2003) contains many mature trees liberally scattered, and the former boundary belt remains in good condition alongside Larch Avenue. The area to the south-west lost to C20 housing is in general not visible in views from the remaining parkland, occupying land which slopes away from the high ground along which the south drive runs.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The irregular pentagonal, brick-walled kitchen garden (C19) stands 150m south-east of the house. The c 1ha garden has a vehicular gateway at its north-east corner, giving access from the service drive which bisects the park from north to south, and a pedestrian gateway at its north-west corner. A lean-to glasshouse is attached to the inner side of the north wall, with a group of free-standing glasshouses and cold frames to the south, all in dilapidated condition (2003). Several late C19 buildings stand to the north of the walled area, including an octagonal game larder and the rectangular, single-storey, brick-built Bothy Cottage. The game larder has a red-brick core, with a roof which sweeps down to form a verandah around the core, supported by wooden posts, the whole topped by an ornamental ventilator.

It appears (OS 1920) that a further area of kitchen garden and orchard lay 50m north-east of the walled garden. This long, narrow, rectangular area is still largely open, and is not generally bounded by walls, but part of its north-east boundary is formed by a range of C19 estate cottages.

#### REFERENCES

Journal of Horticulture and Cottage Gardener 39 (3rd series), (6 July 1899), pp 9-11 A Glass (ed), PSA Historic Buildings Register: historic buildings in the care of Property Services Agency of the Department of the Environment: vol III Southern England (1984), p 26 D L Bird, The Civil Service College 1970-1995 (1995)

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 3rd edition surveyed 1909-10, published 1920

Description written: February 2003 Register Inspector: SR Edited: June 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.