

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

BUXTED PARK

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Name: BUXTED PARK

County: East Sussex

District: Wealden (District Authority)

Parish: Buxted

County: East Sussex

District: Wealden (District Authority)

Parish: Uckfield

label.localisation: Latitude: 50.986900
Longitude: 0.10660329
National Grid Reference: TQ4795522945
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II*
List Entry Number: 1000308
Date first listed: 25-Mar-1987

Details

An C18 park containing significant C17 features and with early and mid C19 formal and woodland gardens which were further developed in the mid C20.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

A manor house and park were recorded at Buxted in 1299. By the C16 they had become the property of the Walley family. In 1651 the manor house, together with parkland and an estate, were purchased by Stephen Penkhurst. These passed to Humphrey Fowle and then in two sale transactions, in 1712 and 1722, to Thomas Medley who probably began the construction of the present house. In 1796, on the death of George Medley, Thomas' last grandson, Buxted passed by marriage to the Shuckburgh-Evelyn family although it was not until 1828 that Sir George Shuckburgh-Evelyn's son-in-law (who became the third Lord Liverpool in 1823) made Buxted his principal home. In the 1880s Buxted passed again by marriage to the second Viscount Portman, in whose family it remained until sold by Claude Berkley Portman, in 1931, to the architect and art collector Mr Basil Ionides and his wife. In 1963 the estate was bought by the Shipmans who opened the house as a health hydro in 1966. His Highness Sheik Zayed owned Buxted as his official UK residence from 1971 until 1987 when it was purchased by the Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union and run as a conference centre. In the mid 1990s the estate was purchased by a property company who established the present (1998) Buxted Park Country House Hotel.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Buxted Park lies south of the A272, between the settlements of Buxted to the east and Uckfield to the immediate south-west. The site, comprising c 168ha of gardens, parkland and woodland, is bounded to the north by the A272, although separated from it in the north-west corner by the buildings and pasture land of

Vulcan Farm. North of the road there is a landscape of rolling, wooded farmland. To the east and south-east the site merges into farmland crossed by the main London to Uckfield railway line (which borders the site for 100m at its most easterly point but is hidden from view by woodland). To the south-west, the boundary is formed by the residential edge of Uckfield. The A26 runs parallel to the west side of the site but, except in the north-west corner, is separated from the road by a 100m wide strip of pasture. The landform consists of two valleys separated by a central ridge. The eastern valley, oriented north-east to south-west, contains the River Uck with Culver Wood lying on its eastern slopes. The western slope of this valley rises to form the central north/south ridge. The west side of the ridge drops quite steeply to the second stream valley, oriented north/south. Views Wood covers the gentler western slopes of this valley.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The present main entrance to the park is midway along its northern boundary at Hogge Lodge. The drive runs south-westwards past the east front of the Lodge and between brick gate piers. Hogg Lodge, a brick building with classical-style features applied to its east front, was built by Basil Ionides in the mid C20. Immediately to the south beyond the Lodge, Buxted Cricket Club field lies to the east of the drive while on the west side are remnants of C19 avenue trees (shown on the OS 1st edition map surveyed 1874, but not earlier maps) and a line of limes planted in the late C20. South of the cricket field, the drive passes St Margaret's church (listed grade II) and churchyard, skirts the gardens lying north-east of the house and arrives at the north-west, entrance front of the house. The line of the present drive follows the route of the main street of the former village of Buxted, of which three plots still existed in the late 1790s (Blandford 1991).

A second approach enters the park in the north-west corner. Passing a lodge on its north-east side, the drive follows a straight course south-eastwards through the north end of Views Wood and meets the main drive at the north-west front of the house. This route, still surfaced as a drive but now a public footpath, was planted as a double avenue of 'Scotch firs' (pines) in 1777 by John Curd (*A Short History of Buxted Park*). The avenue, which was a main approach in the C19, no longer exists; it is mentioned as being no longer complete in 1879 (*J Horticulture*) but some trees remained until the 1987 storm.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Buxted Park (listed grade II*) lies centrally in the park, on the crest of the ridge separating the two valleys and with extensive views over and beyond the park landscape. The present house, which replaced a former manor house on a site to the south-east, was begun by Thomas Medley in 1726 and was probably complete by the mid C18. The principal entrance on the north-west front, through a balustraded courtyard embellished with terms and a fountain (listed grade II*), was an alteration and addition made by Basil Ionides in the 1940s. The original entrance was on the north-east front. Ionides also rebuilt the house to its present two storeys (from its original three) following a fire in 1940. The arcaded portico on the south-west front, the demolition of the south-east office wing and the conversion of the library to a conservatory on the south-east side of the remaining wing, were the work of the third Lord Liverpool in the early C18 (CL 1934). The extension to the north-west of the house dates from the mid 1960s.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens lie to the north-east and south-east of the house. On the north-east side they extend to the stone-built south wall of the churchyard and are contained by walls on their north-west and south-east sides. The portico on the north-east front of the house opens onto a broad lawn, framed by belts of shrubbery and a few mature trees and extending 200m north-eastwards to a brick-walled ha-ha which separates the garden from the park. The breadth of the lawn reflects the line of a former double avenue, focused on the house, which continued north-eastwards into the park. On the north-west side of the lawn are further informal lawns and shrubberies with mid C20 re-planting and a few mature trees. The garden is enclosed from the drive on its north-west boundary by a brick-walled ha-ha. The present general shape and limits of the gardens are shown on William Figg's map of c 1790; the shrubberies were well developed in 1879 (*J Horticulture*) and were still significant as a mature feature in 1934 (CL).

The gardens are contained along their south-east side by a brick retaining wall surmounted by piers and a wire-mesh fence. A wide, gravelled walk, flanked on either side by shrub borders with trees, runs parallel to the wall. The walk terminates at its north-east end (c 600m from the house) in a small rectangular rose garden, laid out with formal beds and enclosed on its north-east and south-west sides by a row of pleached limes. The walk extends south-westwards, passing below the south-east front of the house which is reached by three rising flights of stone steps. These give onto a gravelled terrace enclosed by balustrading from which there is a focused vista eastwards to the lakes in the park. The terrace level extends around to the south-west front

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BUXTED PARK

where it forms a large square lawn, enclosed on the north-west side by the conservatory. In the C19 the lawn contained a central fountain and flower beds (J Horticulture). The line of the walk (known as Queen Mary's Walk since the Ionides' ownership), rose garden and the terraces around the house were established in the mid C19, probably around the early 1850s (Blandford 1991) and are marked on the OS 1st edition map surveyed 1874. The formal gardens were extensively decorated with statuary in the 1930s and 1940s by the Ionides and remained so until the majority of it was sold in the early 1990s.

South-westwards, below the lawn and on the axis of the south-west front of the house, flights of stone steps lead down to a further, crescent-shaped grass terrace with grass walks radiating from it to the south and south-west and a central, crescent-shaped swimming pool. The Ionides laid out this garden on former parkland in the 1930s, focusing the walks on statuary and an axial vista to the park. The pool was added in the mid 1960s. Informal, open glades and trees of mixed ages extend for c 180m south from the pool garden, part remnants of the orchard and tennis court (the latter redeveloped as garden in the 1960s but derelict in 1997) laid out by the Ionides in the 1930s. Paving and two pergolas (in poor condition in 1997) were added at the far south-east end in the mid 1960s. East of the pool garden, and extending for 170m from the C20 summerhouse terminating the south-east end of Queen Mary's Walk, is the Woodland Garden. It contains a number of informally planted mature trees although it was badly damaged in the 1987 storm. The Garden was laid out in the mid to late C19, at the same period as the terraces and the Walk, and contained a network of paths winding through ornamental shrubberies. The rustic reposoir of early C19 origin (CL 1934) no longer exists.

PARK The house and gardens are surrounded by the park on all sides. North-west of the house a scatter of mature trees occurs in the open parkland near the house and along the boundaries of fields beyond. Close to the house on its west side, the trees are more dense and include ornamental species planted in the mid C20. Further westwards, the slopes of the ridge down to the stream valley have a covering of dense scrub with clearings and a few mature trees. The OS edition of 1932 shows these slopes still as the open parkland of the late C18 (Figg map c 1790); the scrub encroachment is likely to have occurred in the late C20. North-east of the house, only a few parkland trees survive from the pattern shown on the OS 1st edition. The park was enlarged to its present extent between c 1790 and 1805(6 (Figg map; OS drawings), absorbing the fields east of the River Uck and in the north-west corner. The major feature of the north-east part of the park is the lime avenue, which runs c 640m south-westwards from the park boundary to a point c 40m south-east of the house. It was severely damaged in the 1987 storm (only forty-two of the 120 recorded trees still stood in 1991). The avenue is shown on Figg's map of c 1790 but the best present field evidence and ring-counts appear to indicate a late C17 planting date and therefore suggest that it may have formed the approach to the former manor house, demolished in the early C18 (Blandford 1991). Immediately north-east of the house and garden are remnants of the double avenue which ran from the house to the park boundary. It is shown on Figg's map of c 1790 but seems to have been extensively replanted in the late C19 and again in the C20 (ibid).

South-east of the house, the Uck valley contains a series of informal, shrub-planted lakes, connected by timber bridges. The chain of Lower Lakes was constructed by Basil Ionides in the mid C20 as a focus for vistas from the house. The Upper Lake, at the south-east end of the lime avenue, was excavated in the early 1970s.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden lies c 200m to the south-east of the house, on a slight platform above natural ground level. The brick walls form a rectangle c 120m x 90m, with two main entrances on the west and east sides and two side entrances. A section of the southern wall is missing and the cottage and outbuildings on the south side are used for storage and by a fishing club. The garden area is covered by rough grass. Figg's map of c 1790 shows the walled rectangle and the similarity of the bricks suggests that the garden may be contemporary with the present house.

REFERENCES

Country Life, 75 (21 April 1934), pp 404-9; (28 April 1934), pp 432-7; 108 (4 August 1950), pp 374-8; (11 August 1950), pp 442-7; (18 August 1950), pp 518-22 I Nairn and N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Sussex* (1965), pp 466-7 M Hadfield, *A History of British Gardening* (1979), p 144, pl IV *A Short History of Buxted Park*, (Sussex Archaeological Society 1982) *Garden History* 17, no 2 (1989), pp 170-1 *Buxted Park Restoration*, vols 1 and 2, (Chris Blandford Associates 1991)

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BUXTED PARK

Maps William Figg, Map of Buxted Place, c 1790 (A517919), (East Sussex Record Office) W Faden, Sussex, 1795 (East Sussex Record Office) William Figg, Map of Buxted Place, 1812 (BMW/C8/2), (East Sussex Record Office) Tithe map of Buxted, 1841 (East Sussex Record Office)

OS surveyor's drawings, 1805(6 (British Library maps) [copies at ESRO] OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1874 2nd edition published 1899 3rd edition published 1911 4th edition published 1932 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1874 2nd edition published 1899 3rd edition published 1911 4th edition published 1931

Description written: July 1998 Register Inspector: VCH Edited: February 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.