

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

DONNINGTON GROVE

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

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**DONNINGTON GROVE**

Name: DONNINGTON GROVE

District: West Berkshire (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Shaw cum Donnington

District: West Berkshire (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Speen

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.417024  
Longitude: -1.3417295  
National Grid Reference: SU 45873 68873  
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden  
Grade: II  
List Entry Number: 1000534  
Date first listed: 30-Nov-1986

## Details

Mid C18 Strawberry Hill Gothick country house by John Chute surrounded by mid to late C18 pleasure grounds and landscape park.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Donnington Castle was built within Shaw Manor in the C14, its defensive earthworks being extended during the Civil War, when the Castle lay, during a destructive twenty-month siege, at the centre of the second Battle of Newbury (1644). In 1751 Joseph Andrews (d 1753) bought Shaw Manor estate from the widow of the Duke of Chandos, who had acquired it thirty years before from the Dolman family. Andrews was succeeded at Shaw by his elder son, Joseph Pettit Andrews, FSA, who in 1766 received a baronetcy. In the 1763 Joseph II employed John Chute, one of Horace Walpole's Committee of Taste in the genesis of Strawberry Hill (qv), to design Donnington Grove on part of the Shaw lands below the ruined Castle. Before this (Rocque, 1761) the land was agricultural, with the River Lambourn running through the centre, together with an adjacent lane.

In 1783 the estate was sold to William Brummell (d 1794), father of 'Beau' Brummell and former private secretary to Lord North, who extended the estate to 400ha, including expanding the parkland. Following Brummell's death the estate was sold into the Best family, in whose hands it remained until the early C20, subsequently passing through several different owners. The house is now (1998) a hotel, with a golf course covering much of the park, with consequent remodelling of the parkland levels to accommodate golfing requirements.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Donnington Grove lies 2km north-west of the centre of Newbury, close to the villages of Donnington to the east, Bagnor to the north-west and Speen to the south. The 70ha site is bounded by agricultural land and woodland to the north and west, with the west and south boundaries marked by roads. Formerly the west boundary was marked by the lane to Bagnor, but since 1997 it has been defined by the A34 Newbury by-pass. The ground slopes generally south and south-west from the high point of Donnington Castle on the north-east boundary,

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to the course of the River Lambourn which cuts through the middle of the park north-west to south-east, rising gently beyond this through parkland to the south and south-east. The setting is largely rural, with Donnington village at the east boundary and the C20 suburban houses of Speen adjacent to the south.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The main entrance lies at the south-east corner of the park, 700m south-east of the house, adjacent to Grove Road, the Donnington to Speen lane. Brick gate piers, with stone finials, support iron gates flanking the entrance, with a two-storey, whitewashed brick lodge standing adjacent to the east. From here the south, Newbury drive curves north-west through open parkland, now laid out as a golf course, with glimpses of the house to the north-west. The drive continues down to a three-arched bridge (probably early C20 on site of earlier structure, listed grade II) crossing the east end of the lake formed from the widened River Lambourn. The bridge, standing 400m south-east of the house, carries the drive across the lake, which it overlooks to the west, together with the house beyond it to the north-west. To the east it overlooks the small, brick and flint gothic Fishing Temple (C18, listed grade II) standing close by on the north bank of the river. The drive then curves north-west towards the house, flanked by trees, passing along the north side of an open lawn (formerly a paddock, Sale particulars, 1980s) stretching down to the north bank of the lake. To the north it passes the brick Pink Lodge, walled garden, and stables, arriving at a carriage sweep adjacent to the south front of the house and the main entrance. A projecting porch tower on the south front contains a first-floor oriel window above a broken colonnade giving access to the entrance hall, overlooking the lawn and lake to the south.

A second drive, the east, Donnington Village drive, enters the park 500m south-east of the house, giving direct access from the village, the entrance marked by White Lodge, a two-storey, whitewashed brick lodge. From here the drive extends west through the park, flanked by remaining specimens of avenue trees, joining the Newbury drive 350m south-east of the house, close to Pink Lodge.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Donnington Grove (John Chute 1760s-70s, 1780s, listed grade II\*) stands towards the centre of the site within the north park, flanked by pleasure grounds. The three-storey, grey brick house was built in Strawberry Hill Gothick style by John Chute of The Vyne in Hampshire (qv), one of Horace Walpole's close friends during the creation of Strawberry Hill, Middlesex. It is an outstanding example of Gothick Revival architecture.

The stable block (late C18, listed grade II) stands 150m east of the house, on the north side of the Newbury drive. Built of brick on L-plan in Gothick style, it has a central archway through which the Castle is dominant on the skyline.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The house is flanked to the north-west and east by two belts of wooded pleasure grounds underplanted with shrubs, and mature yews. That to the north-west formerly contained a path running through it (OS 1883), along the north bank of the Winterbourne Stream. From the house a path runs south-west to a wooden bridge across the north end of the lake, onto a peninsula on which stands a small, flint, Gothick-style pavilion. A further bridge carries the path across the adjacent river to Dairy Farm and the south park beyond. The eastern section of the pleasure grounds retains a path running through it leading to the stables, passing 35m east of the house a small, brick garden house or orangery (late C18, listed grade II) set into the southern edge of the woodland. The south-facing building, with a central door flanked by two large sash windows, overlooks a lawn running down to the Newbury drive, and beyond this the former paddock, now a lawn, extending down to the lake.

**PARK** The park is divided into two sections, the north and south parks, divided from north-west to south-east by the River Lambourn and the Winterbourne Stream which enter at the north-west corner, 300m from the house, both running south-east until they meet 100m north-west of the house. From here they continue south-east as the Lambourn, feeding the lake to the north and running adjacent to its southern shore. The bank between the south shore of the lake and the river is planted with mature trees and shrubs, screening the views south beyond the lake from the paddock, and north from the south park. The lake narrows at its east end, rejoining the river close to the east boundary, 500m south-east of the house.

The south park occupies a north- and north-east-facing hillside, overlooking the house and Castle to the north, still much as depicted in a late C18 print of the park (Faden, 1791), except that the view of the lake and bridge is now (1998) obscured by trees, and golfers and their buggies occupy the landscape rather than cows and sheep and their minders. The ground has been remodelled to accommodate greens and fairways, but many park trees survive, together with a belt of mature limes along the

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southern boundary. The western edge has been destroyed by the A34 Newbury by-pass, close to Dairy Farm which lies at the north end of the lake, 200m south-west of the house. A trout farm lies in the north-east corner of the south park, north of Dairy Farm. A footpath runs through the south park, roughly parallel with the lake and river, possibly related to the former lane shown on Rocque's map of 1761 depicting the river before the creation of the lake and park.

The north park rises steeply behind the house to Castle Wood and the Castle ruins themselves, lying on the north boundary. The Castle (1386, listed grade I; scheduled ancient monument) is situated on the north boundary within its own defensive earthworks (enlarged during the 1640s), overlooking the park to the south and south-west, and with views beyond this to the surrounding hilly countryside. It consists of a ruined courtyard with the remains of six towers, dominated at the east end by a three-storey flint gatehouse with two circular towers, possibly by Henry Yevele. Castle Wood lies adjacent to the west of the Castle, containing paths running through it leading from the north park to the Castle. The west half of the north park is now covered by the golf course, with the house lying on the south boundary, whilst the east end, east of the stables, is arranged as paddocks.

In December 1772 Donnington Grove was depicted and described in *The Gentleman's Magazine*: This House is built in the Gothick style, and the grounds about it are ornamented with much taste. The situation is on a rising ground, backed by a hill crowned with wood, out of which rises Donnington Castle. A lawn spreads around the house, and falls to very fine water; a stream enlarged into a river, which takes a winding, easy course, near a mile long, and of a considerable breadth; there are three or four islands in it, one of which is thickly planted, and affords shelter to many swans and wild fowll, which frequent the water, at the same time that they add to the beauty of the place. Over the river the country consists of corn-fields, which rise agreeably [the site of the present south park]. The lawn is very neat, the trees and clumps well managed, and the wood, in which the water terminates at each end, finishes the scene in a pleasing manner. There is a winding gravel walk through both groves on the banks of the river, which opens to several retired and pleasing scenes; at one spot is a pretty rustic Gothick temple, built of flint, near a cascade, which the river forms by falling over a natural ridge of stone. The whole place is laid out with great taste.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The 0.5ha brick-walled kitchen garden, of roughly triangular shape, lies 150m south-east of the house. Entered through iron gates, flanked by brick gate piers set into the south wall, which frame a view of the Castle to the north, it is divided in half north to south by a double herbaceous border flanking a grass path. The eastern half contains a late C20 Japanese garden, with a pond dominated by a small, grassed, mock mountain, overlooked by a Japanese temple. The western half contains orchard trees set in lawn surrounded by borders, with two lean-to glasshouses, the Peach House and Vinery, containing brick beds, standing against the north wall. At the west end lies a yew maze. A further narrow, walled compartment runs along the outer side of the north wall, containing bothies standing against the north side of the glasshouse wall.

#### REFERENCES

*The Gentleman's Magazine*, (December 1772) *The Victoria History of the County of Berkshire* 4, (1924), p 88 *Country Life*, 124 (18 September 1958), pp 588-91; (25 September 1958), pp 654-7; (2 October 1958), pp 714-17 N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Berkshire* (1966), pp 128-9 Supplementary Statement in Support of Development Proposals at Donnington Grove Estate, (GMA, April 1991)

Maps An Accurate Survey of Speen Mannour ... Belonging to ... the Duke of Chandos, (1730s-40s), (Newbury Museum) J Rocque, Map of Berkshire, 1761

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1877-8 2nd edition published 1913 3rd edition published 1938 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1911

Archival items Sale particulars, 1980s (copy on EH file)

Illustrations Faden, print of Donnington Park, 1791 (copy at Reading Local Studies Library)

Description written: September 1998 Register Inspector: SR Edited: March 2000

## Legal

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