

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

THE WAKES

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Name:	THE WAKES
County:	Hampshire
District:	East Hampshire (District Authority)
Parish:	Selborne
National park:	SOUTH DOWNS
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.095469 Longitude: -0.94486657 National Grid Reference: SU 73984 33436 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000871 Date first listed: 31-May-1984

Details

Gardens, parkland, and ornamented woodland designed and laid out around his home between 1751 and the early 1760s by the naturalist and writer, the Rev Gilbert White.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The origin of The Wakes is a C16 hall building, its name coming from the Wakes family who probably occupied it in the C16 and C17 (Scott 1950). Gilbert White's grandfather acquired it at the beginning of the C18, probably as a dower house for his wife. From 1751, while a curate in and around Selborne and the house in the ownership of his father, Gilbert White (1720-93) began to carry out and record his experiments in landscape design and horticulture in the grounds. His brother John cut the Zig-Zag walks up the nearby Hanger in 1752 (Mabey 1986). White inherited The Wakes from his uncle in 1763 and although his interest had by now turned to natural history, he continued a practical interest in the grounds until his death in 1793. He also made a number of additions and alterations to the house. Few changes occurred during the C19, the principal ones being Professor Thomas Bell's addition of a library and conservatory and his extension of the garden westwards to Gracious Street. The last decade of the C19 and the first half of the C20 saw further change with the addition of an upper storey by F W Cuthbert Read, and then from 1903 under the ownership of the Pears family and from 1910 under that of Colonel and Mrs Bibby, the house was extended and enlarged into the present Edwardian mansion. The Bibbys also concentrated much energy on the gardens, laying out topiary, rose and rock gardens on the Gracious Street Gardens, and herbaceous borders on Baker's Hill. In 1953, an appeal was launched to convert The Wakes into a Gilbert White Museum. A response came from Robert Washington Oates who was looking for a home for his antiquarian collection which included artefacts from the life of the explorer Lawrence Oates. The Wakes, commemorating both Gilbert White and the Oates family, opened as a museum in 1955 and is now (2000) run as a charitable trust. In 1995 the trustees began an ongoing restoration of White's landscape design in the grounds and improvements to the house. The Hanger and Selbourne Common have been owned by the National Trust since 1932 which also has a covenant over the grounds of The Wakes.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The Wakes stands in the centre of Selborne village, on the on the west side of the B3006 (High Street), some 5km south of Alton. The 18ha site comprises c 0.5ha of ornamental gardens and 9ha of parkland with the remainder wooded. To the south-west of the house, the gardens and parkland extend some 350m on fairly level ground towards the foot of Selborne Hanger which rises precipitously to form a high wooded scarp. To the south-east of the house, the land rises more gently. The grounds are bounded to the north and north-east sides by village buildings on Gracious Street and the High Street (B3006). To the east and west, hedgerows enclose the parkland from pastureland, with a public footpath forming the western boundary. The site is surrounded by well-wooded farmland and, to the south, the wooded upper slope of the Hanger and Selborne Common.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The public entrance to The Wakes is from the High Street, at the north-west end of the house where a door leads into the shop and ticket office. The main front door, which served the house when in private hands, stands a few metres further south beneath a gabled porch.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING The Wakes (outside the area here registered, listed grade I) comprises an irregular group of buildings representing its various stages of growth and change, the earlier ones traceable from illustrations in White's *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne* (1788/9). The street elevation of the main house is of two storeys and built in largely C19 brickwork with tile hanging to the upper floor and a C20 gabled entrance porch. The roof is tiled and mostly hipped and topped by a range of chimneys. The original timber-framed hall house still forms the central core. North-west of the hall is the Great Parlour, built by Gilbert White in 1777, and beyond is the library added by Bell c 1850. Beyond this is the C20 billiard room (now the shop). South-east of the hall is a dining room added by Gilbert White's brother in 1794 to which is attached a service wing built in local malmstone ashlar with brick dressings. Beyond again to the south-east are a free-standing brewhouse (listed grade II), also in malmstone ashlar and built by White in 1765, and a stable block (listed grade II).

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The grounds are currently (2000) undergoing reconstruction to Gilbert White's designs. This project, begun in 1995, is guided by White's own writings, correspondence, and the illustrations he commissioned from Samuel Hieronymous Grimm in 1776 (reproduced in Commander 1979).

The gardens are entered from the north-west end of the house, from the shop (former billiard room). A flagged path flanked by grass and a shrub border against the house runs south-eastwards across the site of White's former Terrace. On the south-west side of the path, the main lawn extends in a broad rectangle towards the park, its boundary formed by a ha-ha, the original ragstone face of which was faced with flint in the early C20 (Wilkie 1993; ha-ha undergoing restoration in September 2000). Both the ha-ha and the stone sundial standing on the lawn above it were features of White's 'New Gardens'. The first garden he laid out and which he referred to as the 'Little Garden', occupied part of the lawn and the site of the billiard room. The final version of the 'New Gardens' - they underwent several alterations in White's time - was created from 1760 when he purchased additional land (Garden Kalendar, 28 June 1760). At the south corner of the lawn, above the ha-ha, stands a small timber Alcove (reconstructed 1998), orientated to enjoy pivotal views to the oil jar and statue of Hercules which form eyecatchers in the park. The north corner of the lawn contains a laburnum arch erected in 1973 (planned for removal). Part of the north-west boundary of the lawn is lined by the surviving section of White's brick fruit wall (being rebuilt September 2000). Archaeological evidence suggests that the wall, which was a feature of the 'New Gardens', extended to a much greater length. The south-east side of the lawn abuts the foot of Baker's Hill, the lawn edge marked by White's brick-paved walk running towards the Alcove.

South-eastwards, the ground rises up the broad grassy slope of Baker's Hill, the main area of White's design experiments and on which he worked between 1751 and 1760. This north-facing slope, the site of White's orchard, is planted with a collection of fruit trees and underplantings of flowering fruit bushes, shrubs, and bulbs. The summit of the hill is planted with five columnar Italian cypresses in a quincunx pattern centred on a pedestal-mounted oil jar, all restored to White's original design of 1751-2 (Garden Kalendar, 31 July 1752). The quincunx forms a principal feature in the structure of the hill's landscape, which is organised into a series of radiating vistas and walks triangulated on the Alcove, on eyecatchers in the park, and on the quincunx itself. The west- and south-facing slopes are divided radially into a series of fenced and hedged compartments, laid out variously as paddocks, vegetable and cutting gardens, and trial hot beds for melons. These compartments, forming White's 'Field Gardens',

in which he grew vegetables, flowers, cucumbers, and melons, have been undergoing progressive restoration throughout the 1990s. The far south-east slope of the hill is wooded.

North-west of the main lawn are several compartments which together make up the Gracious Street Gardens, laid out on land purchased in the mid C19 by Professor Bell (Wilkie 1993). Nearest to the house are beds representing the 'six quarters' as laid out in White's original 'New Garden'. These, containing plants described in his *Garden Kalendar*, were established in the mid 1990s and replace an Edwardian rose garden. To the north-west, against the boundary wall, is a small herb garden created in 1975 on the site of Bell's glasshouse. South-west of the six quarters, and enclosed by yew hedging on all but the south-east side, is the Pond or Naturalist's Garden, created in the mid 1990s to replace the early to mid C20 layout which contained a rockery. An informal pond, built on the site of a former water tank, forms a central feature with its surroundings planted with native trees and shrubs. The yew hedge along the north-west garden boundary, planted in 1912, survives in its original form as topiary.

PARK The principal area of parkland, the Great Mead, lies immediately to the south; this is laid to pasture and contains occasional scattered trees. To the west-north-west, beyond a hedged boundary, lies the Ewel (outside the area here registered). This land was purchased by Gilbert White but seems to have always remained in agricultural use. White acquired the parkland gradually, although the exact extent of his property is not clear (Wilkie 1993). He began to construct his eyecatchers from the mid 1750s and these have been restored during the 1990s. They consist of an oil jar in the south corner of the Ewel, a conical mount topped by a wine-barrel seat (aligned on the axis of the two oil jars, the second being that on Baker's Hill) and, in the south corner of the Great Mead, a cut-out statue of Hercules. A replacement has also been planted for White's 'Great Oak', around which he constructed a low mount with a seat. The south-east boundary of the parkland is marked by a narrow shaw known as the Piddle.

Immediately beyond the south boundary of the parkland, the land rises precipitously to form the densely wooded Selborne Hanger. Although this was common land in White's period, he and his brother constructed walks up the Hanger and several buildings. The steep Zig-Zag path, cut by White's brother in 1752, and the more gentle Bostal route, cut in 1780 by White himself, survive, as does the 'wishing stone' or obelisk (a sarsen, similar to others in the Piddle) that White placed at the top. The paths climb the Hanger from the Punfle (open land within the registered area south-east of the Piddle) to Selborne Common, although the alignment of their zig-zags is different, the route having been re-engineered in the 1890s (NT area warden pers comm, 2000). The platforms cut for one of the hermitages and an alcove which the White family and friends used for entertaining and enjoying the views (*Garden Kalendar*, 12 September 1758, 28 July 1753; Grimm drawings of the village and Hanger) can still be seen, although the buildings themselves have not survived.

REFERENCES

G White, *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne* (1788/9) W S Scott, *White of Selborne* (1950) *Country Life*, 118 (15 September 1955), p 545; 148 (23 July 1970), p 247 N Pevsner and D Lloyd, *The Buildings of England: Hampshire and the Isle of Wight* (1967), p 496 G White, *Garden Kalendar 1751-1771* (1976) J Commander (ed), *Gilbert White's Year* (1979) *Proc Hants Field Club & Archaeol Soc* 39, (1983), pp 145-69 R Mabey, *Gilbert White* (1986) F Greenoak and R Mabey (eds), *The Journal of Gilbert White* (1986) K Wilkie, *The Wakes, Selborne Landscape Restoration and Management Plan*, (1993) Maps Tithe map for Selborne parish, 1840 (Hampshire Record Office) OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1870 Illustrations S H Grimm, *Drawings of Selbourne village and the Hanger*, 1776 (in Commander 1979) Description written: September 2000 Amended: November 2001 Register Inspector: VCH Edited: March 2004

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.