

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

KINGSTON MAURWARD

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**KINGSTON MAURWARD**

Name:	KINGSTON MAURWARD
District:	Dorset (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Stinsford
label.localisation:	Latitude: 50.723170 Longitude: -2.4036551 National Grid Reference: SY 71603 91583 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000719 Date first listed: 19-Dec-1986

## Details

C18 parkland and lake, together with early C20 formal gardens laid out by Sir Cecil and Lady Hanbury.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In the late C14 the manor of Kingston was acquired by the Grey family through marriage with the Maurward heiress. By the late C16, Christopher Grey had completed a new manor house (Oswald 1959; Pevsner and Newman 1972), but in the early C18 this house was superseded by a new mansion to its west built for George Pitt of Stratfield Saye, Hampshire (qv), who had married the heiress Lora Grey. The design of George Pitt's mansion, which was begun c 1717 and completed by 1720, has been attributed to both Thomas Archer, and John James of Greenwich (Oswald 1959; Pevsner and Newman 1972), and remains uncertain.

When George Pitt, a cousin of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, died in 1734, Kingston Maurward was inherited by his elder son, William. This William Pitt died without an heir in 1774, and the estate passed to his younger brother, John Pitt of Encombe, Dorset (qv), who had, since 1734, laid out an extensive park and pleasure grounds there with the advice of William Pitt, Lord Chatham. Between 1774 and his death in 1787, John Pitt made extensive alterations to both the house and its setting, laying out the park and forming the lake in the valley below the mansion. In 1787, Kingston Maurward was inherited by John Pitt's elder son, William Moreton Pitt, who entertained King George III at the house during the King's visits to Weymouth, and in 1794, apparently at the King's suggestion, cased the early C18 brick mansion in Portland stone. Perhaps as a result of the cost of this, and other improvements, William Moreton Pitt sold his Encombe estate in 1806, but continued to live at Kingston Maurward until his death in 1836, when the estate was inherited by his son, William Grey Pitt. In 1845, William Grey Pitt sold Kingston Maurward to Francis Martin MP, whose wife educated the young Thomas Hardy, who was born at neighbouring Higher Bockhampton, in the house. The house later served as Hardy's model for Knapwater House in his novel *Desperate Remedies* (1871). Francis Martin sold the estate in 1853 to James Fellows, who, with his widow and son, James Herbert Fellows (who took the name Benyon in 1897), owned the property until 1906, when it was sold to Major Kenneth Balfour. He parted with the estate in 1914, when it was purchased by Cecil Hanbury, who had made a considerable fortune in business in Shanghai, and who had inherited the Villa La Mortola on the Italian Riviera. Immediately after the conclusion of the First World War, Hanbury, later Sir Cecil Hanbury, and his wife, began to lay out a series of formal gardens to the west of the mansion. These gardens were substantially complete by 1920 (Mowl 2003). During the 1920s, Sir Cecil and Lady Hanbury entertained leading politicians and also Thomas Hardy, who had built his own house, Max Gate, c 1.25km south-west of Kingston Maurward.

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Sir Cecil Hanbury died in 1937. Lady Hanbury continued to live at Kingston Maurward, despite the requisition of the house and park during the Second World War, when it served as an important base in preparations for the D-Day landings. The troops relinquished the property in 1945, and in 1947 Lady Hanbury sold it to Dorset County Council for use as a Farm Institute; she herself moved to La Mortola to oversee an extensive post-war restoration programme.

The Dorset Farm Institute, later to become an Agricultural and Horticultural College, opened at Kingston Maurward in 1949. The Institute undertook an extensive programme of repairs and consolidation, while from 1990 the gardens and pleasure grounds have been restored along historic lines (guidebook). The greater portion of the site remains (2004) in institutional use, while the C16 manor house is in private ownership.

#### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Kingston Maurward is situated c 2.5km east-north-east of Dorchester and immediately east of the hamlet of Stinsford, to the south and east of the A35 road. The c 96ha site comprises some 4ha of formal gardens and informal pleasure grounds, a c 3ha lake, and c 89ha of parkland. The site is bounded to the west by domestic properties in Stinsford, and to the north-west by a C19 villa, Birkin House. To the north the site adjoins the A35 road, while to the east it adjoins agricultural land. To the south-east the site is bounded by properties in the village of Lower Bockhampton, and to the south the boundary is marked by a series of drainage channels which cross water meadows extending south from the site boundary to the River Frome c 500m south of the house. Towards its southern boundary, the site is crossed from east to west by a ridge of high ground on which stands the mansion, the C16 manor house, and the kitchen garden. The ground drops steeply towards the lake south of the house, while to the north of the house a valley extends through the park. There are extensive southerly views from the high ground within the site across the valley of the River Frome towards plantations associated with Came House c 1.75km south-south-west, while to the north there are views beyond the park towards Grey's Wood c 2km north of the house.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** Kingston Maurward is approached from the west, from a minor road leading east from the A35 road at Stinsford Hill, through the site, towards Bockhampton Cross. The entrance is situated c 300m east-north-east of the junction of this minor road and the A35 road, and is marked by a late C19 two-storey lodge. Beyond the entrance, a tarmac drive extends c 300m south-east through the park before dividing. One branch then sweeps south-south-east and south, ascending to arrive at the west side of the carriage turn below the north facade of the house, while another branch continues south-east through the park for a further c 200m before turning south and ascending to arrive at the north-east corner of the house and former stables. From this point a further drive leads south to reach the western end of an avenue of mature limes which extends c 240m east-south-east to the C16 manor house. From the manor house, a drive leads east, south of the kitchen gardens, to reach an entrance leading to the site from Lower Bockhampton. Immediately east of the manor, a further drive leads north, passing beyond the boundary of the registered site, to join a minor road c 100m west of Bockhampton Cross.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Kingston Maurward House (listed grade I) stands on a ridge of high ground towards the southern boundary of the site. The house is constructed in brick, covered by a late C18 Portland stone case, and comprises three storeys and a basement under roofs concealed behind parapets. The principal or south facade has rusticated quoins, and a slightly projecting central section surmounted by a pediment supported on an enriched entablature, which in turn surmounts four Corinthian pilasters. The north or entrance facade is of similar design, with the addition of an early C20 single-storey porch which conceals the lower sections of the pilasters. The west facade is of plain design, while to the east, a C19 two-storey service range enclosed a courtyard (now infilled).

The mansion was constructed in 1717-20 for George Pitt, probably to the design of John James of Greenwich (Oswald 1959), although it has also been attributed to Thomas Archer (Pevsner and Newman 1972). The house was originally built in brick, but was cased in Portland stone in 1794 for William Moreton Pitt, acting on a suggestion made by King George III. This casing led to a simplification of the early C18 ornamentation and detail (ibid). The house was further remodelled in the early C20 for Sir Cecil and Lady Hanbury.

The C16 manor house (listed grade I), which stands c 300m east of the C18 mansion, is constructed in rough ashlar and comprises two storeys and an attic under slate roofs with parapets and coped gables. The house is formed from an original E-

shaped range with a central full-height porch and projecting end wings, and an early C17 wing projecting to the east. The house is lit by stone mullion windows. Originally constructed by Christopher Grey c 1590, the house was extended in the early C17. It was extensively restored from a state of dereliction by R A Sturdy from c 1960.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The formal gardens are situated to the west of the mansion, while informal pleasure grounds extend to the south and south-east. There are further garden areas associated with the C16 manor house.

A double flight of stone steps descends from the garden door in the centre of the south facade of the house to reach a broad gravel terrace, from which a shallow flight of stone steps (listed grade II) aligned with the centre of the south facade descends to a sloping lawn which drops away to the lake. The gravel terrace is terminated to the east by a clipped yew hedge, while to the west it extends c 80m to reach an early C20 flight of stone steps flanked by balustrades and a pair of stone piers surmounted by vase finials (listed grade II) which ascends to a further terrace walk. This second gravel walk, the Terrace Garden, extends c 50m westwards between panels of lawn and rectangular planting beds. It is enclosed to the north and south by clipped yew hedges, while to the west it is terminated by a pair of C18 stone piers surmounted by vase finials (listed grade II). These piers frame the entrance to the Brick Garden, a circular yew-hedged enclosure with brick-paved walks surrounding a central box-edged circular bed. Stone statues of Henry III, Richard III, Charles II, and Queen Anne, removed from the Palace of Westminster in 1840 (guidebook), stand in niches set between further box-edged quadrant beds. The Brick Garden marks the intersection of the principal north/south and east/west axes of the formal gardens, and a yew arbour on its west side affords a vista eastwards along the terraces towards the mansion. To the north of the Brick Garden a flight of steps flanked by topiary cylinders of clipped yew and borders planted with Mediterranean subjects ascends to the Red Garden and the Penstemon Terrace which form the northern boundary of the gardens, while to the south a sloping gravel walk descends between double herbaceous borders backed by yew hedges to reach a further walk which forms the southern boundary of the formal gardens.

At the eastern end of the Terrace Garden, a flight of stone steps flanked by low balustrades and piers surmounted by ball finials ascend north to the Rose Garden, a level rectangular terrace enclosed to the east by a stone balustrade and to the west by clipped yew hedges; to the north, the garden is terminated by a stone bench seat set against a further yew hedge. The garden is laid out with four large planting beds set in lawns. From the Rose Garden a flight of rubble-stone steps ascends westwards to reach a terrace walk, the Penstemon Terrace, which extends along the north side of the Croquet Lawn. The lawn is enclosed to the east, south, and west by yew hedges which are ornamented with topiary, while to the north the raised terrace walk is retained by a planted rubble-stone wall. Quadrant steps descend to the north-west corner of the lawn from the terrace walk, while a break at the central point of the north wall, framed by a pair of topiary birds, leads to a sloping box-edged grass walk which ascends to the Temple of the Four Winds, a late C20 recreation of an early C20 stone and wrought-iron tempietto which formerly stood on this spot, and which was removed to La Mortola, Italy, by Lady Hanbury in 1938. The Temple, which stands on an artificial mound of C18 origin (guidebook; OS 1890), affords southerly views across the Croquet Lawn, and through an opening in the hedge on its southern side, to the formal gardens south of the Terrace Garden. The Temple also terminates the easterly vista through the Red Garden which lies immediately west of the mound. The Red Garden is enclosed by clipped beech hedges and has a central stone-edged lily pool set in panels of lawn. To the west, the pool is terminated by a tile-roofed summerhouse planted with wisteria, while to the north, a semicircular bastion allows a view across the park through an avenue of copper beeches planted by Sir Cecil Hanbury in 1935 to mark the Silver Jubilee of King George V (guidebook).

To the south of the Terrace Garden, the Crown Garden comprises a square yew-hedged enclosure, within which there is a further circular yew-hedged enclosure, forming a series of enclosed gardens planted with different subjects. The central garden, originally laid out as a rose garden, is now planted with mixed shrubs and herbaceous subjects. The enclosing hedges are clipped to represent a crown or coronet, while a diamond-shaped opening in the northern hedge allows a vista through the Terrace Garden and across the Croquet Lawn to the Temple. The focal point of the garden is a stone well-head with a wrought-iron overthrow. Wrought-iron gates to the south of the circular garden lead to a gravel terrace walk which forms the southern boundary of the formal gardens, while a gate in the east side of the garden leads to the Spring Garden, an area of informal planting beneath mature trees which includes early C20 beds formed for cultivating ericaceous shrubs (ibid).

Immediately west of the mansion a shallow flight of stone steps flanked by low parapets and piers surmounted by ball and vase finials (listed grade II) ascends to the Balustrade Garden, a rectangular area enclosed by stone walls and balustrades which is laid out with a central rectangular pool surrounded by stone-flagged walks and perimeter borders.

The formal gardens were laid out by Sir Cecil and Lady Hanbury in 1918-20, perhaps to their own design and with the inspiration of their gardens at La Mortola. The OS map of 1890 indicates that the terrace below the south facade of the house, and the steps descending to the south lawn, pre-date the Hanburys' scheme, while areas of informal pleasure ground extended north-west from the house to the mound now surmounted by the Temple, and south-west from the house forming a walk to Stinsford church.

To the south of the house a lawn drops away to the lake. To the west the lawn is enclosed by the Spring Garden and mature specimen trees and shrubs. A flight of stone steps flanked by low balustrades and piers descends on the west side of the lawn to reach a straight gravel walk which leads west-south-west towards the parish church. The steps form part of the early C20 garden scheme and are not shown on the OS map of 1890, while the walk survives from the C19 pleasure grounds. The slope above the walk is planted with low clipped laurels forming a laurel lawn, while to the south it is bordered by a low box hedge. Below the walk, a leat forming part of the system of waterworks for filling and controlling the lake flows through an area of shrubbery and mature trees. This leat is culverted under the south lawn and re-emerges in the early C20 Japanese Garden c 50m south-east of the house. This garden is enclosed by hedges and shrubbery, and is laid out with sinuous gravel paths, Chusan palms and Japanese maples, and a variety of Japanese stone artefacts. The shrubbery to the north-west of the garden encloses the east side of the south lawn.

A grass walk leads eastwards along the north-east bank of the lake to reach a late C18 pavilion (listed grade II) c 130m south-east of the house. The pavilion is constructed in brick with an ashlar portico facing the lake. A pediment is supported by two Tuscan columns, and is flanked by curved ashlar wing walls which are terminated by stone piers. A round-headed niche is set in each wing wall. Steps ascend to the portico, in the rear wall of which is set a pair of panelled timber doors. An apsidal-ended stone-edged pool with a central plinth (vacant, 2004) is set on the level lawn between the pavilion and the lake, while steps descend to the water. The pavilion was constructed in the late C18 by John Pitt (d 1787), perhaps to his own design, and in style recalls the portico of his dairy at Encombe, Dorset (qv). From the pavilion the grass walk continues through a late C20 oak avenue which replaces the early C20 Armistice Walk, to return round the eastern end of the lake and thence along its southern bank through an area of trees and shrubbery.

The south lawn, lake, pavilion, and the walks south-west of the house were formed in the late C18 by John Pitt as part of his scheme of improvements implemented after inheriting Kingston Maurward in 1774 (Oswald 1959; Mowl 2003). These features are recorded on the late C19 OS map (1890), and were subsequently enhanced by Sir Cecil and Lady Hanbury in the early C20 through the construction of the steps to the west of the south lawn and the introduction of new planting which was perhaps intended to give an Italian character to the pleasure grounds (Mowl 2003).

The gardens associated with the C16 manor house are situated to the west and south of the building, and are enclosed to the south by rubble-stone walls (listed grade II). A terrace retained by ashlar walls and approached by a flight of stone steps (listed grade II) extends below the west facade of the house. Probably late C16 or early C17 in construction, this terrace, which lacks its original balustrade, is likely to be contemporary with the construction of the house (Oswald 1959). There are further walled garden enclosures to the east of the house, which became the kitchen gardens for the C18 mansion.

**PARK** The park is situated to the north of the C18 mansion, and today (2004) is in mixed agricultural use, with areas of arable cultivation to the north of a minor road which crosses the site from east to west c 500m north of the house. The ground drops steeply immediately north of the house and carriage turn, before levelling off and gradually rising through a shallow valley towards the northern boundary. The north-facing slope below the house is framed by mature cedars and planes. The ground rises beyond the northern boundary of the park towards Grey's Wood, a mixed plantation which terminates the vista c 1.3km from the house. A narrow belt of mixed plantation extends eastwards into the park from a point adjacent to the principal entrance, screening the minor road from the house as it drops into the valley, while further areas of plantation to the east, north-east, and north-west frame the north vista. Some 130m north-west of the house, the early C20 avenue of copper beeches planted on the axis of the Red Garden extends c 300m north into the park.

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The park appears to have been formed in the late C18 by John Pitt after he inherited Kingston Maurward in 1774 (Oswald 1959), although Isaac Taylor's Map of Dorset (1765) shows an avenue of trees aligned on the north facade of the house extending beyond the present northern boundary of the park. The late C19 OS map (1890) shows extensive parkland planting in the area of the park to the south of the minor road, but much of this was lost during the Second World War when the park was converted into an army encampment and fuel depot. Areas of park to the west of the C19 pleasure grounds were taken into the gardens by Sir Cecil and Lady Hanbury in 1918-20, while to the east of the house mid and late C20 institutional buildings have been constructed within the park.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The kitchen garden is situated c 400m east of the C18 mansion, and c 50m east of the C16 manor house. The garden is rectangular on plan and is enclosed by brick walls c 3m high. The area within the walls is today (2004) laid out with a series of rectangular demonstration borders radiating from a central circular bed. This arrangement echoes that shown on the late C19 OS map (1890). A C19 vinery, now used for ornamental purposes, stands at the north-west corner of the garden, while a doorway in the north wall leads to a frame yard with further C20 glasshouses and associated structures. A gateway in the east wall of the kitchen garden leads to an orchard which corresponds to a feature shown on the OS map of 1890.

The kitchen garden walls appear to be of early C18 construction, and it is likely that the present garden was formed by George Pitt when the C18 mansion was built c 1717, perhaps on the site of earlier gardens associated with the C16 manor house.

#### REFERENCES

A Oswald, *Country Houses of Dorset* (2nd edn 1959), pp 91-2, 154-5 N Pevsner and J Newman, *The Buildings of England: Dorset* (1972), pp 246-8 T Mowl, *Historic Gardens of Dorset* (2003), pp 144-8 Kingston Maurward Gardens, guidebook, (Kingston Maurward College, nd)

Maps I Taylor, *Map of Dorset*, 1765

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1886, published 1890 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition revised 1901, published 1902

Description written: October 2004 Amended: December 2004 (PAS) Register Inspector: JML Edited: May 2005

This list entry was subject to a Minor Amendment on 24 August 2021 to reformat the text to current standards

## 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.