

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

Westbrook

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

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*Westbrook*

Name:	Westbrook
County:	Surrey
District:	Waverley (District Authority)
Parish:	Godalming
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.189673 Longitude: -0.62525248 National Grid Reference: SU 96169 44281 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001671 Date first listed: 30-May-2003 Date of most recent amendment: 29-May-2019 Statutory Address 1: Westbrook, Westbrook Road, Godalming, GU7 2QH

## Historique de la conservation

The site of Westbrook was arable land until the construction of H Thackeray Turner's house, Westbrook, in 1899-1900. The 1st (1872) and 2nd (1897) editions of the OS 25" map show a single field north of Westbrook Road, probably part of the Westbrook estate. The original house of Westbrook, some 340m east of the site, became the Meath Home for Epileptic Women and Girls between 1872 and 1897. Other pre-existing features were the quarry south of the site, and the woodland to the north between the field and the River Wey, with a track running parallel to the river about half way up the valley side. Turner's house was built on this field and the gardens continued to be developed into the C20. The house was first shown on the OS map of 1912 but with no indication of garden layout. The 1916 edition shows the garden layout and also a boathouse and footbridge on the river to the north-east.

Turner's garden at Westbrook was admired by the preeminent garden designer of the late C19, early C20, Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932), who featured it in her 1912 book with Lawrence Weaver, *Gardens for Small Country Houses*. She wrote about it further in *Country Life* magazine in 1915. Jekyll lived nearby and may have supplied some of the plants for Westbrook from her nursery at Munstead Wood. The garden is mentioned in her note books, held at Godalming Museum, mainly in relation to plants for the circular sunk garden and winter garden. It is believed that she advised on or even designed aspects of the garden's planting or layout but this is as yet unverified other than through verbal accounts. Turner's enthusiasm for his garden is reflected in his contributions to *Gardening Illustrated* in the 1920s and 1930s and evidence of its evolution has been captured in various historical photographs and through the recollections of John Mallory. Mallory was Turner's grandson and he lived at the house with his widowed mother and grandfather in the later part of his childhood after the death of his father, George Mallory, in 1924 whilst attempting to make the first ascent of Mount Everest. Recollections have also been given by Una Farr, daughter of Westbrook's head gardener from 1903-1945, Harry Farr. To date, complete plans of Turner's original layout have not been identified, if they ever existed, but a plan was published by Jekyll in 1912. The date of this plan is not known but based on the features it shows, it would seem either to be an early proposal and, or, one which is selective in its level of detail. A number

of the features shown are legible on the site today (2019) or are legible on earlier aerial photos but the gardens to the south were cropped off. An aerial photo of 1947 gives an indication of the layout of this area by this date, and subsequent images show its gradual subdivision. The site passed through several hands during the C20; the house was subdivided in the mid-C20 but has since returned to single family use and remains, with the majority of the original garden, in single private ownership today (2019). Since the house has come back into single occupation a number of the garden features shown in the published plan have been fully or partially recreated, as well as some new features being introduced.

Hugh Thackeray Turner (1853-1937) trained as an architect in the offices of both George Gilbert Scotts, senior and junior, and went into partnership in 1885 with Eustace Balfour. It was however his work as secretary of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, a post which he held for 28 years, which defined his career as an architect and conservation theorist. It was through Turner that the society's ideology was put into practice, fighting to protect buildings at risk from insensitive alteration and educating on their appropriate treatment. Turner was a member of the Art-Workers' Guild and Philip Webb was a friend and architectural mentor. Westbrook is an archetypal Arts and Crafts house and is Turner's major built work.

## Details

An early C20 formal garden designed by H Thackeray Turner, surrounding an Arts and Crafts house designed by Turner for himself.

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Westbrook is situated about 0.7km north-west of the town of Godalming, off Westbrook Road, and occupies high ground overlooking the steep valley sides of the River Wey which runs from north-west to south-east to the north of the site.

The site comprises about 5.5ha and is bounded to the south by Westbrook Road and the gardens of Shepherd's Cottage and Far Cottage (formerly Westbrook cottages), to the east by the entrance drive and to the west by agricultural land. The northern part of the site is occupied by a belt of mixed woodland on the steep slope down to the River Wey which marks the northern boundary of the site. To the east the garden is enclosed by fences, to the west by timber fencing on a traditional hedge bank and to the north by yew hedging on a low stone retaining wall with the river below. To the south the garden is enclosed by stone walls, hedges, and fencing (parts of this area are in the private ownership of Shepherd's Cottage and Far Cottage). There are views from the upper parts of the site across the valley to the east and north, with the towers of Charterhouse School prominent in northerly views. A purpose-built viewing platform on the western edge of the garden gives views over fields to the west and south west.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The site is approached from a gently curving drive leading north from Westbrook Road, which rises steeply to the house situated some 200m to the north-north-west. The southern section of the drive is sunken and bounded on both sides by terraced stone retaining walls with planting shelves and pockets. After about 50m, at a bend in the drive, there is a quarry cut into the hillside to the west; this is the source of building stone for the house and gardens. A further c20m beyond, stone steps lead west up to the 'Twitten', or path to the kitchen garden. The retaining walls of the drive give way to a grassed bank topped with a beech hedge which conceals the house; some mature yews on the bank appear to predate the house. Towards the top of the hill, the eastern verge broadens to give views between mature trees north and east across the valley of the River Wey, with the high stone wall of the garden to the west. After about 160m the drive sweeps round to the west, past the stone-built potting shed (now garden office and store), to reach a forecourt to the north of the house. To the east of the house, screened by the potting shed and garden wall, are the greenhouse, stable yard (the stables now in domestic use) and garden yard with cold frames and a small barn. There is a mid-C20 garage, extended in the C21, to the north of the forecourt and the west side is bounded by an about 2.5m high stone wall with a tiled coping running north/south. At the north end of this is a former ice house and small store, once used as a detached kitchen; these mark the north-east corner of the formal gardens. At the south end of the wall, adjacent to the house, is a hipped tiled roof, below which is the gate leading to the garden and a verandah or loggia on the west side adjoining the north-west corner of the house.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Westbrook (listed Grade II\*) is a large two-storey plus attic Bargate rubble-stone house with steep plain tile roofs designed by and built for H Thackeray Turner between 1899 and 1900 in the Arts and Crafts style. The entrance

front faces north towards the forecourt and the garden front to the south. Adjoining to the east is the range of single-storey stone and tile outbuildings around the stable yard. In the later C20 the house was divided into flats but has since been restored to a single family house.

**GARDENS** The gardens lie predominantly to the south and west of the house and are arranged around a series of strong north/south and east/west axes. The intricately-planned formal gardens are to the west of the house, and originally large areas of kitchen garden were to the east, south of the stable and garden yards. The central part of the garden is primarily given over to lawn, overlooked by the house's south-facing garden front.

The formal gardens are entered by the door in the garden wall at the north-west corner of the house and comprise a number of enclosed and sunk gardens leading into one another via a series of paths running north/south and east/west. A principal feature is the large, circular, sunk garden some 35m to the west of the house. This is about 40m in diameter and is enclosed by a circular yew hedge about 2-2.5m high with arched openings to north, south east and west. Within, the garden is arranged in concentric, gently sloping, stone-edged terraces with a raised octagonal stone lily tank in the centre and radial stepped paths of hoggin and grass at the compass points. These paths are flanked by clipped Irish yew. There has been a partial rearrangement of the concentric planting beds, as shown on the 1912 plan published by Jekyll and Weaver.

To the north-east of the circular sunk garden is a small rectangular sunk garden of about 10m x 20m, laid to lawn and with low stone retaining walls and planting around the edge; to the north-west is the sunken Winter Garden. The latter is reached from the west side of the circular garden via a narrow meandering path enclosed by dry-stone retaining walls about 1m high and topped by yew hedging. The path widens before two semi-circular-headed brick and stone arches leading into the Winter Garden. This is an irregular octagonal stone-walled enclosure c10m x 10m, some 1m below ground level. The garden is paved in hoggin (originally brick) with perimeter beds and four planting beds, restored to an arrangement echoing that shown in the 1912 plan. On the south-facing wall is a recess for a seat, with a brick arch and tiled roof.

To the north of the three sunk gardens is a tightly defined arrangement of garden 'rooms' leading off a wide central north/south grassed path. This part of the garden is shown on the 1912 plan to have included a rose garden, which by the early C21 had been lost. The area was remodelled in 2009 by the landscape designer, Simon Dorrell, to include a number of distinctive rectilinear features, echoing in plan the strong cruciform arrangement shown in the 1912 plan. In the north-east corner of the formal gardens is a stone and tiled shelter for a seat facing south-west, behind which is the aforementioned icehouse and small detached kitchen. To the west of this a path leads down to a terrace walk along the northern boundary of the formal garden, bounded by a low retaining wall and yew hedge to the south and with views over woodland on the steep sides of the Wey valley to the north. A south-facing stone and brick covered seat structure at the centre of this path was removed in the early C21 to allow the construction of a semi-circular belvedere, part of Dorrell's scheme, which projects out at garden level. Beyond this the north-west corner of the formal gardens is bounded by high stone walls, known as the cloister.

A wide grass path and various planting beds run along the west side of the formal gardens, opening out into a lawn, formerly the location of Turner's orchard before he replaced it with a tennis court in the mid-1920s. The tennis court was subsequently grassed over and a new one built in part of the former kitchen gardens. To the east of this lawn is a large shrubbery enclosing a circular lawn reached by one of five narrow grassed paths which snake through the beds. There are mature trees including a holm oak and mulberry. This part of the garden's layout had been partially lost and has been recreated in the early C21 to reflect the layout shown on the 1912 plan.

To the south of the lawn and shrubbery, a substantial stone wall runs east to west, originally forming the northern boundary of the southern range of gardens. The wall is over 2m high and is punctuated with square piers set at 45 degrees to the wall. Approximately half way along its length, in line with the main north/south axis through the centre of the circular sunk garden and out to the belvedere to the far north, is a covered seat recess set between angled piers with a single pitched tiled roof. The wall also delineates the western part of the gardens' main east/west axis. This axis runs from the far eastern extent of the garden though to a small, elevated, viewing platform on the far west boundary of the site – a feature after Jekyll's own 'thunder house' at Munstead Wood, giving views out to the west and obliquely to the south.

The south front of the house overlooks a terrace running the length of the building. The terrace is paved in brick and is on two levels linked by stone steps. It is enclosed by stone walls and originally had raised stone planting beds but these have been removed. A grass walk extends east from the terrace (across the rear of the former stable block), terminating in a separate small raised stone terrace on the eastern edge of the garden. South of the house and terrace is a lawn, bordered on the west side by a pleached lime walk with a stone-flagged path. The view south along the lime walk extends through a gate to a long grass walk enclosed with beech hedges, labelled on the 1912 plan as being planted with China roses but during Turner's time the area was planted with grass and shrubs (this part of the garden is in separate ownership). A stone wall runs along the eastern boundary of the lawn and at its centre is a stone-built summerhouse, with openings to east and west elevations and a steep tiled roof. At the southern end of this wall is a wide brick and stone arch leading to the eastern range of kitchen gardens. The wall turns at right angles here, continuing eastward to enclose the southern edge of the eastern kitchen gardens. The 1912 plan labels the area to the south of the main lawn as a grass nut walk and to the east of this a wire-enclosed fruit garden. An aerial photo of 1947 suggests that these features may have existed at this time, certainly the orchard now in this area was planted between 1947 and 1961. Within this area, adjacent to Westbrook Road, is the 'toy cottage', a small ancillary building extended and converted in the late C20.

**KITCHEN GARDENS** The kitchen gardens were to the east of the main lawn (to the south of the stable and garden yards). The 1912 plan suggests further kitchen gardens to the south but whether these were laid out and what form they took is not clear (a designed scheme can be seen on the aerial photo of 1947 but what this is and when it was created is not clear). A gate in the wall at the south-west corner of the formal gardens leads to a walled enclosure (not illustrated on the 1912 plan) with brick paving and deep perimeter beds. The rest of garden to the south and east of this is now (2019) largely grassed and subdivided. It is in separate ownership and all but the walled enclosure is outside the registered area.

The eastern kitchen garden is reached through the wide stone arch in the wall bounding the main lawn. There are stone-edged and retained borders to the south and west of the kitchen garden but the area is now predominantly given over to a tennis court (to the west) and a swimming pool (to the east). This arrangement respects the original north/south axis running up between the stable and garden yards, through a gateway onto the approach drive. The garden yard has cold frames against the boundary wall and is enclosed to the west by a timber barn with tiled roof. In the stable yard, built against the back wall of the potting shed and opposite the former stables, is the restored greenhouse, with original brick floor and rainwater troughs.

**OTHER LAND** To the north of the gardens is an area of mixed woodland on the steep slope down to the River Wey; the woodland is managed as coppice. There are paths through the woodland which formerly led to a boathouse and a footbridge over the river, both part of Thackeray Turner's early-C20 scheme but now lost.

## Summary

An early C20 formal garden designed by H Thackeray Turner, surrounding an Arts and Crafts house designed by Turner for himself.

## 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.

## Reasons for Designation

Westbrook, a garden designed by H Thackeray Turner and laid out in the early C20, is registered at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

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\* Designer: the work of an accomplished architect and important figure in building conservation, Westbrook was Turner's highly successful foray into garden design and a personal labour of love; \* Design interest: the garden creatively links together enclosed 'rooms' and open vistas with a series of intersecting axes to picturesque effect, while built features in natural materials provide an architectural backdrop to the planting and anchor the landscape to the house; \* Survival: much of Turner's layout survives well including hard landscaping and structural planting; \* Documentation and publication: the garden is recorded in contemporary books and journals and in later publications; a private archive has also been amassed by the current owner of Westbrook house (2019); \* Reputation: the garden was highly regarded by the eminent garden designer and friend of Turner, Gertrude Jekyll, who wrote admiringly of it in her published work; \* Group value: the garden has strong group value with the Grade II\* listed house with which it forms an ensemble.

## Bibliographie

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Musson, J, 'Westbrook, Surrey' in *Country Life*, , Vol. 192, (16 July 1998), pp. 50-53

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### Other

Aerial photo of Westbrook, 26 July 1947, Ref: RAF/CPE/UK/2034.RS.4188, Historic England Archive

Aerial photo of Westbrook, 27 April 1964, Ref: OS/64012.V.113, Historic England Archive

Aerial photo of Westbrook, 28 August 1961, Ref: RAF/543/1426 2F543, Historic England Archive

Gertrude Jekyll's Plant Notebook Number 4 pp10-12, held at the Godalming Local Studies Library