

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

HILL COURT

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Name:	HILL COURT
District:	County of Herefordshire (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Walford
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.892022 Longitude: -2.6176759 National Grid Reference: SO 57590 21677 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001303 Date first listed: 31-Oct-1994

Details

Gardens, including a walled garden dating from the late C17, and with features from the early C20, set in parkland of 40ha, with which the name of John Kyrle is associated.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Hill Court, then called The Hill, was built for Richard Clarke (d 1702), then of Old Hill Court, from 1698 onwards. The design of the house, and of the garden, has been attributed (Daniels and Watkins 1994, 18) to John Kyrle. The work was completed over the six years following Clarke's death by his brother Joseph. In the mid C18 the house was heightened and extended by the addition of symmetrical wings. Following the death of Jane Clarke in 1806, the estate passed to Kingsmill Evans, grandson of Thomas Evans and Alice Clarke, Jane's aunt. He left the house to his nephew, Kingsmill Manley Power (d 1888). In 1890 the property was sold to Major Lionel Trafford whose family lived there until 1982. In the early 1990s the property was sold to a German plastics manufacturing firm and was converted for office and other commercial use.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The Hill Court estate lies 4km south-west of Ross-on-Wye, immediately to the south-west of, and on an unclassified road from, the hamlet of Hom Green. The house and its gardens lie on rising ground above the River Wye, which passes 1km to the west. The area here registered is c 40ha.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main drive leads from the public road which forms the eastern boundary of the site, directly west across the park to the forecourt below the east front. The entrance is via two pairs of piers with gates and railings, all C18 (listed grade II), accompanied by a lodge set in the sandstone wall which borders the public road. Originally, the drive led through an elm avenue reputedly planted by John Kyrle. The elms have now gone, but the avenue was replanted earlier this century (c 1930s) in oak, with the subsequent addition (1965) of an inner line of limes.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Hill Court (listed grade I), begun in 1698, is described by Pevsner (1963, 309) as a 'monumentally spreading symmetrical house of red brick' with stone quoins. The seven-bay centre was built 1698-1700, and was originally of two storeys with a big hipped roof on dormers. Its design has been attributed to John Kyrle (d 1724) (Whitehead 1994, 18). In the C18 a half-storey and a half parapet-half balustrade were added and the roof lowered. On the entrance side is a three-bay pediment with carved cornucopias. One-bay wings connected with lower one-bay links, were added in 1732. Accounts for the building of the house survive.

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In the 1990s two large office blocks in the Swiss-German manner were built in the house's service sector.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS At the west end of the drive, 75m east of house and standing on the brick ha-ha along the eastern edge of the forecourt, is an early C18 pair of gate piers and gates (listed grade II). These were moved into this position in 1933 to commemorate the death of Guy Trafford. A mature cedar stands in the front court.

From the south end of the forecourt, a pair of sandstone gate piers in an C18 brick wall (listed grade II) provide the entrance to the stables (listed grade II, probably mid C18 and early to mid C19) and complex of outbuildings, and an early C19 barn 75m south of house (listed grade II).

The main gardens lie to the north of the house, and round the walled garden to the south. Below the north front is a formal garden focused on a marble fountain engraved 'GDT, 1908, Naples'. Beyond this are shrub-planted lawns, divided from the park to the west by a ha-ha constructed in the early C20, when the northern pleasure grounds were given their current form. At the north-west corner of these gardens, standing on the ha-ha, is a gothic summerhouse erected by John Trafford (1924-78) who is buried in a yew-hedged garden adjacent.

The terrace below the east front is extended as a planted line to the north. South of the house it continues as a walk down what is now (1999) a gravelled strip, screened from the stable yard to the east by a brick wall, leading to the late C17 walled kitchen garden. About 150m south of house an early C18 wrought-iron gate hung between a pair of gate piers capped with stone griffins (listed grade II) leads from the house terrace into the garden. The gate carries the initials JLT. It stands just to the east of an early C18 dovecote (listed grade II).

The walled garden is now laid out as a flower garden, the central path leading across from the gateway to a second, early C18, pair of gate piers, capped with vases, and hung with wrought-iron gates (listed grade II), with the arms and crest of the Clarke family on the elaborate overthrow. This gate is 250m south of house. There is the remains of some glass along the northern wall of the garden; the head gardener's cottage stands in the south-west corner of the garden.

To the south-east of the house, along the north-east side of the walled garden, is a strip of pleasure grounds through which runs a mid C20 water garden, focused on a Chinese pavilion. The walk continues round the eastern and southern sides of the walled area where it passes through yew hedges clipped with topiary shapes. These walks were apparently planted by the Kingsmill Evanses in the 1830/40s, and certainly the mid C19 Tithe map for Walford shows the outline of the southern pleasure ground in its final form. From the walks on the southern side of the kitchen garden are views south to Goodrich Castle; this aspect of the garden design has been attributed to John Kyrle. Whitehead (1994) notes that Kyrle, known to contemporaries as 'The Man of Ross', is supposed to have met Alexander Pope (d 1744) at Holme Lacy (qv). The main feature of Hill Court's gardens as laid out c 1700 comprises 'a great terrace, like that at Holme Lacy, [which] lays along the south side of the house, passing through a series of walled enclosures, connected by gates with monumental piers which line up to frame the ruins of Goodrich castle. Deliberate picture making is involved here, producing a composition which fifty years later William Gilpin would describe as "correctly picturesque"' (Whitehead 1994). Goodrich Court, built in 1828, was also an object in the view prior to its demolition in 1946.

PARK The park which flanks either side of the main avenue is well wooded with a predominance of scattered oaks. A fenced park is shown on Isaac Taylor's map of the county of 1786, and the Tithe map (1844) refers to the area north of the avenue as The Old Park, that to the south, The Lower Park, and the area immediately east of the house, the Pear Tree Orchard. There is a further area of parkland to the west of the house, which is level and more open. On the Tithe map, this is referred to as Sheeps Col Field. A walk leads through Hom Plantation, the wooded area at the north-east corner of the site, passing a cross (listed grade II) on its route to the church. Hom plantation merges to the west with the northern belt, this having been formed by the joining up of three earlier plantations shown on the Ross Tithe map of 1844.

KITCHEN GARDEN See above.

REFERENCES N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Herefordshire* (1963), p 309 *Country Life*, 139 (27 January 1966), pp 180-3; (3 February 1966), pp 228-231; (10 February 1966), pp 286-9 S Daniels and C Watkin, *The Picturesque Landscape* (1994), pp 16-33

Maps Isaac Taylor, *Map of the county, 1786, 1" to 1 mile* (Herefordshire Record Office) Tithe map for Walford parish, 1840 (Herefordshire Record Office) Tithe map for Ross parish, 1844 (Herefordshire Record Office)

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OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1887 1931 edition OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1904

Archival items Sale particulars, 1890 (Herefordshire Record Office)

Description written: January 1999 Register Inspector: PAS Edited: August 1999

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.