

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

HEVER CASTLE

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

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**HEVER CASTLE**

Name: HEVER CASTLE

County: Kent

District: Sevenoaks (District Authority)

Parish: Chiddingstone

County: Kent

District: Sevenoaks (District Authority)

Parish: Hever

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.189504  
Longitude: 0.11999446  
National Grid Reference: TQ 48246 45500  
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden  
Grade: I  
List Entry Number: 1000152  
Date first listed: 01-May-1986

## Details

An early C20 formal and ornamental garden, laid out around a C13 castle by William Waldorf Astor, later Viscount Astor, with the architect Frank Pearson and the nurseryman Joseph Cheal, and set within early C20 parkland.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Hever was first occupied by the Norman family of de Hever in the C13. It passed by marriage to the de Cobham family and then through the hands of several other owners until bought in 1462 by Sir Geoffrey Bullen or Boleyn, the great-grandfather of Anne. After the death of Sir Thomas Boleyn, Anne's father, Hever passed to the Crown and became the home of Anne of Cleves until 1557. In the same year it was granted to Sir Edward Waldegrave, his son, Sir Charles, carrying out alterations. In 1715, the Lord Mayor of London, Sir William Humphreys acquired Hever, then from 1750 until 1903 it was owned by the Waldo family who let the Castle to various tenants as it was never their main residence. William Waldorf Astor, enobled as Baron Astor in 1956, bought Hever in 1903, restoring the Castle and laying out the present gardens and grounds. The Astors sold the estate in 1983, the northern parkland being purchased by Hever Golf Club plc and laid out as the present golf course in 1990. The Castle and ornamental grounds were bought by a private company, Broadland Properties Ltd who run these as Hever Castle Ltd. The whole estate remains (1997) in private ownership.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Hever Castle lies to the immediate north-east of Hever village, some 3km south-east of Edenbridge. The 177ha estate comprises c 47ha of formal and ornamental gardens surrounded by 130ha of parkland and woodland to the south and east and the golf course to the north. The site lies within the broad, shallow, east to west valley of the River Eden, the valley sides rising gently to the site boundaries to north and south. The site is bounded to the

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west by clipped hedging and an internal fringe of trees along a minor lane running north from Hever village to How Green. A hedge-lined track (a public footpath), recorded as the East and West Walk on the OS map of 1937, forms the northern boundary, with the golf course continuing northwards beyond it. An estate road and track forms the southern boundary while to the east, a wooded fringe encloses the site from the gently rolling wooded farmland that provides the wider setting for the entire estate.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The site is approached in the south-west corner, a short drive leading north-eastwards from the public lane beneath the archway of the red-brick entrance lodge, built in 1906 by Baron Astor (Astor 1970s), then continuing northwards and eastwards through light woodland of mixed exotic trees (including cedar, fir, and pine) to pass the entrance kiosks and cross the stone bridge over the outer moat. This approach drive was constructed in 1904 by Astor who diverted the public lane along the western boundary westwards, further away from the Castle, to its present route. A service road, which now (1997) serves as a public exit drive, enters through a gateway 250m north of the main entrance.

East of the outer moat arm, the continuation of the drive to the south forecourt of the Castle is flanked by a double avenue of yew topiary, planted in c 1904 by Cheal and cut into the shape of birds and abstract forms. North of the drive, beyond the topiary, is Anne Boleyn's Orchard, laid out on land recorded as Castle Orchard on an estate plan drawn in 1756.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS** Hever Castle (listed grade I) sits on the level valley floor in the south-west quarter of the site and at the west end of the lake. It is a small (c 26m square), semi-fortified sandstone building with a tiny inner courtyard, set within an inner moat. Built as a fortified farmhouse by the de Hever family in the C13 and C14, the south front, formed by a massive, rectangular three-storey gatehouse with angle turrets, is the oldest part, dating from 1270. John de Cobham received a licence to crenellate in 1383. The Boleyn family made internal alterations to create a family home, adding the central, projecting bay on the gatehouse during their ownership in the late C15. In 1584, Sir Charles Waldegrave created the Long Gallery and possibly the Oratory (CL 1981). The restoration work undertaken by Captain Guy Sebright in 1895 included the demolition of the Tudor stables which lay some 200m to the south-west of the Castle. In 1903, William Waldorf Astor engaged the architect Frank Pearson (1864-1947) to carry out a full restoration of the interior of the Castle (except for some repairs the outside was unaltered) and to build, on its north side, the Tudor-style village as guest and service accommodation. The one- and two-storey cottages of brick and stone, with half-timbered upper floors, are linked to the Castle by a covered bridge.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The formal and ornamental gardens, which were created almost in their entirety between 1903 and 1907 by William Waldorf Astor, his architect Frank Pearson, and the firms of Joseph Cheal of Crawley and Thompson's of Peterborough, lie to the east, south-east, and south of the Castle. From the south forecourt, an axial path crosses the southern arm of the outer moat, created from a former mill-stream, and climbs the southern slope as a 130m long broad, grassed walk lined with rhododendrons and originally laid out with several flights of stone steps (now, 1997, gone). At the top a balustraded staircase (the Golden Stairs) leads up to a viewing platform containing a pool enclosed on the south side by a sheer wall of sandstone with a trickle cascade. East of the Golden Stairs, a former quarry (shown on the OS map of 1897) and a series of connecting stone steps and rockwork are planted with azaleas and ferns and other shade-loving plants. Southwards, above the Golden Stairs and Quarry, a broad, straight grass walk runs eastwards on a ridge along the southern edge of the gardens and continues beyond them along the southern shore of the lake. Known as Anne Boleyn's Walk, it is lined informally with a wide variety of exotic and native trees and was partly replanted after storm damage in 1987.

Continuing eastwards, an upper path from the Quarry Garden winds down steps to the Two Sisters Lawn, its pool, shown established on the 1st edition OS map surveyed 1869-70, planted with moisture-loving plants. The eastern half of the lawn, enclosed to the south and east by trees and shrubbery, is fronted on the east side by a dahlia border and on the south side by a 110m long herbaceous border (the Long Border), planted in 1996 on the site of an early C19 border removed in 1981-2. Immediately beyond the east end of the Long Border, and enclosed to the north and east by the walls of the Italian and Rose Gardens, steps lead down into the Blue Garden. Designed by Cheal, it features massive sandstone rocks (imported from Chiddingstone Causeway), planted with a theme of blue flowers and foliage. A lower path from the Quarry Garden leads onto the slopes of the Spring Garden lawn which overlook the outer moat and which are framed with azaleas and rhododendrons and dotted with exotic and flowering trees. Northwards below the lawn, a path alongside the outer moat leads eastwards from the Castle to the Half Moon Pond, the tall yew hedge framing its semicircular, stone-edged form and central statue of Venus

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and Cupid also acting as enclosure to the western end of the adjacent Italian Garden. South of the pond, the south wall of the Italian Garden extends westwards to form the Cascade Rockery, a sheer rockwork wall designed by Cheal in 1904-06, and planted with azaleas and moisture-loving plants.

The Italian Garden (listed grade II), entered through gateways at the north and south ends of the Half Moon Pond, was designed by Frank Pearson and built between 1904 and 1907 by Thompson's (Astor 1970s) to display Astor's large collection of classical statuary and sculpture. The 220m x 80m rectangular garden is enclosed on its long north and south sides by a c 4m high sandstone wall lined by a broad, paved walk spanned, at 25m and 135m from the entrance, by two pairs of arcaded screens with pilasters and entablature which open, through the north and south walls, into round, roofless pavilions. The north, Pompeian Wall is divided into bays by buttresses and is embellished with statuary and plaques interplanted with a profusion of climbers, shrubs, and bedding. A stone and timber pergola, covered with vines, wisteria, and other climbers runs along the entire length of the southern wall which is constructed, along its western length, as a gallery of rockwork grottoes inspired by the gallery of 100 fountains at the Villa d'Este at Tivoli (ibid). The eastern end of the wall contains shallow niches planted with camellias. The garden terminates at its eastern end in a screen of Ionic columns flanking a central loggia from which a staircase embracing the Nymph's Fountain (carved by W S Frith, erected 1908) leads down to a piazza over looking the lake. The central area of the garden is laid to lawns and equidistant between the pairs of arcaded screens, the rectangular Sunken Garden, enclosed by yew hedges and laid out with a lily pool surrounded by lawn and semicircular oak seats in walled niches. The garden was originally designed by Cheal to contain a Roman bath with a marble surround which was replaced by the present pool in the 1930s.

Opening southwards off the Italian Garden is the Rose Garden, enclosed by brick walls and laid out with lawn and segmental rose beds. South of the Rose Garden is the tea pavilion, built in 1973.

East of the Castle and the inner moat, massive yew hedges, sculpted into buttresses, enclose a series of small gardens laid out by Cheal in 1906-07 and known as Anne Boleyn's Garden. They comprise a herb and knot garden, added in 1995, the paved Fountain Garden which is planted with roses and, at the northernmost end, a garden containing a rank of yew topiary chessmen. On the south side of these gardens is a square yew maze, also planted by Cheal in 1906-07. Beyond the outer moat, informal grassed areas lead northwards and eastwards to the River Eden, diverted to its present course some 50m further north of the Castle in 1904-06 with the construction by Cheal of the c 14ha lake with its two islands: Two Bridges Island (within the river) and Sixteen Acre Island (between the lake and the river). The northern banks of the river and the islands are fringed and scattered with trees of mixed age and species including weeping willow, copper beech, oak, and lime, with much replanting after the storm of 1987. From the east side of the outer moat and aligned on the axis of the Long Gallery in the Castle, the remnants of a double horse chestnut avenue, planted by Cheal in 1907 and with some late C20 replacements, runs for 0.8km across Sixteen Acre Island to the eastern end of the lake which terminates in an ornamental rocky waterfall. At the west end of the island, some 350m east of the Castle, is a water maze with a central mount, built and opened in 1996-7.

PARK South of the gardens and Anne Boleyn's tree-lined walk are open areas of grass and, towards the east end of the lake between its southern shore and Park Wood (shown on the 1756 estate plan and replanted after the 1987 storm), a winding grass path leads through parkland dotted with individual mature trees and clumps including oak, poplar, pine, and copper beech. North of the river a narrow band of parkland laid to permanent pasture separates the river from the golf course which, laid out in 1991 on parkland planted between 1909 and 1936 (OS), extends on rising, gently undulating land to the site boundary. Some of the parkland planting of clumps or belts of mature trees, particularly oaks survive within the golf-course landscape although many of the individual mature trees are now (1997) gone. Three small areas of light woodland, on the north-west and north-east sides of the golf course, survive from the planting pattern shown established in 1937 (OS).

#### REFERENCES

Country Life, 2 (11 November 1897), pp 266-8; 22 (12 October 1907), pp 522-35; (19 October 1907), pp 558-67; 169 (1 January 1981), pp 18-21; (8 January 1981), pp 66-9 P Coats, *Great Gardens of Britain* (1967), pp 112-17 J Newman, *The Buildings of England: West Kent and the Weald* (1969), pp 309-12 Gavin Astor, *Hever in the C20* (1970s) T Wright, *Gardens of Britain* 4, (1978), pp 60-5 Hever Castle, guidebook, (nd) *The Gardens at Hever Castle*, guidebook, (c 1997)

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Maps Elizabeth Bermingham, A Plan of the Manors of Hever & the Estate of Timothy Waldo Esq, 1756 (copy at Hever Castle)  
G Astor, Map showing details before and after alterations 1903-07 (in Astor 1970s)  
OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1869-70, published 1872/3 2nd edition published 1897 3rd edition published 1909 1936/7  
edition OS 25" to 1 mile: 3rd edition published 1908/09 1936/7 edition  
Description written: October 1997 Register Inspector: VCH Edited: November 2003

## 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.