

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

ASHWELL BURY

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Name: ASHWELL BURY

County: Hertfordshire

District: North Hertfordshire (District Authority)

Parish: Ashwell

label.localisation: Latitude: 52.043915
Longitude: -0.15620378
National Grid Reference: TL 26549 39995
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1000904
Date first listed: 11-Jun-1987

Details

Gardens designed by Gertrude Jekyll to plans dated 1907(8), surrounding a country house remodelled 1922(3 by Sir Edwin Lutyens.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Ashwell Bury house was built in the early C19 and extended in the later C19 for the Fordham family who owned the adjacent brewery. In 1907-8 Gertrude Jekyll was commissioned to produce plans for the gardens (NMR), these being dated 1908 and 1909, and these appear to have been laid out largely as she indicated. In 1922-3 Sir Edwin Lutyens extended and remodelled the house. The gardens have been developed and modified during the mid to late C20. The house remains (1999) in private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Ashwell Bury lies on the northern edge of the village of Ashwell, 7km north of Baldock. The c 6ha site is bounded to the south by Gardiner's Lane, and to the west by an extension northwards of the same. To the north it is bounded by the River Rhee and beyond this by Elbrook House and its surrounding parkland. To the east lies Mill Street and the adjacent former brewery buildings which were associated with the site during the C19 and early C20. The ground is largely level. The setting is rural, with agricultural land and parkland to the north, west and south-west, and the village lying to the south and east. The brewery yard and buildings lying adjacent to the north-east have been converted to domestic use.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main approach enters c 120m south-east of the house, off Mill Street, between two brick piers flanked by a brick wall. A brick and white-painted house (c early C20) stands at the south end of the wall, while to the north (outside the area here registered) stands a two-storey lodge, part of the former approach to the brewery. The drive extends c 70m north-west flanked by an avenue of lime trees, bounded to the south by a paddock and to the north-east by a brick wall separating the drive from the former brewery premises, the area immediately beyond the wall now developed as housing. The drive turns west 50m from the house, passing the hedged kitchen garden to the south. To the north lies a lawn planted with mature *Quercus ilex*. A narrow border punctuated by pyramidal clipped yews is separated from the gravel drive by a strip of

lawn. The drive arrives at a rectangular forecourt on the south, entrance front of the house, bounded by the south lawn to the south and overlooking parkland beyond this, with the hedged kitchen garden enclosure to the south-east. The Jekyll plans show her design for the layout of the informal lawn north of the drive much as survives today (1999), although she appears to have suggested a hedge in place of the border which now exists.

A spur off the drive 50m east of the house enters a service yard adjacent to the north-east corner of the house. In the late C19 (OS 1897) only the western section of the drive existed, giving direct access to the brewery yard and building complex to the east, now separated by the boundary wall extending north from the north-west end of the avenue.

In the late C19 (OS 1897) the main approach was from the south, via a drive off the lane connecting Gardiner's Lane and Mill Street, crossing the south park, curving around to approach the south front from the south-west. This approach was straightened when the drive was moved some metres west in the early C20 (OS 1920s), and now appears to have fallen into disuse.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Ashwell Bury (early C19, extended late C19, work 1922-3 by Sir E Lutyens, listed grade II) stands towards the north-east corner of the site. The two-storey building is of white brick and largely rendered (except the north, service front), with stone dressings, and with a low pitched roof and prominent eaves, chimneys and shutters.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens lie to the west and north-west of the house, divided into two main parallel sections by a low bank, planted as a border, extending c 30m west from the north-west corner of the house, with access between the two sections provided by a flight of low stone steps.

French windows lead from the west front onto a raised, stone-paved terrace, partly bounded by a balustrade, overlooking a lawn extending c 30m westwards to the park, from which it is separated by a wooden fence. The south side of the lawn is bounded by a broad, clipped yew hedge with recesses cut into it, screening the lawn from the parkland to the south. A gap in the hedge leads south to a narrow lawn running parallel, leading east alongside the park to a gravel path which enters the forecourt (the path possibly the remains of the north end of the C19 south drive). The north side of the lawn is bounded by the planted bank, at the centre of which are the stone steps leading down to a further lawn. The upper lawn was referred to by Miss Jekyll on her plans as a bowling green, and the recesses in the hedge to the south were intended to be filled with small beds.

The lower lawn to the north is dominated by a formal rose garden, at the centre of which lies a low grass mound enclosed by a clipped box hedge and approached through central gaps in each side of the hedge. The north/south entrances to the mound lie on an axis with the stone steps down from the lawn to the south. The west/east entrances lie on an axis with a box-hedged enclosure to the west, surrounding a small circular lawn, at the centre of which stands a planter on a stone plinth. The lawn runs north, dropping at the north edge to the River Rhee, the approach broken by informal borders, with, at the north-west corner, an informal inlet from the river enclosed by grass banks. Views extend north to Elbrook House and park, and west over the Bury parkland to the countryside beyond. A hard tennis court lies west of the lower lawn, adjacent to the west park.

Miss Jekyll's plans show that she intended that the features on the lower lawn should be linked by axial walks. The area was to be entered from the bowling green to the south. The steps down, flanked by a border designed by her, led to the central square hedged feature (extant 1999) surrounded by formal borders. From here a walk led west to the circular hedged feature (extant 1999), and a further walk led north-west to steps down to the inlet. From the inlet a formal hedged walk returned east alongside the river, turning south and leading to the north side of the central square feature.

In the late C19 (OS 1897) the house was enclosed mainly to the east and north by a smaller garden. A path led north from the house to a riverside walk which at the north-west corner of the garden crossed the river via a bridge, continuing north across Elbrook House park. A path from the east front of Ashwell Bury gave direct access to the brewery complex.

PARK The small park, laid to pasture with scattered mature parkland trees, lies to the west and south of the house. Views extend south-east towards the church and village, and south and west over agricultural land.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden lies close to the south-east corner of the house, enclosed by a clipped yew hedge with gaps cut in it for access. The extent and hedging appears to reflect Gertrude Jekyll's design, but the interior pattern of beds has changed.

REFERENCES

Country Life, 101 (2 May 1947), pp 810-13 J Brown, Gardens of a Golden Afternoon (1982), p 100

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Maps Enclosure map for Ashwell parish, 1863 (Hertfordshire Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1882 2nd edition published 1899 3rd edition published 1925 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1897

Archival items Copies of Jekyll's planting plans (item 70, 1908, 1909) are held on microfiche at the National Monuments Record (originals held at Reef Point, USA).

Description written: March 1999 Register Inspector: SR Edited: October 2000

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.