

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

SYDENHAM HOUSE

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

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Name:	SYDENHAM HOUSE
County:	Devon
District:	West Devon (District Authority)
Parish:	Marystow
label.localisation:	Latitude: 50.633166 Longitude: -4.2208727 National Grid Reference: SX 43036 83851 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000703 Date first listed: 12-Aug-1987

Details

Late C17 or early C18 garden enclosures and C19 gardens and pleasure grounds, with late C20 additions.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Sydenham, named after its early medieval owners, was acquired through marriage by the Wise family in the C14. The present house, built on the site of an earlier structure, is the work of Sir Thomas Wise (d 1630) who was High Sheriff of Devon in 1612. Sydenham was left to Lady Wise, and when Sir Thomas' son, also Thomas, died in London in 1641, the property passed to his grandson, Edward, who was then a minor. Inheriting in 1653, Edward made improvements to Sydenham in 1654, possibly following damage during the Civil War (CL 1915), and was knighted at the Restoration. When Sir Edward Wise died in 1675, Sydenham was left to his only daughter, who was married to Colonel Arthur Tremayne of Collacombe, Devon. The Tremaynes moved to Sydenham in 1694 after the death of the dowager Lady Wise, and their son, Arthur, inherited in 1698. Further changes, perhaps including work in the gardens, were made by their grandson, another Arthur, who came of age in 1722. Arthur III lived until 1796 when he was succeeded by his son who died unmarried in 1809 leaving Sydenham to his cousin the Rev Henry Hawkins Tremayne of Heligan, Cornwall (qv). The Cornish Tremaynes used Sydenham as a shooting box and dower house, and it remained unaltered until 1937, when, following the death of Miss Tremayne, the house and contents were sold. Sydenham was purchased by Major James Despencer-Robertson who commissioned Philip Tilden to make repairs to the house. During the Second World War the house was let to Glendower School for girls. The school continued in residence after the War, but c 1950 Sydenham was sold and reverted to being a private residence. After further changes of ownership Sydenham today (1999) remains private property.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Sydenham is situated c 1.25km north-west of the hamlet of Marystow, and c 2.5km south-west of the village of Lewtrenchard. The c 10ha site comprises some 1.5ha of formal gardens, and c 8.5ha of parkland. To the east and north-east the site is bounded by a minor road which leads from Portgate to the north-west, to Coryton to the north-east, and by Sydenham Wood, an area of ornamented woodland on the south-west-facing hillside north-east of the House. To the west and south-east the site adjoins farmland, and to the south the buildings of Sydenham Farm.

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Sydenham occupies on an area of level ground to the west of the River Lyd, which flows in a valley enclosed by steeply rising wooded slopes to the north-east, and more gently rising slopes to the west and south-west. Views from the site north-west and south-east along the Lyd valley are framed by Sydenham Wood which lies within the registered site to the north-east, and further ornamented woodland, Blackdown Wood, which lies outside the registered site to the west.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Sydenham is approached from a minor road which leads south-west from the Portgate to Coryton road which forms the north-east boundary to the site at a point c 100m north-east of the House. This minor road crosses the River Lyd on Sydenham Bridge (listed grade II), an C18 rebuilding of an earlier structure c 80m in length, with metal-railed sections of parapet which allow views north-west and south-east across parkland adjoining the River Lyd. At the south-west end of Sydenham Bridge the road is divided by a triangular plot of mown grass planted with specimen trees. To the north-west the road becomes a service drive leading to the coach house and stables (listed grade II*), barn (listed grade II) and Sydenham Barton (listed grade II) which stand to the north of the House and garden. To the south-south-west the road passes through the site, dividing the gardens to the west from pleasure grounds to the east. South-west of Sydenham Bridge and aligned upon it and Sydenham Wood to the north-east, a pair of stone, square-section piers with moulded cornices support a wrought-iron gate of early C18 origin (possibly replaced c 1930), which is ornamented with the Tremayne crest (all listed grade II). The gate leads to a gravel path which passes c 25m south-west through the east garden to reach stone steps which ascend to the east porch and the front door of the House.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Sydenham House (listed grade I) was built c 1600-12 for Sir Thomas Wise, incorporating elements of an earlier house. Constructed from rubble stone, the House is of two storeys, with pitched slate roofs. The House is 'E' shaped on plan, with the entrance facade facing north-east towards Sydenham Bridge and Sydenham Wood. The two-storey gabled porch is placed centrally on the east facade, and is flanked by projecting gabled wings to the north and south. Service quarters lie to the north, adjacent to the stables, coach house and Barton. The House was altered by Edward Wise in the mid C17, with further minor alterations and repairs taking place c 1840. Philip Tilden was commissioned to undertake a restoration programme in 1937, and today (1999) Sydenham remains substantially unchanged since the mid C17.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The formal gardens lie to the east, south and west of the House, with areas of pleasure ground to the south and south-east.

The gardens below the east or entrance facade of the House are enclosed to the north, east and south by stone and cob walls with a gate flanked by square-section stone piers surmounted by granite pinnacles and ball finials in the south wall leading to the south garden (all listed grade II). The east garden is symmetrically planned, with an axial gravel path leading from the entrance gate in the east wall to the porch to the west. The walk is flanked by simple geometric topiary shapes in box, with areas of lawn to the north and south. Specimen Irish yews are planted to north and south of the east gate, and at the north-east and south-east corners of the garden. A flight of stone steps ascends to an upper garden enclosed to the north and south by projecting wings of the House, where the axial walk is flanked by further topiary shapes. The walls of the House are planted with climbing subjects. The south garden is a triangular walled enclosure to the south of the House which was laid out with a pattern of small raised beds by Simon Irvine c 1980.

The west garden is enclosed to the south and east by tall rubble-stone walls of late C18 construction (listed grade II). To the north it is enclosed by a range of C18 and C19 stone two-storey buildings including the former laundry and shippon (all listed grade II), to the east of which stands a length of rubble-stone wall and an arched gateway closed by an ornamental wooden door (listed grade II). Below the west facade of the House a stone-flagged terrace and balustrade was constructed to the design of Gillian Bauer in 1972. Centrally paced stone steps descend to a rectangular lawn which is divided by a canal running from north to south. The rectangular canal has apsidal ends to north and south, and widens to form a central square pool with rounded projections to east and west. It was remodelled in the mid C20, but early C20 photographs indicate that the canal was historically wider at its central point (CL 1915). The lawn to the west of the canal is planted with flowering shrubs and specimen trees, while there are borders below the north and south walls enclosing the garden.

Some 80m south-east of the House and gardens, and separated from them by a minor road, the Turtle Grove, named from a dovecote, is an area of mid and late C19 pleasure grounds, with lawns planted with azaleas, specimen trees and conifers

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including a cedar of Lebanon planted in 1847. This was developed from an earlier orchard by John Tremayne from c 1850 (Gardens Old and New). The Turtle Grove adjoins the buildings of Sydenham Farm to the south, and the River Lyd to the east. PARK The park comprises meadows on the north-east bank of the River Lyd to the north-west and south-east of Sydenham Bridge, which are planted with ornamental groups of broadleaf trees. To the north of the service drive and agricultural track which runs to the north and north-west of the stables, coach house and Barton north of the House, a further area of meadow to the south of the River Lyd is treated as parkland with ornamental tree planting including groups of London plane.

KITCHEN GARDEN Lying to the south of the west garden some 100m south-west of the House, the kitchen garden is enclosed to the north by the stone wall (listed grade II) which forms the south boundary of the west garden, and to the east by a late C20 stone wall which separates the garden from the public road. A late C20 wooden gate gives access from the road to the kitchen garden, and links the garden to the pleasure grounds east of the road. The kitchen garden is today (1999) in mixed cultivation, with a range of mid or late C20 glasshouses c 120m south-south-west of the House.

OTHER LAND Sydenham Wood c 200m east of the House occupies the steep, south-west-facing slope of the Lyd valley. Polwhele commented that this 'hanging wood' comprised 'large oak timber', but the same year the Rev Swete noted that the woodland in the vicinity of the House had been felled (Gray 1995). Sydenham Wood was replanted in the early C19 and is now (1999) a predominantly broadleaf wood with scattered groups of purple beeches throughout, and specimen conifers on the south-west or roadside boundary adjacent to Sydenham Bridge. A network of C19 walks and drives survives within the wood, perhaps related to the use of Sydenham as a sporting seat in the C19. Blackdown Wood, excluded from the site here registered, c 650m north-west of the House, is of similar character to Sydenham Wood but lacks drives and walks.

REFERENCES

R Polwhele, *The History of Devonshire III*, (1793-1806), p 444 *The Garden* 44, (1893), pp 157-8 *Country Life*, 5 (29 April 1899), pp 528-32; 37 (6 February 1915), pp 176-82; 119 (28 June 1956), pp 1420-3; 120 (5 July 1956), pp 16-19 *Gardens Old and New* (nd, c 1900), pp 76-9 *Devonshire Ass/Rep Trans* 41, (1909), pp 131-51 G Jekyll, *Garden Ornament* (1918), p 23 T Gray, *The Garden History of Devon An Illustrated Guide to Sources* (1995), pp 215-16

Maps J Speed, *Map of Devon*, 1610 B Donn, *Map of the County of Devon*, 1765 Tithe map for Marystow parish, 1830 (Devon Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1882-3, published 1890 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1883, published 1884 2nd edition revised 1905, published 1906

Archival items Tremayne and Wise family papers including estate accounts, household accounts including late C17 garden items (1499 add), (Devon Record Office) Correspondence regarding estate, 1821-9 (DDT2609-10, 2610-29, 2664-6), (Cornwall Record Office) Eight photographs, c 1900 (West Country Studies Library, Exeter) Sale particulars, 1937 (1096/487), (West Devon Record Office)

Description written: July 1999 Amended: September 1999 Register Inspector: JML Edited: July 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.