

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

THE HIGH BEECHES

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Name:	THE HIGH BEECHES
County:	West Sussex
District:	Mid Sussex (District Authority)
Parish:	Slaugham
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.061357 Longitude: -0.18034058 National Grid Reference: TQ 27612 30688 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000200 Date first listed: 01-Jun-1984

## Details

A C20 plantsman's and collector's garden, designed and planted by Colonel Giles Loder between 1906 and 1966.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

An early C19 villa with associated farm and stable buildings existed at High Beeches when, in 1849, the estate was purchased by Sir Robert Loder. He enlarged the house and laid out extensive formal gardens immediately around it. He was succeeded by his son Wilfred and, in 1906, by his grandson, Colonel Giles Loder, a cousin of Sir Giles Loder of Leonardslee (qv) and of Gerald, later first Lord Wakehurst of Wakehurst Place (qv). Over a period from 1906 until his death in 1966, Colonel Loder planted the present woodland gardens, utilising a great number of newly imported trees and shrubs and receiving plants from both his cousins' gardens and from those of friends such as Arthur Soames at Sheffield Park (qv) and Colonel Messel at Nymans (qv). He also consulted John Millais, a plantsman and landscape designer and son of the Pre-Raphaelite painter, on matters of design and layout. The High Beeches mansion was destroyed by fire in 1942 and not rebuilt, the shell being demolished in 1967. On the death of Colonel Loder, the estate was broken up and the gardens and site of the former mansion were bought by the Hon Edward and Mrs Boscawen. They, with the assistance until his death in 1979 of Colonel Loder's gardener, continued to manage the site to Loder's design and planting principles and to maintain his tradition of fully documented plant records. A new house (outside the registered area) was built on the lawn south of the former mansion. In 1988 the Boscawens established The High Beeches Gardens Conservation Trust and the gardens remain (1997) in charitable ownership.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** The High Beeches is situated on the south side of the B2110, c 1.5km north-east of its junction with the A23 London to Brighton road and of the village of Handcross. The 13ha of ornamental gardens lie on an undulating, south-facing slope which drops progressively more steeply towards the southern boundary of the site. The slope is cut across by a series of small south-flowing, spring-fed stream valleys or ghylls. The site is bounded to the north by an internal tree fringe alongside the B2110 while to the west, south and east, the gardens merge into the surrounding heavily wooded rural landscape, the rising crests of which largely enclose the gardens from distant view. On the immediate

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north-east side, the site abuts the paddock and garden around the present High Beeches house and, to their north-east, the C19 stables with clock tower.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The approach to The High Beeches is from the north, timber gates opening off the B2110 onto a gravelled drive which runs eastwards, parallel to the main road and enclosed from it by a shelter belt of self-sown pine and mixed deciduous trees, largely replanted after storm damage in 1987. Banks of rhododendron and light tree cover along its south side screen the drive from the gardens. Some 120m from the gates, the drive enters the gravelled and grassed car park, laid out on the level terrace of the former mansion site and its walled forecourt, remnants of which survive around the car park's perimeter. The public entrance to the gardens is through a timber lodge in the south-west corner, from which a path leads westwards through a small beech plantation to a gate opening southwards into the gardens.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** From the entrance gate, from which there are fine views over the gardens and to the surrounding wooded crests, a broad, open grassed slope leads down towards the woodland garden. On its west side is a chain of tiered ponds, shown established in 1874 (OS 1st edition), their surrounds planted with informal islands of mixed shrubs and small ornamental trees, the lower two ponds linked by a waterfall over a stone wall. Beyond the ponds to the west, the open meadow slopes are laid out with a number of large, rectangular, shelter-belt clumps of mixed deciduous trees, planted after the storm of 1987. The area immediately adjacent to the ponds, known as the Marie Curie Field of Hope, is also planted with massed daffodils. South-east of the ponds, the open grassland of Front Meadow contains a wide variety of native wildflowers. South-westwards, below the ponds, a grassed path, known as Queen Mary's Walk, leads past banks of azalea and rhododendron along its south-west side towards the stone-surfaced Forrest's Bridge (constructed with other stone bridges in the garden by Loder from 1914) which crosses an ancient east/west boundary ditch and bank. Planted with low-growing rhododendrons, some collected by George Forrest (1873-1932), the bank formed the limit of Colonel Loder's garden up to about 1932 (guidebook; Mrs Boscawen pers comm, 1997). West of Forrest's Bridge, a path leads c 30m to a seat from which there is an extensive vista south-eastwards down the length of a stream valley in which primulas (part of the slope below the seat is known as the Primula Piece), iris, ferns and gentians are naturalised amid dotted rhododendron and occasional tall conifers. Mature oaks form a light canopy. Running south-eastwards from the seat, along the south-west side of the valley parallel to the stream, a path known as the Loderi Walk is fringed with many forms of both Loderei and other rhododendrons and with camellias. The path continues its descent to the south-east boundary of the garden, passing through Dencombe Wood, an area of light oak woodland established as a plantation in the early C19, into which Colonel Loder extended the gardens (removing fifty oaks) from 1932. The far south-west corner of the site is occupied by The Copse, an area of oak standard and coppice woodland.

East of the Loderi Walk and south-east of Forrest's Bridge, paths lead to the top of The Glade, a broad, open grassy slope planted with tree and shrub groups including Japanese maples, witch hazels, styrax and photinias, which descends south-eastwards into Dencombe Wood. From the top of The Glade a path leads c 80m to the Centre Pond, a circular pond established in c 1914 in a former brick pit, the rising slopes on its north side planted with tree heaths and with a blue Atlas cedar dating from 1910. East of the pond a path descends to cross New Bridge which spans a further, south-running stream valley, the rising eastern slopes of which (to the south of New Bridge) are known as the Plain Field and are laid to open meadow with native wild flowers and lightly dotted with exotic trees. North of the Plain Field, the path from New Bridge leads along the east side of the valley through banks of rhododendrons and azaleas to the Oak Seat, adjacent to the eastern boundary and sited in the area of Loder's earliest planting. From here there are fine views westwards across the gardens and near the seat is a dove or handkerchief tree grown from seed collected by Ernest Wilson (1876-1930) in 1904. Westwards from the Oak Seat, a path leads across the stream valley (known as East Ghyll) to the Magnolia Garden (c 50m north-east of the Centre Pond) which is planted with a range of magnolias, two Magnolia Lennei surviving from Colonel Loder's planting in 1914, and other trees and shrubs for autumn colour. On the west side of the Magnolia Garden is a small collection of conifer trees including swamp cypress and juniper, also sassafras.

A comprehensive and detailed description of the planting at The High Beeches can be found in the current edition of the guidebook.

#### REFERENCES

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*Inventory of Great Britain*  
*THE HIGH BEECHES*

The High Beeches, guidebook, (edns of c 1970s and 1990s) Garden History 7, (spring 1979), pp 4-7 Country Life, 175 (29 March 1984), pp 810-12

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1899 3rd edition published 1912 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1874 3rd edition published 1909 4th edition published 1932

Description written: December 1997 Amended: January 2000 Register Inspector: VCH Edited: June 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.