

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

CLAYDON

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

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
CLAYDON

Name:	CLAYDON
District:	Buckinghamshire (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	East Claydon
District:	Buckinghamshire (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Middle Claydon
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.924275 Longitude: -0.96170059 National Grid Reference: SP7149825593 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000597 Date first listed: 30-Aug-1987

Details

A mid to late C18 landscape park surrounding an C18/C19 country house, with further garden development in the C19.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Claydon became the seat of the Verney family in 1620. Sir Ralph Verney returned in 1653 from self-imposed exile in France, to embark on remodelling the manor house, in addition planting the garden with many ornamentals and creating a deer park which held fifty-five deer, sited probably in the position of the present park, but on a smaller scale. He also made a new road to the house and probably began the development of the natural stream c 1660 (National Trust 1990). Little further alteration to the estate was made until Ralph, second Lord Verney, inherited it in 1752, and set about improving the estate in order to try and rival the works being carried out at nearby Stowe (qv). He built the stable court c 1754, and began work on the house, continuing through the 1770s and 1780s. The park was landscaped by James Sanderson of Reading between 1763 and 1776, when he died. Sir Harry Verney inherited the estate in 1827, making improvements to the house and estate, including creating the west terrace by the house, until his death in 1894. His second wife, Frances Parthenope, was the sister of Florence Nightingale, a frequent visitor to Claydon during the second half of the C19. In 1956 the house and gardens were given to the National Trust.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Claydon lies in the Vale of Aylesbury, on low clay hills, at the centre of the four Claydon villages, 15km north-west of Aylesbury and 9km south of Buckingham. The 100ha site is bounded to the south by the Botolph Claydon to Charndon lane, to the west by a lane linking this lane with the Middle Claydon to Steeple Claydon lane, which forms the north boundary together with the village of Middle Claydon, and to the east by a brook at the bottom of a shallow agricultural valley. The setting is largely agricultural, with the small village of Middle Claydon adjacent and the other Claydons all within 2km of the site. To the south several woodlands also form part of the setting, with rides cut through them aligned on the house and park, of which one in particular is centred on the south front of the house. Low hill ranges to the west and south form a distant rim.

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
CLAYDON

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Two drives bisect the park, entering from the north and south and joining at the pleasure grounds in the centre. The main, north drive enters off the Middle Claydon to Steeple Claydon lane, west of the adjacent village. This entrance is flanked by the north lodges (c 1760, listed grade II), small, square, ashlar boxes with short projecting screen walls, ramped down towards the drive between, and supporting wooden gates. The slightly raised drive runs south through the open park, with long views west across the park and lake. The drive arrives at the main, north, entrance front of the house, where a square gravel carriage sweep lies, bounded by a clipped beech hedge, with a large cedar in the north-east corner. A spur off the north drive, close to the house, continues south-east to the stable court and beyond to the south past the kitchen garden, meeting the south drive at the east edge of the pleasure grounds.

The south drive enters off the Botolph Claydon to Charndon lane, past two lodge buildings. The substantial western lodge, now largely C19 Tudor style, of brick and timber, incorporates an earlier, small, low, ashlar building, with a relatively unaltered plain stone lodge in similar style pairing it east of the entrance. Both have short projecting screen walls, ramped down towards the drive between, which support wooden gates in a similar manner to the north lodges. The drive curves north-east around the south end of the pleasure grounds, arriving at their east boundary to join the north drive.

A spur from the south drive, now a disused grass track raised above the surrounding ground, curves around the west boundary of the pleasure grounds close to the ha-ha and meets the north drive close to the house. It appears from the 1841 Tithe map that both this and the north drive formerly met at the west front in a curved carriage sweep, where the west terrace now lies. A further track, now disused, runs straight along the 700m avenue from the south-east corner of the site, curving around the north end of the pleasure grounds.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING The house (listed grade I), which lies at the centre of the site on high ground, is on the site of a Tudor house remodelled in the C17. The east wing, probably on the site of the earlier house, lies close to and faces the stable block, and is attached to the 1860 south wing, of brick and in entirely different character to the other fronts, having probably been altered by Gilbert Scott (1811/78). The south front overlooks the south garden, with views south across the park towards the distant woodland. The main, west wing is of ashlar, consisting of a magnificent suite of large public rooms decorated in the rococo style, built by Ralph, second Earl Verney, in the 1760s and 1770s, with work by Luke Lightfoot and Sir Thomas Robinson, which face west across the park and lake. This wing is the remaining third of a great west wing which stretched north for a total of 256 feet, with a domed marble hall in the middle of it sited approximately where the carriage sweep is today, and a ballroom wing, with a matching facade to balance the remaining front, on the north, far side of the domed hall. The whole magnificent west wing overlooked the newly landscaped park, with extensive views of the countryside to the west. Verney had intended to make Claydon the political and cultural centre of the county, a rival to the Temples and Grenvilles at Stowe, but he died bankrupt in 1791. In 1792 the centre and north wings were demolished, leaving the south end. Because of the demolition of the northern portion no proper front door to the house exists, the main entrance on the ashlar north front being through a window formed during the later remodelling of the north wall.

The brick stables (1754, listed grade II) form three sides of a large grass courtyard, with the east front of the house forming the fourth side. Each range has a pedimented centre, the east range with a tall lantern, and the south with an archway through which the spur from the north drive enters a service area and runs on past the kitchen garden to the north end of the south drive.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The house is surrounded by its compact gardens and pleasure grounds. The formal, mid to late C19 west terrace consists of two rectangular grass panels surrounded by gravel paths; this was created to separate the west front of the house from the park, using a straight stone extension of the curved, brick ha-ha wall which joins it from the south. This terrace has a wide view of the lake and park in the middle distance, across to a panoramic view of the distant countryside stretching away to low hills to the west and south-west. Close to the south-west corner of the house the rubble-stone church of All Saints (c 1300, listed grade I) dominates the west and south garden areas, situated on a hillock above them and bounded with trees to the south and east. The surrounding graveyard was removed in the C18, probably as part of the landscaping works by Sanderson.

The long, level, rectangular south lawn is edged on the west by the church on its hillock, with a bank up to the east supporting a flat terrace and lawn. The south lawn ends at the ha-ha, overlooking the south park, with views to the bridge at the south

park boundary and out into the countryside beyond, particularly towards a ride cut into the eastern side of Home Wood which aligns exactly on the south front of the house. The broad terrace and its lawn above the east side of the south lawn are bounded by walls on the north and east, including those of the two walled gardens. A small brick gazebo, attached to the south-west corner of the smaller, western, walled garden, has a stone panel engraved 'Ellin's Rest 1881' set into the west wall, and a plaque commemorating Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee (1897) is set into the wall at the north end of the terrace. An ashlar, gothic-style fernery (mid C18, listed grade II) lies at the northern end of the south garden, attached to the south range of the stables, close to the house and an archway to the south-east through flanking brick walls (mid C18, listed grade II) leading directly from the garden into the service area. The pleasure grounds, containing mature trees and informal grass areas, extend east from the south end of the south lawn, encircling the kitchen garden on the south and east sides, and continuing north across the end of the south drive to the higher area north of the stables, which contains a square pond which is almost dry (1997). A brick ha-ha separating the pleasure grounds from the park runs from south of the kitchen garden, curving west and north to the west front of the house. The pleasure grounds to the east and north are separated from the park by iron fencing. North of the house a shrubbery with a short gravel drive through it separates the north entrance court from the stable court.

PARK The park, laid out over the earlier deer park by Sanderson, surrounds the house, church and pleasure grounds and falls into two main areas separated by the north and south drives. From the north drive and western ha-ha the pasture of the west park slopes gently down to Sanderson's lake formed from the natural stream. The lake consists of three main sections, separated by earth banks planted with trees, with several tree-planted islands. The land west of the lake is largely level, with scattered trees and clumps. A belt of woodland frames the north end of the lake, above which the spire of Steeple Claydon church is visible from the house and west terrace. At the south end of the lake lies a single-arch, brick and stone bridge (mid C18, listed grade II), an ornamental part of Sanderson's layout, which disguises the termination of the lake.

The western half of the east park is pasture, containing a double avenue of limes and several large old oaks, with the village buildings visible at the north end and a view north-east to distant countryside. The eastern half is arable and the ground falls away to the brook at the east boundary, rising beyond it towards the ridge of the low hill to the east.

KITCHEN GARDEN The larger of the two walled gardens, the kitchen garden, covering three quarters of a hectare, lies 100m south-east of the house, facing south, and is surrounded by brick walls with four entrances, one at the centre of each wall. The north, service entrance gives direct access to the drive system and has little ornamentation, but the other three entrances are marked by brick piers, with stone ball finials on the east and south entrance piers, giving access to the garden and pleasure grounds. A small, late C19 brick gazebo, in similar style to 'Ellin's Rest', is incorporated into the south-east corner, with the gardener's cottage outside the north-east corner. The kitchen garden is cultivated, with a cruciform grass path system, and a central, circular, brick-lined tank (empty). The garden is sheltered by mature trees, mostly conifers, in the pleasure grounds to the south and east. From the lawn south of the house a view east runs straight through the west and east entrances across the walled garden. A further brick-walled garden, less than one quarter of the size of the kitchen garden, is attached to its west wall. This enclosure is laid to grass with perimeter borders and a swimming pool in the centre, with a modern glasshouse on the north wall.

REFERENCES

Country Life, 9 (18 May 1901), pp 617-20; 31 (9 March 1912), pp 356-64; (16 March 1912), pp 394-9; 112 (24 October 1952), pp 1278-81; (31 October 1952), pp 1398-1401 J Broad, Sir Ralph Verney and his estates 1630-1969, (unpub thesis Oxford University 1973) Archaeological Survey, Claydon House, (National Trust 1990) N Pevsner and E Williamson, The Buildings of England: Buckinghamshire (1994), pp 476-81 Claydon House, guidebook, (National Trust 1995)

Maps Tithe map for Middle Claydon, 1841 (no 266), (Buckinghamshire Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1885 2nd edition published 1900 3rd edition published 1923 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1880 2nd edition published 1899

Archival items The Verney Papers, held at Claydon (index at Buckinghamshire Record Office), include the following items: Drawings by James Sanderson of Caversham, employed to landscape the park 1763-76, relating to proposed lake design (12/2/19-21) Designs for garden arbours, c 1770 (12/2/69-70) Lake and planting plan, c 1770, probably by Sanderson (12/2/71)

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
CLAYDON

Description written: 1997 Register Inspector: SR Edited: June 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.