

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

RODMARTON MANOR

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

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*  
*Inventory of Great Britain*  
**RODMARTON MANOR**

Name:	RODMARTON MANOR
County:	Gloucestershire
District:	Cotswold (District Authority)
Parish:	Rodmarton
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.677910 Longitude: -2.0841387 National Grid Reference: ST 94279 97686 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000779 Date first listed: 28-Feb-1986

## Details

Compartmentalised gardens designed to be integral with a country house in the Arts and Crafts style built between 1909 and the later 1920s. HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT In 1884 the Kemble estate, including Rodmarton, was bequeathed to Michael Biddulph. He was a banker, farmer, and landowner from Ledbury (Herefordshire), an MP from 1865 to 1900, and subsequently Lord Biddulph. In 1894 he gave the 551 acre (C.223ha) Rodmarton portion of the estate to his eighteen-year-old younger son, Claud. Claud followed a career in the City, and in 1906 he married Margaret Howard, subsequently described by John Rothenstein as 'the animating and directing force' at Rodmarton Manor, 'presiding over house and village like the abbess of some great medieval religious house' (Aslett 1982). The Biddulphs decided to have a new house built c1909 and commissioned the Arts and Crafts architect Ernest Barnsley to design it. Some £5000 a year was to be devoted to the project, the house being intended not only as a country house but also a focal point in the village and a centre for communal activity. In part this activity was directed to furnishing and decorating the house. The garden was part of the original design. After Claud Biddulph's death in 1954 his wife moved into a cottage and the house was occupied by their son Anthony (d 1984) and his wife Mary (d 1991). Rodmarton Manor remains (1999) in private hands.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Rodmarton Manor stands on the south edge of the small village of Rodmarton, on a minor road 1km north of the A433 from Tetbury, 7km to the south-west, to Cirencester, 9km to the north-east. The Manor's gardens (c 4ha) adjoin open countryside to the east, west, and south, with expansive views over gently falling farmland to the Marlborough Downs 25km to the south. To the north they are separated from the village by grassy closes.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** There are two approach drives: west of the Manor is a gateway on the road connecting the village with the A433. From this the Holly Drive, lined with high clipped hedges of box and holly, leads in a straight line east to the vernacular-style stone buildings at the entrance to the stable yard which act, visually, as lodges. That to the north (listed grade II) is a cottage occupied by the gardener while that to the south (listed grade II) is the former coach house, now (late C20) a garage. On the far side of the stable yard is the west side of the Manor's forecourt. The second approach is via the

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*  
*Inventory of Great Britain*  
*RODMARTON MANOR*

Beech Drive from the village to the north, which runs on a straight line south for 175m between widely set high beech hedges before turning west, through a shrubbery, to the east side of the forecourt.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Rodmarton Manor (listed grade I) is a many-gabled house of Cotswold limestone with a stone slate roof. In plan it is a long thin strip running round three sides of an octagon. On the north-west side of the house is a stables court, while attached to the north-east side of it is a service court. The first designs for the house by Ernest Barnsley (d 1926) are dated 1909, and work began on the kitchen court in that year. The building was well advanced by 1912, the house was occupied in 1915, and work was largely complete by 1926. The last phase of the Manor, its chapel, was completed in 1929 under the supervision of Norman Jewson. Traditional materials and methods were used in the house, which from the time of its construction has been highly regarded as one of the best products of the Arts and Crafts movement. The earlier, C15 manor house on the Rodmarton estate (outside the registered area) had fallen into disrepair in the C18.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** Ernest Barnsley's original overall scheme of 1909 for Rodmarton included its gardens, driveways, and outbuildings, and these were treated as integral parts of the design. The Manor has an intimate relationship with the gardens, the former having main rooms which have open views across the gardens and two open-air loggias on the first floor. The gardens are designed as a series of outdoor rooms, each enclosed by stone walls or formal hedges. The concave north side of the Manor opens onto a forecourt, largely occupied by the grass Circle, 40m in diameter, around which runs the drive. This was intended, in part, to evoke a village green. Clipped yew drums mark entrances to the house. Running across the north side of the forecourt are irregular lines of lime trees, originally pollarded or pleached but not so cropped for several decades. Eastward of these is the shrubbery along the western part of the Beech Drive. The main gardens lie south and especially west of the house. A gateway off the forecourt at the north-west corner of the house leads into the Leisure Garden, with high, rough, Cotswold stone walls to its north and west sides. The present layout, with a largely flagged interior with ground-covering plants and roses, was planted by Mary Biddulph in 1959; previously it was mainly filled with lavender and roses, with grass and stone paths. From the east side of this garden there is access to the first of the compartments which run along the south front of the house. Tucked against the house is the Winter Garden, with pleached lime trees and box hedges; these form part of the original scheme. South of the Winter Garden is the Troughery, an eclectic collection of stone drinking troughs planted with alpines. South of the Troughery is the Topiary Lawn, c 20m long from north to south and c 15m wide, down either side of which are box bushes clipped into various shapes. Circular flagstones run down the centre of the Lawn to the terraced path with white borders and clipped Portuguese laurels planted in the 1920s which runs along the south front of the garden, and from which there are views across the Daffodil Paddock to the south and the countryside beyond. East of the Topiary Lawn, and running along the rest of the south front, is the stone-flagged Terrace, on which there are two square compartments defined by 1.5m high clipped yew hedges (c 1930) with topiary rising above. The south-east portion of this part of the gardens is occupied by the Sunken Garden, at the east end of which is a vine-covered arbour supported on rough stone piers. The terraced path which runs along south of the Terrace and Topiary Lawn continues as an axial path west through the gardens west of the house. To its south, firstly, continuing the line of the Leisure Garden to the north of the path, is the Cherry Orchard. This was part of a field until c 1958. The cherries have largely failed and the rough grass compartment now (1999) contains a number of shrubs and specimen trees. The next compartment to the west is the Croquet Lawn, across the north part of which is a rockery of 1993; earlier this was a tennis lawn. Next is a lawned compartment with a swimming pool of 1974, on the north side of which is a contemporary building with sun lounge and changing rooms. Previously there was a hard tennis court here, and a small rustic pavilion survives at the north-west corner of the compartment. Hard tennis courts still occupy the next compartment to the west. It too has a rustic pavilion on its north edge. Each of the four compartments south of the path, which are almost wholly bounded by high clipped yew hedges, is c 35m long from north to south and c 20m wide. West of the hard tennis courts a gap in the hedge gives access to the Wild Garden, which occupies the south-west compartment of the overall garden plan. Running north/south down its centre is the Hornbeam Avenue, which carries the eye south to the countryside beyond the garden. Running parallel with and north of the axial path is the Long Garden, c 75m long from east to west and c 15m wide. Its south side is bounded by the 2.5m high clipped yew hedge which separates it from the axial path, while to the north it is defined by the buttressed, exterior, stone wall of the kitchen garden which is of an equal height. An

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*  
*Inventory of Great Britain*  
**RODMARTON MANOR**

irregularly flagged path leads down the centre of the walk between herbaceous borders, past a small central court with a basin set around with four benches backed by clipped yew. At the west end of the walk and the path is a stone summerhouse (listed grade II) by Ernest Barnsley with a hipped roof of stone slates. Gardening was one of Margaret Biddulph's passions, and before her marriage she attended Studley Horticultural College for Women, in Berkshire, where William Scrubey had taught. He was persuaded to come to Rodmarton as head gardener, and he and Margaret planted and developed the gardens together. Over the side door to the garden is a carved inscription reading 'A. Wright Faber Tignarius/W. Scrubey Hortorum Cultor' [Wright was the estate foreman]. Under Mary Biddulph, notably in the later 1950s, there were some alterations to the original layout.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The kitchen garden, north of the Long Garden and west of the Leisure Garden, is rectangular, c 70m long from east to west and c 50m wide. Its walls are stone externally and brick internally. Paths, partly lined with old cordon apple trees, divide it into quarters. It remains (1999) in cultivation. An eastward extension of the garden, beyond the high east wall of which is the forecourt, contains a vinery and three early C20 greenhouses. Along the outside of the north wall is a slip with frames, whose north boundary is formed by the Holly Drive. A second, unwallled, kitchen garden, immediately west of the main one, was abandoned c 1980. It is now a grass paddock with some old apple trees along its west side.

#### REFERENCES

Country Life, 160 (16 December 1976), pp 1844-6; 164 (19 October 1978), pp 1178-81 J Sales, *West Country Gardens* (1981), pp 95-8 A Lees-Milne and R Verey, *The Englishwoman's Garden* (1981), pp 31-4 C Aslett, *The Last Country Houses* (1982), pp 225-36 D Ottewill, *The Edwardian Garden* (1989), p 134 Rodmarton Manor: the story of an Arts and Crafts House, guidebook, (Rodmarton Manor 1996) Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1881-2, published 1887

Description written: March 1999 Register Inspector: PAS Edited: April 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.