

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

WYCH CROSS PLACE

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

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Name:	WYCH CROSS PLACE
County:	East Sussex
District:	Wealden (District Authority)
Parish:	Danehill
County:	East Sussex
District:	Wealden (District Authority)
Parish:	Forest Row
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.065825 Longitude: 0.018053137 National Grid Reference: TQ 41500 31547 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000515 Date first listed: 01-Dec-1990

Details

Formal gardens and pleasure grounds designed by Thomas Hayton Mawson in 1901.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT The estate was newly laid out, during the early 1900s for Douglas W Freshfield, a geographer and President of the Alpine Club. Freshfield employed Thomas Hayton Mawson (1861-1933) to design the formal gardens and pleasure grounds which were then built by Mawson using the family firm Mawson Brothers, as contractors. Mawson took great care not to destroy or detract from the dominating natural character of the surrounding forest, describing how he considered that 'the results justified the methods' (see Mawson's Life and Work). His work at Wych Cross Place was considered one of his best achievements and was greatly commended during the 1910s in contemporary journals.

Although some simplification of the planting has taken place and the pergola has been removed the majority of Mawson's scheme has remained unaltered. The site remains in private ownership.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Wych Cross Place lies on the western county boundary of East Sussex, with West Sussex and stands in the Ashdown Forest, 0.5km west of the hamlet of Wych Cross. The 47ha site occupies a spur at the head of a heavily wooded valley covered by Press Ridge Warren. The house and gardens, situated uphill within the northern area of Press Ridge Warren command extensive views out to the south-west, over the heavily wooded slopes.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES An entrance lodge stands a little to the south of Wych Cross some 300m north of the junction of the A275 and the A22, on the west side of the A22 East Grinstead-Uckfield road. The entrance drive lies immediately to the south of the lodge and enters into the estate through a pair of wrought iron gates hung between ashlar piers. From here

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the drive approaches the house winding through pleasure grounds, to arrive at a forecourt situated below the north façade of the house.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Edmund Fisher was the architect for the house designed in 1904, although its siting and orientation was Mawson's decision.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The principal formal gardens lie to the south and west of the house. Immediately below the south facade a balustraded stone terrace forms the main east-west axis of the design. Steps set centrally to the south front of the house lead down from the top terrace to the main terrace.

This main terrace forms the focus of the south facing formal gardens, and affords extensive views across the valley. Central on the main terrace there is a large rectangular lily pond with apsidal ends, with a central fountain.

Low wrought iron gates lead off the west and east ends of the main terrace. Originally the east end opened onto a walk which led to an extensive pergola, now demolished. A pair of double gates set between high stone piers stand centrally on the southern edge of the terrace, at the head of a long flight of steps. These lead down the hillside and gradually become more informally constructed, the greater the distance from the house.

At the foot of the terrace wall there is a broad cross walk which originally linked up to the pergola to the east. To the west the cross walk leads down rough stone steps through a low rockery bank into the more informal pleasure grounds. Below this walk, and separated from it by a shrub bank, is a curving path cut into the hillside, which winds through the lawns and shrubbery laid out below the formal gardens.

From the west end of the top terrace a flight of steps leads down to the bowling green. This lawn, separated and screened from the pleasure grounds below by a shrub-planted bank, is surrounded by a yew hedge which has a curved stone seat set into its apsidal western end.

A balustraded terrace is set against and beneath the western facade of the house. At its northern end a flight of steps leads west down to the rose garden, a narrow lawn set with rose beds, with a stone-built summerhouse at its western end. The bowling green lies below the southern edge of this garden, beyond a yew hedge. On the north side of the rose garden a gateway leads onto a lawn decorated with a fountain in the form of a raised bowl and lead statuette, set against an informal backdrop of shrubs. The top terrace below the south front extends eastwards as a long straight walk which eventually leads to the walled kitchen garden. The area between the walk and the drive to the north is planted with a screen of shrubs, the path being bordered by wide grass verges, backed by hedging in front of woodland. The walk continues through the kitchen garden focusing on the conservatory which is the southernmost building in a range of glass-houses lining the north and east walls.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden forms an integral part of the decorative gardens, and this is reflected in the quality of detailing and construction of the boundary walls and gates, and by its considered interior layout. In the centre of the garden, on the line of the west-east axis, the main paths focus on a circular dipping well surrounded by a framework of trained fruit trees. Further to the east, beyond the kitchen garden, are the stables, bothy and the head gardener's house, carefully designed to form a part of the overall design.

REFERENCES:

Printed material G Beard, Thomas H Mawson (1976), p67 T H Mawson, *The Life and Work of an English Landscape Architect*, pp 69-74, 238-40, n.17,18 T H Mawson, *The Art and Craft of Garden Making* (3rd edn 1907), (4th edn 1912) and (5th edn 1926) *Country Life*, v.28 (1910), pp934-40 *Journal of Horticulture and Cottage Gardener N.S.*, v.55 (1907) pp372-5 *Building News*, v.83 (1902), p46 *Architect and Builder's Journal*, v.34 (1911), p82, 99 *Architectural Record*, v.27, p322 *Architectural Review*, v.28, (1910), p69-70

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile 2nd edition, published 1911

Description written : July 1992 Register Inspector : Dr H Jordan Revised K Campbell, January 2000

Legal

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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.