

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

OARE HOUSE

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Name:	OARE HOUSE
District:	Wiltshire (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Wilcot, Huish and Oare
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.365708 Longitude: -1.7769786 National Grid Reference: SU 15623 62984 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001241 Date first listed: 01-Sep-1987

Details

A formal garden laid out between 1921 and 1925 by Sir Bertram Clough Williams-Ellis, set within the remains of C18 walled gardens.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Oare House was built in 1740 for the London wine merchant Henry Deacon. In the late C18, under the ownership of Maurice Hiller, the House had formal gardens, an avenue, a summerhouse, and a large plantation (Andrews and Drury, 1773). In the C19, under the ownership of the Goodman family, the House was altered and the C18 park was gradually sold off (Enclosure map, 1803; Tithe map, 1839), but the C18 avenue and walled gardens and pleasure grounds were retained. By 1893, Oare House and its grounds had fallen into disrepair and the property was sold that same year (Sale particulars). A succession of different owners subsequently purchased the estate.

Oare House was purchased in c 1920 by Sir Geoffrey Fry, private secretary to Bonar Law and Stanley Baldwin. Shortly after he commissioned the architect, landscape architect, planner, and writer Sir Bertram Clough Williams-Ellis (1883-1978). Between 1921 and 1925, Williams-Ellis designed two new wings for the house as well as various outbuildings, and he also advised on the layout of new formal gardens set within the existing C18 walled gardens, for which he designed various features (CL 1928). During the Second World War, the War Cabinet used Oare House for secret meetings. In c 1970 the House and grounds were bought by Sir Alexander Downer, a former Australian High Commissioner, who sold it again in 1975. In 1985-6 further planting schemes were undertaken in the gardens, to designs by the landscape architect Peter Coats.

The site remains (2001) in private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Oare House, a site of c 3.2ha, is situated along the A345 road between Pewsey and Marlborough, in the village of Oare. The ground at Oare House is generally level, with a slight rise to the north and north-east. Immediately adjacent to the south-east corner of the site stands Holy Trinity church of 1858, built on part of the former grounds of Oare House. To the west and south-west of the site, c 350m and 550m from the House respectively, lie two woodlands called North Copse and Park Copse. A long vista runs in a westerly direction from the garden west of the House through North Copse, where it is lined with lime trees. This was created in the 1920s, perhaps to evoke that shown on the 1773 plan (Debois & Beresford 1996).

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ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main entrance lies c 150m east of the House, on the A345 road between Pewsey and Marlborough. It is flanked to the south by an C18 lodge (outside the area here registered) and gives access to a mature lime avenue which runs in a west-north-westerly direction to a forecourt with gates, walls, and railings (listed grade II) to the east of the House. The lime avenue is flanked on either side by a mature beech hedge, planted c 1926 (ibid).

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Oare House (listed grade I) is situated in the centre of the site. It was built in 1740 and has C19 alterations. Between 1921 and 1925 the three-storey House was enlarged with addition of wings to the north and south designed by Sir Clough Williams-Ellis for Sir Geoffrey Fry. The entrance front to the east has an elevation of five bays and a central Ionic portico. The garden elevation to the west also has five bays, but a central Roman Doric portico.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS To the south of the House lies the Library Garden, a small garden enclosed by yew hedges and walls. It has a wisteria-covered pergola with an adjacent lily pool. At the west end of this garden is a loggia of c 1925 designed by Sir Clough Williams-Ellis (listed grade II). The building is of brick with stone dressings and is framed by a pleached lime avenue. A side door leads into another small, enclosed garden to its west.

Along the west front of the House is a broad paved terrace, with grass slopes leading down to an open rectangular lawn of c 1ha. The lawn is enclosed by C18 brick walls with stone copings (listed grade II), which were slightly altered in the 1920s. The lawn is bounded to its south by the north wall of the kitchen garden. To the north and south of the lawn, against the boundary wall, are fine mixed borders. Along its west side the lawn is closed off by a pair of early C20 clairvoie railings (listed grade II). Beyond these is an early C20 rectangular swimming pool, leading the eye further to a long vista cut through North Copse in the 1920s (outside the area here registered). The pool is enclosed by yew hedges which are trained to massive battlements to the north and south. Along the west side of the pool is an herbaceous border.

To the south-east of the House lies a tennis court introduced in the 1920s, which is enclosed to the north, south, and east by a mature beech hedge.

KITCHEN GARDEN The walled kitchen garden, which is situated c 30m to the south-west of the House, dates from the early C20 (OS 1906, 1924), with a later extension to its south. It has a formal layout with central paths dividing it into four sections.

REFERENCES

Country Life, 63 (10 March 1928), pp 334-41 Victoria History of the County of Wiltshire X, (1970), p 190 B Cherry and N Pevsner, The Buildings of England: Wiltshire (2nd edn 1975), pp 363-4 J Sales, West Country Gardens (1980), pp 238-9 D Ottewill, Edwardian Gardens (1989), pp 182-5 Oare House, Wiltshire: Collection of Historical Research (Debois Landscape Survey Group & Camilla Beresford 1996) [report for English Heritage]

Maps Andrews and Drury, Map of Wiltshire, 1773 (Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office) Oare Enclosure Award, 1803 (Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office) Tithe map for Wilcot parish, 1839 (Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office)

OS Surveyor's Drawings, 2" to 1 mile, 1808 (British Library maps) OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1888 2nd edition published 1906 3rd edition published 1926 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1888 2nd edition published 1906 3rd edition published 1924

Archival items Sale particulars for Oare House, 1893 (Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office) Sale catalogue for Oare House, 1975 (Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office)

Illustrations Aerial photographs, 13 March 1995 (NMR 15219/22, 23, 24); 21 February 2001 (NMR 1563/25, 26), (NMR, Swindon)

Description written: October 2001 Register Inspector: FDM Edited: December 2004

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.