

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

BATSFORD PARK

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*Inventory of Great Britain*  
**BATSFORD PARK**

Name: BATSFORD PARK

County: Gloucestershire

District: Cotswold (District Authority)

Parish: Batsford

County: Gloucestershire

District: Cotswold (District Authority)

Parish: Blockley

County: Gloucestershire

District: Cotswold (District Authority)

Parish: Bourton-on-the-Hill

label.localisation: Latitude: 52.002378  
Longitude: -1.7353610  
National Grid Reference: SP 18264 33804  
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden  
Grade: II\*  
List Entry Number: 1000431  
Date first listed: 28-Feb-1986

## Details

Formal garden, arboretum, and oriental-influenced wild garden of the 1890s and later, and landscape park of the later C18, associated with a country house.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1608 Batsford was owned by John Croker, one of whose daughters carried it in marriage to the Barker family. Later it was owned by Richard Freeman (d 1710), Lord High Chancellor of Ireland and one of the Lords Justices, in whose time a classical front was added to an older and rambling house, and perhaps modest formal gardens laid out around it. In 1712, the year when Kip's view of the house and its surrounds was published (Atkyns 1712), the estate passed to his son Richard. On his death in 1745 Batsford passed to his nephew, Walter Edwards, who took the name Freeman. He was succeeded by his son Thomas c 1756, and it was apparently in his time that the older, formal setting of the house was removed in favour of a landscape park. On his death in 1818 his estates passed to a cousin, John Freeman-Mitford (d 1830), who as Lord Chancellor of Ireland was created Lord Redesdale in 1802. His son and successor John Thomas Freeman-Mitford (cr Earl of Redesdale 1877, d 1886) had new stables built in 1878. However, it was his cousin and heir Algernon Bertram Freeman-Mitford (cr Baron Redesdale 1902, d 1916),

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formerly an attaché in the British Embassy in Tokyo, who created the modern Batsford, from 1888 rebuilding the house on a new site and in the 1890s laying out the Wild Garden and planting specimen trees. His thoughts on gardening were published in *The Bamboo Garden* (1896), and in contributions to William Robinson's *The English Flower Garden* (first published in 1883) and Robinson's periodical *Flora and Sylva* (1903-5). By the time of the First World War Batsford's bamboos, Wild Garden, and Japanese buildings were widely known and admired. In 1918 the Batsford estate was sold to Sir Gilbert Hamilton Wills (cr Lord Dulverton 1929, d 1956); between 1920 and 1939 the garden was cared for and added to by Lady Dulverton, but thereafter was neglected until 1956 when the second Lord Dulverton (d 1992) succeeded. Restoration and additional planting followed. In 1984 he gave the Arboretum to a charitable trust, the Batsford Foundation. The rest of the park remains (1999) in private hands.

#### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Batsford Park stands on an outcrop of the Cotswolds c 2.5km north-west of Moreton in the Marsh. The house stands in its park west of Batsford village, the road to which from Moreton bounds the park to the north-east before turning to follow the north-west edge of the park. This is the highest section both of the registered landscape and the surrounding countryside which slopes downhill to the south-east at first gently and then more steeply, the lowest ground lying along the south-east edge of the park. The area here registered is c 120ha.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** One approach is from the north-west, and there are C19 monumental ashlar gate piers with wrought-iron gates (listed grade II) and a small polite lodge of c 1890 (listed grade II) by Sir Ernest George and Harold Peto adjoining the south-west corner of the churchyard on the edge of Batsford village. A second approach, and the main commercial one to the Arboretum, is from the south via a 1km long approach road from the A44 west of Bourton-on-the-Hill. There are two C19 lodges, one standing on the edge of the park and another 200m to the north-west, close to the walled garden; both are late C19 (pre 1884, OS).

Kip's view (Atkyns 1712) shows that the main approach was then to a court south-west of the house, presumably via the road from Bourton-on-the-Hill. In the C19 there were several other drives to the house in addition to those which remain in use today, notably one from the north-west (now a track past David's Folly) lined with copper beeches, and a further one from the south-east.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Batsford Park (listed grade II\*) was built on a new site in 1888-92 to a design by Sir Ernest George and Harold Peto with work being supervised by Guy Dawber. It is an ashlar building in the Cotswold Elizabethan style comprising a main south-west to north-east range with projecting wings and central porch on the north-west, entrance side. A service range extends north-east from the main house.

The old house lay c 100m to the north-west. Kip's view (Atkyns 1712) shows a multi-gabled house facing south-west, to which a pedimented facade had been applied, probably fairly recently, to the south-east, garden front.

The stables (listed grade II) built for the modern house in 1878 by Sir Ernest George stand in Batsford village, outside the registered area.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** Against the north-west side of the house is a gravelled forecourt, beyond which lawns extend to the bottom of the hillslope occupied by the Arboretum. A wrought-iron gate against the north-west corner of the house gives access from the front to a small yew-hedged court against the south-west side of the house, around a small rectangular swimming pool (?early C20). The main garden extends along the south-east front, enclosed by stone terrace walls and balustrades. It comprises two broad terraces, with pyramidal-roofed garden houses of ashlar on terraces (all stone structures listed grade II) at the two front corners of the garden overlooking Cold Well Lake and the park. All these are of the 1890s, and presumably by George and Peto.

The gardens which made Batsford well known from the 1890s lie in an arc west and north of the house, and were laid out by A B Freeman-Milford, who had been much influenced by oriental gardens and the mountain landscape and flora of Asia Minor and Japan. He laid out a stream, rockery, buildings, and ornaments embellished by a wide range of trees and shrubs, including many natives of China and Japan. Trees were grouped to emphasise hillocks, and to frame a view of the house against the Evenlode valley to the south-east.

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On the hillside c 300m west of the house is the Wild, or Japanese, Garden of the 1890s, with a Rest House, a bronze Buddha, and several Japanese animals in bronze (all structures listed grade II) set around grass clearings among the trees and shrubs. Among the latter are still some of the bamboos for which the garden was especially celebrated c 1900. Some 100m east of the Japanese Summerhouse is a Thatched Cottage (listed grade II), built c 1890 as an ornamental dairy. The Japanese Garden is bounded to the south-west by a stream, down the course of which are several small ornamental pools with rockwork and planting. A bridge carries the main approach drive to the house from the south-west over the stream, and from the bridge there are views of large-scale rockwork on the stream to either side. From here the stream turns north-east, over a cliff-like rockery, to the west end of Cold Well Lake, an informal 120m long pool (dry 1999) 100m south of the house. A much smaller Cold Well Pond appears on late C19 maps and may mark an earlier cold bath.

Kip's view published in 1712 (Atkyns) shows geometric gardens with topiary and walks, probably late C17, principally south-east of the house (in the area of the lawn north-west of the modern house) and to its north-west where terraces ran up the lower part of the hillside. By 1748 these had been removed, apparently replaced by simpler terraces south-east of the house, while extending up the hillside to the north-west was a complex arrangement of planting cut through with straight and serpentine clearances (for ground identification of C18 garden and park features see Landskip and Prospect 1993, pp 17-21 and figs). A view published in 1779 (Rudder) suggests that by this date all the gardens had been removed and the park ran up to the house. By 1824 a low wall had been built to once more enclose the garden south-west of the house (T Barber, engraving).

**PARK** The house stands close to the centre of a roughly square park c 1km across and running downhill from north-west to south-east. The Arboretum and Batsford Park house and village occupy a south-west to north-east strip across the centre of the park, dividing the Old Park (David's Folly and eastward) to the north-west of the strip, from Lower Park to its south-east. The park is permanent pasture, and surrounded by a stone wall. The wall, elsewhere generally only breast high, becomes taller, over 2m, south-west of David's Folly plantation, where it encloses ground added to the park c 1840. Along the north-east edge of Century Plantation the wall is set in a ditch. Close to the north-west corner of the park are some concrete hut bases and earthworks of a Second World War military establishment. In the strip of parkland west of the walled garden are substantial terraced earthworks, perhaps lynchets, and some slight ridge and furrow. A substantial stone cow house, part of the estate rebuilding c 1890, is situated c 100m south-east of the walled garden. In the earliest section of the park to be enclosed, at its northernmost part, is a pair of veteran sweet chestnuts.

Kip's view (Atkyns 1712) shows a gazebo-like building on a grass terrace at the head of a grove on the hillside c 350m north-north-west of the modern house, apparently within the modern wood known as Gilbert's Folly. By 1748 plantations had been planted north of the house, avenues planted, and a scalloped bastion constructed, the last on or close to the site of the earlier gazebo. The park, as such, was only established in the 1770s, and in 1777 road diversions moved the public thoroughfares to the park perimeter. The view published in 1779 (Rudder) shows the house, free of any surrounding buildings, set in a well-planted landscape park. Plans for changes to the design were prepared in 1763-6 by Samuel Driver and in 1783 by John Davenport, but these seem not to have been fully implemented (Landskip and Prospect 1993). The park was extended to its present extent c 1840.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The brick-walled kitchen gardens stand on the south-west edge of the park, 400m from the house. The main garden, perhaps late C18 or early C19, is an irregular, angular enclosure, 130m long from south-west to north-east and 60m wide. Against the west end of the north wall are some late C19 sheds. This, and the former frameyard to the north, are now (1999) occupied by a garden centre.

#### REFERENCES

R Atkyns, *The Ancient and Present State of Gloucestershire* (1712), pl after p 256 S Rudder, *A New History of Gloucester* (1779) Country Life, 14 (4 July 1903), pp 18-28 D Verey, *The Buildings of England: Gloucestershire The Cotswolds* (2nd edn 1979), pp 100-02 J Sales, *West Country Gardens* (1981), pp 37-9 N Kingsley, *The Country Houses of Gloucestershire, Volume Two, 1660-1830* (1992), pp 71-3 Batsford Park: Historical Survey of its Landscape, (Landskip and Prospect 1993) [report for English Heritage]

Maps OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1884, published 1885 OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1883-4, published 1884

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Illustrations T Barber, engraving, 1824 (reproduced in *Landskip and Prospect* 1993)

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