

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

NUNWELL

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NUNWELL

Name: NUNWELL

District: Isle of Wight (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Brading

label.localisation: Latitude: 50.683526
Longitude: -1.1563359
National Grid Reference: SZ 59699 87436
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1000928
Date first listed: 09-Jan-1987

Details

A late C18 or early C19 terraced garden, developed further with ornamentally planted walks and informal trees in the later C19 and C20, which is set within a late C18 and early C19 park, the gardens and part of the park being laid out on the site of an extensive mid C17 formal garden.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The manor of Nunwell was held by the king at Domesday and was centred around the western part of the present estate. The Oglander family became Lords of the Manor sometime between 1193 and 1204 (Oglander 1996), their manor house, destroyed by fire in the mid C16, standing in West Nunwell, north-west of the registered site near Nunwell Farm (Bamford 1936; field evidence). The present house, then a small farmhouse with surrounding gardens and farmland called East Nunwell, was purchased in 1552 by Oliver Oglander; combined with West Nunwell, it became the home and farm of the Ogländers. Further land from the Royal Manor of Whitefield was purchased c 1630 by Sir John Oglander. Sir John, a Royalist and Deputy Governor of the Isle of Wight, lived at Nunwell from 1607 until his death in 1652. He not only rebuilt the House 'together with the brewhouse, barn, stable, warren, gardens, orchards, Hoppardens, bowling green and all other things', but recorded his work in copious notes and descriptions (Bamford 1936). A later plan of Nunwell made in 1748 accords well with Sir John's descriptions. William Oglander succeeded his father and was made a baronet in 1665 (VCH 1908). Additions were made to the House by the fourth and fifth baronets in 1735 and 1768, the works at the latter date comprising a new east front designed to open onto parkland which was newly created the same year (annotations on the plan of 1748). In 1806 Sir William Oglander, the sixth baronet, succeeded his father and in 1807 employed the architect John Nash (1752-1835) to survey and repair the buildings and to design a new house at Nunwell, for which a plan survives although it was never built. The park was further extended and New Farm built c 1810. Following the death of the seventh baronet, Sir Henry Oglander, the estate passed to a cousin, John Henry Glynn, who took the name of Oglander in 1895. He added further to the House and made minor changes to the park and gardens, as subsequent members of the Oglander family continued to do until the late C20 when the House, formal gardens, and kitchen garden were separated and sold. All parts of the estate remain (1999) in private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Nunwell is situated c 0.5km west of the A3055 and the village of Brading. The c 75ha registered site is bounded to the north-east by the hedge-lined West Lane and to the west by a minor

lane which becomes a track at its southern end. The eastern boundary is enclosed from adjoining farmland by a tall hedgerow. To the south, a track forming a public bridleway separates the park from the steeply rising, well-wooded slopes of Nunwell Down. The landform of the park reflects its situation in the folds of the north foot of the Downs: the ground falls northwards to a broad, shallow, central east to west valley, then rises again to a low ridge north-west of New Farm. The surrounding landscape is of lightly wooded farmland which, to the west of the site, retains remnants of a parkland character.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The principal entrance to Nunwell is at East Lodge, a two-storey building (listed grade II) of red brick and pebbledash which stands at the eastern end of West lane. A drive enters through a gateway framed by ball-capped brick piers flanked by wing walls and hung with wrought-iron gates (ensemble listed grade II). The Lodge and gateway were built c 1895-9 by John Henry Oglander, who brought the gates to Nunwell from Lake Como (guide leaflet). The drive follows a westerly course towards the House along a route shown on an estate map by Sam Donne made in 1773. The drive was probably created with the formation of the park in 1768 but may be of earlier origin (Oglander 1996). Some 450m from the Lodge, the drive passes, on its north side, two adjacent ponds set within trees, the eastern one shown on the 1748 plan of Nunwell, the western one a lily pool constructed between 1898 and 1907. A further 100m west it turns south to pass the west front of the House before arriving at the forecourt and principal entrance on the south front. This last section of drive, from the ponds to the House, was laid out at the turn of the C19 as a diversion from the late C18 route which continued on some 150m further west from the site of the ponds (its former line marked by mature oaks) before skirting the west side of the kitchen garden. The former line of its final approach to the south front forecourt from the west appears first on the OS 1st edition map surveyed in 1861. The site's western boundary lane serves as a secondary approach, entering at West Lodge (listed grade II) which stands adjacent to the south-west corner of the kitchen garden. Built in the Tudor style in red brick with a timber-framed first floor, this lodge was erected c 1899. **PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Nunwell House (listed grade II*) stands on level ground towards the south-west corner of the park with its principal view eastwards to Brading and more distantly to Bembridge Harbour. The majority of the building is of three storeys with part of the oldest portion, the west wing, built in Isle of Wight stone rubble with red-brick dressings; the remainder is of brick. The central portion and west wing of the present building form the core of the original E-shaped house begun by Sir John Oglander in 1607; an architect's plan dating from 1735 (Oglander collection) shows that its principal front then faced south. The east wing was rebuilt from 1735, at a slight angle to the main body of the Jacobean house to meet a Proposal for turning the main front to the Garden (architect's plan, 1735; Donne, 1773). The present east facade, with its full-height canted bay, was added to overlook the newly created park in 1768. The present front door and the facing of red mathematical tiles on the south front may be of the same date (Oglander 1996) or possibly of the early C18 (CL 1976). The east front was extended northwards with the present dining and billiard rooms by John Henry Oglander in, respectively, 1895 and 1905 while the loggia at the south end was built in 1875 as a conservatory and converted to its present appearance c 1920 (guide leaflet).

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens to the north, east, and south of the House are laid out formally, those to the east and south-east occupying, along with an adjacent area of the park, the site of enclosed orchards, fruit gardens, and a parlour garden shown on the plan of 1748 and probably representing Sir John Oglander's layout of the early to mid C17. West and south-west of the House are areas of informal trees and gardens around the Coach House.

The principal, east garden front opens onto a gravelled terrace walk running the full length of the House. Immediately eastwards below it, and on the central axis, three steps framed by a pair of piers each topped by a cast-iron urn lead down onto a broad terrace of lawn, the convex curve of its eastern edge formed by a stone and rubble-stone ha-ha wall surmounted by a balustrade topped with stone pineapple and ball finials (wall and balustrade listed grade II). There is no evidence for the ha-ha wall being constructed with the works to the House in 1768, its first appearance being in George Brannon's two views of Nunwell dated 1823 and 1839; its present line is recorded on the OS 1st edition map surveyed in 1861. The balustrade was built around the turn of the C19, probably in association with the extension of the east front in 1895; 1905 (Oglander 1996). The central feature of the lawn is a fountain pool, shown on the OS map of 1862. Below the terrace the retaining wall contains within its western end a grotto watered by the fountain pool above, while on the central axis, stone edging defines the site of a lily pool, now (1999) filled in and grassed, which was converted from a former swimming pool built c 1935 (guide leaflet). From the southern

end of the terrace walk, a staircase of four flights of steps, also constructed in the 1930s and lined with a lavender hedge, leads up to informal trees and tennis courts laid out by 1909 but disused since the mid C20 (Oglander 1996).

From its north end, the terrace walk leads down steps and around to the Long Walk on the north front. This consists of a broad, straight gravelled walk, almost parallel to the House, which runs north-west then crosses the main drive to a rose garden below the east wall of the kitchen garden. The Walk is bordered by wide beds of mixed shrubbery with trees, the section immediately north of the House, which is shown as a shrubbery in 1862 (OS), centred on an urn and enclosed from the park by a crinkle-crankle yew hedge. Within the section west of the drive, strips of lawn lined with domed box balls separate the path from the borders. The rose garden is laid out with stone paving and rose beds and ornamented with urns. The present layout of the Long Walk dates from Major Dennis Oglander's work in the 1960s (guide leaflet).

West of the House and drive, the lawns south and south-east of the kitchen garden are planted as an arboretum with exotic trees of mixed ages and species, on the site of an informal arrangement shown in 1862 (OS). The present design was the work of Vernon Russell Smith c 1963. Some 150m south-west from the House stands the Coach House (now, 1999, a dwelling, listed grade II) which, constructed in red brick and arranged around three sides of a cobbled stone forecourt, was built as stables and a coach house with the enlargement of the House in the 1760s. The building appears, labelled as stables, on Donne's map of 1773; the clock tower he shows has not survived, possibly being removed during repairs carried out by John Nash in 1808 (Oglander 1996). The Coach House is surrounded by lawns with trees and shrubbery and an ornamentally planted pond, shown on the plan of 1748. On the western edge of the lawns (70m from the Coach House) is a brick-domed icehouse, first recorded on the OS map of 1862 but possibly dating from the late C18 building works (*ibid*). Beyond the Coach House gardens to the south-west and south-east are further woodlands which are recorded as the 'Rookery' in 1862 and are shown on the 1748 plan as covering a similar area; the woodland to the south-east is named as the 'Warren' on that plan and probably represents at least a part of the site of Sir John Oglander's C17 warren.

PARK The principal extent of the park is to the north-west, north-east, and east of the House, with the earliest part, created in 1768 on former C17 orchards and farmland and known then as 'The Lawn', lying immediately beyond the east front (annotations on the 1748 plan confirm this date). This is now (1999) under pasture and dotted with individual and clumps of trees which reflect the character shown on Donne's map of 1773. Its present tree cover forms a similar but less dense pattern than that illustrated in George Brannon's View from Nunwell Down of 1839 and shown later on the OS map of 1862. The trees are predominantly mature oaks but an occasional exotic conifer survives from those first shown on the 1908 OS map. Eastwards as far as the eastern boundary, the park is under arable cultivation with occasional trees and is divided by several field boundaries with linear tree belts which run north from the foot of Nunwell Down, on the same lines as those shown on a lease dating from 1683 (OG/49/1). This eastern extension of the park was created from arable fields by Sir William Oglander between 1806 and 1815 (Oglander 1996). New tree planting has been carried out in the late C20.

To the north-east and north-west of the House, beyond the line of the main drive, the park is largely laid to permanent grass with arable in the north-west corner and an overall light scatter of oaks including new trees planted in the late C20. A short line of mature oaks running north-west from the lily pond marks the former line of the main drive, while other lines of trees reflect former field boundaries. These north-eastern and north-western areas were also converted to pasture from former arable by Sir William Oglander, under whose ownership the park reached, in 1815, its greatest extent (*ibid*). He also built New Farm, which stands 450m north-north-east of the House, c 1810. Arranged around a farmyard, the farm comprises a two-storey T-shaped farmhouse in red brick with a diaper pattern in grey headers, a red-brick barn, and a brick granary set upon staddle stones (ensemble listed grade II).

A small area of park extends south and south-west of the House to the fenced boundary of the bridleway. A walk which extends some 450m east from the western park boundary runs along inside the boundary fence; screened from the bridleway by tall evergreen shrubbery and now largely overgrown, it is known as Ladies Walk and is shown on the OS map of 1862 and in photographs taken in the 1920s (private collection). Running in a straight line north from Ladies Walk towards the south front of the House is a short length of lime avenue containing occasional mature trees and new trees dating from c 1935 and 1970; this avenue is planted on the line of an earlier avenue labelled 'The Prospect' on the estate plan of 1748. The original avenue

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appears to have been mostly removed between 1773 (Donne) and 1793 (OS Surveyor's drawing) although a few lime trees are shown surviving on the OS map of 1862 where they are absorbed into the surrounding informal planting pattern.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden (listed grade II) lies c 60m north-west of the House. It is built to an irregular, five-sided plan and is enclosed by c 2.5m high red-brick walls with centrally placed entrances on the west and east sides, the latter with an elaborate wrought-iron gate. Inside the ground is laid to grass quartered by paths lined with mixed planting and with further borders of ornamental plants and fruit between a perimeter path and the walls. A brick gardener's bothy with a slate roof is built into the angle of the extreme south-west corner. The garden is shown on two maps of the late C18 (Andrews, 1769; Donne, 1773); a range of glass erected in the late C19 and early C20 (OS 1862, 1898, 1907) along the south face of the north wall has now (1999) gone, likewise a greenhouse on the east (outside) face of the east wall, recorded in 1807 when it was surveyed for repairs by Nash but removed c 1980 (Oglander 1996).

REFERENCES

Victoria History of the County of Hampshire V, (1912), pp 164-5 Francis Bamford, A Royalist's Notebook, The Commonplace Book of Sir John Oglander Kt of Nunwell (1936) Cecil Aspinall-Oglander, Nunwell Symphony (1945) N Pevsner and D Lloyd, The Buildings of England: Hampshire and the Isle of Wight (1967), p 755 Country Life, 159 (19 February 1976), pp 402-05; (26 February 1976), pp 470-3 Nunwell Gardens, guide leaflet, (nd) F Oglander, Nunwell Estate: Documented History of the Landscape, (MS 1996) [copy on EH file]

Maps A plan of Nunwell House and Gardens, 1748 (private collection) J Andrews, A topographical map of the Isle of Wight in Hampshire, 1769 (Isle of Wight Record Office) Sam Donne, Estate map of Nunwell, 1773 (Oglander Collection OG/PP/13) OS Surveyor's drawing 2" to 1 mile, 1793 (British Library Maps)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1861 2nd edition published 1898 3rd edition revised 1907 1938 edition OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1861, published 1862 2nd edition published 1898

Illustrations George Brannon, view of Nunwell, 1823 (copy in Isle of Wight Record Office) George Brannon, View from Nunwell Down, 1839 (copy in Isle of Wight Record Office)

Archival items The Oglander Collection is held at the Isle of Wight County Record Office, Newport and includes the manuscripts of Sir John Oglander (transcribed by Francis Bamford see Bamford 1936); the architect's drawings of Nunwell House (1735); and 'Mr Nash's plan for a House at Nunwell' (OG87/21H). Early C20 photographs (private collection)

Description written: June 1999 Amended: August 1999 Register Inspector: VCH Edited: January 2005

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.