

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

TICEHURST HOUSE HOSPITAL

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**TICEHURST HOUSE HOSPITAL**

Name:	TICEHURST HOUSE HOSPITAL
County:	East Sussex
District:	Rother (District Authority)
Parish:	Ticehurst
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.048721 Longitude: 0.39511009 National Grid Reference: TQ 67979 30437 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1001600 Date first listed: 08-Apr-2002

## Details

The grounds of an early private psychiatric hospital, opened in 1792. The hospital reused and significantly extended a private mansion, embellishing and adapting its landscape for therapeutic use in the early C19 and extending this in the later part of the century.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1792 Samuel Newington (1739-1811) opened a privately run madhouse for less than twenty patients at Ticehurst in Sussex, only ten miles from the fashionable spa town of Tunbridge Wells (Parry-Jones 1972). Newington appears to have bought a country mansion set in its own landscape and used it to house and treat his patients, although it is also possible that he erected the building himself, without any obvious architectural means of classifying the lunatic patients. In 1812 Charles Newington built the house known as Highlands as his own residence. Situated within the grounds close to the asylum building, it later also seems to have housed some of the wealthier patients.

Two of Charles's sons, Charles (1781-1852) and Jesse (1779-1819), having become surgeons, assisted their father at the asylum and took over at his death in 1811. In 1816 they employed men who had been demobilised after the Battle of Waterloo to landscape and ornament over 40 acres (c 16ha) surrounding the asylum and Highlands (MacKenzie 1992). Jesse died in 1819 and Mrs Newington, their mother, in 1831. Charles became the sole proprietor, having produced a brochure for the asylum c 1830. By the late 1820s (brochure, c 1830) Ticehurst was one of the more lavish private asylums, the 40 acres (c 16ha) of grounds being laid out for the use of the patients. The asylum building was surrounded by a landscape park and pleasure grounds ornamented by many garden buildings, which lay alongside the Tunbridge Wells to Hastings turnpike. Open lawns were surrounded by a belt of trees, through which ran a perimeter walk, and planted with specimen trees and clumps. The wooded pleasure grounds incorporated a Moss House, two-storey Pagoda, Gothic Summer House, other Gothic-style summerhouses, bowling green and Hermitage, and three aviaries. The extent of the pleasure-ground walks was said to be '2 miles, 7 furlongs, 28 rods' (ibid). The c 1830 brochure contains a plan of the site, together with several engravings of the exterior of the asylum, its grounds, and at least eight garden buildings and other features. The grounds were for the recreational and therapeutic use of the patients.

Horsfield (1835) illustrated Highlands and referred to:

several buildings connected with the establishment which from their ornamented appearance possess claims to architectural distinction. Among these are the Chinese Gallery which is fitted up with much taste and affords to the invalids a secure retreat in wet weather; and an extensive Conservatory, in which are choice plants and a good collection of the beauties of Flora. There are likewise pheasantries and aviaries for birds of various kinds ... The house is beautifully situated on a commanding eminence, enclosed within a paddock of 60 acres of land, surrounded with plantations and pleasure grounds. But the pleasure which these combined beauties of nature and art are calculated to give, is greatly enhanced by the reflection that they are set apart for the comfort and improvement of those who labour under such a distressing malady; and we have reason to believe that they materially tend to promote the recovery of the patients.

Charles Newington died in 1852 and the establishment continued, run by his two sons. Further landscaping work was carried out in the grounds, including the addition of Lever's Field in the north-west corner. By the 1850s the patients were 'exceptionally wealthy' and by the 1870s the asylum was widely acknowledged in political and medical circles as one of the most successful and highly reputable private asylums (Mackenzie 1992). By 1900 the estate covered over 300 acres (c 125ha) (Parry-Jones 1972). In the early 1970s the Newington family relinquished their last interests in the hospital (Drewe 1991) which remains (2002) in use as a private psychiatric hospital.

#### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Ticehurst House Hospital stands at the west tip of Ticehurst village. The c 18ha site occupies largely level ground, which slopes down to the south and north, and is set in the rolling hills of the Sussex Weald. The site is bounded to the south by the B2099, built as the Tunbridge Wells to Hastings turnpike; to the north by Vineyard Lane (formerly known as Back Lane, Gibson, 1827) and agricultural land; and by Burnt Lodge Lane to the west. The south-east boundary is marked by a stone retaining wall, at the east tip of which are two brick piers marking the entrance of the former east drive. A further pair of piers flanks a former pedestrian entrance (now disused) standing 100m west of the east tip of the site on the south boundary, opposite a pair of piers in similar style standing on the south side of the B2099 which gives access to Vineyard Cottage (outside the area here registered). West of the south entrance to the site the south boundary is marked by a clipped hedge. The site occupies a shoulder of land which slopes down to the north and south from a central spine running from west to east which opens out at the east end of the site to form the plateau on which the hospital building sits. The setting is rural, with the picturesque village of Ticehurst adjacent to the east. Long rural views extend south from the main hospital building, pleasure grounds, and parkland across the Rother valley, and from the north boundary towards the C20 Bewl Water in the Teise valley to the north.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The main approach to the hospital enters the site from the south off the B2099, 120m south-east of the hospital building. The entrance is marked by brick gate piers flanking the drive. From here the south drive curves north-east and north-west through lawns to approach the south front of the hospital building from the east. The drive arrives at the main entrance to the hospital building at the west end of the south front, approached up low stone steps. From the south front views extend across the formal garden terrace and the lawns beyond, to the distant Rother valley. A spur 100m south-east of the hospital building leads east off the south drive to a mid C20 bungalow (staff accommodation) set in its own garden screened by shrubs. North of this a further spur eastwards gives access to a two-storey brick building lying 110m south-east of the hospital building, which forms the remains of the former stable block (Gibson, 1827). At the south-east corner of the hospital building a short spur extends north, the junction being marked by a turning circle. At the centre of the turning circle is a gravelled area on which stands a C19 jardiniere. The spur continues north along the east front, providing access to further entrances to the building, and at the north end to Vineyard Lane (this entrance being disused, 2002).

A second, south-west drive enters 400m south-west of the hospital building, off the B2099, the gateway being flanked by brick gate piers. From here the drive extends north-east, up a slope flanked by the remains of a mature lime avenue which is in turn flanked by woodland in which are two quarry pits set into the south-facing slope. Some 70m from the entrance the drive emerges into parkland, overlooked by the hospital building, and continues north-east up the slope. The drive passes to the east of Highlands, from which it is separated by a forecourt, the house lying 130m west-south-west of the hospital building. From

here it continues east through lawns scattered with mature specimen trees, to cross the west terrace and arrive at the main entrance to the hospital building on the south front.

A third, north drive gives access off Vineyard Lane, entering 110m north-west of the hospital building. It extends south-west up a short slope between mature trees set in lawn, opening out into a turning circle on the east side of Highlands Lodge, which stands 150m west of the hospital building. From here the north drive turns east to meet the south-west drive 110m west of the hospital building. A spur off this drive extends east 10m south-west of the entrance off Vineyard Lane to give direct access to the service wings on the north side of the hospital building.

In the early C19 (Gibson, 1827) the south-west drive gave direct access from Tunbridge Wells, and followed its present (2002) course. The approach from Ticehurst to the east was via the east drive which entered at the east tip of the site, where Vineyard Lane (then known as Back Road) meets the B2099. From here the drive extended north-west through a wooded area in which stand the properties now known as Ponticum Lodge and The Old Vineyard (a house close to this site being known as Vineyard Cottage on Gibson's plan of 1827). The east drive followed the course of the current south drive from a point 100m south-east of the hospital building to arrive at the south front. Vineyard Lane provided a service drive from the south-east, leading as it does now, directly to the northern, service side of the hospital building. The south drive was not created until the mid C19 (Gibson, 1827; OS 1878), when it was driven through an area of former walled garden which was opened up to become part of the approach lawns.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS** The two- and three-storey hospital building (late C18 and early C19, listed grade II) stands at the north-east corner of the site, built in Classical style of white-painted stucco with mid C19 additions. The entrance front faces south, with the east and west fronts, in which are situated other entrances, overlooking the grounds. The north side comprises two wings extending northwards in which are situated service facilities and staff accommodation.

Set in open lawns 150m west-south-west of the main building, with a small enclosed garden to the west, stands Highlands (c 1812, listed grade II). Built by Dr Charles Newington as his own residence, the house also seems to have accommodated a small number of the most wealthy patients. It now (2002) forms part of the hospital facilities. Of two storeys and stuccoed, it is entered via the east front, with the south front overlooking the parkland and with long views to the valley beyond. The west front overlooks the garden enclosure. The south and east fronts are enclosed by a verandah supported by slim, ornamental iron pillars. The main building and Highlands are illustrated in the c 1830 brochure. Some 20m north of Highlands stands Highlands Lodge, a two-storey, late C19/early C20 domestic building providing further patient accommodation. It is built of brick, with its upper storey rendered, and is entered via a projecting porch on the east front. The west front overlooks the enclosed bowling green which formed part of the early C19 pleasure grounds (Gibson, 1827). Highlands Lodge either occupies, or stands close to, the site of the former elaborate, Gothick-style Chinese Gallery illustrated in the c 1830 brochure (reproduced in Drewe, 1991, and in detail in Horsfield, 1835), which appears to have stood north of Highlands.

The remaining element of what was probably the former stable block stands 110m south-east of the hospital building, adjacent to Vineyard Lane to the north. It appears to have formed part of a stable yard and cow-house complex (Gibson, 1827), but parts of the complex have been demolished and an open area now lies to the west of the building.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The formal gardens largely surround the main building, these in turn being surrounded by the informal pleasure grounds and parkland.

The entrance on the main, south front of the hospital building gives access, on the south side of the drive, to a formal garden terrace running from west to east. The 80m long terrace is enclosed to the west, south, and east by a low stone wall decorated with small jardinières. Short flights of stone steps at the west and east ends of the terrace lead down to the gravel path which runs from west to east along the main lawn and curves southwards at the centre, extending into the lawn beyond, following the line of the stone wall. Long views extend south over the valley beyond the B2099. From the east end of this terrace a further terrace extends north along the east front, with to the east of this a lawn planted with mature trees which is partly given over to car parking. At the south-east end of this lawn, 50m east of the hospital building, stands a short tunnel in the form of a rock arch set into an earth bank topped with rockwork. The arch leads south-east into a circular feature, possibly formerly a fernery, encircled by the bank which is topped by rocks and mature trees and shrubs. Parts of the bank are retained by brick walling.

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The level of the centre of the circular space is raised by the roof of a sunken air-raid shelter. East of this feature stands the former stable block and associated open space.

From the west end of the south terrace a further, west terrace extends north along the west front of the hospital building, bounded by a continuation of the piers and walling of the south terrace. It is broken where the south-west drive enters, at this point flanked by low piers. This terrace is laid partly to lawn, and is partly given over to car parking. West of the west terrace lies the early C20 tennis court garden, bounded by low brick walls and laid largely to lawn, enclosed by shrubs.

The formal terraces were created in the mid C19 (OS 1878), the hospital building previously having stood in open informal lawns (Gibson, 1827). The circular feature and the rock arch were also created in the mid C19 (Gibson, 1827; OS 1878).

From the south side of the south terrace a path leads south-east across lawns which extend south, south-east, and south-west of the main hospital building. A small golf course occupies part of the lawns. The path arrives at the shelter belt on the south boundary, at a point 20m west of the south entrance off the B2099. This is the start of the pleasure-ground circuit walk which was laid out for the recreation and therapeutic use of the patients in the early C19 (Gibson, 1827). The path extends c 750m westwards through the shelter belt running along the south boundary, in places cut into the hillside above the road, and with panoramic views of the Rother valley to the south. The belt contains some mature trees, but many more were lost in the storms of the late C20. The path crosses the south-west drive close to the entrance gateway, and continues west to a point 700m south-west of the hospital building at the south-west tip of the site, where it turns north-east along the west boundary. The paddocks to the west of the south-west drive are open and used for grazing. The lawns to the east of the drive are planted with scattered mature specimen trees. The lawns and paddocks to the west and east of the south-west drive were laid out in the early C19, probably as part of Charles Newington's campaign of 1816. They were planted with clumps of trees and single specimens and surrounded by the circuit walk.

Some 120m north of the south-west tip of the site the path arrives at a wooden summerhouse, known as the Pagoda, which stands 600m south-west of the hospital building. The single-storey Pagoda is open to the south-east, with a tiled floor and bench seat around the interior, and is covered with a pyramidal roof. Formerly the Pagoda was a two-storey building in Gothick style with a verandah at first-floor level surrounding a room, with an open shelter beneath (engraving, c 1830), but it appears to have been rebuilt in the late C19. The Pagoda overlooks an adjacent informal lawn to the south-east which projects into the field beyond, known as Pagoda Field, from which it is separated by an iron fence. The Field is surrounded on the north, west, and south sides by the circuit walk. Views extend south from the Pagoda into the valley beyond.

From the Pagoda the walk extends east along the north side of Pagoda Field through a further belt of trees underplanted with shrubs. To the north the walk overlooks Lever's Field, in the north-west corner of which lie two ponds. The Field slopes down to the north and is bounded on the north side by a further belt of trees. It appears to have been added in the mid C19 (OS 1878) and is overlooked by the north side of the circuit walk. The shelter belt on the north side of this field largely obscures views to the valley beyond. In the early C19 views would have extended north from the belt and walk running along the north side of Pagoda Field (Gibson, 1827).

The belt projects south into Pagoda Field 130m east of the Pagoda, the site of a former lawn (*ibid*), which is now (2002) largely covered with evergreen shrubs. From here the walk continues east, turning north 270m from the Pagoda, at a point where the belt projects south-east into the field. The walk extends 100m north, overlooking Lever's Field to the west and Highlands across the field to the east, to arrive at the Moss House, standing 330m west of the hospital building. This is a Gothick-style wooden summerhouse in similar style to the Pagoda, but with an elaborate finial crowning the roof. The Moss House was depicted in the brochure of c 1830 (engraving, c 1830) and appears to have been rebuilt to a slightly different pattern in the late C19. It was formerly set in an open lawn (Gibson, 1827). North of the Moss House lies a sunken area partly enclosed by mature yews, the site of a former summerhouse (*ibid*).

From the Moss House the walk continues east along the south wall of the kitchen garden, flanked by mature trees including several limes and overlooking the field to the south. Some 130m east of the Moss House the walk arrives at a pair of stone gate piers which give access to the west side of a bowling green to the rear, west side of Highlands Lodge. The green is bounded to the west and south by a brick wall set at intervals with stone piers, some of the piers being topped with finials in the form of

flanges. To the north the green is bounded by a planting of C20 conifers, which is supported below by a brick retaining wall, views from the top of which extend over the valley to the north, these being obscured from the green below. The green was laid out as a square garden with buildings which have since gone, including aviaries at the north-west, south-west, and north-east corners, and a cow house to the south (ibid). During the late C19 (OS 1878) a long rectangular building occupied part of the site of the present conifer plantation. From the north-east corner of the green the walk continues east to meet the north drive, on the west side of which stand further stone piers in similar style to those standing adjacent to the green. The walk continues east to arrive back at the north end of the west garden terrace.

Formerly a spur from the walk led north from north of the hospital building across Vineyard Lane (which appears not to have been a public road at that time) to an open lawn surrounded by a belt of trees through which ran an extension of the circuit walk (Gibson, 1827). At the north-east corner of this lawn, 80m north of the hospital building, lay a bowling green overlooked to the north-east by The Hermitage (gone, 2002). The lawn is now occupied by an orchard, but the enclosing belt remains and the bowling green is planted with trees. In 1910 (OS) the area retained much of its early C19 character. The south-east corner of this area is now (2002) partly occupied by the hospital service yard including several C19 brick buildings. To the east of this yard stands a C20 house and garden (outside the area here registered).

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The rectangular kitchen garden lies 200m west of the main hospital building and is now (2002) disused. It is enclosed by brick walls and is situated on the north-facing slope adjacent to the north boundary, with the late C19/early C20 gardener's cottage adjacent to the north. The enclosure is entered via narrow gateways flanked by brick piers at the centre of the west and east walls, with a further gateway giving access to the gardener's cottage to the north. A glasshouse stands against the north wall, this being the remaining one of a range (OS 1909). The present kitchen garden enclosure was formed by 1827 (Gibson), when it was occupied by an orchard. Prior to this what was probably the main walled kitchen garden lay south-east of the hospital building, adjacent to the present B2099 at the point where the south drive enters the site. The latter area was incorporated into the south drive and flanking lawns when they were created in the mid C19, and the orchard became the main kitchen garden, with the gardener's cottage being built to accompany it.

A former kitchen garden service area lies 100m east of the surviving kitchen garden, immediately east of the north-west entrance to the site. Now (2002) disused, it is set into the northern slope leading down to the north boundary and is partly enclosed by the remains of walls. It formerly contained glasshouses and frames (OS 1909).

#### REFERENCES

T W Horsfield, *The History, Antiquities and Topography of the County of Sussex I*, (1835), pp 589-90 M A Lower, *Worthies of Sussex* (1865), pp 254-5 W L Parry-Jones, *The Trade in Lunacy. A Study of Private Madhouses in England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries* (1972), pp 119-21 C MacKenzie, *A family asylum: A History of the private madhouse at Ticehurst in Sussex, 1792-1917* (PhD thesis, London Univ 1987) F Drewe, *Ticehurst, Stonegate and Flimwell* (1991), pp 123-30 C MacKenzie, *Psychiatry for the Rich A History of Ticehurst Private Asylum 1792-1917* (1992)

Maps Thomas Gibson, *A Map of the Vineyard, Asylum and Highlands with the Pleasure Grounds, Ticehurst, Sussex, 1827* (in *Views of Messrs Newington's Private Asylum ...c 1830*)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 2nd edition revised 1910 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1873, published 1878 2nd edition surveyed 1897, published 1898 3rd edition published 1909 1939 edition

Illustrations 12 engravings of the grounds and buildings within them are in *Views of Messrs Newington's Private Asylum ... (c 1830)*

Archival items *Views of Messrs Newington's Private Asylum for the Cure of Insane Persons, Ticehurst Sussex*, brochure c 1830 (QAL/1/2/E2), (East Sussex Record Office) The Ticehurst House archive is held at the Wellcome Trust History of Medicine Library, London (MSS 6245?790). Quarter Sessions records including material relating to the site are held at East Sussex Record Office, Lewes (QAL 1/1/E1 and /1/2/E2).

Description written: 28 March 2002 Register Inspector: SR Edited: July 2002

## 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.