

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

HILL CLOSE GARDENS

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Name: HILL CLOSE GARDENS

County: Warwickshire

District: Warwick (District Authority)

Parish: Warwick

label.localisation: Latitude: 52.280844  
Longitude: -1.5937225  
National Grid Reference: SP 27814 64822  
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden  
Grade: II\*  
List Entry Number: 1001285  
Date first listed: 01-Dec-1994

## Details

A group of mid C19 detached urban pleasure gardens which retain several C19 summerhouses.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In the late C18 and early C19, many larger towns had groups of small rented gardens forming a ring around the densely developed town centre. These pleasure garden plots were typically subdivided by hedges into individual gardens of between an eighth and a sixth of an acre. The gardens were laid out for ornament and the comfort of the owner and were used to grow a mixture of productive and ornamental plants (Lambert 1994). The expansion of towns in the C19 destroyed the majority of the C18 rented garden sites, but a number of gardens of similar size and function were laid out in the first half of the C19, including Westbourne Road Leisure Gardens, Edgbaston, Birmingham (qv). A national survey (Lambert 1994) has indicated that very few of these sites survive either in their original form or, indeed, at all.

In the early C19 Warwick was hemmed-in by Warwick Castle and Castle Park (qv) to the south, the Common to the west, the grounds of Warwick Priory to the north, and St Nicholas' Meadow to the east, which restricted the expansion of the town. This resulted in much in-filling of the town centre and consequently a need for gardens on the edge of the town for those able to afford the c £100 (£50 for the freehold and about the same sum for fittings left by the previous owner) needed to acquire such an amenity. The addresses of the occupants of the Hill Close Gardens in the C19 are predominantly in the part of the town where the degree of in-filling was greatest (Hodgetts 1994).

Before its development as gardens, the site was a field, Hilly Close, on Linen Hill, bounded on the north by Linen Lane (now, 2000, Linen Street), on the east by the gardens of houses in Cocksparrow (now Bowling Green Street), and on the west by the Common Brook, with further fields to the south. In the later C18 it seems to have belonged to William Wilson. The Close was first divided into gardens in 1845, by Edward Wilson of Exhall, making it one of several similar plots of gardens around the town. By 1851 the site has been named Hill Close Gardens, and the eastern side had been laid out with a service lane running south from Linen Street, off the eastern side of which were nine plots, and to the west, in two rows a further four plots, making a total of thirteen plots. The west side of the Close was still pasture but the fields to the south had become gardens and the

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churchyard of St Paul's church. The Common Brook had been realigned a little to the west, along its present course, although a small stream still ran at the foot of the hill (ibid).

In the 1860s, the whole Close was put on the market. An advertisement in the Warwick Advertiser (14 July 1864) refers to the sale by John Margetts of 'highly valuable building or garden land ... subdivided and let in 35 lots as garden ground, the whole 4a 3r 2p'. Through the sale, the land came into the ownership of Mark Philips of Welcombe, Stratford-upon-Avon. By this date the division of the gardens was complete, making a total of thirty-two plots surrounding the churchyard on three sides. This had involved the construction of two further lanes running south off Linen Street, parallel and to the west of the original access lane. Following the sale, most of the gardens were sold off as individual units until by 1877, only six still belonged to the Welcombe estate. This division of freehold made development of the site difficult (ibid)

The basic layout of the site remained unchanged until the early C20 when some housing development, St Paul's Close and St Paul's Terrace, encroached. This resulted in the loss of eight plots along the northern edge of the site, the previous layout of the gardens being reflected in the development. Additional stabling for the race course replaced the two plots in the south-east corner of the site in the mid C20, and caused a slight modification of the boundary of the adjacent garden to the north. This reduced the number of plots to the nineteen which exist today (2000).

In the 1970s the freehold of the gardens, with the exception of the three eastern plots adjacent to the Bowling Green Hotel (later the Westgate Hotel), was gradually acquired by Warwick District Council for a housing and car-parking scheme; the gardens became almost entirely uncultivated. Planning consent for the housing lapsed in 1994 and, as a result of community interest, the District Council encouraged volunteers to undertake the clearance of the site, and a restoration plan was commissioned in 1997-8. One of the plots and a summerhouse adjacent to the former Westgate Hotel was restored for a television programme in 1999. Today (2000) the site remains in divided ownership, the majority belonging to the local authority.

The survival rate for this type of site is extremely low, with most examples having disappeared under built development. Where they do survive, it is generally as allotment sites with hedges and buildings removed.

#### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Hill Close Gardens are situated c 160m south-west of the centre of Warwick, to the south of Linen Street, an early C20 residential street which leads west from Bowling Green Street to Warwick Race Course on Lammas Field. The c 1.25ha site comprises nineteen individual plots containing an average of 500 square metres which are now (2000) divided by hedges of hawthorn, holly and privet, brick walls and iron railings. It is likely that all plots were originally enclosed by hedges, although individual ownership from the 1860s led to a greater diversity of boundary treatment. Today the majority of the site is enclosed by green-painted metal security fencing c 3m high. The eastern plots which remain in separate ownership are enclosed to the north by a property in St Paul's Terrace, and to the south by the race course stables. To the east, these plots are today enclosed by temporary fences which separate them from the Westgate Hotel which is the subject of redevelopment. The site occupies a west-facing slope which falls from the eastern boundary to the Common Brook which forms the western boundary. From the higher, eastern plots there are extensive westerly views across the race course and properties in Linen Street to agricultural land west of Warwick.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The site is today (2000) approached from a service lane which leads c 50m south from Linen Street at a point c 30m east of its junction with St Paul's Terrace to reach a pair of wide, late C20 green-painted metal gates. Similar late C20 metal gates lead into the opposite end of the service lane from an area of open space, Bread and Meat Close, to the north-west of St Paul's church, which is approached from Friars Street (the A4189 road) c 130m south of the site. There is a further passage leading from Linen Street to a pedestrian gate in the perimeter fence at a point opposite the junction of Linen Street with Cocksparrow Street. A pedestrian gate from St Paul's Close gives access to the plots in the north-east corner of the site, while the eastern plots which remain in separate ownership from the remainder of the site are approached from a gate at the southern end of St Paul's Close. This leads to a service lane which extends c 40m south on the axis of St Paul's Close.

**GARDENS** The garden plots are arranged in five blocks of various length which run from north to south. Service lanes or paths separate the three western blocks, while a further service lane runs between the two most easterly blocks. Plots in the second and third blocks from the east share a common boundary, and are not separated by a path. Late C20 clearance of undergrowth

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on the site has revealed many of the boundary hedges of hawthorn, privet and holly which enclosed the gardens, together with a C19 brick wall to the east of plot 25 and C19 spiked iron railings to the north of plot 12. The gardens retain a collection of mature standard fruit trees, some of which are of C19 origin, while some new fruit trees have been planted (late C20) on cleared plots in the positions of trees indicated on the 1886 OS map. A large mature vine is trained on metal posts and wires parallel to the southern boundary of plot 25.

Clearance has revealed the late C19 path layout in some gardens (plots 17, 18), while elsewhere the late C19 path layout is now (2000) in the process of reinstatement. The southern half of plot 19, adjacent to the southern boundary of the site, is today used as a nursery area, with the remains of a late C19 or early C20 range of brick and timber glasshouses and frames surviving on the west side of the plot. Some 10m south-west of the western entrance to the site from Linen Street, a mid C20 metal and timber shed is today used as a garden office, while further mid and late C20 sheds stand on plots 23 and 24 which have remained in continuous cultivation to the present day. Today only the most western group of gardens, plots 29(31), remain in an overgrown condition.

Eight brick-built summerhouses of various designs survive on the site. Of these, that on plot 18 dates from before 1851 (Board of Health map), and four on plots 7, 17, 19 and 25 from before 1866 (plan annexed to 1866 deed; three are listed grade II). Two further late C19 summerhouses are shown on the 1886 OS map (that on plot 5 listed grade II), while a further building was constructed c 1900. All the summerhouses occupy sites at the eastern end of their plot, so exploiting views across the race course and Common. The summerhouses were decorative buildings, equipped variously with fireplaces, stoves, gas lights, and, in one case, a 'patent earth commode'. The remains of two other buildings survive comprising a mid C19 brick bothy and a late C19 or early C20 brick-built pig-sty on plot 16.

Two C19 inventories show that the Hill Close Gardens had a recreational as well as a productive role, and this continued into the 1920s, although during the early C20 the growing of vegetables had increased in importance. This process was encouraged by the Dig for Victory campaign during the Second World War, and austerity during the 1940s and early 1950s. Today (2000) the gardens as revealed through late C20 clearance and reclamation closely reflect the layout shown on the 1886 OS map with summerhouses of various designs, mature fruit trees, complex path systems and terraces.

#### REFERENCES

Warwick Advertiser, 14 July 1866; 5 January 1878; 16 March 1878; 30 March 1878 Hill Close Gardens, Linen Street, Warwick, (Warwickshire Gardens Trust preliminary report 1993) C Hodgetts, Hill Close Gardens, Linen Street, Warwick, (unpublished historical report 1994) Warwickshire Gardens Trust Newsletter, (Autumn 1995), pp 3-4 D Lambert, Detached Town Gardens (English Heritage theme study 1994) Garden History 24, no 2 (1996), pp 237-54

Maps Warwick Castle Estate Plan, 1786 (Warwickshire County Record Office) Warwick Castle Estate Plan, 1806 (Warwickshire County Record Office) Board of Health Map for Warwick, 1851 (Warwickshire County Record Office) Plan annexed to Deed of 1866 (CR2818), (Warwickshire County Record Office) Preliminary Masterplan for Hill Close Gardens, (Plinke Landscape 1998)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1887 2nd edition published 1905 3rd edition published 1926 1938 edition OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1886 2nd edition published 1905 3rd edition published 1925

Archival items Valuations of gardens and associated fittings and fixtures at Hill Close Gardens, 1878-1920 (CR2433/31), (Warwickshire County Record Office) Photograph, aerial view of Hill Close Gardens from the south-west, 1927 (private collection)

Description written: January 2000 Amended: May 2000 Register Inspector: JML Edited: December 2000

## 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.