

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

THE GARDEN HOUSE, COTTERED

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Name: THE GARDEN HOUSE, COTTERED

County: Hertfordshire

District: East Hertfordshire (District Authority)

Parish: Cottered

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.944216
Longitude: -0.087589397
National Grid Reference: TL 31546 29029
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II*
List Entry Number: 1000558
Date first listed: 11-Jun-1987

Details

An early C20 garden in Japanese style created by Herbert Goode, with further ornamental gardens and parkland, surrounding a country house.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Herbert Goode (1865-1937), a wealthy glass and china merchant, began in 1905, after visiting Japan, to create a miniature Japanese landscape on three flat fields at the edge of Cottered. During a second visit to Japan a few years later, Goode acquired a practical knowledge of Japanese gardening, and on his return called on Seyomon Kusumoto to advise on further developments (1923-6) to his garden. While some artefacts were brought from Japan soon after 1905, others were installed during the second period of development in the 1920s, when Goode also built his house on the site, Cheynes House. The garden featured amongst other things hills, a mountain, waterfalls and lakes, together with numerous items sent from Japan, including stone lanterns, further garden ornaments and a tea house. Goode also laid out an Italian Garden (now gone) within the rest of the gardens, and a meadow and woodland garden of an English character on the remainder of the land.

The garden was restored by the owners in 1964, and the Garden House built adjacent to the garden in 1966, when the site was sold into divided ownership. By the 1970s it was still possible to write 'The garden at Cottered no longer has fourteen gardeners pinching the buds of pines and spruce to maintain the scale of the garden, but it remains one of the best and most sympathetically kept Japanese gardens in the country' (Bisgrove 1978). The site remains (1999) in divided ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The Garden House lies at the west edge of the village of Cottered, which itself is situated 5km west of Buntingford. The c 7.5ha, roughly triangular site is bounded to the south-east by the B1037 road from Cottered to Cromer, to the east by the lane dividing it from the parish church and churchyard beyond, to the north by a public footpath, and to the west by agricultural land. The ground is largely level and the setting is rural, with the village enclosing the east end of the site.

The Japanese Garden is comparable in date and character with the Japanese Garden at Bitchet Green, in Kent (qv), and that at Fanhams Hall, Ware, Hertfordshire (qv).

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Following the construction of the Garden House (1966), since when the site has been in divided ownership, the site has had two main entrances, one to serve Herbert Goode's Cheynes House, and the other to give access to the Garden House and the Japanese Garden.

The main approach to Cheynes House is off the B1037, 20m south of the House, the entrance being flanked by flint screen walls and gate piers. A short drive leads north through a belt of mature trees to a gravel forecourt on the south front, and the present main entrance to the House. A spur off the drive extends north to arrive at a further forecourt and entrance on the east front. A further entrance to the site lies 50m north-east of the main entrance to Cheynes House, at Cheynes Lodge, where further flint screen walls flank brick gate piers, with small windows at the top of each face indicating the presence of a chamber, presumably formerly used to hold a lantern. The short drive curves around to the south-west to the Lodge, an early C20, two-storey brick house standing adjacent to the road.

The approach to the Garden House and Japanese Garden enters the site off the lane adjacent to the east, 200m north-east of Cheynes House. A largely straight drive leads c 75m west-south-west to a forecourt on the north front of the Garden House, and the main entrance to the House which lies adjacent to the north side of the Japanese Garden.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Cheynes House (1924) stands close to the centre of the south-east boundary of the site, some 50 to 75m south-west of the Japanese Garden. The two-storey brick house was built by Herbert Goode during his second major period of development of the Japanese Garden. The wooden-clad, two-storey Garden House was built as a separate dwelling in 1966 and stands c 150m north-east of Cheynes House.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens are presently (1999) divided into two main sections by a wooden fence (late C20), and contain many garden ornaments, structures and small buildings. The majority of the Japanese Garden occupies the north half of the site, and is enclosed by the fence and many mature trees. Goode described the way he wished the Japanese Garden to be viewed in his 1933 guidebook, which can still be followed (1999). The guidebook also detailed the meaning of the features in the garden, which he described along with elements of the Japanese-style planting. To the south and west of the Japanese Garden lie further features developed by Goode in association with it. Some of Goode's features in the Japanese Garden have disappeared, but the ground structure and buildings survive largely intact, linked together by generous plantings of Japanese species.

The Japanese Garden is entered from the south front of the Garden House, but there are several gateways marking the divisions between internal compartments. A wooden gateway at the east corner of the Garden (no 1 on Goode's plan of 1933) formerly gave external access from this side, and was the principal entrance, according to Goode's own account of the garden (1933). The southern part of the garden is partly surrounded by a wooden fence in Japanese style, in which several of the gateways are set, with an exterior path running alongside.

The Japanese Garden is dominated by a central, sinuous group of connected ponds sunk between artificial 'hills' and 'mountains'. The northernmost, Fox Lake, leads south into the Iris Pond, this in turn leading south to Turtle Pond into which a cascade also leads, set in a 'gorge' to the east. A network of paths, some of which are sunken, surrounds the ponds, and cross them carried on small, Japanese-style wooden bridges, some of which have been rebuilt (1999). The 'hills' and 'mountains' are ornamented by various features, including buildings and planting. Temple Hill towards the south of the garden is divided from Kasuga Hill to the north by a gorge. To the east of this, Embroidery Mountain is embellished with a Bear Pit. The whole Japanese Garden is largely surrounded by mature trees, including many pines. A set of stone lanterns (C19 or earlier, listed grade II), scattered throughout the garden in several designs, is placed to light the two main paths, the shrine and the bridges.

From the wooden gateway at the east corner of the Japanese Garden (no 1 on Goode's plan of 1933, and presently (1999) disused), a gravel path leads south-west to a wooden shelter (c 1923-6, listed grade II, no 2 on plan), standing east-south-east of the Garden House, north-east of Embroidery Mountain. The shelter has a fan-shaped, conical wooden roof (formerly thatched) and a hexagonal kerb which formerly enclosed a fountain (gone, 1999). From here a path leads north-west towards Fox Lake (no 8 on plan), passing to the south-west a wooden entrance gate with a side screen (c 1923-6, listed grade II, no 20 on plan) standing 45m east-south-east of the Garden House. Opposite the gate and screen, north-east of the path, stands the wooden Small Resting House (c 1923-6, listed grade II, no 7 on plan), raised on stones and formerly approached via stone steps (gone,

1999). The Small Resting House has a pyramidal wooden (formerly thatched) roof and stands on a small hill facing west over the east half of Fox Lake. Fox Lake, the eastern part of which is presently drained (1999) and contains an island, lies at the bottom of Main and Distant Mountains, adjacent to the north. A path climbs from the east side of Fox Lake up Main Mountain, giving a view over a cascade down to Fox Lake, and towards the Japanese House in the distance to the south-west. The path leads around the north side of the two Mountains. A small thatched tea house stands on the west side of Main Mountain, close to the east side of the Garden House, overlooking Fox Lake and the cascade down Main Mountain to the south.

A painted, wooden Spirit Bridge (Enomoto 1912, rebuilt late C20, listed grade II, no 9 on plan) crosses the narrow part of Fox Lake, linking the path from the main entrance gate (no 1 on plan) to the east, with the Fox Shrine to the north-west. The bridge is modelled on the sacred bridge at Nikko, Japan, called shin-kyo (Spirit Bridge).

The path from the Spirit Bridge leads north-west, between the south front of the Garden House and the north bank of Fox Lake, to a free-standing wooden Red Arch (Torii) (early C20, listed grade II, no 17 on plan), which stands on the north-west bank of Fox Lake, close to the south-west corner of the Garden House. The Red Arch marks the entrance to a short path leading west to the Fox Shrine (Inari) (early C20, listed grade II, no 19 on plan). The shrine is a carved timber and black-stained Shinto shrine, sacred to the God of Prosperity, and stands 20m west-south-west of the Garden House. It is a small example of its type and has lost some of its structures.

South of the Fox Shrine stands the wooden, two-storey Japanese House (early C20 or earlier, listed grade II, no 29 on plan). It has projecting verandahs and stands 30m south-south-west of the Garden House, overlooking Iris Pond to the east and the Tea House beyond this. In Japanese gardens this type of house was used principally as a retreat from a main house. It was normally placed outside a garden, but because this one is within the garden it is more ornamental. From the Japanese House a series of stepping stones and bridges leads east, dividing the north side of the Iris Pond from the south side of the Fox Lake, leading to the wooden Tea House (1905, listed grade II, no 21 on plan) which stands 50m south-south-east of the Garden House, and is entered via sliding doors. It stands close to the wooden gateway (no 20 on plan), overlooking the Japanese House, Fox Lake and Iris Pond to the west, and was brought from Japan by Goode.

A free-standing, cast-metal Green Arch, or Torii (1828 by Osaki, Japan, re-erected 1905(26, listed grade II), stands 50m south-south-west of the Garden House at the west end of Turtle Pond. It formerly stood in front of the Fox Shrine, south-west of the Garden House.

The wooden Resting House (S Kusumoto 1923-6, listed grade II, no 36 on plan) stands at the south end of the garden, on the north side of the Japanese fence which encircles this part of the Japanese Garden. The Resting House is a single-storey, open-sided, thatched shelter. It faces north, overlooking a waterfall, and beyond the paved Mountain Valley to Turtle Pond. Turtle Pond and the Resting House are overlooked by Temple Hill to the east, along the north side of which descends the Gorge, and to the east of this by Embroidery Mountain, planted with mature trees, on the top of which stands the stone bear pit. The path south of Embroidery Mountain was formerly crossed by a wooden bridge (now gone) which gave access to a further section of the Japanese Garden which surrounds another pond adjacent to the south-east. This embanked pond (now, 1999, divided from the main part of the Japanese Garden by the late C20 wooden fence), which lies c 130m north-east of Cheynes House, is surrounded by many mature pines, and has a wooden shelter in Japanese style standing on the west bank, overlooking the water. On the south side steps lead down from the encircling perimeter path to the water's edge.

Some 10m west of the Garden House stands an architectural fragment (mid C19, listed grade II) in the form of a large octagonal drum carved on each face with a coat of arms, thought to have been brought from the Palace of Westminster in the 1930s (listed building description). Further west of the House a stand of mature pine trees set in lawn, known as Pine Grove, leads to the west boundary of the Japanese Garden.

South and south-west of the present confines of the Japanese Garden lie informal lawns, connecting the Japanese Garden with Cheynes House, which incorporate the former sites of the Italian Garden and English Garden (both now gone). At the north-east end of the lawns stand several architectural stone fragments (mid C19, listed grade II), also thought to have been brought from the Palace of Westminster (listed building description). These stand south of a clipped yew hedge which screens the lawns from the pine-encircled pond beyond, now (1999) detached from the Japanese Garden.

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PARK The small park lies to the south-west of the gardens, with Cheynes House separating the southern half of the gardens from the parkland. The park is laid to pasture with several clumps of mature trees, and divided into paddocks by wooden fencing. Towards the north-west corner lies a maze, with hawthorn hedges dividing grass paths, and birch trees planted at intervals in the hedges. Goode is believed to have planted this in the early C20.

REFERENCES

H Goode, *The Japanese Garden at Cottered, Herts 1905-33* (1933) (Hertfordshire Local Studies Library) R Bisgrove, *The Gardens of Britain* 3, (1978), p 80 L Fleming and A Gore, *The English Garden* (1979), pp 210-11, 241 D Ottewill, *Edwardian Gardens* (1989), pp 56-7, 207 n 46

Maps Plan of the Japanese Garden [in Goode 1933]

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1884 2nd edition published 1899 3rd edition published 1925 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1898 3rd edition published 1923

Description written: October 1999 Register Inspector: SR Edited: October 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.