

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

THE JAPANESE GARDEN, BITCHET WOOD

Auteur(s) : Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/>

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Name: THE JAPANESE GARDEN, BITCHET WOOD

County: Kent

District: Sevenoaks (District Authority)

Parish: Seal

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.265627
Longitude: 0.24560152
National Grid Reference: TQ 56764 54225
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II*
List Entry Number: 1000936
Date first listed: 01-May-1986

Details

An early C20 garden designed by Raymond Berrow in the Japanese style, based on a design published in Joseph Condor's *Landscape Gardening in Japan* (1893).

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The Japanese Garden at Bitchet Wood was laid out between 1919 and 1921 by the architect Raymond Berrow for Hugh Micklem, as a self-contained garden without reference to a house. The site remains (2002) in single private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The Japanese Garden at Bitchet Wood lies just to the east of Sevenoaks in the small village of Bitchet Green. The c 0.25ha site is enclosed on all sides by high hedges which divide it from the surrounding gardens. As part of the design, the site, which naturally slopes slightly from south to north, was given additional contours by the creation of five 'hills'. There is one distant view out of the garden from the southern hills, looking northwards to a sandy cliff c 2km away.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The garden is entered through a gateway in the north-east corner, reached from a track leading off the village street beyond the eastern boundary.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The garden is rectangular and enclosed by hedges with a screen belt of trees and shrubs on all sides. Five grassy 'hills', four to the south and one to the north-east, achieve considerable variation in level. It is from the 'Distant Mountain' hill that the view out of the garden to the north is seen. A lake extends irregularly from south to north and includes a rocky cascade and an island. It is crossed by three bridges and has an intricate outline around the hills, giving interest and variety to the winding paths through the garden. These paths often incorporate stepping stones set in sand. Throughout the garden there are many features including a tea house to the north-west which overlooks the lake, and a Garden Well close to the gateway on the north-east boundary. To the west of the lake stands an Umbrella arbour and there are several important stones, for example the Guardian Stone and Kwannon Stone. Notable trees include a yew known as the 'View Perfecting Tree' on the island, and several fine mature acers. Berrow's plan for the garden indicates the positions of many more stones and prescribed trees.

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The layout and features of the garden were designed by Raymond Berrow for Hugh Micklem in 1919 and are modelled closely on those indicated for a 'Hill Garden - finished style' in Joseph Condor's *Landscape Gardening in Japan*, published originally in 1893. The garden at Bitchet Wood contains slight variations on Condor's recommendations, necessitated by the nature of the site, and contains one major addition in the form of an area of bog garden with iris and waterside plants, located to the west of the lake and crossed by the 'Yatsu-hashii' bridge of zig-zag planks.

REFERENCES

J Condor, *Landscape Gardening in Japan* (1893, 1912), pl 25 [Reprinted by Dover Publications 1964]

Maps OS 25" to 1 mile: 3rd edition published 1908 1936 edition

Archival items Garden plan by Raymond Berrow labelled 'Japanese Garden, Bitchet Wood, Seal Kent for Hugh Micklem', nd (c 1919) [copy on EH file]

Description written: January 2002 Amended: February 2002 Register Inspector: EMP Edited: November 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.