

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

**MOUNT HOUSE, ALDERLEY**

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

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**MOUNT HOUSE, ALDERLEY**

Name: MOUNT HOUSE, ALDERLEY

County: Gloucestershire

District: Stroud (District Authority)

Parish: Alderley

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.614900  
Longitude: -2.3350617  
National Grid Reference: ST 76897 90728  
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden  
Grade: II  
List Entry Number: 1000752  
Date first listed: 28-Feb-1986

## Details

Late C19 terrace and ornamental garden of c 0.8ha, created by Marianne North, botanist and painter.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Mount House was given its present shape in 1756 by a Mr Larton, who worked in one of the Alderley cloth mills. Mount House was the last home of Marianne North (b 1830), who lived here from 1886 until her death in 1890. From 1847, North had travelled the world with her father, the Hastings MP, Frederick North, and painted the plants and landscapes she saw. Most of her works are on display in the Marianne North Gallery at Kew Gardens. After her father's death, North's inheritance allowed her to continue her travels. When ill health forced her to cease travelling, she rented Mount House from General Hale, who lived at Alderley Grange (qv), in the same village. North accepted contributions of plants from Kew Gardens, Gertrude Jekyll, Canon Ellacombe and many others and considered her creation to be the 'most perfect garden in England' (Ponsonby 1990). She died on 30 August 1890 and was buried at St Kenelm's church, in Alderley.

After North's death, the property passed through several hands, including those of the Gascoignes, parents of Bamber, and remains (2000) in private hands.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Mount House stands in the south-west quarter of the small village of Alderley, 2km south of Wotton-under-Edge and 20km north-east of Bristol. The c 0.8ha site is bounded to the west by a minor road from Wotton to Hillesley, and to the north by a road which peters out to a track south-east of the House. The southern boundary of the gardens is a low drystone wall and the eastern boundary a higher, brick and stone wall. The House stands at the top of a south-facing slope, at the west end of Winner Hill. The gardens lie on the moderate slope south of the House. South of the gardens, the ground falls away more steeply to a stream in the valley bottom. There are fine views south and south-west from the gardens, across the valley, to the fields beyond.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The main approach to Mount House is from the road to the north. A roughly triangular gravel forecourt lies between the road and the wrought-iron railings which run, on a low stone wall, along the north front of the House. A thick hedge grows behind and through the railings. Two square stone piers, set into the railings, support a pair

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of wrought-iron gates. From this a stone-flagged path leads south to the front door. Between the railings and the House is a narrow strip of lawn. A path leads from the west end of this lawn, around the west end of the House, to the gardens.

A second approach to the gardens is via a gateway c 20m south-east of the House. This leads past outbuildings to a gateway in the wall at the north-east corner of the gardens. The gardens can also be accessed from the pasture south of the gardens via wrought-iron gates set between low stone piers in the southern boundary wall.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Mount House (listed grade II\*) is a rectangular building of two storeys with attics. It is rendered and has a hipped, Cotswold stone slate roof with a parapet. There are seven bays on its north side, two bay windows on the west side, and six unequal bays on the south front. Both the front and back doorways are right (west and east respectively) of centre. The core of the House is of the late C17. Alterations were made to the south front in 1756 and to the north in 1785.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** A gravel path runs east/west along the south front of the House and is interrupted by a small, C20, rectangular stone-flagged terrace around the back door, from which three semicircular stone steps lead down. A hedge to the west of the terrace conceals the entrance to an underground icehouse. The main garden compartment is a rectangle, c 50m long, which is terraced to give two sloping lawns. It is enclosed by a 2.5m high wall (part coursed stone, part brick) to the east and a mixed border of ornamental trees and shrubs to the west. An axial gravel path runs south from the back door, between the wall and a yew hedge, to the bottom of the garden. Here, stone steps lead down to the gate in the southern boundary wall. A strip of lawn east of the path is planted with specimen trees.

Directly south of the gravel path running along the front of the House is the slightly sloping upper lawn. A few metres south of the sundial, stone steps lead down, through a rockery, to the lower lawn. The sloping east and west sides of the lawn are planted with herbaceous borders and specimen trees including, on the west side, a mature gingko and a hankerchief tree. A small magnolia, at the north-east corner of the lawn, is thought to be extremely old (owner pers comm, 2000). Further trees, including several maples, stand at the south end of the lawn; many were planted by North. A small raised bed, supported by drystone walls, stands at the south-east corner of the lawn. A circular pool, at the north end of the lower lawn, below the steps, was removed in the late C20 (owner pers comm, 2000).

A gravel path runs south, along the western edge of the lawn, to a slightly raised wild area c 80m south-west of the House. This part of the garden is planted with shrubs and edged by trees including several mature holm oaks to the north, yews, oaks, and a katsura tree. Winding grass paths pass between the shrubs. One path leads south, following the line of the road, from which it is separated by oaks and yews, to a tennis court (outside the area here registered). An evergreen honeysuckle hedge separates the path from the tennis court. To the north of the wild area, west of the lawn, a dense belt of trees, including yews and holm oaks, divides the gardens from the road below. A drystone wall, topped by a Cupressus hedge, runs along the road, forming the boundary here.

A gravel path runs north of the southern boundary wall, along the south edge of the lower lawn. At the south-east corner of this lawn the path curves north, around and up to 1m below the south-east edge of a rose garden situated c 50m south of the House. Here, a yew hedge grows along the north side of the southern boundary wall, to the south of the path. The sub-rectangular rose garden is enclosed by the 2.5m high brick wall, faced with coursed stone, to its west and a c 3m high brick wall to the north. A 3m high stone wall encloses it to the east but it is open to the south and there are extensive views in this direction. The rose garden consists of a lawn with rose beds along its north, east, and west sides. In *Recollections of a Happy Life* (North 1892), North's sister states that 'a little walled yard full of currant bushes she turned into a lovely rose-garden'. A brick archway with a wrought-iron gate leads back, through the west wall, to the main garden. A second gateway, with a solid wooden gate, in the east wall, leads to a yard and outbuildings (outside the registered area).

North's sister claimed that 'out of the dead level of the lawn-tennis ground she [Marianne] planned a terraced garden, sloping steeply to a pond and rockery which were to be stocked with rare plants from all corners of the globe' (North 1892). When North arrived at Alderley, there was a garden on the site but it had been neglected and it would appear that North was responsible for the layout of the garden as it is today (2000).

#### REFERENCES

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M North, *Recollections of a Happy Life* (1892), pp 330-7 *Country Life*, 146 (3 July 1969), pp 18-22 D Verey, *The Buildings of England: Gloucestershire The Cotswolds* (2nd edn 1979), p 82 *Gloucestershire and Avon Life*, (May 1990) L Ponsonby, *Marianne North at Kew Gardens* (1990), pp 120-2

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1881, published 1886 2nd edition published 1903 3rd edition published 1923

Description written: February 2000 Register Inspector: TVAC Edited: April 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.