

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

Garden at 1 Castle Hill (formerly Wantage)

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

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Garden at 1 Castle Hill (formerly Wantage)*

Name: Garden at 1 Castle Hill (formerly Wantage)

County: Warwickshire

District: Warwick (District Authority)

Parish: Kenilworth

label.localisation: Latitude: 52.348906
Longitude: -1.5876087
National Grid Reference: SP2818872395
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

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label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1435329
Date first listed: 12-Oct-2016
Location Description:
Statutory Address 1: 1 Castle Hill, Kenilworth, Warwick, Warks

Historique de la conservation

Wantage and its gardens were designed by Herbert Buckland (1869-1951). Buckland was a Birmingham architect, articulated in 1885 to a quantity surveyor, Henry Clere, whilst studying at the Municipal School of Art. He joined the Birmingham Architectural Association, and through this came into contact with Charles Edward Bateman, part of a significant family of Birmingham architects, working with his father in the firm of Bateman and Bateman. Buckland worked in the offices of Bateman and Bateman from 1891 to 1895, in which year he set up in practice with Henry Clere, but by 1897 he was in independent practice. In 1899, he joined in partnership with Edward Heywood-Farmer (1871-1917), creating the new firm of Buckland and Farmer, which was to become well-known for its Arts and Crafts buildings, along with the likes of William Bidlake, and Bateman and Bateman, also working in Birmingham. Buckland worked alongside William Bidlake when the two were teaching at the Birmingham School of Art; certainly Buckland's work shares many characteristics with Bidlake's buildings. Buckland and Farmer worked primarily in the Birmingham area, but also undertook commissions as far away as Suffolk, Glasgow, Barnsley and Wales. They principally designed houses for wealthy industrialists and professionals, and school buildings, but their work also extended to commercial and industrial premises. Buckland and Farmer's domestic work appears to have been largely designed by Buckland. Their output from 1899-1911 included more than fifteen mid-sized detached houses, including Buckland's own house, 21 Yateley Road, in Edgbaston, Birmingham (1899), a fine example of an Arts and Crafts house of this period, influenced by C17 domestic building, which is listed at Grade I.

The house was built in 1900-1, to designs by Herbert Buckland of Buckland and Farmer, for Charlotte, widow of Aaron Lufkin Dennison, an important pioneer of mass-production watchmaking, who became known as the father of the American watch industry, and her daughter Ethie, who was the primary force behind the building of the house. Dennison had moved from his native United States of America to Birmingham in 1871, setting up the Anglo-American Watch Company. After Aaron's death in 1895, at which time the family was living in West Bromwich, the Dennisons bought land on Castle Hill in Kenilworth, at the edge of the Abbey Fields.

The land now occupied by Wantage and the other houses along this stretch of Castle Hill was formerly part of Kenilworth Abbey. After the Dissolution the abbey precinct and the land belonging to it were leased to Andrew Flammock, whose descendent John Colbourne sold the land on to Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, in 1581. Dudley had been granted the Castle Manor of Kenilworth in 1562, and this brought the castle and abbey lands into single ownership, in which they stayed until the end of the C19. In 1665 the Crown granted Kenilworth of Laurence Hyde, Earl of Rochester, and the estate remained in the hands of his descendants, the Earls of Clarendon. In 1883, the fifth Earl offered to sell the Abbey Fields to the local Board of Health for public open space. The Board sought permission to apply for a loan of £12,000, with the aim of raising the remainder of the £16,000 purchase price by the sale of some of the land for development. This funding plan was abandoned when it emerged that the terms would require any funds raised by sale for development to be used to repay the loan. The response of the Board was to renegotiate to purchase only the inner part of the Abbey Fields for public space, for £6,000; four of the board members then formed a trust, which raised a loan to purchase the remainder. They built Forrest Road along the southern boundary of the Abbey Fields and gave some land to the churchwardens to enlarge the churchyard at the NE corner of the site. Building plots were then laid out along the N side of Abbey Fields, along Castle Road, and in the SW corner along Castle Road. Various restrictive covenants were placed on the land, to ensure consistency of building lines, and to ensure the quality of development: on each plot, a single house was to be built to the value of £1,000, or a pair of semi-detached houses worth £1,500. Not all of the plots were purchased for building, and in 1888, those remaining were bought between three of the trustees, who eventually transferred much of the undeveloped land to Urban District Council to form part of the public open space of the Abbey Fields. Three plots on the N side of Abbey Fields, along Castle Hill, fell in 1888 to George Marshall Turner, one of the trustees. Plots 11 and 12, and part of plot 10, would later be occupied by the house and gardens of Wantage. Plot 11, the central of the three, was purchased by the Dennisons in 1899, and it is on this plot that the house was constructed in 1901. The adjacent plot,

plot 12, was purchased in the same year, and it seems from the design of the house that it was always the intention of Ethie Dennison to own this plot, as she had the formal rooms in the western end of the house well-provided with large windows looking out to the west, apparently to accommodate her strong desire always to be able to see Kenilworth Castle. Had there been the possibility of plot 12 being developed with the construction of another large house, the windows carefully placed on the western elevation, with a prominent carved datestone to the first floor, would, rather than giving some of the prime views from Wantage, have uncomfortably closely overlooked those of the adjacent dwelling. Plot 10 was, and remains, partly occupied by a row of cottages which were evidently intended to be swept away when the area was developed, though in the event, that closest to Wantage was taken on by Ethie Dennison and run as a charitable enterprise, and all three survive. By the time of a valuation inspection in 1913, she was renting part of plot 10, and soon after purchased the larger part of it, as it was included in her will in 1914. The remainder of the plot, apart from small gardens for the other two cottages in the row adjacent to that purchased by Ethie was returned to the Abbey Fields.

The gardens created for Wantage by Ethie Dennison and Herbert Buckland were divided into a series of compartments, or rooms, for different functions, with different characters. In common with other gardens for Arts and Crafts houses, which stressed the integration of house and garden, the house and gardens were designed as a piece. To the front of the house, to the western side of the entrance court, was a large rose garden; beyond this, an orchard. A large terrace extended to the rear of the house, accommodating the slope of the garden. The kitchen garden was to the east. Retaining walls with flights of steps between them created a further terrace aligned on the house to the rear, leading down to a formal lawn. These are shown in a photograph accompanying an article in *The Studio* of 1905, which comments on the way in which the architect had recognised the importance of the gardens in setting off the house. Further compartments extended across the rest of the gardens, some created by walls, others by hedging. Ordnance Survey maps published in 1903, 1925 and 1936 show the progression of the gardens. The gardens were still under construction in 1903, though much of the layout was already in place – the orchard is marked, as are most of the retaining walls of the upper and lower terraces, though the rear wall of the upper terrace has yet to be built. The garden appears to have been completed shortly after this. By 1925, the terracing is shown complete.

A surveyor from the Valuation Office, visiting in 1913, found that £5,200 had been spent on the purchase of the site, building the house, and the laying out and stocking of the gardens, which were clearly complete by this time. The building value of the house was given as £3,747; the garden walls were valued at £300, the fruit trees at £50, and the other plants bought to stock the garden at £100.

The basic layout of the garden appears to have altered little since the 1925 Ordnance Survey map was surveyed. A garage was constructed to the east of the house in circa 1936, shown on the 1939 map. In recent years the garden has become overgrown beyond the house terrace and the first terrace to the rear.

Details

A suburban Arts and Crafts garden for Wantage, a house built in 1901, laid out circa 1901-5, by Herbert Buckland, architect, and Ethie Dennison, owner.

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The garden is situated in the town of Kenilworth, accessed from Castle Hill. The garden at Wantage covers a roughly rectangular area of approximately 0.57ha, and occupies land which slopes steeply downwards from Castle Hill at its northern boundary, towards the southern boundary, where it adjoins the Abbey Fields, the remains of the former Kenilworth Abbey site, now a public park. The garden also slopes less steeply from the house towards the eastern boundary. The garden is bounded on either side by the gardens of the adjoining houses. The northern boundary is walled. The site lies within the former boundary of the Abbey precincts, and approximately 175m ENE of Kenilworth Castle.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The site is accessed from Castle Hill, the road running to the north of the garden. The garden is walled to the pavement, and has two pedestrian gateways (one now blocked) and one double-gated vehicular access.

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PRINCIPAL BUILDING The garden serves the Grade II-listed house known as Wantage (sometimes referred to as The Wantage), an Arts and Crafts house built in 1901 to designs by Herbert Buckland of Buckland and Farmer, architects of Birmingham. The house is of two storeys, basement and attic, with a recessed porch at the south-west corner forming a verandah with built-in seating.

GARDENS The garden is divided into compartments, or rooms, each with its own character or function. To account for the steep slope away to the south to the rear of the house, and the shallower slope to the west, the gardens are terraced. To the front of the house, the eastern side is an entrance court, with a driveway leading to the recessed front porch and a small outbuilding to the left, which is linked to the house by a wall housing a gate to the garden. The driveway is divided from the garden by a narrow flower bed. The western side of the front garden is devoted to a rose garden, which is lower than the driveway and separated from it by a grass bank creating a level garden beyond, with a short flight of three stone steps down. The rose beds are circular, within lawn. To the western edge of this area is a low wall of brick with plain capping, and a short flight of steps down into the orchard, which occupies the NW compartment of the garden. The orchard has a holly hedge at its southern boundary, above retaining walls to the next compartment to the south, which along with the area further south, is also overgrown; this was used latterly as a vegetable garden.

The lawned area continues on a level with the rose garden along the W side of the house, and returns along the rear of the house, level with the basement windows. The terrace to the rear is formed by walls, the retaining portion built in stone, with brick parapets above. The face of the parapet wall towards the house is rendered. A flight of stone steps down to the next terrace is set centrally, aligned on the rear of the house; it has square-section brick piers with plain capping and flattened stone ball finials, and matching walls. A sundial stands towards the eastern end of the terrace. The E end is bowed out, and carries a flight of stone steps down to the small service court, in front of the lower-ground floor entrance to the service range. Beyond the service court, a wall divides the upper part of the former kitchen garden (on part of which a garage was built in the 1930s) from the formal gardens. The kitchen gardens are further separated from the formal gardens by hedging moving southwards down the slope of the rear garden. At the time of inspection (March 2016) the kitchen garden was largely overgrown.

The first terrace below the house is a rectangular compartment, with the remains of flower borders surrounding lawn, and a hedge to the E side separating the compartment from a path leading from the service court southwards. Box bushes describe openings at the north and south ends of the compartment, in alignment with the steps down into the terrace, and with the long flight of stone steps which leads down from this terrace to the next, maintaining the strong axial focus on the rear of the house through the whole of the formal garden. Beyond this, the garden is overgrown, and largely inaccessible, but a recent measured survey of the entire garden submitted as part of a planning application shows the surviving built features well, and this, together with photographs from recent sales particulars allows a description of the garden to be made. The flight of steps leads down to the formal lawn, which is lower than the surrounding areas of garden and has stone retaining walls to three sides. The sloping areas to either side of the steps were used for planting, and were divided by small walls into miniature terraces: those to the E side of the steps still survive. The main retaining walls have semi-circular niches built within them, and the edges had borders for planting. The southern boundary of the formal garden was planted with an area of yew hedging, with other hedging for the remaining boundaries.

Summary

A suburban Arts and Crafts garden for Wantage, a house built in 1901, laid out circa 1901-5, by Herbert Buckland, architect, and Ethie Dennison, owner.

Legal

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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.

Reasons for Designation

The Arts and Crafts garden at 1 Castle Hill (formerly Wantage), laid out in 1901-5 to the designs of Herbert Buckland, is registered at Grade II for the following principal reasons: * Designer: it is by an accomplished architect of national repute whose work is well represented on the List; * Design interest: it is a significant work that embodies fundamental Arts and Crafts ideas about garden design; its design is carefully integrated with that of the house to create an open and dynamic relationship between the inside and outside space; * Degree of survival: with the exception of the possible loss of part of the terrace wall to the west, the garden 'rooms', including the rose garden, terraces, orchard and tennis lawn, together with the paths, boundaries and trees, survive in the same form as shown in contemporary photographs; * Rarity: an increasingly rare survival of a suburban Arts and Crafts garden; * Group value: strong group value with the Grade II listed house, which is contemporary; the house and garden were designed by Buckland as an ensemble.

Bibliographie

Books and journals

Ballard, Phillada , Birmingham's Victorian and Edwardian Architects, (2009)

'Recent Designs for Domestic Architecture: House at Kenilworth' in The Studio, , Vol. 33, (1905), 306-9

Other

Documents, plans and photographs associated with planning application and LBC applications W/16/0018 and W/16/0019/LB, January 2016, and other earlier applications relating to the site

Sales particulars, Hamptons International, July 2014