

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

TEWIN WATER

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

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**TEWIN WATER**

Name: TEWIN WATER

County: Hertfordshire

District: East Hertfordshire (District Authority)

Parish: Tewin

County: Hertfordshire

District: Welwyn Hatfield (District Authority)

Parish: Welwyn

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.815944  
Longitude: -0.17936530  
National Grid Reference: TL 25595 14602  
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden  
Grade: II  
List Entry Number: 1000920  
Date first listed: 11-Jun-1987

## Details

A late C18 landscape and pleasure grounds to designs by Humphry Repton, surrounding a late C18 country house.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The manor of Tewin was bought by James Fleet in 1714, to whose widow it passed on his death in 1733. Mrs Fleet became Lady Cathcart upon marriage to her third husband, Charles, eighth Lord Cathcart. On her death in 1789, the manor passed to William, third Earl Cowper, and from 1791 to 1797 the property was let to a relation by marriage, Lord John Townsend. An estate map of c 1785-9 (HRO) shows the layout of the parcels of land around the house at that time, including a 40 acre (c 16ha) paddock called The Warren, which Lady Cathcart labelled the park, together with a 7 acre (c 3ha) garden lying adjacent. In 1797 Tewin Water house was demolished and rebuilt in Neoclassical style by its occupant, Henry Cowper, a relation of the owner, the fifth Earl Cowper who came of age in that year.

In 1799 the fifth Earl engaged Humphry Repton (1752-1818) to improve his estates running through the River Mimram valley in Hertfordshire, including Tewin Water, Panshanger and Cole Green (qqv), and Digswell, although the latter was dropped from the scheme at an early stage. Repton produced a Red Book for the Tewin Water estate, with suggestions for improving the landscape, entailing the creation of a 'really imposing expanse of water' from the River Mimram which was to be widened into a lake to take full advantage of the valley scenery around it (Red Book 1799, HRO). As part of the larger scheme to landscape the Earl's estates along the river valley, a Red Book was also produced for the Panshanger and Cole Green estates in the same year. Repton intended that each estate in the Mimram valley within Earl Cowper's possession should be given 'a degree of extent and consequence which it could not boast exclusive of the others, and while each possesses its independent privacy and seclusion, their united lawns will, by extending thro' the whole valley, enrich the general face of the country' (ibid).

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*TEWIN WATER*

Following Henry Cowper's death in 1840 the house at Tewin Water was let to a series of tenants, including the Earl of Uxbridge, and from 1892 to 1897 the third Earl of Limerick. In 1902 Alfred Beit, a diamond millionaire, acquired the estate, extending the house and adding formal elements to the gardens. His brother Sir Otto Beit inherited the house in 1906, and following his own death in 1936, his widow lived in the house until 1946. During the late 1940s and 1950s the estate was sold into divided ownership, and the parkland passed between various owners, during which time much of the parkland timber was felled. The house was a school from 1950 until the late 1990s, subsequently being acquired for conversion into multiple domestic units (1999), with further houses to be built close by.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Tewin Water lies 2km north-east of the centre of Welwyn Garden City, by the suburbs of which it is flanked to the south-west. The c 77ha park is bounded to the south-west largely by the B1000 road linking Hertford and Digswell Water, and to the north and east by agricultural land and woodland, the east boundary being marked by Churchfield Road which is carried over the River Mimram by a C19 bridge. A bridge in similar style carries the B1000 across the river at the north-west tip of the park, in the village of Digswell Water. The south-west half of the site largely occupies the flood plain of the valley, whilst the north-east half of the park rises up the hillside. The north-east hillside is bisected by a valley, running north-east from close to the house and stables, in which Dawley Plantation extends beyond the area here registered to Dawley Wood. The setting is partly agricultural, with the villages of Digswell Water and High Welwyn adjacent to the north-west, and the suburban development of Welwyn Garden City close by to the south-west. Views extend south-west from the hillside in the north-east half of the park towards Welwyn Garden City, and east along the Mimram valley. Panshanger landscape park (qv) lies 2km to the south-east, laid out after 1799 to designs by Humphry Repton for the fifth Earl Cowper, and connected to Tewin Water by the River Mimram.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main entrance to the estate lies 1km north-west of the house, at the point where the villages of High Welwyn and Digswell Water meet, off the High Welwyn lane connecting the two, which leads north from the B1000. The rendered, two-storey Digswell lodge (late C19/early C20) marks the entrance of the north-west drive off the High Welwyn lane. From here the drive curves south-east through the park alongside the River Mimram for 300m before the river moves further to the south. The drive continues south-east through the park, along the bottom of the north-east hillside, passing alongside the north boundary of the remains of the former walled kitchen garden lying 50m north-west of the house. Some 50m north of the house, close to the north entrance of the stable yard, the drive turns south along the west side of an open, level lawn which is bounded to the west by the stable yard and house, and on the other sides by mature trees, with the river running along its south side. The drive arrives at a carriage sweep by the main entrance on the east front of the house, overlooking the lawn. The former east drive, now a farm track and partly lost, enters the site 700m south-east of the house, off Churchfield Road, extending north-west through the park, entering Home Wood 500m south-east of the house. The track curves through Home Wood, joining the north-west drive where it turns south to the east front of the house. Formerly (OS C19/early C20) a further arm of this drive entered at Tewin Lodge, standing 650m south-east of the house adjacent to where the river leaves the site, and built in similar style to the Digswell lodge in the late C19 or early C20. The former southern arm of the east drive curved north and west, meeting the northern arm 500m south-east of the house, the two continuing as one beyond this through Home Wood to the house.

Until the 1790s (Dury and Andrews, 1766; Map of Tewin c 1785-9, showing roads before and after alteration, HRO) the main Digswell Water to Hertford road ran closer to, and roughly parallel with the course of the river. The main entrance to the Tewin Water estate was off this road to the south of the house, a short drive crossing the river to approach the east front of the house directly from the south. Repton in his Red Book (1799) proposed that the main drive should enter from the Hertford end of the newly enlarged estate, at Tewin Lodge, flanked by two spinneys of trees. The drive was to curve north-west across the park, with an uninterrupted view of the lake and river to the south-west, passing close to the bank of the river before curving around the newly altered course of the river, to arrive at the east front of the house from the north. The drive was actually built further away from the river bank than Repton had proposed, and by the 1830s the eastern spur had been constructed, although at that

time there was no sign of Home Wood which was to enclose the west half of the drive by the late C19 (Tewin parish Tithe map, 1838; OS C19). The south-east drive gave good views of the east front of the house across the park.

In his Red Book Repton also proposed that the north-west drive should enter the park c 700m north-west of the house, off the newly straightened Digswell Water to Hertford road, between two spinneys of trees. The drive was to emerge into the park to cross the river, curving east, and passing at some distance north of the kitchen garden, from which it would have been screened by a plantation which would have encircled the kitchen garden. A picturesque, single-storey rendered lodge (outside the area here registered) presently stands 650m north-west of the house, possibly marking the former north-west entrance to the park, if this was ever constructed. By the 1820s (Digswell parish Tithe map, 1822) the north-west entrance stood in its present situation, joined to the original course of the drive.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Tewin Water house (rebuilt and remodelled 1790s, listed grade II) stands at the centre of the site on the low ground of the flood plain, between the River Mimram and a sharp rise in the ground to the north-east. The rectangular, two-storey, stuccoed brick house was rebuilt and modified in the 1790s in Greek Revival style, and altered and extended in the 1890s and 1900s. The entrance front lies on the east side, with garden entrances to the south and west. Formerly the house enjoyed largely uninterrupted views of the river to the east, south-west and south (as Repton had intended), before the banks were obscured by tree growth. Attached to the north side of the house lies the narrow, rectangular stable yard, entered from the north side off the north-west drive, with the former stable block (converted to school accommodation) on the west side of the yard.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The gardens and pleasure grounds occupy level ground along the north bank of the Mimram, and extend c 400m west from the house. An open lawn extends from the west front, an area close to the house being laid to tarmac. The lawn is flanked by trees to north and south, including several large plane trees close to the river, with a range of former school buildings (to be replaced with houses, 1999) extending west from the house along the north side of the lawn. At the west end of the lawn, which is bounded by a footpath, a small copse stands next to the river, close to an artificial stone cascade crossed by a wooden footbridge which carries the footpath south of the river. An overgrown area of former garden lies between the south front and the river.

Repton proposed an informal lawn west of the house, separated from the river by a serpentine path close to the bank which led to the crossing at the west end of the lawn. He suggested that a classical garden building enclosing a seat should be sited close to the west boundary of the lawn. The lawn was to be screened from the kitchen gardens to the north by a belt of trees. At the east end the lawn would overlook the park south of the river, the view being stopped by a thick belt of trees on the south boundary adjacent to the road where he suggested a classical rotunda should be sited as an eyecatcher. Much of Repton's layout proposal was acted upon, although it is uncertain whether the two garden buildings were constructed. By the late C19 (OS 1884) a formal parterre had been added adjacent to the west front, and the lawn extended from the south front to the river, with the riverside path along the south edge of the lawn occupying the north bank. The pleasure grounds had been extended 75m beyond the footpath along the north bank to encompass two islands.

**PARK** The park, largely enclosed by belts of trees, surrounds the house and pleasure grounds, and is divided into two unequal halves by the River Mimram. The river enters the site at the north-west corner, extending in serpentine fashion south-east through the valley, passing close to the south front of the house, before opening out at the south corner of the park into a lake (somewhat silted up, 1999) and leaving the park close by at the south-east corner. The north-east half of the park is largely laid to open arable, with several paddocks laid to pasture between the river and the north-west drive. The park south of the river contains many mature specimen trees in pasture, particularly to the south and west of the house. Home Wood appears to have been planted in the mid to late C19, if not at the time of Repton's major landscaping, and is presently (late C20) significantly smaller than its early C20 size (OS 1925). An icehouse may still survive in the wood 150m north of the house (OS C19). A group of several C20 houses stands c 100m north-east of the house, towards the west edge of Home Wood, close to the north side of the former east drive.

In the late C18 (Dury and Andrews, 1766) the park occupied less than half its present area, with avenues extending north and east from the house. Repton described the 'advantages of the situation' at Tewin Water, including 'a copious supply of beautifully

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coloured water, and such an extent of park without mixture of alien property that the boundary is no where obtrusive' (Red Book, 1799). To Repton the aspect was the most important question, that to the south-east being 'the best of all possible aspects'. He proposed extending the park to west, south and east, and breaking up the planting of avenues east of the house, which he felt were incongruous with the recently remodelled house. The house was to be clearly visible from the park, from his suggested approach from the south-east across the newly carved sweeping curve of the river, as was shown in Neale's view of 1818. The house was also to be prominent in the views from the park south of the river, where the rotunda was proposed at the top of the slope close to the south boundary, backed by a belt of trees.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The remains of the former kitchen gardens lie 50m north-west of the house, marked chiefly by a red-brick wall, broken in places by gateways. The wall runs parallel with the north-west drive, from which it is separated at the west end by an open area of rough lawn planted with young specimen trees, and at the east end by (1999) an overgrown area. These areas formerly contained the north half of the kitchen garden. A further area south of the wall, partly occupied by school buildings and a swimming pool, was also formerly laid to kitchen garden, at which time it was separated from the main ornamental lawn to the south by a belt of trees, some mature specimens of which survive. Repton's plan (Red Book, 1799) showed his proposals for the whole kitchen garden, which were partly carried out (OS C19).

#### REFERENCES

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Maps Dury and Andrews, A topographical Map of Hartford-shire, 1766 An Eye Draft Plan of several parcels of land in the Parishes of Tewin and Digswell, the property of the Rt Hon the Lady Cathcart, c 1785(9 (Hertfordshire Record Office) Tithe map for Digswell parish, 1822 (Hertfordshire Record Office) A Bryant, The County of Hertford, 1822 Tithe map for Tewin parish, 1838 (Hertfordshire Record Office) Tithe map for Digswell parish, revised copy 1841 (Hertfordshire Record Office) OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1884 2nd edition published 1899 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1898 3rd edition published 1925

Archival items H Repton, Red Book for Tewin Water, 1799 (Hertfordshire Record Office)

Description written: August 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.