

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

WAKEHURST PLACE

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

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Name:	WAKEHURST PLACE
County:	West Sussex
District:	Mid Sussex (District Authority)
Parish:	Ardingly
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.064761 Longitude: -0.093217893 National Grid Reference: TQ 33707 31221 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000189 Date first listed: 01-Jun-1984

## Details

An early to mid C20 plantsman's and collector's garden laid out by Gerald Loder, which has subsequently been enlarged and developed since 1965 as part of the Living Collections of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The manor of Wakehurst probably dates from the mid C13, when its connection with the Wakehurst family was established. It passed by marriage to the Culpepers in 1454 with whom it remained for two hundred years, Sir Edward Culpeper building the present house in 1590. The estate was sold in 1694 to the Lydall family and then passed by inheritance to the Clarkes who sold it in 1776 to Admiral Peyton. The Peytons let Wakehurst to tenants from 1816 and sold off portions of the estate including, in the mid C19, land to the north of the mansion, before selling Wakehurst Place and the remaining land in 1869 to the Dowager Duchess of Downshire. She repurchased some of the former estate land and carried out considerable additions and alterations to the house and gardens. Although sale particulars were prepared in 1878, it was not until 1890 that she sold the estate to Sir William Boord. In 1903 he sold to Gerald Loder, younger brother of Sir Edmund Loder of Leonardslee (qv) and later created first Lord Wakehurst, who established many of the present plant collections, particularly those from Eastern Asia and the southern continents. On Loder's death in 1936, the estate was bought by Sir Henry Price who continued to develop Loder's work in the gardens, bequeathing them, with the estate, to the National Trust. In 1965, the Trust leased Wakehurst to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the estate being managed through the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. In 1984, management of the estate was passed to the Board of Trustees of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, who have developed the gardens and plant collections further and who now (1998), in conjunction with the National Trust, manage the site.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Wakehurst Place lies on the west side of the B2028, 1.5km north of Ardingly village and 3.5km south of Turners Hill. The c 40ha registered site comprises some 12ha of parkland, 9ha of ornamental gardens and 20ha of mixed native and ornamental woodland. The eastern third lies on a level plateau, the ground falling away to the south and west and then descending into a deep, east/west ravine-like stream valley. The B2028, largely lined with post and rail fencing, forms the east boundary, while to the north the site is enclosed by agricultural (deer) fencing

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and adjacent deer pasture with, towards the eastern end, scientific and estate administration yards and buildings and the public car park. Beyond these and also to the west and south-west of the site are further wooded stream valleys (also National Trust property), the valley running south from the south-west corner of the site forming the northern arm of Ardingly reservoir. To the south, the site is largely enclosed by internal shelter belts (replanted after the 1987 storm) and is abutted by farmland.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The public entrance to Wakehurst Place is on the east side, gates leading from the B2028 into the car park (which lies outside the registered area). A path leads south-westwards through light, mixed native and ornamental woodland to the carriage courtyard south of the stable block on the east side of the house, its entrance flanked by a pair of giant redwoods. The principal, formal entrance to Wakehurst is at South Lodge, on the B2028 some 200m further south of the public entrance, the drive entering through wrought-iron gates flanked by stone piers and iron railings (lodge and gateway listed grade II). The lodge was probably built between 1825 and 1830 (CBA 1992), although an entrance from this point, with an avenue leading due west to the house, is shown on Thomas Attree's map of 1727. From the lodge the drive, realigned slightly northwards to its present course between 1874 (OS 1st edition) and 1878 (sale particulars), follows a gentle S to arrive at the turning circle in the carriage courtyard.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Wakehurst Place (listed grade I) stands on level ground towards the northern boundary of the registered site and on the eastern edge of the gardens. The three-storey, E-shaped house, its principal, south front featuring a three-storey projection and porch, is built of sandstone ashlar with a Horsham slab roof. Built originally in the form of a complete courtyard by Sir Edward Culpeper in 1590, the south side had been demolished before 1697. The east and west sides were shortened by two-thirds in 1848 and between 1869 and 1870; the north-east wing and the chapel on the east side were added by the Duchess of Downshire. The whole house was restored for Sir William Boord by the architect Sir Aston Webb in 1890, who also added the north porch for Lord Wakehurst in 1903. The entire south front was taken down, restored and rebuilt in 1938. To the north-east of the house and facing south into the carriage court is the two-storey, ashlar stable block (listed grade II\*), with an octagonal bell turret and cupola.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The south or garden front of the house opens onto a paved apron and a large, rectangular open lawn quartered by gravel paths, the present layout established by 1874 (OS 1st edition) on the site of formal gardens shown on Thomas Attree's map of 1727. On its south-east side, the lawn slopes gently down to the roughly circular Mansion Pond (shown on Attree's map), which is fringed with shrubbery clumps and small trees, its former surrounding tree cover largely destroyed in the storm of 1987. Enclosing the pond on its east side are the Tony Schilling Asian Heath Beds, developed after the storm on the site of the former Rhododendron Walk as large islands with dwarf and slow-growing mountainous vegetation. South-west of the lawn, and south of the former croquet lawn which adjoins it to the west, are the island Specimen beds, planted for summer colour around a central, iron-work pergola frame. West of the croquet lawn further sinuous island tree and shrub beds, separated by winding grass paths, are planted as the Southern Hemisphere Garden. These were originally laid out by Gerald Loder, on former open parkland, from 1903 to 1936. The north side of the croquet lawn is enclosed by the island bed of the Winter Garden, laid out since 1965 and planted with shrubs and perennials for winter colour. On its north side, and extending c 100m westwards from the west elevation of the mansion is the rectangular Walled Garden, built between 1869 and 1874 to replace former kitchen gardens and estate yards on the mansion's east side. Entered through an arch at the east end of the south wall, the larger of the two compartments, laid out in 1973 and known as the Sir Henry Price Garden, is quartered by gravel paths with its four beds and perimeter borders planted as 'a modern cottage garden' (guidebook). An arch in the west wall leads into The Pleasaunce which is laid out with an inner square compartment of yew hedges (planted between 1890 and 1903) enclosing a small, quartered lawn with a central fountain basin and statue.

Beyond the main lawn, the path axial on the south front extends c 50m further southwards to the head of the valley, terminating at a bastion enclosed by a balustrade (built since 1965) and with a central sundial, the latter formerly sited (in 1909) on the main lawn. The bastion overlooks a steep, rocky waterfall and the south-west-flowing stream and pools of The Slips garden, the grassy banks of which are dotted with ornamental trees and shrubs. Developed on the line of a former north to south chain of ponds (Attree, 1727; Tithe map, 1841), both Black Pond, at the south-west end of The Slips, and the Bog Garden pond to its west, are surviving remnants of this chain. South-westwards beyond Black Pond are the Water Gardens, laid out around a

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series of informal pools and water courses with board walks and stone weirs and planted with colourful aquatic and moisture-loving plants including, as an addition in 1998, an iris dell.

South-west of the Water Garden, paths follow the stream course along both sides of the steep, ravine-like Westwood Valley beneath a canopy of mature oak trees (the woodland established between 1727 (Attree) and 1823-4 (Greenwood)) mixed with the exotic trees and shrubs, including rhododendrons, which form the Asian collection. On the north side of the valley, within and above a deep cleft in massive sandstone outcrops, is the Himalayan Glade which, planted largely with shrubby mountainous species, is reached from the valley by steep flights of steps. Northwards, on the gentler slopes above the valley and extending towards the northern site boundary is the Pinetum, the northern half of which is shown established on the OS map of 1909. It was extended south to cover its present area from 1965 and the whole was extensively replanted after the storm of 1987.

Two main, east to west paths, which follow routes established by 1874, run along the upper, southern slopes of Westwood Valley, passing through further collections of rhododendrons and, at the western end, affording extensive views southwards to Ardingly Reservoir and the distant South Downs. At the extreme western end of the valley, the stream flows into Westwood Lake, established between 1727 and 1823-4 and fringed with marsh plants and a backdrop of woodland. North of the lake is Horsebridge Wood, which appears to have been planted during the same period and which contains the North American tree collection, many individuals from which were destroyed in the 1987 storm.

**PARK** The parkland lies east of the mansion and gardens, to the north and south of the South Drive. It is open in character with only an intermittent scatter of trees, of varying ages, surviving from the pattern of clumps shown on the OS editions of 1874 and 1909. Maps dating from the 1790s (OS preliminary drawing) up to 1909 (OS 3rd edition), show this eastern parkland extending further south-westwards as far as the present Pinetum, over the area now covered by the gardens. Also by 1909, the area south of the registered site, now known as the South Park, is shown as parkland but appears never to have been extensively planted.

#### REFERENCES

G W E Loder, *Wakehurst Place, Sussex* (1907) P Coats, *Great Gardens of Britain* (1963), pp 52-5 I Nairn and N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Sussex* (1965), p 398 Country Life, 151 (13 April 1972), pp 906-8 T Wright, *Gardens of Britain* 4, (1978), pp 196-201 *Wakehurst Place, Landscape Assessment of the Proposed Visitor Reception Facility*, (Chris Blandford Associates 1992) *Wakehurst Place, guidebooks*, (nd; 1990; c 1997)

Maps Thomas Attree, *A map of several farms and lands of Ric. Lyddel Esq. lying in Ardingly ... in Sussex ...*, 1727 (West Sussex Record Office) C and J Greenwood, *A map of Sussex from an Actual Survey ...*, surveyed 1823-4 Tithe map of Ardingly, 1841 (West Sussex Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1874, published 1879 3rd edition surveyed 1909, published 1912 1952 edition OS 25" to 1 mile: 3rd edition published 1910

Archival items Sale particulars, *Wakehurst Place* (SP533, 1869; SP531, 1878), (West Sussex Record Office)

Description written: January 1998 Amended: January 2000 Register Inspector: VCH Edited: June 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.