

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

MADRESFIELD COURT

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

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*Inventory of Great Britain*  
**MADRESFIELD COURT**

Name: MADRESFIELD COURT

County: Worcestershire

District: Malvern Hills (District Authority)

Parish: Guarlford

County: Worcestershire

District: Malvern Hills (District Authority)

Parish: Madresfield

County: Worcestershire

District: Malvern Hills (District Authority)

Parish: Powick

label.localisation: Latitude: 52.127272  
Longitude: -2.2697710  
National Grid Reference: SO 81629 47697  
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden  
Grade: II\*  
List Entry Number: 1000890  
Date first listed: 28-Feb-1986

## Details

Formal gardens and pleasure grounds of the late C19 and very early C20 associated with a country house. C19 landscape park.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In the later Middle Ages the manor of Madresfield was held by the Bracys. Joan, heiress of the family married Thomas Lygon in the early C15 and the manor has remained in the family ever since. In 1806 William Lygon, MP for Worcestershire 1780-1806, was created Lord Beauchamp and in 1815 Viscount Elmley and Earl Beauchamp. Several other heads of the family also sat in Parliament.

The development of the gardens in the C19, which went hand-in-hand with the enlargement of the house, owed much to the successive head gardeners William Cox (1840s-1883) and William Crump (1883-1919).

Evelyn Waugh was a friend of the Lygons, and the Marchmain family of Brideshead in *Brideshead Revisited* is thought to be partly based on them.

### DESCRIPTION

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**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Madresfield lies 3km east of the centre of Great Malvern, midway between the town and the River Severn. Madresfield Court lies c 400m east of the village of Madresfield, much of which was rebuilt by the estate c 1870. The house's pleasure grounds lie between the two, while Madresfield Park extends east from Madresfield Court for over 1.5km up to the B4424 Powick to Upton upon Severn road. The park is bounded to the north by Madresfield Brook, to the south the boundary following field edges. The area here registered is c 205ha.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** Two drives approach from Madresfield village. North Lodge (listed grade II), a picturesque two-storey building with applied timber framing of 1872 by Norman Shaw, lies at the north-west extremity of the grounds. From here a drive runs south-east, past St Mary's church, and then east through the wooded grounds to the bridge on the south side of the moat. South Lodge, at the south-west corner of the grounds, is a single-storey building with ornate applied timber framing of the mid to late C19, possibly by P C Hardwick. From here a drive runs north-east, past Holly Lodge, to The Gatehouses (listed grade II) 250m south of Madresfield Court, a symmetrical brick gateway range with central archway of 1901 by C F Voysey. The final stretch of this approach to the south side of the Court is up an avenue of tulip trees, planted to replace an elm avenue lost to Dutch Elm disease.

A third approach to the house is through the park, from the brick-built Gloucester Lodge of c 1900 and gates which lie at its eastern extremity. The straight, 2km long, tree-lined Gloucester Drive runs straight from those towards Madresfield Court, first seen with the Malvern Hills beyond as a ridge is breasted c 300m west of the lodge.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Madresfield Court (listed grade I) stands within a moat, which is crossed by a bridge over its south arm. The house was rebuilt or altered at various times, especially extensive being the programmes by William Lygon of 1593 and of his namesake (later first Earl Beauchamp) in 1799. The most extensive alterations were possibly those of 1863-88 when P C Hardwick, architect of the Euston arch, was brought in to remodel and modernise the house, using brick, stone, and timber framing in a variety of late medieval and early modern styles heavily influenced by Germanic models. A timber bellcote rises above the centre of the house.

An outer moat encloses a further area south of Madresfield Court. Some 50m west of the west arm of the outer moat a cross marks the site of the medieval church of St Mary (demolished 1852) and the grave of the sixth Earl Beauchamp (d 1891). Next to the cross are the graves of the eighth Earl Beauchamp (d 1979) and Else, Countess Beauchamp (d 1989). A brick stables block (listed grade II) of c 1800 with C19 additions lies 50m south of the outer moat.

Until the formal gardens were laid out east of the moat in the later C19 the area was enclosed within another outer moat.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** South of the house, between the inner and outer moats, is a lawn. A late C20 rustick summerhouse stands in the south-west corner of the outer moat looking towards the gatehouse. South of the outer moat, and between it and Voysey's gatehouse range, is a level grass area c 200m north/south by 100m bisected by the approach drive. A tennis court east of the drive overlies the site occupied by the kitchen gardens until c 1866-8.

East of the house is a series of garden compartments, possibly designed by Thomas Mawson in 1903 when it is known he was approached by the Beauchamps (Sidwell 1981). Between the house and the moat is a flagged courtyard with beds of lavenders and santolinas; a well-head (listed grade II) with a wrought-iron superstructure forms the central feature. Across the moat, which is revetted on the inside with a rough stone wall rising 2m out of the water, is a brick-walled terrace, in which yellow terracotta is used for the string course, parapet and piers, all contrasting with the purplish bricks used for the body of the walls. Steps through the centre of the terrace wall lead up to a formal garden bounded with clipped yew hedges which define within a series of three-sided garden rooms. Gravel paths cross and run around the edge of the garden, at the centre of which is a stone basin. This compartment projects into the park to the east; the ha-ha which separates the two runs around much of the perimeter of the grounds, in places (eg west of the stables) being surmounted with a low, decoratively pierced brick wall. North of the formal garden and the moat is Caesars' Lawn, known earlier as the Bowling Green.

The pleasure grounds lie mostly west and north of the house, the main internal structure being provided by a triangular arrangement of poplar, oak and cedar avenues. The Cedar Avenue, planted 1866-8, runs north for c 400m from immediately south-west of Madresfield Court, access to its south end being gained through a tall, clipped yew hedge.

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Approximately half way along the Cedar Avenue a semicircular lime arbor or tunnel c 70m in diameter opens off on its west side. That was planted in 1866. On the east side of the Avenue, c 270m from its south end, is a brick seat or summerhouse of c 1900 with a conical roof supported by rustic columns. Some 30m further on, opposite the end of the Oak Avenue, is a late C19 statue of Mercury by C Giddings.

The Oak Avenue, which runs for c 350m south-west from the north end of the Cedar Avenue to the north-west end of the Temple Avenue, is a mixture of *Quercus Cerris* and *Quercus Borealis*. Those trees, now mature, replaced the original 1866 planting of *Abies Procera*. The Temple Avenue, which connects the Cedar and Oak Avenues is of Lombardy Polar, C20 replacements of the ?1860s planting of oaks and elms. Some 50m beyond its west end and looking down it to Madresfield Court is the temple seat which gives it its name. That has a facade with four Tuscan columns and a pediment. It was probably constructed in the 1870s using materials from a lodge described as 'new' in 1814.

Within the area bounded by the three avenues, which like the rest of the pleasure grounds is well planted with a wide variety of mature specimen trees, there are three principal features in addition to the lime arbor. Some 75m north-west of the house is the south end of the compartment known as The Sundial Garden. Created in 1896 this comprises a 15m wide and 100m long holly-hedged compartment which curves west of the lime arbor. A yellow gravel path runs down the middle, with herbaceous borders to either side. The central armillary sphere is by James Gibb.

Adjoining the Sundial Garden to the south is a clipped yew maze, probably late C19 and believed by the family to be based on a design in Boy's Own, with a raised brick platform in the centre. Some 50m further west of the maze is an irregular, canal-like feature c 60m long and 10m wide with mature oaks around its edge.

Abutting the north side of the Oak Avenue 100m from its east end is a 75m long series of yew-hedged compartments, now lawned. These were reputedly planted 1903-6 as a series of flower gardens: Lady Mary's, Viscount Elmley's, and Lady Susan's gardens, to designs by Thomas Mawson (Anon c 1997).

From the east end of those gardens a bridge leads north across the sunken track which runs around the north and east sides of the pleasure grounds. Twenty metres north of the bridge is The Rocks, a Pulhamite rock garden constructed 1878-9. Manufactured to resemble new red sandstone the rocks are assembled in a slight hollow in the ground around a dripping well or basin. Little of the original fern planting survived in the 1990s. One hundred metres to the west is the Wild Garden of the 1880s, with native deciduous trees shading grass which is allowed to grow long and within which wild flowers are encouraged.

A number of gardens documented in the C19 and C20 have disappeared: the Peacock gardens, and the less formal Stepping Stone gardens. Their development occurred mainly between 1863 and the early 1880s. Greater privacy was obtained by the demolition in 1866-7 of St Mary's church and its replacement by a new church on the west edge of the grounds.

**PARK** The park lies east of Madresfield Court, and is entered via the Golden Gates south-east of the outer moat. The park measures 2km from east to west by 1km from north to south, and is mainly pasture ground with occasional oak trees. The ground is mainly flat, although it falls along the north side of the park to Madresfield Brook and towards the lodge at the eastern extremity of the park. Running east/west down the centre of the park is the Gloucester Drive, a 1.5 km long avenue of limes, planted in the 1970s and 1990s to replace a double avenue of elms planted in the early C20 and killed by Dutch Elm disease.

There was a park of some sorts at Madresfield by the C17, and in 1651 an avenue of elm and oak was laid out along a west approach. The C18 landscape park was noted by several commentators. The modern park was probably created c 1870, as a part of the same campaign of improvements which saw the removal of the old church. The old road which ran north/south c 300m west of the house, on a line from the North Lodge to Holly Lodge, was realigned c 200m to the west and estate cottages built along it.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The brick-walled kitchen garden, c 110m east/west by c 80m north/south, lies c 500m north of Madresfield Court. Two gardener's houses and a range of sheds lie outside the north wall. The interior of the garden is occupied by a garden centre.

The kitchen garden complex was moved here 1866-8, previously having lain 200m south of Madresfield Court on the site of the C20 tennis courts.

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REFERENCES R Sidwell, *West Midlands Gardens* (1981) A Forsyth, *Yesterday's Gardens*, (1983), pls 63, 84 Madresfield Court: *Landscape Restoration Management Plan*, (FWAG 1995) Anon, *Madresfield Court Gardens*, (pamphlet, c 1997) R Lockett, *A Survey of Historic Parks and Gardens in Worcestershire*, (Hereford & Worcester Gardens Trust 1997)  
Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: Worcestershire sheet 40 NW, 1st edition published 1884-5 Worcestershire sheet 40 NE, 1st edition published 1884-5 Worcestershire sheet 40 SW, 1st edition published 1884-5 Worcestershire sheet 40 SE, 1st edition published 1884-5 OS 25" to 1 mile: Worcestershire sheet 40.6, 1st edition published 1887  
Archival items Madresfield Tithe map, 1838 (copy at estate office)  
Description written: 1997 Register Inspector: PAS Edited: August 1999

## 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.