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Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

BRADLEY COURT

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Name: BRADLEY COURT

County: Gloucestershire

District: Stroud (District Authority)

Parish: Wotton-under-Edge

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.642015
Longitude: -2.3691786
National Grid Reference: ST 74550 93755
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1000756
Date first listed: 28-Feb-1986

Details

Compartmentalised garden of c 1700, with contemporary summerhouse, associated with a C16 manor house.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The manor of Bradley was bought by the Berkeleys of Berkeley Castle (qv) c 1320, and it was under them that the present house was constructed in the mid C16. In 1611 Bradley was sold to Arnold Oldisworth, one of the Clerks of the Hanaper. Richard Oldisworth married Elizabeth Clutterbuck in 1653, and in due course Bradley passed to Sir William Clutterbuck of Bristol. In 1692 he sold it to Thomas Dawes (d 1713) of Wotton-under-Edge, in whose time the gazebo (1702) was built and presumably the gardens depicted by Kip (Atykns 1712) laid out. He died in 1713 and his wife in 1739/40; they had no children. Bradley Court then passed to John Nelmes (d 1742), who had married their niece. In the later C18 it was held by their daughters, from whom it passed in 1785 to their cousin Thomas Nelmes (d c 1800) who enlarged the house. From his son Richard (d 1817), Bradley Court passed to a distant cousin, Robert Hale Blagden Hale (d 1855); that family sold it early in the C20. Since then it has changed hands many times, and remains (1999) in private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Bradley Court stands in the hamlet of Bradley, on the east side of Bradley Green. The minor road from the Green past the south front of the forecourt then climbs up the lower slope of the Cotswold Edge to the town of Wotton-under-Edge, c 500m to the east. Some 2km to the north of Bradley Court the Cotswold Edge is crowned variously with Westridge Wood, Brackenbury Ditches hillfort, Nibley Knoll, and Tyndale's Monument, all of which form prominent elements of the view from the house and its gardens, over the pasture fields which bound the property to the north and east. The area here registered is c 2ha.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Since c 1985 the main entrance to the property has been via a gateway at the south-east corner of the registered area. From this a drive runs north, past workshops, before turning west to a yard against the north-east side of the house. There are pedestrian gates to the forecourt.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Bradley Court (listed grade II) was apparently begun in 1559, and it is essentially that house which survives today (late C20). It is a two-and-a-half-storey house of rendered, cemented rubble. It is a long building, only one room

deep until c 1790 when a dining block was added on the garden (north) side. The six-gabled south, entrance front is broadly symmetrical, with a central porch flanked by projecting half-octagon stair turrets.

A small stone stable, perhaps C18, and on or close to the site of a similar building shown by Kip, is situated c 50m north-east of the house. To the south of the stable is a single-storey workshop range, while to its north is a lean-to stone store.

Before 1559 the house lay further to the west, on a moated site by the Bourn stream (outside the area here registered).

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The garden comprises a number of compartments, shown on Kip's engraving of the house (Atkyns 1712), whose walls were probably constructed c 1700. The site slopes uphill from west to east and the gardens are gently terraced to accommodate this.

To the front (south) of the house is a forecourt c 25m square, enclosed by brick walls, gates at the south-west and south-east corners of which lead onto the road east from Bradley Green. Between these the south wall bows outwards, as it did in 1881 (OS 1886). The forecourt is laid out with an elaborate box parterre of the mid 1980s around a central fountain. In Kip's time the south wall was straight, and there was a single central gateway from which a path led across a lawn to the house's porch.

East of the forecourt is a narrow compartment, now lawn, but until the mid 1980s the main entrance off the road and shown as the main vehicular access down the east side of the house by Kip. East of this, sloping uphill, is a further lawn, planted with trees and shrubs. In the early C18 this was the site of a substantial two-storey dwelling, perhaps the home farmhouse. West of this was a small, formal quartered lawn, while east of it were kitchen gardens.

To the west of the house, and at a slightly lower level, is a roughly square lawn, 30m east/west by 40m. Brick walls of c 1700 bound the lawn to the north (within which wall are blocked bee boles), south, and west, while holm oaks, balsam poplars, and junipers provide a screen along the south (road) side. Placed centrally on the west wall, c 30m from the house, is a gazebo (listed grade II) of 1702. It is of two storeys (although only the upper opens on to the lawn), square, and with a pyramid roof over deep box eaves. The door to the main, upper room faces back to the house; a single window pierces each of the other three elevations, giving views over the garden compartment to the south and across the countryside beyond. Around the east and south sides of the lawn is a slightly raised gravel walk, constructed c 1990.

West of the lawn compartment, occupying the south-west corner of the property and with a brick wall to the south and west, is an orchard. This was planted c 1995 in what was once a kitchen garden c 35m square. The low basement of the summerhouse may have acted as a tool room. Along the north side of the orchard is a 15m wide vegetable garden, along the north side of which is an early C20 breeze-block wall. East of the vegetable garden, running behind the north wall of the west lawn, is an enclosed flower garden, the Rose and White Garden, c 30m east/west and c 15m wide. Its north wall, like its south, is of brick and c 1700, while the east boundary is a high, ancient yew hedge. In the late C19 there were glasshouses against the north wall. A gateway at the north-east corner of the vegetable garden gives access to the Wilderness, a paddock with specimen trees and shrubs, 100m north/south by 70m east/west. The Plane Avenue, planted c 1985, runs north/south down its centre, aligned on the gateway. Running down the east side of the Wilderness, and extending to outside the north-east corner of the west lawn, is the Bowling Lawn, c 15m wide and c 100m long and lined with hornbeams planted in the 1980s. From the north end of the Bowling Lawn a short path leads through a rockery into the Grotto of 1973. The Bowling Lawn appears on Kip's view. At that date Kip's view suggests the compartments east and west of it were orchards.

A 1m high terrace along the north side of the Bowling Lawn leads up to a 20m wide lawn, which extends south to the house. Kip's view shows a quartered lawn with gravel paths against the house. At the north end of the lawn is a fishpond. At the north end of the pond is a stand of Scots pines, while immediately to its north-east, at the far north-east corner of the garden, is the Mount, a prospect mound constructed in the 1980s. From this there are views back south across the garden to the house and north to Westridge Wood, Nibley Knoll, and Tyndale's Monument. Running south from the Mount, along the east side of the garden, is a lawn with trees and shrubs, at the south end of which, north-east of the gravel court at the end of the drive, is a modern swimming pool.

Much of the present planting was by Adrian Garnetts who purchased Bradley Court c 1970, and in the 1980s and 1990s by the Messels.

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OTHER LAND Later C19 sources (OS 1886) show and map two elm avenues aligned on Bradley Court. One of these was short, and ran south across the field to the south of the house. The other ran south-west for c 600m from the west side of Bradley Green. These were no longer present by 1921 (OS).

REFERENCES

R Atkyns, *The Ancient and Present State of Gloucestershire* (1712), pl after p 854 *Trans Bristol & Glocs Arch Soc* 20, (1895-7), pp 100-07 D Verey, *The Buildings of England: Gloucestershire The Cotswolds* (2nd edn 1979), p 498 J Sales, *West Country Gardens* (1981), pp 46-7 N Kingsley, *The Country Houses of Gloucestershire, Volume One, 1500-1660* (1989), pp 64-5
Typescript notes on garden (nd, c 1990) [guide leaflet provided by owners]

Maps Estate map, c 1822 (in bundle D114/2), (Gloucestershire Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1881, published 1886 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1886 3rd edition published 1921

Description written: April 1999 Register Inspector: PAS Edited: March 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.