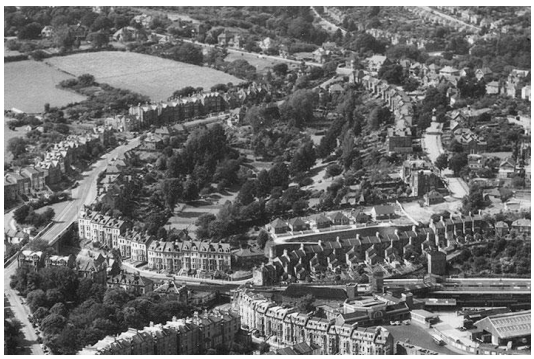
Sussex Gardens Trust

Parks and gardens of local importance in Sussex

Parks and Gardens of the Sussex Coast
Research and Recording project

LINTON GARDENS HASTINGS



c1937



2015

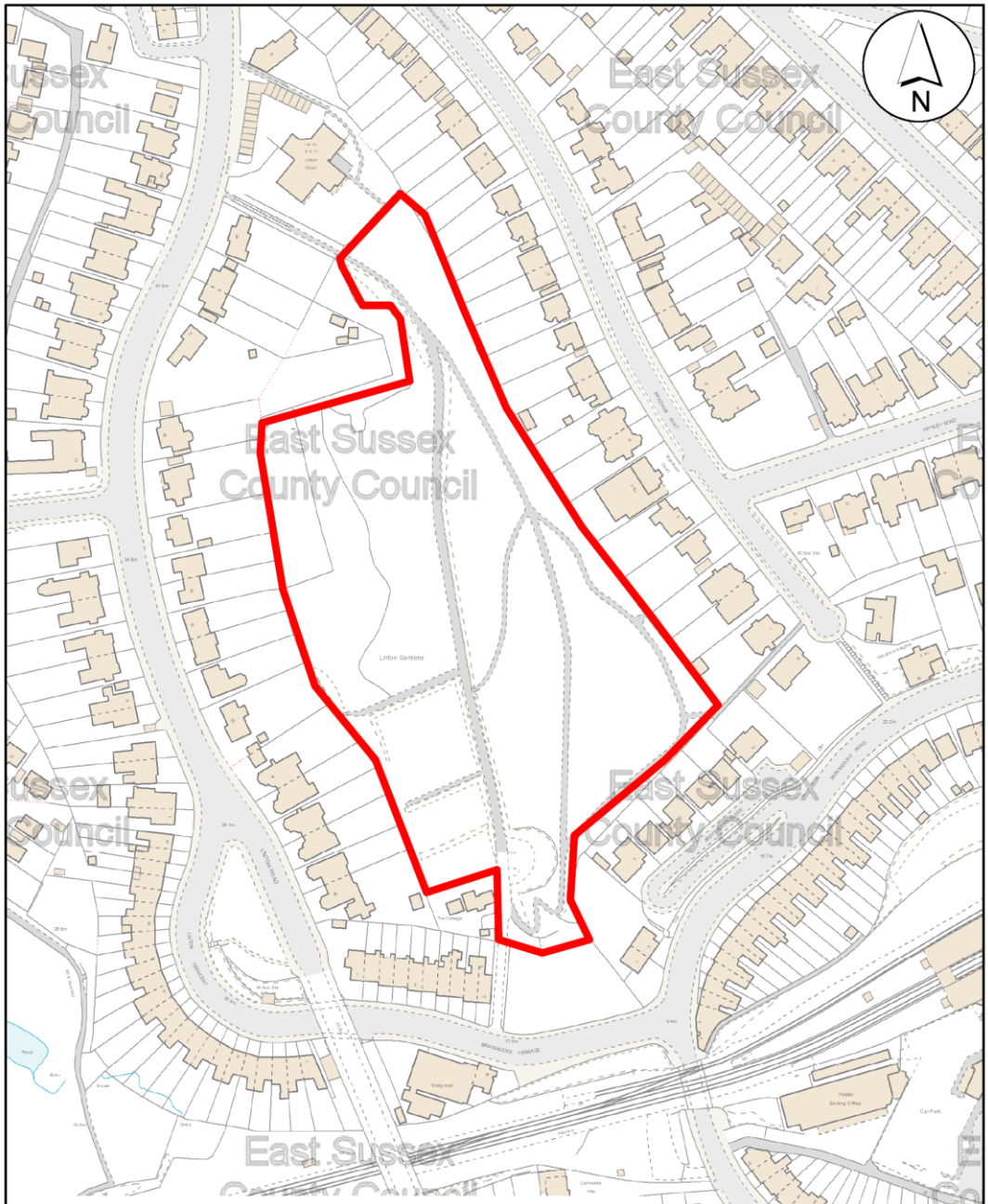
SUSSEX GARDENS TRUST

East Sussex County Council

west sussex county council

THE GARDENS TRUST

SITE BOUNDARY (1)



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Linton Gardens - representing the boundary of the area of designed historic interest	Scale: 1:2,000	East Sussex County Council
East Sussex Historic Environment Record (ESHER) and Sussex Garden Trust working in partnership	Date: 31/05/2022	

SITE BOUNDARY (2)



INTRODUCTION

Background to the 'Parks and Gardens of the Sussex Coast' Project

Our project aim, to research and record the parks and gardens of the Sussex coast, began in 2013 and is nearing completion. Most of the sites recorded are now in public i.e. local authority ownership where their special historic development is not necessarily recognised and therefore conserved. We hope our reports will help improve knowledge and guide their future management.

The variety and period of sites is huge, from C19 and early C20 town squares, 'Old English' and Italianate-style gardens with ponds, pergolas and seating, gardens with salt-resistant traditional bedding and C21 ecological planting, to large parks which began life as farmland owned by influential local families and aristocracy and provided the recreation and leisure space for new urban development.

The administrative areas covered are: Worthing and Adur jointly-run DC, Arun DC, Brighton and Hove City Council, Eastbourne and Lewes jointly-run DC, Rother DC and Hastings Borough. Only Brighton and Hove and Hastings hold a list of local heritage assets (see Historic England's guidance for a definition of local heritage assets and how to identify and protect them . https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/local-heritage-listing-advice-note-7/)

Brighton and Hove City Council's list is the most comprehensive (https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/planning/heritage/local-list-heritage-assets) so our project has not addressed their sites although we may select a few of the more major ones for a deeper level of research in the future.

Content

All research – in local and national archives and on site – is undertaken by a team of volunteers who have received training from professionals expert in appraising designed landscapes who have worked extensively for English Heritage (now Historic England) on sites on its National Heritage List for England. All reports are peer-reviewed.

Each report comprises the following:

- A site boundary map drawn on the current Ordnance Survey map.

- The area within the boundary represents the area of designed historic interest; it does not necessarily include all surviving elements of the historical landscape design, which may be fragmented. It takes no account of current ownership.
- A current aerial photograph with the boundary shown.
- An overview and statement of significance based on the guidance set out in the *National Policy Planning Framework* – the government's guidance for local planning authorities in discharging their planning responsibilities.
- A written description, derived from documentary research and a visual site survey, the format following that used by Historic England for sites on the national *Register of Parks & Gardens of special historic interest* 2nd edn.

Supporters and Acknowledgements:

The Trust would like to thank the volunteers, owners, local authority staff (especially the East and West Sussex Historic Environment Records) and the many Friends groups who have participated in this project and given time and effort to completing this challenging task.
Further information is available from: www.sussexgardenstrust.org.uk

LINTON GARDENS

COUNTY East Sussex

ESCC HER REF MES34279

DISTRICT Hastings

OS REF TQ 812 098

OVERVIEW

In Hastings Corporation's ownership since 1937 Linton Gardens were originally laid out between 1899 and 1910 as subscription gardens for the new residents of the Cornwallis Estate's housing development, built on former hop-growing and market garden land (once owned by Hastings Priory). Comprising a natural valley landscape of open lawns and a varied collection of trees, the name 'Linton' is taken from the Cornwallis' seat of Linton Park, near Maidstone.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Architectural/Artistic: As designed open space associated with residential development, Linton Gardens are unusual in respect of their extent and natural, dramatic topography and the fact that the terraces back onto the space rather than facing it as in a garden square.

Historic: Linton Gardens is one of several designed open spaces which originated as private subscription gardens for new residential areas and were later taken in to public ownership by Hastings Corporation, Warrior and Wellington Squares being other examples. Their creation by the Cornwallis estate is an example of the physical impact of local landowning families on Hastings' development - the Eversfields, Breeds and Briscos hold a similar place. The Gardens retained that link into public ownership through their name which is taken from the Cornwallis' seat of Linton Park, near Maidstone.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The origin of Linton Gardens as a designed open space lies in the early twentieth century. In the 1880s, the land, then part of Old Priory Farm (named after an ancient priory that once dominated the area), which belonged to the Cornwallis Estate, was laid

out as hop gardens (John Mainwaring Baines, *Historic Hastings* p245). By the 1900s it had become a market garden and meadowland, still owned by the Cornwallis Estate. Residential development of the area began in the early twentieth century; the 2nd edition Ordnance Survey of 1899 shows housing already on the west side of Linton Road and on Braybrooke Road to the south. By 1910 (3rd edition OS) a few additional houses had appeared on the Gardens' side of the southern ends of both Linton Road and Wykeham Road (to the east) and a small area of ornamental deciduous and conifer trees had been planted at the extreme southern end of the open space, with a gardener's house, or lodge, built beside the entrance on Braybrooke Terrace. The lower lawns are terraced and may by then (1910) have been in use as tennis courts.

Hastings Borough Council's records inform that under the terms of an old deed (parties not known, but the agreement taken to be part of the Cornwallis Estate's development of the land) 3 acres (1.2 ha) of the land was to be preserved as pleasure gardens, serving as subscription gardens for the residents of the new houses in the surrounding roads; this development is first shown on the 1899 Ordnance Survey (2nd edition) but had been extended further by 1910 (OS 3rd edition). At that time only a small number of houses backing on to Linton Gardens had been built, but it is likely that the residents would have been amongst the early subscribers. The Gardens were to be managed by a board of trustees.

By 1928 (4th edition OS) the Linton Gardens area had been fenced and extended northwards over additional land (formerly allotment grounds), with further tree planting, shrubs and paths. Marked on this 1928 map, towards the extended northern end of the Gardens, is a circular feature, possibly the fishpond mentioned in a 1937 newspaper report. The 1938 map (OS 5th edition) shows residential properties had by then been built along the Linton Gardens sides of both Linton Road and Wykeham Road. These properties have private gardens backing onto the grounds of Linton Gardens, probably with access to them via gates from these private gardens – some surviving old gates in the boundary fences provide evidence of this arrangement.

In March 1937 the trustees put forward an offer, on behalf of the by-then forty subscribers, to gift Linton Gardens to the Town. The agreement was that Hastings Corporation must purchase the neighbouring allotment gardens (at the north of the Gardens) from the Cornwallis Estate to add to the existing subscription gardens, to make a public park stated to be about 5 acres (2 ha) in total (Hastings Parks and Gardens Department booklet published in 1938); 5 acres seems to be an approximate area as there is no record of any land being added since Linton Gardens were officially adopted by Hastings Corporation on 18 September 1937, and a current grounds maintenance record notes that the Gardens consist of 5.95acres (2.4ha). The

agreement stated that by adding the allotment grounds to Linton Gardens "a better entrance, approximately 15 feet wide, would be given to the Gardens from the north end of Linton Road" (*Hastings and St Leonards Observer*, 15 May 1937). The cost of purchasing the allotments to the north of Linton Gardens was £136, and with legal charges the total cost to the Corporation for the entire deal was in the region of £300. This acquisition by the Town, completed in September 1937, severed one of the last remaining links between the Cornwallis Estate and Hastings. However, the name 'Linton' for the Gardens perpetuates that of Lord Cornwallis's family home, Linton Park, near Maidstone.

In reporting on the offer of the trustees to Hastings Corporation, the *Hastings and St. Leonards Observer* of 27 March 1937 stated:

"The gardens are charmingly accluded [sic – possibly 'secluded' intended] and attractive in layout. There are tennis courts, a fishpond, flower beds, and a wealth of ornamental shrubs and trees. There is also space for bowling greens, and the grassy slopes on the Wykeham-road side are already laid out with footpaths, which a certain amount of attention would render suitable for public use.
There is a wide entrance to the gardens from Braybrooke-terrace, and another of similar size from the top of Linton-road, a smaller entry leading from Wykeham-road. Just inside the Braybrooke-terrace entrance, facing up the valley, is a gardener's house of unusually attractive design. The tennis courts are laid out in terraces, and the whole appearance of the gardens is extremely pleasing."

Although no contemporary Corporation plans appear to survive, the layout recorded on the OS map in 1928 was presumably incorporated and added to with further planting by the Superintendent of Parks and Gardens, Mr G Hais, and his department.

Linton Gardens were once a popular venue for the Town's annual 'Crowning of the May Queen' event (contemporary photographs from the late 1930s to 1970s), which was performed in some years at the Alexandra Park. Considered a natural amphitheatre, in 1948 the Town's new open-air theatre was installed in Linton Gardens – the long-standing one in the Alexandra Park deemed unsatisfactory due to the very damp ground. Of considerable proportions, and taking full advantage of the existing landform at the southern end of the site (there is no report of any alterations to the landform for the purpose of installing the theatre), the theatre comprised a main auditorium on the lower lawn and an additional 'bank' auditorium on the grassed bank (plans drawn up by E.N. Mason and Sons Ltd. of Colchester), plays and ballet were performed in the summer season for a short number of years. The tennis courts, laid out by 1928 (4th edition OS), mentioned in the 1937 newspaper report and again in a Hastings

Corporation booklet *Seaside Garland* (1950), fell out of use and provision for reinstatement of this facility in the 1993 Hastings Borough Plan did not come to fruition. The Gardens never appear to have had a bowling green.

The 'gardener's house' or lodge, which first appeared on a survey published in 1910, survives. It was historically rented to council employees for the proper performance of their duties. In 1996 a 125-year lease on the Linton Gardens' lodge was granted to Ten-sixty-six Housing Association (now, 2015, Amicus Horizon) as part of the large-scale voluntary transfer of Hastings Borough Council (HBC) housing stock. In 2013 HBC gave Amicus Horizon consent to underlet the property. The lodge, with an area of private garden, was fenced off in c2012 from the public area of the Gardens.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Location, Area, Boundaries, Landform, Setting

Linton Gardens are situated c0.5km north-west of Hastings' town centre and c250m north-west from the mainline railway station. The 5.95 acres (2.4 ha) site, roughly oblong in shape and narrowing at its northernmost point, occupies a narrow valley oriented north-south, with its naturally-terraced eastern slope dropping steeply down from the east and north boundaries to the west and south.

The Gardens' boundaries comprise a variety of the rear fences and hedges of the surrounding residential properties on Linton Road (to the west), Wykeham Road (to the east) and Braybrooke Terrace (to the south). The valley is overlooked by residential properties on the higher ground of the surrounding roads to the north, east and west, which form the Gardens' setting. Apart from this immediate overlooking Linton Gardens are considerably secluded, although a partial view (between buildings) is afforded from the southern end of Linton Road, near the railway bridge. South-eastwards, from the top of the bank on the Wykeham Road side, there is a good view of the ruins of Hastings Castle, situated on Castle Hill east beyond the town centre.

Entrances and approaches

There are two main, pedestrian, entrances. One is at the southern end, off Braybrooke Terrace, where a broad, tarmaced, path leads between the houses with, immediately inside the Gardens and on its western side, the two-storey, white-painted early C20 lodge or gardener's house; a second entrance is off Linton road at the uppermost, northern end of the Gardens, close to the junction with Priory Avenue and Wykeham Road. The latter entrance is via 57 steps, which lead down from the road. There is another narrower and smaller entrance in the extreme eastern corner of the site, from the southern end of Wykeham Road. None of the entrances are gated, and the Gardens are open at all times. Information boards, giving a concise history of the Gardens, are located at the two main entrances.

Gardens

The whole area of the Gardens is laid to mown grass planted with groups and individual trees of mixed ages and varieties, and crossed by a network of tarmac paths. From the southern entrance, accessed from Braybrooke Terrace via a short, wide path that runs alongside the lodge, a gently curving, tarmaced path runs centrally and northwards to the entrance on Linton Road. This path, which forms a central avenue, is lined on its eastern side with varieties of lime *(Tilia)* trees. There is another gently-curving, tarmaced path on the banked (eastern) side of the Gardens, which runs roughly parallel to the central 'avenue', and these form the main routes through the Gardens. Subsidiary paths (tarmaced) link the main routes and the entrance from Wykeham Road.

At the southern end of the grounds the lawns are terraced in three levels – surviving evidence of formerly being laid out for lawn tennis (OS map of 1928 and *Hastings and St. Leonards Observer* of 27 March, 1937) and now (2015) used for playing various games. The landform in this area, of terraced lawns on the west side and grass bank on east side of the main path, provided the site of the two auditoria for the open-air theatre (in use from the late 1940s into the 1950s) and is unaltered from that period.

A fishpond, mentioned in the report of 1937, has gone. Shrubberies are laid out on the elevated Wykeham Road (eastern) side of the Gardens. The flowerbeds mentioned in the 1937 *Observer* report have gone. The collection of lime trees along the central avenue includes a Golden Lime (*Tilia x europaea 'Wratislaviensis'*), which when last measured in 2012 was a UK champion for girth size (*Tree register of the British Isles*). The limes were planted c1981 to replace Wheatley elms, victims of Dutch elm disease. The Gardens also include a good Dawyck beech (*Fagus sylvatica* 'Dawyck') and Indian horse chestnut (*Aesculus indica*). There are also some horse chestnuts (*Aesculus hippocastanum*), a copper beech (*Fagus sylvatica* 'Atropunicea') and a common yew (*Taxus baccata*), which, from their age and size, appear to survive from the period when this area formed the original private subscription gardens, i.e. prior to 1937.

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Hastings Corporation Publicity and Public Relations Department, *Seaside Garland* (1950).

Marchant, R., *Hastings Past* (1997).

Maps and plans

Ordnance Survey: scale 25" to I mile:
1st edition surveyed 1873.
2nd edition 25" revised 1897.
3rd edition 25" revised 1908.
4th edition 25" revised 1927.
5th edition 25" revised 1938.
Edition published 1974.

Archival item

Plans of E. N. Mason and Sons Ltd (Colchester) for open-air theatre, dated January 1948 (copy provided by Hastings Borough Council): Scale 20 feet to 1 inch.

Illustrations

Newspaper photographs, 1937 and later (undated), *Hastings and St Leonards Observer*.

Various postcards (private collections).

1066 online gallery, https://www.1066online.co.uk/gallery/old-photos/linton-gardens-aerial

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