

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

BADGER DINGLE

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Name: BADGER DINGLE

District: Shropshire (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Badger

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Parish: Worfield

label.localisation: Latitude: 52.594380
Longitude: -2.3406295
National Grid Reference: SO 77023 99675
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1000541
Date first listed: 01-Dec-1986

Details

Late C18 picturesque stream and valley landscape by William Emes associated with a (demolished) country house.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1774 the manor of Badger was sold by Clement Kynnersley, whose family had held it since the early C16, to Isaac Hawkins Browne. He, of Foston (Derbys), sheriff of Shropshire in 1783 and MP for Bridgnorth 1784-1812, was an essayist and editor of the poems of his father and namesake (d 1760). During the years either side of 1780 he employed James Wyatt to remodel the Hall and William Emes to landscape extensive pleasure grounds. On his death, childless, in 1818 he left a life interest in his property to his widow, Elizabeth (d 1839), with the remainder to his cousin's son R H Cheney (d 1866). Thereafter Badger descended with the Cheney's and their kinsmen the Capel Cures until 1944-5 when the estate was sold and, in 1953, the main Hall building demolished. In 1998 the surviving parts of the Hall and its former pleasure grounds were in separate private hands.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Old Hall, the remaining part of Badger Hall, stands on the north side of the hamlet of Badger, 8km north-east of Bridgnorth, on Shropshire's eastern border with Staffordshire. The stream along the bottom of Badger Dingle forms the southern boundary of the parish and of the registered area, which extends north to encompass the whole of the park within which lies the small village of Badger. The area here registered is c 105ha.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main approaches to the Hall in the late C18 and C19 were via tree-lined drives with lodges from the west and east. The latter approach, still in use in 1998, enters the grounds 600m east of the Hall. A lodge was here by 1837; the present, heavily modernised, building, probably replaced it later in the C19. The other approach, sections of which survive as a track, was along a chase through Newton Wood. This began at a lodge 1.25km south-west of the Hall, 150m north-west of Stableford Bridge. That lodge, again mid to late C19, was also heavily modernised in the late C20.

Pedestrian access to the Dingle is via the sandstone defile at the west end of the village. The footpath down this leads across the dam at the head of Upper Pool to Ackleton 1km to the south.

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PRINCIPAL BUILDING Badger Hall was built c 1719 to replace a timber-framed predecessor which lay to its south, west of the church. The Hall was remodelled and extended by James Wyatt (d 1813) 1779-83 for I H Browne as a large, three-storey, brick building with rusticated pilaster strips and quoins. Wyatt also remodelled the interior, introducing a museum, library and conservatory. Plasterwork and paintings had Classical themes. The Hall was further extended in the late C19 and had a conservatory added to its north-east corner. The Hall was demolished c 1953. Its service buildings of c 1700 however were retained and in the 1980s refurbished as a private house, Old Hall (listed grade II).

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens and pleasure grounds fall into three parts: the gardens, the Dingle pleasure grounds, and the shrubbery drive which connects them. Badger Hall's gardens lay within a ha-ha. This survives, as do some specimen trees. About 50m west of the Old Hall is a small pool, the northernmost of the chain of four which leads south through the village before draining into Upper Pool in the Dingle. The two central pools, Church Pool and Town Pool, are the largest. The road to Badger church leads between them, and they have long been regarded as among the village's most attractive features. Very little is known of early gardens around the Hall although one arm of the moat which had surrounded the Hall demolished c 1719 was retained, probably as a garden canal, until the early 1780s.

The site of Badger Hall is linked with the Dingle by a 500m long shrubbery drive, which 300m from the Hall is carried over the public road to Pattingham by a brick bridge (listed grade II). Mature yews flank the drive as it passes over this, perhaps the overgrown remains of a screening hedge. Although overgrown, many mature specimen trees remain in the shrubbery including yew, oak, larch, beech, cedar, sweet chestnut and Wellingtonia. A low stone ha-ha wall bounds the shrubbery along its east side. Some 175m south-east of the bridge over the Pattingham road the drive arrives at the rear of the Bird House on the lip of Badger Dingle.

The Dingle is a 2km long ravine, stream-cut through the local red sandstone. Walks with garden structures run along its north side while along its bottom are three long pools. (The south side of the Dingle was in separate ownership in the late C18 but nevertheless there is a planting of yews to provide a dark stop to the view from the north side.) The landscape received little maintenance between the early C20 and the late 1990s when clearance works began following restoration of the Bird House. While some specimen trees such as Wellingtonia, yew, box, oak, beech and pine survive, the Dingle sides have a dense cover of invasive species such as sycamore. The pools are choked with silt, leaves and fallen trees, and the dams between the lower two have been breached leaving them largely dry.

The Bird House (listed grade II), also known as the 'Pigeon House' or the 'Doric Temple', stands high above Upper Pool and looks across and along the Dingle, a view now partly obscured by trees. Probably designed by James Wyatt, this is a building of ingenuity and distinction; of ashlar with a reception room or salon with apses to front and rear, the former gives access via folding glazed doors to a semicircular apron overlooking the landscape. Its hollow walls were heated from the basement service room, presumably to provide an hospitable environment for exotic plants and caged birds. This building was restored from a ruinous state by the Vivat Trust in the mid 1990s and is now a holiday cottage.

A walk leads east from the Bird House along the north side of Upper Pool and then north into the small subsidiary valley occupied by the woodland of Black Firs. A small sandstone outcrop 200m south-east of the Bird House probably marks the site of a seat from which there was a view back to the Bird House. The principal path however leads west from the Bird House, along the north side of Upper Pool and past cliff-like outcrops of red sandstone. The dam across the head of Upper Pool survives intact, carrying the public footpath from Badger to Ackleton. The way to Badger climbs north, under the brick bridge which carries the walk along the Dingle, and via a defile cut in the sandstone to emerge on the road to Stableford 100m west of the end of Badger village. A well-defined groove runs down the centre of the flat bottom of the defile, apparently a braking slot for waggons descending to the mill which in the C19 stood close to the dam. The footway runs down the west side of the defile; towards its bottom is the stub of a sandstone ashlar wall which supported a door or gate into the Dingle. Immediately south of this, cut into the sandstone side of the Dingle, is an icehouse.

Dropping down the west side of the dam across the head of the Upper Pool, and with a red sandstone cliff rearing above it on the south side of the Dingle, is a cascade. This falls into Middle Pool, which with its dam breached survives as a shallow, silty, 10m wide stream. Midway along its north side is a boathouse with a heavily rusticated portico of c 1800. The path along the

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Dingle runs above this, along the lower part of the north side of the Dingle, past various red sandstone outcrops and cliffs, some of them cut back to form seats. A second rock-cut boathouse lies close to the east end of the north side of Lower Pool. About 200m west of this the path climbs up, away from the line of the pool edge, to the mouth of a tunnel cut through sandstone. The tunnel is c 15m long, and as the path through it is climbed it twists, revealing the stepped ascent to the Rotunda, c 150 to the west (listed grade II). This, like the Bird House, is attributed to James Wyatt. It stands slightly below the lip of the Dingle, with a screen of yews behind, and from it there are views both east along the Dingle and south, outward over the countryside to Stableford and beyond.

Estimates for improvements to the Hall's grounds were submitted by William Emes in 1781 and 1785. The proposed works included levelling the ground (an estimated 70,000 cubic yards were to be moved) and making ha-has, planting a shrubbery east of the Hall and around the stables and clumps of trees elsewhere, altering the approach roads, and making walks linking Hall and Dingle. It seems likely that it was also Emes, who worked here with his associate John Webb (d 1828), who was behind the laying out of the walks and the planting in the Dingle, and possibly also the enlargement of the pools west and south-west of the church. A description of the Dingle c 1800 (Blakeway MS) refers to Alpines on the rock ledges and American rhododendron, kalmia and azalea at the bottom of the valley. Some alterations to the Hall's grounds were made c 1850 by George Cooke, the head gardener.

PARK The park north and east of the Hall, known as the Lawn, was probably laid out by William Emes c 1786, following his submission of an estimate in November 1785 for planting trees in clumps, fencing and sunk fences. Today the parkland is arable farmland almost wholly devoid of trees.

Although the glebe land to the west of Badger village appears never to have been parkland it is important to the setting of the site, and is encompassed by the tree-lined approach drive from the west.

KITCHEN GARDEN A large, roughly square, brick-walled kitchen garden was built in the late C18 south of Badger church, east of Church Pool and bounded to the east by the walk to the Dingle. The main compartment is a maximum of c 120m wide from east to west by c 100m. In the mid to late C19 numerous glasshouses were built in the north part of the garden; none of these survived in the late C20. There is a gardener's house on the north side of the walled area.

REFERENCES

Viator, A Guide to the View from Brimstree Hill (1858), p 38 P Reid, Burke's and Savills Guide to Country Houses: Volume II, Herefordshire ... (1980), p 78 C Howard, Badger Estate and Its Pleasure Grounds (BA dissertation, Wolverhampton Polytechnic 1985) [copy in Shropshire Records and Research Centre] P A Stamper, Historic Parks and Gardens of Shropshire (1996), pp 48, 56, 88, 114 The Victoria History of the County of Shropshire x, (1998), pp 213-17

Maps [all held in Shropshire Records and Research Centre] Badger Estate Plan, 1837 (4792/1) Badger Tithe map and apportionment, 1837

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1881-2, published 1891 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1882, published 1882 2nd edition surveyed 1901, published 1902

Illustrations Watercolours of Bird House and Dingle (J H Smith Colln in SRRC; NMR)

Archival items Blakeway MS 10, f145 (Bodleian Library) [notes for an unpublished history of Shropshire] Hardwick's History of Badger, pp 58-9 (350/3/40), (William Salt Library, Stafford)

Description written: December 1998 Register Inspector: PAS Edited: February 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.