

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

HAPSFORD HOUSE

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HAPS福德 HOUSE

Name: HAPS福德 HOUSE

County: Somerset

District: Mendip (District Authority)

Parish: Great Elm

County: Somerset

District: Mendip (District Authority)

Parish: Selwood

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.244478
Longitude: -2.3458135
National Grid Reference: ST 75958 49535
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1001468
Date first listed: 28-Feb-2000

Details

Early C19 pleasure grounds and a picturesque riverside walk associated with an early C19 villa.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT Hapsford House was constructed for George George, a Frome woollen cloth manufacturer, c 1820. A Map of the Manor of Elm surveyed by Jeremiah Cruse in 1815 shows the site as a paddock, with the mill buildings, a cottage, and the mill stream to the east. The villa and pleasure grounds are marked on Greenwood's Map of Somersetshire which was surveyed in 1820-1. George purchased further land which now (2000) forms part of the pleasure grounds from Sir Henry Strachey, lord of the manor, in 1834 (survey book). This purchase may relate to the extension of the villa. A painting of the house (private collection) records the appearance of the house and grounds as first constructed, while the Tithe map (1839) records the building in its larger form. By 1839 George George had died and the property, then known as Hapsford Cottage, was occupied by his widow, Mary. Between 1841 and 1851 (census returns) Mary George married Capt Henry Morrish, formerly of the Royal Marines. In the mid C19 the house was known variously as Vallis House, Vallis Cottage, and Vallis Villa, from the picturesque valley above which it stands. The pleasure grounds were extended and a new kitchen garden constructed in the mid C19. Capt Morrish died in 1864, and his widow continued to live at Hapsford House until her own death in 1876, although the property was offered for sale in July 1874 (Sale particulars). Hapsford Mill continued to produce woollen cloth throughout the mid C19, before becoming a saw mill in the late C19; a tramway was constructed c 1900 on the eastern boundary of the property, leading south from the mill to stone quarries in Vallis Vale. Following Mary Morrish's death, the property, now known as Hapsford House, was acquired by Alfred Hayman, a dentist who had moved from Bristol. Alfred Hayman died c 1923 and Hapsford House was sold to William Payne-Seddon (Sale particulars). Hapsford House passed through various

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ownerships during the C20, and today (2000) remains in private occupation. The kitchen garden and cottage, and the former mill are in separate ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Hapsford House is situated c 1.5km north-west of Frome, and c 1km east of the village of Great Elm. The c 5ha site is bounded to the north-west and north-east by a minor road which leads east from Great Elm to join the A326, Radstock Road. Hapsford House stands at the northern apex of the site, while the remaining buildings of Hapsford Mill and a late C20 bungalow on the site of Hapsford Cottage, a house which pre-dated the construction of Hapsford House, adjoin the site to the north-east. The eastern boundary is formed by a track which runs past the old stone quarries to two clubhouses and other modern buildings. The eastern part of the registered area is occupied by the Mells River which flows from south to north-east through the site. To the south the site adjoins agricultural land and is enclosed by a stone wall, while to the west hedges and the mid C19 stone wall of the kitchen garden south-west of the House separate the site from adjoining agricultural land. The site occupies a south-east- and east-facing slope which falls away from the House to the Mells River, which at this point contains two islands. Hapsford House stands at the northern end of Vallis Vale, the steep-sided, rocky and wooded valley of the Mells River, which was widely recognised in the C19 for its picturesque qualities. To the south and east of the site, C19 quarrying created exposed rock faces which are today (2000) partly wooded. There are significant views north-east and south-west along the valley of the Mells River within and to the south of the site, while from the pleasure grounds adjacent to the House there are views north down the river valley which are now partly obscured by mature trees and evergreen shrubbery. There are also views south-east across the river valley to wooded rocky outcrops on Hapsford Hill and the east side of the Mells River.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Hapsford House is approached from the minor road to the north-west of the site. The north-west facade of the House fronts directly on to this road, and a mid C19, single-storey gothic stone porch at the western corner of the House leads to a glass-roofed cast-iron verandah which follows the south-west facade of the House to join a further verandah on the garden front. Immediately to the south-west of the House and adjacent to the porch, low stone quadrant walls support C19 cast-iron railings which flank square-section stone gate piers and late C20 wrought-iron gates. The entrance leads from a gravelled area before the gates to a short gravelled drive which extends c 10m south to a semicircular carriage court on the east side of the early C19 stables. The single-storey stables are constructed in stone, with an overhanging hipped roof surmounted by a cupola (restored late C20). Three ogee-headed arches, now (2000) windows but originally entrances to the stables, are set in the east facade; the stables have been converted to domestic use in the late C20. The early C19 view of Hapsford House shows the stables as an ornamental feature in the pleasure grounds. A flight of early C20 stone steps with ornamental balustrades and terminal vase finials (brought-in, late C20, P Lewis pers comm) aligned on the east facade of the stables descends to the pleasure grounds. Hapsford Gardens, the mid C19 kitchen garden, is approached from the public road at a point c 100m west of the entrance to Hapsford House.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Hapsford House (listed grade II*) stands at the northern corner of the site above lawns which drop away to the south-east and south. The core of the House was constructed by George George to the designs of an unknown architect between 1815 and 1820 (Cruse; Greenwood). The early C19 view shows that the House as originally built comprised a central two-storey, hipped-roofed range facing the gardens with a further two-storey, L-shaped wing to the north-west and north; to the south-west was a single-storey, hipped-roofed wing with a canted bay on the garden facade. This wing contains the Gothic Room, a drawing room with elaborate early C19 gothic revival plasterwork which is continued in the hall to the north-east. A verandah extended the full length of the garden facade. At an early date, probably c 1834 when George purchased additional land, the House was extended by adding a further two-storey range to the south-west to balance the original two-storey element of the garden facade. The verandah was continued across the new wing, returning along the south-west facade to reach a new gothic porch adjacent to the carriage entrance to the grounds. A single-storey conservatory was added to the north-east of the original House before 1874 (Sale particulars). The House is finished with stucco scribed to represent ashlar with rusticated quoins, and is lit by sash windows with early C19 gothic tracery set in moulded stone surrounds.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The pleasure grounds lie to the south-east and south of the House. A stone-flagged terrace below the south-east facade of the House is covered by an early C19 glass-roofed cast-iron verandah. Below the House lawns slope down to the south-east and south, while c 15m south-east of the House is a box-edged parterre comprising two circular patterns centred on a central rose bed. Traces of gravel walks remain between the outer box hedges. The parterre is a mid or late C19 addition to the layout shown on the early C19 view. In this view the lawn is ornamented with a 'basket' flower bed to the east-south-east of the House which does not survive (2000), while a belt of low shrubbery to the south-east corresponds to the mature evergreen shrubbery and a group of three lime trees which remain c 30m south-east of the House. Some 65m south-south-east of the House the surviving stone and brick east wall of an early C19 conservatory stands to the south of the shrubbery, overlooking a levelled circular area to the west, now laid to grass. Stone steps at the south-east corner of the remains of the conservatory descend to an area of late C20 woodland garden adjacent to the mill stream.

To west of the lawn an early C19 walk, today (2000) marked by stepping stones, leads c 60m south below a bank to the west which rises to the carriage court and which is planted with C19 evergreen shrubbery and ornamental trees and shrubs, to reach an hexagonal stone-flagged area with an ornamental stone wall to the west; this was designed c 1990 by Penelope Hobhouse (P Lewis pers comm). To the east a shallow flight of stone steps descends from the flagged area to the lawn, while to the south-south-west a formal box-edged walk extends c 115m to reach the early C19 paddock, which is today planted as an orchard with groups of shrub roses. The formal walk passes for c 30m beneath late C20 laburnum arches designed by Penelope Hobhouse, with an avenue of laburnums extending to its end. To the west the walk is enclosed by mature pines, deciduous trees, and evergreen shrubbery, while to the east it overlooks a late C20 woodland garden planted beneath mature deciduous trees on the slope which descends to the lower walk. This slope was identified as a kitchen garden on the 1874 sale particulars. A flight of stone steps flanked by obelisk finials c 15m south of the northern end of the terrace walk descends to the woodland garden.

To the north-east of the lawn an early C19 gravelled, stone-edged walk which corresponds to one shown on the early C19 view of Hapsford House follows the boundary of the site, which is here formed by a high stone wall to the south-west of a public road. The ground within the site is at a higher level than the road, while the walk itself is raised to allow views north down the valley of the Mells River. Today (2000) these are partly obscured by mature trees and evergreen shrubbery. Separated from the lawn by a late C20 herbaceous border, the boundary walk follows a serpentine course c 60m south-east from the House, before sweeping south through an area of woodland garden to reach a service entrance and yard which leads north-east to the public road. After c 45m the walk crosses the walk which descends from the south-east corner of the remains of the conservatory on the lawn above, and turns sharply east to descend a flight of stone steps to reach a levelled area which, in the late C19, was the site of a glasshouse (OS 1886). To the south, a roughly wedge-shaped area bounded to the east by the mill stream and to the west by a C20 walk at a higher level, is laid out as a late C20 woodland garden which was initially designed by Penelope Hobhouse and modified by Pam Lewis (P Lewis pers comm). The mill stream is partly screened by mature laurels which have grown out from a C19 hedge, while c 140m south-east of the House there is a C19 timber-framed and corrugated iron-clad boathouse which was described in the 1874 sale particulars. This area is shown on the 1815 survey (Cruse) as forming the garden to Hapsford Cottage, a structure associated with the mill buildings to the north; in the mid and late C19 it was cultivated as a kitchen garden (Sale particulars, 1874).

An early C19 gravelled, quartz-edged walk descends from the south-east corner of the lawn c 65m south of the House and adjacent to the site of the conservatory. This walk is flanked by mature deciduous trees and evergreen shrubbery, and leads c 115m south-south-east to reach a white-painted timber-railed bridge which passes east across the mill stream. At the western end of the bridge informal stone-flagged steps descend south to a mown grass riverside walk which leads c 70m to a small lawn beneath a rocky outcrop. Crossing the mill stream the walk, here slightly raised and partially surfaced with concrete, runs parallel to the stream on the west side of an island which is bounded to the east by the Mells River. Today (2000) the island is laid to grass under mature specimen deciduous trees, while to the north-east, adjacent to a late C19 stone wall which screens the track bed of the quarry tramway, the island is planted with native trees. Before the construction of the quarry tramway in the late C19, the northern end of the island up to the mill buildings was laid out as an orchard (OS 1886). Some 65m south-east of the bridge, at the southern end of the island, the River Mells is retained by two weirs c 10m apart which form ornamental cascades.

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Adjacent to the northern weir are the stone abutments of a C19 bridge which crossed to a looped walk on the eastern bank of the Mells River. The bridge does not survive (2000), but the walk passing through evergreen shrubbery remains and leads to a further white-painted timber bridge which returns west to a further, smaller island to the south. Today this southern island is reached from the southern tip of the north island by a late C19 painted timber bridge which is first shown on the 1904 OS map. The southern island is now managed as a wild flower meadow, but in the late C19 was a croquet lawn (Sale particulars, 1874). Picturesque groups of rocks are arranged at the northern end of the island and on its margins, while at its southern end there is a substantial rockwork grotto. The grotto is of mounded construction with a rockwork screen to the north, which today (2000) comprises a pair of niches to east and west; the central section of the wall has fallen. The grotto is entered through an arch behind the western screen wall. The interior comprises two chambers: the roof of the larger, northern chamber has partially collapsed obscuring the original floor, but the walls retain picturesque niches and the remains of the roof incorporates stones resembling stalactites; the smaller, southern chamber has a small, brick-lined fireplace on its eastern wall and a cleft in the western wall allowing a view across the mill stream to a wooded rock face. The presence of a fireplace may indicate a use connected with bathing. The earth mound covering the grotto is planted with trees, while a rocky chimney stack rises at the south-east corner. The grotto is of early C19 construction and is recorded on the Tithe map of 1839. The western riverbank adjacent to the grotto island forms a picturesque setting with a partly wooded rock face rising above the water to provide a sense of enclosure; to the east the riverbank is wooded, while there are quarried rock faces partly concealed by mature trees c 50m to the east. To the south the grotto is framed by further woodland in the deep, gorge-like river valley. There are views north along the river valley from the grotto, with reciprocal views south along the valley from the riverside walk.

PARK Today (2000) there is no park or paddock associated with Hapsford House. In the C19 an east-facing slope c 130m south of the House formed an approximately rectangular area of paddock within the pleasure grounds; this area is now a late C20 ornamental orchard. To the north-west the paddock is overlooked by the southern end of the terrace walk, while to the north-east it is bounded by shrubbery adjacent to the lower walk leading to the river. At the south-west corner of the paddock a further rectangular enclosure, today thrown into the orchard, is planted with mature coppiced hazel stools. A further area of paddock was developed in the mid C19 c 65m south-west of the House, on gently sloping ground between the early C19 stables and the mid C19 kitchen garden and gardener's cottage. Today this forms the late C20 garden to the cottage, known as Hapsford Gardens, and is laid out with lawns and mature specimen trees, together with later self-set trees. A tennis lawn was cut into the sloping paddock in the early C20 (OS 1929); a stone retaining wall and stone steps forming the eastern side of this lawn survive (2000). Mature trees and shrubbery extend along the northern boundary of the paddock, screening it from the public road, from which it is enclosed by a C19 rubble-stone wall.

KITCHEN GARDEN In the C19 the approximately triangular area of late C20 woodland garden c 95m south-east of the House was cultivated as a kitchen garden (Cruse, 1815; Sale particulars, 1874). In the mid C19 a new walled garden was constructed c 80m south-west of the House, beyond the paddock. This garden, today in separate ownership and developed as a late C20 garden, comprises a rectangular area enclosed to the west and south by rubble-stone walls c 2.5m high. The wall to the east, which is marked on the late C19 and early C20 OS maps, has been removed, as have the glasshouses and frames which stood towards the northern end of the garden. The masonry bases of these structures have been incorporated into the late C20 garden. Standard cherry trees survive outside the southern wall of the garden, together with espaliered fruit trees trained on the outer faces of the western and southern walls of the garden. A grass slip walk encircles the west and south sides of the garden, with metal estate fencing separating the southern walk from the adjoining land. The slip walks are shown on the 1929 OS map. A mid C19 two-storey stone cottage with ornamental gothic windows on the east facade stands at the northern end of the walled enclosure. The cottage was intended to be visible from the pleasure grounds around Hapsford House, and from the paddock; the longer views are today (2000) obscured by vegetation. A tarmac walk leads east from the cottage across the paddock to connect the kitchen garden to the stables. A further area of kitchen garden is recorded c 70m south of the House on an east-facing slope which is now a further area of woodland garden.

REFERENCES

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Slater, Directory of Somerset (1852-3) Kelly, Directory of Somerset (1861); (1883); (1927) E R Kelly, County Topographies: Somersetshire (1875), pp 232-3 Hapsford House 1810 to 1998, guidebook, (nd, late 1990s)

Maps J Cruse, A Map of the Manor of Elm in the County of Somerset the property of Sir Henry Strachey, Bart, surveyed 1815 (DD/SH C/1165 Box 23), (Somerset Record Office) C Greenwood, Map of Somersetshire, surveyed 1820-1, published 1822 Tithe map for Elm parish, 1839 (Somerset Record Office) Plan of the Hapsford House Estate in the Parish of Elm, Somerset, attached to sale particulars of 1874 (private collection)

OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1885, published 1886 2nd edition revised 1902, published 1904 1929 edition

Illustrations Watercolour, Hapsford House from Hapsford Hill to the east, c 1820 (private collection)

Archival items Manorial papers relating to Sir Henry Strachey's estate at Great Elm, early and mid C19, (DD/SH C/1165, boxes 21, 22, 23), (Somerset Record Office) Census returns for the Parish of Elm, Somerset: 1841, 1851, 1881 (Somerset Record Office) Sale particulars for the Hapsford House Estate, 1874 (private collection) Sale particulars for Hapsford House, 1923 (private collection)

Description written: February 2000 Amended: June 2004 Register Inspector: JML Edited: April 2005

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.