

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

HOLME LACY

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

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Name:	HOLME LACY
District:	County of Herefordshire (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Holme Lacy
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.009254 Longitude: -2.6543286 National Grid Reference: SO 55185 34738 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000500 Date first listed: 28-Feb-1986

## Details

Formal terraced gardens of late C17 or early C18 date, overlaid with late C19 features, and a landscape park associated with a country house.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The manor of Holme Lacy passed to the Scudamores by marriage in 1354. John Scudamore, usher to the court of Henry VIII, built a new house here which in turn was greatly enlarged and remodelled in the 1670s by the second Viscount Scudamore (d 1697). He was the son of the first Viscount, John (d 1671), who was well connected at the Stuart court and had been Charles I's ambassador in Paris. In the early C19 the estate passed to the Scudamore-Stanhopes, who in 1910 sold the house to Sir Robert Lucas-Tooth. He in turn sold it to the cigarette manufacturer Noel Wills, whose widow gave the house to Herefordshire County Council in 1934 who used it as a psychiatric hospital. Sold by the Council in 1981, the house was redeveloped as a hotel by Warners, opening in 1995.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Holme Lacy lies on rising ground on the west bank of the River Wye c 6km south-east of Hereford. Views north from Holme Lacy House were partly obscured in the later C20 by a screen of Cupresses, although those to the east, across the Wye Valley to Fownhope's wooded hills, could still be enjoyed. The small village of Holme Lacy lies 1km to the north, and a minor road leading south from it forms the east boundary of the park. Another minor road from Holme Lacy village forms part of the west park boundary north of the kitchen gardens, but otherwise it follows field boundaries. The area here registered, essentially the extent of the park in the late C19, is c 120ha.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The main approach to Holme Lacy House is from the north, along a straight, 300m long drive lined with mature lime trees flanked by rhododendrons. At the entrance, on the west side of a tall gateway with six stone piers and wrought-iron gates and railings (listed grade II), is a single-storey lodge. Of sandstone ashlar and with a hipped slate roof, the lodge (listed grade II) has a polygonal end facing the gateway. Both lodge and gateway are early C19, and may perhaps have formed a part of the work undertaken between 1828 and 1831 by the architect William Atkinson for Sir Edwin Scudamore-Stanhope.

It was said in the 1860s that before the north drive was created the main entrance was from the west. A back drive still approaches from west of the House, past the north side of the kitchen garden.

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**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Holme Lacy House (listed grade I) was built for the second Viscount Scudamore after his marriage in 1672, a building contract being dated 1674. It is of stone and brick with Bath stone dressings, and has low, hipped, slate roofs. Of two storeys, the House is on a grand scale and roughly H-plan, with the longer ranges facing north and south. The design was apparently inspired by chateaux seen while Scudamore was abroad in Paris and The Hague. A porch and other additions and alterations were made 1828-31 to designs by William Atkinson, and a ballroom was inserted and other changes made to the west of the House after its purchase by Sir Robert Lucas-Tooth in 1910. In the 1990s, when the House was converted to a hotel, major extensions and additions were built west of it.

A good deal is known about the earlier house, a double courtyard structure built during the reign of Henry VIII.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** About 10m west of Holme Lacy House is an orangery (listed grade II), of brick with stone dressings and probably late C17 date. The main, south facade is of five bays, and has five tall, round-headed windows (that in the centre with steps). In the 1990s the interior was used for playing bowls.

South and west of the House and orangery the gardens are laid out in the 'Grand Manner', with the main axes delineated by wide walks and yew hedges. The two main gravelled walks in the late C20 were that which ran east/west across the south front of the House and orangery and separated them from the gardens (the South Terrace, or Broad, Walk), and the West Terrace Walk which ran south at a right-angle off this down to a slight bastion or viewing platform overlooking the more westerly of a pair of large, roughly triangular fishponds. The ponds may have taken on this form in the 1720s; previously they may have been more formal.

The main feature of the garden lies south of the House and is a sunken lawn, sometimes called the Battle Garden. That runs down to the more westerly fishpond, which forms a sheet of water across the bottom of the lawn when seen from the house, with the Deer Park rising behind. Double terraces run around the east, west, and north sides of the Battle Garden, with ramps providing access from the House down the north terraces. In the southern half of the lawn the terraces ramp downwards while at the same time bellying out to east and west to create an amphitheatre-like space adjoining the pond. A gravelled path runs east/west between lawn and pond, connecting the walks down either side of the garden. To the west of the terraced lawn, between it and the West Terrace Walk which connects House and pond, are yews (to the north) and yews and specimen trees (to the south). To the east of the terraced lawn is a yew-edged compartment (to the north) and an apparently irregular grouping of yews (to the south). The East Terrace Walk down the east side of these yews and the east compartment remained unrestored in 1997. East of the East Terrace Walk are (to the north) a pair of sunk lawns. South of these, forming a projection on the wall which bounds the gardens to the east, are the brick and stone foundations of what may have been a summerhouse of c 1700 overlooking the valley and fishpond to the south and east.

West of the Battle Garden the formal gardens are arranged in a series of narrow east/west compartments, mostly defined by tall yew hedges. The main compartment is the Flower Garden (so named from the many flower beds within in the later C19), c 150m long and 40m wide. Within the yew hedges which bound this, and which rise 10m high at the east end in a confused mass of overgrown topiary in which elephants appear to be visible, gravel paths run around the perimeter of a lawn, around the edge of which are golden yews clipped into domes. In 1997 flower beds were being reinstated at either end of the lawn, beyond two apsidal-ended rectangular lily ponds probably constructed between 1899 and 1909.

North of the Flower Garden, and leading west from the House complex, are the few mature trees which are the survivors of the Irregular and Elm avenues.

South of the Flower Garden is the 8m wide Green Walk, bounded by a tall, clipped yew hedge running parallel with the hedge which bounds the Flower Garden to the south. A vista at the east end of this (overgrown in 1997) formerly looked across the Battle Garden to the countryside beyond.

Abutting the south side of the east end of the Green Walk is a square, yew-hedged lawn, the Rose Garden or Rosery. Otherwise the area to the south of the Green Walk is lawn, which falls away to an orchard area.

Running north/south and forming the termination of the formal gardens west of the House is a low raised walk. Known since the C19 as the Poop Deck, the walk is c 100m long, 7m wide and stands c 1.5m high, with a broad ditch to the west. From it views are enjoyed east, down the garden walks, and south into the Deer Park.

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Before the east front of the House is a roughly square lawn surrounded by a C20 privet hedge. North of the House a line of mature yews leads west, presumably once to screen the service buildings behind.

The date of the formal gardens is uncertain; it is unclear whether they were commissioned by the second Viscount Scudamore (1671-97), and if so being an especially early instance of a style of gardening best seen at Hampton Court before 1702 and in the work of Charles Bridgeman (fl 1709-38), or whether they belong to the third Viscount's time (1697-1716) or even a little later. Between 1720 and 1725 Lords Digby and Bathurst, with the help of Alexander Pope (d 1744) were redesigning the landscape at Holme Lacy for the widowed Viscountess Scudamore. Pope says they were trying to create 'something like the water of Riskins and the woods of Oakley Park' (Sherburne 1956), referring to the estates of two of his noble friends. They were clearly taking apart the formal gardens and this would account for the abrupt termination of the yew compartments to the west of the House. These improvements ceased with the death of Frances Scudamore in 1729.

Historical sources reveal a good deal about the surroundings of the House before the formal gardens were created and mention several walled garden compartments, a banqueting house, a bowling green and walks to the Wye.

**PARK** The north front of the House looks across a gently rising strip of parkland c 200m from north to south and 800m from east to west, mostly grassland but with some arable in the western part. In the east part is a fishpond; earthworks suggest another may have lain to the south. Pound Farm and its working buildings, which include tin sheds, lies just outside the park 300m north of the House and dominate the view from it.

The former deer park, The Park, occupies the hill which rises south of Holme Lacy House, extending almost 2km east/west and 1km north/south. The park is entered from the House's gardens via a path across the dam between the two pools, and from here a walk leads south, across an area of permanent pasture then uphill through the mixed commercial woodland which runs east/west as a strip across the park and which forms the main view from the gardens. Dotted about the permanent pasture (Hospital Pond Field) in the northern part of the park are several old specimen trees including a Wellingtonia planted in 1855, firs, a cedar, a copper beech, and sweet chestnuts. Other paths and drives run across the park from an entrance immediately south-west of the kitchen gardens, notably Green Drive which loops south-west across the park, past the site of a keeper's lodge in its western part, before leaving it to form a minor road to the hamlet of Newtown.

South of the belt of woodland the ground continues to rise before levelling out as a hilltop area with panoramic views. This part of the park, which is not visible from the House, is divided into fields and farmed. Some old parkland oaks and several sweet chestnuts remain. A fishpond lies in the central southern part of the park, c 400m west of the site of a deer barn burnt down in 1963.

There was a park at Holme Lacy by 1577, although the relationship of that park to the later deer park remains uncertain.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The brick-walled kitchen garden, c 100m square, lies west of the west end of the formal gardens, immediately beyond the Poop Deck. No glass remains, and the interior is given over to tennis courts, a bowling green, and prefabricated buildings associated with the hotel. A substantial three-bay, two-storey brick gardener's house of the earlier C19 stands at the west end of a slip along the north side of the main garden. Various sheds along the outside of the main garden's north wall have been renovated.

Much of the credit for the orcharding of the county in the early C17 was given to the first Viscount Scudamore, and new orchards were made at Holme Lacy in the 1630s and 1640s.

**REFERENCES** Country Life, 6 (22 July 1899), pp 80-5 G Sherburne (ed), The Correspondence of Alexander Pope (1956), [esp vol 2] P Reid, Burke's and Savills Guide to Country Houses: Volume II, Herefordshire Y, (1980), p 38 Trans Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club 48, (1995), pp 216-20 and pl XXXII P Goodchild, Holme Lacy House, (Centre for Conservation of Historic Parks and Gardens, York 1985)

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: Herefordshire sheet 40 SW, 1st edition published 1887 OS 25" to 1 mile: Herefordshire sheet 40.10, 2nd edition published 1904

Archival items Estate papers (S26); Sale particulars 1909-10 (T7/1-3 and AB23/29); Gardener's recollections (BK13/1/17), (Herefordshire Record Office) Pre-1820 estate papers (Public Record Office, London)

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Description written: 1998 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.