

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

STOKE PARK

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**STOKE PARK**

Name:	STOKE PARK
District:	West Northamptonshire (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Alderton
District:	West Northamptonshire (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Shutlanger
District:	West Northamptonshire (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Stoke Bruerne
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.132681 Longitude: -0.91902374 National Grid Reference: SP7408848815 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001039 Date first listed: 25-Jun-1984

## Details

Gardens of C19 and C20 date within a C17 framework, associated with a small country house contrived from early C17 pavilions attributed to Inigo Jones. Surrounding landscape park incorporates C13 deer park.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The manor of Stoke Bruerne was acquired by Henry VIII in 1541 and formed part of the Honour of Grafton, created in 1541. In 1627 it was among properties granted by Charles I to Sir Francis Crane, courtier and head of the Mortlake Tapestry Works, who c 1630 began to build a new house in the medieval deer park. The king was entertained here in 1635. After Crane's death in 1636 the estate passed to his brother Sir Richard (d 1645) and then to the descendants of his sister Edith Arundell. Few alterations were made until Levison Vernon remodelled the house shortly after he inherited it from his cousin Elizabeth Arundell in 1786. Stoke Bruerne Park was retained by the Vernon family until 1928. The pavilions and grounds were purchased in 1954 by Mr R D Chancellor, and remained in private hands in 1998.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** The village of Stoke Bruerne lies on a minor road west off the A508 from Northampton, 10km to the north, to Milton Keynes, 15km to the south-east. The town of Towcester lies 5km to the west. Stoke Park stands 1km south of the village on a slight rise, with a commanding view south over the River Tove which forms the southern boundary of the registered area. Otherwise that boundary follows the north and west margins of Stokepark Wood, from which it passes south-east to run for 400m alongside the A508. The area here registered comprises 115ha.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** Stoke Park is approached from the north via a drive which first passes through Stokepark Wood before its approach to the rear of the house. There was formerly a tree-lined road to the Home Farm on a more north-easterly line.

In the C18 and C19 the house was approached from the south-east, from an entrance on the later A508. This has gone ( map evidence suggests it was replaced by the rearward approach c 1890 when the house was rebuilt ) although the mature limes which lined it remain an important feature of the park. Although the drive may have been diverted to this line in the C18 when a landscape park was established, an approach from the south-east was presumably intended by the house's designer, and may have been up the axial avenue shown on Tillemans' drawing of 1721.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** The site chosen by Francis Crane for his new house, begun c 1630, was previously occupied by a medieval hunting lodge. The main house, converted from this, was linked by colonnaded quadrant walks to Blisworth sandstone ashlar pavilions, embracing a terrace approach from the park with a central flight of steps. The house was altered in the late C18 and the main block destroyed by fire in 1886. In 1891 a new house was built against the north-east corner of the east pavilion; this was demolished c 1954. Both pavilions are listed grade II\*. The east pavilion originally contained a chapel, the west one a library. The house is important as the first country house in England constructed on the Palladian plan, and although proof is lacking, the design was attributed to Inigo Jones (1573(1652) by the early C18. When John Bridges visited Stoke Park in 1721 he wrote 'The House ... was built by Inigo Jones with a body & 2 wings joint by Corriders or Galleries as may be seen by ye S view of it to ye gardens taken by Tillemans. The Pillars are red of a different Colour from ye House' (Brown and Foard 1994, 98). North of the house are various service and farm buildings (some under conversion to residential use in the 1990s), several of them of c 1900, including the Court House, which stands on the north side of the forecourt, and the Home Farm and its agricultural buildings. There are also a red-brick and limestone coach house of c 1800 (listed grade II) and a dovecote and attached stabling, built in 1684 and extended in the C19 (listed grade II).

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The formal garden around the house has been restored to an approximation of what it was before the fire of 1886.

Between the pavilions is a lawned terrace crossed by linking paths. A stone path, lined with beds, also curves around the north side of the terrace, between the now free-standing columns of the quadrant walks and the niched walls thereof, which survive to either side. A stone balustrade (listed grade II), probably late C19 but replicating an original feature, links the pavilions, with central steps (again as in the original design) leading down to a 25m wide lower terrace, also bordered with balustrading. In the centre of the lower terrace, created c 1890, is a rectangular, mid C19, lily pond and fountain (listed grade II) brought here from Harefield Hall (Middlesex), a property inherited by the Vernons. The lower terrace extends in front of and beyond the pavilions, to an overall length of c 160m. It is lawn with some specimen trees. The east end of the lower terrace is terminated with a late C19, limestone ashlar, nine-bay wall with seven round-arched ironstone niches (listed grade II). These were probably moved here from the wall either side of the steps which links the two terraces.

A late C19 limestone balustrade (listed grade II) on the line of the facade of the original house also links the two sections of the niched wall of the quadrant walks. North of this is the grass forecourt. From the west side of this there is access to the woodland which runs south-west from the house, framing the view. To the east of the forecourt, and separated from it by a yew hedge on the line of the front wall of the house of 1891, is a later C20 flagged herb garden which occupies the house site itself. West of this, within a brick-walled compartment c 50m square, is an orchard. Mostly this is of c 1890, and an arched gateway of that date leads through from the south side of the orchard to the east section the lower terrace.

**PARK** Stoke Park stands within a landscape park which incorporates a medieval deer park.

The northern third of the registered area is occupied by the triangular Stokepark Wood, whose boundaries perpetuate those of the medieval deer park. Some sections of the large, medieval park bank survive on the north-west, west, south and east sides of the wood, which is densely planted with deciduous and coniferous species. The central and southern parts of the park are mainly improved grassland, and there are isolated agricultural buildings in both halves. Areas of ridge and furrow however remain between the house and Stokepark Wood, associated with hollow-ways and other earthworks interpreted by RCHM(E) (1982) as representing the site of a hamlet, possibly the place called Shaw noted in records of the C13 to C15. To the south of

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the house the ground falls away very gently, across the open park to the shelter belt c 1km in the distance, which in the winter signally fails to screen the busy A508. Beyond the ground rises, and the tower of Grafton Regis church, 2.5km to the south-east, forms an important eyecatcher on the skyline.

A licence to inclose his wood and make a park was obtained by Pagan de Chaworth in 1270. In 1594 the park was of 108 statute acres of land and 53 acres of coppice, but with no oaks. When granted to Francis Crane the park held deer. Tillemans' view of 1721 shows an axial avenue running south-east from the house, and at least some of its trees survived until c 1900.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The late C19 walled kitchen garden lay beyond the orchard and the east end of the lower terrace. A later C20 bungalow stands in its north-west corner.

#### REFERENCES

Country Life, 114 (23 July 1953), pp 280(3 Northamptonshire Past & Present 5, (1975), p 231 J Anthony, The Gardens of Britain 6, (1979), pp 150/2 Roy Comm Hist Mons Engl Inventories: Northamptonshire 4, (1982), pp 137/8 T Brown and G Foard, The Making of a County History: John Bridges' Northamptonshire (1994), pp 97/8, 184/5 J Heward and R Taylor, The Country Houses of Northamptonshire, (RCHM(E) 1996), pp 311-15 B A Bailey (ed), Northamptonshire in the Early Eighteenth Century: The Drawings of Peter Tillemans and Others, Northants Record Soc 39, (1996), pp 194(6

Maps Plan of Stoke Bruerne, 1768 (map 434), (Northants Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1892 2nd edition published 1900 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1900

Description written: 1998 Register Inspector: PAS Edited: January 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.