

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

OULTON HALL

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**OULTON HALL**

Name:	OULTON HALL
District:	Leeds (Metropolitan Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 53.744496 Longitude: -1.4618740 National Grid Reference: SE3558827703 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000413 Date first listed: 01-Dec-1984

## Details

Park and pleasure grounds laid out in part to designs by Humphry Repton of 1809(10 with mid C19 additions by W A Nesfield.  
HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Land in the Oulton and Rothwell area was bought over a period of years in the late C18 by a prominent Leeds banker, John Blayd, who used Oulton House, the precursor to the present building, as a country retreat. At that time the land between the house and Oulton village was open common land. Blayd died childless and left the house and the land he had acquired in the area to one of the partners in the bank, John Calverley, who changed his name to Blayd in 1807. The area of common land around Oulton Hall was enclosed through an Act of Parliament which was given Royal Assent in 1809, and Blayd invited Humphry Repton (1752(1818) to Oulton in the same year. Repton produced a Red Book in 1810. The site remained in private ownership until it was turned into a hospital, mid C20. It was acquired by West Yorkshire County Council in 1974 and bought by Leeds City Council in 1984. The Hall is currently (1998) in use as an hotel and the parkland as a municipal golf course which was opened in 1993.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Oulton Hall lies immediately south and west of the village of Oulton. On the north side of the site Springhead Park separates the park from built-up areas, and there is open agricultural land to the south between the park and the M62 motorway. The c 110ha site is on land which slopes gently down to the north and east. The north boundary is formed by Clifton Lane and Rothwell Lane, the A642 bounds the east side of the site, and Royds Lane part of the south-west side. Remaining boundaries are formed by fences separating the park from agricultural land, and on the south side, from a school.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The main entrance to Oulton Hall is on the north side of the site where there is a gateway with stone gate piers and attached flanking walls at the junction of Calverley Road, the A642 and Rothwell Lane. A drive, which was laid out by W A Nesfield (1793-1881) in 1851-2, leads south-west to the Hall. The principal entrance was formerly on the east side of the site, and it is shown on Repton's plan and on the 1848-51 and 1931 OS maps. A drive curved around to the south-west and then ran northwards to the east front of the Hall. The line of the drive has been obscured by the golf course.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Oulton Hall (listed grade II) originated as a modest building, probably of C18 date. It was shown as a simple farmhouse by Repton, who proposed changes to this building which included the addition of a classical loggia

to the east front. Repton's scheme for the house was not carried out and Robert Smirke (1780-1867) altered and enlarged the building, probably in the 1820s. Additions were made by Sidney Smirke in 1839 but the building was seriously damaged by fire in 1850 and rebuilt by Leeds architects Perkin & Backhouse. More alterations were carried out in 1875 and 1888-91. After the site was acquired by West Yorkshire County Council in 1974, the Hall was abandoned and over the years which followed it was vandalised such that little more than a shell survived when it was acquired by de Vere Hotels and restored and extended in the 1990s.

A golf clubhouse of c 1990 is situated c 100m north-west of the Hall.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** On the east front of the Hall there is a terrace with central steps leading down to a secondary terrace, with a low stone parapet, which extends south of the line of building for a distance of c 60m. The terrace is laid out with formal box-edged beds. There are views to the east over parkland to a tree-lined lake. This view was illustrated by Repton whose proposals included planting to screen a line of cottages along the road, and the introduction of two lakes. To the north-east there are views of the church of St John (listed grade II) in woodland. The upper terrace continues on the south side of the building where it has a balustrade (a reproduction of the late C20), and bows out in front of the Hall. From this point central steps (reconstructed late C20) lead down to a formal garden and a fountain which is a late C20 reproduction of a fountain of late C19 or early C20 design. A restored lily pond is situated in the south-east corner of the garden c 70 m south-east of the Hall. This area was laid out by W A Nesfield in 1851(2, and his layout is probably reflected on the 1893 OS map, which shows a rectangular lawn with perimeter paths and a circular area for the fountain on the south side. The bow of the terrace is not shown on this map.

Immediately south and south-west of this area there is a late C20 car park and beyond this a plantation of mid to late C20 date, in an area shown as woodland on the 1893 OS map. The ground rises on the west side of the Hall and paths lead up from the car park to an area of woodland which extends south in an elongated oval and has paths leading through it, as shown on Repton's plan. The paths link with others which lead along the west side of the Hall and then run west to the site of the kitchen garden. On the north side of the Hall the terrace continues along the north front where it has a balustrade (late C20 reproduction) with central steps leading down to a forecourt and car park. This area is bounded on the north side by the remains of a wall, and it is shown as an informal lawn with scattered trees on the 1893 OS map. C20 extensions attached to the west side of the Hall are fronted by lawns with beds and scattered trees.

**PARK** The Hall is situated close to the centre of the park, which is in use as a golf course. Falling land to the east has some scattered mature trees and c 250m east of the Hall, a lake within woodland. A pond south of the lake was already extant when Repton drew up his proposals for two lakes along the eastern edge of the park, to give the impression of a continuous stretch of water or a river glimpsed between the trees, but only the southern lake was executed. It has an island and an irregular outline with a belt of trees around it, some of which are planted on mounds. Repton was concerned that a belt of trees would appear 'little better than a mere hedge' and accordingly made it discontinuous and used mounding to give it a more varied appearance and to conceal the road from the Hall. This area conforms broadly with what is shown on Repton's plan. To the north-east a belt of trees continues along the perimeter and around the church of St John, which lies c 300m north-east of the Hall. The churchyard is planted with mature trees, including an avenue of yews aligned with the north porch. A gate on the south-east side of the churchyard led to a path, shown on the 1848(51 and the 1931 OS maps, running south-west to the north side of the Hall. The church was built under the provisions of John Blayd's will, and was erected in 1827(9 to the design of Thomas Rickman. It is a prominent landmark which is visible from most places in the park and from the north and east sides of the Hall. North and north-west of the Hall there is parkland on rising ground with scattered trees and areas of woodland, much as shown on the 1848(51 OS map, but outside the area covered by Repton's map. The park had also been extended to the south and west by c 1850 when the OS map shows scattered trees, many of which are in lines suggesting field boundaries, which have largely disappeared, though the perimeter belt shown along Royds Lane is extant.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The kitchen garden was situated c 150m west of the Hall. Part of the north wall survives with an arched entrance, the remaining walls having been demolished in the late C20 and the area converted for use as sports and training facilities. The garden is shown on the 1848-51 OS map and on the 1931 map by which time it had doubled in size.

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REFERENCES

D Stroud, Humphry Repton (1962), pp 148-9, 171 N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Yorkshire The West Riding* (1967), p 387 *Country Life*, 181 (17 September 1987), pp 146-9 G Sheeran, *Landscape Gardens in West Yorkshire 1680-1880* (1990), pp 115-17

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1848-51 1931 edition OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1893

Archival items Oulton Hall Red Book, 1809(10 (DB 179), (West Yorkshire Archive Service) [Some Red Book illustrations are reproduced in *Country Life* 1987; maps abstracted from Repton are in Sheeran 1990.] Typescript notes (EH file)

Description written: February 1998 Amended: March 1999 Register Inspector: CEH Edited: November 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.