

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

BROCKET HALL

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BROCKET HALL

Name: BROCKET HALL

County: Hertfordshire

District: St. Albans (District Authority)

Parish: Wheathampstead

County: Hertfordshire

District: Welwyn Hatfield (District Authority)

Parish: Ayot St. Peter

County: Hertfordshire

District: Welwyn Hatfield (District Authority)

Parish: Hatfield

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.802662
Longitude: -0.24077404
National Grid Reference: TL 21398 13021
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1000540
Date first listed: 11-Jun-1987

Details

A mid C18 landscape park remodelled by Richard Woods, c 1770, surrounding an C18 country house.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1700 the Brocket estate was described thus: 'Brocket Hall was the ancient seat of the Brockets situated upon a dry hill in a fair park, well wooded and greatly timber'd enclosed with a brick wall on the west side of the road for the length of a mile and plentifully watered with the River Lea' (Chauncy 1700). Charles Bridgeman (d 1738) produced surveys in the 1730s and made proposals which were not implemented (Bodleian Library).

In 1746 Matthew Lamb (1705-68) bought Brocket Hall from the estate of Thomas Winnington (d 1746). A plan of 1752 (HRO) shows that the old manor house or Hall stood to the north of an adjoining walled garden containing serpentine paths, set in extensive parkland. The park was laid out with a belt, many copses, clumps and specimen trees, and a lake which was formed from the widened River Lea. The bulbous southern end of the lake was embellished with a curlicue which concealed the dam. Upon Lamb's death his son, Sir Pennistone Lamb (1748-1819, cr Baron Melbourne 1770, Viscount Melbourne 1781), inherited the estate, continuing works previously started by his father, including the rebuilding of the Hall by James Paine (begun c 1760).

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Richard Woods was employed from 1770 to improve the setting of Paine's Hall within the park, but there is no known plan by Woods. In 1787 Angus noted how 'The Water and Out-grounds were laid out and disposed by Mr Woods of Essex in the most luxuriant and masterly Manner'. Woods appears to have been employed at Bocket Park until 1774, and his completed work is shown on a plan of 1798 (HRO). He modified the planting and widened the existing water body into a larger lake which extended the length of the park, altering the water level to accommodate a bridge previously built by Paine. A new approach drive was also created, carried across the stately new sheet of water by this imposing bridge. Woods also probably moved the kitchen garden to its present position and carried out work connected with the shrubbery, pleasure grounds, new dairy, hothouse and pinery, which is recorded in estate account books (Garden Hist 1987).

The estate continued in the Lamb family during the C19, passing to William Francis Cowper (cr Baron Mount Temple 1880) upon the death of his mother, Emily Lamb (1787-1869), who had married first the fifth Earl Cowper (d 1837) and second, in 1839, the third Viscount Palmerston (prime minister 1855-8, 1859-65). The estate was sold to the present (1999) Lord Bocket's family in 1922 and remains partly in private ownership, the Hall being used for corporate entertainment, with much of the parkland overlain by golf courses.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Bocket Hall lies at the west edge of Welwyn Garden City, from which it is separated by the late C20 A1(M) motorway, between the village of Lemsford to the south and the hamlet of Ayot Green to the north. The c 200ha site is bounded to the east by the A1(M) motorway, the road occupying the site of a strip of former park woodland which lay adjacent to the former east boundary. This strip was itself bounded by the Great North Road which lies immediately to the east of the motorway. The other boundaries are largely marked by agricultural land and woodland, with the south-west boundary formed partly by the B653 Hatfield to Wheathampstead road, and the south-east boundary partly adjoining Lemsford. The ground slopes generally south-westwards down to the course of the River Lea, incorporating The Broadwater, which flows south across the estate. South-west of the Lea the ground rises again. The setting is partly rural, with, beyond the busy motorway, the extensive C20 development of Welwyn Garden City.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main approach to the park is from the south, via the south drive, which leaves the B653 c 1km south-south-east of the Hall, at the junction with Church Hill. The drive extends north-west for 150m, flanked by lawns, these in turn flanked by the remains of a cedar avenue, to reach a gateway guarded by lodges (James Paine c 1765, listed grade II*) standing 900m south of the Hall. The two-storey, red-brick lodges are ornamented with stone dressings and are flanked by screen walls. The central gates repeat a semicircle motif found on the lodges. From here the drive curves north-west, overlooking the Hall to the north, before turning north-east 450m south of the Hall to cross The Broadwater, carried by James Paine's stone bridge (1772-4, listed grade II*) which is itself overlooked by the Hall to the north. From the bridge the drive curves north up a gentle rise to arrive at a carriage sweep on the south-east front. From here a spur curves northwards, east of the Hall, to give access to a service entrance on the north-west side of the Hall, and the stable block standing c 125m north-west of the Hall. A further spur leaves the south drive 250m south of the Hall, continuing north to the east of the Hall in a wide arc, to join the service drive to the stables 50m north of the Hall.

A further approach, via Ayot Green, enters 900m north-north-east of the Hall, guarded by two red-brick, square-plan lodges and four large gate piers (James Paine c 1750s, listed grade II) flanking the drive. From here the north drive extends south-south-west through woodland, before emerging into parkland 400m from the Hall. The drive joins the outer spur of the south drive 150m north-east of the Hall.

A network of further paths and drives overlies the park.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Bocket Hall (James Paine c 1760-80, listed grade I) stands at the centre of the park, on an eminence, overlooking much of the parkland including The Broadwater below to the west and south. The three-storey, red-brick Hall is a piecemeal reconstruction of an older courtyard house, rebuilt for Sir Matthew Lamb and his son Sir Pennistone Lamb.

The stable block (James Paine c 1750s, converted to hotel use 1987, listed grade II) stands c 125m north-west of the Hall, the two-storey, red-brick block having been built for Sir Matthew Lamb. Some 175m west of the Hall stands a group of buildings enclosing three sides of a courtyard, including the former laundry house and laundry block (both probably James Paine mid/late

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C18, listed grade II). The laundry block has been converted into a golf clubhouse. The former stables and laundry buildings are prominent in views within the parkland.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The pleasure grounds extend north-west from the Hall in a sinuous band, sweeping down to the northern section of The Broadwater and, north of this, the narrower course of the River Lea. The pleasure grounds are laid largely to lawn with scattered mature specimen trees, including cedars of Lebanon. A path runs north-west from the Hall to the edge of the pleasure grounds and the Flint Bridge standing on the northern boundary, 750m north-west of the Hall. Some 200m west of the Hall, at the east side of the former laundry complex, stands The Temple (probably James Paine mid/late C18, listed grade II*), a brick and stucco, single-storey building with an elliptical porch and a marble basin said to have been used for taking syllabub. The Temple overlooks the park and Broadwater to the south.

The pleasure grounds were laid out initially in the mid C18 as parkland with many clumps of trees and singles, being remodelled as a pleasure circuit with a waterside walk as part of Woods' campaign of the 1770s (estate plan, 1752; Pallett, 1798).

PARK The park surrounds the Hall which is set in open parkland with the remains of scattered parkland trees. The parkland is now (1999) largely overlain by golf courses and is bounded by substantial woodland belts. The park is dominated by, and divided into two sections, by the River Lea, which enters the park via the Flint Bridge in Bluebell Hill Wood 750m north-west of the Hall, leaving again 800m south-east of the Hall. The river is substantially enlarged southwards from 300m west of the Hall for c 1km, to form the sinuous Broadwater, which is overlooked by the Hall and parkland which rises to either side of it. The Broadwater had been created by the mid C18, it being remodelled and enlarged in places by Woods during the 1770s to accommodate Paine's three-arched stone bridge carrying the south drive (estate plan, 1752; Pallett, 1798).

A broad avenue begins c 450m south-west of the Hall (on which it is aligned), extending a further 350m south-west to the B653. The avenue is separated from the road by wrought-iron gates and a flanking screen set on a low brick wall (1935, the whole listed grade II) on the east side of the road, and extends for a further 400m beyond the B653, terminating at Benstead's Wood (the woodland being outside the area here registered). Views extend north-east along the avenue to the south-west front of the Hall, which is framed by woodland to the north-east, The Broadwater being invisible from the gates and screen, and from the south-western half of the avenue. The avenue was laid out in the early C20 (OS 1899; 1923), and the gates and screen erected in the mid 1930s by the second Lord Brocket in memory of his parents.

The park retains traces of the mid C18 layout, and much evidence of Woods' improvements of the 1770s, and seems to have been little altered in the C19. The woodland blocks present in the late C18 (Pallett, 1798) have, however, gradually been considerably enlarged and some have merged as a result.

An icehouse formerly stood 150m north-east of the Hall, in a clump of trees (OS 1898).

KITCHEN GARDEN The walled kitchen gardens (probably James Paine or Richard Woods, mid/late C18, listed grade II) lie 300m north-west of the Hall. They are divided into several sections, together with an attached gardener's cottage and octagonal, early C19 glasshouse and other service buildings and glasshouses. An earlier kitchen garden lay to the north of the stables (estate map, 1752).

REFERENCES

Chauncy, *Historical Antiquities of Hertfordshire* (1700) Angus, *Seats of the Nobility ...* (1787) *Copperplate Magazine* 2, (1793-4), pl 76 *Victoria History of the County of Hertfordshire* 3, (1912), pp 101-2 *Country Life*, 58 (4 July 1925), pp 16-22; (18 July 1925), pp 96-103 P Willis, Charles Bridgeman (1977), pp 87, 177-8 J Harris, *The Artist and the Country House* (1979), p 294 *Garden History* 15, no 1 (Spring 1987), pp 31-4 *Brocket Hall Development Strategy*, (Cass Associates 1991)

Maps C Bridgeman, *Brocket Hall*, c 1731(8) (Gough Collection, Bodleian Library, Oxford) *Plan of Brocket Hall, 1752* (Hertfordshire Record Office) Dury and Andrews, *A topographical Map of Hartford-shire, 1766* T Pallett, *Survey and Plan of Brocket Hall Park, 1798* (Hertfordshire Record Office)

OS Surveyor's Drawing, 1810 OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1881 2nd edition published 1899 3rd edition published 1923 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1898 3rd edition published 1924

Description written: January 2000 Amended: October 2000 Register Inspector: SR Edited: November 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.