

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

STOKESAY COURT

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Name: STOKESAY COURT

District: Shropshire (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Craven Arms

District: Shropshire (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Onibury

label.localisation: Latitude: 52.403690
Longitude: -2.8155192
National Grid Reference: SO 44615 78722
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1001306
Date first listed: 19-Oct-1995

Details

Gardens, grounds and park laid out by H E Milner around a new country house c 1890; these incorporate landscape features including pools and trees from an earlier country house.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Between the 1860s and the 1880s the Worcester glover and MP John Derby Allcroft built up a 6000-acre (2500ha) Shropshire estate. The 5200-acre (c 2166ha) Stokesay Castle estate was acquired in 1869 from the Earl of Craven, and the 438-acre (c 182ha) Stonehouse estate in 1874 from Col Clive. It was at the Stonehouse, the chief house on the latter estate, that Allcroft and his family made their home. In 1886 Allcroft added the final main piece of his estate when he bought the 686-acre (c 285ha) Aldon estate from Lord Rowton. In 1889 a new house, Stokesay Court, began to be built close to the former Stonehouse which was demolished. Gardens were laid out to a design by H E Milner. J D Allcroft died in 1893 and was succeeded by his son Herbert John Allcroft. He died young and his widow, Margaret, remarried Brig-Gen John Rotton during the First World War. On her death in 1946 the estate passed to John Russell Allcroft, a son of her first marriage, who in turn died in 1950. Stokesay was inherited by his sister Jewell, who had married the historian Philip Magnus; they adopted the name Magnus-Allcroft. She died in 1992, her husband having predeceased her. The estate remains (1999) in private hands.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Stokesay Court stands within its park 1km south-west of the village of Onibury. This lies on the A49 from Shrewsbury, c 40km to the north, and Ludlow, 8km to the south-east. The house stands on the north side of a small valley (a continuation of Aldon Gutter), the stream along which discharges into the River Onny at Onibury. The park is bounded to the south by Green Lane, from Onibury to Brandhill, and to the north by the unclassified road from Onibury to Aldon. To the west the park boundary follows field edges. The area here registered is c 50ha.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main approach to the house is along a drive from the north-east through the main part of the park, beginning on the west side of Onibury, just off the A49, at a single-storey stone lodge (listed grade II) of 1889

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in a Jacobean style by Thomas Harris (d 1900), the designer of Stokesay Court. About 350m from the lodge the drive crosses the east end of the chain of fishponds via a stone bridge with pyramidal stops at the end, also by Harris. About 200m north of Stokesay Court the drive enters the shrubbery, within which there are numerous mature coniferous specimen trees, swinging south-west to the entrance court at the rear, west side of the house.

A second, principally service, drive leaves the Green Lane 500m south-west of the main drive and runs across the head of the main pool before passing between the stables and the walled kitchen garden.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Stokesay Court (listed grade II*) was built between 1889 and 1892 to a design by Thomas Harris. It faces principally east and was built in a Jacobean style using stone quarried on the estate. It has a carefully laid out plan, with three wings off the main block: the Gentlemen's Wing, the Servants' Wing and the Ladies' Wing. The U-plan entrance court, flanked by the Gentlemen's and Servants' Wings, is on the west side, the main garden front to the east.

Some 150m east of the house is a large and impressive quadrangular stables court, built c 1889 (before the house) to a design by Harris.

Stokesay Court replaced the Stonehouse, built on the north-west side of the main pool in the early C18 by the Earl of Powis, which was a rather severe stone building with a seven-bay, three-storey facade overlooking the lake.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens around Stokesay Court were designed by H E Milner (d 1906) and laid out in 1892 by Richard Smith & Co, nurserymen of Worcester. The gardens run up to the monumental bowed terrace with pierced parapet which runs around the south and east sides of the house. Terracotta vases (not extant) were provided for this by James Stiff & Sons of Lambeth. There are extensive views from the terrace, to Ludlow and beyond to the Cleve Hills c 20km to the north-east. Sweeping lawns with sinuous paths fall away east and south of the house. South of the house there are numerous specimen trees (many presumably of c 1890) and some shrubs, whereas to the east the aspect is more open. Near the centre of the east lawn is a fountain supplied by Pulham & Sons while along its north side are various ancillary buildings including the stables and the foundations of what was probably the vinery. East of the vinery foundations is a small formal garden (overgrown 1990s), originally with pedestalled urns. This was probably contrived from the foundations of a part of the Stonehouse. On its east side it is balustraded (present by 1893 on photos) with a central flight of steps. Abutting and in front of the east side of that garden are the foundations of an elaborate conservatory-like peach house (shown on C19 photos). North-east of the small formal garden and the peach house is a small, formal, yew-hedged compartment, c 20 x 10m, with apsidal projections midway along its north and south sides. Later C19 photos show benches standing within these. This compartment was a survival from the Stonehouse's gardens.

The steps from the small formal garden lead towards a sunken rock or quarry garden (in 1911 planted with thousands of alpinists) with a small grotto-like dripping well on its west side. Overlooking the garden from the south is a platform with the foundations of a rustic summerhouse. From its style the rock garden would appear to date from c 1830.

PARK The main drive curves gently through the north half of the park, which is mainly permanent pasture, and contains many mature parkland trees among which a stand of copper beech is notable.

The main feature of the south of the park is Stonehouse Pools, the chain of six pools (present in this form by 1840) which lie along the bottom of the wooded stream valley which the house overlooks. Paths run alongside the pools, the weirs, falls and sluices between which form notable features. The largest of the pools is the most easterly. It is down to this that the house's main, east gardens run, and on the north-west side of which that the Stonehouse stood. On the north-west bank of the pools is a small ?C19 boathouse entered via steps. Above it, improbably, is what appears to be a brick, summerhouse-like building of the later C17 or C18. Facing the boathouse across the pool is a projecting section of bank known as 'the Redoubt'. The pools are surrounded by many mature trees, relict elements of the landscaped grounds of the Stonehouse. North-east of the pool dam, on the line of the parish boundary and situated on a slight mound, is a large mere oak.

KITCHEN GARDEN The late C19 walled garden was part of Milner's contract; extensive ranges of glasshouses were supplied by Boulton & Paul. It lies c 150m north-east of the house and is c 100m long from east to west and 50m wide. There are ranges of sheds outside the north and east walls. No glass survives.

REFERENCES

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Country Life, 9 (2 March 1901), pp 272-7; no 33 (18 August 1994), pp 32-7; no 34 (25 August 1994), pp 36-9 J Franklin, The Gentleman's Country House (1981), p 268 J M Robinson, Stokesay Court and the Allcroft Family, (intro to vol 1 of Sotheby's catalogue for Stokesay Court's contents sale 28 September - 1 October 1994)

Maps Tithe map for Onibury parish, 1840 (Shropshire Records and Research Centre)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1903 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1883, published 1891 2nd edition surveyed 1902, published 1904

Archival items Family papers, including Milner's bills etc, as well as C19 photographs, are held in a private collection.

Description written: January 1999 Register Inspector: PAS Edited: February 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.