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Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

ABBERLEY HALL

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Name:	ABBERLEY HALL
County:	Worcestershire
District:	Malvern Hills (District Authority)
Parish:	Abberley
County:	Worcestershire
District:	Malvern Hills (District Authority)
Parish:	Great Witley
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.296079 Longitude: -2.3741272 National Grid Reference: SO 74582 66505 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001392 Date first listed: 21-Jul-1998

Details

Later C19 gardens and pleasure grounds, including a Pulhamite rock garden, and a park associated with a former country house.

CHRONOLOGY OF HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In the C17 the manor of Abberley was held by the Walshes. In 1682 the manor was inherited by William Walshe, MP, courtier, poet, translator of the classics and friend of Pope and Addison, both of whom stayed at Abberley. He died unmarried in 1708 and the manor passed to his sister and co-heir Anne, wife of Francis Bromley of Holt. The Bromleys then held the manor until the death of Col Henry Bromley in 1836 when it was sold to John Lewis Moilliet of Geneva, who began to build a new house, known as Abberley Lodge. That burnt down in 1845, the same year that Moilliet died. In 1867 his son James sold the manor to Joseph Jones of Severn Stoke (Worcs), who in 1880 was succeeded by his wealthy cousin John Joseph Jones of Oldham, under whom the estate and grounds were much improved. Abberley was sold by the family in 1916 and the Hall became a preparatory school, which it remained in 1997.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Abberley Hall lies to the south-west of Abberley village in countryside which is well wooded and notably hilly. The Hall and its clock tower, a local landmark, both lie on low hills, and from the Hall views are enjoyed to Woodbury Hill, 2km to the south, and to Abberley Hill, 2km to the east. Witley Court (qv) lies c 4km to the south-east. The park is bounded to the east by the A443 from Ludlow to Worcester, the last being c 15km to the south-east. The B4203 to Bromyard runs along the southern boundary of the park. The pleasure grounds and park around the Hall are bounded to the west by the drive north from Elbatch Lodge and its continuation; the wider parkland to the west is defined by field edges. The area here registered is c 50ha.

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ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main approach to Abberley Hall is via a 500m long drive from the north, lined with C20 sweet chestnut trees. At the north end of the drive are impressive gates, gate piers and walls of c 1883 (listed grade II), probably by J P St Aubyn. The piers are surmounted by statuettes of boys and the gates with the Jones family monogram. On their west side is Main Lodge, a stone building (listed grade II) of c 1883 in the Tudor-Gothic style, possibly also by St Aubyn. A 500m long back drive with lime avenue approaches the stables adjoining the Hall from the south. At its end is the Elbatch gates and lodge complex (all listed grade II), very similar to the Main Lodge group.

A third lodge, North Lodge (listed grade II), lies 1km north-west of the Hall, immediately north of the Home Farm. Of c 1881-3, the brick building is in the Tudor style and has a timber-framed upper part. A drive swings south and then east from the lodge across the former parkland (outside the registered area) towards the Hall's stables.

West Lodge (see below, Park) lies outside the registered area.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Abberley Hall (listed grade II*) was rebuilt following the fire of 1845 incorporating a good deal of the old structure, which was itself constructed around an earlier (perhaps early C18) house. Designed by S W Dawkes of Gloucester, the stone ashlar house is in the Italianate style with a tower between the main block and the service wing. The north, entrance front is plain, relieved only by a porte-cochère of c 1883, at which time the Hall was enlarged and many of the interiors lavishly remodelled. The south, garden front is more decorative, with a five-bay Ionic verandah. Projecting from the east end of the south front is the Headmaster's House, added in the 1970s.

North-west of the Hall is a quadrangular, brick, stables and coach house block (listed grade II) of c 1867 in a plain Italianate style. Since the 1920s the block has been converted to use by the school.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS North of the Hall is a forecourt car park. Beyond the ground falls away, and is laid to lawn with shrubs including rhododendrons. About 100m from the Hall the ground begins to rise again, and on a grassy hill c 200m north of the Hall is the most prominent feature at Abberley, visible from miles around, a Gothic stone clock tower (listed grade II*) surmounted with a short spire, built in 1883-4 by John Joseph Jones to the memory of his father to a design by J P St Aubyn.

The main formal garden, from which there is a striking view to Woodbury Hill c 2km to the south, is the South Terrace along the south front of the Hall. Three grass terraces which lie parallel to the Hall are descended by an axial path with stone steps which leads from a door under the Hall's verandah. That path links to a promenade along the bottom (south) of the garden which is defined to east, west, and south by stone balustrading (listed grade II), sections of which (especially to the east and south) are ruinous. Steps at the south-east and south-west corners give access off the promenade to the pleasure grounds below.

The upper terrace and balustrading continues around the east side of the Hall, where a flight of steps leads down to the top walk in the pleasure grounds. This runs along the front (east) of the 2m high Pulhamite work cliff with its ragged face and grotto-like openings (presumably the 'series of small caves, delightfully cool in the hot weather of early August' described in the *Journal of Horticulture and Cottage Gardener* in 1887) which supports the east terrace and its balustrading. Below the south end of the terrace the walk passes through parallel rows of four mature yews. Other mature yews lie to the south, and the yews in general, together with some of the other specimen trees in the pleasure ground, may well predate the mid C19 aggrandizement of Hall and grounds. Below the north end of the terrace is the start of a Pulhamite water garden, present by 1883, which falls east and then north for c 120m via a curving series of pools. The two largest pools are overlooked from the terrace. The pools have raised Pulhamite flower beds around their edges, and a pair of Japanese Maple planted to either side of them. The water garden ends at a basin near the Hall's icehouse.

The water garden runs through the upper part of the wooded pleasure grounds which extend for upto 300m down the hillslope to the north-east, east and south of the Hall and are planted with largely coniferous specimen trees, many of them dating from the earlier 1880s when J J Jones cleared and replanted the area. The pleasure grounds became overgrown in the mid C20 but had begun to be cleared in 1997. One of the terraced walks and rides which run through them continues past the north side of the kitchen gardens into a shallow north/south valley which forms the western part of a zone of more commercial woodland which extends up the eastern side of the park. In the valley bottom are two ponds. The more southerly, Green Pond, largely silted up and overgrown in 1997, has a small ornamental stone bridge at its north end. The larger pond, the Inkpot, is triangular;

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a large dam retains its south side. In 1887 it was described as newly completed. West of the ponds are various old quarries; the largest, running east and north from the more southerly pond, is the Valley of Rocks, already known as such by 1867. A second former quarry rock garden lies within the main pleasure grounds c 100m east of the South Terrace.

PARK North of the pleasure grounds and east of the main drive are c 15ha of parkland, permanent grass with mature parkland trees. Its south-western corner is occupied by cricket pitches and a swimming pool. Sports pitches also extend over much of the former parkland to the south-west of the pleasure grounds.

West of the pleasure grounds, with the Home Farm on its northern edge, is a further area denoted as parkland in the later C19 and early C20. Within it stands West Lodge (listed grade II), a Tudor-Gothic building of 1881. This former parkland is excluded from the registered area.

A deer park at Abberley, documented between the C13 and C18, lay east of Abberley Hall, between Stockton and Abberley Hill (outside the area here registered).

KITCHEN GARDEN The brick-walled kitchen garden lies c 250m to the south-east of the Hall, below the hill on which it stands. The garden is slightly wider (c 100m) at its south, downhill end, than to the north. The walls and some of the sheds along the outside of the north wall are probably of the C18, whereas the ruinous glasshouses along the inside of that wall and the remainder of the sheds are of the later C19, as is a further tall brick wall (lean-to glasshouses along the south side entirely removed before 1997) and sheds to the north of the main garden. In 1997 the interior of the garden contained a crop of Christmas trees.

A gardener's house, a substantial two-storey brick building in a plain Italianate style, lies to the east of the walled garden. It may be of about the same date as the stables, the 1860s, or have formed part of the improvements of the 1880s. South-west of the garden is a later C19 lodge-like building with timber-framed upper storey, and with a garden to the north enclosed by a tall brick wall. Presumably this was the bothy which in 1887 was said to afford 'almost home comforts' to the head gardener's assistants (J Horticulture).

To the south of the walled garden are a number of 1970s staff houses associated with the school.

REFERENCES

J Horticulture Cottage Gardener 15, (1887), pp 318-20

Gardener's Chronicle 2, (1893), p 713 The Victoria History of the County of Worcester 3, (1913), p 343; 4 (1924), pp 220-1 N Pevsner, The Buildings of England: Worcestershire (1968), p 68 Abberley Hall (promotional booklet for Abberley Hall School, c 1996) R Lockett, A Survey of Historic Parks and Gardens in Worcestershire, (Hereford & Worcester Gardens Trust 1997) Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: Staffordshire sheet 20 NE, 2nd edition published 1903 OS 25" to 1 mile: Staffordshire sheet 20.7, 2nd edition published 1903

Archival items Photographs at Abberley Hall

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.