

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

CROXTON PARK

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Name:	CROXTON PARK
County:	Cambridgeshire
District:	South Cambridgeshire (District Authority)
Parish:	Croxton
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.219416 Longitude: -0.16673061 National Grid Reference: TL 25334 59495 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000491 Date first listed: 16-Jan-1985

Details

A mid C18 house and walled garden set in an early C16 deer park which incorporates earthwork remains of C16 garden features and which was enlarged and landscaped in the early C19.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The Croxton estate was purchased by Dr Edward Leeds in 1571 at which time he created formal gardens and a c 25ha deer park immediately to the north of the hall (Way 1999). The present house, which occupies a site some 150m north of the church, was erected by 1761 by another Edward Leeds, incorporating the remains of the earlier C16 house. Croxton Park and estate remained in the Leeds family until 1820, when Sir George Leeds, equerry to the Duke of Sussex (and created Bart in 1812) sold to Samuel Newton, son of a Liverpool merchant. Following the enclosure of the parish in 1811, Sir George had plans drawn up for a new park, possibly with the help of Humphry Repton (1752-1818), and certainly after it was sold the Newtons enlarged and landscaped the park to the south, removing the remains of the old village to the north-west, beyond the Old Park boundary and creating a lake (ibid). The ornamental walled gardens were also created at this time. The estate remained in the hands of the Newton family throughout the C19 and much of the C20, Sir George Douglas Newton being created Lord Eltisle in 1934. On his death in 1942 it descended to his daughter Myra, the Hon Lady Fox who died in 1981, leaving the estate to her grandson. Within a year it was on the market, to be purchased by a Cambridge businessman, Christopher Curry, who sold off much of the estate; in 1993 c 250 ha, including the house and park, were again sold. The site remains (2000) in single private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Croxton Park covers 80ha and lies on the south side of the A428 Cambridge to St Neots road c 20km west of Cambridge. The A45 forms the northern boundary, with the village of Croxton located in the north-west corner of the park, outside the area here registered. It is a busy road in an otherwise rural setting. The registered site sits within the area defined by the B1040 to the east and Abbotsley Road to the west, all the land beyond the boundaries and between the public roads being agricultural. A drain runs from north-east to south-west through the centre of the park and is dammed in the middle to form the c 1.5ha lake, known as the Fish Pond. The drain and lake sit at a low point in the landscape with the ground rising to the north and south in gentle undulations.

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ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES There are three lodged entrances to the park. The early/mid C19 North Lodge lies c 550m north-north-east of the house and is a small, rectangular, single-storey building set beside large wrought-iron gates hung on brick gate piers. The drive runs south, past the east wall of the walled gardens and then turns south-west to arrive at the gravelled south-east entrance front. South Lodge (c 1.3km south-east of the house, listed grade II) is an early/mid C19 painted brick two-storey building with a rustic verandah on three sides. The drive runs north-west from the lodge, flanked for c 1km on either side by the narrow South Lodge Plantation, before emerging just south of the lake and passing its west bank to arrive at the entrance front. The late C13 parish church of St James stands c 100m to the south of the house and is linked to the village by a drive through the park, which also links the house to a third lodge which stands at the south end of Croxton village street.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING The house at Croxton is known as Croxton Park (listed grade II*) and is a symmetrical Georgian country house of red brick with limestone dressings. The south-east, entrance front has nine bays and a C19 Ionic portico spanning the five central bays. The house was rebuilt for Edward Leeds in c 1761 including part of the C16 house built by his forebears when they acquired the estate in 1571. When the Newton family purchased the property in the early C19 they added the Ionic portico, a dining room to the north-west, and a west wing, which incorporated surviving C18 brick and thatched game larders and outhouses (listed grade II).

The stable block is located c 280m to the west-south-west of the house and is of red brick, arranged around a courtyard entered from the south. Attached to the outer west wall of the stables is an area of kitchen garden.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The C18/C19 gardens and pleasure grounds lie to the north and north-east of the house, with earthwork remains of the earlier C16 gardens located in the park to the north-west. The garden fronts on the north and north-west look onto a small lawn, bordered to the north-west by a curved brick ha-ha. The irregular-shaped sub-rectangular walled garden, which stands c 50m to the north-east, its long walls facing east and west, is surrounded by mid C19 pleasure-ground planting, most of which lies to the north and west, comprising informal paths through open shrub and woodland planting. On the west side of the walled garden, where the pleasure ground borders the garden lawn, is a rustic, late C19 timber and thatch garden house (listed grade II).

Within shrub planting on the west side of the house is a turf-covered early C19 icehouse located c 50m from the thatched game larders.

PARK Croxton Park has an undulating landscape of grassland scattered with trees of mixed ages from veteran oaks to late C20 planting. In addition to oak, lime, plane, horse chestnut and cedar of Lebanon are also present, particularly around the house. The park is enclosed by large C19 plantations, particularly to the east, south and west and some of these contain blocks of pine, particularly along boundary lines where they act as visual links with the house. Part of the south park was put under the plough during the C20.

The park overlies a wealth of archaeological and earthwork features (scheduled ancient monument). The north half of the park is known as Old Park, being created as a deer park in the C16 and retained as parkland ever since. The area immediately to the north of the house is known as Pump House and contains a timber and thatch pump house c 80m west of the north drive as well as, immediately to the north-west of the house, a large, roughly circular earthwork feature c 50m in diameter with shallow ditches and banks extending from the south-east and north-east corners back towards the house. These have been interpreted as a relict of a former formal garden design focused on the old house (Proc Cambridge Antiq Soc 1993). Old Park extends to an area called Cochranes Park on the north boundary.

The C13 parish church (listed grade II*), situated c 100m south of the house, forms an important visual element in the landscape and is linked to the main front of the house by an avenue of lime and walnut of mid C19 origin. The church was partly rebuilt in the late C14 and C15 centuries, restored in 1806, and was the subject of further work in the early C20. To the south-east of the house, in Butchers Field, lie the earthwork remains of the former village, moved when the park was enlarged in the early C19. The c 1.5ha informal lake which dates from the same period lies beyond this area in the south park and provides a fine view of the house from its south bank.

KITCHEN GARDEN The walled garden c 50m to the north-east of the house is now (2000) used as an ornamental flower garden. It is entered through an ornamental gateway on the south side, beside a small sunk garden feature with central raised

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bed. The enclosing high red-brick walls (listed grade II) date from the mid C18 (contemporary with the rebuilding of the house) and enclose an area of c 0.4ha divided internally by a further high brick wall about one third of the way from the south entrance. Another low wall encloses a working area with glasshouses beyond the north wall. A central path runs from the south gate through the garden and is aligned on a large curved stone seat (listed grade II) set in front of the north wall. The garden has been completely renovated in recent years (late C20) and planted as an ornamental flower garden, with statuary, urns, sundials and arbours.

An area of productive ground lies on the west side of the old stable courtyard, on the western boundary of the park, although the origins of this area are unknown.

REFERENCES

Victoria History of the County of Cambridgeshire II (1948), pp 36-41 Roy Comm Hist Monuments of Engl Inventories: West Cambridgeshire (1968), pp 63-71 N Pevsner, The Buildings of England: Cambridgeshire (1970), p 327 J Kenworthy-Brown et al, Burke's and Savills Guide to Country Houses III, (1981) p 12 Cambridgeshire Parklands, (Cambridgeshire Record Office 1990), p 44 Proc Cambridge Antiq Soc LXXXII, (1993), app V, figs 26, 30 T Way, Cambridgeshire parklands survey, (Internal survey for Cambridgeshire County Council 1998) C Taylor, Parks and gardens of Britain (1998), pp 214-15 T Way, Croxton Park, Cambridgeshire. A park and garden history, (private report 1999) [copy on EH file]

Maps Enclosure map of Croxton, 1811 (Q/RDc 32), (Cambridgeshire Record Office) Croxton Hall post-enclosure estate map, 1826 (Cambridgeshire Record Office)

OS Surveyor's drawings 1803(13 (British Library Maps) OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1887 2nd edition published 1902 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1887

Description written: February 2000 Amended: December 2000 Register Inspector: EMP Edited: January 2001

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.