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Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

HALL PLACE

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Name: HALL PLACE

District: Windsor and Maidenhead (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Bisham

District: Windsor and Maidenhead (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Hurley

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.531755
 Longitude: -0.79889144
 National Grid Reference: SU 83412 82111
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

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label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
 Grade: II
 List Entry Number: 1001691
 Date first listed: 16-Sep-2004

Details

A late C17 landscape park with C18, C19, and C20 modifications and additions, surrounding an early Georgian house on the site of a C13 manor house.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Records of a house on the site date from 1234, when La Halle, later known as The Hall, was the manor house of Hurley in the ownership of John de Hurley (History of Hall Place). In 1372 the estate and house were acquired by Hurley Priory and at the Dissolution of 1540 the lands were surrendered to the Crown. The house passed through several hands before it was acquired c 1690 by Jacob Bancks, who came from Stockholm as secretary to the Swedish Embassy. He later served in the British Navy,

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became an MP, and was knighted in 1699. Bancks is thought to have been responsible for planting lime avenues crossing the park, and also statues, and gate piers with a wrought-iron clairvoie (CL 1938).

Bancks died in 1724 and The Hall passed briefly to his son. In 1728 it was purchased by William East, who demolished the old hall and replaced it with the smaller Georgian mansion, Hall Place, built between 1728 and 1735. The house incorporated a fragment of the former late C17 house. A sale plan of 1725 shows four avenues, the fourth being the entrance to the old house from Burchett's Green (VCH 1923; CL 1938). The Rocque survey of 1761 shows the axial entrance avenue leading to a semicircular forecourt, the avenue to the north leading to a rectangular space enclosed by trees, a formal plantation to the south of the house, and rectangular kitchen gardens to its west. The estate included a deer park of c 130 acres (53ha) in the early C20 (VCH 1923).

William East died in 1737 and was succeeded by an infant son, William, who owned the estate until his death in 1819. He maintained the geometric layout of the park, and is attributed with the building of the Gothic Entrance Arch, demolished in 1967. Following the death of Sir William East's son in 1828, Hall Place passed to the Clayton family, Sir George Clayton adding East to his name. He built a portico on the entrance front (demolished 1953), and is attributed with the planting of oaks to depict the fleet at the Battle of the Nile of 1798 and the erection of a statue of Nelson (History of Hall Place).

The 1843 Tithe map shows gardens to the west of the house, enclosed by two ranges of kitchen gardens to north and south. A terrace ran along the west front of the house, terminating in a semicircle at each end. A bee house was erected in the late C19 in a circular enclosure that is shown on the Tithe map of 1843 to the north-west of the gardens. In the mid C19, the land to the east and south of the mansion was parkland of 126 acres (51ha), with scattered trees, perimeter belts, and small blocks of woodland, the northern avenue extending into arable farmland (Tithe map, 1843).

Between 1843 (Tithe map) and 1875 (OS) the main approach avenue was extended further east to the road to Burchett's Green, and a gas works and gasometer were erected north-west of the house in the orchard; these had been removed by 1913 (OS). The estate remained in the Clayton East family until 1939, when it was requisitioned. In 1948 the estate of 1024 acres (415ha) was purchased by the Ministry of Agriculture. Hall Place and Top Farm (previously Hall Place Farm), together with 484 acres (196ha), were acquired by Berkshire County Council in 1949 to establish the Berkshire Institute of Agriculture. In the later C20, education buildings were added to the north, south, and south-west of the house and several perimeter properties passed into separate ownership.

The estate remains (2004) in the ownership of Berkshire College of Agriculture, a charitable corporation.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Hall Place is situated c 4km west of Maidenhead and c 7km east of Henley on Thames. The park is c 1.5km south of the River Thames and borders the west side of the village of Burchett's Green. The site comprises c 180ha and is in a rural, largely agricultural, setting. The site rises gently from east to west, rising more steeply to the south-west and incorporating a steep valley to the north. There are views towards Ashley Hill Forest to the south-west and to High Wood and Prospect Hill to the north-west. The park is bordered by the Grassland Research Institute, formerly part of the estate, and part of Henley Road to the north and north-west, by farmland and housing along the road to the east, by a road, copse, and woodland to the south, and by agricultural land and some housing on Honey Lane to the west.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The principal approach road is from Burchett's Green Road, c 700m to the north of the centre of the village of Burchett's Green. A C19 red-brick lodge lies to the north of the entrance. The entrance drive, a mid C19 avenue of mature lime, ascends rising ground to the west. Some 300m to the west the ground levels off at the location of the former castellated 'Norman' Gothic Entrance Arch (late C18, demolished 1967). This marks the earlier entrance running north from Burchett's Green, which fell out of use following the extension of the approach avenue to Burchett's Green Road in the mid C19. A late C17 lime avenue extends from the site of the Gothic Entrance Arch to the house.

Other entrances include a track running from a lodge on the north boundary that is shown on the Tithe map of 1843 (now, 2004, in separate ownership), a drive running east from Honey Lane in the west, and a third running along the south avenue from the south boundary.

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A public footpath runs through the park from Hall Place Lane in the south, crossing the main approach avenue and running along part of the northern avenue before passing north-north-west through arable land.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Hall Place (listed grade I) is a large country house built between 1728 and 1735 for William East, incorporating a small part of the former late C17 house and with interior stucco work attributed to Artari and Vassali. It is located in the centre of the present park and built of brick with stone dressings and a slate roof. The house is symmetrical in plan, the centre section having three storeys and basement, with single-storey linking blocks to two-storey wings. The east front overlooks the forecourt, a near circular carriage drive enclosing a circular lawn and the east side bounded by an arc of mature lime trees. The house has been used by the Berkshire College (formerly Institute) of Agriculture since 1949 and has been altered and extended since the mid C20. An C18 stable block (listed grade II) with a central archway and clock and bell tower is located to the north of the house. Mid to late C20 college buildings extend north and south of the house.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens lie to the west of the house. A gravel terrace, c 150m long, runs north to south along the west front and overlooks the lawns to the west and parkland beyond. The terrace terminates at its southern end in an embanked semicircle, paved and grassed, accommodating the base of a statue (statue gone 2004, listed grade II). Steps lead south down the bank through a hedge to C20 college buildings. A shrub and herbaceous border runs along the east side of the terrace while parts are enclosed by hedges. The main lawn is flanked to north and south with shrubberies, previously herbaceous borders (CL 1938). Mature specimen trees, including holm oak, Wellingtonia, plane, and yew, and supplemented with recent planting, screen the walls and enclosures of the former kitchen gardens.

Some 170m to the north-west of the house is a small sunken garden with grassed banks and yew topiary. Immediately to the north of this, an opening in the brick wall of the former kitchen garden, running east to west, leads to the late C19 octagonal timber bee house (listed grade II, possibly replacing a structure shown in 1843). The bee house was repaired in 1976 and is set amongst mature specimen trees in a clearing in the former orchard and garden, as indicated on the Tithe map of 1843. This map also shows planting in the sunken garden and in the surviving woodland garden located c 100m further south. East of the bee house and north of the former north range of kitchen gardens are glasshouses and late C20 gardens laid out on the site of a poultry ground and adjoining the former gas works (Tithe map, 1843; OS 1875). Some 170m west of the house, a masonry ha-ha, with a section of recent timber construction, separates the lawn from the park.

On the south elevation of the house, an arched loggia and terrace overlooks a former forecourt or bowling green, later used as a tennis court and now (2004) laid out as a rectangular lawn. The lawn is flanked to east and west by C20 college buildings and bounded c 50m to the south by an early C18 wall with brick and flint piers (listed grade II) which formerly contained a clairvoie giving a view of the deer park to the south (CL 1938).

PARK The former deer park extends to the south and north-east of the house and is largely laid to grass and pasture. The park is bisected by a narrow avenue running north to south immediately east of the house and the wider entrance avenue extending east from the house to the main entrance. The late C17 part of the entrance avenue runs from the house to the former Gothic Entrance Arch and was extended c 280m eastwards to the current entrance on Burchett's Green Road by 1875 (OS 1883). Since the late C20 there has been a programme of replanting between surviving mature common lime trees. The avenue has grass verges and timber post and rail fences enclose paddocks to the north and grassland and playing fields to the south. The park retains some mature planting, including a clump of cedars c 100m north of the entrance avenue and a group of mature oaks and planes to the south.

A second late C17 lime avenue runs north from the entrance forecourt for c 450m, from which point there are views to the north-west over a steep dry valley towards High Wood (outside the area here registered) which existed by 1761 (Rocque). From here a track runs north-north-east along the base of this valley towards the River Thames. Workshops are located to the west of the avenue and stables and a riding arena to the east.

A third, less complete, avenue, also originating from the late C17, extends south from the forecourt to the southern boundary and is planted principally with lime, giving way to oak and other species. To the south-west of this avenue the park has been re-landscaped as a golf course and the ground acidulated to support gorse. There are views over rising ground to the perimeter woodland. A winding track leads west from this avenue c 200m south of the house, passing a small pond c 400m south-west of

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the house and mature parkland oaks. In the 1830s this area was planted with a formation of oaks to commemorate the Battle of the Nile of 1798, of which a few trees survive, including a Turkey oak on a prominent rise at the south-west of the formation, from which there are views over this feature north-east to the house. In the 1990s oaks were replanted and labelled with the names of ships present at the battle. The feature also contained brick pyramids, of which one remains partly intact, and a statue of Nelson, of which only the plinth remains. A late C20 pond lies nearby.

Land immediately west of the house and gardens is grazed. Mature single and hedgerow trees and distant views to woods to the west give a parkland appearance.

KITCHEN GARDEN Two rectangular ranges of kitchen gardens are located to north and south of the formal garden to the west of the house. Formerly these were divided into rectangular sections (Tithe map, 1843) and they may date to the late C17 or early C18. Sections of the red-brick walls of each kitchen garden survive. The north kitchen garden is now (2004) largely occupied by modern glasshouses and other buildings used by the Agriculture College. The south kitchen garden is laid to lawn with some recent tree planting. It is separated from the main lawn by a hedge and a hedge encloses a crèche building at its eastern end. The C18 Garden Cottage (listed grade II) lies at the west end of the south kitchen garden.

REFERENCES

Beard & Co, Seats and Mansions in Berkshire (1866) Victoria History of the County of Berkshire III, (1923), pp 153-4 Country Life, 83 (5 March 1938), pp 246-51; (12 March 1938), pp 272-7 I Nairn and N Pevsner, The Buildings of England: Berkshire (1966, reprinted 1975), pp 150-1 Brief History of Hall Place, (Berkshire College of Agriculture 1981) M Hayles and B Hedges, Around Maidenhead in Old Photographs (1994) History of Hall Place, (Berkshire College of Agriculture, nd)

Maps John Rocque, A Topographical Map of the County of Berkshire, 1761 (Margary edn 1973) Tithe map for Hurley parish, 1843 (Berkshire Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1875-8, published 1883 2nd edition revised 1897, published 1900 3rd edition revised 1910, published 1913 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1875 2nd edition published 1899 3rd edition revised 1910, published 1912 Illustrations Engraving of Hall Place, Seat of Sir Gilbert East, Bart, 1822 (Hurley PR36), (Reading Local Studies Library) Engraving of Hall Place, Seat of Sir Gilbert East, Bart 1822 (rear elevation) (Hurley PR35), (Reading Local Studies Library) Hall Place, front elevation (in Beard & Co 1866)

Description written: May 2004 Amended: July 2004 Register Inspector: SMC Edited: October 2004

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.