

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

ELTON HALL

Auteur(s) : Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/>

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**ELTON HALL**

Name:	ELTON HALL
County:	Cambridgeshire
District:	Huntingdonshire (District Authority)
Parish:	Elton
County:	Northamptonshire
District:	East Northamptonshire (District Authority)
Parish:	Warmington
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.523738 Longitude: -0.39865868 National Grid Reference: TL 08742 92967 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000346 Date first listed: 16-Jan-1985

## Details

Formal gardens and pleasure grounds partly laid out in the 1890s, possibly by Henry Ernest Milner, and partly in 1913 by Col Douglas Proby and A H Hallam Murray, greatly developed from the 1980s onwards, and set between a house and park of Elizabethan origins.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In the late Middle Ages the Elton estate was held by the Sapcote family, and the core of the present house was built by Sir Richard Sapcote (d 1477), although Sir John Sapcote (d 1501) probably added the chapel. The surrounding land was imparked at this time and a park appears here on Saxton's map of the county dated 1576. On the death of Robert Sapcote in 1600 the family ceased to reside at Elton and in 1617 the estate was sold to Sir Thomas Proby. Sir Thomas pulled down much of the medieval house in 1655, leaving only the gateway and chapel, and he and his brother and heir, John Proby, built a new mansion, incorporating these features. In 1750 John Proby (created Lord Carysfort in 1752) married the Irish heiress Elizabeth Allen and with her came the acquisition of large estates in Ireland. By the late C18 the park at Elton covered c 20ha to the west of the Hall and the walled garden lay to the east, in its present position. Further great changes to the Hall were carried out by Lord Carysfort's son John Joshua Proby (created first Earl of Carysfort in 1789) in the early C19 and by the end of the century (OS 1st edition 6" map) the park had been extended to its present size. Following the death of the first Earl, the estate passed to his second son John in 1828 and then to his youngest son Granville when John died without issue in 1855. Granville Proby, the third Earl, undertook further alterations to the Hall which were continued by his sons Granville (the fourth Earl) and William (the fifth Earl). During the 1890s William made alterations to the gardens, possibly to designs by Henry Ernest Milner. The fifth Earl died in 1909 and the estate passed through his sister, Lady Elizabeth Hamilton, to her son Col Douglas James Hamilton

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who assumed the name of Proby in 1904. Col Proby laid out new gardens to designs prepared by his daughter-in-law's father A H Hallam Murray in 1913, the main structure of which was further developed by Meredyth Proby from 1980 onwards. The site remains (2000) in single private ownership.

#### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Elton Hall is situated close to the Cambridgeshire/Northamptonshire border, c 4km west of the A1M where it passes to the west of Peterborough. The park covers an area of c 85ha, bordered by Elton village to the east and north, by the River Nene to the west, and by farmland to the south. The main A605 Peterborough to Northampton road cuts through the south-east corner of the park, the road having been realigned, widened and bunded in the 1990s. The ground falls gently to the south-west and west and rises to a plateau in the north park, while the Hall sits on level ground close to the village road. Despite the proximity of the A605 the park enjoys a generally rural setting on the edge of a small village.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** Elton Hall is approached from the north-east along a short section of straight drive lined with mature lime trees, which runs from the village road up to the north-east front where it ends in an oval gravelled courtyard surrounding a small grass lawn with central sundial (listed grade II). The lime avenue extends beyond the village road and runs north-east through the fields for c 500m before terminating in a block of woodland. During the mid C19 this marked the line of the drive which continued for a further c 700m beyond the woodland to a small stone lodge situated on the old Peterborough road. Although the second part of the drive has gone the lodge survives. During the C19 a second drive ran north from a small stone lodge in Eaglethorpe village to the south, through a narrow plantation known as The Ferns. Turning north-east as it emerged in the open park, it joined the other drives north-west of the Hall. The lodge and plantation survive but the drive is now overgrown.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** A history of almost continual development and alteration mean that Elton Hall as it stands today has a complex character. The Hall (listed grade I) is a country house built of coursed limestone rubble, freestone and ashlar under a stone slate roof. It has a very irregular roof line with castellations, embattlements, turrets, towers, bays and clusters of chimneys. The main entrance facade to the north-east is of two storeys and nine bays with a stone portico over the fourth bay. This facade was added during the C17. The wing to the north-east incorporates the C15 former chapel and gatehouse, which were joined together sometime between 1790 and 1812. The south-east garden facade is complex in character, unified in part by gothic features and late C19 alterations. It includes the gatehouse, joined by the early C19 library to the former chapel which has a central bay with stone steps leading down into the garden and a square tower added in the mid C19. Beyond this lies a further early C19 range. The south-west facade is simpler, being of seven bays with a three-bay projection to the north and a turreted tower to the south.

The original C15 Hall was built by Sir Richard and perhaps Sir John Sapcote. Rebuilding in 1662-89 by Sir Thomas Proby incorporated the chapel in a new north-east wing and included a new north-west wing (Buck, c 1730). An extension to the south-west by John Proby at the start of the C18 was much altered during extensive rebuilding in 1780-1815 by the first Earl of Carysfort in a romantic Gothic style which survives in part in the garden front. In c 1885 the third Earl, in collaboration with Henry Ashton, removed the gothic details from the north-west wing, demolished former additions, rebuilt the north-west cross wing and refaced the north-west wing in stone. Further alterations were carried out by H F Traylen and S Inskip Ladds in c 1870 for the fourth Earl, with later works undertaken by the fifth Earl.

A courtyard of service buildings (listed grade II) are attached to the stable courtyard (listed grade II) which lies immediately to the east of the Hall. The service buildings are single storey, and were built of coursed freestone and limestone rubble in the early C18 with C19 alterations. The stable block, built in 1870 including the south-west range of the early C18 stable, is of rock-faced and hammer-dressed limestone and is entered through an arched gateway surmounted by a clock tower in the north-west range.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The gardens at Elton cover c 1.5ha and lie to the south-east and south-west of the Hall. The south-east garden is bounded to the north-east by the service range wall, to the north-west by the Hall and to the south-east by a yew hedge beyond which lies the park. Yew topiary and a clipped box knot flank the steps from the former chapel which lead down to a wide gravel path surrounding a lawn with central late C19 well-head (listed grade II). The lawn

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slopes up to the path along the south-east boundary and is defined by late C20 clipped yew along the north-west boundary path. A flag-stone terrace runs along the north-east boundary incorporating a sunken garden with lily pond on the axis of the gatehouse. Beyond the lawn to the south-west a vista, defined by hornbeam hedges and clipped box, carries the garden c 70m further to the south-west. The vista leads to a pair of ornamental wrought-iron gates at the ha-ha and beyond these, across the park for a further c 250m, to a classical temple added to the south side of the lake in the 1950s. The hornbeam hedges enclose a rose garden to the south-east and a shrubbery and orangery (C20) garden to the north-west. Because the rose garden is on slightly higher ground the hornbeam hedge is here planted on top of a low stone retaining wall.

The south-west front looks onto a wide lawn, bounded by clipped yew hedges, running to a ha-ha which has been moved closer to the Hall since 1980. Beyond the yew to the north-west are further C20 evergreen shrubbery gardens which contain a thatched hermitage (late C20) and conceal a late C20 swimming pool and tennis courts.

The yew topiary and box knot are all that survive of the 1890s garden design attributed to H E Milner. The main layout of the gardens including the gravel paths, lawn and well-head, terrace and lily pond, and the rose garden retaining wall survive from the 1913 designs of A H Hallam Murray. The rest of the structure including the hornbeam, yew and box hedges, orangery, rose garden and shrub gardens have all been added since 1980 by Meredyth Proby. No archival evidence appears to survive for the existence of formal gardens attached to the Elizabethan house. A drawing of c 1730 however shows a formal arrangement around the entrance court and to the north-east of this (Buck, c 1730). Later illustrations drawn during the C19 of the garden fronts show the park running right up to the Hall and the OS maps confirm that a formal arrangement of paths did not appear until after 1884.

PARK Elton Hall lies in the centre of the eastern boundary of the site (as here registered), with the park extending mainly to the north and west, and partly to the south. The undulating ground contains extensive remains of ridge and furrow in the north park and has scattered trees of mixed ages with an open area in the centre. A small informal lake with boathouse lies c 300m to the south-west of the Hall, backed by a dense block of woodland. Perimeter planting dating from the mid C19 extends around much of the park, although there are views out across the countryside to the west beyond the River Nene.

To the south, a newly planted lime avenue (1990s) runs from the south-east edge of the gardens c 150m to the bunding created for the realigned A605 road. Beyond the road the park is retained under grass with a few scattered trees, all enclosed by thin C19 perimeter plantations.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden lies c 200m to the east-south-east of the Hall. It covers c 1ha in a trapezoidal shape and is divided into three compartments: two small service yards and one large central area. The garden has recently (2000) been opened as a plant centre by Blooms of Bressingham who have built a new shop and restaurant within the main compartment.

#### REFERENCES

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Maps W Saxton, Map of the county of Huntingdonshire, 1576 Enclosure map for Elton, 1784 (PM2/S), (Huntingdonshire Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1884 2nd edition published 1903

Illustrations Inskip Ladds Collection (Norris Museum, St Ives) Elton Hall: north view, from a drawing by S and N Buck, c 1730 (Gough Collection, map 25, fol 23), (Bodleian Library) Elton Hall, from a drawing by J Carter, 1791 (Add MS 22930, f 74), (British Museum) Elton Hall, from a drawing c 1800 (private collection) G Clarke, Series of drawings of Elton Hall, 1850 (private collection)

Description written: March 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.