

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

RAINTHORPE HALL

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**RAINTHORPE HALL**

Name: RAINTHORPE HALL

County: Norfolk

District: South Norfolk (District Authority)

Parish: Flordon

County: Norfolk

District: South Norfolk (District Authority)

Parish: Newton Flotman

County: Norfolk

District: South Norfolk (District Authority)

Parish: Tasburgh

label.localisation: Latitude: 52.529150  
Longitude: 1.2456950  
National Grid Reference: TM 20255 97315  
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden  
Grade: II  
List Entry Number: 1000292  
Date first listed: 18-Sep-1987

## Details

A C16 hall surrounded by gardens developed over several periods, enclosed by a park of C19 origin.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The manor of Rainthorpe dates back to 1444 when it was owned by the Appleyard family, from whom it passed to the Chapman family. Evidence suggests that there was a house at Rainthorpe before 1500 and that in that year it was destroyed by fire (guidebook). The present house was begun in 1503 for the Chapmans and was purchased in 1579 by Thomas Baxter, a local barrister and member of Lincoln's Inn who between 1579 and 1611 substantially enlarged and altered the house, adding two new wings. From the early C17 to the middle of the C19 Rainthorpe passed through many owners, during which time its status fluctuated from a small but grand house to a farmhouse, and it gained walled garden compartments. When Faden's county map was published in 1797, Rainthorpe is recorded as having a diminutive park, the north entrance drive being clearly shown. In 1853 the estate was purchased by the Hon Frederick Walpole MP, a younger son of the third Earl of Orford, who was an enthusiastic collector of antiques and made many changes to the interior by the introduction of his collection and probably laid out the park. Following his death in 1878 Rainthorpe was purchased by another collector, Sir Charles Hervey. Sir Charles made

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further substantial alterations and additions to the Hall and built the stable block and gardener's cottage. The estate changed hands once again in 1934 when it was purchased by J Maurice Hastings, whose family retained ownership, making few changes, until 1993 when the Hall and gardens were divided from the park and both sold as separate lots. The site remains (1999) in divided private ownership.

**DESCRIPTION**

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Rainthorpe Hall lies c 3km to the south-west of the Norfolk village of Newton Flotman, to the west of the main A140 Norwich to Diss road in a well-wooded part of rural Norfolk. The site covers c 24ha, bounded to the south by a tributary of the River Tas, to the north by the Newton Flotman to Flordon road, and by farmland to east and west. The park is composed of three small open grass areas with dense blocks of woodland and perimeter belts enclosing the site on all boundaries apart from that to the west and there are therefore no views into the park from the perimeter. The ground slopes gently from north-west to south-east towards the River Tas, which flows parallel to the southern boundary.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The park is entered from the Newton Flotman road c 350m to the north of the Hall. The drive is marked by red-brick gate piers and is lined by a belt of trees on either side and a mixed avenue of oak and sweet chestnut. It turns a right-angle to approach the north-east front and enters the gravel courtyard which is enclosed by a low red-brick wall with brick piers either side of the entrance.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Rainthorpe Hall (listed grade I) is a small country mansion built of diaper-patterned brick with ashlar dressings and a timber-framed upper floor under a plain tiled roof. It is built to a roughly E-shaped plan with an off-centre three-storey porch and a polygonal stair turret to the rear. The Hall is mainly of two storeys with attics and has several gabled dormers, stone mullion windows, and groups of hexagonal decorative chimney stacks. The Hall was begun in 1503 for the Chambers family and substantially enlarged, by the addition of two wings, and altered between 1579 and 1611 by Thomas Baxter. Further enlargements were undertaken by Frederick Walpole in c 1860, and again by Sir Charles Hervey between 1879 and 1885 who added two new bays to the south-west wing and the stable block which lies c 50 to the north of the Hall.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The gardens at Rainthorpe lie to the south and west of the Hall. The south lawn is bordered to the east by a high C17 garden wall which incorporates a single-leaf wrought-iron gate with an elaborate double-scrolled overthrow decorated with waterleaf and acanthus. Half way along the wall is a summerhouse recess and all along its length is a deep mixed border beside a gravel path leading down to the river. On the west side of the path is a hazel nuttury, said to be contemporary with the building of the house (guidebook) although there is no firm evidence to support this. The east wall is joined to the Hall along the northern boundary of the garden by a low C17 red-brick wall below which is a knot garden of dwarf box, also said to date from the C16 (ibid). The angle between the south-west and south-east arms of the Hall has two terraces, the upper with gravel and enclosed by walls; the lower reached by steps down to a formal grass terrace quartered by gravel paths with a central pool (1990s). This is also enclosed by a wall and steps lead down to west and south onto lawns. The south-east lawn runs for c 120m down to the river; the south-west lawn is enclosed by high yew hedges to north and south and runs for c 150m to the west ha-ha, beyond which lies the open park. Some 70m south of the Hall is a rectangular pool with summerhouse (1997), probably a medieval fishpond in origin, now a lily pool. Bryant's county map shows this to have been a formal stretch of water in 1826. Between the pool and the river is a woodland garden with many mature trees of mixed species, including large yews.

The history of the development of the gardens is not known, beyond the dating of the north and east walls and the suggestions made in the guidebook for the origins of the pool, the knot garden, and the nuttury. Within this layout it is likely that the gardens were given the character that survives today during the mid to late C19 refurbishments of the Hall.

**PARK** The small park at Rainthorpe comprises three open fields of parkland and substantial blocks of woodland. The east park contains the highest number of surviving parkland trees, mainly oaks. The west park is more open in character and suffered the loss of some very mature oaks during the 1987 gales. The third area of parkland lies to the south-west of the Hall and has an open character enclosed on all sides by woodland. The woodlands are of mixed species, some having been substantially cleared and replanted in the mid to late C20. The east and west boundary belts contain some of the oldest trees in the park, including

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oak and ash with a yew understorey. Aligned on the north-east front is a double avenue of Scots pine on the inside and oak on the outside. It runs for c 200m from the north drive and is terminated by the eastern ha-ha.

Study of the few maps which exist of the Rainthorpe landscape suggests that the north avenue and approach dates from at least the C18 but that the park as it appears today was ornamented during the latter part of the C19, probably at the hands of Frederick Walpole or Sir Charles Hervey. The Tithe map published in 1840 shows the Hall surrounded by fields and woodlands, but by the time the OS 1st edition 6" map was published in 1885 a small ornamental park had been created.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The walled garden lies c 50m to the north-west of the Hall, immediately adjacent to the stable block. It is enclosed by walls to the north-east and north-west; by woodland to the south-west; and by a high yew hedge to the south-east. During the 1980s the area was leased by a landscape gardener who laid out a series of 'theme' gardens within the walls, retaining some of the original gravel paths and box-edged borders. These include a herb garden, town garden, and a lawn with low maintenance shrubbery area. In the north corner are three late C19 glasshouses which have recently (1990s) been restored.

#### REFERENCES

N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: North-west and South Norfolk* (1962), pp 288/9 J Kenworthy-Browne et al, *Burke's and Savills Guide to Country Houses III*, (1981), p 170 J J Norwich, *The architecture of Southern England* (1985), pp 432/3  
*Rainthorpe Hall*, guidebook, (1985) *Rainthorpe Hall: Storm damage restoration plan* (1989) [copy on EH file]

Maps W Faden, *A new topographical map of the county of Norfolk*, 1797 (Norfolk Record Office) A Bryant, *Map of the county of Norfolk*, 1826 (Norfolk Record Office) Tithe map for Flordon and Tasburgh parishes, 1840 (Norfolk Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1885 2nd edition published 1907 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1882 2nd edition published 1906

Archival items Mid C19 notebook entitled *Rainthorpe Hall, Norfolk, the residence of Frederick Walpole* (private collection)

Description written: September 1999 Amended: October 2000 Register Inspector: EMP Edited: March 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.