

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

HONINGTON HALL

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**HONINGTON HALL**

Name: HONINGTON HALL

County: Warwickshire

District: Stratford-on-Avon (District Authority)

Parish: Honington

County: Warwickshire

District: Stratford-on-Avon (District Authority)

Parish: Tredington

label.localisation: Latitude: 52.078709  
Longitude: -1.6173445  
National Grid Reference: SP 26321 42330  
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden  
Grade: II\*  
List Entry Number: 1001189  
Date first listed: 01-Feb-1986

## Details

Mid C18 pleasure grounds and parkland developed with the advice of Sanderson Miller, with C19 formal gardens.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In the medieval period the manor of Honington belonged to Coventry Priory, and at the Reformation was acquired by Robert Gibbs. A house, possibly adapted from an earlier monastic grange, was built, together with the surviving mid C17 stables and dovecote. In about 1670 Honington was sold to Henry Parker, a lawyer who was connected by marriage with the Earl of Clarendon. Parker built the present house c 1682, and in 1697 inherited a baronetcy. Sir Henry Parker died in 1713 and was succeeded by his grandson, who in 1737 sold the estate to Joseph Townsend. Townsend sat as an MP, and in 1744 married Judith Gore, the co-heiress of John Gore, MP for Grimsby. Following this marriage extensive alterations were made to the interior of the house. Formal gardens illustrated in an early C18 engraving by S and N Buck were removed in favour of a landscape scheme with the advice of Sanderson Miller (1716-80) of Radway Grange, Warwickshire (qv). Honington was one of a group of Warwickshire sites at which Miller advised, including Alscot Park (qv), Arbury Hall (qv), Farnborough Hall (qv) and Packington Hall (qv). The mid C18 landscape and the remodelled house are shown in a pair of rococo watercolours of 1759 by Thomas Robins (private collection). Joseph Townsend died in 1763, leaving the estate to his son, Gore Townsend, who in turn was succeeded by his son, the Rev Henry Townsend. When the Rev Henry Townsend died in 1873 his nephew, Frederick Townsend, a noted amateur botanist, inherited Honington and lived there until his death in 1905, when the property passed to a distant cousin, Sir Grey Skipwith. In 1924 Honington was sold to Sir Charles Wiggin, and in 1973 his son, the late Sir John Wiggin, undertook a comprehensive restoration of the house. Honington Hall remains (2000) in private occupation.

### DESCRIPTION

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**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Honington Hall is situated c 2km north of Shipston on Stour, and c 1km south-south-east of Tredington, on the east side of the A3400 road from Stratford-upon-Avon to Oxford. The c 72ha site comprises some 8ha of gardens and pleasure grounds, and c 64ha of parkland. To the west the site is bounded by timber fencing adjoining the A3400 Oxford road, and to the north-west by the River Stour. To the south-east the boundary is formed by a minor road which leads north-east from the A3400 Oxford road, along the south-east boundary of the park, to Honington village. The village extends northwards into the centre of the site to reach the parish church c 50m south-east of the Hall, while a further street extends along the southern boundary of the park to the east of the Hall. To the south-east the site adjoins domestic and agricultural properties at Little Honington, while to the east it is bounded by a minor road which leads north from Honington to Halford. To the north the site adjoins agricultural land. The River Stour flows through the site from south-east to north-west immediately to the west of the Hall, and the land rises gently west from the river to the Oxford road. The ground rises to the north-east of the Hall, while to the east it is level, allowing views to Idlicote House and Idlicote Hill, c 2km to the east. There are also significant views south-south-east up the valley of the River Stour within and beyond the site, while a length of metal estate fencing c 100m east of the entrance allows views north into the east park from the village street.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** Honington Hall is approached from a minor road which leads east through Honington towards Idlicote. The junction of the minor road to Honington with the Oxford road adjacent to an C18 toll cottage c 670m south-west of the Hall is marked by a pair of late C17 stone piers surmounted by pineapple finials (the north pier fallen, 2000), which are flanked to the north and south by similar, lower stone piers. The road passes c 270m north-east along the boundary of the south park before crossing the late C17 Honington Bridge (listed grade II), an ornamental, triple-arched structure with ball finials on its parapets. The road continues c 320m north-east to reach the village green and the entrance to the grounds. The entrance is flanked by a pair of late C17 brick and vermiculated stone piers surmounted by stone entablatures ornamented with swags and a cherub's mask, and stone ball finials (all listed grade II). The piers support a pair of painted timber gates with vertical bars and down-swept top rails, while to east and west are similar but lower, single pedestrian gates, which are flanked to east and west by lower, mid C18 stone piers which are surmounted by similar entablatures and ball finials (all listed grade II). Immediately to the north-west of the entrance and within the site stands a single-storey, late C19 brick lodge with stone quoins and a hipped slate roof (listed grade II). The tarmac drive describes a gentle arc north and north-west for c 320m, and is adjoined to the east and north-east by a narrow mown grass verge and metal estate fencing which allows views across the east park and north to the spire of Tredington church. To the west and south-west the drive is bordered by a wide grass verge planted with shrubs and specimen trees. Crossing a service drive which leads north and north-west along the eastern boundary of the pleasure grounds to the stables and farm buildings north-east of the Hall, the drive enters the pleasure grounds. Passing along the south side of the east lawn, the drive is screened from the adjoining church and churchyard by evergreen shrubbery, and arrives at a gravelled area below the east facade of the Hall. A service drive leaves the north-east corner of the gravelled forecourt and sweeps north and west to pass through a carriage arch at the southern end of the C17 stables (listed grade II) to the north-east of the Hall. To the north of the Hall a large gravelled yard, partly on the site of a late C19 service wing demolished in 1979 (Tyack 1994), is enclosed to the east by the C17 stables (all listed grade II), and to the north-east by a late C16 or early C17 brick granary known as the Bothy (listed grade II). There are stone walls with a pair of stone piers surmounted by ball finials (listed grade II) to the north-west, while towards the centre of the yard stands an octagonal stone C17 dovecote (listed grade II). Some 80m north of the Hall a pair of stone piers with ball finials (listed grade II) support a timber gate which leads from the yard to a track which passes c 200m through a lime avenue to reach the C16 park to the north.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Honington Hall (listed grade I) was constructed for Henry Parker, later Sir Henry Parker, c 1682 (date on rainwater heads) to replace an earlier dwelling which had belonged to the Gibbs family. The late C17 house is of two storeys with attic dormers set in the hipped slate roof. Constructed in red brick with stone dressings and quoins, and deep, painted timber cornices, the house is ornamented with Roman busts set in niches above the ground-floor windows. As built, the house was H-shaped on plan, but in the mid C18 Joseph Townsend commissioned the amateur architect John Freeman of Fawley Court, Buckinghamshire (qv) to design an octagonal saloon which filled the recess on the west side of the building. At the same period an open, five-sided loggia supported by stone columns was added to the south facade, while brick and stone

quadrant walls were built at the north-east and south-east corners of the Hall to enclose the forecourt; that to the south-east was demolished in the late C19. The interior of the Hall was embellished with mid C18 plasterwork of the finest quality. In the early C19 a stone portico supported by six Tuscan columns was added to the west facade, partly concealing the canted bay of the mid C18 saloon; this was removed in the late C19 and repositioned against the south facade of the late C19 service wing at the north-west corner of the Hall. The service wing was demolished in 1978, and the portico is today (2000) a garden temple, linked to the Hall by a small late C19 lean-to conservatory.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The formal gardens lie principally to the south and south-east of the Hall, with informal pleasure grounds to the east and west. There are further areas of informal pleasure grounds to the west of the River Stour.

The pleasure grounds to the east of the Hall comprise a large, segmental-shaped lawn, which is enclosed by evergreen shrubbery on a bank to the north which screens a wall and service buildings, and by similar shrubbery to the south which screens the churchyard. To the east the pleasure grounds are bounded by a service drive and metal estate fencing which allows views across the adjacent park. Some 130m north-east of the Hall an C18 stone urn with carved foliate decoration and a flame finial (listed grade II) stands on a tall stone pedestal. This urn was relocated from the pleasure grounds west of the River Stour in the late C20 (guidebook). A semicircular declivity at the east end of the lawn appears to relate to the curved eastern boundary of the forecourt shown on the Bucks' engraving of 1731. The early C18 scheme comprised a walled forecourt with clipped trees flanking a central walk.

The gardens to the south of the Hall are approached through an arched gateway at the south-east corner of the forecourt which remains from the mid C18 south quadrant wall. The mid C18 loggia stands on a balustraded, stone-flagged terrace with stone steps to east and west, which overlooks a late C19 formal garden comprising four geometric, yew-hedged enclosures, each containing a panel of lawn. At the intersection of the cruciform grass walks between the yew enclosures, an C18 stone fountain (listed grade II) comprising two graduated bowls, the lower with mask spouts supported by spirally fluted balusters, stands in a circular pool (dry, 2000). A gravel walk runs below the south terrace, leading to the pleasure grounds to the west of the Hall, while a further walk follows the western boundary of the churchyard, which is here screened by a row of mature limes. This walk extends c 100m south-east from the Hall to reach an early C18 column sundial (listed grade II) which is surmounted by a ball finial and metal wind vane. Early C20 photographs show the sundial surrounded by segmental, box-edged rose beds (CL 1904), while comparison of the 1886 and 1902 OS maps show that at the earlier date the sundial stood on a bastion which projected into the south park. A further area of formal garden known as the Italian Garden lies to the south of the churchyard. Here a small, early C19 classical portico supported by Greek Doric columns stands against the west end of the rubble-stone churchyard wall (all listed grade II). Steps ascend at the rear of the temple (restored 1999) to a small upper room. Parallel to the wall a mixed border is retained by a low drystone wall, while the lawn to the south is laid out with a symmetrical arrangement of two groups of four clipped domes of golden yew. These frame a pair of C18 stone urns (both listed grade II) which comprise a fluted basin with masks supported by a spirally fluted baluster pedestal. Early C20 photographs show formal gardens with geometric box-edged beds around the urns (CL 1904). To the east a stone stepped circular base partly planted with shrubs supports three stone columns which remain from a C19 circular conservatory which is shown in early C20 photographs (CL 1920). The formal garden is enclosed to the east and south by trees and evergreen shrubbery, and together with the yew enclosures below the south terrace, was created by Frederick Townsend in the late C19. Lawns planted with specimen trees slope down to the River Stour to the west of the formal garden.

The stone-flagged terrace below the south facade of the Hall returns along the west facade, with a central square projection which until the late C19 supported the early C19 stone portico (listed grade I with the Hall). This now (2000) terminates the north end of a gravel walk which runs below and parallel to the west terrace. The portico contains a small, wall-mounted marble fountain and basin, while a pair of C18 stone recumbent figures, removed in the mid C20 from the cascade, flank the portico. Stone steps adjacent to the portico descend to a lower, grass terrace. To the north, overhung by mature yews, an alcove surrounded by rustic stone and partly enclosed by timber lattice contains a timber bench seat aligned on a view south up the river. Below the terraces lawns planted with specimen trees, conifers and groups of shrubs descend to the river. The lawns and

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terraces replace formal gardens comprising a series of terraces, geometric enclosures and a pair of pavilions on the bank of the canalised river which are shown in the 1731 view by S and N Buck. These features were removed by Joseph Townsend in the mid C18 with the advice of Sanderson Miller (Garden Hist 1997).

A grass walk extends north along the river bank to reach the mid C18 stepped cascade c 100m west-north-west of the Hall. The cascade is flanked by flat-topped piers of partly vermiculated stone which contain recesses, originally arched but altered to a rectangular form in the C19. The piers were at one time surmounted by the recumbent figures which now (2000) flank the portico north-west of the Hall. Some 30m north-east of the cascade a level-topped mound surrounded by evergreen shrubbery is the site of the square Chinese seat shown in one of Thomas Robins' 1759 views. No visible trace of this structure remains today (2000); it was similar in form to a Chinese seat illustrated on a mid C18 plan of Wroxton Abbey, Oxfordshire (qv) on which Miller advised (Garden Hist 1997). Robins shows the view south along the river as far as Honington Bridge, with lawns to the east and a series of structures including a Chinese bridge, grotto, urn and temple in woodland to the west. The pleasure grounds to the west of the river were in the C18 reached either by a boat (Robins, 1759), or by a walk which extended north from the Chinese seat along the river c 700m to a point opposite Tredington Mill, where a bridge crossed the river (Garden Hist 1997). This walk does not survive today although evergreen shrubbery indicates its course.

The pleasure grounds in Ray Wood to the west of the river comprise a walk, now (2000) a private footpath, which for part of its length runs between the River Stour and a picturesque, serpentine backwater which was remodelled with the advice of Miller c 1744. The Chinese bridge shown by Robins c 190m north-west of the Hall does not survive, but c 160m west of the Hall and aligned on its west facade, the mid C18 grotto remains. Vermiculated rocks are set into the east face of an earth mound, the top of which is planted with yews; the grotto faces a heavily silted pool formed from the widened backwater. Correspondence of 1744 shows that Miller advised on the construction of the grotto, using as his model the source of the River Axe at Wookey Hole, Somerset (Garden Hist 1997). The grotto replaced an avenue aligned on the west facade of the Hall which is shown in the Bucks' 1731 view. The urn shown by Robins to the north-east of the grotto was relocated to the east lawn in the late C20 (guidebook). The walk continues south from the grotto, climbing to higher ground parallel to the Oxford road. Some 190m south-west of the Hall Ray Wood narrows to become a belt of mature trees and evergreen shrubbery which screens the south park from the road to the west. The boundary plantation is enclosed from the park by an C18 ha-ha and late C20 fences. From the walk there are views north-east to the Hall, south-east to Honington Bridge and east across the park, while c 240m south-west of the Hall are the foundations of a small mid C18 temple which was shown in Robins' view of 1759. The walk continues c 450m south through Ray Wood before turning east across the park. Crossing Honington Bridge the walk, today (2000) discernible as a raised mound, passes c 130m north through the south-east park before entering evergreen shrubbery and continuing for c 270m to re-enter the gardens south-east of the Hall.

**PARK** The park lies in three separate areas to the east, south and north of Honington Hall. The greatest area, to the east, is generally level and today (2000) remains as pasture. There are extensive areas of ridge and furrow, and scattered trees and thorn bushes. Adjacent to the drive which follows the south-west boundary of the east park there are significant mature trees. Some 370m east-south-east of the Hall there is a natural pond, while a flat-topped ridge which extends c 600m east-north-east across the park from the garden boundary to the minor road to the east of the park marks the course of an early C18 formal avenue shown in the 1731 view.

The southern park, which remains pasture, is intimately related to the adjoining mid C18 pleasure grounds; the pleasure ground walk crosses the southern end of the park which forms one of a series of incidents on the C18 circuit. The River Stour flows from south to north through the park and, retained to the north by the cascade, was widened in the mid C18. The east-facing slopes to the west of the river are marked by ridge and furrow, while scattered mature deciduous trees within the park soften the boundary with Ray Wood to the west.

The north park, separated from the Hall by the kitchen garden, C17 farm buildings and an orchard, is approached by a late C20 lime avenue which replaced an earlier elm avenue (B Wiggin pers comm, 2000) aligned on the north facade of the Hall. Today the north park remains pasture sloping west and north-west to the River Stour from a ridge of high ground. A spinney on a crest of high ground c 530m north-north-east of the Hall marks the site of the late C17 deer keeper's lodge (VCH), but the park,

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which is shown stocked with deer in 1731 (Buck) does not retain any trees or ornamental planting. The 1731 engraving shows formal rows of trees radiating down the slope to the river from the keeper's lodge, with further planting to the east of the lodge. The late C19 OS map indicates the remains of this scheme, together with an avenue extending c 530m north and north-west beyond the park (and the site as here registered) along a ridge of high ground east of Tredington; this avenue does not survive today. The north park, comprising some 60 acres (25ha), was imparked by Robert Gibbs c 1540 (VCH).

Some 300m north of the Hall, immediately to the north of the kitchen garden and farm buildings, and to the south of the north park, an area of meadow and scrub woodland contains a chain of three or more rectangular fishponds. Today these are overgrown, silted, and in parts dry. The ponds relate to the monastic manor of Honington (Garden Hist 1997; B Wiggin pers comm, 2000).

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The kitchen garden lies c 130m north-north-west of the Hall and is enclosed by buttressed brick walls c 3m high. The garden is rectangular on plan and is today (2000) laid to grass. The wall is breached at the north-west corner, while there is a timber door set in the south wall near the south-east corner. The garden is screened to the south by trees which have grown out from a hedge, while beyond, scattered mature standard apple trees survive from a C19 orchard. To the east of the avenue which leads north from the stable yard to the C17 farm buildings and the north park, an area of old quarried land is also planted with mature standard apple trees.

There is a further area of kitchen garden c 160m south-east of the Hall and immediately to the south of the Italian Garden. This is entered through a wrought-iron gate supported by stone piers with vase finials which is set in a stone and brick wall to the south of the Italian Garden. This area is enclosed to the east by a cob wall fronting the village street, and to the west by evergreen shrubbery; to the south are the late C20 gardens associated with the gardener's house at the south-east corner of the garden. The northern area of the garden remains in cultivation with soft fruit, while there are footings of glasshouses against the northern boundary wall. This area had been developed as a kitchen garden by 1886 (OS).

#### REFERENCES

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Maps H Beighton, *A Mapp of Warwickshire, 1" to 1 mile, surveyed 1722-5* H Beighton, *A Map of Kington Hundred, surveyed 1725, published 1730* F Booth, *Plan of Wroxton Abbey, c 1750* (British Library) Tithe map for Honington parish, 1849 (CR569/132), (Warwickshire County Record Office)

OS Old Series 1" to 1mile, published 1833 OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1886 2nd edition published 1906 1938 edition OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1886 2nd edition published 1902

Illustrations S and N Buck, *Honington Hall in the County of Warwick, the Seat of Sir Henry Parker, Bar, 1731* (private collection) T Robins, *View south through the pleasure grounds by the River Stour, Honington Hall, 1759* (private collection) T Robins, *Honington Hall from the west, 1759* (private collection)

Archival items Copies of plans and correspondence relating to the octagonal saloon, 1751 (Z506sm), (Warwickshire County Record Office) Photographs of Honington Hall from the south and south-east, 1855 (private collection)

Personal communication from Jennifer Meir

Description written: February 2000 Amended: May 2000, September 2000 Register Inspector: JML Edited: December 2000

## Legal

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