

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

SANDON PARK

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Name:	SANDON PARK
County:	Staffordshire
District:	Stafford (District Authority)
Parish:	Sandon and Burston
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.858119 Longitude: -2.0695088 National Grid Reference: SJ9541728961 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001166 Date first listed: 01-Dec-1984

Details

A country house with extensive gardens and pleasure grounds set in landscape park. Among the designers documented at work are William Emes (1778-87), John Webb (c 1800) and W A Nesfield (c 1850).

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The Sandon estate passed to the Dukes of Hamilton in the C18, and c 1770 Sandon Hall was rebuilt on a new, hilltop, site for Lord Archibald Hamilton, later ninth Duke of Hamilton. In 1776 he sold the estate to Nathaniel, first Baron Harrowby, in whose family the estate remained in the late C20.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Sandon Park lies in the Upper Trent Valley, 6km north-east of Stafford and immediately south-east of the village of Sandon. The long south-west boundary of the park runs alongside the A51 Stafford to Lichfield road. To the west the boundary is in part School Lane, leading to Sandon church. Otherwise the park boundary largely follows field edges. The registered area is c 230ha.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main approach to the Hall, attributed to John Webb (1754-1828) who worked at Sandon c 1800, is via the Stafford entrance at the west corner of the park. Two-storey sandstone lodges (listed grade II) of 1902 in the Jacobean style stand either side of tall, wrought-iron gates with an overthrow carrying the Harrowby crest. Some 50m to the south, against the low stone wall which here bounds the park, is Old Lodge (listed grade II), an early C19 single-storey ashlar lodge building in a minimalist classical style. From here the Main Drive climbs gradually uphill through the park, before swinging south around the end of Icehouse Plantation. Although not strictly tree lined the drive west of Icehouse Plantation is bounded by many mature trees, notably sweet chestnuts. The last 400m of the drive is along the west side of The Valley, with views across it to Perceval's Shrine and Erdeswicke's Seat, and then across the open grass of North Lawn. A ha-ha separates the last from the north forecourt of the Hall, which is entered by early C18 wrought-iron gates, probably by William Edney and moved to Sandon c 1900 from Burnt Norton, Gloucestershire (listing description).

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A second approach is from the south-east corner of the park, past the mid C19 Lichfield Lodge and gates (all listed grade II) and along the drive which runs past the east side of the Home Farm to join the Stafford drive c 200m north of the Hall. This drive was apparently created in the later 1770s or 1780s.

Immediately west of the Hall, between its attached stables and the kitchen garden, is Salt Drive, which follows a curving and falling route through the woods and shrubberies of the pleasure grounds to a minor gate on the south edge of the park.

Farm Lodge (listed grade II) stands c 250m south-west of the Home Farm, and is a sham timber-framed and roughcast building of 1869.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Sandon Hall (listed grade II*) was built in 1852 to a design by William Burn (1789-1870). The Jacobean-style house is of two storeys, in sandstone ashlar. The north, entrance front is of nine bays with a porte-cochère in the centre and turrets to either side. To the east, and joined to the Hall by a curved link, is a conservatory of 1864 by Stevens & Robinson. Attached to the west side of the Hall are stables. In a bowl in the ground 100m to the south-west are further brick service buildings, largely dilapidated.

The Hall's predecessor burnt down in 1848. Built in 1770 to a design by the Derby architect Joseph Pickford (c 1736-82), this was the first Hall to occupy the hilltop site. Previously the chief house stood at the north end of The Valley, 200m east of Sandon church, within a square, water-filled moat. North-east of the moat are three fishponds.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS Three grass terraces with paths, steps, urns and beds lie along and parallel with the long south front of Sandon Hall. Beyond is a roughly semicircular area of rough lawn, which falls away for c 100m to a belt of woodland with specimen trees.

East of the Hall the pleasure grounds, largely shrubberies, specimen trees and lawns, cut through with a network of winding paths, occupy an area roughly 200m square. Towards the centre, and reached by the main path along the bottom of the terraces, is a rectangular Rose Garden compartment, 150m long and 20m wide and largely surrounded by clipped yew hedges. At its north end is a C19 stone conservatory, roofless in 1997, in front of which is a lawn with concrete paving slabs laid as paths and geometric patterns. Steps lead to the southern half of the garden, the axial path down which is lined with concrete columns connected with iron arches, probably as supports for roses. That path leads to a circular, yew-hedged compartment, grassed but with quartered beds still visible, and with a terracotta or Coade stone group at the centre. A small stone seat or temple in the centre of the south side looks back up the garden. In an alcove midway down the east side of the garden is a terracotta or Coade stone statue of a woman in classical dress.

South-west of the Hall the ground falls away, and a terrace on the path looping through the planting around the edge of the lawn looks down into the former Amphitheatre Garden, now grassed but with the bed pattern still visible, at the centre of which is a large fountain basin. Beyond, and also overlooked from the terrace, is the Cedar Garden, an area of lawns and specimen trees, especially conifers, which extends south of the Amphitheatre for c 100m.

The gardens and pleasure ground are of several different phases. William Emes (1730-1803) had been brought in to work at Sandon by 1778. Part of his scheme was a large circular flower bed and skittle ground (later destroyed) immediately east of the Hall. By 1787, the year before work began on the Hall, the pleasure gardens south and west of the Hall had been established. Although John Webb did some work in 1805 the next major alterations took place c 1852 to a design by William Andrews Nesfield (1793-1881), part of the works undertaken when the Hall was rebuilt after the fire of 1848. This may have been when Emes' flower garden disappeared, as the south terraces and the Amphitheatre Garden were constructed. At the same time the pleasure grounds were enlarged, and the Foxes Earth area to the south and east of the Cedar Garden (itself already present in 1854) brought into the garden. The free-standing conservatory was present by 1854 as were a number of summerhouses (all apparently now gone) and much statuary. About 1900 further alterations took place, and the extension of the Rose Garden compartment to the south of the conservatory probably dates from that time.

PARK The park is roughly triangular, with its point to the south-east. It is divided into two equal halves by its main topographic and scenic feature, The Valley, which runs north-west to south-east. West of The Valley is Lower Park, together with the Hall and its extensive pleasure grounds, while to the east is the High, or Upper, Park.

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The Valley is sharply defined, slightly curving, and is permanent pasture. Well-defined ridge and furrow shows on its eastern slope with some mature parkland trees. Woodland belts (Beech Banks, Furze Banks, Shrine Belt) run along the top of its east side, with a ha-ha and walk below. Midway along The Valley, c 100m north-west of Shrine Belt, is Perceval's Shrine (listed grade II), a gothic seat looking to Sandon Hall erected c 1815 to the memory of the Harrowby's friend Spencer Perceval, assassinated in 1812 when Prime Minister. Some 50m to the south-east is a sandstone outcrop, Erdeswicke's Seat. This lies on the north side of a gully leading from The Valley to the Upper Park, at the head of the gully being Erdeswicke's Pond.

At the north end of The Valley is the moated manor site, west of which, between it and the church, are the earthworks of Sandon village. This was deserted or removed in the early to mid C18. About 200m north-west of the moat is the south end of Black Hill, a wooded knoll - Scots Pine are prominent on the skyline - surrounded by a sandstone ha-ha. A sandstone crag at the south end of the Hill is called Pulpit Rock, while on its east side are stairs known as Miss Ann Ryder's Steps. South of Pulpit Rock is Helen's Tomb, an C18 underground reservoir with a stone facade.

At the south end of The Valley, tucked almost out of sight in a fall in the ground on its west side, is the impressive stone Home Farm complex (farmhouse and buildings all listed grade II), a model set of buildings designed c 1782 by Samuel Wyatt (1737-1807).

Lower Park is permanent pasture with mature parkland trees; ridge and furrow is visible, for instance, south of the drive east from Stafford Lodges. The main block of woodland is Icehouse Plantation, set on the north-east corner of which is an icehouse of c 1780, the stone screen wall and pedimented door of which (listed grade II) are visible from the drive as it curves round the Plantation. In the C19 the icehouse facade was balanced by the Temple of the Winds (no longer extant), which stood on the other side of the drive and c 75m to the north.

Upper Park, similarly, is largely permanent pasture with mature parkland trees, with Sandon Wood occupying its north-east corner. The highest ground at Sandon occurs near the centre of Upper Park, and here stands Trentham Tower (listed grade II). This, the upper part of one of the stone towers of Trentham Hall, designed c 1840 by Sir Charles Barry, was moved here after Trentham's demolition in 1910-11. From the Tower there are views to Sandon Hall as well as panoramically to the east, towards Uttoxeter. At the south end of the Upper Park is a lesser hill, Wigan's Knoll, around the south side of which is Monument Plantation. The woodland takes its name from Pitt's Column (listed grade II*) which stands on its northern edge: a c 22m high Doric column modelled on Trajan's Column which was erected in 1806 to the memory of Pitt the Younger.

It is uncertain if the creation of a park had begun before the estate was sold in 1776. By 1778, that is before any alterations were made to the Hall, William Emes had been brought in and had begun planting, this work going hand-in-hand with the removal of hedges and fences, the digging of ha-has and the creation of the parkland sward. Work proceeded outwards from the Hall and along The Valley, and by 1787 the following elements of the park seem to have been in existence: The Valley, the North Lawn and Icehouse Plantation, the perimeter plantations, and Black Hill Plantation. Parts of Upper Park may, however, still have been divided into fields as late as 1802.

KITCHEN GARDEN The brick-walled kitchen garden established here in the 1770s or 1780s lies below and c 250m west of the Hall, well screened by woods and shrubberies which form a continuation of the pleasure grounds. The main compartment is rectangular, 100m north/south by 80m east/west. The interior was no longer in cultivation in 1997; a former gardener's house at the north-west corner of the garden had recently been extended along the north interior wall of the garden. There are slips both to the east and to the west sides of the main garden.

REFERENCES Sandon Park Restoration Plan, (Chris Burnett Associates and Janette Ray 1993)

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1900 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1881

Description written: 1997 Register Inspector: PAS Edited: September 1999

Legal

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