

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

BULSTRODE PARK

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Name: BULSTRODE PARK

District: Buckinghamshire (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Chalfont St. Peter

District: Buckinghamshire (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Fulmer

District: Buckinghamshire (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Gerrards Cross

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.585508
Longitude: -0.57980950
National Grid Reference: SU9849288361
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II*
List Entry Number: 1001371
Date first listed: 30-Aug-1987

Details

Early C18 formal gardens (possibly by Henry Wise), naturalised in the late C18, partly formalised in the C19, surrounding a mid C19 country house, within an C18 landscape park improved by Humphry Repton.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

A park has existed at Bulstrode since the early Middle Ages, when its creation is said to have involved the diversion of a Roman road (Records of Bucks 20, 440). It was owned by Bisham Abbey until 1538 when it was sold. In 1676 the estate was acquired by Judge George Jeffreys (d 1689) who rebuilt the house c 1676-85 as an imposing red-brick building with a 70m long south front masking two courts separated by the hall of the previous manor house. In 1706 the estate was bought by William Bentinck, first Earl of Portland, who completed the wings of Jeffreys' house, and laid out surrounding formal gardens (Vitruvius Britannicus IV, 1739), possibly with the assistance of Henry Wise (1653-1738) and Claude Desgots (Harris 1979). The second Duke of Portland employed Stiff Leadbetter to remodel the house in the 1740s, and it was again remodelled c 1806(9 for the third Duke by James Wyatt (1747-1813) who created a castellated west wing. The second Duchess of Portland lived at Bulstrode from 1734 until her death in 1785, developing renowned gardens and introducing new plants collected for her from all over the world. From 1793 Humphry Repton (1752-1818) landscaped the existing mid C18 park and remodelled the gardens, assisted by Samuel Lapidge as contractor and William Ireland as foreman. Repton wrote at some length about Bulstrode park in his Enquiry (1803), praising its beauty and using it as an example of how he recommended parks should be laid out. The eleventh Duke of Somerset bought the estate in 1811, and in 1860 his son, the twelfth Duke, employed Benjamin Ferrey to reconstruct and enlarge the house, demolishing Wyatt's west wing to leave the Keep a free-standing tower, and creating a formal garden over the cellars. During the early C20 Sir John Ramsden, fifth Baronet, carried out extensive planting, including a notable

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collection of rhododendrons. After the Second World War the estate was divided and sold and is now (1997) the headquarters of the Worldwide Evangelization Crusade.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Bulstrode Park lies adjacent to the west edge of Gerrards Cross, 4km east of Beaconsfield, in the Chiltern Hills. The c 140ha site is bounded to the north by the A40 London to Oxford road, to the east by C20 housing surrounding the Old Camp hillfort (scheduled ancient monument), originally part of the landscape park, to the south by the M40 motorway and to the west by gravel workings. The house, at the south end of a plateau, is surrounded by undulating ground on which the park is sited, with largely level pleasure grounds to the west. The setting is mixed agricultural, woodland, urban and industrial, with busy arterial routes on two major boundaries.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main entrance lies 500m north of the house, off the A40, with a drive, created c 1940 during use of the site as an RAF staff college, running south through the north park. Three earlier drives existed before the 1940s but these are now disused and lost in places; they are shown on Repton's map in his Enquiry, as well as on the OS maps published 1883, 1900 and 1926. These gave direct access from the north-west, Oxford direction, the north-east, London and Gerrards Cross direction, and south, Windsor direction. Lodges stand at the north-west and north-east entrances on the A40, but they have been considerably enlarged. That at the south entrance, off the Hedgerley to Gerrards Cross lane, has been demolished. The drives converge at the north front with spurs to the east, service side of the house, having ascended the hillside immediately below the house from the surrounding valley. From here the approach leads through a brick gateway in a belt of trees framing the north tower and doorway to the house, past the open Outer Court to the east and walled garden to the west, arriving at the large gravel and tarmac forecourt dominated by the north front.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Bulstrode house (listed grade II) lies towards the centre of the park. Rebuilt by Benjamin Ferrey 1860-2 for the twelfth Duke of Somerset, probably incorporating elements of the earlier buildings, it is a rambling, red-brick, Tudor-style building with an imposing tower over the main, north entrance and a French Renaissance-style colonnade on the south front giving access to the adjoining south terrace. The enclosed Inner Court, a service courtyard, is attached to the east side of the house, with various C20 buildings close by. Attached to the north-east corner of the house is the Outer Court, entered from the forecourt through a Gothic arch with a ducal crest in the gable, flanked by railings and brick piers with stone caps. The other three sides of this court have a Gothic loggia fronting a single-storey building; access to the Inner Court is through a gateway on the south side.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens lie west and south of the house, being formal in style close to the house and becoming less so further away. The main formal feature lies on the west front, dating from the 1860s/70s. Below the west front, overlying the cellars of the earlier building, lie two rectangular, sunk parterres with stone steps down to the north and south sides, separated by a grass bank with traces of a gravel path along its length. This area is dominated by the Gothic Keep or Pigeon House (James Wyatt 1805, listed grade II) on the west side of the garden, which separates the lime avenue beyond from the west front of the house. The Keep is built of red brick, of two storeys with tall arches in each side, designed as a gateway to the C17 house (Pevsner 1994). The formal area is entered from the south-west corner of the forecourt through a red-brick gazebo with a pyramidal roof, flanked by the red-brick walls of the forecourt.

A broad gravel path, supported by an arcaded retaining wall, runs along the south front of the house, a continuation of a path along the west front running south from the gazebo. Below the retaining arcade a formal grass terrace extends from south of the south parterre, sloping down to a large expanse of informal lawn, reached from the top terrace by two sets of steps set into the corners of the grass slopes below the south-west corner of the house. At the east edge of this lawn, bordering the park, a brick ha-ha, probably C20, runs through a belt of trees. The south lawn is bordered by groups of trees and flowering shrubs, with a copse of trees at the south-east corner, Grove Plantation, which contains a small cemetery (mid C20).

An informal area of mature ornamental woodland, underplanted with flowering shrubs, and lawns, lies west of the parterres, containing features from the formal, early C18 enclosed layout created by the Earl of Portland (Vitruvius Britannicus IV, 1739). These include two circular ponds, a rectangular canal and two lime avenues, one aligned with the west front of the house, the other towards the south end of the area, together with various other earthworks from this period. The area was probably

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naturalised in the later C18, worked on by Humphry Repton during the 1790s, who was invited to eliminate the formal gardens by the third Duke. Repton mentions in his Enquiry various themed gardens created by the second Duchess of Portland including an American garden close to the lily pond (the larger of the two remaining early C18 circular ponds), a flower garden close to the other circular pond, a 'Nursery for Flowers' on the north boundary, a 'botanical garden' and an 'ancient garden'.

PARK The park is dominated by a valley which surrounds the house on three sides, with views over the valley from the hillside on which the house stands to the north and east boundaries. These are planted with undulating belts of trees, with occasional C20 houses visible amongst them. The park contains clumps and single trees, many probably planted during Repton's time, and is largely pasture. The southern park is separated from the main area by the Hedgerley to Gerrards Cross lane. This detached area, situated on the north-facing slope of a hill, is largely pasture with Yewtree Wood at the top of the hill, at the south end, through which rides ran in 1803 (Enquiry).

By 1686 an avenue had been laid out from the house to the park on the Old Camp, but the land west of this, which is now within the park, consisted of fields crossed by public roads. Pococke (1889) records the progress of imparkment: the avenue was removed shortly before his visit (1757), plantations had been made and the surrounding brick wall erected. Repton's description shows that he subsequently modified the existing design.

The park has contracted during the C20, losing the area west and south of the wooded pleasure grounds by the house to gravel extraction. The area east of the current boundary, including the Old Camp, is largely developed with housing, although the Old Camp, the nucleus of the early deer park, remains open grassland, with a surrounding belt of mature trees. A number of mature park and woodland trees are also present in many of the gardens surrounding the Old Camp, bounded on the east by the brick wall which runs parallel to, but set back some metres from, the Windsor Road. The area known as Duke's Wood, beyond the current south-east boundary, is also developed with housing, although the south and west edges of the woodland still exist. Repton's Enquiry shows and describes the pleasure drives through the park surrounding the Old Camp and Duke's Wood; drives now lost which formed a significant element of the designed landscape.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden lies 700m south of the house, bounded to the south by the Hedgerley to Gerrards Cross lane. Still largely enclosed by brick walls, it is now associated with private dwellings. Repton, in his Enquiry, shows the kitchen garden in the same position, with a similar layout to that depicted on early C20 OS maps. A further walled kitchen garden, standing close to the north front of the house, forms the west boundary of the forecourt, separating it from the informal garden to the west. It is enclosed by red-brick walls and is under cultivation, with a late C20 housing block to the north. The 1st edition OS map published 1883 shows that it was under cultivation at this time, although it is not defined on Repton's Enquiry map.

REFERENCES

H Repton, *An Enquiry into the Changes of Taste in Landscape Gardening* (1803) R Pococke, *Travels through England ... during 1750, 1751 and later years* 2, (1889), pp 259-60 Country Life, 61 (1 January 1927), p 25; 68 (15 November 1930), pp 624-6; 179 (12 June 1986), pp 1684-6; (19 June 1986), pp 1772-4 J Dixon-Hunt and P Willis, *The Genius of the Place* (1975), pp 266-7 J Harris, *The Artist and the Country House* (1979), p 168 G Carter et al, *Humphry Repton* (1982), p 148 Garden History 14, no 2 (1986), pp 194-200 N Pevsner and E Williamson, *The Buildings of England: Buckinghamshire* (1994), pp 203-4 Maps Map of Bulstrode Park, in Repton (1803) *A Mappe of a Particular Estate ... including Lord Jeffreys' lands including the manor of Temple Bulstrode*, 1686 (Buckinghamshire Record Office) The working rough map of Bulstrode, 1784 (Buckinghamshire Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1883 2nd edition published 1900 3rd edition published 1926 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1881-2

Description written: 1997 Amended: April 1999 Register Inspector: SR Edited: June 1999

Legal

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