

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

STRADSETT HALL

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Name:	STRADSETT HALL
County:	Norfolk
District:	King's Lynn and West Norfolk (District Authority)
Parish:	Stradsett
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.627744 Longitude: 0.45937188 National Grid Reference: TF 66554 06171 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001263 Date first listed: 27-Oct-1992

Details

An early C19 park and pleasure ground laid out by J C Loudon between 1810 and 1813.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Thomas Bagge inherited the Stradsett estate from his father-in-law Philip Case in 1791, at which time the Elizabethan manor house was accompanied by several ponds and the remains of a medieval moat, and was sheltered to the south by a rectilinear woodland belt, the whole being surrounded by a flat agricultural landscape of enclosed fields and woodlands. Thomas Bagge died in 1807 having imparked land to the south of the manor and planted an avenue through it. He was succeeded by his son, T P Bagge, who prepared to remodel the hall and create a 'picturesque' landscape around it. In 1808 he commissioned Humphry Repton (1752-1818) to supply a design but it was J C Loudon (1783-1843) whom Bagge chose for the commission in 1810, having already paid to enclose c 80ha of arable land around the Hall with a fence in preparation for the creation of the park. It was an important early commission for the young Loudon who had only arrived in London five years before to set up in practice. Loudon completed his work on the park, lake, pleasure ground, and kitchen garden, which together cost over £7000, in 1813 at which time a rift with the family, caused by the excessive bill for the project, caused them to terminate Loudon's contract before plans for a new house were completed. Instead, substantial alterations to the old hall were carried out and finished in 1819. Through successive generations of the Bagge family the main elements of the Loudon landscape have survived. The site remains (1999) in private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Stradsett Hall is located in west Norfolk, c 8km east of Downham Market on the north side of the A1122 Downham to Swaffham road. The c 100ha site is set in a flat agricultural landscape, in a rural part of the county made busy by the proximity of two main roads. The southern boundary is formed by the A1122, that to the west by the A134 King's Lynn to Thetford road, with agricultural land lying to the north and east. Gaps in the boundary plantations offer views into and out of the site.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main approach to the Hall is via the south drive which leads from an early C19, single-storey, gault brick and slate Gothic-style lodge (listed grade II) on the A1122, to a drive which runs north through the

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park to the east front of the Hall. There is also a drive from the south-west corner of the park. These two routes follow closely the medieval approaches to Stradsett which Loudon retained when he reworked the landscape. At this time he also laid out a new main drive, no longer in use, which led off the A134 into the north-west corner of the park at the North Lodge, then ran south through the park, over a bridge across the west arm of the lake, up to the Hall.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Stradsett Hall (listed grade II) stands to the south of centre of the park and is of two storeys in eleven bays, built of brick with a slate and tile roof in an 'E' plan. The Elizabethan core of the house was given substantial Georgian detail in 1819, including a central two-storey porch flanked by Ionic pilaster strips to the east front, a square central portico porch with Tuscan columns to the north front, and sash windows throughout. A two-storey extension was also added to the east front during the early C19 works which were carried out for the Bagge family although the architect is unknown.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The Hall at Stradsett is today (1999) surrounded by gardens, the southern edge of which are marked by mid C18 ironwork railings and gates. A walk leads north-east off the gardens, though a cast-iron cattle grid and bridge over the ha-ha (1819, listed grade II), across the home park to a bridge over the outflow of the lake and so into Waterfall Plantation. This pleasure ground, dominated by yew, box, and laurel, is planted on the dam of the lake, bordering the east side of the water and marking the edge of the park. At its northern end it merges with Garden Plantation, an area of pleasure grounds also dominated by evergreens, which surrounds the kitchen garden. The c 9ha lake, irregular in shape and with several islands, lies north of the Hall in the centre of the site. It was formed by the damming of a brook which ran from west to east across the property. Four small bridges accompany the lake in addition to the main bridge which carried the north drive across its west arm. The banks of the lake are planted with box, holly, weeping willow, and a variety of shrubs. Between the west and north arms is a raised knoll, created from soil excavated during its construction. The knoll was intended to be the site for the proposed new house and the whole design focused on this spot. In the event the new house was not built and thus the pleasure grounds stand somewhat isolated and at a distance from the Hall.

The gardens and pleasure grounds were all created by Loudon between 1810 and 1813, the work being accurately documented in a series of journals kept by his foreman Alexander McLeish. Loudon greatly exceeded his estimate of cost for the work which came to over £7000 compared to the estimated £4000 and thus his association with the Bagge family was terminated in 1813 before his plans for the new house could be executed. By this time however the lake, kitchen garden, pleasure ground, and park were all largely complete.

PARK Stradsett Park lies mainly to the north of the lake and pleasure grounds, with a smaller area to the south, partly in grass and partly arable. It contains a number of earthworks relating to the pre-park landscape, together with some pre-park hedge timber which was incorporated into the park landscape. Much original planting survives, mainly oaks with some lime, beech, ash, and horse chestnut, as well as some later C19 planting. When Loudon arrived at Stradsett the land intended for the park was still predominantly divided into a number of small fields interspersed with woods and pasture. His work included extensive earth moving and the laying of drainage systems which fed the lake, as well as the planting of clumps and individual trees. The park was not bounded by a continuous perimeter belt but rather by a number of separate but carefully positioned plantations, added to the existing woods. Detailed plant orders from a number of nurseries have survived (NRO).

KITCHEN GARDEN The walled kitchen garden stands on the north side of the lake within Garden Plantation. Loudon was responsible for its detailed design and construction and for the planting of fruit trees. It survives in outline but is no longer in use (1999).

REFERENCES

J Phibbs, *Stradsett Park, Norfolk: A survey of the landscape* (1988) [copy on EH file] M Greville, *Stradsett: Creation of a picturesque landscape* (MA dissertation, UEA 1989) [copy on EH file] T Williamson, *The archaeology of the landscape park*, *BAR Brit Ser* 268 (1998), pp 281-2

Maps Estate map, 1791 (private collection) Stradsett Park survey, 1816 (private collection)

Illustration Series of paintings of the landscape by the Italian artist Algilio, 1811 (private collection)

Archival items Journals of Alexander MacLeish, early C19 (private collection) Stradsett Papers (BLX (38)), (Norfolk Record Office)

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Description written: December 1999 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.