

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

STOKE PARK

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Name:	STOKE PARK
District:	Buckinghamshire (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Farnham Royal
District:	Buckinghamshire (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Stoke Poges
District:	Slough (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.536245 Longitude: -0.60718122 National Grid Reference: SU9670082846 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000363 Date first listed: 18-Jan-1992

Details

A country house surrounded by a landscape park laid out by Lancelot Brown c 1750, one of his first commissions. The park was subsequently modified by Nathaniel Richmond (late 1760s) and Humphry Repton who provided designs for the landscape around the new house then being built.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1729 Stoke Manor was inherited by Anne, Viscountess Cobham, whose father, Edmund Halsey, had bought it in 1724. When her husband, Lord Cobham, died in 1749, Lady Anne moved from Stowe (qv) in north Buckinghamshire to Stoke Park. As part of her programme of improvements she employed Lancelot Brown (1716-83), who had recently set up on his own as a landscape improver following ten years at Stowe, to modernise the grounds. Brown created a serpentine lake from a chain of five rectangular ponds, flanked by a landscape park centred on the Elizabethan manor house. Viscountess Cobham died in 1760 with no heir, at which the estate was sold to the Hon Thomas Penn, Lord Proprietary of Pennsylvania, the eldest surviving son of William Penn, the founder of that American province. Penn employed Nathaniel Richmond during the 1760s to draw up plans for general alterations and improvements to the park, but little is known about his exact input. Penn died in 1775, the estate being inherited by his fifteen-year-old son John, who in the early 1790s commissioned Humphry Repton (1752-1818) to make improvements to the park, at the same time as a new house was being built by Robert Nasmith at the centre of the park to supersede the old manor house. Repton's Red Book containing details of his suggestions, dated June 1792, did not advocate major changes within the park, although he did suggest a new garden feature, 'a highly polished garden scene' (Red Book) and pleasure ground, to the west of the new house. Such a feature was not created until c 1808 when Penn based a design upon

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the ideas of the Rev William Mason, particularly those set out in the Commentary to Mason's fourth book of his poem *The English Garden* (1772-81).

The Penn family sold the estate in 1848, it subsequently passing through the hands of several owners during the later C19 and early C20. A golf course was laid out by H S Colt in 1908, and in 1911 parts of the park were sold for housing. From 1920 to 1958 the golf club was owned by Sir Noel Mobbs, who extended the golf course and in the 1930s laid out the Stoke Poges Gardens of Remembrance (qv) on part of the eastern parkland, south of the church. The house is now (1998) a hotel and country club, surrounded by the golf course.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Stoke Park lies at the south-west end of the village of Stoke Poges, adjacent to the 1930s' Stoke Poges Gardens of Remembrance, 3km north-east of the centre of Slough at the southern extremity of Buckinghamshire. The c 115ha park is bounded largely by C20 suburban housing, and partly by roads marking the former north and east boundaries: Park Road and Church Lane respectively. The land is gently undulating, with a valley running north to south through the western edge of the park; a second valley runs north-east to south-west across the eastern half of the park. The setting, once rural, is now largely suburban, with the substantial housing estate of Manor Park lying adjacent to the south. Long views extend south from the house and the southern edge of the pleasure grounds towards the River Thames and Windsor Castle (qv). Stoke Park is part of a group of landscape parks around Stoke Poges, including Stoke Place, Wexham Park and Stoke Court.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The east drive to the north front of the house enters the park at the Lion Lodges (c 1800, probably James Wyatt, listed grade II*), a pair of small classical buildings standing 550m south-east of the house on Church Lane which formerly formed the east boundary of the site. The drive's route north-west across the park has been altered this century from that laid out according to Repton's proposals of 1792. It no longer crosses the upper lake at the three-arched stone bridge (1798, probably James Wyatt, listed grade II) standing 250m east of the house and sited by Repton. Presently (1998) it crosses to the south-west, above Brown's cascade (1760s), carried by a late C20 earth bridge, arriving at a tarmac carriage sweep by the portico on the north front.

A second, north-east drive enters the park 750m north-east of the house, from Park Road, at a pair of C19 brick lodges (listed grade II) built in the style of the nearby stables (1851, listed grade II). From here the drive, flanked by a conifer avenue, extends south-west, passing the walled kitchen garden adjacent to the east, and continuing into the park, joining the east drive 200m north-east of the house. Some 400m further west along Park Road a single-storey lodge, Gateside Lodge (C18, listed grade II), built in Classical style and rendered, marks the entrance to the former north drive, no longer in use, which was part of the landscaping retained from the mid C18 layout. The southern entrance to the park, again no longer in use, runs through an area which was imparked in the second half of the C18.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Stoke Park mansion (designed Robert Nasmith 1789, completed James Wyatt 1790s, listed grade I) stands at the centre of the park, on the southern edge of a level platform from which the ground falls to the east and south. The house, Classical in style and stuccoed, was built by John Penn in the grounds of the existing brick Manor House (1555, listed grade I) which was itself built for Francis, Earl of Huntingdon, and stands towards the north-east corner of the site. Queen Elizabeth was entertained here in 1601 by the subsequent owner, Chief Justice Coke, who had bought the estate in 1599. Lady Cobham, who lived here in the 1750s, was a friend of Thomas Gray whose *Long Story* describes the house. The remaining building is a fragment of the Z-shaped Elizabethan house.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS A formal terrace surrounds the house to the west, south and east, with informal pleasure grounds extending beyond from the west arm of the terrace.

Parterres below the south and east facades of the house are supported by low walls and balustrades ornamented with stone urns dating from the mid C19. That to the south extends as a semicircular bastion and carries a free-standing pool put in some time during the early C20. The broad gravel walk across the south front extends west into the pleasure grounds.

Repton suggested the site for the pleasure gardens, and under his direction the area was divided off from the park with a ditch and fence, stretches of which survive. The layout was refined between 1810 and 1813 by Penn and his land agent, Robert

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Osborne, Penn having been inspired by the Rev William Mason, who had visited Stoke Park in 1792 and with whom Penn had corresponded on gardening matters. Most of the ornaments Penn added were later sold off, but several stone seats remain. Alterations and additional planting were carried out in the mid C19, including the quarry garden constructed of artificial stone. The pleasure grounds, containing many specimen trees, have recently (late 1990s) been cleared, revealing paths and viewpoints overlooking the park. A parterre (late 1990s) has been laid out at the east end of the pleasure grounds, encircling a circular stone pond overlooked by the west front.

PARK The parkland is dominated by Stoke Poges golf course (H S Colt, 1908), and the lakes running north-east to south-west across the east park. Many old oaks stand in the north park, some being survivors from the park, formal plantations and avenues shown on Rocque's map of Berkshire (1761). These may date from the late C16/early C17 (LUC 1990). Much of the present planting is associated with the golf course layout.

The north park focuses on a 18m high Roman Doric column (Wyatt 1800, listed grade II) standing 400m north of the house, which forms a monument to the early C17 owner Sir Edward Coke and which carries his statue by Rossi. The park was enlarged to the north post-1792 and to the east c 1813 when the public road was moved. The park was later extended to the south and to the west beyond the track which marks the parish boundary. Manor Park housing estate was built over the south end of the park, on an area screened from it by a wide tree belt planted around the mid C18. There has also been encroachment of housing around the rest of the perimeter of the parkland. The higher land to the south-east of the lakes, used as a playing field in the mid C20, has been laid to an extension of the golf course (late 1990s), retaining some parkland planting, and with further new planting. A pair of lakes run across the park, divided by a cascade, created from five rectangular fishponds in accordance with Brown's plan. The Manor House stands to the east of the northern end of the lakes. South of the Manor House stands the parish church and to the west of this Gray's monument (Wyatt 1799, listed grade II*), a large stone pedestal with panels inscribed with verses from Thomas Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*. The monument stands on land taken into the park post-1751 when Church Lane was moved. The site was chosen by Repton and offered views to the new house and the column, although these are now (1998) obscured by growth. A Garden of Remembrance, founded in the 1930s by Sir Noel Mobbs, was developed in the area east of the lakes, on the east bank of the upper lake.

KITCHEN GARDEN The brick-walled kitchen garden lies to the north of the Manor House and forms part of the stables and home farm complex.

REFERENCES

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OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1880 2nd edition published 1900

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Description written: September 1998 Amended: April 1999 Register Inspector: SR

Legal

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