

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

COTTESBROOKE HALL

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**COTTESBROOKE HALL**

Name: COTTESBROOKE HALL

District: West Northamptonshire (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Cottesbrooke

District: West Northamptonshire (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Guilsborough

label.localisation: Latitude: 52.364887  
Longitude: -0.96040683  
National Grid Reference: SP7088574601  
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden  
Grade: II  
List Entry Number: 1001028  
Date first listed: 25-Jun-1984

## Details

Formal gardens of largely C20 date with work by several designers including R W Schultz, G Jellicoe and S Crowe, and later C18 landscape park, associated with an early C18 country house.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In the second quarter of the C17 the two manors of Cottesbrooke were acquired by Sir John Langham (d 1671), a successful member of the Levant and East India Companies who was building up an extensive estate in Northamptonshire. He served as MP and Lord Mayor of London, and was created baronet in 1660. His grandson John (d 1746), fourth Baronet, who inherited in 1700, was the first of the family permanently to reside at Cottesbrooke, beginning the present house in 1702. He served as sheriff in 1703, and his apparently wide interests in architecture and music are reflected in the design of Cottesbrooke Hall. Repairs were undertaken during the time of James Langham (d 1795), seventh Baronet, MP and sheriff, who also did work in the park, in the later 1770s digging a lake and building new lodges and approaches. The Langhams retained Cottesbrooke until 1911, when it was sold by the thirteenth Baronet to R B Brassey. In 1937 it was again sold, to the MacDonald-Buchanans. It remains in private hands in 1998.

Cottesbrooke Hall is one of the candidates for the prototype of Jane Austen's Mansfield Park (guidebook).

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Cottesbrooke lies on a minor road north-east of Brixworth, which lies on the A508 roughly midway between and c 15km distant from Northampton to the south and Market Harborough to the north. Cottesbrooke can also be reached via the A50 Northampton to Leicester road, which passes 2km to the west. The Hall lies to the north of the village, with its park extending for 2.5km along the settlement's east and north sides. The area here registered extends to c 250ha.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** Cottesbrooke Hall is approached from the south, via a drive new made in 1938 to the north side of the Hall, from an entrance west of All Saints' church. This follows the 1628 manorial boundary, and crosses

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the lake across the single-arched, ashlar Wellesley Bridge of c 1938, which is of the same basic design as Mitchell's 400m to its east. West and East Lodges (listed with gates grade II) at its end, single-storey and originally with a one-unit plan, were designed c 1780 by Robert Mitchell. They were moved here in 1938 from the entrance on the Leicester Road. This entrance, commemorated in the name of Lodges Spinney, lay at the end of the looping, 2.5km long, north drive. No longer used, its line can still be traced. This approach was laid out c 1780, as was the drive which crosses the lake south of the Hall via a five-arched, limestone ashlar bridge (listed grade II) of c 1780, also probably by Robert Mitchell. This drive starts at iron gates on tall stone piers, probably C18, at the end of a short side road on the north side of Cottesbrooke village. Other than its first section, south of the lake, which was altered in the C19, this approach remains very much as laid out c 1780.

When the Hall was first built the entrance forecourt was on its south side. In the C18 this was railed and had elaborate wrought-iron gates with an armorial overthrow. It has been suggested however (CL 1986, 1329), that the main approach at this time may have been via the northern avenue.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Cottesbrooke Hall (listed grade I) is orientated north-west to south-east; for convenience it and its gardens are here described as if orientated north/south, with the original entrance front to the south. It was rebuilt on a new site north of the village between 1702 and 1711, on an axis aligned on Brixworth church 5km to the south-east. William Smith (d 1724), elder brother of Francis Smith of Warwick, played some role in the design process. The original two-storey, seven-bay, south entrance front, of brick with giant pilasters and dressings of Ketton stone, is linked by quadrants to service pavilions for kitchen and stables behind which are yards with further ancillary buildings. The house was enlarged in the late C18 by Robert Mitchell (fl 1770s(1809), who added an additional blind bay at each end of the north, garden front and created a sequence of large rooms for entertainment across the same. In 1937 the interior was rearranged, and the entrance and garden fronts reversed so that the Hall is now entered from the north, while a formal garden occupies the former entrance forecourt. The architects of the 1937 alterations were Gerald Wellesley (later Duke of Wellington) and Trenwith Wills.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** On the north side of the Hall is a turning circle. From this there is a view down the main north-west axis and the surviving trees of its avenue, set between which 350m from the Hall is Ladies' Pool, now enlarged and irregular in outline but in the C18 rectangular. On the North Lawn, to the west side of the Hall, are two large cedars of Lebanon, possibly planted about the time the Hall was built.

To the south of the Hall, laid out in 1937 on the former forecourt to a design by Geoffrey Jellicoe (d 1996), is a quartered parterre garden with symmetrically arranged clipped green and golden yews. A stone balustrade with central gate bounds the south side of the garden, approached from the Hall by a straight, flagged path. A flight of stone steps leads down to the Lower Lawn. From here there are extensive vistas, firstly along the main axial line and over the lake to the spire of Brixworth church on a ridge-top 5km to the south-east, and secondly along the Lime Avenue planted in 1982 on a more easterly line.

West of the Hall is a series of linked pleasure gardens, laid out since the early C20. The Scottish designer Robert Weir Schultz and Geoffrey Jellicoe were commissioned to work at Cottesbrooke before the Second World War and, after it, Dame Sylvia Crowe. Lady Catherine Macdonald-Buchanan provided much of the inspiration after 1937. Adjoining the west side of the Hall is the Monkey Pond garden, a sunken courtyard garden with rectangular pool laid out 1911(14 to designs by Schultz. Leading westward from this is the 60m long, straight Terrace, a walk with herbaceous borders. At its end are mid C18 limestone ashlar gate piers with wrought-iron gates (all listed grade II), repositioned here from elsewhere in 1938. These lead through to the Gladiator Garden, with a lead gladiator statue set between pleached limes. Its axis is continued south-westwards by the plane allée.

Along the south side of the Terrace are further C20 garden compartments. At the east end is the Dutch Garden, also sometimes known as the Time Garden, a quartered design with low box hedges. To its west is Pine Court, surrounded by what remains of a once more extensive early C20 pergola. This leads through to the larger Pool Garden, adapted from Schultz's original layout, in the centre of which is a circular basin. It still retains his brick-pillared pergola. A seat against the east wall looks across this and through the Dog Gates to the vista down the Gladiator Garden.

Running along the south side of the Pool Garden is the straight Statue Walk, set along the yew hedges of which are four mid C18 statues (each listed grade II) of Classical figures, probably by Peter Scheemakers (d 1781), brought here from the Temple

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of Ancient Virtue at Stowe in 1938. A break in its hedges provides a vista south from the Pool Garden through to the Dilemma Garden, laid out around an urn c 1990.

Earthworks suggest the possibility that when first built there were formal gardens to the north of the Hall, with a slightly sunken 120m long parterre court. Off the centre of this and up the centre of the axial avenue runs a 170m long and 20m wide straight allée or walk, slightly sunken, at the north end of which is Ladies' Pool. Some 50m to the east is a large, tree-covered, conical mound, possibly derived from spoil excavated to form the pool. These gardens - if this is what the earthworks represent - were presumably put down to grass c 1780 when the park was modernised. Correspondence of 1823 notes 'Cottesbrooke much improved by Wood the gardener who seems to know his business' (Langham corresp; quote supplied by J Burt). To what this refers is unknown.

**PARK** The Hall lies within a landscape park, which extends for 1km north and east of it, and has a 400m wide, 1.5km long, dog-leg extension extending south-westwards to the Leicester road. This was added to the park in the mid C19 to flank the north drive. The main feature of the park is the 600m lake, narrow and straight, which lies c 300m to the south of the Hall and slightly downhill of it. This probably represents an elongation in c 1780 of the pre-existing pool. Within the park, including its south-west extension, there is much well-preserved ridge and furrow, and large numbers of mature parkland trees.

By the later C18 the Long Walk was established, running north up the early C18 east boundary of the park, via Long Walk Spinney to Moss Hall Spinney. Moss Hall itself no longer survives, but a later C19 photograph shows a circular, limestone ashlar building with crenellations. Five irregularly spaced gothic openings gave views to landmarks such as church spires. It is tempting to attribute the building to Robert Mitchell.

Some 300m west of the Hall, Hunter's Bridge, a red-brick structure of c 1910, gives access across the stream to a wild garden along its west bank. Its development, begun when that land was purchased and added to the park c 1912, continued in 1998. East of the bridge is a thatched tea cottage of the 1930s.

A park, or at least a designed landscape, was laid out from the new Hall in the early C18. Eayre and Jefferys' map (originating in a survey of 1720) appears to show avenues radiating on the main axis from the north and south sides of the Hall, and the former is still visible on the 1st edition OS map of 1888. Each extends to or beyond a pool. Ladies' Pool to the north-west survives, somewhat reduced, while that to the south-east represents the east end of the lake. A third avenue was apparently aligned on Cottesbrooke church. Although the park was improved and presumably made less formal and more open in the 1770s, it was apparently left unenlarged, and in the 1820s extended south to the Fish Pond, west to the stream which supplied it, north to a line between the pool and The Shrubbery and east to a straight boundary (still extant) from the south end of Long Walk Spinney through Park Spinney to the east end of the Fish Pond. By the late C19 the park had been extended to much the same extent as here registered, and also included an outlying and detached block of land 1km to the south-east of the village, straddling the road to Brixworth.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The kitchen garden lies on the south edge of the park 150m east of All Saints' church, and comprises three brick-walled compartments: Top Garden, Middle Garden and a Frameyard. The gardens were the subject of an extensive study in the 1980s (Campbell 1987), when they were still run on traditional lines. Since then those practices have been discontinued.

#### REFERENCES

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OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1886(8 2nd edition published 1900(1  
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## 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.