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Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

TRAFALGAR HOUSE

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Name:	TRAFALGAR HOUSE
District:	Wiltshire (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Downton
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.012705 Longitude: -1.7354822 National Grid Reference: SU 18653 23736 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001244 Date first listed: 01-Sep-1987

Details

Mid C19 formal garden designed by William Butterfield, set in an C18 park including early C18 works by Charles Bridgeman, surrounding a country house.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1726, Sir Peter Vandeput, a rich city merchant and member of a Flemish family which had settled in England in the C16, purchased the manor of Standlynch. In 1731-4, he built a new house on the site called Standlynch House (since the C19 known as Trafalgar House), to a design by the architect John James of Greenwich. During this period the park was replanned to a design by Charles Bridgeman (d 1738).

Four years after Vandeput's death in 1748, Standlynch House was sold to William Young. In 1766 the House was sold on to Henry Dawkins, the grandson of a wealthy Jamaican landowner. Dawkins commissioned the architect John Wood the Younger (1728-81) from Bath to add two wings to the House. Shortly after, a new portico was added to a design by the architect Nicholas Revett. Dawkins also enlarged the estate by buying some adjoining land. By 1773 (Andrews and Drury), Standlynch House was approached from the south and was surrounded by a formal park. Following Dawkins' death in 1814, the estate was sold to the Crown. After the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, Parliament rewarded Admiral Nelson's nearest surviving relative, his brother William, who duly became the first Earl Nelson, with Standlynch House (from then known as Trafalgar House as required by Act of Parliament). Under the Nelson family the estate grew steadily and by 1884 included 7196 acres (c 2900ha). In 1859, the third Earl commissioned the architect William Butterfield (1814-1900) to restore Standlynch church. During this period Butterfield also added a new balustrade to the east of the House and a formal terraced garden with central steps leading to two square pools to the west. Following a fire in 1866 the south wing of the House was rebuilt.

During the late C19 and early C20 the estate fell into decline and by 1945 it had reduced in size by half. In 1948 the Duke of Leeds bought Trafalgar House, and repairs were carried out to the building. In 1953 the estate was sold to, and amalgamated with, the adjacent Longford Estate. Trafalgar House, together with part of the surrounding land, was sold off in 1961, changing hands several times over the following three decades. In 1995 Trafalgar House passed to a new owner and during a period of investment (when Trafalgar Park became the preferred name for the property), key land and woodland was re-acquired from the Longford Estate.

Trafalgar House remains (2003) in private ownership.

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LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Trafalgar House, a site of c 65ha, is situated halfway between Alderbury and Downton. The River Avon runs along the western boundary of the site, and to the north, east, and south-east, the site is enclosed by farmland, with Standlynch Farm and Standlynch Dairy abutting the site's boundary in the north-east and north-west corners. To the south lies the neighbouring estate of Barford Park.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main entrance lies to the north-east of the site, 580m east-north-east of the House, and is flanked to its south by Standlynch Lodge (c 1860, listed grade II). From here a drive runs westwards through a mature belt of trees before making a gentle curve in a south-westerly direction towards a rectangular forecourt on the east front of the House. The gravel forecourt is enclosed to the north, east, and south by brick balustrades (listed grade II), decorated with vases, introduced in 1859 to designs by William Butterfield.

The site can also be entered at Bunday's Lodge, situated in the south-west corner of the park 360m south-west of the House. From here one of two drives leads in a north-easterly direction, the other in a north-westerly direction. The first turns north after c 350m and leads to the forecourt at the east front of the House. The other drive passes alongside the east wall of the kitchen gardens, with Standlynch church (listed grade II) and its surrounding graveyard to the east. North of the kitchen gardens the drive divides, one branch running eastwards to Home Farm, the other leading north and then east towards Standlynch Farm, c 500m north-east of the House (outside the area here registered). The medieval Standlynch church, founded in 1146 and rebuilt in 1677, has been redundant since the late C20. It was restored by William Butterfield in the mid C19 and in 1914 was rededicated as a private Roman Catholic chapel for the Nelson family.

A new drive from the east was constructed after 1995.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Trafalgar House (listed grade I), a country house of 1733, stands in the centre of the park. It comprises a central rectangular block with single-storey side wings linking two, two-storey pavilions added in 1766. The three-storey east front has seven bays with a central Doric portico, also added in 1766. The three-storey west front has seven windows in the central block, with a central door with steps giving access to formal gardens. The Venetian window in the south pavilion was altered in the mid C20 to provide a doorway and steps from the dining room into the garden.

Two late C18 stable blocks (converted into offices in the late C20, listed grade II) stand parallel to each other c 100m north-east of the House. They are enclosed by mature woodland planted along the eastern boundary of the site. Home Farm, which is screened to its west by mature woodland, stands c 250m to the south-west of the House. This includes a mid to late C19 farmhouse (listed grade II), with various outbuildings added to its west and south-east in the late C20.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens, covering an oval area of c 1ha, enclose the House to the north, west, and south and are separated from the park by a fenced ditch or ha-ha. South of the House the garden is laid out as a lawn enclosed by a hedge and specimen trees, with a central swimming pool (late C20). North of the House the garden is also laid to lawn and planted with specimen trees and a tennis court, while to the west lies a formal terraced garden. An upper grassed terrace runs north for c 120m along the west front of the House, from which two flights of balustraded steps (listed grade II) lead down, across a narrower grassed terrace, to a symmetrical scheme of gravel paths, lawns, and beds with a central fountain. The layout ends in a semicircular bastion to the west enclosed by clipped yew hedges, from which central steps lead down into the park. This central parterre is flanked to the north and south by matching square pools, again enclosed by yew hedges. From the formal gardens there are fine and extensive views over the parkland to the west. In the late C19, the central steps at the west end of the gardens gave access to a c 150m long formal avenue which led westwards to the woodland along the western boundary of the site (OS 1876). By 1901 (OS) this avenue had been replanted but in 1925 (OS) only a few trees remained.

In 1733, before Bridgeman's alterations, garden compartments ran west and south of the new House, while to the north of the House, and separated from it by two lines of trees, was an extensive formal garden criss-crossed with diagonal paths (Willis 2002).

PARK The park east of the House is screened along its north side by a thick belt of mature woodland. In the park to the west, to the rear of the House, is an oval area of mature woodland. From the south-east corner of the House a mature woodland belt extends c 250m eastwards into the park, screening Home Farm situated at its far east end. The southern and eastern part of the

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park are laid to pasture with some areas now in agricultural use. The L-shaped park to the north of the tree belt north of the House (OS 1873) is lined to the west by a thick belt of trees and is currently in agricultural use.

The alterations proposed to the surroundings of the House in the mid 1730s by Charles Bridgeman were ambitious and the surviving traces indicate the scheme was largely, if not wholly, carried out. To the north of the House a wilderness with a central clearing was to be planted in part of the old formal garden. The main emphasis however was on the banks of the Avon to the west of the new house, which were to be thickly planted with trees. Through this a winding carriageway (which can still be traced, 2003) ran to four or five geometrically shaped glades or lookout points. At the park's northern limit, an amphitheatre with square viewing mound (extant, 2003) overlooked a point where the Avon turned briefly westwards (Mowl 2004).

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen gardens lie in the far south-west corner of the site, to the west of Standlynch church, and cover an area of c 1ha. A walled garden in this area is shown on Andrews and Drury's map of 1773. By 1873 (OS), the kitchen garden consisted of two rectangular walled enclosures lined on the inside with glasshouses and various outbuildings.

REFERENCES

Country Life, 98 (13 July 1945), pp 68-71; (20 July 1945), pp 112-15; 179 (13 February 1986), pp 404-06; no 14 (3 April 1997), pp 102-07; no 15 (10 April 1997), pp 44-7 B Cherry and N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Wiltshire* (2nd edn 1975), pp 529-31 P Willis, *Charles Bridgeman* (2nd edn 2002), pp 54, 183, 435, pl 225 T Mowl, *Historic Gardens of Wiltshire* (forthcoming 2004)

Maps Andrews and Drury, *Map of Wiltshire, 1773* (Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office) C Greenwood, *Map of Wiltshire, 1820* (Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1876 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1876 2nd edition published 1901 1925 edition
Illustrations Three plans of Trafalgar, one showing a formal garden near the River Avon, early C18 (reproduced in CL 1986)

Archival items Aerial photographs, 21 June 1999 (NMR 18342/01; 18342/05; 18384/19), (NMR, Swindon)

Description written: January 2003 Amended: March 2004 Register Inspector: FDM Edited: December 2004

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.