

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

HIGHNAM COURT

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Name:	HIGHNAM COURT
County:	Gloucestershire
District:	Tewkesbury (District Authority)
Parish:	Highnam
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.872540 Longitude: -2.2989047 National Grid Reference: SO 79518 19372 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000140 Date first listed: 28-Feb-1986

Details

Largely mid C19 gardens, including extensive Pulhamite water garden, and landscape park associated with mid C17 country house.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In the Middle Ages the manor of Highnam belonged to the abbot of Gloucester. It was granted by the Crown in 1542 to John Arnold (d 1545), who had leased the site since 1516. On his death it was inherited by his son Nicholas, who by 1552 had been knighted, was later sheriff and MP, and attempted to improve the breed of English horses. His heir was his granddaughter Dorothy (d 1580), who was married to Thomas Lucy (kt 1593, d 1605). Their daughter Joyce was married to Sir William Cooke MP (d 1618), and father then followed son, the following being lord: Robert, MP (kt 1621, d 1643); William, MP (d c 1700), for whom the present house was built; Edward (d c 1724); and Dennis (d 1747). The last was succeeded by his sisters, one of whose son, John Guise, reunited the manor in 1769 having lived at the house since 1757 or before. John, who inherited a baronetcy in 1783, held Highnam until his death in 1794, during which time he much improved the interior of the house and landscaped its surrounds. It next passed to his son Sir Berkeley William Guise (d 1834), whose brother and heir, Sir John Wright Guise, sold the manor in 1838 to Thomas Gambier Parry. Parry, who became well known as a painter of frescoes and a collector of works of art, had James Pulham lay out extensive new gardens in the 1840s. After Parry's death in 1888 his widow Ethelinda held Highnam until her death in 1896. It then passed to Parry's son by his first wife, Charles Hubert Hastings Parry, composer (cr bt 1902, d 1918), who was succeeded by his half-brother Ernest Gambier Parry (d 1936). His son, Thomas Mark Gambier Parry lived on at Highnam until his death in 1966. The house, gardens, and a small part of the park passed into separate ownership in 1977. Both this property and the remainder of the park remain (1999) in private hands.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Highnam Court stands c 4km north-west of Gloucester, on rising ground above the floodplain of the River Severn which flows 2km to the east. The park is bounded to the south by the A40 west from Gloucester, and to the north-east by the B4215 to Newent which spurs off it. A track west off the B4215 forms

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the north boundary of the park, while its west boundary is determined by the stream which has long been dammed to form the pools which loop west and south of the house. The area here registered is c 40ha.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main approach to Highnam Court is from Chepstow Lodge in the centre of the south side of the park, close to the east end of the lake. A drive from this entrance was in use by the mid C18, and until the Terrace was constructed in the 1840s terminated at the south side of the house. In the C18 there was no lodge. A 'new lodge' had been built on the Gloucester road by 1838 (Singleton Edwards Landscape c 1990); the present structure, of brick with stone dressings in the manner of the house, is probably a mid C19 replacement. From its gates the drive crosses a mid C19 bridge and dam (listed grade II) at the end of The Lake, and then runs north on a line established during the Second World War to meet the drive from Linton Lodge which ends at the gravel courtyard on the north side of the house. Linton Lodge, at the south-east corner of the park, and its drive (first section not in use 1999) were constructed sometime between 1841 and 1874 (ibid), the lodge being greatly enlarged and modernized c 1990. The third main approach is the Back Drive (present by 1757; ibid) from the north-west, a straight, tree-lined approach off Two Mile Lane, south of Highnam Green.

Until The Lake was enlarged to its present extent in 1809-10 there was a drive called Welch Lane leading north-east to the house from the Gloucester road.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Highnam Court (listed grade I) was built in the Artisan Mannerist style in 1658 to replace a house destroyed in the Civil War. It is a nine-by-five bay, double-pile, two-storey house of brick with stone quoins with a hipped slate roof with dormers. The interior of the house was transformed in the later C18 during John Guise's ownership. Further alterations and additions took place in T G Parry's time under Lewis Vulliamy (d 1886), with the entrance being moved from the south front to the north and in 1869 a billiard room being added to the east side of the house to a design by David Brandon. Some 100m north-west of the house is a U-plan stables block of 1808 (listed grade II), said (VCH 1972) to incorporate materials (including battlements) from the chapel demolished in 1807. An icehouse of 1838-9 stands c 50m further north.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS To the north-east of the house is a gravel turning circle. North of this is a shrubbery, on the far side of which, 100m north-east of the house, is a later C19 pets' cemetery enclosed within an L-plan brick wall with carved inscriptions. Entrance is via a gothic doorway.

The main gardens and pleasure grounds lie east, west, and south of the house. Along Highnam Court's south front, and accessible from the elaborate door at its centre, is an Italianate terrace (listed grade II) of 1843 by Vulliamy with balustrade, urns, and steps. Some 55m to the south is a balustraded terrace wall (listed grade II) on the ha-ha which was reconstructed on this line in the mid 1840s. Between these, and extending for a further 90m on a gentle slope down to the edge of The Lake, is lawn. A rectangular depression just north of the ha-ha marks the site of the Sunk Garden, created in the mid C19 and cleared c 1874. In the later 1990s there was much replanting of specimen trees on the east and west sides of the main axial line of the lawn, framing the view from the house. There was also further planting along the south side of the 400m long Lake, improving the screening of the busy A40. A boathouse towards the western end of the north side of The Lake is mid C19, while seven weeping willows on its north bank were planted c 1940.

Running east for c 25m from the billiard room on the east side of the house is a C17 and mid C19 brick garden wall (listed grade II), c.2.5m high. A conservatory stood against this between the mid C19 and the 1920s. Immediately south of the wall is a formal lawn with four mature Irish yews, probably planted about the time (1869) the billiard room was constructed and originally surrounded by elaborate circular flower beds. East of these a low mound is believed to mark the grave of soldiers killed at Highnam in 1643. South and east of this lawn are further lawns with large numbers of mature specimen trees, mainly of mid C19 date. There are also lawns with mature specimen trees and mid C19 rockeries west and south-west of the house. Gravelled paths and walks link the different areas of the pleasure grounds around the house. Across and below the front (south) of the Italianate terrace (against which is a crinkle-crackle box hedge established 1844 x 1874; Singleton Edwards Landscape c 1990) is a broad walk which runs in a straight line west before turning south-west into what in the C19 was the Beech Grove; four mature trees survive. This path bifurcates c 70m south-west of the house. One branch continues south-west to the south end of the Pulhamite Winter Garden while the other leads west to the east end of the Ladies Winter Walk (also known as the Winter Garden Terrace), which runs along the south side of the main walled garden. In the later C19 statues and columnar yews

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and cypresses stood against the wall, which is divided into bays by vermiculated pilasters of Pulhamite stonework. The lawn west of the house is crossed by the gravelled mid C19 Broad Walk which runs roughly west on an axial line from the drawing room to a gateway in the middle of the east side of the walled garden, through which the walk continues to an opposing gateway in the west wall of the walled garden, thereby to reach the north-west end of the Pulhamite garden. Another walk leads up the outside of the east wall of the walled garden; at its north end is a large sample of Pulhamite architectural forms.

The Ladies Walk gives access to the north-west section of the 120m long Pulhamite Winter Garden which incorporates waterfalls, rockeries, caves, grottos and, close to the south-west corner of the walled kitchen garden, a cliff or island-like mass which was designed to screen a glasshouse within the garden (several Pulhamite structures listed grade II). Planting pockets in the structures were designed for ferns.

In 1607 (Singleton Edwards Landscape c 1990) there were ten pools on the brook west and south of Highnam Court. To the west were Shoell Pool, Horse (later Dog Kennel) Pool, and Orchard Pool, while to the south were seven smaller stews, presumably of medieval origin. To the east, in the fork of the Ross and Newent roads (that is, at the eastern end of the registered area), was the 4.5ha Great Pool. In the mid C18 there was a simple formal garden south-east of the house, but in the early 1770s work was in progress on a new garden, part of the improvements at Highnam made by John Guise. Trees in the Wilderness to the south of the house were felled, pines, shrubs and other plants were brought from Piercefield (Monmouthshire), a kitchen garden and hothouse were constructed, and a new drive laid out. The grounds were considerably altered again in the early C19: the chapel by the south-east corner of the house was demolished in 1807, the seven fishponds south of the house were enlarged to form The Lake in 1809-10, and (after a pause occasioned by a ruinously expensive election campaign of 1810) the Great Pool was drained in 1817-18. In 1841, three years after he bought the estate, T G Parry began work on the grounds. The south, former entrance, front received a new terrace and formal lawns, beds, and walks were laid out east and west of the house. The two southern ponds of the three to the west of the house were drained in the 1840s for the construction of the Pulhamite Winter Garden, undertaken in phases between 1849 and 1862, which was planted with ferns and evergreens. It was also in Parry's time that many of the conifers were planted. In the C20 the gardens fell into serious disrepair; an extensive restoration programme was carried out in the later 1990s.

PARK Highnam Court and its grounds occupy the western third of a roughly oval park 1km long from east to west and 500m wide. This is fairly level permanent pasture, well studded with specimen trees, most of which were planted in the mid C19 by T G Parry. At the north point of the park (not included within the registered area) is a group of buildings, mostly provided in the mid C19 by T G Parry: Holy Innocents' church (1849, listed grade I), the former School (1851, listed grade II), and Church Lodge (1851, listed grade II), built for the Sacristan. Here, too, is the Parish Hall (1904, listed grade II).

A park in Highnam noted in 1332 (Singleton Edwards Landscape c 1990) probably lay elsewhere in the parish, possibly in the vicinity of Highnam Woods north of the registered landscape. A 'New Park' noted in 1607 (ibid) may possibly have adjoined the house and be the earliest phase of the present park. Deer were kept in a paddock north of the house c 1708. Landscaping of the grounds down to the pools formed part of the work of the mid C18, and the house in this new setting is shown on a watercolour by T Bonner of c 1778 (CL 1950). After T G Parry purchased the estate in 1838 the park was extended east of the drive from the Chepstow Lodge and there was much new planting.

The mid C19 landscaping on the estate extended well beyond the park. Some 2km north-west of Highnam Court, on the edge of Highnam Woods (outside the registered area), is a pinetum planted from 1845 by T G Parry. A 2km long ride, Pinetum Drive, runs through it from south-west to north-east.

KITCHEN GARDEN The 60m square walled kitchen garden stands 100m west of the house. The walls (listed grade II) are of 1771-2 with alterations of the mid C19. The east wall is broken by a broad entrance with tall piers, while the west and south walls are pierced by elaborate C19 arched gateways. In the 1990s the interior was cleared and replanted, while the gardener's house of 1866 (replacing an earlier house) at the north-east corner of the garden was renovated and much extended. Brick sheds and bothies, some mid C19 and of two storeys, run along the back of the north wall. The brick-walled area to the north formed a further garden. In the C19 orchards lay either side of the Back Drive and west of the Winter Garden; some old apple trees survive.

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A new hothouse was built in 1772-3. In the C19 there were ranges of glasshouses both in the main walled garden and in that to the north. No glass survives today (1999).

REFERENCES

Country Life, 5 (1 April 1899), pp 400-4; 14 (7 November 1903), pp 644-6; 107 (12 May 1950), pp 1376-80; (19 May 1950), pp 1462-6 Victoria History of the County of Gloucestershire X, (1972), pp 18-20 D Verey, The Buildings of England: Gloucestershire The Vale and the Forest of Dean (2nd edn 1976, reprinted 1980), pp 269-71 Garden History 12, no 2 (1984), pp 138-58 N Kingsley, The Country Houses of Gloucestershire, Volume One, 1500-1660 (1989), pp 106-8 Highnam Court: A Report on the Rock and Water Gardens of James Pulham, (Singleton Edwards Landscape 1990) Highnam Court: Restoration Masterplan, (Singleton Edwards Landscape c 1990) N Kingsley, The Country Houses of Gloucestershire, Volume Two, 1660-1830 (1992), pp 164-6

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1882-3, published 1889

Description written: April 1999 Register Inspector: PAS Edited: April 2003

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.