

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

EASTNOR CASTLE

Auteur(s) : Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/>

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
EASTNOR CASTLE

Name:	EASTNOR CASTLE
District:	County of Herefordshire (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Colwall
District:	County of Herefordshire (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Eastnor
District:	County of Herefordshire (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Ledbury
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.035859 Longitude: -2.3739322 National Grid Reference: SO 74446 37561 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000459 Date first listed: 28-Feb-1986

Details

C19 gardens and pinetum providing the setting for Eastnor Castle, with a deer park of late medieval origin.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The Cock family was seated at Castle Ditch, Eastnor, from c 1600. Charles Cox, MP, was raised to the peerage in 1784 as Baron Somers of Evesham, and improvement of his estate began almost immediately. John Somers Cocks, Lord Somers, his son, commissioned a major new house, Eastnor Castle, in 1811. At much the same time, the laying out of its pleasure grounds began, and a deer park was created on high ground to the north. In the 1830s a pinetum, to become one of the most celebrated aspects of the Eastnor landscape, began to be created in the pleasure grounds. Eastnor remained in the family in 1996.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Eastnor Castle lies 3km south-east of Ledbury, the Castle's pleasure grounds being divided from the deer park to the north by the A348 Ledbury to Tewkesbury road. A stone wall bounding the grounds runs alongside the road and along Clenchers Lane to the west. A ha-ha runs along the south, Golden Hill, boundary of the grounds; it may have been created to hide from view traffic passing along a lane (later closed) from Wayend Street to Clencher's Mill. Yews, perhaps originally a hedge, run along its inside edge. The deer park is bounded to the north-west by a wall, dilapidated in the late C20. To the north and east the boundary largely follows the foot of the hill on which the park lies. Eastnor Castle lies in a valley at the southern end of the Malvern Hills, drained to the south by Glynch Brook which was dammed to form Eastnor Lake. The Castle lies at 91m, the ground rising to the west to Eastnor Hill and Mayhill (182m) and to the north-east to the sandstone hills of the deer park at the highest point of which (240m) is the Obelisk. From the Obelisk there

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
EASTNOR CASTLE

are panoramic views to the south over the Castle, pinetum, Eastnor Hill, and towards the Cotswold hills. The views between the two main elements of the Eastnor landscape, the Castle and the deer park, were, and are, fundamental to their appeal. Surprisingly, given the fine pinetum, much of the Eastnor demesne overlies Wenlock Limestone.

The registered landscape extends to 100ha, that total including the C19 arboretum (c 30ha) and the 2ha terraced gardens.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main approach to the Castle is from Eastnor village to the north-west, through the iron gates adjoining Castle Lodge (listed grade II), a modest stone building of c 1811-12 with two-storey crenellated tower. From here a 300m long drive rises on a curving line through the pinetum before crossing the Castle fosse over a raised causeway and entering the courtyard on the rear (north-west) side of the Castle through the Portcullis Lodge of 1815 (listed grade II). Both lodges were designed by Robert Smirke (1780-1867).

That drive also allows access to the 5km long drive which runs north through the deer park north of the Castle, for most of its length along the Ridgeway. At the start of the Ridgeway proper is Park Lodge (listed grade II), perhaps designed by Robert Smirke and of c 1815. It comprises single-storey square rooms to either side of iron gates on large square gate piers. At the north end of the drive, on the Worcester to Ledbury road, is a small modernised lodge, perhaps C19 in origin.

A back drive approaches the Castle from the south, off Clencher's Mill Lane. It was created between 1817 and 1844. At its end is a gate with stone piers, similar in design to those next to the lodge on the Worcester to Ledbury road.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Eastnor Castle (listed grade I) was built between 1811 and c 1820 to designs of Sir Robert Smirke. The Castle is a mainly neo-Norman version of Inverary (begun 1806), Smirke's first important commission after his return from extensive foreign travel. Of two main storeys and with thin, round, corner towers topped with deeply corbelled battlements, Smirke used a moat to set the kitchen offices out of sight to achieve a compact, picturesque, silhouette. The moat also encloses a forecourt with Portcullis Lodge.

Eastnor Castle replaced the Cocks' previous house, Castle Ditch, demolished in 1814. That, a moated house perhaps built c 1600, lay c 300m to the north-east of the Castle. The house platform was retained as an island at the north end of the Lake.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The crenellated New, or Lower Terrace (listed grade II) on the east side of the Castle, overlooking the lake, was completed in 1878. Now mainly lawn, only one of the yews which ran along the edge of the gravel walk in the later C19 survived in 1996. Built in to the south-west end of the terrace is a triple-arcaded wall fountain incorporating a relief panel bearing Lady Somerset's arms in a laurel tree supported by two archaic lions. The fountain was erected c 1885 'after designs suggested to Mr. Fox by a fountain at Viterbo' (Banks 1992).

The terraces overlook the 500m long lake which provides a romantic setting for the Castle when seen across it. The lake was enlarged from an existing fishpond at the time the Castle was constructed. An ornamental weir at the south end of the lake, and the iron footbridge which carries a walk along the south and east shore of the lake across it, may have been designed by Smirke in the 1820s. East of the lake is the low-lying area called Boulter's Park, in 1997 largely planted with mature poplars. In the C19 and early C20 this was reckoned as part of the park.

The pleasure grounds around the Castle are densely planted with specimen trees, concentrated on the pinetum which covers the hill which rises to the immediate south of the Castle. The pinetum is dominated by large coniferous species imported into the country in the mid C19, with considerable numbers of Sequoiadendron, Sequoia, Cedrus and Pinus. Especially notable are individual specimens or groups of Lucombe oak, Wellingtonia, redwood, incense cedar, Japanese cedar, and Corsican pine. Both the trees and the relatively few surviving shrubs are disposed in bold groups of similar species to create strong formal and spatial contrasts. Only on the more visible outer edges, such as near Church Corner, were individual rarities dotted about in areas of grassland in the manner of a botanical collection. There are also some blocks of later C20 coniferous planting.

A summerhouse stands on the hilltop in the centre of the pinetum; the views it originally enjoyed are now entirely obscured by trees. Although a summerhouse has stood here at various times since at least 1726 (when it was approached by a walk) the present structure, brick cross-walls with a conical roof, was erected or restored in the 1960s.

Planting in the pleasure grounds at Eastnor began c 1813 under the supervision of William Moss, gardener to Earl Somers. Works at this time include the construction of terraces, the approach road and the embankment to contrive the lake. The pinetum (c 30ha) began soon after the Castle was built (black poplar 1817, sugar maple 1823, and Atlas Cedar 1845 are recorded). The main

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
EASTNOR CASTLE

plantings were by the third Earl Somers between 1852 and 1883, and constitute one of the principal collections of conifers in Britain, with additional broadleaved trees. Many specimens were supplied by Veitches, others came from botanical expeditions. The proportion of deciduous trees has declined during the C20, although parts of the pinetum still exhibit the mixture of broadleaves and conifers that excited C19 visitors. Both the winter of 1962-3 and the great storm of 1987 wrought considerable damage in the pinetum. Replanting and restoration works began in the 1990s.

PARK Eastnor Deer Park, which lies north-east of Eastnor village, is bounded to the south by the A348 Ledbury to Tewkesbury road, off which it is entered by gates opposite the entrance lodge to the Castle grounds as well as by other gates to the east. It occupies a roughly square tract of land c 2km by 2km, with the Ridgeway extending for over 2km more to the north. The park is divided by the north/south valley of the Glynch Brook, which runs through its western half. Several pools, mostly late C20 fish management pools, lie along the stream. East of the stream the ground rises to Obelisk Hill, the highest point in the park. To the west it climbs steeply to the Ridgeway, a c 4km long crescent-shaped ridge of Wenlock limestone along which runs the main carriageway through the park. The Ridgeway is well wooded, including much coniferous and some ornamental planting. In contrast much of the low ground east of the Glynch Brook is improved grassland and, near the hamlet of Wayend Street, some arable. The greater part of the central and eastern parts of the park, however, is wood pasture, with thorn shrub on the uppermost part of Obelisk Hill. Park trees have generally not been replaced where they have been felled. The predominant species is oak, of which some in the lower parts of the park are pollarded and older than the majority of the trees elsewhere in the park.

At the highest point of the park stands The Obelisk (also known in the C19 as The Monument) (listed grade II*). Some 90 feet (27.4m) high and designed by Robert Smirke, it was erected in 1813 by the first Earl Somers to the memory of his son, Colonel Cocks, who fell in the action at Burgos (Spain) in 1812. Panoramic views are enjoyed from this point, notably to the east to the range of hills between the Herefordshire Beacon and Midsummer Hill, and to the west to the Iron Age hillfort of Kilbury Camp. There are several cottages in the park, and a bowling green and wood yard on its southern edge.

The Deer Park, or New Park as it was then termed, was created sometime before 1808, probably c 1785. It embraced, especially in its eastern part, land formerly within Bronsil Park. That had been created c 1460 by Richard Beauchamp of Bronsil Castle, 2km east of Eastnor, who was granted permission to create a new 1300 acre (c 540ha) park. Late C18 and early C19 planting in the New Park, and especially that in its western part around the Ridgeway where clumps and individual specimen trees were introduced, was intended to create a landscape park as then idealised. The planting may have expanded gradually east to enhance the existing coppice woods and oak pollards on Obelisk Hill. William Coleman, gardener 1860-1903, supplemented the natural character of the Ridgeway with additional planting of specimen trees. The park's extent remained unchanged until the end of the C19. By 1931 land between Wayend Street and Glynch Brook had been disparked and given over to agriculture; later still the area west of the Ridgeway became farmland. During the mid and later C20 the amount of woodland within the park was reduced, although certainly north of The Obelisk this was through scrub clearance (in the 1950s) rather than through the removal of timber trees.

KITCHEN GARDEN The walled kitchen garden lies c 200m west of the Castle. In the late C20 the interior of the garden was mostly grassed or used as car park; no original glasshouses survived. The garden's outer stone wall was present by 1816. The Gardener's Cottage, 150m west of the Castle, was built between 1816 and 1840, and the tile-hung Pear Tree Cottage, against the east side of the inner garden wall, for the head gardener in the early C20.

South of the kitchen garden are the stables of 1912.

REFERENCES Country Life, 143 (7 March 1968), pp 524-7; (14 March 1968), pp 606-9; (21 March 1968), pp 668-71 Eastnor Castle Landscape Restoration Plan, Volume 1, (Elizabeth Banks Associates 1992)

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: Herefordshire sheet 36 SW, 1st edition published 1891 Herefordshire sheet 42 NW, 1st edition published 1891 OS 25" to 1 mile: Herefordshire sheet 42.1, 2nd edition published 1904

Archival items Estate records 1892-1915, including schedule of improvements 1892-1909 (M5B/15-16), (Herefordshire Record Office) Eastnor Castle, estate records (see National Register of Archives list)

Description written: 1998 Register Inspector: PAS Edited: August 1999

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.