

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

WIMPOLE HALL

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WIMPOLE HALL

Name: WIMPOLE HALL

County: Cambridgeshire

District: South Cambridgeshire (District Authority)

Parish: Arrington

County: Cambridgeshire

District: South Cambridgeshire (District Authority)

Parish: Orwell

County: Cambridgeshire

District: South Cambridgeshire (District Authority)

Parish: Whaddon

County: Cambridgeshire

District: South Cambridgeshire (District Authority)

Parish: Wimpole

label.localisation: Latitude: 52.140347
Longitude: -0.050350792
National Grid Reference: TL3352050909
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: I
List Entry Number: 1000635
Date first listed: 16-Jan-1985

Details

C19 formal gardens on the site of late C17 gardens, with C19 pleasure grounds originating in the mid C18, set in an extensive park first enclosed in 1302. Successive designs for the park were prepared by Charles Bridgeman, Robert Greening, Lancelot Brown, William Emes and Humphry Repton, who produced a Red Book for Wimpole in 1801.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The creation of Wimpole Hall as it appears today began in c 1640 when Thomas Chicheley began to build a new hall on the estate which his family had leased since 1428. Prior to this there had been a medieval moated manor house, just to the north-

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west of the present buildings. According to the Hare map of 1638 this was surrounded by a deer park which had been created in the C14 by the Basingbourn family (Way 1997). In contrast, Chicheley surrounded his new house with a formal garden and an architectural landscape with a north/south axis accentuated by avenues of trees. Chicheley sold the estate to a city merchant, Sir John Cutler, in 1684, who was succeeded on his death in 1693 by his son-in-law Charles Robartes, second Earl of Radnor. Lord Radnor laid out extensive and elaborate formal gardens which were illustrated by Kip in 1707 and described by Defoe as containing 'all the most exquisite contrivances which the best heads cou'd invent' (guidebook). The park was also extended, new avenues planted and fishponds dug. In 1713 the estate passed into the hands of Edward Harley, second Earl of Oxford who commissioned Charles Bridgeman (d 1738) to prepare a grand scheme for the landscape which included the dramatic South Avenue. In 1740 Wimpole was purchased by Philip Yorke, the first Earl of Hardwicke and in c 1750 he asked Robert Greening (d 1759), a professional landscape designer to produce plans for altering the landscape. Greening began the process of removing the formal landscape, replacing straight walks and parterres with sweeping lawns and a pleasure garden near the Hall and softening the formal planting in the park. Philip Yorke succeeded as second Earl of Hardwicke in 1764 but had brought Lancelot Brown (1716-83) to Wimpole in 1760 to redesign and extend the park. Brown's work was consolidated by William Emes (1730-1803) who was employed by the third Earl of Hardwicke following his succession in 1790, at the same time as Sir John Soane (1753-1837) was commissioned to alter the Hall. Emes removed Greening's gardens and much of his pleasure ground to open the gardens into the park landscape. Rather than complete all Emes proposals, the third Earl asked Humphry Repton (1752-1818) to prepare a Red Book in 1801 in which the reinstatement of a small garden on the north side of the Hall was proposed. The third Earl died in 1834 and was succeeded by Charles Yorke, the fourth Earl, who in the 1840s, with the architect Henry Edward Kendall enlarged the Hall, added a stable block and planted shrubberies in the pleasure grounds to the north and east. Charles Yorke, the fifth Earl who inherited Wimpole in 1873 led such an extravagant lifestyle that within fifteen years his debts forced the sale of the estate. It did not however reach its reserve price and was taken over, in settlement of the debts, by the 2nd Lord Robartes in his capacity as Chairman of Agar-Robartes Bank. Thus, after 200 years, Wimpole was reunited with the descendants of Charles Robartes, the second Earl of Radnor. Robartes became the sixth Viscount Clifden in 1899 and moved to the Clifden's principal seat at Lanhydrock (qv), Cornwall. Wimpole was settled on his son Gerald, the seventh Viscount, but it was often shut up. In 1930 when his father died, Gerald moved to Lanhydrock. Wimpole was gradually stripped and let to a series of tenants, the last of whom, Captain and Mrs George Bambridge finally purchased the estate from Clifden in 1938. They refilled the Hall and entertained lavishly until George Bambridge died in 1943. His wife Elsie (only surviving child of Rudyard Kipling) remained at Wimpole for the next thirty years and on her death in 1976 bequeathed the estate to the National Trust. The site remains (1999) in single ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Wimpole Hall lies c 14km south-west of Cambridge off the A603 and 10km north of Royston. It covers an area of c 200ha and is surrounded by the generally flat Cambridgeshire countryside. The boundaries of the site are formed by continuous belts of trees dividing the park from the farmland beyond. The exceptions to this are the south-west boundary which is formed by Arrington village and the end of the South Avenue which is terminated by the old A14 Ermine Street Roman road. The landform in the park varies but is markedly more undulating than the surrounding landscape, with a general fall from north to south. The South Avenue give focus to an extensive view out of the site over the surrounding countryside.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main Arrington Gates (no longer in use, 1999) lie c 1km to the south-west of the Hall, in the village of Arrington. The grand gateway (listed grade II) consisting of wrought-iron gates and railings with Portland stone piers was erected by H E Kendall in 1851 to replace lodges designed by John Soane in the 1790s. It leads to an C18 drive which runs north-east through the park. Level with the south front the drive divides, one drive leading directly north to the gravelled entrance court between flanking rectangular lawns and the other continuing east to the stable block. A second drive enters off the Cambridge road c 2.4km to the east of the Hall. The drive, now a track, was laid out in the mid C19, against advice given by Repton in the Red Book, and runs through Victoria Plantation until it enters the park c 700m east of the Hall

beside the site of the C19 North Lodge (demolished). A second turn off the Cambridge Road c 1.8km south-east of the Hall passes the mid C19 Southern Lodge and meets the east drive at the point where the two enter the park.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Wimpole Hall (listed grade I) is a substantial neo-classical mansion house built of red brick with limestone dressings under a hipped and balustraded slate roof. The ground plan has a double-pile central block with lower flanking wings. The symmetrical south front has seven central bays and wings of five bays each and looks onto the curved forecourt which is enclosed by a mid C19 low wall topped by railings (listed grade II). In the centre is a double staircase of brick with limestone arches, leading to the main entrance. This front was remodelled by Henry Flitcroft in 1742, with a c 1720 chapel in the east wing by James Gibbs, who also added the library wing to the north-west. The west front, looking onto the gardens, was erected by Sir John Soane and remodelled in the mid C19 by Henry Edward Kendall. Below all the later work on Wimpole Hall stands the core of Thomas Chicheley's 1640s house.

The service courtyard and St Andrew's church lie on the east side of the Hall. On the north wall of the courtyard, facing north is the mid C18 rusticated game larder (listed grade II) while the parish church (of C14 origin apart from Chicheley chapel, replaced in 1749 by Flitcroft, listed grade II*) stands beyond the east wall.

The mid C19 stable block (listed grade II*) stands c 200m east-south-east of the Hall. It is constructed of red brick with stone dressings and is ranged around four sides of a courtyard, with a substantial arched entrance, topped by a Doric entablature and turreted clock tower with a domed roof. The block was designed by Henry Kendall and built in 1852 to replace the original late C17 stable which stood just to the south of the church.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens lie to the north and west of the Hall. A gravel terrace runs the length of the north front, backed by a clipped yew hedge which links the projecting east and west wings. A flight of stone steps leads down from the Hall to a central gravel walk, flanked by lawns cut into a formal parterre using box-edged borders filled with roses and clipped yews. The area closest to the Hall, the so-called Dutch Garden, was laid out in the 1980s, the remainder being a recreation of the mid C19 parterre, planted in the 1990s. The garden is bordered to the north by a mid C19 clairvoie (listed grade II) with a low red-brick wall topped with iron railings. A large pair flanking the gateway aligned on the gravel path which leads into the park, framing a vista towards the Tower. A cross-walk runs the length of the boundary and is edged by clipped yews. Steps lead down from the west front to a straight gravel path bordered by roses and mixed shrubs planted (late C20) on the site of Kendall's glasshouse. Across the ha-ha bordering the garden is the recently replanted west avenue (1980s) in the park beyond (replacing an elm avenue lost in the 1970s). The present gardens lie on the site of the late C17 formal parterres which were removed by the succession of 'naturalistic' designers working at Wimpole before being partially put back by Humphry Repton. They were again substantially remodelled in the mid C19 and have been laid out in their present form by the National Trust since 1976.

The pleasure ground lies to the north-east of the Hall where grass planted with many varieties of trees and flowering shrubs flanks a serpentine walk which leads to the walled garden c 350m to the north-east. The pleasure ground was first planted by Robert Greening in the 1750s to connect the Hall to his walled garden, but it was substantially altered by William Emes when he rebuilt the walled garden in the 1790s.

PARK Wimpole Hall sits just to the south of the centre of its park with views radiating from it on crossing north/south and east/west axes. The north park retains many of the features given to it by Lancelot Brown who greatly extended it in this direction. He came to advise the second Earl of Hardwicke from the mid 1760s to the mid 1770s and in addition to extending and laying out the North Park he removed much of the work previously completed by Charles Bridgeman for the second Earl of Oxford and by Robert Greening for the first Earl of Hardwicke. A second serpentine ha-ha (partly by Brown, partly mid C19, listed grade II) crosses the north park c 250m north of the Hall, just to the south of which, close to the western boundary stood an icehouse, no longer extant, built by Flitcroft on Mill Mound. North of the ha-ha lies a string of serpentine lakes, created by Brown out of Lord Radnor's late C17 fishponds. These are crossed by a wooden Chinese Bridge (of late C18 design, rebuilt in the late 1970s, listed grade II) which leads to a grass slope scattered with trees at the summit of which stands the Gothic-style Folly Castle (listed grade II*), designed by Sanderson Miller and built under Brown's supervision by James Essex in 1768-72. A short length of lime and chestnut avenue, a surviving portion of Radnor's north avenue altered and thickened by

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later planting, frames the vista to the folly. Park or Home Farm (buildings listed variously grade II and II*) lies on the edge of the north park, c 200m east of the walled garden and is an unaltered survival of a late C18 model farm, designed for the third Lord Hardwicke by Sir John Soane.

The South Park retains more traces of the earlier formal park landscape and represents the area of the early deer park. It is dominated by Charles Bridgeman's great double South Avenue which runs from the drive south of the Hall for more than 4km across the park and out over the surrounding farmed landscape. Towards the end of the South Avenue is an octagonal basin (now, 1999, dry), also by Bridgeman. A shorter and narrower South Avenue was already extant when Bridgeman came to Wimpole but he replanted and extended it using elms, which were lost in the 1970s and have since been replanted with lime. Many trees were lost in the park during the neglect of the early C20 and the arrival of Dutch elm disease, but a replanting programme has been carried out by the National Trust since 1976, to consolidate the surviving grid planting, clumps and plantations. The South Park also contains a Walnut avenue which survives from the 1690s. Many of the enclosing belts of trees in both the North and South Park, which contain a perimeter drive by Brown and were consolidated by Repton when the park was extended to the south and west in the early C19, have survived.

KITCHEN GARDEN The walled kitchen garden lies c 350m north-east of the Hall. An inner rectangular red-brick wall (listed grade II) encloses an area currently (1999) under restoration as a fruit and vegetable garden. On the north wall stands the Gardener's Cottage (listed grade II), built in the late C18 of red brick under a hipped tiled roof. Encircling the inner garden is a second wall of gault brick. The main doorway to the garden is on the south wall, through a gate hung on tall piers surmounted by ball finials. A second gateway in the north wall has an early C19 iron gate with radial bars to the head. The walled garden designed by Robert Greening in the 1750s was demolished in the 1790s when the present walled garden was constructed by William Emes.

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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.