

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

BOUGHTON HOUSE

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

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
BOUGHTON HOUSE

Name: BOUGHTON HOUSE

County: Northamptonshire

District: Corby (District Authority)

Parish: Stanion

County: Northamptonshire

District: East Northamptonshire (District Authority)

Parish: Brigstock

County: Northamptonshire

District: Kettering (District Authority)

Parish: Geddington

County: Northamptonshire

District: Kettering (District Authority)

Parish: Non Civil Parish

County: Northamptonshire

District: Kettering (District Authority)

Parish: Warkton

County: Northamptonshire

District: Kettering (District Authority)

Parish: Weekley

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 Longitude: -0.66272489
 National Grid Reference: SP9101382556
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

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BOUGHTON HOUSE

List Entry Number: 1000375

Date first listed: 25-Jun-1984

Details

Extensive remains of formal gardens of late C17 and early C18 date around a country house rebuilt at the same time, set in a park developed from a late medieval deer park. Beyond the park are avenues and rides, also part of the landscape of the late C17 and early C18.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

About 1472 Richard Whetehill, a Merchant of the Staple, Lieutenant of Guines Castle and comptroller of the town, marches and mint of Calais, purchased one of the two manors of Boughton. In 1473 he retired from his posts and gained licences to crenellate and to make a park of 100 acres (c 41ha). The property changed hands several times over the next half century, and in 1528 was purchased with the adjoining manor of Weekley by Edward Montagu (d 1557), a successful lawyer who subsequently much enlarged his Northamptonshire estates by purchase and rebuilt the house at Boughton. His son Edward (d 1602), MP and sheriff, entertained the Queen here in 1564. He was succeeded by his son Edward (d 1664), who was created Baron Montagu of Boughton in 1621. In 1647 Boughton was one of the houses visited by Charles I to play bowls while under arrest at Holdenby (qv). His second son, Ralph Montagu (d 1709), succeeded in 1684. An ambitious politician who held various appointments at Court and served as ambassador to France (in 1669-72 and 1676-8) he married twice, in both instances to wealthy and titled women. After several years spent in exile in France he returned to England in 1685 and began an ambitious scheme to rebuild the house and lay out extensive gardens. Ralph, who was made Earl of Montagu in 1689 and Duke in 1705, entertained William III at Boughton in 1695. He was succeeded by his son John, second Duke (d 1749), who held Court offices but whose interests were mainly gardening and antiquarian studies, and who did extensive works in the park. His heir was his daughter Mary, wife of George Brudenell of Deene, fourth Earl Cardigan (d 1790), in whose favour the duchy of Montagu was recreated in 1766. Their son predeceased them and the estates passed to the son of their daughter Elizabeth, who had married the third Duke of Buccleuch. Boughton descended thereafter with the dukedom, and remained in private hands in 1998.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Boughton House stands in its park in a slight hollow on the east side of the shallow valley of the River Ise, 2km north-east of the attractive estate village of Weekley. Passing through that village, and forming the west boundary of the park, is the A43 from Kettering, c 5km to the south-west, to Corby and Stamford. The area here registered includes the formal gardens around the House and the parkland to west (to the A43), east (to the Geddington to Grafton Underwood road) and north (to the C18 park wall 650m north of the House), as well as woodlands and avenues which form or formed parts of the surrounding designed landscape. The area here registered is c 600ha.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main approach is from the north-west, via a drive across the park from The Lodge on the A43. Some 400m east of the lodge the drive crosses an early C18 stone bridge (listed grade II). Another drive approaches from the east, past Crooked Lodge on the Grafton Underwood to Geddington road. Another gateway with piers lies on the edge of Weekley village.

Shortly before Ralph Montagu's death in 1709 a grand axial approach was made to an outer court on the north side of the House. This seems to have been little used, and was superseded by the present approach from the north-west, made c 1723.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Boughton House (listed grade I) is arranged around several courtyards, incorporated within which are the remains of a substantial late medieval house. The transformation of what was a large but rambling house began in 1685 when Ralph Montagu inherited, his work including a monumental, arcaded north range in the French style with state apartments. The other ranges were remodelled by his son, John, on a more modest scale. After the mid C18 there were few alterations as Boughton was but one of several seats owned by the family.

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The two-storey, limestone ashlar stable block (listed grade I) lies north-east of the House, and is almost as monumental. It was completed c 1702.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS Boughton's late C17 and early C18 gardens were extensive and complex, as are their remains. Only an outline description is provided below of the principal features; for a more comprehensive catalogue see RCHM(E) 1979, pp 154-64, and for a contemporary description Morton's account published in 1712.

The main outlines of the late C17 gardens were provided by the River Ise, which was diverted around the west side of the House in a series of straight cuts, each c 300m long, and turned through two right-angles. At the east end of the north canal, 50m north-west of the House, is the Grand Etang, a roughly square pool 100m across. South of that canal, on the main west axis from the House, is a broad, tree-lined grass walk with slight earthwork remains of the complex parterres (Parterre of Statues, Parterre of Basins, Water Parterre, Wilderness of Apartments) which formerly occupied this area of the gardens, at the end of which is the dry basin of the roughly square Broad Pool, c 150m across. On its south side is a raised mount, made from its excavated spoil, east of which is a square compartment within which are the low earthworks of the early C18 flower beds. There are views down the walk west across the Ise, here on a north/south line through the middle of the Broad Pool, and out along the Broad Walk, the main avenue, for c 1.5km to the horizon.

The formal garden remains stretch for a further 500m south of the western parterres, the canalisation west of the Ise expanding the east/west extent of the gardens to 1km. South of the House and the western parterres are the traces of the many other late C17 and early C18 gardens and compartments which occupied this area. Notable is the 60m square Lily Pool c 100m south of the House, with grass steps on the centre of its east side leading up to a former bowling green, now with swimming pool. Between the pool and the House is a formal lawn.

The western part of the gardens south of the parterres is bounded to the north and west by the canals, at the south end of which is the Star Pond. No longer extant is the much-admired Great Cascade which in the early C18 fed the Pond from the canal to the west. East of the Star Pond, and extending along the south side of the kitchen gardens, is woodland, Wilderness Spinney and The Wilderness. Most of the statuary which adorned the wildernesses and other parts of the garden in the early C18 is no longer at Boughton.

The elaborate gardens at Boughton seem to have been begun a year or two after the new house, for in 1685 a 'new gardener' (RCHM(E) 1979, 157) was sent there, probably the Dutchman Van de Meulen who was to work there until his death in 1717. The scheme he was to carry out may have been conceived many years earlier, for when at Versailles and St Cloud in 1669 Ralph Montagu 'formed the ideas in his own mind, both of buildings and gardening' (ibid, 154-64). By 1694 Charles Hatton could speak of 'great talk of vast gardens at Boughton' as well as the failure to date to make fountains work (ibid, 157). By 1706 the gardens west of the House were apparently complete, and by 1709, when Ralph Montagu died, the main work on the whole scheme was finished. About 1721 his son John, the second Duke ('John the Planter'), began to modify the gardens, from 1726-31 employing Charles Bridgeman (d 1738) in at least an advisory capacity. Also important were Booth the agent and Joseph Burgis who was paid £250 to look after the gardens. The Broad Pool, for instance, replaced the earlier octagonal basin, while the cascade and its fountains was replaced by a simple, ashlar waterfall. Already in the 1720s, many of the original flower gardens were being grassed over. After 1749 and the death of the second Duke the gardens saw few changes and in the later C18 Boughton was reported neglected and left to desolation.

PARK Boughton House lies within a roughly oval park c 1.5km across. Along the north side of Weekley village, and alongside the A43 and the Geddington to Grafton Underwood road, the park is surrounded by a wall, mostly of brick and probably early C18. On the line of the Broad Walk the wall is broken, with wooden paling connecting early C18 stone piers (listed grade II). Almost all of the park is permanent pasture, and it contains a fairly high density of mature parkland trees.

The park contains extensive areas of earthworks relating to pre-imparkment activity, notably large areas of ridge and furrow representing open-field land belonging to Boughton and Weekley. The site of Boughton, in the late Middle Ages a small and struggling settlement which was presumably depopulated following imparkment in 1473, is marked by a hollow-way and other earthworks 100m north of the stable block. Running north-east through the west side of the park from the green in Weekley

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village is a hollow-way, until the extension of the park in the C17 the Kettering to Stamford road. Close to the east side of Boughton House is a long, low, pillow mound; there was a warren in this area in the late C17 and early C18.

Extending out from the House and park are the still considerable surviving elements of the network of avenues (some 36km) and rides laid out across the Boughton estate from the later C17. (As with the gardens, only some of the main elements are here described; for a fuller discussion see RCHM(E) 1979, pp 154-64.) Among the most important vistas is the Broad Walk avenue west from the House, which had been laid out by 1715. At its east end, c 550m from the House, is an early to mid C18 statue base (listed grade II). This avenue was replanted west of the A43 in the late C20; underlying the pasture which the avenue crosses is well-preserved ridge and furrow, part of Weekley's open fields. Also surviving in good condition is the Lime Tree Avenue which runs south from the south side of the grounds to high ground 2km to the south, c 800m south-east of Warkton village. From this point other avenues radiated as a patte d'oie north-west and north-east; only occasional over-mature trees survive. The main avenue north from the House, now largely disappeared, led north for c 2.5km to the Geddington Chase wood, through which it continued for another 750m as a straight ride to a clearing around Chase Lodge, a C19 stone keeper's house. Six further straight rides radiate out in other directions from the clearing. Also registered is woodland (Bancroft Wood etc) c 1km north-east of the main park, again cut through with rides which formed part of the early C18 landscape.

Licence to impark 100 acres (c 41ha) was granted in 1473. The House lies near the centre of the original park which was roughly triangular, with its east boundary the modern Geddington to Grafton Underwood boundary. In the C17 the park was extended to the west necessitating a new line for the Kettering to Stamford road. The transformation of the House and gardens from the 1680s extended outwards to embrace much of the surrounding estate through the network of interconnecting avenues and rides, which north of Boughton run for 6km to and around the north side of Stanion village.

KITCHEN GARDEN The two stone-walled kitchen gardens, overall c 440m x 60m, part of the original late C17 scheme and still in cultivation, lie along the north side of The Wilderness. The west garden, twice the length of that to the east, is separated from it by the main walk south from the west front of the House.

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Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1888-90 2nd edition published 1900-1 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1900 1926 edition

Archival items [reproduced in *Northants Past & Present* 5, 1977] Estate map, 1715 (map 1382), (Northants Record Office)
Estate map, 1810 (map 5965), (Northants Record Office)

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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.