

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

LYNFORD HALL

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

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*Inventory of Great Britain*  
**LYNFORD HALL**

Name: LYNFORD HALL

County: Norfolk

District: Breckland (District Authority)

Parish: Lynford

County: Norfolk

District: Breckland (District Authority)

Parish: Mundford

label.localisation: Latitude: 52.509405  
Longitude: 0.67938003  
National Grid Reference: TL 81931 93542  
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden  
Grade: II  
List Entry Number: 1000224  
Date first listed: 18-Sep-1987

## Details

A formal garden designed in the mid 1860s by William Burns and William Andrews Nesfield and an early C20 Japanese water garden, set within a landscape of park and woodland originating in the C18 and greatly expanded in the mid C19.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The first hall at Lynford was built in c 1500 but this was functioning mainly as a large farmhouse when, in 1717, James Nelthorpe purchased the property from Sir Charles Turner and built a new house a short distance from the old hall, retaining the original building as Lynford Farm. The estate remained in the Nelthorpe family until 1805 when it was conveyed to George Eyres and, after a number of other owners, to Sir Richard Sutton in 1827, at which time the gardens and park covered only 26ha (OS Surveyor's drawings). Sir Richard commissioned the architect Charles Robert Cockerell to alter and remodel the house the same year and he expanded the grounds and the park. When the estate was sold in 1856 the Sale Particulars show the house set in a park of c 85ha with large areas of surrounding woodland and a narrow lake running east/west through its centre. The new owner Mr S Lyne Stephens demolished the house in 1863 and commissioned the architect William Burns to construct a new hall c 400m north of the old site, in the Jacobean-Renaissance style. Elaborate new formal gardens were laid out by William Andrews Nesfield (1793-1881), the park was expanded further and the narrow lake remodelled to become more serpentine. Following a fire in 1928, the Hall was restored in the 1930s by James Calder, after which it became the property of the Forestry Commission who planted up much of the surrounding area. After a brief return to private ownership the Hall and its gardens were converted into a hotel and country club, with a permanent caravan park being developed immediately to the east and the gardener's cottage and kitchen garden sold as a separate private dwelling. The remainder of the site is in commercial, divided ownership (1999).

### DESCRIPTION

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**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Lynford Hall lies some 8km north-west of Thetford, on the eastern edge of the village of Mundford, beside the A1065 Brandon to Swaffham road. The registered site covers c 65ha of parkland and woodland. It is situated in the flat Norfolk Brecklands on the northern fringes of Thetford Forest and is thus entirely surrounded by coniferous plantations. The site itself stands on virtually level ground with the Hall in the centre of the northern boundary on a slight rise, with the park dissected from east to west by a tributary of the River Wissey. The site is almost entirely enclosed by woodlands and plantations which make up all the boundaries, apart from a small area of open parkland to the south-west. The main views are from the south front of the Hall towards the river bridge 400m to the south-east and along the long drive to the south.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** Lynford Hall has one entrance, off the northern boundary past a mid C19 two-storey brick and slate lodge with ashlar dressings in the same style as the Hall. The drive enters the grounds through double stone gate piers and runs south for 150m before turning east beside a statue of a pair of bulls moved in the early C20 from the parterre garden, to enter the railed courtyard on the north front of the Hall. The drive is lined with Wellingtonias which extend into the woodland to the west beyond the statue along the vista aligned on the courtyard. The trees also run south along a cross axis in a continuation of the main drive. The avenues were both originally double in the C19 but many trees have been lost to *Armillaria* and those that survive are now (1999) showing signs of attack. The drive to the south of the statue is now a track but was originally a second drive which ran along the boundary between the western end of the park and the woodland before leaving the park to the south along a 1.2km long tree-lined vista. This vista cuts across a minor county road, the crossing formerly marked by a second lodge (now demolished).

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Lynford Hall (listed grade II) is a large, two-storey, Jacobean-style mansion built of red brick with ashlar dressings under a slate roof. The main entrance is on the north front which has an asymmetrical facade and an elaborate open porch with Doric columns. Attached to the west end is a new (late C20) single-storey ballroom extension. The south, garden front has a symmetrical facade of seven bays and a central glazed door opening onto the garden terrace. The block to the east of the main hall was razed to the ground following the fire of 1928 and only the basement survives.

The north front faces onto an enclosed inner courtyard with ornamental cast-iron screen to the west and stable and former coach-house courtyard to the north (both listed grade II). This outer courtyard is entered on the north and south sides through semicircular stone-dressed arches and there is a clock tower with leaded cupola in the north-east corner, between the two courtyards.

The Hall and stable courtyard were built for S Lyne Stephens by the architect William Burns in 1862 on a new site, the two previous buildings having stood further to the south beside the river. The Hall was reduced in size and refurbished following a fire in 1928.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The gardens lie to the south of the Hall on the gently sloping ground which stretches down to the serpentine river some 300m to the south, and extend to the east as far as the caravan park, and to the west into the plantation. Immediately south of the Hall is a complex formal terraced garden linked by steps and surrounded by balustrading (listed grade II). The main parterre extends east/west for 100m and southwards for 200m with a semicircular bastion at the southern end, aligned on the Hall and overlooking the water and the park beyond. These gardens were designed by William Burns and William Andrews Nesfield in the 1860s and were cut with complex beds filled with elaborate bedding schemes until the early C20. Although simplified now (1999) to grass areas decorated with clipped yew and box, the main lines of the original design survive, as does the central fountain and some of the urns and statuary. To the east of the parterre, on a lower level, stands the sunken Roman Garden, surrounded by low brick walls topped by yew hedges. A double set of brick piers marks the northern entrance to this area and leads to a brick path with central sunken pool. The Roman Garden is thought to be a feature added in the 1920s. Beyond the Roman Garden to the east is an area of lawn on the boundary of which stands the Temple of Mercury (listed grade II), c 200m east-south-east of the Hall. This circular ashlar garden temple with six Doric columns is aligned on the east/west axis of the formal gardens and whilst its style suggests an C18 origin, it must have been moved to this position when the new gardens were constructed in the mid C19. South of the Temple is a newly planted (1999) fruit garden, whilst below the garden bastion the lawn stretches down to the water. The eastern end of the water is spanned by an ornamental

bridge while at the western end a series of channels and islands have been created, the largest of which, developed in the early C20 as a Japanese water garden, is cut through with small streams. A newly constructed (1998) Japanese-style bridge links the lawn to the island where traces of the oriental planting survive, together with a recently restored (1998) Japanese Tea House. Further to the west lies a large conifer plantation which was planted on the site of the C19 woodland garden and pleasure ground. In the southern part of this wood, known as Zigzag Covert, c 400m south-west of the Hall, lies the Long Water, a 500m stretch of canalised stream linked by weirs to the lake and with plantations running close to each bank. The Long Water is aligned on the site of the earlier house and its geometrical form suggests it may be part of the early C19 landscape (UEA report). Photographs in *Country Life* in 1903 show that it had been developed by the beginning of the C20 into an ornamental walk, the sloping banks managed as close-cut grass and the wide walks bordered by mixed tree and shrub planting. The remains of a tunnel survive, running under the drive to link the formal gardens to the woodland walks, and in the plantation just to the north of the Long Water can be found traces of the yew, box, and holly which once lined the paths.

**PARK** The park at Lynford surrounds the Hall to west, east, and south and is dominated by woodlands and plantations, most of which date from the early years of the C20 when the Forestry Commission took control of the estate. There is a small area of open parkland to the south beyond the river, which remains under pasture and is scattered with a few individual oak trees. To the south of this lies the catholic chapel of St Mary and St Stephen (of knapped flint with ashlar dressings and topped by a circular bell tower; listed grade II\*), built in the south park for Mrs Lyne Stephens in 1879 by Henry Clutton.

To the east, beside the Hall is a fenced area currently (1999) used as a permanent caravan park for the elderly and beyond this the remaining eastern section has been developed by the Forestry Commission in recent years as an arboretum. Amongst the comparatively new collection of trees are some mature cedars, pines, and copper beech and a tulip tree, all probably dating from the development of the park in the C19. To the west are dense plantations which include the pleasure-ground area around the Long Water in Zigzag Covert (see above).

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The walled kitchen garden and gardener's cottage, used as a private dwelling, lie 350m to the east of the Hall and cover c 2ha. The walls of the garden are in a very poor condition and the internal layout of the garden derelict. Areas of glass and garden service ranges along the north wall are also derelict. The original date of the walled garden is not clear: it appears on the 1st edition OS map of 1883 but may be earlier, relating to the phase of alteration and extension undertaken by Richard Sutton in the early C19.

#### REFERENCES

J Grigor, *The Eastern Arboretum* (1841), p 349 *Country Life*, 14 (28 November 1903), pp 758/65 N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: North-west and South Norfolk* (1962), p 252 J Kenworthy-Browne et al, *Burke's and Savills Guide to Country Houses III*, (1981), p 155 T Williamson and A Taigel (eds), *Gardens in Norfolk* (1990), pp 45/7 Lynford Hall, (UEA report c 1992) T Williamson, *The archaeology of the landscape park*, *BAR Brit Ser* 268 (1998), p 261

Maps W Faden, *A new topographical map of the county of Norfolk*, 1797 (Norfolk Record Office) A Bryant, *Map of the county of Norfolk*, 1826 (Norfolk Record Office)

OS Surveyor's drawings, 1799 (British Library maps) OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1883 2nd edition published 1904 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1903

Archival items Private collection of early photographs Sale particulars, 1865 (WLS XVIII/13 410 X 9), (Norfolk Record Office) Description written: March 1999 Register Inspector: EMP Edited: March 2001

## 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.