

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

WROXALL ABBEY

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WROXALL ABBEY

Name: WROXALL ABBEY

County: Warwickshire

District: Warwick (District Authority)

Parish: Baddesley Clinton

County: Warwickshire

District: Warwick (District Authority)

Parish: Beausale, Haseley, Honiley and Wroxall

County: Warwickshire

District: Warwick (District Authority)

Parish: Rowington

County: Warwickshire

District: Warwick (District Authority)

Parish: Shrewley

label.localisation: Latitude: 52.333904
Longitude: -1.6816427
National Grid Reference: SP2179070694
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1001198
Date first listed: 01-Feb-1986

Details

Parkland with the remains of a late C17 formal landscape, together with mid C19 gardens and pleasure grounds.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

A Benedictine nunnery was founded at Wroxall c 1146 by Hugh fitz Richard of Hatton (VCH). The priory was dissolved in 1536, at which time the property included 'the house, gardens, barns and orchards, pools ... with the mill and the fishery in "Le Pole" called Wroxall Poole with one horsemill' (Ryland 1903). The estate was sold in 1542 and 1544 to Robert Burgoyne, one of Henry VIII's Commissioners in Warwickshire. Burgoyne died in 1545 and was succeeded by his son, also Robert, who

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took up residence at Wroxall c 1568 (ibid), demolishing part of the monastic church and building a manor house to the south. Robert Burgoyne II died in 1613, when he was succeeded by his son, Roger; in 1642 his son, John, who had inherited Wroxall in 1636, was created a baronet. Sir John's son, Sir Roger, who succeeded in 1657, fought for the Crown during the Civil War and c 1660 imparked c 60 acres (25ha) around the manor house. This park is described as 'lately impaled' in a lease of 1664 (ibid). Wroxall continued in the Burgoyne family until 1713 when the widow of Sir Roger's grandson, also Sir Roger, sold the estate to Sir Christopher Wren (1632-1723), Surveyor-General to Queen Anne. A survey of the estate was made by a Mr Bridgeman, possibly Charles Bridgeman (d 1738), in 1714; this shows the park with formal avenues radiating from the house. In 1715 Sir Christopher's son, also Christopher, married the widowed Lady Constance Burgoyne and lived at Wroxall until his death in 1747, when he was succeeded by his son, Christopher. The third Christopher Wren died in 1771, leaving the estate to his surviving son, also Christopher (d 1797). From 1771 to 1806 the estate was let to Samuel Aston of Birmingham. In 1797 it passed to Christopher Roberts Wren, who was living in India until 1812. Christopher Roberts Wren made improvements to the house and gardens between 1812 and his death in 1828, when the estate passed to his daughter Theodosia, who in 1837 married Chandos Hoskyns of Harewood, Herefordshire. Hoskyns was a noted agricultural improver (Tyack 1994) who made significant changes to the estate (VCH). On inheriting property in Herefordshire Hoskyns sold Wroxall Abbey in 1861 to James Dugdale, a banker and mill owner from Liverpool (ibid). Dugdale demolished the C16 house and in 1866-8 built a new mansion on a site to the west of the medieval church, accompanied by new formal gardens and pleasure grounds. James Dugdale died in 1876, leaving Wroxall to his son, James Broughton Dugdale, who in turn died without issue in 1932. In 1936 J B Dugdale's nephew, Lt Commander James G G Dugdale, leased the house to The Laurels School which moved from Rugby; the family sold the house and grounds to the school in 1963. The school, known since the mid C20 as Wroxall Abbey School, closed c 1996 and planning permission for conversion to an hotel was granted in 1998. Today (2000), the site remains in commercial use.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Wroxall Abbey is situated c 9km north-west of Warwick, to the west and south of the A4141 Birmingham Road. The c 115ha site comprises c 5ha of formal and informal gardens and pleasure grounds around the house, and c 100ha of parkland. The site is bounded to the north and east by the A4141 Birmingham Road, while to the south and west it adjoins agricultural land and woodland. The site is generally level, with a shallow valley falling away to the south-west of the house. There are significant views within the site across the park to the north-east, east and south-east, and across the park and surrounding agricultural land to the south-west. To the west and north-west woodland, including Hay Wood c 800m north-west of the house, a wood of medieval origin associated with neighbouring Baddesley Clinton Hall (qv), is also significant for the setting of the site.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Wroxall Abbey is entered from the A4141 Birmingham Road to the east. The entrance is marked by mid C19 quadrant walls and ornamental railings flanking brick piers surmounted by pyramidal stone finials which support ornamental wrought-iron gates (all listed grade II). Within the site and immediately to the north-west of the entrance stands a mid C19 gothic gabled brick lodge comprising a single storey and attic with stone ornaments (listed grade II). The entrance, gates and lodge were designed c 1866 by Walter Scott of Liverpool for James Dugdale; a lodge is shown on the site of the present structure on a plan of 1861 (sale particulars). The tarmac drive follows a straight course for c 480m west-south-west through an avenue of oak and limes to enter the pleasure grounds through a pair of C19 wrought-iron gates c 130m east of the house. The drive continues west-south-west for c 100m through the pleasure grounds to the south of the early C14 Church of St Leonard (listed grade I) and to the north of the C12 ruins of the priory (listed grade II*), to reach the forecourt below the east facade of the house. The forecourt is enclosed to the north, east and south by mid C19 stone balustrades (all listed grade II) with pierced quatrefoil openings; the balustrades were designed by Scott c 1866 and are contemporary with the mansion. An entrance to the south-east gives access to the drive, while a further entrance to the north-east leads to a service drive which sweeps c 30m north-east, north and west to reach the mid C19 stables (listed grade II) c 30m north of the house. The stables are U-shaped on plan with gothic details including a central clock turret flanked by gabled dormers; the courtyard is closed to the south by wrought-iron gates and brick walls. Dated 1866 (datestone), the stables were built by Scott and are contemporary with

the mansion; they replaced the Home Farm shown on Bridgeman's plan (1714). The stables are screened from the forecourt by an approximately oval lawn planted with ornamental trees and shrubs.

The east drive was developed in the early C19, replacing an approach from a public road which ran immediately to the west of the C16 house. This road entered the park from the Birmingham Road at a point c 650m north-east of the C19 mansion, where a pair of C18 rusticated stone piers (listed grade II) survive (2000). The road swept south and south-west across the park, crossing the north avenue c 200m north of the house to enter the 'Great Court' immediately west of the house (Bridgeman, 1714). It then ran c 530m south through the park to join a minor road c 100m south of the park boundary. The road is shown on the Bridgeman survey of 1714 and on a plan of 1805 by Stephen Godson; the 1861 sale plan indicates that the southern section of the road had been removed, while the present eastern approach had been constructed following the course of a late C17 or early C18 park avenue (Bridgeman, 1714). Today the northern section of the former road survives as a track leading from the Birmingham Road across the park to the stables and service quarters north of the house.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Wroxall Abbey (listed grade II) stands on a level terrace towards the centre of the site. The house comprises a principal range of two storeys and an attic, with service quarters to the north. The house is constructed in red brick with carved stone ornaments including a string course between the ground and first floor, mullion and transom windows and carved armorial achievements. The attics are lit by gabled dormers, while a carved stone oriel window projects above the entrance which is set to the south of the centre of the east facade. A similar oriel with granite columns lights the west facade, while the south or garden facade has a pair of full-height canted bay windows. The high-pitched slate roofs are broken by tall, ornamental brick chimney stacks. Wroxall Abbey was designed for James Dugdale by the Liverpool architect Walter Scott, and was built in 1866-8. The mid C19 mansion replaced a C16 manor house which stood on a site c 30m to the east, immediately to the south of and adjoining the parish church of St Leonard (listed grade I) which was formed from the north aisle of the monastic church. The house constructed by Robert Burgoyne (d 1613) incorporated elements of the C12 priory (all listed grade II*) which were retained as picturesque ruins when Dugdale demolished the house in 1866. The C16 house occupied the site of the west, south and east ranges around the medieval cloisters, and was entered from the west with a recessed forecourt flanked by ogee-gabled wings. This facade is shown in a drawing by Thomas Ward (1809), and in a view in the Aylesford Collection (c 1800); alterations made for Christopher Roberts Wren c 1820 by the Birmingham architect Joseph Bateman are shown in an engraving by J P Neale (1822).

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The formal gardens lie to the west, south and north-east of the house, with informal pleasure grounds to the south and south-east. The gardens and pleasure grounds are separated from the surrounding park by C19 and C20 metal railings, while c 50m east of the house the graveyard associated with and immediately to the north of St Leonard's church is enclosed to the west, north and east by brick walls.

A gravel terrace extends below the south facade of the house, and returns below the west facade. The west terrace is terminated to the north by a mid C20 swimming pool constructed on the site of a mid C19 conservatory. A gravel walk extends north beyond the terrace to give access to the lawns below, and to the kitchen garden to the north. The terrace is separated from a lawn by a grass bank, while stone steps descend from the northern end of the terrace to the lawn. Some 60m west of the house the boundary of the pleasure grounds is screened by groups of C19 ornamental trees and shrubs. The west lawn and shrubberies replace an area described in the early C19 as 'The Lawn' (Godson, 1805), which in turn replaced the Great Court or entrance court west of the C16 house (Bridgeman, 1714).

To the south of the house a flight of stone steps aligned on the centre of the facade descends a grass bank below the upper terrace to reach a second gravel terrace leading west to a flight of steps which descends to the lawns, and which is terminated to the east by a C19 summerhouse. To the south of the lower terrace a formal rose garden comprises geometric beds divided by gravel walks which radiate from a centrally placed C19 stone sundial; the beds are articulated by eight topiary box domes and a pair of similar topiary yews (Sidwell 1982). Semicircular on plan, the rose garden breaks forward into the pleasure grounds and is enclosed by C19 stone balustrades (listed grade II) which return to east and west to enclose square lawns. A double flight of stone steps (listed grade II) placed on the central axis of the rose garden descends to lawns and informal pleasure grounds. The terraces and rose garden were designed by Scott c 1866 and are contemporary with the mid C19 mansion.

From the summerhouse at the east end of the second terrace a walk sweeps south-east to reach a further area of formal lawns c 30m south-east of the house which surround the ruins of the medieval priory. The walk encloses a circular flower bed c 50m south-east of the house before continuing east to reach a level lawn which it borders to the south and east. The south walk forms a terrace retained by a low C18 brick wall, while the east walk is informal, leading through evergreen shrubbery to join the east drive c 100m east of the house. To the east the lawn is enclosed by an early C18 brick wall, while to the north-west there are further monastic remains. This lawn is approximately square on plan and is planted with a scattered group of five mature cedars, together with other specimen trees. A shallow flight of stone steps descends from the central point of the lawn to reach C20 tennis courts enclosed to the east and south by evergreen shrubbery. The steps are flanked by a pair of early C18 rusticated stone piers surmounted by stone fluted vase finials (piers and retaining walls listed grade II). The upper or south-east lawn corresponds to the southern half of an early C18 walled garden to the east of the C16 house which is shown on the Bridgeman plan (1714), the Godson plan (1805) and the sale plan (1861). The lawn is the site of the mid C19 flower garden, described in 1861 as 'tastefully laid out in parterres and ... adorned with Flowering Shrubs and Trees of great beauty' (sale particulars). To the north of the east drive the northern area of this garden survives (2000) and is known as the 'Wren Garden'. The garden is enclosed to the east and north by early C18 brick walls. The north wall (listed grade II) comprises six semicircular recesses linked by rectangular piers surmounted by urns. This wall is said to have been designed by Sir Christopher Wren, but there is no documentary evidence to support this tradition (listed building description). The Wren Garden is today enclosed to the south and west by yew hedges, the boundary to the south-west describing a semicircular bay. The eastern half of the garden is occupied by mid C20 tennis courts, while central north/south and east/west walks are bounded by espalier fruit trees. The east/west walk and a walk below the north wall are terminated to the west by gates set in the west yew hedge which lead to the Broad Walk, a yew-hedged walk leading north from the east drive to a gate set in the north wall. Early C20 wrought-iron gates and an overthrow designed by Clough Williams-Ellis (1883-1978) are supported by a pair of brick piers (rebuilt late C20) on early C19 stone bases (all listed grade II). This gateway is aligned with the piers and steps c 160m to the south; C18 and C19 surveys indicate that the gateways were aligned respectively on the north and south park avenues. With the exception of the C20 tennis courts, the present layout of the Wren Garden reflects the outline shown by Bridgeman (1714), and Godson (1805). In 1861 this garden was described as kitchen garden, with the north wall being planted with fruit trees (sale particulars). An approximately rectangular pond c 15m east of the north-east corner of the Wren Garden is similarly a feature surviving unchanged from Bridgeman's survey (1714); the pond may be of medieval origin.

The informal pleasure grounds below the south terraces and to the south-west of the house comprise lawns planted with groups of specimen trees and shrubs. These fall gently from the terraced gardens to a lake of irregular outline c 80m south-west of the house; an island in the lake is planted with specimen trees. A C19 boathouse on the west side of the lake c 150m south-west of the house (OS 1886) does not survive (2000), but a late C20 timber landing stage has been constructed c 80m south-west of the house. A serpentine inlet to the north-east of the lake is crossed by the remains of a late C19 or early C20 stone and timber bridge flanked by C20 ornamental planting. Some 50m south-east of the house a mound planted with evergreen shrubs and trees contains an C18 or early C19 brick-lined icehouse. The pleasure grounds correspond to the 'Kiln Meadow' shown on Godson's early C19 plan, while the lake is shown in approximately its present form on Bridgeman's plan of 1714. Bridgeman and Godson indicate that the lake was fed from a chain of three square ponds to the north-east, on the site of the C20 tennis courts immediately below the south-east lawn. These ponds, which are shown in an early C19 view (private collection), were removed by 1861 (sale plan), by which date informal pleasure grounds had been laid out adjacent to a mid C19 drive which swept south from the west side of the house to join the mid C19 east drive.

PARK Surrounding the house on all sides, the park is today in mixed agricultural use, with scattered mature parkland trees and C19 clumps of trees surviving in arable land and pasture. Mixed boundary plantations enclose the park to the north, north-east, east and south-west. The park is divided by four avenues which radiate from the house and pleasure grounds to the north, east, south-east and south. The avenues correspond to those shown on Bridgeman's plan (1714); the west avenue shown by Bridgeman had been removed by 1805 (Godson) and does not survive. The north avenue, aligned on the gate in the north wall of the Wren Garden, extends c 650m north-north-west across the park to the Birmingham Road, and comprises mature oaks.

The east avenue was replanted with limes in the early or mid C19 when a new access was constructed on the line of the late C17 or early C18 oak avenue; this has been the principal approach to the house since 1866. Mid C20 sports pitches lie in the park to the south of the east avenue, with a mid C20 pavilion c 300m east-south-east of the house. The south-east avenue or Fir Tree Walk extends c 400m south-east across the park from the pleasure grounds, and is partly planted with mature pines; this avenue is identified as the Fir Tree Walk on Godson's plan (1805), and is described in the sale particulars of 1861. The south avenue is today fragmented, with groups of trees and shrubs extending in a broken line c 400m south-south-east across the park from a C19 metal pedestrian gate set in the metal fence forming the southern boundary of the pleasure grounds c 190m south-east of the house. The Bridgeman plan (1714) shows a conventional avenue leading south to the park boundary, but in 1805 the south avenue is described as the 'Serpentine Walk or The Grove' (Godson). The sale plan of 1861 similarly indicates a serpentine walk extending from the pleasure grounds to the park boundary through a narrow belt of trees and shrubs. Vistas radiating from the house and pleasure grounds across the park are framed by mid and late C19 clumps of trees, while boundary plantations c 650m west of the house frame views beyond the park. A series of ponds, many corresponding to those shown on Godson's plan (1805) are scattered throughout the park, while a spring rising in a copse c 300m west of the house has been known as Lady's Well since the mid C19 (sale plan, 1861).

The first record of a park at Wroxall occurs in a lease of January 1664 which refers to 60 acres (25ha) 'lately impaled' by Sir Roger Burgoyne. Bridgeman's survey (1714) indicates that in the early C18 the park to the north, north-east and west of the house was in agricultural use and divided into a series of enclosures. The south-east quarter of the park, bounded to the north-east by the east avenue and to the south-west by the public road (closed 1866) is described as the 'Timber Park'. The Timber Park is crossed from north-west to south-east by the south-east avenue or Fir Tree Walk. Godson's plan (1805) indicates few C18 developments in the park. Extensive improvements were undertaken by Chandos Wren Hoskyns between 1837 and 1860 which combined aesthetic enhancement and agricultural improvement (VCH). The sale particulars of 1861 describe the park as a 'large extent of Finely timbered ground' which included 'capital pastureland'. The associated plan indicates that the mid C19 park corresponded to that shown by Bridgeman in 1714, the western boundary of which was a stream c 320m west of the mid C19 mansion. Land to the west of this stream was taken into the park by James Dugdale between 1861 and 1886 (OS). The present park corresponds closely to that shown on the late C19 OS.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden lies immediately to the north of the house, and is enclosed to the south-west, west, north and north-east by mid C19 brick walls c 3m high. The north-west and north-east angles of the garden are canted. To the south-east the garden adjoins the mid C19 stables and staff cottages, while to the south it adjoins the service quarters north of the main range of the house. The garden is currently (2000) planted with conifers. Remnants of glasshouses, vineries and peach houses survive to the south-west. The late C19 OS map indicates that the garden was divided by walks into five approximately rectangular beds. The kitchen garden was designed by Scott and is contemporary with the mid C19 mansion. The mid C19 garden replaced an early C18 kitchen garden which occupied what is today known as the Wren Garden c 100m east of the house. Both Bridgeman's (1714) and Godson's (1805) plan indicate that a rectangular orchard was situated to the east of the Wren Garden and south-east lawn; this had been incorporated into the pleasure grounds by 1861 (sale plan) and does not survive.

REFERENCES

J P Neale, *Views of the Seats ... IV*, (1821) J W Ryland, *Records of Wroxall Abbey and Manor* (1903) A Dryden, *Memorials of Old Warwickshire* (1908), pp 207-8 Victoria History of the County of Warwickshire III, (1945), pp 215-19 N Pevsner and A Wedgwood, *The Buildings of England: Warwickshire* (1966), pp 483-5 B Bourke, *The Laurels and Wroxall Abbey* (1972) R Sidwell, *West Midland Gardens* (1982), pp 239-40 Wroxall Abbey, *Warwickshire: Historical Landscape Survey*, (Warwickshire Gardens Trust 1992) G Tyack, *Warwickshire Country Houses* (1994), pp 220-2
Maps Bridgeman, *Survey of Wroxall Estate, 1714* [in Ryland 1903, p 68] H Bighton, *A Map of Barlichway Hundred*, surveyed 1725, published 1729 S Godson, *A Plan and Survey of Part of the Wroxall Estate, 1805*, redrawn 1831 (CR113/199), (Warwickshire County Record Office) Sale plan, 1861 (CR113/203), (Warwickshire County Record Office)
OS Old Series 1" to 1 mile, published 1831 OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed and published 1886 2nd edition published 1906 3rd edition published 1926 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1886 2nd edition published 1905 3rd edition published 1925

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Illustrations Drawing, Wroxall Hall, c 1800 (Aylesford Collection, Birmingham Reference Library Archive) T Ward, The Prospect of Wroxall in the County of Warwick, 1809 (British Library Add MSS 29265) Drawing, Wroxall Abbey from the south-west, 1825 (private collection) Drawing, Wroxall Abbey from the south-east, c 1825 (private collection) J G Jackson, Wroxall Abbey from the north-west, 1846 (Warwickshire County 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.