

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

SPYE PARK

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Name:	SPYE PARK
District:	Wiltshire (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Bromham
District:	Wiltshire (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Lacock
District:	Wiltshire (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Melksham Without
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.405984 Longitude: -2.0681536 National Grid Reference: ST 95356 67442 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001619 Date first listed: 10-Jun-2002

Details

Remains of an early C18 garden by Stephen Switzer, set in late C18 pleasure grounds and a landscape park, with further late C19 landscaping.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The first house known as Spye Park was built c 1645 by the Bayntun family, after the destruction of their family seat of Bromham House in the Civil War. The diarist John Evelyn (1620-1706) visited Spye in 1654 and his Diary entry for 19 July that year records: 'Sir Edward Baynton's at Spie Park, a place capable of being made a noble seat; but the humorous old Knight has built a long single house of two low stories on the precipice of an incomparable prospect, and landing on a bowling green in the park. The house is like a long barn, and has not a window on the prospect side'. In the early C18 Stephen Switzer (1682-1745) worked at Spye, recording his work on an Italian cascade made 'sometime since' as 'equal to any in the French Gardens, the Falls of the Water being over Steps and rough Work of different Kinds and different Heights, of about 30 or 40 Foot Fall' (Switzer 1734). Switzer also formed a canal which fed little square basins for fish (Loudon 1822), and he commented on the number of springs and the good water quality, from the sandy soil (Switzer 1734).

Between 1762 and 1800 Spye was owned by Sir Edward Bayntun Rolt, who preserved the ancient trees in the park and remodelled the house, possibly employing the architect Edward Stephens (Trafford-Roberts 2001). Robertson (1792) referred to the 'Forest Scenery' in the park due to the number of ancient trees and to 'an ancient building, but the front next to the park has been modernised, and is ornamented by a handsome portico'. Within ten years many of the trees had been removed and the park was described by Warner (1801) as being as bare as Salisbury Plain. This was probably the work of Sir Andrew Bayntun

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Rolt, who inherited in 1800. William Emes (1730-1803) may have been employed to carry out alterations to the park in the late C18 (Trafford-Roberts 2001).

In the mid C19 a Dr Starkey purchased the estate at Spye from the Bayntun family. Starkey made minor changes to the house and sold the estate to J W Spicer in 1864. Spicer demolished the C17 house in 1868 and employed the architect William Burn (1789-1870) to build a new one, set slightly behind the old house, on higher ground but utilising the same views to the south-west. An article in the *Gardeners' Chronicle* (1891) refers to ancient trees in the park and trees on the lawn which were several hundred years old. A new shrubbery was planted on the steeply sloping ground near the site of the old house and an extensive walled garden was built near Chittoe in 1876 (Trafford-Roberts 2001). Since the late C19 there have been some minor additions to the pleasure grounds but few alterations have been made in the park. In the 1990s the C19 house was demolished as a result of fire damage and the former stables were subsequently converted into the main residence. Spye Park remains (2002) in private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Spye Park, c 315ha (as here registered), is located c 6km south-east of Chippenham in the county of Wiltshire. The park is set in an area of farmland and other designed landscapes, with Bowden Park immediately to the north-west, Bowood (qv) c 2km to the north-east, and Lacock Abbey (qv) c 3km to the north-west. The park is bounded by the Lacock road and the village of Bowden Hill to the north-west, the Lacock road along the north side, by open farmland to the south-west and south-east, by Devizes Road and the village of Sandy Lane to the north-east, and by Clink Lane and the village of Chittoe to the south. The centre of the park occupies a high position looking out over the Avon Vale, with the ground falling steeply to the south-west. A small valley crosses the park from the north-west to the south-east. There are good views from the house site, the gardens, and from the higher ground in the park, to the south-west. The boundaries are marked by a mixture of fences and walls.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Three drives lead through the park to the site of the house, one from the north-west, one from the north-east, and the third from the south. The main drive is from the Lacock road and enters the north-west edge of the park through an early C16 Tudor gatehouse, Spye Arch (listed grade II*), which is situated c 1km north-west of the site of the house. It is built of ashlar with a stone slate roof and is of two storeys with a battlemented parapet. There are C18 gothic ogee-headed niches to either side of the arch, and an oriel window on the first floor. The apron panels bear the arms of Henry VIII. The gatehouse was built for Bromham House and was moved to Spye Park in the late C18, when it was remodelled slightly. A drive leads through the arch and then runs east for 200m, lined by an avenue of late C18 or early C19 limes and horse chestnuts, with additional mature sycamore. A side drive from the north-west joins the main drive at the end of the avenue, giving access to Spye Arch House and some estate cottages. The drive then curves for 300m through Powney's Wood, where it is lined by mature laurels, to the C19 red-brick Middle Lodge. The drive then enters the western park and runs south-east for c 400m, flanked by ancient oak trees to the south, and then divides into three. The southern drive leads south for c 200m to the turning circle in front of the platform and surviving portico of the former house. The middle drive leads first south-east, then south-west to Spye Park House (the former stables), the Dairy Farm, and finally south (c 900m in total) to a lodge (c 450m south of the former house site) and the kennels at the Chittoe entrance. The northernmost of the three branches of the drive leads east for c 400m, alongside the upper pond, and then curves north-east across the northern park for c 800m to White Lodge (c 1.1km north-east of the former house site, now a stables and equestrian centre) on the Lacock road.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Spye Park was built in 1863-8 by William Burn for J W G Spicer. It was demolished in the 1990s after a fire. All that remains of the house is the entrance porch and the house platform, from which there are excellent views to the south-west. Pevsner (Cherry and Pevsner 1975) described the house as 'symmetrical gabled Tudor'. It had a low extension on the north-west end of the garden front and a circular tower to the right which were both added in 1871.

Spye Park House (listed grade II) stands c 250m to the south-south-west of the site of Spye Park. It was the former stables and coach house to Spye Park and is now the main residence. The original range, in ashlar with a stone slate roof, was built in the mid C17 for the Bayntun family. There are C19 additions including a stable range, probably built for J W G Spicer after 1864.

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GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The site of the former house lies between two large lawns. That to the north-east is largely open, giving views to the north and north-east over the valley of a stream, framed by scattered C18 oaks. Towards the southern end of this lawn, c 100m east of the former house site, is the Game Larder (listed grade II), built c 1870 in red brick with ashlar dressings. It has a steep, octagonal roof with bellcast eaves and an octagonal lantern, and a projecting gabled porch on the west side.

To the south-west of the house site is an extensive lawn lined by trees within the pleasure grounds, which frame the views. The trees include C18 oaks, ash, and horse chestnuts, supplemented by C19 and C20 ornamentals, and with an understorey of yew, hazel, and holly. At the north-east end of this lawn are the footings of the former house, raised on a platform and faced in stone (and formerly with balustrading which has been relocated to the north-east of Spye Park House). Below the plinth is a long grass terrace, formerly reached by a flight of semicircular steps (now gone) at the north-west end. At the south-east end of the terrace there is a stone loggia or gazebo, with glazed sides and an open front with four pillars. To the north-east of the loggia is a partly walled flower garden, with a service area and garages beyond. Between the flower garden and the south terrace is a raised circular area planted with C18 limes. A narrow canal is situated on the lawn, c 15m to the south-west of the terraces, with a covered seat at the north-west end. The planting in the pleasure grounds to the north-west of the lawn includes C19 pines, cypresses, and blue cedar, with some older trees and areas of shrubs. A large, roughly circular feature, possibly an early C20 croquet lawn, lies c 100m to the west-south-west of the house site. It consists of an area of grass surrounded by a slightly raised mound.

The south-west end of the lawn terminates at a steep slope which acts as a ha-ha. It was designed to be open but now has scrubby trees growing on it. It was referred to by Switzer as the 'precipice', and on it have been found remains of water features, possibly those by Switzer (Trafford-Roberts 2001).

PARK There are three areas of park, located to the north, west, and east of the site of the former house. The planting largely dates from the late C18, with some ancient oaks. A stream runs from north-west to south-east through the park, dividing the north park from the western and eastern areas. There are two ponds along the course of the stream, the upper pond immediately north of the drive to White Lodge, and the lower pond, c 600m east-south-east of the former house. The ponds, along with several others along the stream, are shown on the OS map of 1886. The northern part of the west park, lying to the south of the main drive, is in pasture but the land running from the west side of the pleasure grounds down to Clink Lane is now partly in arable (2002). In the north park, which is now in arable, there is a clump of C19 Scots pine on the rising ground to the west of the drive. The small eastern park is mainly pasture, with a cricket pitch and pavilion c 200m to the south of the site of the former house. There are two large areas of woodland in the park, Powney's Wood to the north-west, and Pond Moor to the south-east, both of which are shown on Andrews and Dury's map of Wiltshire (1773) and the OS map of 1886. These are predominantly oak and ash, with understorey planting of laurel, yew, and holly. Woodland now (2002) extends north from Pond Moor up to White Lodge, occupying an extensive area of former parkland.

The semicircular eastern tip of the park, beyond the woodland, is now (2002) managed as farmland belonging to Home Farm, which is situated c 150m south of the Lacock road. The area is bounded by a woodland belt around the curving north-east and east side, and has an early C20 irregularly shaped pond with an island, Leech Pond, located just south of the centre and surrounded by woodland.

KITCHEN GARDEN An extensive walled garden is situated c 500m south-east of the former house site. The red-brick walls and the Garden Lodge (for which the walled garden is now a private domestic garden) were built in 1876.

REFERENCES

S Switzer, *An Introduction to a General System of Hydrostaticks and Hydraulicks* (1734) A Robertson, *Topographical survey of the Great Road 2*, (1792), pp 55-7 Rev R Warner, *Excursions from Bath* (1801), p 209 J C Loudon, *An encyclopaedia of gardening* (1822) *Gardeners' Chronicle*, ii (1891), pp 677-8 E S de Beer, *The Diary of John Evelyn* (1955) N Pevsner and B Cherry, *The Buildings of England: Wiltshire* (1975), pp 120-1 *A Survey of the Historic Landscape at Spye Park, Wiltshire*, (Roland Trafford-Roberts 2001)

Maps Andrews and Dury, *Map of Wiltshire*, 1773

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OS 6" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1901 1925 edition OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1886

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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.