

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

WALL HALL

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WALL HALL

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| Name:               | WALL HALL  |
| County:             | Hertfordshire  |
| District:           | Hertsmere (District Authority)   |
| Parish:             | Aldenham   |
| label.localisation: | Latitude: 51.682303<br>Longitude: -0.36005234<br>National Grid Reference: TQ1347599444<br><a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a> |
| label.overview:     | Heritage Category: Park and Garden<br>Grade: II<br>List Entry Number: 1001455<br>Date first listed: 17-Feb-2000                                |

## Details

A late C18 country house surrounded by an early C19 park and pleasure grounds laid out with advice from Humphry Repton, who provided a Red Book of suggestions in 1803. The site was further modified later in the C19 and early C20, with the addition of college buildings in the mid to late C20.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

By the mid C18 a house called Wars Hall, owned by Thomas Neate (Dury and Andrews, 1766; Page 1920), stood east of the River Colne, the estate having formerly been part of Aldenham Manor. In 1799 the Wars Hall estate was sold to George Thelluson, who remodelled the house in Gothick style and laid out the surrounding park and pleasure grounds. In 1801 the Aldenham enclosure act was passed, as a result of which Thelluson and other prominent residents closed several roads and built new ones. In November 1802 Humphry Repton (1752-1818) visited the estate, and in 1803 produced a Red Book (copy at HRO), with suggestions for improving the landscape, particularly the drive system. An 1803 map of Aldenham parish (which does not show the site of the Hall as it was at that time in St Stephen's parish) shows a substantial chalk pit, which was shortly afterwards incorporated in the pleasure grounds, and the home farm. In 1812 the estate, by then known as Wall Hall, was sold to Admiral Sir Charles Maurice Pole (d 1822), MP for Plymouth, who renamed the property Aldenham Abbey. A plan (Shaw, 1812) was made to accompany sale particulars which described the grounds laid out by Thelluson, including a stream 'of Clear running Water, made at considerable Expense' which 'presents a pleasing Object from the House', together with 'Dry gravel walks leading through beautiful shrubberies, flower gardens, etc to a Capital Circular Conservatory, And through beautiful rustic Virandas, entwined with Honeysuckles, to an extensive range of Pheasantries, Aviaries, Bowers, etc'. Gothic ruins were also mentioned, embellished with discarded masonry from Aldenham parish church, and two kitchen gardens with a 'noble circular fronted Peach House, with graperies at the ends' (D/P3/29/9B).

A further plan was made in 1826 (Goodman) which shows the pleasure grounds, by then extended and embellished, and park, together with a sunk fence at the south-west boundary. Further work occurred on the estate during the later C19, particularly c 1860 during the ownership of William Stuart (the widowed son-in-law of Sir Charles Pole, d 1874). This work is reflected on the 1st edition 6" and 25" OS maps of 1883, by which time the park had been extended south-west beyond the sunk fence.

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In 1901 the estate was leased by John Pierpont Morgan Jr (d 1942), an American banker, who bought it in 1910, using it for social functions, including many sporting parties. Although often absent from the estate, he bought up a large amount of surrounding farmland and is thought to have created an Italian Garden (Elizabeth Banks Assocs 1999). Upon Morgan's death Hertfordshire County Council acquired the property, which became the residence of the United States of America's Ambassador, Joseph Kennedy, for the duration of the Second World War. In 1949 the Hall became a teacher training college, subsequently part of Hatfield Polytechnic, which in the 1990s became the University of Hertfordshire. The site is now (1999) in divided ownership, the park being overlain by a golf course.

#### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Wall Hall lies 2.5km west of Radlett and 3km north-east of the centre of Watford, on the northern edge of the village of Aldenham. The c 65ha site is bounded largely by agricultural land, and to the south-west by a golf course, part of which also occupies the majority of the parkland. The undulating ground slopes down towards the north-west to the River Colne, from which the site is separated by a band of water meadows. The setting is largely rural, with Aldenham close by to the south. Nearby to the south-west and west runs the M1 motorway, over which views extend west from the park and entrance front of the Hall towards Watford.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The main approach enters the site in Aldenham, 1km south-south-east of the Hall, off Church Lane which forms the main village street. The entrance to the south drive is marked on the south side by a single-storey, C19 brick lodge which stands at the north-east corner of the village green, overlooked by the church and churchyard to the east. A further C19 lodge, of two storeys and brick-built with gothic windows, stands to the north-west of the first lodge, on the north side of the drive, overlooking the green to the south. The south drive curves north-west, flanked by mature trees, entering the park 600m south-west of the Hall. A 600m long central section, now (1999) disused, remains as a bridleway. Some 650m south-south-west of the Hall the drive turns north and, 300m south-west of the Hall, north-east, entering 100m south-west of the Hall the west lawn, which is planted with mature trees, including cedars of Lebanon. The south drive ascends the open lawn via a gentle slope, arriving at a turning circle on the west front of the Hall which overlooks the surrounding lawn. A large porte-cochère (c 1860) encloses the entrance to the Hall, from which views extend west across the parkland and valley to Watford, as mentioned by Repton (Red Book 1803).

The south drive was in existence by 1812 (Shaw), when it extended from the village through agricultural land. The drive entered the parkland (which was enlarged in the later C19, OS 1883) at its former boundary 450m south-west of the Hall (Shaw, 1812), crossing the former sunk fence (traces of which remain as a ditch, 1999) which marked the park boundary at that time.

A further, south-west drive enters the site 1km south-west of the Hall, at Otterspool Lodge, giving access from Otterspool and the A41 London Road. The two-storey, white-painted brick building with gothic-arched windows stands adjacent to the west side of the drive, at the south-west tip of Bingham's wood, overlooking the River Colne below to the west. From here the drive curves north-east through Bingham's, rising up a gentle hillside to enter the park 700m from the Hall, with views extending north and north-west across the river valley, and north-east towards the west front of the Hall. The drive joins the northern end of the disused part of the south drive 300m south-west of the Hall, from where they extend north-east as one to enter the west lawn. The south-west drive had been created by 1812 (Shaw), when its course extended south-east along the southern edge of Bingham's, joining the south drive 600m from the Hall, at the point where the south drive now (1999) enters the park. The south-west drive was modified to its present course later in the C19, probably at the same time as the south-western third of the park (formerly agricultural land) was incorporated and landscaped.

A spur leaves the south drive 850m south of the Hall, turning north to cross agricultural land (outside the area here registered), following the course of a former service drive (OS 1898) and entering the registered area 450m south of the Hall. The drive passes to the east of an area of late C20 accommodation blocks 350m south of the Hall, turning north-west west of the home farm, which stands 250m south-east of the Hall, to join the south drive as it enters the west lawn 100m from the Hall.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Wall Hall (C18, enlarged 1802, 1830, early C20, listed grade II) stands in the north-east half of the site, set on a plateau which overlooks the Colne valley to the north and west. The two-storey house is of cement-rendered brick

and was remodelled and enlarged by George Thelluson in Picturesque Gothick style c 1802. The main entrance on the west front, enclosed by a porte-cochère, is flanked by two turrets, these in turn flanked by corner turrets, creating a grand gothick facade. The two-storey, brick stable block (now converted to domestic accommodation) stands close by to the south of the Hall, from which it is separated by the former stable yard. The stable block forms the western half of the north boundary of the kitchen garden, and is surmounted by a prominent clock turret.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** Gardens and pleasure grounds enclose the Hall to the north and east. A door in the north, garden front opens onto the open north lawn, which is flanked by mature trees, including cedars of Lebanon, and slopes gently down to the north. The north lawn is enclosed by an approximately oval path, which leads off the carriage sweep on the west front at the north-west corner of the Hall via a clipped yew hedge which screens the main entrance to the Hall and the west lawn from the north lawn. The north edge of the lawn is marked by a line of stones, beyond which a meadow occupying a steep slope descends to an artificial cut of the River Colne, 170m north of the Hall, forming part of the north-west boundary of the site. The cut is broadened to form a narrow lake and backed to the north-west by mature trees.

The meadow divides two arms of the wooded pleasure grounds to the south-west and north-east. A path, now largely overgrown (1999), runs along the south-east, garden side of the artificial cut, linking the two halves of the pleasure grounds. The pleasure ground to the south-west of the meadow occupies a ridge which slopes north-west from the Hall, down to the artificial cut. The remains of a small quarry garden occupy the north-west tip of this arm of the pleasure grounds. By the 1820s (Goodman, 1826; OS 1898) this area contained a network of informal paths, possibly with views across the cut below to the north, towards the water meadows and the main course of the River Colne beyond. In 1812 this area of pleasure ground was smaller and oval, it having been extended by 1826 to its present form (Shaw, 1812; Goodman, 1826).

The artificial cut enters the site at the northern tip of the north-east pleasure grounds, this area being dominated by a large, oval, former quarry area lying at the centre, 150m north-east of the Hall. The quarry is encircled at the edge of its rim by mature yews marking the site of a walk which remains in outline, although partly overgrown (1999), overlooking the interior of the quarry. A levelled area occupies the east edge of the rim, forming a broad platform overlooking the interior. The sloping edges of the quarry are planted with scattered mature trees, including yews, and the bottom has been laid out as an open-air theatre (mid-late C20, disused). A walk leads east from the south end of the platform, running along the south boundary of a woodland 200m north-east of the Hall. The walk, flanked by an avenue of mature trees including oaks and sweet chestnuts underplanted largely with laurel, extends c 150m east along the south edge of the wood up a gentle hillside. It terminates at a point where the hillside reaches a gentle peak, affording views east and south to Aldenham parish church tower in the valley below and the surrounding countryside. A path returns south-west from the quarry back to the north lawn.

The north-east pleasure grounds were laid out as part of the 1810s scheme (Shaw, 1812; Goodman, 1826), although at that time the woodland did not extend as far north of the quarry as now (1999). It appears that the parkland extended north-east alongside the new cut, incorporating the sloping meadow below the north lawn, and that the two flanking areas of pleasure grounds were rather smaller (Shaw, 1812). By the 1820s (Goodman, 1826) the meadow dividing the pleasure ground areas was still referred to as 'parkland', although the south-west arm of the pleasure grounds had been extended north-west, to the water's edge, so cutting off the meadow from the main body of parkland. By the late C19 (OS 1883, 1899) the whole area up to the cut had been incorporated within the pleasure grounds, with footbridges across the cut, and a boathouse.

A straight path leads south from the east side of the north lawn across the east lawn, bounded to the west by the remains of the kitchen garden wall, and to the east by a line of mature trees. A university building standing 100m south-east of the Hall divides the east lawn into north and south halves. The path terminates towards the south end of the lawn, encircling a group of mature yews and other trees which screen a gothick sham ruined building (c 1800, listed grade II), standing 230m south-south-east of the Hall. The tall ruin, built of cement-rendered brick, faces north, along the line of the path. The north side of the ruin has an arched doorway, above which is a large, ruinous traceried window incorporating mouldings taken from Aldenham parish church. The doorway leads from the lawn to the intentionally roofless interior, where gaps in the 'ruined' west and east walls provide exits, that to the west being framed by a further stone doorway. From the east exit a path leads south-east to a further sham ruin (c 1800, listed grade II), a gothick facade standing 250m south-south-east of the Hall. The facade consists of a tall

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brick wall, the upper half rendered, with a large arched gateway and a turret, and stands immediately north of the former Home Farm farmyard, the surrounding buildings now (1999) converted to university accommodation. From the gothic facade a path leads south-east to an area of woodland in which the icehouse (c 1800, listed grade II) stands, 300m south-east of the Hall.

In the early C19 (Shaw, 1812; Goodman, 1826) the path across the east lawn led south straight to the sham ruined building. The ruin was also entered from the west side via a path which led from the south front of the Hall, south through a further area of wooded pleasure grounds, now (1999) occupied by university buildings, and a path from the south side of the kitchen garden. By the late C19 (OS 1898) the path leading across the east lawn split at the south-east corner of the kitchen garden into an approximately oval path which encircled a lawn planted with several conifers on the north side of the ruined building, leading to the west and east sides of the building.

South-east of the east lawn lies the formal Italian Garden, laid largely to lawn and enclosed by clipped yew hedges. It is entered from the centre of the west side, where the yew hedge stands above a brick and flint retaining wall, via a gateway with brick piers and a flight of semicircular stone steps leading up from the south end of the east lawn. A further gateway, in similar style, stands at the centre of the north side, giving access to the former orchard (OS 1898). A brick and timber loggia (now derelict) stands at the centre of the south side, flanked by the hedge. At the centre of the garden lies a square, stone-edged pond, with a mature cedar close by to the south-east. A raised grass terrace runs along the east edge. It is probable that J P Morgan created the Italian Garden during his occupation of the Hall, in the early C20. In the 1940s (RAF) two central paths in cruciform pattern were laid out (now, 1999, not visible), leading to a path which surrounded the pond.

**PARK** The park extends south and south-west from the Hall and pleasure grounds, and is divided unequally into west and east halves by the south drive. The east half, occupying level ground, is laid to arable, with the east edge being occupied by late C20 university accommodation bounded to the east by a belt of woodland, through which the present course of the service drive runs. On the east boundary stands the Home Farm, with a brick-built, two-storey farmhouse, and the former farmyard to the north-west.

The west half of the park, overlain by a golf course, occupies undulating ground leading down to the Colne valley to the north-west. It retains many mature trees in clumps and singles, as well as late C20 golf course planting to define fairways.

During the early C19 the park was approximately two-thirds of its present size, being bounded c 500m south-west of the Hall by a sunk fence (Shaw, 1812; Goodman, 1826). Later in the C19 (OS 1883), the park was extended south-west to its present extent, allowing the south-west drive to be altered to its present course, taking advantage of the views over the valley to the north-west. The site of the former sunk fence is presently (1999) visible as a ditch across the parkland.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The former kitchen garden lies c 30m south-east of the Hall, and is presently (1999) largely occupied by university buildings of a temporary nature. Sections of the C18/C19 brick boundary wall still survive, particularly to the east and south. The west section of the north boundary is formed by the stable block, and that to the east by a lean-to glasshouse against a further stretch of wall. To the north of this wall lies a brick-walled service yard with wooden bothies standing against the north side of the wall.

East of the east lawn, from which it is separated by mature trees, lies a large area of former orchard and kitchen garden (OS 1898), retaining some orchard trees but now (1999) largely given over to sports pitches. It is bounded to the east by a belt of mature trees. In the early C19 (Shaw, 1812; Goodman, 1826) the area was known as Garden Field, and included the area of the Italian Garden; in the late C19 (OS 1883) it was given over partly to orchards, and by the 1940s (RAF) it had been largely laid to vegetable production, with a tennis court on the west edge and the Italian Garden occupying the former southern section.

#### REFERENCES

W Page, *A History of Wall Hall in Hertfordshire*, (unpub ms 1920), (Hertfordshire Local History Library) Wall Hall, Aldenham Landscape History, (Elizabeth Banks Associates, May 1999)

Maps Dury and Andrews, *A topographical Map of Hartford-shire, 1766 Plan of the Parish of Aldenham in the County of Hertford, 1803 (D/P329/4)*, (Hertfordshire Record Office) John Shaw, *Plan of the Wall Hall Estate situated in the parishes of Aldenham and St Stephen's in the County of Herts, 1812 (D/P3/29/9B)*, (Hertfordshire Record Office) T Goodman and Sons,

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Plan of Aldenham Abbey and Grounds Estate in the Parishes of Aldenham and St Stephen's, Herts The Property of Sir Charles Marice Pole Baronet, 1826 (University of Hertford)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1883 2nd edition published 1899 3rd edition published 1920 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1898

Archival items H Repton, Wall Hall in Hertfordshire ..., Red Book, 1803 (private collection) [copy at HRO: PC163] RAF aerial photographs, 106G/UK/862, 6140(1, 29 September 1945 (NMR)

Description written: December 1999 Register Inspector: SR Edited: October 2000

## 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.