

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

WORMLEYBURY

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Name:	WORMLEYBURY
County:	Hertfordshire
District:	Broxbourne (District Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.736158 Longitude: -0.044015463 National Grid Reference: TL 35162 05971 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000252 Date first listed: 01-Jul-1988

Details

A country house surrounded by a landscape park, developed in the 1770s from an earlier formal scheme, together with remnants of early C19 gardens famed for their plant collection.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Sir Abraham Hume built Wormleybury house in the 1770s on the site of an earlier house which had been built, in 1733-5, by his brother, Alexander Hume (d 1765), from whom he had inherited the estate. Sir Abraham's son, also an Abraham, to whom the estate passed on the death of his father in 1772, was a keen gardener, as was his wife, Lady Amelia. They were responsible for many plant introductions between 1785 and 1825, especially from India and the Far East, and the gardens became noted for the collection of rare plants both under glass and in the open. Robert Adam (1728-92) prepared drawings for garden buildings, at least one of which may have been built (CL 1915; Soane Museum). James Mean, editor of the 2nd edition of Abercrombie's *Practical Gardener*, 1817, and also of *The Gardener's Companion or Horticultural Calendar*, 1820, was for a time head gardener at Wormleybury.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Wormleybury lies to the west of the village of Wormley in the Lea Valley. The 57ha site is bounded to the east by the A10 dual carriageway. The east boundary was marked, before the C20 construction of the A10, by the New River, on the east side of which lies Wormley village. On the other sides the site is bounded by agricultural land. A stream, lying within a woodland belt, which feeds the lake from the west, marks the west half of the south boundary. The west half of the north boundary is marked by the lane linking Wormley West End with the main village to the east, this lane bisecting the eastern section of the site. From the house the ground falls to the south and to the east. The setting is partly rural, with the urban development of Cheshunt to the south extending north along the River Lea east of the site.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main drive to the house is from the village of Wormley to the east. The entrance off Church Lane was moved a little to the west in the C19 when a lodge was built, and, with the construction of the A10 in the late C20, has again been slightly altered. Having entered the estate, the drive then crosses a bridge over the northern end of the lake to arrive at carriage sweeps on the east and north fronts. A broad flight of stone steps leads up from the northern

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carriage sweep, set in an open lawn, to a two-storey stone portico on the north front. A stepped walk leads northwards up to the parish church of St Lawrence (C12, restored and extended mid C19, listed grade II*) via an early to mid C18 wrought-iron screen and double gates with overthrow (listed grade II).

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Wormleybury house (Robert Mylne 1767-9, listed grade I) stands at the centre of the site. The three-storey, rectangular brick house, with interior decoration by Robert Adam (1777-9), was built on the site of the 1730s house. The south, garden front has a full height, canted bay window overlooking the garden. A service court is attached to the west side of the house, entered from the west via a two-storey clock-tower arch surmounted by a tall wooden cupola.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS To the south of the present house is a substantial bank, the remains of the mid C18 terraced garden. From here the land falls to the crescent-shaped lake. This was created from a mid C18 canal and circular basin which lay to the east of the 1730s house. Around the southern edge of the water is a yew walk, also a mid C18 feature, which leads to the large, 4m high stone urn (1770, probably Robert Mylne, listed grade II*) standing at the south-west corner of the lake. From here the walk continued as a ride through the shelter belt along the southern edge of the park to its western tip, then through the northern belt and past the Manor House, an early C20 addition in the park (OS C19).

The 1730s house was surrounded by a simple, formal layout, and was approached directly from the north via a long, rectangular forecourt. To the east of the forecourt there were walled gardens, cleared as part of the landscaping work which accompanied the building of the new house, and beyond these a wilderness, the bones of which survive. A formal rectangular canal extended south from the wilderness into the park, opening out into a circular basin with a central circular island. The canal stopped short of a broadened and canalised artificial arm of the stream to the south (estate map, 1751; Dury and Andrews, 1766). Adam's garden building designs included one 'For a Dressing-room to adjoin the Bath'. This is thought to have been situated south-west of the house, where there is a spring and formerly the remains of brick and stonework (CL 1915).

PARK The park lies to west and east of the stream which feeds into the northern end of the lake, and also extends westwards from the house. More land to the east and north was taken into the park in the C19 but the building of the Wormley bypass in the late C20 has reduced the area, and the eastern boundary taken for the area here registered is that of the C18 park. An icehouse stands to the north of the drive, just east of the lake.

KITCHEN GARDEN The walled kitchen gardens, probably of a date contemporary with the present house, stand immediately to its west. Elaborate gardens were laid out in the slips around the walls and numerous plants survive from these although much of the design has gone. It seems likely that this was the site of the early C19 gardens laid out by Sir Abraham Hume and commented on by J C Loudon in his Encyclopaedia of Gardening (1828 edn) and Arboretum and Fruticetum (1838).

REFERENCES

J C Loudon, Encyclopaedia of Gardening (5th edn 1828) J C Loudon, Arboretum et Fruticetum (1838) Country Life, 37 (30 January 1915), pp 144-9 J Royal Horticultural Society 66, (1941), pp 308-12

Maps A map of part of the estate of Alexander Hume esq, ... as it is altered since the last survey taken in 1733, 1751 (Hertfordshire Record Office) Dury and Andrews, A topographical Map of Hartford-shire, 1766 Tithe map for Wormley parish, 1841 (Hertfordshire Record Office)

OS Surveyor's Drawings, 1799-1805 OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1873 2nd edition published 1899 3rd edition published 1938 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1898

Archival items Robert Adam drawings of 1780 for buildings at Wormleybury (BB88/1587; BB88/1599), (Soane Museum)

Description written: April 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.