

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

QUENBY HALL

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**QUENBY HALL**

Name:	QUENBY HALL
County:	Leicestershire
District:	Harborough (District Authority)
Parish:	Cold Newton
County:	Leicestershire
District:	Harborough (District Authority)
Parish:	Hungarton
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.649651 Longitude: -0.96411810 National Grid Reference: SK 70178 06272 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000965 Date first listed: 29-Oct-1986

## Details

Formal gardens of later C18 to later C20 date, probably incorporating work by Harold Peto, and a landscape park originating c 1600, associated with a country house.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The Ashbys acquired an estate in Quenby in the C13. By 1563 they had acquired the whole manor, and soon afterwards moved to enclose and depopulate it. The Hall was rebuilt from c 1620 by George Ashby (d 1653), who had inherited in 1618. He was succeeded by his son, also George, who married the heiress of Eusby Shuckbrugh of Naseby (Northamptonshire). Their son and heir was referred to by John Evelyn as 'Honest George Ashby the Planter' because of the large number of trees he planted at Quenby. He died in 1728, and in the mid C18 Quenby was purchased by his great-nephew Shuckbrugh Ashby (d 1792), who restored what had become a badly neglected house, built a raised terrace or platform around it, and made improvements about the estate. Quenby remained in the family until 1904 when the estate was sold to Rosamund (d 1941), the widow of Edward Seymour-Greaves, who later married Lord Henry Grosvenor. During her time Quenby was restored. The estate was sold in 1924 to Sir Harold Nutting, who lived there until his death in 1972. It remains (1998) in private hands.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Quenby Hall stands within its park on high ground c 10km east of Leicester, the nearest village being Hungarton, 2km to the north-west. The earthwork remains of Quenby village, but one of several deserted medieval villages in the surrounding area, lie 500m south of the Hall. The park's boundaries largely follow field edges, to the east abutting the parish boundary with Cold Newton, although its southern boundary follows a minor watercourse flowing north-west towards Beeby. The area here registered is c 100ha.

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**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The Hall's west forecourt is approached from the west, via a tree-lined drive along a slight ridge across the park. West of the Hall is a small bridge, present by 1767, and at its end, on the west edge of the park, is a two-storey brick lodge of 1925. There is a back drive which leads east from the north-east side of the Hall to Cold Newton, 1.5km away.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING**

Quenby Hall (listed grade I) occupies a hilltop site, and is an H-plan brick house with diaper work and stone dressings, with its principal front, of three storeys and a basement, to the west. The facade is rather plain, and that impression is accentuated by the straight parapet. According to Pevsner (1984, 351) it is the most important early C17 house in the county. It was built for George Ashby, who inherited in 1618, and was begun c 1620 and completed about ten years later. Shukbrugh Ashby, who acquired it in poor condition in 1759, made major structural alterations and decorative changes, but the latter were swept away in c 1905-7 and c 1913 when George Bodley and J A Gotch reinstated Jacobean-style interiors.

Adjoining the north side of the Hall is an ironstone stable court (listed grade II\*), set around a cobbled yard. It is of the early C17, and was reroofed in the later C18. A room at the south-east corner has been fitted out as a Roman Catholic chapel.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The Hall and its gardens stand on a terrace or platform created in the later C18 by Shukbrugh Ashby. West of the Hall is a forecourt (walls, gates etc listed grade II), part lawn and part gravelled, with heraldic iron gates on ashlar piers on its west side providing the main formal approach to the Hall. The forecourt has seen several remodellings. Elaborate iron gates introduced by George Ashby (d 1728) were removed when Shukbrugh Ashby reworked the surrounds of the Hall, and now stand at Newark Museum (Leicester). Ashby's simple scheme was itself replaced c 1910 when Gotch surrounded the forecourt with a red-brick wall with diaper patterning. This now stands only along the south side of the forecourt, elsewhere having been demolished. East of the Hall is a formal lawn with an east/west axial path down its centre from the flagged court along the east front of the Hall. At the east end of the path is a low obelisk of 1978, a copy of one which stands at Garendon (Leicestershire qv). This stands on the path down the east side of the garden, which acts as a terrace walk and from which there are extensive and panoramic views across the park and the countryside beyond. The formal lawn continues around the south side of the Hall, again with extensive views. A broad gravel walk along the side of the Hall and the outside of the west forecourt terminates at a stone, apsidal, bench seat, probably by Gotch. On the lawns east and south of the Hall, and on the lawn west of the stables, are large numbers of mature specimen trees. These include cedars of Lebanon, early C19 successors of nine or ten planted here 1680-90 by George 'the Planter' Ashby.

Formal gardens were laid out east and south of the Hall in the early C20; Harold Peto (1854-1933) was consulted, although the extent of his involvement is unclear. Of these little remains apart from a small sunken garden, in the late C20 known as the Japanese Garden, on its north-east side. What does survive however is a contemporary remodelling of the kitchen garden north of the stables as a formal garden, seen across a ha-ha and hedge which replaced the brick wall along the south side. From iron gates in the centre of that side a broad path leads north, up the centre of the garden, to a brick summerhouse, perhaps C18, set in the centre of the north wall. The compartments to either side are laid out as formal gardens with box hedging, mostly planted following the start of a general restoration and improvement of the gardens which began in 1972.

The pattern of earthworks extending south from the edge of the gardens for c 275m suggests that, probably in the early C17 when the Hall was rebuilt, the remains of the deserted village of Quenby were adapted as formal garden features. These continue the line of the modern axial path down the centre of the south lawn with, successively, a terrace, a moat, a linear pond or canal and finally a second moat. Adjoining the west side of the terrace, c 50m from east to west, is a further level area c 70m across, on the west side of which is what has been interpreted as a prospect mound (Cantor and Squires 1997, 42).

**PARK**

Quenby Hall stands on the highest, roughly central, point of a park which is very approximately rectangular, and 1.5km long from west to east and c 500m wide. This was probably created in the late C16 or early C17 after the depopulation of the village of Quenby, which lay immediately south and south-west of the Hall and whose site is marked by well-preserved earthworks. The park also contains much ridge and furrow, part of Quenby's open-field land.

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The park is largely permanent pasture and contains large numbers of mature parkland trees. There are trees to either side of the drive as it approaches the west side of the Hall, and a painting of the Hall of c 1740 (Cantor and Squires 1997, 51) shows a mature double avenue leading west from either side of the Hall. Still well preserved is Church Avenue, which leads north-west from the Hall towards Hungarton church. These are the survivors of a once more extensive system of radiating avenues, presumably part of the planting at Quenby by George 'the Planter' Ashby in the late C17 and early C18 and shown on a map of c 1810 (LRO).

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The main, C18, brick-walled kitchen garden (walls, and cottage attached to east, listed grade II) lies north of the stables court. It was converted to a formal pleasure garden in the early C20 (above). Off its east side is a smaller, brick-walled garden compartment, wherein a swimming pool was constructed in the later C20.

**REFERENCES** J Nichols, *History and Antiquities of Leicester* 3, pt i (1800), pp 295-7, (4 vols, in 8 parts, 1795-1811, reprinted 1971) *Original Poems, and Translations, Particularly Ambra. From Lorenz de Medic.* Chiefly by Susanna Watts (1809), pp 64-77 *Gardener's Magazine* 7, (1831), p 421 *Gentleman's Magazine*, (August 1814), pp 112-13 *Country Life*, 16 (3 September 1904), pp 342-9; 30 (14 October 1911), pp 550-7; (21 October 1911), pp 590-7 *Quenby Hall, guidebook*, (1977) J Anthony, *The Gardens of Britain 6: The East Midlands* (1979), pp 135-7 N Pevsner, E Williamson and G O Brandwood, *The Buildings of England: Leicestershire and Rutland* (1984), pp 351-3 L Cantor and A Squires, *The Historic Parks and Gardens of Leicestershire and Rutland* (1997)

Maps Map of Hungarton, 1752 (Ma/153/6), (Leicestershire Record Office) Map of Quenby, c 1810 (2687/71), (Leicestershire Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: Leicestershire sheet 32 NE, 1st edition published 1891 Leicestershire sheet 32 NE, 2nd edition published 1904 Leicestershire sheet 32 NE, 1950 edition Leicestershire sheet 32 SE, 1st edition published 1887 Leicestershire sheet 32 SE, 2nd edition published 1904 Leicestershire sheet 32 NE, 1950 edition OS 25" to 1 mile: Leicestershire sheet 32.3, 2nd edition published 1904

Description written: August 1998 Register Inspector: PAS Edited: July 1999

## 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.