

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

STONOR

Auteur(s) : Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/>

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**STONOR**

Name: STONOR

District: Buckinghamshire (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Turville

County: Oxfordshire

District: South Oxfordshire (District Authority)

Parish: Pishill with Stonor

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.595807  
Longitude: -0.93428300  
National Grid Reference: SU7391789089  
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden  
Grade: II\*  
List Entry Number: 1000436  
Date first listed: 01-Jun-1984

## Details

A country house with C17 walled garden attached, surrounded by an C18 landscape park.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The Stonor family have lived in the Stonor valley from at least the C12, being recusants following the Reformation (1540s), and, because of their refusal to take the Oath of Supremacy, were heavily fined and their lands confiscated. Their fortunes improved during the C18, during which time the house was gothicised and the landscape park seems to have been laid out. The Stonors continued in ownership during the C19 and C20, the eighth Thomas Stonor acquiring the barony of Camoys as the third Lord Camoys in 1839. The estate remains in private hands (1997).

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Stonor Park lies 7km north of the centre of Henley, at the north end of the village of Stonor (known as Upper Assendon before the C20), at the heart of the southern end of the Chiltern Hills. The c 90ha park straddles a dry valley ascending west to east, bounded largely by Balham's, Kildridge and Almshill Woods to the north, east and south, with 2m high iron deer fencing alongside the Henley to Watlington road (B480) and its spur north to Turville Heath, forming the west boundary. The agricultural and heavily wooded setting includes the hillside west of the Watlington road, used mainly as arable land, with several substantial clumps interspersed, backed by woodland on the ridge. This area (possibly covering the site of the medieval park; Oxoniensa 1994), whilst seemingly not historically part of the landscape park east of the road, makes an important contribution in the view west and south-west from the house and park.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The main entrance, from the west off the Watlington road, lies 600m south-west of the house, flanked by wrought-iron gates attached to grey and red-brick piers with stone ball finials. These piers are linked by low crescent walls with iron railings to similar outer piers with stone heraldic finials (c 1790, listed grade II). Within the entrance, on either side of the drive, stand two single-storey brick lodges (listed grade II, c 1790 (Listed Building description), or mid

C19 (Steane 1994)), their main fronts facing each other. The drive runs east and north-east through the valley bottom, dividing into three 150m south-west of the house. The north arm enters the pleasure grounds at their south-east corner, continuing north through them and east along the north wall of the walled garden, returning west up the hill to arrive at the site of a house known as The Warren. A spur north from this drive, 150m south-east of the house remains, gives access to the site of the former associated stables, 100m north-east of The Warren at the summit of the hill. Associated drives from the stables ran through Balham's Wood to the north-west, emerging on the lane at Balham's Farm, and north-east to join the east drive close to its east end, 200m from the east lodge (OS 1921/2).

At its division, marked by two brick and flint piers, the main drive continues north-east across the informal south lawn, to arrive at a small carriage sweep by a set of semicircular stone steps which lead to the recessed front door on the south front. The drive then curves south-east, meeting the third, east arm, the latter having crossed the south edge of the lawn 100m south of the house. The east arm is straddled at its east end by a sarsen stone circle (date uncertain) resited here from further north, close to the chapel, in the 1980s. A painting of 1680 (Harris 1979) shows a formal, walled entrance court adjacent to the south front of the house, with two small, castellated towers flanking a gateway at the top of a short flight of steps in the centre of the south wall. From here a broad pedestrian path leads north, flanked by lawns crossed by several diagonal paths, straight to the steps below the entrance porch. A coach approaches from the east, having arrived through an outer wall. None of the structure depicted remains visible. The forecourt may have overlain the site of a late C15/early C16 formal garden with a stepped terraced layout, the putative location identified from parchmarks in 1989 (Oxoniensa 1994).

The north-east and east arms of the drive, having rejoined c 120m south-east of the house, form the now disused east drive which continues north-east across the park in the valley bottom, past the stable yard to the north, crossing Balham's Wood before emerging at the hamlet of Southend 1.2km north-east of the house. This entrance is marked on the north side by a two-storey brick and flint lodge.

A track, possibly a disused drive predating the current west drive (*ibid*) and now a public footpath, enters the park 100m south of the west lodges, continuing along the valley side to the south, the track having a pronounced stepped form cut into the hillside opposite the house. The track overlooks the valley to the north, with extensive views along the whole valley, particularly down to the house and its surroundings. At some point, if serving the house, it must have returned north towards the south front, but if so this section is not visible. An estate map of 1725 shows the drive entering close to where the track now begins at the west boundary (100m south of the lodges), curving north-east across a shoulder of land to join the current course of the drive c 120m east of the lodges.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Stonor House (C14, listed grade I) lies towards the centre of the park, and is based on a medieval, timber-framed hall house built by the Stonor family. The building is set into the steep hillside to the north. The earliest parts of the current house date from the C14, it being enlarged over succeeding centuries and achieving its current plan c 1600. It is U-shaped, with the open side to the south, and brick-faced, of two storeys with dormers, parts being gothicised by John Aitkin c 1750-60. A brick tower (early C15) lies at the south-east corner, behind the east wing, adjacent to the medieval flint chapel at the south end of this wing. A C19 service wing, attached to the north-west corner of the present west wing, was demolished in the 1970s. The house faces south, overlooking the south lawn falling gently to the valley bottom, and a broad sweep of park running up the southern hillside to the top of the hill. A view west and south-west opens up from the south front, down the valley to the broad hillside west of the Watlington road.

The current stable yard lies 150m south-east of the house, consisting of three parallel buildings connected by brick walls, forming two yards standing north of the east drive. The westernmost building, most recently a garage (C17 and possibly earlier, extended C18, listed grade II), built of flint and brick with a gabled west front, was probably built to store wool and subsequently grain. East of this stands a low, brick stable range (C19/early C20), and beyond this a brick dairy, the only surviving part of a former farm.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The garden lies adjacent to the upper floor of the north front which houses the long gallery, with a central door giving access to the garden which is surrounded by a brick wall to the north and east, a continuation of that surrounding the kitchen garden adjacent to the west. A central lawn, with a straight gravel path running parallel adjacent

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to the house, is flanked by shrubberies to the west and east, with curving walks through them, connected on the north side by a terraced garden adjacent to the north wall. Wrought-iron gates in the north wall give access to the park to the north. From the terraced area are views over the roofs of the house, and across the park to the south, to the top of the hillside beyond. A straight gravel path runs along the top of the two terraces, connected by a central flight of brick steps aligned with the garden door in the house, the lower of which, on the site of a C19 greenhouse (removed by the 1920s), contains two rectangular ponds, one on either side of the main axis with the house. An early C20 timber-framed and rendered gazebo stands at the north-east corner, and there are several mature yew trees of considerable girth.

West of the kitchen garden lies a triangular area of pleasure grounds, entered from the kitchen garden. Still laid out much as it was in the late C19, this area is largely rough grass with mature trees and evergreen shrubs including yews. A flight of straight grassed terraces rises from the remains of a ha-ha topped by an iron fence which runs along the south boundary. The remains (back wall) of a C19 peach house stand towards the east end, adjacent to the drive up to The Warren, beyond which a path leads from the north-east corner along the north garden wall, overlooking the gardens and the south park.

**PARK** The park, grazed by a herd of c 200 fallow deer, surrounds the house and garden. It is well stocked with mature park trees planted in singles, small groups and larger clumps, including exotic species, particularly in the open areas to the west and south. It has been heavily replanted following losses in the storms of 1990. Wooded areas occur north and south-east of the house, and on the south boundary, with broad grass rides extending through these north and south from the house. A path extends west and north from the west corner of the pleasure grounds, running along a contour on The Warren hillside. Panoramic views open up in the park, including north and north-west from the southern hilltop towards Christmas Common, and west and south-west over the putative old park. The Warren house occupied a level site 400m north-west of Stonor House, on a large platform dug into the steep hillside. The only significant remaining feature on the platform is a small derelict tower. The remains of a ha-ha, possibly marking the edge of the early warren (Steane 1994), lie some metres to the south.

A medieval park seems to have existed west of the current park and the Watlington road (*ibid*). The estate map (1725) shows this area divided into fields and woodland, with the area of the present park also enclosed and used in similar fashion. By the late C18 (Davis, 1797) the landscape park had been laid out, covering an area similar to that seen today.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The kitchen garden lies adjacent to the north-west corner of the house, surrounded by brick and flint walls (C17/C18 and later) to the north, west and south, with inner perimeter paths and two central cruciform paths. The garden, in productive use until the 1950s, is now largely laid to lawn with ornamental beds and fruit trees. The south perimeter path leads from the house and ornamental garden west to a doorway at the south-west corner which opens onto the pleasure grounds to the west. South of the main kitchen garden the walled frame yard retains a central row of frames, with a modern glasshouse against the north wall on the site of an earlier structure which stretched further west (OS 1880). The outer side of the south wall is of red brick with vitrified headers in checker pattern.

The 1680 painting shows the walled garden occupying the same position as now (1997), including the area of the frame yard. The area of the present kitchen garden was at that time undivided from the main walled garden to the north. The west half of the kitchen garden, covered by a rectangular grid of paths separating beds or lawns, is surrounded by a wall extending as far east as does the current north wall.

#### REFERENCES

N Pevsner and J Sherwood, *The Buildings of England: Oxfordshire* (1974), pp 791-4 J Harris, *The Artist and the Country House* (1979), ill 139 Stonor, guidebook, (c 1990) Oxoniensa LIX, (1994), pp 449-70

Maps The plan of the estate of Thomas Stonor Esq, 1725 (private collection) R Davis, *A New Map of the County of Oxford ...*, 1797 A Bryant, *Map of the County of Oxford ...*, surveyed 1823

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1881(2 2nd edition published 1900 3rd edition published 1921/2 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1880 2nd edition published 1900

Description written: October 1997 Amended: March 1999 Register Inspector: SR Edited: March 2000 74.

## 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.