

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

Ombersley Court

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

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Name:	Ombersley Court
County:	Worcestershire
District:	Wychavon (District Authority)
Parish:	Ombersley
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.264085 Longitude: -2.2332081 National Grid Reference: SO8418162906 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1439026 Date first listed: 13-Apr-2017 Location Description: The landscape surrounding Ombersley Court, Worcestershire

Historique de la conservation

Ombersley Court stands on land which came into the possession of the Sandys family in the early C17, having previously been in the ownership of the Abbot of Evesham. The buildings which stood on the site at that time were replaced in the 1730s when the 1st Lord Sandys commissioned the architect Francis Smith of Warwick to design a new house. This house was characteristic of Smith's work, of three storeys and seven bays, with quadrant wings forming a forecourt in front of the house, with an avenue of trees extending east as shown in Nash's Worcestershire in 1782. Written accounts of the park at this time refer to "a well wooded park" and "the sweet groves of Ombersley" (see Lockett).

The estate passed in 1797 to Mary, Marchioness of Downshire, who in 1802 was named Baroness Sandys in her own right. In 1808 she commissioned John Nash to make proposals for alterations to the house; instead, however, she chose John Webb of Staffordshire as her architect for works to the house, stables and the park. Webb (c1754-1828) was an architect and landscape designer, and had been a pupil of William Emes, a rival of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown. By 1805, Webb's practice was known "all over England" (see Colvin) and he is known to have worked throughout the country, designing both buildings and landscapes. Webb demolished the two wings of the existing house at Ombersley and refaced the main block in ashlar, adding a portico on the E front and a dining room and service wing to the north. He also built a new stable block and kitchen garden, and a drive extending north bounded by brick walls faced in ashlar. In the pleasure grounds around the house he created large lawns with shrubberies and specimen trees and paths among them. The large glasshouse attached to the kitchen garden but facing south seems to have been intended as a feature of the garden, although early plans show it at least partially screened by some planting. The fish ponds or pools in the park, which existed to feed the adjacent mill, were altered and landscaping work carried out across the park, including the construction of a new drive to through the park to the S. The estate plan of 1811 by James Wadmore and the Inclosure plan of c1827 both also show a drive going north-east of the house to the centre of Ombersley village, however it is not clear if this drive was ever actually created; if it was, it was relatively short lived, as it is not shown on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map. Planting in the park was generally in smaller groups or individual trees, rather than the clumps which had been more popular in the C18.

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A letter from 1812 describes the works to the park in progress. It describes filling up parts of the fish ponds, the laying of the new drive, planting of trees and the building of the kitchen garden (see Worledge Associates, Heritage Statement). One of the final acts in the remodelling of Ombersley Court was the rebuilding of the medieval parish church. Instead of Webb, the church was designed by Thomas Rickman, and was built 1825-29. The Marchioness contributed to the cost of the new church and in return retained the chancel of the medieval building as the family mausoleum. The spire of the new church remains a prominent feature in views across the park.

Ombersley hosted several important visitors in the C19, including the Prince Regent in c1807, and the Duke of Wellington. The latter became a frequent visitor, and a Wellingtonia was planted in front of the house in his honour in 1853. Other trees in the garden include Cedars, Golden Larch, Redwoods and Golden Ash.

The garden and park appear to have been little altered for the remainder of the C19. During the Second World War, the W portion of the park was taken into agricultural use, and at some point during the C20 the south drive was removed. The east boundary of the park also appears to have been enclosed with trees during the C20.

Details

A garden and park laid out c1812-c1820 by John Webb for the Marchioness of Downshire, remodelling an earlier C18 park.
LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Ombersley Court is situated c.330m W of the village of Ombersley. The area under assessment is c90ha and is bounded to the S and W by agricultural land, and to the N and E by the settlement of Ombersley and the A449. The land in the N part of the park is largely level around Ombersley Court; to the S the ground undulates with high points to the E of the Black Pool. There are views from parts of the park to the Malvern Hills to the SW.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Ombersley Court is approached from the A4133 Holt Fleet Road which passes N of the park. The present main approach begins c260m N of the house through a pair of gates designed c.1814 by John Webb (listed Grade II). The drive is bounded by ashlar walls and continues S towards the stable block and the rear of the house; a further pair of gates leading E off the drive join another drive through trees to the front of the house. A former entrance lies approximately 1km SE of the house, where a pair of gates and an associated lodge survive (listed Grade II); the drive through the park to the house is no longer extant.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Ombersley Court (listed Grade I) stands on level ground with its principal facade facing E towards the estate village of Ombersley, with the main entrance under a portico supported on Ionic columns. The house is rectangular on plan, of seven bays and three storeys with a projecting wing to the N, and facades of ashlar Clipsham stone. Early C18 quadrant wings were demolished when the house was remodelled by John Webb c1814. A service wing then erected by Webb to the N was also demolished in the 1960s.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens are situated mainly to the S and W of the house, with large areas of lawn planted with specimen trees and a tree belt to the west.

The large forecourt in front of the house to the E has lawn beyond, with a large Wellingtonia planted in 1853, and a ha-ha between this area and the park beyond. A drive leads S from the house to an iron gate on the boundary with the park, and there is a further stretch of ha-ha W of this, with views S from the house and the lawn. There are clumps of trees which frame the views to and from the house. The area to the W of the house is enclosed by a tree belt to the W and the kitchen garden to the N. It is planted with specimen trees and is shown with walks through the woodland areas on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1884; some shrub planting and parts of the network of paths survive here. There is a late C18 ice house amongst the trees to the S. To the N a large, early C19 glasshouse is attached to the kitchen garden and faces S over the lawn.

The area NE of the house and E of the drive is wooded and is shown on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map with some paths connecting the house with St Andrew's Church to the E. A pair of gates survives in the wall N of the church, although no paths appear to survive through the trees.

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PARK The main areas of the park lie to the S and E of the house. There was previously an avenue of trees which led E from the house to the village of Ombersley, and the remnants of this avenue can be seen on historic maps. It no longer survives, and the view from the house is now across open parkland and screened at the E by C20 planting.

The S portion of the park has the lake or ponds at its centre. These are dammed to the W where there was previously a mill and a quarry forming picturesque features, outside the area here registered, and there are narrower sections of the ponds to the N and NE, mostly now silted up. Historic maps show that there were areas of trees partially enclosing the lake; it is now screened almost entirely on all sides by tree growth. The land E of the lake, stretching from Ombersley Court in the N to the Sinton Lodge and gates (listed Grade II) in the S and Park Farm beyond, remains as open parkland planted with trees. The drive which formerly wound through the park here, connecting the house and the lodge, is no longer extant. The W portion of the park, S and N of the lake, has been in agricultural use since the mid-C20 and there are few parkland trees surviving.

There are views within the park, those from the house primarily look E and S. To the S, the view from the house is framed by trees with borrowed views of the Malvern Hills beyond, approximately 20km to the SW. The view to the lake is now screened by trees. Looking N from the lake, the view towards the house shows the S elevation framed by trees, with the tall spire of St Andrew's Church in Ombersley rising to the E. From the S end of the park there are views back to the house and along the River Severn, which runs past the park to the W.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden (listed Grade II) is located NW of the house and stables, and is enclosed by a tall brick wall on all sides, with a smaller enclosed area on the S side which has potting sheds and formerly contained glasshouses. The walls of the kitchen garden are partially heated, and there are stone piers at regular intervals around the walls, some of which may act as chimney flues.

On the S side of the kitchen garden, there is a large glasshouse which faces over the pleasure grounds W of the house. Historic maps appear to show this as being partially screened from the pleasure grounds by planting, but it seems clear that it was intended to form a feature within the garden.

Summary

A garden and park laid out c1812-c1820 by John Webb for the Marchioness of Downshire, remodelling an earlier C18 park.

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.

Reasons for Designation

Ombersley Court, a designed landscape associated with an early-C18 country house but primarily laid out for the Marchioness of Downshire by John Webb c1810-1820, is registered at Grade II for the following principal reasons: * Date: as a good example of an early-C19 country house landscape and a representative example of the changing tastes for landscape design in the period; * Historic interest: as an intact example of the work of John Webb, where he designed both the main elements of the park and gardens, and the principal buildings, including the refacing of the house; * Group value: the park has very strong group value with the Grade I listed Ombersley Court, the Grade II* listed stables and the other Grade II listed buildings within it, as well as with the adjacent conservation area covering the village of Ombersley.

Bibliographie

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
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Mowl, Timothy, , Historic Gardens of Worcestershire, (2006), 103-105

Pevsner, N, Brooks, A, The Buildings of England: Worcestershire, (2007), 508-509

Other

Country Life issues 2920, 2921 & 2922, January 1953

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Ombersley Inclosure Map c.1827 s143/56a BA307/56

Ombersley Tithe Map s760/500 BA1572

Worlledge Associates, Heritage Statement of Significance: Ombersley Court, Worcestershire, November 2016

Wychavon District Council, Ombersley Conservation Area Appraisal, June 2005