

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

EYNSHAM HALL

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EYNESHAM HALL

Name: EYNESHAM HALL

County: Oxfordshire

District: West Oxfordshire (District Authority)

Parish: Eynsham

County: Oxfordshire

District: West Oxfordshire (District Authority)

Parish: North Leigh

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.804955
Longitude: -1.4285845
National Grid Reference: SP 39496 11967
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1001288
Date first listed: 16-Sep-1994

Details

A country house surrounded by an C18 park and mid C19/C20 pleasure grounds. Robert Marnock was involved in the planting of exotics in the 1860s; Owen Jones (1870s) and then Ernest George (1900s) were responsible for the terraced gardens around the house.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The first Eynsham Hall was built by James Lacy (d 1774) or his son Willoughby. The estate was sold to Robert Langford in 1778, including a newly built mansion, to which, before 1782, Langford made several additions (VCH 1990). The Hall stood in a large park created by the enclosure of the heath in 1781. Thomas Parker, fifth Earl of Macclesfield, lived at the Hall in the early C19, enlarging it to the designs of Sir Charles Barry c 1843. Following further alterations to the Hall and gardens during the later C19, including in the 1860s when Robert Marnock was called in to advise on planting, the Hall was demolished by J F Mason in 1903. A new, larger house was completed by 1908; having been a police college in the late C20, it remains a training centre.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The c 330ha Eynsham Hall park lies between the villages of Freeland and North Leigh, bounded to the north-west by the A4095 Witney to Woodstock road, to the west by a track called Wood Lane, and on the other sides by agricultural land. The setting is largely agricultural and rural, with several other substantial landscape parks lying close by, including Blenheim (qv), Cornbury (qv) and Ditchley (qv).

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES There are three main entrances, each associated with a lodge. The Italianate, stone-built North Lodge (dated 1845, Richard Tress, listed grade II) stands at the head of the approach from North Leigh at the north end of the park. It accompanies a pair of wrought-iron main and pedestrian gates (possibly c 1900) hung between rusticated gate

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piers with flanking ashlar piers. From here a drive leads 600m south across the park to the north front of the Hall. The drive enters a rectangular forecourt leading to a porch surrounding the main entrance on the north front. The forecourt is enclosed by stone, balustraded walls (Sir Ernest George 1904-8), with side entries giving pedestrian access from the west and east.

East Lodge stands by the approach from Freeland, 900m east of the Hall. From here the east drive curves west along the north side of the pleasure grounds to join the north drive 200m north of the Hall. The mid C19 South Lodge, built to the designs of Charles Moreing, stands beyond the park, 1.7km south of the Hall, giving access directly from the A40 road to Oxford. From here a drive passes through a strip of woodland to Middle Lodge, before entering the park proper and leading north to the Hall. PRINCIPAL BUILDING Eynsham Hall (Sir Ernest George 1904-8, listed grade II), stone-built in Elizabethan style, stands in the centre of the park. To the north-east stands a rustic hexagonal game larder (C H Howell 1883, listed grade II), while to the east is the mid C19 dairy (possibly C H Howell, listed grade II). The Home Farm complex lies some 300m east of the Hall.

The Hall was rebuilt 1904-8 for the Mason family, replacing a house probably built for James Lacy (d 1774) in the 1760s, Lacy having purchased the estate at that time. That house had been enlarged into an Italianate mansion c 1843-5 by Sir Charles Barry (1795-1860) for Thomas Parker, the fifth Earl of Macclesfield, who had purchased the estate in 1805. The lodges which formed part of these improvements survive. The Hall was subsequently altered, this time by Owen Jones (d 1874) c 1872 for James Mason, who had purchased the estate in 1866.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS Below the south front of the Hall are garden terraces (walls listed grade II), the walls of limestone and in similar style to the forecourt walls. It is thought the terraces were either laid out in 1872 by Owen Jones (Pevsner 1974), or by Sir Ernest George in the early C20. They may however have been redesigned in the early C20 by Thomas Garner, along with the courtyard and pleasure gardens (Oxfordshire SMR). The gardens were preceded by an earlier terraced layout, described, along with the pleasure grounds, in a sale catalogue of 1862. Beyond the terraces are less formal ornamental areas, in which are sited to the west, the Swiss Cottage, and to the east, a fountain. Also to the east of the Hall is a grotto which provides the entrance to an underground way connecting the garden walks with a plantation further to the east.

Walks lead from the gardens south-east to an ornamental lake some 250m from the Hall, which forms a major feature of the landscape. It was created soon after 1866 by James Mason and involved the construction of a substantial dam. A path leads around the perimeter of the water, the area round the lake having been planted up with exotics as part of a wider scheme of ornamental and woodland planting for which Robert Marnock (1800-89) acted as landscape designer.

The small pool lying 300m south-west of the Hall, originally accompanied by a hermitage (now (1999) gone), is earlier and formed part of the late C18 developments.

PARK The site is encircled by wooded belts including The Ride, which forms the east boundary. A track called Back Drive encircles the east boundary of the park from the Saw Mill at the northern tip to Valentine's Clump on the south boundary.

To the north and south of the Hall are open lawns, part of the late C18 landscaping. From this date too are a number of plantations such as Fox Covert, Oval Clump and Claypit Clumps to the north of the Hall, and Green Wood, Rookery Clump, Fletcher's Clump, Hanging Clump, Lodgehill Clump, Coppicehill Clump and Valentine's Clump to the south. Between Laurel Clump and Monument Clump, 650m south-west of the Hall, stands a monument. This was originally surrounded on all sides except the west by a large wood, Wortley Coppice. The Monument was approached by a path through the woods from the direction of the Hall, and also by a long straight path or ride from the south-east.

In the centre of the southern half of the park, incorporating the south end of Green Wood, are the earthworks of an Iron Age hillfort.

The park was first enclosed from the heath in 1781. The Act of 1781 empowered Robert Langford, owner from 1778 to his death in 1785, to enclose only 472 acres (215ha), but from the outset the park was much larger. The Act also empowered Langford to lay out a road from Lodge Bottom to the Witney turnpike, and to line it with ornamental trees, suggesting that, as later, the formal approach to the Hall was by the south drive. Around half of the land within the park boundary however continued in agricultural use.

KITCHEN GARDEN The walled kitchen garden stands immediately to the north-east of the Hall.

REFERENCES

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N Pevsner and J Sherwood, *The Buildings of England: Oxfordshire* (1974), p 602 *Victoria History of the County of Oxfordshire* 12, (1990), pp 121-3

Maps Estate map, 1769 (private collection) Wickham-Steed MS map, 1780 R Davis, *A New Map of the County of Oxford ...*, 1797 Map accompanying sale catalogue, 1862

OS 1" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1833 OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1881-2 2nd edition published 1900 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1880

Archival items Sale catalogue, 1862

Description written: May 1999 Register Inspector: SR Edited: January 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.