

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

ADLINGTON HALL

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**ADLINGTON HALL**

Name: ADLINGTON HALL

District: Cheshire East (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Adlington

District: Cheshire East (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Prestbury

label.localisation: Latitude: 53.320262  
Longitude: -2.1490268  
National Grid Reference: SJ9017080381, SJ9028780831  
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden  
Grade: II\*  
List Entry Number: 1000636  
Date first listed: 10-Jun-1985

## Details

A landscape park originating as a medieval deer park, and a pleasure ground and formal garden of the mid C18, associated with a country house.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The Legh family acquired Adlington by marriage in the early C14, and has been seated here ever since. The present Hall includes a great hall built by Thomas Legh (1452-1519) some time between 1480 and 1505, and a half-timbered range built in 1581 by his grandson, also Thomas Legh (1547-1601). Further rebuilding, of the north front, took place between 1665 and 1670 under the latter's great-grandson, Colonel Thomas Legh (1614-87). The Hall as seen today is largely the result of a building campaign in the 1740s and 1750s by Charles Legh (d 1781), great-grandson of Colonel Legh, who inherited Adlington in 1739. He also made considerable improvements to the grounds of the Hall, laying out a formal water garden north of the Hall and to the south the pleasure ground known as The Wilderness either side of the River Dean. He served as High Sheriff in 1747, and in 1741-2 and 1751 entertained Handel at Adlington. Ormerod, the Cheshire historian, mentions Legh's tastes for music, poetry, paintings and architecture, 'the last of a very doubtful character' (CL 1952, 1737). Improvements to the Hall and grounds were recorded c 1761 in four estate paintings by Thomas Bardwell (1704-67) (Harris 1979). Since the mid C18 there have been relatively few alterations either to the Hall or grounds.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Adlington Hall lies west of Adlington village, c 7km north of Macclesfield. Passing by the eastern boundary of the park are the A523 Macclesfield to Stockport road (moved east to this line and straightened when turnpiked in 1801) and the railway line. To the north the park boundary follows Mill Lane which leads west off the A523; otherwise the registered area, c 65ha, is defined by field boundaries.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The main approach to Adlington Hall in the late C20 is via a short service drive from the north. At its north end, on Mill Lane, are tall, rusticated ashlar stone gate piers with iron gates (complex listed grade II), all

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probably late C17. On the east side of the end of the drive is North Lodge, a two-storey brick house of c 1920. Immediately east of it is a fine, brick, C18 hay barn.

The main formal approach remains that via the tree-lined East Drive. At its end, c 400m east of the Hall on Mill Lane, is East Lodge (listed grade II), a single-storey mid C19 brick building in the Jacobean style. This stands to the south of the impressive entrance (listed grade II), with its iron gates and railings and stone gate piers, of C17 and C19 date.

West Lodge, rebuilt in the later C20, lies 1km south-west of the Hall. The drive which in the 1880s ran north-east from it to the Hall, across the deer park and via the stone bridge in the northern part of The Wilderness, has been removed.

Two mid C18 tapering, obelisk-like, stone pillars (listed grade II) which stand c 400m south-east of the Hall, adjoining the east side of The Wilderness, mark the gate of a now disappeared drive which led from here north-west to the main entrance to the stables. The pillars are c 8m high and c 15m apart, and were originally surmounted with stone unicorn heads, the Legh family emblem, now incorporated in the east courtyard pergola. The drive presumably became redundant when the Macclesfield to Stockport road was moved east at turnpiking in 1801.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Adlington Hall (listed grade I) is a quadrangular building set around a central courtyard. The east range is timber-framed and dated 1581. The north range is of brick and of 1665-70, although incorporating the great hall finished in 1505. The main, brick, south front was completed in 1757: it is of thirteen bays, and has a giant, unfluted, Ionic tetrastyle portico. The west range is also of brick and was completed c 1761. In 1928 Sir Herbert Worthington reduced the Hall in size; projecting wings at the ends of the south range were removed, and the west range became little more than a facade.

East of the Hall is a brick stables and coach house complex (listed grade II\*) of 1749 with nine-bay south front. This was converted to residential use in 1971-4. The north range, of 1817 (listed grade II), is used for corporate and other entertaining.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The surrounds of the Hall are believed to have been extensively remodelled by Charles Legh in the mid C18 at the time he did so much work on the Hall. Formal water features were constructed north of the Hall, and a pleasure ground (The Wilderness) around the River Dean to the south.

North of the Hall is a sunken lawn, connected by a rough cobbled path to a further 100m long sunken garden, surrounded by a c 0.75m high stone revetting wall. The sunken garden is laid to formal rose beds with, to the north, a maze modelled on that at Hampton Court. Rose garden and maze were both created in the 1990s. The sunken lawn and garden occupy two partly infilled formal ponds, the smaller linked by a cascade (now the cobbled path) to the larger, wedge-shaped, Long Water. These were formed (or more probably remodelled; stylistically they would sit more happily with the remodelling of the north range in 1665-70) as part of Charles Legh's work at Adlington in the mid C18. The pools are shown, apparently newly finished, in Bardwell's views of Adlington of 1761. They survived until the C20. Some 150m to the north and aligned on the Long Water was a possible water garden, also wedge-shaped, c 150m north/south by 70m wide. This still survived in the late C20 (1997), albeit within dense rough woodland.

East of the Hall is a cobbled courtyard, bounded to the east by the C18 wall of the stables court. Towards the centre that wall rises to a low apex, marking the position of the demolished brewhouse. To either side of the apex are the C18 stone unicorn heads moved here c 1960 from the gate piers south-east of the Hall. A late C20 pergola stands against the apex, largely occupied by a reclining C18 lead statue of a river god, said to be Father Tiber (listed, with carved unicorn heads, grade II), who reclines on a vase, intended to issue water into the small rectangular pool beneath. He, and accompanying statues of two cherubs (under restoration 1997), was originally sited in The Wilderness, c 60m due east of the Chinese Bridge, in a semicircular, west-facing cut in the slope down to the River Dean.

Before the south front of the Hall is a turning circle with sundial (listed grade II), off which drives lead east to the stables and south, across a rough lawn, to the north end of the Lime Avenue. Running west of and parallel to the latter path is a ha-ha (listed grade II), which continues north past the lawn on the west side of the Hall, and south to The Wilderness. Between the ha-ha and the River Dean 100m to the west is meadow ground.

The Wilderness is approached down an 80m long lime avenue, at the north end of which are rusticated ashlar gate piers supporting iron gates dated 1688 (piers and gates listed grade II). To either side of the avenue are lawns with, especially to the west, mature specimen trees. The avenue ends close to the north-west corner of the kitchen garden, outside which stands

the Shell Cottage (listed grade II), a high-quality brick summerhouse of the mid C18 with its internal walls covered in shells, pebbles and bands of coloured mirrors. This faces north, down the Yew Walk (replanted c 1996) along the north side of the kitchen gardens, at the end of which are late C17 or C18 stone gate piers and iron gates. In the short wall connecting the Shell Cottage with the corner of the kitchen garden is a lancet-headed doorway, which probably gave access to a now demolished glazed summerhouse against the north end of the west wall of the kitchen garden. Enveloping the rear of the Shell Cottage and extending to its north-west is a large rockery with end-set stones around island-like masses, which stylistically looks earlier C19 in date. On top of the north end of the rockery, at the head of a flight of steps, are the foundations for a seat or summerhouse.

The Wilderness proper begins at the Shell Cottage. It comprises a 15ha wooded area c 300m wide, extending south for 500m and bisected by the sinuous and shallow River Dean which runs through it from north to south. The woodland, long neglected in the late C20, is a mixture of mature specimen trees, including many conifers, and mid C20 commercial woodland. There are many areas of overgrown rhododendrons, which together with the leaf mould serve to at least partly obscure many of the winding paths shown on the C19 OS maps. Set along the paths are various seats and buildings. Some 75m south of the Shell Cottage, and standing on a low bluff overlooking the Dean, is The Tig House (listed grade II), presumably a corruption of T'ing House. It is a square brick pavilion of the mid C18 with pyramidal slate roof, the north, east and west walls of which are clad with applied black and white timberwork in chinoiserie style. Arched openings give views out to the north and west from the interior, which is largely occupied by a 2m square stone table. A grassed area immediately to the south was formerly used as a tennis lawn. About 75m south-west of The Tig House is the brick, parapet-less Chinese Bridge across the Dean, expanded in the centre with a stone-flagged platform. About 1760 this supported the Chinese summerhouse shown on one of Thomas Bardwell's views of Adlington. From the bridge a riverside walk leads c 50m south to the ruins of a rude stone grotto- or hermitage-like structure, 5m north of which is an arch in similar style. To either side of the entrance to the grotto is a fallen gravestone.

A modern timber bridge at the extreme southern end of The Wilderness carries a walk to the west side of the Dean. On the west side of The Wilderness, c 80m west of the grotto-like structure, is The Temple of Diana (listed grade II), a mid C18 domed circular temple with six Roman Doric columns. Some 30m to the north, on the west side of the path, are the brick foundations of a small, roughly semicircular seat. About 100m north of the Temple, and c 50m north-west of the Chinese bridge, is The Rathouse, a now roofless brick structure c 2.5m wide internally with small gothic windows and traces of pebble-encrusted rendering. A map of 1850 (Estate Papers) marks another structure at the north end of The Wilderness, and other sources mention the Jupiter House (see below).

South-west of Shell Cottage a stone bridge, with central cutwater to either side, crosses the Dean. It is probably of C19 date, and built to carry the west drive

**PARK** Robert de Legh received licence to impark at Adlington in 1462 (Cal Chart). Until 1914 the park had a herd of fallow deer. In the later C19 it extended south-west of the Hall as a rectangular block, 1km long by 600m wide. There was also parkland east of the Hall, extending to the Macclesfield to Stockport road as a rectangular block 800m long from north to south by up to 500m wide. Those parts of the formerly imparked areas here registered are mainly pasture with some parkland and specimen trees.

A brick Sham Castle of c 1760 stands immediately outside the west corner of the park, visible from the path between the Hall and The Wilderness. One semicircular tower and part of the central arched gateway survived in 1997.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The brick-walled kitchen garden lies c 200m south of the Hall, in plan balancing the water garden to the north: its west wall seems to exactly carry on the line of the axial path through the water garden. The date of the complex is uncertain, but probably mid C18; the tops of the garden walls appear to be shown on one of Bardwell's views of c 1761. The garden is c 125m long from north to south and splays slightly outwards to the south, to c 90m. The north wall, c 4m high, was heated. All the walls have low, broad, stone-flagged crenellated tops. Against the east wall is a single-storey brick gardener's house, The Garden House, rebuilt in the C20 after a fire. At the east end of the south wall is the Jupiter House, an element of the pleasure ground of c 1760. This, a 3m deep brick seat or temple of c 1760, was enlarged westwards by 4m c 1800 using much cruder brickwork, perhaps intended to be rendered and painted. The new pedimented west front incorporated a wooden architrave with a painted inscription in latin, largely illegible in 1997.

The garden interior is still partly used for horticulture; a hard tennis court was built in the south-west corner c 1990.

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REFERENCES

Cal Chart 1427-1516, p 188 *Country Life*, 112 (28 November 1952), pp 1734-7; (5 December 1952), pp 1828-32; (12 December 1952), pp 1960-3 J Harris, *The Artist and the Country House* (1979), pp 320-1 Adlington Hall, guidebook, (C Legh 1987) P de Figueiredo and J Treuherz, *Cheshire Country Houses* (1988), pp 15-19

J Harris, *The Artist and the Country House, from the Fifteenth Century to the Present Day* [1995], pls 57-8

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: Cheshire sheet 28, 1st edition published 1882 OS 25" to 1 mile: Cheshire sheet 28.8, 1st edition published 1871

Archival items The Adlington Hall estate papers are held at Adlington Hall. They include plans of Adlington of 1742, early C19, and 1850.

## 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.