

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

HELMINGHAM HALL

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Name:	HELMINGHAM HALL
County:	Suffolk
District:	Mid Suffolk (District Authority)
Parish:	Helmingham
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.174003 Longitude: 1.1899912 National Grid Reference: TM 18220 57658 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: I List Entry Number: 1000270 Date first listed: 01-Jun-1984

Details

A walled and moated garden dating from the C16, with C19 and C20 modifications, set in a park of C17 origin enlarged in the mid C18 to its present size.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Prior to the C15 a house known as Creke Hall, the home of the Joyce family, stood on the site of the present Helmingham Hall. In 1487 John Tollemache married Elizabeth Joyce of Helmingham and in 1509 their son Lionel married Elizabeth's niece Edith. Edith succeeded to the estate and together they pulled down the old hall and in 1510 erected the present Helmingham Hall together with a moated garden enclosure and a deer park (Williamson 1995). The garden was developed on the site of an earlier enclosure, originally protected by a wooden palisade. In 1729 Richard Tollemache, a talented surveyor, completed a survey of the Tollemache lands at Helmingham and his map of the same date shows that the old deer park of c 47ha to the north-west of the Hall had been extended to include the 'New Parke' of c 14ha surrounding the Hall. By this time the Tollemaches had become the earls of Dysart and between 1745 and 1760 the fourth Earl made alterations to the exterior of the Hall, added the present stable block and built a wall around the moated garden. In 1800 John Nash (1752-1835) was commissioned to make further alterations to the exterior and an estate map of 1802, together with some late C18 watercolours of the park (private collection), show that by this time the park had been further extended to both north and south to its present size. These paintings depict for the first time The Mount, topped by a summerhouse and surrounded on its slopes by a wilderness. The architect Anthony Salvin (1799-1881) was called in by John Tollemache, later the first Lord Tollemache, in 1840 to make alterations to the garden front of the Hall, whilst in the park the summerhouse on The Mount was replaced by an Obelisk in 1860 (guidebook). During the middle of the C20 the fourth Lord Tollemache was responsible for the renovation and rejuvenation of the Hall and grounds whilst in the 1980s the present Lady Tollemache added two new garden enclosures to the east of the Hall. The site remains (1998) in private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Helmingham Hall is located beside the village of Helmingham, c 14km north of Ipswich on the B1077. The park is roughly triangular in shape, covers an area of c 160ha and lies

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to the north-west of the village. Helmingham village street and the B1077 form the south-east boundary with South Park Farm at the south tip. Agricultural land and Paris Farm lie to the west, Valley Farm to the east, and North Park Farm to the north. The park boundary is open in some places and enclosed by scattered woodland in others. It is more enclosed to the north and east and more open to the west. The whole area has a gently rolling topography, undulating down to a stream which runs across the southern part of the park before rising steeply in the south-east corner to the church. North of the Hall the land is flat, then dips down to another stream before rising again to the boundary of the park. Together this provides a rural setting of mainly agricultural land, dotted with farm settlements and punctuated by small villages. The Hall and park can be seen from the village and the main view from the Hall is south-east down the oak-lined main drive. The Mount is located in the western section of park and from its summit fine views are enjoyed back towards the Hall and in all directions across the park and wider landscape.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main approach drive enters the park from Helmingham village in the south-east and runs directly to the front of the Hall. The drive was extended to its present length in 1729 and planted with a double avenue of oak, many of which survive today (1998) (Tollemache survey). Twin red-brick lodges (listed grade II*) with crow-stepped gables are linked to red-brick gate piers by ornamental wrought-iron fencing and central gates (listed grade II*). A branch off the drive turns north-east to skirt the gardens and fishponds before entering the stable block located off the north-east corner of the Hall. A second drive, created c 1820, enters from the eastern boundary, past the gate lodge (Keeper's Cottage), (listed grade II), a two-storey, red-brick and pantile building in Tudor-Revival style, and runs west to the stable block, with a branch off to the south to connect with the front drive. In the garden of the Keeper's Cottage, 20m south of the Hall, stands a thatched and timber-framed Game Larder (listed grade II). This building dates from c 1800 and is constructed in the Gothic style with weatherboarding to the sides and a pyramidal roof.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Helmingham Hall (listed grade I), which sits in the south-east quarter of the park, was completed in 1510 for Lionel Tollemache, the High Sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk. It is one of the largest moated houses in Suffolk. Built in a courtyard plan, it is completely surrounded by a broad C16 moat and is reached by two working drawbridges. The Hall is constructed of red brick with red-tile roofs and much of the original two-storey, timber-framed house remains beneath exterior reworking of a number of phases. It has embattled parapets and crow-stepped gables on all sides and many circular or octagonal chimneys, arranged singly and in groups of four. The south-east or gateway front retains the remodelling undertaken during the Georgian period, with a four-window range and gothic hoodmoulds on either side of the round-arched gateway all added by Nash c 1800. The original terminal gables on each corner formed the model for the redesign of the south-west (or garden) front by Anthony Salvin in 1840 which also incorporates diaper patterning in the brickwork. The moat has C18 red-brick revetments (listed grade II) and an obelisk at each corner, surmounting a square pier. In the centre of the south-east side is a cast-iron bridge by Nash, with octagonal brick piers and open arcaded balustrade. A second near-identical bridge spans the north-east arm near its northern end, with octagonal terminal piers also by Nash.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens and pleasure grounds at Helmingham cover c 3ha, of which 0.75ha is kitchen garden. They lie to the north-east and south-west of the Hall, the main garden front being to the south-west. The south-west garden is moated and is reached by a wide grass causeway. The garden is walled on three sides (north-west, south-west and south-east) but open to the north-east; some enclosure is however provided by a cross wall running north/south through the centre of the garden, behind which lies the kitchen garden. The moated enclosure is thought to predate the Hall and may therefore have been associated with the earlier Creke Hall (guidebook), but the walls (listed grade II) were added in 1749 by Robert Rodwell, bricklayer to the fourth Earl Dysart. The open north-east end of the garden faces the Hall and is newly planted (1990s) with elaborate box knots cut into the lawn and filled with santolina. The deep borders against the cross wall contain musk roses and old quince and mulberry trees. The knots are decorated with two early C19 urns (listed grade II) and a bronze C19 sundial on a limestone plinth (listed grade II) sits at the entrance to the garden, the dial being intricately inscribed to include the Tollemache arms. The grass walk dividing the Hall moat from the garden moat is terminated in the south-east by a female statue carved in limestone. This is paired in the north-west by a male statue holding a wolf's head in his left hand (both listed grade II). Along the inner banks of the moat is a spring border to the south-east and a summer border to the south-west, whilst the north-west, south-west and south-east banks contain large, dome-clipped yews. Mature cedar of Lebanon grace the outer

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banks. Beyond the moat to the north-west is an apple walk of early C20 origins, and to the south-west is a hard tennis court, beyond which lies a wild-flower meadow beneath the remains of orchard trees. This area was shown as orchard on the 1729 Tollemache survey. Beyond the south-east bank of the moat lies the Shrubbery Walk, an area of mixed ornamental tree and shrub planting, with walks lined by mature yew and box.

To the north-east of the Hall are two newly planted garden enclosures, designed by Lady Tollemache and Lady Salisbury in 1982. Arranged around an axial path, they consist of a formal garden of clipped box knots in the Tudor style filled with herbs, and a geometric pattern of borders filled with old roses and bulbs. To the south-east is a small enclosed private garden with pavilion and swimming pool (late C20). The whole is surrounded by fine yew hedges and beyond it to the north-east is a fishpond, known as the Coach-house Pond, set into lawn with some fine mature, early C19 oaks.

PARK The park at Helmingham is a gently rolling landscape which today (1998) covers the same area as that shown in the 1802 Johnson survey. It is partially surrounded by tree belts and clearly shows, both in the positions of trees and in the surviving earthworks along the southern and northern boundaries, evidence of having been extended through field boundary removal during the C18. It is filled with oaks of varying ages from veteran trees to newly planted storm damage replacements, scattered across the whole park as individuals, groves and larger groups. The park is grazed by large herds of red and fallow deer. Oak Grove which lies to the north of the Hall is the largest group planting in the park and it is shown on the 1729 Tollemache survey. It contains some fine old trees. Approximately 700m to the west of the Hall and connected to the pleasure grounds by the remains of a Hawthorn Walk lies The Mount, a grass-covered man-made viewing point with a circular pool at its base and a brick Obelisk at its summit. The Mount was in place by the mid C17 and late C18 drawings hanging in the Hall show that it was by that time surmounted by a summerhouse and planted as a wilderness. The Hawthorn Walk is also shown clearly on these drawings by Hodskinson. The summerhouse was removed in the mid C19 and the bricks used to build the Obelisk. Although the early surveys do not show The Mount, they do show a pool in this location and The Mount itself is mentioned in an agreement between Richard Tollemache and his gardener dated 1661. To the south-east of the Hall is the double Oak Avenue, planted in 1730 as proposed on Richard Tollemache's 1729 survey. Also in this quarter are four fishponds. The two largest (thought to be medieval, current owners pers comm 1998) lie at the base of the rise up to the church and are crossed by a causeway and red-brick bridge by John Nash which date from c 1800 (listed grade II). The eastern part of the park, both north and south of the Hall, contains some very fine old oak pollards of a great age. The age of these trees was already being remarked upon by Neale in 1818, as was the large herd of deer. In the north-west corner, a small brick and flint bridge, described as 'new' in a document dated 1815 (Williamson 1995), crosses the stream at a point known as The Dell. Beside it stands a crooked oak, sketched by Constable in 1801. Beyond the north-east corner of the Hall is the stable block and coach house, built c 1800 (listed grade II) of red brick with a hipped slate roof. It is now used as a tea-room.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden covers 0.75ha within the south-west garden and is completely enclosed by a high red-brick wall (listed grade II), entered on the north-east and south-west faces by centrally placed, highly ornamental, wrought-iron gates. The garden is divided into eight equal sections, as depicted on the 1729 Tollemache survey and the 1802 Johnson survey. It continues to be used as a traditional ornamental kitchen garden, supplying fruit, vegetables and flowers for the Hall. The central north-east/south-west path is edged on each side by deep herbaceous borders, whilst the cross paths have smaller borders and are covered by iron arched tunnels for trailing vegetables and flowers. These cross paths are terminated by seats set into the flower borders which run around the inner walls. Beyond the tunnels are climbing roses which hide the vegetable areas. The internal walls of the garden are covered with trained fruit trees in variety.

REFERENCES

J P Neale View of the seats of noblemen and gentlemen...4, (1818) F D Morris, A Series of picturesque views... 3, (1871), p 21 Country Life, 4 (10 December 1898), p 720; 120 (9 August 1956), p 282; (16 August 1956), p 332; 179 (26 June 1986), p 1860 C Holme, The gardens of England in the southern and western counties (1907), pp 157-8 N Pevsner and E Radcliffe, The Buildings of England: Suffolk (1975), p 259 Helmingham Hall Gardens, guidebook, (nd) Tom Williamson, Report on Helmingham Park, (UEA c 1995)

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Maps Richard Tollemache, Estate survey, 1729 (private collection) Isaac Johnson, Estate survey, 1802 (private collection)
Helmingham Tithe map and apportionment, 1840 (P461/123; FDA 123/A1/1a), (East Suffolk Record Office)
OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1887 2nd edition published 1905 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1905
Archival items Agreement between Richard Tollemache and William Dimmock, gardener, dated 1661 (private collection) The
Helmingham Hall and Tollemache family archives are held in a private collection.
Description written: October 1998 Amended: June 1999 Register Inspector: EMP Edited: December 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.