

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

GAMLINGAY

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

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Name: GAMLINGAY

County: Cambridgeshire

District: South Cambridgeshire (District Authority)

Parish: Gamlingay

label.localisation: Latitude: 52.152391
Longitude: -0.20814893
National Grid Reference: TL 22689 51970
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1000620
Date first listed: 16-Jan-1985

Details

Earthwork remains of early formal gardens, laid out in 1712 for Sir George Downing III.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The house and gardens at Gamlingay had a very short life. The estate of Shackledon was acquired by the first Sir George Downing in c 1677 from Sir Roger Burgoyne, whose family lived in the old grange, around which they had made an inclosed park by 1601 (VCH). Between 1712 and 1713 his grandson, Sir George Downing III, built a new house known as Gamlingay Park, and surrounded it with an ornamental garden. Following his death, Sir George's estate was divided amongst four cousins and their issue. If they had no issue their share was to be used for the foundation of a new college in Cambridge. Prolonged litigation followed the death of the last surviving legatee, Sir Jacob Garrad Downing, in 1764, and Downing College, Cambridge did not finally acquire the property until 1800. The house had been abandoned and demolished in 1776. Thereafter the land was covered with grass, the remnants of the gardens surviving only as earthworks. The college sold the site in 1945 and it remains (2000) in single private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The remains of the gardens of Gamlingay Park lie c 1km to the west of the village of Gamlingay which is situated c 18km west of Cambridge, close to the Cambridgeshire/Bedfordshire border. The site, which slopes gently to the north, covers a rectangular area measuring c 460m x 405m, bounded to the south by a minor road and to the west, north and east by farmland.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The land is entered via a wooden field gate off the road which forms the southern boundary.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The earthwork remains of the gardens show that the house was laid out around three sides of a courtyard, a central circular depression being the site of a sunken garden. To the north of the house site the gardens fall away in three terraces to the site of the lake, the upper terrace, c 150m long and 8m wide, showing the remains of a path extending westwards. The wide second terrace is reached by ramps, 7m wide, at either end of the first terrace and is rectangular in shape apart from a semicircular indentation which follows the contour of the lake edge. A projection to the

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north-east is probably the site of a summerhouse (Taylor 1983). The third terrace also follows the lake edge and is between 7m and 15m wide, also reached by ramps. The lake, now drained, is trapezoidal in shape, its short side facing the house to the south and curved to match the contour of the garden terraces. Its east side is formed by an earth dam, while the north and east boundaries of the lake are indicated by small scarps c 1m high. An oval mound stands to the north of centre of the lake.

Two series of rectangular ponds once lay to the west and east of the lake, those to the west now represented by part of a single pond, while to the east four of the series survive. The remains of footings of a path leading west from the upper terrace can be traced, together with wall footings and earthworks relating to walled garden enclosures on the west side of the house.

The 1801 plan of the estate shows that beyond the earthworks gardens were laid out as formal woodland areas with a main vista on an axis through the garden terraces and lake leading out into the woods. These are shown to have included crossing and radiating paths, a rondpoint and pannes d'oie and were linked to the upper terrace by paths, possibly with fountain basins at the intersections. None of these features survive. Near to Drove Road, c 500m north of the main garden area is the so-called 'Full Moon Gate' (listed grade II), the sole upstanding feature of the C18 buildings.

KITCHEN GARDEN To the east of the house site is a small rectangular pond and the remains of a brick culvert on the site of the former kitchen garden (Taylor 1983).

REFERENCES

Victoria History of the County of Cambridgeshire II, (1948), pp 68-79 Roy Comm Hist Monuments of Engl Inventories: Cambridgeshire I, (1968), pp 110-12, pls 3, 28 J Kenworthy-Browne et al, Burke's and Savills Guide to Country Houses III, (1981), p 15 C Taylor, Archaeology of gardens (1983), pp 110-12 T Way, A study of the impact of imparkment on the social landscape of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire from c 1080 to 1760, BAR Brit Ser 258 (1997), pp 268-9 C Taylor, Parks and gardens of Britain (1998), pp 74-5

Maps Plan of the estate of Sir George Downing of Gamlingay in the county of Cambridge, 1801 (Downing College Map Collection)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1887 2nd edition published 1903

Description written: February 2000 Amended: December 2000 Register Inspector: EMP Edited: January 2001

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.