

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

DRAYTON HOUSE

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

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Name:	DRAYTON HOUSE
District:	North Northamptonshire (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Lowick
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.410266 Longitude: -0.58418155 National Grid Reference: SP 96403 80083 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: I List Entry Number: 1001031 Date first listed: 25-Jun-1984

Details

Well-preserved formal gardens of c 1700 with elements by Tilleman Bobart, John Van Nost, Henry Wise, Jean Tijou and John Webb, associated with a country house. Surrounding landscape park crossed by early C18 avenues.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Simon of Drayton (d 1357), who several times represented the Shire in Parliament, obtained licences to crenellate and impark in 1328. In 1362 the manor passed by marriage to the Greenes; Henry Greene, executed in 1399, was considered by Leland to have built the house he saw in 1540. In 1467, on the death of the last Greene, Drayton passed to a son-in-law John Stafford (d 1473), later created Earl of Wiltshire. His son Edward, the second Earl (d 1499), who entertained Henry VII at Drayton in 1498, was probably responsible for the late medieval alterations to the house. A further major phase of additions dates from the time of Lewis, third Baron Mordaunt (d 1601). During the time of his great-grandson Henry, second Earl of Peterborough, courtier and catholic convert, the garden pavilions were rebuilt. On his death Drayton passed to his daughter Mary (d 1705), who in 1701 divorced her husband Henry, Duke of Norfolk, and married her lover Sir John Germain (d 1718), a soldier who was probably the illegitimate half-brother of William III. During Germain's time at Drayton Henry Wise was planting there, while in 1718 Van Nost supplied parterre statuary. Germain made Drayton over to his second wife Lady Elizabeth (Betty) Berkeley (d 1769), who until her death preserved Drayton as her husband left it. She left it to her cousin Lord George Sackville (d 1785), who began to redecorate. In 1843 the property passed to Caroline Sackville, a niece of the previous owner, and her husband William Bruce Stopford, who brought in W A Nesfield to lay out a new parterre east of the House. Drayton remains in private hands in 1998.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Drayton House stands 2km south-west of the village of Lowick, which is on the A6116 from Thrapston, 3km to the south-east, to Corby. Running 2km south of Drayton is the A14, which 8km to the west passes Kettering. The park stands in open countryside, and its boundaries follow field edges. The area here registered is c 120ha.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main approach is from Lowick to the north-east, along Drayton Road, which continues through the open grassland of the park along the south side of a shallow valley before turning north to approach the main, south forecourt (the principal entrance front since the mid C17) and the west side of the House. Another, now disused,

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drive runs south-east to the Thrapston to Twywell road and this has a stone lodge of 1908. Drives also run south-east, south-west and north-west from the house. Drayton Cottages, a pair of estate cottages of 1908, stand on the south-west drive.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Drayton House (listed grade I) is a large and complex limestone building, largely of C14 to C18 date, ranged around an internal rectangular courtyard dominated by a baroque facade by William Talman (d 1719). To the south is a large forecourt with central sundial (listed grade II), probably C18. The forecourt is entered through large and elaborate iron gates of 1701 by Jean Tijou (fl 1680s-1710s) set between finely carved piers bearing the arms of Sir John Germain and his wife Lady Mary Mordaunt. To either side are iron wickets set on slightly lower piers (piers and gates listed grade I). On the east side of the forecourt is a monumental arched gateway of c 1700 leading through to the east garden, and on the west a similar arch giving access to stables.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens are ranged around the north-west and north-east sides of the House. They are largely contained within walls, generally of limestone, and up to 4m tall (listed grade II). The main garden is the East Parterre, now a simple lawn, c 60m square and occupying the whole of the north-east front. Towards the far side of the lawn is a fountain of 1846 by W A Nesfield (1793-1881), while at the two outer corners are substantial limestone ashlar pavilions or banqueting houses of c 1650 attributed to John Webb (1611-72), linked by balustrading possibly of earlier date (all listed grade II*). To the south of the more southerly banqueting house are iron gates of c 1700, moved here in 1916. A gap in the balustrading and steps lead up to a 30m wide outer compartment with central demi-lune which runs behind the banqueting houses, and leading from the outer corners of which, outside the ha-ha, is the first section of the Lime Avenue. On a plinth in the centre of the outer compartment is a statue of Samson and the Philistine by John Van Nost, one of several which remain about the gardens. South-east of the East Parterre, and beyond a low stone wall, is the 40m square, stone-lined fishpond (listed grade II), created or remodelled c 1700. South-east of this and extending up to the south-east wall, is a lawn. There is a gate close to the south-east end of the north-east wall, and a clairvoie at the south-west end of the south-east wall.

Immediately north-west of the House is a short lime avenue, probably part of the layout of c 1700 and carrying the main axial line south-west. Within the garden the line is continued down the north side of the East Parterre with a double row of limes planted in the late C20. North-west of the short lime avenue, and occupying the rest of the western part of the garden, is a lawn with specimen trees. In the early C18 this area was the wilderness, visible on the Bucks' view of 1729 (reproduced in guidebook 1990) and probably that described by Morton. The 3m tall wall down the south-west side of this (whose line is continued across the line of the lime avenue by a hedge) is pierced towards its centre by an ex-situ doorway with carved surround of c 1580, while at the south-east end of the hedge is an iron clairvoie. North-east of the wilderness area the central and eastern parts of the north garden are divided up by a cruciform arrangement of beech and hornbeam hedges. Of the four compartments so created, those to the south-east are lawns with central urns (listed grade II), while in those to the north-west is the kitchen garden. Set along the north-east wall of the garden at the end of the south-west to north-east cruciform path is a red-brick orangery of c 1700 (listed, with the walls, grade II). Immediately north-west of this is a swimming pool. At the north-east end of the north-west wall are iron gates dated 1699 but possibly incorporating earlier panels. The greater part of the ironwork around the garden seems likely to be by Tijou, and all is included within the listing descriptions.

The basic garden layout was established in the 1580s for the third Lord Mordaunt, and although rebuilt in the 1650s the two banqueting houses date from that time. About 1700 Sir John Germain had the parterre laid out in the Dutch fashion by the gardener Tilleman Bobart (d 1724), who also worked at Hampton Court and Blenheim. The parterre statuary, with figures of Bacchus and Flora, was supplied by John Van Nost (d 1729) in 1718 with directions that it was to be 'painted twice over with a white stone colour'. Also undertaken was the planting of limes, in the garden as well as the park, by Henry Wise (d 1738), the royal gardener, bills from whom covering 1700 to 1703 survive in the estate archives. As remade in the early C18 the gardens appear in a view of Drayton by Samuel and Nathaniel Buck published in 1729 (guidebook 1990). John Morton (1712) mentions 'a very fine wilderness of flowering shrubs', while in 1763 Horace Walpole recorded 'The garden is just as Sir John Germaine (sic) brought it from Holland: pyramidal yews, treillages, and square cradle walks with windows clipped in them' (CL 1965, 1219). In 1846 a parterre was laid east of the House by William Andrews Nesfield. This was abandoned

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c 1945, and the area returned to lawn. Other than the absence of topiary, the east garden again looks much as it did in 1729 although yews were replanted in 1998.

PARK Drayton House lies towards the centre of a roughly square park c 1km in diameter; the perimeter is defined by a ditch and a post and rail fence, and there is a shelter belt around much of the park. The interior is almost entirely permanent pasture, and there are extensive areas of well-preserved ridge and furrow, for instance between the main drive and the park's southern boundary. The park is well supplied with mature parkland trees; there seems to have been a phase of planting in the mid C19, and the late C20 has seen a renewed interest in the parkland planting.

The park is crossed by several avenues. The most important of these is the Lime Avenue, which carries the main axial line north-east from the centre of the east parterre for 500m to the park boundary. This point is also the eastern end of the Oak Avenue, also known as the Church Avenue because of its alignment on Lowick church. Both avenues were planted in the early C18 and still contain many trees likely to be original plantings. The avenue south-west from the House, the Slipton Avenue, of lime and walnut (planted 1965) is under-planted with Norway spruce and shrubs on rotation.

The early C18 landscaping scheme included a double avenue of elms (Pall Mall (from either side of the forecourt, running on straight lines 400m south-east, uphill to the park boundary on the skyline. The avenue was replanted in 1977 with lime, walnut and London plane and at the head are tall stone gate piers with elaborate gates and railings of c 1700, probably by Jean Tijou (listed grade I).

About 1982 Alan Mitchell planted the Arboretum, which incorporated older cedars, as a narrow strip down the west side of the drive which runs on a straight line south-east from the House.

The medieval deer park, Drayton Old Park, lay c 2km north-west of and outside the landscape park. It is not known when the present park was created, although it would seem at least possible that it was c 1700 when so much was done to the House and its surrounds. A late C18 map shows the park much as it is today, although with a rather more complex network of avenues.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden occupies the north-western of the four hedged compartments on the north side of the House. It contains several glasshouses and sheds, partly of C19 date.

REFERENCES

J Morton, *The Natural History of Northamptonshire* (1712), pp 493-4 *Country Life*, 25 (10 April 1909), pp 528-9; 31 (15 June 1912), pp 898-908; (22 June 1912), pp 934-44; 137 (13 May 1965), pp 1146-50; (20 May 1965), pp 1216-19; (27 May 1965), pp 1286-9 G Jekyll, *Garden Ornament* (1918, reprinted 1982), pp 51, 85, 91, 210, 293, 314 *Drayton House, guidebook*, (B A Bailey 1990) J Heward and R Taylor, *The Country Houses of Northamptonshire*, (RCHM(E) 1996), pp 175-88

Maps Map of Drayton, c 1780 (private collection)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1888 2nd edition published 1901 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1900

Description written: 1998 Register Inspector: PAS

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.