

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

STOKE ROCHFORD HALL

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

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Name:	STOKE ROCHFORD HALL
County:	Lincolnshire
District:	South Kesteven (District Authority)
Parish:	Great Ponton
County:	Lincolnshire
District:	South Kesteven (District Authority)
Parish:	Stoke Rochford
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.844255 Longitude: -0.63733863 National Grid Reference: SK 91875 28286 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000991 Date first listed: 24-Jun-1985

Details

Mid C19 formal gardens designed by W A Nesfield and William Burn, set beside a large country house and surrounded by a mid C18 landscaped park with Roman, medieval, and C17 connections.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The name of Rochford comes from the Rochford family who originated in Essex but moved to Lincolnshire in the C15. The old house which they purchased from the Neville family eventually fell into ruin and in the C17 the estate came into the possession of Sir Edmund Turnor who in 1665 began to build a new house on the site of the old one. Around it he laid out formal gardens, parterres, and terraces before he died in 1707. The park was extended and landscaped during the C18, its layout being recorded on the 1799 Enclosure map. The gardens survived in part until the beginning of the C19 but Sir Edmund's house was taken down by his successors in 1774 and by 1794 another, smaller house had taken its place (CL 1901). Mr Edmund Turnor resided in the new house until his death in 1829 and the estate passed to his son, Sir Christopher Turnor. By the 1840s the Turnor family fortune was considerable, allowing Sir Christopher to abandon the old house and its gardens. He commissioned the architect William Burn to design a grand new mansion, which was built between 1841 and 1843 on higher ground to the north-east. Burn also designed and built many of the cottages in the estate village of South Stoke and created formal terraced gardens for the Hall, which was given a new southern approach via a bridge crossing the lakes. The design of the pleasure grounds was undertaken by W A Nesfield, who collaborated with Burn on several occasions (The Gardener 1874). Sir Christopher Turnor died in 1886 and the estate passed to his son Edmund who resided elsewhere and let Stoke Rochford to tenants. On his death in 1903 Edmund was succeeded by his nephew Christopher who retook possession of the Hall. During the Second World War Stoke Rochford was occupied by the army and in 1940 Christopher Turnor died. The family continued to manage the park but

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in 1948, Kesteven Council opened up the Kesteven College of Education in the Hall and grounds. By 1978 when the College closed the Council had erected modern halls of residence in the west park. In October 1978 the National Union of Teachers purchased the lease from Kesteven Council and opened its National Education and Conference Centre. The site remains (2001) in divided ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Stoke Rochford Hall occupies a rural setting c 7km to the south of Grantham, on the west side of the main A1 which forms its eastern boundary. The c 140ha site, which is enclosed by dense plantations, is bordered to the south by South Stoke village, to the west by a private road to Home Farm, and to the north by farmland. The Cringle Brook winds from south to north for c 2km through the park, creating a valley with rolling ground rising up from it to the east and west. This landform gives rise to fine views from the Hall north along the valley of the Brook, and east across the rising ground beyond it.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main approach to Stoke Rochford Hall is from South Stoke on the southern boundary of the park, through stone gate piers surmounted by ball finials set beside a stone and slate lodge (listed grade II) erected in 1841 by Cornelius Sherbourne for Sir Christopher Turnor. The drive, created to serve the new mansion, runs north-west through a belt of trees, then emerges in the park to cross the c 1841 three-arch bridge (listed grade II, possibly by William Burn) over the lakes. From here it climbs north through the park for c 500m before turning south-east towards the Hall beside the ashlar and limestone Obelisk to Sir Issac Newton (listed grade II*, probably by Burn). Here the drive is flanked by lawns backed by mixed ornamental trees and leads through Burn's wrought-iron gate and screen wall (listed grade II*) to the entrance courtyard below the north-west front. The courtyard, now (2001) a tarmac car park, is enclosed by the screen wall to the north-west while to the north-east is a yew hedge set beside a lawn planted with mature fruit trees. The south-west boundary of the forecourt is formed by a lawn backed by a balustraded wall and yew hedge screening the garden beyond. A second lodged entrance, located c 150m south of Home Farm on the western boundary, and an entrance from the north-east corner of the park, now lead onto drives used as farm tracks.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Stoke Rochford Hall (listed grade I) stands in the centre of a large park. The former country mansion is used as a residential trade union centre and is built of ashlar and slate in the Jacobethan style. The three-storey mansion has an irregular ground plan with stone mullioned windows, projecting bays, obelisk finials, and elaborate cornices. To the south-west of the main block is an Orangery which looks out over the south gardens while the north-west corner is connected to a low service range leading to the stables.

The stable courtyard and carriage house (listed grade II) stands on the north-west corner of the service range and is entered through a central semicircular-headed carriage arch on the south-west side. Both the Hall and its associated ranges represent the last phase of building work at Stoke Rochford, by William Burn for Sir Christopher Turnor. The earlier Turnor houses stood much closer to the lakes, c 300m to the south of the present Hall, where two ornamental archways from the C17 stable block (listed grade I) were re-erected in the C19 by Sir Christopher to adorn his park.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens lie to the south-west, south, east, and north-east of the Hall and are enclosed to the east and north by a balustraded retaining wall, beyond which the park falls away towards the valley of the Cringle Brook. They are entered through a gate in the south corner of the entrance courtyard and although simplified, the basic outline of the garden survives as William Burn and W A Nesfield designed it in 1841.

Below the south-west front, in the angle formed by the Orangery, is a small formal parterre of gravel paths, grass, and borders, with clipped yew and box, enclosed to the west by a low retaining wall and to the south by a low balustraded wall. Its layout is very similar to that shown on the 1901 photographs (CL). Beyond the balustrade to the south is a lawn planted with a central shrubbery, defined at the corners by clipped yews. The lawn is flanked by parallel gravel paths running south. Along the eastern path is a long border backed by a yew hedge, with views of the park beyond. To the west of the western path is the pleasure ground, composed of a series of compartments enclosed by mature plantings of mixed exotic species. These compartments include a rose garden, a rock garden, the remains of a sunken croquet lawn enclosed by yew hedges now (2001) used as a

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children's play area, and open lawn, and a late C20 raising ground. The pleasure ground is divided from the west park by a metal fence.

From the east front run a series of grass and gravel formal terraces. Steps at each end run down to the lower level, which has a narrow lawn set with formal borders and planted with clipped yews. From here there are views east over the falling ground of the park beyond. Below the north-east corner of the Hall is a lawn, edged on one side by topiary. Views from the balustrade enclosing this garden extend north along the valley of the Cringle Brook.

PARK The undulating ground of the park surrounds the Hall on all sides and has been retained under grass, with many parkland trees surviving from a wide range of periods. The ages of the species, which include beech, oak, horse chestnut, and lime vary from very mature to recently planted and while some areas have been divided into fields the majority of the park remains open and undivided. The Cringle Brook which runs through the centre of the park from south to north is dammed into a series of thin ponds linked by waterfalls. These are of medieval origin, but the main area of water lying c 250m to the south-east of the Hall was enlarged in the C18 to form an irregular shape 400m long. Another, narrower pool runs for 700m, c 250m north-east of the Hall. On the rising ground to the east of the Brook, in the south-east quarter of the park, a C20 golf course has been laid out, to the north of which lies the C18 Walk Plantation, which is shown on Armstrong's map of 1779 although the scale is too small the record the detail of its layout.

In the west park, c 250m west-south-west of the Hall are a range of mid C20 college buildings with associated sports grounds. These stand beside the Obelisk which is backed to the west by the mid C19 Obelisk Plantation. Map evidence suggests that the park was laid out during the C18 to accompany one of the earlier houses (Armstrong, 1779; Enclosure map, 1799) and was embellished and extended in the mid C19 when the present Hall was built.

REFERENCES

The Gardener, (1874), p 408 Country Life, 10 (9 November 1901), pp 592-7 G Jekyll, Garden Ornament (1918), p 248 N Pevsner et al, The Buildings of England: Lincolnshire (1989), pp 720-2 H Thorold, Lincolnshire Houses (1999), pp 167-8 T R Leach, guidebook, A short history of Stoke Rochford Hall (nd)

Maps Capt A Armstrong, Map of the County of Lincolnshire, 1779 (Lincolnshire Archives) Enclosure award for Stoke Rochford, 1799 (Kesteven Award 70), (Lincolnshire Archives)

OS 1" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1824 OS 6" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1905 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1904

Description written: June 2001; amended October 2002 Register Inspector: EMP Edited: June 2002

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.