

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

MELBOURNE HALL

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

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MELBOURNE HALL

Name: MELBOURNE HALL

County: Derbyshire

District: South Derbyshire (District Authority)

Parish: Melbourne

label.localisation: Latitude: 52.819949
Longitude: -1.4256965
National Grid Reference: SK3880024867
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: I
List Entry Number: 1000682
Date first listed: 04-Aug-1984

Details

Gardens laid out by the Rt Hon Thomas Coke during the period 1704 to c 1710, with advice from Henry Wise, and parkland probably laid out during the C17 and the early C19.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The site was part of a royal manor granted to the bishopric of Carlisle in the C12 or C13. It was used by the bishops as a refuge from the unsettled northern see until the C15 from which time it was leased. Sir John Coke took over the leasehold in 1629 and the freehold was obtained by his grandson, the Rt Hon Thomas Coke in 1704. Coke intended to create a new garden when he inherited in 1696 and he ordered trees and shrubs from London and Wise's Brompton Park nurseries in the years which followed his majority. A plan of the garden was made in 1698. An undated letter of c 1700 (quoted in Saunders and Usher c 1980, 6) refers to two designs for the garden by Henry Wise (1653-1738), the one favoured by Coke 'to suit with Versailles'. Wise visited Melbourne in 1701 but further work was delayed until the freehold of the site was secured in 1704. Shortly after this Coke signed a contract with William Cooke of Walcot for the construction of new gardens which were to include 'terrasses, sloops, verges and fleets of steps'. A second contract followed later in the year which specified 'wilderness work', 'bassons of water' and hedged alleys. Correspondence between Cooke and George London (d 1714) suggests that plans were sent to Henry Wise for his approval but it is not clear whether these represented alterations to Wise's original designs or an entirely new layout he had devised perhaps in collaboration with Coke. Statuary was ordered from Jan Nost's workshop and the hydraulic work was undertaken by George Sorocold. A plan of the garden of 1722 by T Kirkland shows the executed scheme.

The estate descended through the female line to Sir Matthew Lamb whose son Penistone Lamb was created first Viscount Melbourne in 1770. Thereafter it passed through the female line to the Cowper and Kerr families. It is privately owned (1998).

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Melbourne Hall lies on the south-east side of the village of Melbourne in an area which is otherwise rural and agricultural. The c 20ha site is on land which slopes gently down to the valley of the Blackwell Brook which runs approximately north/south between the gardens and park. The site is bounded by

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Blackwell Lane and Park Drive to the north and fencing to the east and south. To the south and west it includes The Pool and woodland called The Intake.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main entrance to the site is from Pool Road where there is a forecourt on the south side of the Hall. There are a number of secondary entrances at various points around the walled garden and from Pool Road.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Melbourne Hall (listed grade II*) probably dates from the early C17. It was altered and enlarged on a number of occasions, most notably by Francis Smith of Warwick in 1725-7 and by William Smith in 1744. The Hall is in use as a private residence (1998).

Immediately north and west of the Hall there are a number of ancillary buildings including cottages, stables and a coach house (all listed grade II*) of C16, C17 and early C18 date, an aisled barn (C15 with later alterations, listed grade I) attached to the north of the stable complex, and an early C18 laundry (listed grade I) c 50m to the north of the Hall which is in use as tea rooms (1998).

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens, which are walled in a mixture of red brick backed with stone and stone rubble (walls listed grade II), lie to the east and south-east of the Hall. On the south side of the Hall there is a forecourt with a turning circle, walled on the east and west sides (walls and archways listed grade I). At the north end of each wall there is a rusticated early C18 arch, and the south ends terminate with stone piers supporting banded ball finials. The forecourt has lawns from which there are views to the south over Pool Road across The Pool. A strip of grassland between the road and the water's edge immediately south of the forecourt is marked Pool Garden on the 1698 plan, which shows the forecourt planted with lines of trees. This arrangement is shown on a sketch of 1722 which shows Pool Garden enclosed by walls.

The gardens on the east side of the Hall consist of a formal garden which slopes down to the east flanked by narrow walkways on the outer sides of walls. Gardens to the south and south-east are axially integrated into the design but not visible from the Hall. A broad terraced walk runs along the west side of the garden in front of the Hall with views to the east over the formal layout and to parkland beyond. At the south end of the terrace there are railings with lyre motifs (early C18, probably by Robert Bakewell, listed grade I with south forecourt walls) from which there are views southwards over The Pool. A central path leads down to the east from the terrace and this is flanked on the north and south sides by lawns shown as parterres on the 1722 map, overlooked by raised alleys. A second terraced walk at the base of the lawns has central stone steps leading down to a lawn with a central circular fountain called the Mercury Fountain. The raised alleys descend to the same level via two sets of stone steps (flights of steps all of c 1704 and listed grade I). The north and south sides of this part of the garden are flanked by brick walls planted with yew hedges on their inner (garden) sides.

Quartering paths run from the Fountain, that to the east leading to the edge of a rectangular pond with an apsidal east end. This is overlooked from the east by a wrought-iron gazebo (Robert Bakewell c 1705-10, listed grade I) called the Birdcage which has a small room to the rear (east side) with a fixed bench giving views to the west over the pond and formal garden. The Birdcage is considered (for example Hussey 1967) one of the finest structures of its type in the country and it acts as the focal point of this part of the garden.

The gardens which can be seen from the Hall are axially related to it though they are not symmetrically placed with reference to the building and are aligned with its south-east corner. That Coke intended to remedy this by enlarging the Hall is confirmed by an undated early C18 sketch (reproduced in CL 1928, 498) showing a new house aligned with the garden. The plan of 1698 suggests that the principal garden divisions and axial relationship with the Hall were preserved in the post-1704 work. The easternmost end of the garden at that time had two fishponds, one of them L shaped and the other square with a central square island.

On the north side, north of the wall and yew hedge, a former dovecote (early C17, listed grade I) lies c 40m north-east of the Hall. It has a tall, octagonal, bell-shaped roof and was remodelled as a garden pavilion in the early C18. A path leads east through woodland (shown as an avenue on the 1722 plan) to a circular fountain (listed grade I), which is at the north end of the northern path from the Mercury Fountain. From this point a matching fountain (listed grade I) can be seen at the south end of the southern path from the Mercury Fountain, and this acts as one of the points of entry into the wooded southern part of the garden.

Paths which lead directly east and west of this fountain run through tunnels of yew. Records of removing decayed framework supporting the hedges in 1726 (quoted in CL 1928, 498) suggest that it was probably designed as a tunnel from the outset.

The south-east part of the garden is articulated about a path which leads south-west from the Birdcage through woodland to a series of glades and rondpoints. A circular fountain is situated c 100m south-west of the Birdcage. Paths running south-east and north-west from it lead to two more fountains: that to the east with a cusped outline overlooked from the east side by a brick alcove with a bench (c 1704, listed grade I); that to the west, which is also circular, overlooked from the west side by a similar seating alcove (also listed grade I). This arrangement is shown on the 1722 map when the southern pond was star shaped. The path which leads south-west from the central fountain terminates at a rondpoint from which four alleys radiate, that to the north-west leading to a grove from which there are views north over the westernmost of the three fountains. The paths and rondpoints reveal unfolding and unexpected views which contrast with the open character of the central part of the garden.

A small valley in the south-west part of the garden is the site of a grotto (early C19, listed grade II*) and the canalised stream, crossed by stone bridges (channel and bridges listed grade II*), which feeds the water features in the garden.

The layout and most of the principal elements of the garden are as shown on the 1722 map.

PARK Parkland to the east of the garden is open pasture planted with groups of trees designed to frame a vista from the Hall with the formal garden in the foreground, the Birdcage in the middle distance, and immediately beyond it, rising ground. An estate map of 1724 shows the area with a U-shaped plantation aligned with the axis of the garden, but as the U is closed it is doubtful if long-distance views could have been obtained at that time and the plantation may have been designed to provide a backcloth for the garden.

On the south-west side of the house, The Pool is a large, irregularly shaped lake with two islands sheltered by a plantation along its southern edge called The Intake. The Pool is shown in similar form on the 1724 map, though there are no islands or planting around it. The water dominates views from the south side of the Hall and the south end of the upper terrace. It was used to provide a head of water to supply the water features in the gardens by engineer George Sorocold, who raised its level by two feet. In the early to mid C19 The Pool was refurbished and the islands created, probably from the products of dredging.

The park at Melbourne was a royal park which was probably created in 1200 when records show payments were made for enclosing it. It was restocked with deer in 1227 after the manor was granted to the bishops of Carlisle. A survey of 1530 noted that the pale was 'in dekaye' and the area was disparked and sold at the end of the C16. Part of the pale survives and is visible in fields c 800m south-east of the Hall. It is shown in fairly complete form on the 1877 OS map enclosing an area separated from the Hall and gardens by fields under arable cultivation. The whole of the area of the former medieval deer park is outside the registered area.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden lies c 300m south-east of the Hall and consists of three brick walls (listed grade II) with stone copings set c 10m apart. The remains of glasshouses and ancillary buildings are attached to the two northernmost walls. The walls are shown on the 1722 map but no associated buildings are shown.

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.

Bibliographie

Books and journals

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Jellicoe, G, Jellicoe, S (at al), *The Oxford Companion to Gardens*, (1986), 367

Pevsner, N, Williamson, E, *The Buildings of England: Derbyshire*, (1978), 278-9

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Other

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Country Life, 63 (7 April 1928), pp 492-9

E Saunders, Melbourne Hall and Estate; H Usher, The Royal Park at Melbourne [Bound together and privately published c1980]

Estate plan, 1724 [maps reproduced in the guidebooks]

Melbourne Hall Gardens, guidebook, (1984)

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Plan of the garden, 1698

T Kirkland, Plan of the garden, 1722