

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

RYTON HOUSE

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

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**RYTON HOUSE**

Name:	RYTON HOUSE
County:	Warwickshire
District:	Rugby (District Authority)
Parish:	Ryton-on-Dunsmore
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.363039 Longitude: -1.4298302 National Grid Reference: SP 38923 74040 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001343 Date first listed: 08-Dec-1995

## Details

Early C19 gardens, pleasure grounds and park associated with an early C19 villa.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The site, which had previously formed part of the Wolford and Halle Fields, was part of an Enclosure Award of just over 24 acres (c 10ha) which was made to the Wilcox family in 1760. This passed by inheritance to Abraham Awson, who in turn left the property to Stephen Freeman in 1798. Freeman (1774-1856) was a member of a long-established Coventry family of Unitarian tradesmen, and in 1806-7 built the present villa. The OS Surveyor's drawing (1813) shows the house set in smaller gardens than at present to the north, east and south sides, but Greenwood's Map of Warwickshire (1820) indicates that by that date the basic form of the surviving landscape had been achieved. Stephen Freeman's brother, William (1773-1849), was an amateur artist of local note (Fretton 1883), and may have been responsible for laying out the grounds at Ryton; he spent his latter years at Ryton House.

Following Stephen Freeman's death in 1856, the property was owned in turn by his nieces, Catherine (Mrs Charles Twamley d 1883) and Mary. Miss Mary Freeman died in 1895, leaving the estate to her nephew, Charles Browett. Browett, a Coventry solicitor, owned Ryton House until after the Second World War, when it became a Royal British Legion Club, in which use it continues today (1999).

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Ryton House is situated c 250m south-east of the village of Ryton-on-Dunsmore, some 5km south-east of Coventry. The c 6ha site comprises c 1.5ha of gardens and pleasure grounds, and c 4.5ha of parkland, and occupies a triangle of land to the west of the junction of the A45 London Road and the A445 Leamington Road. The former lies to the north-east of the site, while the latter forms the south-eastern boundary. The western boundary comprises a hedge which separates the site from fields, now (1999) partly being developed for housing. The site slopes gently north from the House down to a stream running parallel to the northern boundary, which has been dammed to form two lakes. Ryton House is screened from the adjacent public roads by mature trees and shrubbery, but from the House and north terrace there are views over the grounds and lakes to trees on rising agricultural land c 500m to the north.

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**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** Today (1999) the site is approached from the A445 Leamington Road at a point c 50m south-west of the House. A two-storey painted brick lodge with ornamental bargeboards and windows which was constructed by the Coventry builder J L Ackroyd for Stephen Freeman in 1850 stands to the west of the entrance. The tarmac drive leads c 50m north-west between mature trees, before turning east for c 30m to reach the west side of the House. In the C19 this drive was a secondary or service drive which led to the stables and a small farmstead which stood c 30m west of the House. These buildings were largely demolished after 1946 (aerial photograph), but remnants of the farmstead survive today.

The C19 principal approach was from the A45 London Road to the north. The entrance, c 160m north of the House, is flanked by rendered brick piers which are square on plan. The drive, today a track, leads south across a shallow-arched bridge which divides the two lakes, before sweeping westwards to arrive at a terrace below the north facade of the House. The north drive is separated from the parkland to east and west by C19 wrought-iron estate fences with access to the park being through contemporary, ornamental iron gates. The north terrace, in effect the carriage court, is retained by a gently curved stone wall of buttressed construction, with a low parapet allowing views north across the park to the lakes. The ornamental vases which are shown standing on the buttresses in a mid C19 watercolour view (Coventry RO) do not survive (1999).

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Ryton House (listed grade II) was built for Stephen Freeman by the Coventry builder Richard Booth in 1806-7. This house was based on a design by an unknown London architect, possibly Robert Lugar (listed building description), which had been commissioned in 1801; a further plan was provided in 1804 (Twamley 1859, WCRO). The original house comprised a central two-storey block with an unusual part-glazed attic storey fronted by a balustrade to the north. To east and west of the main block were single-storey wings, with bow windows facing north. The house was extended westwards at an early date to provide additional service quarters, and is shown in this form in the watercolour view of c 1830-40 (Coventry RO). Stephen Freeman commissioned the Coventry builder J L Ackroyd to raise the single-storey wings to full height in 1850 and a conservatory (no longer surviving) was also added to the house in the mid or late C19. With the exception of the demolition of the western extensions after 1946 and a small late C20 addition to the north facade, the exterior of Ryton House has remained substantially unchanged from the late C19.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The informal gardens and pleasure grounds lie to the south and east of the House. To the south, originally overlooked by the dining room, is a level lawn dominated by a mature cedar. The lawn is backed by mature specimen trees and evergreen and flowering shrubs. Within the shrubbery is the site of a small circular pool and fountain c 30m south-east of the House which is shown on the 1886 OS map. The lawn was the site of the early C19 flower garden, for which a sketch plan of c 1810 survives showing informal planting beds (WCRO). Early C19 drawings by Edward Rudge illustrate details of the flower garden including a 'basket' flower bed and a small ornamental conservatory (Herbert Art Gallery, Coventry). This structure, c 25m east of the House, survived until 1938 (OS), but does not remain today (1999). Mary Freeman's diaries (1845-93) provide information on planting in the flower garden (WCRO).

**PARK** The park lies to the north and north-east of the House, divided into two paddocks of unequal area by the north drive. The land falls to the two lakes which lie adjacent to the northern boundary of the site c 160m north and 130m north-east of the House. The ground towards the lakes has been regraded in the C20 to flatten the slope. The western, or larger paddock, is entered by an ornamental wrought-iron gate at the east end of the north terrace, and is shown being grazed by two house-cows on a mid C19 watercolour (Coventry RO). This paddock remains an open meadow, bounded by mature woodland and shrubbery to the north and west. Several mature standard pear trees stand to the west of the open paddock, c 100m north-west of the House, and survive from an orchard shown on the late C19 OS map. On the eastern side of the north drive is a second, smaller area of paddock, which, like the western paddock, is defined and enclosed by a wooded belt, from which the open interior is divided by C19 iron estate fencing broken by ornamental wrought-iron gates. A late C20 model car racing track has been constructed to the south of the eastern lake.

The bridge which carries the northern drive forms the dam dividing the upper (eastern) and lower (western) lakes, which were formed in the early C19 by damming a stream which enters the site at its eastern corner, and which flows along the north and north-west boundaries. The level of the lakes was raised when they were repaired and cleaned in 1889, and further repairs were carried out after storm damage in 1895 (Twamley c 1880, WCRO). The boathouse at the western end of the west lake

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shown on the 1886 OS map does not survive (1999). The northern bank of both lakes is planted with mature trees and evergreen shrubbery which screen the site from the A45 London Road. To the north of the boundary planting a deep ditch acts as an overflow for the lakes.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The kitchen garden, referred to as the 'Field Garden' by Mary Freeman in her diaries, is situated to the south of the A445 Leamington Road, c 80m south of the House. The garden is screened from the public road by a brick wall c 2.5m high, which has curved returns to the north-east and south-west. An arched doorway closed by a timber door is set in the wall opposite the lodge and service drive. Today (1999) the kitchen garden is no longer in cultivation and the lateral walk running from south-west to north-east which is shown on the 1886 OS map does not survive. The site of the kitchen garden is now (1999) thrown into the adjoining field and lies outside the area here registered but the roadside wall is included in the area.

#### REFERENCES

W G Fretton (ed), *The Staunton Folio, A Series of Illustrations of Coventry, Warwick and Brinklow* (1883), p 4 A Starkey, *Two Conversations of the Field & By Paths Etc of the Ancient Village of Ryton-on-Dunsmore* (1898) R A Clarke, *Illustrating a City Edward Rudge and Art in Coventry c 1760-1830* (1992), pp 3, 20 H Fryer and J Lovie, *Ryton House, Ryton-on-Dunsmore, near Rugby*, (site report for English Heritage 1995) *Warwickshire Gardens Trust Newsletter*, (Spring 1996), pp 5-6

Maps W Yates and Sons, *Map of Warwickshire, surveyed 1787-9, published 1793* C and J Greenwood, *Map of Warwickshire, 1820*

OS Surveyor's Drawing, 2" to 1 mile, 1813 OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1886 2nd edition published 1906 1938 edition OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1886 2nd edition published 1905 1938 edition

Illustrations Watercolour, *Ryton House and park from the north, c 1830-40, (219/12-16)*, (Coventry Record Office) Edward Rudge, *Sketch views of Ryton House, gardens and park, early and mid C19*, (Herbert Art Gallery, Coventry) Aerial photograph 106 UK 1539/3151, 1946 (Warwickshire SMR)

Archival items Papers relating to Ryton House are held at the Warwickshire County Record Office and include the following items: Plans and correspondence relating to Ryton House (early and mid C19), including plans for the original house, early C19 flower garden, and mid C19 alterations (CR350/18/1(15)); Charles Twamley, *Ryton: Description of Land and Messuages lying in Ryton on Dunsmore, Bedworth and Ansley in the County of Warwick Belonging to the Misses Freeman with notes on Title*, August 1859 (CR2761/1); Charles Twamley, *Note on Ryton House, c 1880* (CR 350/20/6); Notebook regarding the fishponds and their management at Ryton House from 1885 (CR 350/22); Mary Freeman, *Diaries, 1845(93)* (CR 350/19).

*Ryton-on-Dunsmore Enclosure Award* (no plan), 1763 (QS 75/94), (Warwickshire County Record Office) Charles Browett papers, including items relating to his Ryton property, (207/10/9 and 119), (Coventry Record Office) Will of Mary Freeman, proved April 1895 (Birmingham Reference Library Archive)

Description written: December 1999 Amended: May 2000 Register Inspector: JML 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.