

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

LAMPORT HALL

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| Name: | LAMPORT HALL |
| District: | West Northamptonshire (Unitary Authority) |
| Parish: | Lamport |
| District: | West Northamptonshire (Unitary Authority) |
| Parish: | Scaldwell |
| label.localisation: | Latitude: 52.361989 Longitude: -0.88507950 National Grid Reference: SP 76019 74355 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF) |
| label.overview: | Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001036 Date first listed: 25-Jun-1984 |

Details

Gardens and pleasure grounds of later C17 to early C20 date and C19 park associated with a country house.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1560 John Isham (d 1596) of Pytchley, a successful wool merchant, bought the manor of Lamport. After his death Lamport passed from father to son: to Thomas (d 1605), John (kt 1608, cr bt 1627, d 1651) and Justinian (d 1675), the last of whom, an MP and Fellow of the Royal Society, rebuilt the chancel of Lamport church and commissioned the new, classical, south-west front of the Hall. In 1676 his son Sir Thomas embarked on an extended Grand Tour, and it was in 1676(9, during this absence, that Lamport's gardens were reworked. He died in 1681 and was succeeded by his brother Sir Justinian (d 1730), MP in fourteen parliaments. His son Sir Justinian (d 1737) commissioned Francis Smith of Warwick to enlarge the house, a project continued by his brother and heir Edmund (d 1772). Sir Charles Isham (d 1903), owner from 1846, vegetarian and spiritualist, made further alterations to the house and added to Lamport's gardens. Lamport, let in the early C20, continued in the male line until 1976. Then, under the terms of the will of Sir Gyles Isham, the Hall passed to the Lamport Hall Trust, an educational charity. It remained the owner in 1997.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Lamport Hall lies on the A508, midway between Northampton and Market Harborough. The Hall lies south of All Hallows' church, on the south side of Lamport High Street (the B567) 400m east of the A508. Hall and village lie in the eastern part of the parish on a hill, with good views over the surrounding countryside. The registered area (c 33ha) is bounded to the west by the A508, to the north by the B567, and to the north-east by a minor road off the latter. To the south the boundary follows field edges, reflecting the park's post-enclosure date.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main approach to the Hall is now (1998) from the north, via a short, right-angled drive which leads directly off Lamport High Street through a gateway (listed grade II) adjoining the stables. This leads to the

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car park before the Hall's north door. In 1761 there was a broad, straight path south from the north door, across the stable yard to a gate leading onto the High Street opposite the gate into the churchyard.

The main approach in 1761 was to the west front where there was a turning circle. In 1824 a new approach drive was made around the west and north sides of the newly laid out park from a gate on the Northampton road. The piers of that gate, by Henry Hakewill, are surmounted by swans. To the south of the gate is the single-storey Swan Lodge, of 1849/50 and probably by J G Bland. From this gate there are panoramic views west, across the vale in which lie Cottesbrooke and Creaton.

At the east corner of the park is the two-storey stone Porter's Lodge, also of 1849/50. From this a private road ran along the south edge of the park.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING In the descriptions of the Hall and gardens which follow, for convenience the entrance front (facing north-east) of the Hall is taken to face north, and John Webb's entrance front (facing south-west) to be on the west.

King John stayed at Lamport in 1212, and documentary evidence indicates a substantial house on the site of the later Hall rebuilt in 1568 and enlarged 1610(11). About 1651 a new reception suite was commissioned by Sir Justinian Isham from Inigo Jones's principal assistant John Webb (d 1672). Its five-bay, two-storey facade forms the central part of the west front of the present Hall (listed grade I). Overall that front is of thirteen bays, and was enlarged by the addition of a north, library wing in 1732 and complementary south wing in 1740, both designed by Francis Smith (d 1738) of Warwick. The south wing, as built, comprised a room open to the garden where tender plants could be housed during the winter. It was enclosed and converted to a billiard room c 1820 by Henry Hakewill (d 1830) during extensive alterations and extensions by the then Lady Isham, the latter including the construction in 1842 of the south, garden front to a design by Henry Goddard. The north, entrance front was designed by William Burn (d 1870) in 1861.

The stables courtyard (listed grade II) is to the north of the Hall. The stone west range is of the late C16 and c 1680, the other three of 1907. In the mid C18 the C17 stables range faced west to a range which mirrored it down the west side of the north forecourt. Behind, that is built against, the south garden's west wall, 15m from its north end, is a roofless, C18 building c 5m square. Of ironstone, it has a well-detailed window and door in the south side. It is probably a boghouse; a bath house is another possibility.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS Before the north, entrance front of the Hall is a small car park. North of this is a lawn with overgrown box hedging on its north and east sides, screening the path which leads to a gate in the north garden wall which gives access to the church. All Hallows' church lies almost opposite the Hall; Lamport's High Street is carried between the two in a slight cutting.

The west front of the Hall looks out to the park across a grass terrace with stone balustrading (listed grade II) added in 1861 when the present entrance was made and replacing the turning circle shown in a view of 1761 (CL 1921). It was designed by William Burn who also drew up plans for a parterre (no longer extant) within the balustraded area. The gap in the north side of the balustrading, which allows a drive to be brought up to the west door, was made, accidentally, by a tank during the Second World War. Some 30m to the west of the terrace is a slightly sunken area 80m square, probably the site of the courtyard and turning circle shown in 1761.

Three separate gardens lie along the south front of the Hall. The westernmost is the Italian Garden, a box-edged parterre with central shell basin (listed grade II), created in 1857 by Sir Charles Isham. To its east, and immediately south of the decorative, octagonal, mid C19 dairy (listed grade II), is the Rockery. One of the earliest Alpine gardens in England, this was begun by Sir Charles in 1847 and was worked on by him until the 1890s. Of ironstone, it comprises a rough, north-facing, steeply sloping face (listed grade II) some 6m tall and 25m long with a level area at its base. The planting includes dwarf firs and cedars and miniature Japanese shrubs. This area was once populated with small gnomes, imported from Nuremberg by Sir Charles, which were placed to suggest they were mining caves and crevices. This is thought to be the first appearance of the garden gnome in England. The Rockery's south side, towards the garden, is vertical and resembles the wall of a roofless building. East of the Rockery, occupying the space between it and the west wall of the kitchen gardens, is the flagged Rose Garden with rectangular lily pond, laid out in 1923 and replacing a conservatory.

South of the Italian Garden, Rockery and Rose Garden is a flat lawn 100m by 100m, divided up and edged with straight gravel paths. To the west the lawn is bounded for 40m by a 2.5m high wall of narrow, coursed ironstone, behind which in a small

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shrubbery is the possible bath house. The wall adjoins the north end of a raised, 2m high, grass walk which forms the remaining 60m of the western boundary of the lawn and from which there are views west over the park. A similar walk, with later C19 Irish yews along its base, forms the southern boundary of the lawn. At the west end of the south walk are the Park Gates, decorative wrought-iron gates hung on tall ironstone gate piers with ball finials of c 1700. The northern compartments of the lawn are decorated with urns (listed grade II) along the path edges, whereas further away from the Hall, and especially in the south-west part of the lawn, are some specimen trees of the mid C19 and later including a cedar of Lebanon and sycamores. In the centre of the lawn is what is traditionally described as a circular stone cock-pit (listed grade II). Near the south-east corner of the lawn is a small wooden summerhouse which can be turned on a circular base rail. It is enclosed by a box bower, the one survivor of seven such features representing box edgings planted in 1750 around groups of shrubs. The other six were cleared c 1910.

To the east the south lawn is bounded by a c 4m high wall, perhaps later C17, of narrow coursed ironstone with a pyramidal crest. To the north it ends c 40m short of its likely original termination east of the Hall; it was probably foreshortened c 1800 when a 40m square brick-walled kitchen garden compartment was built in the north-east corner of the south garden. The south end of the same wall extends onto the south raised walk, the path along the top of which passes through the wall via a doorway. There is an herbaceous border against the wall.

The raised walk and the path along its north side continues, via a broad archway through the garden's east wall, for c 100m as the Eagle Walk. Lined with Irish yews, and running along the exterior of the south wall of the kitchen garden (here of coursed ironstone), the Walk when created in 1849 led to a cage of eagles. A iron gate at the east end of the Eagle Walk gives onto its 130m long continuation, the Holly Walk, which extends almost to the park wall. Although the raised walk does not now extend along the south side of the Holly Walk there are hints that it may once have done. The C19 hollies which line the Walk were felled or radically lopped in the later 1990s prior to replanting and restoration.

The gardens, compared to the Hall, are poorly documented, and before 1677 are rarely mentioned. John Isham, who rebuilt the house in the 1560s, 'applied himself to plantinge, buildinge, making of pooles', while a diary kept in 1671(3 by his grandson Thomas Isham mentions various walks, a bowling green and a mount (RCHM(E) 1981, 116). The last may have lain at the junction of the two raised walks, on the site of the later park gates. The garden was reworked in 1677, while Sir Thomas (who succeeded his father in 1675) was in Rome, by his agent Gilbert Clerke (1626-97), a noted theologian and mathematician. In 1678 he wrote that 'we are going to gravel your walks and make [the] garden monstrous fine' (ibid). It is tempting to ascribe the raised walks and the great ironstone wall down the east side of the garden to this period. A view of 1721 shows the formal garden before the west front, with a main axial path from the central door lined with conical trees (cypress), while tall formal hedges (yew) lead on parallel lines from the Hall's corners. Steps suggest a terrace closed the west side of the garden. Before 1761 this had been swept away and replaced by a turning circle.

PARK The Hall and its gardens lie on the west side of a modest park bounded by an ironstone wall to the east, west and north. The park is pasture ground underlain with ridge and furrow, and contains scattered specimen trees. Some 400m south-east of the Hall is a sharply conical mound, slightly oval, 8m x 10m, and 3.8m high. Immediately to the east is a partially infilled rectangular pond. Mound and pond post-date the ridge and furrow and are probably landscape features associated with the park. The park was commissioned in the 1820s by Mary Close, Lady Isham, from the landscape designer John Webb (d 1828). It incorporated a walnut avenue of 1678 running south-east from the park gates at the corner of the garden, the remnants of which were replaced in 1929 by a new horse chestnut avenue.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden (walls listed grade II) lies east of the Hall and the east wall to the south lawn. This wall forms the west wall of the main, 80m x 80m compartment, whose other walls are of brick and mid C19. The main east/west axial path across the south lawn is carried across the walled garden area via a broad archway of c 1820 with iron gates. The garden interior is grassed. At the north-west corner of the garden is a brick-walled extension c 4m x 40m of c 1800. To its north are sheds; others, and a ruinous glasshouse lie to the east. To the east of that, running along the north side of the main kitchen garden compartment, is a rectangular brick-walled orchard of the mid C19.

REFERENCES

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Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1901

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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.