

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

SAWSTON HALL

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Name: SAWSTON HALL

County: Cambridgeshire

District: South Cambridgeshire (District Authority)

Parish: Pampisford

County: Cambridgeshire

District: South Cambridgeshire (District Authority)

Parish: Sawston

label.localisation: Latitude: 52.119297
Longitude: 0.17191490
National Grid Reference: TL4879949000
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1000631
Date first listed: 16-Jan-1985

Details

A mid C16 courtyard house originally set in grounds and woodlands which were landscaped in the late C19.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1377 the manor of Sawston was purchased by Sir Edmund de la Pole and it remained in the hands of his descendants until 1982. The estate passed by marriage through the Bradeston, Ingoldsthorpe and Neville families until 1502 when Lady Isabella Neville inherited Sawston and married William Huddleston. Their son, John, made Sawston his permanent home whilst his son, also Sir John, added significantly to his inheritance by acquiring other adjacent manors. Sawston manor house was burned to the ground in 1553, possibly by a Protestant mob, or possibly by the Duke of Northumberland, because Mary Tudor had stayed here during her flight following the death of Edward VI. It was rebuilt by Sir John, who died in 1557, and his son Sir Edmund between 1557 and 1584, probably incorporating parts of the earlier house. The VCH records that there was a 'large court, being quadrant' but no evidence of a park. The Huddleston family continued to live at Sawston, undertaking alterations, rebuilding and extensions in the early C18, as well as a major restoration of the Hall in the mid C19 by Ferdinand Huddleston who succeeded in 1852. The origins of much of the planting in the gardens dates from the mid or late C19. During the Second World War the Hall was occupied by the Air Force and following its return to the family it was replanned internally to make it more manageable. By the time Captain Reginald Eyre-Huddleston RN died in 1970 however the Hall and grounds had fallen into disrepair. The estate passed to Major Eyre who eventually sold it in 1982 to a company, Sawston Hall Ltd, who opened the Cambridge Centre for Languages. The site remains (1999) in single corporate ownership.

DESCRIPTION

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Inventory of Great Britain
SAWSTON HALL

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Sawston Hall lies in the centre of the Cambridgeshire village of Sawston, to the south of Church Lane. Sawston itself is located c 8km south-south-east of Cambridge in a well-populated part of the countryside, which is dotted with numerous large and small villages. The c 22ha site is bounded to the north by Church Lane and St Mary's churchyard, to the east and west by village housing, and to the south by West Green Plantation. It is screened on all sides by woodlands or perimeter belts of trees. The ground at Sawston is flat, the southern half of the site being characterised by low-lying fields and woodlands drained by a series of waterways. This is an enclosed site with no long views or vistas.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The Hall is approached from the north, to the west of St Mary's church, through mid C18 ashlar limestone gate piers hung with C19 wrought-iron gates (all listed grade II) located c 170m north-west of the Hall. The drive runs south beside a mixed shrubbery and then turns east past an open lawn to arrive at the north front. These gates and the informal lawn and shrubbery replace the original north entrance and courtyard which was located on the eastern side of the churchyard and was described in a survey of 1580 (VCH 1978).

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Sawston Hall (listed grade I) is a late medieval manor house sitting in the northern part of its grounds. It is built in a courtyard plan of limestone, ironstone and clunch rubble with plain tiled roofs. The two-storey building is important in the county as the only surviving courtyard house and one of only a few Elizabethan houses built of stone. The round-headed entrance porch lies on the four-bay north front which is decorated with original medieval chequered masonry and has mullioned and transomed windows. The Hall incorporates a private chapel in the south range which was registered for public worship in 1791. Sawston Hall was built between 1557 and 1584 by Sir John Huddleston and his son Sir Edmund who incorporated dated stones into the building of the inner courtyard. During the C18 and C19 it underwent alterations and additions, being substantially restored in the mid C19. During the late C20 the Cambridge Centre for Languages converted and rebuilt the stable block to the west of the Hall into additional educational accommodation.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The grounds at Sawston surround the Hall on all sides. To the north, beside the entrance front is an open area of lawn, backed by a dense mixed shrubbery which screens the churchyard. To the north-east, behind mature yew hedges are modern (late C20) hard tennis courts, surrounded by mature fruit trees. A sunken lawn, known as Mary's Lawn flanks the east front, adorned with urns and a stone seat (moved here in the late C20 from elsewhere in the grounds). This lawn is enclosed to the north by yew hedges, to the south by a brick retaining wall topped by balustrading (late C20), and to the east by a tree-covered bank, beyond which lies the eastern arm of a moat which borders the garden to east and south, the eastern arm being dry. To the east of the moat is a further area of grass, used as sports pitches and screened along the east boundary by Cowshed Wood. The main garden areas lie on the south front and are divided by yew hedges into small compartments, bordered to the south by the water-filled moat. The eastern compartment, known as Chapel Lawn, is currently (1999) laid to grass with the remains of yew topiary but was, up to the 1980s, a rose and lavender garden. Moving west the remaining compartments are bordered on the west by a brick garden wall with a long herbaceous border at its base (planted late C20). The compartments here are laid to lawn and include a yew walk aligned on a mature liriiodendron beside the south front. Beyond the wall to the west is the new building, erected on the site of the stables, which looks south onto a lawn with central borders leading down to a small footbridge over the moat. Map evidence suggests that the gardens were mainly laid out during the C19 (OS 1885); they have been much simplified and altered in the late C20.

Beyond the moat to the south, the pleasure grounds are composed of lawns planted with mature trees which blend into the southern woodland. This area is cut with a series of ornamental and functional watercourses which drain the low-lying land and also feed the moat. Two fishponds of unknown origin have recently (1990s) been cleared here. Part of the southern woodland is left unmanaged (late C20), the more eastern plantations having a pattern of paths and walks which link to woods and open meadows in the south and south-east. Although the area has been ornamented in the past, the extent to which these paths are historic walks is unclear since they are not shown on any of the OS maps.

PARK The remaining land at Sawston, rather than being open parkland, is now (1999) composed of woodland blocks and open meadows, one of which, lying c 200m south-east of the Hall, is a 7.4ha SSSI. Known as the Hill Moor or the Lord's Close, it was referred to in the Sawston Court Rolls of 1398. The 1811 Enclosure map shows that by the early C19 the area was being

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SAWSTON HALL

treated as parkland, recording the presence of linear and curvilinear plantations. It also shows that the land to the north of the Hall was still divided in 1811, some of these boundaries having been removed by 1885 when the park was extended.

KITCHEN GARDEN The remnants of a kitchen garden lie along the north end of the western boundary in woodland dominated by elder and sycamore which is scattered with a collection of iron and asbestos service huts. In the north-west corner of the site a number of temporary buildings are located behind screens of trees and late C20 conifer planting.

REFERENCES

Country Life, 115 (10 June 1954), p 1902; (17 June 1954), p 1998; (24 June 1954), p 2092; 126 (5 November 1959), p 758
N Pevsner, The Buildings of England: Cambridgeshire (1970), p 452 Victoria History of the County of Cambridgeshire VI, (1978), p 251 J Kenworthy-Browne et al, Burke's and Savills Guide to Country Houses III, (1980), p 24

Maps Enclosure map for Sawston, 1811 (Cambridgeshire Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1885 2nd edition published 1901 1948 edition OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1886

Description written: October 1999 Amended: December 2000 Register Inspector: EMP 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.