

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

STRATTON PARK

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Name:	STRATTON PARK
County:	Hampshire
District:	Winchester (District Authority)
Parish:	Micheldever
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.165533 Longitude: -1.2248204 National Grid Reference: SU 54298 40984 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000867 Date first listed: 31-May-1984

Details

An early C19 park and pleasure ground, laid out and planted by Sir Francis Baring, which followed a number of the proposals made by Humphry Repton in his Red Book for Stratton and which incorporates significant features such as the site of a court and remnants of avenues from a formal landscape designed by Lord William and Lady Rachel Russell in the late C17.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The grange or manor house at East Stratton belonged to Hyde Abbey until the Dissolution, when it was seized by the Crown and then sold, in 1544, to Edmund Clerke, one of the clerks of the Privy Seal. It was purchased from him in 1546 by Thomas Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton. From 1607, the family made Stratton their principal seat, the last earl, also Thomas Wriothesley, probably establishing a park when he was granted a licence in 1664 to enclose a highway near his mansion (VCH 1908). On the Earl's death in 1667, Stratton passed to his daughter, Lady Rachel, who in 1669 married William, Lord Russell, son of the fifth Earl, and later (1695) first Duke, of Bedford. They greatly improved the estate with numerous service buildings and an addition of two wings to the house and laid out a formal landscape. A survey made by Thomas Brown in 1730 states that Lord Russell made 'orchards, and avenues, planted groves, wildernesses and other ornaments to adorn and accommodate this beautiful and pleasant seat; he also pulled down part of the town or hamlett of Stratton and laid it into his deerpark'. Lord Russell's gardens and his role as 'one of the best of Masters as well as Gardeners' and an encourager of arts and sciences, were praised by the gardener and writer Stephen Switzer (1682-1745) who was born at East Stratton and began his training as a gardener there (Iconographia Rustica 1718). Following Lord Russell's execution in 1683, the estate passed first to his son Wriothesley, second Duke of Bedford and then, in 1711, to his grandson, also Wriothesley, the third Duke; Lady Rachel lived on at Stratton until her death in 1723. Wriothesley's brother John (1710-71) succeeded him as fourth Duke of Bedford in 1732 and is credited with pulling down 'a great part of the ancient mansion lest it should cause the magnificent residence of Woburn (qv) to be neglected' (Hewetson 1830).

In 1800, Francis Russell, fifth Duke of Bedford sold Stratton Park to Sir Francis Baring, the founder of Barings Bank. He immediately set about improving the estate and in 1801 commissioned Humphry Repton (1752-1818) to produce a design for a new house in a landscaped setting. Repton's Red Book for Stratton Park survives (private collection), and although his

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proposals for a new house were not accepted, Sir Francis seems to have adopted some of his suggestions such as extending the park to the east and west. The existing house was largely rebuilt by the architect George Dance the Younger (1741-1825) in 1803. Sir Francis was succeeded first by his son Thomas, then in 1848 by his grandson Francis, who was ennobled as first Baron Northbrook; his son, Thomas George, served as Governor General and Viceroy of India from 1872 to 1876 and took the title Earl of Northbrook. When his son, Francis George, died in 1929 leaving no heir, the earldom became extinct while the baronetcy passed to the heirs by the second marriage of the first Baron Northbrook. The Stratton estate was put on the market in 1930 and the house sold to a school known as The Vyne but in 1939, Barings Bank bought it back to use as the bank's headquarters during the war. In 1952, the fifth Baron Northbrook (Francis John) bought the park from the bank while the house and the immediate grounds and woods were bought by John Baring, Lord Ashburton, whose seat had been, until 1933 (and would be again from 1962), The Grange at Northington (qv). The house was demolished in 1961 and replaced with the present one and in 1985 the M3 was constructed on the western boundary, along the course of the Roman Road. In 1988, the house, formal garden, and a small portion of the pleasure grounds were sold again and the main area of woodland, Embley Wood, was bought by the Forestry Commission. Both the house and the park remain (1999) in private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Stratton Park lies on the immediate east side of the M3, roughly equidistant between Basingstoke to the north and Winchester to the south. The 123ha registered area, which comprises c 12ha of formal gardens and wooded pleasure grounds and c 111ha of parkland and woodland, occupies the floor and gently undulating slopes of an east to west valley. The entire perimeter of the site is bounded by roads lined with agricultural fencing: the M3, partly within a cutting and partly embanked, runs down the west side, parallel with the A33 road immediately beyond, while minor lanes abut to the south, east, and north. Intermittent tree belts, including screen planting alongside the M3 and woodland within the site, restrict views into the park to glimpses from the lanes to the south and south-east. The surrounding landscape of undulating chalk ridges and valleys is under mixed farming with scattered woodland.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The principal approach to Stratton Park is on the west side, from an access point on the A33 400m north of the house. A drive runs c 200m south-westwards between the two roads before turning south-east to cross the motorway and then bearing south-west, through lawns planted with exotic trees of mixed ages and species, to enter the garden enclosure 80m south-west of the house through a gateway framed by brick piers with stone ball caps. The drive turns north to a forecourt on the north side of the house, grass now (1999) covering its former continuation across the south front, parallel to a ha-ha, to a matching gateway south-east of the house. An early C19 estate map shows Dance's 1803 house with a similar area on the south front enclosed from the park, with the present formal arrangement in place by 1870 (OS). The early C18 house was approached axially from the road to the north-west, through a formally planted enclosure. This arrangement continued until the early C19 when the building of Dance's new house required two new, informal approaches, from the north and south-west, to be laid out. The former entered at London Lodge (listed grade II) at the northernmost point of the park. Designed by George Dance c 1806 and, since 1985, standing detached from the park on the western embankment of the M3, it comprises a pair of lodges linked by a wall with a central turreted archway. The north drive followed a sinuous course southwards across the park, parts of its route surviving now as a track, and looped across the south front of the house to meet the other new drive entering from the south-west corner (now, 1999, gone) at Winchester Lodge (listed grade II). This single-storey building of white-painted stucco and a slate roof dates from c 1805 and reflects both the position and style of a lodge suggested by Humphry Repton in his Red Book. An approach from the turnpike road to the west, established by 1826 (Greenwood), had gained a lodge c 1850 with the construction of Middle or Parkhill Lodge (listed grade II), a brick building with Portland stone dressings, a battlemented bay, and carved bargeboards. This, like London Lodge, became detached from the park by the M3 in 1985, when the present approach from the A33 was also created.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING The house at Stratton Park stands on the western edge of the park, on a platform cut in the lower slope of the north side of the valley and with the spire of All Saints' church in East Stratton village forming a focus of the views southwards over the park. The house is a two-storey rectilinear building of brown brick, with extensive areas of glazing framed in mahogany and with the main living accommodation on the first floor which extends eastwards as a steel-framed

conservatory. Designed by Stephen Gardiner and Christopher Knight and built in 1963; it incorporates, on the south front, the portico of Greek Doric columns and pediment (listed grade II) from the former house built by George Dance in 1803 and demolished in 1961. The axis of the portico is linked to the house by a rectangular pool. An earlier house on the site, which became the principal residence of Thomas Wriothesley, the last Earl of Southampton in the mid C17, was enlarged in the late C17 with the addition of two wings. This was apparently reduced in size by the fourth Duke, the removal of a wing in 1768; and the transporting of some of its pieces to Woburn (qv) being recorded in some detail (Russell archive). The house was under repair in 1789 by the architect Henry Holland before being replaced in 1803 by Dance's house for Sir Francis Baring.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The formal garden and pleasure grounds lie to the north and east of the house. The east front looks out onto an open rectangular lawn, the site of a formal court in 1730. The lawn is enclosed along the greater part of the north side by a drystone retaining wall with a shrubbery and a flagged path at the foot. At the western end of the wall, a double flight of stone steps leading up to the pleasure grounds is flanked on the west side by a rockery constructed of large 'pudding stone' boulders (CL 1914). The eastern end of the flagged path, which is grassed, terminates in a niche of yew hedge enclosing an empty plinth, while the eastern end of the lawn is enclosed by a dense planting of trees including mature yews. The OS map of 1870 shows the lawn planted at its western end with a formal square parterre which in 1905 Lady Northbrook laid out with formal clipped yew hedging, flagged paths, and central flower beds (ibid); these are now (1999) gone. Gertrude Jekyll is recorded as having prepared planting plans for Stratton Park in 1895 but no plans survive.

Northwards above the formal garden, a broad open lawn, now (1999) rough-mown, extends 130m up a gentle slope towards enclosing woodland. It is dotted with several mature cedar trees and a mixture of exotic deciduous and conifer species planted in the late C20. Along the south-west side of the lawn, immediately north-west of the house, traces of a former path run north-westwards beneath a series of yews trained over arched wire frames (CL 1914); formerly clipped, these are now outgrown. South-west of the path is a further grove of mature yews, planted in a matrix and also heavily overgrown with vegetation. Thomas Brown's 1730 survey shows the present area of lawn and its immediate fringes of trees and woodland as it was laid out in the late C17 by Lord Russell and Lady Rachel, with a rectangular enclosure set with formal matrices of trees named as 'orchard' and 'The Firs'. The latter is referred to by Lady Rachel in an account of a storm when 'the fir grove [was] entirely broken and torn up by the roots' (letter of 1703, Russell archive). The north-east side of the lawn is enclosed by further woodland which contains an avenue of lime trees running north-westwards towards the former line of the Roman Road and other formal patterns of tree planting which reflect those shown on Brown's plan. The Roman Road itself is shown planted as an avenue known as Love Walk. The informalisation of the garden which took place in the early C19 retained the avenues, and the new lawn followed the outline of the C17 enclosure to the north and east. Repton's suggestion of realigning the turnpike on the western boundary further west, to the present position of the A33, was adopted and a new plantation planted which enclosed the west side of the lawn (estate plan, early C19). North of the lawn (130m from the house), a brick water tower with a conical cap stands within the woodland. Built between 1870 and 1883 (OS editions), the *Gardeners' Chronicle* of 1883 noted the view from its elevated position 'of the distant country' and 'The Grange [qv], the seat of the other peer of this family'. Just to the south of the water tower there is a reservoir (still in use) and an icehouse (now, 1999, in poor repair).

PARK Parkland extends in a wide arc south, east, and north of the house and gardens. It is under a mixture of arable, rough grass, and pasture and is fairly open in character although with the remnants of occasional mature tree clumps of chestnut and beech. Several clumps appear to survive in the positions shown on the early C19 estate plan although others, with the additional drifts and individual trees which are shown on the OS editions in 1870 and 1911, are now gone. Two or three of the surviving clumps are recorded as 'new plantations' in the legend of the C19 plan. Northwards, the parkland is bounded by Embley and Biddles Wood. Shown established on Brown's survey of 1730, the woodland compartments, divided by rides, are planted with a mixture of coniferous and deciduous trees. From 1730 until between 1870 and 1897 (OS), the two woods were separated by a broad open ride with, by 1870, occasional parkland trees.

The present parkland north of Embley Wood, which is laid to pasture with scattered trees, was enclosed from former fields sometime between 1826 (Greenwood) and 1870 (OS). A park at Stratton was first enclosed by the Earl of Southampton in 1664 and by 1730 its boundaries encompassed most of the present area, including the parts of East Stratton village which

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Lord William Russell cleared and threw into the park. Minor extensions had been made by 1799 to include the land to the south-west occupied by the kitchen garden. Sir Francis Baring did not adopt Humphry Repton's proposals for re-siting the house, but the early C19 estate plan and field evidence suggest that Repton's suggestions influenced the planting design for the informalised landscape. The park was extended to both the east and west in the vicinity of the house by the realignment of the boundary roads, and new plantations were planted on the new boundaries (Survey, 1799; Estate plan, early C19). The eastern boundary belt opposite the house survives, planted predominantly with mature yews, while the western belt is lost beneath the M3. Some 550m south-south-east of the house and surrounded by a belt of yews is the Old School House (listed grade II), built c 1850 and now occupied as a dwelling. To its immediate west, a cross dated 1840 (listed grade II) marks the former site of All Saints' church which was replaced by the present building, erected from 1878, just beyond the south-east corner of the park.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden stands in the far south-west corner of the park and is surrounded by high red-brick walls. Built between 1799 (Survey) and 1826 (Greenwood), its head gardener from c 1834 to 1838 was the gardener and writer Charles M'Intosh (1794-1864). The enclosure is now in use for game-rearing purposes. Some 60m to its north-west is the brick and tile-roofed Bothy (listed grade II), a mid C19 former gardener's cottage.

REFERENCES

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Archival items Russell (Dukes of Bedford) family archive (149M89), (Hampshire Record Office) Baring family archive (92M95), (Hampshire Record Office) Humphry Repton, *The Red Book for Stratton Park*, 1801 (private collection) Hampshire County Council, unpublished notes on the history of Stratton Park, nd (copy on EH file)

Description written: March 1999 Amended: July 2001 Register Inspector: VCH Edited: February 2004

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.