

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

Wavendon House landscape

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| Name: | Wavendon House landscape |
| District: | Milton Keynes (Unitary Authority) |
| Parish: | Wavendon |
| label.localisation: | Latitude: 52.029389 Longitude: -0.65328018 National Grid Reference: SP9249037631 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF) |
| label.overview: | Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1458292 Date first listed: 01-Nov-2019 Statutory Address 1: Wavendon House, Wavendon, Milton Keynes, MK17 8AJ |

Historique de la conservation

Wavendon House, as it became known, derives from a house known as the Grange, that in turn had been a manor of the medieval Woburn Abbey. During the C18 and C19 it was owned by a succession of financiers, including a member of the Hoare family, who also owned Stourhead, and who managed Wavendon as a small country estate. Placed on the Greensand ridge, with its combination of good farmland and acidic soil, which lent itself to hunting estates, and in reach of London, Wavendon was well-placed to aspire to the social life of nearby Woburn Abbey, with which its owners had business connections, and the cluster of other eminent country houses on the Greensand Ridge.

From the later C17 Wavendon was owned by the Selby family, who made successive improvements to the house and landscape. The house was partly rebuilt in the late C17 by James Selby and added to in about 1703 by his son, who in the course of his lifetime, dying in 1772, undertook improvements to the grounds, creating 'handsome gardens', a lake, fishponds and canals, and planting orchards and avenues of trees.

The estate was improved most significantly between 1768 and 1772 with the works by Richard Woods (1715-1793). There are no surviving plans, but accounts record that Woods created two lakes, the sum suggesting he paid occasional visits to the site. The lakes, to the north and south of the house, are linked by a canal crossed by two bridges and a small cascade. While it has been suggested that the walled garden was built at this time, and it was certainly present by 1815, it cannot be securely attributed to Woods, and the bricks correspond in size with those in the later C18 southern canted bays of the house.

While he is less well-known, Woods was a contemporary of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown (1716-1783). Both were surveyors and landscape improvers and experts in hydrology and drainage, but Woods' landscapes tend to be on a smaller, more intricate scale, creating landscapes where the distinction between the pleasure ground and park in the usual later C18 sense was blurred. Because of their scale, they appear to allow a closer visual relationship between the principal mansion, its service buildings and walled gardens than the later C18 trend for separation that Brown in particular advocated. Woods is known to have worked on some fifty schemes, the majority in a belt from Dorset to Essex, where he lived from 1768, and with a cluster of early commissions in Yorkshire. Commissions ranged from small interventions at large sites such as a small pleasure ground and cascade at Audley End, Essex in 1780 (registered Grade I, National Heritage List for England (NHLE) 1000312), to complete schemes such as Cannon Hall, North Yorkshire, 1760-1765, (registered Grade II, NHLE 1001159), Cusworth Hall, South Yorkshire, 1761-1755

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(registered Grade II, NHLE 100412) which have similarities with Wavendon in their scale and use of water. Wivenhoe Park, Essex, 1765 and 1776-1780 (registered Grade II, NHLE 1000371) provides a particularly well-documented example of his remodelling of an existing deerpark with a string of lakes, although subsequently altered. He created an ambitious scheme for the Earl of Arundell at Wardour Castle, Wiltshire between 1764 and 1771, regarded as his most prestigious commission (registered Grade II*, NHLE 1000507), but it was never completed.

In keeping with his landscapes, his garden buildings tended to reflect the Gothic, Chinoiserie and classically informed tastes of the mid- rather than later C18, but he also created walled gardens, their irrigation systems and pumps, and 'was pre-eminent among the improvers in his use of flowers within the designed landscape' (Cowell, 2009, p 17). He was interested in exotic and ornamental trees, and particularly conifers, planting in small clumps and narrow belts rather than defining a park by belts of perimeter planting. Woods was not a leader of fashion nor influential, but he was clearly sought after and admired for his specific skills, and his employers ranged from the wealthy Earl of Arundell to the comfortably-off newly landed gentry at their smaller estates. There is some added interest that Woods, who was brought up a Catholic, worked for both Catholic and Protestant employers, with much of his work achieved before the Catholic Relief Bill of 1778. In 1798 the estate was acquired by Henry Hoare, who enlarged the house, and reversed its aspect, changing its relationship with the designed landscape. Thus, the pedimented, north-facing, front elevation of the C18 house became the rear elevation of Hoare's house, to which a central canted bay was later added. The south front became the main entrance front, with an added portico, facing Woods' southern lake and park. The house was extended to the west, its canted bay matched by a similar bay to the east (Buildings of England, 1994, p 713-4). However the principal rooms and circulation spaces in the core of the house appear to be mid-C18 in character, rather than of about 1800. The historic service buildings, now converted to residential use, stand immediately to the east of the house. The 1815 Ordnance Survey map, the earliest detailed record of the site, shows the house at the centre of the distinctive wheel of two lakes and woodland to the east, and to the west a large walled garden laid out with concentric paths and beds rather than with a quadrilateral grid, and trees, probably an orchard, to the north-west of it. The house was approached by tree-lined drives from the north, south and south-west crossing to the north of the house, past the walled garden, as well as serving the south front of the house. The estate is shown as parkland studded with occasional trees, distinct from the enclosed fields beyond. By 1841 (Wavendon Tithe Map) the south front of the house was approached from the east, through the stable yard, and the southern drive had become a path across the gardens. During the C19 the outer ends of the lakes were gradually framed by increasing planting, with a belt extending south from the southern lake. Maps also show a sequence of more transitory paths and beds near the house, including a path through the belt of trees to the north-east of the walled garden, while a path replaced the drive past the northern front of the house. The northern drive is consistently lined by a row of trees on its eastern side, and by intermittent trees to the west.

The outer park formerly included part of the area now managed as golf course, and the field currently under rough pasture between Park Farm and the walled garden and orchard. There are permeable boundaries and hedges and open views between these and the pleasure grounds. Within the golf course there are specimen trees including a line of conifers. There is a further early C19 lodge at 2 Lower End Road (listed Grade II, NHLE 1213156) but later C19 OS maps show it as separate from the estate.

The house was owned by the Hoare family from 1798 until 1918, when it was sold to a Mr Fairweather, by that time with an estate of 1150 acres, and having since 1912 been leased to an American, Francis Bond. While the walled garden gates were probably installed after the First World War, it is likely that the pear alley dates from the later 1800s or early 1900s, at a time when food production in the walled garden appeared to be at its height, and included a vinery and a peach house.

Wavendon was used as an outstation of Bletchley Park during the Second World War, both in providing residential accommodation for many of the WRNS force who worked there, and in housing number of the Bombes, the decoding/computing machines that were an essential part of Bletchley Park's work.

In 1961 the house and its ancillary buildings were converted for use as a residential special school, the main house was extended and new buildings were constructed in the vicinity. All have since been converted to domestic use and some further residential

buildings and garages have been added within the grounds. The principal rooms and circulation spaces in the house appear to be largely intact, and the grounds, which have not been subdivided, retain much of their historic character and scale.

Details

LOCATION, SETTING, LANDFORM, BOUNDARIES, AND AREA Wavendon hamlet lies in the clay vale at the foot of the Greensand ridge which rises to Woburn Sands and Apsley Heath to the south-east. Wavendon House estate lies to the north-east of the hamlet at about 78m OD. The house stands in the middle of its pleasure grounds and park, where the level drops slightly from south to north. The soil is a stiff loam and Greensand sand with an underlying geology of Oxford clay and gravel. The core of the estate covers about 14 ha (36 acres), about a third of the area depicted as park in 1815, which extended from Park Farm (listed Grade II, NHLE 1213319) to the west, to Lower End to the north-east and about two thirds of the distance from the southern lake towards Cranfield Road, encompassing land now managed as a golf course that was previously park or farmland as opposed to pleasure grounds.

The registered landscape is roughly an inverted triangular on plan, with the base along Lower End Road to the north, where it is bounded by a hedge and fence. Separate houses and their gardens fronting the road are not included. It includes the walled garden to the northwest, where it is bounded by a rail and post fence, hedge and mature trees, overlooking farmland towards Park Farm. The boundary fence, and increasingly a belt of trees, continue southwards to the southern tip of the lake, forming the boundary between the pleasure grounds and former park, now golf course. A similar fence forms the eastern boundary, following the lake before following the field boundaries, planted with hedges and trees, to the east of the north drive. **ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The main entrance is from Lower End Road, to the north, where it passes an early C19 lodge (listed Grade II, NHLE 1213159). It runs in a straight line on a tree-lined causeway along the south-eastern side of the northern lake, flanked by mature trees, principally oak to the east and planes interspersed with conifers and ornamental trees to the west. It crosses the northern of two bridges before curving between the house and the former service buildings (Grade II C18 stables NHLE 1213162 and Grade II C19 coach house, NHLE 1213186), to approach the main, south front of the house, where a gravelled carriage sweep roughly corresponds with the carriage sweep shown on the 1880s OS map. A drive from the bridge to the north of the house, leading towards C20 buildings beyond it and to the walled garden, follows the historic route indicated on the 1880s OS map.

A second track, the former southern-western drive, runs from the south-west corner of the house between yew hedges to the boundary, from where it continues beyond the site as a track, between mature trees, to a southern lodge, adjacent to the Motte Castle 220m south-east of Wavendon Manor (scheduled monument NHLE 1011301).

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Wavendon House (listed Grade II*, NHLE 1289190) is said to be of C17 origins, but remodelled in the C18 and after 1798, when its aspect was reversed. At its core is a symmetrical, two-storey, hipped-roofed house, with a pedimented centrepiece on the north front. An added or extended western range forms a symmetrical south front, which has a central entrance beneath a Tuscan portico, between canted outer bays. It has a lower two-storey range to the east, extended in the C20, with a long hipped roof, and an added single-storey polygonal bay on the north front. Internally, the ground floor is predominantly mid- to later C18 in character, with a closed string stair, rooms with three-quarter, raised and fielded panelling and moulded chimneypieces, and doorcases with eared architraves, pulvinated friezes, and cornices.

GARDENS, PLEASURE GROUNDS AND PARK The principal features are the two lakes, their connecting canal and bridges and their relationship to the house, its service buildings and walled garden. The pear shape of each lake, and islands within them, create perspectives with long views in either direction, closed at the outer ends by belts of trees.

The northern drive overlooks the lake which widens to the north, where there is now an island; the water management of the lake depends on a water course on land between the listed North Lodge and Lodge Farm to the west which is included in the registered area for this reason. The lake is currently fringed with reeds and flag iris and to the west of it the field is under rough pasture, with an open view over it towards the house which emerges above the bridge. To the east, fields divided by rail fences

and backed by hedges and hedgerow trees are under pasture. The local Historic Environment Record notes the footings of an ice house beyond the northern end of the lake but it is understood that these remains were demolished in the C20.

The northern bridge (listed Grade II NHLE 1289204) is aligned with the drive, with the lake narrowing to a canal and turning south-eastwards beneath it. The bridge is built of Greensand stone rubble, with a solid parapet with a flat stone slab coping and curved bastions on the northern end. It has tripartite arches with a larger central opening, and lower, blind, flanking arches, all with pronounced keystones.

The canal curves to the rear of the service buildings, turning south-west before passing under the late C20 house adjacent to the southern bridge, where it meets the southern lake. The bridge is also of Greensand stone rubble with tripartite arches, with small curved bastions at either end, but additionally has the remains of a cascade to the north of it, the direction of flow being from south to north.

From the south front of the house, lawns drop gently to the southern lake, which is widest at its northern end, tapering into the distance where it is backed by a plantation of trees and shrubs, beyond two wooded islands, one of which is circular. Unusually the lake lies east-west in front of the house, its alignment determined by the water supply. By 1815, and probably original to the design, there was a small circular island in the lake and the 1885 OS map shows boathouses on the south-west shore of the lake. The south-eastern side of the lake is backed by a laurel hedge. A glazed path winds along the western edge of the lake in a belt of trees and shrubs from which there are views towards the house. The slipway and position of a former boathouse, marked on the later C19 OS maps, is visible at the north-western end of the lake. There was also a further boat house on its eastern side. To the north of the house a lawn overlooks the rough pasture by the lake. To the west of the house, in front of the walled garden, is a lawn where there are two white mulberry trees (*Morus alba*).

To the east of the house are the remains of a sinuous belt of trees, that on the 1815 and C19 and C20 OS maps echoes the shape of the lakes. The western section is within the registered area. **KITCHEN GARDEN** The walled garden is aligned north-west to south-east and is about 0.4 ha in size. Its entrance is about 72m west of the former north entrance to the house. It is built of soft red and red brown brick, a little smaller than the standard 9" x 4" x 2.5", laid in English bond, without embellishment and with later buttresses, repairs and patching. The south-west wall is missing a section at the southern end. Historic maps indicate that by the later C19 it was laid out on a quadrant plan. Some later C19 scalloped terracotta edgings remain in place, lining diagonal paths. It has a central entrance in the south-east wall, with plain brick piers and inter-war C20 wrought iron gates. The northern entrance has a framed and boarded door in a pegged doorframe. There is no evidence that the north wall was heated for the propagation of fruits, although greenhouses, now demolished, were built against its southern face. There are C19 and C20 and bothies built against the outer face of the northern wall, and footings of former glasshouses on the outer face of the southern wall. The water system is said to resemble systems employed elsewhere by Woods. In the centre of the garden is a rectangular water basin and a well, some 41' deep, reaching the same level as the lake, to which it is connected. There is a second pump on the north wall.

The central north-south axis is flanked by a later C19 or early C20 pear arbour, on an exceptional scale, supported on a large arched metal-frame, with lateral ties.

Beyond the walled gardens are the remains of cold frames and the C19 and C20 orchard (depicted on the 1815 and later maps), that includes walnut, plum and apple trees. The former orchard is part of the historic parcel of land, and has been in use as an orchard since at least the early C19 but it is much depleted, and lacks the special historic interest to be included in the registered area.

Private gardens to individual properties established in the C20 within the registered area are noted as not contributing to the special interest of the C18 landscape.

Summary

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Pleasure grounds and park, including a large walled garden; laid out in 1768-1772 by Richard Woods, with later C18 and C19 additions and alterations.

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.

Reasons for Designation

Wavendon House landscape, laid out in 1768-1772 by Richard Woods, with later C18 and C19 additions and alterations, is registered at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

Design interest:

* pleasure grounds and park laid out by a significant C18 surveyor and improver, reflecting the taste of the period, and transforming the setting of a house by the skilful use of water; * the substantial survival and legibility of a Woodsian scheme that on other sites tend to be incomplete or overlain by subsequent remodelling; * the evolution of the design in the late C18 and C19, and early C20 improvements to the walled garden;

* presence of a large walled garden in close proximity to the principal mansion.

Historic interest:

* enhancement of an estate within fashionable reach of London, and where the house was then remodelled by the influential Hoare family; * C18 patronage, where Woods, a Catholic, worked for both Catholic and Protestant employers.

Group value:

* with the Grade II*- listed house, and Grade II-listed former stables, coach house and lodge, and where Woods' ornamental bridges are also listed at Grade II.

Bibliographie

Books and journals

Cowell, F, Richard Woods: 1715-1793 Master of the Pleasure Garden

Pevsner, N, Williamson, E, The Buildings of England: Buckinghamshire, (2000), 713-4

Other

1815 2-inch Ordnance Survey map

1885, 1900, 1926, 1951-2, 6-inch Ordnance Survey maps

Wavendon Tithe Map, 1841