

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

HURSTBOURNE PARK

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Name: HURSTBOURNE PARK

County: Hampshire

District: Basingstoke and Deane (District Authority)

Parish: Hurstbourne Priors

County: Hampshire

District: Basingstoke and Deane (District Authority)

Parish: Whitchurch

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.231951
Longitude: -1.3689500
National Grid Reference: SU4415748274
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1000216
Date first listed: 31-May-1984

Details

A late C18 landscape park and pleasure ground surrounding a late C19 house with formal terracing which incorporates a wooded deer park of C14 origin and surviving features from landscape designs of the early C18 by Thomas Archer.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The manor of Hurstbourne, although owned by the Crown, was essentially under religious control until the Dissolution. It formed part of a larger estate, including Hurstbourne Tarrant, St Mary Bourne, and Hurstbourne Priors, which was recorded by the Domesday survey as belonging to the Bishop of Winchester. Manorial rights were held by the prior of St Swithin's who in 1332 was given a licence to impark and enclose his woods to create a deer park which probably covered much the same area as the present (late C20) one. The manor house, referred to also as the Priory and later as the Grange, stood in the valley on the Bourne Rivulet. Following the Dissolution, the manor passed to the Crown but was eventually sold in 1558 to Sir Robert Oxenbridge. His grandson, also Sir Robert, again sold it, 'with orchard, gardens and the park called Hursbourn containing by estimation three hundred and fifty acres' (Wilkinson 1861) to Sir Henry Farley of Farley Wallop. Sir Henry died in c 1678 and was succeeded by his sons Henry and then John. John's second son, also John and later to become Viscount Lymington and first Earl of Portsmouth, inherited in 1707 at the age of seventeen. Leaving Eton to make his Grand Tour, he chose instead to volunteer for the Duke of Marlborough's army in 1708 and to fight at Oudenarde. John then set about major improvements both to the Grange and to the surrounding landscape, with the assistance of Thomas Archer (d 1743), one of the leading architects working in the continental Baroque style, largely for the aristocracy but also, from 1715, laying out a complex designed landscape on his own estate in Hampshire at Hale (qv). Although Archer's plan of 1712 for a new Baroque house for Mr Wallop (Pevsner and Lloyd 1967) appears not to have been implemented, the view of the Grange in one of Jan Griffier II's

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two paintings of Hurstbourne (at Audley End, Essex qv) shows flanking pavilions in Archer's style adorning the plain brick house (Harris 1979). North from the house, the Bourne Rivulet was diverted to form an axial canal (White's Directory of 1878 suggests this was a late C17 feature), terminating in a grotto with cascades and beyond, on or near the site of the present house, a mock castle (all now gone). Archer's hand in the landscape of the park is also suggested by the style of other buildings and by surviving planted features (Griffier painting; C18 county maps). The second Earl of Portsmouth inherited Hurstbourne from his grandfather in 1762 and between 1780 and 1785, a new house, designed by James Wyatt (1747-1813), was built by John Meadows on the site of the present one. By the beginning of the C19, informality had been introduced into the landscape in the form of a new winding drive, informal parkland, a pleasure ground, and the smoothing and widening of the Bourne. The parkland was also extended up the west side of the valley (OS Surveyor's drawing, 1808). In 1891, Wyatt's house burned down and a few months later, the fifth Earl died and was succeeded by his son, Newton Wallop, for whom a new mansion, with terraced gardens, was erected in 1891-4. Hurstbourne remained with the earls of Portsmouth, with little change occurring to the park's appearance, until 1936 when Lord Lyvington sold the house and the deer park to Ossian Donner, who gave it to his son Patrick. Following its occupation by the Bank of England during the Second World War, Sir Patrick regained possession in 1947 and in 1965 reduced the house to just under half its original size. Both the house and deer park east of the Bourne and the late C18, informally landscaped parkland on the west side, remain (1999) in separate, private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Hurstbourne Park lies on the immediate west side of Whitchurch and the A34, Newbury to Winchester trunk road, its southern boundary enfolding the village of Hurstbourne Priors. The principal part of the 330ha registered site, comprising the formal terraced gardens and pleasure ground, the designed parkland, and the wooded deer park, occupies the crest and steeply falling sides of a bluff which drops into the valleys of the River Test to the south-east and the south-flowing Bourne Rivulet to the west. The two river valleys converge just to the south of the site boundary. The site extends west across and including the valley floor of the Bourne and up the steep west side of the valley which itself is riven by small dry valleys. The southern boundary wraps around the village of Hurstbourne Priors and at points abuts the B3400. This road continues east towards Whitchurch to form the south-east boundary, along which short sections of estate wall survive. The extreme eastern corner of the site abuts the embanked A34 while to the north and west, the undulating wooded and farmed park merges with a similar landscape beyond.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The principal approach is from Whitchurch to the east, the entrance standing on the B3400 some 200m south-west of where it passes under the A34. The gateway, hung with wrought-iron gates, and the easternmost 100m of drive were built in the mid 1970s, when construction of the trunk road removed the corner of the park and the late C18 entrance lodges built in association with James Wyatt's new house and shown as Porters Lodge on Milne's county map of 1791. The drive winds north-westwards across the park to the north front of the house; its present course, established by the late C19 (OS 1876), follows a more direct route than that designed to serve Wyatt's house which looped deeply to the south before turning to approach the house from that direction. This late C18 course, also recorded on Milne's map, survives as a track. Beyond the north front, the drive continues south-westwards downhill to a secondary entrance at the site of Middle Lodge (built by 1842 and demolished in the mid C20) on the B3048 road which runs the length of the Bourne valley. A short length of road, now a surfaced public road, formed part of the continuing course of the drive in the early C19, carrying it across the valley floor into the parkland (The Common) on the west side of valley. Now (1998) surviving as a track, it terminated on the present B3400 road in the extreme south-west corner of the site at Andover Lodge. This building, demolished in the mid C20, was known as Portsmouth Lodge in 1791 (Milne), Arch Lodge in 1818 (OS), and Cockorum Lodge in 1842 (Tithe map). It was described by Barbara Jones in *Follies & Grottoes* (1974) as a 'massively detailed tower, of grey brick with red brick dressings and tall arches round the windows of two storeys and circular windows under the castellated parapet'. Pevsner and Lloyd offer a similar description and both books suggest that it may have been associated with Archer's new work for John Wallop in 1712.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Hurstbourne Park stands high on the crest of the bluff between the two river valleys with extensive views to both north and south. The two-storey, Jacobean-style house of red brick with stone mullioned windows comprises a rectangular main block from which a curved wing projects to the south-west. Built between 1891 and 1894 by Beeston and

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Burmester (plans held in HRO), it replaced the former house on the same site, burned down in 1891, which James Wyatt designed and John Meadows built for John Wallop, the second Earl, in 1780-5 (Colvin 1978). During the war the house became the headquarters of the Bank of England after which, in 1965, Patrick Donner reduced it by over half to its present size. To the immediate west stands the U-shaped brick-built stable range (listed grade II) which dates from the late C18 to early C19; a stable range is shown in this location on a print published by Harrison and Co in 1783.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS Formal gardens lie on the south or garden side of the house in the form of two broad levels of terraces separated by a bank which extend the length of the front and c 50m beyond to the east, the line of the south front continuing as a high brick wall, topped by a stone balustrade with finials and ball caps, to enclose the terraces from the drive. The terraces were laid out in association with the construction of the present house in 1891-4 (Beeston and Burmester plans). The upper terrace, on a level with the house, is laid to lawn and bisected from west to east by a gravelled walk which terminates at the eastern end in a free-standing stone alcove housing a stone bench flanked by decorative plinths. North of the walk, running parallel along the inner side of the enclosing wall, is an avenue of lime trees while on the south side the lawn is planted with a formal arrangement of topiary yew domes. The lower terrace, which ends abruptly on the south side in a brick ha-ha wall, is reached by a flight of stone steps on the central axis of the house which leads down onto a square lawn with a central sunken fountain basin. Either side of the lawn are two square gardens enclosed by clipped yew hedges and containing as a central feature a pool (in the west garden) and a weeping tree (in the east garden). The terraces are enclosed to the east and west by a screen of informally planted mature trees.

The pleasure grounds lie on the north side of the house. Roughly heart-shaped in plan, they comprise a belt of ornamental woodland which encircles a central level area, known as The Lawn, now (1999) under arable cultivation but dotted with a number of clumps of mixed mature trees including exotic conifers. The woodland has an understorey planting of shrubbery and is threaded by circuit paths, the inner boundary of the belt being marked on the east and west sides by a ha-ha. The pleasure grounds were laid out in association with the building of Wyatt's house, appearing in plan on the OS drawing of 1808; Nethercliff's stylised plan of Hurstbourne, printed in 1817, shows the clump planting in the central open space. The name 'The Lawn' seems to have been first used to describe this area on the Tithe map of 1842, with the term 'pleasure ground' applied only to the woodland belt. The OS 1st edition map of 1876 and subsequent editions into the C20 show the inner edge of the woodland belt laid out as a series of islands of trees set in open glades, an arrangement which has now (1999) become blurred by subsequent tree growth.

PARK The park lies on either side of the Bourne valley, the present boundaries of the C14 deer park on the east side shown as a park pale on county maps and OS editions from Taylor's 1759 map onwards. The eastern half of the deer park is lightly wooded with a largely deciduous cover of trees and an open, grassy floor grazed by sheep. The woodland is cut by a number of avenues, those centred on the statue and pedestal c 850m south-east of the house still reflecting the pattern of a Union flag (created following the Act of Union with Scotland in 1707). Some sections of the avenues have been replanted in the mid to late C20. The main north to south and east to west lines appear on Taylor's map of 1759 and, although absent on Nethercliff's stylised plan of the informalised estate landscape in 1817, the flag pattern is recorded in fine detail on the Tithe map of 1842. It was probably laid out in the early C18 by John Wallop in celebration of his hero Marlborough's military successes and, if Thomas Archer was involved with Wallop's landscape works, the whole concept is likely to have been conceived in 1712, along with Archer's plan for a new house to replace the Grange (Batey letter, 1983). The focal statue, of a Roman emperor standing on the domed roof of a cube-shaped flint pedestal (listed grade II), was erected between 1702 and 1714; it appears in Jan Griffier's view of 1748 looking north-east from the Grange and is recorded as 'The Statue' on the OS map of 1817 (Hocking 1991). A further avenue, planted with limes in the C20, runs from the flag pattern southwards towards the boundary of the park where it is flanked by plantations on the east side and on the west side by the mixed wood of The Beeches, replanted after storm damage in 1987. At the extreme southern tip of the park, standing just off the B3400 road, is the Bee House (listed grade II*), a rectangular three-storey house with a deep parapet, built in red brickwork with panels of blue headers and embellished with further arched and circular panels similar to those mentioned by Pevsner and Lloyd in their description of Andover Lodge (demolished mid C20). This building, probably built as a garden building, may also be associated with Thomas Archer.

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On the west side of the deer park, the undulating ground south and west of the house is open in character, under arable cultivation but planted with several major and a scatter of minor tree clumps, these much replanted following storm damage in 1987. The informalisation of the landscape probably began in association with Wyatt's new house, a print of which by Harrison and Co, published in 1783, shows it set in parkland. Milne's county map of 1791 shows the new serpentine carriage drive and the present major clumps appear on the OS surveyor's drawing of 1808. The course of the Bourne Rivulet, the valley of which is now largely under arable cultivation, was widened and smoothed to form 'a large piece of water, which winds through the Park' (Brayley and Britton 1805). West of the Bourne, the rising valley side known as The Common is enclosed along its western ridge-top by a serpentine belt of woodland, but its undulating slopes are open and largely under intensive arable cultivation. Only an occasional clump survives from the extensive planting of ornamental clumps, shown on the OS surveyor's drawing of 1808, which accompanied the imparking of this area. Netherclift's plan calls it the New Park, the present name of The Common appearing on the 1842 Tithe map. The late C18 pattern of clumps survived until the mid C20.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden stands some 100m west of the house. It is almost square in plan and is both enclosed and divided west to east internally by high brick walls. Brick walls also enclose a further triangle of land adjacent to the south which now (1999) has a dense covering of trees including fruit trees. The main entrance, framed by brick piers with ball caps, is on the south side. The garden is recorded on the OS map of 1817 and is probably contemporary with Wyatt's house of 1780-5. The north-east quarter is at present (1999) under cultivation, with the remainder tree covered.

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Description written: March 1999 Amended: June 2000 Register Inspector: VCH Edited: January 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.