

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

HARTLEBURY CASTLE

Auteur(s) : Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/>

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*  
*Inventory of Great Britain*  
**HARTLEBURY CASTLE**

Name:	HARTLEBURY CASTLE
County:	Worcestershire
District:	Wychavon (District Authority)
Parish:	Hartlebury
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.340609 Longitude: -2.2381757 National Grid Reference: SO 83870 71419 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000884 Date first listed: 28-Feb-1986

## Details

C18 sunken garden and landscape park associated with palace of the bishops of Worcester.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Hartlebury was a possession of the Bishop of Worcester by AD 985. Despite a chequered history and several periods of neglect Hartlebury remained one of the Bishop's residences in the late C20, although since the early 1960s it has been shared with the County Museum Service.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Hartlebury Castle lies on the west side of Hartlebury village which itself lies west of the old line of the Worcester to Kidderminster road, being 16km north of the former and 6km south of the latter. The confluence of the Severn and Stour is 3km to the west at Stourport-on-Severn, and a stream draining to the former has been dammed to form the moat around the Castle and a number of ponds. The immediate area of Hartlebury Castle is low lying. The park is bounded to the south by the Hartlebury to Charlton road, and to the west in part by the Charlton to Torton road and otherwise by a stream which curves to also bound the park to the north. The eastern boundary of the park follows field edges parallel with and west of Rectory Lane, which runs from Hartlebury village north to Torton. The registered area is c 53ha.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The Castle is approached via a straight drive running north-west from Hartlebury village at the end of which is a late C18 (apparently present 1781), single-storey, crenellated, gothick lodge (listed grade II). That drive is lined with the Lime Avenue, said to have been planted during the time of Bishop Stillingfleet (1689-99). Replacement planting took place in 1972. On reaching the Castle the drive turns to enter the east courtyard between a pair of single-storey, gothick, castellated, brick gatehouses (listed grade II) built c 1680. A secondary approach, in the late C20 not used for vehicular traffic, is from the south, off Hillditch Lane where there are iron gates on later C20 brick piers. That approaches the Castle along what becomes, half way along, a pronounced causeway. It is lined with a beech avenue, planted 1884-1927. In the early C19 the approach followed a curving course; the present straight line was adopted before 1884.

### PRINCIPAL BUILDING

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*  
*Inventory of Great Britain*  
**HARTLEBURY CASTLE**

Hartlebury was one of the chief residences of the Bishop of Worcester. It was converted to a castle during the Anarchy, and in 1268 the Bishop received a licence to crenellate; the excavation of the moat at Hartlebury may have been a direct result. The present building (listed grade I) was begun in the late C14, and much of the fabric of the great hall is of that date. During and after the Civil War (notably in 1648) the Castle was damaged and neglected, and its demolition was considered. However, during the episcopate of Bishop Fleetwood (1675-83) Hartlebury was rebuilt as a country house in sandstone, retaining but modernising the great hall. It comprises the great hall to the centre with wings of c 1680. The place of a south wing is taken by the C14 chapel. The east forecourt and gate lodges were added in the later C17, the Castle partly gothicised c 1760, while between 1781 and 1789 the east forecourt was added with brick walls and a pair of square brick lodges at the gate.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The east forecourt, which probably took on its present form in the late C17 when the gate lodges were built, is occupied by a lawn and turning circle created 1759-1774. Flower beds run around the exterior of the courtyard abutting its walls and the Castle, as they did in the late C18. In the early C18, before the turning circle was laid out, a straight drive led from the lodges to the door in the centre of the great hall, with lawns to either side and statues on small plats either side of the door.

The main pleasure ground lies south of the Castle, a rectangular, dock-like sunken garden, open to the west towards the moat and enclosed on the other three sides by walks raised c 8m above the interior of the garden. The walk along the north side, adjoining the Castle, is gravelled and serves as a small courtyard garden. A low, crenellated wall runs around the east and south sides of the garden, with circular bastions at the south-west and south-east corners. To the exterior, especially along the east side, is a dry, moat-like ditch. The garden is mainly lawn, with some trees and shrubs along the sides of the walks. In the centre of the sunken lawn is a fountain basin of 1897.

Along the west side of the Castle is a wide, stone-flagged path, with views across the moat to the park. From the path the ground falls steeply away to the moat, the slope being planted with shrubs and with sinuous paths; a more formal arrangement is shown on a view of 1789.

The basic form of the garden was created by Bishop Hough, enthroned 1717. In 1731/2 he wrote of being in the process of infilling part of the moat to create 'above an acre of ground in a garden of a whimsical, and unusual but not disagreeable figure' (Walker 1987). At the same time the Queen Elizabeth Walk (presumably commemorating the Queen's visit in 1575) was widened into the Broad Walk (not located; perhaps that along the west side of the Castle). During 1743-59 work continued on the gardens; walks were made around them and the moat, trees were planted, and the crenellated wall built; each bastion was to contain a mulberry tree. C18 views by the Bucks and James Ross show the South Garden, as do early C20 photographs when the sunken lawn was divided into quarters.

North of the Castle is a low-lying area, in the late C20 scrub and alder carr. Moat Island and Moat Garden were made hereabouts in the late C18; in the late C19 and early C20 the triangular Allotment Gardens (perhaps additional kitchen gardens) occupied the area.

**PARK** Although the Castle overlooks a small area of parkland to its west, permanent pasture and with a few mature specimen trees, the park otherwise lies wholly east and north of the Castle. South of the Castle the ground is very low lying and is crossed by the raised approaches along the Lime and Beech avenues. It may once have been ponded, and formed part of the fishpond complex alluded to in medieval documents. East and north of the Castle the ground rises, and east of the Castle is a decayed third avenue, of Horse Chestnut. Around the Castle the parkland is permanent pasture with some mature specimen trees. Its eastern, and especially northern, parts are under arable cultivation.

The valley and stream which were adapted to form the Castle moat forms the west and north boundary of the park. Irrigation pools which lie west of Park Farm are of later C20 date, as are scraped fishponds in a low valley which runs roughly east/west across the park. The valley also contains (400m east of the Castle) Park Pool, which broke its bank c 1950. A long pool along the north boundary of the park and present in the early C19 was drained by the end of that century.

Park Farm, in the north-west of the park, was largely ruinous (including timber-framed barn listed grade II) in the 1990s, although some conversion works were in progress in 1997.

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*  
*Inventory of Great Britain*  
*HARTLEBURY CASTLE*

There was a deer park at Hartlebury in the Middle Ages, first licensed in 1339. In the C16 it was said to be about a mile in circumference and to contain seventy-six deer. In the mid C17 the park was about halved in size, and in the reign of Charles II was stated to be about 100 acres (c 40ha) and to be well stocked with deer. The park's bounds were fixed throughout the C19 and are the basis of the registered area.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The walled kitchen garden lies north of the courtyard. The stone-topped brick garden walls survived in the late C20; the triangular garden area itself was occupied by later C20 buildings erected by the County Museum Service. No glasshouses or other horticultural features survived. Pictorial evidence suggests the garden was built in the C18; by 1789 there were south-facing glasshouses.

**REFERENCES** N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Worcestershire* (1968), pp 190-1 *Country Life*, 150 (16 September 1971), pp 672-5 Anon, *Hartlebury Castle: A History 680-1980* (leaflet c 1980) L Cantor, *The Medieval Parks of England: A Gazetteer* (1983), p 84 R O Walker, *Hartlebury, Worcestershire. A Record of a Parish* (1987)

Maps Hartlebury enclosure map, 1781 (BA709/2), (Worcestershire Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: Worcestershire sheet 14 SE, 1st edition published 1888 Worcestershire sheet 14 SE, 1929 edition OS 25" to 1 mile: Worcestershire sheet 14.11, 1st edition published 1884 Worcestershire sheet 14.15, 1st edition published 1884

Description written: 1998 Register Inspector: PAS Edited: August 1999

## 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.