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Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

HACKTHORN HALL

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Name:	HACKTHORN HALL
County:	Lincolnshire
District:	West Lindsey (District Authority)
Parish:	Hackthorn
label.localisation:	Latitude: 53.328178 Longitude: -0.51714316 National Grid Reference: SK 98856 82276 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000980 Date first listed: 24-Jun-1985

Details

A late C18 house and pleasure grounds, set within a late C18 park of earlier origins.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The grounds of the present Hackthorn Hall contain the remains of a Roman settlement and the church beside the Hall is of Saxon origins; from the C12 onwards this formed the focus for a religious community. Following the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1539 the land was granted to the Duke of Suffolk who sold much of it to the Grantham family in 1540. It was from Robert Grantham that his nephew, John Cracroft subsequently inherited the Hackthorn estate in 1618. John built himself a new house at Hackthorn, which by the early C18 was a substantial Elizabethan-style mansion attached to extensive farm buildings and stables. It was set to the east of the church, with open park to the west and is recorded on an estate map of 1722 and a watercolour dated 1792. Between 1792 and 1795 however John Cracroft (1748-1821) employed his architect son-in-law James Lewis to design and build a new house to the west of the church and most of the old hall was demolished, leaving only the stables and farm buildings. At this time the park was embellished and walks laid out through pleasure-ground woods to the walled kitchen garden. In 1805 the church was considered too big for the parish and under the direction of John Cracroft it was modernised and reduced in size, becoming part of the new landscape scheme. John Cracroft was succeeded by his son Robert Cracroft (1783-1862), who married Augusta Amcotts and added her name to his own. Their son, Colonel Weston Cracroft-Amcotts (1815-83) maintained the estate and was responsible for almost entirely rebuilding the church, raising the height of the tower to be seen across the park. When Weston died in 1883 his second son, Edward inherited the estate and dropped the name Amcotts, preferring to be just Cracroft. On his death in 1934 his nephew, Sir Weston Cracroft-Amcotts, inherited the Hackthorn estate. He served the country and county in many ways and was knighted in 1954. On his death in 1975, Hackthorn passed to his daughter and son-in-law Mr and Mrs R Cracroft-Eley. The site remains (2001) in private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Hackthorn occupies a rural setting c 8km to the north of Lincoln, on the east side of the A15 Ermine Street and on the western edge of the estate village of Hackthorn. The c 44ha site is bounded to the south by a minor country road and to the west and north by farmland. The Hall lies on the north side of a

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HACKTHORN HALL

shallow valley, through which a stream runs from west to east, enlarged below the Hall to form a sinuous lake. Dense boundary plantations exclude any views into the site.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main approach to Hackthorn Hall is from the south-west corner of the park, beside a small, early C19, single-storey painted limestone lodge cottage (listed grade II) standing c 600m south-west of the Hall. The partly tree-lined drive curves north-east up through the park to arrive at the gravel forecourt below the north front. This approach appears to be contemporary with the building of the late C18 house, being shown for the first time on the 1824 OS map. A second drive enters from the village, passing the site of the old hall on the eastern boundary c 150m east of the present Hall. It runs north-west up past the church to the late C18 stable block on the east side of the Hall.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Hackthorn Hall (listed grade I) is a large country house built of ashlar under a hipped slate roof, in the Neoclassical style. It has two storeys with attics and a tall semicircular porch facing north. The house was built in the 1790s to replace the old hall which stood c 150m further to the east, the remnants of which survive as a stable yard and farm buildings. In c 1840 a lower, two-storey service wing was added on the east side of the Hall.

The stable block and carriage house (listed grade II) stands beside the east wing of the Hall and was erected in the 1840s. It is built of yellow brick with a coursed square limestone wall along the south-east where it forms the churchyard wall. The church of St Michael (listed grade II*) stands beside the stable block and, although of C12 origins, was largely rebuilt by Charles Mainwaring, the lay rector of Hackthorn, for Weston Cracroft-Amcotts in the 1840s. There are several listed monuments in the churchyard which looks south over the lake and park beyond.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens lie on the south and west fronts of the Hall. A small sunken flagstone terrace below the west front, enclosed by a low stone wall, leads onto a lawn, recently (2001) planted as a formal parterre, beside a short hornbeam avenue running from the south-west corner of the terrace west for c 50m to the metal railings which divide the gardens from the park. On the north side of the lawn is a rustic early C20 summerhouse.

A long gravel terrace below the south front is broken in the centre by steps in a grass bank which leads down to a large lawn with central sundial. A second grass bank leads to a further lawn running down to the north bank of the stone-edged lake. On the east side of the south lawn, below the east wing, is a small sunk garden planted with iris rills and roses. A path on the south side of the sunk garden runs east along the bank of the lake and passes a long herbaceous border planted below the churchyard wall and the early C20 wooden boathouse. The path then enters ornamental woodland which forms the boundary of the garden to the east of the churchyard. The early C19 Garden Cottage (listed grade II), built in part from the fabric of the old hall, is located within the woodland, c 150m to the east of the Hall.

Beyond the entrance courtyard below the north front is a pleasure-ground woodland running north and north-east to the boundaries of the site. Many large trees, including beech, survive, underplanted with yew and holly and through these winds the Lady Walk which links the Hall to the walled kitchen garden situated in the north-east corner of the site. It was laid out in the early C19 (OS 1824).

PARK The Hall stands at the eastern end of the park, which is retained under grass and is well scattered with trees. These represent a variety of ages with the main mature species being oak, beech, lime, and chestnut. Much of the elm was lost in the 1970s but there has been extensive replanting of replacement species. The undulating ground falls to the lake south of the Hall and rises again beyond it to the Roman settlement (scheduled ancient monument) which survives as visible earthwork remains in the grass. The lake existed in 1779 (Armstrong) but may have been widened and edged with stone at the end of the C18 when the new hall was erected. The park is enclosed by dense perimeter plantations and remnants of a late C18 wall surrounding the park survive on the north boundary. Originally slightly smaller, the park was extended to its present size when the new hall was built in the 1790s (Armstrong, 1779; OS 1824).

KITCHEN GARDEN The walled kitchen garden lies c 200m to the north-east of the Hall, on the north side of the buildings associated with the old hall. High red-brick walls enclose the garden on three sides, the south side being open. The ground, which slopes to the south, is still used for the production of fruit and vegetables and retains a mix of C19 and C20 glasshouses along the north wall. The C19 vine house still contains a growing vine said to be 129 years old (estate staff pers comm, 2001). The walled garden was laid out when the new hall was built at the end of the C18.

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
HACKTHORN HALL

REFERENCES

Kelly's Directory of Lincolnshire (1900) H Thorold and J Yates, Lincolnshire A Shell Guide (1965), p 71 W Cracroft-Amcotts, St Michael's Church, Hackthorn, guidebook, (1967) N Pevsner et al, The Buildings of England: Lincolnshire (2nd edn 1989), pp 354-5 T R Leach and R Pacey, Lost Lincolnshire Country Houses 2, (1992), p 65 H Thorold, Lincolnshire Houses (1999), pp 167-8

Maps M Thorndike, An accurate map of the lordship of Hackthorn and Hannah, 1722 (private collection) Capt A Armstrong, Map of the County of Lincolnshire, 1779 (Lincolnshire Archives) Map accompanying sale particulars of parts of the estate, 1913 (2BD 7/75), (Lincolnshire Archives)

OS 1" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1824 OS 6" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1907

Illustrations E Cracroft, watercolour, 1792 (private collection)

Description written: July 2001 Amended: April 2002 Register Inspector: EMP Edited: May 2002

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.