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Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

NIEUPORT HOUSE

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Name:	NIEUPORT HOUSE
District:	County of Herefordshire (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Almeley
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.163966 Longitude: -2.9971242 National Grid Reference: SO 31893 52213 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001411 Date first listed: 07-Jan-1999

Details

A country house with mainly early C20 formal gardens which overlie several earlier phases, including work by W A Nesfield and the formal gardens laid out when the present house was built c 1712-19. The surrounding landscape park has similar, multi-phase, development.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1712 Thomas Pember and his two brothers sold Newport to Thomas, first Lord Foley, of Great Witley (now known as Witley Court, qv), in Worcestershire. Foley, an ironmaster, purchased several other properties locally, possibly for their timber reserves. Newport was transferred to his cousin, Paul Foley, a lawyer and the second son of Paul 'Speaker' Foley of Stoke Edith (qv), Herefordshire. By 1718 the Pember house had been demolished and replaced by the present house. This was surrounded by a formal garden, shown in an estate painting of the early C18. Foley died without an heir c 1739, and Newport passed to his nephew Thomas Foley (II) of Stoke Edith (d 1749). During his time, and especially that of his son Thomas (III), Newport was not the main residence. Little was spent there until 1767 when, perhaps anticipating the establishment there of his third son, Andrew, Foley employed the Hereford surveyor John Bach to survey the property and to suggest improvements. Bach had performed the same service the year before at Stoke Edith. Newport remained with the Foleys until 1863 when Richard Foley Onslow sold it to James Watt Gibbs, the grandson of James Watt, for whom the house and gardens were modernised in the Italianate style, the latter by William Andrews Nesfield (1793-1881). The 3890 acre estate was sold soon after being offered for sale in 1909, and the new owners appear to have again reworked the gardens. After the Second World War Newport was home to a Latvian community. This left in the 1990s, and in 1998 the house and its grounds were in the hands of a development company.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Nieuport House (the Francophile spelling of what earlier sources consistently reproduce as Newport appears to be a C20 affectation) stands 1km north-west of the village of Almeley and 5km south-south-east of Kington in a pastoral, rural landscape. The parkland falls from north-west to south-east, and is drained by a minor tributary of the River Wye, which lies 5km to the south. South of the lake this enters Coke's Yeld Dingle, which extends to a fishpond at Almeley Bridge c 600m south-east of the minor local road running west from Almeley to the A4111 from Kington to Eardisley which otherwise bounds the park to the south-east and south-west. To the north the park boundary describes the north edge of Highmoor Wood, while to the east it follows field boundaries. The area here registered is c 125ha.

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ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main approach is from the south-east, along a drive off the road west from Almeley. At its end is an early C19 single-storey lodge with Tudor gothic details, much extended and modernised in the late C20. The drive enters the house's grounds east of the stables, here being lined with mature coniferous trees including cypresses, and curves round the north side of the stables and house to the gravelled forecourt and portico on the north side of the house. A mid C19 iron estate gate on the north-west side of the forecourt originally opened on to a continuation of the main drive north-west, to a gate on the north-west corner of the park, near Queest Moor. Its line is followed by a footpath. These approaches, and the movement of the public road from Almeley around the southern edge of the park, were almost certainly part of the improvements at Newport which followed John Bach's 1767 survey.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Nieuport House (listed grade II) is a seventeen-bay brick building of c 1712-18. Its architect is unknown, and is suggested to probably have been a mason/builder from Hereford or Worcester, capable of producing 'an assured piece of provincial baroque'(Whitehead, forthcoming). The main, central block is of seven bays and two storeys and an attic, the central three emphasised by a pediment and by pilasters. To either side, east and west, are two-storey, two-bay pavilions, linked to the main block by single-storey blocks three bays long. About 1870 two projecting stone bays were applied to the south, garden front, while to the north a monumental portico and arcading was added. At the same time the service ranges behind the House were enlarged, and the House refenestrated with plate glass.

Twenty metres north of the House are mid C18 stables (listed grade II), now used as a store. Some 50m east of those is a brick stables courtyard, probably part of the works of c 1870.

East of the House and south of the stables, close to where an octagonal pigeon house stood in the C18, is The Beeches, a brick house of the mid C20. Of similar date is a prefabricated single-storey structure 100m south-west of Nieuport House.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS On the north-west side of the House is a roughly circular, gravelled forecourt. North of this the curving line of the approaching drive is largely hidden by an irregularly mounded lawn with specimen trees, most of them mature and coniferous. There is also a massive, veteran sweet chestnut, presumably a survivor of the early C18 landscape. The specimen trees and underlying shrubbery extend east, to link up with that which flanks the approach drive up the east side of the stables.

The main garden lies south of the House. There is a low terrace along the south front of the House, retained by a wall of rustic stonework. A similar wall retains the apsidal south end of the upper lawn (c 40m deep from north-west to south-east), and also the low, semicircular lawn (also c 40m deep) which lies beyond it. Slight banks and terraces are visible in the lawns. A 2m high clipped yew hedge runs around the outer part of the latter terrace wall, leaving a central, 25m wide gap through which the lake can be seen from the House. This south-easterly axis is carried almost to the shore of the lake by extensions of the yew hedge which form a 70m long and 25m wide alley or walk, along and behind which are irregular plantings of trees. Around it is a circular, concrete-edged flower bed, now grassed over. From this point there are good views over the lake, and south-east, across the park, to Burton Hill 7km to the south-east. There is also a view back over the garden to the House, rising above which are the tops of the specimen trees in the woodland and shrubbery to the north of the house.

West of the House, extending to the mid C20 prefabricated building, is a rough lawn with specimen and other trees including a very large mulberry tree.

In 1683, when it was illustrated by Thomas Dingley (d 1695), Pember's house was adjoined by a flat garden plot, crossed by paths and enclosed in an ornamental pale. This was replaced by the garden around the new house of c 1712-18. A terrace walk, lined with evergreens, ran along the south front, turning south at either end of the House around the edge of a square, walled court with a gate in the centre of the south side from which an axial path or drive continued south through the park. From the path around the edge of the walled court grass ramps ran down to a central lawn, in the middle of which was an octagonal basin, its east and west sides aligned on those of the main, seven-bay, block of the House. In 1729 a five-and-a-half-feet-high statue of Mercury 'with a caduceus [Mercury's herald's wand] in his hand' was purchased from Catherine, the widow of John van Nost (II) (d 1729), and brought to Nieuport, and presumably installed either on the terrace or in the basin. All this was probably swept away c 1767 by Thomas Bach, who instead created a simple tuning circle before the south front.

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Greater formality was returned to the surrounds of the House about 1870. South of the House a new bow-fronted terrace was created, in the centre of which was the tazza which now stands on the southern extremity of the garden. This is identical to those provided by William Andrews Nesfield in 1863 for the Broad Walk in Regent's Park (qv), and Nesfield's involvement at Nieuport is confirmed by it being marked on a map on which he recorded his projects. Although the extent of that involvement remains uncertain it seems likely the arrangement of the garden around the north forecourt, and the walk towards the kitchen garden, owe something to him. The present arrangement of rustic walling and yew hedges apparently post-dates 1909, and was presumably commissioned by the new purchaser of the House at about that time.

PARK The main feature of the park is the roughly triangular lake or fishpond immediately beyond (south-east of) the garden, c 180m long from north-west to south-east (where it is retained by a massive dam) and 120m wide. Its east and west sides are fringed with trees including some very large oaks, while the dam lies at the head of a shallow wooded valley, Coke's Yeld Dingle, which extends for 1km to the south-east to end at another fishpond. The woodland in the Dingle is of poor quality and there are apparently no specimen trees or, apart from a slightly terraced path, any other indications that it was conceived as an element of the pleasure grounds.

The field boundary which extends eastward from the south-east end of the dam is a sunken hedge. This southern and eastern part of the park is pasture land with occasional parkland trees. There are considerably more trees in the pastures west and north of the house, while the northern quarter of the park is occupied by Highmoor Wood.

A deer park was laid out around the Foleys' new house in the early C18, and its walled southern part is shown, greatly foreshortened, in a painting of a Stag Hunt at Newport. South-east of the lake, at this time a triangular fishpond, the park boundary probably followed the line of the present sunken hedge. The east, west and south axes of the House were carried across the park by avenues and tree-lined walks. In 1767 any remaining avenues were probably felled, and at least to the south-east the park wall demolished to open up the view to Burton Hill. These alterations are shown on a plan of 1774, which indicates the main park as a ninety-three acre (c 39ha) block north-west of the House, the central part of it occupied by woodland which extended casually towards the House.

KITCHEN GARDEN In the early C18 a walled kitchen garden lay on the west side of the main walled garden to the south of the House. A long walk bounded by pleached hedges led north to a summerhouse. In the alterations after 1767 this garden was demolished and replaced by the present walled garden 200m north-east of the House, and linked to it by a walk lined, near the House, with clipped box bushes. This garden, with mainly buttressed brick walls but with stone along the exterior of the north wall, is c 120m long from east to west and 60m wide. In the centre of the north side is a brick gardener's cottage, apparently largely rebuilt in the mid C19, with ruinous sheds to its east. The interior is gardened by the occupant of the cottage, and only one small post-1882 glasshouse survives, against the east wall.

About 100m north-east of the garden is Highmoor Farm, principally a substantial pair of cottages of c 1900. This occupies the site of the earlier kennels.

REFERENCES D Whitehead, *The Country Houses of Herefordshire* (forthcoming)

Maps James King, *Plan of Newport, 1774* (G75/1), (Herefordshire Record Office) Almeley Tithe map, 1840 (Herefordshire Record Office) Plan attached to 1909 sale particulars (AO60/5), (Herefordshire Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1882 2nd edition published 1904 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1882

Illustrations Painting, *A Stag Hunt at Newport*, (Stoke Edith House)

Archival items Whitehead cites papers in Herefordshire Record Office (collection E12) Sale Particulars 1909, 1916 (AO60/5), (Herefordshire Record Office)

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

Legal

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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.