

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

THORNBURY CASTLE

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Name:	THORBURY CASTLE
District:	South Gloucestershire (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Thornbury
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.613910 Longitude: -2.5303719 National Grid Reference: ST 63373 90698 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000569 Date first listed: 30-Apr-1987 Date of most recent amendment: 10-Jul-2013 Statutory Address 1: Thornbury Castle, Thornbury, Gloucestershire

Historique de la conservation

In 1066 it was recorded that the manor of Thornbury was held by Beorhtric, son of Aelfgar, although by Domesday it was in the hands of King William. The manor has changed hands many times during its history, being held by the Crown at intervals. In the C12 and C13, it was part of the earldom of Gloucester; the de Clare family was responsible for the foundation of the borough of Thornbury in 1243, to the south of the church and manor house. A major fire in 1236 destroyed the manor house, following which Henry III ordered that the Constable of St Briavels supply 20 oak trees from the Forest of Dean for its rebuilding. The house came to Hugh Audley on his marriage to Margaret de Clare in 1317, passing to Audley's son-in-law, Ralph Stafford, in 1347. It is understood that a licence to crenellate was granted in the C14, and early-C14 and C15 financial accounts provide evidence for an extensive complex in which an inner court, entered through a central gate, gave access to a hall, orientated north to south, with kitchen offices to the west and a chapel, begun in 1340 and completed in 1435, to the east of the hall. Accounts also record an outer courtyard containing a range of service buildings.

The manor house was forfeited at the execution for treason of Henry Stafford, 2nd Duke of Buckingham, following the Rebellion of 1483, but was restored to the family and inherited by his son Edward, 3rd Duke, in 1498, who made it his principal seat. Plans were laid for the creation of an ambitious fortified house and a licence to fortify, crenellate, and embattle the manor house was granted in 1510. With the hall and chapel of the existing manor house forming the east range of an inner courtyard, Buckingham set about building an elaborate palace-castle, which demonstrated the involvement of masons of the highest quality, and was apparently modelled on Richmond Palace, at that time England's most splendid royal residence. To complement his bold plans for the castle, Buckingham enclosed some thousand acres including not only the Newe Parke north of the castle, but two further adjacent parks, Marlwood and Eastwood, as well as a coneygar; the 1521 inventory recorded 1500 head of deer in the three parks. In 1514 the Duke obtained a licence to found a college of priests attached to the adjacent parish church of St Mary; the project was not realised.

Thornbury Castle's pleasure gardens lay to the south and south-east of the castle, surrounded by a high stone wall. In the survey made in 1521 (see below) the entire enclosure was referred to as the 'privy garden', whilst the area immediately to the south of Buckingham's principal range of apartments was described as a 'proper garden', but in a late-C16 inventory of the estate

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this area is identified as the privy garden, the name it retains to this day. There is both physical and documentary evidence that a two-storey timber gallery, roofed with slate, enclosed the privy garden, entered from the apartments; such galleries had featured in the gardens at Richmond. On the south side of the garden, the gallery gave access to a raised walkway crossing the adjacent churchyard, and leading directly to the ducal pew (now lost) at the east end of the church (the church is listed at Grade I). C16 tiles have been found in the north-east corner of the privy garden, and it has been suggested that these may have lined the walkways, though they are more likely to be associated with the demolished Duke of Bedford's apartments in this area. The eastern portion of the walled garden enclosure was described in the 1521 survey as being 'a goodly garden to walk in', and is known as the 'goodly garden' today; this area originally communicated with a large orchard, to the east.

Edward, Duke of Buckingham, was executed on the orders of Henry VIII following an investigation for treason in 1521 – the Duke's ostentatious behaviour and wealth, as evidenced by his lavish building programme, having exacerbated the suspicion with which he was viewed – and the estate was confiscated, remaining in Crown ownership until 1554. Henry sent surveyors to make a record of his new acquisition shortly after Buckingham's death, and their account provides a detailed description of the castle and estate. Although works were not recommenced, the buildings were maintained and periodically used; Princess Mary visited during the 1520s, and Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn stopped on a royal progress in 1535. Thornbury Castle was restored to the Staffords in 1554 when it was granted to Buckingham's son, Lord Henry Stafford, by Queen Mary. The upkeep of the castle proved too expensive, however, and it fell into ruin, eventually coming into the ownership of a branch of the Howard family in 1637 and remaining in their hands until the 1960s.

The east range, comprising the original medieval hall and chapel, was demolished at some point before 1732. No pictorial representations survive of the range, which is described in the late-C16 inventory; archaeological investigation has demonstrated the survival of this part of the castle as a buried feature. Although part of the castle – principally the section of the west range to the south of the gatehouse – served as lodgings and a farmhouse in the C18 and early C19, much of the building was ruinous, and it was not until the C19 that it was brought back into use as a high-status residence. In 1849 Henry Howard commissioned Anthony Salvin to restore the castle for his private accommodation. The gardens were re-designed in a C19 interpretation of Tudor style, and this forms the basis of the garden's current appearance. The C19 garden appears to have been laid out on an accumulation of top soil and other material circa 0.8-1m above the earlier garden level. The castle is now (2013) a hotel and restaurant. Trial excavations in 1992 led to the conclusion that there is a strong possibility the early-C16 garden survives largely intact.

In 1679 part of the park immediately to the north of the castle was sold to form a separate estate known by 1775 as Thornbury Park; the present neoclassical house (1832-6, listed Grade II) is now occupied by Sheiling School, Camphill Community, with additional late-C20 residential units to the east of the castle. To the west of the west curtain wall, and outside the registered site, is an area known as the Pithay, now an area of rough grazing. Its historic development is uncertain although 'the Pitties' is referred to in an inventory of 1521 by the Crown Commissioners. Although backfilled with large amounts of building rubble in the 1970s, it was evidently the site of extensive quarrying and excavation, and was possibly the site of part of an abortive scheme by the Duke of Buckingham to cut a canal from the castle to the River Severn to the west. To the south of the castle is the church of St Mary, listed at Grade I. The origins of the church lie in the C12 or earlier, but the building is predominantly C15, with later additions and restoration. The fabric incorporates examples of the Stafford knot, as found in the castle building, and it has been suggested that the tower's openwork crown belongs to the first part of the C15, but there is currently no evidence that the church's surviving fabric contains work directly associated with the 3rd Duke of Buckingham.

Details

Early-C16 pleasure garden and castle grounds, re-designed in the latter part of the C19, probably in conjunction with Anthony Salvin's restoration and remodelling of the castle buildings circa 1854.

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Thornbury Castle is located on the north-western edge of the market town of Thornbury on the flat plain between the Cotswolds and the Severn. The park is now reduced to the area bounded

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by the unfinished ranges of the castle (listed at Grade I) to the west and north sides of the outer court (a ha-ha runs parallel to the western half of the north curtain wall) and by the garden walls (listed at Grade I) and churchyard walls to the south and south-east. To the north-east the garden is separated from the grounds of Sheiling School by a screen.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The castle is approached from a northward continuation of Castle Street, Thornbury, which turns sharply to the east, 100m south of the castle, to run along the south wall of the churchyard. A short drive of some 100m leads north from the bend, past the Tudor Gothic-style West Lodge (1855, listed Grade II), and past a line of four C19 lime trees into the base or outer court, to the west of the castle's west front. The arms of the Howard family are carved above a pedestrian door in the gateway. The drive runs east through a central gatehouse in the castle's west front to the inner court, enclosed by buildings on three sides but open to the east; the inner court has a central lawn.

A drive, announced by the East Lodge (1855, listed Grade II) in the same Tudor Gothic style as the West Lodge, enters the site at the south-east corner of the walled garden and leads round the east and north walls of the garden into the inner court.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Thornbury Castle, listed at Grade I, a fortified house or castle, the principal part of which was built between circa 1511 and 1521 for Edward, 3rd Duke of Buckingham, with C19 restoration and alterations by Anthony Salvin, and C20 alterations. The buildings, of Cotswold stone ashlar, comprise an inner court with a ruined outer court to the west (listed separately at Grade I). The inner court is entered through a gatehouse at the centre of the western range; the intended symmetrical composition of this range was left uncompleted at two storeys, only one of the intended four large polygonal towers being built to full height, with heavy machicolation but no crenellation. The gatehouse carries a long inscription, announcing the date the building was begun, and the identity of the builder. Within the inner court, the south range originally contained the principal state rooms and private chambers, whilst in the north range were kitchens and additional lodgings; the earlier eastern range which once closed the inner court has been demolished. The south-facing elevation of the south range, overlooking the privy garden, is the castle's architectural showpiece, and contains spectacular double-height compass windows with elaborate geometrical profiles, designed to light the Duke's and Duchess's apartments. The decoration of the south and west ranges includes lavish use of heraldic emblems, including the Stafford knot. The south range retains two red brick of complex design.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens at Thornbury Castle comprise an outer court to the west of the castle, an inner court, and the walled garden to the south and south-east of the castle buildings. A scattering of C19 parkland trees survives in the parkland still owned by the castle (Wellingtonia, horse chestnut, sycamore, walnut).

The outer court is the entrance forecourt to the castle. It is enclosed by roofless ranges to the north and west (c 1511-21, listed Grade I), and the castle buildings to the east, with a low stone wall defining the boundary with the churchyard, and contains a lawn with a late-C20 vineyard planted on the west side. In the south-west corner, abutting the West Lodge, is a small Howard family graveyard established in the later C19.

The inner court is grassed; to the east of the castle buildings is an open area with a central lawn, five Robinia pseudoacacia trees, and a number of small conifers in front of a line of Leyland cypress trees forming a screen on the eastern side of the castle grounds.

The pleasure garden is enclosed by rubble walls, approximately 4-5 metres high - the eastern portion being lower - with an embattled parapet (circa 1511-21, listed Grade I), and with oriel windows and door openings on to the churchyard. The garden is in two halves - east and west - with contrasting designs. These were formerly divided by one range of the two-storey timber gallery which surrounded the western half, and provided direct access from the apartments in the south range, through the south wall, and across the churchyard to the ducal pew at the east end of the church. This gallery appears to have been removed by 1732. The western part of the garden, known as the privy garden, immediately below the south-facing windows of the castle, now comprises mown lawns and stone-edged gravel paths around an octagonal lawn with a sundial at its centre, with herbaceous plants and climbers on the castle walls. An area of symmetrical bedding at the centre of the privy garden, and a fountain in a stone-edged octagonal basin close to the ground-floor windows of the castle, shown in the Country Life article of 1907, have been removed.

The eastern portion of the garden, known as the goodly garden, has three subdivisions, created in the mid-C19. To the west are two small rose gardens, enclosed by substantial crenellated yew hedges, with paved paths north and south of an axial east/

west path. The north rose garden has a post-1921 shelter in an Arts and Crafts style against the wall, on a site occupied by the greenhouses in the C19, while the south rose garden has a statue of St James at its centre. At the eastern end of the walled enclosure is an area of open lawn with gravel paths; there are herbaceous borders against the garden walls. Bee-boles are located approximately 1 metre above ground level and 4 metres apart in the walls in this area. At the centre of the eastern wall is a bench framed by a tower of yew. At the southern end of this wall is a doorway, leading to the area once occupied by orchard.

Summary

The surviving landscape at Thornbury Castle, comprising the walled gardens and the inner and outer courts, laid out in the early C16, with much later re-modelling.

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

The landscape of Thornbury Castle is designated at Grade II for the following principal reasons: * Historical interest: the surviving landscape forms part of the complex created from 1511 for Edward Stafford, 2nd Duke of Buckingham, which remained unfinished at his execution for treason in 1521; the site as a whole is recognised as being one of finest examples of Tudor domestic architecture in the country; * Design interest: the enclosure to the south and south-east of the site survives as an important example of a Tudor walled garden, whilst there is both documentary and physical evidence for the unusual cloister which once surrounded the privy garden, linking the house with the adjacent church; * Group value: the landscape has a strong relationship with the upstanding castle buildings and garden walls, listed at Grade I, and with the scheduled remains of the medieval manor house and privy garden, as well as with the two Grade II-listed lodges and the Church of St Mary the Virgin, listed at Grade I.

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