

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

ABBOTS RIPTON HALL

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Name:	ABBOTS RIPTON HALL
County:	Cambridgeshire
District:	Huntingdonshire (District Authority)
Parish:	Abbots Ripton
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.383869 Longitude: -0.17608864 National Grid Reference: TL 24234 77769 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000610 Date first listed: 30-Apr-1987

Details

Pleasure grounds and gardens with mid C18 features, extensively developed from the late 1950s by Humphrey Waterfield and Lanning Roper, set in a mid C19 park.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The site of Abbots Ripton Hall is an old one although the house and the landscape which surround it are much more recent. The manor was mentioned in the Domesday Book and was held by the abbots of Ramsey Abbey until the Dissolution when it was granted by the Crown to Sir John St John. Although no gardens are recorded, it is known that the abbots dammed the eastern end of the Abbots Ripton Brook to provide a body of water in which to keep fish. The manor then passed through the St John family to Oliver, Earl of Bolingbroke, who in 1640 conveyed the property to Hugh Awdley. The estate was divided on Hugh's death between his grandnephews Nicholas and Thomas Bonfoy. Thomas's daughter Susan married Sir Charles Caesar whose descendants continued to hold the manor until the mid C18 when Julius Caesar sold it. The majority was acquired in 1760 by William Henry Fellowes, whose descendants, the lords De Ramseys, remained lords of the manor. The Hall and its grounds however remained with Nicholas Bonfoy's descendants, the Roopers, who almost entirely rebuilt the old manor house in c 1800. In the 1850s the De Ramseys purchased the remainder of the manor, commissioning the architect Anthony Salvin (1799-1881) to make substantial alterations to the Hall. By the mid C19 a small area of gardens, including a long canal, is shown on the Tithe map of 1841 which records the Hall surrounded by pasture fields rather than a park landscape. By the beginning of the C20 gardens were being developed to the south-west of the Hall, which remained a second home to the family who lived mainly at Ramsey Abbey until c 1936 when they moved permanently to Abbots Ripton. During the First World War the Hall was used as a hospital, then in the 1960s and 1970s Lord and Lady De Ramsey commissioned Humphrey Waterfield and Lanning Roper to lay out gardens and pleasure grounds of c 2ha. The architect Peter Foster built garden follies and Christopher Thacker a grotto. The park was expanded and a lake created during the 1970s. The site remains (1999) in private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The village of Abbots Ripton lies c 5km to the west of the A141 Chatteris to Huntingdon road, c 6km north of Huntingdon. The c 22ha site lies on the east side of the village, surrounded

by a flat, open landscape of large fields. The B1090 forms the south-west boundary, screened from the park by a C20 plantation and a bund at the eastern end. To the north-west lies Hall Lane, divided from the garden partly by a hedge and a wall. To the north-east and south-east the park is bounded by hedges, beyond which lies farmland. Views into the park from the roads are screened by the plantations and the garden wall, the main views being internal ones, most notably that between the Hall and the lake. The ground is virtually flat and the Abbots Ripton Brook flows from north-west to south-east through the gardens, both the Brook and lake in the park being fed from run-off.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The principal entrance to the Hall is now (1999) off Hall Lane, through ornate late C20 wrought-iron gates flanked by pleached lime, and leads immediately onto the gravelled forecourt with its central urn. The mid C18 drive through the park enters midway along the southern boundary, past a single-storey cream brick and thatched lodge cottage. Simple black wrought-iron gates lead onto a grass drive which runs north-west over the red-brick, three-arch bridge, dated 1746 (listed grade II), that spans the Brook to arrive at the forecourt on the north-east front.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Abbots Ripton Hall (listed grade II) stands in the centre of the north-west boundary of the grounds, alongside Hall Lane. It is a red and gault brick two- and three-storey house built to a T-plan with the entrance front to the north-east and the garden front to the south-west. Attached to the western corner of the Hall, facing west over the gardens, is an enclosed swimming pool added in the 1970s. Beside the domestic and nursery quarters to the north stands a late C19 brick and thatch dove house. The present house was built at the beginning of the C18 for the Rooper family, was substantially altered by Anthony Salvin in the 1850s and given further alterations, including the addition of the Chinese loggia by Peter Foster, in the 1970s.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens cover c 2.2ha and lie to the south-west, south and south-east of the Hall. Extensive lawns to the south-east are flanked by cherry trees lining a vista to the lake. To the east of this are shrubberies and to the south a series of axial paths cut through mixed borders, including double white borders framed by stone columns. Trees, shrubs, roses and herbaceous plants are combined in this area, which includes an enclosed circular rose garden.

The Abbots Ripton Brook enters the gardens under Hall Lane where it is crossed by a footbridge with Doric columns backed by a grotto (Christopher Thacker 1970). The Brook then widens into a 150m canal with central fountain which faces the south-west lawn and loggia. South of the canal, deep herbaceous borders aligned on the garden door run south-west for c 100m, and are enclosed by mature (possibly late C18) yew hedges. Part way along the borders is a crossing in gothic trellis-work (Peter Foster 1970s) and the walk is terminated by an elaborate wrought-iron gateway with a short red chestnut avenue beyond, leading up to the southern boundary. Between this main walk and the north-west boundary are further borders and enclosed gardens leading to a rose tunnel and pergola attached to the outer, south-east face of the kitchen garden wall, and a rectangular pond of possibly medieval origin with a small mount, surmounted by a mature oak, at the south-west end. Along the boundary wall is a deep grey and silver border designed by Humphrey Waterfield. Although the yew hedges defining the main walk are thought to be late C18 (Thacker 1979), the first map to record simple gardens here is the 1841 Tithe map, the formal structure of the long walk only appearing for the first time on the 1904 OS map. The detail of the planting has been added by Lady De Ramsey, Humphrey Waterfield and Lanning Roper since 1950.

At the south-east end of the canal the Brook is crossed by a Chinese Bridge leading to a thatched gothic summerhouse on the south bank (both by Peter Foster 1970s). From here the garden becomes less formal in structure. Some 200m further downstream the Brook is crossed again by the three-arch bridge carrying the south-east drive, beyond which it follows the line of the south bank of the lake, the area between being planted with mixed trees and shrubs. The path leads to a Chinese Fishing Pavilion (Peter Foster 1970s) at the eastern tip of the lake. This area has all been developed since the 1950s.

PARK A small area of park, laid to grass, lies to the north of the lake and gardens. A few mature oaks stand in the open park, with large plane and pollarded ash along a ha-ha which divides the park from the gardens on the north-east side of the main drive, close to the Hall, and several mature Huntingdon elms surviving in the park and the pleasure ground (these are part of some 600 elms which survive in and around the village of Abbots Ripton). The c 4.5ha lake runs east/west through the eastern half of the park and was excavated for use as a reservoir in the 1970s. Spoil from the excavation has been used to create a long bund in the south-east corner of the park which has been planted with a variety of trees.

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KITCHEN GARDEN The walled kitchen garden is situated in the south-west corner of the gardens, enclosed by high brick walls to the east and north and beech hedges to the south and west. The area is used as a works yard for the gardeners and for growing fruit and vegetables. Collections held in the temperate and subtropical houses have recently (1990s) been donated to the Cambridge University Botanic Gardens. The kitchen garden and glasshouses are probably contemporary with the mid C19 Salvin period of work on the Hall.

OTHER LAND Beyond the northern boundary of the site here registered are two blocks of woodland: Holland Wood and Wennington Wood, both of which are shown on the 1776 estate map. Managed for game, these were cut through with rides during the mid C19 and lined with ornamental tree species, as an extension to the ornamental landscape.

REFERENCES

Victoria History of the County of Huntingdonshire III, (1936), pp 202-4 N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Bedfordshire and the county of Huntingdon and Peterborough* (1968), p 204 *Country Life*, 155 (21 March 1974), pp 626-8; no 50 (11 December 1997), pp 29-31 C Thacker, *The History of Gardens* (1979), pp 85, 184, 263, 280 *The Garden* 108, (February 1983), pp 44-8 Maps Fellowes family estate map, 1776 (2068/MD13), (Huntingdon Record Office) Tithe map for Abbots Ripton parish, 1841 (2196/36/1A), (Huntingdon Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1887 2nd edition published 1900 3rd edition published 1924 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1886 3rd edition published 1924

Description written: December 1999 Register Inspector: EMP Edited: January 2001

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.