

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

HAGLEY HALL

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Name:	HAGLEY HALL
County:	Worcestershire
District:	Bromsgrove (District Authority)
Parish:	Clent
County:	Worcestershire
District:	Bromsgrove (District Authority)
Parish:	Hagley
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.431682 Longitude: -2.1164286 National Grid Reference: SO 92181 81529, SO 92347 80823 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: I List Entry Number: 1000352 Date first listed: 28-Feb-1986

Details

A mid C18 landscape park, with circuit including several notable buildings, associated with a country house by Sanderson Miller.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The manor of Hagley was purchased in 1565 by John Lyttleton, whose descendant Sir George Lyttleton (cr Lord Lyttleton of Frankley 1756, d 1773), statesman, politician, patron and friend of Pope, Shenstone and Thomson and the dedicatee of Tom Jones, began to landscape the estate in the early 1740s and in the 1750s rebuilt the Hall. The estate remained in the family in the late C20, the head of which in 1889 acquired the title of Viscount Cobham on the death of the last Duke of Buckingham and Chandos.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Hagley lies in the lee of the Clent Hills, some ten miles south-west of the centre of Birmingham and six miles north-east of Kidderminster. The site was well favoured for the development of landscape scenery, having wooded valleys, streams and to the north of the Hall rising ground giving fine views of the Malvern Hills, Wychbury Hill (which forms the northern extremity of the park) and the Black Mountains of Wales.

To the west the park is bounded by Hall Lane and Bromsgrove Road and by later C20 housing (School Lane etc) on the edge of Hagley, which north of the walled kitchen garden has encroached onto former parkland. To the south the park boundary follows Gallows Brook before passing along the bottom of the Clent Hills, turning to run west and north around the fields of Hagleyhill farm. The northern part of the park, separated from the rest of the Hagley demesne by the A456 Birmingham Road (a dual carriageway), takes in the southern slope of Wychbury Hill, which is crowned by Wychbury Ring, an Iron Age hillfort.

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The registered parkland extends to c 180ha.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main approach is from the west via Hall Lane and Hall Drive. An avenue of limes (replicating an avenue present in 1826) runs parallel with and south of Hall Lane and then along Hall Drive, at the start of which is a single-storey brick lodge, brick gate piers and iron gates, all of c 1960. A brick lodge, Clent Hill Lodge, lies 100m south-east of Sanderson Miller's mock castle on the south-eastern corner of the park at the end of a former back drive.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Hagley Hall (listed grade I) was rebuilt from 1754 on a site south-west of the old house (whose position in late C20 was occupied by the cricket pitch). Sir George Lyttleton considered various proposals although the final design was by Sanderson Miller (1716-80). It is something of a hybrid, a Palladian rectangle of two storeys raised upon a rusticated basement that contains the offices. Pavilion-like projections at the four corners rise one storey higher than the rest of the building. The building of Hagley, and its exuberant rococo interior decoration, was completed in 1760. The house was badly damaged by fire in 1925, although subsequently meticulously restored.

One hundred yards to the north-west of the Hall is the brick stables and coach house courtyard (listed grade II), of c 1749 and by Sanderson Miller, converted to office and commercial use in the late C20. To the immediate west of the stables is the mid C18 former Rectory (listed grade II). Also by Sanderson Miller (although remodelled by G E Street 1858-65) is the parish church of St John the Baptist (listed grade II*) 200m north-east of the Hall.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS A ha-ha runs along the main, south-west front of the Hall and up its south-east side. North of the Hall is a lawn bounded by shrubs; in its centre is the monument to the poet and landscape gardener William Shenstone (1714-63), moved here in the late C20 from its former location in the park.

North of the drive to the church which passes along the front of the north lawn is the Hall's private gardens: lawns, shrubs, specimen trees and flower beds occupying a strip of ground c 100m wide and 300m long extending to and linking the Hall with the walled kitchen and former orangery. In an area of lawn before the gate to the kitchen garden are six mature clipped yews, arranged in groups of three either side of the path.

Midway up the west side of the private garden is a summerhouse, the so-called Old Dairy (listed grade II*), a stone-built sandstone building of the mid to late C18 built in the style of a Tuscan amphiprostyle tetrastyle temple with east and west facing facades.

The private garden was already enclosed by 1826, with a serpentine path leading north from the summerhouse into a shrubbery along the east side of the kitchen garden. The layout was similar in the later C19 although by then the garden was more densely planted with trees. At that time there was an aviary south of the summerhouse.

PARK Hagley Hall lies towards the south-western corner of its park, the main south-west facade of the Hall looking across grassland with occasional mature specimen trees which falls to the Gallows Brook. The north-east front of the Hall also looks out onto open grass parkland with occasional specimen trees, the church forming a picturesque feature in the near ground. Adjoining the churchyard to the north is the village cricket pitch.

About 300m east of the Hall and church the ground begins to rise, on to the spur-and-valley landscape which was encompassed in the mid C18 in a pictorial circuit walk. From the Hall the route passes the church and runs east across gently rising open parkland from which there are views back across to the Hall. The main topographic feature of the east of the park is a prominent spur, with valleys to either side, on top of which stands the mock castle. One route to the castle is via Hermitage Hollow, the wooded valley which forms the southern boundary of the park, up which there is a chain of dammed ponds, all dry in the late C20. Contemplation seats once lay above and south of the ponds. The principal route, however, runs up the west end of the spur, whose sides are covered with a mixture of C20 commercial woodland and mature specimen trees. At the tip of the spur is a low round mound, reputedly a prehistoric barrow, from which panoramic views are enjoyed back across the park to the Hall and church and to the Shropshire hills in the distance. The mound seems more likely to be an C18 landscape feature. The top of the spur, Castle Lawn, is open grassland, rising gently east for 300m to Sanderson Miller's gothic ruined Castle of 1747-8. This (listed grade II*) is a sandstone building of quadrangular plan, with one complete, round, four-storey corner tower to the north-west and three left as one-storey stumps, all connected by 'ruined' walls. The uppermost storey of the main tower has an elaborate plaster ceiling and forms a prospect room. Praised by Horace Walpole as having 'the true rust of the

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Barons' Wars' (Malins 1966, 62) the Castle reputedly incorporates genuine medieval stonework from the ruins of Halesowen Abbey. It was thoroughly restored in the 1980s.

A terraced path leads east from iron gates along the lower part of Castle Wood, the wooded north slope of the spur. Approximately midway along the side of the spur is the site of Pope's Seat, a Palladian temple-like building shown on an C18 view by Vivares, while c 150m north-west of the Castle is the 1.3m high plinth of Pope's Urn (the urn itself lying nearby), erected in 1744 to the memory of the poet Alexander Pope (1688-1744) to whom the monument bears a Latin inscription. Pope's Seat and Urn look north across Lower Castle Lawn (with Pope's Lawn East adjoining to the west), a shallow, grassy valley, running west down which is a chain of ponds, not all of which held water in the later C20. In the C18 there were cascades between the ponds and at the west end of the westernmost pond a Palladian bridge of c 1762-3 by Thomas Pitt (1737-93, cr Baron Camelford 1784), Lord Lyttleton's nephew. Only their sites survived in the late C20, the Palladian building behind the bridge having been removed in the mid C19 after a tree fell on it. Also no longer extant was a grotto (at NGR SO 9232 8082), originally fed by a stream but already vandalised by 1882, and Shenstone's Monument, moved to the Hall in the C20. About 200m east of the end of the eastern, uppermost pond, on the end of a low spur with views west down the valley to the park, is the Rotunda of 1747, designed by John Pitt (c 1706-87), a distant cousin of Thomas Pitt. Of sandstone, and with eight Ionic columns, the building (listed grade II*) was semi-ruinous in the late C20, with its domical roof largely collapsed.

The northern boundary of the park lies c 100m north of the Rotunda. A tree-lined track runs along it inside the park, as it did in 1826. This leads east, around the grassland known as the East Lawn, to the easternmost corner of the park before turning south-west towards the Castle, while if followed west it picks up the line of a hollow-way which before imparkment apparently connected with School Lane on the east side of Hagley village. About 400m west of the rotunda the track passes several wells; one, Jacob's Well, has a mid C19 gothic well-head arch over it. About 150m further west of Jacob's Well is a small stone quarry, on the north side of which, with views across the park to Shropshire, is the site of Thomson's Seat, an octagonal building designed by John Pitt and bearing an inscription to the virtues of James Thomson (1700-48), the Scottish poet. That structure was replaced in 1853 by a rustick summerhouse following a tree fall. The summerhouse was removed in the mid C20. About the same distance west again, on the edge of the high ground overlooking the Hall, is the Prince's Pillar (listed grade II*), possibly designed by the architect Henry Keene (1726-76) and believed by Lord Cobham to have been commissioned by Admiral John Smith, the illegitimate half-brother of George, first Baron Lyttleton. The Pillar comprises a Corinthian column c 16m high surmounted with a statue of Frederick, Prince of Wales, in military dress. Baron Lyttleton was himself the Prince's Secretary. From the Pillar there are also views north to the northern part of the park, known as Monument Hill after the two features erected there to serve as eyecatchers from the Hall. Some 300m north of the Birmingham Road, and 100m east of the end of Monument Lane which leads north off it, is the Temple of Theseus (listed grade I), erected in 1758 to a design by James 'Athenian' Stuart (1713-88) following his return from Athens. Conceived as a miniature replica of a Greek Doric hexastyle prostyle temple, the building faces south, with views across Hagley Park and to the hills beyond. Further up the hill by c 300m is a mid C18 sandstone obelisk (listed grade II*), the upper part of the shaft having fallen.

There was apparently a park at Hagley in the Middle Ages. This later fell into disuse before being restored by Sir Charles Lyttleton c 1694. Work to improve the park at Hagley had begun by 1744, and although George Lyttleton, first Baron Lyttleton (1709-73) is usually credited with the landscape improvements there he did not succeed to the estate until 1751 on the death of his father Sir Thomas Lyttleton, who may therefore have had a hand in at least the early stages of the work. It seems Baron Lyttleton was his own designer, his ideas no doubt informed by those of his intellectual circle. Inspiration may also have been provided by what the Lyttletons' cousins the Temples had done at Stowe. Specific innovations at Hagley included England's first sham castle and first Doric building (the Temple of Theseus). Planting and other works saw the park so well developed that by 1753 Walpole was able to write of it as 'broken into all manner of beauty; such lawns, such woods, rills, cascades, and a thickness of verdure quite to the summit of the hill ...' (Malins 1966, 62). By 1800 it had its own guidebooks, which make it clear that the circuit included several features (a statue of Venus, for instance) in addition to those noted above.

KITCHEN GARDEN The C18 brick-walled kitchen garden lies c 400m north of the Hall, and is entered by a C20 gateway with wrought-iron gates. The garden is of c 5ha and roughly square, and is divided from east to west by a wall which incorporates a

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former orangery (it and walls listed grade II) of c 1740. That building, of brick with three pedimented bays with single-storey, single-bay wings to either side, was converted in the early C20 to a fruit store, and c 1945 into a house for the Head Gardener. The old glasshouses were removed in the mid 1980s.

REFERENCES

The Victoria History of the County of Worcester 3, (1913), pp 130-4 Country Life, 38 (16 October 1915), pp 520-8; 122 (19 September 1957), pp 546-9; 26 September 1957), pp 608-11 E Malins, English Landscaping and Literature (1966), pp 56-65 G Jackson-Stops, Hagley Hall (1979) R Sidwell, West Midland Gardens (1981), pp 57-8 G Jellicoe et al, The Oxford Companion to Gardens (1986), pp 240-1 The Follies and Other Features of Hagley Park, Hagley Historical and Field Society, Occasional Paper 2 (1994)

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: Worcestershire sheet 9 NW, 1st edition published 1884 Worcestershire sheet 9 NE, 1st edition published 1884 OS 25" to 1 mile: Worcestershire sheet 9.7, 1st edition published 1883

Archival items

Plan of Public Carriage and Foot Roads in the Parishes of Hagley and Clent, 1826 [location of original unknown]

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.