

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

THE HOO, KIMPTON

Auteur(s) : Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/>

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THE HOO, KIMPTON

Name: THE HOO, KIMPTON

County: Hertfordshire

District: North Hertfordshire (District Authority)

Parish: Kimpton

County: Hertfordshire

District: North Hertfordshire (District Authority)

Parish: Knebworth

County: Hertfordshire

District: North Hertfordshire (District Authority)

Parish: St. Paul's Walden

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.867174
Longitude: -0.27497660
National Grid Reference: TL1887020139
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1000912
Date first listed: 11-Jun-1987

Details

An C18 landscape park, formerly surrounding a C17/C18 country house (demolished 1958), with work by Lancelot Brown c 1760-2.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The manor of Hoo was held by the Hoo family from the C13. Thomas Hoo died in 1650, the manor passing to his daughter Susannah and her husband Sir Jonathan Keate, an alderman of London who became Sheriff of Hertfordshire. The Hoo manor house was rebuilt during the mid C17. Sir Henry Hoo Keate sold the manor in 1732 to Margaret Brand, who was succeeded by her son, Thomas, who employed the landscaper Lancelot Brown (1716-83) and the architect Sir William Chambers (1723-96) to embellish the landscape during the 1760s. An undated estate map of the early to mid C18 (HRO) shows a formal approach and garden enclosures, with a small park, surrounding the house prior to Brown's alterations. Upon Thomas Brand's death in 1770 the estate passed through the family, descending with the title of Lord Dacre, the twenty-third Lord Dacre being elevated to Viscount Hampden in 1884. The third Viscount Hampden sold the estate in 1938, it being subsequently in divided ownership. The house was demolished in 1958, a group of several new houses being erected on the site during the 1990s.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The Hoo estate overlies low rolling hills at the northern end of the Chiltern range between Luton and Stevenage, lying 1.5km north-east of the village of Kimpton and 2km south of the village of St Paul's Walden. The c 120ha estate is bounded to the east by the lane connecting Whitwell with Codicote, the boundary being marked by occasional short lengths of a brick and flint former boundary wall lying adjacent to the road, and on the other sides by open agricultural land. The site of the former house occupies a plateau towards the centre of the estate, overlooking much of the surrounding park which drops away to the east and north. From the valley which the eastern boundary occupies, the land rises eastwards up a hillside which draws views from the eastern half of the park and the site of the house. The setting is rural, with views from the house site to the south, east and to the north, particularly towards St Paul's Walden Bury (qv) some c 2km away.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main approach, via the south-east drive, enters the site 750m east of the site of the former house, off the Whitwell to Codicote lane, the entrance formerly marked by a lodge (OS; gone 1999). The drive curves south-west upon a raised bank or causeway which appears to have formed the dam between the northern and southern sections of the former lake, the site of which extends north along the valley from the drive, running parallel with the east boundary. Some 600m south-east of the site of the house, the drive is carried across the southern outlet of the diverted arm of the River Mimram, at the outlet of the former lake, by a single, round-arched bridge (Sir William Chambers c 1764, scheduled ancient monument, listed grade II). Built of brick, the bridge is clad in Portland stone but has lost its balustrade. From the hump-backed top of the bridge views extend north and south, up and down the Mimram valley. From here the drive ascends north-west through the park, with views extending south and north-east to the surrounding countryside. The drive arrives at the gated entrance to a gravel courtyard, having formerly opened out into a courtyard on the main, east front of the former house. The gateway now (1999) gives access to a gravel court on which stands the stable block/coach house, to the north of the site of the former house, flanked to north and south by several 1990s houses.

The north-east drive enters 800m north-east of the site of the former house, off the Whitwell to Codicote lane, the entrance marked by Hoo Farm Lodge (C18, listed grade II). This two-storey cottage, of white-painted brick and stucco, has a prominent, large, round-arched recess on the wall overlooking the drive, facing Hoo Farm to the south. From here the drive curves south-west, ascending to the plateau on which stands the site of the former house. The drive turns south c 300m north of the site of the former house, continuing along the east side of Round Wood before opening out into the gravel courtyard which lies on the east side of the group of recent houses flanking the old stable block/coach house.

The west drive gives direct access from Kimpton, passing the single-storey, brick and flint Hoo Lodge situated 1.5km south-west of the site of the former house, set back off the B651 Kimpton to Whitwell lane. The drive extends north-east across open agricultural land (outside the registered area), ascending the hillside to the C20, single-storey, rendered Hoo Park Cottage, dated 1902. From here the drive (from this point on within the registered area) continues north-east through parkland, flanked by an informal avenue of mixed species and ages, the oldest specimens being large sweet chestnuts and younger specimens being of oak and lime. The avenue finishes at the west corner of Round Wood, with the west drive skirting the north side of the Wood before joining the north-east drive at the north-east corner, 200m north of the site of the former house.

Prior to Brown's work of the 1760s, the main drive approached straight off the lane to the east, aligned on the east front of the house from which it was separated by an enclosed forecourt, and flanked by an avenue of trees (estate map, early-mid C18).

PRINCIPAL BUILDING The manor house (demolished 1958) lay in the western half of the park. Rebuilt c 1661 by Sir Jonathan Keate, it was remodelled by Sir William Chambers for Thomas Brand in the 1760s. By the late C19 (OS 1884) its main entrance on the east front was elevated on a balustraded terrace overlooking the gravel forecourt. The south and west fronts overlooked the gardens, and a service wing extended from the north front towards the stables/coach house. The site of the house is now (1999) partially covered by two 1990s houses and their gardens.

The two-storey brick stable block/coach house (C18, possibly by Sir William Chambers, listed grade II), which stands to the north of the site of the former service wing of the house, has been converted for domestic use. The central block, flanked by single-storey aisles, is entered from the forecourt to the east via three large, arched doorways for coaches.

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GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The remains of the garden and pleasure grounds attached to the former house lie adjacent to the west of the stables and recent dwellings, the area being divided into gardens attached to the dwellings. The informal area is largely laid to lawn, with several large, mature trees, including sweet chestnuts and cedars, lying towards the western boundary. No visible trace of earlier garden features appears to survive. Long views extend south from the south side of the plateau on which the garden lies, towards a range of distant hills. To the north of the garden lies Round Wood (formerly known as Lady Wood, OS C19), an area of former pleasure grounds recently (late C20) replanted with conifers and underplanted with evergreen shrubs including laurel.

Prior to Brown's work of the 1760s, two formal garden compartments extended from the south front of the house, including a bowling green. One small formal garden compartment lay adjacent to the west front (estate map, early-mid C18). In the late C19 and early C20 (OS) the garden surrounded the former house to the south and west, with a formal system of paths enclosing panels of lawn close to the house, leading to less formal areas towards the north and west edges of the garden. At this time Lady Wood, an area of mixed woodland, contained a network of paths which have since disappeared.

PARK The park surrounds the garden and site of the former house and is laid largely to pasture with some arable, areas of woodland being mainly sited around the perimeter. From the site of the house the park, containing clumps of trees and scattered singles, slopes east down towards the eastern boundary. Some 500m north-east of the site of the house lies the brick-built icehouse (C18, listed grade II), sunk into a promontory overlooking the valley to the east, with its dome exposed and having lost its approach tunnel on the east side. East of this promontory the ground slopes more steeply down to the valley, reaching first the western arm of the River Mimram, and beyond this the site of the former lake, formed by Lancelot Brown c 1760-2 by diverting the river into an eastern course. The site of the lake was partly filled in during the C20 and trees planted over much of the area. The two water courses join south of Chambers' bridge at the southern end of the former lake, continuing southwards through an area of seemingly short-lived former parkland (OS 1884). A path formerly led north-east across the parkland from close to the west end of the south-east drive, giving direct access from the house to the west side of the walled garden at the north-east corner of the park.

West of the pleasure grounds, adjacent to the informal avenue flanking the west drive, lies a cricket pitch and pavilion. To the south of this lie the woodland areas of Longcroft Spring, Christmashill Wood and Hoopark Wood.

North of the north-east drive lies an area of the park which covers a steep-sided valley; this contains Oldfield Plantation and, to the west of this, a large, mature cedar of Lebanon. Views extend from the park in many directions.

Before Brown's work of the 1760s, the much smaller park lay adjacent to the gardens, to the west and south of the house, with Round Wood adjacent to the north-west (estate map, early-mid C18).

KITCHEN GARDEN The brick-walled kitchen garden, largely laid to lawn, lies towards the north-east corner of the site and consists of an inner brick-walled compartment bounded to the west and south by a further, outer compartment, itself walled to the south and west (the walls being C17 and listed grade II). The outer compartment is entered from the park via a stone doorcase set at the centre of the south-west wall, with a further opening aligned with this doorway set into the dividing wall between the two compartments. Formerly (OS C19) a path crossed the park from c 75m north-east of the former house, leading north-east from the south-east drive to the stone doorway in the outer brick wall.

The north-west boundary of the area is largely formed by farm buildings including the brick Hoo Farmhouse (C17 and later, listed grade II).

REFERENCES

Chauncy, *Historical Antiquities of Hertfordshire* (1700), p 510 C Campbell, *Vitruvius Britannicus IV*, (1725), pl 18 Royal Institute of British Architects, *Catalogue vol B*, (1972), p 113 D Stroud, *Capability Brown* (1975), pp 229-30, pl 34a B Cherry and N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Hertfordshire* (1977), pp 330-1 *Country Life*, 165 (19 April 1979), p 1178
Maps Survey of the Manors of Legats, Parkbury, ... situate in the Parishes of Kimpton and St Paul's Walden, early-mid C18 (40443), (Hertfordshire Record Office) Dury and Andrews, *A topographical Map of Hartford-shire*, 1766
OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1884 2nd edition published 1899 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1898

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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.