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Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

CHARLECOTE PARK

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Name: CHARLECOTE PARK

County: Warwickshire

District: Stratford-on-Avon (District Authority)

Parish: Charlecote

County: Warwickshire

District: Stratford-on-Avon (District Authority)

Parish: Hampton Lucy

County: Warwickshire

District: Stratford-on-Avon (District Authority)

Parish: Wellesbourne and Walton

label.localisation: Latitude: 52.204215
Longitude: -1.6252966
National Grid Reference: SP 25704 56287
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II*
List Entry Number: 1001187
Date first listed: 01-Feb-1986

Details

A C16 deer park and C17 formal gardens landscaped in the mid C18 by Lancelot Brown, with C19 formal gardens and pleasure grounds around a C16 house which was remodelled in the early and mid C19.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Sir Walter de Cherlecote, an ancestor of the Lucy family, inherited the estate in 1189. It is possible that the family, who adopted the name Lucy in the C13, has been associated with the estate since before the C12 (guidebook). Thomas Lucy (c 1532-1600), the first of three successive owners of that name, inherited Charlecote in 1551 and began an ambitious building programme, completed by 1558, replacing an earlier house with the present mansion. In 1565 Lucy was knighted, and in 1572 Queen Elizabeth visited the house on her progress from Kenilworth Castle (qv). By tradition, William Shakespeare was apprehended for poaching in the deer park c 1583, and Sir Thomas Lucy is said to be the basis for Justice Shallow. Sir Thomas' son outlived his father by only five years, and was succeeded in 1605 by Sir Thomas III, a friend of Lord Herbert of Cherbury. Sir Thomas III died in 1640, and the Commonwealth period and late C17 were marked by several inheritances in quick succession. Thus, in 1677, Charlecote was inherited by Capt Thomas Lucy (d 1684), who with his cousin, Col George Lucy (inherited 1690), was

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responsible for laying out elaborate formal water gardens shown in a perspective painting of c 1700 (National Trust Collection) and an engraving of 1722 by Henry Beighton (Dugdale 1730). The gardens are also recorded on a survey made by James Fish in 1736 (WCRO). Following Col Lucy's death, the estate passed to his brother, the Rev William Lucy (d 1723), and thence to his nephew, Thomas. Suffering from epilepsy, Thomas was excluded from control of the estate, which remained unchanged until his brother George inherited in 1744. George Lucy travelled abroad extensively, introducing from Portugal in 1756 a flock of Jacob's sheep, which remains in the park (1999). In about 1750 Lancelot Brown (1716-83) drew a rough plan of Charlecote on the reverse of a plan for Packington, Warwickshire (qv) (WCRO). Recalled c 1757, Brown built the cascade south-west of the house and regraded the banks of the River Dene (WCRO). In 1760 George Lucy entered into a contract with Brown which included provision for the destruction of the C17 water gardens, the widening and improvement of the River Avon, and the modification of fishponds in the park (Fairfax-Lucy 1958). On George Lucy's death in 1786 the estate passed to his cousin and secretary, the Rev John Hammond, who had assumed the name of Lucy. In the late C18 Charlecote became a destination for literary tourists to Stratford-upon-Avon, and early C19 visitors included Washington Irving (1818), Sir Walter Scott (1828) and Nathaniel Hawthorn (c 1850). In 1823 Charlecote was inherited by George Hammond Lucy (d 1845), who the same year married Mary Elizabeth Williams of Bodelwyddan Castle, Wales. Mary Elizabeth recorded details of life at Charlecote in her diaries up to her death in 1890, which included extensive 're-edification' of the house between 1829 and 1845. This work was continued by G H Lucy's second son, Henry Spencer, who inherited the estate from his elder brother in 1847. Agricultural depression in the 1870s brought financial problems for the estate, and when Henry died in 1890 Charlecote was let. Henry's eldest daughter and heiress, Ada (d 1943), married Sir Henry Ramsay-Fairfax, Bt (d 1944), who assumed the name Fairfax-Lucy. In the mid C20 further financial pressures led to the sale of outlying areas of the estate, and in 1946, Sir Montmerie Fairfax-Lucy, who had inherited from his father in 1944, presented Charlecote to the National Trust. Sir Montmerie was succeeded in 1965 by his brother, Sir Brian, whose wife, Lady Alice, researched the history of Charlecote, and assisted the National Trust with its restoration. Today (1999) the site is in divided ownership.

Charlecote Park is one of a group of sites in Warwickshire at which Lancelot Brown advised in the mid and late C18. These include Combe Abbey (qv), Compton Verney (qv), Newnham Paddox (qv), Packington Hall (qv), Ragley Hall (qv) and Warwick Castle (qv).

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Charlecote is situated c 0.5km south-east of the village of Charlecote and c 8km south of Warwick, to the west of the B4088 road which runs north from Loxley to Warwick. The c 105ha site comprises some 2ha of formal gardens and pleasure grounds around the house, and c 103ha of parkland. The site is enclosed on three sides by public roads: to the north the boundary is formed by Charlecote Road, which runs north-west from Charlecote to Hampton Lucy, while to the east the B4088 road forms the boundary; to the south the boundary is the B4086 Stratford Road. The park boundaries adjoining public roads are fenced with traditional split-timber deer pales. To the west the site adjoins agricultural land. The site is generally level and forms the flood plain of the River Avon, which sweeps through the park to the west of the house. Two tributary streams join the Avon within the park: the River Dene to the south of the house, and a small stream, which is dammed to form a lake, to the north-west. There are extensive views westwards from the house and terraces across the park towards the Welcombe Hills north of Stratford-upon-Avon, while the C19 tower of Hampton Lucy parish church c 600m north-west of the house and Charlecote parish church c 400m north-east act as eyecatchers. From the northern bastion of the wilderness north of the house there are extensive views across the park towards Charlecote village and to agricultural land beyond Charlecote Road.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Charlecote Park is approached from the B4088 road to the east through a mid C19 entrance designed by John Gibson (listed grade II) which comprises brick and stone piers which terminate concave brick wing walls surmounted by ornamental wrought-iron railings. The walls and railings flank tall brick piers surmounted by carved stone heraldic beasts. The piers support a pair of arch-topped wrought-iron gates ornamented with heraldic devices. From the entrance the gravelled drive leads c 260m west-north-west across the park through an avenue of late C20 oaks, which replaced an earlier avenue of C17 origin which is shown in the perspective views (oil painting, c 1700; Beighton, 1722). The axis of this avenue

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was projected east for c 400m across farmland east of the B4088; only remnants of this eastern extension survive today (1999). The avenue is terminated to the west by a C16 brick, two-storey turreted gatehouse (listed grade I), which formed part of Sir Thomas Lucy's mid C16 remodelling of the house, and which leads to the forecourt to the east of the house. The forecourt is enclosed to the south by a brick wall (listed grade II*) c 3m high which assumed its present form under the Rev William Lucy (d 1723), for whom a pair of elaborate wrought-iron gates supported on brick piers with pierced obelisk finials was installed south of the house, leading from the forecourt to the kitchen court. To the north a similar and contemporary pair of gates (listed grade II*) leads to the garden. A similar, but lower, brick wall (listed grade II*) to the north of the forecourt is surmounted by mid C19 pierced stone strapwork balustrades and urns, and serves to retain the cedar lawn above. At the central point of the north wall, stone steps set in a semicircular recess which contains stone bench seats and which is flanked by a pair of early C18 lead figures (listed grade II*), ascend to the cedar lawn. The forecourt is today (1999) laid out with two panels of lawn which are divided by a gravel walk which continues the axis of the drive through the gatehouse to the porch on the east facade of the house. Projecting north and south wings enclose a gravelled area immediately below the house, the walls of which are planted with climbers. Mature yew trees grow adjacent to the south forecourt wall. The present arrangement of the forecourt dates from the mid C20 when mid C19 formal parterres created for Mary Elizabeth Lucy were removed (aerial photograph, 1950). The parterres had themselves replaced picturesque shrubberies and lawns which are shown in early C19 views, and a circular pool and fountain which is shown in Beighton's view of 1722 and Fish's plan of 1736. The forecourt is now (1999-2000) to be remodelled to a scheme planned by Sir Edmund Fairfax-Lucy comprising lawns and specimen topiary.

A service drive leaves the B4088 c 80m south of the principal entrance. A simple timber gate leads to a tarmac drive which, following a course parallel to the principal drive, runs c 260m west through the park in a mid C20 avenue, to reach the C16 stables and service buildings to the south of the house (listed grade I). There are designed views south across the parkland and River Dene from the service drive which follows the line of the old Stratford road which was diverted to its present course c 650m to the south in 1755. The realignment of the road necessitated the construction of a single-arched stone bridge (listed grade II) crossing the River Dene on the park boundary c 430m south-east of the house, to the design of David Hiorn. The bridge is significant in internal vistas within the south park, and from the south-west drive. The south-west drive, now (1999) a track, also follows the line of the old Stratford road. The drive enters the park through a Jacobean-style stone arch closed by wrought-iron gates and flanked by brick wing walls surmounted by pierced stone balustrades designed by John Gibson in 1865 (all listed grade II). The arch stands to the south-east of a contemporary brick lodge, also designed by Gibson (listed grade II), some 930m south-west of the house. The drive extends c 480m north-east through a mid C19 avenue of limes, before turning east and running c 400m through an avenue of C17 limes which is parallel to the River Avon. Turning sharply north, the drive crosses the River Dene on a triple-arched stone bridge, Park Bridge (listed grade II), which was built in 1867. The grounds around the house are separated from the deer park by mid C19 wrought-iron gates at the south end of the bridge. From the south-west drive there are views north-east across the River Avon to the house, and east across the south park, which are punctuated by Park Bridge and Hiorn's Bridge on the park boundary.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Charlecote (listed grade I) stands on a level terrace on the east bank of the River Avon towards the centre of the park. The present red-brick, two-storey house was built between 1551 and 1559-60 by Sir Thomas Lucy. To this mid C16 house George Hammond and Mary Elizabeth Lucy in 1829-37 added a west range overlooking the river containing a dining room and library, which was based on a design by C S Smith. An earlier plan by Benjamin Dean Wyatt was not implemented. At the same time the interior was renovated with the advice of Thomas Willement, and the exterior of the C16 house 're-edified' by substituting mullion windows for C18 sashes. In 1852-6 Henry Spencer Lucy employed John Gibson to remodel the north wing and build an extension to the south wing. The house is roughly C-shaped on plan, with projecting north-east, south-east and south wings. The entrance or east facade has an off-centre, two-storey stone porch, possibly added in 1572 to mark Queen Elizabeth's visit, and a mid C19 stone oriel window which lights the Great Hall. The south-east and north-east wings have C19 two-storey canted bay windows flanked to north and south by C16 octagonal turrets with ogee roofs, which echo those on the C16 gatehouse. The mid C19 west or riverside facade is gabled, while the C19 south wing has further ogee-roofed turrets echoing those on the original house.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The formal gardens and informal pleasure grounds lie to the north and west of the house. The forecourt to the east is also treated ornamentally. From the forecourt the gardens are approached by wrought-iron gates at the north-east corner of the house, which lead to a gravel walk running parallel to the north facade of the house. To the north is the croquet lawn, separated from the park to the west and north by low brick walls surmounted by mid C19 pierced stone balustrades surmounted by urns (all listed grade II) designed by John Gibson. At the west end of the gravel walk a broad flight of stone steps descends to terraces which lie between the mid C19 west range and the River Avon. The upper terrace is enclosed by mid C19 pierced stone balustrades surmounted by stone urns designed by Gibson (all listed grade II), with small circular bastions containing stone bench seats at the north-west and south-west corners. The terrace is laid out with a symmetrical, geometric box-edged parterre, which was recreated in 1995 following the mid C19 plan (guidebook). A broad flight of stone steps descends from the centre of the west side of the parterre terrace to a narrow gravelled lower terrace, from which a further flight of stone steps descends to the river. There are views south-west, west and north-west from the terraces across the parkland west of the River Avon and towards the tower of Hampton Lucy church. There is a further terrace enclosed by pierced stone balustrades below the mid C19 south wing. This is approached from the west terrace by a flight of stone steps, and is today (1999) laid out with a gravelled area to the north and a small parterre to the south. The early C18 perspective painting shows a terrace and parterres enclosed by walls, with ogee-roofed gazebos to the north-west and south-west, and steps descending to the river to the west of the house.

From the gates leading from the forecourt a further gravel walk gently ascends to the north-east above a grass bank to the east of the bowling green. To the east of this walk is a level, roughly square lawn which is planted with mature cedars arranged in two rows to the east and west, and which frame the single-storey stone orangery c 80m north-east of the house. This was built in 1857 and is attributed to John Gibson (listed grade II). The orangery replaced a mid C18 classical summerhouse built by George Lucy to replace the late C17 cupillo which formed part of the formal gardens. Gravel walks border the lawn to the north, east and south, and stone steps aligned on the orangery descend south to the forecourt. To the east the lawn is separated from the park by a brick and stone coped ha-ha which allows views north-east towards Charlecote church, which was rebuilt by Gibson in 1851-3 for Mary Elizabeth Lucy. To the west of the orangery, and some 50m north-east of the house, is a small rustic timber and thatch mid C19 summerhouse, known as Granny's Summerhouse (listed grade II). Built for Mary Elizabeth Lucy, it was inspired by Plas Newydd, Llangollen, home of Lady Eleanor Butler and the Hon Sarah Ponsonby, which she had visited as a child. To the north of the summerhouse is a C19 rockery and shrubbery, which adjoins a gravel walk. Known as the Ladies' Walk, this extends c 80m north, forming the west side of a raised, apsidal-ended promontory retained by brick walls which extends into the park for c 100m. To the west, the Ladies' Walk is adjoined by a late C20 herbaceous border which replaced a mid C20 'Shakespeare border'. To the north, the Ladies' Walk opens into a lawn planted with two mulberry trees, from which there are views across the park. A similar walk returns along the east side of the promontory, affording further views across the east park to the parish church. The area between the east and west walks, known from the C19 as the Wilderness, is enclosed by evergreen shrubbery under mature ornamental trees and conifers. A network of curving walks passes through this area which has been developed in the late C20 as a woodland garden.

The present gardens were developed from the mid C18 when George Lucy commissioned Lancelot Brown to remove complex late C17 and early C18 formal gardens which lay to the north of the house. These are shown in the late C17 perspective painting now in the house, and in H Beighton's perspective engraving (1722); they are also recorded on Fish's plan of 1736. The formal gardens comprised two parallel brick-lined canals to the west, between which was a narrow isthmus on which stood an octagonal gazebo. To the east were a bowling green on the site of the cedar lawn, and parterres, to the north of which was a wilderness on the site of the C19 Wilderness.

PARK Surrounding the house on all sides, the park today (1999) remains a managed deer park with herds of fallow and red deer. An enclosure c 600m west of the house is today under plough. Some 240m north-north-east of the house a lake formed by damming a small stream is retained to the west by an earth dam with a wide, brick-lined cascade which is joined by low brick walls to a stone arched bridge (all listed grade II) c 10m to the west. The bridge carries a drive to Place Meadow at the north-west corner of the park. The lake is said to be of C16 origin (listed building description), and is shown on the early C18

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perspective painting of the house; it was altered in the mid C18 by Brown, but a chain of three ponds is shown in this location on the 1791 estate plan. The north bank of the lake is planted with cedars and other ornamental trees. An avenue of limes extends c 260m north-east from the gatehouse across the east park to the parish church. This avenue, replanted in the late C20, follows the course of an avenue shown on the early C18 perspective painting, and on Beighton's view (1722). The axis of the entrance avenue is projected to the west of the River Avon by a double avenue of horse chestnuts which extends c 550m west across Camp Ground, the area of parkland to the west of the river. The avenue, aligned on the west facade of the house, was replanted in the mid C20, following the course of the double avenue shown on the early C18 painting of Charlecote; Beighton (1722), Fish (1736) and Clarke (1791) show a single avenue across Camp Ground, but this did not survive in 1886 (OS).

The park to the south and south-east of the house is crossed from east to west by the River Dene. Some 130m south-east of the house the river feeds an eel trap, while the confluence of the Rivers Dene and Avon c 80m south-west of the house is marked by a stone stepped cascade (listed grade II) which was originally constructed in 1757(61 to the design of Lancelot Brown, and which was renovated in 1867 by Gibson. The south park was extended in the C19 by the addition of the 'Polo Field', a level enclosure c 400m south-east of the house which had previously been farmland associated with King's Mead Farm c 670m south-east of the house.

The West Park c 250m south-west of the house was developed from the mid C18 when the Stratford road was closed. Land to the south of the lime avenue remained in agricultural use in 1791 (Clarke plan), but had been imparked by 1886 (OS). Today (1999), the West Park retains scattered oaks which survive from former hedgerows, and extensive areas of ridge and furrow c 400m south-west of the house. A mixed plantation, 'Old Town', adjoins the river c 400m south-west of the house, and is separated from the park by iron fences. This may have been the site of a medieval village and house (L Griffin pers comm, 1999), and until the C19 lay on the western boundary of the park. The location of a timber bridge crossing the Avon which was designed and built by John Standbridge in 1768 is unclear, but Clarke's plan (1791) suggests that it may have crossed the river adjacent to Old Town, giving access to Camp Ground from West Park.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden lies c 400m east-south-east of the house, on the east side of the B4088 road and to the north of the River Dene. Today (1999) the kitchen garden is in divided ownership and use, with the northern section being used as a commercial nursery. Here the brick north wall of the garden survives with a C20 lean-to glasshouse. To the south, the C19 two- and three-storey diapered brick gardener's house has been extended in the late C20, with a wing to the east replacing C19 glasshouses. The gardener's house stands in late C20 ornamental gardens which are bordered to the south by the River Dene. The kitchen garden was moved to its present location to the east of the B4088 in the mid C18 as part of improvements associated with the diversion of the Stratford road and the creation by Brown of the cascade on the River Dene. The early C18 perspective painting shows a walled kitchen garden to the south-west of the house, bounded to the south by the River Dene, and to the west by the River Avon; further kitchen gardens are shown to the north of the stables and south of the forecourt. This arrangement is confirmed by Beighton's view (1722) and Fish's plan (1736). Today (1999) these areas are a paddock and wood yard respectively. To the south of the River Dene, and c 130m south of the house, an area of level ground is planted as an orchard with mature standard apple trees. This area is shown as an orchard on Beighton's view (1722), and is described as the 'Cherry Orchard' on Fish's plan of 1736.

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Illustrations Oil painting, perspective view of Charlecote Park from the west, c 1700 (National Trust Collection) H Beighton, *The East Prospect of Charlecote in Warwickshire, the Seat of the Reverend Willm Lucy Esqr, 1722* (in Dugdale 1730) E Rudge (?), *Charlecote House, c 1800* (Aylesford Collection, Birmingham Reference Library Archive) Aerial photographs, 1950; 1963 (Cambridge University Collection) [in Binney and Hills 1976]

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Description written: December 1999 Amended: May 2000; September 2000 Register Inspector: JML Edited: December 2000

Legal

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