

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

LEIGH PARK (STAUNTON COUNTRY PARK)

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

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LEIGH PARK (STAUNTON COUNTRY PARK)

Name: LEIGH PARK (STAUNTON COUNTRY PARK)

County: Hampshire

District: East Hampshire (District Authority)

Parish: Rowlands Castle

County: Hampshire

District: Havant (District Authority)

Parish: Non Civil Parish

label.localisation: Latitude: 50.875519

Longitude: -0.97816712

National Grid Reference: SU 71991 08944

Map: [Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden

Grade: II*

List Entry Number: 1000112

Date first listed: 31-May-1984

Details

A Regency landscaped garden, laid out in the 1820s and 1830s on the site of late C18 pleasure grounds and a walled garden, with a series of specialist gardens and follies by Sir George Staunton to accommodate his Chinese and botanical interests. The gardens are surrounded by a park of C18 origin, which was developed by Sir George in the early C19, and also incorporates late C19 alterations.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

During the medieval period, the land at Leigh Park comprised woodland and pasture which lay adjacent to the ancient Royal Forest of Bere. By the C18 there was a farmhouse on the site which was occupied by a Mr Harrison of Ley. This was purchased by William Garrett who in 1802 enlarged or rebuilt it, enclosed a park of some 420 acres (170ha), and laid out 'productive gardens ... shrubberies ... and the whole of the lands [as] a perfect ferme ornée' (Sale catalogue, 1819). The estate was bought in 1820 by Sir George Staunton, a great authority on China and friend of Sir Joseph Banks. As a boy he had accompanied Lord Macartney on his mission to China and for much of his later life was employed by the East India Company. Sir George greatly extended the house and developed and planted the gardens around it, incorporating many new introductions from China. He also created further pleasure grounds to the north which he embellished with a lake, follies, and garden buildings, describing his work in detail in his Notices of the Leigh Park Estate in 1836. Following his death in 1859, the estate was bought in 1861 by William Stone who built a new mansion overlooking the lake, demolishing Sir George's house over a period of some fourteen years. Some alterations were made to the grounds including the creation of Upper Lake and a new entrance drive from the north. The estate was sold in 1874 to Major General Sir Frederick Wellington Fitzwygram, passing to his son, Frederick Lofthouse Fitzwygram in 1904. No significant changes occurred during the ownership by the Fitzwygrams but following wartime use

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by the Admiralty, 2400 acres (972ha) were purchased from the family in 1946 by Portsmouth City Council to build the Leigh Park housing estate. The remaining land, comprising the present gardens and parkland, were retained as public open space although in 1959 William Stone's house was demolished and in the early 1950s the South Gardens were separated from the North Pleasure Grounds by the construction of Middle Park Way. Considerable new planting was carried out during the 1960s and early 1970s until, in 1978, the majority of the park was designated a Conservation Area. In 1987 the present Staunton Country Park was formed, the land ownership being now (1998) in both local authority and commercial ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Leigh Park lies on the northern outskirts of Havant, on the west side of the B2149, Petersfield Road. The 90ha registered area comprises c 19ha of kitchen and nursery gardens, pleasure grounds, and paddocks associated with farm buildings, c 30ha of woodland, and c 41ha of parkland. The eastern third of the site lies on level ground which falls in gentle undulations towards the north-west boundary with the wooded ridges of the Forest of Bere beyond forming the distant view. The housing estates of Leigh Park abut the site to the south-west, south, and south-east although on the south-east boundary they lie beyond Petersfield Road, the northern half of which (Durrants Road) is fringed by detached houses interspersed with tree belts. Middle Park Way, built in the 1950s, cuts from west to east across the southern third of the site, separating the area known as South Gardens from the North or Leigh Park Gardens. To the north-west and north, the woodland and grassland of the park merges into wooded farmland.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Both North and South Gardens are entered from Middle Park Way, with the entrance to the public car park in South Gardens situated some 80m west of its junction with Petersfield Road. Pedestrians enter a few metres further west, at a pair of gateways with brick piers and iron gates which stand facing on opposite sides of the road and from which gravelled paths lead northwards towards the lake and pleasure grounds and southwards to the present park entrance buildings. These, converted from C19 coach house and garden use, stand against the south-east wall of the kitchen garden. The paths follow the route of the main drive to Sir George Staunton's house, which stood adjacent to the south-east corner of the kitchen garden. The drive, laid out on the course of a former sunken public lane which Sir George moved eastwards to the present Petersfield Road in 1828, had two entrances with lodges, one some 650m north of the house and a second a similar distance away to the south (both to designs by Vulliamy (Campbell 1988) and both now, 1998, gone). While the approach from the south was retained to serve the new mansion built by the lake in 1863, a new drive from the north was laid out from a new North Lodge (dated 1868), which stands at the northernmost tip of the site at the junction of Durrants Road with Manor Lodge Road.

PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS Following the demolition of both the C18 and C19 houses, the present principal buildings, which stand to the south-east of the kitchen garden, comprise those structures surviving from Sir George Staunton's building works, some of which have C18 origins. Immediately south-east of the garden wall is the Gothick Library, a small, largely stuccoed octagon with crocketed pinnacles, built by the architect Lewis Vulliamy (1791-1871) in 1832 (listed grade II). It forms the only surviving part of an C18 house which stood on the south-west side of the Library. This was enlarged for William Garrett by John Kent of Southampton in 1802 and again by Sir George Staunton from 1819 before being demolished over a period of some years between 1863 and 1874 (Campbell 1988). The house and its gardens are illustrated in a series of watercolours by Joseph Gilbert in 1833 (private collection). Some 70m to the south-east of the site of the former house is Leigh Park Farmhouse (now known as the Regency Farmhouse) and dairy (listed grade II), dating from the C18 and C19. The farmhouse, restored in the 1990s and in use as a tea room, comprises a two-storey building of red and blue brick with a pitched tiled roof and pointed gothick arches to the upper windows on the south front. East of the farmhouse is an L-shaped range of a mid C19 red-brick barn and cowshed, with a further open-fronted timber and brick cartshed on the east side (group listed grade II); these now house farm animals (for the farm trail) and other country park uses.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens and pleasure grounds lie to the north and south of Middle Park Way, their present boundaries with the surrounding park largely established by c 1842 (Estate map). From the entrance to the South Gardens from Middle Park Way, a broad walk follows the course of the early C19 northerly approach to the house. The northern end, south as far as the walled kitchen garden, runs through a belt of mature native and exotic trees and shrubberies which Sir George planted with half-hardy shrubs and flower beds in the early C19; these were described as the North Garden in his

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Notices of the Leigh Park Estate (1833). It also featured a cone house and rockery (now gone). The grounds to the west and south of the walled garden are laid out informally with trees in groups, belts or as scattered individuals, interspersed with lawns or rougher grass. On the immediate south side of the walled garden, west of the site of the C18 house, mature conifers survive from a former Pinetum and further west, shrubbery occupies the site of a former American garden, described in the Notices as being planted with rhododendrons and heaths. South from the site of the house, as far as the garden boundary, denser tree and shrub cover occupies the former south lawn. The estate map of c 1842 shows this lightly dotted with trees and with, at the extreme southern end (c 100m from the house), the formal beds of a Dutch Garden and a Swiss Wood House. These, which appear to have been established by 1821 (CBA 1992), have now gone, although elements of the Dutch Garden beds appear to have survived into the C20 (OS 1909). West of the walled garden the West Garden is planted either side of a central path with exotic trees and shrubbery, described in the Notices as containing pear trees, flower beds, and a green tea tree.

On the east side of the main walk, c 70m south-east of the house site, the principal front of the Regency Farmhouse faces south over its garden of an open lawn enclosed by a belt of mixed herbaceous plants and shrubs, restored to a Regency appearance in the 1990s. The house and lawns are surrounded by paddocks and the C18 and C19 buildings of the C18 ferme ornée which is now run as an ornamental farm and is (1998) under restoration.

North of Middle Park Way the broad walk, fringed as within the South Gardens by belts of exotic and native trees and shrubbery, continues into the North or Leigh Park Gardens. East of the walk and abutting the road, the c 1ha walled Storey Garden, now laid to rough grass, was built and planted as an orchard in the 1860s (Sale plan, 1860; OS 1st edition). Stable Cottage (listed grade II), built in the early C19 as Keeper's Cottage, stands immediately north of the garden, with associated timber yards and a saw pit. Northwards again and with a frontage on to Petersfield Road is the red-brick Coach House, built in the late C19 (listed grade II as the Stable Block) and restored in 1997-8. Beyond the Storey Garden the walk, still following the early C19 route, bears north-westwards through the centre of extensive lawns planted informally with a wide range of trees of mixed ages and species and with shrubbery. Those on the north-east side, which include many trees dating from the 1960s and 1970s, were enclosed from the park as pleasure grounds between 1860 and 1870 (Sale plans) and planted as an Arboretum (Sale catalogue, 1874). The lawns and shrubbery to the south-west of the walk comprise part of the early C19 pleasure grounds laid out by Sir George Staunton and formerly included a Rosary, a Moss House, and a Temple of Friendship (all now gone). The walk terminates at the turning circle on the east front of the site of William Stone's Leigh Park mansion. This was built by R W Drew in 1861 and demolished in 1959, the only surviving feature being the garden terrace and parapet wall on the north-west side (listed grade II). The terrace, from which there are views north-westwards to wooded ridges beyond the site, overlooks the principal part of Sir George's pleasure grounds. A broad open lawn enclosed by trees and shrubbery slopes down from the terrace to an irregularly shaped lake, known as Leigh Water, with five wooded islands. Two of these and the brick edging to the lake were added by William Stone in the 1860s. A brick bridge with three elliptical arches (listed grade II) which connects one of the islands to the shore is the only surviving feature from the many built by Sir George; these included five bridges, a Turkish Summerhouse, a Corinthian Bridge, and a Chinese Boathouse. The perimeter woodland and shrub belt around the lake contains a walk along which further garden buildings were erected. Of these the Shell House, an hexagonal, gothic, flint-built structure (listed grade II* as the Staunton Memorial), survives sited within a dell some 60m south of the site the mansion. A length of the pathway leading south-east from the Shell House is surfaced with a pattern of coloured pebbles (early C19, listed grade II). On the north-east side of the lawn, the woodland is cut by a vista and walk, known as The Avenue and dating from Stone's work in the 1860s, which runs 1.1km north-west from near the site of the mansion to Upper Lake. This, now partly silted up and overgrown, was also constructed by William Stone.

PARK The principal areas of parkland lie within Thicket Lawn and High Lawn, to the west of the gardens and on the north side of Middle Park Way. The undulating ground is under light grazing or rough grass and is scattered with a few groups and individual mature trees. The land is shown as part of the park on the estate plan of c 1842 but appears to have been further planted with parkland trees in the 1860s (OS). Adjoining the North Gardens on the north-east side, the small areas of grazed parkland in Hammond's Land and Beacon Lawn also form part of the early C19 park. The crest of Beacon Lawn is crowned with the Beacon (Vulliamy, listed grade II), an open circular gazebo of eight columns and a dome with a metal acanthus finial

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which was built in 1830 (Salter 1987). Northwards, the drive to North Lodge passes through the woodland of Hammond's Copse and alongside further areas of grazed parkland. The south-west corner of the site, south of Middle Park Way, contains Great Copse, reduced from its extent in c 1842 (Estate map) by housing built in the 1950s. Its mature deciduous woodland formerly contained arbours, an icehouse, and a fenced kitchen garden (CBA 1992), all now gone, and was linked to the South Gardens by the Long Walk.

KITCHEN GARDEN The roughly 60m x 60m brick-walled enclosure containing the kitchen garden, which has a crinkle-crankle wall on its south side (walls listed grade II), stands in the South Gardens. A walled garden is shown on this site on an early C19 map of Leigh Park, although the present garden seems to have been built, on the same site but to a different alignment, by Sir George Staunton by 1833 (Campbell 1988). It is quartered by paths and laid out to both fruit and vegetables and floral bedding and has a range of glass on the north wall which contains a vinery and hot houses; a former stove house has now gone but the octagonal Victoria Regina house with its heated pond to the south of a new stove house was restored in 1993. North of the garden are further C20 glasshouses, the remnants of pineapple and melon pits, and the site of a cone house.

REFERENCES

N Pevsner and D Lloyd, *The Buildings of England: Hampshire and the Isle of Wight* (1967), p 280 K Campbell, *Leigh Park Gardens, Havant, Restoration Masterplan*, (nd, pre 1987) G Salter, *Leigh Park Gardens: a short history and guided walk, guide leaflet*, (revised edn 1987) K Campbell (Bilikowski), *The Regency Gardens at Leigh Park, Hampshire*, (Diploma dissertation, University of Greenwich (formerly Thames Polytechnic) 1988) Sir George Staunton Country Park, Masterplan, (Chris Blandford Associates 1992)

Maps Estate map, nd (pre 1824) (124 M71/ME/P1), (Hampshire Record Office) Estate map, 1833 (11M64 E/P2), (Hampshire Record Office) Estate map, c 1836 (76M78 E/P4), (Hampshire Record Office) Tithe map for Havant parish, 1842 (Hampshire Record Office) Survey of Leigh Park estate by Charles Lewis, c 1842 (M78A E/P6), (Hampshire Record Office) Sale catalogue map, 1860 (Hampshire Record Office) Sale catalogue map, 1874 (Hampshire Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1859-69 (sheet 67); 1867-75 (sheet 68), published 1870-80 2nd edition published 1898 3rd edition published 1910 1931 edition OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1897 3rd edition published 1908 1932 edition Illustrations Joseph Frances Gilbert, 29 watercolours in folio entitled 'Leigh Park Scenery', 1833 (private collection)

Archival items G Staunton, *Notices of the Leigh Park Estate*, 1836 (Hampshire Record Office) Sale catalogue, 1860 (Hampshire Record Office) Sale catalogue, 1874 (Hampshire Record Office)

Description written: October 1998 Amended: July 2001 Register Inspector: VCH Edited: February 2004

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.