

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

HODNET HALL

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Name:	HODNET HALL
District:	Shropshire (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Hodnet
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.850573 Longitude: -2.5854933 National Grid Reference: SJ 60668 28280 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001125 Date first listed: 01-Dec-1986

Details

C20 gardens developed around a chain of pools within an earlier landscape including C19 formal gardens and a medieval deer park.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Hodnet came to the Hebers in 1752, when Elizabeth (d 1753), the wife of Thomas Heber of Marton (d 1752), inherited it from her second cousin Henrietta Vernon, whose family had lived there for 250 years. Their son Richard (d 1766) died without a male heir and Hodnet passed to his brother Reginald. He (d 1804) lived in the Rectory at Malpas (Ches) where he held a moiety of the living, he also presenting himself in 1787 as rector of Hodnet. Reginald was succeeded by his son Richard (d 1833), MP, and he in turn by his niece Emily (d 1901), the daughter of the celebrated Anglican divine and hymn-writer Reginald Heber (d 1826) and wife of Algernon Percy, a great-nephew of the fifth Duke of Northumberland. On inheriting the estate the couple took the surname Heber-Percy. A new Hall was built on an elevated site in 1870. The present extensive gardens began to be developed in the 1920s by Brigadier A G W Heber-Percy (d 1962). Hodnet remains (1998) in private hands.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The village of Hodnet lies 20km north-east of Shrewsbury on the A49 to Newcastle-under-Lyme. The village also lies on the A442 from Telford to Whitchurch. Hodnet Hall stands within its park on the west side of the village, overlooking the chain of ponds which are the main feature of the gardens. The park is bounded to the east and north by the A49, and by the unclassified road off it west to Marchamley. The west and south boundaries of the park run around the bottom of the nameless hill which forms the western half of the park, following the edges of Nicco and Hope Woods. The area here registered is c 140ha.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main formal approach to the Hall is from the north, down the North Drive between a widely set lime avenue. The line of that avenue is continued 100m north of the A442 where on the top of a ridge is a broken classical pediment, a memorial to Brigadier Heber-Percy. It comprises the portico of Apley Castle, near Wellington (Shrops), designed in 1791-4 by Joseph Bromfield (d 1824). This was acquired by the Brigadier at Apley's demolition in 1956 and re-erected here in 1970.

Another approach to the forecourt on the north side of the Hall is via a drive which continues the line of Hodnet's Church Street. Until the Hall was rebuilt in 1870 this was the line of the main road from Shrewsbury to Whitchurch. The Hall grounds

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
HODNET HALL

are entered via a stone gate of C17 character moved here in 1954. The Beech Avenue which turns off this to lead downhill, south, formed the drive to the Hall's predecessor. A third approach, ending at Home Farm, is via a tree-lined drive from the south end of the village.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Hodnet Hall was rebuilt in 1870 to a design by Anthony Salvin (d 1881). It is a large, regular, neo-Elizabethan mansion, reputedly modelled on Conover Hall (Shrops, qv), the north front E-plan and with Gibbs windows and mullioned and transomed windows. It was reduced in height in 1967.

The earlier Hall, a half-timbered building, lay on low ground c 100m to the south-east, in the area now occupied by the Camellia Garden. Its stable block, now used as a tea room, survives 200m south-east of the modern Hall.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS Along the south side of the Hall is a terrace, supported on an arcaded red-brick wall. Below this is the Broad Walk, a terrace with gravel walk. From it there are fine views over the pools and gardens in the small valley below to the pigeon house on high ground 300m to the south, and beyond to the distant Long Mynd and Shropshire Hills. Below it a dramatic flight of ramped terraces falls to Main Pool, with a flight of steps down their centre. The terraces have a wide variety of planting, and the view to them across Main Pool with the Hall rising above is one of the main prospects at Hodnet. When rebuilt in 1870 there was only a single terrace to the south of the Hall; the main flight and the steps were constructed in the early 1920s.

Main Pool, and the older Horse Wash to its south-east, comprise the easternmost pools in a chain of seven which run along the bottom of a shallow valley. Next to Main Pool is the Water Garden, followed in turn by Pike, Heber and Paradise Pools. The two westernmost pools are apparently unnamed. East of Paradise Pool especially the poolsides are planted with a very wide variety of trees and shrubs. To the west of Paradise Pool the pools enter the lower part of Nicco Wood, planted predominantly with beech. A network of paths runs around the pools.

Paths and rock-cut steps lead south-east, downhill, from the east end of the Broad Walk through a shrubbery, to the circular, concentric, Rose Garden, originally part of the old Hall's gardens. At its centre is a statue of Old Father Time, introduced in or after the 1920s. East of this, extending to the Beech Avenue, is the Camellia Garden. West of the current Hall is a yew-hedged formal garden with topiary. A swimming pool lies within. West of the formal garden, along the north side of Pike and Heber Pools, is the Orchid Meadow, confined to the north by rising ground and woodland.

On the crest of the slope above (south of) Horse Wash Pool is the Stone Garden, with beds around a rectangular lawn centred on a granite boulder removed from the Pool in 1960. Stone pillars mark its entrance. To its south, extending to the Home Farm, is a plantation of oaks underplanted with ground-covering plants. In the southern part of the plantation is a small, circular, brick summerhouse, formerly a smoke-house.

To the east and south of the stables are the terraced lawns of the old Hall, probably of early to mid C19 date. These look eastward to the earthworks of the castle (see below). A summerhouse, contrived from a kennels building, stands on the west side of the lawns in front of a screen of trees and shrubs. A north/south axial path with shallow flights of steps runs down the east side of the lawns. The Magnolia Walk was planted along it in 1956-7. At the south end of the path is an ashlar gateway of 1631 (listed grade II), moved to Hodnet from Adderley (Shrops) in 1954. Also of the 1950s is much of the walling which extends west from the gateway, and then turns north, defining this part of the pleasure grounds. Immediately north of the wall, and running east/west past the gateway and into the field to the east of the pleasure grounds, is a line of veteran oaks. These mark an earlier field boundary, removed before 1840.

Some 300m south of the Hall are the Home Farm buildings. These are dominated by the timber-framed so-called Tithe Barn (listed grade II*) of 1619. Other buildings include a large, late C19, Dutch barn and stables of 1868. Now standing in isolation 100m to the west is a brick and stone pigeon house (listed grade II*) of 1656. The building is finely detailed, and stands at the head of a flight of terraces on its east side.

Until 1921 the gardens around the new Hall comprised a single terrace to its south, the small formal garden to its west and the main approach avenue from the north. There was no link to the terraces and rose beds of the old Hall. In that year Brigadier Heber-Percy began work on the water garden in the valley below (south of) the Hall, and in 1923 created the Main Pool by forming a dam, part of a series of works which by the early 1930s had seen the existing four pools enlarged to a chain of seven.

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
HODNET HALL

The terraces above it and the long flights of steps down them were created in the mid 1920s. Relatively little was done in the 1930s, although trees were cleared from the field south of the pools to open the view to the pigeon house. Large-scale work on the gardens, around the stables and south of Home Farm, resumed in the 1950s and has continued to the present.

PARK The park falls principally into two parts: the land east and south-east of the pleasure grounds, extending outward to Hodnet village; and the former deer park (shown eg on Saxton's map of 1577), occupying the hill to the west of the Hall.

Within the first area the main feature, c 300m east of the Hall, is the well-defined earthworks of its distant predecessor as Hodnet's chief house, a motte and bailey castle (scheduled ancient monument). The motte is covered in rough woodland, which extends as a plantation belt along the west side of the A49 as it passes through Hodnet village. The multiple baileys however lie in a large permanent pasture with a number of mature parkland trees. To their south-west are the earthworks of a mill pool, belonging to a mill demolished in the early to mid C19. Part of the west end of the field, occupied until the early C19 by Hodnet's vicarage, is used for visitors' car parking. The field to its south, crossed by the back drive from the south-east, is also well treed. The second area comprises the unnamed hill rising south of the chain of pools and to the east of Kenstone Hill, which is higher still. Hodnet's hill is pasture, its highest point towards the south-west corner from where there are panoramic views, notably east, over Hodnet. Various small pools and hollows are former marl pits. The hill is largely circumscribed around its base with woodland. Running around the south side of the hill is Hope Wood (presumably a corruption of Hopton, the settlement to its south); at its north end the 1879 OS map marks a Druid Stone. Nicco Wood (derivation unknown) lies around the west side of the hill, deep-cut, hollow-way-like earthworks descending north through it to the valley-bottom pool.

The deer park was created before 1275 when Odo of Hodnet was granted licence to divert two ways which ran through his deer park to new courses around its perimeter. One of the old ways, to the east, is believed to have been the Shrewsbury to Newcastle road, moved from the line of the modern Beech Avenue 100m east of the Hall to its present line (the A49) 350m to the east. The other route was to be moved north, and was therefore presumably the Whitchurch road. Whether this was moved, and if so from what line, is unknown. In 1870 the Whitchurch road ran along Church Street, passing c 100m north of the site of the intended new Hall. It was accordingly moved north in that year to its present line, allowing the old drive to become a private drive and facilitating the enlargement of the park to take in the ground between the two. Previously this area was occupied by a series of long, narrow closes representing inclosed open-field strips. Deer were last kept in the park in the time of Sir Richard Vernon (d 1723 or 1725), who is believed to have been responsible for felling most of its woodland.

KITCHEN GARDEN The brick-walled kitchen garden, 90m east/west by 45m north/south, lies c 50m south of Home Farm. A box-edged path runs around the perimeter of the garden, which remains in production. No old glass survives. The gardens, including a brick gardener's house built against the west end of the north wall, are of c 1860. In 1840 the kitchen gardens lay on the east side of the approach to the old Hall from the north, c 80m west of Castle Hill.

REFERENCES

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Description written: November 1998 Register Inspector: PAS Edited: February 2000

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.