

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

LONGSTOWE HALL

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

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*  
*Inventory of Great Britain*  
**LONGSTOWE HALL**

Name: LONGSTOWE HALL

County: Cambridgeshire

District: South Cambridgeshire (District Authority)

Parish: Bourn

County: Cambridgeshire

District: South Cambridgeshire (District Authority)

Parish: Caxton

County: Cambridgeshire

District: South Cambridgeshire (District Authority)

Parish: Longstowe

label.localisation: Latitude: 52.184237  
Longitude: -0.091628787  
National Grid Reference: TL 30567 55715  
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden  
Grade: II\*  
List Entry Number: 1000626  
Date first listed: 16-Jan-1985

## Details

Late C19/early C20 formal gardens and pleasure grounds set in a late C19 park.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The manor of Longstowe was purchased by the Cage family in 1571 and immediately after this date Sir Anthony or John Cage created a small deer park to the west of the newly built manor house. Since that time the ownership of the site has passed through many families. In 1649 it was sold to Francis Bickley who stayed only six years, selling in 1655 to Sir Ralph Bovey. When Sir Ralph died in 1679 the estate passed to the Rev Thomas Davis who took the extra name of Bovey. It passed to his daughter Catherine who had married Sir Thomas Alston and for the next 100 years the estate remained in the hands of various members of the family, during which time little was done to the landscape. In 1797 John Wasse Alston sold the property to the Rev Robert Thompson who made few alterations. In 1840, following Thompson's death, his trustees sold the property to Richard Simpson, whose son Joseph (of nearby Bourn Hall, qv) conveyed it to Sidney Stanley in 1858. The map accompanying this sale shows the park still divided into pasture fields in a pattern which reflects the 1799 Enclosure. Sidney Stanley began to restore the house in the 1880s, added extensions to the north and south wings, built two lodges and created a small landscaped

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*  
*Inventory of Great Britain*  
**LONGSTOWE HALL**

park. He also built Hall Farm on the northern boundary of the park (OS 1st edition 6" 1890). Once again however the estate remained in the family for only a short time, for his son, Charles Wentworth Stanley sold the manor in 1905 to W A Briscoe after running out of funds to complete the work on the house. The Stanley family moved to Hall Farm which they renamed Longstowe House (and which is now called Home Farm), reorganising the north drive so that the North Lodge now stands at the entrance to the Home Farm drive. In c 1910 Briscoe commissioned the architect John W Simpson to completely remodel the Hall, at which time the entrance was altered to the east front from the west front, and formal gardens were laid out to the west and north of the Hall. The old fishponds were also extended into a series of small lakes, linked by cascades. W A Briscoe's son R G Briscoe gave the estate to his nephew, M G M Bevan in 1957, following the use of the Hall as a girls' school during the Second World War. The site remains (2000) in single private ownership.

**DESCRIPTION**

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Longstowe Hall is situated on the A1198 Huntingdon to Royston road, on the north-west side of Longstowe village. It is set in a flat agricultural landscape of large fields with few trees and covers c 31ha. The A1198 forms the eastern boundary of the site, with the village lying to the south-east. Farmland encloses the site to south, west and north. Home Farm lies adjacent to the northern boundary (outside the area here registered) and has its own lodged drive that forms the northern boundary of Longstowe park. The Hall sits in a dip in the landscape, the ground rising gently towards the slightly undulating west park which is enclosed by trees. One view extends north beyond the park, through a gap cut in the trees lining the drive to Home Farm.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** Longstowe Hall is now approached from the east, through an arched gatehouse built in c 1912 to designs by Sir John Simpson, to replace the late C19 East Lodge. The drive was subsequently realigned to run up to the east front courtyard past a pair of stone entrance pillars. The courtyard is retained by balustraded walls to the east and north, with clipped topiary at their base. Before the early C20 alterations to the Hall, the entrance facade faced west and was approached from the North Lodge entrance at the north end of the eastern boundary along a drive which ran through the pleasure ground between the lakes and the Hall before turning east to the stable block beside the west front. The North Lodge was absorbed into the Home Farm land when the Stanley family moved there in 1905.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Longstowe Hall (listed grade II) is a mansion house of late C16 origins which was remodelled in the late C19 and then substantially rebuilt c 1912 by Sir John W Simpson for W A Briscoe in the Jacobean style. It is built of red brick with stone dressings under a plain tile roof. It is mainly of two storeys with attics and has stone mullioned windows and clusters of red-brick chimneys. The garden front to the west retains some of the original C16 house and also has the late C19 central fluted Doric portico which acted as the entrance to the Hall before Simpson turned the approach to face east.

The stable block (listed grade II) is located on the south-west side of the Hall and is built of red brick with plain tiled roof. It is of c 1700 origin but like the Hall was subject to major rebuilding in the late C19 and early C20.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The formal gardens lie to the north and west of the Hall. On the north front is a large rose garden, enclosed by balustraded retaining walls decorated with ornamental finials. It is laid out in a formal pattern with flag-stone and gravel paths and box-edged knots focused on a central circular rose pergola. A double flight of steps leads up through the north wall to the informal pleasure ground, while the path running along the north front extends west into a view down to the lake.

On the west front a gravel terrace looks onto a lawn with two mature yew hedges which define a view to the lake. This is aligned on the old entrance porch, which became the garden door following the Simpson alterations to the Hall. The hedges flank deep herbaceous borders either side of a grass walk which runs right to the lake, where a set of curved shallow steps lead down into the water. Beyond the hedges are grass lawns planted with specimen trees, that to the south leading to a stone bridge over one of the cascades that link the series of three lakes, running north/south c 100m west of the Hall. The bridge leads to a garden walk which turns north along the west bank of the lakes through Wilderness Spinney, a pleasure ground of mixed trees, evergreen shrubs and clumps of bamboo, before crossing the water at the northern boundary of the site and returning south to the Hall along an axial walk through trees and shrubs which also frame a view out of the site to the north.

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*  
*Inventory of Great Britain*  
**LONGSTOWE HALL**

The size of some of the trees in Wilderness Spinney and the pleasure ground, together with the existing documentation (OS 1890) suggest that their planting was started by the Stanley family in the mid to late C19. The outline of the formal area to the north of the Hall and the creation of the informal lakes, linked by cascades and sluices, out of the old medieval fishponds appear also to be of this period. Further to the north of the formal rose gardens, in a rectangular moated feature, the Stanleys created a garden with twin borders backed by mounded yews and a pergola; this no longer survives. The rest of the garden features, including the rose garden and the west garden borders and hedges were all laid out by W A Briscoe in the early C20.

**PARK** The park lies mainly to the west of the Hall which stands south-east of centre. A small area of parkland, including a cricket pitch, lies to the south and east of the Hall and a substantial block of woodland known as Home Wood lies along the eastern boundary. The west park has an undulating character on ground which rises gently west from the lakes. It retains some ridge and furrow and a scatter of trees, mainly oak and ash, much of which has been replanted in recent years (1990s). A lime avenue (replacing an earlier elm avenue) carries the axial view from the herbaceous borders west-north-west across the park. The earliest park at Longstowe dates from the C16 deer park or paddock created by the Cage family when they built the Hall in 1571. The areas of ridge and furrow show where the park was expanded during the mid C19 by the Stanley family, following enclosure of the area in 1799. This C19 park has been slightly reduced to the north, where a thin belt of trees were planted along the drive to Home Farm at the end of the C19 and the land beyond turned over to arable.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The kitchen garden lies to the south-west of the stables and is partly enclosed by brick walls. Reduced in size in the early C20 it is now (2000) laid to fruit, vegetables and flowers and has a late C20 swimming pool in the enclosure in the north-west corner. The early C19 red-brick and tile Gardener's Cottage (listed grade II) incorporates the old fruit store and stands on a lawn to the east of the walled area. Beside this, c 50m to the south, is an early C20 brick and tile power house, and between the two buildings stands a C19 icehouse.

#### REFERENCES

Victoria History of the County of Cambridgeshire II, (1948), pp 120-4 Roy Comm Hist Monuments of Engl Inventories: West Cambridgeshire (1968), p 174 N Pevsner, The Buildings of England: Cambridgeshire (1970), pp 433-4 M Allen, Gardens of East Anglia (1975) J Kenworthy-Browne et al, Burke's and Savills Guide to Country Houses III, (1981), p 20 Cambridgeshire Parklands, (Cambridgeshire Record Office 1990), p 48 T Way, Cambridgeshire parklands survey, (Internal survey for Cambridgeshire County Council 1998)

Maps Enclosure map of Longstowe parish, 1799 (Cambridgeshire Record Office) Plan of Longstowe estate, 1834 (map 53 (1) 83:10), (Cambridge University Library) Sale plan of Longstowe Hall Estate, 1858 (296/sp30), (Cambridgeshire Record Office) Sale plan of Longstowe Hall Estate, 1870 (map 53 (1) 87:94), (Cambridge University Library)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1890 2nd edition published 1903 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1890

Description written: March 2000 Amended: December 2000 Register Inspector: EMP Edited: January 2001

## 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.