

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

CIRENCESTER PARK

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CIRENCESTER PARK

Name: CIRENCESTER PARK

County: Gloucestershire

District: Cotswold (District Authority)

Parish: Cirencester

County: Gloucestershire

District: Cotswold (District Authority)

Parish: Coates

County: Gloucestershire

District: Cotswold (District Authority)

Parish: Daglingworth

County: Gloucestershire

District: Cotswold (District Authority)

Parish: Duntisbourne Rouse

County: Gloucestershire

District: Cotswold (District Authority)

Parish: Sapperton

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.728277
Longitude: -2.0315738
National Grid Reference: SO9791603285
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: I
List Entry Number: 1000432
Date first listed: 28-Feb-1986

Details

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Extensive wooded park, divided by avenues, planted by Allen, first Earl Bathurst, from 1714 to 1775, with the help of Alexander Pope and much influenced by Bathurst's association with Stephen Switzer.

NOTE This entry is a summary. Because of the complexity of this site, the standard Register entry format would convey neither an adequate description nor a satisfactory account of the development of the landscape. The user is advised to consult the references given below for more detailed accounts. Many Listed Buildings exist within the site, not all of which have been here referred to. Descriptions of these are to be found in the List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest produced by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The manor of Cirencester was granted after the dissolution of Cirencester Abbey to Lord Seymour of Sudeley, and then in 1554 to Sir Anthony Kingston (Kingsley 1989). By 1592, Sir John Danvers held it and his son, the Earl of Danby, sold it to Henry Poole of Sapperton in 1615. It passed by marriage, c 1645, to the Earl of Newburgh, and the widow of Charles, Lord Newburgh sold it in 1695 to Sir Benjamin Bathurst.

Cirencester Park (listed grade II*) was built 1714-18 for Benjamin's son Allen (1684-1775), first Earl Bathurst and Tory MP for Cirencester, on the site of the C16 Oakley House/Grove/Lodge of the Danvers family, parts of which may have been incorporated into the new house. Cirencester Park developed from c 1714, when the collapse of the Tory government on the death of Queen Anne brought about early retirement for Earl Bathurst. In 1716, Lord Bathurst added the manor of Sapperton to the property. In collaboration with his friend and advisor Alexander Pope (1688-1744), who first visited Cirencester in 1718, Bathurst turned his attention to the improvement of the house and the creation of the park, which he opened to the public.

When Lord Bathurst died, aged ninety-one, in 1775, the park was unfinished and the house unsound. The third Earl employed the architect Robert Smirke in 1810-11 to add the present north wing and demolish the west porch. Smirke probably also rebuilt the east front in 1830 (Kingsley 1992).

The house and park remain (2000) in private ownership.

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

Cirencester Park stands at the north-west edge of the town of Cirencester, c 20km south of Cheltenham. The park, over 1000ha in area, extends westwards from the House for 8km. It lies on gently undulating land, bounded to the south by the A419, to the west by a minor road from the A419 to Winstone, and on the other sides by agricultural land. Overley and Hailey Woods lie to the north and south-west of the park respectively. A 1.5-2m high drystone wall extends around most of the park, apart from a short hedged section north of the eastern part of Broad Ride.

The two main approaches to Cirencester Park are from the east end. East of the house, a circular courtyard (C18) is enclosed by a curved wall (early-mid C18, listed grade II*) to the east around a vast, three-quarters circle yew hedge. A gateway from Park Lane passes through the centre of the wall and hedge. The main entrance from the town to the park is from Cecily Hill, 250m north-west of the house. A road from the town leads west to wrought-iron gates and railings (brought from Carshalton and erected in 1886, listed grade II) between two large stone lodges (early C19, listed grade II). From the gates, one of the principal rides, Broad Ride, extends west for 8km, in a straight line between St John the Baptist's church in Cirencester, and the village of Sapperton. Other, minor, entrances at the south side of the park are marked, from east to west, by Windsor Lodge (south of the lake), Beechcopse/Two Mile Lodge (south-east of Oakley Wood), Four Mile Lodge (south-west of Ten Rides), and Sapperton Lodge (west of Ten Rides).

The site consists of extensive woodland, with park and pleasure grounds. The latter, located west and south of the mansion, comprise the Italian Garden and Temple Garden, each with early C18 buildings. South-west of the pleasure grounds, within the Home Park, is a tree-lined lake (c 5ha). Dug by Lord Bathurst by 1736, it was one of the earliest irregular pieces of water in the history of English gardening (Batey and Lambert 1990).

The park was developed from c 1714 by the first Earl Bathurst, in collaboration with Alexander Pope. It is an early and fine example of the 'rural and extensive gardening' advocated by Stephen Switzer (Batey and Lambert 1990). The park is mainly wooded (with many mature beech as well as other deciduous and coniferous species) to the north and west (Oakley Wood) and is more open to the south-west. Lengthy avenues or rides divide the park, extending in straight lines between principal

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viewpoints. The Broad Ride forms the central axis of the park. The main intersections along it are the Hexagon (c 700m north-west of the mansion, facing Windsor Walk, which runs southwards, with a ha-ha to its west, to bound the Home Park); Seven Rides (by Pope's Seat, near the Polo Ground, c 2km west of the mansion); and Ten Rides (deep in the west part of Oakley Wood, c 5.5km west of the mansion). Several rides extend beyond the park, across the surrounding countryside. These include two rides extending south from Oakley Wood into Hailey Wood; Broad Ride, which extends for c 1.5km beyond the west end of the park; Bishop's Walk, from the north-west edge of the park; and Overley Ride, from the northern edge.

Lord Bathurst was responsible for many of the garden buildings along the Broad Ride. These include, from east to west: the Hexagon (a covered seat, c 1736, listed grade II*); two pairs of stone piers (late C18/early C19 and early/mid C18, listed grade II); Pope's Seat (a small stone pavilion, early C18, listed grade II*); and the Horse Guards (a pair of pavilions, late C18/early C19, listed grade II). To the north of Broad Ride, between Seven Rides and Ten Rides, are the Round Tower (early/mid C18, with early C19 additions, listed grade II); the Square Tower (early/mid C18 with C20 alterations, listed grade II); and Ivy Lodge (early/mid C18 house, offices, and barn with an attached granary and cartshed embellished as a Gothick-style landscape feature, listed grade II*). Some 500m north-east of Ten Rides is Alfred's Hall (designed by Alexander Pope and Lord Bathurst 1721, enlarged 1732, listed grade II*), probably the earliest gothick sham ruin in England (Fleming and Gore 1979).

Elm Avenue runs south-west for 1.5km from the mansion to Queen Anne's Monument (a commemorative column, built 1741, listed grade II*), with clumps of trees on either side. None of the original elms remain today (2000) but a section of the Avenue has been recently replanted with elms and the bases of two Second World War army hospitals lying across the Avenue are in the process of being removed.

REFERENCES

Note: There is a wealth of published material about this site. The key references are cited below.

Country Life, 24 (8 August 1908), pp 192-9; 107 (16 June 1950), pp 1796-1801; (23 June 1950), pp 1880-4 D Verey, *The Buildings of England: Gloucestershire The Cotswolds* (1970), pp 184-7 L Fleming and A Gore, *The English Garden* (1979), p 110 J Sales, *West Country Gardens* (1981), pp 49-51 N Kingsley, *The Country Houses of Gloucestershire, Volume One, 1500-1660* (1989), pp 76-7 C Thacker, *England's Historic Gardens* (1989), pp 35, 46-7 M Batey and D Lambert, *The English Garden Tour* (1990), pp 152-6 N Kingsley, *The Country Houses of Gloucestershire, Volume Two, 1660-1830* (1992), pp 101-3 Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1882, published 1883 1st edition surveyed 1875, published 1885 1st edition surveyed 1874-82, published 1888

Archival items Oblique aerial photographs, 1999 (NMR, Swindon)

Description written: May 2000 Register Inspector: TVAC Edited: March 2003

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.