

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

SENNOWE HALL

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

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SENNOWE HALL

Name: SENNOWE HALL

County: Norfolk

District: Breckland (District Authority)

Parish: Gateley

County: Norfolk

District: Breckland (District Authority)

Parish: Guist

County: Norfolk

District: Breckland (District Authority)

Parish: North Elmham

County: Norfolk

District: North Norfolk (District Authority)

Parish: Stibbard

label.localisation: Latitude: 52.791574
Longitude: 0.93724057
National Grid Reference: TF 98147 25600
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1001018
Date first listed: 18-Sep-1987

Details

An early C20 Italianate garden, winter garden, and wooded pleasure ground by George Skipper, set in an early C19 park with mid C19 features planted by William Barron.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The early history of this site is obscure. There may have been a building of some kind on the site in the early C15 when Prior Hugh of Walsingham leased a convent's rabbit warren and hut ('garyte') at 'Senhaw' to Roger Skynnere of Lycham. It is most likely however that the bones of the present house were built on a virgin site in 1774 by Thomas Wodehouse, the third son

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of Sir Armine Wodehouse of Kimberley in Norfolk, who was residing here when William Faden's map was surveyed in the 1790s (Kenworthy-Browne et al 1981; CL 1981). A map of the parish of Guist, surveyed in 1785 (NRO) shows that the eastern section of the park was then in existence: the park was presumably created around the time that the house itself was built, as was the walled kitchen garden. For the first part of the C19 the estate was leased out and by 1851 was the residence of one Colonel Fitzroy. At this time the woodlands in the western half of the park were increased. Edward Wodehouse died in 1855 and the trustees engaged the architect Decimus Burton to alter the house, following which the Morse-Boycott family came into possession. During the 1850s William Barron (late of Elvaston Castle in Derbyshire, qv) was commissioned, either by Fitzroy or the trustees of Edward Wodehouse, to lay out gardens and carry out work in the park, including the planting of the west drive. In 1887 the estate was sold again, to Bernard Neve-Foster who remained for eleven years before selling to the Cook family. The purchaser was Thomas A Cook and he employed the architect George Skipper in 1905-7 to remodel and enlarge the house, to lay out grand Italianate gardens and to create a lake, drives, and lodges in the park. The C20 has seen few further changes and the site remains (1999) in private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Sennowe Park lies to the west of the A1067 Norwich to Fakenham road, c 13km south-east of Fakenham beside the village of Guist. The registered site covers an area of c 66ha, with the Hall sitting centrally between the east and west lodges. It is entirely enclosed to east, north, and west by woodlands which are a particular feature of the park and is cut through from east to west by the River Wensum along the southern boundary, beside which lies a sinuous lake. The landform is gently rolling, falling from north to south down to the Wensum valley and the lake, with the Hall standing on high ground close to the western boundary of the park. Sennowe is set in rural Norfolk, surrounded by farmland and woodland. Views out of the site are obscured by trees although prior to the early C20 planting south-east of the river, views of Guist church were possible.

Beyond the River Wensum to the south of the park lies an area of land on rising ground which has, to some degree, been embellished as part of the park scenery and yet has always remained outside its boundary. The plantations and woodland belts planted during the late C19 have picturesque qualities and have been retained as the land around them has been reused for farming. Today (1999) the land comprises a lake (formed following C20 gravel extraction), wet meadow, and arable land. Although it lies outside the area here registered, this area makes an important contribution to the park setting.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main approach is the Norwich Drive which enters the park from the A1067 in the east. The entrance passes a pair of identical lodges interconnected by ornate iron railings and stone gate piers with overthrow (all by George Skipper 1905-7 and listed grade II) known as the Italian Gates. The lodges are built of brick with ashlar dressings and slate and copper roofs in the Italianate style with copper-topped towers rising on the drive side. The long straight drive runs south-west down a gentle dip and is flanked by wide grass verges bounded by mixed woodland underplanted with laurel and rhododendron. Some 550m south-west from the lodges the drive passes over a Baroque-style bridge of brick with stone dressings, by Skipper and dated c 1910 (listed grade II). The drive curves west after 900m to enter the open park at river level, runs north-west along edge of a woodland bank, then enters woodland 150m from the Hall before swinging south to arrive at the carriage court on the east front.

Prior to Skipper's involvement in the site, the principal entrance had been from the west, a drive which is still in use but is now the secondary entrance. The West Drive is almost 1.5km long and enters the site from a minor county road, past twin lodges (listed grade II) by Skipper built in the same style as the Norwich Drive lodges. The north lodge at this entrance is of an earlier date, its fabric being enclosed by Skipper in the early C20 to match the new one on the south side of the entrance. The west drive runs through woodland and meanders up a steep climb before turning south-east at the mid to late C19 gamekeeper's cottage onto a c 700m straight drive lined with mixed exotics, including pines, cupressus, and cedars, which joins the Norwich Drive to the north of the Hall. The planting of the west drive is the work of William Barron who is said to have moved many of the trees as mature specimens during the 1850s from the Earl of Leicester's Holkham estate (qv).

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Sennowe Hall (listed grade II*) is a large Edwardian Baroque country house which faces east and south across its parkland. It is built of red brick with stone dressings, under a slate roof with some copper details. The entrance

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front faces east across the park while the five-bay south front overlooks the terraced gardens. This includes a ground-floor stone loggia with Ionic columns and statues which returns at the west end to a five-bay winter garden. To the north is the kitchen court, 40m to the north of which is a free-standing red-brick Italianate Campanile clock tower and water tower (listed grade II*), designed by Skipper between 1905 and 1907.

The Hall was originally built for Thomas Wodehouse in 1774 and was given an upper storey and some remodelling by Decimus Burton in 1855. The whole was then engulfed by the work of George Skipper, a prolific and well-respected Edwardian architect based in Norwich, who created the house which stands today (1999), adding the stable block, winter garden, and clock tower.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS To the east of the Hall is the main gravelled entrance court which is divided from the south gardens by a castellated yew hedge, and from the park in the east by a balustraded retaining wall. The east court is entered on the north side through wrought-iron carriage gates hung on stone gate piers with swags, cornice, and urns (listed grade II). The east balustrade is cut by a similar pair of piers and gates opposite the main entrance to the Hall and between the wall and drive are lawns cut with lavender-edged beds and a central rose arbour.

To the south lie the main garden terraces (listed grade II), arranged on two levels surrounded by brick retaining walls with stone quoins, balusters, coping, and urns which are the work of George Skipper who created the gardens between 1905 and 1907 (Elliott 1986). At the mid-point of both the east and west walls are stone temples with Tuscan Doric columns and hemispherical domes, forming entrances to steps to the park below. Mature cedar of Lebanon stand close by. The upper terrace has further stone staircases to east and west and in the centre of its retaining wall is a three-arched stone loggia with shell-headed niches and balustrade at the upper terrace level. The lower terrace is laid to grass with herbaceous borders along the base of the retaining wall and two fluted and swagged stone urns. Panoramic views south and east are enjoyed from the raised garden terrace over the park to the lake, focused on the boathouse at the eastern end of the water, from which point there are views back up the park to the Hall. On the top level, at the west end of the Hall stands the recessed winter garden which survives almost exactly as Skipper designed it.

West of the south terraces and at a lower level is a semicircular lawn, backed by yew hedging in the centre of which is a section of balustrading which makes a viewpoint west into the woodland water garden. Tennis courts, now abandoned, lie to the south of this lawn. A wooded pleasure garden runs between the west side of the Hall and the walled kitchen garden 150m to the south-west. It is planted with mixed species including many conifers, sweet chestnut, monkey puzzles, holly, box, and yew and it is cut through with paths and a water course which runs from a semicircular grotto pool below the balustraded viewpoint through narrow channels and pools lined with rough stone, bridged occasionally by larger stones. At the end of the main walk a wide brick archway leads to the outer east wall of the kitchen garden, where a long flower border once ran along its entire length beneath a wooden pergola (now demolished). The pleasure ground existed in some form by the mid C19 (Sale particulars, 1850).

PARK Sennowe Park covers an area of c 64ha, the majority of which is heavily wooded. The open area of park lies to the south and east of the Hall and is situated on the lower ground along the River Wensum. Parkland planting is mainly mid C19, with oak, beech, and sweet chestnut scattered in small groups. Three very mature trees appear to predate the creation of the park (namely a sweet chestnut of c 400 years; an oak of c 350 years; and a fine layered beech. The trees in the surrounding plantations date mainly from the early C20 and were planted as a mix of species at wide spacing for amenity value. Recent thinning has begun to favour Corsican pine and Douglas fir with natural regeneration of the hardwoods being encouraged. In the late C18 the park covered an area of c 130ha and the woodland was concentrated along the north-east edge. The west drive was in position but the southern sections of park were partly under the plough and carr vegetation with no evidence of ornamentation (parish map, 1785). By 1850 the layout had changed but the size remained constant (the woodlands had been increased all around the perimeter and the Hall was described as having 'rich park-like grounds' (Sale particulars, 1850). During the second half of the C19 William Barron made further alterations to the park planting and by the end of the C19 Norris's Plantation had been added to the east. An 1887 survey also shows that the boundary between the park and surrounding countryside was very blurred, with land around the plantations south and east of the Wensum going in and out of arable production. During the early C20 Skipper ornamented the Norwich Drive to the east and created a lake beside the Wensum, with a rustic timber-framed boathouse (listed

grade II) at the eastern end, the upper balconied storey extending out over the water. Further planting also took place across the site during the first twenty years of the C20, augmenting its use as a shooting estate.

KITCHEN GARDEN The walled kitchen garden lies 150m to the south-west of the Hall and sits on slightly sloping ground which falls from north to south. Its red-brick walls are intact and the mid C19 glasshouse along the inside of the north wall has recently (late C20) been renovated. The brick base of a peach house runs south centrally from the glasshouse and ends in a curved retaining wall with central steps down to a circular dipping well. The early C20 pattern of box-edged paths has now gone but the area is still given over to vegetable production. On the outside of the north wall are a series of frames and garden storage buildings, together with the mid C19 red-brick gardener's cottage. A walled garden was in place on this site by the end of the C18 but the present structure has mid C19 brick walls and was further embellished by Skipper at the beginning of the C20 as an ornamental kitchen garden.

REFERENCES

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OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1891 2nd edition published 1907 3rd edition published 1925 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1885 2nd edition published 1906

Archival items Sale particulars, 1850 (MC30 MS 18622/185), (Norfolk Record Office) Sale particulars, 1898 (Norfolk Local Studies Library)

Description written: January 1999 Amended: October 2000 Register Inspector: EMP Edited: March 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.