

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

LAVERSTOKE PARK

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

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Name: LAVERSTOKE PARK

County: Hampshire

District: Basingstoke and Deane (District Authority)

Parish: Laverstoke

County: Hampshire

District: Basingstoke and Deane (District Authority)

Parish: Overton

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.237220
Longitude: -1.2918857
National Grid Reference: SU 49532 48909
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1000473
Date first listed: 14-May-1990

Details

An early C19 landscape park laid out around a Palladian mansion incorporating landscape views of the green downland above the River Test. A mid C19 scheme of improvement by Melville Portal involved the addition of picturesque lodges and the demolition of the earlier Tudor manor which lay in the park but the estate retains its informal landscape character.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1710 Henri Portal (d 1747), a French Huguenot, escaped France and settled at South Stoneham where, alongside other French refugees, he ran a paper mill. With the support of Sir William Heathcote of Hursley, he acquired the lease of Bere Mill, a corn mill at Laverstoke and the following year started building a paper mill. The prosperity brought by his securing a contract with the Bank of England to supply high-quality paper for bank notes led to his acquisition of Freefolk Manor in 1747. This was a brick-built late Tudor mansion which lay to the east of St Mary's church.

Henri's heir, Joseph (1720-93), added to the property in 1759 by purchasing the Laverstoke estate along with the estate of Freefolk Syfrewaste which lay further south on the opposite bank of the river. Joseph's son Henry (d 1801) built a new Palladian mansion in 1798 to the designs of Joseph Bonomi (1739-1808). This lay 420m to the west-north-west of Freefolk Manor on slightly higher ground.

Laverstoke Park was a prominent, fashionable landscape park in early to mid C19 Hampshire. It formed the subject of many of G F Prosser's (1804-82) watercolours, the published illustrations in his *Select Illustrations of Hampshire* (1833) including views of Freefolk Manor as well as Laverstoke House. Prosser spent much time at Laverstoke between 1850 and 1860 and a book of his watercolours of the estate survives (private collection).

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Extensive alterations to the house in the mid C19 by Melville Portal were accompanied by the addition of ornamental estate lodges in a Picturesque style, the demolition of the ancient Freefolk Manor, the replacement of the principal drive running north to south on the east side of the park with a new layout of drives (although the earlier route was retained as a vista), and the adaptation of St Mary-s church into a mortuary chapel. Portal also commissioned G E Street to design a rectory and school for the village. Although minor landscape modifications were undertaken they did not alter the estate's informality and landscape views.

The Laverstoke estate, including the paper mill, remained in the hands of the Portal family until the 1990s when the business was acquired by De la Rue. Laverstoke House and park were disposed of in a private sale to a new owner, who is currently (1999) undertaking an extensive scheme of restoration and necessary refurbishment.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Laverstoke Park lies to the west of Basingstoke, some 2km to the east of Whitchurch, on the north side of the Test valley. The main Salisbury to Andover road (B3400) divides the major part of the 138ha park from a smaller southern area of parkland.

The parkland is divided from surrounding farmland by heavily wooded boundaries. To the north, Home Plantation extends along most of the parkland boundary apart from a section in the north-west corner where a narrow shelter belt demarcates the walled garden and Home Farm. Icehouse Row forms the boundary at the easternmost point of the park and, further to the south, the copses and woodland on Rotten Hill and Wool Down mark the southernmost limits of the park and the horizon. The hamlet of Freefolk Priors lies directly adjacent and to the west of the park while Freefolk, a linear settlement, divides the south-westernmost park from Wool Down and the southernmost area of parkland.

The Palladian house is situated on a slight rise central to the parkland landscape, with its principal views extending beyond the lake and valley floor and up the wooded hillside to the horizon south of the river. The River Test flows from east to west through the park, entering over a low weir near Keeper's Lodge (now East Lodge) at the north-east corner of the site. South of the House it is dammed to form the Mill Pond which issues from the park under a three-arched brick bridge, now heavily reinforced to carry the weight of the traffic on the public road.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The principal entrances lie at Freefolk Lodge (mid C19, listed grade II) at the west end of the park and at Overton Lodge at the east end of the park. From the west entrance a drive leads across a gentle slope between a newly planted lime avenue (1999). This approach passes to the north of the House and then sweeps around to approach the House from the east, after joining the approach drive from the east. At this point it forms an oval carriage turn below the east front. A further drive leads past a lodge near the Home Farm, to the north-west of the House, and meets the principal west drive at a point 100m north-west of Laverstoke House.

Midway along the public road which runs through the park lies Church Lodge (1848, listed grade II), a picturesque building with timber beams, herringbone brickwork, and a steeply pitched gabled and tiled roof. Freefolk Lodge is of a similar estate style with elaborate bargeboards, timber framing, herringbone brickwork, and panels of small, square knapped flints. Overton Lodge is also built in a Picturesque style.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Laverstoke House (1798, listed grade II*), designed by Joseph Bonomi, was extensively remodelled in the late C19. The original house had two flanking wings running northwards enclosing a U-shaped court, and a principal drive leading westwards and eastwards with small turning circles on the west and east fronts (Tithe map, 1852). The height of the building appears to have been reduced to two storeys, while on the east front a later porte-cochère extends forward.

The principal entrance lies on the east front where formerly a balustraded entrance court was pierced by the main drive, which sweeps around to the entrance in a curve before leading out northwards to the stables. The balustrade has been removed and the stables and ancillary buildings to the north of the mansion are being extensively remodelled (late 1990s) to provide additional accommodation and facilities.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS Laverstoke House is separated from the parkland on the south by a brick ha-ha. To the south of the House are the remnants of a formal terrace, previously ornamented with urns which were removed c 1990. A pair of wrought-iron gates provides the way out of the pleasure gardens to the north and presumably these were once linked

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via a path with the similar pair which leads north again to the rustic summerhouse (now ruinous). Further to the north of the mansion, a woodland with walks curves around to enclose a nearly circular lawn area on an axis with the House. The woodland stretches from west to east to become part of Home Plantation.

To the west of the House a terrace walk below the west front led through raised areas of rockery. This area is now being remodelled and an orangery is being constructed across much of this ground (1999); nevertheless areas of overgrown shrubbery survive.

PARK The undulating park is thickly planted with specimen trees, both native and exotic, much of the surviving planting being from the C20. In the clump of yew trees to the east of the House are the remains of St Mary's church. After the benefices of Freefolk Syfrewaste and Laverstoke were united the church was remodelled to become a mortuary chapel of the Portal family. This work was completed by Melville Portal in 1876.

The position of Freefolk Manor, which lay to the east of the church until it was finally demolished in 1852, is marked by a stone commemorating the site. The Mill Pond, essentially an industrial feature which powered the Laverstoke paper mill, forms a lake in the mid-ground with tree belts screening Laverstoke Mill and, further to the east, a long length of the public road. This industrial element of a designed landscape is unusual in the county.

The Salisbury to Andover road (B3400) runs parallel and to the south of the river and although it cuts through the park, it does not visually interrupt the extensive views. To the south of the B3400, and on both the west and east sides of the road through Laverstoke, the wooded slopes of Wool Down form the backdrop to the principal views from the House. Recent neglect and the scrubbing over of these areas is now (late C20) being reversed and the long grassland strips which punctuated the wooded skyline are being reinstated. There was previously a mid C20 rotunda at the southern end of a clearing through Rotten Hill Copse which lies in the south-east corner of the park, with a view northwards back to the south front of the House.

KITCHEN GARDEN The brick-walled kitchen garden is situated against the northern site boundary, to the north-west of the House. The main entrance is through a pair of wrought-iron gates in the east wall standing opposite the picturesque gardener's house, incorporated into the west wall of the garden. Known as the Gardener's Cottage (1851, listed grade II), this building was designed by P C Hardwick for Melville Portal as part of his extensive estate building scheme. The ornate T-shaped building of red brick and flint has a half-hipped and gabled roof and ornate bargeboards, with a tower and porch in a picturesque Gothic style.

REFERENCES J Hewetson, *Architectural and Picturesque Views of Noble Mansions in Hampshire* (1830) G F Prosser, *Select Illustrations of Hampshire* (1833) House and Garden, (November 1987), pp 146-53 Report for Conservation Area designation, (Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council 1989) [copy on EH file] Anthony Blee, *Report on Laverstoke House. Appendix AB2: Historical information*, (1997) [copy on EH file]

Maps Tithe map for Laverstoke parish, 1852 (Hampshire Record Office)

OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1875, published 1880 2nd edition revised 1896

Illustrations Joseph Bonomi, *Drawings for Laverstoke House, 1797-9* (C3/BONOM 13 (1-4)), (RIBA Drawings Collection) P C Hardwick, *Drawings for the Gardener's House, Laverstoke Park, c 1851* (RIBA Drawings Collection) G F Prosser, *Watercolours of the Laverstoke Estate, 1850s/60s* (private collection)

Archival items Photographs of Laverstoke House and Park, 1965 (BB65/2807-28), (NMR, Swindon)

Description rewritten: September 1999 Register Inspector: KC 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.