

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

WOLTERTON HALL

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

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WOLVERTON HALL

Name: WOLVERTON HALL

County: Norfolk

District: North Norfolk (District Authority)

Parish: Erpingham

County: Norfolk

District: North Norfolk (District Authority)

Parish: Itteringham

County: Norfolk

District: North Norfolk (District Authority)

Parish: Wickmere

label.localisation: Latitude: 52.840403
Longitude: 1.2090959
National Grid Reference: TG 16230 31813
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II*
List Entry Number: 1001022
Date first listed: 18-Sep-1987

Details

An early C18 park and woodland designed as a collaboration between Thomas Ripley, Charles Bridgeman, Horatio Walpole and others, surrounding an early C18 Palladian mansion with mid C19 gardens laid out by William Sawrey Gilpin.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The manor of Wolterton was held for much of the Middle Ages by the de Wolterton family. The designed landscape has a long and complex history which began with the purchase of the estate in 1722 by Horatio Walpole, brother of Sir Robert Walpole of Houghton (first Prime Minister of England). Horatio began an immediate programme of updating the Hall and grounds, the latter in the late geometric style with terraces and a large canal. A fire in November 1724 however largely destroyed the Hall and all work on the grounds was stopped. The following year the architect Thomas Ripley was commissioned to design a replacement hall, choosing a new site c 60m to the north-west of the old building. A garden plan to ornament the new hall, produced between 1724 and 1729, has been attributed to Charles Bridgeman (Willis 1977) but closer inspection of the estate accounts (Wolterton archive) reveals that the final design, recorded by the surveyor James Corbridge in 1732, was the result of a collaboration between Joseph Carpenter, Thomas Bayfield, Thomas Ripley, and Walpole himself, the latter two being the

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chief designers. Carpenter preceded Charles Bridgeman as partner to Henry Wise at the Brompton Park Nurseries but died in late 1726 and Bridgeman appears to have subsequently given sporadic advice en route to Houghton or Gunton (qqv) where he was working. The final formal layout included a lake, kitchen garden, sunken bowling green, and southern vista framed by groves. Walpole died in 1757 and was succeeded by his eldest son, also Horatio, who became first Earl of Orford in 1806. When the first Earl died in 1807 a map produced in the same year showed that the formal landscape had become softened by the addition of woodlands planted in a naturalistic style. Few changes occurred during the period of the second Earl (1809-22) but with the succession of the third Earl a new phase of activity commenced. George Stanley Repton was commissioned to enlarge the Hall in 1828 and in 1829 the landscape gardener William Sawrey Gilpin (1762-1843) designed an elaborate new parterre for the south front, new curved drives and woodlands through the park, and exotic planting for an arboretum in Pleasure Ground Plantation. Other Gilpin proposals were not implemented but the island he suggested for the lake was finally added in 1880. During the mid C20 much of the park was put under the plough then returned to grass in the mid 1980s. Many park trees have been lost but two new avenues have been established this century, one running north from the Hall and another south-east across the park. The site remains (1999) in private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Wolterton Park is located c 3.5km north of Blickling, itself c 19km north of Norwich in a rural part of Norfolk on the north side of the River Bure valley. The site covers c 180ha and is bounded to the east by the Fring Wood Farm to the Saracen's Head road, partly wooded on the park side with open fields beyond. A brick park wall runs along the north boundary, edged by two woodland plantations on the park side and again fields beyond. The Itteringham to Matlask road forms the west boundary, and agricultural land lies to the south, mostly screened by trees along the perimeter of the park. The ground has a gently rolling character with a slight fall southwards towards the course of the Bure which runs 1km to the south of the Hall. The Hall sits at the centre of the park looking south over the lake and north over the park, with Blickling Folly just visible on the skyline. There is also a shorter view north, defined by a new (C20) avenue. The main views into the site are from the west, the Mannington road having good views of the Hall and church. There are also glimpsed views of the Hall from the Itteringham road and through the trees from the north drive.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main entrance is off the northern boundary, c 800m to the north-east of the Hall, past the single North Lodge (listed grade II) built in 1914 of red brick and reused C18 stone dressings. The gently curving drive is lined with recently planted trees; it passes through a second set of gates c 120m north-east of the Hall where the park joins the pleasure ground, before arriving at the north front. A secondary drive enters from the western boundary at Dairy Farm yard and cottages (variously listed grade II and ranging in date from C17 to C19) and runs through the Pleasure Ground plantations to the north front. There are two tracks from the north front of the Hall: one leads to Oak Cottage, lying c 600m from the Hall on the east-south-east boundary; the other runs south through the eastern half of the park past the C18 Keepers Cottage (listed grade II) to Decoy Plantation.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Wolterton Hall (listed grade I) is a large country house of brick and stone under a slate roof. It is built in a rectangular plan in the Palladian style, with later additions. The north, entrance front has three storeys and seven bays with a central door flanked by pilasters. The original entrance was to the first floor but the stairs were removed in the early C19 and the door became a window. To the west is a four-bay, two-storey range terminating in a one-bay, three-storey pavilion designed by Philip Hardwick. The south, garden front mirrors the north front with the addition of an arcade and rusticated balustrade, and flights of stone steps up to a first-floor terrace. The Hall is, externally, much as completed in 1741 by Thomas Ripley for Horatio Walpole, except for the arcading along the south front, and the wing to the east, which were added by Hardwick and George Stanley Repton for the third Earl of Orford in 1828.

The east front faces a courtyard, entered on the east through an archway with flanking lodges. The East Lodge (listed grade II) is of early C19 origin, the two single-storey buildings constructed of brick and attached by a central arch. The stable block (listed grade II) lies c 100m to the south-east. It is rectangular in plan with a central courtyard, entered through a stone archway on the north wall with an octagonal wooden clock tower on the ridge above. The stables were designed in c 1750 by Thomas Ripley for Horatio Walpole.

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GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The main garden terrace is to the south, entered from first-floor level onto an arcaded terrace with flanking steps down to garden level. Here a grass terrace is bordered to east and west by yew hedges with statues and urns. Beyond the yew hedge to the west is a lawn with veteran plane trees, whilst beyond the hedge to the east is a further enclosed compartment. A central axial gravel path leads to a raised gravel terrace running for c 200m east/west across the garden, reached by a short flight of steps. A second set of steps leads down to another grass plat which is bordered to the south by the ha-ha. The east end of the raised terrace is terminated by a stone seat, whilst at the west end steps lead down to another garden level, formally a rose garden, with rotunda. The gardens are the remains of the work of Gilpin. The formal bedding schemes added to the Gilpin terraces in the late C19 were grassed over the in 1940s.

PARK The park at Wolterton is all under grass in a rolling landscape, partly divided by fences in places. It is scattered with individual trees and clumps of various ages with a good proportion of C20 planting. The park landscape is punctuated by larger belts and blocks of woodland, particularly scattered around the perimeter. The lake lies 400m to the south of the Hall, running for c 400m in a north/south alignment. It was created by 1730, the northern end probably incorporating the excavations for the formal canal aligned on the old hall, work on which was stopped after the fire of 1724. Dairy Cottages and the estate farm complex, built from the C17 onwards, lie in the north-west corner of the park. The ruined circular tower of St Margaret's church (listed grade II*) some 200m to north of the Hall forms a visual element in the landscape scheme. New avenues have been planted to the north of the Hall, and to the south-east during the later C20 and many clumps dating from the Gilpin period survive in the west park.

To the west of the Hall the early C18 grove survives in outline and became Pleasure Ground Plantation in the C19, under Gilpin's direction. It was largely replanted in the early C20. A few of the original sweet chestnuts survive in here but none of the original paths. The main lines of the early C18 formal layout can still be traced across the park, divided from the gardens by the ha-ha which dates from the mid C18. Although they have been much softened, the main early C18 north and south vistas also survive.

KITCHEN GARDEN The 1.5ha walled kitchen gardens (listed grade II) lie c 100m to the south-east of Hall. They are the largest early C18 walled gardens in Norfolk and have a complex layout (Williamson 1998). The ground in the main compartment falls from east to west and contains the remains of glasshouses and forcing houses in the south-west quarter. The north wall incorporates the Gardener's Cottage and the old cucumber house. The free-standing C19 Peach House conservatory (listed grade II) occupies a central position. To the south is a second enclosure with older walls, and skirting this to south and east another low wall of later date. To the west of the old kitchen gardens are the remains of an orchard and to the east a range of modern farm buildings. The area is currently (1999) being developed as a commercial organic market garden.

The walled gardens date from the early C18 and appear (Corbridge, 1732) to have been designed as an integral part of the ornamental landscape, the drive around the lake returning through the walled gardens to the Hall.

REFERENCES

Country Life, 24 (3 October 1908), pp 450(60); 122 (18 July 1957), pp 116-19; (25 July 1957), pp 166-9 N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: North-east Norfolk and Norwich* (1962), pp 347-8 P Willis, Charles Bridgeman (1977), pp 85, 185, pl 80b J Garden History 11, (1991), nos 1 and 2, pp 100-1 B Peters, *A country house and its landscape 1722-1858*, (MA dissertation, UEA 1991) S Piebenga, *William Sawrey Gilpin*, (English Heritage designer theme study 1993) T Williamson, *The archaeology of the landscape park*, BAR Brit Ser 268 (1998), pp 72-80, 286-91

Maps A Plan of Wolterton Hall and grounds (attributed to Charles Bridgeman), nd (c 1724-9), (Gough Collection, Bodleian Library, Oxford) James Corbridge, *A map of Wolterton Hall and Grounds, 1732* (private collection) Proposal for new planting of Wolterton grounds (attributed to H Walpole), nd (c 1742), (private collection) W Faden, *A new topographical map of the county of Norfolk, 1797* (Norfolk Record Office) A Bryant, *Map of the county of Norfolk, 1826* (Norfolk Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1890 2nd edition published 1907 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1906

Archival items Marginal elevation of Hall and grounds from Corbridge map, 1732 Thomas Ripley, *Design for a temple*, c 1742 (private collection) The extensive Wolterton archive is held in a private collection.

Description written: July 1999 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.