

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

LILLESHALL HALL

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Name:	LILLESHALL HALL
District:	Shropshire (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Sheriffhales
District:	Telford and Wrekin (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Chetwynd Aston and Woodcote
District:	Telford and Wrekin (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Lilleshall
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.724980 Longitude: -2.3743547 National Grid Reference: SJ 74814 14214 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001126 Date first listed: 01-Dec-1986

Details

Formal gardens and pleasure grounds with large numbers of specimen trees and a landscape park, all of c 1840 and associated with a country house.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

George Granville, Earl Gower, had the manor of Lilleshall settled on him for life in 1823 by his father George Granville (cr Duke of Sutherland 1833). The old family house, Lilleshall Old Hall in Lilleshall parish, was considered too modest a residence, and Lilleshall Hall was built for him by Sir Jeffry Wyattville in Sheriffhales parish, c 2km to the south-east. On his father's death in 1833 Lord Gower became the second Duke of Sutherland. He died in 1861. After the First World War the Duke of Sutherland (who had already sold Trentham (Staffs, qv)) sold Lilleshall in favour of a London house and Sutton Place in Surrey, 'where I could enjoy the beauty and peace of the countryside and yet be able to travel to and from London with ease' (Mandler 1997, 242). Lilleshall Hall and its grounds then became commercial pleasure gardens. Lilleshall now (1998) forms the National Sports Centre, managed by the English Sports Council.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Lilleshall Hall stands c 8km north-east of Telford new town and 5km south of Newport, on elevated ground which falls gradually away to the north-west and south-west. The main body of the park (excluding the long approaches from the north and south) is partly bounded to the north and south by local roads, while to the west it extends to the ruins of Lilleshall Abbey. The area here registered is c 200ha.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES There are several approaches with lodges, most of which are half-timbered or have applied timber framing and are of c 1900. The main approaches are from the north, via the Golden Gates at Pave Lane, and from the

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south-east by Crackleybank Lodge, south of Sheriffhales (where there is a fine lodge, probably that designed in 1835 by Charles Barry (d 1860), in the village). Both these avenues are about 2km long, and approach via cross-roads and additional lodges before entering the park. The north avenue was originally of Wheatley elm, now replanted with Wellingtonia. A further 150m avenue of Atlas and Lebanon cedars approaches from the south. The drives merge before approaching the Hall from the east through Sir Jeffry Wyatville's Gatehouse (listed grade II) of 1829-32 into the entrance court before the Hall. A smaller court lies to the north-east with Wyatville's stables (listed grade II), now a gymnasium.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Lilleshall Hall (listed grade II*) was remodelled and much enlarged in stone and in a Tudor-Gothic style from an C18 or earlier building in 1826-30 to designs by Sir Jeffry Wyatville (d 1840). The Hall is double fronted to the west and south, with a broad, L-shaped terrace (listed grade II), of c 1829 and by Wyatville, around these sides from which there are fine views of the gardens and beyond. At the south end of the west terrace is a bastion-like projection with a tazza, while a pillar sundial stands on the south-west corner bastion. At the north end of the west terrace, looking south along it, is an alcove seat. From here there is access to a further terrace on the roof of Wyatville's Orangery (listed grade II with the terrace), which projects west from the Hall. Spectacular views west and north-west across the Weald Moors are glimpsed from the west terrace and the Orangery roof, over the garden's specimen trees and Abbey Wood. A new wing was added to the Hall in 1906.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS Some 14ha of gardens and pleasure grounds lie beyond the terraces to the west and south of the Hall. These are principally laid out as lawns with terraces and fine specimen trees including large oaks, cedars, beech, chestnuts, pines, yew and exotic conifers.

The west terrace, c 7m high, is supported by arched piers which form a twelve-bay loggia across the head of the garden. There is direct access from the Hall to this level. Running along the front of the loggia is a 10m wide, tarmacked walk, which continues, as a gravelled walk, for 75m south of the Hall to the edge of the main garden where there is a gateway with wrought-iron gates in the stone garden wall. South of the walk are two broad grass terraces, each c 2m high. West of the lower terrace, aligned on the west side of the Hall, is the Dial Garden, a circular flower garden, c 20m in diameter, surrounded by a 1.5m tall yew hedge planted around an existing garden c 1900. Inside are clipped yew bushes and concentric flower beds. West of this is the Italian Garden, a rectangular lily pond with formal rose beds around the perimeter, all surrounded by stone balustrading (listed grade II). This compartment is of c 1900.

Running along the south side of the Dial and Italian gardens is the central east/west path through the formal gardens, which continues east alongside the Hall's south terrace, against which are flower beds. The path along the north side of the Dial and Italian gardens is covered by an iron-framed pergola, now c 100m long and planted with roses, wisteria and clematis. In the C19 it was almost three times as long, and planted with roses and fruit trees, including apples. North of the pergola is a glade whose west end is terminated by a Grecian Temple or Loggia (listed grade II) built c 1900. The glade is bounded to the north by an 8m high coursed stone wall, heavily buttressed and with flower beds along its base. A broad opening in the wall gives access to the compartment to the north, now occupied by an AstroTurf sports field.

Running along the head of the upper grass terrace south of the Hall is an avenue of mature cedars (5 Cedar of Lebanon, 4 Atlas Cedar). To its east are bowling greens with, to the south, a rectangular yew-hedged compartment, once the Dutch garden. The path down the east side of these compartments begins at the bastion at the east end of the Hall's south terrace and ends, 220m to the south, at The Belvedere (listed grade II), a smaller version of the Temple at the end of the glade.

Extending around the west and south-west of the formal gardens and lawns, and linking them with Abbey Wood, is a broad, c 100m wide, belt of mature specimen trees. Many seem likely to have been planted c 1840; a few may be associated with the earlier house. Some are quite closely planted - a grove of cedars and other conifers south of the lily pool is notable - while elsewhere the planting is more widely spaced and there are areas of mown grass. Paths loop through and around the edge of the planting. On its west edge, adjoining a modern sewage plant, is a group of later C19 and C20 pets' graves grouped around a squat stone monument to Czar, a Russian Wolfhound acquired by the Sutherlands in Moscow in the mid C19.

Leading west from the gardens, through Abbey Wood towards the ruins of Lilleshall Abbey, is The Duchess Walk, laid out with rhododendrons and azaleas. This was already present in 1858 (Viator).

Below (west of) the southern end of the grass terraces west of the Hall is a single, ancient, oak pollard.

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Who was responsible for laying out the gardens and pleasure grounds at Lilleshall c 1830-40 is unknown, and Wyattville's suggestions (Harris 1971, pl 245) are very different from what was done. Correspondence of 1836 from the Duchess of Sutherland suggests that the family may have been working with their own estate gardeners. In that year she writes of how she was hoping to entice William Sawrey Gilpin (d 1843) over for the day, to advise on planting 'banks' near the house, the approaches and a new drive that was under construction: 'I feel sure that we shall do this better and more rapidly for having him'. At least for a year however Gilpin resisted her entreaties, and it remains unknown if he ever visited or advised (Stamper 1996, 76). In the C19 and early C20 Lilleshall was famous for the floral displays in its ribbon and circular beds. In 1851 these were 'brilliant and dazzling' (Bagshaw), while in 1898 it was said 'the blaze of colour is attained by boldly contrasting various hues to secure rich effect, dark colours are opposed to light; zonal perlogoniums, calceolarias, and tuberous begonias being among the most important plants used' (Stamper 1996, 83). The Greek Temple, Belvedere and Italian Garden, together with the entrance lodges, provide evidence for the scale of investment at Lilleshall c 1900.

PARK The park divides roughly into three. West of the Hall and its gardens is Abbey Wood. South-east of this is a largely open area, the north-east part of which is a large playing field (with pavilion) associated with the National Sports Centre. The east section of the park is Lilleshall Hall Golf Course. Woodland belts and some plantation belts have been retained on the golf course, while along the east side of the main drive to the Hall from the south is permanent pasture with mature parkland oaks. Peartree Lodge, on the south-east approach drive, is the clubhouse.

In 1844 the park had yet to be formed, and remained an enclosed, agricultural, landscape. It was presumably formed soon after this date.

The ruins of Lilleshall Abbey, although outside the park, were reckoned in the C19 to be among Lilleshall's attractions (Viator 1858).

KITCHEN GARDEN The small kitchen garden, with various glasshouses, lay beyond the stone wall along the north side of the garden. The area is now occupied by the AstroTurf pitch and associated car park and other facilities.

REFERENCES

S Bagshaw, *Directory of Shropshire* (1851), p 397 Viator, *A Guide to the View from Brimstree Hill* (1858) *Country Life*, 4 (23 July 1898), pp 80-3 Lilleshall, guidebook, (early C20) [copy in Shropshire Records and Research Centre] J Harris, *A Catalogue of British Drawings in American Collections* (1971), pp 306-10, pls 244-7 The *Victoria History of the County of Shropshire* xi, (1985), p 154 P Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of the Country House* (1989), p 242 P A Stamper, *Historic Parks and Gardens of Shropshire* (1996), pp 76, 83, 89

Maps Sheriffhales field name map, 1844 (Shropshire Records and Research Centre)

OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1881, published 1882 2nd edition surveyed 1900, published 1902 OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1880-1, published 1890

Archival items Drawings relating to Lilleshall by Sir Charles Barry are held in the City Museum and Art Gallery, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent. Sale catalogue, 1917 (SC/1/23), (Shropshire Records and Research Centre)

Description written: September 1998 Register Inspector: PAS Edited: February 2000

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.