

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

HARRINGTON

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Name: HARRINGTON

District: North Northamptonshire (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Harrington

label.localisation: Latitude: 52.415794
Longitude: -0.86491754
National Grid Reference: SP 77298 80361
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II*
List Entry Number: 1001034
Date first listed: 25-Jun-1984

Details

Extensive and well-preserved earthwork remains of formal gardens and associated fishponds, probably of later C17 date.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1231 the manor of Harrington was bequeathed by John Montague to the Order of St John of Jerusalem (the Knights Hospitallers), which also owned the nearby manor of Arthingworth, and the manor house became a priory. In the early C16 the Order leased the manor to the Saunders family, which after the Dissolution acquired the freehold. In 1582 Harrington passed to the Saunders' kinsmen the Stanhopes. Sir John Stanhope was created Lord Stanhope of Harrington in 1605. On his death in 1620 the manor passed to his son Charles, who died without issue in 1675. The manor then passed to Elizabeth, his father's daughter by a second marriage. She married Sir Lionel Tollemache, third Earl of Dysart, during whose time it is believed the formal garden preserved as 'The Falls' was laid out. The house was demolished soon after 1745, and the family sold the estate in the mid C19 to finance building work on its Cheshire estate. It remained in private hands in 1997.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The village of Harrington lies c 4km west of Rothwell, on the minor road to Kelmarsh. The east boundary of the registered area adjoins the village street, separated from it by a rough, brick-patched stone wall. Field boundaries form the western, northern and southern limits of the site. The gardens slope downhill to the north-west, with the site of the house at the bottom of the main flight of garden terraces. Below the house site the ground continues to fall away to a now dry fishpond complex, and there are extensive views west and north across the Ise valley. The registered area comprises c 17ha.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES There is pedestrian access off Harrington's High Street at both corners of the site.

The gateway at the north-east corner probably marks the approximate position of the original entrance to the site, a modern footpath following the likely line of the drive down the north side of the garden terraces. Hollows down the north edge of the supposed drive line mark the position of tree stumps observed in the 1970s; ring-counts suggested a planting date in the early C18. Other stumps observed at that time north-west of the house site probably indicate the line of the drive's approach to the house (RCHM(E) 1979, 76-7).

PRINCIPAL BUILDING The house was described in some detail by John Bridges in 1719 (Brown and Foard 1994, 113-14). His account suggests the house, incorporating medieval fabric, was rebuilt c 1600 by Sir John Stanhope and further altered a

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century later. Demolished in the mid C18, its site is now represented by amorphous earthworks below the centre of the lowest of the main terraces.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The formal garden remains, long-known locally as 'The Falls', comprise well-defined earthworks under permanent pasture, running downhill between Harrington's main street and the site of Harrington Manor. There has been little damage to the site since the garden's abandonment, and the only incursion into the area has been at the eastern corner of the site where a single house was built in the 1960s. Further down the slope to the west are the earthworks of a major pond complex.

The gardens are aligned north-west to south-east, and are c 220m wide from south-west to north-east and c 230m long, with clear evidence of a symmetrical arrangement about a central axis. The house site occupies a level platform at the bottom of that axis. To its south-west side, and forming the corner compartment of the gardens, is a slightly sunken compartment c 73m wide from south-west to north-east by c 61m. A raised terrace 1.5m high runs around the three sides away from the house site. Raised paths divide the compartment into quarters, and at the centre is a circular depression c 13m in diameter marking a pool or fountain basin. Continuing the line of the garden to its north-east, at the bottom of the axial path down the lower terraces and presumably before the main garden front of the house, is a smaller terraced area c 43m wide. North of the house site is a denuded mound, c 1m x 4m, possibly once a prospect mound providing a view west over the fishponds.

Climbing gently south-east up the slope to the village's main street are five terraces, each c 30m wide. With the exception of the lowest, c 0.5m high, each stands c 1.5m above the last. Various features are visible on the terraces. The second above the house has a broad, shallow, concave cut to its front. The third terrace has the depression of an 80m long canal or pool across its centre, still partially water-filled via a spring. At either end of the fourth terrace are small, roughly square depressions c 12m in diameter, presumably marking small formal pools. The earthworks of a lozenge-shaped pool of similar dimensions lie at the centre of the fifth and uppermost terrace. From the south-east side of this terrace, the head of the garden, slightly sunken paths run diagonally down the terraces, past either end of the canal on the third terrace, before turning inward to approach the centre of the terraced area interpreted above as lying before the house's garden front.

Immediately west of the wall dividing the site from the High Street is a line of mature horse chestnut trees. A modern farm track runs down the south side of The Falls, beyond the end of the terraces. On the north side of the path down the north side of The Falls, c 75m from the entrance to the site, is a scarped depression of uncertain date or purpose. It seems unlikely to be a garden earthwork, and may post-date the abandonment of the site in the mid C18.

In 1712 John Morton wrote 'For a descent of Garden Walks there is nothing so remarkable with us as is that of the Walks of the Garden on the Northern Front of the ... House at Harrington' (Morton 1712, 494). John Bridges (d 1724) writing in 1719, attributed the gardens to the Earl of Dysart then living, which enables the gardens represented by the earthworks to be dated with some confidence to between 1675 and 1719.

OTHER LAND Behind the house site, on the line followed by a modern fence, is a 2.5m high brick and limestone rubble retaining wall which has partially collapsed at the south-west end. Below this the ground falls away more sharply, and at the bottom of this slope, c 250m from the house site, is a large and well-preserved fishpond complex. The valley sides have been widened and dams constructed to retain three ponds arranged north/south and overall some 280m long and (at the north end) 120m wide. Adjoining, especially to the east and north, are banks, ditches and channels, some at least likely to be associated with the management of water to the ponds, while surrounding the ponds are extensive traces of ridge and furrow.

The fishponds are thought to be of medieval date (RCHM(E) 1979). While they may have originated during that period it would seem likely that they continued in use during the garden's heyday and until the demolition of the house in the mid C18. They would have formed a major component of the view from the house westward across the Ise valley landscape.

On the death of Lord Stanhope in 1620 the property was described as Harrington Park. Brown and Foard (1994, 113) state that in the early C18 there was a park at Harrington which included the area of the fishponds.

REFERENCES

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J Morton, *The Natural History of Northamptonshire* (1712), p 494 *Archaeologia* 38 (ii), (1860), pp 389-404 Roy Comm Hist
Mons Engl Inventories: Northamptonshire 2, (1979), pp 75-8, pls 9, 26 *Country Life*, 166 (6 December 1979), pp 2142-4 T
Brown and G Foard, *The Making of a County History: John Bridges' Northamptonshire* (1994), pp 113-14, 183, 196
Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1889 1927 edition OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1900
Description written: 1998 Register Inspector: PAS Edited: January 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.