

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

RODE HALL

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

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Name:	RODE HALL
District:	Cheshire East (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Odd Rode
label.localisation:	Latitude: 53.114623 Longitude: -2.2757817 National Grid Reference: SJ8163857529 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000644 Date first listed: 10-Jun-1985

Details

A country house with formal gardens of 1861 by William Andrews Nesfield and a landscape park created by John Webb in the early C19 after Humphry Repton prepared a Red Book in 1790.

CHRONOLOGY OF HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1669 the manor of Rode was sold by the Rode family to Roger Wilbraham of Townsend House, Nantwich. The family may not have lived here however until Roger's son Randle rebuilt the Hall c 1700. On Randle's death in 1732 Rode passed to his third son, Randle II, a London lawyer who became Treasurer of Lincoln's Inn as well as Deputy Steward of Oxford University and an MP. In 1752 he doubled the size of the Hall, and c 1754 built a folly castle eyecatcher on Mow Cop, 4km to the east. On the death of Randle II in 1770 the estate was inherited by his son Richard Wilbraham Bootle, who had taken the additional name in accordance with the will of his wife's uncle Sir Thomas Bootle (d 1796). He did relatively little to the Hall, and although he commissioned a Red Book from Repton (1752-1818) in 1790 its proposals remained unexecuted until c 1803 when Wilbraham Bootle's son Randle III (who dropped the name Bootle) brought in John Webb (1754-1818) to impark the surrounds of the Hall. That work went hand-in-hand with major changes to the Hall.

Randle III lived on until 1861, when Rode passed to his son Randle IV, who immediately commissioned W A Nesfield (1793-1881) to improve the surroundings of the Hall.

Rode remains (1997) in private hands.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Rode Hall stands c 2km north-east of Alsager, and its park is bounded on its short, west side by the A50 main road from Alsager to Knutsford. Around its north and east perimeter runs the minor road (Pool Side, Church Lane) from Alsager to Scholar Green. To the south the boundary follows field edges. The area here registered is c 88ha.

The Hall, gardens and kitchen garden are all aligned roughly south-west to north-east. In the descriptions which follow they are treated as if aligned west/east.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main approach is from the east, off Church Lane, along a drive which c 1985 was lined with trees including sweet chestnuts and limes. At its east end is Top Lodge, a two-storey timber-framed and tile-hung building of 1902. A lodge of similar date and character stands on the west edge of the park; the drive therefrom is no longer in

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use. South of an icehouse these two drives join to make a single approach to the south forecourt. Several mature sweet chestnuts, possibly early C18, stand either side of this approach, suggesting it is of some antiquity.

A third lodge of c 1900 stands on the south-east edge of the park, on the corner of Moss Wood.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING About 1700 the existing Hall at Rode was demolished and a new, south-facing, seven-bay, brick house built, with slightly projecting end bays. In 1752 this was converted to a service range as a new, west-facing house was built to the west, linked to the old building by an arcaded courtyard. Between 1799 and 1813 the two blocks were linked and the house (listed grade II*) given its modern form to designs firstly by the Liverpool architect John Hope (d 1808) and secondly by Lewis Wyatt (1777-1853). Over the same period large sums were expended on reordering and furnishing the interior of the Hall. The south front was further emphasised in the 1860s by William Andrews Nesfield who designed a new forecourt, and in 1927 when Darcy Braddell added an entrance portico to the mid C18 portion of the Hall. A large and impressive brick stables range (listed grade II) on the east side of the south forecourt may be of c 1752.

About 150m south of the Hall is an C18 icehouse, restored in the late C20.

The home farm lies south of the kitchen garden, which serves to screen it from the Hall.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The south front of the Hall faces onto a forecourt, closed on the east side by the stables range of 1804 and on the west by a 2m high brick wall. Along the south side of the forecourt are low, coursed, rough-stone walls with low stone gate piers and iron gates, part of Nesfield's work of 1861. A stone wall of the same character divides the forecourt before the Hall from that before the service range and stables.

The main, terraced gardens lie before the west front of the Hall, and were designed in 1861 by W A Nesfield. A straight gravel walk, 150m long, extends along the west front of the Hall and well to its south. Steps from the colonnaded porch in the centre of the west front lead down two steep, ramped, grass terraces. An axial path leads from the steps to the circular Rose Garden which forms the centrepiece of the lower, western portion of the garden. The Rose Garden is bounded to the west by a yew hedge, which also extends north and south to line the gravel walk along the bottom (west) of the garden. At the north end of that path, and looking back along it, is a stone, tile-roofed summerhouse of c 1861. Most of Nesfield's flower beds along and below the terraces have been filled in (although visible as depressions). Clipped golden yews, presumably also part of the 1861 design, stand in the lower part of the garden to either side of the Rose Garden.

A simple terraced lawn of c 1861 also extends along the long, north side of the Hall, separated from the park by a ha-ha. A gravel path, connecting with those west of the Hall, runs down it with two groups of mature limes evenly spaced to either side. At the east end of the path it surrounds a grass circle, within which are three mature beech trees. From there a path, known as the Colonel's Walk, leads along the outside of the north wall of the kitchen garden; it is lined in part with holly and laburnum. The Colonel's Walk, named after Colonel (later General Sir) Richard Wilbraham (d 1900), leads to the rough woodland called Nettlehole, which abuts the kitchen garden to the east. In the C19, and until the later C20, the Colonel's Walk continued as Ladies Walk across the park and via a belt of trees to Rode church, rebuilt on the east side of Church Lane in 1861.

About 100m west of the Hall, in a grassy hollow (perhaps once a brick pit) c 80m in diameter and planted with mature coniferous specimen trees, is the Wild Garden. In the middle is a small stone fountain basin. To its west is a grotto (listed grade II) made out of dark, irregular, rockery stones, with one large arched entrance on the east side and a smaller one to the rear (a second rear entrance is blocked). The interior is decorated with shell- and pebble-work. In front of the entrance is a rude stone cross. The path through the grotto continues as rough, flagged paths round and through rockeries to either side, formed like small islands and with the stones predominantly end-set. The flagged paths wind off to other parts of the Wild Garden.

On the north side of the Wild Garden a small stream rises in the rockery, and is carried through rockery work to the end of a pool called The Stews. Boathouse Walk, down the east side of The Stews and thence past the Tunnel Boathouse to Rode Pool, is well planted with mature trees, especially Corsican Pines.

The Wild Garden, its rockery, and the landscaping of The Stews is likely to have been by John Webb, who was working on the surrounds of Rode between 1803 and at least 1812. He was paid for levelling the old garden in 1812, and had earlier accounted for 'garden pots' purchased at the Wedgewood works. Wilbraham gave his wife '3 for her flower garden in 1803.

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PARK Rode Hall stands towards the centre of a roughly triangular park, 1.5km from east to west and a maximum of c 800m from north to south. Its main feature is the 150m wide Rode Pool which runs for 1.2km along the north side of the park. An inlet, roughly midway along its south side, leads up the gully in which, 100m nearer the Hall, is the pool called The Stews. At the south end of that inlet is the brick Tunnel Boathouse. On the west side of the inlet, above the point where it meets Rode Pool, is a 2m high stone obelisk (listed grade II) of the C18 or C19, moved here c 1970 from Kent Green. This occupies the site marked on C19 maps (OS) as the Wigwam, apparently a genuine wigwam brought back from Canada c 1830.

There is some planting along the north side of Rode Pool, and three larger blocks of woodland (from west to east Pool Wood; Bathing Wood; Meadow Planting) to its south. Old Wood lies west of the Hall with Letitia Planting on its south side; on the east side of the park are Millbank Wood, Lodge Wood and Moss Wood. To the east of Pool Wood is Rode cricket ground; a new pavilion was built in the 1990s. Otherwise the park is used as farmland, mainly pasture but (1997) with a large area of arable land north of Old Wood.

In 1790 when Humphry Repton visited Rode there was no park and the Hall was surrounded by the fields of an agricultural landscape; Repton commented that the landscape 'is much more consistent with the view from a Cottage or Farm house than from the Portico of a Gentleman's Seat' (Carter 1982). He proposed flooding a lake, and bringing a new approach to the north of the Hall. It seems likely however that imparkment did not take place until John Webb came to work at Rode in 1803. The main feature of the landscape, Rode Pool, was formed by extending existing pools eastwards; Webb was paid for creating 'the large water' and 'the lesser water' in 1812. At the same time the existing roads around the north and east sides of the new park (Pool Side and Church Lane) were realigned. Landscaping presumably included the planting of the various blocks of woodland, notably around the lake, and removal of the old kitchen garden, which lay in the area of Meadow Planting.

KITCHEN GARDEN The brick-walled kitchen garden, which measures c 100m east/west and c 60m north/south, lies c 50m east of the Hall, adjoining its rear yards. Some garden walls already stood here in the later C18, although the principal kitchen garden then lay north of the Hall. Removal of the latter, and the construction of a garden in the present location, were among Repton's proposals of 1790 and presumably formed part of Webb's early C19 work at Rode. Along the tall, north wall of the garden are: at the west end and facing into the garden, a two-storey brick gardener's house of the early C19; two glasshouses, their upper parts extensively rebuilt in the later C20; and, at the east end of the wall, a later C19 brick bothy. The garden remained in a high state of cultivation in 1997, although a hard tennis court had recently been laid out in the south-east corner of the garden.

Abutting the west wall of the garden is a small, triangular, brick-walled melon ground, now largely occupied by a C20 swimming pool.

REFERENCES

G Carter et al, Humphry Repton, Landscape Gardener 1752-1818 (1982), p 150

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: Cheshire sheet 57, 1st edition published 1882 OS 25" to 1 mile: Cheshire sheet 57.4, 2nd edition published 1909

Archival items The following items are held (1997) in a private collection at Rode Hall: H Repton, Red Book for Rode, 1790 Plan of Odd Rode Demesne, nd (mid C18) W A Nesfield, Plan of proposed works at Rode Hall, 1861

Description written: August 1997 Register Inspector: PAS Edited: April 1999

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.