

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

MIDDLETON PARK

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

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MIDDLETON PARK

Name: MIDDLETON PARK

County: Oxfordshire

District: Cherwell (District Authority)

Parish: Chesterton

County: Oxfordshire

District: Cherwell (District Authority)

Parish: Kirtlington

County: Oxfordshire

District: Cherwell (District Authority)

Parish: Middleton Stoney

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.892899
Longitude: -1.2398227
National Grid Reference: SP 52409 21867
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1001405
Date first listed: 29-Oct-1998

Details

Country house with remains of early-C18 pleasure grounds based on medieval park, surrounded by C18/early-C19 landscape park. Early-C19 improvements to pleasure grounds and park probably by Lewis Kennedy.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1201 Gerard de Camville emparked Home Wood at Middleton Stoney, which, in 1328, was surrounded by a stone wall half a league (c.3km) in circuit. The park seems to have incorporated the area presently known as Home Wood, being incorporated into the later landscape park. By 1710 a new house had been built to replace the old manor house close to the village, its new location towards the south end of a rectangular park and bounded by its own formal courts to north, east and south. In 1737 the estate was sold to William Villiers, 3rd Earl of Jersey, in whose family it remained until 1946. The 3rd Earl built a replacement house in the later 1750s. Sanderson Miller designed two buildings for Lord Jersey in 1749, one of which could have been the Gothic gate lodge. The C18 house was demolished in 1934, replaced in 1938 by a house on the same site, designed by Sir Edwin and Robert Lutyens for the 9th Earl of Jersey, and converted to flats in 1974.

SITE DESCRIPTION

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LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LAND FORM, SETTING Middleton Park lies to the west of the village of Middleton Stoney, 15km north of Oxford. The c.330ha park is defined by the parish boundary and wall to the south, a strip of farmland between the perimeter belt and the ancient monument known as Ash Bank to the west, and the B4030 public road to the north and east, along with the village of Middleton Stoney, which also lies to the east. The land is mainly level, the ground falling gently to west and south.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main entrance is that from Middleton Lodge, with its accompanying screen and gates (together listed grade II), which stands at the south end of the village. The stone lodge was built in 1805 to the designs of Edward Blore, and the screen is possibly by Thomas Cundy, erected at the same time as he was working on the mansion, 1806-07. From the entrance the drive leads west across the parkland to the pleasure grounds, continuing this line to pass between a pair of two-storey lodges (1938, Sir Edwin Lutyens, listed grade II*), and hence arriving at the north side of the turning circle. Beyond the circle, c. 50m north of the house, stands a pair of stone urns (possibly Thomas Cundy, C18/early C19, listed grade II).

A second lodge, Oxford Lodge (late C18, listed grade II), built in Gothic style and of elongated octagonal plan, with a small crenellated tower, marks the south-east corner of the park. From here a drive crosses north-westwards through the park to join with the east drive as it enters the pleasure grounds. Also joining at this point is a drive from the north which enters the park at Heyford Lodge, the lodge standing to the east of Park Farm. The drive runs south-east across parkland, then south down the east side of the pleasure grounds. An estate building, known as the Swiss Cottage, stands 350m west of Oxford Lodge on the south boundary of the park.

The structure of the drives pre-dated the re-working and re-orientation of the house in the 1930s, and remains as shown on the 1833 Ordnance Survey, when the entrance was on the east front.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Middleton Park (listed grade I) stands at the centre of its parkland, enjoying views across the gently falling ground to the west and south. A service wing (Sir Edwin and Robert Lutyens, listed grade II*) extends the main block of the south facade eastwards to the southern of the forecourt lodges and incorporates as its southern facade part of the C18 house. The present house, the fourth on the site, was built 1934-38 to the designs of Sir Edwin and Robert Lutyens.

Between 1805 and 1810, the 3rd Earl of Jersey called on Thomas Cundy to remodel the house, commissioning a number of paintings to record these works.

GARDENS & PLEASURE GROUNDS The house stands at the southern end of an extensive, roughly rectangular area of pleasure grounds, c.800m long (north-south) and c.325m wide (west-east). This level, c.25 ha. plot, possibly on the site of the medieval park, is separated from the surrounding landscape park by an encircling ha-ha. To the south of the house is a sunken lawn, a double flight of steps leading down from the stone retaining wall to the terrace alongside the south front. The lawn is bordered on west and east sides by low retaining walls supporting terraces planted with flowering shrubs, above which are grassed terrace walks. From the house there are views out across the park, over the lawn and the ha-ha which marks the garden's southern boundary. A view of Cundy's proposals for the new house, from the first decade of the C19, shows a formal garden set on a balustraded raised platform, from which a broad set of steps leads down into the park.

Flanking the west front are two low, stone walls (listed grade II), part of the 1930s work, terminated by stone lions (Coade stone, late C18-early C19, listed grade II), the lions having formerly flanked the carriage drive in front of the earlier house. On the north side of the house, the line of the east drive continues westwards, through a grassed area set with specimen trees, as a walk to the edge of the pleasure grounds.

The northern two-thirds of the pleasure grounds is planted as commercial woodland, Home Wood. A central ride bisects the wood, focussed on the north front of the house; its line once continued further north as a ride across the park through the 'North Door' in the boundary wall, and, planted to either side with platoons, so on, across the two public roads to The Heath woodland. Within the wood subsidiary paths branch off the central ride, with a perimeter walk starting at the house, leading west, then north along the top of the ha-ha, curving further into the wood along the northern edge of the ground, then returning back to the ha-ha to lead south, and so back to the house via the north and western sides of the kitchen garden. An C18 icehouse (listed grade II) lies c.300m north-west of the house, its stone face probably having once held a simple triangular pediment; close by is a statue base.

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In the early C18 Home Wood, then known as 'The Park' (1710 map) was cut through by two straight rides arranged in cruciform pattern running north-south and west-east (Map of Middleton Stoney, 1710). By the mid-C18 additional straight and curving paths through the woodland had been created, linking small open spaces (1736 map).

PARK The park, created in the second half of the C18, is now primarily under the plough, with consequent loss of many parkland trees. Those remaining include a number of Lebanon cedars. It is largely enclosed by belts and woodland, however: Mangthorn Wood and Old Nursery to the west, Pedigree Plantation and The Belt to the east, and Old Covert to the south-east. Within the park are also a number of substantial clumps: along the west side, from south to north, Cowground Covert, Busheyground Clump, Sainfoinhill Clump and Alder Clump; along the east side, again from south to north, Whitegate Plantation, Cowground Clump, Rubbishpit Clump and Parsonsfield Clump.

Set to the south of the east drive, 350m from Middleton Lodge and 100m north of Parsonsfield Clump, stands the largely medieval All Saints Church (listed grade II*), extended eastwards for the Jersey Mausoleum, c.1805. A medieval wayside cross stands 50m to the north. East of the church is a castle mound and bailey. North of the east drive, adjacent to the north drive, is a cricket field with pavilion. Beyond this to the north is a c.9ha area fenced off from the park, as it has been since at least the mid-C19 (Ordnance Survey, 1st Edition 1", 1833); south-east of this, between the park and the public road, lies the western part of Middleton Stoney village.

West of the house, but not visible from it, and just set in from the western edge of the park, is a lake, fed by a stream which enters the north-west corner of the site, and flows from the dam at the southern end of the lake to feed a second, smaller, body of water, lying 350m south of the house. A view by Lewis Kennedy, entitled 'Alterations for the Improvement of Middleton Park', done for the Earl of Jersey in 1811, shows the view south from the house as parkland with a ribbon of water crossing the middle ground. In the early C18 only a stream existed along the course of the water bodies (Grantham, Map of Middleton, 1710), later widened to form a 'pond' and 'new pond' (map, 1736).

Following the remodelling of the house by Thomas Cundy, the 5th Earl of Jersey employed the gardener Lewis Kennedy in the early C19 to produce an improvement scheme for the park, which seems to have been executed. At this time Lord Jersey also extended the park on the east side: in 1814 c.29ha were added to the park, and in 1824-25 a further extension involved demolishing the old manor house near the church, together with nearby cottages and streets, to be replaced by new, picturesque cottages outside the park.

KITCHEN GARDEN The walled kitchen garden complex lies to the north-east of the house, within the pleasure ground area. The main, southern area is walled and contains a pair of C19 cottages built into its north wall. The northern part is smaller and surrounded by brick and stone walls on three sides, and a bank with yew trees on the fourth. It is occupied by a 1980s house and a converted stable.

REFERENCES

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Maps [all held at Oxfordshire Record Office] A map of Middleton Stoney, 1710, The Honble Henry Boyle, Lord of the Manor (private enclosure map) The contents of Several Inclosures and Parts designed for the Rt Honble the Earl of Jersey at Middleton Stoney, 1736. Davies, A New Map of the County of Oxford, 1797. Ordnance Survey 1" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1833 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1884 2nd edition published 1900 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1881

Illustrations Lewis Kennedy, Alterations for the Improvement of Middleton Park, 1811 (private collection)

Description written: February 1998 Amended January 1999 Register Inspector: SR Edited: March 2000

Legal

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