

LEICESTERSHIRE

WHATTON HOUSE

**NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE
LONG WHATTON
SK4924**

**GD1966
II**

SUMMARY OF HISTORIC INTEREST

Gardens, mostly late C19 and including a Chinese Garden, and a landscape park associated with an early C19 country house.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE SITE

In 1802-3 an exchange of manors was made between Thomas March-Philipps of Garendon Park (qv) and Edward Dawson, through which the latter became lord of Whatton. He immediately demolished the old manor house which stood near the church in Long Whatton village, and built in its stead a house set in a landscape park on high ground 1.5km to the north-east overlooking the River Soar. In the 1870s about the time the house was largely destroyed by fire, the estate was purchased by the first Lord Crawshaw. He built the present house in 1876 and, insofar as is known, laid out its Chinese Garden in the years which followed. The estate remains (1998) in private hands.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

Whatton House stands in its park 5km north-west of Loughborough. It occupies high ground, a bluff looking east across the valley of the River Soar and south across the valley of one of its tributaries, the Long Whatton Brook. To the east the park is bounded by the A6 from Loughborough to Derby (here a dual carriageway). Otherwise the park edge follows field boundaries. The area here registered is c. 70ha.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The main entrance drive curves uphill, south-west across the park, from the North Lodge on the A6. This (listed Grade II) is a single-storey, hip-roofed, late C19 building of white brick laid on edge to resemble small ashlar blocks. A corresponding drive north-west from the C19 South Lodge had become disused in the late C20. A tree lined back drive leads west from the stables before turning to run south-west to an entrance on Mill Lane, north of Long Whatton. Adjoining the gates is a two-storey brick lodge of 1842.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING

Whatton House (listed Grade II) was rebuilt around the shell of the old building, after the fire of 1876, as a three-bay ashlar house with hipped slate roofs. The original five-by-three bay shape was retained, with the main five-bay garden facade to the south. A conservatory at the south-west angle was replaced in 1974 by the present (1998) colonnade. On the narrow east front, against the forecourt and overlooking the valley of the River Soar, is a projection incorporating the main porch.

Against the north side of the House are stables and service buildings, probably of c. 1802. The earlier house was built for Edward Dawson by John Johnson (d. 1814), a native of Leicester.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

A gravelled forecourt, extended eastwards to its present extent in the C20, runs along the east front of the House. From it there are extensive views east, over the park and the Soar valley

beyond. To the north-west it is adjoined by a formal lawn in the north-east angle of the House, in the centre of that lawn there being two cruciform flower beds either side of an elephant statue. The forecourt also gives access to the terraced garden along the south front of the House, 80m long and 35m wide, from which there are views over its balusters and across the falling and rolling parkland towards Long Whatton. Broad gravel paths run along the centre line of the garden and along its bottom, being bisected by the axial path which descends down the garden from a garden door from the House. The garden is largely laid to lawn punctuated with Irish yews; most of its late C19 formal rose beds have been grassed over. A swimming pool lies in the north-west portion of the garden, against the colonnade of 1974 which forms a western extension of the main House.

The path through the centre of the terraced garden continues as the Broad Walk westward along the south side of the kitchen garden. Between the path and the garden wall is an herbaceous border, while to the south of the path are shrubs and specimen trees. The latter screens a formal rose garden 50m south of the south-west corner of the kitchen garden. This, laid out in 1898, has a quartered design, and terracotta statues at each corner. The Broad Walk continues 40m westward of the south-west corner of the kitchen garden where it ends at the Bogey Hole (listed grade II), a former icehouse converted into a grotto with mounded rockery over. Steps lead up to the stone base of a summerhouse (now gone) which looked back along the Walk to the House and east forecourt 200m to the east. The conversion had begun by 1831 when the rockwork by Mrs Dawson was mentioned (*Gardener's Magazine*); further work took place in 1885.

The Bogey Hole stands at the east end of Whatton's Chinese Garden, which extends for c. 200m along the north side of the pleasure grounds. Little is known about the precise origin of the Garden, although it was apparently created in the late C19 as a setting for a considerable collection of oriental statuary and sculptures. Winding through the gardens are rock-lined paths, while 100m north-west of the Bogey Hole is a bark summerhouse, probably late C19. Further work, perhaps to extend the garden, apparently took place in the 1930s. East of the Chinese Garden against the north end of the west wall of the kitchen garden is an ornate stone loggia with Quattrocento carving, zigzag parapet and belvedere seat. Adjoining this is a small enclosed garden known as the Dutch Garden. From this there is a view northward to the spire of Kegworth church. South of the Chinese Garden, and extending west from the Bogey Hole, is the Arboretum. Although some the trees are mature - probably planted about the time the park was established in the early C19 - the greater part were introduced in the second half of the C20. On the western edge of the pleasure grounds is a small lake, created in the 1930s.

PARK

The park is roughly rectangular, and extends for c. 500m north and south of the House. East of the House, where the park falls sharply away to the boundary with the A6 it remains permanent pasture and has numerous mature parkland trees. North and south of the House the park has largely returned to arable farmland, although some parkland trees remain, especially in the former area. Much of the south-west part of the park is wooded; this screens the back drive.

The park was laid out around the House about the time it was built, c. 1802-3.

KITCHEN GARDEN

The brick walled kitchen garden complex which adjoins the west side of the House was laid out c. 1802. The main compartment, which remains under cultivation, is rectangular, and c. 90m east to west by 50m. It contains much glass, some late C19 but mostly post-dating the Second World War when market gardening was carried on. Along the north side of the garden are sheds, a frameyard and a gardener's house.

REFERENCES

J Nichols, *History and Antiquities of Leicester* 3, pt ii (1804), pp1103-5 (4 vols, in 8 parts, 1795-1811, reprinted 1971)
Gardener's Magazine 7, (1831), p427
Country Life, 178 (21 February 1985), pp456-8
G Plumtree, *Collins Book of British Gardens* (1985), pp359-60

Maps

OS 6" to 1 mile	1st edition published 1890
OS 6" to 1 mile	2nd edition published 1903
OS 6" to 1 mile	3rd edition published 1922

OS 25" to 1 mile	2nd edition published 1903
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Registered Inspector : PAS

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