

GARENDON PARK  
CHARNWOOD  
LEICESTERSHIRE  
SK5019  
GD1337  
II

### **SUMMARY OF HISTORIC INTEREST**

A remnant Arcadian landscape of the 1730s including three high-quality structures designed by Ambrose Phillipps, an early member of the Society of Dilettanti.

### **HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT**

A Cistercian abbey, one of the earliest in the country, was founded at Garendon in 1133. After its dissolution in 1536 the site was granted to the Earl of Rutland and was subsequently bought in 1684 by Ambrose Phillipps (kt 1686, d 1706), a successful London lawyer. On his death Garendon passed to his second son William, a merchant in Constantinople. In 1703 William married Jane, the daughter of Sir Samuel Dashwood, sometime Lord Mayor of London. William's son Ambrose inherited in 1729 and immediately set out on a Grand Tour of France and Italy where he drew the Roman remains and where his good looks occasioned the epithet 'The Handsome Englishman' (*Archit Hist* 1965). On his return, presumably in time to stand in the parliamentary election of 1734 at which he was re-elected for the county, he became one of the first members of the Society of Dilettanti, founded in London at some stage between 1732 and 1734 by a group of young men who had made the Grand Tour in the first half of the 1730s. At Garendon he designed a magnificent new house to replace the C17 one and re-landscaped the surrounding park in which he erected several major structures based on classical precedents. After his death, aged only thirty in 1737, Garendon passed to his brother Samuel (d 1774) under whom the greater part of the work on the house was undertaken. Thereafter Garendon descended in the family. The estate remains (1998) in private hands.

### **DESCRIPTION**

#### **LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING**

Garendon Park lies on the western edge of Loughborough. It is now partly bounded to the west by the M1 which when constructed ca 1960 cut off the south-west corner of the C18 and earlier park. To the south the park touches on the A512, otherwise the boundary following the line of a dismantled railway. Garendon Hall lay on the site of the Cistercian monastery and the pleasure grounds and home farm lay within the monastic precinct, the north wall of which, 2m high and of stone rubble, forms the park wall. This extends east to the edge of Thorpe Acre where its line turns south, although the wall has been largely robbed away. To the north of the wall a track follows the outside of the park wall running east from the south end of the Hathern Drive. Otherwise the park boundary follows field edges. The area here registered is ca 200ha.

#### **ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES**

The main entrance into the park is off Ashby Road, the A512, along the south side of the

park. Adjoining the gate is Snell's Nook Lodge (listed grade II), a two-storey Charnwood granite rubble building of 1847 in the Tudor Gothic style designed by William Railton (d 1877). From here a drive constructed in the 1980s swings east around the ridge surmounted with the Temple of Venus before joining an older drive from Shepshed south-west of the park. This passes the White Lodge (listed grade II), a possibly C17 building remodelled in the early C18. Of two storeys and three bays, it is stuccoed and has a low, hipped Swithland slate roof. On the south side is a massive central double door with radiating fanlight above approached by seven steps. The lodge stands 100m west of the Triumphal Arch (see below), and serves as an eye-catcher from the Ashby Road. The present drive serves White Lodge and now runs from it west of the Triumphal Arch before running north-east to the buildings in the northern part of the park. Historically the drive ran hard around the south and east sides of the Arch.

The other main approach to the Hall was from the north via the Red Arch lodge (listed grade II) which stands at the south end of the Hathern Drive. This, of 1837 and also by William Railton, is an ornate turreted red-brick building with central carriage arch.

#### PRINCIPAL BUILDING

Garendon Hall suffered badly from its occupation by the army during the Second World War and was eventually demolished in 1964. All that remains upstanding is the mid C18 arch (listed grade II), stuccoed and with a clock in the pediment, which gave access to the service yard; a cottage 25m to the south-east and a small Palladian arch and railings (listed grade II) which flanked the west side of the Hall. The last are supposedly based on gateways designed by Inigo Jones and erected at Beaufort House and transferred by Lord Burlington to Chiswick. Some 50m east of the cottage are the footings of the abbey's chapter house discovered during excavations of 1964-72. The demolished Hall was of three main phases. Ambrose Phillipps (d 1737) conceived a remodelling of his existing C17 house on a grand scale as a great L-shaped building with Palladian fronts to the south and east giving views across the park to its intended eye-catching buildings. He died before building work was much if at all advanced and his successor Samuel built only the south range. This was of eleven bays and had a pedimented portico with four Ionic columns. A W N Pugin (d 1852) proposed a great new moated manor house for his friend Ambrose Lisle March Phillipps de Lisle but in the event the old Hall was recast by Pugin's son E W Pugin (d 1875) in 1864-6. He added a storey within a huge mansard roof to the Hall.

#### GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

South-east of the Hall site is an area of mature ornamental woodland. This was formerly a pleasure ground or shrubbery cut through with broad grass walks, the central one having a mid C18 summerhouse (demolished ca 1943) with pedimented portico at its south-eastern end.

South and south-east of the Hall site are some remains of the linear canals which were a part of the landscaping scheme of the early 1730s commissioned by Ambrose Phillipps. The main canal running from east to west across the south front of the lawn to the south of the Hall may have lain on the line of the monastic precinct.

Some 300m north-west of the Hall site is an irregularly shaped lake ca 200m in diameter and wood fringed.

Behind (north of) the Hall site are various farm buildings (some listed grade II) of brick and stone incorporating some medieval fabric and presumably representing part of the monastic home farm. East of these are the earthworks of a large triangular pond.

## PARK

The park, since 1943 largely arable land, lies mainly south and south-west of the site of the Hall. This stood on relatively low ground with higher ridges along the east boundary of the park and across its southern half. It was on these that Ambrose Phillipps chose to place his eye-catching buildings, the Temple of Venus, Triumphal Arch and Obelisk, when in the early 1730s he designed or commissioned the landscaping scheme which transformed the setting of the Hall. An extant sketch book of Phillipps' (*Archit Hist* 1965) suggests he was his own architect.

One kilometre south-west of the site of the Hall on the crest of the southern ridge is the Temple of Venus (listed grade II\*) based on the Temple of Vesta at Tivoli. It is a circular ashlar building with peristyle of Ionic columns and a carved oak entablature and copper dome, the last replacing a lead covering stolen in the 1940s. The whole structure stands on a slight mound and is raised on four steps. The windowless interior, which contains high quality architectural details, originally contained a statue of Venus. This was broken during Luddite riots in the locality in 1811.

Three hundred metres west of the Temple of Venus and also on the ridge top is Garendon's Triumphal Arch (listed grade I) based on the Arch of Titus in Rome. Of ashlar with a moulded round-headed carriage arch, the east front has four Corinthian columns and an attic with a fine relief of the Metamorphosis of Actalon. This is one of the earliest examples of an English building inspired directly by direct observation and interpretation of a Roman building.

Some 700m east of the Hall site on a low, wooded ridge on the east side of the park is a 24m high obelisk (listed grade II). Of stuccoed brick and carried on a thick iron plate carried on four ball feet set on a stone pedestal, the obelisk is directly aligned on the centre of Phillipps' unexecuted scheme for the east front of the Hall.

There was a park at Garendon by 1640; it was then reported to contain 13,350 trees including ninety-two giants. Ambrose Phillipps' park improvements in the 1730s included a grand scheme of avenues, rides and planting within which at key points his buildings were sited. An estate map of 1777 shows how from the canal across the south front of the Hall a broad double avenue ran south to the park boundary. Two single avenues ran parallel to and west of this, the more westerly aligned on the Temple of Venus which lay roughly midway along it. The Temple also lay on an east/west avenue which ran across the north/south ones at right angles. The Triumphal Arch lay at the west end of this avenue. Other avenues crossed the 'primary grid' of avenues at 45 degrees to it. The

longest of these avenues was again aligned on the Temple of Venus. A double avenue ran east from the Hall to the Obelisk. Nichols (1804) records that Ambrose Phillipps had also intended the park to contain a family mausoleum and a second obelisk on which there was to have been a statue of Hercules. The main north/south double avenue of elms (which family tradition suggests replaced oaks) was felled in the last quarter of the C18. Much other timber was taken from the park at this time, and it seems likely that Phillipps' scheme of avenues and rides almost wholly disappeared at this time; certainly only scraps of avenues can be discerned on the 1st edition OS map surveyed 1882-3. By that time however new trees had matured and the park was well wooded. Its deer herd was then 200 strong. This survived until the Second World War when the animals were shot and the parkland ploughed.

#### KITCHEN GARDEN

Nothing of any substance remains of the kitchen gardens. In the C19 there were glasshouses in the north-eastern part of the shrubbery south-east of the Hall, and a commentator in 1831 (*Gardener's Magazine*) was critical of their disposition which, he said, lacked any overall design. There were also garden compartments north-east of the farm buildings along the south side of the park boundary wall.

#### REFERENCES

- J Thosby, *Select Views of Leicestershire* 1, (1789)  
J Nichols, *History and Antiquities of Leicester* 3, pt ii (1804), pp 802-3 (4 vols, in 8 parts, 1795-1811, reprinted 1971)  
*Gardener's Magazine* 7, (1831), pp 427-8  
*Architectural History* 8, (1965), pp 25-38  
J Crocker (ed), *Charnwood Forest: A Changing Landscape* (1981), pp 48-51, 72, 78, 104, 116  
N Pevsner, E Williamson and G K Brandwood, *The Buildings of England: Leicestershire and Rutland* (1984), pp 159-60  
A E Squires and W Humphrey, *Medieval Parks of Charnwood Forest* (1986), p128 et seq

#### Maps

- Map of Garendon, 1777 (private collection)  
OS 6" to 1 mile:  
1st edition surveyed 1882-3, published 1885  
2nd edition surveyed 1899-1901, published 1904  
3rd edition surveyed 1919, published 1922  
OS 25" to 1 mile:  
2nd edition surveyed 1899-1901, published 1903

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