

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

SHIREOAKS HALL

BASSETLAW  
SHIREOAKS  
SK5580

GD1318  
II\*

A late C17 and early C18 landscape park with early C17 gardens and a late C17 water feature which are set on either side of a C17 hall with later alterations.

### **HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT**

After the Dissolution of the Monasteries, Henry VIII granted Robert and Hugh Thornhill the manor of Shireoaks. Thomas Hewett acquired the manor in 1546 and it is likely that his grandson, Thomas Hewett, built Shireoaks between 1612 and 1617, the house probably being designed by John Smythson (Girouard 1983). The courts and terraces north-east of the house were probably laid out at the same time (Pevsner and Williamson 1979). Sir Thomas Hewett (1656–1726), Surveyor of Woods North and South of the Trent and Surveyor General of the Works to George I, inherited Shireoaks as a minor in 1660 and did not live there until after 1689. He probably remodelled the south-west front, added the north-west wings, the pavilions and outbuildings, and refitted the interior, and soon after began to lay out the water garden (ibid).

Sir Thomas Hewett died in 1726 leaving the estate entailed but left instructions and money to complete any unfinished building projects (L Godlewski pers comm, 1999). The estate was entailed to the Thornhagh family of Osbertson who adopted the name Hewett. When John Thornhagh-Hewett died in 1787 his cousin John Hewett (d 1811) inherited. The Hall was partially demolished and gutted in 1811. John Hewett's nephew and heir, Richard Wheatley, sold the reversion to the Duke of Norfolk in 1812 and external and internal alterations were made. The estate was sold to the Duke of Newcastle in 1840 whose family owned Shireoaks until 1945 when it was sold to a local farmer. The Hall, now (1999) partly in ruins, and the axial water garden have been in separate private ownership since the 1970s.

### **DESCRIPTION**

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

Shireoaks Hall stands at the south-west edge of the village of Shireoaks, 3.5km north-west of Worksop. The c 16ha site is long and narrow with the Hall, stables, and ponds to the north-east, the canal and cascade forming a central spine, and the Grand Basin with its surrounding woodland to the south-west. The east boundary is formed by Shireoaks village while the remaining boundaries abut agricultural land. Netherthorpe Airfield lies west of the Basin. The site is largely level though gently sloping towards the east, and the area suffers from mining subsidence. The setting of the site is primarily agricultural, including views over the extensive area of former parkland which was laid out formally in the late C18 (Young, 1790) and contained formal avenues and blocks of woodland. Shireoaks Colliery stands 600m to the north-east.

#### **ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES**

Shireoaks Hall is approached from the north off Thorpe Lane in the village. A drive leads south for 150m to a car park next to the Hewett Arms, a converted stable/coach house. From

the car park a path leads between the Lady Pond and the Kitchen Pond for 120m to the north-east front of the Hall. The southern approach, now (late C20) disused, was from Steetley Lane (outside the area here registered) c 1km south-west of the Hall. The approach ran north-east for c 700m along what is now (late C20) a public footpath to the south-west corner of Oak Wood where a pair of ornamental gates formerly stood (now removed to Clumber Park qv), then north-west along Spring Lane, eventually arriving at the south-east front of the house.

#### PRINCIPAL BUILDING

Shireoaks Hall (listed grade II\*) is built of coursed Magnesian limestone with slate and pantiled roofs. The building is cruciform in plan, of three storeys over a basement, and seven bays by six bays. The remains of a C17 service wing to the north project into the base court. The Hall was probably built between 1612 and 1617 by John Smythson (Girouard 1983), with alterations in the early C18 for Sir Thomas Hewett. It was partially demolished and gutted c 1811, restored 1812, and further restored post 1975.

Two pavilions now (late C20) known as East and West Stables (both listed grade II\*) stand 30m to the north-west of the Hall. They are built of ashlar and coursed squared rubble and have C17 hipped roofs with early C20 slate additions. They were probably built by Sir Thomas Hewett in the late C17 or early C18, as were the two ponds, all being shown on Young's survey of 1790.

#### GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

There are terraced gardens to the north-east of the Hall, while to the south-west a water garden extends into the park, aligned with the south-west front of the Hall. A series of stone terraces descends from the north-east front. The upper grassed terrace is at the same level as the Hall, a gravel path leading north-east to a flight of stone steps at the base of which lies a broad, grassed terrace. The axis is continued by a further flight of steps which lead north-east down to a grass bank between wooden farm gates, beyond which lies a narrower terrace, also grassed, the whole complex being enclosed with brick walls. The walled garden and terraces probably date from the building of the Hall in the early C17 (Pevsner and Williamson 1979). A parterre appears on the north-west side of the walled garden on the 1890 sale plan but this is no longer extant. North-east of the lowest terrace is the Fountain Pool, a rectangular canal 127m long by 21m wide with its north-east bank shaped to a semicircle in line with the Hall, at the point where its sluice lies; this area is now (1999) overgrown with trees.

On the south-west front a brick ha-ha runs from north-west to south-east and between it and the Hall is an overgrown lawn. The area south-west of the ha-ha and north-east of the axial canal in the park to the south-west is now (late C20) grassed with some trees. The two ponds 100m north-west of the Hall, Lady Pond and Kitchen Pond, probably date from the late C17 or early C18 (Young, 1790).

#### PARK

Parkland lies to the north and south-west of the Hall. In the late C18 (Young, 1790), the park comprised 132ha. The historic boundaries of the former park are defined by Thorpe Lane to the north and Steetley Lane to the south, and by Spring Lane to the east and Netherthorpe Road to the west, with Scratta Lane/Dumb Hall Lane closing the south-west boundary. The majority of the former parkland is outside the boundary here registered and all is under the plough.

The parkland to the north of the Hall is enclosed by Thorpe Lane to the north and Shireoaks village to the east and is grassed with scattered trees. The open parkland to the south-west of the Hall is also pasture with scattered mature trees.

In the south-west parkland is a water feature (scheduled ancient monument) aligned on the south-west front of the Hall. Created for Sir Thomas Hewett in the late C17, it comprises a 250m long canal fed by a series of thirty-four cascades, broken with twelve small pools, in all 450m long and fed by the Great Basin, 122m in diameter, situated 880m south-west of the Hall. A path follows along the south-east side of the canal with views out over the fields of the former parkland. The canal and cascades are shaded by a flanking line of mature limes interspersed with yews, in a pattern of one lime to three yews. At the north-east end of the canal, between the line of trees and the canal, two triangular bosquets (now gone) are shown on the plan of 1790.

With the canal forming the central axis of a *patte d'oie*, two avenues are shown on the 1790 map extending north-west and south-west from the north-east end of the canal. Of the avenue trees only a solitary beech remains at the beginning of the avenue which ran south-west, although the lines of the avenues are now (1999) reflected by two public footpaths. On the 1790 map the western ends of the two avenues are shown joined by a third avenue running approximately north to south to form a triangle. A fourth avenue formerly led south-west from the Great Basin, extending the axis from the Hall and canal.

To the north of the Basin is Shireoaks Park Wood, a woodland of 5.5ha. On the 1790 map Shireoaks Park Wood is shown as New Pond Plantation and formerly extended north to the north-west avenue. The Great Basin is linked via this wood with Netherthorpe to the north-west by a 400m long stone-built culvert set into the Magnesian limestone bedrock (partly outside the area here registered). The culvert, in part vaulted and in part slab-roofed, is large enough for a man to crawl through and carries the water supply for the Great Basin from a reservoir situated at the north-west end between Top and Bottom Farms. The culvert was constructed by Sir Thomas Hewett in 1725 (L Godlewski pers comm, Sept 2000).

To the south-west of the Great Basin is the 1.5ha remnant of Scratta Wood, which formerly extended south-west from the Basin, continuing south and westwards from the intersection of the avenues (Young, 1790). In Scratta Wood stood a banqueting house or *tempietto* (now gone). This was a rectangular building 'with flights of steps to entrances at each end and, inside, a different classical order in each of the three rooms, marble walls and floors, ceilings painted by Trench, and a bust of Sir Thomas by Rysbrack' (Pevsner and Williamson 1979). It was described by an anonymous visitor in 1727 as 'a small stone house with three marble rooms in it, one of Darbyshire Marble, of ye Tuscan Order' (private collection). Other descriptions of the *tempietto* were by George Virtue 1725-6 for the *Walpole Society*, and Henry Holland in his *History of Worksop* in 1825.

The anonymous visitor of 1727 also noted that there was 'a Tree in the Park that hangs its boughs over Nottinghamshire, Darbyshire and Yorkshire', and that there were wooded walks in the park. In 1728 a Mr Baker noted that the park was well stocked with beautiful deer (private collection).

## REFERENCES

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H Holland, *History of Worksop* (1825), p 178  
*Garden History* III, no 4 (1975), p 32  
M Binney and A Hills, *Elysian Gardens* (1979), p 60  
N Pevsner and E Williamson, *The Buildings of England: Nottinghamshire* (2nd edn 1979), pp 312–13  
M Girouard, *Robert Smythson and the Elizabethan Country House* (1983), pp 134–8, pls 74, 75  
*Trans Walpole Soc* 20, Diary of George Virtue (1725–6), II

#### Maps

J Young, *Survey of the Manor of Shireoaks in the counties of Nottingham, York and Derby* 1790 (private collection)  
Plan, Sale catalogue, 1890 (private collection)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 3rd edition published 1923  
OS 25" to 1 mile: 3rd edition published 1923

#### Archival items

Extract dated 30 June 1727 from an unpublished journal of a tour by an anonymous gentleman who set out from London in June 1727 and visited Shireoaks on 30 June 1727 (private collection)

Extract from an unpublished journal of a tour made by a Mr Baker in the summer of 1728 from Buckinghamshire to Yorkshire and back (private collection)

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