

= Ince Blundell Hall =

For the building with a similar name in Cheshire see Ince Hall

Ince Blundell Hall is a former country house near the village of Ince Blundell , in the Metropolitan Borough of Sefton , Merseyside , England . It was built between 1720 and 1750 for Robert Blundell , the lord of the manor , and was designed by Henry Sephton , a local mason @-@ architect . Robert 's son , Henry , was a collector of paintings and antiquities , and he built impressive structures in the grounds of the hall in which to house them . In the 19th century the estate passed to the Weld family . Thomas Weld Blundell modernised and expanded the house , and built an adjoining chapel . In the 1960s the house and estate were sold again , and have since been run as a nursing home by the Canonesses of St. Augustine of the Mercy of Jesus .

The hall is Georgian in style , and consists of a main block with a service block linked at a right @-@ angle to its rear . The hall is recorded in the National Heritage List for England as a designated Grade II * listed building . Some of the buildings associated with the hall are also designated at this grade ; these are the Pantheon and the Garden Temple , both of which were built by Henry Blundell for his collection of statues , the chapel , and a building known as the Old Hall . In the garden and grounds of the hall are nine structures listed at Grade II ; these include the stables , a monument , a sundial , gateways and a lodge , and the base of a medieval wayside cross .

= = History = =

The manor of Ince Blundell was held by the Blundell family from the 12th century . The first documentation of the name of Blundell at the site is that of Richard Blundell in 1212 . Following the Reformation the Blundells retained their Catholic faith and suffered from the consequent disadvantages and dangers . Nevertheless , by legal transactions and advantageous marriages the Blundell family acquired more possessions ; by the end of the 18th century they held 15 manors together with other property , some of it as far away as Liverpool and Preston .

The present house was built by Robert Blundell (1700 ? 73) who inherited the estate in 1711 . Building began in about 1720 , and it was finished by 1750 . The house was designed by Henry Sephton , who was the " leading mason @-@ architect in the area " at that time . In 1761 Robert Blundell moved from the house to Liverpool , and the estate passed to his eldest son , Henry (1724 ? 1810) . Henry then started to extend the house by adding what he described as " a large body of offices " at right @-@ angles to the main block , and he did this " without the help of a Wyatt (sic) or any architect " . In the grounds he designed and built a stable block and greenhouses , created a kitchen garden , and landscaped the park , which included a lake and a ha @-@ ha . He built a wall around the perimeter of the estate , and designed one , and possibly two , of the gateways .

Henry Blundell was a collector , first of paintings and later of statues and antiquities , the collection amounting to over 500 items . In order to house them at Ince Blundell , he constructed a series of buildings in the grounds of the hall . Initially he kept his collection in a series of greenhouses , but in about 1790 ? 92 he built the Garden Temple , a building in Classical style . This was followed in about 1802 ? 05 by a more impressive building , the Pantheon , its design based on the Pantheon in Rome . When Henry died in 1810 , the hall passed to his son , Charles . He died childless in 1837 , and the estate passed to Thomas Weld , a cousin . He took the name of Thomas Weld Blundell , and restored , refurnished and redecorated the hall . In the mid @-@ 19th century a large bay window was added to the west side of the Drawing Room , and a new Dining Room was built at the east end . Ceilings were raised , and interior decoration was carried out by the firm of Crace . Weld Blundell added a new vestibule to connect the Gallery , the Dining Room , and the Pantheon . The portico of the Pantheon became the new main entrance to the hall , and the Pantheon itself the reception hall . What had been the original chapel became the organ loft of a new large two @-@ storey chapel designed by J. J. Scoles .

During the Second World War the hall , its buildings and park were used by the War Office and the Admiralty , and additional buildings were erected . Five parachute bombs fell near the hall , one of them blowing out all the windows in the garden front . By 1960 the estate was " seriously dilapidated

", and it was decided to sell the hall and the surrounding land . The farms went to the sitting tenants , and the chapel , which had been used as a parish church since 1947 , was given to the Archdiocese of Liverpool . The hall was bought by the Canonesses of St. Augustine of the Mercy of Jesus , who adapted it for use as a nursing home . It was officially opened as such on 27 May 1961 by the Rt Revd John Heenan , who was at that time the Archbishop of Liverpool . Much work had to be done to make the building fit for its new purpose , including making it weather @-@ proof , installing central heating , a lift , and a washbasin in each bedroom . A new entrance was created at the back of the hall , with access for wheelchairs . The former Gallery was converted into a chapel for the use of staff and residents . Henry Blundell 's wing is used partly to provide services for the hall , and partly by the sisters as a convent . The sisters and staff of the hall continue to provide nursing and other care for the elderly .

= = Architecture = =

= = = Exterior = = =

Ince Blundell Hall is in Georgian style . It is constructed in brick with sandstone dressings , and has an L @-@ shaped plan . The main block faces southeast ; it is in two storeys with an attic , and has a front of nine bays . Richard Pollard and Nikolaus Pevsner describe the front as being in late English Baroque style , and consider that it was " evidently inspired " by the front of Buckingham Palace , London . Between the upper storey and the attic is an entablature with a cornice and a panelled parapet . The central three bays project forward , the lower storeys are flanked by pairs of giant pilasters , and at the sides of the central doorway are giant columns . There are more pilasters at the ends of the building , and in the central three bays of the attic . All the pilasters and columns are Corinthian in style . The windows are sashes and are surrounded by architraves . The ground floor windows in the central bays have segmental heads with keystones , and those in the outer bays have friezes and pediments carried on consoles . Below the upper floor windows are panelled aprons and consoles . The central doorway has a segmental head and a keystone carved with the Blundell arms . At the corners of the front are quoins .

To the right of the main block is a 19th @-@ century single @-@ storey wing with five bays , the central three of which are canted . Behind is a single @-@ storey block , linking the main block to the service block , which is at right angles to the rear . The service block is Henry Blundell 's " offices " , and is in Palladian style . It faces southwest , is in two storeys , and has a seven @-@ bay front , plus a three @-@ storey three @-@ bay pavilion to the right . The central three bays of the service block project forward under a pediment . Above the central porch is a Diocletian window . There is a clock in the gable , and over the pediment is a cupola carried on Tuscan columns . The windows are sashes with wedge lintels . The central bay of the pavilion is round @-@ headed and recessed , and its windows are a mixture of Diocletian , tripartite , and oculi .

= = = Interior = = =

When the house was first built , the main entrance was through the centre of the southeast face , which led into an entrance hall . Following the alterations carried out by Weld Blundell in the 19th century , the portico of the Pantheon became the new main entrance . When the house was converted into a nursing home , a new entrance was created at the rear . At the time the Weld Blundell family moved from the house , the entrance hall was used as a Library , the Drawing Room was to the left , and a Billiard Room to the right . To the right of this was the Dining Room , and behind it was the Gallery . The Billiard Room has become the Music Room , the former Library is a lounge for the residents , and the former Gallery is the chapel for the staff and residents .

The interior of the house has retained much of the decoration carried out by Crace . The ceiling contains Rococo plasterwork dating from about 1750 depicting symbols relating to music and hunting , together with representations of learning and cultivation . On the walls are paintings by

Crace . Pollard and Pevsner refer to these as being " delicately pretty Raphaelesque decoration " . The former Entrance Hall is " small , simple and sober " , and the Staircase Hall behind it is " not a grand space at all " . The Dining Room , also decorated by Crace , contains oak panelling on the walls , and painted panels in the ceiling . The oak fireplace replaces the original marble fireplace that was removed when the Weld Blundell family left the house . There is also a scheme of Crace decoration in the former Gallery .

= = Associated structures = =

= = = Pantheon = = =

The Pantheon is at the angle between the main block and the service block . It is built in stone with a lead dome and has a circular plan . On the southeast side is an Ionic portico with four columns , a frieze , and a cornice . On the exterior are niches and panels with reliefs . Inside is an Ionic pilastrade , a frieze decorated with triglyphs and roundels , and niches for statues , four of which are in the shape of Venetian windows . The interior of the dome is coffered , and it has a central glazed oculus , which is the only source of lighting for the building .

= = = Garden Temple = = =

The Garden Temple , which is in the form of a temple , stands in the grounds to the south of the hall . It was probably designed by William Everard , and it was restored in about 2000 . The building is mainly in stuccoed brick with stone dressings , and has a hipped roof . On the front is a Tuscan portico with four columns , reliefs , and busts , and in the pediment is a mask . The frieze contains a Latin inscription , which translates as " In this place it is summer and winter all year round " , referring to the fact that the building was heated by air from external fireplaces . Behind the portico is a three @-@ bay palistrade , and a central entrance flanked by niches and with a relief above . Inside there are recesses for statues , two in the shape of Venetian windows . Some Roman masks and relief panels have been set into the walls .

= = = Old Hall = = =

Despite its name , this was not the previous hall , as the present hall was built on the site of the older hall . Its original purpose is unknown , and in the 19th century it was used for drying hops . The building stands in the grounds to the southwest of the hall . It is in brick with stone dressings , and has a roof partly of stone @-@ slate and partly of slate . The building has three storeys and a front of five irregular bays . The windows are mullioned , and the entrances have quoins and large lintels with slight Tudor arches .

= = = Church of the Holy Family = = =

The church is at right angles to the north end of the service block . It was originally the family chapel , and has since been used as a Roman Catholic parish church . It was built in 1858 ? 60 and designed by J. J. Scoles . The church is in brick with stone dressings and has a slate roof . The exterior is relatively plain , but the interior is elaborately decorated , some of which may have been executed by Crace ; there are also paintings by Gebhard Flatz .

= = = Stables = = =

The stables are in the grounds to the southwest of the hall . They were built in about 1800 ? 14 , and are in brick with stone dressings and a hipped slate roof . The stables are in two storeys and have a nine @-@ bay front , the central three bays projecting forward under a pedimented gable . In

the centre is a recessed round @-@ headed entrance with angle pilasters , an archivolt , and a keystone . Above this is a Diocletian window . Elsewhere the windows in the ground floor are sashes with wedge lintels , and those in the upper storey are oculi . There are more round @-@ headed recesses in the end bays , and a 20th @-@ century garage to the north .

= = = Garden structures = = =

In the garden to the south of the main block is a monument in the form of a marble Tuscan column on a stone plinth . It carries an eagle , and dates from the early 19th century . To the southwest of the hall is a sundial dated 1741 . This consists of a stone baluster , and its metal plate is missing . Further to the southwest is an octagonal structure built into the wall of the kitchen garden . It is in stuccoed brick with a slate roof , and has a round @-@ headed entrance and a keystone decorated with an acanthus . This flanked by recesses , and there are more recesses inside . Also within the grounds of the hall is the base of a medieval wayside cross , which is a scheduled monument .

= = = Gates and lodge = = =

The most impressive entrance to the grounds is the Lion Gate on the A565 road to the south of the hall . It was designed by Henry Blundell in the 1770s , its Baroque style design copied from a gateway in the background of one of his paintings , the Marriage of Bacchus and Ariadne by Sebastiano Ricci . The gate is constructed in sandstone and consists of a central round @-@ arched entrance and two flat @-@ headed pedestrian entrances . The central entrance is in Doric style with columns , and an entablature with a triglyph frieze including bucrania and rosettes . On the top is a broken pediment containing a cartouche and an urn decorated with ram 's heads and festoons . The pedestrian entrances have rusticated surrounds . Above one is a statue of a lion , and above the other is a lioness . The entrances contain cast iron gates . The East Gate dates from the 1770s , and was probably also designed by Henry Blundell . It has a round @-@ headed central entrance and flat @-@ headed pedestrian entrances , and is simpler than the Lion Gate . The central entrance is flanked by Ionic pilasters , there is a fluted frieze with a decorated central panel , and a pediment . Above the pedestrian entrances are tented caps decorated with festoons and rosettes .

The West Lodge , also on the A565 road , is to the north of the Lion Gate . Dating from the middle of the 19th century it is in French Renaissance style , built in brick with stone dressings and a slate roof . The lodge has three bays , the central lodge with two storeys , and the outer lodges with one storey and attics . The central bay is flanked by pilasters , and has a round @-@ headed entrance with archivolts , a keystone , and decorated spandrels . The windows are round @-@ headed sashes ; there is a pair above the entrance , and one in each of the outer bays . In the attics are dormers with ball finials . The outer bays have hipped roofs , the central bay has a pyramidal roof , and all have spike finials . The simplest entrance is the Northeast Gate , dating from the 1770s , consisting of a pair of gate piers with later gates . The rusticated piers are in stone and have moulded caps and flattened ball finials .

= = Appraisal = =

Ince Blundell Hall is described by Pollard and Pevsner as a " splendid Georgian house " , although they consider Blundell 's service block is " a rather plodding Palladian affair " . The hall was designated a Grade II * listed building on 11 October 1968 . Grade II * is the middle of the three grades of listing and is applied to " particularly important buildings of more than special interest " . Also listed at this grade are the Pantheon , the Garden Temple , the Old Hall , and the Church of the Holy Family , along with the park and garden surrounding the hall . Other structures are listed at Grade II , the lowest grade , which is applied to " buildings of national importance and special interest " . These are the stables , the column carrying an eagle , the sundial , the octagonal structure , the Lion Gate , the East Gate , the West Lodge , the Northeast Gate , and the base of the

wayside cross .