

## = Prior Park Landscape Garden =

Prior Park Landscape Garden surrounding the Prior Park estate south of Bath , Somerset , England , was designed in the 18th century by the poet Alexander Pope and the landscape gardener Capability Brown , and is now owned by the National Trust . The garden was influential in defining the style known as the " English landscape garden " in continental Europe . The garden is Grade I listed in the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England .

Around 1100 the site was part of a deer park set out by the Bishop of Bath and Wells John of Tours . In 1720s it was bought by Ralph Allen and landscaped to complement his new house . Further development was undertaken after the house became a seminary and then a Roman Catholic grammar school ( which later became Prior Park College ) . In the 1990s 11 @. @ 3 hectares ( 28 acres ) of the park and pleasure grounds were acquired by the National Trust and a large scale restoration undertaken . Features of Prior Park Landscape Garden include a Palladian architecture bridge , lake and ancillary buildings .

## = = History = =

Set in a small steep valley overlooking the city of Bath a park was established on the site by John of Tours , the Bishop of Bath and Wells , in around 1100 as a deer park . It was subsequently sold to Humphrey Colles , a lawyer and member of parliament for Somerset , and then another member of parliament , Matthew Colthurst . Even before the Dissolution of the Monasteries the walls which had enclosed the deer park had fallen into disrepair and the deer had escaped . The land was then returned to agricultural use .

## = = = 18th @-@ century design = = =

Purchased by the local entrepreneur and philanthropist Ralph Allen in the 1720s , Prior Park 's 11 @. @ 3 hectares ( 28 acres ) English landscape garden was laid out with advice from the poet Alexander Pope during the construction of the house , overseen by Allen between the years 1734 and his death in 1764 . During 1737 , at least 55 @, @ 200 trees , mostly elm and Scots pine , were planted , along the sides and top of the valley . The valley floor remained as grassland and drainage water was channelled to form fish ponds at the bottom of the valley .

Later work , during the 1750s and 1760s , was undertaken by the landscape gardener Capability Brown ; this included extending the gardens to the north , removing the central cascade and making the wooded hillside ( combe ) into a single sweep . " The garden was influential in defining the style of garden known as the ' English garden ' in continental Europe " . The gardens were laid out in two distinct areas : those on the east side of the house were set out as vegetable plots on either side of the serpentine path , while on the western side were statues and grottoes , trees and evergreens with climbing and scented plants . Exotic plants which had only recently arrived in Britain included Aristolochiaceae , Passiflora and Bignonia .

In 1828 the house and estate were purchased by Bishop Augustine Baines to create a seminary and then Bishop William Clifford for a Roman Catholic grammar school which later became Prior Park College . Further landscaping was carried out in the 1880s .

## = = = Restoration = = =

In 1993 the park and pleasure grounds were acquired by the National Trust and it was opened to the public in 1996 . In November 2002 , a large @-@ scale restoration project began on the cascade , serpentine lake and Gothic temple in the wilderness area , this is now complete . Extensive planting also took place in 2007 . Future plans include re @-@ roofing the grotto and building a replica Gothic temple .

## = = Garden features = =

The garden 's features include a Palladian architecture bridge ( one of only four of this design left in the world ) , Gothic temple , gravel cabinet , Mrs Allen 's Grotto , the ice house , lodge and three pools with curtain walls as well as a serpentine lake . The curtain wall by the lake is known as the Sham Bridge and is similar to Kent 's Cascade at Chiswick House and Vunus Vale at Rousham House . Ralph Allen was also responsible for the construction of Sham Castle on a hill overlooking Bath .

The rusticated stone piers on either side of the main entrance gates are surmounted by entablatures and large ornamental vases , while those at the drive entrance have ornamental carved finials . The Porter 's Lodge was built along with the main house to designs by John Wood the Elder .

= = = Palladian bridge = = =

The Palladian bridge , which is a copy of the one at Wilton House , has been designated as a Grade I listed building and scheduled monument . It was repaired in 1936 .

= = Bath Skyline = =

A five @-@ minute walk from the garden leads on to the Bath Skyline , a six @-@ mile ( 10 km ) circular walk around the city that encompasses woodlands , meadows , an Iron Age hill @-@ fort , Roman settlements , 18th @-@ century follies and views over the city .