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E. Digswell Lake and urbanised parkland

At the road (Bessemer Road, A1000) turn right. You are walking parallel with Digswell Lake (E) formed in 1810, but now a private fishing lake and not accessible. Turn right again to walk back up the valley bottom. When you get a view of the south façade of Digswell House (C), look to the left and head for the old-fashioned lamp posts. Follow their line across the road and along. After a right bend there is a gap in the houses on your left and an avenue of trees leading you up to Temple Wood, possibly planted by Brown c.1771.



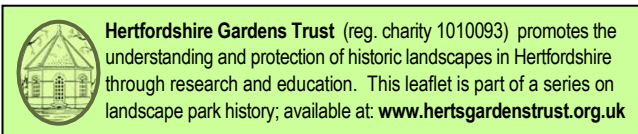
G. The walled kitchen garden at Digswell Place

In the fringe of Temple Wood turn right onto the path along the wooded margin with banks on your right. This belt of trees formed the backdrop for the landscape park. At a meeting of paths go straight ahead, climbing gradually towards a white house at the top.



H. Samuel Peirse Map of 1599 (walk in red)

This is where Digswell Place (formerly the Rectory) is located, connected to Digswell Church by Monks Walk. It was part of the wider Digswell landscape and features Brownian clumps of trees, parkland planting and earthworks. It is possible that Gertrude Jekyll supplied plans for its garden in 1920. Turn left past the old kitchen garden walls (G) along Rectory Road until you reach the 'Reservoir' car park (P) on your left. Rectory Road shows up clearly on the Peirse survey of 1599 (H).

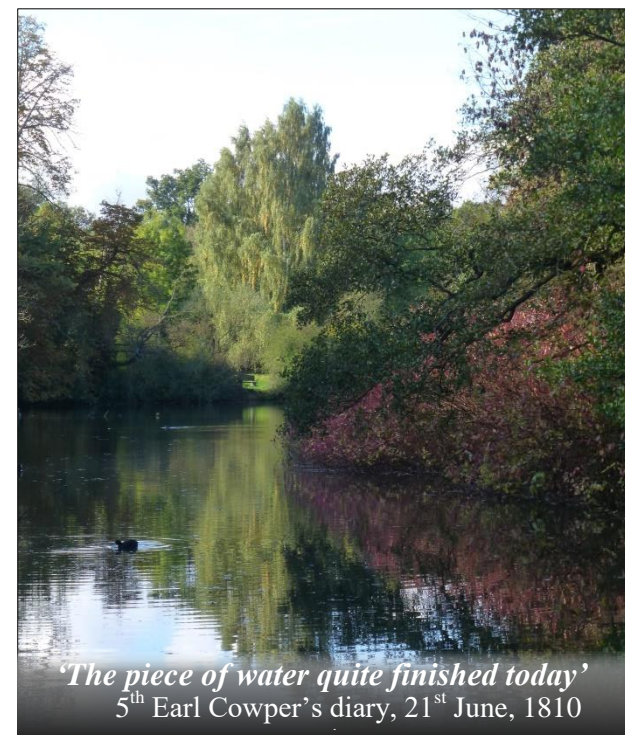


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Hertfordshire Landscape Parks



Digswell Park



E. Digswell Lake

The Walk is a circuit of about 2½ miles (4 km), which can be muddy. OS Explorer Map 182.

Car Park P by the side of the reservoir on Rectory Road off B197 opposite Red Lion pub ☒, (TL228140); or the West Campus **P** (TL235134).

Digswell House (C) is sited on a promontory overlooking the River Mimram valley (E) and the ground sweeps down to the north, east and south. To the west the land rises with the tree-lined Monks Walk (B) to the former Rectory (Digswell Place, G) and Sherrardspark Wood (A).



C. Digswell House, south façade

The medieval moated manor with a warren and fish-ponds was bought in 1414 by Sir John Perient. After various changes in ownership, Digswell was held by Richard Willis who paid Lancelot Brown £1,100 for work during 1771-73. Early 18th century formal gardens were removed, and parkland clumps of trees were created around Digswell House and the Rectory, but Monks Walk linking the two was retained. The House (1807, by Samuel Wyatt), the damming of Digswell Lake (1810) and improvements inspired by landscape designers Humphry Repton and Nathaniel Kent were implemented by 5th Earl Cowper.

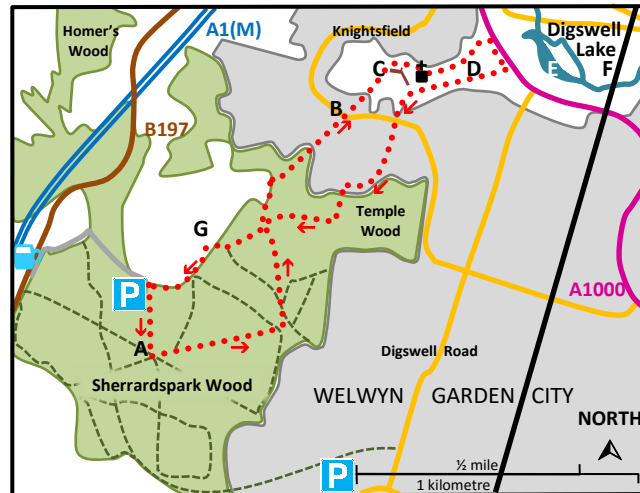
The railway viaduct (F) across Mimram valley was completed in 1850. Digswell and other parts of the Cowper estates were sold in 1919 to pay death duties and 1688 acres were acquired for the new Welwyn Garden City. Cowper's mansion is now private housing and the A1000 (Bessemer Rd, 1950s) cuts Digswell Park off from the Lake.




A. 'Six Ways' junction in Sherrardspark Wood

Start from either car park **P** and at the 'SIX WAYS' junction (**A**), take the path towards 'PENTLEY PARK', and again at the next meeting of ways. At the third signpost, walk towards 'MONKSWOOD', down a gully and up.

This amenity woodland acquired in 1919 is shown on the Peirse survey of 1599 (**H**), but the star-shaped formal rides date from late 18th century replanting with oak and sweet chestnut. Linear earthworks exist, possibly from the earlier coppice wood. Remains of the 1860 Luton to Welwyn railway (closed 1966) survive as a public bridleway, and the site has some swallow holes where the underlying chalk has dissolved and collapsed.



 Walk along a lapboard fence and after a bridleway horseshoe marker, turn right and head down the wide path called Monks Walk (**B**), across a road and past the cricket ground on the left, separated by a ditch that could be the remains of an 18th century sunken fence or ha-ha. At the road turn right, passing in front of Digswell House and the Church (core c.1200, crenellated tower c.1530).



B. Monks Walk viewed from the North

The House sits on a knoll which was enhanced with earthworks to emphasise the oak and thorn plantings and the curve of the valley sweeping down to the river Mimram. Follow the path round the corner of the church and then immediately left so you are walking above the valley. From here an impression can be gained of a coherent Brownian park landscape of some distinction (**D**). On your left is the ancient Sweet Chestnut Grove, which pre-dates Lancelot Brown's designs (www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk).



D. Horse Chestnuts in Digswell Park