

**LEICESTERSHIRE
AND RUTLAND
GARDENS
TRUST**



**REPORT ON THE HISTORY OF
THE GARDEN AT
ROTHLEY COURT**



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A History of the Garden at Rothley Court

Introduction

For some years, the Leicestershire and Rutland Gardens Trust has been involved in a national project to research and record the history of our parks and gardens with a view to entering this information into a national database:

<http://www.parksandgardens.ac.uk/>

This research into the history of the gardens at Rothley Court forms part of this project. However, it was felt that it would also be desirable to publish our findings in the form of a written report, which it would be possible to download from our own website:

www.lrgt.org

We should like to thank Terry Sheppard and Brian Verity of the Rothley Heritage Trust for showing us round the garden at Rothley Court. Particular thanks also go to Terry for the detailed information that he provided. Without his knowledge of the local history of Rothley, this report could never have been produced.

Sue Blaxland
2012

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Description of Rothley Court and its Gardens

The village of Rothley lies approximately 8 miles to the north of Leicester, just off the A6, Leicester – Loughborough road. Rothley Court is situated to the west of the village, on the road to Cropston.

The Grade I listed manor house, formerly known as Rothley Temple, now Rothley Court Hotel, is set behind high stone walls, which conceal it from the road. Manicured lawns and shrub borders surround the house and outbuildings. Beyond them, there is English parkland with fine trees, extending into neighbouring fields which originally formed part of the estate. To the north-west of the house, is a walled garden and, to the south, running from the terrace, is a straight path, punctuated by a stone pool and fountain, which leads down to Rothley Brook.

The site dates from the 11th century. The manor house is late 16th/early 17th century with remodelling in the 18th century and significant alterations and additions in 1894/95. There is some 17th century panelling and an 18th century staircase. It is built of granite rubble stone, with a small portion in red brick, with stone dressings. The parapet is stone and the roof is of Swithland slate with brick ridge and side stacks. The Templar Chapel, which is attached to the house, dates from the 13th century.

This link to the Leicestershire Villages website for Rothley has many illustrations of the site, as well as some of the documentation that has been used for this research:

<http://www.leicestershirevillages.com/rothley/115-rothley-court-hotel.html>

Timeline

- 1086** At the time of the Domesday survey, William of Normandy was recorded as Lord of the Manor of the Manor and Soke of Rothley. This was an administrative unit, over which the King could enforce certain rights.
- 1231** Henry III made a gift of his rights and lands at Rothley to the Knights Templar.
- 1231-1312** The Knights Templar set up a regional Preceptory at Rothley. Its purpose was to raise funds and recruit knights to protect pilgrims and to fight for the Holy Land. The Chapel was added to the Preceptory. With the suppression of the Order of the Knights Templar in 1312, the rule of the Templars at Rothley came to an end.
- 1313-1340** After the demise of the Templars, the Knights of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem, were granted the Manor and Soke of Rothley. This was confirmed by King Edward III in 1330 and they continued to run it, from their Preceptory at Old Dalby, until the Dissolution of the Monasteries, when the land temporarily reverted to the King.
- 1529** A lease of 29 years of the site of the Manor of Rothley was granted by the Prior and brethren of the Hospitallers to Humphrey Babington, who was also a Hospitaller Knight.
- 1540-1565** At the time of the Dissolution of the Knights Hospitaller, Babington held an unexpired lease, of which 18 years had still to run. A further lease was drawn up and the Manor continued to be leased by the Babington family until Humphrey Babington, grandson of the above, purchased the Manor and Soke and developed the buildings into a family home.
- 1565-1845** The Babington family lived at Rothley through many generations and it remained in their hands until 1845.
- 1729** There is evidence of a formal garden from a copy of a plan dated 1729 but no further information has been obtained to corroborate this.
- 1742** Following a kitchen fire, a new wing was built on to the south of the house. The date is shown on a chimney
- 1776** Thomas Babington (the last Babington owner of the Manor) inherited the estate after the death of his father.
- 1780-1781** A map of the Rothley Parish was produced in 1780 by J. Seagrave for the Enclosure Commissioners for the Rothley Enclosure of 1781. This would enclose the Rothley Temple Parish in order to modernize the estate and run it along more efficient lines.
- 1782** William Emes produced a plan for the estate
- 1781-1790** The Enclosure Act was implemented.
- 1800** Thomas Babington Macaulay – later Lord Macaulay, was born at Rothley Temple. He was the son of Zachary Macaulay, brother-in-law to Thomas

- Babington.
- 1819** A survey plan was produced. This appears to show that some of Emes' proposals had been carried out. The plan contains alterations and notes made by Thomas Babington, showing tree planting dates.
- 1837** Thomas Babington died.
- 1842** A plan was produced by John Bromley, a Derby surveyor, for the executors of the will of Thomas Babington. The executors had agreed a sale to Babington's son-in-law, Sir James Parker, who was Vice-Chancellor of England. This plan, and the accompanying valuation formed the basis of the sale, exceeded £40,000.
- 1845** Thomas Babington's widow, Jean (nee Macaulay) died.
- 1852** On the death of Sir James Parker, the estate passed to his son, Harry Rainy Parker. During his ownership, the manor house was occupied by tenants. The 1861 and 1871 Censuses both record that there was one gardener.
- 1893** Harry Rainy Parker sold the entire estate in lots.
- An illustration of the property and its grounds appeared in the Illustrated London News on November 4th.
- The Temple and its grounds were purchased by Frederick Merttens, a German émigré and successful Manchester businessman.
- 1894-1897** Merttens developed the house and grounds. The garden front and a new wing were designed by John Ely of Manchester. The gate lodge, turret, piers and gates were constructed, possibly also by John Ely.
- By 1897, Merttens and his family were completely resident at Rothley Temple.
- In addition, Merttens set about planning a new housing development: Rothley Garden Suburb, along the lines propounded by Ebenezer Howard for the development of garden cities.
- 1901** The Census shows two gardeners residing in the Gardener's cottage and another in the Groom's cottage. This would indicate that Merttens had developed the gardens to incorporate a croquet lawn to the west of the house. Several postcard images from the early 20th century show a straight path, edged with flower beds running from the house to the Rothley Brook.
- 1901** Merttens was advised by his doctor that he needed to live abroad, for his health
- 1901-1929** Merttens was involved in planning "Rothley Garden Suburb". Land was sold to the north and west of the manor to develop this, including a golf course, Rothley Park, which was opened in 1912.
- 1902-1949** Ernest Henry Broadhurst, a cotton trade executive, leased Rothley Temple, remaining there till the death of his wife in 1949.
- 1935** Frederick Merttens died in Rugby.
- 1939-** The Home Guard had their HQ in the Turret building in the old stables

- 1945** area, near to Westfield Lane.
- 1951-1956** Merttens' sons, as Directors of Rothley Temple Estates Ltd., leased the Temple as a nursing home.
- 1957-1959** Clive Wormleighton, a speculative builder, owner of Mallory Park Racing Circuit and a member of the modern order of Knights Templar, purchased Rothley Temple in 1957 and, in 1959, opened it as an hotel. The name was changed from Rothley Temple to Rothley Court.
- 2001** Greene King took over ownership of the hotel.

Below: The south-facing garden front with the pool and fountain created for Frederick Merttens in the foreground



Detailed History

Domesday Book in 1086 recorded that the Manor and Soke of Rothley with 22 outlying dependent hamlets was held by William the Conqueror. A Manor was an estate held by a lord, with tenant farmers, and a Soke was a term arising under the Danelaw (literally a safe place) and was a linked group of settlements, which gained the benefits of safe and orderly internal government and land transfer.

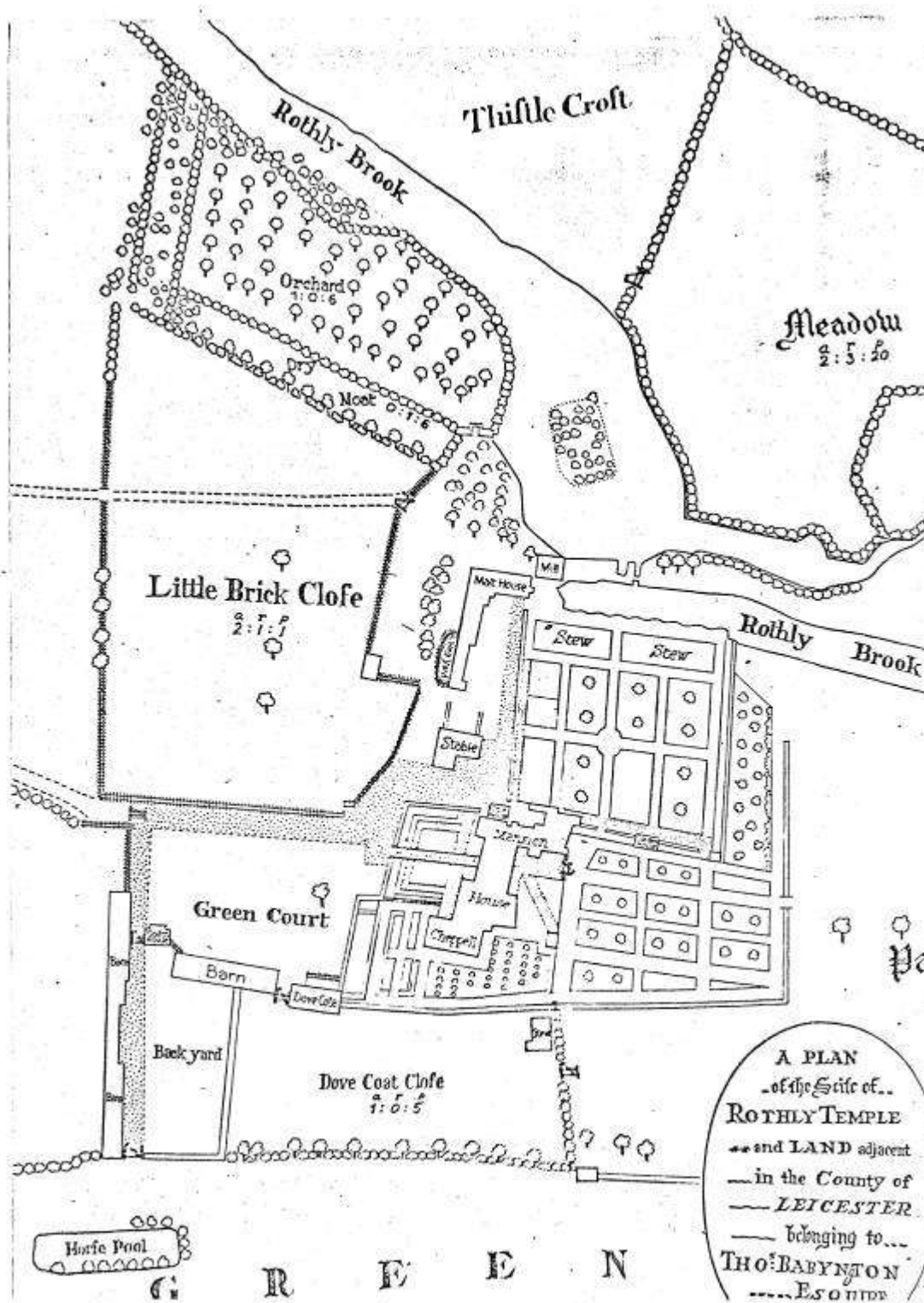
On 6th July 1281, Henry III made a gift of his rights and lands at Rothley to the Knights Templar, a monastic order of knights founded in the twelfth century for the protection of pilgrims traveling to the Holy Land. His intention was to bequeath his body to the Order for burial and prayers for his immortal soul. By 1235 the village of Rothley was confirmed to the Templars, along with land, the wood, the mill and rents from the villagers. They established a residence about a kilometre to the west of the main village settlement, which became known as Rothley Temple. The site was also associated with a hunting park and there is topographical evidence from the enclosure map suggesting that part of the original boundary survived. They set up a regional Preceptory (headquarters) at Rothley with the primary objective of raising money to meet their religious obligations in the Middle East. A Chapel was added to the Preceptory, which is still in existence. Deeds dating from 1331 list two orchards - "the fruit and herbage of which are worth 20s a year, a dovecote with 6s 8d a year and two mills, one water and one wind, worth 60s a year".

In 1312, Templars were suppressed by Pope Clement V, who pronounced that the lands which they had held should be handed over to the Knights Hospitaller, in order to continue the support of the cause in the Holy Land. The Hospitallers, like the Templars, were warrior monks, and already held lands in Leicestershire, at Old Dalby. They administered their soke at Rothley from there, probably leasing out the demesne to sub-tenants.

Some of the Hospitallers were named within the Rothley court documents, including a number of members of the Babington family, shown as knights in the early sixteenth century. On 24th June 1529, a lease for 29 years was granted to Humphrey Babington, by the Prior and Brethren of the Order. At the time of the Dissolution of the Knights Hospitaller in 1540, Humphrey retained the manor house and certain of its lands, but the bulk of the estate, which had been owned by the Hospitallers, reverted to the Crown. This lease was subsequently extended but it was not until 1565, during the reign of Elizabeth I, that the entire estate passed to Humphrey Babington, grandson of the above.

The Babington family continued to hold the manor house and the estate through many generations, until 1845.

There is evidence of a formal garden around the manor house from a copy of a plan dated 1729. This was found among the papers of the late Rodney Offley, a Rothley historian, but unfortunately, there is no further corroborative information. To the east of the Manor House is an area titled 'Green Court' with a barn and dovecote. To the south is a stable and a malt house and to the west are formal gardens. Between these



1729 Plan of Formal Garden at Rothley Temple

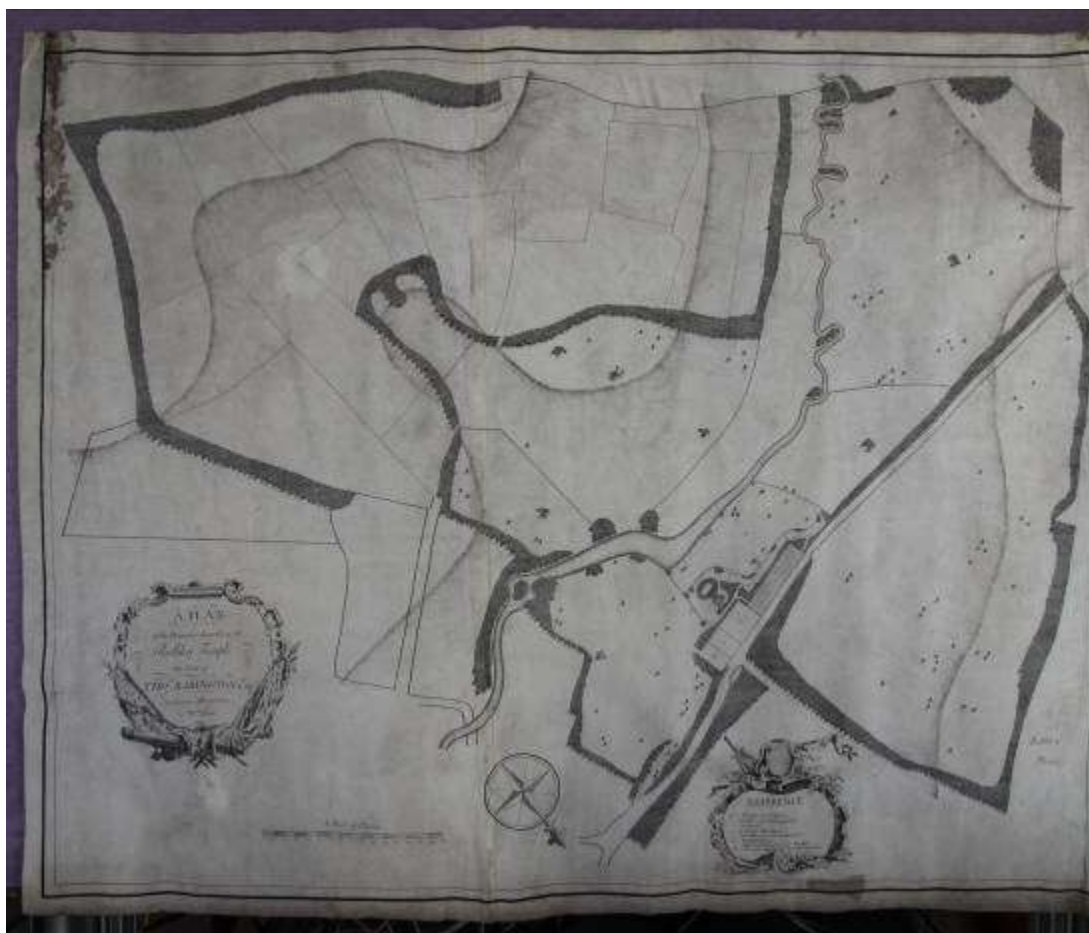
and the Rothley Brook are two stew ponds. There is a mill on the Brook and an orchard beyond, to the south east.

In 1742, following a kitchen fire, a new wing was built on to the south of the house. The date is shown on a chimney.

In 1776, Thomas Babington (1758-1837), the last Babington owner of the Manor, inherited the estate after the death of his father. He had been well-educated to equip him for this task, attending Oakham and Rugby Schools and then reading Classic, Mathematics and the Law at St. John's College, Cambridge. He was joined at Cambridge by Thomas Gisborne, the son of a Derbyshire landowner and merchant, and William Wilberforce. The three became close friends.

Babington completed his Law studies at Lincoln's Inn in 1779 and then set about the modernization of his estates at Rothley. In 1780, a map of the Rothley Parish was produced by J. Seagrave for the Enclosure Commissioner Babington's Enclosure Act of 1781 reorganized the land distribution along more efficient lines and released land in small plots to the poorer people of Rothley so that they could have land to grow food.

In 1782, William Emes produced a plan for the estate.



Keith Goodway, an authority on Emes, who compiled the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography entry, comments that the wording on the plan is ambiguous. It reads “with some alterations by William Emes” making it unclear whether the plan shows alterations he had already carried out or alterations that he was proposing. He goes on to say that the plan is not one of his more exciting designs and that it gives the impression that he had to compromise more than usual to meet the demands of agriculture – there are very clear field boundaries and the fields tend to be rather rectangular. The woodlands are sited to screen the kitchen garden, farmyard and possibly a small rectangular drying ground by the house – and the boundaries. The lake has been formed by damming the brook. He states that the cartography of the plan is typical of Emes style.

He goes on to suggest a possible reason for Emes involvement at Rothley. Thomas Babington’s sister, Mary, married Thomas Gisborne (Babington’s old university friend) who lived at Yoxhall Lodge, Staffordshire. Yoxhall was visited by Emes when he was Head Gardener at Kedleston. This is a tenuous but possible explanation for the choice of William Emes as a garden designer.

In 1819, a survey plan was produced which appears to show that some of Emes’ proposals had been carried out. Most interestingly, the plan is annotated by Babington with corrections and notes regarding dates of tree planting. For example, Babington writes: “The plan is inaccurate as to the position of the trees in the lawn in front of the Temple. The... Oaks there were planted in 1805, and a few in 1808. The plants were from acorns gathered by me (T. Bab.) at Hillerston, Devonshire in 1796.” Many of the acorns were from Turkey Oaks, *Quercus cerris*, which are vigorous and very tough, but, unfortunately, are not good timber trees. In an account book for the period 1781-1790, Babington records tree planting “by plain of young oaks” in December 1782 and also “planted in hedge...rows on the enclosure.. 1700 Oaks £8 8s 6d, 607 Elms £6 2s 6d, 50 Beech £0 17s 0d, 20 Lombardy Poplars £0 5s 0d” also “setting acorns with the price of them 10d a strike = £4 3s 0d”

In her memoir “Rothley Temple in the Old Time”, Babington’s granddaughter, Eliza Coneybeare, recalled “My Grandfather was very fond of his young trees, and my brother Edward, who was the happy possessor of a javelin, and always imagined himself an old knight... was forever rushing about, making the javelin quiver in the trunks of these trees, his supposed enemies, and much to the detriment of the bark.” She went on to write: “Well, Edward on this occasion had climbed some cherry trees in the paddock behind the house. These cherry trees had grown to the size of forest trees, and added much to the beauty of the Temple in the spring, when they were one mass of white blossom, which turned afterwards into the most delicious little black cherry.... The boys of the family or about the stable yard were for every set to climb the trees and throw down the cherries, which we gathered up in large baskets and carried off to eat in the boat, which was generally moored on these occasions under the thick branches of the paddock oak, stretching far over the water.”

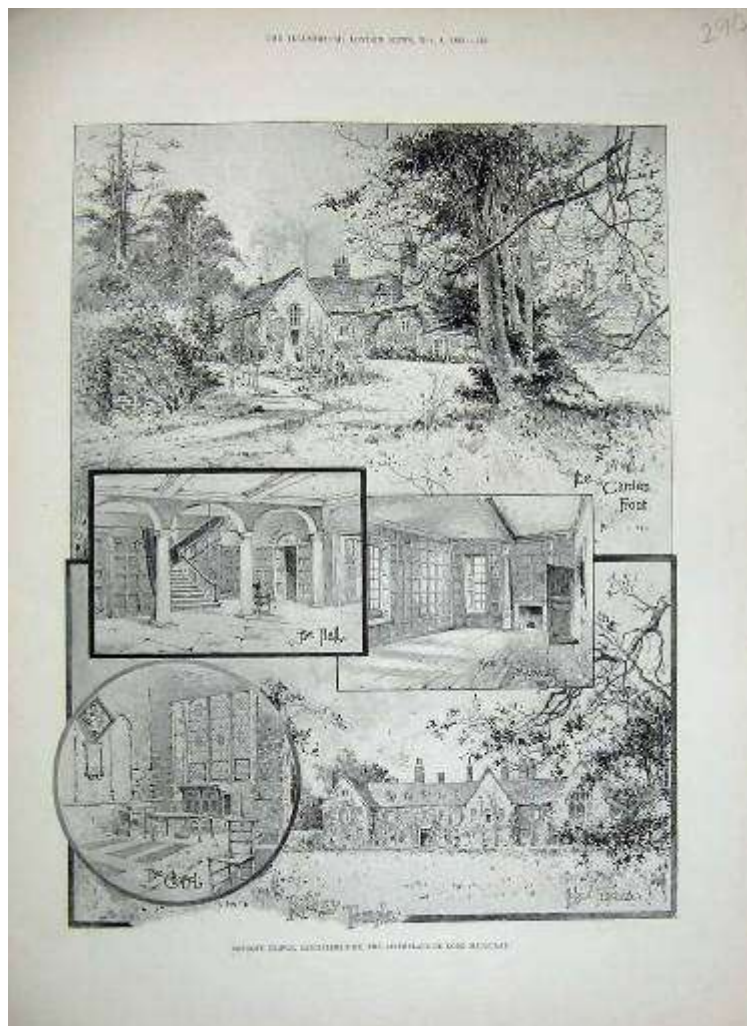
At the same time as developing his estate, Thomas Babington became involved with Wilberforce’s campaign for the Abolition of Slavery and worked with him and Gisborne to prepare evidence and plan strategy. In 1787, he married Jean Macaulay, whose brother, Zachary was also prominent in the anti-slavery movement. In 1800

Babington became MP for Leicester till 1818. He died in 1837. His wife, Jean Macaulay Babington died seven years later, in 1845.

In 1842, a plan was produced by John Bromley, a Derby surveyor, for the executors of the will of Thomas Babington. A sale had finally been agreed of the entire estate to Babington's son-in-law, Sir James Parker, the Vice Chancellor of England. The map, with the accompanying valuation schedule, formed the basis of the sale.

In 1852, Sir James Parker died and the estate passed to his son, Harry Rainy Parker, a farmer and magistrate. During his ownership, the manor house was occupied by tenants. The 1861 and 1871 Censuses both record that there was only one gardener. Little was done to the property during this period.

In 1893, Harry Rainy Parker sold the entire estate in lots. The sale catalogue described it as: "The Interesting Old Manor House, known as 'Rothley Temple'". There was a "finely-timbered park of about 30 acres" approached by "long carriage drives, one with lodge entrance". The gardens were described as "Pleasure Grounds, Stone-walled Kitchen Garden, Orchard and Lawns, inexpensive to maintain, two men being sufficient". An illustration of the property and its grounds appeared in the Illustrated London News of 4th November.



The Temple and its grounds were purchased in 1893 by Frederick Merttens (1849-1935), a German émigré, who had left Prussia because of the rise of militarism. He had become a successful Manchester cotton merchant. In 1894, he set about developing both the house and the grounds. The garden front of the house and a new wing were designed by John Ely of Manchester. A new gate lodge, turret, piers and gates were constructed, possibly also by John Ely. By 1897, Merttens and his wife were fully resident at the Temple and three children were born.

The 1901 Census shows 2 gardeners, father and son (William and Harry Marsh) residing in the Gardener's cottage and another gardener (William Selway) in the Groom's cottage. This would indicate that Merrtens had developed the gardens by this time.

Merttens set about planning a new housing development, Rothley Garden Suburb: <http://cdm15407.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/search/collection/p15407coll3> which formed part of a growing national movement for garden cities. This was to be on his lands to the north and north-west of the Manor. The business model was based on selling individual plots of land but only allowing the erection of houses according to conditions in keeping with the required ethos of the project. The Great Central Railway was completed in 1899 and Merttens had persuaded the railway to build a station at Rothley, close to his estate, rather than at Swithland. The plans included a golf course, Rothley Park, to the west of the Manor, and this was opened in 1912.



However, by 1901, Merttens had developed health problems and his London doctor told him that living in Leicestershire was not conducive to his health: he must go and live on the snow line in Switzerland. In three weeks, Merttens sold the animals, dismissed the staff and decamped to Montreux. He died in 1935.

The 1902 Ordnance Survey map shows the new wing and gate lodge as well as a formal path, leading from the house to the brook. The fountain on this path is shown. This features on postcard images from this period. There are extensive greenhouses in the walled garden. None of these elements feature on the OS map of 1885.



Two postcard images of Rothley Temple c 1900

Around 1902, Ernest Henry Broadhurst, a cotton trade executive (of Tootal, Broadhurst & Lee), became the tenant of the Temple and continued to live there until the death of his wife in 1949.

In “The King’s England – Leicestershire and Rutland”, edited by Arthur Mee and originally published in 1937, there is the following description: “... hidden away in its high-walled grounds near the village of Rothley is Rothley Temple, famous as the birthplace of Lord Macaulay. On close inspection, it reveals itself as one of those fascinating houses of English domestic architecture which have added to themselves throughout the centuries, the new blending happily with the old...” There then follows a description by George Trevelyan: “The stately trees, the grounds (half park,

half meadow), the cattle grazing up to the very windows; the hall with its stone pavement rather below than above the level of the soil, hung with armour rude and rusty enough to dispel the suspicion of its having passed through a collector's hands...."

During the 2nd World War, the Rothley Home Guard had their HQ in the turret building in the old stables area, near to Westfield Lane.

Shortly after the death of Ernest Broadbent's wife, Catherine, in 1949, the owners, Merttens' sons, as Directors of Rothley Temple Estates Ltd., found an alternative tenant, a Mrs. Ward, who leased the Temple as a nursing home. In 1956, the Church opened a new Vicarage on glebe land in the village, putting the commodious old Vicarage by the Church up for sale. Mrs. Ward bought it for her nursing home business and left the Temple.

In 1957, Clive Wormleighton, a prosperous speculative builder and owner of Mallory Park Racing Circuit, purchased Rothley Temple. He was a member of the modern order of Knights Templar. Wormleighton changed the name of the house from Rothley Temple to Rothley Court and it was opened as an hotel in 1959. He continued to own the property until 1979. He died in 1981 and is buried in the Chapel.



The Hotel was taken over by Greene King in 2001

As a footnote to the history of the garden, in 2004, pieces of stone were discovered outside the Chapel, being used as rockery stone. On closer inspection, these turned out to be an incomplete stone effigy of one of the Knights Templar. The history of Rothley Court had come full circle!

Surviving Historic Features of the Garden

Walled Garden

The walled garden appears for the first time on William Emes plan of 1782 as 'Kitchen Garden'. It is shown as being divided into two halves by a path and is screened from the Manor House by a belt of tree planting. It appears on subsequent plans and there is a small greenhouse at the east end. It is not until the 1902 OS map that this is replaced by a much larger greenhouse, clearly part of the improvements undertaken by Frederick Merttens. It was not possible to access the greenhouse to see if there is a manufacturer's name plate.

Today, the walled garden is sadly neglected, being sub-let and grazed by goats. The greenhouses are in a poor state of repair and there are fruit trees which have not been pruned for many years.



The Gate Lodge and Gate

Gate Lodge dates from 1895 and is possibly by John Ely of Manchester. It has a Swithland slate roof with a brick side and rear chimney stacks. It has crow-stepped gables, mullion windows with leaded lights and there are similar lancet windows above.

Between the right gate pier and the left side of the lodge, there is a linking wall with a Gothic arched doorway and door. There is a pair of wrought iron gates to the drive. The left gate pier is linked to a small round folly tower.

Grade II listed



Gate Lodge and Turret

Prominent People Involved with this Site

William Emes (1729 – 1803)

Nothing is known of William Emes' early life but he took up the post of head gardener to Sir Nathaniel Curzon at Kedleston Hall in Derbyshire in 1756 and remained there till 1760, possibly leaving because the appointment of Robert Adam with responsibility for "the intire manadgement of his (Curzon's) Grounds" left him with little scope. Emes had already started altering the earlier formal landscape and made the upper lake.

In 1758, at the age of 28, he married his servant, Mary, daughter of John Innocent, a tailor. They had five sons and three daughters. One son, John Emes (1762-1808) went on to become an artist, an engraver and, later, a goldsmith.

After leaving Kedleston, Emes moved to Bowbridge Fields, Mackworth, a farmhouse about two miles away and started to develop an extensive practice as a landscape designer. He worked mainly in the North Midlands and in Wales. His style was similar to that of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown. However, it is likely that he was influenced by the same design ideas as Brown, rather than directly copying Brown's style. On one occasion, at Eaton Hall, Cheshire, he was called in to replace Brown.

It was said that "Mr Eame excells in the laying out Water" and he often included serpentine lakes and rides in his landscapes. In some instances, he was called in to introduce it into landscapes where none existed. He sometimes supplied a plan and left the client to carry out the work. However, at sites such as Chirk Castle and Erdigg, he supervised the work over a number of years. He frequently worked with the architects, Samuel or James Wyatt, whom he may have met professionally at Kedleston. At Sandon in Staffordshire, he laid out a flower garden adjacent to the house, a feature which anticipated the later designs of Humphrey Repton. He also designed a number of minor buildings, such as a lodge at Attingham Hall and a greenhouse at Penrice Castle.



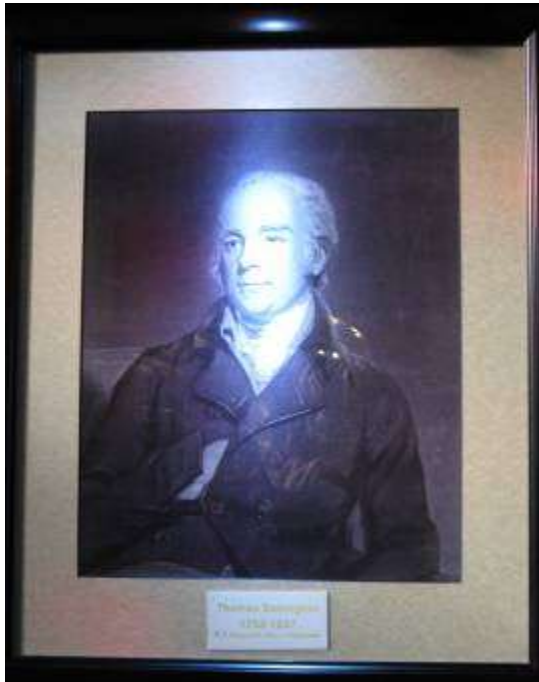
The cartography of Emes plans is elegant, drawn in Indian ink on vellum with the design of a cartouche being repeated on many of his plans.

In 1789, following the death of his wife, he moved to Hampshire and took a lease on Elvetham Park. A number of his commissions in the south of England date from this period, some of which were carried out in partnership with John Webb, who had been his foreman. He died in 1803, in London, at the home of his daughter, Sarah.

Thomas Babington (1758 –

1837)

Thomas Babington was the first son of another Thomas and his wife Lydia nee Cardale, daughter of the Rev. Joseph Cardale, Vicar of Hinckley, Leicestershire. He inherited the estate after his father's death in 1776. To equip him for the role of Lord of the Manor, he had been educated at Oakham and then Rugby Schools. He entered St. John's College, Cambridge in 1775, where he read Classics, Mathematics and the Law.



At Cambridge, he met Thomas Gisborne, the son of a Derbyshire landowner and merchant. Gisborne, who wanted to become an Anglican clergyman, was reading Divinity. Babington had a strong Christian faith and the two young men became close friends. This later led to Gisborne meeting and marrying Babington's sister, Mary. The third person to complete the group, was William Wilberforce, who joined St. John's at the same time as Gisborne.

Babington completed his law studies at Lincoln's Inn in 1779 and set about modernising his estates at Rothley with his Enclosure Act of 1781. This reorganised the land distribution along much more efficient lines. He also

released some land in small plots to the poorer people of Rothley – a practical demonstration of his strong Christian faith. He had also joined the Clapham Sect, a group of influential Church of England social reformers, which included Wilberforce.

In 1787, on a trip to Scotland, he met and married Jean Macaulay, daughter of the Rev. John Macaulay, minister of Cardross, Co. Dumbarton. Jean was sister to Zachary Macaulay one of the leaders of the anti-slavery movement. In 1800, Zachary's son, Thomas Babington Macaulay, who later became Lord Macaulay, a prominent Whig politician and poet, was born at Rothley Temple in 1800.

Babington, as an evangelical Christian devoted himself to a number of good causes. He offered to pay half the cost of smallpox inoculation for the people in Rothley in 1784-5. He set up a local Friendly Society to purchase corn for sale to the poor at a lower price, to improve the lives and diet of his estate workers. He set up trusts to provide housing in local villages and supported moves to extend voting rights to more people. In 1780, he became High Sheriff of Leicestershire.

In 1787, the London Abolition Committee (for the Abolition of Slavery) was formed, with Wilberforce spear-heading the campaign. From 1788 onwards, Gisborne and Babington were strong supporters of the campaign, working with Wilberforce in

London, at Gisborne's home in Staffordshire and at Rothley Temple to summarise the evidence that had been gathered by the Select Committee.

From 1800 to 1818 Babington was Member of Parliament for Leicester. This put him constantly at Wilberforce's side in the House of Commons when the Abolition Act was passed in March 1807.

Thomas's granddaughter, Eliza Coneybeare wrote of her grandfather: "I did not personally know him till he was quite old, and I fear I cannot sketch anything so perfect as he was then: his somewhat old-fashioned politeness and hospitality; the peace born of God and a pure conscience which pervaded his whole being and his every look; his countenance beaming with delight when he saw a set of young people happy together. If we ever got up a little dance – and it was a favourite winter evening's amusement – he would stand at the door, leaning on his gold-headed stick, watching us with joyful face, and constantly saying "Oh I love to see you happy, my dear children."

He died on 21st November 1837 at the age of 78 and is buried in the chapel at Rothley Temple, along with his wife, Jean.

Frederick Merttens (1849-1935)

Frederick Merttens was a successful Manchester cotton merchant. He was German by birth and came to England because of his objection to the rise of militarism in Prussia.

In 1893, he purchased Rothley Temple from Harry Rainy Parker and set about developing both the house and its grounds. He employed John Ely, who was a Manchester architect with a portfolio of successful projects of public buildings to his name. The garden front of the house and a new wing were designed. There was also a new gate lodge, turret, piers and gates, possibly also by John Ely. By 1897, Merttens and his wife were fully resident at the Temple and three children were born. There were improvements to the garden as well with a straight path leading from the house to the Rothley Brook. A pool and fountain were constructed and there were new greenhouses in the walled garden. In the 1901 Census, 3 gardeners were employed.

Merttens revelled in being Lord of the Manor. As has been described earlier, he planned a new housing development: Rothley Garden Suburb and a golf course, was opened to the west of the manor, in 1912.



The opening ceremony of the Golf Club – Frederick Merttens is the central figure on the front row.

However, his delight in his new home and role was not to last. By 1901, he had developed health problems and his London doctor told him that he needed to live in Switzerland. Within three weeks, he had sold the animals, dismissed the staff and decamped to Montreux.

His concerns about militarism obviously continued and he published a book in 1914 entitled: "Militarism and Wages – The Effect of Militarism on wages and prices". By 1921, after the 1st World War, he was back in England, living at a house called "Bilton Rise" in Rugby. (It was formerly known as "Plex House").

In 1926 he inaugurated a series of lectures: "The Merttens Peace Lectures" which were delivered annually and circulated in book form. They were published by Leonard and Virginia Woolf at the Hogarth Press. The first lecture was entitled "Justice among Nations".

He died in 1935 and is commemorated in the Chapel at Rothley Temple.

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