

## **Introduction to Tatton Park**

### **General**

Cheshire County Council manages and finances Tatton on behalf of the National Trust in accordance with a 99 year lease. Tatton Park is a significant attraction, identified by the Culturenorthwest as one of the North West's top 50 "Cultural Gems" and one of the region's 'Star Turns'. It was awarded 'Cheshire large visitor attraction of the year' in 2004 and 2005 by the tourism board and 'The Independent' listed Tatton Park as No1 in its top 50 stately homes in Britain (Sept 2004), particularly highlighting its gardens.

Tatton has been awarded a Green Flag and a 'Green Heritage Site' award every year since 2004. It is classed as an "inter-regional gateway" in the Interreg funded "European Garden Heritage Network" but also provides a significant area of local greenspace for Knutsford and the surrounding area. Tatton Park is a 'Welcome Host' site and has been Quality Assured by VAQAS, providing a welcoming, safe environment for visitors.

The Mansion and gardens are a registered museum (reg. no.1875) and contain significant paintings, furniture, library, statuary and plant collections. The 2000 acre park contains a Scheduled Ancient Monument around the Old Hall site, over 2000 recorded sites or monuments, 25 listed buildings, two sites of special scientific interest and a RAMSAR site (international mosses and meres). The Park, of national importance, is included in the English Heritage register of historic parks and gardens (reg. no. 1477), its landscape is a significant component of a designated 'area of special County value', while its wildlife and ancient deer herds require expert curation. Much of the park is now covered by a Countryside Stewardship agreement. In addition to the Mansion, Gardens and Park, Tatton also boasts a working farm and a medieval Old Hall that are open to visitors.

Tatton not only conserves and provides access to an important heritage. It also contributes to the understanding and development of today's cultural resources at many levels with a new major programme taking place 2005-2008 called '**oneplace**' to interpret Tatton's 'sense of place' through different media and with both artists of international repute and emerging artists. Tatton is also contributing to Cheshire's Year of Gardens '08 and will be staging the Tatton Park Biennial, a major contemporary arts event, as part of its contribution.

The site makes an important contribution to the economy and culture of the region, making a net contribution of £8.8m p.a. to the Cheshire and Warrington economy (SQW Dec 2006), attracting over 800,000 visits, while hosting major events such as the RHS Flower Show, Halle Concert and North West Fine Foods Fair. Tatton also provides an educational and community resource, with nearly 20,000 school children visiting, adult learning opportunities, around 80 volunteers and close involvement with local organisations. Tatton Park will make a significant contribution to the strategic 'Cheshire's year of gardens 08' initiative.

Tatton Park is a successful, diverse and dynamic heritage resource that makes a significant contribution to the region through looking forwards at the same time as caring for the legacy of the past.

### **The Parkland**

The appearance of the parkland today owes much to the ideas of the landscape architect Humphrey Repton (1752-1818) who produced his 'Red Book' design in 1791 around the same time as the architect Samuel Wyatt (1737-1807) had started work on the mansion .

Half of Tatton's 2000 acres are open to visitors, offering trails to explore, fishing and horseriding, a play area for the adventurous, the perfect setting for a picnic and the opportunity to see abundant wildlife. It remains a beautiful place with grand vistas, changing moods throughout the year and enough space to escape from today's hectic lifestyle.

Herds of Red and Fallow deer roam freely across the park, while in the summer, flocks of sheep graze lazily on its grasslands. Deer have been a feature of the park for centuries, while they have been recorded locally for thousands of years. Their graceful form and their obvious

association with the park, its purpose and design make them a very special feature of Tatton throughout the year. Other wildlife of interest includes the bird populations. There are regular sightings of rare species on the park and the meres. These are often highlighted by the park rangers on a wildlife notice board and newsletter. The parkland trees, avenues and woodlands offer contrast for both the landscape and its wildlife.

During World War II, Tatton was used for as a base for parachute and glider training in association with Ringway (now Manchester International) Airport. Many features from that time can still be discovered in the park today.

### **The rest of the estate**

Within the park, the Old Hall glances back at pre-Egerton times to an earlier epoch of country house living with house and farm gathered together in one place. The park itself, though by Repton, complete with its Red Book, still preserves important vestiges of an early 18<sup>th</sup> century avenue. The house, though its genesis involved no less than five architects, derives its character from the work of the architect Lewis Wyatt at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The simple, and somewhat modest scale of the Neo-classical exterior belies the lavish opulence of state room interiors which contain the largest collection of Gillows furniture in the country and a spectacular collection of Grand Tour pictures. The domestic offices and cellars are among the most complete in the country; while the Tenants Hall was added by the 4<sup>th</sup> Lord Egerton in 1935 to house his collection of ethnographical objects and mounted trophies. The sequence of the Conservatory, Orchid House and Fernery built between 1818 and 1859 are a grand testimony to the 19<sup>th</sup>-century fashion for collecting exotic plants from all over the world. The pleasure grounds also contains the most unique Japanese garden, designed and built at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Japanese workmen, as well as an extensive pinetum. Much of the 6-acre walled kitchen gardens has recently been restored and are on a palatial scale. Finally, the Home Farm, the engine house of the whole agricultural estate, retains nearly all its buildings.

### **For further information**

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