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Hagley Park

Contribution from Mrs. Hilda Deeley:

Extract from a letter from Horace Walpole (who visited Hagley in 1753) to Mr. Bentley:

“You might draw, but I can’t describe the enchanting scenes of the Park: it is a hill of 3 miles, but broken into all manner of beauty; such lawns, such woods, rills, cascades, and a thickness of verdure quite to the summit of the hill, and commanding such a vale of towns, and meadows, arid woods, extending quite to the Black Mountains in Wales, that I quite forgot my favourite Thames! Indeed, I prefer nothing to Hagley but Mount Edgumbe. There is extreme taste in the park, the seats are not the best but there is not one absurdity. There is a ruined castle, built by Miller, that would get him his freedom even of Strawberry Hill; it has the true rust of the Barons’ Wars. Then there is a scene of a small lake, with cascades falling down such a Parnassus; with a circular temple on the distant eminence; and there is such a fairy dale, with more cascades gushing out of the rocks; and there is a hermitage, so exactly like those in Sadeler’s prints, on the brow of a shady mountain, stealing peeps into the glorious world below; and there is such a pretty well under a wood, like the Samaritan Woman’s in a picture of Nicolo Poussin; and there is such a wood without the park, enjoying such a prospect; and there is such a mountain on t’other side of the park commanding all prospects that I wore out my eyes with gazing, my feet with climbing, and my tongue and vocabulary with commendings.”

Contribution from Mr. Alan Rankin:

Extract from John Wesley’s Journal - Saturday, 13th July 1782:

“I spent an hour in Hagley Park; I suppose inferior to few, if any in England, but we were straitened for time. To take a proper view of it would take five or six hours.”

Then follows a brief but glowing account of Shenstone’s Leasowes at Halesowen - “I have seen nothing in all England to be compared with it”.

A description of Hagley Park from “The Seasons” by James Thomson:

.....There along the dale
With woods o’erhung and snagg’d with mossy rocks,
Whence on each hand the gushing waters play,
And down the rough cascade white-dashing fall,

Or gleam in lengthen'd vista through the trees,
You silent steal; or sit beneath the shade
Of solemn oaks, that tuft the swelling mounts
Thrown graceful round by Nature's careless hand,
And pensive listen to the various voice
Of rural peace: the herds, the flocks, the birds,
The hollow - whispering breeze, the plaint of rills,
That, purling down amid the twisted roots
Which creep around, their dewy murmurs shake
On the sooth'd ear.

This section of the poem "Spring" was first published in 1728, and appeared in an extended revised edition in 1746. Thomson received his first invitation to Hagley in 1743 and became a frequent visitor. He died in 1748.

Pevsner states that "Hagley Hall was built for the first Lord Lyttelton in 1754 - 60. The gardens and garden ornaments, however, were begun already in 1747 or a little earlier".