In 2008 work got underway to restore the landscape to its former glory.

**Wildlife at The Leasowes**

The Leasowes is not only an historic landscape but also a nature reserve. The site has several different habitats, including woodland, grasslands ponds and streams, each one providing a home for, and supporting many different species.

In the 18th century, the woodland would probably have been a mixture of oak and ash with an under story of hazel and would have been managed to produce timber and materials for charcoal and fencing.

The woodland is now managed to benefit the wildlife, which includes a variety of species such as green and great spotted woodpeckers, tawny owls, badgers, wood mouse, bank voles, voles, butterflies, wood anemone and many more.

At The Leasowes there are a number of ponds, streams and wetland areas; important to wildlife as they support a wide variety of species such as the emperor dragonfly, frog, toad, newt, kingfisher, darter, dace, three-spined stickleback, fish and grey wagtails.

The farmland of the 18th century would probably have been a mixture of arable and pasture; indeed the term “Leasowes” means meadow and parts of the site still retain evidence of the former ridge and furrow ploughing system.

Some of the grassland areas have remained undisturbed for centuries and are therefore of great value to wildlife, supporting many wildflowers, invertebrates, small mammals and fungi including the rare Bletilla and Crimson waxcap species.

The Leasowes

a guide to the historic landscape and nature reserve

Location

The Leasowes
Leasowes Lane
Off Muchwood Hill
Halesowen
West Midlands
B62 8DH

The Leasowes lies east of Halesowen, not far from junction 3 of the M5 motorway.

Contact us

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In 1934 by Halesowen Council, which became part of Dudley Council in 1974.

1960s. Sections of the circuit walk remain, but many of the buildings including the Ruined Priory, survived until the 1960s. Sections of the circuit walk remain, but many of Shenstone's original trees have gone.

In the years since, fortunes have increased and declined. The house itself was rebuilt in 1778 and several other buildings including the Ruined Priory, survived until the 1960s. Sections of the circuit walk remain, but many of Shenstone’s original trees have gone.

Shenstone’s early education was under a school-dame in Halesowen, whom he later immortalised in his poem, “The School Mistress”. Subsequently he attended Halesowen Grammar School before going to academy in Solihull and to Pembridge College in Oxford in 1732.

Thomas Shenstone died in 1724 leaving William and his younger brother Joseph in the care of their mother. She continued to manage the farm until her death in 1732. The guardianship of the land passed to John Spencer and later to Thomas Dolman (William’s uncle), before William took over the estate in the early 1740s.

Shenstone admitted that he was a poor farmer and only ever wanted to write poetry. His poems were occasionally published until 1750 when Robert Dodds included some of his work in a book of modern poems. The book was a best seller and Shenstone’s poems became very popular.

He was preparing his collected works for publication when he died of fever in February 1763 and was buried in Halesowen churchyard. Shenstone did not marry and his estate passed to John Hodgetts, a distant relative.

Although famous during Shenstone’s life, The Leasowes reputation increased after his death, due largely to the publication of ‘A Description of The Leasowes’ by Robert Dodds in 1763. This described the circuit path, which led visitors through the varied landscape, allowing visitors to tour The Leasowes. Visitors to the site included Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin and John Wesley.

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The Leasowes is renowned both nationally and internationally for its significance in marking a fundamental change in garden design.

At the time, gardens in Britain were laid in formal designs with rigid lines of trees and shaped flowerbeds and pools. This was Shenstone’s original approach to landscape The Leasowes but he soon abandoned this for a style that respected and utilised the natural landscape.

He was not a wealthy man; indeed, if Shenstone had the means he would have probably continued with his formal designs. He worked in an unplanned fashion, forced to economise and to use his imagination, which is why it became such a unique landscape.

Shenstone transformed parts of his property into a ‘terme ornée’ – an ornamental farm. Not only did he introduce cascades and pools into the natural waterways, constructed runs and seats to decorate the landscape, dedicated urns to the memory of friends and planted trees and shrubs to highlight the views both within the site and more importantly the surrounding countryside.

The distinctive features added by Shenstone developed into a themed walk, which visitors to the site can still enjoy today.

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