

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

Ightham Court

Auteur(s) : Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/>

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Name:	Ightham Court
County:	Kent
District:	Tonbridge and Malling (District Authority)
Parish:	Ightham
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.295489 Longitude: 0.28578874 National Grid Reference: TQ5946457632 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000405 Date first listed: 01-Nov-1989 Date of most recent amendment: 04-Jun-2015 Location Description: East side of Fen Pond Road, Ightham, Kent, TH15 9HT

Historique de la conservation

Ightham Court, formerly known as Court Lodge, was an ancient manor whose ownership is recorded at least as early as 1262. The current house was built in the mid-C16 by the Willoughby family, either Sir Thomas Willoughby, who was Chief Justice of the Common Pleas in 1538, or his son Robert. Robert sold the property to William James, the third son of a Roger James from Haastrecht in the Netherlands by 1600, and it remained in the ownership of that family for over 300 years. According to Hasted (*The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent V, 1798*) his successor, Sir William James II, sequestered loyalist estates during Cromwell's interregnum and was three times a Knight for Kent. His successor, Sir Demetrius James, was born c1629 and died in 1678, and his son William James III was elected Sheriff of Kent in 1732.

During the latter part of the C17 or the early part of the C18 a formal garden was laid out and this is illustrated in a Kip engraving published in 1728. This shows the main house facing west to Fen Pond Road behind a small walled garden and a circular carriage drive, flanked by stabling and barns to the south and walled kitchen gardens to the north. Immediately north and east of the house are shown formal gardens with a circular pond with a fountain to the east, a summer house at the south-east corner and raised terraces on the north side. Further south are additional kitchen gardens. North of the formal garden is shown a large wooded area known as The Wilderness, including an island with a moat and extensive fish ponds. Adjoining the eastern side of the formal gardens and adjoining kitchen gardens, and continuing on the south side of the kitchen gardens, is shown an L-shaped area of ornamental trees, possibly an orchard. The Kip engraving shows further fields and woodland to the south and east.

During the middle years of the C18 William James IV was in residence at Ightham, and on his death in 1781 the estate passed to his second son, Colonel Richard James. A series of alterations to the house carried out by him in c1800 may, in part, have been directed by the architect Samuel Wyatt (*Country Life*, 26 June 1958). Ightham Court is shown on the 1798 one-inch Ordnance Survey map Kent Sheet 16 by draughtsman George Pink. Colonel James died childless in 1807 and left Ightham to his first cousin once removed, Demetrius Grevis, who then changed his name to Grevis-James.

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On the 1868 First Edition Ordnance Survey map the property is still called Court Lodge, a number of the garden boundaries shown in the Kip engraving survive and an ice house is shown in the middle of the island. There is no change on the Second Edition map of 1895, except that the name of the property has changed to the current Ightham Court. Sales particulars of 1905 for Ightham Court state that 'The grounds surrounding the house include extensive lawns on the west, north and east sides. One with a small pond stocked with goldfish and an aviary and machine house. Three produced walled kitchen gardens, fruit garden and orchard. Extensive glasshouses... Picturesque wilderness (with rookery) containing some remarkable timber trees including very fine specimens of oak, ash, beech, lime, chestnut etc., near the middle of this wilderness is an island surrounded by an ancient moat with a summer or tea house on it. The Moat is kept at a level by a pond close at hand, which is fed by springs and is connected to the garden by pipes feeding several cisterns and the fish pond on the lawn. Nearby is a similar Island or Tumulus surrounded by a moat now dry. There is an ash plantation growing hop poles.' The total acreage surrounding the house is 95 acres, 2 rods, 28 poles. There is no change on the 1909 Ordnance Survey map.

From the Grevis-James family the property passed by marriage to Colonel E W Grevis Bailey, on whose death in 1920 the house was sold and the estate divided up. It then passed through several hands until, in 1944, the Court was purchased by Colonel Ralph and Lady Gweneth Cavendish. It changed hands again in 1984, following which a major restoration programme was undertaken. The site remains (2015) in divided ownership.

Details

A small country house with gardens and woodland containing features surviving from the formal layout of the late C17 or early C18.

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Ightham Court is situated c8km to the east of Sevenoaks on the north side of the A25. The c10ha site occupies a rural location which is bounded to the west by Fen Pond Road and to the south, east, and north by a mixture of farmland and woodland. The house and gardens sit in the south-west corner of the generally level site.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The present (2015) access is from Fen Pond Road, c150m to the south-west of the house. The drive runs north and then turns east towards the stable block, in an arrangement which has been altered from its early C18 route, although the entrance to the house is still on the west front. A second drive enters the site from the northern tip of the Wilderness and runs south through the woodland to arrive at the west front.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Ightham Court (listed Grade II*) is a small country house built of red brick with stone dressings under a slate roof. It represents one recess of the original mid C16 H-plan house, filled in by a projecting four-storey classical frontispiece in 1575. Apart from the c1800 alterations, which included the addition of Tudor-Gothic mullion windows and a porch on the west front, the main building has been little altered since its construction by the Willoughby family in the mid C16. On the south side of the Court stands a single-storey stable courtyard, open on the west side, into which the main drive leads.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The house is set in lawns which, to the east and north of the house, retain grass terraces and have walls surviving from the late C17/early C18 formal gardens, as shown on the engraving by J Kip (1728). To the south-east of the house, at a lower level, are walled gardens which also formed part of this scheme. The walled gardens are laid to lawn and planted with shrubs and perennials, while the grass terrace on the north side of the walled garden contains a circular garden area with a central fountain basin.

Beyond the garden to the north is a piece of woodland known as The Wilderness, which retains some early plantings. It was divided by a lime avenue aligned on the north facade of the house until the avenue was severely damaged in the Great Storm of October 1987. Within The Wilderness is a complex of fishponds and two substantial moated mounds. The larger of these earthworks is circular and has the remains of an icehouse at its centre. The smaller is D-shaped and carries the footings of a summerhouse on its summit. The ponds and mounds may predate the gardens but were incorporated into the late C17/early C18 layout as garden features.

SELECTED SOURCES

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
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J Harris, *The History of Kent* (1719), p 162 J Kip, *Supplement du Nouveau theatre de la Grande Bretagne* (1728), pl 16 T Badeslade, *Thirty six different views of noblemen and gentlemen's seats in the county of Kent* (1750s), pl 15 1798 Ordnance Survey map by Draughtsman George Pink, Kent 16 Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent V*, (1798) [Facsimile edn 1972] 1905 Sales Particulars of Ightham Court Victoria History of the County of Kent 1, (1908) *Country Life*, 123 (26 June 1958), pp 1424-7 Inspector's Report: Ightham Court, (English Heritage 1989)

Summary

A small country house with gardens and woodland containing features surviving from the formal layout of the late C17 or early C18.

Legal

This garden or other land is registered under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 within the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens by Historic England for its special historic interest.

Reasons for Designation

Ightham Court is on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens at Grade II for the following principal reasons: * Age and rarity: it is a site formed before 1750, illustrated by the Dutch illustrator Johannes 'Jan' Kip c1728, where at least a proportion of the site's original layout is still in evidence; * Representativity: it is a representative example of a late C17 or early C18 formal garden and woodland, though the mound and fishponds possibly survive from an earlier period; * Group Value: with the main house, Ightham Court, which dates from the mid-C16, and is listed at Grade II*.