

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

LULLINGSTONE CASTLE

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Name:	LULLINGSTONE CASTLE
County:	Kent
District:	Sevenoaks (District Authority)
Parish:	Crockenhill
County:	Kent
District:	Sevenoaks (District Authority)
Parish:	Eynsford
County:	Kent
District:	Sevenoaks (District Authority)
Parish:	Shoreham
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.359676 Longitude: 0.18053140 National Grid Reference: TQ 51914 64546 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001687 Date first listed: 18-Mar-2004

Details

A mid to late C 18 landscape park created from an earlier deer park. The park surrounds a C 16 and later country house with informal pleasure grounds and gardens, parts of which overlie C 17 and C 18 formal gardens.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The manor of Lullingstone was mentioned in the Domesday Survey. In 1279 the estate was acquired by Gregory de Rokesley, three times Lord Mayor of London, who was granted liberty of free warren in the same year. By 1368 John Peche, Alderman of London, had possession and also won the right of free warren. It is possible that a park was enclosed and laid out at this time. In the late 1490s Sir John Peche (d 1522) built a new house, including two detached gate houses, probably on the site of, or close to, an earlier manor house (Pittman). Sir John was prominent at the courts of Henry VII and VIII, the latter who probably visited Lullingstone several times, and appointed Sir John Lord Deputy of Calais in 1509. A tilt yard was apparently constructed for him on a flat area beyond the adjacent public road, immediately in front of the outer gate house.

In 1522 the estate passed to Sir John's nephew, Sir Percyvall Hart (d 1580), also prominent at the courts of the Tudor monarchs, who made Lullingstone his chief residence. The earliest reference to the deer park is in the earliest surviving manorial roll of

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1545 (pers comm S Pittman, 20 Feb 2004). A deer park is mentioned at Lullingstone in 1570 by Lambarde and illustrated for the first time on Symondson's map of 1596. By the late C 17 (drawing, nd, c 1670-80, in Harris) the garden consisted of a number of formal enclosures: the house was surrounded by a walled moat and approached from the west via outer and inner forecourts, these guarded by the respective gatehouses; narrow, enclosed lawns lay to the south of the moat reached via a small bridge; an orchard and formal lawns with a square summerhouse lay to the north and north-west of the house; the church stood at the heart of the compartments within the walled churchyard, with a farmyard adjacent to the west; an avenue led west from the outer gatehouse, beyond the public road into the park. In the early C 18 Percyvall (d 1738), the last of the Harts at Lullingstone, who had inherited in 1700, remodelled Lullingstone House and church, and was visited by Queen Anne. (Pittman)

In 1738 the estate passed to Sir Thomas Dyke, who had married Percyvall's daughter, Anne. Sir Thomas's wealth derived from Sussex ironworks, and he used it to revive the fortunes of the estate, which he made his seat and which was renamed Lullingstone Castle. He and his son, Sir John Dixon Dyke (1756-1810) restored the apparently moribund park 'to its present state as a Park again' (Hasted, 1797, quoted in Pittman). Between 1738 and 1756 a new wooden fence was erected encircling the park (Pittman). Buck's engraving (mid C 18) shows a similar layout to the c 1670s drawing. A further mid C 18 view, taken from the north-east beyond the River Darent, confirms this layout, and illustrates in greater detail the square-plan summerhouse, and a rectangular-plan dovecote further to the north, adjacent to pasture leading to the river (oil painting, mid C18). It also illustrates a low bridge or causeway across the river linking the west bank with the east bank. Sir John demolished the inner gate-house and walls, filled in the moat and created an informal lake to the south of the Castle (Pittman).

A plan of 1802 (estate map) provides a detailed picture of the layout of the park and gardens. It shows within the park a small building, a summer house, on Summerhouse Knoll, standing on a promontory above and to the south-west of the Castle, together with an obelisk to the north of the summerhouse standing prominently on a further shoulder of land to the northwest of the Castle. In 1934 much of the park was sold to Kemp Town Brewery, Brighton who in turn sold it in 1938 to Kent County Council. In World War II a decoy airfield was sited in the park, and the Castle was occupied by the army. In 1946 the designer Eleanor Sinclair Rohde laid out a Tudor-style herb garden in the walled kitchen garden for Zoe, Lady Hart Dyke (Country Life, 1983). In the mid-1960s Dartford Rural District Council, having leased the park from Kent County Council, laid out an 18-hole golf course in the park, with a further 9-hole course added in the later C20. The park is presently leased by Sevenoaks District Council and remains (2004) in use as a public amenity; the Castle and grounds remain in private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Lullingstone Castle stands 7km east of Orpington and 1 km south-west of the village of Eynsford. The c 300ha site is bounded largely by agricultural land, with Castle Road adjoining the site at the east end of the south boundary, Redman's Lane adjoining the site on the south boundary alongside Home Wood, and the A225 road bounding the eastern tip of the site. The park boundary is well marked, particularly to the north, west and south, by the remains of ditches and banks surviving from the park pale with service tracks (now footpaths) running alongside, and in places by C 19 iron park fencing, particularly on the south and west boundaries. The site occupies the valley of the River Darent which enters at the east end of the south boundary. The river runs for 1 km northwards, alongside the east side of the lake, then between the gardens and pleasure grounds, emerging at the east end of the north boundary. To the west two dry valleys run up towards a plateau of the North Downs in the west corner of the park. The setting is rural, with panoramic views from the eastern half of the park north and south along the Darent valley, and east to the steep valley side. The M25 runs parallel 100 to 200m west of the west boundary, and Lullingstone Roman Villa lies adjacent to the north boundary close to where the Darent leaves the site.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The former main approach during the C 19 and C20 enters from the A225, on the east side of the site, 350m north-east of the Castle at the east side of the park, giving direct access from Sevenoaks to the south and Eynsford to the north. To the north of the entrance stands a C 19 lodge, built in Picturesque style. From here the east drive extends south-west down the hillside, flanked by parkland to the east and the wooded pleasure grounds to the west. 125m south-east of the Castle the drive turns north-west, leading to a late C20 footbridge which crosses the course of the River Darent 75m from the Castle. The footbridge replaced an earlier bridge which carried the drive in the C 19. From here the drive continues

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north-west around the south front of the Castle, turning north to enter the lawned forecourt on the west front of the Castle at a turning circle, overlooked by the central front door. The forecourt is bounded on the north side by the kitchen garden wall, adjacent to which stands the medieval parish church of St Botolph, set in the forecourt lawn. The west side of the forecourt is bounded by a the gatehouse of c 1500, from which a yew hedge extends north to the southwest corner of the kitchen garden, and stables and other outbuildings lead south, turning east along the west side of the south boundary of the forecourt. The remainder of the south side is bounded by lawns which lead south to the lakeside. From the gatehouse a gravel drive leads east, linking it directly with the Castle.

The west drive enters the park off Parkgate Road adjacent to Park Gate House, 2.5km west of the Castle. From here the west drive curves east through the centre of the park, crossing the western plateau and descending via the bottom of the southern of the two dry valleys into the Darent Valley, overlooked by Summerhouse Knoll to the south, and the site of the former obelisk to the north. The west drive arrives at the gatehouse on the west side of the forecourt.

A third, north drive enters off Lullingstone Lane, 650m north of the Castle, adjacent to the remains of Lullingstone villa, giving access from Eynsford. From here the north drive extends south, alongside meadows leading down to the Darent to the east, bounded on the west side by estate houses including Lullingstone Park Farm and Lilac Cottage. The drive runs alongside the west wall of the kitchen garden to arrive at the gatehouse. The drive continues southwards from the gatehouse as a path which emerges 650m south-west of the Castle at Castle Road alongside the Lullingstone Park Visitor Centre.

The present drive system was apparently largely developed by the C 19. By 1769 (Andrews, Dury and Herbert) the west drive was in place. The present north drive and southern extension follow the course of the old public road as shown by Andrews, Dury and Herbert. This linked Eynsford with Shoreham to the south and was superseded by the turnpike road which now forms the A225. Castle Road was built to link the turnpike and the east end of Redman's Lane after the old road was closed in 1861. The east drive is first shown on the 1802 estate map.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Lullingstone Castle (C 16 and C18, listed grade II*) stands towards the east edge of the park, in the valley of the River Darent, and may occupy the site of an earlier manor house. The three-storey house is brick-built, its entrance front to the west, with kitchen and laundry blocks to the south, and the garden front to the north. The Castle enjoys extensive views west across the park and north and south along the Darent valley. The house as originally built was surrounded by a moat to the north, west and south, with a large inner gatehouse at the entrance to the moated forecourt (sketch, 1670-80, gone by the later C 18), but these features were removed in the mid C 18.

75m west-north-west of the Castle stands the massive gatehouse (1497, listed grade I). Built of red brick it is rectangular in plan with polygonal turrets attached to the west, outer face. The central gateway gives access to the forecourt from what was formerly the public road and from the west drive to the forecourt leading to the Castle. Some 50m west of the Castle stands the L-shaped stable block (C 16, altered C 19, listed grade II), now (2004) converted to a cottage.

30m north-west of the Castle stands the church of St Botolph (medieval with C18 decoration, listed grade I), set on the north side of the forecourt. It is built largely of knapped flint with a large early C 18 stuccoed south porch and west bell turret, and contains a collection of fine memorials to the Peche, Hart and Dyke families.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens and pleasure grounds enclose the house to the north, east and south, and are divided into two main sections: the gardens to the west of the River Darent and the pleasure grounds to the east, leading up the hillside towards the A225.

The gardens are laid largely to informal lawn, extending north, south and eastwards from the Castle. At the north-west corner of the Castle stands a group of three mature Cedars of Lebanon, linking the north side of the forecourt and the church with the north lawn. The west side of the north lawn is bounded by the kitchen garden. To the east the lawns are bounded by the river, and the north end is bounded by paddocks running parallel to the river. The south lawn leads down to the lake. In the C 17 and mid C 18 (sketch, 1670-80; oil painting, mid C 18) the north lawn contained the main garden compartments, divided into two formal, walled lawns of unequal size reached across the moat from the north front via a small footbridge, with a summerhouse at the south-east corner close to the Castle. The lawns were surrounded by gravel paths and lines of trees, and some of the walls were planted with fruit trees. To the south of the Castle were two narrow lawns which may have been bowling greens.

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East of the River Darent lie the wooded pleasure grounds. These are now (2004) reached via the footbridge on the east drive, but formerly a bridge further downstream linked the pleasure grounds with the north lawn. The footings of this bridge survive, together with a brick pier on the east side, and may be the successor to the bridge shown in the mid C 18 oil painting. A path runs northwards alongside the river at the west edge of the pleasure grounds. From here the ground rises steeply eastwards towards the A225, planted with mature trees of mixed species including beech and London plane. This slope enjoys long views across the park to the west. An C 18 brick and flint ice house (listed grade II) is set into the hillside part way up the slope, c 125m east of the Castle. The walls of an C 18 flint bath house (listed grade II) stand c 150m further north, between the path and the river. The bath house is rectangular in plan, with an apsidal north end. It is now roofless but appears to have been of a single storey, and retains a rectangular plunge pool at the centre of the floor.

South of the Castle lies a lake, the northern tip formed in the later C 18, which was extended southwards to its present size by gravel workings in the mid C20. It is enclosed by a band of woodland. Long views extend southwards across the lake along the valley beyond. In 1769 (Andrews, Dury and Herbert) this was given over to a rectangular area of parkland completely enclosed by the River Darent and a subsidiary arm, but by 1802 (estate map) the oval lake had been formed at the north end. On the upper slope to the east of the lake are the remains of the rectangular Victorian ice skating rink shown on 1907 OS.

PARK The park extends west from the gardens and pleasure grounds and is overlooked by the west front of the Castle. It is laid largely to woodland and pasture. For a detailed description of its history see Pittman (1983). A golf course occupies much of the open land, and a late C20 club house stands close to the west boundary on the high plateau which occupies this end of the park. The park contains many copses and single trees, including veteran oak pollards, with extensive woodland along much of the south boundary. Panoramic views extend from the north and south boundaries along the Darent, and east along the two dry valleys over the river to the hillside beyond (outside the area here registered).

The park is dominated by the two valleys rising westwards from River Darent valley, divided by a central shoulder of land which extends out into the river valley from the plateau at the west side of the park. A deer-keeper's lodge and a deer house formerly stood on this central shoulder (Pittman). Towards the east end of the hillside north of the northern valley lies the site of the former obelisk (late C18, gone), depicted on the 1802 estate map, and marked on the 1870 OS, which stood in a prominent position 850m north-west of the Castle. Summerhouse Knoll stands c 650m south, in view of the site of the obelisk, 650m south-west of the Castle, on the southern valley side. An earth mound remains at the site of the summerhouse, planted with a mature Scots pine, but there is no visible sign of the summerhouse, which was shown on the Andrews, Dury and Herbert map of 1769 and the 1802 estate map, but does not appear on the 1870 OS.

The landscape park was laid out over the former medieval deer park in the mid- to late C 18 by Sir Thomas Dyke and his son Sir John Dixon Dyke, incorporating many earlier woodland features including many ancient oak and hornbeam pollards and wood pasture, and retaining much of the medieval ditch and bank.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden lies 30m north-west of the Castle. It is enclosed and divided into two unequal sections, to the north and south, by brick and flint walls (C 17-C 19, listed grade II), and entered off the north drive via a double gateway in the west wall. The larger area, to the south, is an irregular quadrangle. It contains the remains of the herb garden designed by Eleanour Sinclair Rohde for Zoe, Lady Hart Dyke in 1946. Although many of the beds have been grassed over, leaving a central pattern of beds, the beds and paths are still visible as earthworks in the lawn. The second area comprises a former slip garden to the north which incorporated a frameyard and other glasshouses (OS 1870), with an orangery at the east end, overlooking the north lawn. The orangery is now (2004) converted to a domestic residence. An C 18 octagonal brick dovecote (listed grade II) stands at the east end of this area, beyond the orangery, overlooking the north lawn.

The larger, southern area of the kitchen garden is shown laid out as an orchard in the late C 17 (drawing, 1670-80), enclosed by a perimeter path but otherwise undivided from the north lawn to the east. The 1802 estate map shows it at approximately its present extent, including the slips area to the north, the orangery overlooking the north lawn and the dovecote, but does not provide any internal detail. By the late C 19 the south-west corner had been cut off the kitchen garden to form part of the forecourt. REFERENCES

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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.