

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

MABLEDON

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

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Name: MABLEDON

County: Kent

District: Tonbridge and Malling (District Authority)

Parish: Non Civil Parish

County: Kent

District: Tunbridge Wells (District Authority)

Parish: Bidborough

County: Kent

District: Tunbridge Wells (District Authority)

Parish: Southborough

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.179311
Longitude: 0.25526874
National Grid Reference: TQ 57733 44648
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1001296
Date first listed: 25-Jul-1995

Details

Gardens and parkland surrounding an early C19 villa designed by Joseph Parkinson with later additions by Decimus Burton.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

During the C18 the Mabledon estate was known as Quarry Hill. The present house was built c 1805 by Joseph Parkinson (1783-1855) for James Burton (1761-1837, father of the architect Decimus Burton, 1800-81). It then passed into the hands of John Deacon for whom Decimus Burton carried out further work on the building between 1829 and 1831. The grounds surrounding the house were laid out during the same period and the park was extended southwards in the 1850s. The site remains (2001) in private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Mabledon is situated c 2km to the south-east of the town of Tonbridge, at the junction of the A26, which forms the eastern boundary, and the A21, Tonbridge bypass which borders the site to the north. To the west and south the boundaries are formed by farmland and woodland. The site covers c 43ha with the house occupying an elevated site on the edge of a plateau, enjoying fine views out to the west.

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ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES A drive leads off the A26 c 200m to the south of the house and runs north, parallel with the tree belt along the eastern boundary. It passes between short lengths of balustrading marking its crossing over a stone ha-ha, to arrive at the east front of the house. The drive was realigned in the mid C20 as a result of road widening, previously having turned off the public road at a point marked by a lodge (now demolished) further to the south. An approach from the north is now (2001) closed off, again due to the widening of the A26. As laid out, it led off the road, passed a lodge (now demolished) at the northern end of Quarry Hill Wood, and then ran south to the east front of the house.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Mabledon (listed grade II) is a large castellated country house built of ironstone ashlar under a slate roof. It was constructed in two storeys in the Tudor-Revival style in c 1805 by Joseph Parkinson for James Burton and was subsequently altered by Burton's son, Decimus for John Deacon between 1829 and 1831. The main entrance front to the east is flanked by square, three-storey towers while the garden front to the west is dominated by a wooden conservatory. To the north of the house stands a range of offices.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS Below the east, entrance front is a ha-ha, beyond which the land, formerly part of the park, has now (2001) been brought into the gardens to form a gently sloping lawn stretching eastwards down to the road. The main gardens lie to the south and west of the house. To the south are several grass terraces bounded by the ha-ha. To the west, leading out from the conservatory is a level parterre, beyond which is a series of grass terraces linked by flights of stone steps and grass banks. The garden walls are topped with wrought-iron railings. At the north-east corner of these gardens a path joins another from the service area on the north side of the house, to become the rhododendron walk. This sunken path leads through shrubbery and pleasure grounds, severely damaged in the storm of 1987, round the edge of the garden area and down to a pleasure ground, focused on an informal pond c 300m to the west of the house, on the north side of the kitchen garden.

PARK The north-east corner of the site is occupied by Quarry Hill Wood, within which is a quarry planted with a stand of beech in the early C19 and laid out with walks and drives. The Wood also suffered serious damage in the 1987 storm. The land to the west of Quarry Hill was imparked and planted with a scattering of parkland trees when the park was laid out at the beginning of the C19. At the same time a brook which runs along the western boundary of this area was widened as part of the landscape scheme.

The land falls sharply to the south of the house as a small park occupying a natural west-facing bowl between the west gardens and Coxon Wood in the south-west corner of the site. The boundary of Coxon Wood was altered c 1850 when the park was extended southwards. A scattering of mature parkland trees, mainly oak and ash, survive in the south park. The track which formerly led west from the south drive across the park to the kitchen garden is no longer visible. Within the park, and c 50m to the south-east of the kitchen garden is a small lake, surrounded by estate railings, perched on the side of the valley. The banks have now (2001) grown up with scrub so that it is no longer visible as a main feature in views from the house.

KITCHEN GARDEN The walled kitchen garden stands c 300m to the west-south-west of the house. Outside the north-east corner of the garden is the ornamented Garden Cottage, probably dating from the mid C19 when the park was enlarged.

REFERENCES

J Britton and E Brayley, *The Beauties of England and Wales* 8, (1808), p 1295 C Greenwood, *An epitome of county history* vol 1, County of Kent (1838), p 125 H Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840* (1978) Report on Mabledon, (Debois Landscape Survey Group 1992)

Maps OS Surveyor's draft drawings, 1799 (British Library Maps) Tithe map for Bidborough parish, 1839-40 (Centre for Kentish Studies, Maidstone) Tithe map for Tonbridge parish, 1840 (Centre for Kentish Studies, Maidstone)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1871 2nd edition published 1895

Description rewritten: March 2001 Register Inspector: EMP Edited: November 2003

Legal

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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.