

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

ROTHERFIELD HALL

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

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Name:	ROTHERFIELD HALL
County:	East Sussex
District:	Wealden (District Authority)
Parish:	Rotherfield
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.039480 Longitude: 0.19912788 National Grid Reference: TQ 54274 28981 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000366 Date first listed: 01-Dec-1988

Details

Formal gardens, incorporating architectural and ornamental features designed in 1897 by Frances Inigo Thomas to complement his restoration and extension of a Tudor house.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The house was built originally for the Fowles family who were wealthy Wealden iron manufacturers. It was extended in 1666, then greatly enlarged in 1897 by Frances Inigo Thomas (1866-1950), for Sir Lindsay Lindsay-Hogg.

F Inigo Thomas was the nephew of Broderick Thomas (1811-?1898), one of the principal garden designers of the mid to late C19 who worked in a strongly architectural style, and in the 1870s created the lake and rock garden at Sandringham, Norfolk (qv). F Inigo Thomas, an architect, collaborated with Reginald Blomfield, providing the illustrations for the latter's book *The Formal Garden in England* which was published in 1892. This book greatly helped to popularise the idea that good garden design and form should be based on existing historical precedents. As a result the 'formal garden' became increasingly fashionable during the later years of the C19 and the turn of the century. Thomas himself wrote various articles in contemporary gardening magazines stressing the importance of the relationship of the garden and house, and the superiority of the architect to the gardener in matters of design. His other garden works include a formal scheme at Parnham House, Dorset (qv) and in 1891 the restoration of the garden at Athelhampton, Dorset which he worked on throughout the next thirty years.

During the mid C20, after a period of use as a school, Rotherfield Hall has once again become a private residence (1999).

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Rotherfield Hall is situated to the east of Crowborough, some 500m east of Jarvis Brook. The 26ha site lies on a westward-sloping hill, with higher ground to the east affording some shelter. The Hall stands on the highest part of the slope and there are spectacular views out to the west and to the Crowborough ridge.
ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The principal entrance to the site is at its north-west corner, lying directly on the south-east of the Treblers Road and Clackhams Lane junction. It is marked by large rusticated stone gate piers (1897, listed grade II) and the adjacent lodge. The drive winds upwards to the north of the Hall, which is only occasionally visible through the trees, and divides just as it reaches the start of the informally planted pleasure grounds north of the Hall. The major route continues

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on to the east front through an entrance flanked by gate piers and into the walled forecourt (listed grade II), whilst the other branch leads around the western boundary of the formal gardens to the stables which lie south-west of the Hall. This section of the drive runs below the foot of the retaining boundary wall which forms the western edge of the formal gardens and from which it is thus screened. It continues on to lead out onto Treblers Road some 600m to the south of the north-west entrance where it is marked by an ornamental gateway (1897, listed grade II) with rubble-stone piers and pyramidal finials flanking ornamental cast-iron double gates.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING The north part of Rotherfield Hall (listed grade II*) is dated 1535 and was built by the Fowles family using stone quarried from their estate. As well as a datestone marked 1535, there is another of 1666 on the north side. The southern half of the Hall was added to the main range by F Inigo Thomas in 1897, copying the style of the earlier house and complementing his restoration of the earlier building. To the south-west of the Hall is a stable block with stable yards, carriage house and horse boxes

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS East of the Hall lies the walled rectangular forecourt (1897, all structures listed grade II*), delimited by stone walls with sections of balustrading and great rusticated gate piers in the centre of the north and south walls. A grass turning circle forms the central area of the forecourt. Across the forecourt and opposite the front door, the east forecourt retaining wall is broken centrally by a small arched doorway which focuses on a fountain and basin set into it. The arch is flanked by broad stone seats and through the arch, on either side of the fountain, steps lead up to the higher level. On this upper level two lawn terraces extend (1897, both listed grade II*), one parallel with and the other at right angles to the Hall. The latter, a long, narrow bowling green deeply cut into the hillside is bordered by terraced beds and is designed so as to carry the eye along its length when seen from a position by the main door. It terminates at a retaining wall some 110m east of the Hall. Before which is a shallow pool. To either side of the lawn are groves of trees, formally planted and divided by yew hedging.

To the west of the Hall lies a walled garden comprising a terrace, retaining walls, balustraded walls, steps, arcade, summerhouses and gazebos (1897, all structures listed grade II*). The upper terrace is set directly against the Hall and is paved in rubble-stone with a millstone set centrally. Steps flanked by a balustrade lead down to the lower level from the centre point of the terrace. At its southern end the terrace terminates at an arcade and loggia. An archway and lean-to summerhouse are set in the angle of the garden wall, where it returns on the south side of the walled garden. At the north end of the terrace an iron gate leads out of the gardens.

Beyond the upper, west terrace the natural steep slopes have been modelled and formed into two terraces divided by a grass bank. A set of steps leads down off the upper terrace to the first of these, laid out as a parterre which centres on a pool surrounded by box-edged beds set in turf. The shallow rectangular pool which opens out centrally into a circular pool has a statue of Aphrodite at its centre (1897, listed grade II). A pair of two-storey, brick-built summerhouses adjoining the walls that run down the north and south sides of the garden mark the change in level to the lower grass parterre. A substantial retaining wall surmounted by a balustrade forms the western edge of the gardens.

The southern end of the Hall is decorated with a Tuscan arcade, made up of five rusticated arches which lead from the morning room into the garden. On the south side the arcade leads to the service quarters. A path leads from the south front through a rose garden to a central podium of rubble-stone located beneath an arched clairvoie.

PARK The small park extends westwards from the gardens alongside a stream which flows north/south along the bottom of the valley. F Inigo Thomas included this area in his scheme by landscaping the stream, dammed in the C16 to form a string of hammer-ponds, with a series of four small stone bridges (all listed grade II) over the stream. A boathouse in the form of a square tower is set on the southernmost hammer-pond. One entrance into this boathouse lies through a gothic red-brick arch directly from the south drive. On a lower floor of the boathouse a Roman arch leads out onto a stone landing stage at water level.

KITCHEN GARDEN The walled kitchen garden lies beyond the stables on the south side of the Hall.

REFERENCES

Country Life, 26 (14 August 1909), pp 228-36 Architectural Review 34, (1913), pp 19-20, pls 12, 13, 14 G Jekyll, Garden Ornament (1918), pp 167, 177

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Description written: December 1999 Register Inspector: KC Edited: February 2001

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.