

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

HATCH PARK

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Name: HATCH PARK

County: Kent

District: Ashford (District Authority)

Parish: Brabourne

County: Kent

District: Ashford (District Authority)

Parish: Mersham

County: Kent

District: Ashford (District Authority)

Parish: Smeeth

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.127444
Longitude: 0.94189590
National Grid Reference: TR 05949 40578
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1001291
Date first listed: 08-Mar-1994

Details

A mid C18 landscape park accompanying a country house built by Robert Adam.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The manor of Mersham was given to the See of Canterbury in 1051, and was purchased, along with the deer park, by Richard Knatchbull in 1485. Sir Wyndham Knatchbull Wyndham, fifth baronet, took over the estate in 1736. On his death in 1749, his son Sir Wyndham, sixth baronet, then age twelve, inherited the estate. In the early 1760s on his return from a Grand Tour of Italy, the sixth baronet called in Robert Adam to design a new house, on a new site, on the ridge a little to the south-west of the earlier building. Wyndham died in 1763, before his house had been completed and the property passed to his uncle, Sir Edward Knatchbull (d 1789), who completed the work. The estate then passed to the seventh baronet's son, Sir Edward (d 1819) who in 1780 married Mary, daughter and co-heir of William Western Hugessen and sister-in-law of Sir Joseph Banks. Their son, the Rt Hon Sir Edward (1781-1849) inherited the estate and carried out some alterations to the house in 1827. Further alterations were made under Sir Wyndham Knatchbull, twelfth baronet (d 1917). On the death of Sir Wyndham, the estates and title reverted to Cecil Marcus Knatchbull-Hugessen, fourth Baron Brabourne and thirteenth baronet. His son, the fifth Baron

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Brabourne and fourteenth baronet, was Governor of Bombay from 1933 to 1937, Governor of Bengal from 1937 to 1939, and Viceroy and acting Governor-General of India in 1938. Having succeeded his father in 1939, the sixth Baron Brabourne and fifteenth baronet was killed in the war in 1943 at which time the estate and titles passed to his brother. The estate remains in private ownership with the mansion currently (2000) leased to the Caldecott Community, and the parkland subject to a Deed of Covenant between the current owner and the National Trust.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Hatch Park lies c 5km south-east of Ashford, to the north-east of the village of Mersham. The c 165ha site is bounded to the south-west by the A20, to the south-east by The Ridgeway, and by farmland along all other boundaries. The original southern boundary of the site may have taken a line along the southern edge of Bockhanger Wood, through the present site of the stables, to join The Ridgeway. It seems likely that a second, earlier road followed the parish boundary which runs north/south across the centre of the park. The house, known as Mersham-le-Hatch, stands on the edge of a ridge with the park falling away to the north, the location providing extensive views over the park to the rising ground beyond.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main drives all enter the park from the A20 to the south-west. The west drive branches off the public road at the western end of Bockhanger Wood, passes the small Bockhanger Lodge c 950m north-west of the house, winds through the Wood, then breaks out into the open park c 450m north-west of the house. From here it hugs the hillside with the wooded land rising to the south and the park falling away to the north, and leads to the entrance front on the north-north-east side of the house, although the original entrance was on the opposite front, facing south-south-west. A second approach, from the south-east corner of the park c 600m south-east of the house, crosses the flat, wooded south park, turning westwards to give a view of the house on its platform and the lakes in the park beyond to the north. The third, more direct approach lies between these two; a drive from the early C19 yellow brick and tile Hatch (or South) Lodge (listed grade II), which stands c 350m south-south-west of the house, leads north along the western edge of the pleasure grounds and up to the south-south-west side of the house.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING In the centre of Hatch Park stands Mersham-le-Hatch, an imposing country house (listed grade I) built in the Palladian style of red brick with Portland stone dressings under a slate roof. The house faces south-south-west and has a large rectangular central block linked by narrow, straight balustraded corridors to rectangular flanking wings. This facade was originally the entrance front but during the C20 the garden front to the north-north-east, with its ground-floor balustraded loggia, became the main entrance. The house was designed by Robert Adam (1728-92) for Sir Wyndham Knatchbull between 1762 and 1766 and was altered in 1827 and 1872 for later members of the Knatchbull family.

The mid C18 stables (listed grade II*) stand c 100m to the south-east of the house.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens lie to the south of the house. Below the south front a broad open lawn is encircled by a shrubbery and specimen exotics, particularly Wellingtonias, while to the south-west are remnants of a pond and fountain which once formed the focus of a mid C19 flower garden. The gardens are divided from the band of fields between them and the road by a ha-ha. Much of the shrubbery and exotic plantings date from the mid C19 although according to an account of 1776 (CL 1921), when the mansion was completed in the 1770s the gardens and pleasure grounds were said to have been 'laid out with great taste and judgement'.

PARK The park, which was formed in the mid C18 when the house was built, lies to the north, east, and west of the house. It is partly under grass and partly under arable and is still grazed in places by a herd of fallow deer (2000). The parkland to the north of the house represents the area of the medieval deer park. Here the land falls down to the north-east to the stew ponds, the largest of which forms a lake known as the Boat Pond c 400m north-east of the house. Beyond the Boat Pond the land rises gently to the perimeter belt. A generous scattering of parkland trees remains.

Barrack Wood occupies the south-east corner of the site, while a further area of woodland occupies the western corner of the park. The latter is divided into Spring Wood and Bockhanger Wood, within which stand a number of mature coppiced trees, particularly hornbeam.

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KITCHEN GARDEN The C18 walled kitchen garden covers c 0.5ha and stands beyond the stables c 150m to the south-east of the house. It retains pathside borders of box with espalier fruit trees behind and contains an area of flower garden beside a derelict peach house.

REFERENCES

E Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent III*, (1797-1801) [Facsimile edn 1972], p 286 J P Neale, *Views of seats*, 2nd series, (1826) F O Morris, *Series of picturesque views* 5, (1866-80), p 45 *Country Life*, 49 (26 March 1921), pp 368-75; 58 (8 August 1925), pp 218-26 I and E Hall, *Report on Hatch Park for Kent Gardens Trust*, (1993) [Copy on EH file] Description rewritten: March 2001 Amended: March 2001 Register Inspector: EMP Edited: October 2003

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.