

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

BRICKWALL

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Name: BRICKWALL

County: East Sussex

District: Rother (District Authority)

Parish: Beckley

County: East Sussex

District: Rother (District Authority)

Parish: Northiam

label.localisation: Latitude: 50.982385
Longitude: 0.61188517
National Grid Reference: TQ 83433 23578
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II*
List Entry Number: 1000177
Date first listed: 25-Mar-1987

Details

Late C17 or early C18 garden of formal compartments, restored in C17 style in the mid to late C19 and late C20 and with the addition of a C19 park containing a formal avenue.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Brickwall is first mentioned in connection with a sale in 1491. It was purchased for the Frewen family by Stephen Frewen in 1666 and remained the family seat until becoming a girls' school in the early 1930s. The house and grounds were requisitioned for military use during the war and afterwards, in 1947, became a boys' school from which the present Frewen College developed. The area of the estate beyond the gardens and immediate park remains (1998) in private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Brickwall lies to the east of the main A28 road from Tenterden to Hastings and at the extreme southern end of Northiam village. The site comprises formal gardens of c 4ha with parkland and wooded estate land to the south of c 41ha. The triangular site is defined on two sides by roads, with the A28 forming the western boundary and the B2088 the eastern. The southern boundary is formed by the route of the former road which was replaced during the 1860s by New Road, c 180m to the south. At the north end, enclosing the drive and forecourt, the garden boundaries consist of close-board fence backed by dense evergreen shrubbery, the iron railings shown on the estate map of 1845 having been removed in the mid C20. Further south along the western boundary with the A28, the brick wall of the garden, topped by clipped beech trees, replaces the fencing. The park and estate are enclosed mostly by timber paling and boundary copses. Beyond the roads to east, west and south is a surrounding landscape of small fields, hedgerows and woodlands.

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The site is level at its north end but rises to a gentle east/west ridge in the centre of the park before dropping southwards towards the Sherbourne valley beyond the site boundary.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The site is approached at the north end from Northiam village, the entrance opening off the B2088, c 100m south of its junction with the A28. The previous entrance opened more directly onto the road, as shown on the Tithe map of c 1840. Colonel Edward Frewen had the road on the eastern boundary diverted to its present course, further away from the house, sometime between 1834 and 1839. Sydney Smirke (1799-1877) built the present brick entrance piers ornamented with stone lions (listed grade II) during that period. The present drive follows a straight course south to the gravel turning circle in front of the house.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Brickwall House (listed grade I) is sited on level ground at the north end of the site with its principal elevation facing north-east. It is a striking timber-framed, black and white Jacobean house, parts of which bear the dates 1617 and 1633 although the fabric of an earlier building is probably incorporated. The extensions to the west and south were made in the late C17 and other alterations occurred in the C19. The large east wing was added (to replace or enlarge an existing wing) in 1873, possibly as part of George Devey's (1820-86) work which also may have included the alteration of the garden front to its present form. The stable block (listed grade II) which forms an ensemble with the house was built by Smirke during the 1830s. A brick school block, built in the 1970s, extends southwards from the stables.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The formal gardens lie on the south side of the house and are entirely enclosed by brick walls (listed grade II). Their principal feature is the old yew topiary contained within two rectangular enclosures, both of which are shown already established in their present shape on a plan of the grounds dated 1729.

The south, garden front of the house opens into the first enclosure and onto a brick-paved terrace walk edged by the low bank of the raised lawns beyond. A flight of three steps leads up the bank to an axial gravelled path lined with low box hedging and an avenue of six pairs of flat-topped, approximately pyramidal or jug-shaped clipped yew trees, interplanted with herbaceous perennials. It is not clear when these trees were planted: a prospect of the house in 1729 shows an arrangement of narrow, pyramidal trees lining a central walk. The 1st edition OS map (surveyed 1872), indicates similar lines of evergreen trees; photographs of c 1900 and 1909 (ESRO) show what are likely to be the present trees as well-grown, sharply clipped yews. Seven of the yews have been replaced, six of them in 1997.

Rectangular lawns lie to the west and east of the axial path. On the east lawn is a rectangular, sunken swimming pool, formed from a previous fishpond which is recorded on the plan of 1729. A central rose bed was laid out in 1989, replicating a similar circular bed in existence in c 1909. Beyond the west lawn, along the length of the western site boundary wall, is a raised grassed perimeter walk lined with beech trees pleached hard against the brickwork. These are shown well established in photographs of 1900. Further yew hedges enclose this first garden compartment on its east and south sides. Two arched passages in the southern hedge, marked by pairs of clipped yew cones, lead onto a transverse gravel path lined by the east/west wall of the second compartment, which is entered through a central archway in the wall.

The second compartment is laid to lawn with groups of clipped yew cones at the corners of what were formerly four rectangular beds. These beds are shown in outline on the plan of 1729. By the late C19 (OS 1st edition; photographs of c 1909) they were surrounded by paths and planted with fruit and orchard trees. The present long, rectangular, box-edged beds lining the east and west sides of the lawn, and the chessboard garden with its clipped yew chess pieces at the south end, were laid out in 1980-2, with the planting of the long beds completed in 1995.

At the far south end of the garden, steps lead up to a narrow terrace or bowling green and to a central gateway, also by Smirke, giving views out into the park. To the west of the compartments, the remaining area of garden enclosed by walls now contains school sports facilities and buildings. It was recorded as The Warren on the estate map of 1845 and was previously shown planted as an orchard on the 1729 plan. Further gates, also C19, lead south out of this area into the park. Two sections of wall on the east boundary of the garden are missing, having been removed during the Second World War.

PARK Immediately south of the garden and extending some 300m southwards, is a scatter of mature oak and cedar trees within rough grass. These are remnants of the pattern shown on the 1st edition OS map and would appear to represent the main area of designed parkland on the estate. On the southern edge of the parkland, and running due east/west in a straight line between the

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site boundaries, is an avenue of sweet chestnut trees. This feature and a reference to Brickwall Park by name are shown on the 1845 estate map. Neither park or avenue are shown in existence on the Tithe map of c 1840, which shows instead the former field pattern. Together with archival material from the Frewen family, map evidence suggests that both park and avenue were laid out during the 1840s in association with the enlargement of the house and formal layout of the garden by Thomas Frewen. The landscape of several small woods and a scatter of trees in open pasture land was formerly part of the estate.

REFERENCES

Country Life, 8 (29 September 1900), pp 400-6 H I Triggs, Formal Gardens in England and Scotland (1902), pp 29-30 G Jekyll and G Elgood, Some English Gardens (1904), pp 87-9 A L Frewen, A History of Brickwall in Sussex and of the Parishes of Northiam and Brede (1909), pp 67-9 W H Godfrey, Gardens in the Making (1914), p 175 Victoria History of the County of Sussex IX, (1937), p 269 I Nairn and N Pevsner, The Buildings of England: Sussex (1965), pp 574-5

Maps Map of Brickwall estate, 1729 (5104121), (East Sussex Record Office) The Ichnography of Brickwall, (inset on above), 1729 Tithe map of Northiam Parish, c 1840 (East Sussex Record Office) Map of Brickwall estate, 1845 (East Sussex Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile, 1st edition surveyed 1872 2nd edition published 1900 3rd edition published 1910 4th edition published 1932

OS 25" to 1 mile 1st edition surveyed 1872 2nd edition published 1909 3rd edition published 1930

Archival items Collection of B/W photographs, nd, but c 1900/1909 (East Sussex Record Office) [copies on EH file]

Description written: March 1997 Amended: July 1998 Register Inspector: VCH Edited: February 2000

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.