

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

FARNHAM PARK

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Name:	FARNHAM PARK
County:	Surrey
District:	Waverley (District Authority)
Parish:	Farnham
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.225178 Longitude: -0.79618992 National Grid Reference: SU 84159 48020 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001499 Date first listed: 27-Mar-2001

Details

A C14 deer park associated with C12/C13 Farnham Castle and laid out as a landscape park by Bishop North in the late C18 and early C19. The early C19 pleasure grounds within the curtain wall of the castle survive in part, as do those around the Ranger's House in the centre of the park.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Bishop William Wykeham created the New or Little Park at Farnham in 1376. Like the neighbouring Old or Great Park to the west, it was a deer park owned by the bishops of Winchester. The extent of the two parks is recorded on at least two maps, those by Christopher Saxton (1579) and John Speed (1610). By 1690 the map made by John Seller shows only the New Park, the Old Park having, by this time, been broken up into farm holdings. John Senex's map of 1729 shows the New Park fenced to the north and south with the Nadder stream entering, as now (1998), on the north side.

Despite Bishop Morley (Bishop 1662-84) having had a Keeper's Lodge built on a rise in the centre of the park, poaching was common and resulted, by the late C18, in the loss of most of the deer. Bishop Brownlow North (Bishop 1781-1820) reported that he found the park very neglected (Manning and Bray 1804). By the beginning of the C19 North had begun to embellish the New Park, improving the surface, laying out roads and walks, planting young trees, and protecting the old trees. He also made improvements to the Keeper's Lodge. Many of these improvements are recorded on the OS map of 1811. When William Keane visited the castle in 1849 he described the park as beautiful, being adorned with deer and a noble avenue of elm trees. He also noted that the inhabitants of Farnham enjoyed the park as a healthy promenade. By 1872 (OS) the tree cover had become well established.

After nearly 700 years in the ownership of the bishops of Winchester, Farnham Park was in 1930 sold to the town of Farnham. Although much of it became a golf course, with the Ranger's House as the clubhouse, the tradition of animal grazing continued. During the Second World War pill boxes and anti-glider posts were erected throughout the park and the Ranger's House became the headquarters of the local air-raid wardens. In addition much of the park was ploughed up and crops, including potatoes and wheat, were grown there.

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Farnham Park remains (2001) in public ownership and open to the public, and roe deer and cattle continue to graze the parkland. The Ranger's House at the centre of the site, and the surrounding pleasure grounds, are now in private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The c 131ha which comprise Farnham Park are located to the north-north-east of Farnham town. The park still retains the boundary of the medieval New Park, much as was shown on Saxton's map of 1579, and is bounded to the west by Folly Hill (A287) with, in the south-west corner, Farnham Castle separated from the park by its defensive bank and ditch. Folly Hill runs north/south along the boundary between the Old and New Parks; in the C14 this was a strip of wasteland (Gapper 1996). To the north the site is bounded by C20 residential housing in Hale and Upper Hale. Agricultural land, separated from the park by an ancient hedgerow, provides the eastern boundary, and residential housing of Farnham town makes for the boundary to the south. The site slopes moderately to the south. Various dells in the south-west slopes mark the site of old chalk pits cut into the chalk ridge and the remains of medieval field systems have been recorded in this area (Graham 1998). There are good views from the southern slopes of the surrounding countryside, across Farnham town.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main entrance to Farnham Park is from the southern end of Folly Hill where a short track between the cricket ground (c 1930), to the south-west, and the c 8ha golf course (1960s), leads to a car park. A number of football pitches and the mid C20 sports pavilion, to the north-east of the car park, provide additional public sports facilities. Until the late C18 (Lindley and Crosley, 1793), the entrance to the park appears to have been from the castle. A second entrance from the north-east side of the park led diagonally from the village of Hale across the park to the Ranger's House and then on to the castle. By 1811 (OS) the entrance from the north-east no longer led directly to the Ranger's House but continued west on to Folly Hill, some distance to the north of the castle, the access road to the Ranger's House now being set to the west of the house.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Farnham Castle (scheduled ancient monument) stands on a hill in the south-west corner of the park. The hill slopes down to the south but is almost level to the north. The castle complex, which consists of the Keep and domestic buildings (listed grade I), is enclosed by a ditch and bank on which the C12/C13 curtain wall (listed grade I) stands. The wall, which was built of local chalk, has been extensively rebuilt or refaced in brick, and the square mural towers which projected outwards from the north face have been lost.

The mound on which the Keep was built is enclosed within a shell of masonry with the remains of four equally spaced turrets set around the north face. A fifth, the entry tower, still stands to its full height and is situated to the south. A drawbridge originally provided access from the castle buildings to the Keep. Archaeological excavations (c 1958) in the centre of the Keep recorded the foundations of a C12 square stone tower and a deep well. The site of the well is covered in concrete while grass is laid over the rest of the area.

The domestic buildings, the Great Hall, the kitchens, chapel etc are built in a triangle around a court to the south of the mound. The south front includes Fox's Tower, a square brick structure of three storeys which dates to c 1470-5. The early C18 stable block (listed grade II) is situated to the west of the mound.

Farnham Castle was begun in 1138 by Bishop Henry de Blois, a grandson of William the Conqueror. The Great Hall and the Keep date from c 1180 but most of the buildings have been altered over the last 800 years. After the Civil War, when the Parliamentarians occupied the castle, Cromwell ordered the partial destruction of the Keep. Following the Restoration, Bishop George Morley carried out extensive alterations and repairs to the buildings, as did Bishop Thorold (Bishop 1890-5). After 1927, when Farnham was transferred to the See of Guildford, the buildings were modified again. In 1956, the bishops took up residence in Guildford and the castle buildings remained unoccupied until taken over by their present lessees in 1962. At around the same time the Keep was taken into care by English Heritage which continues to maintain it to the present day.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS Situated to the south and east of the castle are the castle gardens. The lawn to the south is made on the outer moat and decorated with a mature cedar of Lebanon and some more recent plantings. To the east of the castle a fountain and pool, surrounded by beds of roses, decorate the lawns. Ornamental trees are scattered about the area. The rest of the pleasure grounds are laid to grass decorated with ornamental trees.

The improvements to the pleasure grounds around the castle are largely attributed to Bishop Sumner (Bishop 1827-69), a scientific botanist who was interested in gardening. He converted the ramparts into ornamental walks with views over the gardens and the surrounding countryside. The walks were bordered with exotic flowers and climbing shrubs (Gardener's Mag 1835). Bishop Sumner introduced hothouses, stove and pine pits, and also laid out a flower garden within the Keep (J Horticulture & Cottage Gardener 1863). The OS map of 1877 records the pleasure grounds two years after the death of Sumner; it shows the Keep with a formal pattern of paths around the central well-head, trees planted around the site, and a number of glasshouses to the west. The outer moat is planted with trees, and conifer and cedars are shown in a garden directly to the south of the castle. The pleasure grounds appear to remain little altered until the beginning of the C20 (OS 1895). From this time however the number of glasshouses declined. A large glass house was taken down in 1903 and another in 1911, and although a Sale catalogue of 1970 describes stove plants among the varieties of flowers and shrubs in the garden, the days of the glasshouses were numbered, the last one being removed in the late C20.

PARK The undulating parkland is divided into three distinct areas. The major part to the north-west, north, and east survives as informal park. Some parts of this area are fenced in to control cattle and a line of electricity pylons runs east/west across the northern end of the site. The informal parkland is crossed by a number of paths, some of which are recorded on Rocque's map of 1768, the main one being from what is now Nutshell Lane in the north-east corner. This path now runs diagonally across the centre of the site, passing the Ranger's House to the south-west before continuing on to the Bear Lane gate in the south-south-west corner. The Nadder stream, which enters the park in the north-west corner, meanders east for c 600m across the northern part of the site before turning to the south. After meandering for a further 800m the stream exits the site c 100m to the north of Bell Piece on the south-east boundary. Five pieces of water are clustered around the centre of the park; to the west is Carron Pond, probably created for floating decoy ducks for shooting parties from the Ranger's House, while 100m to the south and fed by Carron Pond, is the smaller Friends' Pond. Towards the east side of the park are Aubrey and Yoyo Ponds, the former reinstated by excavation in 1994. Midway between Carron and Aubrey Ponds is the small, round, Deer Pond.

To the north of the main entrance and the car park, and separating the formal and informal areas of the park, is the Queen Mother's Hedge. The mixed species hedge was planted in 1980 to commemorate the eightieth birthday of Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother. To the south of the hedge and running parallel with it is an avenue of young lime and beech trees. The avenue, which is focused on the castle, runs for c 1km from south-west to north-east and was first recorded on John Rocque's plan of 1768 as a double avenue of trees. It was replanted in the mid C20 after the existing trees had succumbed to Dutch elm disease. To the south of the avenue the ground slopes down to a strip of open parkland with a narrow, gently curving asphalt footpath running along the southern boundary from the Bear Lane entrance gate in the south-west corner to the Bell Piece entrance in the south-east corner. Entrances from neighbouring streets, Upper South View and St James' Avenue, connect with the path. The path, which connects an adventure playground near the Bear Lane entrance and an area of more traditional play equipment opposite the St James' Avenue entrance, is bordered with mature and semi-mature beech, lime, chestnut, and oak trees, with the younger trees to the north.

Slightly south of the centre of the park stands the two-storey, brick-built Ranger's House (listed grade II*). Built as the Keeper's Lodge by Bishop Morley for his two nephews, it is shown on Rocque's map (1768) as being within a rectangular enclosure surrounded by formal rows of trees. The house was enlarged and improved by Bishop Brownlow North in the latter part of the C18. During the Second World War the Ranger's House was used for military purposes and was derelict by the 1950s, when it was saved from demolition by a campaign led by the Farnham Society and Sir John Betjeman. The house was restored by a private owner in the late 1950s. It remains (2001) in private ownership and stands within c 6ha of pleasure grounds.

The grounds around the Ranger's House are enclosed within wooden post and rail park fencing. Trees of various ages screen much of the garden from the park but a good view of the north front of the house can be seen from the neighbouring Nutshell Lane footpath. Laid largely to lawn, the garden includes ponds, an orchard, a rose garden, meadows, and woodland. On the south-facing aspect the lawns are overlooked by a stone terrace and a pergola interspersed with topiary yews. To the south-east of the house a rose garden enclosed with brick walls and yew hedging has a small, mid C20 gazebo built in a similar style to the house. Two ponds situated on the east side of the garden include an ornamental round pond with a wooden bridge on its

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east side. Water runs from this pond, through a sluice, into the duck pond. The second pond is ornamented with a small island, wooden duckhouses, and a wooden bridge. Nine cedars of Lebanon lie in three clumps to the south, east, and south-west of the Ranger's House. These are all that remain of some thirty cedars of Lebanon said to have been grown from seed brought from the Holy Land by Bishop North in the late C18 and planted by his wife (Gapper 1996). The present owners are replacing the missing cedars with plants germinated from the seed of the original trees (A Fleming pers comm, 2001).

REFERENCES

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Maps Christopher Saxton, *Map of Surrey*, 1579 John Speed, *Map of Surrey*, 1610 John Seller, *Map of Surrey*, 1690 John Senex, *Map of Surrey*, 1729 J Rocque, *Map of Surrey*, surveyed c 1762, published 1768 Lindley and Crosley, *Map of Surrey*, 1793 C and J Greenwood, *Map of Surrey*, 1823

OS Old Series 1" to 1 mile, published 1811 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1872 2nd edition published 1895 3rd edition published 1914 1935 edition

Description written: February 2001 Amended: March 2003 (DC) Register Inspector: LCH Edited: April 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.