

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

CHILDERLEY HALL

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Name: CHILDERLEY HALL

County: Cambridgeshire

District: South Cambridgeshire (District Authority)

Parish: Childerley

label.localisation: Latitude: 52.235479
Longitude: -0.015780963
National Grid Reference: TL 35596 61553
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II*
List Entry Number: 1000614
Date first listed: 16-Jan-1985

Details

Moated gardens of C16 origin, restored and replanted since 1957, beside a C16 hall and deer park.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The present Childerley Hall represents the remains of a large red-brick manor house built, along with moated gardens, in the late C16 by the fourth Sir John Cutts, on the site of an earlier moated building which from c 1520 had been accompanied by a small deer park. This park, to the west of the Hall, was developed on the site of Little Childerley village which had disappeared by the end of the C15 (Way 1998). The estate passed through successive generations to the sixth Sir John Cutts on whose death without issue in 1670, it eventually became the property of the Lord John Cutts, the younger brother of his distant relative Richard Cutts of Arkesden (Essex). During the middle years of the C17, under the Cutts, the depopulation of Great Childerley village was completed, leaving only the family's private chapel, so that the park could be extended to reach c 250 acres (c 104ha) and laid to pasture, the Hall sitting at its centre. The result was described by the Cambridge antiquarian John Layer (1580-1640) as 'one of the most absolute and complete seats if not the best of the whole shire' (CL 1969). In 1686 Lord Cutts sold Childerley to Felix Calvert, a brewer and farmer, in whose family it remained until 1860, by which time the park had been returned to arable farming and part of the Hall demolished. The last Calvert to hold the property was General Felix Calvert who offered it for sale several times from 1842 onwards, while at the same time undertaking major restoration and remodelling of the Hall in a Tudor-gothic style, along with the large-scale erection of farm buildings immediately north of the Hall. Felix died in 1856 but the bank foreclosed on his brother and heir E S F Calvert and the property was sold in 1860 to Edward Burtenshaw Sugden, created Lord St Leonards as Conservative Lord Chancellor in 1852. Childerley passed to his grandson, the second Lord St Leonards who was declared bankrupt in 1884 at which time the Childerley estate was taken by his mortgagees, to be eventually sold in 1920 to John Marsland Brooke who had been its tenant since 1897. In 1957 his descendant Francis Benjamin Brooke sold the estate to Mr J G Jenkins, after which the moated gardens were restored and substantially replanted. The site remains (2000) in single private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

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LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Childerley Hall park covers c 26ha and lies c 12km west of Cambridge, on the north side of the A428 Cambridge to St Neots road in a part of the county dominated by flat, open arable land. The Hall stands in an isolated position, the villages of Great and Little Childerley both having disappeared by the C17, and is entirely surrounded by park and farmland, the boundary of the site to the west being marked by a well-preserved C17 bank and ditch.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main approach to the Hall is from the south, off the A428, past two mid C20 lodge cottages. The c 2.2km tarmac drive (entrance lodges and c 1.8km of drive outside the area here registered) runs north through farmland to arrive at the mid C19 farm complex, then turns east along the north side of the Hall, to a walled and gated entrance court with gravel drive and central lawn planted with Irish yew. Farm tracks enter the site from the west, east and north. Map evidence suggests that although all four drives were in use up to the mid C18, that to the south was always the principal entrance and by the late C19 had become the only one, the others already reduced to farm tracks.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Childerley Hall (listed grade II*) is a large, asymmetrical red-brick country house, dressed with limestone and Roman cement, under a tile roof. It is built in two storeys with attics and comprises a main east/west C16 solar range with C19 extensions to the north and north-east. The entrance front faces a walled entrance courtyard to the north, whilst the garden front looks south over a dry moated enclosure. The original mansion was built in the late C16 for the fourth Sir John Cutts, partly demolished in the C18 by the Calvert family, leaving only the east/west range which was restored and extended by General Felix Calvert in c 1850. The surviving C16 wing contains the King Charles Chamber, so called after Charles I stayed with Sir John Cutts in 1647, decorated with paintings by Matthew Gooderick (Kenworthy-Browne et al 1981).

Immediately to the north-east, surrounding a small courtyard, are single-storey mid C19 service buildings, while to the north of the Hall is a substantial range of farm buildings which include a stable courtyard, all added by General Felix Calvert in the 1850s.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens at Childerley lie to the south of the Hall and occupy a 91m x 72m area of land within a dry moated enclosure with raised circular prospect mounds at each of the two southern angles. The gardens take advantage of a slight fall in the ground level, with a large gravel terrace against the Hall forming the fourth side of the enclosure, cut in the centre by a set of steps leading down to the main garden. At the east end of the terrace is a small compartment enclosed by box and laid to lawn with trees, clipped box and herbaceous borders. The restored early C17, free-standing family chapel (listed grade II*) stands at the west end of the terrace. The central steps from the terrace lead down to a wide grass terrace with a formal mid C20 pool to the east and an informal rockery garden to the west, enclosed by a yew hedge with clipped topiary figures. From this terrace a further gentle slope runs down to the main level of the garden which is divided into compartments. The central area is laid to lawn bounded to the south by yew hedges, to the east by a yew-hedged enclosure planted with shrubs, and to the west by a small raised box knot. Beyond the lawn and yew hedges to the south the ground rises gently and is planted with orchard trees.

A walk runs around the summit of the flat-topped ornamental moat bank surrounding the gardens, planted along its southern arm with a mix of flowering shrubs. Beyond the bank to the east, enclosed by a tall beech hedge, is a narrow water course, while the west bank acts as a dam to a stream feeding a large informal pool known as Church Pond to the west of the main gardens. A late C20 bridge spans the stream and leads to a late C20 woodland garden.

PARK The Hall sits at the centre of the park which is divided into Great Park to the south, Grove Park to the west and Black Park to the north. Grove Park with its bank and ditch boundary represents the area of the C16 deer park, Black Park and Great Park being taken in during the C17 expansion of the site. Grove Park and Great Park are both partly arable, partly pasture with few surviving parkland trees, the dominant species having been elm until the mid C20. Black Park is partly pasture with a some mature trees, mainly oak, and a small horseshoe pond of unknown origin c 300m north-east of the Hall. The remainder of Black Park is now (2000) used as a turkey-raising unit, beside which stands an approximately twenty-year-old block of woodland. Until the 1950s Grove Park contained earthwork remains of Little Childerley village. Wood Walk Spinney (beyond the boundary of the area here registered) to the west of the Hall has an embanked pond, now dry, at its centre, once part of a string of ponds. In the eastern section of Great Park substantial earthworks remains of Great Childerley village survive and

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immediately east of the garden boundary are two overgrown fishponds, shown on the 1808 plan to be the remains of a group of four in a field known as Fish Pond Park, possibly part of the early C17 garden layout (C C Taylor pers comm, 2000).

KITCHEN GARDEN The walled kitchen garden lies on the east side of the Hall, beyond the mid C19 service courtyard. It is reached via a late C20 wrought-iron gateway from the eastern end of the gardens. This newly restored (late 1990s) walled compartment is divided by gravel paths into areas where fruit, vegetables, roses and cut flowers are grown, the paths partly covered by arbours, the beds decorated with obelisks. The kitchen garden is believed to date from the late C19 (Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust).

REFERENCES

Roy Comm Hist Monuments of Engl Inventories: West Cambridgeshire (1968), pp 44-7 Country Life, 146 (6 November 1969), pp 1170-3 N Pevsner, The Buildings of England: Cambridgeshire (1970), p 320 Garden History 8, no 1 (1980), p 2 J Kenworthy-Browne et al, Burke's and Savills Guide to Country Houses III, (1981), p 10 Victoria History of the County of Cambridgeshire IX, (1989), pp 39-45 Cambridgeshire Parklands, (Cambridgeshire Record Office 1990), p 44 S Kemp and T Way, Medieval village and deer park of Childerley, (Cambridgeshire County Council report 1992) T Way, Cambridgeshire parklands survey, (Internal survey for Cambridgeshire County Council 1998)

Maps Plan of the manor of Childerley, 1808 (Cambridge University Library MS Plans 552) Tithe map for Childerley parish, 1849 (Cambridge University Library)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1886 2nd edition published 1902 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1886

Description written: May 2000 Amended: December 2000 Register Inspector: EMP Edited: January 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.