

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

HARTRIDGE HOUSE

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

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Name: HARTRIDGE HOUSE

County: Kent

District: Tunbridge Wells (District Authority)

Parish: Cranbrook & Sissinghurst

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.123286
Longitude: 0.54213780
National Grid Reference: TQ 77997 39073
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1001289
Date first listed: 14-Dec-1993

Details

Gardens laid out in 1907 by the owner Colonel Charles Grey, a respected horticulturalist and nursery owner, to provide the setting for his new house.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The grounds of Hartridge House were laid out on a virgin site by the owner, Colonel Charles Hoare (he became Charles Grey as a consequence of his second marriage in 1917) around the turn of the C20, the work pre-dating that on the house which was erected in 1913. The site was not laid out to a definite plan, rather it grew in stages as progressively more land was taken in. Colonel Grey was descended from Henry Hoare of Stourhead (qv) and grew up at Hackwood (qv). An alpine expert, collector, and author of three volumes on hardy bulbs (published in 1937), after the First World War Colonel Grey moved to Yorkshire where he was instrumental in founding the Northern Horticultural Society's Harlow Carr Gardens, Harrogate. After 1920 when Hartridge was sold, Colonel Grey moved back to Hocker Edge, a mill which lies to the west of Hartridge (outside the area here registered), at which he had been living prior to the building of the new house. Here he developed a second garden which included an extensive rock garden under construction in 1925, and to the south-east of this a commercial nursery. The nursery attended the main horticultural shows, winning various trophies including a gold cup for a rock garden exhibited at Chelsea Flower Show in May 1937. Amongst a number of other schemes, Grey also laid out his brother's garden in Ovingden, Hampshire (qv), worked at Belsay, Northumberland (qv) for Sir Arthur Middleton, and was responsible for some improvements at Mount Stuart, Northern Ireland. Since the 1920s the site has been divided up but remains (2001) in private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Hartridge House occupies a rural setting c 18km to the east of Tunbridge Wells on the west side of the village of Cranbrook Common, which itself lies to the north of Sissinghurst village. The c 17ha site is bounded on all sides by woodland, with a short section of Convalescent Lane running along the south-east edge. The house stands high above the Weald of Kent, commanding a panoramic view to the north, west, and south, with a deep wooded valley falling away to the south-east.

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ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Hartridge House is approached via a tree-lined drive branching north-west off the track known as Convalescent Lane which leads west off the B2083 north of the village of Sissinghurst. The drive passes across farmland, originally planted as orchards, for c 0.7km to arrive at the informal turning circle at the north front. Steps between a low retaining wall lead up to a raised paved path to the front door, flanked on either side by grass.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Hartridge House (listed grade II) is a small country house built of red brick with raised, rusticated quoins. Deep coved eaves lie below a plain tiled hipped roof which supports a tall central brick stack. The house is arranged in two storeys, with attics and has a central two-storey porch with flanking wings. The house was built for Charles Grey in 1913, possibly to designs by the Arts and Crafts architect Mervyn Macartney. It is dated on the decorated hopper-heads at the top of prominent down pipes.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS Beyond the south front of Hartridge House lies a level lawn bounded by yew hedging. The extensive views over the countryside beyond have become obscured by the trees which lie beyond the yew hedge. From the centre of the lawn, a long, straight, tiled path leads through a gap in the yew hedge down to the wooded valley in which stands a simple wooden shelter. The bank to the east of the walk is laid out as a rockery. The site provided perfect conditions for the success of rhododendrons and azaleas, plants which were enjoying great popularity in the Edwardian period.

Roughly parallel, to the east of and above the main walk, is a straight grassed path, on the far side of which, at a slightly higher level and screened by a yew hedge, is the tennis lawn. Above this again is a less formal path through woodland. A screen of planting divides the gardens from the paddock, once planted as a cherry orchard and presumably, since two greenhouses still stand here, the kitchen garden area.

A new swimming pool has been constructed at the eastern end of the main lawn and a new set of balustraded steps has been built off the west end of the lawn leading down to a tree-planted grass slope. A lime avenue marks the boundary along the south-west perimeter of this area, from where the path leads to, then encircles a small lake. A leat links the lake to a second, smaller, body of water, set in the north-west corner of Rowland's Wood. The Wood forms the setting for the house on the north side. Below the north front the plantings which once divided the offices from the family rooms have been taken out, and the area to the east of the house has been tarmacked over.

REFERENCES

The Northern Gardener (1956), pp 21-4

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1908

Description rewritten: April 2001 Amended: October 2001 Register Inspector: EMP Edited: November 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.