

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

MOUNT EPHRAIM

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

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Name:	MOUNT EPHRAIM
County:	Kent
District:	Swale (District Authority)
Parish:	Hernhill
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.302151 Longitude: 0.96153915 National Grid Reference: TR 06540 60057 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000256 Date first listed: 22-Sep-1988

Details

A country house surrounded by terraced gardens, including a large rockery, laid out in the early C20 and set in a small, mid C19 park.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The Dawes family have been associated with Mount Ephraim since the 1650s and the first house to be built on this site was constructed in 1695 for Major William Dawes who also acquired several small parcels of the surrounding land. The house was let to the vicar of Hernhill between 1820 and 1870 and it is likely that the Rev Handley was responsible for some of the tree planting which survives from this period. In 1880, Sir Edwin Dawes returned from India with sufficient wealth to rebuild and enlarge the house and to extend the grounds. He further developed the landscape, creating a small park setting for the new house. William Charles Dawes succeeded to the estate in 1912 and, as well as making alterations to the house, completely remodelled the gardens and created a large rock garden, possibly with the assistance of Waterer's nursery. During the middle part of the C20 the gardens became completely overgrown but they have been the subject of a reclamation programme in the latter years of the C20. The site remains (2001) in private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Mount Ephraim is located on the north side of the A2, Sittingbourne to Canterbury road, c 5km to the east of Faversham. It occupies a rural setting between the villages of Dunkirk, Boughton Street, and Hernhill. The c 13ha site is bounded to the south-west by Staplestreet Road and by farmland and woodland on all other boundaries. The land falls away from the house, which is situated in the western corner of the site, to the north-north-east in the direction of the sea, which can be seen from the gardens c 6km beyond the northern boundary.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES A short drive leads north-north-east from Staplestreet Road along the western boundary, its entrance to the site marked by a pair of C19 wrought-iron gates and late C17 supporting brick walls (listed grade II). The drive forks after the gate piers, the eastern fork leading to the gravel entrance court below the north-west front of the house. The northern fork of the drive leads first to the early C20 stable block c 120m to the north-north-west of the house, and then continues to link with the lodge on Church Hill (both outside the area here registered).

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PRINCIPAL BUILDING Mount Ephraim (listed grade II) is a country house built of red brick under a slate roof in an irregular plan. It is constructed in two storeys with a rectangular main block and service wings to the south-west. The entrance is on the north-west front which carries a central leaded cupola. The house was rebuilt c 1880 for the Dawes family, on the site of a house built for them in 1695. It was extended by William Charles Dawes in 1913.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS To the north-west of the house, a secondary drive from the stables to the house runs along the north side of a wall which encloses an area of lawn, shrubs, and topiary first planted in the late C19. The south side of the wall has a herbaceous border along its length. A small summerhouse stands at the north-west end of the garden, overlooking a recently planted (2001) formal planting. The southern boundary of the north-west garden is formed by the main drive to the house forecourt.

A series of four partly balustraded terraces descend the gentle slope to the north-east of the house, towards the late C19 lake located c 200m from the house. Each terrace is subdivided into areas at different levels. The top terrace is laid to grass planted with larger trees and has a central fountain. From the house steps descend to the first area (the Rose Terrace) which has small rose beds set in grass, surrounded by yew hedges. Below this lies another grass level, though there are traces in it of cross-paths coupled with small-scale terracing. The third terrace is also laid to grass, with a hard tennis court located at its south-east end. The terrace is reached via a set of gates hung on tall, red-brick gate piers surmounted by ball finials. The lowest terrace is laid to grass planted with larger trees and has a central flight of steps leading down to the edge of the lake, on the north-east bank of which is Mount Ephraim Wood, underplanted with rhododendrons and azaleas. In the late C20, the piped water leading from the lower end of the lake was opened up to form a stream and its banks were planted as a water garden. To the west of the terraces is a rock garden laid out in the Japanese style, reputedly by the firm of Waterer's in c 1912, while to the south-east lies a vineyard reached via the early C20 Motto Gate. The present gardens were laid out mainly by William Charles Dawes in the early C20. Below the south-east front is a large area of lawn set with a circular fountain close to its south-east boundary. Some 50m to the south-east of the house, beyond the fountain, is an C18 brick ha-ha (listed grade II) which divides the gardens from the park.

PARK The park was formed during the second half of the C19 by the planting of occasional exotic specimens in the field beyond the south-east lawn and in the field to the north of the house, on the east side of the drive to Church Hill. The south-east field is now (2001) mainly open grass, with a small pavilion standing on its south-east boundary. Mature trees are confined to the southern corner of the area.

REFERENCES

E Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent* 6 (1797-1801) [Facsimile edn 1972] Inspector's Report: Mount Ephraim, (English Heritage 1988)

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1870 2nd edition published 1898

Description rewritten: March 2001 Amended: November 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.