

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

FAIRFIELD

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

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Name: FAIRFIELD

County: Somerset

District: Somerset West and Taunton (District Authority)

Parish: Stogursey

County: Somerset

District: Somerset West and Taunton (District Authority)

Parish: Stringston

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.179670
Longitude: -3.1640250
National Grid Reference: ST 18732 42915
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1001144
Date first listed: 01-Jun-1984

Details

A medieval site with C18 walled gardens in a late C18 landscape park, and C19/early C20 pleasure grounds around a country house.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

A manor house existed at Fairfield at least as early as 1166 and in 1288 a chapel was built and an endowment given for a chaplain. In 1473 the owner, William Verney, was granted a licence to fortify the house with a wall and seven round towers and to make a park of c 200 acres (c 80ha). In 1589 a partial rebuilding of the house was completed by Elizabeth Verney and her husband William Palmer. In the early C18, three of the bases of the round towers and a walled courtyard east of the house are recorded as still extant but the chapel had disappeared, as had most or all of the ancient village of Fairfield which stood to the east of the house. Collinson (1791) remarks of the village that 'the greater part of the houses have long since been taken down' and the chapel 'is now so entirely destroyed, that even the place where it stood is not known'. By 1791 the landscape had been transformed into a landscape park with informal groups of trees (illustration in Collinson 1791). In 1806 Sir John Acland obtained an Act to move the Stringston road from its position immediately adjacent to the south lawn to its present line c 450m south of the house, allowing the park to be extended southwards. In the mid C19, Sir Peregrine Acland, an active local landlord, improved the gardens and built Stogursey School (1860, listed grade II), outside the site here registered, which acts as an eyecatcher in views from the south garden. In the early C20 Sir Peregrine Acland-Hood, Lord St Audries, inherited the estate and oversaw another phase of the landscape's development, which continued into the 1950s. Fairfield House remains (2002) in private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

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LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Fairfield House and grounds, comprising c 40ha, are located c 12.5km east of Watchet in Bridgwater Bay on the West Somerset coast. The southern boundary is formed by a minor public road between the villages of Stringston in the west and Stogursey in the east. To the west the boundary follows the western edge of Brambles Wood and a field boundary. The northern boundary runs along the outer, northern edge of Great Plantation and the outer edge of Back Lawn, north of the House, and runs east along the eastern approach to the gate at Suttonford Cottage, 400m north-east of the House. From there it follows the eastern edge of the plantation in which the Cottage stands to the Stringston road. The ground is generally even and rises gently to the Great Plantation north-west of the House. To the south, across the park, the land rises gently to Fairfield Wood and towards the ridge of the Quantock Hills which lie c 6km to the south-west.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The southern approach to the House is from the Stogursey to Stringston road, 350m south-east of the House, and is marked by two lodges. New Lodge is to the west of the drive and dates from c 1950s. The lodge to the east is in C19 Picturesque style with a wash-house attached, constructed of tufa blocks in a grotto style. The drive runs north and north-west for c 350m into the flat parkland then curves westward to approach a yew-edged forecourt (c 1928), shadowed by a holm oak, at the north-east front of the House. The final 150m of the drive was altered in the early C20 when it was redirected from the south-east front. A second drive approaches from a minor public road 700m east of the House and enters the registered site at a plantation in which stands Suttonford Cottage, north of the drive. From there it runs c 400m to the west through an avenue of lime trees (c 1970s), with views of parkland to the south. A path, on the line of a former drive, runs north from the grounds west of the House, through the Great Plantation and Honibere Belt, outside the site here registered, to the sea. This route was laid out in the 1830s by Sir Peregrine Acland for the benefit of his consumptive daughter.

An extension of the southern entrance drive continues in the opposite direction, and outside the site here registered, as an unmetalled field track leading southwards and up the slope to a lodge on the Nether Stowey road, 1km south of the House. This former drive and lodge date from the landscape improvements of c 1795 to 1806.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Fairfield House (listed grade II*) has a date stone of 1589 on the porch, recording the completion of an extension of the C12 house. It is a two-storey E-plan house, remodelled in the late C18 when finials were removed and a parapet added. The principal front is to the south, which until the late C18 also served as the entrance front. It comprises lime rendering over rubble, with exposed quoins on the porch, Bath stone dressings, and a hipped slate roof. There is a collection of offices and outbuildings immediately north of the House, including a barn (C17, listed grade II), a granary (C18, listed grade II), and a stable block and dovecote (late C18, listed grade II).

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS There is a small late C20 parterre garden immediately south of the south-east front of the House, and a lawn which covers a former, early C18 formal garden and pond, recorded on an estate painting of the period (private collection). These features were presumably removed as part of the landscape improvements of the late C18/early C19. To the west of the south lawn is a pleasure ground, first recorded as the 'Shrubbery' on an 1806 plan, containing rough grass paths between shrubs and specimen trees, including limes (possibly C18), an enormous *Parottia persica*, C19 hollies, holm oak, yew, Thuja, and a hawthorn/medlar graft. Lord St Audries was responsible for introducing many unusual bulbs which transformed the Shrubbery into an early C20 woodland garden. In the centre, c 100m south-west of the House, is a 1950s pond, immediately north of which is a lawn and a 1930s summerhouse, the former thatched roof of which was replaced with shingles in the 1990s. Brambles Wood forms the western boundary and shelter belt. Some 120m south of the House are the remnants of a maze, designed in the 1920s by John Acland-Hood, brother of Lord St Audries. The remains comprise a boundary hedge of yew around a pattern of flags set in grass on the line of the maze paths. The maze hedges were taken out in the 1990s. Along the north side of the Shrubbery is Sir Peregrine's Walk, laid out by Sir Peregrine Acland in the 1830s. This runs c 100m west from the House, c 5m south of the south wall of the kitchen garden, past a Deodar cedar, and along a now irregular line of yews to an iron gate into a paddock known as the Grove which was formerly dotted with large beech trees, felled in the 1970s.

A mature cider orchard, extended in the early C20 by Lord St Audries, is located c 200m north-west of the House, sheltered on three sides by the Great Plantation.

PARK There are parkland areas at Fairfield to the south, south-east, east, and north-east of the House. The southern park (late C18/early C19) lies south and south-east of the House and came into being following the realignment of the Stringston road c

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1806 and the construction of a rubble-stone ha-ha which runs from north-east to south-west across the site. This area of the park contains a number of C18 or earlier sweet chestnuts trees, English and Turkey oaks, and other scattered parkland standards. Some 1.5km south-east of the House, and outside the boundary here registered, is Stogursey School, designed for Sir Peregrine Acland by John Norton of Bristol (1860, listed grade II) in a picturesque Gothic style, which acts as an eyecatcher in views from the south front and lawn.

North of the east drive and the House is a roughly rectangular area known as Back Lawn which contains eight notable mature oak trees in grassland. North of Back Lawn, and outside the site here registered, is Martin's Wood which seems to have been associated with the owner of a dwelling that was part of the old village removed from this area in the mid C18 (Collinson 1791). A medieval deer park was created at Fairfield in 1473 and its location has been identified to the west of the House, outside the site here registered, in an area of agricultural land and woodland. Fragmentary remains of a boundary ditch have also been identified west of the Shrubbery and Brambles Wood (Lady Gass pers comm, 2002).

KITCHEN GARDEN There is a complex of walled kitchen gardens and smaller enclosures (listed grade II) located immediately west of the House. It comprises two main gardens some 20m west of the House, with two smaller enclosures, possibly used as drying grounds, immediately adjoining the House. The gardens have external walls of roughly coursed blue lias sandstone with internal skins of brick and pantile coping. Estate maps suggest that the walled kitchen gardens were constructed between c 1750 and 1795 and the date 1778 has been roughly inscribed on one of the west-facing brick walls of the northernmost kitchen garden, which since the 1960s has been used for a mixture of grazing and vegetable growing. One of the drying yards contains a rose garden, planted in the 1950s, and an early C20 glasshouse.

REFERENCES

J Collinson, *History and Antiquities of the County of Somerset I*, (1791), pp 252-6 J Bond, *Somerset Parks and Gardens* (1998), pp 50, 73, 96-7, 119-20

Maps Estate plan, c 1750 (Somerset Record Office) Survey of the Manors of Fairfield and Durbarrow, 1795 (Somerset Record Office) Supplement to survey of 1795, 1806 (Somerset Record Office) Plan of gardens, 1815 (Somerset Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1886 2nd edition published 1904

Illustrations Three estate paintings, early C18 (private collection)

Archival items Elizabeth Acland Hood Gass, *Notes on Fairfield Garden & Grounds*, nd (copy on EH file) Elizabeth Acland Hood Gass, *Notes on Fairfield*, 2002 (copy on EH file)

Description written: November 2002 Register Inspector: DAL Edited: May 2004

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.