

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

FRANKS HALL

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

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Name: FRANKS HALL

County: Kent

District: Sevenoaks (District Authority)

Parish: Farningham

County: Kent

District: Sevenoaks (District Authority)

Parish: Horton Kirby and South Darent

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.385414
Longitude: 0.23543605
National Grid Reference: TQ 55649 67523
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1000325
Date first listed: 01-Jul-1988

Details

Mid Victorian gardens and a small park laid out in the 1860s within the main lines of an Elizabethan and C17 scheme.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The original Franks Hall, which stood on the east bank of the River Darent, opposite the present Hall, was built in 1220 in the reign of Henry III by a Yorkshire family named Frankish. Lancelot Bathurst, a wealthy London merchant completed the building of the present house in 1591 but lived only three years to enjoy it. On his death in 1594 Lancelot Bathurst was succeeded by his eldest son, Randolph. His fourth son, George, founded a junior branch of the family and it was his grandson who was created the first Earl Bathurst in 1772. When Randolph died, Franks Hall passed to his son Sir Edward Bathurst. Sir Edward's son, Thomas, was a man of science who was knighted by Charles II in 1659 and died at Franks Hall in 1688. His only son, Francis was married four times but his two sons both died bachelors, leaving Sir Edward's daughter Bernice to inherit the Franks estate. Bernice married Joseph Fletcher and on her death in 1748 the estate passed to her son-in-law John Tasker who put it on the market. From the early C19, the property went into a slow decline. In 1860 however the estate was purchased by Robert Bradford who restored and enlarged the house and laid out the gardens and park again. In c 1880 the estate was again sold, and was purchased by Vavasour Earle who made various alterations to the gardens. In 1911 he put the property on the market and it was returned to the Bathurst family through its purchase by Earl Bathurst. During the C20 Franks Hall has had numerous owners until it was acquired by Findlay Publications Ltd as their headquarters in 1980. During the 1980s a major restoration programme was undertaken on the Hall. The site remains (2001) in divided ownership.

DESCRIPTION

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LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Franks Hall is located in the Darent valley, to the north-east of Farningham and to the south-west of Horton Kirby. The c 40ha site occupies a rural location, bounded to the north-east by Franks Lane, to the west by Dartford Road, to the south-east by Eglantine Lane, and to the south-west by farmland. The Hall stands at the foot of a valley, on the west bank of the River Darent which flows from north to south through the site, dividing the gardens from the park. The land rises to the west and east of the river.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The entrance to the site is at its northern tip, c 170m north-west of the Hall where a drive forks off Dartford Road, passing through iron gates (1940s) and a later C19 gateway (possibly by E W Roumieu, listed grade II) beside a lodge. From here the drive runs south-east, parallel to Franks Lane, to the stable block, then continues, curving round to the south, to the entrance front on the south-east side of the Hall.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Franks Hall (listed grade I) is a square, three-storey building constructed of brick on a knapped flint base, under a tile roof. It is a square building with a stone doorway flanked by Doric columns on tall bases in the centre of the south-east, entrance front, and a projecting octagonal turret in the centre of the south-west front. The Hall was built in 1591 by Lancelot Bathurst to replace an earlier mansion situated on the other side of the river.

The two-storey stable block (listed grade II) is arranged around a quadrangle with a carriage arch on the north-east front and is constructed of red brick with stone dressings under a tile roof. It stands c 40m to the north of the Hall and is linked to it via a tunnel under the north lawn. The stables were built in the late C19, probably to designs by E L Roumieu.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The Victorian reworking of the gardens, for which there is a good photographic record (see guidebook), respected the lines of the earlier gardens, and the area to the north-west of the Hall still reflects the Elizabethan or C17 arrangement. A square lawn extends from the north-west front of the Hall, bounded on three sides by a slightly raised walk along which four brick gateways, which would have been set within walls but are now (2001) free-standing, survive from the C17. This lawn was the site of the Elizabethan forecourt. Steps from the hard-standing below the garden front mark the end of a straight walk which forms the south-east side of the lawn. The walk leads north-west to a stone and flint gazebo, adjacent to which stands one of the early gateways which bears the date 1689 (listed grade II). A pair of ornamental brick piers in the southern corner of the lawn marks the start of a lime avenue, planted in the C19. A picture gallery was built at the southern end of the avenue by Vavasour Earle (late C19/early C20). A flight of steps from the south-east front leads down a grass bank to another lawn which stretches down to the river.

A box-hedged knot garden on the south-west side of the Hall occupies the site of a large conservatory which was demolished in c 1915. Beyond this a broad walk leads down the east side of the lime avenue, between it and an area of lawn, to the site of a tea house (now, 2001, demolished) which formerly stood c 180m south-west of the Hall on the boundary of the site here registered. During the mid to late C19 the area adjacent to this walk was filled with extensive displays of bedding, these having been replaced by the late C20 by tennis courts.

To the west of the avenue is a large paddock planted with specimen trees and surrounded by a woodland walk behind an iron fence. The land here rises to the west and at the highest point stood a summerhouse (now demolished), rebuilt in flint and brick in 1910 by Lord Bathurst who had bought back the old family home. Near to its site is a small garden laid out with Italian cypresses; a statue, now removed, formerly stood in front of a stone niche (listed grade II) set into the brick wall, surrounded by a rockery of flint and slag.

PARK The main area of parkland, divided into Pigeons' House Meadow and Eglantine Field, lies to the south-west of the river. The park extends over the valley side up to Eglantine Lane which runs along the east side of the site and is partly retained under grass. Several clumps of parkland trees survive.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen gardens lie beyond the lawn on the north-west front of the Hall and are within the area of the Elizabethan or C17 walled enclosures. The glass and potting sheds have been replaced by a caretaker's house. To the west of the kitchen garden, between it and a flint wall, is a hedged area planted as an orchard with apple trees trained to form over-arching walks.

REFERENCES

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F O Morris, Series of picturesque views 1, (1866-80), p 47 Country Life, 1 (20 March 1897), pp 295-8; 34 (26 July 1913), pp 126-33 Franks Hall, guidebook, (1983) Inspector's Report: Franks Hall, (English Heritage 1988)

Maps Estate map, 1860s (Centre for Kentish Studies, Maidstone)

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.