

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

GOODNESTONE PARK

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Name:	GOODNESTONE PARK
County:	Kent
District:	Dover (District Authority)
Parish:	Goodnestone
County:	Kent
District:	Dover (District Authority)
Parish:	Wingham
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.241818 Longitude: 1.2289676 National Grid Reference: TR 25473 54136 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000260 Date first listed: 01-May-1986

Details

A largely C19 formal garden with significant surviving C18 features and with C20 planting, set within an C18 park.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The manor of Goodnestone was held by Sir Thomas de Godwyneston in the C13 and then by the Engeham family. In 1705 the estate was purchased from Sir Thomas Engeham by Brook Bridges, an Auditor of the Imprest under Charles II, who built the present house. Bridges' son succeeded him and was created a baronet in 1718. The Fitzwalter family came into possession of Goodnestone on the marriage of the third baronet to Fanny Fowler, co-heiress (albeit in abeyance) of the Barony of Fitzwalter. Their third daughter, Elizabeth, married Jane Austen's eldest brother, Edward and the novelist was a frequent visitor to their house on the Goodnestone estate in the late C18. Goodnestone passed by marriage to the Plumptre family in 1828 and in 1924, Henry Fitzwalter Plumptre successfully claimed title to the ancient Barony of Fitzwalter. Goodnestone remains (1997) in private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Goodnestone Park lies adjacent to the south end of Goodnestone village, c 1km east of the B2046, between the villages of Wingham, 2.5km to the north-north-west and Aylesham, 2km to the south-west. The registered site, which comprises c 15ha of formal gardens and ornamental planting, surrounded by a further 96ha of parkland, farmland, and woodland, occupies the floor and the gently rising east and west slopes of a shallow dry valley, the land falling generally towards the north.

The southern and eastern boundaries and most of the length of the northern boundary are bounded by narrow lanes while the western boundary is marked by a farm track; the site is largely hidden from view by internal roadside woodland belts. Beyond

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the lanes the landscape opens into rolling arable farmland, with occasional small woods and lengths of hedgerow. On the north side of the site, Goodnestone village extends some 400m southwards into the park and the site boundary follows the rear fence lines of the properties lining the main street (The Street).

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The present approach to Goodnestone Park is from the north, through the village. The main street passes, on its west side, Holy Cross church and then Lindley House (within the site and listed grade II). It continues southwards to form the drive to the house, passing, c 50m south of Lindley House, the wooded frontage and entrance to the Dower House and its stable block (both also within the site and listed grade II* and II respectively). Some 80m further south a spur off the drive turns westwards towards the house, passing beneath the central arch of the stable and estate building block (listed grade II) then looping southwards to arrive on the gravelled forecourt of the principal, west front of the house.

The approach from the village street continues southwards past the east front of the house to Gate Lodge (listed grade II) which lies west of Bonnington Farm on the southern boundary. This route, now (1990s) a track providing private access to the park and farmland, formed the Old Park road which was the principal approach to the east front of the house in the C18. This is shown in Thomas Badeslade's view of 1719 and Thomas Hogben's survey of 1763. Alterations to the orientation of the house in 1844-5 required a new principal approach and New Park Drive was constructed. From the south, it enters the site at South Lodge (300m west of Gate Lodge) and follows a loose S-shaped course, now (1997) grassed, to the forecourt of the house. From the north, it enters off Saddlers Hill (100m west of its junction with The Street), at a lodge of similar design to South Lodge, and follows a straight, concrete-surfaced course southwards along a double horse chestnut avenue (replanted in the 1990s after felling and then storm damage) to arrive at the west front. This northern length of New Park Drive was in use as an approach to the house until the 1980s.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Goodnestone Park (listed grade II*) stands on the valley floor, at the centre of its park. It is a three-storey house of nine bays, built of red and blue brick with a hipped, slate roof. The house, built on the site of an earlier mansion (Hasted 1790), appears to have been completed by 1704 (the date on a brick on the east front) and was originally a two-storey, double-pile structure. It was considerably remodelled and given a third storey in place of its attics in c 1770-90 by Sir Brook Bridges, third baronet, who consulted the architect Robert Mylne (1734-1811) although the extent of his contribution is uncertain (guidebook). In 1844-5 further alterations were carried out by Sir Brook William Bridges, fifth baronet, to designs by the architectural firm of Rickman and Hussey of Birmingham (ibid). The entrance hall was moved to the present, principal, west front and the large pedimented Greek Doric porch added. The late C18 stucco finish was uncovered to reveal the original brickwork and the main fronts enriched with stone window casings.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens and pleasure grounds surround the house but lie largely to the west, north, and east/south-east, with formal, terraced gardens to the immediate east and west.

The east front of the house opens onto an upper terrace of lawns, laid out on the site of an early C18 terrace (Badeslade, 1719) which is bisected by an axial gravelled path, punctuated by Irish yews and extending 20m eastwards down a flight of stone steps (listed grade II) in a grass bank to a lower terrace. A broad yew walk (planted mid 1990s), formerly gravelled, runs north to south along the top of the bank. The lower terrace, laid to lawn with a mixed border at the foot of the grass bank, is c 80m deep and 158m in length and is raised above the Old Park drive on a brick wall, its moulded stone parapet (formerly embellished with urns) forming a low wall on the eastern, garden side of the terrace. The wall returns westwards for 25m to enclose the terrace at its south end while at both north and south ends, steps lead down through the wall to gates onto the drive. The terraces were designed by Rickman and Hussey in 1844-5 as part of the alterations to the house (Sell, Wade Postins 1992), the lower terrace occupying the site of its early C18 walled entrance court (Badeslade, 1719) which itself had been replaced by a carriage sweep by 1763 (Hogben). The northern end of the terraces, laid out informally with trees and shrubs, are enclosed from the stable block by a brick wall and by a screen of holm oaks planted in c 1850 (Sell, Wade Postins 1992).

From the west front forecourt and centred on the Doric porch, a grass amphitheatre rises in three tiers which are connected by three axial flights of stone steps and enclosed by wings of yew hedging (planted in the 1990s) on the top, west side. The amphitheatre, known as the Terraces and also part of the 1844-5 improvements by Rickman and Hussey (ibid), is built on the site

of the early C18 walled great parterre and its flanking fruit garden (to the north) and wilderness garden and grove (to the south) which had been replaced by a single enclosure known as the Lawns and Walks by 1763 (Badeslade, 1719; Hogben, 1763).

West of the Terraces the axial grassed path leads between mature clipped hedges, flanked to north and south by lawns dotted with ornamental trees planted since the 1950s (guidebook), into the 170m long, double Lime Avenue. The Avenue, planted in 1984 to commemorate Lord Fitzwalter's seventieth birthday. Its line preserves the axis of an early C18 avenue which divided the Great Wilderness Garden into two compartments. These survived in that form in the layout of the Lawns and Walks, which had replaced the Wilderness by 1763 and were recorded as light woodland by the early C20 (OS 1908). The former Wilderness compartments, to the north and south of the Avenue, have been planted since the mid C20 as a small arboretum of mixed native and exotic trees.

North of the Terraces, on lawns laid out with ornamental shrubbery, two mature cedars of Lebanon survive from the parkland planting carried out in the 1840s and 1850s. Some 150m north-west of the house and marked by a shrub-covered mound is the site of the Well House. Built c 1650, possibly as a hunting lodge, and incorporated into the north-west corner of the early C18 garden (Badeslade, 1719), it was demolished in 1965 (CL 1995). North of the Well House site the New Park Drive leads northwards into the chestnut avenue; to its east and extending from the estate buildings 170m northwards to the churchyard wall is a series of three contiguous, rectangular walled gardens (listed grade II). Running parallel between the gardens and the avenue is the Holly Walk, established on a north to south axis of the early C18 garden and known as the Church Walk by 1763 (Hogben). The Walk terminates at a pair of C18 stone-capped brick piers (listed grade II) at a gateway in the churchyard wall. North-west of the Terraces and west of the chestnut avenue an area of mixed mature woodland contains a small water garden with a pool and rockery and a surrounding woodland garden with acid-loving shrubs and herbaceous planting. This area was laid out in the 1920s on the site of late C18 orchard and nursery gardens (Hogben, 1763). By the late C19, these compartments had been cleared and replaced by two clearings set within plantations (OS 1877).

PARK The park extends more or less equidistantly around the perimeter of the house and gardens. Hogben's survey of 1763 is the earliest record of the area of the park, when it occupied approximately the south-west and south-east quadrants of its present extent. South of the house and separated from the south boundary lane and from Bonnington Farm by woodland established between 1763 (Hogben) and 1872-3 (OS 1877), grazed pastureland is dotted with single and loose clumps of mature and newly planted (1990s) oak trees in a pattern established after 1763. Just within the southern boundary, c 130m north-east of Bonnington Farm, is an icehouse, built in a chalk pit. Towards the south-west boundary is an area known as Larkins which was laid out as part of improvements to the park between 1719 and 1763 attributed to a nurseryman, Samuel Driver (Sell, Wade Postins 1992). It is now (1990s) managed as set-aside land and contains two central, equidistant roundels c 45m in diameter, restored and replanted to their C18 appearance in the late C20. Larkins is enclosed along its north, west, and south sides by a woodland belt known as the Serpentine which contained a sinuous walk (now virtually gone) entered from the west side of the gardens. The south-east quadrant, bounded to the north by a C19 sunken fence, lies on rising ground. Its lower slopes are grazed and the upper slopes, largely enclosed by woodland, are managed as set-aside. The parkland is planted with a series of six evenly but apparently randomly spaced roundels also attributed to Driver and restored in the late C20. The north-west and north-east quadrants are enclosed along their boundaries by significant woodland belts and laid out with a number of internal woodlands. These areas of parkland, the open land managed as set-aside, were imparked from fields in the late C18 or early C19 (ibid) although Hogben's survey shows two of the present plantations in the north-east quadrant (Longwood on the east boundary and an oval plantation now in commercial forestry), in place by 1763.

KITCHEN GARDEN The Walled Gardens are entered through an archway in their south wall, some 30m north of the house. The present structure of the garden walls, which were restored after the Second World War (guidebook), was laid out by 1763 on the site of the early C18 walled fruit garden and associated enclosures to the north-east and incorporated fragments of these walls. The eastern half of the first, southernmost compartment is laid to lawn with shrubbery and specimen trees with rose borders and a group of glasshouses and frames towards the north end. The western half is laid to mixed borders flanking a broad, central grass path which continues as an axis, focused on the church tower, through openings in the dividing east/west walls of the remaining compartments. These openings were probably made in the late C18 or early C19 (Sell, Wade Postins 1992). In

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the second compartment the central walk is flanked by borders of old roses and herbaceous planting on the west side and by box-edged herbaceous borders, linked by pergola arches festooned with climbers on the east side. The third compartment was partly redesigned in 1998 (guidebook); paths edged with mixed borders and occasional pairs of Irish yews divide the garden into four quadrants which are laid out with fruit and vegetables.

REFERENCES

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OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1872-3, published 1877 2nd edition published 1898 3rd edition published 1908 OS 25" to 1 mile: 3rd edition published 1907 1938 edition

Illustrations T Badeslade, *View of Goodnestone Park, 1719* (in Badeslade 1750s)

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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.