

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

GREAT MAYTHAM

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Name:	GREAT MAYTHAM
County:	Kent
District:	Ashford (District Authority)
Parish:	Rolvenden
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.046886 Longitude: 0.63172186 National Grid Reference: TQ 84569 30799 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000221 Date first listed: 01-May-1986

Details

An early C20 formal garden designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, incorporating built elements of an early C18 garden and set within a largely C19 park, part of which has C18 origins.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

An estate existed at Maytham in the Saxon period and a manor and its owners were referred to in Domesday Book. Owned by two de Maytham sisters in the C14 and by the Carew family in the early C16, it became Crown property in 1539. Granted first to Thomas Cromwell and then to Sir Thomas Wyatt, it passed by marriage to the Colpeppers of Bedgebury who owned it until 1714 although it was never their principal residence. It was sold in that year to Captain James Monypenny who began building the first recorded house on the site. The property remained in the hands of various members of the Monypenny family, who enlarged the house and the park in the C19, until the death of Lt-Col Robert Thomas Gybbon-Monypenny in 1893. Various owners and tenants including, from 1898 until 1907, the authoress Frances Hodgson Burnett, occupied Great Maytham until 1909 when the then owner, Mr Powell-Edwards, sold it to the Rt Hon H J Tennant who engaged Sir Edwin Lutyens to rebuild the house and lay out the formal gardens. When the Maytham estate was sold again in 1936 the tenanted farmland surrounding the house and park was sold off separately. A succession of owners followed, the house being used by the National Institute for the Blind and by the army before falling into a state of neglect. In 1961 most of the parkland was divided and sold, the house, gardens, and part of the eastern parkland being purchased by the Country Houses Association (formerly the Mutual Households Association) who restored the property and converted it to residential retirement apartments. The house and gardens remain (1997) in charitable ownership with the majority of the parkland in divided private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Great Maytham lies adjacent to the east side of the main Ashford to Hastings Road (A28), on the south side of the village of Rolvenden. The 44ha registered site, which comprises 3ha of formal and ornamental gardens set within 41ha of parkland and woodland, occupies level ground in the centre which rises in gentle undulations to the north-east and falls away to the south-west and south-east. The boundaries to the east and west, largely enclosed by hedges and internal tree fringes, are formed by the A28 and a minor lane, Maytham Road. To the south

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the boundary follows the course of a park boundary bank lined largely with coppiced hornbeam; on its south side is a public footpath. Beyond the site to the west, south, and east is a gently undulating landscape of small fields, hedgerows, and woodland while to the north the site is bounded by the housing and church of Rolvenden village.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The entrance to the site is on the east side, from Maytham Road. A drive enters through the carriage arch which connects the twin flanking lodges of the gatehouse, known as the Clock-House (listed grade II*). Built by Sir Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944) as stables in 1909-10, in grey brick with red-brick window dressings and with a wooden cupola and clock face above the arch, the building was converted to residential use between 1961 and 1965. The drive, lined with an avenue of five pairs of lime trees, replanted in the early 1990s to replace Lutyens' original six pairs destroyed in the storm of 1987, runs on a 90m straight course to the gravelled, yew-hedge-enclosed forecourt, laid out 1909-10, on the principal, north-east front of the house. Andrews, Dury and Herbert's Map of Kent of 1769 shows the house similarly approached directly from the east but by the early C19 (Mudge, 1801; Greenwood, surveyed 1819-20), the house appears to have been served by the present partly grassed track which enters the site at West Lodge (of mid C19 origin) on the Hastings road (A28), passes the entrance front of the house and then continues south-eastwards to East Lodge, built between 1870-2 and 1899 (OS 1st and 2nd editions) on the Maytham road. The present entrance was established in 1909-10 as part of Lutyens' design for the house and grounds.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Great Maytham Hall (listed grade II*) sits on level ground towards the south-east corner of the park and enjoys extensive views south-westwards to the distant ridges of the Sussex Weald. Built of grey brick with red-brick window dressings and quoins, the main block of three storeys and the two wings of two storeys each have a semi-basement and an attic storey under a hipped, tiled roof. On the south-east side and connected to Lutyens' house by a passage at semi-basement level is a red-brick pavilion or bothy, built as a laundry to the former C18 house and converted by Lutyens to a squash court. A similar but detached pavilion survives to the north-west of the present house and both were converted to residential use in the early 1960s. The first house recorded at Great Maytham was started on the site of the present house in 1721 and consisted of a two-storey building with basement and the two detached pavilions. It remained roofless until completed in c 1760. A third storey, in Tudor style, was added in 1880 before the house was partially destroyed by fire in 1893. Repaired and altered immediately afterwards, it was virtually rebuilt by Lutyens in 1909-10, only the cellars and the pavilions being incorporated from the C18 house. Conversion to residential apartments took place from 1961 to 1965.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The formal gardens and pleasure grounds lie to the west and south-west of the house, the formal terracing designed, and the C18 walled gardens remodelled, by Lutyens in 1909-10. The south-west front opens onto a paved terrace (restored 1977-8), lined by parallel mixed borders, which runs the full 75m length of the house. It is enclosed at the north-west end by the south-east wall of the kitchen garden and, at the north corner, by a small, square brick gazebo (shown on the OS 1st edition) which is entered from the terrace and which offers views, through openings, over the C18 coach houses and yard (converted to garage use in the early 1960s) below to the north-west and, to the north-east, over a small paved courtyard between the main house and the C18 detached pavilion. In the centre of the terrace, opposite the door leading out from the saloon and continuing the axis of the main drive, a flight of stone steps leads down to a landing embraced by further short flights, flanked by shrub-planted projecting brick bastions, onto the principal lawns. These are also reached from both the extreme north-west and south-east ends of the terrace by straight staircases of similar stone steps flanked by bastions. The extensive lawns, laid out by Lutyens, are constructed as a series of three descending terraces separated by grassed banks, the central level laid out as a croquet lawn. The apparent extent of the lawn in the early 1870s (OS) is defined by the present upper level. The lawns are terminated on their south-east and south-west sides by a grassed ha-ha, planted along its south-east side with shrubbery, the remnants of a box hedge, and occasional trees and immediately beyond them by a copse which screens the view of the park from the house.

The lawns are enclosed along their entire north-west side by the south-east, red-brick wall of the walled gardens, the southernmost c 50m and two piers being added by Lutyens to the surviving C18 length. From the staircase at the north-west end of the terrace a stone-paved path with a central grass strip runs 100m south-westwards, parallel to the wall, to a small paved terrace, terminated by a balustraded wall, from which flights of stone steps lead south-eastwards down onto the lowest level

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of lawn and north-westwards into the southernmost walled garden. This garden is only partially walled, being enclosed to the north-west and south by a belt of mature oak wood, underplanted with rhododendrons and shown established by 1870-2 (OS 1877). It is laid to lawn with, as its central focus, a square lily pool surrounded by paving and four corner herbaceous beds. An axial paved path leads south-eastwards from the pool into the woodland and north-eastwards up a flight of semicircular steps and through a wrought-iron gate into the principal walled enclosure. Its walls surviving from the C18 and formerly containing a rose garden (guidebook), this is laid to lawn surrounded and divided centrally by stone-paved paths (the present structure established by 1870-2, OS 1877) with mixed borders along the foot of the walls and with a climber-covered brick and timber pergola running south-west to north-east over the central axial path. A further wrought-iron gate gives access onto the lawns from the east corner while built into the south corner is a raised brick gazebo designed by Lutyens in 1909-10 in a style similar to the gazebo on the terrace.

PARK The park extends to the north, west, and south of the house and gardens. To their immediate north-west and south-west, the gardens are abutted by woodland, that to the west, shown established on Mudge's map of Kent of 1801, comprising largely coppice with small areas of conifer plantation. The woodland to the north-west, also largely coppice and recorded by 1909 (OS) as The Wilderness, encloses a lake, constructed between 1870-2 and 1898 (OS 1st and 2nd editions) on former marshy, clump-planted parkland. Beyond the woodlands to the west and on the rising ground to the north the parkland, shown established between 1819-20 (Greenwood) and 1870-2 (OS 1877), is open in character, laid to permanent pasture and with a few clumps and individual trees surviving from the extensive planting pattern shown on the OS 1st edition as extending to the east to west field boundary 320m north of the house. North of this field boundary, tree cover, sparse in 1870, now (1997) comprises only three or four mature oaks with a similar number of new trees planted in the 1990s. South of the boundary and north of the lake, the surrounds of the southernmost of two ponds, established by 1898 (OS), are now (1997) planted with a small collection of ornamental trees.

Immediately north-east of the house, and enclosed by a narrow, westward-extending arm of coppice woodland, the parkland has a denser scatter of clumps and individual trees of mixed age. South-east of the main drive and extending to the southern boundary of the site, the parkland, shown established on Mudge's map of 1801 and well furnished with scattered trees in 1877 and 1909 (OS), is again laid to permanent pasture and open in character, with a few clumps and, to the east of the house, a number of large mature pollards.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden lies to the west of the house, enclosed to the south-west by the wall of the principal walled garden and by further walls to the south-east, north-west, and north-east, the last backing onto the coach houses and garage blocks. A range of small outbuildings and greenhouses, which existed in 1870-2 (OS 1877), was largely replaced after 1908 by an extensive range of glasshouses, the surviving brick bases of which are now planted ornamentally as private gardens for residents or used for propagation.

REFERENCES

Country Life, 32 (30 November 1912), pp 746-53 L Weaver, Houses and Gardens by E L Lutyens (1913), pp 247-56 J Newman, The Buildings of England: West Kent and the Weald (1969), p 479 J Brown, Gardens of a Golden Afternoon (1982), pp 170, 179 Great Maytham Hall, guidebook, (Country Houses Association 1982)

Maps W Mudge, Map of Kent, 1" to 1 mile, 1801 C Greenwood, Map of the County of Kent from an actual survey made in the years 1819 and 1820, c 1" to 1 mile, 1821

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1870-2, published 1877 2nd edition published 1899 3rd edition published 1909 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1870 2nd edition published 1898 3rd edition published 1908

Description written: October 1997 Amended: January 1999 Register Inspector: VCH Edited: November 2003

Legal

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