

NOTES ON FAIRFIELD GARDEN & GROUNDS.

The Site has many natural streams, rising on the Quantocks, and two wells. The soil is neutral and light, unlike the clay belt along the coast a little to the north. Strong westerly prevailing winds, sometimes bringing salt, affect the woods and garden, but the protection of trees and the fact that the sea is under one and a half miles away mean that some unexpectedly tender plants can be grown. These are sometimes damaged or killed by late frosts particularly when following mild early spring weather.

General History

- 1166 or earlier: manor house in existence.
- 1288 Chapel built.
- 1473 Licence granted to William Verney to encircle house with a wall and seven round towers, and to enclose 200 acres of land for a park (i.e. a deer park; the site has recently been identified to the west of the house and is now fields and woods).
- C15 Fine carved oak roof put on first floor hall.
- early) Chapel re-built by Robert Verney, who also built a new gatehouse and other C16) buildings.
- 1562 & 1575 Chapel described as 'a very fair building'
- 1589 Coat of arms above porch to mark partial re-building of house, incorporating part of the medieval building, by Elizabeth Verney and her husband William Palmer.
- c1730 Thomas Palmer recorded that the bases of three of the towers built in 1473 still remained, but the chapel had completely disappeared, as had all trace of the ancient village of Fairfield which used to be to the east of the house.
- early) Maps give the outline of the three towers and a walled courtyard to the east of C18) the house, an indication of a possible moat, and show a large pond to the south and the Stringston road going past the walls. They also mark the C17 barn and C18 granary and other outbuildings which still exist.
- early) Paintings show the pond and a formal garden, with the bases of the three C18) towers and part of the wall still there.
- 1789 Date on one of the (newer) walls of the kitchen garden.
- 1791 Painting and Collinson print show the house (superficially altered by Sir John Acland to look more Georgian) surrounded by a park with clumps of trees.
- 1795 Plan indicating positions of part of kitchen garden walls, orchards and outbuildings etc; with pencil sketches of a new drive and lodges.
- 1806 Plan as above, showing changes made by Sir John Acland, who extended the park to the south, moved the Stringston road (by Act of Parliament), made the winding drive and built two lodges; he also diverted streams to make a ha-ha; by this time the formal garden, pond, and towers were no longer to be seen.
- 1830 Plan indicating kitchen garden walls and some outbuildings.
- mid) Sir Peregrine Acland continued to plant trees as his ancestors had done, created C19) walks in the garden, and probably lined part of the walls with brick for growing earlier fruit.

late C19) The kitchen garden was always in full use, even when the family had another & early) house at St Audries, the soil at Fatfield being particularly fertile after many C20) centuries of cultivation.

1918 Peregrine Acland-Hood (Lord St Audries), who, like his predecessors, was descended from the original C12 occupants of Fatfield, inherited the house and garden. He began to introduce many unusual bulbs (now naturalised) and make a woodland garden. He also extended the orchards and built greenhouses. The C19 or earlier frames and hothouses were already ruinous or had disappeared, but the kitchen garden water supply system and ponds remained. He had a life-long interest in the weather, keeping daily records of the rain and temperature. The rockery was created by his mother, Lady St Audries (Mildred DeMoleyns). The maze of yew hedges was designed and laid out by his brother, John Acland-Hood, and Mr Haines (the gardener's son, who later became Ipswich Borough Surveyor), and planted by estate staff.

1920/39 At this time the walled kitchen garden was fully maintained, with many vegetables, and pear, peach and apricot trees against the walls, and a long double herbaceous border. A rose garden was planted in one of the courtyards, with paths of bricks from the old stable floor. A hard tennis court was made and a wooden thatched summer-house was built, also a skittle-alley in the park. 1940's During the war maintenance of the garden obviously had to be reduced considerably. The lawn in front of the house was ploughed up to grow potatoes. 1960's Part of the kitchen garden was grassed. An ornamental pond was dug near the maze on the site of the former tennis court. More bulbs were continually planted and also trees and shrubs.

1970's Formal beds of roses and lavender were planted close to the house in the front. The garden and several ancient trees were badly affected by the 1976 drought, which also weakened the 200 year old beech trees in the grove to the west, resulting in their gradual decline and death, thus leaving the garden much more exposed to wind.

1980's Woodwork decorated during the 1930's by members of the family and their friends was removed from the collapsed skittle-alley to the summer-house. 1990's Following the death of many of the yews and because of the difficulties of maintenance, the centre of the maze was replaced by paving to the same plan as half the scale. The thatch on the summer-house roof was replaced with oak shingles.

Trees, shrubs and bulbs are continually being planted to maintain the woodland garden (and to replace damage by honey fungus in places). The walled garden planting has been simplified, with more grass and interesting small trees. The C18 granary has been extensively repaired using chestnut and oak from nearby. The aim is to maintain the interest of the garden and the surviving outbuildings, with a feel for its history, while keeping the work needed to a minimum.

The garden and part of the park are on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.

Richard de Courcy

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Richard de Courcy^[a] (sometimes **Richard of Courcy**;^[2] died around 1098) was a Norman nobleman and landholder in England.

Richard was probably the son of Robert de Courcy, but his mother was named Herleva.^[2] His family was from Courcy in the Calvados region of Normandy.^[1]

Richard gained lands in England after the Norman conquest of England, being named as a tenant-in-chief in Domesday Book.^[2] He gave his name to Stoke Courcy, in Somerset, which over time became known as Stogursey.^[4] He also held Nuneham Courtenay in Oxfordshire,^[5] Sarsden, and Foscot.

After the death of William the Conqueror in 1087, William's lands were divided between the two oldest sons, with Normandy going to the eldest, Robert Curthose, and England going to the next eldest son, William.

Both brothers attempted during the next nine years to seize the other brother's lands.^[6]

Most of the nobility of both England and Normandy chose sides between the two sons, but a few magnates witnessed documents of both brothers.^[2] Richard was one of those who was a witness to both Duke Robert and King William II's charters.^[2] Richard, along with William Bertram, was named by the nuns of Holy Trinity in Caen, Normandy as stealing from their convent after the death of William the Conqueror.^[2]

Richard, along with Hugh de Grandmesnil, resisted the efforts of Robert of Bellême to expand his lands. Shortly before Christmas in 1090, a small war broke out between Robert of Belleme on one side and Richard and Hugh on the other. Robert of Belleme secured the aid of Duke Robert in the efforts to capture Richard's castle at Courcy.

This prompted Richard and Hugh to appeal to the duke's brother King William for help. From 1 January 1091 to at least 23 January 1091 Courcy was besieged by Robert of Belleme^[7] and Duke Robert.

The siege was lifted when King William landed in Normandy in late January or early February.^[8] Bishop Gerard of Seez had attempted to mediate the dispute and siege but these efforts ended with Gerard's death on 23 January 1091.^[9] Richard was at King William's court between 1091 and 1094, as he is recorded in royal documents for that period.^[10]

Richard married Wandelmode and had at least two children: William de Courcy and Robert de Courcy. William inherited the lands in England while Robert received the Norman lands.^[11] Robert was married to Rohais, the daughter of Hugh de Grandmesnil.^[9]

Richard died around 1098.[†]

William de Courcy

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

William de Courcy (died c. 1114), feudal baron of Stoke Courcy (modern Stogursey) in Somerset, was an Anglo-Norman nobleman.

William was the son of Richard de Courcy by his wife Wandelmode.^[1] The family was from the Calvados region of Normandy.^[2] William inherited the English lands of his father in about 1088.^[1]

On the accession of King Henry I of England in 1100, William was appointed a royal steward,^[3] or *dapifer*.^[1] There were probably four stewards in the royal household, and Henry kept in office the three he inherited from his brother King William II, namely Eudo, Haimo and Roger Bigod, 1st Earl of Norfolk.

William was the only new appointment to this office at the start of Henry's reign.^[4]

In March 1101 William served as a surety for Henry fulfilling a treaty with Robert II, Count of Flanders. William pledged 100 marks as security that would have been forfeited should the king fail to uphold the treaty terms.^[5] In 1107 William witnessed a charter of the king in Normandy and 6 more royal charters during 1110 in England.^[6]

While Henry was absent from England in 1111 William was one of the advisors of Queen Matilda, who was left behind in England to govern the country.^[7]

William gave a gift of land as well as the advowson of the church at Nuneham Courtenay in Oxfordshire to Abingdon Abbey, the advowdson grant being related in the *Historia Ecclesie Abbendonensis*. Shortly after these grants, William further gave to Abingdon a fishery named "Sotiswere".^[8]

William married Emma de Falaise, the daughter and heiress of William de Falaise, feudal baron of Stoke (later "Stoke Curcy, Stogursey") in Somerset, who held amongst many others, the manor of Stogursey in Somerset, his *caput*, at the time of the *Domesday Book* in 1086.

William inherited the lands of his wife and became thereby feudal baron of Stogursey.^[9] The honour of Stoke-Courcy represented 25 knight's fees.^[10]

By his wife he had three sons:^[11] William de Courcy (died before 1130), eldest son and heir who inherited the feudal barony of Stogursey,^[9] Richard, and Robert de Courcy, who may have inherited his father's royal stewardship.

William de Courcy died c. 1114