

MALDON DISTRICT COUNCIL

BRADWELL LODGE
(formerly the Rectory)

BRADWELL ON SEA

TM 004 067

Originally a C16 house on a moated site, considerably extended by John Johnson, architect, with the gardens laid out by the agricultural improver and rector (Rev. Sir Henry Bate Dudley) in the late C18.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The north wing of Bradwell Lodge was originally a moated Tudor house dating from 1520. It was believed to have been given to Ann of Cleves by Henry VIII as part of the divorce settlement. The Rev. Sir Henry Bate Dudley (1745-1824) purchased the advowson of Bradwell-juxta-Mare in 1781 for a reported sum of £1,500. He acted as curate for the absentee rector George Pawson until 1797 and leased the neglected glebe from him. Writing to the bishop in March 1798, Bate Dudley explained how when he had arrived at Bradwell the glebe of 300 acres was in so ruinous a state from flooding and neglect that no one would farm it. Bate Dudley drained the glebe and the first mark of recognition of what he had done came from the Society of Arts in 1788 when he was granted the Silver Medal for reclaiming the land from the sea. In his report to the Society, Bate Dudley said that he had enclosed 45 acres by September 1786 and by 1800, when he was awarded the Gold Medal, he had reclaimed 206 acres and was growing corn on the land. He spent £28,000 of his personal fortune in draining the marshland round Bradwell and eventually reclaimed over 250 acres of marshland and applied mole drainage to heavy land.

The wealthy rector employed the eminent architect John Johnson (surveyor of the county of Essex from 1782 to 1812) to build an extension, an 'elegant chateau'. The work on the south wing is said to have taken place between 1781 and 1786 and it had, among other features, an unusually spacious belvedere decorated with Ionic columns. This viewpoint was used by the artist Gainsborough. Sir Henry combined the roles of rector and squire of Bradwell on Sea from this house. He was a sporting and duelling parson, he wrote comic operas which were performed at Covent Garden, and was for a time editor of the Morning Post. On the death of Rev. George Pawson in 1797 the bishop of London, although he was aware of the great improvements carried out in Bradwell, refused to institute Bate Dudley because he had farmed both tithes and glebe while acting as the curate. Rev. W. Gamble was appointed instead.

Thomas Wright, in his 1836 History of Essex, wrote that the Lodge 'is approached by a noble avenue of trees and is situated on an eminence which commands extensive prospects over a richly cultivated country. The surrounding scenery is in high degree beautiful and picturesque.' Sales particulars in 1883 describe the rectory as a 'first class mansion with grounds that are pretty and productive. The grounds are well laid out and planted with fine shrubs and comprising about five acres besides the seven acres of freehold. The sixty eight acres of glebe and freehold comprising the Home Park etc. are close around the house; the whole forming an unusually attractive residence.'

In 1901 Rev. E. Owen put the house up for sale as he needed a smaller rectory. In a hand-written description to a potential buyer, he mentioned the greenhouses and pits, the good walled garden, the fig trees of enormous size, and the myrtles. In the same year, he noted in his 'Information to the Board

of Agriculture' that the rectory was a mansion with about six acres of grounds, and a park of about 17 acres, requiring three gardeners and very expensive.

The house remained a rectory until 1938 when it was purchased by Tom Driberg MP and was renamed Bradwell Lodge. It was requisitioned by the RAF in 1941 but restored and redecorated in 1951. As early as 1953 Driberg intended that the house should be taken over by the National Trust. The Trust, however, was unable to obtain sufficient funds, and Driberg was forced to sell the house in 1971 due to debts. According to Eric Rayner, some land had already been sold for enlargement of the playground of the adjoining Buckeridge school.

The 1980 sales document describes the property as originally a small moated Tudor house dating from 1520. There was a large lawn to the front of the house with a copse of trees each side. One of the trees, an enormous Ilex, was said to be 400 years old. The lawn was bounded by a ha-ha at its southern edge, beyond which was a large field curving around the outside of two copses. To the west of the house, bordering the circular sweep of the drive, were many trees including mulberry, horse chestnut, elms and a ginkgo. There was an approximately 2 acre cultivated walled garden to the north east of the house, Adjoining this was a large open garden with lawns and numerous rose beds, the remains of an old maze, and also a small sheltered bricked terrace surrounded by numerous flowering shrubs. To the left of the entrance drive was a pond, and there was a small lake and woodland on the western boundary. A paddock of some 25 acres was used for grazing.

The estate was again for sale in 1995 and the particulars mention the approach to the house through a pair of wrought iron gates and a gravelled drive. The garden of approximately 6.5 acres contained several sections, including a rose garden, an old vegetable garden with laurel hedging, some fine old fruit trees (including mulberry and fig) and a large pond at the base of the drive. The garden was separated from the remainder of the land (over 19 acres) by a ha-ha, with some fine mature trees dotted about the spacious lawns.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM & SETTING

Bradwell Lodge is near the centre of the village of Bradwell-on Sea. It is bounded to the west by the Maldon Road South/High Street, to the north by East End and the primary school, to the south by Bacons Chase, and to the east by fields. The site is level and occupies about 10 hectares.

ENTRANCES & APPROACHES

There is a short shrub-lined drive from the High Street through iron gates on brick piers. A second winding drive approaches the house from the south from Bacons Chase through the small park, and was restored along its original line by the present owner on the evidence of parch marks seen from the air. It crosses the ha-ha ditch over a red brick bridge. This has been rebuilt to the original design (re-using some of the old material) and has a three-centred arch in stock brick with an ornamental keystone on the east side. There are no lodges.

PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS

The northern part of the two storey house is C16/17. The south end is an extension raised on a shallow semi-basement, built in 1781-86 and designed by John Johnson. On the roof between the four main chimney stacks is a glazed belvedere to provide an outlook over the nearby estuary and the

surrounding countryside (said to have been used by the painter, Thomas Gainsborough). On the west side of the house is a semi-circular Doric portico designed by Quinlan Terry in 2005. North of the house is a weather boarded timber framed two storey coach house and stable. The house is listed Grade II*, the coach house Grade II.

REFERENCES

- Briggs, N., 1991 *John Johnson 1732-1814*, Essex Record Office
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Wright, T., 1836, *History of Essex*, London

Maps and Images

- 1777 Chapman & Andre map of Essex
1793 engraving of Bradwell Lodge ERO I/Mb 48/1/4
1812 engraving of Bradwell Lodge ERO I/Mb 48/1/3
1839 tithe map ERO D/CT 46
1881 OS 6" map 1st edition
1897 OS 25" map 2nd edition
1978 photograph of Bradwell Lodge ERO I/Mb 48/1/1
1984 extract from OS map in sales catalogue ERO B7204

Archival Items

- 1883 sales particulars ERO T/P 124/2
1902 MS letter from Rev. E. Owen ERO T/P 124/2-3
1962 Essex County Council SMR (HER) 2065
1980 sales particulars ERO B6803
1984 sales particulars ERO B7204
1995 sales particulars ERO B8457

Website

www.burnham.org.uk/historymakers.htm (17/10/2006)

Research by Jill Plater. Site visit by Jill Plater and Michael Leach on 27 March 2008.