

**MALDON DISTRICT COUNCIL
GREAT BRAXTED**

**BRAXTED PARK
GRADE II**

TL 855 153

Park and woodland of medieval origin remodelled in the mid C18 and early C19.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1342 Braxted Park was owned by the Countess of Pembroke, at which time it had a deer park. Little is recorded of the landscape between that date and c.1650 when the estate was purchased by Thomas Darcy. His son, also Thomas, built a new house in 1682. Known as Braxted Lodge, it stood on the site of the present house, with fishponds, a kitchen garden to the north of the house and a triple avenue of limes leading from the south front to the road. A survey of c.1740 records the landscape at this time which also had a formal garden below the north front. The state was sold in 1700 to Peter Whitcomb who died in 1704, after which it was let until Whitcomb's daughters sold it in 1721 to Henry Cornelisen. During this time it was recorded as having 'no great best garden' (E. Banks Assocs. 1993). When Cornelisen died in 1751, the property was purchased by Peter Du Cane I who took advice from Isaac Ware and Thomas James before remodelling the house to plans by Robert Taylor. He also planted avenues in the park radiating from the house, remodelled the ponds, and extended or reconstructed the ha-ha around the north of the pleasure grounds in an arrangement shown on the 1777 county map (Chapman & Andre). Peter Du Cane died at the age of ninety and was succeeded in 1803 by his son, Peter Du Cane II, who commissioned John Johnson to extend the house. He made extensive alterations to the park, including the removal of his father's avenues (leaving the original south avenue), the enlargement of the ponds into a lake, the extension of the kitchen garden, and the creation of the east terrace walk. Peter Du Cane II was succeeded by his son, Peter Du Cane III, in 1823, at which time the house was renamed Braxted Park. At the same time the park was greatly enlarged and enclosed by a 7.2km long park wall, punctuated by six lodge buildings at various points. Peter Du Cane III also created a pleasure ground in Fabian's Plantation on the north-east boundary of the park. His work on the landscape is recorded in an estate survey of 1831. In 1841 Braxted passed to Peter's cousin, Charles Du Cane, who maintained the property until his death in 1889. Thereafter the estate fell into decline and was sold by the Du Cane family in 1919. It was purchased by William Boulton who, in 1947, sold it to the Plessey Company. The main house was occupied by the chairman of the company, Sir Allen Clark, and then by his son Michael Clark CBE DL, who bought it in 1965 as a private house. Part of the park was opened as a golf course in c.1970 and Pundicts Lodge was sold. The rest of the site remains (2000) in single private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM & SETTING

Braxted Park is situated c.5km to the west of Witham, close to the A12. The c.202 hectare site enjoys a rural setting and is entirely enclosed by a park wall (listed Grade II). The southern boundary is formed by Braxted Park Road and the western boundary by Kelvedon Road, while to the east and north is farmland. The gently undulating ground falls slightly to the south-west towards the course of the River Blackwater which flows c.200 m beyond the western boundary wall.

ENTRANCES & APPROACHES

The principal approach to Braxted Park lies c.400m south-south-west of the house. Four single storey red brick lodges (c.1828, listed Grade II) mark the entrance, those flanking the drive being attached to panels supporting the wrought iron gates. The gates lead onto The Avenue, a straight drive up to the south entrance front, lined by rows of lime trees, a feature which dates from the early C18. The drive dips down to cross the stone, stucco and gault brick bridge (early C19, listed Grade II) over the lake and rises again to arrive at the grass and gravel forecourt below the south front of the house, which was laid out by Peter Du Cane I in 1752. In the western corner of the park, c.850m west-north-west of the house, stands the painted brick and grey slate Witham Lodge and gates (listed Grade II). From here a drive runs east and then south-east through The Rookery woodland along the south bank of the lake before emerging to join the main drive beside the bridge. Kelvedon Lodge (listed Grade II) stands in the northern corner of the park, c.1.1km north-west of the house. This two-storey painted brick and pantile cottage was built, like the other lodges, by Peter Du Cane III in the early C19 and is now (2000) used as the entrance to the golf course.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING

Braxted Park (listed Grade II*) is a large red brick country mansion, built in two storeys with a stone parapet coping under a grey slate roof. The south front has a nine-bay central section with projecting two-bay wings, all with octagonal paned sash windows and central double doors with a flat-roofed stucco surround. Attached to the rear of the house is a C18 orangery (listed Grade II), now (2000) used as a swimming pool. The house was built in 1682 by Thomas Darcy to replace an earlier one which stood c.400m to the west, beside the surviving church of All Saints (of C12 origin, listed Grade II*). Braxted Lodge, as it was then known, was substantially rebuilt for Peter Du Cane I by Sir Robert Taylor between 1751 and 1756. Enlargements were carried out by John Johnson for Peter Du Cane II from 1804 to 1806, and further remodelling undertaken for Peter Du Cane III by Henry Harrison in 1834, after which it became known as Braxted Park.

The stable blocks (listed Grade II) are attached to the eastern end of Braxted Park and are contemporary with the work of Robert Taylor, with C19 alterations. The enclosed red brick and tile buildings form a courtyard, the symmetrical south front of which has a central two-storey pedimented arched carriageway surmounted by a small bell-cote. Attached to the C18 east range is a further courtyard range, with a metal water pump (listed Grade II) added to the C18 range in the early C19.

GARDENS & PLEASURE GROUNDS

The garden lies to the north and north-east of the house. A lawn below the north front is planted with a mix of mature trees and shrubs. It is bounded to the west by a low brick wall and ha-ha (mid C18,

listed Grade II). The eastern edge of the lawn is formed by the west wall of the kitchen garden, at the base of which are long borders in which stands a moulded lead cistern (listed Grade II) dated 1677. The walk beside the borders runs north to the end of the kitchen garden wall and then turns east into a small Dial Garden, now (2000) laid to grass and enclosed by beech hedges but shown as a Fan Garden on Craggs' estate map of 1822. This in turn leads round to the outside of the east wall of the kitchen garden, along which runs a long raised grass terrace, bounded by a ha-ha (listed Grade II) giving extensive views over the east park. The east terrace was created by Peter Du Cane II at the beginning of the C19.

Within the park are the remains of two substantial pleasure grounds which were developed to the east and west of the lakes. That to the east is now (2000) woodland, while that at the west end, known as Pondhead Shrubbery, retains some shrubs and fine mature trees. This area has been partly reclaimed and replanted (late C20). In Fabian's Plantation c.800m to the north of the house, at the north-east end of the park, Peter Du Cane III planted a further wooded pleasure ground (Elizabeth Banks Assocs. 1993) which is shown on the 1st edition 6" OS map of 1874. This had now (2000) reverted to woodland.

PARK

The park at Braxted is almost entirely surrounded by perimeter plantations and approximately half its area is covered by woodlands. A golf course was created in the north park in the 1950s and the area scattered with a mix of mature and late C20 tree planting. A mount which looks over the north park lies c.180m to the north-west of the house and is crowned by a group of mature oak and lime. The remainder of the open park is now (2000) agricultural land. The core of the park surrounding the house, which has its origins as a medieval deer park, was developed as a landscape park in the C18. It was extended to its present boundary when the park wall was built in c.1823.

To the south and west of the house is The Lake, a large sinuous body of water which was created by Peter Du Cane II in the early C19 from a string of four earlier fish ponds. At the western end of the lake he built Lake Lodge (listed Grade II), with its bridge spanning the western inlet and leading to the Cave/Hermitage (listed Grade II*) which was probably used as a game larder (ibid) and which he surmounted with a summerhouse. All but the summerhouse survive.

At the eastern end of the park stands Pundicts Lodge (listed Grade II), a large C16 timber-framed and plastered house, linked to Braxted Park by a footpath.

KITCHEN GARDEN

The walled kitchen garden (listed Grade II) lies c.50m to the east of the house. In the centre of the south wall is a pair of tall wrought iron gates leading into the garden which is divided into three compartments linked by a central path running north/south. The northern section contains a tennis court, while the central section is still (2000) cultivated for fruit and vegetables. The southern compartment contains late C19 glasshouses and C20 frames. Beyond the south wall is a small orchard. The walled garden was built when the house was remodelled in the mid C18. It was extended to its present size by Peter Du Cane III in the early C19.

REFERENCES

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Page, W., & Round, J.H. (eds), 1907 *Victoria County History of Essex*, ii

Pevsner, N., & Radcliffe, E., 1979 *Buildings of England: Essex*, 195

Virtue, G., 1831 *Picturesque Beauties of Great Britain*, 284

Maps

1672 map of manor of Great Braxted ERO D/DHt T38/5-6

c.1740 survey of the lordship and parish of Great Braxted ERO T/M 415

1777 Chapman and Andre's map of Essex

1794 enclosure survey for Great Braxted parish ERO D/P 133/3

1822 W. Craggs survey of Braxted Park ERO T/M 423

c.1825 map of Great Braxted ERO D/DU 19/22

1831 J. Braedel survey of Great Braxted ERO T/M 426

1839 tithe map of Great Braxted ERO D/CT 48

1874 1st edition 6" OS map

1897 2nd edition 6" OS map

1897 2nd edition 25" OS map

Archive Items

A large collection of archive material is held at ERO. The papers of the Ketton-Cremer family (which has connections with Braxted) are held at the Norfolk Record Office.

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