

**MALDON DISTRICT COUNCIL
BURNHAM ON CROUCH**

CREEKSEA PLACE

TQ 934 962

A Tudor house with a walled Tudor courtyard, and extensive early C20 improvements to the gardens and lakes, with an ornamental bridge designed by Chancellor & Son of Chelmsford.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Creeksea had only one manor which, from the C17, was held by the Harris family, the manor house (Creeksea Hall) being at the north end of the parish, adjacent to Creeksea church. Creeksea Place (probably originally called the New House) was probably built by one of the Harris family (possibly Arthur, who died in 1597, and was half-brother of Vincent Harris, builder of the Friary House on the Carmelite site in Maldon). A rainwater head on the north wing is dated 1569. The house was owned by the Harris family until 1650 but its subsequent ownership and tenancy is unclear. The east wing was demolished in about 1740, possibly to make the house suitable for use by tenant farmers. Wall fragments indicate that there was originally a west wing, but it is not clear if the courtyard was enclosed on its open side by a south wing, or merely by a wall and gateway as shown on the RCHM plan. The north wing extends westwards, probably as a service wing, and is Tudor, with Edwardian alterations and additions. The original main entrance was on the east side of the east wing, approached from the east through the surviving Tudor brick gateway into the square walled outer courtyard. The RCHM description mentions that the foundations of two walled gardens to the south and west of the house had been exposed, but did not suggest a date for these, and it is not clear exactly where they were sited. The RCHM plan show a length of wall running west from the south-west corner of the inner courtyard.

Chapman and Andre's map of 1777 shows the entrance drive passing between two lakes in the west corner of the estate. It also clearly shows an enclosed garden divided into several compartments on the south and east sides of the main house.

Between 1900 and 1907, major improvements were made for William Rome, a successful oyster merchant. A new east wing, and a shortened west wing were built on the Tudor footings and designed by Chancellor & Son of Chelmsford. The west service wing, and much of the interior, was altered. Externally new lakes were dug, a lodge and a bridge were constructed (the latter taking a new drive over the dam of the largest lake) and the ornamental gardens were laid out. A second walled garden was added adjoining the east side of the Tudor entrance courtyard. Bricks for the new additions were made on site, copying the originals from the house. An undated setting-out plan for the garden has been found amongst the Chancellor papers, but it is not clear if it was designed by that firm, or how much of the proposal was implemented. For example, the unscarred face of the north side of the new walled garden suggests that the glasshouse marked on the plan was not built in this position.

Rome died in 1907 and the estate was put up for sale. The farm was sold separately in 1908, and the house and its garden in 1909. A number of owners followed, and the house was used as a school in the 1930s. During the Second World War, it was requisitioned by the Navy and known as HMS St Matthew. During this period some work was done to the house, and photographs in the 1950 sales

catalogue show a garden which has matured considerably from the images in the 1908/9 catalogue. The house was used as Miss Havisham's house in the 1950s film of Dickens's *Great Expectations*. Luigi Bertorelli bought the estate in 1950 and his family still own it, though no one now lives in the house. There are two static caravan sites along the north, west and southern boundaries; these have been on the estate for at least 40 years. Until recently, the garden was in a poor state, overgrown with many weed trees, with the walled gardens nearly impenetrable and the lakes in need of dredging. Work continues to be done to the house and gardens as finance becomes available.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM AND SETTING

Creeksea Place is on Ferry Road, off the B1010, immediately south of the Southminster railway line. The land falls away to the river and the house, on higher ground, would have had spectacular views over the water (now lost through tree encroachment). The original garden, park and farm covered about 16 hectares but the farm is now in separate ownership.

ENTRANCES & APPROACHES

From the position of the walled courtyard, the original entrance may have been from the east side. By 1777 access was from Ferry Road, passing between the northernmost two lakes. This entrance was provided with wrought iron gates, and an early C20 red brick lodge, designed by Chancellor & Sons (now boarded up). The drive (over which Creeksea Place has right of way only) was lined with horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*), some of which have survived. The farm buildings to the east are screened by trees, and in separate ownership.

Chancellor's work included a new bridge between the two southern lakes, to provide a new drive which gave more direct access to Ferry Lane. This was (and still is) lined with a double avenue of oaks (*Quercus* sp.)

PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS

The main house is listed Grade II*. The north wing, and much of its western extension (the service wing) are of C16 date with some original features including chimney stacks, windows, and an original staircase on the south side. The east wing and the stub of the west wing were added between 1900 and 1907, designed and built to a high standard by Chancellor & Son. A porch was added to the north side in 1918, designed by F.W. Chancellor. There is a derelict red brick stable block of unknown date close to the farm buildings (possibly also a Chancellor design), and the remains of an icehouse within the grounds.

REFERENCES

Bettley, J & Pevsner N., 2007 *Buildings of England: Essex*, Yale UP, 311-2

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Rooke, D.A., 1987 *The History of an Essex Village; Creeksea* (booklet)

Scarfe, N., 1968 *A Shell guide: Essex*, Faber & Faber, 88

Maps and Images

1777 Chapman & Andre map of Essex

c. 1919 photographs ERO T/P 179/6

Archival Items

1900-01 Chancellor dwgs ERO D/F 8/W544

1901-21 Chancellor dwgs ERO D/F 8/458

1901 Chancellor dwgs ERO D/Rma Pb2/161

1909 sales catalogues ERO T/P 179/4

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Websites

English-heritage.org.uk

Nationalarchives.gov.uk

Creekseaplace.co.uk

Researchers Susan Brice and Michael Leach. Site visits by Susan Brice on numerous dates between 2004 and 2009.