

**MALDON DISTRICT COUNCIL
TOLLESHUNT D'ARCY**

D'ARCY HOUSE

TL 930 119

Though a modest site, D'Arcy House has had two distinguished owners who each loved this garden; Dr. John Henry Salter JP (1841-1932) and the author Margery Allingham (1904-1966)

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The date of the house is not known. Julia Thorogood describes the present building as a 'Queen Anne dwelling superimposed on an older Tudor building' and Bettley and Pevsner refer to a seven bay Georgian brick front. The 1777 Chapman & Andre map shows a house on the site. It is not specifically identified on the 1840 Tithe Award map. The 1874 25" OS map shows a narrow garden, the same width as the house, running south of it, adjacent to South Street. Margery Allingham called this 'The Lady Garden'. The map also shows a rectangular plot of about ¼ acre to the east of the house, set at right angles to it, lying within a larger area of just over five acres, named 'Lion Field' and 'Further Lion Field' in the Tithe Award. Opposite the house was a pasture of approximately one acre. All of these became part of the D'Arcy House estate and may have been used for pasturing Dr. Salter's horses. He appears to have added another two acres (also confusingly called 'Lion Field') to the front meadow, making the D'Arcy House land up to about eight acres. Acquisition of some of this extra land must have occurred before 1884 (vide *The Bottle Street Gazette*, Autumn 2005). By the time of the 1897 25" OS map, the rectangular piece of land to the east of the house had been enlarged to approximately ¾ acre and matches the present footprint of the site. This, and The Lady Garden, probably became Dr. Salter's main ornamental garden.

Dr. Salter purchased D'Arcy House from Dr. Thomas Houghton Walker in 1864 and moved to Tolleshunt D'Arcy on 29 October 1864 soon after his marriage to Laura Duke. He lived there till his death in 1932. The diary that he kept from 1849 until the day before his death records his remarkable life and achievements in the fields of local government, the magistracy, travel, medical societies, dog breeding and judging, and freemasonry, as well as his dedicated and demanding professional commitment as the local general practitioner. He was an avid sportsman and reckoned to be one of the best shots in the county in spite of the loss of one eye. His collection of animal trophies was presented to the Chelmsford Museum in 1932.

He was a very keen horticulturalist, was elected a Fellow of the RHS in 1900 and created a much-visited garden at D'Arcy House. Margery Allingham, who knew the garden from childhood, provided vivid descriptions of the garden, noting that Dr. Salter 'created her from a patch of meadow just about 100 years ago..... He planted copper beeches, made a lawn and an apple walk of D'Arcy Spice from cuttings from the original tree..... Her fruit and flowers dominated the village shows over the exhibits of the parson, the lawyer, and the neighbouring gentry..... (in) the shrubbery and the original Queen Anne yard, which now contains very little save an enormous ilex, a terracotta vierge on the wall and a bad tempered vine, every year there was a garden party. Every year I trailed after Mama and listened to the Doctor.....and he dilated all the time on the alstroemeria, the agapanthus, the Etoile de Holland, the D'Arcy Spice, the beans...' (vide *The Bottle Street Gazette*, August 2005)

The annual garden party was always held on the first Wednesday in July when the garden was at its finest. He was a regular exhibitor at horticultural shows, winning some 1400 prizes between 1888 and 1931. He was particularly passionate about roses and was appointed RHS judge of roses in c.1902. In Margery Allingham's novel, *Dancers in the Morning*, Dr. Bouverie, a keen rose grower, is thought to have been a portrait of Dr. Salter. However the plant he is best remembered for is a blood-red alstroemeria which he first noticed in the garden of an obscure neighbour. In July 1902 he showed it to the RHS Committee who gave it an Award of Merit subject to it being named; he chose *Alstroemeria* 'Mrs. J.H.Salter'.

No images of Dr. Salter's garden have been found, though his gardening activities are recorded in his diary, and he is known to have made some watercolour sketches of it in 1924. After his death in 1932 the property was inherited by his partner, Dr. Arthur William James, who was killed two years later in a car accident. The house was then bought by Margery Allingham and her husband Lt. Col. Philip Youngman Carter who moved there in June 1935. They had stretched themselves financially and struggled in the early years to maintain the garden to its former high standard. The writer recorded their dilemma in her biography. 'The beautiful garden, in which the County had been entertained, and from which prize-winning exhibits, hooded and specially crated, had been despatched to the Chelsea Flower Show and innumerable local events, required two or three men and considerable expertise to maintain it. Now it curled and crept and spread its tendrils to block light from most of the downstairs windows of the house..... It would have been virtually impossible for any legatee to have fulfilled the Doctor's wishes 'that things should be carried on as they are now' – and equally impossible to make a single significant change without the whole village commenting.'

Her writings indicate a growing interest in the garden, as well as her developing horticultural expertise. There were changes. A rockery was added and planted up with about 60 varieties, and about 100 apple trees were planted probably on the northeast part of the site (now land belonging to *Campion Lodge*). She shared Dr. Salter's love of roses, and revived his tradition of holding garden parties, and – like him – wrote with enthusiasm about her garden. She died in 1966, followed by her husband three years later. The house remained in the family till 1984, when Margery's sister, Joyce Allingham, moved into a bungalow, *Campion Lodge*, which had been built on to outbuildings to the northeast of the house. Much of the former three acre *Lion Field*, including the orchard, was separated from *D'Arcy House* and became the grounds of *Campion Lodge*. Since 1984 *D'Arcy House* has had at least three different owners.

SITE DESCRIPTION

[A site visit was not possible, so the following description has been gathered using information freely available from published sources, including the sales catalogue of 1992, and from visiting a neighbouring site that was formerly part of the *D'Arcy House* estate.]

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM & SETTING

D'Arcy House is in the centre of *Tolleshunt D'Arcy* village on the east side of *South Street*, 4km north of the *Blackwater* estuary and 9m northeast of *Maldon*. The site covers about 0.3h and the garden is partially walled to the south and east of the house. It is roughly rectangular with a stepped northern boundary. To the north of the site is a service yard with a range of outbuildings, now converted to a

dwelling for letting. About 5m from the northeast corner of the house is a two-storey building, with an external ladder leading to first floor level giving access to a former apple store.

A tall red brick wall flanking both sides of the house frontage forms the western boundary. The former outbuildings comprise part of the northern boundary between the road and Campion Lodge. It then continues, parallel to the side of the bungalow, as a very rough brick wall topped with whole flints. On the Campion Lodge side of this wall is a plaque which states 'MYC. BEN BALDOCK HIS WALL 1958. PYC'. The eastern and most of the southern boundary are formed by chain link fencing.

ENTRANCES & APPROACHES

The only vehicle entrance is to the north of the house, from the road through a five-bar wooden gate. The tarmac drive leads to a tarmac parking area for several cars. Beyond is the rear yard which is paved. From South Street the only other entrance is via the front door of the house. There is a locked gate at the northeast corner of the yard which would allow access from Campion Lodge. This was provided when the two sites were separated in case access to Campion Lodge via the Queen's Head car park was ever denied. Another locked metal gate between the two sites is located in the chain link fencing about half way along the southern boundary.

PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS

D'Arcy House is a Grade II listed building, thought to be of eighteenth century date with a classical Georgian red brick façade facing onto South Street. There are four attic dormers behind a high parapet, and a mansard tiled roof. The front porch is a pedimented, with two columns and glazing to both sides. The accommodation described in the 1992 sales catalogue includes four reception rooms, two kitchens, a breakfast room, nine bedrooms, three bathrooms and a conservatory. The conservatory is shown on the 1897 25" OS map. On the front of the house are two plaques, one commemorating Dr Salter, 'respected Doctor and eminent Mason', the other for Margery Allingham.

REFERENCES

- Allingham, M., 1937 *Dancers in Mourning*, Heinemann
- Allingham, M., 2005 'In My Garden' in *The Bottle Street Gazette: Journal of the Margery Allingham Society*, Autumn 2005
- Allingham, M., 2005 'The Garden' in *The Bottle Street Gazette: Journal of the Margery Allingham Society*, Autumn 2005
- Anon, 1932 'Obituary of Dr John Henry Salter' in *Essex Review*, xli, 158-9
- Bettley, J., & Pevsner, N., 2007 *The Buildings of England: Essex*, Yale UP, 791
- H.W.G.B., 1934 'A Life more than Commonly Long; more than Commonly Useful' in *Essex Review*, xliii, 22-4
- Jones, J., 2009 *The Adventures of Margery Allingham*, Golden Duck
- Lovell, K., 1991 *In the Land of the Tolles*
- Lovell, K., 1992 *The Spice of D'Arcy Past* (includes photos of D'Arcy House)
- Thompson, J.O., (ed) 1933 *Dr Salter, Diary and Reminiscences 1919-1932*, London
- Thorogood, J., 1991 *Margery Allingham, a Biography*, Heinemann

Maps and Images

1777 Chapman & Andre's map of Essex

1840 Tithe map ERO D/CT 364

1874 25" OS map 1st edition

1874 6" OS map 1st edition

1897 25" OS map 2nd edition

1897 6" OS map 2nd edition

n.d. photo of back of D'Arcy House ERO 1/Mb 368/1/34

n.d. photos in Margery Allingham archive, Albert Sloman Library, University of Essex, boxes 45 & 54

Archival Items

1992 D'Arcy House sales catalogue ERO C1417

n.d. Margery Allingham archive, Albert Sloman Library, University of Essex, boxes 45 & 54

Research by Sally-Ann Turner October 2009