

**EPPING FOREST  
SHEERING**

**DURRINGTON HOUSE**

**TL 490 132**

House remodelled at least once during C18 with improved gardens and grounds, which were extended towards the east by 1790s and further developed during C19. Mid C19 park formed following road diversion in 1845.

**HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT**

Until early C20 Durrington House, also known for a time as Durrington Hall, was part of the Sheering Hall estate and for much of C18 and throughout the C19 it was the principal residence for the Lord of the Manor. Research to date has failed to find any specific reference to the property prior to 1725 when it is mentioned in a conveyance relating to the sale of the estate (ERO: D/DPn/T1/44): '*.... and outhouses lately belonging to a messuage called Durringtons ....*' The earliest map found indicating its existence is one showing coach roads around Harlow dated 1741 (ERO: TM 132/1). Of the various properties illustrated on this map, 'Durringtons' is one of the few with illustrated grounds. The grounds are shown laid out in a block of four rectangular areas to the east of the house, which is shown as being of a similar size to Sheering Hall (see Essex gardens Trust garden research files), whose grounds perhaps significantly are not shown. Whilst Sheering Hall appears on various pre C18 Essex county maps, Durrington House does not and this suggests that the house was of lesser insignificance at that time. The VCH (Vol 8) states that the south range dates from early C17 but it appears to have been refaced early in C18.

In 1725 Samuel Feake senior, chairman of the East India Co at least until 1728 (ERO: T/B 345/1), purchased the Sheering Hall manorial estate from Robert Chester, director of the South Sea Company, who had had to forfeit the property following his involvement with the South Sea 'Bubble'. Samuel Feake was also Lord of the Manor in Henham. He died in June 1757 and his son, also Samuel, inherited the estate at the age of 46. He died in October 1774, aged 63, and the family epitaph (Essex Review Vol 56 p138) mentions 'eldest son of Durrington House, Sheering.'

The fact that both father and son were named Samuel has added to the confusion of when, and by whom, Durrington House was remodelled. The Listed Building Schedule for Epping Forest lists (p80) the domestic quarters approx. 10metres north of Durrington House as Grade II, dating from C17 and this building may have comprised the original property. The Listing suggests (p79) that Durrington House (Grade II) in its present form dates from c1750s or 1760s which suggests that it was Samuel Feake the younger who was responsible for the main work. Muilman observed in 1771: '*A capital mansion, called Durrington House, has lately been built about a mile south-west from the church upon the estate belonging to Shering-hall manor. The structure is from an elegant design, in which the architect and the builder have displayed great judgement...*'. Wright (1836) mentioned: '*....Samuel Feake esq. who erected the capital mansion of Dorrington House...*' and Collier wrote in 1861: '*...delightfully situate above the vale of the Stort ..... we see the roof of the chief mansion of the parish – Dorrington Hall, built by Samuel Feake, esq., about 1770...*'.

Samuel Feake the younger was probably responsible for the remodelling of Durrington House (as illustrated by the engraving by J. Chapman (no date) in Muilman's *A New and Complete History of Essex* Vol 4 of 1771) but, according to family papers (ERO: T/B 285/1), the Feakes were living at Durrington House by 1741. It seems reasonable to assume that Samuel Feake senior may have undertaken some improvements to the property (such as the early C18 re-facing of the south range) following his purchase in 1725 and before 1741. This would perhaps account for its specific inclusion on the Harlow coach road map. This is supported by Salmon, writing about the manor of Sheering c1740: '*...Samuel Feake Esq.: who hath made other Purchases here, and has built a Seat for his own residence.*' Morant (Vol 2, c1760s) also mentions that Samuel Feake (senior) built a seat in Sheering and he adds: '*...having a little turn'd the great road. It belongs now to his son – Samuel Feake.*' No other reference to date has been found to verify that the Harlow to Sheering was diverted during the C18 although the present owners did suggest that the very straight path (see below) might follow the line of an earlier road.

On the Chapman and Andre map (1777) the four rectangular blocks in the grounds of Durrington House, shown on the 1741 map, have been replaced by a single rectangular area (possibly orchard) to the east of the house and a pond is shown within a, presumably, grassed area at the front (west) with the drive curving around this area on the north side. Presumably this is the garden as described in 1771 by Muilman: '*... the situation corresponds with the neatness of the building, and has every advantage necessary to render it delightful; nor has the judicious owner been any ways deficient in his taste, in laying out of the gardens, and grounds around it: so that it may vie in neatness, though not in magnificence, with most of the seats in this part of the county.*'

On the death of Samuel Feake the younger in 1774, his sisters, Anne and Mary, inherited as co-heiresses the manors of Henham and Sheering. Anne died in 1800 but her husband Jonathon Cruse, who had to change his name to Feake as a condition of Anne's will (ERO: D/DB T635), continued to live at Durrington House until 1818. It is assumed that they were responsible for extending the grounds as shown on the Surveyors Drawings of 1790s. The grounds seem to have doubled in length, stretching alongside the road towards Sheering, and are mostly to the east of the house. Much of the area appears to be covered in trees (orchard and/or woodland?) and the front pond is shown.

Mary died, unmarried, in 1803 leaving her moiety to Amelia Hollingbury and her daughter, Henrietta who was married to Thomas Glyn. The Glyns were living as tenants at Durrington House from 1819. This moiety was later inherited by their eldest son, the Rev. Thomas Clayton Glyn. In 1844 it was agreed to make a partition of the whole estate as there were too many co-heirs. As a result of this the Manor of Sheering, Durrington House and the Sheering Estates were acquired by the Rev. Thomas Clayton Glyn who chose to live at Durrington House.

The Tithe map (ERO: D/CT 313B) of the early 1840s indicates the addition of a rectangular area, possibly a walled kitchen garden, north-east of the house with a fairly large bullet-shaped pond filling much of its southern section. A smaller rectangular walled area is shown adjacent (on west side) to the first and to the north of the outbuildings.

During Rev. Thomas Clayton Glyn's ownership, the estate layout was changed following a road diversion in 1845, which subsequently enabled a park to be formed (ERO: Q/RHi 5/36). The new road followed a straighter course a field's width to the south of Durrington House and passed much closer to Sheering Hall than the old road. In fact the new road dissected the private road to Sheering Hall, reducing its length by nearly a half, and this surely confirmed that Durrington House was by that time regarded as the principal residence on the Sheering Hall estate. The first edition 25' OS map (surveyed c1874) shows the park extending west to east from Lower Road to Chapel Field and north to south from the line of the old road to the new road. The west side of the park has the most trees, some clumps of which appear to have been enclosed, and this is the area that would have been overlooked directly from the house. In addition to the trees randomly lining the two roads on the south-west sides of the park, there is a curved area of mixed conifer and deciduous planting in the very south-west corner where Lower Road meets the main Harlow to Sheering road. This may have been intended not only to obscure the house from the road but also to frame the view from the house, standing on higher ground, across the park and the valley beyond.

The first edition 25' OS map shows much of the pleasure gardens well-furnished with trees and various paths cover the site. The pond in the kitchen garden has become rectangular and there are two glasshouses outside the kitchen garden, one on its west and the other adjoining the south-west corner. A wedge-shaped area is shown to the east side of the kitchen garden. A path leads from the latter then borders a rectangular space (possibly for fruit growing?) before leading off to join other paths. A more formally laid-out square area of garden is shown to the east of the house; the front pond appears as a more distinctive oval shape and the drive is lined with trees. The layout shown on the first edition 25' OS map may have been similar to that referred to by Coller in 1861: '*With its gardens and tasteful grounds it is the meet home of a country gentleman.*'

Rev Thomas Clayton Glyn died in 1860 and the estate passed to his son Clayton William Feake Glyn who died in 1887. His son, Clayton Louis Glyn, became the new owner and, despite inheriting debts from his father, he enjoyed entertaining and living rather extravagantly. In 1892 he married Elinor Sutherland who had been brought up in Canada. According to her grandson (*Elinor Glyn, a Biography*), she was befriended for a time by the Countess of Warwick who lived about fifteen miles away. The Biography mentions that Clayton Louis Glyn enjoyed being Lord of the Manor and centred his life on Durrington House and his surrounding estates. Elinor liked to take walks on the estate away from the locals who had to make obeisance to her. She disliked not being allowed to walk through her own woods because of the need to avoid disturbing the young pheasants! Glyn's debts grew and he was saved from bankruptcy by his wife's success as an authoress. In 1896 living at Durrington House became too much of a financial strain, and they moved to Sheering Hall until 1903 when they moved to a cottage on the estate called Lamberts. Glyn died in 1915 and in 1918 Elinor conveyed the manor to their daughters, Margot and Juliet. By 1924 the estate had been sold and broken up.

Durrington House was the home of Sir Harry Goschen from c1907 until his death in 1945. In 1960 the property, in a rather derelict state, was purchased by Mr and Mrs E. Hambro who renovated the house and improved the ornamental garden. Since 1986 the present owners have continued to make improvements both to the house and the garden.

## SITE DESCRIPTION

### LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM & SETTING

The site is about 2 km west-south-west of Sheering parish church and is about 30 hectares in area. It is bounded to the south and east by the Harlow to Sheering road, to the west by Lower Road, a minor road to Lower Sheering, and to the north by farmland. The gardens are level but the parkland falls gently to the south.

### ENTRANCES & APPROACHES

From Lower Road near Old Harlow, the entrance is by a short drive that branches at its eastern end, which corresponds to that shown on the first edition 25' OS map. There are two panelled C18/C19 stone piers (Grade II), topped by stone balls on low plinths, adjoining the road and a wooden park gate. New railings line the fairly straight section of the drive on the south side with a low hedge lining the north side. This section of the drive, running almost west to east, has a hard surface and leads to the service area, stable yard and three cottages at the back (north) of the principal building and this corresponds to the position of the drive shown on the Chapman and Andre map of 1777. Approximately two-thirds of the way along the drive divides and a section, with a loose gravel surface, leads off to the south. It is protected by newly installed electric gates and ends in a turning area in front of the principal building. There is no lodge. On the eastern extremity, at the point where the original road meets the diverted road of 1845, there is a second entrance, not suitable for vehicles, between stock brick piers and dwarf walls, both capped with Portland stone copings, those on the walls bearing scars of removed railings.

### PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS

The Grade II listed two-storey house, with attics, is covered in stucco and, from the west, it closely resembles the Chapman engraving (illustrated in Muilman). The house was extended during C19. Recent repair work revealed a timber framed structure with brick infill beneath, indicating an earlier building within this shell. Cottages and a stable block (all listed Grade II) with clock turret to the north are mainly in stock brick and of early to mid C19 appearance.

### REFERENCES

- Coller, D.W. *People's History of Essex* (1861) p318  
*Dept of Environment Listed Building Schedule for Epping Forest* (1984) p79-80  
*Essex Review*, Vol 56 (1947) p138  
Glyn, A. *Elinor Glyn, a Biography* (latest edition 1968) p77 et al published Hutchinson & Co, London  
Morant, P. *The History and Antiquities of the County of Essex Vol II* (1763-8) p500  
Muilman, P. *A New and Complete History of Essex Vol IV* (1769-72) p106  
Pevsner, N. *The Buildings of England – Essex* (1954) p345  
Salmon, N. *History and Antiquity of Essex* (1740) p81  
*Victoria County History of Essex Vol 4* (1983) p241-3  
*Wight's Directory Essex* (1848) p300  
Wright, T. *History of Essex Vol 2* (1836) p306

## Maps

*Coach Roads Within Six Miles of Harlow T. Kitchin Sculp* ERO: T/M 132 (1741)  
J. Andrews & A. Dury (1776-1777) ERO: County maps 3(J)  
J. Chapman & P. Andre *A map of the county of Essex from an actual survey..* (1777) Sheet 11  
Surveyor's Drawings 1790s Sheet 14  
Tithe Map c1840 (ERO: D/CT 313B)  
OS 6' to 1 mile: 1st edition (published 1880s) Sheet 41  
OS 25' to 1 mile: 1st edition (surveyed 1874-79) Sheet 41.3  
OS 25' to 1 mile: 2nd edition (published 1897) Sheet 41.3  
OS 6' to 1 mile: 2nd edition (published 1898) Sheet 41  
OS Landranger 167 (reprinted 2001) shows 'Durrington Hall'

## Archival Items

ERO: A42 Sales Particulars 1924 of Sheering Hall estate  
ERO: D/CT 313A Tithe Award c1848  
ERO: D/DB T635 Deeds of Feake family estates including Sheering 1757-1800  
ERO: D/DPn Records of Sheering Hall late C17th and C18th  
ERO: D/DPn/E1 Wills & Settlements of Glyn family (1803 - 1880)  
ERO: D/DPn/F1 Wills & Settlements of Feake family (1757 - 1803)  
ERO: D/DPn/F2 Family papers 1788 - 1850  
ERO: D/DPn/T1/44 Conveyance dated 3 August 1725  
ERO: D/DU 932/4 Glyn family papers including Lease of Durrington House in 1907  
ERO Q/RHi 5/36 Road diversion (1845)  
ERO: T/B 285/1 Calendar of deeds of Henham Estate and Feake family (1618-1879)  
ERO: T/B 345/1 Papers relating chiefly to Henham Estate (c1700 - 1729) with letters from Samuel Feake senior

## Maps and Images

Engraving by J. Chapman (no date) in P Muilman, *A New and Complete History of Essex* Vol IV (1771) opp. p.106  
Aerial photograph obtained from Essex CC. Run 12: 5753 (1991)

Researcher: Sally-Ann Turner

Site visit: Dr Twigs Way, Dr Michael Leach and Sally-Ann Turner (27/04/2004)

Edited: Twigs Way 06/06/04