

UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL
LITTLE EASTON

EASTON LODGE

TL 594 240

GRADE II

Gardens designed by Harold Peto in 1902, incorporating a late C17/early C18 grove.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1302 Matthew de Loveyn acquired a licence for two parks at Little Easton, a great park of c. 470 acres and a little park of c. 74 acres. The lands and property at Little Easton were granted by Queen Elizabeth in 1590 to Henry Maynard; a map of 1594 shows the site of the house and walled garden. Maynard, who was knighted in 1603, demolished the old building and built a large Elizabethan mansion. He was succeeded in 1640 by his son, also William, who surrounded the new house with a park with a double avenue of trees aligned on the west front. The estate at Easton then passed through William's son, Banastre, to his grandson Henry who became the fourth Baron Maynard. Soon after his death without issue in 1742, the grounds were recorded in an engraving by Skynner, which shows that the park had been formalised with radiating avenues laid out in *patte d'oie*. His brothers Grey, and then Charles, succeeded him and it was during Charles, sixth Baron and first Viscount Maynard's time that Muilman's description of the grounds (1770) was published. This records a 'large park, gardens, canals, serpentine walks, shrubberies and various other useful ornaments' (Muilman 1770). The bachelor first Viscount was succeeded by his cousin Charles in 1775. Chapman & Andre's map of 1777 shows that he quickly modernised the grounds by the replacement of the canal with an oval basin but otherwise the grounds were unchanged. By 1811 an estate map of the gardens and park are shown in a form which changes very little until the 1870s. The second Viscount died in 1824, without a direct heir, and the estate passed to his nephew Henry. Henry made many improvements to the estate, laying roads and building lodges and cottages. In February 1847 a fire almost destroyed the Elizabethan house, but Henry commissioned the architect Thomas Hopper to rebuild the original central wing, and to extend the house in the Gothic Revival style. When the third Viscount died in 1865 he left his estate to his three year old granddaughter Evelyn Maynard, who in 1881 came into her inheritance and married Lord Brooke, later fifth Earl of Warwick. In 1902 Lady Warwick commissioned the architect and garden designer Harold Peto to create an elaborate setting for the north side of the house. During the first decade of the C20 Easton Lodge was famous for its society gatherings but during the First World War the Essex Yeomanry used the park for training.

In February 1918 the house suffered a second fire and in 1919 and 1921 parts of the estate were sold. Following the 1918 fire the architect Philip Tilden was commissioned to rebuild the west wing, constructed as a separate building, and he is also thought to be responsible for additions to the Peto garden (Magnus & Spencer-Jones 2000). In 1937, the year before her death, Lady Warwick established a country nature reserve in the park. Her younger son, Maynard Greville, inherited the estate in 1938 but took little interest in it. During the Second World War it was requisitioned by the War Office and the park cleared of trees to make way for an airfield. After the War, the house was demolished, leaving only Tilden's rebuilt west wing, and the gardens were abandoned. Following his death in 1960,

Maynard Greville's daughter Felice Spurrier inherited the estate, built herself a house to the east of the Japanese lakes and sold the surviving buildings and grounds to Charles Wearn, who sold much of the stone paving and statuary in the gardens and in 1971 divided the buildings into three and sold them. The surviving west wing of Easton Lodge was purchased as a private house, known as Warwick House, since which time new garden features have been added and the restoration of the early C20 garden has begun. The site remains in divided private ownership.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM & SETTING

Easton Lodge lies just to the north of the A120 Bishop's Stortford to Braintree road, on the west side of the B184 which links Dunmow to Thaxted. The site here registered covers an area of c. 17ha, bounded to the north and east by farmland, to the south and west by former parkland carriage drives, now farm access tracks. The gardens are set in an area of generally flat land, in a developed part of the Essex countryside.

ENTRANCES & APPROACHES

Easton Lodge is approached from the east, along a concrete drive laid down by the Services during the Second World War, on the line of a C19 drive. The drive leaves Little Easton village past Easton Manor and enters the former park midway along its eastern boundary, c. 750m south-east of Easton Lodge, running north-west in a straight line before turning north-east into the gardens to arrive at the south-east front of the Lodge. The drive also continues past Easton Lodge to a second turn north-east into the former stable courtyard. A brick archway gatehouse (late C18, listed Grade II, outside the area here registered) survives on the southern boundary of the former park, c. 2.65km south-south-east of the Lodge, although the drive through the park which connected it to the main house was removed during the construction of the airfield.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING

Easton Lodge stands to the north of centre of the former park. The red brick and tile T-shaped house, with stone mullion windows and diaper-work details, is an early C20 building by Philip Tilden. The Elizabethan house was almost completely destroyed in 1847 by a fire and the central wing was rebuilt by the architect Thomas Hopper who also made extensions in the Gothic Revival style. In 1884 the architect William Young made further additions but in 1918 these, together with the surviving Jacobean wings, were lost in a further fire, resulting in the rebuilding of only the west wing by Tilden for Lady Warwick. The remains of Thomas Hopper's Victorian building were pulled down by the owner, Maynard Grenville, in 1950.

To the west of the Lodge stands the late C19 stable yard cottages (listed Grade II), stables, former coach house and washhouse, as well as the red brick water tower (listed Grade II) and a servant's house.

GARDENS & PLEASURE GROUNDS

The gardens at Easton Lodge surround the house but lie predominantly to the south-east, north and north-west of the house. Some 70m to the east of the present Lodge stands the platform of the Victorian house, planted in the 1950s as a silver birch grove. To the south-west of this, originally in

front of the Victorian house, are a series of terrace beds set in gravel, designed by Peto and reconstructed from 1993 onwards. The terrace beds descend south-west to parallel long borders focussed on the entrance to Easton Lodge at one end, and a formal pool and pavilion at the other, standing c. 100m to the south-east of the Lodge. The pavilion was constructed in the 1920s, possibly to a design by Philip Tilden, although its setting and long borders are late C20. The terraces look south onto a lawn where a box and yew sundial and a replica of Shakespeare's border (laid out by Lady Warwick at Stone Hall, located on the western edge of the former park, and outside the area here registered) have been planted (1990s). Beyond the pavilion and south lawn, the south-east corner of the gardens is covered by The Bosquet, an area of ornamental shrubbery and woodland which, according to early maps and engravings, dates from the early C18. Since that time its arrangement of paths has altered, its planting added to by Peto, but it retains its character as a wooded area cut through with paths.

Harold Peto's commission in 1902 focussed mainly on the area to the north of the house where he added a formal lawn, twin pergolas flanking a croquet lawn, a sunken Italian garden, and a Japanese garden, all of which survive in part. To the north-east of the site of the Victorian house is a formal lawn with eight brick-edged square beds filled with planting. The central four are by Peto, the outer four added in the 1920s, probably by Tilden. A double row of clipped yew hedges divides this lawn from the croquet lawn beyond it to the north-east. Peto bordered the croquet lawns with large, elaborate pergolas which no longer survive. On the north-east of the lawn stands the sunken Italian garden, the centre point of which is a formal oval pool edged with balustrading and surrounded by paving, with borders below the retaining walls. It was reached by steps on each side, those to the south-east being the only ones which survive.

Running north-west and then north from the sunken garden is an area of lawn, planted with trees and lined with lime, which was planted by Harold Peto as a Japanese garden. The central wide grass walk leads to Perryfield Ponds, two pools divided by a narrow causeway at the northern boundary of the gardens. These were used by Peto as the termination of his Japanese garden, but they are of earlier origin, being shown on the Chapman & Andre county map of 1777 as one large body of water. The planting and decoration of the walk, together with the treatment of the ponds, has been much simplified in the late C20, following their lease to the Dunmow Fishing Club.

Immediately to the north-west of the house is a large, enclosed paved courtyard, with a central balustraded octagonal pool and fountain basin, all laid out by Peto. The floor of the courtyard is decorated with a wide range of paving materials, including cobbles, bricks, and tiles on edge. Beyond the courtyard to the north-west is an I-shaped fishpond (late C20), at the southern end of which stands the late C17 square red-brick dovecote.

PARK

The former park at Easton Lodge survives only in outline and lies outside the area here registered.

KITCHEN GARDEN

The walled garden lies to the north of Easton Lodge, on the site shown to have been used for walled gardens in the early C18 (Skynner, 1732). It is divided into two compartments, that to the east being laid to grass and planted with trees as the grounds of a private house created (late C20) from the surviving Servant's House. The walled garden to the west continues to be cultivated for the production of fruit and vegetables. On the outside face of the north wall stands the Shelley Pavilion, moved to

Easton from Maresfield Park, Sussex in the 1920s for use as a west porch. It was later re-erected as a summerhouse in its present position, facing north towards the Japanese garden.

REFERENCES

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Maps

- Map of Ugley, Tiltey etc by R. Agass, 1593: ERO
Survey of the Maynard estate, 1730: ERO D/DMg P1
Chapman & Andre's map of Essex, 1777
Survey of the Maynard estates, 1811: ERO D/DMg P2
Tithe map of Little Easton parish, 1839: ERO D/CT 126B
Survey of the Maynard estates, c. 1850: D/DMg P8
OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1886
OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1897, 3rd edition published 1920

Illustrations

- Skykker, T., 1732, engraving of house, gardens and park (copy at Easton Lodge museum)

Archive Items

- Photographs of the Peto garden, 1907 (held in CL 1909)
Many of the estate papers are held at ERO under D/DMg.

Description written August 2000. Amended January 2001. Register inspector EMP. Edited September 2001.