

**EPPING FOREST  
THEYDON GARNON**

**GAYNES PARK**

**TL 484 017**

Ancient deer park dating from the C13 with remains of C19 gardens, including a formal parterre and rockery, wild garden, and tree plantations. More evidence remains of early C20 gardens to the south of the mansion.

**HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT**

Gaynes Park, also known as Park Hall, Gaines or Genis, was part of a medieval deer park belonging to the manor of Theydon Garnon. The estate appears to have been formed out of the forest (Waltham) during the reign of King Henry III when Robert Garnon secured a licence to enclose his wood at Taydon for a park. The estate derived its name from John Engaine who occupied the property at one time, and in 1578, during the ownership of Sir FitzWilliam, Queen Elizabeth I visited Gaynes during her Progress through East Anglia (Davey).

In 1650 the Manor is described as having a brick built house, gardens, orchards, yards, stables, outhouses enclosed with brick walls and three acres of land, fishponds, and a store of young timber plus 450 acres (Particular). It is also described as being well supplied with water and well stocked with deer (D/Dac 229). During the C17 an additional 700 acres were added to the estate (VCH).

The original house, Park Hall, was demolished by 1740 and was replaced by a new house built a short distance away on higher ground (Chapman and André). By 1781 the property belonged to Thomas Coxhead, passing to his son William Coxhead-Marsh, and later the Chisenhale-Marsh family. Around the turn of the century Mr Marsh is described as one of the largest landowners in the area. The Tithe Map of 1838 confirms that much of the surrounding land belonged to Gaynes Park estate under the ownership of William Chisenhale-Marsh.

In 1861, Gaynes is described as 'standing in a park with grounds about it tastefully laid out: and for the beauty of its woodland scenery it is scarcely to be excelled amongst the houses of the Essex Gentry' (Coller 1861). By 1872 a large number of trees had been planted, with walks meandering through them, including a plantation near the house with a large fishpond to the south (OS 1<sup>st</sup> Edition). Close to the west of house there were terraces and walks. Photographs show that to the south there was yew hedging, and a pergola overhanging another path which led to the fishponds or lakes (Essex Countryside). Oak trees lined the driveway. The walled garden was planted mainly with fruit trees. There is also evidence of an area used as a turning circle in front of the house. However, the OS maps does not show any obvious pathway through to the point where there is now a viewing platform overlooking Hawkshill and Redyn's Wood. The farm buildings, which were added to later, are situated to the north of the kitchen garden. During this period the estate grew arable crops, grazed cattle and sheep, and reared pigs.

In 1896 a fountain to the west and sundial to the south of the building were indicated, with steps leading down to both these areas (OS, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition). By 1896 the fishpond, surrounded by trees, had been incorporated into the pleasure grounds and divided into two distinct areas of water. A gardener's house had been built in the kitchen garden. The turning circle had been defined, a path leads to the viewing platform, and continuous walkway is shown around the west and south of the house leading to a track beside the walled garden. There are several rides and walks in Hawkshill Woods where conifers and shrubs have been planted and today one is known as Rhododendron Ride.

The new series OS Map (1923) shows developments in the pleasure garden. The forecourt in front of the house becomes more circular. An avenue of conifers had been laid out in a field to south-west, possibly to enhance a view from an upstairs window, or to act as a boundary line between the grazed and arable fields. The gardens close to the house were more precisely defined. Just after this period an Italian style garden was incorporated with low neatly trimmed box parterre hedges surrounding flower beds and at least two large urns on plinths (family photograph 1940's). It is understood that the owners of Gaynes used to visit Italy where they acquired many such urns and other mementoes. Pictures also show shaped yew tree hedges, which divide the upper and lower part of the south garden where a sundial is placed.

Recently discovered photographs taken between 1898 and 1902 show a well-tended garden with many trees and a wide pathway leading down from the south of the building to the lake below.

By about 1950 the garden had been re-arranged (aerial photograph). The parterre to the west of the building has been completely removed with no evidence of further planting whilst to the south of the planting had been altered.

The viewing platform appears on the New series map (1936) but its date cannot be confirmed as earlier as this piece of the map is missing from the 1920 version of the New Series.

Gaynes Park was used as a beacon for guiding aeroplanes to North Weald airport during the second World War, and there are letters requesting financial assistance to restore some bomb damage to the house and greenhouses as well as a request for permission to 'build a cucumber house in my market garden' and the garden 'not being suitable for vegetables at the moment' (1947/8 at EPO).

By 1946 the property owned by the Gaynes Park Estate comprised of the Mansion, 36 cottages, seven farms and tenanted farmhouses, two shops, amenity land, gardens, greenhouses and two cottages - a total of 1,346 acres (EPO).

From 1962 to 1968, and again in 1970, the gardens were opened to the public and are described as having 'flowering shrubs, particularly azaleas and rhododendrons, also fine trees' (NGS/Essex Countryside Magazine). Terraces and flowerbeds were planted with roses. Paths from the south door of the house led through rose beds and on through a well-manicured yew hedges towards and possibly around lily covered fishponds. Dutch Elm disease, in the 1970's, destroyed the avenue of trees to the north of the property. This avenue was known to the then owner as Elm Tree Walk.

In 1976 the Estate sold the house and approximately 2.4 hectares (six acres) of pleasure ground. This roughly coincides with the building of the M11 motorway though the estate to the west. Despite this, in 1981 Gaynes Park was still referred to as having 'fine gardens sloping to a lake and extensive prospect to the south'. The Estate itself retained approximately 1,000 acres but by 1985 a row of horse chestnuts has been removed to facilitate a new driveway from Banks Lane leading directly to the farm buildings. This did not affect the pleasure grounds.

The parkland, wooded area and possibly the pleasure ground suffered in the great storm of 1987 when at least 3,000 trees were destroyed. During this period, and the following decade, the pleasure grounds show evidence of serious neglect and there was an attempt to preserve the site and in particular the trees (EPO 1991). However, between 1985 and 1999 most of the trees between the house and the viewing platform were removed to make way for a car park. (Aerial photos)

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

### **LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM AND SETTING**

Gaynes Park is located in the parish of Theydon Garnon, 14 miles from London. It lies east of Epping and Copped Hall, and north-east of Epping Forest. The once commanding views from the house of the surrounding landscape and countryside have been somewhat obscured by the overgrown garden. Farmland and woods surround Gaynes Park Mansion and pleasure grounds.

There are two driveways to the Gaynes Park Estate only one of which leads to the house. The driveway to the west crosses the M11 and is bordered with oak trees, some diseased or dying. The Lodge at its entrance belongs to Gaynes Park Estate as do the fields either side of the drive.

### **PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS**

Gaynes Park Mansion (grade II\*) is a large Jacobean styled building dated c. 1870 and incorporates remains of late C18 and early C19 house. It is set on high ground in the northern part of the pleasure ground, which slopes gently away from the house. Even now it is possible to see many London landmarks from part of the property, as well as the woods and forests.

## **REFERENCES**

### **Books**

Burkes and Savills, 1981, *Guide to Country Houses*, vol. III,

Coller, D.W., 1861, *Peoples History of Essex*,

Davey, Zillan, 1996, *An Elizabethan Progress*, pg. 141

Drury, Paul, 2002, *Report: Gaynes Park and Theydon Garnon, Essex: The Evolution of the House and its Environs*,

Harper.G.C, Aug. 1965, *The Perplexedness of Theydon Garnon Essex Countryside Magazine*, Aug. 1965

Morant, P., 1768, *History and Antiquities of Essex*,

Pikes, 1909, *New Century Series - Essex in C20*, no. 27,

*Victoria County History CH*, vol. 4

### **Maps**

Chapman and André, Map of Essex, 1777

Tithe map and award from 1838

OS 25' first edition, 1876 (surveyed in 1872) 50-15 and 50/14

OS 25' second edition, 1898

OS New Series, third edition, 1923 61-5 /61-9/61-19

### **Pictorial Evidence**

Chisenhale-Marsh family photographs

Cluttons' Sales Catalogue of Gaynes Park 1975

Harsell.I, Engraving by Park Hall near Epping, the seat of Marsh, esq.', 1898-1950's

### **Archival Items**

Land tax from 1793 to 1832 [ERO ref.]

Particular, ERO ref. D/Dac 228 1650 and D/Dac 229

Quarter Sessions, Easter, 1610 [ERO ref.]

DOE Report: Epping

### **Acknowledgements**

Mr Anthony Guy Chisenhale-Marsh

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### **Site Visits**

20/5/01 (various vantage point on public roads)

-/8/01 (footpath to the south)

7/9/01 (short walk round the gardens)

5/02/02 (short tour round the adjoining farm buildings and drives)

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