

**CHELMSFORD CITY COUNCIL
STOCK**

GREENWOODS
(formerly STOCK HALL)

TQ 693 991

The major phase of garden design for Greenwoods was in 1908 when the Cumbrian landscape designer, Thomas Hayton Mawson, drew up plans for the owner Richard Adam Ellis. A large proportion of Mawson's design is extant.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In the eighteenth century Greenwoods was known as Stock Hall. The oldest parts of the building date to the seventeenth century but the building is mostly early nineteenth century with twentieth and twenty-first century additions.

Greenwoods was originally owned by the Bate family. The daughter, Anne Bate, married Thomas Berington and after George Bate's death Anne inherited Stock Hall in 1751. For a time Stock Hall became a seat of Catholicism. Greenwoods passed to Thomas and Anne's third son William, born 1743, and on his death in 1791 to William's sole surviving son, Thomas, who inherited the estate until his death in 1811. His uncle Philip Berington became heir to Greenwoods until his death in 1818. Stock Hall then passed into the ownership of another Catholic family, the Eldridges. The Hon. Arthur Petre leased Stock Hall from Wm. Prior Johnson, Esq. in 1855. The lease included the outbuildings, coach house, stables, cottage and granary, gardens and pleasure grounds, shrubberies and plantations, meadow, pasture and woodland – in all 51 acres. The 1874 ordnance survey map shows that the boundary of the pleasure grounds was drawn much tighter around the house, which had been renamed Greenwoods. Ponds located mid-way at the northern boundary, and to the east of the early nineteenth century range, form focal points around which paths and shrubberies are arranged.

In 1901 Richard Adam Ellis acquired Greenwoods. He was born in 1855 and was one of the founders and for many years senior partner in the City of London firm of Richard Ellis and Sons, Auctioneers, Estate Agents and Surveyors. He married Emma in 1878 and had two sons and a daughter. He was many things including a parish councillor, churchwarden, Justice of the Peace, president of Stock Cricket Club and the President of the local Conservative Association. Thomas Hayton Mawson (1861-1933) was commissioned to design the gardens of Greenwoods for Richard Adam Ellis, JP in 1905 with revised plans in 1908. Mawson's design included alterations to the gardens which maintained 'a genuine old English feeling of breadth'. Within the layout was a covered way between house and park, a yew hedged sunken pond, a rose garden enclosed by trellis work, and a garden house. To one side of the rose garden stood a brick garden shelter furnished with a fitted wooden seat with a closed back and supported by wood columns, a tiled roof with broad lead hips that gave 'considerable character'.

The Cumbria Record Office in Kendal, the main depository for Mawson's work, has records relating to Thomas Mawson's design for Greenwoods for 1905 and a revised plan of the garden layout for Richard Adam Ellis in 1908 (WDB/1/33). The Record Office also holds photographs of the grounds taken in

1910 following the completion of Mawson's design (WDB 86/9/35). Two ponds, one near the house and another nearer to the stable block are shown on the 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map of 1896 and were incorporated into Mawson's design. To the rear of the house a main path leads southwards to a major feature of the Mawson design, a sunken pond, which is on the site of the pond seen in the late nineteenth century Ordnance Survey maps. Paths lead out from each side of the sunken pond, one of these being an avenue leading to a serpentine wall, another to the summer house. A design of ornamental beds immediately outside the rear of the house led to an area of grassland with views to the parkland beyond. Mawson had made detailed plans showing a design for the ornamental wall and gateway that separated the grassland from the parkland and a covered walkway designed to lead west from the house to the ornamental beds and parkland. The 1896 Ordnance Survey map shows there was at that time a perimeter of trees around the main area of garden.

Other documents held by the Cumbria Record Office include a drawing in detail of a proposed gatehouse and a ground plan of the carriage court. Photographs taken in 1910 after the completion of the design at Greenwoods show the sunken pond and central statue, a path leading to the sunken garden, the covered walkway and ornamental beds, brick wall and recessed seating, the lily pond, and the rear of the house with its ornamental beds. A cruciform arrangement of trees in the south-east lawn was planned, including a Wellingtonia.

Following the death of Richard Adam Ellis, Greenwoods was put on the market by his son-in-law, Admiral Sir Harry Vernon Haggard, and daughter, Lady Haggard. Negotiations started with the Fire Service who wanted it for their headquarters, but the West Ham Central Mission bought it in 1948.

Greenwoods was opened by the West Ham Central Mission in 1948 as their Country Centre and Queen Elizabeth officiated at the opening ceremony and planted a tree. In 1965 Ron Messenger took charge of the work in Greenwoods and under him it became a Therapeutic Community using a psycho-social model for the support of those suffering mental ill health. In Ron Messenger's book *The Greenwood Years* he relates how 'when the big ornamental pond – one of the most attractive features of the garden – had to be emptied to remove danger for little children, and turned into a rose garden, hundreds of water lilies were sold.' The book also refers to the selling of Swan Wood and the fields immediately opposite Greenwoods on the other side of the B1007. Swan Wood lies beyond the parkland and gardens of Greenwoods and was sold to the Woodland Trust. The West Ham Central Mission closed on 1st April 1999.

1999 sales particulars (ERO c1582) include in the description of the grounds that 'the property is approached over a gravelled driveway with grass verges and three mature horse chestnuts to the front of a high mellowed red brick wall with climbing roses. A gateway with high brick pillars, topped by urns and flanked by a Holm oak and yew, opens to a large gravelled sweep with central Italianate wellhead to the front of the property. A wrought iron gate, with attractive scroll work and pillars to either side featuring coats of arms, within a high brick wall opens to a gravelled walk with sweeping lawns interspersed with mature Wellingtonia, horse chestnut, copper beech, turkey oak, ash and lime, with well clipped yew hedge surrounding a sunken garden, having gravelled walks, shaped flower borders and centre piece fountain (damaged) of nymphs cavorting in the waves. An avenue of pollarded limes leads to the north west of the sunken garden. Lawns and terracing to the rear of the

property lead to a paved covered walkway with brick arches, dividing the lawns from an area of orchard to the north. A gravelled driveway leads from the main access to Greenwoods to the rear of the property and original outbuildings.'

Greenwoods was opened as a Spa and Hotel in 2001 after the building was extended and refurbished.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES AND SETTING

Greenwoods lies in the rural village of Stock, its entrance directly off the B1007. It is approximately 6 miles from Chelmsford and 3 miles from Billericay and lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The site is bounded to the north by Crondon Park Road. To the east, the site is defined by a short section of a tall brick wall to the front of the house, beyond which is a greensward adjacent to the High Street. To the south of the main drive, the east boundary is marked by a timber fence and to the north, by a red brick wall. The site has a level aspect.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The approach to Greenwoods is from the B1007 through a wide entrance in a substantial brick wall flanked by brick piers surmounted with urns. This brick wall was presumably of Mawson's design as a very early 20th century Spalding photograph shows a wooden fence and gateway as the entrance to the house. In the verge between the road and the brick wall are mature horse chestnuts. This gravelled drive leads to the oldest part of the house and continues in front of the later additions to the old lily pond around which are spaces for car parking. Beyond the lily pond is a grassed area divided by a holly hedge and the few apple trees here are probably the remains of the old orchard. A further car park is beyond this, screened by a hawthorn hedge, and this secondary drive to the north, flanked by sweet chestnuts, forms the vehicular exit and to the south, a narrower entrance allows access and egress for motorised garden equipment.

There is a very large coppiced yew in the grassed area to the left of the main entrance. This yew is included in Mawson's design for the 'carriage court' with the wording 'yew tree replanted' and may have been an existing yew on the site that was moved. According to Mawson's plan other yews were to be sited in this area, possibly ornamental ones in pots that were a popular feature of his designs. Currently two well-shaped yews sit side by side in the bed south of the large yew but neither of these figure in this position on the 1908 design. Mawson's revised plan sites a feature in the centre of the carriage drive opposite the entrance to the house and this may have been a wellhead. A 1953 photograph shows a wellhead sited in this position which remains today although it may have been moved to a more central position, possibly to accommodate a circular driveway for the motor car.

Another substantial wall, also on Mawson's design, separates the gardens from the carriage court with access to the gardens through a single ornate wrought iron gate. The capped brick piers have a coat of arms on them.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING

The Department of the Environment list part of Greenwoods as Grade II and describe the building as an early-mid nineteenth century stuccoed house with end pilasters and a twentieth century addition. The house is believed to have some seventeenth century remains. The house has been further extended in the twenty-first century in its adaptation to a hotel and spa facility.

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