

BRENTWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL
SOUTH WEALD

HOU HATCH

Grid Ref: TQ 558 945

Grade II listed house with grounds said to be improved by J. B. Papworth (1775-1847) in c.1824. Papworth, though primarily an architect and artist, undertook numerous landscape designs and was author of *Hints on Ornamental Gardening* (1823).

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1777 it was occupied by Captain Smith and was already contained within a park which had an avenue running to the west, the house being framed by two shorter ones running south to Weald Road. There was already a lake to the northwest (Chapman & André's map of Essex, 1777). More detail is shown on a map of 1788/9 when it belonged to John and Elizabeth Willan. This shows a formal garden in four compartments in the same position as the present walled garden but extending further south. The avenues are unaltered (ERO D/DTw P3).

In about 1824 the architect J B Papworth (1775-1847) was employed by W. Willan to redesign the grounds (Papworth 1879, 72). It is not clear what changes, if any, were made, as the sale plan of 1829 (arising from the bankruptcy of a new owner Rowland Stephenson) shows an identical layout to that shown on the maps of 1777 and 1788/9. Perhaps Papworth's improvements were to the planting. The sales particulars describe a 'capital kitchen garden, lofty walls, clothed with fruit trees; pleasure grounds intersected by shrubbery walks, flower gardens, fish ponds, sheet of water and other appropriate embellishments.' The description refers to 'remarkably fine avenues of elms' (one of which can be seen in an early twentieth century photograph). There were also various domestic offices including stables and a coach house, and an oval turning circle in front of the house. The estate comprised 115 acres, including 74 acres of parkland (ERO D/DTw E10).

In 1853 the estate was bought by the Petres for the Hon. Frederick Petre but by 1861 it had passed to Osgood Hanbury (of the brewing family and related by marriage to the Tower family of Weald Hall). He lived at Hou Hatch c1863-1882 (Colvin 1954; Powell 1983). The park in 1872 appears little changed from the 1777 map, apart from an apparent reduction of the southern part of the walled (or partly walled) garden, though this was still divided into four compartments. There was a small circular feature in the south-east quadrant. One of the short avenues approaching the house from the south had been removed. Both these alterations might have been part of Papworth's scheme. However the lodge is not shown, so this must postdate the survey (25" ordnance survey map 1872).

Judge Sir H. Cunliffe owned the estate in the early twentieth century and commissioned the architects P. & H. W. Currey to add a red brick east wing in a loosely Queen Anne style. He is believed to have made small, but unspecified, alterations to the garden and was an enthusiast for rockeries. He also had a series of small ponds dug along the stream northeast of the lake. Towards the end of the

twentieth century the house and garden had fallen into a seriously ruinous state from which it has been sensitively rescued by the present owners (information from present owners).

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, LANDFORM, SETTING

The park is bounded by Weald Road to the south, the bridle way between Weald Road and Lincoln's Lane to the east and to the north-west by the unnamed stream feeding the lake and the lake itself. It is of similar area to that shown on eighteenth century maps. The land falls away to the north and south, providing excellent views over the surrounding undulating and wooded countryside.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

There was formerly an entrance off what is now a rough track (formerly tarmacked) which links Weald Road to Lincoln's Lane. There is a late nineteenth century single storey red brick lodge with decorative carved gable boards at this entrance, but it has been much altered and extended. The drive from this point passed north of the walled garden, providing an impressive view of the lake in the valley floor before reaching the house and the stable block. The turning circle in front of the east wing has been lost. The more (and original) direct entrance from the south off Weald Road, on the line of a former avenue, has large modern wrought iron gates on modern red brick piers.

PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS

The present house contains an older core (probably seventeenth century) within the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century south wing in stock brick. There was a service wing of the same period to the north, but this was destroyed by fire in the 1960s. The east wing in red brick, designed by P. & H.W. Currey of 37 Norfolk St. London, was added c.1903. (Historic England listing description; plans in private ownership). Stables and other service buildings lie to the northwest, and new garages and a covered swimming pool have been built on the site of the demolished north service wing.

REFERENCES

Books and Articles

Colvin H M 1954 *Biographical Dictionary of English Architects*, London, p.440

Papworth, Wyatt, 1879 *John B Papworth, A Brief Record of his Life and Works*, p.72, printed privately

Powell, W R 1983 *Victoria County History of Essex*, viii, OUP

Maps

1777 Chapman & André's map of Essex 1777 Plate XVII

1788 Map ERO D/DTw P3

1872 25" ordnance survey map sheet LXVII

Archival Items

1829 Sales catalogue ERO D/DTw E10/SAL/B5763

1826 Footpath diversion ERO Q/RHi 4/52

Researcher Michael Leach; site visited 30 March 2016