

**BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL
SILVER END**

**SILVER END MEMORIAL
GARDENS**

TL 806197

A mid C20 garden created in a model garden village, built to accommodate the workers of Crittalls metal window frame manufacturers. The Gardens were a memorial to Francis Crittall and his wife Ellen, and to mark its centenary.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Francis H Crittall, metal window frame manufacturer, created the model village of Silver End in 1926-32 to provide much needed decent housing for his ever-growing workforce. He envisaged the new village as 'a contented community of Crittall families enjoying the amenities of town life in a lovely rural setting'. The community had its own 280ha (700 acre) farm as well as three piggeries, a bakery, a sausage factory, bacon curing, a slaughter house and a poultry farm. The produce was sold at the Department Stores, a large shop of twenty six departments in the village centre. Under the guidance of Captain Richard Reiss who had been closely involved with the Garden City movement, three architects were chosen to work together on the scheme: Thomas Tait, Murray Hennell and CHB Quenell. Based closely on the Welwyn model, Silver End was to be a village with full facilities at its centre surrounded by tree lined avenues, wide verges and hedge-enclosed front gardens. The houses varied in their design in order to avoid the monotony that characterised similar schemes of the period. A five year plan of building one hundred houses a year was achieved, but further expansion was prevented by the depression.

In front of 'The Manors', Francis Crittall's home, was an open recreational space which in the original scheme included a bowling and putting green and tennis courts. The area was unenclosed and footpaths crossed the area including Mr Crittall's shortcut routes to the factory and shops. It was on this area that a park was created as a memorial to Francis and Ellen Crittall and to mark the centenary of the firm. The Memorial Gardens incorporated a children's play area with a paddling pool, a sunken rose garden, a pergola walk, an avenue of Lombardy Poplars and importantly a Japanese garden furnished with artefacts from their frequent trips abroad. The Japanese Garden was the first element to be finished as is shown by the plaque that reads: '*Walter Francis Crittall designed this garden in memory of his parents Ellen Laura and Francis Henry Crittall. It was opened 6th May 1950*'. The opening ceremony of the Memorial Gardens took place in 1952 in front of the gates which were inscribed '*These Gardens are dedicated to the memory of Francis Henry Crittall founder of Silver End. These gates and lamps were made by the voluntary labour past and present in grateful memory of*

the Guv'nor and his wife'. The gates were machine made and built from sections of metal window frames which were produced at the Silver End factory. A second set of gates were dedicated to Walter Crittall. They were opened in 1956 and inscribed: '*1887-1956 these gates and railings were made and presented by the Crittall employees in memory of Walter Francis Crittall "Mr Pink"*'. The gardens are included in the designated Conservation Area in Silver End that was established in 1983 and a successful Lottery bid was achieved in 1997. At the time of writing none of the improvements have been implemented but preliminary work has started.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM AND SETTING

The Memorial Gardens are set out directly in front of 'The Manors', the home of Francis Crittall, on a rectangular site which also included the Silver End Hotel (now a nursing home), a bowling green and some housing. The long axis of the grounds is aligned north-west/south-east. The site is ringed by roads and planted to the west and south with mature lime trees. The north boundary road is set to both sides with mature *Robinia pseudoacacia*.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The main entrance to the gardens is through the Memorial Gates on Broadway. From here the path leads directly across the gardens to 'The Manors' where another entrance is marked by a round-topped gate set in straight railings. The entrance on the southern side is entered through the memorial gates to Mr Walter 'Pink' Crittall and a fourth entrance is situated beyond the rose garden onto Broadway. There is a fifth entrance on the northern side into Silver Street through simple metal gates hung on concrete posts. The fourth and fifth entrances are later additions.

PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS

There are no buildings.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

Passing through the Memorial Gates a stone flagged path leads directly ahead towards 'The Manors' flanked by an avenue of two lines of cherry trees and one line of poplars on each side of the main path set in a broad band of grass borders: the mature lines of the cherry trees were reinforced by Lombardy Poplars on the creation of the park. To the right is a children's play area with swings, slides and climbing equipment; to the left an area containing impressive mature trees and three circular beds and a path which leads to a granite memorial to Lord Braintree. There was originally a timber shelter here but it was vandalised. The path that runs the entire length of the park, linking Francis Way with Silver Street, crosses the

avenue at roughly the half-way point. Turning off the avenue to the left this path leads towards the Japanese Garden, passing an open area on the right with a centrally planted mature plane tree. The Japanese Garden, designed by W. F. 'Pink' Crittall, embodied many of the Eastern design elements which he and his father so admired, incorporating artefacts such as the Torii arch and stone lanterns which they brought back from their frequent trips abroad. The large pagoda, of some 15ft (4.5m) in height, dominates the central island where bamboos and Japanese maples are planted among the boulders. A staggered bridge (which in the Japanese tradition prevented pursuit by devils, as they could only walk in straight lines) crosses the circular pond to the island. The memorial plaque is set in a splayed brick wall at the point where the path leads across the water, the land rising behind to a small mound along the top of which runs a low privet hedge and some tree heathers and hebe. There was a heather garden here formerly. The main axis path ends near here, flanked by two Irish yews, with the 1956 memorial gates to Mr 'Pink'. The sunken rose garden is sited on the eastern side of the main axis path beyond an open grass area planted with mature specimen trees. The rose garden is surrounded by 1m high yew hedges and based on a lattice design within a square. Brick steps allow access to the garden from diagonally opposed corners. Close by, a paved space with seating is enclosed by yew hedging. From there the path leads through to the metal pergola planted with wisteria and other climbing plants and joins the main axis path. A beech hedge surrounds the garden areas of the park, which were once fenced off from the recreational areas, but the fence has since disappeared. Beyond the children's play area in the upper, northern end of the park is a football pitch and mature trees.

REFERENCES

National Heritage Lottery Bid 1997, Braintree District Council
N Smith *Silver End Garden Village*, Diamond Jubilee Edition 1986
S King *Silver End: Voices from the Guv'nor's Village* 1996

Maps

OS 6" to 1 mile scale published 1955 (sheet TL81NW)
Plan attached to Heritage Lottery Fund application

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