

ENGLISH HERITAGE REGISTERED GRADE II

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL

TERLING PLACE

TERLING

GD1737

TL776 143

A late C18 mansion set in early C19 formal gardens and pleasure grounds, surrounded by a park laid out in the 1770s by Nathaniel Richmond.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The Terling estate originally belonged to a Bishop of Norwich but on a visit by Henry VIII, the king liked it sufficiently to exchange it for another estate in Essex. The Tudor house stood between the present mansion and the church, which is separated from the mansion gardens by a wall believed to have been part of the original Tudor walled garden. An estate map of 1597 records that at that time the house sat in a landscape scattered with many individual trees (IAAS). John Strutt purchased the manor of Terling in 1761 and by 1769 was considering building a new house. Strutt was the Tory MP for Maldon from 1774 to 1790 and a friend of fellow Tory Thomas Berney Bramston of Skreens, near Roxwell in Essex. Bramston had employed the landscape designer Nathaniel Richmond to remodel his grounds in 1770 and appears to have recommended him to John Strutt, along with the architect John Johnson. A mutual friend of both men wrote to Strutt on 28 February 1770: 'Bramston's business is to communicate to you Mr Richmond's intention of visiting Skreens so that you can have him do that which you never can do, fix the situation of your intended house' (Brown 2000). Thus Richmond chose the site for the new house, John Johnson provided the designs, and Richmond laid out a new landscape park. The new, south-facing hall together with its park are shown as an enclosed area dotted with trees on Chapman and Andre's map of Essex published in 1777. John Strutt died in 1816 and was succeeded by Colonel Joseph Strutt who, from 1818 to 1824, commissioned Thomas Hopper to remodel and extend the house and it was Hopper who turned the main entrance to the north and added the long wings. In 1821 Joseph was raised to the peerage and became the first Lord Rayleigh. The 1844 Tithe map shows that by that date Lord Rayleigh had also laid out three radiating avenues to the north of the house and a semicircular pleasure ground enclosed by a ha-ha to the south, while the park was enclosed by perimeter belts on all sides. In the 1850s a conservatory was added to the west

wing. In 1871 the third Lord Rayleigh succeeded to Terling and, together with his wife Evelyn, may have been responsible for developing the walled kitchen garden, the first map to show the feature being the OS 1st edition 6" map of 1881. The third Baron established a laboratory in the west wing and became famous for his experimentation, discovering argon in 1894 and being awarded the Nobel Prize for Science in 1904. Evelyn, Lady Rayleigh carried out much planting in the gardens, creating a wooded pleasure ground to the north-west of the house which linked it to Swan Pond (a much older feature of the landscape). The fourth Lord Rayleigh succeeded in 1920 and continued his father's scientific achievements while his wife Kathleen continued to develop the gardens. During the mid C20 much of the west park was returned to agriculture and the mansion became the centre of the Lord Rayleigh Farms Inc. The site remains (2000) in single private ownership.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

Terling Place lies on the south side of Terling village, which is located in the Essex countryside c 7km west of Witham. The c 110ha site is situated on the north side of the gently sloping valley of the River Ter, which flows from north-west to south-east across the park. It is bounded to the north-west by the Crow Pond Road, to the south-west by Church Road, to the north-east by Hatfield Road, and to the south-east by farmland.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The main entrance to the site is from Terling village, off Church Road, through simple iron gates hung on red-brick gate piers surmounted by pineapple finials. The drive runs south through grassed pleasure grounds planted with many species of trees, then follows the wall of All Saints' church, turning west and then south again to arrive at the main entrance on the north-west front. A second, minor drive enters the park c 400m to the north-east of the mansion, off Hatfield Road. Simple wooden gates and an early C20 two-storey lodge cottage mark this entrance and from here a farm track runs west then south-west through the park and past the kitchen garden to join the main drive from the north. The entrance beside the church is shown on the 1844 Tithe map, the east drive appearing for the first time in 1881 (OS) but shown without a lodge until 1924.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING

Terling Place (listed grade II*) is a large country mansion built in grey brick with limestone dressings under a slate roof. The three-storey central block is flanked by long one-storey wings which extend obliquely forwards to north-north-east and west-south-west, these terminating in small garden temples facing the pleasure grounds. The south-east elevation faces the gardens, its central part set slightly forward, the original late C18 door altered to

become a window. A mid C19 conservatory joins the formerly free-standing west wing. The central part of the house was built by John Johnson for John Strutt between 1772 and 1773, while the wings were added by Thomas Hopper for Colonel Joseph Strutt (later first Lord Rayleigh) in 1818-24.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

The gardens lie to the north, west, and south of the mansion. From the entrance court on the north-west front three radiating avenues of conifers extend through lawns, the central avenue leading to a terrace c 100m to the north-west of the house, rising to higher woodland planting beyond, along the boundary with All Saints' churchyard. The other avenues lead into ornamental woodland plantings which extend as far as the northern and western boundaries. This arrangement dates from the early C19 and is shown in its present (2000) form on the 1844 Tithe map. The woodland to the west extends as far as Swan Pond which lies c 320m to the south-west of the mansion. The Pond is shown as a water body on the 1597 estate map although was only brought into the pleasure grounds at the end of the C19 by Lady Rayleigh.

A semi-circular ha-ha encloses the gardens below the south-east front which are laid to lawns decorated with a formal geometric layout of clipped box hedges and paths enclosing beds. The shape and form of these gardens are also recorded on the 1844 Tithe map, while the details of the hedges and beds are shown on the 1881 OS map.

PARK

Terling Place is set at the northern end of its extensive park. It is divided into two parts by the River Ter which lies to the south-west, between the mansion and Swan Pond. The majority of the park to the north-east of the river has been retained under pasture and is scattered with individual trees (some of a great age), the greatest concentration lying to the east and north-east of the house, where remains of lines of oaks and limes are evident. The strong perimeter plantations shown on the 1844 Tithe map are now (2000) not as dense or complete as they were, although Brockspark Wood c 500m to the south, and Hollow Ditch c 350m to the south-east of Terling Place (outside the registered area), both survive.

KITCHEN GARDEN

The c 2ha walled kitchen garden lies on the north-east side of the mansion and is divided into two compartments. The larger compartment is entered through a small gate in the south-west wall and is laid to grass, with some areas used partly for vegetable cultivation and partly as a tree nursery (1988). The smaller compartment to the north-east retains some glass and cold frames but is otherwise laid to grass (1998). Although the walled gardens may be of earlier origin, they are not shown on maps prior to the OS 1st edition (1881).

REFERENCES

This Essex, (August 1973), pp 40-4

N Pevsner and E Radcliffe, *The Buildings of England.. Essex* (1979), pp 378-9

J Kenworthy-Browne *et al*, *Burke's and Savills Guide to Country Houses III*, (1981), p 75

Institute of Advanced Architectural Studies (IAAS) Survey (nd) [copy on EH file]

D Brown, 'Nathaniel Richmond (1724-1784) - Gentleman Improver,' (PhD thesis, UEA 2000)

Maps

J Chapman and P André, *A map of the county of Essex from an actual survey 1777*

Tithe map for Terling parish, 1844 (D/CT 136B), (Essex Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1881

2nd edition published 1897

3rd edition published 1924

OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1897

Archival items

Road closure order, 1788 (Q/RHi 3/15), (Essex Record Office)

Aerial photographs, 1988 (4090/26-27, 4 1), (NMR, Swindon)

The Strutt manuscripts are held at the Essex Record Office and in private ownership

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