

**BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL
CASTLE HEDINGHAM**

**THE MANSION HOUSE,
HEDINGHAM CASTLE**

TL 786 358

Remnants of early C18 garden on medieval castle site; C20 gardens.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The history of the medieval castle at Hedingham and the de Veres is fully described in the R.C.H.M.E. archaeological report of 1995. After the extinction of the earldom in 1703, the estate was eventually bought in 1713 by Sir William Ashurst, who built a house on the Inner Bailey, a prime example of a genuine ruin being incorporated into the aesthetic ensemble of the house/garden. At the time of Sir William's death in 1719 the house was finished, but it was left to his son Robert to undertake or complete the garden layout. In 1720 Robert constructed a dovecote between two of the old fish ponds, and employed Adam Holt in 1726 to add an octagonal end to the 'Shank of a Canal already made' and plant an avenue (Essex Record Office: D/DMh F31 and A4) which on Sangster's map is shown flanking the canal down to the road. A curved screen of low iron railings mounted on a low wall separated the octagon from the entrance approach and allowed a long view south across the road to the countryside beyond. This is shown on a view by Buck of 1738, which with the survey of 1766 by Sangster (D/DMh P3) and in conjunction with estate particulars of 1777 (D/DMh E34) show the state of the garden between the 1720s and 80s, and even the map by Bailey Bird of 1785 (D/DMh P5) records few changes. The 'Flower Garden walled in' referred to in 1777 is clearly shown on the Buck view, with a raised walk along the east wall and a pavilion at the corner. This garden may have served the botanical interests of Lewis Majendie (b.1756), who acquired Hedingham through his wife: a memoir written after his death refers to his enthusiasm for 'the cultivation of the field and the garden, into the latter of which he introduced many new specimens from the Botanic Garden of Mr. William Curtis at Brompton'. The kitchen gardens throughout C18 were located immediately on the west side of the octagon and were not moved until the third quarter of C19 to their later position near the west corner of the park. In addition to his botanical and horticultural interests, Lewis Majendie was also awarded medals for his planting of forest trees. A planting book of 1789 (D/DMh F31) gives details of fruit trees, forest trees and shrubs, and in some cases where they were planted.

The later history of the garden is summed up by Moraig Brown: 'Major elements of the C18 formal landscape have disappeared but their earthworks remain, including those of the elm avenue, the lines of lime trees beside the canal, the kitchen garden and the ponds around the dovecote. During the C19 the vista was softened by extensive woodland planting on the slopes east and west of the canal and on the side of the ringwork, and there was a return to formality close to the house where a turning circle was replaced by a formal terraced garden, remains of which survive today' ('A Castle Unravelling' in Essex Journal, autumn 1997). The canal with octagon end is still extant, although the crispness of its outline has disappeared through silting and bank erosion.

In the Depression following the First World War, Miss Musette Majendie started a training scheme to teach domestic skills to out-of-work young men, chiefly miners. In 1981, the present owners, the Hon. Thomas and Mrs. Lindsay, inherited Hedingham castle from Musette Majendie, Mr. Lindsay's cousin.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM AND SETTING

The Mansion House at Hedingham Castle lies to the north of the village of Castle Hedingham and to the east of the medieval earthworks and keep of the castle of the de Veres, Earls of Oxford. The ground falls away steeply on all sides of the house, partly due to the natural topography and partly due to the medieval fortifications, as the house was built on the site of the Inner Bailey.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The single approach is from Bailey Street, Castle Hedingham, to the south-west of the house. The drive skirts the southern edge of the castle mound and terminates at the west and south fronts of the Mansion House. A turning circle for carriages is shown immediately in front of the main (eastern) block on Sangster's map of 1766 and on the Tithe map of 1846, but it had been moved to its present position by 1876 (first edition 25" OS).

PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS

The Mansion House at Hedingham Castle was built between 1713 and 1719 and is listed grade II*. It is constructed of red brick with stone dressings and consists of two attached blocks, the smaller one to the west and the main block to the east. In 1720 a brick dovecote (grade II) was built 60m south-east of the house and forms a major element in the views from the house terraces, with the canal in the foreground and backed by ornamental planting. The C12 stone keep (grade I), and C15 brick bridge (grade II*) spanning the castle dry moat, form impressive features in the grounds of the house.

REFERENCES

Country Life, *xlvi*, 18th Sept. 1920 (article on castle; very little about the Mansion House or grounds)
M Brown, *Hedingham Castle, Essex (RCHME) 1995*; esp. pp.9, 23-25
M Brown, 'A Castle Unravelling', in *Essex Journal*, Vol. 32/2, 1997.

Maps

George Sangster, *Plan of Hedingham Castle, 1766 (D/DMh P3)*
Bailey Bird, *Map of the demesne lands of Hedingham Castle, 1785 (D/DMh P5)*
Chapman and André, *Map of Essex, 1777*;
Tithe Map, 1846 (D/CT 173).
OS 6" to 1 mile scale first edition 1875
OS 25" to 1 mile scale first edition 1875
New Series, third edition 1922

Archival Items

Scrapbook of letters and various mss. (D/D/DMh F31)
Estate account book 1725-40 (D/DMh A4)

Pictorial Evidence

S and N Buck, *A Perspective View of Hedingham Castle, 1738*
Engraving in *A New and Complete History of Essex*, ii, 1770
Photo in *Country Life*, 18th Sept. 1920.

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