

UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL
ASHDON

WALTONS

TL594430

Park, gardens and ornamental lake laid out in the C18.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1259 Sir Richard de Walton (sometimes recorded as Wanton or Wawton) bought a lease of Tithel's land from John de Wangeford and Margaret his wife, giving name to the estate, which still survives as Walton Park or Waltons. Muilman writing in 1769 tells us that 'This part of Ashdon at the time of the survey belonged to Tyhill the Briton, and Alleric de Vere; it was then called Stenitune or Staunton, and to this day Stevington-end or Stenten-end.' According to Morant (1768) it is not known how long the estate continued in the Walton family, but he remarks on the position of the family, since 'William de Wawton, or Wanton, was one of the Knights or Representatives, for this county in the Parliaments 33 Edw I and 45 Edw II.'

Eventually, passing into the ancient family of Tyrell, Sir Robert Tyrell sold the estate to William Lord Maynard in the early C17 from whom it descended to Sir William Maynard who was responsible for the alterations to the house and most probably the improvements to the garden and parkland. There is evidence from a writ of *ad quod damnum* of 1762 (Highway Rolls) that Sir William Maynard obtained permission to 'inclose part of a highway...beginning at the North West Corner of the paddock of the said Sir William Maynard...and ending...at the Bottom of a Field called Woodshot', besides being granted permission for two other closures of highway and footpath, leading us to conclude that at this time the parkland was being developed. A tithe book of 1755 makes mention under 'The Hon.ble Sir Wm Maynard Bart his Lands Tythable to Ashdon...' of the Great Park and also the Hare Park, and a later Tithe book of 1791 ('interleaved for occasional Remarks') states: 'The Park was laid into its present Form 1763 or 4'.

Writing in 1759/60 William Cooper, the curate of Thaxted, describes his visit to the house: 'Sir Wm. Maynard's seat at Ashdon is most beautifully situated: it is 9 miles distant from Thaxted, and fourteen from Cambridge: from Sir Wms you plainly see Ld Godolphins House upon Hogmagog [*sic*] Hills. The Walks, the Partirres, the Avenues, are laid out with great taste and judgement...'

Muilman in his *A New & Complete History of Essex* (1769) mentions that Waltons 'hath been rebuilt in an elegant manner, by Sir William Maynard...'. A picture of the Maynard family painted circa 1759-61 and attributed to Arthur Devis (now in the National Gallery of Art, Washington) depicts the family in front of the house showing Charlotte, wife of Sir William Maynard, whom he married in 1751, their two children and the widow of Sir Henry Maynard (William's father).

Certainly the Chapman & André map of 1777 gives us a very clear plan of the estate. A tree-lined carriageway approaching from the Bartlow road to the north, passes through an area of perimeter

planting before running across open parkland planted with specimen trees. Extensive kitchen gardens lay close by the house to the north-west; lakes or fishponds of a complex ornamental shape lay to the north-east surrounded by paths and planting. The map is inscribed 'Lord Maynard', no longer at this date referring to William, but to Charles Maynard who inherited the estates and viscountcy from his distant cousin in 1775.

In 1865 Daisy, Countess of Warwick inherited the estate from the last Viscount Maynard. The O.S.6" map of 1877 still shows the estate virtually unchanged after a century. Considerable parkland surrounds the house and a narrow line of plantation runs from the northern perimeter almost due south across the parkland to a point opposite the front of the house. The kitchen garden still shows discrete compartments to the northwest of the house, but the formal, four-square form of the 1777 map is no longer there. To the northeast the lakes are shown surrounded by mixed planting and a circulatory path. The shorter carriageway to the south and Ashdon village passes through a plantation of trees and close by a circular area of water. 'Ashdon Place' is inscribed on the map.

In 1896 the Countess of Warwick sold Waltons to E. T. Hooley. The O.S.25" map of that year shows the elongated shape of the house and the outbuildings of similar size that lay almost parallel to the main building. The avenue from the north can still be seen; the stand of trees dividing the southern parkland with its steeply sloping sides and narrow water channel; the very grand turning circle to the front of the house and the plantation and water features to the north-east. Greenhouses are to be seen in the kitchen garden area. The southern access road still passes through an area of trees, although the area of water is no longer identifiable. The catalogue of the 1896 sale describes the 'Tastefully Laid-out Pleasure Grounds' and 'at a convenient distance from the House is a Charming Rookery, through which flows an Ornamental Stream of Water, passing under two picturesque old bridges, and joining the River Bourne in the Village beyond.'

After only two years Waltons was sold on again, due to Hooley's bankruptcy, to Francis Fisher. In 1916 Major Henry T. Luddington became owner, living there until his death in 1921. It was still owned by his widow in 1954 when a fire caused extensive damage, resulting in the demolition of a large part of the house. In 1956 the estate was sold to Edmund Vestey and remains in the family to this day.

The County Aerial survey of 1990 shows the C18 parkland and water features still very much in evidence.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES & LANDFORM

Waltons is 1 km north-east of the centre of Ashdon village, bounded on the east by the county boundary, to the north by tree belts, to the west by a byway and to the south by the minor road from Ashdon to Steventon End. The area is approximately 60 hectares. The site is relatively flat but rises to the east of the house with distant views to the W from the top of the slope.

ENTRANCES & APPROACHES

There are no lodges. The main entrance is a short driveway through young woodland (a few mature beeches survive) from the minor road south of the house. The drive continues north past the house,

along a tree-lined drive (elm until the 1970s, now replaced with lime), ultimately connecting with the Ashdon to Bartlow road.

PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS

The Elizabethan house, extensively modified in the C18, was demolished after severe fire damage in 1954. A new house was built on the same site, but with its main entrance on the east side, requiring excavation of part of the slope to form the drive and parking area. To the south, two ranges of cottages and stables of C16/17 date survive, the east block being originally continuous with the former house (the wall at the north end has been rebuilt where its connection with the fire damaged mansion was severed).

REFERENCES

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Wright, T., 1835 *History and Topography of Essex*, ii, pp. 96-97
Cromwell, T K., 1818-19 *Excursions in the County of Essex*, ii, p. 130
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Archival Items

- Diary of William Cooper 1759/60: ERO D/P 16/28/7
Sale catalogue 1896: ERO B1625
Tithe book 1755: ERO D/P 18/3/37
Tithe book 1791: ERO D/P 18/3 73
Highway diversion: ERO Q/Rhi 2/2
Highway diversion: ERO Q/Rhi 1/14

Maps

- Chapman and André, *A Map of the county of Essex...1777*
Ordnance Surveyor's Drawings, 1799
Tithe map, 1848: ERO D/CT 8B)
O.S. 6" to 1 mile, 1st edition, surveyed 1877
O.S. 25" to 1 mile, 2nd edition, surveyed 1896

Images

- 1990 E.C.C. Information Resources Centre Aerofilms Grid Ref 1027

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