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Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

HAPPISBURGH MANOR

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Name:	HAPPISBURGH MANOR
County:	Norfolk
District:	North Norfolk (District Authority)
Parish:	Happisburgh
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.823972 Longitude: 1.5330638 National Grid Reference: TG 38132 31010 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001460 Date first listed: 20-Mar-2000

Details

An Arts and Crafts garden designed by Detmar Jellings Blow in 1900 to accompany his butterfly-plan house for Albermarle Cator.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

When the Tithe map was prepared for Happisburgh parish in 1841 the land where Happisburgh Manor was to be built was still farmed. During the last years of the C19, Albermarle Cator of the wealthy Norfolk land-owning family based at nearby Woodbastwick, purchased three fields at Happisburgh with the intention of building a summer holiday house, choosing the invigorating coastal site to suit his frail health. The young Arts and Crafts architect Detmar Blow (1867-1939) was commissioned in 1900 to design the house and grounds. Blow created a double butterfly-plan house, which he called Happisburgh Manor, to provide a variety of sheltered garden spaces and he gave the grounds a compartmented garden. As part of the commission Blow designed and built two other houses on the site: St John's to the south-west and St Anne's as a gatehouse at the end of the drive, its gardens inter-linked with those of the main house which the family renamed St Mary's. The main grounds were extended to the south during the 1930s but during the war the house was requisitioned by the Observer Corps. The north end of the house was destroyed by a bomb and was restored by Christobel Tabor (nee Cator) after the war. In 1960 she left the property to her nephew Peter Cator whose family lived there permanently for almost ten years. The Cators sold the site in 1969 at which time the three houses fell into separate ownership. St Mary's became a country club until 1989 when the site was purchased by Norman and Stella Ashton. The Ashtons restored the architect's chosen name of Happisburgh Manor and returned the house to a family home. The site remains (1999) in private divided ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Happisburgh Manor is situated in the parish of Happisburgh on the east Norfolk coast, almost equidistant between the seaside resorts of Cromer and Great Yarmouth. The area in which the village lies is on the edge of the North Walsham plateau, at the point where it joins the Broads area. The site covers c 1.2ha and is bounded to the east by fields leading down to the sea, to the north by a lane with village housing beyond, to the north-west by the Vicarage grounds, and to the south-west by fields attached to St John's. The southern boundary is formed by a thin

strip of woodland, beyond which lies a residential village road leading to the beach. The ground slopes from north to south and allows views from the house to the south and south-west, with a view to the east across the sea. The Manor itself sits on the raised ground and this, together with its block of mature woodland, makes it a dominant feature in the local landscape.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The house is approached from the west off the main village road, Whimpwell Street. The entrance, c 130m to the west of the house, is flanked to the south by St Anne's (listed grade II), a pebble-flint, brick and thatch two-storey gatehouse building by Detmar Blow, and to the north by a row of stable buildings (listed grade II), also brick, thatch and flint and by the same architect. St Anne's has its own garden area which runs along the edge of the village street, to the south of the property. The straight drive to the Manor is lined by an overhanging irregular holm oak avenue backed by strips of mixed woodland and arrives at the gravelled entrance courtyard on the west front through brick gate piers topped by ball finials. A second drive enters c 170m to the north-west through a wooden gate and runs south between a block of woodland and the boundary wall with the Vicarage, to join the main drive before the west front. This second drive is now (1999) a grass track.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Happisburgh Manor (listed grade II under the name of St Mary's) is a large pebble-flint house with brick and tile dressings under a thatch roof. It is a vernacular Arts and Crafts building in the domestic revival style, of two storeys constructed in a butterfly or X plan. The entrance front to the west has a single-storey gabled porch with an oak door under a lintel of Roman tiles. The flint walls are decorated with brick diaper work and the gable ends of each wing are decorated with purlin irons which make the words AVE MARIA STELLA MARIS. The north-west and north-east wings are joined by a curved single-storey service block which encloses a small open courtyard. The house was designed by Detmar Blow for the Cators, a local Roman Catholic family, in 1900 and is said to be the first fully worked example of a four-wing butterfly-plan house (Aslet 1982).

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens are divided into compartments around the house, the main original structural elements being enclosed by a low pebble-flint wall forming an oval around the house. A gate from the entrance court leads north into a narrow lawned enclosure with newly replanted borders (1990s) which curve past the entrance into the north courtyard. A second gate in the south wall of the entrance court leads to a further narrow lawned enclosure flanked by flower borders. At the axis with the south front the ground is lower than the house, allowing the creation of a small raised sun terrace level with the house, reached by a flight of brick steps. A second flight leads south to a hedged tennis lawn on a lower level outside the central oval, said to have been the best grass court in Norfolk at the beginning of the century (Cator family archive). To the east front is the largest garden compartment, laid to lawn with flower borders beside the house and defined to the east by a raised herringbone brick curved terrace with a low parapet wall giving extensive views out towards the sea. The terrace is terminated at each end by square brick summerhouses with thatched hipped roofs (listed grade II). Original plans for a formal parterre of flower borders on the east front were probably never completed although a single brick path from the raised terrace to a central sundial was constructed (base only survives, 1999).

There are further, less architectural garden areas outside the central core. To the south, below the oval retaining wall are deep mixed borders and grass banks leading to the tennis lawn. A further set of steps, axially aligned on the south front, leads through the privet hedge bounding the tennis lawn down to another area of grass partly planted as an orchard. A central path originally lined with shrub borders is still evident beneath the grass. To the south-west of the house is a formal rose garden (created late 1990s) with central wooden revolving summerhouse, beyond which lies the kitchen garden. Beyond the north garden wall c 25m to the north-west is a timber and thatch open-barn-style garage beside a newly planted woodland garden (late 1990s). An original timber and thatch storage building lies c 20m to the north-east on the east boundary. The northern woodland originally came right up to the house but part of it was cleared to form a car park in the 1980s. The new woodland garden replaces the car park and leads into the northern woodland which was planted in c 1900 to shelter the garden from the sea winds. Beyond the woodland on the north boundary is a small grass area known as The Pightle, originally used to graze the carriage horses.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden lies c 40m south-west of the house and runs east/west parallel to the main drive, enclosed by hedges. It is screened from the drive on the north side by a strip of woodland and is bounded by a hedge on the south side. The enclosed area is divided into four plots (currently, 1999, laid to grass) by a central east/west path and a tall hedge running north/south through the middle. The kitchen garden is entered from the tennis lawn and Rose Garden to the

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east and is screened from the main garden by a tall hedge. The central east/west path, lined with box, is axially aligned on the dividing path in the Rose Garden. At the western end where the property joins St Anne's, the division between the two gardens is indistinct (a reflection of the fact that originally they were intended to run together).

REFERENCES

Architectural Review 15, (1904), pp 214, 219-21 L Weaver, *Small Country Houses of Today* (1909 edn), p 22 G Jekyll and L Weaver, *Gardens for Small Country Houses* (1912), p 211 C Aslet, *The Last Country Houses* (1982), p 246 David Ottewill, *The Edwardian Garden* (1989), p 103 W Kaplan and E Cumming, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (1991), p 39

Maps Tithe map for Happisburgh parish, 1841 (Norfolk Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1885 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1905 3rd edition published 1938

Archival items Documents and photographs are held in the private collections of both the Cator and Ashton families. MoD aerial photograph, 1949 (National Monuments Record, Swindon) County flight aerial photograph, 1989 (National Monuments Record, Swindon)

Description written: November 1999 Register Inspector: EMP Edited: February 2001

Legal

This garden or other land is registered under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 within the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens by Historic England for its special historic interest.