

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

LAYER MARNEY TOWER

Auteur(s) : Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/>

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*  
*Inventory of Great Britain*  
**LAYER MARNEY TOWER**

Name:	LAYER MARNEY TOWER
County:	Essex
District:	Colchester (District Authority)
Parish:	Layer Marney
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.823178 Longitude: 0.79671540 National Grid Reference: TL 92836 17538 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000209 Date first listed: 01-Jul-1987

## Details

Early C20 gardens surrounding a gatehouse built in 1515 and set within the remains of a medieval deer park.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The building of Layer Marney Tower was started in c 1515 by Henry, first Lord Marney and continued by his son John, second Lord Marney who lived for only two years after his father's death in 1523. The Tower, consisting of the gatehouse with wings to east and west was finished, together with an isolated south range, but the remainder of the courtyard house was never completed. Little is known of the landscape that surrounded the property at this time although a deer park is recorded here in 1266. Following the death of John, second Lord Marney, the property came into the hands of Sir Brian Tuke who died in 1545, to be succeeded by his third son George, whose widow entertained Queen Elizabeth at Layer Marney in 1579. The estate was purchased in 1667 by Nicholas Corsellis in whose family it remained until it was sold in 1836, in a poor condition and reduced to the status of a farm, to Quentin Dick. The sale catalogue includes a map which shows the Tower set beside a small formal garden on the north front. When Quentin Dick died in 1858 Layer Marney was purchased by Rev Alfred Peache who, together with his son James, began to restore the structure of the buildings and to lay out a terraced garden on the south side of the Tower. They completed the north-west wing in 1900 and closed the old carriageway through the hall at the base of the Tower, effectively turning the approach from south to north, leaving space to create the new gardens. In 1904 the property was once again for sale and was bought by Walter De Zoete who carried out major restoration work on the house. He also remodelled and extended the gardens to the south where he built a Tea House in 1910 from which to view the Tower (CL 1914). When Walter De Zoete died in 1934 Layer Marney Tower was purchased by Dr and Mrs Campbell. Mrs Campbell planted shrub borders on the south side of the Gallery and ran a market garden from the property. After the Second World War she sold most of the land and following her death in 1958, the Tower and its grounds were purchased by Major and Mrs Gerald Charrington, who were succeeded at the Tower by their son Nicholas Charrington. The site remains (2000) in single private ownership.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Layer Marney Tower is located c 11km to the south-west of Colchester, on a minor country road off the B1022 Colchester to Tiptree road. The c 8ha site lies in a rural setting bounded to

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*  
*Inventory of Great Britain*  
**LAYER MARNEY TOWER**

the north-east and east by the road to Wick Farm, and to the north, west, and south by farmland. The track to Hall Farm forms part of the south-west boundary. The ground at Layer Marney is generally level with a fall to the south which levels out around the Tea House. From the Tower there are extensive views out across the countryside to the south and west.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** Layer Marney Tower is approached from the north, through wrought-iron gates hung on red-brick gate piers surmounted by ball finials, beside which stands an early C20 two-storey, red-brick lodge cottage with stepped gables. The drive runs south-east through the small park to arrive at the gravelled forecourt below the north-west front of the Tower. Until the end of the C19, the main approach had been from the south-east, up a straight drive to the Tower which had a carriage drive through its hall. The approach was turned round by Rev Alfred Peache and his son James, who closed up the carriage drive with the addition of oak doors.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Layer Marney Tower (listed grade I) is the gatehouse and remaining wings of a great early C16 house which was never completed and is a very fine example of early Renaissance work. It is built of red brick with terracotta dressings and diapering, the tower standing 25m high with a three-storey central section and flanking eight-storey octagonal turrets. Attached to the Tower is a small two-storey wing to the south-west and a late C19 wing to the north-east which forms the north side of an outer courtyard, on the south side of which stands a barn known as the Gallery, now largely rebuilt but incorporating C13 material. The Tower was started in 1515 by the first Lord Marney and his son John, second Lord Marney but was never completed after John's death only two years after that of his father. The late C19 wing was added by the Rev Alfred Peache and his son James.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The gardens lie to the west and south of the Tower. Below the west front is a balustraded gravel terrace made in 1905, at the northern end of which, on the north-west corner of the house, is a formal rose garden enclosed by yew hedges, created in the 1970s. Below the main terrace walk is a lower balustraded terrace laid to grass and flower borders with steps in the centre of the west wall and at the end of the north wall, leading down to what is now (2000) part of the park but which was a further terrace when the garden was created in the early C20. Beyond the south-west corner of the house, c 50m from the garden, stands the church of St Mary the Virgin (listed grade I), linked to the house by a walk through a tree and shrub area planted in 1982 and known as the Silver Garden.

The main terraced gardens lie to the south-east of the Tower. Immediately below the south-east front is a lawn planted with mature trees and shrubs. A central flagstone path carries the axis from the centre of the Tower right through the gardens. A flight of brick steps leads down to a broad east/west axial path flanked by borders, aligned on the church at the western end while a yew hedge terminates the eastern end. This eastern path runs below part of the south wall of the Gallery and was planted with shrubs in the 1930s by Maybud Campbell. The main axial path continues for 30m through the garden and is flanked by yew hedges planted in the 1950s to replace early C20 rose hoops. It terminates in wrought-iron gates on brick piers. To the west of the path is a grass area and to the east a lawn and a garden compartment enclosed by walls, in 1900 containing a bowling green, now (2000) a swimming pool with pool house built in the 1970s. The structure of these terraced gardens was started by Rev Alfred Peache in the late C19 but they are substantially the work of Walter De Zoete in the early C20.

The axis of the main path continues beyond the gates and across the access road to the church, through a second set of gates. Steps lead down to a path also flanked by yew hedges to a stone-flagged area with a well-head at its centre. Beyond this, further gates lead into the Tea Field, a wildflower meadow at the end of which, c 300m south-east of the Tower, stands the Tea House. This was built by Walter De Zoete in 1910 as a replica of the Feering almshouses and at that time had curving pergolas on either side of it (these no longer survive). The Tea Field is bordered by lines of trees, with a thicker boundary plantation along the south-west edge. The Tea Field was added to the gardens by Walter De Zoete and was laid out as ornamental kitchen gardens, flower gardens, and orchards. The area was given over to a market garden in the mid C20 and is in the process (2000) of being returned to a garden.

**PARK** A small area of parkland lies to the north of the Tower. Just beyond the north-east corner of the Tower lies a pond which is shown on the map which accompanies the 1836 sale catalogue and may be of much earlier origin. It has been developed in the late C20 as an ornamental water garden, one corner of which is spanned by a wooden bridge. Open and fenced areas of

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*  
*Inventory of Great Britain*  
**LAYER MARNEY TOWER**

grass occupy the remainder of the land north of the Tower, scattered with trees of mixed ages and species, including some very mature oaks. A plantation has been created since the 1980s in the north-west corner of the park.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The location of a kitchen garden prior to the end of the C19 is not recorded, but from that time onwards the land to the south of the church access road, in what is now (2000) Tea Field, was used for cultivating fruit and vegetables. A small area of orchard still exists here but the trees appear to be mid to late C20 plantings.

#### REFERENCES

G Virtue, *Picturesque Beauties of Great Britain: Essex* (1831), p 2 *Country Life*, 14 (12 September 1903), pp 368-71; 35 (21 February 1914), pp 270-8; (28 February 1914), pp 306-14 N Pevsner and E Radcliffe, *The Buildings of England: Essex* (1979), pp 261-5 *Essex Life*, (January 1980), pp 30-3 J Kenworthy-Browne et al, *Burke's and Savills Guide to Country Houses III*, (1981), p 60 *Layer Marney Tower*, guidebook, (c 1990s)

Maps Map to accompany Sale catalogue, 1836 (DHt/E32), (Essex Record Office) Tithe map for Layer Marney parish, 1840 (D/CT 215 B), (Essex Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1874 2nd edition published 1898 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1876

Description written: December 2000 Register Inspector: EMP Edited: September 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.