

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

WEALD PARK

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Name: WEALD PARK

County: Essex

District: Brentwood (District Authority)

Parish: Non Civil Parish

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.629014
Longitude: 0.26182808
National Grid Reference: TQ5664894667
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1000747
Date first listed: 01-Jul-1987

Details

A late C17 and early C18 park and woodland, developed in the mid C20 as a country park.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

From 1062 until the Dissolution, the manor of South Weald belonged to Waltham Abbey and during the C12 a deer park was formed. Henry VIII sold the manor to Sir Brian Tuke who built an H-plan hall just to the north-west of the church. Sir Brian died in 1545 and the estate passed into the ownership of Lord Rich who sold it in 1548 to Sir Anthony Browne, during whose ownership a north-west wing was added. The South Weald estate remained in the Browne family until 1688 when another Sir Anthony sold it to Sir William Scroggs, Lord Chief Justice. A painting from the late C17 or early C18 (Harris 1979) records the hall surrounded by a series of walled courtyards. Sir William was succeeded in 1683 by his son, also William, who sold the estate to Erasmus Smith. It passed in succession to his sons Erasmus (d 1707), Samuel (d 1732), and Hugh (d 1745) but during their collected period of ownership the Smith family made many improvements to the hall and the grounds. A map, commissioned by Samuel Smith in 1738 and attributed to Monsieur Bouginion, records a series of formal walled gardens around the hall, a Belvedere tower on a mount surrounded by a wilderness, and an extensive formal park landscape. Hugh Smith's daughters sold the estate in 1752 to Thomas Tower of Iver in Buckinghamshire, whose son Christopher extended the park to the north, deformed the water, and in 1778 commissioned Robert Adam (1728-92) to make further changes to the hall. These changes are recorded on a survey of 1788 which shows the enclosures around the house had been removed but the Belvedere Mount retained. Christopher Tower died in 1810 and was succeeded by his eldest son Christopher Thomas, who died in 1867 at the age of ninety-two. Weald was inherited by his grandson Christopher John Hume, who extended the park south of the road into an area known as the Front Park. The estate remained in the Tower family until 1946 when it was sold by Captain Christopher Tower and broken up. Weald Hall and the park was purchased by the Metropolitan Railway Country Estate company. The hall was demolished in 1951, leaving only a C19 granary and the C16 Queen Mary Chapel. Two years later the park, excluding the C19 addition to the south, was bought by Essex County Council who turned it into a country park. The site remains (2000) in divided ownership.

DESCRIPTION

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LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Weald Park is located on the north side of the A12, just to the east of junction 28 of the M25, on the south-west edge of Brentwood. The c 212ha site is bounded to the north by farmland, to the east by Sandpit Lane, to the south-east by Wiggly Bush Lane in South Weald village, and to the west by Lincoln's Lane and farmland. The gently rolling land falls to a shallow valley across the centre of the park where a string of lakes were formed in the C18 from a stream running from north-east to south-west. The park enjoys a rural setting despite its close proximity to Brentwood.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES There are three late C20 entrances to Weald Park off Lincoln's Lane: one at the southern end close to South Weald village which follows the line of the late C18 drive and leads to a car park on the site of the hall; the second c 100m to the north leading to a car park beside the visitors' centre; and the third into a further car park just to the south of the C19 West Lodge. None of the C19 maps show a drive connected to West Lodge, suggesting that it was either abandoned very quickly or that West Lodge marked the northern perimeter of the park rather than an entrance drive. A fourth, late C20 drive enters Weald Park off the southern boundary, past the cricket field in South Weald village.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Weald Hall was started in the mid C16 by Sir Brian Tuke and added to by Sir Anthony Browne in the C17 before being extensively reworked in the early C18 by Samuel Smith, and again in 1778 by Robert Adam for Christopher Tower. It stood in the south-west corner of the present park but was demolished in 1951 leaving, c 150m north-west of the site, a red-brick and peg-tile C16 building known as Queen Mary Chapel (listed grade II). Also surviving beside the site of the hall is a red-brick and peg-tile granary (listed grade II) erected in c 1800. There are several other buildings in the Chapel complex, including a C19 barn (listed grade II) now used as a visitors' centre and three late C20 buildings.

On the west side of Lincoln's Lane, c 400m north-west of the site of Weald Hall, stands Rochetts (listed grade II), a timber-framed brick and peg-tiled C16 farmhouse associated with the hall. The farm building was altered in the C17, C18, and C20 and has a C16/C17 timber-framed barn on its west side. Rochetts is approached from a drive off Lincoln's Lane, marked by an early C19 circular thatched lodge cottage (listed grade II) set beside curved red-brick and decorative iron screen walls.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The garden and pleasure grounds lay to the east of the site of the hall and survive today (2000) as earthworks and one set of brick steps, representing the C19 terraced formal garden located between the hall and the Belvedere Mount which lies c 100m to the east, edged by a ha-ha wall on its eastern boundary. The C19 formal gardens used the walled enclosures from the C16 and C17 garden as their basis (CL 1897). The raised mount was created in the early C18 by Samuel Smith at which time it was surmounted by a Belvedere tower. The mount at that time was laid out in a complex series of paths and planting; this was softened into a wilderness during the C19. Some of the planting from the late C19 survives although only the base of the tower remains.

PARK Weald Park lies mainly to the north of the site of the hall, with a lesser area of open park located to the west and south-west around Rochetts farmhouse. The south-west tip was added to the main body of the park during the C19 at which time it was known as Front Park.

The area immediately to the north-east of the hall site is known as the Deer Park and represents the area where the C12 deer park was located. It remains under grass and is well scattered with trees, retaining the character of an ancient deer park. The area to the north of the hall site, covering the western half of the park, has a more open character and is retained under grass planted with fewer trees of mainly C19 origin. Views from the Belvedere Mount look north over the Belvedere Field towards a 900m long chain of informal lakes c 450m to the north, the westernmost lake being located on the west side of Lincoln's Lane in the land surrounding Rochetts farmhouse. In the early C18 Samuel Smith laid out a large rectangular formal body of water in the park (estate map, 1738) which was deformed in the late C18 by Christopher Tower (estate map, 1788) to create the lakes which survive today (2000). In addition to the lakes there are several small ponds located throughout the park.

The north-east quarter of the park is heavily wooded and known partly as The Forest. This is cut through with rides and paths, one of which, the Chestnut Avenue, survives from the early C18.

KITCHEN GARDEN The walled kitchen garden lies on the north-west side of the site of the hall, to the south-south-east of the Chapel. The area is no longer used for cultivating vegetables and is partly given over to a service yard for the country park.

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WEALD PARK

A range of C19 glasshouses survives on the inside north wall. Part of this enclosure at least seems to be a survivor from the C17 formal layout, the walls dating from the C17, C18, and C19.

REFERENCES

T Wright, *History and Antiquities of Essex* (1836), p 534 *Country Life*, 2 (20 November 1897), pp 560-2; 18 (14 October 1905), pp 5220-7; 36 (3 October 1914), pp 454-61; 102 (15 August 1947), p 326 F G Emmison, *Catalogue of maps in Essex Record Office* (1947), pls 15, 16 *Victoria History of the County of Essex IV*, (1956), pp 80-1 J Harris, *The Artist and the Country House* (1979), p 150 J Kenworthy-Browne et al, *Burke's and Savills Guide to Country Houses III*, (1981), p 79

Maps Bouginon (attrib), *A plan of Weald Hall in Essex, seat of Samuel Smith, 1738* (D/DTW P1), (Essex Record Office) J Chapman and P Andre, *A map of the county of Essex from an actual survey ..., 1777* (Essex Record Office) *A survey of Weald Hall, the estate of Christopher Tower, 1788(9)* (D/DTW P3), (Essex Record Office) *Tithe map for South Weald parish, 1838* (D/CT 388/2B), (Essex Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1881 2nd edition published 1898 3rd edition published 1915 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1872

Description written: January 2001 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.