

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

PICKENHAM HALL

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Name:	PICKENHAM HALL
County:	Norfolk
District:	Breckland (District Authority)
Parish:	South Pickenham
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.603665 Longitude: 0.73594013 National Grid Reference: TF 85371 04168, TF 85758 03874 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001011 Date first listed: 18-Sep-1987

Details

Arts and Crafts gardens designed by Robert Weir Schultz between 1902 and 1905, set in a small ornamental early C19 park.
HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

A house was built on this site in the late C16 by Aubrey Fisher, which his son occupied between 1660 and 1698, after which it was sold. It subsequently passed into the hands of the Chute family sometime in the mid C18 who rebuilt the hall in the Palladian style. Faden's county map records that by 1797 the park extended to c 38ha, south and east from the hall, but no earlier evidence exists for its origins. The hall was remodelled again in 1829 in Neoclassical style by the architect William Donthorn for William Wiggett Chute and in subsequent years Chute extended the park and widened the river to form a narrow lake. In 1842 the estate was sold to the Applewhaite family. When Edward Archer Applewhaite died in 1889, Charles Applewhaite and Henry Blake were appointed trustees and in 1898 the property was conveyed to Mary Blake who sold it in a semi-derelict state to G W Taylor in 1902. Taylor immediately commissioned the prominent Arts and Crafts architect Robert Weir Schultz to rebuild the house and to lay out new gardens. Taylor sold the estate to speculators in 1918 from whom the Moreton family purchased it in 1925, to develop as a shooting estate. During the Second World War the house was occupied by the Red Cross and the gardens were neglected. Mrs G Moreton instigated a restoration programme before selling the property in the late 1980s to a Mr Daniels. It then passed briefly into corporate ownership before returning to private hands, in which it remains (1999).

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Pickenham Hall is located in rural Norfolk, c 5km south of the market town of Swaffham. It lies in an area of farmland composed of small hedged fields and woodland blocks punctuated by individual farmsteads or small villages. It sits in the picturesque River Wissey valley, beside the village church. The boundaries of the park are enclosed on all sides by perimeter woodland belts, apart from small open sections in the centre of the east and west boundaries. Beyond the boundary belts lies farmland to the south, the village of South Pickenham to the north, and country roads to east and west. The ground slopes gently from west to east, towards the River Wissey which flows from north to south c 100m east of the Hall. Beyond the river the land rises again gently to the east boundary. Views from the Hall are focused on the park to west, south, and east, extending out of the boundary to the west but being foreshortened to the east by the rising ground.

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ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Pickenham Hall has two approach drives, both with lodges and wrought-iron gates. From the north-west corner the drive passes an early C20 single-storey, butterfly-plan cream rendered lodge with tile roof and porticoed entrance on the west facade. The drive runs east to the Hall and is lined with grass and a mix of ornamental shrubs and trees to the north which give glimpses of the village church beyond. To the south a low fence and recently planted hedge (1990s) divide the drive from the park. At its eastern end the drive turns south through a second set of wrought-iron gates to arrive at the gravelled forecourt on the west front. The second drive enters from the north, beside the church and the mid C19 North (or Back) Lodge (listed grade II) 200m north-north-west of the Hall. This two-storey building is constructed of flint with brick dressings under a tile roof. The drive runs south past the stables and garages to join the west drive c 80m north-west of the Hall.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Pickenham Hall (listed grade II) sits close to the northern boundary of the park. It is a two-storey, red-brick building with plain-tiled roof constructed in the Neo-Georgian style. The main entrance facade is of five bays with a central recessed doorway, facing west over the open park. The south front has a central loggia with two semicircular arches and a balcony above, looking over lawns to the park beyond. The garden front faces east and is composed of five bays with central arched doorway onto the garden terrace. To the north lies an extensive range of service quarters. The Hall was built between 1902 and 1905 by Robert Weir Schultz for G W Taylor. Little of the earlier house survived the rebuilding apart from two panels from the Parthenon frieze which were incorporated into the garden architecture. The earliest house on the site, of which nothing is known, was transformed in c 1830 by William Donthorn into a porticoed Palladian mansion for the Chute family. Its structure however was found to be unstable during the 1902 Weir Schultz rebuild and thus could not be rescued.

Beyond the service range immediately to the north-north-west lies the brick and tile stable courtyard, also by Robert Weir Schultz. It is enclosed on three sides and open to the south. In the centre of the north range is a leaded clock tower with fine Arts and Crafts numbering to the face, topped by a bell tower and weathervane. Immediately to the east of the stable block stands the early C20 red-brick and tile Laundry Cottage, whilst on the north side of the stables is a range of kennels, garaging, and game larders, of early C20 origin with later additions.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens at Pickenham cover c 4.5ha. On the west the gravelled forecourt is flanked by yew topiary to the north and south, with a brick ha-ha to the west giving open views over the west park. The south front loggia leads onto a wide gravel terrace with retaining wall and herbaceous border below (new planting 1990s), running onto a lawn planted with trees and shrubs and divided from the park by a low iron fence. The east front leads to an upper gravelled terrace terminated to the north by a brick loggia with circular viewing windows. Centrally placed below the terrace is a semicircular rustic fountain and pool beside a wide gravel walk running the length of the east facade and flanked by wide herbaceous borders (new planting 1990s). The walk is terminated at the north end by a high brick wall decorated with the Parthenon friezes beside the brick base of a C19 conservatory. Beyond the terraces the east lawn runs down to the widened River Wissey, spanned by a rustic early C20 oak bridge into the park beyond. On the north edge of the east lawn is a circular sunken garden surrounded by yew hedges which enclose crazy-paved paths, beds, and a central well with fountain. This feature is of early C20 origin but has been substantially remodelled in the late C20. North of the Hall, Laundry Cottage has its own small enclosed garden, east and north of which is a new orchard (1990s) beside woodland walks which lead to the walled kitchen garden.

PARK The park covers c 56ha to the east, west, and south of the Hall. It remains under grass and is dominated by oaks, 100-250 years old, together with a scatter of beech trees of mainly mid C19 date. There is also much later planting. A small pond lies in the north-west corner. Back Park, to the east of the River Wissey, is more undulating than the land to the west and has more alder, willow, and hawthorn. The park at Pickenham existed in 1797 when Faden's county map was published and was extended in the mid C19. For a time it extended beyond the Hilborough road to the west but this area had lost some of its trees by 1887 (OS) and was subsequently returned to arable. The Back, or East Park was added in the mid C19 and the perimeter belts planted. In the woods beyond the boundary of the north-west corner of the park lies an early C19 icehouse (listed grade II).

KITCHEN GARDEN The walled kitchen garden lies c 200m north of the Hall. It is built of red brick and comprises two compartments, with a range of stores and glasshouses on the outer south wall. Inside, the southern compartment continues to provide fruit and vegetables whilst the northern compartment is currently (1999) being developed with tennis court, croquet

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lawn, and rose arches. A new tennis pavilion has recently been constructed (late 1990s). The walled garden pre-dates the present house and was constructed for the Chute family in 1812.

REFERENCES

Architectural Review 21, (1907), pp 101/8 N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: North-west and South Norfolk* (1962), p 323
Architectural History 22, (1979), pp 88-115 J Kenworthy-Browne et al, *Burke's and Savills Guide to Country Houses III*, (1981), p 167
T Williamson, *The archaeology of the landscape park*, BAR Brit Ser 268 (1998), p 267

Maps W Faden, *A new topographical map of the county of Norfolk, 1797* (Norfolk Record Office) A Bryant, *Map of the county of Norfolk, 1826* (Norfolk Record Office) Tithe map for Pickenham parish, 1843 (Norfolk Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1887 2nd edition published 1904 3rd edition published 1926 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1905

Archival items Sale catalogue, 1843 (MC30 MS 18622/170 477x1), (Norfolk Record Office) Conveyance of property, 1898 (DN EST 56/3/9), (Norfolk Record Office)

Description written: July 1999 Register Inspector: EMP Edited: March 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.