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Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

BOREHAM HOUSE

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BOREHAM HOUSE

Name: BOREHAM HOUSE

County: Essex

District: Chelmsford (District Authority)

Parish: Boreham

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.753388
Longitude: 0.52811158
National Grid Reference: TL 74597 09101
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1000354
Date first listed: 01-Jul-1987

Details

Formal canal and gardens laid out in the 1720s, with pleasure grounds designed by Richard Woods in the 1770s.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

At the beginning of the C18 the site of Boreham House formed part of the neighbouring New Hall estate (qv), which in 1713 was sold by the widow of the second and last Duke of Albermarle to Benjamin Hoare, son of the rich Fleet Street banker. Possession of the New Hall mansion however was only to take place after her death and Hoare, rather than wait for her to die, chose to build himself a new house nearby. Boreham House was completed in 1728 to designs by Henry Flitcroft and was approached by twin drives flanking a long canal. Benjamin died in 1750 and was succeeded by his elder brother Richard who, in the early 1770s commissioned the landscaper Richard Woods to lay out pleasure grounds and create a lake on the south side of the house. The formal canal and approach, shown in an engraving by Muilman in 1771, remained unaltered. Richard Hoare was succeeded by his son Henry Benjamin, who died in 1779 leaving two daughters, but Boreham House seems to have been inherited by a second cousin, another Richard. Richard was created a baronet in 1786, after which time he did not live at Boreham House but rented it to Sir Elijah Impey. In 1789 Richard Hoare sold the property to William Walford who resided at the House until 1797 when it was bought by Sir John Tyrell, whose descendants, eventually through the female line, remained at Boreham House until 1930. In 1812 Sir John commissioned the architect Thomas Hopper to add carriage arches to the wings of the House. During the early years of the C19 Sir John and his son, also John, laid the surrounding farmland to pasture and ornamented it with tree planting, while at the beginning of the C20 Mrs Tufnell-Tyrell made a rock walk and wild garden in the pleasure grounds and widened Richard Woods' lake. In 1930 the 3000 acre (1250ha) estate was purchased by Henry Ford who established Fordson Estates Limited. Boreham House and 32 acres (c 13ha) of surrounding land was used to establish the Henry Ford Institute of Agricultural Engineering. In 1952 it was transferred to the Ford Motor Company and thereafter became a training centre for Ford Tractor Operations. During the 1970s Ford began selling much of the surrounding land and in 1995 the House and pleasure grounds were sold to Mr V Adams. The site remains (2000) in single private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

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LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Boreham House is situated on the north-east edge of the town of Chelmsford, between the villages of Chelmer to the south-west and Boreham to the north-east, and is set in a highly populated part of the county. The House and grounds cover c 13ha and lie just to the south-east of the A12, their north-west boundary formed by the B1137 which runs parallel to the A12. The remaining boundaries are all formed by farmland and are partly ditched or hedged. The ground at Boreham House is generally level, with a slight fall to the south-east towards the River Chelmer valley which lies c 700m beyond the boundary of the site here registered.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The approach to Boreham House is from the B1137, through gates which lead to twin parallel drives flanking a long formal canal. The drives lead directly to the entrance forecourt below the north-west front of the House.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Boreham House (listed grade I) is a small mansion built of dark-brown brick with stucco dressings. The entrance front faces north-west and is of seven bays with a projecting central Tuscan portico over the front door which is reached by a small flight of steps. The main facade comprises a central block of two storeys with flanking single-storey wings and triumphal carriage arch entrances at the north-east and south-west ends. The gardens on the south-east front are reached by a flight of balustrated steps from a central pedimented doorway. Boreham House was designed by James Gibbs and executed by Edward Shepherd for Benjamin Hoare between 1727 and 1728. In the early C19 Thomas Hopper added the grand carriage arches for Sir John Tyrell.

Through the arches on either side of the House are service and carriage courts, and stables.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens lie to the north-west and south-east of the House, separated by the House itself and by garden walls which extend beyond each of the wings to the north-east and south-west boundaries of the gardens where they terminate in symmetrical square garden buildings, perhaps banqueting houses. Between the carriage drives on the north-west front is a c 250m long formal canal, laid out when the House was first built in the early C18. At this time each of the drives were lined with elm trees, creating a four row avenue, considered by County Life in 1914 to be 'probably one of the best elm avenues in the country'. During the 1960s all the avenue trees were lost to Dutch elm disease and have since been replaced by a collection of flowering cherry trees, mixed shrub beds, roses, and bedding set in grass on the canal sides.

From the south-east front steps lead onto a gravel terrace which looks over a sloping lawn scattered with a variety of trees and shrubs. The central lawn is free of trees, giving a view down to the small informal lake created by Richard Woods in the 1770s, which runs along the south-east boundary of the gardens. The lake was widened to its present size by Mrs Tufnell-Tyrell at the beginning of the C20. The gently undulating lawn was contoured by Woods to open up the view of the lake and the landscape beyond it, a view which is now (2000) obscured by trees around the water. Woods also formed small hillocks in the grass on which trees were planted, the hillocks but few of the trees surviving. Along the south-west side of the lawn is a larger concentration of trees, many of them later C20 additions to the area where Woods planted a pleasure-ground shrubbery. During the 1930s the south lawn was used for tennis courts and a small formal rose garden laid out to the west of them. Neither the lawns nor the rose garden survive (2000).

A small bridge (unsafe, 2000) leads over the south-west end of the lake to a small area of dense woodland, the probable site of Mrs Tufnell-Tyrell's rock and wild garden, while at the north-east end of the lake a mid C20 plantation of conifers has been added. The boundary planting along the north-east side of the gardens is of mid to late C20 character and at the north-east end, near the House, it screens a depot and storage area used for tractor storage during Ford's occupancy of the House.

PARK The former parkland lies outside the area here registered. During the first half of the C19 Sir John Tyrell laid some of the surrounding farmland to pasture and embellished it with clumps of trees, adding an icehouse to the field south-west of the canal. Two contemporary writers, in discussing Boreham record that the landscape was 'not very extensive but laid out with great taste' (Virtue 1831; Wright 1836) and both describe only the Woods' pleasure grounds and lake. The icehouse survived only until the end of the C19 and the fields were returned to agricultural use when Henry Ford set up the Institute of Agricultural Engineering in 1930.

KITCHEN GARDEN The walled kitchen garden lies on the south-west side of the House and is joined to it by the stable courtyard wall. Gateways in the north-west and south-east walls provide links into the rest of the grounds. The land is presently

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(2000) uncultivated and used for storing farm machinery. At the south-west end of the north-west wall is a square brick garden building, identical to the one which terminates the wall on the north-east side of Boreham House. The walled gardens are of C18 origin, probably built by Benjamin Hoare to accompany his new house in 1728, but certainly in existence by 1777 when Chapman and Andre's county map was published.

REFERENCES

P Muilman, *A New and Complete History of Essex I*, (1771), p 133 G Virtue, *Picturesque Beauties of Great Britain: Essex* (1831), p 28 T Wright, *History of Essex* (1836), p 108 *Country Life*, 36 (11 July 1914), pp 54-60 N Pevsner and E Radcliffe, *The Buildings of England: Essex* (1979), p 95 *Garden History XV*, no 1 (1987), pp 34-6 Boreham House, Essex Landscape Restoration Plan 1, (Chris Blandford Associates 1993) E Burgess (ed), *More about Boreham* (1996)

Maps J Chapman and P Andre, *A map of the county of Essex from an actual survey ...*, 1777 (Essex Record Office) Tithe map for Boreham parish, 1838 (D/CT 40), (Essex Record Office) Survey of Boreham House, 1852 (D/DGe/P35), (Essex Record Office) OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1887 2nd edition published 1897 3rd edition published 1922 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1887 2nd edition published 1897

Illustrations Two paintings by Wootton (1740) in Hoares Bank.

Archival items Original documents relating to Boreham House are held in the Hoares Bank Museum; some are available on microfilm at Essex Record Office (D/DU 649).

Description written: September 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.