

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

UPMINSTER COURT

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

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Name:	UPMINSTER COURT
County:	Greater London Authority
District:	Havering (London Borough)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.568852 Longitude: 0.25475650 National Grid Reference: TQ 56365 87962 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001586 Date first listed: 28-Jan-2002

Details

Gardens laid out at the beginning of the C20, to accompany a country house built 1905-6 to designs by Sir Charles Reilly.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Up until the end of the C19 the site on which Upminster Court was to be built belonged to the Branfill family of the Upminster Hall Estate. The Tithe map of 1841 shows the land divided into two agricultural fields with two small woodland belts on the boundaries and a pair of small cottages alongside the Harold Wood road. Chancellor and Sons, architects and surveyors to the trustees of the Upminster Hall Estate, drew up a survey plan in 1904 which was copied to Sir Charles Reilly, chosen architect of Arthur E Williams, son of Samuel Williams a local shipping and coal merchant, to whom the land was to be let or leased. Sir Charles, himself a resident in the same parish, designed a new house for the Williams family. Building commenced in 1905 and was completed in 1906, and gardens were laid out. By the end of the 1920s the family had ceased to live in the house which was used as offices after 1929 (L Amos pers comm, 2001). Around the same period (1927-9), Arthur Williams sold 22 acres (c 9ha) of land leading down to the Ingrebourne valley to Upminster Golf Club. During the Second World War a refugee centre was set up at Upminster Court; in 1946 Essex County Council purchased the site for use as an education centre. In 1965, when the county boundaries were reorganised, Upminster Court moved into the ownership of the London Borough of Havering who, in 1972, opened a short-stay respite centre and set up the Borough nursery in the gardens. The care centre closed in 1991 and since 1993 the house has been used as a training centre for council staff. The site remains (2001) in single public ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Upminster Court is situated on the western edge of Cranham, c 4km west of the M25 between junctions 28 and 29. The c 3ha site, which has a gentle fall from east to west, is bounded to the east by Hall Lane, to the north and south by private housing, and to the west by a golf course occupying open land in the Ingrebourne River valley. The Court occupies a semi-urban setting but enjoys good views west over the river valley.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The house is approached from Hall Lane, through gates hung on a pair of red-brick gate piers surmounted by ball finials (listed grade II) situated in the centre of the eastern boundary. These lead onto a straight drive which runs for c 600m between lawns edged with pollarded limes, to a gravel forecourt with central grass turning circle. When

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the house was built in 1906 the centre of the circle was marked with a stone font which has since gone (2001). At the house the drive divides, turning north to the stable block, and south to the southern boundary where it turns east to leave the site in the south-east corner. A second, service drive enters the site c 100m further north off Hall Lane and runs along the northern boundary directly to the stable block. This drive passes beside a small lodge cottage (outside the area here registered) which predates the building of Upminster Court.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Upminster Court (listed grade II) is a country house built of red brick and stone in the Wren Revival style. It is constructed in two storeys, with attics under a slate roof. The east, entrance front has six bays with a single-storey colonnade between projecting wings, while the garden front to the west has four-three-four bays with giant Ionic pilasters. Beyond the north wing is a kitchen court, enclosed by boot and knife rooms. The house was built by Sir Charles Reilly, an architect of the Liverpool School, between 1904 and 1906, for Arthur Williams.

The stable court (listed grade II) lies c 40m to the north-east of the house and has a three-bay front facing south with a carriage entrance topped by a clock tower. It was also erected by Charles Reilly.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens, which were laid out to accompany Charles Reilly's house, surround the house on all sides. To the east the area between the house and the eastern boundary wall is laid out to two lawns, edged by pollarded limes along the drives and scattered with occasional mature specimens. In the southern lawn, beside the eastern boundary, is a rock and water garden laid out after 1945 in a crater created by a wartime bomb and known as the Crater Beds. To the south, the house leads onto a small garden enclosed by high red-brick walls surmounted by pineapple finials. The garden is entered from the east front forecourt via an elaborate, wrought-iron Apprentice's Gate. The area is currently (2001) laid to lawn with a central lily pond of late C20 construction. Early C20 OS maps show that this compartment originally had a path leading from the house to the southern boundary wall and was laid out as an Italianate parterre.

The west facade gives onto a paved terrace, bounded to the west by a low balustrade on top of a retaining wall and to the north and south by high, curved red-brick walls. Steps at either end of the terrace lead down onto the main north/south gravel terrace walk which runs alongside herbaceous borders and clipped yews planted at the base of the walls. From the terrace walk, steps aligned on the centre of the house lead down to a path dividing two croquet lawns which are edged with dense shrubberies carrying east/west cross walks. These shrubbery walks act as divisions between the central flower gardens and a series of terraced lawns to the north and the vegetable gardens to the south. Beyond the croquet lawns, the path continues west down a further flight of steps to a second north/south cross walk enclosed by shrubs and bamboos. Beyond this lie two smaller garden compartments, that to the north of the main axis laid out as a flower parterre (overgrown, but with the layout shown on the 1920s OS still evident) and that to the south, enclosed by clipped yew hedges, laid out as a simple quartered lawn around a central mature specimen tree.

To the north-west of the house, the garden boundary is defined by a mixed woodland spinney, shown to be extant on the 1841 Tithe map. This looks onto three lawns, terraced to take account of the slope to the west. The top lawn, originally the bowling green, is currently used as a horticultural training area. The middle terrace was a grass tennis lawn, divided from the bowling green by a brick retaining wall which is now (2001) overgrown. Below the tennis lawn, the third lawn was planted as a vineyard in the 1970s; this survived until the 1990s. It is now laid to grass, the western boundary of the garden being defined by a hedge.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden area lies to the south of the flower gardens. On the south side of the wall enclosing the south garden is a range of Edwardian glasshouses which now (2001) look onto a car park enclosed by hedges, but originally stood within a walled garden. To the west of this the land was used for vegetable growing but is now overgrown. Early C20 maps suggest that the northern boundary of the vegetable garden was marked by a crinkle-crinkle wall but there are no visible remains of this feature. The south-west corner of the gardens was, like the north-west corner, planted as a vineyard in the 1970s which again survived until the 1990s before being removed. The area is currently not in use.

REFERENCES

N Pevsner and E Radcliffe, *The Buildings of England: Essex* (1979), pp 397-9 Victoria History of the County of Essex VII, (1983), p 147 Macmillan Encyclopaedia of Architects III, (1973), p 538 Upminster Court: a brief history, guide leaflet, (Havering BC, nd)

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Maps Tithe map for Upminster parish, 1841 (D/CT 373 (5)), (Essex Record Office) Chancellor and Sons, architects, Plan of land proposed to be let to Mr Williams - copy sent to Mr Reilly 8 November 1904 (D/F 8/454), (Essex Record Office)
OS 6" to 1 mile: 1921 edition OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1896 1920 edition 1939 edition
Description written: December 2001 Amended: February 2002 Register Inspector: EMP Edited: March 2002

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.