

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

KENTWELL HALL

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Name:	KENTWELL HALL
County:	Suffolk
District:	Babergh (District Authority)
Parish:	Long Melford
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.096331 Longitude: 0.71994665 National Grid Reference: TL 86410 47711 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1001169 Date first listed: 01-Jun-1984

Details

A C16 moated manor house with surrounding gardens dating from the mid C16 onwards, sitting in a park of C17 origin, developed in the late C18 possibly under the direction of Humphry Repton.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Kentwell manor belonged to the de Valance family in the C13 century when it was imparked and a mansion house certainly existed at Kentwell prior to the erection of the present Hall. A building which survives to the west of the present Hall dates from c 1500 and is thought to have been a service building related to the earlier house (Suffolk SMR). Kentwell Hall was built by the Clopton family and is first mentioned in the 1563/4 will of William Clopton's mother who mentions 'my new mansion house of Kentwell Hall'. The estate passed through the female line of the family to William's granddaughter Sissilia and her husband Sir Thomas D'Arcy. Up until this time most of the land surrounding the Hall was divided into small arable or pasture fields punctuated by woods. By 1676 however when D'Arcy sold the estate to Thomas Robinson, the sale particulars record '150 acres of park, orchards, gardens and yards' (CL 1902). Robinson made considerable alterations to the house but after the estate passed to his grandson, Sir Thomas II, Kentwell was sold in 1706 to John Moore, a cloth worker from London. Moore was succeeded by his nephew in 1713 and the estate remained in the Moore family until 1823.

The landscape is mentioned again in 1773, when it is described in Henry Moore's will as consisting of 'park inclosed, dovehouse, gardens and fishponds' (Williamson 1994). Richard Moore was the last member of the family to own Kentwell and he made such major changes to both house and estate that they put him into considerable debt. Between the years 1787 and 1805 the landscape park was developed and in 1797 a drawing of Kentwell by Humphry Repton (1752-1818) appeared in Peacock's *Polite Repository* which suggests that the developments made at this time were carried out under Repton's direction (Carter et al 1983). In 1823 Richard and his son sold Kentwell. The estate was bought by Hart Logan who continued to make improvements but after his death in 1839, it was sold once more. The sale particulars record a beautifully timbered park of just over 300 acres (c 125ha) and the estate was purchased by Henry Bence Bence for his son E R Starkie Bence. It remained in that family's ownership until 1969, the following year being divided into lots and sold. The Hall and immediate grounds were purchased by

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Patrick Phillips who subsequently acquired additional land around the house such that the majority of land within the registered boundary returned to single ownership. The estate remains (1998) in private hands.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Kentwell Hall lies at the north end of the village of Long Melford. The park is generally triangular in shape, tapering to a point at the south end where it bounds onto the village churchyard and north end of the village green. The church is a substantial and elegant building, erected by John Clopton in the C15 (Williamson 1994). To the east the boundary is formed by the High Street which is lined with village houses of various ages and links Long Melford to the main A134 Bury St Edmunds to Colchester road which skirts the eastern side of the village. The west boundary is made up of farmland, with some village housing at the south-west end. To the north, the extent of the park is marked by a wide track, which is a public right of way, and beyond this lies farmland and woodland. The site covers c 52ha of which 6.5ha are gardens. From the site of the Hall the land is level to the east and the north and falls gently to south and west. This gives views from the garden gates south-west across farmland. There are also important filtered views of the church from various points along the main approach avenue.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Kentwell Hall has one main approach drive which runs from the southern tip of the park for c 1km in a straight line to the entrance court. This drive is marked at the road by a small rustic lodge of C15 origin, the core of which remains within an early C19 Gothic Revival-style building (listed grade II). The present gates are modern (late C20), attached to low flint walls of early C18 origin. The drive itself is lined by an avenue of lime trees of varying ages, the original feature said to have been planted by Thomas Robinson in 1678 and shown on a sketch made in the same year by Dr Bisbie (present owner, pers comm). The first maps to depict the avenue date from the mid to late C18. The avenue terminates c 100m south of the Hall where two octagonal lodge buildings linked by black wrought-iron fencing and elaborately decorated gates mark the end of the park and the beginning of the pleasure grounds. This entrance to the pleasure grounds has been created in the late C20, the octagonal lodges being constructed of brick with lead roof to mirror the style of the turrets on the main house. The late C18 gates were purchased from Earham Hall in Norfolk in 1913 for the road end of the drive but have now been moved to this location and a new set of gates hung at the south end of the avenue (Williamson 1994). The drive continues into the pleasure grounds and crosses the south side of the moat to enter the main courtyard of the Hall. A secondary, service drive in the form of a wide farm track enters the park along its northern boundary and skirts the west side of the Hall before turning east to link up with the main drive in front of the moat. Up until the end of the C18 a public road ran east/west across the park, just outside the wall of the original service court of the Hall. This was removed in 1783 to make way for the development of the landscape park (ibid).

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Kentwell Hall (listed grade I) is a fine C16, red-brick and tile, moated mansion, which had been erected by the year 1563 and is still used as a private family residence. It was built in four or five stages to its present E-shaped plan, the main south front being of three storeys with three-storey gabled bays and a central porch. The wings project south and are also of three storeys with square bays at each end. They have octagonal turrets, topped with weathervanes at each end facing the open court. All the windows are mullioned and the chimney stacks have blank arcading on the sides. A detached range of two-storey buildings to the west are built of the same materials with part having a jettied upper storey with exposed timber framing. These buildings project over the moat, with cruciform arrow loops, and are thought to be part of the service buildings to the original house, retained as an outbuilding when the new Hall was built. The whole is surrounded by a complete moat with brick revetments and is approached by brick-arched bridges on the south and west sides.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The origins of the garden areas are difficult to define since early cartographic evidence for Kentwell offers no detail of these. Within the moat, on the east front of the Hall, lies a small yew-hedged garden enclosure, laid to lawn cut with beds filled with a late C20 planting scheme and edged with mature cedars planted c 1800. An 1842 map of the gardens gives details of this area, showing a series of geometric flower beds set in grass. Beyond the moat to the east and north-east lies grass with a late C20 row of lime trees and a yew 'castle'. Late C19 OS maps of this area show it to have been densely planted with shrubberies at that time. Outside the open entrance court on the south front, the main drive is bordered by grass plats. The western plat is divided from the park by a newly constructed brick ha-ha (1998) whilst the eastern

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plat is bordered by woodland. Excavation of a late C20 wildlife pond on the eastern plat uncovered remains of the main road which originally ran east/west past the front of the Hall (diverted at the end of the C18). Approximately 2m off the south-west corner of the moat lies the C17 dovecote (listed grade II*). North of the dovecote is a yew walk of very mature trees (C17 or earlier), bordered by shrubberies and a small woodland.

Beyond the moat to the north lies a walled kitchen garden derived from a C16 enclosure, partly surrounded outside the walls by a second moat. This is made up of the long Fish Pond which lies outside the kitchen garden's west boundary and the Back Moat along the north. The eastern moat is now dry (1998) and has been laid out as a sunken garden with grass and long herbaceous borders running along the length of the kitchen garden wall. An undated (but probably late C18) map of Kentwell offers the first cartographic evidence for these gardens which shows the moated enclosure to the north. The 1838 Tithe map however lacks the eastern arms of both the northern moat and the Hall moat. The division between garden and park along the north boundary is marked by a narrow deciduous woodland strip.

PARK Kentwell Hall lies at the centre of the registered site, surrounded by a park which has lost much of its character during the mid C20 as trees have been removed and grass has been lost to arable production. The park can be divided in two distinct areas: that which lies north, east and west of the Hall, and that which lies to the south. To the south of the Hall much of the arable land has recently (late C20) been returned to pasture, although nothing remains of any tree planting. Remnants of some of the perimeter belts and clumps along the boundaries put in place by the Moore family in the late C18 and early C19 when the landscape park was created have survived, the eastern boundary in particular being very well treed. Near the Hall on the west side of the avenue, a number of old parkland oaks (possibly C17) have survived and these have been augmented with recent (late C20) replanting of some clumps in the park. The eastern section of the park is laid to grass and divided by fences into small fields near the Hall. This section contains the greatest surviving numbers of old parkland trees. Beyond these fields and to the north and west of the Hall the land is under arable production and the area is devoid of parkland trees.

In the extreme north-west corner of the site lies Pond Plantation, a dense, mixed species deciduous woodland containing a series of three linked ponds close to the site of the ruined St Anne's Chapel, together with the remains of three more ponds which survive as earthworks (Bond and Williamson). The area of trees here was extended between 1783 and 1838 to create Pond Plantation with the intention of enclosing the ponds (Phibbs et al 1988). The origin of these man-made ponds is not clear but recent study has suggested that they formed a series of ornamental fishponds which surrounded a much earlier house than the present Hall (Williamson 1994).

KITCHEN GARDEN The walled garden on the north bank of the main moat around the Hall is enclosed on three sides and is open to the Hall front on its south side. The first edition OS 25" map of 1885 gives a layout for this area, which has been recently re-established as a kitchen garden (late C20). It now contains areas of grass, rows of trained fruit trees, some of which are said to date from the C17 (present owner, pers comm) and box-edged borders containing flowers for cutting, herbs and vegetables. On the south-facing internal face of the north wall are the remains of a range of glasshouses.

REFERENCES

Peacock, Polite Repository (1797) T K Cromwell, Excursions in the county of Suffolk (1819) J P Neale, View of the seats of noblemen and gentlemen...I (2nd series), (1824) Country Life, 12 (11 October 1902), p 464 N Pevsner and E Radcliffe, The Buildings of England: Suffolk (1975), p 351 Kentwell Hall, guidebook (1976) M Binney and A Hills, Elysian Gardens (1979), p 23 G Carter et al, Humphry Repton (1983), p 166 J Phibbs, J Meehan and C Gallagher, Kentwell Hall, Suffolk, (Inspector's Report 1988) T Williamson, Kentwell Hall, Suffolk, (UEA Report 1994)

Maps Manors of Kentwell and Monks Lyton, 1613 (private collection) Map of Kentwell Park, nd (probably late C18) (HD11:475/387 & 8), (East Suffolk Record Office) Map of Kentwell Park Montagues, nd (probably late C18) (HD11:475/385), (East Suffolk Record Office) J Hodkinson, The County of Suffolk, 1783 Plan of Kentwell estate, 1838 (HA505/3/1), (West Suffolk Record Office) Tithe map, 1839 (FL509/3/21), (West Suffolk Record Office) Plan of the gardens, 1842 (private collection) Footpath diversion plan, 1870 (Q/SH 71), (West Suffolk Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1905 3rd edition published 1927 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1885 2nd edition published 1904 3rd edition published 1926

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Archival items Sale particulars, 1839 (HA 505/3/13), (West Suffolk Record Office) West Suffolk Record Office holds a substantial Kentwell collection including: Moore family and estate papers (HA/505/3/4); C19 account books; correspondence and memoranda; and 17 volumes of the C19 diaries of E R S Bence. The County Sites and Monuments Records (SMR) holds unpublished research on moated sites in Suffolk. K Bond and T Williamson (UEA) have carried out research (unpublished) into fishponds in Suffolk.

Description written: September 1998 Amended: June 1999 Register Inspector: EMP Edited: December 1999

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.