

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

WIVENHOE PARK

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

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WIVENHOE PARK

Name: WIVENHOE PARK

County: Essex

District: Colchester (District Authority)

County: Essex

District: Colchester (District Authority)

Parish: Wivenhoe

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.878447
Longitude: 0.95112401
National Grid Reference: TM 03226 24103
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1000371
Date first listed: 01-Feb-1989

Details

An old deer park, improved in 1776(80 by Richard Woods to form a landscaped park of 34ha round a country house, with the remains of a garden designed by William Andrews Nesfield between 1847-8.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The Wivenhoe estate was owned by the Rebow family from 1733 until 1902. When Issac Lemyng Rebow died in 1734 his son, Issac Martin Rebow was only two and it was not until he was twenty-seven years of age and married that he started to build a house within the park inherited from his father. In 1758 Rebow commissioned Thomas Reynolds to design the house and seven years later employed the landscaper Richard Woods to design a new park, the laying out of which did not commence until 1776. Issac died in 1781 and was succeeded by his eldest daughter Mary Hester. Mary's husband, Francis Slater, assumed the name of Rebow when they married in 1796. Mary and Francis extended the park and commissioned Constable to make a series of drawings and a painting of the park in 1816. When Francis died in 1845 the estate passed to his son-in-law John Gurdon (who also assumed the name Rebow). John Gurdon commissioned the architect Thomas Hopper to remodel the House in 1846 and William Andrews Nesfield (1793-1881) to advise on the relocation of the coach roads and entrances and to advise on the planting of the park and the flower garden. John Gurdon died in 1870 and passed the estate, along with extensive debts, to his son Hector Gurdon Rebow, who retired away from Wivenhoe and sold the estate in 1902 to Charles Edmund Gooch. Neither C E Gooch nor his son Charles Michael made many alterations to the House or the landscape, which were occupied by the army during the both the First and the Second World War. The estate was sold by the Goochs to the University of Essex in 1964 and the western half of the park (outside the area here registered) is now covered by an extensive range of university buildings. The House, converted into a conference centre in 1977, was extended by the architect Bryan Thomas in 1986(8). A large car park has been put in below the north front. The site remains (2000) in the single ownership of the University.

DESCRIPTION

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LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Wivenhoe Park lies on the north side of Wivenhoe, in an increasingly developed area just to the south-east of Colchester. It covers c 34ha, bounded to the north by Elmstead Road, to the north-east by Colchester Road, to the south-west by the main University campus and to the south by Boundary Road. The relatively flat parkland is divided by a valley to the north-west of the House where three lakes cross the site from north-east to south-west.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The present approach is from the west of the House, via a drive through the University campus known as Park Road. This leads off Boundary Road which marks the southern edge of the site. The mid C19 entrances are marked by small Gothic-style cottages. The West or Colchester Lodge (listed grade II) on Elmstead Road, known locally as Clingoe Hill, is shown on the Tithe map of 1838 but was given its present gothic exterior by Thomas Hopper in 1848. The line of the drive from the West Lodge was laid out in c 1837 when the park was enlarged to the west. It is no longer in use but its route across the park to the north front is still visible. The East or Wivenhoe Lodge (listed grade II) on Colchester Road is similar in style to the West Lodge. This small, octagonal, Gothic-style building is linked to the House by a short drive through the pleasure grounds.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Wivenhoe House (listed grade II*) is situated towards the eastern boundary of the park, overlooking the valley and the lakes. It is a red-brick, three-storey mansion with shaped gables and transom windows, in the Victorian Flemish style. It was built by Thomas Reynolds in 1758-61, in the deer park, and was enlarged and refaced by Thomas Hopper for John Gurdon Rebow in 1846-53. Hopper was also responsible for the stable block (listed grade II) to the north-east of the House which was constructed in matching Tudor style, now (2000) incorporating modern extensions associated with the University use.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS To the west and south of the House is a garden area, originally oval in shape, surrounded by a low brick retaining wall (listed grade II) which separates it from the flat parkland beyond. The garden was laid out in 1847-8 by W A Nesfield who also carried out some planting in the park and advised on the entrances and carriage drives, although his proposals for the latter were rejected. There have been late C20 alterations to the garden design.

PARK Wivenhoe Park lies to the north-west and south-east of the mansion and is well scattered with mature oaks, sweet chestnut, lime, and beech. Most of the trees date from the mid C19 and are set in grass, managed for a variety of purposes by the University. The area here registered represents the park designed and laid out by Richard Woods in 1777, the later C19 extensions having been used for the development of the University campus since the 1960s. A series of three lakes runs through the valley. The top two lakes were developed as part of Woods' landscaping, the third, on the site of the kitchen gardens, having been added by the University. A modern house was built in the 1960s on the site of Woods' bridge and dam between the top lakes. Woods designed a rubble grotto for the head of the lakes which has recently (late C20) been rebuilt in red brick. The icehouse stands close by. Woods' plan of the park is dated 1765 but the majority of the work for which he was responsible was deferred until 1776, all his work being well documented in the Rebow archives.

The painting of the park completed in 1816 by John Constable is discussed by Sir Ernst Gombrich in *Art and Illusion* (1960), and by J Clarkson and N Cox in *Constable and Wivenhoe Park* (2000).

KITCHEN GARDEN The site of the late C18 kitchen garden was used to create a third lake by the University since the 1960s.

REFERENCES

T Wright, *History and Antiquities of Essex* (1836), p 397 D W Coler, *The people's history of Essex* (1858) E H Gombrich, *Art and Illusion* (1960) R Feeseey, *History of Wivenhoe Park* (1963) [copy on EH file] *Country Life*, 142 (7 December 1967), p 1473 M Sommerlad, *Wivenhoe Park and John Constable* (1984) *Garden History* 14, no 2 (1986); 15, no 1 (1987) T R G Gray, *Wivenhoe Park: history and natural history* (Univ of Essex 2000) J Clarkson and N Cox, *Constable and Wivenhoe Park* (Univ of Essex 2000)

Maps Richard Woods, *Design for the improvements of Wivenhoe Park, 1765* (copy in Essex Record Office, location of original unknown) J Chapman and P Andre, *A map of the county of Essex from an actual survey ..., 1777* (Essex Record Office) Tithe map for Wivenhoe parish, 1838 (D/CT 152B), (Essex Record Office) Estate map, c 1840 (T/M 275), (Essex Record Office)

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OS Surveyor's drawings, 1799 (British Library Maps) OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1874 2nd edition published 1898
3rd edition published 1924 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1876 2nd edition published 1896

Illustrations J Constable, painting, Wivenhoe Park, Essex, 1816 (National Gallery of Art, Washington DC) [reproduced in
Clarkson and Cox 2000] J Constable, pencil drawings of Wivenhoe Park, 1816 (Victoria and Albert Museum) [reproduced in
Sommerlad 1984] T Barber, print of Wivenhoe mansion and park, 1835 (Essex Record Office)

Description written: September 2000 Amended: April 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.