

**BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL
BULMER**

AUBERIES

TL 850 399

Mid C18 garden, overlaid by early C19 landscape park, possibly with the involvement of Repton.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Auberries is not mentioned in Morant, but is on the registration of papist estates of 1717, when the 'mansion house of Awberries' is owned by Charles Stafford but occupied by Robert Andrews, yeoman on a 99-year lease from 1716.(Q/RRp 1/7). By the 1730s Robert Andrews was described as 'gent'. Auberries was inherited by his son, also Robert, who was painted with his wife by Gainsborough c 1748 looking out over their property, by then bought outright. Robert was more interested in agricultural than garden improvements, and the layout of Auberries remained relatively formal throughout the C18, as recorded on a parish map of 1808 (D/DU 53). The original house had obviously been altered by Robert senior, as his will of 1734 refers to 'the new part of my dwelling house called Awburys otherwise Oburys' and also specifies 'the Parlour Garden and Orchard called the Old Orchard adjoining to the same'. Muilman in *The New and Complete History of Essex, 1770*, states that the house 'is decorated with gardens laid out in the most pleasing taste; and hath belonging thereunto several ponds, well stored with fish... There belongs to this house one of the finest and best cold baths in England'. After the death of Robert junior the estate was sold, and the sale catalogue of 1806 in conjunction with the parish map of 1808 give a clear picture of the garden layout at that time, which with the house and lawns comprised 2.8ha (7 acres): 'The Pleasure Ground is chiefly disposed in a Bowling Green before the South-East Front, bounded by two Fruit Walls, and extending to a Ha! Ha!' The map shows the two curving walls angled over the valley and its 'beautiful Hilly and wooded View', with a block of woodland to the north, through which the entrance ran. The engraving in the *New and Complete History of Essex* illustrates the description in the catalogue: 'The Wall to the Left extends to one of the Pavilions, which is a Tool House, with Summer House above ditto; the corresponding Pavilion is a Pigeon House'. The 1808 map records Dovehouse Field somewhat to the east of the house and garden, suggesting that the dovecote may have been rebuilt near the house while the field retained its old name. The catalogue states that 'The Garden adjoining is laid out for Ornament and Use, and in this is a small Green House, handsome Sun Dial, Alcove and Leaden Statue'. The cold bath mentioned by Muilman was 'situated to a South Aspect' and was 'a neat timber building on Brick Underpin, Lath and Plaister and Thatched, containing a neat Dressing Room, ... the Bath Room is brick, paved round the Bath, which is ... lined round with White Tiles'.

The purchaser of Auberries in 1806, Charles Greenwood, built a new house and modernised the grounds. It is possible that he commissioned Humphry Repton to advise on layout, as there is an engraving in Peacock's *Polite Repository* for 1811, which often indicates Repton's involvement with the property illustrated. An engraving from *The Ladies Memorandum Book* shows the new piece of water with rebuilt cold bath/boat house, which is of greater architectural merit than the previous one,

and reminiscent of Repton's design for Higham Hill of 1793. However the engraving is undated and the only clue to date is that it is described as Greenwood's seat and is therefore 'pre-1837', the date of his death. The Tithe map of 1840 records in some detail the grounds at this time, by then the property of Col. Meyrick in a form little changed today. The cold bath/boat house survived long enough to be photographed, as did the elegant lodge at the south entrance.

Following Col Meyrick's death in 1845, Auberies was bought by a keen cricketer, Caledon Alexander. In 1857 the estate was acquired by James St. George Burke; in whose family it still remains.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, BOUNDARIES, AREA, LANDFORM AND SETTING

Auberies lies about 3 miles south-west of Sudbury, on the Essex/Suffolk border. The historic designated area covers 81ha (200 acres), lying within an estate of 480ha (1175 acres). The A131 Halstead to Sudbury road forms the south boundary; the west boundary follows an irregular line, skirting Round Wood, joining Church Road north for a short stretch, and continuing due north leaving the earlier drive and then outbuildings to the east. The northern boundary initially follows the line of Sandy Lane, and the east boundary drops down from the corner of the lane following the hedgerows to Armsey Farm on the A131.

The house platform lies near the north-west corner of the site, on the higher ground which extends roughly north-south to the west of the main drive. This land formation allows fine views towards the lake, the Stour Valley and Sudbury beyond.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

Until the first quarter of the C19, the main approach was from Sudbury in the north, with a secondary entrance from Bulmer in the south, and both these drives remain as secondary approaches. The main entrance since at least 1840 has been from the A131, with the entrance gates (listed grade II) set well back from the main road, pierced with splay, and formerly with a classically-designed lodge. The drive runs through Round Wood and emerges into a newly planted avenue, flanked by parkland on the east with a view down to the lake, and by arable fields on the west. It again enters woodland as it passes the stables and curves to the gravelled turning circle on the north-west façade of the mansion.

The original main entrance was approached along Sandy Lane, which is planted with limes on the north side of the road. The specimens of mature yew were possibly planted as focal points at the beginning of the drive. The entrance gates with restrained finials and low brick splays to either side are intact, but the ice house on the west side of the entrance has disappeared, and the former lodge was demolished in the 1950s, together with that at the south entrance. The drive, with a few remaining lime specimens, passes through dense woodland with evergreen understorey to either side, before arriving at the turning circle to meet the current main approach. A third drive leads directly from Church Road in Bulmer to the service area, following the line indicated on Chapman and André 1777.

PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS

Auberries (listed grade II) was originally a mid C18 five-bay brick house, altered and enlarged at the beginning of C19, and again in mid-century. It fronts the north lawn, planted with major specimens of Cedar of Lebanon.

The stable yard is to the west of the house, entered by an early C19 archway incorporated in the stable block (listed grade II), which has recently been restored. The centre is surmounted by a painted timber cupola with clock face. Frederick Chancellor added a coach house and grooms' quarters in 1890.

REFERENCES

P Muilman, *A New and Complete History of Essex*, ii, 1770
Bulmer *Then and Now*, 1979

Maps

Chapman and André, *Map of Essex*, 1777
I Johnson, *Survey of the Parish of Bulmer*, 1808 (Essex Record Office: D/DU 53)
Tithe map and survey, 1840 (D/CT 56a and b)
OS 6" to one mile scale first edition, surveyed 1876
OS 25" to one mile scale second edition, 1897

Archive Items

Deeds 1617-1833 (D/DB T1817)
Christies Sale catalogue, 1806 (B 785)

Pictorial Evidence

Engraving in P Muilman, *A New and Complete History of Essex*, 1770
Engraving from *The Ladies Memorandum Book, or Pocket Museum*, nd, pre-1837
Photographs of cold bath and lodge, c 1900 (Private collection)

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