

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT
LAMBOURNE**

BISHOPS HALL

TQ 475 953

Remnants of design and planting under the auspices of Lord Lambourne, who served as president of the RHS (1919-1928). He was well known for his interest in rare plants, both hardy and exotics, which were raised within his series of specialised glasshouses and within the grounds of Bishops Hall representing late 19th and early 20th century work.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The Bishops of Norwich held the estate of Bishops Hall in Lambourne from the 13th century until 1536 when the estate was transferred to King Henry VIII. The principal building was situated at the site known as Bishops Moat. Sometime during the ownership of William Walker (d. 1708) and his son Thomas (d. 1748) the manor house was relocated further west from Bishops Moat.

The Lockwoods purchased the manor of Lambourne in 1782. By the 1830's with the addition of Bishops Hall, which became the family seat, the estate comprised the manors of Bishops Hall, Lambourne, St. John's (originally Lambourne-and-Abridge) and Dews Hall (demolished by mid-19th century).

It was not until Lieut. Col. The Right Hon. Amelius Richard Mark Lockwood, P.S., C.V.O., M.P., K.L., J.P. took over the estate that evidence of major work on the property began. In 1910, Col. Lockwood was described as a, '... keen hunter, with a stuffed woodcock displayed in Bishops Hall shot by King Edward VII when the guest of Col. Lockwood. The entry for Bishops Hall in the same publication is: '...his picturesque Essex seat,' 'standing in about one hundred acres of grounds and commanding wide and extensive views, the fine old mansion, Bishops Hall, show great advantage amid the exquisitely laid out gardens, with Col. Lockwood's special care. Some of these have been made under his personal supervision and are particularly interesting to horticulturists, in that they contain almost every flowering shrub that can be grown in the county, as well as many of the rare sorts that are seldom to be met with north of Cornwall.' (Essex: Historical, Biographical and Pictorial, 1910).

Col. Lockwood's interest in horticulture is further confirmed in a portrait of him in the Essex Review (1903) which lists his accomplishments as a: 'first-rate shot, a foxhunter, and a practical gardener, growing carnations that are as well-known at St. Stephen's as the Colonial Secretary's orchids.' In Essex Worthies (1973), Addison wrote, 'Besides politics, his main interest were gardens and animals...and it was his passionate love of flowers that brought him the friendship of Edward VII (stayed at Bishops Hall for hunting), George V, and Queen Mary, particularly while he was President of the Royal Horticultural Society'.

The most important change to the garden occurred sometime between 1872 and 1897 when the road that ran along the south of the property was moved further from the principal building not only did

this afford greater privacy for the mansion, the change also created a large area for planting. This area became the main garden used for Lord Lambournes collection of trees and shrubs.

Textual descriptions or remarks pertaining to the grounds of the estate tend to be general. The one account of a specific feature within it refers to a unique planting scheme developed by Lord Lambourne with the assistance of Mr James MacDonald of Harpenden (a nurseryman specialising in grasses who exhibited frequently at R.H.S. shows), is featured in Country Life (Ixi, Oct 1927, p. 519).

‘The grass garden is hidden away in a declivity to the left of the carriage drive and approached from opposite sides by a *laburnum* path with an *azalea* bed foreground. A rose walk and foliage bower flanked upon one side by a vast dahlia bed strike at all seasons the notes with which the monochromatic scale of green of the infinitely varied harmonies of the grasses form, so to speak, an accompaniment of subtle semitones and shades of colour. The bank of grasses frame the whole and very effective notes of colour are struck by rose water lilies, finely grown specimen clumps of *Eulalia zebrina*, *Panicum proliferum*, *Glyceria spectabilis*, *Phleum pratense* ‘*aurea*’, *Elymus glauca*, *Holcus mollis*, *Eulalia japonica* ‘*variegata*’, *Dactylis glomerata*, and *Eulalia zebrina* ‘*japonica*’. Against the background of *Bambusa palmata* and *B. metake* rise the panicles of *Bocconia nitida*. The pool is fringed with more grasses – with a clump of blue-starred anchusa, *Muehlenbeckia complexa*, citron yellow butterflies of mimulus and the orange hemerocallis or day lily. A grass path winds through a tunnel of knot grass, or polygonum and another rises towards the right, beyond the dahlias, to a great gunnera, which has clearly encountered a congenial sited to display it giant leaves. It is, indeed, a haven of dreams which over a century and a half ago – and that majestic willow yonder was a slip brought from Napoleon’s tomb at St. Helena. Thus does a garden evermore hold memory.’

When the estate was put up for sale in 1929 the total acreage was some 1,615. The house was demolished in 1936 (V.C.H.). The third Bishops Hall was built 150 yards south-east incorporating features from the earlier house.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

Bishops Hall is located approximately half-mile south of Abridge in the village of Lambourne. Thomas Write published an account of the Lockwood estate saying, ‘... its situation being on the summit of a hill commanding a prospect towards Epping Forest on the north; extending to the Thames and counties of Kent, Surrey and Middlesex on the south west. The wide vistas are still evident today.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The main entrance is retained from the south gate next to the original lodge house along New Road. The back entrance and drive from Church Lane is no longer in use.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING

The current, and third, Bishops Hall built by the 1950’s is in a loose Tudor style using interior details taken from the earlier Hall.

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Maps & Images

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Portrait of Lord Lambourne, Journal of the RHS, vol. LIV, pt. II (1929), p. 252

Cartoon: Mark Lockwood Stalks the Alien in Epping Forest, Punch, 15 July, 1908, p. 49, (Reproduced in Brent Elliott's history of the RHS)

Photograph: Grass Garden, Country Life, lxii (8 Oct. 1927), p. 519.

Aerial Photograph, 1938, (ERO ref: C/DP/16/3)

Map of Lambourne, 1716, (ERO ref: D/DU 354/1)

Map of Lambourne & Stapleford Abbots c. 1845, (ERO ref: D/Dlo / P3)

O/S 1870-72

O/S 1897

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Photo of Lt. Col. Lockwood, 1895, (ERO ref: I/Pb/12/15/2)

Postcard: Col. M. Lockwood, M.P (1847-1928). (ERO ref: I/Pb/12/15/1)

Schedule of deeds, manorial documents and estate papers, 1559-1842, relating to estate of Edward Lockwood Percival, Esq., (ERO ref: D/Dlo/T56)