

CHELMSFORD CITY COUNCIL
STOCK

LILYSTONE HALL

TQ 685 983

A mid to late nineteenth century garden that still retains many of its original features.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Lilystone Hall was built in 1847 and a private chapel was added to the house in 1879 which was a simple apsed structure by Buckler. Chapman and André's 1777 map of Essex shows an earlier building on the site, the residence of Mr. W. Johnson.

In an extract from the will of Thomas Adler, gent., of Stock, in the year 1683 he bequeathed to his son John Adler his house called Lyllystones with all the lands belonging to it, which had been purchased from Robert Worthe, Thos. Jaye and John Blatch.

In the eighteenth century three farms called Lilystones, Old Austins and Old Berries belonged to Edward Bailey and following his death they were settled in 1751 by Edith Bailey, his widow, on her marriage to Thomas Thayer. In 1758 the three farms were sold to William Prior Johnson who, during his family's ownership, changed the name of Lilystones to both Stock House and Woodlands. Lilystones Farm at this time was 'a capital messuage and farm consisting of a convenient dwelling house, now untenanted, a coach house, two stables, a bake house, brew house, dairy, dovecot and other necessary offices, a bar, cow house, hay house and cart shed, an orchard, courtyard, and about fifty-five acres'. William Prior Johnson, Esq. died in 1776 and his will was long and complicated as he did not have a son. His estate went to a grandson, James Richardson, who took the name of James Prior Johnson Richardson.

James's son, William Prior Johnson, eventually inherited the estates and in a survey report and valuation of the estates of William Prior Johnson Richardson in 1840 and 1844 (ERO D/DSa/156) Lilystone Hall, now called Stock House Farm, is described as 'an Elizabethan style house with gable ends, seated on a gentle rise of the hill within a quarter of a mile of Stock village, overlooking a very limited woody tract of county. There is a carriage sweep in front but with all the additions and repairs, decay is visible with respect of the building'. The agricultural buildings comprised a large barn, granary, cartage, stables, coach house and piggeries. Attached to the house was a large orchard and garden. The timber at this time comprised 52 oaks, 7 ash, 19 elms and 62 pollards. Mention is also made of a cottage and garden opposite the farm which belonged to the estate and divided into two tenements, wood built and tile top with a large garden. The 1841 tithe map gives the owner of Lilystones as Richardson, James Prior Johnson and the occupier was John Stock. The 1844 survey and valuation of Stock House Farm described the house and premises as 'soon running into a state of dilapidation, it is at present occupied by the working bailiff and is store rooms. In 1845 the other two estate farms, Old Austins and Old Berries (both with the changed names of Dirty Hall and Rocks Farm, were sold). A new Lilystone Hall was built in 1847. White's History, Gazetteer and Directory of the County of Essex in

1848 notes that W.P. Johnson, Esq., has a handsome seat called 'Woodlands' (yet another change of name) erected in 1847 at a cost of around £7,000.

An indenture was made on 3rd December 1855 between William Prior Johnson and the Hon. Arthur Petre to include outbuildings, coach house, stables cottage and granary and gardens, pleasure grounds, shrubberies and plantations, in all fifty-one acres. When the Hon. Arthur Petre, fourth son of the eleventh Lord Petre, became tenant of Lilystone Hall he opened a private chapel there, available to local Catholics. The Hon. Arthur married Lady Catherine Howard, 5th daughter of the Earl of Wicklow and they had ten children. They lived at Lilystone Hall until 1861 when the Hon. Arthur purchased the manor of Coptfold in Margareting. The new resident of Lilystone Hall in 1862 was another Catholic, Thomas Walmesley, brother in law to the Hon. Henry Petre who was an elder brother of the Hon. Arthur. In 1867 the chapel at Lilystone Hall was dedicated to Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St. Simon Stock but it was not until 1868 that a priest, Canon John Walker, was appointed, but his incumbency only lasted a year. In 1869 Thomas Walmesley left Lilystone Hall and in his place the Gillow family, siblings William, John, and Isabella, also Catholics, acquired Lilystone Hall and they were partly responsible for the survival of Catholicism in the village.

John Francis Gillow died in 1894 and both William and Isabella died within months of each other in 1893. Lilystone Hall was offered to the Archbishop of Westminster as a country residence but Cardinal Herbert Alfred Vaughan declined and offered it to the brother of his secretary, Msgr. Thomas Dunn. William Dunn and his family arrived at Lilystone Hall in 1895. In 1904 Msgr. Dunn donated a quarter of his land to All Saints to extend their churchyard. Lilystone Hall was put up for sale after the death of William Dunn in 1926 and the house passed into non Catholic hands, although the chapel remained open for public worship. Photographs of Lilystone Hall and its grounds were taken by the commercial photographer, Fred Spalding, and were put together in album entitled 'Lilystone Hall, Stock, Essex, August 1927'. These black and white photographs provide an excellent record of the house and grounds at that time. The 1931 sale catalogue (SALE/B4658) offered for sale part of Butts Lodge Estate, Stock Mill, and part of Lilystone Hall Estate and in 1932 the sale catalogue (ERO D/F 33/16/24) for Butts Lodge Farm included the sale of four enclosures of pasture land forming part of the Lilystone Hall Estate.

Sir Percival Perry, the chief representative of the Ford Motor Company, acquired Lilystone Hall in 1937 and during the war gave over part of the Hall to the Marist nuns who used it as a school. The daughter of Lord Perry's butler recalls that at this time Lilystone Hall had formal herbaceous borders, mainly for cut flowers. The great feature of the Hall was the extensive range of rhododendrons and azaleas, which suited the acidic soil and were low maintenance.

Lilystone Hall was for sale in 1973 and the sales particulars (ERO SALE/3667) of 23 October say 'the property is approached by two access driveways, each with impressive wrought iron gates. The main drive passes one of the lily ponds and between shrubs, trees and lawns, meeting the secondary drive at a wide sweep in the front of the house. To the south is a bank of rhododendrons and shrubs. The lawn slopes gently away from the house to the springed lily ponds, which form a feature of the lovely grounds. The main pond is comparatively narrow but over 330 feet in length. One end is open and the other is enclosed by masses of rhododendrons. There is an island with further rhododendrons which is reached by two bridges, one constructed of timber and the other of stone with wrought iron

balustrades. A small waterfall takes the water below ground to the second beautiful pond. Close by there is a timber summerhouse which looks out over a terrace to a small ornamental pond with fountain in the shape of a heron. The lawns are lined by a superb selection of shrubs, deciduous and coniferous specimen trees which are a feature of the grounds and include beech, oak, copper beech, silver birch, ash, weeping ash, chestnut, maple, pine, fir, larch, cherry, weeping willow, large planes, and glorious cedars. Rarer species include strawberry and tulip trees. To the north of the house there are wide stone steps leading up to the gently rising lawns. Shaded paths meander among the wilder parts of the gardens. The parkland like paddock is beyond a bank of roses which forms the western boundary of the gardens. In the paddock there are a number of mature trees and along two boundaries there are wide belts of trees. The grounds are approximately sixteen and a quarter acres (6.58 hectares). The sale included the four cottages built in 1933 in Lilystone Close, across the road and opposite Lilystone Hall. but part of the Lilystone estate. The estate houses in the Close had neither front nor back gardens other than grass. There was extensive orchard of mainly Cox's orange pippins behind the houses.

An animal research establishment was built on land belonging to Lilystone Hall in Honeypot Lane and the Duke of Norfolk, President of the Animal Health Trust, laid the foundation stone in 1956. The Duke of Edinburgh opened the new buildings in 1957 afterwards taking lunch at Lilystone Hall with members of the Trust. The aim of the establishment was to research into disease of farm livestock.

Sales particulars in 1981 (ERO SALE/B6907) gives details of the fourteen converted apartments and the description of the grounds relate that twenty-two gardeners were employed to maintain the grounds in its heyday. The 1981 sales particulars mention many of the rare plants and trees, including flowering tulip trees, have survived and that the Hall stands in six acres with garages and carports arranged in two blocks positioned close to the Hall but discretely secluded.

By the time the Hall was converted into apartments the ornamental lakes and meadows had been sold and a fence divided them from the main garden. These lakes have become very overgrown and the timber bridge has disappeared although the stone one remains. Despite the loss of some of the original trees in the 1987 gales, the gardens today are well maintained and retain much of their former splendour.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

Lilystone Hall is situated on the outskirts of the village of Stock off the B1007 where Stock Road meets Honeypot Lane. The Hall is approximately six miles from Chelmsford and three miles from Billericay and lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The main drive to Lilystone Hall is from Honeypot Lane and curves up to a wide sweep in front of the entrance of the house and continues to the side of the Hall and a block of garages. This drive to the front of the Hall from Honeypot Lane is lined with trees and shrubs, including two sweet chestnuts, a large spineless holly, Portuguese laurel, and near to the house entrance, a large well shaped strawberry tree, *Arbutus*, as well as an old *Acer palmatum dissectum*. A further entrance and gateway is from the B1007 Stock Road but is no longer used as a carriage drive.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING

Lilystone Hall is a large grey brick house with stone parapet built in 1847 graded II by the English Heritage. The south front of the three window range has giant stone pilasters rising through two storeys. The centre bay is surmounted by a pediment. The centre doorway has a Greek Doric portico with fluted columns and is approached by a flight of steps. At the east side is an apsidal chapel (now converted to apartments) with semi-circular headed windows with glazing bars. The windows are divided by brick pilasters and the roof is tiled.

REFERENCES

Books and Articles

Burke and Savill 1981 Guide to Country Houses vol III
Foster, Stewart 1991 The Catholic Church in Stock McCrimmon Publishers Ltd
Jarvis, L. Donald 1995 With Respect ... the story of the residents of Stock 1245-1995, Don Fraser Print Sudbury
Pevsner, N 1954 The Buildings of England – Essex Penguin Books
Phillips, Charles 2003 Stock Ian Henry Publications pp 32, 33, 37, 39, 48, 50, 54

Maps and Images

1777 Chapman and André's map of Essex plate XVII
1841 Title map of Stock
1870's 6" 1st edition ordnance survey map sheet 60
1893-1896 2nd edition 25" ordnance survey map sheet 60.11
20th century Fred Spalding postcard of Lilystone Hall and its grounds with the lake in the foreground.
1927 Album of photographs taken by Fred Spalding specifically for Lilystone Hall.
20th century calendar postcard of Lilystone Hall with the lake in the foreground.

Archival Items

1683 Extract from the will of Thomas Adler (ERO D/AEW 27/43)
1758 Statement as to copyholds of the Manor of Blunts (ERO D/DE/T91)
1776 Will of William Prior Johnson (ERO D/DE/T78)
1840 & 1844 Survey Report and Valuation of estates of William Prior Johnson Richardson ERO D/DSa/156
1855 Lease between Hon Arthur Petre and William Prior Johnson ERO D/DE/T63
1931 sales catalogue ERO SALE/B4658
1932 sales catalogue ERO D/F 33/16/24
1973 sales catalogue ERO SALE/1667 23 October
1981 sales catalogue ERO SALE/B6907

Websites

www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk accessed 22 October 2010 – listing information for Lilystone Hall
www.stock.org.uk March 2010
www.at.ford.com/news June 2009 p18 (accessed 20.10.10)

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