

**BRENTWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
BRENTWOOD**

**MERRYMEADE HOUSE**

**Grid Ref: TQ598 943**

An Edwardian garden retaining features of its original layout.

**HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT**

Merrymeade House was designed by Hugo Ritchie Bird (1879-1958) in 1912 for Robert Horne-Payne (1869-1929), a local business man who formerly lived at The Hermitage, Shenfield. Horne-Payne was a rich financier with a passion for cricket and built his house overlooking the County cricket ground. The British Columbia Electric Railway in Canada was financed largely with British capital: the company was formed by Robert Horne-Payne and Francis Barnard. Horne-Payne's financial skills left an imprint in the area and a northern Ontario town, Hornepayne, bears his name.

The fields in front of the house, now Merrymeade Country Park, were recorded as pasture in 1837 but may have formed part of the estate of the Horne-Payne family.

Robert Horne-Payne's wife, Alice, sold the house in 1948 to the Essex County Council and it was used as a teacher training college by the Anglia Polytechnic University until it was given to the Brentwood Council in 1999 with a covenant on it for the use of the community. Following refurbishments the house opened as a community facility with apartments above.

In 2007 landscaping student Mark Peacock expressed concerns for the future of the gardens as he believes they still have the remains of an Edwardian fernery. He thought the basic layout of the garden remains in its original Edwardian style with the old paths still visible.

**SITE DESCRIPTION**

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM & SETTING**

Merrymeade House is situated very close to Brentwood town centre and one mile from Shenfield town centre. The Chase leading to the front of the house continues on to buildings that were once part of the estate: the Phoenix Day Nursery is located in one of these. To the front of the house is Merrymeade Park, a conservation site, and beyond the rear gardens is the former Essex County Cricket ground.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES**

Merrymeade House is approached from Merrymeade Chase, a turning off Sawyers Hall Lane. There is a circular drive in front of the house with a row of pine trees in a central grassed area. A public footpath runs adjacent to Merrymeade Park from Hall Lane, Shenfield to Sawyers Hall Lane, Brentwood.

## PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS

The house and the attached garden wall were listed Grade II in 2005. The 1912 house has red brick in Flemish bond with red brick dressings. The ornate cast iron rainwater heads are inscribed A.H.P. for Alice Horne-Payne and R.H.P. for her husband. The attached garden wall is a curved red brick wall in Flemish bond, with brick pilasters and tiled coping, terminating in square pier with faceted cap. There is a brick arched gateway to the service yard.

## GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

The contemporary gardens survive with the remains of the garden pavilion, formerly thatched, and a small bridge on the main drive. A recently restored octagonal thatched summer house stands in a lawned area in front of the former coach house, now a children's nursery, to the west of the house.

A gate in the brick wall attached to the east side of the house leads through to the formal gardens at the rear of the house. This attached brick wall curves around the formal gardens until it reaches the hedged area that separates the formal gardens from the cricket ground. In the grassed area immediately in front of the curved wall is a rectangular area with raised edges, now all grassed over and forming humps: possibly once an area for sport or otherwise as some garden feature.

The formal gardens to the rear of the house are a series of grassed walkways hedged on either side. A central grass path leads to steps up to a flagstone terrace with a stone capped brick wall to the rear of the house. Other grassed pathways, all hedged on either side, criss-cross the central path. To the west side of the house are stone edged raised beds now overgrown.

## PARK

Merrymeade Country Park is managed by Brentwood Borough Council. The site is split into a number of fields, two of these being owned by Essex County Council and leased to the Brentwood Borough Council and the other owned by Brentwood Borough Council. The site is an oasis for wildlife and is managed primarily for nature conservation. This thirty-four hectare site consists of four grassland fields, scrub, a small area of woodland and wetland habitats including a pond and stream.

## REFERENCES

### Books and Articles

Canham, Kathy 2007 *Mark on mission to save secret garden* in *Brentwood Gazette* 5 September

### Maps and Images

1862/78 first edition 25" to the mile ordnance survey map sheet LXVII 3

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Sites visits: 2017