

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT**  
**WILLINGALE DOE**

**WARDENS HALL**

**TL 594 069**

Wardens Hall is a predominantly C18 manor house with contemporary grounds and a well-designed lake. It was owned in C18 by Sir John Salter, Lord Mayor of London in 1740 and has remained as a compact agricultural estate.

#### **HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT**

The Wanton family who were at Wardens Hall about 1349 gave the manor its name. It was then owned by Bedles, Sampfords, Wisemans, Fytche family and in 1597 Nicholas Brocket of Sawbridgeworth. His son, John, conveyed the premises to Geoffrey Nightingale. About 1634 Robert Cole, esquire to the body of King Charles I, became the owner. His childless son Robert Cole succeeded him, and he bequeathed this estate to his twin sister, Deborah's son, Sir John Salter, alderman of London.

Sir John Salter, who was sheriff in 1735 and Lord Mayor of London in 1740, rebuilt the manor house and improved the roads around it. He also built galleries in each of the two Willingale churches.

Salter's daughter married William Mills who passed it on to his son William.

Muilman described it as 'ornamented with a delightful garden laid out in a peculiar manner, and with the greatest taste; with fish ponds, and with a pleasing prospect'

By 1914 it was part of the Skreens estate, Roxwell, which was then for sale. The sale catalogue describes it as a compact Agricultural and Sporting Property extending to 205 acres, with capital house and buildings, some first rate land and a lake of nearly 2 acres.

Skreens is less than 4 kms away from Wardens Hall and although Wardens Hall may not have been part of Skreens estate in the C18 it is highly likely the 2 owners would have known what each other was doing. Skreens was owned by the Bramston family and correspondence between Bamber Gascoyne and John Strutt fellow Essex Tory MPs of Thomas Berney Bramston (1733-1813) refer to Mr. Richmond visiting Skreens. (Could Nathaniel Richmond have designed the lake?)

In 1922, the 209 acre estate was bought by Ernest Stock and was farmed by his son, Jack and his son Alan until it was sold to the present owners in 1991 as a 205 acre estate. The house and surrounds are well maintained, and an excellent sudden view of the lake appears after leaving the house and passing outbuildings. The surrounding farmland is contract farmed.

#### **SITE DESCRIPTION**

##### **LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING**

Wardens Hall is about half a kilometre south-east of Willingale village. The grounds are bounded to the north by the Willingale to Fyfield road, to the south by structures associated with the former Willingale airfield. The east and west boundaries are undefined. The present farm area is just under 100 hectares. The site falls very gently to the south, but more markedly to the west, where a tributary of the River Roding runs in a shallow valley from south to north.

## ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

Wardens Hall is approached by a straight drive from the Fyfield road, lined by full grown oak trees on the west side. Berry Lodge was built in the 60s for the owner’s family and is well set back from the drive and there is no evidence of an earlier building. The approach drive has been concreted and there are several surviving war-time Nissen huts (most in good condition) on the east side of the drive.

## PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS

The farmhouse, listed Grade II, has been dated about c.1740 (Pevsner). This probably refers to the north elevation; the other elevations lack symmetry and much of the south elevation is covered with tile hanging, suggesting an earlier timber framed building within. The Depart of Environment listing describes the house as early eighteenth century with Flemish bond brickwork. The extensive range of C18 or C19 farm buildings immediately to the north of the house are in a good state of repair.

## SUMMARY

The lake indicates that this was a designed landscape for a wealthy client. Though no landscape architect has been identified, the scale and quality of the scheme suggests that a professional was involved. Skreens Park estate of which Wardens Hall was once part belonged to the Bramston family, who were in touch with Nathaniel Richmond, a landscape architect of whom Humphry Repton (1752-1818), wrote in 1788 that ‘the works of Kent, Brown and Richmond have been the places of my worship’. It should be considered for inclusion in the Inventory, even though little of the formal garden has survived.

## REFERENCES

- Morant, P. 1768 *The History and Antiquities of the County of Essex*, # pp477-478  
 Muilman, P. 1771-72 *A New and Complete History of Essex*, Chelmsford, pp. 294-295  
 Pevsner, N. 1996, Second edition, *The Buildings of England*, Penguin Books, p.427

## Archival Items

- 1770 ERO T/B 251/7 Correspondence between Gascoyne and Strutt  
 1857 ERO B2801 Sale notes of about 24 acres Copyhold to the Manor of Wardens Hall. Plan  
 1857 ERO B2964 Sale of small estate of 15 acres copyhold of the Manor of Wardens Hall  
 1914 ERO A277 June 1914 Skreens Park Sale catalogue  
 1922 ERO B3347 Sale of Wardens Hall 209 acres

## Personal Communications

Margaret Padfield, nee Stock born Wardens Hall 30.6.32. and the current owners.

## Maps

- 1772-74 Chapman and Andre Sheet 12  
 1805 OSD Sheet 11  
 1874 OS 1<sup>st</sup> edition 25 inch colour Sheet L1.3  
 1878 OS 1st edition 6inch No. 51  
 1896 OS 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 25 inch Sheet 51.3

1922 ERO B3347 Sale map of Wardens Hall

Undated Map showing Schedule of Buildings when Willingale Airfield was in operation. Private collection

1981 Aerial photo 5.5.81 Ref. 12/81 Essex County Council

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Site visit 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2004 with Michael Leach

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