

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT
LOUGHTON**

WARREN HALL

TQ 409 952

Formerly Warren Hill House. Note: This site was not visited as part of the Inventory as no access could be gained. Research has been carried out by Georgina Green and these notes are taken from her work.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Warren Hill House was built in 1872, immediately prior to the 1878 Epping Forest Act, which put a halt to further development within the Forest. The site lies to the north of Holmehurst, a comparable Victorian villa built at this time and to the south of Warren House; both of which are also included within the Inventory.

The land on which Warren House was built was, until c1865, part of the Forest. It was probably enclosed in that year, and by 1877 it was reported that a house, with stables and outbuildings and gardens and entrance lodge had been built. Due to clearance of the Forest the site would have commanded quite extensive views at this time. The building and well wooded grounds are shown on the 1879 1st edition 25'. This shows the site with lodge, avenue, kitchen gardens and lawn. In 1881 a W. Sewell and family were living at the site, with their servants. James Adams was the gardener, and he lived in the Lodge.

In c1890 the house and grounds were sold, although Mrs Sewell is still recorded as being there in 1891. A Sales Particular of 1890 records the house and grounds in considerable detail. The Entrance Lodge and approach feature as an engraving (by T. Way) on the front, and a range of evergreens are shown lining the sweeping drive/carriageway. The property is described as 'a family mansion occupying a high position and commanding extensive views on all sides, approached by a Carriage Drive with Lodge at Entrance, standing in the midst of Very Beautiful Pleasure Grounds'.

The grounds and gardens are described as comprising:

'Pleasure Grounds laid out by Messrs Veitch, at great expense about 20 years since, and include lawns, shrubberies, shaded walks, well planted with choice shrubs and ornamental trees; well stocked kitchen and fruit gardens, Orchards, vineries, peach houses, etc'. Additional to this was stabling etc and two grass paddocks, the whole comprising some 16a2r17p' (approx 16.5 acres).

The plan that accompanies the particulars confirms this description and adds the following information: The boundaries on the south, west and north of the house were planted with tree belt of conifers and under-planting – with a shady boundary walk running through the double planted belt on the west and north. This ends rather abruptly part way along the north boundary, and it may be that a view was desired in this area. There is no tree belt shown on the eastern boundary – which would have overlooked the Forest at this period.

An orchard lay to the north of the Lodge, occupying the space between the Lodge and the stables/piggeries and cow sheds. Rather oddly shaped kitchen gardens lay between the Epping-

Woodford Rd (now the A104) and the cowsheds, whilst further rectangular kitchen garden lay between the house and the piggeries. These latter gardens also contained ranges of hothouses. An irregular shaped pond lay in the far north-west corner. Close to the house, oval/kidney-shaped lawns adjoined the house to the south and north, with further tree planting giving these a very sheltered aspect. There is some indication of small shrub beds. To the east, steps led from the house to a cross-path, and then further steps to a sunken lawn. This contained a circular arrangement of flower beds of a typical Victorian style, which then led on to further areas of lawn. A shrubbery walk ran the perimeter of these closer garden lawns, separating them from the larger area of grounds. There is no indication of fountains or other water features.

An engraving of the 'rear' view of the house appears to show a wooden paling fence separating the garden lawns and bed from the wider area of grounds. In this engraving (again by T.Way) we can just make out the beds that comprised the circular feature, however it is not possible to detect what the planting was (except it was not low bedding). Several immature trees are shown in the lawns.

A description of the grounds notes again the role of the Veitch nurseries, and draws particular attention to a 'remarkable holly hedge'. The glasshouses were said to include four peach houses, span roof camellia house, three vineries, and span roof orchard house. A further view, of the stables with clock, show part of this glasshouse range.

The site was featured during its 'Victorian Heyday' in an article in Country Life Magazine, which recorded gardens including Victorian bedding (article not located, information from M. Brown researcher of Holmehurst).

In 1909 the property was sold again. Photographs accompany this Sales particular, showing the house remarkably similar to the modern (2004) sales particulars! The description repeats some of the earlier information, but also notes tennis and croquet lawns, rose and flower gardens, ornamental rockery with miniature waterfall, as well as the orchard and vegetable gardens. There is a photograph taken of the view to the east of the property, showing clearly the arrangement of circular beds, and the fine views beyond. Unfortunately although the sale was in June, the photographs appear to have been taken much earlier in the year (trees are not in leaf) and only some very small bedding plants, widely spaced, appear in the beds. However this at least indicates that the site was not a rose garden. A further photograph shows the straight 'fir walk' which must be that on the northern boundary, this is described as being quarter of a mile long.

The site was sold again in 1930 and a further Sales Particular repeats much of the information given before. However two photographs of the gardens show the circular flower garden, with steps and urns, and the rockery garden and stream. After 1930 the house was owned by the Lusty family (although requisitioned during the war), until 1974 when it was sold first to the City of London Corporation and then on to a developer.

Warren Hall is currently sub-divided into a series of six apartments, a swimming pool and gated secure access have been installed. Although the site is currently under split occupation, the grounds are maintained and contain some remnant planting, with wooded grounds, walks and lawns, as well as private access to the Forest. The site is also part of a 'group' with Holmehurst (also a Veitch planting), and (to a lesser extent) Warren House, and has thus been included within the Inventory despite no

access being granted. Every effort should be made to retain the mature planting which dates to the Veitch phase at both this site and Holmehurst.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

Warren Hill House is situated on the west side of Loughton, on the corner of the A104 and Manor Road. It is located just off the highpoint at approximately 69m. and would have had at the time of construction.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

Approach at present is only via secure gated access from Manor Road to the south. A Lodge (now a separate dwelling) is situated at the entrance, indicating that this would originally have also been the main entrance. A curved driveway leads to a much 'turning circle' but with greatly reduced area of central lawn. This small circle of lawn has a central clipped evergreen and some bedding.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING

The house itself was built between 1865 and 1877, when it was recorded by the Commissioners for the Forest and is a Victorian detached villa of some status. It is predominantly of red brick with some stonework with extending balustraded balconies on each side and porches. Plans for the house survive in the Sales catalogue of 1890, where it is described as a freehold residential property designed under the supervision of a well-known local architect. It was frequently sold in the first part of the C20 and was requisitioned by the government during the 2nd world war. In the 1970s the house was finally sold to a developer and split into apartments. It is currently divided into six apartment blocks, but retains its porched frontage and balcony, although extensions and development have been added to the side and roof.

REFERENCES

Green, G. c2000. Warren Hall, Manor Road, Loughton. (A history for private client).

OS 25inch 1st edition 1879

ERO A1019 Sales Particulars The Warren Hill, 1890

EROA245 sales particulars The Warren Hill 1909

ERO 245a sales particulars The Warren Hill 1930

2004 sales particulars (on file EGT)

Pers. Comm.

Georgina Green

Mrs M. Brown (recent owner of adjoining Holmehurst)

Researcher and Editor: Twigs Way 09/09/04 Site not accessed.