

BRENTWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL
KELVEDON HATCH

KELVEDON HALL

Grid Ref: TL558 000

Ornamental grounds with a fine sheet of water and an ornamentally shaped swimming pool with a Baroque pavilion.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The Wright family held Kelvedon Hall in 1538 and stayed in possession for the next four centuries. John Wright of Kelvedon Hall died in 1551 and his eldest son, John, held the Hall. His second son, Robert who died 1587 became lord of the manor of Great and Little Ropers occupying the Moat House in Brook Street. The second John Wright died in 1563 leaving Kelvedon Hall to his son, the third John Wright. The next John Wright changed the course of his family history as in 1605 he and his sister Ann were converted to the Roman Catholic faith. The Wrights extended the estate in 1604 by purchasing nearby Germaines, a former manor. The seventh John Wright (died 1731) married Eugenia Trinder, a co-heiress to her father's fortune, and in 1742 his son John had Kelvedon Hall rebuilt. The rainwater heads are dated 1725 and 1740.

Next to the manor house was St. Nicholas' Church: the church was built in 1753 to replace a medieval church which had fallen into disrepair. After the new church was built the old church was too expensive to maintain and gradually fell into ruins. In Wright's new house a chapel was built, and the 1753 church was abandoned in 1895 when a new church was built in the village. The remains of the church are still to be seen among the trees. Chapman and André's 1777 Map of Essex clearly shows the church near to the house, some formal gardens are also shown as is an area of parkland and a large wooded area.

In 1837 the Kelvedon estate consisted of 880 acres which included the Hall and grounds and several other farms and cottages. The estate continued in the Wright family until the death of John Francis Wright in 1865 and the estate passed to his nephew Edward Carington Wright, who in turn left it to his own nephew Sir Henry J. Lawson. The house was advertised to rent in 1865, the advert for which described the Hall as being 'seated in a beautifully timbered park.....the pleasure grounds and gardens are laid out with great taste in lawns, flower-beds and adorned with clumps of evergreens and shrubs and a fine sheet of water stocked with fish; walled kitchen gardens sloping to the south, fully cropped and planted with choice fruit trees, vinery green-house, melon-ground, etc., - the whole about 12 acres'.

In Rush's 1897 *Seats in Essex* Kelvedon Hall grounds are described as being 'well laid out and ornamented by plantations and a piece of water of above two acres in extent'. From 1891 the house was occupied by a tenant, John Algernon Jones, a wealthy city stockbroker, and on his death in 1916 the estate was purchased from Sir Henry in 1922 by Jones's widow. The 1920 sales particulars for the

885 acres site describe the grounds as being 'well laid out grounds and adorned by some forest timber and well grown ornamental trees and shrubs, including araucaria, cupressus, weeping ash, beech, stately chestnut, and fine magnolias'. Also described were the tennis court, sloping lawns adorned by numerous rose beds and herb borders. These beds were intersected by winding gravel walks, bordered by fine box hedges whilst adjoining a 'capital' aviary. There was also a walled kitchen garden that was well cultivated and stocked with a variety of wall and bush fruit. To the front of the house was a large sheet of ornamental water with shady wilderness walks from the grounds to Park Wood. In 1923 a large portion of the Kelvedon Hall Estate was sold: this included several cottages, woodlands, and five plots of land 'suitable for developing as a small holding'. Upon the death of Mrs Jones the house was sold in 1932 to St Michael's Roman Catholic School but the school closed in 1937. Much of the timber in the grounds was felled during this time. The 1932 sales document describes the house as being 'approached by a long carriage drive, mostly of fine oaks. After skirting the lake the drive sweeps round a wide lawn, flanked by projecting wings of the house to the columned entrance porch'. The description of the gardens included information on the walled kitchen garden with tomato house, vinery, plant house and frames. There were also standard and bush fruit, including old mulberry and fig trees, plus a newly planted orchard of apples, plums, and quince. The particulars also mention the walled and enclosed peacock garden and the ha-ha separating the pleasure grounds from the undulating well-timbered eighty acre park. The estate covered 147 acres at this time.

In 1937 Kelvedon Hall was bought by the wealthy Anglo-American M.P., diarist and socialite, Henry 'Chips' Channon (1897-1958) who restored the house to its former elegance and added a pair of entrance lodges. The results of the renovation were published in *Country Life* in May 1941. Christopher Hussey wrote 'An agreeable feature of Kelvedon is the quantity of old brick garden walls, courts, and outbuildings attached to the triangular spaces formed on either side of the main block by the wings. To the north, Lady Honor Channon has her kennels for a charming breed of Hungarian sheepdogs. At the south end a pretty old orangery with high sash windows backs on to the court wall and is draped in wisteria. The space above the door has been painted by John Churchill with the Signs of the Zodiac. Beyond it, sloping walls enclose a sunny garden now containing the swimming pool and bathing pavilion the graceful, cream-washed little building, with its copper roof and its baroque gardener and *mädchen* guarding its steps, is a delightful reminder of happier days – past – and to come'. The architects for the renovation of Kelvedon Hall, Lord Gerald Wellesley and Trenwith Wells, also designed the pair of entrance lodges which were linked by an archway and replaced the original lodge (c1839).

During World War II the house was used as a Red Cross convalescent home from 1941 to 1945. Chips Channon died in 1958 and the Hall was bequeathed to his son Paul (Henry Paul Guinness Channon 1935-2007). Paul was the Conservative Member of Parliament for Southend West from 1959 to 1997 and married Ingrid Guinness (formerly Wyndham) in 1963.

A.J. Huxley described in detail the Kelvedon Hall gardens in an article in *Country Life* in 1962. Huxley mentions the long narrow stretch of grass to the right of the house 'like an attenuated bowling green. The house wall carries a large *Magnolia grandiflora* and in front a giant horse chestnut stands to one side of a semi-circular area; beyond is a group of four windswept pines; cattle graze beneath them, kept from the garden by a ha-ha. All this is peaceful, unpretentious; there is no hint of a complex

garden layout. This is as it should be, for the styles of house and garden do not match. To reach the garden one walks away from the 'bowling green', where a wide grass walk, with wall to one side and tall shrubs, including a huge cotoneaster, on the other, leads gently downhill'. Other features of the gardens at this time were the small orangery with a gate in its adjoining wall opening onto an ornamentally shaped swimming pool with a Baroque pavilion. Formal gardens formed part of the upper gardens with a series of self-contained enclosures: the biggest being a rose garden. There were grassed alleys, one edged with clipped yews: these alleys formed the axes of a quadrant of inter-connected roundels of grass, surrounded by flower beds. The lower parts of the garden were informal where wooded walks led to a small shady pool surrounded by a wild garden and an area of uncut grass and parkland. Huxley observed that 'Kelvedon includes practically every fashionable plant of the day'. Roy Strong visited in 1969 and commended the Hall as 'done over in the best style by David Hicks'.

The Kelvedon Hall gardens have been regularly opened to the public for charitable purposes. Henry Channon inherited the Hall on his father's death.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM & SETTING

Kelvedon Hall is situated immediately off the A128 Ongar Road and is approximately two miles from Ongar and five miles north of Brentwood. The Hall is surrounded by Metropolitan Green Belt land and has the River Roding passing through the parish at Langford Bridge.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

Entrance to the Hall is through a triumphal arch with cornice and partly balustrade parapet surmounted by a central urn. The arch is flanked by two attached lodges, single storey, stuccoed with parapets, partly balustrade. The entrance lodges are Grade II listed and were designed by Lord Gerald Wellesley and Trenwith Wells in 1938. A short carriage drive through an avenue of trees leads up to Kelvedon Hall. The front of the house overlooks a small lake created by the damming of a small stream.

PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS

The house is a Grade I building of red brick, Flemish bond, and lead roof, restored in the late eighteenth century and in 1937-8 by Lord Gerald Wellesley and Trenwith Wells. The main front has three stories with seven windows on each of the upper floors. On either side of this block are two storey pavilions connected to the main front by curved screen walls. The pavilions have hipped roofs with turrets and cupolas. The Grade II stable block is late eighteenth century and later. The stables form three sides of a courtyard on the north-west side of the hall.

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Researcher: Jill Plater