

HYDE HALL/GREAT HYDE HALL.

The Story of a Manorial Home.

The house has usually been called simply Hyde Hall. However, it is strictly speaking known as Great Hyde Hall, which of course differentiates it from the Royal Horticultural Society Garden at Hyde Hall, Chelmsford.

BEGINNINGS.

Being so far removed in time from the events concerned, much of the following section of this article is necessarily conjecture, but it is firmly based upon a logical extrapolation of facts.

The siting of Hyde Hall is interesting. The implications and circumstantial evidence show that it may be the original site of the demesne of the first local Saxon Lord (there was no such thing as a Lord of the Manor at that time). Due to the heavy forestation of the local land, access was limited to the area around Sawbridgeworth. Rivers however, did provide a means of transport. The Saxons were quite late in arriving here, possibly not coming in numbers until after the year 500, having followed the River Stort valley. Indeed, the earliest local archaeological Saxon finds are from the area of the river. It thus would make sense that the first Saxon Lord would site his house there.

The very name 'Sawbridgeworth' (Saxbrixteworde in Domesday) also gives us a clue. One interpretation (there are others) of the name reads 'Toll Bridge by the Manor'. This is taken from the following: Sax = Salt Salt was still used as a form of payment in late Roman/early Saxon times. Brixte = Bridge. Worde/Worthig = Fortified Manor.

Another clue comes from Domesday which recorded a pre-existing watermill here for 1066. Thus, the Saxon Lord's house sited where Hyde Hall now is would have been able to control both the toll bridge and the watermill, both of which would have provided a substantial revenue. There is finally the fact that Hyde Hall is sited on the 'wrong' side of the River Stort to be in Sawbridgeworth, which it undoubtedly is, unless there is some special historical significance.

Later in history, Christianity came to the Saxons. The synod of Hertford was recorded in the year 672/3 and no doubt the Saxons of Sawbridgeworth were already converted by this time. Therefore, when the first church was built, the local Lord would have wished for his house to have been placed nearby. The Church of Great St. Mary's as we see it is 13th century but archaeology shows pre-Norman signs and the Pudding Stone at the base of the tower indicates pagan use of the site. Thus, this shows it to have been the site of the first church since pagan sites were generally absorbed by the new religion. Therefore, the siting of Sayesbury Manor indicates the site of the new house for the Saxon Lord. He would not have simply abandoned the old site though, and this would account for the strange positioning of Hyde Hall.

THE HOUSE.

Great Hyde Hall is a grade II* listed building, entry number 1347838 and was first listed 6 October 1971. It is sited at National Grid Reference TL 49587 15397.

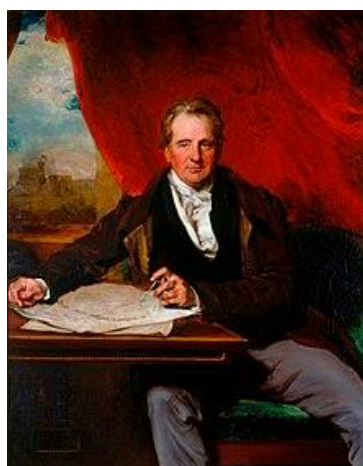
The Hyde Hall estate was in the ownership of the Josslyn/Joslyn/Jocelyn family from at least the 13th century. The present house was built in the year 1572 by Richard Josslyn (1528 – 1575) and it became the seat of the Jocelyn family for many years. Richard was the MP for Scarborough in 1558. He was appointed through his family connections there and possibly may never have visited the town. Upon his death, Richard was buried inside Great St. Mary's church on 10 September 1575.

At some time, the Jocelyn family have held the following titles: Earl Roden; Viscount Jocelyn; Baron Newport; Baron Clanbrassil and Baronet of Hyde Hall. Of these, the titles of Earl Roden and Baronet of Hyde Hall are still extant and in the early 21st century were held in Eire.



Arms of the Jocelyn family

In about the year 1770 there were some additions made to enlarge the house, and the whole house was re-modelled 1806-7 by Sir Jeffry Wyattville who was the architect who also re-modelled Windsor Castle and Chatsworth House. This work being done for the then owner Robert Jocelyn 2nd Earl Roden (1756 – 1820).



Sir Jeffry Wyattville

Following on from the re-modelling, there was a constant series of modifications internally including the transformation of the North West wing into a private school which operated from about 1940 until 1960.



Hyde Hall early 20th century

In 1940 with the coming of the Second World War, the old Royal Flying Corps landing ground near Allen's Green was revived as Mathams Wood Advanced Landing Ground for RAF Army cooperation squadrons. Although not strictly correct, this would later be called RAF Sawbridgeworth, and part of Hyde Hall was briefly requisitioned by the military for use as the Station Headquarters and the Officer's Mess. In 1978, the house was transformed and divided into privately owned luxury flats.

The pair of lodges at the main gate are Georgian and, in the grounds, there is an out of character 20th century 'Heads House' dating from the use of the NW wing as a school.



Lodges at the entrance

Historic data from 1776 shows the whole estate once comprised an informal mediaeval parkland and the arable field adjacent and to the West of the house is designated an 'Area of Archaeological

Significance'. Also, there are no rights of way across the estate which is private with no public access. All of this is further indication of an ancient manorial ownership.

GHOSTS.

As an afterword, for those of you that are supernaturally minded, Great Hyde Hall may be the haunt of no less than three ghosts.

The most well documented ghost belongs to Sir John Jocelyn 3rd Baronet (1689 – 1741). Sir John wished to be buried with his favourite horse in the churchyard of Great St. Mary's. Not surprisingly though, this request was refused by the church and Sir John was finally buried (possibly without his horse, stories differ) within the grounds of Hyde Hall. This burial took place in un-consecrated ground near to the main drive. It is said that on dark nights Sir John can be seen riding his horse along this main drive.

In the 1980s, the American rock singer Suzi Quatro lived for a time at Hyde Hall. She is reported as saying that one of the rooms was haunted by a ghost named Richard. Could this be the ghost of Richard Josslyn (1528 – 1575) in who's time the was house built?

There are also stories of the ghost of an unnamed little girl who is sometimes seen wandering lost.

REFERENCES.

Blair, P, (1938) *The Place Names of Hertfordshire*. St. Albans History.

Eerie Place. *Great Hyde Hall, Sawbridgeworth*. eerieplace.com

Hertfordshire County Council, *Great Hyde Hall*. www.hertfordshire.gov.uk

Historic England. *Great Hyde Hall*. Historicengland.org.uk

Lindstrum, D, (1972) *Sir Jeffry Wyattville Architect to the King*. Oxford University Press.

Sawbridgeworth Fire Brigade. *Archive Photographs*. www.sawbridgeworthfirebrigade.co.uk

Wikipedia.

Flt Lt Douglas Coe BSc RAFVR(T) Ret'd.

November 2018.