

# EASTCOTE HOUSE GROUNDS

*A Brief History & Tree Guide*



## **EASTCOTE HOUSE GARDENS**

### **Eastcote House and the Hawtrey family**

Until Eastcote House finally closed its doors in 1962 and was demolished two years later there had been a house on the site for at least four hundred and fifty and probably five hundred years. The first dwelling, recorded in 1507, belonged to the Walleston family 'and was known as Hopkyttes. About the year 1525 Ralph Hawtrey left his parents home at Chequers in Buckinghamshire, now the country house of the Prime Ministers of this country, and settled in Eastcote after marrying Winifred Walleston and inheriting Hopkyttes. Although Eastcote House when we last saw it had a plain Georgian facade, this concealed a much older building dating in part from the late 16th century no doubt replacing the original Walleston house. No part of the house remains today except that there are stones incorporated in the adjacent rock garden which look remarkably like the tops of the Tuscan columns which supported the portico to the house and there is an ancient cill plate in the refurbished Great Barn at Manor Farm which is rumoured to be a re-used ceiling beam from the house.

Ralph Hawtrey's arrival in Eastcote in the early 16th century was the start of a long family connection with the district. Whereas the history of our two other great houses, Haydon Hall and High Grove, shows a succession of unrelated occupiers, Eastcote House was in the ownership and occupied by the Hawtreys and their descendants continuously for over 350 years, with the exception of a short period in the mid 19th century when the house was let. They became extensive landowners and persons of great local importance. The last of the family at the house was Francis Hawtrey Deane who left in 1878 although the family ownership of the house and farmland continued until the early part of this century. The house was subsequently let to a variety of persons one of whom was Sir Samuel Morton Peto railway and building contractor responsible, with others, for the building of the Houses of Parliament.

### **The Stables**

Between the house and the walled garden lay the stables, coachhouse, outside service quarters, stores etc., ranged round a courtyard open towards the road. Of these buildings the stables, dated to the early 17th century, still remain although the building has been refronted using thin bricks and incorporating old timbers. The paved yard also remains as it does at Haydon Hall. A screen of yew trees designed to hide the working quarters from the promenaders in the grounds and chosen no doubt because of their evergreen foliage and their long life, still exist, again as it does at Haydon Hall.



*Eastcote House just prior to demolition.*

## **The Dovecote**

Dovecotes generally are interesting; buildings with an ancient history, Until the development in the 18th century of root crops, winter feed for cattle was scarce and as a result only breeding pairs could be kept and the rest were slaughtered and salted down. It was soon realised that the fresh meat deficiency could be made good in some measure by the keeping of pigeons and this led to the building of dovecotes some of which date from an early age. They were mostly circular buildings with rows of niches let into the inside walls for the nests. Access to the nests was via a ladder supported on the arm of a stout central post pivoted at the top and bottom called a potence® The square ivy-clad dovecote at Eastcote House dates from the 1700's although much renewal has occurred. The square turret is now clad with wavy-edged boarding and the small dormer window entrance half way down the slope of the roof has gone. The ivy has been cut back at the top and reveals the slight overhang of the roof, the brick dentil course and the shaped wooden brackets

The building of dovecotes was heavily restricted and normally only permitted to the lord of the manor. One of the early Hawtreys built himself a dovecote at Eastcote House without permission but, presumably because of his standing with Kings College Cambridge, the lords of the manor at that time, he was forgiven and a licence for the building was granted in 1601. The present building is likely to be a replacement of the earlier one. It still retains its potence. Manor Farm, Ruislip at one time possessed a dovecote as shown on a map of 1750.

## **The Walled Garden**

The antiquity and extent of walled gardens may be judged by the fact that one existed at Nonsuch in Henry VIII time with walls 14 ft high. Their provision received encouragement in the mid 18th century by “Capability” Brown's robust method of landscape gardening sweeping all flower and fruit growing out of the way and into enclosures. The walls of the garden at Eastcote House are listed as 17th century and there is much evidence to show that continuous repair and maintenance including the bricking up of garden doors has been carried out over the centuries. On the other hand there are still a great number of the thin red bricks usually associated with the Tudor period incorporated in the walls and some of these are even less in thickness than the 2 inches usually associated with that period. In the absence of documentary evidence the date of the walled garden must remain uncertain but one cannot but wonder whether the illegal building of the original Elizabethan dovecote does not provide a clue. In any event the walled garden remains a splendid feature of the area well worthy of the care and attention given to it by the Eastcote Residents Association, the Conservation Panel and the Local Authority.

The triangular enclosure at the entrance to the Walled Garden at one time contained lean-to glasshouses on the north wall and there are the remnants of an orchard. Lining the upper boundary is a neat line of coppiced hazel, an essential component in olden times of wattle and daub walling.

## **The Grounds**

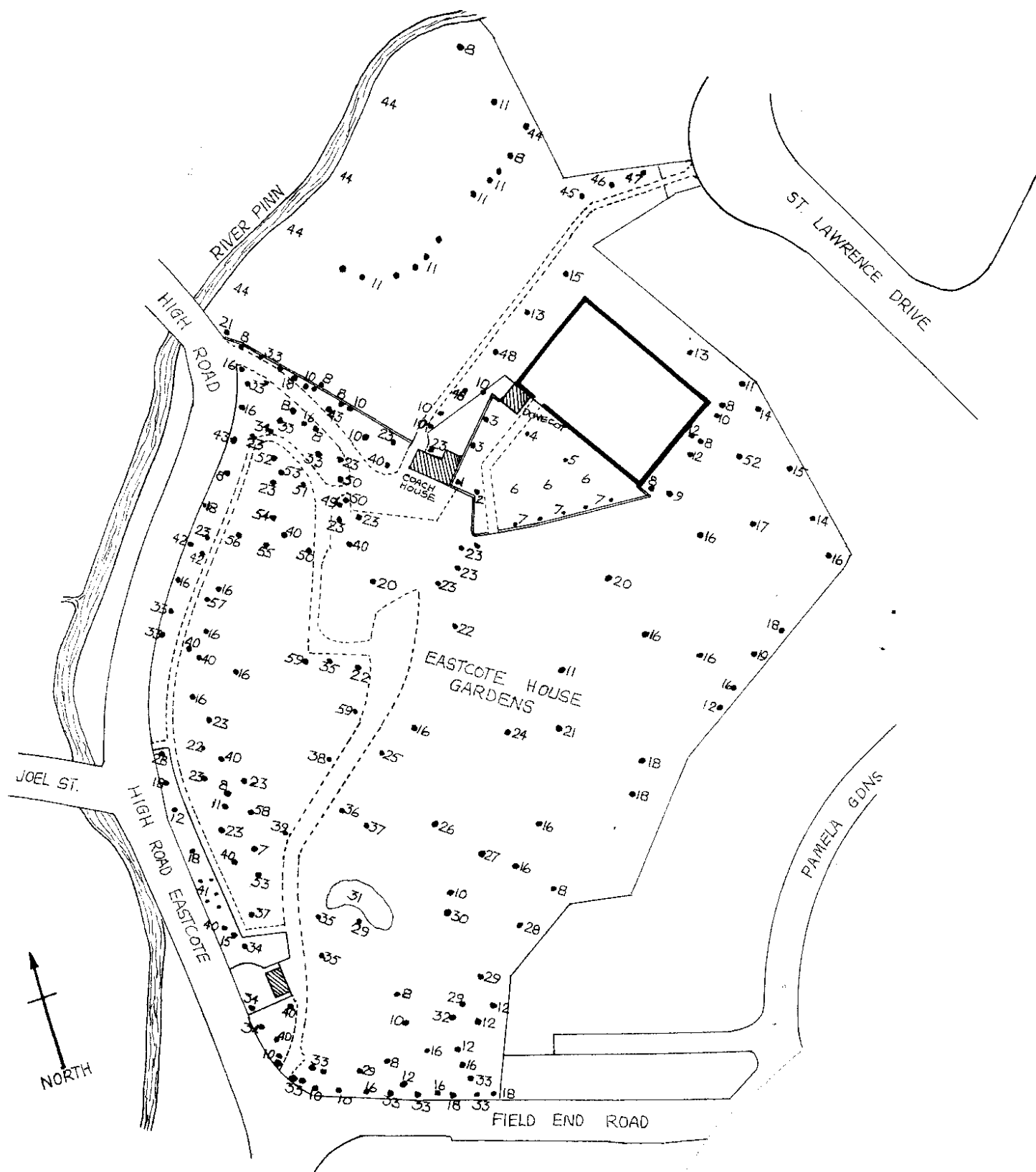
It has to be remembered that until the mid 1930's Eastcote House was set in farmland. Park Farm, part 16th century, in Field End Road was no doubt the home farm of the estate and the fields in between were unenclosed and planted with trees to give a parklike effect outside the comparatively small grounds of the house. Several of these magnificent oaks still exist in St Lawrence Drive. In other directions views are obtained to the north, across the Pinn, to the green fields of Joel Street Farm and Haste Hill.

There is little doubt that the grounds have been subject to continued change over the years. The National Trust say that not one of their stately homes remain in their original setting due to the change in garden fashion and the same would have applied to Eastcote House grounds on a minor scale.

The architect Mr F.H. Hansford FRIBA thought that the sloping grounds to the north of the house was at one time a terraced garden with the main entrance that side. This is the entrance drive which contains the rather mysterious Sarsen stones found scattered over the district. (There is one in the grounds of Highgrove). The circulating walk round the garden still exists in part on the north side but on the south it has become almost wholly obliterated.

The process of change and improvement has happily continued in latter times, for example the trees we have lost have been replaced and augmented by others.

The scheme of linking Long Meadow into Eastcote House Garden across the Pinn has improved our enjoyment considerably. Part of this area used to be Well Green and was waste of the manor until the Enclosure Act of 1804 when it was allotted to Eastcote House. Although the destruction of Eastcote House is always to be regretted it is good to know that there is preserved for public enjoyment not only a pleasant and interesting park but one whose history is an important and integral part of "our village".



# Trees in Eastcote House Gardens 1981

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 1. Bay                      | 31.Elizabeth Copse (see footnote)       |
| 2. Eucalyptus               | <u>TCOTS</u> HC 32.Goat Willow (Sallow) |
| 3. Fig                      | 33.Horse Chestnut                       |
| 4. Mulberry                 | 34.Portuguese Laurel                    |
| 5. Walnut                   | 35.Tulip Tree                           |
| 6. Apples (cultivated)      | 36.Dawn Redwood                         |
| 7. Hazel                    | 37.Lawsons Cypress                      |
| 8. Ash                      | 38.Gean                                 |
| 9. Cockspur Thorn           | 39.Italian Alder                        |
| 10.Sycamore                 | 40.Holly                                |
| 11.Hawthorn                 | 41.Elm                                  |
| 12.Hornbeam                 | 42.False Acacia (Robinia)               |
| 13.“Paul’s” Scarlet Thorn   | 43.Plane                                |
| 14.Purple Leaved Crab Apple | 44.Alder                                |
| 15.Whitebeam                | 45.Willow                               |
| 16.Oak                      | 46.Purple Leaved Plum                   |
| 17.Silver Fir               | 47.Crab Apple                           |
| 18.Lime                     | 48.Medlar                               |
| 19.Beech                    | 49.Laurel                               |
| 20.Weeping Ash              | 50.Box                                  |
| 21.Bird Cherry              | 51.Austrian Pine                        |
| 22.Cherry                   | 52.Lombardy Poplar                      |
| 23.Yew                      | 53.Irish Yew                            |
| 24.Red Oak                  | 54.Laburnum                             |
| 25.Wellingtonia             | 55.Spruce                               |
| 26.Red Buckeye              | 56.Monkey Puzzle (Chilean Pine)         |
| 27.Service Tree             | 57.Mountain Ash (Rowan)                 |
| 28.Turkey Oak               | 58.Cypress                              |
| 29.Scots Pine               | 59.Ornamental Peach                     |
| 30.Thuja                    |   |

## **“Elizabeth Copse”**

<b>E</b>	<b>Eucalyptus Gunnii</b>	<b>Blue Gum</b>
<b>L</b>	<b>Liquidambar_Styraciflua</b>	<b>Sweet Gum</b>
<b>I</b>	<b>Ilex Altarclarensis ‘Golden King’</b>	<b>Holly</b>
<b>Z</b>	<b>Zelkova Serrata</b>	<b>Huckleberry</b>
<b>A</b>	<b>Acer Rubrum ‘Schlesingeri’</b>	<b>Maple</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>Betula Costarte</b>	<b>Birch</b>
<b>E</b>	<b>Eucalyptus Gunnii</b>	<b>Blue Gum</b>
<b>H</b>	<b>Hamametis Mollis</b>	<b>Witch Hazel</b>