

Conservation Area Statement - Craigweil House, Aldwick

(1) Historical Background

Craigweil House

Although demolished in 1939 there are very important Royal connections with the property and the locality.

Craigweil House, originally named "The Pavilion" was built in 1806 for the Countess of Newburgh.

In 1882, Dr. Stocker, changed the name of the property to "Craigweil House". In 1915, Sir Arthur Du Cros, Bart, J.P. (1871 - 1955) bought the house and wooded estate of some 30 acres. He was awarded the Baronetcy in 1916 in recognition of his war efforts which included the introduction of the Motor Ambulance Service. He was founder and President of the Dunlop Rubber Company and founder and director of the Austin Motor Company. In addition he pioneered the pneumatic tyre and was the first person to use them in a race in a Queens College, Belfast, sports competition in 1889.

Sir Arthur was a Conservative Member of Parliament for 14 years, representing Hastings (1908 - 1918) and then Clapham (1918 - 1922). In 1919 he reconstructed Craigweil House in a lavish style, adding a wing to the east and west sides so that every bedroom had a sea view. The very latest technology was introduced. Seawater was pumped to every bathroom; and an electric lift served the three floors, an electric organ was installed (with music piped around the house), and a telephone system run throughout the house - all powered by an electric generator located in the grounds.

Sir Arthur Du Cros was very much at the centre of politics and he is credited with having been the founder of the modern Conservative Party and it is known that two Prime Ministers - Bonar Law and Asquith enjoyed his hospitality at Craigweil House.

Royalty at Craigweil House

King George V became ill and lung surgery was carried out on 12th December 1928. His recovery was slow and on the 22nd January 1929 Buckingham Palace issued the statement saying "*it has been realised by the King's medical advisers that, prior to the establishment of convalescence, there would arrive a time when sea air would be necessary in order to secure the continuation of His Majesty's progress*". The Palace statement went on "*with the knowledge, a careful search was made for a residence not only suitable in itself but possessing the necessary attributes of close proximity to the sea, southern exposure, protection from wind, privacy and reasonable access to and from London. The residence selected was Craigweil House, Bognor, placed at His Majesty's disposal by Sir Arthur Du Cros, Baronet*".

On the 9th February 1929, His Majesty the King came to Craigweil House in Aldwick to join Queen Mary who had travelled on ahead. Garaging and stabling of horses was made available in Clock House, which stands today but now converted into terraced houses.

On the 14th May 1929, just before returning to Windsor Castle, Queen Mary planted a Blue Cedar Atlantica Glauca tree in recognition of the royal visit. The tree is still to be seen as a beacon, towering over the area in its grey/blue magnificence and protected by a Tree Preservation Order.

By the end of February the King's condition had improved and he granted an audience to his Prime Minister, Mr. Stanley Baldwin.

The Prime Minister was accompanied by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York who were ceremonially appointed to office by His Majesty. He then took Holy Communion with them.

On the 1st April 1929, Easter Monday, Kneller Hall Military Band played in the grounds of Craigweil House and the King made his first public appearance when, upon the conclusion of the morning, open air concert, he walked to the sea wall at the bottom of the garden and greeted what some report say hundreds, yet the majority say, were thousands of well wishers who cheered loudly as he raised his hat and expressed the hope that they had enjoyed the music.

On the 19th April 1929, Major Henry Seagrove, holder of the world's land and water speed records was knighted by the King at Craigweil House.

During their stay at Craigweil House, Queen Mary would often walk along The Drive, through the estate to Barrack Lane and through the village of Aldwick. She would drive to Bognor Town, Cosham and Southsea on shopping trips and in Portsmouth she is known to have visited antique shops and have paid a courtesy visit to the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Navy in the Dockyard.

It is chronicled that the Queen also travelled to Amberley, Arundel Castle, Goodwood House, Petworth, Hove Museum and to Brighton's Royal Pavilion. She regularly attended services at Pagham Church and twice attended morning service at Chichester Cathedral.

Royal visits to Craigweil House abounded as the King's health improved and these included the Prince of Wales (later King Edwards VIII); the Duke and Duchess of York (later to be King George VI and Queen Elizabeth); Prince Olaf (later to be King Olaf of Norway); Princess Mary (daughter of the King, who later became the Princess Royal and Countess of Harewood); the Duke of Gloucester (the son of the King); Prince Axel of Denmark among many lesser royals, not least of which, perhaps was Queen Elizabeth, his granddaughter and the present Queen Elizabeth II, then 3 years of age.

Princess Elizabeth had never been to the seaside before and was busily engaged making sand castles with buckets and spades which Queen Mary, reportedly, travelled from Craigweil to buy in Bognor Town.

On the 15th May 1929, with His Majesty's health continuing to improve, together with Queen Mary, he left Craigweil House and returned to Windsor. Within weeks, His Majesty was graciously pleased to accede to the request of Bognor Urban District Council to grant it the dignity of "Regis" and so was created "Bognor Regis".

Other Historical Connections

Lord Bernstein of Craigweil, one time head of Granada Television, lived at "Five Trees", 78 The Drive, until the 1970's and is thought to have taken the title from Craigweil when he was elevated to the peerage. He received a Life Peerage in 2006 as a Socialist Peer. The House was sold by Lord Bernstein circa 1985.

The Cater family, founders of the large grocery business empire lived at "Silvergates", 52 The Drive.

Rita Hayworth, the actress, regularly visited "Kingswood", 62 The Drive accompanied by Ali Khan, the son of the Aga Khan.

John Snagg, the wartime broadcaster, lived at "Little Fellows" during the wartime years that Du Cros' daughter was away. He famously broadcast the landing on the beaches at D-Day and was a contemporary of Alvar Liddel and Stuart Hibberd.

Sir Maurice Jenks was Du Cros' son-in-law and lived at Little Fellows and was Lord Mayor of the City of London in 1931.

Dorothy Perkins (High street chain of ladies shops, many subsidiaries and mills in Yorkshire and Lancashire) founders and owners, the Farndon family, lived at " Kings Lawn", 38 Kingsway. The last survivor, Mrs. Matti Farndon died in October 1995.

Sir Ronald Howe, then the recently retired Assistant Commissioner in charge of the Metropolitan Police Criminal Investigation Branch, lived at "Queenslawn" 36 Kingsway , in which grounds sits the Blue Cedar Atlantica Glauca tree planted by Queen Mary.

The Marchioness of Cambridge had "Three Ways" built at Canons Close, for her occasional use.

Residential Development

Sir Arthur Du Cros fell on financial hard times following the Stock Market disaster which greatly damaged his business interests and he was obliged to sell Craigweil House. He continued to live, though, on the estate in Craigweil Manor and then the "Beehive" in Canons Close until his death in 1955. The

Du Cros link to Craigweil did not end there because his daughter and son-in-law continued to live in "Little Fellows", 31 The Drive, gifted to her by her father, until September 1962 when she left the area.

Sir Arthur paved the way for the creation of a superb private marine estate by appointing Mr. Josiah Auty, FRIBA, a Chartered Architect of distinction and based in Chichester, to oversee the whole project. His brief was first to create the road layout of the proposed estate to be known as "The Craigweil House Estate". That original road layout remains intact today, although the land immediately to the west of the white gates across The Drive was developed at a later date and known as The Barns Rock Estate and did not form part of the Craigweil House Estate.

Auty went on to design "Little Fellows", at 31 The Drive, for Sir Arthur and this he gifted to his daughter. He also designed "Green Oaks" (now "Kimberley") at 1 The Drive and this went to another family member. Each property is of Arts and Craft and Tudoresque style and each stands to this day. At that time Auty also designed "Kings Lodge" at 1 The Kingsway, the initial estate office, and that property also remains intact.

The estate was described in the sales brochure of 1933 as having "evolved from the world renowned Estate of Craigweil House. The Estate of some 70 acres lies 2 miles to the west of the town (Bognor), open to the English Channel, flanked by a wide range of sands, aloof and sequestered, bathed in sunshine the beauty and exclusiveness of the Estate .. will be shared by that fortunate community of buyers who establish their homes at Craigweil .. ornamented by forest trees and other delightful features, of which each house erected will have its share, whilst elsewhere on the Estate the surroundings are park like - a notable contrast to the common form of development. Residencies are constructed from designs and under the supervision of the architect (Josiah Auty FRIBA), whose professional advice is at the disposal of purchasers".

It goes on to say "Restrictions have been imposed which, without being onerous, will serve to preserve the surroundings from uncontrolled or undesirable development. The roads through the Estate have on either side deep verges, grass - studded with trees and flowering shrubs, thus perpetuating an environment of great charm. Working upon a wide and generous plan, there are available a hundred or so houses and sites actually having beach frontages (in the Deeds, above High-Water Level) have already been sold and houses of magnificent dimensions have been erected there".

Finally, the brochure states "the Craigweil Estate is unique, an adjective previously avoided in this "forward", but inevitable in the end if justice is to be done to this wonderful property. A shopping centre on the Estate is nearing completion, when it will be possible to purchase most household requisites at competitive prices. And an up-to-date motor service station, with all modern appliances, forms part of the Estate shopping centre."

(2) Description of the Conservation Area

General

Given the planned nature of the estate the boundaries are based on the 1937 layout prepared by J. Auty. Most of the estate still bears the sense of being laid out as one unified piece, the street landscape tree framework intending to create the rather "Arcadian" setting for house design that would echo after the arts and craft and Tudoresque, and of the 1930's aspirations - "a house in the country by the sea". Josiah Auty's design reflected this.

The estate has developed over 70 years so that there is a strong mixture of styles and ages of properties. There is generally a low-density character in the estate particularly in Kingsway, The Drive, and Queensway with space between buildings being important to that character. The estate is predominantly characterised with residential dwellings of one and two storeys, the three storeys Coastguard Parade being the only notable exception. House sizes vary in size and it is interesting to note that the original specification for the estate indicated "*the houses so built fall into two categories - the larger, higher price houses erected on a substantial plot on the one hand; on the other a smaller residence, occupying a less extensive plot and accordingly available at prices which make them an attractive proposition for those in a position to maintain a pied-a-terre by the sea without giving up a London or suburban residence.*" This is reflected in the slightly higher density of Wychwood Close leading to the lower densities of The Drive, Kingsway and Queensway.

The original house designs sought to embrace some of the new technology, factory made components such as Critall steel windows for instance. The surviving original parts of the Craigweil House do still reflect that overall ideal.

Original Sussex wrought ironwork is seen on the gates of many properties within the estate and a distinguishing characteristic on many beach frontages is the traditional Tamarisk hedging. Herringbone and tile creasing are important features of the Aulty designs and the traditional construction materials are of local stock bricks and plain clay tiled roofs.

The sense of spaciousness throughout the conservation area is enhanced by the general absence of road parking in tandem with open or landscaped verges.

A unique and outstanding feature of Craigweil House is that the full length of its beach is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Barrack Lane

The western boundary of this area fronts Barrack Lane with its grass verges, mature trees and pavement. The properties are set back from the road, in a regular building line. There is a mixture of single storey and two storey

properties. Soft landscaping at the front of these properties contributes to the semi-rural character of the street.

The entrance to Craigweil House is through the imposing and distinctive early 1930's piers surmounted by stone lions with shields. They are a distinctive feature of the street scenes of both Barrack Lane and Kingsway.

The pattern of development changes at the southern end where the Coastguard's Parade of shops provides a focal point. The Parade is of interest in that it was clearly part of the planned estate and provided local shopping facilities for the new residents. The formality of the curved Parade forms a contrast with the low-density development further along the road. A distinctive line of trees characterises the Parade and they help to delineate the curve in the road.

Kingsway

At its western end Kingsway is lined with mature trees, shrubs and hedging dividing the main carriageway from the service roads from the north and south leading to the properties. These pathways are gravelled and along with the trees create a pleasant and distinctive enclosure of the road. A uniform building line dominates the pattern of development along both sides of the road. The properties illustrate distinctive individual designs, expressing a character of grandeur in many instances. The design and style of the properties does vary, illustrating the time periods within which the individual properties were constructed.

The character of Kingsway changes slightly at the curve in the road; the grass verges widen creating a sense of spaciousness. Boundary treatment of the properties varies; there is a variety of brick boundary walls, fences and some properties have open frontages. Younger planting is visible on the verges and miniature trees are present.

Houses are set back from the verges throughout Kingsway with spacing between properties both at ground and first floor levels providing a sense of spaciousness.

Wychwood Walk and Close

Grass verges with no pavement characterise the roadside of this area constructed from 1934, enhancing the informal character of the estate. There is a predominance of buildings of a similar shape, with detailing and fenestration providing a visual continuity in the street scene. Distinguishing and attractive features of this area are the leaded roofs to a number of entrance porches. The sense of a planned estate, with a distinctive continental feel prevails. A regular building line characterises the roads and the curvature in the road at the eastern end of Wychwood Close where it joins to Kingsway adds to the informality of the estate.

The Drive

Entering The Drive from Barrack Lane a regular building line prevails, with some properties on the northern side sharing sweeping driveways. Wide landscaped verges and mature, established trees dominate the street scene and the slight curve and camber of the road contribute to the informal character.

Leading off The Drive is Craigweil Manor, a modern development of bungalows leading the Craigweil Manor complex. The former Water Tower is a striking building along this road, visible on the skyline from other areas of the estate.

Towards its centre section, The Drive curves on approaching the gateway dividing the western and eastern sections. Beyond the gateway, eastwards, the mature trees, planned from the beginning, and shrubs lining the roads and in the gardens create a pleasing sense of enclosure. Properties are set a good distance back from the road in well-established grounds. Boundary treatment along this part of The Drive varies, high walls enclose some properties, others hedges and oak cleft fencing.

There are several imposing buildings in this section, including 'Silvergates', 52 The Drive, a Grade 2 Listed Building designed by Ernest B. Glanfield FRIBA and constructed in 1934.

The environment of The Drive at the eastern end opens up and the trees become more dispersed and the grass verges widen. As mentioned before, the eastern end of The Drive has historical importance; King George the Fifth (accompanied by Queen Mary) spent time in 1929 recuperating from a serious illness at Craigweil House which was 'put at the King's disposal' by the owner and later - founder of the estate, Sir Arthur Du Cros. Craigweil House was demolished in 1939 but was located adjacent to the footpath leading to the Clock House. The Clock House, formerly the Royal Stables, is now 5 dwellings.

(3) Opportunities for Improvement

Possible future opportunities for improvement could include the following:-

- a) Establish a planting programme to reflect the original concept of an "Arcadian" estate, with particular emphasis on the establishment of avenues of trees.
- b) The use of Article 4 Directions to:-
 - (i) Prevent the enclosure of verges;
 - (ii) Prevent the removal of important elements and features of buildings which make a positive contribution to the character of the area; and
 - (iii) Prevent the hard surfacing of front gardens and verges.