

= Swakeleys House =

Swakeleys House is a Grade I listed 17th century mansion in Ickenham , London Borough of Hillingdon , built in 1638 for the future Lord Mayor of London , Sir Edmund Wright . Originally the home of the lords of the manor of Swakeleys , writer Samuel Pepys visited the house twice . The property changed hands many times over the years and at one time was home to the Foreign & Commonwealth Office Sports Association . Large sections of the grounds were sold off in 1922 and developed as suburban housing .

Following a long period of decline , the house was purchased in the 1980s by a group of local residents and restored as part of its conversion to offices . It became a focal point for Ickenham during the biennial Ickenham Festival when the grounds were used to host the main gala day , until the house 's new owners restricted access in 2014 . Swakeleys is open in part once a year to the public as part of Open House London . Planning permission was granted in 2014 for the conversion of the house to form one large residential property .

= = History = =

= = = Construction = = =

The manor of Swakeleys was named after Robert Swalcliffe , 14th century owner of the manor , who is also recorded as " Swalcleve " . John Charlton later took ownership of Swakeleys but a relative of his was subsequently killed during the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485 , while fighting on the side of Richard III . The victor of the battle , Henry VII , subsequently granted Charlton 's widow a life interest in the manor , although he gave possession to Sir Thomas Bouchier . The Bouchiers later passed Swakeleys to Sir John Pecche , from whom it then passed to the Earl of Devon , Henry Courteney , then Ralph Pexall .

The house was built for Sir Edmund Wright , who became Lord Mayor of London in 1640 . The brick structure dates from between 1629 and 1638 . In 1629 , Wright purchased the grounds from John Bingley , who had undertaken extensive remedial work on an existing 13th century structure in the grounds ? probably timber framed and wattle filled . Bingley 's alterations were said to have been detrimental to the condition of the house and grounds . He was accused of driving away almost all the birds in the dovehouse , and of pulling up many healthy fruit bearing trees from the orchard . The house had a moat , which Bingley filled in , believing the water to be unhealthy , at which point he also had a defensive brick wall built around the house .

The house is built in an " H " shape with a central section flanked by four projecting wings . Swakeleys was built of English Bond brick , with its windows framed with stone . Several of the exterior rain water heads show the year construction was completed along with the initials " E.W. " for Sir Edmund Wright . To the west of the house , a large lawn stretches out to what is now known as Swakeleys Lake . The main routes leading to the house have since become the residential streets Swakeleys Road (then Back Lane) , The Grove and The Avenue .

Inside , the main staircase is made of oak , and the fireplaces of marble . The 42 foot (13 m) long by 23 foot (7 m) wide Great Chamber , also known as the Ball Room and the Long Gallery , originally had a pinewood floor . This was covered by new flooring after it became worn over time . The room is 16 foot (4 m) high , with the ceiling arranged in fifteen panels . Within the room is a wooden screen made for Sir James Harrington in 1655 by woodcarver John Colt and painted to resemble stone . On top of the screen sits a bust of Charles I flanked by two lions . In the Dining Room , the panelling is believed to be from the original house , which Sir Edmund was so impressed by that he had it incorporated into the new building .

= = = Subsequent ownership = = =

Wright 's son in law Sir James Harrington took over ownership from Sir Edmund .

Harrington was a commissioner at the trial of Charles I and fled to France in 1660 upon the restoration of the monarchy . His wife , Lady Harrington , sold the house to Sir Robert Vyner .

Samuel Pepys visited the house in 1665 and noted some of its features , particularly the busts of Charles I , Lord Essex and Lord Fairfax and described the house as " a very pleasant place " . He visited the house twice to collect money on behalf of Charles II from Sir Robert Vyner who was a well @-@ known goldsmith . On one occasion , Sir Robert showed Pepys the body of a black boy who had worked at the house and died of tuberculosis . The body had been dried in an oven and kept in an open coffin and was then displayed to visitors . Sir Robert later became Lord Mayor of London in 1674 . After the house became empty in 1923 , workmen unsealed a cupboard near the servants ' quarters where it was believed the body was stored , though they found no trace of it .

Pepys wrote of his first visit :

Sir Robert died in 1688 , when Swakeleys passed to his nephew Thomas Vyner , whose son Robert sold it to Benjamin Lethiullier in 1741 on behalf of his sister @-@ in @-@ law 's son Benjamin . In 1750 , Lethiullier 's son sold the house to the Reverend Thomas Clarke , at that time rector of Ickenham . Clarke 's son Thomas Truesdale Clarke succeeded his father in ownership of the house in 1796 . He was later found drowned in the River Pinn , which ran through the Swakeleys estate . Although the river was only 20 inches (51 cm) deep , it was enough to cover his face and therefore cause drowning . An inquest was held which refused to return a suicide verdict as the coroner believed such a ruling would stigmatise the Clarke family .

Edward Walford also wrote about Swakeleys House in 1893 , when he described it as " the most interesting Jacobean house in the whole county of Middlesex . The gardens are quaint and trim , laid out in something of the old @-@ fashioned style and a long avenue of elms adorns the front of the house to the south . " The avenue was developed as the residential road The Grove , though the elms were killed by Dutch elm disease in the 1960s .

While Albert Gilbey was the main tenant of the house in the 1890s , the All England Croquet Championships were held in the grounds . Gilbey later became High Sheriff of Middlesex in 1912 . The estate became significantly smaller following the disposal of 1 @, @ 382 acres (559 ha) of the estate for development at an auction on 5 July 1922 . Warren Road , Swakeleys Drive , Court Road , Milton Road , Ivy House Road , The Avenue and Thornhill Road (originally named Park Road) were constructed while other land bordering the River Pinn was designated as public open land . Humphrey John Talbot bought the house to avoid it being demolished and eventually sold it to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Sports Association in 1927 , upon the condition he could remain as a tenant on the first floor . Swakeleys was requisitioned by the military during the Second World War when a searchlight battery operated within the grounds . The Foreign Office retained the house until 1955 when it was sold to the London Postal Region Sports Club . The club staged cricket matches with local teams from Ickenham and Uxbridge .

= = = Restoration = = =

Three local residents , Keith Chamberlain , Paul Newson and Simon Kreiger , formed Swakeleys House Ltd as a non @-@ profit company to purchase the house in 1980 following a long period of deterioration . They then restored its key features and constructed new office buildings within the grounds to help finance the restoration works . In 1984 , a 25 year lease was negotiated with the Bristol @-@ Myers Squibb company and the house was opened to the public for three days a year . HRH Prince Philip the Duke of Edinburgh officially opened the newly refurbished house on 7 May 1985 . Swakeleys House Ltd went on to win the 1988 Country House Award for best conversion of a listed country house .

During 2012 , scenes for the film Great Expectations , and the television adaptation of Mr Stink , were filmed within the house .

= = = New ownership = = =

The Bristol @-@ Myers Squibb lease expired in 2009 and Swakeleys was sold to new owners who

wished to reduce public access to one day a year , as part of Open House London . This new proposal was accepted by the London Borough of Hillingdon in June 2010 .

In 2014 , the new owner of Swakeleys , CES Properties (Ickenham) , received planning permission from Hillingdon Council to convert the house back into a single large residence , including 23 en @-@ suite bedrooms , a party pavilion and a stable . CES Properties placed restrictions on the staging of the Ickenham Festival that year , leading to the festival 's organising committee relocating its planned gala day and evening events to the nearby Vyners School . The festival had previously used the grounds of the house as a focal point for events . CES Properties placed the house up for sale in February 2015 for £ 45 million .