

Pishiobury house drawing

By Stephen Vincent



Within the fine art collection of the Bishop's Stortford Museum is a comparatively small, framed picture depicting Pishiobury House in Sawbridgeworth. Measuring 12cm x 8cm, it is a pen and ink drawing with watercolour tinting, on paper.

This small drawing is in fact a work by the English architectural and landscape draughtsman John Preston Neale (1780 – 1847). It is one of a series of English country houses which he did in the early nineteenth century and was illustrated in his 1821 publication of *Views of Seats of Noblemen and Gentlemen*. This drawing would therefore have been penned in about 1820.

It was part of a collection of 45 works by Neale bequeathed by the historical architect Walter Ison to 10 public collections. It has since been copied and engraved by various artists and then sold on independently as a print. Many copies are altered to such an extent that they bear little resemblance to the original and so the depth of feeling as experienced by Neale is lost. Its purchase was made by the Bishop's Stortford Museum through the Art Fund in 2006.

Aside from being an important drawing, it also represents a snapshot in time, the landscape as seen and captured by the artist before the age of the camera.

The site dates back to the Middle Ages. The Manor of Pishobury (then spelt differently) was sold by Lord Scope to Henry VIII in 1534 who then granted it to Queen Anne (Boleyn). The manor house fell into disrepair and was rebuilt in 1585 by Walter Mildmay. Following a fire to this Late Tudor re-build, James Wyett in 1782 was commissioned by Jeremiah Milles III to remodel the house, with the park grounds to be refurbished in the Landscape Style. The work on the park has been attributed to the Landscape Architect Lancelot (Capability) Brown who actually died in 1783, halfway through the project which was completed in 1784. How much input Capability Brown had in this his final project is unknown, but his style of landscape stripping and set feature additions remains in evidence today.



It is the 1784 remodelled Pishiobury House that can be seen in the background of the drawing, viewed through the then relatively recent open landscaped park. The feel of the landscape has been captured by the artist to reproduce a moment in time, near to 200 years ago.

The Pishiobury House drawing can be found in the Bishop's Stortford Museum.

The Bishop's Stortford Museum is your first choice for discovering the history of the town. With a mix of local history displays, holiday activities and themed walks and talks, we have something to offer the whole family. Admission to the museum is free and is open Monday –Friday 10am to 5pm and from 10am – 4pm on Saturday's.

Researched and written by Stephen Vincent.

Stephen is retired and has volunteered at the museum for five years, and worked for another museum prior to Bishop's Stortford. He has a lifelong interest in geology, archaeology and history and over the years has undertaken extensive fieldwork and associated research.