

**THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE GARDENS TRUST RESEARCH  
AND RECORDING PROJECT, 2014–15**

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# THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

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### INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust (BGT) was founded in 1997 and has been a Registered Charity since 2003. We cover the historic county of Bucks (pre-1974 boundaries). We have 183 members in the county and beyond, as well as links with other local and national organisations and authorities.

Our mission statement is “to record and conserve the gardens and parks of historic Buckinghamshire” and “to aid in the creation and restoration of gardens, parks and green spaces within the county”. We do this by communicating to the public information through lectures, exhibitions, presentations and publications about Bucks historic designed landscapes. We also strive to inform decision-makers about the significance of specific sites based on our local knowledge and experience. We aim to support the conservation efforts related to historic gardens and parks for future generations. One key aspect is in training volunteers to be skilled researchers and recorders for our Research and Recording Project. Our volunteers are drawn from BGT and the wider community of similar groups including local history and archaeology societies (including BAS).

Gardens and parks are intrinsic to our national heritage. There has perhaps never been a time when there has been as much interest in them, yet with unprecedented demands and pressures for change. Garden history encapsulates an amalgamation of art, archaeology, architecture, garden design, landscape, horticulture and social history. Current and future generations will benefit from the preservation and recognition of these historical designed landscape resources. In this project we are creating a clear, rigorously reviewed and well-structured body of information including the significance of sites and their aesthetic design in order to disseminate this knowledge to the public and decision-makers who are involved in the management of and potential changes to these sites.

For the sites on which our project is focused, their history and design significance have been little recognised and poorly understood. Buckinghamshire’s rich and unique share of Britain’s endowment includes 37 recognized nationally important parks and gardens (included on the English Heritage *Register of Parks and Gardens of special historic interest* of some 1660 sites). Rather than address nationally important sites which are generally relatively well understood, our project targets some of the 400 locally significant sites identified and adopted by Bucks County Council in 1996 in their County Register Review, prioritising those which are at risk of change. These local sites are especially vulnerable to inappropriate management and developmental change due to a lack of information about their historical significance and the extent of their survival.

Our volunteers are trained to make visual surveys, interpret maps and illustrations and make site evaluations of the landscape design and its aesthetic. They also present written and illustrated reports on their findings. The volunteers receive plant identification training, particularly on key types of trees likely to be encountered in Bucks. The information generated by the project is being made available in printed form, and digitally to sources such as Buckinghamshire libraries (including BAS library), record offices, BCC and Milton Keynes Historic Environment Records (HER), and the web sites of BGT and UK Parks and Gardens Database.

Our methods are based on principles established initially by Historic England in their *Register of Parks and Gardens of special historic interest*, adapted by BGT to include ‘statements of significance’ in a format recognised in the National Planning Policy Framework. Thus our site dossiers are rigorously prepared and formatted to a professional standard that is well tried and tested for its purpose.

We gain our basic understanding of each site’s history with structured primary and secondary research, principally in the Centre for Bucking-

hamshire Studies (CBS). CBS holds most of the archive required for the research including relevant maps, images, printed references and documentary evidence, personal and family papers, photographs, social and county histories, architectural and county guides, sales catalogues and contemporary newspapers. The volunteers also search other archives and resources on-line.

Bucks County Council Historic Environment Record (HER) has been a great supporter of this project from the outset. The HER believes that the work we are doing is a valuable addition to the County resources. The HER also provides historic and archaeological data.

Volunteers are trained to use these materials to establish the historic development of sites and to help identify surviving historic features on the sites, including historic trees and shrubs, landscape and built structures and horticultural features. Collectively this work sets the framework for each site. It also forms the over-arching structure for the project as a whole because it enhances our understanding of the historic significance of sites and reinforces the importance of their continued survival.

In the pilot phase in 2014–15, largely funded by a generous Heritage Lottery Fund grant of some £9,000, we covered around 20 sites. We intend to select and visit a further 30 ‘high interest’ sites during the continuation project period 2015–17, for which we have been largely and very generously funded by the Finnis Scott Foundation and Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust, as well from BGT’s own funds.

The recording is in the form of a clearly set out and succinct report in a dossier of information including maps and images. It is available in print and digitally on our web site. Each dossier includes a brief history of the site’s landscape development based on research at CBS and other sources outlined above. The dossier provides a description of the current layout and what survives of the historical garden and park. The report is based on a format established as good practice by English Heritage in their national *Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of special historic significance*. The dossier includes current maps and photographs of key aspects taken on the BGT site visits and a boundary map showing the area of surviving historic interest. A statement of significance is provided to a set format, reflecting National Planning Policy Framework guidance. In

addition maps are included to record key features, planting and views. Many notable primary documents are associated with these sites, mostly held at the Centre for Bucks Studies. The most useful, particularly manuscript plans, images and written sources are referred to within the dossiers.

A key aim is for the completed recording to provide a current assessment of the historic garden and the horticultural significance of the site’s designed landscape. This perspective enables BGT and others to assess the value of each site as a heritage asset, not only within the county, but also in a national context.

#### SUMMARIES OF DESIGNED LANDSCAPES APPRAISED BY BGT 2014–15

The following are summaries of the historic interest of 20 designed landscapes appraised by the Bucks Gardens Trust Research and Recording Group in 2014–15, taken from the individual site dossiers. Below, the sites are arranged by broad site type (although not all fit neatly into categories and some overlap several) and their key historic and surviving interest is described. A pattern of historic interest and current significance is beginning to emerge, but it is early days to start drawing conclusions. We hope we will be able to draw more informed conclusions over the coming years as the body of information swells, and we will publish these in *Records* in due course. The full dossiers are available on the BGT web site: <http://www.bucksgardenstrust.org.uk/research-and-recording/our-research/>

#### Villas

##### *Alscot Lodge, Princes Risborough* (HER 1301106000)

A typical garden and pleasure ground for a small, Regency-style country villa developed in the 1830s from a farmstead with a small associated estate acquired by a local lawyer to become the focus of a Bucks hamlet. The mid-C19 2.5ha site is of a typical largely informal layout focussed on the detached villa set in the Vale of Aylesbury below the Chiltern scarp and on the Alscot Brook, widened in the mid-late C19 as a narrow lake (and since then further widened) and enclosed by a belt of mature ornamental trees. The extent

and survival of villa gardens is not well recorded and this is a good example at this scale, with an ensemble of typical features including gateways, boundary wall, a walled kitchen garden and stable yard which survives largely intact.

**Key feature:** lake enclosed by mature belt of ornamental trees.

***Brands House, High Wycombe***  
(HER 1292601000)

The 16ha gardens and park for a country villa, developed in the C18 and C19 from a farmstead. The largely C19 designed landscape is extensive considering the size of the house, and makes good use of the Chiltern setting. It survives largely intact as it had developed in phases by the early C20. The property is associated with several influential figures of Buckinghamshire. The extent and survival of villa gardens is not well recorded and this is a good example at this scale, with an ensemble of typical features which survives largely intact. It is one of a group of C19 villas and country houses located on hillsides around High Wycombe, developed to take advantage of an elevated position and extensive southerly Chiltern views, others nearby including Hughenden Manor, Rayners, and Castle Hill House (Wycombe Museum).

***Castle Hill House (Wycombe Museum)*** (HER 0060705000)

A Regency garden for a C16/C17 Chiltern farmhouse, remodelled and extended in the early C19 as a modest villa, with considerable significant archaeological evidence identified and varied potential. The 0.8ha garden is a typical layout focussed on a villa, which makes good use of the Chiltern setting, with formerly extensive views south and west over High Wycombe, now partially obscured by trees. The garden was previously considerably larger, including land now occupied by the adjacent C20 vicarage and the Haystacks area to the north, and south down as far as Castle Street. It is dominated by the extraordinary 10m high Mound, believed to originate as a medieval defensive structure (SAM). This was incorporated into the early C19 garden design as the most important feature, crowned by a lost Regency flint gothic folly viewing pavilion, recorded in photo-

graphs, whose site survives. The extent and survival of villa gardens is not well recorded, and this is a good example at this scale, with an ensemble of typical features, many of which survive, as well as the Mound. It is one of a group of C19 villas and country houses located on hillsides around High Wycombe, developed to take advantage of an elevated position and extensive southerly Chiltern views, others nearby including Hughenden Manor, Rayners, and Brands House.

**Key feature:** The mound and the site of the lost flint viewing pavilion/summerhouse on top, formerly with extensive views over High Wycombe.

***Horsenden Manor, near Princes Risborough***  
(HER 0032303000)

The 29ha pleasure grounds and park of a Regency country villa, on the site of a medieval and later manor house. A Civil War moat has been incorporated into the pleasure grounds design, which is focussed on an unusually complex series of informal ponds and water courses, and also on the adjacent parish church. The Regency layout (c.1810) survives largely intact as it had developed in phases by the early C20, with some later alterations. The extent and survival of villa gardens is not well recorded and this is a good example at this scale, with an ensemble of typical features including the walled kitchen garden, as well as the unusual water features.

**Key feature:** unusual water features

***Lilies, Weedon*** (HER 0032902000)

A small country house, informal pleasure grounds and park established in the present form in phases during the C19 following Enclosure, incorporating earlier fabric including a C16 garden wall. The layout is closely associated with its originator, Lord George Nugent, originally of Stowe, who lived here for 45 years. He apparently established the park and garden from c.1805, although the detail of some of his work is unclear. The most unusual feature is his Grove of Friendship with the last few surviving commemorative stones marking surviving tree planting by his illustrious friends including Douglas Jerrold, editor of *Punch* and the author, Harrison Ainsworth. Others are thought to



FIGURE 1 Horsenden Manor near Princes Risborough: the Regency layout for the villa at the foot of the Chilterns, seen in the 1840s across one of the canals (copyright Sarah Rutherford)

have included the Duke of Somerset, Lord John Russell, W.S. Landor, Charles Dickens, Richard Westmacott and Robert Browning. The present 40ha layout reflects closely that mapped in the 1870s in Henry Cazenove's time, when the house was rebuilt for him by the architect George Devey and the grounds were altered too, incorporating elements of Nugent's layout. A number of fine ornamental trees survive from both main periods.

**Key feature:** The Grove of Friendship commemorating Nugent's friends.

***Stoke Court, Stoke Poges*** (HER 1232001000)

A pleasure ground laid out informally in the late C18 or early C19 around a paddock, as the setting for a rural cottage closely associated with the C18 poet Thomas Gray. The owners sought to create a small-scale imitation of a landscape park in the

style of a *ferme ornee*, imitating a working farm with a circuit walk through a belt of ornamental trees and hedgerows around a paddock. The design makes good use of the Chiltern setting, including views from the elevated northern pleasure ground around the site of the former summerhouse overlooking Windsor and Eton that possibly inspired Gray's poem 'Ode on a distant Prospect of Eton College'. This layout was developed in several phases in the mid- and late C19 and early C20 as the setting for what became a substantial country house, including formal features, a maze, a chain of water bodies and extensive parkland. The most important designed elements, those present by the mid-C19, largely survive in the 11ha site, including the mounded site of the former summerhouse. The later C19 and early C20 expansion phases to the south, west and east, were of lesser importance and have been lost or fragmented. The C20 housing around the

garden has damaged the early C20 phase particularly to the south-west and south-east.

**Key feature:** The circuit walk, belt planting around it, former summerhouse and its mound and views.

***Stoke Place, Stoke Poges*** (HER 1232102000)

A mid-C18 pleasure ground by the nationally renowned designer Lancelot Brown while at his most productive, as the setting for a C17 Chiltern country villa, for career soldier General Howard. The pleasure ground was enlarged and embellished in a further phase in the early C19 by Howard's grandson, adding features, enlarging Brown's lake, and creating the park to the east and south. It was unusual for Brown to design only a pleasure ground, but for his work he was paid £800, indicating a significant commission. The most important elements of the layout, those established by the mid-C19, largely survive in the 40ha site, including the essence of Brown's work of the mid-1760s, but also an extensive kitchen garden in three compartments with gardener's house, and the remains of former structures around the lake. The layout made good use of the Chiltern setting, originally including views from the pleasure ground towards Windsor and Eton, now obscured by vegetation. Two key ornamental structures present by the 1820s (orangery and rotunda possibly by Brown) have gone, but their positions are evident and their settings remain. The extent and survival of villa gardens is not well recorded and this is a good example at this larger scale, with the remains of a fine ensemble of features which survive largely intact, although the layout has been somewhat simplified.

**Key features:** Brown's mid-1760s pleasure ground lake altered in the early C19, associated landscaping and mature trees, and the sites of the lost rotunda and orangery.

***Woodrow High House, Amersham***  
(HER 0423202000)

A typical early-mid-C19 country villa landscape with C18 origins in a Chiltern setting comprising formal and informal gardens and pleasure grounds and a small park, including a fine collection of ornamental trees. The most notable feature is a detached pleasure ground comprising a dell, with a

fine sunken grotto, leading to a Yew Walk affording views across the site. The layout of the 10ha site survives largely intact with few alterations since the 1870s, although the grotto is fragile and areas of the grounds have been adapted for a recreational centre. The extent and survival of villa gardens is not well recorded and this is a good example at this scale, with an ensemble of typical features many of which survive, its most notable feature being the grotto and dell. It is one of a group of Chiltern villa gardens including Brands House and Castle Hill House (Wycombe Museum).

**Key feature:** The grotto in the dell, and ensemble of trees framing the whole landscape design.

**Victorian Country Houses**

***Bletchley Park*** (MK HER MMK 6085  
(BP gardens) & 2554 (Water Hall Gardens))

The 16ha core of a flamboyant late C19 country house estate, gardens and park built for the Leons, a banking family, including a collection of mature ornamental trees and incorporating elements of an early C18 layout for a previous house called Water Hall. With World War II looming Bletchley Park was chosen specifically in part for this character when the site was acquired in 1938, and over the following six years developed into what became an internationally important wartime intelligence base. The recreational use of the core of the ornamental landscape was important to the Codebreakers in the success of their work. Of the domestic landscape, many of the pleasure ground features survive, but the kitchen and most of the wider park have been lost to the kitchen garden and later development. Many of the key features of the core of the wartime base survive.

**Key feature:** The domestic layout around the house and its adaptation for internationally significant wartime use.

***Green Park (formerly Aston Clinton Park)***  
(HER 0020402000)

The remains of a mid-late C19 garden and park for a lost country house, forming an early element of a unique cluster of seven flamboyant C19 Rothschild country house landscapes in Buckinghamshire/



FIGURE 2 Woodrow High House, Amersham: the rare and intriguing grotto set in a mound within a beech-planted dell (*copyright Sarah Tricks*)

Hertfordshire, the closest comparable of which are nearby Halton House and Tring Park. The design incorporates features from previous C18/C19 design phases and the Wendover Arm of the Grand Union canal, with mid-C19 buildings by Stokes and Devey (who both worked on nearby Rothschild sites) and extensive mature ornamental tree planting. The 75ha site is contiguous with adjacent Halton House, also for the Rothschild family. Although many features and much woody planting survives including parkland, losses and change have been sustained in the C20, including during the 1960s adaptation to a training centre, included most notably the replacement of the lost mansion with a large recreational building, and residential development around the northern periphery.

**Key features:** The C19 drives, pleasure ground and park planting and structures, the physical link to Halton adjacent, and family and stylistic links with the other Rothschild properties in the Vale of Aylesbury/Chilterns.

***Rayners, Penn (formerly Penn School)***  
(HER 0641300000)

A mid-late C19 Chiltern country house, gardens and park, developed in two major phases for Philip Rose, a local solicitor who was a close business, political and personal associate of the Prime Minister and author Benjamin Disraeli throughout his career. The C19 design makes good use of the Chiltern setting and survives largely intact, including many mature trees, although with some losses to residential development. It is one of a group of C19 villas and country houses located on hillsides around High Wycombe, developed to take advantage of an elevated position and extensive southerly Chiltern views, including Hughenden Manor, Brands House and Castle Hill House (Wycombe Museum).

**Key features:** The C19 pleasure ground, drives, extensive planting and structures and the association with Disraeli and his nearby Hughenden Manor.

***St Katharine's, Parmoor*** (HER 0087604000)

A late C19/early C20 Chiltern country house, gardens and park developed from a farmstead for

the Cripps family of politicians on a site known to have been occupied since the C14. The 33ha site is associated with several influential C20 figures. The designed landscape makes good use of the Chiltern setting and survives largely intact.

**Key features:** The C19/early C20 park and pleasure ground with drives, water garden, walled kitchen garden, planting and structures and the association with the Cripps family, and their social and political milieu.

**Other Country Houses**

***Chalfont Park, Chalfont St Peter***  
(HER 0085101000)

An extensive country house landscape developed in phases since the mid-C18 with contributions from nationally-known designers including Lancelot Brown (mid-C18), Nathaniel Richmond (mid-C18), Humphry Repton (late C18), Edwin Lutyens and possibly Gertrude Jekyll (early C20). It is one of several parks in the vicinity with work by Brown including Latimer House, Stoke Park, Stoke Place, Moor Park and Langley Park. It is one of several notable parks along the river Misbourne, including Shardeloes (where Richmond and Repton also advised), Denham Place (where Brown advised) and Missenden Abbey. The landscape framework remains largely intact despite some simplification of planting during the C20. Losses include the early C20 formal gardens and kitchen garden; a golf course has been inserted in the north park and the A413 dual carriageway through the west park.

**Key features:** The complexity of the design and connection with such a variety of architects and landscape designers of national significance and the adaptation of the design embrace and maximise to the *genius loci* (spirit of the place and its form).

***Chenies Manor*** (HER 0167104000)

The remains of a Tudor house of palatial scale built in the C16 for the Russell family of Woburn, with the remains of associated gardens and parkland on a 35ha site known to have been occupied since the C12. The property declined from the C17 until bought by the present owners in 1955 who created gardens on the earlier site around



FIGURE 3 St Katharine's, Parmoor: the park and its Chiltern setting for a country house for the Cripps family, developed in the late nineteenth century. *(copyright Adrian Jackson)*



FIGURE 4 Chalfont Park, Chalfont St Peter. The main drive to the Chiltern country house with a massive plane tree, possibly part of 'Capability' Brown's work of the 1760s *(copyright Sarah Rutherford)*

the surviving wing. The Tudor gardens do not survive in a complete form above ground although certain elements can be traced including perhaps the remains of terracing above the Chess valley. Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown in the 1760s incorporated a view from nearby Latimer House and park through Chenies woodland to the church tower of St Michael, but this has since grown in.

**Key features:** The fragmentary C16/C17 garden and wider landscape features of a Tudor palace.

***Dinton Hall*** (HER 0063602000)

A typical garden, pleasure ground and small park for a manor house with medieval origins, and fabric from various phases, that survives largely intact. The key surviving ornamental period is the

mid- and later C18 initiated by Sir John Vanhattem and developed in similar form by his successors into the C19, including garden buildings, and a complex wilderness garden area retaining mature trees, water features and mounds. A wilderness was a garden area, based on an ornamental grove of mixed species of trees and shrubs with paths cut through it, and often water features and garden buildings. The 13ha ensemble includes a substantial Gothic folly (ruined) detached from the main site in its own pleasure ground on the ridge to the north overlooking the river Thame valley and Eythrope Park to the north, and the Chilterns to the south. The documentary evidence for the C18 and C19 landscaping activity, in the form of the ‘Occurrences’ memorandum (at CBS), is of particular value in identifying the development and significance of the grounds during the C18 and C19. The



FIGURE 5 Chenies Manor: the mid-twentieth-century sunken garden in front of the fragment that remains of the Russell family’s sixteenth-century palace at the heart of the Chilterns (*copyright Sarah Rutherford*)

ensemble survives largely intact, although with the loss of some features such as wilderness serpentine paths and the formal boundary.

**Key feature:** The C18 layout particularly the Wilderness and large, detached folly outlier/eyecatcher in its own grounds, and Chiltern views.

***Princes Risborough Manor House (formerly Brooke House)*** (HER 0097602000)

A Chiltern town manor house garden with early origins, within the Saxon core of a medieval town, and with a close relationship with the medieval church, the former Black Prince's manor and moated deer park, and its own former farmstead. The 0.6ha site has been a domestic one since the C16 and possibly before, and contains medieval features from the town's wider history. The site survives largely intact: the site has been gardened since at least the C17 and the four surviving compartments (front garden; 'best', or walled garden; orchard; and yard) were present in the C19, but, as such compartments are typical of the C17/C18, these may be an earlier survival. It is an unusual survival of its type, and an important space within the town as one of the largest surviving garden spaces.

**Key feature:** The compartmentalised manor house garden with early origins.

***Winslow Hall*** (BCC HER 0202001000)

An outstanding late C17 country house for the Lowndes family of landowners and politicians, linked with Sir Christopher Wren, with associated formal gardens and park developed c.1695–1700 with advice from prolific royal gardeners London and Wise, and some subsequent remodelling of the gardens. The framework of the early designed landscape survives largely intact, including the park to the south of the house, parts of the kitchen garden advised upon by London and Wise, garden walls and remnants of avenues to the east and north-east, now detached. The 13ha site is associated with several influential C19 and C20 figures, and has important WW2 associations. This is the essential contemporary setting for the house and is valuable as a rare survival in its own right.

**Key feature:** The London and Wise structural framework of the garden layout.

**Cemeteries**

***Aylesbury Cemetery*** (HER 0638800000)

A typical early Burial Board cemetery for a rural market/county town laid out 1856–57, which is one of the most significant cemeteries in historic Bucks. It was designed by architects Poulton & Woodman of Reading, focussed on a largely intact group of buildings including two fine chapels that survive in good condition, with modest C19/C20 memorials. The mid-C19 gateway and lodge have gone. Along with the cemetery at Box, Wiltshire (1858), which only has a single chapel, this is apparently one of the best surviving examples of their cemetery work (*c.f.* Amersham and the more flamboyant Basingstoke, both 1859). The original c.2ha geometric layout, which survives largely intact, was developed successively during the later C19 and C20, echoing the original pattern, to cover some 7ha. It retains some notable trees from the largely evergreen C19 core planting which made a significant contribution to the ornamental cemetery character, and some from successive phases.

**Key features:** The 2ha mid-C19 grid-pattern layout, specimen planting, chapels and mortuary.

***High Wycombe Cemetery*** (BCC HER 0647700000)

A typical early Burial Board cemetery opened in 1855, for a Chiltern market and furniture town, with successive extensions northwards in similar style in the later C19 and C20. The geometric C19 layout survives largely intact with the Victorian Lodge as the principal building at the town end, and a group of vaults. The 10ha site has some notable trees, including an avenue of pleached limes along the main drive. Sited on a steep west-facing slope, it makes good use of the Chiltern setting and enjoys spectacular views west over the town in the Hughenden Valley and north-west to the rural top end of the valley towards the Disraeli Monument (1862) and across Hughenden Park to the Manor.

**Key features:** The mid-C19 grid-pattern layout, spinal terrace path, lodge and gateway, vaults and spectacular views.



FIGURE 6 Aylesbury Cemetery: 1855, a fine layout and ensemble by architects Poulton & Woodman of Reading: the main axis, with the two chapels, leading to the mortuary, set in a good collection of C19 trees (copyright Charles Boot)

**Marlow Cemetery** (BCC HER 0648700000)

A typical early C20 public cemetery for a Chiltern market town, with buildings and layout designed by local architect C S Vardy, which survives very largely intact. The surviving planting of the 2ha site, advised on by local nurseryman Charles

Turner, includes mature specimen trees and shrubs typical of late C19 and early C20 cemeteries.

**Key features:** The early C20 grid-pattern layout, chapel, and planting advised on by local nurseryman Turner.

*Sarah Rutherford*