

Understanding Historic Parks & Gardens in Buckinghamshire

The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust Research & Recording Project



Little Halings (Tile House Farm)

April 2016

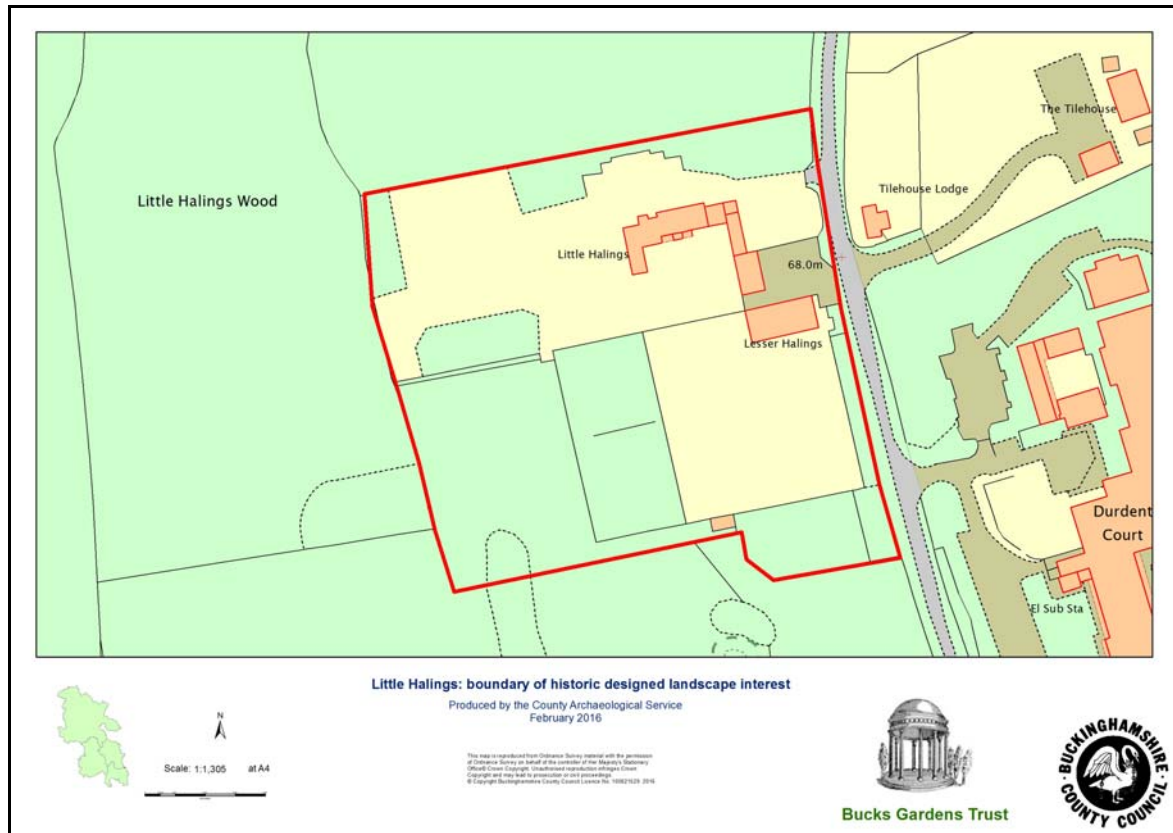


THE
GARDENS
TRUST



Bucks Gardens
Trust

HISTORIC SITE BOUNDARY



INTRODUCTION

Background to the Project

This site dossier has been prepared as part of The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust (BGT) Research and Recording Project, begun in 2014. This site is one of several hundred designed landscapes county-wide identified by Bucks County Council (BCC) in 1998 (including Milton Keynes District) as potentially retaining evidence of historic interest, as part of the Historic Parks and Gardens Register Review project carried out for English Heritage (BCC Report No. 508). The list is not conclusive and further parks and gardens may be identified as research continues or further information comes to light.

Content

BGT has taken the Register Review list as a sound basis from which to select sites for appraisal as part of its Research and Recording Project for designed landscapes in the historic county of Bucks (pre-1974 boundaries). For each site a dossier is prepared by volunteers trained on behalf of BGT by experts in appraising designed landscapes who have worked extensively for English Heritage on its Register Upgrade Project.

Each dossier includes the following for the site:

- A site boundary mapped on the current Ordnance Survey to indicate the extent of the main part of the surviving designed landscape, also a current aerial photograph.
- A statement of historic significance based on the four Interests outlined in the National Policy Planning Framework and including an overview.
- A written description, derived from documentary research and usually from a site visit, based on the format of the Historic England *Register of Parks & Gardens of special historic interest* 2nd edn.
- A map showing principle views and features.

The area within the site boundary represents the significant coherent remains of the designed landscape. It does not necessarily include all surviving elements of the historical landscape design, which may be fragmented. It takes no account of current ownership.

NOTE: Sites are not open to the public unless advertised elsewhere.

Supporters and Acknowledgements

The project was supported by The Gardens Trust (formerly the Association of Gardens Trusts and the Garden History Society) and funded by BGT with significant grants from the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust and the Finnis Scott Foundation. BCC generously provided current and historic mapping and access to the Historic Environment Record.

The Trust would like to thank the volunteers and owners who have participated in this project and given so much time and effort to complete this challenging and rewarding task.

Further information is available from: www.bucksgardenstrust.org.uk

COUNTY:	BUCKINGHAMSHIRE	LITTLE HALINGS (TILE HOUSE FARM) BCC HER 0653900000
DISTRICT:	SOUTH BUCKS	
PARISH:	DENHAM	
OS REF:	TQ 030 898	

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Overview

A compact Arts and Crafts garden for a smaller country house built to designs by Walter Sarel incorporating an earlier, modest farm house and kitchen garden. The layout includes a sequence of formal garden compartments surrounding the kitchen garden, within a wider informal landscape of Chiltern woodland and paddocks, itself within a wider rural setting. Planting advice was provided by Gertrude Jekyll and a planting plan survives. Much of the layout survives but the planting has been considerably simplified and it is unclear whether any of the Jekyll planting survives.

Archaeological interest

The identified archaeology is of local significance as far as it is understood. Archaeological potential relates to the former agricultural use of the site and the Chiltern woodland in the north-western section, as well as lost features relating to the early C20 layout, particularly lost garden paths, structures and other features.

Architectural interest

A largely complete ensemble of buildings for an early C20 smaller country house, together with an earlier kitchen garden, designed in a single phase with the garden layout by architect Walter Sarel.

Artistic interest

An Arts and Crafts style garden in a relatively compact area forming the setting for a smaller country house. The Sarel layout responds to the siting of the house, contrasting formal compartments to the north, west and south with informal embanked lawns and woodland beyond, and the rural Chiltern setting. Mature trees include Scots Pine and Fir, overlooking areas of lawn interspersed with rhododendron and laurel created for Mrs Acland-Hood in 1927. Gertrude Jekyll, one of the most prolific and influential early C20 garden designers, is known to have advised and one of her planting plans survives, but it is unclear to what extent her scheme was executed or to what extent the early planting survives. Much of the framework of the designed landscape survives intact, but the detail of some of the schemes has been lost. Walter Sarel worked with Gertrude Jekyll on at least 7 projects and there is some documentation on their collaboration at the Little Halings site.

Historic interest

The site has been associated with various notable owners and occupiers including the Drummond banking family in C19 when it was part of the Tile House estate. It is primarily of interest for the collaboration of architect Walter Sarel and Gertrude Jekyll on the late 1920s garden. The historic interest is considerably increased by the survival of documentation of the early development of the garden, c.1926, including a planting plan by Gertrude Jekyll.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

By the late C19, west of the entrance to the Tile House, and on the west side of Tilehouse Lane, stood a large rectangular-shaped kitchen garden for the substantial Tile House estate, owned in the C19 by the Drummond family (q.v. Denham Grove (Tile House)).

The conventional rectangular Tile House kitchen garden established by the late C19 (OS) was enclosed by a wall. By 1870 (OS) it contained three glasshouses, two in the northeast quadrant and one in the northwest quadrant, with central water tanks, later replaced by pumps (OS 1900 and 1930s). West of the kitchen garden was a small orchard and beyond this was Little Halings Wood. To the south was a field. A straight boundary between Little Halings Wood to the west and Tile House Lane to the east enclosed the north side of the farm house and farm yard into a long narrow compartment, bounded by the kitchen garden and orchard to the south. By 1923 (OS), the farm was called Tile House Farm and little had altered in the layout of its surrounding agricultural landscape.

In 1927, Mrs Acland-Hood who lived previously in Eaton Place, London (number 32 according to the 1911 census) commissioned the architect Walter Sarel (1873-1941) to re-design and extend the buildings of Tile House Farm and kitchen garden, which was renamed Little Halings. Letters from Walter Sarel to the builders use the name Little Halings (CBS). Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932) provided advice including planting plans, at least one of which survives (University of Berkeley collection). Of Sarel's 81 commissions (new houses, alterations and additions) 7 had some involvement with Miss Jekyll in their garden layouts or planting schemes. She had probably known Sarel as a family friend since he was a child in Kent (Tankard & Wood).

Since the 1920s little major alteration occurred in the gardens although some of the detail of the planted features has disappeared, particularly the cruciform hedged allees in the former orchard. Little Halings remains in divided private ownership.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

Little Halings is situated at the northern tip of the parish of Denham, some two miles north of the parish church, very near the border between Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire. The 2 ha. site lies in an area of mixed farmland and woodland together with a scattering of C20 detached homes. The site lies at the far eastern end of the Chiltern dip slope, above the River Colne to the east, on a deposit of sands and gravels, the remnants of an ancient terrace of the River Thames. It is bounded to the east by Tile House Lane which gives access to Denham, to the south by a meadow and beyond this by Great Halings Wood, to the north by a further meadow and to the west by Little Halings Wood. These meadows to north and south, together with Great and Little Halings Woods form the key rural setting of the garden, together with, east of Tile House Lane, Denham Grove, a conference centre and hotel which occupies the site of Tile House which burnt down in the 1950s, set within its parkland (q.v.).

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

Little Halings is entered from the east off Tilehouse Lane, at a gateway standing 30m east of the house, set back off the lane, flanked by a semicircular beech hedge. From here a straight, gravel drive leads 40m west through a small stand of mixed mature trees to the entrance to the house towards the west end of the north front. Here the front door overlooks a roughly rectangular gravel forecourt to the north surrounded by a clipped hedge c.1.5m high.

A service entrance lies 25m south of the main gateway, giving access off the Lane to a former service yard below the east, service wing of the house, now (2015) used for car parking. The yard is hedged to the north and east and walled to the west and south, with a cottage forming part of the south boundary.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING

Little Halings stands in the north-east corner of the site towards the east edge, set back from the east boundary with Tilehouse Lane. It is a two-storey brick and tile-hung house with a red clay tiled roof and prominent brick chimneys and gables in the roofs. It comprises three main wings: the main one running west to east is flanked by west and east wings at right angles to it and offset to the south. The north, entrance front overlooks the forecourt, the west and south fronts overlook the gardens, and to the east is the former service wing.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

The garden encloses the house to the west and south and is divided into several linked compartments. French doors on the south side of the house open onto a wide paved terrace which surrounds the square sunken garden. The sunken garden is enclosed on all sides by the house or brick walls (to south and west). The west wall running south from the west wing of the house is pierced by a series of five arches leading to further gardens on the west side of the house. Roses are trellised along the arched wall. In the middle of the south terrace is a small decorated well. The sunken lawn has mature Indian Bean Tree (*Catalpa*) at its centre. Miss Jekyll's planting plan (October 1927) which indicates a 240' long wall planted with plants trained along it and an herbaceous border below, might relate to the borders below the three freestanding garden walls. Her design shows mixed shrubs at the back of the border against a wall (a list is attached) and swathes of mixed perennials for the front of the border including stachys, delphinium, pinks, purple sage and dahlia (list attached).

The sunken garden connects with the lawn and gardens on the west side of the house through the arches. Below the west front of the house is a wide flower bed. The lawn is laid out with a cruciform pattern of stone paths converging on a fountain. The central north/south path runs parallel to the house and leads from the forecourt at the north end south to the kitchen garden. A modern sundial stands on this path between the fountain and forecourt. The southern end of the path terminates at the entrance to the kitchen garden through an arched gate in the wall.

The north end of the lawn connects with the south-west corner of the adjacent forecourt. Formerly at this point (OS, 1930s) the lawn was shaped into two squared alcoves set into the north edge, with

a corresponding curved apsidal alcove in the south edge against the kitchen garden. This lawn looks westwards onto an informal lawn that terminates at Little Halings Wood and is planted with a number of mature trees around the edge. At the south-west corner of the lawn below the west front a path leads west through a small area of shrubs across the south side of the informal lawn beyond, alongside the north side of the remains of a decorative wall. This wall divides the informal lawn to the north from a former ornamental orchard to the south. At the centre of this boundary two sets of shallow steps lead south down into the former orchard. Formerly two mature oak trees just to the north in the meadow marked the entrance and steps but the westernmost tree was recently blown down, leaving only one of the pair.

The 0.5 ha former orchard is now meadowland with a small area of solar panels. It is bounded to the east by the kitchen garden wall, with a doorway for access. In the late 1920s the orchard area was slightly enlarged to the west as far as Little Halings Wood. The orchard trees were retained and the compartment was laid out with a cruciform pattern of hedged paths converging on a central circular or octagonal feature and opening out to what was probably a hedged seating area at the south end of the north-south path (OS 1930s, 1950s). This layout has since gone, but is clearly shown on the 1930s OS and evidence of the path system may survive below ground level.

KITCHEN GARDEN

Little Halings kitchen garden (93 x 65m) lies adjacent to the south side of the sunken garden, and to the orchard to the west. It originated as a 0.5ha walled kitchen garden for Tile House (OS, 1896, 1923), but in the 1920s it became part of the Little Halings garden when it was developed around it. In c.1930 it was divided by a north-south wall into the present two unequal sections. The western third became Little Halings kitchen garden and the eastern two-thirds were used for a further house and garden. Evidence remains for a small glass house and cold frames in the western third, which were also shown on the 1930s OS. Today (2015) in the western section a small area is used for vegetables with also two rows of pleached fruit trees. The rest is rough grassland.

WALTER SAREL, ARCHITECT (1873 -1941)

Henry Walter Molyneux Sarel was born in Bickley, Kent. He is a rather shadowy architect and his RIBA Biography file (2011) records no obituary, nor articles about him in the professional journals. However, he seems to have designed numerous houses and gardens and is associated with Gertrude Jekyll on at least 7 commissions. He worked on at least 5 commissions in Bucks.

A list was prepared by Sarel's widow, Charlotte, some time after his death, of his architectural commissions with clients' names (at RIBA library). Her list contains 66 commissions with 20 new houses and some 46 alterations/additions. Other sources note a further 15 commissions. Of the total of some 81 commissions, 7 had some involvement by Gertrude Jekyll in their garden layouts or planting schemes. It seems that Walter Sarel was one of the first architects with whom Gertrude Jekyll (1843 – 1932) worked and that she had probably known Walter Sarel since he was a child in Kent (Tankard and Wood, *Gertrude Jekyll at Munstead Wood* (1996)).

Mrs Sarel's list of her husband's commissions included the following Buckinghamshire sites:

- *The Manor House*, Little Marlow, Bucks, for Captain Bradish-Ellames
- *Denham Place*, Bucks, for Basil Fothergill, Esq. The listed building description refers to *Country Life* articles of 18 Nov 1915 and 25 Apr 1925, but does not note Sarel. Included on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens.
- *Little Hayling*, Denham, Bucks, for Mrs Acland Hood [sic – from Mrs Sarel]. Reef Point Collection Folder #204 Gertrude Jekyll's 1927 plan, named as "Little Harling".

The notes written above are extracted from an unpublished typescript (May 2012) at the RIBA Library by Don Josey of Walton on Thames, Surrey, based on his research into Sarel's life and works; the latter aspect being built on the simple list of commissions provided by his widow in the RIBA Biography file. Mr Josey has more recently noted (W Wormley pers.comm. 8 Feb 2016) that of commissions omitted from Mrs Sarel's list he identified Little Munton, Sunningdale, Berks in 1924 also for Mrs Acland Wood, shortly before Little Halings. Miss Jekyll was also associated with that garden and planting designs (Surrey History Centre ref. 4113/7/12-15).

In Sept 1941, Leonard Tarrant, who had worked in Sarel's office, sent a list of Sarel's works to the RIBA (without dates), indicating that Sarel was involved with many garden designs: "a list of a number of New Houses and Alterations and Additions to existing Houses which the late Mr Walter Sarel carried out and restored, besides many others, *also numerous Gardens were planned and laid out under his instruction and supervision.*" [Italics added] Tarrant may have had drawings as well.

Sarel's principal architectural works were chiefly domestic, and he built and restored many large and small residences throughout the country. In addition to the three Bucks sites listed above, he made alterations and additions to:

- The Manor House, Stoke Poges, for Colonel Shaw
- Beaconsfield Golf Club, for Colonel Weddell

GERTRUDE JEKYLL (1843-1932)

Although so often associated with the architect Sir Edwin Lutyens, Jekyll worked with nearly 50 other architects including prominent names and those, such as Sarel, who were sound architects but not of the foremost prominence. Little Haling was a commission late on in her career. It is almost certain that she did not visit the site as by this time she travelled little. The surviving planting plan is apparently for a border around the Sunken Garden. It is unclear whether she provided additional designs for other garden compartments. It was common for her to provide advice on specific areas rather than the whole garden.

Miss Jekyll provided designs for a number of other sites in Buckinghamshire including Woodside Place, Chenies (her first commission with Lutyens, 1893), Cheswick, Hedgerley (1902), Pollard's Park, Chalfont St Giles (1906), Barton Hartshorn (Robert Lorimer, c.1908), Rignalls (Adams and Holden, 1909) Nashdom (Lutyens, 1909), Chalfont Park (Lutyens, 1912, qv), Fulmer Court (1913), Bramleys, Great Missenden (architect E Willmott, 1913), Pednore House, Chesham (architect Forbes & Tate, 1919), Ponds, Seer Green (1928).

REFERENCES

Lathbury, R.H., *A History of Denham*, 1904

Tankard, Judith B and Wood, Martin A. *Gertrude Jekyll at Munstead Wood* (1996).

Maps

1770s, Thomas Jefferys, Map of Buckinghamshire (CBS)

1810, Ordnance Surveyor's Drawing, scale 2" to 1 mile (British Library)

1825, A. Bryant, Map of the County of Buckingham (Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies)

Ordnance Survey

1870s, 25" to 1 mile, 1st Edition

1883 1st edition 6" to 1 mile, sheet 48

1900 2nd edition 6" to 1 mile

1926 3rd edition 6" to 1 mile

1930s 25" to 1 mile

1975 National Grid 1: 10,000 scale

Images

Aerial Photos

1947 RAF series (HER)

1950s National Grid provisional edition 6 (HER)

1955 RAF series (HER)

1966 (HER)

Archival Items

University of California, Berkley, Environmental Design Archives; microfilm copies at English Heritage Archive, Swindon: Reef Point Collection Folder 204(1), planting plan 'Little Harling'.

Tilehouse estate, Sale catalogue, 1884 (CBS AR 76-2012)

Rose Palmer and Wallace Wormley, 06 February 2016, edited SR 16 February 2016.

KEY HISTORIC VIEWS & FEATURES



Key to numbered features

1. House	2. Service wing & courtyard
3. Main drive	4. Main entrance
5. Service entrance to service yard	6. Forecourt
7. South Terrace & Sunken Garden	8. West, formal lawn below west front
9. Informal lawn leading to Little Halings Wood	10. Orchard garden
11. Kitchen garden, west half	12. Kitchen garden, east half
13. Meadow	14. Little Halings Wood

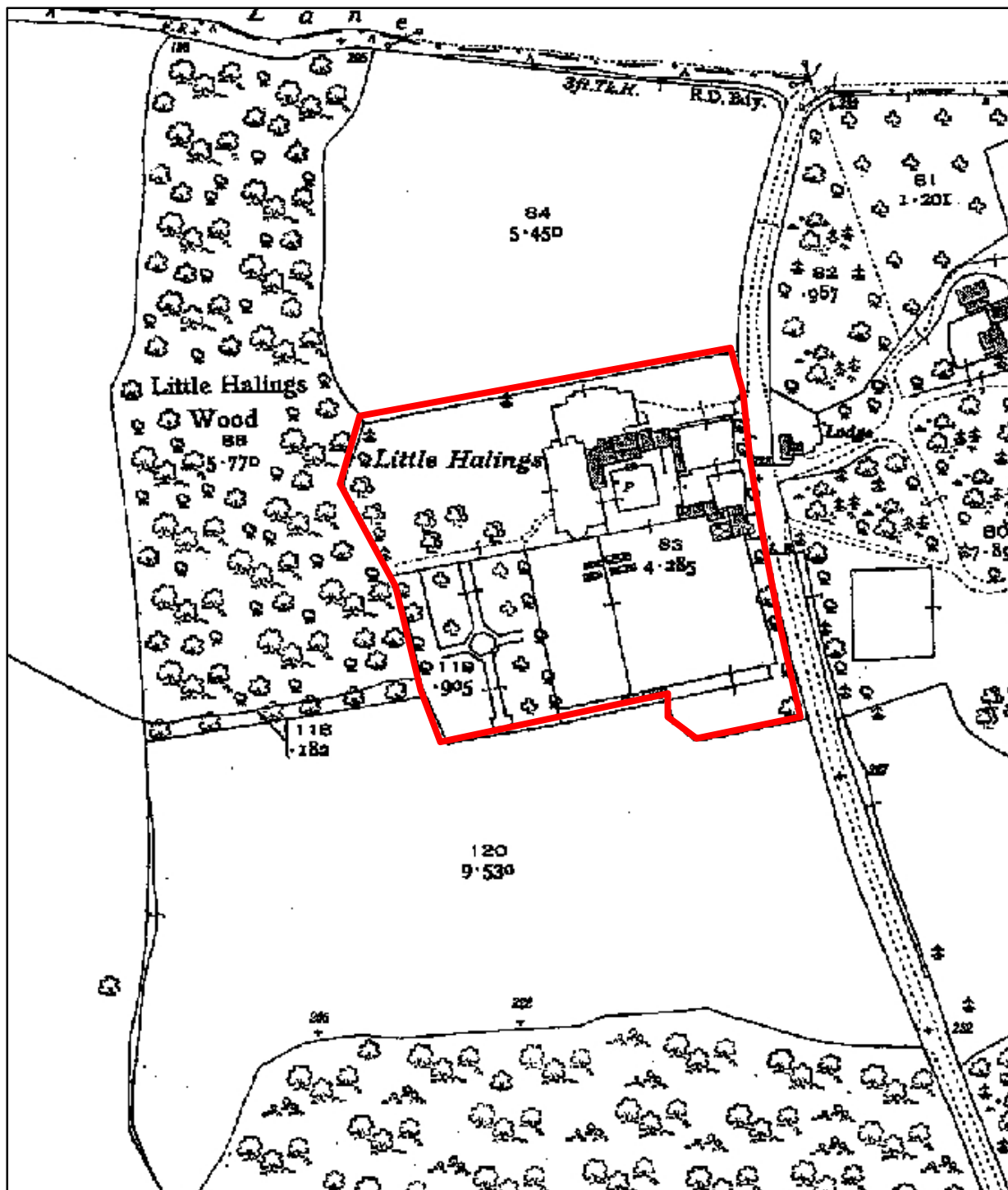
IMAGES OF KEY FEATURES



The south front and sunken garden (left); the well on the south side of the sunken garden (right)



Brick arches connecting the sunken garden with the western gardens



Little Halings OS 1930s, showing the complete layout

List of Wall Plants on Jekyll Plan (University of California, Berkley) October 1927

Laurustinus lucidum (*Viburnum laurustinus lucidum*)

Forsythia suspensa (2 no.)

Robinia hispida

Calycanthus ?orientalis (?*chinensis*)

Cistus cyprius (2 no.)

Pyrus japonica (2 no.)

Escallonia sp. (2 no.)

?Claret vine

Fuchsia riccartonii (2 no.)

Bignonia radicans

Escallonia sp

Ceanothus Gloire de Versailles

Ceanothus ?floribunda

Buddleia var.

Clematis flammula train into [next wall plant]

[next wall plant unclear, possibly *Spiraea* sp?]