

# Understanding Historic Parks and Gardens in Buckinghamshire

The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust Research & Recording Project



## POUNDON HOUSE

June 2016



Bucks Gardens Trust



The Finnis Scott  
Foundation



The Stanley Smith (UK) Horticultural Trust

# HISTORIC SITE BOUNDARY



## Poundon House: boundary of historic designed landscape interest

Produced by the County Archaeological Service  
April 2016



Scale: 1:1,913 at A4



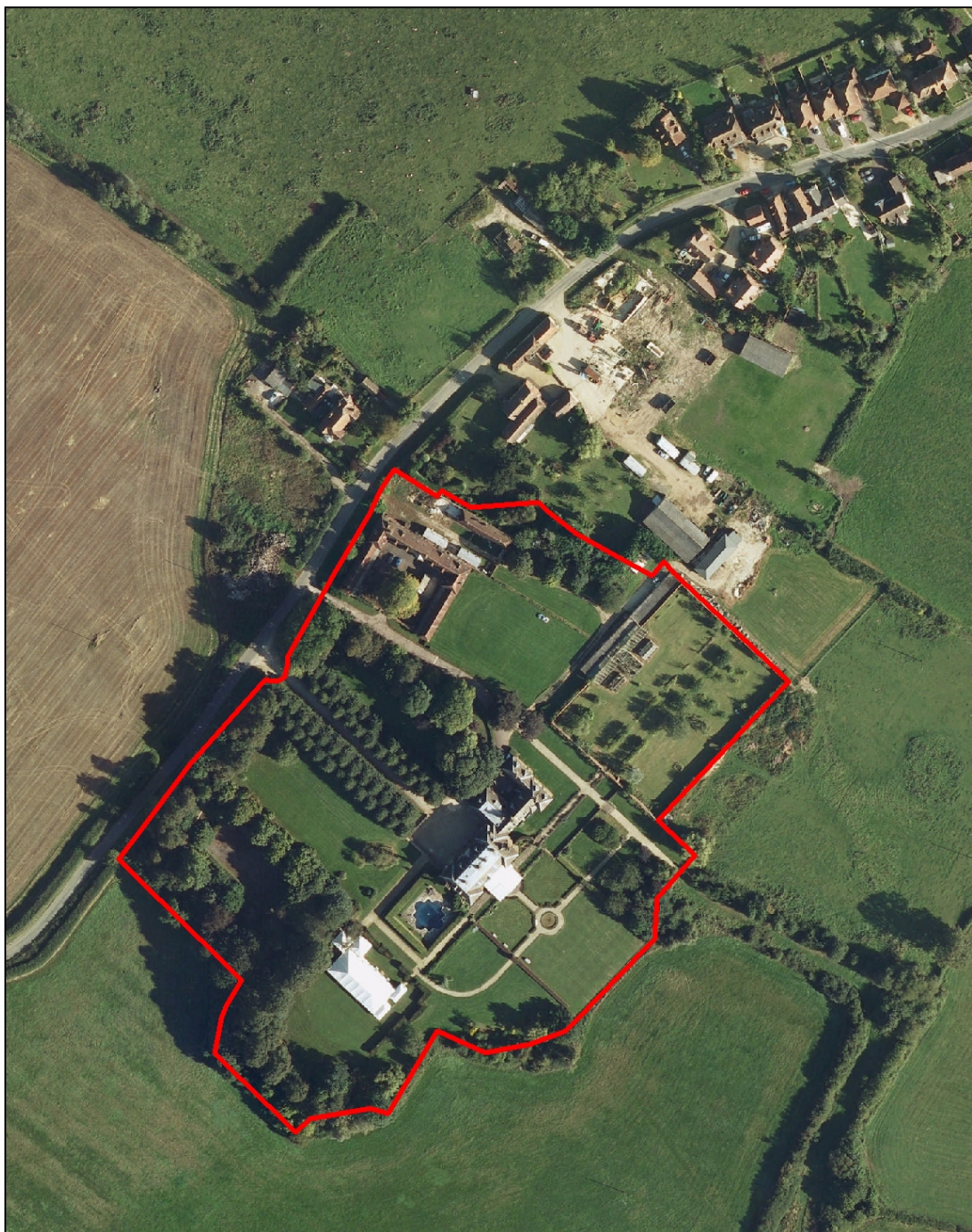
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**Poundon House: 2006 aerial photograph**

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## 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 (now Historic England) (BCC Report No. 508). The list is not definitive 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/Historic England 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 a site visit, based on the format of the English Heritage (now Historic England) *Register of Parks & Gardens of special historic interest* 2<sup>nd</sup> edn.
- A map showing principal 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](http://www.bucksgardenstrust.org.uk)

<b>COUNTY:</b>	BUCKINGHAMSHIRE	<b>POUNDON HOUSE</b>  HER 1118703000
<b>DISTRICT:</b>	AYLEBURY VALE	
<b>PARISH:</b>	POUNDON	
<b>OS REF.:</b>	SP 645 251	

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### Overview

An Arts and Crafts-style garden designed by the renowned garden designer Thomas Mawson c.1909 for a smaller country house, built by an unknown architect 1907-09. Mawson's layout includes formal terraces, lawns and garden compartments and a kitchen garden with ornamental features, set in agricultural land with long views over the Vale of Aylesbury towards Waddesdon. The layout and garden structures largely survive.

### Archaeological interest

The identified archaeology is of local significance. Archaeological potential relates to the former agricultural use of the site including lost buildings, routes and other elements, as well as lost features relating to the early C20 layout, particularly garden paths, glasshouses, structures and other features in the former kitchen garden.

### Architectural interest

A largely complete ensemble of buildings for an early C20 smaller country house, including stable block/motor house, terraces, steps, garden walls and gateways, pools, paving, and the remains of glasshouses and garden sheds. The house and stables were designed in a single phase by an unknown architect with the main garden structures responding to them, by notable landscape designer Thomas Mawson.

### Artistic interest

An early C20 Arts and Crafts-style garden by renowned and prolific landscape designer Thomas Mawson forming the setting for a smaller country house, which survives largely intact. The Mawson layout responds to the house, its site and the rural setting, with long views over the Vale of Aylesbury towards Waddesdon. A series of formal and informal garden compartments below the house includes a walled kitchen garden and the remains of glasshouses. While a considerable amount of structural planting survives in the form of hedges and trees the more ephemeral planting has altered and the kitchen garden is no longer productive.

### Historic interest

The site is associated with the notable garden designer Thomas Mawson (1861-1933), who began practising in the late 1880s. This commission came at the height of his career.



## HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1774 the villages of Charndon & Twyford were enclosed (*VCH*). By 1825 the hamlet of Charndon to the south together with 'Pound End' to the north were part of Twyford Parish (Bryant 1825). In 1847 the LNWR railway line construction began between Oxford and Bletchley. Marsh Gibbon and Poundon Station about a mile to the south of the site of the future Poundon House was the last station to be built, in 1880 (OS 1885; Disused stations).

Manor Farm, part of Twyford Manor was sited in Poundon to the north of fields on which Poundon House was subsequently built. By the late C19 two fields lay on the south east side of Poundon Main Street. These were to form the core of the site (OS 1885).

In 1883 Mr. Wenman Aubrey Wykeham Musgrave inherited Poundon Estate/Manor (*VCH*). In 1906 the Poundon estates (745 acres) were together put up for sale by him with Messrs Harper, Deely & others, which included 'several very fine building sites....healthy.....good water supply' (Paxton & Holiday).

Mr. John Pemberton Heywood Heywood-Lonsdale, a distinguished military man, bought the estate (Kelly's Dir. 1911) and commissioned local builders Lewis Penn (of Launton) to construct Poundon House between 1907 and 1909 (Pevsner, *VCH*). Lonsdale was renowned for improving the breeding stock of the Bicester Hunt hounds, having three breeding kennels nearby. Following his return from active service in WW1, he became master of the hunt in the early 1920s, later sharing this title with his son before retiring in 1932 (Greaves).

In c.1909 shortly after the house was finished the renowned landscape designer T.H. Mawson (1881 - 1933) was employed to design the gardens (Mawson; Waymark). Mawson, who came from the Lake District and had offices in Lancaster and London, was involved in several gardens in south Buckinghamshire around this time including Newlands Park Chalfont St Giles 1903; Uplands, Stoke Poges 1906; St Bernards, Gerrards Cross, 1909 (Waymark). The house was constructed to designs by an unknown architect in local ironstone in Queen Anne revival style, and the garden was laid out with formal compartments also employing the same stone, leading to informal lawns and shrubberies. By 1919 (OS) a kitchen garden, drives and formally terraced lawns were in evidence.

Poundon was used during and after World War II for intelligence purposes and various huts were erected in the gardens. These were used for high-security training and communications during and post WWII by the 39th Signals Brigade (secret-bases .co.uk; [englandspiel.eu](http://englandspiel.eu)). By 1952 (OS) the layout remained relatively unchanged; a survey by the Ministry of Works (1956) shows the layout in detail (private collection).

Poundon Estate (846 acres) which included Manor Farm and associated buildings and land, was put up for sale in 1959, in parts or a whole as an investment opportunity. The house and 2 acres were already let on a lease to the Ministry of Works (*The Times*) and The Signals regiment continued to use this facility until the mid-1960s (Francis Frith). In 1976 the site was bought by the present owners from the Poundon Estate Trust. In 1976 planning permission was given for change of use back to residential, and the huts were removed (AVDC).

By the late C20 (1995 aerial photograph) additions included a tennis court in the north-west corner of the garden, and hedges enclosing a swimming pool west of the house with paths from the house. The site remains in private ownership.

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

### **Location, Area, Boundaries, Landform and Setting**

The site is located at the southern edge of the hamlet of Poundon, roughly 6.5km north-east of Bicester and 10km south-west of Buckingham. Soil conditions of the countryside around the hamlet are seasonally wet, with slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils, while those for more elevated areas are lime-rich loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage.

The roughly square 4ha. site occupies an elevated location (700m AOD) on the south-east side of Main Street. The frontage to Main Street (80m north-west of the house) mostly comprises a wall of squared ironstone. Metal fencing forms the other boundaries to the south-west and south. The north-western half of the site is generally level but the remainder slopes down considerably to the south-east. The setting is rural, and except for Main Street to the north-west and the nearest parts of the hamlet of Poundon, the site is surrounded by farmland.

The elevated position allows views from the garden and the house, towards Lodge Hill (Waddesdon Manor) 12 km to the south-east, almost on axis with the garden front of the house and its principal terrace, and towards Muswell Hill 10km to the south. This view appears to have been framed by the planting of conifers alongside the Marsh Gibbon road 500m south-east (beyond the historic site boundary). Another stand of mixed planting (on Beacon Hill) adds interest to the view to the 750m south of the house from the house (beyond the historic site boundary).

## **ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES**

The three entrances and drives to Poundon House are all approached from Main Street on the north-west side of the site.

The main gateway stands 80m north-west of the house and forecourt. It is in the form of a semi-circle set back off the road, divided equally into three sections. The central section comprises two metal gates (listed Grade II) on ironstone piers topped with ball finials. The piers abut curved ironstone walls leading outwards to two further smaller roadside piers completing the semi-circle. From the two outer piers the garden wall extends to the north-east and south-west. From the main gate a gravel drive lined by a double avenue of limes leads to the gravel courtyard below the main entrance in the north-west front. The avenue frames the view of the centre of the house. This was the main approach as designed by Mawson (1926 OS).

The second, service entrance lies 35m north-east of the main entrance. It is marked by modest stone pillars supporting metal gates. From here a service drive with a hoggin surface leads south-east to the service courtyard and service wing, passing the early C20 stable yard into which an entrance leads. C.20m north-east of the service gateway is a second service entrance with a five bar gate. From here a second, late C20, service drive initially passes a stable and garage block, then leads directly to the north-west side of the kitchen garden and the attached sheds, before turning south-west to the service wing.

## **PRINCIPAL BUILDING**

Poundon House (listed grade II) stands centrally within the site, at a point where the land begins to fall away to the south-east. It is dated 1908 on a foundation stone (list description). It is in Queen Anne style with a timber eaves cornice, prominent hipped roof in stone slate with dormers, heavy small-paned sash windows and a central pediment in the centre of each principal frontage. The two stories are faced with coursed squared ironstone with ashlar quoins: principal corners are emphasised by rusticated quoins. The H-plan house is orientated north-west/south-east with principal rooms in the centre of the symmetrical south-east, garden front. The entrance front to the north-west is not symmetrical: the location of the main stair immediately north of the central entrance is indicated by a Palladian window.

The lower service wing is attached to the north, and is of one and a half stories in coursed ironstone and is in contrasting 'Arts and Crafts' style. It is set back behind the south-east, garden front of the house, projecting it north-west towards the service drive, and partially encloses the square forecourt. It has its own small square court to the north-west.

The combined stable and garage block stands c.80m north of the house. It comprises three wings arranged around a square gravelled court, with a wall along the fourth, south-west side, entered from the service drive close to its entrance from the street. The wings are built of red brick under hipped roofs with dormers. The central, north-east wing, some 40m long, has a central pediment with a small-paned lunette window and contains the garages. The flanking wings contain rows of stables. A mature chestnut stands in the centre of the court.

## **PLEASURE GROUNDS**

The pleasure grounds surround the house and are of a single design phase by T H Mawson c.1909. The garden door in the south-east, garden front of the house opens onto a 50m wide terrace of weathered stone laid in a diamond pattern, running parallel to the house. To the sides of the terrace the stones are laid in a random rectangular pattern between a flower border planted against the house and a grassed area, up to the 1m high retaining wall on the south-east side. At the south-west end of the terrace stand the remains of a wooden gate with distinctive ornamental hinges.

A central flight of steps leads south-east from the terrace down to a grassy terrace crossed by a gravel path. The top three steps are of a regular straight construction, but the lower five are semi-circular. The gravel path crosses the lawn for c.10m between clipped and shaped box hedging to a second set of three steps. This leads down to a lower level, to a gravel area with a round water feature containing a central fountain. A small wall surmounted with box hedging surrounds the water feature on the north-west side.

Beyond the water feature is a lawn, 40m in length which is bounded to the south-east by a ha-ha/ditch running parallel some 65m from the house. The ditch formerly contained a metal fence (pers. comm. owner) which was removed in the late C20 to create a ha-ha. Gravel paths lead north-east and south-west from the water feature to clipped beech hedges with arches which flank the main lawn; these are a late-C20 addition to the garden, planted by the present owner.



Where the beech hedge meets the south-west boundary is an incomplete circle of laurel hedge with a central mature mulberry tree; this design is mirrored on the opposite side of the garden but the mulberry tree has gone. The ha-ha finishes at the beech hedge and the remnants of earlier metal fencing continues the boundary line.

Below the south-west front of the house is the swimming pool enclosure surrounded by a clipped beech hedge. This was formerly a lawn. Beyond this is a larger yew-hedged lawn, formally a grass tennis court. 50m west of the house is an informal shrubbery with a small dog cemetery and a hard tennis court.

From the central terrace below the south-east garden front, stone-paved paths lead to either side past two square ironstone pillars 1.5m high. A 2m high curved ironstone wall connects the north pillar to the house. The north-east path leads down steps to a gravelled path flanked by lavender directly to the kitchen garden. Leading south-east from this path a further gravel path leads via steps down to a gate 75m from the house giving access to surrounding fields.

### **KITCHEN GARDEN**

The 0.4 ha rectangular walled kitchen garden (listed Grade II) measures c.55m x 70m. It is located 45m north-east of the house and is orientated north-west to south-east sloping gently towards the south-east. It is approached from the house via the path leading north-east extending the line of the main terrace. The original timber ornamental gate of 1908/09 is set centrally in the south-west wall within a brick archway. The walls are mainly in red brick c.2.25 m high and capped with slates and tiled copings. Some mature espaliered trees remain.

The garden is now (2016) laid to grass, and divided into quadrants by two paths in a cruciform pattern reflecting the early layout (OS 1919 & 1926). The path leading from the access gate running north-east is flanked by mature fruit trees. This path terminates at a central alcove in the north-eastern wall, at which point this part of the wall is lined with ironstone, and is an axial feature which draws the eye when entering the garden. The centre of the garden where the paths meet is defined by a circular stone plinth, possibly covering a disused well.

The path running north-east from the centre of the garden leads to the remains of a T-shaped greenhouse, c.27m wide which partly abuts the north-west wall. It is flanked by two freestanding smaller greenhouses. They all have timber windows set on 1m high brick walls with pitched roofs over; with the iron window controls, but little glazing remains. The smaller greenhouses are in use and in the large greenhouse is a mature vine. Set in the north-west wall, flanking the large greenhouse, are solid framed and ledged timber doors providing access to a lean-to brick single storey gardener's shed on the outer side of the wall.

By 1956 (Ministry of Works survey, private collection) the garden was divided by paths into eight symmetrical areas enclosed with a path following the inside line of the walls. The garden was probably still productive at this time.

## References

### Books, Articles and other sources

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Waymark, Janet, *T H Mawson Life, Gardens & landscapes* (2009), 234.

### Maps

Ordnance Survey

1<sup>st</sup> edition 6" 1885

2<sup>nd</sup> edition 6" 1900

Edition of 1926

Revised provisional edition of 1952

Ministry of Works survey 1956

### Illustrations

Oblique aerial photograph 22 September 1961 (CBS)

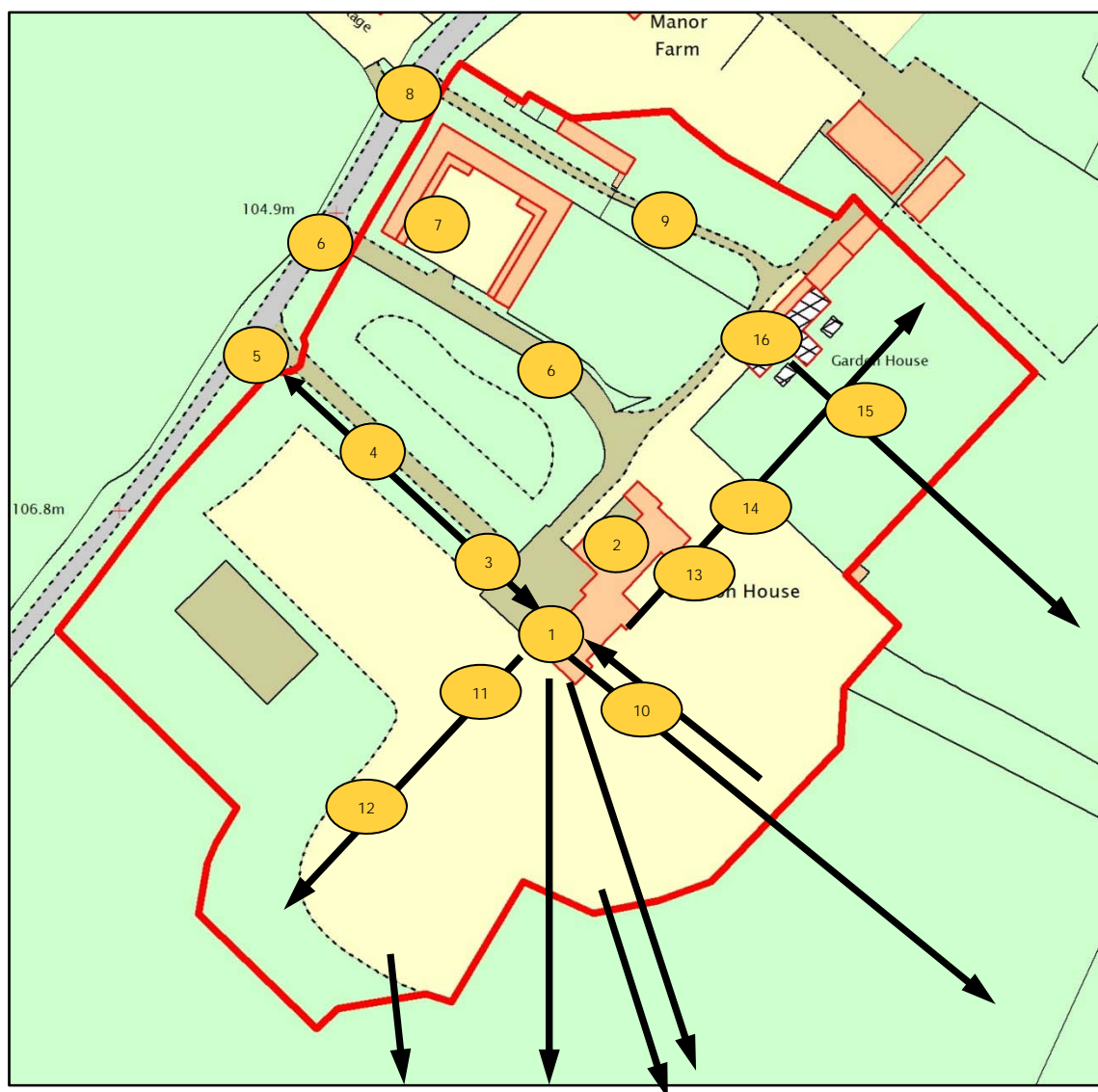
### Archival Items

Paxton & Holiday: sales catalogue, 1906 (CBS c/169/22)

G Huntingford, K Edwards and L Carter

Edited by C de Carle 22 April 2016; SR 29 April 2016; 16 June 16

## KEY HISTORIC VIEWS & FEATURES



**Key to numbered features**

1. House	2. Service wing & courtyard
3. Forecourt	4. Main, north-west drive
5. Main, north-west entrance	6. Service entrance & drive
7. Stable and motor block	8. 3 <sup>rd</sup> entrance
9. Service drive to kitchen garden	10. South-east garden & terraces
11. Swimming pool garden	12. Hedged lawn
13. Path to kitchen garden	14. Gateway to kitchen garden
15. Kitchen garden	16. Glasshouses and site of lost glasshouses

## HISTORIC IMAGE



The house and garden under construction. (Courtesy Mr A Roscoe)

## KEY CURRENT IMAGES



Principal entrance (left) with curved walls either side and (right) the service entrance



Principal approach and entrance (north-west) front of house (left); garden (south-east) frontage, with circular pool and steps to main terrace (right).  
South drive, view south (left) and view north to house (right).





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16 June 2016

The combined stable and garages: from the village street (right) and the interior courtyard (left)



Principal terrace and retaining walls looking north-east (left) and steps and piers to principal terrace from north-east (right)



Principal views: axial south-east view to Lodge Hill from principal terrace (left) and south to Muswell Hill (left) with framing planting to left



The walled garden: axial entrance from principal terrace (left) interior with espaliered trees (centre) and remains of glasshouses from south (right)