

# Understanding Historic Parks and Gardens in Buckinghamshire

The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust Research & Recording Project



**Brands House, Four Ashes, High Wycombe**

**June 2015**



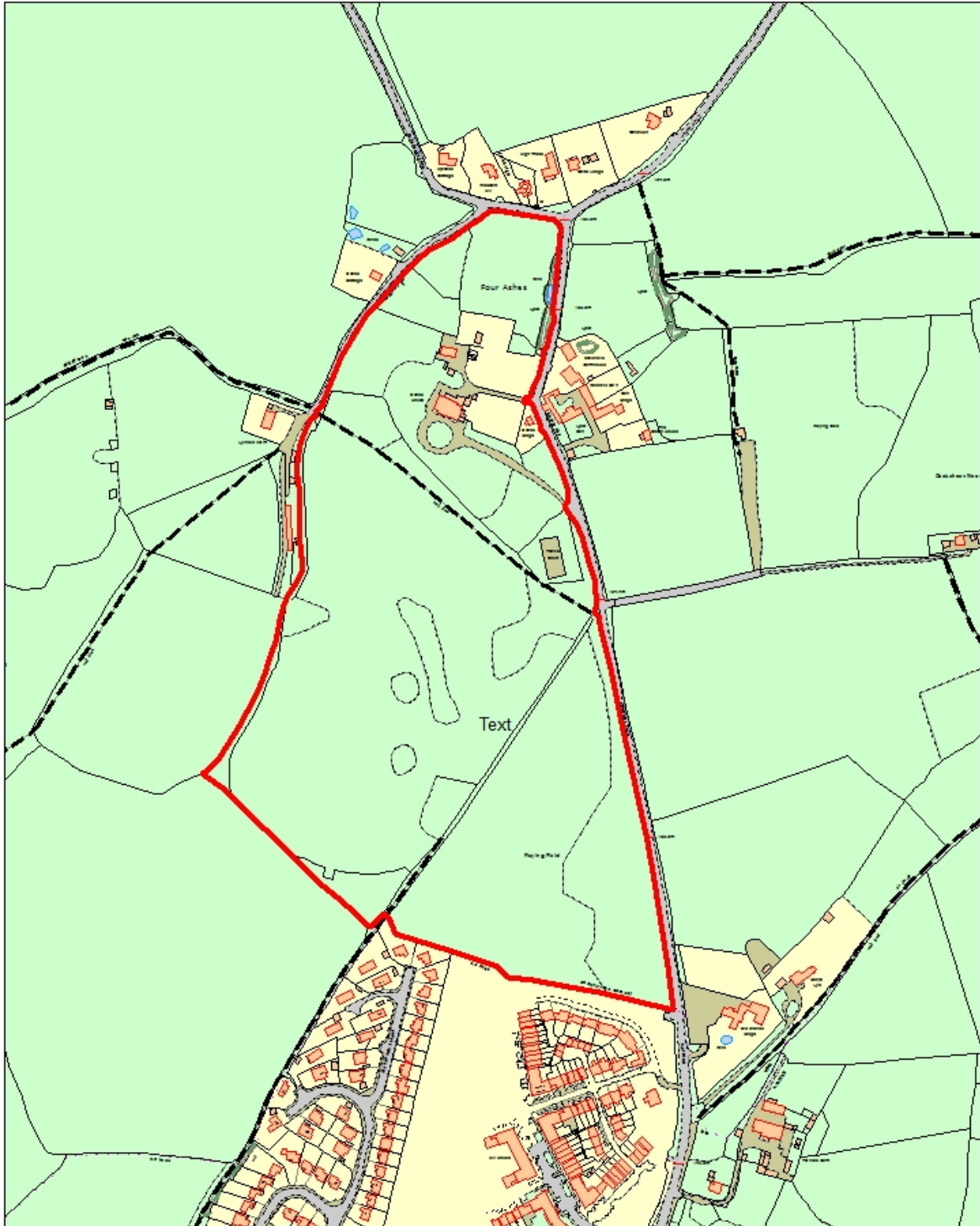
**Bucks Gardens  
Trust**



**Association of  
Gardens Trusts**



# HISTORIC SITE BOUNDARY



## Brands House: boundary of historic designed landscape interest

Produced by the County Archaeological Service  
April 2015



Scale: 1:4,302 at A4



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Scale: 1:4,302 at A4

**Brands House: 2008 aerial photograph**

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**Bucks Gardens Trust**

## 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 a site visit, based on the format of the English Heritage *Register of Parks & Gardens of special historic interest* 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 Association of Gardens Trusts and funded by BGT with a significant grant from The Heritage Lottery Fund. 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)

COUNTY:	BUCKINGHAMSHIRE	<b>BRANDS HOUSE</b>  <b>HER 1292601000</b>
DISTRICT:	WYCOMBE	
PARISH:	HUGHENDEN	
OS REF:	SU 875 956	

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### Overview

The 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.

### Archaeological interest

The hamlet has moated manor environs around Banking Meadow, with the potential for further evidence associated with the hamlet and with the pre-C18 origins of the site as a farmstead and agricultural land. Evidence survives of the pre-C19 road layout.

### Architectural interest

A villa comprising a modest C18 three-bay house enlarged in the early C19 with a grander five-bay wing in classical style with central pediment and pedimented porch with Ionic columns which enjoys long views southwards over the garden and park to the Chiltern valleys beyond. The early C19 staircase is notable, and the entrance hall, with its vaulted ceiling and wall mounted classical plaster relief panels, leads to the main drawing room, overlooking the park. The kitchen garden is enclosed on three sides by a typical C19 red brick garden wall.

### Artistic interest

The park and garden, developed in the C19 to complement the contemporary south wing of the house, survive largely intact and are sited to enjoy elevated views over the Chiltern Hills. Considerable design integrity remains in the informal layout, including ornamental trees in the pleasure grounds such as Scots Pine and Fir overlooking areas of lawn, interspersed with rhododendron and laurel, and mature park planting in singles, clumps and belts. The kitchen garden survives as an open space enclosed by mid-C19 red brick walls but has lost its C19 layout.

### Historic interest

The property has been associated with important and influential C19 and C20 figures. John Newman went on to become an eminent gentleman and a magistrate, sitting on the Bench at the same time as Benjamin Disraeli in the C19. The site was closely linked to the village of Hughenden, with a bridleway and ancient burial route that ran down to Hughenden church. During the 1930s, the house became known for its Society activities, including shooting parties, point to points, and even aeroplanes landing on the lawn. The surviving historic documentation is important to establish the development and significance of the site.

## HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In the C12, Robert, son of Brand was party to a legal agreement in 1196 concerning land in Kingshill. Brand's name was afterward used as a surname by the family descended from him.

The Bates family were at Brands House in the C17. John Bates (1689 -1760), his son Richard Bates (1718 –55) and his grandson, John Bates (1743 –99) were of Four Ashes of the Parish of Hughenden (Hitchenden) (*The Short Pedigree of the Bates Family* (SPBF)). Upon John Bates death in 1799, he had bequeathed to John Newman (the younger at Aylesbury) his messuages, cottages and tenements in Chipping Wycombe as seen in the Will of John Bates (WJB). The early layout was for a simple farmhouse with a large orchard to the north and agricultural land to the south. The walled garden has a brick dated 1797, but the first real evidence of its existence is on the tithe map of 1841.

The site was developed by the Newman family during their tenure of ownership in the C19 into a substantial country estate. It comprised some 733 acres at its most fully developed when they sold it in 1919 (WDC). A period of major development occurred during the 1840s during which was built a large, new wing to the old farmhouse that faced south-west. In 1841 John Newman requested planning permission to divert Brands Lane, which ran directly east of the farmhouse from south to north joining Greenhill to Four Ashes Road. This gave the house and gardens greater privacy and provided a drive across the newly created park with views of the house on the approach. Also in 1841, there was a turning circle in front of the new wing. By 1880 (OS) a large rectangular pond had been created to the north-east along with a drive connecting the turning circle to Kingshill Road. By then the grounds had been extended and significantly developed since 1840 such that they included a walled garden, gardens around the house and parkland, planted with a variety of trees including conifers.

The orchard north of the house was in existence, bounded by what is now Kingshill Road to the east and the former Brands Lane to the west (now, in 2015, a private drive out of the estate). The land to the south remained agricultural. However, by 1880 (OS), Brands Lane had been diverted and a park with a scatter of trees was established.

John Newman the younger, was the sole owner of the 800 acre estate when he died in World War I. When the estate was sold in 1919, it was split into 14 lots. Brands House, together with Rockhalls Farm was bought by Mrs. Viccars. The house became known for its shooting parties, point to points, and even aeroplanes landing on the lawn during the 1930s (WDC). Even though much of the surrounding farmland was sold after the 1919 sales, much of the parkland and gardens survived.

Few changes occurred to the gardens and grounds in C20 but by 1987 (Folkard & Hayward sales catalogue) a new tennis court lay in the SE corner and large swimming pool had been built in the walled garden.

The last of the Viccars family left the house in 1978 and it fell into disrepair. In the 1980s, the parkland to the south east of the footpath which cuts diagonally across the park was sold to Bucks County Council. Rockhalls Farm and its barns were sold, the barns to be converted into residential

units. Brands House became offices suffering some neglect, before returning to use as a family home in 1999 (WDC).

The site is currently in private ownership.

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

### **LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING**

Brands House is situated in the small hamlet of Four Ashes, approximately 2 miles north of High Wycombe. It lies south of the Uplands grounds (qv) in Kingshill Road and sited above 180m in the Chilterns overlooking the Hughenden Valley to the west on chalk with deposits of clay-with-flints. It has views to the west, down the steep valley side, into the Hughenden Valley and to the south across the gently sloping plateau to High Wycombe now (2015) screened by trees. The site is set within mixed farmland with C20 development to the south.

The 16 ha. site is bounded on its eastern side by Kingshill Road which extends from south to north. Mature trees and hedging line the south boundary between the park and the Kingshill Road. The northern boundary in the C19 ran along Four Ashes Road until it turned southwards along Church Lane, however the current (2015) northern boundary does not include the area of the former orchard (1974 OS) which was sold in the C20.

From the point where Church Lane turns to the west the estate boundary continues southwards for about 320m and then turns east to meet Kingshill Road. This part of the boundary is marked by hedgerows and modern fences with occasional gateways. From the 1760s (Jefferys) until 1841 (estate map for the planned road diversion), the former line of Brands Lane (which ran from Greenhill to Four Ashes Lane) formed one of the site boundaries. This also served as an access road to the C18 house. However, when the new road across the park to Kingshill Road was put in (1841) and John Newman created the parkland, it became obsolete and the gardens were extended on the west side of the house to include West Meadow. The former route of Brands Lane can still be traced across the park.

Brands House enjoys two key views. From the C18 west wing is a view northwest across the Hughenden Valley to Church Farm, somewhat restricted near the house by a large yew tree to the south and a clump of trees including a large Scots pine to the north. The early C19 south wing enjoys a long view across the park to the south-west towards the Hughenden Valley in the distance.

### **ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES**

The main entrance to the estate enters off the Kingshill Road 130m southeast of the house. At the entrance a modern gateway is flanked by two mature Wellingtonias. From this entrance a gravel drive gently curves north-westwards between high hedges of laurel and rhododendron of the gardens and pleasure grounds leading to a turning circle on the south side of the house in front of

the main entrance. This occupies the site of the turning circle present by 1841 (estate map). A further drive leads to the north side of the house from Church Lane to the west.

Formerly the drive split into two at the eastern end of the walled garden, providing another entrance from Kingshill Road but now (2015) only the southernmost arm exists. A further access led to the north side of the house along the outside of the north wall of the walled garden from Kingshill Road.

Other minor entrances to the park have timber five barred gates. The early C19 approach from High Wycombe was via Greenhill and then Brands Lane (1841 estate map). It crossed the park from south-east to north-west, arriving at the 1720s west wing of the house. This approach was diverted after 1841 diagonally across the park from south-west to north-east and then north to the main entrance on the south front of the house. By 1889 (OS), that approach across the park had become a footpath and the main approach from High Wycombe was along Kingshill Road as now.

## **PRINCIPAL BUILDING**

Brands House (listed Grade II) was by the mid-C18 a small double-fronted farm house built for the Bates family in the 1720s, which faced north-west onto the former line of Brands Lane. The earliest part of the house is the C18 west wing which appears on maps (Jefferys). This west wing is a modest three-bay, two storeyed structure with attic rendered with plinth, wooden dentil eaves cornice and old tile roof. There are large servants' quarters and service areas attached to the northern side of the building. This appears on maps from the mid-C18 as Mrs. Bates' name appears on maps from 1760s (Jeffreys). By 1825, the house was part of an E-shaped complex.

The C18 west wing was remodelled c1820-30 with a grand south front and steeply-peaked pediment gable (BM). The house was extended eastwards at right angles by a south facing, two storey double fronted wing with a triangular pediment. The old house became the west wing, in the Queen Anne style, of a grander five-bay house facing south with extensions to the rear in classical Georgian style. Parks and formal gardens were a part of this C19 development (BM).

East of the present front door, a small attached pillared loggia was added in late C20 on a site previously occupied by a glasshouse. There is a central pediment and pedimented porch with Ionic column.

## **GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS**

The gardens and pleasure grounds extend from the house c.50 m west and north, 50m to the south and 100m south-east as informal lawns fringed with woodland and comprising several seamlessly linked sections.

Lawns extend around the south, west and north sides of the house. South-west of the entrance front, in the centre of the turning circle created by 1841 (estate map) is a recent fountain surrounded by a garden feature of a compass style design in low box hedging. To the north are two modern glass houses and a modern dovecot. Small stands of mature trees include yews and other



conifers and mature hedges border the lawns to the north side of the house. On the east side is the walled garden. About 75m south-east of the house and off the drive, is a pathway that winds through rhododendrons to a small glade and dell, with a stream flowing into a small pond, that may be of C19 origin. The pond has a balustrade along one edge. The path is carried over the stream by a modern wooden bridge to the hard tennis court. Here there is a rectangular pergola with a small terrace and a balustrade with ornamental urns.

The planting is typical of the mid-C19, with ornamental trees such as Scots Pine and fir, overlooking areas of lawn, interspersed with rhododendron and laurel. Closer to the house the grounds are wooded, hiding the building from Kingshill Road.

## **PARK**

The park occupies a plateau extending for some 400m south of the house. It contains various stands of mature clumps and single trees, some deciduous and others of pines and other more exotic species, with belts of mature trees around the outer boundary. The park layout remains much as it has been since the mid-C19 (OS).

The park is separated from the gardens by an iron park rail fence running some 60m south-west of the house, north-west to south-east from Church Lane to Kingshill Road. To the south of the fence is a large circular hollow, possibly a swallow hole, however local hearsay has it as a WWII bomb crater. A footpath runs alongside the fence. The east side of the park retains an avenue of oaks. Another footpath cuts diagonally across the park from south west to north east to meet the first path at Kingshill Road. The western side of the park is grazed and the eastern side is a public playing field. On the southern edge is a small copse of mature pine trees which screens some of the view to High Wycombe.

The former orchard north of Brands House appears by 1841 (estate map) and is marked on later OS maps. It is now (2015) unmanaged semi-woodland. A linear depression has been identified as a moat (OS) lies north of the kitchen garden and runs alongside and between the former orchard and Kingshill Road. It may have been part of the farm water supply and not a moat.

Formerly an avenue of trees (English or Turkey oak) lined the route of the old road, Brands Lane that traversed the park (1841 estate map; OS 1889, 1925), running from near the house in a southerly direction toward a bridleway that formerly ran down to Hughenden Church in the C19.

## **KITCHEN GARDEN**

The 36m x 42m kitchen garden lies immediately east of the house and is largely enclosed by a garden wall (listed Grade II) which runs along the north, south and east boundaries. Even though the wall contains a brick dated '1797', the 1841 map does not indicate a walled garden and this dated brick may be resited from elsewhere. The wall of red and vitreous brick is irregularly bonded, with cement coping. The house provides the west side closure to the area. The walls secluded the garden from the rest of the grounds while permitting them to be the greatest advantage from the house.

The area contains a large central rectangular swimming pool within lawns, flower beds and fruit trees espaliered against the walls. Attached near the top of the southwest facing exterior of the garden wall are two late C19 or early C20 decorative masks. A walled garden is first shown in the 1870s (OS), with a large glasshouse in the southern half. However, by 1897 (OS) the large glasshouse has been replaced by a small glasshouse in the northern half.

## REFERENCES

Pevsner, N & Williamson, E. *The Buildings of England, Buckinghamshire* (1994), p407.  
Wycombe District Council, Four Ashes, Conservation Area Character Survey, 2006.

## Maps

1760s, Thomas Jefferys, Map of Buckinghamshire (CBS).  
1812, OSD 2" to 1 mile (BL).  
1825, Bryant, Map of Buckinghamshire (CBS).  
1841, Map of Brands House Estate (CBS Q/H/102).  
1874, OS 25" to 1 mile, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, s. 1874, p. 1880 (sh. 42.10).  
1880s, OS 6" to 1 mile.  
1897, OS 2<sup>nd</sup> edition p. 1898.  
1925 OS, s. 1923-24.  
1926, OS 6", Sheet XLII SW.  
1938, OS Provisional Edition 6", additions in 1938.  
1970s, OS National Grid, 1: 10,000 scale.

## Images

Photo of the 1841 Brands House Estate Map in the CBS Archives mentioned above, showing the full 733 acres owned prior to the 1919 sale (Photo in private collection)

1947, RAF photo (HER)

## Archival Items

Short Pedigree of the Bates Family (**SPBF**), in the Carrington Collection Papers, (CBS D-CN/9/2/2/3)

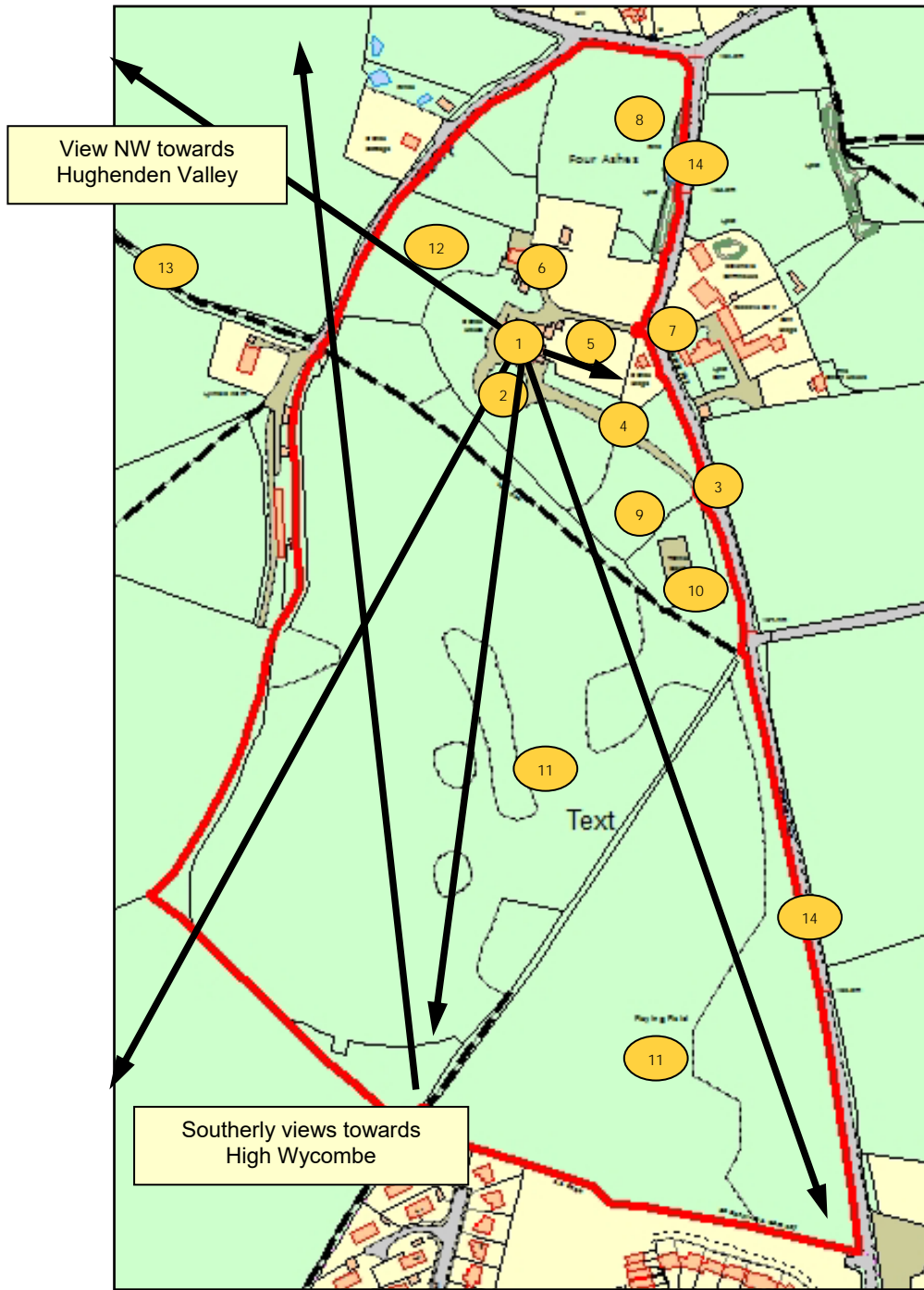
Will of John Bates (**WJB**), in the Carrington Collection Papers, (CBS D-CN/9/2/2/2)

Folkard & Hayward, sales catalogue for Brands House, 1987.

Savills and Cluttons, sales catalogue for Brands House, 1999.

Wallace Wormley and Rose Palmer, 13 April 2015. Edited SR 06 May 15.

## KEY HISTORIC FEATURES & VIEWS



**Key to numbered features**

1. House	2. Forecourt & entrance front of house
3. Main entrance off Kingshill Road	4. Main drive
5. Kitchen garden	6. Yards & stables
7. Service entrance and drive to rear of house	8. Former orchard
9. Glen	10. Tennis court & pavilion
11. South park	12. West park
13. Lane to Hughenden church	14. Kingshill Road

## KEY IMAGES



