

Understanding Historic Parks and Gardens in Buckinghamshire

The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust Research & Recording Project



St Katharine's, Parmoor

December 2014



**Bucks Gardens
Trust**



**Association of
Gardens
Trusts**



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* 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.

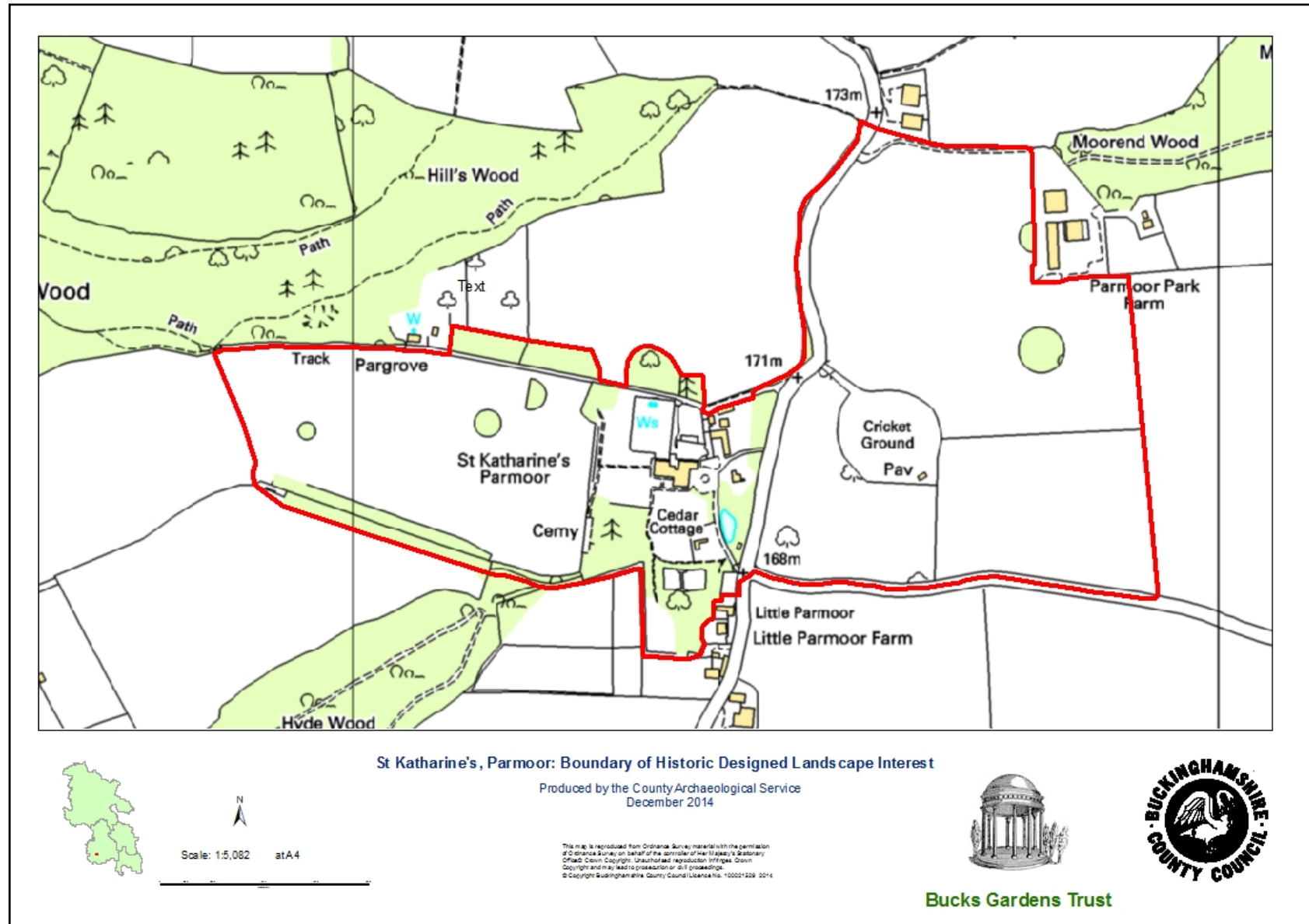
Supporters and Acknowledgements

The project was supported by The 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.

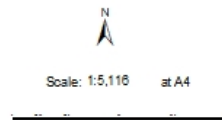
The Trust would like to thank the volunteers and owners who have participated in this project and given so much time and effort to complete this challenging and rewarding task.

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

SITE BOUNDARY MAP



AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH



St Katharine's, Parmoor : 2010 aerial photograph

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Produced by the County Archaeological Service
December 2014



Bucks Gardens Trust



COUNTY:	BUCKINGHAMSHIRE	ST KATHARINE'S, PARMOOR BCC HER 0087604000
DISTRICT:	WYCOMBE	
PARISH:	HAMBLEDEN	
OS REF:	SU793893	

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Overview

A country house, gardens and park developed in the late C19/early C20 for the Cripps family of politicians on a site known to have been occupied since the C14. The property is associated with several influential C20 figures. The designed landscape makes good use of the Chiltern setting and survives largely intact.

Archaeological interest

There is considerable archaeological potential as the site has been continuously occupied as country house since the C14.

Architectural interest

A typical late C19/early C20 country house ensemble including mansion, gateway and stables. The house incorporates evidence of earlier features. The C19 walled kitchen garden and associated structures form a group of service structures.

Artistic interest

A late Victorian country house, park and garden developed in the late C19 and sited to make the most of elevated views over characteristic rolling landscape in a remote corner of the Chilterns. Notable surviving features include the remains of a water garden, a ha-ha terrace, kitchen garden, and tree planting which can be seen to date from the late C19 ownership as well as many fine mature trees including a large cedar near the house and a mixed avenue on the approach from Frieth with notable specimens including Turkey oak, beech and sweet chestnut.

Historic interest

The property has been associated with important early C20 political figures and social reformers – Charles Alfred Cripps, who was responsible for much of the landscape development that can be traced today; his son Stafford Cripps; and Beatrice and Sidney Webb and their Fabian circle. It was later associated with King Zog of Albania who was resident with his retinue during World War II, and Lady Sue Ryder.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The property is first recorded in the C14 when it was owned by the de Malyns family. The first reference to the name 'Parmoor Estate' and Manor is in the C15 (*VCH*). Langley (1797) states that it was owned by the Knights Templar. After multiple changes of ownership it came into the possession of the Verney family in 1472 and the D'Oyley family in 1603 and remained in their possession until 1800. The D'Oyley estate map of 1786 describes it as 'House, orchard, garden and rickyard 3 acres, 2 rods'.

After several changes of ownership Henry Cripps QC occupied, then owned, the estate from the 1860s. The gardens and kitchen garden were first recorded in 1883 (OS). He was succeeded in 1899 by his son Charles Alfred who became Lord Parmoor of Frieth in 1914. In a major phase of development 1893–1903 the house was enlarged (HER) and the landscape consolidated as it remains today; the kitchen garden was developed; the Frieth to Hambleden road (now Parmoor Lane) was rerouted to the east of the house and a new northern entrance was constructed. The park was developed and a substantial and sinuous avenue planted along the northern section of the Parmoor Lane approach.

Charles Alfred Cripps, a leading lawyer, politician and churchman, was married to a sister of the important social reformer Beatrice Webb (co-founder with her husband Sir Sidney Webb of the London School of Economics), and was the father of leading Labour politician and post-war Chancellor of the Exchequer Sir Stafford Cripps, born at Parmoor in 1899. The family thus had close connections with trade unionist, socialist and pacifist movements. The exiled King Zog of Albania and his entourage occupied the house 1941–46 (HER).

The sale catalogue of 1946 describes the site at the height of its development. It describes the main features including 'Mansion, Grounds, Buildings 33.304 acres ... Extensive lawns, ornamental and rose gardens, small woodlands and an ornamental water garden, etc ... Walled-in productive kitchen and fruit garden comprising a large range of glasshouses, amongst which are a large peach house, vinery, fig house and several smaller houses; also a range of potting and tool sheds adjoining.'

The core of the site was sold and became St Katharine's Convent in 1947 and the HQ of the Sue Ryder Prayer Fellowship in 1995; it is currently (2014) used as a conference centre, while parts of the gardens are being restored (SRPF, n.d.) and being used to provide therapeutic and horticultural activities for disadvantaged people (Lady Ryder Memorial Garden, n.d.).

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

Parmoor is a 33-ha site located in south-west Buckinghamshire, in a rural area of the Chilterns. The site is approximately 12 km south-west of High Wycombe, 1 km south of Frieth and 4 km north-northeast of Hambleden. The property is bisected by Parmoor Lane which runs north–south between Frieth and Hambleden; iron park fencing remains in places. The western side contains the house and gardens. Agricultural fencing delineates the western parkland boundary; the north boundary is partly fenced along a track/public footpath (shown on the Jeffery's map (1760s)) leading to Pargrove and Hatchet Wood; east of Pargrove the north boundary is marked by an ornamental belt running along the north side of the track. The south-west boundary is wooded with the remains

of a track (shown on the D'Oyley map 1786) leading to Hythe Wood (on 1786 map as Hides Wood) and Bagmoor. The park to the east side of Parmoor Lane is bounded by arable land to the north, east and south. The north boundary is partly wooded (Moorend Wood) and partly agricultural fencing. The east boundary is unfenced across arable land, and to the south an unnamed hedged lane links Parmoor with Finnamore/Shillingridge Park.

The estate is situated on a low plateau sloping gently from the north-eastern to the south-western corner, characterised as an incised slope. Where the site drops to the south-west towards the western boundary it enjoys panoramic views of a wooded ridge over ornamented agricultural land with occasional plantings. On the north-east boundary the late C20 buildings of Parmoor Park Farm are visible.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

There are two entrances, about 180 m apart, on the west side of Parmoor Lane, the main entrance being the southern one. It is marked by a pair of square-section 3-m high brick gate pillars topped with terracotta ball finials, although the gates have gone. The south drive runs north past a pond (shown on the D'Oyley 1786 map) on the east side within mixed woodland and an orchard, after 200m reaching a turning circle below the east front of the house. Banks planted with mature cedars to the north and yews to the south, screening the views to Parmoor Lane, flank the turning circle.

The northern entrance off Parmoor Lane, bounded by tall laurel hedges, is a tarmac drive curving 90 m south-west from Parmoor Lane to the turning circle.

Before the 1890s (OS) the main entrance was on the north side of a former public road (the former line of Parmoor Lane) from Frieth along Parmoor Lane and the track to Pargrove. The former public road passed between the kitchen garden and stableyard, passing the house and pond on a line which was re-used as the present south drive. Linking to this former route is a partly surviving 250m avenue of mixed deciduous trees flanking Parmoor Lane where it runs north towards Frieth. This includes notable specimens of English oak, Turkey oak, beech and sweet chestnut. Parmoor Lane was rerouted (apparently by the Cripps family when they developed the parkland and estate to the east of Parmoor House) to its current line along the line of a footpath which appears on the D'Oyley map (1786).

PRINCIPAL BUILDING

Parmoor House (listed Grade II) stands 100 m west of Parmoor Lane. The home of the D'Oyley family 1603–1800, the two-storey, four-bay red-brick house was partly remodelled c.1770–80, and was much enlarged on the north and west sides 1893–1903 by Charles Alfred Cripps. The mansion is entered via a forecourt and *porte-cochère* on the east front. The west wing is dated 1903 and has a banqueting hall at the western end. This has a three-bay arcaded veranda of red sandstone to the west side. The south and west fronts, including the veranda, overlook the garden, while the west front also enjoys views over former parkland to distant wooded hills.

A range of late C19 – early C20 brick service buildings stands 50 m to the north and north-east of the mansion, including an L-shaped stable block converted to a motor house overlooking the former stable yard.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

The gardens and pleasure grounds extend c.50 m west and 200m south from the house as informal lawns fringed with woodland and comprising several seamlessly linked sections. South of the house French windows open to a gravel path parallel to the south front with a lawn to the south and west. Specimen trees in the lawn are dominated by a large Cedar of Lebanon in the south lawn, shown on OS 1921. The south-west corner contains a small group of mature apple trees. Beyond the lawn to the south rough grass and scrub extend to a former water garden and an area of shrubs and specimen trees. The eastern boundary with the main drive is marked by a belt of trees.

The remains of the water garden (first indicated on OS 1919–1927 and described as such in the sale catalogue (1946)), visible from the south front, comprises a rectangular, sunken area some 40 x 20 m, now empty of water, up to 1 m deep and surrounded by a rendered brick retaining wall. The feature is surrounded by trees, mostly self-seeded; some may be those shown on the OS 1919–1927. The sunken area is bisected by a 2m wide north–south raised path. Raised areas within the perimeter represent planting beds. A wooded mound to the south may be spoil from its excavation. Formerly (OS 1919–1927) the feature was surrounded by a path which linked the southern drive to Hythe Wood.

A wooded area lies c. 200m south and south-west of the house at the edge of the garden. Formerly a track (Jeffreys 1760s to OS 1900) ran westwards along the southern boundary downhill through Hyde Wood.

Adjacent to the woodland on the west garden boundary is a grassed terrace c.3m wide with wide westerly views across the parkland and beyond. A section, bounded by a low brick wall against the park, runs through a small cemetery to the southern end of the terrace. The burial ground was used by the convent in the mid–late C20 and contains a number of headstones.

Beyond the cemetery the terrace continues as a ha-ha terrace first shown on OS 1921 along the park edge of the west lawn. This extends for 50m below the west lawn rising to a raised grassed terrace supported by a low brick wall c. 50 cm high, and surmounted by a 40 cm ornamental metal fence. The ha-ha is backed by a 1m high buttressed brick wall as a boundary between the lawn and the park. The northern end of the terrace continues as an iron fence with a pedestrian gateway from the lawn to the park.

Aerial photographs (1985 – 2003) and maps (HER) show that formerly an axial path crossed the lawn from the south-west corner of the house to the terrace. Prior to 1921 (OS) the pasture extended closer to the west aspect of the house in a curved boundary.

PARK

The park is divided into two sections. The west park (OS 1898), now pasture, is roughly rectangular and slopes away from the house. Four deciduous roundels are scattered in the park, all first shown on OS 1898 and apparently part of the Cripps development. One has remnants of a single metal estate fence around the perimeter; another has a fence and ditch. The ornamental belt and roundels along the north boundary beyond the track to Pargrove are an early C20 addition (OS 1919) to shelter the house, garden, kitchen garden and eastern section of the park.

The east park, which slopes gently upwards from Parmoor Lane, was developed by the Cripps family from 1893 onwards and contains a number of mature trees and tree roundels of this period. The south-western quadrant includes a C20 cricket square and pavilion. Parmoor Park Farm (late C20) occupies the former north-east corner of the park with the remains of a roundel adjacent. Beyond the farm is Moorend Wood. Further views extend east and south beyond the site.

KITCHEN GARDEN

The 0.5ha kitchen garden lies immediately north of the house and dates from the early Cripps ownership (OS 1898). A 3.5m brick wall surrounds the garden, which is divided into quadrants by a cruciform path. There are four entrances, one in each wall. The central north entrance gives vehicular access from the lane to Pargrove and has a pair of wooden gates within a semi-circular archway. The west gateway leading to the lawns has an iron gate providing views over the park; the east gate gives access to the service yards and the southern one leads to the house. On the inside of the north wall are the remains of two lean-to greenhouses, first indicated on OS 1898, flanking the vehicle entrance. That on the west side contains a mature grapevine. The original iron window controls remain along with grating rails and walkway panels. A plate on the inside of the doorway gives the maker's name as Mackenzie and Moncur, a leading supplier of greenhouses in the late C19 (ref. ScotlandsPlaces).

The foundations remain of two pitched-roof greenhouses on the north wall (gone, 1930s photographs). Back sheds stand against the outer side of the north wall. Mature fruit trees line the inner east wall, and a few flank the pathway in from the lawns.

The southern end of the walled garden formerly contained several service buildings. A modern lean-to greenhouse stands at the southern end of the east wall along with other modern outbuildings.

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Maps

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1760s, Jeffreys, Map of Buckinghamshire (Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies)

OS 6in to 1 mile 1st edition published 1883
2nd edition published 1900
1919–1927 (1920s) edition

OS 1:2500	1876
OS 25 in to 1 mile	1921
OS scale not known	1898

Images

1985 aerial photograph 1985 RC8-HJ 160 (Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies)

1989 aerial photograph 6289064 (Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies)

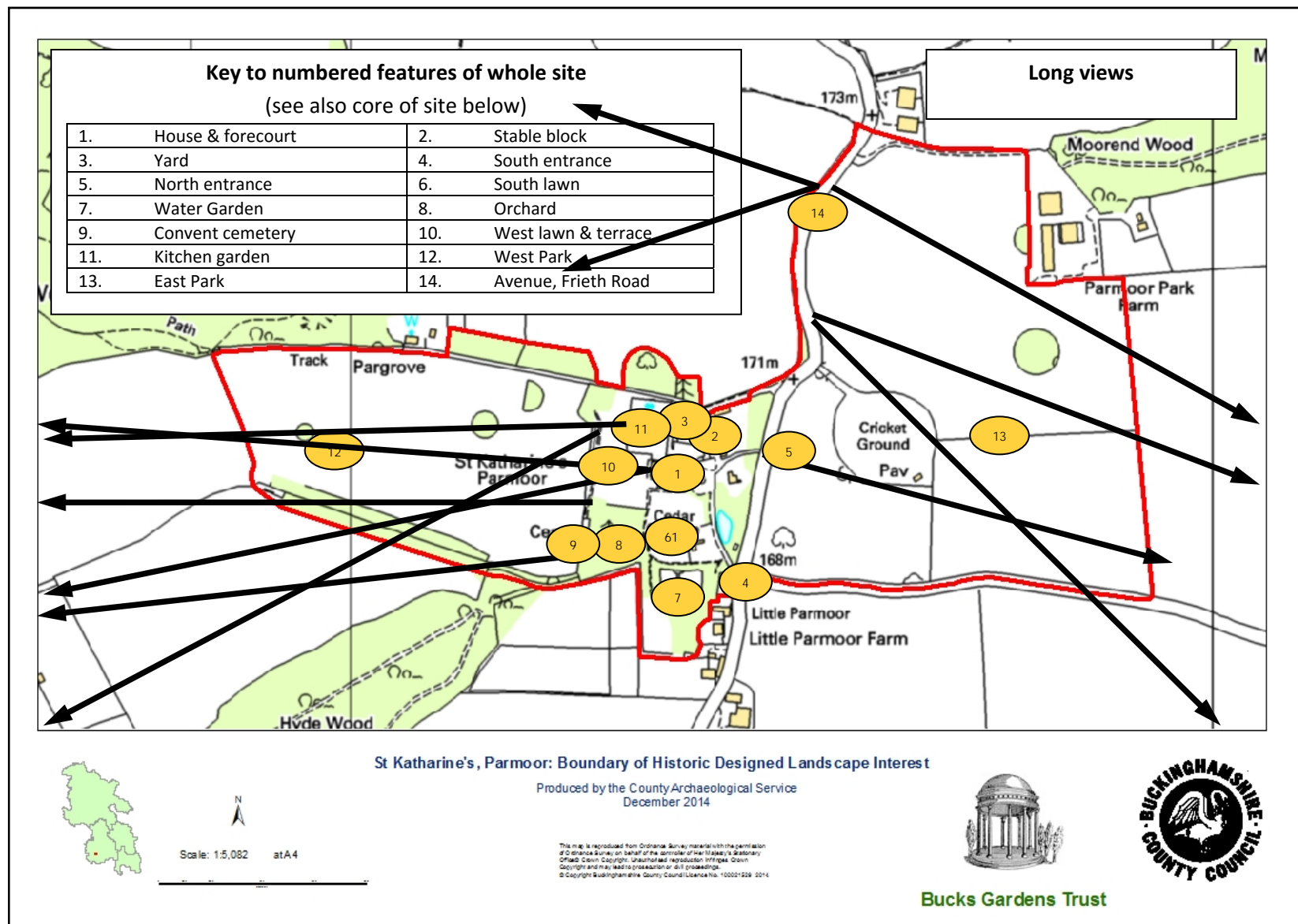
2003 aerial photograph (Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies)

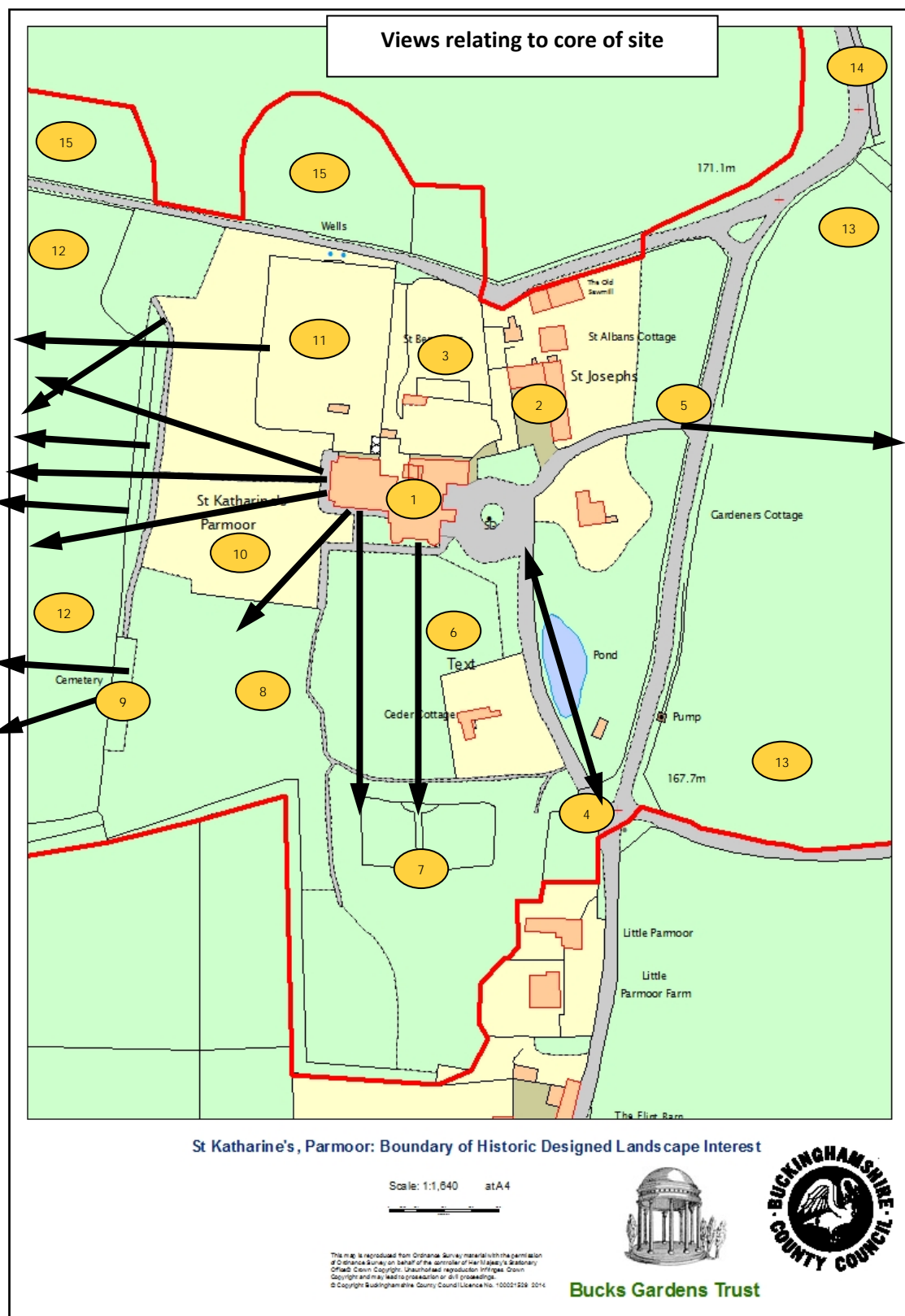
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CB & AJ, March 2014

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KEY HISTORIC VIEWS & FEATURES





Key to numbered features in core of site

1. House & forecourt	2. Stable block & yard
3. Yards	4. South entrance
5. North entrance	6. South lawn
7. Water Garden	8. Orchard
9. Convent cemetery	10. West lawn & terrace
11. Kitchen garden	12. West Park
13. East Park	14. Avenue, Frieth Road
15. Screening woodland	