

Understanding Historic Parks and Gardens in Buckinghamshire

The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust Research & Recording Project



(Mary Buckle)

High and Over, Amersham

September 2017



Bucks
Gardens
Trust



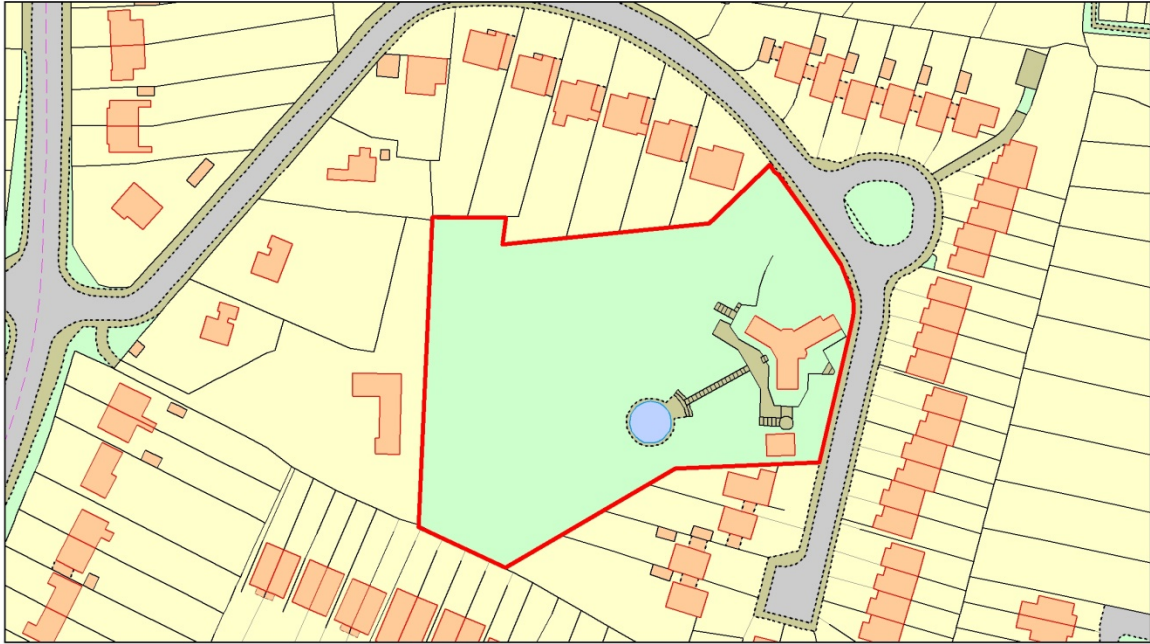
The Finnis Scott
Foundation



THE
GARDENS
TRUST

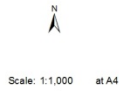
The Stanley Smith (UK) Horticultural Trust

HISTORIC SITE BOUNDARY



High and Over: boundary of historic designed landscape interest

Produced by the County Archaeological Service
May 2017



This map is reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction is illegal. Copyright and any other rights reserved by Ordnance Survey. © Copyright Buckinghamshire County Council Licence No. 100021202 2017



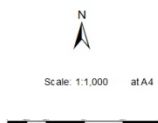
Bucks Gardens Trust



High and Over: 2008 aerial photograph

© Getmapping plc. www.getmapping.com

Produced by the County Archaeological Service
May 2017



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 (now 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/ Historic England *Register of Parks & Gardens of special historic interest* 2nd 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

COUNTY:	BUCKINGHAMSHIRE	HIGH AND OVER, AMERSHAM BCC HER 1246000001
DISTRICT:	CHILTERN	
PARISH:	AMERSHAM	
OS REF:	SU 966 973	

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Overview

The core survival of the garden of a small country house of international significance, one of the first houses built in the Modernist style in England (1929-31), and *“of outstanding importance as the first truly convincing essay in the international style in England..... It is the first work by Amyas Connell who with Basil Ward and Colin Lucas formed the most important architectural practice designing modern movement houses in the inter-war period.”* (Historic England) The strongly geometric garden design, now surviving in part only, was integral to the design of the house in providing an extended living space in similar formal style, with structures such as the water tower as a viewing platform as well as the roof and windows of the house overlooking the Chiltern valley far below. It was extensively written up in the architectural press during building and afterwards, in which the garden was also noted for its close relationship with the building.

The garden was soon threatened as “Metroland” spread. Much of the 5 ha. estate was developed in the 1960s so that housing now surrounds the site. The 0.75 ha core of Connell’s garden design, as executed in modified form by the owner Ashmole and his gardener George Marlow, survives with white-walled terraces, tiered rose beds, circular swimming pool and series of steps surrounding the Y-shaped house. These complement the Modernist style of the house. The contemporary Lodge and four Sun Houses in similar style, all within their own gardens, are a key part of the setting of the house and garden.

Archaeological interest

Archaeological potential is largely related to lost garden structures, paths, beds and other features.

Architectural interest

One of the earliest houses in Modernist style in Britain, High and Over (listed Grade II*) was designed by the influential architect Amyas Connell who won the British Prix de Rome in 1926. He had been influenced by Le Corbusier at the Paris Exhibition in 1925 and by French Modernists Andre Lurçat and Robert Mallet-Stevens. The house is constructed with a reinforced concrete frame and features a central hexagonal hallway with radiating spurs which form a “Y”. The associated lodge and Sun Houses (Listed Grade II) nearby in similar style and materials, survive as part of the early development designed by Connell with his brother-in-law Basil Ward, although the striking water tower has gone. The 'Y' shape; horizontal ship-like storeys; biplane-shaped canopy and its white façade make High and Over unique. The clean lines, modern materials and geometric design contrast strongly with typical Metroland houses. The contemporary Lodge and four Sun Houses in similar style form an important architectural group as part of the intended setting of the house.

Artistic interest

The remaining core of a complex garden area forming the setting for an internationally significant smaller country house and reflecting the design by Connell and laid out by the owner Ashmole and his gardener. The layout responds to the slope with a series of formal terraced garden compartments around the house within the Metroland and 1960s development setting, the intended rural Chiltern setting having been banished to the far distance. It is of high significance for its complex design as a geometric setting where many other houses in similar style were surrounded by lawns in the contrasting naturalistic English Landscape style (e.g. Patrick Gwynne's The Homewood, Surrey). The loss of the wider garden has damaged the design, but this makes the surviving core and the features all the more significant and as the setting for the house. The gardens of the Sun Houses and lodge are also of significance as the collective setting for these buildings and High and Over.

Historic interest

High and Over was designed and built for Professor Bernard Ashmole, a world authority on Ancient Greek sculpture and architecture, when he was Yates Professor of Classical Archaeology at University College London. He was later to become Director of The British Museum having been involved with the war-time evacuation and re-instatement of the Elgin Marbles. He was descended from an uncle of Elias Ashmole who founded the museum in Oxford which bears his name. (Kurtz) During World War II the Water Tower was used as a lookout position (Kurtz). It was owned by D L Mays, the Punch cartoonist in the 1950s and later by the architect F Briggs.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1929 the Shardeloes Estate came on to the market. Dorothy Ashmole (Bernard's wife) bought a 12 acre site from the Tyrwhitt-Drakes half a mile north-east of Amersham on the edge of Metroland and adjacent to the area known as Amersham-on-the-Hill. It sloped gently down towards the south (Kurtz) on an agricultural hillside above a bowl 'The Hollow' (a former chalk quarry). The site was poor quality agricultural land, on high ground and completely bare of trees, including the remains of a former chalk quarry, most traces of which had been removed by ploughing. The site was prominent from nearby roads including the main Aylesbury road in the valley below.

The 'Y' shaped concrete-framed house with brick infill was begun in 1929 and completed in 1931. It was built for Bernard Ashmole (1898-1988) Professor of Classical Art and Archaeology at the University of London (1929-1948) by the architect Amyas Connell, originally from New Zealand. He had met Ashmole at the British School in Rome when he was the Director and Connell was a student. High and Over was among the first houses to be built in the Modernist style in England. The house was in a shockingly new style and prominent from its surroundings, with its nearby water tower. Around the west edge of the garden alongside the drive (now Highover Park) were built in 1933-34 several smaller houses in similar style, known as Sun Houses designed by Basil Ward, Connell's partner and brother-in-law (Sharp).

In his Autobiography (Kurtz) Ashmole described how, together with his gardener George Marlow, he was responsible for the construction and development of the garden and designed landscape during

the early 1930s. The geometric design by Connell complemented the clean lines of the house but was executed by Ashmole and Marlow rather differently and incorporated traditional planting.

The house and garden were the subject of extensive and detailed coverage in the contemporary press, including an illustrated *Country Life* article (19 September 1931) and in the Pathe Newsreel of 1931 "An Ultra Modern House". It features towards the end of the 1973 BBC film "Metroland" in which John Betjeman, the Poet Laureate, celebrates life along the Metropolitan Line. Although he was a fan of Metroland, in his book "Betjeman's England" he declared that High and Over, "scandalised all of Buckinghamshire." (Betjeman, Games: publisher John Murray 2010)

In 1929 Connell was involved in house and garden designs at Lyme Park and Trent Park in Middlesex for Sir Philip Sassoon. Connell also worked on designs for interiors of shops and restaurants, including the Vitamin Café in Oxford Street, on which he collaborated with A.M. Hargroves (sister of his wife, Maud Hargroves). In 1930 Connell united with his old friend Basil Ward to form Connell and Ward and together they worked on a number of building projects including in 1932/3 New Farm Grayswood Surrey which had a flat roof as a garden. In 1934 Connell designed the Saltings: the Sinah Lane house on Hayling Island and Usherwood.

Connell's Y-shaped design remained extremely unusual, evoking the Butterfly Houses of the Arts and Crafts movement which also took advantage of the sheltering benefits of the shape. Other houses in the same style were usually compactly rectangular in shape, such as the small group of factory managers' houses at Silver End, Essex by TS Tait for Critall, The White House (1931) and Thurso House (1932), Cambridge, both by Checkley (Yorke).

The garden was started in 1931 while the house was being built. On the 14th January the timbers of a pergola being constructed were brought down in a gale (Kurtz). Connell had planned a very formal garden for the estate and the designed landscape originally included the lodge, a water tower, and tennis court (e-architect.co.uk article, John Winter 29/6/2010). An early plan of the layout is shown on page 16 of this dossier.

The main phase of development of the garden took place from 1934 onwards after Ashmole had employed George Marlow as the gardener. He moved into the lodge with his wife May who became housekeeper for the Ashmole family. In the following year George Marlow dug over half the five acres set aside for the garden; removed the flints and set them aside for paths; planted many fruit trees; laid out and planted a large kitchen garden; and sowed Broad Walk with grass. George constructed the rose garden which consists of a series of triangular terraces. George worked with Ashmole to construct the circular swimming pool, paths and flights of steps (Kurtz).

During the early 1940s the house was let to a business firm (Kurtz), but by April 1941-1945 the Ashmole family were back at High and Over. The house was used by Dorothy Ashmole to accommodate refugees during WWII (Kurtz).

In the 1950s the Ashmoles sold the house which was bought by D L May the *Punch* Cartoonist (amershamhistory.info/bfa). Much of the garden was sold separately for development in the 1960s and housing was built around much of the site, leaving part of the Roman-style garden with its circular swimming pool and steps.

Around 1962/3 High and Over was bought by Frank Briggs, an architect, who split the house in two. The house had been threatened with demolition but it was saved by being divided between two owners who shared the garden and pool. In 1971 Grade II listing was awarded but it has more recently been upgraded to Grade II *. In 1984 High and Over was bought by Nigel Budden. In 1994 the architect John Winter advised on the restoration of the exterior. (e-architect.co.uk 29/6/2010) and between 2005 and 2010 the house was turned back into one residence.

In 2010 it was bought by the current owners (2017) a husband and wife: a sculptor and an art historian and interior designer who are continuing the restoration (Independent.co.uk).

The site remains in private ownership.

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM AND SETTING

The 0.7 ha site is located in the late C20 development of Highover Park which is part of Amersham-on-the-Hill. It stands about half a mile north-east of the centre of Amersham, a Chiltern market town, near to the Metropolitan Line railway station, above Old Amersham in the valley.

High and Over is situated on a hillside above a bowl, The Hollow (a former chalk quarry), overlooking the broad valley of the River Misbourne as it passes through Amersham. It was sited to make the most of elevated views overlooking the gently undulating landscape in the Chilterns and was also prominent from the surrounding roads. The house perches just below the top of the hill at 125m AOD on a fairly steep south-west facing slope.

The north-east and east boundaries are marked by the road Highover Park, and on the other sides the site is abutted by at least 16 properties built on part of its former grounds in the later C20. The present boundaries consist of wire netting to the north screened by trees and shrubs. East of the house, adjacent to the rose terrace, the boundary is a high beech hedge and wire netting. The boundary fences along the south and west edges are screened by a belt of native woodland trees, tall conifers and yew. The housing estate covers the wider area of the former garden, with the four contemporary (1930s) Sun Houses and lodge in similar style adjacent to the west.

The chalk bedrock is interspersed with layers of clay-with-flints, beneath which is a layer of clay which retains the water held in the Chilterns aquifer. Ashmole tapped in to this water source when constructing his water tower. The soil is chalky loam-fairly poor in quality but well drained. The south-facing aspect gives shelter from cold north winds.

To the north-west the four Sun Houses (listed Grade II) and the former gardener's lodge, all within their own gardens, complement the Modernist design of High and Over. The adjacent development of houses built in the 1960s, although screened from the garden by dense perimeter planting, overlooks the site, reduces the impact of the design and restricts the intended extensive views of the woods, fields and Old Town of Amersham. From the roof some views remain.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The site is approached from a public road to the west called Highover Park, a turning north-east off Station Road, which connects Old Amersham and Amersham-on-the-Hill. Highover Park curves around the west and north sides of the former garden and houses built adjacent to the north

boundary of the present garden. Near the entrance off Station Road was an electrical transformer for the estate. Highover Park, following the former line of the drive, passes initially three Sun Houses to the east below the main garden, then a lodge for the gardener and housekeeper, built at the same time as the main house in similar style. A fourth Sun House stands above the former drive to the north. The Lodge (not listed) is in separate ownership and has been the subject of considerable alteration. Beyond this stand a row of six 1960s houses before reaching the present entrance to the site on the east side of the road.

The site is now entered 30m north of the house, where a gravel drive leads south from Highover Park road (the former drive). It divides into a triangular shaped turning circle enclosing a circular concrete-sided flower bed 5m from the front door on the north front. A service spur slopes down to the basement garage which is also underneath the terrace on the north-west side of the house. The spur drive is edged with low white rendered retaining walls. Until the 1960s development the main drive curved north for 115m from Station Road and then north-east for 110m to the house entrance.

A contemporary source noted that, 'There is an entrance 'lodge' as white and geometrical as the house; it will ultimately form the entrance feature of the main driveway up to the house, a road which has been graded and partially constructed to be an easy approach to the forecourt of the house' (*Arch. and Building News*, 1931).

PRINCIPAL BUILDING

High and Over house (listed Grade II*) and the lodge nearby to the north-west (outside the historic boundary), were constructed between 1928 and 1931 to designs by the New Zealand architect Amyas Connell (1901-80). It was his first commission and is regarded by many as the first major Modern Movement house in England (Sharp, Rendel; Richardson), conceived at the same time as key buildings including Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye and Mies Van Der Rohe's German Pavilion at the Barcelona Exhibition. In 1932 it was one of only two buildings represented in the exhibition 'The International Style' at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (Bucks Monument, MBC1864). It was an extraordinary opportunity and achievement for such an inexperienced architect.

The construction is a concrete frame with brick and block infill, rendered and painted white. The house was designed in a Y-shape plan with 3 wings at 120 degrees with a hexagonal central hall, to maximise sun and shelter, as the exposed site is near the top of a hill which was bare fields at the time of construction. The entrance façade is oriented north-west with few windows to concentrate the focus on the front door and triangular porch above. On the north-east façade three sides of the hexagonal hall protrude with vertical glazing to the first floor and then bands of glazing on the second floor. The south-east, garden elevation has almost continuous bands of windows on the ground and first floors and then the terrace canopies above each wing. When built these commanded excellent views of the garden and Misbourne Valley beyond (views all now gone except for the rooftop).

The ground floor had the dining room and kitchen service quarters in one wing, library in the second and drawing room in the third wing. The central hexagon is double height with folding doors to open up the whole of the ground floor. On the first floor bedrooms and dressing rooms occupied two wings and maids' quarters and bathroom in the third. The second floor was for the nursery with a second staircase to first and ground floors. The other two wings had roof terraces with concrete

canopies for shade and weather protection on the second floor (Sharp, Rendel). Part of the top floor with flat roofs was designed for playing or sleeping out, with hoods over them against the weather.

Contemporary sources reported widely on the house, noting that it was 'one of the first examples of in England of reinforced concrete frame construction applied to domestic architecture' (*Arch. and Building News*, 1931).

- On the siting: 'We studied the site carefully and decided the best position would be towards its southern end, where the ground fell rather more steeply and where there was a hollow, probably formed by a chalk pit long abandoned' (Kurtz).
- On the effect in its rural Chiltern setting: '...those with imagination could see that, startling though it looked at first in a bare field, it would fit into the landscape eventually, and the growth of trees around it would act as a foil and enhance the general effect' (Kurtz).
- On the style: '...the first house in this country to adopt the style of Le Corbusier's early villas' (Pevsner).
- On the use of the roof: 'The use of the roof is one of the foremost features of the house; for here is a placeto enjoy the rolling luxury of a Chiltern valley. It is covered to protect from undue strength of sun or inclement showers.....What better view could be obtained of a well laid-out garden than that of a roof-top observer?' (*Arch. and Building News*, June 1931).
- On the success of the project: '...three primary factors emerged; the contour of the site, the maximum intrusion of sun into the house and also the view...the Y shaped plan with wings 120 degrees from each other... solved satisfactorily those three objectives' (Sharp, Rendel).
- On the overall significance: 'The whole is a monument to the International Modern style of the thirties, and a very valuable document of the courage and boldness of the clients and their architects' (Pevsner).

The house was divided into two properties in the early 1960s, with both halves sharing the garden and pool. The house had been returned to single ownership between 2005 and 2010 when the current owners bought it as one house.

Nearby to the west of the garden in 1934 Connell designed four new properties in their own gardens, called the 'Sun Houses' (listed Grade II) in similar Modern Movement style, with roof terraces (outside the site boundary). Three were constructed at the bottom of Highover Park, then the drive to the main house, immediately east of Station Road; the fourth was built further up the hill north of the drive, opposite the Lodge. The Lodge and Sun Houses are all in separate ownership.

The former water tower (demolished in the 1960s), which stood east of the entrance drive (now Highover Park road) and 70m north-east of the house, was constructed to house a pump to feed water from the artesian well beneath it to the swimming pool and the fountain in the entrance hall of the house (Ashmole). It was a focal feature of the garden and comprised a concrete water-tank on the highest point of the site - a circular pole with a large circular cistern like a millstone high up. Visually this had even more of a shocking appearance than the house. The most exciting vista was from the top of the tower via an internal ladder, overlooking the large circular pool excavated by Ashmole and Marlow at the foot of the garden steps (now the swimming pool). This vantage point also reinforced the geometrical pattern of the garden.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

The gardens are a fragment of the original c.5 ha. extent. The majority was developed in the 1960s except for a core around the house, making it more enclosed than intended and obscuring the views over the Misbourne valley.

From the front door and proceeding around the north-east wing of the house which is now close to the boundary hedge with Highover Park, the south-east, staircase façade is glazed to its full height and looks over the remains of the former triangular Rose garden. The garden has the remains of terraces that Ashmole and his gardener constructed by hand in the early 1930s. These beds contain a few modern rose bushes and a large cedar. A metal gate in Art Deco-style gives pedestrian access from the road, leading to a triangular path down six steps to the concrete slab paving terrace in front of the staircase facade. When first made this rose garden was triangular with the base at the house and the point uphill across the present road finishing in the front garden of the present 41 Highover Park.

At the far end of the south wing are the remains of the site of the pergola: a terrace with a low white concrete retaining wall that continues around the house on its western side enclosing an asphalted terrace that varies in width between 1-4m. Connell's cut-away drawing shows this terrace as concrete. Four uprights making a box shape with wooden cross beams, which appear on the aerial photo from the 1930s, appear to be from the original pergola. The pergola/terrace now (2016) terminates here at a garage, with access from Highover Park, which was built in the 1960s. From here steps lead west down onto the lawn. About six steps down is a lower terrace which instead of concrete is retained by flints collected by the Ashmole family from the surrounding fields; the wall was built by Ashmole and his gardener (Findlay).

Following the terrace around the south wing of the house one arrives at a steep flight of steps which leads c. 20m south-west down to the circular swimming pool. These steps are lined by privet hedges encircling about one quarter of the pool to form a sun terrace at the bottom of the steps. Two lime trees flank the steps, planted in the 1960s.

Continuing clockwise around the house, a shorter flight of steps (12) leads onto the lawn on the north-west side of the house and then the terrace leads to the drive. A further 5 steps lead from the lower terrace onto the lawn. The central part of the garden to the west is laid to lawn and the three boundaries are wooded areas, mostly conifers and holly but also some broadleaved trees planted in the last 50 years to screen the development beyond.

Connell's design was divided into three parts with the axes extending from the wings of the house and was geometrical like the house. One third, to the north contained the entrance drive, water tower and fruit trees, the eastern third contained the maze (not made), the rose garden, broad walk and kitchen garden and the final third, to the west, contained the swimming pool, lawns and a terraced garden (again not constructed). This comprised a masterplan for the site where the landscaping was as important to the project as the construction within it (Sharp, Rendel). The long broad walk had a small rectangular pool at the south-east end and a water tower, which was itself a landscape feature, and five court. Herb borders flanked the broad walk. A tennis lawn and long rectangular orchard lay downhill from the water tower.

Connell was influenced by international models. The gardens close to the house on the east and south-west sides were based on equilateral triangles divided into terraced beds, strongly recalling Guevrekian's garden at the Paris Exposition as well as Villa Noailles at Hyeres (1927). Ashmole changed the position of the swimming pool and did not proceed with the main terraced garden or the maze. Andre Lurcat (1894-1970) advocated building towards the sky where the benefits of light and sun could be enjoyed from the roof terrace. The garden was essentially composed to be seen from above.' Lurcat also believed that even the most modest house was incomplete without a productive garden'. Connell placed the features sparingly on the large site and they were separated by large areas of roughly mown grass (Findlay, 2010; Yorke, 1944).

Paul Vera (1888-1971) may also have been an influence. His new formulation acknowledged labour, reflected in the positioning of the vegetable garden between the formal axes of the pergola and the broad walk. But tradition was not abandoned. The various garden rooms were edged by low hedges of box, controlled shrubs and tall clipped green walls. Concrete was used as a modern substitute for stone masonry' (Findlay, 2010).

The full extent of the garden was widely reported along with the house, as its essential setting.

Of the integral nature of house and garden: '..here is a man who wishes to live with the Sun and the Air, though well defended from the stronger winds and to take advantage of such amenities as the hillside affords, with its long view across an English river valley. But he must be content ... until such time as his garden grows; until such time as its pergolas are finished and its designed planting is of full height to complete the extension of the house into its surroundings and to limit the prospects to those which have themselves preserved the amenities.....it requires considerable imagination to envisage the full intentions of the architect...without the garden layout with which it is to be surrounded' (*Arch. and Building News*, June 1931).

Of the creation of the garden: 'To create a garden from the five acres we had set apart for it was an immense task. The soil was of clay and flints, about half and half, lying above a subsoil of chalk.... It proved eventually to be a marvellous soil for fruit, and when mature we had an abundance of apples, pears, cherries, plums, peaches and figs, all growing out in the open.' (Kurtz) 'Ashmole and Marlow were kept busy with construction of the garden which took place as the builders were working on the main house. They began with the 'Long Lawn' which extended along the rear boundary and linked the water tower with a large kitchen garden. The lawn was levelled, edged with flint paths and planted with shrub borders.' (Findlay, 2010)

'In a year George (the gardener) had dug more than half of it to the depth of a garden fork, taking out the flints to form a basis for paths; had planted dozens of fruit trees, had laid out and planted a large kitchen garden and had sown with grass the Broad Walk. This was about thirty feet wide and over hundred yards long; it began at the water tower (where we made an oblong pool eighteen feet by six) and sloped gently down towards the south.' (Kurtz)

A triangular terraced rose garden constructed south-east of the house divided it from the large kitchen garden beyond. Ashmole recalled: 'George also constructed the rose-garden, a series of terraces rising in steps on a triangular plan, fifty feet wide at its base, to the east of the house. He and I together cast several thousand feet of deep concrete edges for the beds, and several thousand square feet of cement paving for the paths.' (Kurtz) The beds were divided into strips of turf and

cultivated soil with two broad stairs on either side rising to a small ornamental lawn and circular pool with roses in rows by colour with alternating bands of yellow and red (Ebert, daughter of Ashmole). A duck pond lay at the end of the long lawn near the water tower.’ (Findlay, 2010)

The circular swimming pool south of the house was a key feature in the design, but was modified by Ashmole: ‘In the middle of 1934 George and I embarked on the swimming pool. Modifying Connell’s plan which put it elsewhere, I had sited this at the lowest point of the Hollow, south-west of the house to which it was linked by a long flight of steps – also home-made – conforming exactly to the slope of the ground..... George and I dug a circular pit thirty-three feet in diameter, wheeling the spoil out to the western edge of the Hollow and spreading it there to heighten and improve the general shape.’ (Kurtz) ‘A broad terrace was added to the slope at the top of the chalk pit behind a retaining wall built up with flints dug out from the garden. When the pool was finished in 1935, a long concrete stair was built linking it with the lower of the two terraces and a semi-circular seat constructed in poured concrete.’(Findlay, 2010)

The pergola had a short life and was left unfinished. In January 1934 a tremendous gale flung down the timbers on top of the pillars of a pergola which was just being built. The structure at the top of each group of pillars (there were five of such structures) consisted of two beams of timber 12”x4”, 20 feet long; all were lifted bodily from the pillars, some of which they demolished. (Kurtz)

KITCHEN GARDEN

The former 0.25ha. kitchen garden, lay south-east of the house along the west edge of the broad walk and east edge of the pergola, south of the rose garden. It was divided into rectangular beds aligned west/east. Connell’s plan and photos show it narrowing to the south.

MB, SM Edited SR September 2017

REFERENCES

Books

The Architect and Building News (29 Nov. 1929; 03 Jan. 1930; 26 June 1931; 03 July 1931; 30 Oct. 31; 6 Nov. 1931; 13 Nov. 1931; 20 Nov. 1931; 11 Jan. 1935) (CBS)

Brown, Jane, *The English Garden Through the C20* (1999), 122, 132, 133.

Campbell, Katie, *Icons of C20 Landscape Design* (2006), 23.

Country Life (19 September 1931), 302.

Elliott, B., *The Country House Garden from the Archives of Country Life* (1995), 167.

Kurtz, Donna (ed.), *Bernard Ashmole, An Autobiography* (1994), 51-61, 217-222.

Pevsner, Nikolaus and Williamson, Elizabeth, *The Buildings of England, Buckinghamshire* (2003, edition), 139-141.

Powers, Alan, *The Modern Movement in Britain* (2005), 88-92.

Richardson, Tim, *English Gardens in the C20* (2005), 121,125.

Sharp, Dennis and Rendel, Sally, *Connell, Ward and Lucas* (2008), 44-55, 140-143.

Strong, Roy, *Country Life 1897-1997, The English Arcadia* (1996), 108-110.

Tunnard, Christopher, *Gardens in the Modern Landscape* (1950), 69-92. [Guvrekian, le Corbusier, etc]

Victoria County History, *Buckinghamshire Vol.3* (1925), 141-155.

Yorke, FRS, *The Modern House in England* (2nd edn. 1944), 13.

Other

Findlay, Michael, 'Amyas Connell, High and Over' and the Role of New Zealand Architects in the British Modern Movement (Unpublished Thesis Otago University), 2011.

Findlay, Michael, 'So high you can't get over it' undated

Findlay, Michael, 'An experiment with time', 2016, presentation

Myers, Katy, *Gardens for Modernist Houses in Buckinghamshire*, text of talk given to Bucks Gardens Trust 16.2.2013

Maps

Jefferys' Map of Buckinghamshire 1770.

Bryants' County Map 1825.

Ordnance Survey:

2" Surveyor's draft 1812

6" to 1 mile 1st Edn. 1882

2nd Edn. 1900

3rd Edn. 1925

Emergency Edn 1938

Provisional Edn 1944

Revised 1950s

1:10,000 National Grid 1978

Aerial Photographs (Bucks County Council HER)

1947, 1950 RAF

Internet

<http://www.e-architect.co.uk> accessed 29.10.16

<https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=Scandalised+all+of+Buckinghamshire&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&hl=en-gb&client=safari> accessed 29.10.16

<http://amershamhistory.info/on-the-hill/high-over/> accessed 1.11.16

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9oz6d6Y5P94> accessed 2.11.16

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amyas_Connell accessed 2.11.16

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernard_Ashmole accessed 2.11.16

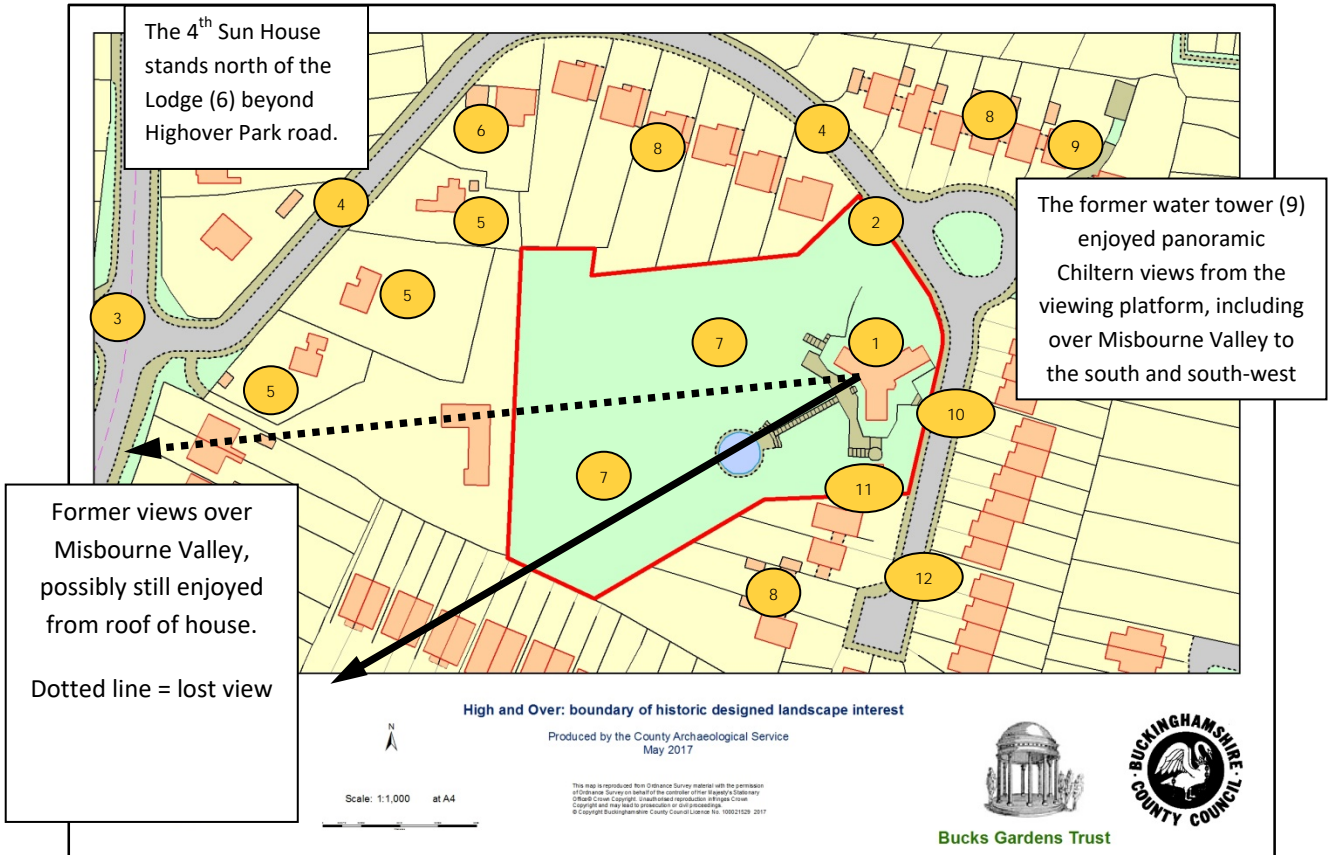
<http://www.skibbereeneagle.ie/architecture/high-and-over-amersham/> accessed 2.11.16

<http://www.britainfromabove.org.uk/image/EPW044254> Accessed 3.11.16 (aerial photos)

<http://www.themodernhouse.com/sales-list/highover-park> Accessed 11.11.16

http://interstices.ac.nz/previousfiles/INT09_Findlay.pdf Accessed 28.11.16

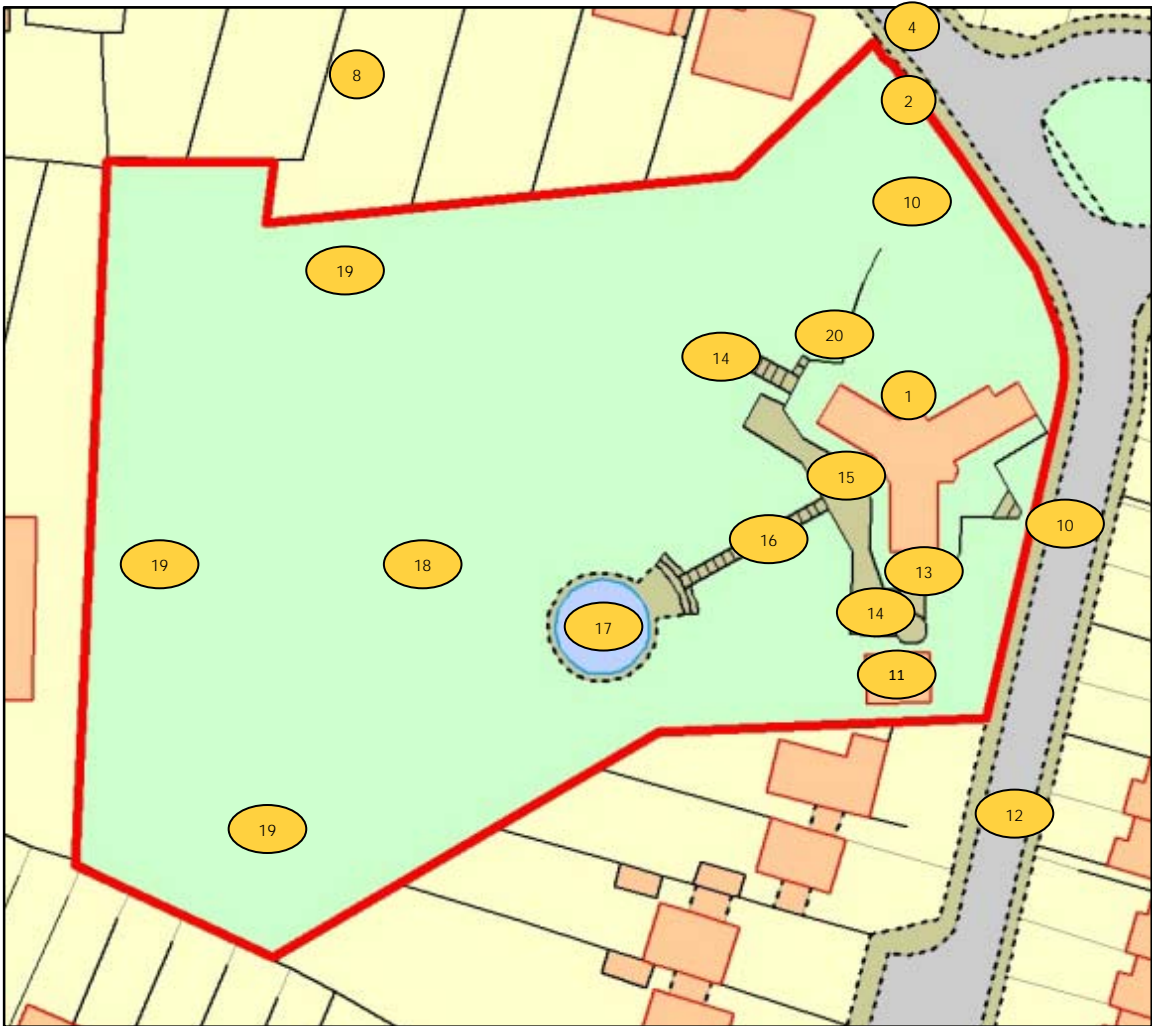
KEY HISTORIC VIEWS & FEATURES



The wider site

Key to numbered features (as used on maps above and below)

1. House & forecourt	2. Present main entrance
3. Station Road	4. Highover Park, former drive
5. Sun Houses	6. Lodge
7. Garden	8. Former garden
9. Site of former water tower (approx).	10. Site of former rose garden
11. 1960s garage	12. Site of former kitchen garden
13. Pergola	14. Steps to lawn
15. Terrace	16. Steps to swimming pool
17. Swimming pool	18. Lawn
19. Woodland	20. Garage entrance (Basement)



The core of the site (numbers correspond to the key above)



Connell's Early Plan of the Garden c.1931

This was not carried out quite as shown but is a close version.

Key to numbered features above

1. House	2. Main entrance and turning circle
3. Drive (approx site of present main entrance)	4. Drive
5. Water tower & Fives Court	6. Rose garden
7. Maze	8. Kitchen garden
9. Pergola	10. Rectangular Pool
11. Terrace	12. Steps to pool and terraced gardens
13. Pool	14. Swimming pool
15. Sun Houses	16. Lodge
17. Broad Walk	18. Tennis court
19. Fruit trees	20. Electrical Transformer

CURRENT & HISTORIC IMAGES

Black and white photos below (c.1930) are from a private collection. Efforts have been made to trace the copyright holder to obtain permission for the use of copyright material but without success. The Bucks Gardens Trust apologizes for any errors or omissions and would be grateful if notified of corrections that should be incorporated in future editions of this report.

ALL COLOUR PHOTOS ARE THE PROPERTY OF MARY BUCKLE



View north-west across the rose garden towards the staircase facade



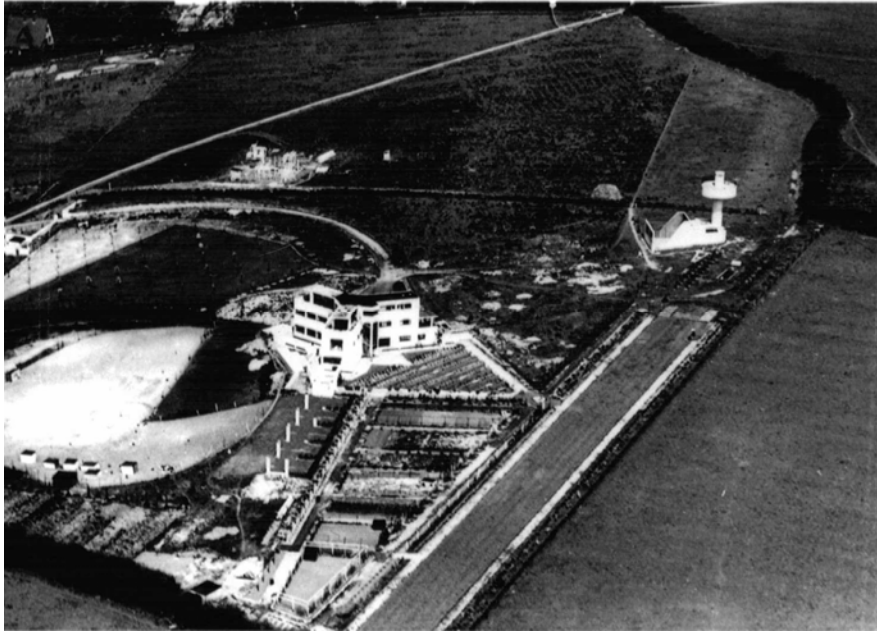
Left: View north-west across the rose garden towards the staircase facade today

Above: View from the staircase window onto the remains of the rose garden



Above left: view north, showing the pergola, kitchen garden, broad walk and rose garden.

Above right: view south from the water-tower, showing the broad walk and kitchen garden.



Above: taken from the south shows the water tower and chalk pit prior to the construction of the swimming pool (under construction below)



View south-west from the terrace to the swimming pool (c.1930 left; 2016 right).



The south-west façade once the swimming pool was completed, including flint walls retaining the main terrace (c.1930 above; 2016 below).





Above: view from the west. Below: view south from the drive



View south-west past the garage to the main lawn.



The north facing entrance front



Highover Park, the former drive, view south-east towards High and Over.