

Understanding Historic Parks & Gardens in Buckinghamshire

The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust Research & Recording Project



Richings, Iver

March 2016



Bucks
Gardens
Trust

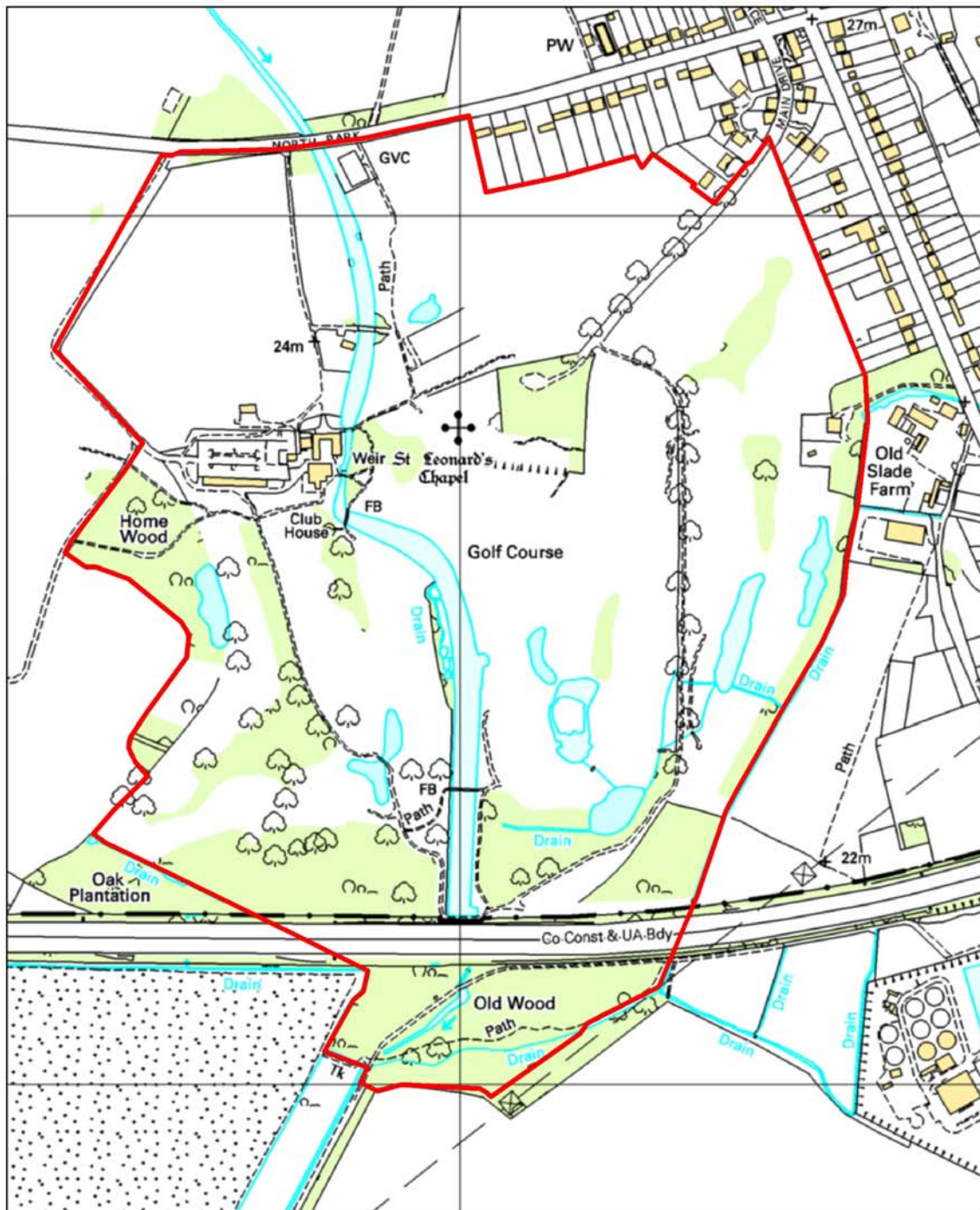


The Finnis Scott
Foundation



The Stanley Smith (UK) Horticultural Trust

HISTORIC SITE BOUNDARY



Richings Park: boundary of historic designed landscape interest

Produced by the County Archaeological Service
February 2016



Scale: 1:5,714 at A4

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Richings Park: 2011 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 (BCC Report No. 508). The list is not conclusive and further parks and gardens may be identified as research continues or further information comes to light.

Content

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

Each dossier includes the following for the site:

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

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

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

Supporters and Acknowledgements

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

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

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

COUNTY:	BUCKINGHAMSHIRE	RICHINGS
DISTRICT:	SOUTH BUCKS/SLOUGH	
PARISH:	IVER & COLNBROOK	
OS REF:	SU 030 786	
		BCC HER 0024104000

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Overview

The park and pleasure ground for a nabob's villa of the 1790s, further developed in the mid-C19. It incorporates remnant features from a renowned and influential early-mid-C18 *ferme ornée*, most notably Lord Bathurst's extensive canal. The site and previous house (dem. 1780s) had strong connections with the C17 royal court, and early-mid-C18 literati including Alexander Pope who wrote part of his famous translation of the *Iliad* here c.1717, and associations with the garden designer Stephen Switzer, whose contribution is unclear. The layout, at its most fully developed by the 1920s, survives partly intact, although having lost the 1790s villa (the second in the park), four lodges, the detail of the gardens and pleasure ground, and been overlaid by a golf course and divided at the south end by the M4 motorway.

Archaeological interest

Various finds were made during the construction of the golf course in the 1990s indicating prehistoric, Roman, Saxon and Medieval occupation. High potential exists for lost C19 features relating to the second house (built 1790s, demolished 1950), and the grounds and lost structures related to them, including four lodges, several summerhouses, garden terraces, bridges, drives and paths, also for the canal and a lost boathouse. The abandoned Edwardian water garden beside the canal has considerable archaeological potential for paths and structures. Lesser potential exists for earlier structures and features, particularly the first house, possibly with medieval origins, demolished in the 1780s, and its gardens, including the early-mid- C18 *ferme ornée* features, and for the medieval St Leonard's Chapel, possibly sited in the pleasure grounds.

Architectural interest

With the loss of the two successive houses and associated lodges, the architectural interest is based upon peripheral buildings, particularly the fine and well preserved C18 and C19 stable block and coach house complex (Home Farm) and associated farmstead structures, and the adjacent kitchen garden brick walls (probably C18). In addition, a fine ashlar three-arched bridge (c.1790s) straddles the canal in the north park, an ice house lies in the south park, and a flint bridge which carries the former south drive from Colnbrook, stands in woodland south of the M4.

Artistic interest

The late C18 park and pleasure grounds for a nabob's villa (gone), modified in the mid-C19 with terraces and a ha-ha below the villa, extended pleasure grounds leading to the canal and a new drive, Main Drive. This incorporated elements of the formerly renowned *ferme ornée* for Lord Bathurst of the 1710s-30s, associated with the designer Stephen Switzer, which was developed for Lady Hertford in the 1740s, but was largely lost by the late C18. The main element of this early phase, the extensive canal, was incorporated and extended northwards when the road was moved

c.1790s to its present position along the north boundary. A number of mature trees survive, including lime and hornbeam in Old Wood, a yew and holly walk, veteran park specimens, further yew, conifers, planes, horse chestnuts and two Turkey Oak avenues, but the design has become blurred with the golf course planting in the 1990s. Despite the villa and lodges having gone the layout can still be traced and the site of the villa survives as the focus of the design (covered in scrub and trees).

Historic interest

Richings was the setting for regular gatherings in the early C18 (at the first house) of influential political, philosophical and literary circles of the early C18, all friends of Lord Bathurst's, many of whom were also noted garden-makers or writers about gardening, including Swift, Pope, Gay, Dr Arbuthnot, Congreve, Prior, Bolingbroke, and Addison as well as of garden-makers and arbiters of taste within Bathurst's wider circle of friends and relations. In particular the site has close associations with Alexander Pope, the great early C18 writer and arbiter of landscape design taste. Here he advised Lord Bathurst on landscape and wrote part of his renowned translation of Homer's *Iliad*. Richings was the country home in the 1740s-50s of Frances Hertford, poet, letter writer and patron of notable literary men of the following generation including James Thomson, Stephen Duck and William Shenstone, many of whom she entertained here in the 1740s.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In the C14 & C15 lands in Iwer were held by the Richkings family with John Richking a tenant in 1397. The same year is a reference to local land "le Rych Inge". In 1402, Henry atte Water granted land to John Richking and this may have formed the "nucleus of the Richings Estate consisting of lands and a capital message" (VCH). In 1422, his son, Edmund, purchased land at Sutton (adjacent to the present site) and in 1434 from the Edred family and thence the estate passed through various hands.

In 1576 William Salter (1526-1606), grocer, freeman purchased Richings for his son Edward (1562-1647) a minor with an additional 15 acres in 1581. (On line Members Biographies, History of Parliament 1604-1629). Sir Edward, became a barrister at Grays Inn and carver "for full forty years" (Lipscombe), JP. His sons Sir William and Sir Christopher were courtiers to King James 1 (1604-1608), Prince Henry (1609-1612), and Prince Charles (1614-1625), thereafter Charles 1 (1625-1641). By 1649 members of the Royal Family had been entertained in the great house, in which the furnishings were lavish (Will of Dame Ursula Salter TNA POB 11/208/165). The estate then passed through the Salter family to Sir Peter Apsley in 1678. It is likely that Richings was surrounded by gardens but no evidence for their form has been identified to date.

In 1691 on the death of Sir Peter Apsley the Richings estate (also known as Riskins in the C18) passed to the Bathurst family through Sir Allen Bathurst's wife Catherine (daughter & heir of Sir Peter Apsley). Sir Allen Bathurst (1684-1775), son of Sir Benjamin (1639-1704), and his wife Catherine inherited Cirencester Park, Gloucs, a more extensive estate in 1704 and he was conferred with a barony by Queen Anne in 1712.

The rural villa 3 miles east of Windsor and close to London became Bathurst's court residence and he developed the grounds in a novel way, where he entertained literary and court circles, "It was as

the residence of Lord and Lady Bathurst, in the reign of George 1 and George 11 that Richings first became the resort of wits". (WH Ward & KS Block) with visits by the literary Scriblerius club (founded in 1713) and literary lions Addison, Pope, Congreve, Gay and Swift. Letters (1723, 1727) invited Pope to "Riskins" and in 1727 Bathurst invites Pope to meet Bolingbroke and to bring Gay.

Between 1714 and the 1730s Bathurst developed and remodelled the grounds with advice from Alexander Pope and Stephen Switzer as an early *ferme ornée* (French for ornamental farm with productive pasture, arable enclosed by ornamental walks lined with shrubs, trees and hedges). In 1723 Lord Bathurst wrote to Pope of the "alteration of my woodhouse and some little baubling works about which you shall direct as you will" (Ward & Block 1872).

Lord Bathurst may have commissioned Stephen Switzer to devise a scheme for Richings Park and although Switzer wrote about it and published a plan in 1742 in *Ichnographica Rustica* it is not clear whether the plan is accurate or how he contributed to Bathurst's layout. Bathurst incorporated a "Pope's Seat" at both Cirencester and Richings, and the latter also had a "Pope's Walk," an avenue of horse chestnut trees parallel to Bathurst's lower canal which survived in part into the 1970s.

The Countess of Hertford (1699-1754) and her husband bought the property in 1739, renaming Richings, Percy Lodge (a family name of Lord Hertford who became Duke of Somerset in 1748). They continued to enhance Bathurst's concept of a *ferme ornée*. Lady Hertford in her letters to Henrietta Knight, Lady Luxborough, details the changes planned for the house and grounds; "We have just now taken a house by Colnbrook. It belongs to Lord Bathurst, and is what Mr. Pope called his 'Extravagant Bergerie'. The environs perfectly answer that title, and come nearer to my idea of a scene in Arcadia than any place I ever saw...The house is old but convenient, and when you are got within the little paddock it stands in, you would believe yourself one hundred miles from London...." She describes some of its romantic features; "a cave overhung with periwinkles" with a spring gushing out of the back of it; "with little arbours interwoven with lilacs, woodbine, syringas and laurels"; an astounding number of nightingales" (Brown).

After her husband's death in 1750, the Dowager Duchess continued to enhance the estate including a Porter's Lodge "at my Gate" and "some Change in my Rosary, and Openings in other Parts of the Park. I have erected a little Hermitage in one of the Woods near the Canal, whose roof is thatched, and its Walls of Straw." (Selected letters between the late Duchess of Somerset, Lady Luxborough & others) Rocque's Map of Middlesex (1754), published the year Lady Hertford died, is apparently an accurate depiction of the formal layout of Richings. His Map of Berkshire (1761) shows a similar layout, including an L-shaped canal some 555 yards long, with central circular pool, formal allees cut through wooded parkland south of the house and a 'circumferential ride'. West of the house was a menagerie, and on the former site of St Leonards Chapel, a grotto and greenhouse and the "Abbey Walk of beech trees with a statue at the end" (Ward & Block). Little had altered by the late 1760s (Jefferys).

With the death of the Duchess in 1754 the estate passed to her son-in-law, the Earl of Northumberland who sold it to Sir John Maine Coghill whose widow sold the property in 1776 to the Rt. Hon John Sullivan, Under Secretary of State and Commissioner for India and a contemporary and supporter of Lord Wellesley, later the Duke of Wellington (on line HPMB 1790-1820; Lipscombe).

Sullivan had business connections within the East India Company visiting India and China. He was appointed Resident of Tanjore, a state in Southern India and “made a large fortune at Tanjore by being concerned in proving grain, provisions and stores for the troops” (on line HOPMB 1790-1920) He left India in 1785, bought Richings Estate in 1786, the old house was destroyed by fire in 1788 and he married Henrietta Hobart in May 1789, whose father was Earl of Buckinghamshire. (on line HOPMB 1790-1820) Between 1785-1808 he purchased Parsonage House and lands extending the estate to the north (CBS D-SY/4 12 items deeds of sale), the park was remodelled with new drives, lodges, a three-arched bridge and the public road was moved northwards as the boundary of the new park (North Park /1810 SD). The environs of the former house including the stables and menagerie area, walled garden became part of Home Farm (1810 Enclosure Map & OS 1830). Around 1790 a new villa was built c120m north-east of the stable block on slightly higher ground.

By 1810 (OSD) Sir John’s new villa landscape was largely complete, with informal parkland with specimen trees, boundary woodland and belts. By 1824 (Gendall) the three storey villa was flanked by single storey colonnades leading to two storey pavilions, with a central entrance portico. After Sullivan’s death in 1839 the property passed to his son John Augustus Sullivan who sold the property in 1855 to Charles Meeking (d 1912) who owned a department store in Holborn Circus.

The Meeking family owned the estate for the next 67 years, developing the gardens and park. The C18 canal remained a key feature. By the early C20 (OS 1920) the south-west meadow of Holmewood has paths, mixed trees and viewing areas and on the west side of the canal a water garden and boat house (OS 1900). Charles’s descendant Violet Meeking, Lady Apsley sold the property in 1922 to the Sykes Brothers.

The Sykes’s kept the mansion to live in and Old Slade and Home Farm as working farms. Through their “Phormium Company “ (part of Richings Park Co. Ltd) they planned and developed in the 1920-30s the north-east land for a residential estate of Richings Park, but the company went into receivership in 1932 (Allen). A number of houses were built around the north-east corner of the park flanking the entrance to Main Drive (OS 1930).

William Boyer & Sons, aggregate merchants, purchased the park in 1938 (W Matthews editor web site richingspark – local reminiscences D Whitby Roberts solicitor for Richings Park Company Ltd and resident Bathurst Walk 1931-2000). Between 1938-40 the villa was taken over briefly by Bomber Command (Connelly). The villa was demolished in 1950 (*Bucks Advertiser & Gazette* 10 March 1950) possibly resulting from war damage (Bombs over Buckinghamshire web site). In 1963 the M4 was built through the south section of the park, cutting through the south tip of the canal and divorcing the park from the south section containing Old Wood a weir, and a flint bridge. In the mid-1990s the majority of the estate was developed as a golf course. The site remains in divided ownership.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

Richings Park is situated 27km west of London, 7km north-east of Windsor, 1.3km south-west of Iwer and 1km north of Colnbrook. It occupies a low lying (25 feet above sea level), largely level area of clay overlain by gravel gently draining south. Many watercourses cross the area, leading to the River Coln running nearby to the south and east, and thence to the Thames some 6km to the south. The main watercourse enters the site at the north end of the canal by the site of the former north-west lodge and entrance, via a canalised curved watercourse running through agricultural land to the north of the park, which is culverted below North Park Road. North of the road and west of the watercourse, a triangular copse which shelters the entrance, marks the point where the watercourse enters the canal. It leaves the site 1km to the south on its way to the Colne.

The 75ha site is bounded to the north by North Park Road, and by the early C20 houses fronting its east end. Sections of C19 park railing survive along the northern boundary line against the road. The eastern boundary is the early C20 houses fronting Old Slade Lane leading south to the track to Percy Lodge and beyond this the boundary continues alongside a belt of trees in the park and a culvert running south-south-west under the M4. To the south, beyond the M4 motorway, the southern edge of Old Wood and Oak Plantation abut a pasture which rises gently to the south, and a filled in gravel pit. The western side is bounded by industrial land, residential land, Sutton Farm then the boundary continues north through the golf course back to North Park Road.

The setting is largely rural, particularly beyond the north, east and south boundaries, where it remains agricultural with scattered housing. The site is bisected at the south end of the park and canal by the M4 motorway and the junction with the M25 is nearby to the east. To the west beyond Sutton the setting is housing and commercial sheds. Views extend from the south-east drive south-east beyond the M4, and northwards from the north-west entrance off North Park Road over agricultural land. Formerly a key view extended towards Windsor Castle to the south-west but this is screened by trees.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The main entrance is from North Park Road c.350m north-west of Home Farm. The drive runs along the north-west edge of the park for 260m south-south-west, then bears south-south-east for 190m to the walled car park, formerly the kitchen garden, west of Home Farm. This drive was established as the main drive in the 1990s. It partly follows the course of a track established by the early C20 (OS) giving access from North Park Road to Home Wood and Sutton beyond.

Three drives through the park were established in the late C18 for Sullivan when he laid out the park in its present form (possibly in part following the course of earlier drives), with a further, fourth drive, Main Drive, established to the north-east by the mid-C19, all of which are now largely disused. All converged on Sullivan's 1790s villa.

The latest of these four drives, Main Drive, enters off North Park Road at East Lodge (formerly single-storey, rebuilt late C20). The gateway leads into a C19 pinetum, in which many mature specimen conifers survive within a recent housing development. From here the drive curves south-west for 450m across the north park, flanked by a mature Turkey Oak avenue (probably early C20, OS), to

arrive at the remains of the forecourt below the former north front Sullivan's lost villa. The villa had flanking wings set back to the north which partly enclosed the forecourt. The site of the forecourt enjoys views north over the park. By 1844 a drive led from south-west from the junction of Old Slade Lane with North Park Road, with a lodge at the junction (Conveyance Map Christopher Tower to Charles Meeking), to the villa. By 1868 (OS) Main Drive, East lodge, the gateway, pinetum and an avenue were established, with avenues also along surrounding roads.

The second, north-west drive enters off North Park Road, 400m north-west of the site of Sullivan's villa. The gateway lies next to the site of the former north-west lodge where several mature trees still stand, including horse chestnuts, adjacent to the west of the north end of the canal. The entrance is sheltered by a small copse in the field to the north beyond the road (beyond the historic site boundary). From here the drive runs south for 200m before turning east into a small copse including mature pines, which encloses a fine, three-arched stone bridge (similar in style to that at nearby Stoke Park, see photograph below) straddling the north arm of the canal, 200m north-west of the forecourt. The drive crosses the bridge from which views extend north and south along the canal. The bridge formerly enjoyed elevated views of the villa to the south-east. From here the former course of the north-west drive (now turfed) crosses the north park to the forecourt. A spur continues from west of the bridge south to the great archway entrance in the north range of Home Farm, which is framed in the view from the drive by mature yew in front of the range. By 1801 (Iver Parish Plan CBS IR/35R) the lodge, entrance, drive and bridge were established.

The third, south-east drive is the longest approach and formerly gave access from Colnbrook High Street (formerly the main road from London), 1.75km south-west of the site of the villa. The drive survives north of the A4 Colnbrook by-pass as a disused track but 650m south of the villa site is blocked by the M4. The drive was formerly entered off Colnbrook High Street at the junction with Mill Street. Here the initial c.20m length is marked by a C19 brick wall alongside, set with an inscribed stone recording the connection with Richings Park.

North of the A4 Colnbrook by-pass the track runs through agricultural land, formerly partly enclosed by an avenue (OS), for 960m (outside the historic site boundary) before reaching Old Wood at a point formerly marked by Weir Lodge and gateway (gone) which were established by 1810 (OSD). From this entrance to Old Wood the track continues north-east, crossing the watercourse below the outfall of the canal via a three-arched flint bridge. Beyond the M4 it continues north-east along the park boundary of Old Wood before emerging into the south park and continuing northwards for 500m flanked by a mature Turkey Oak avenue which is probably of early C20 origin (OS). It seems that formerly views extended west between the avenue trees towards the canal, and north-west towards the villa, but 1990s fairway planting blocks these. 150m east of the site of the villa at the north end of the avenue, near the ice house, the track turns west to join Main Drive just before it enters the forecourt. At this point at the north end of the avenue, a spur formerly led east across the park to Percy Lodge, standing at the edge of the boundary belt of woodland, 300m east of the site of the villa, giving direct access from Old Slade Lane. The park stretch of the drive has gone, but Percy Lodge still stands and from here the drive continues through woodland to the lane. The spur was established by the 1860s (OS) although the lodge was later (OS, 1898).

The fourth, south-west drive gave access from Weir Lodge, leading north through the west side of south park, overlooking the canal, to Home Farm, and the stable block. This has been replaced in part by a golf course track leading to the south side of the kitchen garden (now the car park).

By 1754 (Rocque) there were 4 entrances to the first house. The northern entrance was situated on the former road which ran west to east joining Sutton to Thorney (moved northwards by Sullivan c.1790s), and the drive ran south to the house. The second entrance was from the west on the northern side of Sutton Green entering the estate by the Menagerie near present Home Farm. The third, south-west entrance, which was from the south off Sutton Green, and thence from the London Road, led into the south-west corner of the gardens and then through the gardens to the house. The fourth entrance, from the south giving access from London via Colnbrook, passed through the woodlands and gardens to the house. By 1788 (Inclosure Plan) the estate had been extended north to the new road joining Sutton to Thorney, established for Sullivan.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING

The first house on the site, with medieval origins, for which the early garden was designed, was destroyed by fire in 1788. Its form and exact site are unclear but apparently it stood adjacent to the narrow central section of the canal near the site of the present Home Farm.

A new house was constructed c1790, on a slightly higher site c230m north-east of the original site by the Rt Hon John Sullivan, as a villa around which he remodelled the park into its present form. This second house was demolished in 1945 but parts of the foundations and the cellars survive amid scrub.

The main entrance to Sullivan's house was on the north front overlooking the forecourt where the four drives converged. Photographs and watercolours (inc. Gendall 1824) show a square, three storey, yellow brick building, with cornice and parapet, and full length sash windows on the ground floor. This central block, with a central entrance portico with Doric columns, was flanked by single-storey colonnades leading to two storey pavilions set back to the north. The bowed south, garden front enjoyed views of the park. Attached to the south-west stood a conservatory overlooking the terraces and pleasure ground.

The main surviving building is the C18/C19 two-storey Home Farm stable block. This stands c250m south-west of the site of the second house beyond the pleasure ground alongside the central culverted section of the canal. It surrounds three sides of a courtyard which is open in part to the south, overlooking the nearby single storey 1990s golf club house. The double height archway main entrance on the north side has large wooden gates, which give access from the north-west drive. On the roof of the east range is a clock tower. The ground floor comprised stalls for horses, with staff accommodation and storage rooms above, which is now used in part for offices and as a gym. To the west between Home Farm and the Kitchen Garden stand several ancillary buildings, including cottages, barns and kitchen garden sheds. Parts of these buildings have been incorporated into the present golf club facilities.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

The remains of the gardens lie to the south and west of the site of the second house. They were divided loosely into two sections comprising: formal terraces to the south of the house, terminating to the south against the south park at a 1m high brick ha-ha, with views of parkland; and informal pleasure grounds to the west leading to the south arm of the canal and Home Farm.

Within the formal terraced area immediately south of the site of the house, the remains of paths and steps survive amongst scrub, with mature yew, lime and other ornamental trees. The southern half of the former terraces is now golf fairway and green, overlooking the brick-walled ha-ha to the south and enclosed by mature trees to the east including a fine, mature London Plane. The layout is clearly shown on late C19 mapping.

The remains of the informal pleasure ground extend south-west from the site of the former conservatory towards the Stable Block. This area is bounded to the north by the remains of a former yew and holly walk which terminates at a footbridge (a C20 replacement) across the south end of the north end of the canal, leading to the Home Farm north entrance and beyond this the kitchen garden. The west side of the pleasure ground is enclosed by the narrow central section of the canal (linking the main north and south sections of the canal), with a further footbridge (C20 replacement), leading to the south side of Home Farm.

The south-west corner of the pleasure ground is enclosed by the north end of the south canal which is crossed by a third bridge (another C20 replacement), leading out to the south park. A bridge was present in this position by 1801 (Parish Plan). The area is laid to lawns and golf greens, and contains a collection of mature trees with a beech roundel, Wellingtonia, exotic pines and hollies. The remains of the C19 path system established by the Meekings survives (OS).

In the south park on the west bank of the canal lie the remains of a narrow, 100m long, water garden, now overgrown. It comprises a string of linked geometric ornamental pools and associated structures including masonry from a former bridge, together with mature trees. This feature first appeared as a small pool by 1900 (OS) but by 1920 (OS) it had been considerably extended southwards to its final form.

Following the creation of a pleasure ground close to the villa by Sullivan in the 1790s, it was further developed during the ownership of the Meeking family (1855-1922). They built the ha-ha, extended the terrace southwards to the new ha-ha, and built a boat house by the central narrow section of the canal (OS and historic photos). Between 1900 and 1922 the detached water garden was incorporated. Photographs of the 1860s show the Meeking family in the gardens enclosed by metal fencing and gates, some of which survives.

PARK

The parkland is divided into 2 unequal halves, to the north and south of the site of Sullivan's villa, which are in turn bisected to west and east by the canal running north – south. The remains of Pope's Walk run south from the east end of the Ha-ha towards Old Wood, in places still lined by mature trees.

The park is now (2016) overlaid by a golf course (1990s) with a few mature trees survive including, London Plane, Turkey oak, horse chestnut, limes, oak, ash, hornbeam. Parts of the north-east corner have been lost to C20 development along the roadside, but several cedar trees and the oak avenue of Main Drive survive. On the western side, Home Wood (late C19, OS) screens the park from Sutton. To the south the park is enclosed by Old Wood (present by the mid-C18, Rocque), which is bisected west – east by the M4. Within the southern section of Old Wood, the weir and a brick and flint 3 arched bridge survive (first shown on 1868 OS) along with several mature trees including Scots pine, hornbeam and limes.

To the east of the gardens is an ice house, first shown in the 1868 (OS) adjacent to the south- east drive.

The main feature of the park is the 1km long canal which is divided into three sections: to the north (320m long); a narrow central section (120m long); and to the south (530m long). The southern section is probably an early C18 creation (possibly from earlier ponds) and is first shown by Rocque (1754) in an L-shape with the first house at the north end in the vicinity of the present central section. By 1810 (OSD), after Sullivan's house was built, the northern section appears, crossing the recently created northern section of the park, and the south section has become curved. The 3-arched bridge across the north section, 120m north of Home Farm, is in a grove of mature deodar cedars, yew, Corsican pine and conifers. The former boat house appears by the late C19 (OS).

By 1810 (OSD) the formal landscape surrounding the canal had gone, and the area was laid to informal parkland with specimen trees, boundary woodland and belts. The remodelling included formal terraces and gardens surrounding the house with the canal remaining the central focus after Sullivan's death in 1839 when the property passed to his son John Augustus Sullivan, Principal Marshall of Jamaica.

KITCHEN GARDEN

The brick-walled kitchen garden (c.100m x c.45m) on the west of Home Farm, is used as a carpark, with a late C20 entrance through the centre of the west wall. There are 2 entrances in the northern wall: a pedestrian door close to the western wall and a wider gateway adjacent to the eastern wall, which were in place by 1868 (OS). A wide gap in the southern section of the eastern wall leads past the barn through an archway into the west side of the stable yard.

The 3m high brick walls are stone coped, with buttresses supporting the western wall and hooks for wires to support plants on the north wall. A mature plum tree grows in the former slips outside the north wall.

The kitchen garden was first shown in outline by 1810 (OSD). By 1868 it had 4 large greenhouses and an orchard, with 2 further greenhouses in an adjoining area to the south east (OS). In the slips outside the walls were deciduous trees (probably orchard trees). By 1880 (OS) the trees within the kitchen garden had been replaced by vegetable beds, as had also the slips to the west. By 1900 there were only 3 greenhouses and there was no evidence of planting. In 1930 there were only 2 greenhouses. The aerial photos of 1945 and 1947 showed some planting within the walls. A slip was

an open area surrounding walled garden, often used for soft fruit and often itself enclosed by a belt of evergreens to give shelter.

THE LANDSCAPE – AN OVERVIEW

Richings is the site of a very early, perhaps the earliest, example of a particular landscape style, the *ferme ornée*, blending the aesthetic with the productive. The layout was initiated by Baron Bathurst in the 1710s for his rural villa, and developed for Frances Countess of Hertford in the 1740s. This renowned layout apparently influenced in the early to mid-C18, via visitors and designer Stephen Switzer's books, the developing English Landscape style. This style remains Britain's most important contribution to the visual arts worldwide. A key view extended to Windsor Castle. In its early layout the site may have been influential on other notable early C18 landscapes including Marble Hill, Twickenham, although this layout is largely lost except for the canal. Little of that layout survives except for the focal canal and a few trees which were incorporated by Nabob Sir John Sullivan into the remodelled and extended grounds of his new villa in the late C19.

Richings contains a very early surviving example of a serpentine canal which formed the focus of the *ferme ornée*. This comprises the surviving south section of the canal and possibly the narrow central section. It possibly predates those of the late 1720s/early 1730s at Chiswick, Kensington Gardens and Bridgeman's unexecuted design for a great serpentine at Lodge Park, Gloucestershire.

Richings is closely associated with the notable early C18 landscape writer and designer Stephen Switzer, which he promoted in his writings. It is the only example of his involvement in Bucks and the extent of his contribution is unclear. The layout of Richings which he published in 1742 is difficult to reconcile with other evidence of the site and it is possible it has considerable inaccuracies.

Richings was one of an outstanding group of C18 courtiers' villas which, with their fashionable grounds, developed in this area west of London, in the vicinity of the royal court at Windsor, and close to the Thames for easy access to London. Surviving examples include Ditton Park (EH registered grade II), Langley Park (grade II), Stoke Park (grade II*), Stoke Place and Cliveden (grade I), Hedsor House (grade II).

The layout and planting were altered later in the C18 and C19 to the present form to focus the landscape park and gardens on the second, late C18 house site to the east, but still embracing the extensive canal. By the mid-C19 the layout included formal terraces, informal pleasure ground, avenues, boundary woodland and belts, and the park thickly planted with specimen trees. This typical landscape park survives largely intact although without the house which went in 1946; in the late C20 it was supplemented by golf course planting.

Many of the ancient trees noted by John Harris in the 1950s have gone. Several mature London Plane survive in the park together with lime, belts to east and south, and Old Wood alongside the M4 (which also contains hornbeam). A C19 pinetum survives among recent housing in the former north-east corner of the park near the site of the former East Lodge. Two fine Turkey oak avenues line Main Drive and the former south drive.

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Aerial views 1945, 1947, 1951, 1955, 1976, 1985, 1989, 1995, 1999, 2003, 2011 (at HER)
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Centre for Bucks Studies

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Conveyance, Plan of Estate 1792 (SY/32)
Conveyance from C J H Tower to C Meekings. 1884 (D-SY/22)
Conveyance from Violet Meekings to F. E. & H. Sykes. 1922 (D-SY/22)
Conveyance from E Sykes to 'Richings Park Estate' 1928 (D-SY/58)
Layout of Richings Park Estate 1929 (D-SY/22)
Plan of Richings Park to Receivers. 1932 (D-SY/58)

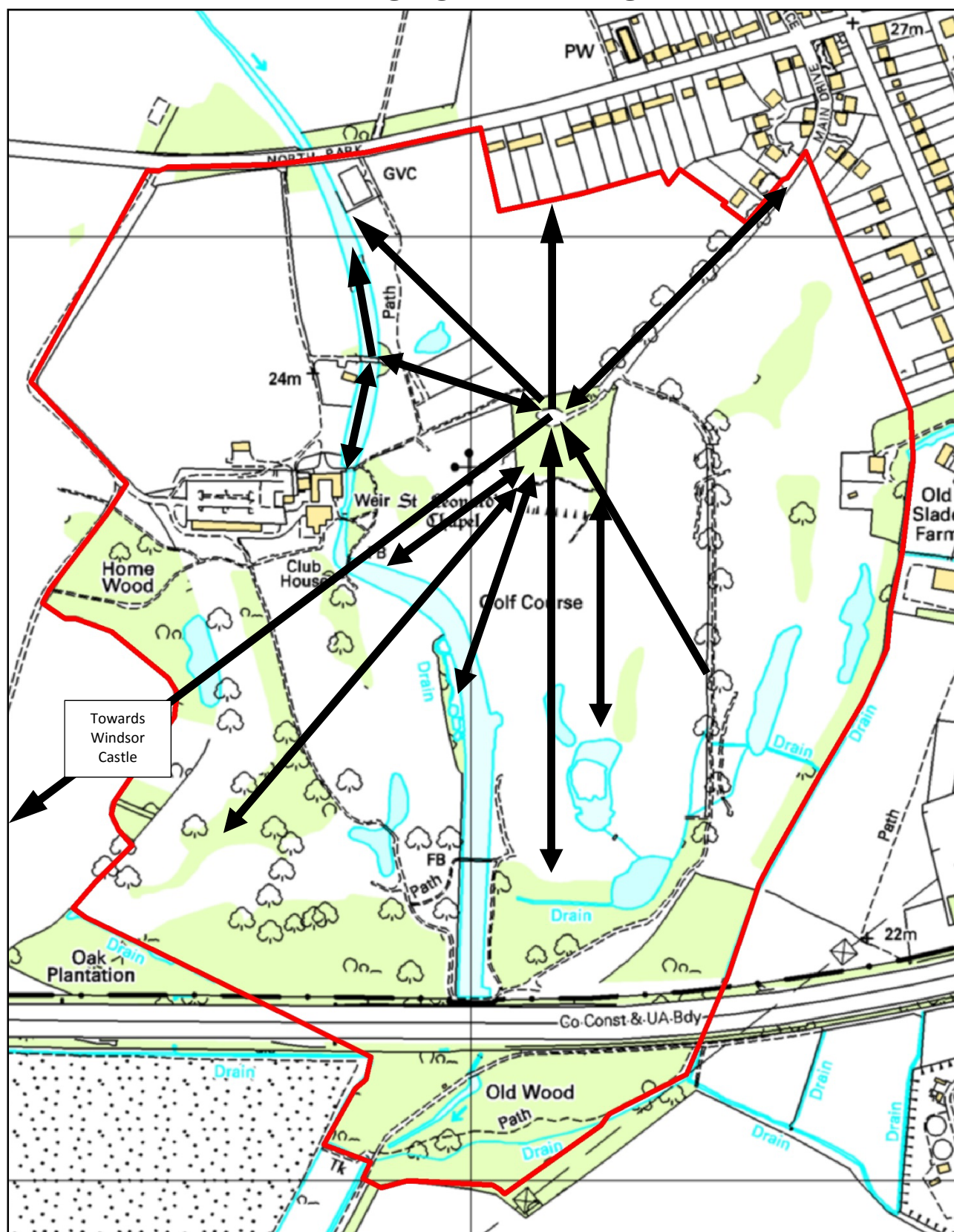
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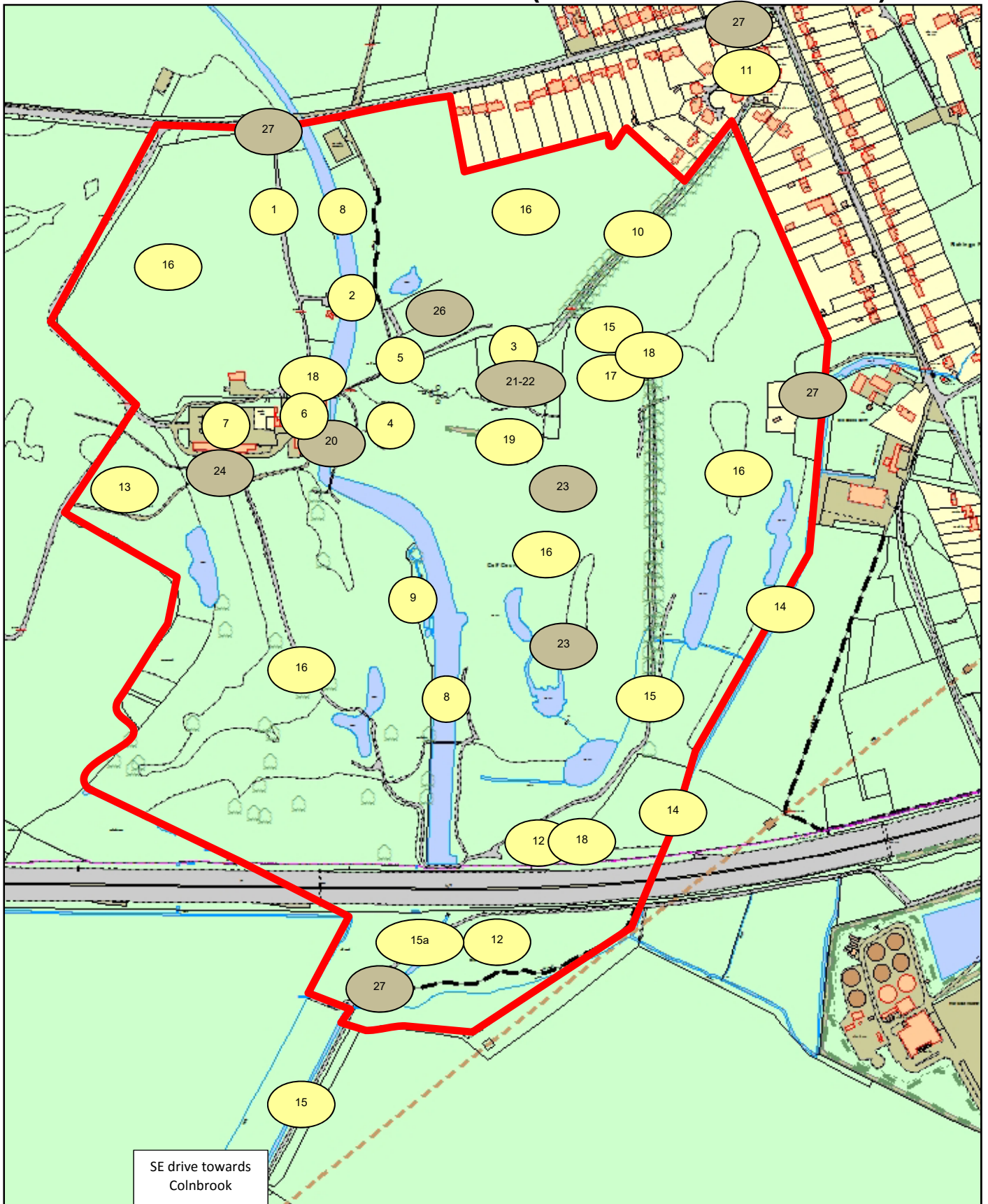
GM, JT, RH

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KEY HISTORIC VIEWS



KEY HISTORIC FEATURES (EXISTING AND LOST)



KEY TO FEATURES MAP

Surviving Features (yellow spots)

1. North-west drive, outer section from bridge (late C18 possibly incorporating earlier stretch)
2. Brick/stone 3-arched bridge carrying NW drive including conifer grove around it – late C18
3. 2nd house (c.1790s): site of platform, forecourt and garden terracing (C19) now in scrub
4. Pleasure ground informal planting to W of house terraces including yew, beech circle, etc (C19)
5. Yew/holly walk between house and stables (Home Farm) along N side of pleasure ground (mid-late C19)
6. Stable yard (?C18) – Home Farm
7. Kitchen garden walls, brick, ?C18
8. Canal, north arm (late C18/early C19) and south arm (early C18)
9. Water garden on W bank of south canal (remains) (?early C20)
10. Main (NE) Drive and oak avenue (mid-late C19)
11. Pinetum at NE end of Main Drive, now among houses (mid-late C19)
12. Old Wood around S end of park inc. mature lime, hornbeam (present in early C18 scheme)
13. Home Wood to W of park (C19)
14. Boundary belt along E park (C19) including lime and oak
15. SE drive from Colnbrook including Turkey oak avenue (late C18-early C19)
- 15a Flint bridge carrying SE drive from Colnbrook across stream
16. Parkland (except NE corner) although planting altered with golf fairway planting (late C18-early C19)
17. Ice house
18. Scattered remains of iron fencing and gateways (mid-C19)
19. Ha-ha (mid-C19)

Losses (brown spots)

20. Site of 1st House (burnt down 1780s)
21. Site of 2nd House (demolished 1950), forecourt on N front, foundations survives in scrub (Feature 3 above)
22. Formal garden terraces around house 2nd site (mid-C19), tho the area survives in scrub (Feature 3 above)
23. Pope's Walk avenue Walk N- S between canal and south drive, possibly on 1750s Rocque plan
24. Slips around outer side of kitchen garden (late C18)
25. Kitchen garden productive cultivation (now car park) (no spot, see Feature 7)
26. W drive section between bridge and site of house (late C18)
27. Lodges to S (Weir), N, NE (East) & E (Percy)

IMAGES



Richings: bridge carrying NW drive over the north arm of the canal, probably c.1790s (south elevation).



Nearby Stoke Park bridge 1798, probably James Wyatt, listed grade II, sited by Humphry Repton.



Kitchen garden, SW corner (left); south park: ice house and Turkey Oak avenue (right)



South park, south-east drive with Turkey Oak avenue, view south to Old Wood (left);
North park, north arm of canal, view from bridge south (Centre) and north (right)



North arm of canal, south end: bridge from yew walk to stable block (left); view north from bridge to drive bridge (Centre); view south from yew walk bridge to canalised central section by stable block (right).



Home Farm/stable block: north range and main entrance from north-west drive (left); courtyard (centre, right)



Central section of canal and golf club house with central bridge from pleasure grounds (left); north end of south arm of canal, view east (centre); view north to pleasure grounds across north end of south arm of canal (right)



South park, west of canal, view south to Old Wood and Oak Plantation



South arm of the canal, view north (left, centre) and south (right)



The two sides of the south drive flint bridge, now cut off from the park by the M4.



Remains of iron gateway and fencing near ice house alongside the SW drive (left);
one of the water garden pools, alongside the south arm of the canal (right).



WWII guard hut on site of south terrace (left); service buildings against E wall of kitchen garden (centre);
yew & holly walk alongside north pleasure ground boundary (right).



Plaque on wall close to former entrance to the south-east drive,
off Colnbrook High Street opposite Mill Street (Julian Hunt).

Includes the wording 'CM Richings Park ?1868 ...' CM is probably owner Charles Meeking