

Understanding Historic Parks and Gardens in Buckinghamshire

The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust Research & Recording Project



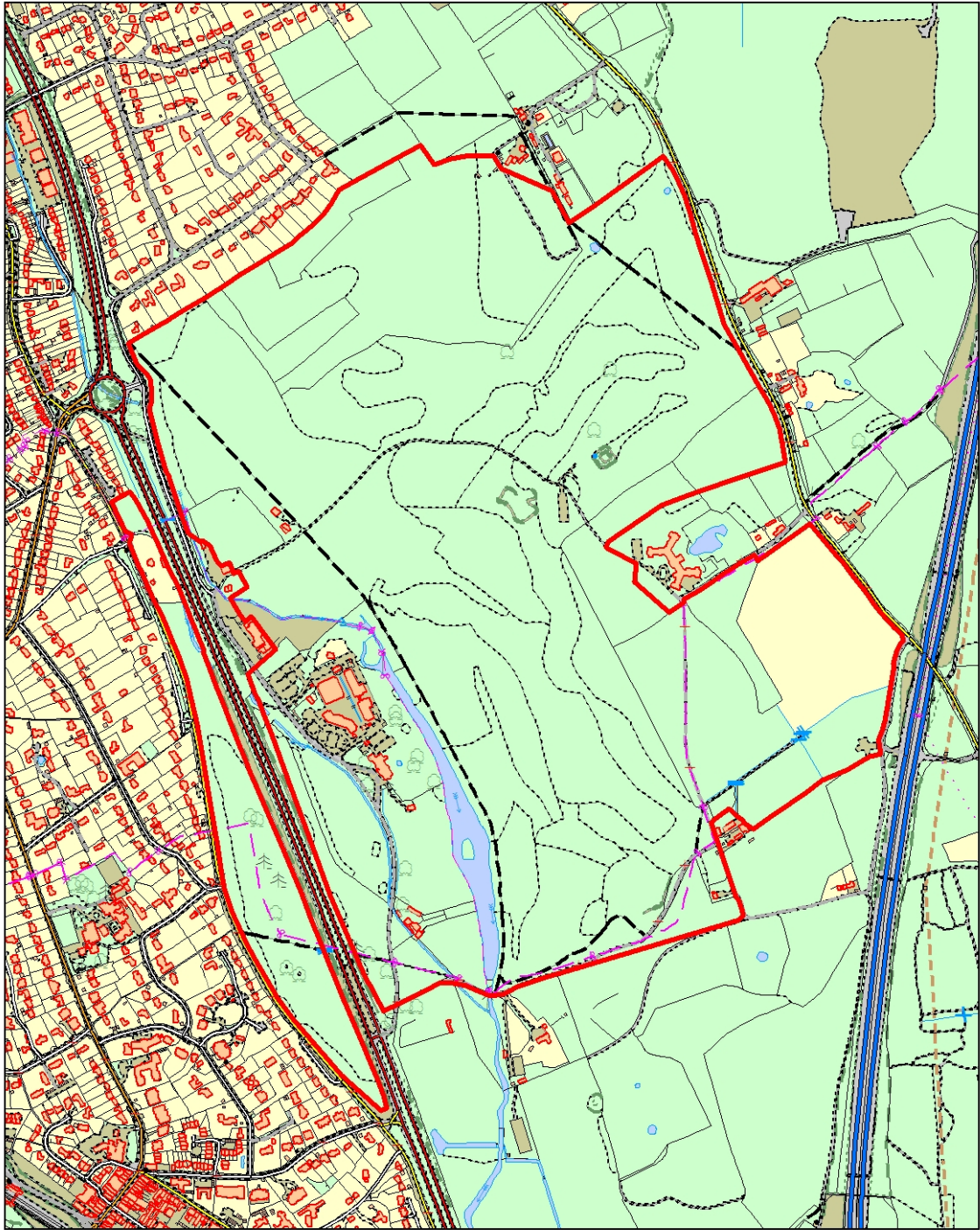
CHALFONT PARK

12 February 2016



The Stanley Smith (UK) Horticultural Trust

HISTORIC SITE BOUNDARY



Chalfont Lodge: boundary of historic designed landscape interest

Produced by the County Archaeological Service
August 2015



Scale: 1:8,828 at A4



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Bucks Gardens Trust





Scale: 1:8,828 at A4



Chalfont Park: 2010 aerial photograph

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August 2015



Bucks Gardens Trust



INTRODUCTION

Background to the Project

This site dossier has been prepared as part of The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust (BGT) Research and Recording Project, begun in 2014. This site is one of several hundred designed landscapes county-wide identified by Bucks County Council (BCC) in 1998 (including Milton Keynes District) as potentially retaining evidence of historic interest, as part of the Historic Parks and Gardens Register Review project carried out for English Heritage (BCC Report No. 508). The list is not conclusive and further parks and gardens may be identified as research continues or further information comes to light.

Content

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

Each dossier includes the following for the site:

- A site boundary mapped on the current Ordnance Survey to indicate the extent of the main part of the surviving designed landscape, also a current aerial photograph.
- A statement of historic significance based on the four Interests outlined in the National Policy Planning Framework and including an overview.
- A written description, derived from documentary research and a site visit, based on the format of the English Heritage *Register of Parks & Gardens of special historic interest* 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 and funding from the Finnis Scott Foundation and Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust. 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	CHALFONT PARK BCC HER 0085101000
DISTRICT:	CHILTERN	
PARISH:	CHALFONT ST PETER	
OS REF.:	TQ 0082 8955	

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Overview: An extensive country house landscape developed in phases since the mid-C18 with contributions from nationally-known designers including Lancelot Brown (mid-C18), Nathaniel Richmond, Humphry Repton (late C18), Edwin Lutyens and possibly Gertrude Jekyll (early C20). It is one of several parks in the vicinity with work by Brown including Latimer House, Stoke Park, Stoke Place, Moor Park and Langley Park. It is one of several notable parks along the River Misbourne including Shardeloes (where Richmond and Repton also advised), Denham Place and Missenden Abbey. The landscape remains largely intact despite during the C20 some simplification of planting, and losses including the early C20 formal gardens and kitchen garden north of the house, and the insertion of a golf course in the north park and the A413 dual carriageway through the west park. Its significance arises from the level of survival of the complexity of the design and connection with such a variety of architects and landscape designers of national significance and the adaptation of the design to the *genius loci* (spirit of the place and its form).

Archaeological interest: The site has the potential for evidence associated with a manor house site in occupation since the medieval period including a moated site and remains of the manor under the present house. It also has the potential for lost structures and features related to the designed landscape from the C18 onwards including lodges, boathouse, drives, paths, Chalfont Lodge, etc.

Architectural interest: The site contains work by a range of notable architects including the country house in Strawberry Hill Gothic style by renowned mid-C18 gentleman architect John Chute, with alterations by Anthony Salvin. The stable block is by Bentley, and Edwin Lutyens contributed cottages, garden buildings and the lost Italianate garden as an ensemble north of the house in the early C20.

Artistic interest:

The mid-C18 country house landscape was laid out by the foremost landscaper of his day, Lancelot Brown, including a lake set in parkland, with the work executed by his associate Nathaniel Richmond and others for Charles Churchill. This was developed and extended with advice by Humphry Repton in the late C18, and the lake was later re-shaped. Lutyens' early C20 additions to the pleasure grounds comprised the formal Italianate Garden (gone), orangery, cottages and pavilions. Notable planting includes a number of mature trees in the park and pleasure grounds from the C18 onwards, particularly London Planes (including the enormous specimen outside the main entrance to the house) and conifers, although much additional tree cover has grown unchecked in the later C20.

Historic interest: The site has associations with prominent local families including the C15/16 Brudenells, the C14 and C17 Bulstrodes and a tenuous link with Judge Jeffreys. Horace Walpole was related by marriage to Charles Churchill, and his influential 'committee of taste' including Bentley and Chute, advised on design here. Other C18 artistic connections include William Hogarth, satirist, and prominent C18/C19 artists Girtin and Turner. The historic interest is increased by the survival of documentation relating to the development of the landscape including an entry in Brown's account book, C18 artistic representations, numerous photographs, sales particulars, mapping and C19 published accounts.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Chalfont Park formed part of the Manor of Celfunde which was mentioned in the Domesday Survey (*VCH*). In 1538 Elizabeth Brudenell inherited the Brudenells estate, and her husband Robert Drury purchased the Manor of Chalfont St Peter, which had belonged to Missenden Abbey for more than 350 years (Thorpe & Hunt).

In the C17 Chalfont Manor/Brudenells returned to the ownership of the Bulstrode family of Hedgerley. In 1626 a Deed of Sale, shows that Thomas Baldwin was living in 'the ould place' (the Old Brudenells House in Chalfont Park) at a rent of £150 per annum, the deed mentions that ground shooting, good trout and an eel weir were available (Manorial Index, CBS). For the rest of the century the estate passed through a number of hands.

In 1707 Brudenells comprised of a mansion house with grounds consisting of a pleasure garden, orchard, courtyard and other yards with dove houses, barns and stables all moated round (Sales particulars in Thorpe/Hunt). By 1714 John Wilkins was the owner. By 1736 he had mortgaged Brudenells to Lister Seman (trustee), when it comprised a 3 acre moated and quartered parterre, several avenues and a kitchen garden, typical of a manor of this time (CBS/ Map-Leicester Land Registry).

In 1755 the estate was sold to the trustees of General Charles Churchill (nephew of 1st Duke of Marlborough) for his son, also Charles (1732-64), satirist and poet, and his wife Lady Maria Walpole (half-sister of Horace). Horace Walpole was a regular visitor and he introduced Churchill to John Chute of The Vyne in Hants, a gentleman architect who had contributed to the design of Walpole's Gothic-style house, Strawberry Hill, Twickenham in 1747. Chute rebuilt Chalfont House along similar lines and a stable yard was designed by Richard Bentley. Chute also laid out a landscape park around his new house. Bentley and Chute were key members of Walpole's 'Committee of taste' at Strawberry Hill advising on Gothic architecture and décor. Churchill was said to be a possessor of much taste and judgement (Loudon *Encyclopaedia* 1827), but his ambitions were probably larger than his means.

Lancelot Brown (1716-83) was working at nearby Langley Park in the early 1760s for the Duke of Marlborough when he was asked to survey and draw up plans for the landscape of his relative Charles Churchill at Chalfont. The cost of the work in 1763 was £35 (a single payment shown on the account ledger at Drummonds Bank, Phibbs). This probably accounted for a visit and survey, but it may have included broad design suggestions. The

work was possibly carried out by Brown's foreman Nathaniel Richmond who worked at nearby Shardeloes throughout the 1760s (David Brown thesis). Richmond had formerly been foreman for Brown's designs at nearby Moor Park, Hertfordshire. The River Misbourne was dammed with a weir to create a lake.

In 1783 after Brown's death his assistant Samuel Lapidge took over the landscape work at Chalfont Park (*Gardener's Magazine*). A plate of Chalfont Park featured in Lyson's *Magna Britannia* in 1806 (the original in Angus's *Seats* 1778) showing the maturing planting, and it was noted that 'the plantations were laid out in a style of elegant simplicity, suitable to the character of a *Ferme ornee*'.

Thomas Hibbert purchased Chalfont Park in 1794. His family were from Cheshire, and had made their money as plantation owners in Jamaica and were involved in the slave trade. With help from Main (head gardener 1795) he continued to carry out the designs that Churchill had planned. Humphry Repton was engaged to bring more farmland into the park, increasing its size to 150 acres. Repton marked out the principle features and the choice of trees was left to Main (*Gardener's Magazine*, 1828). Improvements included scenic planting, a boat house and icehouse. Repton's drawings of Chalfont featured as vignettes in Peacock's *Polite Repository* (1799) although no Red Book of his proposals is known of.

Hibbert was a patron of the arts who invited the most important water-colourists of the day to paint the park. Thomas Girtin (1775-1802), country house portraitist, painted several views of the house and lake and also the newly constructed Chalfont Lodge in 1796. His friend, J.M.W. Turner visited Chalfont in 1800 and painted two watercolours, from the south-west and from the eastern slopes of the park (*Country Life*). The extent and development of the estate are shown on the estate map of 1813 and Bryant's 1820 map.

In 1835 John Nemhard Hibbert (Sherriff of Buckingham 1837 and local philanthropist) became the owner. In the 1840s Anthony Salvin made improvements to the house (Tithe map and apportionment of 1843). Following Hibbert's death in 1886, large parts of the 1037 acre estate were sold for the development of Gerrards Cross (Thorpe/Hunt). Chalfont House was not sold in June 1888 (*The Times*) despite being advertised as one of the finest residential properties in the county, with shooting grounds and trout fishing.

Having passed through various hands, by 1905 it was again for sale and in 1910 Edward Mackay Edgar (1876-1934) a Canadian/British banker became the owner. His wife employed the architect Edwin Lutyens to make improvements in 1913. He designed an Italianate sunken garden (now gone), with an orangery at one end and arbour, alcoves and wishing well at the other, to the northwest of the house, which may have been in collaboration with Gertrude Jekyll (British Listed Buildings/HER).

In World War I Chalfont House was an auxiliary hospital for officers. In 1921 the park was sold and became a country club/hotel (Hotel Brochure); a golf course was laid out in the north park in 1921. In 1944 the house and remaining park were purchased by British Aluminium Company (later British Alcan, company brochure). Research laboratories were

built on the site of the Lutyens gardens and the other formal gardens were also largely lost. By 1955 only 200 acres of the park remained (1955 sales catalogue). Today (2015) the site is in private ownership and is currently leased by Citrix Computer Systems and others.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Location, Area, Boundaries, Landform and Setting

Chalfont Park is set in the Chiltern Hills, in the south-east of Buckinghamshire, close to the border with Hertfordshire and the former county of Middlesex (now the London Borough of Hillingdon). The 138ha site is immediately to the south of the village of Chalfont St Peter and east of Gerrards Cross, towns which developed during the early C20 following the arrival of the railway in 1906.

The north-east boundary follows the line of Denham Lane, apart from where it circumnavigates Chalfont Lodge (now (2015) a C20 care home). It continues south-east for 100m along the lane and just before meeting the M25 the boundary turns to the south for 100m where it borders a mix of farmland and woods following a track and public footpath it continues south west for 125m before circumnavigating Cold Harbour Farm and turning south for 50m the boundary then continues 200m west before reaching the weir (at the south end of the lake). 100m before the A413 it turns to the west and then north following the A413 to the roundabout beyond here the boundary follows the line of housing and north-east side of Hogtrough woods before turning south-east and then east to re-join Denham Lane.

The soil is a mixed gravelly loam over chalk. The setting to the east in the belt between the park and the M25 motorway is farmland, with predominantly suburban housing to the west and north. The 1842 sale catalogue for the neighbouring Orche Hill House on the hillside to the west emphasized views over the grounds of Chalfont Park.

Chalfont Park is situated in the undulating River Misbourne valley at an elevation of 60m. The river and lake which flow north to south are to the east of the house and a tributary stream flows past the west side of the house through former watercress beds. The house is located at the bottom of the valley and towards the centre of the park. Here the topography rises steeply to the east to 90m and less steeply to the west. The Misbourne was until the later C19 a fast flowing stream, fed by chalk springs which often dried up (hence bourne). This combined with water extraction have led to its frequent disappearance in the C20. The groundwater in the lake is maintained by natural springs.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The main approach is from the north-west along a C20 service road which runs parallel to the A413 dual carriageway. It enters the site 800m north-west of the house off the A413 roundabout. From here it runs 400m south-east, passing to the west of the cricket pitch and golf club in the north park. It continues southwards for a further 400m before reaching the forecourt below the south-west front of the house. Beyond the house the drive continues south through the park for 300m to the south entrance, where it joins the A413.

By the late C19 there were two main entrances, from the north, giving access from Chalfont St Peter and Amersham, and from the south, giving access from Uxbridge and London. The former north entrance lies 250m north-west of the mansion opposite Claydon Lane, cut off from the main approach by the A413 dual carriageway. Here North Lodge stands adjacent to the remains of gate piers that supported 'the exceedingly handsome, hammered iron, folding gates' (1888 sales catalogue). A similar South Lodge and gateway stood at the former south entrance, which lay 180m south of the present south entrance, opposite Marsham Lane (OS). The former south entrance and Lodge were probably demolished when the dual carriageway was constructed, at which point the south section of the drive was also lost.

The lodges gave access from the turnpike road between Wendover and Oak End in Iver (established by an Act of 1751) after it was routed c. 1760s further west from the house than the previous road which ran close to the west front, so that the turnpike skirted the park to the west (now Lower Road/Amersham Road). In the 1960s the dual carriageway was built (A413), which bisected the western section of the park.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING

Chalfont House (listed Grade II) is a country house, converted to office use in the mid-C20, standing at the heart of a landscape park. It developed from the mid-C18 on the site of an earlier manor house, and was altered in the C19 and C20. The Gothic-style building is rendered, with two storeys, and is ornamented with heraldic emblems and crenellations (Pevsner).

The house stands towards the south-west side of the park between the lake 250m to the east and the drive 25m to the south-west. It occupies level land in the valley bottom. The entrance front is on the west side of the house and overlooks the forecourt with a large plane tree (9m girth). The garden fronts are to the south and east, and command views of the pleasure grounds, the lake and park beyond.

The stable yard adjoins the house to the north. During the C19 other service buildings were built in and around the stables, but today only the gateway remains (Alcan brochure). The red brick stable yard gateway is Gothic in style, and stands north-west of the house. The arch which formed the entrance to the yard (Grade II listed) has survived largely intact, it is Tudor chamfered in style and the battlemented circular towers have cross-loops and blank arrow-slits. It was built in 1755 to designs by Richard Bentley, a friend of Churchill and Walpole. After World War I the stables were converted for use as a commercial garage (BCC Historic Gardens Project).

The estate cottage, standing 300m north of the house, and a gardener's cottage, standing 250m north west of the house (both listed Grade II), were built to designs by Lutyens in 1913. He also designed a brick orangery, a possible collaboration with Gertrude Jekyll, 250m north-west of the house, dominating the Italianate garden (BCMAS Gardens Review). The orangery was built in a similar style to Bentley's stable block arch with Tudor arched windows and crenellations.

The brick house present by the early C18 (1736 Estate map) was rebuilt in 1760 for Charles Churchill to designs by John Chute, in Strawberry Hill Gothic (Tomkins drawing 1790). The house was two storeys and had battlements and square towers with porticos to the garden and lake fronts, it was probably built on or near to the previous house or stable yard (Alcan brochure).

In 1799 Thomas Hibbert employed John Nash to turn the house into something more flamboyant, including enlargement of the building and the addition of a clock tower with finials (now gone). In 1836 John Hibbert employed Anthony Salvin to remodel the house. He gave it a heavier outline by filling in the front arcades and adding heraldic emblems and gargoyles (Croft photograph 1865). Salvin's other work included Alnwick, Scotney and Warwick Castle. As was the fashion in the late C19 the mansion and stables were clad with ivy to give them an aged appearance.

The picturesque Chalfont Lodge (now gone, outside the historic boundary), was situated 750m north east of the house. It was designed by the architect John Nash as an eyecatcher from the house and park, in the style of a Gothic hunting cottage. It was demolished and a care home was built on the site in the late C20. It was set in its own extensive grounds, with an ornamental lake, kitchen garden and pleasure grounds. It was later used as a dower house and in 1930 it became a girl's school; after World War II it was used as a training centre (Seabright). Chalfont Lodge was approached by a 500 metre drive across the park to the north east and the entrance was on Denham Lane where it had its own lodge. Chalfont Lodge commanded wide ranging views of the parkland (Girtin painting 1799/*Country Life*).

PLEASURE GROUNDS

The pleasure grounds enclose the house to the north and east. They are largely laid out as informal lawns which slope down to the lake with a scattering of mature trees, including a pair of Douglas Firs and Yews. An ornamental pond with a fountain is located immediately below the east, garden front. The area to the north end of the lake was planted with shrubs and conifers including yew and crossed by paths which led to a rustic summerhouse in the form of a temple at the north end of the lake (sales particulars).

By 1778 the house had a sweeping lawn, island beds containing specimen trees under planted with shrubs, a range of exotic trees (young conifers) and shrubs flanked the lawn (Lyson). By 1800, Thomas Hibbert had stocked the gardens with tender exotics, including heaths and other Cape plants which were starting to be sent back by plant collectors in South Africa (Loudon *Encyclopaedia*). In 1843 John Nembhard Hibbert made alterations, including formal features leading down to the lake (Tithe). By 1888 the pleasure grounds included an Italian garden with a central fountain and broad terrace walks sloping to the lake. Lawns and shrubberies planted with choice trees and shrubs afforded shaded walks, with rustic bridges. The area to the north end of the lake was planted with shrubs and conifers and crossed by paths which led to a rustic summerhouse in the form of a temple at the north end of the lake (sales particulars).

North of the stable yard lies a C21 canal and lawn with herringbone brick paths flanked by office blocks. This is the site of the former Italianate sunken garden (itself on the site of the former kitchen garden) which in 1913 Mrs Edgar employed Lutyens to design here. Gertrude Jekyll was reputedly consulted on the design of the orangery and also suggested a wishing well (Pevsner). These gardens became the focus of the formal gardens and the Victorian bedding and terraces were grassed over (AP 1938). The Italianate garden consisted of a sunken pond in three sections, divided by walls made up of 4 steps on each side there were 7 steps on each side down to the rills, the perimeter path was of bricks laid in a herringbone design. The surrounding lawns were divided by trimmed hedges with pillars at the ends and arches (Hotel brochure 1921). The axis of the garden followed the line of the house and focused on the red brick Orangery situated beyond a pergola at the northern end of the garden. In the 1950s the garden was demolished to make way for the research facilities of British Aluminium.

PARK

The roughly square park surrounds the house, pleasure grounds and the lake. A path runs alongside the east shore of the 500m long lake and a boathouse formerly stood on the west side 75m south-east of the house. This path formed part of a circuit walk (OS).

Approximately half of the park, in the north and east, has been used as a golf course since 1921 (Edmunds) The remaining area is laid primarily to pasture and woodland. Some of the woodland has become dense during the C20, obscuring formerly open sweeps of pasture with scattered trees. In the northern corner is the C19 Hogtrough Wood. The slopes east of the lake are partially wooded, including spinneys of varying size. The west park beyond the dual carriageway is largely woodland, although formerly, before the dual carriageway was built, it was open parkland planted with scattered trees and enjoyed views over the valley of the house and park (OS, early C20). Various structures stand in the park which were built in the C20, including the golf clubhouse and car parking with ancillary buildings adjacent to the east of the north drive, and Stable Farm in the south park adjacent to the south drive.

There are two cricket grounds. One lies south of the house (formerly the Alcan recreation ground, disused). The other, earlier, pitch lies to the north, laid out in 1887 by Captain Penton (BCMAS, GRR). There are two C18 trees in close proximity to the house, a large cedar immediately north-west of the front entrance and a champion plane (circumference 9.3 m) in the forecourt. The plane was one of several planted south of the house (1888 Sales Catalogue map) a number of which survive alongside the drive.

A medieval moated site (SAM) lies 500m north-east of the house, its circumference is 34m.

By 1736 (estate map) double planted avenues lined the east/west axis of the house, with trees lining the north drive, but there was little planting in the wider landscape. Little changed until the mid-C18. In 1760 Charles Churchill employed Lancelot 'Capability' Brown to make a survey which probably included damming the River Misbourne to create a lake or broad water and extensive planting (Drummonds Bank ledger). In 1795 James Main came to Chalfont Park as head gardener to Thomas Hibbert, in 1828 he wrote an article with detailed descriptions of the planting (*Gardener's Magazine*). In 1795 groundwork was carried out

under the direction of Mr Lapidge (one of Brown's assistants) and Mr Ireland, foreman. Ireland was responsible for the successful moving of a number of very large trees, including a 60 foot high white poplar, using a timber truck pioneered by Brown. (*Gardener's Magazine*).

Lapidge left around 1796 to work at Woburn Abbey. Soon after work commenced under the direction of Mr Repton who was also working at nearby Cassiobury and Shardeloes. In 1799 Hibbert made two purchases, 152 acres of enclosed land immediately abutting on the north west side of the old park (now Hogtrough Woods) 'This required to be dressed in the same livery as the rest of the estate' (*Gardener's Magazine*). There was also an additional 31 acres of meadow land which called for the 'immediate effect of wood' to mark the extent of the property and extend the scenery. The principle features were marked out by Repton however the choice of trees was left to Main (*Gardener's Magazine*).

The trees planted in the meadow ground included spruce, alders, limes, elms and beech. Repton used hawthorns which he planted in groups with a large tree or two intermixed, creating sweeps and flowing lines. 'The park remains a monument of his (Churchill's) fine taste, his abilities with ornamentals and his skill as a profitable planter' (*Gardener's Magazine*). Hibbert carried forward Churchill's ideas in both the new and old parts of the estate, with direction from Main and advice from Repton (*Gardener's Magazine*).

The lake was largely straight (OSD, 1811), and Main commented that it was more like a canal and that it was extended by Lapidge. The River Misbourne was dammed by a weir at the northern end and there was another weir, which was wider at the southern end where it re-joined the river. When the lake was widened a picturesque island was created, 150m south east of the house. Today there is a larger island, probably formed in the C20 when the lake remained silted up for 60 years, in 1985 the lake was finally dredged and the west side was landscaped (Alcan brochure). In the C19 a rustic boathouse was built on the west edge of the lake 75m south-east of the house.

An ice house stands 200 metres from the house on the eastern side of the lake. The domed construction is covered by a mound. The entrance passage which faced north-east was reportedly in a ruinous state and the ice well filled with rubble (BCC records 1993). A brick and timber rustic built shooting shelter stood south of Hogtrough Wood (now gone; 1908 sales particulars). At the beginning of the C20 'A Fir Tunnel' was created through the dense plantation on the slopes 300m east of the lake, used by shooting parties. By 1908 it was in need of clearing to re-instate the views (1908 sales particulars).

KITCHEN GARDEN

The site of the former walled kitchen garden lies 250m north-west of the house. It is now a car park (2015) having been laid out c. 1910. The north-west wall, pavilions and gardeners cottage survive in use as day care nursery.

A kitchen garden is first recorded in 1736 (estate map). It was over an acre in size to the east of the moated house, walled, with an octagonal pond. Three orchards and a slip garden lay outside the walls for the cultivation of hardy vegetables.

Following the re-building of the house in 1760 the kitchen gardens were relocated to the north and a range of buildings/sheds were built adjacent to the north-west wall (Tithe map 1843). By 1888 the kitchen garden which was entirely walled and included a range of stoves stood adjacent to the north west-wall, with eight further glasshouses to the west of the garden (1908 sales particulars). In 1910 Lutyens's Italianate sunken garden was built on the site. At that time a 3 acre area adjacent and to the west was laid out as a third kitchen garden, and was walled and stocked with fruit trees (AP 1937).

In 1888, the gardener's cottage (former East Lodge) was located in the area south of the kitchen garden, north-west of the house, with a nearby fruit room, mushroom house and potato store. In 1913 Mrs Edgar instructed Lutyens to build a new gardener's cottage (also known as the Bungalow, OS 1973, listed Grade II) attached to the north-west wall with small pavilions in the east and west corners (listed Grade II).

LANCELOT BROWN'S WORK

Lancelot 'Capability' Brown was active as a freelance landscaper throughout England from 1751 until his death in 1783. He was continuously occupied with commissions throughout this time for clients from the king, 6 Prime Ministers, half the House of Lords and the wealthiest men of Britain to less wealthy merchants and nouveau riches. General Howard was a typical newly-wealthy gentry client whose funds came from his aristocratic wife. Brown's commissions ranged from tens of thousands of pounds designing and implementing schemes for clients such as Lord Coventry at Croome Court and the Duke of Marlborough at Blenheim, to £35 for a visit by him and a ground survey by one of his men, such as at nearby Chalfont Park c.1760. The £35 paid by Chute is a typically small sum limited to a visit and survey, but it may have included broad design suggestions.

In the vicinity of Chalfont Park, i.e. near royal Windsor, Brown worked for a number of clients. His account book (at the RHS) shows that during the 1760s he was paid £2,800 for work at nearby Langley Park (1763-64) for the Duke of Marlborough, where another long, sinuous lake was laid out. He is believed to have worked at Stoke Poges Manor House for the Dowager Lady Cobham who in 1751 retired from Stowe (where Brown himself had recently left after 10 formative years of his career) after the death of her husband, but the extent of his work is unclear. The grounds were limited in size. He worked at the adjacent Stoke Park (west of Stoke Place) in 1758 according to John Penn (1813), designing the lake with the appearance of a natural river by linking five rectangular ponds. This park was modified by Humphry Repton. Brown may have worked at Ditton Park, but it is hard to see his hand, and in any case the attribution may not be accurate.

The long, sinuous pleasure ground lake at Chalfont Park is the site's clearest Brownian feature. It is the prestigious focus of the pleasure ground, and surrounded by a circuit path through lawns and ornamental woodland. The other local Bucks sites he worked at had

similarly narrow, sinuous, but longer, water bodies. The two lakes at Stoke Park total some 780m long and lie out in the park. An even longer chain of park lakes is at Latimer (based on the widened River Chess) where the upper one is 825m long, the lower 450m, totalling 1,275m. The narrow, sinuous lake perched just above the bottom of the valley in the park at Wycombe Abbey is 1000m long. Stoke Place lake as he designed it in its original narrow sinuous, river-like form, was of the scale and character of Chalfont Park, as the focus of an informal pleasure ground near the house, although that at Chalfont Park is longer at 600m. Like Chalfont, at Langley Park the 500m long lake divides the pleasure ground from the wider park.

EDWIN LUTYENS AND MISS JEKYLL

Although so often associated with the architect Sir Edwin Lutyens, Jekyll worked with nearly 50 other architects. However, it is her partnership with Lutyens that was so successful and influential. Often they worked on a particular part of a site as here at Chalfont Park. Miss Jekyll provided designs for a number of other sites in Buckinghamshire including Woodside Place, Chenies (her first commission with Lutyens, 1893), Cheswick, Hedgerley (1902), Pollard's Park, Chalfont St Giles (1906), Barton Hartshorn (1908 architect Robert Lorimer, qv), Nashdom (Lutyens, 1909), Rignalls (Adams & Holden, 1909), Fulmer Court (1913), Bramleys, Great Missenden (architect E Willmott, 1913), Pednere House, Chesham (architect Fobes & Tate, 1919), Little Haling, Denham (1927, architect W Sarel), Ponds, Seer Green (1928).

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Maps

- 1736 Estate Plan Brudenells – Leicester Land Registry (copy at Bucks County Council Historic Environment Record)
1760 Jeffery's Map of Buckinghamshire
1825 Bryant's map of Buckinghamshire
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Ordnance Survey

1811 Ordnance Surveyor's Draft (British Library)

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Illustrations

Peacock, *The Polite Repository* (1799)

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Croft photograph (1865) Lucey Collection of Historic Photographs (accessed on line)

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Aerofilms early aerial photographs, Britain from Above website

Archival Items

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1888 Sales Catalogue (Historic England Archive)

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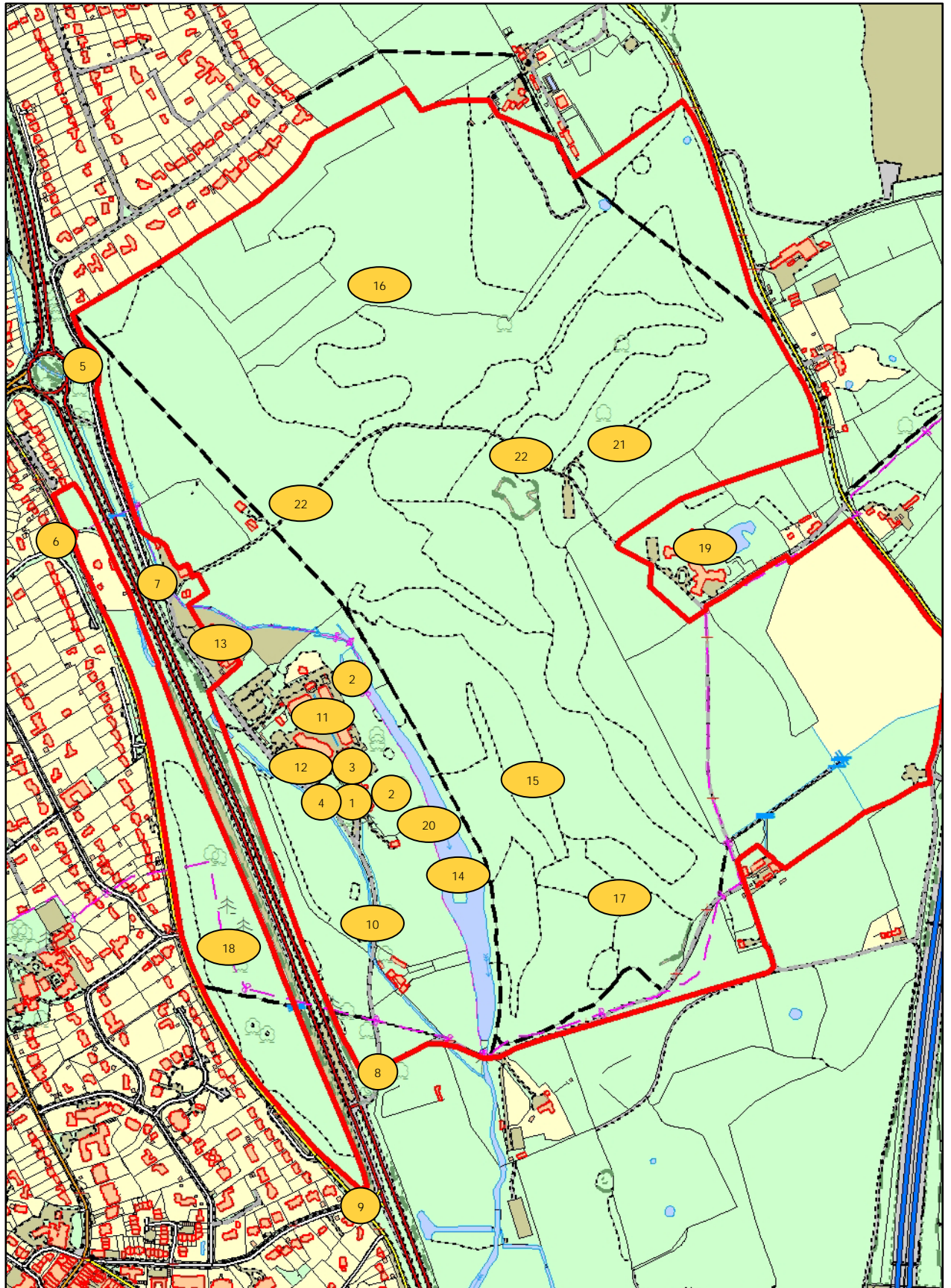
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Chalfont Park Hotel brochure (1921) (private collection)

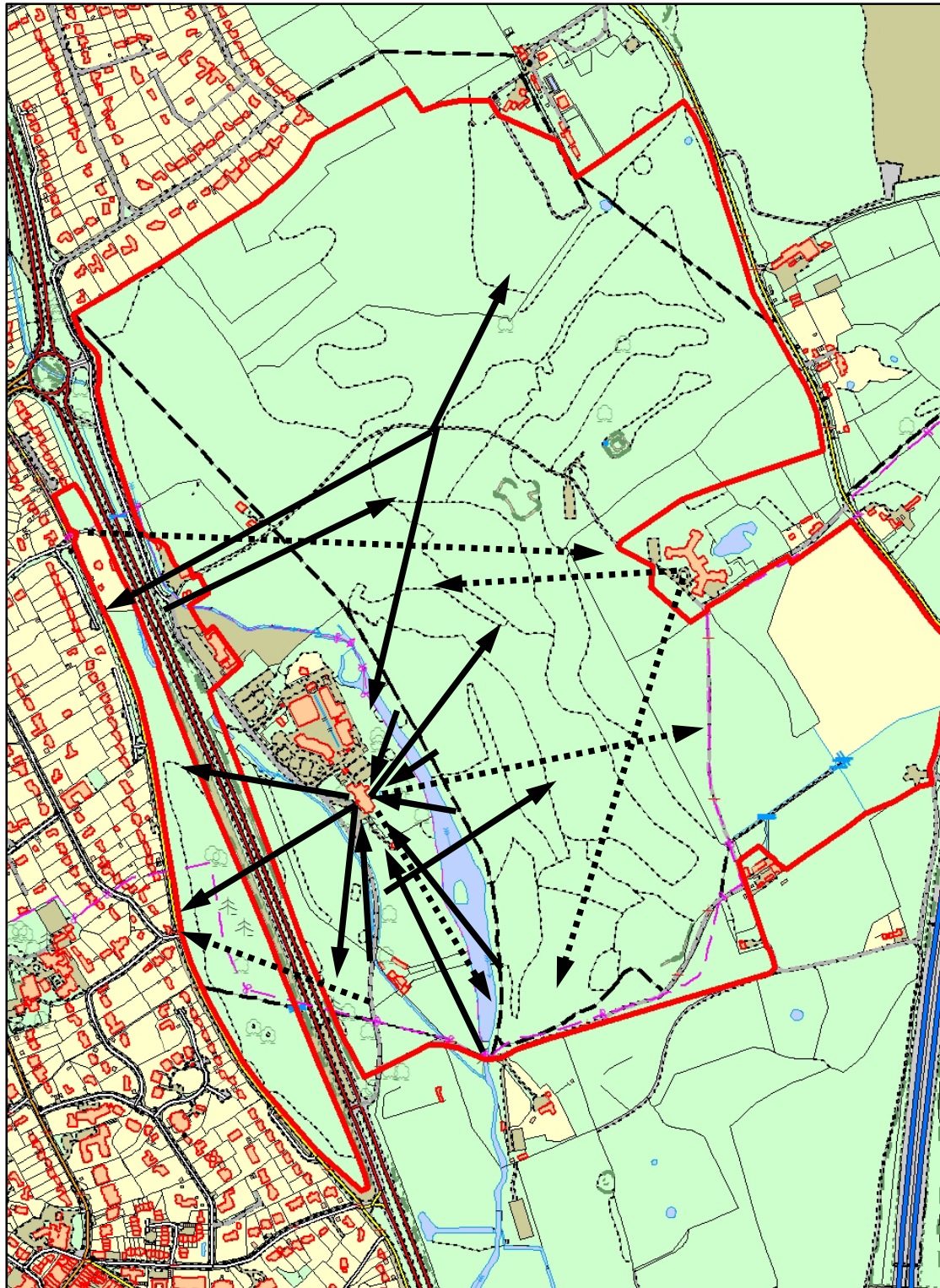
Claire de Carle September 2015; edited 26 October 2016

KEY FEATURES

- 1 House
- 2 Pleasure grounds
- 3 Stables
- 4 Forecourt including champion London Plane
- 5 North entrance
- 6 Former north entrance, including Lodge, remains of gate piers
- 7 North Drive
- 8 South entrance
- 9 Former south entrance
- 10 South Drive
- 11 Office development and C21 rill formerly site of Italianate Garden, with Orangery at north end
- 12 Car Park, site of early C20 kitchen garden, retains Lutyens gardeners cottage, pavilions and wall
- 13 Golf Club House
- 14 Lake
- 15 Ice House
- 16 North Park
- 17 South Park
- 18 West Park
- 19 Chalfont Lodge (now care home) and grounds
- 20 Site of Boat house
- 21 Moated site (SAM)
- 22 Drive to Chalfont Lodge



KEY VIEWS



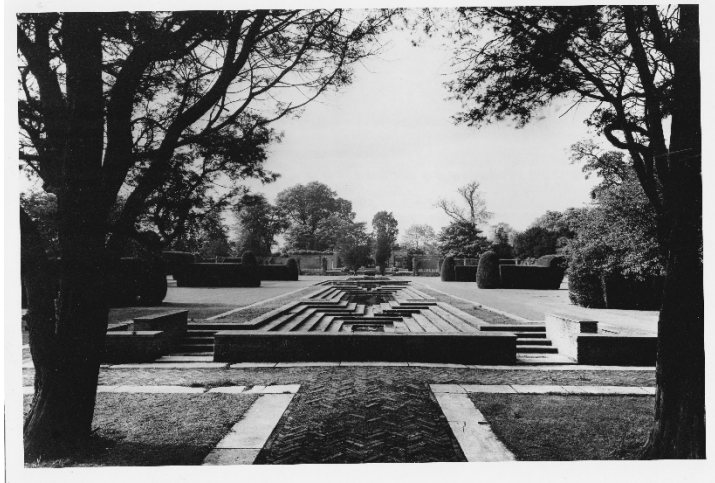
HISTORIC IMAGES



View after Girtin (left) 1799



Hotel 1920s (right) BCC.



Lutyens' Italianate gardens 1920s (private collection)

KEY CURRENT IMAGES



West front, drive and forecourt with London Plane (left);
east front across pleasure ground and lake from lakeside walk (right).



Stable block (left); east front across the lake viewed from the park (now golf course) (right).



South drive, view south (left) and view north to house (right).



The south end of the lake with cascade.



North park.

Former pleasure grounds



Site of early C20 kitchen garden and Lutyens gardener's cottage (left & centre); site of Italianate Garden with C21 offices and rill and Lutyens Orangery (right).



South end of former Italianate garden with loggia and wishing well (rebuilt)



Lutyens house (left) and golf club house (1920s-30s) (right).