

Understanding Historic Parks and Gardens in Buckinghamshire

The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust Research & Recording Project



Chenies Manor

June 2015

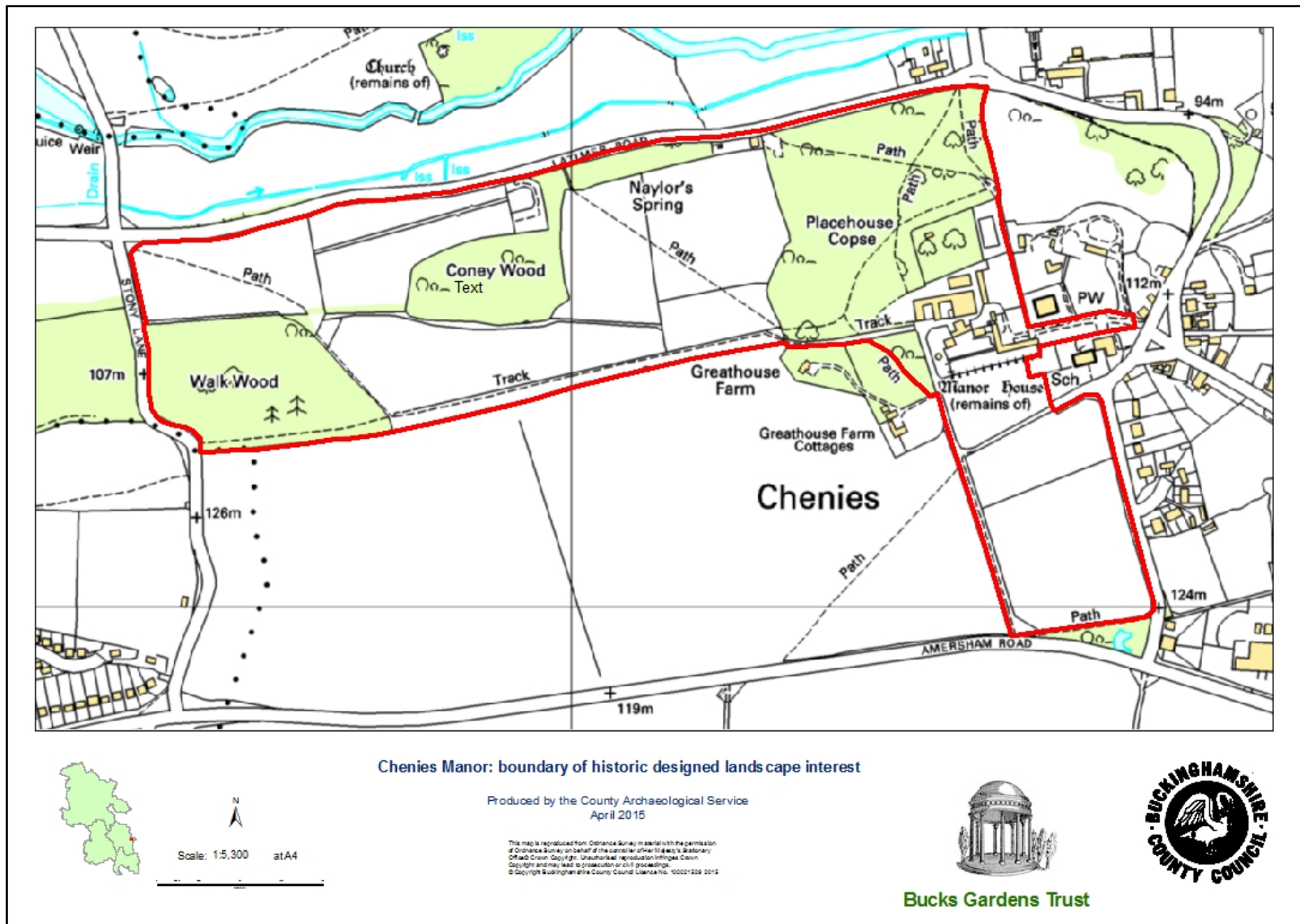


Bucks Gardens Trust

Association of

Gardens
Trusts

HISTORIC SITE BOUNDARY





Scale: 1:5,658 at A4



Chenies Manor: 2008 aerial photograph

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Produced by the County Archaeological Service
April 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. 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	CHENIES MANOR BCC HER 0167104000
DISTRICT:	CHILTERN	
PARISH:	CHENIES	
OS REF.:	TQ 015 984	

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Overview

The remains of a Tudor house built in the C16 for the Russell family with the remains of associated gardens and parkland on a site known to have been occupied since C12. The property declined from the C17 until bought by the present owners in 1955 who created gardens on the earlier site. The Tudor gardens do not survive in a complete form above ground although certain elements can be traced including the remains of terracing above the Chess valley. Lancelot 'Capability' Brown in the 1760s incorporated a view from nearby Latimer House and park through Chenies woodland to the church tower of St Michael but this has since grown in.

Archaeological Interest

The site of demolished ranges and outbuildings of a formerly extensive Tudor House for the Russells when they were closely associated with Tudor monarchs, including Scheduled remains. The potential exists for associated agricultural and garden/park features.

Aesthetic

The remains of a C16 park and garden associated with the Russell family's prodigy house, overlaid by late C20 gardens around the surviving C16 wings incorporating earlier fabric.

Historic Interest

The estate has strong connections with medieval and Tudor royalty. It became the early principal estate and residence of the Russell family (Dukes of Bedford) in their meteoric rise to wealth and power, between 1526 and 1627, when they hosted Henry VIII and Elizabeth I. After this their principal residence became Woburn Abbey, but Chenies remained in their ownership as a minor property until the 1950s when the major part of estate was sold. Their mortuary chapel is attached to the parish church, containing many outstanding family funerary monuments since the C16.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Formerly known as Isenhampstead, and first mentioned in 1165, the manor was taken in 1285 by Edward I in payment of debts due. For 11 years it was a Royal Palace and belonged to the Crown (Sheehan). Edward I occasionally resided here, as did Edward III. In 1296 it was granted to Bartholomew Cheyne and subsequently became known as Cheynes. In 1526 it was inherited by Anne Sapcote (Broughton) through Agnes Cheyne. In the same year Anne, who was a widow, married John, Lord Russell.

John, Lord Russell was a favourite of Henry VIII and in 1530 was granted the adjoining manor of Amersham. The funds from this manor enabled him to build at Cheynes. 'The olde house of the Cheyne is so translated by my Lorde Russel that little or nothing of it yn a maner remaynith untranslated: and a great deale of the House in ben newly set up made of Bricke and Timber: and fair logginges be erected in the gardein' (Leland). Evidence suggests the site included a north range between the existing west range and the church and a large building facing north along the edge of the Chess Valley with large bay windows with gardens on the slope down to the river which was linked to the surviving wings (Wessex Archaeology). 'And there be about the House 2 Parkes, as I remember' (Leland). It is suggested that these were to the west and south west (Wessex Archaeology). Henry VIII visited the house 3 times and in 1541 the Privy Council met at Cheynes. John was made 1st Earl of Bedford in 1550. The surviving south wing was built around this date (Wessex Archaeology). John died in 1555. Francis, the 2nd Earl spent much of Queen Mary's reign in the 1550s in exile due to Marian plots. However with the family position restored from 1558 under Elizabeth I, the Queen visited on 19th July 1570 and the Privy Council met at Cheynes again in 1592. At the time the Earl described his property as that 'old house and barren soil' (Letter to Lord Cecil-Chenies Church and Monuments). Anne, Countess of Warwick, widowed in 1590, lived until her death in 1604 at Cheynes. She was guardian to Edward 3rd Earl of Bedford who 'developed very moderate capacities' and 'married the brilliant but extravagant Lucy Harrington'. (Chenies Church and Monuments). Lucy Harrington was an heiress in her own right and inherited houses at Moor Park and Twickenham where she developed gardens. (The Twickenham Museum) Cheyney is marked on Speed's *Tudor Atlas* (1612). It is likely that formal gardens and possibly a hunting park were developed with the house in the C16.

The Russell family's influence at court declined with Edward who was involved with the insurrection of the Earl of Essex and Edward was briefly imprisoned. On his death in 1627 the estate passed to his cousin Frances. The family moved to Woburn and from that date only lesser members of the family resided at Chenies and rarely, if ever, in the house. The extensive ranges built in the C16 for the royal visits were either allowed to decline or more likely demolished to reduce liabilities.

In 1736 the demesne included various gardens around Chenies House including Little gardens, Inner Court and Yards, Outer court, Great Garden, Place House Orchard, the blind walk lying between the Great Garden & Place Orchard (Davis, J). Orchards lay to the north with Place House Coppice wrapping around these to the north and west (Estate map 1785). The remaining parts of the house were by 1748 let as a farm and the estate managed for its income (primarily agricultural and forestry). In the mid-C18 Horace Walpole reported to George Montagu that there were 'but piteous fragments of the house remaining and it was occupied by a farmer tenant'. In the 1760s permission was sought from the Duke for the felling of trees to create a vista from Latimer House to the tower

of St Michael's church Chenies in accordance with designs drawn up by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown (Mason, 1795).

By 1785 formal garden compartments and cultivated areas lay primarily to the west of the remaining buildings but also to the east. By 1822 the park apparently lay to the east and south of the church only (Bryant). By the 1870s much smaller gardens lay to the immediate west of the house and large buildings had been built on formerly cultivated areas and orchards to the north-west. (1876 OS) The gardens to the immediate west had a formal design bisected by paths and the gardens were surrounded by trees. By 1880 the manor was described as 'now restored with great taste and occupied by the Church Warden'... having been it is said a royal hunting lodge, when the land around Chenies were mostly forest' (Lord Wriothesley Russell & Dunne, FBW).

In the early 1950s the prime part of the estate including the manor house and all surrounding land was sold to the Metropolitan Railway Company who in 1955 auctioned it as Great House Farm (Knight, Frank & Rutley). Since 1955 the manor house has been privately owned. The gardens have been developed as a series of compartments around the house by the current owners, evident on a series of aerial photographs.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

The small village of Chenies is centred on the Manor House and the nearby Church; indeed much of the housing is related to the Estate and dates from the mid-C19. It lies at the fork in the road connecting Rickmansworth, 5.5 km to the south-east, with Amersham (A404) some 5km due west, and a minor road to Chesham 6.5km to the north-west. The site and the adjacent church lie on a wide plateau of about 120m AOD on the gently sloping dip slope of the Chilterns, NW to SE, and 80m above the River Chess to the north. The north slope towards the Chess is steep in places. The chalk is overlain with clay-with-flints. The setting is wooded with ancient woodlands and modern plantings and agricultural with Latimer village and park a mile or so across the Chess valley to the north-west.

The county boundary between Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire runs along the Chess at the north. The estate extended for a considerable distance west towards Amersham and south-east towards Chorleywood and Rickmansworth. The 35ha. site is roughly rectangular, bounded on the north by the Chesham Road in the valley below, in the east by the road from the centre of the village due south, in the south by the Amersham road (A404), and in the west by Stoney Lane, linking Latimer to the A404.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The manor house comprises the remnants to the south-east of a much larger house which overlooked the Chess to the north. This lay to the north along the courtyard boundary and to the north-west underneath the present farm buildings (Wessex Archaeology). By 1844 (Tithe Map) the main entrance to the site was 180m east off the main village road. A C19 lodge (listed Grade II) marks the entrance off the village green. The road is gated 50m from the house and bordered by mature Beech and Lime trees. The drive arrives at a gravel forecourt at the south-west corner of the house where the south and west wings join. By 1876 this entrance, having reached the house swept north and then west in a curve to the farm buildings at the rear (north-west) of the house (OS). This

drive superseded the C18 entrance from the village green which passed the south wing into a farmyard west of the house (Estate map 1736). This access had been blocked by buildings by 1844 (Tithe Map).

By 1824 the service entrance to the farm buildings lay nearly 400m south of the house off the Amersham Road; the drive ran north and then turned east to enter the farmyard to the west of the house (Bryant). This drive survives today (2015).

A pedestrian access leads up the steep Chess valley slope from a lodge at the north west corner of Place House Copse some 300m north-west of the house. The path turns south for 130m passing the churchyard wall, to the forecourt. This approach was present by the 1870s (OS).

In the 1770s Cheynes Lodge stood to the south-south-east (Jefferys). That and Lodge House on Stoney Lane to the south-east survived into the 1820s (Bryant). Both were apparently lost to the Metropolitan Railway (operational 1889).

A western approach runs along a bridleway, to the south of Long Walk Field, giving access from Stoney Lane some 900m to the west. This route was tree lined (elms) in C19 (Moule painting) and was known as Lady Cheyne's Walk. It is possible that this was the C16 entrance, possibly leading to a building called The Nursery (listed Grade II) standing west of the existing house. This may have been one of two gateways (Wessex Archaeology). By 1844 this bridleway swung south some 100m before the gatehouse to join the bridleway to the south of the south wing. (Tithe Map)

PRINCIPAL BUILDING

Chenies Manor House (listed Grade I) stands 200m west of the centre of Chenies village. The country home of the Russell family from 1526 until 1627, still standing are the south (1552) and west (1538) ranges and a medieval undercroft (Scheduled Ancient Monument). The manor house is approached via a forecourt leading to an enclosed courtyard below the north and east fronts. The entrance door is in the south-west corner of this courtyard. The buildings are C16 Tudor in style and noted for their magnificent chimneys. Of particular note is the lack of windows in the south facade of the south range. The church of St Michaels (listed Grade I, outside the site boundary) stands overlooking the house in its churchyard immediately north-east of the house. Its outstanding feature is on the north side, the mortuary chapel of the Russell family, including a notable group of finely sculpted memorials since the C16. A group of farm buildings, some constructed in the C18 and some in C20 stands 50m north-west of the house around a large concrete yard.

There is no evidence visible of the former north wing of the house and/or north range, or the farmyard buildings standing to the south of the house in the C19.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

The gardens enclose the house to the north, south and west. Some 10m south of the south range, is a wall topped by a metal fence and beyond that a ha-ha. The ha-ha was dug by the current owners although a ditch is shown along the same line on maps since 1876; the outer area was called Calves plots (tithe map 1844). The area beyond the ha-ha was laid to lawn in the late C20 with a parterre of formal yew topiary, urns and a central gazebo. The central path of the parterre is aligned on the Queen Elizabeth Oak, already a large specimen in the C16 (Morris). In the south-east corner, in the

outer garden, stand various mature trees including 5 mature limes and 1 horse chestnut and some 20m to the north 3 mature alder.

West of the west range are the formal gardens, a series of later C20 compartments on different themes. These overlie what may have been the privy or small garden to the Tudor House. The northern edge of this area is bounded by brick built outhouses which stretch from the edge of the west range to a building which may have been one of the former gatehouses. These buildings were standing in the C18 (Estate Map 1736) and C19 (1876 OS map) but are not shown on the 1844 Tithe Map. Beneath the gardens to the west are a series of underground passages, their use unclear but seemingly too big to be drains. They do not exist anywhere near or under the existing ranges. To the rear of the gatehouse lies a walled physic garden created in the C20 around the well house which houses the pump for the well which formerly served the house and village (listed Grade II).

A small courtyard north of the west range contains a box tree reputed to be 200 years old.

The courtyard north and east of the house is walled on the two sides not enclosing the two ranges of the house. The north wall is late C20. In 1955 the courtyard (along with many areas in the garden) contained a large amount of laurel which was grubbed out. A path/drive from the gate in the wall to the east (the wall has narrow arches inserted along its length until it meets the church boundary wall) leads to the front door in the south west corner. The area is mainly laid to lawn. Aerial photographs taken since 1947 reveal the development of the garden in the C20.

In 1785 there were compartmented gardens in the courtyard, to the west and south west and in the south-west corner of an orchard on the site of the current larger farm buildings. A further orchard lay to the north (Estate Map). In 1844 the courtyard was described as the Homestead Yard Garden and to the north lay the homestead and Place House Orchard (Tithe Map). By 1876 (OS) the gardens to the west were laid out in compartments with trees along the western and southern boundary and trees to the south of the south range. The area to the immediate west of the path running alongside the church was an orchard. Below to the north, within Place House Copse, was a cricket ground. In 1925 (OS) the courtyard was wooded with ornamental trees and conifers. The area included the upper half of the current kitchen garden. No detail is shown to the west of the house. The cricket ground remained in situ.

In 1960 it was noted that remains of broad Tudor terraces stepped down to the river Chess (Pevsner). Archaeological evidence suggests at least two terraces forming the C16 Tudor Great Gardens to the north of the house. The privy garden would have lain to the west (Wessex Archaeology).

PARK

The park divides into two main sections to the north and south of the garden.

Beyond the bridleway some 100m south of the house the park is laid to grass and forms part of the vista from the more formal areas of garden.

Place House Copse lies 125m to the north of the house. A disused tennis court lies to the north of the kitchen garden. There is evidence of terracing adjacent to the house and 65m to the north (at least two) largely post C16. Within the Copse is at least one further terrace. The copse has several

public footpaths which may mark the lines of former walks and rides, the steepest path from the corner of the churchyard to the Chesham road has some pebbles suggesting that some of the paths may have been laid out formally. These may date from 1831 (Letter Mr Bewnall). During the 1760s a vista was opened up under the direction of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown from Latimer Park House to St Michael's church tower which would have required the felling of some trees in this wood with the permission of the Duke of Bedford. Brown 'made a view to Cheyneys church ...as natural and picturesque as can well be imagined'. (Mason, 1795; *Garden History*, 2013) The vista is grown in with mature trees.

West of Place House Copse a large field extends westwards along the top of the valley known as Long Walk field. It is bounded to the south by a bridleway known as Lady Cheynes Walk. This is shown in a C19 painting as lined with mature elms (gone) since when new trees have been planted. The walk provides extensive views over the Chess Valley to the north and north-west towards Latimer House. The walk stretches for some 0.6km towards Amersham/Chesham until it meets Stoney Lane in the west. Within Long Walk Field is Coney Wood, whose name suggests it may have been used as rabbit warren.

KITCHEN GARDEN

The kitchen garden lies to the north of the entrance courtyard. The walls were built in the late C20. It probably occupies part of the site of the Tudor Great Gardens including the upper terrace. It has a central path just to one side of the axis. In the south-east corner is a later C20 turf labyrinth based on one in a painting at Woburn of the 3rd Earl of Bedford who lived at Chenies. By 1736 (estate map) it was occupied by compartmented gardens and in 1844 (Tithe map) the area was described as 'Homestead Yard Garden'.

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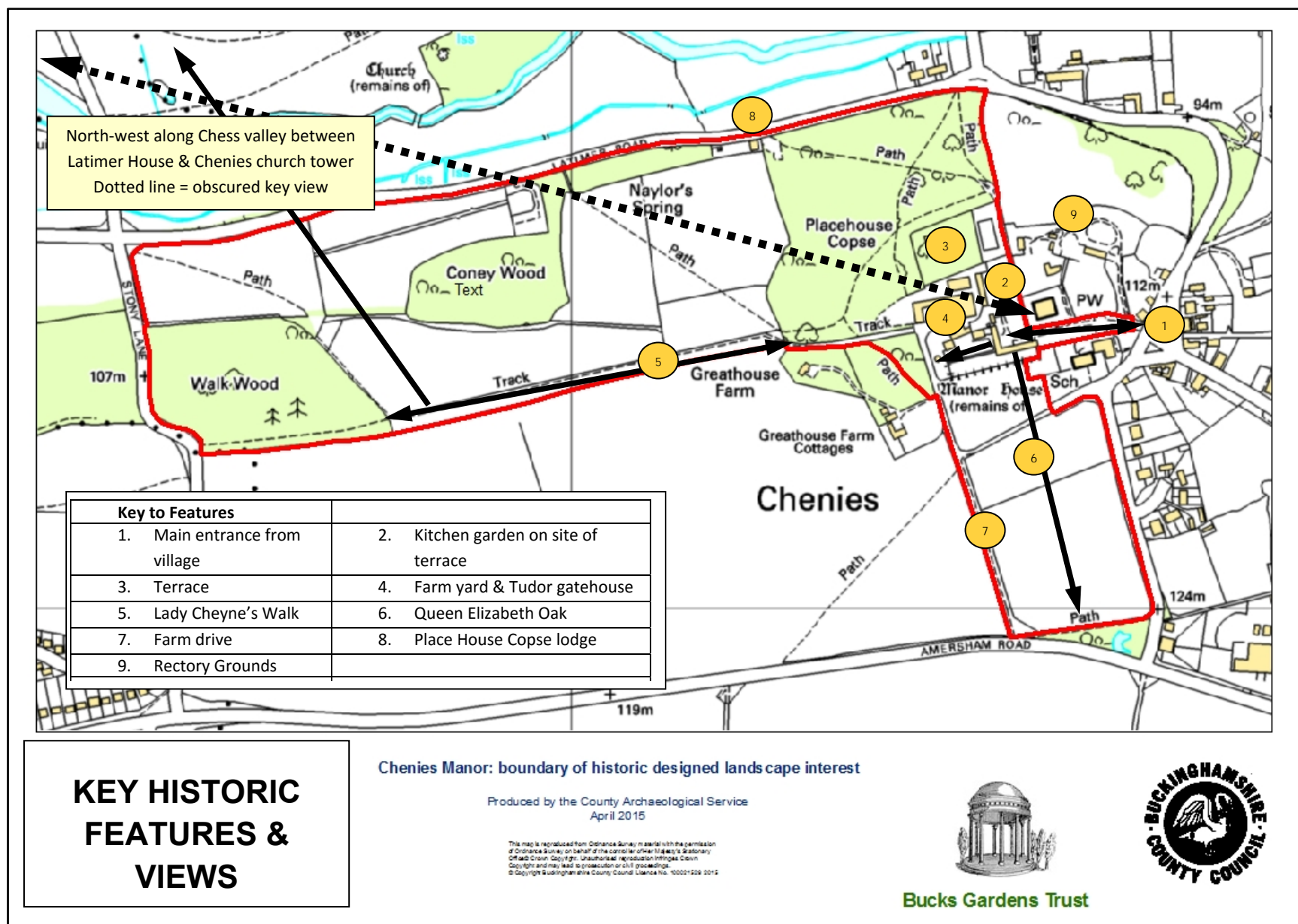
Chenies Parish Tithe Map and Award, 1844 (CBS)

Illustrations

Henry Joseph Moule (1825-1904) watercolours: *Lady Cheyney's Walk* (AYBCM: 1951.8.3), *Place House Chenies* (AYBCM: 1951.8.18; AYBCM: 1951.8.19), *St Michael's Church & Place House* (AYBCM: 1951.8.20). (BCC, Halton)

Colour aerial photographs 1947, 1968, 1969, 1985, 1989, 1999, 2003 and 2008 (BCC).

S Tricks, ed. SR, April 2015.



KEY IMAGES



South wing from turf maze to north (left); west wing from garden (centre); south lawn (right).



Probably gatehouse at west end of garden (left); garden (centre & right).



South lawn & ha-ha (left); Queen Elizabeth Oak south of house (centre); turf maze and church (right).



Turf maze on site of upper garden terrace (left); Lady Cheyne's Walk (centre & right).



Second, lower, terrace, in Placehouse Copse.