

Understanding Historic Parks and Gardens in Buckinghamshire

The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust Research & Recording Project



Lilies, Weedon

September 2015



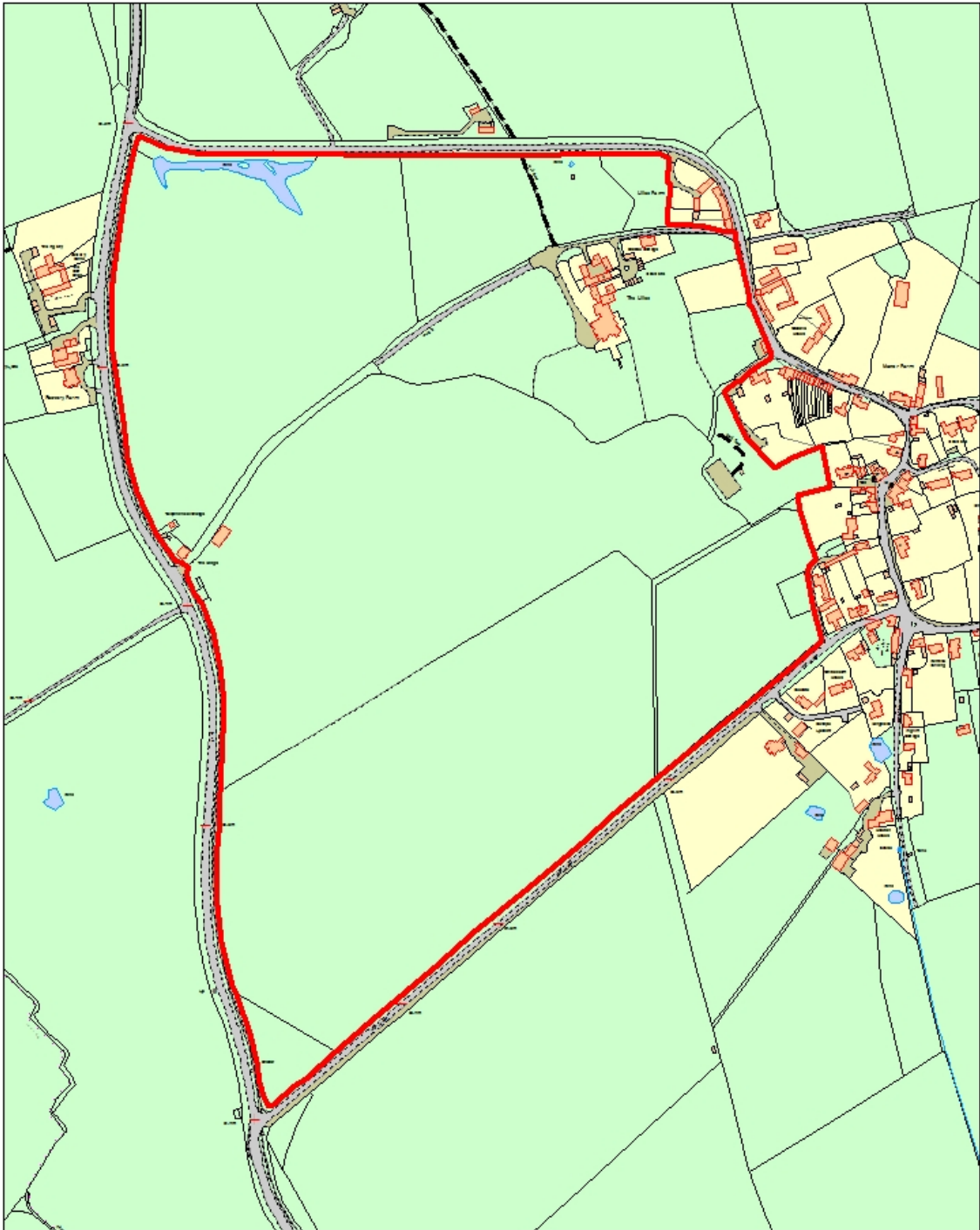
Bucks Gardens
Trust



Association of
Gardens Trusts



HISTORIC SITE BOUNDARY



The Lilies: boundary of historic designed landscape interest

Produced by the County Archaeological Service
April 2015

Scale: 1:4,684 at A4

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The Lilies: 2006 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 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	LILIES, WEEDON BCC HER 0032902000
DISTRICT:	AYLESBURY VALE	
PARISH:	HARDWICK CUM WEEDON	
OS REF:	SP811 184	

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Overview: A small country house, informal pleasure grounds and modest park established in the present form in phases during the C19 following Enclosure, incorporating earlier fabric including a C16 garden wall. The layout is closely associated with its originator, Lord George Nugent, originally of Stowe, who lived here for 45 years. He apparently established the park and garden from c.1805, although the detail of some of his work is unclear. The most unusual feature is his Grove of Friendship with the last few surviving commemorative stones marking surviving tree planting by his illustrious friends. The present layout reflects closely that mapped in the 1870s in Henry Cazenove's time, when the house was rebuilt for him by Devey and the grounds were altered too, incorporating elements of Nugent's layout. A number of fine ornamental trees survive from both main periods.

Archaeological interest: Apart from the garden walls, the windmill mound beside the Buckingham Road and the main drive/village road/holloway little pre-Nugent is evident. The remains survive of buildings linked to Cazenove's late C19 gas production for the house. There is potential related to the adjacent village and origins as open fields, also lost garden features such as paths, and kitchen garden structures.

Architectural interest: A typical late C19 small country house ensemble with an attached service wing, stables and nearby lodge and farm buildings, an early group by George Devey c. 1870 (on the site of an earlier manor house). It is one of his first small country houses and atypically classical in style. His plans and drawings are with the RIBA. The kitchen garden walls are partly C16 and a rubble section allegedly contains elements from Bolbec Castle at Whitchurch and local fossils. Together the buildings and walls are a distinctive component of the landscape on the western fringe of the village of Weedon.

Artistic interest: The layout survives largely intact as established by 1870, as a typical C19 small country house ensemble originating with Lord George Nugent in the early C19, with its second main phase for Henry Cazenove from 1870. It retains some fine and impressive C19 deciduous and evergreen ornamental trees and some C19 shrubs remain, including specimens likely to date from Nugent's time, although the trees and planting have thinned in some places and in others have been replaced. The park and pleasure ground are designed to enjoy extensive panoramic views of the setting, over the Vale of Aylesbury.

Historic interest: Strong associations with Lord Nugent and his influential C19 social, literary and political circle, including Lord John Russell, Charles Dickens and Robert Browning. Some of these connections are evidenced in surviving memorial stones in the grounds erected when various trees were planted. An early owner was a member of the nationally important Lee family of Quarrendon and there are suggestions of links to the Rothschild family of nearby Waddesdon. The gardener Michael Rochford was employed in the 1840s by Nugent and later founded a famous nursery.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Lilies is in the parish of Hardwick with Weedon. The parishes were owned separately until 1525 when the Lee family, related to the Lees of nearby Quarrendon, took over both and held the combined ownership until 1801 (*VCH*). The property is marked on a map by Robert Morden (1695). In January 1801 an Inclosure Bill was published covering Weedon, including the manor called Lilies, with its garden and in the same year the manor of Hardwick with Weedon was sold to the Marquis of Buckingham.

George Nugent-Grenville (1788-1850), 2nd Baron Grenville, younger son of the 1st Marquess of Buckingham of Stowe, lived at Lilies from about 1805 as a tenant. He was a politician and writer with surprisingly radical and reforming views which departed from his family's views, and during his occupancy until his death in 1850 his residence became a popular venue for literary men and politicians. His friendship with many such men he recorded in the Grove of Friendship planted over a number of years to commemorate the visits of various friends, each tree marked with a commemorative stone.

In *Legends of the Library at Lilies* Lord Nugent wrote about the early history of the site and claimed that it had first been occupied in the C12 by a French monastery, called Lelius, supposedly after the lily, the emblem of France. However, it could also have been called La Lees, reflecting its ownership by the Lee family. During Lord Nugent's tenancy a park and a formal garden were present in 1824 (Bryant). This indicates that the designed landscape had extended south to meet the Weedon road and also shows that in the first part of the C19, in Lord Nugent's time, the roads to Weedon were altered and a new approach built to the north to enable the old road to become the main drive to Lilies House.

Lord Nugent describes a 'smooth narrow pool, scarce visible among rising shrubs, which belt in and shroud the ground from the incurious wayfarer'. He writes of lightsome glades and leafy shadows and terraces 'each edged on one side by a border of gay flowers under a stone wall of depth corresponding with the different height of steps'. He almost acknowledges the emergence of neglect when he says 'in the days of its pride this blaze of flower garden formed a rich contrast with the lawn of vivid green at the foot of the lowest terrace'.

In the mid-1840s Michael Rochford was appointed as gardener at Lilies (Allen). He came from Ireland in 1840 and probably worked for Joseph Knight's Royal Exotic Nursery in Chelsea, later the famous Veitch nursery. This was well known for rare and beautiful plants from around the world. Lord Nugent was already interested in rare plants because he had been High Commissioner in the Ionian Islands (1832-35) and travelled widely in the Near East, bringing back plants for his garden never seen in England before. No documentation has been found of what either Lord Nugent or Rochford did at Lilies.

In 1848 the Buckinghams were forced to sell their land holdings in and around Aylesbury (*Bucks Herald* 1848). Lord Nugent, who possessed the Grenville tendency to financial ineptitude, then bought Lilies and surrounding parkland. On Lord Nugent's death in 1850 (very heavily in debt), Lilies was inherited by Dr Connell, a relative of Nugent's wife.

The house apparently burnt down in 1860 and was rebuilt by 1870, the first tenant possibly being Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild (Eaton). It has not been possible to substantiate the information about fire or the tenancy. In 1869 the site was bought by Henry Cazenove, a stockbroker from London. He had the house rebuilt within a year of buying the estate (*Bucks Herald*, 1870).

His improvements included a gasometer and gas lighting, as well as changes to the park and gardens with lawns bounded by numerous tall and stately trees (*Bucks Herald* 1870). A working plan (1869) shows extensive paths and possible drives, with formal lakes and pools, but there is no evidence of implementation.

Henry Cazenove died in 1894; plaques in St Mary's Church, Hardwick commemorate him and his wife, as well as their son who was later killed at Ypres in World War I. After Cazenove's death the house was sold, remaining in private hands, with the park, gardens and home farm until the site was again sold in 1940 (*Bucks Herald* 1940, report of private sale) to a firm of distillers. In 1946 it was bought by the Royal Bucks Hospital and used as a training centre and the rest of the estate sold into divided ownership. In 1999 (sales particulars) the house was sold, along with ten acres. The site remains in divided private ownership.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Location, area, boundaries, landform, setting

Hardwick with Weedon lies some 2.5 miles north of Aylesbury and 2 miles south of Whitchurch just east of the main A413 Aylesbury to Buckingham Road. It lies in a vale comprised of heavy clays that is mainly farmed. Weedon Village is perched on a ridge in the centre of the parish. The 40 hectare Lilies site is on the north-west fringe of the village and the house and immediate garden area are on the edge of the escarpment, with the park sloping down to meet both the Buckingham Road to the west and the roads to Weedon village to the north and south. The park is a combination of a gently undulating area to the north and west, with a flat section to the south, now (2015) used for the Buckinghamshire County Show. From the house and garden there are fine views of the distant Chilterns to the south-west and to the north to Hardwick church and beyond towards Whitchurch.

The main boundary feature is a substantial brick garden wall which runs for about 120m along the north-east boundary with Weedon High Street. Parts of this wall are C16 (Pevsner). The northern section, opposite Lilies Farm is made of rubble, allegedly containing stones from Bolbec Castle and local fossils. The remaining boundaries are mixed hedging and follow the lines apparent by the late C19 (OS 1870s).

Entrances and approaches

The present main entrance (2015) lies 140m north-east of the house, between the north end of the garden wall in Weedon High Street and Lilies Farm. The drive leads west, past the farm buildings to the north and the former stable block to the south. The drive meets a small car park 160m from Weedon High Street, where it turns south. Modern gates here lead to the terrace in front of the main entrance on the west side of the house. The drive culminates in a semi-circular evergreen hedge at the southern end, with a turning circle.

The former main entrance from the Buckingham Road lies 470m south-west of the house across the park. It was created early in the C19. The OSD contemporary with Lord Nugent's early residence (c.1813/14) shows the drive to the house, with a lodge building on the Buckingham Road. A red brick lodge, with possible work by Devey, survives next to large wooden park gates set in five pillars, with a metal side gate. The wooden gates have retained their metal fittings, but have been reconstructed in historic style in oak.

From here the drive leads north-east across the park to meet the current drive at the small car park to the

north of the modern gates leading to the terrace in front of the house. The south half of the drive is wide enough for vehicles – though now grassed. This drive formerly continued round to the house (OSD 1813/14 and OS 1920s). At the approximate half way point in the park the land starts to rise and becomes more wooded, with views to the north. The drive continues as a path, with some evidence of an ancient holloway, or sunken road, joining the modern drive 80m north-west of the main entrance of the house.

A public footpath bisects the east half of the site, linking the north and south boundaries, passing between the house and the walled garden to the east.

Principal Building

Lilies House (listed grade II) was rebuilt in 1870 by George Devey as a country house with attached service wing and stables. The house is red brick with a slate roof and brick chimneys and it has two storeys with an attic. The entrance front on the west side has a broad porch surrounding the front door. The south and east garden fronts have C17-style gables and the south front also has two small projecting wings and between them there is a late C20 conservatory. To the north there is a long service wing and a stable block with a reconstructed clock tower. The rooms to the west and south would have views over the gardens, park and out to the Chiltern hills. Those on the eastern side have views over the garden and trees, planted as specimens and to screen the house from Weedon Village. Devey's house was on the site of an earlier manor house which burnt down in 1860 (Eaton).

To the north east, 135m from the house is Lilies Farm, which was altered by Devey at the same time as he rebuilt the main house and this is marked by the 1870 date stone.

Gardens and Pleasure Grounds

The gardens and pleasure grounds lie to the south, east and west. They reflect the later C19 layout (OS 1870s), but apart from the Grove of Friendship it is not possible from the documentation to say how they reflect to Lord Nugent's changes in the early-mid-C19.

Modern terracing with lawns surrounds the immediate east and south garden fronts, with a fountain and small rill on the south side. The stable and service blocks to the north and east are surrounded by mature shrubberies and trees. This layout is recognisable from at least 1869.

Informal lawns with a belt of trees and shrubs enclose the house to the west, south and east, with some individual specimens. Some of the trees in this area were possibly planted by Lord Nugent, including a fern leaf beech (*Fagus sylvatica* 'Asplenifolia') in the south lawn and nearby a copper beech (*Fagus sylvatica* 'Purpurea'). A large cedar of Lebanon (*Cedrus libani*) stands on the south lawn, which is bounded by a sunk fence and the remains of park railings. Two further cedars of Lebanon face the front door with an oriental plane tree (*Platanus orientalis*) by the modern gated entrance to the gardens. Nothing appears to remain of Lord Nugent's terraces, mentioned in his *Legends of the Library at Lilies*, though an undulation in the lawn to the south- west of the house appears to have been constructed, whose purpose is now unclear.

Two Wellingtonia trees mark the south eastern boundary and beyond this is a disused tennis court, which is surrounded by a continuation of the park railings, which form the boundary to the south lawn.

This area was planted with trees by the 1870s (OS), with a path leading south-west from Weedon High Street, which still skirts the modern garden. North-east of the house is a large Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) and an area bounded by mainly yew hedging with mature shrubs, many of them box set in lawns, with a new greenhouse. This area slopes down to the main drive from Weedon Village and reflects the later C19 layout (OS 1870s).

To the west and north-west steep wooded slopes lead down to the park (OS 1870s), with footpaths of recent origin.

180m west of the house, where the former main drive broadens out, a sloping, wooded glade contains the Grove of Friendship. This unusual feature faces north across the park towards Hardwick Church (OS 1870s). The Grove has a central inscribed stone with surrounding memorial stones against some of the trees. This was to commemorate friends of Lord Nugent, with stone memorials erected to commemorate the planter. It seems that at one time there were about 50 of these stones but it is now possible only to see about 12. As at 2014 named stones included Douglas Jerrold, editor of Punch and the author, Harrison Ainsworth. Others are thought to have included the Duke of Somerset, Lord John Russell, W.S. Landor, Charles Dickens, Richard Westmacott and Robert Browning. The central stone inscription is in Latin and translates as 'May the trees planted here prosper, they are the work of my friends. We vow that they will afford a harmonious shade to who so ever approaches mindful lest they damage the sacred grove of friendship' (Eaton). Lord Nugent's custom was reported (*Bucks Herald*, 1870) upon the death of Charles Dickens with the planting of a fine specimen fir, which had then been but a short time introduced into this country from the Himalayas, though this does not seem to have survived. The 1870s owner, Henry Cazenove, had directed special care taken of this 'Grove of Friendship' (*Bucks Herald*, 1870)

Park

North-west of the park drive an open and gently undulating area of parkland slopes both west to the Aylesbury road and north to the road to Weedon. This reflects the late C19 layout and is mainly pasture, with a tree belt replanted alongside the Aylesbury Road, established by the late C19 (OS 1870s).

A central belt of trees formerly led from the park drive towards a long, narrow, irregular shaped lake in the north-west corner of the park (1870s O/S). This lake lies along the northern boundary with the Weedon Road and at its western end joins the northern end of the tree belt along the Aylesbury Road, with the far north-west corner shown as wooded. By the 1920s (OS) this belt was substantially reduced and nothing remains today. The lake survives at the north-west corner of the park.

A mound, c. 375m west of the house, adjoining the Buckingham Road, may be the remains of a C17 windmill. This mill was mentioned in a grant of land dated 1692 and a windmill is shown on the 1802 pre-enclosure map of Weedon, albeit on the other side of the road. However, the layout of the Buckingham Road was changed in the time of Lord Nugent, when improvements were made to Hardwick Bridge (*RECs. Bucks*, 2008).

South-east of the former main drive there is a level area used for the Buckinghamshire County Show and is mainly grass, with the remains of isolated tree roundels. It is divided into equally sized northern and southern sections by a fence and the southern section is further subdivided with a small field to the east (OS 1870s; 1920s). By the 1870s (OS) more extensive tree planting was grouped at the western end and to the south of the Lodge gates, with roundels in the southern section and more isolated roundels to the north. The far south western corner was heavily wooded. The 1870s parish survey refers to the landscaping

of the park, which may survive in existing field names. The northern section of this area being called Middle Park and the south western The Park. The planting in the northern section has been considerably thinned out, though there are signs of some roundels remaining and of tree planting in the far south western corner.

At the northern boundary, between the north road to Weedon and the north-east drive to the house a wooded area slopes down to the road. A path leads south down this wood towards Hardwick Church from where the drives meet, 80m north-west of the house and was wooded in the late C19 and early C20 (OS 1870 and 1920s). Remains survive of stone and concrete structures and a water tank: the site of a gasometer serving the OS map, together with an access path. By 1900 (OS) the structure had expanded. The concrete water tank is spring fed, it seems and was perhaps a source of water for the house. The 1813 map shows a pond in this area, as do subsequent maps. What appears to be the remains of a former gas light stands at the entrance to the drive, by Lilies Farm.

Adjoining to the east is an area of open land formerly an orchard (OS 1870).

Kitchen garden

Two adjacent kitchen garden areas currently occupy the far east of the garden, running north/south next to the old garden wall on the eastern boundary alongside Weedon High Street. They are marked in this form on the 1870 OS and on the 1869 working plan.

The more northerly of these two areas is quartered by brick walls on four sides as per the late C19 (OS). This area may have been used to grow cut flowers for the house, as it retains the heat such as to make vegetable growing difficult (pers. com. Head Gardener 15 December 2014). The entrance is from a door on the west side from the house and garden, with doors to the north and south. There is a door to Weedon High Street on the east side, but it is accessed to the north of the walled garden area. No other garden structures survive, though in the late C19 and early C20 a group of garden buildings stood in the north-east corner. (OS 1870 and 1920). The area contains a swimming pool (NW), vegetable plot (NE), tennis court (SW) and grass (SE). The north wall is flanked by yew hedges.

To the south is a larger area, partially walled along the east boundary with Weedon High Street. It was probably the productive garden complimenting the flower garden in the area to the north. It is now a flower meadow with grass paths and young trees and espaliered fruit trees round the walls.

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Maps

Robert Morden 1695

1802 Weedon pre-enclosure map (CBS)

Bryant, Map of Bucks, 1824

Plan of Lilies garden and park 1869 (CBS)

Ordnance Survey

1813/14 Ordnance Surveyor's Drawing (BL)

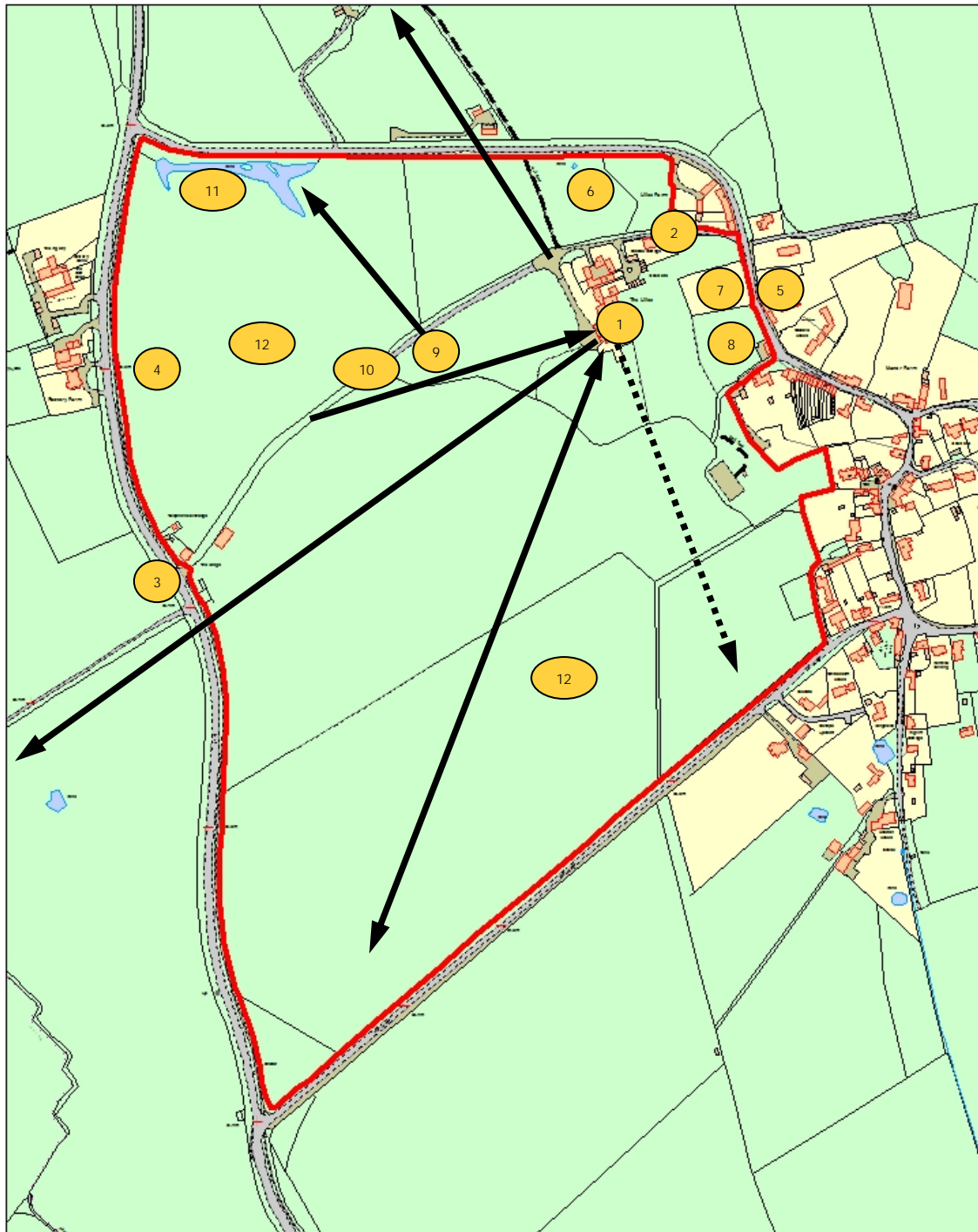
1870s first edition 25"

1900 second edition 6"

1920s 6"

G Grocott, J Stansfield March 2015, edited SR 19 September 2015

KEY HISTORIC FEATURES & VIEWS



Scale: 1:4,684 at A4



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Key to numbered features

1. Lilies House	2. Present main entrance
3. C19 main entrance and lodge	4. Windmill stump
5. Garden wall	6. Gasometer site
7. Walled kitchen garden	8. Unwalled kitchen garden
9. Grove of Friendship	10. Main park drive (disused)
11. Park pond	12. Park