

Understanding Historic Parks and Gardens in Buckinghamshire

The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust Research & Recording Project



Manor House (Brooke House), Princes Risborough

June 2015



Bucks Gardens Trust



Association of
Gardens
Trusts



HISTORIC SITE BOUNDARY



Princes Risborough Manor: boundary of historic designed landscape interest

Produced by the County Archaeological Service
April 2015

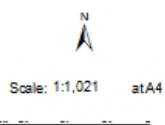


Scale: 1:1,393 at A4

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Princes Risborough Manor: 2008 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 principal views and features.

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

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

Supporters and Acknowledgements

The project was supported by The 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	MANOR HOUSE (FORMERLY BROOKE HOUSE), PRINCES RISBOROUGH BCC HER 0097602000
DISTRICT:	WYCOMBE	
PARISH:	PRINCES RISBOROUGH	
OS REF.:	SP80650352	

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Overview: A substantial Chiltern town garden space within the Saxon core of a medieval town, near the market square, and with a close relationship with the medieval church, Black Prince's manor and moated deer park, and its own former farmstead. The site has been a domestic one since the C16 and possibly before, and contains medieval features from the town's wider history. Still including both house and garden, the site survives largely intact, and represents a typical modest town manor house garden. Its four surviving compartments (front garden; 'best', or walled garden; orchard; and yard) were present in the C19, but, as compartments are typical of the C17/C18, these may be a survival from earlier centuries; the site has certainly been gardened since the C17. It is a good survival of its type, and in important space within the town as one of the largest surviving garden spaces.

Archaeological interest: Considerable potential for the survival of the foundations of the medieval house, and garden features since at least the C17, such as garden paths, gazebos, walls, water features and borders; also traces of a large medieval bank forming the outer earthwork of the Black Prince's manor house and potential for further features relating to the associated moat.

Architectural interest: A typical example of a modest-sized C17 manor house with some notable features. The relationship between the surviving C17-C19 house and garden has remained intact, notably manifested in the C17/early C18 garden walls (all listed at Grade II*).

Artistic interest: The garden's four compartments are typical of its era of origin. The main views within and outside the gardens survive, including the view into the adjacent church yard. The house and garden are an important focal point within the town's historic core, as are the mature trees within the site, such yew and an evergreen oak.

Historic interest: The site is a key element of the town's historic core as the largest garden in the town, with a physical association with the Black Prince's Manor. It has strong associations with the Rothschilds, and some association with Sir Peter Lely.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Princes Risborough evolved from a small Saxon core (focused on Church Street and Church Lane) to a larger market town, initially as a result of planned medieval expansion along the High Street (Green). The evolution of the related manor(s) is less clearly delineated, due to ambiguous and ‘hopelessly confused’ (Oswald) accounts of the descent of both the ‘King’s Manor’ and the ‘Abbot’s (or Brookes) Manor’, which were sometimes united in a single (often royal) ownership, and sometimes not. The Manor House is now largely understood to have been part of the Abbot’s Manor, but not actually to have been the manor house (Oswald; Macfarlane and Kingham).

The Manor House’s location within the Saxon core of the town has strongly influenced the extent and form of its garden. The church lies immediately to the south west of the Manor House, with the moated site of the Black Prince’s stud (itself the focus of former parkland) beyond. Remains of a moat, and a former farm, are located immediately to the north west of the Manor House, and the medieval expansion of the town lies to the east and south east. As a result, the extent of the designed landscape has remained reasonably static, within a plot identifiable on maps since 1810 (Rutt enclosure map).

A house (known as Brooke House) was first referred to on this site in 1589. The site was bought by Joan Chibnall and Vincent Barry (the steward of the King's Manor) in 1624, and the name confirmed in her will in 1649. By this time, however, architectural evidence suggests that the current house was in existence, having been constructed for Mrs Chibnall between 1630 and 1650 from the bones of – and possibly on the plan of – the earlier house (Pevsner; Oswald; Matthews). It was subsequently owned (but probably not occupied) by the painter Sir Peter Lely, and then the Penton family between 1692 and 1808. By 1824 it was lived in by Mr Grace, Steward to Lord Hampden (*The Mirror*, July 10 1824), but by 1862 was in a ‘very neglected condition’ (Sheahan). By the 1880s, when it was purchased (along with the neighbouring farm) by Nathan Mayer Rothschild, it was only partly occupied (the remainder being used for storing grain) and in a ‘sadly dilapidated condition’ (Oswald). The house was refurbished by the Rothschilds, and, after the death of Lord Rothschild’s son Nathaniel Charles, passed to the National Trust in 1925; since then it has been leased to a range of tenants.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

The small market town of Princes Risborough lies midway between the larger Buckinghamshire towns of Aylesbury (14 km to the north), and High Wycombe (14 km to the south), on the A4010. Within Princes Risborough, the 0.6 ha site lies to the north west of the High Street, which runs parallel to the A4010. The Manor House occupies the south eastern corner of a broadly rectangular plot, aligned broadly west-east, with a walled, western frontage to Church Lane. The western portion of the site’s northern boundary is defined by the farm buildings originally associated with the Manor House (now in separate residential ownership); the eastern portion of this boundary abuts a Tesco supermarket and car park (built 1996). To the east, the site is bounded by the rear of the commercial properties which front Duke Street (an extension of the High Street), whilst the

southern, walled boundary abuts modern (mid-1980s) residential and retail development, on the site of a former factory, which itself replaced an early C19 malthouse and brewery.

Princes Risborough stands 100-140m above sea level at the northern end of one of only a few gaps in the Chiltern hills (the Chiltern escarpment rises steeply from the east of the town to a height of approximately 250 metres); the site itself is broadly flat. Geologically, Princes Risborough is very much a part of the Chilterns, lying on chalk, though very close to the boundary with gault clay, immediately to the north, which has been a source of the characteristic local bricks and tiles; flint deposits have also provided a local building material. The subsoil in the area is chalk, with clay surface soils away from the hills.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The site is approached from Church Lane (a private road off Church Street, itself leading off the High Street). The main (pedestrian) access to the house and small front garden is through crescent wooden gates, 10m from the entrance to Church Lane. Immediately at the entrance to Church Lane is a wooden gate in a slightly recessed portion of the wall, giving pedestrian access to the yard to the south of the house. Further down Church Lane, at the end of the walled garden, is a large wooden double gate of plain modern design, serving a large brick-built garage at the rear of the walled garden (1994 leasehold particulars).

PRINCIPAL BUILDING

The Manor House (listed Grade II*) is on the site of an earlier house (first referred to, as Brooke House, in 1589). This earlier house was replaced by the current house in the mid/late C17 (also called Brooke House, until the late C19), although some elements of the plan form suggest the reuse of part of the foundations (Matthews), and some internal features are clearly survivals from the earlier house (Oswald). The current house is 'a handsome red-brick building with pilasters and mouldings in cut and rubbed brick' (Page), and for its style and building materials is a high status building within the town, where other surviving buildings of the period are often vernacular, and timber-framed and/or use brick and flint. It was refurbished by the Rothschilds in the 1880s, and altered for the National Trust in 1926 (Oswald). It has 'slightly later rear wings' (list entry; Pevsner), and a conservatory on the north east corner added in the early 1990s, with direct access on to the rear garden.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

The gardens associated with the Manor House have four main components, each broadly rectangular: the small front garden, to the west of the house, fronting Church Lane; the walled garden to the north west of the house, also fronting Church Lane; the former orchard, to the rear (east) of the house; and the yard to the south of the house.

The front garden has a central path of local Denner Hill setts from the gate to the front door of the Manor House, with lawns to either side, and peripheral tree and shrub planting. The northern boundary is marked by the wall of the adjoining walled garden, to which there is access through a

wooden gate. The wall fronting Church Lane here is C17/early C18, in English bond with moulded plinth and pitched coping, ramped down to the front (list entry); the brick gate piers (topped with stone ball finials) were rebuilt in 1982 (*ibid.*).

The wall continues in slightly changed form up Church Lane, to define the boundary of the walled side garden to the north west of the house, terminating in the former barn (albeit interrupted by the large gate serving the garage in the walled garden); the eastern boundary of this part of the garden is also walled, with arched gateways to the rest of the garden (1994 leasehold particulars). The walls are early C18, irregularly bonded (list entry). The walled garden, laid primarily to lawn, is accessed via French windows from the Drawing Room (1994 leasehold particulars): this is the garden front of the house, overlooking the 'best' garden. In 1967, this garden was known to contain 'a magnificent evergreen oak' (1967 leasehold particulars), which appears to be extant. The garden is first shown as walled in the first edition 6" OS map (1880s).

Map evidence suggests that the rear (eastern) garden was formerly an orchard, from at least the 1870s until the 1960s (OS; 1967 leasehold particulars). There is now (2015) a hard tennis court at the rear of this part of the garden (granted planning permission in 1998), aligned north east-south west. A watching brief over the tennis court construction (NT 1998), which removed topsoil to a depth of 0.5m, identified brick foundations for a small building, probably of C19 origin (pers. comm. G Marshall, National Trust, 27 April 2015). A swimming pool dug north-east of the walled garden c.2006-07 has since gone. The tennis court lies immediately to the north of the site of a large bank identified in the 1989 National Trust Survey (Matthews), which was described as being 5-6m wide and 30m long, with a north west-south east alignment, and believed to be part of the outer earthwork of the Black Prince's manor house. It is not clear whether this survived the construction of the swimming pool. Various smaller structures in this part of the garden include a late C20 detached garden shed/boiler house on the south east boundary. To the south of the house is a small yard, surrounded by a modern brick wall. The boundaries of the whole garden are well treed.

The area to the north of the western part of the former orchard (to the east of the former farm buildings), containing the remains of two sides of the Black Prince's deep moat to the north and east (Page; Grubb map; OS maps), was part of the land associated with the Manor House until the 1960s. It is shown as an area of watercress beds on maps from the C19 until the 1960s (Rothschild archive map; OS maps). The water course survives, though now (2015) identified on OS maps as a pond and spring, and is one of the various sources of water in the town that results from being on the chalk aquifer and spring line (a covered, disused well is described in the main gardens in the 1994 leasehold particulars). This land now serves as the rear gardens to the residential properties in the converted farm buildings, and is not part of the defined area of designed landscape interest.

PARK

The Manor House has never had its own park, but lies within the area contained by the outer moat of the Black Prince's former manor house and medieval deer park (Matthews; Cantor and Hatherly), which has influenced both the extent and some of the features within the garden.

KITCHEN GARDEN

There is no particular evidence of a kitchen garden at the Manor House, but there was an orchard in the rear garden, as discussed above.

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IMAGES

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MAPS

1810 Rutt Enclosure Map (CBS IR.22.2R)

1823 Grubb Map (CBS MA 257)

Post-1866 Rothschild Archive map: plan of properties at Princes Risborough (H+J M37)

Rothschild Archive map (H+J 13/37)

Ordnance Survey

6" to 1 mile:	1st edition, 1880s
	2nd edition, 1900
	1920s
	1960s

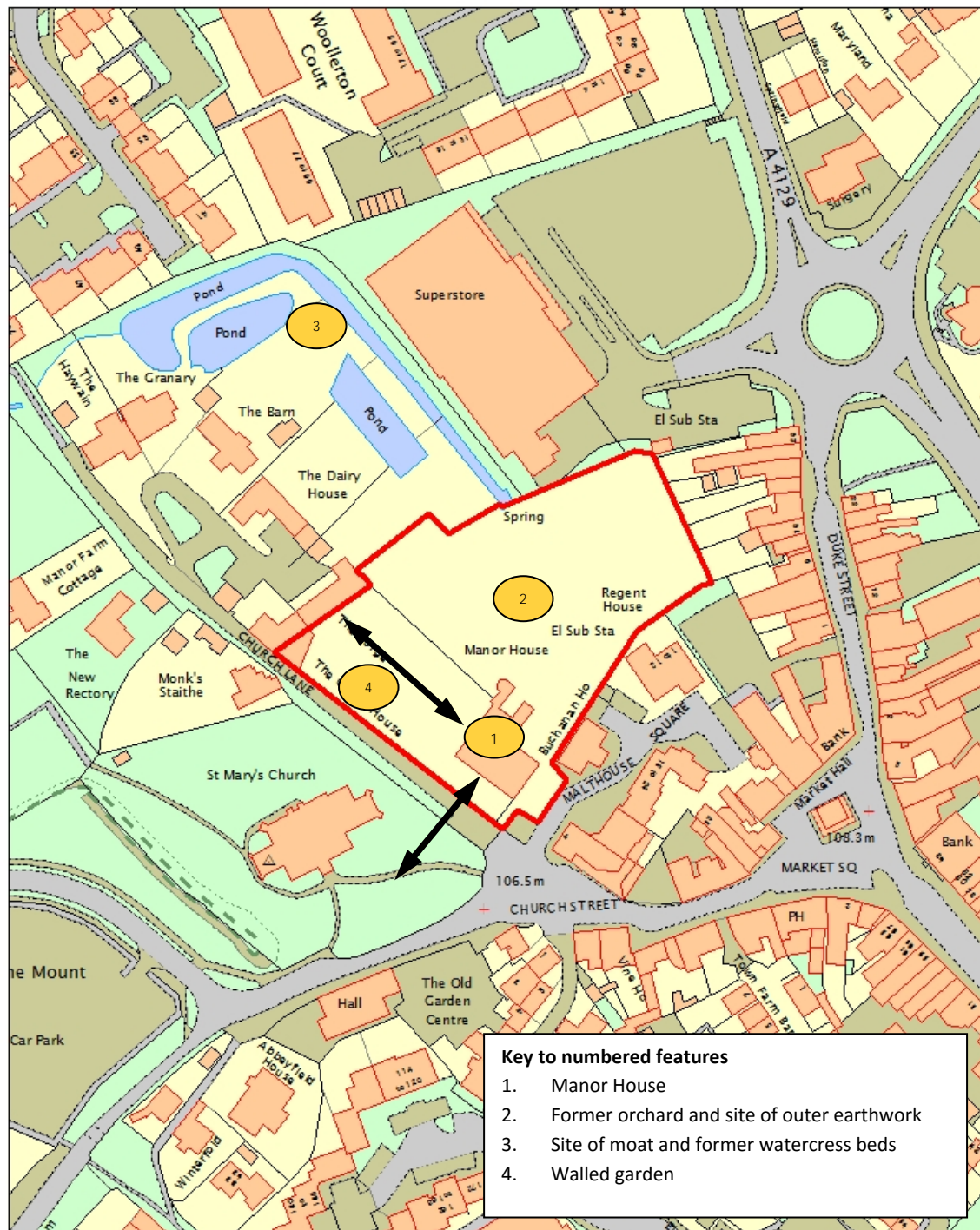
25" to 1 mile:	1st edition, 1870s
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1: 10,000:	1970s-80s
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KEY HISTORIC VIEWS & FEATURES



Princes Risborough Manor: boundary of historic designed landscape interest

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