

Understanding Historic Parks and Gardens in Buckinghamshire

The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust Research & Recording Project



PEDNOR HOUSE

December 2016



Bucks Gardens Trust

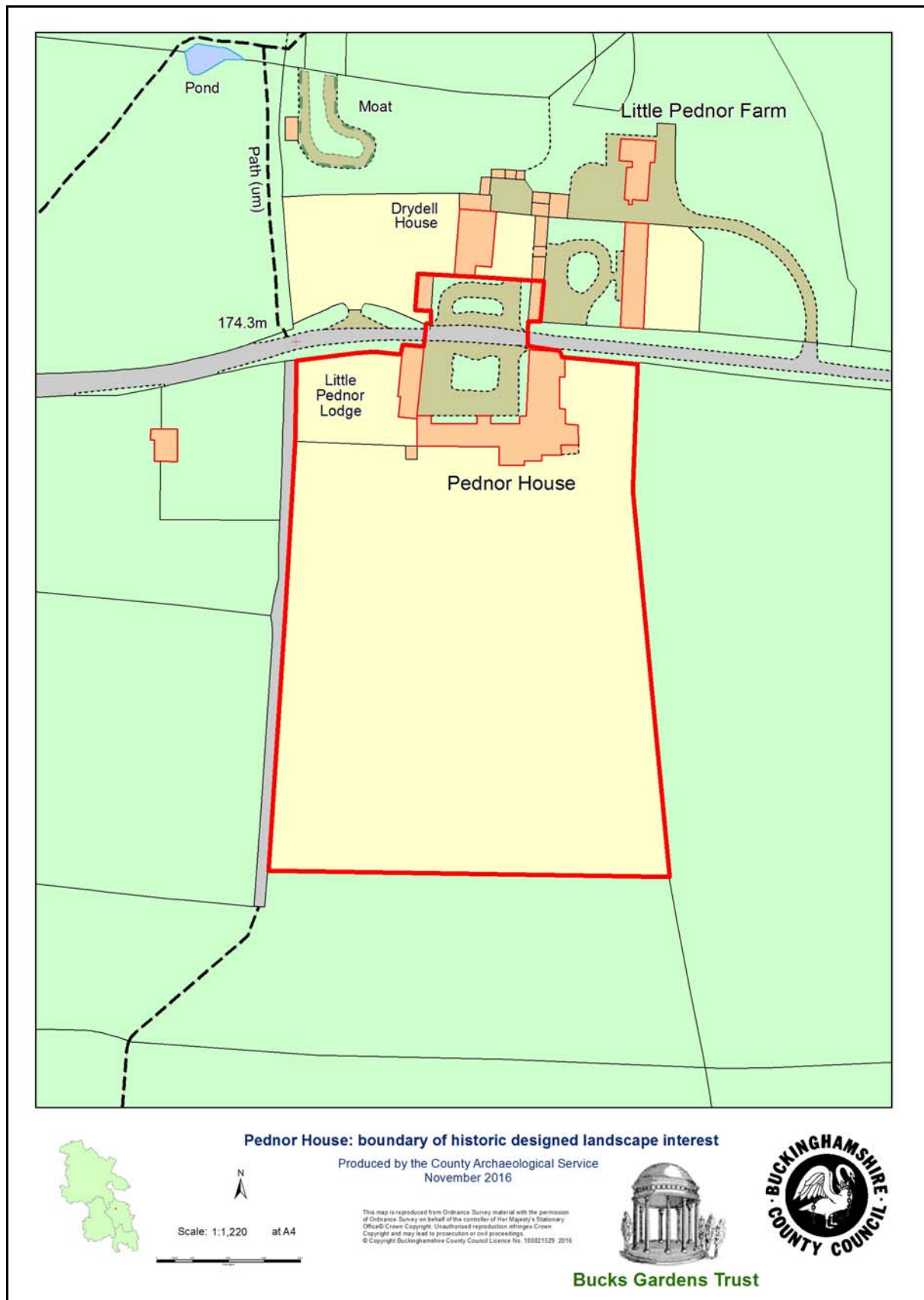


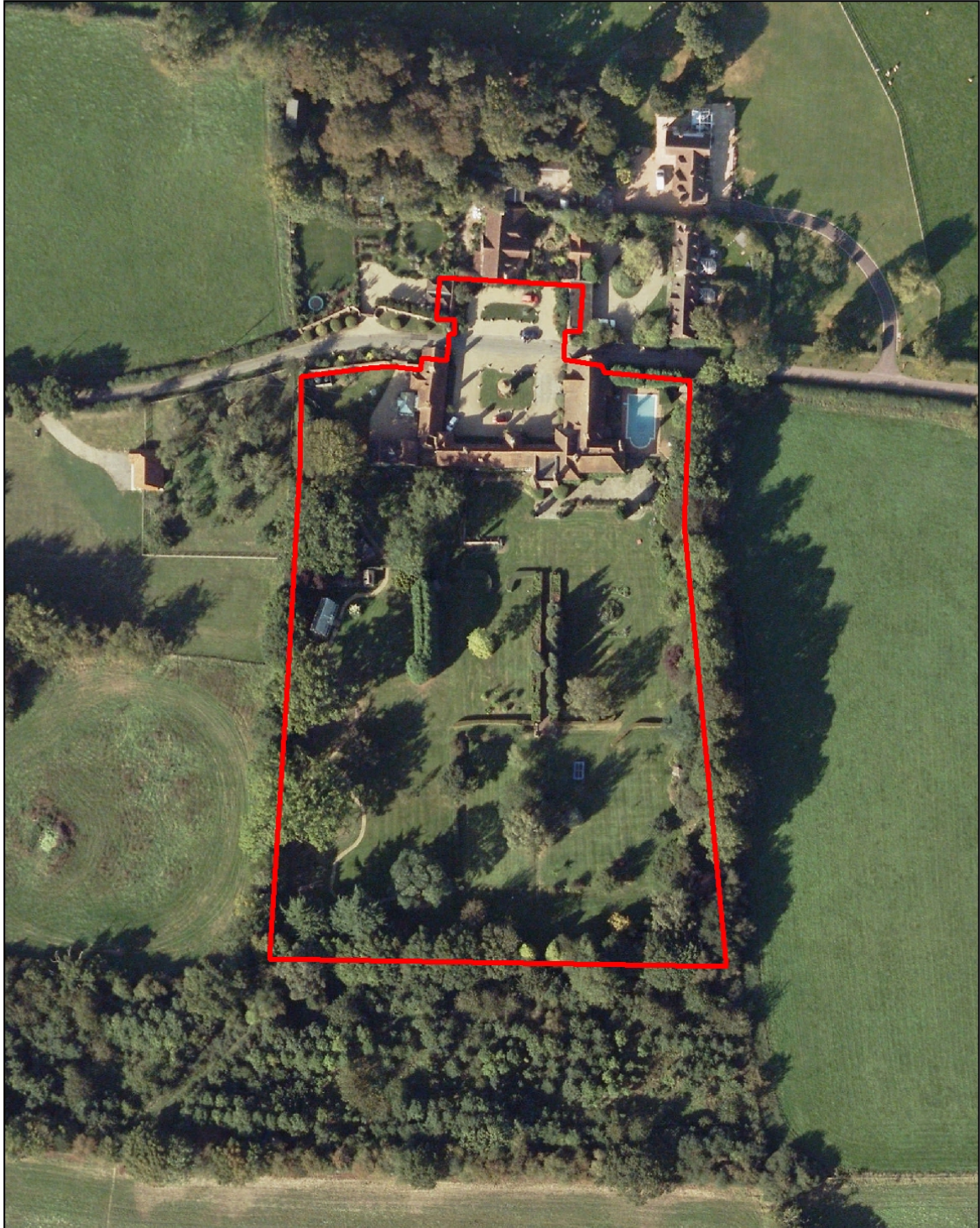
The Finnis Scott
Foundation



The Stanley Smith (UK) Horticultural Trust

HISTORIC SITE BOUNDARY





Scale: 1:1,220 at A4



Pednor House: 2008 aerial photograph

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Produced by the County Archaeological Service
November 2016



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 (now Historic England) (BCC Report No. 508). The list is not definitive 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/Historic England 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 Historic England *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 Gardens Trust (formerly the Association of Gardens Trusts and the Garden History Society) and funded by BGT with significant grants from the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust and the Finnis Scott Foundation. BCC generously provided current and historic mapping and access to the Historic Environment Record.

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

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

COUNTY	BUCKINGHAMSHIRE	PEDNOR HOUSE BCC HER 1240304000
DISTRICT	CHILTERN	
PARISH	CHARTRIDGE	
OS REF	SP 925 027	

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Overview

A country house and gardens developed 1911-12 in the Arts and Crafts style by architect Edwin Forbes, incorporating and sensitively converting existing farm buildings, with some areas possibly planned by Gertrude Jekyll, including in 1919. The focus of the design is the forecourt and its approaches via the public lane which bisects it, enclosed by the house and former service buildings. The complex use of materials, particularly brick, in the forecourt and related structures is of particular note. The layout remains largely intact.

Archaeological interest

Archaeological potential north of the historic boundary focusses on a nearby medieval farmstead and moat, designated a Scheduled Monument. Within the garden is the potential for lost garden features such as paths, the kitchen garden, walls and other structures.

Architectural interest

A group of buildings for a country house based on a remodelled farmstead, of which the Arts and Crafts elements of 1911-12 by Edwin Forbes of Forbes and Tate are the key architectural feature. This is particularly sensitive design in an area of outstanding beauty, the work involved the firing of special hand-made window mullion bricks. The original brickworks were traced and an original mould from 1910 survives. The ensemble is noted as 'A remarkably successful enlargement of some farmbuildings to make a formal composition round the south side of a large oblong courtyard, through which runs the public road' (Pevsner, 1994). This was the practice's most extensive and successful conversion, turning farm buildings into a picturesque Tudor courtyard house.

The house incorporates a central tower which offers roof access with views of the garden and surrounding landscape. The dovecote dominating the forecourt is the focal point of the approach via two pairs of fine brick gate piers flanking the road and nearby gateways. Ornamental elements of the C20 garden design include a raised terrace, with steps down to a lawn, a loggia and a walled garden.

Artistic interest

A country house garden laid out 1911-12 probably by Edwin Forbes as part of the remodelling of this house. While the garden incorporates features typical of the Arts and Crafts movement including a terrace and loggia, it is the forecourt including gate piers, walls, gateways along the lane and a dovecote which is the most impressive feature. An undated planting plan survives for a circular sundial garden designed by Gertrude Jekyll (1919), who was also asked to suggest planting for a small paved area, although the extent to which her work was executed is unclear. Some mature trees including oaks predate this phase.

Historic interest

The property was the home of Hermione, Countess of Ranfurly, OBE, (née Llewellyn 1913–2001), the author of *To War With Whitaker: The Wartime Diaries of the Countess of Ranfurly, 1939–1945*. She founded the Ranfurly Library service which became Book Aid International. The documentation of the development of the garden, c.1919, includes a planting plan by Gertrude Jekyll.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In the C12 the lands at Pednor belonged to Missenden Abbey 2.5 miles to the south-west (Pastscape). The site was occupied in the medieval period as part of a moated site survives 100 yards north-west of the current house.

After the Dissolution the lands called Pednor and Sextens Croft were granted to John Lord Russell, later 1st Earl of Bedford from 1550. His principal residence was Woburn Abbey. He owned land in Amersham and a house at Chenies (his wife's property). Pednor and Sextens Croft were in the tenure of Thomas Wedon whose son, Richard Wedon purchased the freehold of Pednor Grange in 1563 (VCH). Another son, Thomas, left £500 to build and endow an Almshouse for four poor godly people in Chesham in 1624. The property of the Almshouse was 98 acres of land at Hundridge which is half a mile south of Pednor House on a parallel ridge (Sheahan).

By 1770 buildings flanked the road and the property was known as Little Pednor (Jefferys). In 1812 an area of trees occupied the area behind the buildings on the north side of the road (OSD). This was called by 1825 'Moat Wood' and the house was Pednor Farm (Bryant). By 1843 (tithe map and apportionment) Great and Little Pednor belonged to the same owners but were rented to different tenants. Little Pednor consisted of 174 acres including 3 acres of 'house, farm buildings, yard, garden and orchard' with the buildings located on both sides of the road.

From 1851 Edwin Birch farmed 250 acres in Chesham which in subsequent census was described as 330 acres at Little Pednor Farm until his death in 1885 (census/Lancaster).

By 1878 (OS) three square ponds were present. One abutted the west side of the house, one lay a few yards east of the house and another lay across the road to the north-east next to what is now Pednor Court. South of the house a small garden included beds in a geometric pattern. On the south-west corner of this was a small rectangular building and two tracks running in a south-east direction across the un-cultivated area of the garden, with several deciduous trees. The moat north of the road was mapped for the first time.

By 1900 a large part of the moat gone. Fewer trees stood south of the main house with five in a quinquex pattern. The tracks had disappeared (OS).

The main developments to the house and garden took place after 1910 when Claud Lawrence owned the house (Kelly/Weaver). In 1911-12 the architect Edwin Forbes of Forbes and Tate extended and redesigned the C17 farmhouse and attached farm buildings to make a larger house in the Arts and Crafts style (Pevsner). An ornate circular dovecote was erected as the focus of the

forecourt between the house and the lane and elaborate round gate piers were built flanking the lane at the east and west entrances to the forecourt.

By 1919 Henry Harrington was the owner for a short period. In November 1919 Forbes had apparently been carrying out additional work around the house, for he wrote to Gertrude Jekyll requesting from her a 'scheme and estimate for supplying plants to grow in the joints of the [?stonework]' for the terrace and steps leading to the Rose Garden. He enclosed two copies of a plan, one for her use and for his. The terrace wall was 2'6" high and of solid brick work. This plan survives but remains unannotated by Jekyll, suggesting that she did not supply a scheme. He added a request for, 'Naturally very low things and for all year round.' Miss Jekyll did, however, supply a planting plan for a circular Sundial Garden, but the date of this is unclear. It may be from the 1911-12 remodelling of the house or from 1919. The plans and letter are in the Jekyll Collection at the University of Berkeley, California (microfilm copies at the Historic England Archives). It is unclear whether these plans were executed (Kelly/Lancaster).

From 1927 to 1947 the house was owned by Robert Scott Sligh (or Sleigh). He added a 'fortified' tower to the south elevation and a coat of arms said to be of the Sleigh family. Few changes occurred between 1900 and 1945 (OS). In 1933 a serious fire destroyed two cottages, two dairies, a mixing shed, stables and outhouses, but the main house survived.

During World War II Pednor House was requisitioned and housed the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital for Pregnant Mothers. Robert Sligh had died in 1939 and in 1947 his executors put the estate up for sale, price 2,000 guineas (Lancaster/Knight Frank & Rutley). The estate was bought by Lord and Lady Ranfurly who lived there until 1964 (Hermione diaries, p 274).

By the 1950s (OS) an extension closed the south-west corner of the house. The field west of the house was incorporated. The name of the house had been changed to Pednor House Farm. Lord Ranfurly built a house for his farm manager across the road, Little Pednor Farm (Caroline Simmonds, daughter, Lancaster). The barns which are now called Drydell House were milking sheds supplying the family with milk, cream and butter. The swimming pool was added in the 1950s (Lancaster). In 1964 the Ranfurlys sold the estate in lots and bought Great Pednor 1/3 mile to the north-west for £36,500 (Hermione diaries, pp 274, 358). The sales particulars for the Pednor House Estate describe 'Easily maintained garden including kitchen garden and orchard. Swimming pool and hard tennis court. Garages, Bailiff's house, 2 cottages, Home Farm, Little Hundridge Farm, Total 337 acres.' (Lancaster/Knight Frank and Rutley). The estate was sold in lots and Pednor House was reduced to 14 acres. The site remains in private ownership, the current owner having purchased it in 1998.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM AND SETTING

The 1.5ha rectangular site lies in a hamlet in the parish of Chartridge set on one of a series of parallel ridges which gently descend in a south-easterly direction to the valley of the River Chess. The site lies 1 mile south-west of the village of Chartridge and 2.5 miles west-north-west of Chesham in the Chiltern Hills.

The garden is located on a very gentle south-facing slope in this undulating chalky area of the Chilterns at c.200m elevation. The garden lies south of the house, set in a rural landscape with large fields mainly used for pasture. It lies south of Little Pednor Farm and the adjacent moated site (SAM).

The northern boundary runs along the narrow Drydell Lane, and is marked by the wings of the house, brick piers flanking the road and the gravelled forecourt. Both the west and east boundaries south of the house consist of tall brick walls c37m long, which are interrupted by gateways. The wide gateway in the western wall gives access to the field and the footpath west of the garden. An isolated former gateway consisting of brick pillars stands near the eastern boundary about halfway along the garden, detached from the present boundary. Its role is unclear. The other boundaries to west, south and east are fenced and planted with mixed deciduous and coniferous trees of various ages.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

Drydell Lane gives access from the east and west north of Pednor House. It separates Pednor House from Little Pednor Farm which was formerly part of the estate. The eastern and western entrances are marked by pairs of circular brick-built gate piers (listed Grade II), flanking the road. The piers are decorated with three courses of coggled bricks at intervals. These piers are each surmounted by staggered courses to form a dome. These piers give access to the former farmyard on the north side of the lane, which was incorporated at the same time as an ornamental yard enclosed by the former motor house and brick walls. North of these piers two brick gateways are set back off the lane into brick walls which flank the lane and are apparently contemporary. The north gateway has unusual battered piers with arched, tiled tops, and the south gateway has a brick overthrow.

South of the road the rectangular, gravelled forecourt is enclosed on three sides by the house with a central lawn panel on which stands the dovecote. Beyond this is the entrance to the house towards the centre of the south range. The two sets of piers stand c.30m apart, marking the width of the forecourt. High brick walls unite the south piers with the wings of the house. The ensemble was designed by Edwin Forbes of Forbes and Tate c.1911-12 (Pevsner).

The large, circular brick-built dovecote (Forbes, listed Grade II) stands c.10m north of the front door. It has a conical tiled roof topped with a weather vane, spaces in the brickwork in a series of diamond-shaped patterns, and a circular perching ledge. The wooden door in the north side faces the road. It is surrounded by a circular clipped hedge and several staddle stone bases.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING

Pednor House (listed Grade II) stands centrally towards the north end of the site. It comprises several adjacent buildings from a variety of periods and includes a number of styles of construction. It takes the form of an elongated U-shape with the east and west wings projecting north to the roadside and flanking the forecourt and dovecote.

The central range is set back c.20m south of the road, and is built of brick with clay tiled hipped roofs, moulded brick window surrounds, mullions, transoms and other features. The centre of the north elevation has a two-storey projection with a small domed cupola on the ridge. The east wing which was formerly the barn has a long sweeping roof with windows on the ground floor. Internally it is a two-storey high room. The west wing is a single-storey cottage.

The garden front, in the central range, faces south and has a projection just off centre with an octagonal turret and a stone 'Tudor' arched entrance probably added in the 1920s. The east corner comprises a brick columned loggia, accessible from both the house and garden, which was part of the 1911-12 design.

Pednor House was built in the C17 as a timber-framed farmhouse with associated farm buildings. It was enlarged in c.1911-12 (Pevsner) in the Arts and Crafts style by the architects, Forbes and Tate and the barn and outbuildings were incorporated into the main building to form three sides of the forecourt. On the north side of the road the old cow sheds and dairy were converted into the motor house and engine room in c.1911-12 (Pevsner) forming the fourth side to the forecourt but these are now in separate ownership and have been rebuilt to form a domestic dwelling (Drydell House).

The 1947 sales particulars described the house as dating from the C16, by the 1940s with 11 bedrooms, 5 bathrooms electric light, central heating, charming old gardens, model home farm buildings, C18 farmhouse and buildings, 3 cottages and 125 acres.' Price 20,000 guineas'. (Lancaster/Knight, Frank & Rutley).

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

The c.1 ha. gardens lie south of the house with an additional small area to the east where the swimming pool is located. The gardens are accessed by several doors on the south, garden front which lead onto a York Stone terrace. The terrace runs east along the south elevation from the 'Tudor' doorway around the loggia on the south-east corner of the house to the swimming pool on the east front. The main feature is the integral Loggia, which was constructed c.1911-12 with the remodelling of the house (Pevsner). It has a round brick column at each end against the house, and an additional column midway along the south side, and the open corner has three round brick columns which support black painted wooden beams. The floor has quarry-tiling. A wisteria up the south wall of the house overhangs the loggia.

Beyond the loggia, the east garden lies below the east wing, dominated by a central swimming pool set in lawn and York Stone paving. This occupies the site of the former sunk garden, described in 1914 as unplanted (Weaver). By then, on the east side of the house was 'a round pool with a paved margin set in the middle of a square sunk garden as yet unfurnished with flowers. When its retaining walls are gay with saxifrages, veronica and aubrietia they will make a delightful frame to the present paving and the coming turf.....The terraces are of random, or, as it is sometimes called, "crazy paving"; but this treatment has been rather overdone' (Weaver, 74-75). The crazy paving has been replaced by York Stone.

At the east end of the south terrace, in front of the loggia, semi-circular steps lead down to the lawn and a low raised flowerbed on the south side of the terrace containing lavender and box balls. This has a 60cm high brick wall behind it with flagstones on top, with roses planted on the lawn side. On the south terrace, west of the Tudor-style door, a red brick path leads west for c.50m alongside a narrow border between the path and the house. This path passes through a metal gate in a brick and flint wall and then becomes flagstones before returning to brick construction, terminating at a gate in the western boundary. South of the path at its west end is a mature oak and a few fruit trees. The

brick and flint wall extends south at right angles to the house for 13m and then turns at a right angle to extend east for 9m before coming to an abrupt end.

The garden is predominantly laid to lawn and bounded by a mixture of mature trees including hawthorn, yew, lime and holly. Two pairs of isolated brick gate piers stand near along the east boundary but their purpose is unclear.

A central brick path c.40m long starts 20m south of the house. The path was formerly edged with conifer trees (AP2008, Hamptons Sale Cat.) the current owner has replaced these with a pergola of stone effect pillars and wooden cross beams, planted with various climbers such as roses and wisteria and edged with box with perennials planted along the base. East of this path a recent circular pond has a central fountain encompassed by a rose border. West of the path is a hedged area containing a recent reconstruction of the design provided by Gertrude Jekyll for a Sundial Garden.

The central path culminates in steps down to a further lawn, planted with a few trees including two silver birches and a goat willow. This lawn was previously two tennis courts, one grass and one hard. At the south-west corner a roundel of Robinia trees is encircled by a gravel path which then winds its way northwards back towards the west end of the house. Mature trees along its route include a copper beech and two mature oaks, one with a girth of 5.5m.

KITCHEN GARDEN

There is no kitchen garden (2016). It was formerly sited c.25m south-west of the house and was contained within the main garden (AP 1948, 1985). It was 20m by 25m and fenced with wire netting and contained a small shed, C20 glasshouse and cold frames (Lancaster aerial photos). In 1964 the kitchen garden was still in use (Lancaster) and in 1985 (A.P.). West of the lawn is a C21 greenhouse on the site of the former kitchen garden.

West of the house, beyond the public footpath (outside the historic boundary) is an orchard and fenced paddock, containing a small barn/stable.

FORBES & TATE, AND MISS JEKYLL

Pevsner (1994) tells us that one of the busiest architects in Buckinghamshire in the 1900s was James Edwin Forbes who had a partnership with James Duncan Tate as Forbes & Tate. Forbes's *magnum opus* was Pollard's Park House, Chalfont St Giles (1907), a Lutyensesque house similar to Lutyens's Berrydown (Hants, 1897), both for the same owner. Forbes designed other houses in the same tract of woodland, including the cottagey Pollardswood Grange with a thatched gatehouse. They were particularly active in converting existing old buildings to houses, with Pednor House (1911-12) being their most extensive and successful. In 1919 they made a medieval hall-house, Baylin's Farm, Beaconsfield into a retreat for London furniture store owner Ambrose Heal. Barn conversion, as at Pednor, has a longer history than one might imagine: barns became golf clubs (Denham, c.1916) and houses (Burnham 1922; Chesham Bois 1928).

Although so often associated with the architect Sir Edwin Lutyens, the Surrey-based Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932) worked with nearly 50 other architects including prominent names such as Forbes and Tate. 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, Great Missenden (architects Adams and Holden, 1909), Lillingstone House (1910), Chalfont Park (architect Lutyens, 1912), Fulmer Court (1913), Bramleys, Great Missenden (architect E Willmott, 1913), Orchards, Little Kingshill (1914), Little Halings, Denham (1927, architect W Sarel), Willowbrook, Eton (1927, Lutyens), Ponds, Seer Green (1928).

As at Pednor, it was common for her to provide planting plans without having visited the site, based on information and plans supplied by the architects. Unusually, there was a lapse of some 7-8 years between Forbes's main commission for the house and his request to Miss Jekyll for her suggestions in the garden, which was for a subsequent owner. Again, as at Pednor, it was common for her to provide planting schemes for particular parts of a garden, as also happened in Bucks for a sunken garden at Lillingstone House (1910) and in 1927 for a border alongside a sunken garden at Little Halings, Denham.

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Maps

- Jeffreys, T. *Map of the County of Buckinghamshire surveyed in 1776-1768* (1770)
- Bryant, A. *A Map of the County of Buckinghamshire... in the year 1824* (1825)
- Ordnance Surveyor's Drawing 2":1 mile 1812 (BL)
- Ordnance Survey
- 25" to 1 mile 1877
- 6" to 1 mile 1st Edition 1882
- 6" to 1 mile 2nd Edition 1900
- 6" to 1 mile 3rd Edition 1925

Illustrations (Bucks County Council HER)

- 1947, 1948 aerial photos

1985, 1999, 2003, 2008 Bucks county survey aerial photos

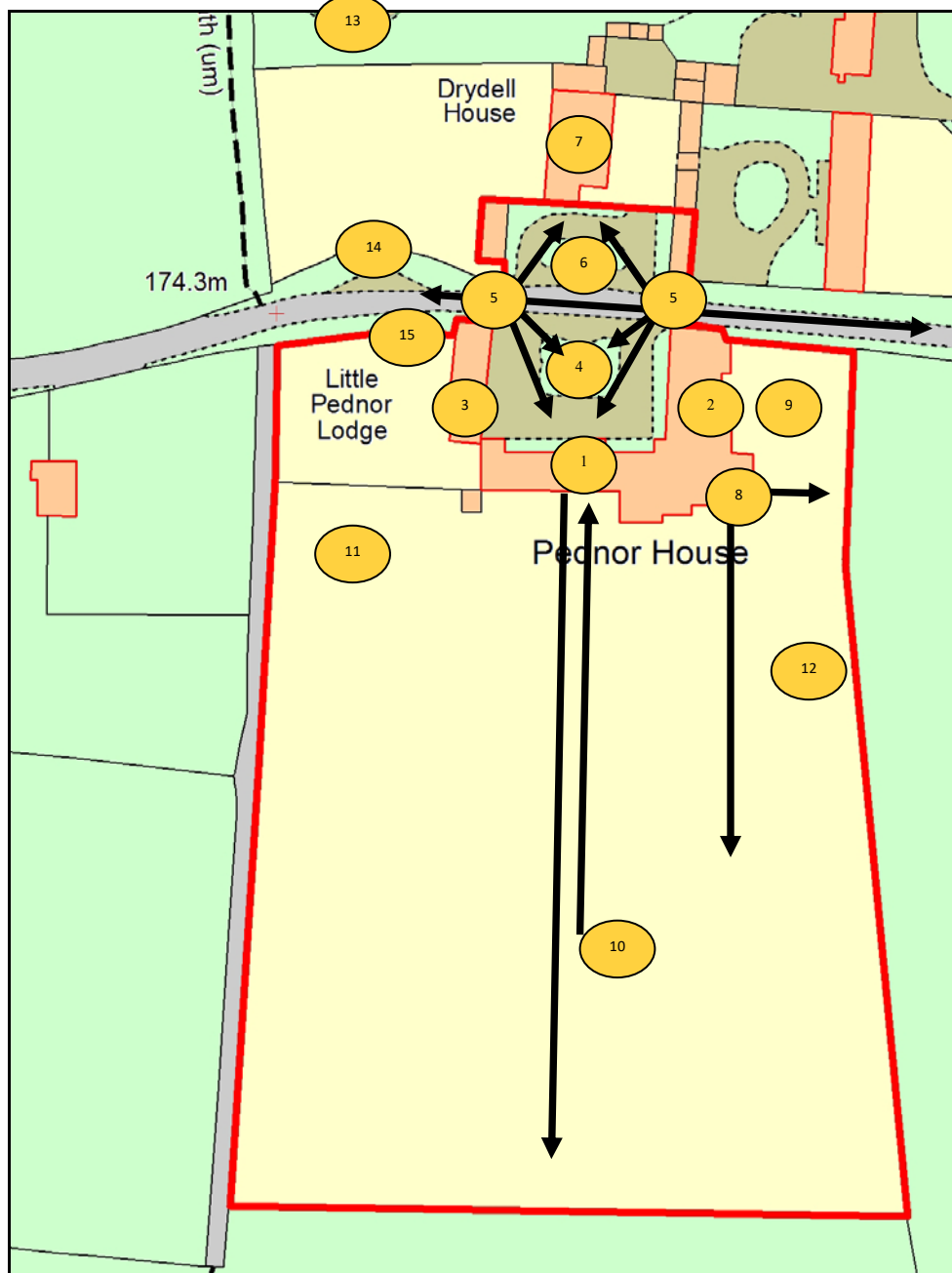
Archival Material

Plans and a letter in the University of Berkeley Reef Point Collection of Gertrude Jekyll material (California), microfilm copies at the Historic England Archive, Swindon.

The two lots of sales particulars (1947 & 1964) are in Lancaster.

MB, SM Edited by CdeC 1 November 2016 SR 14 Nov. 16.

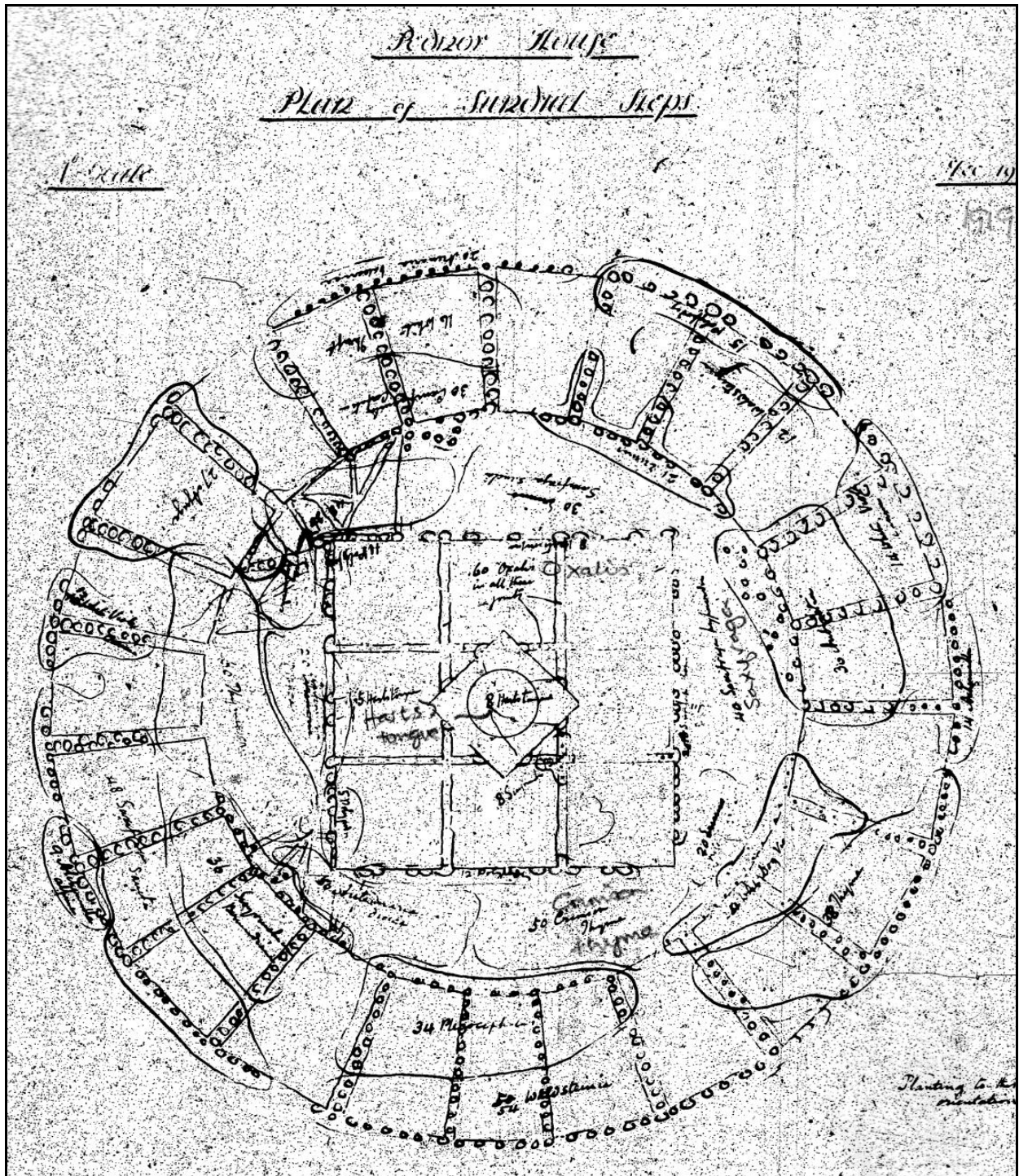
KEY HISTORIC VIEWS & FEATURES



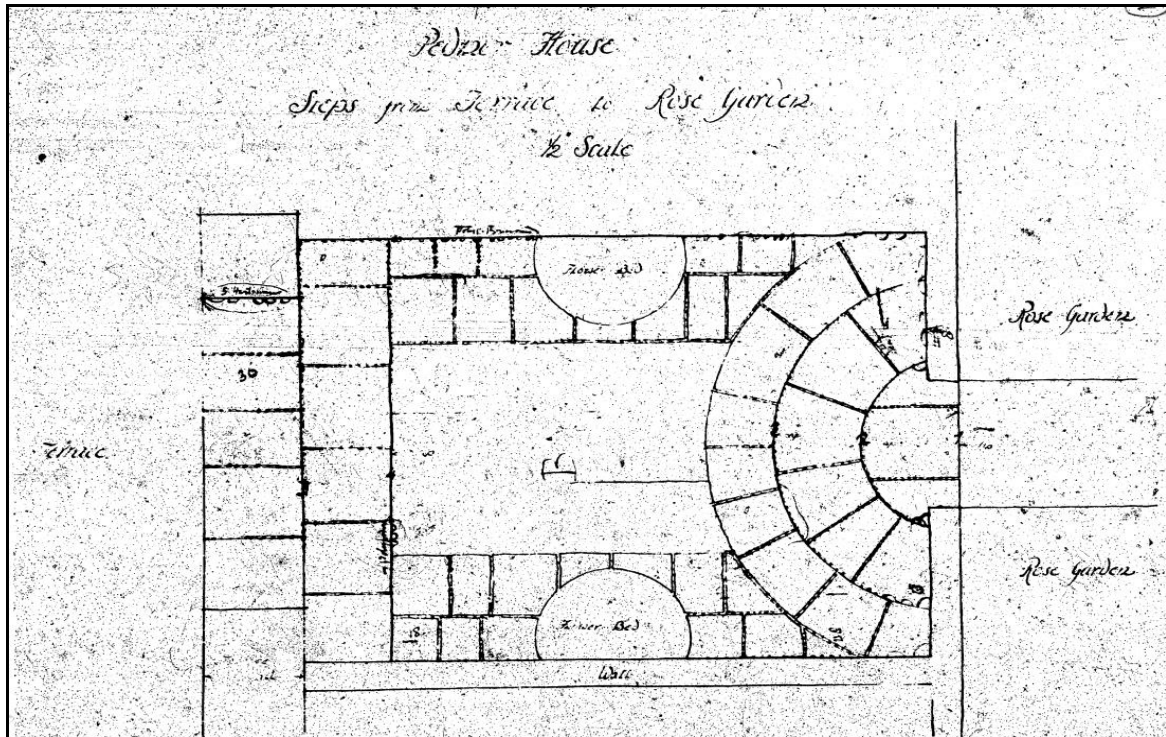
Key to numbered features

1. House – south range entrance	2. House – east range, former barn
3. House – west range, single storey	4. Dovecote in forecourt
5. Gateway piers	6. Motor court
7. Motor House (former)	8. Loggia
9. East garden – possible site of Jekyll scheme	10. Lawn, formerly tennis court
11. Site of former kitchen garden	12. Gate piers – isolated
13. Moated site	14. Gateway to former yard
15. Gateway to west garden	

IMAGES OF KEY FEATURES



Gertrude Jekyll planting plan for the 'Sundial Garden' (Historic England Archive sh. 102 no. 3)
Scheme for plants in paving.



Plan of 'Steps from Terrace to Rose Garden', Forbes and Tate sent to Gertrude Jekyll (Historic England Archive sh. 102 no. 2)



Gate piers either side of the road through the forecourt (Mary Buckle 2016)



Semi-circular steps on south-east corner of south elevation (Mary Buckle 2016)



Jekyll style sundial garden reinstated by present owner (Mary Buckle 2016)



Garden Front looking east (left); mature oak and glasshouse on site of former kitchen garden (right) (Mary Buckle 2016).



Isolated gate posts in south-eastern corner of present garden (Mary Buckle 2016)



Entrance front of house, Forbes and Tate dovecote (left); view south-west from the house (right)
(Mary Buckle 2016)



The garden front (left); view south down the central path (left); (Mary Buckle 2016)



The loggia (Mary Buckle 2016)