Understanding Historic Parks and Gardens in Buckinghamshire

The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust Research & Recording Project



Chilton House

January 2019



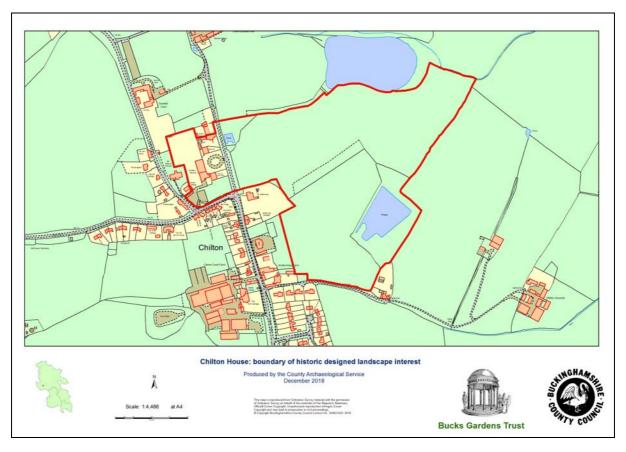


The Stanley Smith (UK) Horticultural Trust



Bucks Gardens Trust

HISTORIC SITE BOUNDARY





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 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 (now 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 English Heritage/ 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	CHILTON HOUSE
DISTRICT:	AYLESBURY VALE	
PARISH:	CHILTON	BCC HER 0404403000
OS REF:	SP 687 116	

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Overview

A garden and small park associated with a C16 manor house remodelled c.1740. With Tudor origins and mid-C18 additions including the fine forecourt (or *cour d'honneur*), the strongly compartmented garden layout incorporates earlier elements particularly the garden walls with Tudor fabric, and is the immediate setting for the notable house. The park is dominated by a mature lime avenue and contains an enigmatic formally-shaped pond of early origins that is not visible from the house or gardens. The adjacent village, wrapping around the gardens and part of the park, makes a strong contribution to the approaches and setting, particularly the church and churchyard to the wests, as does the wider rural Vale of Aylesbury setting including views eastwards to Upper Winchendon.

Archaeological interest

The potential exists for features related to the C16 elements of the H-plan house and its service buildings, also lost features of the associated C16 and later garden and park. Evidence of lost garden features may include paths, walls, several greenhouses formerly in the kitchen garden, garden buildings and the ornamental layout of parts of the gardens evident on aerial photographs. In the park the environs of the pond and avenue are of particular potential.

Architectural interest

Chilton House is a fine example of a Tudor manor house heavily remodelled and extended to its present form c.1740 echoing Buckingham House with its attached pavilions and large forecourt with ornamental stone piers and iron railings and gates as an impressive screen from the main approach. In this it has similarities with nearby Wotton House. The house survives intact. The attractive outbuildings include a stable block and barn. The mid-C18 architectural features of the forecourt framing the house and pavilions are of high quality including wing walls with niches, and the screen of iron railings and gates affording views of the park beyond. The garden walls behind the house apparently reflect elements of the layout of the Tudor compartments.

Artistic interest

A formal walled and terraced garden and small park of Tudor origins, with later alterations. The L-shaped garden wrapping around two sides of the house reflects at least in part the C16 layout of enclosures, framed by the walls with terraced ground form. The garden survives largely intact, with mature trees including yew framing terraces and informal lawns, along with the approach established it seems at least by the mid-C18. The imposing mid-C18 forecourt is at the heart of the design. The house, drive and forecourt overlook a small park containing mature specimen trees in particular a lime avenue, and a geometric pond. The pond and its original ornamental function are enigmatic, particularly as it is not visible from the house; it probably originates considerably before the C18. Broad views extend east over the Vale of Aylesbury; the house and forecourt are prominent across the falling parkland in several views from distant points to the east. The walled kitchen garden has lost the productive layout and structures, and is in part laid out with a recent design.

Historic interest

The site is a typical mid-Bucks manor with associations since the medieval period with various notable local families.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The manor of Chilton was held in the medieval period by a succession of families (*VCH*) and eventually was granted to Sir John Risley who temporarily enjoyed the profits of the property after the attainder of John, Lord Zouche following the Battle of Bosworth in 1485 (*VCH* and *Country Life* 1). The attainder was reversed in 1495 and the Zouches sold Chilton to John Croke in 1529. Croke is recorded as one of the six Clerks in Chancery and this and his other public appointments became profitable. The first house at Chilton was probably built by Croke c.1529 and the garden still 'bears the traces of the first Croke' (*Country Life* 1). The garden walls and the style of the many doorways suggest an extensive early Tudor garden. Traces of geometrical designs south and north-west of the house are evident (e.g. 2006 AP). A substantial stone gateway survived at the entrance to the drive from the village until the house was recast in the mid-C18 (*Country Life* 1).

In 1554 John Croke died. His son, Sir John I, was elected MP for Buckinghamshire in 1572 and has a fine memorial in Chilton Church. His son (Sir John II) was also an MP and was elected Speaker in 1601 and appointed Judge of the King's Bench in 1607. He died in 1608. His son, Sir John III, was MP for Oxfordshire 1614-20 and then retired to his second wife's property in Dorset. (http://historyofparliamentonline. org /volume/ 1604-1629/croke-sir-john1586-1640). He sold or mortgaged the park at Chilton and died with £4,000 debts (VCH).

A dovecote was noted at Chilton in 1626 (*VCH*). Sir John IV (cr. baronet c.1642) a royalist colonel, raised a troop for the King in the English Civil War (*VCH*). In 1644 Prince Rupert ordered that the house be demolished to render it untenable by Parliamentary troops, but rescinded the order. The Crown leased Chilton to Mrs Ann Andrews c.1660, one of the creditors of Sir John IV (*VCH*), who died in penury in the Fleet in 1678/9 (*VCH*). His son Sir Dodsworth lived in the village until he died in 1728 (*Country Life* 1). The manor passed through the Limbrey and Hervey families. In 1728 (D/A 218/35) it was bought by Richard Carter, Deputy Lord Lieutenant for Oxfordshire. Two dove houses superseded an earlier dovecote in 1739 (*VCH*).

Soon after, the Tudor house was remodelled for Carter c.1740 based loosely on the influential design of Buckingham House in London (Pevsner and Williamson). Chief Justice Richard Carter died in 1755 with his son George Richard Carter inheriting. By 1771 (Jeffery's) the house was in owned by 'Carter Esq'. The death of his son (also George Richard) in 1771 left two daughters and two co-heirs. The surviving daughter, Martha Catherine, brought Chilton to her husband John (later Sir John) Aubrey (*VCH*). Another marriage brought Chilton into the Ricketts family and this family later took the Aubrey name.

By 1813 (OSD) lands associated with the House were similar in layout to now, including the fishpond at the southeast extremity. By 1824 (Bryant) a park lay east of the house with a diagonal avenue of trees corresponding with the present avenue and a feature, probably the fishpond, to the south. A schedule to a plan of the village (D/BMT/55/1, c.1868) records the parish priest, the Rev George Chetwode, as occupying the house and gardens, the walk in front and 7 other parcels of land and 'The Old Fishpond &c' (altogether an estate slightly more extensive than that surveyed in 1813). Chetwode had married Elizabeth Sophia, the heiress to the Ricketts estates (*Bucks Herald* 1868). The plan unaccountably omits the north pavilion but includes the barns and outbuildings north-east of the House much as they are now. A building stood in the spinney north-east of the house where a small pond is now. Both plans show a line of cottages on the east side of the 'walk' as it extends to the north of the House.

When Charles Aubrey Ricketts died at nearby Dorton in 1874, Chilton and Dorton went to descendants of his cousin Sir Henry Fletcher. Sir Henry (d.1910) added the Aubrey name.

Unspecified garden restoration was carried out c.1914 by the tenant at the time, The Hon.Lady Egerton, a forebear of the current owners (*Country Life* 1 &2). By 1912 (Domesday Survey) The Hon Lady Egerton was in occupation. Sir H. A. Fletcher was the owner. The land included the house called 'The Gatehouse', immediately south-east of the gates onto the village street.

The House was requisitioned as a school c.1940 with the south pavilion remaining as a family home (*Country Life* 2). Around 1945 the House was taken over by Buckinghamshire County Council as a nursing home. Sir Henry and Lady Aubrey-Fletcher bought the lease in 1987 (*Country Life* 2) and the house has continued as a nursing home.

NB There is no link between Chilton House and Chilton Park, based around Chilton Park Farm, built as a lodge located 0.8km north-west of Chilton village (Pevsner and Williamson). That park was conventionally recorded on successive historic maps of the county as an oval area with palings for a century from John Speed (1610) onwards.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, LANDFORM SETTING

Chilton lies 13km south-west of Aylesbury and 5km north of Thame. It is a linear village, its main street running north-south along a pronounced ridge. Chilton House (listed Grade II*) stands in the centre of the village, immediately east of the parish church of St. Mary, both just north of a dog-leg of the village street which swings to the west around both of them. The House stands east of the top of the ridge and faces east, so that the compartmented gardens behind to the west are terraced up to the churchyard. The forecourt (or *cour d'honneur*) and park in front of the House slope down away from it. The house is a prominent feature in views from the east e.g. from the crossroads on the elevated Chearsley-Upper Winchendon road, framed by the park and forecourt. The house, forecourt and park enjoy wide-ranging views east towards Ashendon and Upper Winchendon.

The 16.5 ha. site is situated in an area of rolling and folded agricultural countryside. The eastern flank of Chilton's ridge is broken by a succession of small spurs and valleys. Despite its prominence from the east, the House is hidden by mature planting and topography from the road to Chilton from Chearsley only a little distance to the south-east. The site includes the House, forecourt, the walled garden enclosures to the north, west and south, and the Park to the east. A lake created north of the historic park in the late 1990s lies just beyond the park. The south edge of the view of the Park is framed by the avenue of old lime trees. Apart from the brick walls enclosing the gardens and forecourt, the site is mostly bounded by post and wire fences, usually associated with hedgerows. A new house immediately north of the barns (AVDC 16/00563/APP) in farmhouse style with single storey outbuildings, replaces former buildings.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The principal approach continues the northwards alignment of the village street from south-east of the house at the above-mentioned dog-leg. Beyond this the private tarmac drive extends between plain stone gate piers with pyramidal caps, the timber gates having ornamental curved braces supporting metal dog bars.

The drive continues north shaded by mature limes for 80m. Alongside to the west are the stone walls (listed Grade II) of the former kitchen garden, then the garden of the south pavilion and then the forecourt iron railings. The former kitchen garden wall to the west is topped with brick, featuring a Tudor doorway. Further on a modern doorway leads into the garden south of the southern pavilion, attached to the north by the fine iron railings bounding the rectangular forecourt. The tall railings (listed Grade II) consist of wrought iron palings c.1.5m high on a substantial

red brick plinth c. 1m high with stone coping. The railings are supported at intervals on slender red brick piers, the inner ones topped by decorative stone urns and the outer piers at the corners with pinecones. A central vehicle gateway of two leaves with an elaborate wrought iron overthrow gives access to the forecourt and to the House. The sudden turn into the forecourt keeps the entrance front of the House hidden from the village until the visitor is level with the forecourt. The east side of the drive is lined by a ha-ha overlooking the park beyond, with a modern concrete retaining wall.

The rectangular forecourt (44m x 46m), is flanked by matching pavilions linked to the main building by curved wing walls. It is laid to grass with a wide oval carriage drive of gravel. Five pleached hornbeams flank the carriage drive. Below the House is a low grassed terrace. Two flights of stone steps lead to the front door which is framed by Ionic columns supporting a triangular pediment.

Beyond the forecourt, the drive continues north past the house for 275m past the site of a former line of cottages (1860s plan) to Home Farm, formerly Gregory's Farm (OS 1878), now the Chilton Business Centre. The drive provides a rear access to the C17 Townhill Farm (listed Grade II) with C17-C18 barns (listed Grade II) c.155m north-west of the House.

East of the drive opposite the former stable yard and barn is a pond. It is spring fed and has a brick floor. Sir Henry Aubrey-Fletcher notes that it is an unusual survival: 'it provided a washing facility for carts and carriages before the days of metalled roads. The carts or carriage would be brought in with the horse in situ. The driver would take the cart down one ramp into the water and do a couple of circles to allow the water to wash the wooden rims and spokes and then exit up the other ramp and drive the short distance up the hill to the stables to deposit horse and cart. A forerunner to the modern carwash!' (pers. comm. 03 January 2019).

PRINCIPAL BUILDING

CHILTON HOUSE

The Tudor Chilton House c.1529 was on an 'H' plan with wings extending west (Pevsner and Williamson). The House (listed Grade II*) was considerably modified c.1740 by infilling the rear elevation between the wings and recasting the entrance elevation to produce a rectangular plan with forecourt walls, gates, railings and a pair of square pavilions with central lantern turrets. The recast House is of red brick with stone dressings. The imposing entrance front overlooking the forecourt to the east is of nine bays, of three storeys, with a rusticated stone basement and a panelled brick parapet. The north and south elevations retain the substantial chimney breasts with diaper brickwork and the brick chimney stacks of the Tudor house. An extension on the south side of the House is first noted by 1880 (OS) but has since been recast.

The garden elevation to the west, again of nine bays, is plainer than the entrance front. The projecting central five bays are marked out by irregular fenestration in its outside bays, each having a Venetian window set in a mezzanine level between ground and first floor and with a tall round-headed window above it at second floor level. Access to the gardens may have been via the wider central aperture currently occupied by a window, with a door to one side. Two further garden doors have been inserted towards the north-west corner of the house.

The south extension has been extended as a modern one-and-a-half storey extension of red brick with dormers between the House and the south pavilion. Patio doors on the south side open to a modern paved terrace in the former kitchen garden.

PAVILIONS

The square pavilions flanking the forecourt are linked to the main house by short curved walls with rubbed brick niches. The pavilions are topped by timber cupolas with ogee caps, the south (the 'Clocktower') having a clock and the north a wind dial. Each pavilion has its own associated enclosure, that for the Clocktower to the south being an walled enclosure extending east towards the drive, while the north pavilion backs onto the Stable Yard to the north. The Clocktower was recently converted to four flats. It has no doors or windows towards the forecourt, the elevation being enlivened by pilasters, a cornice and blank arcading. The north pavilion was a stable and retains many of its fittings, and now houses the Estate Office. It is similar in appearance towards the forecourt but the arches incorporate casement windows either side of a central door. The east elevations of the pavilions towards the drive have pilasters and segmental headed sash windows (the glazing bars of which are finer than those of the main house) below a cornice topped by a panelled parapet. The outer bays have blocked circular apertures above the windows.

OUTBUILDINGS

The outbuildings (individually listed Grade II) are located on the north side of the Stable Yard beyond the North Pavilion (i.e. north-east of the house). They include a C17 stone barn with red tiles, a late C18 or early C19 timber granary on staddle stones, and a C19 stone stable and hayloft with red brick details converted into a cottage. Parts of the yard retain their pitched stone surface.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

The pleasure grounds extend in various compartments from the north round the west and south sides of the House. They occupy elevated ground in relation to the village street, before it begins to climb northwards past the elevated churchyard towards Townhill Farm, such that the substantial southern boundary wall of rubble stone with a coping of red tiles is largely a retaining wall.

The lower lawn has a strip of paving immediately next to the House with a short slope up to the level of the grass. A central depression indicates the location of stairs up to the grass level but no related structures have been found (pers. comm. House Manager). This rectangular lawn (45m wide x 22m deep) is dominated by a large sycamore to the south. A hoggin path skirts the south end of the lawn and leads to a Tudor wall between the House and Churchyard of narrow red brick with diaper work including a stone doorway into the churchyard. A blocked doorway lies a little way to the south. The brickwork inside this doorway suggests a gabled structure stood against the inside of the wall.

The lower lawn widens northwards with a slight change in level into an area c.140m x 70m north of the House. A considerable grass slope on the west side leads to the upper lawn beyond, north of the churchyard. The slope skirts the west and north perimeters of the north half of the lower lawn. As well as the slope to the upper lawn, this part of the lower lawn is bounded to the north by a plain red brick wall with a gate near its east end between plain substantial brick piers, and to the south by a wall (listed Grade II) which at its north end is of red brick. It includes arched bee boles and the material changes to stone rubble with two C16 stone doorways (Zeepvat). The north door leads down stairs to the stable yard while the other is blocked. By 1878 (OS) deciduous trees grew in front of this wall, with evergreens at the north end inside a perimeter circuit walk linking the upper and lower lawns. A gate set in railings, next to the north-east corner of the House, leads to stone steps down to the forecourt.

The rectangular upper lawn (c.70m x 25m) lies west of and above the north half of the lower lawn and is bounded by the churchyard to the south. A flight of brick steps leads up to the south-east corner and also up the grass slope from the lower lawn though an arch in yew hedging. The bank dividing it from the lower lawn is topped by sections of yew

hedging and two mature yew trees. The south and west boundaries are lined by early brick walls, that to the west with a plinth and further bee boles at regular intervals. This wall has a number of small decorative trees against it. A red brick pavilion at the centre of the north side of the lawn has small-paned central doors and windows supported by timber piers all under a tall hipped roof of red tiles. East of this is an old door in the wall, within a rectangular opening with a wrought stone surround. Traces of a geometric garden layout in the south half of the upper lawn can be seen on aerial photographs and the lawn is uneven. By the late 1870s (OS) a small circular feature (?a fountain) occupied the centre of the lawn with deciduous trees scattered in the north half and evergreens around the edges.

PARK

The Park extends downhill east and south east of the house. It is divided from the drive by a low ha-ha. This formerly had a slight bulge eastwards opposite the gates to the forecourt on axis with the house but this had disappeared by 1983 (OS). The ha-ha is now straight, c.1.2m high, and is formed of rustic concrete blocks topped with red brick. The pasture below (noted as 'the Park' on the 1860s map) offers extensive views along the valley between Ashendon and Chearsley and contains evidence of former ridge-and-furrow. It is framed to the north by a stand of trees (evident on the 1860's map as a spinney). In these trees is a U-shaped pond present by the 1860s (map). The view is framed to the south by a spur surmounted by an avenue of limes, c.200 years old: noted by 1813 (OS) but not on the 1860's map. The avenue runs north-east along one of the spurs from behind properties on the south side of the village street. The Park falls to a large kidney-shaped lake c.190m x 95m constructed c.1999 (outside the historic boundary)c. 450m north-east of the House.

The large field comprising most of the Park extends south-east into open pasture. The furthest corner is 630m east of the House, from which it is invisible because of the spur to the south.

The Park skirts the south-east end of this spur around the main feature: a fishpond set in mature mixed trees, the origin and ornamental function of which is unclear. Its geometric shape suggests it may be of the C16 or C17. It is set down between two spurs and invisible from the house. An icehouse lay near the south-east corner (OS). It was of the C18 or C19 and has collapsed leaving a circular hollow. A small section of probably the west face survives in the undergrowth on this side of the pond. This part of the Park extends west to the rear boundaries of properties beside the village street. It reaches the cottages at the east end of Chapel Lane, the rear gardens of which extend north up to the enclosure round the fishpond. This location (0.65ha) was called 'Brick Kiln Corner' on the 1860s village plan and is considered a probable site of C18 brickworks (HER 0168100000). It is open except for four limes in a square and another group of trees closer to the cottages, which may survive from the former south hedgerow boundary on the Brick Kiln Corner.

KITCHEN GARDEN

The former kitchen garden lies south of the house and south pavilion, and extend to the south-east towards the entrance gates from the village street. On the south ind west sides the boundary to the village street is a tall stone rubble wall topped with a coping of red tiles (listed Grade II). The west end has a car park in the former glasshouse yard (OS 1878) entered at the south-west corner from the village street through a break in the wall. A row of modern garages on its north side forms the boundary with 'Garden Cottage' (listed Grade II), formerly in separate ownership (1860s village plan). An overflow car park to the east of the main car park is screened by hedging. Apart from a paved terrace outside the House's south extension in the area formerly occupied by a number of glasshouses (1st Edn 25" OS 1878), the former kitchen garden (now 'The Orchard') is laid to grass with hoggin paths with edging and lighting. It contains several apple trees and a large cherry. The west half centres on a sundial while the east half shows traces of another knot garden (see aerial photographs) and has an uneven surface. One of the paths slopes down east to

the Tudor doorway in the wall dividing this area from the drive from the village street. The tall north wall against the Clockhouse (south pavilion) yard/garden formerly supported a long glasshouse (OS 1878).

By the late C19 (OS) a large number of glasshouses stood in the kitchen garden, including the long glasshouse against the north wall and groups of glasshouses in the area occupied by the terrace and in the glasshouse yard now the car park. These were removed in the C20.

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Country Life 3 (21 December 2007)

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Maps

1610 Speed, Map of Buckinghamshire 1770 Jefferys, Map of Buckinghamshire 1825 Bryant, Map of Buckinghamshire c.1868 Map of the village of Chilton (CBS D/BMT/55/1)

Ordnance Survey

1813 Ordnance Surveyor's Draft (BL)

OS 25" to 1 mile:

1st Edition surveyed 1879 published 1880

OS 6" to 1mile 1st Edition published 1880

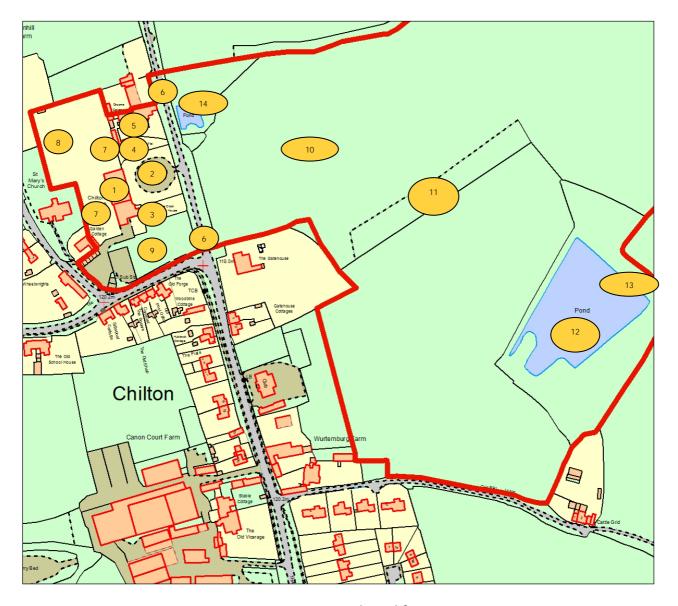
Photographs

2010 Aerial photographs, Buckinghamshire CC, (HER)

G Huntingford

Edited SR January 2019

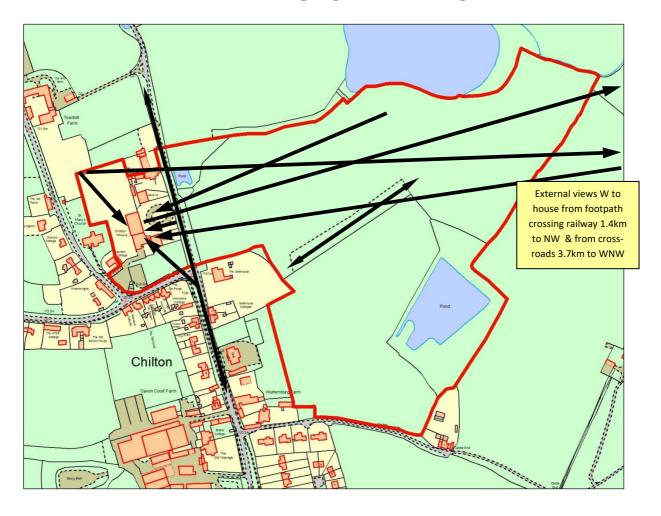
KEY HISTORIC FEATURES



Key to numbered features

1.	Chilton House	2.	Forecourt
3.	South Pavilion	4.	North Pavilion
5.	Former stable yard & barn	6. at sout	Drive & ha-ha along east bank, main entrance h end off village street
7.	Lower Lawn	8.	Upper Lawn
9.	Former kitchen garden	10.	Park
11.	Lime Avenue	12.	Pond in woodland
13.	Former ice house (site)	14.	Cart Pond

HISTORIC VIEWS



CURRENT IMAGES





The entrance from the village street looking north (left); The approach looking north with a Tudor doorway on the left to the former kitchen garden (right).





The railings fronting the forecourt looking from the south east (left); The House and carriage drive looking from the east (right)





Tudor doorways in the wall between the House and churchyard from the west showing diaper brickwork to the left (left); lower lawn looking north past the west elevation of the House (right)





The lower lawn looking south west towards the church (left); upper lawn looking north towards the garden pavilion (right).





Bee bole in the west boundary wall of the upper lawn (left); upper lawn looking south towards the church (right).



Lower lawn, north half, House and north pavilion, from the north east corner of the upper lawn.





The former kitchen garden ('the Orchard') looking south east (left); House and south pavilion from the orchard looking north west with site of former glasshouse in the foreground (right).





The listed outbuildings from the south east (left); east over the Park from the approach including the new lake (right).





South-east section of the Park westwards towards the village street (left); lime avenue on the spur framing the south side of the principal view, looking north east (right).

Bucks Gardens Trust, Site Dossier: Chilton House, Aylesbury Vale DC January 2019





Cart pond from north-east (left) and north-west (right), spring-fed (Sir Henry Aubrey-Fetcher).



Cart pond from west (Sir Henry Aubrey-Fetcher).