

Understanding Historic Parks and Gardens in Buckinghamshire

The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust Research & Recording Project



TILE HOUSE, LILLINGSTONE DAYRELL

April 2022



The Finnis Scott
Foundation

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Foundation



HISTORIC SITE BOUNDARY



Tile House, Lillingstone Dayrell: boundary of historic designed landscape interest

Produced by the Council Archaeology Service
April 2022



Scale: 1:6,605 at A4



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Tile House, Lillingstone Dayrell: 2020 aerial photograph

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**Buckinghamshire
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 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 a significant grant from the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust. 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	Tile House HER 0639800000
DISTRICT:	AYLESBURY VALE	
PARISH:	LILLINGSTONE DAYRELL	
OS REF:	SP 685 395	

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Overview

The gardens, pleasure ground and park for an 1880s country house, including garden terraces, informal pleasure ground lawns with mature trees and shrubberies, a walled kitchen garden, parkland with lakes. The design incorporated a 1690s farmhouse (Old Tile House) and existing woodland and many trees which originated in the medieval royal forest of Whittlewood. The ensemble survives very largely intact, except for the loss of kitchen garden structures and layout, seemingly also structures around the lakes, and the addition of minor school structures and sports pitches around the core since the site became a school in the mid-C20.

Tile House is one of a group of country houses which were established in the county in the later C19 on new sites as a designed ensemble of mansion, service structures and integral ornamental landscape. The most extensive and spectacular of these were Waddesdon Manor and Halton House (both on new sites in existing estates) for the Rothschilds. Others of a less lavish but still notable scale comparable to Tile House include nearby Akeley Wood, and also Swanbourne House School, Grendon Hall, Bletchley Park and Rayners, Penn (see BGT dossiers). It is also one of a group of ornamental parks established around the periphery of the great Stowe estate including Akeley Wood, Lillingstone House, Shalstone Manor House and Boycott Manor.

Archaeological interest

The site has the potential for evidence associated with the medieval forest and woodland uses, particularly relating to the surviving ancient trees but also for banks, routes, boundaries and buildings. It has potential for former features related to the 1690s farmhouse and its environs, and the present designed landscape since the 1880s such as buildings, paths, beds, terraces, boundaries, etc, particularly for the abandoned kitchen garden, lost drives and rides and features relating to the now overgrown lakes such as boathouses.

Architectural interest

A typical group of structures for a new country house of the 1880s (date stone 1882) by architect Ewan Christian who worked on several church restoration projects in the county. He designed the stable block, a lodge, and perhaps other structures. All were united in design as an Elizabethan manor house complex, said to be the last C19 manifestation of combined Tudor and Gothic styles in Bucks (Pevsner, 94). The original principle building, Old Tile House is of architectural interest for its late C17 origin as a farm house which was used as staff accommodation when the new house was built and formed a feature in the park.

Artistic interest

The layout comprises a typical and largely complete ensemble of garden, pleasure ground and park for a country house developed in the 1880s with buildings in Elizabethan/Gothic style. The design retained much of the existing ancient Forest woodland both as woodland and as specimen trees in the new park. The lakes were key features, but these are now obscured. Old Tile House was retained, forming an eye-catcher in the park and from the main approach from the lodge, and is set in its own small garden. Stowe Park forms a key feature of the setting beyond the west boundary, particularly the adjacent Old Deer Park and the important 1720s Castle Riding linking Stowe

Castle to the south and Black Pit pond to the north. This avenue ride originated as part of Charles Bridgeman's vast formal woodland design, and runs parallel to and defines part of the west boundary.

Historic interest

The site originated in the royal Forest of Whittlewood and is of interest for its close proximity to Stowe.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Tile House is situated in an area with considerable evidence of Roman settlement. The area was of significant importance during the late Anglo-Saxon period and Lillingstone Dayrell was owned by the Giffard family and formed one vill of 10 hides. By 1086 it had become two vills, each of 5 hides (*VCH*). Following the Conquest, the parish was owned by the Dayrell family (BGT Lillingstone House Dossier). During the early medieval period the parish formed part of Whittlewood Forest. Together with Rockingham and Salcey, Whittlewood was part of a chain of Royal Hunting Forests covering a vast tract of land in middle England. Whittlewood was considered highly valuable and owned by successive monarchs, administered for them by their own officials and subject to Forest Law (*Northampton Past and Present* 56). By the beginning of the C19 the Dayrell family fortunes were in decline and parts of the estate began to be sold especially to the Robarts family. The Tile House estate was purchased by Abraham Robarts in 1801 (Deeds of the estate D210/1-6 Buck Archives). Over the C19 the Robarts gradually became the dominant family in the area with Abraham John Robarts buying the title of Lord of the Manor from E.M. Dayrell in 1887 (Mountney: CBS MS D210/24/8 cited in Radley- Bucks Archive – BGT Dossier – Lillingstone House).

Abraham John was by 1871 (Census) a banker and magistrate living in Lillingstone House, Lillingstone Dayrell with his young growing family. By 1873 he owned 980 acres in Lillingstone Dayrell with an estimated rental value of £1,188.00 (The Genealogy Archives – Return of Landowners 1873 Buckinghamshire). In 1882 Robarts began building his own house within the estate. He commissioned Ewan Christian, a very successful Victorian architect known for his ecclesiastical work, and most famously for the design of The National Portrait Gallery in London.

Tile House was sited west of the village of Lillingstone Dayrell in Tilehouse Wood, a small area of ancient woodland which still exists. The trees are mainly oaks, beech, spruce, sweet chestnut and hazel coppice. Tile House was built in the Christian Neo-Elizabethan style and described as, 'big, forbidding with groups of huge chimneys. The house is decorated with terracotta panels one of which has the inscription, 'Marjorie and Alice Robarts 1882', two of Abraham John's daughters. Robarts commissioned a three-sided Stable Block with courtyard to the east in the same style as the house, of crimson brick, with eaves and gables tile-hung. A lodge was built at the entrance to the new drive in matching materials to Tile House and the stables. Tile House was landscaped with a walled kitchen garden to the east, a parterre to the north-west and two lakes to the south. In the 1890s the large parterre at the rear of the house was laid out with formal flower beds in lawn in the Victorian style (Historic England images). By 1900 the field fronting the house had been incorporated into the parkland (OS 1881, 1900).

The house was built on higher ground with a view across grassed terraces down towards a C17 building known as Old Tile House. Previously Old Tile House had been known as Tile House Farm and does not appear with the new name until 1900 (OS). Tile House is first mapped in 1900 (OS). Built in 1693 by Sir Marmaduke Dayrell, Tile House Farm stood in its own wooded grounds (Buckingham Monument Report, 2.12.2020). By 1900 trees had been cleared and the renamed house had become part of the Tile House parkland (OS). Old Tile House was used by the Robarts as staff accommodation. Both the head gardener and estate carpenter were living here with their families (Census). Old Tile House gardens have been developed since becoming independent of the estate.

During the late C19 Robarts became deeply involved in local and county life. Abraham John continued to embrace and develop the role of Lord of the Manor. He had already paid for the restoration and additions to the local church,

St Nicholas in Lillingstone Dayrell in 1868 (Kelly's Directory). In 1889 he funded a new parish school and master's residence (Kelly's Directory). Until his death he continued his interest in farming, in particular stock breeding (*Bucks Herald*). The well-maintained gardens of Tile House played a very important and enjoyable part in the Robarts family and social life. Many events were held here. In 1898 Mr. Boulton the head gardener created a triumphant arch along the tree lined drive and clothed the main entrance to the house with ivy to celebrate the wedding of John, one of the Robarts sons (*Bucks Advertiser*). Cricket matches were often played on the newly created pitch in the front of the house (*Bucks Herald* 1867, 1880, 1887 and many more). A holiday for the primary school children, known as 'scholars', was held each year on the front lawn. In the late C19 and early C20 many fetes supporting a variety of causes were held. In 1891 Tile House stood in a 'charming park and grounds' (*Bucks Herald* 12 September 1891). Flower Shows were always an important part of the Tile House calendar. In 1911 at the flower show, 'A thoroughly happy and delightful time was once again spent by the whole of the inhabitants of Lillingstone Dayrell on Saturday last. The programme comprised a mower show, tea and all sorts of games and sports.' In 1913 the flower show was an event which was 'always looked forward to with much expectancy by the inhabitants of the parish' (*Bucks Herald*). The local press reported that throughout this period the lakes were well used and enjoyed on festive and sporting occasions, boating and swimming being popular. To celebrate George V's Silver Jubilee in 1935 'A fine display of fireworks across the lake' was witnessed by many. Anglers fished in the lakes for a number of years, competitions being held by many clubs.

William Boulton was head gardener and maintained the garden for many years. He had considerable success in horticultural competing and judging. In 1887 during the First Annual Chrysanthemum Show at the Town Hall in Buckingham he won prizes for his chrysanthemum displays, Muscat of Alexandria grapes, and for the best collection of vegetables. The family too enjoyed some success at the same show with a third prize to Miss Robarts of Tile House for her bouquet. Boulton was judging at various local flowers shows at the turn of the century including Shalstone in 1893 and Stowe in 1904/6, (*Bucks Advertiser and Free Press*). Boulton died in 1917.

Edith, Abraham's wife, died in 1919 and she was wheeled from Tile House to the local church, 'by the four oldest gardeners' (*Bucks Herald*). Following the death of Abraham John in 1926, his son John inherited the house.

John was growing award winning chrysanthemums in the 1930s; and he continued the pattern of hosting various events in the grounds. In 1932, 1933 and 1934 the gardens were open to the public in aid of the Queen's Institute and District Nursing (*Times Digital Archive*). During World War II, 55 acres was cleared of bracken and trees. The area was planted with potatoes and was visited by a cabinet minister in June 1943 (*Bucks Advertiser and Free Press*). In May 1948 the gardens were open again when the rhododendrons were in flower, which can still be seen (*Bucks Advertiser and Free Press*). Later that year John and his wife celebrated their Golden Wedding at their Norfolk home. In November a party was held at Tile House for 160 estate workers but not in the gardens (*Bucks Advertiser and Free Press*). By 1949 the parterre had lost the flowers, being replaced with topiary, but the walled garden was still in use (AP EAW025910 England (1059) Lillingstone Dayrell, from the south-east).

The garden was opened in 1951 for the National Garden Scheme in aid of Retired District Nurses. The garden was described as, 'wild and undulating (*Bucks Advertiser & Free Press*); not the 'well-maintained' setting' as it had previously been described; this suggests some lack of upkeep.

John died in January 1954 and the family decided to vacate the house and sold the contents and furnishings in the following September (Notice of Sale by Stace and Foot, Brackley, *The Times*). In 1954 Tile House became Charmandean School which relocated from Worthing in Sussex. By the late 1950s the cricket ground was no longer in use (National Grid 1952/50s 6in), although the outline can still be seen in ariel photos, most recently in 2017.

In 1998 Tile House became the home of Akeley Wood Senior School. Some school buildings have been added to the grounds at the back of the house, designed to be in keeping with the pre-existing site. Most of the site remains a school and students use the established grounds for sports and social activities. Old Tile House is in separate ownership as a residence.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

Tile House lies 2km west of the village of Lillingstone Dayrell and 6.5km north of Buckingham. The internationally important Stowe House (Grade I) lies 2.5 km to the south-west and its park boundary abuts the west boundary of Tile House park. Silverstone Racing Circuit lies 2.5km to the north-west. The course of a Roman road runs north/south west of Tilehouse Woods.

The boundary is defined to the south-east by Stowe Castle Road, to the west by the boundary with Stowe Park RPG and to the north by a service road and beyond this by Stowe Park. The boundaries in a clockwise directions starting at Tilehouse Farm are as follows: Stowe Castle Road runs south-west from Tilehouse Farm for 1200m and then the boundary turns north along a bridleway for 300m before turning west and north through Tilehouse Wood. After 1300m it turns east along the north boundary of Tilehouse Wood. After 150m the boundary turns south for 430m and then it follows the service road for 550m back to Tilehouse Farm.

The 68ha. site lies between the 125m and 140m contour lines and is set in an undulating rural landscape, surrounded on the west by parkland and to the east by agricultural land. The soil is loam/clay. The house stands towards the centre of the site with woodland to the south-west, north-west and north-east. There are views over the park and beyond to the south-east. There is no visual link with Stowe park.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The principal entrance lies 600m south-east of the house off Stowe Castle Road, 1.5km west of Lillingstone Dayrell. The north side of the entrance is marked by a lodge (listed Grade II) built c.1882 with Tile House which is in a similar ornate Elizabethan style. The one-and-a-half storey building is constructed of crimson brick with decorative tile hanging to the upper storey. The west front has two bays: the left hand bay has a hipped roof covering a veranda of four timber arches and balustrade; the right hand bay has a bay window and a gabled first storey.

From the Lodge the drive curves slightly to the north-west through parkland towards the house, 675m to the north-west. After 200m the drive to Old Tile House branches off to the left. After passing through a gateway the main drive gradually inclines and the chimneys of Tile House come into view. As the drive levels the whole house can be seen. The drive finally curves to the south-west and passes the stable block to the north and ends at a small turning circle on the south-east front of Tile House.

A further service road links the stable block near the house with Tilehouse Farm 700m to the east, where it joins the road 430m north-east of the main entrance. This road passes the north side of the Walled Garden. In 1900 (OS) this was a tree-lined avenue (VCH).

PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS

The house (listed Grade II) stands towards the centre of the site and was built in 1882. The entrance front is to the south-east with garden fronts to the north-west and south-west. The north-east side is the service front and faces

the stable block. The house was designed by Ewan Christian in an ornate and picturesque Neo-Elizabethan style (Pevsner). It is built of crimson brick with painted terracotta dressings and a tiled roof arising out of which are clusters of tall chimney shafts. It is gabled with terracotta panels with foliage and heraldry in the Arts and Crafts style. The south-east entrance front has a round oriel window and projecting square tower with sundial. The north-west side front has a recessed central section with a semi-circular staircase projection.

50m north-east of the house stands a stable block (listed Grade II) forming three sides of a courtyard with the south-west side, which faces the house, being the open side. It was built c.1882 of crimson bricks with eaves and gables tile hung in similar style to the house and lodge.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

The gardens lie north-west, south-west and south-east of the house and consist of a parterre, upper and lower terraces, and lawn separated by a ha-ha from the park. Views extend to the south-east over the park and beyond.

Extending from the south-east elevation of the house, beyond the drive, a lawn leads out to a ha-ha of brick with stone coping. At the north-east end of the lawn and ha-ha is a group of, mainly, native trees (yew, birch, oak, holly, beech and ash). At the south end the ha-ha returns to the north-west and becomes the retaining wall between the upper and lower terraces. The wall is topped with a stone ball at the corner. The ha-ha has been breached in recent years to install a modern road connecting the playing fields with the house.

To the south-west of the house an upper and lower terrace extend for 110m north-west from the ha-ha. The upper terrace runs along the south-west side of the house and parterre before rising in two stages by two sets of six stone steps, each set topped with a stone ball finial on each side in the same style as that on the corner of the ha-ha.

Two further matching sets of stone steps lead from the upper to the lower terrace alongside the south-west side of the house. The brick retaining wall with stone topping curves outwards to form a bastion, before continuing on its original alignment as far as the upper terrace steps. An mature ash tree stands on the bastion. In the 1890s (Historic England Images) ornamental planting in beds ran along the retaining wall with a gravel path alongside separated from the beds by lawn. The lower terrace is now fenced off. Remnants of the gravel path are visible in the grass.

4m from the base of the south-easterly set of steps is a rectangular hole surrounded by paving. It is an abandoned modern swimming pool (perscomm Site Manager). This feature is visible on aerial photographs from 1999 and 2003.

Extending from the north-west of the house is a parterre of four tiers. The first tier is sunken, the second is at ground level and the final two are at the levels of the terraces to the south-west and north-west of the house. The parterre is laid to grass with golden yews planted on the second level. In the 1890s (HE Images) the parterre was planted with bedding plants.

The area to the north-west of the tiered parterre is now populated by modern school buildings beyond which are rhododendrons and the woodland of Tilehouse Wood. In 1900 (OS) the line of the upper terrace path extended through the wood and by 1949 (aerial photo Britain from Above) a gap in the trees and hedges beyond on the same alignment suggests there may have been a vista but it is now overgrown.

PARK

The park surrounds the gardens with woodland on the south-west, north-west and north-east sides and the school playing fields on the south-east. Old Tile House and garden lie at the far end of the playing fields, 250m south-east of the house and is an intrinsic element of the historic view. Old Tile House (listed Grade II) was built 1693 by Sir Marmaduke Dayrell. The two-storey building of brick and stone with tiled roof has C19 additions to the rear. It is now in separate ownership. By 1899 (OS) this area was planted with specimen trees and clumps, apart from the area adjoining the driveway which was a cricket pitch.

170m to the south of the house lie two lakes: the larger north-west lake (150m x 45m) and the smaller south-east one (80m x 30m). The area surrounding them is now overgrown and access to them is restricted (2021). They do not feature on the 1881 OS map but were present by 1900 (OS) so are likely to have been constructed when the gardens were laid out in the 1880s. The 1881 OS map shows a spring at the site of the larger lake so this probably feeds the lakes. By 1899 (OS) there were two boathouses, one for each lake. It is unclear if either survives.

Park railing lines the edge of the wood south-east of the house and continues south-east to the lakes. A C19 iron five-bar gate in the fencing leads into the wood. It has five horizontal bars reinforced by two diagonal bars running from the centre-top of the gate to the bottom corners. Two cylindrical iron gate posts have cone-shaped tops.

KITCHEN GARDEN

330m east of the house is a walled garden (125m x 70m). The area within and without the walls is now overgrown and its original layout is no longer evident. Access is from the service road to the north. Between the service road and the walled garden a service yard contains a two-storey cottage and on the north side of the north wall of the walled garden is a range of outbuildings and structures which were probably stores and a chimney suggests one was a boiler room. On the south side of the north wall (ie inside the walled garden) are the remains of a variety of metal brackets and wiring and a gateway leading from the walled garden to the service yard.

An advertisement for Henry Hope, Horticultural Builder and Hot Water Engineer of Birmingham (*Orchids, their structure, history and culture*, Lewis Castle, 1886) contains a testimonial from A J Robarts praising the range of hot houses, fitted with hot water apparatus and back shedding that had been installed in 1882. By 1899 (OS) a line of glasshouses ran along the centre section of the north wall inside the walled garden and square glasshouse stood in the centre of the service yard so it is likely that these are the buildings referred to in the advertisement.

Shortly after the garden was laid out (OS 1899) the layout consisted of cruciform paths and a possible well or dipping pond at the centre. By 1949 (AP Britain from Above) the walled garden remained in full production.

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Akeley Wood School, www.akeleywoodschool.co.uk

Maps

Ordnance Survey

Ordnance Surveyor's Draft 1813 (BL)

25" to 1 mile 1881

6" to 1 mile 1st edition 1885; 2nd edition 1900; 1952; Late 1950s

1 to 10,000 1983 NG edition

Aerial photographs

1946, 1947 RAF (HER)

1949 EAW025910, Silverstone Motor Racing Circuit, Lillingstone Dayrell from the south east. Britain from Above

Photographs:

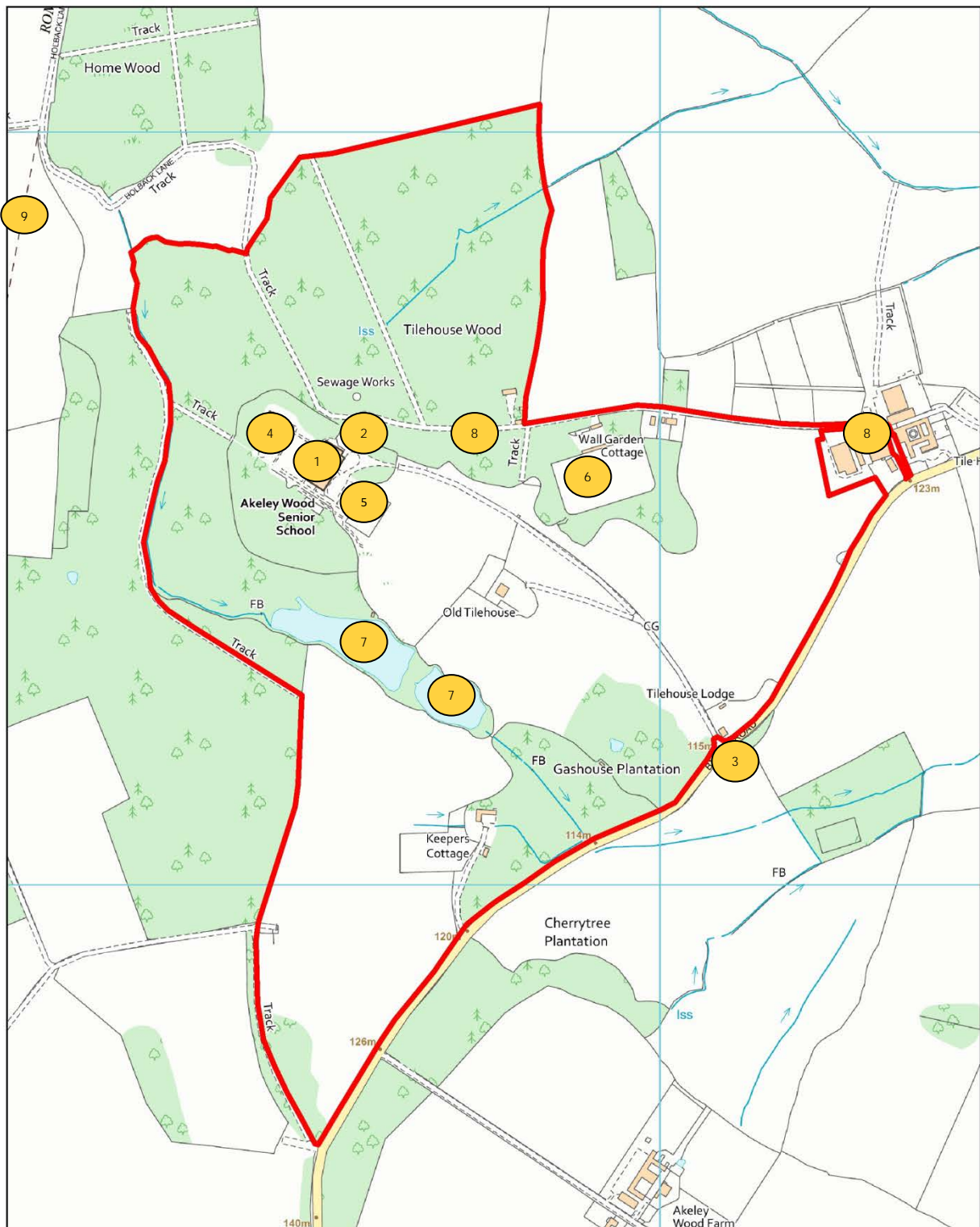
Tile House from the garden, Bucks County Council

Bucks Gardens Trust is grateful to Louise Keil for her help.

Pam Lambourne and Ann Birch January 2022

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KEY HISTORIC FEATURES



Tile House, Lillingstone Dayrell: boundary of historic designed landscape interest

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Key to numbered features

1. Tile House	2. Stable Block
3. Entrance and Lodge	4. Parterre
5. Ha-ha	6. Kitchen Garden
7. Lakes	8. Service Road
9. Stowe Park	10.

HISTORIC IMAGE



1893 photograph of the garden of Tile House (Source: Historic England Archive, with permission).

CURRENT IMAGES



Entrance front



**Looking towards Tile House
Akeley Wood Senior School from Old Tile House**



Tile House Stable Block



View of the Ha-Ha in the front of the house



**View from front of Tile House towards
Old Tile House**



View of front lawns towards the lakes



View towards Old Tile House showing fencing



Similar view of Tile House 2021 as 1893 view



**Current rear parterre with topiary
dating at least from 1949**



Parterre showing rear lawned terrace



**Rear parterre from Tile House towards Tilehouse Wood
showing topiary, birdbath and school sporting facilities**



Roses growing on wall in the rear garden



Steps leading down from back parterre to lower walk



Looking back towards rear garden



The lower lake with water lilies



Kitchen garden showing west wall



Kitchen garden showing east wall



Wall adjoining the gardener's cottage, showing ivy growing over old chimney



North wall entrance to gardener's cottage from kitchen garden