

THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

RESEARCH AND RECORDING PROJECT 2020–21

SARAH RUTHERFORD AND CLAIRE DE CARLE

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust's (BGT) Research and Recording Project pilot phase in 2014–15 was introduced in *Records* 56 (2016) and our progress into succeeding phases, 2016–20, was published in vols 57–61 (2017–21). Our volunteers continue researching and recording parks and gardens in historic Bucks that are generally not included on the Historic England *Register of Parks and Gardens of special historic interest* (denoting national significance). To add to the 82 sites summarised in the previous six volumes of *Records*, we here add summaries for 16 sites throughout the county for a wide range, which are the fruits of our work in 2020–21. This work has been funded with generous assistance from several donors, including Buckinghamshire Council (BC), the Finnis Scott Foundation, the Roland Callingham Foundation, members of BGT, and invaluable help in kind from BC's HER. The circumstances of the Covid pandemic during 2020–21 slowed down some aspects of the work of our volunteers, but they are to be congratulated for continuing as far as possible, given the access restrictions to archives and difficulties in making site visits, while achieving a considerable output.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL LOCAL HERITAGE LIST PROJECT

Early in 2021, a new government initiative offered added motivation to complete our assessments. It fulfilled the exact purpose at which our project has been aimed: the recognition of the significance of local heritage assets, in this case through local authority heritage list assessment projects. Successful councils secured some of the £1.5 million to embark on pilot 'Local Heritage List' enrichment campaigns. Twenty-two authorities were selected, including Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

Responding to a short timetable, members of the Buckinghamshire Council Heritage Team, including the HER, worked hard to get this project off the ground. BGT's Research and Recording team has since its inception in 2013 built a close relationship with the HER via Julia Wise, and we were keen to support this project. We offer valuable experience gathered over the last eight years in assessing the significance of our local landscapes in a rigorous methodology, and a team of very capable trained recorders. We also offered over 100 completed site assessments in which the significance can easily be assessed to identify whether sites qualify for inclusion on the local list.

BGT, alongside representatives from BAS, has attended fortnightly Teams meetings contributing to the project. The Council launched the website for the project in autumn 2021, and has organized informative events and on-line lectures for 2022. The object is to engage with local heritage groups and members of the public who are encouraged to nominate heritage assets for inclusion on the Local Heritage List.

BGT has achieved a huge amount during the last eight years, completing assessment of most of the 'A' list sites on the *Bucks Historic Parks & Gardens Register Review* (1996) which were identified as qualifying for assessment for the national Register. Of the 17 of these sites left to research, three survive as early earthwork sites. Around 200 on the 'B' list, many of which are probably of local significance, remain to be assessed. The Local Heritage List project is just the incentive to address these remaining sites. We have shortened the report format in order to speed up the process and identify those worthy of inclusion on the Local Heritage List for consideration. We use the now excellent resources available online, including the National Library of Scotland OS maps, other historic resources, Google Earth and Streetview, and online list descriptions as well as information from the HER. This approach is

something that we have successfully established during the last year when site and archive visits have not been possible.

We sit on the Council's review panel to offer advice on whether nominations meet the criteria for inclusion on the Local List. Sites may be put forward which were not on the Register Review that was compiled almost 25 years ago. The criteria for inclusion include age, and we hope to identify designed landscapes that are just over thirty years old, hidden gems that may now qualify, including the garden created, from 1954, by Roald Dahl at Gypsy House, Great Missenden or artists' gardens we have researched.

We hope that this will take us much closer to identifying and recording all the significant surviving historic parks and gardens of Bucks.

INTRODUCTION TO SITE OVERVIEWS 2020–21

The following overviews set out the historic interest of the varied types of designed landscapes reviewed in 2020–21, and are taken from the individual site dossiers. Rather than address nationally important sites which are generally relatively well understood, we mainly target the 400 locally significant sites identified by BCC in 1996 in their County Register Review. These sites, which are of at least local interest, are especially vulnerable to inappropriate management and developmental change due to a lack of available information about their historical significance and the extent of their survival.

The overviews below, taken from the site Statements of Significance, are arranged by broad site type (although not all fit neatly into categories and some overlap several) and their key historic and surviving interest is described. A pattern of historic interest and current significance is beginning to emerge in the types of sites in Bucks. We hope to draw more informed conclusions over the coming years as the body of information swells, and we will publish these in *Records* in due course.

Over 100 of our dossiers are available on the BGT web site at: <http://www.bucksgardenstrust.org.uk/locally-important-sites/> Links to these dossiers have been added to historic features included within dossiers that are Listed by Historic England as part of the *Enriching the List* scheme.

OVERVIEWS

Country Houses

Akeley Wood, Akeley (BC HER 1071003000) *by Ken Edwards*

The 73ha park, garden and pleasure grounds for an 1860s country house which was architect George Devey's first large country house, including terraces, informal pleasure ground lawns with mature trees and shrubberies, a walled kitchen garden, parkland and pre-existing woodland which was incorporated as part of the design. Garden terrace additions in Arts and Crafts style by Ernest George 1911/12 include a Tudor-style brick and ironstone gazebo. The woodland and many trees originated within the former medieval royal forest of Whittlewood. The ensemble survives largely intact, except for the loss of kitchen garden structures and layout, and the addition of school structures and sports pitches around the house, stables and Home Farm since the site became a school in the mid-C20, also with the addition of a house in the kitchen garden, and in the park equestrian centres and houses. Even so, the key elements of the design remain legible.

Crawley Grange, North Crawley *by Penny Elvin and Kathy Jackson*

The 35ha park, garden and pleasure grounds for a Tudor country house, developed in their present form during the C19 and early C20, possibly incorporating elements of an earlier landscape associated with the house. The garden combines formal and informal features and planting and was extended into part of the park in the later C20. The park has a C19 serpentine approach avenue and together with the garden retains many mature specimen trees and clumps. This is a good example of its type, which survives largely intact along with the rural setting including the village.

Denham Court, Denham (BC HER 0214900000) *by Geoff Huntingford*

The 57ha park and pleasure grounds for a mid-C17 and later country house on the west bank of the river Colne in south Bucks which survive largely



FIGURE 1 Akeley Wood: George Devey's first large-scale country house, 1860s (*Ken Edwards*)



FIGURE 2 Akeley Wood: Ernest George's 1911/12 Tudor-style brick and ironstone gazebo as part of his Arts and Crafts style garden additions (*Ken Edwards*)



FIGURE 3 Denham Court: eighteenth-century bridge to the island (*Geoff Huntingford*)



FIGURE 4 Denham Court: approach to the house (*Geoff Huntingford*)



FIGURE 5 Denham Court: gateway (*Geoff Huntingford*)



FIGURE 6 Denham Court: garden river (*Geoff Huntingford*)

intact. While the pleasure grounds north of the C17 house have been grassed over and replaced by a large turning circle for the Mansion's current golf clubhouse role, those on the south side retain the ornamental planting established in the late C19 and its wealth of mature trees. The island setting of the Mansion survives, created by an ornamental watercourse which is crossed by a C18 classical bridge and two C19 bridges. An iron suspension bridge of c.1890 gives access across the river Colne to a further extension to the late C19 park. The main park is crossed by two C18 drives with entrances marked by ornamental gateways, and it contains mature typical mid-C19 planting, including a lime avenue framing the principal drive amongst much planting and ground remodelling for golf course use. Late

C20 changes include considerable extensions to the Mansion, the addition of a number of pools in the park as part of a major remodelling for a golf course, and the removal of traffic from the original principal approach.

Grendon Hall, Grendon Underwood (BC HER 1169100000)

by Claire de Carle

The 37ha park, garden and pleasure grounds for an 1880s country house on an elevated site, including terrace, informal lawns with mature trees and shrubberies, and parkland. The site has since the mid-C20 been in institutional use as a prison. The layout survives considerably intact and key elements of the design are legible, including



FIGURE 7 Grendon Hall house and garden in 2007 (*Andy Gryce/Grendon Hall, HM Prison Springhill, Grendon Underwood/CC BY-SA 2.0*)

much of the pleasure grounds, and the park, which is bisected from an ornate gateway by a straight drive to the house. Areas have been lost to a 7ha housing estate in the south park, and prison buildings in the pleasure grounds around the Hall to the east and south. The elevated areas of the site enjoy extensive views south and west particularly from the garden, drive and south park. A large prison compound lies adjacent to the east in the otherwise rural setting.

Newland Park, Chalfont St Peter (BC HER 0410001000)

by Sarah Tricks

A typical example of an extensive Chiltern country estate. The landscape was laid out in the late C18 with modifications in the C19. A major remodelling of the garden occurred in the early C20 with a formal scheme by the renowned landscape architect Thomas Mawson, 1901–03. The grounds survive largely intact and key elements of the design are legible, with much mature ornamental planting and an extensive formal drive from Chalfont St Peter with two gateways and lodges. The many later C20 and C21 structures were built for the college in the park where the Chiltern Open Air Museum is also located. While these disparate buildings cluster around the house, drive and pleasure grounds they have left the key ornamental features intact.

Penn House, Penn (BC HER 001692000)

by Geoff Huntingford

The 50ha park, garden and pleasure grounds for a country house of the Curzon and Howe families with in which a small garden surrounding the house in the 1760s was extended successively in the late C18/early C19, and late C19, with minor additions in the early-mid-C20. The grounds survive intact with much mature ornamental planting and are a good example of a Chiltern estate.

The site developed over c.200 years, to reach its zenith in the mid-C20. The layout remains intact, focussed on the house, formal gardens to the east and kitchen garden to the north, with many mature trees, including Wellingtonias, and fine avenues and belts along the drives. The early-C18 poet Alexander Pope's Obelisk and Urns are the most significant ornamental feature, terminating an axis

from the entrance of the house and sited at Penn in the early C19. The long south drive is of particular note with a winding course from the early C20 lodge up the hillside to the plateau, taking in extensive views of the steep hillsides and estate land. Other estate structures particularly the kitchen garden walls and cottages form incidents along the drives.

Stockgrove Park, Soulbury (BC HER 1054905000)

by Sheila Meekums and Mary Buckle

An extensive C19 country house estate elevated on the Greensand Ridge straddling the Bucks/Bedfordshire boundary. The core and parts of the park were remodelled and developed in the 1930s with many new structures by W Curtis Green, a fine geometric terraced garden close to the house, and an enlarged park lake with an unusual focal boating pavilion (now derelict), incorporating and supplementing ornamental park planting in similar style. The complex and high quality 128ha ensemble is one of the finest final flowerings of the country house estate immediately before World War II. It survives largely intact, although the unique 1930s boathouse/ lake pavilion is ruinous.

Swanbourne House (Swanbourne School), Swanbourne (BC HER 1103500000 & 0493201000)

by Gill Grocott and Jill Stansfield

The 40ha grounds of an 1860s Italianate country house by William Burn including terraces, informal pleasure grounds, a walled kitchen garden, and parkland, with many mature trees and long views over the Vale of Aylesbury from its elevated situation. Edwardian additions when the pleasure ground was remodelled include an extension for a tennis lawn, set in shrubbery and overlooked by a small circular gazebo, and the north lodge. The ensemble survives largely intact, except for the loss of the north drive and kitchen garden structures and layout, and since the site became a school in the mid-C20 the addition of school structures and sports pitches around the house, structures and pitches in the kitchen garden, and in the park a much enlarged Home Farm.

Swanbourne Old House, Swanbourne (BC HER 1101600000)

by Gill Grocott and Jill Stansfield

The 9ha park, garden and pleasure grounds for a C16 and later country house at the heart of a village in the Vale of Aylesbury. The layout, developed in phases from the late C18/early C19 when the house was remodelled, survives largely intact with many mature trees and is typical of a country house estate in the Vale. Late C20 changes include the addition of a swimming pool, tennis court, productive garden and the loss of cultivation of the kitchen garden, but otherwise much of the garden layout appears to remain almost unchanged since 1810. The park remains much as it was when enlarged in the 1880s and major changes were made, including the drive linking with Swanbourne House (since

abandoned), with C20 additions including a cemetery and the War Memorial.

The Vache, Chalfont St Giles (BC HER 0434003000)

by Sarah Tricks

The Vache is a C16 and later country house with a park, gardens and pleasure grounds. The park was laid out in phases, including the straight Long Walk, a former main approach from the turnpike first recorded in 1730. The park focus is the Monument to Captain Cook, an eye-catcher pavilion built on a mound in 1780 by Admiral Palliser, an admirer of Cook. The 88ha site survives largely intact with many mature trees from various phases and is a typical example of a substantial Chiltern country house estate. The 1990s Mews develop-



FIGURE 8 The Vache: lodge (*Sarah Tricks*)

ment adjacent to the house and other scattered modern houses have largely left the historic character and key ornamental features intact.

Of particular landscape significance is the monument to Captain Cook (1728–79) which forms an eye-catcher elevated on a mount in the north park. A small square flint tower is trimmed and castellated with red brick with a round headed arch in each wall to reveal the monument to Cook, a plinth supporting a globe of the world. The plinth has a long and admiring inscription over all four sides to Captain Cook. The form is similar to the Cook Monument at Stowe erected in 1778 by Earl Temple (d.1779) following Cook's first two successful voyages of exploration; he was killed on the third in 1779. The Stowe monument comprises a huge globe (now a replica), on a pedestal on an island in the Alder river in the Elysian Fields. It is unclear whether Palliser deliberately followed this as a model for his own structure.

Detached Hunting Park

Black Park, Wexham (BC HER 0162510000)

by Liza Wormell

This extensive medieval deer park was landscaped for the 3rd Duke of Marlborough in the 1740s and is a rare example of a detached hunting park. It originated as a hunting park for the Langley Estate with its boundaries defined by 1607 separating it from the adjacent Langley Park which surrounds the mansion. Black Park then developed from heathland as a detached hunting park and was landscaped during the mid-C18 by the 3rd Duke who also owned the adjacent Langley Park. Langley Park was developed for the 4th Duke by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown in the 1760s alongside his work at Blenheim Palace and Brown may have influenced elements of the layout of Black Park. In any case the two parks were linked by an early-C17 or earlier avenue retained by Brown, giving access directly from Langley Park to the hunting ground of Black Park but this has been disrupted by the C20 dual carriageway (A412) which also cut back the south boundary with the loss of the C18 or early C19 ice house.

The 212ha Black Park, which never had a focal building, remains almost intact, with an extensive network of routes having developed, and the design instead focusses on the large lake (early

1740s) sequestered in woodland. This was originally plantations of Black Pines (*Pinus nigra*) planted when the lake was dug, an early planting of this species in plantations which gave the park its name. While none of these specimens survive the park has many conifer plantations and has since 1970 been a Country Park.

Town and Village Gardens

The Bury, Chesham (BC HER 0651600000)

by Liza Wormell and Joanne Kidd

The 10ha gardens and pleasure grounds for a country villa built 1712–16 at the edge of the market town of Chesham for the Lowndes family of landowners and politicians. The grounds comprise elements of the original formal layout, with other areas in informal style. Elements of the early-C18 framework include the entrance, gateway, fine flanking lodges, drive and forecourt and the strong relationship with the church and churchyard. Notable later features include the terraced lawns leading down to Bury Pond, which is a large, C18 serpentine lake possibly created from a formal canal, and the remains of The Grove (now overgrown), formerly a lawned pleasure ground with specimen trees and an C18 avenue bisecting it which overlooked the Pond. The main loss is the kitchen garden, developed in the C20 with houses, although elements survive including some walls and structures relating to Bury Pond including boathouses and a bridge. The elements of the early C18 layout are a rare survival; later modifications reflect contemporary trends in various phases. The setting contrasts the buildings along one of the main roads into Chesham, to which the entrance ensemble makes a strong contribution, with the rural Chiltern Pednor valley and the public Lowndes Park.

Twentieth-Century Landscapes

Lowndes Park, Chesham (BC HER 0651600000)

by Liza Wormell and Joanne Kidd

A 24ha mid-C20 public park incorporating the pleasure ground and park of the former Bury Hill House which was closely associated with the adjacent town house, The Bury (q.v.). The layout, including Skottowe's Pond and the nearby avenue at the bottom of the park nearest to the town, survives largely intact although incursions have



FIGURE 9 Black Park map of layout, Buckinghamshire Country Parks



FIGURE 10 The Bury, Chesham: garden arcade, late nineteenth or early twentieth century (*Sarah Rutherford*)



FIGURE 11 The Bury, Chesham: early eighteenth-century main entrance with flanking lodges (*Sarah Rutherford*)

occurred at the north-west, upper end of the park with school and other development. The park is dominated by the great sweep of sward planted with specimen trees and clumps rising from the avenue north-westwards, with increasingly spectacular views over the Chiltern Chess and Pednor valleys in which the market town of Chesham lies, and of the parish church.

Shrubs Wood, Chalfont St Peter (BC HER 1251601000)

by Sarah Rutherford

The 20ha garden and woodland of a mid-1930s country villa which is of great significance as a Modernist interpretation of the traditional English country house and is an important example of “mature” Modernism. The garden is typical for

this sort of progressive house of the 1930s with an attached formal terrace encouraging the integration of indoor and outdoor life, surrounded by informal lawns with shrub beds and specimen trees, set within the late C18 parkland of Newland Park (q.v.). The enclosed approach through a block of Chiltern woodland, Shrubs Wood, is a key feature. From 1949, the house was owned for nearly 40 years by Bridget D’Oyley Carte, owner of the D’Oyley Carte Opera Company, who developed the garden. The layout survives intact and is comparable with others in this idiom, such as the pioneering High and Over, Amersham (1929, q.v.), The Homewood, Surrey (Patrick Gwynne, 1938–39) and Royal Lodge, Windsor.

The sites on the following pages form part of an extensive group of large parks covering the landscape of the New Town of Milton Keynes.



FIGURE 12 Lowndes Park, Chesham: Skottowe’s Pond (*Sarah Rutherford*)

Waterhall Park, Bletchley

by Jill Stansfield and Gill Grocott

Waterhall Park forms the southern tip of the Ouzel Valley Park, one of the three large linear parks which were key parts of Milton Keynes Development Corporation's (MKDC) planned cityscape in the 1970s-80s, enhancing the original landscape

of rolling undramatic countryside to provide a new landscape character of sufficient strength to contain new city developments and create significant areas of useable countryside within the city boundary. The linear parks follow the valleys of two small rivers, the Ouzel and Loughton Brook, together with the larger valley of the river Ouse to the north. They form the recreational and environ-



FIGURE 13 Waterhall Park, Bletchley: one of the linear parks in the river valleys of Milton Keynes (Jill Stansfield)

mental lung of the city, as well as being an essential component of managing flooding.

The 23ha public park is in Bletchley and outside the New Town area, but it was planned by MKDC to enhance the recreational amenities of the town and to link with the wider elements of the new landscape north through connections with Caldecotte Lake, the Ouzel Valley Park and Willen Lakes. The park areas of Milton Keynes were designed around a framework of “strings, beads and settings” (MKDC original design guide). The strings are linear footpaths, cycleways, greenways and riding trails. Beads are activity centres. The setting is the visually or physically public landscape which makes up the body of the park. Land uses in this area include grazing, sports grounds, lakes, wildlife zones and events areas etc., many of which generate income which contributes to the management costs of the parks. Waterhall Park is part of a landscape system where the details of the materials, types of horticultural features and planting all work with the natural and artificial topography to produce an outstanding unified design. It survives intact and continues to be developed in similar character following the vision of the Milton Keynes Parks Trust.

Ouse Valley Park, Milton Keynes
by Jill Stansfield and Gill Grocott

Ouse Valley Park is one of three linear parks, with Ouzel Valley Park (the largest area of parkland)

and Loughton Brook linear park, developed in the 1970s and 1980s to keep pace with the incoming population.

The earlier landscape in Milton Keynes was undramatic gently rolling countryside, with mixed farming. All three linear park designs used the low lying sites along river valleys to feature indigenous wetland species such as willow and poplar and to continue the tradition of pastoral farming. The soil is mainly clay, but in the river flood plains all contain gravel. The extensive Ouse Valley Park has many common features with the other two linear parks, but it is the lowest lying and is focused on the most dominant river. It has the most rural aspect of any of the parks, with old trees, hedgerows meadows and new plantations providing excellent habitats for wildlife. The size of the river supported a larger scale of gravel extraction, with the creation of significant wildlife reserves and new wetland areas. As a result this park has continued to change and develop in ways that the other parks have not. The park views have a sense of wilderness due to the extent of wetlands to the north that is unusual for an urban landscape.

Ouse Valley Park is part of a landscape system where the details of the materials, types of horticultural features and planting work together with the natural and artificial topography to produce an outstanding unified design. It survives intact and continues to be developed in similar character following the original vision.