

## BUCKINGHAMSHIRE GARDENS TRUST SHORT SITE REPORT

### AMERSHAM MUSEUM

BASELINE INFORMATION			
Site Name	AMERSHAM MUSEUM		
Included in BCC Register Review?	NO	HER Number	-
Type of Site	Town Garden associated with a C15 hall house		
Address	49-51 High Street Old Amersham HP7 0PD		
Ownership (single or divided)	Charity/Divided		
Parish	Amersham		
Former District	Chiltern		
Prompt for Assessment	Suggested by member		
Type of Assessment	Desk and site visit (2/10/21)		

#### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The relict garden of a C15 and later merchant's hall. The garden area may be contemporary with in the C15 hall. The small garden was formerly larger, including areas to the east, the garden of the present No. 47 which survives, and possibly to the west, lost under the 1870s almshouses.

The medieval town house garden occupies a narrow plot behind the house, 15m long by 4m wide. As a medieval merchant's hall house the surviving garden area is probably contemporary, the length limited by the River Misbourne at the far end. It was formerly wider including some or all of the garden of No. 47 to the east, possibly with an orchard beyond the river. The garden is bordered to the west by a row of almshouses known as Miss Day's (1875, Listed Grade II) with a communal garden which may also occupy a former part of the hall house garden. At the north end of the garden is a red brick privy and a rear gate which offers the only external access to the garden. Beyond the gate is the River Misbourne and formerly a bridge led to the land beyond. Views extend north to the much later Amersham Rectory c. 1728 on the hillside. The soil is very fertile due to its proximity to the chalk stream and frequent flooding. Since 1990 the museum garden has been developed and maintained by volunteers as a medicinal herb garden.

## SHORT SITE DESCRIPTION

### **Location, Area, Setting as seen from maps and current APs (do not include boundaries).**

Amersham Museum is situated on the main street in Old Amersham a short distance from the historic Market Hall (1682 Drake). The wide streets were used for the market and the town was a coaching stop en route from London during the C17 and C18. To the rear of the garden is the River Misbourne and beyond the water meadow the hill rises to Amersham on the Hill at 150ms (asl).

### **Historic Development of the designed landscape**

#### **Chronology**

1480 Medieval Hall House (Grade II) built

1613 - 1847 Hunt Family Thomas Hunt (a maltster)

1847 Henry Toovey

1891 Frederick Toovey built an antique shop in front of the house

1928 The buildings at 49-51 High Street were part of the land sold by the Tyrwhitt Drake Family

Until 1982 Ronald Frank Toovey continued antique business

1985 Amersham Society raised money to buy the house and for its restoration

1991 opened to the public

2017 museum expanded into the cottage built on the footprint of the medieval cross wing

When the hall was extended during the C17 the garden extended east along the full range of the hall (nos. 47-51 High Street) as shown on an archaeological plan of the site dating from 1986. The 1838 tithe map shows the garden was previously twice its current size, as it extended the whole width of the hall to the east. By 1898 (OS) the garden was been split, number 51 retaining a narrow strip which is now the museum garden.

### **Principal Building overview**

The timber framed building has a full height hall. The oak timbers were felled locally. The service wing was at the east end and a solar wing with the living quarters to the west.

Numerous modifications include in the C16 fireplaces and brick chimneys were added and a first floor created, and the house has been divided into several dwellings. It is now Amersham Museum.

### **The Garden**

The garden is now a narrow plot typical of a C19 town house, about 15m in length by 4m wide. As the residence of a medieval merchant's house it probably had a Garden, possibly with an orchard beyond. The plot would have extended the full width of the hall house.

There are views from the garden north to Amersham Rectory c. 1728 on the hillside.

The garden is bordered to the west by a row of almshouses known as Miss Day's (Grade II) built in 1875 which have a communal garden and beyond these the Maltings formerly part of Wellers Brewery. The almshouses may occupy part of the former garden area of the merchant's house. At the far end of the garden is a red brick privy with a clay tile pitched roof and a rear gate which offers the only external access. Directly beyond the gate is the River Misbourne where a bridge may have crossed it to the meadow. Since 1990 the museum garden has been developed and maintained by volunteers as a medicinal herb garden. The soil is very fertile due to its proximity to the chalk stream and frequent flooding that has occurred.

## CONCLUSIONS AND REFERENCES

### Key Sources

Tithe map of Amersham 1838

OS 1898

Map accompanying sales catalogue of 1928, Tyrwhitt-Drake family

Godwin D&J. *The Herb Garden at Amersham Museum* (2020)

<https://heritageportal.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/Monument/MBC14159>

<https://amershammuseum.org/history/>

### Reason for Interest

Garden of a medieval merchant's hall parts of which date to the C15

### Issues / Threats

#### CONSERVATION STATUS

Listed building, Conservation Area

#### Survival – percentage of historic site

Approx. 25%

#### Condition

GOOD

### RECOMMENDATION

The garden and house are owned by the Amersham Society and the house is the home to the local museum. The garden is maintained to a high standard by a team of volunteers.

No further action required unless proposals for significant change are made.

**Recorder: Claire de Carle, 2022**



Exterior of building 1970 and 2020 (Images Amersham Museum)

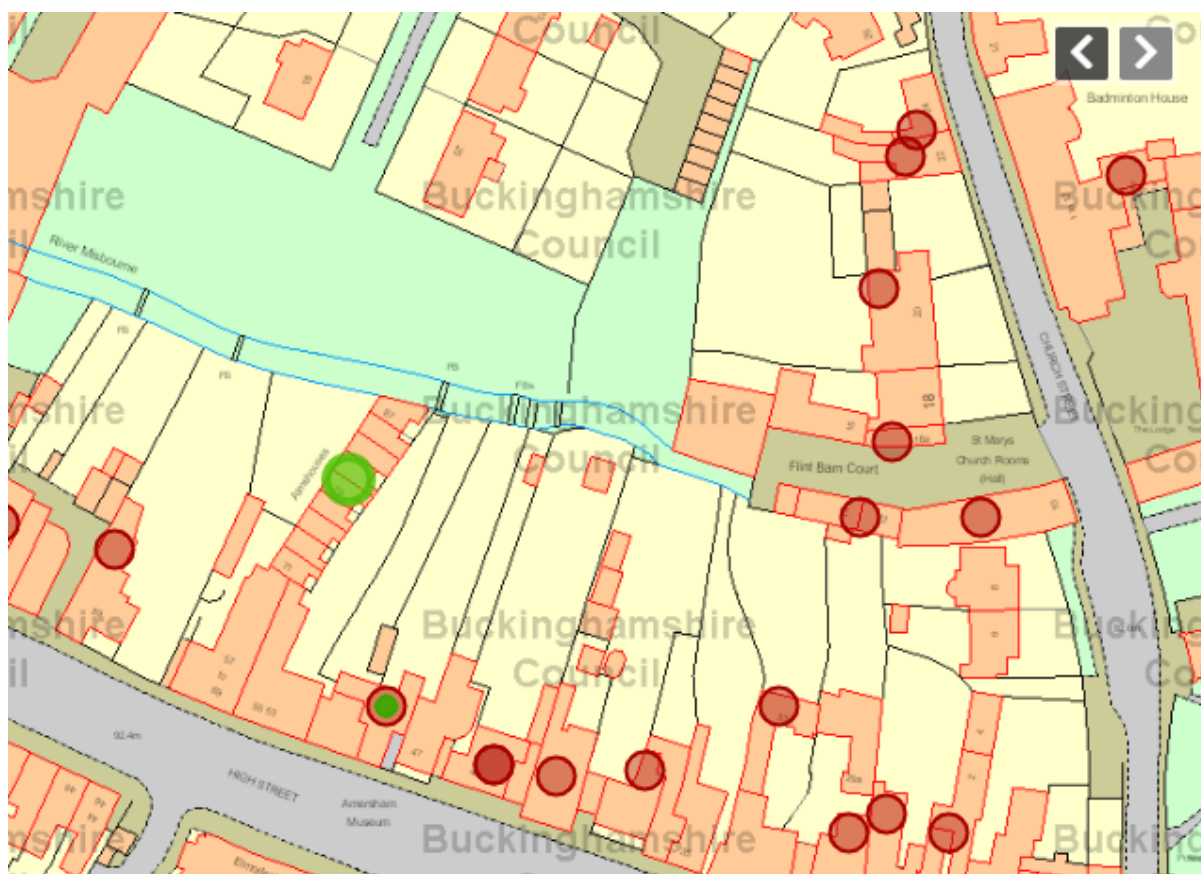


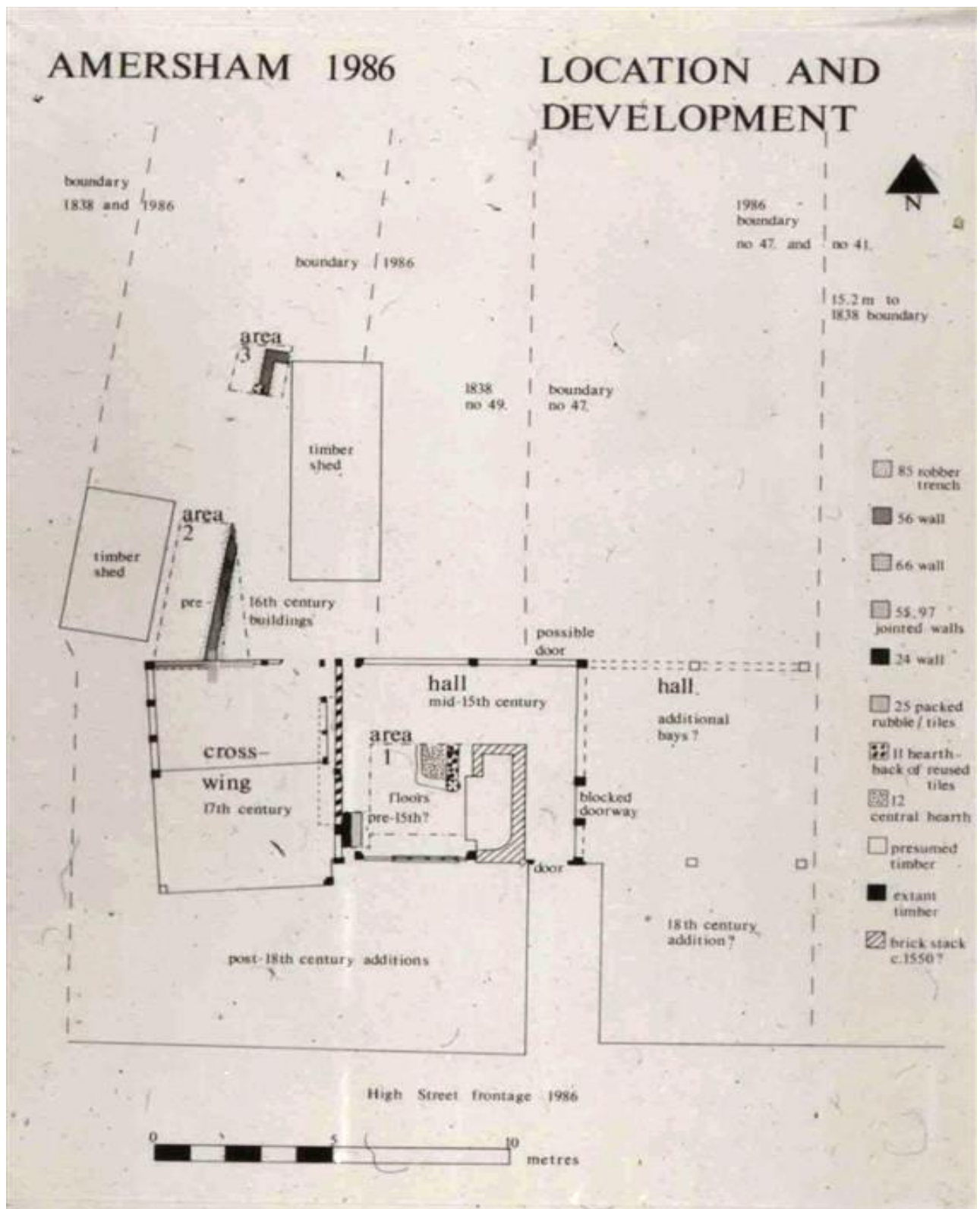
View north along the garden laid out as the Museum Herb Garden 2017 (C de Carle)





The privy and Amersham Rectory in distance (C de Carle)    The former garden now number 47 (2017)





Bucks History Portal