

PLACE HOUSE, HORTON, (FORMERLY BUCKINGHAMSHIRE); THE HOUSE AND GARDEN AND ITS SUCCESSOR.

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Place House, Buckinghamshire whose appearance is known only from two eighteenth-century drawings, is described. The original building, the principal manor house of Horton built adjacent to St Michael's church, was clearly a timber-framed hall which, with various extensions, survived until the late eighteenth century when it was replaced by a new Horton Manor by Thomas Williams, the Anglesey copper magnate.

The Scawen and Brerewood family who lived at Place House are briefly described. In the eighteenth century the Brerewoods spent much money on water features in the garden and built a library over one canal. Some surviving features which can be identified from maps or on the ground are described, among which are a notable series of walls built of exceptionally large bricks.

INTRODUCTION

Place House at Horton, formerly in Buckinghamshire, latterly administratively Berkshire, has been a neglected Buckinghamshire house, probably because it was not occupied by significant county gentry in its later life, and partly because it had been demolished by the time Buckinghamshire's principal historians, Lipscomb and Sheahan, were writing. The earliest published account of the house and grounds, to which a number of later writers refer, appears in an article in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of August 1791 (pp 713–716). 'The Brerewood Family of Place House, Bucks', written by one 'CP' shortly after the house had been demolished. The article includes an etching based on a drawing dated 1773 by F.Brerewood (who lived there), engraved by Cook. The drawing has recently been reproduced in the Society's *Historic Views of Buckinghamshire*, accompanied by a brief description (BAS 2004, 101). In view of the interest of the house and in particular its gardens, it was felt the latter note could be usefully expanded.

THE GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE DESCRIPTION OF HORTON PLACE

The text of the article outlines the acquisition of

papers relating to Horton and the Brerewoods, gives a history of the family and briefly describes the house and grounds.

The Lovers of Antiquity will not be sorry to know, that by accidentally meeting with an auctioneers hand bill, on the fourth and last day's sale of a tradesman's effects in the Strand, where the late Francis Brerewood, Esq. had lodged nearly fifteen years ago, and from narrow circumstances had left his property behind him, many writings of this, and of the last century, were preserved from destruction. His chest had been three days sold and delivered to a broker, the purchase of it as waste paper, from whom they were redeemed.

[There follows a brief account of the Brerewood family who are discussed below]

Plate III [here Fig 1, lower] presents a West view of Place House, in Horton, near Colnbrook, Bucks. The manor of Horton did belong to the Scawens, who sold it some time ago. Sir Thomas Scawen knt. Alderman of London, appears to be the last owner of it in the family. It is now in a widow lady of the name of Hickford ... [who is said] ... to have purchased the manor of a Mr Cook of Beaconsfield. This mansion was occupied by Thomas Brerewood the elder, the beginning of this century; it appears to have been built about the early part of Elizabeth's reign, and was

moated round. The Brerewoods laid out a large sum of money in improving the house, garden and canals, which lie below the bed of the River Colne, from which they are separated only by a bank. They purchased from the proprietors of the adjoining mills [Horton Mills, an important paper mill in the early seventeenth century] leave for an opening to feed the canals from the main river, at the expense of no less a sum than 300 l. In the extremity of the garden, from the earth dug out in forming these canals, they made a mount, whose perpendicular height is about 18 feet; at the base of which is a leaden canister, containing some coins of the time, with the names of the family and friends who were present at the ceremony and being young men of spirit and fashion, they did much improve this old mansion to the taste of the times. Across the principal canal they threw an arch, on which they built an elegant pavilion, which was fitted up with much expense of furniture carving, and gilding, as a library. This edifice did not long survive the old house, being quite cleared away some years. The garden walls are built of remarkably large brick, 15 inches long by 7½, made from a bed of clay found there at the time of digging and enlarging the canals, which the gardener says, are deemed in measure equal to an acre of land. After this family left Horton, the house, wanting repair, was occupied by Mayhew, a gardener, for nearly forty years, who rented the garden-grounds. Sixteen years ago the house was taken down, being in ruins: the site of it and the gardens is six acres, let to Mr. Cox for 22 l. 10s. per year. The house did join, as may be seen from the plate, to the south side of the tower of Horton church.

[The author also gives some detail of the church, noting its Norman doorway with wave and zigzag mouldings, the chapel on the north with the Scawen family vault under, and the presence of Milton's mother's grave in the centre of the chancel.]¹

THE MANOR OF HORTON AND THE OCCUPANTS OF HORTON PLACE

At Domesday, Horton, in Stoke Hundred, was held by one Walter son of Othere; its lands included a mill. Walter also held Eton and Burnham. Horton passed to his descendants the Windsors but by 1254 the manor had been subinfeudated. Shortly after the death of the lord Richard de Oxhey in 1295, the

manor was split, part becoming Berkin Manor. Other small manors or holdings in Horton are identifiable in the fourteenth century namely Horton Pury, Okhide and Speelings or Spillings. The principal mill came to be held by Eton College. Horton manor itself passed through the hands of many families including the Bulstrodes who at one time held Berkin also. In 1650 Thomas Bulstrode sold the principal manor to Daniel Cox and Sir John Pettus who in 1658 sold it on to Robert Scawen. (VCH 1925, 3: 281–6). A little detail on the Scawen family who lived in Place House, and their successors the Brerewoods – who lived in the house but did not hold the manor – is given below.

Medieval manor houses in Buckinghamshire were commonly moated, as they often were elsewhere. The converse is not the case as not every moat contained a manor and some having other functions did not even contain buildings. The author of the *Gentleman's Magazine* article, 'C.P.', states that Place House was moated and this was probably the case although there is no other direct record. Buckinghamshire's principal manor houses, apart from being moated, are commonly sited in close proximity to their churches. The presence of mid-twelfth century features in the church, noted by 'CP' and subsequently confirmed by the Royal Commission (RCHM 1912, 206) suggests that Place House is likely to have either incorporated or replaced, a contemporary manor house. That the advowson of the church was at a later period shared between the Horton and Berkin manors, also indicates the subsequent importance of the latter.

Apart from Place House there were several other moated sites in Horton. The Victoria County History (VCH 3, 282–3 and VCH 2, 30) recorded three: a) Berkin Manor to the ENE of the church, the outline of which is clearly shown on the Inclosure map of 1807 (BRO, IR 43); b) a moat only a little distance to the south-east of Berkin and adjacent to Horton Mills on its SW side (VCH 2, no 1 on fig. p.31) clearly visible on Figure 2. This small moat, now destroyed, could possibly have preceded the (larger) Berkin moat to which it is close, and finally, c) VCH also records a moat at Horton Manor (VCH also calls it 'Horton Hall', but this is

¹ An archaeological watching brief took place at the church during alterations inside the tower. Although many burials were encountered, there were no ceramic finds or other objects earlier than the post-medieval period (Taylor 2004). A number of other Buckinghamshire villages whose name contains the element *tim* have archaeological evidence for early Saxon settlement (Humm, Lawson and Farley 1994, 145–6)



*Place House, Horton Bucks. From an old pen & ink
Drawing, circa 1705.*



FIGURE 1
Upper: Place House, Horton circa 1705. Reproduced courtesy the Bodleian Library (Ms. Top. Bucks, c.1. f.54 facing.)
Lower: Place House, Horton in 1773. Print in BAS collections (BAS 4/56)

doubtful. The suggestion is possibly based on VCH's belief that Horton 'Manor' was on its original site whereas it was constructed *de novo* in the late eighteenth century, albeit early maps show there was prior settlement at the new location. The long lake adjacent lake to Horton Manor is unhelpfully marked 'moat' on early OS maps.

Having dismissed the latter, a previously unrecorded moat can be added to the list, namely the rectory. The rectory was described as moated in 1639 in a glebe terrier (BRS 1997, 114–15). In Gyll's judgement the rectory building of his day, later the Old Rectory, 'does not seem to be the old one cited in ancient deeds of conveyance, being a comparatively modern house dating from 1700 perhaps ...' (Gyll 1862, 252). However VCH records it as 'early seventeenth century refaced with brick' (VCH 1925, 281) and although no moat is shown on the Inclosure map, the reference is probably secure. The building is now Asquith Nursery, a listed building on Horton Road.

(a) The Scawen family

Robert Scawen moved in to Place House 'soon after his investment' in 1658 (Gyll 1862, 218, 224). His son Humphrey was baptised at Horton church 1658–9 and buried here in January 1676. A release of 1667/6 includes 'the manor of Horton and the rectory and advowson of the parish church of Horton, ... to the use of Robert Scawen for life'. (BRS 5, 28). Robert died in 1669 having been at the house for eleven years and was buried in Horton church, his will – unfortunately lacking any detail of the house – being recorded at Canterbury in March 1669/70 (PRO: PROB 11/322). He left to his wife the use of his capital messuage called Horton Place 'with all outhouses, orchards, gardens, courts and yards thereto belonging except the orchard or nursery late in the occupation of widow Burnes', also the use of all his household goods. Robert also held land the manor of Anthony in Cornwall. The will of his wife Katherine was proved in 1684 (PRO: PROB 11/377).

Robert Scawen had seven sons of whom Edward, presumably the oldest, succeeded. He is recorded as leasing a meadow to Wm. Slater in 1687 (BRS 5, 28) and his own son William was baptised in 1693. The burial of 'Edward Scawen, Lord of the Manor' is recorded in the parish register for 1691 (Gyll 1862, 262) and his will was proved in June

1693 (PRO, PROB 11/415). Edward had a brother Thomas who in March 1667/8 is recorded as receiving a legacy payable to him under the will of his father Robert (BRS 5,28). Thomas was later to succeed to the manor, however in the meantime it was William Scawen, presumably Edward's son noted above, who acquired the property and manor. In the parochial returns of non-conformist meetings of circa 1712, for Horton it is noted that Mr William Nanney was Rector and Sir William Scawen, Knight, Patron, but:

No person of quality or gentleman of estate lives in it. Sir William Scawen has an ancient seat and mannour house, which is now let. There are no monuments of note in the church nor antiquities in the parish.

(BRS 28, 115).

Thomas Scawen, who probably did not live at Place House either, was an alderman of the City of London, and a governor of the Bank of England, knighted in 1714. He was still holding the manor and rectory in 1723 and also the manor of Carshalton which his heirs continued to hold (deeds 25, June 1723. Sutton Local Studies Centre, reference via A2A).

He died in 1730 and was buried at Horton (Gyll 1862, 262) leaving the manor to his wife Martha. When she died in 1766, their grandson James Scawen succeeded. The burial of several other Scawens is recorded in the parish register. Gyll in describing the church, notes the existence of a large anonymous Scawen monument with 'more than 20 Scawens buried here' (1862, 244) and Lipscomb notes that the family are deposited in lead coffins in a vault under the manorial pew (1847, IV, 513). In 1782 James sold the manor which then passed through various hands before being bought in 1794 by Thomas Williams whose family retained the manorial title into the twentieth century (Gyll 1862, 218–44, Lysons 1813, 582)

From the above it will be seen that the Scawens occupied the manor house by 1658 but had ceased to occupy it by 1712.

(b) The Brerewoods

The Brerewoods may have acquired the property within the first decade of the eighteenth century as a son was buried at Horton in 1718. The Brerewoods, according to Gyll (1862, 224), were:



FIGURE 2 Horton, Ordnance Survey 6", sheet LVI SE, second edition.

... a family which rose from small beginnings, and attained very great opulence and literary renown ... [however] ... The hand of the diligent made rich, but neglect or prodigality, like a small perforation in a vast vessel, was the inroad to ruin.

Thomas Brerewood who first rented Horton Place '... inherited a large fortune from his father and grandfather, the savings of industry, frugality and talent judiciously applied.' (Gyll 1862, 226). His father was Sir Robert Brierwood onetime Recorder of Chester and Judge of Common Pleas according to 'CP'. Thomas was the product of Sir Robert's second marriage, to Katherine Lea (d.circa 1684), daughter of Sir Richard Lea of Cheshire. Earlier ancestors were Mayors, Aldermen and Sheriffs of Chester and included a scholar at Brazenose, Oxford and a Professor of Astronomy at Gresham College. Thomas died about 1730.

His own sons included Charles, whose burial in December 1718 was recorded in the parish register (Gyll) 1862, 224–233), Francis, and Thomas, a poet of slightly risqué works. Following the death of the latter in 1748, a sister took possession and was subsequently in dispute over the property with her brother Francis. It must have been Francis who drew the only view we have of the property in 1773, before apparently retreating to live in the Strand, London (Gyll 1862, 227). He died in 1781 aged 82. The house, in a poor state of repair, was later let to a gardener (see account by 'CP' above)

LOCATING HORTON PLACE AND ITS GARDEN

The print published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (Fig 1, lower) shows, it is stated, a 'west view' of the house immediately adjacent to the tower of the parish church of St Michael. Lipscomb (1847, IV, 510), presumably also working from the print, describes the house as being 'adjacent to the south side of the tower of the Church'

'CP' notes that the house was demolished 'sixteen years ago' – that is to say about 1775, although it was later noted that a 'small part' was occupied by cottagers (Lysons 1813, 582). A watercolour of Horton church painted in 1828, a view from the NW in the library of The Society of Antiquaries

(London)² gives no clue as to the former existence of the house. Today, the tower has a single doorway on its west side, much altered since Brerewood's drawing as has the staging of the tower and upper twin windows; a corner buttress on the south-west angle might, however, be the one shown in the picture. There is no particular reason to doubt the general accuracy of the drawing and Place House probably did stand close to the south side of the church. Walls and a tree mean that even if were the house still standing, this particular view of the house would now be blocked.

The earliest map probably showing Place House, although the building is not named, is that of John Rocque published between 1752 and 1761 as part of his Berkshire series. This shows a cluster of buildings in the angle between the east-west Stanwell Road and a broad way leading down to what can later be identified as Deeplake Common. In the centre of this cluster is a building set back from the road in its own plot, probably the church, with two other blocks of buildings abutting its plot at the south-west corner, one east-west and one north-south, the latter probably being Place House. It may be noted that a settlement is also shown further south where the later Horton Place is to be built. The next map is the smaller scale county map of Jefferys published in 1770 shortly before the house was demolished in 1775. This indicates a building immediately abutting the symbol for the a church on its SW side with a cluster of associated buildings, in the plan of a reversed F to the west, which has the same relationship to Deeplake Common.

The next available map is the Inclosure map of 1807 (Fig 3; CBS, IR 43). This shows the new manor house which has been constructed some distance south of the site of Place House, fronting Deeplake Common. It shows that Thomas Williams owns the land around extending as far east as the River Colne. This might have also been the extent of the grounds attached to Place House. The Inclosure map depicts residential buildings in red. A small red building SSW of the church, could be a remnant of Place House although it seems a little too distant from the church. More interestingly, the map shows an irregular rectilinear arrangement of waterways south of the church fed by a ruler-straight north-south channel leading from the Stanwell Road. It seems likely that these watercourses

² Red folio: 'Buckinghamshire'.

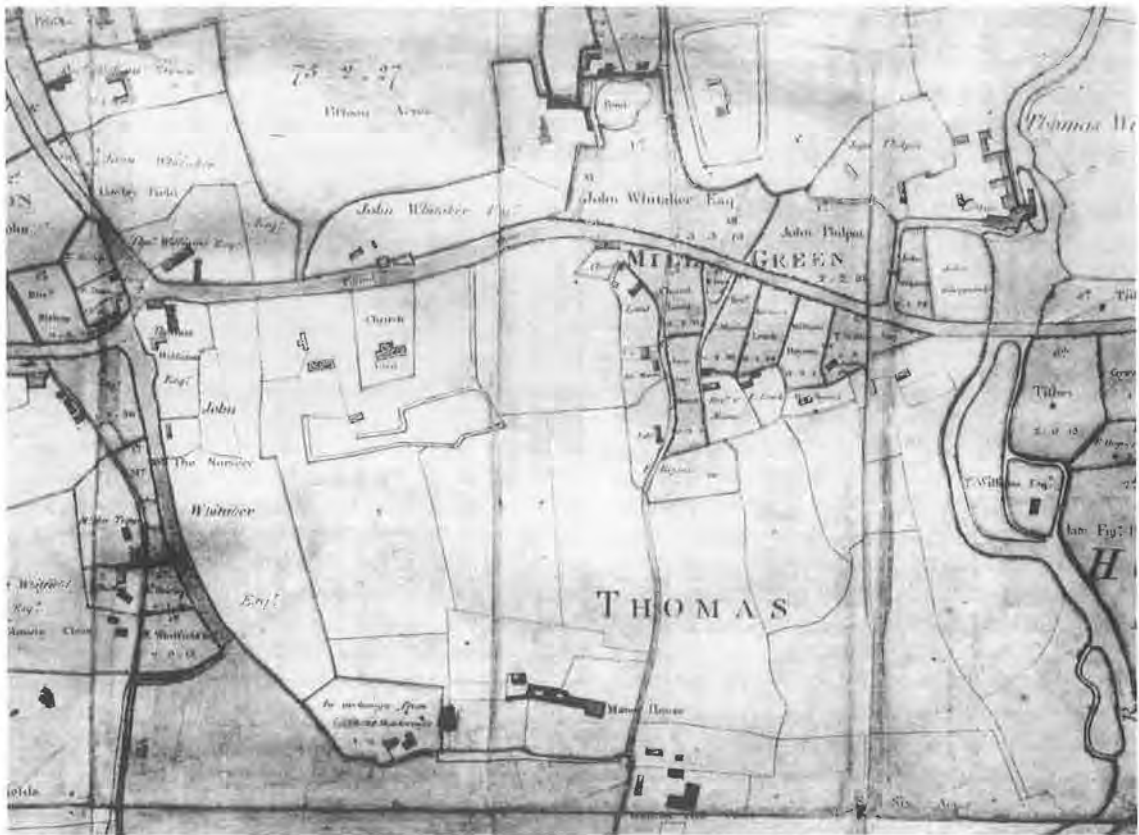


FIGURE 3 Part of the Inclosure map of 1807, reproduced courtesy Centre for Bucks Studies (IR 43)

once formed part of the formal gardens of Place House (see on).

Bryant's map of 1825, is clearly recycling old information. It shows a building within an enclosure attached to the south wall of the churchyard, which might represent Place House, although by that date the building was largely demolished and he fails to show its replacement 'Horton Manor' which by that date had already been standing for some eighteen years. A poor-rate valuation map of 1838 (BRO: Ma/107/IR) again shows, as did the Inclosure map, a small isolated building SSW of the church but the rectilinear waterway system is not shown; if it still existed it would fall largely in a new belt of woodland. In the accompanying terrier the field putatively containing Place House is simply called 'Field back of church'. This map also

shows a new driveway from Stanwell Road, west of the church, arcing down to Horton Manor, with a lodge on the road at the entrance.

Finally, the first edition 25" OS survey of 1869 (Bucks LVI, 15) shows Horton Manor and its grounds in detail, the house fronting a long lake, with Manor Farm to its SE.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF HORTON PLACE

Although the print in the *Gentleman's Magazine* from a drawing by Brerewood, had been thought to be the only view of the house³ two other images, both similar, have recently come to light in scrapbooks of 'Buckinghamshire Gleanings' assembled by the Reverend FG Lee of All Saints Vicarage, Lambeth, which were sold to the Bodleian Library

³The artist was erroneously named as 'Brenwood' in the BAS 2004 publication; it should have been Brerewood.

between 1885 and 1890 (Ms.Top. Bucks. c.1 and c.4).

Although Lee drew many Buckinghamshire views himself, he also copied the work of others and does not always note which are which. He was certainly aware of the Brerewood image of Horton Place since a print cut from the magazine is included in volume 4 of his 'Gleanings' (f.54 facing). However, in the same volume is an unlabelled pen and ink drawing which is clearly also of Place House with his initials 'FGL'. In the same medium in volume 1, folio 27, is a second version of this but with the caption 'Place House, Horton, Bucks. From an old pen and ink drawing circa 1705.' This drawing is reproduced here courtesy of the Library (Fig.1, upper).

There are some significant differences between the '1705' drawing and the later Brerewood image of 1773. For example, the later drawing has a massive chimney on the right hand side of the porch not present on the earlier one and some detail shown in the earlier drawing is on the later one obscured by vegetation. It seems likely, therefore, that although Lee may have done some tidying up, the image he copied was not the *Gentleman's Magazine* image but, as he indicated, an earlier drawing.

The 1773 drawing, as previously noted, shows the main building apparently aligned N-S, judging from its relationship to the church tower, which unfortunately the earlier drawing does not show. The earlier drawing is, however, on the whole more informative and is used for the description below. The terms north and south relate to the presumed alignment of the structure.

Two principal ridge levels are apparent in the 1705 drawing and the roofs appear to be tiled. The main block, which can be presumed to be the original structure, has a two-storey porch about two-thirds along its length which from many examples known elsewhere, would give access to a cross-passage at the lower end of the hall. The porch has a pointed arch with rectangular fenestration above. Both the earlier and later drawings show diagonal timbers in the gable end. The later drawing apparently shows lateral pilasters at ground and first floor level, but as on the upper floor there are diagonal braces all of these features are likely to be of timber. To the left of the porch is a substantial multiple chimney, rising from ground level. Left of this are two levels of windows, presumably illuminating an open hall, or a hall into which an upper floor

has been inserted. Next is a projecting northern wing with an irregularity at the junction between the main building and wing perhaps related to the single chimney arising above. The wing has upper and lower full-width windows, above which there is evidence of timber-framing in the gable end including diagonal braces. The later drawing seems to indicate that the bay may be canted.

To the right of the porch is a second projecting bay, with upper and lower windows apparently canted. Between porch and bay are one, or possibly two, windows in the main wall. A second ridge level, shorter and slightly lower, continues the alignment of the main building to the south. Projecting from it is a third broad bay with diagonal braces at ground and first floor level. There are windows at all three levels. In the later drawing only the upper window is visible; here it appears to be an oriel window. One upper floor single-light window is just visible in the wall between the two wings. Clustered chimneys are apparent at the roof ridge. To the right of the whole is a small single-storey extension with chimney and small openings or windows. Although largely concealed by a tree in the later drawing a larger window is indicated, suggesting that the structure may have been modified subsequent to the 1705 drawing. The most significant structural difference between earlier and later drawings are the arrival of a massive chimney stack to the right of the porch by 1773, and of another chimney block or possibly an additional roof ridge behind the northern end of the principal block.

There is little doubt that Place House originated as a medieval timber-framed hall house, the positioning of the porch reflecting the cross-passage. It is likely that the hall was at the northern end, lit by the windows visible north of the porch. The two levels of hall windows may indicate that it had at some time acquired an upper floor. The remainder of the building, including perhaps the extension of the main structure to the south and the additional wings, and certainly the addition of the awkwardly placed chimneys, reflect the gradual evolution of the house in accordance with changing social needs.

The contribution of the Scawens to improvement of the house and layout of the grounds in the later seventeenth-century is not known. If the 1705 date of the first drawing is correct, then it might show the state of the house at a transitional phase between

occupancy by Scawens and Brerewoods. That there is so little superficial difference between the earliest and latest image, a period of sixty-eight years, may suggest that the Brerewoods did not make major structural alterations. The building's fate was certainly sealed in the latter years of their tenure or shortly after as the Williams family decided to rebuild elsewhere. As Gyll records (1862, 228):

The house which now neglect was precipitating into decay, was partially taken down in 1785⁴ and subsequently the lease or rent was in one Cox, at a rate of £22.10s yearly. There were still remnants of brick-work, whose disintegration was not entirely removed until 1832, at the suggestion of George Thomas Ellison, Esq (brother of Mr. Ellison, Vicar of New Windsor), the legal adviser of Colonel Williams, hence the park is disencumbered of the unsightly fragments of a once substantial manor house.

THE GARDENS

Although the Brerewoods may have had little impact on the house during their tenure, they clearly did so on the gardens. As noted in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, they 'laid out a large sum of money in improving the house, garden and canals ...'. In particular, they purchased a feed from the water of the adjoining mills for their canals, made an arch across one with a library on top and made a mount. The canals were fed 'from the main river' and the gardens lay 'below the bed of the Colne, from which they are separated only by a bank'. At this point it may be noted that the Colne has a braided channel and the nearest water to the house is today mapped as the 'Colne Brook', the Colne itself being further east. The mill would be Horton Mill, a papermill for much of its life (VCH 1925, 282).

Although the site of the house and gardens later rented by Mayhew the gardener was only six acres (according to the *Gentleman's Magazine*) it is likely that it also had a park which would have extended as far as the modern Colne Brook, the area subsequently shown on the Inclosure map to be that owned by Thomas Williams whose land extended to Deeplake Common on the west and down as far as the Wraysbury parish boundary on the south, Bryant (1825), although deficient in many respects, also shows this as an area of parkland.

The Inclosure map depicts the new manor house 'Horton Manor' some distance south of the church. It has a 'canal' on the south side which could be a relic of the Place House gardens but is probably too far from the house. More certainly related to Place House is a rectilinear array of waterways previously noted, a little south of the church shown on the Inclosure map. There would just be room for the house to be sited between these water features and the church (Fig. 3). A long canal runs N-S from them to join the E-W road through the village. This seems unlikely to be the negotiated 'opening to feed the canals from the main river' which lies to the east, but no direct supply is shown on any map nor is visible on the ground today, although an east-west hedge boundary shows on maps later than the Inclosure map and could mark such a course. The system of rectilinear waterways is not shown on the earliest large scale OS map, the 1st edition 25" LV1, 15, of 1869, presumably having disappeared in the intervening years, however, the N-S canal remains, although stopping short of the road. The canal system must have been extensive as it was said to occupy 'an acre of land'.

Although the Brerewoods would not by the early eighteenth century, have been in the vanguard in establishing a substantial water garden, they would none the less have been following the fashion of the time. In the mediaeval period most manor houses were moated and many had separate fishponds. It was a short step with the developing interest in gardens in the Tudor period to add formal water features. A recent work by Henderson (2005) gives many plans depicting this process in action, for instance at Holdenby (1587), Cranborne Manor, Dorset (1610), Welbeck Abbey (1629) and in William Lawson's design for a garden (1610). Locally there was a good example to follow at Denham Place, Bucks (Harris 1958, with a colour plate in Harris 1979, pl xiv). Here the house, built between 1688 and 1701, had gardens which included a substantial canal with adjoining rectangular ponds. A feature of particular interest is that the main canal at Denham had a 'water pavilion' built over it, reflected slightly later in the Brerewood's library also built on an arch over the canal. Horton Place was never to become an important house with accompanying designed parkland such as at Denham Place previously noted, or Ditton,

⁴ 1775 according to the *Gentleman's Magazine*.

Langley, Stoke or Richings, all within a few miles of Horton, but expenditure on appropriate gardens was clearly an important issue for the Brewwoods.

THE NEW HOUSE, HORTON MANOR

Place House's replacement, about 300 metres to the south, had been constructed by 1807 when shown on the Inclosure map. It had been occupied by the Williams family, lords of the manor since 1795. The house is briefly described by Sheahan (1862, 866), as follows:

Horton (Manor) House is in the occupation of Sir William Yardley, Knt ... The mansion, which is modern, is situated in a pleasant park, and the hall door is approached by a flight of thirteen stone steps, and a portico supported by four fluted columns.²

Gyll, also published in 1862, is more fulsome:

A new mansion which now adorns the park, was designed and executed. It is pleasantly situated near a

piece of running water, an offshoot from the Colne, being surrounded with trees which give a lively appearance, and cast a gratefully umbrageous shade in the heats of summer. The edifice is modern in architecture, constructed of brick coated with stucco, raised on arches which to defend it from floods, while the chief door is entered by a flight of some dozen stone steps. The hall is commodious, so are the principal apartments on the ground floor, containing a library, drawing room and dining room *en suite*, all looking on the south aspect of the park, and to this a verandah is added, uniting ornament and utility.

(Gyll 1862, 228 – 9)

The layout of the house is shown in detail on Ordnance survey maps. Access was by a driveway from the Stanwell Road, to the west of the church (Fig 2)

Following the death of General Owen Williams, the estate went on sale on June 6th 1905. A sale catalogue is in the possession of Mr and Mrs Marlow of Horton who kindly showed the writer. A photograph from the catalogue is included here (Fig 4) and a few details:



FIGURE 4 Horton Manor, successor to Place House, from a sale catalogue of 1905, kindly loaned by Mr and Mrs Marlow.

Freehold Residential and Agricultural Properties embracing an Area of 1,215 acres, and known as the Horton and Wraysbury Estates in the Counties of Bucks and Middlesex. ... Comprising the well-known mansion, situated in the midst of a beautifully timbered Park, and known as "Horton Manor". ... [the mansion] substantially erected in brick with pleasing elevation in slate weathering, is slated except the dome-shaped portion which is covered with copper. It is entered with a flight of 12 stone steps through a handsome porch, which is supported on four stone columns ...

By the 1970s the house was in an advanced state of decay. A very good series of photographs of both house and outbuildings taken in 1972 by the county are on Buckinghamshire County Council's website. Rosalind Willatts who remembers the house in its decayed state says that it was an unusual structure in that it was basically of pine with brick infill, faced with slate. She notes that the extensive use of slate and the copper dome were due to the Williams family strong links with Anglesey. Thomas Williams was co-founder of the Parys Mine Company and owned several copper warehouses, one being in London (Brinley Jones 1973, 98)

The land containing the house site and its farm have now been extracted for gravel.⁵

THE SITE TODAY

Horton and the adjoining parish of Wraysbury to the south, have been the subject of extensive mineral extraction and there are also large reservoirs not far to the NW and SSE of the village. Mineral extraction had advanced within 90 metres of the southern boundary of the churchyard and the resultant spread of water is now a fishing lake. The small field between the churchyard and lake where Horton Place probably lay is currently under arable and nothing of it is visible on the surface. Above ground two significant elements survive, some distinctive walling and a large earthen mound. The waterways are also briefly discussed below.

(a) The mound.

About 65m south of the churchyard wall is a large vegetation-covered irregular mound. It is about

26m east-west by 15m north-south, fairly steep-sided and about 5m high (Fig 5, f). The top is uneven with a large scoop on the southern side. At first glance it might be interpreted as upcast from the adjacent gravel pit to the south, however, locally it is known to pre-date the adjacent pit and is said to be an icehouse mound (*pers comm* C. Rayner and R. Willatts). It does not appear on any map but would have been sited immediately adjacent to the water features associated with Place House. Ice houses commonly had an association with water since this provided a ready source of winter ice. It obviously could have served either Place House or the later Horton manor, but it is somewhat distant from the latter. The *Gentleman's Magazine*, however, notes that:

In the extremity of the garden, from the earth dug out in forming these canals, they made a mound, whose perpendicular height is about 18 feet; at the base of which is a leaden canister, containing some coins of the time, with the names of the family and friends who were present at the ceremony..

Although scarcely at the 'extremity of the gardens'⁵ since it would have been only a short distance from the Horton Place, it is possible this distinctive garden feature might have originated in this manner but have later been utilised as an icehouse.

(b) The brick walls (Figs 5–7)

In 1791 'CP' recorded the presence of a series of unusual brick walls, clearly associated with the former gardens of the house. These were subsequently noted by later writers, for example Lewis – 'The church ... is surrounded by a Roman [*sic*] wall' (1845, 552), and by Gyll (1862, 247) who notes that 'A door leads into the Park near the site of the old mansion'.

The walls are later described by the Royal Commission – although not as fully or accurately as they might be:

'The E., W. and S walls of the Churchyard are built of large old bricks about 14 in. by 5 in. by 3½ inch; the E. wall has buttresses and the W. wall semi-circular turrets and two posts of a former large gateway, all probably of late 16th-century date.' (RCHM 1912, 207)

⁵ Archaeological excavation at the site of the farm produced a rich assemblage of material dating back to the Neolithic. (Preston 2003).

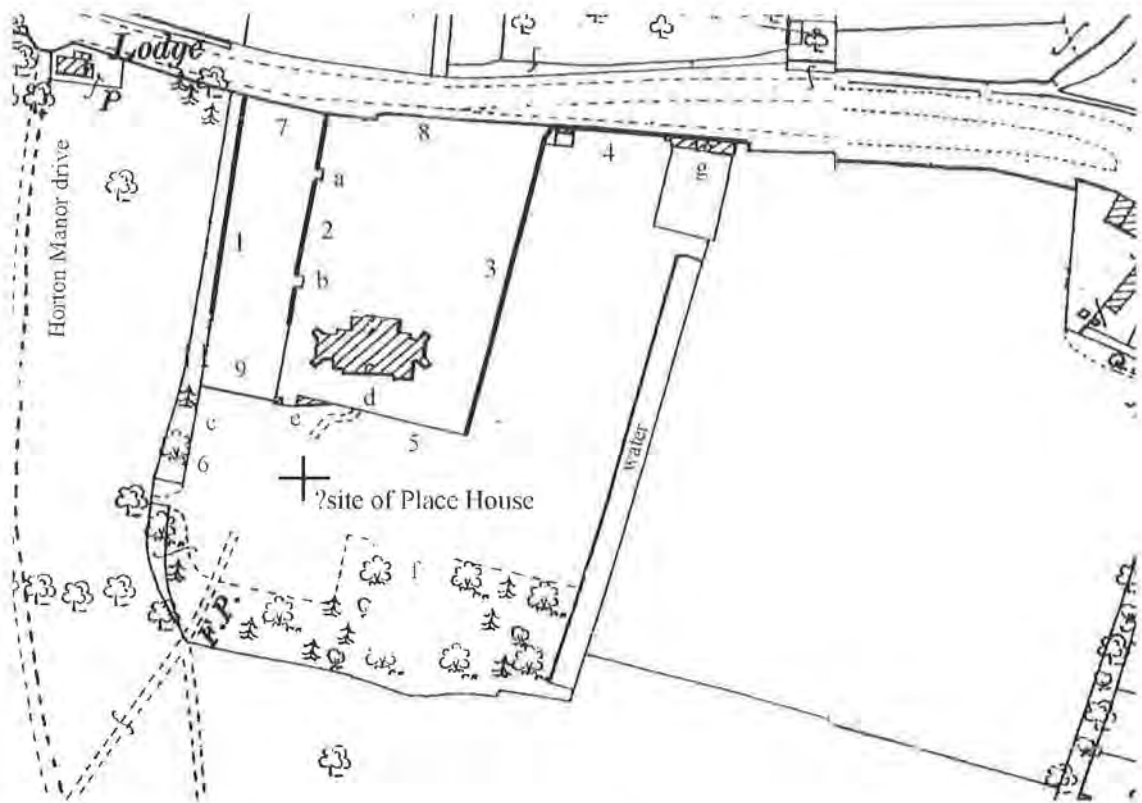


FIGURE 5 Map showing surviving features relating to Place House around the churchyard. Based on 25" OS 2nd edition 1899, annotated and modified.

And finally, they are noted by Pevsner (1994, 404) who, erroneously in the writer's view, confuses matters by stating that the walls 'contain bricks from the Tudor mansion'.

The distinctive feature of the surviving walls around and near the churchyard, some now protected by listing (LBS 40697), is the substantial size of the bricks in some of them first noted in the *Gentleman's Magazine*. They are clearly hand-made; their length varies a little but they are up to $13\frac{1}{2}'' \times 4'' \times 2''$ (31–34cm x 15cms and 8–9 cms). They are generally dark-red but often overfired. It is most unlikely they would have been used in a domestic structure and the *Gentleman's Magazine* clearly states that they were a product of digging the canals and used for garden walls.

In the following description all of the walls in the vicinity of the churchyard are numbered on Fig 5

(1–9) and associated features are lettered (a–d). The walls would benefit from closer study than has been possible here. In particular, almost the entire length of some faces is obscured by dense ivy. Lime mortar is used throughout except, unfortunately, for some recent repairs.

1. This wall is not noted by the Commission although it is built of large brick for a length of over 60m south from the road. Beyond this length is a broad possible blocked entrance of mixed-dimension brick which butt a vertical finished edge on the south. The southernmost length is of $9'' \times 4'' \times 2''$ ('Tudor') bricks with a high plinth. At the top it is finished with a capping below which is an angled denticulated brick course. On early Ordnance Survey maps (Fig 5) the whole length is shown as a double boundary with trees between,

Wall 1 forming the east side. This double character is still evident today further south, but most of it has been absorbed by private gardens. It is possible that this double feature was once a watercourse. The land to the east of the wall is now an extension to the churchyard.

2. The west wall of the old churchyard is also composed of large bricks for about 60 metres south of the road as is Wall 1; it terminates opposite the break in Wall 1, which is presumably not coincidental. The wall has two features (a and b), which the Commission describes as 'semi-circular turrets'. Their external curve projects east into the old churchyard (Fig 6, upper). Both are hollow, rather like small bastions. There is now an entrance through on the south side of the northern one but although the vertical face is well-finished on the south side of the gap it is not clear if this is original. If these bastions had any function it was surely in forming semi-circular recesses to be seen from the west side rather than the churchyard side. A second entrance breaks through this wall near the southern end by the church tower opposite the putative blocked entrance in Wall 1. Thereafter it continues south in the same brick as Wall 1 with the same denticulated brick upper course to the southern boundary. Through it is a blocked doorway with a timber lintel. The commission notes 'two posts of a former large gateway ...' through the wall but the writer is unclear to which feature this refers since no posts survive.

Walls 1 and 2, two parallel large-brick walls, the eastern with niche, can probably be interpreted as flanking a driveway leading to Place House.

3. There has been some recent rebuilding of Wall 3, the eastern wall of the churchyard, however, the whole length of 88 metres is built of large bricks to a height of about a metre. The structure above is more complicated since from the basal large-brick courses rise a series of regular pilaster features; the Commission calls these 'buttresses' but they have no such function. The pilasters flank slightly recessed panels at the base of which are angular sloping-face bricks. In the southern third of the wall both pilaster and infill is composed of neatly-laid narrow 2-2½" brick and at first sight this seems to be original, however, in Wall 4 (see below) the eastern length including recesses and pilasters is composed only of large bricks and it therefore

seems likely that this was the original construction and the neat thin bricks are rebuilds, probably of several phases.

The northern end of Wall 3 by the road has a double angle and it then turns east along the Stanwell Road to form Wall 4. Some of the large bricks utilised in the turn are longer than the norm and have angled faces, showing that the angles are original features.

4. As noted above this wall, which is made mostly of large brick with some original pilaster and recess features at its east end (Fig 6, lower), extends about 56m along the road. It terminates at a field entrance at the site of a former building (g) built against its southern face. This structure was occupied within living memory. The wall end, apparently finished, was close to the terminal of the N-S canal previously noted. Together with the churchyard wall and the canal, it would have formed a three-sided rectangular enclosure.

5. The commission states that the south churchyard wall is also built of large bricks. This is possibly an error since it is obviously well-established and built entirely of 2-2½" bricks and no large bricks are present in it at all. It has a doorway through it (d) with two re-used pieces of marble moulding on the lintel and other marble pieces, perhaps from memorials, in its sides. Although not recent it cannot have existed when Place House stood, if the illustration showing the house's relation to the tower is correct. It may have been built during the tidying up which took place once Horton Manor was established. OS maps show a footpath leading from the doorway towards the Horton Manor driveway. Its western third has a change of alignment with a right-angle at the junction (Fig 5e), difficult to see because of ivy but now sheltering a shed on the churchyard side. This odd little feature may have some relationship to earlier topography.

6. Wall 6 continues the same alignment as Wall 1 for another 23m beyond the churchyard's southern boundary. It is densely covered in ivy but appears to be of the same character as Wall 1. At its southern end a garden no-mans land reflects its original double-boundary character noted above. About 14 m south of its junction with Wall 9, is an original doorway (c) with faceted brick sides.



FIGURE 6
Upper: North 'bastion' of Wall 2, looking towards Stanwell Road with gateway in Wall 7 visible behind.
Lower: Wall 4 fronting Stanwell Road with both base and pilaster features built of large bricks.

7. This wall is also built in narrow bricks. It has a central entrance with two brick pillars either side with stone capitals (Fig 7). Two stone blocks, whose function is uncertain but may have supported gate hinges are set in the upper part of the inner face. If the interpretation that the land behind once formed a driveway to Place House is correct, then this gateway is quite narrow for such an entrance, but it is difficult to see a reason for it being constructed later. It clearly pre-dates the cemetery extension.

It should be noted that Gyll (1862, 197) appears to have thought that the Place House entrance was further west:

Before the antique entrance to the Old Place, when rented by the Brierwoods and possibly by the Seawens, are two brick posterns now united by a wall: in one of them is an aperture made for the convenience of receiving letters, that crowning *addendum* to civilisation.

The letterbox is marked on OS maps and would place his proposed entrance west of Wall 1.

8. The north wall of the 'old' churchyard is a relatively modern flint wall.

9. This wall, the southern wall of the churchyard extension, is modern. No early maps show any feature on this alignment.

This description of these interesting walls does not do justice to a complex set of features which deserve further study. It is, however, clear that the 'large brick' walls are incidental to the churchyard and are a feature related to the gardens of the Place House. It has been proposed that Walls 1 and 2 flank a former driveway. Some of the other walls in 'Tudor' brick and the entrances through them are also likely to relate to the house. The eastern churchyard wall (3) and its northern return (4) along the road, may be the surviving walls of a large walled or part-walled enclosure of which the N-S canal would have formed the eastern boundary. This could initially have been a formal garden but might eventually have become a kitchen garden.



FIGURE 7 Gateposts in Wall 7 fronting Stanwell Road, at presumed north end of the driveway to Place House.

c) Water features

The significance of water features to Place House gardens has been discussed above when it was noted that the mapped elements consisted of a system of rectilinear waterways, probably immediately south of the house, and a N-S canal linking them to the Stanwell Road, the canal probably forming one side of part of a large enclosure. The rectilinear features are no longer visible on the ground, a small part might have disappeared into the gravel pit on the south side, and the N-S canal has been infilled and levelled. A hedge line, now removed, could have indicated the predicted E-W feeder. It is possible that the southern end of Place House was partly contained within the angled waterway on the north side of the system, in which case it would have come very close to the house. If the house was indeed moated, as stated in the *Gentleman's Magazine* then this angle could be a relic of such a moat.

The extent of the house and gardens was said to be six acres. In addition to this some parkland can be presumed, extending to the river on the east as 'C.P.' noted and was later the case with Horton Place. Early maps of Horton (eg Fig 2) show numerous natural braided watercourses flowing down from the village of Colnbrook and passing on both east and west sides of Horton village. The evolution of these in relation to the supply to Horton Place would repay further study.

CONCLUSION

Although not a first-rank Buckinghamshire house, Horton Place is of considerable interest. This short study has probably raised as many questions as answers but hopefully will provide a basis for further study.

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