

THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

RESEARCH AND RECORDING PROJECT 2018–19

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INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

BGT's Research and Recording Project pilot phase in 2014–15 was introduced in *Records* 56 (2016) and our progress into succeeding phases, 2016–8, was published in *Records* 57–59 (2017–19). 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 49 sites summarised in the previous four editions of *Records*, we here add summaries for 16 sites throughout the county for a wide range of designed landscapes, which are the fruits of our work in 2018–19. This work has been funded with generous assistance from several donors, including Bucks County Council, The Stanley Smith (UK) Horticultural Trust, The Roland Callingham Foundation and The Finnis Scott Foundation and help in kind from Bucks County Council HER.

The following summaries set out the historic interest of these varied types of designed landscapes, and are taken from the individual site dossiers. Rather than address nationally important sites which are generally relatively well understood, we target mainly the 400 locally significant sites identified by Bucks County Council in 1996 in their County Register Review, prioritising those which are at risk of change. 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.

DESIGNED LANDSCAPES APPRAISED 2018–19

The site overviews 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. Patterns are emerging in types of sites. 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 70 of our dossiers are available on the BGT web site: <http://www.bucksgardenstrust.org.uk/locally-important-sites/>

Country House Estates

Baylis Park, Slough

Gwen Miles, June Timms

A late 17th /early 18th-century country villa and exceptional ensemble of service and garden structures including garden pavilions, and many walls, gateways and iron gates, enclosing formal gardens developed in three main phases c.1695–1735. A number of notable architects, garden designers and builders employed at Eton, Windsor and St Paul's cathedral were employed at Baylis by Henry Godolphin in the 1720s–30s. Thomas Ackres, a successful garden designer and contemporary of the Royal Gardener Charles Bridgeman (d.1738), laid out the surviving formal gardens c.1726–27, probably incorporating an earlier framework. The architect John James may have contributed.

The framework of the formal landscape established by the 1730s survives largely intact, including walled service areas, with west, south and kitchen gardens, the re-modelled Wilderness with one of three former ponds, and an approach avenue to the elaborate walled forecourt with a pair of two-storey garden pavilions. Not only is the garden the essential contemporary setting for the house, but it is a rare survival in its own right of this period, although the internal detail of the early layout has largely gone including several water



FIGURE 1 Baylis Park, Slough: early to mid-18th century garden pavilions and walls. It is now a public park (S Rutherford)



FIGURE 2 Baylis Park, Slough: early to mid-18th century iron garden gateways and walls (S Rutherford)

features, particularly the focal canal south of the house with formal stepped terraces framing it, and little if any early planting survives.

Chilton House (BCC HER 0404403000)
Geoff Huntingford

A garden and small park associated with a 16th-century manor house, re-modelled c.1740. With Tudor origins and mid-18th-century additions including the fine forecourt (or *cour d'honneur*), the strongly compartmented garden layout incorporates earlier elements, particularly the garden walls with Tudor fabric, and is the immediate setting for the notable house. The park is dominated by a mature lime avenue and contains an enigmatic formally-shaped pond of early origins that is not visible from the house or gardens. The adjacent village, wrapping around the gardens and



FIGURE 3 Chilton House: bee bole in early garden wall (G Huntingford)

part of the park, makes a strong contribution to the approaches and setting, particularly the church and churchyard to the west, as does the wider rural Vale of Aylesbury setting including views eastwards to Upper Winchendon.

Dorney Court (BCC HER 0210407000)
Claire de Carle

A late 18th and 19th-century garden, pleasure ground and park with origins c.1500, which survives intact. The garden around the house was re-modelled in the early 20th century in Arts and Crafts style. It is associated with a c.1500 timber-framed manor house, re-modelled in phases, most recently in the early 20th century. The informal wooded pleasure grounds retain many mature trees, with the classical Hermitage as a belvedere overlooking the grounds and wider landscape, evoking the Athenian Tower of the Winds. The village makes a strong contribution to the approach from the east, Windsor direction as does the wider rural Cress Brook and river Thames setting to the west, north and south.

Nether Winchendon Manor (BCC HER 0167303000)
Sarah Tricks

A late 18th and 19th-century garden and park, with garden phases in the mid-late 20th century, which survives intact. It is associated with a 15th and 16th-century manor house re-modelled in Gothick style c.1800. The adjacent picturesque village makes a strong contribution to the approach and setting to the west as does the wider rural Vale of Aylesbury and river Thame setting including views south towards Cuddington and the Chiltern scarp beyond.

The grounds are typical of a Bucks manor house, reflecting the fashionable tastes of a late 18th/early 19th-century owner of some wealth and survive intact. They are based on a considerable phase of re-modelling when the house was re-modelled c.1800, including a new drive from Cuddington across the Thame which divides the park from the garden, embellished with Thomas Harris's fine bridge. This stone bridge (c.1802) carrying the main, south drive over the Thame is the most important ornamental feature in the park, embellished with Coade stone plaques. It is similar to one of the 1750s at nearby Eythrope, possibly by Isaac



FIGURE 4 Nether Winchendon Manor: Thomas Harris's fine bridge, c.1802 (S Tricks)

Ware. The gardens and park are largely laid out in the informal late 18th and early 19th-century style, but the walled gardens north-east of the house may be older. Into these, gardens of the mid-late 20th century are fitted along with terraces around the house. Mature trees survive throughout, including part of a former avenue running south across the park, with further 20th-century planting including the Dawn Redwood avenue (1950) along the north drive, an early planting of this Far Eastern deciduous conifer in England.

Weston Underwood Manor

Gill Grocott, Jill Stansfield

A garden and park associated with a lost Bucks manor house. The site has strong associations with the nationally significant late 18th-century English poet William Cowper who inspired the Romantic poets including with his poem *The Task* (1785), in which the features at Weston Park are seminal.

This was one of the most frequently-printed poems of the 19th century, admired by George III and Jane Austen, and apparently an inspiration to William Wordsworth. Wilfred Pippet also took inspiration from the grounds for his illustrations of *Ballads of Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire* (1825).

The landscape survives much as Cowper knew it, with no major alterations after the house was largely demolished in the 1820s. The gardens immediately around the former house survive in outline along with various sets of imposing gate piers on the approaches. The most important garden areas are detached north of the public road. These comprise three adjacent compartments; The Grove, the walled kitchen garden and The Wilderness. In the 18th century, the park was dominated by a formal layout of trees which was softened in its lines in the 19th century; some of these trees survive. It formed the setting for a number of important buildings that largely survive, including the Alcove and the Moss House (gone), some illus-

trated by Storer in 1803, as well as a circuit walk. The adjacent village makes a strong contribution to the approaches and setting, as does the wider rural Ouse valley including views from the park east to Olney church spire.

Town Gardens

Cowper and Newton Museum, Olney

Ken Edwards

The town garden of the renowned and influential late 18th-century poet and letter-writer William Cowper, who for 18 years both gardened in it enthusiastically and drew inspiration from it for his poetry and letters during his retired life there. The extent and framework of the walled garden survives intact with minor changes internally since he left it in 1786. The main feature is the diminutive, vernacular Summer House in which he spent much time musing and writing, and which continues to enjoy views of the setting he knew, particularly the orchard between the former Vicarage and the Summer House Garden and the fine church spire beyond. The character of this small 18th-century gentry garden has probably changed little since Cowper left to move to nearby Weston Underwood (q.v.) in 1786. Several mature trees of the 19th or early 20th century include a yew in the Flower Garden.

The historic interest of the garden is based on the association with William Cowper, a nationally important literary figure whose output is now largely forgotten. Here he lived for 18 years as he set out to make the best of a retired life with his friend Mrs Unwin, and nearby friend and collaborator the Revd Newton. He was celebrated in his day particularly for the wit, humour and acuteness of observation in his letters, which embrace subjects from everyday life to politics and literary events. Almost 90 years after his death he was described as ‘the most popular poet of his generation and the best of English writers’ which is underlined by the fact that George III awarded him a pension of £300 a year in 1794. In period and style Cowper straddled the divide between the classicism of Dryden and Alexander Pope, and the romanticism of Wordsworth, Keats and Shelley. Shortly after his death it was said that, ‘Among the literary characters that, in the present age, have attained celebrity by the extent of their genius and



FIGURE 5 Cowper & Newton Museum, Olney: Cowper's summerhouse which he called his Sulcery (S Rutherford)

excellence of their productions, must be ranked the poet Cowper ... uniting piety to talent, and devotion to principle, [who] employed the graces of poesy to strengthen the bands of morality, and give energy to the precepts which direct the heart to religion.’ (Storer 1803).

In his garden at Olney was the tiny garden building “not much bigger than a sedan chair” that he called his Sulking Room and where he spent much time. Built by the previous owner as a Smoking Room or Sulcery, it served the same purpose when Cowper’s friend Newton joined him there, and was undoubtedly the site of much of Cowper’s musing and creativity. The historic interest is increased because of the surviving references by Cowper to his gardening interest and activities here, in his letters and to the expression of this interest in his poetry.

Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century (up to World War I)

Dancers End Pumping Station (BCC HER 0445900000)

Sarah Rutherford

The compact grounds of a rural fresh-water pumping station, built c.1866 in a remote hilly Chiltern setting, well preserved if somewhat neglected, with strong links to the Rothschild family. It is focussed on a central brick pumping house and ancillary structures by one of the main architects to the Rothschild landowners in the Vale of Aylesbury, George Devey, a nationally renowned architect. The layout was probably by Samuel Homersham, consultant engineer to the Chiltern Hills Spring Water Company, in 1865, accommodating Devey's buildings. An avenue of mature cedars of several varieties lines the drive, of types commonly found in the nearby Rothschild parks and gardens.

The focal landscape feature, the oval cooling

pond, is overlooked by the engine house, with on the opposite side of the drive the remains of a substantial kitchen garden for the associated staff cottages. The later Superintendent's house (built by 1897) overlooks the whole site, standing in its own garden. The pumping station was built early in the development of 19th-century waterworks in England when most undertakings, both private and municipal, were architecturally impressive and many had ornamented landscapes (e.g. Bestwood in Nottinghamshire).

Dorton Spa (BCC HER 0168401000) Geoff Huntingford

The remains of the ornamental grounds for a modest mid-19th-century commercial spa, the only example in Bucks. It was developed in the 1830s to a design by James Hakewill who designed the spa building. It operated until the later 19th century, based on a Chalybeate spring believed to have curative qualities from the iron salts in the water. The ambitious classical spa building, which



FIGURE 6 Dancer's End Pumping Station: the engine house and cooling pond, late 19th/early 20th century

never reached the intended extent, was set in an ornamental pleasure ground in existing woodland, laid out with ponds, paths, garden buildings and an impressive gateway. It was reached from an associated hotel in Brill above via a dramatic drive into the valley with extensive views of the Vale of Aylesbury. The landform survives within the wood as hollows, banks and some masonry to indicate the major features and lines of the layout and position of the building, along with the generally dry remains of the boating lake and some mature yew. The line of the drive from Brill survives as a public footpath.

East Burnham Park (BCC HER 0653701000)
Claire de Carle

The remains of the garden and park laid out for Sir Harry Veitch (1840–1924) in the 1890s–1900 as a horticultural showpiece for his country villa. Veitch was the most eminent nurseryman and horticulturist of the later 19th to early 20th centuries and initiated the world-famous Chelsea

Flower Show. He used the grounds here for many social events attended by the foremost horticulturists of their day and important clients, including regular cricket matches. When he died he was said to be: ‘the most outstanding figure in contemporary horticulture, and during the last fifty years no one has exercised so great an influence on all things pertaining to gardening’. As well as for his residence, it was developed in the 1890s–1900 as a showpiece to display numerous plants in an artistic and fashionable manner, including introductions by his firm. It was laid out and planted as a statement of taste and to impress Veitch’s peers and clients. The detached pleasure ground is associated with the renowned rock garden designer F.W. Meyer, whose plan for a Bog Garden (c.1900) survives.

Although fragmented, a considerable amount of the fabric and planting established by Sir Harry by the time of his death here in 1924 survives, but some has been lost to development and mineral working in places.

A considerable area of the core garden survives,



FIGURE 7 East Burnham Park: Meyer’s Rock Garden, c.1910

together with the detached pleasure ground developed by the designer F.W. Meyer (1852–1906) in which a house has been built, retaining many garden features. The parkland setting has been reinstated to some degree since mineral extraction but without planting.

Horwood House (BCC HER 0517702000)
Clare Butler

An Arts and Crafts country house by renowned architects Detmar Blow and Fernand Billerey. The contemporary park and gardens incorporate 18th and 19th-century features, which were extended and re-modelled in Arts and Crafts style c.1911 to complement the house. The 1911 layout, which survives largely intact except for areas north-west of the house, was influenced by Blow, but also expresses the vision of the owner's wife and her Head Gardener, Harry Thrower, the father of Percy Thrower, who grew up and began gardening there. The landscape design, which is integral with the house and Blow's other structures, includes a long formal avenue approach from an imposing gatehouse through the park to a large walled forecourt, and a sequence of garden compartments including terraces, lawns, an ornamental walled garden and the remains of an informal woodland garden, set in parkland overlooking the Vale of Aylesbury.

Mid-Late Twentieth Century Landscapes (post-World War I)

Bekonscot (BCC HER 0789600000)
Wallace Wormley

The oldest surviving model village in the world, initiated in the 1920s. It has inspired many other model villages and miniature parks in the UK and around the world. It is a rare surviving example and has influenced model villages over the years such as Bourton-on-the-Water in 1937 (now Grade II listed), Madurodam in the Netherlands in 1952 and later Legoland in Denmark in 1968. It was designed and created in the garden of Roland Callingham in the late 1920s, opened to the public in 1929 and has continued to expand over the decades since, to his vision. For him, the aim was not strict accuracy of scale, but to give pleasure. This labour of love was never meant to be taken too seriously.

Bekonscot was always meant to be eccentric, fun and full of character.

Callingham's original landscape concept survives intact and in very good condition. The site is of the highest significance for its vision in dealing with such a complex civic scheme, uniting most successfully many individual settlements and buildings modelled on typical English scenes. While the layout is notional and adapted to the circumstances of the site, it represents a typical region of England, reflecting a quest to evoke the nostalgia of the 'olden days' in Inter-War suburbia, tempered with modern developments that do not jar with the rural English surroundings. The detailing of the execution including model buildings, hard landscaping and choice of planting is integral to the historic design and its success. The railway is an inspired addition which unites the layout alongside the path system and adds great interest to the design for children and grown-ups alike. The horticulture is of the highest quality, using a palette of relatively common plants which softens and clothes the layout, adapted, shaped and managed to complement and reinforce the small scale of the layout. Some of the woody specimens are of considerable age.

Campbell Park, Milton Keynes
Gill Grocott, Jill Stansfield

A large late 20th-century public park, a key part of the Milton Keynes Development Corporation's planned cityscape, linking urban Central Milton Keynes (CMK) in a corridor to a swathe of naturalistic parkland down the Ouse Valley (see dossier for CMK; also Newlands Tree Cathedral and Willen Lakes below). It is one of the largest and most imaginative parks to have been laid out in Britain in the later 20th century and is probably of national significance. It is magnificently generous and on the right scale for the city. The detail of the materials, types of horticultural features and planting all 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 for it as a people's park.



FIGURE 8 Bekonscot Model Village, Beaconsfield (W Wormley)



FIGURE 9 Campbell Park, Milton Keynes: the Milton Keynes Rose, one of many sculptures in the park, is intended for Celebration, Commemoration and Contemplation available to everyone. Designed by artist Gordon Young, it is an open-air circle with markings based on the mathematical beauty of a flower. 106 granite pillars of varying heights emerge from the surface, many of which are inscribed with dates of events that have local, national or international significance. (Jill Stansfield)



FIGURE 10 Chilterns Crematorium, Amersham: woodland and lawn around the building (S Rutherford)

Chilterns Crematorium, Amersham (BCC HER 0650000000)
Sarah Rutherford

A fine example of the grounds for a mid-20th-century rural crematorium ensemble designed in the 1960s to incorporate, respond to and fit sensitively into the rolling Chiltern setting. The naturalistic style includes a large proportion of existing woodland, ornamented with further woody planting, together with scattered lawns which are threaded through with the drive and paths. The main building was sensitively extended in 2005 with some of the layout altered including reworking of the apron in front of the buildings and also a new car park, but the key elements and design ethos survive well.

Horwood Manor (BCC HER 1417303000)
Clare Butler

One of the last large-scale country houses, by architect A.S.G Butler on a new site in 1938–39, set in contemporary formal and informal gardens. The landscape survives largely intact but has been divided with the division of the buildings into many residences. The landscape design is integral with the house and Butler's associated structures including garden terrace, stable block, forecourt walls and gardener's cottage. The ensemble includes a formal approach from an imposing gatehouse through fields to the large forecourt, and informal gardens reached from the house via the formal terrace enclosed by the angled wings of the house, and formerly a kitchen garden.

A Cathedral of Trees

The arching branches of woodland trees evoke the image and character of a medieval gothic cathedral. Different tree species are used to recreate the outline of Norwich Cathedral, with Californian redwoods making the main tower, cedars at the western entrance, limes forming the columns of the nave and an avenue of fastigiate hornbeam defining the aisles.

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Nave, Cloisters and Tower

Cedar trees mark the west gate of the Cathedral and two cypresses form spires at the west end of the nave. There are four Californian redwoods which form the tower and the gateway to the cloisters are liquidambar trees.

Towards Chapter House Mound

Cloister

In the centre of the cloister lawn four Glastonbury thorn have been planted. The cloisters are lined with a tall hornbeam hedge which shelters the space and makes it a pleasant place for contemplation and relaxation.

KEY	
Deodar Cedar	Giant Redwood
Liquidambar	Silver Maple
Italian Cypress	Leyland Cypress
Evergreen Oak	Fastigiate Oak
Cherry	Yew
Pine	Fastigiate Hornbeam
Lime	Hornbeam
Mixed Hedging	Poplar
English Oak	Ash
	Glastonbury Thorn

Sanctuary

Choir

Tower

Nave

Chapel

Transept

Transepts and Chapels

Looking ahead from the transept crossing, ash trees line the choir and dark arching horn oak form the sanctuary. Two cypress spires flank the altar site in the open area beyond the sanctuary.

Two circular chapels north and south are approached from the corners of the choir area. These are defined by circles of lime trees and have flowering cherries and apples as their central feature trees. Steps lead from the main ground level of the cathedral to the transept plateau. The central feature is a single horse chestnut. A conical mound represents the site of the chapter house at Norwich Cathedral and is crowned with a laurel hedge.

Designed by landscape architect Neil Higgin, the first plantings using semi-mature trees for its key elements took place in 1986. As the trees mature, some of the species will be thinned and a range of colourful spring bulbs planted to echo the image of sunlight shining through stained glass windows.

Towards Cathedral Meadow

The Parks Trust is a self-financing charity dedicated to caring for over 5,000 acres of parks and landscapes in Milton Keynes. Visit www.theparkstrust.com or phone 01908 233600

FIGURE 11 Newlands Tree Cathedral, Milton Keynes: plan (Milton Keynes Parks Trust)

Newlands Tree Cathedral, Milton Keynes

Gill Grocott, Jill Stansfield

This is the most recently planted of three significant tree cathedrals in the UK. The others are in Scotland at Glencruitten, Oban (early 1920s) and Whipsnade, Bedfordshire (early 1930s) and were planted by private individuals in response to World War I. Four other tree cathedrals are known in Europe including one in Germany, one in the Netherlands and two in Italy.

Newlands was created in 1986 by Milton Keynes Development Corporation (MKDC), designed by the landscape architect Neil Higson and is the only municipal tree cathedral, although shaped by similar medieval ecclesiastical influences as those at Glencruitten and Whipsnade. The plan form is based on Norwich Cathedral. It is part of the Milton Keynes Development Corporation's planned cityscape, linking urban Central Milton Keynes (CMK) in a corridor to a swathe of naturalistic parkland down the Ouse Valley (see dossier for CMK; also Campbell Park above and Willen Lakes below). The Tree Cathedral is one of few such spiritual plantings, with a high quality of design and survives intact and in good condition. It is an excellent example of an unusual but effective design to evoke a spiritual building.

Willen Lakes, Milton Keynes

Gill Grocott, Jill Stansfield

A very large public park, a key part of the Milton Keynes Development Corporation's planned cityscape of the 1970s-80s, linking urban Central MK in a corridor to a swathe of naturalistic parkland down the Ouse Valley. It is linked with Campbell Park and Newlands Tree Cathedral in an unbroken chain and all were designed as part of the original planning for Milton Keynes New Town. The design is based around two naturalistic linked lakes, North and South, which fulfil an essential

water management function for the city, dealing with potential flood water. The South Lake is a major recreational asset for Milton Keynes, and the North Lake is a notable habitat for wildlife and quiet recreation.

It is one of the largest and most imaginative parks to have been laid out in Britain in the later 20th century and is probably of national significance. It is magnificently generous, on the right scale for the city and contrasts with the other parks in the chain leading out from CMK, both in function and design style. As designer Neil Higson explains: *Willen Lake park is a key component of the overall Milton Keynes parks system (c.2000 ha.). The system is designed on the principle of "Strings, beads and settings". The strings are linear footpaths, cycle ways, greenways and riding trails. Beads are activity centres and "places" such as Willen Park, MK Bowl and picnic areas, play areas, cafes etc. The setting is the visually or physically public landscape which makes up the body of the park. Land uses in this area include grazing, forestry, sports grounds, lakes, wildlife zones, events areas etc., most of which can generate some income which contributes to the management costs of the parks. Willen Lakes Park is one of the most important beads on the system.*

The detail of the materials, types of horticultural features and planting all 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 for it as a people's park.

REFERENCE

Storer J 1803, *Cowper, Illustrated by a Series of Views, In, or near, The Park of Weston Underwood, Bucks.* J. Swan (London) [a slim volume illustrated with many elegant engravings of sights associated with the poet.]