

Understanding Historic Parks and Gardens in Buckinghamshire

The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust Research & Recording Project



Conjectural reconstruction of the west side of the house and approach through the water gardens.
The warren rises beyond. Buckinghamshire Council.

QUARRENDON HOUSE

MAY 2021

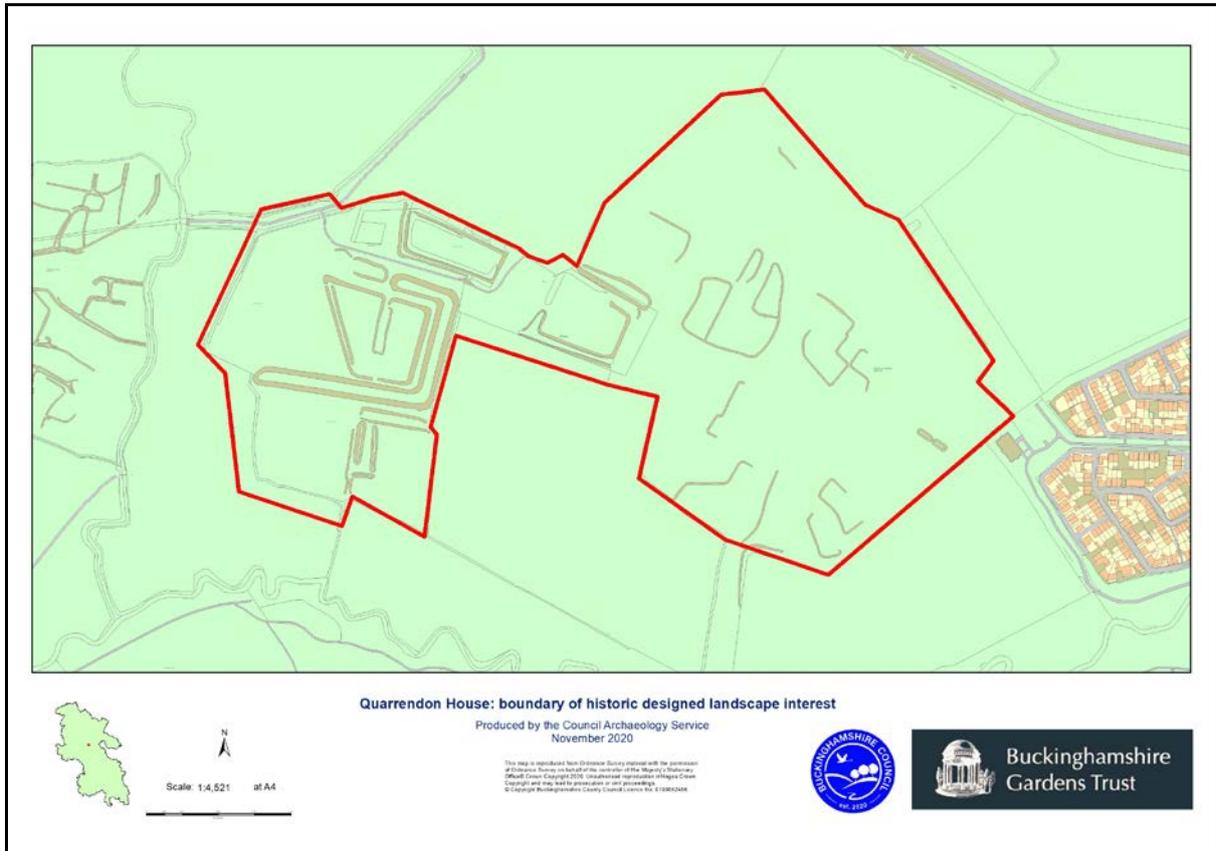


The Finnis Scott
Foundation

Roland
Callingham
Foundation



HISTORIC SITE BOUNDARY



INTRODUCTION

Background to the Project

This site dossier has been prepared as part of The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust (BGT) Research and Recording Project, begun in 2014. This site is one of several hundred designed landscapes county-wide identified by Bucks County Council (BCC) in 1998 (including Milton Keynes District) as potentially retaining evidence of historic interest, as part of the Historic Parks and Gardens Register Review project carried out for English Heritage (now Historic England) (BCC Report No. 508). The list is not definitive and further parks and gardens may be identified as research continues or further information comes to light.

Content

BGT has taken the Register Review list as a sound basis from which to select sites for appraisal as part of its Research and Recording Project for designed landscapes in the historic county of Bucks (pre-1974 boundaries). For each site a dossier is prepared by volunteers trained by BGT in appraising designed landscapes.

Each dossier includes the following for the site:

- A site boundary mapped on the current Ordnance Survey to indicate the extent of the main part of the surviving designed landscape, also a current aerial photograph.
- A statement of historic significance based on the four Interests outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework and including an overview.
- A description, derived from documentary research and site visits, based on the format of Historic England's *Register of Parks & Gardens of special historic interest 2nd edn.*
- A map showing principal views and features.

The area within the site boundary represents the significant coherent remains of the designed landscape. It does not necessarily include all surviving elements of the historical landscape design, which may be fragmented. It takes no account of current ownership.

NOTE: Sites are not open to the public unless advertised elsewhere.

Supporters and Acknowledgements

The project was funded by BGT, with significant grants from the Finnis Scott Foundation, the Roland Callingham Foundation, BCC (since April 2020 part of Buckinghamshire Council) and various private donors. Buckinghamshire Council also provided significant funding, and help in kind including current and historic mapping and access to the Historic Environment Record. The project is supported by The Gardens Trust.

The Trust thanks the volunteers and owners who have participated in this project and given so much time and effort to complete this challenging and rewarding task.

Further information is available from: www.bucksgardenstrust.org.uk

SITE NAME: QUARRENDON HOUSE	HER NO: 0055601002
COUNTY: BUCKINGHAMSHIRE	GRID REF: SP 802 158
PARISH: QUARRENDON	

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Overview

The nationally significant earthwork remains of the extensive gardens and park of a lost C16 country house, probably commissioned for Queen Elizabeth's pre-eminent courtier and Queen's Champion, Sir Henry Lee. These include an exceptionally large late C16 water garden in three sections, with terraces, ponds and canals, and a warren, all now within pasture. The site was abandoned in the C17, and the house gradually demolished by the early C18, with little disturbance since leaving a single-phase earthwork layout of magnificent complexity and scale. The ornamental landscape is comparable in scale locally with Ascott Old House, Wing, and further afield with other great C16 and early C17 gardens including Theobalds, Herts and Holdenby, Northants, but the central great water garden is unique. Further aspects of the significance of the site are given in Appendix (Buckinghamshire Conservation Trust, Adopted 2010).

Archaeological interest

High potential exists for evidence of the C16 former mansion and gardens, the adjacent warren, the medieval church and churchyard, moated manor house, and for agricultural, village settlement and other uses. Lost ornamental features may relate to watercourses, paths, walls, beds, other structures such as garden buildings, sculpture bases, heraldic beasts, and other features evident on the ground. The state of preservation of the garden and warren earthworks, with little disturbance since C17 abandonment, is reflected in the Scheduled Monument status and is a good candidate for non-invasive electronic survey. However the SM description (updated in 1990) still interprets the garden as Civil War remains. There is also high potential for buried remains relating to earlier, Roman settlement and to a possible early Anglo-Saxon royal residence.

Architectural interest

The C16 moated house has gone along with associated structures of the period, and their appearance is unclear, although a conjectural artistic reconstruction has been created (see front cover). The house was set within a moat east of the small church, the ruined remains of which survive. The garden probably had walls, banqueting houses and many other structures.

Artistic interest

The late-C16 earthwork remains of an early, extensive and formerly magnificent country house garden for a wealthy owner and royal courtier, at the forefront of taste, which was little altered after abandonment. The adjacent warren was typical of an ensemble for a group of wealthy recusant owners, comparable with those at Rushden and Ascott Old House, Wing, and redolent with covert Catholic symbolism. The remote rural setting, detached from Aylesbury and converted by Sir Henry Lee to productive grazing land by the drainage to supply his water garden, has been largely lost with the recent development of the extensive Berryfields suburb which envelops the site.

Historic interest

The site has strong links with Sir Henry Lee, the pre-eminent Elizabethan courtier who created the garden, having been knighted by Mary I in 1553, who then in 1559 became Queen's Champion for 31 years, acquired extensive estates and lucrative positions and was twice MP for Buckinghamshire. Very few documents survive to chart the history of the house or landscape. While there is no documentary evidence that Sir Henry Lee was the commissioner of the gardens, it seems plausible that he was.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

This section is based on Everson (*Recs Bucks*, 2001), with additional material published since 2001.

Quarrendon was a medieval village, which in 1086 was assessed at 10 hides. From the Norman Conquest to 1236 the overlordship of the manor of Quarrendon passed through different branches of the de Mandeville family; the overlordship then transferred to the De Bohun earls of Hereford; but the de Mandevilles continued to hold Quarrendon under them until 1332 when it passed to the Beauchamp earls of Warwick. Through the C13 into the C14 kings occasionally stayed at Quarrendon, and in 1297 it is recorded that there was there a moated house and a garden amounting to 8 acres (R. Gem, 'Quarrendon under the de Mandevilles, c.1086-c.1332', in preparation).

A manorial residence existed by the early C15 (Marshall) and a small church was erected towards the centre of the village as [a chapel of the parish church of Bierton](#). It seems that the village was removed by the early C16, probably related to the intensified grazing of sheep, leaving the church and extensive earthwork remains under grazed pasture.

The Lees of Buckinghamshire and Warwickshire were prosperous graziers and wool merchants and important tenants of the de Beauchamps, who were associated with Quarrendon in the C15. In 1499 the manor of Quarrendon was leased to Richard Lee, who had been farming the land for several years (*VCH*).

At his death, Sir Richard Lee held many houses and manors beside Quarrendon. They are listed in his will and their locations include Weedon, Aylesbury, Charlbury and Ditchley, of which the last was probably the most important to him. He died at Quarrendon. (pers. comm Garry Marshall, 22 April 2021)

Robert Lee acquired the manor on a more secure basis in 1512. By the second quarter of the C16 there was a moated residence, with a garden, and a two-acre toft. Robert and his son Anthony followed the route of courtly service under Henry VIII.

Anthony's son Henry (1533-1611) succeeded to his father's estates in 1550 while still a minor. His career was notable for following the changes of monarchy without giving offence, as his epitaph records. He served at court under Henry VIII, was knighted by Mary I in 1553 and married Anne Paget, daughter of one of Mary's privy councillors from a family which remained adherents of the Old Faith. MP for Buckinghamshire twice, Henry held various crown preferments and was renowned as a soldier, poet and courtier. He was in 1570 the originator of the famous Accession Day tournaments and personal champion to the Queen from 1559-90. Quarrendon was only one of his

several major residences in northern Bucks and Oxfordshire including Ditchley, and he was from 1571 Lieutenant of the royal manor of Woodstock and Ranger of the park there.

There is no documentary evidence that Sir Henry Lee was the commissioner of the gardens, but other evidence makes it plausible that he was. In 1570 a winter flood caused the loss of 3,000 head of sheep, cattle and horses. Flooding had been a frequent occurrence in the C15 when tenants had responsibilities for maintaining drainage dykes and ditches (Marshall). It seems likely that Sir Henry created the water garden after this 1570 flood, at least in part to help control the water flow and reduce the effect of such inundations. It also seems likely that it was largely completed by 1592, the date of the Queen's putative visit. He harnessed remote water supplies to the north and east and linked them to new drains and dyked hedge lines to control the flow, converting a large area of former floodplain north of the site into rich grazing meadow. The main outflow returned water directly to the River Thames, converting the narrow floodplain west and south-west of the site to grazing meadow. The ornamental design of this water garden is unique and its scale of heroic proportions, lying at the heart of and overlooking the transformed agricultural estate. The origin of the warren on the far (east) side of the mansion is unclear but was probably part of Sir Henry's transformative scheme.

It had been believed that this major outlay was displayed when Sir Henry, having resigned as her Champion and retired to Quarrendon, is said to have received a royal visit at Quarrendon from Queen Elizabeth in October 1590 or 1592, where 'a gorgeous entertainment' was staged to delight and divert her. Lipscombe (1847) refers to 'The Masque at Quarendon' at which the Sovereign and her Court were entertained with great splendour and magnificence. However, this supposed visit and the attendant festivities has since been shown to be a mistaken attribution: the events were actually located partly at Woodstock and partly at Ditchley Park, which was Henry Lee's main residence (Simpson, 2016).

Sir Henry died in 1611. The estates remained with his family, passing initially to his cousin, another Henry. The duration and use of the house through the C17 is unclear, but it was partly pulled down by 1666 and further dismantled in 1713 when it was effectively demolished. What was left became the tenanted farm, Church Farm. The estate was sold in 1802. Church Farm was removed from the moated site in the C20.

The site remains open agricultural land but has become surrounded in the early C21 by dense residential estates in outer Aylesbury and a new feeder road runs nearby. It is owned and managed by a charity, the Buckinghamshire Conservation Trust which in 2011 produced a Conservation Plan for its management.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM AND SETTING

The site of Quarrendon House and grounds lay until recently in level, open agricultural land in the valley of the River Thames, north of the A41 Aylesbury to Bicester road, 1.5 miles north-west of the centre of Aylesbury. Since 2010 the agricultural setting has gradually been replaced by Berryfield and Buckingham Park, suburbs of Aylesbury.

The 26ha. site overlies a floodplain, with the river Thames nearby to the south and the country estates of Hartwell (formerly owned by the Lee family) and Eythrope beyond the A41 to the south

and south-west. The site is at the heart of a network of drains and tributaries of the Thame. The ruinous remains of the small former church of St Peter stand adjacent to the north, enclosed on three sides by the gardens. The 7ha. remains of the west half of the deserted village (known as Quarrendon II) lie west of the garden, immediately west of the tributary of the Thame running south into it, and 300-400m west of the church. The east half of the village (Quarrendon I) lies within the site between the site of the house and warren.

The main designed views related to the approach from the west (as noted in the next section). Everson also identifies views north and south into the grazing land (*Records of Bucks*, 32), in particular the meadows are an important part of the setting along with the watercourses to the north. Today the best view of the whole site in its landscape setting is from the warren at its easternmost high point.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The original approach is unclear but analysis of the site evidence indicates that it probably led from the line of the A41 to the west, east along the village street through Quarrendon II. It then crossed the tributary of the Thame, running east between two leats, north of the churchyard. Beyond the churchyard it turned south and then east flanked by two garden canals to arrive at the west side of the moat crossing via a bridge or causeway to the mansion and into the central courtyard. (Everson, Figure 18 C) A gate and a stone and timber bridge were mentioned in 1430 manorial accounts (Marshall). The entrance would have had a view along the axis framed by the canals, of the south side of the church, 200m to the west.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING

The site of the mansion has not conclusively been proven, but it seems to have stood on flat, low-lying land, c.200m east-south-east of St Peter's church within a rectangular moat. The island is 80m x 55m and was entered via a causeway 8m wide, on the west side. Nothing is known of the appearance of the house and it survived for only c.150 years, from when Sir Henry Lee built it probably between the 1570s-92, its decline in the late C17 and then final destruction in c.1713. It is could have been quadrangular with the entrance front to the west, facing the little church and beyond this Quarrendon II, and visible from the road through the village. The garden front would have been to the east, overlooking the east half of the moated site, with views eastwards beyond this of the ornamental park and warren sloping upwards away from the moat, with its prominent pillow mounds. The north and south elevations overlooked adjacent agricultural land. The position of service buildings is unclear.

The low-lying position was overlooked by the hillside park and warren to the east, and it was possibly also distantly visible from Akeman Street half a mile to the south and south-west. It would also have been visible from the water garden detached to the west and south-west.

Latterly the moated island was occupied by the farmhouse and buildings of Church Farm which may have incorporated a fragment of the C16 house, but this has now gone.

The likely site of the house relates strongly to the water gardens to the west, and park and warren to the east and they are apparently all part of a single creation. The moated manor house was blocking the connecting route between the medieval village areas of Quarrendon I to the east and

Quarrendon II to the west in 1390 and probably before that: Quarrendon House was built on an already blocked route.

The ruined remains of the medieval church, St Peter's, stand in the churchyard 200m north-west of the moated site. The stone building probably originated in the C13, with later alterations, but had by the early C18 been abandoned and was then stripped of its glass and furnishings, becoming a ruin by 1850. Several Lees were buried here including in the chancel in 1611 Sir Henry, following a spectacular funeral that reflected his status as a Knight of the Garter, and his immediate family, marked by elaborate alabaster and Sussex marble tombs (gone). The church formed a feature from the water gardens to the east and south, and on the main westerly approach from Quarrendon II to the moated site to the south-east. It is possible that a set of almshouses built by Sir Henry stood alongside the south side of the churchyard adjacent to the water garden.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

Moated House Site

It seems likely that if the house occupied the west half of the moated island, then the east half was given over to a private garden which would have enjoyed views east over the park and warren. However, no evidence for such a garden has been identified.

The Water Gardens

The main feature is the water gardens which forms a remarkable complex made up of a series of principal components, notably canals enclosing a main compartment and massive enclosing terraces. Their coherence is indicated by their interlocking and mutually interrelated alignments, but they are detached from the site of the former mansion.

The c.5.5ha. water gardens lie detached to the west and south-west of the moated country house site on low-lying ground, and drain into the River Thames to the south. The ornamental layout survives exceptionally well in earthwork form in pasture, having been abandoned in the mid-late-C17 after less than a century in existence, with little disturbance since all the masonry structures were removed. The lost structures probably included retaining walls for the terraces, steps, balustrades and one or more summerhouses/ banqueting houses.

The gardens are divided into three areas: to the north is a pond garden between the church and the moated house comprising the remains of a group of ponds and islands; south of this and divided from it by the west approach to the house is the central and largest garden, with canals and massive banks for terrace walks enclosing a large open space; adjacent to the south again is an outer garden overlooked by the massive south terrace of the main garden.

The 0.6ha. north water garden is based on a string of three square islands, each measuring c.20m x 20m. A channel of c.8-10m width surrounds the islands and around this is a broad flat-topped external terrace or walk. The south side of this terrace also carried the western approach to the moated house, east of the church. It overlooked the main water garden to the south.

The c.3ha. main, central garden lies south of the church. It is surrounded by raised terraces which form the most massive and prominent features within the garden. The terraces are enclosed inside and outside, by canals and linear ponds which surround and form a key part of the garden design. The heroic size and elaboration of the terraces caused them to be misinterpreted as Civil War

fortifications. The terraces are broad and flat-topped, c.10-12m wide, and up 2.2m high. They form three sides, north, east and south, of a rectangle. The north arm is 60m long, the east arm 120m and the south arm 180m, proportioned in the ratio 1:2:3. On the terrace tops find detail includes raised platforms and ramps. Platforms at the corners and on the south terrace suggest former garden buildings or raised viewpoints. Canals, largely dry, enclose all arms of the terraces, both inside and out, turning them into islands. Access was presumably by ornamental bridges of which no trace survives. The canals are regular, 12m wide and 0.8m deep. That along the outside of the south arm is 180m long has a bank along its south side which is a dam for the whole system and had outlets to the south. A further bank and canal enclose the garden to the west.

The c.1.5ha. central rectangular enclosed area contains an embanked canal running diagonally from north-west to south-east. It is 20m wide and enclosed by flat-topped banks apparently for raised walks. Evidence of formal tree planting on its flanks indicates former lines of elms. This divides the rectangular area unevenly to west and east. Given Sir Henry Lee's court prominence and pageantry is likely that the flat geometric area, overlooked by the canal terraces, was laid out with geometric flower gardens of parterres and knots similar to the elaborate 0.5ha. garden created for the Earl of Leicester for Queen Elizabeth at Kenilworth Castle in 1576, and described in detail by Laneham. The Quarrendon garden might similarly have included an aviary, fountains and basins, sculpture, other iconographic features, arbours, trellis work and pergolas, connected by a formal pattern of gravel paths enclosing flower beds worked in knots and symbolic patterns.

The third, southernmost garden, beyond the main south raised terrace is the outer garden, lying downslope of it and seen from it. The 2ha. area is divided into two roughly equally-sized rectangular compartments of different character by the north-south main outflow from the main garden water system, an embanked channel of c.7m width. This eventually feeds into the River Thames. The west half, 65m x 90m, is largely internally featureless, but it is bounded on the south side by a large rectangular pond, 70m x 20m with to the north a broad flat-topped embankment with a slight circular mound towards the centre. The east half has the remains of a further water feature in the north-west corner.

The water gardens are comparable with other great Elizabethan gardens. These include Elvetham, Hampshire where a large crescent-shaped lake was excavated for a single entertainment for the queen in 1591, a geometrical water garden at Holdenby created by 1587 and a little later Sir Francis Bacon's early C16 water garden at Gorhambury, near St Albans. A water parterre was created by Robert Cecil at Hatfield after 1608. (Henderson)

PARK

The right to create a hunting park was granted to John Fitzjohn in 1276 (*VCH*). The reference to a park does not mean that the park was created by John Fitz John in that year, as he had died the previous year. The document refers to a grant sometime earlier by Henry III to John Fitz John of free warren and a park in Quarrendon and Fleet Marston – i.e. somewhere in those adjacent manors/parishes. The grant of free warren indicates this was in the royal forest of Bernwood, which did not include the settlement at Quarrendon itself, so the hunting park was probably created at some distance from the manor house, outside the settlements. It was probably not the same park that was created as an ornamental feature by Sir Henry Lee some 300 years later, probably east of the house on the moated site.

The former park relating to the C16 layout lies east of the moated house site. It is pasture, and forms the setting for the elements of the rabbit warren which are scattered in it. The west half is level, rising to the east to a plateau overlooking the house and water gardens. The park overlies the earthwork remains of the east end of the medieval village, known as Quarrendon I. Analysis of the surviving earthworks indicate that the former main street ran more or less centrally, on the level ground, and before the medieval manor house was built linked to Quarrendon II to the west via a straight track past the north side of the church which was partly lost when the moat was constructed (Everson).

The principal features contemporary with the country house are a group of well-preserved pillow mounds, which with the shallow drainage ditches that link them and define a series of elongated closes around them make up a rabbit warren. The warren occupies a skyline position when viewed from the house and gardens below, on the ridge c.350-400m east of the house at 76m AOD. Generally the mounds occupy either the top of the ridge or the west-facing slope just below. They fall into three types: single circular mounds c.10m diameter; single elongated mounds, c.20-30m long; and 3 strings of linear mounds with overall lengths of 70m or more. Their origin, development and purpose is discussed further in Everson. The site of a possible warrener's house has been identified towards the centre of the park but no upstanding evidence survives.

The ridge-top warren formed a feature in views from the house and moated enclosure, as well as in easterly views from the water garden terraces and in views from Aylesbury across the Thame valley. It is likely late C16 in origin, along with the water gardens.

There is no direct evidence for the date of this warren but the context is in the setting of the C16 country house of the Lee family. It has been suggested (Everson) that the warren is a covert expression of Sir Henry Lee's religious stance, betokening adherence to the Old Faith (i.e. Catholicism). Sir Henry's patriotism and staunch Protestantism are not, from conventional documentary sources, in doubt. Even so, there is considerable evidence for Catholic sentiment in the Lee family including Sir Henry's marriage to the daughter of William, Lord Paget, a Catholic family. In this respect the warren is comparable locally with Ascott Old House near Aylesbury in which a warren and pillow mounds have been interpreted as a key element of another extensive C16/early C17 layout based on a great terraced garden. Sir Robert Dormer and his family remained devoted to Catholicism after the Reformation and this warren may be more ornamental and symbolic than functional, specifically to portray this subversive metaphor. This was also the case with the warren at the Triangular Lodge at Rushden, Northants.

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Maps

Jeffreys, Map of Bucks, 1768

Bryant, Map of Bucks, 1825

Ordnance Surveyor's 6" & 25" : 1 mile scales, surveyed 1877-79

Ordnance Surveyor's 6" & 25" : 1 mile scales, revised 1898

Ordnance Surveyor's 6" & 25" : 1 mile scales, revised 1923

Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust is grateful to Julia Wise, Buckinghamshire Council HER Officer, and Mike Farley, former Buckinghamshire County Archaeologist, for their help in preparing this report, also to Richard Gem and Garry Marshall for kindly offering comments and information from their recent studies and analysis of the site, and to Sandy Kidd, former Buckinghamshire County Archaeologist, for further comments.

SR

June 2020, edited April 2021

KEY HISTORIC FEATURES & VIEWS



Key to numbered features

1. Site of former manor house on moated island	2. Garden terraces & canals	3. Pond garden	4. Outer Garden	5. West approach
6. Church	7. River Thames	8. Quarrendon village II	9. Quarrendon village I	10. Warren on hillside

MODERN AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS

By Mike Farley



View from the south, 2005.



View from the south showing the River Thames wiggling around the site to the south and its unnamed tributary to the west, 2005.



View from the west, 2005.

The River Thame wiggles around the site to the south and its unnamed tributary to the west.



Aerial view from the south, 2006.

HISTORIC MATERIAL

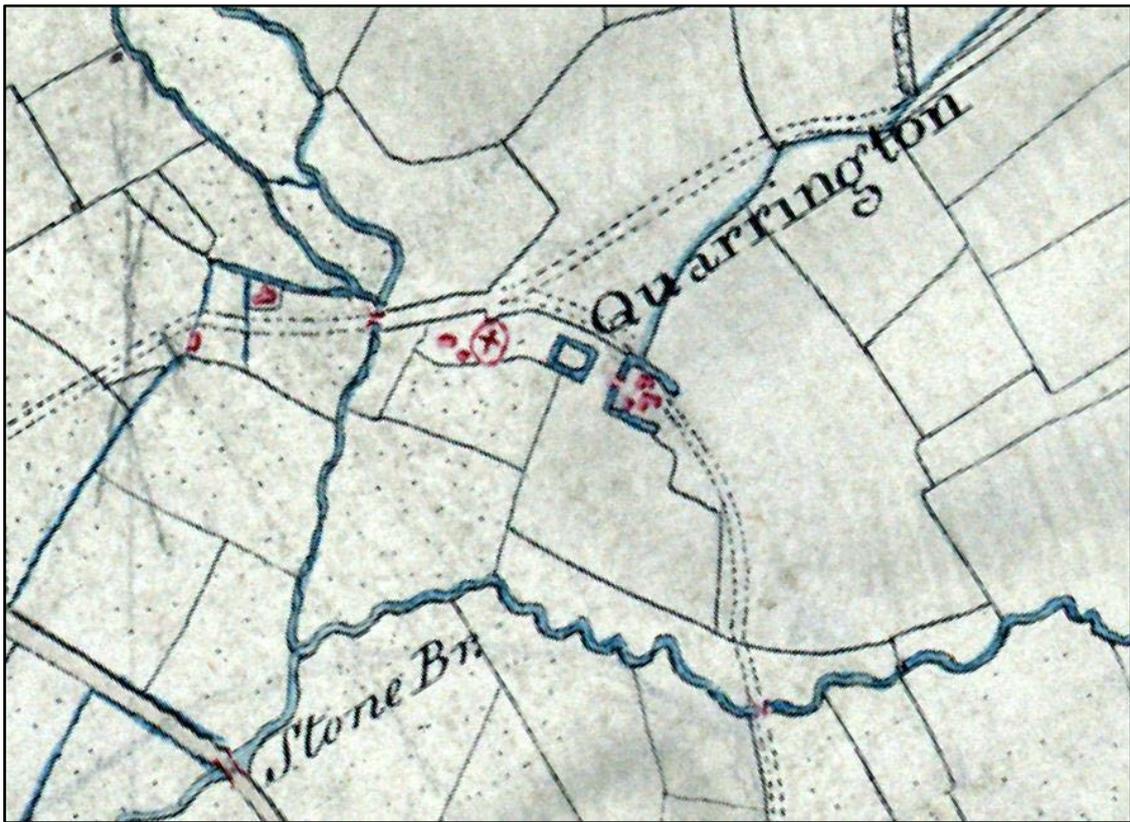


Conjectural reconstruction drawing of the moated house and approach from the west, flanked by water gardens. The warren rises beyond. Aylesbury lies beyond the warren, out of sight at this point (Buckinghamshire Council).

NB It is possible that this reconstruction may be wrongly oriented and too tightly enclosed by the moat if Everson's theory that Quarrendon House faced south is correct.



1965 aerial photograph of the water gardens and main approach from the east (in Taylor, 1998).



c.1812, Ordnance Surveyor's Drawing.



1898, Ordnance Survey, 25" scale showing the core of the gardens.

The site of the former mansion was by then occupied by Church Farm.

APPENDIX

QUARRENDON LEAS: STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

A Document Adopted by the Buckinghamshire Conservation Trust

at its meeting on 4th November 2010

Summary of Purpose of Document

With a view to the future proposed management of the Quarrendon Leas site by the Buckinghamshire Conservation Trust, the Trust has considered it useful to prepare a *Statement of Significance* for Quarrendon Leas. The primary purpose of this Statement is to identify what is important about the site, so that the significance of the site can be conserved and enhanced for the future. Accordingly the Statement will have an important role in informing future policies and action plans

The Statement is based on information currently available and, insofar as it shares the limitations of that evidence, may not have identified all aspects of the significance of the site.¹ Thus, although it is intended as a long-term document, at a future stage it may be considered appropriate to commission a more detailed Conservation Statement or Conservation Management Plan, requiring further research.

The Statement contains five sections, identifying respectively:-

- (1) The overall national significance of the site.
- (2) The overall local significance and potential of the site.
- (3) Particular aspects of the archaeological and historical significance.
- (4) Particular aspects of the ecological significance.
- (5) Particular aspects of the significance of the site in relation to public access, education and the provision of 'green infrastructure'.

Statement of Significance for Quarrendon Leas

1. OVERALL NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

Quarrendon is a nationally outstanding example (as recognised by its status as a scheduled ancient monument) of an English village that was depopulated in the 16th century and of the subsequent development of a Tudor manor, gardens and wider landscape incorporating much of the site of the village and its chapel.² There are grounds for suspecting that the site may also have been significant in the Saxon period and possibly earlier. Because the area has been maintained as grassland for over three centuries, the form of these features has been clearly preserved, and the preservation of below-ground remains can be expected to be good. The archaeological evidence is the primary reason for the site's designation as a scheduled ancient monument. There is potential for encouraging carefully planned programs of archaeological research leading to better understanding and public presentation of the site.

¹ These include especially: (1) as regards the archaeology of the site, the paper by Paul Everson, 'Peasants, Peers and Graziers: the Landscape of Quarrendon, Bucks, Interpreted' in *Records of Buckinghamshire*, 41 (2001), 1-45, and additional information in the Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Record; (2) as regards the ecological interest of the site, information held by the Environmental Records Centre at the Buckinghamshire County Museum. Other reports and documents relating to the site and held by the Bucks Archaeological service are listed in a separately available schedule prepared by John Shipley.

² The national importance of Quarrendon among deserted medieval village sites was first identified by the work of Maurice Beresford in the 1950s, and the site was subsequently considered by the Department of the Environment to be of potential 'guardianship' quality. The full significance of the site as a whole was established in 2001 by Paul Everson's survey.

2. LOCAL SIGNIFICANCE AND POTENTIAL OF SITE AS A WHOLE

(i) Historical

The site offers an exceptional opportunity for local inhabitants, and also for a wider public, to experience and appreciate the pattern of English rural life as it developed across the centuries. It illustrates the history of the Vale of Aylesbury from Anglo-Saxon times to the present-day, particularly the changeover from medieval peasant agriculture to enclosure for grazing land which occurred from Tudor times. Quarrendon is associated with a local saint, and later with Sir Henry Lee (see below). An informed understanding of Quarrendon Leas can contribute greatly to the identity of the local community at a time when an expanding Aylesbury is absorbing villages once separate from it.

(ii) Natural Environment

Despite its proximity to Aylesbury, Quarrendon Leas is an attractive and relatively tranquil rural landscape. It comprises a large area of natural floodplain and a mixture of flood meadow, grassland, hedges, trees and water bodies, with the River Thames at the southern boundary of the site: each of these habitats has the potential to support wildlife. There are also attractive views of the wider countryside, particularly to the north. While its current ecological interest may be of less significance than its archaeological and historical interest, overall the site has the potential to be a valuable wildlife resource and, with appropriate management, could support a range of species and habitats. The proximity of this large site to the expanded town of Aylesbury should assist in reducing car use (and consequent carbon emissions) engendered by travel to more distant recreational sites.

(iii) Recreation and Community

The site, including the buffer land around it to the north of the River Thames, has the potential to make a major contribution to the 'green infrastructure' of Aylesbury and the Vale, where there is a recognised deficit at present.³ Given appropriate management of ecologically and archaeologically sensitive areas, there is considerable scope for informal public recreation here, and it would also contribute to the overall provision of green space and sustainable access routes in the area. The provision of interpretation boards, guided trails and educational resources would help release the site's potential for formal and informal outdoor education. As the new development areas are occupied there will be the possibility of encouraging volunteering and perhaps a 'friends' group. A partnership is being developed with the new Aylesbury Academy.

3. PARTICULAR ASPECTS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

A. The Medieval and Tudor Periods

(i) The Medieval Village

The visible earthworks of the village preserve the layout of the village of Quarrendon in the late middle ages. At that time the settlement was one of farmsteads, grouped around irregular greens and connected by sunken roadways with the surrounding fields and with the town of Aylesbury across the river. At the time of its desertion it was the product of a long development over many centuries, during which it may have had different layouts and different social structures. The visible earthworks represent one important element, but there is likely to be equally important evidence buried below ground, which would be susceptible to future archaeological analysis. Furthermore, there are areas of significance relative to the village that lie outside the currently scheduled monument, but which should also be subject to appropriate management; for instance, a field containing ridge-and-furrow (evidence of medieval strip ploughing) between the scheduled monument and the site of Quarrendon House Farm, and former meadows to the north and south of the scheduled monument.

³ Buckinghamshire Green Infrastructure Consortium, *Green Infrastructure Strategy* (April 2009); Aylesbury Vale District Council, *Draft Green Infrastructure Strategy* (2009).

(ii) The Elizabethan Garden

The most spectacular aspect of the site is the series of earthworks associated with the great garden and park created in the Tudor period by the Lee family, whose wealth was built on sheep farming. Much of this development is probably to be attributed to the period between 1550 and 1611, when Quarrendon was the property of Sir Henry Lee, courtier and Queen's Champion to Elizabeth I, together with his first and second wives, Anne Paget and Anne Vavasour. The main garden occupies a large quadrilateral area, defined by water-channels, terraced promenades and viewing platforms; while the subdivisions within this may have been intended to embody certain geometric ratios thought significant by the Elizabethans. Subsidiary areas enclosed by water-channels lie to the north and south of this main area. These Elizabethan garden earthworks are regarded as one of only a handful in the country to be so well preserved.

(iii) The Water Management System

An integral aspect of the Tudor gardens was the careful management of the water that would have been necessary to ensure that levels in the water-courses were maintained at the proper height. This required the diversion to the garden of water from the stream flowing southward through Quarrendon, and the return of surplus water to the stream or to the Thames. The main feeder was taken from some 400m upstream and followed an indirect course in order to gather further run-off water. The original system is largely preserved in modern field drains and dyked hedges and deserves management and protection. However, though the system is an integral feature of the historic gardens, it is without any formal protection outside the boundaries of the scheduled monument. In addition to the managed water system for the gardens, the regular flooding of the adjacent meadows was also important for the farming of the land.

(iv) The Rabbit Warrens

Of quite a different character, but of no less interest, are the artificial rabbit warrens that were created as an eye-catcher on the skyline. These clearly had a practical function insofar as the rabbits provided meat and fur; but it has been suggested that warrens at other contemporary sites may also have had symbolic significance.

(v) The Moat and Manor House Site

The manor house of the Lee family is thought to have been located within the surviving moated enclosure. Although no direct archaeological evidence of this has been found so far, the association of moated site and manor is common in the county. The still partly water-filled moat is an important and attractive feature of the site. The manor house site is of key significance as the focal point of the garden and park layout, and the foundations of the farmhouse that occupied part of the site remain as a point of reference. Unfortunately the current condition of this area is poor because of the presence of demolition rubble.

(vi) The Ruins of the Church

The medieval church of St Peter, which was a chapelry of the greater parish of Aylesbury (focused on Berton church), was intact at the beginning of the 19th century but is reduced to a ruin today. A number of illustrations record its gradual decay. Its importance lies not so much in the quality of the existing ruins, as in its historic significance. The church was restored in the late 16th century by Sir Henry Lee and formerly contained his tomb together with that of his wife Anne Vavasour; while the almshouse founded by him may have lain immediately to the south. At an earlier date the chapel, which is known to have been in existence by the 12th century, would have served the surrounding medieval village. The church was clearly a key feature throughout the history of the medieval and post-medieval site down to the 17th century

B. Earlier Periods

(vii) Anglo-Saxon History

There is clear evidence for occupation at Quarrendon during the later Anglo-Saxon period and slight evidence for earlier Anglo-Saxon occupation. According to medieval tradition still current in the Tudor period, St Osyth was born (c.660) at the rural residence of her father Frithuwold; and this residence or 'royal vill' was said to be at Quarrendon. The historical Frithuwold was the sub-king of a region within the larger kingdom of Mercia, and he was married to Wilburh, the sister of king Wulfhere of Mercia (658-674). Eadgyth, the sister of Wilburh and Wulfhere, is traditionally recorded as the first abbess of the monastery or minster in Aylesbury, possibly on the site of the present St Mary's. By the time of the Domesday survey (1086) Quarrendon was a sizeable rural settlement of peasant farmers with arable fields, woodland for pigs and extensive meadowland.

(viii) Roman Occupation

There was a substantial Roman settlement a little to the west of Quarrendon Leas along Akeman Street, and a number of farmsteads are known to the east and north of the site. It is possible that Quarrendon lies upon an earlier site and/or that any Anglo-Saxon royal vill was located here because there was some continuation of administrative function from the Roman period.

C. The Post-Tudor Period

(ix) 17th to 19th-Century History of the Site

Sir Henry Lee died without children in 1611, when his estates passed to a cousin, and subsequently the family's interests were centred on Ditchley Park, Oxfordshire. By the early 18th century the Quarrendon property was tenanted and the great manor house reduced in size; until eventually in 1802 the property was sold. These changes had a beneficial effect from the point of view of the preservation of the site, insofar as the gardens were not subjected to the changes in fashion that elsewhere marked the development of great estates from the 17th to the 19th centuries. Quarrendon remained under low intensity grazing by sheep and cattle, and latterly the land was regarded as especially suited for the fattening of beef cattle, which were then sold in Aylesbury market. Evidence remains of ox-pens and other agricultural buildings of these later periods and they constitute a significant witness to the continuity of agriculture on the site

(ix) The Wider Archaeological Context

The Quarrendon site itself offers a remarkable view of English history and rural life over at least seven centuries (and probably longer), but at no time did this settlement exist in isolation. Its significance must finally be appreciated in the context of the wider surrounding area to which it relates, and to the evolving understanding of this wider area. Archaeological investigations in adjacent areas will be of importance in adding to this broader understanding whilst surviving historic landscape features would gain significance from association with the scheduled site.

4. PARTICULAR ASPECTS OF ECOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

(i) The Medieval Village Site

The medieval village was notified as a Biological Notification Site in the 1980s, for its neutral grassland and associated habitats. A Red Data Book plant, Good King Henry (*Chenopodium bonus-henricus*) was recorded in 1987, but has not been found since. This plant was introduced to Britain in pre-Roman times and is a perennial of disturbed, nutrient-rich soil, often being found around farm buildings or on 'waste' ground.

(ii) The River Thames

The River Thames at the southern boundary is also listed as a Biological Notification Site. Water Voles (a protected species and a Priority species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan) were recorded along this stretch of river in the past, but the most recent record available is from 1986.

(iii) The Floodplain

The area of grassland at the west of the site has been mapped by Natural England as 'Floodplain Grazing Marsh', a Priority habitat type in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. However, further survey information would be needed in order to confirm whether this land currently meets the definition for Floodplain Grazing Marsh.

(iv) Protected Species

There are records of some other protected species within the site. Great Crested Newts were recorded in a pond at the north-west of the site in 2002. Badgers are active within the site, including (in 2002) active setts. A range of birds, including some protected and/or declining species (e.g. skylark, song thrush, linnet, yellowhammer, grey partridge) have been recorded, mostly in relatively low numbers.

(v) Black Poplars

A particular feature of the site is the presence of Black Poplars. Aylesbury Vale is regarded as a stronghold for this native tree, which is of considerable significance within the landscape of the Vale.

4. PARTICULAR ASPECTS OF SIGNIFICANCE FOR PUBLIC ACCESS AND 'GREEN**INFRASTRUCTURE'****(i) County and District strategies**

Quarrendon Leas is identified in the Buckinghamshire Green Infrastructure Strategy as an historic landscape opportunity site and part of the North West of Aylesbury Green Infrastructure Opportunity Zone. It is also identified as a flagship project in the Draft Aylesbury Vale Green Infrastructure Strategy.

(ii) Public accessibility

Quarrendon Leas, together with adjacent public open space within the Berryfields and Weedon Hill major development areas, could provide a more than 100 hectare open space to identify an identified deficit to the north of Aylesbury. National 'accessible natural green space standards' (ANGSt) suggest that (*inter alia*) there should be one accessible 100 hectare site within 5 km of everyone's home. At present only the southern fringes of Aylesbury are served in this way by sites in the Chilterns. Quarrendon Leas would extend such coverage to the whole town and to villages as far as Bierton, Waddesdon and Whitchurch .

(iii) Economic, environmental and social functions

Green infrastructure can provide a range of economic, environmental and social functions – the Bucks GI Strategy identifies eleven such functions. In addition to heritage preservation, Quarrendon Leas could potentially contribute to at least eight of the other functions defined in the Strategy, notably: recreation, transport and rights of way,⁴ links and gateways, education and training, landscape character, nature conservation, managing flood risk and integrating communities – thus delivering a high degree of multi-functionality. In the longer term the site might also become a local tourism venue.

⁴ The contribution is to green transport by providing a high quality local resource one reduces the need for car travel to more distant recreational sites.