

M25 junction 10/A3 Wisley interchange TR010030

6.5 Environmental Statement: Appendix 11.3 Statements of significance

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M25 junction 10/A3 Wisley interchange

The M25 junction 10/A3 Wisley interchange Development Consent Order 202[x]

6.5 ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT: APPENDIX 11.3 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

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Appendix 11.3

Statement of Significance

11.1 Painshill Park Appraisal of History and Significance

11.1.1 Introduction and Purpose of Heritage Statement

Scheme context

- 11.1.1.1 This report details the history and significance of Painshill Park and the numerous listed buildings it contains. As part of a wider Road Investment Programme, junction 10 of the M25 is due to be upgraded to relieve traffic flow during rush hour. As part of this relief work, the A3 will be widened and new access routes will be provided, resulting in impacts to Painshill Park, a Grade I registered Park and Garden that contains numerous Grade II and Grade II* listed buildings. As a result of this, a new scheme of access is required.
- 11.1.1.2 After consideration of design options and evolution to refine the design to respond better to a number of considerations, including the need to maximise the scheme's sensitivity to the historic environment, the proposed option 'PAIN04C' comprises an overbridge which would include construction of a 4.8 metre wide access road with passing bays linking properties south east of the A3 with Red Hill Road. The overbridge would be situated approximately 120m west of the park's western boundary, approximately 160m from the grade II* listed Gothic Tower. This location is an improvement on an earlier iteration of the same option 'PAIN04', where the overbridge over the A3 was higher and within 75m of a Grade II listed building that sits outside the park boundary, Foxwarren Cottage (Grade II listed). PAIN04C is also further from the Gothic Tower (Grade II* listed) which sits within the park boundary and nearer to junction 10, than it was with PAIN04; and the overbridge would also be lower, landing at approximately at ground level in relation to the Gothic Tower.
- 11.1.1.3 The route of PAIN04C (as with PAIN04) requires an incursion into the Painshill Park Grade I Registered Park and Garden between the proposed overbridge and the gas compound. The land take within the registered park and garden for this option would be minimal, and would be limited to a strip of land close to the A3, and would also partly run along the area immediately adjacent to the gas compound, an area of limited significance. The level of the new access road would pass the Gothic Tower at a lower level than the adjacent ground level and would be approximately distant 43m from it.
- 11.1.1.4 Other options which are not being progressed would potentially have greater impacts (including on designated assets, such as Ancient Woodland or on a group of listed buildings of and around Painshill House),
- 11.1.1.5 These options are mapped and explained in further detail in the Environmental Assessment Report (Atkins 2016).

Heritage assets affected

- 11.1.1.6 The scheme has the potential to impact Painshill Park, an early example of an informally laid out landscape garden, designed by its owner, the Hon. Charles Hamilton, between c.1738 and 1772.
- 11.1.1.7 Painshill is notable for the scale and variety of listed buildings that it contains and for the significance of the park and the part the buildings play in it. The listed buildings roughly fall into two categories: the group of mid-18th century garden follies and structures within the restored pleasure gardens, originally designed by Hamilton, and the group of later 18th and 19th century buildings grouped together and associated with the Grade II* listed Painshill House. These are listed below.

Pleasure Gardens

- Gothic Temple (Grade II* listed);
- Chinese Bridge (Grade II listed);
- Grotto Complex (Grade II listed);
- Mausoleum (Grade II listed);
- Waterwheel (Grade II listed); and
- Gothic Tower (Grade II* listed).

- 11.1.1.8 In addition to the above list, this group of heritage assets includes the hermitage, the Turkish tent and the Temple of Bacchus, which were all built by Hamilton but did not survive the 19th century. These have been reconstructed as part of the ongoing restoration of the park, and help make sense of its landscape by reinstating and/or emphasising historic relationships but they are not listed.

Painshill House Group

- Painshill House (Grade II* listed);
- Stables (Grade II listed);
- Round House (Grade II listed); and
- Lodges (Grade II listed).

- 11.1.1.9 In addition to the above list, this group of assets also includes the nearby mid-18th century Grade II listed Cobham Bridge. This asset falls partly within the registered area of the park, and although it is functionally distinct from the Painshill House group of assets, it forms an element in their immediate setting. It was in place during Hamilton's tenure, was part of the main access route into the park (via the two lodges and gates) and played a part in the park landscape from the 18th century onwards.

- 11.1.1.10 There are two further listed heritage assets within Painshill Park, the Grade II listed walls of the Walled Garden and the Grade II listed Gardeners Cottage. These fall outside both of the groups of heritage assets outlined above and have highly localised settings. Their form, locations and distance from the A3 corridor,

indicate that they are unlikely to be affected by the proposals. They have therefore not been considered further within the report.

11.1.1.11 One heritage asset that has no relation to Painshill Park, has the potential to be affected by the scheme. This is the Grade II listed Foxwarren Cottage. As it is not part of Painshill Park it has not been assessed in this report. The significance of the asset is assessed using the methodology set out in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, in the Environmental Assessment Report (Atkins 2016).

Sources

11.1.1.12 There is a wealth of primary and secondary source material relating to Painshill Park, and much of this has been consulted in preparing this report. A full list of cartographic sources consulted is included in Annex A. A full bibliography of primary and secondary sources consulted is included in Annex B. Additionally, a site visit was undertaken in July 2017, specifically to inform this study, as well as an earlier visit in 2016.

11.1.2 History of Painshill

Before Hamilton

11.1.2.1 The site of Painshill had formed part of Henry VIII's Honour of Hampton Court, an extensive group of manors held under Crown control. This was disparted in 1548, and by the turn of 18th century was managed as three individual farms. It was these farms that Charles Hamilton, the youngest son of the Earl of Abercorn, secured the leases for in 1738.

11.1.2.2 There is some debate as to the state of the site when Hamilton took control of it. Walpole, writing in the mid-18th century, described it as a 'a most cursed hill', suggesting that the land was largely, if not totally, barren heathland¹. However, a large house was located in the north-eastern corner of the site by the Portsmouth Road. This had likely been constructed in the early 18th century by a tenant of the site, reputedly the French statesman the Marquis Duquesne, possibly with the assistance of John Vanburgh, who was a nearby land-owner². It is possible that some formal gardens associated with this house survived into the 1730s and formed the basis for Hamilton's improvements. Thus, Rocque's Map of Surrey (1768, but based on surveys made in the 1730s) shows the east of the park adorned with a cruciform avenue of trees, and a lake in roughly the same position as at present, but with a smaller area and with a more rectangular form. Rocque's more detailed 1744 plan of the estate shows this cruciform avenue as still in place at that time and also depicts what may be an arrangement of small square ponds connected by canals to the south-east of Hamilton's house. Nothing survives of these features. Both of Rocque's maps are reproduced in Annex A, and Figure A.3 in Annex A shows an excerpt of the 1744 plan showing the arrangement of putative formal garden features.

11.1.2.3 However, it is also possible that, rather than pre-dating Hamilton's acquisition of the land, these formal landscape elements may have formed part of Hamilton's first attempts at landscape gardening which he later reformed in a more

¹JW Lindus Forge and Mavis Collier "Painshill" Walton and Weybridge Local History Society 1986 14 12

²Forge and Collier, 9

naturalistic manner, more in accordance with developing fashions at the time: The 1744 Rocque map shows the 'amphitheatre', a space between dense trees and other planting, as being in place on the summit of Wood Hill. Amphitheatres were commonly found in of Charles Bridgeman's landscape gardens, such as the nearby garden at Claremont which was landscaped by Bridgeman from c.1725, and Hamilton was certainly inspired by Bridgeman's work³. This was the easternmost feature of the central core of the park, which largely located between the amphitheatre and the Turkish tent, where open views were most dramatic.

The Hon. Mr Charles Hamilton

11.1.2.4 The youngest son of the Earl of Abercorn, Hamilton had received a fine classical education but had little hope of a substantial inheritance from his father. His career is rather chequered, involving two short spells in parliament, serving as MP for Strabane, where his father was a major land-owner and then for Truro, and various positions in the court of Prince Frederick, including as the Receiver for the Island of Minorca. In the words of one commentator, Hamilton "emerges as a bit of a 'chancer', a lackadaisical MP and a very minor aristocrat on the edge of Court, on the lookout for sinecures but with a prickly reluctance to play the courtier's game. He had tastes beyond his means, borrowing money here and there in "a cloud of debts and mortgages." "4Hamilton, who had undertaken two Grand Tours by c.1735, was also clearly a man of some discernment and education, being described at the time as "ye top man of taste in England", and his advice on design and architecture was clearly sought by contemporaries⁵. The Grand Tour, a ramble through continental Europe culminating in a stay in Rome, was somewhat *de rigueur* for men of breeding in the 18th century, and seems to have often been little more than an excuse for pleasure seeking. Hamilton's tours, however, seem to have had a genuinely transformative effect on him. He collected ancient sculpture in Rome and is reported to have studied painting in Lorraine, where he became influenced by the Arcadian landscapes of the 17th century classical painters Claude and Poussin⁶. Indeed, Uvedale Price, who did much to disseminate the term 'picturesque' in his late 18th century essays on landscape theory, stated that Hamilton "had not only studied pictures but had studied them for the express purpose of improving real landscape."⁷ These paintings, and the fine grottos, cascades and terracing of the gardens he must have seen in France and Italy, were to be highly influential in his conception of Painshill.

11.1.2.5 From 1738 to his sale of the park in 1773, Hamilton reworked the site to provide a heavily landscaped park with an ornamental pleasure garden dotted with architectural follies and a lake at its centre. Hamilton seems to have begun by planting the north west and west section of the parkland with woodland early: both of the Rocque Maps show this planting in place, and it was included in the park design early to screen the core of the park from the Portsmouth Road and

³ Michael Symes "Fairest Scenes: Five Great Surrey Gardens" Elmbridge Museum Services 1988. Bridgeman was the early pioneer of the informal garden and developed characteristic features, such as the ha-ha

⁴ DAVID LAMBERT "Reviewed Work(s): Mr Hamilton's Elysium: The Gardens of Painshill by Michael Symes" *Garden History*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (SUMMER 2011), pp. 136-137

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Forge and Collier 14

⁷ Alison Hodges 'Painshill Park, Cobham, Surrey (1700-1800): Notes for a History of the Landscape Garden of Charles Hamilton' *Garden History*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Autumn, 1973), pp. 39-68

provide a wooded hilly area at the west end of the park, that was visible from the core of the park around the lake, and provided a sense of enclosure and a backdrop to the views from there, a function that it still fulfils. This planting included native species as well as exotic specimens: 'Hamilton was a keen arboriculturalist and introduced many foreign species to the garden, including firs, pines and North American redwoods. When Charles von Linne, son of Linnaeus, visited Painshill with Sir Joseph Banks and Dr Daniel Solander in 1781, he said that he had "seen a greater variety of fir-trees there than anywhere else in the world."⁸ The presence of conifers in the north west and west parts of the park therefore form part of its significance. It should also be noted that for much of Hamilton's tenure Painshill was also a working landscape. The south of the site included vineyards, a brick, tile and flower pot factory and associated clay pits: "perhaps he [Hamilton] saw in Painshill the potential for making the fortune which he lacked."⁹

- 11.1.2.6 The Gothic Temple, the Turkish Tent, the bridges, the Mausoleum, the Hermitage and the Gothic Tower were in place by 1772, when they were sketched by William Gilpin, one of the early exponents of the "Picturesque" in Britain. The Grotto was described as "under construction" in 1765¹⁰. The last area to be landscaped appears to have been the southern extent of the lake and the adjacent 'ruined abbey', in around 1772, which replaced the estate's brick, tile and flower pot works and their associated workshops¹¹. The follies are notable for their impermanence: Hamilton's budget would not stretch to construction in stone, and the majority of the follies were therefore constructed in timber and brick and then rendered to look like stone. Both the Hermitage and the Turkish Tent were of such ephemeral construction that they appear to have vanished by the later 19th century. The Temple of Bacchus survived in ruined form until the early 20th century.
- 11.1.2.7 Unlike many of his contemporaries, Hamilton seems to have been working as his own landscape designer. Alison Hodges, who compiled the list of primary sources relating to the garden's layout, stated 'We have the testimony of Joseph Spence, the translator of Pere Attiret's letter on Chinese gardens in the *Lettres Edifiantes* and a neighbour of Hamilton's at Byfleet, that Hamilton at Painshill "directed and oversaw all the operations, both in the buildings and gardens: and now says he would not have the same to go through again for all the world".¹² The reference to buildings suggested Hamilton was largely responsible for the design of the architectural features in the gardens as well as the landscape itself and designed them as integral to his landscape. It is known that Robert Adam provided designs for the internal ceiling decoration of the Temple of Bacchus, as the designs for this survive at the Sir John Soane Museum, and this has led some historians to infer his involvement in the design of some of the other follies. Kitz, for example, suggests that Adam had a hand in the design of the Gothic Tower, based on its apparent similarity to Scottish baronial architecture¹³. There

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Forge and Collier, 12

¹⁰ <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/96722>

¹¹ Michael Symes "Fairest Scenes: Five Great Surrey Gardens" Elmbridge Museum Services 1988 39

¹² Alison Hodges 'Painshill Park, Cobham, Surrey (1700-1800): Notes for a History of the Landscape Garden of Charles Hamilton' *Garden History*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Autumn, 1973), pp. 39-68

¹³ Norman and Betty Kitz "Hamilton and His Picturesque Landscape" Whittet Books 1984 64. This is a highly tendentious statement: Scottish baronial architecture tends not to feature square towers. If anything, the Gothic Tower resembles the tower of a Norman English parish church ornamented with windows in the Gothick Walpole manner

is no documentary evidence to support what appears to be little more than a hunch on Kitz's part, and it does not appear likely. It is far more likely that Hamilton was designing his own follies, possibly with reference to published designs in pattern books. Both the Gothic Pavilion and the Mausoleum bear some resemblance to designs published by Batty Langley, who was, as Hodge noted, described by a contemporary as "an architect that has published a book of bad designs." Hodge also noted that "Langley does seem to have been able to turn his hand to whatever was fashionable and profitable, and architectural historians of to-day appear to regard him principally as a purveyor of pattern-books." Langley had worked for Hamilton's brother, Lord Paisley, so a connection between the two is likely¹⁴. The exception to this appears to be the Grotto, where Hamilton engaged the mason Joseph Lane. Joseph Lane and his son Josiah would go on to design major grotto complexes at Fonthill, Oatlands and Ascot House. Painshill appears to have been one of their earliest significant commissions, and one where they developed their signature style¹⁵. It is also located at the centre of the park in design terms.

After Hamilton

- 11.1.2.8 Hamilton was not a wealthy man, and much of his improvements at Painshill were financed by mortgages. In 1773 the calling-in of one of these mortgages forced Hamilton to sell Painshill, whereupon he retired to Bath. The new owner, Benjamin Bond Hopkins, built a new house for the estate on a site possibly suggested by Hamilton. This was completed in a Palladian manner to designs by the East India Company architect Thomas Jupp. Little is known about Jupp's architectural training, "but the fact that he was one of the original members of the Architects' Club would imply that, in accordance with its rules, he had studied in Italy or France."¹⁶ He must also have been a Royal Academician for his design of the 'Principal Front' of Painshill Park House was exhibited there in 1778: unusually this consisted of an ionic portico sandwiched between two bows¹⁷. In this period, the principal façade at Painshill was that facing east. The house was entered from the east façade and had open views down the hill to the River Mole and its mid-18th century bridge, adjacent to the park. Plate 1, shows how the late 18th century house was meant to be seen at the time it was built from across the River Mole and beyond, from where it appeared most impressive, dominating its parkland.
- 11.1.2.9 The Stables, Round House and lodges were all built thereafter between 1773-c.1800, and Jupp may have had a hand in the design of those also. Bond Hopkins appears to have added to the specimen planting introduced by Hamilton and constructed the 'Roman bath house' to the south-west of the house, which was described by *The Topographer* in 1790, but which no longer survives¹⁸. It also appears likely that Bond Hopkins built the extant walled garden in the east of the park; as written descriptions of the park from Hamilton's tenure suggest that the kitchen gardens were located closer to the house. Bond Hopkins

¹⁴ Alison Hodges 'Painshill Park, Cobham, Surrey (1700-1800): Notes for a History of the Landscape Garden of Charles Hamilton' *Garden History*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Autumn, 1973), pp. 39-68

¹⁵ <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/96722>

¹⁶ Colvin, 598

¹⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁸ Michael Symes 'Benjamin Bond Hopkins at Painshill' *Garden History*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Winter, 1999), pp. 238-243

possibly felt the need to remove these from the view from the principal façade of his newly constructed house.

- 11.1.2.10 Jupp's Painshill House survives. It was heavily altered and extended for a later owner by Decimus Burton in 1831-2. Burton's alterations involved the construction of a new porch and entrance on the west façade, altering the entrance to Jupp's original design. Burton also replaced a small gothic chapel on the south façade with a large conservatory. This is illustrated in a 1904 edition of *Country Life*, but it was itself replaced in c.1910 with a wing housing a ballroom, lower than the main body of the house and designed to balance a wing extending to the north. The interior contains fine Adamesque plasterwork, likely by Jupp, with some Grecian detailing by Burton in the former saloon on the east façade¹⁹.
- 11.1.2.11 The estate was sold several more times during the 19th century. By the early 20th century it was owned by a family called Combes, who were responsible for incorporating the remains of the Temple of Bacchus into the East front of Painshill House, on the site of Jupp's long vanished portico. Otherwise, they appear to have maintained the 18th century form of the garden, as early 20th century OS maps show.
- 11.1.2.12 During the Second World War, Painshill House was requisitioned to house Canadian airmen, who are variously credited with using the follies for target practice, and selling the lead from the Grotto's roof to fund a VE day party. These stories may be apocryphal, but they are illustrative of Painshill's steep decline in the post-war period. In the late 1940s the estate was purchased by the Baroness de Veauce who converted Painshill House and its outbuildings into individual dwellings, a conversion that was praised at the time for its sensitivity in maintaining historically significant fabric²⁰. Less sensitively, however, the parkland was also divided into lots and sold for other uses. Some areas of the conifer plantations and all of the domestic dwellings along the northern boundary of the estate date to this period. All of this had a negative effect on Hamilton's pleasure gardens. The painter John Piper, quoted in *Country Life* in January 1958, described the park as surviving in a state of "picturesque decay" and Iain Nairn, writing in the 1960s, described the park as "sadly neglected... many of the ornamental structures are going or gone."²¹ By the 1970s, when the Friends of Painshill Park was formed, the gardens were in a poor state. The lake had largely silted up, the roof of the main chamber of the Grotto had collapsed, the Gothic Tower had been gutted by fire, the Gothic Temple and the Ruined Abbey were in a poor state of repair, and, as stated above, the Temple of Bacchus, the Hermitage and the Turkish Tent had vanished entirely. By 1980, the local authority had purchased some 62ha of the original gardens and restoration work was underway.

¹⁹ Gordon Nares "Painshill Surrey" *Country Life* No 3183 Jan 2 1958 19

²⁰ *Ibid*

²¹ *Ibid* 18 and Nairn, 404



Plate 1: Engraving of Painshill Park House, c1790. From Batley's History of Surrey

Reproduced in Gordon Nares "Painshill Surrey" Country Life No 3183 Jan 2 1958 19

11.1.3 Description

Location

11.1.3.1 Painshill Park is roughly triangular in shape, bounded by the curve of the River Mole to the south and east, and the line of the A3 (formerly the route of the London to Portsmouth Coaching Road) to the west and north. The site is roughly a mile and a half long and a mile wide at its widest point.

Approaches

- 11.1.3.2 The principal historic approach was along a drive from the north boundary of the site, which led into the park from the Portsmouth Road passing Hamilton's house in the north east of the site. This survives as the approach to Painshill House (Grade II* listed) and its associated outbuildings, and its main historic entrance gateway from the A3 is marked by two lodges (Grade II listed). However, there is now no connectivity to the wider park from this approach.
- 11.1.3.3 A secondary approach to the east of this, and immediately to the west of the Cobham Bridge, runs through the east of the park to the historic walled gardens and the visitor's centre. This approach appears to be marked on Rocque's 1744 Map of the estate, running from an entrance to the park to what may be the formal water features in the gardens of Hamilton's house (see maps reproduced in Annex A, Figure A.2 and Figure A.3).
- 11.1.3.4 The current principal approach is from the east of the site, from a car park on Anvil Lane across a landmark bridge over the River Mole to the visitor centre (constructed to designs by Fielden Clegg Bradley in 2001, and winner of the 2003 Civic Trust Design Award) adjacent to the walled gardens. This approach is

not marked on historic maps of the estate. The Mole formed the southern and eastern boundary of the park and there were no crossings over it into the park in the 18th/19th centuries, other than the Cobham Bridge in the eastern corner of the park.

Description

- 11.1.3.5 The site generally falls from the north, reflecting the underlying geology, the 100' and 50' gravel terraces that run through this section of the Thames valley, to just above sea level at the River Mole valley in the south and east edge of the site. This fall in the site was exploited during the laying out of the park to create a dramatic and varied garden schema. Painshill can be split between the restored pleasure gardens to the south and the wilder, less overtly cultivated parkland to the north and west. Syme has noted: "the gardens exhibit a basic division between park and garden. The lake is the centrepiece of the pleasure gardens, which were cultivated more intensively than the open parkland surrounding the [northern portion], which was simply meadow with trees dotted about, or in clumps".²²

The northern park

- 11.1.3.6 The north west edge of the park is thickly wooded, which serves to screen the A3 from the vast majority of the park. The western end of the park is also largely planted as dense woodland. These wooded areas were part of Hamilton's original design and have become more accentuated over time with an increase in the extent and height of the woodland. Some areas of the north of the park are relatively open and feature individual and clumps of planted trees, including specimen trees, introduced by Hamilton and Benjamin Baud, set in wide expanses of grassland, generally fringed and contained by trees. An example of this is the area of the park in front of the west facade of Painshill House, which features cedars and pines in an open area of meadow, beyond the immediate light tree screen around the house. The north-east of side of the park, where the land falls to the River Mole valley, as the valley curves to the north-east, is laid out as an open grassland meadow (as it was in the 18th century). The Grade II listed Cobham Bridge, at the park's boundary, is highly visible and makes a positive contribution to the park's setting in this area.
- 11.1.3.7 Between these two relatively open areas is the group of designated assets surrounding Painshill House (Grade II* listed). This group of assets includes the estate's lodges (Grade II listed), the former Stables (Grade II listed), and the Round House (Grade II listed), formerly the estate brewery, immediately to the north of the house. Collectively these assets form a cohesive group of late 18th to early 19th century country estate buildings, with a legible and clear relationship to one-another and with Painshill House. Each of the buildings now sits in individual gardens demarcated by thick hedges. These gardens have various features, including hard landscaping, fountains, paths and raised flower beds, that are likely to date to their conversion into individual dwellings in the 1940s, but much of the mature planting clearly predates this and there are examples of specimen conifers, cypresses and pines introduced by Hamilton and Bond Hopkins dotted throughout the individual gardens. The boundaries of the house and former

²² Michael Symes "Fairest Scenes: Five Great Surrey Gardens" 39

outbuildings are relatively densely planted (although there are some areas of less dense planting), serving to somewhat separate the group of assets from the wider park. Despite this reduced connectivity between this group of assets and the wider park, the group of assets retains visual connectivity with the parkland - there are clear views from Painshill House to the open grassland planted with specimen trees to the west and to the open water meadow area by the River Mole and Cobham Bridge to the south, and it is likely that there are views from the other assets to the parkland to the south.

- 11.1.3.8 The north of the park, to the north east of the western woodland (which has been in place since Hamilton's time) has also seen the most significant alteration in the later 20th century, with areas given over to conifer plantations, a girl guide camp and several domestic dwellings. These sit within the registered area of the park, but are highly screened by thickly planted perimeters. The woodland in the north and west of the park is crossed by pylons, which are highly prominent in some areas of the park, and, although the A3 is visually screened from the vast majority of the park, it has a significant aural presence in the north and west of the park.

Hamilton's Pleasure Gardens

- 11.1.3.9 The restored pleasure gardens are concentrated in the centre, south and south west of the park, and this is the historic core of the gardens, where the follies are located in and around the lake, which runs in an irregular shape along the southern part of the centre of the park. There was a defined route that visitors were expected to follow when touring Hamilton's garden, which seems to have been followed by both Horace Walpole and William Gilpin on their visits to the garden, and is described in some detail in Thomas Whatley's 'Observations on Modern Gardening' of 1770. The description of the pleasure gardens and the follies below as they now stand follows the sequence of this defined route.



Plate 2: The Gothic Temple

- 11.1.3.10 The 18th century visitor experience began at the north of the park, at the historic entrance (now the entrance to Painshill House) flanked by the two lodges, before climbing Wood Hill. At the summit of the hill, visitors entered an open grassed space surrounded by dense tree planting known as the amphitheatre, which featured a lead copy of Giambologna's Rape of the Sabines. (Similar planted amphitheatres had featured in the nearby gardens of Oatlands and may have inspired Hamilton). The views afforded by the amphitheatre were channelled by tree plantations so that there were wide vistas over the River Mole to the south and there were also views westwards to the Gothic Temple and the open core of the park around the lake. From the amphitheatre here, visitors could pass to the south to view the vineyards created by Hamilton on the southern slopes of Wood Hill. These were planted in the 1740s but had reverted to woodland by the 1770s, and were replanted in the 1990s. The fact that the vineyards had become woodland by this time indicates that for much of the park's history, including during part of Hamilton's tenure, the amphitheatre's main views were towards the Gothic Temple and from there to the core of the park beyond (See Plate 2 for the views to the core of the park when approaching the Gothic Temple from the amphitheatre).
- 11.1.3.11 Beyond the vineyards lay the southern extent of the lake, and from the approach to the Gothic Temple there were views beyond over the core of the park. The views out of the park to the surrounding agricultural land beyond the Mole Valley are now among the finest views out of the park. This south east section of the lake was filled in the 1770s, in the depression formed by a clay pit that served the estate's brick and tile works. The Chapel or Abbey 'Ruins' (Grade II listed) were constructed in c.1772, on the site of the brick and tile works itself. The 'Ruin', the last of the follies built in the park, takes the form of a two-storey, three-bay building constructed in rendered brickwork with octagonal side towers, and it features pointed arch windows with Y-shaped tracery. It is generally considered to be one of the garden's less successful follies: as one commentator has noted, it is "best viewed from the further bank of the lake and then preferably through a slight mist."²³ Of all the follies, the ruined Abbey appears the most insubstantial in the landscape, more like a piece of stage scenery design than a piece of permanent architecture, perhaps further illustrating Hamilton's straightened financial situation in the early 1770s.

²³ JW Lindus Forge and Mavis Collier 23



Plate 3: View of the lake from below the Gothic Temple. The Gothic Tower was originally prominent in this view, but is now all but entirely masked by tree growth

11.1.3.12 After enjoying the views to the south over the Mole valley, the visitor was then encouraged to pass westwards from the amphitheatre along a short tree-lined avenue to the Gothic Temple (Grade II* listed; see Plate 2 for views of the Gothic Temple along this approach route). The temple was constructed in stucco-covered wood and takes the form of an octagon, with each of its eight sides having an open ogee arch with a quatrefoil decorated circular opening above, rising to a battlemented roof parapet. The temple is a fine example of 18th century Gothick architecture, in the manner of Horace Walpole's playful villa at Strawberry Hill. Walpole, however, was not charmed by the temple, apparently stating with contempt that "the Goths never built summer houses or temples in a garden."²⁴ From inside the temple, visitors could view a broad sweep of views in an arc running south west-west- north west, taking in the majority of the pleasure gardens: the lakes and the Grotto on the valley floor, with the wooded hillsides rising to the west, terminating the view. The Turkish tent was, and is, prominent on the western hillside and provided a focal point along with the classical bridge at the opposite end of the lake in front of the dense tree screen that bounded the western end of the open core of the park defined by the lake and its setting. As has been stated, the Gothic Temple "is perhaps the finest example of Hamilton's flair for siting his buildings where they would be most effective. On the edge of a bluff [the Gothic Temple] is visible... from the whole western area of the park. Looking out from it in the opposite direction, one enjoys the finest view the garden has to offer."²⁵ The westwards view also prominently featured the Gothic Tower rising through the trees beyond, to the north-west as is depicted in Gilpin's sketch of 1772. A depiction of 1772 from close to the Chinese Bridge and Grotto (See Plate 4) shows the way in which the landscape around the lake was meant

²⁴ Nairn 404

²⁵ JW Lindus Forge and Mavis Collier 19

to be experienced, with strong tree screens around the fringes of the open ground at the core of the park around the lake, framing views of the lake and of the follies and features around it. This depiction also confirms Hamilton's design intention in relation to the Gothic Tower, as illustrated by Gilpin (see Plate 6). Both of these contemporary illustrations show that the tower was meant originally to be seen from the core of the park as visible above the then lower tree line, as a tempting mysterious distant presence above the tree line of the tree screen that bounds the park's less wild, informal core. It was a tantalising feature in the distant woodland. However, the growth of the trees has masked the Gothic Tower in these views.

11.1.3.13 The view from the Gothic Temple was meant to impress the visitor with the scale and variety of the landscape at Painshill. Hamilton skilfully deployed the topography and massed planting as well as the broken outline and sinuous form of the lake to create the illusion that the landscape was much larger and more dramatic than it is in reality. The lake was central in the creation of this *tromp l'oeil* landscape: "the lake, which was extended in 1772 by the arm of water which stretches past the Ruined Abbey, is a masterpiece of skill in its design, because it can never be seen all at once and deceives the eye into making it seem much larger than it is. It also changes its appearance - lake, canal, river - from different positions. This is a perfect example of the way in which Hamilton was able to use space in the creation of illusion."²⁶ The view back from the Turkish Tent has similar qualities (see Plate 8).

11.1.3.14 From the Gothic Temple, the visitor passed down through the wooded hillside to the lake, crossing the 'Chinese Bridge' (Grade II listed), which has been described as "Chinese Chippendale... a portmanteau object" and is inaccurately dated in the list description to the mid-19th century²⁷. From here the visitor entered the Grotto on the central islands of the lake. The Grotto (Grade II listed), the restoration of which was completed in 2013, is entered from a rockwork arch clad in a oolitic limestone which has the appearance of volcanic tufa. Internally, the Grotto takes the form of a subterranean narrow passage leading into a wide cavern with openings onto the surface of the lake. The exteriors of these openings are also clad in the tufa-like limestone, and as Symes has noted, this stone gave an eerie effect and "was used not only on the Grotto but also on numerous alcoves and outcrops all over the grotto island, including, most spectacularly, an arch to invite the visitor on to the island". The Grotto's internal walls and roof are covered in a variety of Derbyshire spars, amethysts and other semi-precious crystalline rocks. False stalactites and stalagmites, composed of timber formwork and covered in spar, give the cave a naturalistic appearance.

²⁶ Michael Symes "Fairest Scenes: Five Great Surrey Gardens" Elmbridge Museum Services 1988 39

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 42



Plate 4: View within the core of the park (c.1770) towards the Turkish Tent and classical bridge. The Gothic Tower is visible above the tree line, indicating its original role within the park, as it is designed to rise as a tempting mysterious distant presence above the tree line of the tree screen that bounds the park's less wild informal core.



Plate 5: Grotto Island (Harrison 2017)

- 11.1.3.15 In their early incarnation, grottos had often been light-filled rooms attached to houses or freestanding structures in gardens, with walls decorated in shells and stones mimicking contemporary architectural styles. By the mid-18th century, however, they had evolved into something more dark and naturalistic. They were intended to inspire feelings of the sublime in the viewer: a thrilled fear at the awesomeness of the natural world, tinged with feelings of melancholy. The grottos at Fonthill for example, which were inspired by those at Painshill and were similarly laid out by the Lane family, were particularly dark, cavernous, and terrifying.
- 11.1.3.16 The feelings of sublime melancholy inspired by the grotto were meant to persist in the viewer as they passed over the lake, via a wooden bridge, restored in the 1980s, to a small clearing in a wooded area just east of the central part of the lake, containing a mausoleum (Grade II listed). This originally took the form of an ashlar and rubble faced 'ruined' triumphal arch, ornamented with Roman statuary and with an altar and ornamental Roman urn at its centre. It was depicted in this form by Josiah Wedgwood on the Imperial Russian Dinner Service decorated with scenes of English parklands, commissioned by Catherine the Great and now in the Hermitage museum in St Petersburg. In the later 20th century it appears to have been a favourite target of vandals, and was in a poor condition by the 1970s, and has been partially restored, although not to its original form.
- 11.1.3.17 The planting surrounding the mausoleum was dark and largely coniferous, to help form a suitably melancholic setting for the folly to sustain the dark mood created by the grotto. This dark and dense planting was carried on up the western flank of the park, where the character of the park was more wooded, with limited long views and a sense of enclosure and intimacy. To get to this part of the park the visitor walked alongside the western extent of the lake, which originally took the form of a cascade, and the waterwheel (Grade II listed), a 19th century copy of one installed by Hamilton to raise water from the River Mole to the slightly higher lake bed. Waterwheels were often included in the idealised Arcadian landscapes painted by Claude Lorraine, and the inclusion of one in a fairly prominent position in the garden further underlies the significance of landscape paintings to Hamilton as an inspiration for Painshill.
- 11.1.3.18 From the waterwheel, the visitor passed into a more densely planted area that climbed steeply from the valley floor. The path led between dark coniferous planting with massed shrubbery below. This area contains many of the specimen plants introduced by Hamilton from Europe and North America, including numerous species of pine and rhododendron. At the bottom of the slope the visitor could enter the Hermitage, a structure of ephemeral construction that did not survive the 19th century. A copy, after contemporary descriptions, was constructed in the 1990s. The Hermitage contained a comfortably furnished parlour at first floor level, and was therefore something of a *cottage ornee*, from which visitors enjoyed a fine view beyond the Mole valley to the south.
- 11.1.3.19 Upon leaving the Hermitage, the visitor climbed a fairly steep curving path between dense planting to reach the Gothic Tower (Grade II* listed). The tower (see above) was built to sit in fairly dense woodland and long views would have been available from the core of the park, with the tower rising above the trees. Closer up there were also channelled views from the pathways, which were

generally of the tower frames by trees either side (Plate 7 shows an example of this effect. Other than these channelled views its general setting at ground level was dark, intimate and enclosed by planting. The tower was certainly built by Hamilton before 1772, as it was painted by William Gilpin in that year, and may date to the 1730s as a building is shown on this location on Rocque's Surrey Map. The list description is therefore inaccurate in dating it to the mid-19th century. It is constructed in brick, laid to English bond, with a plait band marking each floor, and with gothic two-centred arched windows to each floor (it was originally rendered). The tower's roofline is enlivened by a battlemented parapet, and the attached staircase turret which rises above the main tower's roofline. The tower functioned as a museum for Hamilton's collection of Egyptian antiquities, objects which held connotations of death and memorialisation in the period, and the sombre setting of dense dark coniferous planting must have seemed appropriate to the tower's use. One commentator has described this as "the farthest and most lonely part of the park".²⁸ Contrasting with its melancholy character at ground level its battlemented rooftop functioned as a viewing platform for extensive views out of the estate: it was reported that views to Windsor and even St Paul's could be obtained on a fine day. The views from the tower are now more constrained by the growth of trees (in height and density), and feature pylons and overhead wires prominently to the south, in one the few views where the ground is visible.



Plate 6: Gilpin's sketch of the gothic tower, showing the building screened close up, with the tower rising high above the trees, which reach to below its top stage. Gilpin was one of the main exponents of the Picturesque movement.

²⁸ JW Lindus Forge and Mavis Collier 34

11.1.3.20 The tower was originally highly visible in this part of the park, but the growth of trees and other vegetation has meant that it is currently only visible from a short distance away, from within the densely wooded west of the park: there are two principal views, one from a path immediately to the south of the tower and one from a path running south-east of the tower. The southern view is marred by the pylons (see Plate 7), and the south-eastern view only exists on a small stretch of path, from which it is not possible to see the park's main core in the opposite direction. The view towards the tower from this stretch of path is of the tower with tall trees either side providing a backdrop and framing for the tower. In addition, the tower was originally rendered in white stucco, which would have made its upper stage and battlements more visible against the dark massed tree planting. The combined loss of its render and the growth of the trees means that the tower no longer maintains its intended role within the park to the degree it was designed to, although it remains an imposing structure close up. In addition, as the Painshill entry in the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens notes, the tower's setting has been heavily compromised by pylons and overhead wires; a large pylon sits squarely in front of the tower in the southern axial view of the tower, further diminishing its significance in the landscape and the contribution that setting makes to its significance.



Plate 7: The Gothic Tower, showing the southern axial view and its altered setting

11.1.3.21 From this 'dark and melancholy' densely planted area, the visitor passed to a more open woodland glade containing a classical Temple of Bacchus: this bright and open area is planted with a colourful array of flowering shrubs "intended to lift the spirits and inculcate the cheerfulness that ought to accompany the god of wine."²⁹ The Temple of Bacchus is currently under re-construction at the time of

²⁹ Symes, Michael Symes "Fairest Scenes: Five Great Surrey Gardens" Elmbridge Museum Services 1988 47

writing. It was originally a rectangular building with a portico on its north and south facades, that to the north featuring “a pediment and freeze illustrating a suitably bibulous scene...”³⁰ It was described by Gilpin as “grand and noble” and was also the only example of English architecture praised by Thomas Jefferson, the American President and architect, when he visited this country in 1786³¹. The temple is visually isolated from much of the park and from its core around the lake.

11.1.3.22 From this space, the visitor passed to the Turkish Tent, a feature that was installed in the hillside by Hamilton by c.1765, and was possibly based on designs by the architect Henry Keene. (A drawing in the RIBA archives by Keene accords to the tent closely; Hamilton had likely acquired Keene's drawings and based the design of the tent on that). The Tent was recreated in the early 1990s to the original drawings, although in more permeant materials. The Tent originally acted as an eye-catcher in views from the Gothic Temple on the opposite side of the lake. From the Tent visitors could view the broad sweep of the gardens to the east, with the lakes and the Grotto in the foreground at the base of the slope, the Gothic Temple in the middle distance, with dense dark tree and shrub planting beyond (see Plate 8). The two follies, the Tent and the Gothic Temple, function as major viewing points from which to view the gardens at their most dramatic, and simultaneously act as eye-catchers in the respective views from the east and west. Here the tour effectively ended, with the visitor being conveyed back to the house by a waiting pony and trap.

11.1.3.23 With the exception of the altered entrance to the park from the A3, and the area around the Gothic Tower where pylons, overhead wires and the A3 are a significant presence, this defined visitor route can be enjoyed today in much the manner a visitor to Hamilton's park would have experienced it in 1770. This is testament to the quality of the ongoing restoration of the gardens.

³⁰Ibid

³¹ Alison Hodges 'Painshill Park, Cobham, Surrey (1700-1800): Notes for a History of the Landscape Garden of Charles Hamilton' *Garden History*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Autumn, 1973), pp. 39-68



Plate 8: View from the Turkish Tent, 2017

11.1.4 Significance

11.1.4.1 This assessment of significance is based on the guidance laid out in Historic England's *Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment* (2008). This document is currently under review by Historic England, with an updated version in preparation. The principals are likely to remain the same in the forthcoming version, with some ambiguities ironed out. At the time of writing the 2008 version is still the main current HE guidance on determining significance. Conservation Principles sets out four broad categories of significance and value. These are: aesthetic value, communal value, historical value and evidential value.

11.1.4.2 Painshill embodies aesthetic, historical and evidential significances.

Significance of Painshill Park

Aesthetic

11.1.4.3 Painshill's significance is largely aesthetic, representing a major development in 18th century historic aesthetic tastes. The garden is an early and well-restored example of a naturalistically planted and informally laid out landscape garden. The informal garden became a defining trope of the 18th century, and Painshill was one of the first of the genre. Indeed, some commentators have suggested that it was the very first. Kitz, for example, stated that Painshill was the first garden to be "devoid of all formality, in its nature was to be, not a backcloth but the principal feature."³² This is perhaps an exaggeration; Charles Bridgeman and

³² Kitz, 17

William Kent were both designing landscape gardens incorporating substantial areas of informality in the 1720s and 1730s, at a time when a slew of landowners were involved in redesigning the landscapes of their country seats. One aristocrat, writing in 1739, complained that “you hardly meet with any Body, who, after the first Compliments, does not inform you that he is in Mortar and moving of Earth; the modest terms for Building and Gardening. One large Room, a Serpentine River, and a Wood, are become the most absolute necessities of Life.”³³ The references to a serpentine lake and a wood suggest that these informal features were becoming standard for garden design as Hamilton began landscaping at Painshill.

11.1.4.4 Whether it was the first informal landscape garden or not, Painshill was certainly an early and very fine example; no less an authority than *Country Life* described it as “one of the earliest of the great landscape gardens”³⁴. Hamilton was a talented and well-regarded landscaping designer who synthesised a wide-ranging set of influences, from the contemporary landscape designs of Bridgeman and Kent with the landscape paintings of Claude and Poussin from a century earlier, in creating Painshill. As Hodge had noted, “Hamilton was able to combine the literary-intellectual-pictorial ideas of Pope, who knew Homer and Virgil but not Italy, with the pictorial interpretation of Italy practised by “Il Signore” Kent, who loved Italy but was not versed in classical writings. Kent's style undoubtedly imitated the actual gardens of eighteenth-century Rome: Hamilton sought to evoke the spirit of the classical world.”³⁵ Part of Hamilton's genius is that he created a varied and dramatic garden in the manner of the huge Whig set-pieces at Stowe and Stourhead, on a much smaller site and with a fraction of the budget, illustrating his skill as a landscape designer. He created a “landscape garden as a series of experiences, separate and yet within a totality. There is much richness and depth in the design, and William Kent's artistic approach is carried much further by Charles Hamilton...”³⁶

11.1.4.5 Painshill was indisputably influential, which lends it further aesthetic significance. The aesthetic importance of Painshill to 18th century garden design is illustrated by the illustrious visitors who left accounts of their visits to Painshill: including the contemporary arbiters of taste, Horace Walpole and William Gilpin. Gilpin, who coined the term ‘picturesque’, visited the gardens twice (once in 1765 and once in 1772) and left a series of written and sketched impressions of his visits. It is likely that Painshill had an impact on his developing theory of the picturesque, as Uvedale Price, who did much to disseminate Gilpin's writings in the later 18th century, tells us³⁷. Painshill's contemporary significance is also illustrated in the lengthy account of it in Thomas Whately's *Observations on Modern Gardening* of 1770. That Painshill was visited by Thomas Jefferson and John Adams in 1786, during Bond Hopkins' tenure, is illustrative of its enduring significance and fame³⁸. Hamilton was clearly recognised as a significant garden designer by his contemporaries, and he was likely to have been consulted on the design of

³³ Alison Hodges ‘Painshill Park, Cobham, Surrey (1700-1800): Notes for a History of the Landscape Garden of Charles Hamilton’ *Garden History*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Autumn, 1973), pp. 39-68

³⁴ CL 18

³⁵ Alison Hodges ‘Painshill Park, Cobham, Surrey (1700-1800): Notes for a History of the Landscape Garden of Charles Hamilton’ *Garden History*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Autumn, 1973), pp. 39-68

³⁶ Michael Symes “Fairest Scenes: Five Great Surrey Gardens” *Elmbridge Museum Services* 1988 37

³⁷ Alison Hodges ‘Painshill Park, Cobham, Surrey (1700-1800): Notes for a History of the Landscape Garden of Charles Hamilton’ *Garden History*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Autumn, 1973), pp. 39-68

³⁸ Michael Symes ‘Benjamin Bond Hopkins at Painshill’ *Garden History*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Winter, 1999), pp. 238-243

gardens at Fonthill, Stourhead, Wycombe Hagley, and Bowood (the last of which is the result of a collaboration between Hamilton and Capability Brown)³⁹. That Hamilton was, in his old age in Bath, consulted by the King of Sweden's gardener, further illustrates his acknowledgment by contemporaries as a significant garden authority⁴⁰.

- 11.1.4.6 The individual follies, both the listed surviving examples from the mid-18th century and the recreated late 20th/early 21st century examples, also embody high aesthetic significance. As a group of buildings, the follies, which range in style and materials, illustrate the stylistic richness of the 18th century, a period that tends to be inaccurately equated solely with an austere classicism and together, work to create the set piece landscape that largely focusses on the lake. As well as having strong aesthetic significances individually, the follies make a high contribution to the aesthetic significance of Painshill Park as a whole, by providing archetronic points of reference along the defined route by which the pleasure gardens at Painshill were meant to be enjoyed; they contribute to the stylistic depth and variety of Painshill. However, the Gothic Tower makes a lessened contribution to the park as a whole due to the growth in height of the trees since the 18th century making its site too hidden from the core of the park and making it a peripheral building the immediate setting of which is compromised by the introduction of pylons and overhead wires.
- 11.1.4.7 In general, setting makes a limited contribution to the significance of Painshill Park as a whole. The boundaries of the garden are thickly planted to ensure that the garden is experienced as its own enclosed sphere and there are limited views from the gardens as a whole to the landscape beyond its boundary, particularly to the north. The exceptions to this are the views to the south, across the Mole Valley to the agricultural land beyond, from the designed view-points at the summit of Wood Hill and from the Hermitage, which make a positive contribution to the aesthetic significance of the garden. Similarly, the Grade II listed Cobham bridge, which dates to the mid-18th century and lies partially outside the registered boundary of the garden, makes a positive contribution to the aesthetic significances of the garden and is contemporary with Hamilton's garden in its heyday.
- 11.1.4.8 The significances of the group of assets surrounding Painshill House are primarily aesthetic, as a cohesive and well-preserved example of an 18th/19th century country house ensemble in the Picturesque style. That the buildings include fabric designed by a prominent early 19th century architect, Decimus Burton, lends the ensemble further significance. Setting makes a high contribution to the significance of the group of assets, in particular the visual connections between the park and Painshill House. The views from the house to the area of the meadow with specimen trees to the west and from the house to the water meadow and Cobham Bridge to the east provide connections with the historic parkland and lend the whole ensemble further significance, particularly those to the east as this was designed by Jupp as the principal façade of the house. The immediate gardens of the group of assets also make a high contribution to their significance as they incorporate mature planting introduced to the parkland by Hamilton and Bond Hopkins in the 18th century.

³⁹ Kitz, 17 and Michael Symes Garden History, Vol. 34, No. 2 (Winter, 2006), pp. 206-220

⁴⁰ The inclusion of a Turkish Tent in the gardens of the King of Sweden's Palace at Haga may have resulted from this connection.

Historical

- 11.1.4.9 Painshill embodies historical significance as it not only illustrates a particular historical moment when English land owners were reforming their landscapes, but is also illustrative of the cosmopolitanism and internationalism of the 18th century. The landscape demonstrates an orientalism that was fashionable in the period, in the form of the Chinese bridge and the Turkish tent, as well as the wider adoption of Gothick motifs. More significantly, the planting incorporates many newly introduced planting species from North America and Asia. This illustrates Britain's place at the centre of a nexus of international connections, and it contributes to the historical significance of Painshill.
- 11.1.4.10 The group of assets surrounding Painshill House have separate historical significances as evidence of the changing nature of this part of Surrey, from a rural hinterland in the 18th century, to an affluent commuter belt in the mid-20th century, as well as its associations (see aesthetic significance above).

Evidential

- 11.1.4.11 It is possible that the gardens contain currently masked archaeological remains relating to now lost formal landscaping and walled gardens, which, if it is the case, would embody evidential significance. These are likely located on the west bank of the River Mole, to the east of Painshill House. There may also be more ephemeral garden archaeology surviving or earlier planting schemes, and the buildings, alterations to them and buried remains of former building foundations may also provide evidence of the evolution of the park.

11.1.5 Conclusion

- 11.1.5.1 There are two different elements to Painshill Park: Hamilton's landscape and the late 18th century Painshill House and its group of buildings and associated landscape.
- 11.1.5.2 Hamilton's landscape largely focusses on the central lake and its surrounding features, with strong tree screens providing visual barriers and areas of dark intimacy, with other south-eastern elements and its north eastern fringe (including the bridge over the River Mole) maintaining their original character. Excessive tree growth, some development, and the division of the land in the north-western edge and in the west end of the Park have largely divorced these areas from their former role in Hamilton's landscape or diminished their contribution in terms of their historic roles within the park. What survives of Hamilton's Park, especially its core elements, represent a significant and highly influential moment in the history of landscape design and the advent of the picturesque movement.
- 11.1.5.3 Painshill House and its group of buildings, driveway and open land to its east and west retain their cohesive relationship and have their own significance, fairly separate from Hamilton's landscape, although the drive from the lodges is probably also that of the original house.



Plate 9: Gardens to East of Round House, showing prevalence of 18th century mature trees as well as high quality mid-20th century landscaping

11.2 RHS Wisley Appraisal of History and Significance

11.2.1 Introduction and Purpose of Heritage Appraisal

Scheme context

11.2.1.1 As part of a wider Road Investment Programme, junction 10 of the M25 is due to be upgraded to relieve traffic flow during rush hour. As part of this relief work the A3 will be widened and a new overbridge will be constructed adjacent to the west of Wisley Gardens, a Grade II* Registered Park and Garden. These works have the potential to harm the significance of the gardens. This Heritage Appraisal assesses the significance of Wisley Gardens with the aim of assisting option definition, the development of detailed design and mitigation, and the impact assessment.

Location

11.2.1.2 Wisley Gardens is located to the south of Byfleet and west of the village of Pyford. Its south-eastern boundary is formed by the A3 and its south-west boundary by Mill Lane. With a minor road leading north from Mill Lane on its west boundary, the River Wey forms a boundary to the north-west, and Wisley Lane encloses the site to the north-east, with the village of Wisley located adjacent to the extreme northern boundary.

Sources

11.2.1.3 The work included archive and desk-based research and a site visit to establish the history and significance of the gardens, its boundaries and setting, and the

contribution of its various component areas and setting to its significance. A full list of cartographic sources consulted is included in Annex C. A full bibliography is included in Annex D. The site visit was undertaken in July 2017.

11.2.2 History of Wisley

- 11.2.2.1 The land at Wisley was first laid out as a garden by Mr GF Wilson in the late 19th century. Wilson, described variously as “the father of English amateur gardeners” and “one of the most skilled amateur gardeners of his day” was a successful manufacturer of pesticides and had served as the RHS’s Treasurer⁴¹. In 1878 he purchased the site, then known as Glebe Farm. His garden was laid out as a six hectare portion of ‘Wild Garden’, the remainder of the site being rented to a local farmer. Wilson’s ‘Wild Garden’ consisted of flower and shrub planting in naturalistic formations, within an existing and well-established oak woodland. Wilson also planted a garden of shrubs and lilies on the hilly ground to the south of the wild garden and constructed a series of ponds, the banks of which were densely planted with newly introduced exotic specimens of Japanese flowering irises and roses, including many introduced to the UK for the first time.
- 11.2.2.2 This garden was highly regarded by contemporaries, both for its naturalistic form within an existing woodland and for its incorporation of exotic species. Country Life described it approvingly in 1897: “embosomed in woodland and disturbed only by the song of birds is Wisley, the garden that Mr GF Wilson FRS has formed in this Surrey wild. The retreat – a garden of hardy flowers – is approached by a drive of five miles from Heatherbank on Weybridge Heath, the principal residence of Mr Wilson...there is no vegetable menagerie about this garden in woodland, no wriggling beds on the turf or harsh and violent colour contrasts.”⁴² The leading Edwardian gardener Gertrude Jekyll visited it on several occasions, stating “I have had the happiness of visiting Mr GF Wilson’s garden at Wisley, a garden which I take to be about the most instructive it is possible to see.”⁴³ Wilson remembered an exchange with Jekyll: “a great gardener who had a beautiful and successful garden of her own, ongoing around with me said, “I don’t know what to call this place, it is not a garden” and on my assenting to this said “I think it is a place where plants from all parts of the world grow wild”; this being what I aimed at, was very comforting.”⁴⁴
- 11.2.2.3 On Wilson’s death in 1902, the estate was purchased by a wealthy Quaker businessmen and gardener, and in 1903 was given by him in trust for the perpetual use of the Royal Horticultural Society “for the purpose of an Experimental Garden and the encouragement and improvement of scientific and practical horticulture in all its branches.”⁴⁵ The Royal Horticultural Society had been founded in 1804, and originally maintained premises in Kensington and an experimental garden at Chiswick. By the early 20th century, the Society was keen to look for larger premises for experimental planting, on a less constrained site away from the polluted air of London.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Anon. “the Late Mr G F Wilson” Country Life April 5th 1902 and CD Brickell (ed) “Guide to Wisley Garden” The Royal Horticultural Society 1976

⁴² Anon. “Notable Gardens: Wisley” Sept 25th 1897, 319-320

⁴³ Register Entry

⁴⁴ Anon. “the Late Mr G F Wilson” Country Life April 5th 1902. Jekyll is not named in this exchange, the authors surmise is that it refers to her

⁴⁵ CD Brickell (ed) “Guide to Wisley Garden” The Royal Horticultural Society 1976

⁴⁶ Montagu Evans “RHS Wisley Heritage Statement: Part 1” (2016), 8



Plate 1: The Arts and Crafts influenced Laboratory Building, of 1914, with the formal gardens, dating to 1970, in the foreground

11.2.2.4 Under the RHS's management the area cultivated as gardens has greatly increased and the gardens have been altered and re-landscaped in several waves of development. Much of the current form of the garden dates to a phase of re-planting and landscaping in the post-war period, although this incorporated many earlier buildings, hard landscaping and mature planting from earlier phases of the garden's development. Between 1907 and 1912 a number of buildings, including a small laboratory building, were constructed to the west of Wilson's house, and a Pinetum and Rock Garden (as *Country Life* rather tartly noted "in the garden of today, a rock garden of some kind has become a necessity") were laid out north and south of the Wild garden, respectively⁴⁷. In 1914 more land was purchased and a larger laboratory building was constructed to the design of a local architectural practice Imrie & Angell (see Plate 1).

11.2.2.5 In the inter-war period, a small area of formal terraced gardens was laid out to the south of the Laboratory building in c.1920, and a large glass house and workshops were built immediately to the east of the Laboratory. An extensive area of land was purchased in c.1937 to the south of the site, known as Battleston Hill and the Portsmouth Field, bordering the Portsmouth Road (now the A3), and this was landscaped in the late 1930s and 1940s. The post-war period saw the construction of new buildings to the north of the laboratory and an extensive re-landscaping of the gardens as a whole. A formal axial broad grassed path was laid out through the centre of the narrowest part of Battleston Hill, the Broad Walk, in c.1950, the Portsmouth Field was re-landscaped as trial beds, and a highly formal garden was created immediately to the south of the laboratory building, on the site of the former glass houses and workshop yards.

⁴⁷ Ibid and GC Taylor *The Royal Horticultural Society's Gardens at Wisley* *Country Life* Feb 18th 1933

In the later 1970s an extensive arboretum was planted in an arc along the south, south west and west of the gardens (see Plate 2). The period from the 1990s to the present day has seen further alterations and additions, largely in the form of buildings for visitor services. These included, for example, new restaurant facilities and gift shops, built in the 1990s, in a period that it has been suggested “arguably redefines the role of the gardens at Wisley as one focussed primarily upon the popular visitor experience”⁴⁸. A historic map regression, showing the development of Wisley, is provided in Annex C.

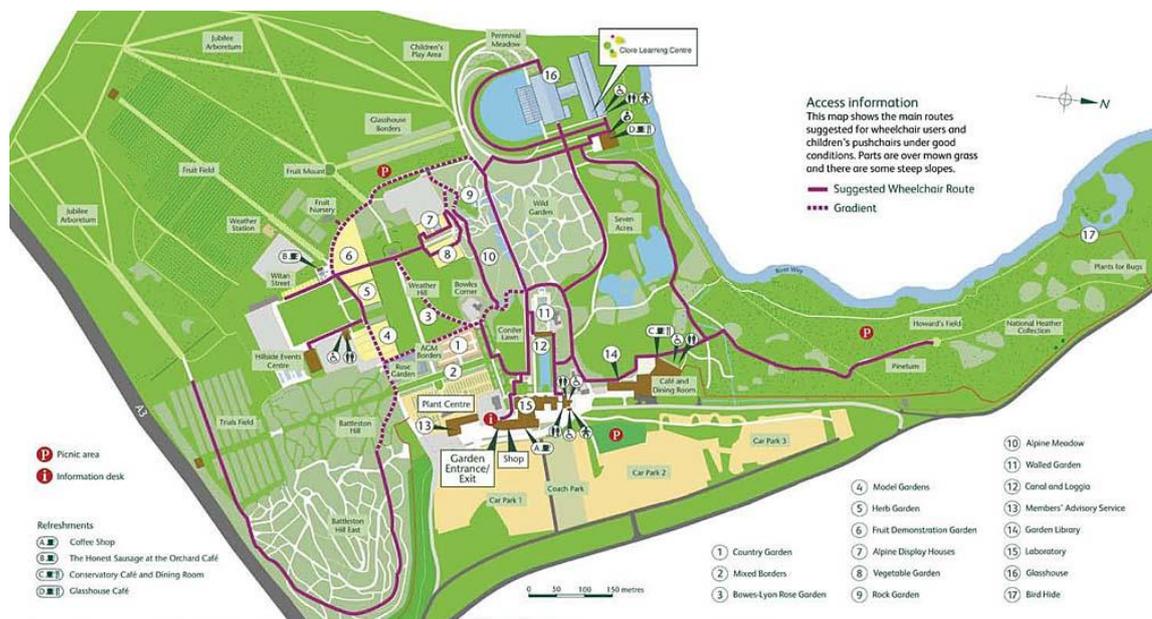


Plate 1: The RHS Map of Wisley Gardens (north is on the right hand side of the map)

11.2.3 Description

11.2.3.1 Wisley takes the form of a series of different, highly contained and varied garden spaces, connected by a circuitous network of paths (see Plate 2). The site is largely flat in the north. Towards the south it is bisected by a high ridge that runs from east to west across the southern half of the site. From its south slopes, the ground slopes down to the A3 at the southern boundary of the registered area, which is densely planted, serving to screen the A3 from much of the garden. Battleston Hill is at the east end of this ridge and extends to the south-east.

11.2.3.2 Visitors pass through a modern eastern entrance booth, accessed from the car park on Wisley Lane, through highly ornate wrought iron gates, dating to the 1920s and commemorating a former president of the RHS. After travelling through the gates, the visitor enters the formal gardens adjacent to the Laboratory building. The Grade II Laboratory building is a long, lateral building of two floors beneath a steeply pitched tiled roof, built in an Arts and Crafts vernacular idiom, which was described by Ian Nairn, who was no fan of Lutyens, as being “in a weakened and sweetened version of Lutyens Tudor, by Imrie and Angell 1914, with some surface picturesqueness.”⁴⁹ In its heavy roof, picturesque fenestration and outsize chimney stacks it certainly recalls Lutyens’ Edwardian country house work, particularly Great Dixter in Sussex of 1910, described by

⁴⁸ Montage Evans “RHS Wisley Heritage Statement: Part 1” (2016), 11

⁴⁹ Pevsner et al, 529

Mark Girouard as “securely linked to the country house tradition – in his early days to irregular and half-timbered mediaeval or Tudor manor houses...”⁵⁰.

- 11.2.3.3 The formal gardens immediately adjacent to the Laboratory building’s entrance façade appear at first glance to be all of a piece; however, there were two distinct phases of development dating to the 1920s and the 1970s. The terraced gardens and conifer lawns to the south-east of the laboratory date to the 1920s. These lead to a terrace walk aligned roughly east-west, which connects the laboratory with Weatherhill Cottage, a small tile-hung cottage built in the late 19th century as a “small gentleman’s residence” by GF Wilson, and now used as offices⁵¹. This terrace walk is planted with formal beds of herbaceous borders, in an arrangement shown on a plan of Wisley dated 1927⁵².
- 11.2.3.4 To the north of the conifer lawn and aligned with the entrance to the Laboratory building, the second phase of the highly formal garden was laid out by the leading landscape architect Geoffrey Jellicoe in 1970. This consists of rectilinear canal, formed by the depression of the foundations of demolished glass houses, surrounded by a pleached walk (foliage trained to grow around a flexible framework, to create a screen) to the north side and a paved walk on the south side. The canal is terminated at its west end by an open-sided loggia, formed from an early 20th century potting shed. To the west of this there are two interlinked walled gardens, formerly workshop yards, both of which were laid out by Jellicoe with formal flower beds bisected by axial paths. To the west and north of this formal arrangement lie the rock garden, Wilson’s Wild Garden and the pinetum. The historic character of this area was somewhat diminished by the great storm of 1987. The loss of trees as a result of storm damage has given this area a more open aspect than it originally possessed.
- 11.2.3.5 The 1920s terrace walk leads to an area of gently rising ground, known as Weather Hill, in reference to a meteorological station that once stood at its summit. This area was planted in the post-war period as a formal rose garden and contains a pavilion commemorating a former president of the Society, Sir David Bowes-Lyon, designed by Derrick Lees in the 1960s, in the form of linked octagonal roofs supported by simple teak columns. To the north and south of this are the model gardens for fruits, vegetables and flowers. Beyond which, to the south, is the area of glass houses that adjoin the trail garden (formerly the Portsmouth Field). Beyond this to the west are the fruit collections and the jubilee arboretum, which wraps around the south, south-west and west of the gardens.
- 11.2.3.6 To the south of the terrace walk, a formal axial grass ride, the Broad Walk, rises to the summit of the ridge that extends west of the main, eastern part of Battleston Hill. This is one of the few places within the gardens with extensive views, as much of the rest of the gardens take the form of intimate enclosed spaces surrounded by hedges or walls. From the Broad Walk where it crowns the summit of the ridge (which runs west of the main part of Battleston Hill, and is marked by a contemporary sculpture), there are views to the north to the formal gardens, the Laboratory building, the conifer lawn and the Wild Garden beyond. Looking to the south, the axis of the broad walk is carried down the slope through the more formal staircase of the Mediterranean Garden to the Trial

⁵⁰ Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, 307

⁵¹ Montagu Evans. The building is an unusually early example of concrete construction in a domestic setting and is unlisted.

⁵² RHS Lindley Library London, Y3/7

Garden, formerly Portsmouth Field. This area was planted as cherry orchards in the 1940s, but these were removed in 1970 and replaced with the trial beds which are laid out in formal parterres, with the central axis terminated by a timber pavilion containing memorial benches and memorial plaques. The Trial Garden is at the southern-most extent of the gardens, and its boundary is thickly planted with mixed shrubs and specimen trees. The A3 is only intermittently visible through this fairly dense cover; however, its traffic is a significant aural presence. It is largely screened from the majority of the Trail Gardens. The Trail Garden was conceived of as part of the RHS's remit to test the growth of new and exotic species. That the test beds are laid out in such a formal manner, and at the end of a key axis within the garden, is evidence that they were conceived of as a key element within the visitor route through the gardens. The garden also continues one of the historic functions of Wisley Gardens as an experimental garden.

- 11.2.3.7 The ridge and the main part of Battleston Hill, to the east and south-east of the ridge, are densely planted on either side of the Broad Walk riding, with dense tree cover and flowering shrubs. Oliver Dawson described Battleston Hill as “a ridge of high ground running east and west between the mixed borders and the Portsmouth Road, wooded with scotch pine, oak, sweet chestnut and birch. The northern slopes were cleared in 1937 and planted with a collection of rhododendrons.”⁵³ East of the Broad Walk, the main part of Battleston Hill is thickly planted with azaleas and camellias, beneath the dense tree canopy – in a manner that recalls the original form of Wilson’s ‘Wild Garden’, in the north of the site. The dense planting is wound through with a network of circuitous paths: “The gardens are particularly known for their collection of rhododendrons ... the main plantings of rhododendrons and evergreen azaleas are on Battleston Hill, and visitors make a bee-line for this part of the gardens in late spring.”⁵⁴ The dense planting extends down the hill to the east of the Trial Garden to the chain-link fence that borders the A3, with numerous labelled specimens. The dense planting on the hill to a large extent restricts views outwards from the Gardens to the very edge of Battleston Hill.
- 11.2.3.8 The south-western part of Wisley Gardens includes the Jubilee arboretum, with its two main north-east to south-west avenues of trees. North of this area, near the gardens’ western boundary, is the large modern glasshouse. In some of these areas there are more extensive westerly views. The northern part of the gardens has relatively intimate spaces and the north-eastern boundary, to the north of the 1914 Laboratory building, is generally screened by high timber fences, walls and buildings.

11.2.4 Significance

- 11.2.4.1 This assessment of significance is based on the guidance laid out in Historic England’s Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment (2008). This guidance is currently being updated, but has not been superseded at the time of finalising (April 2018). Wisley’s aspects of significance are essentially aesthetic and historic, although it also has communal significances.

⁵³ CD Brickell (ed) “Guide to Wisley Garden” The Royal Horticultural Society 1976

⁵⁴ Oliver Dawson “Wisley: A Gardener’s Garden” Country Life June 1st 1963

Significance of RHS Wisley

Aesthetic

11.2.4.2 Wisley has a high aesthetic significance as a well-designed multi-period 19th and 20th century garden. It is striking that, although the gardens were laid out in successive waves over a century of development, they are highly cohesive. The gardens, as a whole, resemble an Edwardian country house garden, taking much influence from the Gertrude Jekyll gardens of the period; as Ian Nairn, writing in 1971, said of Wisley “her influence is everywhere apparent.”⁵⁵ Jekyll’s gardens tended to feature small intimate walled enclosures, terraced walks lined with herbaceous borders and massed informal planting contrasting with an underlying formal, rectilinear hard landscaping of paths, raised beds, and canalised water features, giving something of the impression of a 17th century garden gone picturesquely to seed. Her influence on the 20th century re-landscaping at Wisley is hardly surprising. It is testament to the immense significance that Jekyll had on early 20th century gardening, having had direct involvement in at least 120 gardens (often in partnership with Lutyens) and an influence on many more besides⁵⁶. As Girouard has said of the Edwardian country house garden, “the garden had become the supreme symbol of the good life lived in the country. But it had to be a country garden, full of outdoor plants growing naturally... over the whole country-house scene floated the image of Gertrude Jekyll’s boots as painted by William Nicholson...”⁵⁷. It is interesting that the garden that Jekyll had actually visited and admired at Wisley, the Wild Garden laid out by Wilson in the 1870s, was strikingly unlike her own work, although it may have been an influence on the naturalistic manner in which she massed planting together in her later designs.

11.2.4.3 The involvement of Geoffrey Jellicoe in the laying out of a portion of the formal gardens near the laboratory lend the garden further aesthetic significances. Jellicoe was a leading landscape architect of the 20th century, as a founding member and former president of the Landscape Institute.

Historic

11.2.4.4 Wisley has a high historical significance as an unusual, and evolving, example of a scientific garden, developed primarily to propagate and test new and exotic species of plants. The Trial Gardens, model gardens and glass houses, whilst not the most historic, or, in the case of the glass houses and model gardens, not the most aesthetically significant areas of the garden, embody this significance and therefore make a high contribution to the significance of the garden. The highly numerous species of exotic, unusual or historical trees, shrubs and flowers throughout the gardens, many with identifying plaques, recall the garden’s founding rationale and therefore make a high contribution to its historical significance.

11.2.4.5 Wisley is lent even greater historical significance through its association with the Royal Horticultural Society. The Society, founded in 1804, is the country’s oldest horticultural association, and Wisley is its oldest still extant garden. The

⁵⁵ Ian Nairn, Nikolaus Pevsner, Bridget Cherry “The Buildings of England: Surrey” Penguin 1971 600

⁵⁶ Michael Tooley “Gertrude Jekyll and the Country House Garden: From the Archives of Country Life by Judith Tankard” Garden History, Vol. 39, No. 2 (WINTER 2011), pp. 282-284

⁵⁷ Girouard, 314

monuments associated with former presidents of the RHS, the highly ornate entrance gates and the Bowes-Lyon pavilion, for example, are visible evidence of this connection and its association with the RHS's patrons.

Communal

11.2.4.6 Wisley has communal significance as a well-regarded visitor attraction. This has become increasingly central to the RHS's conception of what Wisley is and does, something which is evidenced by the increasing provision of visitor facilities (gift shops, café and restaurant facilities and the like) throughout the late 20th and early 21st century. Wisley's communal significances are further illustrated by the numerous memorial plaques and benches located throughout the gardens, showing the level of public identification with the site.

Sensitivities of RHS Wisley to peripheral development

11.2.4.7 In relation to the periphery of RHS Wisley, features that would remove boundary walls and features along the east side of the site, especially around the main Laboratory building, would be detrimental to the garden's significance. The car park already slightly detracts from the significance of the boundary, but the tall boundary elements largely protect the significance of the garden itself.

11.2.4.8 In relation to the southern part of the site, the south slopes of the ridge to the west of the main part of Battleston Hill and the Trial Gardens would be sensitive to the removal of its south tree screen on the north west side of the A3, although with its boundary tree screens in place, its setting beyond this is fairly robust and could sustain change without loss of significance. Although the main, eastern part of Battleston Hill and its dense planting and tree growth are significant, the setting of the boundaries here is less sensitive to development, as development in its setting would affect just the views from only the edges of the fairly dense planting.

11.2.4.9 In relation to the two linear avenues of the Jubilee arboretum and vineyard on the more open, west side of the gardens, the views along the main axes of the arboretums (which run roughly north east-south west), are sensitive and development in the linear views would harm significance. The southern boundary of the gardens in this western portion of the gardens is less sensitive to development in its setting, as views are relatively restricted by peripheral tree screens and the arrangement of trees within the gardens. In the western part of Wisley Gardens, north of Mill Lane, some more open areas of the gardens near the modern glasshouse have longer views to the west beyond the gardens. These areas of the setting have some sensitivity, despite the recent nature of some of the landscaping within this part of the gardens.

11.2.4.10 The northern parts of the site consist of intimate gardens east of the River Wey and west of Wisley Lane. The setting of the gardens here plays little role in the significance of the gardens, as the gardens are generally well screened, and where screening is less extensive on the edges of the gardens, trees within the gardens close to the boundary largely screen the more significant interior spaces.

11.2.5 Conclusion

- 11.2.5.1 Wisley Gardens is a significant scientific garden, developed primarily to propagate and test new and exotic species of plants, that still fulfils its original function in this respect. New communal significances have developed over time, and a major element of the site is its more recent role as a visitor attraction, which at the same time forms a small element of its significance and has introduced elements that have eroded its significance. The gardens consist of a number of different fairly self-contained intimate, but interconnected gardens. These set-pieces form the main significant areas of Wisley Gardens. The scientific testing garden function has mostly, although not entirely, moved to the southern part of the site, to the Trial Garden on the south boundary and the greenhouses on the west side of the ridge extending westwards from the main part of Battleston Hill. However, the areas to the north of Battleston Hill and its ridge retain other significances, and still represent the core of the gardens. Most elements of the gardens have been subject to change over time, and the proposed development of buildings by the RHS within the gardens to the north of Battleston Hill, will have a significant impact on some of its core spaces.
- 11.2.5.2 Generally, the boundary treatments of the gardens form part of their design and often contain specimens that form part of their significance as well as protecting the significance of the gardens. Beyond these boundaries, the settings of the various, self-contained, but interrelated garden elements that sit on the boundary of Wisley Gardens have different sensitivities. The setting of the densely planted main, eastern part of Battleston Hill is fairly robust, as visibility outwards is limited to its periphery. The tree screens on the southern boundaries of the Trial Gardens and spaces to its west protect the park from outward views, so that the setting to the south is not sensitive to change.
- 11.2.5.3 The southern part of Wisley Gardens is generally currently dominated by the sound of traffic. The main north-east and south-west axes of the main tree avenues of Jubilee arboretum would be sensitive to development at their ends. The western boundary of the gardens, further north, is also, in part, sensitive to development beyond the garden boundary, where there are extensive western views.
- 11.2.5.4 The gardens' Wisley Lane boundary, to the north of the north edge of Battleston Hill, is sensitive to large scale, tall development in its setting. The car park detracts from the setting around the main entrance to the gardens; and to the north of this, the edges are largely screened by tall timber fencing, walls and edge planting, so only tall development to the east is likely to impact on the contribution of the setting to the significance of the park.

Annex A. Cartographic Sources



Figure A.1: Excerpt of Rocque's 176X Map of Surrey Showing Painshill (British Library Maps Collection)



Figure A.2: Rocque's 1744 Map of Painshill Park (Surrey History Centre PT/6/1/5)



Figure A.3: Excerpt of Rocque's 1744 Map of Painshill showing potential formal landscaping on the banks of the River Mole

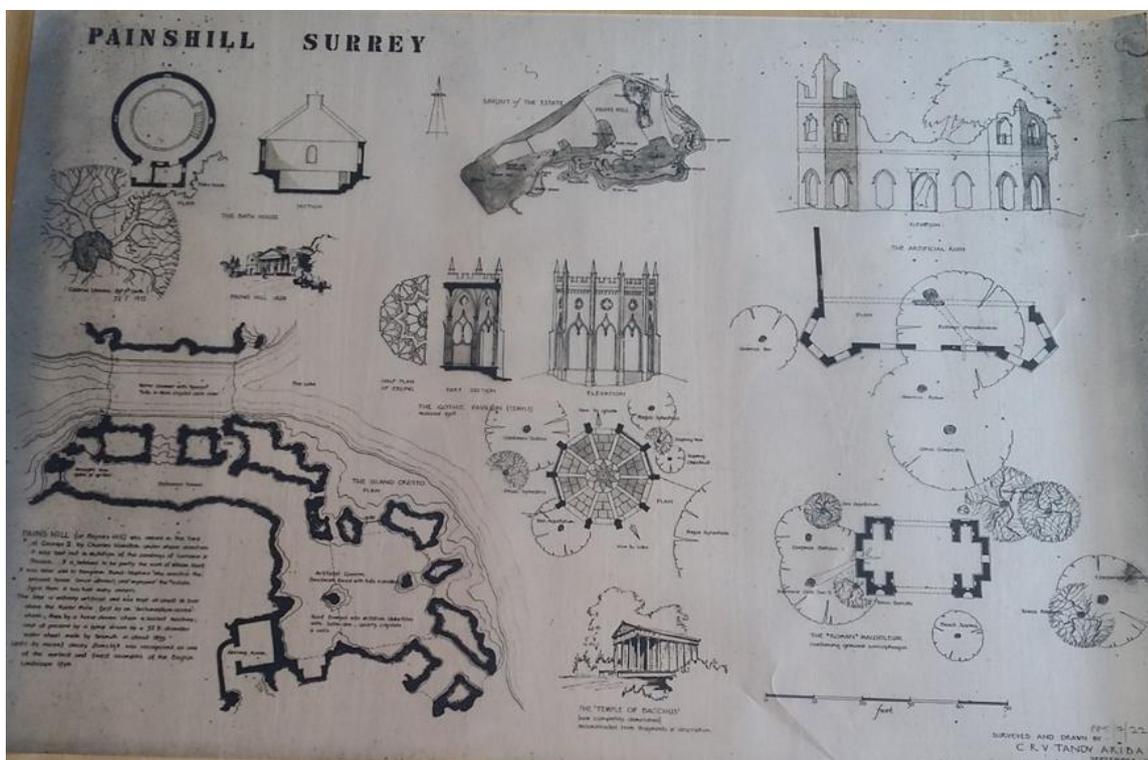


Figure A.4: Annotated Plan of the Park. 1950 (Surrey History Centre PPT/7/226)

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A View from the West side of the island in the garden of - Hopkins, Esq. near Cobham, Surrey. Surrey History Centre 2331/16/PART1/57

Distant view of house at Painshill Park, with bridge over River Mole in foreground. Engraving also published by Allen and West and T Conder. 1795. Surrey History Centre 4348/4/23/5

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Annex C. Historic Maps

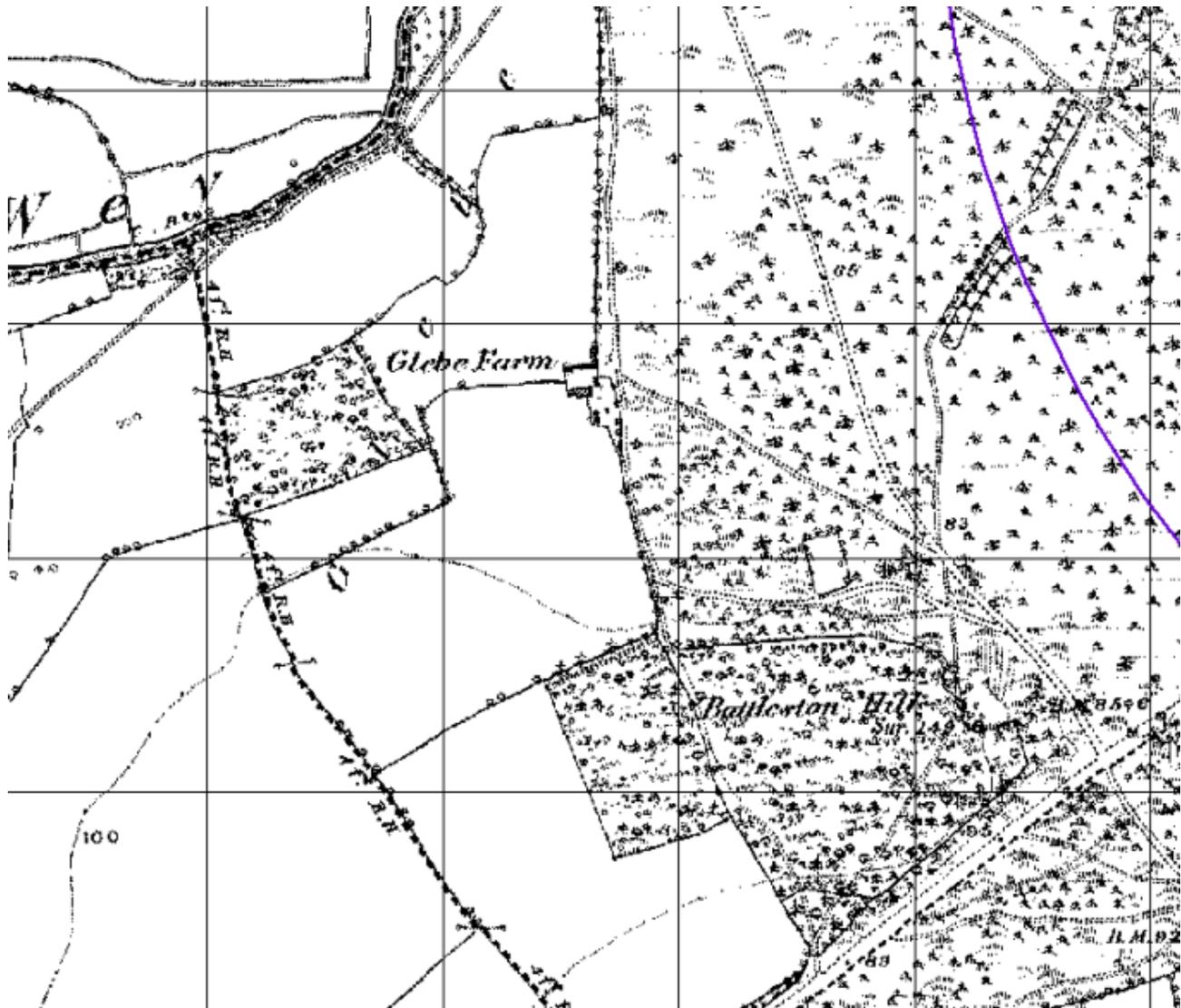


Figure C.1: Wisley RHS location, as shown on 1872 OS Map

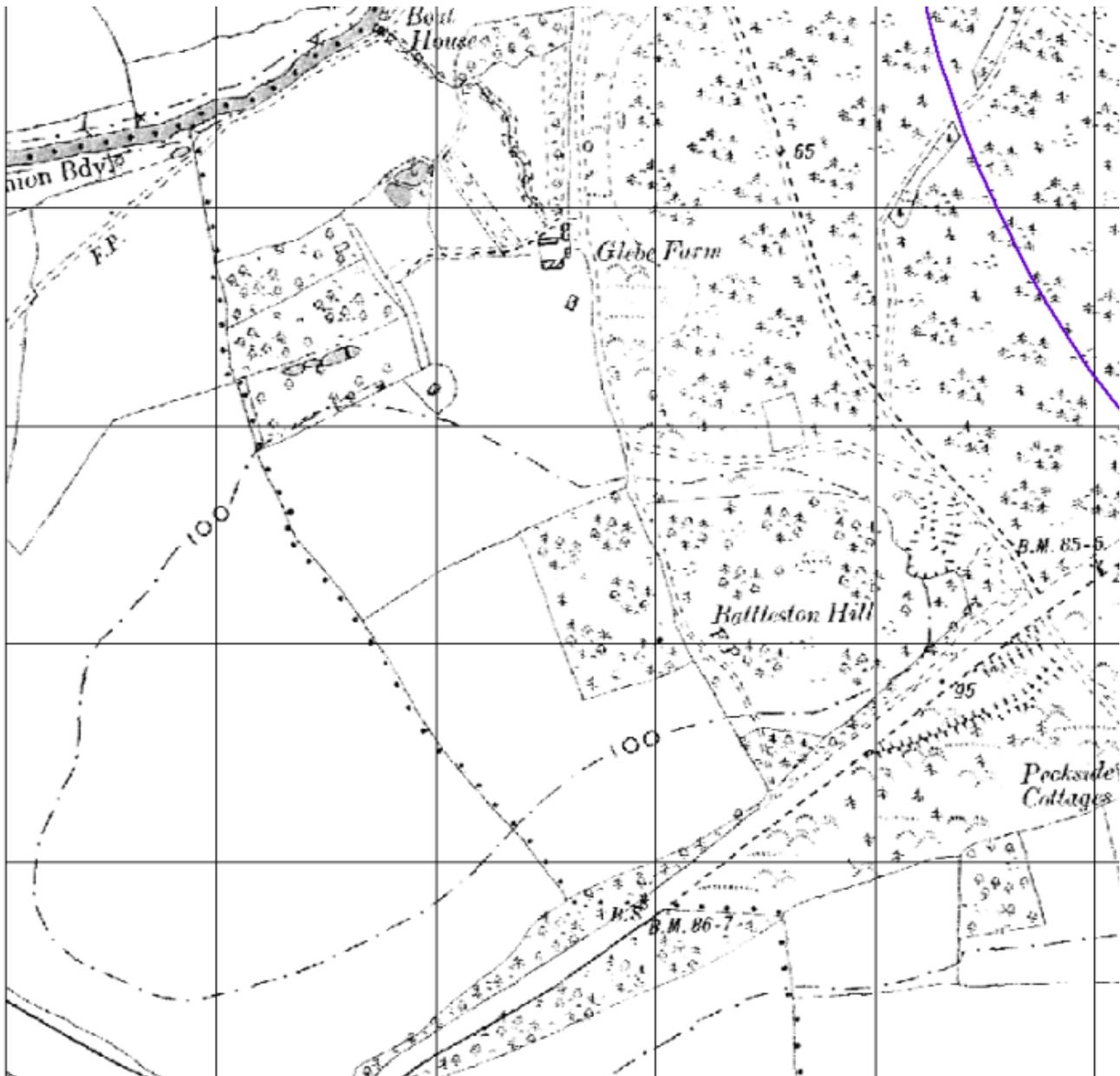


Figure C.2: Wisley RHS grounds in 1897

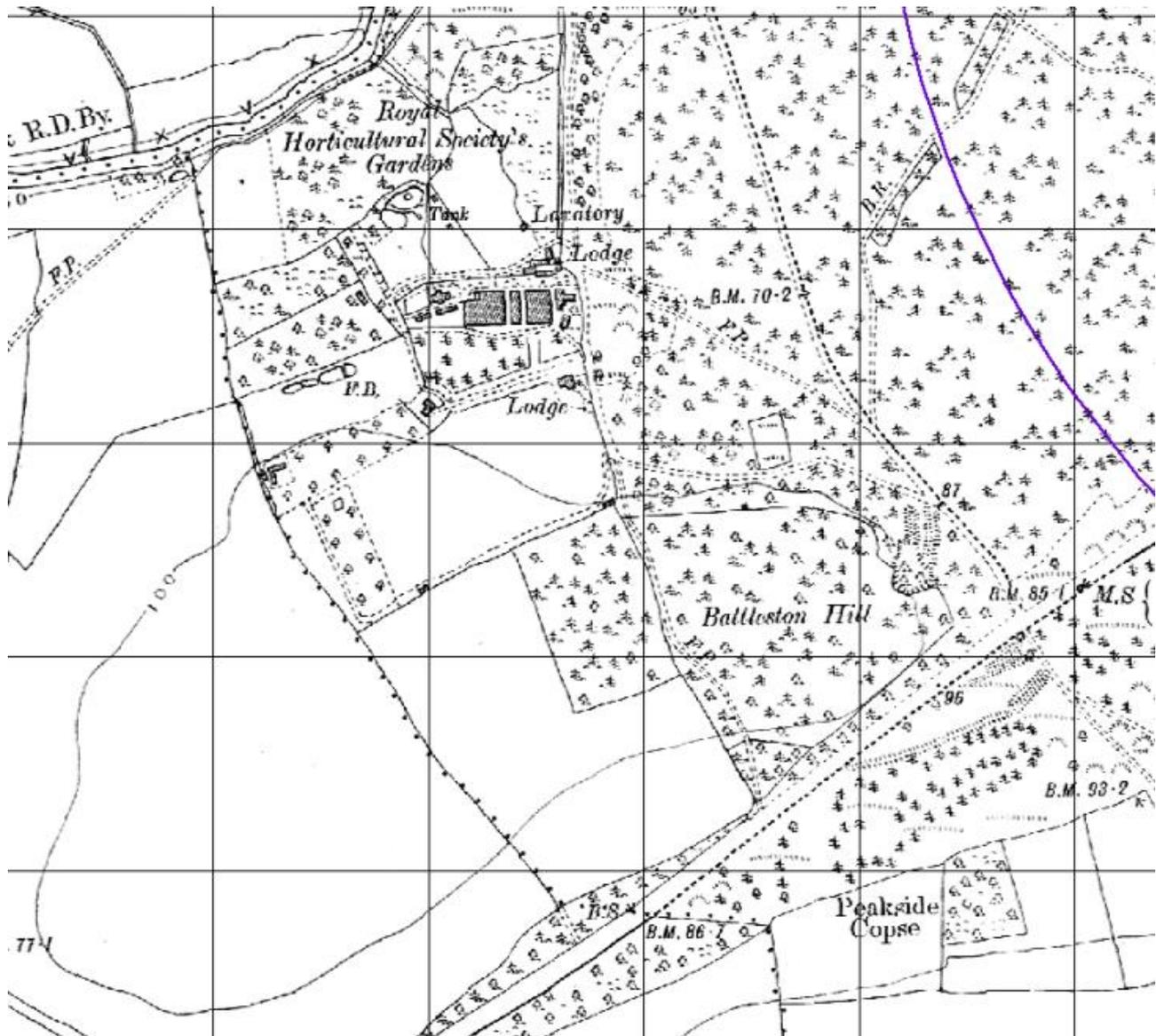


Figure C.3: The first illustration of the Wisley RHS gardens on OS mapping, 1919-1920

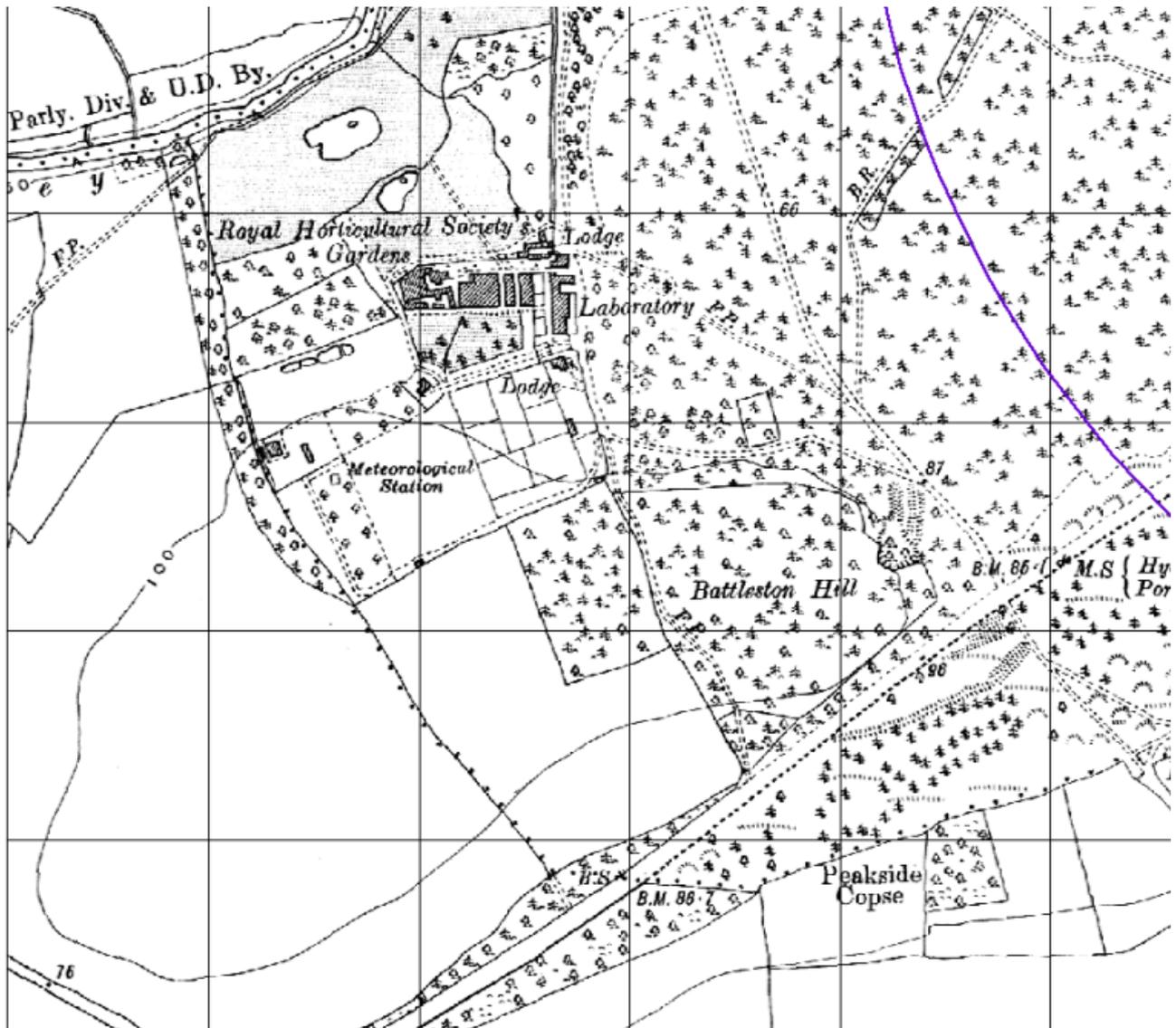


Figure C.4: Wisley RHS gardens, 1934-1935

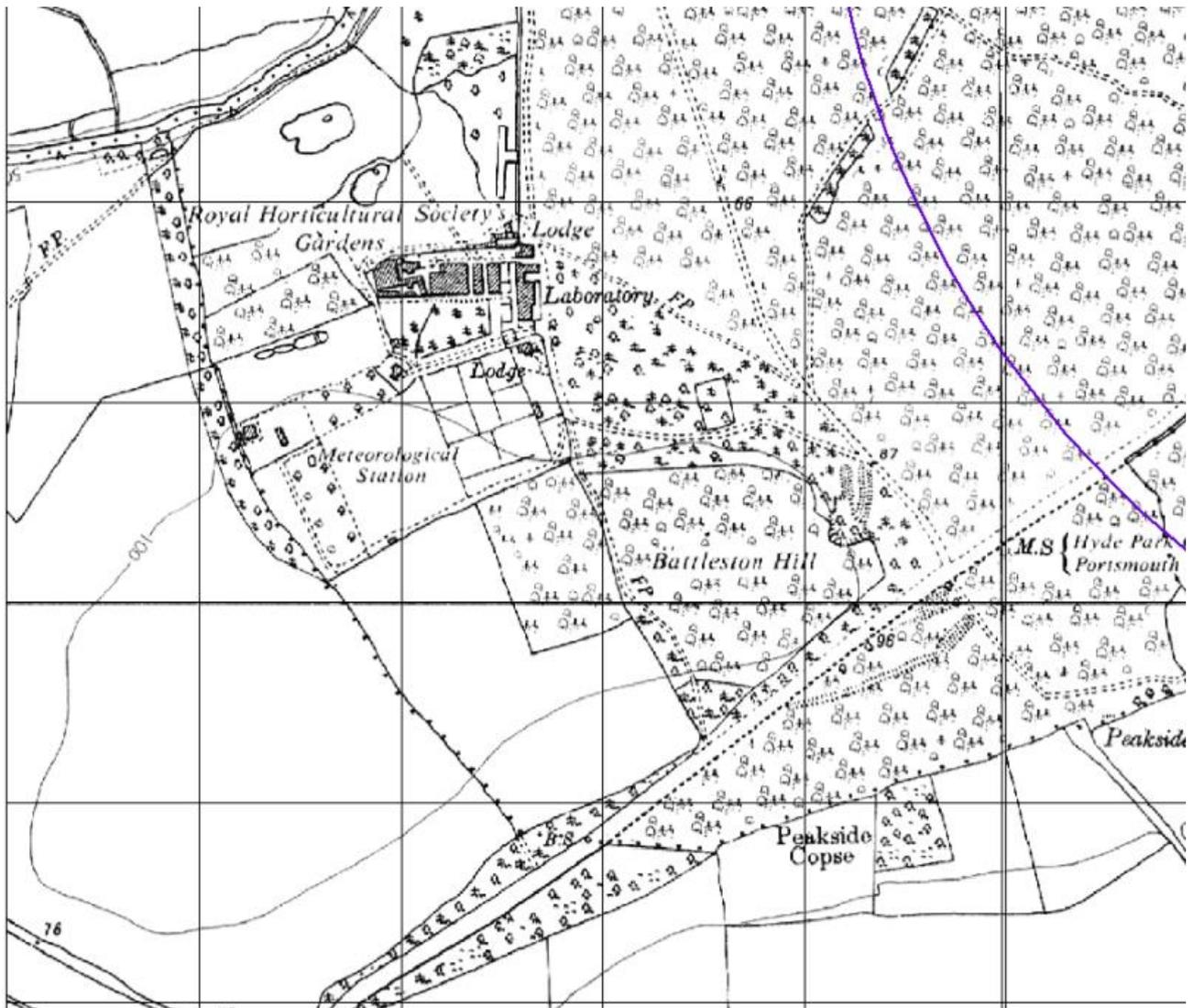


Figure C.5: Wisley RHS gardens, 1961

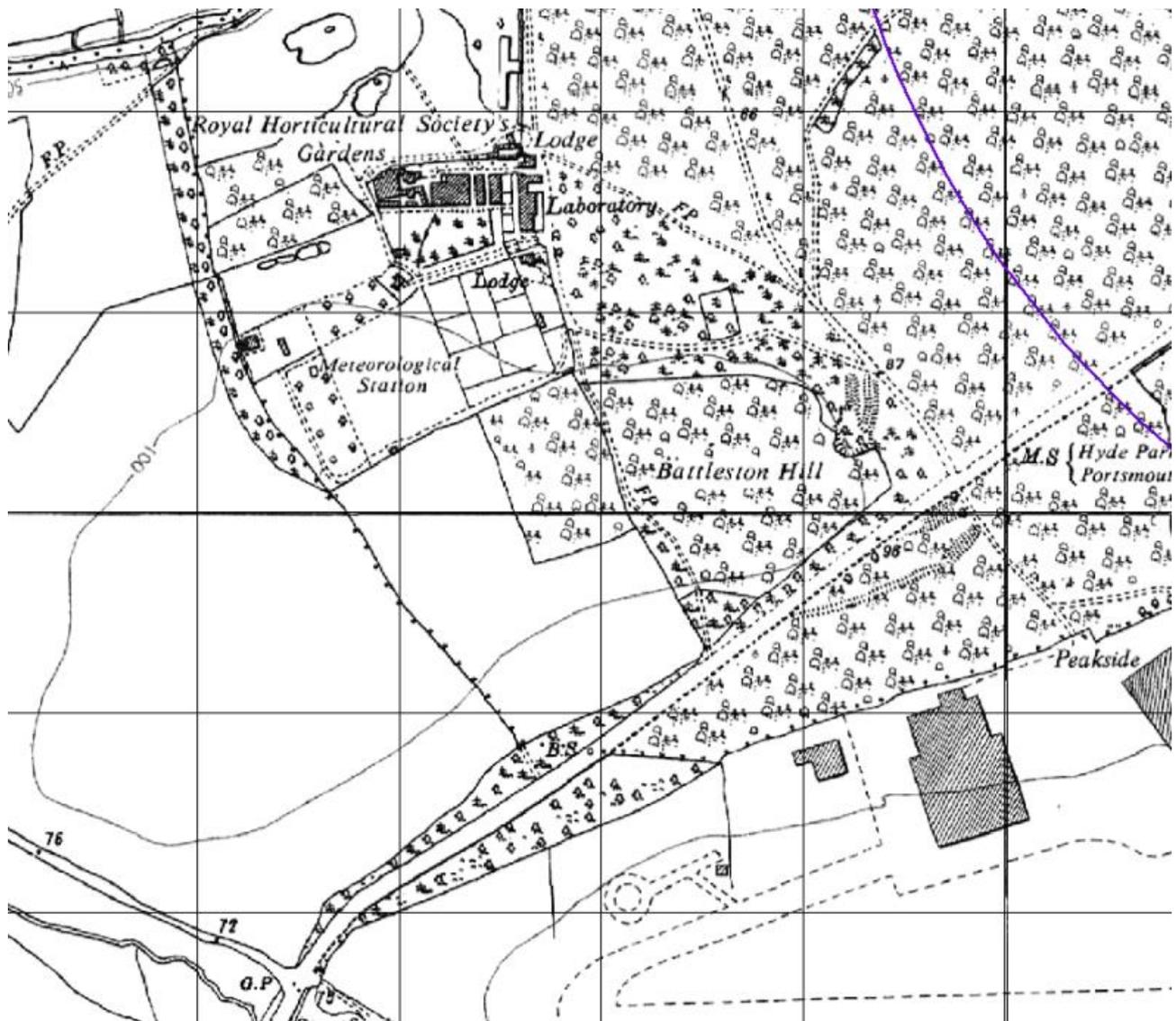


Figure C.6: Wisley RHS Gardens, 1964, showing development of the airfield and at Peakside



Figure C.7: Wisley RHS Gardens, 1975-77, showing the A3 trunk road and further development of the Airfield south of the A3



Figure C.8: Wisley RHS Gardens, 1989, showing internal changes to the RHS site



Figure C.9: 2006 OS map of RHS Wisley



Figure C.10: 2016 'Vector Map Local' OS map of Wisley RHS, showing current extent of the part and ancillary features

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Montage Evans "RHS Wisley Heritage Statement: Part 1" (2016)

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