

Research for our site: Amphill Great Park



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Amphill Great Park timeline:

Early C15 Deer Park built by Sir John Cornwall, surrounding Amphill Castle
1524-32 Frequent visits by Henry VIII and early 1530s Katharine of Aragon lived here
1660s Estate bought by John 1st Baron Ashburnham, present house replaced Great Lodge and Russett's Lodge built
1769 2nd Earl of Ossory remodels house and employs Brown work on landscape
1773 Katharine Cross (erected by Lady Ossory and Horace Walpole)
1837 House leased to Lord Wensleydale
1868 Railway constructed and tunnel (second tunnel built 1893-95)
1870s Estate bought by Duke of Bedford, public allowed access
1895 3rd (Reserve) Battalion uses park for training
1914-16 Park occupied by Army for training recruits and camp huts built
1916-19 8000 soldiers nursed back to health
1919-20 Amphill Camp Memorial Cross erected on site of former camp
1939-45 House occupied by Army
1940s House bought by Bovril
1947 Urban District Council buys park for £11,000
1955 House converts to Cheshire Home
1977 House divided into domestic units



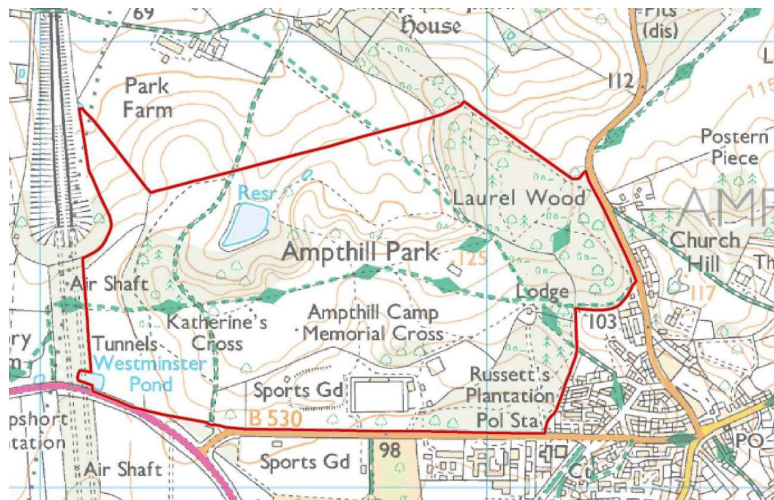
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- Basic timeline from internet searches



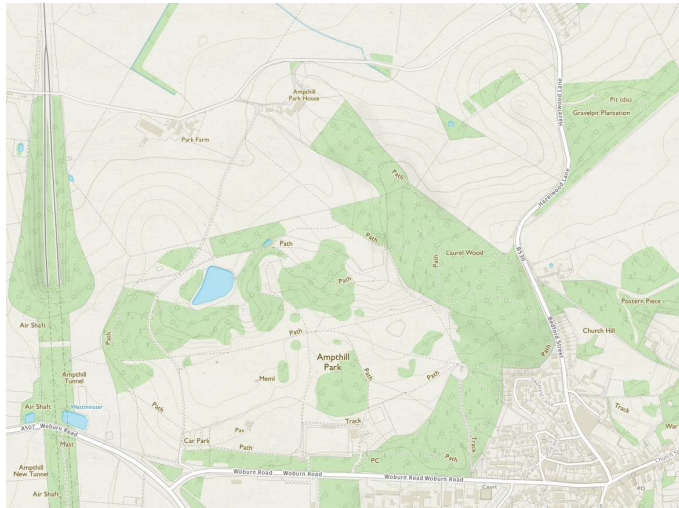
Google Earth aerial photograph of Ampthill Great park



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Maps and illustrations for Ampthill Great Park included:

Gordon's Map, 1736, photograph of detail from the copy in BARS
Thomas Jefferys' Map 1765, photograph of detail from the copy in BARS
Miller's Map 1748, from the Ampthill Park CMP
Bryant's Map, 1825/26, from a photograph of detail from the copy in BARS
Undated C19 Parish Map, from the Ampthill Park CMP

At the top of the form is the basic info – easy so far!

The notes are very useful though, so let's read through them:

- The purpose of this condition assessment is to capture a sense of the overall condition, vulnerability and management of Registered Parks and Gardens. After assessment, if sites are considered to be potentially vulnerable or at risk, then further professional assessment will need to be carried out by a Heritage at Risk Landscape Architect.
- The scales for each risk category – condition, vulnerability, management, and trajectory – are intended to capture the degree to which a landscape may be at risk and not a precise 'score'.
- For very large and complex sites it might be necessary to carry out assessments for distinct parts of the site and aggregate the overall condition.
- The register of parks and gardens contains a variety of site types; rural parks and gardens, public parks, cemeteries, institutional (hospitals, asylums, etc.) landscapes, commercial landscapes, etc. The risk assessment has been designed to accommodate the variations in form, use and feature across the various site types, but some discretion may need to be applied with unusual sites.
- Identify the degree of risk in each sub-category (on the right-hand side of each

panel) and then aggregate the scores to identify the degree of risk for condition, vulnerability, management and trajectory, and ultimately the overall risk to the site.

- If there is a single, standout problem with the site then record this in the 'notes' section.
- Under the section on 'ownership', also consider how different 'departmental' interests within one organisation could result in the equivalent to a site that is in multiple ownerships.
- Establish a chronological reference point from which to assess the site based on; the last time it was assessed for HAR purpose, the registration description, or possibly the point when the site was created. Reference to the parks and gardens register description (NHLE) will be essential to ensure that the level of risk is assessed against the purposes for registration as a park and garden of special historic interest.
- Note, that where one single owner predominates, there may still be threats to the site arising from different, conflicting 'departmental' interests.
- Use a large-scale map of the registered area, the parks and gardens register description and any previous site notes
- Note if the site has been subject to any heritage crime; vandalism, graffiti, arson, etc



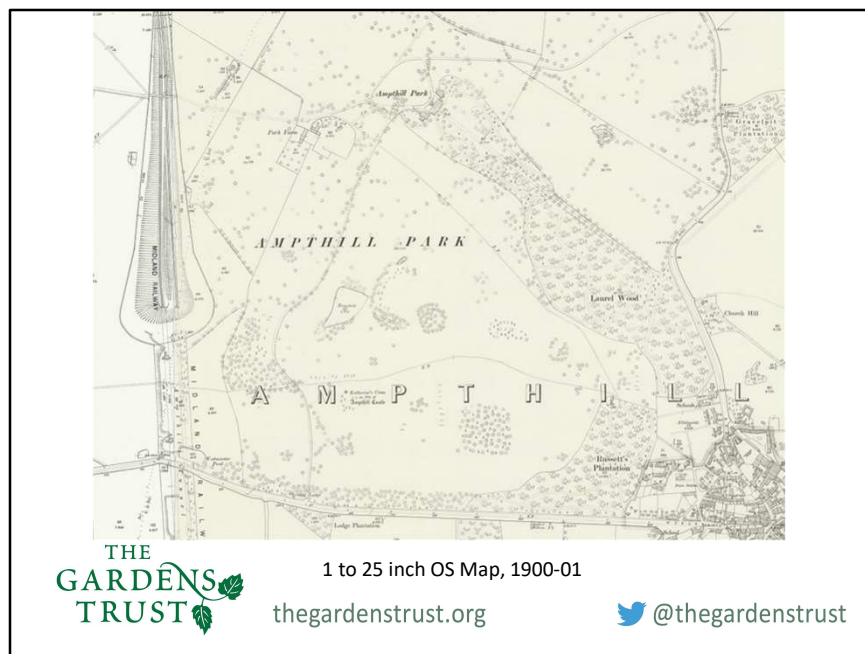
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OS Map 1883

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National Library for Scotland OS maps, online



National Library for Scotland OS maps, online

Capability Brown's Account Book, page for the Earl of Ossory at Ampthill Park

In February 1771 Received of the Earl of Upper Ossory On Acc. of the work at Ampthill	200.0.0
1771 in June Received of his Lordship	300.0.0
In December Received of his Lordship	300.0.0
1772 in June Received of his Lordship	400.0.0
November 19 Received of his Lordship	300.0.0
Mem: that I settled the above Acc with Lord Ossory to and with Nov the 14 th and a Balance remained due to one of	
	(96.9.7)
Dec 14 th 1773 Received of the Earl	300.0.0
March the 17 th in 1775 Received of the Earl y all Demands	500.0.0

£ 2,300.0.0

£210,000 in today's terms



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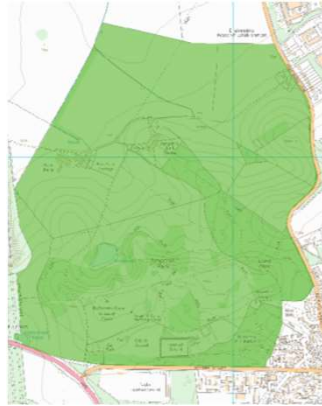
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Image and transcript taken from the online digital version of Brown's Account book, held at the RHS Lindley Library.

AMPTHILL PARK

Overview

Heritage Category: Park and Garden,
Grade: II,
List Entry Number: 1000378
Date first listed: 30-Nov-1986



HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Ampthill Great Park, originally a deer park, surrounded Ampthill Castle, which was built in the early C15 by Sir John Cornwall, lord of Ampthill Manor; Ampthill Little Park lay south of the Ampthill to Woburn road. Having become royal property, the castle and parks were used by Henry VIII, who paid frequent visits between 1524 and 1532, and by Katherine of Aragon in the early 1530s during the divorce proceedings with Henry. The castle was ruinous by the end of the C16 (VCH) and the present Park House was built in the late C17 to replace the Great Lodge, built in the C16 for Sir Francis Bryan. In 1769 the second Earl of Upper Ossory employed Sir William Chambers (1723-96) to remodel the house, and following this work, employed Lancelot Brown (1716-83) to landscape the park from 1771-2, for which Brown received £2396 (Stroud 1975). Horace Walpole visited Ampthill, corresponding regularly with Lady Ossory, and advised on the erection of the Katherine Cross in 1773, contributing the inscription. The second Earl lived at Park House until his death in 1818. In 1837 it was leased to Sir James Parke, later Lord Wensleydale, whose family remained as tenants until his widow's death in 1879, the estate having been bought by the Duke of Bedford during this period. The house was occupied by the army during World War II, following which it was sold to Bovril Limited, in 1955 becoming a Cheshire Home. It is now (1997) divided into several domestic units.

Historic England's Register of Parks and Gardens Listing – for Ampthill Great Park, List No. 1000378

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

Amphill Park lies 10km south of Bedford, at the north-west corner of Amphill town. The c 140ha site is bounded to the south by the old Woburn to Amphill road, with the site of the medieval Little Park and Cooper's Hill south of this, to the east by the Bedford to Amphill road, and to the north-west and north by agricultural land, with the mainline railway forming the south-west boundary. The southern part of the site is bisected west to east by the Amphill Ridge, part of the Greensand Ridge, which falls gently to the south boundary and steeply to the north to the flat land of the Bedford Plain in the northern half of the site. The setting is largely agricultural and wooded, with the town of Amphill to the south-east, the village of Millbrook to the west, and the Houghton House estate to the east.



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ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main approach to the house is via the east drive, entering the park 600m north-east of the house off the Bedford to Amphill road, curving south-west through the park with broad views to the north and west. A spur off the main drive turns south 50m north of the house, curving up a steep slope to arrive at a gravel sweep by the tall flight of broad stone steps on the north-west front of the house. This front overlooks a sloping paddock with a stone statue of a hound on a pedestal (late C18, listed grade II) at the top, south end and two flanking clumps of trees adjacent to the drive, possibly the remains of an C18 avenue which ran north-west from the house. The drive then curves down to the west, returning to join the main drive as it continues on to Park Farm, 300m west of the house. The remains of a further, largely straight drive, now known as Lime Walk, enters off the Bedford road 650m south-east of the house. Its route cuts through the steeper gradients within Laurel Wood to create a smooth gradient up through the Wood and, formerly, through the pleasure grounds, to the south-east front of the house. Its course through the pleasure grounds is now largely lost. Gordon's map of 1736 shows this as the main drive. A third drive, thought to be the major drive through the park as established by Brown (Bedfordshire Magazine 1972), enters 900m south of the house off the Woburn road on the south boundary, passing the site of a lodge demolished in the late C20. The drive curves north up the hillside to the top of the ridge, with views from the incline to the west and south-west towards distant woodland, and, at the summit, sudden spectacular views north across the reservoir and house into the Bedford Plain towards Bedford, as well as a view of the plateau site of Amphill Castle, now marked by the Katherine Cross. The drive descends steeply around the edge of a wide, bowl-shaped feature containing the reservoir, today (1997) becoming an agricultural track as it crosses arable land to join the west arm of the east drive up to the north-west front of the house.

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GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The informal, enclosed pleasure grounds lie on the south-east, garden front of the house, extending 300m south-east to merge with Laurel Wood, and bounded to north and south by the intermittent remains of a brick ha-ha. Together with Laurel Wood, they occupy the shoulder of land extending north-east from Ampthill Ridge, with the house situated at the north-west tip. The area close to the house is laid largely to lawn with specimen trees, the ground falling sharply to north and south from the broad, level, central spine, with views from the slopes across the park to the south, and the park and Bedford Plain to the north. This area, subdivided into three by hedges and low fences, is divided from the south-eastern section by a fence (C20) situated 100-150m south-east of the house. Beyond the fence the pleasure grounds contain many more mature trees, including the remains of a short lime avenue 200m south-east of the house, lying adjacent to, and to the north of, the main axis of the Lime Walk drive. This area contains further mature limes, beeches and yews, with scrub undergrowth. A narrow central path on the central spine links the fence with the remains of a gateway 300m south-east of the house, marking the formal division between Laurel Wood and the enclosed pleasure grounds.

Formerly (OS 2nd edition 1901), when Lime Walk drive continued north-west from Laurel Wood, it ran through the centre of these wooded pleasure grounds, with two informal, curving paths running parallel to, and either side of, the straight drive. The wooded areas thinned out towards open areas closer to the house, and eventually all three routes converged on the central block of the south-east front of the house, with a path running the length of the front. Laurel Wood, with Lime Walk drive running along its northern boundary, appears to be an extension of the pleasure grounds, with various informal paths within the woodland which emerge on the boundary with the south park. Its wooded character is similar to that of the wooded south-east section of the enclosed pleasure grounds.



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PARK The park, which surrounds the house, is divided into two by a C20 fence line which runs from west to east. Gordon's map of 1736 shows the house and park, surrounded by a paled fence, extending over both sides of the Ampthill Ridge, falling some way into the Bedford Plain to the north. The northern half, now largely arable farmland with the consequent loss of most of its park trees, is sited on land sloping gently down to the Plain, while the southern half which straddles the ridge is still largely pasture, bisected by the woodland spine of Laurel Wood and Russett's Plantation. The southern half contains many clumps of trees, perhaps planted by Brown, and some trees said to predate Brown's work (Bedfordshire Magazine 1972). Hill spurs, planted to emphasise their smooth contours, run from the Ridge down to the south boundary with, at the bottom, several late C20 sports pitches and clubhouses in a line running parallel with the belt which runs the length of the south boundary, merging into Russett's Plantation at the east end. Here lies Russett's Lodge, 800m south-east of the house, on the boundary between the park and the Plantation. It is a small, late C17 brick building, remodelled and enlarged by William Chambers who gave it a classical, pedimented facade on its main, north front.

The Katherine Cross (listed grade II) stands in a prominent ridge-top position 700m south of the house, a tall stone cross of Gothic design erected by James Essex in 1773 for the second Earl of Upper Ossory, to mark the site of Ampthill Castle. The cross, sited on a plateau with views north towards the house and Bedford Plain, bears a shield of England impaling Aragon, and an inscription by Horace Walpole commemorating Katherine of Aragon's residence: 'The mournful refuge of an injured Queen' (VCH). The Ampthill Camp Memorial Cross lies 100m south-east of the Katherine Cross, built in similar style and erected by the Duke of Bedford after World War I to commemorate the use of the park as an army camp. The railway has been taken as the western boundary of the area here registered, but formerly the park extended west of the railway line, as far as the village of Millbrook (OS 1st edition published 1881). Views still extend west from the park over the higher ground on which this former parkland lay.



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KITCHEN GARDEN There are no obvious remains of a kitchen garden, although several glasshouses are shown inside an enclosure adjacent to the east of Park Farm on the OS map of 1901.

REFERENCES The Walpole Society 16, (1927-8), pp 69-70
D Stroud, Capability Brown (1975), p 215
J Collett-White (ed), Inventories of Bedfordshire Country Houses, 1714-1830, (Bedfordshire Historical Record Society 1995), pp 12-15
Bedfordshire Magazine, 13 (autumn 1972), pp 241-6

Maps

T Jefferys, The County of Bedford, 1765
A Bryant, Map of the County of Bedford, 1826
Amphill Park, 1808 (Bedfordshire Record Office)
OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1881
2nd edition published 1901
3rd edition published 1926 OS 25" to 1 mile:
1st edition published 1880

Description written: September 1997 Amended: April 1999
Register Inspector: SR Edited: April 1999



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