

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

HALTON HOUSE

Auteur(s) : Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/>

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*Inventory of Great Britain*  
**HALTON HOUSE**

Name: HALTON HOUSE

District: Buckinghamshire (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Aston Clinton

District: Buckinghamshire (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Halton

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.781909  
 Longitude: -0.72346035  
 National Grid Reference: SP 88158 10020  
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

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label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden  
Grade: II  
List Entry Number: 1000601  
Date first listed: 30-Aug-1987

## Details

Late C19 formal gardens and park with woodland rides, surrounding a contemporary country house.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Baron Lionel de Rothschild, head of the British branch of the Rothschild international banking dynasty, bought the Halton estate from Sir George Dashwood in 1853, including the manor house (no longer extant) close to the church, the grounds around it and parkland north of the Grand Union Canal. Baron de Rothschild was elected to the House of Commons in 1847, however as a practicing Jew was unable to take his seat as a Member of Parliament until 1858. The Baron died in 1879, soon after which his son, Baron Alfred (d 1918), began to build a house on a completely new site, previously agricultural land, 600m east of the church. During the 1880s Alfred laid out the grounds around the House and constructed woodland rides up the steep scarp to the Austrian-style chalet at the top. After his death, the RAF bought the estate in 1919 to create a training base, using the House as the Officers' Mess, demolishing the Winter Garden at the south end of the House and in 1935-7 constructing a new south accommodation wing. Parade grounds and buildings were constructed by the RAF over the south and east park areas, retaining many estate trees. The site remains (1997) in use as part of an RAF base.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Halton lies 5km south-east of Aylesbury and 2km north of Wendover, on the edge of the Chiltern Hills, overlooking the Vale of Aylesbury to the north-west. The 120ha site is bounded to the south by Halton Camp, to the east by woodland, to the south-west by Halton village, to the west by Halton Airfield and to the north by the former parkland of Aston Clinton Park (now known as Green Park), a former Rothschild property. The eastern half of the site, east of the Upper Icknield Way, runs east up the steep Chiltern scarp with spectacular views across the Vale and towards the House below, to a plateau at the top. The western half of the site, with the House sited towards the eastern edge of this area, largely slopes gently down to the south and west. The immediate setting is varied, with the extensive buildings of the RAF base prominent to the south, the small village of Halton to the west, and the hanging woodland within the site extending to north and south. Within the wider setting Halton is one of seven Rothschild country estates within a 10km radius of Aylesbury bought, and usually furnished with a new house, during the second half of the C19.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The main entrance, off the Upper Icknield Way, lies 300m east of the House, opposite Mansion Hill Lodge, a late C19, half-timbered, two-storey lodge. The drive curves west, flanked by clipped evergreen shrubs to

arrive at a gravel carriage sweep in front of the large porte-cochère on the south-east, entrance front of the House, and a pedestal light in the centre of the sweep. The drive continues along the outer edge of the sweep, separated by a strip of lawn, to give access to the south wing of the House. A spur off the main drive runs north through woodland, over Hairlane Bridge (probably contemporary with the Canal construction, c 1799) over the Canal into the Aston Clinton/Green Park estate. A further drive enters the site 1km east of the House near the top of Aston Hill, at Astonhill Lodge, with a panoramic view north along the scarp and into the Vale. From here a drive runs to the Chalet (1887-8, listed grade II), a summerhouse/pavilion, now a house, sited on the top of the plateau at the edge of a large open area. It is modelled on an Alpine chalet and was built for Baron Alfred to entertain his guests (including King Edward VII and Lily Langtree), and as a focus for expeditions on horseback from the House. Beyond the Chalet, to the south, various rides and a drive traverse the woodland on the scarp down to Mansion Hill Lodge, with spectacular views west to the House and Vale beyond. The remains of a lime avenue flank the drive along the east boundary of the woodland. A drive, now a path, enters at the south corner of the park, running north through the belt of woodland along the Icknield Way to emerge on the east lawn. McEwen Ride enters the park 650m south-west of the House, marked by a late C19/early C20 brick and half-timbered lodge, running north-east straight across the park to the north end of the garden, curving around it before turning south to meet the main drive north-east of the House.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Halton House (W R Rogers of Cubitts 1881-3, listed grade II\*) lies at the centre of the registered area, built by Alfred de Rothschild on a new site in a French Renaissance style, of ashlar stone with steep, slated roofs, iron crestings and finials and a prominent porte-cochère on the south-east, entrance front. A service wing in matching style is attached to the north end. The elaborate domed Winter Garden was attached to the south end of the House when it was built, with three radiating flights of steps down to the gardens. It was demolished in 1935, replaced by an accommodation block designed by Vincent Harris. The latter is linked to the House by the Winter Garden corridor, with white stone columns and niches. The House is sited on elevated ground facing the Vale, but it is largely screened from views of the Vale by the mature trees around the west boundary of the garden. From the south side of the accommodation block a view of the hills above Wendover is visible above the RAF buildings along the south boundary.

The red-brick stables lie 750m south of the House, with three squat, square towers linked by low ranges, originally enclosing one side of a rectangular yard, now a riding school.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The large, informal east lawn is surrounded by mature trees and shrubs screening it from the Icknield Way to the east, with views up the steep wooded slope beyond. A path leads south from the carriage sweep down a flight of stone steps, with a balustrade linking it to the accommodation block, to the south lawn which is now part of the playing fields (originally parkland). The path continues along the south front of the accommodation block, returning north-east to run straight along the garden terrace on the north-west front of the House. The major garden features lie to the west and north of the House. A flight of stone steps, balustraded, on an axis with the garden door, leads north-west from the broad gravel terrace, down to a straight, broad gravel path leading to the circular pond and fountain.

During the late C19 and early C20 this path was flanked by two rows of circular bedding beds, planted and trimmed in three dimensional manner to resemble cushions (Adam 1983). This formal garden is now largely laid to lawn with columnar cypresses flanking the central path. The pond is the focal point from the garden front, with a stone edging and floodlighting at water level. The central fountain is much reduced in height and detail. This formal area is backed by mature trees and shrubs on the west garden boundary. North of the pond, 100m north-west of the House, in a clearing in the trees, reached by a path which sweeps north around it, is the oval Italian Garden, entered through a pair of elaborate wrought-iron gates. A central oval lawn is surrounded by the remains of a mosaic path and stone edging, dominated at the north end by a stone-effect gazebo, in ruinous condition (1997). A path from the garden terrace runs north to reach an informal oval pond, with, at the east end, a rockwork grotto/cascade, now dry, which fed the pond with water, crossed by the path which then leads north to a further rock feature surrounded by trees. The cascade, now considerably decayed, appears also to have had water running through it, with the foundations and floor of a thatched, rustic pavilion at one end. These garden features are screened from the north end of McEwen Ride to the north by evergreen trees and shrubs.

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**PARK** The park surrounds the gardens to the west and south. The western area is bisected south-west to north-east by the disused, but still water-filled and tree-lined, Wendover arm of the Grand Union Canal (1799), the two parts of the park being connected by a path crossing a cast-iron, blue-painted bridge (1880, listed grade II) with a delicately patterned ornamental parapet. The area west of the Canal was part of the park connected with the earlier Halton House which stood close to the church (OS 1st edition 1884), and was incorporated into the later Rothschild park, c 1880s. It is now pasture and visually disconnected from the rest of the park by mature trees growing along the Canal. The park east of the Canal, now largely playing fields, has been curtailed to the south and east of the Icknield Way by RAF development, reducing its extent considerably. Many clumps, belts and single trees have been retained, together with, at the northern extent, Marl Copse, an area of mixed woodland with ornamental trees through which runs the drive connecting Halton with Aston Clinton Park/Green Park.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The kitchen gardens were sited 1km west of the House, a remaining feature of the earlier Halton House landscape. They appear to have been quite extensive, but have now been infilled by housing development and tennis courts, with little or no remaining structures.

#### REFERENCES

Country Life, 1 (19 June 1897), pp 664-6; 154 (11 October 1973), pp 1062-4 A E Adam, Beechwoods and Bayonets, The Book of Halton (1983) B E Scott, The story of Halton House, (unpub thesis (1994) held at Aylesbury Local Studies Library) N Pevsner and E Williamson, The Buildings of England: Buckinghamshire (1994), pp 364-5

Maps Halton Estate map, 1884 (Ma/88/1), (Buckinghamshire Record Office) Tithe map for Halton parish, 1840 (192), (Buckinghamshire Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1884 2nd edition published 1900 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1899

Description written: 1997 Register Inspector: SR Edited: October 1999

This list entry was subject to a Minor Amendment on 28/09/2020

## Legal

This garden or other land is registered under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 within the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens by Historic England for its special historic interest.