

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

SHARDELOES

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SHARDELOES

Name: SHARDELOES

District: Buckinghamshire (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Amersham

District: Buckinghamshire (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Little Missenden

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.663896
Longitude: -0.64576583
National Grid Reference: SU 93761 96992
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II*
List Entry Number: 1000425
Date first listed: 30-Aug-1987

Details

An C18 landscape park and woodland with work by Nathaniel Richmond and Humphry Repton, surrounding an C18 country house, with remains of a formal early C18 layout in park, possibly by Charles Bridgeman.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT Shardeloes manor was acquired by the Drake family in the early C17. Sir William Drake inherited the estate from his uncle (also Sir William) in 1669, developing gardens around the house towards the end of the C17. In 1726 Montague Garrard Drake paid Charles Bridgeman (d 1738) £50, although little else is known about Bridgeman's involvement at a time when the stables and outbuildings were being rebuilt, and it was intended to rebuild the house to plans by James Leoni. Drake died in 1728, and work stopped until his son, William (d 1769), commissioned Stiff Leadbetter to produce new plans in 1758, involving Robert Adam (1728-92) during the 1760s, when the house was substantially rebuilt. The formal landscape, presumably Bridgeman's, around the old house is shown in an engraving by Badeslade and Rocque (1739), with an extensive geometric layout including a straight canal ending in a circular pond aligned with the north-east entrance to the house, avenues on the main axes, angular woodland blocks and formal gardens behind (to the south of) the house and to the north-west in the valley. By 1761 (Rocque) the naturalistic lake had been created from the formal water elements, but the geometric layout still existed south of it. Nathaniel Richmond was employed from 1763 to 1770, with his foreman Henshaw, Richmond being paid £1000 and Henshaw £1300 for work at Shardeloes, during which time it seems that the formal layout was transformed into an informal scheme. This was probably one of Richmond's most important commissions (David Brown pers comm, June 1997). As illustrated in the Red Book for Shardeloes in 1794, Humphry Repton (1752-1818) produced a scheme for improvements, designed largely to enhance the landscape north of the lake. This seems to have been partially implemented. The Drakes continued to live at Shardeloes until the Second World War, when the house was used as a maternity hospital and the park ploughed for arable. The house and attached buildings were subdivided into flats c 1960, when the rest of the estate was divided and sold.

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DESCRIPTION LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Shardeloes lies in the Chiltern Hills. The house stands 1km west of Amersham, the park boundary being adjacent to the west end of the town, and 1km south-east of Little Missenden, the park boundary being adjacent to the east end of the village. The c 390ha site is bounded to the west by Mop End Lane, and on the other sides by agricultural land and woodland. The land is hilly, particularly the area north of the house which runs north down to the valley of the River Misbourne, continuing uphill beyond the lake, over the A413 dual carriageway (formerly the C18 Aylesbury to Amersham turnpike) to the woodland at the northern boundary. The setting is largely agricultural and wooded, although both Amersham and the dual carriageway are prominent in views east from the house and north parkland. The Aylesbury to Marylebone railway crosses the woodland at the northern end of the park, but, being set in a cutting, is largely unseen.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main, east entrance, giving direct access from London and Amersham, lies adjacent to the old course of the A413 (before improvements in the 1980s moved it some metres further to the north-east), 900m east of the house. The drive enters between iron entrance gates and a screen (late C18, listed grade II) and leads past two single-storey lodges, the western one (early C19, listed grade II) of white-painted stucco with a recessed three-bay Doric portico on the east front facing the drive, the eastern one seemingly rebuilt (late C20). From here, flanked by C19 iron fencing and mature lime trees at irregular intervals, it curves west and north-west across the park and up a gentle gradient to the north-east front of the house, arriving at Adam's imposing, three-bay portico with its elegant Corinthian columns, skirted by a flight of low stone steps giving access to the central front door and lofty entrance hall. The drive has views of the park to north and south, with, at the front entrance, an extensive view across the north park and lake to the woodland at the north boundary, framed by two clumps of trees to the north and east of the house. A south drive, now disused and lost in places, gave access across the park from the High Wycombe to Amersham road, the A404, via Wycombe Lodge, a small brick building with a rustic verandah, now much enlarged, situated 1.8km south-west of the house, this approach joining the main drive 500m east of the house. The west drive, now used as farm access across the park, enters from Little Missenden village street c 1.5km to the north-west, giving access from the village and Aylesbury. This approach runs along the bottom of the valley parallel with the river, turning south up the steep slope into woodland. It used to emerge on the south side of this woodland, north of the stables, but since the stables have been converted to residential use (c 1960s) the course in this area has been obliterated by landscaping. Stone gate piers mark the site where it emerged into the stable yard, however, from where it leads south-east to the north-east front of the house.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Shardeloes (1758-66, listed grade I), built for William Drake by Stiff Leadbetter, with entrance portico and interior decoration by Robert Adam, and work by James Wyatt from 1773, stands at the centre of the park. The house, based around a C17 building, has a central courtyard (probably the earlier manor house seen in the 1739 Rocque and Badeslade view), with formal, C18 state rooms to the north-east and south-east. It was converted to flats by P Carter c 1960. The rendered office range attached to the north corner of the house, and the stable block (listed grade II) to the north of this, to which the office range is attached, form two open-fronted, north-east-facing courtyards overlooking the north parkland. These ranges were designed by Francis Smith 1722-6, for Montague Garrard Drake, and were originally attached to the old house. Robert Adam altered the stables in 1761.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens lie south and south-east of the house, bounded on the south and east sides by a substantial ditch, which was part of a sunk fence (the fence itself now gone, 1997), probably of C18 origin, and possibly by Richmond. They consist of open lawn close to the south-west and south-east fronts, merging into grass paths and clearings separated by clumps of mature shrubs and mature ornamental trees further from the house. Considerable clearing and development of this area of ornamental woodland took place in the 1980s, supervised by Mr A Thompson, with the addition of bands of ornamental shrubbery and specimen trees.

A small, late C20 garden lies below the south-east front of the house, and a rectangular hedged enclosure lying below the south-west front, designed by Elspeth Hoare c 1960, surrounds a small, late C18 summerhouse (listed grade II). This is classical in the style of the mansion, rendered and painted, with a pediment and four pillars on the south-east elevation. Wrought-iron gates

(attributed to Robert Bakewell) on the south-east garden boundary, aligned with the south-east front of the house, were brought c 1960 from Newnham Paddock, Warwickshire (qv), and open up a view of the park to the east.

PARK The extensive park is divided into north and south halves by High Wood west of the house and the main, east drive. The south park is largely arable with woodland plantations. The south corner, known as Rough Park, is largely woodland with the remains of the drive from Wycombe Lodge running through, and a large electricity substation set within. North of the woodland lies undulating open arable land with views north-east to High Wood and, in the distance, of the woodland on the hillside north of the River Misbourne. High Wood seems to have been part of a circuit of pleasure grounds with paths from the garden leading through it (OS 1885). Some of the major paths still survive as woodland tracks. In the park south and east of Summerville's Wood, 500m south-west of the house, lie the remains of formal plantations (seen clearly on OS 1st edition map of 1885), now much depleted, backed to the south by Wheatley Wood planted across the valley along the south-east boundary. These are probably the remains of early C18 plantations, part of the formal layout (OS 1885).

The north park lies to the north of the house, occupying the sides and bottom of the Misbourne valley running from west to east through the landscape. It is dominated by the house at the top of the southern slope and the central lake in the valley. The north park is also divided from west to east by the dual carriageway, originally the Aylesbury to Amersham turnpike which is shown in the 1739 Badeslade and Rocque view.

The park south of the A413 and north of house is largely pasture, with clumps and single trees, many of early C18 origin, their arrangement suggesting the naturalised remains of the formal layout. The 1739 Badeslade and Rocque engraving shows an elaborate, formal walled water garden lying south of the present walled gardens, straddling the course of the river on the west side of the park, with a formal layout in the area occupied by the present walled garden. This may not have been built, but remains of a formal layout survive here (Inspector's Report 1990).

North of the A413 lies the area with which Humphry Repton was principally concerned. The park has no specimen trees, but is backed by woodland. Repton's proposals included a bridge under the turnpike linking the two parts of the north park and a Tuscan temple, but these were not carried out. Those proposals which were executed, at least to some extent, included enhancing the picturesque beauty of the beech woods on the hillside forming the backdrop to the main view north from the house (Weedonhill Wood), creating a drive through the woods and improving the resulting views towards the house. Traces of the drive are discernable, with individual lime and horse chestnut trees, apparently of late C18 date, fringing the woodlands (Colson Stone 1992). A prominent clump proposed by Repton still exists in the park, and the dam at the east end of the lake is masked by a plantation (Engine House Wood) as Repton proposed, in place by 1812 (OS Drawing 1812). From the north end of the park there are long views south down over the dual carriageway to the lake at the bottom, and up the steep pasture beyond to the north-east front of the house framed by the two clumps.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden lies on a south-facing slope towards the west side of the north park. Estate accounts (Drake family papers in Bucks RO) indicate the walled garden was built 1787-9. The gardens' removal from the vicinity of the house (kitchen gardens behind the house are hinted at in a view of c.1730: Willis pl 72a) was presumably part of ongoing improvements at Shardloes. The site had previously been part of water gardens shown on the view of 1730, these gardens probably being among the works at Shardloes for which Charles Bridgeman was responsible in the mid 1720s. The kitchen gardens are set behind a tall wall screening from the Aylesbury-Amersham turnpike (later the A413, now a dual carriageway), probably retained from the earlier water gardens (estate accounts (D/DR/5/62) record £101 spent 'Repairing old walls near the road'). Indeed, comparison of a view of the water garden c.1730 (Willis pl.62a) and later maps suggests that the kitchen garden's footprint directly overlies the boundaries of the northern part of the water gardens. The five compartments were new-built, and the estate accounts record heavy expenditure on walls and coping, three stove houses, and a hot house. Alongside the accounts are undated and unsigned drawings for a 135-foot long 'Green House' with an elaborate, octagonal, central, masonry, pavilion-like structure (D/DR/4/5), and for a 'Hot House' (D/DR/4/21).

The 1880 OS shows that at that date the every structure associated with the gardens was packed tightly into the central compartment - a slightly unusual arrangement. The four compartments to either side and the slip along the south side stood empty, and were presumably entirely give over to horticulture. On the opposite side of the Aylesbury-Amersham road, its

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boundaries respecting those of the walled kitchen garden, was an orchard. Some form of structure stood at the south end of this, over the road from the gardener's cottage. This, perhaps another gardener's house, was presumably demolished when the road was dualled. By the late C20 the gardens were derelict.

REFERENCES Published material T Badeslade and J Rocque, *Vitruvius Britannicus IV*, (1739) *Country Life*, 34 (5 July 1913), pp 18-26 D Stroud, Humphry Repton (1962), p 172 P Willis, Charles Bridgeman and the English Landscape Garden (2001), pp 63, 434, pl 72a G Carter et al, Humphry Repton (1982), p 148 N Pevsner and E Williamson, *The Buildings of England: Buckinghamshire* (1994), pp 617-19 *Shardeloes: Inspector's Report*, (English Heritage 1990) *Shardeloes, Buckinghamshire Outline Restoration Plan*, (Colson Stone Partnership 1992)

Maps J Rocque, *Map of Berkshire, 1761* Plan showing Shardeloes Park on the Aylesbury to Uxbridge road, 1790-1810 (Buckinghamshire Record Office) *Map showing the diversion of the highway around Shardeloes Park, 1804* (Buckinghamshire Record Office)

OS Surveyor's Drawing, 1812 OS 6" to 1 mile; 1st edition published 1885 2nd edition published 1900 3rd edition published 1925 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1881 2 2nd edition published 1898

Description written: July 1997 Amended: July 1998; April 1999; June 2005 Register Inspector: SR Edited: September 2000

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.