

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

**BUSBRIDGE LAKES**

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

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**BUSBRIDGE LAKES**

Name: BUSBRIDGE LAKES

County: Surrey

District: Waverley (District Authority)

Parish: Busbridge

County: Surrey

District: Waverley (District Authority)

Parish: Godalming

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.172708  
Longitude: -0.60585895  
National Grid Reference: SU9756042420  
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden  
Grade: II\*  
List Entry Number: 1000301  
Date first listed: 01-Jun-1984

## Details

A collection of mid C18 follies set within a secluded steep-sided valley containing a chain of lakes.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The Busbridge estate was purchased by John Eliot from James de Busbridge in the early C16 and a fine timber house was erected c 1560. John Eliot's great grandson, William (1587-1650), who was knighted in 1620, converted the house into the Old Hall in the mid C17. He also formed the park, being granted free warren in his 500 acres (c 208ha) in 1637 (VCH). An account of a deer hunt in 1624 refers to ponds at the site (Larner 1947). The Eliot family sold the estate in 1710 and in 1748 it was purchased by Philip Carteret Webb (1700-70), a lawyer who was MP for Haslemere from 1754 to 1767 and Joint Solicitor to the Treasury for nine years. He was elected FSA in 1747 and FRS in 1749, and drew up the charter of the Society of Antiquaries in 1751. Webb was responsible for many of the garden features at Busbridge. The Canal 'nearly 700 feet long and 58 in breadth' was mentioned in an anecdote about the effect on its water of the great Lisbon earthquake of 1755 (Rev C Clarke, quoted in Larner 1947). Webb's first wife died in 1756, and at her request she and two children who had died in infancy were buried in the grounds, in a cave dug into the rock by a company of soldiers quartered at Guildford. Their bodies were reburied in Godalming church after Webb remarried. The house was enlarged and improved in 1775 for General Sir Robert Barker, an officer of the East India Company, but the estate continued to change hands regularly. Between 1792 and 1823 Henry Hare Townsend, MP for Calne owned the property and it was here that his son, Chauncy Hare Townshend, the notable collector was born in 1798. The Old Hall was demolished in 1906 and a new one built for Percy N Graham and his wife Marion on high ground to the north. At the same time the stables and coach house were converted into the present Busbridge Lakes House. The kitchen garden had already been relocated to a site further to the north in c 1859 (Gardeners' Chronicle 1862). Gertrude

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Jekyll, who lived nearby at Munstead Wood (qv), mentions garden work in progress at Busbridge Hall in one of her Notebooks and she also drew up plans for the garden.

The estate was broken up and sold in lots in 1951; the Hall was purchased by the Post Office Fellowship of Remembrance, the farmland by local farmers, the Lower Lake by a convent, and Busbridge Lakes House and 40 acres (c 16ha) of the valley by a Mr Haines. Haines sold much of the statutory before selling the property in 1966 to the present private owner. The estate remains (1999) in divided ownership.

#### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Busbridge Hall lies c 2km south of Godalming. The registered site of c 72ha comprises c 30ha of formal gardens, pleasure grounds, and lakes surrounded by c 42ha of parkland, the latter part wooded and part agricultural. The site contains a valley running east/west within which is a series of lakes, fed by springs to the east. The land rises to both north and south, levelling out to the north to form a relatively flat plateau. The site is bounded by Home Farm Road on the north, Hambleton Road to the east, farmland to the south, and Tuesly Lane to the west. The gardens of residential properties bound the site to the north-west and north-east. Boundary fencing consists principally of park railings. **ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The access to Busbridge Hall is from Home Farm Road on the northern perimeter of the site. The drive is shown starting c 300m further north on the plan accompanying the sale particulars of 1836. The plan shows the drive passing a lodge, described in the 1920 sale particulars as 'the Middle Lodge, situate at the Northern entrance to the Park, ... a picturesque stone and tiled and gabled building with latticed windows'. The drive runs south and after 270m divides, the eastern arm turning south-east and then south-west to arrive at the north front of the present Hall, the western arm running south along a dry wooded valley and through a pair of stone gate piers, then across the valley floor north-east of the Middle Lake to the site of the earlier hall c 150m south of Busbridge Hall.

A second drive enters the site from the south-east, at the southern end of Hambleton Lane, where a lodge which first appears on the OS map of 1916 flanks the entrance on the south side. This drive runs westwards, lined by Bargate stone walls, to serve Busbridge Lakes House, 210m south-east of the Hall.

At the north-east corner of the site, south of the junction of Home Farm Road and Hambleton Road, a narrow unmade track runs south to the remains of the kitchen garden and the former Head Gardener's House.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Busbridge Hall stands on the level ground just south of the centre of the site, with views north across its grounds and adjacent farmland. Designed by Ernest George (1839-1922) for Percy N Graham and erected in 1906, its situation at the edge of the valley would originally have given south-facing views over the lakes to the hillside beyond; trees now obscure any distant views from the southern elevation. The two-storey building has Dutch-style gables, sash windows, and a loggia on its south side, and is clad in thin bands of coursed stone. The Hall has recently (1990s) being converted into residential apartments.

The earlier house stood to the west of the present Busbridge Lakes House, on the site of what is now House Pond. The original timber house built by John Eliot was enlarged to the Old Hall in the mid C17 and was further enlarged and improved in 1775. It was described in 1862 (*Gardeners' Chronicle*) as 'The mansion, a plain square white building with slate roof'. After its demolition in 1906, the coach house and stables were converted to Busbridge Lakes House and given similar Dutch-style features to the new Hall.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** A stone-flagged terrace runs around the west and south elevations of the Hall; on the west are low stone walls and a formal rectangular pool, on the south are balustrades, stone seats, and simple pieces of topiary. A path which ran eastwards along the top of the hill to the Head Gardener's House is now (1999) lost in scrub woodland. The valley bottom to the south of the Hall and to the north of Busbridge Lakes House contains a series of lakes running from east to west: The Canal, House Pond, Middle Lake, and Lower Lake. The Canal (C18 or earlier) is crossed by a rustic stone bridge (C18, listed grade II) at its east end. In the hillside to the north, c 150m east-north-east of Busbridge Lakes House is the Hermit's Cave (C18, listed grade II), entered via a pointed arch with an iron grille gate set into a round rockwork arch. This leads to passages, an icehouse, and a large chamber with a central pillar from which five passages radiate, one of which originally contained the coffin of Philip Carteret Webb's first wife. A restored Doric temple (C18, listed grade II) stands 80m

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east of the Hermit's Cave. Nearby is a circular domed Grotto (C18, listed grade II) from which a spring once flowed. Some shell decoration is still visible inside the Grotto, and the initials 'HHT 1810' (Henry Hare Townsend, the then owner).

At the far eastern end of the valley is a series of late C20 pens for ornamental wild fowl; this area was the site of the kitchen garden until 1859 (*Gardeners' Chronicle* 1862). To the south runs the drive to Busbridge Lakes House. Between the House and The Canal are lawns and flower gardens, while mature specimen trees and shrubs stand alongside The Canal and House Pond and on the steep valley sides. Two pairs of late C20 wrought-iron gates designed with the black swans motif of Busbridge Lakes are situated at the east and west sides of the gardens, close to Busbridge Lakes House.

To the west and south of the House is a winding vale with walled sides containing a rustic pavilion, a small room and sham ruins, and another room (all listed grade II). A five-arch screen stands at the entrance to a gully known as the 'Ghost Walk', so called because of the marble busts once placed in niches in the cliff walls. The Walk runs from north-west to south-east in the cliffs behind the House, the vale narrowing towards spiral steps at the east end. On the hillside to the south is a miniature mock henge made from stones set vertically in the ground. Further east on the valley side is a statue of Hercules on a mound in the grass.

Some 40m west of Busbridge Lakes House is House Pond, created in the C20 on the site of the Old Hall, while c 200m to the north-west is Middle Lake, on the southern shore of which is the Boathouse (listed grade II). Built in the early C19, this is a cement-rendered building with a pantile roof and a trellis screen with an arched opening to the front.

At the western end of Middle Lake is a rustic bridge (C18, listed grade II) described by Keane in 1849 as 'a stone bridge of eleven arches, a contrivance of consummate skill and ingenuity, suggested and executed by Mr Bowers, the bailiff and head gardener'. He goes on to say:

'the road runs not over but by this bridge, the small flow of water is carried under the road to a lake below. Looking from the approach-road, from the house or from the pleasure grounds, the eye is carried from one lake under the arches to the lake below connecting them into one large piece of water spanned by a beautiful bridge'. (Keane 1849)

Below the bridge, the Lower Lake is now in separate ownership and there is no longer a view between the two lakes. Lower Lake, which lies c 220m west of Busbridge Hall, is now owned by a fishing club and is enclosed by 2m high wire fencing. Its banks are closely planted with trees and rhododendrons. The clubhouse is situated at its western end and between this and Tuesly Lane is a small lake known as Lady Well. In 1973 work to clear the lake of silt revealed a stone structure containing four Roman altars, originally from the west end of Hadrian's Wall, which formed part of the C18 landscape. Several other Roman stones have been found scattered around the estate during the C20. In 1923 the stones were identified as being part of a collection from Scaleby Castle in Cumbria and it is thought that they were moved to Busbridge as part of Philip Carteret Webb's landscaping in the C18. They have since been removed to Carlisle Museum.

The valley bottom contains a range of trees including the 'Restoration' chestnuts, said to have been planted in 1660, two tulip trees, a cedar of Lebanon, a Monkey Puzzle, and a large sequoia close to Busbridge Lakes House.

**PARK** The parkland to the north of Busbridge Hall is divided into fields, as is that to the north of the Lower Lake. A temple which formerly stood at the top of the valley north of Middle Pond (OS 1870) may be that which is now sited at Hatchlands Park, Surrey.

The hillside south of Busbridge Lakes House is well wooded, although the woodlands were badly damaged in the storms of 1987. The hillside is planted with a variety of species including yew, box, lime, and sweet chestnut.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The kitchen garden lies 350m east of the Hall. Its external walls, built of brick and cement-rendered on the outside, still exist, as does one glasshouse in the centre of the garden. The Bothy at the south-east corner is now a private dwelling. South of the walled garden is a partially yew-hedged enclosure with a central dipping pool, now (1999) laid to pasture. Two new dwellings have been built in the vicinity of the kitchen garden, one to the north and one to the east of the walls. The *Gardeners' Chronicle* in 1862 describes 'a new kitchen garden', commenting that 'It is only three years since what is now the kitchen garden was a corn field'. The garden was moved because the old site in the valley bottom was too cold and damp. The article describes and illustrates the extensive glass ranges within the walled area and observes that the yew hedge surrounding the rest of the garden 'has a better appearance seen from the surrounding pleasure grounds than a hard stone or brick wall'.

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Original undated planting plans exist (private collection) for the varieties of fruit trees, vines, and fruit bushes within the garden. The former Head Gardener's House is situated south of the garden, some 400m south-east of the Hall.

#### REFERENCES

J P Neale, Views of the Seats ... (1818-23) W Keane, Beauties of Surrey (1849), pp 133-7 Gardeners' Chronicle, (29 November 1862), pp 1126-8 Victoria History of the County of Surrey 3, (1902-12), pp 27-8 Rev H M Larnier, Busbridge, Godalming Surrey A History: Ancient and Modern (1947) B Jones, Follies & Grottoes (1974), pp 394-5 R Bisgrove, The Gardens of Gertrude Jekyll (1992), p 83

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1875, published 1880 2nd edition surveyed 1910, published 1912 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1870

Archival items Sale particulars, 1836 (Godalming Museum) Sale particulars, 1920 (Godalming Museum) Copies of Jekyll's planting plans (File 11, Folder 38) are held on microfilm at the National Monuments Record (originals held at Reef Point, USA) Gertrude Jekyll, Notebook No 9 (Godalming Museum) Undated coloured planting plans for kitchen garden (private collection) Description written: October 1999 Register Inspector: BJL Edited June 2002

## 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.