

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

**OLD ALRESFORD HOUSE**

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**OLD ALRESFORD HOUSE**

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| Name:               | OLD ALRESFORD HOUSE   |
| County:             | Hampshire   |
| District:           | Winchester (District Authority)   |
| Parish:             | Old Alresford   |
| label.localisation: | Latitude: 51.099116<br>Longitude: -1.1583796<br>National Grid Reference: SU 59028 33649<br><a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a> |
| label.overview:     | Heritage Category: Park and Garden<br>Grade: II<br>List Entry Number: 1000481<br>Date first listed: 18-Jun-1990                                 |

## Details

A landscape park designed in 1764 by Richard Woods as the setting for a country house.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The parish of Alresford formed part of the Bishop of Winchester's extensive estates for over a thousand years. Sometime during the mid C12, Bishop Godfrey de Lucy, who lived in nearby Bishop's Sutton, had the 350m long Great Weir constructed. This formed a balancing lake, known as Alresford Pond, for the Itchen Navigation.

Admiral Lord George Brydges Rodney (1719-92) had been brought up in the Itchen Valley by his godfather and moved there after serving with Hawke at Cape Finisterre and making his fortune during the Austrian War of Succession (1740-8). He amassed a considerable fortune during his naval service and rose from being a penniless captain to an Admiral earning £10,000. In order to build himself a country seat he commissioned the architect William Jones to build a house between 1749 and 1751. After his marriage in 1753, he bought further lands and farms and then, in 1755, he purchased Alresford Pond, finding that he had 'the opportunity of showing our mercey in not suffering the poor birds to be shot at' (CL 1978). He commissioned Richard Woods (1716-93) to prepare a design for Alresford Park in 1764, which was laid out between Alresford House and Alresford Pond to the south.

Lord Rodney, who succeeded his father in 1792, bought an area called 'The Voog', commonly known as 'The Bog' in 1816. This was set out with paths and bridges across a small stream that runs through the south-west corner of the park. The Rodney family owned Alresford House and Park for three generations until the 1870s, since when it has continued in private ownership (1999).

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** The 16ha of Old Alresford Park lie on the north side of the Itchen Valley, 1km north of the village of New Alresford and 12km east of Winchester on the former London road. The park abuts Colden Lane, the northern boundary of the site, and the north-west corner of the site is separated from the B3046 by the churchyard of St Mary's; for the rest of its length the western boundary adjoins this road. The southern boundary is formed by Bighton Road which separates the park from Alresford Pond. To the east of the park lies Upton Park, formed sometime during the C19 by a neighbouring farming estate and separated from the earlier landscape park by a perimeter belt.

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Tree belts enclose the southward-sloping site and frame views within and beyond the park. From Old Alresford House there are views south across the park. Views towards the Pond, upon which the original layout was based, have been lost due to the later addition of an intercepting tree belt and the growth of fen woodland.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** On the north, entrance front a formal entrance court is formed by the east and west wings of the House. The entrance court is divided from the road by brick walls and an ironwork screen with a pair of wrought-iron entrance gates (listed grade II).

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Old Alresford House (listed grade II\*) was built between 1749 and 1751 by William Jones for Admiral Lord Rodney. It lies against the park's northern boundary, close against the road which leads from the parish church to Upton House. To the north-east of the House is a modern house (built 1990) and the remains of the service buildings.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** Pleasure grounds, separated from the park by a ha-ha, lead to the beech walk down the east side of the park which screens the adjoining estate, Upton Park. This follows the concept outlined on Woods' plan. An icehouse stands at the northernmost corner of the site at the top of the beech walk.

To the east of the House, on the site of the stable yard, is a C20 rose garden.

**PARK** Woods' plan was largely implemented apart from some minor amendments. Replanting following the storms of 1987 and 1990 has followed the configuration of Woods' planting scheme. To the south of the House, the ha-ha separates the lawn and areas of ornamental planting flanking the House from the park. The parkland slopes gently down to Bighton Road which forms the southern boundary between the park and Alresford Pond. Over the years the lake has silted up and scrubbed over in parts so that it now covers an area of 6ha.

Richard Woods' plan of 1764 survives (private collection) and clearly demonstrates his design intentions. The parkland was to be enclosed by irregular plantations extending downhill towards Alresford Pond, which was to be framed by these plantations in views from the park and House. Trees along the road now block any views that did exist in this area, Alresford Pond being effectively screened off from the landscape park. The central space was grazing land with small clusters of trees in key positions to frame and add depth to views. A proposed coachway led off the B4038 to the west of the House, passing south of the churchyard to meet an eastern coachway at a carriage circle placed directly on the south front of the House. The eastern coachway led through shrubberies, south of the kitchen garden, then northwards along the belt which divided the park from Upton Park. This eastern coachway was implemented (OS 1860; Colvin and Moggridge 1989) and the proposed western one seems to have been formed as a walk.

Woods positioned 'Various kinds of Benches to the different Prospects', backed by dense planting at key points around the park so that there was a continuous screened boundary on three sides. The perimeter planting was made up of a deciduous belt underplanted with evergreens, principally yew, to shelter the path which winds through the whole of this linear plantation. Following severe storm damage in 1987 and 1990 this belt has been extensively replanted. The inner edges of the plantation were broken by elongated groups of isolated trees in grass beyond the ha-ha, and blocks of trees with an understorey within the ha-ha. Few of these blocks of trees survived the storms and they have been replanted. The ha-ha survives although it was built on a slightly different alignment, closer to the House than that indicated by Woods. The area to the east of the House was occupied by the service and ancillary buildings including a rick yard, cow yard, wood yard, poultry court, stables, and drying grounds.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The kitchen garden lies to the north-east of the House and directly south of the stables. In part it pre-dated Woods' work although he extended the complex eastwards and converted the existing kitchen garden into a 'Melon ground'. The site has recently been developed for housing (1990) which has included the removal of a section of the original kitchen garden wall.

#### REFERENCES

Country Life, 163 (5 January 1978), pp 18-21 D Jacques, *Georgian Gardens* (1983), p 83 A Policy for the Restoration of the Park at Old Alresford in Hampshire, (Colvin and Moggridge 1989, revised 1990)

Maps Richard Woods, *A Design for the Improvement of the Seat of Sir George Bridges Rodney at Old Alresford in Hampshire, 1764* (private collection) Thomas Milne, *Hampshire or the County of Southampton, 1" to 1 mile, 1791* Tithe map for Old Alresford parish, 1839 (Hampshire Record Office)

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OS Surveyor's drawing, 2" to 1 mile, 1808 (copy at Hampshire Record Office) OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1860  
2nd edition revised 1910

Description rewritten: September 1999 Register Inspector: KC Edited: February 2004

## 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.