

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

HUNTERCOMBE MANOR

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**HUNTERCOMBE MANOR**

Name: HUNTERCOMBE MANOR

District: Buckinghamshire (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Burnham

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.516992  
Longitude: -0.65721758  
National Grid Reference: SU 93269 80640  
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden  
Grade: II  
List Entry Number: 1000602  
Date first listed: 30-Aug-1987

## Details

Remains of late C19 gardens on site of C17 gardens, having associations with the C17 diarist John Evelyn and work by the C19 garden writer Eleanor Vere Boyle.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The manor belonged to Burnham Abbey in the C14, at which time the timber-framed core of the house was built. George Evelyn I bought Huntercombe in 1656 and died the following year, being succeeded by his son, George II, cousin of the diarist John Evelyn, who built the Jacobean wing of the house. John Evelyn mentions Huntercombe in his diary for 1679, describing the 'sweet gardens, exquisitely kept, though large' (Pevsner and Williamson 1994), and is likely to have been a regular visitor to Huntercombe. The Evelyns sold the house in 1705 to the Eyre family who owned it until 1871 when it was sold to the Rev Richard Cavendish Boyle and his wife, Eleanor Vere Boyle (EVB). EVB, a friend of Queen Victoria and her family, many of whom visited Huntercombe, wrote children's books, and books on gardening matters: *Days and hours in a garden* (1884), *Sylvana's letters* (1900), and the third chapter of *Seven gardens and a palace* (1900) are about Huntercombe. She developed Evelyn's garden in the 1870s, creating a late C19 ensemble, adding her own framework of topiary and ornamental trees and moving the road further west of the house. EVB died in 1916, and after having several further owners, Huntercombe was sold to Buckinghamshire County Council and is now (1997) a children's hospital.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Huntercombe lies on the south-west edge of Slough, towards the south end of Burnham parish. The 7ha site is bounded to the north by the grounds of a research laboratory, to the west by Huntercombe Lane South, to the east by the Huntercombe spur of the M4 motorway, and to the south by Huntercombe Farmhouse and a path which runs east of it. The lane is partly lined on both sides by C19 lime trees which appear to relate to the short lime avenue close to the west boundary inside the site. The land is flat, set in agricultural land to the south and west, with the medieval monastic buildings of Burnham Abbey adjacent to the south-west corner of the site, and the urban edge of Slough and Cippenham to the east and north. A 1996/7 hospital development to the south and south-east, sited very close to the stable block, lies on part of the designed landscape (OS 25" 1st edition 1881).

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The main approach to the site is from the north, off the Bath Road, 150m south along Huntercombe Lane South, to the modern entrance gates and gate piers which lie at the head of a curving, tree-lined drive which

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runs 150m south to the north entrance court. This courtyard, enclosed by red-brick walls, is entered through two banded brick and stone gate piers with stone balls on top, and iron gates. The gravel drive, flanked by two large, clipped yew pyramids, opens into a turning circle by the front door, flanked by lawn. The drive from the north entrance continues south around the west wall of the courtyard, running adjacent to the west walls of the house and south garden, meeting the west end of the stables and here another, south entrance from Huntercombe Lane South. The south entrance is in the process of alteration (1997), related to the new building south of the stables. The course of this whole drive appears to be that of the public road before, in the 1870s-80s, EVB appealed to Queen Victoria to help her gain permission to move it further west, to its present course.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Huntercombe Manor (listed grade I), which lies to the west of the site, is based around a C14 timber-framed hall on its south side, with further work in the late C17, early C18 and 1880s. It presents a rambling, mostly late C19 exterior, with south and east fronts facing onto the garden, and the north front overlooking the entrance courtyard. The 1770 stables, adjacent to the south entrance, are of rustic brickwork, with a stone cartouche of arms on the north side and a timber lantern, and have been converted to office accommodation. The building faces the south front of the house 50m to the north across the south garden. The stable yard south of the stables has been incorporated in hospital development, and several associated buildings demolished.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The gardens surround the house, with the formal elements closest to the building. To the north-east an L-shaped walled garden is surrounded by 3m high, C16, red-brick walls (listed grade II), much repaired, with eight entrances in the walls. Several of these entrances have ornamental gate piers and stonework. The interior is laid to lawn with some herbaceous borders. The remains of several straight paths crossing the garden are visible beneath the lawn. North of the walled garden, the scattered remains of rock features and small, C19/C20 concrete pools lie in woodland. South of the walled garden, the east wall of the entrance courtyard terminates the west end of an enclosed gravel walk parallel with the walled garden, bounded on the south side by a clipped yew hedge. A small seat is set into the west wall. Crossing this path at right angles near its west end, a further path leads south from an arched entrance in the walled garden, running across the east lawn parallel and close to the east front of the house, and terminating at an incomplete C16, soft, red-brick wall (listed grade II). The east lawn contains several clipped yews, and is also crossed by another, wider path running parallel to, and 30m east of, the east front of the house. This path bisects the garden from north to south and provides a view along the whole length of the garden. East of this straight gravel path the lawn becomes less formal, with some large ornamental trees, shrubs planted informally, an old field pond incorporated as an ornamental feature, and an orchard in the south-east corner. The south boundaries of the east lawn and the south garden are formed by the fragment of C16 wall, which runs parallel with the south front of the house and has been reduced to foundation level in places at the west end. The wall was part of former buildings and seems to continue west between the house and stables, with brick piers where the path between stables and house crosses it. The south garden is enclosed by the house to the north, the C16 brick wall to the south and west where it returns north, and clipped yews to the east. A wide, straight, central gravel path connects the south entrance of the house with the north entrance of the stables, with panels of lawn to west and east. A dogs' graveyard lies in the south-west corner, among mature yew trees. West of the house and drive an avenue of C19 limes runs north/south, pre-dating the re-routing of Huntercombe Lane South (OS 25" 1st edition 1881). After the public lane was moved in the 1880s (OS 25" 2nd edition 1899) another entrance to the site from the Lane was created, apparently at the north end of the lime avenue. This entrance and associated short drive to the house no longer exists, and the area is now partly covered by a car park north of the house.

**PARK** The small, flat park lies east of the garden, with sparse, single trees set in pasture. It appears to have extended north as far as the Bath Road, but this is now covered by the research station buildings, although some mature trees still remain in this area.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The kitchen garden and associated glasshouses appear to have been sited south-east of the house, south of the C16 wall and east of the stables. This area has been developed as a separate hospital unit.

#### REFERENCES

Country Life, 5 (6 May 1899), pp 560-5; 105 (3 June 1949), pp 1310-12; (10 June 1949), pp 1374-7; (17 June 1949), pp 1438-41  
G F Thomas, A History of Huntercombe (nd, c 1969) N Pevsner and E Williamson, The Buildings of England: Buckinghamshire (1994), pp 208-9

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Maps Plan of Burnham parish, c 1808 (MaR/16), (Buckinghamshire Record Office) Tithe map for Burnham parish, 1841 (74), (Buckinghamshire Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1882 1931 edition OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1881(2 2nd edition published 1899

Description written: 1997 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.