

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

ICKWELL BURY

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

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**ICKWELL BURY**

Name: ICKWELL BURY

District: Central Bedfordshire (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Northill

District: Central Bedfordshire (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Old Warden

label.localisation: Latitude: 52.099874  
Longitude: -0.33788962  
National Grid Reference: TL 13947 45918  
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden  
Grade: II  
List Entry Number: 1000577  
Date first listed: 30-Nov-1986

## Details

C17/C18 walled gardens, surrounded by late C18/C19 pleasure grounds with lake and landscape park, associated with a late C17 country house destroyed in 1937.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Ickwell Bury Manor, having been owned by the Priory of St John of Jerusalem, was granted in 1543 to John Barnardiston, in whose family it remained until it was sold to John Harvey in 1680. Harvey seems to have remodelled the existing house, adding the stable block. Gordon's map of 1736 shows an irregular, gabled house (probably of early C17 origin) with an enclosed forecourt which was remodelled later in the C18. The Harveys owned the estate until 1924, but from 1903 the house was occupied as a preparatory school. In 1937 it burnt down. Colonel H G Wells bought the site, building a new house completed in 1940, standing close to the site of the earlier house and attached to the stable block. The Wells family gave the estate to Bedford School and the house is currently (1997) leased to the Yoga for Health Foundation.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** The estate lies 9km south-east of Bedford, at the west edge of the hamlet of Ickwell and the village of Northill. The c 140ha site is bounded to the north and south by lanes, to the east by Northill and Ickwell and the lane linking them, and to the west by agricultural land, the adjacent area on the southern half of the west boundary being parkland during the C19. The gently undulating land lies on the Greensand Ridge and is largely agricultural, with woodland interspersed, with the designed landscapes of Moggerhanger Park (qv) to the north, Old Warden Park (qv) adjacent to the south, and Southill Park (qv) adjacent to the south of this.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The main entrance, off Ickwell Green, lies 300m east of the house, entering through a wooden gateway. The drive curves south-west through the park, dividing 200m east of the house, from where one arm runs to the east entrance of the stable yard, and the other curves west to the lawn enclosure in which the house stands. The south-east extent of the enclosure, 50m south-east of the house, is defined by a low brick wall with balustrading which contains two

entrances from the park, one at each end, marked by brick piers with ball finials. The drive runs through the northernmost entrance, past iron gates, to the south-east front. The remains of a further drive, extant in parts, enters at the north boundary, off the Northhill to Cople lane, 1.3km north-west of the house. This runs past a C19 timber-framed lodge, now much extended. The north drive runs south, past a substantial moat and fish ponds in Home Wood, where mature yews flank the course of the drive in places, crossing the open park north-east of the house before arriving at the gates beyond the south-east front. A pair of single-storey, rendered, late C18/early C19 Gothic lodges lies 350m east of the current north lodge, 1.2km north of the house, possibly at the head of an earlier entrance to the north drive, now lost. They are sited several metres apart, lying adjacent to the lane, with their front doors facing each other. A third drive, extant in parts, enters 700m south of the house off the Old Warden lane, curving north through woodland containing old sand pits, crossing the southern half of the park to join the other two drives at the south-east front.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** The original Ickwell Bury, probably built in the early C17, remodelled by John Harvey in the 1680s and again in the C18, lay on the eastern side of the estate very close to the site of the current, smaller house, built c 1940 by A S G Butler for Col H G Wells. A watercolour of c 1820 (Thomas Fisher) shows the west and south (main entrance) fronts of the house with lawn and scattered trees. The current house, of brick with two storeys, lies slightly north of the original, attached to the west end of the L-shaped brick stable block (c 1680, listed grade II), converted c 1940 into guest rooms. This range forms the south-east arm of the stable court, the court being entered from the east through a late C19 brick archway (listed grade II), with a semicircular-headed arch with a stone keystone carved with the arms of the Harvey family. A small square tower with a pyramidal roof is attached to the south-east. The gravelled courtyard has a sundial on an ornamental brick pillar placed on a small lawn at its centre. It is enclosed by low buildings, including on the north-west side a range of brick and timber-framed barns and outbuildings, c C17-C19 (listed grade II), and to the south-west further C18 and C19 brick outbuildings (listed grade II). The main entrance to the house lies in the south corner where a low tower joins house and stables together.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The gardens and pleasure grounds lie north and west of the house. The main formal feature, the walled garden, lies close to the north-west front of the house, surrounded by high red-brick walls, possibly of C17 origin, partly rebuilt in places. The garden, possibly built as a series of kitchen gardens (1781 map), was laid out most recently in the 1940s. It is entered from the lawn north-west of the house down stone steps, and is subdivided centrally north-east to south-west by a further brick wall, broken to the south by stone steps down to the north-west flanked by brick piers, and to the north by an archway also with stone steps down to the north-west. The garden contains flower and vegetable beds divided by grass paths edged by stone flags, and a limestone monument in the form of a 1.5m high obelisk with a sundial (listed grade II), probably erected c 1803 by Major John Harvey. The main axial grass path, the Long Walk, runs north-west from the entrance close to the house, along the length of the walled garden, edged by stone flags and flower borders.

At the north-west end of the Long Walk, c 120m north-west of the house, the brick boundary wall is broken by a gateway with wrought-iron gates. This gives access to the pleasure grounds surrounding the lake, and leads directly to a flight of stone steps, on an axis with the Long Walk, flanked by brick piers, running down to the lake edge. From here a narrow view opens over the former park beyond the lake, on an axis with the north-west avenue.

The irregularly shaped lake, with its three small islands, seems to have been created in the early to mid C19 (not shown on 1781 map or in 1826; present on 1881 OS). It is surrounded by a narrow belt of ornamental woodland containing a path with views out to the park to the south and former park to the west, with, in places, banks with mature trees on them, probably formed from the spoil when the lake was excavated. A boathouse (now (1997) gone) lay on the east bank, at the point where the water drains over a dam into a small culvert, crossed further down by a low, brick, arched pedestrian bridge. The culvert runs into a ditch (possibly the remains of a moat) which surrounds the north-west and north-east sides of a further garden enclosure, now disused, bounded to the south-west by the brick wall of the walled garden and to the south-east by the stable court. This enclosure contains a timber-framed and thatched bee house (C19, restored late C20, listed grade II) and a red-brick octagonal dovecote (c 1680s, listed grade II\*) with a pyramidal roof. The dovecote, built for John Harvey, retains its internal features including c 986 brick nesting boxes and wooden potence.

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**PARK** The park lies to the north, east and south of the house and gardens, and can be divided into inner and outer sections. The inner park, largely defined by the area of park shown in 'A Plan of the Parish of Northill' of 1781 (copied in 1833), lies to the south, east and north-east of the house and remains pasture. It is bounded on the south and east by a mature belt adjacent to the Ickwell Green to Old Warden lane, a small stream defines the northern boundary, and to the west is a fence line with arable land (formerly parkland, as shown on the 1st edition OS map published 1881) beyond. It contains mature ornamental trees, including limes, horse chestnuts and a monkey puzzle tree. A water feature lies close to the south boundary, 200m south-east of the house, consisting of two rectangular ponds, one much larger than the other, connected by a small canal with earth banks at either end. These are shown on the 1781 map.

The outer park lies to the north of the house, divided by Home Wood which contains the moat and fishponds lying 800m north of the house. It is largely arable and has lost most of its park trees. A double avenue of horse chestnuts flanks a ride south-east from Deadman's Oak, 2km north-west of the house, to Home Wood. This is aligned on the lake and house at its south-east end, although the view is now obscured by intervening trees in Home Wood.

The 1781 map shows the house reached from the village green by a drive across a small park lying to the south and east of the house, with an enclosed walled garden to the rear (north-west), and the rectangular water features some distance to the south and north. Bryant's map of 1826 shows the park covering a similar area to the 1781 map, and no lake depicted. The 1881 OS map shows the major features present now (1997), including the north-west avenue and the lake within the extended outer park.

#### REFERENCES

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Maps T Jefferys, *The County of Bedford, 1765 A Plan of the Parish of Northill & Part of the Parish of Sandy ... estates belonging to John Harvey, 1781, copied 1833* (Bedfordshire Record Office) A Bryant, *Map of the County of Bedford, 1826 OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1881 2nd edition published 1901 3rd edition published 1926 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1880*

Description written: September 1997 Amended: April 1999 Register Inspector: SR Edited: May 1999

## 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.