

Leicestershire and Rutland Gardens Trust Walled Kitchen Garden Register

Name of House:	Exton Park			
Address:	Exton Estate Office Exton Park Oakham Rutland LE15 8AN			
Ownership:	Private X	Public	Institutional	Other
Grid reference:	SK91650 11700	Map No: EXPLORER 234 Rutland Water		
Official Designations	Designation: Historic England (Parks and Gardens)	Reference: 1000960	Grade: II	
Date original WKG created:	<p>The precise dating of the kitchen garden walls is unknown but the first cartographic reference is the OS first Edition 1884 (Rutland V SE) map, which shows a large garden, walled on three sides, with extensive glass and brick structures.</p> <p>The first written reference to kitchen garden walls is an entry in the <i>The Gardener's Magazine</i> of 1829. This account refers to "the walls of the kitchen-garden ... and the ruins of a hot-house, built in the Dutch style, with oak rafters of ample dimensions" – although the locations are not made clear.</p> <p>The Exton Archive contains a sketch plan of the pleasure grounds by James Edmund Harries, dated 1843. This shows a walled kitchen garden in its current form, size and location, but with no associated buildings or glasshouses.</p>			
<p>Other key dates in development:</p> <p>The Historic England listing notes suggest a hot-house had been built in the Park in the 1760s and later there was a "botanic garden" and herbarium. At this time there was probably a small kitchen garden adjacent to a farmhouse to the N of the Old Hall.</p> <p>An engraving illustrated in <i>The Historic Parks and Gardens of Leicestershire and Rutland</i> (Cantor and Squires, 1997) from a painting of 1739 shows this old farmhouse with numerous other buildings opposite the Old Hall.</p> <p>In 1810 a serious fire at the Old Hall caused the family, over the next few years, to relocate to this farmhouse, which was then developed as the principal residence.</p> <p>It is likely that the kitchen garden was relocated to its current location as a part of that scheme, and the current walls therefore built around that time.</p>				

<p>Size and brief description:</p>	<p>The walled kitchen garden (WKG) lies 600m to the NW of the Hall alongside a fishpond which forms its southern boundary. It is around 7 acres in size with a roughly square outline with one corner cut across at the north western end to accommodate the old glasshouses on the S facing side with bothies behind.</p> <p>Overall dimensions are 150m E-W and 100m N-S. The area is currently grassed with some fruit trees to the NW corner. Some of the original paths remain but the glasshouses were demolished in 1999.</p> <p>The enclosed ground is generally flat but with gentle slope N-S.</p>
------------------------------------	--

Current Use: Currently the area is laid to grass for “glamping”, run by a company called Lantern & Larks, although a few remaining fruit trees are maintained.

Features: further information and current condition:

<p>Walls, doors, gates</p>	<p>The walls extend along the perimeter of the site up to the edge of the fishpond, which forms the south-facing boundary. Some sections have been extensively restored but original sections are of Flemish Bond with outward facing buttress piers every 15ft. Wall height is mostly up to 13ft.; wall thickness is two bricks (18”); stone saddle-back copings have a central ridge and a drip overhang.</p> <p>The outward facing side of the section between the bothies and the gardener’s cottage is stone faced.</p> <p>A survey plan in the Exton archive (not signed or dated but estimated by the archivists as mid/late C19th) lists the precise measurements of the wall lengths in feet as: E wall 738; N wall 590; W wall 400.</p> <p>The internal layout shown on the 1884 OS map shows a central path running N-S from the main entrance to the middle of the N wall, accessed through double wooden gates, and a perimeter path around the inside of the whole site. Three lateral paths intersect the central path at right angles and the middle crossing point has a circular brick path which would have enclosed a feature such as a fountain, statue or flowerbed. The middle lateral path ends at a set of ornamental wooden gates to the E end, leading out to parkland.</p> <p>At the NE corner a single wooden door gives access into the frame-yard area (now a car-park). At the SE corner a pair of ceremonial wrought iron gates leads to a drive eastwards to the Hall through a landscaped wooded area. The path which runs W alongside the fishpond passes a set of brick piers at the mid-point where it intersects the N-S central path, indicating that there used to be a gate here within a fence or hedge (shown on the 1884 map and the 1843 plan but since removed). Facing this on the fishpond side is a semi-circular flight of brick steps leading down</p>
----------------------------	--

	<p>to the water, probably used for dipping water buckets.</p> <p>There are a further three pedestrian access gates, one at the centre of the E wall and one at each end of the bothies.</p>
Glasshouses	<p>Our site visit revealed clear evidence of glasshouses, raised beds and frames to the inside of the angled S facing wall (with the bothies along the outside) but only bases and foundations now remain.</p> <p>Eye witness accounts indicate that prior to 1999/2000, the old glasshouses were used to grow produce to be sold at Leicester Market and that around year 2000 two lean-to glasshouses remained along with several free-standing heated greenhouses further to the east and a part-sunken alpine house. This concurs with the aerial photos of the site taken in 1952 (courtesy of britainfromabove.org) and the Google Earth satellite image of 2000.</p> <p>The glasshouses were reportedly iron framed with wooden windows and described as “rather ornate”. They had water troughs along their back walls.</p> <p>The 1884 map shows a range of three separate lean-to glasshouses along the S facing wall with groups of frames in front of each and raised beds or cold frames beyond.</p> <p>Three further freestanding glasshouses or frames are shown to the N of the garden walls with a further building nearby.</p> <p>An article in the <i>Journal of horticulture and cottage gardener</i> in 1872 recalls extensive lean-to glasshouses with one 8ft. high x 8ft. wide (length not given), a stove house 30ft. long by 20ft. wide, an early vinery (with also bedding plants), a 42ft. long succession vinery, a late vinery, a Muscat house, and an intermediate house for orchids and lilies – none of which structures had their dimensions appended.</p> <p>One supposes that at least some of these are the glasshouses outlined on the 1884 OS map.</p> <p>There is a quotation document in the Exton Park Archive from Foster and Pearson in 1917 for replacement of a partitioned lean-to glasshouse, which was 60ft. long x 14.5ft. wide x 14ft. high. A 39ft. section was described as a “plant house, to the LHS of a facing wall”. A smaller section (21ft. long) was described as a stove.</p> <p>The quoted work included a low perimeter wall to three sides and the remaining framework glazed with continuous vertical sheet glass panes, elliptically set between hardwood frames. It included for ventilators to the front elevation and roof with existing hinged apparatus being re-used. There is no account of whether this work was carried out but a further document covered questions about costs. The descriptions seem similar to the structures described to us as being in use in 1999.</p>
Pits and Frames	<p>The <i>Journal of Horticulture and cottage gardener</i> article of 1872 noted pineapples planted out in heated beds, cucumber and</p>

	melon pits and potatoes and other vegetables under lights in the frame-yard.
Hotwalls/furnaces	The apple store at the west end of the range of bothies contains a duct that runs along the base of the inner wall to an outside access door, below a chimneystack. This duct was reported as having soot inside in the early 2000s, which suggests that this may have been part of a hypocaust heating system (probably from the early C19th.
Heating pipes/boilers etc.	The bothy at the east end of the range has an installed Beeston Robin Hood "New C Pattern" hot water boiler which is oil-fired, but not used. These boilers were introduced in the early 1900s and would have heated a "stove" on the other side of the wall and possibly other glasshouses.
Backsheds, workrooms, stores, Gardener's house, cottages, bothies	<p>The whole of the outside of the wall facing NW is taken up with a range of bothies. The one at the western end is the old apple store, which has a stone flag floor, plastered walls and roof and wooden storage racks against the SE facing wall. This wall also has a single square cross-section brick fire duct running along its length at floor level with a chimney at the outer end. As a single duct its purpose is unclear but it may have kept the stored fruit frost-free in winter or was part of a larger heating system. On our visit we noticed a stack of frame lights stored here, which appeared complete and in good condition.</p> <p>The central section of the range has been converted into a single story house.</p> <p>The eastern end is currently used as a shop/reception room for visitors and contains the hot water boiler with intact plumbing. There are profiled benches once used for potting work.</p> <p>There is a gardener's cottage at the western corner of the walled enclosure, which is shown on the 1843 plan and the 1884 OS map but which has been extended since. Rear windows overlook the garden.</p>
Wells, ponds, tanks, towers	None seen – apart from the fishing lake.
Planting	<p>A most detailed account of historical planting occurs in an article in the <i>Journal of Horticulture and cottage gardener</i> of April 1872 where it is described as "one of the best kitchen gardens in England".</p> <p>The visitor described five intersecting "walks", 7.5ft. wide "for horse and cart access". He found peaches, nectarines and a trained mulberry against the S facing wall, with figs near the glasshouses. E and W facing walls had trained plums, cherries and pears. There were also pyramid fruit trees planted (replacing old espaliers).</p> <p>Vegetable "quarters" contained colewort, cabbage, broccoli, peas and potatoes, as well as strawberries, gooseberries, currants and raspberries. In the frame-yard, potatoes and melons were grown</p>

	<p>and there were pineapple pits.</p> <p>The bothies included a mushroom house, a fruit room, a tool shed and garden offices.</p> <p>Although the correspondent commented on “an insufficiency of glass” he none the less recorded a stove lean-to 30ft. x 20ft. wide for flowers, an “intermediate house” for orchids and lilies, cucumber and melon pits, lean-tos 8ft. x 8ft. wide, for cuttings and ripening cucumbers (mostly “Telegraph”), and several “fruit houses” including an “early vinery” (with also bedding plants), a “succession vinery” 42ft. long, a “Muscat house” (with also azaleas and camellias) and a “late vinery” with peaches as well as primulas and cineraria.</p>
Other key features	<p>The S facing wall with the apple store behind it, which would previously have supported a lean-to glass-house, has a horizontal row of metal (hinged) ventilation plates mounted at high level with associated manual opening mechanism at floor level. These appear to have been for ventilating the apple store.</p>
Other information	<p>The Exton Archive has numerous record books detailing men employed in the gardens from 1829 onwards. In 1829, six men were employed all year round, but in 1837 only three men were employed in the winter months.</p> <p>From 1845 onwards the Gardener, William Chapman, made a set of monthly reports for the upkeep of the kitchen garden, pleasure grounds and ornamental woodlands.</p> <p>In January 1848 he recorded that three men were employed for a total of 64 days work on the pleasure grounds. The kitchen gardens required six men to work 136 days (including six man-days for filling the ice house). By March the work had increased to 81 man-days for the pleasure grounds and 161 man-days for the kitchen gardens, which encompassed training and pruning fruit trees, digging, carting manure and providing vegetables for the kitchen.</p> <p>From 1925, monthly accounts for sales of flowers, wreaths, fruit and vegetables suggest a more commercial orientation.</p>
Date site visited	<p>March 8th 2016.</p> <p>By Keith Aldridge and Sue Blaxland, hosted by Jeremy Duckworth of Lantern & Larks (lessees of the walled kitchen garden).</p>
References:	<p>OS Maps 1884 <i>Rutland</i>, 25":1 mile, IX.NW, 1st Edition and subsequent revisions 1903, 1928, 1949.</p> <p>The Exton Archive: <i>Records of the Noel Family, Earls of Gainsborough and Viscount Campden</i>, Leicester Records Office: DE3214, accessed 2016.</p> <p>DE3214/6772 & 6781: Labourers Books 1829/30 & 1837/38.</p> <p>DE3214/DE3214/6848: Gardener's Monthly Reports.</p> <p>DE3214/8483: Plan of Pleasure Grounds and Gardens, J.E. Harries.</p> <p>DE3214/8485: Sketch survey plan of WKG, C19th.</p> <p>DE3214/8487 & 8488: Foster & Pearson quotation and letters</p>

	<p>1917. DE3214/8491: Monthly Accounts for garden produce and flowers, 1925 onwards.</p> <p>Historic England, 1986, <i>Exton Park, Listing Description</i> LEN 1000960.</p> <p>Cantor L. and Squires A., 1997, <i>The Historic Parks and Gardens of Leicestershire and Rutland</i>, First Edition, Newtown Linford, Kairos Press.</p> <p>Loudon J.C., 1829, "Exton Park", <i>The Gardener's Magazine</i>, Volume V, Issue No.23, pp. 673-674. (Biodiversity Heritage Library).</p> <p>Johnson G. and Hogg R., 1872, "Exton Hall", <i>Journal of horticulture and the cottage gardener</i>, Volume 22, April, London, pp. 311-314. (Biodiversity Heritage Library).</p> <p>Aerial Photograph: Exton, 1952, www.britainfromabove.org.uk, copyright Historic England.</p>
Researched by:	Keith Aldridge
Record Compiled by:	Keith Aldridge

Extract from the 1884 1st edition OS map



Aerial photograph 1952



External view of N wall and earlier frame yard



View of S facing wall with bothies behind– showing ventilator flaps



Storage racks in the fruit room – brick fire duct visible below

