

Leicestershire and Rutland Gardens Trust
Walled Kitchen Garden Register

Name of House:	Billesdon Coplow			
Address:	Tilton Lane Billesdon Coplow Leicestershire LE7 9DS			
Ownership:	Private X	Public	Institutional	Other
Grid reference:	SK 708 042	Map Nos: O/S Explorer 233 Leicester & Hinckley 1:25000. O/S 25inch First Edition, 1885, XXXII.II/XXXII.15 O/S 25 inch Second Edition, 1903, XXXII.II/XXXII.15 O/S 25 inch, 1960, SK7004 & SK7104		
Date original WKG created:	The first record of the WKG at Billesdon Coplow is the First Edition <u>O/S Map</u> 1885. The use of machine-made bricks indicates that the walls were probably built c.1855-1885.			
Other key dates in development:	<p>After the 1764 enclosures Nicholas Simons owned the estate. (<u>Victoria County History</u>)</p> <p>Shortly before 1790 John Palmer built the house (<u>Victoria County History</u>; <u>Throsby</u>, 1790; N. Pevsner).</p> <p>1842-3 Charles Thomas Freer extended and partly re-fronted the house (<u>Victoria County History</u> & Pevsner).</p> <p>1885 First Edition <u>O/S Map</u> shows the WKG (walled kitchen garden).</p> <p>1911 John D'Arcy Hartley acquired the estate. (<u>Victoria County History</u> & Pevsner).</p> <p>1937 Mr C. Bennion bought the estate. (<u>Victoria County History</u>).</p> <p>1976 The estate was bought by the current owners, Mr and Mrs Bridgwood.</p>			
Size and brief description:	<p>The surviving house at Billesdon Coplow is built some 700 feet above sea level, high on the southwest side of a wooded hill called The Dales. The WKG garden is located some 200 metres away from the house on low ground sheltered by The Dales. There are stables to the west and the buildings of Home Farm to the south of the WKG. Access is via a bridle path from the main road and pathways from the house through the pleasure gardens and woodland.</p> <p>The WKG is approximately a third of an acre and the land slopes towards the south/southeast. The garden retains the almost rectangular footprint set centrally within a larger area shown on the 1885 <u>O/S Map</u> (called slips or further cultivated areas in the 1937 <u>Sale Catalogue</u>). The longer north and south garden walls are not quite parallel being slightly more widely spaced towards the west. The west end forms a shallow v-shape projecting outwards with a two storey hexagonal building at the centre. The north section of the west end continues the garden wall and is divided in half by the single garden entry; the southern section consists of three one-storey garden and storage buildings.</p> <p>No early planting survives. Today the garden is still used and maintained as a kitchen and pleasure garden.</p>			

Official Designations for garden (e.g. EH listing)	Designation: English Heritage Listing of the house 24 th January 1985.	Reference: ID: 190563	Grade: Grade II
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Features: further information and current condition:	
Walls, doors, gates	<p>A red brick, Sussex bond, buttressed wall surrounds three and a half sides of the garden. The 3 inch wide bricks are regular in form, colour and texture suggesting machine-made bricks of the late nineteenth century. A projecting slate crease or drip mould beneath a blue engineering-brick saddle-back coping shelters the wall. The walls show some signs of repair.</p> <p>The single entry consists of a broad wooden gate. The 1885 <u>Map</u> shows an earlier entrance alongside and to the north of the hexagonal building and another entry between the two outer sheds to the south. (See above and appendix).</p>
Glasshouses	<p>Today the southwest corner of the WKG has a small modern glass house. The 1st and 2nd edition <u>O/S Maps</u> indicate outside the WKG to the south west a small glasshouse (not extant). Described as a brick greenhouse with timber lean-to greenhouse (1976 <u>Sale Catalogue</u>) Jeff Guy argues that just the top and front light opening mechanism were by Messenger. Current owners have stored, for possible re-use, the top & lower Messenger mechanisms.</p>
Frames	<p>Towards the southwest corner of the WKG are two modern rectangular frames each with four glass panels.</p>
Pits	<p>None.</p>
Hotwalls/furnaces	<p>Current owners used the pipes from a furnace and vinery near the house to construct the pergola within the WKG. (See <u>Sale Catalogue</u> 17th March, 1937).</p>
Heating pipes/boilers etc.	<p>There was a chimney and boiler attached to the east end of the small glasshouse outside the walled garden (see above).</p>
Backsheds, workrooms, stores	<p>Three one-storey storage buildings form the southern half of the west wall. The northernmost shed, probably built earlier than the WKG and currently used for potting, has two windows facing west and an entry into the WKG. The other sheds of similar date to the WKG are only accessed from the west. (See appendix).</p> <p>To the north, between the walled garden and the stables, is a single storey building built of Sussex bond, machine-made bricks with slate roof. It appears on the 1885 <u>O/S Map</u>, and the 1976 <u>Sale Catalogue</u> describes it as 'tool shed, store place and apple store'. It is still used for storage and fruit store using original shelving; the upper part is sealed to accommodate bats.</p>
Gardener's house, cottages, bothies	<p>Forming the centre of the west wall of the WKG is a picturesque Gothick, hexagonal, two-storey building built of narrow red bricks in English Garden Wall bond with a slate roof and brick chimney. It is earlier than the WKG. Whilst two fireplaces suggest an accommodation function, there is only evidence of storage functions linked to the WKG. (See appendix).</p>
Wells, ponds, tanks, towers	<p>The 1885 <u>O/S Map</u> shows three pumps. One is located in woodland to the southeast of the main house with a long narrow building nearby which according to the current owners was a</p>

	<p>pump house. It appears on the 1903 <u>Map</u> but the 1960 <u>O/S Map</u> and the 1976 <u>Sale Catalogue</u> map locate a well on the site.</p> <p>The 1885 <u>O/S Map</u> shows a second and third pump: one within the stable courtyard, the other between the stables and the walled garden. The 1960s <u>O/S Map</u> shows rebuilt stables with two pumps side by side between the stables and WKG.</p> <p>The 1903 <u>O/S Map</u> locates a sluice outside the north corner of the WKG; it is demarcated but not named in the first edition <u>O/S Map</u> and may have been a pond. It no longer exists.</p> <p>The 1885 <u>Map</u> shows a central circular feature possibly a tank within the WKG. Today this space is occupied by a circular brick-edged pond, constructed by current owners.</p> <p>An iron tank collects rainwater for the WKG from the roof of the hexagonal building.</p>			
Planting	<p>No evidence of early planting survives.</p> <p>The 1885 <u>Map</u> shows within the WKG a peripheral path and north south central path. The 1937 <u>Sale Catalogue</u> states the slips were also cultivated. The 1960 <u>O/S Map</u> shows no planting but an external peripheral path close to the walls of the WKG.</p> <p>The current garden laid out since 1976 roughly forms a union flag combining a productive kitchen garden including espalier fruit trees on the north and east walls, and more decorative elements such as a pergola along the west end of the long central path and a parterre of low clipped hedges.</p> <p>Immediately outside the walls are mown grass borders (formerly slips) and espalier fruit trees along the exterior east wall.</p>			
Any other information:	<p>A timber pavilion still extant and a derelict tennis court north of the walled garden were mentioned in the 1976 <u>Sale Catalogue</u>. Today the tennis court is grassed over.</p>			
Date site visited	<p>12 January 2014 and 1st April 2015 courtesy the owners.</p>			
References:	<p>Aerial Photo Billesdon Coplow - http://www.britainfromabove.org.uk/image/epw057108. <u>Billesdon Coplow Estate Sale Catalogue</u>, 17th March, 1937. <u>Billesdon Coplow Sale Catalogue</u>, 3rd November, 1976. Discussions with the current owner, Mrs Bridgwood. English Heritage <u>Listing Description</u>. Jeff Guy information on greenhouses. Leicestershire Record Office maps and sale catalogues. N. Pevsner, <u>Buildings of England, Leicestershire & Rutland</u>, 1984. University of Leicester, Archaeological Services, <u>Report on Billesdon Coplow</u>, 2012. <u>Victoria County History Leicestershire On-line</u>.</p>			
Researched by:	<p>Elizabeth Bacon, Gill Knight, Rowan Roenisch</p>			
Record Compiled by:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Elizabeth Bacon, Gill Knight and Rowan Roenisch</td> <td>Date: January 2014 - July, 2015</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Elizabeth Bacon, Gill Knight and Rowan Roenisch	Date: January 2014 - July, 2015	
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APPENDIX

Leicester University Archaeological Services Report, 2012, attributes the origin of the two-storey hexagonal building to the Romantic Movement calling it 'a garden retreat...a place of escape and quiet contemplation from the hustle and bustle of the of the large country house'. Its picturesque appearance with early Gothic Revival style windows and location would seem to support this proposition.

This two-storey building has a slate roof and brick chimney; it is constructed of irregularly coursed narrow red brick in an English Garden Wall bond. The bricks are 2.5 inches wide, uneven in form, colour and texture suggesting hand-made, clamp fired bricks pre mid nineteenth century.

The plan consists of one room downstairs and two first-floor rooms divided by a partition and accessed by a staircase. The chimney has two flues and serves fireplaces on both floors; the lower fireplace has a domestic mantelshelf.

We note brickwork below the western ground floor window possibly indicates an earlier entrance moreover the current single entry to the south does not appear original owing to the finish of the side brickwork and its segmental arch (all other openings are pointed).

An Archaeological Report, 2012, argues all the blind openings were constructed at the same date. We believe that the ground floor north face may have had a window because the even texture and colour of the infill bricks suggests a later date than bricks in the main body of the building. By contrast the brickwork of the first floor, blind windows do match those in the rest of the building.

The character of the original bricks and the early Gothic Revival style of the openings and recessed panels suggest a date between the late eighteenth century and 1840s – the period of the main house and other major early works.

Windows and fireplaces suggest an original function such as a simple shelter or accommodation and, although the 1976 Sale Particulars describe it as a 'former gamekeeper's cottage', current owners have told us that the gamekeeper occupied a house attached to the west of the main house. We have no evidence that once the WKG had been built it became gardeners' accommodation, but by 1976 it was used as a tool and potting shed with loft over (1976 Sale Particulars).

The Archaeological Report, 2012, dates the three one storey sheds to the mid nineteenth century. It states the northerly shed with higher roof than the other sheds has an infill section suggesting a gap between it and the hexagonal building. We note the main brickwork is probably earlier than mid nineteenth century since it matches the earlier hexagonal building; whilst the infill brickwork is machine-made.

The bricks of the two most southerly sheds match those of the walled garden. The central shed is composed of two cells and we suggest its south cell with double doors may have originally formed an entry to the garden. (See 1885/1903 O/S Maps).

Billesdon Coplow Walled Garden: Illustrations



Billesdon Coplow: west wall of the kitchen garden with hexagonal building & sheds.



Billesdon Coplow: coping of saddleback blue bricks with slate drip course.



Billesdon Coplow: apple store located between the stables and the walled garden.



Billesdon Coplow: Google Earth view showing current layout of the walled garden.



Billesdon Coplew: some of the decorative planting in the walled garden today.