



Historic England

# Rural Landscapes

Register of Parks and Gardens Selection Guide



# Summary

Historic England's selection guides help to define which historic buildings and sites are likely to meet the relevant tests for national designation. Four guides, of which this is one, deal with the types of site included on Historic England's *Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England* which is a constituent part of the *National Heritage List for England*.

Each guide falls into two halves. The first defines the types of site included in it, before going on to give a brisk overview of how these developed through time, with notice of the main designers and some of the key sites. The second half of the guide sets out the particular tests a site has to meet if it is to be included on the *Register*. A select bibliography gives suggestions for further reading.

This guide covers rural designed landscapes, including gardens and parks around country houses. The other three guides treat Urban, and Institutional, landscapes, and Landscapes of Remembrance, that is cemeteries and burial grounds.

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## Front cover

Deene Park, Northamptonshire (registered Grade II), created in the mid sixteenth century. The lake and bridge (listed Grade II) are of the mid eighteenth century.

# Contents

<b>Introduction.....1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Specific Considerations .....21</b>
<b>1 Historical Summary.....2</b>		
1.1 Before the Romans .....2	3.1 Documentation .....21	
1.2 Roman gardens .....2	3.2 Group value and listing .....21	
1.3 Post-Roman .....2	3.3 The natural landscape.....21	
1.4 The Middle Ages.....2	3.4 Authenticity.....22	
1.5 Country house gardens 1550-1660.....4	3.5 Condition .....22	
1.6 Deer parks .....6	3.6 Planting and the <i>Register</i> .....22	
1.7 Country house gardens 1660 to the mid eighteenth century.....7	3.7 Archaeological interest .....22	
1.8 William Kent and early eighteenth-century landscaping .....8	3.8 Deer parks .....22	
1.9 The landscape park mid eighteenth to the early nineteenth century.....9	3.9 Sports grounds.....23	
1.10 Victorian formality .....12	3.10 Grading .....23	
1.11 The twentieth century and Revivalism.....14		
1.12 Arts and Crafts gardens .....15	<b>4 Select Bibliography .....24</b>	
1.13 Plant-centred gardens.....16	4.1 General .....24	
1.14 Modernism and beyond .....17	4.2 Roman.....24	
	4.3 Medieval .....24	
	4.4 Early modern.....24	
	4.5 Eighteenth century .....25	
	4.6 Nineteenth century.....25	
	4.7 Twentieth century.....25	
	4.8 Periodicals.....25	
	4.9 Websites .....25	
<b>2 Criteria for Registration .....20</b>		
2.1 Date and rarity .....20	<b>5 Where to Get Advice.....26</b>	
2.2 Further considerations .....20		
		<b>Acknowledgements.....28</b>

# Introduction

The *Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England* (now a component of the [National Heritage List for England](#)) was set up in 1983. It includes designed landscapes of many types, private and public, which are identified using explicit criteria to possess special interest. To date over 1650 sites have been included on the *Register*. Thereby Historic England seeks to increase awareness of their significance, and to encourage appropriate long-term management. Although registration is a statutory designation, there are no specific controls for registered parks and gardens unlike listed buildings or scheduled monuments. However, the [National Planning Policy Framework](#), gives registered parks and gardens an equal policy status with listed buildings and scheduled monuments.

This is one of four complementary selection guides which briefly describe the types of designed landscape included on the *Register*, and set out selection criteria for designation. This guide covers rural landscapes, mainly around private houses, including parks around country houses. The other three guides treat [Urban](#) and [Institutional](#) landscapes, and [Landscapes of Remembrance](#). Inevitably there are some overlaps; allotments and nurseries, for instance, are treated in the [Urban](#) guide. The listing of buildings in designed landscapes is considered in the [Garden and Park Structures](#) selection guide, and the scheduling of archaeological garden remains, principally but not exclusively medieval and early modern earthwork remains, is discussed briefly below in section 4 but treated more fully in the [Gardens](#) scheduling selection guide.

# 1 Historical Summary

## 1.1 Before the Romans

In recent years the landscapes of prehistoric England have continued to be explored and revealed, with existing monuments and ancient patterns of land use being interpreted through ever-changing theoretical perspectives. The use and meaning of space, whether in the house or in great ritual complexes, was clearly highly significant, and was constructed and adapted over millennia. These are landscapes of immense importance (as discussed in the scheduling selection guide treating [Ritual and Religious Sites pre-410](#)), but as yet there is no suggestion that significant places had landscapes designed purely for aesthetic effect and pleasure.

## 1.2 Roman gardens

Elaborate formal gardens associated with villas, with topiary, pools and statuary are known from classical sources. In England archaeological evidence for such has occasionally been recovered, most notably at Fishbourne (West Sussex; a scheduled monument) where bedding trenches for formal box hedges were found in excavations in the 1970s, these later being used as the basis for its reconstructed garden. At Bancroft Villa (Buckinghamshire) a formal pool was excavated in its courtyard and there have been hints of other features elsewhere. At Gorhambury (Hertfordshire) and Rivenhall (Essex; a scheduled monument) villas have been argued to stand within deliberately designed landscapes with vistas, landmarks and avenues of trees. Both in rural and urban contexts the recovery of plant remains demonstrates the potential of developing a better understanding of this aspect of Roman horticulture. As later, a garden landscape around a villa could flow into the productive estate beyond.

One notable discovery at Wollaston (Northamptonshire) was an extensive area of vineyards, evidenced by bedding trenches.

Hunting was popular in the Roman period (it was depicted, for instance, on mosaics), but where and how it was carried on in England, and whether in defined hunting grounds, is unknown. At Fishbourne it has been argued that south of the palace there was an animal park or *vivarium* (apparently similar to the later medieval 'little parks': see below) where in the first century AD fallow deer were kept; for the moment this remains unique.

## 1.3 Post-Roman

In what is conventionally termed the Anglo-Saxon period in England, neither archaeological nor historical evidence suggests the presence of designed landscapes around high status houses, although that is not to deny the possibility that the organisation of space in such complexes could be very deliberate. Hunting was popular and is mentioned in various historical sources, and the 71 'hays' (mostly in Worcestershire, Herefordshire, Shropshire and Cheshire) – the meaning of the word is uncertain but relates in some way to the containment and management of deer – and 31 deer parks mentioned in Domesday Book (1086) show that, by the time of the Norman Conquest, special enclosures for deer were being constructed, as well as lodges for those charged with their management.

## 1.4 The Middle Ages

It has long been known from literary sources like the *Romance of the Rose* and from manuscript



**Figure 1**

Bradgate Park, Leicestershire. Many registered landscapes have great time-depth. There was a deer park at Bradgate, just outside Leicester, by 1241, and during the 1490s the Marquis of Dorset built an

ambitious brick house here. In 1928 the park was bought by Charles Bennion, a local industrialist, and given to ‘the people of Leicester for their quiet enjoyment’. Registered Grade II.

illuminations that castles and great houses could have small but elaborate pleasure gardens: the *hortus conclusus*, or herber. Such sources – admittedly mainly continental – indicate that in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries their features could include turf benches, trellis work screens, tunnels and arbours, fountains, pools and rills, specimen trees and a wide range of sweet-smelling flowers and herbs in beds. Later, in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, when more evidence is forthcoming from England itself, we see the appearance of knot gardens, where compartments overlooked from the house were divided by paths, typically into quarters, with curvilinear patterns picked out using plants like thyme and rosemary and coloured earth and sand. By this time great gardens incorporated carved and painted woodwork such as railings and heraldic beasts, all of which is a reminder that we should not think of ‘the medieval garden’ as something fixed and unchanging.

Sometimes the location of such gardens is known (like the admittedly exceptional Rosamund’s Bower, in Woodstock Park, Oxfordshire, part of the Grade-I registered Blenheim Park) or can be deduced. So far there have been no targeted excavations, but the potential for investigating their character and development is very considerable. Surviving garden-related structures are rare: the stone loggia or ambulatory at Horton Court (Gloucestershire; listed Grade I) of about 1530 is exceptional, although there are a few early banqueting houses elsewhere. Productive gardens, for vegetables and herbs, were presumably commonplace, and monks are thought to have had an expertise in the growing and use of medicinal plants. Evidence for these activities has sometimes been forthcoming in the form of plant remains in waterlogged deposits. Orchards for different types of fruit are frequently documented; these too may have had an ornamental dimension.

High-status houses, whether lay or religious, frequently stood within extensive designed landscapes. There are two sites which embody this. At Kenilworth Castle (Warwickshire; registered Grade II\*) a great artificial mere was created around the royal castle in the thirteenth century, at the end of which a large moated 'pleasance' or artificial island garden was created in 1417 with a timber banquetting house and corner towers. The use of views, water, and carefully considered approaches (where visitors were taken on a proscribed, circuitous, route to show off the building) can also be seen at the second type-site, the landscape around Bodiam Castle (East Sussex; listed Grade I), built by Sir Edward Dalingridge in the 1380s. Many more examples are now known, and the setting of even quite modest manorial complexes may have had an aesthetic dimension. The most recurrent element in these schemes is water: meres, moats, fishponds and millpools, and it may be that the combination of economically productive estate components within the setting of a house was deliberate to emphasise prosperity and hospitality.

A particular variation of medieval designed landscape was the 'little park', noted especially in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries but also later. These were clearly something different from the usual deer park (treated below). Most stood close to the house or overlooked by it, and appear to have been semi-natural pleasure grounds which provided a pleasing setting with animals and birds to watch and hear, and probably somewhere to walk; they were perhaps akin to the idealised parklands seen in some manuscript illuminations. Two dozen or more have been identified, most associated with grander castles and houses; many more are suspected.

Hunting remained popular in the Middle Ages and beyond. The English medieval kings had access to vast hunting grounds, some wooded, where Forest Law gave protection both to the deer and to the trees. The administrative framework was accompanied by structures such as lodges and boundary banks. Deer hunting was also facilitated by parks (Fig 1), where deer were confined and managed within areas of wood and grassland

circumscribed by a 'pale', that is a ditch with an outer bank surmounted by a tall oak fence. Typically parks lay away from settlements on economically marginal land, and most were of 30-80 ha. Many contained a lodge (often surrounded by a moat) for the parker (responsible for the parks management and security), and sometimes fishponds and rabbit warrens too. Physical evidence of medieval deer parks takes the form of field boundaries which fossilize the line of the pale; sometimes its surviving bank and ditch; exceptionally a park wall; and the site of the lodge. Some lodges survive as standing buildings, having become farmhouses (the name lodge can be indicative, although this was also a popular name for isolated new houses in the nineteenth century). As well as being the home of the parker, lodges were where the huntsmen and women took refreshment and planned the hunt; a single upper entertainment room and sometimes a viewing tower can give them a special plan form and interest. The number of parks grew steadily in the two centuries after the Norman Conquest, park ownership spreading from the ranks of the aristocracy to wealthier manorial lords. Estimates about how many parks were in existence by the earlier fourteenth century – largely based on the sale of royal licences – vary widely; Oliver Rackham thought about 3,200, although others feel this is too high an estimate. But whatever the total, they were commonplace. After the Black Death (1348-9) their number declined, by perhaps 30 per cent over 150 years.

## 1.5 Country house gardens 1550-1660

From the mid sixteenth century our knowledge of gardens increases with the proliferation of gardening texts and descriptions, estate mapping, and documentation in general. There is also much more that survives above ground, as the gardens of the upper classes became larger, more elaborately constructed with terraces, mounts and water gardens, and studded with garden buildings of various types.

The conversion of monasteries to country houses was probably always accompanied by at least



**Figure 2**

Lyveden New Bield, Northamptonshire. In the 1590s Sir Thomas Tresham created an extensive garden, rich in symbolism – Tresham was a staunch Catholic – linking his country house with a cruciform hill-crest garden

lodge or banqueting house. Including a water garden defined by a raised walk and (as here) mounts, this extraordinary survival, registered Grade I, has been restored by the National Trust.

a measure of landscaping and garden making. New gardens, often within the former cloisters, are sometimes glimpsed in early maps and estate paintings (the bird's-eye views of houses in their settings which became popular in England in the later seventeenth century) and the archaeological potential to recover evidence of these has been demonstrated, for instance, at Haughmond Abbey (Shropshire; a scheduled monument).

In the years after 1550 gardens began to change, and at the grandest castles and palaces Italian Renaissance ideas began to be introduced. At Kenilworth (Warwickshire) the garden received a make-over in the 1570s in anticipation of a visit by Elizabeth I, when terraces, obelisks and fountains were introduced, while at Theobalds (Hertfordshire; a scheduled monument) the enclosed courtyard gardens gained a grotto, terraces and statuary in 1575-85. Some of these great formal gardens made use of large-scale

earth-moving and a few have survived, usually because the house itself fell from favour or was demolished leaving the garden fossilized. Examples include those laid out at Holdenby (Northamptonshire; registered Grade I) by Sir Christopher Hatton after 1579; those made at Chipping Campden (Gloucestershire; site a scheduled monument) by Sir Baptist Hicks (later 1st Viscount Campden) in the 1610s; and those made by the Paston family at Oxnead Hall (Norfolk) between the 1590s and 1630s. All employed multiple terraces, probably tree-lined walks, water gardens, and also garden buildings or architectural incidents. At Holdenby all that survives of the last are the elaborate arches which gave access to the base court, but later sixteenth-century sources also evidence a three-storey banqueting house, arbours and seats. At Chipping Campden there are two fine banqueting houses (listed Grade II\*) which face each other at either end of what was the main



terrace to the front of the house; garden walls, elaborate steps, piers and gazebos are lost, although echoed by the surviving ogee-domed gatehouse. The house at Oxnead has gone as well, but what remains includes part of a brick summerhouse or gatehouse, and boundary walls with two little canted pavilions flanking a gateway (some structures listed Grade II). Missing is the statuary supplied in the 1620s by Nicholas Stone (heralding the later vogue for statues in English gardens) which included representations of Hercules, Apollo, Juno and the three-headed dog Cerberus. By the end of the sixteenth century wildernesses were starting to appear alongside the open, formal, gardens compartments and in contrast to them. These were more private, enclosed, bosky compartments: a clergyman described a wilderness as a 'multitude of thick bushes and trees, affecting an ostentation of solitariness in the midst of wordly pleasure.' Also found were arcades and 'cloistered walks', as at Harefield, Middlesex (registered Grade II), and viewing mounds in various forms including cones and four-sided pyramids. The late sixteenth-century grotto at Theobolds, mentioned above, seems to have been the first in England. In the early seventeenth century other examples started to be constructed, some subterranean some not, but all generally featuring rock- and shell-work and often gushing water. Sundials and fountains, too, were becoming both more common and more complex at this time.

Sometimes these great gardens had detached pleasure grounds at some remove from the house: one example, a water garden with ornamental buildings on islands, was at Somerleyton (Suffolk; registered Grade II\*), an Italianate garden created by the Wentworth family in the 1610s and 1620s. Water gardens in general, whether around the house or around orchards, were popular in the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, some contrived from earlier moats and fishponds, others entirely new. Some, like Tackley (Oxfordshire; registered Grade II; also a scheduled monument), of about 1620, and also at some remove from where its creator John Harborne lived, featured highly geometric arrangements of ponds and terraces where fishing and wildfowling

were carried on: landscapes combining pleasure and profit. Various structures could be associated with these such as boundary walls, elaborate gateways, fishing pavilions and 'supping' (eating) rooms. Even more detached was Francis Bacon's celebrated water garden at Gorhambury (Hertfordshire; registered Grade II), being planned in 1608, which was reached via a mile-long walk from his house.

These water gardens form part of a wider group of allegorical gardens and landscapes created in the decades around 1600, mirroring contemporary fashions in upper class building like the triangular Longford Castle in Wiltshire (landscape registered Grade I) and the 'curious' and witty buildings of the architect John Thorpe. The proclamations made in the 1590s by Sir Thomas Tresham of his Catholic faith via the Greek Cross-shaped New Bield at Lyveden (which stood alongside a water garden with four mounts; registered Grade I; Fig 2) and his Triangular Lodge at Rushton (both Northamptonshire; landscape registered Grade II\*) are the best known.

A very different style of garden was created at Wilton House (Wiltshire; registered Grade I) in the early 1630s by Isaac de Caus: three great flat compartments with a broad central axis leading from the house to an arcaded grotto. The first comprised four 'platts' (formal lawns) with flowers and statues; the second a grove, densely planted with trees and containing fountains and statues; the third was laid out with formal walks and ended with an imposing transverse terrace beneath which was the grotto. The central walk continued beyond this into an area of less regular groves and 'wildernesses' with an amphitheatre, triumphal arch, and statue of Marcus Aurelius.

## 1.6 Deer parks

The overall number of deer parks in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is hard to estimate, in part because while many were enclosed – that is divided into fields and turned over to more profitable mainstream agriculture – elsewhere, new ones were being created to cater for the

newly wealthy and the ambitious: deer farming and hunting remained signifiers of money and status. Henry VIII was a keen hunter and made new parks as did James I who was said to be 'excessively fond' of hunting. Elizabeth was also an enthusiastic participant in the hunt but typically left it to her courtiers to create parks for her entertainment. Sir Christopher Hatton's Holdenby had a garden mount designed, in part, to give a view outward to his deer park where, no doubt, he hoped to entice the queen (who in the event never came) to join him in the hunt. Weapons new to the ritual of the hunt, the crossbow and firearms, were employed, and by the sixteenth century an increasingly popular form of hunting was to wait in a stand, sometimes raised up (as in the modern word grandstand), to shoot at deer as they were driven past (after a nasty fall in 1536 Henry VIII hunted exclusively from the stand). The earliest surviving example is the same monarch's 'Great Standing' (now better known as Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge; listed Grade II\*) in Fairmead Park in Epping Forest (Essex), completed in 1543, others being the so-called Hawking Tower (listed Grade I) in the park at Althorp (Northamptonshire; registered Grade II\*), built in 1612-13, and the fine one of the 1630s (listed Grade I) at the end of the deer course in Lodge Park, Sherborne (Gloucestershire; registered Grade I). Lost examples sometimes appear on early maps, and their sites can be perpetuated in place-names such as King's Standing.

One highly important development, from around the mid sixteenth century, was the imparkment of land around great houses to give privacy and a pleasing setting; previously, as has been seen, with the exception of 'little parks' which could lie alongside aristocratic residences, parks were generally in marginal landscapes and very separate from the house. Both types are shown in huge numbers on the printed county maps which appeared from the later sixteenth century.

In the seventeenth century the deer park, nominally as a hunting ground, remained an almost essential part of an estate of any pretension. J T Cliffe has estimated that there were some 850 parks, of between about 10 and

400 hectares, while in 1617 Fynes Moryson, diarist and traveller, reckoned any family with an income of £500 had a park. A good example of a hunting ground at the bottom end of the scale was the eight-hectare park at Stapleford, Leicestershire, where in 1613 Sir Philip Sherard kept thirty deer 'for his pleasure and the service of his house.' In the Civil Wars of the mid-century many estates suffered grievous losses of timber and deer, and while quantification is impossible, it is likely that from the Restoration enclosure of land of all types for profitable agriculture, and the laying out of new landscapes in the continental style around houses, contributed to the decline of the traditional hunting park. By the end of the seventeenth century, hunting the fox across open country was becoming rapidly fashionable, and the surviving deer parks took on a role that was increasingly ornamental and symbolic.

## 1.7 Country house gardens 1660 to the mid eighteenth century

As noted, the fashion for formal landscapes, much influenced by Italian Renaissance and French Baroque gardens, gathered pace after the Restoration in 1660. Garden compartments about the house, defined by gravel paths, balustrades or clipped hedges, typically comprised parterres – symmetrically divided patterns created through beds cut in lawns, low hedging, and gravel and coloured stones – with lawns, bowling greens, and *bosquets* or ornamental woods to either side and beyond. Water was sometimes used for formal pools and canals, fountains, jets, and cascades, and at some greater houses was carried into below-ground grottoes with statues of river gods. In the later seventeenth century prospects were of growing importance to garden designers, with views being carried into the countryside beyond by axial and radial avenues of trees and rides through woodland (Fig 3). Exemplar landscapes at Badminton (Gloucestershire; registered Grade I) and Chatsworth (Derbyshire; registered Grade I) were laid out by the royal gardeners George London (d. 1714) and Henry Wise (d.1745) in the late seventeenth century.



**Figure 3**  
Croft Castle, Yarpole, Herefordshire. Trees have often played an important part in landscaping schemes, whether formal or informal. Veteran trees can evidence otherwise lost phases of a site's history. This line of sweet chestnuts

defining a ride dates from the mid seventeenth century, and forms the most coherent survivor of an ambitious layout of avenues and plantations. Registered Grade II\*, and a National Trust property.

After the Glorious Revolution which brought William and Mary to the throne in 1688, gardens in the Dutch style became more fashionable with complex parterres, elaborate topiary and greater use of lead urns and statues, much of it drawn from Classical mythology. Good examples of garden buildings and hard landscaping of this date, as encountered at Westbury Court (Gloucestershire; registered II\*), with its pavilion, gazebo, statuary and walls (variously listed Grade II), are relatively rare; and even Westbury is much restored.

By the 1720s, while gardens started to become less elaborate, the designed landscape beyond often became more complex and extensive, with ornamental woodlands, groves and wildernesses, as favoured by Stephen Switzer (d.1745) and Batty Langley (d.1751). No longer comprising separate walled areas, these wildernesses, filled with networks of paths and clearings, classical

sculpture and temples, were promoted as places of contemplation.

## **1.8 William Kent and early eighteenth-century landscaping**

Influential opinion, and garden fashions, now began to move away from rigidly ordered planning. Cleaner sight lines were favoured in gardens, and the ha-ha or sunken wall was introduced to allow an uninterrupted view from house and gardens across to the landscape beyond. William Kent (d.1748) created irregular gardens, which were no longer arranged using geometrical or symmetrical lines. His design for Rousham (Oxfordshire; registered Grade I; Fig 4) of 1738 was created as a circuit, where diversity and surprise were key watchwords. In this and other landscapes great attention was paid to the placement and associations of classical



**Figure 4**  
Rousham, Oxfordshire. Among England's most admired, and influential, gardens. Modified in the 1730s by William Kent, the gardens around the house were rich in garden buildings and statues, but also – notably

– looked over the River Cherwell, 'calling in' (to use Alexander Pope's phrase) the countryside beyond. That the garden has seen little later alteration adds considerably to its special interest. Registered Grade I.

structures, statues and columns within the landscape, and the order in which they were to be encountered. Sometimes the intention was to convey political ideas or affiliations to the well-educated visitor who may well have been on the Grand Tour: pre-eminent among such landscapes is Stowe (Buckinghamshire; registered Grade I), where the existing formal landscape was extended and softened in the thirty years after 1727 by Charles Bridgeman, probably William Kent, Lancelot Brown, and the owner, Viscount Cobham. By now lodges or other architectural features such as triumphal arches marked the main entry points to designed landscapes.

The 1730s and 1740s saw a relatively short-lived fashion for so-called Rococo gardens featuring serpentine or curvilinear paths, shell-decorated grottoes, and especially garden buildings and bridges in the classical, 'Gothick' or Chinese

(Chinoiserie) styles. Complete landscapes of this type were relatively rare: Painswick, Gloucestershire (registered Grade II\*), restored in the late twentieth century, is the outstanding example, and Painshill, Surrey (registered Grade I) is another. More typical was the addition of individual features or buildings to existing gardens.

### 1.9 The landscape park mid eighteenth to the early nineteenth century

Informal landscapes evolved rapidly from the middle of the eighteenth century (Fig 5). Lancelot 'Capability' Brown (1716-83), who was active from about 1750 and undertook roughly 280 formal commissions, was England's most influential and best-known designer in this style. That said, many other 'place-makers', such as William Emes in the west midlands and Marches, were



**Figure 5**

Shardeloes, Buckinghamshire. Charles Bridgeman's early eighteenth-century formal landscape was later modified by Nathaniel Richmond and by Humphry Repton. Then, as now, the main road from Aylesbury to

Amersham bisected the park, the north part of which is under the plough. Parks have often been ploughed (especially when corn prices were high), and this does not preclude registration. Registered Grade II\*.

operating at a regional level. And especially with modest landscaping schemes, landowners often took the lead themselves, working with estate staff. Landscapes around houses were transformed, or laid out from scratch, in an idealised 'natural' manner, with pasture ground running uninterrupted from the house (animals being kept at a distance by an unseen ha-ha) into gently undulating grounds studded with clumps of trees, and with the world beyond screened by plantation belts around the park edge. The key feature of interest was usually a lake in the middle distance, ideally contrived to resemble a great river curving through the park (Fig 6). Whilst buildings and temples were still included within the landscape to add variety and interest, they were employed more sparingly, and complex iconographic schemes were less fashionable. Typically the house was approached by a sweeping, curvilinear drive

– such parks were meant to be experienced in motion – which wound through the extensive parkland, allowing the carriage-borne visitor to catch varied glimpses of the lake and house between the parkland clumps and plantations. In ambitious schemes (such as overseen by Brown) earth might be sculpted, sometimes subtly, sometimes dramatically, to enhance the natural topography. Such landscape parks are reckoned among England's most important contributions to European civilization.

Most landscape parks were kept private by a boundary wall or railings, with entrances overseen from gatekeepers' lodges. Roads and footpaths across the park were often diverted around the perimeter, and sometimes settlements and farms were removed and rebuilt out of sight or had ornamental facades added to make them eye-catchers. Home farms, kennels and walled

gardens (listing guidelines for which are in the [Garden and Park Structures](#) selection guide), too, might be moved away from the house or concealed by planting even if, paradoxically, they were rebuilt to improve productivity and to impress the interested visitor.

While landscaped parks are generally associated with great country houses, even modest gentlemen's house, rectories, and merchant's villas might be set in an informal few acres of grass and specimen trees (such as the cedar of Lebanon) defined by an imposing wall and with some form of summerhouse to provide shelter.

In the late eighteenth century the 'natural' landscapes created by Brown and others increasingly attracted adverse criticism, most trenchantly from the north Herefordshire landowners Sir Uvedale Price (d.1829) and Richard Payne Knight (d.1824). These proponents of the Picturesque argued that sweeping lawns, serpentine lakes and parkland clumps were too

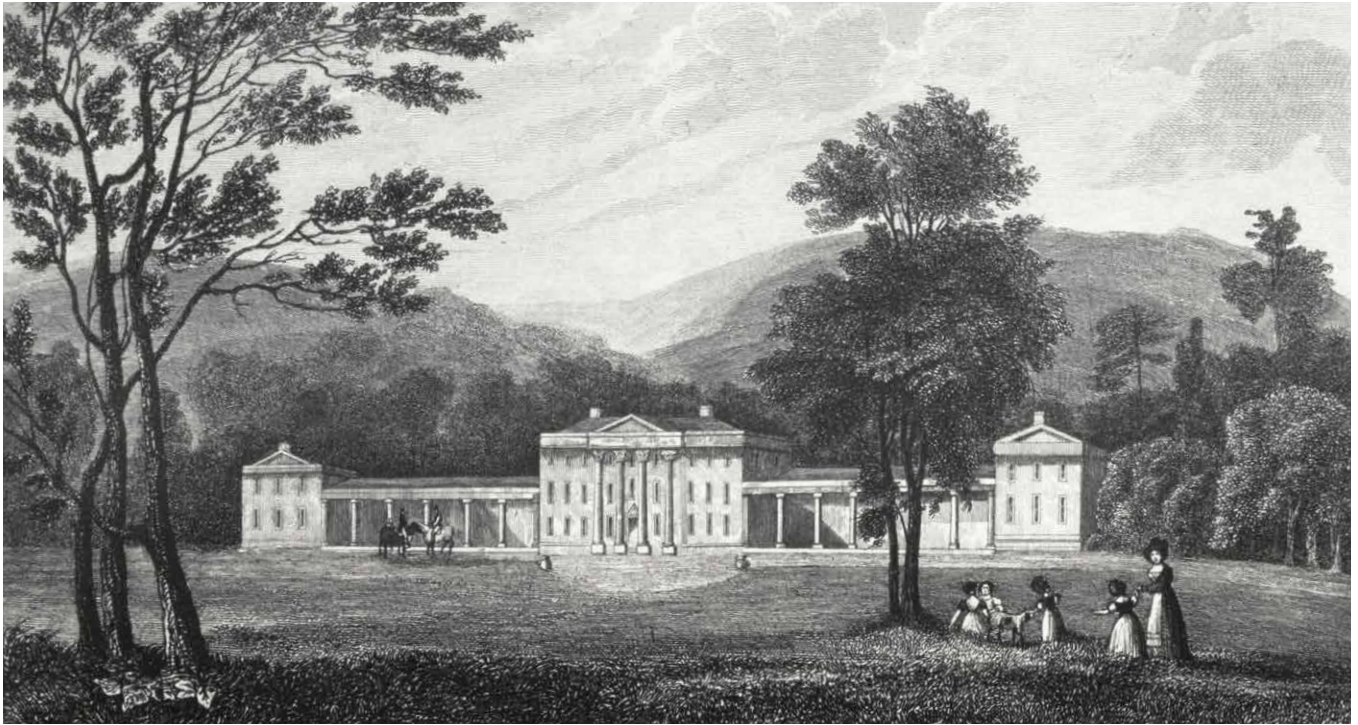
contrived to appear natural. Instead, influenced by their home surroundings, Foxley, and Downton Gorge, they promoted landscapes which were wild, rugged and varied. While their ideas were highly influential, as a style the Picturesque was difficult to introduce where the natural topography lacked dramatic incident. One designer who did work in this style with considerable success was William Sawrey Gilpin (d.1843), who was active as a landscape gardener from about 1806.

Landscape parks also attracted criticism as they lacked interest around the house. Families wished to have grounds to walk in, shrubs and flowers to provide colour, scent, and seasonal change, and a degree of shelter and privacy from the world beyond. Humphry Repton (1752-1818), who set up in business in 1788 with an aspiration to become England's leading landscape designer, initially worked in imitation of Brown's style but from about 1800, as evidenced by his before-and-after 'Red Book' proposals (roughly 125 are known to survive



**Figure 6**  
Compton Verney, Warwickshire. Lancelot 'Capability' Brown landscaped the park between 1768 and 1774 for John Verney, 14th Baron Willoughby de Broke. This followed on from Robert Adam's remodelling of the

house, which Brown made to appear as if it stood on the banks of a great river. Restoration and replanting is ongoing. Registered Grade II\*.



**Figure 7**

Many places saw more than one episode of landscaping. At Attingham (Shropshire) much of the early park-making of 1769-72 was by Thomas Leggett a 'pompous and dictatorial' Irishman. Another phase

of work, including enlargement of the park, followed the delivery of a Red Book by Humphry Repton in 1798. Registered Grade II\*, and a National Trust Property.

from some 350 commissions), re-introduced raised terraces around the house to separate it from the grounds beyond. Sometimes these terraces were decorated with elaborate flower urns. Pleasure grounds comprising flower beds, lawns, shrubberies and walks, sometimes with edged pools, summer houses, statuary and other architectural features, again became commonplace between the house and park in a style called the *Gardenesque*, coined in 1832 by the highly influential horticulturalist John Claudius Loudon (1783-1843). The 1820s Swiss Garden at Old Warden (Bedfordshire; registered Grade II\*) shows this at its busiest, with structures and flower beds set close together to enliven the garden route.

### 1.10 Victorian formality

Mid and later nineteenth-century garden styles remained highly varied, although some common trends can be picked out. Plant availability increased markedly, both through introductions

of species from around the world, and as a consequence of the removal of duty on plate glass in 1845 which saw large-scale glasshouses proliferate in kitchen gardens. As a result planting, and especially elaborate formal bedding schemes, became more ambitious, encouraged by an expanding horticultural press (Fig 9). Technology also came more to the fore, with cheap and relatively efficient lawnmowers.

From around the 1840s, with W A Nesfield (d.1881) the most influential designer, historically-inspired revivalist gardens became evermore popular. Complex French-style parterres with box hedges and coloured gravels were laid out alongside the main garden fronts of houses, often combined with Italianate terraces, balustrading and stairways. Trentham (Staffordshire; registered Grade II\*) of the 1830s and Osborne (Isle of Wight; registered Grade II\*) of the 1850s were among the most ambitious of many large-scale schemes. In some gardens compartmentalisation was used to group plants with common characteristics or



**Figure 8**

Druids' Temple, Ilton, North Yorkshire (listed Grade II). Designed landscapes sometimes had outlying features, as eye-catchers or detached gardens to be visited on an excursion. This folly of

about 1810 stands three miles from Swinton Park (registered Grade II\*), behind which lies a whole early nineteenth-century megalithic landscape.

country of origin to together; the 'world garden' at Biddulph Grange (Staffordshire; registered Grade I) of the 1850s is perhaps the most striking example of this. Its creator, James Bateman (d.1897), owed his great wealth to industry; many of the most ambitious Victorian gardens, like the houses they complemented, were similarly the fruit of remarkable commercial success.

In fact, formality did not go unchallenged, and Nesfield's extravagant and labour-intensive schemes soon fell out of fashion, and very different gardening philosophies were promoted. The horticultural writer and gardener William Robinson (d.1935) advanced a predominantly plant-centred approach to garden design, and his book *The Wild Garden* (1870) influenced garden designers all over the world, including the Netherlands, Germany and the USA. He rejected

traditional Victorian bedding-out schemes in favour of 'natural' or 'wild' gardens, such as that created at his home, Gravetye Manor, East Grinstead (West Sussex; registered Grade II\*), and advocated the use of both wild and garden plants, blended with exotics from other countries. The Royal Horticultural Society had been founded in 1804; its Garden at Wisley (Surrey; registered Grade II\*), developed by George Ferguson Wilson from 1878 to 1902, consists of a collection of different planting areas designed to take advantage of the terrain and soil conditions.

In part because of further developments in publishing, including the launch of *Country Life* in 1897, the 1890s saw a growing interest in garden design in general, and especially more academically correct formal gardens. Reginald Blomfield's *The Formal Garden in England* was





**Figure 9**  
 Wrest Park, Bedfordshire. One of England's grandest early eighteenth-century gardens, by George London and Henry Wise, with a banqueting house (listed Grade I) by Thomas Archer. There are two main later phases: of about 1760,

when 'Capability Brown' softened formal canals and undertook planting; and the 1830s, when formal parterres (now restored by English Heritage) complemented a new mansion in the French style. Registered Grade I.

published in 1892, and Henry Inigo Triggs's *Formal Gardens in England and Scotland: Their Planning and Arrangement and Ornamental Features* in 1902. An expanded third edition of Alicia Amhurst's *A History of Gardening* in 1905 claimed 'Ten years before the close of the nineteenth century gardening was still the passion of the few, now it is the craze of the many.'

### 1.11 The twentieth century and Revivalism

That taste for Revivalism in garden design persisted after the First World War. Many garden designers travelled to Italy and elsewhere to study historic gardens, which inspired their designs. At Cliveden (Buckinghamshire; registered Grade I) and later at Hever Castle (Kent; registered Grade I),

the former American Ambassador in Rome, William Waldorf Astor, laid out extensive formal and ornamental gardens in the Italian style. However, the true spirit of Italian Revival gardens was probably best expressed by Harold Ainsworth Peto. At Iford Manor, Freshford (Bath and North East Somerset / Wiltshire; registered Grade I), his own home, he laid out an Italian formal garden on a steep hillside, adorned with sculptures and artefacts brought back from his travels in Italy. Garden reconstruction and recreation became popular too. At Hazelbury Manor, Box (Wiltshire; registered Grade II) the architect Harold Brakspear laid out a formal garden inspired by the early seventeenth-century garden that once surrounded the house. Other styles, including Moorish, Dutch, and Oriental were also explored, as at Bitchet Wood, Seal (Kent; registered Grade II\*), where in 1919-21 the architect Raymond Berrow laid out

a Japanese garden based on a plan published in Joseph Condor's book *Landscape Gardening in Japan* (1893).

## 1.12 Arts and Crafts gardens

From about 1900, influenced by the Arts and Crafts Movement and inspired by William Morris's garden at Kelmscott Manor (Oxfordshire; registered Grade II), many garden designers became interested in English vernacular gardens using local materials and native plants and flowers. Gertrude Jekyll and Edwin Lutyens who collaborated on more than a hundred commissions between 1890 and 1914, were especially influential. One of the best

examples of their collaboration is Hestercombe (Somerset; registered Grade I; Fig 10). Here, typically, Lutyens' formal architectural features were successfully combined with Jekyll's informal planting schemes characterised by drift planting with colour sequences to create what Alexandra Harris called 'carefully planned spontaneity'.

In 1900 the landscape architect Thomas Mawson published his book *The Art and Craft of Garden Making*, which greatly influenced early twentieth-century garden design. Although Mawson drew on both revivalism and the Arts and Crafts movement, he also embraced the use of modern materials including concrete and asphalt for his hard landscaping, thus paving the way to modern design.



**Figure 10**  
Hestercombe, Somerset. The register includes selected examples of the work of England's most highly-regarded landscapers and garden designers. Here the Hon. E W B Portman commissioned Edwin Lutyens to

design new formal gardens, pleasure grounds, and walled gardens in 1904-06, with planting schemes by Gertrude Jekyll. Registered Grade I.

At this time, sports facilities such as tennis courts and swimming pools were incorporated into garden design too, a trend that developed further in the 1930s. At Steeple Manor (Dorset; registered Grade II), a very young Brenda Colvin, laid out one of her first gardens in 1923-4, which successfully accommodates space for cars despite clearly remaining rooted in the Arts and Craft tradition.

### 1.13 Plant-centred gardens

Plant-centred gardening remained popular throughout the twentieth century (Fig 11). Harold Nicolson and Vita Sackville-West's garden at Sissinghurst Castle (Kent; registered Grade I),

developed from 1930, and Rosemary Verey's garden at Barnsley House (Gloucestershire; registered Grade II), to which she moved in 1951, are often seen as the embodiment of this particular gardening tradition. Sackville-West defined her approach as 'profusion, even extravagance and exuberance, within confines of the utmost linear severity.' Also influential was the garden and arboretum created between the 1950s and 1970s by Sir Harold Hillier, a plantsman of world reknown, at Jermyns House, near Romsey (Hampshire; registered Grade II). During the twentieth century gardening became a leading pastime for a growing number of people as urbanisation and home-ownership became increasingly widespread. From the 1930s, many



**Figure 11**  
Kelmarsh Hall, Northamptonshire. Here the interest of the eighteenth-century landscape, an essential setting for James Gibbs's Grade I house of about 1730, is greatly enhanced by the gardens created

between the 1920s and the 1950s by Nancy Lancaster and Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe, with assistance from the plantswoman Norah Lindsay. Registered Grade II\*.



**Figure 12**

Dartington Hall, Devon. There will always have been gardens around this major fourteenth-century house; tradition has it that this level area with terracing behind was a medieval tilt-yard. There were major

landscaping works here between the 1920s and 1940s, and the earthworks were probably reworked at that time. Gardens, like buildings, can see dynamic change – not always well-documented. Registered Grade II\*.

more people lived in suburban houses with gardens, and plant-focused gardening became increasingly popular; the Festival of Britain (1951) also promoted an emphasis on domestic-scale horticulture. *Gardeners' Question Time* was a wireless staple from 1947. Magazines for the amateur gardener became glossier, and in 1968 *Gardener's World* was launched by the BBC. In the late twentieth century an increased interest in 'green matters' and sustainability was in part behind the incorporation of such features as wildflower meadows in gardens, and a renewed interest in fruit and vegetable gardening.

## 1.14 Modernism and beyond

The 1930s saw strong Modernist themes emerge in domestic architecture, but this rarely extended to include garden design: The Homewood in Esher, Surrey (1938; Listed Grade II), where the architect Patrick Gwynne consciously planned a woodland garden, is an early and rare example. What did prove inspirational were the ideas of Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright who revisited ideas on how their houses should relate to the surrounding landscape. Here the location of the house was carefully chosen, making full use of the existing geography and contours. In some cases existing parkland with mature trees, or a former walled garden, was seen as the ideal location. A



**Figure 13**

Boughton House, Northamptonshire. Orpheus, designed by Kim Wilkie, a major new garden feature, constructed 2007-9. An inverted pyramid, it mirrors the mount behind, part of the grand, early eighteenth-

century Grade I registered formal landscape created by the 1st and 2nd Dukes of Montagu. Designation does not prevent change.

particularly strong interaction or integration with the surrounding landscape could be achieved, for example, by blurring the boundaries between indoor and outdoor spaces, by including external rockwork or trees into the interior, and by using full-height picture windows to frame distant views of the landscape. Valley Spring in Bath (listed Grade II) and Parkham Wood House in Brixham, Devon (listed Grade II) are good later examples from the 1960s.

Intact gardens dating from the 1930s are rare in England. One survival is the garden at St Ann's Court, Surrey (registered Grade II\*) by the landscape architect Christopher Tunnard, a student of the garden designer Percy Cane. This

is a 1937 remodelling of an existing eighteenth-century landscape to complement the modernist Grade II\* listed house designed by Raymond McGrath. A year later Tunnard published his polemic *Gardens in the Modern Landscape* (revised edition 1948) in which he condemned contemporary garden-making in England as suffering from the burden of past history and an excess of horticulture, and through which he promoted the concept of the 'functional landscape'. That said, during the Second World War and the Austerity Years which followed when few private houses were built, commissions for new gardens were rare, and not until the 1950s and 60s did garden designers in England develop a truly modern garden style.

During that post-war period English garden designers found inspiration in the work of Dan Kiley and Roberto Burle Marx in America and Brazil, and were influenced by contemporary abstract painting and sculpture. Use of abstract shapes, consisting of strong lines or soft curves, and their symbolism and spiritualism, had a profound impact on garden and landscape design. Japanese gardens, having a long tradition of successfully integrating in- and out-door spaces, also became an important source of inspiration, as did contemporary Scandinavian landscape design. The Japanese Garden created in 1964 at the New House, Shipton-under-Wychwood, Oxfordshire (house listed Grade II\*; garden registered Grade II\*) is a good example. Materials such as brick and concrete were popular in hard landscaping, and planting was mainly used architecturally, with specimens selected for their strong shapes and foliage patterns. Ideas were spread by publications such as Sylvia Crowe's *Garden Design* (1958) and John Brookes's *Room Outside: A New Approach to Garden Design* (1969).

From the 1950s, some country-house owners commissioned new gardens, or embellished and expanded earlier schemes. The best examples were often laid out by designers of national importance, as at Sandringham House, Norfolk (registered Grade II\*), which includes an interesting mid twentieth-century design by the landscape architect, town planner and architect Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe. Since the 1980s, garden and landscape design has been influenced by post-modernist theories, as explored (often on a grand scale) by the landscape architect and theorist Charles Jencks and arguably more

recently by Kim Wilkie at Boughton House (Northamptonshire), where he designed a new feature called Orpheus, for the Grade I registered early-eighteenth century landscape (Fig 13). The 1950s also saw the first research-based garden restorations (or reconstructions), again typically at country houses, both by private owners and by organisations such as the National Trust. The seventeenth-century garden at Westbury Court, Gloucestershire (registered Grade II\*), was an early and influential restoration, carried out by the National Trust in the late 1960s, and Painshill, Surrey (registered Grade I) another. Such projects were undoubtedly encouraged by the rise of country house visiting as a mass leisure activity.

The post-war years also saw the opening of sculpture gardens, which have antecedents in the courtyard displays of statuary in the classical and Renaissance worlds. They include the Barbara Hepworth Sculpture Garden, St Ives, Cornwall (registered Grade II; now the Barbara Hepworth Museum), a garden created, and expanded, in the 25 years after 1949 as a setting for a group of her own sculptures. The large-scale expressionist welded metal figures by Lynn Chadwick in Lypiatt Park (Gloucestershire) add considerably to the special interest of the Grade II\* registered landscape within which it lies.

In the early twenty-first century interest in historic gardens has seldom been greater; landscapes are restored and added to, while ever more publications explore the stories of particular places and designers. England's place in garden-making has few challengers.

# 2 Criteria for Registration

All sites included on the *Register of Parks and Gardens* must hold a level of significance defined as ‘special historic’ interest in a national context. Nine general criteria have been defined, five relating to date and rarity, and four to other considerations, which have been used in assessing candidates for inclusion since the start of the *Register* in the 1980s.

## 2.1 Date and rarity

The older a designed landscape is, and the fewer the surviving examples of its kind, the more likely it is to have special interest. Likely to be designated are:

- Sites formed before 1750 where at least a significant proportion of the principal features of the original layout is still in evidence
- Sites laid out between 1750 and 1840 where enough of the layout survives to reflect the original design
- Sites with a main phase of development post-1840 which are of special interest and relatively intact, the degree of required special interest rising as the site becomes closer in time
- Particularly careful selection is required for sites from the period after 1945
- Sites of less than 30 years old are normally registered only if they are of outstanding quality and under threat.

## 2.2 Further considerations

Further considerations which may influence selection, and may exceptionally be sufficient by themselves to merit designation, are as follows. In each case there is an expectation that at least a significant proportion of the main elements of the designed landscape layout survives:

- Sites which were influential in the development of taste, whether through reputation or reference in literature
- Sites which are early or representative examples of a style of layout or a type of site, or the work of a designer (amateur or professional) of national importance
- Sites having an association with significant persons – the gardens of John Milton (Milton’s Cottage, Chalfont St Giles, Buckinghamshire, registered Grade II); Jane Austen (Chawton House, Faringdon, Hampshire, registered Grade II); and Gilbert White (The Wakes, Selborne, Hampshire, registered Grade II\*), for instance, are registered – or historic events (Boscobel, Shropshire, registered Grade II, where Charles II was concealed in the Royal Oak in 1651, where the contemporary garden survives as well as the successor to the Royal Oak)
- Sites with a strong group value with other heritage assets

# 3 Specific Considerations

In this section, more specific guidance is given relating to the registration of rural landscapes, which outlines our approach in assessing candidates for being added to the *National Heritage List for England*.

## 3.1 Documentation

Whatever its date and type, where a landscape's creation or development is particularly well documented it will almost always add to its interest, and can merit designation at a higher grade.

## 3.2 Group value and listing

The presence of a contemporary building around which landscaping took place is not a prerequisite for designation. However, if there is a contemporary house, this will almost certainly strengthen a case for designation, or possibly designation at a higher grade. So too will the presence of garden buildings and structures such as walls and steps. This will especially be so where those structures are listed (see the [Garden and Park Structures](#) selection guide). The same principles apply to designed landscapes at some remove from a house like water gardens and deer parks, where a lodge will add interest.

## 3.3 The natural landscape

All designed landscapes, and not the least landscape parks, will be influenced by, or draw on the natural topography within their bounds, and in the surrounding countryside (what is often termed setting). In terms of assessment for inclusion on the *Register*, and grading, as much as possible natural advantage and beauty (or lack of) will be set aside, and it will be the design concept and its implementation and survival which will be appraised. That said, there are cases where the natural landscape has been deliberately appropriated as a principal feature of the design, and here this will be a factor – sometimes an important one – in assessment. This would apply, for instance for the picturesque cleft forming Downton Gorge (Shropshire and Herefordshire; registered Grade II\*), and with Thomas Mawson's formal gardens at Rydal (Cumbria; registered Grade II\*) which contrast deliberately and spectacularly with a backdrop provided by the jagged peaks of the Lake District.



### 3.4 Authenticity

Especially where a house has remained as the focal point of a designed landscape, its gardens, pleasure grounds and parkland will have seen change. This may at one end of the scale be the result of ongoing routine management, replacement and repair, and on the other the product of more vigorous campaigns of alteration, restoration or even recreation (Fig 12). Change through routine works is unlikely to have had a seriously detrimental effect on the character of the landscape, whereas unsympathetic restoration may have; each case will have to be judged on its merits. A recreated landscape is unlikely to merit designation, unless through time (and almost certainly upwards of 30 years) it becomes of historiographical interest. An example of this is the Grade-II registered garden at Ann Hathaway's Cottage, Starford-on-Avon (Warwickshire).

### 3.5 Condition

If a site is in poor condition, or if a park is under the plough (a rapidly reversible condition), it will nevertheless remain a candidate for designation where its overall design or layout remains sufficiently intact. However, if a site is irreversibly lost, for example to housing, it will not be eligible for registration, irrespective of any former historic importance.

### 3.6 Planting and the Register

For many people, the mention of the word garden conjures up a vision of floral beauties or culinary possibilities. However, the *Register* is concerned with the more structural design elements in the landscape such as landform, built structures, walks and rides, water features, structural shrubberies, arboreta, hedges and trees, and not the more ephemeral, shorter-lived plantings of herbaceous perennials, annuals, roses, and most shrubs. However, where historic planting schemes or plant collections survive, these will probably add interest to the site; a particularly fine scheme might contribute towards a high grade.

Where a plant collection is of interest for purely scientific or botanical reasons, it will not be registerable. Responsibility for the national collection of plants rests with the Royal Botanic Garden, Kew.

### 3.7 Archaeological interest

In terms of below-ground archaeology, it will only exceptionally be the case that enough is known about it for it to be included in the assessment. If, however, whether through excavation or geophysical survey, it is demonstrably the case that there are high-quality, well-preserved, below-ground remains, then this may well strengthen the case for designation, or designation at a higher grade. Normally, the earlier the date of any known archaeological survivals, the greater their potential importance.

Where an historic garden has been entirely abandoned, scheduling rather than registration will generally be the most appropriate designation to consider. Scheduling can also be considered for any substantial or significant portion of garden earthworks or other archaeological remains which lie in parkland or farmland beyond the boundary of a current garden. For guidance in such cases see the [Gardens](#) scheduling selection guide. Some sites, such as Harrington (Northamptonshire) have 'double designation', that is they are both scheduled and registered (the latter at Grade II\*). Henceforward such duplication will be avoided and the most appropriate designation regime will be chosen. It will remain the case that specific archaeological sites (which may or may not be directly associated with the designed landscape) may be scheduled within a wider registered landscape.

### 3.8 Deer parks

The huge number of deer parks in medieval and early modern England, and their character, are discussed above. A very few survive fairly intact today (the National Trust estimates that 10 per cent of parks extant in 1300 still

contain deer) enjoying a mixture of deciduous woodland and open grassland within a boundary with a still-extant bank-and-ditch pale. Deer parks established in the medieval to early modern periods may be eligible for inclusion of the *Register of Parks and Gardens*; fundamental will be the survival of the park interior, or a large part of it, unenclosed for agriculture and with its woods, trees and grassland intact, and with its perimeter clearly defined by banks, walls or hedges. The presence of structures such as lodges and deer shelters, especially where listed, will generally add to a park's interest. So, too, will be the survival of the principal house with which the park was associated, especially where there is a visual relationship between the two. An example would be Whitcliff Park, which was (and is) the deer park of Berkeley Castle (Gloucestershire) and is inter-visible with it. Together, these landscapes are registered at Grade II\*.

### 3.9 Sports grounds

Country house parks which include golf courses will be assessed as parks, rather than as sporting landscapes. Structures associated with sports grounds such as stands and pavilions may be eligible for designation, and guidance on this is provided in the [Sports and Recreation Buildings](#) listing selection guide. Historic England provides guidance on the design and management of golf courses in historic parks via [Golf in Historic Parks and Landscapes](#).

### 3.10 Grading

While all registered sites are considered to be of a sufficiently high level of special historic interest to merit a national designation, the sites included on the *Register of Parks and Gardens* are divided into three grade bands to give added guidance on their significance. The three grades are Grade I (of exceptional interest), Grade II\* (of more than special interest) and Grade II (of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve them). Having begun by assessing the best-known designed landscapes, we accordingly have a high percentage registered in the higher grades, and 37 per cent of all such sites are graded in a Grade I or Grade II\* ranking; by way of comparison, only 8 per cent of listed buildings are designated at these levels.

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Tim Mowl is the lead author on a county-by-county series of books on historic parks and gardens. To date volumes have appeared on Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely, Cheshire, Cornwall, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, Somerset, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Wiltshire and Worcestershire. Many other counties have coverage by other authors.

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## 4.9 Websites

[Parks & Gardens UK](#) is the leading on-line resource dedicated to historic parks and gardens across the whole of the United Kingdom.

# 5 Where to Get Advice

If you would like to contact the Listing Team in one of our regional offices, please email: [customers@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:customers@HistoricEngland.org.uk) noting the subject of your query, or call or write to the local team at:

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## **West Region**

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Figure 7: F Calvert, *Picturesque Views ... in Shropshire* (1834)



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