

HERTFORDSHIRE GARDENS TRUST
LOCAL LIST: **DACORUM**

Present Name of Site
ABBOTS HILL

Historic Name (if known)
BLACK HILL, BLEAK HILL

Parish/Town **Hemel Hempstead**

National Grid Reference of Principal Building: TL075045

Present Area (approximate) 76 Acres Hectares

Brief Description

John Dickinson purchased 125 acres of farmland in the parish of Abbots Langley. The house is situated on a high point with the land falling away to the south and west towards the Gade valley and the Grand Union Canal. The house was designed to have views across the valley to Nash Mill, his paper manufactory.

Principal Building: The house was designed by John Dickinson and started in 1836 and is constructed of grey stone sleepers on which the London North West railway line had originally been laid. The roof is pitched with three gables and there are two wings. It was designed with only one outside door. An observatory was built but not used. The house became a school in 1912, and has been altered.

The main approach is from a lodge on Lower Road between a well-spaced avenue of deciduous trees, first shown on the 1898 (2nd edition) Ordnance Survey map. The drives merge and turn south to the east of the house, where there was formerly a carriage sweep. At the top of the main drive is a metal farm gate with a self-closing hinge used on rising ground. This part of the drive still has the original flint rain gully.

The approach from Bunkers Lane is a straight carriage drive heading southwest now flanked on the northeast by a conservation area, through a previously well-wooded belt. The drive is cut into the hill for the second part of its course and the flanking land supported with flint walls. The coping on these walls has now disappeared but may have been similar to the semicircular brick coping found from demolished walls elsewhere on the estate.

The **Lodge** on lower road is of one storey and attics with gabled dormers built of knapped, uncoursed flints in a picturesque style. There is currently a small garden attached laid out to lawns and small shrubs.

The **gate piers** at the Lower Road entrance are octagonal and of stone with five tiers of knapped flint panels on each side. They are capped with moulded stones. The approach from Bunkers Lane has remains of one similar gatepier, crudely repaired, on the south side.

The **stable block** forms three sides of a quadrangle of 1 storey and attics. It is of brick under a steep tiled roof and built of flint and brick. The gable ends flanking the entrance are of an unusual stepped design.

Pleasure grounds: These lay to the west of the house and have been superseded by sports facilities although some mature trees remain, including several Copper Beech.

Walled Kitchen Garden: This was situated to the northeast of the house where the science block now stands. Langley Tennis Club is situated on the site of the former orchard. There are remains of brick corner posts and flint walls in the vicinity with semicircular brick coping, although

most of the walls are now heaps of flint and brick rubble along the back lane. Iron estate railing was found in a number of places beside the back lane.

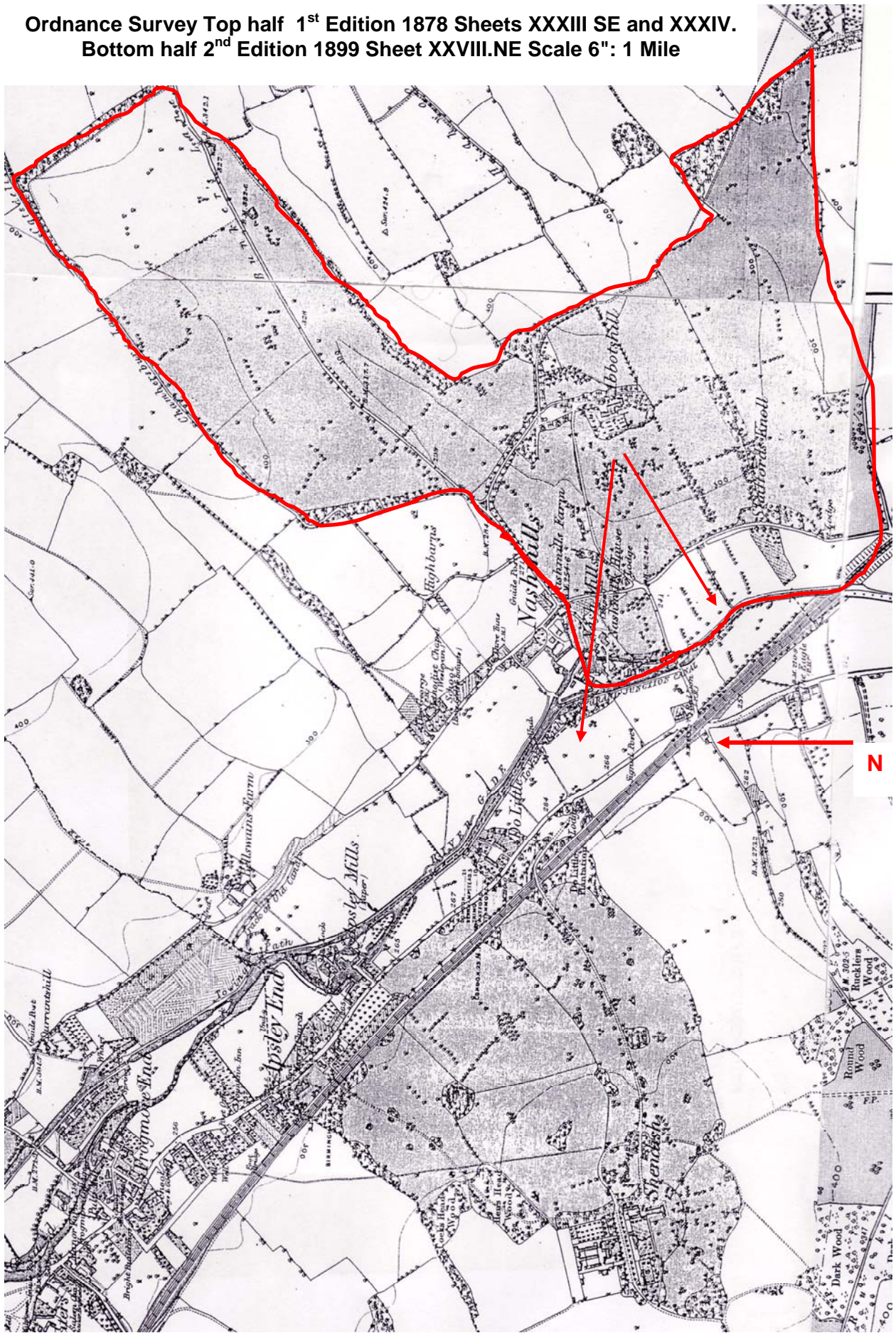
Park: Apart from the school sports fields and buildings and the Langley Tennis Club to the east of the site, the park remains under arable cultivation, with the exception of the parkland with mature trees to the southwest and the hanger wood along the Bunkers Lane valley to the north east. A conservation area lies to the north of the Bunkers Lane entrance.

A tree survey of the site was undertaken in 1999.

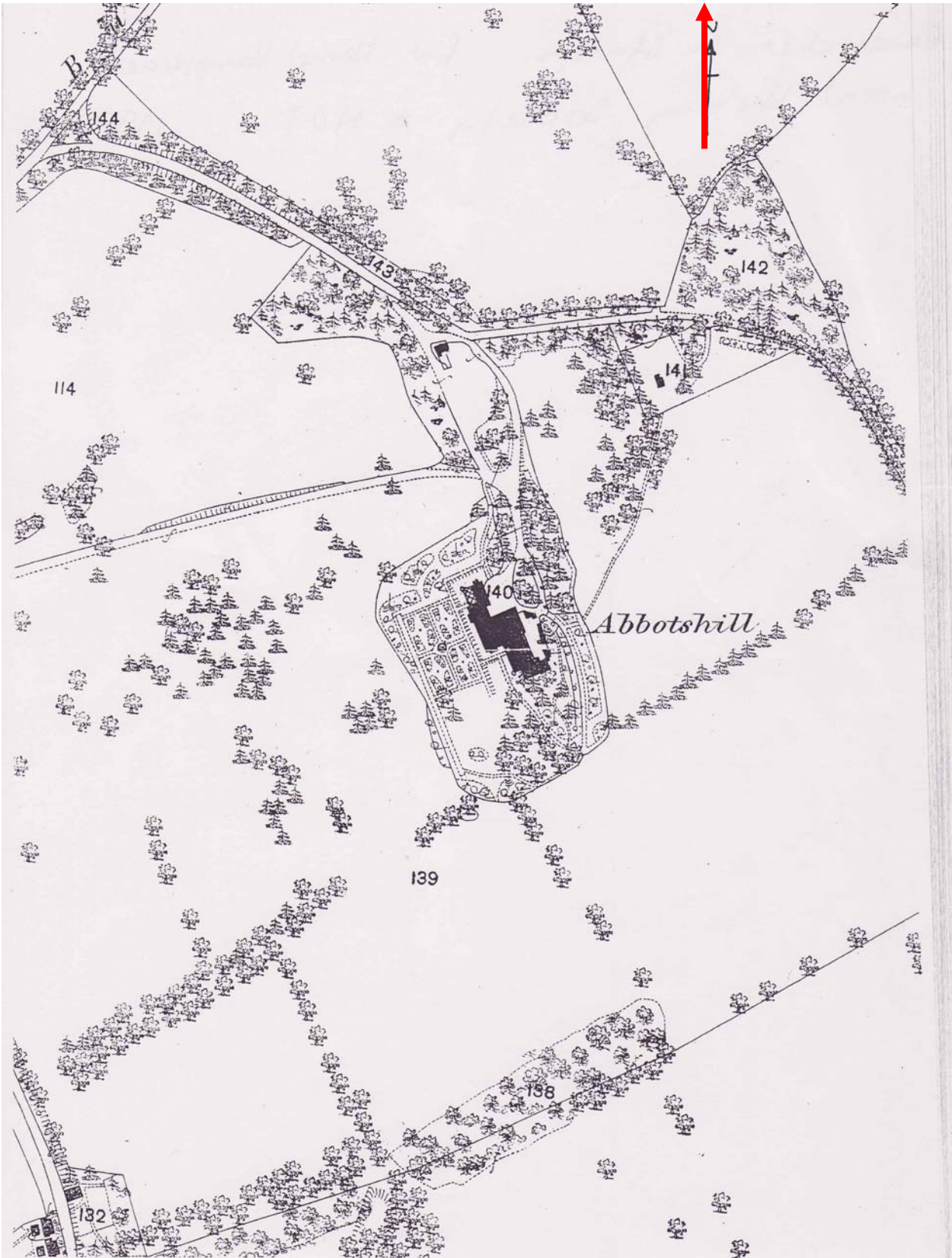
An ice house is situated in the fields to the north of the back lane.

Important people associated with site: Resident and Architect: John Dickinson, paper manufacturer
Assessment of significance. Park which has remained intact from 19 th century although much altered. The mature parkland has been degraded by sports facilities and additional school buildings but avenues to Bunkers Lane and parkland to the western entrance remain. It is a good example of a 19 th century gentleman's residence on the outskirts of a country town, and also of an industrialist's estate close to his manufactory.
Principal Uses: School, Tennis Facilities in former walled garden
Public Access/Rights of Way: BOAT 003, Footpath 08
Designations: (e.g. Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Conservation Area, Listed Buildings, EH Register of Historic Parks & Gardens, Tree Preservation Orders, SSSIs, Nature Reserve, National Trust, County Wildlife Site, etc) Landscape Conservation Area Landscape Characterisation Area: 8, Upper Gade Valley Nature Reserve:
Sources of information: Report available from HALS
Site visited by: Hertfordshire Gardens Trust Date: 2008

**Ordnance Survey Top half 1st Edition 1878 Sheets XXXIII SE and XXXIV.
Bottom half 2nd Edition 1899 Sheet XXVIII.NE Scale 6": 1 Mile**



Showing Relationship between Shendish Manor, Abbots Hill and Nash Mills



Ordnance Survey 1st edition 1877. Scale 25":1 mile