

HERTFORDSHIRE GARDENS TRUST
LOCAL LIST: **DACORUM**

Present Name of Site
AMERSFORT

Historic Name (if known)
FAIRHILL

Parish/Town **Nettleden with Potten End**

National Grid Reference of Principal Building: TL010 085

Present Area (approximate)

Hectares

Brief Description

Principal Building: A large house in Queen Anne style, built in 1911 by Ernest Willmott for W S Cohen; two storeys and attics, symmetrical H plan, nine bays long, with two-storey porch on the main NW front and a single-storey service wing at the north-east end. It is in narrow plum brick in English garden wall bond, with red brick dressings, deep plastered eaves cove and steep hipped roofs in red tile

The stable block 1911 by Ernest Willmott to match the house at the time as the house, now converted into flats. The date '1911' is in openwork on windvane. Narrow plum brick with red brick dressings and tile arches, red tile-hanging to 1st floor, and tall hipped red tile roofs. A separate L-shaped group with single-storey north stable range and 2-storeys east coachhouse range pierced by a round arched carriageway.

The main **approach** is from The Common on the Ashridge to Potten End road . The entrance gates opened onto to a straight drive flanked by grass with May trees in a double avenue. This area was called the Green Court. The area is laid to lawn with no trees on it at present. The forecourt on the NW front formerly contained a pool with a statue of, . The pool has been filled in and the statue is now in the Water Gardens at Hemel Hampstead (q.v.). A pergola ran west from the forecourt along the south side of the tennis court

Lodge now Gardener's cottage. Circa 1911 by Ernest Willmott, to complement the main house. Plum brick with lighter red dressings, plinth and rusticated corners. Deep plaster eaves cove to tall very steep hipped roof of red tiles. A small symmetrical house of one storey and attic facing the entrance drive.

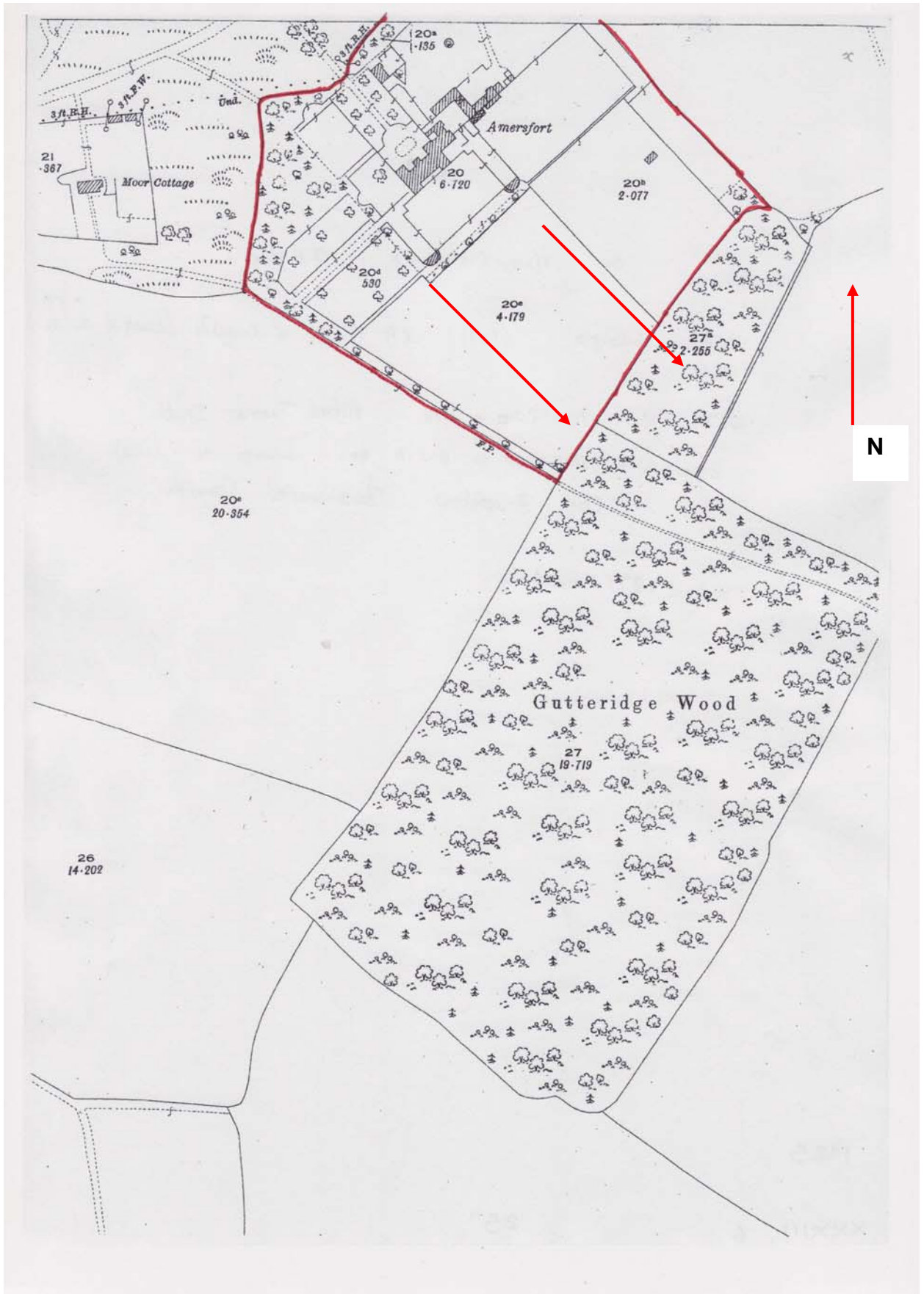
Pleasure grounds: Cohen commissioned Gertrude Jekyll in 1911 to augment the ornamental tree landscape (of thorn, crab, cherry and plum) laid out to Willmott's plans. Willmott had laid out the garden to be part of an overall design with the house and had a terrace connecting the 2 loggias which form the ground floors of the wings. Detailing on the terrace, of pots, paving, seats and steps was indicative of Arts and Crafts practice. This gave views over the garden and the countryside beyond. Two raised grass walks, lined with Jekyll's short borders, leading to the end of the garden on either side of the lawn end in semi-circular bastions giving further views into the countryside. The Jekyll planting which she designed and provided, had massed azaleas and heathers with a few lilies and other plants. These were for a single border to be viewed from the lawn below but balanced on either side of the walk to the bastion. They therefore rise in height from the front of the border to small shrubs at the back and ranged from blues and whites at the end to oranges and reds at the centre. Planting for further borders around the lawn, the Monk's Walk , the Rose Garden, Pergola, the Green Court trellis and climbers for the walls were all designed by Jekyll and softened Willmott's strongly geometrical design. The garden was designed to provide year-round interest. Correspondence exists between Cohen and Jekyll but no evidence of her visiting Amersfoot has been found.

A tennis court, still extant, was incorporated into the design on the west side of the approach drive, opposite the lodge and flanked by a pergola on the south side. To the south of this was the rose garden, now laid to lawn and without its original central witch hazel.

Kitchen Garden: This lay to the east of the lawn but is now laid to grass with perimeter shrub planting. It was divided into 6 compartments by cross walks with frames and glasshouses on the north wall and the stable yard and farm yard just beyond the north wall. A perimeter path of gravel.

An Upper **Orchard**, west of the rose garden was separated from the Lower Orchard, to the south, by Jekyll's double flower borders. The orchard areas are now laid to grass but the line of the borders is still extant.

<p>Important people associated with site: Architect: <i>Ernest Willmott.</i> Designer: <i>Gertrude Jekyll</i></p>
<p>Assessment of significance. Important Arts and Crafts house and garden by Ernest Willmott and Gertrude Jekyll still largely intact as to layout.</p>
<p>Principal Uses: Private residences</p>
<p>Public Access/Rights of Way: None</p>
<p>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) Grade II* House, with forecourt walls, and linked terraces and loggia on south east Grade II The Cottage on north side of forecourt, Stable block Green Belt</p>
<p>Landscape Characterisation Area: 120, Little Heath Uplands</p>
<p>Sources of information: Report available from HGT Conservation Group, including copies of Jekyll planting plans</p>
<p>Site visited by: Hertfordshire Gardens Trust Date: 1996</p>



Ordnance Survey 1925 Sheet XXXIII.6. Scale 25":1 mile

Plan of Amersfort Grounds from *English House Design* by Ernest Willmott. 1911.

