

HERTFORDSHIRE GARDENS TRUST
LOCAL LIST: **DACORUM**

Present Name of Site
GADEBRIDGE PARK

Historic Name (if known)
Gadebridge

Parish/Town
Hemel Hempstead

National Grid Reference of Principal Building: TL049 081

Present Area (approximate) 32 hectares

Brief Description

Originally a farmhouse this was rebuilt at the turn of the 17th century by the Combe family who also owned The Bury, just south of St Mary's Church. The house was owned by Dr Richard Hale who bought up several more farms and devised the estate upon his nephew Thomas Tower in 1729. During the 18th and early 19th centuries it remained part of the Gadebridge Estate owned by the Tower family of Weald Hall who had links with Ashridge and Wormleybury. The Estate also included Shantocks Farm (q.v.), Gaddesden Hall (q.v.) the paper mills leased to Fourdrinier and an interest in The Bury at the southern end of the estate. It was sold off piecemeal between 1820 and 1840. It was later owned by Astley Paston Cooper, a surgeon at Guy's Hospital, royal surgeon to William IV, George IV and Queen Victoria, and a founder of West Herts Infirmary at Piccotts End in 1826. A later Sir Astley, first mayor of the Borough in 1898, owned c. 1000 acres in Hemel Hempstead. In 1914 the house was sold and became a Preparatory School (later Westbrook Hay, q.v.) before being taken over by the Commission for New Towns and demolished. The parkland of 43 acres was purchased by the Hemel Hempstead Borough Council in 1952.

Principal Building: Demolished. This was situated on an eminence to the west of the Gade looking down to the river. The original house was built in the 1690s. In 1774 it was described as a genteel house with 2 parlours and 5 bedchambers. By the 19th century it had been much extended to an 11-bay, 2-storey house with central pediment and port cochere on the south side. It was clothed in creeper to the level of the first floor and stuccoed above. The house was demolished to build the Marketing Education Centre for Kodak in 1973. This has been demolished in its turn.

Approaches: The road was across the river by a Ford and footbridge with a curving drive heading uphill towards the walled garden and farm. The ford was guarded by The Round Cottage, which was also known as the Threepenny bit house. This was also demolished when the New Town came into being.

The main approach to the house was from the Old Town High Street north of the settlement at the Lodge. This **Lodge** was set back from the road and the drive flanked with low walls topped with stone and metal railings with the gatepiers surmounted by circular finials. The drive headed west to the river, crossing it via the 'Chinese bridge' (still extant) then turned north, then curved west to the front of the mansion. This bridge, also called the White Bridge, replaced a ford in 1840 when Astley Cooper commissioned a local iron founder, Joseph Cranstone, to build the bridge in a mock bamboo Chinese style. The Lodge in Piccotts End Road has been demolished and was opposite the original site of the drinking fountain/lamppost. The Lodge in Queensway remains.

Gadebridge Farm: was situated to the northeast of the house and was demolished along with the house and gardens by the Commission for New Towns

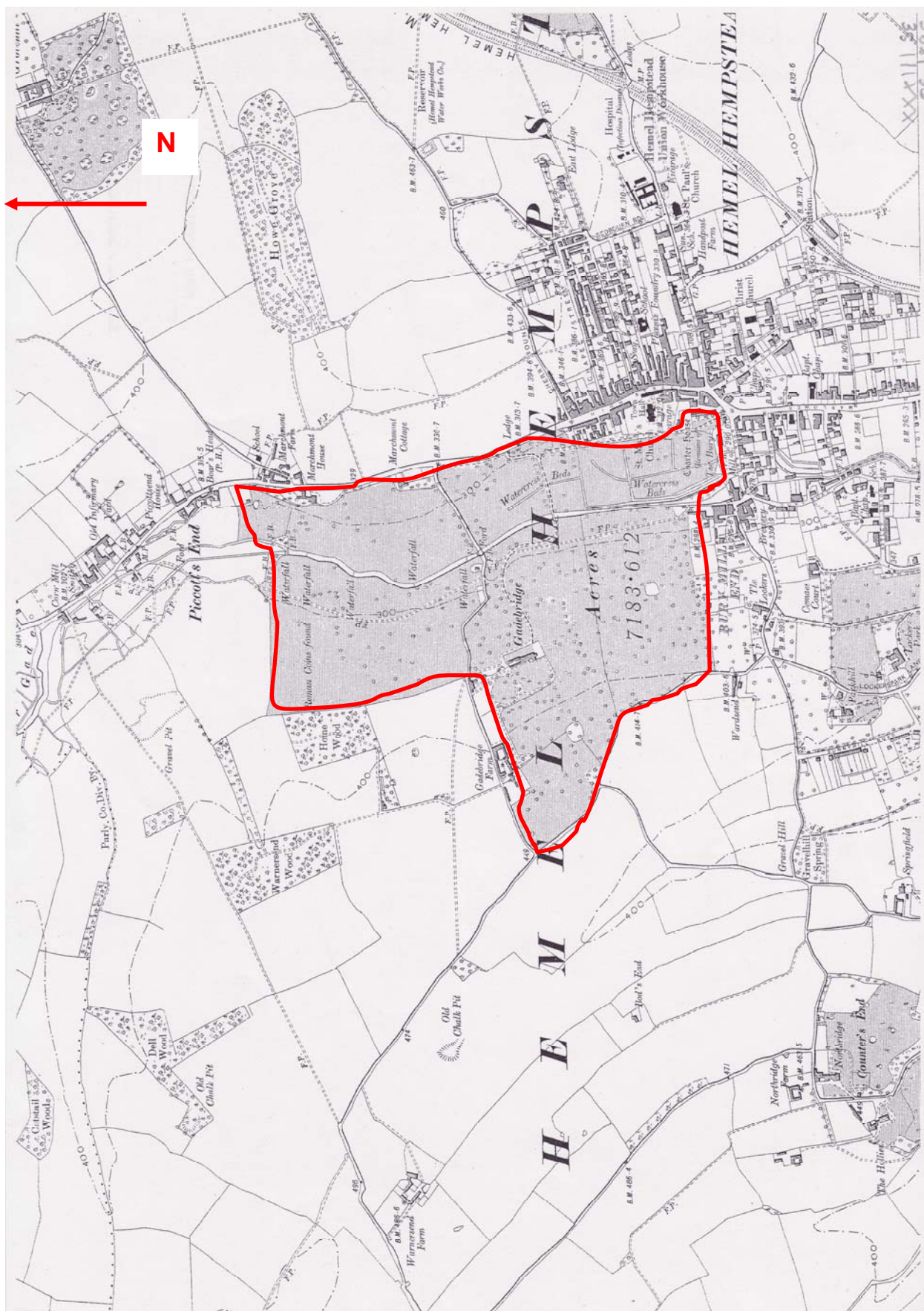
Pleasure grounds: Drury and Andrews, 1766, shows formal gardens laid to the west of the house, an orchard to the south and a small area of pasture or park. By 1877 there were informal walks round lawn to the west of the house with remnants of avenues reaching south and then east-west into the park

Walled Kitchen Garden: In 1774 these comprised 3 small gardens planted with good fruit. By 1877 the walled gardens were extensive and divided by cross-paths into 8 segments and situated just east of Gadebridge Farm. The eastern end contained glasshouses and frames and several of the paths were lined with fruit trees.

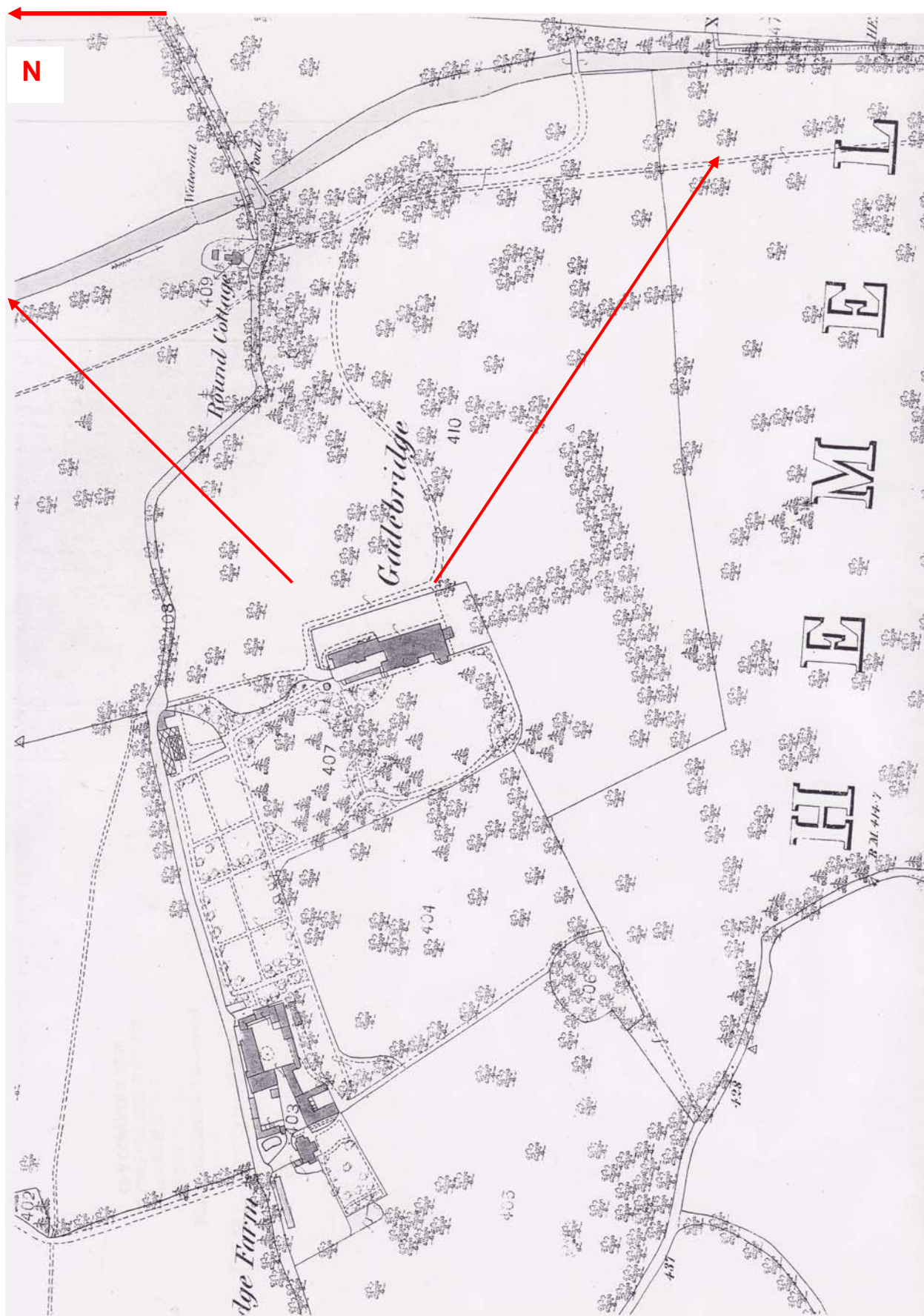
Park: In 1774 a spring and wood of about half an acre was laid out with walks, with further walks along the river and 2 small fishponds fed by the trout stream. In all the grounds to the house in 1774 were 8 acres. By 1899 the park extended both sides of the river which had a series of 4 ornamental waterfalls along it. It extended from Piccotts End in the North as far as Bury Mill End and comprised 7183 acres. The Park today extends from the site of The Bury north to Marchmonts and includes the walled garden of the Bury and children's play facilities. The original river course in the valley bottom was diverted to its current position many years ago and in 1987 re-profiled to create a low flow channel along the centre of the River, thus allowing vegetation to establish on either side to broaden habitat diversity and encourage more species. Pools were left below each weir to allow public access to the water's edge.

The southern end of the Park abuts Mr Ginger's Villa and water garden at The Bury which he occupied in c.1796.

Important people associated with site: Resident: Sir Astley Paston Cooper Owners: Dr Richard Hale, Tower family of Weald Hall
Assessment of significance: Remnant of late 18 th and early 19 th century parkland with some features still extant
Principal Uses: Public Park
Public Access/Rights of Way: Open land
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) Scheduled Ancient Monument: Roman Villa in Home Wood, Gadebridge Park Green Belt Area of Archaeological Significance: Gadebridge Park Landscape Character Area: 123 High Gade Valley
Sources of information: Elizabeth Buteux <i>From Private Estate to Public Park: the Paston Coopers and Gadebridge</i> , Hertfordshire's Past 49, OS Maps, Title Deeds of Gadebridge Estate (HALS DE/Nm)
Site visited by: Hertfordshire Gardens Trust Date: 2009



Ordnance Survey 2nd Edition 1899 Sheet XXXIII SE Scale 6":1 mile

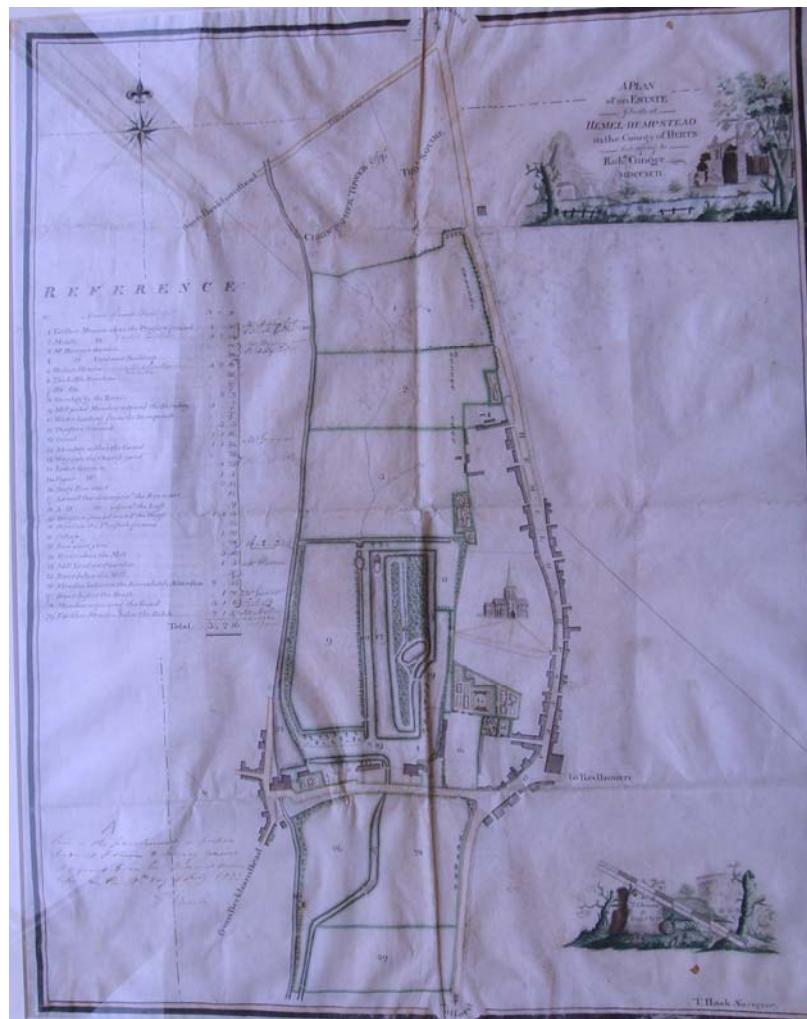


Ordnance Survey 1st Edition 1877. Sheet XXXIII.7 Scale 25":1 mile



Gadebridge Park 'Chinese' Bridge looking West. September 2009
Eastern perimeter wall showing flint original and infill where drive and entrance were sited. September 2009





Mr Ginger's Villa at The Bury 1796.