

HERTFORDSHIRE GARDENS TRUST  
LOCAL LIST: **DACORUM**

Present Name of Site  
**GOLDEN PARSONAGE**

Historic Name (if known)

Parish/Town **Great Gaddesden**

National Grid Reference of Principal Building: TL051 125

Present Area (approximate)

In 1836 Golden Parsonage was advertised for lease and the particulars noted a park of 46 acres. In Herts Archaeology and History Vol 15 2006 – 2008 the acreage is given as 148 acres.

**Brief Description**

Significant park and gardens in 18<sup>th</sup> Century to the present day though the park is now mostly ploughed. Origins of the house and grounds are 16<sup>th</sup> Century but extant features are principally 18<sup>th</sup> Century.

**Principal Building:** Country house and attached garden walls on the north east. Present house begun in 1720s by Henshaw Halsey which seems to have originated as a new north western wing to the older house of the 1660s, just three bays wide and with the finest architectural details on the south east – facing the gardens. Soon after completion, this block was extended by a further two bays to the north west. After demolition of most of the older, existing house, this new virtually square building became the main residence.

**Approach:** Running south west from Gaddesden Row along a hedge and tree drive reaching the main entrance which faces NNW where there is an inscription beside the porch outside dated 1766.

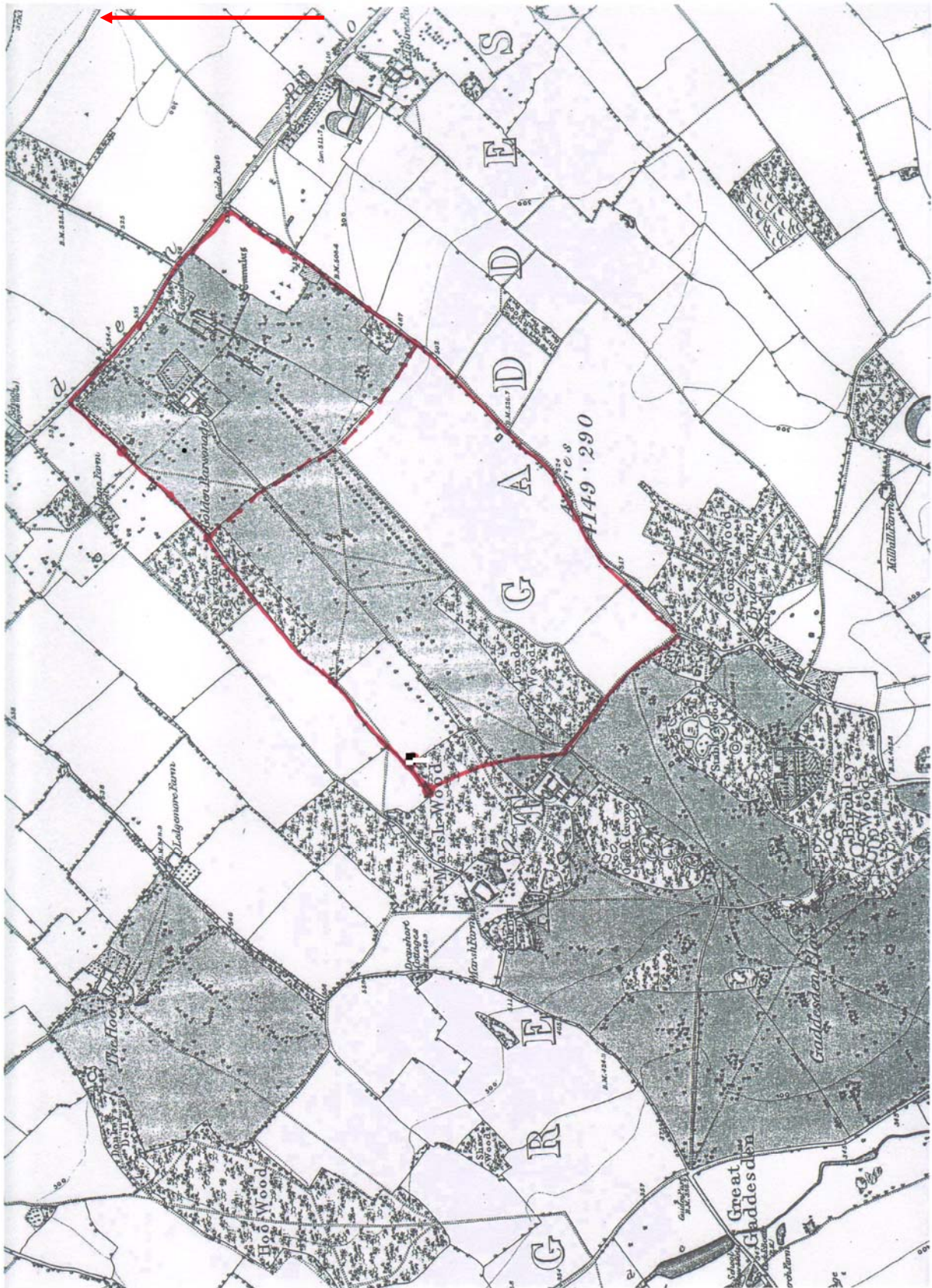
**Stable block/other utilitarian buildings:** A long brick wall of 56 courses high, each course being 7.5cm runs SW to NE adjacent to the SE front of the house and bears evidence of garden buildings at each end with windows punched through at the eastern end to overlook a lawn and the smaller of 2 walled garden enclosures. The building at the western end seems to have been erected at the same time as alternations made to the house by Henshaw Halsley in the 1720s for its walls are decorated with the same vitrified headers as the pilasters of that new build. Windows of both buildings have been block and the buildings themselves taken down but enough remains to suggest two imposing greenhouses or orangeries looking out across the main area of gardens.

**Walled Garden:** 100 metres NE of the house and described as trapezoid and constructed after 1787 using bricks from the 1760s demolished house's walled gardens which were built SE of that house. Walls 3ft high, lower parts of narrow 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> Century red brick English bond, upper parts 18<sup>th</sup> Century red brick Flemish bond.

**Pleasure grounds and ornamental features extending into the wider park:** An estate map in 1717 for Henshaw Halsey shows the house surrounded by a series of rectangular enclosures bordered with trees. The main garden is to the south and east of the house and terminates in an area of woodland described as The Grove. Relict features are a series of three rectangular ponds, possibly semi-ornamental fish ponds, joined together to form a single rectangular area of water in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Some 25 metres to the east and parallel with the ponds is a low raised terrace on which still grows a single large lime tree, the survivor of an avenue of trees. To the north east of the terrace is another area of water, a substantial ornamental canal of early 18<sup>th</sup> Century date, flanked by a walk – the remains of a three-meter

wide terrace can still be seen, cut into the slope of the ground on its western side. A tree covered mound, some five meters in height stands about 100 metres to the east of these features and some 250 metres from the house, constructed early 18<sup>th</sup> Century at a time when there was an increasing interest in extended prospects. Lastly, extending south westwards from and almost on the same alignment as the fishponds, is a fine avenue of lime trees which today continues for some 600 metres as far as London Wood. Some originals survive with girths in excess of 5 metres suggesting a planting date of 1720s. The feature is not aligned on the house or on a point near it and nor did it ever line a major approach to the house. Drury and Andrews' county map of 1866 and Bryant's map of 1822 do however show that there was originally another avenue, running parallel and some distance to the north west which was apparently aligned on the house. However it appears this surviving avenue was intended simply to provide a walk or a ride extending out from the Grove and associated garden features into the wider landscape of the estate.

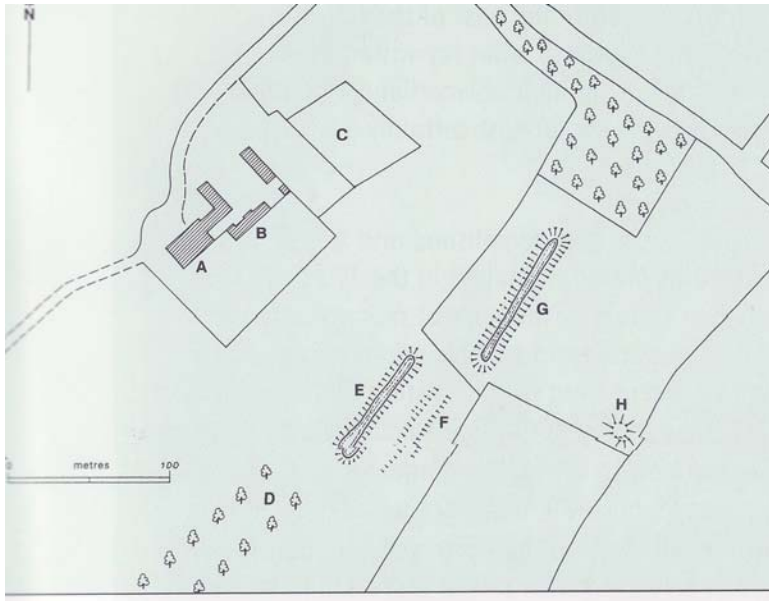
<p><b>Important people associated with site:</b>  <b>Resident:</b> Sir John Halsey (d1670) Master of Chancery, Thomas Halsey sheriff county 1697 and MP (between 1685 and 1713).  <b>Architect:</b>  <b>Designer:</b></p>
<p><b>Assessment of significance.</b> Ancient and complex site with many relict features of 18<sup>th</sup> landscape park which merits further investigation. It has always been linked with the neighbouring Gaddesden Place estate (q.v.), owned by the same family</p>
<p><b>Principal Uses:</b> Residential and farming on estate</p>
<p><b>Public Access/Rights of Way:</b> FP 23, 32, 34</p>
<p><b>Designations:</b> (e.g. Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Conservation Area, Listed Buildings, EH Register of Historic Parks &amp; Gardens, Tree Preservation Orders, SSSIs, Nature Reserve, National Trust, County Wildlife Site, etc)  <b>House and garden walls attached on north-east Grade II*,</b>  <b>Great Gaddesden Area of Archaeological Significance</b>  <b>Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty</b>  <b>Rural Area</b>  <b>Landscape Character Area:</b> 124 Gaddesden Row</p>
<p><b>Sources of information:</b> Original report of Hertfordshire Gardens Trust in ACC 3898 in Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies</p>
<p><b>Site visited by:</b> Hertfordshire Gardens Trust Date: 2000</p>



Ordnance Survey 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Sheet XXXIII 1883/4. Scale 6":1 mile



**Ordnance Survey 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Sheet XXXIII 1883/4. Scale 6":1 mile  
Showing Relationship of Golden Parsonage and Gaddesden Place**



- A Mansion
- B 17C Wall
- D Lime Avenue c. 1720
- E 3 Fishponds joined to form 1 in late 19C
- F Low raised Terrace with relict lime of early avenue
- G Early 18C canal
- H Tree covered mound possibly an 18C viewing mount

**Relict landscape features at Golden Parsonage**



**Remains of early 18c Canal**

**Sweet Chestnuts**



**Lime Avenue**

