

HERTFORDSHIRE GARDENS TRUST  
LOCAL LIST: **DACORUM**

Present Name of Site  
**WESTBROOK HAY**  
Parish/Town

Historic Name (if known)  
BOVINGDON HAY

National Grid Reference of Principal Building: TL026 055

Present Area (approximate) School: 26, Golf Complex: 160 Acres

**Brief Description**

A small gentleman's estate lying between Boxmoor and Bovingdon. Although the site of a manorial complex, first noted in 1199, the present estate was put together in the later 17<sup>th</sup> century by Joshua Lomax of Childwickbury for his younger son, the lawyer Thomas. It passed by marriage into the Ryder family in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century and was inherited by Granville Dudley Ryder in 1831. He was a local benefactor, rebuilding Bovingdon Church and building the West Herts Infirmary (see entry for *Heath Lane Cemetery*). It was used by RAF in 2nd World War, then by the Hemel Hempstead New Town Commission. It became a school 1963 and various additions, such as a new Sports Hall opened in 1995 have filled the walled garden and other parts of the site.

Its significant ornamental gardens were first depicted in 1766, and became in turn Victorian and Edwardian in style with balustrades, urns, verandahs and flower beds in lawns. Today the layout is simpler and has reverted to the formal style of the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. A formal 18<sup>th</sup> century wilderness to the east was divided by straight rides into separate blocks (c.f. Goldingtons, Kendals Hall and Edge Grove).

**Principal Building:**

The house was built by Thomas Lomax after he inherited in 1686. It is of 2 storeys, originally square but much altered in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> and extended in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> centuries so now irregular with bow windows rising through both storeys on the northwest and southwest fronts and the roof surmounted by a parapet. c.1800 it was 2 bays and 2 storeys, but by c.1840 it appears to have been a 3-storey building with roofs of a steeper pitch. Presently it is stuccoed with a pilastered cubic porch on the north entrance front which has views towards Hemel Hempstead. The garden front faces northwest to take advantage of the views towards the Chilterns near Tring (now blocked). A subsidiary garden front faced south towards an orchard, where the current walled garden is now.

**Approach:**

The original approach was via a drive from Bovingdon to the east of the house but this had been superseded by the drive from the A4146 near Winkwell curving southwards towards the north front. The old drive is now a track, the Bovingdon portion being used as a drive to Little Hay Golf Course and Driving Range.

**Hay Lodge** on London Road Bourne End is a single-storey building with a rustic verandah, now under a tiled roof, originally plain and fishtailed tiling. Built in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century in Cottage Ornée style, it flanked the northern drive to the house. The current approach to the house is a few yards to the west of the Lodge.

**The Lodge** which flanks the entrance of the drive from Bovingdon was built in 1851 in flint/puddingstone and brick. It is in Victorian picturesque with steep gables with decorated barge boards with dormer windows in a 1½ storeys under a tiled roof. The decorated wooden porch facing the drive has a carved coat of arms.

The entrance to the pleasure grounds from the park is marked by 2 brick piers, with render, surmounted by ball finials and backed by rhododendrons. A simple iron gate hangs between them.

**Stable block/other utilitarian buildings:** Little Hay Farm was situated to the west of the pleasure gardens and approached by a lane parallel to Boxmoor Lane, only part of which survives at the Bovingdon end. The site of the farm is occupied by sheds and barns. At the time of the 1871 census the farm was occupied by the Gardener and various labourers. A good example of a picturesque Victorian barn, built of flint and red brick under a tiled roof, sits on the crest of the hill to the southeast of the house. This is flanked by a Sequoia.

**Pleasure grounds:**

The parterre with two plats to the northwest of the house has been replaced with one with four flower beds leading to a lawn with specimen trees. These curtail the historic views westwards from the garden front of the house. The 18<sup>th</sup> century orchard to the north of the house has been replaced by a 20<sup>th</sup> century parterre. There are remnants of ornamental planting with cedars of Lebanon and

**Walled Kitchen Garden:**

The walled kitchen garden lies to the southeast of the mansion. Although the walls are largely intact the interior is now occupied by large school buildings and car parking.

**Park:**

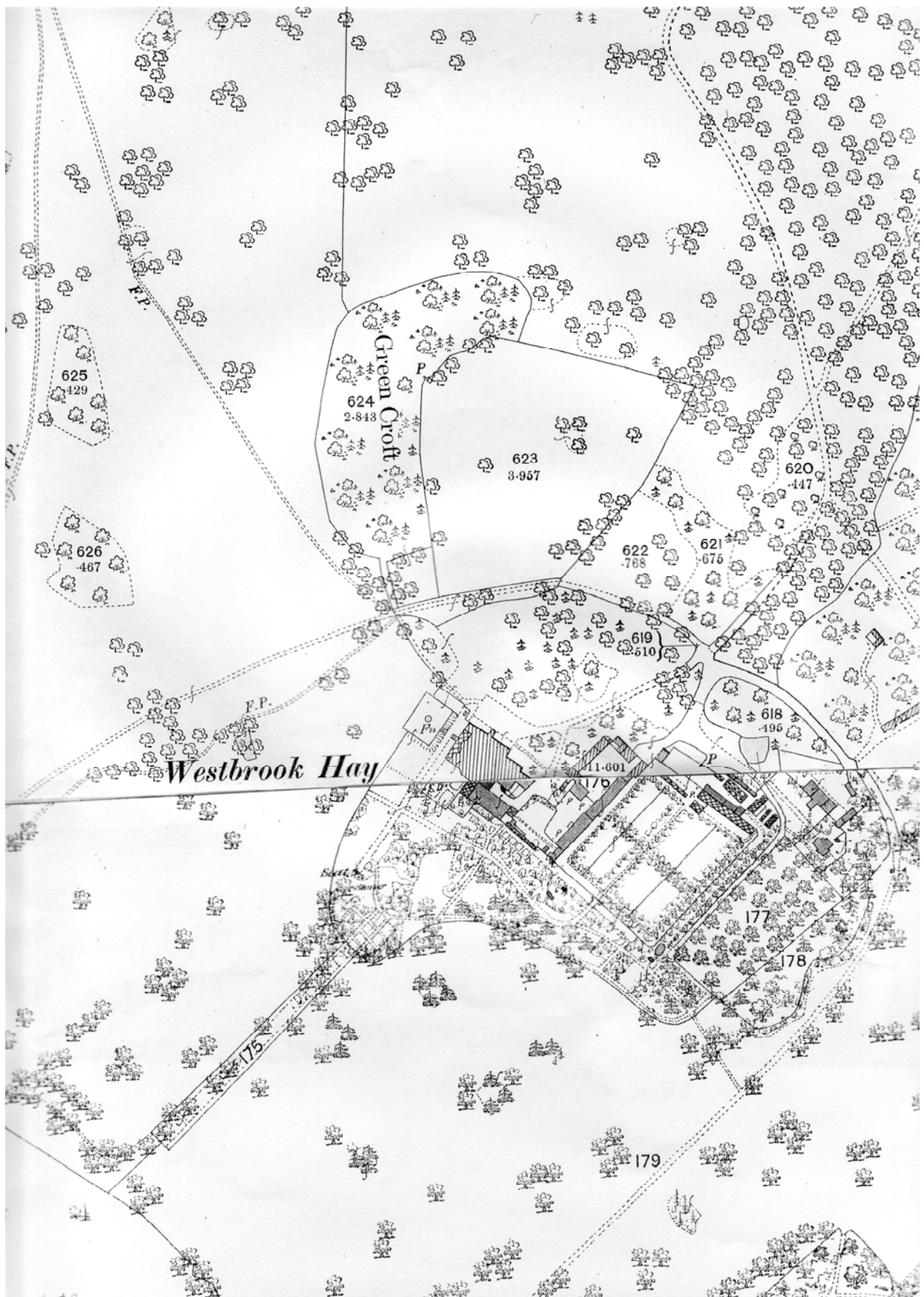
The wilderness was converted into orchards or plantations by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century which have now been replaced by pastureland. Much of the park to the southwest was converted into Little Hay Golf Course in 1977. The avenues running northeast from the house survived until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century but have now gone although a part of the line of the northern most one can still be traced. A row of limes running from the house to the A41 is the remnants of the avenue shown on the 1883 Ordnance Survey map and may be the one marked on the Dury and Andrew Map of 1766. Much of the parkland associated with the school has been converted into sports pitches.

An ancient and rare yew wood is still at the southwestern part of the estate. Much of the ground outside of the school premises is crossed by foot and bridlepaths and run by the Boxmoor Trust. Many of these paths still have the old iron estate rails alongside them. There are areas of laurel, holly and yew, which may be ornamental in origin as they lie at the southern end of the Wilderness shown on the 18<sup>th</sup> century map. Footpaths still follow the tracks of the old drive through Gorsefield wood.

<b>Important people associated with site:</b>	
<b>Resident/Owner:</b> Joshua Lomax of Childwickbury, Granville Ryder, 19 <sup>th</sup> century philanthropist	
<b>Architect:</b>	
<b>Designer:</b> (golf course: Hawtree)	
<b>Assessment of significance.:</b> A gentleman's small estate, still largely intact although converted to other uses. It provides a green barrier between Boxmoor and Hemel Hempstead and the village of Bovingdon, helping to preserve the latter's distinctiveness.	
<b>Principal Uses:</b> School and Golf Complex	
<b>Public Access/Rights of Way:</b> FP 23, 24	
<b>Designations:</b> (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)	
House, The Lodge, Hay Lodge Grade II listed	
Green Belt	
<b>Sources of information:</b> Hertfordshire GT Conservation group compiled from information in HALS	
<b>Site visited by:</b>	Hertfordshire Gardens Trust      Date: 2009







Ordnance Survey 1<sup>st</sup> Edition 1878 Sheet XXXIII.14 (bottom half) & 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 1898 Sheet XXXIII.10 (top half) Scale 25":1 mile