

HERTFORDSHIRE GARDENS TRUST  
LOCAL LIST: **DACORUM**

Present Name of Site  
**HARESFOOT**

Historic Name  
Harefordshende  
Harfoteshall

Parish/Town  
**Berkhamsted**

National Grid Reference of Principal Building: SP989 061

Present Area (approximate)

Hectares

**Brief Description**

On the site of 'Harefordshende', a medieval farmstead, a mansion was built in 1787 possibly by John Dorrien of the East India Company. It became the residence of the Smith-Dorriens, a well known banking family. Thomas Dorrien had 200 acres in his park in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, which decreased to 320 by 1820 and further decreased to 140 acres although the estate amounted to 1209 acres in Hertfordshire. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century Colonel Dorrien was one of the numerous agricultural 'improvers' in the county who crossbred Southdown sheep with Leicesters. General Sir Horace Dorrien Smith died in 1930 and the estate was split up, with the house and 150 acres of park land being purchased by Geoffrey Blackwell. The old house burned down in 1965 and in 1985 the stable block was converted to a preparatory school.

**Principal Building:** The main house burned down in 1965 and the Stable Block now forms the main building of the school complex.

**Approach:** This is along a tree-lined avenue running southeast from Chesham Road. It terminates at the west of school complex with a turning circle containing a lawn and a blue cedar, planted to mark the founding of the school in 1985.

**Stable block and Coach House:** Now main building of complex. Georgian of 2 storeys with central pediment under a slate roof. A classroom range to the southeast, next to the walled garden, was built in similar style in 1989.

**Pleasure grounds:** The immediate surroundings of the school and walled garden are screened with mature trees from the arable fields beyond. The pleasure grounds have been built over with various school buildings separated by lawns dotted with mature trees.

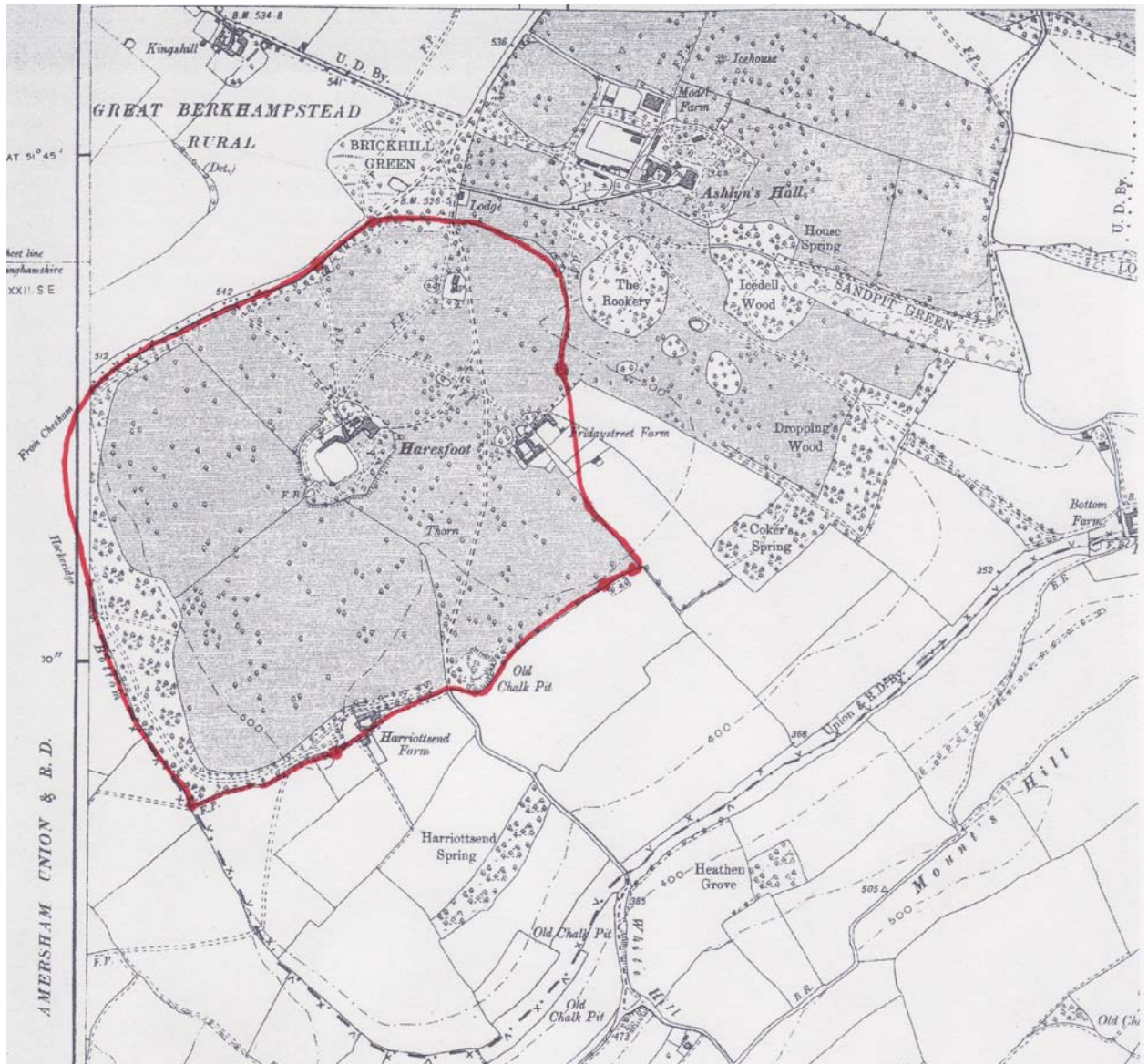
**Walled Kitchen Garden:** This covers 1 acre and is laid out as sports pitches.

**Park:** Ice house

In the wider landscape the Hockeridge and Pancake Woods cover about 74 hectares. In the 1790s the Dorriens realised about £1400 p.a. from the managed oak, beech and other native trees. This continued until the estate was broken up. The woods were purchased by the Foundling Hospital at Ashlyns in 1944 to prevent the possibility of speculative housing development. They were sold in 1952 by Miss Mary Wellesley who planted many of the 50 species of non-native conifers. In 1986 she donated the restored woods to the Royal Forestry Society.

Haresfoot Park is farmed as arable with about 255 acres in hand and 203 acres let on a 50 year Farm Tenancy. The land encloses Haresfoot and its park and stretches along south of the A41 corridor towards Bourne End. This is currently for sale in 3 lots so the site could be further divided.

<p><b>Important people associated with site:</b>  <b>Resident:</b> John Dorrien, East India Company Director 1763-65; Lt Colonel Robert Dorrien 19<sup>th</sup> C Agricultural Improver; Sir Horace Dorrien Smith, Soldier WW1:</p>
<p><b>Assessment of significance:</b> Small estate to the south of Ashlyns (q.v.) one of a group clustered around Bekhamsted (Rossway [q.v.], Woodcock Hill [q.v.] &amp;c) possibly due to the easy access to London along the coaching road.</p>
<p><b>Principal Uses:</b> Day Nursery and Preparatory School</p>
<p><b>Public Access/Rights of Way:</b> RUPP 48, FP41, 42, 46</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>Green Belt</b>  <b>Landscape Characterisation Area:</b> 110 Ashlyns and Wigginton Plateau</p>
<p><b>Sources of information:</b></p>
<p><b>Site visited by:</b> _____ <b>Date:</b> _____</p>



Ordnance Survey 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 1899. Sheet XXXIII.SW Scale 6":1 mile