

HERTFORDSHIRE GARDENS TRUST
LOCAL LIST: **DACORUM**

Present Name of Site
STOCKS

Historic Name
Stocks Manor

Parish/Town
Aldbury

National Grid Reference of Principal Building: SP962133

Present Area (approximate)

Brief Description

First reference to Stocks made in 1176.

Located approximately 1 mile north of Aldbury, Stocks House sits in the centre of what was an essentially parkland estate of 550 acres on the edge of the Chilterns scarp that now contains a golf course. The estate was acquired by Arnold Duncombe in the mid 18th century. Extensive formal gardens are shown on Dury and Andrews map of 1766 together with orchard and walled garden. A new house was erected in 1771. The estate passed to William Hayton (nephew) and on his death in 1811 to the daughter of his half-sister who had married Samuel Whitbread. Their daughter Harriett inherited. She married James Gordon and then ultimately Stocks passed to their son James Gordon before being sold. Estate purchased in 1892 by Mrs Humphry (Mary Augusta) Ward, a niece of Matthew Arnold and sister-in-law of TH Huxley, from Lord Grey. Frequent visitors to Stocks included Julian and Aldous Huxley, GB Shaw, Henry James and the Darwins. Aldbury was made famous as Clinton Magna in Ward's book of that name.

In 1909 Humphry Ward asked TH Mawson to design gardens for Stocks. Although his design was not completely executed, a pair of wooden summerhouses similar to those Mawson designed for Little Onn and Moor Crag, a rose garden and a carriage court were completed

During WWI the house was let to the Land Army. On Mrs Ward's death in 1922 the house was sold to pay her son's debts. It was used as a girls' school from 1944-1972. After some years of private ownership the house became a hotel before returning to a succession of private owners. A golf course was laid out in the parkland in 1993.

Principal Building: The much modified house sits close to the site of the 16th century Manor House. The present house was begun by Arnold Duncombe in 1773, with 2 new wings and a doubling of the main block later in the 18th century. Further development in the 19th century expanded the footprint of Stocks house. Substantial additions, including the three-storey northwest service wing, were made in the late 19th and early 20th centuries by Mrs Humphry Ward. The house is stuccoed, of two storeys and attics under a steep hipped tile roof with parapets. The south front has a pediment and the west front a two-storey canted bay window

Approach: The drive leaves Stocks Road and passes a small Lodge before heading northwestwards through parkland to arrive at the southwest front.

Stable block/other utilitarian buildings: The Duncombe family owned **Stocks Farm** from 1503 until the 19C. Associated with the farm was a large brick house west of the farmyard. This house was largely demolished in 1773 when Arnold Duncombe built a new house further to the NW, but a fragment of it is thought to have survived as the west wing of Tudor Cottage. The middle part of Tudor Cottage probably dates to c1600; the south wing was built in the early 20C for Mrs Humphry Ward of Stocks House.

The **farm buildings, stable and coachhouse** have been converted into 20C housing, but in origin belonged to Stocks Farm. The north and west ranges date to the 16C, the south range to the early 17C with a late 17C gateway; also a late 17C east barn with an 18C coachhouse

adjoining its north-west corner, and an early 18C stable on the north side of the north range. The farm buildings are timber framed on low red brick sills, generally with dark weatherboarding; the east barn has red brick infill. The coachhouse and stable are of red brick. The complex forms a court on the north side of the farmhouse, built in 1908; the coachhouse and stable were built to serve Stocks House

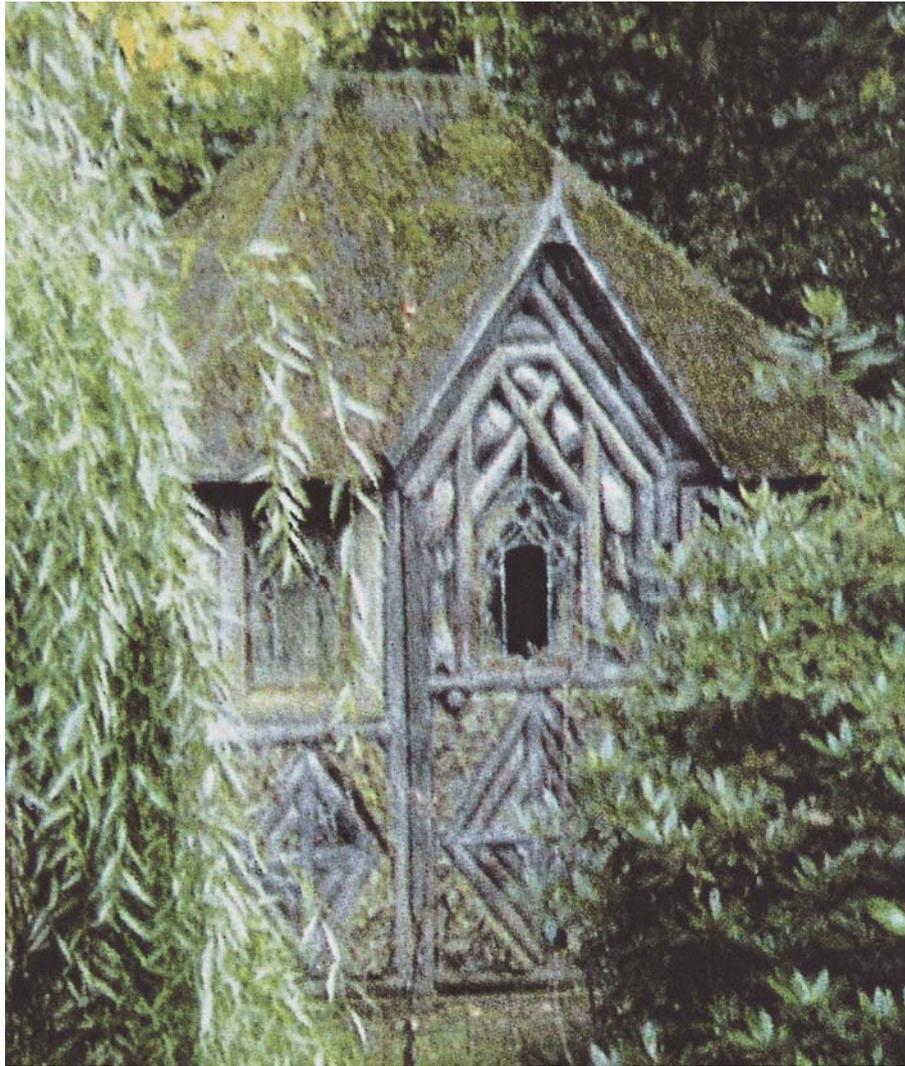
The **dovecote** was once part of Stocks Farm. It stands on the east side of Stocks Road, facing S. It is a tall single-storey rectangular building in red brick with blue brick diaper and the date 1753 in blue bricks on the frontage. The central boarded door is in a heavy frame with an unglazed rectangular fanlight; there are small unglazed windows in a heavy frame set high in the middle of the east side. At the centre of the ridge is a square weatherboarded turret. The inside is lined with twin nesting boxes in brick, up to eaves level. It is now used as an equipment store.

Pleasure grounds: These adjoin the house on the south and west sides giving views over the . The views to the south are defined by mixed tree clumps at the southern corners of the pleasure grounds

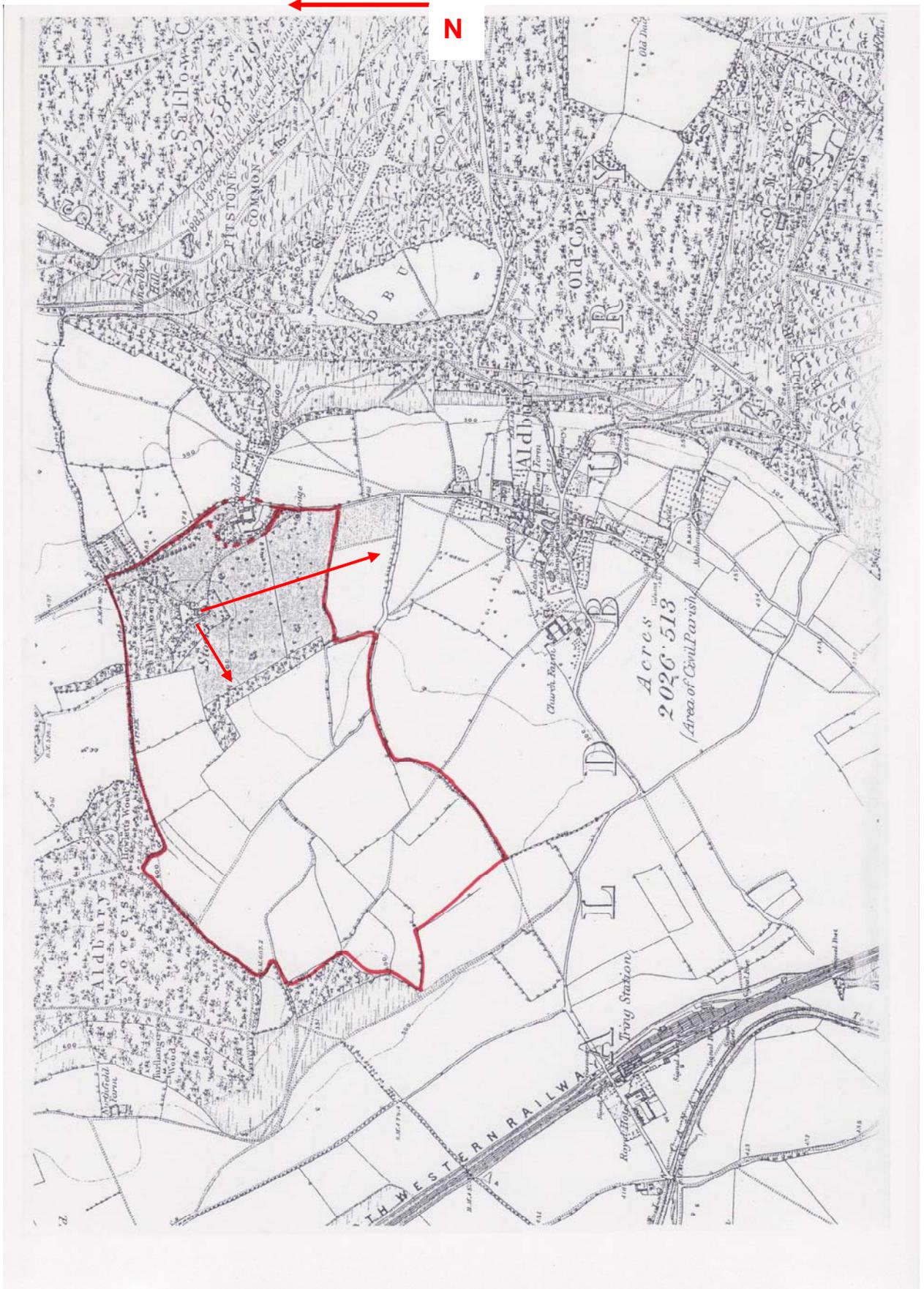
Walled Kitchen Garden: This was on the other side of Stocks Road to the northeast of the house, opposite Walk Wood. It now contains a large house and the grounds have been laid to lawns in a series of five compartments.

Park: There is a small park laid to pasture to the south of the house, laid to golf course in 1993. There is an ongoing (2009) application to build a Clubhouse. The park to the north of the house is laid to mixed deciduous woodland In the 19th century this Walk Wood contained a number of paths and drives.

Important people associated with site:	
Resident:	Mrs Humphry Ward
Visitors:	Matthew Arnold, GH Trevelyan, Dickens, various Huxleys, GB Shaw, the Darwins
Designer:	Thomas Hayter Mawson
Assessment of significance. The stables and farm buildings form a group of outstanding interest and illustrating structural changes over three centuries.	
Principal Uses: Private house and Park, Golf Club and course	
Public Access/Rights of Way: if you dare	
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, Model Farm, Stables, Dovecote, Manor House	
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	
Landscape Character Area: 115 Aldbury Coombe	
Sources of information: Waymark, J 2009 <i>Thomas Mawson, life, gardens and landscapes</i> Frances Lincoln; Davis, J 1987 <i>Aldbury-The Open Village</i> ; HALS; OS Maps; Heritage Gateway	
Site visited by:	Date:



Summerhouse at Little Onn similar to that erected at Stocks c.1909. Probably manufactured by Garden Crafts Ltd of Staveley



Ordnance Survey 1st Edition 1884. Sheet XXV Scale 6":1 mile