

LAYOUT

The garden has a central axis path which is approximately 1m wide, with a further 1m wide path parallel to the north wall to form a 3.1m border. This path gives access to a door into a potting shed and to the glasshouse. At its eastern end the path curves to join a crossing path that runs parallel to the east wall before joining the central axis path. Another crossing path features at the west end, near the yew hedge. All the existing paths are gravel with box edging (*Buxus suffruticosa*).

Today, the area to the south of the central axis path is laid to grass and has no surface evidence of internal paths or divisions. Later planting at the eastern end of this area has disturbed the archaeological evidence, although, six one spit deep test trenches revealed traces of gravel and suggest paths of a similar width to the extant paths running parallel to the yew hedge and the south wall. These mirror the extant paths on the other side of the central path, and conform to those shown on 1885 map (see page 6).¹³ This map shows two further crossing paths near to the house, running from north to south, one extant beside the conservatory (since demolished) and the other lost under grass near the yew hedge which today forms the western end of the walled garden and is underplanted with box which continues in curves to the central axis path.

ENTRANCES

Today, the walled garden is accessed from the house through two gaps in the western yew hedge. In the north wall there is a fan-arched opening with 1.83m softwood brace and ledge door leading through to a small leanto building (used as a potting shed) attached to the north side of this wall. Further towards the Hall along the north wall, and outside the present walled garden, is a fan arched opening with a 15 bar metal gate giving access from the front drive. An additional entrance, now infilled with brick, once gave access from the drive into a

conservatory which was attached to the Hall. There are no further access points into the walled enclosure, and no evidence of any having previously existed.

WALLS

NORTH WALL: The north wall consists of a straight section in today's walled garden, which joins a curved section towards the east elevation of the Hall. At approximately 2.44m high and with a thickness of 0.4m, it is constructed in regularly sized 9" x 4" red bricks to the interior laid in monk bond (one header to two stretchers), with regular, gently-sloping triangular coping stones laid above a final course of brick headers. Unknapped whole flints form the exterior skin with six brick buttresses and a flush pillar at 3.66m spacings.



TOP: The outside of the north wall showing a brick buttress and the outer facing of unknapped flint.

RIGHT: Door to potting shed in the north wall.



These are not bonded into the main wall. Each buttress is 2.15m high and 0.7m wide, with a depth from the wall of 0.66m at the top and 0.96m from the bottom. They are shown on the 1885 map (see page 6), but do not appear on the earlier map dated 1858 (see page 5), suggesting they were added for structural reasons, probably by John Haywood during his extensive remodelling of the house and stables.

EAST WALL: Similarly constructed of red bricks with an outer skin of unknapped whole flints, the east wall has eight flush pillars along its length which are only visible on the outside (east) of this wall. It is approximately 2.44m high with the same copings as on the north wall. A tight curve forms the junction between them. There are two buttresses within the walled garden, each 2.20m high x 70cm wide, which are not bonded into the main wall. These buttresses do not appear on the detailed map of 1885, which suggests they were constructed at a later



TOP: Members of Suffolk Gardens Trust measuring the inside of the east wall. Note the buttress and weathered brickwork.

TOP RIGHT: The outside of the east wall showing brick pillars.

RIGHT: Detail of brick pillar with unknapped flint facing of outside east wall.

date for structural purposes. The top four courses of this wall have been renewed using cement mortar. Towards the north end of the east wall, and only visible from the outside, is an unusual infilled rectangular opening measuring 60cm wide x 30cm high, set at 2.44m from ground level. It has been infilled with brick and has a brick surround with two horizontal recesses. To date, a suitable explanation for its purpose has not been found, although it appears to correspond to the position of the short length of fence/hedge shown on the 1858 map (see page 5). Lying on the ground within the east wall slip garden is a detached piece of brick and flint walling. There is no evidence that it is related to the enclosure walls, which suggests it may have come from a section of the outer boundary wall which has recently been rebuilt.

SOUTH WALL: At the intersection of the east and south wall are the remains of lime plaster which appears to correspond to a small structure shown on both the 1885 and 1926

maps (see pages 6 and 7). In this area the south wall forms a return of the east wall at 2.44m high and with the same coping, before curving down to approximately 1.75m. Butting up to this is the main south wall which, although built of similar brick in the same monk bond, has rounded coping. Because of the shadow it would cast, not all garden enclosures were built with a solid south wall and were often formed by hurdles or even dispensed with altogether. So, although a wall is shown as early as 1839 (Tithe Map), it is possible that the lower south wall was constructed after the north and east walls. Today, this wall terminates a short distance from the Hall, giving a gap which opens onto the main gardens to the south. Both the 1839 and 1858 maps (see page 5) shows the wall making a return to join the house, although by 1885 it had taken on its present form. This was probably necessary to accommodate the new conservatory attached to the east elevation of the Hall and would have joined the enclosure to the newly extended gardens immediately to the south of the house.



LEFT: The remains of lime plaster at the intersection of the east and south wall correspond to a structure shown as early as 1885. BELOW: The outside of the south wall, at its eastern end, showing the drop in height and brickwork butting-up.





*LEFT & CENTRE: Leather straps found on the inside of the north wall and outside of the south wall.
RIGHT: Illegible lead label on north wall.*

FIXINGS: There is relatively little evidence on the inside brick walls for fruit support mechanisms. Some hand-forged, square-headed fixing nails can be seen on the east wall (see photo on page 8), with intact leather straps near the east wall buttresses, the outside of the south wall and also near the curved section of the north wall. However, far more holes and support straps can be seen on the outside of the south wall, but with none visible on the outside of the north and east wall. This suggests no significant use was made of the ‘slip gardens’ to the north and east.

LABELS: Bill Wyman, the former Rolling Stone and enthusiastic metal detectorist, was invited to help search for plant labels during 2005, but only uncovered metal rose labels from the late 19th and early 20th centuries (see pages 16 and 17). In addition, only a single lead label, with illegible scratched wording, was found attached to the inside north wall. The sparsity of label finds suggests that little fruit of significance was grown within the walled garden.

BELOW: The east elevation of the Hall showing the remains of the conservatory base.



BUILDINGS

CONSERVATORY: The remains of floor tiles and brick plinth walls clearly mark where once stood a conservatory. Map evidence shows it was in existence by 1885 and also in 1926, at which time it formed an integral part of the western end of the walled garden. Its demolition may have coincided with the planting of the yew hedge, which forms the western side of the garden today.

POTTING SHED: Attached to the outside of the north wall is a wooden leanto structure with corrugated iron roof. Today it is used as a potting shed. It measures 6.63m long and extends 6.66m from the wall. It has four small wooden windows. There is a boiler pit with Monad boiler in-situ and piping out through the wall into the walled garden. This shed was probably built in the early 1900s and is first shown on the 1926 OS map (see page 7).

GLASSHOUSE: Built on a red brick plinth, the 'extended leanto' glasshouse is attached to the inside of the north wall, which was extended by two courses to accommodate support timbers. As with the potting shed, it is first shown on the 1926 map. A plate on the door reads "Boulton and Paul, Norwich", an engineering firm producing a wide variety of products in addition to glasshouses at the beginning of the 20th century. It has an earthen floor and four top opening lights at 1.5m centres, with ornate cast iron brackets. Four top hinged vertical windows at the front reflect the same layout.

BELOW LEFT: The potting shed attached to the outside north wall.

BELOW RIGHT: View of the glasshouse.

BOTTOM: The glasshouse seen from the south-east corner of the walled garden. Note the door into the potting shed to the left.





Ornate iron brackets in the glasshouse.

Caste iron guttering supported by ornate iron brackets discharge water into a slate trough, although there is no evidence of a mechanism to siphon water into the glasshouse. There are fruit wire supports, with eight eyes at either end, but no evidence of holes in the plinth wall to accommodate vines. The staging to the north side is probably not original, although the wrought iron brackets may well be. These shelves start at 1.92m high with 0.37m between, and are 0.35m wide. The brackets are at 1.7m centres.

SUMMER HOUSE: Both the 1885 and 1926 OS maps (see pages 6 and 7) show a small irregularly shaped building in the south-east corner of the walled garden. Examination of the wall in this area shows the remains of lime plaster and an abrupt halt to the few holes left from fixings in the wall (see page 13). The evidence of plaster and shape of this structure strongly suggest the existence of a summer house or similar structure, rather than a utility building such as a shed.

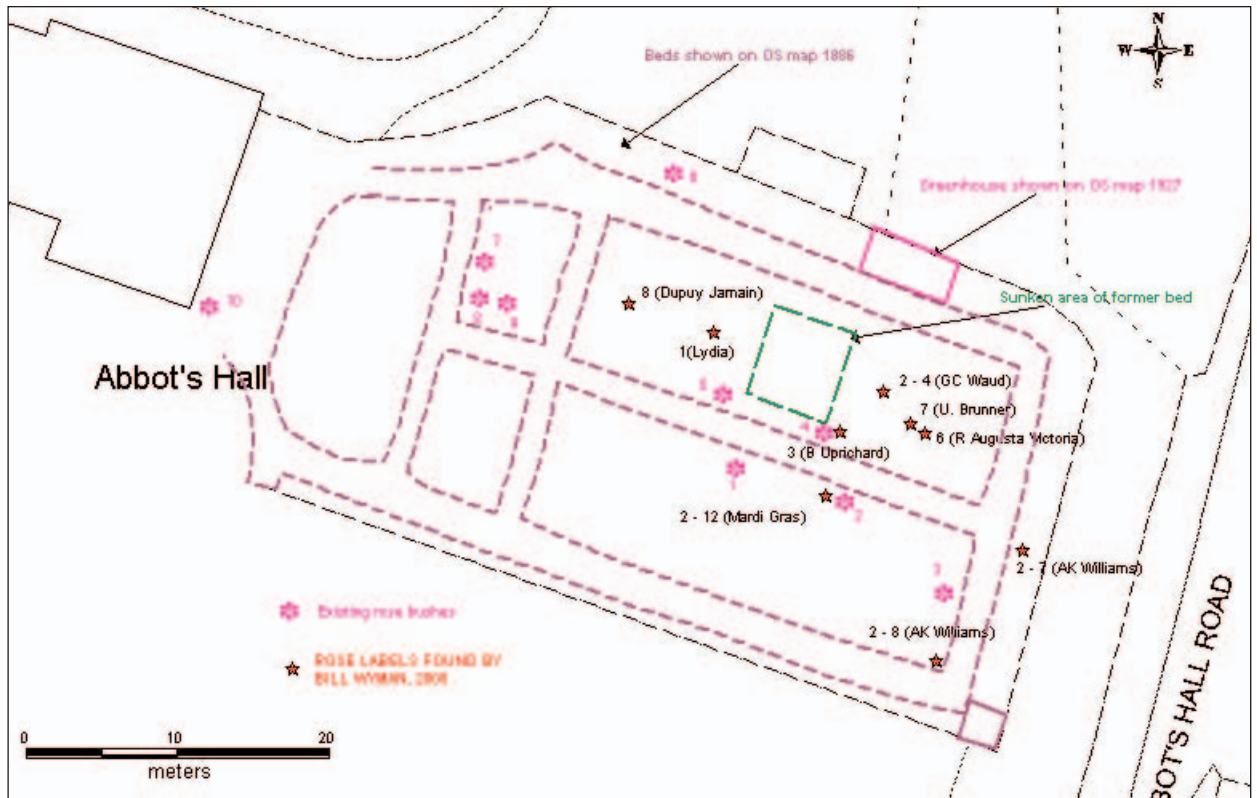
PLANTING

Overall, there is very little to indicate what was originally grown in the garden. The western boundary is formed by a yew (*Taxus baccata*) hedge approximately 2.5m high, which is underplanted with box (*Buxus suffruticosa*). This continues into the garden to form low partition hedges. There are no stumps of felled trees within the walls and, today, lupins grow haphazardly throughout the garden with some modern conifers and roses of indeterminate age. A Sweet Bay (*Laurus nobilis*) could be fairly old and two figs (*Ficus carica*), which appear to have been fan-trained at some point, are located at the west and east ends of the north wall.

Metal detection by Bill Wyman in 2005 uncovered only metal rose labels from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The earliest of these being for the hybrid perpetual roses 'Dupuy Jamain' (1868), 'Alfred K. Williams' (1877) and 'Ulrich Brunner' (1882) – these could belong to the period of garden layout shown on the 1885 map. Unfortunately none of these roses are represented among the surviving roses in the garden. The later labels were for the roses 'Reine Augusta Victoria' (hybrid tea 1891), 'George C. Waud' (hybrid tea 1908/9), 'Betty Uprichard' (hybrid tea 1922), 'Ly[?dia]' (hybrid tea 1933) and 'Mardi Gras' (hybrid tea 1953).

In March of the same year Sally Kington, the International Daffodil Registrar of the Royal Horticultural Survey, conducted a survey of the daffodils at the Hall.¹⁴ Her preliminary opinion is that, with the exception of a group of 20th century varieties at the north-west end of the original formal lawn south of the house, the majority of the daffodils seem to pre-date those that were named and classified at a major RHS conference in 1885. They appear to consist of trumpet varieties of perhaps the 1870s, with doubles of 17th–18th century date in the walled garden, such as 'Telamonius Plenus', Thomas 'Virescent Daffodil' and 'Orange Phoenix' (syn. 'Eggs and Bacon').

TOP RIGHT: Plan of walled garden showing position of rose labels found by Bill Wyman. Courtesy of Suffolk County Council. BELOW: Bill Wyman in action and some of the labels he found.



CONCLUSION

With limited documentary evidence and much of the extant evidence being based on what is *not* in the garden, a discussion of the development of the walled gardens at Abbot's Hall must be considered as rather speculative and largely based on suggestions and possibilities.

Evidence from Sally Kington suggests that the area now taken up by the walled garden was planted with daffodils dating back to the 17th and 18th centuries. This suggests the area was once part of the formal gardens originally laid out by Charles Blosse in the early 18th century.

The size of brick used to construct the north and east walls, and the fact they are solid (without 'frogs') are suggestive of a late 18th or early 19th century construction. This, coupled with the fact that the lower section of the south wall may have been constructed at a later date, could suggest that the north and east walls (plus short south wall return) were originally erected primarily as a physical barrier to the pastureland to the north, known as 'Camping Land'. Alternatively, when the former formal gardens to the south were converted to pastureland and orchard, a fully enclosed area was initially constructed using hurdles on the south side, which were later replaced by a brick wall. It is not possible to determine the exact dates for this process, although, given his social circle and connections to agricultural innovators of the period, it seems likely that John Edgar Rust was responsible for the development of the walls during the early part of the 19th century.

Once enclosed, and given its small size and the lack of other areas for pleasure gardens attached to the Hall at the time, it seems likely that the walled enclosure was used for

ornamental rather than practical purposes. This appears to be confirmed by so little evidence being found for fruit and vegetable growing on any scale.

It seems likely that John Hayward, who bought the property in 1877 and set about an extensive programme of building, is responsible for adding the conservatory to the east elevation, opening up the walled garden at its south-west corner to join with an extended area of pleasure gardens to the south, and for adding the buttresses to the north wall. The two internal east wall buttresses appear not to have been added until a later date. The layout of paths, position of the 'summer-house' and extent of the walls we see today reflect those shown on the detailed map of 1885.

The Longe family had become the owners of Abbot's Hall by 1904 and it is likely that they were responsible for the addition of the glasshouse and potting shed to the north wall. By 1926, with the removal of fencing both north and south of the Hall, the former pastureland was converted to garden and many of the extant trees surrounding the walled garden appear to have been planted around this time. Both the conservatory and the 'summer house' are still shown on the 1926 OS map and must have been demolished since then, possibly at the time the yew hedge was planted.

Over the last 50 years the walled garden has become derelict and slowly fallen into disrepair, and, although a certain amount of repair and maintenance has recently taken place, a major programme of restoration is required if its historic past is to be retained and its future secured.

The walled garden seen from across the former formal south garden.



NOTES

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- 3 Nikolas N. Pevsner *Buildings of England, Suffolk*
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- 4 Tithe map and Apportionment, 1839,
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- 5 Drinkstone Tithe Apportionment 1841
- 6 Religious Census 1851
- 7 Sale Particulars 25th June 1858, HE402/1/1858/19
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- 9 OS Map 1885 1:500 Sheet 56/7/16, Suffolk Records
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- 10 OS Map 1926 1:250 Sheet 56/7, Suffolk Records
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- 11 Sale Particulars 25th June 1858, HE402/1/1858/19
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- 12 OS Map 1885 1:500 Sheet 56/7/16 Suffolk
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- 13 OS Map 1885 1:500 Sheet 56/7/16 Suffolk
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- 14 Sally Kington, International Daffodil Registrar,
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