Sussex Gardens Trust

Parks and gardens of local importance in Sussex

Parks and Gardens of the Sussex Coast
Research and Recording project

BEAUPORT PARK, ST LEONARDS-ON-SEA

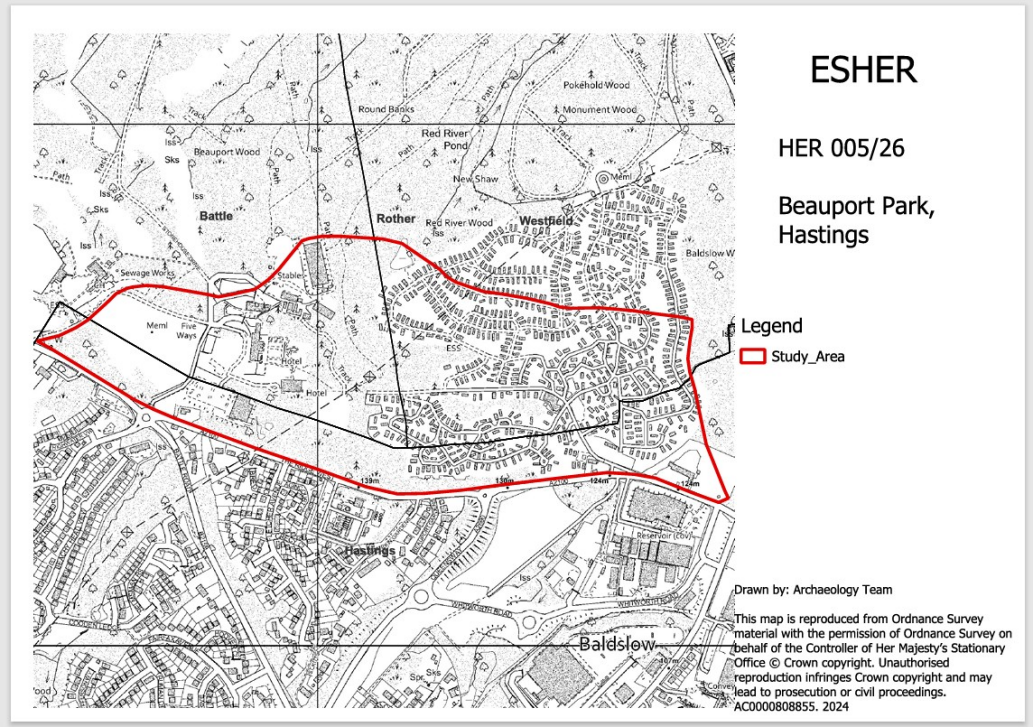


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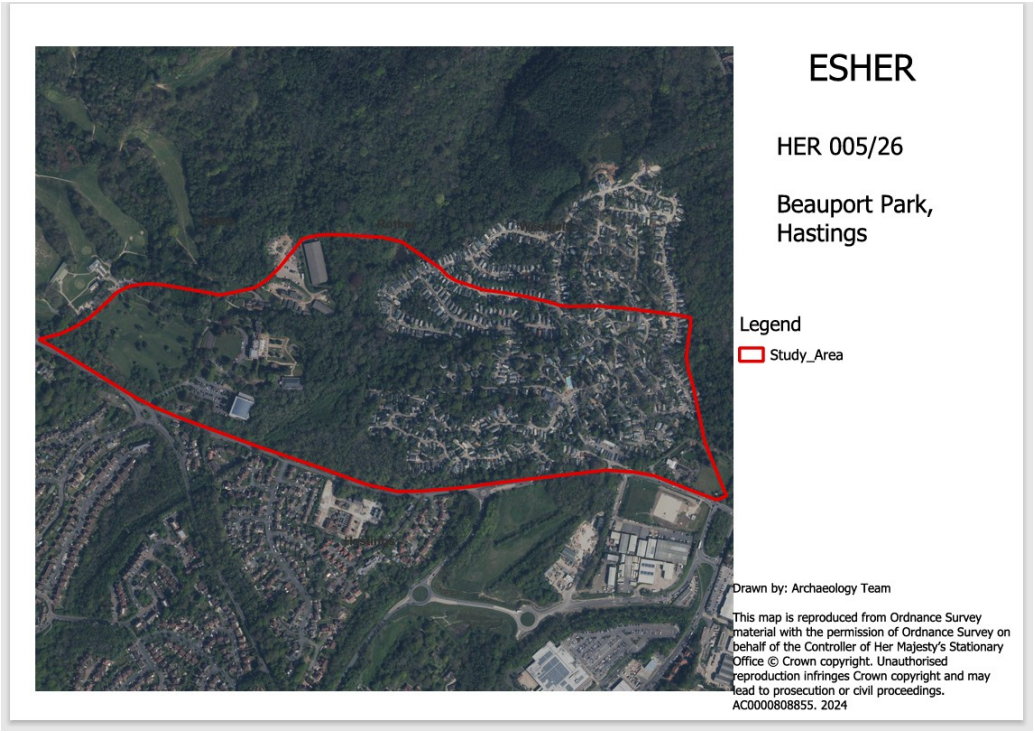


2026

SITE BOUNDARY (1)



SITE BOUNDARY (2)



INTRODUCTION

Background to the 'Parks and Gardens of the Sussex Coast' Project

Our project aim, to research and record the parks and gardens of the Sussex coast, began in 2013 and is nearing completion. Most of the sites recorded are now in public i.e. local authority ownership where their special historic development is not necessarily recognised and therefore conserved. We hope our reports will help improve knowledge and guide their future management.

The variety and period of sites is huge, from C19 and early C20 town squares, 'Old English' and Italianate-style gardens with ponds, pergolas and seating, gardens with salt-resistant traditional bedding and C21 ecological planting, to large parks which began life as farmland owned by influential local families and aristocracy and provided the recreation and leisure space for new urban development.

The administrative areas covered are: Worthing and Adur jointly-run DC, Arun DC, Brighton and Hove City Council, Eastbourne and Lewes jointly-run DC, Rother DC and Hastings Borough. Only Brighton and Hove and Hastings hold a list of local heritage assets (see Historic England's guidance for a definition of local heritage assets and how to identify and protect them . https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/local-heritage-listing-advice-note-7/)

Brighton and Hove City Council's list is the most comprehensive (https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/planning/heritage/local-list-heritage-assets) so our project has not addressed their sites although we may select a few of the more major ones for a deeper level of research in the future.

Content

All research – in local and national archives and on site – is undertaken by a team of volunteers who have received training from professionals expert in appraising designed landscapes who have worked extensively for English Heritage (now Historic England) on sites on its National Heritage List for England. All reports are peer-reviewed.

Each report comprises the following:

- A site boundary map drawn on the current Ordnance Survey map.

- The area within the boundary represents the area of designed historic interest; it does not necessarily include all surviving elements of the historical landscape design, which may be fragmented. It takes no account of current ownership.
- A current aerial photograph with the boundary shown.
- An overview and statement of significance based on the guidance set out in the *National Policy Planning Framework* – the government's guidance for local planning authorities in discharging their planning responsibilities.
- A written description, derived from documentary research and a visual site survey, the format following that used by Historic England for sites on the national *Register of Parks & Gardens of special historic interest* 2nd edn.

Supporters and Acknowledgements:

The Trust would like to thank the volunteers, owners, local authority staff (especially the East and West Sussex Historic Environment Records) and the many Friends groups who have participated in this project and given time and effort to completing this challenging task.
Further information is available from: www.sussexgardenstrust.org.uk

BEAUPORT PARK

COUNTY East Sussex

ESCC HER REF 137754

DISTRICT St Leonards-on-Sea

OS GRID REF TQ788 137

OVERVIEW

Beauport Park is a wooded estate of approximately 800 acres in an elevated area sheltering Hastings from the north and east lying within the boundaries of Battle, Rother and Westfield, East Sussex. The site has a diverse history dating back to at least Roman times but became a designated landscape from 1752 when Brigadier General Sir James Murray bought land to develop a house and estate. The estate is currently divided into several distinct areas and ownerships comprising Bannatyne's Spa Hotel, Beauport Holiday Park, a riding school, a driving range and golf course of 186 acres, 9-Hole Pitch 'n' Putt and 164 acres of surrounding woodland.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Beauport Park held some rare and unusual trees brought back from overseas during the 19th century. These have been researched and recorded, but many were destroyed through disease and/or cut down. The site contains the Lady Mary Montgomerie Monument of around 1855 (listed grade II), a neo-classical commemorative monument erected by her husband, Sir Charles Montolieu Lamb, who served as a Royal Equerry and as Sheriff of Sussex 1829-30. There is also evidence of the third largest iron works in the Roman Empire and a Roman bathhouse (Scheduled Ancient Monument at Risk).

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The history of what became, from the mid C18, known as Beauport Park, can be traced back to Roman times, evidenced by discovery of an extensive series of ironworks and a Roman bathhouse (Thornton, p. 292). The early eighteenth-century house on the estate was rebuilt from 1762 by Brigadier General Sir James Murray (1721-94), second in command to General Wolfe, who named the site Beauport Park after a village near

Quebec, Canada, where he served (Historical Hastings). Murray was away from Beauport Park during appointments in Quebec and Minorca, but retired there 1782, planting rare and unusual trees and adding to his landholding (HAARG Journal Summer 2003).

Murray died on 18th June 1794, when the Beauport estate was bought by Sir James Bland Burges, although Murray's eldest son, James Patrick Murray, and his wife Elizabeth remained as tenants until 1804. The Estate Plan of Beauport of 1804 (Hastings Library) using field names matched with the Westfield Tithe Award of 1841 and subsequently plotted by a London cartographer, John Newton, was presumably executed on behalf of the new owners (see ESRO-ACC 5046). The plan shows a walled garden and a kitchen garden to the east of the house and an extensive lawn and plantations on its west. The remainder of the estate of 450 acres further west and to the north of the house is shown as woodland and tenant fields. In response to a legacy from John Lamb, Burges and his son Charles Montolieu both changed their name to Lamb by Royal Licence in 1821. An ionic temple (listed grade II) was erected in the woods in memory of Sir James's first wife but has since fallen into neglect.

Sir Charles Lamb made alterations to the house (Ross, p. 51) and planted further trees in the park with the aim that every species that would grow in Britain's climate would be represented. *The Gardener' Magazine* and *Register of Rural and Domestic Improvement* (1842) extolled the grounds as 'delightfully bold and commanding fine views of the sea with single specimens of exotic trees mixed with native ones and strong growing climbers growing through'. When Charles Lamb died on 21st March 1860, having been predeceased by his son, Charles James Saville Mongomerie Lamb, in November 1856, his heir as the 3rd Baronet was the infant Archibald Lamb (Will dated 1st February 1860 and proved on 3rd April). Until Archibald reached his majority in 1879, the estate was leased to Thomas Brassey, the railway engineer, and then his son, also Thomas. He and his wife lived at Beauport Park from 1860 to 1870, during which time they travelled extensively and brought back plants from all parts of the world, including India, Australia, the Americas, the West Indies and the Mediterranean. A 1911 record of trees on the estate includes oak, beech, wellingtonias, araucarias (1826), *Pinus Insignis* (1830), *Sequoia Sempervirens* (90 ft high) and monkey puzzle trees (Bloomfield); and a 1913 publication described Beauport Park as having one of Britain's 'outstanding collections of trees of all kinds' (Elwes and Henry).

Archibald Lamb lived at Beauport House from 1870 until he died in 1921. The 6" OS Map of 1873 shows an extensive wooded area with winding footpaths to the west of the house on the site of the earlier lawn with a maze and tilting ground further west. On the house's east front are terraces with gardens, including four formally laid out conifers. The 1st edition OS map of 1875 also shows ornamental grounds including orchards,

kitchen gardens and a walled garden The 2nd Edition OS map of 1897 shows two lodges at Beauport: the Hundred Inn, later converted into the East Lodge; and Battle Lodge, built in Greek Doric style, which was inside the Hastings Road entrance. After Lamb's death the estate was inherited by the son of his sister Mary, John Singleton, and the contents of the house were disposed of by auction. The house was gutted by a fire in 1923 but rebuilt in 1926 in neo-Georgian style, but without the servants' quarters. The 4th Edition OS map of 1930 shows the smaller house with terraced gardens on the east front still planted with trees and shrubs in lawn. By 1938, the house, still the property of John Singleton, was being run as Beauport Park Hotel. A new lodge is shown at the entrance road from the B2093 to the south of the house.

In 1939 Canadians were stationed in the house, which become an officers' club and HQ as part of a secret resistance plan, while the park was a testing ground for Canadian mortars. The house continued as a hotel after the war, and a caravan park occupied part of the estate during the 1940s and 1950s (OS revised edn). In 1964, the hotel was purchased by Miles and Gill Anderson, the building extended, the gardens reduced and a golf course developed (1967). In 1969, the estate was owned by a Mark Singleton, from whom, in 1973, Hastings Borough purchased part of Beauport Park for £1,576,000, 60 acres of which (valued at £485,000) was intended for town expansion. In 1983, the hotel was bought by Ken Melsom, David Robinson, Helena Melsom and Stephen Bayes, who made renovations in 1999, including adding a conservatory to the north garden front. In 2005, Bannatyne Health Club opened in the grounds (located to the south-east of the hotel) and subsequently took over the hotel in 2007. Plans to build a 20-room extension, car park and conference suite to the hotel were approved in 2008.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Location, Area, Boundaries, Landform, Setting

Beauport Park is situated outside Hastings on the western end of a ridge of hills and within Westfield, Battle and Hollington cusps lying between the boundaries of the A21 and A2100 at a height of 400 metres at the A2100 road. It is now 800 acres in total and triangular in size. A boundary stone wall about 5-6 feet high (in reasonable condition) runs between the west and east entrances to the hotel on the A2100, but otherwise there is no visible boundary other than woodland.

Entrances and Approaches

The main entrance to the hotel (now extended on its east side) is along Stonehouse Drive, which runs northwards from a roundabout where the B2159 joins the A2100, to the hotel car park and entrance to the Montgomerie Conference Suite. Further west

from the main entrance, a second drive from the site of the former west lodge, leads north-east to the golf club building, golf course and driving range, the pitch 'n' putt and the riding stables. The entrance to the holiday park is further east on the A2100, where the east lodge (now a private residence) is located. All drives are poorly maintained and bordered by neglected trees and shrubs.

Garden

Beyond the car parking area on the hotel's west entrance front is a large lawn bordered by mature trees with a tennis court. A path leads east from the entrance front to the modern Montgomerie Suite on the hotel's south side, the gardens there also laid to lawn with mature trees and shrubs. On the east garden front are three ornate conservatories set on a gravelled terrace, below which is a further terrace laid out formally with mature yews on lawn, as shown on earlier maps. A sunken garden (date unknown) is below. Some original statues and urns (in poor condition) remain in the garden, as seen in earlier photographs.

Most of the estate is still woodland and some trees planted by James Murray and later owners can be found on the golf course but have not been managed due to limited staff resources. The ionic temple to Lady Mary Montgomerie is situated (1855, listed building grade II) within the 250 acres of the Beauport Holiday Park, which is laid out with private holiday homes, swimming pools, restaurants etc within a wooded landscape.

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Research: Carol Parham	**Completed:** January 2021	**Editor:** Virginia Hinze & Barbara Simms