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The Gardens and Landscape of Rothamsted Manor - an Historical Report - Volume 2 - Appendices and Figures

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Rothamsted Research

Rothamsted Research (2001) *Appendix E Suggestions for Further Research ;* The Gardens And Landscape Of Rothamsted Manor - An Historical Report - Volume 2 - Appendices And Figures, pp 32 - 32

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APPENDIX E

Suggestions for further research

1. The changes carried out by Sir John Bennet-Lawes in the mid 19th Century and by Sir Charles Lawes-Wittewronge in the early 20th Century are likely to be the most interesting and fruitful subjects for future research, and a reasonable quantity of material from these periods is probably still in existence. It is likely that the illustrious career of Sir John Bennet-Lawes helped to ensure the preservation of his papers. Boalch's history certainly had access to sources beyond those held at HALS. A good place to start would be with enquiries to the descendants of Sir Charles Lawes-Wittewronge. As an adjunct to this it would be interesting to know what effect, if any, the research in the estate had on the gardens and their cultivation.
2. There is a faint chance that papers concerning Rothamsted prior to 1623 survive with Bardolph family papers in another archive, but if this were the case it might be expected that antiquarians would have tracked them down long ago. It is in any case unlikely that such papers would reveal much of use in the present cause.
3. It is possible that a more thorough study of Sir John Wittewronge's accounts and records may reveal something of interest. In particular, the building accounts of 1647-1653 might be analysed to further ascertain their relevance, if any, to the construction of garden features. Other accounts include references to a considerable amount of hedging, and it may be possible to trace the creation of the field boundaries
4. A branch of the Wittewronge family was at Stantonbury in Buckinghamshire, which Sir John Wittewronge bought in 1663, and there may be further papers in that County Record Office. There may also have been other branches or family members elsewhere. Boalch refers to a mount at Stantonbury, and it would be interesting if this dated from the time of Sir John's building works there during the 1660's.
5. Information on the gardens in the 1700's might be found in the papers of the lessees mentioned in Appendix A.
6. Research on the physical fabric at Rothamsted might include archaeological studies of the footings below the south lawn, or investigations of any remains of garden walls under the western parterres. More accurate expert dating of the garden walls, gates and other features would be useful. It may be possible to find features in the woodland such as gravel paths or ditches. A survey of mature trees (and stumps) to establish species, age and location might be helpful to trace the history and intention of the planting and may reveal otherwise obscure or fragmentary formal features such as early avenues. It would also be interesting to know the age of the topiary yews, and the origin of the stone urns, seats and other ornamental features.
7. It would be possible to undertake an analysis of the architectural history of the house and outbuildings in respect of their relationship with the gardens and the wider estate.
8. There are other features of the Rothamsted landscape on which further historical research may be undertaken. These include the lodges, the design of the research campus itself and its associated technical requirements, such as greenhouses, and also the public 'Rothamsted Park' north of the research site, which serves the town of Harpenden. There may even be aspects of the landscape of the experimental fields that are worthy of attention.