

# Warnford Park

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Today I would like to give you a quick canter through Warnford Park, the house, people and gardens. I'll try to give you a little introduction to the people and the style in which they lived.

"Where is Warnford Park?" I hear you ask. Well, it lies in the heart of the Meon Valley and straddles the river, which runs north to south. To the west, you have the land rising up to Beacon Hill, and it extends the other way over the gently rolling hills to Old Winchester Hill. It nestles in the centre of the valley, and it's an 18th-century landscape park and pleasure grounds designed as the setting for a fine country house by, of course, Capability Brown.

What are the origins of Warnford Park? Well, here we have to go back into the mists of time. Warnford, per se, as East Meon and all the areas around here, has been inhabited right through from Paleolithic times to nowadays, but not as villages as we know them. They would have been isolated hamlets.

Our history of Warnford Park really starts in Anglo-Saxon England. Prior to the 7th or 8th century, you had what were called ard ploughs, basically posh sticks, which scraped the surface; and you had to scrape the surface in two directions. You couldn't plough much land in a day. It was at that point that the true mouldboard plough, which turns over the soil, came to be. Really, you could plough much more land with a single plough. You could have much bigger fields. It did, though, require much better horses or oxen to pull it!

A true plough was expensive. It needed a rich man to afford it. More fields equals more labour needed. And it all congregated together. As the plough developed, more land was put in cultivation. The villagers nucleated and clustered around a manor house, whose owner was the man who could afford the ploughs. Thus it was in the 8th century, you started forming the true English village: a manor house,

village houses, and a church, with three or four open fields around it, which were farmed in common.

We know that Warnford Park existed in Anglo-Saxon times, from recorded history. It's important to know, Warnford Park as it exists now was actually two separate manorial estates. Warnford, which is the low-lying region around Warnford Village, and Upwarnford, which is basically all the hilly bits, apart from Beacon Hill. From very early they were separate estates.

The Warnford estate, we know, was owned by Wulfric Cepe or 'Wulfric the Merchant', in 1053. He was quite a rich man and owned a number of estates around Hampshire. Earl Brygwyn had inherited Upwarnford at the start of the 11th century and gifted it to Hyde Abbey in Winchester. Its worth knowing that that's only when we've got the written evidence for the estate, it would have been considerably earlier in origin.

Surrounding farms and settlements also existed at a very early date, the main ones of Warnford are Riversdown at 961 and Wheely Farm at 1045. Sadly, the earliest recorded dates for Bere Farm and Peake Farm are from the 1200s and 1311, much later. But that's only the documentary evidence. There's a wonderful old map of Bere Farm, which indicates the likelihood that it actually was a Roman estate, because of the arrangement of the fields and its boundary. But both would have also certainly been Anglo-Saxon.

Where would you have lived in Anglo-Saxon times if you were a landowner of Warnford? Well, thanks to all the archaeology going on nowadays, we have a good idea from similar estates of similar sizes.



Here on the left, you have a typical manorial hall - a longhouse arrangement where you have a central porch and tiny windows, it's basically wood wattle and daub, a wood shingle roof. The central raised roof section is really the chimney-type arrangement – with vents to allow the open fire to escape. You can see inside on the right, think Viking long hall, it's just one open area for living, eating, drinking, everything.

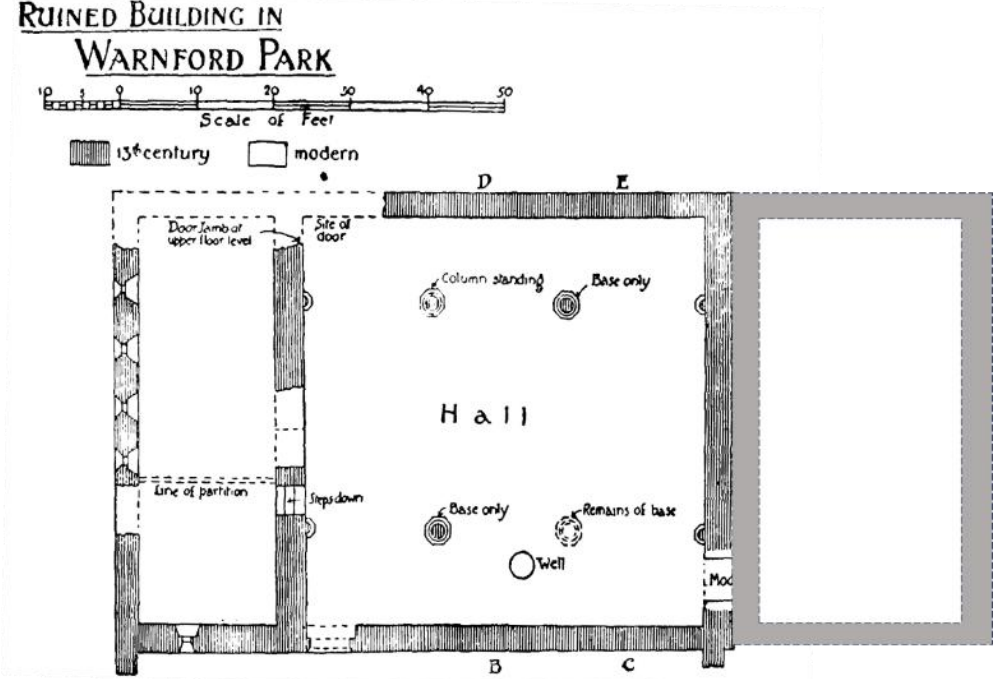
It's important to realise this hall would not have been on its own, it would have been part of a farm system. You would have had separate kitchens, well, they burnt down too often to ever be in the same building, stables, barns, etc., and of course, at this time, a church, which was mandatory!

But it's really only in Norman times where Warnford Park truly emerges from the mists. It was then that Warnford Park was granted to the de Port family, straight after the Norman Conquest. They were one of the big landowners in Hampshire and they had 55 estates centred on Old Basing and Basing Castle.

In the 12<sup>th</sup> century Adam de Port undertook major renovations in Warnford Park. He rebuilt the church and then built a stone manorial hall, St John's House, in 1210 as a fitting residence for when he visited, the ruins of which are still there tucked behind the church. Both were very close to the Old Road, the precursor of the A32, which at the time ran to the east of the River Meon, very close to the church and St John's House. As was the norm, the village would have been around the church and the manor house, not where it is now. Why it moved is for a little bit later. And it wasn't voluntary, by the way!

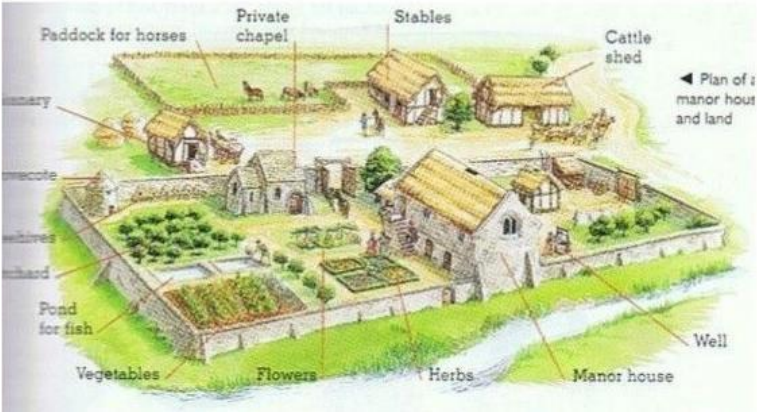


Here is the stone manorial hall of Warnford Park. On the left is St John's House from 1789, and here is a photograph from today. I will show you in a minute what it is.



Here you can see the plan of St Johns House. You have the main hall in the centre where you lived, ate, and slept. On the western (left) side, you have the pantry and the buttery, which isn't to store butter, I'm sorry, it's to store beer barrels and wine. And the buttery and pantry was the solar, which was the Lord's private living room.

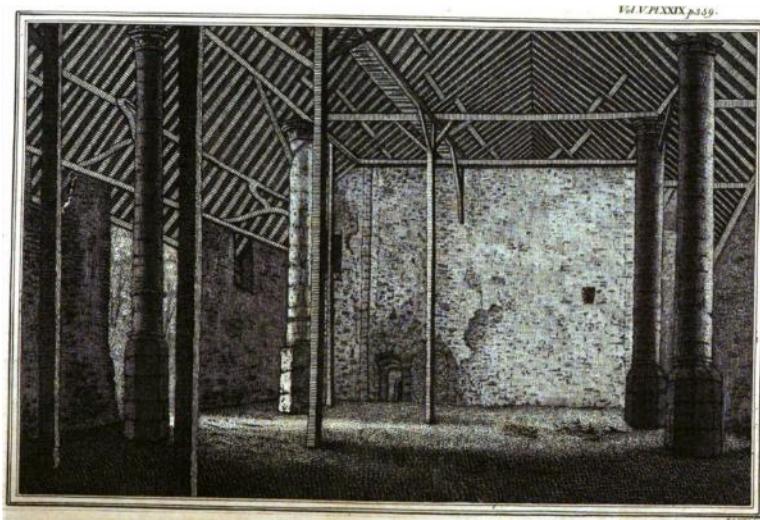
There are a couple of very similar manor houses around the country. From these buildings, although it does not exist today it is likely that the Lord of the Manor would have had his private apartment on the east (right) side. We don't know that for certain, but it is likely. He certainly wouldn't have slept with the hoi polloi in the Great Hall!



As I said, the manorial hall was all part of a grand manorial system. An example is shown here. You have the manor house, obviously a water source, a flower garden, and a vegetable garden. A herb garden also existed, very important, as that was your pharmacy! Also shown is a private chapel that would have been Warnford Church as it is now. A Dovecote, really important, providing fertiliser for the fields, mainly. And at the top, stables, cattle sheds, beehives. It's a full manorial system to provide food and everything you could ever need.

Interestingly, this old house has never seriously been updated over the years. It stayed much as it did from the 12th and 13th centuries, right the way through to Elizabethan times. I don't know why, but it must have been really far below the domestic Tudor standard by then. I mean, we've seen Hampton Court and similar houses from then, and it's a little bit downmarket from that, you have to admit!

The House and Park passed down through the family until mid-Elizabethan times. In 1577 it was sold to a rising star in the civil service, William Neale, Auditor of the Exchequer, which is one down from the Chancellor of The Exchequer. This was quite a lucrative post because, of course, you took your 10% commission on everything that passed through your office!



They did indeed believe the old manorial hall was far below their standards and built a new mansion in the modern style in a new location not far from the old hall. But they were frugal and here you can see the old hall from 1779, and this old house was still extant at the time. It was a barn, but it was still available and usable.

Why they bought Warnford Park, I still don't quite know, because it needed quite a lot of work. A fixer-upper, isn't that the modern expression? A good estate agent, that's all I can think of!. They spent quite a lot of money, and they quickly upgraded the park to the style they thought they deserved. They built a new house in the modern style of the time, in a new location, completely separate from the old one.



And it really must have been quite something at the time because we know, in 1665, Warnford Park had 20 fireplaces. That was when there was a tax put on fireplaces. As an example, if you had 6 fireplaces, it meant you were gentry. The rectory at Warnford only had 5. The next building with the most fireplaces actually had 8, but that was the George & Falcon Inn, which was slightly cheating.

This is what we believe is the old Neale house, which survived all the way through to the demolition of the Mansion in 1956. I'll show you more of the context later, but it was on the western edge of the Mansion.

Here we can start to talk about the manorial gardens. Its at this time they start to emerge from the mists. Given his rank, William Neale would have had a garden in the latest style, and at the time this included a knot garden and a herb garden. As I said earlier, herbs were very important and had a number of uses. You placed them around the place to add a nice scent to cover odours at the time: lavender, marjoram, basil, etc. Herbs were grown for the kitchen: saffron, oregano, rosemary, tarragon. Healing and medicinal herbs were also very important: sweet woodruff, lavender again, rosemary, borage.

He did also, though, more importantly, have a hop garden where the kitchen garden is now, and I'll show you that later. He must have loved his beer!



This is what I mean by a knot garden. This is a typical Tudor layout. It's low box hedging with different coloured gravel in geometric patterns and the hedging is in geometric style. Here they've got some small trees to counterpoint it.

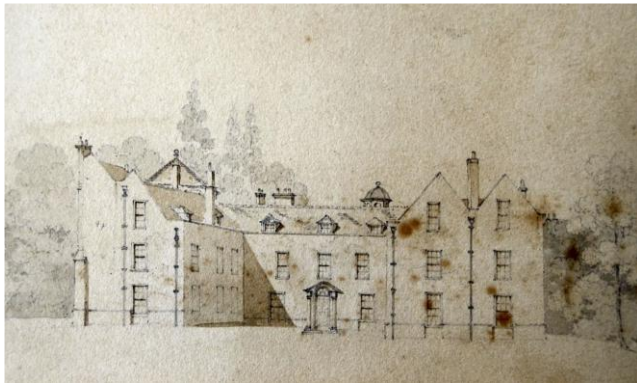
Fame at last for Warnford Park! Queen Elizabeth came to stay in 1591. She regularly took a holiday in late summer, July to August, maybe to September, at least six weeks out in the country. There were several reasons for this. 1) the town smelled a bit, especially in the high heat of summer. 2) that's when the diseases came. 3) she could have a look around at all her aristocratic friends and enemies and work out who was still a friend and who was an enemy and keep an eye on them. It was a regular routine for the Queen.

In this year, she toured Surrey, West Sussex and Hampshire. They drove around 20 miles a day, stopping from house to house, and maybe they stayed for up to a week in your house. When I say Queen Elizabeth, I mean all of her court as well, maybe 1,000 people in total, with all the courtiers and their servants. And you were expected to entertain royally. You paid for it yourself, of course. It bankrupted a few people, doing this. Thank God, she only stayed for one night in Warnford Park. I bet they were really grateful!

The Neale House wasn't much lived in after 1646, and the family's time there came to an end in 1678 when it was sold. And indeed, it was noted as being waste and the house was untenanted then.

Why was it sold? Well, Thomas Neale, the great-grandson of the original purchaser William, had a brewery business and decided he could make more money by watering the beer. As you can imagine, that didn't go down well with the customers, and he lost a lot of money and was forced to sell the estate. He seemed to be a little bit of an East End wideboy.

The house passed through a number of hands over the next 100 years, not really staying in any one hand, until 1754, when the 11th Earl of Clanricarde purchased it. They'd been tenants there for a number of years and wanted a country house in England. They were great Anglo-Irish nobility basically owned half of Galway, about 70,000 acres!



Again, you can see a trend here. They felt the house was slightly beneath them, so they built a fine Georgian-style mansion in a symmetrical style when it was originally built. This view is from a hand-drawn postcard from 1819, a visitor who was staying there for a few days sent a, "Loving it here, wish you were here, all is fine," postcard.

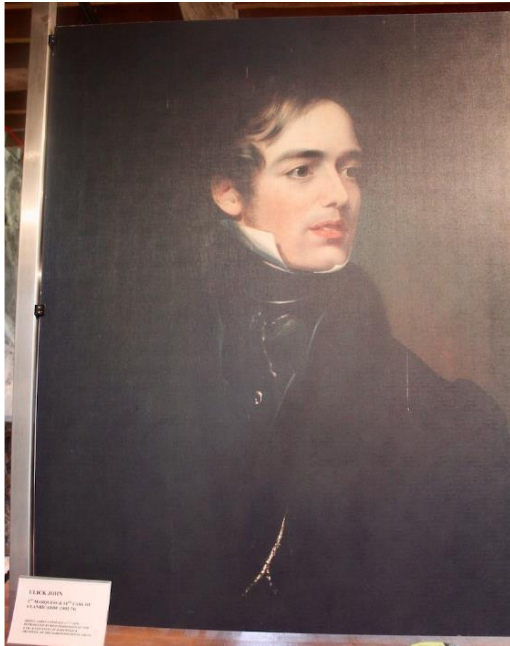
Here we're looking south at the mansion. You can see the main entrance centrally on the north side. Take note of this little turreted tower here. On the west (right) side you have a projecting wing. It would have been identical originally on the east (left) side. Later on, in about 1780 to 90, when they redeveloped the parkland, they changed the mansion to this, modifying the east wing to add in a three-storey tower with a fine Venetian window so you could peruse the parkland and show it off.



And, of course, they lived in luxury now. They had their own icehouse, built in the late 18th century. What is an icehouse? Well, basically, it's a huge pit in the ground lined in brick and covered in a brick dome and lots of earth. That is the Warnford Park one, the entrance to it, which still exists. It's about a 15-to-20-feet-deep pit.

What the gardeners would do in late winter, as part of their job, any time it froze decently was to get onto the lake, chop up the ice, shove it in the icehouse, and cover it in straw, and it would last for at least 18 months in there. So, yes, they could have their ice creams. Very important too! And, again, getting a trend here, but "Show one over on the neighbours."

We now come on to Ulick de Burgh. He was the last of the Clanricardes in the estate, and he renamed it in the romantic style as Sanfroy, with the house called Belmont, but sold it in 1826. Why? Well, the story is that he was one of those inveterate Georgian gamblers. When he married in 1826, his father-in-law covered up the scandal. But it's thought that he was forced to sell it by his father-in-law to cover the debt.



This is him on the left, from close to that time. Yes, he does look like a posh Georgian gambler! On the right here is Lady Hester Amelia de Burgh, she is the wife of the first owner. More of her anon!

What does the garden look like at this time? Well, we know because it exists today. At this time, they remodelled the park using Lancelot 'Capability' Brown. They had initial discussions with him and a survey in 1773. The main layout as we know it was completed by 1782. And yes, Lady Hester would have been involved extensively in laying it all out.

What made it all possible was the diversion of the main road, now A32, from the position where it was to the east of the river to its current alignment, due to rebuilding it as a turnpike, as a toll road. Local history attributes this move to Lady Hester wanting more privacy.

The course of the new road swept to the west around Warnford Park, isolating it from passing gaze. The story goes that she sniffed one day and said, "Move these peons. I don't want to see them anymore." And so all the houses around the church were demolished and the village set up where it is now. I mean, they owned all of it anyway.

The garden was landscaped by Capability Brown. He did nothing by halves! He diverted the river as it entered the park, dug that huge lake, rearranged all the river's

exit from the park by a series of sluices, planted lots of trees to provide perimeter shelter belts, clumps of trees in the north eastern parts, and a pleasure garden and woodland grove south of the mansion and the church. He also created key views and sightlines, both to local cottages and to the distant points: Pinks Hill, Beacon Hill, etc.

Importantly for us they created the Pleasure Garden and the Pleasure Garden Walk, which is now the Snowdrops Walk. You walk past the church, through the old hall, which, yes I'm sorry, he did knock it down to make a ruin out of it, because you had to have a ruin if you were Capability Brown.

Past a Memento Mori bridge, a bridge for the dead, through a woodland walk, and there was a woodland grove in a glade in the centre of the woodland where there was a hermitage and a hermit. Sadly, it was a rather poor waxwork dummy, but we gloss over that. And there's a formal walkway on the south side of the park with a nice little summerhouse, just a small summerhouse in the centre of it, which is now a fine three-bedroom house. I'll show you more of that and the gardens as we go on.

The 19th century beckons and Warnford Park changes hands many times, each owner leaving his mark on the house and gardens. First, there was William Abbott, Edward Tunno, and then, and more of these two, Edward and Adelaide Sartoris.

By 1833, that Georgian mansion we saw had been extensively remodelled and the main entrance moved completely to the opposite side of the house, to the south side. The carriageway was remodelled and went under an arched gateway into a courtyard. The north facade between the two projecting wings of the house was extended, putting in some much-needed fancy rooms, and the whole house was, sort of, pushed-up a bit more and the roof remodelled, looking much closer in appearance to how it did at the end of its life.



And we know what it looks like because it was recorded. This is from the northeast looking slightly southwest and you can see a fine top hatted gentry fishing in the lake there, slightly out of place but we don't talk about that! Poetic licence you know. You can see here the same two projecting wings you saw earlier, and this is that north facade. And here now you're starting to see the east side of the house with the three-storey tower with the triangular roof and the Venetian window.



Here you can see a plan of the estate in 1837 from the Tithe Map of the time. As you can see here, the A32, the road to Old Winchester Hill, Warnford Village at the top there, and the parkland with the river and the lake extending down.

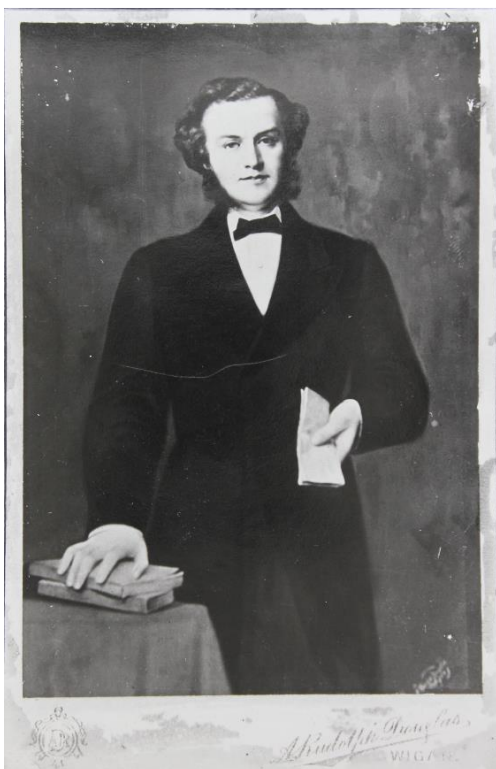
We know what the house was like, at least for the main rooms, because along with that previous drawing from 1833, the author describes some of the main rooms. There is an ionic porch opening up into a 40x21 foot hall, a broad staircase reaching up to the upper floors and principal apartments, you had a drawing room of 27x23 feet, a 31x20 foot dining room, and the library was 33x21 feet. And some rather nice paintings there with Rubens, and a few others. And it is noted that the offices were on the west side of the entrance court, i.e. the old Neale Building.

A little digression about the Sartoris, the residents in the 1860s. This was Edward and Adelaide Sartoris. They inherited it from the previous owner and previously lived in Westbury House, of which they were tenants for many years. The Sartoris family was very colourful. Adelaide was from one of the most illustrious theatrical families of the time, the Kembles, and she was one of the greatest opera singers of her era, seen for several seasons until 1840 when she married. At the Royal Opera House, of course!

She was indeed a great hostess and really enjoyed her house and garden parties. A friend of many of the great artistic, literary, and musical figures of the age including Browning, Lord Tennyson, Leighton, and Chopin. Well, she liked that sort of thing!



And here she is. On the right is her singing in the 1840s. And that's her on the right quite a lot later. And I'm sorry to have to say, but those aren't all hoops. She put on a little bit of weight by then.



Moving on from the Sartoris. Times change. In 1867, the House was bought by Henry Woods and inherited by his son. Who was Henry Woods? Well, victorian nouveau riche from Wigan, a mill owner, cotton manufacturer, colliery owner, and horror of horrors in hampshire, a Liberal Party politician. And this is him from slightly earlier.

We can start to see now who else lived on the estate at the time from the census of 1881. Henry Woods, his wife and his two daughters were living in the mansion on that day in the house. That's it, just four people. Bear that in mind.

Taking a deep breath, they had a governess, a butler, a cook, housekeeper, two lady's maids, four housemaids, a kitchen maid and a scullery maid, and two footmen, and that's just the interior staff. Then you have two coachmen, two stable boys, a head gardener and four other gardeners, and that excludes farm workers or labourers and the gamekeepers. That's quite a lot of people looking after the Woods!

A little bit of a slight change of tune. How would they have lived? How would you have lived in those days as a guest? Well, these are all real menus from equivalent houses. We don't have any menus from Warnford Park, but we do have from a large number of other similar estates. We know Adelaide loved country house parties. She would have had them often.

Here is what you would have had for breakfast in 1887. You had a choice, and you could have had all of them if you liked. Hot mackerel, rabbit curry, beef fillet, partridges, poached eggs and ham. Of course, there were also cold platters of beef, ham, tongue, turkey, pate de foie gras, pheasants, brawn, and game pie, with fruit, toast, rolls, etc., tea, coffee or hot cocoa. And if it was hunting you were doing, there would have been beer or more likely cherry brandy to warm you up for the trip. Now, that's a proper breakfast to set you up for the day!

Dinner, of course, was the most important meal of the day and was very, very formal, I'm afraid. Thankfully, this is beyond 1840, so you will have had Russian service. As we know today, you get a starter served to you, and taken away, a main course served to you, and taken away, and dessert served to you, and taken away. Before that time, it would have been French service where everything came onto the table at once. Soup, dessert, roast, everything, and got cold before you could get to it.

So what, again, is a typical menu of the time, this is from 1892. Soup, beef consommé. A fish course, which was salmon in hollandaise sauce. Entrée, goose liver pate in pastry, or a 4oz tenderloin beefsteak with truffles. What's termed a

relevé, which is roast, a roast saddle of mutton or a spring chicken Neapolitan. A roast course, as this was autumn so a grouse or a pheasant. Entremets, which seemed to spread from vegetables through to desserts, we had cauliflower cheese, a chocolate and vanilla slice, then iced strawberry soufflé. To finish, anchovy rissoles.

But I'm sorry to have to disappoint all of you fine ladies, and I'm assured you're all fine ladies here in East Meon, you would have quite often starved because you were expected to eat delicately, sparrow-like at your food. Certain foods were off-limits to women. You wouldn't have had the pâté, I'm sorry. No, no, no. And when I say soup, beef consommé, I mean one small ladle and small portions of everything.

It's noted that you really did want to stock up heavily on your breakfast because you would have starved in the evening. But at least you wouldn't have been sober. Fine dry white wine with the soup and fish or a sherry or marsala. With the relevé and entree, well, Bordeaux or burgundy, a nice red.

With the cold entrées, a dry white wine. With the roast, Bordeaux or, and this is what I want to bring back, champagne. With the entremets, only champagne, and with the dessert, port, Tokay, etc., some sort of sweet wine. So you wouldn't have minded starving.

We move on to the later 19th century. Henry Woods finished the house in its current form. He added a library, and a conservatory onto the east wing, and completely re-faced the east, north, and west facades of the whole house to make it all look symmetrical, it had bay windows, very Victorian. I think it looks hideously ugly, but who am I to say?

He also finished off the gardens, adding a formal sunken Italian garden to the east of the house, a walled kitchen garden over the hermitage and extensive glasshouses. The entire north wall of the kitchen garden had a glasshouse on its southern-facing side.

It was, of course, heated, and by heated, I mean there were fireplaces in the wall every so often. That was the gardeners' duty to keep the fireplaces going, to warm the entire wall as a radiator, with coke. And service buildings behind its north wall, which exist today.



Here is the estate from 1870. To orient you, left is north. So you've got the river coming in on the left, and then there's the lake with an island there.

We now move on to a slightly sadder point, the house in the 20th century. Between 1935 to 1938, Warnford Park was sold to the Chester family, and it was taken for war use. The Canadians used it, I believe, and the land was used as a naval depot as well. It was much battered-about, with dry rot, wet rot, etc., you name it. And in 1956, following a long period of decline, the house was demolished.



A little bit of a tour of the house. I have an extensive set of photographs. I've just put a few in here. Here you can see the entrance archway on the end of the western house wing. This is the corner of the Neale building.



Here is the new mansion, looking north to the new entrance. And, yes, there's that same tower with the domed roof from the 1819 image, which is has a clock, as we can see.



This is looking in entirely the opposite direction, looking from the northwest. You can see here the west facade and the north facade, and it's all been rendered, all the windows look the same, with typical Victorian bay windows added. It looks pretty boring.



We've moved around to the east wing, here you can see the remains of that three-storey tower with the pyramid roof, the roof is gone but the rest is still there, and you've still got the big windows up there. And here you can see it from further back, and you can start to see the Italian sunken garden.



We have a few photos of the interior, this is actually from the sales brochure of 1935. This is the music room, and I would point out it's got electric lights. They pumped water from a water wheel from the River Meon up into a cistern in the roof and it was continually pumped, so as it filled up the cistern, it drained through a DC generator which charged up the battery systems. So that was a DC lighting system.



It wasn't everywhere because this is the library, and you can see there are candles here and no electric lights. A rather large, rather dark library, but anyway.



And here, I think one of the nicer rooms, the drawing room. Some nice, big mirrors to give you a bit of space. A small fireplace to heat the whole room. But actually, Woods put in central heating. It had a Victorian heating system and coke-fired boiler

with large pipes circulating. It probably didn't work very well but at least they tried!  
These houses are all notoriously cold.



Let's do a tour of the gardens. This is actually a photo from that fine Venetian window looking east into the Italian sunken garden. Shrubs, all on the borders, surrounding it. This nice fountain here, some flower borders. And if you look carefully, all the flowerbeds are fenced off. They must have had a rabbit or hare problem! That's true in all of the photos I've seen.



Here is a close-up of the same fountain, the borders there. The lawns are all looking really great and you can see here how they did it. This is the rather large lawnmower, two people to pull it, one person to push it. Not a job I would want!



Moving on to some more modern photos. These are a few photos of the lake. This is looking south from the north end.



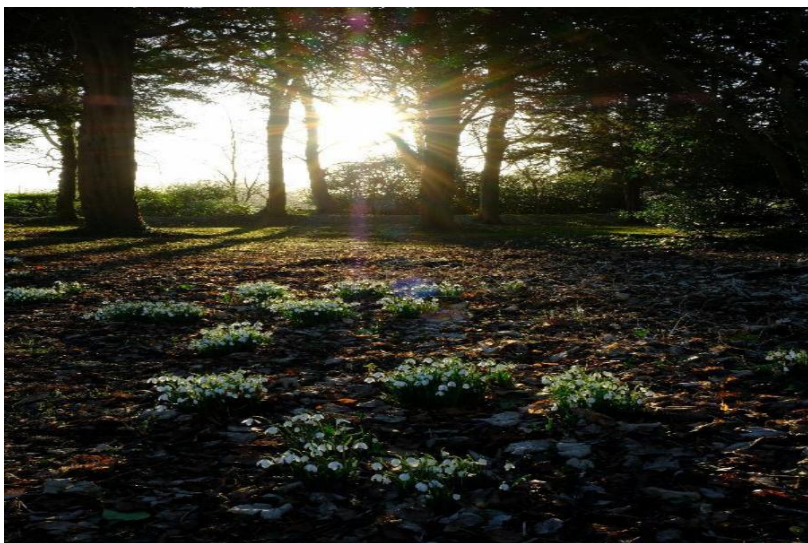
The northern end of the lake as the River Meon enters it, looking south in winter and yes, it's iced over. A good day to pick ice for the icehouse.



We talked about the Pleasure Grounds, and they lie to the south of the church and consist of a walk past St John's House through the woodland belt, and back via the formal raised terrace and the summerhouse.



And here you have what I was talking about as the Memento Mori bridge. It's not really a bridge to anywhere. This is one of a series of canals surrounding the whole site. It's a bit boggy there if you don't do something with the water. There's a wooden bridge over it now. So you can see how it looks through to the other side. And you can go through it if you wish.



A walk through the woodlands of the Pleasure Grounds, through to the formal raised terrace. It extends some 100 metres westwards from east to west, and halfway down the terrace, you pass the summerhouse.



Here it is, Strawberry Hill Gothic style, also known as the Dower House or Lady Mary's Bath House because it was originally a bathhouse as well as summer house. The basement is a bath, and it actually straddles one of the canals there feeding water. So the top bit would have been used as a summerhouse for parties or eating, to bathing in the bottom.



All good things must come to an end, and the house was much battered about and misused in the war and afterwards and was demolished in 1956.



And somewhere, the main floor on the ground floor still exists, black and white checkerwork marble. It is documented as having been “passed on” by the builders to somebody unknown.

That brings our story of Warnford Park and its mansion to an end.