

Timeline for Oatlands Palace, Oatlands House and Broadwater Lake

Date	Events
1537	King Henry VIII purchased Oatlands in January - a manor house belonging to William Reed/Rede a very wealthy London goldsmith. W Reed's son was a minor on his death and was put into the guardianship of Thomas Cromwell who persuaded the family to transfer the freehold to the Crown. Henry VIII was keen to create an ambitious scheme of properties and estates stretching from Hampton Court to Windsor in the west. Work began on upgrading Oatlands in June 1537.
1538-9	Jane Seymour had given birth to Prince Edward at Hampton Court in October 1537 but had died 2 weeks later. Henry was looking for wife no. 4 and wanted to create a Palace for this new Queen within the Honour of Hampton. Oatlands was designed round three courts, the most northerly containing the royal apartments, the Queen having the slightly larger side as it was her palace. Each set of royal apartments had a Privy Garden. There was a Prospect Tower approached by a broad spiral staircase which led to a completely glazed polygonal chamber in the sky. This had 360 degree views over the hunting grounds which allowed the ladies to watch the chase while the men in the field could use the crystal chamber, the gilded vanes and flags to guide them home.
1540	Oatlands was a Standing House - always ready for royal occupation. Henry married Anne of Cleves in January 1540 but divorced her in the July. He married Catherine Howard secretly at Oatlands 19 days later on 28th July.
1542	Catherine Howard was executed in February for adulterous treason.
1543	Henry married Katherine Parr in July. She spent time at Oatlands but Henry came rarely in his latter years, just for the occasional hunting trip.
1547 - 53	Edward VI used Nonsuch as a young Prince but as King more often Hampton Court, Oatlands and Greenwich.
1553 - 1558	Mary I spent time at Oatlands. After the end of her false pregnancy she retired to Oatlands from Hampton Court on 3rd August 1555.
1558 - 1603	Elizabeth I also spent time at Oatlands enjoying the hunting. In her later years, 1570s onwards, rails were erected at Oatlands in front of her bedchamber which faced into the Middle Court to stop people catching her in a state of undress.
1603 - 1625	James I gave Oatlands to his Queen, Anne of Denmark, in 1611 and it was used almost every summer for hunting trips. He stayed there in 1605 and enjoyed fishing in the Thames. Paul Somer painted a portrait of the Queen with Oatlands Palace in the background. She built a silkworm house and a vineyard. Anne employed Inigo Jones to design a gateway which features in the Somer portrait. For her, Inigo Jones modernised the interiors, throwing out the Tudor furniture and replacing the panelling with a more contemporary style.
1618	A Grand Reception was held at Oatlands for the Venetian ambassador, Piero Contarini on August 30th. The Company drank a toast to Princess Elizabeth who had married Frederick Count Palatine in 1613 and was soon to become Queen of Bohemia, 'The Winter Queen', in 1619. After Anne of Denmark died in March 1619 King James continued to use Oatlands for hunting trips and his bedroom was improved.
1625 - 1649	Charles I settled Oatlands on his Queen Henrietta Maria in 1625 on their marriage. She employed John Tradescant the Elder to design the gardens. She also used Inigo Jones who continued to transform the Tudor Palace interiors into more of a French style. When she had finished, Oatlands was the most modern and comfortable of all the royal country houses.

1640	Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester, the youngest son of Charles I was born at Oatlands Palace. He was known as Henry of Oatlands. One of the first imported Cedars of Lebanon was said to have been planted to mark his birth. (A great cedar between Lakeside Grange and Oatlands Hotel bears a plaque identifying it as the tree. It has suffered in recent storms.) John Tradescant the Elder brought back rare plants for the Queen from his travels abroad. When he died in 1638 his son John Tradescant the Younger was appointed. He died in 1662.
1646	Charles I was briefly imprisoned at Oatlands during the Civil War. The infant Princess Henrietta was temporarily housed at Oatlands during the Civil War before being smuggled to France.
1650s	To pay for the expense of the Civil War, Royal palaces were sold off. Oatlands was sold to Robert Turbridge for £4000. He demolished it and in 1651 sold the bricks to Sir Richard Weston of Sutton Place to build locks and bridges for the new River Wey Navigation which made a straighter route for barges south to Guildford. There remained a single house some distance from the Palace, which was perhaps a Hunting Lodge. This house became the residence of William Boteler who had supported the Commonwealth and been part of the 'Rule of the Major Generals'.
1660s	At the Restoration the estate reverted to the Crown. Charles's widow returned to Oatlands from exile in 1660 but as there was no proper house she decided to live at the Queen's House, Greenwich. The estate was leased to John Harvey of Ickworth, Suffolk via the Queen Dowager's second husband the Earl of St Albans. Queen Henrietta Maria died in 1669. Charles II then leased the estate to John Staley a London goldsmith and Martin Folkes, probably trustees of the Earl of St Albans. The lease was sold to Sir Edward Herbert. John Evelyn described the Estate as 'a barren place.'
1680s	During the reign of James II the house was occupied by Sir Edward Herbert, the Lord Chief Justice but he followed King James into exile and died on the continent in 1698. The house was forfeited to the Crown. The lease of the house was then given to Herbert's brother, Arthur latterly Earl of Torrington who had supported the opposite side and was Rear Admiral of England and Master of the Robes. A third brother petitioned for the return of Oatlands to the family in 1691 but was killed in battle.
1696	The Earl of Torrington acquired Oatlands in this year. The Story of Oatlands House
1716	The Earl of Torrington died and left Oatlands to Henry Pelham Clinton, 7th Earl of Lincoln who remodelled the estate and laid out new formal gardens in 1725 as well as erecting a House, (Oatlands House) on the Terrace in the fashionable Palladian style.
1728	The 7th Earl died and was succeeded by his brother the 8th Earl then only 13, but he died two years later.
1730	The 8th Earl was succeeded by his younger brother Henry Pelham Clinton in 1730 who became the 9th Earl at the age of 10.

<p>1737</p>	<p>A Plan of the Gardens was published by Bartholomew Rocque, brother of the better known John Rocque who surveyed Claremont, Esher Place and Painshill - all designed landscapes created around the same time. This presents a picture of the grounds as they would have been in the formal days of 7th Earl.</p> <p>The Terrace was the backbone of the layout stretching for over half a mile providing a platform for superb views of the Thames Valley. From it a series of angled slopes were cut down to a cruciform canal. On the opposite side of the canal was an amphitheatre much simpler in design than its cousin at Claremont. It was aligned on the axis of the main avenue running through the courtyard beside the house north - south. A bowling green adjoined the courtyard on the level of the Terrace. Further away from the house were kitchen gardens and ponds. A 'goose foot' feature to the east of the Terrace had one avenue specifically designed to give a vista of Claremont. A small artificial mount rose to the left of the Canal.</p>
<p>1744</p>	<p>Henry, the 9th Earl married Catherine, daughter of Henry Pelham of Esher Place, whose brother the Duke of Newcastle had lived at Claremont. Both these men were political figures but Henry was not interested in politics, he preferred country pleasures and the redesign of the gardens in the new free landscape from 1740s to 1760s. Among those involved over the years were Lord Burlington, William Kent, Spence and possibly Southcote. Stephen Wright, assistant to Kent and Clerk of Works at Hampton Court was architect and estate manager for many years certainly from 1755 and possibly earlier. Burlington designed a Palladian villa at Oatlands - there are several versions in the RIBA collection. Its location is a mystery.</p> <p>In 1747-8 the gateway by Inigo Jones from the old Oatlands Palace was transferred to the east end of the Terrace. Burlington had an Inigo Jones gateway moved from Chelsea to his own garden at Chiswick.</p>
<p>1768</p>	<p>The Duke of Newcastle died childless and title passed to Henry who became 2nd Duke of Newcastle as well as 9th Earl of Lincoln. He acquired the titles Lord Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire, Master of the Jewel House and High Steward of Westminster.</p> <p>He had a reputation as 'an indolent hypochondriac' but did commission the beautiful new gardens for Oatlands in the now fashionable English style - a recreation of the Arcadian landscapes popularised by Claude Lorraine and Poussin.</p> <p>William Kent who was working at Esher Place was employed by the Earl to redesign Oatlands Park but he died after only a year's work. He did design the Temple of Vesta, a mock temple with pilasters of the Corinthian order supporting a high coffered dome. He had recreated Inigo Jones's classical gateway which had survived the Commonwealth period and placed it at the east end of the Terrace. Sadly it was in later times broken up to make a rockery!</p> <p>After Kent died Mr Wright was employed to oversee the work on the Park including the building of the Broadwater Lake and the planting of many trees, with advice and help from Joseph and Josiah Lane of Tisbury, who were employed to transform Wright's Grotto into a fantastic romantic idyll.</p> <p>Dr Johnson was not so impressed by the Grotto but it seems to have been a remarkable structure on two levels, the lower level consisting of three rooms - a gaming room, a hall of stalactites and a bathing pool over which presided a statue of Venus de Medici. The upper room was used for entertaining guests to banquets and tea parties. The Grotto was built of tufa, a pitted limestone from the Bath region and fossils of different sorts similar to the grotto at Painshill. Its decoration was made from glass mirrors, brain coral, minerals, flints and ammonites. The whole site was constructed between 1760 - 70 with most work done by the Lanes between 1770 - 8.</p> <p>Horace Walpole, another caustic critic, did not find that the estate measured up to his expectations it seems.</p>
<p>1788</p>	<p>The Duke of Newcastle sold Oatlands along with the moors and lands which he had held on Crown leases to Frederick, Duke of York, who also had other properties in Byfleet and Walton.</p> <p>The Duke of York paid £33,000 for the freehold of the property in 1790.</p>

1791	The Duke of York married the Crown Princess of Prussia, Frederica Charlotte Ulrica Catherine. The Duke soon tired of life at Oatlands preferring the clubs and gaming houses of London. The Duchess, by contrast, enjoyed the seclusion and isolation of rural Weybridge. She established a menagerie which included a Brahmin bull, wallabies, rare goats and peacocks. She was devoted to the life of the village and supported local schools and charities.
1794	Oatlands House suffered a fire which burnt down one wing. This gave the Duke the opportunity to rebuild it in the now fashionable Gothic style with crenellations, turrets and gables.
1800s	The Duke only appeared at Oatlands for weekend parties and social events arranged by the Duchess. The fashionable set came down from London including such Society figures as Beau Brummell.
1816	The Duchess let Princess Charlotte, daughter of Prince of Wales, later George IV, stay at Oatlands after her marriage to Leopold Duke of Saxe-Coburg Gotha. They left to live at their new home Claremont, Esher. Tragically Charlotte died in childbirth in 1817.
1820	Duchess of York died.
1822	A Monument is erected to her on a spot in the centre of Weybridge known from then on as Monument Green.
1824	The Duke of York sold the estate to the Regency dandy Edward Hughes Ball Hughes, (known as 'The Golden Ball') for £145,000. Ball Hughes was a reckless gambler. He fled to France to escape his creditors. In his absence his agents leased the estate to Lord Francis Egerton MP (later 1st Earl of Ellesmere) who, after the lease expired in 1844, bought land on St George's Hill and built a house there. In 1831 Fanny Kemble visited Oatlands when it was rented by Lord Francis Egerton. She suggested that he had made overtures to buy it but remarked that while the house was not a good one, the park was delightful.
1843	There was an unsuccessful attempt to sell land by Ball Hughes' solicitors.
1846	Finally a successful sale was completed with the whole estate divided into 64 lots. These were sold to property developers looking for land to build luxury villas for the business classes coming to the area after the building of the railways. Oatlands House was sold with 97 acres of land for £11,000 to a Mr Peppercorn who sold it in the 1850s to the London and South Western Railway Company. It was converted into a hotel in 1856.
1856 - 1903	Among the famous guests who stayed at The Oatlands Hotel were Emile Zola, Anthony Trollope and Edward Lear who painted the cedar trees. The Park was sold off for residential development. The carriageway running through the Park was converted into a public road called Oatlands Drive and large villas were constructed alongside.
1916 - 1930	During the First World War the hotel was requisitioned as a casualty hospital for New Zealand forces serving in France. They used the Grotto as target practice. Shortly after the War the building was purchased by the North Hotels group and further developed. By the 1930s a ballroom, restaurant and new wing had been added. A housing estate was built on the site of the lost Oatlands Palace in the 1920s. Broadwater Lake provided a beautiful outlook for the mansions built on its south side. In the latter part of the 20th century these great houses were sold, demolished and replaced by new developments of apartments and terraced houses. The Grotto became unsafe and was demolished by the Ministry of Works in 1948. A broken arch remains in the undergrowth behind St James's School.
1980s	Barclays Associate Hotels owned the property for some years until the mid 1980s. Oatlands Investments Ltd. acquired the hotel in 1986 restoring it and refurbishing it.