

The Ha-ha



A Ha-ha would be built to be unseen from the important side. The retaining wall of the Ha-ha here at Great Linford is mostly buried, but you can see how impressive it would have been from this picture of a surviving Ha-ha.

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A Sunken Wall

A freshly planted pleasure garden, full of expensive and exotic specimens, needed protection from grazing livestock. Yet a fence was an ugly interruption to a good view. What to do?



Surprise the Eye

The clever solution was a sort of hidden ditch, first described in France in 1709 and copied in England in the 1720s. A Ha-ha creates an optical illusion of continuous lawn so good that it would *"surprise the eye coming near it, and make one cry, "Ah! Ah!"*

When this Ha-ha was dug in the 1760s, it offered views over open valleys and pasture, and divided the gardens from an area of grazed parkland. Today the views are lost and the parkland is more heavily planted than originally, making the most of locally-rare soil types to grow a variety of interesting trees.



A 2019 archaeological dig uncovered the original Ha-ha ditch and a drywall of local limestone. There was also pottery, including fragments from the earliest phases of the village, and pieces of high-status glazed tile, perhaps from the original manor.

Image credit: Cotswold Archaeology

