

Carfax Conduit, 540m south west of Nuneham House

Listed on the National Heritage List for England. [Search over 400,000 listed places](#)

(<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>)

Official list entry

Heritage Category:**Scheduled Monument**

List Entry Number:**1020965**

Date first listed:**09-Apr-1951**

Date of most recent amendment:**15-Jul-2003**

Location

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County:**Oxfordshire**

District:**South Oxfordshire (District Authority)**

Parish:**Nuneham Courtenay**

National Grid Reference:**SU 53727 97671**

Reasons for Designation

Conduit houses form the most visible structures within early clean water systems. They mainly occur on the line of piped water from springs or rivers on land above towns which were gravity fed with water from them. The conduit houses act as storage tanks and provide reservoirs to give enough head of water to feed the system. The water system for Oxford was set up as a gift soon after 1600. Carfax Conduit formed part of a gravity-fed system intended by Otho Nicholson to provide clean drinking water to the City of Oxford from the North Hinksey Conduit. Although most of the original system (built 1610-1616) has been replaced or built over, it was a fine example of early civic clean water provision and marks an important stage in the development of the city. Despite having been moved and re-erected in the 18th century, Carfax Conduit represents an important part of Nicholson's system. Its significance was already apparent in 1786, when it was saved and re-erected as both an important piece of civic history and a fine ornamental structure.

Details

The monument includes the remains of an ornate conduit house situated in Nuneham Park, 540m south west of Nuneham House, close to the east bank of the River Thames. The conduit has the outward appearance of a Renaissance version of a Gothic market cross with a solid base. It was originally erected in Carfax in Oxford in about 1600 where it formed part of a gift of several conduit houses and a pipe system given to the city by Otho Nicholson to provide clean drinking water. His coat of arms and initials form part of the ornamentation on the structure. This conduit house, which is a Listed Building Grade I, was constructed in the form of a cross above ground to blend in to its original location as a focal structure at a crossroads. In 1786 traffic congestion led the University authorities to widen the road and remove the conduit. The structure was offered to Lord Harcourt, who had it re-erected on its present site in the grounds of his estate. He instructed William Mason to design a new plinth for the cross, replacing the original tank house. The result was a park ornament on a site originally intended for a Gothic tower. In 1947 the monument was bought, along with the estate, by the University of Oxford and it reverted to its previous owners. Another survival of Otho Nicholson's public water supply system is the North Hinksey conduit house, which is a Listed Building Grade II* and the subject of a separate scheduling. It lies in its original position on a hillside outside the City of Oxford. The building contains a water tank and a well which formerly provided water to the Carfax Conduit in its original location in Oxford.

MAP EXTRACT The site of the monument is shown on the attached map extract. It includes a 1 metre boundary around the archaeological features, considered to be essential for the monument's support and preservation.

Legacy

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System number:**30836**

Legacy System:**RSM**

Sources

Other

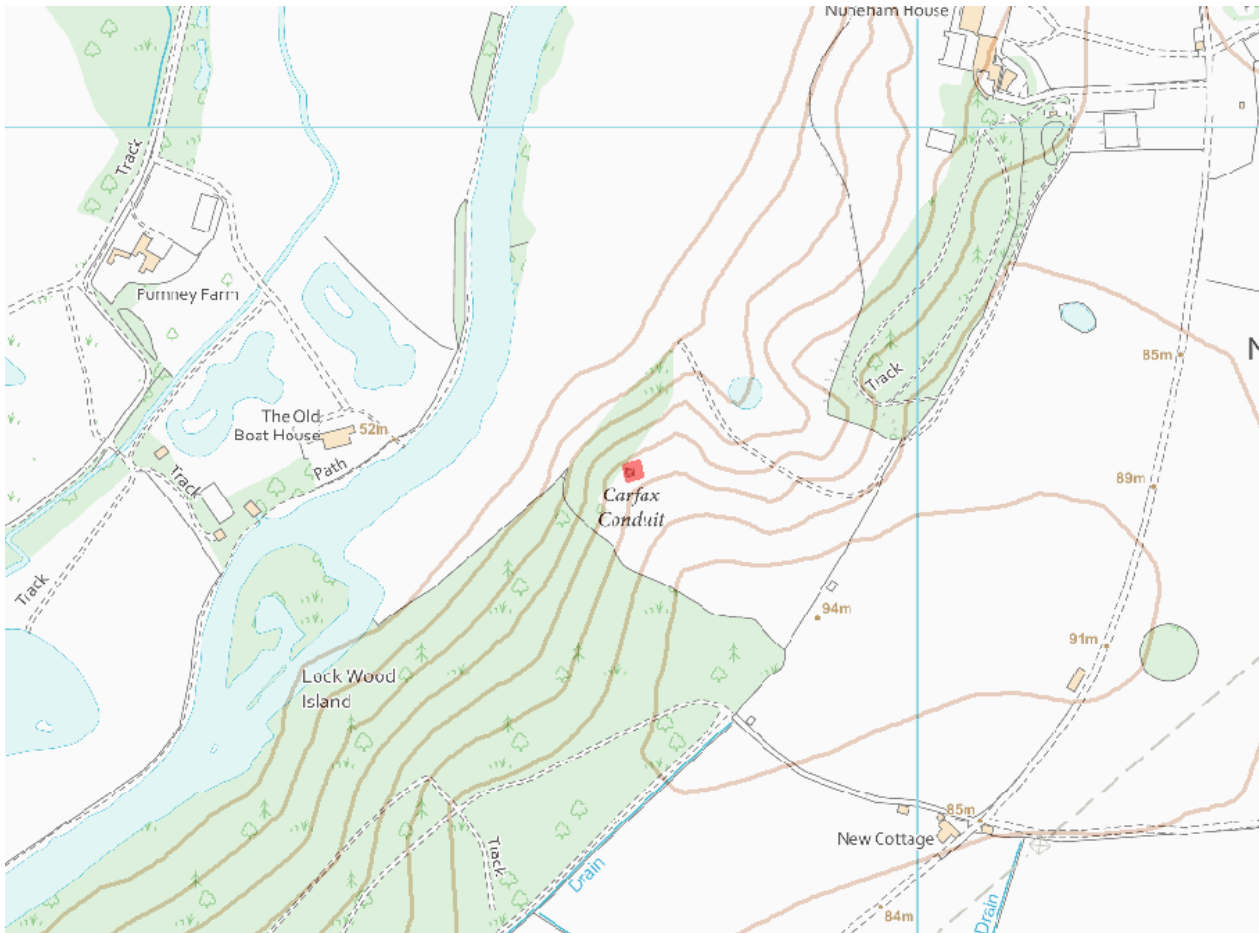
PRN 3512, Conduit, Folly, (1991)

SCHEDULING 28132, JEFFERY, PAUL , North Hinksey Conduit House, (1996)

Title: 1:10,000 Ordnance Survey sheet SU 59 NW Source Date: 1986 Author: Publisher: Surveyor: SU 59 NW

Legal

This monument is scheduled under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 as amended as it appears to the Secretary of State to be of national importance. This entry is a copy, the original is held by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.



Map

This map is for quick reference purposes only and may not be to scale. This copy shows the entry on 17-Mar-2025 at 13:15:12.

© Crown copyright [and database rights] 2025. OS AC0000815036. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900.© British Crown and SeaZone Solutions Limited 2025. All rights reserved. Licence number 102006.006.

End of official list entry