



# YORKSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

## Womersley Park

### Statement of Significance

This statement of significance for Womersley Park, created by the Yorkshire Gardens Trust, is derived from research carried out as part of Selby District Historic Designed Landscapes project.

#### 1. Heritage Values Summary

The designed landscape of Womersley Park was developed by its owners, the Harvey family, from the early 18th century for over 300 years. At its largest extent in Victorian times, the historic landscape included formal and productive walled gardens, icehouse, pleasure grounds, rolling parkland, woodland copses and woodland shelter belt. Although the Womersley Park estate is now reduced, the designed landscape still retains many of its features, providing an important aesthetic and community asset for Womersley village. The house (listed Grade II\*) and gardens of Womersley Park lie in the Womersley conservation area. Areas of the former parkland retain evidence of Roman settlement and the earthworks of Womersley medieval village are a scheduled monument.

#### 2. Historical Value ('Narrative')

Womersley Park was initially developed by Tobiah Harvey in the early 18th century as owner of most of Womersley village. He instigated a walled garden and probably started to develop the wider parkland. Later generations refined the walled garden and developed the rolling parkland to include a lake. Major changes in Victorian times included: new glasshouses and vinery in the walled garden; an ice-house, in close location to medieval remains; planting of a copse of trees known as Lady Hawke Wood; and a driveway through the parkland connecting the house to a newly built lodge on the Pontefract road. The estate, although reduced in size by land sales, remained in family ownership until 2004. Although there are no documented landscape architects associated with the changes over three hundred years, the development of the landscape reflects contemporary trends. The reduced estate still contains features associated with different periods of development, notably the large divided walled garden with one part containing a box-hedge parterre originally designed by Lady Anne Rosse (nee Messel) in the 1940s and the other having an 18<sup>th</sup> century mulberry tree.

Further investigation could refine the features of landscape design at Womersley Park and elsewhere. For example, Tobiah Harvey's account book from 1705 until his death in 1720 provides evidence of planting of fruit trees, other fruit and vegetables, many purchased from the Perfects, nurserymen at Pontefract. There appears continuation of a link with the Perfect family, one of whose members was involved in the design of Campsmount a nearby estate in the hands of relatives of the Harvey family. In later generations, there was marriage into the Parsons' (Lord Rosse) family now famed for the estate at Birr Castle, and then 20<sup>th</sup> century marriage into the Messel family, who developed renowned gardens at Nymans. All of these links to other gardening families would be worthy of further study.



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### 3. Evidential Value ('Research')

The historic estate of Womersley Park contains clear and valuable evidence of prehistoric, Roman, medieval and later, Victorian and 20<sup>th</sup> century activities. There is evidence of past settlement in the parkland around Lady Hawke Wood, where Roman pottery, iron slag and cropmark enclosures have been recorded. There is potential for archaeological investigations to recover further information and confirm the survival of features below ground.

More detailed survey of Icehouse Park, with its listed icehouse, remains of a medieval village and remains of a lake, might provide further evidence for the design of features, particularly those implemented in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### 4. Aesthetic Value ('Emotion')

Womersley Park is the setting for the hall (listed Grade II\*) and its associated coach house and stables (listed Grade II\*), surrounded by walled gardens, rolling parkland and woodland shelter belt in the heart of a village. The extensive magnesian limestone walls surrounding the mix of formal and more open walled garden, along with the house itself, are key features of the village landscape, blending with many of the limestone structures in the village. The rolling parkland slopes upwards from the main street of the village to woodland planted on the top. Although parts of the historic estate were sold off for agriculture (Icehouse Park) or housing (within part of the walled garden), the visual landscape has remained more or less intact. The estate provides an aesthetically pleasing landscape.

### 5. Communal Value ('Togetherness')

Womersley Park is an important heritage and environmental asset for Womersley and the surrounding area. The house and gardens, but not all of the historic parkland, are in the Womersley conservation area. At its largest extent, the Victorian estate provided opportunities to drive and walk through extensive parkland. Today a public footpath maintains some access across the historic parkland and through woodland for the local community, who value and appreciate the landscape. During the Second World War, the army occupied Womersley Park, and it holds memories for those who were stationed there. A courtyard building adjacent to the house was used as a NAAFI and is now a cafe.

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