



YORKSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

High Hall Parkland

Statement of Significance

This statement of significance for High Hall Parkland, created by the Yorkshire Gardens Trust, is derived from research carried out as part of the East Riding Historic Designed Landscapes project.

1. Heritage Values Summary

High Hall Parkland adjacent to the village of Bishop Burton has been an important site for many centuries. At the time of Domesday the Archbishop of York owned the manor and a deer park is recorded in the early 14th century. Its surviving earthwork boundary is a protected scheduled monument. The Gee family acquired the estate in the 17th century and landscaped the grounds and parkland around their two residences, High Hall and Low Hall, over the next two hundred years following the landscape fashions of the time. The Watt family extensively landscaped the grounds in the late 19th century, commissioning the notable Victorian landscape architect William Broderick Thomas. He introduced an early example of the formal, 'Italianate' style that became popular from 1890, one of the few recorded in the East Riding of Yorkshire. By 1953 High Hall was demolished to make way for Bishop Burton College. Despite redevelopment, parts of the pleasure grounds, formal garden structures and walled garden survive. The woodland planting and perimeter shelterbelts add to the setting and character of Bishop Burton Conservation Area.

2. Historical Value ('Narrative')

Domesday records the Archbishop of York held the manor of Bishop Burton, where a manor house and deer park are recorded by 1323. The Gee family acquired the estate in 1603 and held it until 1783. They were a prominent East Yorkshire family, linked by marriage to other notable East Riding families particularly the Hothams of Scarborough and South Dalton (Dalton Hall). In the early 18th century, they were part of the 'Burlington' set, particularly James Gee (1686-1751) and Colonel William Gee (1699-1745). Indeed Lord Burlington designed a house for William at Bishop Burton in 1730s, but it was probably never built.

The manor house was rebuilt a number of times by the Gee family and Samuel Buck's sketch of c. 1720 and the 1780 enclosure plan show 'Bishop Burton Hall' and its position at this time, north of York Road. As the male line died out in 1778 with debts of £40,000, accounts reveal expenses for laying out the grounds surrounding the house, including ponds and pleasure grounds and probably the walled garden.

Richard Watt (1751-1798) bought the estate in 1783 and the family, later Wyatt-Hall, retained it until 1930. Richard had gained his wealth in the West Indies sugar plantations and became a successful ship owner and merchant. Following a fire at High Hall in 1790 the family lived at Low Hall,



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located by the church in Bishop Burton village. It too had its own small parkland, walled garden, wilderness ('The Grove') and circular ornamental pond, the latter mirroring the one at High Hall, both seen on the 1851 Ordnance Survey map.

During the mid 1870s High Hall was rebuilt to designs by George Devey and then extended and altered by W. H. Fletcher in 1886, who also designed the stable block and entrance lodge (Listed Grade II, NHLE: 1379970). At this time William Broderick Thomas, a 'Gentleman Improver' who also worked at Dalton Hall and Sandringham, was employed to remodel the grounds. Most notably a walled terraced garden with two bastions, which are an unusual designed landscape feature, and show Thomas being influenced by the 'new' formal movement as promoted by Reginald Blomfield and Francis Inigo Thomas, William's nephew. Blomfield suggested a similar design for Mellerstain House, Berwickshire in 1909, although it was not carried out.

3. Evidential Value ('Research')

The most significant remaining feature enclosing the northern part of the parkland at High Hall is a deer park boundary ('The Reins' formerly 'Keeper's Walk'). The park ditch, recorded in 1388, and its bank survive as an earthwork and is a scheduled monument (NHLE: 34699). Its form is unusual compared to other deer park boundaries, as the more substantial ditch (4m wide and 0.5m deep) occurs on the outside (possibly to deter poachers), rather than the inside of the bank, where a narrower ditch survives (2-3m wide and infilled to 0.2m deep). As evidence for only three sides of this deer park enclosure survive, the full extent of the deer park is still to be established.

The medieval deer park, owned by the Archbishops of York, had a manor house, or palace associated with it, allegedly located by the village church (NRHE: 64095). Earthwork and geophysical surveys may reveal the character of any remains that lie south of the church, particularly a moated enclosure seen on the 1860 enclosure map. It may reveal later phases of development with the house and gardens of Low Hall, now demolished. It may also prompt discussion of other potential locations for the Bishop's palace, such as 'Knight Garth', on the south side of the village, where extensive earthworks still survive, or closer to the site of High Hall.

4. Aesthetic Value ('Emotion')

High Hall was demolished in 1953, to make way for building Bishop Burton College, but the designed landscape still retains the walled garden and parts of its wooded pleasure grounds and perimeter plantations. These greatly enhance the setting for the surviving Arts and Crafts style stable block with its prominent clock tower and cupola and the Listed entrance lodge. Views and vistas from the terraced garden bastions extend to the west over parkland with tree clumps; whilst to the east earthworks of medieval lynchets survive in the undulating parkland pasture and wooded slopes. The woodland, although largely replanted, significantly masques the extensive modern college building complex when viewed from the surrounding roads and village.



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The southern periphery of the parkland and adjacent estate village lie within Bishop Burton Conservation Area. This recognises the special architectural and historical character of the area and the wider parkland surrounding the College adds to the green space and picturesque setting, appreciated by the local community.

5. Communal Value ('Togetherness')

High Hall and its parkland is the site of a Second World War prisoner of war camp, known as Camp 136, used until 1948. It operated as a work camp, where prisoners were sent to work as labourers in the local community. It first held Italian and then later German prisoners of war. The place holds memories for locals and interns from this period of history.

Since the foundation of Bishop Burton College in 1954 within the designed landscape of the former High Hall, it has provided vocational training, first in agriculture and now diversifying as an equine centre. The parkland and historic walled garden has provided an inspiring educational resource for generations of students.

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