

# Rotherham local plan

## Sites & Policies Examination

### **Preliminary Heritage Impact Assessments:**

LDF0078 Land off Dalton Lane and Netherfield View &  
LDF0591 Land off Magna Lane/ Dalton Lane

LDF0251 Land between Sheffield Road and the B6059  
Representation number 163 Land at Lindleys Croft

LDF0433 South of Brampton Meadows

LDF0417 Land off Church Lane (Within Aston Hall Parkland)

September 2016

# **Matter 15: Rotherham Urban Area**

LDF0078 Land off Dalton Lane and Netherfield View &  
LDF0591 Land off Magna Lane/ Dalton Lane

# LDF: 0078 & 0591 Land off Dalton Lane



Figure 1 LDF0078



Figure 2 LDF0591

## The Site(s)

Two individual sites that combined make a 9.1 hectare parcel of land that bridges the gap between the older settlement of Dalton Parva to the south and Dalton to the north. Both sites are currently in agricultural use.

Both sites are currently under agricultural use. Topographically there is a sharp drop in levels from 60 metres above sea level at Dalton Lane in the south down to 27 metres adjacent Magna Lane in the north.

## Designated Heritage Assets Potentially Affected

To the immediate south of both sites, and LDF0078 in particular, are two designated heritage assets namely;

- Dalton Parva Conservation Area, designated 7<sup>th</sup> April 1976
- 175 Dalton Lane (East Farmhouse) Listed Grade II 26<sup>th</sup> November 1987

# Analysis

## Dalton Parva Conservation Area

Dalton Parva is one of three settlements that make up the parish of Dalton; the other two being Dalton Magna and Dalton Brook. There has been a settlement at Dalton Parva since Norman times, in fact the village is listed in the Domesday Book of 1086. Although the parish of Dalton is large, Dalton Parva remained a small and isolated agricultural village where the only industrial activity was quarrying. It remained this way until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1900 a colliery was sunk at nearby Silverwood. This had a major impact on the parish and Dalton Parva until its closure in 1994. The pit became the main employer and with the subsequent dramatic increase in population more housing and development was seen throughout the area.

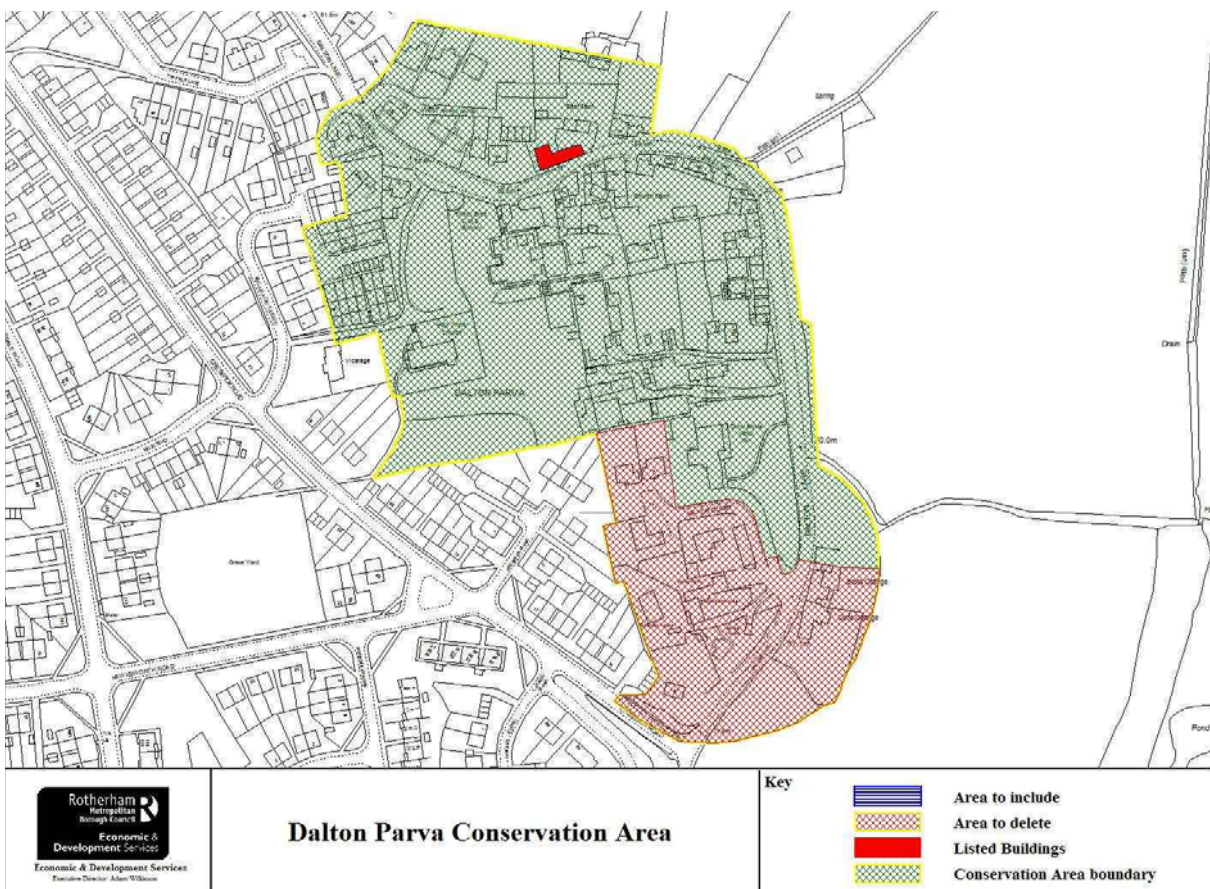


Figure 1: Dalton Parva Conservation Area

The conservation area focuses on the historic core of the village, encompassing most of the pre-colliery buildings. Topographically the area occupies a beautiful ridge top location which lends itself to far reaching views across the valley. Dalton Road, the main road that runs through the village follows the winding line of the ridge top. Along the road are situated many of the older buildings in the village and it is this combination of the spectacular natural landscape and stone built cottages that provides this area with a special and unique character.



Today there isn't any agricultural activity in the village the buildings at East Farm have all been converted to residential dwellings. The late 17<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse (grade II) maintains an imposing presence situated on Dalton Road, its listed status reflecting the fact that it is one of the most significant buildings in the village. Equally grand and imposing are the village church and 138 Dalton Lane. The church, Holy Trinity is a Victorian addition to the village it was built in 1849 after the formation of the new parish. Whilst 138 Dalton Lane is an imposing mid-late Victorian house, although currently in a dilapidated condition, still acts as an impressive gateway to the village and conservation area on approach from the north.



Figure 2: The unlisted Holy Trinity Church

With the exception of the converted farm complex at East Farm the majority of buildings are small houses and cottages from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. They are either built in rows or are detached. All are two storey with simple pitched roofs with chimneys at their gable ends, many have kneelers too. Sandstone is the predominant building material, but roofing materials vary throughout with pantiles and slate being traditional. Interjected among the older properties are a number of houses dating from the 1970s and 1980s. Most of these did not respect the character of the area in their design and materials and are somewhat detrimental to the area.

Whilst a number of buildings line Dalton Lane such as 1-7 Dalton Lane others are positioned in a more haphazard way such as the group of cottages opposite East Farmhouse (146-154 evens Dalton Lane). Areas such as this and the backwater lane, The Fold, reflect as well as act as reminders of the village's rural past that has long since been lost. A further reminder can be found with the village pound. A rare survivor of times before land was enclosed and animals were allowed to graze on common land, this pound would have held any strays until they were collected by their owners. Although it is overgrown at present it is in good enough condition for some restoration and enhancement work to make it a feature of the area.

Although Dalton Parva is now amid a much larger residential area a rural feel is still maintained by the many mature trees and the green spaces throughout the area. The importance of the countryside views must not be understated either. The largest public open space is the tree lined avenue up to the church, but many of the smaller, sometimes unkempt verges contribute significantly to the character of the area, some of these spaces have benches to enjoy the area and the views.

In an earlier review it was stated that Dalton Parva should be a *'pearl among Rotherham's conservation areas'*, however, then as now, inappropriate improvements and alterations have undermined the character of most of the area. Examples of such alterations include the widespread changing of windows for uPVC varieties, cladding and rendering of external walls and the use of inappropriate materials for extensions.

Other detrimental factors include large areas of unkempt land, the unfinished conversion of 138 Dalton Lane into flats/apartments and the 1970/80s housing that is not in keeping in style and materials. Since its designation as a conservation area in 1976 much of the original character has been eroded by both alterations and development. Although originally a rural, agricultural village its proximity to Rotherham town has resulted in the village having a 'residential' land use allocation in the development plan for the borough. Undoubtedly this has and will further place additional pressure on the conservation area.

## 175 Dalton Lane (East Farmhouse)

A three storey Grade II listed former farmhouse built in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century of coursed, squared, dressed sandstone with a Welsh slate roof. No longer in agricultural use, the building is a reminder of the settlements agricultural past



Figure 3 Grade II listed East Farmhouse

# Potential Impact

As described above, the settlement of Dalton Parva and its surrounds have undergone drastic and fundamental changes over the last century. As the Ordnance Survey map of 1901 shows, Dalton Parva was once an isolated farming settlement. The major transformation has occurred in the last fifty years mainly through the construction of the large municipal housing estates of East Herringthorpe and Dalton.

Without doubt this has had a significant effect on the character and setting of Dalton Parva Conservation Area. However, its ridge top location still offers key views out to the north towards Dalton and inwards to the south from Magna Lane.

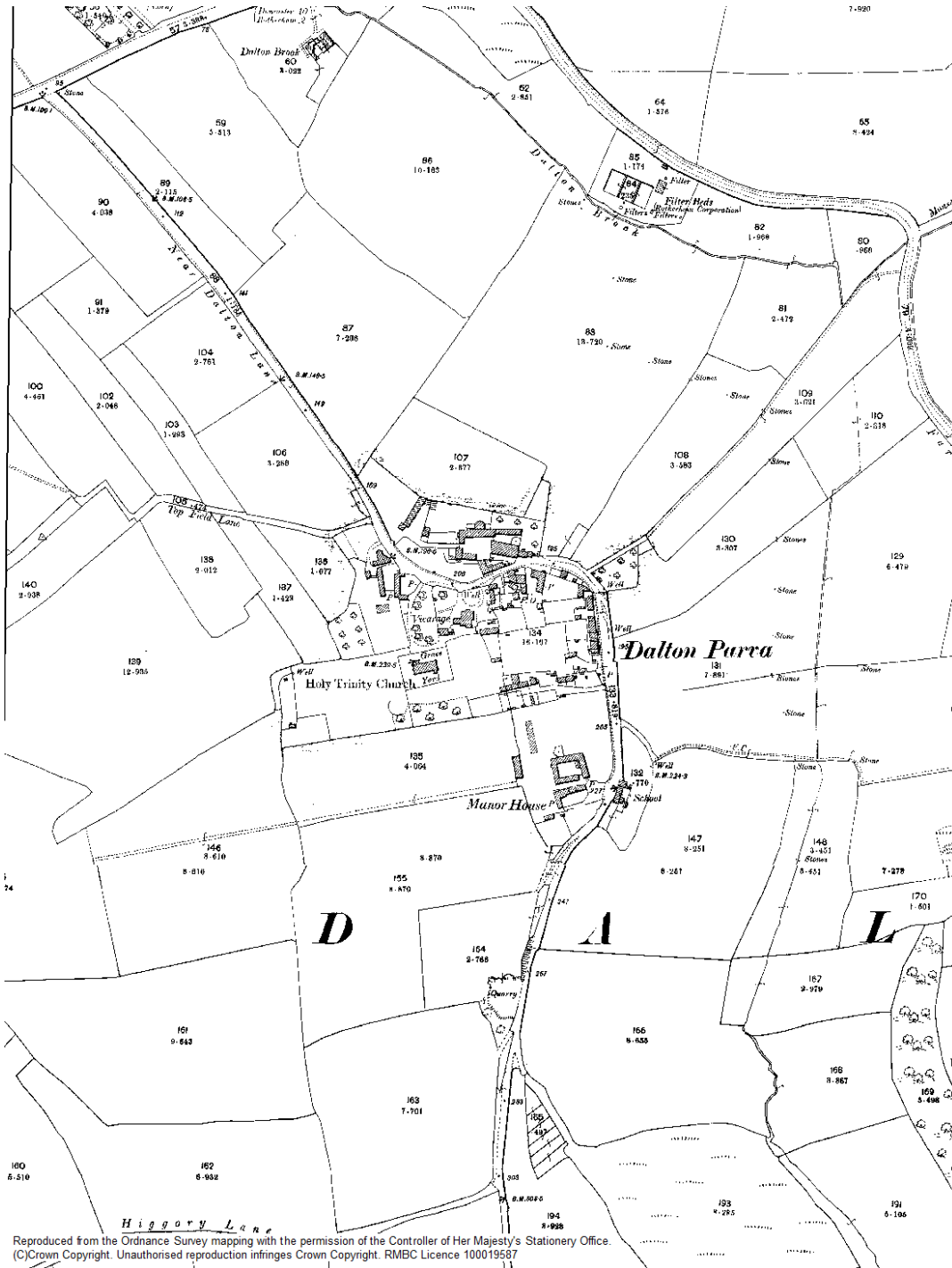


Figure 4 Dalton Parva, Ordnance Survey Extract 1901



The Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal for the Proposed Site Allocations (EB77A) considers that “The landscape effect of development of these sites is likely to result in a moderate adverse effect with a noticeable reduction in the aesthetic and perceptual quality of the landscape.”

## Conclusion

There is no doubt that the special character of Dalton Parva conservation area has been significantly eroded over the last fifty years, however the ridge top location and pattern of the road and lanes still results in a unique area of merit within the borough.

It is evident that both of these sites, and in particular the site immediately to the north east of the Conservation Area (LDF0078), make a positive contribution to the Heritage Assets at Dalton Parva and that any development could potentially detract from their character and setting.

A more detailed Heritage Impact Assessment will be essential if either of these sites is to come forward for allocation for residential purposes or indeed as safeguarded land



Figure 5 View looking north east from Dalton Lane towards Magna Lane

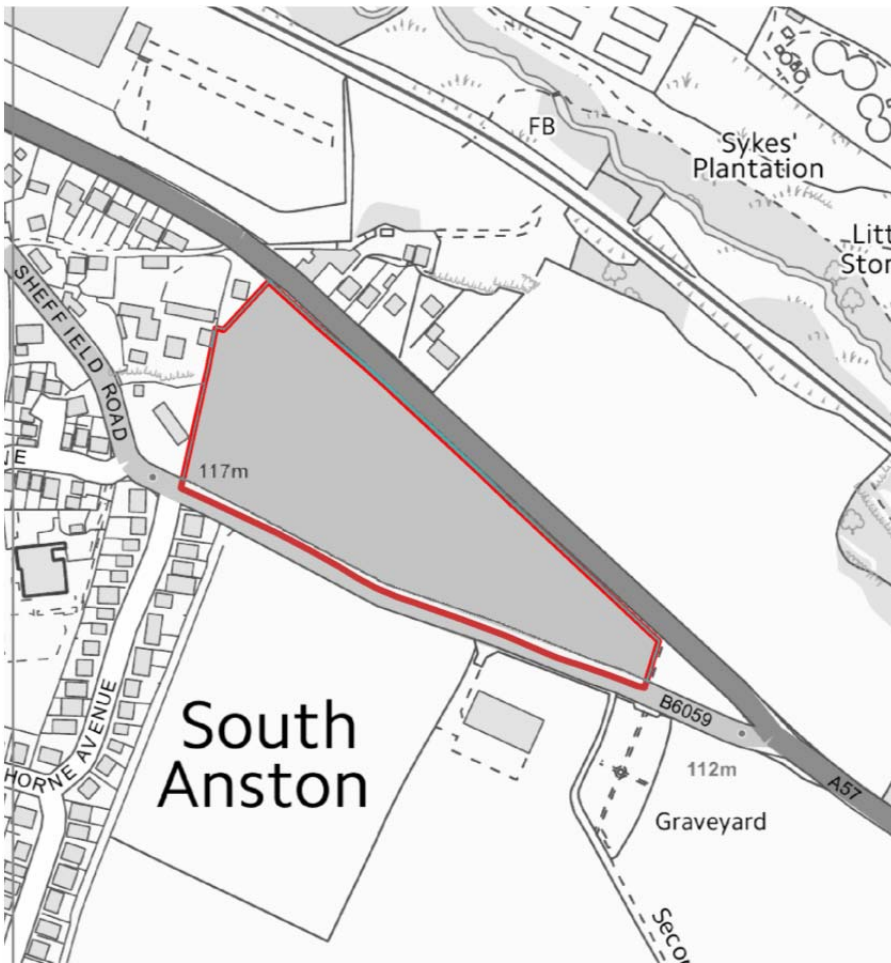


# **Matter 17: Dinnington, Anston and Laughton Common**

LDF0251 Land between Sheffield Road and the B6059

# LDF0251 Land at Worksop Road, South Anston

## The Site



The site is a 3.6 HA, triangular parcel of land to the east of the settlement of South Anston. The parcel of land has well defined boundaries with the A57 Worksop Road running along its north eastern perimeter, Sheffield Road to the south and the residential fringe of South Anston to the west.

As the photograph below illustrates, the site is currently under grass and has a slope from approximately 116 metres above sea level in the south west of the site down to 110 metres adjacent the Worksop Road.

Figure 1 LDF 0251



Figure LDF0251 as seen from the western corner off Sheffield Road

# Designated Heritage Assets Affected by the Proposed Allocation

Within a 250 metre radius of the site are three principle heritage assets namely;

- The Church of St James, Sheffield Road, South Anston listed Grade I 29<sup>th</sup> July, 1966
- South Anston Manor House, off Sheffield Road, South Anston listed Grade II 29<sup>th</sup> July, 1966
- South Anston Conservation Area designated 9<sup>th</sup> February, 1977



Figure 2 The Grade II listed Manor House, Sheffield Road

## Analysis

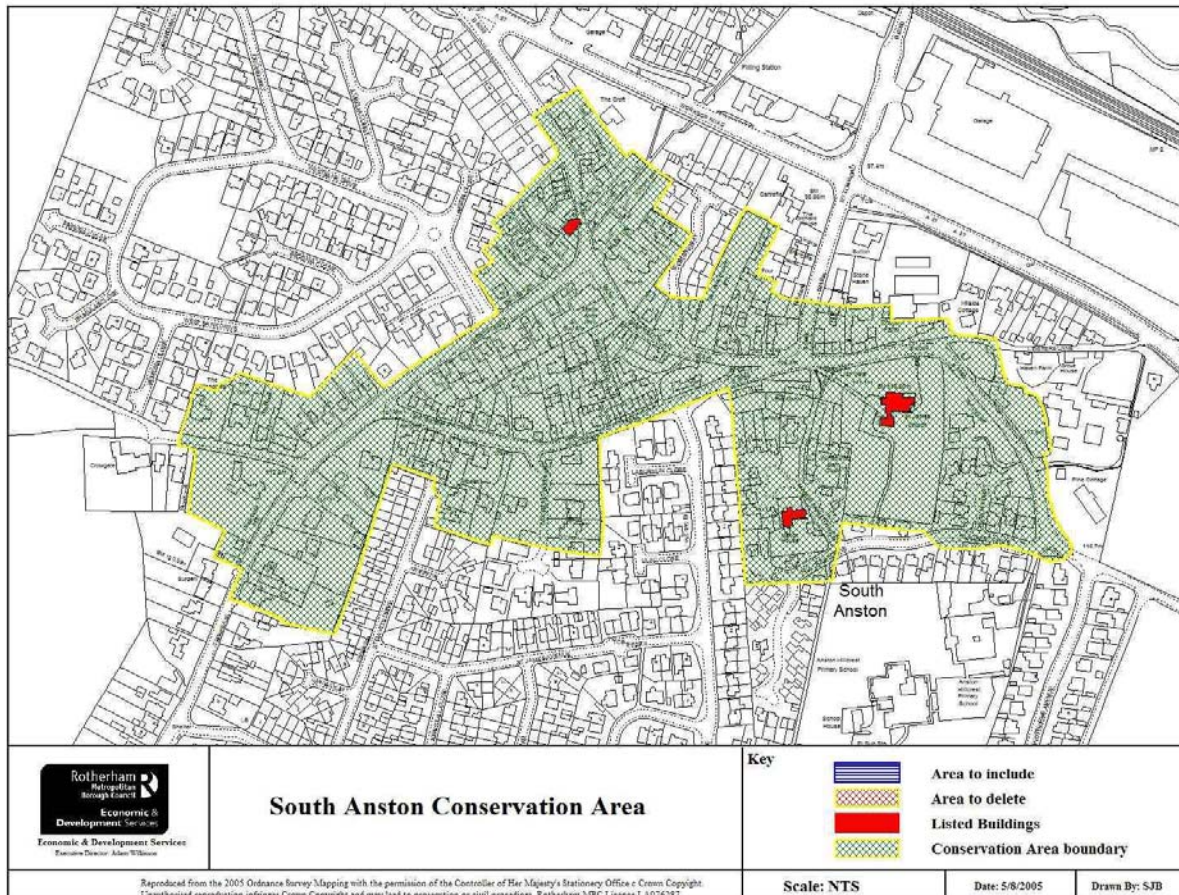
### History and Development of the Settlement

Anston is a large village (using the definition of a village as a single parish) but is probably better described as a small township. The present population is between 10,000 and 12,000. Anston has its own parish council but most local services are provided by the Metropolitan Borough of Rotherham in the County of South Yorkshire. Anston is located 13 miles east of Sheffield, 10 miles southeast of Rotherham and 7 miles west of Worksop. The A57 trunk road passes through South Anston.

Although Anston is a single parish there are two distinct areas called North Anston and South Anston. Many residents prefer to use these names for their postal address rather than just Anston which is the official name used by the Post Office. There is sometimes confusion with the nearby village of Aston because of the similarity of name.



North Anston appears in The Domesday Book (1086) as *Anestan* and South Anston as *Litelanstan*. There is some debate as to whether this Saxon name might refer to a local feature known as "One Stone". Along with most settlements in the present South Yorkshire the first inhabitants would have been Anglo-Saxon. The lands are listed as belonging to Roger de Busli, a Norman knight, the lands being taken from their previous owner, Edwin (an Earl of Mercia), by William the Conqueror to reward his supporters.



The attraction of North Anston as a site for settlement came from the spring of water (now known as The Wells) in the hillside just north of the River Ryton (known locally as Anston Brook). South Anston is similarly located on a hillside on the south side of Anston Brook. The river between the two settlements was easily forded and later crossed by a stone bridge (Anston Bridge). The light and well-drained soil made good agricultural land. The local limestone rock was ideal for buildings and used not only in Anston, but also at a much later date for the Houses of Parliament and the Geological Museum in London in the 19th century.

The best local example is the parish church of St James in South Anston. Its commanding position makes it readily visible to the approaching traveller. The oldest part of the church is the nave which dates from the 12th century. This was extended by the addition of the north aisle in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the south aisle and the new chancel in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and the tower in the 15th century. The style of architecture is mainly Early English. The Victorians reordered the interior and added the porch. Today's generation is responsible for further internal reordering and for the meeting room extension. When first built the church was a chapel to the church at Laughton en le Morthen, which continued to make the provision of a chaplain until the ecclesiastical parish of Anston was formed in the 1860s.



Other buildings of note to be found in South Anston are the Manor House and the Methodist church. Some may also appreciate the Loyal Trooper pub which was once a farmhouse. In North Anston there is Anston Hall (now partitioned into small units) and some fine houses on Main Street and Hillside. Also in North Anston is The Wells, a feature restored and maintained by Anston Conservation Society.

Farming and quarrying were the main activities in Anston until the development of coal mining in the area at the beginning of the 20th century which saw collieries open at Kiveton Park, Dinnington and South Anston (Harry Crofts). Railways were built to serve this part of the 'concealed' coalfield, with the railway to Dinnington Colliery passing through Anston opening in 1904. Anston's population began to increase at that time but not as rapidly as those village more directly affected by the collieries e.g. Dinnington. Anston's rapid growth started in the 1950s with the building of a large council estate in North Anston. This was followed by considerable private development in the 1960s onwards which eventually saw a 4-fold increase in population. New schools, shops and pubs were built to cater for the rapid increase in population leading to the settlement we see today.

## Church of St James

Whilst there has been a place of worship in Anston since at least the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the magnificent Grade I structure we see today was built in the 14<sup>th</sup> century with the tower and clerestorey dating from the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Built of ashlar and dressed limestone with a lead and green slate roof. The tower, built in a perpendicular style is a significant local landmark and has Norman stones built into the north wall of its base.



Figure 3 The western elevation with tower and lych gate taken from the junction of Sheffield Road and High Street

Internally, there is a beautiful and very rare 14<sup>th</sup> century effigy of a father and his daughter. Originally this stood outside the church but has now been relocated and stands near the font at the west end of the nave. Some of the pillars between the nave and the aisles have holes in them, now filled in, which are thought to have been caused by musket balls during the Civil War of the 1640's.



Figure 4 Church of St James, north elevation, taken from Sheffield Road



## Character of the Area in the Vicinity of the PDS



Figure 5 LDF0251 showing surrounding area

As the aerial photograph shows, the area to the west of the site is predominantly residential made up predominantly of detached properties built since the 1970's. To the south west is Anston Hillcrest Primary School built in the late 1960's to meet the need for additional school spaces in the settlement.

The area to the immediate west of the site, formerly a collection of abandoned agricultural buildings, has recently been re-developed with the construction of five detached dwellings (Planning Application Reference No. RB2011/0802).



Figure 6 Abandoned agricultural buildings off Lidsters Lane (now demolished)





Figure 7 Example of new housing built under planning permission RB2011/0802

The area to the north, south and east is predominantly agricultural with significant, modern agricultural buildings to the south off Sheffield Road and a cemetery to the south of the eastern tip of the site



Figure 8 Anston burial ground



# Conclusion

Development on LDF0251 would constitute an intrusive finger into the Green Belt to the east of South Anston. In terms of designated heritage assets any development on the site would have an impact on the character and setting of the South Anston Conservation Area and more importantly the Grade I listed Church of St James.

This potential impact is clearly illustrated by figure 9 below. Taken from the edge of the A57 Worksop Road, this is the view both pedestrians and motorists have as they approach the settlements of North and South Anston. The impressive spire of the church is in the middle distance.

Without doubt, any development would detract from this key view and, therefore a change of allocation on this site should be strongly resisted.



Figure 9 Key view looking westwards over LDF0251 towards the South Anston Conservation Area and the spire of the Grade I listed church

# Matter 18: Todwick

Representation number 163 Land at Lindleys Croft

# PSP 163 Land at Lindleys Croft, Todwick

## The Site



Figure 1 PSP 0163, Land at Lindley's Croft

A 662 square metre site off Lindley's Croft currently used as car parking for the adjacent Church of St Peter and St Paul in the settlement of Todwick (see figure 1) A significant part of the site is under tarmac, however, as the photograph shows it is well maintained and landscaped, screening it from the adjacent children's play area, also in the ownership of the church.



Figure 2 PPS 0163 seen from the junction of Lindley's Croft and Church View



## Designated Assets Potentially Affected

Within a hundred metres of the site there are two principle heritage assets namely;

- The Church of St Peter and St Paul, listed Grade II\* 29<sup>TH</sup> July 1986.
- The Manor House Moated Site, A Scheduled Ancient Monument designated 21<sup>st</sup> June 1991

Both of these are significant heritage assets.

### The Church of St Peter and St Paul

The origins of a church on this site possible date back to Anglo Saxon times. The current structure has a rubble sandstone nave dating from the 11<sup>th</sup> Century. The remainder of the structure is otherwise ashlar and coursed, squared limestone with the chancel and porch added in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and the tower in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century. The roof is constructed of lead and graduated slate. Notable features are the original carvings of a face and a scallop shell in the roof beams, the blocked devils door seen inside and out and an impressive coat of arms of George III.



Figure 3: The Grade II\* Church of St Peter and St Paul, south elevation



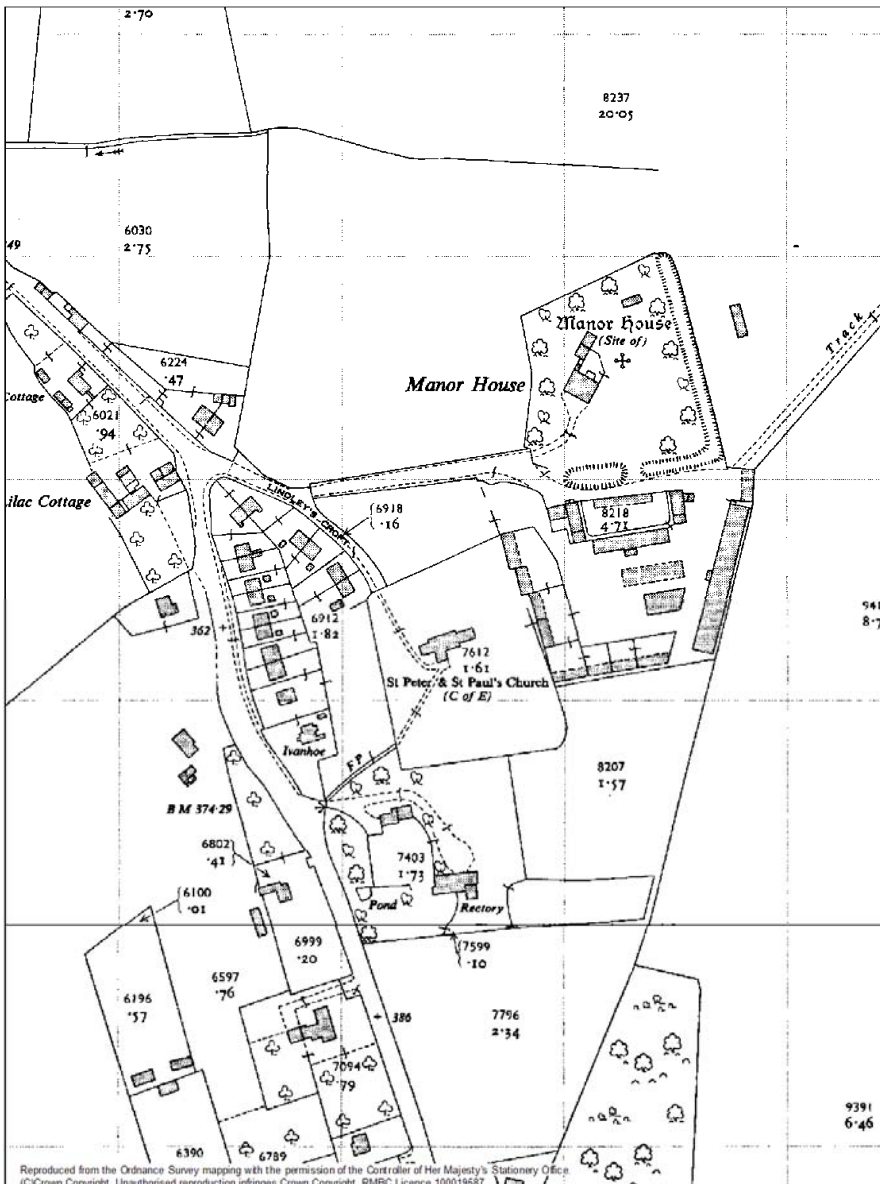
Internally, the church has Jacobean (1600s) high oak box pews and pulpit which date from the reign of James I. The last four pews on the south side are lower and open - it is thought that these were originally intended for servants! In one of the pews is a brass memorial dated 1609. There are some fine stained glass windows, including one featuring St George and the dragon. In the churchyard is a large stone thought to be the original altar.

## Todwick Manor House Moated Site

The Manor House moated site consists of an island surrounded by a largely water filled moat filled in and partially built over to the west and south west. Underneath the present house and its garden are the foundations of an old Manor House demolished in 1947. These remains in turn overlie those of a medieval manorial complex. Around 6000 moated sites are known in England. The peak period during which moated sites were built was between 1250 and 1350 and the largest concentration lies in central and eastern parts of England. Todwick has not been excavated with the foundations of successive manorial complexes likely to survive undisturbed making the site of considerable archaeological potential.

## Impact on Designated Heritage Assets

As the Ordnance Survey map from 1956 shows (figure 4) the immediate area around both the Church and the Manor House has changed significantly during the last 60 years



particularly with the new housing development on both Church View and Rectory Gardens. However, the site under consideration and the adjacent play area is considered to be *important* to the setting of the Manor House and *vital* to the setting of the Church.

Figure 4 Ordnance Survey extract 1956

The potential development site, at its closest point, is 33 metres from the northerly elevation of the Grade II\* listed church and, serving as the main vehicular access point, any additional housing development would have a significant impact on the setting of the Church.

## **Conclusion**

Any potential housing development on this site would be detrimental to the character and setting of both the Manor House Scheduled Ancient Monument and crucially the Grade II\* listed church.

Consequently any attempt to change the allocation of this site should be resisted.

# Matter 19: Thurcroft

LDF0433 South of Brampton Meadows



# LDF0433 Land South of Brampton Meadows, West of St Withold Avenue, Thurcroft

## The Site



A 2.5 hectare site to the west of the settlement of Thurcroft to the rear of the gardens of residential properties on Brampton Meadows and St Withold Avenue. To the immediate west of the site is LDF0773 which has been the subject of a previous Heritage Impact Assessment.

Currently the site is under grass and forms part of a much larger field which includes LDF0773, to the west. There is no discernible physical boundary between the two.

Topographically, the site slopes from west to east from a height of 132 metres above sea level down to 120 metres adjacent the boundaries of the properties on St Withold Avenue.

Figure 1 LDF 0433



Figure 2 LDF0433 and LDF0773 taken from the ridge line above Brampton Road looking east towards Thurcroft

# Designated Heritage Assets Affected by any Potential Change in Allocation

There are no designated heritage assets in the immediate vicinity of the site, however, 140 metres to the west lies the Conservation Area of Brampton en le Morthen with its significant cluster of ten Grade II listed buildings (see fig below)

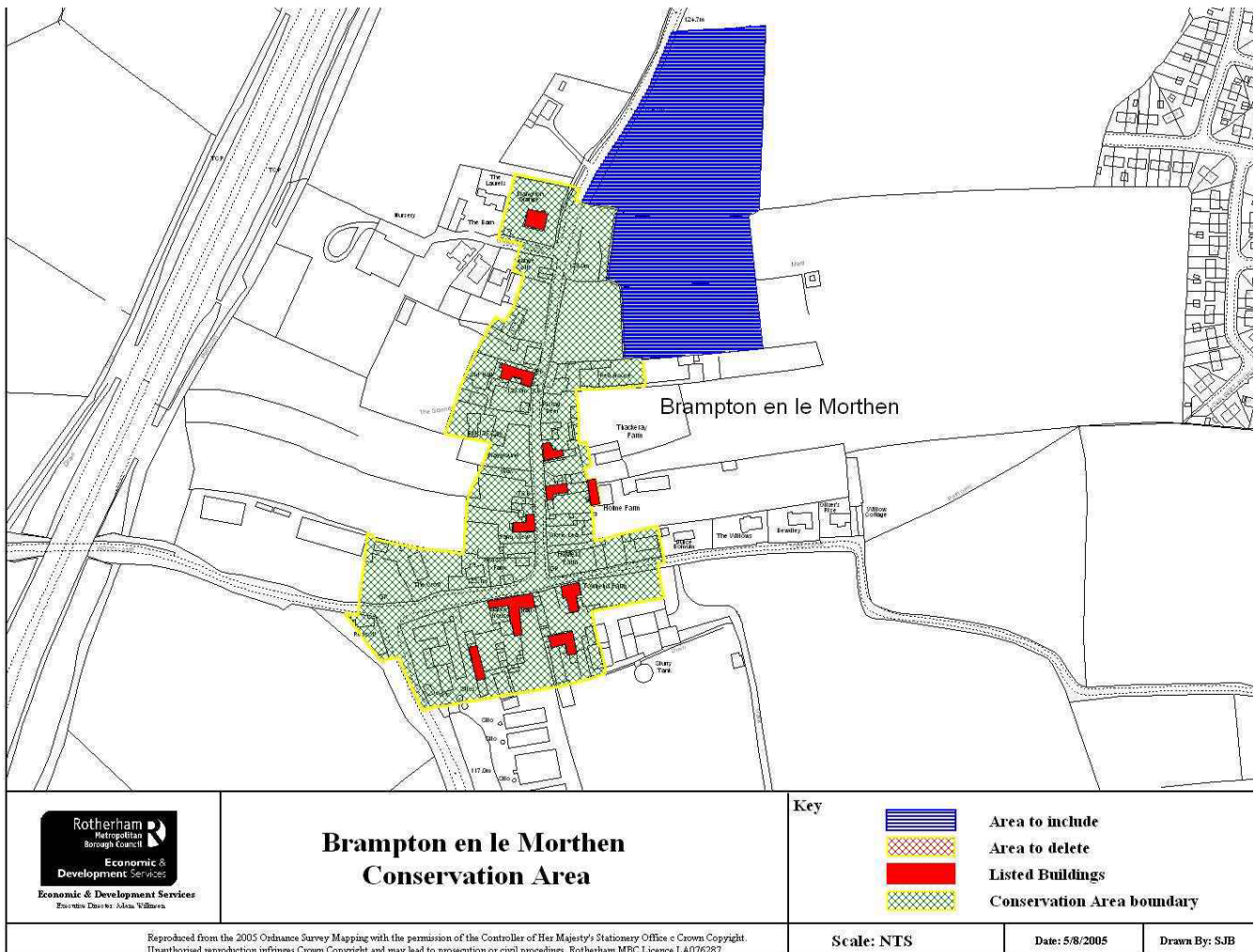


Figure 3 Brampton en le Morthen Conservation Area

Brampton en le Morthen is one of the smallest conservation areas in the borough as well as being an area that is still characterised by agricultural activity. The area has few facilities, the pub, the Rising Deer, has now closed.

The village was referred to as Brantone in the Domesday Book of 1086. Despite the early origins of this hamlet the area is characterised by the many farmhouses, barns and cottages from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The architectural and historic importance of these buildings is recognised by fact that many within the area are listed. The part timber frame, part stone jettied Manor House is a particularly fine example dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries occupying a prominent position at the corner of Wood Lane. The early 19<sup>th</sup> century barn at Town End Farm is also a very dominant building in the area.

The majority of buildings are built from sandstone and vary in height from 1 storey farm outbuildings to 3 storey farmhouses. The roofs vary, some slate, some pantile. The majority are simple ridge type and most have chimney stacks at their gable ends. The use of kneelers and gable copings are widespread. The crow stepped gable at Old Hall is a particular notable and unusual feature.

Most buildings along Wood Lane sit directly on the road side although few have their entrances onto the road, with exception to the pub and the Manor House. Therefore many are gable end to the road thus placing emphasis on the chimney stacks.

Windows have been replaced sympathetically, although uPVC is starting to be seen. Traditional windows should be encouraged as replacements and original windows retained. Yorkshire sash remain in some properties however a common window type seen in the area are simple single light windows of three panes.

The mud on the roads and the intermittent pavement from the many farms that are still in operation provide the area with a unique character. Although Wood Lane has a significant amount of through traffic nowadays, the village changed little over the past century. The village retains grass verges and boundaries are mainly denoted by stone walls many of which are castellated. Boundaries are also formed by hedgerows. That is likely to be ancient, denoting earlier field systems.

Brampton en le Morthen has managed to retain a unique and special character. Unlike neighbouring villages that expanded during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries with the mining industries, Brampton has remained as a small hamlet with working farms. Every effort must be made to retain this character. Although the village is located in the Green Belt, within the village there are numerous in fill sites between buildings. These spaces enable glimpses of the countryside beyond including the spire of the church at Laughton en le Morthen, and ensure that the village retains a rural and agricultural feel. Any proposals to develop any of these sites must carefully consider the impact on the character of this conservation area.

Although the area is generally well preserved, there are some buildings that are in a dilapidated condition, mainly farm buildings. However, restoration of other buildings has been undermined by the use of cement based mortars and strap pointing.

## **Potential Impact**

As mentioned above, the village of Brampton en le Morthen has managed to maintain its character as a well preserved agricultural village despite the rapid early 20<sup>th</sup> Century expansion of Thurcroft to the north east, brought about by the sinking of the colliery in 1909.

The character of the village is clearly illustrated by the number of listed buildings; almost half of the buildings within the Conservation Area boundary are listed, albeit at Grade II. This represents the highest percentage of listed buildings of any Conservation Area in the Borough. The Conservation Area, as designated, has helped to protect the remainder, not least of which, the former Rising Deer pub, where attempts to demolish have been resisted.



The Conservation Area has key internal views, namely up and down Brampton Road (Figure 3 above), however, the key views associated with Brampton are to be found on the edges of the settlement. Here views, both in and out, are of particular importance and value in that they reinforce the settlements rural character and its relationship with the surrounding



Figure 4 Key internal view of the Conservation Area looking northwards down Brampton Road

agricultural landscape, thereby placing the village's origins in context.

Arguably the key view is obtained heading northwards out of the village on Brampton Road. Here, looking north east is a sweeping vista of agricultural land and hedgerows. The combined site of LDF0433 and 0773 lies behind the hedgerow on the ridge line (as illustrated by the red arrow) and therefore any impact on the character and setting of the Conservation area is currently mitigated by both topography and vegetation cover which, if maintained, will continue to screen any further encroachment of the settlement of Thurcroft.



Figure 5 Photograph taken from the northern edge of the Conservation Area looking eastwards towards Thurcroft

# Conclusion

In terms of impact on Designated Heritage Assets, it is considered that the potential impact of development of LDF0433 would be low for the reasons outlined above. However, development *would* further reduce the distance between the settlement of Thurcroft and the rural conservation village of Brampton en le Morthen and in turn would increase pressure to also develop the aforementioned LDF0773 which *would* have a more significant impact on the conservation area.



Figure 6: Sites to the west of LDF0433, LDF0773

It is difficult to see how these two sites could be looked at separately and, therefore, in view of the previous objections raised by Historic England to development on LDF0733, any development on the adjacent site LDF0433 should also be resisted.

Should the possibility of development on either of these sites be pursued further, then, in view of the duty on the Council to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of its Conservation Areas, including their setting, and, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of any Listed Building, there will, as a minimum, be a need to undertake a detailed Heritage Impact Assessment, to determine the contribution these sites make to the character and setting of the Conservation Area and the nearby Listed Buildings and to further assess the significance of the possible impact on the historic setting of the Conservation Area and Listed Buildings .

# **Matter 25: Aston, Aughton and Swallownest**

LDF0417 Land off Church Lane  
(Within Aston Hall Parkland)



# LDF0417 Land Off Church Lane, Aston

## The Site

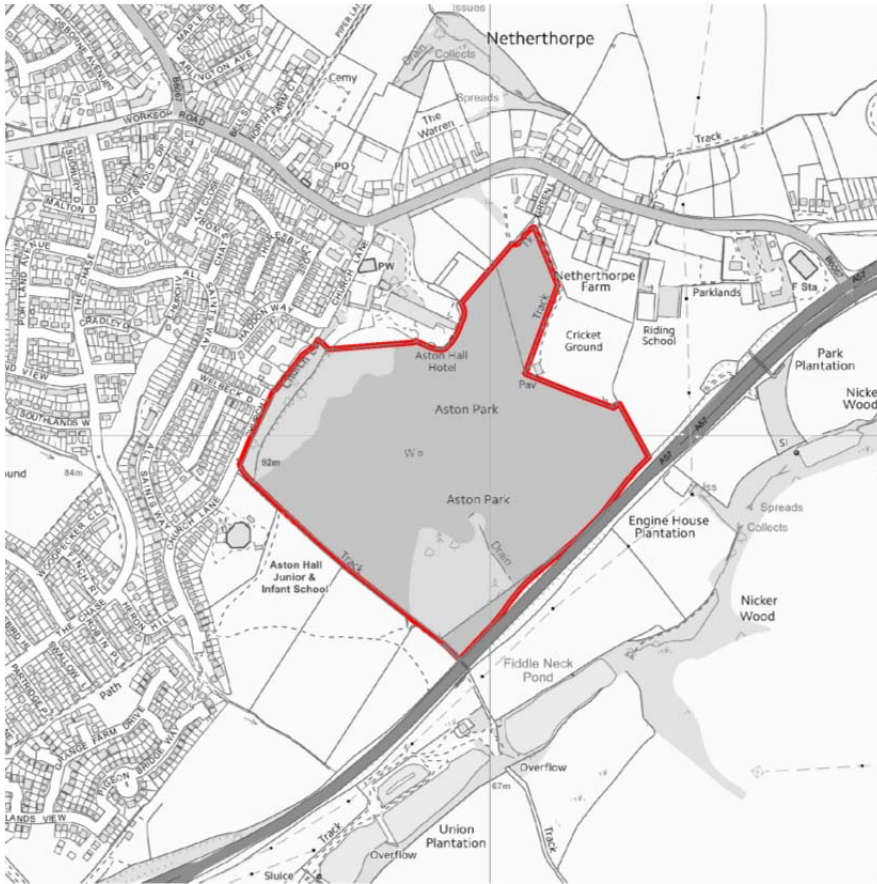


Figure 1 LDF0417

A 19 hectare site, to the east of the settlement of Aston. The site is bounded by Church Lane to the west, the A57 to the east, Aston Hall and Worksop Road to the north with Aston Junior and Infant school to the south-west.

Topographically the site slopes down from 100 metres above sea level adjacent the ha-ha at Aston Hall to 80 metres adjacent the A57.

A public footpath runs along the southern boundary of the site to the north of the school. There are no public rights of way traversing the site.

## Designated Heritage Assets

Within the village of Aston, to the immediate west of the site there are thirteen statutorily listed structures;

1. Entrance Gateway and attached railings at the Lodge, Church Lane, Aston. Listed Grade II on 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1987
2. South Farm House, Worksop Road, Aston. Listed Grade II 30<sup>th</sup> October, 1972.
3. Church of All Saints. Listed Grade I 29<sup>th</sup> March, 1968.
4. Gate Piers 12 metres to east of Church of All Saints. Listed Grade II 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1987
5. High Trees, Church Lane, Aston. Listed Grade II 29<sup>th</sup> March, 1968
6. The Old Coach House, Church Lane, Aston. Listed Grade II 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1987
7. Outbuilding 15 metres to west of South Farm House, Worksop Road, Aston. Listed Grade II 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1987
8. 22 and 24 Worksop Road, Aston. Listed Grade II 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1986
9. East Wing, Coach House and West Wing, Aughton Court. Listed Grade II 29<sup>th</sup> March, 1968.
10. The Grange, Worksop Road, Aston. Listed Grade II 29<sup>th</sup> March, 1968
11. The Lodge, Worksop Road, Aston. Listed Grade II 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1986
12. Aughton Court, Worksop Road, Aston. Listed Grade II\* 29<sup>th</sup> March, 1968
13. Gravestone to Hill Family 5 metres to east of South Porch of Church of All Saints. Listed Grade II 1st April 1896.

# Aston Conservation Area and the History of the Settlement

Modern Aston is a large village that has extended so it now merges with neighbouring areas. The conservation area therefore focuses on the historic heart of Aston around the church, Church Lane and Worksop Road. It is likely that this is the where the earliest settlement was in Saxon times, after all the name 'Aston' is derived from the old English, 'east tun' and is listed in the Domesday Book (1086) as 'Estone'.

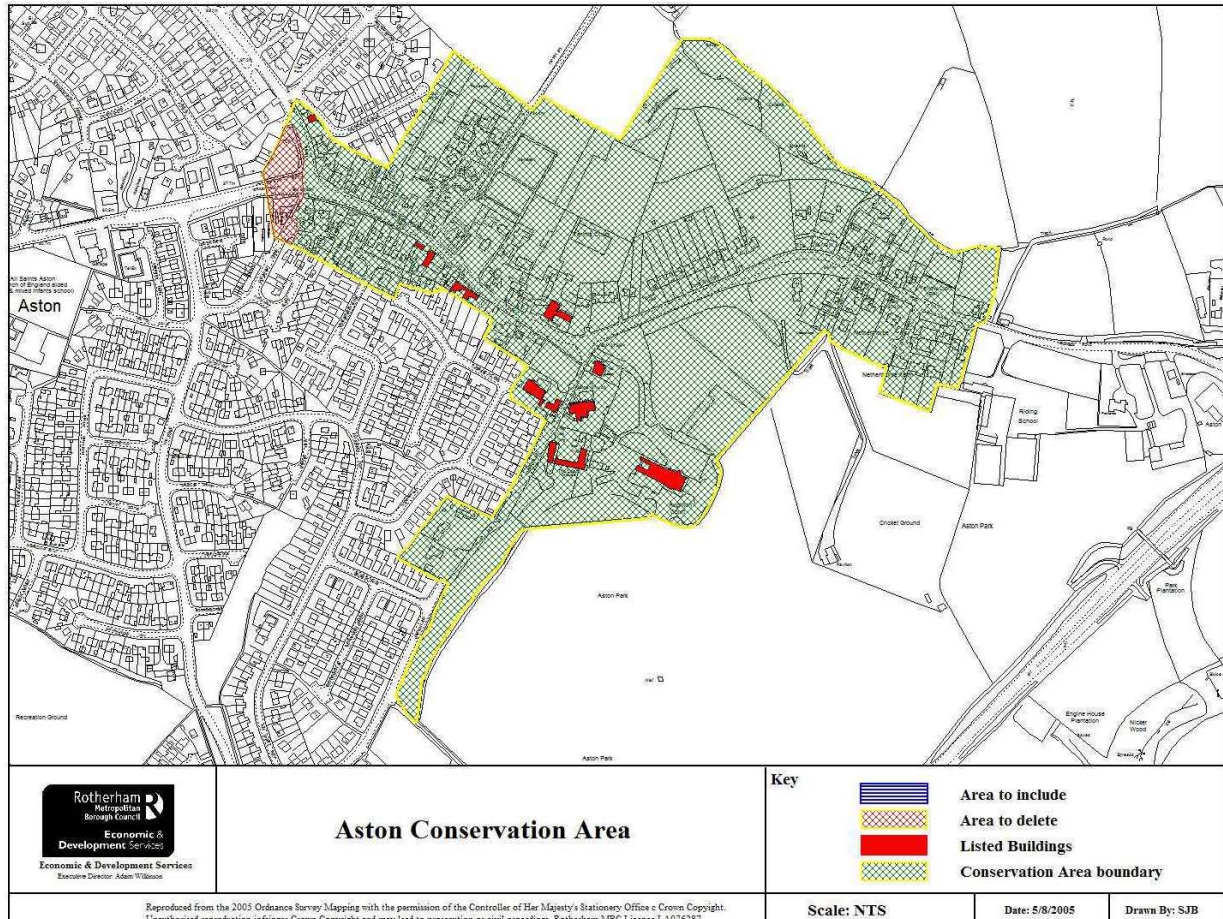


Figure 2: Aston Conservation Area

One of the most striking aspects of Aston is the many prominent and significant buildings. These include the grade I listed Church of All Saints' that dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the grade II\* country house, Aston Hall (Aughton Court) designed by the famous York architect John Carr c.1772. There are also many grade II listed buildings and structures. These fine buildings certainly ensure that Aston warrants conservation area status.

Although no farms are working today within the conservation area the historical development is clearly agricultural. The cottages mainly date from the 18<sup>th</sup> century as do the larger houses, and appear to be built within plots from earlier times. Early OS maps certainly show evidence of strip farming to the rear of these buildings. Generally views are short and closed yet fields can be glimpsed between buildings to the north of the area.

There is no predominant building type in the area, they range from small cottages to large country houses, stable blocks to 1920s/30s detached housing. Brick and painted render is used, however many of the earliest buildings are built from sandstone and is certainly the predominant material used, especially in the construction of the many boundary walls that range in height from 1-3 metres often with rounded copings. Building height varies too from 1.5 storeys to 3 with a range of roof styles, pitch, hipped and cross gabled. Many properties have been re-roofed with modern materials, but the traditional materials at Aston are clay pantiles or slate.

A notable architectural feature is the use of kneelers and quoin stones, these details have often been replicated on many of the recent new build properties in the area.

Traditionally many of the windows in the cottages would have been Yorkshire sash. Few properties still retain these and those that do should be encouraged to do so. The replacing of windows especially with uPVC is having a detrimental effect on the character of the area. The desirability of these windows is no doubt increased by the incessant traffic noise along the busy Worksop Road. This heavy traffic through the area is creating a noisy, polluted (dirty grass verges, buildings) area. This pollution and subsequent salting of the roads in winter months is also damaging the sandstone of some buildings and boundary walls.

Important features are the many large mature trees, most are covered by specific tree preservation orders and the removal of any must be considered carefully. In addition to the trees, the intermittent grass verges also contribute to the area and help to ensure that it retains an element of its once more rural past.

Another factor that detracts from the area is the poorly designed shop/business signs. Although not many in number their impact can be great if not designed with consideration for the overall character of the area.

In 2005 an appraisal recommended retention as a conservation area with minor change to north-western boundary. By removing the shops and car park a defined boundary can be created that focuses on the historic heart of the village. The boundary to the west and south remains unchanged, but it is important to note that this follows the line of an 18<sup>th</sup> century Ha-Ha that was probably associated to Aston Hall and is still visible in parts.

It was also recommended that the introduction of an Article 4 direction could be considered regarding the windows of Swiss Cottage at The Warren. This building is a prominent and unusual building and has historical connections with Aston Hall.



# Aston Hall and Parkland

Situated on the north-west boundary of LDF0417 sits the Grade II\* listed Aston Hall. Now used as a hotel, Aston Hall occupies a prominent hill top position enjoying commanding views to the south and east. It is a compact three storey house, of five bays with a central three window canted bay on the north and south facades and is built of local magnesian limestone and roofed in Westmoreland slate.



Figure 3 Aston Hall, principle elevation

Originally the seat of the Melton family, Aston Hall passed by marriage to the Darcys of Hornby Castle in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century and was sold off by the 4<sup>th</sup> and last earl of Holderness in 1774. The old Aston Hall had been demolished following a fire and rebuilt to the designs of the renowned architect, John Carr of York. In addition, Capability Brown was involved in the layout of the Park. Aston Hall was used as a hospital after the last war and was subsequently converted to a hotel in the 1980's.



The park has suffered from the encroachment of the duel carriageway to the south. Mining has also affected the landscape which added several extra ponds to the valley.

Despite this, the house retains its original relationship with the park and can still be appreciated in its principle aspects much as Carr intended.

## **Capability Brown and the Park Setting**

Brown's involvement at Aston is not 100% conclusive, however, the evidence is compelling. The park possessed the characteristics of a "Brown-scape" and there are numerous payments recorded to Brown during the 1750's and 1760's from the then owner of Aston Hall, Lord Holderness. These changes to the landscape were extensive and the arrangement of a series of lakes and broad lawns were eminently in Brown's style and Holderness and Brown enjoyed an extensive professional relationship. It thus seems more than likely that Brown **was** indeed responsible for the park setting at Aston Hall.

This being the case, the installation of the ha-ha around the north, east and south sides of the house would also have been by Brown. Brown's use of a ha-ha emphasised the continuity of park and house, the smooth transition from hall to landscape. It was a regularly employed device (employed at Stowe, Charlcoate and other Brown gardens) which preserved the naturalism of a garden's relation with the broader setting, while creating an inner area protected from animal encroachment. The ha-ha runs around the principal sides of Aston Hall, the sides which could be seen from afar and which were unencumbered by the service wing.

A clear comparison can be made between the changes to Aston Park and those to Holderness's other Yorkshire park at Hornby. An 1806 survey of Hornby Park reveals the same serpentine series of lakes, smooth lawn descending to the south east and randomly dotted trees within the park as occur at Aston. Brown's mature style is evident in each instance.

(Taken from "Aston Hall, A Historical Report by Roger Bowdler, Historic Analysis and Research Team, English Heritage, April 1996 which is attached as an appendix)

## **The Church of All Saints**

A highly significant Grade I listed place of worship originating from the late 12<sup>th</sup> century with additions in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. Built of red sandstone and limestone ashlar with a lead and Welsh slate roof.

## **History and Development of the Church**

About 700 AD, the people of Aston embraced Christianity and built a church; probably of wood and wattle. It is recorded in the Domesday Book that "a church is there, and a priest". There are traces of that church beneath the present building. After the Norman Conquest in



1066, the Norman Lord erected a Hall and rebuilt the church in stone. Since then the building has been extended a number of times although some of the original early 12th century stonework remains.

In the 13th century, the church was probably a rectangular building covering what is now the Nave. There would have been a solid west wall where now there is a tower, and solid walls instead of the arches on either side. Narrow slits in the walls would have given a little light which would have reflected from the lime washed walls. The decorative stonework would have been coloured in red, blue and yellow paint. Rushes would have covered the earth floor and a patch of disturbed earth would indicate a recent burial. At the east end of the church (where the altar is now) there would have been an apse – a semi-circular wall with a roof like a dome. The altar would have been under the dome.



Figure 5 The Grade I listed Church of All Saints, easterly elevation

The building was extended, and the side aisles built, at various times during the medieval period. Because of this piecemeal extension, the piers (pillars) and the arches are in different styles. The south-east arch is early Gothic while the others are in Norman rounded style, with typical carved decorations. The walls of the aisles would have been plastered and decorated with pictures or with uplifting texts. There are fragments of these painted texts on the wall of the north aisle, one of which dates from 1604. It was revealed when the plaster was being removed from the wall in the late 20th century.

The chancel was built for William de Melton, Archbishop of York and Lord Chancellor of England. He bought the Manor of Aston and built a Hall as residence when visiting this part



of his Archdiocese in 1332. The original apse was removed, the Gothic style arch constructed and the church extended again. This extension differs from the rest of the church in that the outside is faced with limestone.

The altar was placed under the east window which is why there is a squint (an angled opening) to the right of the chancel arch. This gave a view of the altar from the south aisle. The 19th century Sanctuary Lamp still hangs over where the altar was situated before it was moved in 1957. The chancel was built with two doors. One was used by the clergy (it now leads into the choir vestry). The other door was the Lord of the Manor's entrance, with a path across the graveyard to the 16th century gateway to Aston Hall. The lord's entrance gave access to his private pew, which was just to the east of the squint. It had its own fireplace, which was discovered when the wall by the squint was replastered in the 1990s.

After the chancel was built, the east end of the south aisle became a Lady Chapel and in medieval times an altar stood against the wall. There is a piscina (stone basin used for washing the Communion vessels) built into the south wall. The Lady Chapel was a favoured burial place and a number of Rectors are buried there. At the opposite side of the building (the east end of the north aisle – where there is now a door into the choir vestry) was the Melton family's Requiem Chapel.

The porch was constructed in the 14th century. The badly eroded figures on either side of the entrance are effigies of King Edward III and Queen Phillipa. This dates the porch to no later than 1369 – the year the Queen died. A 1900 newspaper reported that the carvings were in near perfect condition but the acid rain later in the 20th century has almost obliterated them. It is probable that the stone benches were used when teaching children, before the village had a school.

The tower was erected sometime between 1350 and 1450. It is part of the Melton additions to the church. The tower is about eighty feet in height and overlooks all the other buildings in the Parish. It has had many uses over the centuries. In its early days it provided a look out and refuge in times of trouble: flattened musket balls found outside its walls are evidence of that. It was also used as a temporary gaol to hold people awaiting trial. In around 1552 there were six bells in the tower: the surviving bell-rope holes indicate that the bells were swung. Unfortunately the foundations are not very solid and swinging the bells also rocked the tower. There are now just three bells, two of which date from 1784. One of them is connected to the Parish clock and strikes the hours. The clock is weight powered and requires winding two or three times each week. In the mid-20th century, mining subsidence caused the tower to tilt away from the nave and that stopped the pendulum from swinging. Later the tower tilted back to the perpendicular and the clock became operational again.

By the 18th century, the building had assumed its present shape. In 1771 oak pews were fitted to wooden flooring; these pews remained in use for over 200 years, until they were replaced by the current pews which came second hand from Holy Trinity Church in Rugby. In about 1790, a gallery was erected in the base of the tower. It lasted about 90 years and during that time it was used by musicians, provided space for additional seating and was home to a barrel organ. At that time there was an ornate wooden screen dividing the tower from the nave.

The Victorians added what is now the choir vestry. For many years it housed a small pipe organ, but in 2001 this was removed and replaced with the present electronic instrument.

The most recent addition to the church is the Narthex, which was built in 1989 and is reached through a new oak door in the north wall. It provides a toilet, kitchen and a meeting room.

There are a number of memorials in the church to Lords of the Manor, and from them it is possible to trace the families which held the estate. On the left side of the chancel arch is a brass memorial to Sir John Melton (the last Melton Lord of the Manor), and his coat of arms. He died during the reign of King Henry VIII.

Dorothy Melton inherited the estate and married a George Darcy. The Darcys resided in Aston for many years and the last of them, Good Sir John, inherited the Manor in 1602. He married four times: there are effigies of him and his first three wives on the north wall of the chancel. He was left without an heir and his fourth wife outlived him. She married Sir Francis Fane and continued to live in Aston. The monument to their 'many sonnes and daughters' is on the south wall of the chancel.

The last Lords of the Manor were the Verelsts. Harry Verelst succeeded Clive of India as Governor of Bengal, and when he retired he first rented and then bought the Manor in 1770. Only a year later- on Christmas Day 1771 – the old Aston Hall burned down. One stained glass window was salvaged, and installed in the church in the Lady Chapel. It depicts the Arms of the Darcy family (and families related by marriage). There are brass plaques in memory of later members of the Verelst family on the screen in the tower. In 1928 the Manorial Estate was divided up and sold off – the Aston Hall being converted to a women's mental hospital. It is now the Aston Hall Hotel.

### The Font

The font dates from about 1400. It was moved from under the tower to its present location in 1957. The carved figures on the base are thought to represent King Herod, intent on killing the baby Jesus and a guardian angel warning Joseph to flee with the Holy Infant to Egypt.

### William Mason

Mason was probably Aston's most famous Rector. There is a monument to him in the chancel and a much grander one in Westminster Abbey's Poets Corner. He was appointed (by Robert Darcy, the Fourth Earl of Holderness) in 1754, and remained for 43 years. He was responsible for building the Old Rectory (which still survives – the large building opposite the church entrance). Amongst his visitors to the Rectory were Horace Walpole, and his close friend the poet Thomas Gray, who penned 'Elegy in a Country Churchyard'. On the south wall of the church are two plaster reliefs, commemorating Mason and Gray, which were originally in the summer house of the Rectory.

On the north side of the Sanctuary is a 19th century copy of a 4th century Florentine relief of the Madonna and Child. The other two parts of this work are in a St Petersburg museum. There are chairs in the Sanctuary from the 16th, 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. The altar, which may date from Saxon times, was about two feet wider than it is now. During the Edward VI purges the stone altar top was taken out of church and hidden to prevent its destruction. It was rediscovered (broken in two) in the churchyard in 1957.

On the wall of the tower are large boards recording charitable bequests. By today's standards the amounts seem trivial but when they were made, a worker was earning about £10 a year. Much of the original investments were lost but Aston Charities still aids needy parishioners and local groups. (Kindly reproduced from the All Saints, Aston cum Aughton website)

## Conclusion

Aston Hall was a house to be seen from a distance and from which a prospect of the distant Derbyshire hills could be enjoyed. The impressive Grade I church tower added to the picturesque incident of the hill crest.

Aston Hall deserves its II\* grade on a number of counts. It is a characteristic, small-sized country house by Yorkshire's leading 18<sup>th</sup> century architect. It was built for an eminent client, and rapidly passed into the ownership of a man of historical interest in his own right. Its commanding hilltop setting endows it with considerable presence and underscores the importance of the Darcy family, its builders.

Despite the encroachments of modern roads, the park, to the layout of which strong connections with Capability can be adduced, still retains its original configuration to a large extent and still sets off the house to advantage. The principle elevations are the north, the east and the south. The most important view of the house is from the south east, in which direction the park descends.

Any encroachment upon these areas would have a damaging effect on the character and setting of Aston Hall, the Church of All Saints and the Aston Conservation Area alike.

For this reason any development on LDF0417 should be strongly resisted.



**ASTON HALL  
WORKSOP ROAD  
ASTON  
SOUTH YORKSHIRE**

**Historical Report**

**Roger Bowdler**

**Historical Analysis and Research Team  
English Heritage**

**April 1996**

**ASTON HALL, WORKSOP ROAD, ASTON, Nr ROTHERHAM,  
SOUTH YORKSHIRE**

**Summary**

Aston Hall is a three storey Palladian country house, listed grade II\*, situated on a commanding hill-top site in the coal-rich lands of South Yorkshire. Originally the seat of the Melton family, Aston passed by marriage to the Darcys of Hornby Castle in the mid-16th Century and was sold off by the 4th and last earl of Holderness in 1774. The old Aston Hall had been demolished following a fire, and rebuilt to the designs of John Carr of York; how much of this had been completed by the time of the sale is unknown. Capability Brown was probably involved in the lay-out of the park. The estate was purchased in 1774 by Harry Verelst, sometime Governor of Bengal, and remained in the family's possession until early this century. Verelst installed the present staircase in 1776-77. Substantial alterations affecting the service wing were carried out in 1825. Aston Hall was used as a hospital after the last war and was subsequently converted to a hotel in 1980s. The park has suffered from the encroachment of a dual carriageway across its middle. Mining has also affected the landscape, and added several extra ponds to the valley. Despite this, the house retains its original relationship with the park and can still be appreciated in its principal aspects much as Carr intended.

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## Description

Aston Hall occupies a prominent hill-top position, enjoying commanding views to the south and east. It is a compact two and a half storey house, of five bays with a central three-window canted bay on the north and south facades, and is built of local magnesian limestone and roofed in Westmoreland slates. A lower service wing extends to the west. The main entrance on the north side is via a low door within the rusticated ground storey: its relative lack of emphasis is explained by the former existence of twin stairs leading up to the first floor, or piano nobile, which are shown on the only known drawing by Carr of the house (see pl.3). The ground floor (or 'rustic') and attic storey sport square six-pane windows; those of the piano nobile are double squares with twelve panes, set within frames with pulvinated friezes and with balustraded aprons, the centre-most being accentuated with a triangular pediment. A modillioned cornice runs around the house. The east elevation has suffered from the lowering, blocking and re-fenestration of ground floor windows. The south, or garden, front survives in good condition save for the insertion of French windows into the central opening.

The service wing, however, presents a more complicated picture. Of two storeys, it is connected to the western elevation of the hall and shows signs of considerable rebuilding, particularly in its lower, western section. The shallow hipped roofs are covered with Welsh slates rather than Westmoreland ones, to denote the wing's lesser status. The presence of a lower and asymmetrically sited wing comes as no surprise in a Carr house. There are, however, signs of later alterations. The two storey, five bay wing lacks the house's rigorous symmetry; besides, it is faced with a darker stone, and the location of windows so close to the abutting of the wing with the main block creates an awkwardness that argues against Carr's direct involvement.

The interior of the house has undergone alterations both ancient and modern. The principal change relates to the stairs. The present stairs are believed to consist of Derbyshire marble (they are painted at present), and were installed by John Platt (1728-1810) in 1776-77<sup>1</sup> for Harry Verelst. Many of the fireplaces have been removed but otherwise the interior survives to a reasonable extent. The secondary stairs lead to the second floor: this is one of the best spaces within the house, with the bedroom doors being symmetrically arranged in a triumphal arch pattern.

The house is surrounded by a ha-ha on all sides save the western, where a large car park is now sited. A notable pair of rusticated gate-piers connect the hall with the churchyard. A solitary early 19th century urn to the north of the house is the only garden feature close to the hall. The park is still clearly recognisable in form and extent despite the encroachments of a dual-carriageway through its midst. A series of ponds lies in the valley to the south-east, beyond the bare park that leads up to the house.

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<sup>1</sup>H. Colvin, A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840 (3rd ed. 1995), 759. The Platts were Rotherham's leading family of mason-architects for most of the 18th century; John Platt had an interest in several Derbyshire marble quarries.

### **The Earlier Aston Hall**

Aston Hall was originally the seat of the Melton family<sup>2</sup>. George Darcy (d.1558) married Dorothy, daughter and heiress of Sir John Melton of Aston, and the estate remained in the Darcy's hands until the late 18th century.

The earlier Aston Hall is known only through a sketch of the 1720s by Samuel Buck<sup>3</sup>, and a ground plan included in a parish map of the 1760s, shortly before its rebuilding<sup>4</sup>. The hall appears to have been a large castellated range with end towers and corner turrets, its oriel windows and regularly spaced mullioned windows suggesting a medieval structure<sup>5</sup> with substantial 16th century remodelling. Comparison might also be made with the principal seat of the Darcys, Hornby Castle<sup>6</sup>. Aston Hall was a building of considerable local importance. According to the 1672 Hearth Tax Returns for South Yorkshire, only one building possessed more hearths: the earl of Strafford's seat at Wentworth, which had 43 to Aston Hall's 27<sup>7</sup>. The Hon. Conyers Darcy (1599-1689), created earl of Holderness in 1682, was in occupation at that time.

The magnificent rusticated gate piers that lead into the churchyard are all that remain from the earlier Aston Hall above ground today. Of red sandstone, with ball finials, they appear to be late 17th century in date and are now flanked by later walls of limestone. The present Aston Hall seems to have been built slightly to the east of the site of the earlier building; certainly the cellars of the 1760s building show no signs of earlier fabric. The Samuel Buck view is labelled as 'the east prospect' and appears to show the surviving gate piers. Relating the drawing to the 1760s plan, it would appear that Buck's view was actually taken from the north-east, and that the older Aston Hall stood on the site of the present-day car park and service wing.

### **Aston in the mid-18th Century**

The 'People's Republic of South Yorkshire', ironically enough, possessed a notable concentration of aristocratic estates in the mid-18th century, of which Aston was but one.

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<sup>2</sup>For the Melton pedigree, see Nathaniel Johnston, An Essaye Towards the Illustrating of the Antiquities of the Right Honourable Familyes of the Lords D'Arcie Conyers & Mennill & of the Right Worshipfull Familiye of the Meltons of Aston in Com. Eborum (1677), B.L. MS Lansdowne 3402, f.118v. ff.

<sup>3</sup>British Library, MS Lansdowne 914, f.64v; repr. in Ivan Hall ed., The Yorkshire Sketchbook of Samuel Buck (Wakefield, 1979), 90.

<sup>4</sup>Sheffield Archives, MD 3516.

<sup>5</sup>Compare Bolling Hall near Bradford: Louis Ambler, The Old Halls and Manor Houses of Yorkshire (1913), pl. xlii.

<sup>6</sup>G. Worsley, 'Hornby Castle, Yorkshire', Country Life 29 June 1989, 188-93.

<sup>7</sup>David Hey ed., the Hearth Tax Returns for South Yorkshire Ladyday 1672 (1991), 5. The Hearth Tax consisted of a 2/- levy on each hearth. A major source of government revenue and a major source of public discontent, it was ended in 1688. The records for the area are incomplete, however.

Taken as a whole, Yorkshire had the lowest concentration of such seats, but in the years around 1750 only Rutland exceeded South Yorkshire in terms of the numbers of such estates<sup>8</sup>.

Aston's greatest asset has been its situation, enjoying a fine view into Derbyshire. Johnston, writing in 1677, stated 'the towne stands pleasantly having an open prospect to ye southwest, to Chesterfield & ye Countrey adjoining on ye east, ye Parish of Todwich adjoyneth... ye Hall stands on ye east of ye town adjoining to ye church'<sup>9</sup>. Its other economic asset has been the coal deposits lying below Aston Park and elsewhere in the parish.

To Aston's advantages of mineral wealth and visually advantageous setting was added a third: its proximity to the Great North Road. This endowed the Hall with a particular appeal to the Lords Holderness, who could use it as a staging post on their way up to their principal seat of Hornby Castle. It also announced the beginning of the family's prominence in the county, which was most strong in the North Riding but which was also in evidence here. Aston Hall's commanding position was a visible reminder of Darcy authority.

The village's most famous resident was the Rev. William Mason (1724-97), the poet and biographer of Thomas Gray. Presented to the rectory of Aston by Robert Darcy, 4th earl of Holderness in 1754, Mason rebuilt the rectory to the designs of John Carr<sup>10</sup>. Writing to Horace Walpole on 21 June 1777, Mason stated that the Archbishop of York 'praised my house and said it was imprudent to lay out so much, but it gave me consolation to think I had by doing so, made a pretty adequate return to Lord Holderness for his patronage, especially as the living was retained in the family; and as to the situation I thought it so pleasant that a man might very well preserve his independency in it; the only thing which I thought worth preserving'<sup>11</sup>. Mason is now best-remembered as author of the epic poem The English Garden of 1772. Aston is memorably described in a letter written to Thomas Wharton on 21 June 1767 by Gray: 'here we are, Mr Brown and I, in a wilderness of sweets, an Elysium among the coal-pits, a terrestrial heaven. Mind, it is not I, but Mason, that says all this, & bids me tell it you. Tomorrow we visit Dovedale and the Wonders of the Peak'<sup>12</sup>. Mason did not, perhaps, influence the design

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<sup>8</sup>Paul Nunn, 'Aristocratic Estates and Employment in South Yorkshire 1700-1800' in S. Pollard and C. Holmes, Essays in the Economic and Social History of South Yorkshire (1976), 28-9.

<sup>9</sup> op. cit., f.114.

<sup>10</sup>Plan of Aston Rectory in John Carr's copy of Robert Morris's Select Architecture (1755) in the Soane Museum, opp. pl.3. See Mary and Robert Wragg, 'Two Houses by Carr of York', Country Life 12 April 1956, 752-53.

<sup>11</sup>W.S. Lewis ed., Horace Walpole's Correspondence, vol. 28 (New Haven, 19..), 317. See also G.C. Moore Smith, 'Gray and Mason at Aston', Hunter Arch. Soc. Trans. II (1924), 271-76.

<sup>12</sup>P. Toynbee and L. Whibley, Correspondence of Thomas Gray (Oxford 1935) iii, 964. The Mr Brown referred to was not Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, but rather Richard



of Aston Hall or its park; yet his very presence at Aston reminds one that this was a village with inhabitants and visitors of enormous cultural significance, besides being owned by an eminent northern magnate.

### **Aston in the 1760s: a period of change**

Mason's rebuilding of the Rectory in the mid-1760s heralded major changes in the village. This was a decade of great importance to Aston. Not only was the Hall rebuilt and the park remodelled: the whole landscape of the village was altered as a result of the enclosure of the common fields. In 1766 An Act for the Dividing and Inclosing Several Open Fields, Commons or Waste Grounds, situate, lying and being within the manors of Aston and Wales, in the County of York was passed<sup>13</sup>. The parish of Aston-cum-Aughton contained over 800 acres of commons and open fields. The Act sought to consolidate widely scattered plots into amalgamated holdings, particularly those of Lord Holderness, lord of the manor. The undated plan of the Parish of Aston in the Sheffield Archives would appear to have been prepared in connection with this Act: it affords valuable insights into the earlier appearance of the Hall, and is annotated with numbers relating to the land apportionment; the preparation of a proper survey of the manor was one of the pre-requisites of the Act.

It also confirmed his rights to 'all the Mines and Quarries, and all Seams and Veins of Coal, Lead Ore, Iron Ore and all other Minerals... lying and being within and under the said Commons or Waste Ground'. Mineral extraction in such a coal-rich area was an extremely important additional asset to the estate.

The Act also had a considerable impact on the village's roads: new lanes were to be laid out, connecting older routes and bisecting newly amalgamated fields, which were to be enclosed with 'good and sufficient fences and ditches'. It was only after the rationalisation of the feudally determined land holdings that the stage was prepared for the remodelling of Aston Hall and its park.

### **Lord Holderness and the Remodelling of the 1760s**

The Aston estate was one of the principal possessions of the earls of Holderness. The first Darcy to be ennobled was Sir Thomas Darcy, who received a barony in 1509; his involvement in the Pilgrimage of Grace led to his execution in 1538 and the termination of the title, which was restored in 1548<sup>14</sup>. The family's importance grew throughout the 17th century, culminating in their elevation to an earldom in 1682. During the 18th century they were the leading Whig family in the North Riding.

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Brown, fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge.

<sup>13</sup>Sheffield Archives, MD 5716. This volume contains, in addition to the printed Act, a later manuscript copy of the 1768 Land apportionment Award.

<sup>14</sup>On the Darcy family, see R. Thoresby, Ducatus Leodiensis (2nd ed., 1816), 227-28; T. D. Whitaker, The History and Antiquities of the Deanery of Craven (3rd ed. 1878), 71; Johnston, *op. cit.*, *passim.*; G.E. Cokayne, The Complete Peerage (rev. ed. 1910-59), vi, 533 ff..

Robert Darcy, 4th and final earl of Holderness, was born in 1718 and succeeded his father at the tender age of three. Holderness was an extremely influential court figure, serving as Lord Lieutenant of the North Riding in 1740-77, Lord of the Bedchamber in 1741-51, as a Privy Councillor from 1751, as Secretary of State in 1751-61 besides various appointments abroad<sup>15</sup>. George III said of his two secretaries of state -of whom the elder Pitt was the other- that 'he had two secretaries, one who would do nothing, and the other who could do nothing, and he would have one who both would and could'. His dismissal from his Secretaryship of State was compensated by later securing the post of Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, and being granted an annual pension of £4,000. Holderness was appointed governor of the Prince of Wales in 1771.

Walpole described the secretary 'who could do nothing' as a 'formal piece of dulness'. However, Holderness was a discerning patron of the arts and an active member of the Dilettanti Society. He employed Athenian Stuart on his London town house, Holderness House (dem. 1964) in the early 1760s, and possibly also at Hornby Castle and at Sion Hill, Isleworth<sup>16</sup> at the same time. Another person to whom payments are recorded in his private accounts<sup>17</sup> was Capability Brown, who appears regularly from 1756 onwards. A third figure is that of John Carr.

Holderness's withdrawal from government in 1761 enabled him to devote more time to his estates. It is no coincidence that all four of his houses- Hornby Castle, Aston Hall, Holderness House and Sion Hill- underwent works during the 1760s. Such extensive works prompted a Mr. Yvonnet to write concernedly in October 1765 to Sir Robert Hildyard, Bt.: 'the alterations you tell me Lord Holderness makes at Hornby Castle will be very expensive and so many buildings going forward at once will drain his pocket. He will want some other good friend as Sir Conyers to die and leave his estates to sell to raise money'<sup>18</sup>. Holderness evidently lived beyond his means. In 1768 his total income was £8,191 (of which £2,678 was derived from the Aston estate, £900 less than the Hornby estate brought in), but he had debts of £27,000<sup>19</sup>. His extensive commitments elsewhere, combined with this debt, may have been the reasons behind the sale of Aston Hall in 1774. How advanced Carr's replacement house then was is not known.

Despite Holderness's debts and other building projects, it was evidently decided that the old Aston Hall was to be completely rebuilt rather than remodelled, as was the case with Hornby Castle. The reason for this appears to have been a damaging fire. According to Hunter, 'the earls of Holderness, who were accustomed to reside much at Aston, greatly improved the old house, or rather erected a new house on its site. To this

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<sup>15</sup>See his entry in the DNB.

<sup>16</sup>Worsley, op. cit..

<sup>17</sup>BL, MS Lansdowne 3497: Private Accompts 1739-79. These are tantalisingly undetailed, and are simply annual summaries of income and expenditure, listing amounts paid out and from whom bills had been received.

<sup>18</sup>Quoted in Country Life, 15 March 1990, 76.

<sup>19</sup>Worsley, op. cit., 189.

they were in part compelled by the effect of one or more fires, from which the edifice suffered severely<sup>20</sup>. According to the 1956 Country Life article by the Wraggs, old Aston Hall was destroyed by a fire one Christmas<sup>21</sup>. Aston was thus added to Hornby Castle, Holderness House and Sion Hill as the manifestations of Holderness's zeal for building.

Whatever the cause, Holderness's proposed remodelling of Aston Hall and Park were not to be completed for their instigator. In 1766 Holderness received £12,000 from a Mr Snow, 'borrowed of him on mortgage of Aston Estate at 4/10/- per cent'<sup>22</sup>. This was the first relaxation of the Darcy's two-hundred year grip on the estate. However, the property was not disposed of finally until the mid-1770s. Mason wrote to Horace Walpole on 2nd October 1774 thus:

At last the fate of Aston is decided and my nabob cousin is in possession of the house, manor, etc. and last night the boys of the village having dragged a cast of coals from the pits made a bonfire on the occasion. This goodly estate which came into the D'Arcy family by a marriage with an heiress of the Meltons, temp. Prin. Eliz., now goes from it because a broken Scots quartermaster (steward to the Duke of Leeds) would not suffer him to redeem it. Take physic, Pomp!<sup>23</sup>.

Mason went on to complain that Holderness's piecemeal sale of the estate in small parcels would create difficulties for him in collecting tithes.<sup>24</sup> His 'nabob cousin', Harry Verelst, was a man of considerable importance in his own right, having held the post of governor of Bengal in 1767-69 under Clive. Aston Hall might have lost its patrician and hereditary owner, but it had still gained a new occupant of status. Holderness died at Sion Hill in 1776 and was brought back to Hornby Castle for burial in the Darcy vault.

#### **Carr's work at Aston**

The earliest attribution of the house to Carr is found in Thomas Allen's A New and Complete History of the County of York of 1831. 'Within a few hundred yards of the church, and once surrounded by a park, stood Aston Hall, the ancient residence of the

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<sup>20</sup>Rev. Joseph Hunter, South Yorkshire (1828-31, repr. 1974) ii, 165. Also viz. the MS Historical Notes compiled c.1800 by John Payne of Newhill (Sheffield Archives, MD 6782), n.p.: 'the earls of Holderness made Aston Hall what it now is. The old Mansion had been on fire more than once'.

<sup>21</sup>Mary and Robert Brian Wragg, 'Two Houses by Carr of York', Country Life 12 April 1956, 752-53.

<sup>22</sup>BL, MS Egerton 3497, f.68.

<sup>23</sup>Horace Walpole's Correspondence vol. 28, 172. Holderness's accounts refer in November 1775 to £1,057 received from Mr Verelst as 'ballance of his purchase money'. Another payment in December 1776 to Verelst refers to a bond of £9,800 made over to Holderness.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 231.



D'Arcys, afterwards earls of Holderness, which was pulled down upwards of fifty years ago, and the present mansion erected on the ancient site, under the direction of Mr Carr, of York'<sup>25</sup>.

The connection with Carr is clinched through a sketch plan of the house contained in Carr's own copy in the Soane Museum of Robert Morris' Select Architecture (1755). This ground floor plan, with two sets of dimensions, is inscribed 'Aston Hall'. This plan is of particular interest as it shows the original stair arrangement: access to the piano nobile was by means of a pair of semi-circular stairs (a la Kedleston) leading to the canted bay on the north side, with the entrance hall left unencumbered. The inner stairs would have been a continuation of the present secondary stairs.

Carr's earliest connection with Aston came through William Mason and the rebuilding of the Rectory. Carr wrote to the Leeds Infirmary Committee from Aston in 1767<sup>26</sup> when he was probably engaged upon this project, and it was probably through Mason that Carr became known to Holderness. Such was Carr's rising status in Yorkshire, however, that Holderness or his agent may have turned to Carr as the obvious choice. This appears to have been the case at Hornby Castle. Payments are recorded from Holderness to Carr between 1757 and 1768 totalling over £2,000, indicating the extent of the professional relationship. This was a far greater sum than that recorded over the same period to James Stuart, Holderness's London architect. Details of these payments are listed below, in Appendix 1.

The new Aston Hall bore a marked resemblance to a number of other Carr buildings, above all in manifesting 'Carr's deep liking for solid geometry'<sup>27</sup>. Basildon Park, Berkshire of 1776 consists of the same three storey, canted central bay design: in sum, a classic Palladian small country house. Basildon Park shares more than a stylistic connection with Aston Hall. Carr's only work in Southern England, it was built for Sir Francis Sykes, a Yorkshire-born Nabob who was a friend of Harry Verelst of Aston: his portrait even hung in Verelst's house<sup>28</sup>.

Thornes House, near Wakefield, repeats the design which was realised in brick. Like Basildon but unlike Aston, it was flanked by symmetrical wings with two-storey pavilions. Kitson remarked on the similarity of Aston Hall to Constable Burton in plan and elevation. This house in the North Riding was built in 1762-67 for Sir Marmaduke Wyvill, Bt.; the comparison is not a close one. Ivan Hall suggests that the closest comparison is with Gledstone Hall, near Skipton, built c.1771 for the Rev. Richard Roundell and now demolished.

### **Capability Brown and the Park Setting**

Just as Holderness turned to Carr for architectural assistance at Hornby Castle and at Aston Hall, so he turned to Brown for help with the new park. Holderness was one of

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<sup>25</sup>op. cit., iii, 145.

<sup>26</sup>Sydney D. Kitson, 'Carr of York', Journal of the RIBA, 22 January 1910, 253.

<sup>27</sup>Ivan Hall, Georgian Buxton (Derby 1984), 19.

<sup>28</sup>Kitson, op. cit., 250.

the peers who petitioned the Duke of Newcastle in 1758 on Brown's behalf, trying to secure for him the post of Royal Gardener<sup>29</sup>. He engaged Brown on extensive works at Hornby, and it would appear that he was also engaged at Aston Hall. A payment to Brown is recorded in Holderness's private accounts for February 1760: 'Paid Mr Brown for surveying Aston Estate 100, and the Bedfordshire Estate 50'<sup>30</sup>. The evidence is not conclusive: the park possesses the characteristic features of a 'Brown-scape', and numerous payments recorded to Brown during the 1750s and 1760s from Lord Holderness (See Appendix 1 for a summary of references to Brown in Holderness's accounts). However, we know that changes to the landscape at Aston were extensive in the 1760s, that the arrangement of a series of lakes and broad lawns were eminently in Brown's style, and that Holderness and Brown enjoyed an extensive professional relationship. It thus seems more than likely that Brown was indeed responsible for the park setting at Aston Hall.

The chaste, restrained case of Carr's house reflected its position. This was a house to be seen from a distance, and from which a prospect of the distant Derbyshire hills could be enjoyed. This affected the park setting: the house on the ridge was surrounded on its south and east sides by sweeping lawns, interspersed with randomly planted trees<sup>31</sup>, that offset the house and did not obscure the view. Trees only encroached upon the house on the west side, where the service wing stood: trees still screen the service wing (or 'offices') when viewed from the principal, south-east, angle of vision. The church tower added to the picturesque incident of the hill crest.

Brown's alterations to the park seem to have consisted of creating further narrow lakes in the valley south-east of the house, of installing a ha-ha running, bastion-like, around the north, east and south sides of the new house, of planting clumps of trees within the park and to the south-west of the house, and in removing all trace of earlier structures from the site of the older Aston Hall. Brown's use of a ha-ha emphasised the continuity of park and house, the smooth transition from hall to landscape. It was a regularly employed device (employed at Stowe, at Charlote and other Brown gardens) which preserved the naturalism of a garden's relation with the broader setting, while creating an inner area protected from animal encroachments. The ha-ha runs around the principal sides of Aston Hall, the sides which could be seen from afar and which were unencumbered by the service wing.

The construction of the dual carriageway through the park to the south-east, between the house and the series of lakes, has had a devastating effect on the setting. There is also evidence of older but extensive mine workings in the vicinity of the park that has affected both lakes and lawns: the former have increased in number while the latter's surface is still disturbed, and many of the trees have gone. A 1928 photograph

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<sup>29</sup>Dorothy Stroud, *Capability Brown* (1965), 57. Stroud makes no reference to Brown's work for Holderness.

<sup>30</sup>loc. cit., f.51v.

<sup>31</sup>The only evidence for the original planting, besides its present-day remains, is the 1st Edition 25" Ordnance Survey map (sheet ccxcv.16), surveyed 1875-90, pub. 1893.

showed that a the park still contained a number of older trees at that date<sup>32</sup>. Mining took place under the park following the sale by the Verelsts of the house; an agreement was entered into with the Sheffield Coal Co. in January 1928<sup>33</sup> to exploit the underlying deposits.

A clear comparison might be made between the changes to Aston Park and those to Holderness's other Yorkshire park at Hornby. An 1806 survey of Hornby Park<sup>34</sup> reveals the same serpentine series of lakes, smooth lawn descending to the south-east and randomly dotted trees within the park as occur at Aston. Brown's mature style is evident in each instance.

### Subsequent History

Harry Verelst's purchase of the house and part -at least- of the estate took place in 1774; one source states that he paid the considerable sum of £40,000 for it<sup>35</sup>. Grandson of the noted Dutch-born flower-painter Cornelius Verelst, he made a fortune in the East India Company and was one of Clive's principal administrators in India, succeeding him as Governor of Bengal in 1767-69. Returning, a wealthy man, to England in 1770, he then married the local heiress Ann Wordsworth but suffered from a series of court actions brought against him by opponents in Bengal. This did not prevent him from installing the Derbyshire marble staircase by John Platt in 1776-77<sup>36</sup>; Platt was a member of the dynasty which dominated building and design in the Rotherham area for most of the 18th and early 19th centuries. Carr's involvement had presumably come to an end by this date. Platt, as not only a builder but owner of several marble quarries, would have been the obvious choice for the staircase.

Verelst died in France in 1785, and was succeeded by his eponymous son<sup>37</sup>. The estate was offered for sale in 1789 but no buyer was found<sup>38</sup>. Harry Verelst junior married in 1803: a marriage settlement reveals that the Aston estate then produced £1172 p.a., rather less than his estate on the Isle of Thanet. Major works were carried out at Aston Hall in 1825: the stable block to the west of the house sports a keystone inscribed HV 1826, and it has been suggested that Carr's outer stairs were removed at this date,

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<sup>32</sup>1928 Sale Particulars for Aston Hall, issued by John D. Wood: Sheffield Archives, ref. 317/x6/1.

<sup>33</sup>ibid., 40.

<sup>34</sup>Repr. in Worsley, op. cit., 193. The original is among the Leeds Papers held by the Leeds Archaeological Society).

<sup>35</sup>Horace Walpole's Correspondence, vol. 28, 172, note 8: original source not cited.

<sup>36</sup>Wragg, op. cit., 753; Colvin, op. cit., 759. See note 1 above.

<sup>37</sup>See Hunter, op. cit., II, 166 for the Verelst family pedigree.

<sup>38</sup>ibid., 165.



and that the service wing was rebuilt at this date also<sup>39</sup>. If so, then some of Carr's stonework seems to have been re-used: the string courses at first floor and cill levels are continuous with those upon the house, but other heights and junctions are less felicitous. The lower, western extension of the service wing appears to be later 19th century work, judging by the lintels and eaves brackets. The absence of early views<sup>40</sup>, let alone working draeings, makes such questions answerable by analysis alone.

The 1893 OS map shows that the service wing was then even larger, with a continuation to the west enclosing a small court; this was removed around the middle of this century, possibly after the hall's conversion to a hospital.

The separately-listed lodge looks slightly later in date than these alterations to the offices. Another early 19th century legacy is the Rousseauesque urn-topped pedestal to the north of the house, bearing a sentimental inscription concerning transience<sup>41</sup>. Otherwise, both house and park appear to have undergone surprisingly few changes.

Furniture sales were held at the house in 1817, 1853 and 1861<sup>42</sup> but the house remained in the possession of the Verelsts until the present century. A large red brick racquets court was built close to the churchyard early this century, but that was the final addition to the estate. The 1927 Kelly's Directory of the West Riding of Yorkshire named Capt. Rodney Verelst as the owner, but revealed that the 'fine building of stone, standing in a park of about 100 acres, with pleasure grounds and shrubberies' was unoccupied.

Early in 1928 the 'well-known Aston Estate' of 1505 acres, including 'a fine stone-built Georgian Residence, containing hall, suite of entertaining rooms, 16 bed and dressing rooms, 4 bath rooms, eminently suitable for an institution of school' was put up for sale, together with eleven farms and the village of Aston. The house was purchased by Sir Ronald W. Matthews, JP, sometime chairman of the LNER company. The estate yard and outbuildings, despite being described as 'a capital site for a garage or petrol station' failed to find a buyer.

Aston Hall was converted into a mental hospital known as Aughton Court Hospital in the 1960s, and in 1987 permission was granted for the conversion of the hospital to hotel and conference centre use in 1987. Large single-storey extensions were made to the south-west during the 1960s which were retained and altered to form the 'Byron Suite' of the hotel; this has been extended in recent years through the addition of a crudely detailed stone-clad addition to the south-west. Much of the northern lawn was given over to car parking, as was the lawn to the west of the service wing that led through to the stables. These are now in separate ownership.

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 752.

<sup>40</sup>The York Georgian Society's The Works in Architecture of John Carr (1973), 2 that the house was illustrated in J.P. Neale's Views of the Seats of Noblemen and Gentlemen (1818-25) is unfounded, judging by the set in the RIBA library.

<sup>41</sup>'Ici au printemps de leur jeunesse mes bien aimees soeurs Louisa et Eliza cultivaient des fleurs helas elles ont passee comme ces fleurs et elles ont seche comme l herbe des champs'.

<sup>42</sup>Sheffield Local Studies Library, sale cat.s vol. 3, nos. 1 and 17; vol. 4, no. 7.

## Conclusion

Aston Hall deserves its II\* grade on a number of counts. It is a characteristic, smaller-sized country house by Yorkshire's leading 18th century architect. It was built for an eminent client, and rapidly passed into the ownership of a man of historical interest in his own right. Its commanding hill-top setting endows it with considerable presence and underscores the importance of the Darcy family, its builders.

Despite the encroachments of modern roads, the park (to the layout of which strong connections with Capability Brown can be adduced) still retains its original configuration to a large extent, and still sets off the house to advantage. The residence nearby of the Rev. William Mason, a significant figure in the evolution of picturesque landscape theory, is of interest but probably of no greater significance. Close comparisons can be drawn between the parks at Aston and at Hornby Castle, the principal Yorkshire seat of Lord Holderness, on which both Carr and Brown were engaged in the 1760s.

The older Aston Hall was sited slightly to the west of the present building. The service wing may incorporate elements of Carr's original, but has undergone considerable alterations at several stages, including c.1825.

The principal elevations are the north, the east and the south. The most important view of the house is from the south-east, in which direction the park descends. The chaste, solid geometry of the building is its primary and Palladio-derived characteristic. Any encroachment upon these sides would have a damaging effect on house and setting alike. The west side was from the outset the least prominent, but its proximity to the entrance front demanded that a suitably architectural treatment was given to it.

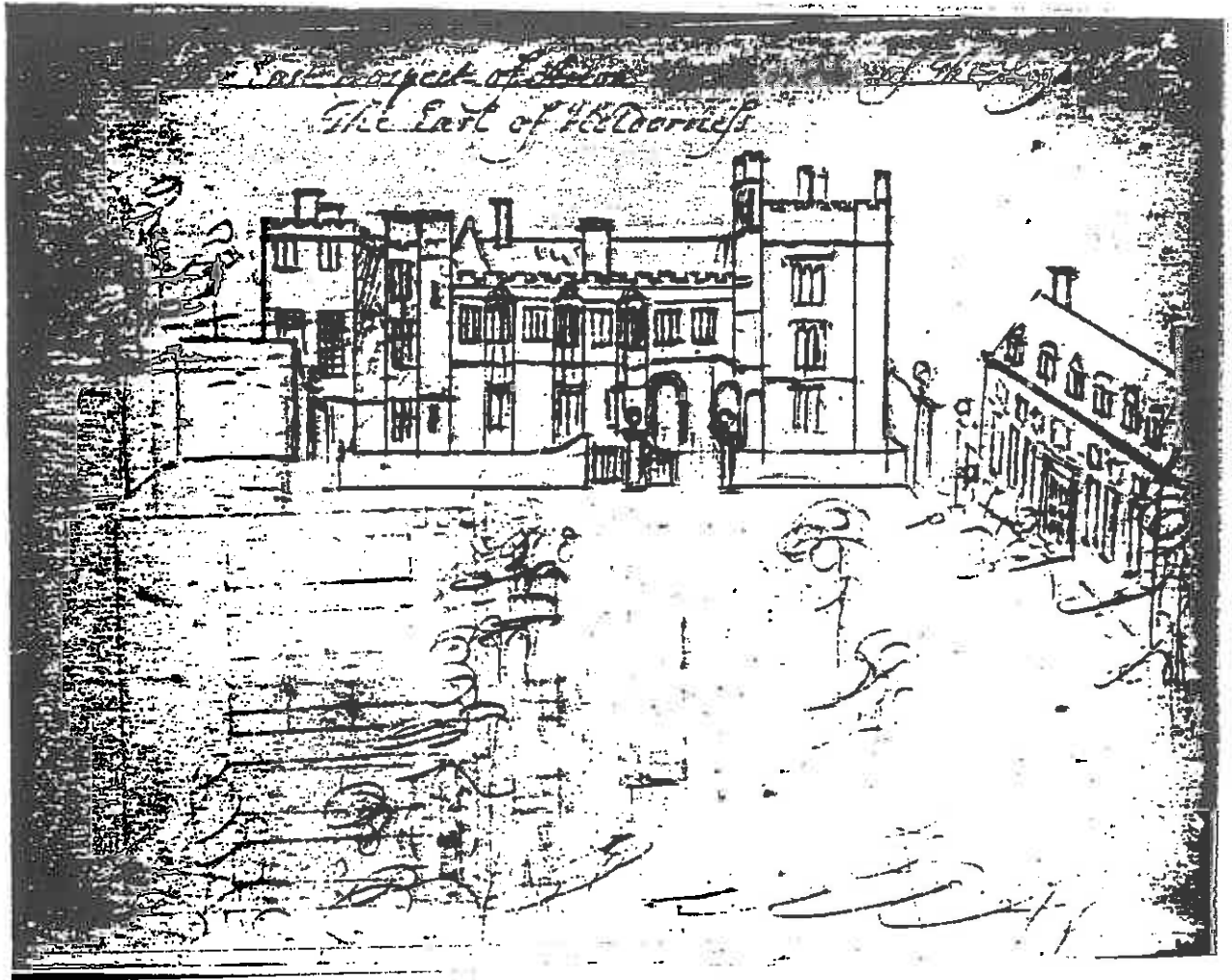
**Appendix 1: Payments recorded to John Carr and Lancelot Brown in the Account Book of Lord Holderness (BL, MS Lansdowne 3497)**

Dec 1747	Mr Carr	£100
Sept 1756	Mr Lancelot Brown	£200
Feb 1757	Mr Carr	£280
Mar 1757	Mr Lancelot Brown	£140
Sept 1758	Lancelot Brown	£185
Feb 1760	paid Mr Brown for surveying Aston Estate	£100
May 1761	Lancelot Brown	£150
Nov 1761	Lancelot Brown	£300
April 1762	Lancelot Brown	£200
Feb 1763	Mr John Carr	£508
May 1763	Mr John Carr	£400
Aug 1764	Mr Carr	£100
Jan 1765	Mr Carr	£50
Aug 1765	Mr Carr	£100
Sept 1765	Mr John Carr	£62
Dec 1765	Mr Carr	£126/10/-
May 1766	Mr Carr	£55/13/8
May 1766	Mr Carr	£134/14/2
July 1766	Mr Carr	£111/9/4
Nov 1766	Mr Carr	£137
Nov 1767	Mr Carr	£100
Oct 1768	Mr Carr	£80

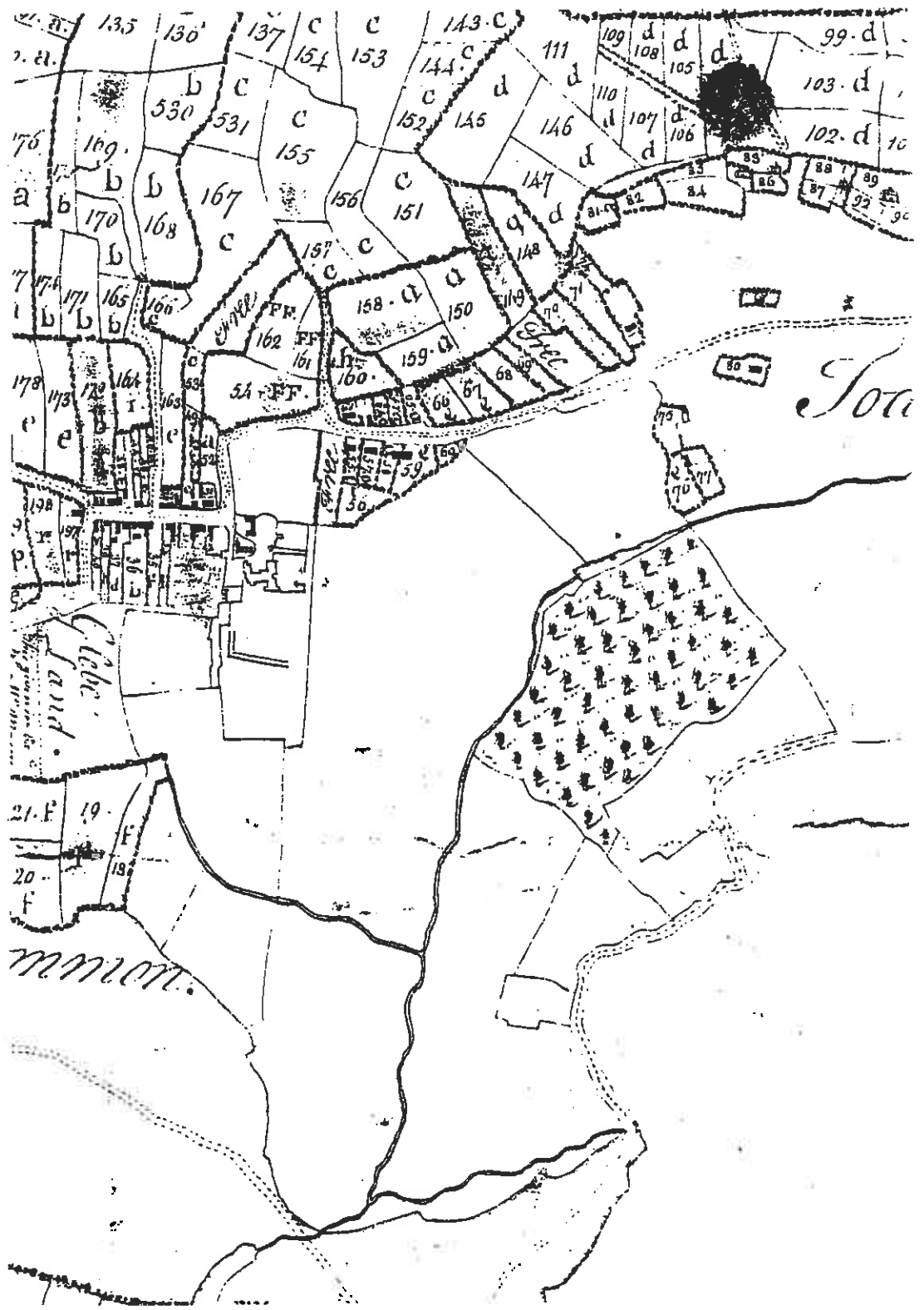


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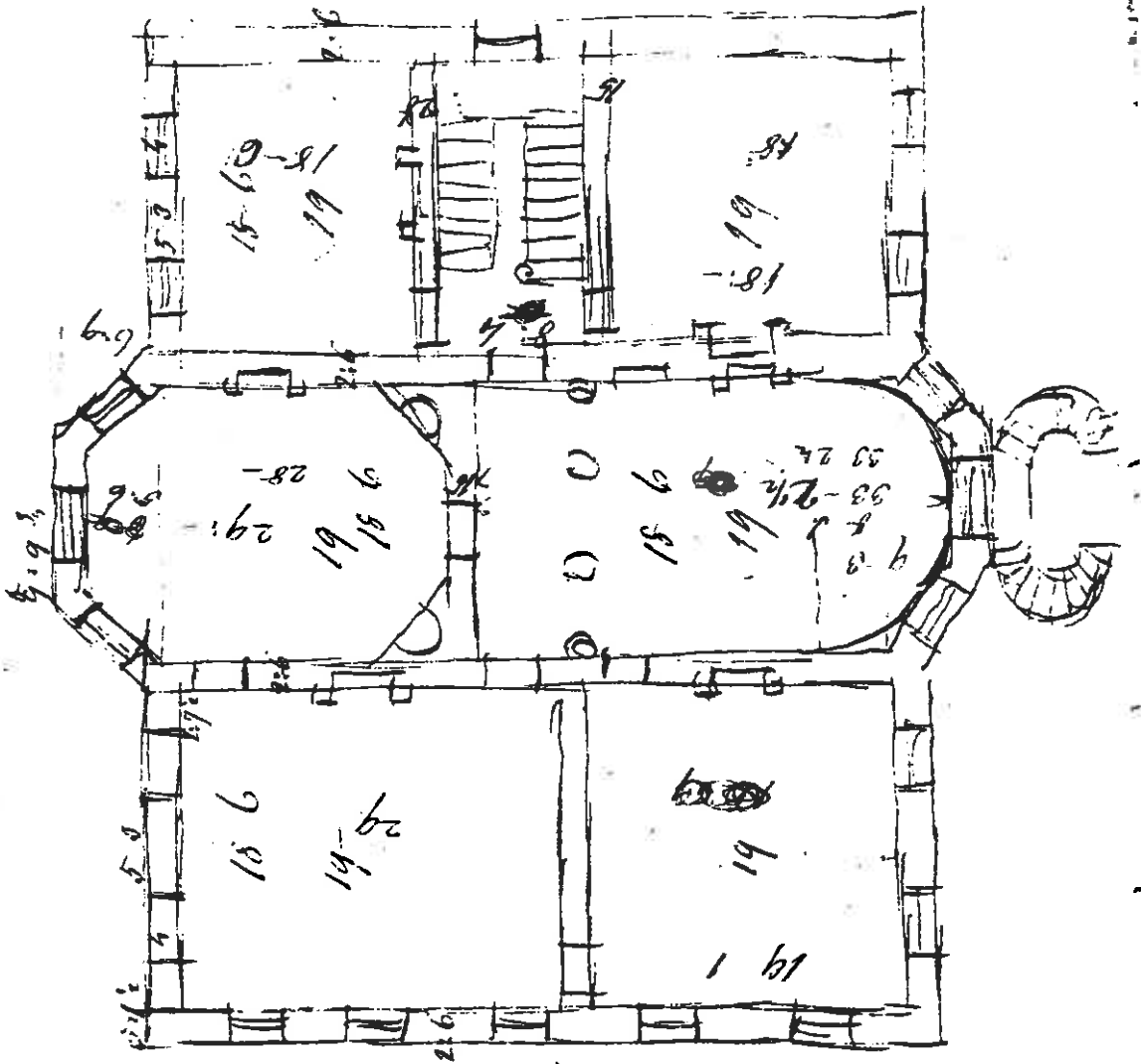


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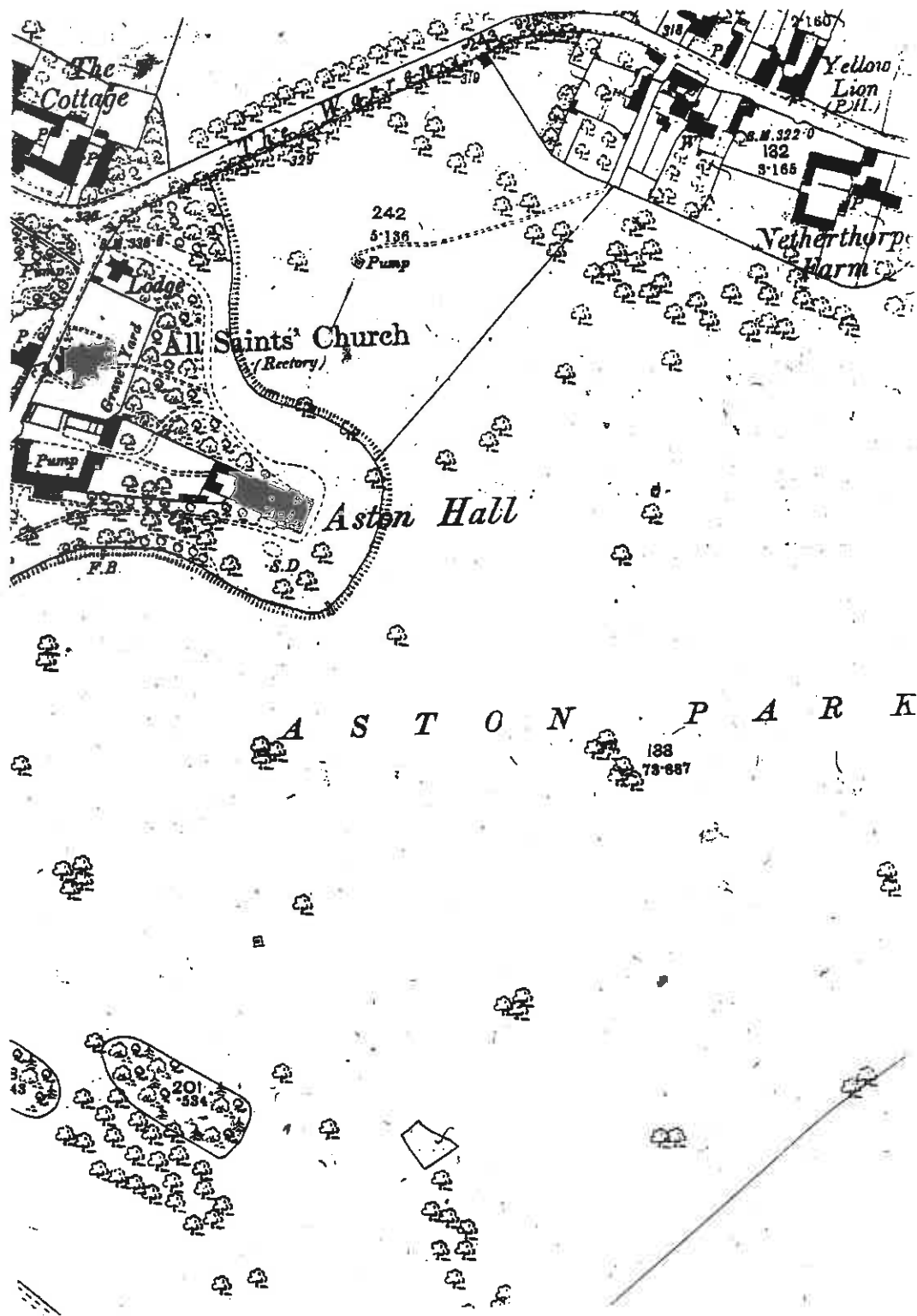
*Design for a Queen's Portico*



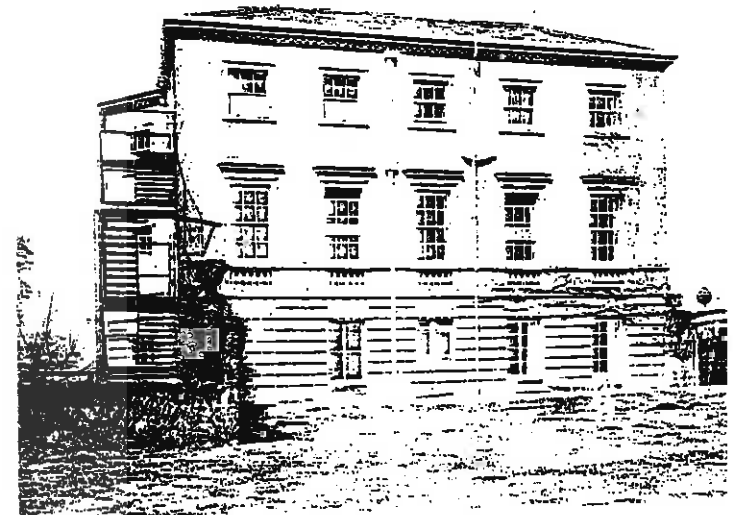
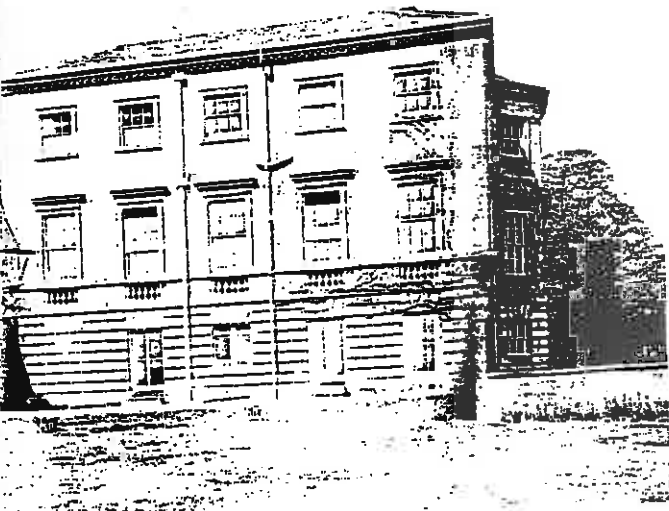
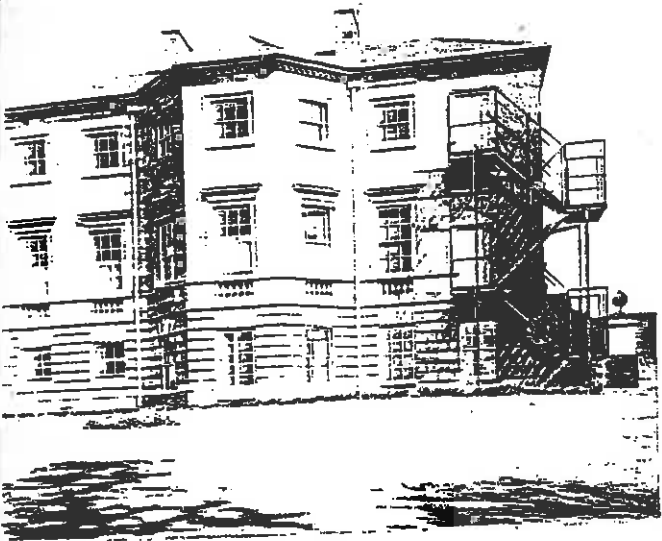
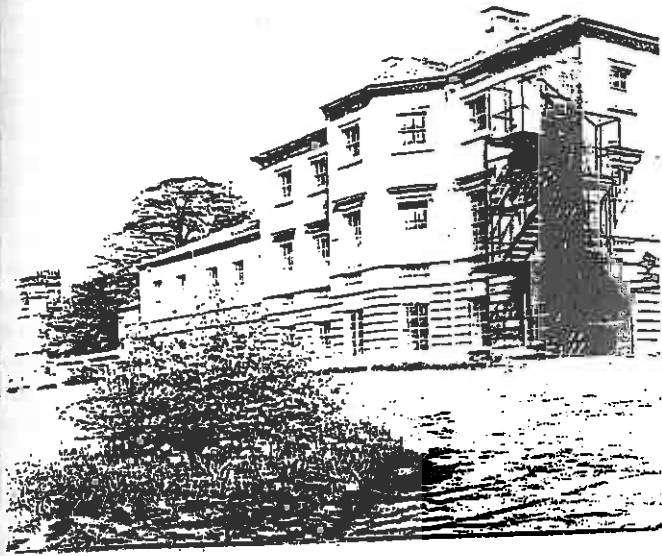
*John Carr*

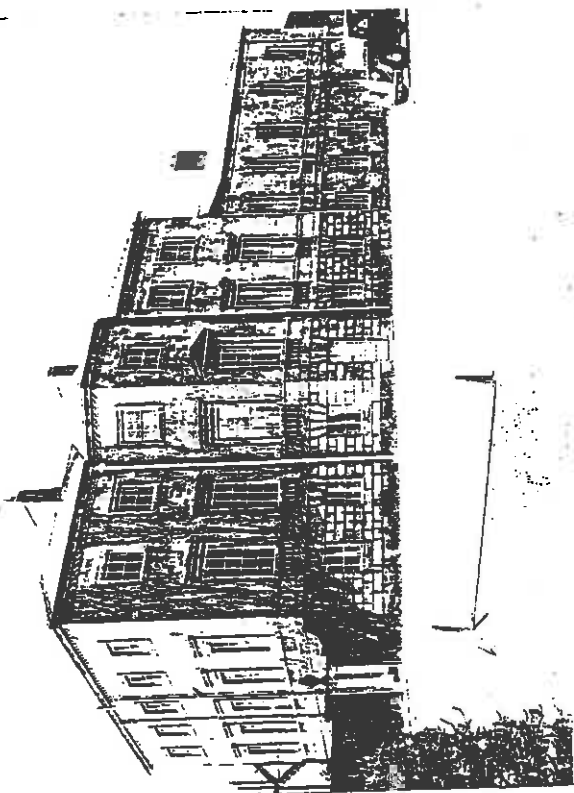
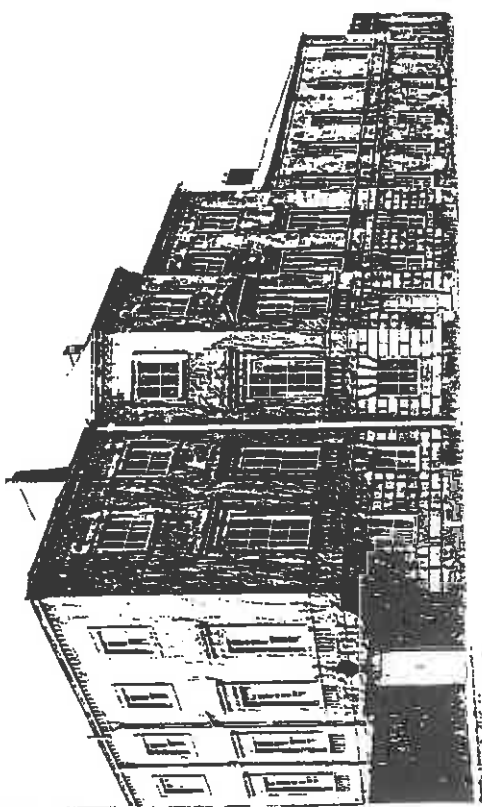
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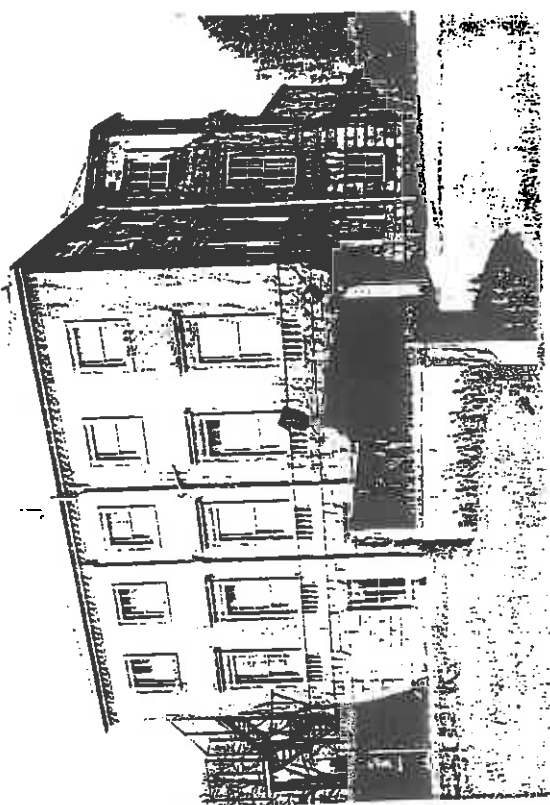


4 Detail from 1st Ed. 25" O.S. map, 1893.





5 Photographs of Aston Hall, c.1950 (National Monuments Record)





6 Aston Hall: north front, 1995



7 Aston Hall: east facade, 1995





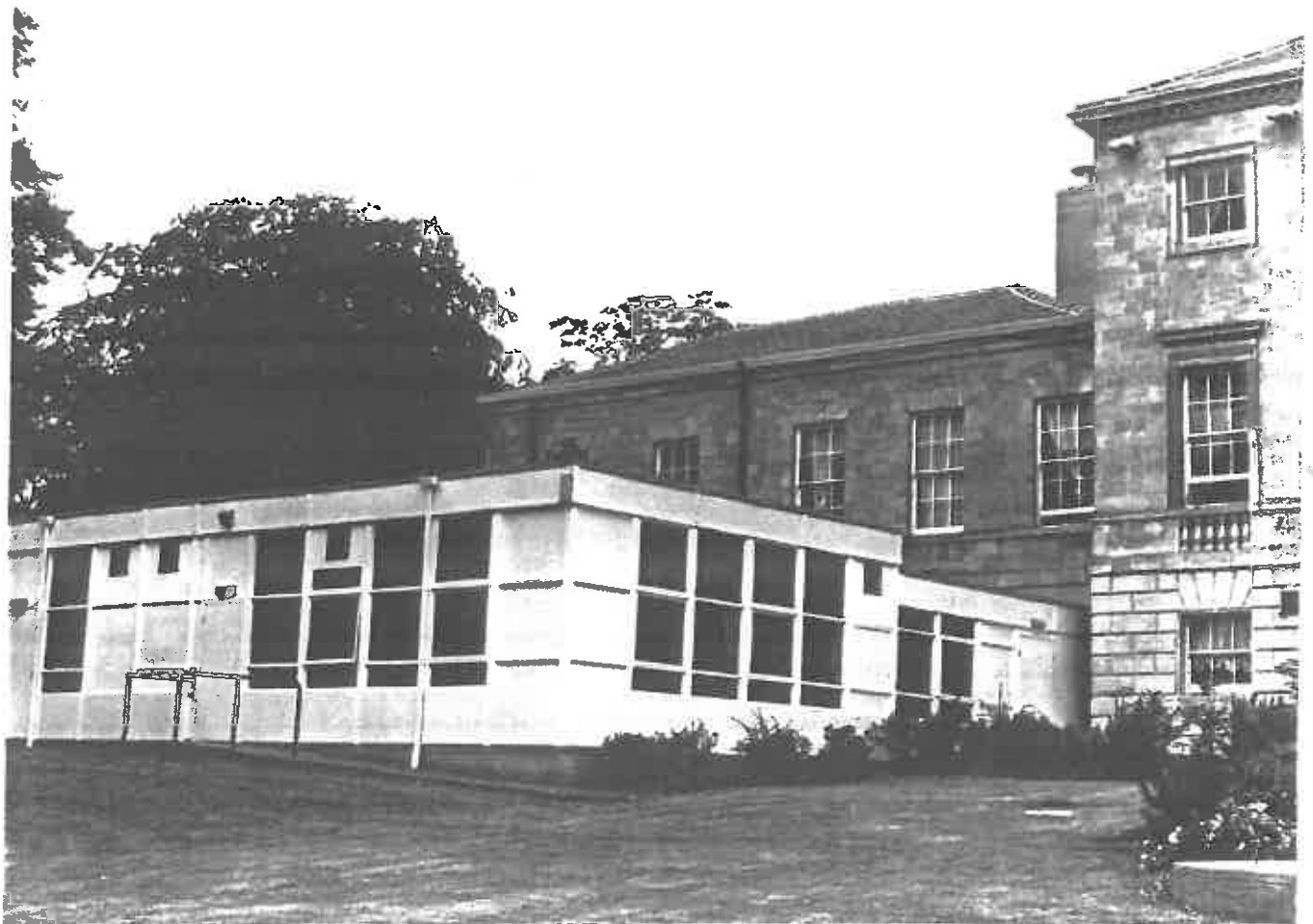
8 Aston Hall: south front, 1995



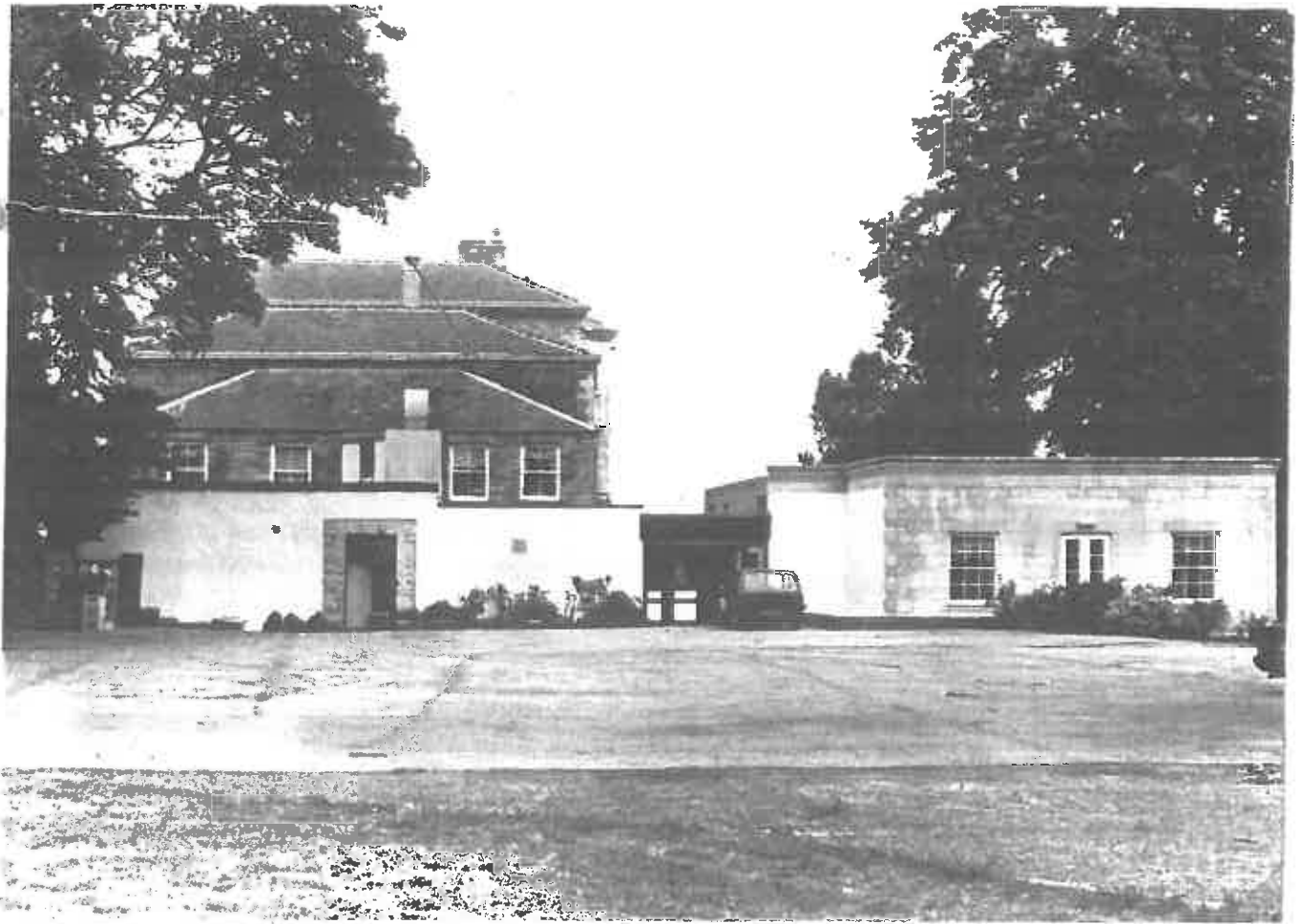
9 Aston Hall: from north-west, 1996



10 Aston Hall: service wing, north front, 1996



11 Aston Hall: service wing from south-east, showing modern extension, 1995



13 Aston Hall: gate piers from old Hall leading into churchyard, 1996



14 Aston Hall from the south-east, 1996



15 Southern prospect from Aston Hall, towards Derbyshire, 1996.