

## Private Parkland Zone

### *Areas within this Zone*

*'Bilham Park', 'Bramwith Hall', 'Brodsworth Park', 'Burghwallis Park', 'Campsall Park', 'Cantley Park', 'Cusworth Park', 'Hesley Park', 'Hickleton Park', 'High Melton Park', 'Loversall Park', 'Owston Park', 'Rossington Hall and Park', 'Wadworth Hall', 'Woodlands Park (fragment)', 'Wyndthorpe Hall and Park'*

### *Summary of Dominant Character*



**Figure 1: Cusworth Hall** © Dave Pickersgill and licensed for reuse under a creative commons license <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>

The defining historic characteristic of this zone is the use of land as ornamental parkland chiefly from the 18<sup>th</sup> to late 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Many features created during this time continue to have a major impact on current landscape character. Character Areas in this zone are frequently clearly separated from surrounding countryside by circuits of walls or plantation woodlands providing screening and enclosure, although these may be broken or absent where agricultural use has been reintroduced within their boundaries. Trees and woodlands are an important feature of most of these landscapes, with deciduous plantation and ancient woodlands serving not only ornamental purpose but also providing cover for game. Open areas

are often punctuated by scattered trees, with the surrounding ground cover typically either permanent grassland maintained as pasture or in many cases managed for arable cultivation. The focal point of many of these parks is a large elite residence and related 'home farm' complex, sometimes on the fringe of an older village. In some cases no hall survives. Common design features in these character areas are generally intended to emphasise the high status of their original owners. Such features can include ornate gateways and lodges; tree lined avenues and curving driveways; architectural follies, statuary, fountains and summerhouses; artificial lakes and ponds; formal gardens; and kitchen gardens.



**Figure 2: Part of Brodsworth Park converted to arable production in the 20th century but retaining specimen trees planted for ornamental purposes © 2007 Steve Fareham, licensed for reuse under a creative commons license <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>**

### ***Relationship to Adjacent Character Zones***

The distribution of the character areas within this zone frequently relate to areas of farmland economically productive during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. A notable concentration of parkland can be found in relation to the economically productive agricultural landscapes of the Southern Magnesian Landscape (Countryside Commission 1996). The more detailed distribution of these character areas however shows a close relationship also exists between the landscapes of this zone and the 'Surveyed Enclosure'

Zone, with nearly all examples adjacent to areas of land enclosed by parliamentary award.

These areas are also often closely related to the 'Nucleated Rural Settlement' Zone- with many examples abutting or surrounding older villages; a relationship which will be explored further below.

### *Inherited Character*

The setting aside of large tracts of land for the exclusive use of a small restricted and powerful social group, is much older than the period in which the parks of this zone were established. The medieval landscape of South Yorkshire included at least 26 specially enclosed or *imparked* areas created specifically to enclose a population of deer for hunting (Jones 2000, 91). In the Doncaster area (although notably outside the areas included within this zone) three enclosed deer parks are known from the medieval period at Conisborough (Jones 2000, 94), Finningley (Hunter 1828, 79), and Hatfield (*ibid*, 155). Within this zone, a further probable deer park existed at Owston, most probably on the site of the present Owston Park (Roberts 1995). This is the only known example of medieval parkland in this zone; some legibility of this medieval park can be traced in the current landscape. A circuitous boundary can be traced around the site, likely to represent the continuation of the original park pale that defined the demesne lands of the manor. Medieval deer parks performed a much less aesthetic function than their post medieval counterparts, but nevertheless required considerable maintenance representing significant investments in land resources. Most were being broken up by the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries as these maintenance costs stretched their owners resources (Rackham 1986, 126) with many parks divided into enclosed land and woodland.

Following the European renaissance, the idea of parkland was reborn as a focus for display of status and wealth through the aesthetic manipulation and presentation of land. Early examples, such as the park established for Godfrey Copley at Sprotborough in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century (Klemperer 2003 cited in Fenton-Thomas 2006, 13) took their influences from formal continental models (Copley had been influenced by a visit to Versailles) based on the geometric division of space through the use of features such as low parterre hedges; regular straight avenues of trees; and rectangular 'canals'. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century this formal and geometric aesthetic was challenged by English landscape designers such as Lancelot 'Capability' Brown [1716-1783] and Humphry Repton [1752-1818] (Rackham 1986, 129). Both Brown and Repton championed a naturalistic, 'picturesque' approach to landscape originally developed by artists such as Claude Lorraine. The majority of parks surviving in the Doncaster 'Private Parklands' zone either originated in this style or were re-ordered to conform to it during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

In a number of cases within this zone the sites chosen by landowners were already the sites of existing large houses and halls, some the sites of

medieval manor houses. Medieval manor houses are known or probably existed at or near to the site of Brodsworth Park, Cusworth Park, and Wadworth Hall with Tudor or earlier building fragments known at Hickleton Hall, Burghwallis Hall, High Melton Hall, Loversall Hall and Owston Hall (compiled from Roberts 1995). At Burghwallis the site of a moated manor house may survive as a small pond within the former park (see Keith 2002, 5.3.3).

Where these parks relate to existing elite settlement patterns there is usually a close relationship to a pre-existing medieval nucleated settlement. At Bilham and Owston, there is strong evidence for deliberate clearance of earlier village forms at the time of emparkment. Evidence also exists for the deliberate re-routing of important roads and alteration to parts of villages at Burghwallis, Brodsworth, Hickleton, Cusworth, High Melton, and Loversall (see Nucleated Rural Settlement Zone and individual gazetteer entries). The built fabric of the remaining buildings of these villages shows clear evidence of investment by estates in their appearance through the rebuilding of tied cottages and facilities. Other evidence of medieval settlement within these 'Private Parkland' areas includes the medieval churches of Loversall, High Melton and Brodsworth both of which were deliberately included within later parks. This thorough reworking of existing rural forms has been associated by some authors (see Roberts 1995, 2-4; Newman 2001, 105) with the creation by the park sponsors and designers of an idealised countryside, physically and historically separated from the truth of its past.

The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century creation of many of these parks also served to preserve a number of pre-existing boundary and earthwork features from earlier agricultural landscapes. The designers of parklands would generally set out to create, "*an appearance of respectable antiquity from the start, incorporating whatever trees were already there*" (Rackham 1986, 129). This approach is likely to have fossilised earlier steeply sloping ancient woodlands and boundary features along the edges of parks. A less deliberate class of fossilised feature within parks are earthworks of ridge and furrow earthworks and the tofts and crofts of deserted and shrunken settlements. Examples of ridge and furrow can be found at Loversall and Owston, where they are likely to have been preserved by their removal from arable cultivation at their imparkment. It is likely that both classes of earthwork can be found at other sites.

Parks in this area that were not linked directly to earlier manorial estates are more likely to have been created by individuals belonging to the gentry rather than aristocratic classes. Examples in this zone include Rossington Hall and Park and Wyndthorpe Hall and Park. At Rossington, a new park was created in 1773 on the former Rossington Common by Doncaster Town Clerk James Stolvin shortly following its parliamentary enclosure in 1771 (Roberts 1995). At Wyndthorpe the small simple park still retains the triangular shape of the earlier common land.

### ***Later Characteristics***

The economic pressure that these large tracts of land and their accompanying mansions put upon owners, appears in most of the cases in this zone to have been too great to maintain their use as originally designed. Stolvin found the financial outlay necessary to create Rossington Park and the Shooters Hill mansion too great and was forced to sell his stake in the property after a few decades (Roberts 1995).

Most properties in the zone seem to have experienced major changes of use in the period 1900-1950, with a number of houses, including Burghwallis Hall (convent school), Hickleton Hall (girls school and later care home), High Melton Hall (military training camp and later further education college) and Woodlands Hall (miners welfare institute) transferring to institutional use during this period. With the exception of Burghwallis Park (where conversion to agriculture removed most internal specimen trees), the accompanying ornamental grounds survive to some extent. At Woodlands part of the park survives around the hall, whilst another fragment was incorporated into the model village built for the Brodsworth Colliery Company by Percy Bond Houfton. This period also saw Owston Park converted into a golf course before its conversion to agriculture during World War II<sup>1</sup>.

Arable cultivation of parkland is noticeable at a number of the houses where residential occupation of the mansion appears to have persisted into the later 20<sup>th</sup> century, most noticeably at Cusworth and Brodsworth, two of the grandest houses of the district. At both sites new enclosure boundaries were introduced within the park during the mid 20th century, by the late 1990s cultivation was integrated with the surrounding intensive arable regimes. At Cusworth, agricultural intensification that followed the bisection of the park by the A1 Doncaster Bypass in the late 1960s has erased much of the earlier park boundary. At Brodsworth much of the mature planting within the park survives within the newer arable landscape and the screening plantations are largely intact.

More recently, the late 20th century trend to maintain elite landscapes as heritage sites has led to restoration programmes of both house and garden landscapes at both Brodsworth and Cusworth by English Heritage and Doncaster MBC respectively following their purchase from ancestral owners in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Pressures for housing development may alter surviving smaller parkland landscapes, a process already apparent at Hesley Park where some small scale residential development was undertaken around the hall and farm c.2005.

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<sup>1</sup> Owston Park was re-imparked as a golf course in the 1990s (Symonds and Davies 1995)

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