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Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

Aswarby Park

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Name:	Aswarby Park
County:	Lincolnshire
District:	North Kesteven (District Authority)
Parish:	Aswarby and Swarby
County:	Lincolnshire
District:	North Kesteven (District Authority)
Parish:	Aunsby and Dembleby
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.948723 Longitude: -0.42181071 National Grid Reference: TF0613540203 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1441825 Date first listed: 10-Nov-2017 Statutory Address 1: Aswarby Park, Aswarby, Lincolnshire, Located near Grid Reference TF0639

Historique de la conservation

The settlement of Aswarby is first mentioned in the Domesday Book, which records land being owned by Gilbert de Gant and Guy of Craon, and the existence of a church, and two parts of another church. The Lay Subsidy of 1334 records the wealth of the settlement as £3 8s 7 3/4d, considered to be below average for the Wapentake of 'Aswardhurn', and by 1563, the village was recorded as comprising 22 households. By the late C17, 21 families lived in Aswarby, and the population appears to have remained at that level throughout the C18 and early C19. By 1861 the population had grown to 142, but had diminished to 122 by 1901. It is not clearly documented when the park at Aswarby was established, but the park landscape has been superimposed upon medieval or post-medieval plough land as evidenced by the extensive survival of ridge and furrow throughout the park landscape to the north and west of Aswarby village. The present location of the village dates to the mid-C19, when Aswarby Park was enlarged and improved. The existing village was moved several hundred yards to the east, beyond the medieval Parish Church of St Denys, and the newly-built South Lodge at the re-aligned entrance to Aswarby Hall.

The Aswarby estate passed through a succession of owners; the de Gants, de Kymes, then the Umfraville and Tailboys families, the last descendant of the latter selling the estate to the Carre family. In 1618 Aswarby was inherited by Rochester Carre, who became insane in 1637 and survived for another forty years, during which time factions within the Carre family fought to secure control of the estate. In 1723, the estate, which had been severely neglected during the Carre family dispute, was sold by Carre, Lord Hervey to Sir Francis Whichcote, and it was his descendent Sir Thomas Whichcote (1813-1892) who initiated the improvements and enlargement which shaped the present Aswarby Park landscape.

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Prior to the Whichcote ownership, little is known about the development of Aswarby. An undated drawing of the Hall depicts an extensive multi-gabled house with mullioned and mullioned- and- transomed windows presumed to be of C16 or early C17 date. A drawing of 1821 shows the house to have been rebuilt or remodelled, with a symmetrical seven-bay front, pedimented entrance, sash windows and roof dormers, and with what appear to be the remains of an earlier subsidiary range to one side. Further remodelling had taken place by the early C20, with the addition of a semi-circular central projection and a balustrade parapet to the south front. By 1948 however, the house had fallen into disrepair, and following the deaths of the last Sir George Whichcote in 1946, and then his brother Sir Hugh Whichcote in 1949 the hall was demolished in 1952. The estate was inherited by his great nephew, who, in 1969, converted the stable block to form the estate's new principal residence.

It is presumed that Aswarby Park was initially developed at some time prior to the C18, with surviving specimen trees of great age defining the positions of avenues planted prior to the mid-C19 enlargement of the park by Sir George Whichcote. The OS map 1" (1824 edn) depicts the extent of the C18 park, prior to its complete inclusion in the park further developed by the Whichcote family in the C19. The C18 park is also depicted in the original preliminary drawing of the area made in 1814 by the ordnance surveyor at a scale of two inches to the mile.

A pair of C18 ashlar masonry pillars, located to the south of the site of the Hall, are thought to mark the approach to the Hall from the original main road. This ran from the Church of St Denys westwards to the site of the Tally Ho public house. Beyond the pillars, to the north, the approach to the house from the North Lodge, flanked by dense groups or multiple avenues of trees, and further north again, the Canal, a water feature shown on the OS Map 6" (1891 edn) both share the same alignment. However, it is the C19 developments for which most physical and documentary evidence survives. In 1822, the old parsonage was demolished, and its replacement erected a few hundred yards away. In 1836, a stable block designed by H E Kendall, located to the east of the house, was the first of a series of major developments on the estate. Between 1845 and 1851 the village of Aswarby was moved from its position to the west of the parish church to its present position north-east of the church, and most of the present buildings, including cottages and estate buildings date to this period. The walled garden and its bothy, the kennels, north and south lodges, the estate office and the Rose Pergola were all completed during this phase of expansion.

The OS Map 6" (1905 edn) depicts Aswarby Park in its fully-developed form. Aswarby Hall is shown with an avenue of trees extending to the road (now the A15) which delineates the park boundary to the west. The house is shown with a grid of paths and beds to the south, the paths extending into small shelter belts to the south-east and south-west. To the north-east is a further shelter belt through which the track from the South Lodge approaches the house, converging with the track from the North Lodge. Further east is the Stable Block, with the Kennels to the north. The Walled Garden and associated structures is shown to the east of the Stable Block, with a path extending along its southern boundary passing through the Rose Pergola to the South Lodge. The demolition of Aswarby Hall was the greatest single change to have occurred in the recent history of the park landscape. The operations of the present Aswarby Estate have included the maintenance of most of the parkland as pasture, of much of the woodland shown on the 1905 map, and new and replacement avenue tree planting. The area of parkland to the south of the A15, where it turns eastwards to the south- west of Aswarby village, is now (and possibly once more) ploughland but its boundary plantations have been maintained. Much of Aswarby Park was designated as a conservation area in June 1991.

Details

LOCATION, SETTING, LANDFORM, BOUNDARIES AND AREA

Aswarby Park is located four miles to the south of Sleaford. It is bounded to the west and south by the main A15 road, to the north by a small watercourse identified on the 1905 Ordnance Survey (OS) map (at 1:10560 scale) as 'North Beck' and to the east by Wood Lane and the southern section of Main Street.

The principal house, formerly the Stable Block, is located in the south-east sector of the park, together with the buildings closely associated with Aswarby Hall – the Walled Garden and Gardener's Bothy (listed Grade II – NHLE 1061821), the Kennels (listed Grade II – NHLE 1360595) and the Rose Pergola (listed Grade II –NHLE 1061822). The C19 hall was originally set within shelter belts, its formal gardens to the south and tree-lined vistas over open parkland to the north and west. The land

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rises gently at the northern end of the park towards Barrow Hill. On the periphery of the southern end of the park are other estate buildings and dwellings, together with the medieval Parish Church of St Denys (listed Grade I – NHLE 1360619) and Glebe House (listed Grade II – NHLE 1061782).

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The main entrance is situated at the south end of the park, where an acute bend takes Main Street eastwards above the Church of St Denys, and the entrance drive continues northwards past South Lodge and its gate piers, flanking wall and gates (listed Grade II – NHLE 1360620) The Gothic-style lodge, thought to have been designed by H E Kendall, architect of the Stable block is built of rubble limestone with ashlar dressings, and is T-shaped on plan. The entrance is defined by low stone boundary walls and stone gate piers with pyramidal caps which support wrought iron gates. The entrance drive then curves westwards through a shelter belt above the Walled Garden to the present house, and originally continued to the entrance of the Hall.

A secondary entrance carries a track from the A15 in the north-west area of the park south-eastwards and then directly south towards the site of the Hall. Access to the park at this point is overseen by North Lodge (listed Grade II - NHLE 1360617) and its separately-designated gateway and railings (listed Grade II - NHLE 1061780). The mid-C19 Gothic-style lodge is built of rubble limestone with ashlar dressings and is L-shaped on plan. The angled entrance gateway has stone gate piers supporting an iron gate and is flanked by low stone boundary walls carrying iron railings and pendant chains.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING

The original principal building, Aswarby Hall was demolished by 1952, after an extended period of neglect and decline, and finally after its occupation for military purposes in the Second World War, after which it was described as having been left in 'such a condition that no sensible person would live there'. The principal building is now the converted stable block, which was made into a residence for the current owners of the estate in 1969.

ORNAMENTAL GROUNDS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

The gardens to Aswarby Hall were located to the south, south-east and south-west of the house and their form is depicted on the OS 1905 map (at 1:10560 scale). These too have been largely lost, although aerial photographs show shallow tree lines marking the boundary of the former garden areas. A new formal avenue marking the main axis of the converted stable block extends westwards to align with an avenue of trees planted close to the line of the avenue shown on the early OS map depictions of the park.

OTHER BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES

To the north of the Stable Block are The Kennels (listed Grade II – NHLE 1360595), a small mid-C19 two-storey brick building with ashlar dressings described as having a central entrance passage, single fenced courts and slender wrought iron screens. To the south-east of the Stable Block is the Walled Garden and Gardener's Bothy (listed Grade II – NHLE 1061821). It comprises a large rectangular enclosure bounded by tall red brick walls laid to English Garden Wall bond. The garden dates to the mid-C19, and incorporates a small lean-to bothy on the outer face of its north elevation. A 2014 survey of Aswarby Park carried out by the Lincolnshire Gardens Trust (LGT) records the survival of 'old outhouses behind.. (the walled garden) ... stables and a mushroom house'. There is a lean-to glasshouse on the inner face of the garden north wall, but other parts of the garden now accommodate a tennis court and a large surfaced area.

Immediately to the south of the Walled Garden and running parallel to it is the Rose Pergola (listed Grade II – NHLE 1061822). The substantial remains of this mid-C19 garden structure are formed of parallel rows of circular brick columns with pyramidal limestone copings. These flank a path which leads from South Lodge to the eastern end of what were the hall gardens. It also incorporates a short access path leading into the Walled Garden mid-way along its south wall. At the centre and each end of the pergola were originally clusters of four taller square columns with ball finials. Some of these and a number of circular columns are now missing.

PARK

The parkland which extends to the north, west and south of the site of Aswarby Hall is typical of many of the English country estate landscapes which were created in the C18, and further developed and expanded in the C19. Aswarby Park, possibly first laid out somewhat earlier, was developed on former late medieval or post-medieval plough land, evidence of which is to be seen

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in the extensive ridge and furrow which survives as well-preserved earthworks throughout most areas of the park. A drawing of Aswarby Park by William Stukeley in 1730 depicts an arched structure at the end of what appears to be a canal with a church spire in the distant background, suggesting the existence of designed park landscape features by the early C18. The further development of the park saw the superimposition of tracks, ponds and plantation woodland on the earlier landscape, but the maintenance of the park by means of grazing has ensured the survival of earlier patterns of use. This is clearly apparent to the west of the church where evidence of the medieval village survives as a series of well-preserved earthworks which delineate the positions of former crofts, tofts and a track way. Other surviving earthworks relate to the original line of the Turnpike road from Sleaford to Bourne, shown on the surveyor's drawing of 1814. The road was re-aligned when the park was enlarged in the mid-C19 and now forms the route of the A15.

Aswarby Hall stood with vistas extending in three directions into parkland characterised in the main by uninterrupted grassland populated with specimen trees, its boundaries reinforced by linear plantations, but otherwise defined by plain post-and-rail fencing or hedgerows. Inserted within this informally-arranged landscape were more disciplined areas of planting; an oak avenue extending from the western edge of the park and a much more densely-planted area to the north of the hall site flanking the approach from North Lodge. The northern half of the park was accessed from North Lodge, from which a grassed track led south-eastwards towards what is shown on late C19 and early C20 OS maps as a narrow rectangular pond identified as 'The Canal'. This area is now densely-wooded and overgrown, and the feature is no longer recognisable although further evidence of its presence may be concealed by vegetation. However, map evidence suggests that the Canal formed part of, or the terminal element of, a vista extending northwards from the hall. It may also have had a practical function in providing water for an ice house now infilled and no longer visible, located at the centre of a field boundary to the east of the canal.

The northernmost sector of the park is defined by a narrow woodland belt extending east-north-east from North Lodge, which partially encloses the parkland up to its northern boundary at the North Beck. This area is undivided and has mature specimen trees scattered across its extent. The central and largest sector of the park extends from the North Lodge boundary to the east-west section of the A15 which joins Main Road. This sector of the park contains the principal estate buildings and, as previously described, notable features of the park landscape created in the C19. A significant number of veteran trees survive in this sector, particularly in the area to the north of the hall site adjacent to the cricket pitch, where there are parallel lines of trees of different generations, including veteran trees. To the east of this area, a raised track extends northwards across the ridge and furrow, then divides westwards towards the site of the Canal, passing across its base to join the track leading to North Lodge, and northwards towards Barrow Hill.

The cricket pitch, and a pavilion, (now demolished) were created at some time between 1891 and 1905, and appear to be the last additions to the park landscape apart from the re-planting of trees in areas of earlier planting. The most visible of such areas is the avenue planted to the west of the hall site, and now creating a vista towards the former Stable Block. Alongside this area are a small number of surviving veteran trees from the original avenue shown on the early OS map depictions of Aswarby Park. At the eastern end of the later avenue, a C21 metal bridge spans a drainage ditch at the base of a low ha ha, created following flooding in 1968.

To the north of the new avenue, close to the park boundary is an earthwork (Scheduled Monument NHLE 1004992) originally identified as 'Barrow in Aswarby Park'. Another interpretation of the earthwork, which takes the form of a mound, is that it was the base of a windmill which pre-dated the creation of the park. The Ordnance Surveyors drawing of 1814 records the mound, and it is possible that it served as a prospect mound for the park. To the south of the Hall site is a further monument, formed of a pair of C18 ashlar masonry pillars (listed Grade II NHLE 1061778), which bear the Whichcote family crest, and which are now thought to mark the original approach to Aswarby Hall from the main road prior to its realignment in 1846. To the south of the pillars is a large, irregularly-shaped pond with a sluice at its northernmost point, apparently controlling the outflow into the drainage channel leading towards the hall site and beyond. The pond is fed from a drain system to the west passing through the southernmost sector of the park, an area separated from the other parts by the A15 road. Unlike the other sectors however,

this area has been ploughed and although it retains parkland trees and the boundary plantations shown on late C19 and early C20 OS map depictions of Aswarby Park, the visual character of this area of the park is considerably altered.

Summary

The parkland to the now-demolished Aswarby Hall, known to have been in existence by 1814 and further developed and enlarged in the mid- and late C19, and including within the park boundary not only the surviving evidence of successive campaigns of parkland enhancement but also the earthwork remains of the medieval settlement of Aswarby and its extensive associated plough land.

Legal

This garden or other land is registered under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 within the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens by Historic England for its special historic interest.

Reasons for Designation

Aswarby Park, near Sleaford in Lincolnshire, established in the C18 or earlier and further developed throughout the C19 by the Whichcote family, is registered at Grade II for the following principal reasons: * Historic interest: as an evolved country house landscape dating from at least the early C18 which retains visible evidence of its evolution and phases of development in the form of buildings and planned landscape features; * Architectural interest: as displayed by the estate buildings and structures which survive within the park landscape, including lodges, kennels, a walled garden and gardeners' bothy, almost all of which are listed buildings; * Archaeological interest: the extensive survival of ridge and furrow as evidence of medieval plough land, and the earthwork remains of Aswarby village, demolished to make way for C19 improvements to the park, add significantly to the special interest of the park landscape; * Group value: Aswarby Park has strong group value with the medieval Parish Church of St Denys, listed at Grade I, and the Tally Ho public house, Glebe Cottage, 1 and 2, 3 and 5, and 6 and 7 Main Street, 1 and 2 Wood Lane, the Old Smithy, and the Estate Office, all located near the park boundary and all listed at Grade II.

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