



YORKSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

Grimston Park

Statement of Significance

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

1. Heritage Values Summary

Grimston Park house and garden are an important example of the formal Italianate style of architecture and landscape design that was popular in the mid 19th century. Decimus Burton designed the mansion house along with many other estate buildings, which are Listed. William Andrews Nesfield laid out the formal gardens and elements of his sunken rose garden and terrace parterre still survive, surrounded by extensive wooded pleasure grounds. The parkland setting in the valley of the River Wharfe, probably shaped from the late 18th century, retains its naturalistic style with numerous scattered trees, enhanced by the late nineteenth century with narrow perimeter tree belts, clumps and larger plantations. The estate maintains close links with the local church and village community and holds memories for those that were billeted at Grimston Park during the Second World War.

2. Historical Value ('Narrative')

The large estate at Grimston Park has attracted many wealthy owners. Three generations of the Garforth family owned it during the eighteenth century. The earlier house was designed by John Carr, probably built prior to 1790 under the tenure of the Garforth family. They had a close association with Carr, commissioning him to build a town house in York and design alterations to their other properties, at Wiganthorpe Hall and Askham Hall at Askham Richard, the latter becoming John Carr's home in his later life.

By the mid nineteenth century with changing fashions John Hobart Caradoc, 2nd Baron Howden made significant changes to the house and gardens. He was equerry to HRH the Duchess of Kent (Queen Victoria's mother) and married Princess Catherine Bagration, a relation of the Tsar of Russia. He commissioned Decimus Burton to rebuild the house in 1840, creating a mansion in Italianate style, also enhancing the wider estate, designing the coach house, stable block, summerhouse, manège, observatory tower and lodges with ornamental gates and walls. He also engaged William Andrews Nesfield to design the gardens, creating a terrace parterre and sunken rose garden with fountain. The formal gardens and extensive pleasure grounds surrounding the house were intersected by walks and embellished with marble statuary and contained the possibly unique 'Emperors' Walk'. This collaborative work continued at the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, Burton designing the Palm House and Nesfield the gardens, parterres and walks.

The large walled gardens were very productive throughout the nineteenth century, under a succession of owners: Sir John Francis Cradock, 1st Baron Howden; his son 2nd Baron Howden; Albert Denison, Baron Londesborough; his son William, the Lord Londesborough, and then John Fielden, whose family still own the estate. Extending to four acres but close to the house, they were



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used as both ornamental and kitchen gardens. With the aid of heated walls and twenty-three glasshouses, they grew vines, pineapples, peaches, melons, figs, orchids and carnations. They won many prizes for fruit, vegetables and flowers at the York Horticultural Society Shows. That tradition of horticulture continued as a nursery business was set up in the walled gardens in the 1960s.

3. Evidential Value ('Research')

The parkland retains evidence of past settlement and land use from prehistory through to the medieval period. Aerial photographs reveal cropmarks of late Iron Age or Roman trackways and enclosures. An excavated Roman villa is scheduled and there is potential to discover more about possible industrial workshops and pottery kilns.

There is good survival of earthworks of a medieval hollow way and open field systems of ridge and furrow associated with Grimston village. These earthworks have the potential to protect and masque earlier settlement and field systems beneath them. There is more to discover about the form and phasing of the medieval settlement, prior to the laying out of the eighteenth century parkland.

4. Aesthetic Value ('Emotion')

The fertile valley of the River Wharfe is a prime location for establishing a country house and estate. The river bordering the parkland is a significant part of the designed landscape adding to its aesthetic qualities and picturesque style. It was navigable for leisure and a valuable resource as a fishery, abounding with salmon, trout, grayling and lampreys.

The setting for the Italianate mansion house, Grimston Park (Listed Grade II*) and other estate buildings, many also Listed, is enhanced by the well maintained gardens and parkland, managed as pasture or arable farming. Many mature trees survive in the former pleasure grounds and parkland, where an observatory tower (Listed Grade II), with ornate Egyptian style embellishment, is an eye-catcher, from which there are extensive views across the landscape.

5. Communal Value ('Togetherness')

Grimston Park is a thriving working estate that engages with the local community and its close historical links with Kirkby Wharfe village are maintained. St. John the Baptist Church (Listed Grade II*) lies within the walls of the parkland and an annual May Day walk around the estate raises funds to support it and provides an opportunity for local families to learn about the estate's history and experience the parkland and gardens together. It continues a tradition of visitors having access to Grimston Park, as invited groups, or attending medieval re-enactments and banquets, or as customers to the nursery in the walled garden.

The place holds memories for those who were stationed at Grimston Park during the Second World War. In 1940 the riding school was converted into an Operations Centre for Church Fenton and most of the Yorkshire airfields. Male officers were billeted in the stable block and female staff housed in Nissen huts in the woodland of the pleasure grounds. Kirkby Wharfe Military Cemetery, created at the edge of the parkland for RAF Church Fenton, enables families and locals to commemorate those who died during the war.

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