

The evolution of Baysgarth Park, Barton.

In the 21st century Baysgarth Park is an extensive public park, much used and valued by a large proportion of the parish's population. With the loss, since c.1990, of almost all of Barton's peripheral green areas to housing estates the Park has seen no threat to its extent, is well maintained by North Lincolnshire Council's local works team and boasts a much-used modern sports centre, re-built just a few years ago. Recently a Friends of Baysgarth Park group has been formed and is already applying for funding (Jan. 2017) to further improve the Park's facilities. For the purpose of this study it is useful to divide the Park into two parts; the lower Park, that is the most northerly half between Baysgarth House and the Sports Centre (Leisure Centre), and the upper Park, that is the southern section between the Sports Centre and the peripheral public right of way between Eastfield Road and Brigg Road.

The northern part of Baysgarth Park, an area mostly visible from the seven-bay south wing of Baysgarth House, has for most of its parkland history been a private park, owned and enjoyed by the owners (or tenants) of Baysgarth House. The earliest parts of the present Baysgarth House date from the 17th century but there was clearly an earlier property on the site as a surviving late 16th century will in conveying the property uses the term 'capital messuage', generally meaning a house (mansion), outbuildings and land. Indeed the will refers to 80 acres of land being willed along with the property.

This land (park?) may, or may not, have all been adjacent to the house. However, various clues may shed light on the then prevailing situation. Running diagonally through the lower park is a shallow dry valley which, in recorded history, often carried a stream flowing north-east and then along Whitecross Street.¹ For centuries before the present Brigg Road was turnpiked in the 1760s the old Brigg/Lincoln road followed the bottom of this valley alongside the stream and, it seems unlikely that any private land attached to Baysgarth House would have extended across the stream and highway. Furthermore on the parkland alongside the

¹ The dry valley is etched into the lower slope of the Humber Valley and is underlain by chalk bedrock. Thus whether or not the stream flowed on the surface would depend on the level of the water table in the porous rock. The 'shallowness' of the valley profile must be more a product of glacial erosion than post-glacial riverine erosion.

present Brigg Road can be discerned the remnants of ridge-and-furrow cultivation, this particularly when there is a light covering of snow. This evidence of pre-enclosure cultivation strips relatively near to Baysgarth House suggests that any land attached to the House in the 16th century was west and/or north of the present park. Finally, in this line of speculation, the 'Deed of Gift' whereby Clare Ermytrude Magdalen Wright-Ramsden conveyed Baysgarth House and Park to Barton on Humber Urban District Council in September, 1930 refers to Southgarth (the large pre-enclosure farmhouse north of Preston Lane) in connection with the transaction, implying that this was land once attached to Baysgarth House, perhaps even an early 'home farm'.²

The long association of the Nelthorpe family with Baysgarth House and Park began in 1620 when Richard Nelthorpe purchased the estate. This transaction refers to four acres adjoining the south part of the hall – this hall would have been an earlier property than that seen today and, as the highway still passed along the valley bottom, perhaps the ridge-and-furrow land had been, by then, incorporated into an embryonic private park. Up to his death in 1640 Richard Nelthorpe acquired a vast portfolio of land and property in many parishes across Lincolnshire and Yorkshire. Descendents in the Nelthorpe family owned Baysgarth for 170 years after 1620 and it is thought that the present north-east wing was built in the early 18th century to replace an earlier property while the south wing, according to the surviving date-stone, dates from 1731.³

² I only have a typed copy of this 'Deed of Gift' but it seems to read true. It is a very interesting document and clearly the product of a thoughtful mind. It includes three references to the comprehensive Public Health Act of 1925, particularly in respect of public parks.

³ References here to the Hall and the Nelthorpe family are taken from information sheets compiled by David Williams, keeper of Baysgarth Museum in the 1980s.



Fig. 1 View west-north-west from the edge of the Leisure Centre car-park and showing most of the ‘lower park’ including part of the dry valley where once was a small man-made lake in the private parkland.

In 1792 Sir John Nelthorpe sold Baysgarth to William Graburn. Little evidence as to the size of the private park seems to have been included in the various legal transactions across the previous 170 years however, in 1818 when Graburn sold the property to Thomas Nicholson and an 18 acre park was identified. This expansion of the private park may relate to the fact that in 1760 the local Turnpike Trust had re-routed Brigg Road from the dry valley bottom to its present route. Also Parliamentary Enclosure in the 1790s would have made easy any incorporation of ‘old enclosures’ to the south to be incorporated in the park if agreement between owners could be had.⁴ The figure of 14 acres means that by 1818 the whole of the ‘lower park’ we see today had been enclosed and was visible from the south-facing facade of the late 18th century wing of the Hall (see Fig. 1). Beyond the southern boundary of the Park, and beyond some ‘old enclosures’, would have extended the expanse of ‘South Field’ (open field) before Enclosure (in the 1790s) and rectangular farmland fields after Enclosure (see Fig. 2).

⁴ See Russell, R. *Great Changes in Barton 1793-1900* (Barton W.E.A., 2002, 11). Rex’s map of pre-enclosure Barton shows ‘old enclosures’ extending as far south as where the Sports Centre now stands.

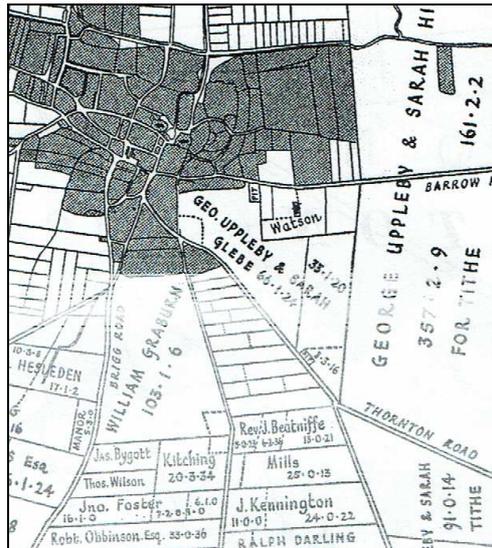


Fig. 2 Extract from the map drawn by Rex Russell and entitled 'Barton after Enclosure'. The shaded areas show the built-up area and 'old enclosures', that is land in private ownership prior to enclosure by Act of Parliament in the 1790s. Although the post 1760 Brigg Road is shown the map also shows the ancient diagonal highway (possibly a Georgian 'public right of way') crossing land that is either parkland or 'old enclosures'.

When in 1930 Mrs. Ramsden donated Baysgarth House and Park to Barton on Humber Urban District Council the area involved is recorded as covering 16½ acres, so since 1818 there had been a modest increase in the extent of the 'lower park' and which by 1930 included Park Cottage.⁵ This extension was probably negotiated by Robert Wright-Taylor who had purchased the house and grounds in 1889.⁶ That Baysgarth Park had been somewhat extended to the south is confirmed by the 1908 O.S. 25 inch to 1 mile map (surveyed 1906) (see Fig. 3).

A question that arises with regard to the Park is had it been 'landscaped'? There is no evidence on the ground today of any previous formal flowerbeds or parterre garden arrangements and indeed the Kelly's Directory of Hull and Lincolnshire, published 1900, writes of Baysgarth House as 'beautifully situated in a well timbered park, some of the elm trees being from 200 to 300 years old'. In late Georgian times it became the fashion for land around a 'family seat' to be 'emparked', and

⁵ A surviving house and outbuildings beside Brigg Road, almost opposite the Horkstow Road junction.

⁶ Robert Wright Taylor was a London barrister and Mrs. Ramsden was one of his daughters who had been brought-up at Barton and who, by 1930, was living at Rising Hall, Castle Rising, north-west Norfolk. A few years ago an extensively researched exhibition was mounted at Baysgarth House focusing on the Wright-Taylor family. A central theme of this exhibition was the death of Mrs. Ramsden's brother, killed on the Western Front during the Great War in 1917.

surely the Nelthorpe family could well have followed this fashion. In the region the famous Lancelot Brown ('Capability' Brown) had drafted the landscaping of Burton Constable Hall, Holderness, East Yorkshire in the 1760s and of Sledmere Hall, high Yorkshire Wolds, in 1777. Somewhat later Humphrey Repton advocated the creation of more 'naturalistic' emparking. The parkland to the south of Baysgarth House, although on a smaller scale than those referenced, lent itself to such landscaping by virtue of it being crossed by the post-glacial dry valley.⁷

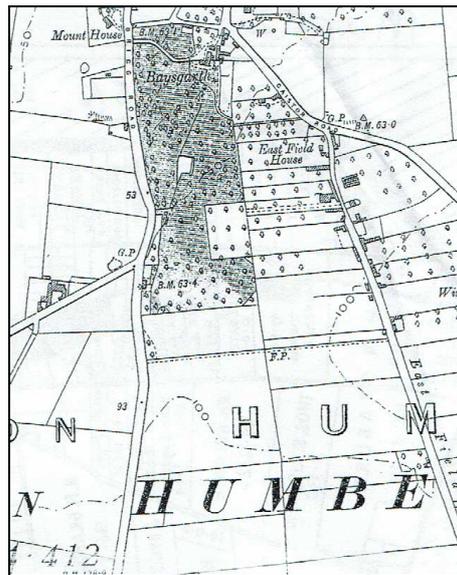


Fig. 3 Extract from the 1908 O.S. 6" to 1 mile map, surveyed 1885, revised 1906. Random tree symbols strongly suggest that Baysgarth private park had been 'emparked'. The map shows that even by 1906 Wright Taylor had further extended his parkland south. The diagonal route-way clearly no longer existed by 1906 although the bed of the dry valley is identified by a stream or pathway. If the former, it had clearly been dammed near midpoint, the rectangular white space then presumably being a small lake.

Whatever nature it had had before by 1930, land then to the south and east of Wright-Taylor's park was permanent pastureland, it too dotted with mature and young-mature deciduous trees. These fields had been known as 'cow park' and, certainly some, had been owned by Wright Taylor. In the early 20th century the eastern boundary of the private park, and the public park immediately after 1930, was straight north-south along the line of the majestic avenue of trees that now stands either side of the path leading from the public toilets to the Leisure

⁷ The Hall had a walled garden immediately south-east of the house, flowers and vegetables in profusion could well have been cultivated here.

Centre. Between this boundary and Eastfield Road were a series of narrow post Enclosure fields, some with buildings alongside Eastfield Road. In 1954 Fred. Hopper (Jun.) bought most of these fields plus the larger fields to the south of the public park. F. Hopper also owned Park Cottage, which was provided housing for his gardener (see Fig. 4).

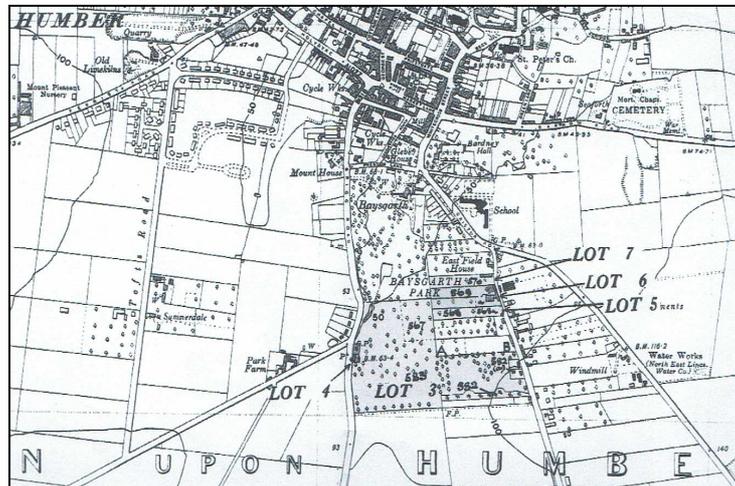


Fig. 4 An extract from a map dated 1954, this being a 6” O.S. map (enlarged), now housed in one of Baysgarth Museum’s collections. It was produced to highlight the land for sale in ‘lots’, that land subsequently bought by F. Hopper (Jun.). The ‘lake’ was still in evidence and the land beside Eastfield Road which was not bought by Hopper has subsequently become the Park View estate as well as one private house and linear garden immediately north of the public footpath between Eastfield Road and Brigg Road.

In the 1970s Fred. Hopper’s lands around the public park were sold to Barton on Humber Urban District Council to be consolidated into Baysgarth Park, at which point the Park arrived at its present extent (see Fig. 5).



Fig. 5 View of the central part of the 'upper park' as seen from the rear corner of the Leisure Centre. In the middle distance the recently planted 18 commemorative oak trees are just visible in the col of the undulation.

With local government reorganisation in 1974 the new Barton Town Council became trustees of Baysgarth House and Park (the Town Council replacing the previous Urban District Council). Barton Town Council then passed-on the duty-of-care to Glanford Borough Council (the middle tier of Humberside County Council's management structure). Further local government reorganisation in 1996 resulted in the demise of Humberside County Council and responsibility for Baysgarth House and Park was transferred to North Lincolnshire Council, a unitary authority. This remains the situation today.

The singular fact that Baysgarth House stood, from its earliest incarnation, outside the medieval ramparts ('castledykes') resulted in the development of a private and later public park on the outskirts of the built-up area. The loss, particularly since 1990, of other peripheral open green areas to housing estates means that the value of Baysgarth Park to the community has increased and the value of the benevolence of 1930 is all the greater. The development of the Country Park, on previously contaminated land to the north of the built-up area, has provided Barton's other public recreational area, this time incorporating an ecological priority and funded by public and European Economic Community funds, rather than being the product of private philanthropy.