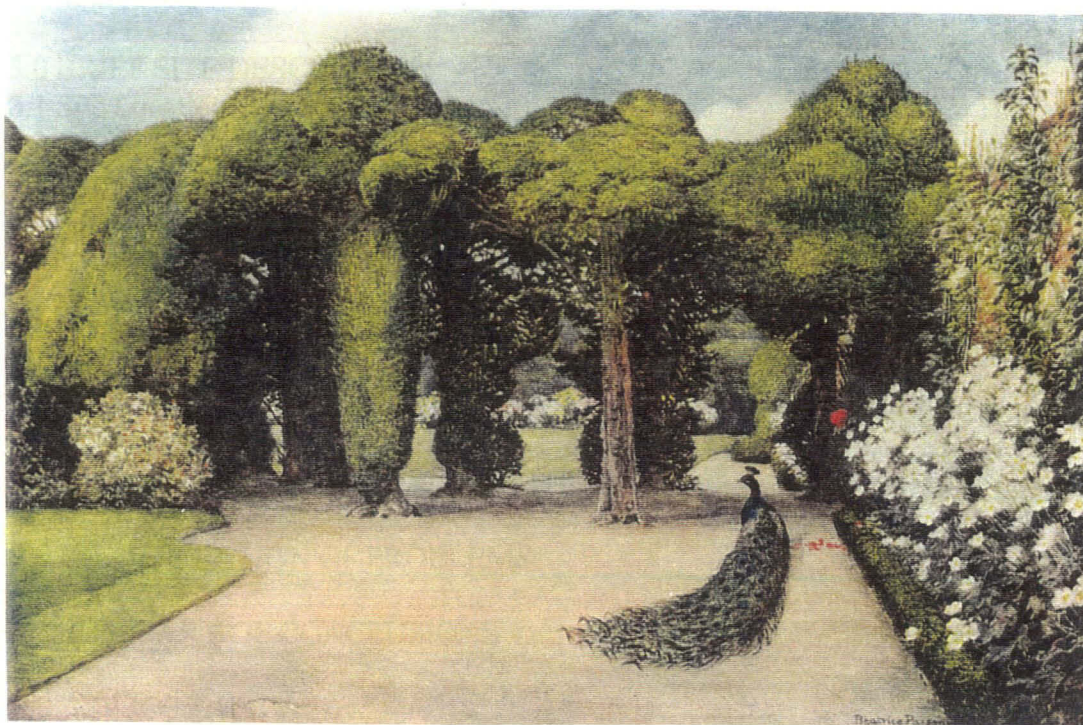


AYSCOUGHFEE HALL SPALDING, LINCOLNSHIRE



HISTORICAL APPRAISAL of THE PLEASURE GROUNDS

JULY 2000

ANDERSON & GLENN, BOSTON (UK)

CONTENTS OF THE REPORT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Brief and Consultants Biographies
- 1.2 Scope of the Report
- 1.3 Aims of the Report

2.0 METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 Desk top Survey
- 2.2 Site Survey

3.0 BRIEF SITE DESCRIPTION

- 3.1 Site Location
- 3.2 Historical
- 3.3 Acquisition by Spalding Urban District Council

3.4 CONSERVATION PHILOSOPHIES

4.0 CHRONOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE GARDENS

5.0 ANALYSIS OF EXISTING GARDENS

6.0 HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SITE

7.0 IDENTIFICATION OF PROBLEMS

8.0 SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

9.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY

APPENDIX A: ILLUSTRATIONS

APPENDIX B: PLANS & MAPS

APPENDIX C: PHILOSOPHIES & OPTIONS: DEFINITIONS

APPENDIX D: GLOSSARY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BRIEF

1.1.1 *Anderson and Glenn*, a Chartered Architectural and Landscape Practice solely engaged in the restoration of Historic Buildings, Parks and Gardens, have been commissioned by the *South Holland District Council* to examine the condition of the Ayscoughfee Hall Gardens and make outline recommendations for the future management of garden areas identified within this report as being of historical interest and importance.

1.1.2 *John Glenn*, a partner in *Anderson and Glenn*, is a horticulturist and garden historian and a recognised authority on the historical use of Yew (*Taxus*) in English Parks and Gardens. A copy of his thesis on the topic, prepared for the *Graduate School of the Architectural Association*, London, can be found in the library of the *University of York*. He is engaged in further extensive research into the ornamental use of yew at the *Institute of Advanced Architectural Studies* at the *University of York*. He has produced and implemented historic garden restoration proposals, and undertaken historical appraisals on many sites for English Heritage for the upgrade of the *Register of Historic Parks and Gardens*.

1.1.3 As part of this study the built structures within the garden and the boundary walls, have been appraised by *Mary Anderson*, a specialist conservation architect with vast experience of the restoration of historic buildings. She is a main committee member of the *Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings* and a full member of the *Institute of Historic Building Conservation*. She has undertaken work on historic buildings for *English Heritage*, *The Churches Conservation Trust*, and various Local Government Authorities.

1.2 SCOPE OF THE REPORT

The scope of this report is limited to assessing the present condition and the historical importance of the gardens.

1.3 AIMS OF THE REPORT

To assess the historical significance of the gardens and to evaluate the importance in local and national terms of any surviving early elements.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Undertake a desk top study to research and collate information contained within the following archives: Anderson and Glenn Library of printed works, plans and photographs, local Public Libraries and the County Record Office. Also examine relevant documents provided by *South Holland District Council*.

2.2 Undertake a site survey using the South Holland District Council plan, plot features, take record photographs and compare with archival plans, maps and historical illustrations.

3.0 BRIEF DESCRIPTION

3.1 Ayscoughfee Hall gardens extend up to approximately five acres and are located on the east bank of the River Welland, close to the centre of the town of Spalding and adjacent to the parish church. The OS grid reference is TF 2490 2236.

3.2 The gardens surround the Hall which has its origins in the fifteenth century and which was modified over the following centuries by successive owners. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it was owned by the Johnson family. It is during their tenure that the present form and structure of the grounds was determined. It appears likely that this work was undertaken at the time of Maurice Johnson the II (1685-1755). As founder (1709-1710) of the Spalding Gentleman's Society and prime mover in the revival of the Society of Antiquaries (1717) he occupies an important position in the history of eighteenth century learning.

3.3 In 1902 the Hall and its grounds became the property of Spalding Urban District Council and the gardens became the first and only public park serving the town of Spalding and the local district. A municipal overlay was therefore gradually applied to the private grounds of the Johnson family.

3.4 CONSERVATION PHILOSOPHIES

3.4.1 It is important to explore in general terms the current conservation philosophies and definitions relating to Historic Cultural Landscapes as a whole and how they relate to Ayscoughfee Hall Gardens.

3.4.2 Landscapes with cultural significance possess aesthetic, historic, and social value for the past, present and future generations and each element has a part to contribute to its total importance. Remove or compromise one part of the landscape and its loss reduces the overall importance of the site. Authentic fabric once destroyed is gone forever and no subsequent replacement will possess this important historical link with the past.

3.4.3 The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) over a number of international conferences have produced a series of definitions and guide lines for the identification, care and protection of cultural landscapes. The aim of conservation is to retain the cultural significance of a place and must include provision for its security, its maintenance and its future. Conservation is based on a respect for the existing fabric and should involve the least possible physical intervention.¹ It is therefore essential, when carrying out any work on such sites, to carefully assess the evidence provided by the existing fabric, to ensure that this is, as far as possible, properly understood, before any work is commenced.

¹ *Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance*. The Australian ICOMOS (Burra 1979)

3.4.4 The Public Park movement of the nineteenth century was pioneered by the work of social reformers and philanthropists who believed the working classes would benefit from the mentally uplifting and healthy influences that green urban spaces would provide. This philosophy was championed greatly by the horticultural writings of John Claudius Loudon whose published works influenced the early urban parks created in the nineteenth century. He designed the first public park, Derby Arboretum, which was opened in 1840. Many towns and cities followed this example and many parks and arboreta were created by local government authorities throughout the nineteenth and into the early twentieth centuries. Such places became a matter of great civic pride and Local Councils vied with one another to make theirs a place of horticultural excellence. By the start of the twentieth century, there had arisen an enormous interest in gardens and gardening². Thus the acquisition of Ayscoughfee by the local authority answered a growing need. A large number of examples were designed specifically as public parks using greenfield sites, others, as at Ayscoughfee Hall, were created by the acquisition into public ownership of former private houses and their gardens. These are two differing approaches, whilst both are attempting to fulfil the same public need for open recreational spaces, they should be viewed as distinctly differing landscapes in terms of historical restoration philosophies. The historical origins of the first category can usually be traced back to their intended *Form, Function and Philosophy*; the second is not always as straight forward. Parks, such as Ayscoughfee, that fall into this latter category, require careful analysis to identify the historical importance of what may still remain from any earlier designed pleasure grounds.

3.4.5 A change in the administration of public parks came with the adoption of the Bains Report (1972) during the reorganisation of local government in the early 1970s. This had the effect of placing the administration of parks under the control of the newly formed leisure services departments and their subsequent loss of

² Evelyn Cecil *A History of Gardening in England* 3rd edn. (London 1910) p. 306

individual identity and funding. Today the economic restraints imposed by central government under the terms of the 1988 Local Government Act and the introduction of Compulsory Competitive Tendering have seen further changes to the management approach of public parks generally. Since the above legislation was introduced concern over falling standards of urban parks has been expressed by many amenity societies both at national and local levels and more recently by government agencies concerned with heritage issues. This has led to a reassessment of urban parks not only as green public spaces but also as heritage assets of local and national importance.

4.0 CHRONOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE GARDENS

4.1 Whilst it is possible that gardens were made around the hall when it was first built, no substantial evidence to indicate the form they took is known to have survived from that period until up to the first quarter of the eighteenth century. The earliest known plan of the grounds was made by John Grundy and is dated 1732. He was a land surveyor, who prepared the plan of the town of Spalding for the Spalding Gentleman's Society, of which he was a member. This shows the layout of the grounds of Ayscoughfee Hall in some detail. Remarkably it appears that the present site boundaries were in place and the footprint of the gardens as they were then relate closely to what remains on the site today, especially to the south and south east of the hall.

4.2 The gardens shown on the Grundy plan are described by area as follows [*figure 1*].

4.2.1 The forecourt [area A] immediately to the west shows a simple treatment of open appearance containing what is likely to be a turning circle for carriages. No large planting is indicated in this area which would have allowed the architectural features of the front facade of the building to be seen as a complete composition.

4.2.2 To the south of the hall is a formal layout with its north south axis walk running down to the southern boundary. Immediately to the south of the Hall, are what are likely to be two plats of asymmetrical size [area B], the larger to the west of the main axis. A cross axis with an exedra is shown running west to east at the southern boundary of the plats.

4.2.3 The north south axis continues through the exedra bisecting what are likely to be wilderness quarters to the east and west [area C]. What appears to be planted boundaries are shown around these areas which create a distinct geometrical form.

4.2.4 To the east of this area the present Canal is shown in its own distinct space [area D]. To the east of that appears to be a kitchen garden and orchard.

4.2.5 Directly to the east of the hall is an area of trees planted in formal rows [area F] which could indicate a garden close, with the trees planted as a walk and counter walks, a feature popular in the early eighteenth century. This thesis is strengthened by the plan form of a garden building shown at the eastern termination of the walk. The remains of such a garden still exists in Lincolnshire at Easton Hall near Grantham.

4.2.6 To the north and immediately adjacent to the hall an avenue of trees [area H] is shown leading into area F.

4.3 Armstrong's *Map of Lincolnshire* (1779) shows the gardens but includes much less detail than Grundy. Importantly it shows the addition of the stable block and the garden building shown in 1732 on the main eastern axis still in place [both in area F].

4.4 The 1887 OS map of the site shows the addition of glasshouses to the south of the stable block [area E]. In the gardens to the south of the hall [area B] the two plats have now become one lawn and the clear definition of the line of the Exedra is lost

due to later plantings within the semi-circular area. The distinct definition and demarcation of the wilderness quarters is less defined. To the east of the main axis there are what appear to be randomly placed geometric shaped flower beds laid out in the manner of John Claudius Loudon's gardenesque style. To the west more informal planting has appeared and at the southern end the start of a serpentine walk which extends almost the length of the south eastern boundary. This leads up into what is now an area used for bowls, tennis etc [area F]. The nineteenth century 'Owl' Tower, built in 1848, is shown at the southern end of the canal [area D] and an icehouse is shown close to the southern boundary [area B]. The Garden Close [area F] has lost all its timber apart from a row on the northern boundary. The garden building on the eastern boundary has also gone. A second inner wall running parallel to the northern boundary is shown. Area F had become a grass field by the early twentieth century and was used in its early municipal ownership years as a children's recreation ground. Extensive glass-houses have been constructed against the southern wall of the coach-house and a group of garden buildings has been built to the east of area F. The siting positions of the four statues [plates 19 - 22] are shown with one (possibly plate 19) being between the 'Owl' Tower and the Canal. Two (possibly plates 21 - 22) are placed symmetrically either side of the Exedra. The fourth (possibly plate 20) almost on the southern boundary and to the west of the north south axis of the Yew Walk [area B/C]. The existing diagonal walk to the eastern entrance to the Hall is marked.

4.5 A plan of the gardens in public ownership, published in the guide book of 1912 shows little change in the layout of the garden's footprint. The land to the east of the hall however has now been designated as a playground [area F].

4.6 By 1929 the OS map shows the addition of the present municipal overlays of bowling green and tennis courts to the east [area F] and bowling green and aviary to the south east [area E]. It also shows the demolition of the 'Owl' Tower and the addition of the historically important War Memorial designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens on its site [area D]. A pond garden has been created to the east of the southern

bowling green [area E]. The gardens to the south [area B] appear to have changed little.

4.7 The OS map of 1974 shows the addition of a bandstand to the west of the central axis within the historically important Exedra [area B]. A small pond has been added within the borders to the south of the tennis courts [area F].

4.8 There are occasional published historical references to the gardens before 1900. The Hon. John Byng, later Fifth Viscount Torrington who visited Ayscoughfee in 1790 refers in his diaries to the fine yews. They are again mentioned in the following brief description found in William White's *History, Gazetteer and Directory of Lincolnshire* (1872); "...it [Ayscoughfee] is chiefly remarkable for its fine gardens, containing a magnificent clipped yew hedge, said to be one of the finest in England,..."³ E T Cook, writing just after the gardens came into public ownership, described them as unique and claimed "...no town in England can boast a more interesting garden".⁴ He also commented that the "...peculiar architectural treatment of the yew trees [at the entrance to the garden] should be noted".⁵

4.9 Historical Illustrations of the gardens

4.9.1. Nineteenth century views of the house [see APS report] show us little or nothing of the form of the gardens.

4.9.2. The earliest known illustrations, specifically of the gardens, appear to date from about 1900. These consist of watercolour paintings [plates 1 & 2] and a series of *Country Life* photographs published in 1916 [plates 3-22]. These show the Hall from the south lawn, the Canal Garden, the Yew Arcade and the Yew Walk. Early twentieth century postcards merely duplicate the views already mentioned.

³ William White *History, Gazetteer and Directory of Lincolnshire* (1872) p536

⁴ E.T Cook *Gardens of England* (London 1908) p. 120

⁵ *ibid.* p.180

5.0 ANALYSIS OF EXISTING GARDENS

5.1 Analysis of Existing Garden Structures

5.1.1. Walls

The grounds are fully enclosed by tall red brick walls which protect the setting of the gardens and provide shelter and attractive vertical surfaces within. The earliest walls appear to be those which enclose the front entrance forecourt and along the west boundary beside Church Lane. Here there is some stone at the base and the brickwork is battered at the top, a characteristic early eighteenth century form. The forecourt walls have a chamfered gritstone coping from the 1845 facelift of the whole frontage. Elsewhere they are brick coped. Along Church Lane the walls have added sloping buttresses along the inside face and the southern end section has been rebuilt in modern times.

Another early wall, partly in stone, is that which runs from the house eastwards terminating in a massive tall rusticated brick pier capped with a large stone ball finial. This originally marked a gateway with a corresponding pier on the east side. That pier and the remaining section of wall was taken down when the stable block was removed. The stone ball finial still remains in the grounds. The brick facing of this wall may be contemporary with the construction of the adjoining garden room.

The walls along Love Lane are likely to be late eighteenth to early nineteenth century although sections have been rebuilt. These are in plain brickwork with a projecting corbel brick covered by a rounded mortar capping.

The wall between the church yard and the grounds although an early boundary is a relatively recent lower brick wall in a common type brick.

The internal wall which divides areas E and F is covered by the aviaries on the south side and the rock and water gardens on the north. It is likely to be of a similar date to

the eastern boundary walls and was certainly in position by the time of the 1887 Ordnance Survey map. It has added buttresses and its condition is likely to be poor.

Many of the walls have had cement figures and animals added to them and they have also been repaired inappropriately using hard cement mortars and patches.

5.1.2. War Memorial

The commissioning and design of the War Memorial are fully described in the fifth edition of Ayscoughfee and its History published by the Spalding Free Press in 1923. The architect Sir Edwin Lutyens was chosen for the work on the basis of his involvement with other memorials including the Cenotaph in Whitehall and in the British War Cemeteries in France and Flanders.

The site for the Memorial was apparently chosen by Sir Edwin following a visit to Ayscoughfee when he recommended using the Canal as a setting for the monument. His original scheme was reputed to have been for a memorial with a cloister garden and this would have cost over £8,000. As funds from subscriptions did not reach that amount the scheme was modified and a reduced proposal estimated at between £3,000 - £4,000 was proposed.

It is interesting to note from the published works of Lutyens that a memorial of a similar but extended design was built as a loggia for part of a monument in France at Daours. It seems likely that Lutyens modified this design for Spalding. That design, as did many others, also included a separate 'War Stone' set on a raised platform. At Ayscoughfee this sits at the end of the Canal and is in the form of a monolith of Portland stone surrounded by three curved steps. The stone is inscribed 'Their name liveth for evermore'. This motif of a single block of stone was put up at the war cemeteries to act as a parent monument for all those who died. The simplicity and beautiful proportions of the design gives these War Stones a mysterious beauty.

The actual structure, referred to as a Temple of Remembrance is constructed in bath stone and brick which has been rendered in a lime render. The roof is a shallow pitched hip, covered in clay pantiles. The form is of three arches, divided by two columns, with a single arch to each side end. The arch was the architectural motif favoured by Lutyens in his work on memorials. On the inside face of the plain rear wall are three panels inscribed with the names of the dead. These are headed by the phrase 'The Glorious Dead' which was Lutyens own thought contained on his first drawing of the Cenotaph, and which has been used on all war memorials since then. Either side of the centre panel are carved stone flags, painted to resemble the Union Flag on the left and the White Ensign on the right.

The memorial was erected by Hodson Ltd of Nottingham and London and the contract price was £3,400. It was dedicated and unveiled on June 8th 1922.

The Temple which is classical in its inspiration sits in a very dignified manner at the end of the Canal and is a great visual and historical asset to the grounds.

5.1.3 Gateways

The main gateway is that leading to the front forecourt (Area A) This is marked by octagonal stone piers with Gothic panels. They are surmounted by small gablettes with carved heads. There is a floriated finial on the very top. The gates are cast iron with Gothic details and dog bars. On the piers are inscribed bronze plates. That to the left reads ' These gates were erected by Public Subscription in Memory of Wm. Stapleton Royce M.P. In the right hand pier 'By unstinted public service in parliament and the locality he showed his love for his native town.' On the gates are two shield plaques. These state ' The elements so mixed in him that nature might stand up and say to all the world ' this was a man'. And ' Honour and shame from no condition rise, act well thy part, there all honour lies'.

The gateway [plate 32] to the garden leading from the Drive (Area H) is marked by brick piers with smaller stone finials and that is clearly shown on a painting of the rear of the Hall dating from 1821. (Figure 12, in APS report) . The iron gate appears to be the original one featured in that painting.

The small pointed archway to the south side of the Hall, which leads from the front forecourt through to the lawned area is part of the late Georgian Gothick treatment of the front facade, most of which was replaced by the Victorian face lift of 1845. It is shown on the engraving of 1808 by Brand. (Figure 10 in the APS report.)

Other gateways through the boundary walls are modern and of no historic interest.

5.1.4 Buildings within the Garden

Apart from the ice house, none of these are of any historic interest. The Ice House is covered by a large mound and sits at the end of Area C beside the boundary wall. Its impact on the gardens is relatively small as it is set within its own enclosure surrounded by modern railings.

The brick pavilion which dates from 1974 replaced the old stable block. It is a utilitarian building and part of the Municipal overlay of the site. It does allow the park to offer facilities such as café and lavatories, plus the operation of the games provided on the site.

Other buildings are of no architectural interest and have minimal impact on the site.

5.2 Analysis of Existing Gardens

5.2.1 The forecourt [area A] with its turning circle, appears on the 1732 Grundy map.

Like many other sites it lost its railings during the second world war. There is

pictorial evidence published in 1808 showing that railings formed part of the early nineteenth century boundary treatment.

5.2.2 The south lawns [area B] correspond in shape and size to what appeared to be two plats, possibly of grass, that are shown on the Grundy plan of 1732. The location of the main north south axis of the formal gardens meant that the plats were not of uniform width, the one to the west of the axis being the wider of the two. On the Grundy plan the southern boundary of this area is shown in the form of an Exedra, which in garden terms refers to an area with a semicircular backdrop, in the manner of an apse. In classical terms the Exedra was a place where ".....philosophers, teachers of rhetoric and other studious persons can sit and discuss".⁶ Maurice Johnson as an eminent antiquary and scholar, was likely to be aware of the classical usage associated with Exedras and therefore it is a distinct possibility that the design of this garden feature could have direct philosophical connections with his interest in learned groups such as the Spalding Gentleman's Society. Such a practice was not uncommon at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and iconography, classical associations and allegory were used by men of education and taste in the design of gardens. This was certainly practised in Lincolnshire by William Stukeley, the 'Father of British Archaeology.' A friend of Maurice Johnson II, in 1726, he laid out a garden at his house in Grantham, containing a sylvan 'temple of the Druids,'⁷

5.2.3 Different materials were used to construct Exedra but the choice of yew as a backdrop at Ayscoughfee corresponds with the construction of one, dating from about the same period, surviving at Chiswick House. To complete the iconography, statues and busts of great philosophers were often set in niches cut into the yew. There is no direct evidence that this was carried out at Ayscoughfee, but given Johnson's antiquarian interests it could be argued that it would have been a likely possibility.

⁶ *Vitruvius on Architecture* Book V. c. xi. trans. Frank Granger, p 308

⁷ *Dictionary of National Biography* (1885-) vol. LV, ed. by Sidney Lee, p. 128

5.2.4 Maurice Johnson II was certainly interested in gardening and was said to have a fine collection of plants. He was also very intimate with the world famous botanist Linnaeus who visited Spalding and therefore very likely the gardens at Ayscoughfee.⁸

5.2.5 Ayscoughfee is justifiably famous for its fine yews, and the yew walk and formal gardens [area C] are the most striking historical feature within the gardens. Situated to the south and south east of the hall, they were admired by the early twentieth century horticultural expert, Ernest T Cook; who, amongst other things, co-edited with Gertrude Jekyll the highly influential gardening magazine *The Garden*.⁹ He considered that [the garden at Ayscoughfee] was unique and wrote in 1908 that ".....no town in England can boast a more interesting garden";¹⁰ and that the 'peculiar architectural treatment of the yew trees should be noted [plate 2].¹¹

5.2.6 Examination of the yews indicates there has been several phases of planting. What appears, by comparative observation, to be the earliest, forming a clearly identifiable 'footprint' of the Exedra and central north east axis Yew Walk. These features are to the south of the lawns, [area B], the southern boundary of which is formed by the Exedra. This planting footprint corresponds to that shown on the Grundy map of 1732 and is likely to date from the first quarter of the eighteenth century. Ring counting, carried out after gales had destroyed some of the original yews in 1980s, indicated those lost were from that early period.¹² Yews however are notoriously difficult to date and it is possible that some of the yews have been planted at different periods of the gardens development. For example the hedge line to west of the canal garden indicates later plantings of yew are contained in its southern continuation starting at about forty metres from the house. For a general dissertation on the problems of dating yew see Appendix A in this report.

⁸ *Dictionary of National Biography* vol. XXX, ed. by Sydney Lee, p. 23

⁹ *The Gardener's Chronicle* (May 15th 1915) p 270

¹⁰ Ernest T Cook *The Gardens of England* (1908) p. 120

¹¹ *ibid* p. 180

¹² Rosalyn Pursglove, *The History of Ayscoughfee Hall* (South Holland Museum Service 1994)

5.2.7 By the end of the seventeenth century Yew was being recommended by the famous arboriculturist John Evelyn, (1620-1705), as a "...*Succedaneum* to *Cypress*,"¹³ for hedges and clipped formality. It was being used to form walks and large avenues in gardens where the evergreen qualities and greater hardiness made it a more suitable plant than the *Cypress* which would have probably been the first choice of many who had seen it growing in Italy when undertaking the 'Grand Tour'.¹⁴ The climate of England was becoming harsher as indicated by the severe winter of 1683-84 which destroyed many less hardy trees.¹⁵ Therefore during the first quarter of the eighteenth century the choice of yew for the structural planting of garden features was well established and popular.

5.2.8 Although the Dutch style of garden design, with its formal use of yew, especially topiary, was coming under fierce attack in the early eighteenth century through the writings of Pope and Addison, a view taken up by 'persons of superior judgement',¹⁶ its use was very much approved of for clipped green structural and architectural features, such as those at Ayscoughfee. Indeed Stephen Switzer (1682-1745), an exponent of a more open and natural style that was to develop into the 'Landscape Movement' of the eighteenth century, conceded that 'enclosed.....gardens were absolutely necessary in towns and cities where the owner is hemmed in on all sides.'¹⁷ Batty Langley promoted yew for structural boundary plantings; writing in 1728 that it ".....makes a beautiful Hedge, as well as fine Standards, to be mix'd with other trees in Groves of Ever-Greens, and to grow wild in the Quarters of a Wilderness."¹⁸ It continued to be used throughout the 18th century in this way as Alexander Hunter confirmed in 1776 ".....for wilderness quarters, as also for hedges, for which service it is excellently well adapted,"¹⁹

¹³ J.Evelyn, *Silva or a Discourse of Forest Trees*, 5th Edition (1729) p. 158

¹⁴ *ibid*

¹⁵ J.Evelyn, *Letter to the Royal Society* (1684) *The Royal Society's Transactions*, no. 158, reprinted from *The Miscellaneous Writings of John Evelyn* (1825)

¹⁶ Phillip Miller *The Gardener's Dictionary* (1731)

¹⁷ Stephen Switzer, *Nobleman, gentleman, and gardener's recreation*. (1715) p. xxix, and *Ichnographia rustica* (1718) vol 1 pp. 338-346

¹⁸ Batty Langley *New principles of gardening etc.* (1728), p. 156.

¹⁹ *Silva or a Discourse of Forest Trees* by John Evelyn, Esq. (York 1776), ed. Alexander Hunter, p. 379.

5.2.9 The footprint of the present Canal [area D] appears on the Grundy map of 1732, which could indicate it as a type of formal water feature that was still popular in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. This rigid use of water lost favour in English gardens as the Landscape Movement became fashionable later in the century. Whilst the feature depicted by Grundy had the appearance of a typical formal canal, it has no obvious geometrical relationship to the Hall and its other formal gardens. This could be an indication that it was already in existence before the planting of the yews in the 1720s and was an adaptation of an earlier feature such as a stew pond or reservoir. There are known examples of this practise of conversion elsewhere.²⁰ Unfortunately this must remain as conjecture, as the archaeological evidence which would have assisted in dating the feature is most likely to have been destroyed in the 1980s during 'refurbishment' work on the Canal. It is possible that the line of yews dividing the canal and south lawns were planted, at least partly, in the form of an Arcade or Fenestrated Palisade, which would have had the effect of inter-relating the two areas as a compatible design feature. Certainly circa 1900 this arcaded effect is very evident from contemporary illustrations and it was regarded by the horticultural writer E T Cook as an unusual feature exhibiting a peculiar architectural treatment of the yew trees²¹ [plate 2]. Palisades in yew and evergreens and other verdant material were certainly advocated as designed garden features in the early eighteenth century²². Circa 1730 the Third Earl of Burlington created a Yew Arcade at Chiswick House. It is thought likely that the design inspiration for this was derived from an illustration produced in the second English edition of John James, *The Theory and Practice of Gardening* (1728)).²³ Contemporaneous instructions for the creation of Yew Arcades were also given by Richard Bradley in "Directions to Gardeners, who have not had the

²⁰ Michael Symes *A Glossary of Garden History* p. 112

²¹ E.T.Cook, *Gardens of England* (A & C Black 1908) p. 180

²² John James *The Theory and Practice of Gardening* (1712) pp. 46-47

²³ Jan Woudstra. *Chiswick House Grounds Restoration. The Arcade*. (August 1995).

*opportunity of travelling, with regard to some Particulars in laying out of Gardens.....*²⁴

5.2.10 Examination of photographs, postcards and paintings, dating from circa 1900 onwards indicates that the Canal and its garden were then contained within massive enclosures of yew hedging to the eastern and western boundaries, a brick wall to the northern boundary with a pedestrian gate with substantial rusticated piers. The gate lined up on the central axis of the Canal. This opening in the wall does not appear on the Grundy map of 1732.

5.2.11 At the southern end of the Canal the 'Owl' tower, built in 1848, provided a focal point until its demolition and replacement by the present War Memorial which is constructed in the form of a Loggia. This building is to a design by Sir Edwin Lutyens, its intended form was to be larger and possibly a facsimile of one built at Daours²⁵ [Plate 24]. For financial reasons, the design for the Memorial at Ayscoughfee was modified and by the removal of the two arches at either end savings on the building costs were achieved. The association of Lutyens and the overall quality of the building gives this area an importance in historical terms [plate 26].

5.2.12 The recently created Peace Garden [area E) is enclosed on its western boundary by the reinstated yew hedge, which also divides it from the Canal and the Lutyens War Memorial. Mature plantings form its southern and eastern boundaries, and it is contained to the north by the 1970s restaurant and recreation block. Its design possesses a pleasing use of proportion and it sits well in its relationship to other areas of the garden. This feature is arguably the best quality of the more recent overlays and it is placed appropriately adjacent to the earlier tribute to those who

²⁴ Richard Bradley *New Improvements of Planting and Gardening, both Philosophical and Practical*. Seventh Edition, (1739), "A Collonade, or Arcade in a Garden, is generally planted with Yew-Trees.." p. 163.

²⁵ A.S.G. Butler *The Architecture of Sir Edwin Lutyens volume III: Town & Public Buildings* (Country Life, 1950) Plates 112/113

gave their lives in the service of their country [plate 30]. The mid nineteenth century drinking fountain is adjacent to the peace garden. It was re-located onto the site from the centre of the town in 1954.

5.2.13 The siting of the bowls and the tennis courts to the east of the hall [area F] indicates an earlier sensitive approach to the Municipal overlays of the first half of the twentieth century. This deliberate policy has done much to contribute to the survival of the much more historically important early eighteenth century formal gardens to the south of the house. By siting the bowling green almost adjacent to the Hall, an evocation of an early eighteenth century grassed plat or lawn is achieved [plate 31]. This is however marred by the fussy treatment between it and the Hall. The plantings to the north and south of this area, together with the rather crudely designed water feature are now looking somewhat tired.

5.2.14 The formal herb garden [area G] as a specifically designed feature has no historical provenance beyond the writings of twentieth century garden pundits such as Elinore Sinclair Rhodes,²⁶ and as such it is inappropriate and historically misleading to place one adjacent to Ayscoughfee Hall.

5.2.15 The present main entrance to the gardens [area H] is adjacent to the north elevation of the hall. In former times it was used as access to the former coach house and stables and was never intended to lead visitors into the pleasure gardens. Consequently as a gateway to the gardens it is less than satisfactory [plate 32]. The 1950s avenue plantings of scarlet horse chestnut trees are replacements of an earlier avenue which still appears to occupy the position shown on the Grundy plan of 1732.

²⁶ Helen Leach, *Cultivating Myths* (2000) p. 24

6.0 HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SITE

6.1 The present footprint of the gardens corresponds almost exactly to the survey plan of 1732, therefore the whole site can be regarded as an important survival of an early eighteenth century town garden. Survivals of such sites appear to be extremely scarce.²⁷

6.2 The formal gardens to the south of the Hall are the most significant part of the site, containing as they do the discernible structure of the early eighteenth century yew plantings [plate 28]. As so much authentic planting remains from the era of the 1732 survey, it offers a valuable opportunity for an archaeological investigation that could result in an historic garden restoration of great accuracy and national importance.

6.3 The War Memorial is also of historical significance as the design is the work of Sir Edwin Lutyens, an architect of world standing.

6.4 The site has very strong associations with many nationally important antiquaries and internationally important botanists of the eighteenth century.

7.0 IDENTIFICATION OF PROBLEMS

7.1 The historical importance of the site has not been fully appreciated until recently and therefore management decisions effecting the role of the gardens have not taken into account its unique authentic qualities. Inappropriate later overlays have therefore been imposed upon the site. These are to be regretted but fortunately those that have occurred to the south of the Hall are reversible.

²⁷ Anthea Taegal, Conservation Officer for the Garden History Society.

7.2 No restoration proposals or management plans have so far been formulated to protect the historically authentic fabric of the site in the future and there isn't an archaeological strategy in place to develop a further understanding of the gardens.

8.0 SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Ayscoughfee Hall gardens today represents a nationally important, possibly unique, example of an early eighteenth century enclosed town garden. There is strong evidence that the integrity of its boundary footprint and much of the early layout of formal yew plantings to the south, delineating the main north south axis and Exedra, have survived. The yew gardens are the most historically significant area of this early footprint and contain the least of the later overlays and additions of the Municipal Park. The gardens offer, if sensitively and expertly restored, an exciting conservation opportunity to enhance and protect a valuable heritage asset that would provide an area of contrast to the recreational facilities that are at present sited to the east of the Hall.

8.2 The rarity value of the Hall's surviving early yew gardens owes much to the citizens of Spalding for their decision to purchase Ayscoughfee at a time when many such important houses and gardens were being destroyed in large numbers by speculative builders. The long term effects of this wholesale and often thoughtless destruction was already causing concern at the beginning of the last century. The architect Inigo Trigg writing before the first world war complained that: "New suburbs have been created without method or plan and for the most part without any expert supervision. Country lanes, open fields, private parks, pleasure grounds and gardens are everywhere giving place to rows of dreary streets. Hedges trees and fields are ruthlessly destroyed with the sole object of crowding the maximum number of houses on the minimum area of land."²⁸

²⁸ H.Inigo Trigg *Town Planning Past, Present and Possible* 2nd edn. (London 1911) p. 171

8.3 As the iconography of the Yew Exedra to the south of the Hall is likely to have important philosophical associations with Maurice Johnson and the Spalding Gentleman's Society, careful consideration should be given to the restoration of this area together with the remaining early eighteenth century yew footprint. Inappropriate later overlays of both hard and soft landscaping could be removed and the design of that period be brought back as near as possible into its original form. This would offer a strong case for the gardens to be upgraded on the English Heritage's *Register of Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England* to II* The proposals to create a new bandstand in this area should therefore be rescinded and an alternative site for this feature be considered, possibly somewhere to the east of the Hall.

8.4 Before any of this work is attempted, an archaeological strategy should be prepared and implemented. Respecting the high heritage value of the grounds it is desirable that this work is undertaken by an experienced archaeologist who has a proven track record in the specialised field of garden restoration.

9.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY

9.1 Published Works

Richard Bradley, *New Improvements of Planting and Gardening, both Philosophical and Practical* (1718), seventh Edition, (1739),

A.S.G. Butler, *The Architecture of Sir Edwin Lutyens volume III: Town & Public Buildings* (1950)

Evelyn Cecil, *A History of Gardening in England* 3rd edn. (London 1910)

E T Cook, *Gardens of England* (1908)

J.Evelyn, *Silva or a Discourse of Forest Trees*, 5th Edition (1729)

Letter to the Royal Society (1684) The Royal Society's Transactions, no. 158, reprinted from *The Miscellaneous Writings of John Evelyn* (1825)

John James, *The Theory and Practice of Gardening* (1712, 1728)

Batty Langley *New Principles of Gardening etc.* (1728).

Helen Leach, *Cultivating Myths: Fiction, Fact & Fashion in Garden History* (Auckland NZ, 2000)

Phillip Miller, *The Gardener' Dictionary* (1731)

Rosalyn Pursglove, *The History of Ayscoughfee Hall* (South Holland Museum Service 1994)

Michael Symes *A Glossary of Garden History*

Stephen Switzer, *Nobleman, gentleman, and gardener's recreation*. (1715),
Ichnographia rustica, (1718)

H. Inigo Triggs *Town planning Past, Present and Possible*, 2nd edn, (London 1911)

Ayscoughfee and it's History, (Printed and published by the Spalding Free Press 1923).

Burra Charter,

Dictionary of National Biography: (1898-) Volume LV, ed. Sidney Lee

Historic Parks and Gardens in the Planning System: A Handbook. Christopher
Dingwall and David Lambert, (1997)

Park Life Urban Parks and Social Renewal (Comedia in association with Demos,
1995)

*Public Prospects: Historic Urban Parks Under Threat: A short report by the Garden
History Society and the Victorian Society*, Hazel Conway and David Lambert. (1993)

Silva or a Discourse of Forest Trees by John Evelyn, Esq. (York 1776), ed. Alexander
Hunter

9.2 Unpublished Works

John Glenn *The Ornamental use of Yew in English Parks and Gardens*
(Thesis, Graduate School of the Architectural Association, 1996)

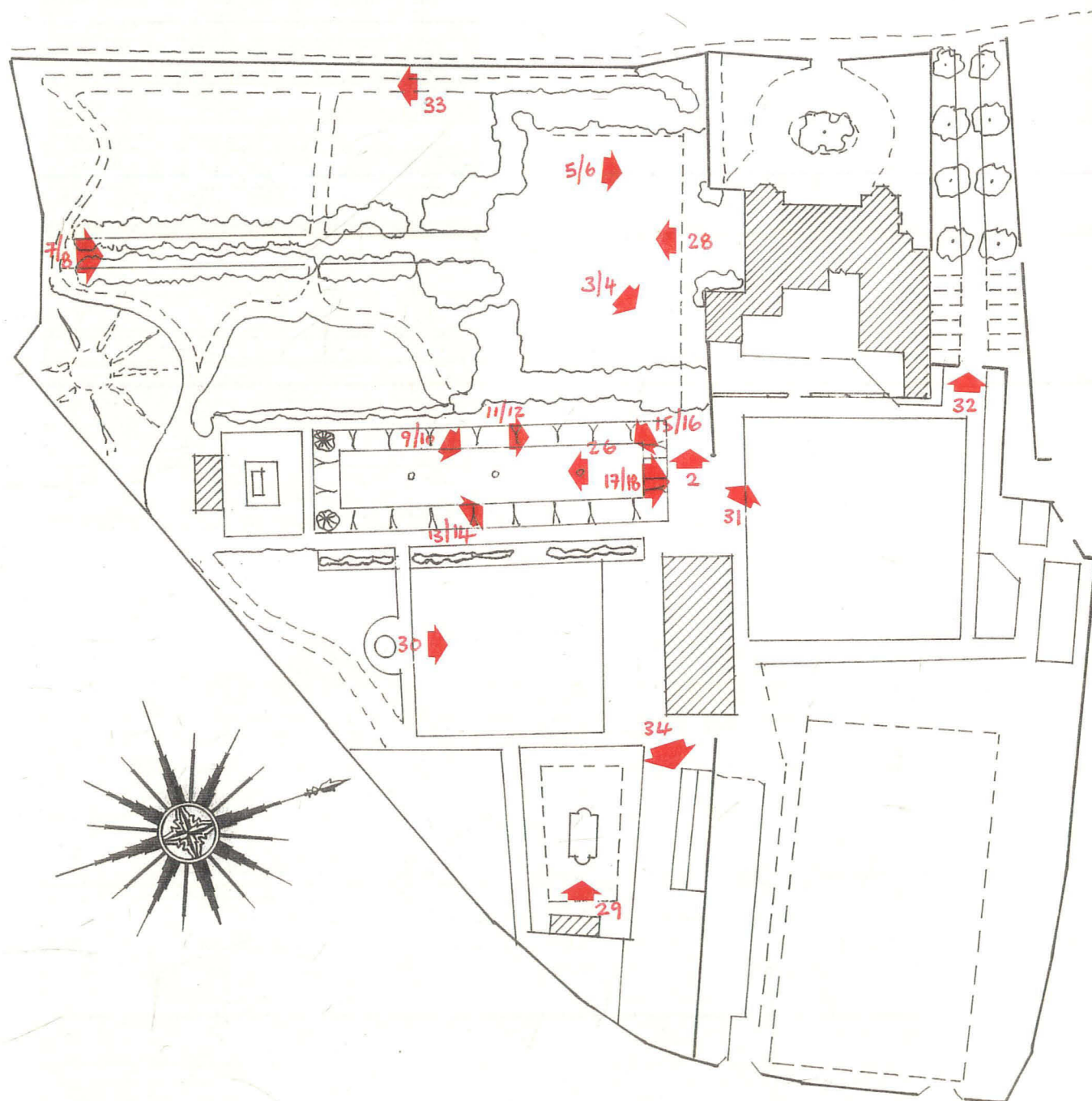
Jan Woudstra, *Chiswick House Grounds Restoration. The Arcade*. (August 1995).

A report prepared for English Heritage.

'*The Wilderness in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Gardens*',
(Institute of Advanced Architectural Studies, University of York 1986)

APPENDIX A: ILLUSTRATIONS:

FIGURE ONE: ILLUSTRATION VIEW POINTS



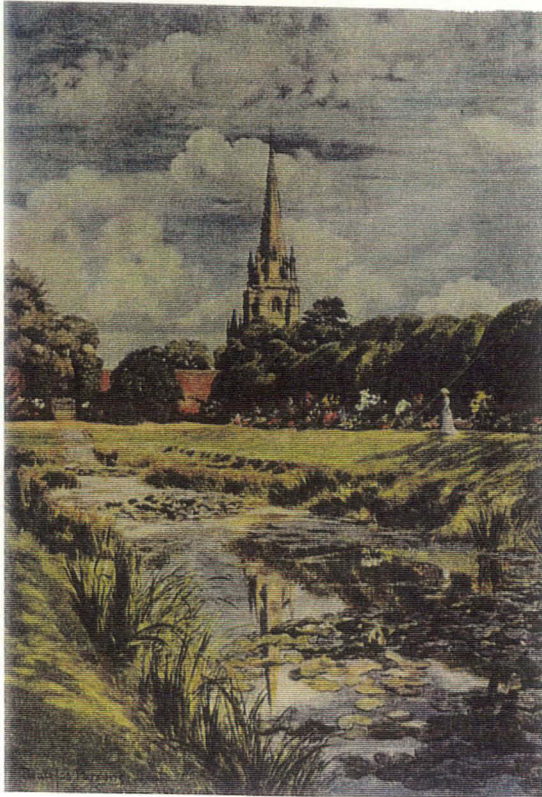


Plate 1
The Canal Garden, looking north
by Beatrice Parsons (1908)

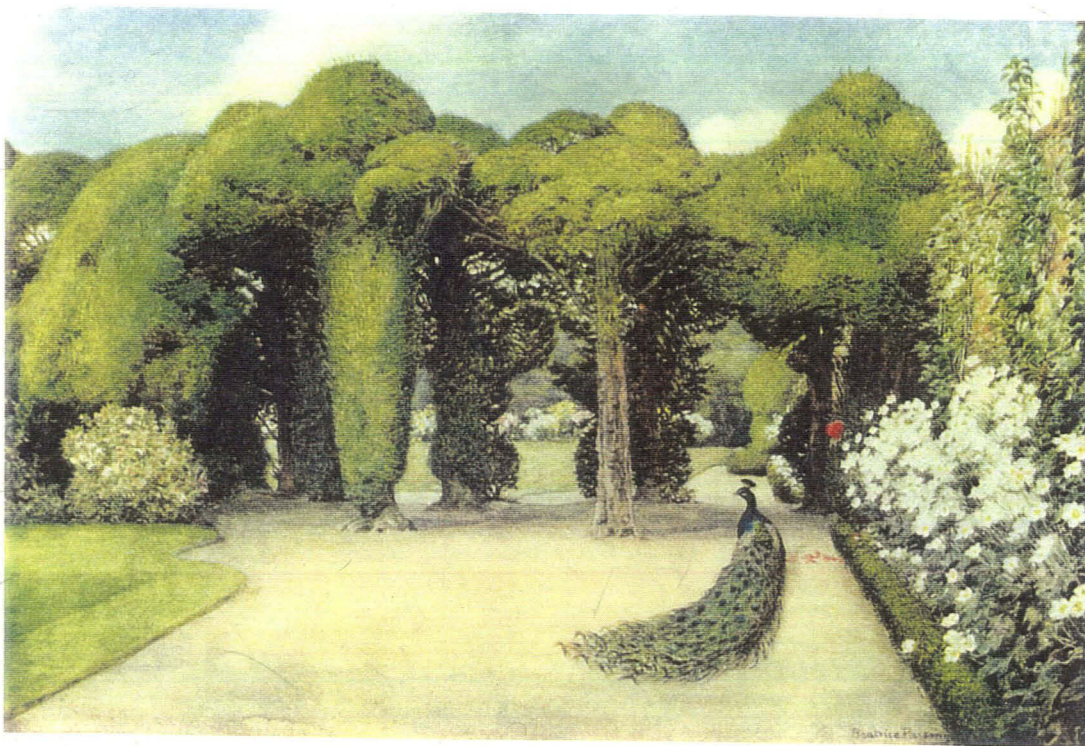


Plate 2
The entrance to the gardens by Beatrice Parsons (1908)

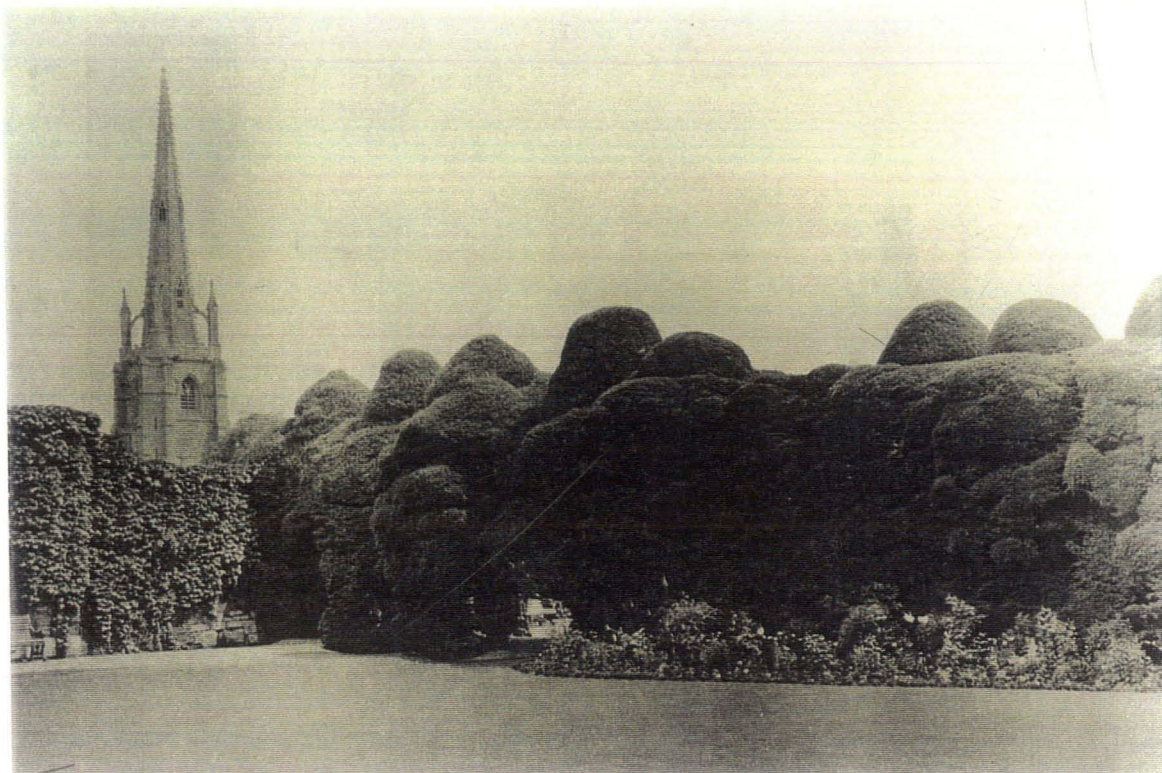


Plate 3
Country Life view of the yew 'Arcade' and church from the south lawn (1916).



Plate 4
 The same view in 2000. A hedge of privet has been planted at the base of the yews.

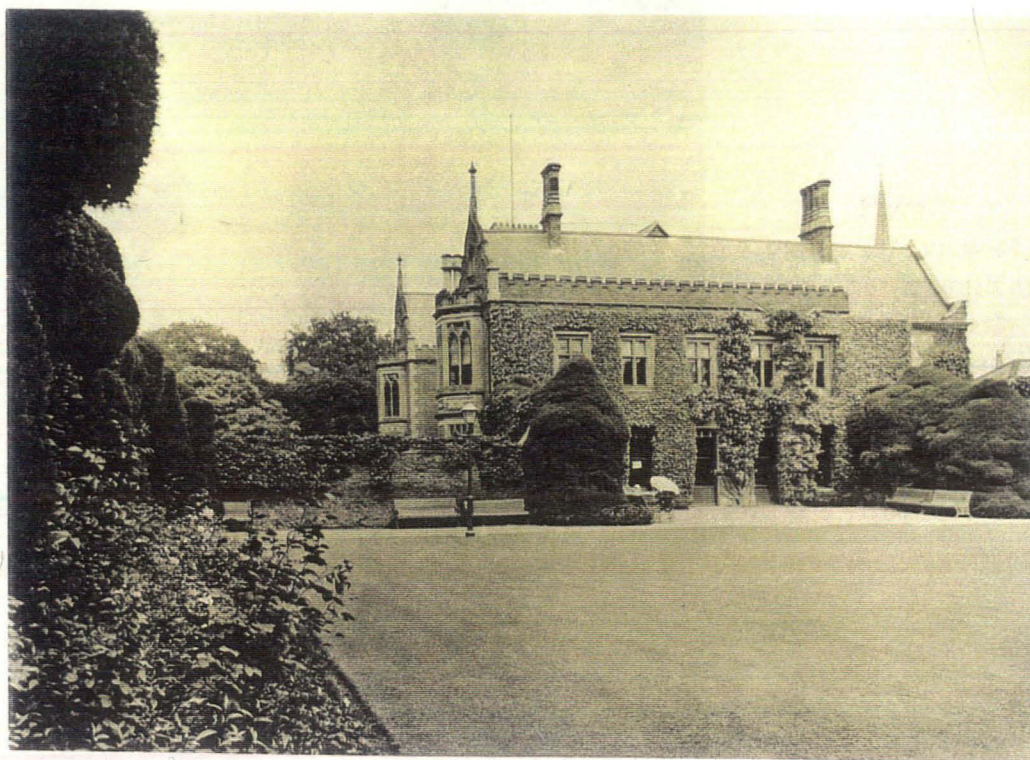


Plate 5
Country Life view of the Hall from the south lawn (1916)

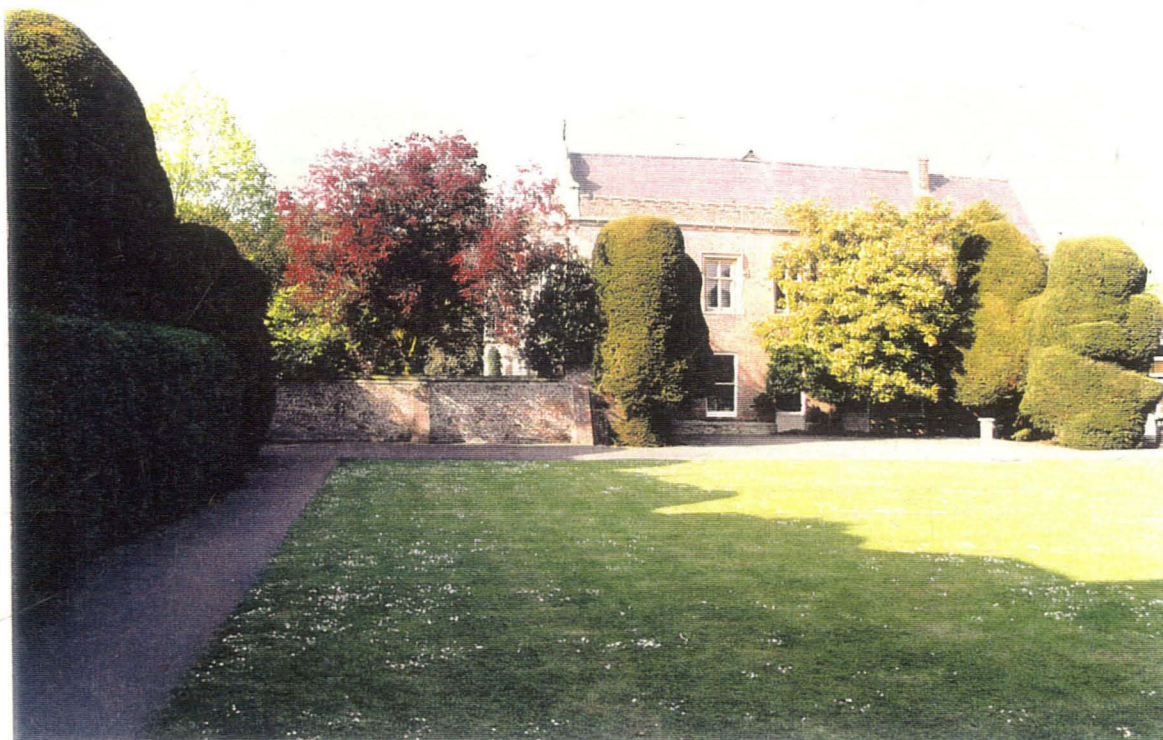


Plate 6
 The same view in 2000. Plantings have matured and now obscure the house.



Plate 7
Country Life view of the
 main north south axis,
 showing the early 18th
 century yew plantings.
 (1916)



Plate 8
 The same view in 2000. Tree losses occurred in the gales of the 1980s.

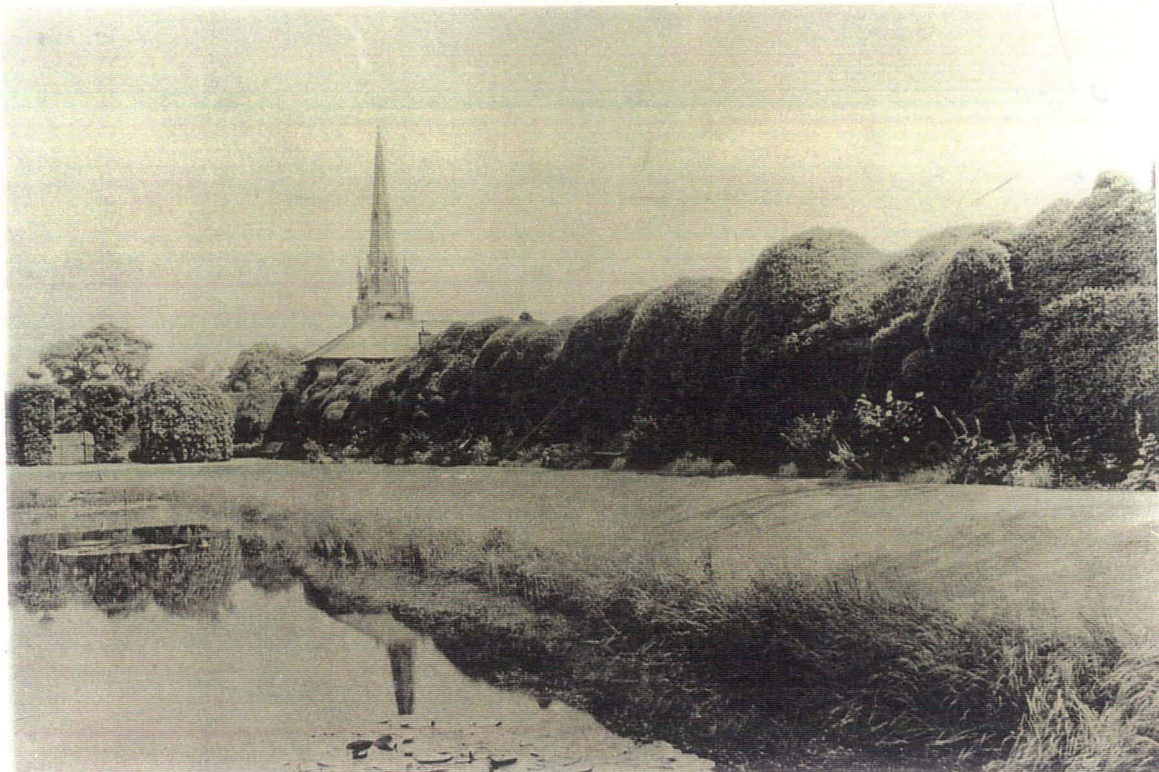


Plate 9
Country Life view of the Canal Garden (1916) see *plate 1*.



Plate 10
 The same view in 2000. The yew hedge has been replanted, the coach house replaced by the pavilion and the gate and its eastern pier removed.

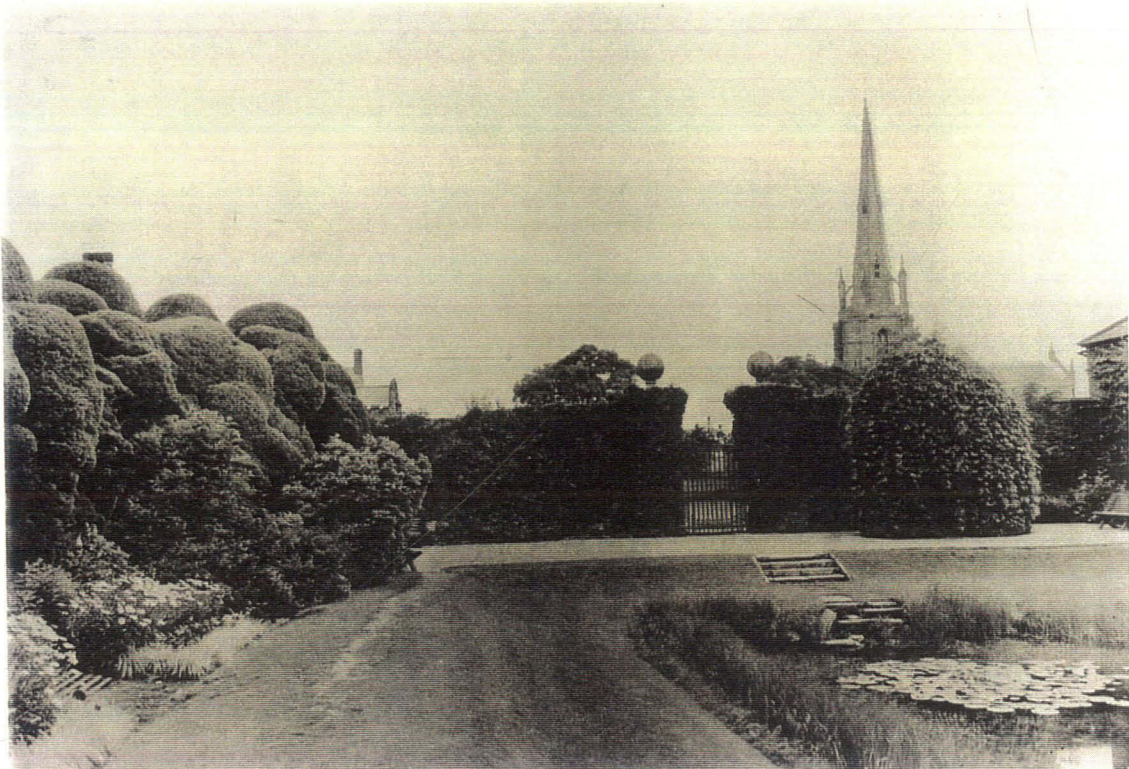


Plate 11
Country Life view of the Canal Garden (1916).

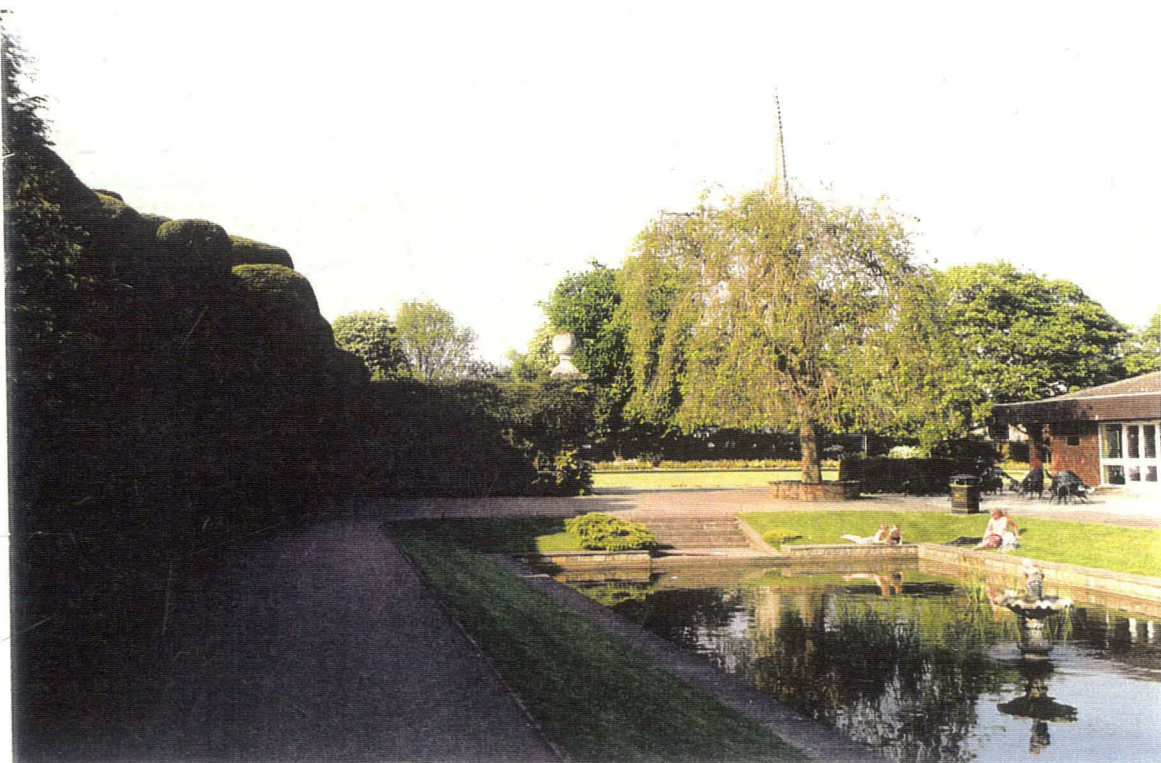


Plate 12
 The same view in 2000. See notes for *plate 10*.



Plate 13
Country Life view of the Canal Garden (1916).

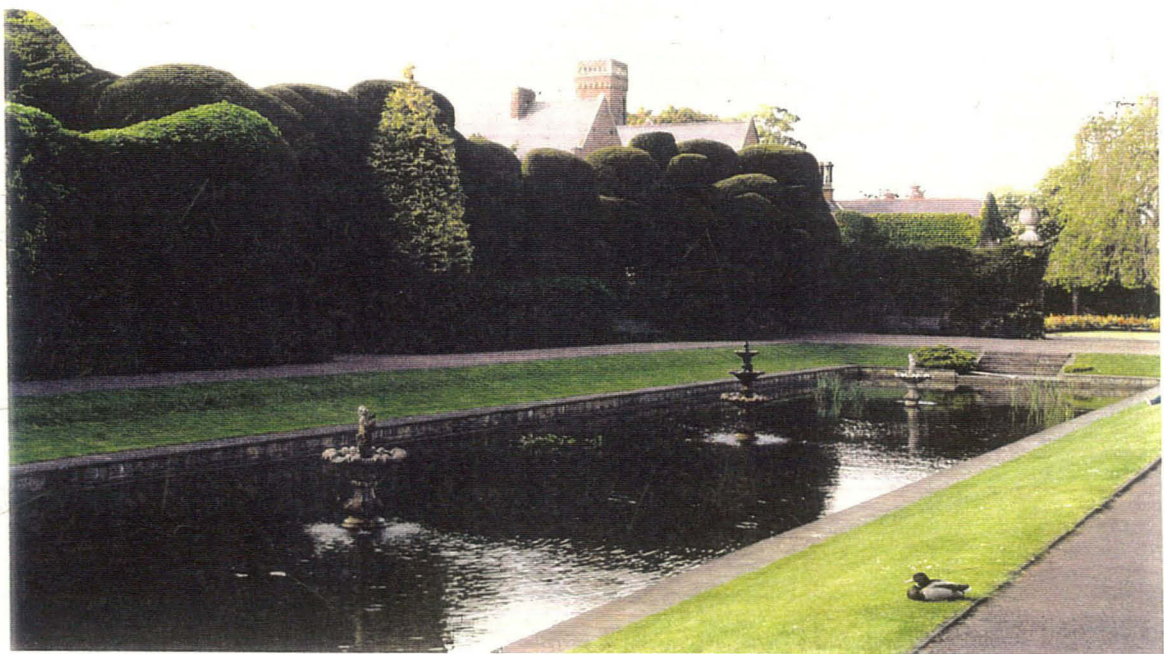


Plate 14
 The same view in 2000. The yews are higher and are marred by the additions of inappropriate plantings, within the line and to the base.



Plate 15

Country Life view of the Canal Garden (1916), note the 'Owl' Tower on right.



Plate 16

The same view in 2000. The yew hedge has been replanted and the 'Owl' Tower has been replaced by the Lutyens War Memorial.



Plate 17
Country life view of gates to
 the north of the Canal Garden
 (1916).

Plate 18.
 The same view in 2000.
 Gate and pier removed.





Plates 19 - 20
Country life illustrations of fine statuary (1916), now removed.



Plates 21 - 22

Country life illustrations of fine statuary (1916), now removed.

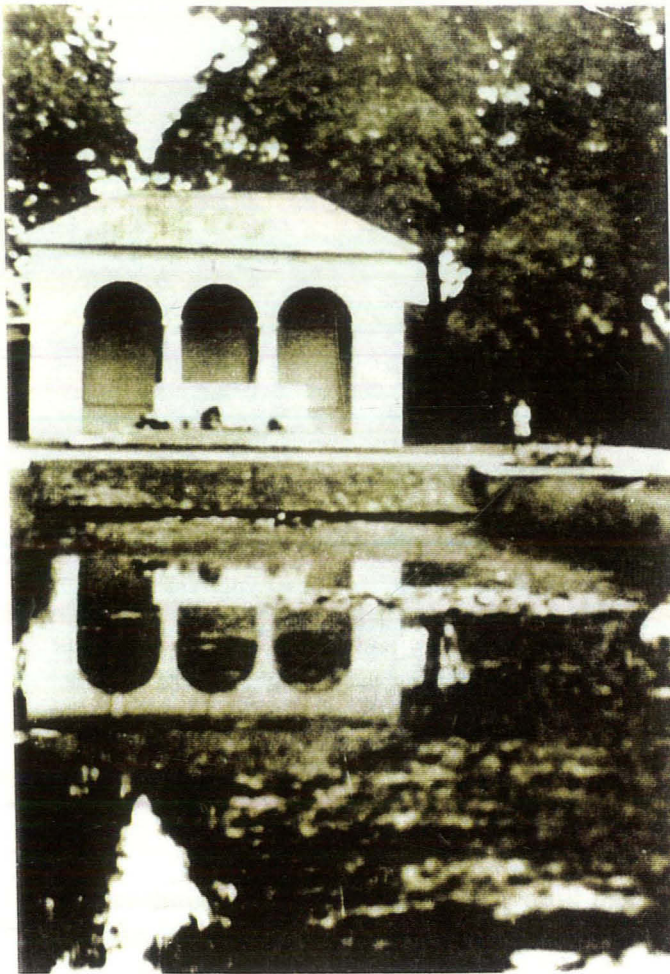


Plate 23
The Lutyens war Memorial
shortly after erection.
Note the recently planted yew.
(see plate 35).

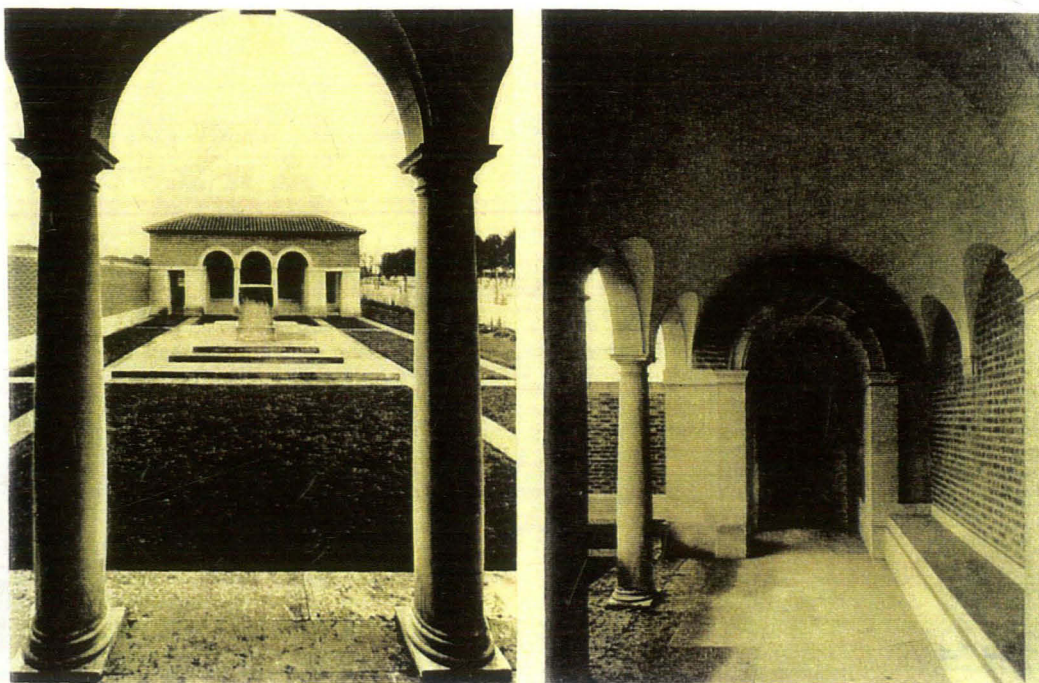


Plate 24
The Memorial was originally intended to be as large as the one at Daours,
but lack of funds prevented this and a truncated version was built instead.



Plate 25

The archaeological evidence that would have helped provide a date for the construction of the Canal, was destroyed during the 1984 refurbishment.



Plate 26

The Canal and War Memorial in 2000.



Plate 27
The 1930s Bandstand before its collapse.



Plate 28
The cobble base of the Bandstand remains. The semi-circular backdrop of the important yew Exedra is obscured by inappropriate later plantings.



Plate 29
The pond in the 'Cottage' garden



Plate 30
The 'Peace Garden' constructed recently as an adjunct to the War Memorial.



Plate 31

The east front of the Hall, seen across the Bowling Green.



Plate 32

The entrance gates and Horse Chestnut Avenue.



Plate 33

The Pergola, an unfortunate overlay upon the early 18th century Formal Gardens.

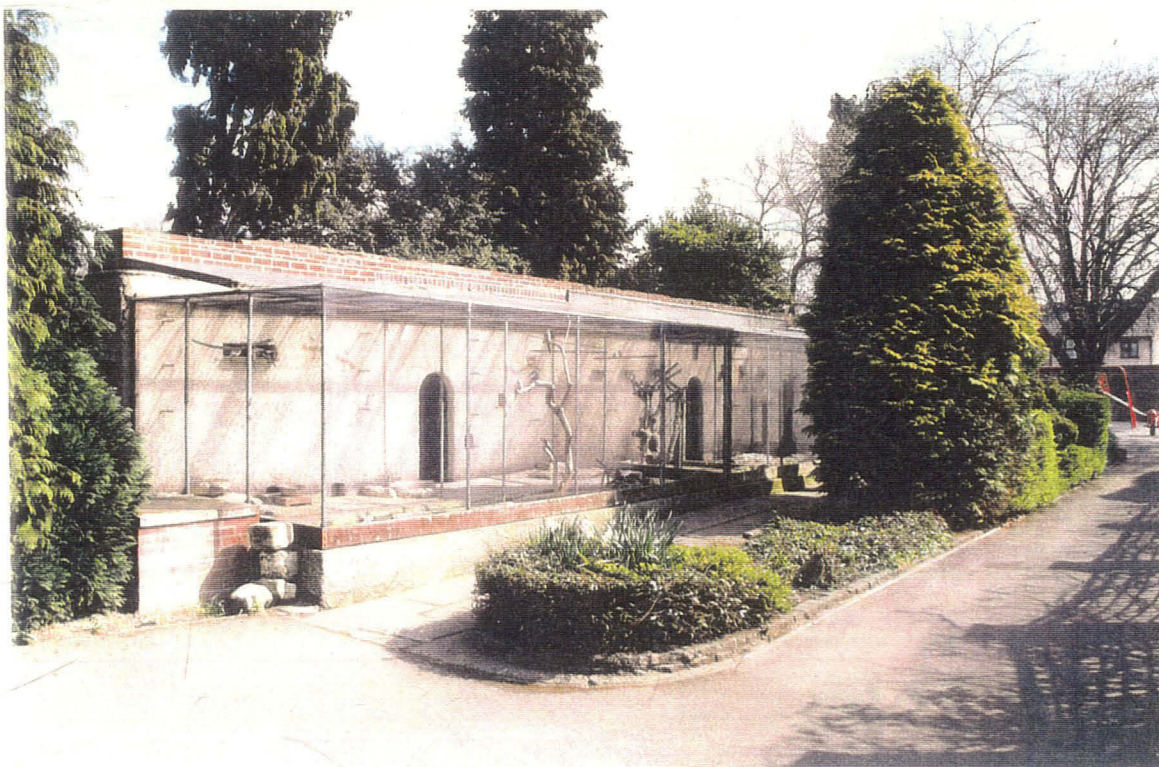


Plate 34

The Aviary, now looking somewhat 'tired'.



Plate 35

One of two yew 'Sentinels'
planted in the 1920s either
side of the War Memorial.

Plate 36
likely 19th century yew
planting. Note statue
base. See plates 19 - 22



APPENDIX B: PLANS & MAPS

FIGURE TWO: GARDEN AREAS

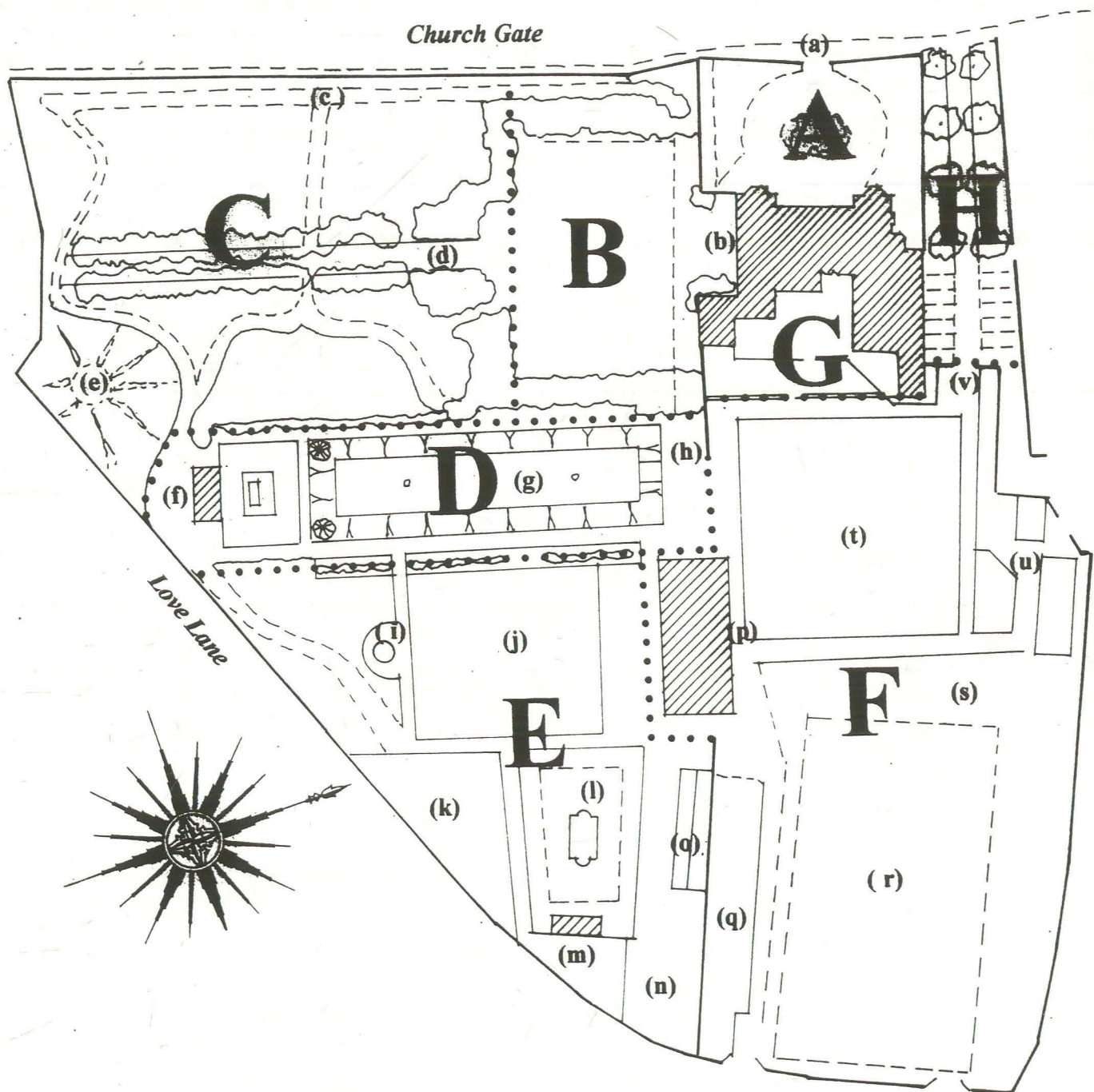




FIGURE FOUR: EXTRACT FROM ARMSTRONG'S MAP OF 1779

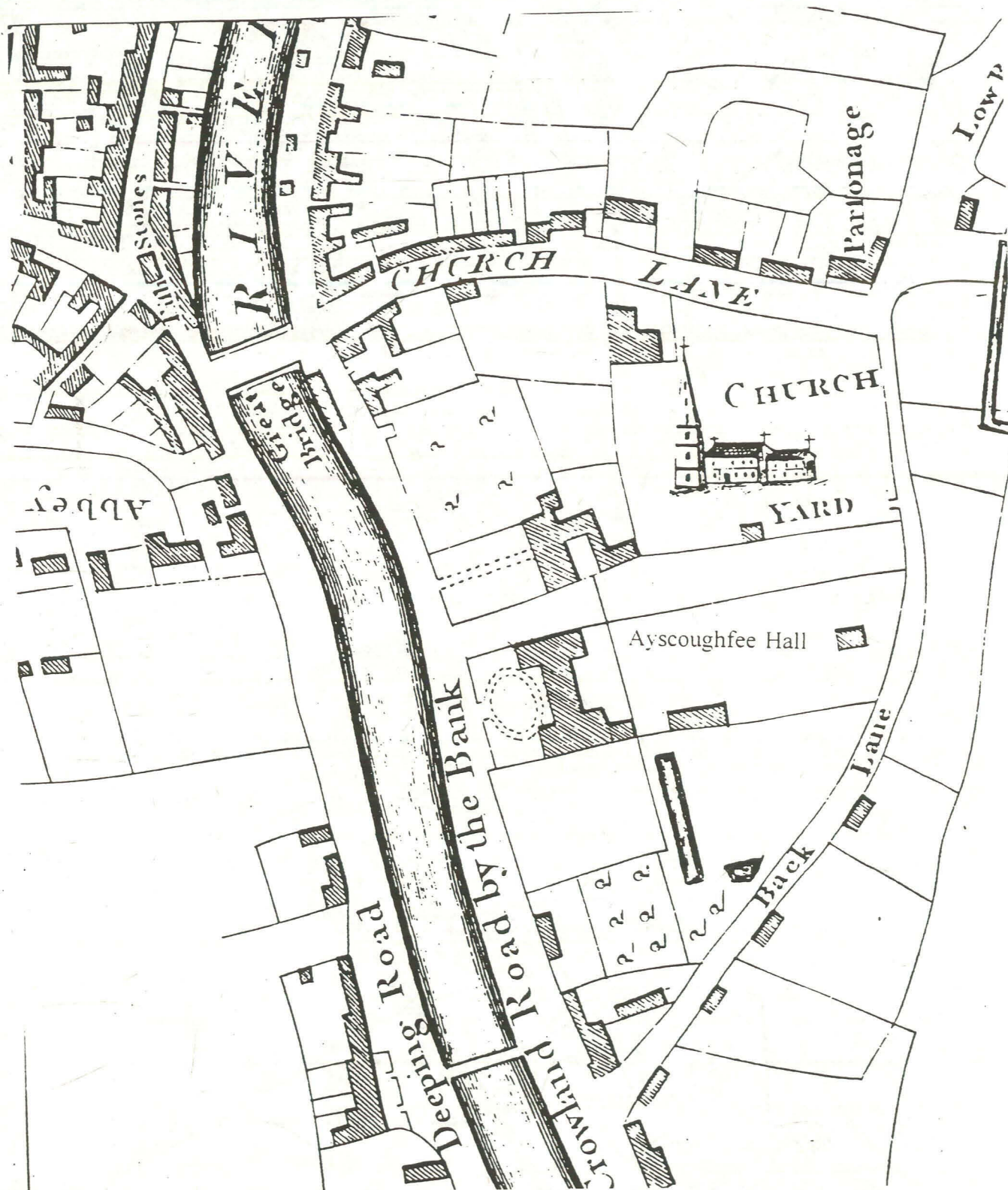


FIGURE FIVE: OS 1887 SCALE: 1:2500

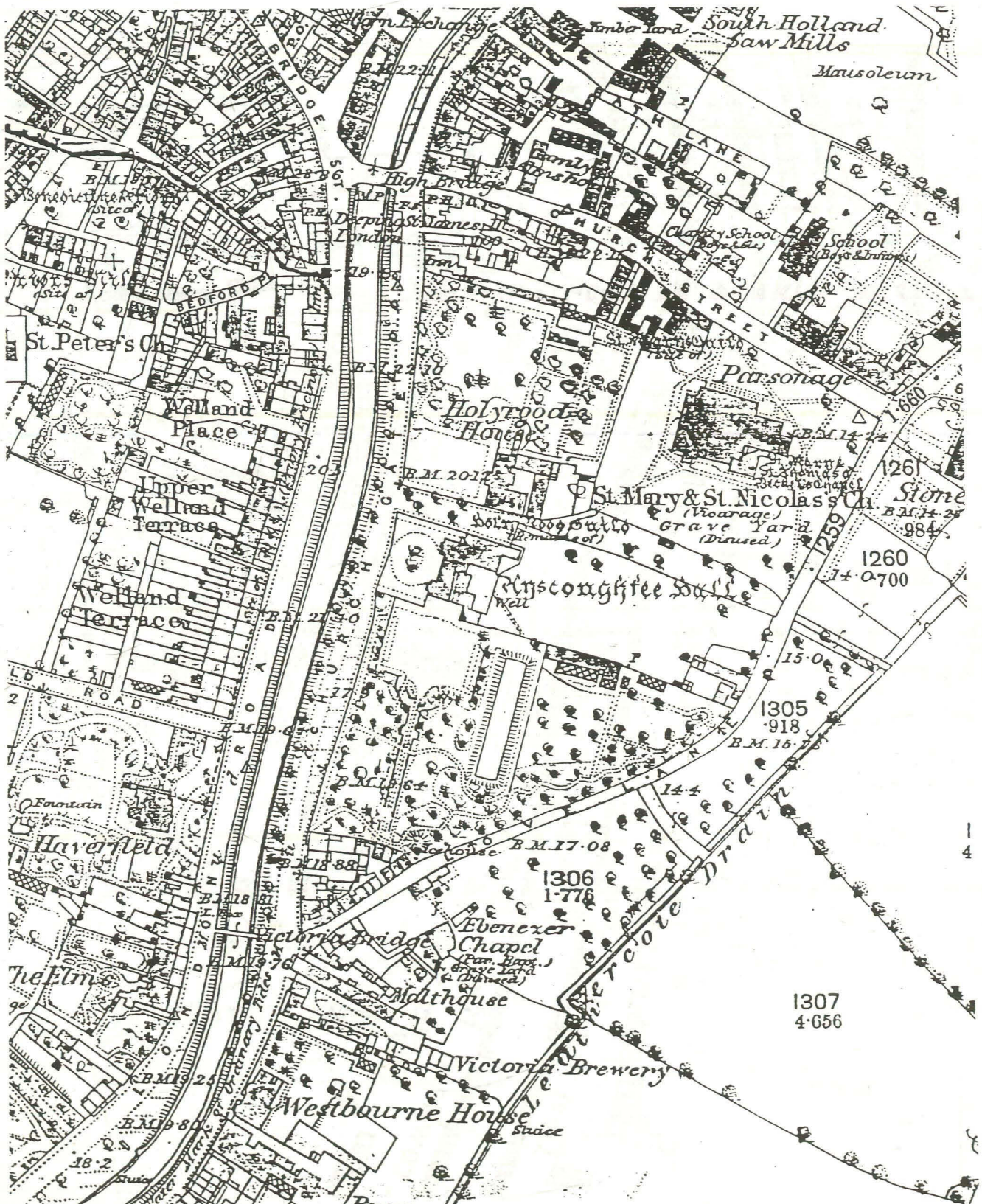
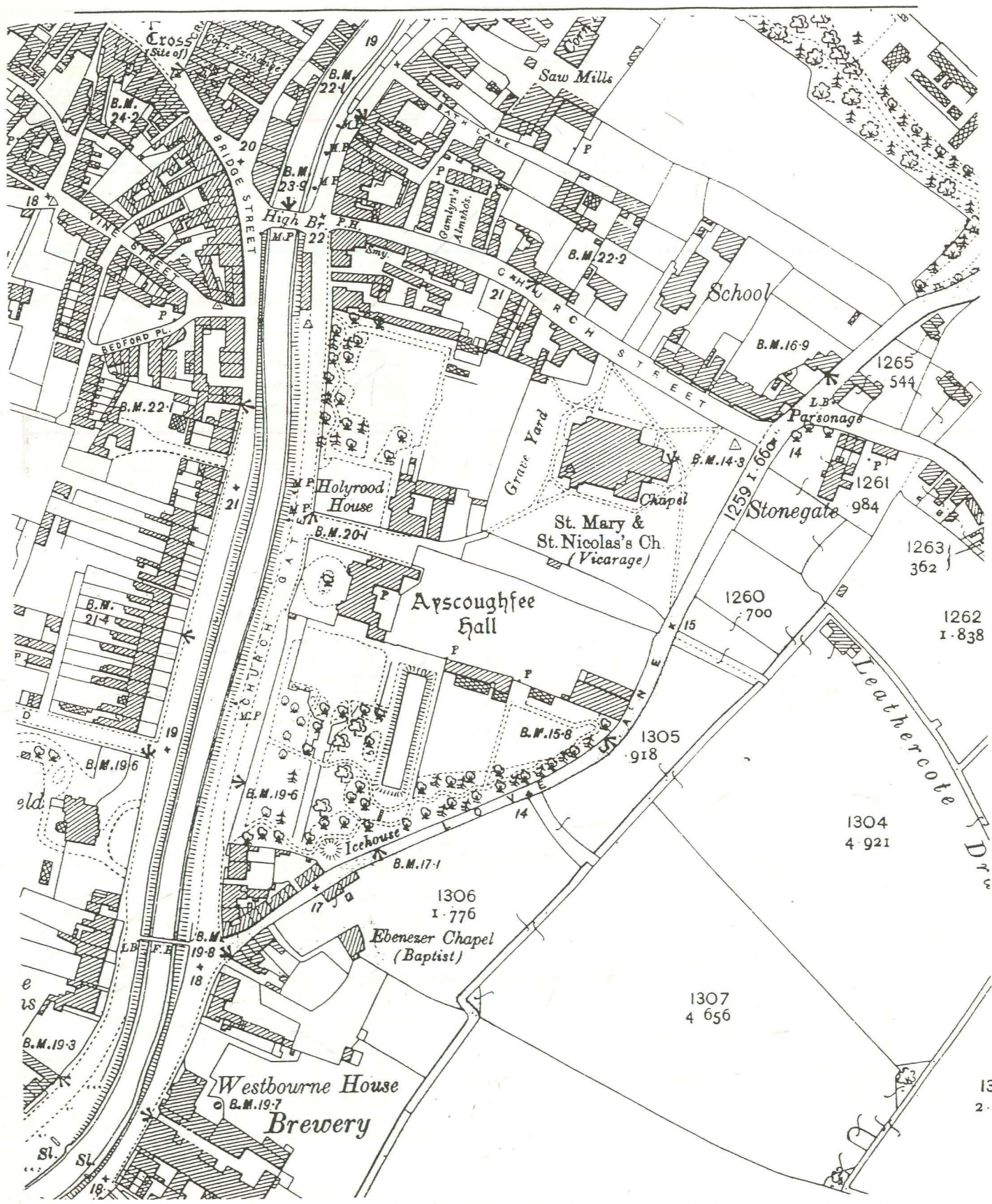


FIGURE SIX: OS 1903 SCALE: 1:2500



SURVEY OF THE GARDENS AT AYSCOUGHFEE HALL SPALDING
©ANDERSON AND GLENN: BOSTON (UK)

FIGURE SEVEN: PLAN FROM GUIDE BOOK OF 1912

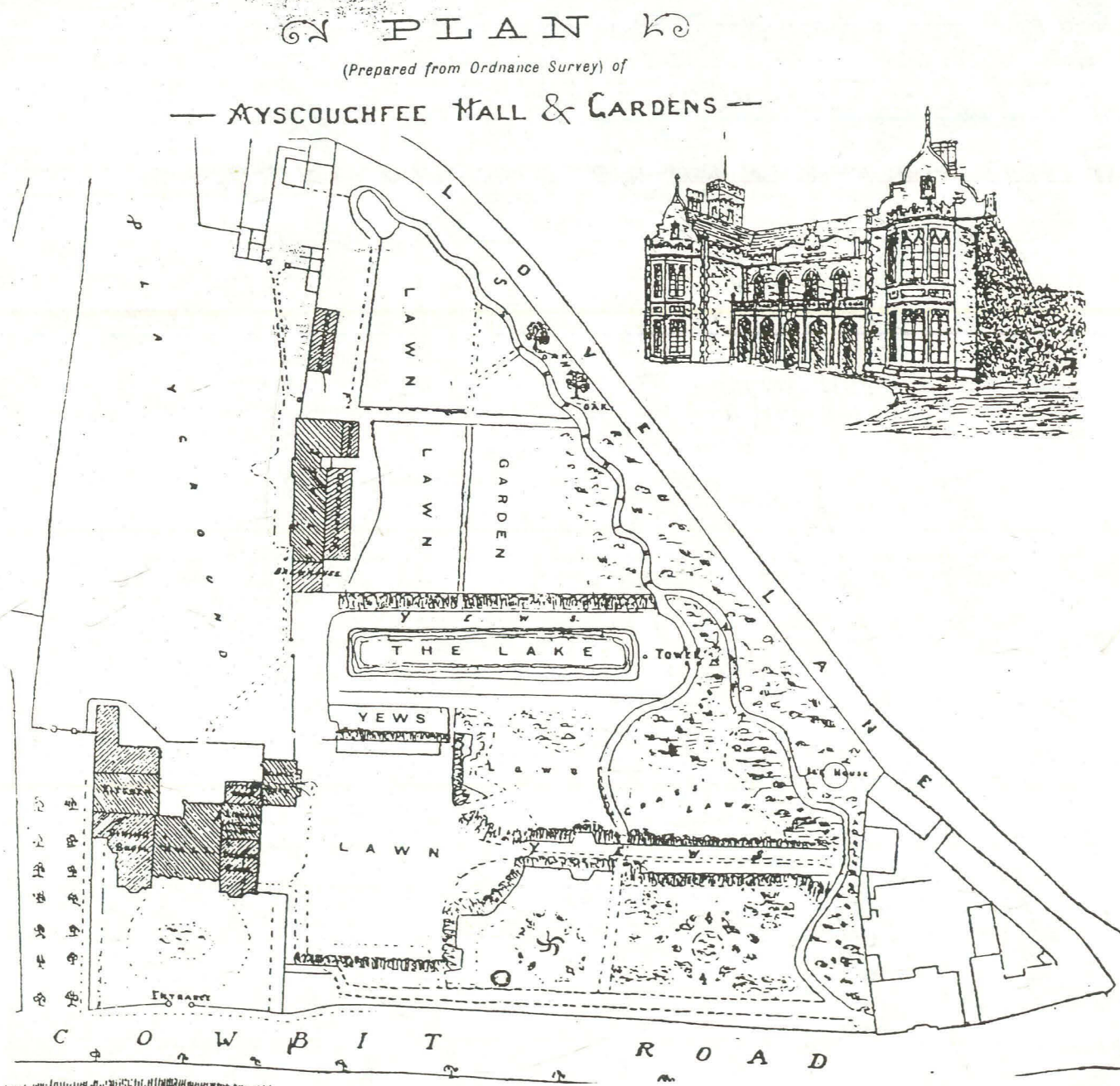
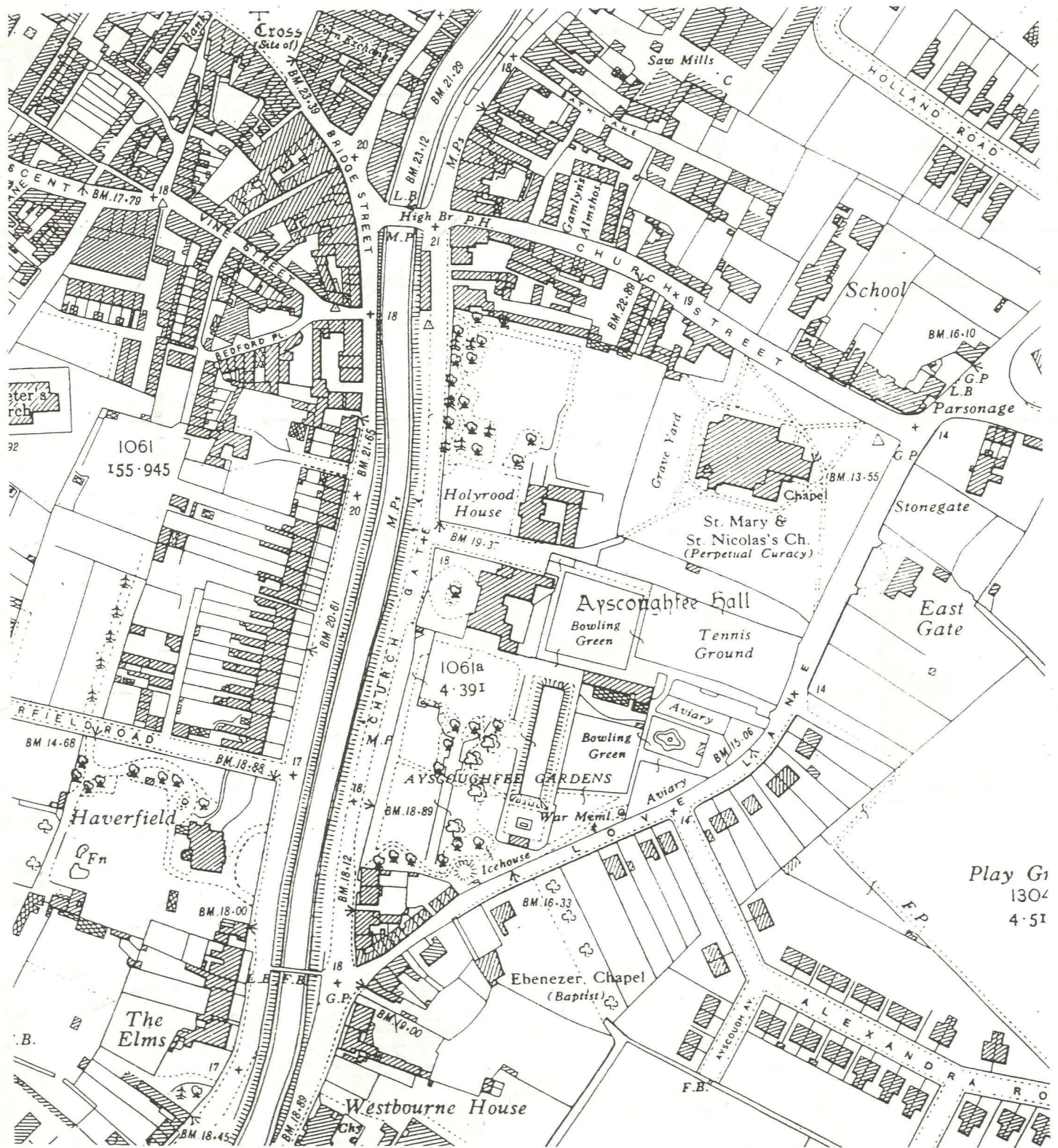


FIGURE EIGHT: OS 1929 SCALE 1:2500



SURVEY OF THE GARDENS AT AYSCOUGHTEE HALL SPALDING
©ANDERSON AND GLENN: BOSTON (UK)

