

Private Parkland

Areas within this Zone

'Bretton Park', 'Cannon Hall', 'Stainborough Park', 'Wortley Old Park', 'Wortley New Park', 'Worsbrough Park', 'Noblethorpe Hall', 'Birthwaite Hall', 'Haigh Hall', 'Middlewood Park', 'Burnt Wood Hall'

Summary of Dominant Character

The defining characteristic of this zone is the use of land as ornamental parkland from the 17th to early 19th century. These areas of parkland often have clearly defined boundaries, separating the land from the surrounding countryside by circuits of walls or plantation woodlands that provide screening and enclosure. In some cases these may be broken or absent where agricultural use has been reintroduced within the park. Most of the larger parks originated as deer parks so boundaries often have deep internal ditches to prevent deer leaving the enclosed space.

Trees and woodlands are an important feature of most of these landscapes, with numerous bands of deciduous plantation and ancient woodlands and scattered trees punctuating open areas. The surrounding ground cover is typically either permanent grassland maintained as pasture or land 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. Design features in these character areas are generally intended to emphasise the high status of their 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.

Relationship to Adjacent Character Zones

The majority the 'Private Parkland' zone is surrounded by areas of 'Assarted Enclosure'. This relationship may be in part due to the former wooded character of the area as a link has been made between heavily wooded regions and high numbers of deer parks (Rackham 1986, 123). The later establishment of 18th century ornamental parklands within a similar area will have more to do with the financial success of large landowners.

These areas are also often closely related to the 'Nucleated Rural Settlement' zone, with many examples abutting or surrounding historically 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 and powerful social group developed from a medieval tradition of creating enclosed deer parks. This was linked with the idea of a designated, unenclosed hunting area known as a forest or chase. All deer belonged to the Crown making a license to create a park or chase, known as a grant of free warren, necessary from the 13th century (Jones 2000, 91). There were numerous grant of free warren recorded in the Barnsley area only some of which resulted in the creation of an enclosed park. Medieval chases have not been considered as part of this zone as they rarely directly impacted on the physical form of the landscape.

Within the district of Barnsley the earliest known enclosed deer park was at Tankersley, with parks at Wortley, Wharncliffe, Gunthwaite and Brierley established by the 15th and 16th century. Of these, only 'Wortley Old Park' and 'Wortley New Park' remain as cohesive areas of parkland with surviving ornamental features. Brierley was partly overbuilt by the industrial settlement of Grimethorpe, Tankersley was broken up after extensive ironstone mining and Gunthwaite was converted to agricultural use in the 18th century.

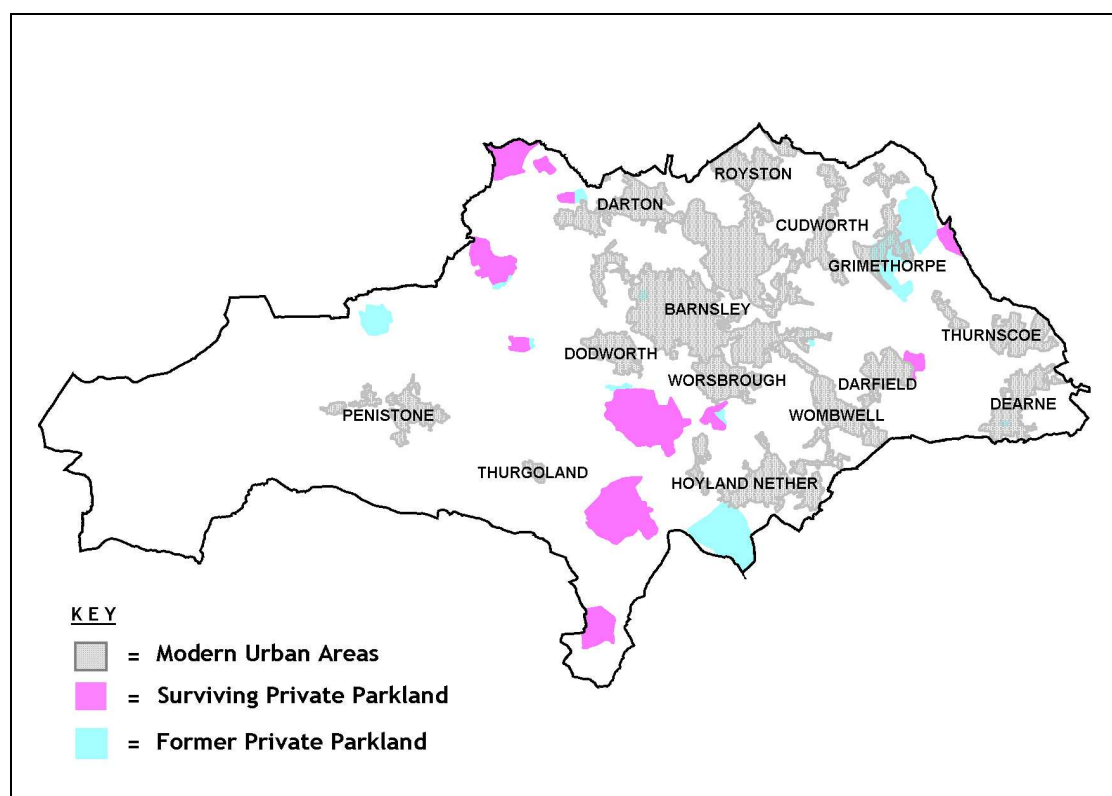


Figure 1: Map of the Barnsley district showing areas of current and former Private Parkland. Based on OS mapping © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Sheffield City Council 100018816. 2007

Medieval deer parks were not developed as hunting grounds as the enclosed spaces would have been too small for a true hunt. Rather, they were a store for fresh venison, other meats and timber (Rackham 1986, 125). Although medieval deer parks provided an economic resource for their owners, they nevertheless required considerable maintenance representing significant investments in land resources. Most were being broken up by the 16th and 17th centuries as these maintenance costs stretched their owner's resources (ibid, 126).

Following the European renaissance of the 14th to 17th century, the idea of parkland was reborn as a focus for display of status and wealth through the aesthetic manipulation and presentation of land. Earlier parks took their influences from formal continental models 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 18th century this formal and geometric aesthetic was challenged by English landscape designers championing a naturalistic, picturesque approach to landscape (ibid, 129). Many of the earlier parks within this zone were re-ordered to conform to this style during the 18th and 19th centuries. Stainborough Park, although itself an 18th century development, went through some of these changes in style. Early maps show a heavily regimented layout of trees and pathways with formal ponds and gardens; many of these features were replaced in the late 18th century with rolling parkland and the development of the Serpentine Lake (Wentworth Castle and Stainborough Park Heritage Trust 2006).

In a number of cases within this zone the sites chosen by landowners were already the sites of existing large houses and halls, in some cases the sites of medieval manor houses. Many of the earlier Halls were entirely rebuilt in the 18th and 19th century to conform to architectural fashions or create a more imposing symbol of wealth and status. At Worsbrough a 17th century manor house survives and at Birthwaite the 17th century structure partially survives although remodelled but in most cases there is nothing left of the earlier manors.

Where these parks relate to existing elite settlement patterns there is usually a close relationship to a pre-existing medieval nucleated settlement. The villages of Wortley, Worsbrough and West Bretton (over the border in West Yorkshire) are all closely associated with the large parks and their halls. In some cases there is strong evidence for deliberate clearance of earlier villages or encroachment upon existing town fields; the surviving sinuous field boundaries within Stainborough Park are suggestive of a former town field associated with a village that no longer exists and historic map analysis suggests that areas of town fields were removed for the development of 'Wortley Old Park' and 'Cannon Hall' park. There is also evidence for the re-routing of important roads around new areas of parkland; this is known to have occurred at Cannon Hall.

The preservation of boundary and earthwork features from earlier agricultural landscapes by the 18th and 19th century parks was partly a

deliberate mechanism to root the park in the landscape. As Rackham has pointed out, the designers of parklands set out to create, “*an appearance of respectable antiquity from the start, incorporating whatever trees were already there*” (1986, 129). This approach is most likely to have fossilised earlier steeply sloping ancient woodlands and boundary features along the edges of parks.

The built fabric of the remaining buildings these villages (see ‘Nucleated Rural Settlement’ Zone) shows clear evidence of investment by estates in their appearance through the rebuilding of tied cottages and facilities. This thorough reworking of existing rural forms has been associated by some authors (see Newman *et al* 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. Examples of the establishment of ornamental features outside of the main park boundaries are seen at Stainborough Park. Rockley Abbey on the southern park boundary is a former hall that was reshaped to produce a picturesque ruin. Further afield from the parks, there were often follies built in the surrounding countryside as features to ride to, examples survive on the edge of Nether Hoyland and Worsbrough.

Later Characteristics

The pressures on owners to maintain these large tracts of land and their accompanying mansions appears in most of the cases in this zone to have been too great to maintain their private use. Although outside of this zone, Tankersley Park is a prime example of an absentee owner finding the mining of ironstone too tempting an economic prospect to disregard. This led to the breaking up and final abandonment of the park and hall (see ‘Surveyed Enclosure’). Cannon Hall also underwent mining activity, although at a later date. This consisted of significant amounts of open cast coal mining after the Second World War, which led to much tree loss in the park (Moxon 2000, 158).

Most of the elite residences in the zone seem to have experienced major changes of use in the period 1900-1950. Both Stainborough/Wentworth Hall and Wortley Hall were occupied by the army in the Second World War. Wentworth Hall went on to become a teacher training college and later an adult education centre; Wortley Hall took a different path and was bought by a Labour Co-operative to be used as an education and holiday centre where the partly derelict hall and grounds were restored by a voluntary workforce (Wortley Hall 2001). Bretton Hall also became a teaching college in 1949, later becoming part of the University of Leeds, it is now set to become the site of a hotel and luxury spa (Wakefield Council 2007). The grounds were sold separately and became a sculpture park.

Some of the elite residences associated with smaller areas of parkland sustained their private use to a later date. This is likely to be due to the smaller financial pressures on the up keep of the grounds. Many of these

have become offices or a number of separate dwellings in the late 20th century however.

Arable cultivation of parkland is noticeable at a number of the parks within the zone. The turning over of parkland to arable production was often how the estate owner managed to retain private ownership of the house. This trend has led to the loss of many park features. More recently, however, the late 20th century trend to maintain elite landscapes as heritage sites has led to restoration programmes of both house and garden landscapes. Stainborough Park is undergoing such a program and the surviving parts of Worsbrough Park have been developed as a country park with the addition of former 19th century industrial sites around Worsbrough Basin.

Pressures for housing and commercial development have led to urban encroachment on some parkland landscapes. This has occurred at 'Noblethorpe Hall', 'Birthwaite Hall' and the edges of 'Cannon Hall'. This pressure has led to the loss of other areas of 18th century parkland within the urban centres of the district.

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