



# YORKSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

## Gisborough Hall and Priory park and gardens

### Statement of Significance

This statement of significance for Gisborough Hall and Priory park and gardens, created by the Yorkshire Gardens Trust, is derived from research carried out as part of the Historic Designed Landscapes project.

#### 1. Heritage Values Summary

Gisborough Hall and Priory park and gardens are an unique example of an historic designed landscape that has been developed not only for its owners but also for the wider public. This was started by the priory that had a close connection with the adjacent town that flourished next to it. Even when it was sold into private hands, the Chaloner family, have regularly opened up the grounds to visitors.

#### 2. Historical Value ('Narrative')

The construction of the Priory in the early 12th century has shaped the designed landscape around it for the following 900 years. First were the gardens for the Prior and canons in the immediate precinct of the priory that included a cloister garth, a cemetery orchard and a private garden for the Prior. To the east was an enclosed area of c. 70 acres that served as a small park and in 1239, the Prior and canons of Gisborough were granted the right to have a separate hunting park to the southwest.

Following the dissolution of the priory in 1540, its lands were leased and then sold to Thomas Chaloner ten years later. For over a century, the Chaloners lived elsewhere and the priory site was largely abandoned. When Edward Chaloner moved to Guisborough, he chose to build a new house to the northwest instead. However, his son, William, probably benefiting from the reopening of the alum mines, chose instead to build a large new house in the former priory grounds c. 1680. Parts of its designed landscape were incorporated into the layout including the cloister garth (bowling green), dovecote, probably the fishponds and the wider parkland to the east.

Some features, such as the diamond-shaped garden, were added in the first half of the 18th century but it was largely unchanged by 1773 when William Chaloner started making more substantial changes. These included the removal of the formal gardens next to the hall and their replacement with pleasure grounds of paths, trees and shrubs. The pond opposite the hall in 'Fountain Garth' had been filled in. There was a new walled kitchen garden ('Melon ground') and the wider landscape to the east had been opened up to form an area of parkland.

By 1797, due to problems of damp in the hall, the decision was made to relocate to 'Longhull', a farm to the east where Robert Chaloner built a new house. This changed the focus of the gardens and together with a new designed landscape around the new hall, he altered the existing gardens including the double avenue of limes in a diamond shape south of the east wall of the priory church. Robert ran into financial problems and he left to live in Ireland in 1825 following his bankruptcy. His



## YORKSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

son, also Robert, managed to restore the family finances before his death in 1855 and his brother, Thomas, carried on with the improvements to the new hall and the grounds, employing William Brodrick Thomas, to lay out the immediate grounds around it.

The landscape we see today was shaped by Thomas' great-nephew and his wife, later Lord and Lady Gisborough, from 1902. They extended the hall and renamed it Gisborough Hall, added the two lodges to the north and south and created a new garden area with glasshouses and frames as well as the 'Italian garden' with a lily pond, a rose garden and a long herbaceous border next to the terrace.

### 3. Evidential Value ('Research')

While the priory buildings have been subject to excavations and research, little has been done to learn more about the medieval designed landscape, specifically the dovecote area that may have been the site of the Prior's private garden. Another former feature where further research is needed, is the diamond shaped garden of the mid-18th century that was on the site of the later Lime Walk to establish a possible date of construction and any possible links with a similar layout at the rococo garden at Painswick.

While no evidence of landscape designers being employed at the priory site have been found, the Victorian designer, William Brodrick Thomas, was engaged by Thomas Chaloner c. 1857 for the grounds around Longhull. Although his designs are in the archive, when and how much of these were implemented is not known.

### 4. Aesthetic Value ('Emotion')

The ruined east wall of the priory church is a major landmark in the town and thus a symbol of Guisborough, representing the close connection between them. Together with Gisborough Hall, their combined designed landscape provides not only an important area of green space in a town where there has been rapid development of housing over the last 30 years but also a reminder of the past.

### 5. Communal Value ('Togetherness')

Gisborough Hall is now run as a hotel and its immediate grounds are open to its guests to enjoy. Previously part of the priory grounds, the area surrounding the lime tree walk is currently tenanted by Gisborough Priory Project, who have restored and rejuvenated it to reflect the history of the Chaloner's gardens. They also have a Local Management Agreement with English Heritage to manage and open the adjacent scheduled monument free of charge to the public. The woodland is open to visitors to the Priory and special events are held throughout the year to encourage people to visit.

06.03.23