

**THE STATE AND THE  
COUNTRY HOUSE IN  
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE,  
1937-1967**

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# Abstract

This thesis considers the state preservation and use of Nottinghamshire country houses during the mid-twentieth century, from the initiation of mass requisition in 1937 until 1967 when concerns for architectural preservation moved away from the country house. This thesis reviews literature on the landed estate in the twentieth century and the emergence of preservationist claims on the country house. Three substantive sections follow. The first discusses the declining representation of landowners within local governance in Nottinghamshire and the constitution of the County Council, and considers how estate space was incorporated within broadened concerns for the preservation of the historic environment and additionally provided the focus for the implementation of a variety of modern state and non-state functions. The second section considers how changing policy and aesthetic judgements impacted upon the preservation of country houses. Through discussion of Rufford Abbey, Winkburn Hall and Ossington Hall I consider the complexities of preservationist claims and how these conflicted with the responsibilities of the state and the demands of private landowners. The third section considers how estate space became valued by local authorities in the implementation of a variety of new modern educational uses, including the teacher training college at Eaton Hall and a school campus development at Bramcote Hills. The thesis concludes by considering the status of the country house in Nottinghamshire since 1967, and contemporary demands on the spaces considered historically in this study.

*Dedicated to the memory of  
Ernest Craske Lax (1911-1983),  
whose stories of life below stairs  
I would love to have heard*

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# Preface

In February 1946 Mr. Keith Douglas, a composer and the owner of Farfield Hall, Addingham in Yorkshire, wrote to my grandfather Ernest Craske Lax in reply to an enquiry he made, requesting a return to his domestic staff and following wartime service in the Royal Navy. My grandfather was employed at a number of country houses from 1926 until 1949, starting as a footman at Eaves Hall in Lancashire and rising to head butler at Lexham Hall, Norfolk. In his melancholy reply Mr. Douglas considered the State, the future of domestic service, a changing society, estate community and the impacts of “the modern world”.

Victoria Hotel  
Rickmansworth  
Hertfordshire

11 February 1946

To Ernest

You talk about the same as Soar.<sup>1</sup> But I wonder how many people will be able to afford a Butler in future. The extremes of taxation are now so appalling – to *all* of us – that it may be doubtful if people can afford Butlers in the future. It is possible that a “Man about the House” (called a House Parlourman) may still be possible and highly welcome; but I think that the era of large houses (or even small ones) with Butlers is dying out. Perhaps a good thing for the general community; but not so good for the likes of you and me, who formed part of a family together and took pleasure in looking after each other. But this is the way of the modern world. It is a new way, and we have all got to face it. Generally speaking, it may be excellent, if we can ever get rid of the red-tape worms, but it wrecks friendly communities like Farfield.

Keith Douglas

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<sup>1</sup> Head Butler employed at Farfield Hall. Text copied exactly from original.

# 1 Introduction



**Figure 1.1:** The demolition of the south-east corner of Nuthall Temple in 1929.<sup>1</sup>

On 31 July 1929 the west wing of Nuthall Temple, a Palladian country house built between 1754 and 1757, and located three miles to the north-west of Nottingham, was loaded with firelighters, sprinkled with paraffin and set alight to the delight of a large expectant crowd. The weakened structure was then pulled down wall by wall as illustrated in figure 1.1. Reported by the local Nottingham Evening News as an “impressive scene”, and a “wonderful sight”, this was a novel solution to an emerging problem – what to do with redundant historic buildings, the upkeep of which could no longer be afforded by estate landowners?<sup>2</sup> Acceptance of the need to preserve buildings of architectural or historical importance was in its infancy. Whilst other ancient sites, including castles and monastic complexes were more

clearly regarded as of national importance, and had accordingly been awarded legislative protection since the late nineteenth century, more recent Georgian estate houses fell outside of both public concern and state support.

Christopher Hussey, an architectural historian and keen supporter of Georgian architecture had previously written a double feature on Nuthall Temple for *Country Life* in 1923, just six years prior to its demolition, in which he praised the building and its Rococo interiors. Nuthall Temple was built between 1754 and 1757 by Thomas Wright for Sir Charles Sedley in the Palladian villa style, and is illustrated in figure 1.2 (Hussey 1923).<sup>3</sup> It was one of only four examples within England and, together with its interior design, was argued as an important example of Georgian architecture. In particular the Octagonal Hall with its rich Rococo plasterwork crowned by a domed roof received special attention. In 1778 Sedley had commissioned James Wyatt to undertake a number of alterations. Externally these included the installation of Venetian windows on the garden front and the lowering of balustrades below some others. Internally the redesign of the music room in a neo-Classical style illustrated how much taste had changed within a short period of time (Worsley 2002:68).

Hussey's praise for Nuthall was not reflected elsewhere at the time. Grand Georgian estate houses were regarded as both domestically unhomey and not fitting within the English countryside.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, whilst for Hussey part of Nuthall's importance lay in it being a rare architectural example of the Georgian period, for *The Times* this reflected the fact that, "the practical common sense of English landowners never favoured the experiment of building houses in that

manner for this country”. The general inconsistency of opinion regarding the property, and of the need to ensure the preservation of architecture more generally, is characterised by *Country Life*, where Christopher Hussey was on the staff, commenting that, “Nuthall lacked only one thing – architecture”.<sup>5</sup>

The final residential owner of Nuthall Temple was the Reverend Robert Holden, Rector of the Parish, whose family had owned the estate since Robert Holden purchased it in 1819 at auction for his second son. The Holdens were an established Derbyshire family who had both invested heavily in the purchase of land and through marriage ties had connections with many of the neighbouring landowning families (Jacks 1881). In the early nineteenth century Nuthall was the home of a junior branch of the Holden family and although briefly let between 1844 and 1853 was well maintained including various improvements to both the interior and exterior of the property (Smith n.d.).



**Figure 1.2:** The Palladian styled Nuthall Temple built between 1754-7 by Thomas Wright for Sir Charles Sedley (Hussey 1923).<sup>6</sup>

When the Reverend Robert Holden died in 1926 his son Robert Millington Holden succeeded to the estate. Owing to falling agricultural rents and outstanding estate duties owed to the state he was forced to consider selling the property. Initially at auction on the 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1927 the Temple and its parkland of 650 acres was left unsold with many neighbouring landowners preferring to purchase agricultural land. By the inter-war period, high taxation, agricultural decline and decreasing social and political control meant that landowners now focused increasingly upon financial survival over social splendours. Nuthall and its remaining land were subsequently sold privately. Interior and exterior fittings were sold at auction in 529 lots on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> May 1929 with many fixtures subsequently installed in other estate houses.<sup>7</sup> The remaining shell of Nuthall Temple was sold for £800 to the demolition contractor, J.H. Brough and Co. of

nearby Beeston, who later that summer presided over the public demolition described and illustrated above (Hadfield 1982; Nuthall Local History Society 2002). The ruined shell of Nuthall remained, once all of saleable value including much of the building material had been claimed, until 1966 when this too was finally pulled down in order to make way for the extension of the M1 motorway. The site of the former house is now under one of the slip roads at Junction 26, within the remnants of its parkland landscape.

Nuthall Temple, one of four similar estate houses in England modelled on Antonio Palladio's designs for the Villa Rotonda in Vicenza, most closely resembled Scamozzi's Rocca Pisana. Other examples of this Palladian villa style included Chiswick House (1729) by Lord Burlington to the west of London, and Mereworth Castle (1723) by Colen Campbell and Foot's Cray Place (c.1754) both of which were in Kent. Whilst Foot's Cray was destroyed by fire in 1949, discussion of concerns for the preservation of Chiswick House after the Second World War, just over ten years after the destruction of Nuthall Temple, illustrates how significantly regard for the historic environment had changed.

Increasingly overrun by surrounding suburban development during the late nineteenth century, the Duke of Devonshire decided to strip the interior of Chiswick House. He subsequently let it as a lunatic asylum and the grounds surrounding the house became important publicly accessible open space. On 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1943 James Lees-Milne, Secretary of the National Trust's Country House Scheme, visited Chiswick and commented upon its condition within his diaries.

To our surprise we found the place in better shape than we had expected. The garden, though overrun with children, is quite well kept up. True, the roof of the temple, “the first essay of his lordship’s (Burlington) happy invention”, is in a bad state. The house requires repointing, replastering and repainting. A great temporary garage for the firemen’s engine has been erected in front of the main portico which is supported by iron girders (Lees-Milne 1995:225-6).

Concerned at the appearance of Chiswick, Lees-Milne drew attention to the property at a Georgian Group committee meeting later that month. Following the Second World War a battle of taste had emerged regarding the true architectural value of the property. Lees-Milne regarded the late eighteenth century James Wyatt wing as of little value and recommended that it should be demolished thereby revealing Lord Burlington’s original building which could then be furnished as a pure example of the period (Lees-Milne 1986:140-1). In contrast, Derek Sherborn, a listed buildings inspector with the Ministry of Town and Country Planning, objected to the demolition arguing that the property’s architectural history was little understood and that in some instances errors in the dating had occurred (Sherborn 2003:137). Increasingly this interest in support of the villa grew, resulting in the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments within the Ministry of Works accepting ownership of the property and undertaking necessary repairs in preparation for opening it up to the public. Chiswick House remains a nationally important example of English architecture and popular visitor attraction today, much used and appreciated by members of the public. In January 2006 the Heritage Lottery Fund announced that it had earmarked £7.9m as part of phased

improvements to the 26 hectares of woodland, gardens, lawns and sports facilities at Chiswick House.<sup>8</sup>

Parallel to the efforts which would save Chiswick, a considerable amount of interest grew around the partially demolished Nuthall Temple, all expressing regret at its loss. In his Nottinghamshire volume of *The Buildings of England* series, Nikolaus Pevsner commented upon its destruction as a “disgrace”, suggesting that, like some other country house interiors of that period, “the central room at least should now stand in the Nottinghamshire Museum grounds”, and thereby under the guardianship of the state (Pevsner 1951:143). This furthered interest in the fate of the property. Armed with Pevsner’s description, and having uncovered a drawing of the property whilst cataloguing the Royal Institute of British Architects collection, John Harris, an enthusiastic young architectural historian in the manner of Christopher Hussey, decided to journey to Nottingham from London in 1957 to see what, if anything, remained of the estate house. Confronted with the ruined shell, Harris instead travelled locally to inspect Bulwell Hall and Watnall Hall, both of which to his dismay were heading the way of Nuthall (Harris 2000).

Later still, in 1974 the Temple featured in *The Destruction of the Country House* exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London which chronicled the loss of estate houses since 1875. Of the ten houses in Nottinghamshire listed as being demolished within the gazetteer, Nuthall Temple received the most attention, with both its interior and exterior illustrated (Strong et. al. 1974).<sup>9</sup>

Through this exhibition, and subsequent retellings, the story of Nuthall has been characterised as one in which landed decline and a lack of widespread architectural interest in the late 1920s resulted in the demolition of the property (Brand 2004; Worsley 2002). Despite increasing awareness of the threat to architecture during the mid-twentieth century and increased state provision for preservation, it has been argued that as a result of landed decline, requisition during the Second World War, legislative frailties and the lack of active involvement of the state, many more country houses were demolished than should have been the case.

In contrast to narratives of decline, with the state often regarded as the principal culprit, this thesis considers the opportunities which country houses and their parkland estates offered in the implementation of new and expanding public policy initiatives during the mid-twentieth century, including social welfare care, various forms of education and training provision, and public recreation within the amenity landscape of an estate parkland. I argue that the broadened authority of the central and local state contributed significantly to ensuring that many properties remain in existence to date. Legislation that ensured the maintenance of private residential estate houses remained weak and was only progressively enhanced within successive Town and Country Planning Acts and the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act, 1953. Strengthened measures included the listing of properties and the allocation of grant funding for repairs and maintenance. Other opportunities were being explored by Ministerial departments, county councils, nationalised industries and private companies. These have now come to be viewed as a distinct form of preservation.

Accordingly, the time period covered by this thesis is regarded as significant. In 1937 the central state, under threat of war, initiated procedures for the mass requisition of certain private premises for military and civil purposes. This represented the single greatest direct state intervention in private country house landscapes during the twentieth century, and has become a central focus in discussion of country houses during this time period. At the end of the date range, key legislation of 1967 recognised the necessity of preserving important buildings and landscapes other than the country houses. Increased attention was also given to industrial archaeology and vernacular architecture. More generally other debates, including the popularity of heritage tourism and a new environmentalist agenda, provide a focus for discussion of the country house, public recreation space and landscapes during the late 1960s. These latterly mentioned aspects are not considered by this thesis.

Between 1937 and 1967 the country house and its landscape was a contested terrain; a site of symbolic, albeit waning, patrician power and later an essential component of national cultural history. Whilst these themes have been addressed elsewhere, this thesis focuses on the central and local state and other locally-based institutions, and charts the changes through which such institutions increasingly recognised the country house as a site of national heritage worthy of preservation and as an amenity for efficient and effective service provision (Mandler 1997a).

This thesis, therefore, considers how the different arms of the state became involved in the preservation and use of estate space. In considering

Nottinghamshire, I am able to discuss the different processes which operated within the County and how government policy and Ministerial authority, together with the responsibilities of the County Council, through its membership and committee structure, increasingly became drawn into debates regarding both issues as to the future preservation of estate architecture and the various opportunities for utilising country houses and estate space within the expanding responsibilities for education and social welfare provision.

The state, both nationally and locally, is regarded as the collective set of institutions which hold different levels of social, cultural, economic and political authority so arranged to ensure the protection and maintenance of society and social relations. It is not synonymous with government, although this is an essential controlling component, but includes, for example, the judiciary, armed services and the political system (Dear 2000:788). It was insufficient solely to consider national and local government with reference to county houses during this time period. Instead, the various official and unofficial practices and procedures through which policies were formulated and implemented need to be considered. This consideration is especially important in that it highlights the changing political or socio-economic constitution of local and national government during the period. The decline of landowning representation at both political scales, albeit less so in the County Council, and high profile involvement of Ministerial departments, non-Parliamentary committees and non-governmental organisations, leads to a detailed consideration of forms of state governance. As will be demonstrated political networks, both within and beyond government through formalised Committee structures, membership to non-governmental

amenity groups, or other more informal processes variously affected abilities to inform policy towards country house within Nottinghamshire. Approaching governance, therefore, opens up the study of the state, beyond central and local government relations and responsibilities. Within Geography conceptualisation of the state has been considered mainly from a Marxist or political-economy perspective (Clark and Dear 1984; Cloke and Little 1990), and a shift in focus towards governance have revealed new understandings of the state and authority (Woods 1997a; 1997b; 1998; 1999). Governance has become a keyword within both political and rural geographical research. Governance is defined as, “the involvement of a wide range of institutions and actors in the production of policy outcomes, including non-governmental organisations, quangos, private companies, pressure groups and social movements”, as well as those state institutions traditionally regarded as part of government. Further to this it also refers to the nature of the relationships between various organisations (Painter 2000:317; Painter 1995). Such an approach is crucially important in discussion of modern western state systems which promote partnership working with members of the public and other stakeholder organisations. With reference to this thesis it is equally relevant to consider evident networks of governance during the mid-twentieth century. Michael Woods’ research is of particular importance to this thesis in his discussion of local state formations and the political activities of elite classes. His study of discourses of power and rurality within Somerset County Council during the twentieth century demonstrates how elite groups have continued to legitimate their rights to leadership. Despite waning official political control during the inter-war period it is argued that a conservative rural hegemony encouraged acceptance of a “discourse of agricultural community”, placing

landowners at the centre (Woods 1997a:467). This vision was maintained until the late 1960s, and as will be evident in chapter 4, key similarities exist within Nottinghamshire during the same period.

In addition it is argued that a cultural and historical geography perspective contributes significantly to a better understanding of the political and cultural practices which informed considerations towards the country house in Nottinghamshire during the mid-twentieth century. Landscape studies within cultural geography have demonstrated the ability of landowners to reflect their status and authority within landscapes. This has clearly been argued with reference to the design of estate houses, landscape features and surrounding parkland during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Cosgrove 1984; Cosgrove and Daniels 1988; Seymour 1988; Daniels 1999; Daniels and Seymour 1990). Yet, with few exceptions (Clemenson 1982; Matless 1998; Short et al 2000), the country house in the twentieth century has received relatively little sustained attention within cultural and historical geography. As will be discussed in the thesis, authority and the ability to control land, its appearance and use, continued to be of great importance in the twentieth century, despite new challenges to landowners and landownership. Wider concerns for landscape protection and greater state planning control, led to central government and local authorities to be increasingly responsible for the preservation and use of country houses and their immediate estate parkland. In different circumstances the management and use of formerly private landscapes by public authorities both mirrored the practices of landowners in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In contrast, a clear modernising agenda for education and social welfare reform

immediately following the Second World War can initially be viewed as conflicting with other state concerns for the preservation of aristocratic, landed and gentry country houses landscapes. Whilst such concerns were evident, especially in consideration of tax breaks to landowners and in grants for the repair of country houses, these issues were largely avoided. Research within cultural geography considering modernity in twentieth century Britain has largely shown the state acceptance of modern visions within traditional or historic landscapes (Matless 1998; Short et al 2003).

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. In chapter 2 I consider the debates that have circulated regarding the decline of landed society and the ascendancy of the country house within national cultural history during the mid-twentieth century. Chapter 3 addresses the methodological approaches undertaken during research and the rich variety of sources that have been consulted.

The empirical research of this thesis is divided into three substantive chapters. In chapter 4 I discuss political governance within Nottinghamshire. Special attention is given to understanding how the composition of the County Council changed greatly during the twentieth century, the involvement of the central state, and the increased attention given to various planning functions, including the preparation of the County Development Plan and broader concerns for the preservation of rural amenity and the historic environment. Secondly, I consider the changing ownership and use of Nottinghamshire country houses. Drawn from a comprehensive survey of country houses undertaken for this thesis I discuss the various patterns of use. Particular attention is given to the significance of

requisition during the Second World War, the use of estates by private companies and nationalised industries, and the initial process of listing buildings of architectural and historic importance.

In chapter 5 I consider in detail the battles which ensued over the preservation of three Nottinghamshire estate houses, Rufford Abbey, Winkburn Hall and Ossington Hall. Debates regarding each of these cases fall across the period considered by this thesis and therefore are informed significantly by legislative changes directed towards the preservation of estate houses. Emphasis is given to attempts to find new uses for these properties, the specific intentions and desires of their owners which variously impeded preservation and debates regarding their relative architectural merit.

In chapter 6, I consider how country houses and their estate parkland became central to post-war education provision within the county. Within Nottinghamshire new demands for additional teaching staff led to the development of new training facilities. Eaton Hall was considered most appropriate for such an institution. The estate house, together with ancillary buildings offered initial accommodation and immediate estate land was opportune for future building development.

In contrast at Bramcote Hills, with an expanding local population, emphasis was placed upon the need to develop a number of primary and secondary schools. The parkland at Bramcote Hills, was regarded as ideal for the construction of a model campus development, which would take advantage of not only the space available

but also would parallel, in the construction of the individual schools. These proposals progressed by the County Council within a countywide agenda for education provision were combined with local concerns for the establishment of public open spaces.

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<sup>1</sup> Photograph courtesy of Mrs. Jean Nicholson.

<sup>2</sup> Nottingham Evening News. 1 August 1929.

<sup>3</sup> Hussey mistakenly attributed Nuthall Temple to Stephen Wright who later designed Clumber Park in Nottinghamshire.

<sup>4</sup> The Times. 21 March 1929. pp29.

<sup>5</sup> Country Life. 17 September 1927. pp414.

<sup>6</sup> Photograph reproduced from Worsley (2002:27).

<sup>7</sup> The architectural firm Seely and Paget purchased ballustrading which was later installed at Templewood, Northrepps in Norfolk which they designed in 1938.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.9261>. 19 February 2006

<sup>9</sup> The other houses illustrated included Blyth Hall, Clumber Park and Rufford Abbey.

## **2 Landed society and the country house in the mid-twentieth century**

The country house estate and landed society has received significant interest from both historians and geographers. Particular attention has been given to the political, economic and social history of landowning classes up until the late nineteenth century who acquired, inherited or had been awarded, by royal consent, large tracts of land (Beckett 1986; Thompson 1963 Habbakuk 1994; Mingay 1976; Stone and Stone 1984). The success and power of hereditary landowning elites was reflected in their property. Commissions for the construction and adaptation of country houses and the design of parklands and gardens demonstrated landowners wealth and prosperity, their ability to keep up with changes in taste, and their rights to reconfigure local landscapes (Girouard 1978; Cosgrove 1984; Daniels 1989; Daniels and Seymour 1990).

Within the last fifteen years as the twentieth century has drawn to a close so the more recent history of elite landowners and their property has increasingly been addressed (Clemenson 1982; Beard 1989; Cannadine 1990, 1994; Thompson 1990; 1991; 1992; 1993; Cornforth 1998; Littlejohn 1997; Mandler 1997a). Within the last hundred years landed control both locally and nationally has changed markedly. The ascendant status of landowners in the late nineteenth century has been contested and replaced by the state, which has wrestled and assumed governing and controlling functions. Such societal change during the last

century, its causes and implications, have been the cause of much debate. Equally the rural landscape during the twentieth century has received considerable interest. Increasingly the country house estate and designed parkland have become established and accepted as essential components of the valued national landscape. As will be discussed, this appreciation within broader concerns for rural planning and preservation gained considerable momentum during the inter-war years and continued to develop during the Second World War and beyond.

This chapter is split in two parts. Firstly I will discuss the decline of landed society as a controlling political, social and economic class from its onset in the late nineteenth century. Particular attention is given to the status of landed society during the mid-twentieth century when traditional forms of landed control both nationally and locally, it is argued, were in significant decline. Increasingly rural governance became the over-riding responsibility of the state as Ministerial departments and local authorities undertook the functions which had traditionally been controlled and administered, both locally and nationally, by landowners. Such a transition was largely uncontested as paternal landownership became an increasingly unacceptable system within a modernising and progressive society. For some commentators, however, landed decline was more of a retreat than an enforced attempt at eradication. Landownership, albeit greatly reduced in acreage, remained of central importance and although this was not directly tied to political control, it did provide a means of economic gain which upheld and maintained estate living as was still in evidence at the close of the twentieth century.

In the second part I discuss how narratives of landed decline have been contrasted with the ascendant interest in landed property, reconfigured and accepted as part of a national heritage. Estate houses, parklands and the accumulated chattels of landed society have all been revered within country house tourism. As will be demonstrated, landed decline and the ascendancy of heritage provided the state with a complex conundrum to tackle in the immediate post-war years. In accepting the need to preserve country house estates the state could not accede to the financial support of a privileged class – as much as some landowners hoped and amenity groups recommended. Any financial support from the Treasury would come at the price of the quasi-nationalising of the country house estate including the demand for public access to properties. Landed decline and the increased status and responsibility of the state, therefore, became centred, most interestingly, in concerns for landed property. The fears of landowners were most pronounced in the immediate post-war period when the first socialist government was formed, increasing markedly the central authority of the state and viewed by many, albeit mostly unrealised, as a considerable threat to the preservation of estate houses.

## **2.1 Landed society in the twentieth century: decline or survival?**

Within this section I wish to briefly discuss the various debates which have surrounded the social, political and economic decline of elite landownership within the United Kingdom since the late nineteenth century. I will then turn to look in depth at debates concerning continued decline in the mid-twentieth century, efforts at the maintenance, adaptation and re-establishment of elite power within the drastically altered economic, social and political contexts of late modernity. I do not attempt to give a comprehensive overview as such has been undertaken elsewhere, but more to highlight emergent themes which impinge significantly on debates regarding the preservation and use of country house estates during the mid-twentieth century (Mingay 1976; Beckett 1986; Habbakuk 1994; Thompson 1963; Cannadine 1990).

### **2.1.1 The onset of decline: landed society, 1880-1939**

Widespread confidence, religious zeal and affluence within Victorian elite classes fostered huge building programmes that reflected their authority and power. Domestic industrial expansion had fuelled civic pride and encouraged the construction of Gothic town halls, parish churches and large scale residential development across the provincial cities. Elsewhere within rural areas Victorian remodelling and lavish reconstruction of country houses in revivalist styles was witnessed apace. Rural confidence however was more fragile than that found within the cities. By the late nineteenth century the aristocracy and gentry, many

of whom had profited significantly from agricultural production, colonial opportunism and in driving domestic industrial expansion, witnessed fundamental economic, social and political changes that would begin to erode traditions of paternal landownership.

Cannadine (1990) pin-points the 1880s as the moment when the landed order began to erode into what for him would become an anachronism by the late twentieth century. Even before this there were signs that parliamentary measures would impede landownership. Whilst most threats were staved off, the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, which had protected cereal prices since 1815, set in motion lengthy agricultural decline at the hands of cheaper overseas imports. In addition, the first Reform Act of 1832 initiated parliamentary and electoral change which would come to be detrimental to landowning control. Whilst the impacts of these changes were not felt instantly they did raise concern within the landowning ranks, which by the late nineteenth would be compounded by additional threats to incomes implemented by successive Liberal governments.

The late Victorian period witnessed the introduction of estate duty taxation in 1894, the onset of domestic agricultural decline following the repeal of the Corn Laws which led to a decline in both rental and sale prices of land, increasing industrialisation and urban expansion, and the rising confidence of middle class industrialists and professions, which would threaten landowning authority (Cannadine 1990). Significantly, these social, economic and political changes were reflected in the creation of a new system of regional administration and in the reform of electoral representation. Firstly, the successive Reform Acts, which

were initially conservative attempts to enhance the “legitimate influence” of landed society, subsequently resulted in safe patrician seats held within the House of Commons becoming increasingly precarious (Thompson 1963:49). Secondly, and most significant to this research, was the establishment of county councils in 1888. Whilst on initial inspection they mirrored their forerunner, the Quarter Sessions, as landed strongholds, county councils extolled a new democratic focus that would progress an agenda of local control within the shire counties. County Councils increasingly dominated local policy. As publicly elected representatives they assumed and were awarded power originally vested in the unelected landowning Justices of the Peace. Landed representation within local political systems was more trenchant than within national government with representatives holding influential, not simply ceremonial, positions within county councils. The evolution of county governance and the gradual evaporation of landed representation during the twentieth century will be discussed in chapter 4.

With the declining economic success and political status of patrician landowners so there were various new social opportunities for future survival which were predominantly urban and municipal. Landowners sought, and were equally encouraged, to fulfil emergent positions of civic social prestige during the early twentieth century (Cannadine 1990). Whilst elected representation on the county councils was one example, which held a degree of political autonomy, other more prestigious and ceremonial opportunities included positions such as the mayors of city authorities, chancellors of new universities and chairman of cultural industries and government commissions. The social function of elites therefore increasingly became focused within urban areas, municipal politics, civic ceremony and

continued, albeit declining, involvement in national government. The reconstruction of prestige in new and emergent positions of social standing, whilst having little executive power, elevated landowners to the apex of local society to the benefit of institutions and the willing acceptance of patricians. As elsewhere emergent concerns for countryside and architectural preservation during this period was one such agenda to which landowners turned as elected patrons. One of the most prolific was Lord Crawford who was influential in the passing of the Ancient Monuments Act of 1900 and acted as chairman of the Historic Monuments of England, which became a royal commission in 1908 and which will be discussed in greater depth later (Cannadine 1990:580). Other landowners such as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Viscount Esher, the 11<sup>th</sup> Duke of Grafton, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquess of Zetland and the 11<sup>th</sup> Marquess of Lothian all joined the ranks of the National Trust, acting as either presidents, chairmen, or as was witnessed following the Second World War, government committee members concerned with the future preservation of the historic environment. Emergent preservation concerns and the role of landowners through the tabling of private members bills within the Houses of Parliament and the promotion of legislative changes as representatives of amenity preservation groups will be discussed at length in a later section of this chapter. For Thompson (1993), however, the understanding that declining power was met with increasing social prestige was implausible. Instead he argues that the survival of estate landowners throughout the twentieth century calls for recognition of different forms of prestige and power beyond those concerned solely as patriarchal.

The First World War whilst having a devastating effect on the social fabric of most rural estates, offered a degree of economic respite for some landowners with the temporary revival of agriculture and through a diverted focus upon military service and established regimental links. Following the end of hostilities, however, state agricultural support was removed and the impact of estate duty taxation was a heavy and humiliating blow which affected many landowning families who had lost heirs during the war. The impact of the war upon landownership was stark and there were few victors. In the period immediately following the First World War, agricultural depression, crippling taxation and death duties resulted in the largest number of estate sales to that date as landowners became leaner, selling outlying holdings in an effort to retain their historic homes (Habakkuk 1994). Although land values were depressed, there was still considerable prestige in the ownership of a family estate and many wealthy industrialists, particularly those who had profited from the First World War, rushed to purchase houses and adjacent land, not so much for economic reasons but primarily for sporting recreation. Many took an interest in local politics serving as Justices of the Peace or as representative members of county councils and generally assumed the status of local gentry. This development heightened earlier trends evident since the late nineteenth century which witnessed the increasing blurring of social boundaries. By early 1939, the estate map of the United Kingdom was a confused one. Although there remained a substantive titled section of high society who owned large country estates and London properties, many of whom enjoyed hunting and entertained at shooting parties, numbers had thinned significantly. The maintenance of landed society, its economic basis and social function was under continued threat with only the greatest landowners able

to survive largely unscathed. The Second World War would provide the impetus for fundamental post-war political, economic and social change that significantly furthered developments in evidence during the inter-war period. Equally, financial requirements during the war meant that taxation was held high – already in 1939 the top rate was set at sixty percent. Furthermore greater state control of land and mineral resources was viewed as a necessity. Although most measures were implemented during the war and continued into the post-war period, it has been argued that the nationalisation of mineral rights in 1948 significantly eroded the economic position of landowners who had profited from industrial expansion (Smith 2002). This and other legislative measures, which were implemented in quick succession, effectively placed a financial strangle-hold on landed society. As such, 1939 has become characterised as the last social season of landed society. Although the presentation of debutants at court continued up until the mid-1950s, the confidence of landowners, which drove their recreational and entertainment activities, was evaporating.

### **2.1.2 Landed society at war, 1939-1945**

The Second World War offered landed elites the prize of short term glory at the price of long term loss (Cannadine 1990). Just as in the First World War, landowners rushed to assist, offering high profile support both under Churchill's coalition government and within the upper echelons of military brass. Additionally, as was witnessed during the First World War, some owners offered their properties for use as military billets or convalescence homes. A measure of change between the two wars, however, was characterised by the state now

instigating formal requisition procedures under the Compensation Defence Act of 1939 which gave central control over property allocation with no recourse for owners who either wished to offer their property elsewhere or even refuse entirely. Proposals for the mass requisition of premises for wartime use were initially conceived in 1937 when the Committee of Imperial Defence considered it expedient to undertake a survey of country properties suitable for requisition (Robinson 1989; Seebohm 1989). In December initial agreement was reached regarding the types of buildings which would be exempt from formal requisitioning. These included,

- 1) Government buildings and Local Authority buildings
- 2) Premises owned by the Railways, Port Authorities, Canal Companies and Public Utilities
- 3) Food warehouses and cold storage plants
- 4) Hospitals
- 5) Private dwelling houses with less than four rooms on the ground floor

By far the greatest number of buildings, therefore, which could successfully be requisitioned, were private estate houses. Not only did they provide substantial space for administrative and residential accommodation but also the surrounding private estate land which presented a secure and secret site within which to billet service personnel or undertake military training. The state requisition of country estates prior to and during the Second World War was a massive undertaking which demanded considerable organisational skill within the Directorate of Lands and Accommodation of the Office of Works, headed by E.N. de Normann, to meet

primarily with the specific demands. These were often conflicting, particularly between the War Office for the military services and other concerns for agricultural production and medical and educational provision administered by the Ministries of Agriculture and Health respectively. Inflated by the additional government property temporarily requisitioned during the Second World War, which was predominantly made up of country estates, the Directorate was described as holding, “the largest estate in the country” in the early fifties (Kohan 1952: 417). As will be discussed later, however, the estate house and its surrounding parkland were viewed as a functional space with little concern for its aesthetic qualities.

Owners were not surprised when formal requisitioning notices were served on them, in part because of their successful use during the First World War. Whilst the upheaval caused confusion and an inconvenience for many owners, as recounted by several whom James Lees-Milne met on his travels as secretary for the National Trust’s Country House Scheme, it was also viewed as an opportunity to offload properties and their increasingly expensive maintenance costs (Mandler 1997a).

The total number of country houses requisitioned has never been assessed because Government Property Registers were destroyed, most likely for security purposes.<sup>1</sup> However examples of estates that have no wartime history are rarely discovered and estimates suggest that about 2000 were requisitioned (Cornforth 1998:26). Unlike in the First World War, where houses were used solely as military encampments, prisoner of war camps and convalescent homes, new

threats, particularly aerial bombardment, placed additional and conflicting demands on available land and requisitioned premises.

Changing military requirements and domestic concerns for agricultural productivity throughout the Second World War meant that there were large demands made on estate space. At the onset of Second World War, when children from inner city areas were being evacuated to rural areas, many boarding schools were relocated to country houses including Malvern School at Blenheim Palace and Scarborough Girls School at Castle Howard. Often this was a result of the perceived threat of aerial bombardment but equally school buildings were requisitioned in areas of strategic or military importance which meant that alternative accommodation was required. Predominantly there were various military uses including billeting and combat training within the parkland, strategic and command control with houses acting as headquarters, for example, for General Dwight Eisenhower, Royal Air Force Bomber Command and the United States Army Air Force, and hospitalisation and convalescence (Robinson 1989; Seebom 1989; Cannadine 1990; Beard 1989). In addition a whole network of houses around Worcester were considered for emergency purposes should Whitehall and the Cabinet War Rooms become inoperable. Spetchley Hall just east of Worcester had been requisitioned for use as a convalescence home for operational United States Army Air Force personnel but could be converted as Churchill's headquarters if bombed out of London. Elsewhere, parklands provided for both emergency relief landing grounds and permanent airfields, with pockets of covert woodland and plantations offering ideal cover for administrative buildings, billets and munitions storage. Often the land was requisitioned together

with the adjacent estate house which was either used for billeting officers, lecture-based training, administration or entertainment as the officers' mess.

In the preparations for D-Day in 1944 the military build up heightened and soldiers, vehicles and stores were amassed within the United Kingdom. Estates became camps particularly for American army and airborne regiments and it was in Inigo Jones' double cube room at Wilton House in Wiltshire that all strategic planning for the invasion was undertaken (Beard 1989:113; Clemenson 1982:137). By late June 1944, when most of the estates had been emptied of military personnel, they were replaced with German and Italian prisoners of war who had surrendered on the continent and were interned in the United Kingdom supplementing the agricultural labour force. The many Nissan hut encampments constructed by allied military forces on estates provided ample and suitable accommodation which was maintained until the gradual repatriation of prisoners after May 1945 (Moore and Fedorowich 2002).

The war also offered a huge boost to domestic agricultural incomes with requirements for increased productivity. Both the production and distribution of crops and food was heavily controlled by the state through local County War Agricultural Executive Committees (CWAECs) and rationing. Whilst both landowners and tenant farmers received the financial benefits of a revived agricultural industry, increased state involvement burdened both. Firstly, the CWAECs had powers to dispossess farmers who were considered inefficient and mismanaged their holdings, and secondly, estate parklands and other suitable land was requisitioned and ploughed up as agricultural acreages were increased (Short

et al 2001:202). A further state control was the temporary freeze of rents throughout the duration of the Second World War which was a further problem for landowners (Clemenson 1982:113).

Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* is often used to illustrate the imposition of requisition during the war; acting as a prediction for the further erosion of landed society at the hands of the state, or in Waugh's terms, "the Hooper-Atlee terror" (Waugh 1980:210). Such sentiments were also evoked within the diaries of James Lees-Milne whilst secretary to the National Trust. Elsewhere, as Mandler (1997a:314) states, most of their contemporaries, "were quietly philosophic: the occupying troops because they had no reason to feel otherwise, but owners too, because the war was effecting a complete sea change in their attitudes to their home".

In viewing the Second World War in the context of advances made during the 1930s, Mandler (1997a:312) argues that the war gave a fresh impetus to countryside planners in their plans for post-war Britain. This was met through, "a new realism on the part of owners [which] allowed the country house to be considered as part of the planned countryside". Similarly he argues that the post-war period experienced a "convergence of taste" between "historically conscious aesthetes" and modernist planner-preservationists. It is therefore in drawing upon Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*, which demonstrated a distrust of modernist planning as characterised in Hooper, that Mandler is able to dismiss such fears as never being realised through revived fortunes in the 1950s and 1960s (Waugh 1960:7-22). As he comments – "Hooper would prove more careful, more

magnanimous, and – in Waugh’s terms – more ‘civilised’ than Waugh himself could ever admit” (Mandler 1997a:312).

Although Waugh later admitted that his prophesy was overstated *Brideshead* has become emblematic within the history of the country estate and landed society, tied inextricably to a broad period of aristocratic decline (Waugh 1960). The Second World War has been considerably overstated within landed decline during the twentieth century. Whilst the requisition resulted in considerable damage to many estate houses it was through the subsequent restriction on the supply of building materials and labour as part of compensation payments from the War Damages Commission which both prevented swift repair and encouraged further decay. Indeed where owners ignored such restrictions the penalties were enforced with severity (Robinson 1989).

Owners were therefore faced with as much uncertainty following the end of the Second World War as they had witnessed at its start. Changes made within the two Finance Acts of 1940 closed some loopholes exploited by landowners which had enabled them to avoid estate taxation, including the formation of private estate companies. In addition the ability of owners to pass an estate to their heir during their own lifetime was further restricted (Clemenson 1982:112).

Estate houses, which had been neglected and damaged during hostilities, presented a significant emotional and financial challenge for their owners. For some, feelings of hereditary responsibility provided a considerable driving focus, hoping to weather the present storm. For others less optimistic, any opportunity to

remove the financial encumbrance was viewed as a considerable incentive. Opportunities, depending on the financial need, for realising the value of estate capital at the end of the Second World War included the sale of contents and land, the sale of the estate house as a private residence, offices for a company or for demolition, the passing of the estate directly to the National Trust as part of their Country House Scheme, or possibly giving it to the state in payment of any death duties which were owed. The state acceptance of country house estates during the post-war period will be discussed in a later section within this chapter.

### **2.1.3 Landed society, 1945-1967**

The new Labour government of 1945, whose cabinet was the least landed in history to that date, drew heavily on emergent modernising policy that many members had progressed during the Second World War on, for example, social welfare, education, reconstruction and planning reform. The post-war period therefore provided a new challenge to landownership. Increased state responsibilities continued to erode landed authority, estate owning was no longer viewed as a means to political control but landed property became a central component of national heritage. Private estates increasingly became viewed as a public amenity and landowners accepted or contested their changing status in different measure during the post-war period.

Post-war austerity meant that taxation remained high, state control of agriculture remained in force, and restrictions on labour and building materials, required for the reparation of many estate houses, was stringently enforced (Clemenson 1982).

Political change gave greater uncertainty following the Second World War. The modernising agenda realised by the socialist Labour government was viewed as a direct antagonism to landed control and although never fully realised this did present owners with considerable pessimism for the future. Although falling short of land nationalisation the fundamental changes to planning legislation contained within the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947, for example, reduced significantly the value of land, vesting development rights with the state. The recovery of estates following the Second World War was further impeded by social changes that made estate owning increasingly unacceptable. Domestic estate staff that had been recruited for military service during the War viewed domestic service as not according with moves towards social democratisation. Besides which landowners could no longer afford to maintain the large body of domestic and estate staff that had populated country houses up until the outbreak of war.

With the return of a Conservative government in the early 1950s, however, there was a significant resurgence in the fortunes for landowners. The regeneration of agriculture, rise in land prices, the removal of state development rights, and as will be demonstrated, later grants for the maintenance of estate houses all contributed, in different measures, to greater optimism. Agricultural revival and the acceptance of country estates as part of national heritage gave two clear profitable directions for landowners. As either productivist farmers, taking their holdings in hand, or guardians of heritage, landowners and landowning had an accepted national value within modernising society.

In part because state financial support required public access to estate houses, increasingly owners turned to recreation and tourism as a means of economic benefit. Rather than offering their houses to the National Trust or the state in payment of estate duty taxation many owners considered the benefits of opening their estate houses to public visitors. This move drew upon, and further contributed to, the growth in interest in estate living and public acceptance of the country house estate as part of national culture (Mandler 1997a).

The opening of estates to the public certainly was not a wholly new phenomenon. During the nineteenth century, members of landed society journeyed between estates where they were received by estate owners, but increasingly since the end of the nineteenth century differing degrees of wider public access to parkland was given. During the inter-war period regularly updated publications announced those properties open to the public. Suspended during the Second World War, public interest and demand gradually developed in the post-war period reaching its apex in the mid-1960s. Famous examples of those owners who, in many instances were criticised by landed society for accepting the masses, included the Marquess of Bath at Longleat, the Duke of Devonshire at Chatsworth, and the Duke of Bedford at Woburn Abbey (Mandler 1997a; Bedford 1959). As owners who succeeded to their estates immediately following the Second World War, they held a vision of private ownership and hereditary responsibility with an acceptance of societal change. The opening up of country houses continued apace during the second half of the twentieth century. Acceptance of and interest in landed property was reflected in both the increasing number of visitors registered during the summer months and in the escalating membership of the National Trust.

For Cannadine (1990) landed decline was an inexorable process during the twentieth century. Attempts by landowners to retain their economic wealth, political authority and social distinctiveness were ultimately in vain, and in some instances only proved to exacerbate decline and further reveal their irrelevance as a governing elite within modern society. In contrast to this thesis of decline, however, F.M.L. Thompson (1990; 1991; 1992; 1992) provides a different understanding of landed society in the twentieth century. He argues that the declining status of landowners should be understood as a voluntary retreat rather than as a result of the political and economic threat revealed by the centralising agenda of the state.

Thompson suggests an increasing and active retreat from the realm of visible and influential power, a retreat which has been confused with the total erosion of the landed order. Whilst agreeing that in many cases landed families, often those of most marginal political and economic status, ceased to exist, Thompson argues that many of the large magnates and those who grasped new opportunities, sold extensive tracts of land, benefited from the resurgence in land prices, remodelled themselves as farmers and managed to survive, assisted increasingly by a pervasive understanding of the hereditary landowner as the guardian of national heritage.

Throughout the twentieth century resourceful strategies such as marriage to wealthy foreign heiresses, employment beyond the estate, the increasing turn to agricultural production and forest management, or the opening of the country

house to the public, have all in their way competed against an ideal of British hereditary landownership, but equally have successfully ensured and maintained in many cases their association with, and ownership of, land well beyond the period covered by this thesis.

## **2.2 The state, the landed estate, architectural preservation and the ascendancy of the country house estate**

The legislative history of architectural and ancient monument preservation within Britain was largely concurrent with the late nineteenth century decline in landed estates (Harvey 2003). The Ancient Monuments Act, 1882 was the first legislative move to protect archaeological sites under threat from agricultural practices. This was a Liberal triumph, promoted tirelessly by Sir John Lubbock, later Lord Avebury, and supported by William Gladstone when he became prime minister in 1881. The Act was implemented under intense debate, especially from landowning members of parliament who saw such efforts as a significant state incursion on property rights. Within parliamentary debate in 1875 Sir Charles Legard, a Conservative baronet who had sixteen barrows on his land complained that this was, “an insult to the spirit of enterprise of private citizens who inherited these ancient monuments” (quoted in Delafons 1997:25).

The Act was the first government acceptance that the state should be responsible for ensuring the preservation of ancient sites. Increasingly the state, both national

and local, assumed and was awarded greater responsibility for the protection of the historic built environment and the management of rural landscapes. Although, noticeably absent in early acts of parliament which were concerned solely with archaeological sites and (pre-) medieval buildings, the country house estate, as a later contribution to the historic landscape, increasingly figured within preservation concerns.

An emerging group of aesthetes and architectural historians who had witnessed the erosion of landed control and authority during the twentieth century viewed the future of the country house estate and its preservation with pessimism. There was a considerable coalescence of opinion between individuals, architectural associations and preservation groups who lobbied heavily in support of the estate. For example James Lees-Milne, secretary of the National Trust's Country House Scheme, wrote in his diaries of the deep regret he felt at the decline of feudal landownership (Lees-Milne 1995; 1983; 1985; 2000). Others held solely aesthetic judgements as to the value of the country house as representative of a nationally important contribution to architectural design.

Within this section I discuss the evolution of state involvement in the preservation of the country house estate during the mid-twentieth century. Increasing concerns for the future of estate houses, as referred to above, were represented in the Houses of Parliament and increasingly greater state protection was awarded. The period on which this thesis focuses witnessed the ascendancy of the country house estate as it became accepted as a significant contribution to national cultural identity (Mandler 1997a, 1997b; Wiener 1992; Wright 1985; 1991). This is

especially evident within the legislative changes which emphasised giving greater protection to the historic environment. The country house estate was an initial concern which drove statutory measures. As will be discussed within this section, numerous state initiatives established during this period gave support to the country house estate. These included the process of listing buildings of architectural importance, the offering of grant funding for reparations, and assistance in ensuring that vacant properties found new uses. As part of these there were considerable administrative changes which gave the central state ultimate responsibility for the preservation of the historic environment. The various representative interest groups concerned with preservation were brought together within ministerial committees, especially within the Historic Buildings Councils, to give guidance to the minister of state (Emmerson 1956; Strong et al 1974; Cornforth 1974).

As with other governmental policy during this period, despite the centralisation of preservation responsibilities, County Councils as the local planning authorities were charged with ensuring the policy was implemented. As will be developed with regard to Rufford Abbey in chapter 5, such responsibilities forced councils into a very difficult position. Legislative provision would only ensure that those houses deemed nationally important would be awarded the maximum state support and in many instances demands by the local public and architectural and amenity groups characterised county councils as uncultured bureaucratic villains. By the late 1950s greater autonomy was given to county councils for the preservation of historic architectural within their locality. As will be demonstrated, this was particularly evident in the creation of Building

Preservation Trusts which were awarded grant funding for local conservation schemes. By the early 1960s the focus of preservation demands changed significantly. Country houses were not on the agenda locally, in part because many which had raised earlier concerns had either been preserved or demolished but also grant funding enabled county councils to preserve the architecture that was deemed locally important (Delafons 1997; Cornforth 1974).

Whilst there has been abundant interest in the history of the country house estate, within the last ten years increased attention has been given to the understanding of more recent, twentieth century, histories. These have included the success of country house preservation as part of national heritage and the tourist industry (Mandler 1997a; Littlejohn 1997; Cornforth 1998) and new forms of country house architecture and design (Aslet 1982; Robinson 1984). Elsewhere arguments for preservation and the state have undeniably become inextricably intertwined during the twentieth century. This is clearly evident within histories of conservation that follow chronological political debates, government reports and Acts of Parliament (Delafons 1997; Boulting 1976). The ascendancy of state control, both centrally and with regard to broadening local functions, meant that political support became an underlying necessity during the mid-twentieth century. As Mandler (1992:460) comments in reviewing the preservation concern,

So conservationists had willy-nilly to act politically: to recruit a political constituency, to lobby the State, to make choices and tactical decisions. The State, its bureaucrats and politicians, had to make choices, too: how to respond to these novel pressures, how to weigh them up against other,

countervailing, pressures, often how to select those conservation options that happened to coincide with other, unrelated goals.

### **2.2.1 The preservation of rural England, 1918-1939**

The inter-war period witnessed the further progression of a preservationist agenda. Significantly there was an emerging concern for the preservation of rural landscapes as a result of increased countryside recreation and urban-style development within rural areas. Efforts during this period at negotiating a vision of English national identity that focused significantly on the rural scene have received considerable scholarly interest (Howkins 1986; Matless 1990, 1998). It has been argued that this vision of England, viewed as under threat, was not solely reactionary and anti-modern. Both preservationists and planners accepted the necessity of technological innovation but this would be carefully managed with close regard for the preservation of amenity landscapes through greater discretionary powers being held by the state. During the 1930s it was the preservation of the rural landscapes which dominated parliamentary concerns.

One such response by government was in the creation of the Town and Country Planning Advisory Committee in 1934. The Committee was chaired by Sir John Maude and amongst its eighteen members there included Sir Patrick Abercrombie of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England (CPRE) and Sir Raymond Unwin of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). Before proceeding to discuss the impact of the Second World War on efforts to preserve the country house estate it is worth reflecting on this Committee, which in the statements

made within their written report published in 1938, characterise planning concerns in the interwar period. Such concerns expressed by the CPRE focused upon suburban and rural building development and this was later extended by the Barlow, Scott and Uthwatt Committees who made various recommendations, which included for example, the extension of planning powers, greater control of advertisements and woodland protection and additional purchase powers for open space provision (Cullingworth 1972).

Unlike later committees concerned with the preservation of the countryside there is no significant representation of those who could be viewed as interested in architectural preservation. Indeed in the paragraph given over to the architectural preservation the Committee concluded that, “the powers for the preservation of buildings appear to be fully adequate”, adding that beyond the suggestion that more local authorities be encouraged to survey the buildings worth preserving within their area, “we do not think it is necessary to make any recommendations”.<sup>2</sup>

Preservation legislation as it existed prior to the Second World War was based solely on the successive Ancient Monuments Acts which, although increasing state responsibilities, were insufficient in offering protection for the broadening interest in the historic environment. No statutes during the inter-war period made any attempts to rectify this problem. This said, the Town and Country Planning Act of 1932 enabled local authorities to prepare preservation schemes within their locality which would give a degree of protection from demolition if a building preservation order was enacted. Whilst giving discretionary powers to local

authorities schemes were not readily prepared because of fundamental frailties. Firstly, where buildings preservation orders were enforced owners would receive full recompense which was a considerable deterrent. Secondly, there were no comprehensive lists of architecturally important buildings from which to inform the preparation of schemes. Thirdly, in approving schemes the Minister of Health was required to consult with the Commissioners of Works whose interests and responsibilities rested predominantly with ancient monuments. This resulted in administrative complications with divided priorities which prolonged the implementation of schemes (Delafons 1997:38-41).

Although flawed and largely ineffective, the Act established a legislative framework that would later be significantly built upon. This would include the initiation of listing procedures during the Second World War. In addition, there was an increasing acceptance by senior politicians of the importance of the need to preserve rural landscapes and architecturally important buildings. In Clough Williams-Ellis' edited volume *Britain and the Beast*, the messages of support contained in the preface illustrate the emerging state acceptance of a responsibility to encourage and support preservation. Former, current and, most importantly future cabinet members, joined landowners, who held executive positions within amenity groups, in recognising the need to preserve the historic landscape (Williams-Ellis 1937).

Incorporated within these concerns during this period were the first sustained efforts at including the country house estate within visions of a preserved countryside (Dutton 1935). This became increasingly pronounced in the 1930s

when, for example, the National Trust turned to the preservation of estate houses within their Country House Scheme, which was established in 1936. The following year, in 1937, the Georgian Group was formed, and the period was marked by a number of influential debates with the Houses of Parliament (Diestelkamp 2002). There was considerable organised and tactical support within the formal political process despite the declining political influence of landowners. The pursuit of the visual arts, architecture, antiquity and understanding of landscape had historically been established as an elite obsession and within new amenity and preservationist causes landowners became prestigious figureheads. Those who held hereditary titles and sat in the House of Lords increasingly offered vocal criticism, although given their ailing political superiority, they were not always particularly influential.

Urban expansion, ribbon development, increasing car ownership, and improved working conditions, which included greater leisure time, during the inter-war period informed key debates about access and the enjoyment of the countryside. The countryside captured a new imagination as weekend tourists clambered up peaks armed with Ordnance Survey maps to guide them or drove through the valleys below, finding a vantage point and stopping for a picnic. The urbanisation of the countryside through urban expansion, the erection of advertising hoardings and new homogenous building construction, became a key focus of attack for the CPRE, formed in 1926. The motivations and efforts of the organisation are most clearly evoked within the architect Clough Willams-Ellis's *England and the Octopus* and *Britain and the Beast* which announced a moral aesthetic, one in which behaviour, enjoyment of scenery and rural planning was ordered and

distinct from that of its urban counterpart (Williams-Ellis 1928, 1937; Matless 1998).

A clear focus was given to concerns for architectural design within rural locations. Increased development within rural and suburban locations had witnessed homogenous housing schemes which, although often in revivalist styles, were viewed as contrasting, and importantly detracting, from the local vernacular. Equally concerns about the loss of the distinctiveness of rural settlements became aligned with concerns for the preservation of estate houses which, unlike much smaller domestic residences within villages, were regarded by Williams-Ellis and the CPRE as under threat.

For Williams-Ellis a balance should be struck between, “making lovely buildings and lovely places generally accessible, without thereby impairing their distinctive characters” (Williams-Ellis 1937:91). Teaching the values of the countryside and the need to preserve it was a key focus of the CPRE and the emergence of rural tourism and recreation pursuits encouraged a missionary zeal which reconfigured the countryside for an urban population. As Williams-Ellis commented, in elevating the country house within the preservationists cause, “We must perforce put up with the inevitable misunderstandings and gaucheries that will mark the first contacts of the uninitiate with their hitherto unrealised heritage” (Williams-Ellis 1937:92). In addition landed decline was clearly recognised for leaving the country house estate under threat,

Merely because there are ever more and more great country houses in England than there are rich men able and willing to inhabit them, it is unthinkable that such places should be allowed to perish away – the really great houses, that is – those that are great in their architecture, their associations, and the beauty of their settings, are not merely great in size (Williams-Ellis 1937:92).

Williams-Ellis advocated a process which scheduled the most valued houses thereby giving listed protection and tax advantages. He recognised the primary necessity of state support and emphasised how this could be combined with public access. Furthermore, and as was much believed, the state would adopt the National Trust's Country House Scheme thereby ensuring familial occupation and social status, if not ownership. Although the state was unwilling to be drawn on the country house estate in such a manner, during the late 1930s many of Williams-Ellis's suggestions were later incorporated within preservation legislation. The vision was most clearly expressed by Sir Stafford Cripps, who would later become the first socialist Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1945. As has been discussed elsewhere this vision incorporated a progressive modernist perspective with an acceptance of the need to conserve past landscapes. Cripps clearly evoked such sentiments, which would develop with greater emphasis awarded to the country house estate, when he commented that,

We cannot go back, we do not want to go back, to the conditions of feudalism, but we must somehow wrest our beauty of the country from the grip of the Beast of industrialism, with all its foul habits of spoliation (sic).

We must build again the community life of our villages, I believe, through some method of English collectivisation worked out in our own country by our own ingenuity. [This book] gives the evidence and poses the questions for the judgement of the people – the common people whose heritage it is (quoted in Williams-Ellis 1937:vii-viii).

In 1937, the same year that *Britain and the Beast* was published, the Georgian Group, an association of aesthetes who considered that Georgian architecture was being under-valued by the state, was established. The Royal Commission for Historic Monuments which had been charged with making inventories of historic architecture only considered those monuments and buildings built before 1714 (Sargent 2001; Summerson 1991). The Georgian Group's initial pre-war concerns for the future of Georgian architecture within city redevelopment schemes shifted after the Second World War to encompass the country house estate (Mandler 1997a). Through the activities of the Georgian Group, particularly the efforts of the architectural historians, Christopher Hussey and John Summerson, Georgian architecture became a *cause celebre* during the wartime and post-war period.

### **2.2.2 Destruction and neglect; threats and responses, 1939-1945**

The country house estate was in a vulnerable position during the Second World War with owners absent, domestic staff employed elsewhere and the properties themselves requisitioned for emergency purposes. Concerns for the preservation

of the countryside witnessed during the inter-war period shifted as considerable emphasis was given to the threat which aerial bombardment would inflict upon urban historic architecture. The war therefore provided considerable motivation for increased legislative provision which was later met during the war within the Town and Country Planning Act, 1944. The three influential government reports presented by the Barlow, Scott and Uthwatt committees in 1940 and 1942 contributed significantly to the formation of this Act and have been extensively documented elsewhere (Cullingworth 1972). Most importantly they all advocated greater state involvement in land use planning, reconfiguring the landscape that was both planned and protected. For the first time rural and urban areas were viewed as distinctive and it was recommended that planning policies would ensure and support this. State intervention in rural planning issues during the Second World War provided a context in which emergent concerns for the country house estate could be voiced.

Active preservation and recording by the state was undertaken by the Ministry of Works' Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments, which until 1953 remained the principal state organisation concerned with rudimentary listing and official protection of sites and buildings. Created as a result of ancient monuments legislation in the 1882 Act, the Inspectorate was chiefly concerned with pre-eighteenth century monuments, including castles and manor houses, and so additional concerns for the threat to later buildings left the department overstretched.

The establishment of the National Buildings Record (NBR) in 1941 characterised the co-operative nature of preservationist claims made during the war. Born out of a conference held at the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) convened by the art historian Kenneth Clark and chaired by the architect W.H. Ansell, delegates representing architectural organisations, the arts and the state expressed concern at the lack of official architectural record for buildings, especially those in urban areas threatened with destruction (Anonymous 1940). The RIBA was central in the establishment and positioning of the NBR. Other parallel exhibitions organised by the RIBA during the Second World War, particularly *Rebuilding Britain*, tied concerns for historic architecture to more pressing demands which focused upon post-war reconstruction planning extolling benefits of modern architectural design in harmony with the historic environment (Beveridge 1943).

The Royal Commission for Historical Monuments, who were undertaking such work, only considered buildings constructed up until 1714. It was agreed that the NBR, once established, would begin to compile and create architectural records for buildings constructed after 1714. The primary focus was the Georgian terraces, especially those in London and Bath and classical churches. It was not, however, until after the Second World War that their attention shifted to the country house (Summerson 1991).

Most significantly, partly funded by the Treasury, the NBR brought together civil servants within the Ministry of Works who were responsible for the administration of ancient monuments and preservation organisations within one body and therefore reflected the increasing co-operation between the state and

aesthetes of architectural and amenity organisations. Although established as an incorporated company and fiercely defended as independent of the state, the NBR increasingly undertook requests from Ministerial departments to record and survey monuments and buildings.

In 1949 the Ministry of Works published a pamphlet summarising the state's efforts for ensuring the preservation of archaeological sites and historic buildings during the Second World War (Ministry of Works 1949). As is evident in the work of the NBR, the war was a pivotal factor which not only encouraged greater interest in historic sites, but also progressed knowledge and understanding. Until the formation of the Historic Buildings Councils in 1953 the sole department concerned with the preservation and conservation of sites, and increasingly buildings, was the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments (or Ancient Monuments Branch) within the Ministry of Works. The Inspectorate was concerned with all building forms and as the pamphlet realised the majority of those were located in urban areas.

Just as the NBR promoted the recording of architectural history beyond ancient monuments so the state increasingly recognised the necessity of broader protection. The Town and Country Planning Act of 1944 initiated the process of listing buildings of architectural and historic importance. Despite this, there was no compulsion for the newly created Ministry of Town and Country Planning or local authorities to compile such lists. However, when buildings were listed a degree of protection was offered. Owners who wished to alter or demolish a listed building were required to notify the local authority who could either consent to

such intentions or enforce a building preservation order. Whilst the Act contained certain pitfalls and only offered a degree of protection, it did provide the basis for future building conservation and further statutory support as evidenced within later legislation (Delafons 1997:59).

In 1945, the National Trust celebrated its jubilee year, and in its commemorative review publication made claims that it could carry the mantle as guardian of landscape and protector of national heritage (Lees-Milne 1945). Edited by James Lees-Milne and published by Batsford, the mainstay of British topographical texts during the mid-twentieth century, chapters reviewed the variety of conservation endeavours undertaken by the Trust including its origins in landscape and coastal protection, nature reserves, town property by John Summerson and all rural buildings from tied cottages and farm houses to estate mansions, the latter written by Lees-Milne himself. Such was the breadth of the claims that it included older built structures and sites including ancient monuments and manor houses which had been the central concern of the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments within the Ministry of Works.

By the end of the Second World War, therefore, there was a significant basis for legislative reform. There was a greater state acceptance of the need for policy provision which protected historic architecture, fuelled by a convergence in the opinions of those promoting concerns for the future of the built environment and the state.

### **2.2.3 Country house ascendancy: post-war planning and preservation policy, 1945-1967**

During the post-war period architectural preservation became established as an essential element of interventionist planning policy legislation. Subsequent legislation offered greater centralised protection that further placed control at the hands of the state, just falling short of nationalisation (Mandler 1997a). Progress on administrative restructuring, however, was painfully slow and the various appropriate Ministries held overlapping responsibilities which further slowed decision making and added to confusion. It was not until the passing of the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act in 1953 that significant progress was made in ironing out these inconsistencies and thereby greater enabled future preservation. Equally there was further co-operation between the central state, local authorities, the National Trust, and the amenity and preservation organisations, such as the Georgian Group, the CPRE and the SPAB who progressed significantly the preservation cause, with the country house estate as an initial primary concern.

Public attention to historic architecture was generated in two ways during the post-war period. Firstly in the flourishing of architectural history monographs in the immediate post-war period which featured and celebrated specific architects, landscape designers, design periods and, through *Country Life*, individual houses (Watkin 1980). In addition *Country Life* increasingly voiced major concerns regarding the future of country house estates. Articles by the then-editor Christopher Hussey both tabled concerns regarding the witnessed destruction and announced legislative changes. Elsewhere, aesthetes and architectural historians

increasingly advanced awareness of the current threat and the national importance of historic architecture – especially the country house estate (Lees-Milne 1945; 1947; Briggs 1952; Hussey 1955, 1956, 1958; Summerson 1949). The dual message expressed within newspapers, magazines and published monographs, therefore, extolled the importance of historic architecture whilst reminding of current threats to it.

The Town and Country Planning Act, 1947 has been viewed as a milestone in conservation and planning legislation, and together with the 1944 Act, provided the foundation of legislative protection still in evidence today. More broadly, the Act accorded well with the, “centralist framework of control”, reflected within the other two monuments of post-war planning legislation, the New Towns Act, 1946 and the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949 (Cherry 1972; Larkham 1999:107). Although falling short of land nationalisation, the 1947 Act introduced two key principles which informed significantly interventionist planning. Firstly, that the state would not be responsible for the payment of compensation to owners of land where development was prohibited. Secondly, where development was allowed a charge was payable set at the increased value of the land attained by planning permission. Both measures were introduced to target the speculation and profiteering on land and in their own way, therefore, reinforced legislative protection given to the historic environment and nature conservation (Grant 1999; Cullingworth 1980).

Through the 1947 Act, the Ministry of Town and Country Planning was now compelled to compile lists of important buildings county by county. S.J. Garton

was appointed as Chief Investigator of Ancient and Historic Buildings in charge of a team of about 30 who were arranged regionally. Grade I were those, of such importance that their destruction should in no case be allowed, Grade II were those which were regarded as of national importance and thereby should be preserved, and finally Grade III were regarded as solely a concern for planning authorities who may consider them as of local value worthy of preservation (Delafons 1997). Only those buildings classified as Grades I and II received statutory protection, however, and Grade III structures were entered on a supplementary list which by their record ensured greater confidence in the listing process as a comprehensive study of national architectural value. The listings process suffered from fitful and slow progress which despite confusions has been well documented elsewhere (Delafons 1997; Saint 1996; Harvey 1994; Sherborn 2004). Although solely a Ministerial responsibility the listings process drew heavily upon individuals with strong aesthetic interests rather than career civil servants (Sherborn 2003).

The listing of buildings, therefore, restricted owners in the alterations that they could undertake both internally and externally on their properties. The number of notices to demolish listed buildings, especially those of country houses, was so great and the demands made of local planning authorities so involved that their inability to cope, combined with legislative complications, led many estate houses to be demolished despite holding listed status. The next step was the consideration that the state should offer financial support in order to repair country house estates. In December 1948, under mounting political pressure from within both Houses of Parliament, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Stafford Cripps took a

lead and appointed a committee to assess evidence of the country house problem and to make recommendations for legislative measures securing its maintenance and preservation.

Chaired by Sir Ernest Gowers, a career civil servant, other members including W.H. Ansell of RIBA, the art historian Anthony Blunt and Sir Cyril Fox, archaeologist and president of the Society of Antiquaries represented conservative values which would later come under intense criticism following the publication of the final report (Mandler 1997a). Somewhat remarkably the Committee largely presumed the national importance of the country house, stating its terms of reference as being, “to consider and report what general arrangements might be made by the Government for the preservation, maintenance and use of houses of outstanding historical or architectural interest, which might otherwise not be preserved, including, where desirable, the preservation of a house and its contents as a unity” (Cornforth 1998:50; Treasury 1950:1). It was this presumption which set in motion efforts by the state to preserve the country house estate.

Having consulted with numerous organisations and visited some estate houses the published conclusions of the committee recommended significant state support to the overwhelming benefit of estate owning landowners. This was achieved through the mutual understanding of the country house as both an important example of British artistic endeavour and as a domestic family home. In the final report the Committee published a statement made by the Pilgrim Trust,

They are not merely beautiful structures, but possess an indefinable atmosphere as the centres of highly civilised home life. To convert them into more 'show-places' or to institutionalise them as museums... would deprive them of their intrinsic character and rob them of their 'soul' (Treasury 1950:30).

Therefore, in parallel to the National Trust's Country House Scheme, which had experienced a post-war renaissance, the Gowers Committee, recommended tax relief and death duty exemption. It thus promoted a vision for preservation which placed the owner as the rightful guardian of national architectural heritage, stating that, "designated houses should, as far as possible, be reserved as private residences occupied preferably by the families connected with them" (Treasury 1950:49). The complex, and seemingly contradictory, recommendations of the Gowers Committee left the Labour government in confusion. Certainly its findings came under intense criticism from civil servants within the Ministry of Works' Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments and the Ministry of Town and Country Planning. The Ministry of Works, who had themselves assumed responsibility for the protection and management of the historic environment, submitted a significant rebuttal of the Report's findings. Rather than create a new independent executive agency responsible for protection, the Ministry considered that there could be greater use of the existing administrative machinery and technical experience. The argument expressed was for greater central state control of preservation with the Minister of Works given executive responsibility. The argument was powerful. Without legal designation the Ministry had already accepted ownership of a number of properties, including Audley End and Osterley

Park in London, had amassed a small but able technical staff of surveyors, inspectors, structural engineers and archaeologists to name a few, and most significantly their management of the many Crown properties they had had given them considerable experience as to conservation requirements.<sup>3</sup>

The matter was left unresolved by the Labour government until increasing pressure led the re-elected Conservatives to considerably rework it within the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act, 1953. Civil servants and both main parties within the House of Commons found the final draft bill far more palatable offering greater central control in line with the concerns of the Ministry of Works. Drawing upon other recommendations made by the Gowers Committee the act created the Historic Buildings Councils for England and Wales. They were solely advisory bodies, however, reporting to the Minister of Works who made grant and loan funding recommendations for either the repair or immediate maintenance of historic properties – predominantly country house estates. In addition they also considered the state purchase of exceptional properties and adjoining land or contents and also assisted in transference of properties to the National Trust (Glennie 1974:178). Unlike the Gowers Committee which was criticised for its sympathy to landowners, the appointment of members to the Historic Buildings Councils was carefully undertaken to ensure a greater balance of opinion. Headed by Sir Alan Lascelles, other founding members included the architectural historians John Summerson and Christopher Hussey, the Earl of Euston (SPAB, National Trust), the Countess of Radnor, Sir James Mann (archaeologist and President of the Society of Antiquaries), and W.M.F. Vane

(surveyor). The legislative changes recommended by the Gowers Committee and subsequently implemented within the 1953 Act are shown in Figure 2.1.

Gowers Committee recommendation	Implementation within 1953 Act
<p><b>Creation of Historic Buildings Councils</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of Historic Buildings Council responsible to the Treasury and would submit annual reports and accounts.</li> <li>• Ability to award grants to occupied houses, or with new uses</li> <li>• Awarded power to acquire compulsorily or by agreement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three created covering England, Scotland and Wales. Responsible to the Minister of Works.</li> <li>• Role was solely advisory. The Secretary of State made final decision.</li> <li>• Implemented</li> </ul>
<p><b>Relation of HBCs to existing authorities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HBCs to absorb the National Buildings Record (NBR)</li> <li>• HBCs to be the central authority advising Government departments, local authorities and owners</li> <li>• Simplification of statutory provisions for protection of historic houses.</li> <li>• HBCs should assume responsibility for compiling lists of buildings of historic or architectural interest.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The NBR became part of the Royal Commission on Historic Monuments</li> <li>• Implemented</li> <li>• Not achieved. HBCs meant there were 3 sets of provision.</li> <li>• Not implemented.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Designation of outstanding houses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce published lists of ‘designated’ houses which were of architectural importance</li> <li>• Empowered to list contents of houses. Owners to give notice for their removal (e.g. sale)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not implemented (remained with MTCP/MHLG)</li> <li>• Not implemented</li> </ul>
<p><b>Policy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That designated houses should be as far as possible be preserved as private residences occupied preferably by the families connected to them.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because there were no ‘designated’ houses this did not apply.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Tax reliefs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Estate owners to be given relief from income tax on repairs and maintenance costs and death duties.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not implemented</li> </ul>
<p><b>Co-operation with local authorities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouragement of local authorities to co-operate with HBCs especially with regard to urban architecture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed progressively. Local preservation schemes (e.g Nottinghamshire Buildings Preservation Trust)</li> </ul>

**Figure 2.1:** Summary of recommendations made by the Gowers Committee and their implementation within the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 and associated statutes (Treasury 1950; Cornforth 1974:126-7).

Although the Historic Buildings Councils did not become the central authority concerned with architectural preservation as the Gowers Committee recommended, with listing functions being retained by other Ministerial departments, they did perform an essential role in the allocation of grant funding to private owners, the National Trust and local authorities in ensuring the maintenance of historic buildings. Funding rose from £254,000 in 1954, their first full year, to £548,000 in 1958 after which it was capped at £400,000 and only gradually increased (Colvin 2002; Glennie 1974; Cornforth 1974:24-31; Cornforth 1998:53-59).

Although the listing of buildings was a lengthy process it did provide a basis from which to make considered grant funding decisions. Additionally, in recognising that many would not meet the necessary standards to receive a grant, the HBC from its inception established the Historic Buildings Bureau (HBB) in an attempt to match vacant country houses under threat of demolition, which would be exempt from funding, with the newly created nationalised industries, research establishments, private companies and other government departments who required new premises at a time when building restrictions were in force and construction costs high. Prior to its establishment the Ministry of Works, with the close assistance of the Ministry of Town and Country Planning had tried extensively, using its insufficient resources, to find suitable new uses.<sup>4</sup> The HBB took over casework previously held by the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments with the Ministry of Works and accepted further cases as guided by its own Committee on Uses for Historic Buildings.

The collapse of the private estates market in the immediate post-war period restricted significantly the rental and resale of residences for domestic purposes, and although considered by many, including James Lees-Milne and the Gowers Committee, as an unsuitable option ensuring preservation, the HBB was successful in securing the future of many houses. Up until 1967 in total the Bureau had had 82 houses on its books, including Ossington Hall and Ordsall Hall in Nottinghamshire which feature within chapters 5 and 7 of this thesis respectively (Cornforth 1974:39-40).

The Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act, 1953, therefore sealed central state compulsion in the preservation of buildings of outstanding historic or architectural importance in addition to its responsibilities for ancient monument sites. Elsewhere it further confirmed the position of the state as chief guardian of the country house estate, which was increasingly being configured and accepted as an essential component of national heritage. The Historic Buildings Councils therefore represented the apex of the increasing coalescence of taste where the expanding authority of the state accepted and incorporated those demands of architectural historians and the preservation and amenity societies .

This was clearly evoked within the close working relationship of all the governmental and non-governmental bodies concerned with heritage protection. Through legislative amendments estate houses and valued chattels, for example, were accepted by the state in lieu of death duties and subsequently passed on to the National Trust. As part of all acceptances of property, especially those under their own Country House Scheme, the Trust required an endowment in order to

cover maintenance costs and in many instances private owners could not afford such capital sums. As a result of Hugh Dalton's National Land Fund and grant payments from the Historic Buildings Council, there was greater opportunity for the preservation of estate houses through more flexible financial arrangements. Most importantly, this better enabled those properties deemed as of national importance to be preserved.

During the mid-1960s there were significant changes in planning and preservation policy which reflected the changing function of legislation, political commitment and opinion as to current threat. Emphasis moved away from concerns for rural architecture and instead became centred on urban comprehensive redevelopment and modernisation schemes which, even more so than post-war reconstruction proposals, proved a considerable threat (Andreae 1996).

Elsewhere, the designation of Conservation Areas meant buildings were no longer considered in isolation but in relationship to each other, forming a settlement or neighbourhood pattern. Conservation Areas became an important means of protecting local character and were often implemented in village centres and established urban centres which had largely been overlooked since the NBR, and in particular their chairman W.H. Godfrey, had voiced initial concerns for urban architecture – as a result of both aerial bombardment and redevelopment schemes (Godfrey 1944).

Local planning authorities had been the agents implementing central government policy. Although vested with powers to enact building preservation orders

preventing demolition these were rarely adopted, in part because owners could force the authority to purchase the property. However, where the Minister of Town and Country Planning (later Minister of Housing and Local Government) deemed the preservation of a property as paramount he could serve a building preservation order on behalf of a local planning authority. There were increased moves which gave county councils greater autonomy for making decisions regarding building preservation, with their County Surveyors' departments taking a lead.

The Civic Amenities Act, 1967, enabled the creation of local, county-based, building preservation trusts, which were often chaired by the County Surveyor. Since 1967 preservation policy has further changed. The Town and Country Planning Act, 1968, which was predominantly implemented to reconfigure the development plan process also tightened up preservation provision providing further state control. Owners were no longer able to notify local planning authorities of their intention to demolish listed buildings, but instead were required to apply for permission. The obligation for listed building consent meant that the pressure previously placed upon local planning authorities to enact building preservation orders on owners was removed. In addition spot listing was introduced thereby offering immediate legislative protection for threatened buildings deemed as architecturally important.

Between 1945 and 1967, therefore, the legislative protection of buildings of architectural or historic evolved significantly. Before the Second World War concerns for the future preservation of the English landscape had fostered a vision

of the countryside which was not anti-modern but increasingly the distinctiveness of the urban and the rural was confirmed within planning and preservation proposals. Under increasing threat during landed decline the country house estate was incorporated as an essential component of this rural scene. Perceived widespread threat to the countryside, both by the state and increasing numbers of visitors, had encouraged an increasing convergence of lobbying opinion. Amenity, architecture and preservation groups, and their representative landowning presidents, sought political support for greater state intervention that included the control of development, landscape and protection and architectural preservation – or collectively, amenity. It was not until the late 1960s that considerable support for environmental concerns such as habitat protection and species diversity became a significant argument for further conservation.

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<sup>1</sup> Some registers do survive and are held at the National Archives. Known as the Blue Books they were most likely collated by a regional office of the Directorate of Lands and Accommodation and not centrally. NA WORK 50/23-27.

<sup>2</sup> Town and Country Advisory Committee. Report on the Preservation of the Countryside. 23 July 1938. pp30.

<sup>3</sup> NA HLG 103/14. Report on the Gowers Report. Unattributed. June 1950.

<sup>4</sup> NA HLG 126/52-3. Historic Buildings Bureau.

### **3 Methods and sources**

This research project has been reliant upon a number of primary and secondary sources that have enabled the deeper understanding of the changing use and valuing of Nottinghamshire country house estates during the mid-twentieth century. Within this section I detail the variety of methods adopted and sources used, including oral testimony, written and textual archives, Ordnance Survey maps of different dates, and sale and demolition catalogues. In discussing the value of these sources I then demonstrate how these have been successfully incorporated with site study visits to a number of Nottinghamshire estates which, when used in conjunction in the field, have enabled the further understanding of processes of land use change during the period of study.

Increasing research on country house estates and landed society during the twentieth century has opened up, and equally relied upon, a number of different sources than has been used for previous periods (Elton et al 1992). The deposit of family estate papers for public inspection in the post-war period, an undertaking which was partly as a result of the landed decline addressed within this thesis, meant that historians during the latter half of the twentieth century had access to a wealth of documentary material to consider the social, economic and political ascendancy of landed elites up until the late nineteenth century. The variety of different sources now increasingly accessible in part reflects changes within landed society during the last century. Even on their own estates, waning landed control was met with increased interest by a variety of organisations and societies,

who held equally various demands, concerns and interests for the use of estate space. It is, therefore, within the records of county councils, Ministerial departments, and amenity, preservation and conservation societies where histories of twentieth century country house estates can be found.

Furthermore, increasing interest in research on the historic built environment has encouraged the publication of a number of detailed guides. Predominantly interest has stemmed from family and local history where concerns focus upon the history of individual private residential properties (Barratt 2002; Henstock 1988). There is considerable overlap between the sources used in researching smaller residences and country house estates. However, the larger, older or greater status the property, then the more detailed sources regarding its built and social history are available to the researcher.

A third point is that increasingly the tracing of archival resources has become an easier undertaking. Bound paper catalogues have been replaced with fully searchable computer databases, which although still in their infancy, are revealing new sources pertaining to specific estates and families. Two principal on-line catalogues used within the undertaking of this thesis include, firstly, the National Archives, which hold all governmental and central state archive papers, and Access to Archives (a2a).<sup>1</sup> The latter brings the catalogues of national, local and institutional archives together and provides a wealth of research opportunities.

### **3.1 Oral history**

The mid-twentieth century, a period which to many lies within living memory, offers both a challenge and an opportunity to the oral history researcher. Oral testimony has increasingly been adopted as a research strategy during the second half of the twentieth century. Firstly it is viewed as a means of uncovering new histories, which through under representation within archival or written sources, may have remained untold. Secondly, it offers a way of accessing more recent histories prior to, for example, the release of archival documents, and thirdly, it offers a means of interrogating histories and giving importance to personal narratives. It is not my intention here to critique oral history as a research strategy. Instead, I wish to demonstrate how oral history has been adopted within this research and, in acceptance of the above, discuss how such an approach has contributed to the further understanding of Nottinghamshire estates during the twentieth century.

The use of oral history as a research strategy has been discussed at length elsewhere (Thompson 1988; Portelli 1981). A key element of critique has been an engagement with ethical considerations regarding the representation of individual responses within research. New technologies, which allow the easier tracing of individuals through the digitised electoral roll, further contribute to this debate. Access to this has specifically enabled within this research the tracing of members of estate owning families and those represented within archive material. The sale of many estate houses during the mid-twentieth century has meant that former

landowners have increasingly retired and the tracing of people who have not courted attention provides key questions in how personal histories are unlocked.

My interest within this thesis is predominantly in addressing how institutional cultures of different state and non-state organisations present an agenda which either incorporates, implicates or ignores the country house estate and landowning elites. Whilst this thesis has been reliant upon written and archival sources the contribution of oral testimony is essential in understanding individual motivations and actions beyond that presented within formal correspondence and reports. Therefore, rather than merely reflect the written historical document oral testimony has provided an opportunity to develop a deeper and broader understanding of the country house estate.

Within this research oral testimonies were considered once archival and documentary sources had been inspected. A good understanding of the history of individual case studies, including negotiations, state involvement and resultant developments, enabled greater opportunities during discussion with individuals to uncover their own understanding of events. Specifically country house estates prove to be an emotive subject. Acceptance of their national architectural value means that many people make claims on their use and management. Primarily it is the former owners of country house estates for which the revisiting of past, and perhaps traumatic, histories can prove the most sensitive. This, however, is not to understate any other renegotiation of the past by individuals as events that they have not considered in many years are brought to the fore.

Figure 3.1 lists the semi structured interviews which were held as part of this research. Whilst principally this thesis was supported by archival data, semi-structured interviews, where possible, proved very useful. The earliest interview conducted was with Myles Thoroton Hildyard. This was especially important due to his broad knowledge of Nottinghamshire country houses and past involvement with the National Trust and CPRE across the county. Requests for interviews with individuals were always enthusiastically accepted and they were all conducted in the interviewees own home, although an alternative suggestion was always made should they be uncomfortable with this arrangement. This meant that additional information, such as photographs and retained correspondence was available for inspection.

Two comments can be made regarding the interviews conducted in support of the detailed case studies. Firstly, they were conducted after the majority of archival data had been collected and therefore informed part of a triangulation exercise. Interviewees were initially asked about their memories and past involvement in the history of certain country houses. Knowledge drawn from archival data was then introduced and discussed, where appropriate, to contribute to discussion and to clarify certain points. This was especially important in recognising the different perspectives and positionalities of interviewees compared to the detailed representations contained within archival reports. Secondly, and in support of this, the process gave opportunity for the emergence of other themes and personal viewpoints not contained within the County Council or Ministerial data.

Name	Details (date of interview)
The late Mr. Myles Thoroton Hildyard	Descendent owner of the Flintham estate; former local representative of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England and the National Trust. (March 2002)
Mrs. Pamela Goedhuis	Owner of the Ossington estate. Widow of the late William Maxwell Evelyn Denison. (May 2003)
Mrs. Jean Johnson Mr. Richard Weaver Mr. Alan Ward	Tenants and former tenants on the Ossington estate. (January 2004)
Mrs. Angela Farrer	Daughter of former owners of Eaton (Charles William and Kathleen Langley Kayser). (April 2004)
Mr. Robert Innes-Smith	Actively involved in attempts to preserve Rufford Abbey; former member of SPAB. (May 2003)
Mrs. Diana Barley	Member of inspection group for County Council special schools; widow of Professor of Archaeology, University of Nottingham and member of Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England. (2004)
Telephone interviews	
Mr. Graham Beaumont	Former conservation officer of Nottinghamshire County Council; member of Nottingham Building Preservation Trust.
Sir John Starkey	Descendent owner of Norwood Park.
Mr. G.M.T. Foljambe	Former descendent owner of Osberton Hall. Continues to own the estate.
Mrs. Xenia Francklin	Owner of the Gonalston estate; former County Councillor.

**Figure 3.1:** List of interviewees and people questioned as part of thesis research.

Furthermore, letters requesting historical information regarding the ownership and use of estate space were sent to a number of hereditary owners of country houses, where such details regarding the mid-twentieth century may be recalled. Whilst most owners responded by letter or e-mail it was from this request that I spoke at length with Sir John Starkey and Mr. G.M.T. Foljambe. In total fifteen letters were sent out and ten responses were received.

Discussions with individuals also unlocked additional private documentary material pertaining to individual case studies. This proved to be highly significant

in contributing further to a deeper understanding of individual involvement, beyond which could be achieved from solely institutional or state archives. Although I do not discuss personal archives further it is documentary material held in repositories to which I next turn.

## **3.2 Archival and documentary sources**

Principally, this thesis has been reliant upon a wealth of archival material held within national and local archive offices and private collections covering governmental Ministries, local authorities departments, organisations, individuals and estate owning families. No single estate researched in depth has provided detailed correspondence files from all of these stakeholder groups. Instead however, apparent competing interests regarding estate space have readily been evident even when consulting one source due to the culture of written communication adopted in the mid-twentieth century.

Whilst different organisations and institutions held specific styles and approaches to their correspondence, which are reflected within archive files there are some general features of mid-twentieth century correspondence culture and record management evident especially within Ministerial departments and local authorities. Firstly, it was standard practice that all out-going letters were copied to file, therefore both corresponding sides are well represented and queries, actions and considerations can be followed. This has been especially important within this research where discussion between different groups was both a

necessity with regard to planning and preservation decisions, and equally important when responsibilities of councils and Ministerial departments were uncertain. Secondly, whilst all formal correspondence was typed, hand written comments often scribbled in haste during internal circulation have proved illuminating; revealing inconsistencies, confusions, personal opinions and political implications. Thirdly, as detailed below there is a breadth in the other forms of correspondence both within and beyond institutions; each offering significant nuances to the narrative:

#### Internal memos

Typed or hand written correspondence between casework officers within either Ministerial or local authority departments. See point two above.

#### Formal reports

Copies of formal reports presented at committees, predominantly relating to on-going casework. Reports consist of summary statements of past involvement with regard to specific properties, updating members on recent events and usually requesting decisions on further action to be taken.

#### In-coming correspondence

Letters, usually addressed to chief casework officers, heads of department (local authorities), Clerk of the Council (local authorities) or the Minister (central state) from external organisations and individuals.

Out-going correspondence

Copies of correspondence sent to external organisations and individuals.

The main archive holdings consulted are discussed below.

### **3.2.1 National Archives**

Increased central state control of local planning, education and social welfare functions during the twentieth century has produced a wealth of documentary material by respective Ministerial departments. Arranged by department the National Archive catalogue is searchable on-line by place name, parish or building. Below is a summary of the Ministerial department files consulted whilst undertaking this thesis together with specific details regarding relevant content.

**AIR Air Ministry**

- Operational reports of RAF Ossington

**ED Ministry of Education**

- Construction, loan sanction, management and inspection of state schools. Including Bramcote Hills campus development and the teacher training college at Eaton Hall and Ordsall Hall.

**HLG Ministry of Housing and Local Government** (incorporating former Ministry of Town and Country Planning (MTCP))

- Inherited documents including all planning functions (from Ministry of Health and MTCP)
- Preparation of lists of buildings of architectural or historic importance (MTCP)

- Reports of the Historic Buildings Council for England (HBC was originally a responsibility of the Minister of Works but later fell under the MHLG hence records held under last administrative department).
- Casework files of the Historic Buildings Council regarding grant applications.

**MAF**            **Ministry of Agriculture** (and derivatives)

- National Farm Survey undertaken between 1941 and 1943 (land ownership/use maps and completed forms). Arranged by parish (Short et al 2000).

**T**                **Treasury**

- Correspondence regarding the preservation of Rufford Abbey. Principally regarding financial issues including grants and loans for repair and maintenance.

**WORK**        **Ministry of Works** (and derivatives)

- Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments (IAM) (responsibility for the protection and guardianship of ancient built and archaeological sites).
- IAM assumed greater responsibilities for more recent contributions to historic environment before Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act, 1953, placed responsibility with Historic Buildings Councils.

### **3.2.2 Nottinghamshire Archives Office**

Although the Nottinghamshire Archives Office holds the majority of estate papers pertaining to Nottinghamshire families the vast majority of these papers do not cover the twentieth century. It was, therefore, within the records of Nottinghamshire County Council where the majority of research was undertaken. Within the archival records of the County Council the correspondence and subject papers of the Clerk of the Council's office and the County Surveyors' (County Director of Planning) department have been well catalogued and contain considerable detail regarding town and country planning and architectural

preservation. Other useful sources held included Ordnance Survey mapping of various scales and dates, the complete reports of the County Council committees, and local pamphlets.

As will be discussed in chapter 4 the Clerk of the Council provided the central administrative function of the council, providing a link both internally between departmental officers and committee members, but also with central government departments. Traditionally holding a legal qualification the Clerk was the principal officer concerned with all legislative undertakings including the announcement of all statutory powers given to local authorities. This was a function which became significant during the mid-twentieth century as county councils were increasingly awarded more statutory responsibilities, functions and provisions (Jackson 1967). Whilst the County Surveyors' records provided considerable detail regarding the functional planning and implementation of certain policy, it is the Clerks' records which more clearly detailed the motivations of the Council, its members and equally that of government departments. This was especially evident with regard to Rufford Abbey where concerns for the preservation of the property expressed by national amenity organisations prompted both local government and ministerial responses. Both the Clerk of the Council and County Surveyor's files provided the considerable backbone to discussion of Rufford Abbey and Winkburn Hall.

Indexed bound copies of all reports presented to Nottinghamshire County Council committees provide an initial starting point for all research. It is from these that a clear understanding and context of all decisions can be made. As detailed above,

reports provide a summary of past involvement and request the committee to make decisions upon further action. In researching the council's involvement with all country house estates within Nottinghamshire such reports have been essential in ascertaining details where committees were required to make key decisions upon estates, but for which their involvement was not so protracted to warrant the creation of a specific casework file. This is clearly evident in considering decisions made by the Town and Country Planning Committee who were regularly informed of requests by owners of listed estate houses to demolish their properties. As will be demonstrated it is clear that following the Council's costly involvement at Rufford Abbey, future decisions upon preservation were kept at a safe and cautious arms length. Furthermore, the study of these reports reveal the variety of council responsibilities undertaken and provide an important context within which to place concerns for the preservation of architecture and educational provision.

In addition the record office held complete Ordnance Survey mapping, including the second edition 1:2500 series which although produced in the late nineteenth century contained essential detail which aided site visits. Surveyed at a time just as landed society was in decline the maps reflect the height of estate development and proved a considerably useful tool from which to compare landscape changes. Other series from the mid-twentieth century held on micro-fiche further aided comparisons and were especially useful in locating modern additions to estates, including new domestic arrangements, and military and industrial sites. Figure 5.4 an Ordnance Survey map dated 1959, for example, illustrates the location and condition of hutments erected within the woodland at Rufford Abbey.

Whilst all the National Archives files which I wished to consult were open to public access there were a number held within Nottinghamshire Archives Office which remained closed. Certain files, especially those regarding special schools established within country houses, which included personal details of children and treatment, understandably remained inaccessible. Permission was granted, however, from the County Council to consult a number of other files which included the detailed consideration of which properties would be included in initial lists of buildings of architectural and historical importance. These files had remained closed on account of the more recent additions that they contained and which held little interest to this research.

### **3.2.3 National Buildings Record (National Monuments Record)**

The National Buildings Record was one of many organisations established in the mid-twentieth century concerned with the witnessed destruction of the historic built environment. It was not a preservation or amenity organisation, akin to the Georgian Group or the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings, but a coterie of architectural historians, antiquarians, archaeologists, Ministerial inspectors of ancient monuments and architects whose chief motivation was the collection, creation, indexing and public supply of a complete record of architecture in England and Wales.<sup>2</sup>

Most recently attention has been drawn to its history within the wider review of the past preservation of the historic environment (Summerson 1991; Croad 1992; Sargent 2001). It is in testament to the significance of the NBR as an institution

absorbing, reinterpreting and promoting a national cultural identity that led the architect Roderick Gradidge to state that, “if one ignores the brutalities of war, the early 1940s seem to have a romantic tranquillity that we have now quite lost. As a direct reflection of the horrors of that war, people turned back to what would then have been called ‘the spirit of England’, and tried to save everything worthwhile from that maelstrom. So there were films like Powell and Pressburger’s *A Canterbury Tale*, John Piper’s paintings, and on a perhaps more practical plane, the National Buildings Record, that excellent institution, founded to make a record of all the best buildings in the country before they were destroyed by bombs” (quoted in Croad 1992:80).

Increasingly its architectural and archaeological sources collected and created since the Second World War, including building and aerial photographs, architectural and archaeological reports, measured drawings, and sale catalogues have become recognised as a key documentary resource for both family and local historians, in addition to professionals working within the historic environment sector (Croad 1988; Golding 2004).

Despite increased attention to the records of the NBR, it is an underused archival resource. Unlike other architectural repositories including the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, the Courtauld Institute and the Royal Institute of British Architects, which specialised in the collection of pre-twentieth century architectural plans, the NBR is a product of concerns for the preservation of the historic environment during and since the Second World War. As a result

its collections and own administrative history are of special interest within this research.

Established in 1941 the National Buildings Record (NBR) developed as a necessary resource which complemented significantly the growing concern for architectural preservation during the mid-twentieth century. During the inter-war period there was neither adequate planning controls for the protection of historic architecture nor wide public acceptance as to its national importance. Public acceptance of the need to preserve country house estates was not met during the inter-war period, despite the attempts of either the CPRE, SPAB, the Georgian Group or the National Trust to further preservation or encourage further state support both financially and through legislation. The Second World War stimulated greater consideration for the preservation of the built environment, especially within urban areas targeted during aerial bombardment which became a key motivational factor for the formation of the NBR. Equally, such an emphasis was clearly evident within surveys for lists of buildings of architectural or historic importance undertaken by the Ministry of Town and Country Planning initiated during the final years of the Second World War which focused initially solely upon urban areas. Such initial concerns of the NBR later evolved to include country house estates during the post-war period as the threat from aerial bombardment was replaced by more pervasive and often-cited pressures tied with landed decline and increased demands for the preservation of historic architecture. It is in discussing changing interests in architectural preservation which evolved during the Second World War and post-war period, that the National Buildings

Record clearly illustrates the evolving acceptance of the country house as an architectural form of national importance.

The principal focus of the NBR was in the collection and creation of architectural records. Broad acceptance of the need for such an organisation was expressed at a conference held at the Royal Institute of British Architects in November 1940 which was convened by Sir Kenneth Clark, director of the National Gallery, and chaired by W.H. Ansell, president of the RIBA. The architect and antiquary Walter H. Godfrey was appointed as the NBR's first director, assisted by the architectural historian Sir John Summerson, and through its Council of Management the organisation began to amass an unprecedented architectural record. Most importantly the independence of the NBR was rigorously guarded. Incorporation as a private company meant that it could operate independent of its parallel recording authority; the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England. It was however, funded by private donation and, increasingly, from Treasury grants, and as a result the functions of the NBR were drawn upon by Ministerial departments. Such a relationship was more of co-operation than competition. The Ministry of Works often informed the NBR of threatened buildings worthy of survey and increasingly requests from the state were accepted as an essential component of the Record's workload. In 1963 the warrant of the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England was renewed and under increased acceptance of the need to combine the similar functions of each organisation the NBR was incorporated within the state, becoming the National Monuments Record (Summerson 1991; Sargent 2001; Croad 1992).

Principally there were three forms of architectural record undertaken by the NBR; photography, architectural reports and measured drawings. The primary and most efficient method of architectural record was photography. The art of architectural photography had been explored in the early twentieth century and displayed to great effect within the pages of *Country Life* during the inter-war period. Fundamentally, however, whilst the subject may have been the same, and in many instances so was the composition, the motives between the two was wholly different. *Country Life* celebrated architectural form whilst the NBR was concerned with capturing and recording this form should it be demolished, not solely for posterity but as a working document for renovation, repair or as a pattern for reuse elsewhere in the future. Often images included the photographer's car within the composition, either directly adjacent the property within figure 3.2 at Wiseton Hall or sheltered under a tree as illustrated within figure 5.12 at Rufford Abbey.



**Figure 3.2:** View of Wiseton Hall from the north-west. Photograph taken for the National Buildings Record in c.1956.<sup>3</sup>

Most importantly there is a sense, similar to that in the preparation of a demolition catalogue as detailed below, that the arrival of an NBR photographer was perceived as the final death knell on a country house. Such contrasted starkly with the arrival on the doorstep of listings inspectors of the Ministry of Town and Country Planning who recorded a property's architectural history with a mind to its national importance and candidature for preservation.

The photographic record of the NBR held within red box files predominantly included images taken during the period from the 1940s until the 1960s and are therefore an essential textual document in the research of the mid-twentieth century country house estate. External photographs ensured the coverage of all elevations with attention to principal architectural or historic features including door surrounds and window casements. Internally, focus was upon state rooms including mantel pieces, staircases and other decorative features. Houses were often in a state of neglect and abandon, and as such photographs were highly evocative. This was clearly leapt upon in the creation of *The Destruction of the Country House* exhibition in 1974 (Strong et al 1974). Photographers also turned their lenses upon other features within the parkland including statuary, entrance gates and piers, lodges and even trees. Sometimes such photographs would be accompanied with brief historical details regarding the commissioning or purchase of certain architectural, landscape and decorative features.

In many instances the photographic record was supplemented with a detailed architectural report undertaken, sometimes, by the regional inspectors of the

Ministry of Town and Country Planning employed in the listing of buildings or Inspectors of Ancient Monuments from the Ministry of Works. The report would detail dates of construction and any subsequent remodelling, the arrangement of rooms, construction techniques used and present condition, together with sketches of principal architectural features. There was, however, little attempt to ascribe architectural value unlike in the grading system of listing buildings. The report therefore would complement the photographic record providing additional detail.

Both the photographic record and architectural report gave a good general overview of the recorded property. Where greater detail was required, often reflecting a features regarded importance, measured drawings were commissioned. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, the partial demolition of Rufford Abbey revealed the Cistercian night-stair linking the brothers' frater with the adjoining abbey church. This had subsequently been built over in the later remodelling of the property into a country house. Photographic record of this elevation could not emphasise the stonework in such detail as to reveal coursing, window arrangements, periods of construction and the night-stair itself once the later plasterwork had been removed. Measured drawings also revealed the uncertain future of specific features where it was considered that, often during demolition, the most complete architectural record should be ensured. Elsewhere, prior to the accession of estate papers within county record offices, surveyors inspecting properties on behalf of the NBR, took the opportunity to make tracings of important architectural drawings.

### **3.2.4 Taylor Simpson and Mosley; solicitors to the Drury Lowe family of Locko Park, Derbyshire**

Research on the Rufford, Ossington and Eaton estates was not reliant upon private estate papers. Although both Eaton and Ossington remained in family ownership with the former being sold in 1945 and the latter still in the possession of the Denison family, correspondence and estate papers had not been retained. In all of these instances, however, other archival sources as discussed above have provided considerable detail, from different perspectives, for the future management and use of these estates. In contrast no such papers could be sourced for Bramcote Hills. This small estate had not drawn any architectural or amenity interest from within central government, and even as a local concern the county archives office held no separate files on the detailed planning considerations for the estate. All such details were obtained from the Reports of the Council and the files of the Education and Architects Department of the County Council.

During attempts by the County Council to purchase the site one such report of the Education Committee identified Mr. Drury-Lowe as owner of Bramcote Hills. Their family seat of Locko Park just outside Derby is still privately owned and in writing through the University of Nottingham Manuscripts Department, who currently hold earlier Drury-Lowe papers, I managed to trace a large volume of estate papers regarding Bramcote Hills, currently held by the family solicitors, Taylor, Simpson and Mosley in Derby.

The holding predominantly contained conveyances of land to private tenants and the local authorities, legal correspondence regarding a public enquiry, estate maps and newspaper cuttings, all contained within one steel muniments box. With the

assistance of the family solicitor a detailed understanding of the estate's history, including how it came into the possession of the Drury-Lowe family, was successfully achieved.

### **3.2.5 H.A. Johnson and Son (Architects) of Doncaster**

H.A. Johnson and Son were an established family firm of architects based in Doncaster. Taught under Sir Albert Edward Richardson at the Bartlett School of Architecture in London, Johnson became established both nationally and locally, through associations with the Georgian Group and the Thoroton Society. This culminated in 1967 when he became a founding member of the Nottinghamshire Building Preservation Trust, created with the support of Nottinghamshire County Council under the Civic Amenities Act of the same year. It was through a search on the Access to Archives on-line catalogue that specific relevant details were uncovered as being held at the Doncaster records office. As will be discussed in later sections details included, firstly, a request from the Georgian Group for Johnson to inspect, and report upon, the threatened Ossington Hall in 1959 in order to ascertain its architectural importance. Secondly, in 1967 Johnson was employed by G.M.T. Foljambe of Osberton Hall to undertake works reducing part of the nineteenth century wing of the estate house, and thereby making the residence more economic. In latter years Johnson assisted in the revision of Nikolaus Pevsner's Nottinghamshire volume of his *Buildings of England* series in 1979 and published papers within the *Transactions of the Thoroton Society* on the architecture of Grove Hall, Osberton Hall and Ossington Hall respectively (Johnson, 1980, 1983; Johnson and Cox 1985).

### **3.3 Sale and demolition catalogues**

Sale catalogues provide a wealth of information in considering the mid-twentieth century country house estate. Like the photographs of the National Buildings Record they are evocative of landed decline as landowners are required to sell land and possessions in an attempt to economise and/or raise finances for the payment of estate duties.

Estate sales at auction have included portions of outlying agricultural land, woodland, farms, housing, public houses or chattels and the various accumulated contents of estate houses including fine art, books, china and silverware. Detailed maps, acreages, rateable values and names of any existing tenants accompanied land sale catalogues. These, therefore, provide a very detailed survey of the estate, or parts of the estate, at the time of the sale. Details of purchasers and sale values, however, are difficult to uncover although newspaper reports, both locally and nationally, sometimes provided coverage.

Most telling of all are the instances when a family placed an entire estate up for sale. Separate catalogues for the sale of an estate house were often embellished with photographs, often taken years prior and many not bearing any resemblance to the property's present state of repair. Catalogues often included a detailed history of royal patronage, elite society living and fanciful trivia. This historical pedigree was significant and additional associations were enshrined within the opening statement, "by the order of", which preceded the name of the notable landowner selling their property.

During the mid-twentieth century when the estate market was in decline the demand for a complete estate was slight and as such it was often broken into denominational lots thereby attracting a variety of interest from speculators and entrepreneurs, tenant farmers, developers and private individuals. Many owners and auction houses recognised the lack of demand and instead advertised estate house sales during the mid-twentieth century as appealing to potential opportunities for a new use; whether as a private school, hotel, golf course development, or company offices.

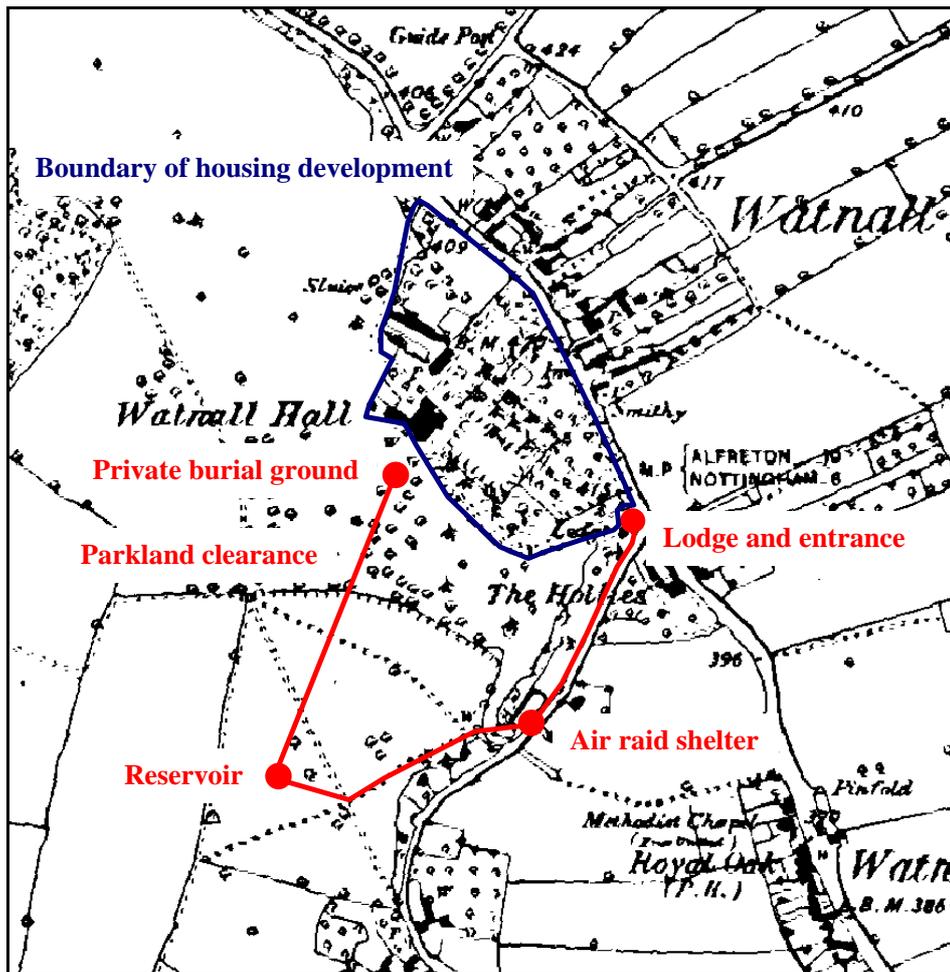
Where there remained no interest in the property, the final resort was to enact a demolition sale. The building fabric often had already been sold to a demolition company and remaining items including staircases, garden statuary, balustrades, doors, wooden flooring and fireplaces were put up for sale *in situ* with potential purchasers responsible for their removal. Often, however, such a publication acted as mere advertising welcoming prospective thieves to steal from an already abandoned property. With remaining items sold, or stolen, the estate house was ready for demolition; an event clearly remarked upon within the reminiscences of the architectural historian John Harris (Harris 1998, 2002).

## **3.4 Field visits**

Field visits to the sites of country houses were an important part of the research methodology. They are particularly significant in the research of demolished country houses where landscape changes on the estate since the mid-twentieth century have in some instances been considerable. There is usually evidence on the ground demonstrating the continuity and change of land use that is not readily evident within written and other textual archival documents. Reports, photographs and period maps show only a snap-shot in time; what is visible or known about a place solely at the date of production of that source. Armed with the knowledge of past uses and changes within the landscape it is possible to decode the present landscape to reveal and present another reading of landscape evolution.

### **3.4.1 Watnall Hall: notes on site visits and documentary sources**

The site of Watnall Hall is much like that of many country house estates where the house has been demolished and the immediate estate land converted to an alternative use. Whilst nothing remains of the estate house, finally demolished in 1962, signs of its past use are clearly evident. Instead of detailing the history of the estate and discussing the events leading upon to its demolition, which is discussed within chapter 4, I wish to present a journey around it as illustrated in figure 3.3. To tell the story of the estate through the site visit that was undertaken and to incorporate details from archival and secondary sources which confirm and add further detail to archival and documentary sources.



**Figure 3.3:** Ordnance Survey map of Watnall Hall and parkland in 1885. Annotation shows identified landscape features.

Firstly the location of the estate quickly became apparent from the main road. A lodge, subsequently extended (marked on figure 3.3), gate pier and curved entrance wall revealed the former main approach to the Hall from the south. The curved drive which rejoins the main road to the north now encloses housing development built in the late 1960s on roads now named Rolleston Crescent and Lancelot Drive after the last resident owner. The housing development retains the

boundary of the formal gardens adjacent to the Hall from the parkland beyond to the west.

Within the parkland, to the south west of the Hall, there was evidence of the clearance of some parkland trees, with the stumps of some still remaining. This was most likely undertaken following the estate sale of 1954, when the parkland presented an opportunity for tenant farmers as grazing land. In addition there was earlier evidence of state incursions within the parkland as a direct result of the expanding local population. In the late nineteenth century, a covered reservoir was constructed within the parkland on the only available high ground locally. Later state use of estate space was apparent within woodland adjacent to the local road to the south of the Hall. A covered Stanton air raid shelter confirmed the estate's wartime history, when much of the parkland and house provided temporary residential accommodation for Royal Air Force personnel attached to the nearby regional headquarters.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, on the high ground above Watnall Hall to the south east within the parkland was a fenced private burial ground, illustrated in figure 3.4. The gravestone inscriptions provided important family history information including material on Sir Lancelot Rolleston and his wife Maud. The former died in 1941 and was buried on the hill whilst the R.A.F occupied the Hall and the formal gardens were covered in rows of temporary hutments.



**Figure 3.4:** The author transcribing gravestones at Watnall Hall.

These details, although they do not feature at length within the written discussion of Watnall Hall contained in chapter 4, demonstrate the valuable contribution of field study. Visiting the site of Watnall Hall and exploring its parkland revealed key features both contained within and absent from Ordnance Survey maps. An understanding of its present use enabled greater appreciation of how estate space was planned and developed during the mid-twentieth century. Finally, it also confirmed written histories of the estate and contributed further to interpreting the extent to which requisition, other state responsibilities and changing uses impacted and were incorporated within a designed estate landscape.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk), [www.a2a.org.uk](http://www.a2a.org.uk). 16 February 2006.

<sup>2</sup> NMR NBR 26. 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the National Buildings Record. Statement on principal objectives at rear; NBR 30, 31. Memorandum of Association of the National Buildings Record under the Companies Act, 1929.

<sup>3</sup> NMR MLM 462.

<sup>4</sup> Stanton air raid shelters were constructed at military establishments during the Second World War and were much larger than the domestic Anderson shelter, although the principle of design was the same.

## **4 County governance, landowners and the preservation and use of country houses in Nottinghamshire**

### **4.1 Nottinghamshire: county governance and county society**

Nottinghamshire is a county of much diversity with considerable attraction for both the lover of the countryside and the student of history as well as the man of business. Its landscape varies from hill lands and forests to broad pasturelands; its industries from coal-mining and iron-smelting to lace-making and agriculture; and its stately mansions, ancient hostelryes, churches and relics are steeped in associations with the past. Industry and rusticity go hand in hand and both are inseparable from history and romance.

Alderman William Bayliss, Chairman of Nottinghamshire County Council (Nottinghamshire County Council 1952a).

Although not alluded to by William Bayliss in this promotional guide to Nottinghamshire, the inseparability of industry and rusticity, business interests and amenity concerns, would require close control and careful management in order to maintain the attractiveness of the county both with regard to securing private investment and its landscape and heritage protection. Here I introduce the

county, before addressing the work of the County Council and other issues of local governance.

Dubbed the Midland Stronghold by Arthur Mee for the County's royalist allegiance during the English civil war, Nottinghamshire's historical associations played significantly in the imagination and subsequent policy decisions of the County Council (Mee 1938). The former royal hunting park of Sherwood Forest is located centrally within the County and has since the eighteenth century been associated with the Dukeries estates of Welbeck Abbey, Clumber Park, Thoresby Hall and Worksop Manor, respectively owned by the Dukes of Portland, Newcastle, Kingston and Norfolk who included allusions of Robin Hood within their architectural and ornamental commissions. At their zenith in the late nineteenth century the Dukeries estates became popular for royal visitations most notably the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII).

The administrative county of Nottinghamshire covers an area of just over 520,000 acres, about 50 miles north to south, and 30 miles east to west. Owing to increased mining activity and the expansion of the Nottingham conurbation since the turn of the century the County's population had increased at a rate almost double the national average, from 377,000 in 1921 to 535,000 in 1951. In 1952 Nottinghamshire County Council predicted a further rise to 663,000 in 1971 (Nottinghamshire County Council 1952b; Association of Planning and Regional Reconstruction 1949).

At its peak in 1951 the City of Nottingham had a population of about 310,000 which has since been declining especially following the redevelopment of inner city residential areas. Population expansion within the city increased at such a rate in the early nineteenth century that the County's population concentrated in the city had risen from a quarter in 1801 to 42% in 1861. The regional market towns of Mansfield, Newark and Retford, which have also experienced population growth, lie in the west, east and north of the county respectively.

The concentration of principal economic activity was in part divided according to the geological characteristics of the county (Edwards 1966). To the east are the agricultural heartlands of the county with prime, albeit predominantly clay, farmland located along the valley of the River Trent which stretches from Nottingham through Newark and into Lincolnshire. Within the city of Nottingham, and around its fringes the county's hosiery industry developed. Lace manufacture, for which Nottingham became famed, centred on the city whereas frame knitting grew extensively during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in outlying settlements such as Calverton and Woodborough to the north east (Marsden 1953).

In the west and north of the county were the coal seams exploited since the sixteenth century and reaching a peak during Victorian industrial expansion. Numerous collieries were established and at their peak immediately following the First World War these numbered 31 within Nottinghamshire. This industrial development resulted in the expansion of the surrounding residential communities serving these collieries such as Mansfield and Hucknall – an area brought much to

life within the literature of D.H. Lawrence. Landed families within Nottinghamshire gained considerable success from the exploitation of mineral deposits during this period. It was the coal mining of lands owned by Francis Willoughby in the sixteenth century that funded the construction of the Elizabethan house Wollaton Hall just to the west of Nottingham. Furthermore, the Duke of Portland, Earl Manvers and Baron Savile had also instigated the mining of resources under their estate lands at Welbeck, Thoresby and Rufford respectively during the early twentieth century. Other families established themselves during the nineteenth century through the exploitation of coal within Nottinghamshire. These included the Barbers of Lamb Close and the Seelys of Sherwood Lodge who both owned a number of collieries within the County. The nationalisation of mineral rights, and later the coal mining industry in its entirety, removed the principal income of many midland estates in an instant (Waller 1983; Smith 2002).

#### **4.1.1 Social leaders and public persons: Nottinghamshire County Council and the landed elite**

In his historical study of Cheshire County Council from 1888 until the early 1960s, J.M. Lee, argues that there were two personality types elected as members of the Council – social leaders and public persons (Lee 1963). Historically rural landowners with sufficient private financial wealth had assumed the unelected position of social leaders. Their right to rule, whether nationally in Parliament or

within the county, was an accepted responsibility and requirement which came with owning property. It was a hereditary undertaking that the landowning elite held positions of local political power. Primarily, as the royal representative within the county, the greatest power was held by the Lord Lieutenant and secondly the High Sheriff. Other systems of power and authority existed including the magistrates and justices of the peace. Social leadership was an unchallenged and accepted system of rule which had been established through landownership and maintained until increased pressures for reform were raised in the mid-nineteenth century.

Social change, economic expansion and political reform increasingly meant that local government was more accessible to those from other areas of society. Local government was time consuming and increasingly in the late nineteenth century members of the professional urban middle classes had the private financial means by which they could afford to challenge local government seats. The public person was a wholly different political servant; a product of, and advocate for, the evolving reform of local government, manifest most importantly within the ethos, structure and management practices of county councils and county boroughs. Despite the relative inadequacies of such a binary division of elected members it does open debate regarding the change in governing structure of local authorities and how county councils such as Nottinghamshire, once controlled by landed elites, became increasingly democratised as more members representing the local population were elected to office.

Whilst formation, politics, structure and responsibilities of local government during the mid-twentieth century have been addressed elsewhere, it is the changing political and social composition of Nottinghamshire County Council since its establishment that provides the focus of the next section (Keith-Lucas and Richards 1978; Smellie 1968; Clarke 1955; Jackson 1967).

#### **4.1.2 Nottinghamshire County Council; the origins, membership and changing responsibilities of county government, 1888-1967**

County councils were created under the Local Government Act of 1888. The Local Government Board of central government had become increasingly concerned as to the representative nature of the appointed Quarter Sessions, which administered local government affairs together with Justices of the Peace and magistrates and was dominated by local landowning elites. Rather than creating a system of local governance that broke away from paternal control, landowners retained considerable economic and social influence within the counties such that deferential voting was prevalent and customary. Landowning control of local government functions was often merely transferred from the Quarter Sessions to the county councils thereby undermining such democratising intentions.

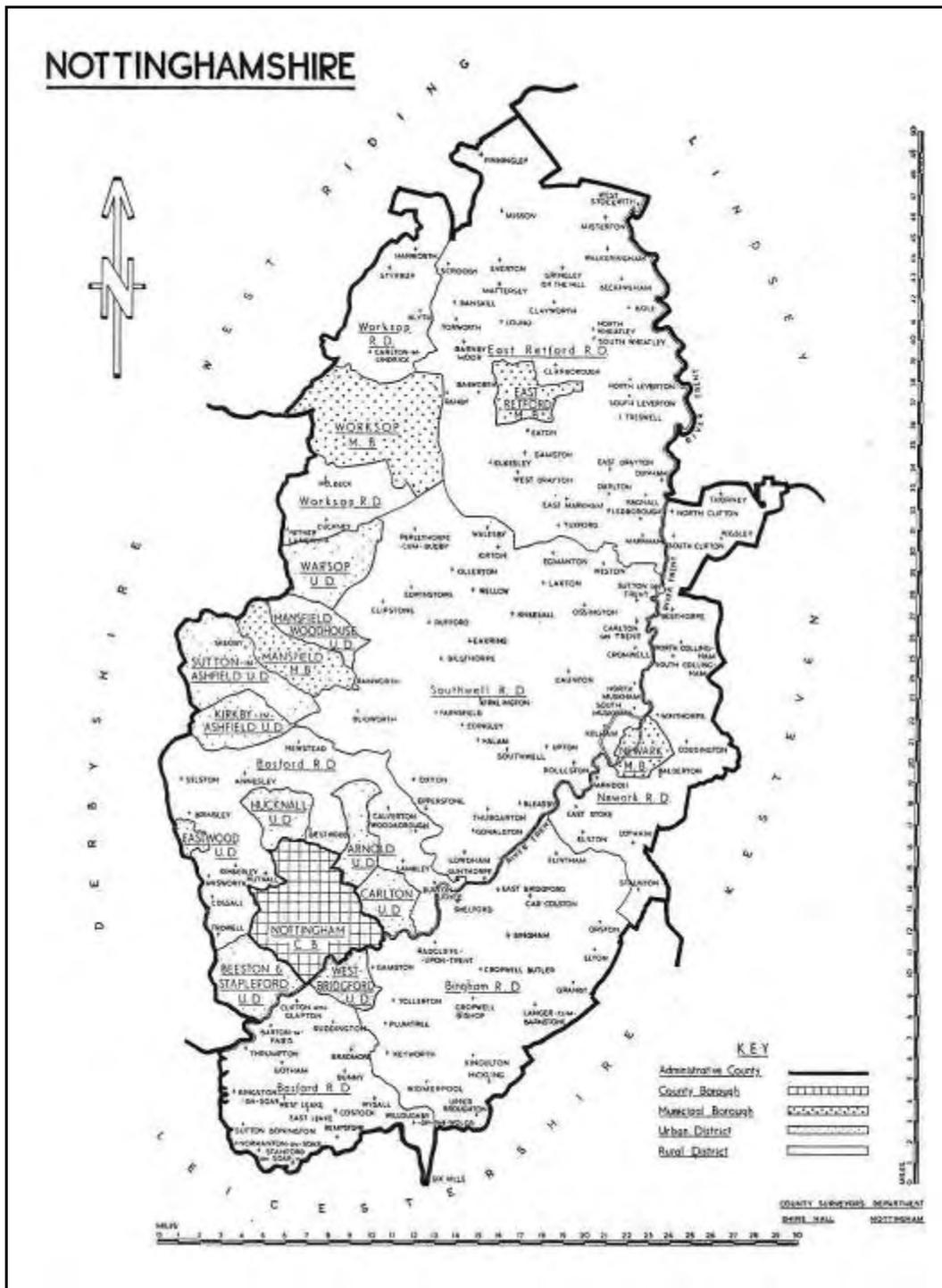
In Nottinghamshire following the first elections in April 1889, Lord Belper of Kingston Hall, the out-going chairman of the disbanded Quarter Sessions was

nominated as the new chair of the County Council. In predicting that such moves would not alter the governing interests of landed elites the 10<sup>th</sup> Duke of St. Albans of Bestwood Lodge, William Amelius de Vere, in his position as Lord Lieutenant serving Her Majesty Queen Victoria, was reported to offer no obstructive sentiments to the formation of the Council instead considering that local representation and taxation could only improve the service to ratepayers (Meaby 1939: 70; Long 1964). The Duke was, himself, elected to the County Council in 1898 and was promptly elevated to higher eminence, reflecting his status, on the Aldermanic bench.

The new County Council mirrored the Quarter Sessions not only politically through those elected to office but also administratively. The County was divided into 46 electoral wards corresponding to those of the Quarter Sessions, in which there were a total of 51 seats. In addition the elected members voted to nominate 17 individuals to act as Aldermen. These were the guardians of the council, not elected by the population but considered worthy of influential positions owing to their acclaimed status within county society. Therefore members of the Council could circumvent the democratic process in the appointment of those who may have not been democratically elected.

In this regard figure 4.1 illustrates the spatial organisation of the local government within the administrative region of the Nottinghamshire. Within the control of the County Council were ten Urban Districts which were predominantly located on the fringes of Nottingham County Borough, which was a unitary metropolitan authority, and extended along the western fringes of the County within the coal

mining areas. Furthermore there were six Rural Districts which were much greater in size but less densely populated. These covered the more southern, central and northern areas of the County which were predominantly agricultural. Both of these had their own representative elected members charged with the administration of the respective councils. In addition to the Nottingham County Borough there were a further four Municipal Boroughs, although it was only the former which was politically autonomous from the County Council.



**Figure 4.1:** Map showing local government boundaries and settlements within Nottinghamshire as existed from the late nineteenth century until 1974.<sup>1</sup>

Through the inter-war period the responsibilities of county councils developed piecemeal and owing to increased requirements immediately following the Second World War proposals for an overhaul of local government would not successfully be undertaken until the Maud Committee on Management reported in 1967. As Smellie (1968) suggests the history of local government during the period can be broadly characterised as two overlapping phases. The first between 1888 until about 1936 when the process of piecemeal developments were consolidated, most notably within the Local Government Act, 1933 which provided a countrywide standard for responsibilities and working practices. The second phase emerged in 1939 when concerns for the future state of the United Kingdom were heightened following the onset of the Second World War, an agenda based fundamentally on an ordered world which would both be manifest in the structure and management of representative authorities and their respective functions and responsibilities. Despite certain legislative frailties evident during the interwar period, most notably within planning functions, local government had developed considerable autonomy for local policy development and implementation epitomised within Winifred Holtby's novel *South Riding* (Holtby 1936). Policies of centralisation during the Second World War and nationalisation afterwards, however, placed local authorities increasingly as agents implementing the desires of central government. Broadly this process of centralisation witnessed power being placed higher within the political system. District councils lost control of certain functions to the counties, such as planning control, and correspondingly counties lost out to the central state, most clearly evident in the nationalisation of utilities, agricultural production and health service provision.

### 4.1.3 Landownership, the country party, party politics, and the County Council

To commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the creation of County Councils, in 1939, the Association of County Councils invited each authority to publish a history of their work to date. Kenneth Tweedale Meaby, the Clerk of the Council, wrote the section for Nottinghamshire (Meaby 1939). This snapshot in the history of the Council included details of the notable members, chairmen and reports regarding the achievements of the different committees. Published within the report was a photograph of the Council. This is illustrated in figure 4.2 with those who feature within this study highlighted. I will discuss the responsibilities of the Council through its different Committees in a later section and it is the representative members that I will discuss here with initial reference to the 1939 report.



**Figure 4.2:** Members of Nottinghamshire County Council in 1937 outside Shire Hall, High Pavement, Nottingham (Meaby 1939:78).<sup>2</sup>

From the date of its establishment up until 1946 Conservatives and allied political independents controlled the County Council, and as such many of the high ranking positions within the Council were awarded to local patriarchal landowners. In 1889 there were thirteen estate owning members of the Council out of a total of 51 councillors and 17 Aldermen. Together with Belper and Seely these included the Duke of St. Albans of Bestwood Lodge, Viscount Galway of Serlby Hall, Duke of Portland of Welbeck Abbey, Baron Savile of Rufford Abbey, F.I.S. Foljambe of Osberton Hall, Earl Manvers of Thoresby Hall, Lewis R. Starkey of Norwood Park, Henry Denison of Babworth Hall, James Thomas Edge of Strelley Hall, John Liell Francklin of Gonalston Hall, G.C. Robertson of Widmerpool Hall and Edward E. Harcourt-Vernon of Grove Hall.

Even within the period of conservative control there were clear changes in landowning representation. Whilst on its establishment all the major county landowners, especially those of the Dukeries estates, were members, except for the Duke of Newcastle of Clumber Park, increasingly this landed representation was dominated by more minor estates owners, gentlemen and retired army officers who supplemented the ranks within the Conservative/independent alliance. Most significantly many of these public persons had industrial and professional interests which they increasingly could incorporate with local government service. Major Thomas Philip Barber, for example, had inherited the family mining company, Barber Walker and Company Limited, which owned seven collieries within Nottinghamshire in 1897 and followed his uncle Robert Barber as an Independent member of the Council in March 1898 rising to Chairman of the Council – a

position which he maintained from 1932 until 1946 (Whitelock 1954). He owned Lamb Close House within the area of the company's collieries to the north west of Nottingham and unlike other rural landowners who adorned their formal gardens with statuary of classical tastes the Barbers had chosen a large block of coal from a deep hard seam, representative of their business interests, to be placed as a focal point amongst the well maintained hedges and neatly cut lawns. Thomas Barber's motivations, therefore, differed starkly from those of the landed barons of the Dukeries, for example, whose estates reflected good design and taste, the vestiges of feudal control and social leadership, and who associated with the traditions of landed society. Barber neither made such connections nor did he have similar aspirations, instead devoting all efforts towards the management of the family's industrial enterprises and increasingly to local public service. In 1946 the Conservative/Independent franchise lost control of the County Council to the Labour party. As a result of this election, therefore, Barber's control was lost following the increasing election of socialist colliery workers, some of whom no doubt were in his employ. The post-war socialist landslide witnessed both within local and central government impacted personally upon Barber and his interests. Firstly he lost the Chairmanship of the Council although he remained on as a member until his retirement in 1961, and secondly, following the nationalisation of coal production in 1947, Barber Walker and Company Limited ceased to be a trading concern and was voluntarily liquidated in 1954 (Whitelock 1954).

The first Labour member was William Mellors a printer from Hucknall, who had been elected in 1889 at the formation of the County Council. Particularly following the First World War, Labour Party members representing the mining

constituencies, predominantly in the west of the county, were increasingly elected to office. When Labour gained control in 1946 William Bayliss, a principal representative for the Nottinghamshire and District Miners' Federated Union, was appointed Chairman of the Council (Griffin 1971; Long 1964). The party held control for twenty years until it was regained by the Conservative Party in 1967 (Housden 2000).

During the mid-twentieth century local politics operated broadly on a consensual basis with emphasis given to the effective service of elected representation rather than divisions being created by divergent party agendas. Following the Labour victory in 1946, party political affiliations within the Council became more pronounced with an increasing division between Conservative and Labour Party members. Despite this, however, it remained customary for the Chairman, who represented the controlling party, to invite the minority party to elect a Vice-Chairman (Housden 2000:14). A summary of those individuals who held the chairmanship of the Council is contained in figure 4.3.

Chairman Vice-Chairman	Dates of office	Employment/Residence
Lord Belper	1889-1914	Landowner, Kingston Hall
Sir Charles Seely	1889-1898	Landowner, Sherwood Lodge
Francis John Savile Foljambe	1898-	Landowner, Osberton Hall
Viscount Galway	1904/10-11	Landowner, Serlby Hall
Viscount Galway	1914-1928	Landowner, Serlby Hall
Sir Lancelot Rolleston	1928-1932	Landowner, Watnall Hall
Major Tomas Barber	1932-1946	Colliery owner, Lamb Close Ho.
J.Lewin	1936	Retired contractor
Job Nightingale Derbyshire	1937-1940	Rempstone Hall
S.H. Clay	1941-1945	Solicitor, Retford
William Bayliss	1946-1962	Miners' Agent, Basford
L.W.A. White	1946-1950	Solicitor, Chilwell
C.C. Kirk	1951-1955	Silk merchant, Mapperley
Colonel Sydney Farr	1956-1962	Company director, Arnold
Colonel Sydney Farr	1962-1963	Company director, Arnold
Frank Augustus Small	1965-	Farmer, Woodborough
Colonel Sydney Farr	1965-1967	Company director, Arnold

**Figure 4.3:** Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Nottinghamshire County Council.

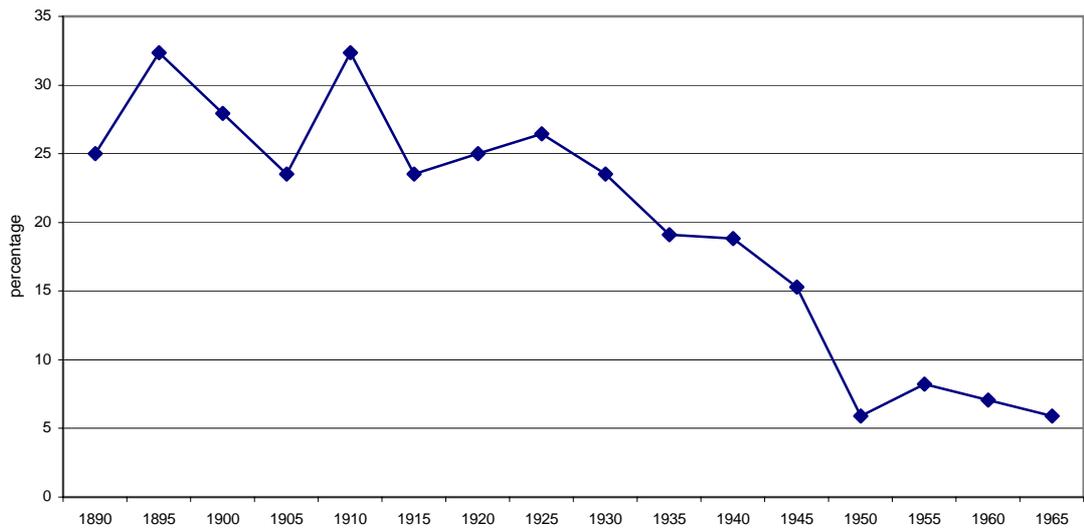
The bold line marks changing Council control from Conservative/Independent to Labour<sup>3</sup>

Since the establishment of the Council landowning representation had declined both with regard to publicly elected members and equally those privately elected on the Aldermanic bench.

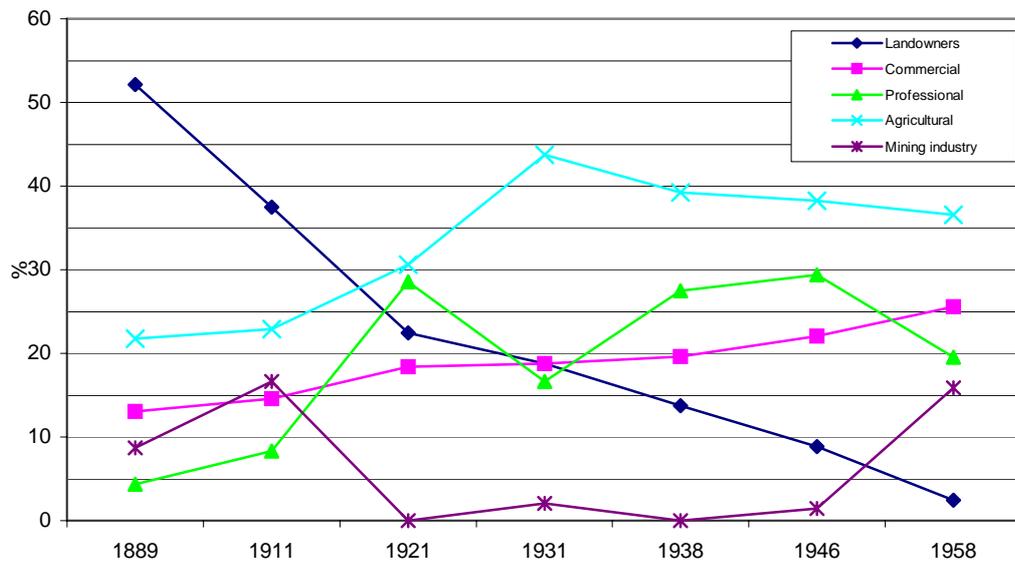
The Aldermanic system was a clear manifestation of the assumed rights of landowners to rule which came under increasing criticism as anti-democratic and was finally abandoned in the 1970s. It was feared that the council could appoint any individual it felt worthy regardless of an electoral result and as such in many instances within the country Aldermen were appointed despite losing in an electoral contest. Although it is unclear if such appointments occurred in Nottinghamshire certainly the Aldermanic bench was a reserve of political control

without electoral responsibilities, with many local landowners as members, including the Duke of St. Albans, Viscount Galway, James Thomas Edge and Baron Savile. Lord Belper had also been nominated as an Alderman but owing to his election in the Gotham division by only four votes he declined the invitation stating that he “refused to seek refuge” following such a narrow victory (quoted in Meaby 1939:70). However rather than the Aldermanic bench acting as the preserve of local landowners, as Lord Belper believed it could, membership by the rural governing elite was never strong, even in 1889 when only four of the seventeen Aldermen were rural landowners. Between 1936 and into the late 1950s this had fallen to three and from the early 1960s there were no members of the rural landed elite remaining on the Aldermanic bench.

The decline of landowning representation, including both elected members and Aldermen, is illustrated in figures 4.4 and 4.5. The data for these has been obtained from two different sources and therefore confirms a consistent pattern of decline.



**Figure 4.4:** Line graph showing percentage of county councillors and Aldermen who were landowners in Nottinghamshire by five-year intervals.<sup>4</sup>



**Figure 4.5:** Line graph showing percentage of elected Nottinghamshire County Council members by occupational class grouping. Figures based on Long (1964).

Whilst figure 4.4 illustrates the declining membership of landowners who were known to have been estate owners, figure 4.5 furthers this in considering the Council's constitutional make up according to social class. Although with clear and certain flaws this chart begins to demonstrate the changing formation of the County Council. Firstly, there is a noticeable declining landowning interest throughout the period, which largely supports figure 4.4. Secondly, during the most marked period of decline between 1889 and 1921 it is mostly agricultural tenants and private farm owners, despite agricultural recession, who replaced landowners and remained the most represented occupational class within the Council. Thirdly, the election of mine workers and officials, excluding owners, fell rapidly following the First World War, and later overtook landowners after the Second World War, when the Labour party won control of the County. Finally, professional and commercial interest groups have remained well represented within the Council. Having increased significantly prior to the First World War, membership has roughly remained constant during the inter-war and immediate post-war period.

#### **4.1.4 Traditions of county governance by the rural landowning elite; beyond the County Council**

It has already been commented that the most influential position of local governance had historically been that of Lord Lieutenant. Appointed as the royal representative within the counties the post gave considerable access to the monarch and in Nottinghamshire, similarly to other counties, was held

successively only by titled landed elites. With increased political control being placed within elected governments the position took on more of a ceremonial and civic role.

The position of High Sheriff ranked just below that of Lord Lieutenant and had equally been the reserve of local landowners. The increasing time demands required for the position meant that by the eighteenth century the rural elite looked on it unfavourably (Beckett 1986). As such, within Nottinghamshire minor country house owners perhaps viewed the post, with regard to its undeniable status, as a means by which their own position within county society could be elevated. During the mid-twentieth century those appointed included Sidney Shephard of Elston Hall who went on to represent the Newark constituency in parliament, the cigarette manufacturer Captain William Frederick Player of Staunton Grange, and George Fitzroy Seymour of Thrumpton Hall.

The five parliamentary constituencies within Nottinghamshire, whilst more fiercely fought, witnessed parallel voting patterns to those of the County Council wards and increasingly passed to the Labour Party. In the inter-war period the coal mining areas of Broxtowe and Mansfield were Labour controlled whilst Rushcliffe and Newark remained staunchly Conservative (Housden 2000; Waller 1983). The Newark constituency remained under Conservative control, surviving the Labour landslide of 1945, until Sidney Shephard of Elston Hall, a former High Sheriff to the County, was displaced in 1950 by G. Deer (Long 1964). The constituency contained the greater portion of the Dukeries estates and was, “one of the most traditionally minded rural regions of the country”, with a stronghold of

deferential voting (Waller 1983:140). Members of the local governing elite and their supporters had historically represented the seat. W.E. Gladstone, a close friend of Lord Lincoln, heir to the Newcastle estate of Clumber, won his first parliamentary constituency there in 1832. Between 1885 and 1890 Earl Manvers held the seat before it was passed to the Duke of Portland and other members of the Cavendish-Bentinck family. From 1922 the Marquess of Titchfield, held the seat until becoming the Duke of Portland in 1943, following which Shephard won the resulting by-election. In contrast Bassetlaw, another predominantly agricultural constituency dominated by landed estates, had elected a Labour Member of Parliament much earlier in 1929.

#### **4.1.5 Nottinghamshire County Council and changing local government responsibilities, 1937-1967**

The principal responsibilities charged to county councils, some of which changed significantly during the period of study, included the development of the local highway and bridge network, town and country planning, the management of smallholdings owned by the council, road safety, weights and measures, hospital provision and public health care, child welfare, education, agriculture, historic records and the emergency services, including police, fire, ambulance and latterly civil defence. All these functions were administered through a committee structure populated by elected members who held scheduled meetings of about four a year. Where required for the long-term management of, for example, specific institutions, smaller sub-committees were also established. County councils held

considerable freedom over the management of their administrative affairs although they were required under legislation to appoint a finance committee and a number of chief departmental officers such as the County Surveyor, the Director of Education and Clerk of the Council. Together with revenue funding through the council rates, local authorities received additional funding through central state grants and loans which were available for specific schemes. Through these loans, however, central Ministerial departments became increasingly involved in ensuring the efficient and effective distribution of finances.

The central positions within the County Council were those of Clerk of the Council and Justice of the Peace, often undertaken by one individual. From 1921 Kenneth Tweedale Meaby, as illustrated in figure 4.2, held this position and was later succeeded by his deputy, Alan R. Davis in 1954. Meaby was a solicitor, bachelor and JP who resided in a Georgian town house in the exclusive Burgage Green neighbourhood of Southwell. He regularly travelled into Nottingham by train and it was customary for it not to leave without him should he be delayed. He has been described as a portly autocrat with a plodding, determined and forceful nature.<sup>5</sup> The Clerk was in charge of the administrative management of the entire Council, would liaise between the elected members, committees, respective departments and would publicise relevant legislative changes. As discussed in chapter 3 the office's central importance in the administration of the Council has meant that its archived correspondence files, apart from that of education, are the largest Council holding in the Nottinghamshire Archive Office. It is perhaps not surprising that the Clerk's departments records were well catalogued and maintained for Meaby was also responsible for the management of historic

manuscript records and the County muniments. Indeed, like his predecessor H. Hampton Copnall, he also published catalogued lists and transcriptions of county records (Copnall 1915; Meaby 1947).

## **i Nottinghamshire County Council during the Second World War**

During the Second World War there was considerable central control of many functions undertaken by county councils. As such, within the coalition government there were broad patterns of executive powers being returned to or maintained within Ministerial departments, the central state, and newly created legislative bodies. Local government increasingly became the administrative arm of the state, fulfilling the demands and requirements of central policy. Within Nottinghamshire this was most clearly evident in, for example, evacuation policy, air raid precautions and civil defence which were administered by Tweedale Meaby, the Clerk of the Council. In addition local authorities were charged with the provision of emergency health care and the reception and billeting of evacuees which is explored in greater depth within chapter 6.

Central control was viewed as highly necessary during the war and when Labour won the parliamentary elections of 1946 such a policy was maintained, in part because the party had subscribed to a broad policy that argued the benefits of state authority, but also because the administrative system, following the Second World War, had already been established and therefore was the cheapest and most efficient option. This, therefore, set the agenda for the future of local government; one of declining autonomy with increased central state control over funding and

which placed county councils as responsible for the management and implementation of central policy.

## **ii Nottinghamshire County Council responsibilities I; social welfare and highways**

Major changes in the responsibilities of county councils during the immediate post-war period were witnessed in health provision, the care of children, public utilities, education and planning. Planning will be discussed in depth in the following section and I tackle education services and the impacts of the Education Act, 1944 in greater detail within chapter 6 with reference to the estates of Eaton Hall and Bramcote Hills.

Changes in primary health care provision were two-fold. In 1946 the Beveridge Report on Social Insurance and Allied Services was adopted within three legislative measures, the National Insurance Act, the National Insurance (Industrial Injuries) Act, and finally, the National Health Service Act, which established the welfare state and placed hospital provision, maternity homes and mental hospitals within central control in the Ministry of Health. Local authorities were given control of the lesser functions of ambulance, after-care services, midwifery and the provision of health centres (Keith Lucas and Richards 1978:47). Furthermore the Children Act, 1948, ordered that county councils establish a children's committee which would make provision for the care of all minors regardless of social upbringing, and would be ultimately responsible to the Minister of Health.

During the interwar period as the counties specific town planning responsibilities were developing, there was more established confidence in the management of the road and bridge network. Increasing car ownership meant that necessary highway construction would have to be undertaken with careful regard to emergent countryside amenity and preservation concerns evident within planning legislation. The redevelopment of the county's road network had been viewed as paramount to meet increasing patterns of car ownership and was undertaken in three ways (Meaby 1939). Firstly, commuter routes needed to be established, both to connect Nottingham with the rest of the county to the north, but also for those travelling longer distances and thereby enabling a countrywide road network. Secondly, the location and condition of bridges on the River Trent needed to be assessed as part of highly publicised civic schemes, and thirdly, the whole network of roads needed to be expanded and improved using modern techniques of construction. Major roads that were developed included the reconstruction of the Nottingham-Bawtry road, the A614, which commenced in 1914. This road had been the principal highway traversing the county and its modernisation was a key engineering scheme ensuring that the county was more accessible. Concentrating the increasing number of public vehicles along this routeway brought the public ever closer to Nottinghamshire's largest estates. The road divided the Thoresby, Clumber and Rufford estates with the principal entrances of the latter two opening directly on to this highway. Clumber Park and Rufford Abbey would, following the Second World War, be opened up to the public under the ownership of the National Trust and the County Council. The modernisation of the road both contributed to the demise of the estates, particularly Rufford which was located in view of the road, and facilitated greater public access as a recreation attraction.

Following the passing of the Trunk Road Act of 1936, the County Council were relieved of their function as that of Highways Authority for trunk roads and responsibility was placed with the Minister for Transport. The designation of Trunk Roads furthered the work undertaken by the County, and although relieving their financial responsibility to some parts of the network, also necessarily removed, to a degree, their control. The Act, however, only considered the major roads within the country and as such in 1938, there were still 1332 miles of roads of different classes for which the Council were responsible.

### **iii Nottinghamshire County Council responsibilities II; Town and country planning in Nottinghamshire**

Together with education provision, town and country planning functions increasingly offered the greatest challenges and opportunities to the county councils. The two broad phases of local government organisation, which I discussed earlier, are most starkly evident with reference to planning functions. This is illustrated most noticeably in the 1939 report of Nottinghamshire County Council where town and country planning was the last of all the Council's responsibilities to be given attention in part because of its then more minor role, unlike highways and bridges less established and more uncertain within the functions of local government (Meaby 1939). The increasing central importance given to planning issues during the Second World War focused upon attempts to ratify demands that the amenities of landscape should be protected against development pressures and post-war economic demands. Within Nottinghamshire this was most clearly demonstrated within the *County Development Plan*

published in 1952, and equally implied within the quote from William Bayliss, Chairman of the Council, which introduced this chapter.

The history of town and country planning within the United Kingdom has been well documented (Cullingworth 1972). Here I examine how central government policies, reports and legislation impacted upon local planning within Nottinghamshire. In so doing I will make reference to the Town Planning Committee (which later became the County Planning Committee), its elected membership and responsibilities, together with detailed reference to those chief professional officers who prepared detailed plans and reported to Committee members. I will make little reference at this stage to planning requirements for the preservation of buildings of architectural or historic importance. Rather I wish here to develop the broader planning context within which legislative requirements made of local authorities for the preservation of architecture would be placed. As will become evident the importance of historic architecture and landscape value of estate space became intertwined with wider planning demands and concerns for the preservation of woodland, provision of public open space and the broader protection of rural landscape against development, including urban sprawl.

In 1936 the Town Planning Committee of the County Council was chaired by A. Peatfield, a farmer from Retford. Those appointed as members included Lord Belper, Sir Joseph Nall of Hoveringham Hall and Sir Lancelot Rolleston. By 1941 Sir Joseph Nall had assumed the position of Chairman and the 24 members (including 3 vacancies) included Edward Francklin, Earl Manvers, G.E. Taylor of

Aspley Hall and William Randle Starkey of Norwood Park. Between 1941 and 1946 the Conservative member H.C.C. Carlton, a company director from East Leake near Loughborough, became chairman of the now renamed County Planning Committee. Following the resignation of Earl Manvers from the County Council in 1946 there remained three landowning members on the Committee. Despite the Labour victory in 1946 H.C.C. Carlton remained as the committee chairman until succeeded by W.H. Foster, a colliery checkmeasurer from Warsop, in 1951, who in turn held the position until the Conservative Party regained control of the Council in 1967.

Planning requirements had been born out of concerns for public health in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The focus of attention was exclusively on urban areas which had developed in a somewhat uncontrolled manner as part of industrial expansion and, in recognising this origin in concerns for sanitation, sewerage and public health it was, until the end of 1942, the Minister of Health who was responsible for planning functions. Indeed county councils initially became involved in planning issues almost by default through the creation of joint planning committees concerned with the increasing regional focus of decision making that included the suburban areas of major conurbations, often under the control of a county council.

Through the passing of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1932, there was increased recognition that rural areas also required planning control. The Act was the principal planning legislation prior to the Second World War and in 1939 the County Director of Planning in Nottinghamshire, Reginald A. Kidd, emphasised

its perceived importance in empowering, “Local Authorities to prepare planning schemes to preserve that which is most attractive on the face of Great Britain, to remove that which is repulsive, and to ensure that future changes preserve and amplify rather than destroy existing amenities” (Kidd 1939:16).

Whilst the 1932 Act did offer greater planning powers to local authorities through the joint committees it came under considerable criticism, firstly because planning controls were dependent on a scheme being approved by the Minister and up until 1 April 1939 only 2 % of the United Kingdom land area had received such support. Furthermore, once such schemes were approved their amendment could only be achieved through a further submission to the Minister. Secondly, and a problem of planning which would continue to dog policy, was the issue of compensation and betterment. Refusal to permit development resulted in local planning authorities being forced to pay compensation to the landowner. All too often the compensation for prime development land adjacent to major urban areas was at an unaffordable price and as such it significantly inhibited good planning judgements made by the county council (Keith-Lucas and Richards 1978:50). This was raised by the County Council who, in 1939 despite, “the limited scope of existing legislative powers”, were working towards to the submission of their own scheme which would permit, “the ordered development and the preservation of amenities” (Meaby 1939:112). Such planning functions at this time focused upon the control of development, the construction of buildings, the reservation of open spaces, sewage disposal and woodland preservation which was enabled through a process of zoning certain land areas where development would be permitted or restricted.

The Second World War provided the opportunity and impetus for the amendment of legislation. Three influential, and much referenced, government committees made recommendations as to the future of planning. Firstly, although established in 1937, the Royal Commission on the Geographical Distribution of the Industrial Population under the chairmanship of Sir A. Montague Barlow reported in 1940. The final report recommended that industry should be decentralised from London to provincial towns thus aiding population redistribution (Royal Commission on the Distribution of the Industrial Population 1940). Such a recommendation would require significant controls on industrial expansion and a national standard for planning which resulted in 1943 in the creation of the Ministry of Town and Country Planning.

Secondly, and based upon Barlow's conclusions, the Departmental Committee on the Utilization of Land in Rural Areas was established in 1941 to consider how a policy of decentralisation could be fulfilled without negative impact to both highly important agricultural production and the amenities of the countryside. Recommendations in the committee report published in 1942 included the location of industry in existing towns, development of new towns in order to prevent urban sprawl, green belts preventing the merger of towns and the nationalisation of utilities (Ministry of Works and Planning 1942a). In assessing how best the recommendation of Barlow could be furthered the Scott Committee offered some challenges to landownership, both with regard to the physical control of land and in other more paternal obligations. Whilst Scott's intentions to keep town and country separate would ease pressures on the development of rural land belonging

to estate owners the committee did perceive land as part of a, “national estate”, to fulfil the requirements of the population, either by ensuring future agricultural productivity or in preserving and maintaining what was characteristic about England’s rural settlements (Mandler 1997a:321). Rural planning and the design and maintenance of tied housing in estate villages had developed as one of the paternal responsibilities of landownership within an agricultural community and this featured as one of their concerns. The Scott Report gave opportunity to reconsider the position of agricultural production and as such made recommendations for the comprehensive modernisation of rural housing, which through the agricultural depression of the 1930s had remained neglected by landowners.

Finally, the Expert Committee on Compensation and Betterment, published their final report (the Uthwatt Report) in 1942 (Ministry of Works and Planning 1942b). Central to this was concern over the payment of compensation to landowners which would be owing should restrictions on development be made, whether through the decentralisation of industry within less dense developments or, more drastically, in the total restriction of development and maintenance of agriculture in green belt areas. Specific recommendations included the acquisition of development rights by the state to better enable local government efforts at preserving amenity areas. Secondly land values were limited to values as of 31 March 1939, preventing highly inflated prices. This placed local authorities at a significant advantage of being able to purchase land cheaper than private developers, and as such the County Valuer became a highly important officer within the Council. Owners often contested the reduced value which the Council

offered for their land and property only to be swiftly served with a compulsory purchase order when they rejected the offer.

The 1947 Town and Country Planning Act was the most significant piece of post-war planning legislation, creating a legacy for practice which would be sustained until it was substantially amended within the Town and Country Planning Act, 1968. Much of the Act's provisions were directed squarely at the county councils who were established as the local planning authorities instead of the district councils. Principally the 1947 Act regulated all forms of development and established a preventative rather than an enabling culture of local planning. The system thereby worked on the assumption that all land was subject to restrictions prohibiting development unless permitted by the county council and their planning committee. Central to the increased control by the county council was the revision of compensation and betterment. If development was permitted then a charge was made to the council that was equal to the increase in value of the land which would arise from the development. This development charge, therefore, provided an additional income for the county councils and redistributed the benefits of development from the private owner to the community. Equally, if development was refused the local planning authority were not compelled to pay compensation. Whilst these measures placed considerable planning power with the county councils development was inhibited, angering landowners wishing to profit from their land. In 1951 the Conservative government scrapped the development charge and thereby increased the demand and commodity value of land which provided considerable relief for estate owners.

Whilst previous attempts at comprehensive planning through zoning had been discretionary within earlier legislation, under the 1947 Act councils were required to submit detailed development plans which would be revised every five years. Nottinghamshire County Council submitted their *County Development Plan* to the Minister of Town and Country Planning for approval in 1951. Published in February 1952 in three volumes it consisted of a written statement including a multitude of maps and tables, a plan for the environs of Mansfield, and finally proposals for other urban districts where the pressure on development land was at its most acute. Within the main written statement dedicated sections included the economic necessity of agricultural production together with the increasing amenity and recreational aspects of forestry, mineral extraction, demography, industry and employment, rural community structure, education provision, public utilities, highways, conservation and amenities, ancient monuments and historic buildings and the condition of rural housing, followed by a programme timetable for specific projects (Nottinghamshire County Council 1952b).

In the preface to the written statement the Chairman of the County Planning Committee, H.C.C. Charlton, clarified the agenda and heralded the democratising benefit which the plan would achieve:

The uncontrolled sporadic development which took place during the inter-war period provides ample evidence of the need for planning and thus ensuring the right use of every piece of land in this comparatively small island... Now more than ever is required a proper balance in land use, - a proper distribution of the available land to essential purposes on a

reasoned and planned basis, and with this in view, it is important to encourage a proper concept of planning, namely, the guiding of development on lines that will be of benefit to everybody as opposed to individual action with detrimental public effect (Nottinghamshire County Council 1952b:preface).

The preparation of the *County Development Plan* was a huge undertaking which attempted to ratify the dualism of preservation and development requirements. The Council had undertaken an extensive survey of the County prior to the preparation of the report (Association of Planning and Regional Reconstruction 1949). This focused significantly on determining patterns of land use in order to ascertain where development pressures were likely to be most acute and the nature of such demands. As such these concerns, especially with regard to mineral extraction, were specifically addressed within the two additional volumes on Mansfield and the urban districts. The final Annual Report of the Ministry of Town and Country Planning for 1951 detailed concerns characteristic of Nottinghamshire and other counties where there was intensive extraction of mineral deposits, and thereby further added weight to the claims made by the County Council within their *County Development Plan* which made recommendations under an extension of planning powers.

During the next 100 years (after 1815), industry prospered and spread with immense rapidity, and builders and constructors of every kind made their claims haphazard upon whatever land suited their purpose, without thought for the wider social and economic consequences; they mingled factories

with dwellings, crammed houses together, built over good seams of coal and deposits of gravel and made Britain the most urban country in the world (Ministry of Town and Country Planning 1951:1).

#### **4.1.6 Central government and its regional offices**

Within a discussion of the different state functions acting in Nottinghamshire it is important to bring attention to the regional offices of central government departments who played a significant role in liaising between county councils and Ministerial departments. Originally established under the Civil Defence Act, 1939, as part of mass mobilisation procedures during the Second World War to ensure the effective administration of an area should communications with London be cut these offices continued to function during the post-war period as civil defence regions when there was still a perceived threat to international stability, and correspondingly as areas for the administration of other state functions (Smellie 1968; Emmerson 1956). Each ministerial department organised their regional offices according to their own requirements and the Ministries of Work, Town and Country Planning (latterly Housing and Local Government) focused particularly on building works, local planning and development control demands. In addition, whilst the preparation of lists of buildings of architectural or historic importance and the responsibilities of the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments was controlled from London, the regional office were involved in publicity, making necessary announcements and liaison with local authorities. In particular the Regional Controller of the Ministry of Works, Sir Henry C. Prior, acted on behalf of the

Ministry of Town and Country Planning, and was in close contact with the County Council during the preparation of such lists, as will be discussed in a later section.<sup>6</sup>

In total the country including Scotland and Wales was divided into twelve regions. Nottinghamshire fell within Region 3 which included the administrative counties of Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Rutland, Lincolnshire and all but the northern part of Derbyshire. The central offices were established to the north west of Nottingham adjacent to the ring road on land which had been part of the Wollaton Hall estate. Following the estate sale in 1925 to the Corporation of Nottingham much of the land was sold for extensive residential development and prior to the Second World War a portion was reserved for government offices.

In the concluding report of the Ministry of Town and Country Planning, before its functions were incorporated within a new ministry for Local Government and Planning, the work of the respective regions were summarised. Within Region 3 great emphasis was given to the boundary disputes between Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottingham County Borough and the role which the regional office assumed in advising the Minister on a solution (Ministry of Town and Country Planning 1951). The establishment of the various local government councils had been carried out in such a way that great inconsistencies existed in size and thereby rateable value between similar authorities. This, therefore, considerably constrained the ability of some councils to undertake specific duties. As such boundary disputes were common throughout the early and mid-twentieth century and battles between neighbouring local authorities were common.

In order to meet increasing housing needs and additionally thereby expand the City Council's rateable value the Corporation of Nottingham determined that a 900 acre site just beyond the city border in Clifton would be the only ideal location for necessary expansion. Having purchased the land from Peter T. Clifton of Clifton Hall, to the south west of Nottingham, in July 1947 they applied to Basford Rural District Council for planning permission to develop the area. The District refused this, arguing that the location of the development at Clifton had not been proved as the only possible site. In addition they were reluctant to accept development on what was very good farmland adjacent to the River Trent and which over a number of years had been successively well farmed. The Minister of Town and Country Planning failed to overturn the decision at appeal and subsequently in 1949 the Council applied again to the County Council who had now become the local planning authority under the 1947 Act. The Minister decided to accept responsibility for the application personally and after a vain search for alternatives he gave permission to develop with the stipulation that the housing density and layout would have to be to his satisfaction. Furthermore it was stated that he would not accede to any further development on the optimum farmland to the south of the River Trent (Ministry of Town and Country Planning 1951). Although not expressed as such, this was also the location of the village centre of Clifton, and the other side of which was Clifton Hall, which would thereby be protected from such development.

#### **4.1.7 Amenity and preservation organisations within Nottinghamshire; the Council for the Preservation of Rural England and the Rural Community Council.**

Although it is a recognised diversion from the focus of this chapter it is important to draw attention to the amenity, preservation and historical organisations established within Nottinghamshire who became increasingly vocal on local planning issues within Nottinghamshire. To a considerable degree members of these associations were also elected representatives of Nottinghamshire local authorities. In this section therefore I discuss the agendas of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England, before addressing the relationship of the Nottinghamshire Rural Community Council to the County Council and county society.

##### **i The Council for the Preservation of Rural England**

The Council for the Preservation of Rural England (CPRE) was created in 1926 initially as an umbrella organisation that co-ordinated, and later centrally assumed, the activities of a number of regional bodies that had been established to voice concern at the widespread and seemingly unchecked development experienced within rural areas. Importantly the organisation was not wholly averse to development but advocated careful and considered planning of the countryside, questioning what was appropriate, desired and sustainable both with regard to the rural economy and its amenity value.

By 1937 it was reported that the CPRE consisted of 42 constituent organisations and in its eleven years 28 county branches had been created (Williams Ellis 1937). At a meeting at the YWCA in Nottingham on the 21 June 1949, presided over by the Duke of Portland, the Nottinghamshire Branch of the CPRE was established. Attending the inaugural meeting were City and County Councillors, departmental heads within the respective Councils and Sir Patrick Abercrombie who founded the CPRE and addressed the meeting. The Duke of Portland formally proposed the creation of the branch and accordingly was unanimously elected as the President of the Branch. In addition to the Duke, the Chairman was Alderman William E. Hopkin who was a J.P. and member of the County Council. The Vice-Chairman was Viscountess Galway, the dowager Hon. Lucia Emily Margaret Vere Monckton-Arundel of Serlby Hall.<sup>7</sup> Her daughter, Celia Ella Vere Monckton-Arundel, is also known to have taken an active interest in the CPRE and was involved in this capacity in the preservation of Rufford Abbey. Also her husband, Sir Joshua Francis Rowley, who was employed with the National Trust, was approached by William Maxwell Evelyn Denison regarding the preservation of Ossington Hall. Both of these case studies are considered in further depth in chapter 5.

In addition to the above the Executive Committee consisted of a further seventeen individuals including Alderman L.W.A. White and R.A. Kidd, the County Surveyor and Director of Planning. Below this was the General Committee, which was divided regionally with single members of the respective Urban and Rural District Councils being appointed. Further members of the General Council included those representing other different amenity groups including the

Nottingham, Derby and Lincoln Architectural Society, Institute of Landscape Architects, the Nottinghamshire Playing Fields Association, the Nottingham Archaeological Society, Ramblers' Association, Nottinghamshire Rural Community Council, the Footpaths Preservation Society and the Nottinghamshire Parish Councils Association. Other subscribers and donors included Councillor H.C.C. Carlton, Lt.-Col. Lord Charles Cavendish-Bentinck of Oxton Hall and Earl Manvers of Thoresby Hall.

In the Branch's first annual report, published in 1950, a number of key activities and issues were recorded. These included concern over the impact of new gravel pits within the Trent Valley to the north east of Nottingham and, "the gradual movement of the coalfield towards the southern areas of the County", undertaken by the National Coal Board.<sup>8</sup> The Branch was also deeply concerned with the deterioration of public amenities and took up a number of cases including further development of Wollaton Park, the more recent move by the Army to create a housing estate in Bestwood Park in the expanding suburbs to the north of Nottingham and the initial phase of construction of the Staythorpe power station. Indeed, during its construction the contractor, Balfour Beattie, had purchased nearby Winkburn Hall for use as administrative offices and temporary hostel accommodation.

## **ii     The Nottinghamshire Rural Community Council**

The Nottinghamshire Rural Community Council (RCC) had become established in October 1935 owing to the fragmentation of a regional division that covered a number of East Midlands counties in addition to Nottinghamshire (Brasnett 1969; Matless 1990). In April 1954 the Nottinghamshire Rural Community Council held its first County Ball since 1938. The interwar balls, inaugurated in 1934, had been the premier local event of county society attended on various occasions by minor royalty. Its revival signalled renewed confidence both within the work of the RCC but more broadly within county society. Indeed by the mid 1950s the Conservative government's removal of the development charge had drastically improved the value of land and was echoed in greater confidence in agricultural markets.

The RCC encouraged the then President, the Duke of Portland, to hold the Ball in the state apartments of Welbeck Abbey. The revived success of the event led to preparations for the next ball being undertaken in September 1954. The Executive Committee suggested that three venues would be considered as suitable. In order of preference these were Welbeck Abbey again, the Viscountess Galway's house of Serlby Hall and finally Colwick Hall immediately to the east of Nottingham which had been owned by Home Breweries since the late nineteenth century. Colwick was surrounded by public recreation land designated by the Corporation of Nottingham, and overlooked the Nottingham racecourse.

Landed support for the RCC was waning, for in January 1955 it was reported that both Duke of Portland and Viscountess Galway had refused to grant permission

for their respective homes. As the third, and least favoured option, attention therefore turned to Colwick Hall, illustrated in figure 4.6. The Hall was visited by the Chairman, Alderman L.W.A. White and several members of the County Ball Committee and it was later reported that they “were much impressed by the improvements which they saw”, and a “tentative” booking was made for 15<sup>th</sup> April 1955.<sup>9</sup> The Ball, however, was not successful with profits being reduced from £280 in 1954 to £45 in 1955. Councillor H.C.C. Carlton, who had attended the Ball, “felt strongly that the place [Colwick Hall] was not suitable. The Ballroom was too congested and the seating was inadequate”.<sup>10</sup> Colwick Hall had been in non-residential use for about 60 years, the immediate parkland and lake had become a popular public open space and the interior of the Hall had altered greatly over the years. The former ballroom was renamed the Paddock Bar to reflect its horse racing associations and the Hall’s stables were still used on race days.



**Figure 4.6:** Main staircase at west end of Colwick Hall with discrete W.C. signposting under non-residential use. Photographed in 1970 for the National Monuments Record.<sup>11</sup>

Whilst the re-establishment of the County Ball can seem somewhat trivial within a wider project that attempts to identify broad changes within the administration of a county and its corresponding impacts upon landed society, there are a number of points of interest. Beyond the location of the Ball, it is important to recognise the continued patronage of established rural organisations by the county's landed society. Although the Rural Community Council often held its meetings in the Council Chamber of the County Council and had elected members of the Council on its own council together with key representatives of appropriate County Council departments, it was still headed, almost ceremonially, by the largest landowner in the country at the time, the Duke of Portland. The degree of control he exercised, beyond that of not permitting the County Ball to be held at Welbeck,

is not known, but the organisation of the RCC, despite being so allied to the state, is in marked contrast to that of County Committees, whereby their structure was not grounded on cultural and social authority but instead electoral mandate.

## **4.2 Country houses and landed society in Nottinghamshire: preservation and use of the historic built environment, 1937-1967**

### The Dukeries Estates

Large country estates, which had been in the possession of the same families for years without number, have been and are still being broken up, and the houses attached to them sold to individuals, most of whom have had little connection with the land; or have been turned into schools or other institutions. Though it is unfortunate that this severance should be necessary, it may yet have its redeeming side, for by this breaking up of large estates more landed proprietors are created. This means that a greater number of people have a stake in the land of the country than before, which should make for stability. On the other hand, farmers no longer have the old landlords to whom they were accustomed to turn for help when times were bad, as I fear they generally are in these days.

Many of the great houses, when not in the occupation of strangers, or used for other purposes, quickly become derelict. I can speak of this from my own experience; for when I first lived at Welbeck the great neighbouring houses, such as Clumber, Thoresby and Rufford, were all inhabited by their owners, who for the most part employed large staffs of servants of every kind. Now, not one of them is so occupied, except for a very few days in a year, and the shooting attached to them is either let or abandoned.

As the years pass, more and more such houses will be deserted, and the employees will be obliged to find other homes, and other means of subsistence. Whether or not this is for the general good I leave for others to judge. It is certainly the fact (Portland 1937:2-3).

This quotation is from the 6<sup>th</sup> Duke of Portland's introduction to his memoirs *Men, Women and Things* of 1937. Portland was the owner of Welbeck Abbey within the Dukeries of Nottinghamshire and his reminiscences and reflections, illustrate how landed society had changed around him within Nottinghamshire. The Welbeck, Thoresby, Clumber and Rufford estates were the largest and most established within the county, assisted greatly during the twentieth century from the profits of mineral extraction. All home, at one time, to Dukes (apart from Rufford) they were prize aristocratic lands whose owners spent heavily on improvement, entertainment and attaining influence and social status. Welbeck was the largest of these with Bateman recording that in the late nineteenth century the Duke of Portland's estates within the county totalled 43,036 acres, and including other holdings across the country including Scotland and Northumberland this totalled 82,199 acres (Bateman 1883; Smith 2002). Although, as discussed in chapter 2, landed decline during the twentieth century would affect all landowners it was the most wealthy, or those who owned the greatest holdings, who could survive more readily by both managing their estates more efficiently or selling outlying land or estates. By 1937 it is clear that the Dukeries estates were in considerable trouble and it was Portland's view that this would continue; landowners would be forced to sell up and houses would be demolished or converted to institutional uses. The fortunes of the Dukeries estates

were somewhat divided. Clumber Park had been demolished that year, an act which probably shocked landed society in Nottinghamshire to the core. The Duke's intentions of building a more modest house within the parkland after the Second World War never came to fruition and following successive contents sales the Duke of Newcastle eventually sold the estate in its entirety to the National Trust in 1945. Equally Rufford was sold in 1938 following the death of Baron Savile for financial reasons to a local property developer. As for Welbeck and Thoresby, the fortunes of their owners were somewhat better, and both estates remain in family ownership today, although the mansions are used as an Army college and a hotel. Like many estate landowners the Portlands had suffered their hardships. Continued agricultural crisis and the Wall Street crash of 1929 had led the 6<sup>th</sup> Duke, like many landowners, to cancel rents and in 1938 the Coal Mines Act nationalised mineral rights without the payment of compensation (Smith 2002). As a direct result of this the 6<sup>th</sup> Duke relied upon capital, selling much of his land in Scotland and Northumberland totalling 18,000 acres. In contrast to this scene of decline, on the 5<sup>th</sup> May 1939 the Duke and Duchess of Portland celebrated their golden wedding anniversary at Welbeck. Amongst those celebrating included notable local and national landowners and high-ranking County Councillors. A more intimate, but no less extravagant, family gathering was held on the 11<sup>th</sup> of June. Dinner was served on the gold plate service that the couple had been given as a wedding present and the Duchess wore the Portland diamonds valued at about £10,000. The respect bestowed upon both the Duke and Duchess was illustrated by the necessity for the local post office to remain open, despite it being a Sunday, in order to receive greetings and congratulations from across the world, including Queen Mary (De Courcy 2003:106).

Upon the death of the 6<sup>th</sup> Duke in 1943, his son inherited. As with many heirs who succeeded to estates at this time, High Victorian values were replaced by pragmatic realism. For the 7<sup>th</sup> Duke, the importance lay in ensuring the future of family estates at Welbeck. Firstly, Bolsover Castle in Derbyshire, a semi-ruinous property inherited by the Portlands, was successfully passed to the state thereby alleviating the cost of the property's upkeep. Welbeck Abbey itself was let to the Ministry of Defence in 1954 and became a college tied to the British army whilst the 7<sup>th</sup> Duke resided in Welbeck Woodhouse, a smaller house he built for himself when Marquess of Titchfield in 1930. Through the post-war period the family managed to maintain much of the Welbeck estates without the large scale sale of land. In contrast to the nationalisation of mineral rights prior to the war, the extension of this in 1945 to include coal mines themselves now included compensation payment. The 7<sup>th</sup> Duke of Portland, who owned six working mines, received a substantial payment which was profitably reinvested (Smith 2002).

The Earl Manvers at Thoresby Hall, initially fared somewhat better. Although Portland describes them as absent within his memoirs, following the end of the Second World, as an aging landowner, the Earl and his wife returned and lived in Thoresby until his death in 1955 when the title became extinct. As with moves at Rufford and Clumber during the post-war period, Thoresby was opened to the public from 1957 until the late 1980s. Lady Manvers drew significantly from the resurgence of local tourism and demand for recreation space within Sherwood Forest and the Dukeries estates at this time. With Welbeck occupied and never open to the public, she was able to offer the unique experience locally of a large

estate house which still remained in hereditary family ownership. Although the scale of this initiative was not comparable to that undertaken at Longleat and Woburn Abbey, where young owners who had recently succeeded to the estates embraced tourism more readily than anywhere else in the country, a miniature railway was established in the parkland of Thoresby to supplement the public enjoyment of the Hall.

In surviving the Second World War with their estates largely intact, it was both the resurgence of agriculture and the payment of compensation upon the nationalisation of coal mines that benefited these two remaining Dukeries estates. Specifically, this included the increased profitability of agriculture on both tenanted land and especially where holdings had been taken in hand. Landownership became a more profitable and stable occupation than it had been immediately prior to the Second World War. Despite continued high taxation, requisition during the War, compulsory purchase of land and increased state planning and financial control which had all managed to impede, erode and restrict estate economies since 1937, there were new opportunities which enabled survival in the long term. Options included first, the renting out of estate property, which was in much demand for various industrial and social welfare functions, if not private residential use. Second landowners could remodel themselves either as the self styled guardian of national heritage or alternately as an agricultural producer, both of which were increasingly accepted and promoted by the public and state.

### **4.2.1 Nottinghamshire country houses during the mid-twentieth century**

The largest and grandest of Nottinghamshire estates, especially those within the Dukeries, discussed above, have received considerable attention covering all periods of estate expansion and decline (Smith 2002). But these great estates only provide part of the story. I will now discuss the other country houses which were also tied to networks of landed or territorial power within Nottinghamshire. This section is based on a complete survey of country houses in Nottinghamshire between 1937 and 1967 undertaken for this thesis, which is summarised in table form below. A brief commentary follows the table concerning the wartime use of estates, the role of local authorities, the role of nationalised industries, and the ways in which national concerns for preservation were realised and contested within the County.

Earlier surveys and lists of Nottinghamshire's country houses do exist. In 1881, for example, Leonard Jacks published a tour of Nottinghamshire estates based upon a regular newspaper column that he had written for the *Nottingham Journal*. Collected under the title *The Great Houses of Nottinghamshire and the County Families* he visited 37 of the principal estates (Jacks 1881). Jacks was a council member of the Thoroton Society, the local historical and antiquarian organisation. He was able to gain access to many houses, was escorted around by their owners and described a very private domestic world of comfortable rooms, open fires and fantastical stories.

Fifteen years later, in 1896, Cornelius Brown, local writer and President of the Thoroton Society, published his *History of Nottinghamshire*, in which he listed 155 houses, all of which were under private ownership (Brown 1896). Many of those listed had been purchased or built by successful local businessmen who had profited from the county's coal and hosiery industries to reflect their industrial achievements. Most of these, however, were not country estate houses and instead were more modest modern domestic residences often in close proximity to urban areas.

I have compiled a list of 127 country houses within Nottinghamshire based on a number of sources including Pevsner's *Buildings of England*, trade directories and statutory lists of buildings of architectural or historic importance. Many other individual sources and records have also been used, including information gained from interviews and oral history (see Chapter 3). The list considers only those properties regarded as country houses, ranging in size from more modest gentry residences up to the largest stately home with attached parkland. The list is not comprehensive, for there are likely to be several modest country houses that have been missed, but it is as complete as I could make it with the resources and time available to me.

For each house I have attempted to show the changing use and ownership between 1937 and 1967. Details regarding many of the smaller houses have been difficult to obtain. My intention in undertaking this survey was firstly to find a way of compiling the mass of data regarding Nottinghamshire houses which I uncovered during the research. Secondly, and more importantly I wanted to provide some

detailed statistical information about use and ownership which would complement the detailed case studies which form the basis of the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

In addition I have represented this table within a series of maps of Nottinghamshire for the years 1937, 1939-1945, 1947, 1957 and 1967 (figures 4.8-4.12). These maps illustrate the temporal change of ownership and use across the county, revealing different county-wide and more localised patterns. In addition to comments drawn from figure 4.7 other points of note include, firstly, the clustering of houses owned by Nottingham Corporation in 1937. These are predominantly in areas where residential demand was greatest and such houses became key sites of Council sponsored housing development. In addition other institutional uses are centred upon principal urban areas such as Nottingham, Mansfield and the colliery area, and Newark. Elsewhere within the County country houses remain in private ownership. Secondly, figure 4.9, in contrast to the map of 1937, illustrates the extent of mass requisition during the Second World War. Thirdly, figure 4.10 demonstrates the direct impact of requisition immediately following the War, with many houses not simply reverting back to private residential use, but instead either were identified as empty or owned by Nottinghamshire County Council or a nationalised industry. Many of these were located in close proximity to more built-up areas, serving local populations. Some remained under military use and act as a reminder of the comprehensiveness of requisitioning powers. Fourthly, figures 4.11 and 4.12 confirm a continued pattern, up until 1967, of declining private residential ownership as more rural country houses were converted to institutional uses. In spite of this, however,

there remained moderate concentrations of private residences within the north of the county, in the vicinity of Welbeck, Worksop and Retford, and to the east of Nottingham on the fringes of the Wolds.

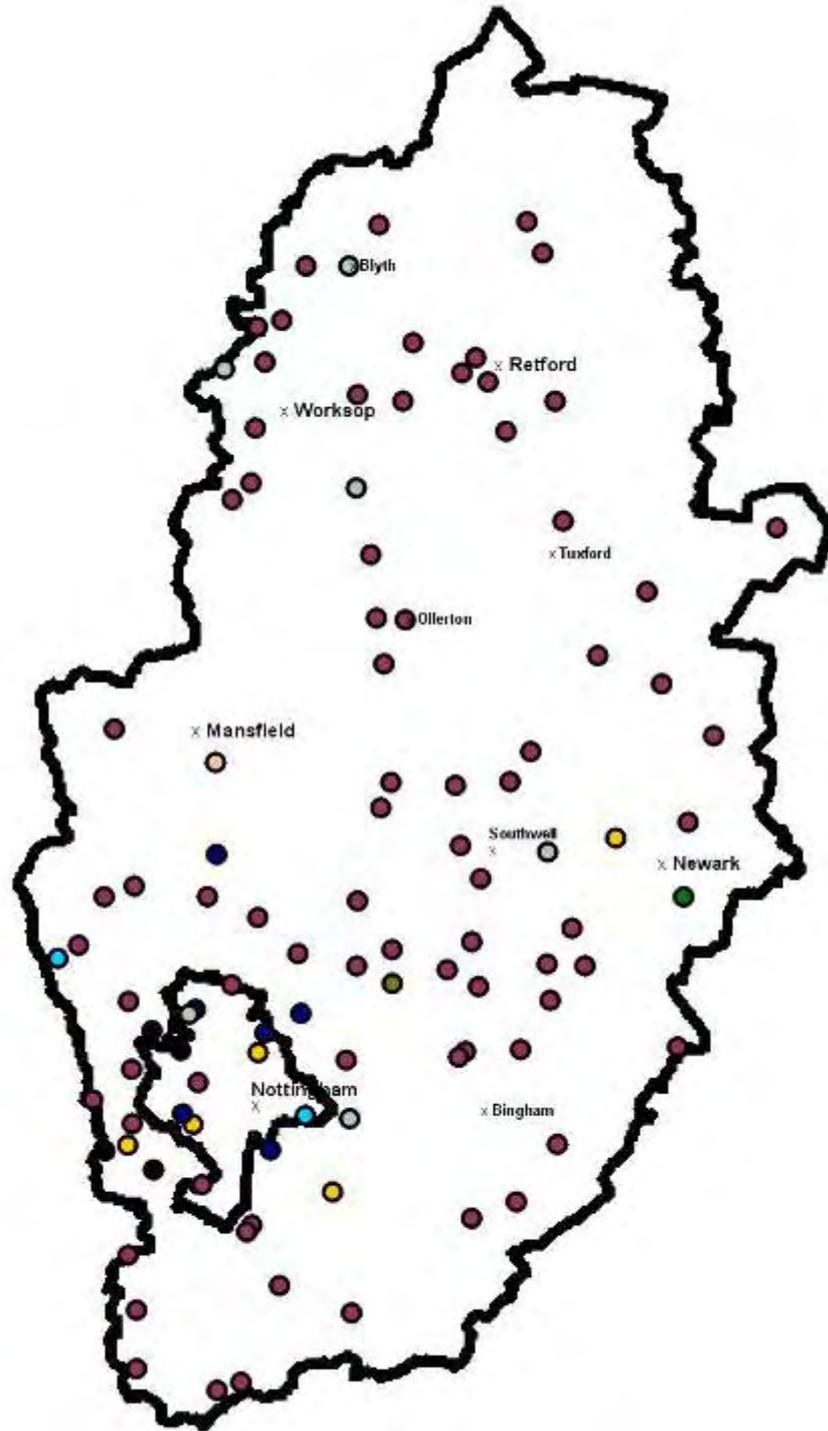
Country estate house	Year																															
	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	
Annesley Hall	(Chaworth Musters)																				^											
Arnot Hill	Arnold Urban District Council: offices and public recreation grounds																															
Asply Hall	(Taylor)																													D:1968		
Babworth Hall	(Whitaker)																															
Balderton Hall	"Colony for Mental Defectives"																															
Basford Hall														miners welfare									^									
Beesthorpe Hall	(Rycroft Aldred)																															
Berry Hill Hall														Miners rehabilitation centre																		
Bestwood Lodge	(Bowden)																															
Bleasby Hall																																
Blyth Hall																																
Bolham Hall (House)																																
Brackenhurst Hall	(Hickling)																															
Bramcote Hall	Bramcote Hall Preparatory School																															
Bramcote Hills	(Drury-Lowe)																															
Bridgeford Hill																																
Browtowe Hall	D:1937																															
Bulwell Hall	Approved sch																															
Bulwell Wood Hall																																
Bunny Park	(Cordeux)																															
Car Colston Hall	(Fisher)																															
Carlton Hall (Lindrick)	(Ramsden)																															
Carlton Hall (Trent)	(Vere-Laurie)																															
Chilwell Hall																																
Clayworth Hall	(W. Moore)																															
Clifton Hall	(Clifton)																															
Clumber Park																																
Cockglode House																																
Colston Bassett Hall	(Le Marchant)																															
Colwick Hall	O:1896 Nottingham Racecourse Company																															
East Bridgeford Hall	(Gertrude Fox)																															
Eastwood Hall	Barber Walker Colliery Company: Offices																															
Eaton Hall	(Kayser)																															
Edwinstowe Hall																																
Elston Hall	(Shepard) MP for Newark																															
Epperstone Manor	(Ley)	(Bourne)																														
Farnsfield Hall	(Harwood Cash)																															
Felley Priory	(C.A.M. Oakes)																															
Flintham Hall	(Hildyard)	Some land taken for RAF Syerston																														
Gateford Hall	(Machin)																															
Gedling House	(W.H. Blackburn)																															
Gonalston Hall	(Franklin)																															
Grove Hall	(Harcourt Vernon)																															



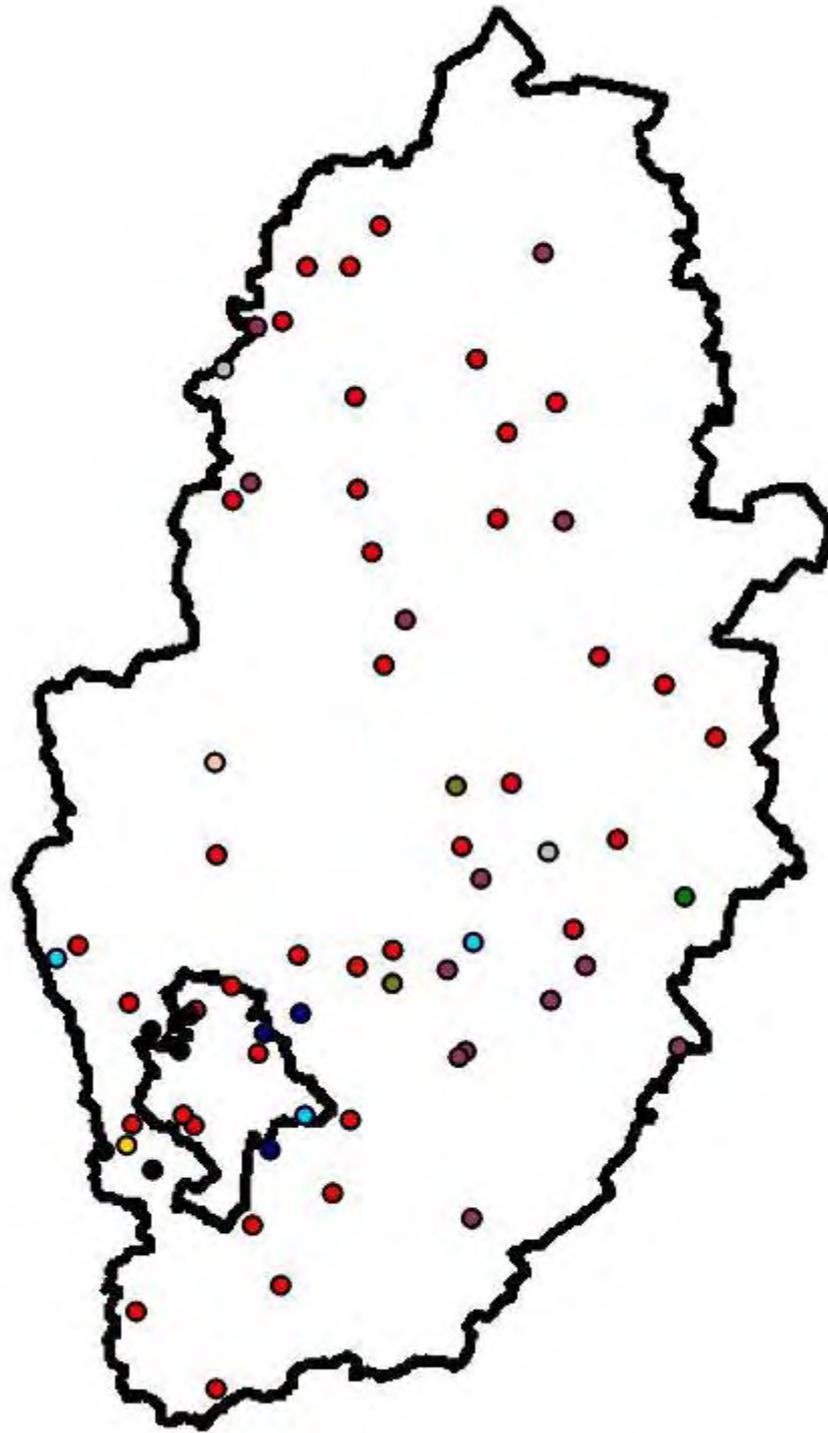
Country estate house	Year																														
	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967
Serlby Hall	(Galway)		Army: billeting																												
Shelton Hall																															
Sherwood Hall												Site: Secondary Technical: Boys and Girls School																			
Sherwood Lodge	(Seely)											National Coal Board: East Midlands Division Headquarters																			
Shireoaks Hall																															
Skegby Hall	(Allsebrook)												Skegby Hall Approved School																		
South Collingham Hall	(Curtis)		HQ Major Curtis																												
Stanford Hall	(Cahn)		Army: ROAC					Co-operative College														^									
Staunton Hall	(Staunton)																														
Stapleford Hall	D:1935																														
Stoke Hall	(Sheldon)		Military																												
Sirelley Hall	(Edge)																														
Sutton Bonington Hall	(Tilney)																														
Syerston Hall	(Fillingham)																														
Teversal Hall																															
Thoresby Hall	(Manvers)		Army billet: top floor						Proteus army camp in park													Open to the public until 1970s									
Thorney Hall	(Neville)																														
Thrumpton Hall	(Byron)																														
Thurgarton Priory	(D'Oyley Ransom)							Boots Pure Drug Company: Experimental Research Station																							
Trowell Hall																															
Tuxford Hall																															
Upton Hall																															
Wallingwells																															
Wainall Hall	(Rolleston)		RAF: 12 Gp. HQ						Girls' private school																						
Welbeck Abbey	(Portland)		Store for County Council muniments																												
Welbeck Woodhouse	(Portland)																														
Welham Hall																															
Wellow Hall																															
West Bridgford Hall																															
West Retford Hall	(Huntsman)		Evacuation																												
Whatton Manor	(Player)																														
Widmerpool Hall	(Hutton)																														
Wigthorpe Hill																															
Winkburn Hall	(Todd)		Prep School																												
Winthorpe Hall	(Need)																														
Wiseton Hall	(Laycock)																														
Wiverton Hall																															
Wollaton Hall		Public Open Space		US Army/PoW																											
Woodborough Hall	(Dowson)																														
Woodthorpe Grange		Public Open Space																													
Worksop Manor	(Farr)																														

KEY	Ownership / use of country house
	Private residential (owner-occupied or rented)
	Nottinghamshire County Council
	Nottingham Corporation and District Councils
	Central state (inc. those administered by County Council)
	Private company
	Private education
	Military use / requisition during Second World War
	Other
	Empty
	Demolished
	Unknown
^	Photographed by or for National Buildings (later Monuments) Record

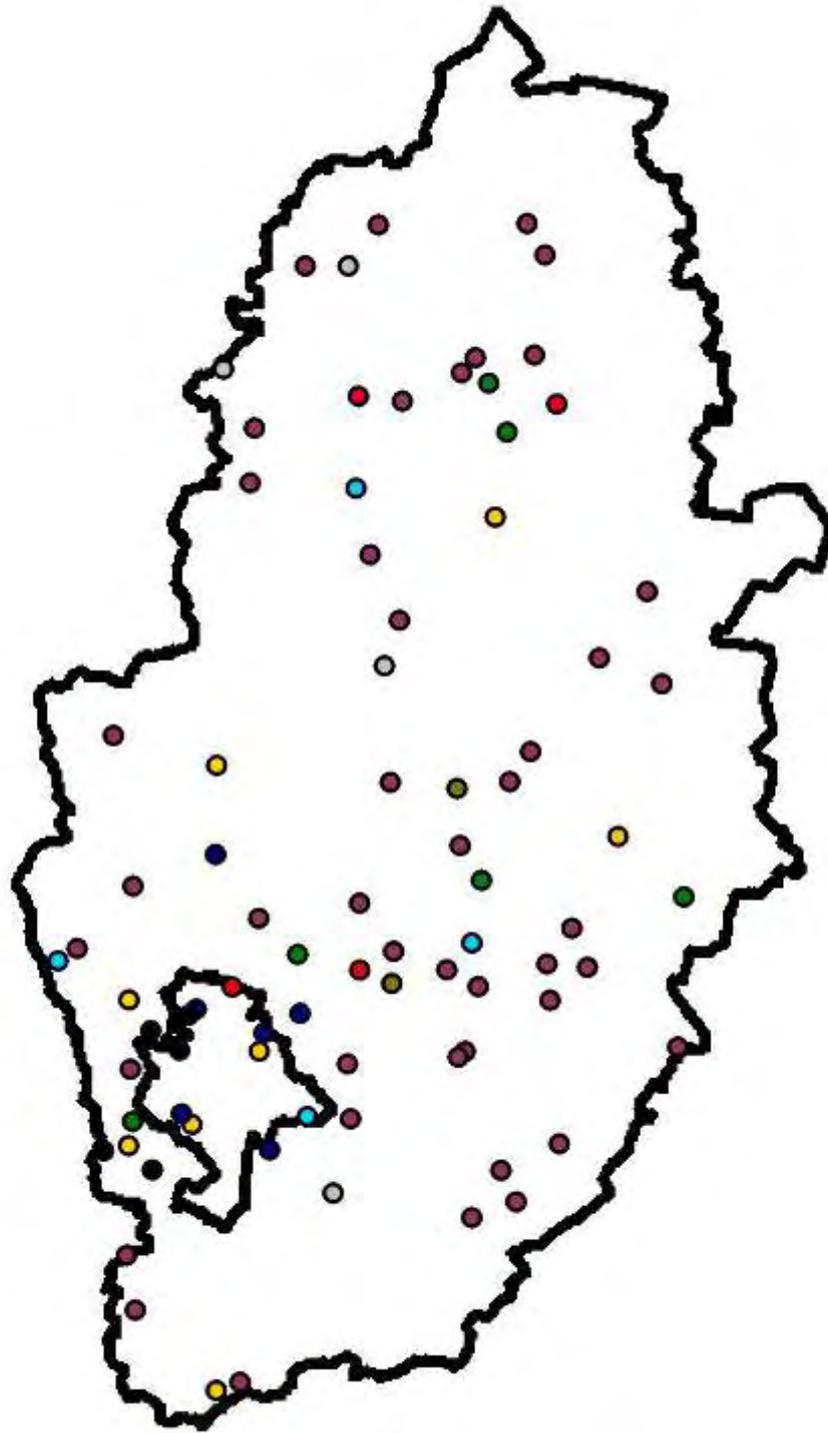
**Figure 4.7:** Table of country house estates in Nottinghamshire and their changing ownership and use between 1937 and 1967.



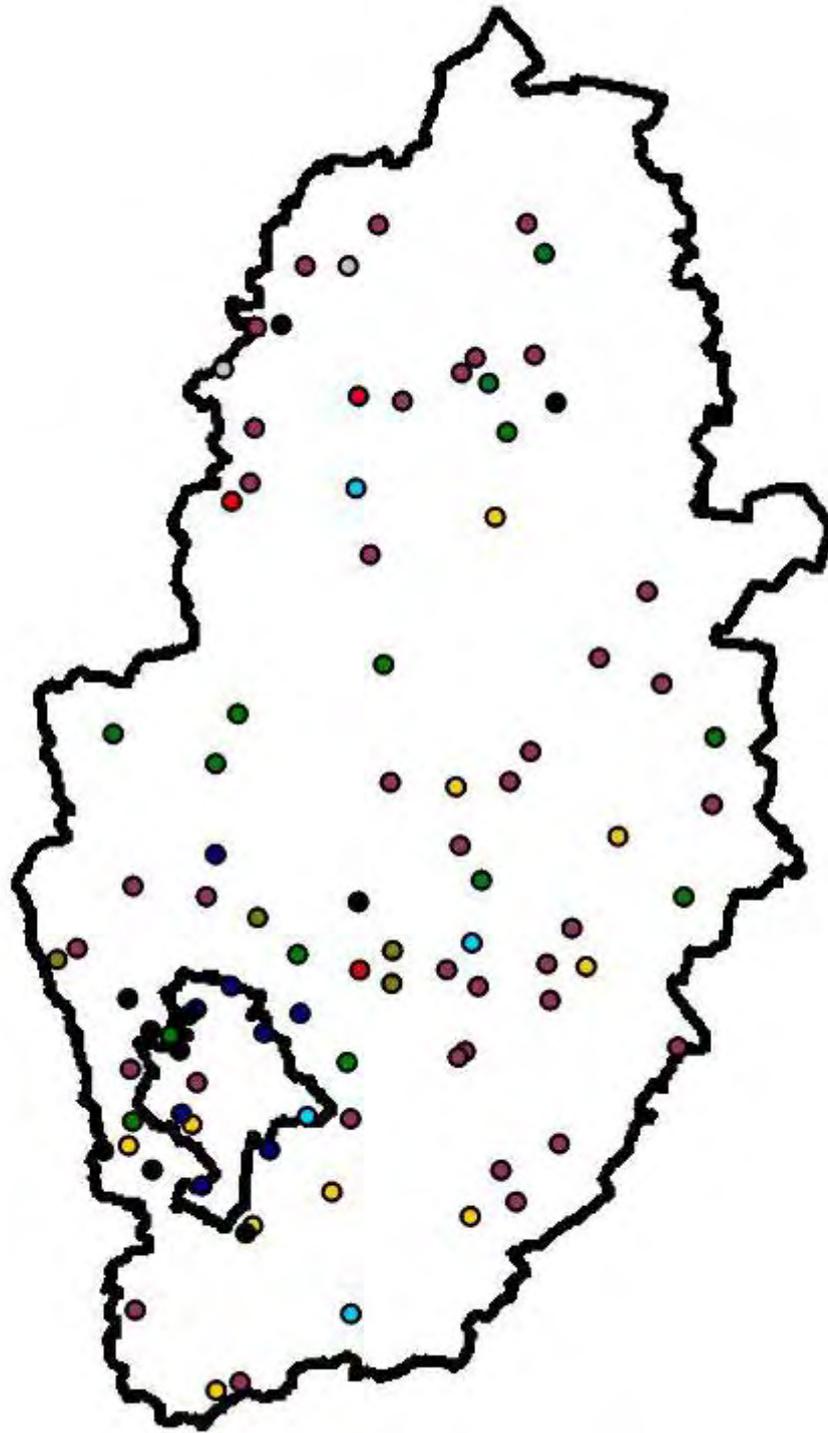
**Figure 4.8:** Map illustrating the ownership and use of Nottinghamshire country houses in 1937. Coloured symbol represents location and use or ownership of country house. Key is the same as used in figure 4.7.



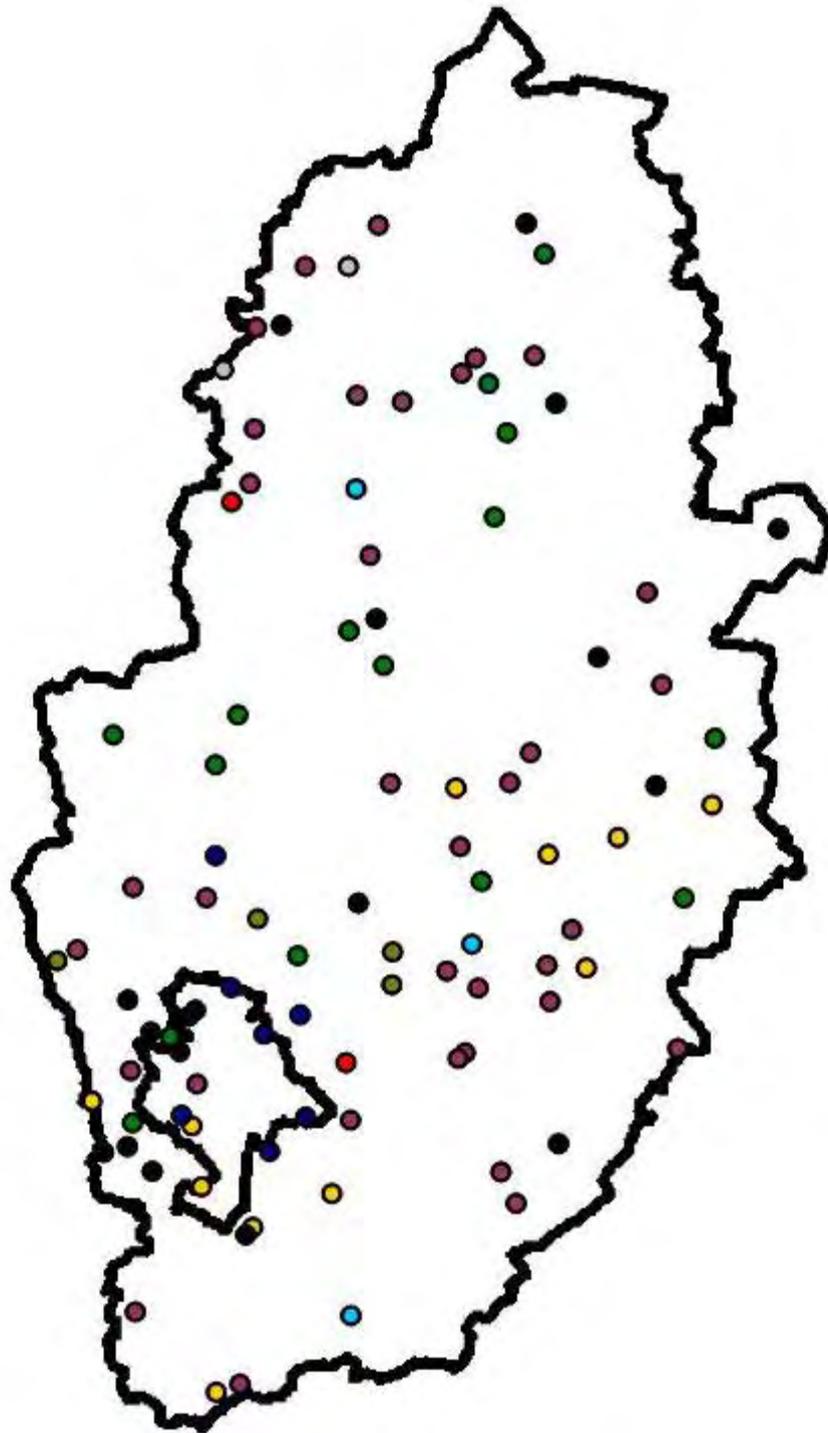
**Figure 4.9:** Map illustrating the ownership and use of Nottinghamshire country houses during the Second World War (1939-1945).



**Figure 4.10:** Map illustrating the ownership and use of Nottinghamshire country houses in 1947.



**Figure 4.11:** Map illustrating the ownership and use of Nottinghamshire country houses in 1957.



**Figure 4.12:** Map illustrating the ownership and use of Nottinghamshire country houses in 1967.

In assessing how the country house estate landscape has changed in Nottinghamshire during the twentieth century I wish to discuss ownership and use by comparing figures for 1937 with those for 1967, a summary of which is contained in figure 4.13. Making clear inferences, however, are made difficult on account of the houses for which details are unknown and some consideration should be given to how these houses could skew results. It is most likely that properties where no details are known in either 1937 or 1967 were in private residential use. As a result I have included two percentages for private residential use; one not including the unknown houses and the other representing the maximum possible value including these estate houses. On account of this whilst the percentages of properties in non-residential uses will alter, the percentage difference between 1937 and 1967 will remain the same. With this in mind it is clear that understanding the change between 1937 and 1967, rather than variation within that individual year, remains both achievable and significant in demonstrating the estate landscape within Nottinghamshire.

Ownership and use	1937	%	1945	%	1967	%
Private residential	78 (101)	75 (80)	14 (70)	20 (55)	35 (65)	36 (51)
Institutional (state owned)	8	8	9	13	26	27
Institutional (private)	8	8	6	8	14	14
Demolished	4	3	6	6	18	14
Military (armed services)	0	-	35 (91)	49 (71)	2	2
Empty	6	4	1	1	2	2
Unknown	23 houses		56 houses		30 houses	
TOTAL	127		127		127	

**Figure 4.13:** Summary of changing ownership and use of country house estates in Nottinghamshire in 1937, 1945 and 1967.<sup>12</sup> Figures and percentages in brackets represent maximum value including those houses where details are unknown.

The summary contained in figure 4.13 demonstrates how significant the period under study was, with considerable variation in ownership and use of estate houses. The private residential use of estate houses fell markedly from 78% (maximum of 80%) in 1937 to 36% (maximum of 51%) in 1967. By that time a total of 14% had been demolished and 43% (minimum of 33%) were in non-residential ownership. It should be noted, however, that those properties for which no ownership details could be ascertained in either 1937 and 1967 were most likely in private residential use, and therefore it is assumed that this remained the largest classification.

Little basis for comparison can be made with no similar surveys being undertaken both nationally and in other localities. Certainly the types of different uses accord nationally, as estates became public parks, offices for private companies and nationalised industries, and premises for a variety of central state and local authority functions. The only comparable attempt initially listed a total of 202

estate houses which were placed towards new uses nationally although this was accepted as incomplete with only Clifton Hall and Kelham Hall being listed for Nottinghamshire (Cornforth 1974).

The summary contained in figure 4.13 only illustrates the broad change between the two dates and there is need for the further consideration of variations within the period. It is clear that a shift away from residential use occurred markedly following the Second World War. Whilst I do not want to tie significant claims to this being as a direct result of the War it seems clear that wider social, economic and political changes affecting estate ownership in the immediate post-war period impacted upon all property owners; whether the Duke of Portland at Welbeck Abbey who let the ranging estate house to the British Army or the Le Marchant family who sold their more modest Colston Bassett Hall to a Catholic children's college. Damage to country houses during the Second World War was perhaps of little impact compared to the new powers of local authorities that enabled the compulsory purchase of properties using the Town and Country Planning Act, 1947. In many instances owners resisted such threats and yet were forced to relent when such procedures were enacted.

#### **4.2.2 The changing use and ownership of Nottinghamshire estate houses: commentary**

Whilst key debates around the use of estates for public educational and amenity purposes are discussed in later chapters there are, however, several issues regarding the pattern of changing estate use and ownership between 1937 and

1967 which require brief elaboration here, including requisition and use during the Second World War and the purchase of country houses by nationalised industries and private companies offering a public service.

## **i      The requisition and use of country houses during the Second World War in Nottinghamshire**

Firstly, there is the specific influence of military use during and after wartime. Before the Second World War military use of estate land had been subject to criticism on amenity grounds, as by Clough Williams-Ellis in 1928:

### *Soldiers*

The Army and the Air Force (and to a lesser degree the Navy) are like blow-flies – where they settle, there you will find corruption and all unpleasantness... Their buildings insolently challenge and howl down whatever of quiet loveliness may lie within their range... It is at demolition, however, that they really excel – they are the architects of destruction.

Clough Williams-Ellis, 'A Devil's Dictionary' in *England and the Octopus* (Williams-Ellis 1928)

In this entry on 'soldiers' for his 'Devil's Dictionary' for *England and the Octopus* Williams-Ellis revealed what he considered the damage brought upon the countryside by the military services with regard to the buildings which they construct, adapt and abuse, and the lack of sensibility this shows for the landscape.

Stonehenge and Salisbury Plain was the focus of his scorn, in particular the airfield site, with its concrete shelters and ironwork hangers, established during the First World War adjacent to the ancient monument.

During and after the Second World War similar concerns regarding the military and amenity would be raised by commentators such as Evelyn Waugh within *Brideshead Revisited*. However with the outbreak of war such commentary was generally put on hold, given the necessity for mobilisation, and the various military and civil requirements placed upon land. Country estates were part of this mobilisation with Nottinghamshire no exception (Robinson 1989; Seebohm 1989). Various uses followed, including the billeting of military personnel. In Nottinghamshire examples include Watnall Hall, Woodborough Hall and Ossington Hall, which were occupied by the Royal Air Force. The majority, however, were used for the billeting and training of Army personnel and following the D-Day invasion of western Europe many of these sites were used for the internment of German and Italian prisoners of war.

Located to the north west of Nottingham and just a mile south-east of Watnall Hall, a small concrete installation constructed within a railway siding served as the headquarters of Fighter Command's No.12 Group covering the Midlands, Norfolk, Lincolnshire and North Wales, with the site regarded as ideal being centrally located within the region. Initially completed in 1938 the installation did not become fully operational until late 1940 when control operations were transferred from nearby R.A.F. Hucknall. Numerous hutments were erected within the immediate locality providing administrative support and residential

accommodation for up to 900 personnel. Within the grounds of Watnall Hall, illustrated in figure 4.14 prior to demolition, were six individual structures including a large timber stores unit, four Laing hutments and a temporary brick built ablutions block (Hadfield 1985). Sir Lancelot Rolleston, former Chairman of the County Council, and owner of the estate died in March 1941, leaving his widow Maud in residence surrounded by frantic wartime activity. Part of the Hall was used as accommodation for Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) personnel with the Rollestons retaining a flat on the first floor.



**Figure 4.14:** Watnall Hall from the west prior to demolition. Photograph taken in by F. Lomas for the National Buildings Record in c.1960.<sup>13</sup>

In conjunction Woodborough Hall to the north-east of Nottingham, was requisitioned as residential accommodation for senior officers. It was far enough away from potential aerial targets such as Nottingham, Derby and R.A.F. Hucknall and in the early years of the war the house was used by Air Vice

Marshall Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory whilst he was Group Commander based at Watnall. Watnall Hall itself was derequisitioned in 1945 and in a similar vein provided residential accommodation for a girl's school. Lady Maud died in 1949 and, without an immediate heir to the estate, a niece inherited and sold the Hall at auction in 1954. Woodborough Hall was retained by the military authorities and was used successively as a residence for senior RAF and Army personnel.

Whilst at Watnall and Woodborough the estate house was centrally important for military use. Elsewhere it was estate land which was especially valued. At Clumber Park, landed decline had already led to the demolition of the estate house by the Duke of Newcastle's nephew the Earl of Lincoln in 1938. Despite this, the large estate of about 4,000 acres and numerous ancillary buildings which had been retained proved of considerable useful value. As with other nearby estates such as Thoresby and Rufford, Clumber provided ample space for the training and billeting of a whole army battalion aided by the privacy offered behind the park wall. Indeed so vast was the parkland at Clumber that it was used for a number of purposes. Firstly, following requisition in 1940, numerous sites within the parkland which had been a popular space enjoyed by the public, were sealed off and used to store ammunition and explosives, designated as No. 24 Ammunition Sub-Depot of the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.<sup>14</sup> Secondly, in the Summer of 1941 the parkland was site to experiments of a new trench cutting machine, nicknamed Nellie and undertaken by a company of Royal Engineers and the Ministry of Supply (Turner 1988; Fletcher 2005). Built in Lincoln a location for the trial of the tank was required that was relatively local and secure. The tank arrived in two parts and was constructed at the estate sawmill, converted to a machine works.

Surrounded by woodland so as to maintain secrecy the parkland site was large enough and most suitable for undertaking repeated trials. Landscaped by Lancelot Brown the south lawn, immediately beyond Clumber Lake, right at the centre of the estate, would have formerly been incorporated within the foreground view of the estate house, now it was being repeatedly scored in swathes across the parkland 5' deep and 7' 6" wide. Winston Churchill took a personal interest in the trials and in November 1941 attended a demonstration at Clumber with senior army officers, as illustrated in figure 4.15.



**Figure 4.15:** Prime Minister Winston Churchill inspecting trials of the Nellie experimental trench cutting tank in Clumber Park in November 1941 (Turner 1988)

Despite overcoming initial technical problems the machine was never mass produced because there was no general demand for it on any of the fronts on which the allies were then engaged. Clumber was considered highly appropriate for the undertaking of secret trials. Unlike the requisition of other estates, the

presence of the estate house was not essential to military requirements. Indeed because the house had been demolished Clumber proved even more appropriate; certainly any attempts by the owner, the Duke of Newcastle, to impose stipulations upon use would be less likely now that he was no longer in residence.

In 1939 the 10<sup>th</sup> Duke of St. Albans sold his Bestwood Lodge estate lying just north of Nottingham at auction. The land south of the Lodge was purchased by the Nottingham Corporation and Arnold Urban District Council for housing development but following the outbreak of the Second World War the entire estate was requisitioned. In parallel to the significance of Watnall Hall, Bestwood became the headquarters of the Army's Northern Command. In 1940 the parkland itself became a tented encampment providing accommodation for soldiers evacuated from Dunkirk (Robinson 1987).

Elsewhere many other estates provided temporary accommodation for army regiments during training and prior to deployment overseas, especially in the build up to D-Day in June 1944. Such estates included Bulwell Hall, Thoresby Hall, Carlton (-in-Lindrick) Hall, Serlby Hall, and Blyth Hall. The latter was unoccupied prior to the War and was promptly vacated following the end of hostilities, remaining empty until its demolition in 1972. The only estate known to have been used by American soldiers was Wollaton Hall, where the 92<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Regiment was billeted in the parkland prior to D-Day.

The requisition of Kelham Hall proved to be the most contrasting use of an estate. Since 1903 it had been let to the Society of the Sacred Mission as a theological

college, and was eventually purchased with a loan in 1921. The arrival of the successive British army regiments billeted both within the Hall and parkland clearly provided considerable confusion and disturbance for the older residents especially Father Herbert Kelly, the principal of the college, who shuffled around Kelham's corridors and increasingly was confined to his room amid the bustle of military occupation (Kelly 1960:5).

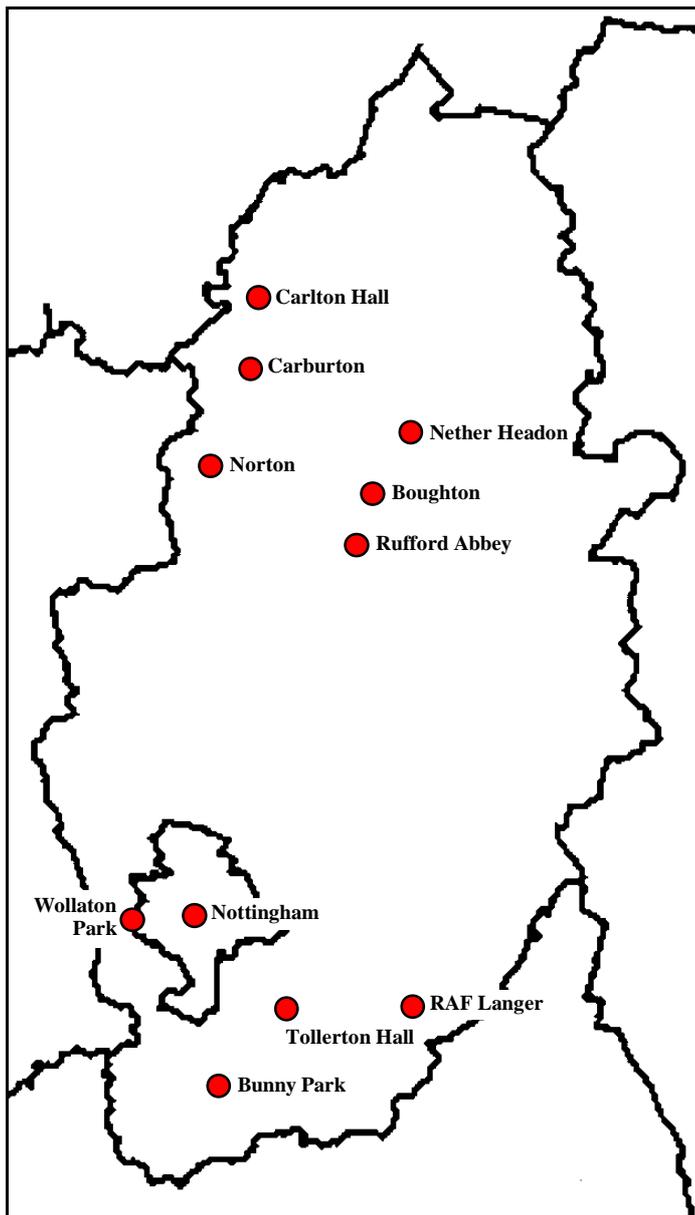
The Society's own newsletter reported at length upon the general excitement of requisition and the sporting relationship between the Brothers and service personnel.

[The Blues household cavalry] were soon succeeded by some outlandish, foreign-speaking men from the Hebrides. They too were mounted. We think that some of them could speak English, but the general impression we had of them was of little dark men talking in Gaelic of the finer points of predestination [...] The general reaction of these different bodies of men was interesting but remarkably unvaried. At first they were a little bewildered at being parked in a "monastery". They were all a little shy of the inhabitants, shy that is, till they had been beaten at cricket or football and had seen their boxing champions knocked out. Then they became quite friendly (Anonymous 1945:27-8).

As demands on the property increased so the various wings of Kelham were requisitioned, thereby reducing the area occupied by the Society, and

appropriately for many of the regiments parade services were held in the large modern neo-Byzantine chapel constructed in 1936, prior to their departure.

A number of estates also saw the establishment of prisoner of war camps late in the war. As Battalions who had been encamped at different estates within the county had received a posting overseas or had been moved further south in preparation for one, especially during the build up towards D-Day, estates that were still under requisition became available. Opportunities arose for the containment of Italian and German prisoners of war who were moving in a direction counter to that of the British and American armed services. Having disembarked at ports such as Southampton, prisoners were allocated to military controlled installations across the country. Within Nottinghamshire there were known to have been 9 camps (see figure 4.16) and these included Nether Headon near Retford (52), Carlton-in-Lindrick Hall (143), Wollaton Park (166), Tollerton Hall (169, 613 and 698), Norton Camp in Cuckney near Mansfield (174), Carburton near Worksop (181 and 249), Langer on the RAF station (262), Boughton just outside New Ollerton (633), Bunny Park and Rufford Abbey.<sup>15</sup>



**Figure 4.16:** Map showing prisoner of war camps in Nottinghamshire

Following the cessation of hostilities repatriation was not instantly undertaken and instead a programme of re-education was initiated. At Bunny Park, German prisoners were still held in December 1947. Bunny also illustrates the complex administrative organisation of the prison camps. The camp established within Bunny Park was part of a wider detachment of satellite camps created to meet

increasing demand within the Army's Northern Command. No. 1 Bomb Disposal Squadron of the Royal Engineers were charged with the responsibility to maintain a total of 6 camps with their headquarters at Bunny. Satellite camps included Sheffield, Birmingham, Buckton, Hull and Sibsey. Each of these were satellites to established neighbouring camps, indeed Bunny itself was linked to the Langar RAF camp (262) just 8 miles to the east.<sup>16</sup>

## **ii State ownership; local authorities and nationalised industries**

The table also brings out the role of local authorities. The County Council, District Councils and Nottingham City Corporation purchased a number of estate houses and ancillary land within, and beyond, Nottinghamshire during the mid-twentieth century. Primarily these were for educational purposes and will be discussed in detail within chapter 6. The broadening responsibilities of local authorities, albeit increasingly determined by central government, during this period meant that there was a rapid increase in demand for buildings and land.



**Figure 4.17:** Aerial view of Widmerpool Hall taken in 1952 prior to the construction of extensions.<sup>17</sup>

Secondly, nationalised industries took over responsibility for a number of country houses, using them as headquarters or training and research facilities in similar fashion to those acquired by private companies, such as Widmerpool Hall illustrated in figure 4.17, which was owned by the Automobile Association as a training college. The establishment of the National Coal Board as the central state authority concerned for the ownership, operation and development of mining resources within the United Kingdom represented one of the greatest challenges to landownership within Nottinghamshire. Many of the principal estates within the County had profited successfully from the extraction of mineral resources below their land during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During periods of agricultural decline the letting of mineral rights to private companies provided a

degree of economic stability for Nottinghamshire landowners. In many senses the change in economic and political power from private landowning interests to the national and local state in the post-war period is symbolised by the acquisition of the Nottinghamshire country houses of Eastwood Hall, Sherwood Lodge (see figure 4.18) and Bestwood Lodge by the National Coal Board.



**Figure 4.18:** East elevation of Sherwood Lodge and Church of St. George by Aston Webb (1903) near Arnold in 1960. Photograph taken by National Coal Board.<sup>18</sup>

### **4.2.3 The preservation of Nottinghamshire country houses: general**

Requiring more detailed discussion, and running behind the information presented in the table are a variety of stories concerning the ways in which national concerns for preservation were realised and contested within the County. While chapter 5 addresses the story of Rufford Abbey and Ossington Hall in detail, an account is required here of the regulations and procedures informing debates over architectural preservation of country houses in Nottinghamshire. Despite Pevsner's comment in his 1951 *Buildings of England* volume on the county that: "Neither the architectural nor the picturesque traveller would place Nottinghamshire in his first dozen or so of English counties" (Pevsner 1951:11), the issue of architectural value did not pass without debate, and here country houses took their place within a range of valued structures such as churches and ancient monuments.

The responsibilities of local authorities for the preservation of architecture slowly evolved during the mid twentieth century. Nottinghamshire County Council somewhat reluctantly witnessed their keen planning ideals for the preservation of the countryside and the maintenance of its amenity extend as they assumed greater powers over the built environment and were hence drawn into increasingly bitter debates over the aesthetic value of architecture and its national importance. Local authority responsibilities for the preservation of architecture were first invested in the Town and Country Planning Act, 1944 and further expanded and confirmed within the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act. Whilst the County Council had

held an unenviable position, caught between government policy, local ratepayers and architectural and amenity groups, by the mid 1960s local authorities were given greater authority to determine which elements of the built environment were of local importance together with the legislative and financial means by which to preserve it. This autonomy, albeit loosely controlled by central state funding, was most clearly illustrated in the Local Authorities (Historic Buildings) Act, 1962 and the Civic Amenities Act, 1967. Debates were shaped by local members of amenity groups, chief officers and Members of the Council, University of Nottingham academics, and members of the Thoroton Society, with many individuals featuring in more than one of these groups. Such individuals and organisations had become increasingly vocal regarding architectural and archaeological preservation during the mid-twentieth century.

Such active engagement and legislative changes led to the establishment of the Nottingham Civic Society, affiliated to the Civic Trust, in 1961, and the Nottinghamshire Building Preservation Trust (NBPT) in 1967. Accordingly by the end of the period with which this thesis is concerned the focus of amenity attention was shifting. Whilst the preservation of country house estates was a key motivation of the Gowers Report and equally dominated the funding of the Historic Buildings Council for England, this emerging local perspective focused on vernacular, industrial and more modest domestic architecture. Funded through the County Council, the NBRP offered both grants to private individuals for the repair of properties and free conservation advice. However in the earlier part of the period covered by this thesis the country house held a central place in county amenity debates.

The process of listing of buildings of architectural or historic importance after the Second World War has already been discussed both within this thesis and elsewhere (Stamp 1996; Delafons 1997; Harvey 1994). Here I discuss how this was undertaken in Nottinghamshire. I am chiefly concerned both with progress made prior to, and including, the release of the first list in 1951.

The Ministry of Town and Country Planning, with the assistance of the Regional Departments of the Ministry of Works liaised with county councils and readily undertook initial inspections and surveys of architectural forms within their administrative region. As elsewhere within the country the listing of Nottinghamshire architecture was very slow and under increasing political pressure. The Ministry of Town and Country Planning had no regional offices and so the Ministry of Works, who held planning functions in relation to ancient monuments, government and Crown property, played an important role. Sir Henry C. Prior, the Regional Controller for the Ministry of Works based in Nottingham, reported to the County Council in December 1950 that the work of compiling lists of buildings of architectural and historic importance, as charged to the Ministry of Town and Country Planning under the Act of 1947, was taking longer than expected.<sup>19</sup> He therefore requested that if the Council had compiled their own lists, then these could provide the basis for the Ministry's own survey work. Delays in the preparation of lists across the country were widespread and therefore assistance in compiling preliminary reports would be most welcome at a time when the Ministry was coming under increasing criticism.

Urban Districts were surveyed earlier than Rural Districts, in part a result of the origins of listing during the Second World War. Increased threat of aerial bombing in urban areas meant that architecture in built up areas was under greater threat. Moreover, monuments and buildings were located within a closer area which made survey easier. Following the cessation of hostilities the preliminary work undertaken in urban areas meant that lists could be extended.

The Council however had no such list for rural areas, and in June 1951 G.S. Orpwood, Higher Executive Officer of the listings section within the Ministry of Town and Country Planning wrote to the Clerk of Nottinghamshire County Council submitting a provisional list of houses and monuments of historic and architectural importance located within the Rural Districts.<sup>20</sup> This was the first list to be received by the County Council and mainly consisted of large estate houses, manor houses, dovecotes, village crosses, farmhouses and school houses. Churches were initially considered as not needing statutory protection, but were increasingly listed during the late 1950s and early 1960s.

The list totalled 125 properties and monuments (excluding Southwell town centre) and is reproduced in full in Appendix One. Of these 29 (23%) were country estate houses, which are listed in figure 4.19 below by district council. Rufford Abbey, which is discussed at length in chapter 5, was initially listed as a building of architectural importance on 18 March 1949 owing to the increased concern for its preservation, but its designation was altered to that of an ancient monument under earlier legislation prior to the release of the final list in 1951, and therefore does not appear.

Other notable omissions from the list include the grand Victorian houses of Kelham and Thoresby, which may reflect the relative under representation of Victorian architecture within lists of architectural importance at this time. The Victorian Society was formed in 1958, and it was not until 1961 that the Sub-Committee on 19th and 20th century buildings within the Ministry of Housing and Local Government circulated a list of nineteenth century architects whose work was deemed worthy of preservation. The list included Sir George Gilbert Scott (Kelham) and E.W. Godwin (Beauvale House), although there was not mention of Anthony Salvin (Thoresby Hall, Rufford Abbey) or S.S. Teulon (Bestwood Lodge).

Newark Rural District	Grade	Basford Rural District	Grade
Elston Hall	II	Annesley Hall	II
Staunton Hall	II*	Bunny Hall	I
Bingham Rural District	Grade	Clifton Hall	I
Car Colston Hall	II	Felley Priory	
Colston Bassett Hall		Lamb Close House	
Holme Pierrepont Hall	I	Newstead Abbey	I
Wiverton Hall	II*	Papplewick Hall	I
Southwell Rural District	Grade	Stanford Hall	II*
Brackenhurst Hall	II	Strelley Hall	II
Edwinstowe Hall	II	Thrumpton Hall	I
Upton Hall	II*	Watnall Hall	
Winkburn Hall	I	East Retford Rural District	Grade
Worksop Rural District	Grade	Babworth Hall	II
Blyth Hall		East Markham Hall	
Serlby Hall	I	Grove Hall	
Hodsock Priory (gateway only)		Ragnall Hall	II
Welbeck Abbey	I	Rampton Hall (gateway only)	
		Tuxford Hall	

**Figure 4.19:** First provisional list of houses of historic and architectural importance by Rural District submitted by the Ministry of Town and County Planning. grey = subsequently demolished; buff = institutional use.<sup>21</sup>

Another list of buildings of architectural importance was prepared by the Ministry of Works with the assistance of the Regional Office based in Nottingham. This is illustrated in figure 4.20. Undertaken prior to the introduction of the grading strategy (I, II and III) as detailed within the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947, this system graded houses according to a scale of A-D that was arranged to reflect county or national importance, rather than importance within the Rural District in which the house was located. Although undated this list was compiled between 1941 and 1946 and was most likely undertaken during the Second World War, before listing responsibilities were established.

<b>Category A</b>	<b>Category D</b>
Newstead Abbey	Annesley Hall
Welbeck Abbey	Beesthorpe Hall (Caunton)
Wollaton Hall	Bulwell Wood Hall
<b>Category B</b>	Clifton Hall
Clumber House	Felley Priory
Rufford Abbey	Staunton Hall
Thrumpton Hall	Thoresby Hall
<b>Category C</b>	Watnall Hall
Edwinstowe Hall	Winkburn Hall
Grove Hall	
Holme Pierrepont Hall	
Thurgarton Priory	
Wiverton Hall	

**Figure 4.20:** Ministry of Works list of secular buildings worthy of preservation by category in Nottinghamshire.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, because the National Trust were in receipt of an increasing number of offers and requests to take over the occupation of estates across the country they had decided as early as 1939 to draw up a provisional list of estate houses which were viewed as of national importance, in order to compare the relative merits of individual cases, if and when their Historic Buildings Committee were asked to

consider them. Of the 324 listed as of “first importance” only two were from Nottinghamshire; Rufford and Welbeck (Diestelkamp 2002:99-100). Although Welbeck never required consideration by the National Trust, Rufford did. Chapter 5 on Rufford below shows how, despite the Trust’s initial enthusiasm for the house, deterioration during the Second World War and neglect thereafter, combined with the fact that the house would not come with the necessary endowment, made the Trust think otherwise of its value.

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<sup>1</sup> Map taken from Nottinghamshire County Council budget programme document 1949-1950. The map is prior to the expansion of Nottingham County Borough in April 1952 south of the River Trent at Clifton.

<sup>2</sup> Those highlighted include 1) Kenneth Tweedale Meaby (Clerk of the Council), 2) Sir Thomas Barber of Lamb Close (Chairman of the Council), 3) Sir Lancelot Rolleston of Watnall Hall, 4) Mrs. Kathleen Langley Kayser of Eaton Hall, 5) Lady Esme Savile of Rufford Abbey, and 6) Colonel William Maxwell Evelyn Denison of Ossington Hall.

<sup>3</sup> NAO CC. Details obtained from index record cards of elected members held at Nottinghamshire Archives and annual datebooks published for members of the County Council.

<sup>4</sup> NAO CC. Details obtained from index record cards of elected members held at Nottinghamshire Archives and annual datebooks published for members of the County Council.

<sup>5</sup> Conversation with Miss Joan Thomas of The Rodney School, Kirklington Hall.

<sup>6</sup> NAO CC/CL1/PG01

<sup>7</sup> First Annual Report of the Nottinghamshire Branch of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England (1950).

<sup>8</sup> First Annual Report of the Nottinghamshire Branch of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England (1950).

<sup>9</sup> NAO DD/RC/2/7. Report of the Executive Committee of the Rural Community Council (Nottinghamshire) 29 January 1955

<sup>10</sup> NAO DD/RC/2/7. Report of the Executive Committee of the Rural Community Council (Nottinghamshire) 5 June 1955.

<sup>11</sup> NMR BB71/648

<sup>12</sup> Percentages have been obtained by excluding those houses where ownership and use details are unknown. In contrast percentage for demolished houses is considered against total housing stock of 125. Houses recorded as demolished in 1967 includes those since 1937.

<sup>13</sup> NMR AA60/4886

<sup>14</sup> National Trust leaflet. Wartime Clumber (Bygone days in Clumber Park) 2003.

<sup>15</sup> [www.islandfarm.fsnet.co.uk](http://www.islandfarm.fsnet.co.uk). Accessed June 2003. The number in brackets refers to the station number. In some instances camps were designated more than once.

<sup>16</sup> NA FO 939/83. Bunny Park

<sup>17</sup> Photograph courtesy of The Automobile Association

<sup>18</sup> NA COAL 80/1951

<sup>19</sup> NAO CC/CL1/PG01.

<sup>20</sup> NAO CC/CL1/PG01.

<sup>21</sup> NAO CC/CL1/PG01. Grading is taken from statutory lists of buildings or architectural or historic importance published in the 1980s and is meant as a guide and may not reflect original grading in 1950s which would have been undertaken according to classes I, II, and III.

<sup>22</sup> NA HLG 103/80. Historic Buildings Committee: preservation and protection of ancient and historic buildings. 1941-6.

## 5 The preservation of the country house in Nottinghamshire

During the mid-twentieth century the country house estate slowly attained iconic status. By the end of the period considered within this study the country house and its designed parkland, valued alongside other scenic rural landscapes, had become secure within national cultural history. Owners had increasingly considered the option of opening their doors to members of the public as a means of securing an additional income and by the early 1960s the visiting of historic houses, both under private ownership and that of the National Trust, became a significant national pastime – what Evelyn Waugh termed in the prologue of his revised edition of *Brideshead Revisited* in 1960 as the “cult of the English country house”. The ascendant status of heritage has been discussed at length elsewhere and has been featured within chapter 2 (Samuel 1994; Hewison 1987; Wright 1985, 1991; Lowenthal 1985, 1996). My intention within the following two chapters is to gain a deeper understanding of how lesser known and, in some instances, less grand country house estates contributed to and fared within an emerging system of increased state protection. Furthermore, I wish to question how their architectural value, whether attributed by the state or amenity and preservation societies, informed decisions made on the future of these properties both as undertaken by the national and local state, and the owners themselves, during a period in which owning an estate house, if not necessarily the estate land upon which it centred, was regarded as both socially unpopular and financially draining.

Within the next two chapters, therefore, I discuss the attempts to preserve three estates within Nottinghamshire. Predominantly I consider in depth Rufford Abbey and Ossington Hall; two very different estates within the county with regard to their architectural history and thereby architectural value, the differing levels of support for preservation drawn both nationally and locally, the intentions of their respective owners and, owing to the different times at which the preservation of these estates was considered, the differences in legislative and administrative state provision. Both were demolished and as a result the importance of these factors could easily be overlooked in understanding the changing management of the historic environment during the mid-twentieth century. Furthermore, discussion of Winkburn Hall, which features as an interlude between the two chapters, is included to confirm evolving state policy and public appreciation, and equally to demonstrate the successful preservation of a threatened Nottinghamshire country house.

## 5.1 Rufford Abbey, Nottinghamshire County Council and the preservation of amenity

The building history of the house has not yet been sufficiently cleared up (Pevsner 1951:152).

The building history was never fully explored, which is a great pity, because the fabric suggested a fascinating story (Pevsner and Williamson 1979:301)

For Nikolaus Pevsner in the Nottinghamshire volume of *The Buildings of England*, Rufford Abbey presented an interesting conundrum for the architectural historian with known construction dates ranging from the remains of the twelfth century monastery until Anthony Salvin's remodelling in 1838. The fate of Rufford Abbey involved negotiations with and the support of numerous local and national organisations. Whilst Clumber was demolished in 1938 with little public or governmental regard, Rufford, following the end of the Second World War raised considerable interest – in part arising out of the unrecognised loss of Clumber and the rising organised protest against the destruction of historic architecture, especially country houses. Such was the attention awarded to Rufford in the late 1940s that it featured in a number of national newspapers and journals. Reports were published in *The Daily Telegraph*, *Country Life* and *The Manchester Guardian*, and in addition a BBC radio programme was dedicated to uncovering the history of the estate.<sup>1</sup> Following the announcement of the death of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Baron Savile in 1931, *The Times* took a keen interest in the immediate fortunes of

the estate, announcing its sale and the subsequent auction of contents in considerable detail. The Abbey also received mention in the Houses of Parliament, with concerns expressed by Lord Methuen regarding future preservation in the House of Lords. It also caught the attention of the Gowers Committee and although Rufford was not an estate which the members visited, it certainly informed their thinking on certain issues regarding the state preservation of country houses.

The first country residence at Rufford was built in the late sixteenth century for George Talbot, the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Shrewsbury, and partly encased a portion of the earlier twelfth century Cistercian monastery, which had existed until Dissolution. In 1616 the estate passed to the Savile family, upon the marriage of Lady Mary Talbot to Sir George Savile of Thornhill Hall, West Yorkshire. Since then the estate had expanded and considerable alterations and additions were made to the Abbey itself. In 1931 the trustees of the George Halifax Lumley-Savile, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Baron Savile, then only twelve, decided that on account of death duties owed they would sell the estate. Sir Albert Ball, a Nottingham industrialist, bought the total land holding of 18,700 acres privately with the intention of realising a quick profit. Following the auction of the estate and the contents of the Abbey in the autumn of 1938, the estate house and immediate parkland was purchased by Henry Talbot de Vere Clifton, who was the descendant owner of Lytham Hall in Lancashire and resided in Jamaica. During the Second World War the estate parkland was requisitioned and upon its return to Clifton in 1945 he instigated moves to demolish the Abbey in order to develop the land. Successive battles over the preservation of woodland and architecture as a public amenity resulted in the

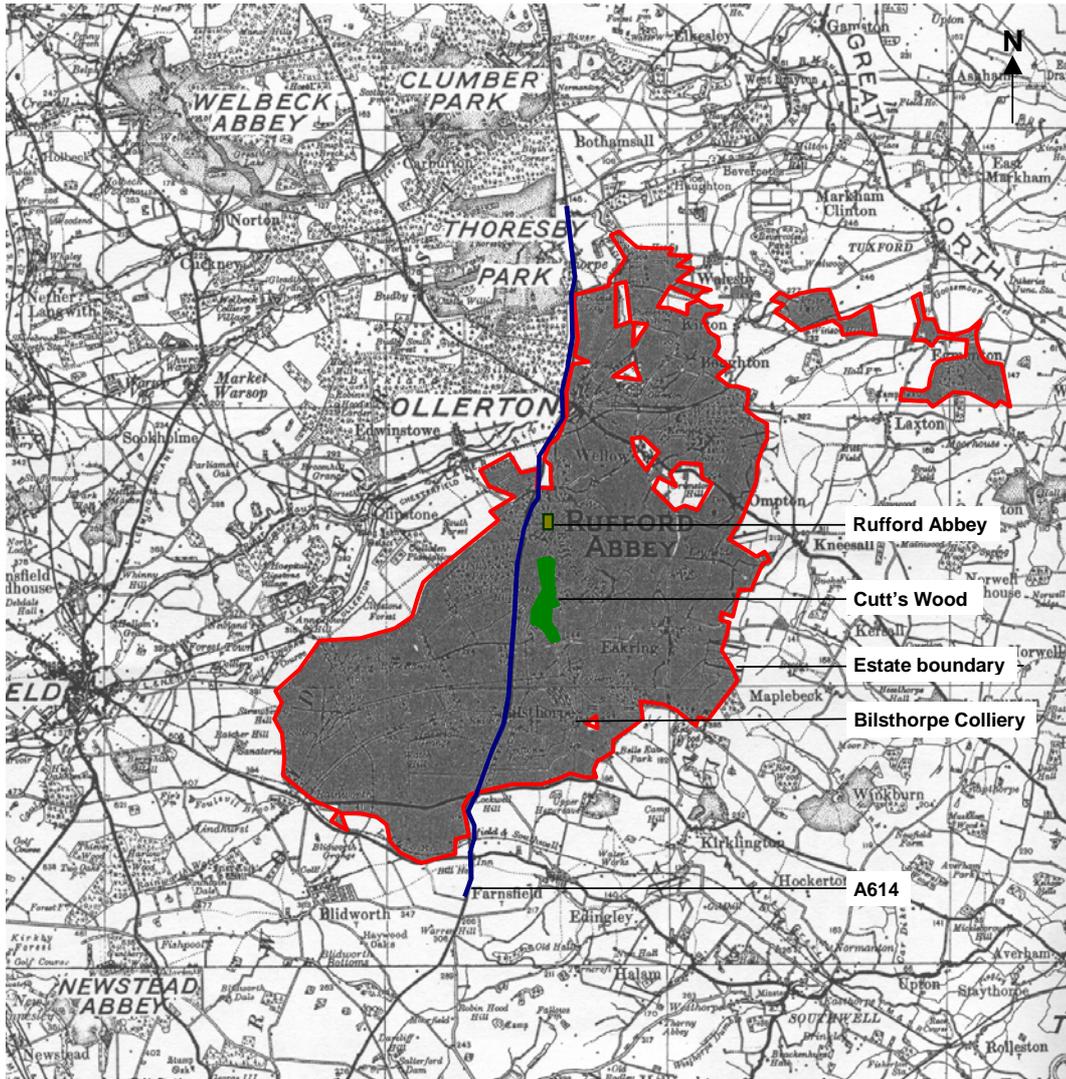
Nottinghamshire County Council being forced by Clifton to purchase the Abbey in 1952. Numerous attempts were made under the ownership of the Council to find a new use for the building but in 1956 extensive parts of the Abbey were demolished leaving a shell that protected the remains of the former Cistercian monastery and the southern range which provided accommodation for a caretaker and subsequently Forestry Commission employees.

In this chapter I first outline the architectural and historical background of the Abbey, which became central to debates regarding the property's importance and its claims for preservation. I then discuss the requisition and use of the estate parkland and how the wartime requirements for timber initiated attempts by the Ministry of Health and Nottinghamshire County Council to preserve sections of woodland. I analyse the variety of opinions regarding the architectural and historical importance of the Abbey, ranging from individuals within the County Council who had a responsibility both to their rate-payers as owners of the Abbey since 1952, to landowners, the National Trust and, most importantly the SPAB, who desired that the fabric in its entirety should be preserved. Differentiation is made between the mansion and ancillary buildings and other architectural features that also became the focus of preservation debates. Central to the survival of the Abbey was the securing of a new use, and within this section I discuss the variety of alternative solutions submitted, and in the main rejected. I conclude by discussing how an over-riding interest in the Abbey's Cistercian history and the possibility of archaeological investigation was progressed by the Ministry of Works as a justification for the partial demolition of Rufford. This was furthered in the desire of the Nottinghamshire County Council to develop the site as a public

open space where it was recognised that whatever fabric was left of Rufford Abbey together with any associated historical knowledge would complement the public's experience of the space.

### **5.1.1 Location and history of the Rufford Abbey estate**

Rufford Abbey is located seventeen miles to the north north-east of Nottingham and lies at the heart of the county. Ollerton, formerly part of the estate, is the nearest market town just two miles to the north. Figure 5.1 shows the immediate vicinity of the Abbey and its parkland. The immediate estate land around the house is bounded by a local road to the north and a major arterial road, the A614 Old Rufford Road, to the west, which was the principal north-south road within the County, as can be seen in figure 5.2. Extensive service buildings exist to the south of the Abbey and include, stables, coach house, orangery, brew house, a water tower and kitchen gardens. A lake lies within the parkland to the north-east where there is also a water mill. Although it was never the home of a Duke, Rufford is situated adjacent to the area known as the Dukeries within the former Sherwood Forest and adjoined the Thoresby estate to the north.



**Figure 5.1:** Map showing the location of Rufford Abbey and neighbouring estates within the Dukeries (Knight, Frank and Rutley 1938a).



George Savile, the 1<sup>st</sup> Baronet of Thornhill, through marriage. At this time the Rufford estate extended to 9,568 acres – two thirds of which was forested. Under George Savile, the 4<sup>th</sup> Baronet and 1<sup>st</sup> Marquess of Halifax, in the late seventeenth century there was extensive development of the estate including the construction of the Stuart north wing to Rufford Abbey, clearly visible in figure 5.7, together with the stable block. Following brief ownership of William Savile, 5<sup>th</sup> Baronet and 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquess following the death of his father in 1695, the family estates passed in 1700 to a collateral branch of the family under Sir George Savile, the 7<sup>th</sup> Baronet. In 1784 his son, the 8<sup>th</sup> and last Baronet died and the estates were divided amongst his nephews, the children of Barbara Savile and Richard Lumley, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Scarborough, who had built Sandbeck Park in Yorkshire. Rufford passed to his second son Richard Lumley-Savile, 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Scarborough, and then to his younger brother in 1832, John Lumley-Savile, the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl. The Sandbeck estate instead was inherited by his fourth son, Frederick Lumley.

In 1837 at Rufford, John Lumley-Savile, the 8<sup>th</sup> Earl of Scarborough and son of the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl, appointed the architect Anthony Salvin to undertake a substantial redesign of the south and west frontages including the addition of a central staircase which linked the south wing with the later north (see figure 5.7) – the cost of which totalled £13,000.<sup>2</sup> Four years later in 1841 he commissioned a new approach to his remodelled residence. The straight drive, which made the front entrance to the Abbey visible from the main road, was flanked with lime trees, similar in style to that at nearby Clumber Park. In addition a lodge was built adjacent to the main road, which acted as a feature visible from the estate house, together with an imposing set of west gates and piers surmounted with the 8<sup>th</sup>

Earl's armorial bearings, as illustrated in figure 5.8. Upon his death in a riding accident his third illegitimate son, Captain Henry Savile, inherited Rufford in 1856. The title, however, reverted to the 8<sup>th</sup> Earl's cousin, son of Frederick Lumley, who had inherited the seat of Sandbeck Park in Yorkshire (Pevsner and Williamson 1979; Smith 2000). Economic and political success during the nineteenth century led to considerable investment within the estate and by the end of the century the lands surrounding Rufford Abbey, principally represented within figure 5.1, totalled 17,820 acres (Bateman 1883).

During the nineteenth century Rufford became a favourite venue for Royalty and socialites with the estate being reputed for its hunting and shooting gatherings. This reached its height during the Edwardian era when Edward VII frequently visited (Smith 2000; Smith 1984). Upon the death of the then owner, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Baron Savile in 1931, Rufford Abbey was placed in trust until the 3<sup>rd</sup> Baron, George Halifax Lumley-Savile, then only twelve years old, would be old enough to inherit the family seat. In 1938, as a result of outstanding estate duty taxation and reduced income from the estate, his trustees decided to sell the Abbey in its entirety to Sir Albert Ball, a local industrialist, former Mayor of Nottingham, father of the First World War pilot and Lord of the Manors of Bunny, Bradmore and Tollerton in Nottinghamshire, illustrated in figure 5.3.<sup>3</sup> Announcing the purchase, *The Times* commented that, "Sir Albert will try to sell the residence, but at present he has no customer for it. Parts of the estate he regards as ripe for building development", adding that Rufford was the fifth of the county's "great houses" to be vacated or sold by its owners in recent years, alongside Clumber, Bestwood, Wollaton and Newstead.<sup>4</sup>



**Figure 5.3:** Sir Albert Ball (centre front) and his wife at the official unveiling of the memorial in the grounds of Nottingham Castle to their son, Albert, in 1921. Lord Trenchard is on the left at the rear (Bowyer 2001).

Sir Albert had inherited the family plumbing business but by the early twentieth century, he had turned his interests towards the profitable business of real estate and became involved in the purchase of a number of estates within the East Midlands that were increasingly being presented for sale. Although it had lain empty since 1693, Tattersal Castle, in Lincolnshire, was offered to Sir Albert for £1,125 in 1910. Whilst deciding whether or not to purchase, Ball had already offered the Castle to the National Trust for £2000. In trying to encourage them he insisted that, “I have had a very considerable sum offered for the mantelpieces, and I am sure I should get more for them if I break them up, which is my intention

unless I dispose of [the Castle]” (quoted in Mandler 1997a:184). Sir Albert did not, eventually, purchase the Castle but merely speculated as to whether profit could be achieved by its quick resale to the Trust. They did almost agree to the proposal but decided against it. Later the castle was bequeathed to the Trust in 1926 according to the will of Lord Curzon of Kedleston Hall in Derbyshire who eventually purchased it and spent heavily on its preservation.<sup>5</sup>

An interesting comparison emerges between the competing desires of Lord Curzon and Ball during the early twentieth century. Curzon had already purchased Bodiam Castle in Sussex in 1917 and was increasingly characterised, even in his own lifetime, as a promoter and saviour of the nation’s built heritage. Private wealth and self-promotion, through publication, public ceremony at which he spoke, and the opening of his properties to the public, enabled Curzon to be claimed as an early exponent of the preservationist cause. Ball’s purchase of Rufford Abbey in 1938 and his expressed intentions for redevelopment announced by *The Times* raised little concern. The preservation concern was still in its infancy and Ball, as a well-known civic dignitary, would not expect to receive any local challenge to his intentions. This was clearly evident in the opportunities he took in purchasing other estate houses in Nottinghamshire prior to Rufford. Sir Albert had purchased the Papplewick estate, seven miles north of Nottingham, in April 1919 for £136,410 which he promptly broke up and sold and latterly, in 1936, he is also known to have purchased Upton Hall which was three miles west of Newark.<sup>6</sup>

Returning to Rufford, shortly after his purchase Sir Albert made moves to break up the estate as he had done at Papplewick. Initially the contents of the Abbey were sold by auction in the Long Gallery of the north wing of Rufford from the 11<sup>th</sup> until the 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1938 (Knight, Frank and Rutley 1938b). *The Times* covered the sale in considerable detail reporting that the auction raised a total of £25,000.<sup>7</sup> There were a further two auctions of the contents. Firstly one furniture and object d'art sale which raised £10,000 and Christie's held an auction of fine painting in London, attended by the US Ambassador, which raised a further £31,000.<sup>8</sup> Two months later, once the contents had been sold, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> November, the estate itself was auctioned in 479 lots. The lots consisted of farms and small holdings, residences, business premises, cottages and building sites within the neighbouring settlements of Ollerton, Eakring, Bilsthorpe, Boughton, Wellow, Ompton, Egmanton and Walesby. Rufford Abbey, itself, was advertised as a single lot together with the parkland covering 843 acres (Knight, Frank and Rutley 1938a, c).

The catalogue announced that the sale would total 18,700 acres but Sir Albert had already sold 7,380 acres by private treaty prior to the auction. The three collieries located on the estate, Bolsover Colliery Company Limited, Stanton Ironworks Company Limited (Bilsthorpe) and Butterley Company Limited, all opted to purchase their surface workings. Additionally twelve farms were purchased and the Hop Pole Hotel in Ollerton together with three other public houses had also been sold. The catalogue remarked that the sale was unprecedented reflecting the changes in landownership patterns and the various opportunities which existed in its public auction in small holdings: "The property now comes on to the market

for the first time in its existence and affords a unique opportunity seldom available of purchasing land and property in this noted and beautiful district” (Knight, Frank and Rutley 1938c:1).

Whilst much of the estate was sold no bids were received for the Abbey and it was withdrawn. The auctioneers also withdrew a number of adjacent lots recognising that the potential sale of the Abbey would be much improved if there were options to acquire additional amenity land.<sup>9</sup> Sir Albert had announced with confidence that, “overtures are still being made for the Abbey. I don’t think for one moment that it will be pulled down. I don’t intend doing such a thing”.<sup>10</sup> Interest had been expressed in the Abbey and negotiations were on going for its conversion into an, “educational centre”, alternately it was proposed that Rufford could “form a useful nucleus for a holiday camp”.<sup>11</sup>

These negotiations fell through and on 29<sup>th</sup> August 1939, nine months after the auction, *The Times* announced the sale of Rufford. Although not stated, the new owner was Henry Talbot de Vere Clifton. Born in 1907, Clifton was the descendent owner of Lytham Hall in Lancashire. He also owned Kildalton Castle on Islay in Scotland and was currently resident in Jamaica.<sup>12</sup> It is most likely that he never saw the property and had been encouraged to purchase the estate by his land agent with a view to speculating on the land and selling it for development (Innes-Smith 1998:70). During his ownership of the estate Henry Talbot de Vere Clifton provided a considerable foil to the County Council and their attempts to secure the future preservation and use of Rufford, most notably with regard to amenity woodland and the estate house itself.

## **5.1.2 Nottinghamshire County Council and the preservation of amenity woodland during the Second World War**

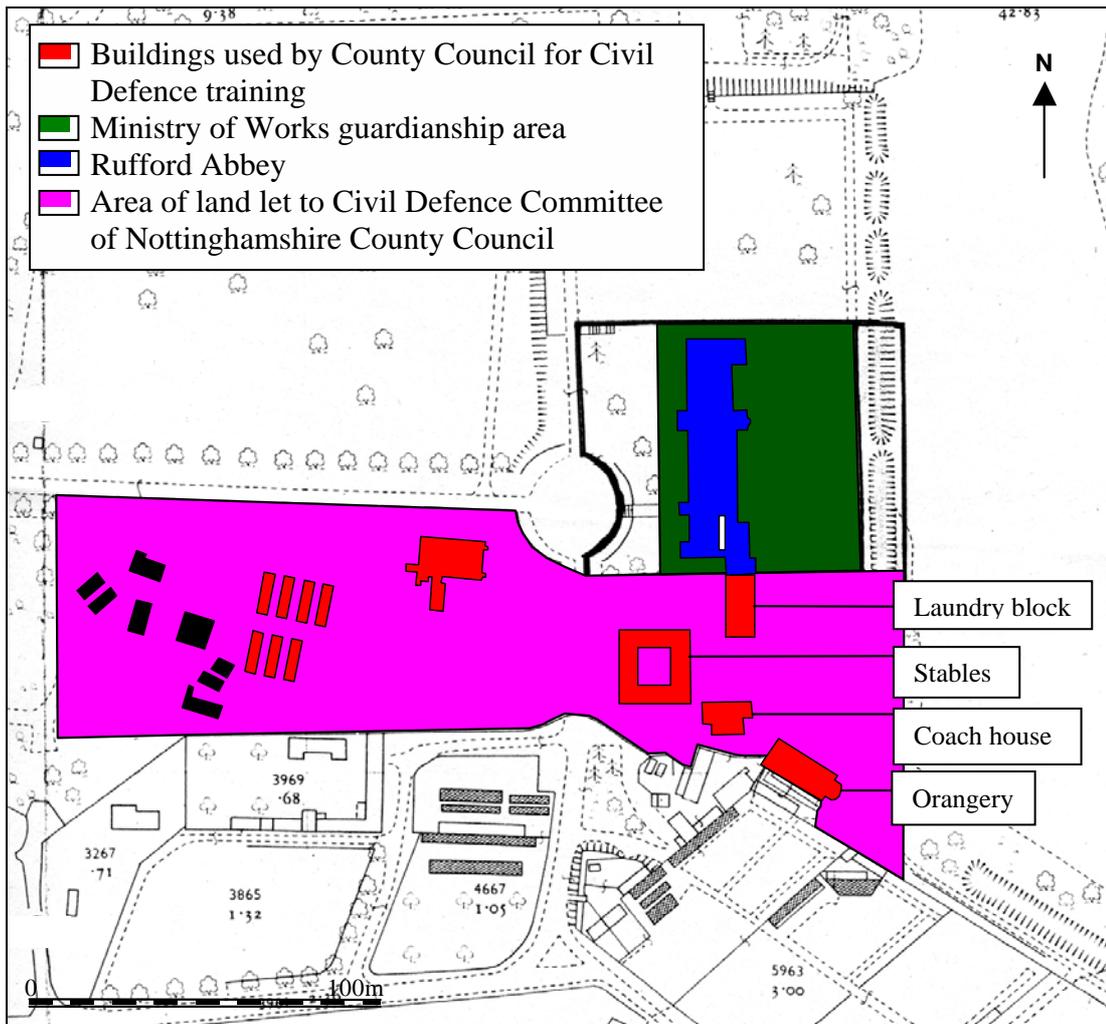
### **i. Requisition and the military use of the Rufford Abbey estate**

Following its sale in 1939 de Vere Clifton had no intention of occupying the property himself or even letting it, and as such Rufford Abbey remained empty. The large number of domestic servants, gardeners and gamekeepers that had populated the estate in the late Victorian and early twentieth century had gone with only a caretaker remaining to ensure the security of the Abbey (Smith 1984). The silence that had lingered around Rufford, however, was all to change as a result of the Second World War.

Shortly after de Vere Clifton purchased the parkland estate, the Abbey and its immediate grounds were requisitioned by the War Office. Firstly, in 1939, the 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade of the Leicestershire Yeomanry arrived on horseback and later departed equipped with motorised artillery having undergone conversion training within the parkland. The 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Coldstream Guards with their Churchill tanks succeeded them. Before their departure to join the allied invasion of Normandy in June 1944, twenty hutments were constructed in the parkland immediately to the west of the Abbey. These hutments, the location of which is shown in figures 5.4 and 5.7, then became the temporary home of Italian prisoners of war. It is reputed that, with access to the Abbey itself, they removed all the silk brocade tapestries in order to make handbags for their girlfriends (Smith 2000;

Robinson 1989:167). The prisoners worked on many of the estate farms and may have also supplemented the labour force of the Forestry Commission who held land on a long lease.

The National Farm Survey undertaken at Rufford between 1941 and 1943 illustrates the fragmentation of the estate following the estate sale in 1938 and the broad interest that was drawn in the purchase of lots including sitting tenants, neighbouring landowners, property and investment companies, speculators and private developers. With regard to the rest of the immediate estate, the survey of 1943 illustrates the level of fragmentation and its necessary impact upon the management, efficiency and productivity of the various holdings and their tenure. Most notably in March 1942 it was recorded that the Forestry Commission owned 120 acres in addition to 2000 acres of woodland on a leasehold arrangement. This was divided into 10-acre holdings and was tenanted by local forestry and coal mining workers. Although it is difficult to locate these holdings they are identified as being of poor quality for cultivation and were probably acquired as part of more extensive woodland holdings. It is identified that most tenants either lacked experience, a will to cultivate or alternately managed their holding for subsistence production only.



**Figure 5.4:** Annotated Ordnance Survey map of Rufford Abbey estate including hutments erected during the Second World War and which were later used for Civil Defence purposes. February 1959. See also aerial view in figure 5.7.<sup>13</sup>

**ii. The Ministry of Health, Nottinghamshire County Council and the preservation of amenity woodland**

Woodman spare that tree!

Touch not a single bough!

In life it sheltered me,

And I'll protect it now.

Charles Dibden (1745-1814), from *Woodman spare that tree*.

By the mid seventeenth century two thirds of the Rufford estate was forested providing quality timber, hunting cover and scenic walks within a designed landscape. The estate house was sheltered from the main road within dense woodland planting which opened up into the parkland to the east. The Broad Ride to the north, illustrated in figure 5.5, was created with the regular planting of beech trees, the formal gardens included varieties of walnut, sycamore, copper beech and a cedar of Lebanon which was reputed to have been planted by Charles I and subsequently lopped following his death at the end of the Civil War.<sup>14</sup>

During one royal visit in the early nineteenth century the poet Charles Dibden, having witnessed a tree being felled within the park, wrote the poem *Woodman spare that tree!* (Knight, Frank and Rutley 1938a). The woodland at Rufford was just as much an economic resource during the Second World War as it was during the nineteenth century. Indeed necessity during wartime had encouraged the unchecked clearance of large areas by both the Ministry of Supply and Forestry Commission, as is evident within figure 5.5.



**Figure 5.5:** North gates and Broad Ride at Rufford with the Abbey shrouded in mist in the background. Taken for the National Buildings Record in 1950 by F.J. Palmer.<sup>15</sup>

Reflecting Charles Dibden's concerns for the preservation of woodland species, in 1940 Nottinghamshire County Council, together with the Ministry of Health, made efforts to ensure that a portion of the estate woodland would be saved from felling. As will be demonstrated, however, their motivations differed significantly from Dibden's concerns for the private scenic qualities offered by woodland within the Rufford estate. Initially it was recommended that preservation could be achieved through co-operation with de Vere Clifton but as a result of his unwillingness to agree to the request of the County Council new powers targeted at the enforcement of Tree Preservation Orders, initially introduced through the Town and Country Planning (Interim Development) Act of 1943 were explored.

In January 1940 George Pepler, Chief Planning Inspector of the Ministry of Health, wrote to Nottinghamshire County Council stating that whilst it was realised that demand for timber had increased during the Second World War and would continue to do so, this did not necessarily mean the complete destruction of woodland. Where possible the Ministry would support the County Council's claims to ensure the preservation of areas of woodland with respect to its amenity value.<sup>16</sup> Pepler had been a key exponent of careful land-use planning and had particular experience in negotiating the dual problem of landscape protection and industrial expansion particularly within areas dominated by coal mining similar to that of Rufford. This was revealed in 1918 at the public inquiry regarding a proposal by Penybont Rural District Council to exploit further coal reserves, when he concluded that although the area was, "developing into a colliery centre", the, "surroundings are quite beautiful and it is most desirable that the development of the area should be on proper lines so that the amenities may be preserved and every convenience may be provided" (quoted in Sheail 1981:82).<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, he was a significant figure in the creation of the Doncaster Coalfield report, which was written by Patrick Abercrombie in 1922. The report focused upon the containment of urban growth by the carefully planning of a series of settlements serving specific collieries (Cherry 1981). Whilst no such plan had been progressed for the Rufford area, Pepler's experiences assisted greatly in promoting managed preservation within industrial rural areas. Such an intervention was necessary because the Town and Country Planning Acts of 1919 and 1932 had not provided the executive powers necessary to compel local authorities or the Ministry of

Health to ensure the division of areas of industrial expansion and undeveloped countryside.

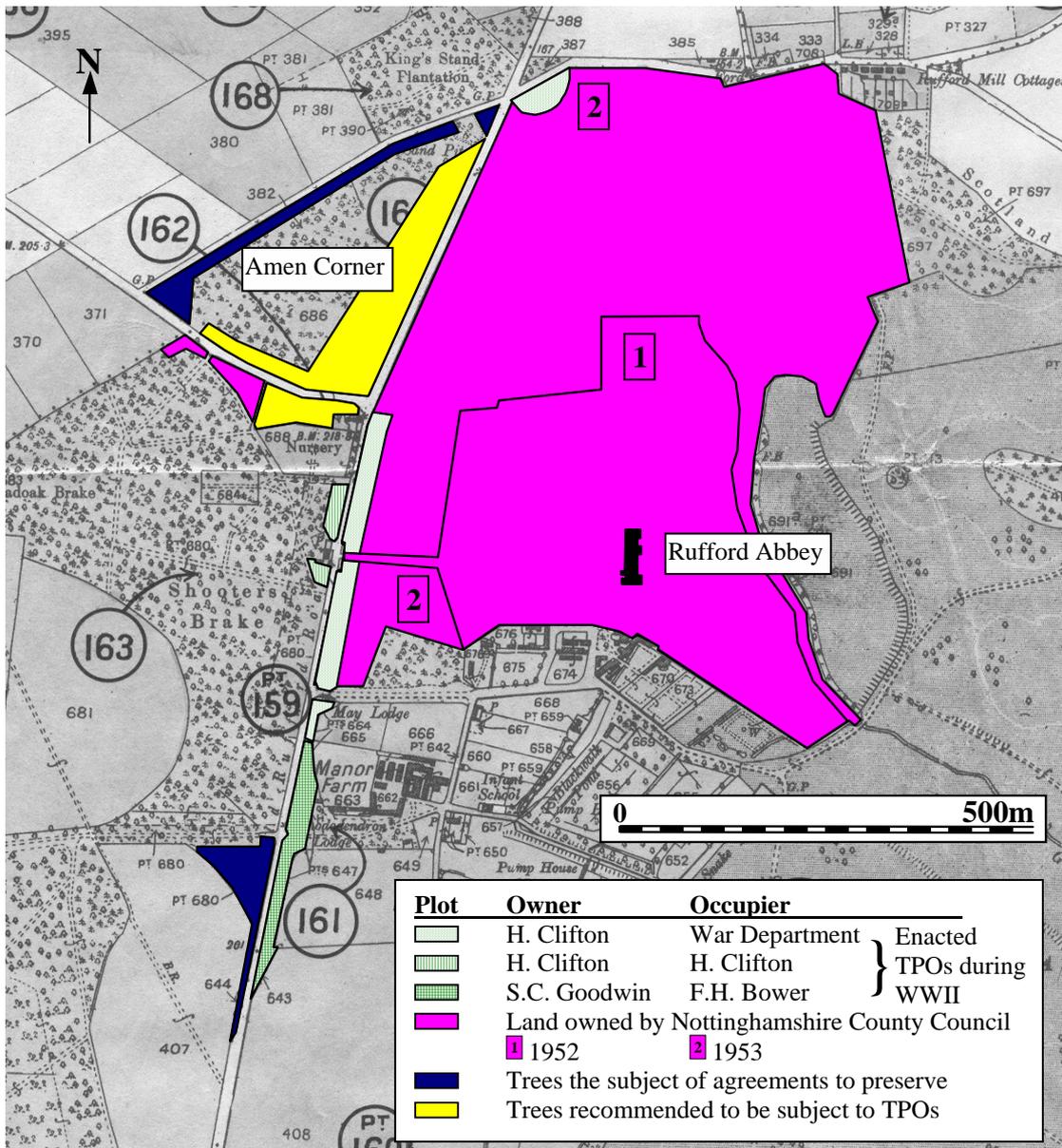
It was this informed thinking that encouraged the County Council to consider the possibility of amenity preservation with regard to Rufford. The County Surveyor, Reginald A. Kidd, considered that two approaches towards preservation could be undertaken – either a designated area could be defined for special attention, or alternatively a broad approach could be taken to schedule any woodlands regarded as important within the County. With the support of the County Planning Committee the County Surveyor determined that a focus upon the Dukeries, within Sherwood Forest, would enable the greatest efficiency whilst ensuring maximum amenity protection of a valued landscape.<sup>18</sup> Justification for such a choice was later given at a Public Inquiry where it was estimated that between 600-700 acres of woodland had been cleared within the Dukeries between 1939 and 1943. By comparison, in response to the unchecked felling it was only a modest area of woodland that was proposed for preservation; just 16 small woodland areas totalling a modest 23 acres. Therefore, a direct result of the estate passing from landed control was to necessitate the intervention of the County Council and the Ministry of Health during a period of threat to woodland, in order to ensure the preservation of amenity. Certainly Clifton made no similar effort and, as will be demonstrated, he later perceived this as an intrusion which was detrimental to the economic value of the land and tried to contest any such proposal for the legislative scheduling of woodland.

Central to the argument submitted by the County Council was that areas of woodland were of prime amenity importance and that their loss would be damaging in the long-term to the local landscape. Whilst recognising that blanket protection would not be justifiable strategic areas, as illustrated in figure 5.6, were highlighted. The initial focus was to ensure preservation of woodlands immediately adjacent the A614 Nottingham-Bawtry road. As the main county road to the north the Council emphasised that members of the public travelling along it held regard for this woodland. This was again emphasised in a Public Inquiry where the County Council stated that they were, “intensely anxious to preserve as far as possible the great amenity value and beauty of woodlands... in the vicinity of the public highway”.<sup>19</sup> It encapsulated the idea of the Dukeries within the public imagination and with much of the parkland being private, albeit with public footpaths where access could be gained, this was the link between the commuting public from Nottingham and the Dukeries estates, or more broadly, Sherwood Forest and the historical myths that this conjured.

With regard to the specific proposals, the County Surveyor, in April 1940 described the area thus; “Rufford Abbey with the beautiful park and lake and the surrounding woods lies on the east side of the Nottingham – Bawtry road and further to the east thereof the land rises and forms a pleasing skyline. Opposite the Abbey on the west side of the road are dense but rather shallow woods and beyond these is a hard drab skyline punctuated only by an occasional house and colliery building in the distance”. It was therefore recommended that the thinning of woodland in the vicinity of the Abbey, to the east, could “open up further natural beauty”, whilst the loss of woodland to the west would be “disastrous”.<sup>20</sup>

As felling was about to commence in this area it was viewed by the Town Planning Committee, which consisted of a number of local landowners who were sympathetic to the preservation of amenity, that agreements with owners should be initiated to prevent the spoliation of the view.

The proposal contrasted considerably with other woodland projects undertaken by the state at Rufford. The Forestry Commission had leased over 2000 acres of woodland on the estate from 1928 and had been undertaking a programme of afforestation. As Chairman of the Town Planning Committee, Sir Joseph Nall of Hoveringham Hall, spoke to the Parliamentary Secretary of the Forestry Commission, Professor Adshead<sup>21</sup>, “who stated that the Commission [had] no programme to purchase land for afforestation during the war period”, but were prepared to lease land owned by local authorities and not private owners. Whilst the Forestry Commission was not in a position to consider purchasing land from Clifton at that time it did give encouragement and support to any further expansion of the County’s desire to protect amenity woodland.<sup>22</sup>



**Figure 5.6:** Interim Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) enforced by Southwell Rural District Council through Town and Country Planning Acts of 1932 and 1943 during the Second World War. It also illustrates arrangements made with landowners and land later owned by Nottinghamshire County Council.<sup>23</sup>

The areas of woodland recommended for preservation, illustrated in figure 5.6, included:

- Amen Corner (apexes and strip of Elm)

A timber merchant agreed to preserve silver birches on the north east apex of area free of charge. Bradford Property Trust owned land on apex and

was not willing to agree to preservation but prepared to sell land to the County Council. The Property Trust were prepared to enter into an agreement regarding the preservation of a strip of Elms within Amen Corner. Before the sale could be completed in March 1941 the Trust sold the land to Mr. A.J.D. Beesley who was keen to prevent development and thereby willing to enter into an agreement.

- Pittance Park

A small area to the north east of woodland to include trees on high ground (Screen)

- South of Rhododendron Lodge

Agreement was negotiated with Mr. Stuart C. Goodwin of Hexgrave Park but because the land was owned by him and others as Trustees the 1932 Act did not give provision for this to be completed.

- Eastern edge of Nottingham-Bawtry Road (Rose Cottage to south of Manor Farm)

This land was retained as part of the Rufford Abbey estate and owned by Henry Talbot de Vere Clifton. An agreement was made for a 15 yard strip of woodland running north-south to be preserved although the County Council wished this to be increased to 25 yards. Mr. A.J.D. Beesley owned Rose Cottage and inquired of the Council the possibility that he may be permitted to demolish it and erect a new house further back – the County Surveyor stated that such a proposal would “receive every support”. Manor Farm together with the adjacent land had been sold to Mr. Stuart C. Goodwin of Hexgrave Park, near Kirklington. It was reported in April 1941 that he too was willing to enter into an agreement.

- Land adjacent to the north and south of the West Lodge
- “Ornamental” trees within parkland
- Wilderness (north and south sides)

Land owned by Henry Talbot de Vere Clifton

- Shooters Brake

Land owned by Henry Talbot de Vere Clifton

- Broadoak Break

Screen

- Cutt’s Wood

Screen masking Bilsthorpe Colliery. Agreement was reached with financial assistance from colliery owners.

Cutt’s Wood, to the south of Rufford Abbey, shown in figure 5.1, was given special detailed attention. It was here that the County Council extended their intentions beyond the preservation of strips of woodland enclosing the A614 to the protection of a wider vista.

The mining of coal had been fundamental to the economic stability of the Rufford Estate. In 1917 the Second Baron Savile ordered investigations into the exploitation of mineral deposits and subsequently in autumn 1924 the Bilsthorpe Colliery, 3 miles to the south, was sunk (Smith 2002:47). As the workings of the colliery would be in the line of sight of the Abbey, Cutt’s Wood was managed in order to mask Bilsthorpe and consisted of Conifers, Oaks, Ash, Beech and Elms. The scale of the woodland also meant that it masked the colliery from the main road and as such became a focus for preservation during the Second World War.

Its importance was detailed by the County Surveyor, Reginald Kidd, in 1941 who described that when travelling south an, “expansive view of the south-east is opened up, Cutt’s Wood, a long low hill densely wooded, being prominent in the foreground. On the same line of sight beyond Cutt’s Wood is Bilsthorpe Colliery with large overhead equipment and two high refuse dumps, all at the present time screened by the higher trees in Cutt’s Wood”.<sup>24</sup>

As all of the estate had been broken up and sold to various local farmers and speculators complex negotiations were instigated by the Council to ensure the preservation of woodland. Parties included tree merchants, Henry Talbot de Vere Clifton, various local farmers, and speculators intent on private and commercial development.<sup>25</sup> In an attempt to ensure maximum co-operation Reginald Kidd emphasised that all owners would, “derive benefit from the general scheme of preservation of amenities, that proposals as affecting the various ownerships are complementary, and that any small effect of the proposed restriction on any one property is more than counter-balanced by the beneficial effect of the proposals as a whole”.<sup>26</sup>

Prior to the accession of the Town and Country Planning (Interim Development) Act 1943 which established Interim Tree Preservation Orders and thereby scheduled the protection of designated woodland, the Town and Country Planning Act 1932 gave the County Council, “power to enter into agreement with owners of land restricting the planning, development or use thereof, the provisions of such an agreement being binding on the successors of an owner”, which could include the preservation of woodland.<sup>27</sup> Enforcing a tree preservation order did not require

the purchase of land and under the Town and Country Planning Act 1932 the County Council could order maintenance payments to be made to a landowner to ensure the preservation of specified trees. The County Council, however, could not enforce such measures and preservation orders could only be achieved through agreement. Without this necessary control, landowners, especially Henry Clifton, could make the process protracted and frustrating.

Although some agreements had been made with owners, by 1943, after three years of negotiations, Henry Clifton was still not willing to accept the proposal for the areas on the edge of the Rufford parkland. In February 1943 Henry Clifton, “failed to exercise an option to repurchase the timber”, in these areas and without further County Council intervention this would have meant that Clifton could enforce timber merchants to fell.<sup>28</sup> As such Southwell Rural District Council enforced an order on Clifton to preserve the woodland following the accession of the Town and Country Planning (Interim Development) Act 1943. This, however, was contested and a local inquiry was held in November 1943 in order to ascertain if the order should be upheld. The order was upheld much to the aggravation of Clifton at this intervention which he considered as detrimental to the economic value of the estate.

Having secured the preservation of areas of woodland within the Rufford estate, the County Council increasingly became drawn into a growing debate regarding the future of the estate house itself.

### **5.1.3 The preservation of architecture at Rufford Abbey**

I am afraid the root of the trouble is that those in authority, not necessarily politicians, have not got a real wish to preserve and see nothing but financial trouble ahead if they do put up a case in favour of preservation.<sup>29</sup>

Lord Methuen to Robert Innes-Smith in reference to Rufford Abbey

In a June 1953 letter to Robert Innes-Smith, a campaigner for the preservation of Rufford Abbey whose involvement will be discussed at greater length below, the Liberal peer Lord Methuen summed up the general malaise that hampered the preservation of Rufford and other similar houses, targeting not politicians but instead alluding to civil servants within Ministerial departments and County Councils. Lord Methuen had been a long-standing advocate of the country house and its historic value. He had initiated discussions in the House of Lords and was a keen advocate of the state-sponsored preservation of chateaux in France; a system which he ideally wished to be implemented within England.

Methuen's comments are of particular interest in the context of this section as they raise important questions of those who held the authority that would determine the fate of Rufford. Therefore, within this section I examine the complex debate that focused upon the historical and architectural importance of the Abbey through the individual politicians, civil servants, aesthetes and landowners within the

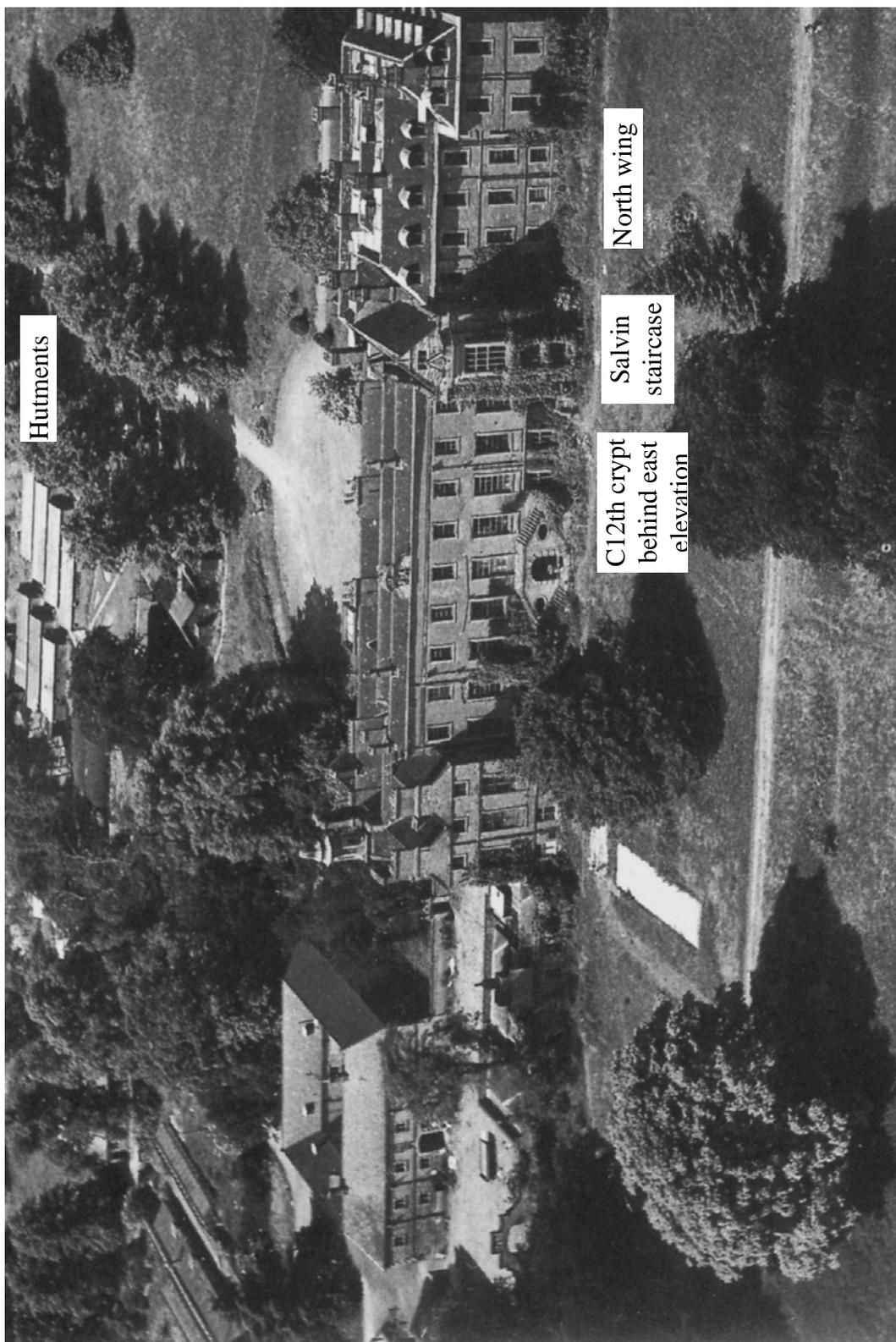
Treasury, Ministry of Works, Ministry of Town and Country Planning (later Ministry of Housing and Local Government), Nottinghamshire County Council, SPAB, CPRE and the National Trust.

Nottinghamshire County Council's attempts to preserve amenity within the Rufford estate during the Second World War focused little on the Abbey itself. The emphasis on the preservation of woodland was viewed solely as an attempt to protect the image of the Dukeries and Sherwood Forest for ratepayers journeying along the A614 between Nottingham and Bawtry and in ensuring the maintenance of a valued county identifier. Through legislative requirements within the Town and Country Planning Act 1947 which made the County Council the local planning authority, twinned with increased demands for preservation of historic buildings from both within the central state and external preservation organisations, so the Council became the central focus for lobbyists.<sup>30</sup>

## **i The preservation of Rufford Abbey**

Upon the cessation of hostilities, Rufford Abbey was derequisitioned and returned to Henry Talbot de Vere Clifton. Although he received compensation from the War Damages Commission under provisions made as part of the Compensation (Defence) Act 1939, there was no requirement that such payments were to be spent on the repair of the building in question. Accordingly Clifton did not spend the money on Rufford but instead proceeded to strip the interior of its panelling and doors in preparation for its demolition. On 9 April 1949 Clifton gave official

notice of his intention to demolish Rufford Abbey. Contrary to arguments that Rufford was of national importance and worthy of preservation, Clifton's agents stated that in the current post-war economic climate it was of greater national importance to demolish and salvage valuable building materials.<sup>31</sup> Figure 5.7 is an aerial view of Rufford Abbey taken the same year that Clifton submitted his intention to demolish and showing the external condition of the property at this time.



**Figure 5.7:** Aerial photograph of west elevation of Rufford Abbey taken in 1949 (Nottinghamshire Evening Post 1995).

From this, though, the County Council became increasingly drawn into more substantive debates regarding the future of the Abbey itself. This was in part fuelled by requirements tabled within the Town and Country Planning Acts of 1944 and 1947 which initiated the listing of historic buildings. Although the listing process had been exceedingly slow, owing to the perceived threat to Rufford the Ministry of Town and Country Planning confirmed that Rufford would be included in February 1949.<sup>32</sup> Clifton applied to demolish Rufford, and under legislation the County Council had two months to either accept the request or invoke a Building Preservation Order. Under pressure from ministerial departments and the SPAB the latter course of action was advanced and this was confirmed by the Minister on 8 August 1949. Once again Clifton submitted an application to demolish and under the Order this too was denied. He argued that the poor state of the building had meant that the land was of no financial value, and as a result of this final refusal to demolish, Clifton then exercised on 1 January 1950, his right under Section 19 of the 1947 Act to require that the County Council, the authority who enacted the Building Preservation Order, to purchase the building from him (Innes-Smith 1998). It was reported in the Municipal Journal that whilst Building Preservation Orders had been enforced across the country, Rufford Abbey was the first case whereby the owner had served a notice to purchase on the enacting authority.<sup>33</sup>

Listing, therefore, proved to be a double-edged sword. Nottinghamshire County Council, with pressure mounting to enact a Buildings Preservation Order, would have been criticised for allowing Clifton to demolish, or, as happened, could be forced to purchase it themselves. I will consider the actual purchase of the Abbey

in 1952 in a later section. Within the rest of this section, though, I will discuss the debates that ran alongside these legislative actions as individuals and organisations tried to determine the historical and architectural importance of the Abbey.

Broadly speaking there were two divided opinions as to the value of the Abbey. Firstly the Ministry of Works suggested that due to there being a mixture of architectural styles it was not worthy of preservation. They did however contend that the Cistercian undercroft, which had been incorporated into the fabric of the Abbey was the only element of significant interest. Interestingly, arguments for the total preservation of Rufford also referred to the number of architectural styles. Robert Innes-Smith (1998:70) later described the “beautiful house,” as, “a microcosm of English architecture”. Others who similarly upheld the Abbey’s importance included the Ministry of Town and Country Planning, who had initially listed the building, the SPAB, the National Trust (James Lees-Milne was more circumspect) and a number of Nottinghamshire landowners including Myles Thoroton Hildyard of Flintham Hall and the Duke of Portland at Welbeck Abbey.

The SPAB took a keen interest in the fate of Rufford, greatly assisted by the work of Robert Innes-Smith who became their unofficial representative. Robert Innes-Smith had been educated in South Africa and returned to Britain in September 1945 to study Law at Sheffield and upon exploring the country estates of the Dukes of Norfolk around Sheffield, including Worksop Manor became drawn to the Dukeries estates within north Nottinghamshire. He found that contrary to his expectations and education landed society was under threat. Clumber had been

demolished in 1938, Rufford was heading for a similar fate and Innes-Smith adopted the cause to fight for its preservation. The SPAB had requested that one of their member architects, David Nye, report on the condition of Rufford and provide a cost as to necessary reparations.<sup>34</sup> His report became the basis for subsequent debate regarding the future of the Abbey, though the Ministry of Works were concerned that the SPAB had accepted the reports conclusions too readily.

Attention had also been drawn to the National Trust as a potential saviour of the property. The Trust's Country House Scheme, established in 1936 and managed by James Lee-Milne, was much publicised and had come to be recognised as an increasingly attractive option for many estate owners in the immediate post-war period. Indeed, in a survey of estates conducted by the Trust in 1939 to be of first importance should options on them later be presented before the Historic Houses Committee, included in Nottinghamshire only Welbeck Abbey and Rufford Abbey (Diestelkamp 2002). By the time that the Trust were consulted however, the property no longer met the criteria of the Committee.

It is thought that the plight of Rufford Abbey came to the attention of the National Trust through the media publicity it drew, the links between the Trust and Peers within the House of Lords or, as is more likely, through their Honorary Representative in Nottinghamshire – Myles Thoroton Hildyard and his friendship with James Lees-Milne. Following a visit to Rufford in June 1949 James Lees-Milne reported to the Clerk of Nottinghamshire County Council the views of his Historic Buildings Committee in July 1949. He mediated that, “notwithstanding

the several injudicious alterations made, chiefly to the interior of the building, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the sad deterioration of the fabric throughout the recent war, they consider Rufford Abbey to be a building of sufficient architectural merit and historic interest to be very well worthy of preservation”.<sup>35</sup> This said, it was clear that the National Trust would not be in a position to accept the property, in part because no endowment, either from Clifton, the state through the National Land Fund or the County Council, would be offered for upkeep. In addition the Trust were increasingly receiving options on a number of properties for their revived Country House Scheme where financial arrangements were more secure. They could, therefore, afford to be far more selective.

Lees-Milne’s personal view however was somewhat different. As he wrote in his diary on 22 June 1949: “...[I] was driven by the Town Clerk’s people to Rufford Abbey and conducted all round. It is deserted and depressing. I cannot call it a first-class building but it is better in the stone than the illustration. Inside deplorable apart from the twelfth-century undercroft. Nothing old left otherwise. It is suffering cruelly from dry rot to the extent that all the floors and the ground storey of the Stuart wing have been ripped up and the earth is showing through. The property has been bought by Harry Clifton who is now anxious to demolish it. It seems a pity to let it go, but no use can be found for it” (Lees-Milne 1985:196).

In 1949, the Trust accepted a total of twelve properties including houses of varying sizes and landscaped gardens. The Trust’s adopted position on Rufford, therefore, was solely as a “well-wisher” for its future preservation and it would not be drawn further on its ownership.<sup>36</sup>

Neighbouring county landowners showed a degree of indifference to the fate of Rufford Abbey. Earl Manvers confessed to believing that, “the Abbey seems to me too close to the road to be worth spending much money on”.<sup>37</sup> This perhaps suggested more his opinion that Rufford was too open to be a suitable private residence as compared to Thoresby and he did not consider any other potential uses of the house. Furthermore, when requested through his land agent H.D. Argles, Manvers would not assist in sending some estate workers to help in immediate repair works.<sup>38</sup> The Duke of Portland, however, took a more active interest. He wrote an article in a Sheffield newspaper in which he appealed for the Abbey, stating that, “the County Council are, I understand, making every effort to find a use for it but have so far been unsuccessful and I am appealing to the general public in Nottinghamshire and adjoining counties to make a further effort to save it... I do feel very strongly that the Abbey should be preserved for Nottinghamshire and would ask any individual or organisation interested to write to me”.<sup>39</sup>

Apart from these interjections there was no broad rallying round to appeal for Rufford. Owners perhaps did not want to be drawn too deeply into discussions regarding the Abbey’s future. They certainly did not want to take on the building as a going concern themselves. Conversely the sale of 1938 highlighted the stark difficulties of maintaining an estate and if anything, would engender a sentiment of self-preservation amongst owners. The Earl of Scarborough also took an interest in the fate of his ancestors’ former residence, Robert Innes-Smith

suggesting to him that he might wish to maintain an apartment at the Abbey, and therefore re-establish the family connection, but such a suggestion was declined.

Myles Thoroton Hildyard of Flintham Hall, on the other hand, became a more effective supporter of Rufford as a member of the Nottinghamshire Branch of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England. He was in close correspondence with Robert Innes-Smith and James Lees-Milne of the National Trust and, although not a member of the County Council himself, demonstrated significant knowledge of the local government system to be able to recommend the appropriate Committees and members to consult. One such letter to Innes-Smith read, “I see in my diary there was a Planning Committee meeting on July 4<sup>th</sup> did you hear anything? Mr Carlton has just been replaced by a Socialist [W.H. Foster] but I know several of them well”.<sup>40</sup> The SPAB, who desired Rufford to be preserved in its entirety equally recognised the value of Myles Hildyard as being able to negotiate between different opinion groups and raise the profile of the case, stating that, “it [was] pleasing to know that Mr. Myles Hildyard took the trouble to see the house. The more visitors of this nature the better”.<sup>41</sup>

Central to debates regarding architectural importance and, as will be demonstrated below, the search for new users, was the predicted costs of restoration and conversion. Opinions were divided along similar lines to that of architectural value. The SPAB had commissioned an architect, David Nye, to compile a report – he assessed that the cost of necessary repairs would be £11,745. This countered that of the Ministry of Works who proposed a figure in excess of £60,000.

Differences in the cost of reparations experienced at a number of other estate houses were a central focus of the Gowers Report, and although the Committee members did not visit Rufford Abbey, the experiences at this estate certainly raised questions regarding preservation provision. Because Rufford had received considerable attention within the press the Committee, therefore, needed to address how far the problems associated with Rufford were characteristic of the existing state machinery and paralleled similar experiences at other estates. The Ministry of Town and Country Planning made a submission to the Gowers Committee highlighting two features of the Rufford case which argued in favour of the SPAB report.

Firstly, the report argued that figures presented by the Ministry of Works were too high. Whilst the Ministry of Works believed that the SPAB's intervention regarding the cost of repair of Rufford had, "complicated matters,"<sup>42</sup> the Gowers Committee concluded that the Ministry of Works repair contracts were overpriced and that although of a high standard were preventing the preservation of estate houses. The accusation was not well received within either the Ministry or the Treasury, who authorised expenditure, and one comment highlighted the differing opinions held by Ministers and accordingly the official position of their departments;

I am sorry if I seem to defend the Ministry of Works too vigorously; but I do feel that there has been in connection with the Gowers Report a certain amount of endeavour to create prejudice against the Ministry on entirely insufficient grounds. My Division tries, and will continue to try, to keep

the Ancient Monuments expenditure within the proper bounds. Only yesterday... Mr Root, the Under Secretary responsible, was complaining to me that the provision is too parsimonious.<sup>43</sup>

Secondly, through Rufford, the Gowers Committee realised the complexity of placing of value on architecture. Non-professionals such as Kenneth Tweedale Meaby, the Clerk of Nottinghamshire County Council, found the varying opinions endowed upon Rufford very confusing. With the variety of architectural styles from differing periods in evidence at Rufford, Government departments held contrasting views as to what was of national interest and thereby worthy of preservation. The Ministry of Works did not regard it of great importance apart from the 12<sup>th</sup> Century crypt. In contrast the Ministry of Town and Country Planning agreed with the SPAB over its national significance as complete. In siding with the Ministry of Works, and with a specific financial interest, A.E.L. Parnis of the Treasury contended that, "it is easy to say a thing is important if you don't yourself have to find the money for it".<sup>44</sup>

Certainly the differences in the proposed figures caused considerable confusion within the County Council. In an effort to ascertain a figure which the Clerk, the County Surveyor and Councillors trusted, and upon which they were able to make a judgement, they enlisted the support of Lord Trent, the owner of Boots the Chemist. Lord Trent had expressed an interest in Rufford as either a pharmacy college or distribution depot. He agreed to commission the company's architect to undertake a detailed survey and furthermore to advertise for tenders to undertake necessary work.

## **ii The preservation of ancillary architecture at Rufford Abbey**

While initially attention was focused upon the preservation of the Abbey building, moves were also made to ensure the preservation of other architectural features within the estate. In part led by the Ministry of Town and Country Planning who upheld the idea that preservation of unifying features could add significantly to the appeal of the estate. This was further demonstrated by the County Council's reluctance to relinquish elements of the estate that were deemed essential to the preservation of amenity.

The Earl of Scarborough wrote on two occasions requesting the Council if he could buy the west gates upon which was displayed the Coat of Arms of his ancestor, the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of Scarborough, as illustrated in figure 5.8, for them to be re-erected at his residence, Sandbeck Park. This request was denied in consideration that the west gates formed an important element of the amenity of the estate owned by the Council and that, despite the future of the estate house still being uncertain, their sale would be detrimental.



**Figure 5.8:** The west gates at Rufford Abbey in 1977 constructed in 1841 for the 8<sup>th</sup> Earl of Scarborough and surmounted with his armorial bearings.<sup>45</sup>

However while the west gates, as a recognisable landmark situated adjacent to the A614, were retained by the Council, the iron gates hidden away to the north of the estate, as illustrated in figure 5.5 did not fair so well. It was reported in the minutes of the Rufford Abbey Sub-Committee meeting of 6<sup>th</sup> January 1958 that, “having regard to the state of the entrance gates at the north end of the grass drive, authority be given for them to be released to an outside person at a price equal to scrap value and the County Architect be asked to report to the next Meeting concerning the maintenance of the pillars which will remain”.<sup>46</sup> Although it is not known if this was undertaken, certainly they were partly removed or allowed to deteriorate because in a report of 1965 it was recommended that dangerous parts of the ornamental gates be removed.<sup>47</sup> The County Architect was of the opinion that, “they are not worth repairing, being badly corroded at the base and broken and rusted away elsewhere”.

#### **5.1.4 The search for potential new uses of Rufford Abbey**

Within this section I discuss the variety of different proposals that were either considered, discounted or furthered with regard to Rufford Abbey and its parkland from 1949, before the Council owned it, until 1958 when the north wing had already been demolished and work was being undertaken in preparation to the Ministry of Works accepting the Abbey as an Ancient Monument.

The conversion of country houses to institutional and corporate uses during the post-war period has received mixed reactions. Immediately following the Second World War, many architectural historians viewed new use as a threat to preservation and the intrinsic value of architecture. Managing authorities were viewed as holding little concern or appreciation for architecture. However, in the post-war period, with a large number of houses being demolished, amenity and preservation organisations accepted that conversion was better than demolition and that any suitable use would at least secure the building in the immediate future. Following acceptance that neither the state or the National Trust were willing to accept the property the search for a new use was accepted by all interested parties as a priority.

The SPAB took a lead in trying to find an alternative user. Acting as an agent, in a similar role to that later played by the Historic Buildings Bureau, they maintained a register of contacts requiring historic buildings for either private or commercial reasons. Similarly, the County Council canvassed its own departments and

Committees to ascertain if any of the Council's functions could be relocated or expanded at Rufford. Figure 5.9 represents the variety of permanent and temporary uses, and recommendations considered by the County Council and following approaches from other private organisations, nationalised industries and Ministerial departments.

Date	Details	Proposed by	Result
1949	National Coal Board (offices)		Unsuitable
1949	British Sugar Corporation		X
1949	Radio Research Station (DSIR)		X
1949	Prison, Civil Defence and Children's home, Ministry of Supply, MoH, Farm Institute		X
1949	Sheffield Regional Hospital Board (Annex for "mental defectives")		X
1949	Adult College of Education (NCC Education Committee)	NCC	Financial
1949-50	National Trust		Unfeasible
1950	Public open space (inc. walking and fishing)	NCC	Undertaken
1950-52	Mr. R.S. Innes-Smith (personal residence and open to public)		Unfeasible
1950	War Memorial School		X
Jan.-Nov. 1950	County Museum (akin to the Castle Museum)	Myles Thoroton Hildyard and Lord Euston	Not furthered
Feb 1950	W. and J.B. Eastwood (local Turkey Breeders) expansion of their holding on estate		X
July 1950	Conference venue (The Hayes, Swanwick, Derbyshire)		Unsuitable size of rooms
Sept 1950	Rufford Village Fete (Fete in parkland and tours of the Abbey)		Agreed
Nov 1950	Raleigh Bicycle Company	Lord Euston	X
End 1950/ March 1951	Boots Pure Drug Company (Pharmacy College, warehousing)	NCC through Lord Trent	Not cost of repair but operating costs
July 1951	Edwalton Men's and Youth Club		Hutment not

	(requested hutment)		available
1951	Civil Defence (hutments, stables, coach house and orangery)	NCC	Agreed
June 1951-Jan 1952	Carmel College (Privately run Jewish further education college)	SPAB / Article in the New Statesman	Condition of property
July 1951	G.B. Few (of Park Hall, Charnock Richard, Lancs)		X
August 1951	Convent of the Assumption	SPAB	Financial
Aug 1951	Orangery could be used for sale of refreshments	NCC	Rented to Civil Defence Comm.
1952	Auxiliary Fire Service training	NCC	Agreed
May 1952	Youth Hostel “or some cultural organisation”	Innes-Smith	Not furthered
Oct 1952-May 1953	Mr. H.G. Browne (conversion to flats) experience elsewhere	SPAB	Financial
May 1953	Royal Army Educational Corps (War Office)	National Trust/ Portland	Unsuitable for requirements
Sept 1953	The Borough Bottega (Art colony and exhibitors) RENT		X
Sept 1953	Zoological Garden	H.B. Dakin (Caretaker)	Not furthered
1953	Forestry Commission Offices (Hutments)		Agreed
1953	Storage in Saw Mill (Highways and Bridges Committee)	NCC	Agreed (sold for £1850)
1953	Staff accommodation in Mill House (Salaries and Establishments Committee)	NCC	Agreed (sold for £1500)
1954	Folk museum operated by Notts Local History Society	CPRE	Not furthered
July 1957	Offices for Dukeries Educational Institute (Nottinghamshire Education Committee)	NCC	No available office accom.
Jan 1958	Camping for boys from Risley Hall (Duke of Edinburgh’s Award Scheme)	Education Committee	Approved <sup>48</sup>
Nov 1958	Derek Sherborn (personal residence)		None available

**Figure 5.9:** Post-1945 uses considered for the Rufford Abbey estate.<sup>49</sup> Green entries are those associated to the functions of the County Council. Red entries are those which were progressed.

In May 1953 the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for War informed Tweedale Meaby that his department were interested in Rufford as providing a permanent home for the Royal Army Educational Corps. The Clerk of the Council initially wrote to the Duke of Portland emphasising that such a use was “one of the very things for which Rufford could properly be used”. As potential feasible users became less apparent so such comments regarding the appropriateness of solutions become more recognisably desperate. Meaby wrote to Major-General Sir John Whitaker of Babworth Hall requesting that he together with General Laycock of Wiseton Hall, both within Nottinghamshire, could bring enough pressure on the War Office.<sup>50</sup> The interventions, however, of the retired Army officers was not enough. The War Office decided that Rufford did not provide “suitable” accommodation.

Initially it seems that only Government departments and nationalised industries were approached with regard to taking over Rufford. In May 1950 Lord Euston complained about this approach to Hugh Dalton, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, arguing that such a remit was too narrow and that the SPAB had evidence of other organisations and individuals who had expressed an interest.<sup>51</sup> Robert Innes-Smith, himself, provided a “scheme which not only preserved the Abbey as an historic building, but also justified the money spent by the Council in acquiring it by converting it into a public amenity for the county”.<sup>52</sup> The underlying principle of the scheme was to keep the Abbey as an occupied home with full public access. He suggested that an initial outlay of £500 could secure the most immediate repair work and following profitable seasons of the house being open the money earned could be reinvested. The Council believed that he was too optimistic regarding the

finances required for the buildings' preservation. Another suggestion came from Rufford caretaker Dakin, who, concerned as to what the focus of public interest would be at Rufford if it was to be developed as an open space, suggested the creation of a Zoological Garden.<sup>53</sup> This too was considered unsuitable.

There was greater success with attempts to find uses for ancillary buildings, partly due to new functions acquired by the County Council. The Civil Defence Committee focussed on the wartime hutments, coach house, stables, and orangery. The Special –Sub-committee of the Finance Committee reported that “These buildings [stables and coach house] lend themselves for ready adaptation for this purpose, they are centrally situated within the County and would obviate the provision of a number of smaller centres within the built-up areas, with the consequent duplication of instructors and equipment”.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, the Highways and Bridges Committee sought space for storage, the Salaries and Establishments Committee sought accommodation, and the Council also considered the wider estate for public open space provision, as discussed below.

There was however another impending development, which would prove crucial in the fight to save the Abbey. The District Valuer in 1953 reported that the state owned National Coal Board had announced its intentions to resume coal extraction from a 7' 6" seam on the western side of the buildings. The operation was due to last from 1958 until 1980 and as such it was expected that extensive damage could be experienced due to possible “erratic subsidence”.<sup>55</sup> This revelation sealed the fate of Rufford.

### **5.1.5 The preservation of archaeology, and Rufford Abbey as a ‘noble ruin’**

As it became more apparent that no new use could be found for the Abbey and with its condition rapidly deteriorating, the County Council began increasingly to recognise that demolition would be inevitable. The Ministry of Works who proposed accepting the Abbey as an ancient monument presented the only acceptable solution and under their guardianship Rufford would be partially demolished to ensure the safety of the Cistercian undercroft. This resulted in a debate as to what extent of the Abbey should remain essentially forming a protective shell. Although debate still continued as to the architectural merit of the Abbey what I am interested in here is how this informed the approach that was to be taken in ensuring, not only the stability of the structure, but more importantly its presentation. The idea that the remains could represent a ‘noble ruin’ akin to that of Hardwick Old Hall is of particular interest.

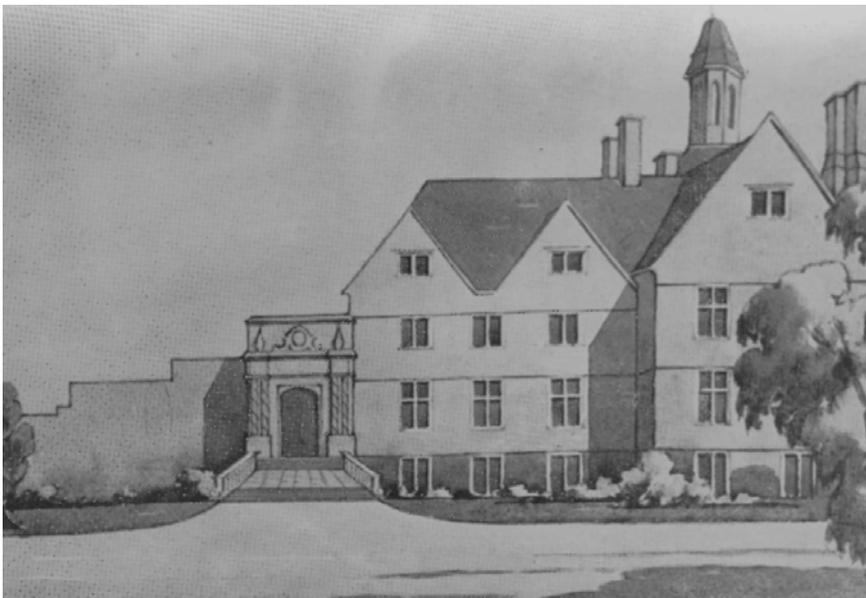
#### **i Partial demolition, the Council for the Preservation of Rural England and guardianship under the Ministry of Works**

Although resigned to the loss of the north and east wings of the Abbey, the SPAB continued to argue that demolition should stop there. Under increased pressure from the SPAB and latterly the Council for the Preservation of Rural England the County Council were convinced of the benefits of preserving more than just the undercroft. Two predictive sketches, illustrate the slight difference of opinion as to what should remain of the Abbey. Figure 5.10 was conceived by the Ministry of Works, whereas figure 5.11 was recommended by the County Planning

Committee of the Council and could well have been drawn up by David Nye of the SPAB.



**Figure 5.10:** Ministry of Works perspective sketch of west elevation of Rufford Abbey as it would look following partial demolition. Unknown surveyor and date but believed to be mid-1950s.<sup>56</sup>



**Figure 5.11:** Second artist's impression of west elevation of Rufford Abbey as presented to the County Planning Committee of Nottinghamshire County Council.<sup>57</sup>

David Nye and the County Planning Committee clearly considered in great detail the form of what remained of Rufford as an extant building whilst giving little attention to how the partial demolition would be undertaken and viewed. Certainly if it was not for the placing of the porch then Rufford could mistakenly be recognised as a medium sized country house with a high garden wall extending to the north. Conversely, the Ministry's sketch details how the proposed partial demolition would be viewed. Rather than strip the ground floor to the level of the undercroft the Ministry is evidently keen to retain an irregular arrangement of wall. Such a perspective was described as creating a 'noble ruin'<sup>58</sup>. I will return to these different perspectives in greater detail in my next section on archaeological investigation.

Whilst most within the Council worked to mediate an appropriate solution the Chairman of the Rufford Management Sub-Committee, W.H. Foster, expressed an opinion, which was in stark contrast to all other expressed opinions: "During the past week I noticed on the TV some mansion or stately home in Scotland being demolished in a few minutes by a few well placed sticks of gelignite. My thoughts were immediately turned on Rufford Abbey, and I pondered on the idea being put to work in getting our County Council rid of a liability by this means, after all what could be salvaged of any value had been done. In the Scottish case the reason given for the demolition was the too high cost of upkeep for the present owner. I respect old historical buildings, but in doing so I think regard must be had to the maintenance cost of such buildings when preservation is being clamoured for."<sup>59</sup> Although thought was divided as to what should remain of the

Abbey there is no other sentiment that expressed a similar course of action. This is not to suggest, however, that frustrations within the Council did not lead others to harbour such thoughts, and certainly as will be discussed in section 5.2, experiences at Rufford impacted significantly upon the involvement of the County Council in the subsequent preservation of other estate houses.

Without a clear agenda and under continued pressure from both the CPRE and SPAB, the County Council decided to convene a conference in order to discuss requests that some portion of the central section and south wing, in addition to the twelfth century undercroft which lay below, should be preserved. Held on 23 July 1954 attendees included members of the Rufford Management Sub-Committee, Mr. David Nye (SPAB), representatives of the Ministry of Works and the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, Lady Galway of Serlby Hall and Myles Thoroton Hildyard (CPRE), Mr. R. Innes-Smith, Lord Kilmaine (Pilgrim's Trust) and appropriate departmental heads within the County Council.

Lady Galway, Honorary Secretary of Nottinghamshire Branch of the CPRE clearly stated that, "from an amenity point of view we should very much like to see the Great Hall [located directly above the crypt] left as a whole with its roof intact, and not as a ruin", adding that, "the concern of the CPRE lies chiefly in the external appearance of the Abbey".<sup>60</sup> The Ministry of Housing and Local Government went further when reporting that, "apart from its archaeological interest, the centre block makes a very pleasing contribution to the landscape, giving focus to the park and would enhance, if retained, the appearance of the Jacobean wing which was to be preserved".<sup>61</sup> David Nye of the SPAB emphasised

the fundamental difference that existed between the two schemes illustrated above. Although it was a nineteenth century construction the porch on the west elevation was directly in line with the main drive and was therefore highly visible from the main road, or conversely notable in its absence. This can be seen within figure 5.12



**Figure 5.12:** West elevation of Rufford Abbey prior to partial demolition. Note the fencing in the foreground surrounding the hutments constructed during the Second World War and the National Buildings Record car sheltered under a tree. Photograph taken by F.J. Palmer for the NBR in 1950.<sup>62</sup>

Countering this the Ministry of Works replied to the Nottinghamshire branch of the CPRE stating that the Midlands was not an area noted for its monastic remains and that Rufford was the best preserved example. As part of the partial demolition

excavations could reveal significant information regarding the construction and layout of the Cistercian Abbey. As such, the regional importance of the Cistercian undercroft, levelled by the Ministry, led them to conclude that the Hall “with its detail belonging to the 19<sup>th</sup> rather than 17<sup>th</sup> century, it is to be sacrificed for the sake of exposing the medieval work it conceals”. As a concession the Ministry of Works bowed to pressure from the County Council and the SPAB that as the southern wing was the most complete example of 17<sup>th</sup> century architecture at Rufford this too would be retained.<sup>63</sup> As such Rufford was effectively stripped of all its 19<sup>th</sup> century additions.

As with the preservation of belts of woodland adjacent to the A614 the eventual undertaking to preserve the Abbey was a cosmetic affair and the eventual course of action proved to be a trade off between the differing viewpoints. The northern wing had already been demolished and it was decided that the encased extension to the eastern wing should similarly go. The central portion was gutted although the western elevation was maintained as much intact as possible. As such, to the unsuspecting passer by, Rufford looked extant. Although it was intended that the offices would be housed in the southern range that extended the three gables as illustrated in the predictive sketches of Rufford, in figures 5.10 and 5.11, instead the portion of the Abbey behind the two gables, south of the porch, was gutted.

The recommendation that Rufford Abbey could be preserved as a “noble ruin” can be associated to the picturesque tradition of the eighteenth century but whereas a parish church, chapel, castle or old hall within the parkland could be preserved as ruin to act as a picturesque feature, at Rufford it was suggested that the house

itself could provide this function within a public recreation park. In the nineteenth century ruins were viewed as romantic allusions to a medieval past and subsequently during the Second World War there was debate as to their significance within post-war reconstruction. The *Architectural Review* in 1944 argued for the preservation of London churches that had been bombed during the war but the debate can be broadened to a wider appreciation of ruins. Amenity became a central focus to the argument. Architecturally the country would “gain considerably by so free and picturesque a treatment of some of the bombed sites, because most of the planning done now and to be translated into reality after the war is of necessity utilitarian, more concerned with traffic, health centres and population densities than with aesthetics. Yet aesthetics must not be forgotten if we want to have towns worth living in” (*Architectural Review* 1944:14).

In October 1955, following the successful appointment of contractors, the Clerk confirmed the three stages of the impending demolition.<sup>64</sup> Nottinghamshire County Council was to demolish the north wing, kitchen block and roof of central section, and the Ministry of Works was to continue work, at cost to the County Council, until just the medieval undercroft remained. The completion of the demolition work and the required safeguarding of the Abbey would then continue at cost to the Minister under the guardianship of the Ministry of Works.<sup>65</sup> Demolition work commenced in June 1956, as illustrated in figure 5.13 and it was not until the late 1980s that this was finally complete and the public was able to inspect the interior of what remained of Rufford Abbey.<sup>66</sup>

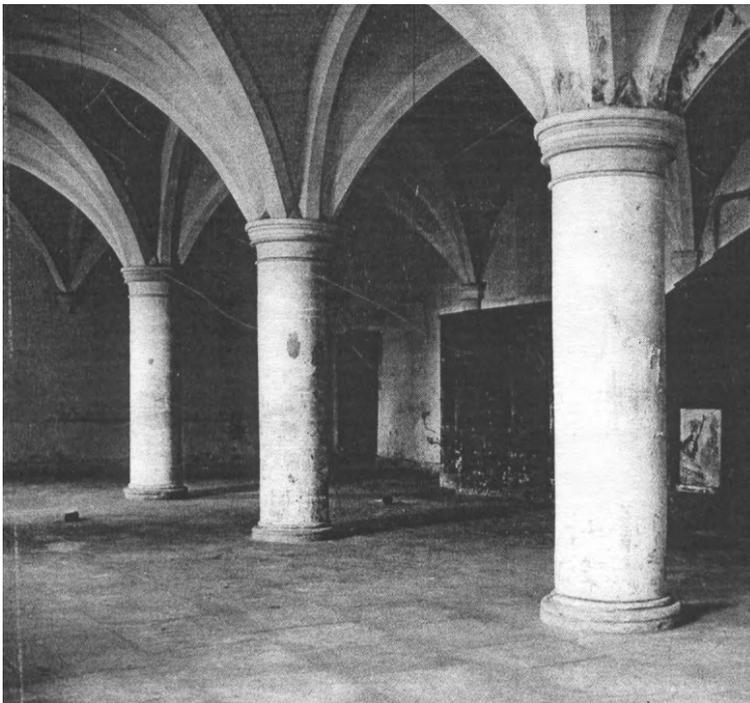


**Figure 5.13:** Rufford Abbey during demolition in 1956 from the north-west. Only the ground floor windows of the north wing remain and work has commenced on the roof of the western range.<sup>67</sup>

## **ii Archaeological investigation and the Ministry of Works**

In his historical survey of Abbeys in the United Kingdom published in 1958, prior to part of Rufford being accepted under the guardianship of the Ministry of Works, Gilyard-Beer listed 40 known Cistercian abbeys 16 of which were in the care of the Ministry of Works. The only other monastic sites in Nottinghamshire included the Priors of Blyth, Mattersey, Newstead and Worksop – none of which were Cistercian (Gilyard-Beer 1958).<sup>68</sup> The remains of Mattersey, lying in open farmland five miles to the north-west of Retford further north in the county, had been the only example in the county to be accepted under the guardianship of the Ministry of Works. This was undertaken between 1912 and 1914 and owing to the fact that other monastic sites, both within Nottinghamshire and the rest of the country, had been encased in the fabric of later estate houses, many of which

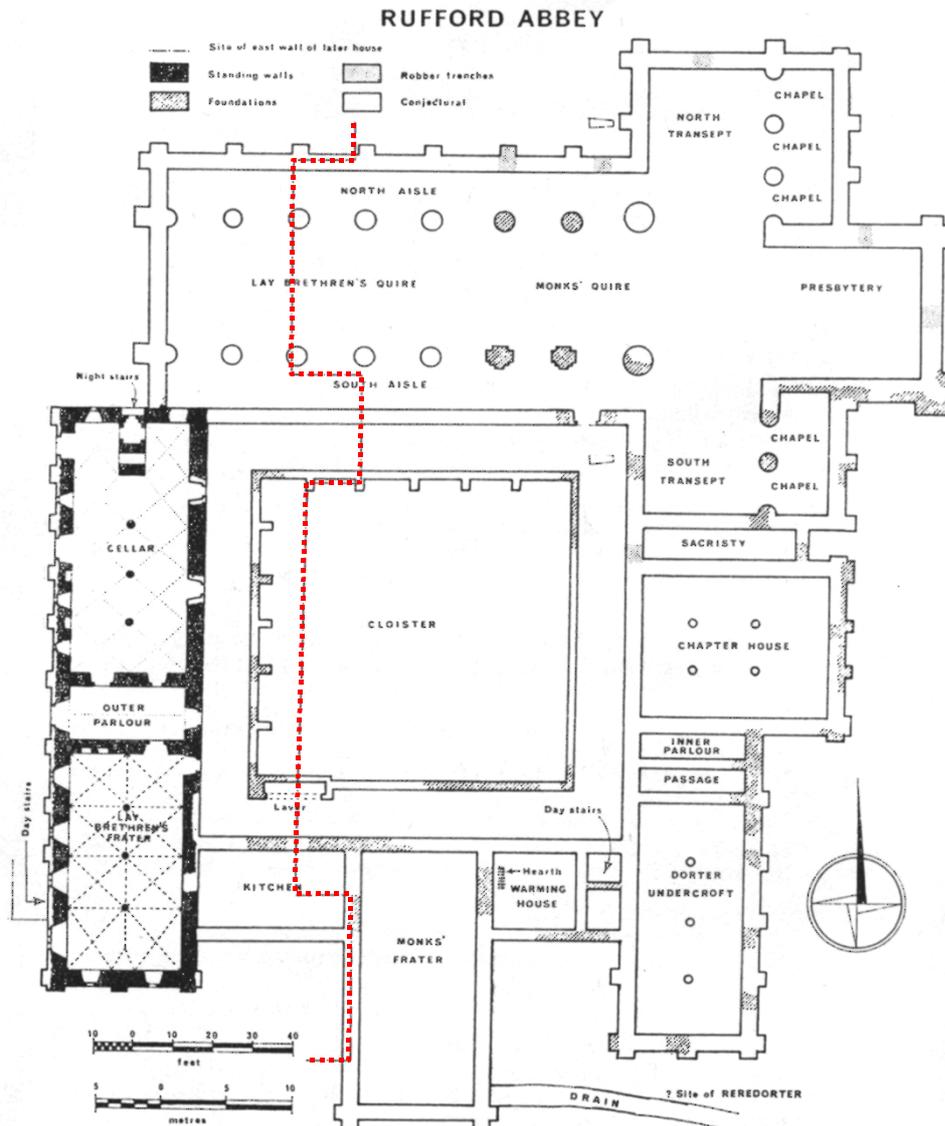
remained in private hands, the demolition of Rufford provided a rare opportunity to further the understanding of monastic sites beyond what had been learnt following protection offered under the Ancient Monuments Acts in the early twentieth century. Figure 5.14 illustrates the one portion of the crypt which was the focus of such attention and division.



**Figure 5.14:** The twelfth century frater at Rufford Abbey as photographed by the National Buildings Record on 17 February 1949.<sup>69</sup>

Although it is clear that the inability to find a new use for the Abbey and its deteriorating condition eventually necessitated its partial demolition, the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments of the Ministry of Works, the only body prepared to take over the Abbey under guardianship, justified the demolition on account of the archaeological investigation that could be undertaken. The County

Council's intention to open the park for public recreation was used by the Ministry of Works as a justifying measure for partial demolition. In a letter to the Clerk, D.J. Cockell contended that, "interest of the existing remains would be much increased if they could be shown rough in relation to the plan of the rest of the Abbey".<sup>70</sup> Archaeological investigation was undertaken in 1956 and 1957 under, initially, Mr. T.L. Jones and subsequently Dr. M.W. Thompson. A sample of trenches across the entire site revealed foundations and robbed out building material that determined the layout of the monastic complex. As illustrated in 5.15, showing the plan of the foundations, excavations under the demolished eastern range of the later Abbey revealed the western edge and extent of the cloister and the north wall of the kitchen. Initial reports were recorded in *Medieval Archaeology* in 1958 and 1965 (Anonymous 1958; Gilyard Beer 1965). Although it is difficult to determine the significance of what was discovered to the study of monastic architecture and society, R. Gilyard-Beer of the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments reported that the "lay brethren's frater preserved in the later house [at Rufford] is one of the finest examples in Britain". The specific nature of this range, which also included the cellar, was in contrast to that which was revealed at Fountains Abbey. Whereas at Fountains there was an undivided range of 300 feet containing 22 double bay vaults, Rufford best showed the alternate method in which structural divisions marked the cellar, lay-brethren's frater and outer parlour (Gilyard Beer 1958:41, 1965). Following its partial demolition Rufford was removed from the provisional list of buildings of historic and architectural importance and in April 1961 was re-scheduled as an Ancient Monument.



**Figure 5.15:** Plan of the Cistercian Abbey at Rufford. Based on excavations undertaken by the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments of the Ministry of Works in 1956 and 1957. The red dotted line indicates the location of the later country house (Gilyard-Beer 1965:162)

### **5.1.6 Nottinghamshire County Council and public open space provision at Rufford Abbey**

It has already been revealed that once the Minister of Town and Country Planning had confirmed that Nottinghamshire County Council would indeed have to purchase the Abbey from Henry Talbot de Vere Clifton an extensive effort was undertaken to find a new user. Numerous options were considered but the Abbey was either in too poor condition with the continued threat of mining subsidence, was estimated as too expensive to repair, or was equally unsuitable to certain purposes. Whilst the County Council could find use for certain ancillary buildings including storage, fire training and Civil Defence, a use for the Abbey itself could not be found. The only option was the creation of a public open space within the estate parkland.

The County Council decided that safeguarding a greater proportion of land would not only improve the possibility of finding a new user but also would facilitate the preservation of amenity. Accordingly the following land and buildings was purchased:

• Rufford Abbey, coach house, stables, orangery and immediate 57 acres (see pink area No. 1 in figure 5.6)	£13,000
• West gates	£1,100
• Additional 82 acres for public open space (see pink area No. 2 in figure 5.6)	£6,450
<b>Total</b>	<b>£20,550</b> <sup>71</sup>

Following the purchase in 1952, Nottinghamshire County Council created the Rufford Management Sub-Committee to oversee the ownership of the Abbey. W.H. Foster, a colliery worker from Warsop, was elected Chairman for the duration that the Committee sat. The Chairman of the Council, Alderman W. Bayliss, was also a permanent member and others who were appointed at different times included H.C.C. Carlton, Chairman of the County Planning Committee and Commander M.B.P and Xenia Francklin, both of Gonalston Hall. The responsibilities of the Committee covered such functions as regulating the shooting rights, dredging the lake, sewerage provision, preparations for public open space provision, development control, footpath amendments and finally ascertaining the feasibility of potential new uses for the Abbey building.

In 1950 the Council had established a Special Sub-Committee of the Finance Committee, charged solely with dealing with Rufford. It was requested to report upon the potential of providing public open space on the site. In 1950 it was reported that the area would feature in the County Development Plan as a “Landscape or Amenity Zone”, and it was the first public open space outside of urban boundaries to be designated by the County Council.<sup>72</sup> As previously highlighted Clifton had further broken up the parkland and all he retained was the Abbey and the immediate 58 acres in which it was set. Ten different individuals owned the remaining land that the Council had considered acquiring. The committee reported back on 27 October 1950, having compiled a survey of similar public open spaces in the area. Two miles away at Edwinstowe walks around Major Oak in Sherwood Forest had provided a considerable attraction. This area had become restricted due to the construction of a military camp in the area and as

yet it had not been re-opened. Perhaps more significantly though, the National Trust, together with the co-operation of local authorities, including Nottinghamshire County Council, had opened up 338 acres at Clumber with a further 1707 acres expected following derequisition. The survey report concluded that, “there is no pressing need for the provision of a public open space at Rufford”, but adding that, “the availability of another public open space might result in wider use of such facilities in the public interest”.<sup>73</sup>

Once the County Council had established its control over Rufford they was not prepared for any external influences to devalue the amenity of the estate. This was clearly witnessed in their refusal to sell the west gates to the Earl of Scarborough and can equally be demonstrated in a proposal by the Ministry of Power in 1964 to extend power lines across parkland to the north of the Abbey. In response the County Planning Committee and the Rufford Abbey Sub-Committee protested against such an intention. It was argued that such a development would detract from the Council’s sustained efforts to, “secure the preservation of this high amenity area”.<sup>74</sup> Subsequently cables were diverted further to the north beyond estate land owned by the County Council. The Council also sought to connect with emerging ideas of nature conservation, with in March 1965 the Nottinghamshire Trust for Nature Conservation permitted access to Rufford during the spring or summer “with a view of declaring the area to be one of more than usual scientific interest”.<sup>75</sup>

## **5.2 The repercussions of Rufford: Winkburn Hall as a “prima facie” case of preservation**

In November 1958 Newark Rural District Council and Nottinghamshire County Council were given formal notice by the solicitor acting for a demolition contractor of their intention to demolish Winkburn Hall under Section 30 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1947.<sup>76</sup> The Hall had numerous owners since the Second World War and subsequent changes of use during temporary ownership had left the Hall in a poor condition. The owner Mr. Craven-Smith-Milne sold the Hall in 1934 to a Yorkshire businessman. In 1939 it was sold again and a preparatory boys school was soon evacuated there. In 1953 the County Council was approached as a potential purchaser but no Committees or departments had requirement for it so the offer was rejected.<sup>77</sup> Instead, during the construction of Staythorpe power station, Balfour Beatty purchased the Hall and used it for office accommodation and as a hostel for employees. Around 1955 once Staythorpe had been completed it was sold to a local farmer, Mr. G.B. Booth who took up residence. In 1958 the Hall together with 14 acres of land was up for sale again and the intended purchaser was Major Thomas P. Barber of Lamb Close House, and the former Chairman of the County Council, who wished to demolish Winkburn.

Whilst the negotiations regarding Winkburn are somewhat eclipsed by the confusion and prolonged dealings that ensued concerning Rufford, there are numerous aspects that make it an interesting counterpoint within the story of state involvement in Nottinghamshire landed estates. Firstly, significant differences are

evident within the central and local government relationship. With regard to Rufford, the County Council were influenced by the desires of the various Ministerial departments. This was especially evident when the Ministry of Works' suggestion of accepting part of the Abbey under guardianship alleviated significantly the burden of ownership. With respect to Winkburn, however, there is a degree of antagonism between the Council and the Ministry of Housing and Local Government regarding the enacting of a Building Preservation Order. Secondly, it is the former Chairman of the County Council, Major Thomas P. Barber who stipulated that for him to agree to the purchase permission for demolition would have to be certain and this undoubtedly placed the Council, as local planning authority, in a difficult position between the desires of the Ministry and a senior member. Thirdly, there was a more measured and controlled approach taken by the County Council in their dealings with Winkburn, with a deeper understanding of statutory policy and the responsibilities of the various governmental organisations.

Initial notification of the intention to demolish was sent to the Clerk of Newark Rural District Council and A.R. Davis, Clerk of the Nottinghamshire County Council on the 26 November 1958.<sup>78</sup> Under Section 30 of the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947 two months notice of the intended demolition was thereby given. Both Councils forwarded the formal notification to the Minister of Housing and Local Government and furthermore, Davis consulted the opinions of R.A. Kidd, the County Director of Planning.

Officials of the Ministry of Town and Country Planning had already inspected the Winkburn estate during the compilation of statutory lists of architectural and historic buildings. The Hall, together with the adjoining wall to the church, had been listed as Grade I in August 1952. At the same date the former school-house within the village was listed Grade II. Nine years later, in August 1961, the St. John of Jerusalem church, which adjoined the Hall, was added as Grade I together with the stables as Grade II. These additional listings emphasised the importance of the buildings as a grouping rather than just in isolation. Additionally the threat to the Hall was so concerning that Herbert Felton of the National Buildings Record visited to photograph the exterior and interior of Winkburn in 1959. Figure 5.16 illustrates one such example.



**Figure 5.16:** West elevation of Winkburn Hall. Photograph taken by H. Felton of the National Buildings Record in 1959.<sup>79</sup>

With the listing in mind the Advisory Committee on Historic Buildings and the Minister of Housing and Local Government considered that Winkburn was a, “prima facia”, case worthy of preservation and that the County Council should make a Building Preservation Order.<sup>80</sup> Such a suggestion was cautiously received. Memories of the purchase of Rufford that was enforced by the Minister of Town and Country Planning in 1952 were still fresh. Indeed on receipt of a letter from the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, highlighting the importance of Winkburn, A.R. Davis, the Clerk of the Council, wrote in pencil a note for circulation – it read simply, “Remember Rufford!”<sup>81</sup>

The County Planning Committee of the County Council concluded in their meeting on 3 February 1959, that in spite of the Hall being, “a good example of its type and if it could be used would be an asset to the County”, no use could be found for it and its condition had been allowed to deteriorate. The County Architect emphasised the poor state of the kitchen and service area and a substantial crack had developed on the east elevation. The Committee considered that owing to the suspected high cost of renovation it was not prepared to recommend making a Building Preservation Order.<sup>82</sup> The Southwell Rural District in their response noted resignation and regret but backed the County Council in its decision. Whilst in agreement S.W. Lynds, the Clerk of Southwell, felt, “disturbed that premises of this nature are gradually being demolished and the tradition of our Nation being gradually expunged by such happenings”.<sup>83</sup>

Such a decision, therefore, put the County Council and Rural District in disagreement with the Ministry of Housing and Local Government. When the

Planning Committee reported again on the 5<sup>th</sup> May 1959 it was reported that on the 13<sup>th</sup> February 1959 the Minister had informed the Council that he himself had decided to enact a BPO. The draft Pre-Order confirmed Winkburn as a building of special architectural importance. Specifically, “it has a fine exterior with three dignified brick facades dating from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century (the attic storey was added probably later in the 18<sup>th</sup> century). The interior has an exceptionally good 17<sup>th</sup> century staircase, a subsidiary staircase of the same date, and other features of note such as enriched overdoors... It is considered that a preservation order should be made in order to allow time for inquiries into the possibility of a new use being found for the house”.<sup>84</sup>

The Planning Committee expressed deep concern because if the Order was confirmed, “it would have effect as if the County Council themselves had made it and the responsibility for looking after the building could as a result thereof rest with the County Council”.<sup>85</sup> The Minister could therefore in effect enforce the County Council to take personal responsibility for the Hall. A formal objection was submitted to the Minister on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1959 and a Public Inquiry was proposed to convene on the 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1959 to assess the case. This was to be chaired by an inspector appointed by the Minister – Mr. W.H. Owen. This, however, was not required as on 26<sup>th</sup> May 1959 it was announced that a new owner had agreed to purchase Winkburn instead of Major T.P. Barber. With the Hall as his residence, Mr. E. Capes proposed to rear pigs and poultry on the adjoining land. This, however, was not the final outcome. In April 1960, the County Director of Planning became aware of Capes’ intention to auction Winkburn through Henry Spencer and Sons. Although at the sale, held on 1 May

1960, the Hall did not meet the reserve, three months later on the 18 August 1960, Sir William Frances Barber, son of Major T.P. Barber, who maintained the rest of the estate lands within Winkburn, agreed to the purchase.

Support for the Hall was evident throughout the period of negotiations. Once again the SPAB wrote expressing their concerns. Similar to their intervention at Rufford, they explicitly expressed the importance of the building, requesting that time be given to finding a new use whilst offering their assistance in such attempts, and in support of their argument they forwarded a report to the County Council which confirmed that, “the house is of much importance and in good structural condition.”<sup>86</sup> In 1951 Pevsner’s Nottinghamshire volume commented that both the Hall and church were “close together in the overgrown grounds” (Pevsner 1951: 205). Debate as to the architectural importance of the building and the ascertaining of dates of construction were key to justifying the need to preserve Winkburn. Evidence to confirm this was vague and was seemingly initially drawn from Pevsner, who himself in 1951 could ascribe no more than, “probably early C18 with later attic storey”. He was, however, more generous in describing the interior – “Heavily carved scrollwork of the staircase and pretty little *sopraporte* with Rococo landscape motifs” (Pevsner 1951: 206). A.R. Davis however tried to distance the Council from such debates, arguing simply that, “the issue was not whether the building was worth preserving but whether the spending of public money on preservation would be justified especially as it had not been possible to find a new use for it”.<sup>87</sup>

Furthermore, Commander Philip Francklin of Gonalston Hall took an active interest in the preservation of the Hall. Together with Ivor Gowran of Beeston, he wrote on the 19<sup>th</sup> January 1959 to Henry Brooke, the Minister of Housing and Local Government expressing their key concerns. As a new member of the County Council, elected in 1958, Commander Francklin did not want to cause ructions, with other members and R.A. Kidd. No doubt aware of the problems experienced by the Council regarding Rufford he emphasised the, “continual effort which is made by the Nottinghamshire County Council – and in this the Director of Planning and his staff must claim much credit – to preserve the beauty of the countryside”, adding that, “it is in full support of this policy and these endeavours that we object to the impoverishment which would... result by the razing of Winkburn Hall to the ground”.<sup>88</sup> In a later letter following the successful outcome at Winkburn he bemoaned, “the modern complaint of everything having to be settled in five minutes makes particular nonsense where the future of a 250 year old building is concerned”.<sup>89</sup>

As such, Francklin was appreciative, “that the County Council cannot take upon itself the financial responsibility for maintaining empty houses, however beautiful, if they have no use”. He added, however, that, “Nottinghamshire’s share of beautiful domestic architecture is small and of those houses that remain Winkburn is [...] an outstanding example”.<sup>90</sup> The specific construction date of the Hall had not been confirmed and debate placed it as either under the reign of William and Mary or as Georgian, Francklin instead emphasised the importance of the Hall within the small village which had remained undeveloped.

The house and church, which adjoin each other, are linked in the way that old manors and their churches often are. It is impossible to demolish one without effect on the other. Both lie in the heart of the Nottinghamshire countryside, which is a feature of the County that is fast diminishing. If Winkburn is destroyed it cannot but impoverish the countryside in which it is set.<sup>91</sup>

At the time when the Council were notified of the owner's intentions towards Winkburn they were just finalising the future of Rufford. The north wing of the Abbey had been demolished but debate still ensued regarding the 12<sup>th</sup> century undercroft and the ability to preserve a greater or lesser portion of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century fabric within which it was encased. Nine years of negotiations regarding the Abbey had certainly taught the County Councillors, the County Surveyors Department and the Clerk of the Council a considerable deal as to the pressures to preserve, the policy requirements, and especially their responsibilities as the local planning authority. This said there was seemingly a degree of consternation that the Minister could enact a Building Preservation Order and enforce the local planning authority to be responsible for the upkeep of the Hall should the owner submit a purchase notice.

### **5.3 The State and the preservation of Ossington Hall**

With the passing of landed control at Winkburn Hall and Rufford Abbey, debate regarding their future use and architectural value was led by both different preservation groups, such as the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and the Council for the Preservation of Rural England, and local landowners. In contrast the Ossington Hall estate, illustrated in figure 5.17, had survived under hereditary ownership and the intentions of the then owner, W.M.E. Denison, for his land in the 1960s conflicted with concerns expressed by another architectural preservation organisation, the Georgian Group which had been established in 1937, as to the future of the Hall. Central to this debate, and which this chapter discusses, is the amenity value of the estate under private hereditary ownership, the impact of requisitioning during the Second World War and the post-war role of the central state in listing buildings, providing grants for repairs and acting as a central agent in the search for new uses. All of these informed the future of the Ossington estate.

Discussion of the preservation of Ossington and maintenance of the familial estate is framed during the late 1950s when there was both an improved market value of agricultural land and increased profitability of farming. Furthermore, following the passing of the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act, 1953, the administrative confusion between different state departments experienced at Rufford Abbey to a degree had been solved with the creation of the non-executive Historic Buildings Councils for England and Wales and the Historic Buildings

Bureau (HBB) which, respectively, considered grant applications for repairs and sought new uses. In total, up until 1967, the HBB acted to find uses for 82 country houses. Within Nottinghamshire these included both Ossington Hall and Ordsall Hall (Cornforth 1974:39-40).<sup>92</sup> Such new administrative measures enabled and facilitated the preservation of many country houses within the United Kingdom but, despite numerous attempts, Ossington was demolished in 1963. Within this section, therefore, I will examine attempts to preserve the Hall with reference to administrative, financial and legislative changes which had been implemented since efforts to prevent the partial demolition of Rufford had failed.



**Figure 5.17:** Ordnance Survey map of Ossington village in the early twentieth century. Red rectangle sites the housing development planned for 1951. Blue line indicates coverage of aerial photograph in figure 5.20.

### **5.3.1 Introduction: The Parish of Ossington and the Denison family**

Originally built in 1729 for the Cartwright family to replace a house partly destroyed during the English Civil War, Ossington Hall is believed to have been designed by James Gibbs.<sup>93</sup> Ossington resembles designs for an unnamed gentleman's residence in Yorkshire in Gibbs's *Book of Architecture* to which Edmund Cartwright was known to have subscribed (Sherborn 2003; Johnson 1980; Harris 1990).<sup>94</sup> In 1768 William Denison, a textile merchant from Leeds bought the house and estate of 1,750 acres for £34,000 from George Cartwright's four daughters who jointly inherited the estate (Wilson 1968:165)<sup>95</sup>. William initially invited John Carr to design a circular temple in 1780 although this was not executed. At this time the estate was considerably improved, including the repairing of farm buildings, but very little was spent on Ossington Hall itself (Worsley 2000:189). When he died in 1782 William left seven estates in four counties, which in total were valued at between £500,000 and £700,000, to his brother Robert under trust – this included Ossington and Sutton-on-Trent in Nottinghamshire.<sup>96</sup> Although Robert died three years later he called Carr back to design the Holy Rood church as a memorial to his elder brother. Under his own will he made directions for the construction of a mausoleum and the commissioning of statues of both himself and William (Wilson 1968:169). Robert's nephew John Williamson inherited the estate and under the will of William assumed the arms and title Denison.

As a result of William and Robert both being bachelors with no direct heirs the entailing of the estate was carefully arranged. Robert only enjoyed the estates under trust and it was the future inheritance of John Wilkinson and his brother Edward Wilkinson which William focused upon in his will. In addition to the maintenance of the Denison name control of the family estates was divided between the two brothers. Both John and Edward jointly inherited all of the family estates in Leeds with the stipulation that the Durham estate be made available for sale if needed to maintain lands owned in either Yorkshire or Nottinghamshire. William's attempts to secure the estates within the family was somewhat countered by his brother. Robert left Potterton Lodge in the West Riding of Yorkshire together with an annuity to his former housekeeper at Ossington, Mrs. Ann Dunn. Following the death of his first wife, John Wilkinson (senior), father to John and Edward married Ann thereby bringing Potterton back into family ownership.

Edward later resided at Potterton Lodge in the West Riding of Yorkshire whilst John Denison (Wilkinson) opted to reside at Ossington.<sup>97</sup> He proceeded to improve the Hall itself and from 1787 William Lindley was a regular visitor to Ossington. Initially the interior was remodelled but in 1799 plans were accepted for a new stable block and coach house, and then in 1805 a north and south wing was added to the Hall. Later John was elected as Member of Parliament and upon his death in 1821 his eldest son, John Evelyn Denison inherited.



**Figure 5.18:** Late nineteenth century sketch of the west elevation of Ossington Hall from the lake (Brown 1889)

Six years later, in 1827, he married Lady Charlotte Cavendish Bentinck, the third daughter of the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Portland of Welbeck Abbey despite the initial reluctance of her father. This was an ascendancy in the aristocratic linkages of the Denison family which resulted in many improvements on the estate and further established a landed dynasty. In 1839 Denison paid for the remodelling of the north and south wings which improved both the domestic and formal accommodation, the west elevation of which can partly be seen in figure 5.18. Finally as illustrated in figure 5.19, in 1863, he commissioned Henry Clutton to design entrance gates to the Hall.<sup>98</sup> Such improvements also reflected Denison's own political successes; having been a Member of Parliament and a Lord of the Admiralty, he was elected unopposed to the position of Speaker of the House of Commons where he served for two terms. On his retirement in 1872 John Evelyn refused to accept a pension stating that, "though without any pretensions to

wealth, I have a private fortune which will suffice, and for the few years of life that remain to me I shall be happier in the feeling that I am not a burden to my fellow-countrymen".<sup>99</sup> He was vested with the title Viscount Ossington which became extinct following his death on 7 March 1873 leaving no heir. Following probate the Denison estates were valued at less than £120,000.<sup>100</sup> Such a period is viewed as the onset of aristocratic decline in England and perhaps this was also true for the Denison family (Cannadine 1990). By now the family retained only their Nottinghamshire estates at Ossington and adjacent Sutton-on-Trent.

At this time the Denison family had established a rich pedigree with John (Wilkinson) Denison's children either marrying into well established families or attaining prominent political, religious, military or legal positions. In addition to John Evelyn other notable siblings included Edward who was appointed Bishop of Salisbury, a position he held from 1837 until 1854. William Thomas held a number of key positions in the colonial British state including the governorships of Van Diemen's Land, Australia and Madras for which he was knighted. Finally George Anthony became the Archdeacon of Taunton.

John Evelyn, 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount Ossington was succeeded by his nephew William Evelyn, eldest son of Edward, who had served as Member of Parliament for Nottingham between 1874 and 1880. In 1877 he married Lady Elinor Amherst, daughter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl Amherst and upon his death in 1916 his son William Frank Evelyn succeeded to the estates. However, two years later in 1918 he died of wounds received during the First World War whilst serving with the Sherwood Rangers and the estates were passed back to his mother Lady Elinor. With a mind

to ensuring the future of the estate she passed ownership to her nephew W.M.E. Denison in 1930, although it was not until completing his military service with the Sherwood Rangers in 1947 that he took up residence. Lady Elinor remained on at the Hall until her own death in July 1939, when W.M.E. Denison's father temporarily resided in the Hall before it was requisitioned.

William Maxwell Evelyn (hereafter Denison) had been educated at the Royal Naval College Osborne and Oriel College, Oxford and became a Justice of the Peace in 1936. His public service was further extended as an elected Conservative member of Nottinghamshire County Council from 1937 until 1946 when he lost his Edwinstowe seat, and subsequently, with Southwell Rural District Council serving as a co-opted member of the County Council's area planning committee between 1946 and 1970. He married twice, firstly to Gladys Gatacre which ended in divorce in 1946, and secondly to Pamela Miles the following year. Moving to Ossington was somewhat of a shock. With no central heating the installation of electric heaters did not manage to keep the house warm and despite the best efforts of the estate joiner the house had been damaged as a result of military occupation during the Second World War. It is to the requisition whilst Denison was serving overseas that I now turn.

### **5.3.2 The Ossington estate during the Second World War**

In 1941 the Air Ministry requisitioned Ossington Hall and purchased additional estate land to the west of the house for the construction of an airfield. The flat farmland over which the elevated Hall surveyed was ideal for the expansion of Royal Air Force bomber airfields in the area. The flat agricultural landscapes to the east of the county, which extended to the Lincolnshire fens, witnessed widespread bomber airfield development especially during the Second World War.

Together with Denison's land the plans for the airfield development meant that a small part of Earl Manvers' estate within the parish of Laxton to the west was also required. In May 1943 the regional branch of the Air Ministry's Works Department entered into agreements with Earl Manvers, through his agent H.D. Argles, for the purchase of 6 acres of land that had initially been requisitioned in April and August 1941. As in the construction of other airfields, landscape features which made particular sites highly attractive were adopted within the designs and facilitated the running of the site. In particular at Ossington wooded plantations of North Wood and Speakers Plantation to the north provided excellent cover for the administrative, technical and residential ancillary sites serving the airfield should it come under aerial attack.<sup>101</sup> The station headquarters and main entrance were constructed under the cover of Speaker's Plantation and North Wood. Aircraft dispersal sites were located in parts of High Wood; the Women's Auxiliary Air Force encampment was sited at Colonel Denison's North

Park Farm and the largest of all the dispersed sites was the Communal Site which was constructed immediately to the west of the main drive to Ossington Hall, as illustrated in figure 5.19 and 5.20. In addition the local road from Ossington to Kneesall in the west was necessarily blocked under Defence Regulations to allow for the construction of runways, which is shown in figure 5.20. In the process the village lost two buildings, firstly a farmhouse, Straw Hall, to the north west within the Manvers estate, but more significantly, the village school to the east of the airfield which was never replaced. This highly mobilised, encompassing and technologically modern image of Ossington is quite distinct from that of the Nottinghamshire born travel writer Arthur Mee, who commented in 1938 that:

The world seems far away in this delightful spot at the end of a charming ride from Kneesall; its lanes are leafy glades; its few dwellings are trim with red walls and roofs. Not far from a group of stately larches, sheltering a bronze crucifix to men who died for peace, a fine lime avenue leads to the church and the gates of Ossington Hall (Mee 1938).

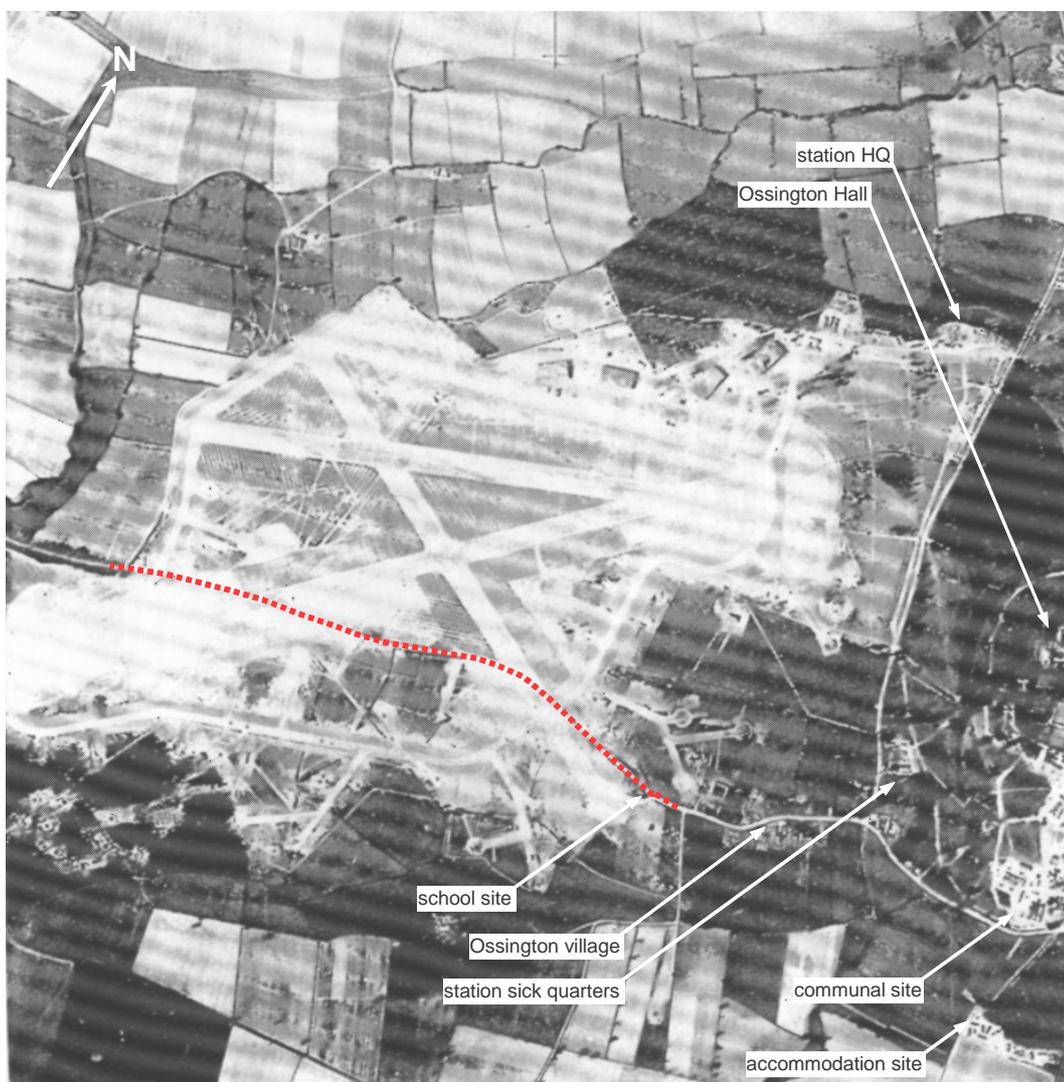


**Figure 5.19:** Entrance gates and drive to Ossington Hall. The Communal Site of R.A.F. Ossington was sited along the left hand side of the drive.<sup>102</sup>

Although the airfield was initially earmarked for Number 5 Group of Bomber Command it was never used and in January 1942 it was allocated to Flying Training Command and No. 14 Pilots Advanced Flying Unit was transferred there. As part of this it is believed that the top floor of Ossington Hall was used to billet some of the student pilots whilst the rest of the house was adapted to train aircrew in unarmed combat (Halpenny 1990). Much of the damage experienced at other estate houses during the Second World War was avoided due to the efforts of Harry Pitchfork, the head gardener who remained as part of a skeleton staff managing the estate.<sup>103</sup>

In May 1943 the airfield was transferred back to Bomber Command and it became home to No. 93 Group that later included No. 82 Operational Training Unit. As

the need for trained military aircrews diminished towards the end of the Second World War the airfield was transferred briefly to Transport Command where it operated as a conversion school to train pilots for civilian air transport jobs with the British Overseas Airways Corporation (Halpenny 1981:154-5).



**Figure 5.20:** Aerial photograph of R.A.F. Ossington taken in April 1942 (Taylor 1997). Red dashed line shows the portion of the original road blocked off during the requisition of the estate.

Most of the land that had been requisitioned in 1941 by the Air Ministry had been farmland so this was commented upon during the Ministry of Agriculture's reports undertaken as part of the National Farm Survey in late 1941 and 1942. This survey and subsequent attempts to improve productivity on farms was further state involvement in a private landscape that imposed restrictions both upon the landowners and their tenant farmers (Short et al. 2002). The farms that were surveyed in the parish of Ossington predominantly belonged to Denison. The soil was identified as of poor quality; adequate agricultural knowledge amongst farmers was limited and technological improvements on some farms nonexistent. James Cameron Gifford who assisted in the surveying of Nottinghamshire commented upon Mr. G. Watson's farm Park Lidgett, to the south east of the Hall, in May 1942 that, "this farm [203 acres] is reputed to be the worst farm in Nottinghamshire and has been taken over by the W.A.C. Also Laxton Common 76 acres of derelict common land has been attached to this farm by W.A.C.".<sup>104</sup> As elsewhere in Ossington, the local branch of the War Agricultural Committee intervened quite extensively in the management of many of the local tenanted farms. Even North Park Farm, which Colonel Denison had taken in hand, was described as under the 'direction' of the War Agricultural Committee in spite of it being recognised as being of 'A grade management'.<sup>105</sup>

It was also evident that the direct and encompassing impact of mass mobilisation on the agricultural sector in Ossington could have long-term negative impacts as a result of state measures for immediate goals. Most of Highland Farm, which was also part of the Ossington estate, had been requisitioned as part of the airfield

development. When the National Farm Survey was recorded in January 1943 the inspector found that, “this man is only now a spare time farmer as the Air Ministry have taken most of farm. He seems to have lost interest”.<sup>106</sup>

### **5.3.3 Derequisition, land-use and the post-war planning of the Ossington estate**

Although the airfield was officially decommissioned in September 1946, the Air Ministry had begun the disposal of land a year earlier. In September 1945 moves were made to derequisition some of the land that had been taken over from Earl Manvers. As part of the Compensation (Defence) Act 1939, the requisitioning authority was required to return land to a state prior to occupation. Under this direction, at Knapeney Farm to the north west the Air Ministry agreed to pay £24 for the removal of brick floors and concrete paths that had been constructed in 1942 for a searchlight site as part of the airfield’s defensive measures.<sup>107</sup> The official decommissioning prompted the gradual and piecemeal derequisition and sale of land and buildings.

At Ossington in October 1946 the Rural District Council drew up plans for the conversion of hutments on four of the accommodation sites west of the Hall. With minor alterations each of these single roomed billets, in the case of the airmen’s quarters, were converted to provide two family homes with two bedrooms, a kitchen and sitting room.<sup>108</sup>

Immediately following the Second World War, therefore, former military sites within rural areas offered new opportunities for the development and advancement of rural housing which had for so long been the responsibility of the estate landowner. Rural housing had been a focus of pre-war and wartime government concerns. Under-modernised and in poor condition estate tenants lived in accommodation which, despite the aesthetic charm of being in an estate village, was often uninhabitable. Whilst hutments only offered temporary accommodation to casual workers assisting on the estate farms and thereby did not improve the housing stock in Ossington, post-war planning powers of the local authorities enabled new modern housing to be built for local tenants.

Furthermore, with much of the land immediately west of the drive concreted over during the Second World War for use as the Communal Site, the District Council viewed such an area, shown in figure 5.17, as appropriate for the location of a minor housing development which was required of many country settlements following the Second World War. In September 1951 the surveyor of Southwell Rural District Council submitted plans for the erection of 6 semi-detached houses facing the main road through Ossington and lying immediately west of the main drive.<sup>109</sup> The development had been planned with the full support of Denison who was a member of the District Council, however, the following month the *Newark Advertiser* reported that such a proposal had been thwarted by the Ministry of Works together with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries who were in the process of derequisitioning parts of the airfield development and returning many of the concrete runways, taxiways, hardstands and ancillary sites to agricultural

land. As part of the distribution of sugar beet which had increasingly been cultivated during the Second World War and which continued post-war, the Ministry of Supply within the area required temporary open-air storage space for 15,000 tons. Denison, together with the Council's chairman Lt.-Col. G.H. Vere-Laurie of Carlton (on-Trent) Hall, raised concerns, firstly with regard to the safety issue of thousands of wasps consequently swarming around the sugar, and secondly, despite the many remaining concrete sites within Ossington, that the Ministry had chosen the exact same location as that upon which the District Council wished to build key local housing. This move by the Ministry, which was undertaken without consultation with the District Council, was commented upon by Denison;

Three weeks ago a lot of lorries arrived at Ossington Aerodrome and dumped hundreds of bags of sugar all over the place where we want to build our houses. They were left two or three days in the rain without any cover, then a few tarpaulins were put over them.<sup>110</sup>

Contrastingly, in February 1956 as part of continued efforts at returning the airfield to agricultural land the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries consulted the County Council's Highways and Bridges Committee regarding their intentions to reopen the main road which had been closed off since 1941. Eleven years after the end of hostilities and a further five since the airfield had been decommissioned, Ministerial finances were such that this long overdue move could be undertaken, despite the fact that the future use of the airfield could not fully be discounted. The original road, which had not been incorporated within the airfield development scheme, had become overgrown due to lack of use. The Ministry's

proposal was that part of the existing concrete runways could be maintained and linked up with the old road at the points where it had been discontinued in 1941. The recommendation was argued as firstly, offering both the “greatest economy” when the supply of construction materials was regulated and secondly, “leaving the maximum area of land available for agricultural purposes”.<sup>111</sup>

Many Acts of Parliament passed at the onset, and during, the Second World War, which were necessary to ensure the speedy purchase and requisition of land and buildings as part of mass mobilisation procedures, countered long term efforts to tighten up town and country planning controls. Consequently, at Rufford, the Ministry of Health, then responsible for planning, made efforts to inform the County Council of existing legislation which could be implemented with their assistance to ensure degrees of protection, even during wartime. Such an example, through a deep understanding of the legislation, brought Ministerial departments into conflict over the necessary use of land but, more importantly, provided continuity to the planning ethos.

At Ossington the state imposition during the Second World War was greater than that witnessed on other estates discussed within this thesis. Unlike at Rufford, there were no joint efforts for example to preserve woodland amenity during the war, but post-war legislative measures intended to redress wartime imposition. The Building Restrictions (War-Time Contraventions) Act, 1946, restricted Ministerial control over land and buildings which had been retained either under requisition or ownership. Authority was therefore placed with the local planning authorities and their County Planning Committees. The exercise of this

realignment of planning policy was witnessed within the intentions of the Air Ministry at Ossington.

In February 1959, having sold back or derequisitioned most of the airfield site, the Air Ministry contacted the County Planning Committee with regard to the four hangars to the north which it had retained. Before the passing of the 1946 Act the Ministry, being the owners of the property, could have reasonably sold the hangars. In considering the application the Planning Committee determined that such an intended use did not accord with the County Development Plan of 1952 or wider moves towards landscape and amenity preservation within the area and therefore rejected the proposal.<sup>112</sup> Increased planning control in the hands of local authorities did not give any significant concessions to landowners and the preservation of the economic or amenity value of their estates. As a representative of the regional planning committee and member of the District Council, however, Denison could voice concerns regarding the future planning of Ossington.

### **5.3.4 The Historic Buildings Council and the preservation of Ossington Hall**

Following his remarriage, Denison and his wife, Pamela, decided to return to Ossington, illustrated in figure 5.21, and adopt it as their family home. Although serious damage had been prevented during the Second World War due to the careful vigilance of the estate joiner, the house was in need of extensive modernisation. There was no central heating and the electric fires installed never

quite managed to keep the house comfortable. With a skeleton staff the Denisons lived in and maintained a small portion of the Hall; the south wing was no longer used and the second floor service attic was abandoned and merely provided additional weatherproofing.



**Figure 5.21:** East elevation of Ossington Hall in 1957. Photograph most likely taken by the National Buildings Record.<sup>113</sup>

In 1956 Denison considered that the financial costs of maintaining Ossington Hall, which was increasingly in much need of repair, were so great that he had only two options. Either to sell a large portion of the estate land in order to fund the upkeep or to leave the Hall and rent it out.<sup>114</sup> As I will discuss, owing to Denison's deep desire to protect the amenity of his estate for recreational shooting purposes he was reluctant to sell any land because of the many pheasant coverts maintained. Equally, because the Hall was situated prominently in the middle of the Ossington estate he recognised that any future new use, especially associated to state functions, would also be undesirable.

Firstly the only maintained route to the house was along the main drive shown in figure 5.19 and access across land retained by Denison would have to be negotiated. Secondly, rather than having little regard for the Hall within his shooting estate, Denison recognised that the Hall, because of its location was a central visual focus of the estate and the shoot. I discuss below Denison's unwillingness to accede to the recommendations of the HBB and thereby, in his view, concede defeat to the state. Denison only considered the options which most accorded with his vision and as such only considered letting the hall as a private residence or as apartments for retired service personnel.

In the autumn of 1959 the Denisons opted to move out of the Hall in favour of the smaller former vicarage, Ossington House, which was located more centrally within the village. Once attempts to preserve the Hall had failed a number of interior features were reinstalled in their new home. In addition to extending the House with a new wing, funded in part by the sale of the family's stud in Ireland, fireplaces and the original wooden block flooring from the Hall were installed.<sup>115</sup> That same year Denison consulted his friend Sir Joshua Rowley regarding his concerns as to the future of Ossington Hall. Rowley worked on the staff at the National Trust and latterly offered his house Packwood in Warwickshire to them (Lees-Milne 1986:158, 245). In 1960 his family seat, Tendring Hall in Suffolk was demolished and so he had considerable knowledge and personal experience upon which to draw in advising Denison (Strong et al 1974).<sup>116</sup> Rowley was married to Celia Vere Monckton-Arundell, daughter of the 9<sup>th</sup> Viscount Galway of Serlby Hall in Nottinghamshire, and was also a close friend of James Lees-

Milne.<sup>117</sup> He recommended that Denison write to Lord Euston, owner of Euston Hall, and then a member of the Historic Buildings Council for England's Committee on Uses which had been formed under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953. In his letter to Euston Denison expressed his concern for the future of Ossington Hall and his desire to ensure that his estate remained private and profitable:

I have recently moved out of Ossington Hall and am now living in a smaller house in the village [Ossington House]. I am not, therefore, prepared to sell the hall since, apart from the fact that nobody would buy it, except perhaps the County Council or some other Authority for use as an institution of some sort, it is right in the middle of my estate surrounded by woodlands and would very definitely ruin the shooting and other amenities of the estate generally.<sup>118</sup>

This determination not to sell and a lack of success in finding a suitable tenant through the private rental market led Denison to seek the assistance and advice directly of the Historic Buildings Council for England.<sup>119</sup> In his letter he reiterated the points made to Lord Euston and emphasised that another state office, the Ministry of Town and Country Planning, had recently listed the property thereby confirming Ossington's architectural importance. He further asserted the estate's architectural pedigree through the known work of Carr in the design of the church and his student Lindley in the remodelling of the Hall.<sup>120</sup> Increased recognition by the HBC was given to the group value of architectural features and Denison attempted to persuade its Committee of the mutual architectural importance of

both the church and the Hall. Indeed it was perhaps the former and the statuary inside which was regarded of greater importance. Certainly Pevsner offers only 3 lines of comment to the Hall compared to eight times this in reference to the church and its monuments to the Cartwrights and those of Robert and William Denison (Pevsner 1951:145-6).

To the Historic Buildings Council and other Ministerial departments Pevsner's *Buildings of England* was a constant reference point before more detailed investigation could be undertaken.<sup>121</sup> But in relation to the architectural history of Ossington Hall detailed survey would be required in order to ascertain its worthiness of a state grant. The first provisional list of buildings of architectural and historic importance submitted by the Ministry of Town and Country Planning in June 1951 did not include Ossington Hall.<sup>122</sup> Neither was the hall part of an amended list for Southwell Rural District submitted on 7 August 1952 (Nottinghamshire County Council 1964).<sup>123</sup> It was not until the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, who were now responsible for listing procedures, had been informed of the possible demolition in July 1959 that investigators hurriedly placed it on the list, stating that:

The full comprehensive list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest has not yet been issued for this area but this building is of sufficient interest (Grade II\*) to merit its listing. It has been decided therefore to list the Hall, the stables and the sundial in the garden in advance of the main list. The stable and sundial are graded II.<sup>124</sup>

In their hurry and enthusiasm to place Ossington on the list a number of errors were made. As will be discussed later, before the HBC committed a formal investigation of the Hall to consider its worthiness of a grant, a preliminary architectural report was written for consideration by Members of the HBC. This was no doubt exclusively drawn from the listing statements made by an inspector of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government. In these James Gibbs was identified as the principal architect in 1729 with alterations by John Carr in 1784 and later by an unidentified architect in 1838. Both the stables and sundial were also referred to although the latter was given a date of, “seventeenth century probably”.<sup>125</sup>

Whilst initial listings were concerned with domestic architecture such as manor and estate houses which had not previously been offered protection under Ancient Monuments legislation, increasing attention was given to the clustering of architectural features. Country estates offered more to the history of creative arts than just the estate house and ancillary buildings, both aesthetic and functional, statuary and monuments increasingly offered attention. As witnessed at Rufford, the orangery became a focus for this broadened aesthetic attention and at Ossington this included the sundial in the rose garden and the stables in the latter half of 1959.<sup>126</sup> The late eighteenth century stables, as already mentioned were believed to be by Lindley, although no architect was attributed in the official listing. The sundial, dated 1812, by Arthur Buckle was, “included for group value only”, as grade III (later II).<sup>127</sup> However, it was not until 11 August 1961 that the classical Holy Rood Church was added to the list.<sup>128</sup>

However, as Denison was to discover, because one Ministerial department had conferred value on the property this did not necessarily mean that this would be mirrored in the opinions and actions of the Minister of Works, Rt. Hon. Lord John Hope, who ultimately made grant allocation decisions based upon the advice of the Members of the Historic Buildings Council. Discussion with regard to Denison's enquiry can be divided for ease and clarity four ways. Firstly, from the perspective of the Historic Buildings Council's general stipulations regarding funding issues, secondly with regard to Ossington Hall as an example of Georgian architecture, thirdly the preservation situation as it was in 1959, and fourthly, with regard to Denison's own desires and demands for the future of his estate.

As one of the key recommendations of the Gowers Committee created through the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act, 1953 the Historic Buildings Councils had developed clear rules for the allocation of state grant funding towards preservation. Headed by the courtier the Rt. Hon. Sir Alan Lascelles, nephew to the fifth Earl of Harewood, who knew of many country estates but nothing of their architecture, the Council's membership offered a balance of differing perspectives and was not populated by the recognised aesthetes and architectural experts as some had hoped and others feared (Mandler 1997a:347-8). The chief architectural consultants on the Council at this time were Christopher Hussey and Sir John Summerson. Both had studied and celebrated Georgian architecture of which Ossington was an example. In 1958 Hussey had just published the last of his celebrated trilogy on Georgian country houses (Hussey 1955; 1956; 1958) and similarly Summerson, who was now curator at the Sir John Soane's Museum in London, had published his work, *Georgian London*

(Summerson 1946). Indeed he was perhaps aware of, and may have taken interest in, Soane's designs for Ossington which were still retained by the Denison family. Had these designs been implemented over those of Lindley then Summerson may well have offered greater support. More influential support, however, could have come from Sir David Eccles, the former Minister of Works, to whom the Council reported. Eccles was a member of the Georgian Group and collector of eighteenth century antiques (Mandler 1997a:345).

The Council's annual report for 1959, the year in which Ossington's case was presented, provides illuminating contextual information regarding the preservation of historic architecture at that time. Furthermore complete lists of those properties which were offered grants provides information regarding the architectural quality and building type which Ossington was placed against. Firstly in 1959 the total grants budget was cut by a third from £600,000 to £400,000 as such the Council reported that, "we are having to recommend you to refuse grants to many buildings which would hitherto have qualified", adding that, "in these cases it is only with the greatest regret that we have recommended you not to make grants since we realise that we may well be signing the death warrants of fine buildings".<sup>129</sup> The number of grant applications far outstripped the funds available to support all claims and as such the Council had created its own classification system in which to judge the importance of individual cases, as A, B or C. Whilst houses of both A and B standards were regarded as of outstanding value and worthy of grants, the latter were placed on a waiting list until the end of the financial year and thereby not offered an immediate grant, "lest this prejudice our

ability to help an even more important building”.<sup>130</sup> Such a classification – Ossington was graded B - therefore placed houses in preservation purgatory.

Prior to any official inspection of the property a brief architectural history of the Hall was written for consideration by members of the HBC. Contrary to other conclusions made regarding its architectural pedigree, notably by Howard Colvin, the brief summary listed James Gibbs as the principal architect in 1729 with alterations by John Carr in 1784 and then later by an unnamed architect in 1838. The stables and sundial were also referred to, although the latter was pronounced as probably seventeenth century. The Hall was no doubt unknown to the Council members including the classicists Summerson and Hussey. Lord Euston had been an initial contact for Denison but in no way could he vouch for the Hall’s pedigree. Two photographs were supplied in addition to the summary, most likely taken by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government upon listing, or the National Buildings Record. The Council were not convinced about the identification of the architect; both Hussey and Summerson could have had a basis upon which to contend or doubt Ossington as Gibbs’ work. Certainly, at this stage no reference was given to the Hall’s condition of repair, and so the basis for the Council’s rejection of Ossington as worthy of a grant can be argued as resting on its architectural associations and the Council’s aesthetic judgements.

The reply was perhaps not what Denison expected. In order for the Council to award a grant an assessment as to the property’s sustainable maintenance would have to be ascertained. In the case of county estates this meant ownership and occupation and there are two comments to make here. Firstly at Ossington in an

attempt to maintain control of the estate Denison only wished to let the property and this would certainly restrict the number of potential tenants. Secondly, there were Denison's concerns as to what a future use might be. Indeed if the County Council or Home Office wished to establish a special school or borstal within the Hall as Denison feared, then they would no doubt stipulate that they purchase the property. With the future ownership of the Hall uncertain, and with it classified as B category, the Committee of the HBC decided that they could not offer a grant and instead passed the case onto their subsidiary department the Historic Buildings Bureau and Denison's grant application placed on a waiting list pending any future developments.

If the Historic Buildings Bureau could successfully find a new user which would ensure the Hall's immediate future then the possibilities of a grant being offered were greatly improved. As the property was empty it would be regarded as an ancient monument to be conserved rather historic building requiring financial assistance for preservation. As a result, before offering the desired grant, the HBC passed the case to the Historic Buildings Bureau. With six years experience in finding new uses for country estate houses, the secretary to the HBC Mrs D.M. Phillips was not optimistic in finding a tenant to suit the demands of Denison:

I am now able to tell you that the Historic Buildings Council have agreed to refer Ossington Hall to their Historic Buildings Bureau. Mr. Clarke, Director of the Bureau, will be getting in touch with you as he will need to visit Ossington Hall in order to obtain all the details he will need to pass on to possible tenants... The Council felt that the fact that you are ruling

out any institutional use will make it very difficult, if not impossible, for them to suggest a tenant.<sup>131</sup>

The HBC had received a total of 346 grant applications in 1959 with 90 being regarded as of “category A” status and accordingly awarded financial assistance that year. With 18 applications being withdrawn the remainder were placed on a waiting list. In spite of this Denison remained resolute and reiterated his concerns over any future possible institutional use of Ossington:

I agree that it will be difficult to let Ossington Hall to anyone other than an institution, but as I shall continue to live here [in the village] I do not want the amenities of the Estate spoiled by Borstal Boys or lunatics. I am sure you will appreciate my point.<sup>132</sup>

Notification of intent to demolish awoke concern from inside the Georgian Group. The attachment of James Gibbs and John Carr as architects, attributed respectively in the design and remodelling of Ossington Hall, initiated and later supported the Group’s claims that this house should be preserved. The Group had been informed of Denison’s intention to demolish through the government department concerned with listing, the Ministry of Housing and Local Government. Indeed significant informal links existed between the two with many of the Ministry’s listing investigators also being council members of the Georgian Group.

Although to the Georgian Group the pedigree of Ossington was not in question, its state of repair and architectural quality needed to be assessed in order to ascertain

how best to advance their claims for preservation, by either suggesting a new use should be found or supporting any claims that a public grant should be given. On the 1 January 1962 they wrote to H.A. Johnston and Sons, a family firm of architects based at Wadsworth Hall near Doncaster, requesting if a representative could visit the Hall and submit a report detailing its present condition and architectural quality together with further details as to Denison's intentions. H.A. Johnston visited the Hall on the 17 January 1962 and his report described its deteriorating condition in relation to its architectural value. H.A. Johnston had trained at the Bartlett School of Architecture of the University of London under Sir Albert Richardson. Sir Albert latterly contributed significantly to architectural history and the preservation of buildings during this period. He was one of the original members of the Council of Management of the National Buildings Record, serving from 1941 until 1963. Johnston also informed the group of Denison's comments that representatives from the HBC had agreed on the idea of maintenance but had no fund from which to offer funds. He added that the costs of reparation and conversion would be significantly less than the construction of a new building and made recommendation according to his own witnessed experiences whilst based in Doncaster.

In adjoining Yorkshire, the County Council have taken several houses of this size, and turned them with success into Training Colleges. The situation of Ossington is very suitable for this purpose.<sup>133</sup>

As at Rufford it was the SPAB, however, who took a more practical lead in trying to secure the future of Ossington. On the 21 June 1962 *Country Life* published

pictures of five country residences. Under the main title *Country Life* added, “the houses illustrated here are among a number listed by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings as being in danger of serious deterioration if no use can be found for them that will enable them to be preserved. Readers who are interested in purchasing or leasing them or can suggest an alternative use should write to the secretary of the S.P.A.B.”.<sup>134</sup> The piece was not a paid advertisement similar to those of the large estate agents which crowded the opening pages of the magazine. Denison, as perhaps had other owners, tried such avenues in an attempt to find an appropriate tenant with no success. The co-operation of *Country Life* and the SPAB in the creation of such an article transformed the mere processes of property exchange into news and thereby contributed to the re-evaluation of the country house, by now well established, from mere aristocratic residence to building of national architectural importance worthy of preservation. Of course by publicising the plight of the house within the pages of *Country Life* the piece was predominantly addressing landed society and by the 1960s it had perhaps been conceded by *Country Life* and its readership, but as less of a concern for the SPAB, that the article recognised the value of new uses in the fight to preserve country estate houses. Hope that the featured houses could be maintained as private residences rather than with an alternate use was, however, not lost as evident in the title of the article – “Houses in search of a owner”.

Together with Ossington, these included the Elizabethan Canons Ashby, which later featured on the cover of Marcus Binney’s *Vanishing Country Houses* as an estate house which was saved from demolition, Madeley Court in Shropshire, Eagle House in Somerset and the nineteenth century tower of Hadlow Castle in

Kent which was all that remained following the demolition of the residence itself in 1952 (Binney and Milne 1982). The feature emphasised that these buildings were, “in danger of serious deterioration if no use is found for them that will enable them to be preserved”, and that prospective owners should contact the SPAB direct. As such the Society was operating parallel to the state run Bureau.<sup>135</sup> Although, unlike the Bureau who maintained a broad list of prospective owners and tenants many of which were industries, the Society used its contacts within the aesthetic and landowning communities to seek initial opportunities which would maintain country houses as private residences – targeting in particular rich industrialists looking for a residence. Of the five properties advertised in *Country Life* only Ossington was demolished.

In preparation to renting out Ossington, Denison sold off a large portion of the contents of the Hall on 21 April 1960<sup>136</sup> but as no potential tenants had been found by May 1960, he decided to relax his disapproval of an institutional use for Ossington Hall. Almost immediately a company who converted estate houses into apartments for retired people, the Mutual Household Association, was approached. Created in 1955 by Rear-Admiral Bernard Wilberforce Greathead, the Association was a non-profit organisation which purchased a number of country estates which by 1974 totalled 10. One of its earliest was Gosfield Park in Essex, which was an initial house on the books of the Historic Buildings Bureau. Whilst many new uses for country houses have been retrospectively criticised for their failure to preserve architecture without detrimental additions or necessary alterations, the Association has been celebrated by architectural historians due to the nature of the new use, which was viewed as befitting such a private landscape,

but also because of the sustainability and sensitivity of such ventures (Cornforth 1974:49).<sup>137</sup>

Response from potential individual tenants on the books of the Mutual Household Association was disappointing and as such their interest was lost – Ossington did not meet their own aesthetic tastes.<sup>138</sup> However, by the end of the year a similar and more sustained interest was expressed – a proposal that almost saved the house but which, due to its protracted nature, ultimately condemned it. The Historic Buildings Bureau was contacted by Colonel F. Jones-Davies whose intention, similar to that of the Mutual Household Association, was to convert the house into about 10 flats for occupation by retired army officers including himself. With renewed hope for the future of the Hall a grant application was submitted to the Historic Buildings Council. It was estimated that repairs would cost between £7,000 and £10,000 with a further £30,000 to convert Ossington to flats.<sup>139</sup> This time two reports were commissioned in order to assess the grant application, addressing architectural value and other factors which might determine whether a grant should be awarded:

On the garden side the central block is flanked by pedimented wings with triple windows: the left-hand one is late 18<sup>th</sup> century – the date given is 1784, – but the right-hand one, though similar, is said to be of 1838. This difference of date is borne out by the character of the interiors. These are on the whole disappointing... The staircase is genuine early 18<sup>th</sup> century with slender twisted balusters, but not very exciting... On the other [left]

side of the house is the Parish Church, eighteenth century but somewhat altered for the worse.

The house has been empty for a year or so: it feels as though it has been empty for ten. But even after allowance has been made for superficial impressions, I am not satisfied that, except for the 1784 room, the house as a whole measures up to today's 'A' standards.<sup>140</sup>

As a result of the architectural report and the poor condition of part of the house the decision of the Historic Buildings Council was to refuse the grant, although the possibility of available funds was not ruled out – Ossington Hall being placed on the 'B' list should finances be unallocated at the end of the financial year.<sup>141</sup> As always the reasoning for refusal was as a result of comparisons with other grant applications:

They [the Historic Buildings Council] have agreed that Ossington Hall is a very interesting building, but as funds are short, and as there are more important buildings where repairs are equally, or even more urgently, needed, they are not able to recommend that a grant be offered at present.<sup>142</sup>

By June 1961, the Historic Buildings Council was in a position to offer a token gesture of £2,000 towards the necessary repairs which were estimated at between £8,000 and £12,000 on the condition that the house was leased for a minimum of 21 years and that it be made open to the public at least one day a week in the

summer.<sup>143</sup> Whilst their opinion of the quality of the house had remained unchanged they felt that because the Historic Buildings Bureau had found a new use for the house this should at least be met with a grant, no matter how small. It was known that Colonel Jones-Davies spent the winter in France and all correspondence was sent to his address there and one in London. Problems with receipt of correspondence had already been experienced and it was not until February 1962 that a reply to the grant offer was received. By now the Historic Buildings Council had lost interest and had allocated the funds to another project. In his letter Colonel Jones-Davies is in defence of his actions – or lack of them:

I am sorry that nothing came of Ossington Hall. However, I do not feel the fault was wholly mine. Had the Council moved smartly at the time I was negotiating I could have made arrangements with the Bank and so on.... So I am afraid the whole scheme is off. In addition the Hall has fallen into much disrepair in the last year and is now, I think, almost beyond recall unless a great deal of money is spent on it.

The minutes of the Committee of the Historic Buildings Council's meeting on 7 February 1961 illustrates the final word on Ossington Hall – the resigned and detached tone of the minutes provides a fitting melancholic air to the final fate of the house:

The Secretary (of the Historic Buildings Council) said that the Ministry of Housing's Advisory Committee had been asked to consider an application by the owner for demolition of the house; they did not feel that it was a

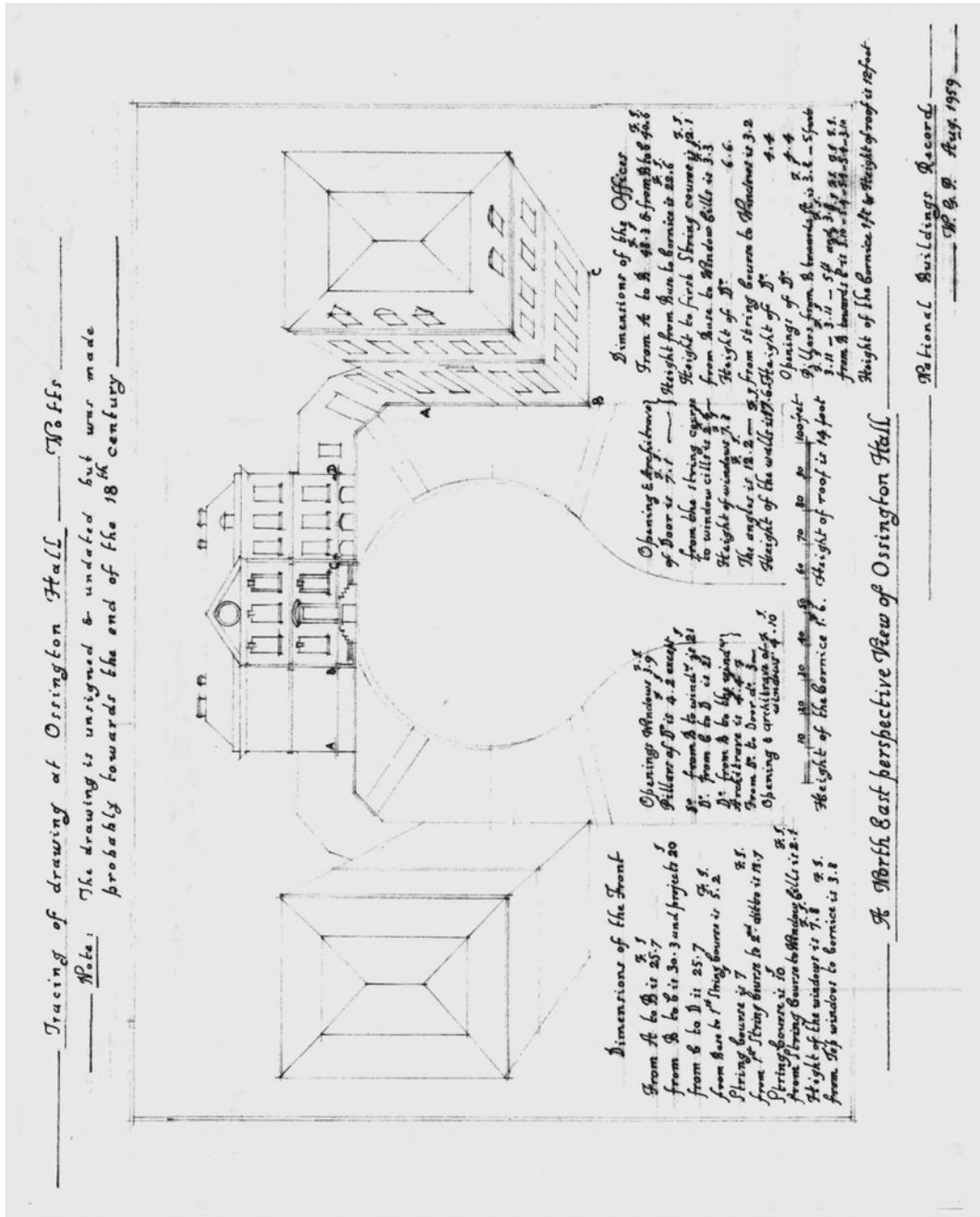
strong candidate for preservation but proposed to ask the owner to delay demolition in the hope that a new user would be found. Members felt that the building had no outstanding claims to preservation and, therefore, should be reclassified 'C'. The Council agreed to recommend that the grant of £2,000 should be cancelled and the building removed from the Historic Buildings Bureau's list.<sup>144</sup>

### **5.3.5 The demolition of Ossington Hall**

Following the withdrawal of a grant, and with no new proposal for its future use, Denison notified the County Council of his intent to demolish Ossington in October 1962. As witnessed at Winkburn, despite its listed status, the Council decided not to impose a Building Preservation Order. With the support of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, who were then responsible for listing procedures and aware of the protracted negotiations which had gone on between Denison and both the Historic Buildings Council and Bureau, on the 6 November 1962 W.H. Foster, chairman of the Planning Committee, signed the Report to the Council which concluded, "in all the circumstances no objection will be raised to this proposed demolition".<sup>145</sup>

At Rufford the Council initially involved itself through the unconsidered implementation of a Building Preservation Order, while at Winkburn the Council were drawn into arm's length negotiations through rumblings instigated by a member, Francklin. By 1962, with declining estate owning or landed

representation within the Council the announcement of Ossington's demise passed with little concern. Illustrative of the interest in Ossington, the Hall was well recorded by the National Buildings Record who commissioned a photographic survey in 1957 (see figure 5.23), measured drawings in 1959 (see figure 5.22) and an architectural report in May 1962.<sup>146</sup> Such an extensive record of the property merely confirmed the worst fears of all concerned, that the Hall would be demolished.

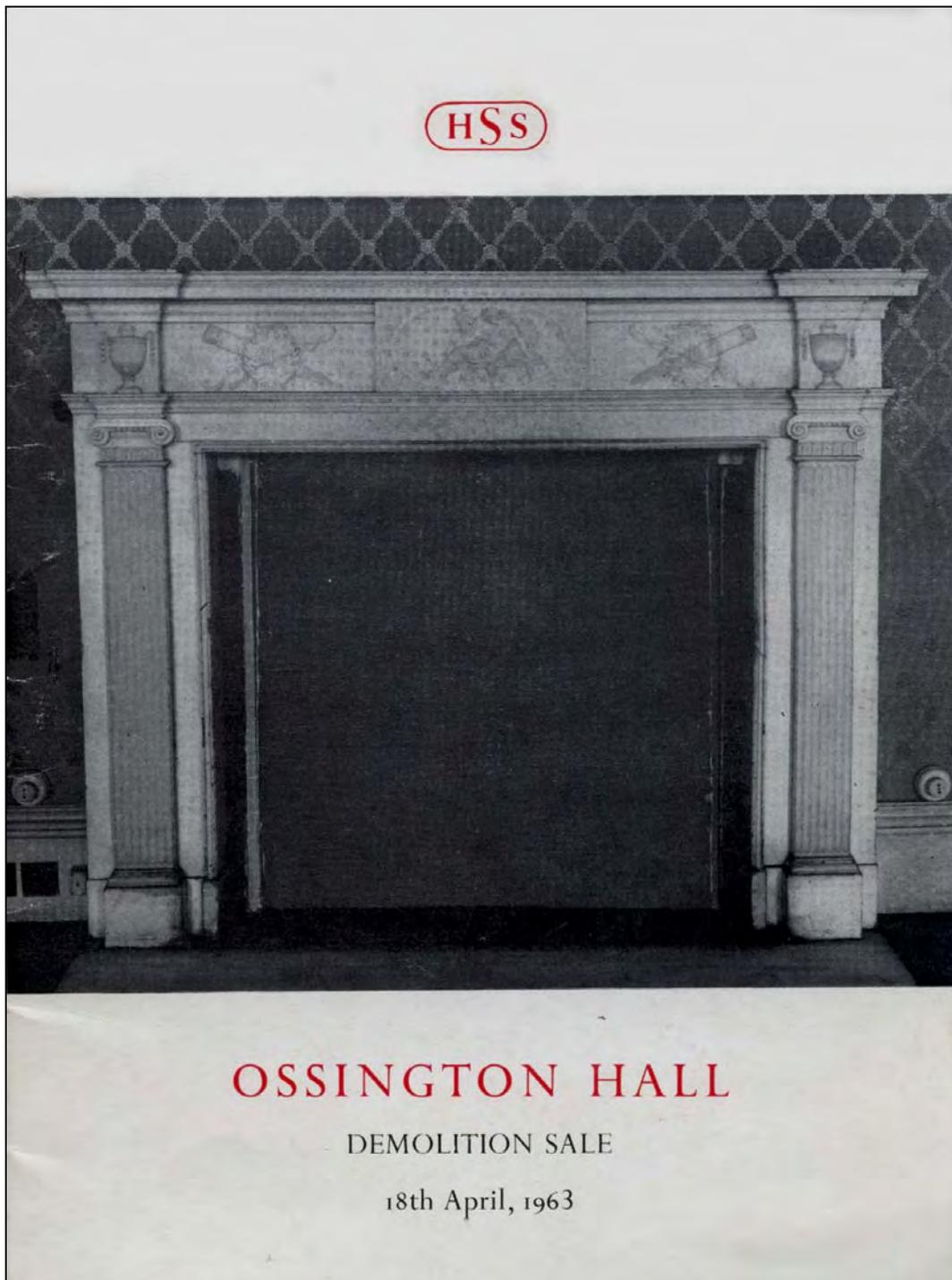


**Figure 5.22:** Measured perspective drawing of Ossington Hall in August 1959. Tracing of late 18<sup>th</sup> Century original by W.G. Prosser for the National Buildings Record.<sup>147</sup>



**Figure 5.23:** The Drawing Room at Ossington Hall. Photograph taken by F.J. Palmer for the National Buildings Record in 1957. The bookcases were reinstalled in Ossington House.<sup>148</sup>

In April 1963 Denison ordered the fixtures of Ossington Hall including staircases, fireplaces, flooring and garden ornaments to be auctioned off although much of the statuary and fireplaces were stolen prior to the sale (Sherborn 2003) (see figure 5.24). The Portuguese parquet flooring was re-laid at Ossington House, some of the book cases were transferred, and after demolition some of the bricks were salvaged for use in the extension of Denison's new residence.



**Figure 5.24:** Demolition sale catalogue for Ossington Hall undertaken on 18 April 1963.

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- <sup>1</sup> The Daily Telegraph, Demolition of Rufford Abbey stopped, 24/5/49; Country Life, The Future of a Great House, 20/8/38; Manchester Guardian 7/1/49 The Chapel at Rufford Abbey.
- <sup>2</sup> Anthony Salvin (1799-1881) was principally a restorer of castles and designer of domestic architecture. Within Nottinghamshire his other principal commissions were in the design of the Jacobean styled service wing at Kelham Hall (1844-1846) and the third Thoresby Hall (1865-1875) in a neo-Elizabethan style (Pevsner and Williamson 1979).
- <sup>3</sup> Sir Albert Ball resided at Stansted House which was built as part of a wealthy residential development within the boundaries of Wollaton Park following the sale of the estate by the Lord Middleton in 1925.
- <sup>4</sup> The Times. 2 April 1938. p15.
- <sup>5</sup> The chimney pieces which had been stripped out and were awaiting export from Tilbury docks were repurchased and returned to Tattersal with considerable ceremony upon decorated horse-drawn carriages (Avery 2002).
- <sup>6</sup> Those who purchased land within the Papplewick estate from Ball included a local Industrial Provident Society and Sir Charles Hilton Seely who bought 444 acres centred on Forest Farm just north of his estate at Sherwood Lodge.
- <sup>7</sup> The Times 13-15 October 1938; 24 October 1938
- <sup>8</sup> The Times 19 November 1938.
- <sup>9</sup> The Times. 23 November 1938 p11. 24 November 1938 p11.
- <sup>10</sup> The Times. 29 November 1938 p11
- <sup>11</sup> The Times, 29 November 1938 p11.
- <sup>12</sup> Burke's Landed Gentry (1969) 18<sup>th</sup> Edition.
- <sup>13</sup> NAO CC/CL1/PN/02
- <sup>14</sup> NMR AA51/74. Comment noted by National Buildings Record photographer.
- <sup>15</sup> NMR AA51/72
- <sup>16</sup> NAO CC/SV/11/7/1. Letter from G.I. Pepler (Ministry of Health) to R.A. Kidd (Country Surveyor, Nottinghamshire County Council) 26 January 1940.
- <sup>17</sup> Also PRO HLG 53/269.
- <sup>18</sup> It was later in the County Development Plan of 1952 that a broad preservation strategy across the county was instigated.
- <sup>19</sup> NAO CC/SV/11/7/2. Report of the Town Planning Committee. 1 February 1945.
- <sup>20</sup> NAO CC/SC/11/7/1. Report to the Town Planning Committee from the County Surveyor, Reginald A. Kidd. 16/4/40.
- <sup>21</sup> Also of Liverpool University
- <sup>22</sup> NA CC/SV/11/7/1. Letter from the County Surveyor to Messrs. Oates (Timber Merchants) Ltd. 7/9/40. The National Farm Survey for Rufford details land that was owned by the Forestry Commission by 1943.
- <sup>23</sup> NA CC/SV/11/7/3, 5-6. Based on Ordnance Survey 6" to 1 mile map from Rufford Abbey estate sale of 1938 (Knight, Frank and Rutley 1938c).
- <sup>24</sup> NAO CC/SV/11/7/1.. Letter from the County Surveyor to G.I. Pepler (Ministry of Health). 26/4/41.
- <sup>25</sup> The ownership of land and trees also hindered negotiations. Upon the 1938 sale tree merchants had purchased woodland, thereby the "licence to fell" and not the land upon which the trees grew. The timber merchants involved included Messrs. Oates Ltd and Messrs. Godley and Goulding, both of Worksop.
- <sup>26</sup> NAO CC/SV/11/7/1. County Surveyor to W.B. PUNCHARD (Rufford Estate Officer)
- <sup>27</sup> Section 34, Town and Country Planning Act, 1932.
- <sup>28</sup> NAO CC/SV/11/7/1. Letter from County Surveyor to Colonel Sir Joseph Nall MP of Hoveringham Hall. 26/2/1943.
- <sup>29</sup> P RIS. Lord Methuen to Robert Innes-Smith. 17 June 1953.
- <sup>30</sup> In previous attempts to preserve woodland the County Council worked in association with the then local planning authority, Southwell Rural District Council.
- <sup>31</sup> NA WORK 14/2107. Alexander Leach (Land Agent to Clifton) to Ministry of Works Regional Office. 1950
- <sup>32</sup> NA WORK 14/2107. S.J. Garton (MoW) to Meaby (Clerk) 12/2/49.
- <sup>33</sup> NA WORK 14/2107. Article from the Municipal Journal. Undated.
- <sup>34</sup> David Evelyn Nye's practise address was Brook End, Surrey. He also presented evidence on behalf of the SPAB to the Gowers Committee.

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- <sup>35</sup> NAO CC/CL1/MC01R1 vol 1. Letter from James Lees-Milne (Secretary, Historic Buildings Committee, The National Trust) to K. Tweedale Meaby (Clerk of Nottinghamshire County Council). 29 July 1949.
- <sup>36</sup> WORK 14/2107. Handwritten comment by K Ruth-Davies (Area Agent, MoW). 7 January 1949
- <sup>37</sup> P RIS Earl Manvers to Robert Innes-Smith. 28 April 1949.
- <sup>38</sup> P RIS. H.D. Argles (Thoresby Estate Office) to Robert Innes-Smith. 3 May 1949
- <sup>39</sup> P RIS Letter from the Duke of Portland, published in an unknown Sheffield newspaper. 13 February 1950.
- <sup>40</sup> P RIS Myles Thoroton Hildyard to Robert Innes-Smith. 12 July 1952.
- <sup>41</sup> P RIS Monica Dance (SPAB) to Robert Innes-Smith. 15 March 1950.
- <sup>42</sup> NA WORK 14/2107. Memo from Neil Digney to R. Auriol Barker. 5 July 1950.
- <sup>43</sup> NA T 226/94. Letter from D. Johnstone to P.D. Proctor. 3 August 1950.
- <sup>44</sup> NA T 226/94/25. Memo by A.E. L. Parnis (Treasury). 19 July 1950.
- <sup>45</sup> PTP NCCE002946
- <sup>46</sup> NAO CC3/28/2/2. Minutes of the Rufford Management Sub-Committee. 6 January 1958.
- <sup>47</sup> NAO CC3/28/2/2. Minutes of the Rufford Management Sub-Committee. 17 May 1965.
- <sup>48</sup> NAO CC3/28/2/2. Minutes of the Rufford Management Sub-Committee. 1958
- <sup>49</sup> Information drawn from number of Nottinghamshire Archive Office files.
- <sup>50</sup> NAO CC/CL1/PN02.04. Letter from Tweedale Meaby to Sir John Whitaker. 18 May 1953; Letter Meaby to Duke of Portland. 18 May 1953.
- <sup>51</sup> NA WORK 14/2107. Lord Esher to Hugh Dalton. 11 May 1950
- <sup>52</sup> NAO CC/CL1/MC01-R1 Vol.1. Letter from Robert Innes-Smith to Alderman H.C.C. Carlton. 21 May 1952.
- <sup>53</sup> NAO CC/CL1/MC01R1 vol 1. Letter from H.B. Dakin to Meaby. September 1953.
- <sup>54</sup> NAO CC/CL1/PN/02 Report to the Special Sub-Committee of the Finance Committee. 27 October 1950.
- <sup>55</sup> NAO CC/CL1/MC01R1 vol 1. Report of the District Valuer. 22 October 1953
- <sup>56</sup> NA WORK 31/1654.
- <sup>57</sup> Nottinghamshire Countryside. (1955) 16(6) pp. 21. Possibly drawn by David Nye of the SPAB. This option was favoured by County Council and SPAB
- <sup>58</sup> NA WORK 14/2107. Reported in memo from G.S. Orpwood 1 April 1950
- <sup>59</sup> NAO CC/CL1/MC01-R1 Vol.2. Letter from Cllr. W.H. Foster to Clerk of Nottinghamshire County Council. 2/5/54
- <sup>60</sup> NAO CC/CL1/PN 02.03. Letter from Celia Monckton-Arundel (CPRE Nottinghamshire) to D.J. Cockell (MoW). 9 May 1955.
- <sup>61</sup> NAO CC/CL1/PN 02.03. Comment of R.J. Yuoard (MHLG) at Rufford conference.
- <sup>62</sup> NMR AA51/35
- <sup>63</sup> NAO CC/CL1/PN 02.03. Miss M.E.I. Waterman (MoW) to Rt. Hon. Celia Monckton-Arundel (CPRE, Nottinghamshire) 12 January 1955.
- <sup>64</sup> NAO CC/CL1/PN 02.03. Clerk of Nottinghamshire County Council to Secretary of Ministry of Works. 31 October 1955.
- <sup>65</sup> NA WORK 14/2107
- <sup>66</sup> NAO CC/CL1/PN 02 03
- <sup>67</sup> PTP NCCE001749.
- <sup>68</sup> Other Monastic sites were listed in Pevsner (1951:15). These included Lenton, Thurgarton, Wallingwells, Felley and Welbeck.
- <sup>69</sup> NA WORK 14/2107.
- <sup>70</sup> NAO CC/CL1/PN 02.03. Letter from D.J. Cockell to Clerk. 11 March 1955
- <sup>71</sup> 50% of his was funded with the assistance of a Ministry of Housing and Local Government loan.
- <sup>72</sup> NAO CC/CL1/PN/02 Report to the Special Sub-Committee of the Finance Committee. 27 October 1950.
- <sup>73</sup> NAO CC/CL1/PN/02 Report to the Special Sub-Committee of the Finance Committee. 27 October 1950.
- <sup>74</sup> NAO CC/CL1/PN 02.03. Notes on interview by Deputy County Director of Planning. 30 September 1964.
- <sup>75</sup> NAO CC3/28/2/2. Rufford Management Sub-Committee. 9<sup>th</sup> March 1965.
- <sup>76</sup> Nottinghamshire County Council was solely responsible for such requests. Winkburn was in Southwell Rural District and not Newark.

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- <sup>77</sup> NAO PG01.03-WI.
- <sup>78</sup> NAO PG01.03-WI. Letter from John Q. Clayton (Solicitor) to Clerk of Newark District Council. 26 November 1958. Winkburn, however, was in Southwell Rural District and so the letter was forwarded to the Clerk of the Council, S.W. Lynds.
- <sup>79</sup> NMR AA59/284
- <sup>80</sup> NAO PN 01.03-WI. Letter from N.K. Baker (MHLG) to Clerk of Nottinghamshire County Council. 29 December 1959
- <sup>81</sup> NAO PN 01.03-WI. Letter from N.K. Baker (MHLG) to Clerk of Nottinghamshire County Council. 29 December 1959
- <sup>82</sup> Minutes of the County Planning Committee. 3 February 1959.
- <sup>83</sup> NAO PN 01.03-WI. Letter from S.W. Lynds (Clerk of Southwell RDC) to A.R. Davis (Clerk Nottinghamshire County Council) 17 April 1959.
- <sup>84</sup> NAO PN 01.03-WI. Draft copy of Building Preservation Order by Ministry of Housing and Local Government. 13 February 1959.
- <sup>85</sup> NAO PN 01.03-WI.
- <sup>86</sup> NAO PN 01.03-WI. Letter from Monica Dance (SPAB) to Clerk of Nottinghamshire County Council. 6 March 1959.
- <sup>87</sup> NAO PN 01.03-WI. Notes made by A.R. Davis (Clerk of Nottinghamshire County Council) 3 March 1959
- <sup>88</sup> NAO PN 01.03-WI
- <sup>89</sup> NAO PN 01.03-WI. Letter Commander Francklin to A.R. Davis (Clerk of Nottinghamshire CC) 3 June 1959.
- <sup>90</sup> NAO PN 01.03-WI
- <sup>91</sup> NAO PN 01.03-WI. Letter from Francklin and Gowran to Minister of Housing and Local Government. 19 January 1959.
- <sup>92</sup> I have found no further records pertaining to the Historic Buildings Bureau's work with regard to Orsdall Hall. This house became a hostel for the Nottinghamshire County Training College and is discussed in chapter 6.
- <sup>93</sup> The original house is illustrated in Thoroton (1677).
- <sup>94</sup> Disputed by Howard Colvin.
- <sup>95</sup> Wilson (1968) suggests that the Ossington estate was purchased in 1768 but other sources suggest 1755. Burke's Landed Gentry (1969) 18<sup>th</sup> Edition.
- <sup>96</sup> ODNB 2004. Equivalent to between £40m and £55m at 2002 prices.
- <sup>97</sup> Potterton Hall had been left in the will of Robert Denison to his housekeeper (Hewlings 1989)
- <sup>98</sup> Henry Clutton was the architect of a number of country seats and churches. In Nottinghamshire his commissions included Moorhouse church (1860-1), also for John Evelyn Denison, and Widmerpool Hall (1872-3) for John Coke Robertson
- <sup>99</sup> ODNB 2004.
- <sup>100</sup> ODNB 2004. Equivalent to £6.5m at 2002 prices.
- <sup>101</sup> Such locations were often used for the concealment of bomb dumps.
- <sup>102</sup> Photograph by author in 2002.
- <sup>103</sup> Comments by tenants within the Ossington estate.
- <sup>104</sup> NA MAF 32/366/80. Form B496/E1 completed by James Cameron Gifford. 28 May 1942.
- <sup>105</sup> NA MAF 32/366/80
- <sup>106</sup> NA MAF 32/366/80. Form B496/E1 completed by P. Baddiley. 14 January 1943.
- <sup>107</sup> NUMD. Ma 5E179/6c,7,8. Letter from War Department Land Agent (Nottingham) to H.D. Argles (Land Agent to Earl Manvers). 19 September 1945. Also completed compensation forms under Compensation (Defence) Act 1939.
- <sup>108</sup> NAO DC/SW/4/8/21/1-2. Plans for conversion by S. Cooper (District Surveyor) October 1946
- <sup>109</sup> NAO DC/SW/4/12/24/1. Southwell RDC. Ossington Housing. S. Cooper, District Surveyor, September 1951.
- <sup>110</sup> <http://www.newarkadvertiser.co.uk/history/51oct.htm> Newark Advertiser, 10 October 1951. Accessed October 2002
- <sup>111</sup> Report of the Highways and Bridges Committee. 7 February 1956.
- <sup>112</sup> Report of the County Planning Committee. 3 February 1959.
- <sup>113</sup> NA HLG 126/582
- <sup>114</sup> Comment by Pamela Goedhuis
- <sup>115</sup> Comment by Pamela Goedhuis
- <sup>116</sup> Tendring Hall was used in May 1947 to hold German prisoners of war (Lees-Milne 1986:158)

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- <sup>117</sup> Burke's Landed Gentry (1969) 18<sup>th</sup> Edition.
- <sup>118</sup> NA HLG 126/582. Letter from Denison to Lord Euston. 11 October 1959.
- <sup>119</sup> Ossington had been on the books of the estate agents Spencer and Sons, Retford from early August 1959. Since then there had been no prospective tenants.
- <sup>120</sup> NA HLG 126/582. Letter from Denison to the Historic Buildings Council. 14 October 1959.
- <sup>121</sup> Typed copies of individual entries from *The Buildings of England* have been inspected in a number of archive files including NA HLG 126/582 Ossington Hall.
- <sup>122</sup> The estate houses within Southwell Rural District included Brackenhurst Hall, Edwinstowe Hall and Winkburn Hall.
- <sup>123</sup> The Hall was certainly listed by 1959 and the only amendment to the list for Southwell Rural District occurred in the submission of the statutory list on 7 August 1952.
- <sup>124</sup> NA HLG 126/582 Letter from L.W. Webb (MHLG) to Miss P.N. Taylor (HBC) 14 July 1959.
- <sup>125</sup> NA HLG 126/582
- <sup>126</sup> Report of the Planning Committee to the County Council. November 1959.
- <sup>127</sup> NA HLG 126/582 The stables were subsequently demolished following an accidental fire in the 1980s. The site is now a car park for the Holy Rood church.
- <sup>128</sup> [www.imagesofengland.org.uk](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk). 16 February 2006.
- <sup>129</sup> Historic Buildings Council for England. Seventh Annual Report, (1959). pp3.
- <sup>130</sup> Historic Buildings Council for England. Seventh Annual Report, (1959). pp3-4.
- <sup>131</sup> NA HLG 126/582. Letter from Mrs. D.M. Phillips (Secretary to the Historic Buildings Council for England) to W.M.E. Denison. 13 November 1959.
- <sup>132</sup> NA HLG 126/582. Letter from Denison to Mrs. D.M. Phillips (Secretary to the Historic Buildings Council for England). 20 November 1959. There are examples of estate houses in Nottinghamshire that, at this time, became borstals or provided mental health care.
- <sup>133</sup> DA DY/JOHN/2. Report on Ossington Hall. 17 January 1962
- <sup>134</sup> Country Life. Houses in Search of an Owner. CXXXI, 21 June 1962.
- <sup>135</sup> Country Life. Houses in Search of an Owner. CXXXI, 21 June 1962.
- <sup>136</sup> NMR Catalogue of a large portion of the contents of Ossington Hall.
- <sup>137</sup> The Mutual Household Association later became the Country House Association. In 2004 the CTA placed all its country houses up for sale.
- <sup>138</sup> NA HLG 126/582. Extract from the Minutes of the Committee on Uses (Historic Buildings Council) Meeting held 13 October 1960.
- <sup>139</sup> NA HLG 126/582. Letter from Mr. Clarke (Historic Buildings Bureau) to the Historic Buildings Council. 1 December 1960.
- <sup>140</sup> NA HLG 126/582. Report of Dr. M.J. Craig (IAM, MoW). 19 January 1961.
- <sup>141</sup> NA HLG 126/582. Report by A. Brookholding-Jones (MoW or MTCP) commented upon water damage to plaster, vulnerable sections of the roof, the neglect of service areas, attics, cellars and forecourt building since the Second World War. 20 January 1961.
- <sup>142</sup> NA HLG 126/582. Letter from Mrs. D.M. Phillips (Historic Buildings Council) to Colonel F. Jones-Davies. 24 February 1960. In 1960 a total of 293 applications were received, of which 80 were awarded grants (Historic Buildings Council for England, Eighth Annual Report 1960)
- <sup>143</sup> NA HLG 126/582. Letter from Mrs. D.M. Phillips (Historic Buildings Council) to Colonel F. Jones-Davies. Grant offer and necessary stipulations. 1 June 1961.
- <sup>144</sup> NA HLG 126/582. Extract from Minutes of meeting of Historic Buildings Council. 7 February 1961.
- <sup>145</sup> Report of the County Planning Committee. 6 November 1962.
- <sup>146</sup> NMR File 32287. Ossington Hall
- <sup>147</sup> NMR 93/10937.
- <sup>148</sup> NMR AA58/1444.

## **6 The State, the country house and education and social welfare provision in Nottinghamshire, 1937-1967**

Increasingly the country house estate is being viewed as an educational resource. Opportunities now exist which offer funding for the presentation of the historic environment which accords with structured educational requirements. Whilst during the mid-twentieth century country houses were graded and assessed based upon their architectural importance or value for adaptive use, today they are also resources for National Curriculum teaching and lifelong learning. English Heritage, the National Trust and the Historic Houses Association, a collective of private owners who open their estate houses to the public, have all considered the wealth of opportunities that the country house estate can contribute to social, economic and political history with many regions and houses employing their own Education Officers to further promote the relevance of estate histories.

Much earlier, such sentiments were expressed by the Ministry of Education in presenting evidence before the Gowers Committee, who were charged with making recommendations enabling the future preservation of country house estates, prior to its publication in 1950, commenting that, “it seems to us that education in the wider sense in which we like to think of it would be among the chief losers were no solution to be found” (Treasury 1950:44). Whilst accepting this claim, the Gowers Committee held firm to considering how best estate houses

could be preserved and therefore recommended against the direct use of houses in the establishment of schools and other educational establishments.

Within this chapter I consider how the country house estate was central to broader education changes within the twentieth century despite such recommendations. Of all the different uses to which country houses were placed during the mid-twentieth century the most numerous within Nottinghamshire was in the establishment or relocation of different forms of education establishments. With reference to figure 4.7 which details the changing ownership and use of estates and houses between 1937 and 1967, out of the total of 127 estate houses listed in Nottinghamshire 29 (23%) were adapted for a variety of educational and training uses at any given point within this time period.

Specifically with regard to educational establishments emphasis has often been given to the use of country houses as private fee paying schools, including for example, Stowe. This is clearly paralleled within research that has considered requisition during Second World War when it was predominantly private schools that were evacuated to the most lavish and celebrated houses. Examples include Malvern Boys' School at Blenheim Palace, Queen Margaret's School at Castle Howard and Penrhos College at Chatsworth (Seebohm 1989; Robinson 1989; Mandler 1997a; Cannadine 1990). For Clough Williams-Ellis there was a seemingly apparent harmony in the adoption of estates and their houses for use as private schools. In 1921, he wrote of Stowe that, "there are few places better worth preserving or better suited for public delight and education, Properly arranged and wisely administrated Stowe might become a great cultural centre"

(quoted in Cornforth 1998:20; Cornforth 1974:49). In contrast it is the intention of this chapter to explore in depth estates, and their houses, which have not come to be recognised for their national architectural or historical importance to art or architecture, but nonetheless have contributed significantly both regionally and locally as part of a national agenda for education provision.

Within this chapter there are three sections which consider education and social welfare provision with detailed reference to the country house in Nottinghamshire during the mid-twentieth century. The first looks at changes in the education system including the Education Act, 1944 and then discusses state educational establishments within the county, which are not included in the final two sections. These include Approved and Special Schools and the establishment of Farm Institutes. These various education sectors involve and draw on different levels of state involvement which will be made explicit in the course of each section. The two examples which form the in-depth case studies within the second and third sections, have commanded significant state involvement. Firstly, in response to shortages of trained teachers I discuss the establishment and operation of the Nottinghamshire County Training College at Eaton Hall and Ordsall Hall, both near Retford, which were purchased in 1946. The second example brings demands for education provision and public amenity planning together. At Bramcote Hills half of the parkland, including the estate house, was purchased by the local district council to ensure improved public open space provision. The other half of the estate parkland was purchased by the County Council for the creation of a campus development which incorporated all the new forms of education establishments brought in by the Education Act, 1944. Whilst the principal focus in this chapter is

upon education provision, discussion of the case study country houses is interwoven with an account of the Council's parallel efforts to improve social welfare care. Firstly, Special Schools were directed to provide learning opportunities for children requiring specialist care. Secondly, the availability of land and premises essential for the development of a modern primary and secondary education system conflicted with other public social and welfare needs to which estate space was considered equally suited. As will be discussed this was most clearly evident at Bramcote Hills. In addition, at Eaton Hall essential social welfare provision during the Second World War revealed hitherto unexplored opportunities towards which country houses could be placed.

## **6.1 The state and education provision in Nottinghamshire**

The Education Act, 1944 has received considerable attention within political, cultural and social histories of the late twentieth century and was a key component of a new post-war social agenda within which the central state and local authorities were given considerable control and responsibility for various social welfare functions (Ministry of Education 1947). The 1944 Act has been viewed as initiating wholesale change of the education system in England and Wales. Through this statute, which received cross-party support during the Second World War, the coalition government prompted extensive restructuring that included the curriculum, staffing and training, building programmes, special and vocational education and further broadened learning opportunities to include both an extension of secondary education for all up until the age of fifteen and adult learners. Much of the responsibilities for change rested with local education authorities; the metropolitan boroughs and county councils, under supervision and guidance of the Ministry of Education and, in certain circumstances, the Home Office.

### **6.1.1 Evacuation, country houses and the Second World War in Nottinghamshire**

It has been suggested that of all the uses to which estate houses were put during the Second World War, the provision of temporary teaching and residential accommodation for evacuated schools is that best remembered (Robinson

1989:41). Often emergency accommodation was arranged through informal approaches to owners, or equally through owners pre-empting the requisition of their premises, and offering properties to local private schools. Military occupation was regarded by owners as highly undesirable and so many made efforts to secure more peaceful and less destructive wartime uses, of which education provision was the most favoured.

In some instances the evacuation of schools was undertaken not because of any perceived threat to the pupils but because their premises were required within a national, regional or local organisational structure. As such wartime military or civil services could be established where specific provisions were required, either in isolation, or more often in order to complement existing establishments within localities. Such examples included Malvern College and the Royal School whose premises had been allocated for use by the Admiralty (Seebohm 1989). As such there were circuits of requisition which placed Ministerial departments in competition with each other and more importantly required head teachers to enlist the assistance of the Ministry of Education, to make representations with the requisitioning authority, the Directorate of Lands and Accommodation, for alternate premises or, all too often, to explore opportunities with local estate owners themselves.

Within Nottingham both the Boys' and Girls' High Schools, located on adjacent sites just north of the city centre were designated as an evacuation area and both considered whether it was necessary to relocate (Waugh 1957). Both head teachers sought out alternative accommodation but it was not until the 150<sup>th</sup> South

Nottinghamshire Hussars took possession of the Girls' School on 1 September 1939 for billeting and the installation of a search-light battery that both seriously considered their options. The Girls' School attained greater success, securing both the Masonic Hall in Daybrook, four miles to the north of the city centre, as a day school, and the estate house of Ramsdale Park, a further two miles north which had been offered to the school by Mrs. Vera Lilian Seely, for 100 residential boarders. Ramsdale, illustrated in figure 6.1, remained as a boarding school until the summer of 1944 when the Army released their premises in Nottingham. Owing to a perceived threat of flying bombs which were being launched against London and the south east at the time, it was decided to retain Ramsdale as a summer school until July 1945, providing additional accommodation for girls from private schools in London (Boyden 1975).



**Figure 6.1:** Ramsdale Park from the south from the original drive through woodland in 2003.<sup>1</sup>

Originally heralding from Lincolnshire, the Seelys had become an established Liberal landowning family purchasing land during the second half of the nineteenth century in Hampshire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Surrey. In 1859 Charles Seely purchased Brooke House on the Isle of Wight, adjacent to Queen Victoria's estate at Osbourne House. He retained the family links with Lincolnshire serving as Member of Parliament firstly in 1847 and again from 1861 until 1885, two years before his death. His only surviving son, Sir Charles Seely, 1<sup>st</sup> Baronet, had purchased extensive landholdings in Nottinghamshire during the 1870s, principally centred on coal mining activities, including the residence of Sherwood Lodge, to the north of Nottingham, which following his inheritance of the family estates, became his principal home. Equally interested in politics he served as the Liberal Member of Parliament for Nottingham from 1869 until 1874 and again between 1880 and 1885, and was also one of the founding members elected to the County Council in 1889 and served as Vice-Chairman until his retirement in 1898. It was during this local service, in 1896, that he was created 1<sup>st</sup> Baronet Seely.<sup>2</sup>

By 1883 he owned a total of 14,666 acres within Hampshire, Derbyshire and Surrey (Bateman 1883). Sir Charles Seely had heavily invested colliery profits within his estate. Firstly he remodelled the classical Sherwood Lodge and secondly, in 1903 he commissioned Sir Aston Webb, the architect of the Royal Naval College at Dartmouth, to design a chapel dedicated to St. George, which was connected to the house, as illustrated in figure 4.13.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, in ensuring that all his sons were established with estate property he commissioned the construction of Ramsdale Park, on land adjacent and east of his Sherwood Lodge

estate. His eldest son, Sir Charles Hilton Seely, 2<sup>nd</sup> Baronet, would inherit the Lodge, his youngest son, John Edward Bernard Seely, later 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Mottistone settled at Brooke House, which left Lt.-Col. Frank Evelyn Seely.

Ramsdale Park was built by Sir Charles Seely between 1907 and 1911. He chose the site over a number of alternate options by standing on top of a tower of Lincoln Cathedral at such a time when a number of his estate workers were waving flags at the other sites just north of Nottingham. Ramsdale was the only site visible to him and as such was chosen. The prominent position of Ramsdale within the locality is illustrated by its regular use since construction by the Ordnance Survey as a triangulation station.<sup>4</sup> Original plans for the house show a much larger structure with a north elevation of eight bays with four copper ogee cupolas, one at each corner.<sup>5</sup> The reduced design, as illustrated in figure 6.1, incorporated one of the copper domes and a small central open court-yard which was overlooked by the main staircase.

Despite the investment on improvements and expansion made by the Seelys, it is clear that finances were not as secure as implied prior to the First World War. Firstly, as suggested, the original plan for Ramsdale Park had to be drastically scaled down, and secondly, soon after its completion the property was let to the Marquess of Titchfield, heir to the 6<sup>th</sup> Duke of Portland, following his marriage in 1915 and he resided there with his family until 1930 when his new home, Welbeck Woodhouse, set within the grounds of Welbeck Abbey, was completed (Smith 2002:52). Ramsdale, whilst quite a distance from Welbeck Abbey, was a

modern, well appointed property which could comfortably house the Marquess and his new wife, Hon. Ivy Gordon-Lennox.

Equally this fifteen year let to the heir of the largest landowner in Nottinghamshire gave Ramsdale some standing as a residence and following the death of Frank Seely in 1928, his son, Major Frank Wriothsesley Seely inherited and resided there with his wife Vera Lilian until it was offered to the Girls' School during the Second World War. Whilst Major Frank Seely was posted overseas during the Second World War, it was left to Vera Lilian to manage the Ramsdale estate.

The reminiscences of former pupils who resided at Ramsdale during the Second World War recall staff and students muddling through in unfamiliar surroundings (Boyden 1975). During the winter the house was effectively cut-off and supplies had to be dragged along the frozen drive. Equally when the oil powered heating system ran out the building was often uncomfortably cold. At other times the accommodation provision was so tight that the head teacher often slept on a camp bed in a corridor alcove. Despite hardships however, the temporary residence beyond the urban fringe offered new experiences, freedoms and learning opportunities which would not have been available at the school premises within the city. Firstly the children learnt about the variety of plant species in the gardens on the estate, in part from some of the outdoor staff that remained. In addition there were a number of opportunities for organised games and the children were given a degree of freedom to explore the grounds.

As was intended by the process of evacuation Ramsdale offered a sense of security, due in part to its elevated site which, surrounded by woodland, was somewhat remote despite its proximity to Arnold, an expanding residential settlement on the fringes of Nottingham. As one former pupil commented;

The war, metalled roads and other people were somewhere at the far end of the “long drive”, just past the pot holes, the daffodils and the farm dog, which was always under the command of a shrill whistle. Even the Oxton Road [at the bottom of the hill one mile to the north] was without traffic, and therefore remote from Nottingham (Boyden 1975:133).

Despite this sense that the war was distant there were physical and symbolic changes within the estate which in some instances would go unnoticed by the children. Strikingly the copper cupola at Ramsdale, a notable local landmark, had been draped in camouflage netting in case it should be used as a visual navigation aid by enemy bombers seeking industrial targets in Derbyshire to the west or Yorkshire further north. Although Nazi aircraft would often pass overhead, only on one occasion were bombs dropped in a field adjacent to the house, much to the excitement of the students and worry to the staff. In addition, with accommodation in short supply locally, Jewish refugees for a period also resided at Ramsdale and members of the Womens’ Land Army cultivated the kitchen garden whilst supplementing the agricultural labour force on one of the neighbouring estate farms.

This provides one example of the use of a Nottinghamshire estate for the evacuation of a private school during the Second World War. Whatever the experiences of children and staff during hostilities the temporary occupation of estate houses as schools fuelled a national debate, both during and after the War, as to the suitability of historic buildings such as country houses being converted in the future for similar purposes. For some, modern demands would mean that the conversion of properties together with the need for additional space would be unsympathetic with existing historic architecture. As the Gowers Committee concluded in 1950, following a number of estates being converted, the demands of the Ministry of Education in making such properties suitable, including the construction of gymnasia, laboratories and perhaps residential accommodation would, “almost certainly spoil any house which was considered worthy of preservation” (Treasury 1950:44).

Earlier, during the Second World War a number of key debates were held in the Houses of Parliament, which brought attention to the perceived threat towards landownership, the national importance of historic architecture, and importantly, raised the question as to the suitability of country houses for successful conversion to new uses, especially for education provision. The Liberal peer Lord Methuen of Corsham Court in Wiltshire spoke in parliamentary debates of his enthusiasm that country houses, which were no longer in private residential ownership, should be converted for use as residential colleges. Whilst recognising that there would be a limit to the number of museums which could be housed in country houses he argued that there was, “no limit to how many educational, particularly adult educational establishments [could be established].... What better background

could be provided than by many of these country houses with their well planned settings, where such men as Brown and Repton and others have given their best'. As a gesture confirming his own commitment he leased part of Corsham to the Bath Academy of Art – a relationship which he maintained until his death (quoted in Mandler 1997a:326).

Methuen's intervention opened up discussion as to the variety of educational uses to which country houses could be put beyond solely that of the fee-paying schools as had been witnessed during the Second World War. The private realm of the estate house was, therefore, renegotiated as an important site of public education provision by the state. County councils were the principal authority concerned with the management of local state schools and it is with reference to Nottinghamshire County Council in the following section that I discuss the role of the Education Committee and its principal officers, and the scale of the education provision programme within Nottinghamshire.

### **6.1.2 State education provision in Nottinghamshire; the Education Committee and the County Development Plans**

Responsibility for education provision had been a key priority of county councils since their establishment in 1889. This role, however, was formalised under the Education Act, 1902, which required the creation of a committee constituted by elected members and specialist advisors. In Nottinghamshire from 1903 until 1931

there had only been two chairmen of the Education Committee, the estate owners Henry Mellish of Hodsock Priory (1903-1927) and T.L.K Edge of Strelley Hall (1927-1931) (Meaby 1939).

During the mid-twentieth century the Education Committee of the County Council increased in membership and almost doubled in the ten years between 1936 and 1946, following which it maintained a size of about forty members. This reflected the increased emphasis and importance placed upon educational provision for which the county councils had responsibility. From 1931 until 1946 the Chair of the Education Committee was Major Thomas Philip Barber, a conservative Independent, who had inherited the family mining business, Barber Walker Company and the residence of Lamb Close House, to the north west of Nottingham in the centre of the family's colliery activities. Barber resigned the Chair of the Education Committee in 1946, when with the Labour party gaining control of the Council, Matthew Holland was elected in his place. As a centrally important position within the Council, the Chair of the Education Committee was now a keen Labour supporter and advocate of new principles for the overhaul of the County's education provision. Such changes were equally reflected in the County's education department. In December 1942 the then Director of Education, Major B.W.L. Bulkeley retired, after 31 years in the position, and was replaced by J. Edward Mason, who like Holland was a keen supporter of modernising education provision. Even prior to the political and administrative change within the Council in 1945, however, moves under Bulkeley had already witnessed the successful use of estates houses, including as will be briefly discussed later Hopwell Hall and Risley Hall in Derbyshire. This expanded most

significantly during the post-war period as the Education Committee and its chief officer recognised the potential use of estate houses and their surrounding amenity parkland in successfully implementing a modern agenda for education provision.

Both Holland and Mason, therefore, as the principal individuals concerned with education provision within the county held considerable authority and responsibility for the implementation of the Education Act, 1944. An initial responsibility undertaken was for all local education authorities to carry out a review of education provision and to formulate a funding programme that included timetabled building programmes and targeted structural reorganisation, including new areas of education provision. Two plans drawn up by the Education Committee, *A Development Plan for Primary and Secondary Education* (Nottinghamshire County Council 1947), and *A Development Plan for Further Education* (Nottinghamshire County Council 1948), detailed a comprehensive survey of provision and outlined where funding for necessary expansion would be targeted.

The plan for primary and secondary school development in Nottinghamshire proposed a total cost of £19,000,000 between the years of 1948 and 1962, funded almost exclusively by government loans. At its peak building activity between 1950 and 1955 total expenditure would account for £10,000,000.<sup>6</sup> The comprehensive reorganisation of education provision is evident in the figures for the building programme. Of the 310 primary schools in existence immediately following the Second World War, 160 would be closed, and 125 new schools would be constructed. This reflected a process of rationalisation in which it was

recognised that many of the Victorian primary schools were either uneconomic or in need of complete redevelopment. The greatest expansion was evident in secondary education provision. In total 67 new secondary schools were proposed at a cost of £7,000,000. The opportunity to undertake such a large-scale building project will be demonstrated below in relation to the Bramcote Hills campus development.

New education provision was reflected in modern architectural design, placing the demands of students and teachers at the heart of all construction decisions. Modern, efficient and economic prefabricated construction methods such as expressed within the designs of the Consortium of Local Authorities Special Programme (CLASP), and which was partly innovated by the Nottinghamshire County Council in association with Hertfordshire County Council, enabled a greater number of building projects to be undertaken within budget requirements (Saint 1989; Ministry of Education 1961). Both plans were presented by the Education Committee with considerable pride, remarking upon the long-term benefits which the plan would offer. As was stated, “this expenditure is calculated to produce [...] the major educational facilities for this County for the next half century. It is the Nottinghamshire school-children of 2000 A.D. whom the Committee have in mind as well as the generations which will precede them from the present date to the end of the century” (Nottinghamshire County Council 1947:59). Modern design and construction methods were considered in harmony with the use of country house estates and their parkland settings. Many of those purchased by the County Council, whilst providing initial accommodation, were promptly complemented with adjacent prefabricated teaching and accommodation

blocks. Equally, where finances permitted, more expensive traditional building programmes reflected the design of the pre-existing estate houses as will be made evident regarding Hopwell Hall and Eaton Hall.

For the County Council, therefore, the country house provided a considerable opportunity for the establishment and expansion of various forms of education provision. For primary and secondary education it was predominantly amenity estate land which was considered of greatest importance. Farm Institutes clearly required an estate in its entirety, including agricultural holdings, farm buildings and different land types and vegetation cover in order to offer the greatest learning opportunities to students. Finally, it was in the provision of approved and special school education where the estate house itself was considered of greatest importance. As is discussed in the following section, a modestly sized estate and house was deemed highly appropriate in providing the necessary seclusion, containment, accessibility and learning opportunities required for the specialist care and education of children.

### **6.1.3 Special and approved schools and country houses; education, care and training provision for children**

Within the County's Development Plan for educational reform special attention was given to targeted special provision for children with emotional, mental, physical and behavioural difficulties (Nottinghamshire County Council 1947).

Prior to the Second World War the Council had already managed three special schools for children with mental problems and learning difficulties and the plan detailed intentions to extend this to an additional nine schools, with provision for an additional 980 pupils (Nottinghamshire County Council 1947).

Approved schools were first designated under the Children and Young Persons Act, 1933. This legislation charged local authorities and their Education Committees with the responsibility for the care of children as directed by the court system. As a response to the out-dated industrial schools and reform system, which focused more on correction than care and encouragement in its approach, approved schools offered residential education for children with recognised behavioural problems. Whilst the Ministry of Education supervised the administration of special schools, approved schools fell under the Children's Department of the Home Office in partnership with local authorities (Newsam 1954). Although there are marked similarities between the two types of school, the Approved system was derived from the state's responsibility to maintain law and order which included policing, provision for the courts and the prison system. This provision was extended to include the errant behaviour of children and necessary specialist provision which covered borstals and remand and care homes. By 1953 it is reported there were about 8000 children registered in 130 approved schools within the United Kingdom.

Special schools differed slightly, providing accommodation and care for children with severe learning difficulties and mental illnesses. Both of these

responsibilities, however, were considered by the Council in parallel and provision of facilities within country houses were considered appropriate to both.

In detailing the successes of specialist provision for children with emotional and behavioural problems, which had become established since the Second World War, a Department of Education and Science pamphlet published in 1965 reviewed the establishment of many specialist schools, giving special attention to those in adapted country house estates (Department of Education and Science 1965:30). Local authorities, in conjunction with the Ministerial departments, considered the selection of appropriate premises according to key factors including location, size, additional adjacent land, and purchase and adaptation costs.

Location was determined as both an emotional and functional logistic factor. It was concluded that because most of the staff also resided within the school, “very isolated [houses] have the disadvantage that it is difficult for staff to maintain good outside contacts” (Department of Education and Science 1965:30). In addition the efficient and economic management of such a property that would need to be easily reached by a number of contract services could also be hindered by such a remote location. Distance could equally be emotionally detrimental to the children: “Pupils too can feel cut off from the outside world unless they visit places of interest and meet a variety of people”. Conversely, “busy urban areas [...] may provide too many temptations for getting into trouble” (Department of Education and Science 1965:31).

A building which would need to be “warm, colourful and welcoming” would also be a place of comfort and security within which children with physical, emotional and behavioural conditions would reside and should necessarily be a domestic space (Department of Education and Science 1965:31). The layout and size of an estate house lent itself most appropriately to conversion for this. Initial new uses of such estate houses to a degree mirrored private residential ownership. Reception rooms and bedrooms could easily be converted to communal common rooms and, with additional beds, private family bedrooms could be adapted as small dormitories which did not have an institutional feel. Whilst rooms, “should be as homely as possible”, in contrast to this a clear distinction is made between making children feel comfortable in a homely environment and home itself. In many circumstances the placement of children in care within approved schools was as a result of circumstances found at home (Department of Education and Science 1965:30; Newsam 1954; Ford 1957). Therefore, a building and estate landscape, which contrasted markedly with, for example, inner city areas of Nottingham, provided an appropriate balance.

In the same way that careful distinctions were made between encouraging a homely atmosphere that did not evoke sometimes painful associations of home, so the same could be said for ensuring that schools could facilitate both areas of constructive study and relaxation within the same building. Within an estate house this division of space could be difficult to achieve but with available out-buildings, such as stables or a coach house, and in the construction of new especially dedicated classrooms, adjacent to the estate house, such an emotional and physical distance could be achieved.

The availability of additional land, usually between 10 and 20 acres, not only offered room for expansion but also focused on forms of recreation provision which included the, “surroundings, atmosphere, established gardens and grounds and a variety of useful outbuildings” (Department of Education and Science 1965:32). Such characteristics could facilitate a programme which encouraged learning and understanding through individual and group engagement with the environment of an estate landscape. The cultivation of plants and vegetables was encouraged under the supervision of the resident gardener, opportunities for “free and imaginative play” could be plentiful with trees to climb and hide behind, and even available bricks, wooden planks and rope, seemingly in abundance within out-buildings, could be used to develop skills of constructive play – as well as destructive (Department of Education and Science 1965:33).

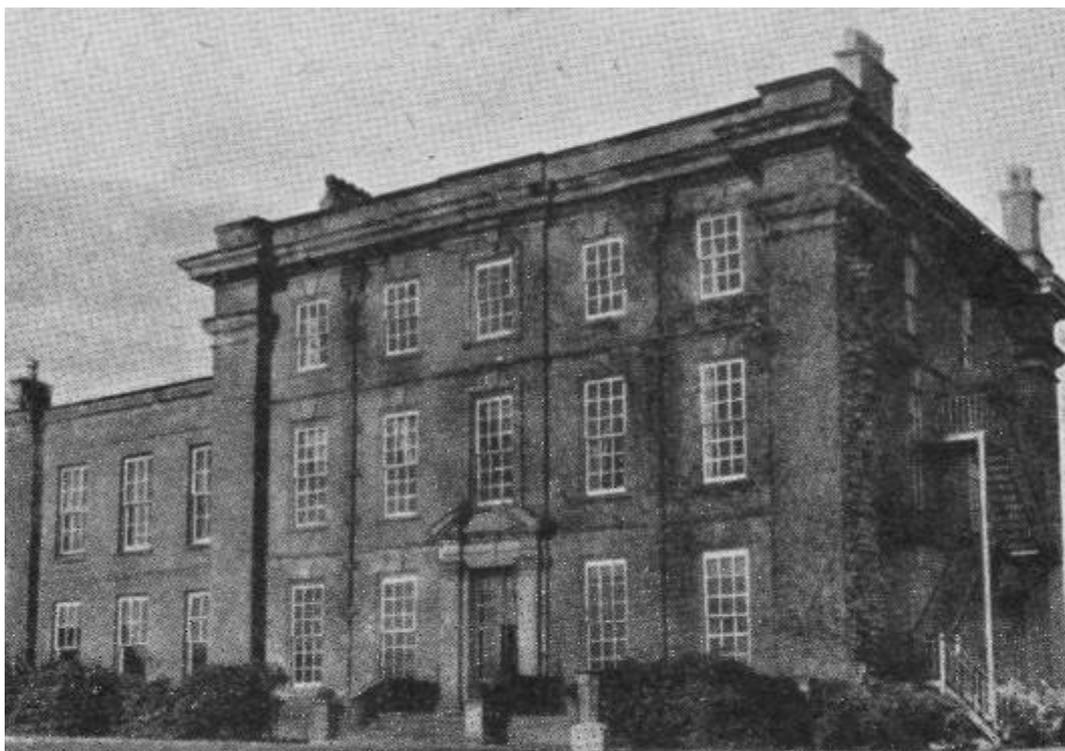
The country house estate on the fringes of an urban area can, therefore, be viewed as a highly attractive option for both special and approved school education provision. Particularly, it was the more modestly sized houses and estates, often those little regarded for their architectural or historic importance, which were purchased. Such houses provided the optimum space, both within and beyond the estate house, and equally their adapted use was rarely questioned by amenity and preservation organisations. Furthermore, the requirements by which properties were measured as suitable by the County Council alleviated the pressures which many landowners were faced with during the immediate post-war period. Whilst such threats have been well documented, it was clearly the estate house which proved the over-riding burden. Staff shortages, restrictions on maintenance

expenditure and the continued depression of the estate market meant that it was often, as illustrated with regard to Ossington Hall, the houses and not estates which owners wished to sell. Therefore, it is viewed that requirements for a small area of adjacent land within such provision, focused attention upon the estate house and its immediate formal and kitchen gardens. Estate owners would retain agricultural land, which although not significantly profitable in the immediate post-war period, increased in value following both greater state support of productivist farming and the removal of the development charge by the Conservative government in the mid-1950s.

Despite general misgivings regarding the educational use of country houses, the Gowers Committee recognised the suitability, benefit and growing demand in properties converted as Special Schools. The Report stated that evidence supplied by the Ministry of Education accepted that such uses were, “not a wholly satisfactory way of preserving any part of them except the fabric” (Treasury 1950:45). Despite this the Ministry emphasised to the Committee the emotional and educational benefit of special uses stating that, “the handicaps of these children are often compensated for by exceptional gifts of the sense of touch, for example, or the sensitiveness to atmosphere,” and adding, “there is a strong case for regarding fine furniture, beautiful surroundings and a gracious atmosphere as part of their educational apparatus” (Treasury 1950:45).

## **i      Approved and Special Schools owned and managed by Nottinghamshire County Council**

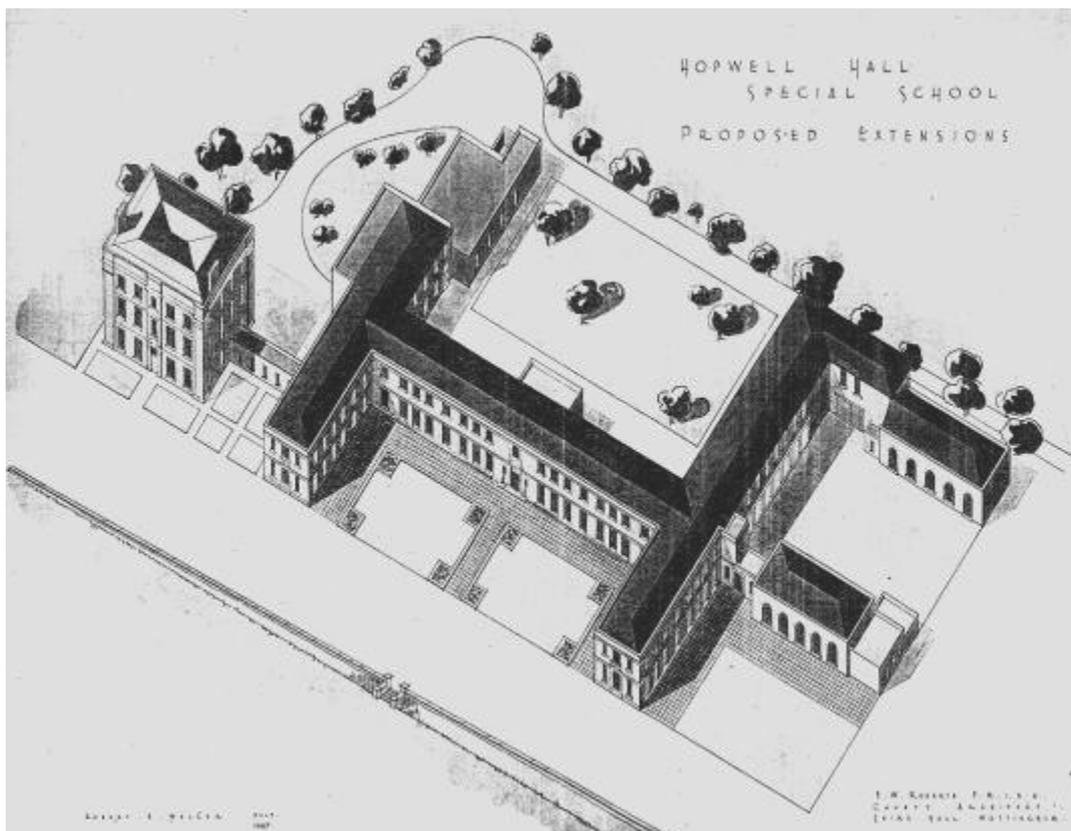
The first houses which were owned by the County Council were not in Nottinghamshire but instead just a few miles to the west of Nottingham in Derbyshire. In 1921 the County Council accepted an offer of Hopwell Hall, illustrated in figure 6.2, as a gift from Cecil Henry Pares whose family had owned the estate and house, built in 1720, since the late eighteenth century. Cecil had inherited the estate as a result of the death of his elder brother in the First World War and opted to reside at the family's home in the exclusive Calvi resort in Corsica, rather than Hopwell (Craven and Stanley 2001:283; Pevsner and Williamson 1986:248-9).<sup>7</sup> Together with the estate house, located almost equidistant between Derby and Nottingham, the Council also accepted 15 acres of land adjacent to the house, thereby providing the necessary recreational provision.<sup>8</sup> In addition the Council had purchased Sutton Fields House, a gentry house in Sutton Bonington near Loughborough in June 1930, which was used for 45 boys with severe learning difficulties.<sup>9</sup> Other existing provision prior to the start of the Second World War, also included Berry Hill Open Air School, south of Mansfield, for children of, "delicate", disabled conditions (Nottinghamshire County Council 1947:155). Therefore, at this time, there totalled three facilities administered by Nottinghamshire County Council, albeit not exclusively located within the administrative area, where there was special residential education provision for children.



**Figure 6.2:** Hopwell Hall, between Nottingham and Derby.<sup>10</sup>

Whilst state run primary and secondary education was offered solely to children residing in specified catchments within Nottinghamshire, special and further education was initially managed within a regional network that went beyond county boundaries. Special schools in the East Midlands were each run by one local education authority but provision was made to accommodate children from other counties. Nottinghamshire worked in liaison with another 13 authorities locally and therefore its ownership of Hopwell, and later Risle, in Derbyshire was not such a peculiar arrangement (Mason 1958:143). In this regard, the Development Plan highlighted an additional number of institutions across the country in which the Education Committee had placed children with disabilities which included voluntary and publicly managed institutions on the south coast and in the north-west.

Allocated for use as a special residential school for boys between the ages of 7 and 13 Hopwell Hall received its first 12 pupils immediately in 1921 and following modifications this was rapidly increased to 45. In 1947 and 1948 a new wing was constructed doubling the schools' capacity. The Development Plan contained an isometric plan of the proposed extensions and this is illustrated in figure 6.3. The extension was sympathetic to the design of the Hall and was planned to reflect the orientation of the Hall and to mirror its design features. The pitched roof, neo-Georgian windows and segmental pediments over the doorways all mirror the classical style of the Hall. Indeed in viewing the development from the south, the new two storey wing would not dwarf the estate house but instead, connected by a covered corridor, would complement it.



**Figure 6.3:** Hopwell Hall Special School, Derbyshire. Proposed extensions designed by E.W. Roberts, County Architect (Nottinghamshire County Council 1947).

Later, in 1955 further proposals detailed by the Education Committee included the second phase of extensions and “modernisation” of Hopwell Hall which would increase its accommodation to 96 boys.<sup>11</sup> In 1957, however, a fire swept through the Hall causing damage which the Council could not afford to repair. Having spent a considerable amount of money on the new wing and with regard to the importance of the school within the East Midlands it was decided that what remained of the Hall should be demolished and a new building constructed in its place. Despite the absence of the estate house, Hopwell Hall continued to provide important special education and care for children with severe learning difficulties throughout the period which this thesis considers. Increasingly the Hall was part of a network of similar properties established within the county under the approved and special school schemes.

The second house, and the first which the council purchased for education purposes, was Risley Hall. Originally built in 1695, it was located just one mile to the south east of Hopwell Hall, also in Derbyshire, and its estate parkland was adjacent to that of Hopwell. The estate house had undergone numerous alterations including a neo-Jacobean remodelling in the late nineteenth century and a new courtyard and stables in 1908 (Pevsner and Williamson 1986:311). The estate’s location adjacent to Hopwell Hall should not be regarded as insignificant. Risley was located directly on the old A52 Nottingham to Derby road and significantly on the way to Hopwell Hall from the Council’s offices at County Hall in West Bridgford. It would, therefore, be likely that should the estate become available, or

alternately if the owner wished to sell, then the Education Committee would be aware. Since 1890 the estate had been owned by Mr. Ernest Terah Hooley. He was a self-made millionaire, cattle breeder and friend of Edward VII who later was declared bankrupt which resulted in the loss of the estate. Having initially managed to retain ownership of the Hall he was forced to sell the freehold in the late 1920s and is known to have remained on as a tenant until 1941, at which time his creditors, the then owners, decided to sell the property (Craven and Stanley 2001:188-9). In 1942 the Council purchased the house and allocated it for use as an Approved School. Demand for properties in the locality during the Second World War was such that, following prolonged preparations for its occupation, the Education Committee was informed that if this was not fulfilled promptly then the War Office would requisition the property and allocate it for an alternate use.

Encouraged by the successes of both Hopwell and Risley, the County Council was keen to consider the ownership and use of other estates within their own administrative boundary and for the further development of their Derbyshire houses. During the Second World War special and approved school provision had focused upon ensuring accommodation for boys between the ages of 5 and 16 and so the Education Committee turned its attention to ensuring that girls had similarly high quality provision. Skegby Hall and Ramsdale Park near Mansfield and Nottingham, respectively, became the focus for this further expansion of provision.

In February 1946 the Education Committee authorised the purchase of Skegby Hall, four miles to the west of Mansfield, together with nine acres of adjoining

land for use as an Approved School for girls. The Hall is illustrated in figure 6.4. It was originally built in 1720 as a five bay house of two storeys and an attic for the Lindley family, similar in proportions to Hopwell. It was extended in the late nineteenth century under the ownership of Robert Marsh Eckersley Wilkinson Dodsley and by the Second World War the house and its estate was owned by Mr. Wilton Allsebrook, a Conservative MP. The District Valuer regarded the property as worth £3000 but Mr. Allsebrook refused to sell to the County Council. Accordingly under planning powers a Compulsory Purchase Order was drafted to compel the owner to sell at this price.<sup>12</sup> As was witnessed elsewhere, the mere threat of enacting such legislative powers encouraged Allsebrook to reconsider.



**Figure 6.4:** Skegby Hall in the late nineteenth century. The first modern wing designed by the County Architect, E.W. Roberts, in 1946 adjoined the property to the right.<sup>13</sup>

Later in 1946, E.W. Roberts, the County Architect, undertook a similar scheme for expansion as would later be witnessed at Hopwell. Despite building

restrictions he designed red brick west and east wings which mirrored the proportions and style of the original. The careful attention made in this construction led Pevsner to clearly identify these later additions should there be any confusion (Pevsner 1951).

In addition, the Ramsdale Park estate received attention from the Education Committee. The successful use of the estate house during the Second World War for education purposes had already proved the potential of the property. Ramsdale Park was regarded as an ideal location for a special school, lying just beyond Nottingham's suburbs to the north and adjacent to main A614, north-south road. Equally, on the highest ground in the area it did provide a sense of distance as was experienced by children of Girls' High School during the War. Immediately following the vacation of Nottingham High School for Girls in 1945, the estate was considered as appropriate for the establishment of a farm institute, but this was unfulfilled. The Seelys had not returned to Ramsdale following the vacation of the Girls' School and instead continued to reside in a more modest house in neighbouring Oxtun. Following the Council's initial interest in the property negotiations were protracted and the Seelys expressed aggravation that due to this continued expression of interest, and in knowledge of the compulsory powers which the Council could wield, they had had to turn down several offers from private purchasers which included a developer wishing to convert the property to flats and a local utility company who sought office accommodation. Owing to the loss of rental value due to indecision, the representatives of Major Frank Seely argued that it was, "nothing less than a public scandal that a home of this capacity

should remain empty for such a long period during these times of acute housing shortages”.<sup>14</sup>

The Education Committee were concerned that their intended purchase of Ramsdale would not include the site of a Roman encampment, adjacent to the house, which had been scheduled as an ancient monument, and the upkeep of which they may become liable for. When the Education Committee did proceed with its purchase this scheduled site at Ramsdale, was not included in the area of land procured.<sup>15</sup> The scheme had the full backing of the local Ministry of Education inspector who commented in its authorisation of purchase that, “the house seems very suitable for this purpose”.<sup>16</sup> The owner, Major Frank Seely was still serving abroad, and so his wife Vera Lilian acted on his behalf. As was experienced at Skegby, the Seelys were not keen on selling the property to the County Council at their recommended price of £5,500, especially when greater offers had already been turned down.

The County Council, therefore, submitted a Compulsory Purchase Order under the section 90 of the Education Act, 1944 and section 1 of the Acquisition of Land (Authorisation Procedures) Act, 1946, for the acquisition of Ramsdale together with 15 acres of land, but this action was again averted when Seely settled, on 17 May 1948, for £7000.<sup>17</sup>

A number of stipulations were placed on the sale of the property. These included the exclusion from the sale of four Adam mantelpieces belonging to Mrs Vera Lilian Seely, the erection of stock proof fencing around the Council owned land

and the creation of a new driveway.<sup>18</sup> The original main driveway to the estate house, which was surrounded by woodland, as can be viewed in figure 6.1, was long and circuitous, and crossed the agricultural land retained by the Seelys. The new driveway, adjacent to a service entrance, offered the most direct access to the site owned by the County Council but was in its own way no less impressive. The straight drive, lined with equally spaced modern street lights, rather than the more typical tree-lined avenue akin to that already referred to at Rufford Abbey and Clumber Park, was in direct line with the copper domed roof of the estate house. The new uphill approach to the house masked it from view until the last moment when it would dominate the field of vision. In addition, because the land to be sold was surrounded by agricultural holdings retained by Seely certain access arrangements were permitted which would enable estate workers to access across the site of the Special School in front of the house.<sup>19</sup> In addition to the accepted £7,000 for the property, it was estimated that the Education Committee would have to spend a further £5,000 on furniture and fittings. Furthermore, whilst the property was in a good state of repair it was considered that essential works including sewerage, heating, lighting, the fitting of a kitchen and ablutions, together with necessary adaptations for its new use, would cost a further £21,600.<sup>20</sup>

Following a formal opening ceremony attended by members of the Education Committee, the County Council and dignitaries, the school received its first 10 pupils on 9 October 1950.<sup>21</sup> Finally, having been reluctant to sell the property to the Council, in an interesting change of heart Mrs Vera Lilian Seely was appointed as a council inspector of special schools within the County, responsible

to the Education Committee.<sup>22</sup> It has already been noted that during the mid-twentieth century there was a marked decline in representation of landowners as elected members of the County Council. In contrast to the waning of landed political responsibility, as local control was increasing passed to the state during the twentieth century, the purchase of Ramsdale Park by the Council provided a new opportunity for landowners to take on a social responsibly role as guardians of children's well-being, care and education (c.f. Cannadine 1990).

The availability of country houses within Nottinghamshire immediately following the Second World War provided an opportunity for the Education Committee to quickly undertake new and expanding responsibilities under the Education Act, 1944 and associated targeted legislation. Such schemes were prioritised by the Council which were supported by new build projects which took advantage of modern construction techniques such as advocated by CLASP. In 1947, even before the Education Committee had established schools in any of the Nottinghamshire estates plans existed for the construction of a purpose built boarding special school in Thieves' Wood, two miles to the south of Mansfield on the A60. Whilst Hopwell and Ramsdale offered what was initially a cheap option during the period of building restrictions there were limitations including the large cost of upkeep, the unsuitability of the layout, and the inability of providing all necessary services required. The modern purpose built unit at Thieves Wood could, therefore, tackle these inadequacies. The Director of Education J. Edward Mason went further when arguing that, "the one idea that the planners and architects have tried to emphasise is that Thieves' Wood is *not* an institution"<sup>23</sup> (Mason 1958:146). Despite, therefore, all intentions at avoiding an institutional

feel to the special schools established within country estates, to a degree this was perhaps not achieved. The architecture, whilst grand and relatively modern, was perhaps not homely enough. Ramsdale Park, particularly, had an institutional feel about it with its undistinguished, elevated and imposing brick design and dominating cupola tower (see figure 6.1). The estimated cost of Thieves' Wood was £130,000 to provide accommodation initially for 180 children. Notably the cost per child was much lower than that of Ramsdale (Nottinghamshire County Council 1947:155).

The implementation of demands for the provision of specific education requirements was always a process of negotiation between the different functions and priorities of the state. In February 1956, the Ministry of Agriculture considered Sutton Fields House, which was a special school for girls located near the Midland Agricultural College in Sutton Bonington, as suitable premises for the Ministry's regional office of the new National Advisory Service.<sup>24</sup> The Education Committee were willing to accede to this request should alternative accommodation for the displaced children be found elsewhere. It was to Ramsdale Park that the Committee turned stipulating that if, "certain amenities can be provided for, it offers reasonable alternative accommodation". In the event the Ministry did not acquire Sutton Fields, but this event does illustrate the demand for premises and the resultant pressures which would have been upon the special school system. It also shows wider moves formulated by the central state which witnessed the increasing establishment of regional government offices. Parallels are evident within demands for provision of agricultural education, discussed in the next section.

#### **6.1.4 Agricultural education, farm institutes and Brackenhurst Hall**

Another form of specialist education that increasingly became the responsibility of the state was further education in agriculture. Formal agricultural education had developed since the late nineteenth century and colleges offered non-residential courses that taught farming techniques and land management. Greater emphasis upon agricultural production during the Second World War and into the post-war period resulted in the encouragement of agricultural education, both through the university courses and new state-led vocational training schemes. The target was for a new farm institute for every county.

Agricultural education in Nottinghamshire had first developed in 1895 with the establishment of the Kingston Dairy Institute at Kingston-on-Soar which later became the Midland Agricultural College when it relocated in 1914 to Sutton Bonington, to the south west of Nottingham. Located within Nottinghamshire it was jointly administered by neighbouring local authorities including Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Rutland, Lindsey and Kesteven. Increasing emphasis placed on agricultural education and the furthering of new research resulted in greater demand for land. In 1919 and 1939 local farms belonging to Lord Belper of Kingston Hall were, respectively, purchased and rented (Meaby 1939).

In 1947 the Joint Advisory Committee to the Ministers of Agriculture and Education reported the need for greater attention to agricultural and horticultural education. With reference to the East Midlands, only Northamptonshire had a

state funded farm institute, in addition to the one-year courses held at Sutton Bonington. With provision already existing in Nottinghamshire the report recommended that an additional three institutes be established at decommissioned military training sites in Leicestershire, Lincolnshire (Lindsey) and Derbyshire. However, following the transfer of the Midland Agricultural College under the sole management of the University College, Nottingham offering degree and diploma courses in horticulture, dairying and poultry keeping, it was considered that Nottinghamshire too would benefit from a farm institute (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food 1943, 1946, 1947, 1958).

The transferral of the Midland Agricultural College coincided with new moves directed by the Ministry of Agriculture for the establishment of Farm Institutes by county councils. This was an attempt to formalise and standardise agricultural education across the country under the management of both the County Agricultural and Education Committees who were responsible for the training, technological advancement and promotion of modern agricultural techniques. Such increased state involvement in training paralleled the central government intervention in agricultural production which was initiated during the Second World War and continued during the post-war period. Indeed County Council responsibilities for agricultural production under a dedicated committee were removed, vested within the central state and replaced with concerns for agricultural education provision.

The County Council's commitment to the establishment and management of a new agricultural college was evident in the fervour in which the Education

Committee sought, with the co-operation of the Ministry of Agriculture and the County War Agricultural Executive Committee, suitable premises. In May 1945 the Higher Education Sub-Committee reported that, having surveyed a number of properties, Ramsdale Park was considered, “eminently suitable”.<sup>25</sup> With the support of the respective state organisations and Ministerial departments, Ramsdale, having only just been vacated by the Nottingham Girls’ High School, was regarded as in good condition and would offer the required residential accommodation. The property lacked, however, classroom space, which would have to be built as restrictions to labour and building materials permitted. The Seely family, at this time, still owned nearby Sherwood Lodge which had been their main family residence and so the option to sell the house which had been such a drain on their wealth in its design and construction was perhaps considered most seriously.<sup>26</sup> However, in total the land required at Ramsdale for its successful operation of a farm institute was regarded by the Education Committee to be about 600 acres. Although the soil was regarded as favourable, varying between light and heavy, on the suburban fringe to the north of Nottingham the land required by the County Council far exceeded that which Frank Seely was willing to sell.

Later, on the 5 November 1946 the Education Committee reported that the Ministry of Education had approved the acquisition of Brackenhurst Hall, just south of Southwell, together with an initial 21.5 acres of estate land for use as an Adult Education Residential College.<sup>27</sup> Brackenhurst was a second choice following the Committee’s unsuccessful attempt at purchasing Kirklington Hall, which they could not afford to buy within the 1945 to 1946 financial year. Instead,

the property was promptly purchased by a local private school which required new premises to expand.



**Figure 6.5:** The east elevation of Brackenhurst Hall and the reinstated formal gardens in 1979.<sup>28</sup>

Sir William Hickling, a local businessman who had inherited the family lace bleaching business and was a former County Councillor, owned Brackenhurst Hall. He had purchased the small estate from George Savile Foljambe of Osberton Hall in 1899 and proceeded to buy adjacent holdings totalling 250 acres which included two farms. Furthermore, the estate was greatly improved with alterations made to the house and new planting schemes incorporated within the gardens (Train n.d.) Following interest expressed by the County Council, Hickling was willing to accept £22,000 for the total property required. The Committee reported that whilst it hoped that an amicable arrangement could be made compulsory purchase powers would be considered against one of the Council's former

members. Instead no progress was made and it was not until Sir William's death in 1947 that the trustees to the estate agreed on the sale. By now additional land was available to the Education Committee and instead of purchasing the property as an Adult Education College, it was realised that the entire estate could be more suitably used as a Farm Institute. Sir William's own initiatives provided considerable continuity with the intentions of modern agricultural education. This tradition and success in agriculture, horticulture and land management was celebrated at Brackenhurst. Firstly, Hickling was a nationally well known dairy cattle breeder and the estate was synonymous with Brackenhurst Jean, reputedly the finest ever dairy shorthorn. Secondly, in 1928 the County Architect, E.W. Roberts successfully reinstated the estate dewpond, believed to have been the first constructed in Britain, which had silted up and drained. Thirdly, and more practically, the estate offered all the principal requirements of a Farm Institute, including sufficient land both for agricultural production and future development, farms for livestock management and rearing, gardens for horticultural trials and studies, and suitable accommodation for teaching, administration and private study (Lyth 1989).

In the preceding sections I have considered the variety of specialist education requirements towards which country house estates were placed. Modest estate houses provided highly suitable accommodation for the numbers of children and students considered for each establishment for their effective operation. Special and approved schools were created in small houses, therefore offering optimum opportunity for the care and education of children with behavioural or emotional difficulties, or severe mental health illnesses. In contrast, the establishment of the

farm institute within Nottinghamshire held a greater demand for estate space and the potential for expansion as was revealed at Brackenhurst.

Within the following sections I consider the use of estate space for more general demands advanced within the Education Act, 1944. The expansion and overhaul of primary and secondary education provided the greatest challenge to the Ministry of Education, county councils and their Education Committees and Directors of Education. In Nottinghamshire alone it was estimated that the increase in the compulsory leaving age from formal state education to fifteen would retain a further 6,000 pupils within the County education system (Nottinghamshire County Council 1947:59). This section, therefore, considers the dual responsibility of ensuring improved educational facilities, including the construction of new schools and the provision of playing fields, in order to meet such expansive demands, and the training of skilled teachers in order to fill the increased number of positions available and ensure that the variety of new skills required were attained.

In the first section I consider in depth the purchase, use and management of Eaton Hall and Ordsall Hall, near Retford, as the Nottinghamshire County Training College. In parallel to specialised education provision, Eaton and Ordsall offered both the appropriate amount of space deemed necessary for its successful operation and a suitable environment for the training of future teachers.

Whilst the estate houses at Eaton and Ordsall were essential requirements of such an establishment, similar properties would not be essential in ensuring the

improved provision of primary and secondary state education infrastructure. In the second section I discuss the Bramcote Hills estate, to the west of Nottingham, portions of which were purchased by the local Urban District Council and the Nottinghamshire County Council. In the second instance, parkland excluding the estate house, was considered by the Council's Education Committee and Director of Education as highly suitable for the construction of necessary primary and secondary educational facilities supporting an expanding local population. This approach for education development within a single campus centred within estate parkland became the model for provision within Nottinghamshire and was adopted elsewhere.

## **6.2 The State, the country house and teacher training provision in Nottinghamshire; Eaton Hall and Ordsall Hall**

The recommended reorganisation of the education system during the Second World War had fundamental implications for both infrastructure and teaching resources. The raising of the school leaving age to fifteen in 1947 together with the large scale building programme directed under the Education Act, 1944, meant that large numbers of additional teachers, drawn predominantly from the armed services following demobilisation, would have to be recruited and trained. The recruitment of new teachers, a shortfall which was most acute immediately following the Second World War, was central to a strategy that became a focus of the Ministry of Education and local education authorities up until the 1970s when the adequate supply of qualified teachers was reached (Pile 1979:129).

Two schemes were established immediately following the Second World War to train new teachers. The first was a permanent scheme undertaken by the county councils with support and authorisation from the Ministry of Education under the direction of the 1944 Act. Secondly, in realising that the immediate requirements would not be met an emergency scheme was established by the Ministry of Education which utilised properties and installations requisitioned and established during the Second World War (Jones 1948; Ministry of Education 1950:131-151). Accommodation varied markedly ranging from temporary military installations to country houses.

Within this section I detail two parallel schemes that were adopted to facilitate the training of teachers within Nottinghamshire; Daneshill Emergency Teacher Training College and the Nottinghamshire County Training College at Eaton Hall. The first was not a country estate but an assemblage of hutments and industrial buildings constructed as an ordnance depot on wasteland during the Second World War and favoured by the Ministry of Education for their emergency scheme. Eaton Hall, built in the early nineteenth century, was purchased by the County Education Committee as a permanent college to train teachers. In addition a nearby estate house, Ordsall Hall, located west of Retford on the fringe of the town's expanding residential area, was also purchased and served as a residential hostel for students studying at Eaton Hall.

This chapter, therefore, charts the search undertaken by the Education Committee to find suitable accommodation for a teacher training college and how Eaton Hall and Ordsall Hall became central to their requirements, the phased development of the Eaton Hall estate, the operation and management of estate space, and the relationship between the County Committee and the Ministry of Education, whose negotiations reveal the valuing of estate space and the differing visions for its use within this context. Furthermore, with reference to the previous chapter which considered the state and the preservation of country house estates, this section considers two houses, Eaton Hall and Ordsall Hall, neither of which were regarded as of architectural or historical importance. Before proceeding to discuss these estate houses, however, I wish briefly to consider the Emergency Training Scheme of the Ministry of Education, which equally relied upon country houses requisitioned during the Second World War to ensure immediate provision.

### **6.2.1 The Ministry of Education, the Emergency Scheme and permanent County Colleges of Education**

The Ministry of Education realised that their target of 70,000 new teachers would not be achieved without direct assistance from central government. Such was the immediate demand, that a centrally administered Emergency Scheme for the Training of Teachers was established in late 1944 in the hope of recruiting an initial 12,000 of the intended target before the end of 1946 (Ministry of Education 1950).<sup>29</sup> A circular published in May 1946 reported that in total 9500 places had been secured within 41 colleges (24 of which had not yet opened).<sup>30</sup> Whilst the search for permanent training colleges was the responsibility of local education authorities with the consultative support of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry took direct control in the emergency scheme, which involved the funding, facility sourcing and approval, equipping and staffing of specific establishments, whilst the local authority assumed a regional agent role.

Across the country a number of types of buildings were considered appropriate to be included in the scheme, many of which had been requisitioned for use during the Second World War and in late 1944 were in the process of being released by respective ministerial and military authorities. In total there were 55 emergency training colleges. Six (11%) were based in country estates and a further five (9%) were housed solely in hutments and ancillary buildings constructed in estate parklands.<sup>31</sup> The largest proportion, fifteen (27%), were located in “industrial hostels”. These were hutments which had been grouped on one site for specific

industrial, military purposes, and often constructed in haste during the Second World War (Ministry of Education 1950). These installations were able to accommodate and educate quite a large number of students in relative comfort and they were described as the “most convenient for college purposes”, and were the option favoured by the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education 1950:16).

The first emergency training college to be commissioned was Alnwick Castle, the ancestral home of the Dukes of Northumberland, which was opened on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1945. During the Second World War part of the castle had been occupied by the Newcastle Church High School for Girls and it was this same portion of the house that was allocated for teacher training provision.<sup>32</sup> On 15<sup>th</sup> January 1948 Bletchley Park in Buckinghamshire, now famous as the place where the Enigma code was cracked during the Second World War, became the last college to be established (Smith 1998). Following the cessation of hostilities the estate house and hutments, the latter constructed during the war, were re-allocated for use by the Ministry of Education. Other accommodation used for teacher training purposes consisted of colleges and schools, town houses previously used by local education authorities for the training of teachers, hotels and hutted hospitals (Ministry of Education 1950).

Country houses were the least preferred option because as stated within the review of Emergency provision:

Experience showed that the large country house, regarded in so many quarters as the solution to the problem, was seldom practicable and never

wholly satisfactory. It was nearly always too small, inadequate in washing and sanitary provision, in kitchens and dining rooms, and in large teaching spaces. Heating was a constant difficulty, as coal fires meant a large domestic staff when such help was almost unobtainable, and central heating, if already installed, was usually derelict and useless. The few country houses that were selected had for the most part been used by Service Departments during the war, and had been extended by the addition of huts. (Ministry of Education 1950:16)

The Ministry conceded that, whilst there were many problems associated to the establishment of colleges in estate houses, they did offer an attractive solution. During the post-war period there were significant restrictions placed upon construction work, which meant the reconditioning and use of existing buildings was viewed with greater interest. Furthermore, as was argued by the SPAB during attempts to preserve Rufford Abbey and potential new uses were being sought, the cost of constructing a new similarly sized building was far greater than the potential repair and adaptation costs of the existing structure.

With new and expanding non-residential demands for properties, meeting the requirements of private and public institutions and nationalised industries, so the adaptation of existing buildings was considered the only feasible option in the immediate post-war period. As has been discussed previously for landowners the economic crisis in estate management meant that in some instances any demand for land and property would be considered with considerable interest. Whilst large landowners could rely upon capital, for smaller, single estate owners, the options

were far more restricted, and it was the smaller estate houses which were the most manageable and suitable for county council requirements.

The demands for new accommodation, both as part of an emergency scheme and for permanent colleges, therefore provide a context within which to place the establishment and operation of training institutions in Nottinghamshire. The first such institution, Daneshill Emergency Training College, was established by central state action. A committee headed by G.N. Fleming of the Board of Education (later Ministry of Education) reported in April 1944, making recommendations regarding the location of emergency colleges. They concluded that ideally colleges should be sited near to, or within easy reach of large residential populations, in particular those with Universities or other higher educational institutions. As such, firstly, the permanent staff could be supplemented by local lecturers, secondly, some colleges would only cater for day students and so private accommodation would be necessary, and thirdly, the college could take advantage of resources such as libraries, museums and galleries.<sup>33</sup> Unlike the review of the emergency scheme published in 1950, there was no mention by the Committee of the types of properties and sites considered suitable.

Within Nottinghamshire only one male residential Emergency College was established. This was at Daneshill a few miles to the north west of Retford. Described as an industrial hostel it opened on 17 February 1947 before closing in August 1950 having trained about 600 teachers. Established in the inter-war years the site had been developed as Ranskill Royal Ordnance Factory and consisted of

about two dozen Nissen-type buildings which were used for storage, production, residential accommodation and administration. Situated three quarters of a mile to the east of the London North Eastern Railway it offered excellent transport links and a branch line was constructed to enable the easy movement of armaments. Following the cessation of hostilities, Ranskill was no longer required, and with a permanent ordnance factory located to the west of Nottingham at Chilwell still operational, it was decided to close the site. Prior to the derequisition of land and buildings notification of intent was distributed to other Ministerial departments and local authorities. Whilst the property would have to be reallocated to a county council, it was far easier for Ministries to pass temporary ownership under requisition between themselves. Such was the case in this instance where Ranskill was transferred between the Ministry of Supply and the Ministry of Education.

### **6.2.2 The search for teacher training accommodation in Nottinghamshire: teaching and residential provision**

A Ministry of Education circular entitled *Acquisition of sites*, distributed in November 1944 emphasised the urgent requirement for local authorities to seek premises and land for educational buildings for various purposes. Within this notice the Ministry expressed that for such initiatives appropriate accommodation would have to be secured within two years of the end of the Second World War.<sup>34</sup> The County Education Committee acted on this, together with the policy objectives tabled in the Education Act 1944, which directed that:

The Minister shall [...] make such arrangements as he considers expedient for securing that there shall be available suitable facilities for the training of teachers for service in schools colleges and other establishments maintained by local education authorities, and for that purpose the Minister may give to any local education authority such direction as he thinks necessary requiring them to establish maintain or assist any training college or other institution or to provide or assist the provision of any other facility specified in the direction.<sup>35</sup>

Furthermore, the Board of Education also argued that:

We urge that those responsible for the planning of the location of new training colleges... should seize any reasonable opportunity that may present itself for grouping together as large a variety of such colleges as possible (Board of Education 1944:75)

The Education Committee of Nottinghamshire County Council before the war had managed four teacher training centres spread across the county in East Retford, Newark, Nottingham and Hucknall. All these, it was reported, became secondary schools and so they began searching for appropriate permanent accommodation to accord with new central state policy which recommended that rather than provision being spread around the County's principal settlements, it should be centralised and accessible (Meaby 1939:91).

Following the end of hostilities large numbers of properties that had been requisitioned were being released by their respective Ministerial departments. Before being derequisitioned and returned to their owners other Ministerial departments and local authorities were notified of the availability of these premises, giving them first refusal. In particular the Ministry of Education often notified the Education Committee of the County Council of such impending releases should they require them for educational purposes. The names of about 28 estates within the County and City boundaries were conveyed to the County Council.<sup>36</sup> In June 1945 the Training of Teachers Sub-Committee reported that both Mapperley Hall and Bestwood Lodge could be available and having concluded that such premises were highly suitable, “every effort be made to secure [them] at as early a date as possible”, for teacher training provision.<sup>37</sup> The following month the Development Sub-Committee reported that the War Office were unable to release Bestwood and there were vague reports that Mapperley was to be reassigned as a women’s hostel.<sup>38</sup> The latter had been purchased by Nottingham Corporation in 1903 when Frederick Wright sold both his Lenton Hall and Mapperley estates. Anticipating the later intentions of the County Council in 1945, Mapperley Hall opened in 1906 as a hall of residence for male students enrolled on teacher training programmes within the School of Education at University College, Nottingham (Barnes 1993).

Furthermore Royston Manor was also reported as available but as it could only accommodate 20 people it was soon discounted. Even more properties were brought to the attention of the Education Committee. On the 13 September 1945 the Development Sub-Committee reported on Tollerton Hall. Whilst it was

suitable and in sound condition the County Architect, E.W. Roberts, concluded that the roof was in need of extensive repairs. At this time, however, it was still an active prisoner of war camp and its release date was unknown with repatriation being a lengthy process. Further comments were submitted on Watnall Hall and two town houses to the north and west of Nottingham but “in view of the unsatisfactory nature of these reports no future action on them will be taken”.<sup>39</sup>

Four days later, as the unsuccessful search continued, the County Council’s Director of Education, J. Edward Mason, reported back to the Ministry of Education, detailing additional properties that the Education Committee had considered:

We have surveyed practically every building in this County which seemed likely to be available or to offer any hope at all of being suitable for conversion into Training College accommodation. I am pretty certain that the ideal building does not exist, especially since we lost Stanford Hall, Welbeck, which has many attractions, has of course, as you are aware, many factors against its use as a Training College, and since the Military Authorities are in occupation and use it for training of their own personnel, it is no good us entertaining it as a possibility.<sup>40</sup>

Such frustrations, where those properties considered were either too small or too large, or where Ministerial requirements held priority over the County Council, were short lived, for in the same letter Mason went on to add that a new property had emerged, the specific nature of which made it a highly attractive proposition:

The new venture in mind is Eaton Hall... it is in pleasant country, and is the property of a member of the County Council... What makes the venture even more attractive, however, is that there are adjoining this house a very excellent set of stables, horse boxes, garages etc.<sup>41</sup>

In search of suitable premises for a teacher training college the Education Committee considered a reported 28 properties located in both rural and urban areas. Such a number offered varying positive and negative characteristics. Indeed size and the ability to convert efficiently and quickly seems to have been of greater importance than the designed landscape setting which a country house could offer. As J. Edward Mason conceded, “the ideal building does not exist”. The town houses and Royston Manor offered little capacity beyond provision that the Council had operated prior to the Second World War. Regarding other estates there was confusion over whether they were actually available. If it had have been available Welbeck Abbey was perhaps too large, whereas Stanford Hall was viewed as the most appropriate. Its suitability was reflected in the success which the Co-operative Society later demonstrated in the management of Stanford as a residential further education college which was a similar type and size of establishment to the intended teacher training college.

The Education Committee determined that Eaton Hall should be their first choice but whilst approval was being sought from the Ministry of Education more estates were still being identified as available. In December 1945 the Development Sub-Committee reported that both Thorney Hall, to the east of the county, and Hesley

Hall near Blyth were considered equally unsuitable. There were three identified reasons why the Education Committee concluded that Eaton Hall was the most appropriate estate of all those considered. Firstly, the County Architect had reported that only minor initial alterations would be required to make the college operational. Secondly, and related to this, the ancillary buildings including stables, garages and the lodge permitted immediate conversion for classrooms and the Principal's private accommodation. Finally, in comparison to other estates considered, a member of the County Council who sat on the Education Committee owned Eaton Hall. Mrs. K.L. Kayser, of whom more below, understood the responsibilities of the Education Committee and was sympathetic to such demands upon estate space.

The County Training College would serve to provide teachers predominantly for Nottinghamshire schools so its position within the centre of the county would be an ideal location. Despite this no mention of such a factor is given within the minutes of the Education Committee or correspondence with the Ministry. Located on the Great North Road, the principal north-south road which traversed the County, Eaton was a highly accessible choice. In 1954 in an article celebrating the history of the road it was reported that owing to problems associated with vehicle movement within Retford the Ministry of Transport, with the support of the County Council, had recommended that the road be diverted from Markham Moor, south of Eaton, along the Worksop Road heading west where it would link up with another principal long-distance national road, the A614 (Noble 1954). This diversion was implemented and therefore downgraded the stretch where Eaton Hall was located. Whilst the original estate house at Eaton was hidden from

view within its grounds, the massive expansion of the site to the east prior to the downgrading as illustrated in figure 6.15, made the development in full view of passing car users. This acted as an advert for the County, its ability in design and its social and education acumen, the impact of which was negated when the cars were diverted.

Once the Education Committee had concluded that Eaton was the best option they began to consider other available premises which could provide additional hostel accommodation until such a time when permits for building materials and labour could be secured to develop the immediate land adjacent to Eaton Hall. The Education Committee considered three premises within the vicinity of Eaton, including two large Victorian detached town houses. Firstly the Hardmoors which was located between Retford and Eaton along the Great North Road (see figure 6.8), and Glenesk which had been built near the railway line between Ordsall and Retford within a residential area. The third option, which the Committee eventually chose, was a nineteenth century country house called Ordsall Hall, situated in a parish adjacent to Retford, and which had become increasingly developed during the later Victorian and Edwardian era.

The Hardmoors was the nearest property to Eaton Hall under consideration. In October 1945 the Director of Education wrote to the District Valuer requesting that enquiries be made for the purchase of the Hardmoors. It was owned by Mr C.H.S. Stephenson and was still under requisition by the Ministry of Works. Despite the support of the Ministry of Education it was concluded by the Ministry of Health that the property was still required, despite being vacant at that time, to

provide temporary accommodation for foreign refugees complementing similar provision found elsewhere near Retford.<sup>42</sup> The estate house of Grove Hall, three miles to the south-east of Retford, had been requisitioned for such a purpose and the Hardmoors provided additional overspill accommodation when required. The additional accommodation available at the Hardmoors, therefore, became the focus for two different potential state uses based in neighbouring country house estates.<sup>43</sup>

Ordsall Hall, as illustrated in figure 6.6, had been developed on the site of a farmhouse during the nineteenth century (Ableson and Griffiths c.1969). At the time of the Education Committee's interest in the Hall it was owned by Mr Arthur Peel Williamson, a solicitor of Retford. He had been a councillor of Retford Borough since 1910, was elected as an Alderman in 1921 and had twice been appointed mayor of Retford in 1914 and 1932 (Anonymous 1935). Following Williamson's death his widow Beatrice advertised the estate for sale. The availability of the property accordingly reached the attention of the County Council's Education Committee.



**Figure 6.6:** The south elevation of Ordsall Hall in c.1920.<sup>44</sup>

Despite the enthusiasm of the Education Committee, the Ministry of Education were concerned as to the success of running a composite college on two sites which, although only two miles apart, could only be connected by travelling through Retford. An inspector within the Ministry of Education specified particular concern with the County's proposal:

I am still strongly of the opinion that Ordsall Hall is too far away from Eaton Hall to make the training college a workable unit and therefore want to press for a full-time College bus to fly between the two places. Otherwise I am convinced we shall have to abandon Ordsall Hall for training college purposes diverting it to other educational purposes.<sup>45</sup>

Another civil servant, however, had concluded that haste was required and this was ultimately the deciding factor prompting a decision by the Ministry.

I must confess that I am not at first sight very much attracted by the idea of working two properties so far apart as components of one College, but there are obvious advantages in anything which makes a start possible.<sup>46</sup>

Following an inspection of the three properties considered as a residential hostel to complement Eaton Hall by members of the Development Sub-Committee of the County Council on 1 December 1945, it was concluded that with regard to necessary alterations and additions which would be required at Ordsall, the Hardmoors and Glenesk, the former would require the least. Accordingly on the 6 December 1945 the Sub-Committee requested the County Architect to notify the owner of Ordsall Hall of the Council's "confident" interest in the property and to secure steps for the necessary Ministerial approval.<sup>47</sup> On the 30 August 1946, just eighteen days prior to the official opening, the Director of Education, Mr. J. Edward Mason, requested formal permission from the Ministry of Education to purchase Ordsall Hall which, which as yet, had not arrived from the Ministry.<sup>48</sup>

The County Education Committee intended that the teacher training college would initially be for 50 female students and it would operate as a composite college – Eaton Hall would provide teaching facilities and accommodation for 30 students whilst Ordsall Hall would provide for an additional 20. Provision at Daneshill Emergency College was solely for men and so it was considered that whilst this was operational, Eaton would focus upon the recruitment and training of female teachers.

### **6.2.3 Eaton Hall; an architectural and social history**

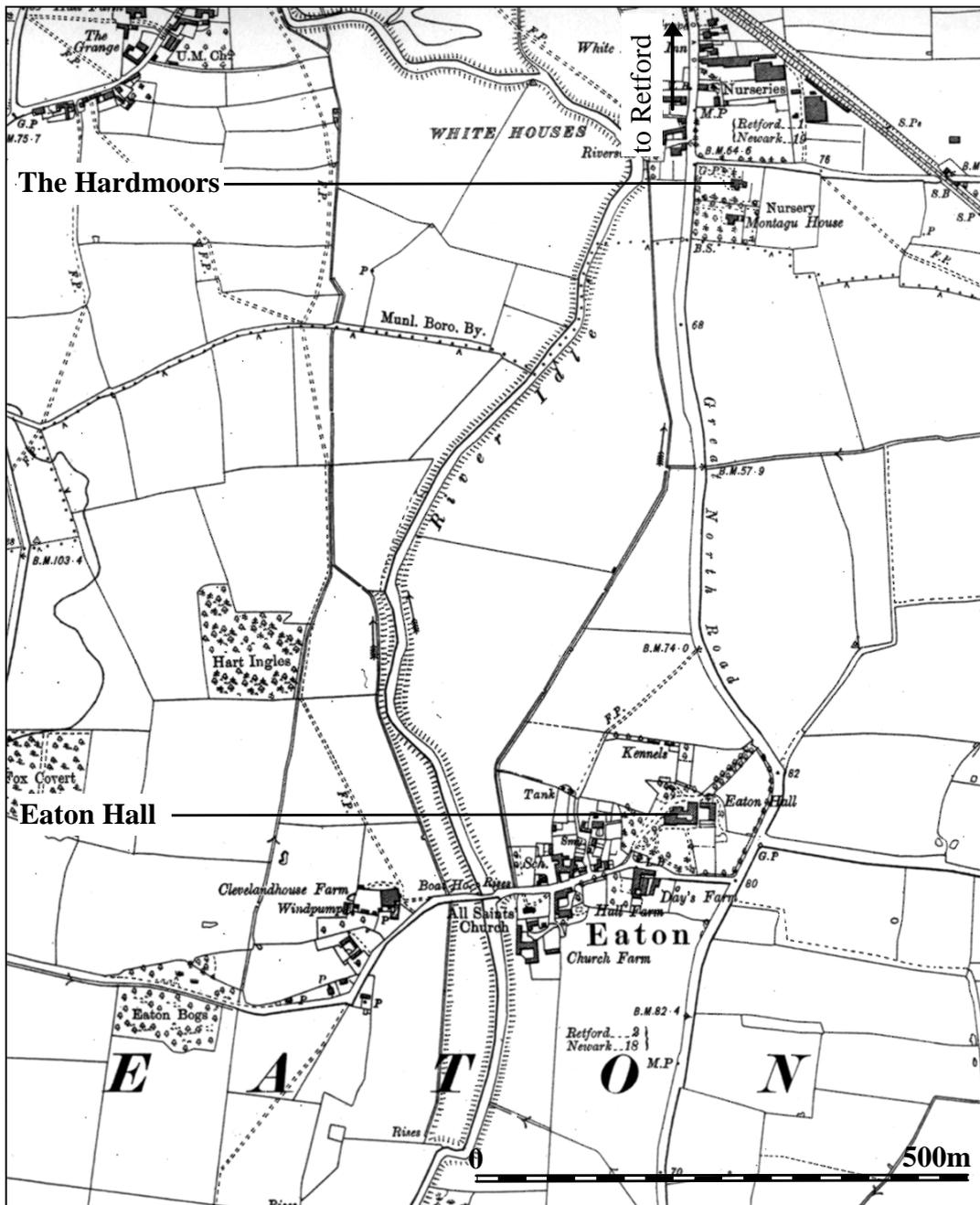
Eaton Hall, as illustrated in figures 6.7 and 6.8, was owned by Charles William Kayser whose wife, Kathleen Langley Kayser, was a member of Nottinghamshire County Council, representing the Tuxford electoral division. She had been elected unopposed in May 1930 as the first female member of the Council. In welcoming her, Colonel Sir Lancelot Rolleston, Chairman of the Council and owner of Watnall Hall, which the Education Committee would later consider purchasing, declared that, “a new and happy step had been taken” (quoted in Withers 1989:27). She was “politically minded” and was chair of the Womens’ Conservative and Unionist Association in Retford with the assistance of Isobella Monckton-Arundell, daughter of the 8<sup>th</sup> Viscount Galway of Serlby Hall.

Charles William Kayser purchased the estate in 1914, a time when land and property sales were high (Whitaker 1927:37; Beckett 1986; Cannadine 1990; Clemenson 1982). He was a steel manufacturer and owner of Kayser-Ellison Steel based in Sheffield. In addition to the Eaton estate, he also purchased land in the adjacent parishes of Ordsall (excluding Ordsall Hall) and Gamston which in total amounted to about 3000 acres. Financial successes derived from military expansion prior to the First World War enabled Charles to indulge his passion for field sports. He was an active member of the Grove Hunt whose country extended 24 miles from north to south and 30 miles east to west within north Nottinghamshire, south Yorkshire and a small part of Derbyshire. To the south east of this territory was the Eyre, and latterly Harcourt-Vernon estate of Grove Hall, which the hunt was named after, just two miles to the north east of Eaton.

The first Master of the Grove Hunt was the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Scarborough, of Rufford Abbey, who held the position between 1807 and 1822. Other landowners who held the title included the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Viscount's Galway of Serlby Hall, and between 1907 and 1926, when the Kaysers were active members the Master was the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl Fitzwilliam of Wentworth Woodhouse in Yorkshire.<sup>49</sup>



**Figure 6.7:** South elevation of Eaton Hall soon after its purchase by C.W. Kayser. This photograph featured in the College of Education's anniversary publication (Abelson and Griffiths c.1969).<sup>50</sup>



**Figure 6.8:** Ordnance Survey map of the Eaton Hall estate in 1921.

Of all the principal members of the Grove Hunt who did not have a country seat at this time, Charles Kayser was perhaps the best positioned and most financially able to take advantage of the availability of Eaton Hall on the estate market at a time when a high proportion of land and property changed hands.

Eaton Hall was a sporting estate during the interwar period. Coverts were maintained for shooting, the Grove Hunt regularly met on the estate and other local landowners were regularly entertained there. Through the Kayser's hunting interests and County Council connections, associations with neighbouring landowners were fostered across the entire north of Nottinghamshire. These included, for example, the Duke of Portland of Welbeck Abbey, the Foljambes of Osberton Hall and the Whitakers of nearby Babworth Hall. At Eaton Hall no extensions were made to the property itself but Charles built a stable range for 12 horses, a coach house and garages for 6 cars to the east of the estate house. Furthermore, trees were planted to the south and east where the estate land met the Great North Road in order to maintain privacy and an avenue was planted along the main approach to the north east.<sup>51</sup> The house prior to development is illustrated in figure 6.9.



**Figure 6.9:** South elevation of Eaton Hall in c1910 prior to Charles Kayser's redevelopment of the stable range to the east.<sup>52</sup>

Eaton Hall was built in about 1830 for the Honourable John Bridgeman-Simpson (1763-1850) of Babworth Hall and was located on the site of a former manor house from the eleventh century.<sup>53</sup> The new Hall had immediate grounds of about twenty acres. In 1830 John's son of his second marriage, Henry Bridgeman-Simpson, married the daughter of Mr. Henry Baring of Cobham Hall in Norfolk, and Eaton Hall was perhaps built as their residence. Following the death of John in 1850 Henry inherited. In 1886 the Babworth and Eaton estates, as directed under Henry's own will, when he died in 1873, were left to Brigadier General Henry Denison (1847-1938).<sup>54</sup> He was the son of Stephen Charles Denison and nephew of John Evelyn Denison, Viscount Ossington of Ossington Hall. He was also a founding member of the County Council, serving until 1915, and amongst his interests he listed the field sports of shooting and hunting together with collecting birds and eggs (Anonymous 1935). In 1913 Colonel Henry Denison advertised the sale of the Eaton estate, including village property at auction. Charles William Kayser was the eventual purchaser.

#### **6.2.4 Eaton Hall, emergency maternity provision and the Second World War**

As with other houses discussed within this research Eaton Hall had a notable wartime history. Within this section I explore the use of the estate house by the government's Emergency Maternity Service established during the Second World War, the function of the hospital within a wider programme of evacuation and social welfare care, and the role of the County Council and the Kayser family in

respectively sourcing properties and maintaining care. As I highlighted with regard to Rufford, issues regarding the value of the estate are placed in connection with wider concerns beyond the war itself. At Eaton, whilst schemes for maternity care were based upon safety of both the mother and her unborn child from bombardment during the war, it can be placed within wider social welfare developments such as the professionalisation of care, improved medical services and increasing hospitalisation both during and after pregnancy. Most significantly, the care provided by the Emergency Maternity Service can be viewed in assisting changing perceptions of childbirth, which had formerly centred on the home, to an increased acceptance of hospitalised maternity provision (Dunn 1953; Titmuss 1950).

In 1940 Angela Kayser, daughter of Mr. And Mrs. Kayser, married Leslie Melville Farrer, a huntsman whose family owned Green Hammerton Hall in Yorkshire.<sup>55</sup> Together they moved nearby to Barnby Moor in Nottinghamshire where they looked after the Grove hounds which were kept just west of the village in kennels owned by Earl Fitzwilliam of Wentworth Woodhouse.<sup>56</sup> Earlier, in 1938, at the request of her father, Angela became the Master of the Grove Hunt at the age of 27 which brought with it the responsibility for the upkeep of the hounds. The move to Barnby left Angela's parents in residence at Eaton Hall. Charles William Kayser was now 70 years old and unable to enjoy the hunt as he did during the interwar period, and with Kathleen pursuing her political interests, when not caring for her husband, Eaton temporarily became a much quieter place.<sup>57</sup>

Earlier, in January 1940, the Maternity and Child Welfare Committee of the County Council, reported that K.L. Kayser, realising that during the Second World War property would be requisitioned and herself feeling a social responsibility to assist, offered Eaton Hall to the County Council. A lease was taken out on the property by the Ministry of Health for seven years or until six months after the end of hostilities whichever was earlier.<sup>58</sup> It was expected that it would be either allocated for evacuees or, with Mrs. Kayser having specialist knowledge of hospital care, service personnel sent for a period of convalescence. Instead under requirements tabled within the Government's evacuation scheme for the temporary safe resettlement of individuals it was allocated for a purpose which combined both of her expectations; the evacuation, hospitalisation and care of expectant mothers from cities threatened by aerial bombardment.

## **i Early maternity provision and the rise of institutional care**

During the interwar period increasing responsibilities for maternity and child welfare were conferred upon local authorities. Following the Maternity and Child Welfare Act, 1918, both district and county councils were charged with reporting all births, organising health visitors, and administering health centres and clinics. This was developed in the passing of the Midwives Act, 1936 which further established state support for maternity care. This legislation required that local authorities secure the employment of certified midwives therefore making midwifery a professional occupation. In 1939 it was reported that in Nottinghamshire there were 50 full-time midwives and 65 district nurse midwives

employed by the County Council (Meaby 1939:102). Maternity care at this time was focused upon the home where most births took place. Only where conditions were unsuitable or when there were perceived complications were mothers confined at special maternity wards in hospitals. Increasing demands for hospital care by women's welfare groups and acceptance of mothers of such provision meant that between 1927 and 1937 the number of hospital births rose from 15 to 25 percent. Most notably this figure increased markedly following the war in 1946 to 54 per cent (Lewis 1990).

It is within the context of the developing professionalisation and centralisation of maternity care and the gradual increase in hospital provision that an emergency scheme during the Second World War can be placed. Concerns regarding the potential safety of expectant mothers prior to the Second World War accelerated these patterns and furthermore, through other developing proposals of social welfare provision, became increasingly established during the post-war period.

## **ii The Emergency Maternity Service; the national scheme for evacuation and Eaton Hall**

In early 1939 the government considered it necessary to plan a mass evacuation strategy should war be declared. It was realised that the principal targets for aerial bombardment would include industrial towns and that in order to minimise loss of life mothers, children, the infirm and those hospitalised adjacent to potential targets would receive priority consideration. In addition to safety, other reasons for evacuation were considered which addressed existing provision and social

change enforced during wartime (Titmuss 1950). As highlighted in the previous section maternity provision in hospitals, although increasing, was not extensive. During the war beds would be prioritised for those injured and therefore maternity provision would not be increased (Dunn 1954). Secondly, mass mobilisation into the services left expectant mothers without the family support and care which was essential for home delivery (Ferguson and Fitzgerald 1954). Increased state support through evacuation was the only available option and within this section I discuss the development and management of such a policy with direct regard to the use of Eaton Hall as part of the government's Emergency Maternity Service.

Accepting this threat the strategy for planning any evacuation was drawn up by central government. Towns and cities highlighted as likely to be key targets were regarded as evacuation areas and it were these where priority planning schemes were concentrated. Although initially mothers were received from London, principally Eaton Hall provided maternity care for mothers from Hull. The docks were regarded as likely to be a key target, in part because of their bombing during the First World War. This judgement was correct and an air raid of 22 June 1940 made Hull one of the first cities in the United Kingdom to be bombed. From this date until May 1941 Hull received only minor attack but between May and August 1941 air raids were much heavier (Gebbie 1953). It was during this time that the five city hospitals were damaged. Prior to bombardment medical officers had recognised that the proximity of all hospitals to potential targets meant that necessary alternative provision should be made. In relation to maternity care, therefore, hospital beds were in greater need for those injured in air raids over expectant mothers. This was further compounded by air raid damage to the

hospitals which made provision even more acute. The only solution, therefore, was to establish hospitals within reception areas which were not under threat of bombardment and this often meant estate houses in rural locations.

The County Committee were required to establish an emergency maternity home for expectant mothers evacuated from London and Hull both of which had been the targets of heavy bombardment and having recently received the offer from K.L. Kayser, Eaton Hall was allocated for just this purpose. It was due to open in January 1940 but owing to organisational problems and a lack of demand prior to intensive bombing it was reported in April 1940 that the hospital had been closed. It was expected that it would be reallocated to the Middlesex Hospital Board, providing nursing home accommodation for wives of military personnel.

This was not undertaken and on the 1 August 1940 the emergency maternity hospital opened with Mrs. Kayser acting as 'commandant,' assisted by her daughter Angela and a selection of employed domestic workers. Initially only the second floor was used for expectant mothers but as demand for beds increased the first floor was also converted. In the summer of 1942, owing to increased demands on the service, Kathleen Kayser decided to resign her post and personally appointed a qualified matron from Queen Charlotte's Maternity College in London to assume the position.<sup>59</sup> The following winter, having been operational for two and a half years the hospital's one hundredth baby was delivered. At a ceremony held in the Hall the Marchioness of Titchfield, of Welbeck Woodhouse, presented the mother with a silver tankard on behalf of the Kaysers.

The Maternity and Child Welfare Committee published occasional reports which detailed the number of mothers cared for and babies delivered. At its peak, between 25 September 1944 and 31 December 1944 the hospital had admitted 164 cases and had delivered 123 babies. Those admitted had steadily increased from 108 in early 1944 to 131 between April and June. In the early months of 1945 numbers declined with 75 cases admitted and 57 births during a similar period.<sup>60</sup> Owing to this reduced demand for evacuation of expectant mothers the maternity hospital closed on 31 August 1945 having achieved about 2000 successful deliveries.<sup>61</sup> That same year, in recognition for her continued political service, which included her maternity work, Mrs. Kathleen Kayser was awarded an M.B.E.

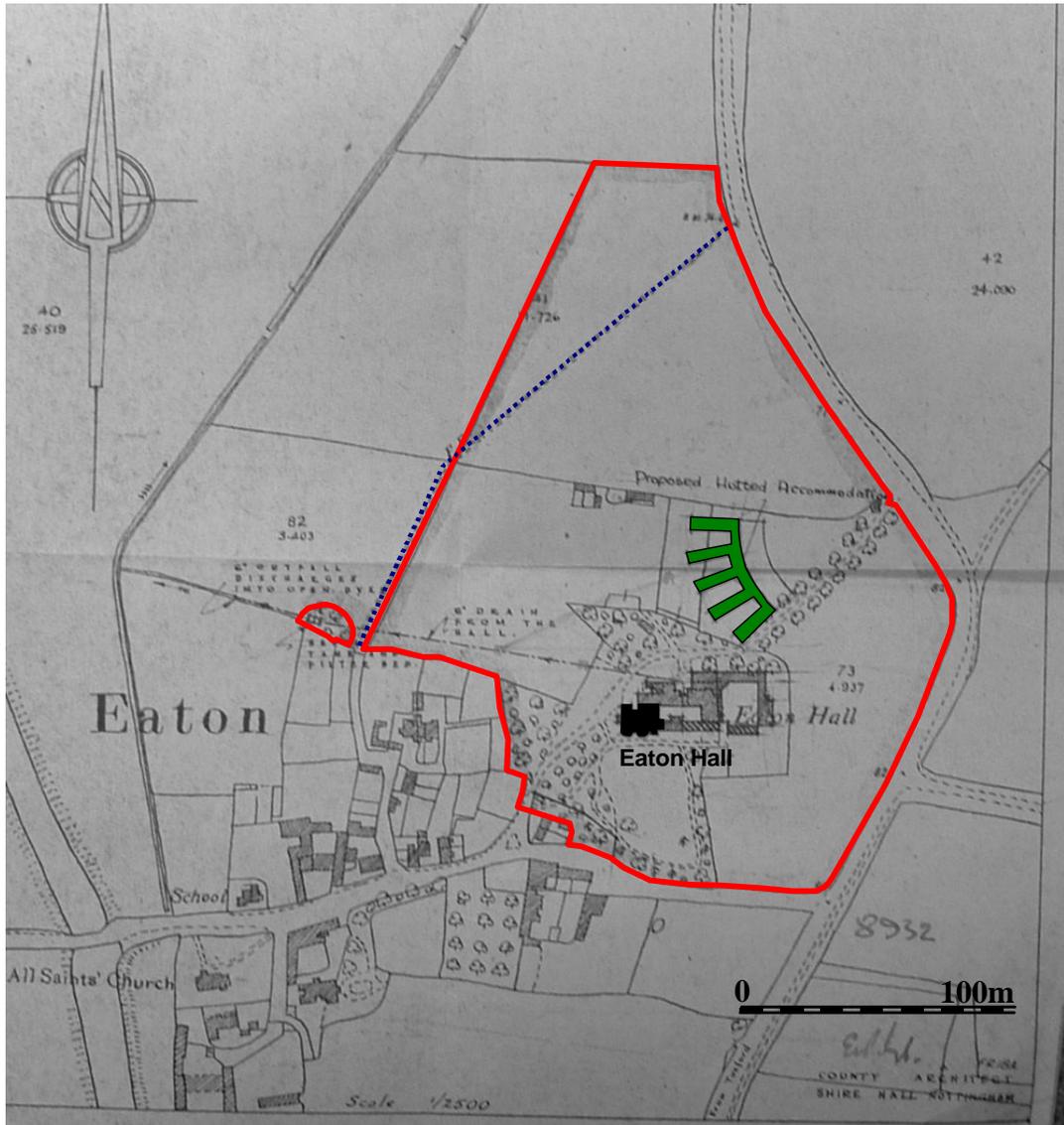
### **iii Changing use: maternity provision to teacher training college**

With the successes of the emergency hospital still fresh and on-going, on the 1 May 1945 the Maternity Committee considered the possibility that Eaton Hall could be transferred to the Council once its demand during the Second World War had expired for use as a permanent County Maternity Home. The necessity of the emergency scheme during the war had highlighted the urgent need for additional maternity beds across the country and once the Government controlled scheme had been disbanded the responsibility of care returned to the local authorities. In Nottinghamshire provision was especially acute because the Ministry of Health

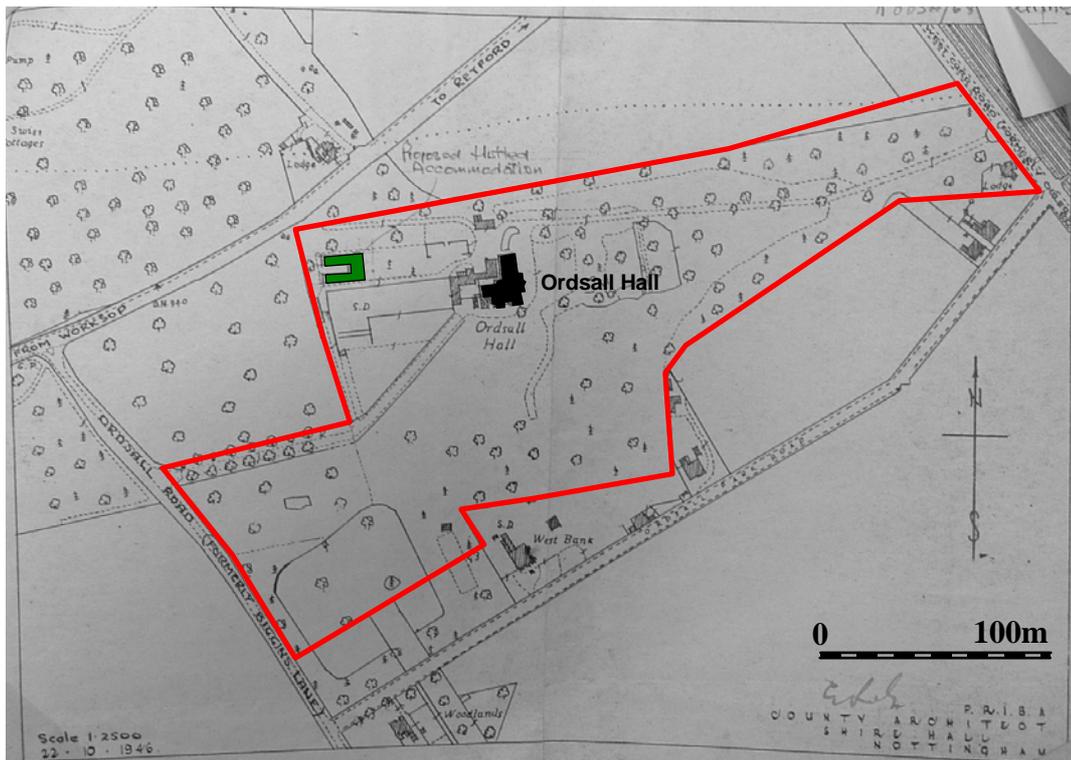
were reported to have refused to sanction a loan for the extension of the Basford County Institution within Nottingham.

At their following meeting on the 6 November 1945 the Committee announced that the proposed scheme had been abandoned and that Eaton Hall emergency maternity home had closed on the 31 August 1945. On that same day, the 6 November, in another Committee room within County Hall, the Education Committee discussed a number of items on their agenda, one of which was to consider the possibility that Eaton Hall could be adopted as the County Training College required under the Education Act, 1944; Councillor Kathleen Kayser was at both meetings.

The Education Committee considered that the purchase of Eaton Hall would be undertaken as a mere formality. Informal negotiations between Kathleen Kayser, the Director of Education and the Committee chair, Alderman L.W.A. White had no doubt ironed out possible complications. However, the Committee soon reported that negotiations had stumbled. The District Valuer had placed before the Kaysers an offer of £7,500 for Eaton Hall together with nineteen acres of land based on 1939 prices, as illustrated in figure 6.10. Such an offer was considered too low and so the Committee considered enacting a Compulsory Purchase Order on one of its own members in order to secure the property. Similarly negotiations regarding the purchase of Ordsall Hall had also failed. With compulsory purchase orders being threatened by the County Council eventually both owners relented and accepted the prices offered by the District Valuer. Ordsall Hall, together with 21.5 acres, as illustrated in the map of figure 6.11, was purchased for £6,375.<sup>62</sup>



**Figure 6.10:** Plan of Eaton Hall drawn up by the County Architect's Department in May 1946 showing land purchased by the Education Committee of the County Council and the location of hutment accommodation referred to as The Leas. The hand drawn additions to the east of the Hall are garages and the stable range constructed by Charles Kayser in the later 1910s. Blue dashed line is a public footpath.<sup>63</sup>



**Figure 6.11:** Nottinghamshire County Council plan of the Ordsall Hall estate in October 1946. The red line is the land purchased by Nottinghamshire County Council from the executors of the estate of Mr. A.P. Williamson. The green shading shows where hutments were constructed.<sup>64</sup>

The stage was now set for the unveiling, operation and development of the estate as a training college. In contrast to arguments regarding the appropriateness of such country residences as considered by the Ministry of Education, the first Principal of the College, Miss L.M. Warren commented that, “the decision to buy the houses was a happy one in that the College was able to make a beginning in a country house atmosphere rather than in that of an institution” (quoted in Ableson and Griffiths c1969:3).

On the 24 June 1946, J. Edward Mason was pleased to report to the Ministry of Education that agreements had been reached regarding the sale of both Eaton and

Ordsall to the County Council.<sup>65</sup> The conveyance for the land at Eaton was completed on 11 October 1946, and is illustrated in figure 6.10.<sup>66</sup> In preparation for the sale of Eaton Hall to the County Council the Kaysers in 1945 requested the auctioneers Henry Spencer and Sons of Retford to conduct a sale of the remaining contents of Eaton Hall including furniture, fine art and vehicles that had remained there during the Second World War and which could not be incorporated into the farmhouse in the village to which they had moved. Rupert Spencer, the principal auctioneer, recalled that, “the Kaysers had always had lovely carriages and cars of yellow colour with their coat of arms added in colours. I was determined that the outside cover of the furniture catalogue should be the absolutely correct shade of yellow”. One item included an oak dining table together with twenty dining chairs which was purchased by another Sheffield steel company for use in their board room (Spencer 1973:57).

### **6.2.5 Nottinghamshire County Training College; initial development, equipping and opening, Phase One 1946-1949**

Both Eaton and Ordsall Hall required substantial modification, improvement and equipment supplies before the college could receive its first intake.<sup>67</sup> Although the establishment, equipping and running of the College was undertaken by the Education Committee through the Director of Education it is clear that the Ministry held ultimate control in sanctioning purchases, granting loans and authorising expenses of items ranging from curtains to educational buildings. The

role of the Ministry at this time is paramount in understanding the means by which development of educational establishments, in part instigated to meet government targets, was undertaken. The authority of the Ministry and demands and wishes of the Education Committee often placed the two in direct conflict. This was exemplified in J. Edward Mason's attempts to procure fifty pounds worth of curtain material for the principal's study; an undertaking which did not feature high on the priorities of the Ministry but still needed their sanction. In an internal memo, J.A. Humphreys, an inspector of the Ministry wrote resignedly that, "Eaton Hall makes very heavy weather of everything".<sup>68</sup> He later added with regard to other procurement demands made by the Education Committee that delays existed due to the, "[Nottinghamshire Education] Authority's general unwillingness to abide by any advise given by the Ministry."<sup>69</sup>

### **i Furniture, equipment and adaptation**

Upon purchasing Eaton Hall the Ministry of Health supplied an inventory of equipment that was used at Eaton during the Second World War and which they were willing to sell to the Country Education Committee. These included 40 folding iron bedsteads, 164 sets of bedding, 52 Turkish bath towels and kitchen equipment in total estimated at £681.<sup>70</sup> The Director of Education argued that the Ministry of Works, who were in charge of equipping the college, could not provide such items and that the option to acquire such necessary equipment should be considered.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore Mrs. Kayser was willing to dispose of a number of pieces of furniture and fixtures, including a Bechstein grand piano.<sup>72</sup> Items of furniture were purchased privately from Mrs. Kayser, through the Ministry of

Works and at the auction sale of remaining contents held at Eaton Hall, which has been referred to above.<sup>73</sup> The furniture that was provided directly by the Ministry of Works, however, was not satisfactorily received which justified efforts made by the Director of Education to procure items from other sources.

The furniture supplied by the Ministry of Works at a cost of £1,312 is of exceedingly poor quality. The wardrobes are made of rough wood and are badly knocked about with no handles to the doors, but merely holes through which one puts one's finger... We were most anxious to set a high standard for the students of this permanent training college and made every effort ourselves to ensure that the place would be furnished in good taste and style, believing that a student's surroundings matter greatly at this formative period of her life.<sup>74</sup>

This is just one example of a number of minor incidents and complaints that the Education Committee had with suppliers within Ministerial departments. And this was not the end of it; more significant problems were experienced in making necessary structural modifications and additions to Eaton Hall. As part of post-war reconstruction policies central government had placed restrictions upon the availability of building materials and labour, only permitting essential works. The differences between gaining Priority A and Priority B classification from the Ministry of Education for building work had ramifications as to when or if such development was initiated which delayed the establishment of necessary educational and social welfare facilities. Whilst education provision was deemed essential the bureaucratic process of filling in repeated forms, obtaining priority

licences and chits, and obtaining approval for purchases as little as paint brushes meant that there were frequent periods where work was at a standstill.<sup>75</sup> Efforts made by the Education Committee and the Director of Education to prepare both establishments for the start of the academic year in 1946 are detailed below.

In preparing for the first intake of students the focus of the Education Committee and the Architects' Department was on the adaptation of the estate houses and their ancillary buildings. Minor alterations were deemed instantly necessary and in September and November 1946 the Committee notified the Ministry of Education regarding alterations to be undertaken. At Ordsall Hall the garage became a recreation room, the reception rooms on the ground floor became a dining room, assembly room, additional recreation room and a library. As part of this several internal walls were removed on the ground floor and additional ones installed on the first floor.<sup>76</sup> Despite this the residential accommodation was inadequate for 20 students with most in dormitories. Furthermore, the kitchens were extended and some of the outbuildings were converted for use as a laundry and bicycle store.

The conversion and adaptation of Eaton Hall proved a more complicated undertaking in part due to the teaching and additional residential accommodation which needed to be provided. Similar to Ordsall the principal reception rooms were converted for use as a dining room, common room, library and principal's study, the kitchen was extended and a new heating system installed. The stables were converted to two classrooms with woodblock flooring, the garage became a biology laboratory and the covered car wash area was enclosed to become an art

room. In total the cost of adapting Eaton and Ordsall Hall was £5,000 and £2,000 respectively.<sup>77</sup>

## **ii Official opening of Eaton Hall**

There was considerable pressure to get both Ordsall and Eaton ready for the arrival of the first 50 female student teachers who were due to commence studies on the 17 September 1946. Even with adaptations still being undertaken the first intake was received and accommodated, and the County College of Education duly opened.

It was not until over a year later, however, on the 15 October 1947 that Eaton Hall was ceremonially opened. Daneshill had received its first male students in February of that year and so both colleges were officially opened by the Minister of Education, George Tomlinson. The attendance by the Minister of the state responsible for national education demonstrates both the prestige with which such training colleges were regarded and also their importance within the post-war reconstruction of the education system.

Despite being a country residence, now proudly owned by the County Council, Eaton Hall did not have a reception room large enough in which to conduct the proceedings and so these were undertaken at Daneshill following which departmental heads within the Council, civil servants from the Ministry and members of the respective management committees for both colleges, which included Councillor Kathleen Kayser, attended a lunch at Eaton Hall.

### **iii Additional emergency accommodation: hutments**

In May 1947, despite the College being in operation, continued delay and uncertainty as to when phase two would be initiated forced alternative options to be explored in order to cope with the proposed increase in student numbers in excess of the initial 50. The Education Committee had received details of central government property that was available for sale. One listed item was for 40 timber huts that had been erected for the army on the Thoresby estate during the Second World War. The huts were of differing sizes, the largest being 60 feet in length and were all constructed from timber weatherboarding on a wooden frame with plaster board lining and sectional timber flooring. The County Council recommended the Ministry of Education that, “seven of these huts [...] would provide immediate accommodation for the 50 additional students whom it is desired shall be admitted to the training college this year”.<sup>78</sup> The Minister of Education accepted this proposal. Five of the huts were erected at Eaton and were arranged in an arc which was aligned to the main drive to the estate house and a field boundary as can be identified in figure 6.10. The purchase, however, was not solely intended as a temporary solution. Although initially used to provide hostel accommodation they were later adapted for practical classes. A brick built corridor, as located in figure 6.10 and illustrated in figures 6.12 and 6.13, was constructed to link the huts together, giving the development added permanency both in adding protection to the hutments and also due to the expense which the development cost. In total 160,000 bricks was used on this single project at a cost

of £8,000; £500 more than the purchase cost of Eaton Hall and the 19 acres of land within which the hutments were erected.

The arrangement of the hutments in an arc is also of importance. A similar arrangement, albeit on a larger scale, was witnessed in the construction of Bramcote Hills Secondary Modern School in 1948 which is the focus of the next section. At Eaton, with land to the east of the Hall already reserved for phase two development and open space to the north and west required for recreation provision one of the only available spaces was to the north east of the Hall. Whilst this triangular portion of land, bounded by the main drive and a field boundary, naturally recommended an arc configuration, economics and a demand for natural light are viewed as equally important considerations.<sup>79</sup> Firstly, in clustering the hutments at one end reduced the cost of interconnecting them. Secondly, and as a result, if the hutments were arranged on radials this could enable greater light to be received and therefore negate that lost in the clustering.



**Figure 6.12:** The Leas brick corridor development which adjoined the hutments to the north. See figure 6.13 for plan and elevation of The Leas in 2004.<sup>80</sup>



## **6.2.6 Nottinghamshire County Training College; design and construction of new accommodation at Eaton Hall, recreation provision and secondary education at Ordsall Hall, Phase Two 1950-1967**

The purchase and use of Ordsall Hall was only considered as a temporary solution for training and residential provision. The development of the Eaton Hall estate was viewed as an extreme priority for the Education Committee of the County Council. In outlining the large scale construction work which was undertaken at Eaton I discuss the problems that had to be overcome regarding the provision of labour and materials, the reliance upon traditional building techniques and the resultant parity between the modern construction and the late Georgian hall.

The second phase of development on the estate was undertaken as soon as necessary building materials and labour were available. Permission had been sought from the Rural District Council prior to the County Council assuming powers as the local planning authority, which itself was a mere formality, and the loan sanctions from the Ministry of Health were in place. The scheme for the development was drawn up by the County Architect, E.W. Roberts, and was itself undertaken in two stages. The total development is illustrated in figure 6.15. All of the proposed development would be directly east of the Hall, thereby maintaining land to the west for formal recreation and organised sports. This meant that the entire stable and garage range built by Charles Kayser soon after he bought the

estate, and which was initially considered as a key factor for choosing Eaton, would be demolished and rebuilt upon.

In September 1950 an initial block of the east wing, immediately adjacent to, but not adjoining, Eaton Hall was complete. In addition to 50 study rooms, there were two classrooms and a students' common room. The second stage of the development, which consisted of the additional 100 private study rooms, was finally complete in autumn 1953. Earlier in 1952 the Main Hall and Gymnasium had been completed which gave the college a central congregating space which had previously been a temporary marquee on the west lawn.

Although these developments added to the available classrooms and communal and recreational spaces the central importance was for private study rooms in order to accommodate more student teachers. In February 1957 the Ministry of Education published a *Building Bulletin* on the development of training college hostels (Ministry of Education 1957). Schemes and developments for the accommodation of student teachers across the country undertaken during the early 1950s had revealed key demands and requirements of hostels and with similar schemes necessary elsewhere the bulletin offered advice to local education authorities and Ministerial employees. Whilst the conversion of industrial hostels, within the emergency training scheme implemented by the Ministry of Education, resulted in mainly dormitory accommodation being provided the availability of land adjacent to estates meant that more appropriate provision could be developed which placed the educational and social development of the student teacher at the centre. The central focus was based upon the study bedroom and although inter-

war hostels had provided individual rooms these were small, stating that, “when [...] furniture is installed there remains scarcely enough space to work in comfort at the table and certainly insufficient to spread out an Ordnance Survey map or a sheet of drawing paper, or to store the considerable quantity of material that a student accumulates” (Ministry of Education 1957:2-3). A necessary increase in private space was matched with parallel increases in provision of communal areas. Common rooms and large study areas were viewed as paramount for interaction, relaxation and for undertaking large scale projects.

Between 1953 and 1967, with the major residential accommodation in place, there were further minor extensions and alterations. A separate gymnasium, a laboratory and other classrooms, a new kitchen and, in the early 1960s a new Arts Block immediately north of the Hall, which, in contrast to the new wing, was a two storey shingle clad steel framed building in the CLASP construction method were all constructed.

## **i Parity of styles: Modern extensions and estate houses**

All was new, soundly and rather traditionally built, blending smoothly with the Georgian architecture and landscaping of the Old Hall (Ableson and Griffiths c.1969:1)

One of the final developments undertaken as part of phase two was the complete interlinking of the Hall and the new east wing. In 1950, with the completion of the first stage of the extension, Eaton Hall was linked solely on the ground floor through the late nineteenth century addition as visible in figure 6.14. In the late

1950s the first and second floors were adjoined, which provided additional staff quarters and an extension to the library. As illustrated there was considerable effort to tie the old and the new together. This is most forcefully demonstrated in the window line where the differing sizes on the ground, first and second floors all match up, albeit with slightly wider new versions. Although there was available space within the land owned by the County Council to construct a separate annex, the blending of the old and new was viewed as both aesthetically and functionally beneficial.



**Figure 6.14:** The south elevation of Eaton Hall showing the parity of styles between the Georgian Hall and the east wing in 2004.<sup>83</sup>

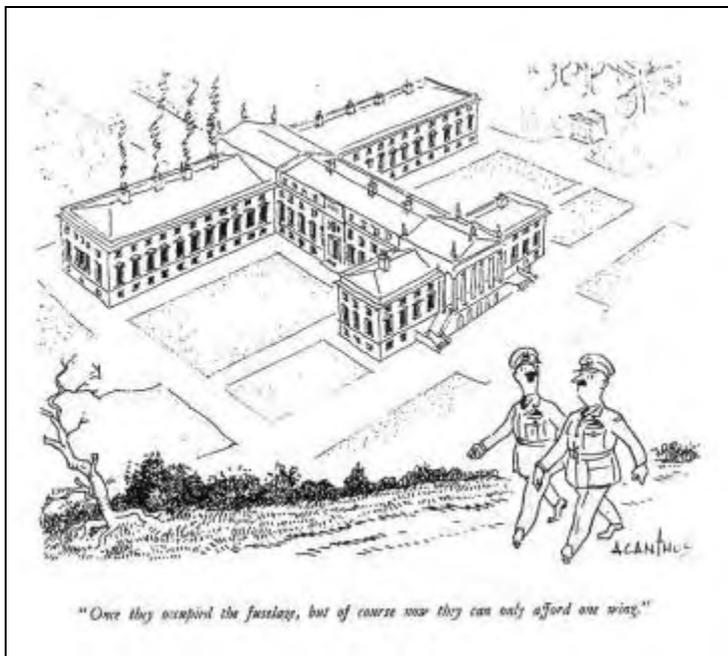
In addition the footprint of the new structure as visible within the aerial photograph of the site within figure 6.15, mirrored designs by E.W. Roberts for other estates within the county undertaken at a similar time. As illustrated in figure 6.3, of the planned extensions to Hopwell Hall, a rectilinear form of long straight corridors and right-angled turns were terminated with large principal and communal spaces, such as the assembly hall or gymnasium. Furthermore, the most

efficient use of space, which ensured the greatest amount of light was an H-plan form.

Taken further, the layout of the east wing at Eaton Hall mimicked Classical styles of country house development. Whilst it is perhaps crude to compare the aerial view of Eaton, in figure 6.15, with that of a wartime Punch cartoon which parodied the enforced settlement of estate houses during requisition, as illustrated in figure 6.16, it does illustrate evident comparisons, most notably in an arrangement resembling an aeroplane. Derived from economic success the addition of a new wing or remodelling of the house itself demonstrated both a landowner's ability to adopt and forge fashionable architectural styles and to represent their political and social influence. In their construction of the east wing at Eaton, the County Council and, in particular, the County Architect were adopting a similar strategy. The confidence of the new education system is manifest within the construction of the east wing. To take this idea further the design, therefore, relegates Eaton Hall to the fringes. It becomes an extension of the wing belonging to the east wing extension.



**Figure 6.15:** Aerial photograph of Eaton Hall College of Education from the south-east following the completion of the Phase Two development in the mid 1950s before the Hall and the east wing were fully interlinked. Also visible are the playing fields, the tennis courts and The Leas.<sup>84</sup>



**Figure 6.16:** Wartime cartoon published in *Punch* parodying the similarities between an aeroplane and the architectural plan of a typical country house (Reproduced from Robinson 1989).

## **ii Recreation provision and landscape change at Eaton Hall**

One of the reasons Eaton was recommended as suitable was because there was both an adequate and manageable amount of land necessary for recreation. The provision of playing fields was viewed as highly important in the establishment of educational facilities and was considered within the initial consideration of potential sites and properties. Two sites of recreation provision were found at Eaton. Firstly an area the size of two football pitches was set aside to the north west, and to the east beyond the phase two development, a number of hard tennis courts were marked out; the latter now doubling as an overflow car park.

Upon opening Eaton Hall, it was initially considered that out-door recreation facilities were sufficient, certainly in relation to other demands. In October 1946 it was agreed, in consultation with the Rural Land Utilisation Officer of the Ministry of Agriculture, that immediate requirements for playing field provision were adequate and that existing cultivation which had been undertaken adjacent to the estate house, during the Second World War, should continue for a further year.<sup>85</sup>

However, once such requirements lessened in January 1949 the Nottinghamshire Education Committee sought a diversion to the public footpath that ran diagonally across land owned by the County Council to the north of Eaton Hall, including recreation land, as can be seen in the 1921 map figure 6.10. Having secured the support of the Highways and Bridges Committee and the County Planning Committee for the extinguishment of this right it was agreed that an application be submitted to the Minister of Town and Country Planning requesting a diversion.<sup>86</sup>

In accepting that this land was important for organised recreation provision the

Minister agreed to a diversion that extended the footpath around the boundary of the land owned by the County Council.

### **iii Ordsall Hall estate; the construction of the Ordsall Hall County Secondary School**

In September 1953, once the second phase of construction was complete at Eaton Hall, the need for residential accommodation at Ordsall was no longer required and the property temporarily closed. Despite this, however, the accommodation at Eaton did not provide for enough students and so in 1956 Ordsall Hall, which had remained empty for three years, reopened. Whilst the land purchased at Ordsall included enough for recreation, relaxation and enjoyment of the student teachers, there were new demands placed upon it. An increasing local population meant that additional primary and secondary school provision was required.

The Education Committee determined that parts of site would be re-allocated within the expanding education provision for the Retford district where a new two-form secondary school was required. The Hall itself did not offer suitable accommodation and so a two-storey CLASP structure was designed based upon successes achieved by the County Architects' Department within education provision across Nottinghamshire. Mr. J. Griffin, who was assigned as job architect, commented upon the development and its relationship to Ordsall Hall within the *Architects' Journal*.

The school is being built on a heavily wooded site in the grounds of Ordsall Hall. There is a good view to the east over the lawns and gardens of Ordsall Hall. The specialist areas radiate from the cultural and administrative centre, the 2-storey classroom block and library have been sited to take advantage of the view to the east (Comment by job architect, J. Griffin) (Mason 1957:519).

Unlike at Bramcote Hills, which is the focus of the next major section, there was a clear relationship between the Hall and the additional construction, despite initially being allocated for different purposes. Modern architectural methods were viewed as complementing the existing landscape. This was clearly a motivation as the County Architect, now D.E.E. Gibson had stated in 1947 whilst employed by Coventry City Council, “no reason exists why new developments and new building techniques should not fit in well with the old ones” (Gibson 1947:243).

The location of the school also influenced the Ministry of Education inspectors in 1963 upon visiting the site for the first time, commenting that,

The building is most attractively situated with an open view towards Ordsall Hall but set in the midst of a number of large well-established trees. It is known that the architect realised that these trees would present lighting problems and that he made provision for additional roof lights<sup>87</sup>

### **6.2.7 Eaton Hall College of Education: concluding comments**

This section has sought to uncover the use of estate space for teacher training purposes. As discussed above in agreement with the recommendations of the Gowers Committee, the Ministry of Education argued that country houses did not provide suitable accommodation for teacher training colleges or other educational facilities (Treasury 1950; Ministry of Education 1950).

In 1950, the same year that the Ministry published its pamphlet celebrating the success of emergency training provision the Gowers' Committee, charged with investigating the future use and preservation of buildings of historic and architectural importance as already discussed, published their conclusions. In recognising that a solution to increasing demolitions would come from adaptation for new uses the Committee had misgiving regarding educational uses above all other. A central recommendation was for state financial support. However, with this there would be requirements that a building would offer a degree of public access and, "it may not be convenient to arrange for houses used as schools to be regularly open to the public." The Committee recognised that many houses purchased for educational reasons required necessary additional building work to be undertaken and this led them to report that, "the amount of additional building required would almost certainly spoil any house which was considered worth preserving" (Treasury 1950:44). Finally the Committee concluded that regarding special educational provision, a use towards which many estate houses in Nottinghamshire were placed:

We, who are concerned with the preservation of historic houses, naturally do not approach the proposal from the same angle as those who have the responsibility of enabling afflicted children to make the best of their lives; we are perhaps more impressed by its drawbacks as a means of preservation (Treasury 1950:45).

Concerns over the ability of modern uses to secure preservation and, equally the valuing of modern developments themselves, are evident within the National Buildings Record photographic survey of Eaton Hall conducted in 1950. The whole series carefully avoids including the new modern wing, in part because it was not the focus of historic architectural interest. Within one such photograph, illustrated in figure 6.17, this intension is extended to include careful camera placement behind foliage.



**Figure 6.17:** South elevation of Eaton Hall. Photograph taken by F.J. Palmer for the National Buildings Record in 1950. Foliage hides the modern additions to the east from view.<sup>88</sup>

Alternately it could be argued that estate houses offered ideal accommodation for such training purposes. Receptions rooms could easily be maintained as communal spaces for teaching, meetings, or as common rooms and small rooms for domestic staff serving the household could provide adequate study and bedrooms for students. They were less likely to provide adequate bathrooms, heating and cooking facilities.

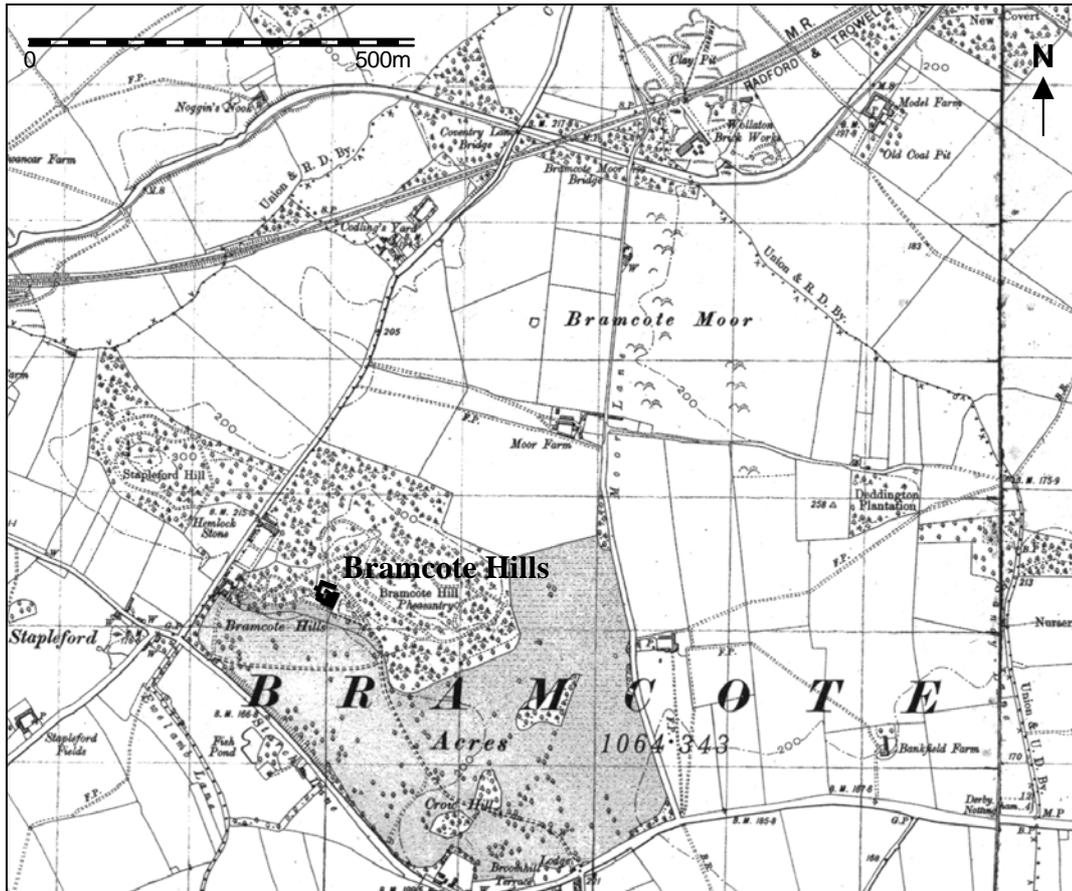
Whilst this section has considered the establishment, management and development of an estate by the County Council directed towards one aspect of requirements tabled within the Education Act, 1944, it is to the wider provision of primary and secondary education facilities within the County that I now turn. The

Nottinghamshire Training College at Eaton Hall, mirrored similar specialist education provision discussed earlier, where the house and immediate estate land were regarded as essential and most appropriate for education, care and training, at Bramcote Hills, it was the estate parkland, rather than any existing buildings, including estate houses, which was viewed with considerable interest.

### **6.3 The Bramcote Hills estate; Education and public open space provision**

Built in 1805 for the Sherwin family Bramcote Hills was located 4.5 miles to the west south west of Nottingham and immediately north of the A52 Nottingham to Derby road within the parishes of Bramcote and Stapleford, just outside the respective village centres. Situated just beyond the Nottingham City Council boundary the estate fell within the authority of the Beeston and Stapleford Urban District Council and Nottinghamshire County Council. It was a neo-classical villa with six bays, large sash windows and a pedimented south façade. A service wing and outbuildings had subsequently been added later in the nineteenth century to the north and west of the main house. The estate house is initially illustrated in figure 6.22.

Set back from the main Derby Road to the south by half a mile the estate house was on the high ground that rose to the north. Surrounded by woodland and rhododendrons the house took advantage of the natural topography overlooking both Bramcote village and the Erewash Valley to the south. Furthermore the estate offered a vantage point from which to survey the Hemlock Stone, a stack of bunter sandstone which had received considerable antiquarian interest. An early twentieth century map of the estate is illustrated in figure 6.18. In addition, the photograph in figure 6.19, which shows the view across the Bramcote Hills estate in the 1930s illustrates the local topography.



**Figure 6.18:** Ordnance Survey map showing the Bramcote Hills estate in 1901. Bramcote village centre is just off the map to the south.



**Figure 6.19:** The parkland landscape of the Bramcote Hills estate. View from the south in the 1930s.<sup>89</sup>

The history of this estate illustrates competing demands placed upon estate land and therefore provides an appropriate concluding case study upon which to end this thesis. The fragmentation of the estate involved the agreed sale of parcels of lands to local authorities, nationalised industries, private developers, private companies and tenant farmers. Indeed the discussion of Bramcote Hills encompasses the competing interests and values discussed in depth for other estates in Nottinghamshire.

This section of the chapter is divided in two parts. Firstly I consider the purchase of half of the estate by the Education Committee of the County Council for the construction of a campus development consisting of primary and secondary schools as directed under the Education Act, 1944. Secondly I discuss how the other half of the parkland was purchased by the Beeston and Stapleford Urban District Council for public open space provision. Both demands had arisen following the increase in local population, as residential development expanded to the west of Nottingham and new industries were established within the area. Unlike other demands made of estate space such competing interests never resulted in conflict between the two authorities. Instead, as will be discussed, it was the private interests of the then owner of the estate, John Alfred Edwin Drury-Lowe of Locko Park in Derbyshire that conflicted significantly with the wishes of the two local authorities. His personal concerns were that the amenity of the estate should remain as a financially viable concern, rather than as a public amenity, and that he should be able to decide upon the future of the estate without state interference. Before addressing both of these aspects, however, I initially turn to discuss the history of the Bramcote Hills estate, its ownership and development,

and how efforts to secure its future within one family line in effect left it vulnerable to the ascendant authority of the County Council and Urban District Council during the mid-twentieth century.

### **6.3.1 Changing ownership: the Holdens, the Drury-Lowes and Bramcote Hills**

An understanding of the changing ownership of the Bramcote Hills estate prior to 1937 is important because certain social and legal decisions made by the owners at different times weakened the estate and made the resulting fragmentation that was imposed by two local authorities somewhat easier. Instructions made in the late nineteenth century, which would direct the estate within a junior branch within one family under trust placed the estate outside of the general and accepted primogeniture succession. Once the trust failed and the estate reverted to the main family line the estate was in poor condition. The estate house itself had been successively rented out to local industrialists, agricultural land values were low and all estate buildings were in much need of repair. So in 1937 when the Drury-Lowe family of Locko Park inherited the estate the necessary capital investment required at Bramcote Hills was not recommended. In order to develop this, therefore, I need to detail in depth the history of the families that owned the estate.

In 1829 Catherine Holden married John Sherwin of Bramcote Hills, upon which they both assumed the name of a relative of his and thereby became Sherwin Gregory.<sup>90</sup> In June 1869 John died without an heir and so Catherine, in June 1892 set up a trust as part of her will that entailed the ownership of the estate within her

family; the Holdens of Nottinghamshire.<sup>91</sup> This move was intended to ensure that her younger brother, Henry Holden, having not married into a wealthy family, nor in direct line to inherit one of the other family estates, would be able to enjoy the status that was accorded with such a residence.

With the stipulation that the estate should be passed according to her “right heir”, as directed by her will, rather than by primogeniture, it was under this decree that the estate would be vested in trust with her descendants being regarded as tenants for life. Directions made regarding the entailing of a personal estate were powerful means by which property could be directed according to an individual’s wish (English and Saville 1983; Wright c.1897). Cases existed whereby land could be either tied together within one family or equally kept separate within a number, and certainly at Bramcote the latter seems evident for, as will be seen, Catherine attempted to ensure that her estate did not get tied into the larger family estate of Locko Park which had belonged to her mother’s family. Such a move broke with the continuity of family ownership and the amassing of private capital that was being witnessed at other estates in the later nineteenth century (Wright c.1897).

Catherine Holden was the fifth child of Robert Holden of Felley Priory, Nuthall Temple (both Nottinghamshire) and Darley Abbey (Derbyshire) and Mary Anne Drury-Lowe of Locko Park (Derbyshire). This marriage tied two neighbouring families together and offered a wealth of seats from which to draw. In addition many of her twelve siblings had married into more established landed families. Whilst her eldest brother William Drury<sup>92</sup> inherited the family seat of Locko Park,

Sophia married the Honourable Reverend Alfred Curzon, Rector of Kedleston in Derbyshire, and Robert and Atkinson Alexander at different times were resident at Nuthall Temple and Harlaxton Manor in Lincolnshire. Of her younger sisters Frances Maria married John Bainbrigge of Lockington Hall in Derbyshire and Emily Mary married James Thomas Edge of Strelley Hall in Nottinghamshire. Her youngest brother Henry Holden resided at Bramcote Grove and it was specifically with his interests in mind that Catherine Sherwin Gregory directed her will. Under her direction Henry would be the tenant for life and the estate would pass through to his eldest son and accordingly to his eldest son. The trust failed twice owing to Henry's first two sons dying without an heir and so in 1913 Henry's third eldest son Frank Ernest Holden (known as Ernest Frank) became the tenant for life. In May 1919 Ernest Frank sold a substantial portion of the estate off by auction (Holden 1930). The sale totalled 920 acres and consisted of holdings in Stapleford and south of the Bramcote Hills estate around the village. Importantly he retained the mineral rights which would offer a valuable source of income should extraction be undertaken.<sup>93</sup>

Ernest Frank Holden opted not to reside at Bramcote Hills and instead purchased Scalby Hall near Scarborough which he bought from proceeds of the 1919 sale. A number of notable local industrialists rented the Bramcote estate during the 1920s and 1930s. These included William Hardy, a local brewery owner, in 1925, and Mr. Tansley.<sup>94</sup> During this period the estate became the focus for a number of social events. In 1929 the Prince of Wales attended the Nottinghamshire Agricultural Society show, which was held in the parkland, and later the

Harrington Hunt, based at Elvaston Castle in Derbyshire, met there on a number of occasions.

From December 1935 Bramcote Hills had been let to Mr FitzHertbert Wright on a 14½-year lease for £250 per annum.<sup>95</sup> Upon requisition by the Ministry of Supply in 1939 his tenancy was terminated and he moved back to his family home at Yeldersley Hall, near Ashbourne in Derbyshire until his death in 1947. Yeldesley Hall had been sold to Henry Fitzherbert Wright in 1907 and when his father died in 1910, rather than move back to the family home of Hayes in Swanwick, he opted to remain at Yeldesley and instead sold Hayes for £11,500 to the First Conference Estate Ltd in 1911; a company which, as already mentioned, immediately following the Second World War considered the purchase of Rufford Abbey (Craven and Stanley 2001).

In March 1937 Ernest Frank Holden, the youngest son of Henry Holden, died without an heir and so within just 45 years, the entail had failed. The estate had passed through the occupation of Henry Holden's immediate descendents and therefore reverted under trust to the descendent of Catherine's eldest brother, William Drury-Lowe, who was John Alfred Edwin Drury-Lowe, and who had succeeded to the family estate of Locko Park. John Alfred Edwin was the second son to William Drury Nathaniel Drury-Lowe and inherited when his elder brother, William Drury Drury-Lowe, was killed in action in 1916 during the First World War.<sup>96</sup> Ernest Frank Holden left an estate which was valued at £95,500. Of this £73,000 were investments, the Scalby Hall estate valued £4,500 and Bramcote Hills, in part owing to its location between Nottingham and Derby, was a further

£18,000. The estate duty totalled £22,300 at 23%, which once paid, left Drury-Lowe inheriting a net total of £73,200.<sup>97</sup>

In support of J.A.E. Drury-Lowe (hereafter Drury-Lowe) there were two trustees. These were Gerard Hamilton Smith of the National Provisional Bank and Llewellyn Eardley Eardley-Simpson of the solicitors Taylor, Simpson and Mosley based in Derby. Neither of these individuals were family members but had been chosen because of their close association with the family's financial and legal matters. Their involvement in the estate was of paramount importance. Not only did they uphold a legal requirement vested in them as part of Catherine Sherwin Gregory's trust, but, together with the land agent at Locko Park, Mr. G.T. Inglis, they were influential and knowledgeable advisors who managed and maintained this ancillary estate for Drury-Lowe.

Despite the intentions of Catherine Sherwin-Gregory the failure of the trust meant that the Bramcote Hills estate was absorbed, perhaps somewhat unexpectedly, within the land holdings owned by the descendants of her mother's family, the Drury-Lowes. It was, therefore, no longer a principal residential estate within a family line but an unoccupied, or temporary let, appendage to a major local estate. As such it was viewed more for its financial worth than its suitability as an attractive private residence. Concerns for the preservation of the amenity, therefore, mirror those of Sir Albert Ball and Henry Talbot de Vere Clifton, one time owners of Rufford Abbey, in ensuring that any portion of the estate retained should hold a marketable value which could be attractive to local industrialists,

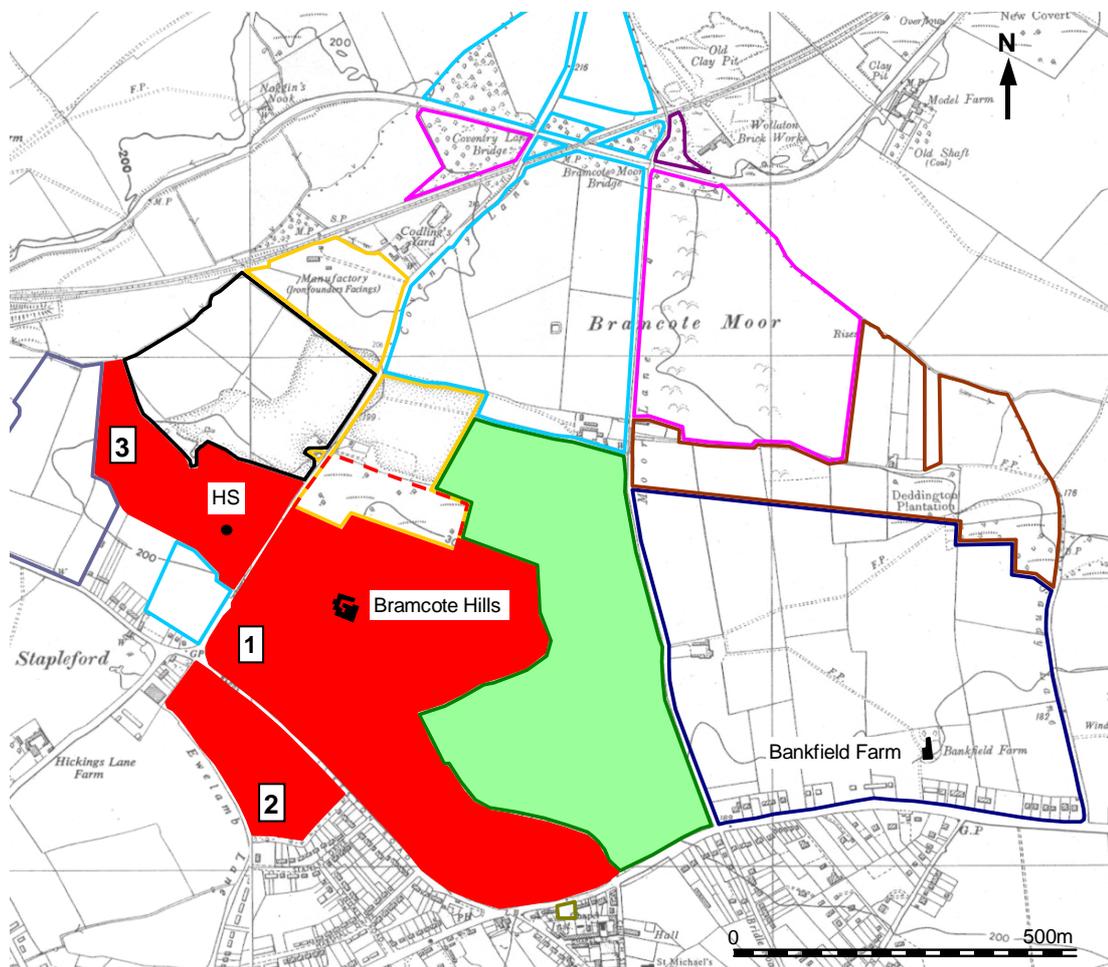
nationalised industries, or social welfare organisations desiring a convenient residence or suitable office accommodation.

The Bramcote Hills estate was an increasingly attractive development site during the inter-war period and the inheritance of Bramcote Hills at this time could have proved highly profitable to J.A.E. Drury-Lowe. Instead however, as will be discussed in the following section, increased planning controls vested within local authorities combined with the nationalisation of development rights through the Town and Country Planning Act, 1947, depressed the value of the estate significantly. Despite the capital and possible influence that could be drawn upon by Drury-Lowe he could do nothing about the impending attraction that the estate offered to both Beeston and Stapleford District Council and Nottinghamshire County Council.

### **6.3.2 Bramcote Hills; 1937-1967**

Bramcote Hills offered both the Urban District Council and the County Council possibilities for enacting specific social welfare, health and educational requirements that had passed through the legislature before and during the Second World War. The implementation of such responsibilities was facilitated through new planning powers available to county councils including the compulsory purchase of land and property. For Nottinghamshire County Council the concern was for adequate education provision under the Statutory Building Requirements detailed in the Education Act of 1944, whereas Beeston and Stapleford Urban District Council were concerned as to the future preservation of amenities and

what the estate could offer to the expanding local population. Whilst, initially the Councils operated separately with conflicting schemes, negotiations progressed between the two that enabled their specific demands to be met. This co-operation, as will be demonstrated, was most effective in 1947 when the attempts of the District Council to purchase part of the estate for public recreation provision was met by objections from J.A.E. Drury-Lowe, his trustees and tenants that led to a public inquiry. The break-up of the estates is illustrated in figures 6.20 and 6.21. These will figure significantly within discussion in this section.



**Figure 6.20:** Map showing the sale of the Bramcote Hills estate. HS refers to Hemlock Stone and numbered areas are referred to in the table. Base map taken from Ordnance Survey 6 inches to the mile published in 1955.<sup>98</sup>

	Ownership history	Date	Area (acres)	Cost (£)
	Bankfield Farm: Sold to Arthur Short Estates Ltd. Some plots adjacent to Derby Road had already been sold to individuals for residential development.	03/45	100	11,000
	Bramcote Hills (east): Sold to Nottinghamshire County Council – Education Committee	05/47	76.6	7,850
1	Bramcote Hills (west): sold to BSUDC	03/48	79.5	11,600
2	Land and cottages: Sold to BSUDC for extension to the Ryecroft Housing Estate which had been planned 7/49	11/50	14.4	1,650
	Grassland and moorland: Sold to tenant (H.C. Rogers)	03/51	48.9	2,225
	Cottage: Sold to tenant (A. Langsdale)	04/51	0.4	750
	Deddington Farm: Sold to tenant (A. Wing)	04/51	42.0	2,100
	Agricultural land			
	Sold to tenant (H.Taylor)	05/51	20.3	1,100
	Building plot sold to A. Hickingbotham	05/51	plot	100
	Agricultural land (south west holding): Sold to sitting tenant (P. Taylor)	05/51	4.6	450
	Land: Sold to National Coal Board for tipping site for Trowell Moor Colliery.	05/51	29.8	2,000
	Moor Farm (northern holdings): sold to P. Taylor	05/51	71.0	3,500
	Woodland: Sold to Jackson and Sons, Brick Yard, Wollaton	05/51	1.1	40
3	Stapleford Hill and Hemlock Stone: Sold to BSUDC (UDC had originally leased Hemlock Stone and immediate land)	03/52	17.3	750
	Quarries: Sold to General Refractories (Including Pamela Cottage on land owned by NCB)	02/53	21.1	3,400

**Figure 6.21:** The sale of land on the Bramcote Hills Estate. Shaded holdings refer to claims for compensation made by Drury-Lowe for the loss of development value as identified in the valuation for probate in 1951. Refer to figure 1 for location of holdings.

### **6.3.3 The Second World War at Bramcote**

As I have argued elsewhere, in relation to other Nottinghamshire country house estates, legislative changes regarding planning, education and social welfare provision that were central within the post-war agenda for change and reconstruction were developed upon existing legislation enacted before and during Second World War.

Below I explore the impact of requisition during the Second World War, the use of space within and across the estate, and how the physical use of the estate had a direct impact upon considerations for its future. I then go on to explore the more pervasive and wider ramifications of legislative changes regarding the development and formalisation of planning responsibilities that directly influenced and later required local authorities to develop town planning schemes within their districts.

#### **i Requisition of the estate and use by the Auxiliary Territorial Service**

In late 1939 the Ministry of Supply requisitioned the Bramcote Hills on behalf of the War Office. The estate house, together with its immediate parkland, was allocated for use by the Auxiliary Territorial Service (A.T.S) at a rental cost of £181 per annum. The A.T.S. had been created in September 1938 in order to ensure the smooth operation of military procedures and logistics. At its peak in the

Second World War 20,000 women were engaged in a variety of jobs which included office, mess and telephone orderlies, drivers, postal workers, butchers, bakers, ammunition inspectors, military police officers and gun battery crews. Under the management of the A.T.S., Bramcote Hills, illustrated at the time in figure 6.22, became a recuperation centre and hostel for women who were attached to the 14<sup>th</sup> Nottinghamshire Detachment at the Chilwell Central Ordnance Depot located two miles to the south, also to the west of Nottingham (Haslam 1982).



**Figure 6.22:** A lecture given to A.T.S. girls in the parkland during the Second World War. Bramcote Hills House to the north west is at the rear.<sup>99</sup>

Prior to the war, it was considered that most of the additional employees required would be drawn from the surrounding population but having determined that there would not be enough the Army considered that A.T.S. personnel could hold such

positions. This rapid expansion, mobilisation and migration of people, a concern which was more broadly expressed in the Barlow Report on the location of industry in 1940, resulted in large scale encampments and hostels to be built under the direction of the Ministry of Supply.

At Chilwell initial positions included cooks, drivers, clerks and storewomen, however, many were reported to complain that the military authorities did not allow them to undertake more heavy work such as the waterproofing tanks and eventually women worked in all trade branches at Chilwell.<sup>100</sup> This broadening of the duties undertaken by A.T.S. personnel enabled men to be redeployed, often to overseas duties, and also increased the demand for A.T.S. workers and accordingly the necessity for accommodation provision. When the first women arrived at Chilwell there was no designated accommodation for A.T.S. personnel so temporary billets in private houses were arranged, and despite improved accommodation provision many still lodged at a variety of locations in the area, including a purpose built A.T.S. encampment within the confines of the depot. At its peak 3500 women worked at the Chilwell depot, which made it the largest single A.T.S. unit in the Army (Haslam 1982).

The Central Ordnance Depot at Chilwell managed many ancillary stores and maintenance depots within the division of the Army's Northern Command.<sup>101</sup> Many of these were located in the parkland of estates and included, Ottershaw Park, Quernmore Park, Raby Castle, Castle Ashby, Tatton Park and Parlington Park. Although the Ordnance Depot was not directly responsible for the use of Bramcote Hills, other estates did fall within their command. Unlike at Bramcote,

the use of these estates became increasingly problematic. With heavy artillery and tanks often being transported in and out many of the estate roads were in need of repair and it did not take much rain before continual movements turned the parkland into a quagmire making the installation inoperable.

The use of the Bramcote Hills estate during the Second World War, therefore, met both local and national demands for military installations and civil defence. The scale and resources required of the Northern Command's Central Ordnance Depot at Chilwell meant that land and accommodation within the area was at a premium. Bramcote Hills within its parkland was remote enough to be ideal to offer recuperation from shift work at the Depot whilst being close enough to ensure that it was easy to travel to on a daily basis. Following the end of hostilities the need for such a large A.T.S. staff at Chilwell was sharply reduced. Bramcote Hills was derequisitioned in October 1946 and returned to its owner, J.A.E. Drury-Lowe. Due to dilapidations inflicted upon the estate house, cottages, gardens and grounds during occupation Drury-Lowe submitted a claim for financial reimbursement to the War Damages Commission under Section 2(1)b of the Compensation Defence Act, 1939.<sup>102</sup>

The parkland and the house at Bramcote Hills was not the only portion of the estate to be requisitioned. Across the country, before the commencement of the Second World War, plans for civil defence were being developed and each district was to have their own detachment of Local Defence Volunteers that later formed the Home Guard. The vacant residential and agricultural buildings at Bankfield Farm, just beyond the estate parkland to the east, were requisitioned for just such a

purpose. This land had been under consideration for residential development prior to the Second World War and following derequisition interests were renewed.

## **ii Bankfield Farm, the Home Guard and residential development**

Bankfield Farm, illustrated in figure 6.23, was allocated for use as the headquarters for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Nottinghamshire Division of the Home Guard under the command of Lt. Col. J. E. Marshall (Anonymous 2003). The initial recruits prior to the distribution of uniforms are illustrated in figure 6.24. It offered adequate space to undertake exercises and train, but more significantly it was in a highly strategic position, located directly between the settlements for which they were responsible– Beeston and Stapleford. Exercises were undertaken on the other side of the estate, to the west beyond Hemlock Stone on Stapleford Hill. Specific training included defensive manoeuvres and grenade practice. As a result, such activities necessitated trees being uprooted and the landscape was left pitted from explosions.<sup>103</sup>



**Figure 6.23:** View to the north across Derby Road in the early twentieth century prior to residential development. Bankfield Farm is to the right in the background.<sup>104</sup>



**Figure 6.24:** The 3<sup>rd</sup> Nottinghamshire Division of the Home Guard. The photograph is believed to have been taken within the Bramcote Hills parkland and early in 1940s before uniforms were distributed.<sup>105</sup>

In addition, the County Council, together with the Beeston and Stapleford Urban District Council formed an Invasion Committee and a response scheme to invasion and attack was implemented which necessitated the use of additional large buildings in the locality. At a meeting in March 1942, which was attended by Nottinghamshire County Council Alderman, L.W.A. White as Vice-Chairman, it was reported that because the district lacked an Emergency Medical Service Hospital suitable provision should be sought. Due to the shortage of suitable premises, many of which, including Bramcote Hills, had already been “earmarked”, the Committee suggested the use of “larger private houses”. In accordance with requisitioning procedure those considered would have to be well heated, could provide suitable accommodation for between 50 and 100 people and accordingly had appropriate cooking facilities. An arrangement was made with the head teacher of Bramcote Preparatory School at Bramcote Hall within the village for its use in an emergency as both a hospital and a dressing station. It was agreed that the Hall could provide 100 extra beds without disturbing the school’s ongoing activities. By March 1943, with the scheme complete, an exercise was undertaken to assess the response of the Home Guard and emergency services to fire damage of residential property, high explosive incendiaries, poison gas and multiple casualties.<sup>106</sup>

Upon the derequisition of Bankfield Farm in January 1944, G. Inglis, the land agent acting for Drury-Lowe’s estates identified that the land was poor, the buildings were derelict and therefore the property was of little rental value as an agricultural holding. During the Second World War the holding at Bankfield was still farmed by the tenant, J.R. Woodhouse, at a rental cost of £55 per annum. He

resided at Manor Farm in Bilborough, three miles to the north, north east of Bankfield, and despite being classified as an “A grade” farmer by the National Farm Survey inspector in March 1942 he was unable to significantly improve the land.<sup>107</sup>

Since March 1937, prior to its requisition, discussions were in an advanced stage for the sale of the 100 acres of farm land for development and accordingly a new purchaser expressed interest. Drury-Lowe’s chief concern was that the sale should not jeopardise the amenities of the estate in general and thereby hinder any future sale of the estate house and its parkland. In recommending the disposal Mr. Inglis commented that he could, “not foresee any likelihood of interference by the proposed sale, as the mansion [was] separated from the building site by the east side of the park and Moor Lane which is approximately a third of a mile distant”.<sup>108</sup> Planning permission for housing development had been approved by the Urban District Council in March 1937 and in early 1939 a Nottingham jeweller, F.C. Poyser, had entered into negotiations for the purchase of the land. Having investigated his intentions Drury-Lowe’s solicitors discovered that he represented a developer and concluded that, “our clients are not very interested in dealing with land speculators”.<sup>109</sup>

During the 1930s plots of land had been sold off along Derby Road to individuals wishing to develop and as Drury-Lowe and his advisors recognised the farm land was ripe for development and would command a high price if sold for this purpose in stark contrast to its rental value. In 1943 the owners were approached by another developer, Arthur Short Estates Ltd. and this time decided that the holding

should be sold, in part because of the belief that following the war the local authority or Ministry of Agriculture would enforce them to undertake structural repairs on the farm.<sup>110</sup> Accordingly the first parcel of land to be sold by Drury-Lowe of 100 acres achieved an agreed price of £11,000.

Following the sale of estate land in 1919 this further controlled fragmentation illustrates the concerns of landowners to ensure minimal loss of value to the estate. The core parkland surrounding the estate house was regarded as of considerable value which could later be sold for development, if necessary, or alternately sold as a small country estate. The concerns expressed by Drury-Lowe mirror those of W.M.E. Denison at Ossington and significantly the County Council at Rufford Abbey when the estate was under public ownership. Both were concerned with the preservation of their own interests and that meant ensuring that the immediate parkland surrounding the estate house should be maintained in unity. Furthermore, a clear distinction is made between estate breakers and developers. The omni-present estate breaker who would resell land on to a developer was regarded with some scepticism by Drury-Lowe and his advisors and direct negotiations could ensure a degree of control over development and would certainly secure greater profit. In this instance, therefore, the close involvement of the trustees and a respected land agent would be able obtain assurances before recommending the sale of any land.

Whilst permitting the housing development, in July 1944 it was reported that District Council were to place stipulations upon the northern boundary of the housing estate near the Deddington and Alexandra Plantations. Along Deddington

Lane the council proposed to acquire a strip of land 100 yards in depth which would act as a public access route between Wollaton Park, a public open space under the ownership of the Nottingham Corporation, and the Bramcote Hills estate, which was currently in the process of being scheduled under the town planning scheme that was being developed by the County and District Council.<sup>111</sup>

### **iii Beeston and Stapleford Urban District Council and the preparation of the town planning scheme**

Other demands were also being made of the estate at this time. During the Second World War initial proposals were being developed by the Urban District Council for the preparation of town planning schemes as permitted under the Town and County Planning Act, 1932. The principle of these schemes was based upon the classification of land according to broad criteria such as residential, industrial, educational and recreational (Cullingworth 1972:21).

Prior to the Education Committee's interest in the estate, in December 1942 the Nottingham Regional Planning Joint Executive Committee, which consisted of members of the Urban District and County Council, had included the Bramcote Hills estate within their Primary Zoning Proposals. Introduced in the 1932 Act, local authorities could prepare and execute,

A scheme [...] with respect to any land, whether there are not buildings thereon, with the general object of controlling the development of the land comprised in the area to which the scheme applies, of securing proper

sanitary conditions, amenity and convenience, and of preserving existing buildings or other objects of architectural, historic or artistic interest or beauty, and generally of protecting existing amenities whether in urban or rural portions of the area.<sup>112</sup>

Following the passing of the 1932 Act it was seven years before the joint committee was formed and a further three years before a scheme for Beeston and Stapleford was being developed. Indeed, slow progress was being witnessed nationwide. In 1942, the Uthwatt Committee reported that despite local authorities declaring intentions for 73% of England and Wales, only 5% had thus far been finalised within schemes that had then necessarily been approved by parliament (Ministry of Work and Planning 1942b; Booth 1999:37). Once complete and confirmed by Parliament, the local planning authority in effect lost powers regarding the control of development. Schemes were regulatory and rigid and contained certain provisos for development, which so long as it accorded to the scheme, was permitted. This lack of control encouraged the delay. Indeed the announcement of an intention to prepare a scheme conveyed Interim Development Control on the local planning authority and this gave added powers which were flexible and ensured greater involvement in managing development (Cullingworth 1972:21)

At the request of the Urban District Council, the Committee reserved 134 acres at Bramcote Hills which consisted of the adjacent land shaded green and red (solely marked 1 in figure 6.20), bounded by the principal roads to the south and west,

and local road to the east, as illustrated in figure 6.20, as “public open space and recreation grounds”.<sup>113</sup>

Whilst the Act had major flaws, as witnessed in the discussion of Rufford Abbey regarding tree preservation orders and the ability to preserve the amenity of open areas, it did build upon previous legislation and for the first time brought all land, both developed and undeveloped, under the control of local planning authorities (the District Councils). It also set in place a procedural and organisational structure for the management and control of land within which the local planning authority and members of the joint planning committee were central.

The preparation of the town planning scheme for the Beeston and Stapleford District is, therefore, viewed as a paramount development that represented the continued emergence and confirmation of the powers of local authorities to place claims and intentions upon privately owned land. Similarly, as other parties became interested in Bramcote Hills, it also demonstrated the weaknesses of the schemes – frailties that included the payment of compensation to landowners over loss of development rights and the lack of necessary machinery by which schemes could be enforced (Cherry 1975:10). By the time that such a threat to the scheme became likely legislative changes were in place which tackled both of these aspects. Furthermore the interest of the Education Committee of the County Council in the estate enabled both authorities to pool resources, knowledge and possible influence to draw up a scheme that met both of their demands.

Although not viewed as a threat to the scheme, in part because the proposal did not develop beyond the enquiry stage, the interest of the Nottingham General Hospital, did make the District Council aware that possible threats were likely and that the estate would receive attention from welfare organisations and developers wishing to purchase.

#### **iv Nottingham General Hospital**

In 1943, Drury-Lowe was approached personally by the County Alderman and landowner Lord Belper of Kingston Hall, who represented the Nottingham General Hospital, with regard to the possibility that Bramcote Hills together with 30 acres could be sold for adaptation as a rehabilitation centre under the control of the hospital with the additional 100 acres of the parkland being allocated for “public open space”.<sup>114</sup> This suggestion paralleled the wartime use. Knowledge of the requisition enlightened and encouraged representatives of similar social welfare institutions as to the possibilities which country house estates could offer in the expansion and re-organisation of provision once hostilities had ceased. Furthermore, support was also forthcoming from the local MP, Ralph Assheton, and a member of the District Council, Mr. E. Vincent Brown, who offered the hospital personal financial assistance to convert the estate house which he described, in its present condition, as “never again [being able to be] used as a residence”.<sup>115</sup>

Despite the support of a County Council Alderman, however, the reply on behalf of Drury-Lowe was that at this time when the estate was under requisition, from which they were accordingly in receipt of an income, together with the uncertainty as to how long it would be under requisition, they would not consider selling.<sup>116</sup> In December 1945, following the cessation of hostilities, and with a view that opinions may have changed, Vincent Brown made a more impassioned appeal to Drury Lowe to offer, or sell at a nominal value, the estate house to serve for the benefit of former military personnel.<sup>117</sup> Drury-Lowe's solicitors were still not forthcoming. The Education Committee of the County Council had subsequently expressed an interest in the estate and as his solicitors realised that with, "regard to the powers held by local authorities [we] can not entirely disregard".<sup>118</sup>

A similar opportunity would later realise itself as will be discussed in the section below. By this time, however, Beeston and Stapleford Urban District Council had also developed an interest in the estate and the statutory influence that they could discharge resulted in complex and competing negotiations that displayed the power of local authorities over land and their willingness to enforce their desires.

### **6.3.4 Nottinghamshire County Council and education provision in Beeston and Stapleford**

The County Education Committee had a head start in preparing for legislative changes that would later be enacted in the Education Act 1944. In July 1943, the Development Sub-Committee first met to discuss the structure and provision of education within the county. Meetings became more frequent and focused following the submission of the education white paper that eventually became the Education Act on 3 August 1944.

Under directions for an overhauled secondary education system the 1944 Act determined that of those children of secondary age 15% should be in Grammar education, 15% in Technical and the remaining 70% in Secondary Modern. The scale of the operation was so immense that local authorities were required, within one year of the passing of the 1944 Act, to publish a development plan for primary and secondary education.<sup>119</sup>

With specific regard to Grammar school provision the Development Plan highlighted that whilst the eastern side of the county enjoyed a “super-abundance” of such facilities, the west, which was more populated and included Beeston and Stapleford, lacked similar provision (Nottinghamshire County Council 1947:17). The Education Committee, together with the Director of Education and the County Architect determined that the most efficient and affective way to tackle this was on a campus:

A derivative of this solution, particularly appropriate where considerable new secondary school provision has to be made and where a sufficiently large site can be acquired is that of grouping schools providing different courses on **an educational campus**. Here not only can much improved amenities be provided economically, to be shared by all the pupils, but many of the advantages claimed for the comprehensive school can be obtained in large measure without the corresponding difficulties arising from sheer weight of numbers [emphasis in original] (Nottinghamshire County Council 1947:21).

In addition to Bramcote Hills the Education Committee also considered two other campus sites which would address the east-west division. Accordingly school provision was developed on the Sparken Hill campus in Worksop and the Ash Farm campus at Kirkby-in-Ashfield. Most similarly to the Bramcote Hills development Gedling House together with 28 acres of land, on the fringe of Nottingham to the north-east, was purchased in 1950 from the trustees of W.H. Blackburn for a total of £9000. Here two secondary schools were constructed using the CLASP method to provide education provision within an expanding colliery and industrial area.<sup>120</sup>

The Education Committee commented that school provision in Beeston and Stapleford was particularly acute. Dated infrastructure together with cramped teaching and recreation facilities combined with rapid population expansion prompted proposals for priority investment and re-organisation. Indeed, between 1901 and 1945 the population had increased by 270% from 16,823 to 45,500 and

accordingly population density had risen from 2.53 to 7.13 people per acre. The district had benefited from the location of major industry including the Beeston Boiler Company, Boots Pure Drug Company Limited, Ericsson Telephones Limited and the Central Ordnance Depot at Chilwell. (Association for Planning and Regional Reconstruction 1949). Whilst housing development had progressively increased to meet resultant residential demands, education provision had been neglected. Indeed, it is worth reflecting that the sale of Bankfield Farm for housing development, which had been approved by the District Council as early as 1939, did contribute to the heightened demand. Therefore, Drury-Lowe's careful concerns in 1945 that the estate house and parkland should be not be threatened by the sale, in a small way contributed to its own necessary fragmentation as a result of the actions of the Education Committee.

The rapid population increase within the District paralleled, and in part contributed to, an acute shortage of space upon which to develop additional housing or new educational establishments. It was stated in the survey undertaken by the Association for Planning and Regional Reconstruction to assist both the Corporation and County Council in the preparation of their Development Plans that, "the whole of central Beeston is so built up that it is practically impossible to obtain new sites and extensions to existing [school] sites" (APRR 1949:23). The report also drew attention to the 1300 houses that had recently been built with a further 500 planned. As such the projected education provision would have to be increased by more than double from 1660 pupils to 3450.

The plan adopted by the County's Education Committee was to build five schools within the estate parkland of Bramcote Hills within a thirteen year period at a cost of £549,000. The specific details of the respective schools together with their priority within a timetable of over 400 projects is detailed in figure 6.25.

School	Priority	Planned first term	Pupils	Cost (£)
Secondary Modern for Boys	1 and 172	1947/8	450	112,500
Secondary Grammar Mixed	14	1947/8	600	150,000
Secondary Technical Mixed	17	1947/8	600	150,000
Secondary Modern for Girls	133	1952/3	450	112,500
Junior Mixed	406	1959/0	160	24,000
<b>Total</b>			<b>2260</b>	<b>549,000</b>

**Figure 6.25:** The school building programme at Bramcote Hills (Nottinghamshire County Council 1947).

The estimated cost of upgrading the infrastructure of the existing twelve schools within Beeston and Stapleford together with the construction and equipping of an additional 18 schools (including those at Bramcote Hills) was £1,784,200. Therefore 31% of the costs were solely directed at the development of Bramcote Hills. In total £24,800 was estimated as the cost of the land required for the five sites. In effect, though, the land was purchased for a quarter of this.

## **i      The Education Committee and the purchase of part of the Bramcote Hills estate**

Having co-operated on the establishment of the primary zoning proposals that would schedule Bramcote Hills as a public open space through the Joint Committee, both the County and District Councils already had a working knowledge of the site. When the Education Committee of the County decided upon Bramcote as a suitable location for education development they were able to use the links that had been fostered within the Joint Planning Committee.

In October 1944 having just completed the zoning of the Bramcote Hills estate as a public open space, the Urban District Council could reasonably respond frostily to new demands placed on the estate. The initial suggestion by the Education Committee was that the County Council would purchase the whole of the estate parkland and the Urban District Council would acquire from them that which was not required for education. The District Council was initially adverse to the threat to the zoning provision which educational development would mean. However, following further negotiation, the importance of the proposal was realised and resulted in the District Council relenting. In November 1947, the District agreed in principle to buy back from the County land on the estate which was not required for education, subject to the necessary loan sanction being received from the Ministry of Health.<sup>121</sup> Accordingly it was agreed that the more even land east of the main estate drive would be allocated for the Education Committee and the land to the west would be designated as public open space under the ownership of the District Council. Despite this agreement, however, legal requirements which prevented councils themselves speculating on land stipulated that only land

required for specific purposes could be acquired by individual councils and as such the County Council could not purchase additional land and sell on even if it was to another local authority.<sup>122</sup>

With the Education Committee now satisfied with their requirements and of the importance of Bramcote Hills, negotiations had to be opened with Drury-Lowe. The Director of Education, J. Edward Mason, and the Chairman of the School Management Sub-Committee, Alderman L.W.A White, made a formal approach to Drury-Lowe regarding the availability of the estate following derequisition.<sup>123</sup> Accordingly the Chairman of the Education Committee, Major Thomas Barber, together with the Director of Education met the owner at his solicitor's offices in Derby on the 23 May 1945. Although it was understood that Drury-Lowe was not anxious to make the sale he was later reported to recognise the importance of the development.<sup>124</sup> In a letter from his solicitors to the surveyors, Richardson and Linnell, it was commented that "Colonel Drury-Lowe prefers to retain the property. We are inclined to think the Nottinghamshire Education Committee have resolved to acquire it, and will eventually do so. It will not be easy to persuade him to sell unless the price is a good one".<sup>125</sup>

Drury-Lowe and his advisors were acutely aware of the potential economic value of the estate especially with regard to possible residential development. As early as the initial scheduling of the estate under the Primary Zoning Procedures Richardson and Linnell raised the question of compensation because the estate was, "ripe for development as a building estate as and when building regulations permit." With the uncertainty as to what land the Education Committee required

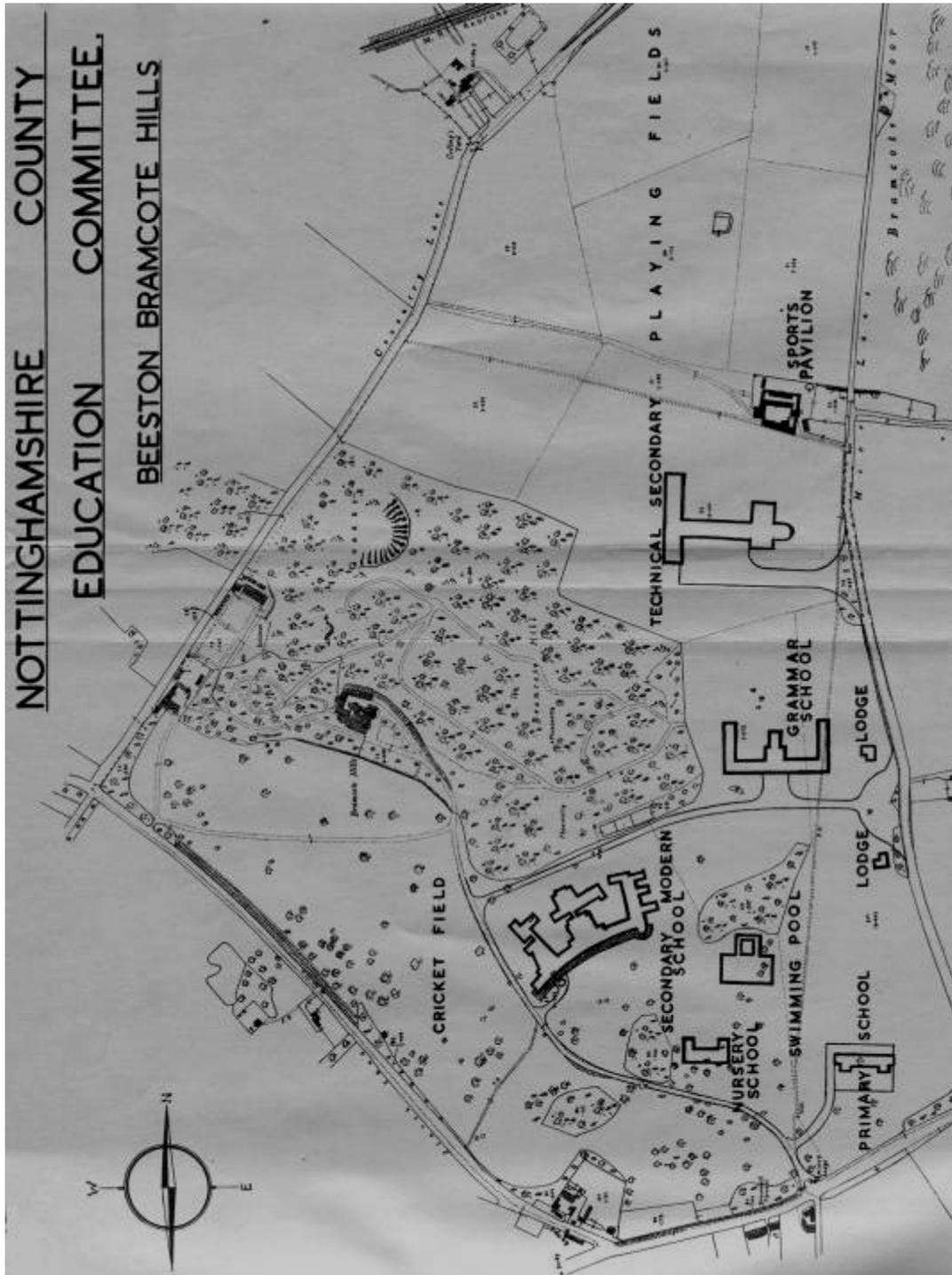
they went on to add that if the property (house, gardens and grounds) was sold on the open market without restrictions for development it could realise about £8,500, whereas if restrictions were placed on the property the difference could be £4,000. The advice given, with little information, was to await derequisition and request £10,000 from the County Council.<sup>126</sup> Regardless as to what portion of land the Education Committee desired it was certainly the intention of those advising Drury-Lowe that he should squeeze the County Council for the maximum amount.

In April 1946, the estate agents acting for Drury-Lowe emphasised that if a sale were to be made they would recommend that only the whole of the property should be negotiated for and it should not be sold piecemeal, reflecting Drury-Lowe's personal concerns regarding the sale of Bankfield Farm the previous year. As previously identified, despite the County Council's willingness to purchase the estate, planning regulations would not permit it.<sup>127</sup> Owing to the slow progress made with Drury-Lowe, therefore, if a purchase was to be made the Education Committee were advised to enact a compulsory purchase order. Authorisation was granted from the Ministry of Education on the 14 September 1946 to submit a Compulsory Purchase Order for an initial 18 acres of the required 76 acres. This covered solely the land upon which the Secondary Modern for Boys was to be built and because it was highest priority scheme on the Education Committee's development timetable haste was paramount.<sup>128</sup> This was later amended to extend to 70 acres and on 4 March 1947, under section 90(1) of the Education Act, 1944 and section 2 of the Acquisition of Land Act, 1946, the Minister of Education sanctioned the order. Planning approval of the CPO by the Ministry of

Health/Ministry of Town and Country Planning was a mere formality and the sale was duly completed in August 1947 for a total of £7850.

## **ii The planning and design of the Bramcote Hills education campus**

Even before the eventual purchase the Education Committee, Country Surveyor and County Architect, E.W. Roberts had been considering in great detail the layout and technical specifications of the development and the original plan, as illustrated in figure 6.26.



**Figure 6.26:** Proposal for the development of the Bramcote Hills estate by the Education Committee of Nottinghamshire County Council. Architects site plan published in the County's education development plan by E.W. Roberts (Nottinghamshire County Council 1947).

The plan for the education campus illustrated a clear continuity with the development of the land as a private estate in the early nineteenth century. Not only did the location of the specific schools take advantage of the site's topography, they were also well distributed and paralleled the residential villa development which had been witnessed to the east on what became the University of Nottingham's campus. Similar to the construction of a pair of lodges at the west entrance of University Park mirroring a country estate landscape, this was replicated in the proposal at Bramcote Hills as illustrated in figure 6.26. Since the Education Committee had only purchased a portion of the estate, and although this included the original driveway to the south, it was deemed that this would provide inappropriate access, and so the County Council's estate was orientated with the main entrance being from Moor Lane to the east. This is clearly recognisable in the way that the plan, in figure 6.26, itself is not orientated northwards. It was just off this lane that a pair of lodges would herald the entrance to the campus and would possibly be used as residential accommodation for maintenance staff. Although they were not built and the design for them is undetermined, the continuity between a private residential estate and the modern education campus symbolised the confidence of the new education system. As will be demonstrated later, nowhere was this more evident than within the innovative architectural style which was to be developed in Nottinghamshire during the 1950s.

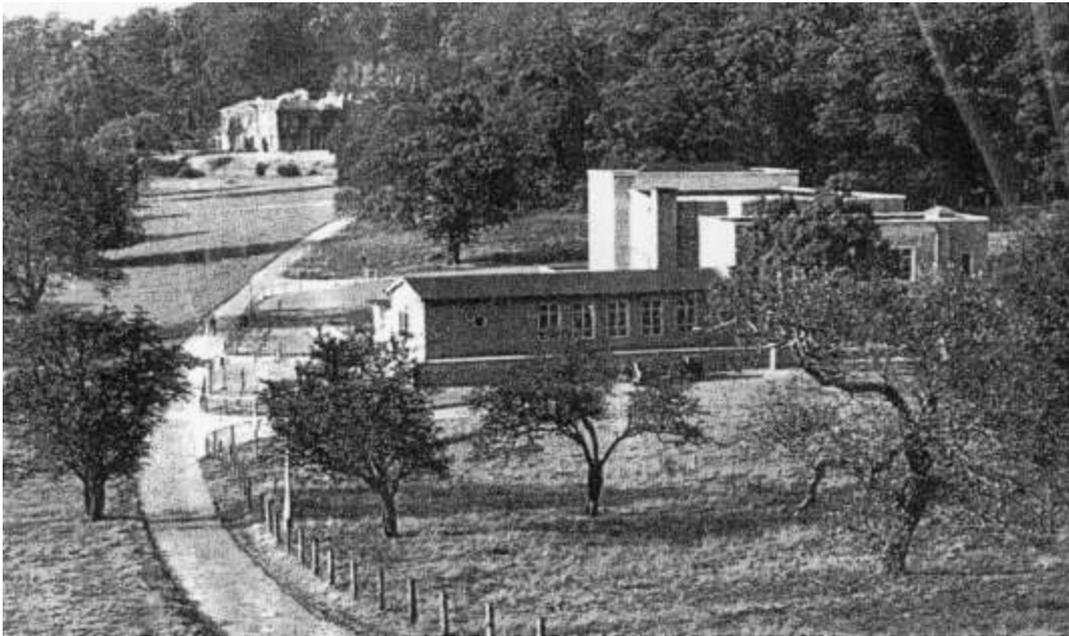
Although not contained in the development plan, it was intended that a nursery school would be built, thus extending the breath of education establishments further and provision was also made for a publicly accessible swimming pool. The latter was eventually developed close to the original entrance in the late 1960s.

Further to the north, the plan also included the conversion or redevelopment of the residence at Moor Farm as a sports pavilion. The Education Committee had initially considered it necessary to purchase the additional 48 acres of land at Moor Farm for use as playing fields. Owing to the poor condition of the land and buildings, Mr. Inglis, Drury-Lowe's agent, recommended that the trustees agree to the additional sale and a conveyance for this portion of the estate was drawn up in March 1948 for £2880.<sup>129</sup> In June 1950, however, the Ministry of Education was unable to approve the purchase due to what Tweedale Meaby resignedly described as, "recent restrictions placed on the purchase of lands on local authorities".<sup>130</sup>

This setback forced more detailed consideration as to how best to plan the portion of the estate owned by the County Council. What started as a dispersed scheme with space being maintained between and around the individual schools soon became more cramped. Certainly, government requirements on playing field provision could not be ignored – nor could the size of the individual secondary schools be reduced. Indeed, the Secondary Modern was already open and so there was no option to turn back. The Education Committee, the County Surveyor, nor the County Architect could foresee this hurdle. It was not the Ministry of Education who the Council considered could delay and prevent necessary development – especially for some of the most important schools in the Education Committee's project timetable.

The County Council did not formally approach the Urban District Council to inquire if they could purchase part of their portion of the estate parkland to the west and instead the Technical and Grammar schools were constructed closer

together with 100 acres of playing field provision being allocated to the south where the junior school was originally intended. The proposal was pared down to just the Secondary Modern, Grammar, Technical Secondary and the Junior Mixed, with the timetable for construction in that order. There was insufficient space for a Secondary Modern for Girls school and the intention to develop this was dropped.



**Figure 6.27:** View along the original drive in 1948 with the estate house at Bramcote Hills in the background. Part of the newly completed Secondary Modern School for Boys is visible in the foreground.<sup>131</sup>

By 1955, as already identified, the Secondary Modern school, illustrated in figure 6.27, was complete and had been open for seven years, the Technical Secondary, see figure 6.28, was in construction and the Grammar school was in the final stages of planning. The timetable was behind schedule and to add to this E.W. Roberts, the County Architect, retired with the design and construction of the campus incomplete and stumbling. D.E.E. Gibson, who had been praised for his

contribution in the reconstruction of Coventry had fallen out with the city councillors and dramatically resigned his position. A.R. Davis, the Clerk of Nottinghamshire County Council quickly met with Gibson and offered him the job. This was somewhat of a scoop for the County because Coventry was viewed as a more prestigious council. Gibson was set with three principal tasks. Firstly to get the school building programme back on track, secondly, to build up a team that could achieve this, and finally to repair the relationship between the Nottinghamshire architecture and education departments which had, themselves, been soured over the construction delays (Saint 1987:164).

**Figure 6.28:** Photograph of Bramcote Hills Technical School taken in 1959.<sup>132</sup>

The Technical School opened on the 10 September 1956, and the official opening ceremony was conducted on the 28 September 1957 by Dr. B.V. Bowden, a scientist who was developing computer technology. Then, on the 15 November 1958, ten years after the Secondary Modern opened, the Grammar School was officially opened by J.W.P. Garrett the Headmaster of Bristol Grammar School.

One and a half years later, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1960, the task was complete and finally, Bramcote Hills Primary School, rather than the originally intended Junior Mixed opened for 160 children.<sup>133</sup> In April 1963, A.R. Davis made a request to the Minister of Education that it should be extended and with agreement in the summer of 1964 a CLASP structure costing £12,194, was erected providing a

dining space and two additional classrooms which increased intake by a further 80 pupils.

The first school inspections of the individual schools on the Bramcote Hills campus received favourable feedback. In the second inspection record for the Secondary Modern in July 1963 the inspector commented that, “the site is a splendid one, aesthetically satisfying and well maintained, and the building is of generous proportions”.<sup>134</sup> This said, recommendations were made, and these included improvement to the drainage on the southern playing field and the expansion of the playing fields.

In a pamphlet published in February 1963, once the main development had been completed, the Director of Education, J. Edward Mason, heralded the success of the campus scheme in providing an economic and effective solution to the school building problem that was experienced in Nottinghamshire following the Second World War. With reference to Bramcote Hills he highlighted that through careful class timetabling the campus system enabled the sharing of facilities, both recreational and educational, between the schools. The co-operation and the specialisms which each of the schools offered enabled them to have facilities that outweighed their individual needs. As such the Secondary Modern could boast the largest stage at any school in the county.<sup>135</sup>

### **6.3.5 Bramcote Hills, Beeston and Stapleford Urban District Council and public open space provision**

Attention now turns to the western portion of the estate, where Beeston and Stapleford District Council, prompted by knowledge of an impending private sale which would jeopardise the town planning scheme, considered measures by which they could intervene and ensure that their vision of public open space was confirmed. This eventually meant enacting legal powers over the purchase and control of land which had eradicated the failures of the 1932 Act.

On the 28 March 1947 Mr. C.H. Wragg, the Clerk of the Beeston and Stapleford Urban District Council, made a request to Drury-Lowe to borrow the keys for the estate house, which had just become vacant following derequisition, in order to inspect its condition. Despite the curious nature of this request it was the first direct intimation of the Council's desires to acquire the property, which up until that time, as described by the solicitors Taylor, Simpson and Mosley, had been in the "vaguest of terms" through correspondence received from the County Council's District Valuer, and mention from the Director of Education that the District Council also wished to acquire the remaining portion. Such a request caused considerable surprise and concern to the owner and trustees. The threat of a further compulsory purchase of a similarly large part of the estate, this time by the Urban District Council countered negotiations for a private sale that had been on-going with the Royal Midland Institution for the Blind. Indeed just two days prior to the Urban District Council requesting the keys to Bramcote Hills the

lawyers representing the Blind Institution had agreed to purchase the remaining portion of the estate.<sup>136</sup>

In this section I will discuss the desire of the Urban District Council to purchase the western portion of the estate as public open space, their negotiations with the owners and Nottinghamshire County Council that ultimately led to a public inquiry held on 31 October 1947 at the Town Hall in Beeston after they had submitted a compulsory purchase order in early June.

Whilst Drury-Lowe and his trustees reluctantly agreed upon the sale of the eastern part of the estate to the County Council there was greater involved discussion regarding the future of the western part which included the estate house itself. Although 100 acres at Bankfield Farm had been sold for development and a further 78 acres of the estate had been sold off to the County Council there was no intimation that Drury-Lowe would willingly release the rest of the estate. Moreover Drury-Lowe was reluctant to sell and his trustees reported that they would not be surprised if he decided to reside at Bramcote Hills himself. Throughout and immediately following the Second World War much of the estate beyond the parkland was under tenanted occupation which included two of the three farms on the estate Moor Farm and Deddington Farm.

What followed was a lengthy battle between the Drury-Lowe, together with his trustees, and the Urban District Council who had already enlisted the support of the County Council regarding the future of the remaining estate that constituted Bramcote Hills house and its immediate parkland. At the heart of the battle were

the rights of ownership and the ability to determine the future of the estate. As can be imagined the Urban District Council enforced powers that enabled them to forcibly “acquire” land much to the owners consternation and resistance. In addition, as will be revealed, the specific intentions of the owner and the council prove highly interesting and illustrate the complex demand for (estate) space at this time. Whilst multiple demands upon space is nothing new, this was made especially acute in the suburban belt of Nottingham where development pressure had almost engulfed the estate and in so doing had necessarily claimed the estate parkland itself in the form of the expansion of education provision.

## **i      The Royal Midland Institution for the Blind**

In February 1947, whilst the land required by the Education Committee was being finalised, the owners of Bramcote Hills entered negotiations for the sale of a portion of the estate to the Royal Midland Institution for the Blind. The organisation were currently located in cramped premises in central Nottingham with no garden facilities and therefore desired to expand their work that provided training for blind people so that they could achieve gainful employment. The Enfield family who owned nearby Bramcote Grange until its auction in 1946 had links with the Institution and they may have had knowledge of undertakings on the Bramcote Hills estate suggested the house as appropriate.<sup>137</sup>

Understanding that the forthcoming changes to town and country planning legislation would, “eventually detrimentally affect the owner’s interest in this estate,” encouraged those representing Drury-Lowe to enact the sale to the Blind

Institution as soon as possible.<sup>138</sup> Taylor, Simpson and Moseley commented that, “it will be quite clear that some local authority or other is going to spoil the estate by breaking it up so we might as well clear it now while there is a chance at least”.<sup>139</sup> The other trustee, Gerard Hamilton added that, “it seems a wonderful opportunity to dispose of the property and I agree entirely”.<sup>140</sup>

It should not, however, be concluded that the desire to sell was solely based on the perceived threat from a local authority but also an acceptance as to the importance of the work being undertaken by the Institution. As stated by the solicitors, “the Bramcote owners were, immediately the offer of the Institution came before them, impressed with the idea as a scheme for the benefit of the public in assisting an unfortunate section of the unfortunates who were afflicted by blindness”. This position was assisted by the support for the purchase that was received by both the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Health because the proposal developed accorded with the intentions of the Disabled Persons Act, 1944 and, parallel to Nottinghamshire County Council, the Education Act, 1944.<sup>141</sup> In March 1947, agreement was reached for the sale of 69.9 acres including the house, cottages, buildings and all growing timber for a cost of £11,500.<sup>142</sup>

## **ii Beeston and Stapleford Urban District Council and public open space provision: stage 2.**

The necessity that public open space should be reserved from increasing developmental pressure was realised in 1943. As has already been identified during the Second World War, the Nottingham Planning Joint Executive Committee, which consisted of members of Beeston and Stapleford Urban District

Council and Nottinghamshire County Council passed a resolution that 134 acres of the Bramcote Hills estate would be scheduled under the primary zoning proposals. In January 1946, however, the Urban District Council considered that this protection was no longer adequate and so amended the Primary Zoning, recommending that, “provision for public open spaces be reconsidered with a view to resisting certain proposals and generally making increased provision”.<sup>143</sup> Through the close co-operation that developed with the County Council and in particular the District Valuer, it is considered that they knew of private moves by Drury-Lowe to sell the remaining portion of the parkland, including the estate house, to the Royal Midland Institution for the Blind. Instead of announcing their intentions they monitored the situation. With knowledge of the legislative powers at their disposal they could wait until the threat almost became realised before submitting their compulsory purchase order.

This direct and abrupt intervention brought the owners and the Institution for the Blind into direct conflict with Beeston and Stapleford and from this bitter debate ensued regarding the relative merits of the two schemes. Despite attempts made requesting that the Council reconsider they did not accede and accordingly on the 29<sup>th</sup> March 1947 a compulsory purchase order was submitted to the Minister of Health, which brought the dispute into focus at a public inquiry.

### **iii Public inquiry: Drury-Lowe and Royal Midland Institution for the Blind versus the Beeston and Stapleford Urban District Council**

The matter could not be resolved and so the Minister of Health called a public inquiry, presided over by Mr. V.D. Joll, to sit at the Town Hall in Beeston on 30 October 1947. It is primarily through the legal papers that the competing interests of the two parties can be identified. The public inquiry focused upon three key issues. These were the manner in which the District Council had conducted itself over the matter, the necessity for additional public open space, and the national and regional importance of both the estate to the Blind Institution and for the extraction of minerals that supplied the steel industry.

The first is evident in the proceeding section and demonstrated the ability by which the District could closely follow the sale to the Blind Institution in the knowledge that at any point they could enforce a compulsory purchase order. Drury-Lowe's counsel could only re-emphasise the rights of a landowner to choose their own purchaser and were confused over the Urban District Council's rejection of a new social use for Bramcote Hills which would benefit the local population<sup>144</sup>

The second point of contention was the necessity and indeed suitability of open space provision at Bramcote Hills. Whilst General Refractories, the company who were extracting moulding sand under licence to the north of the estate house argued that the quarry edge to the north of the woodland was dangerous and therefore unfit for public access, the greater interest focused upon other public open space in the locality.

The trustees argued that similar public spaces already existed nearby including Wollaton Park, owned by the Corporation of Nottingham, and Highfields on the other side of Beeston near the University of Nottingham campus. Despite the relative proximity of these two sites the trustees failed to recognise that these were both located beyond the urban district boundary and therefore could not be considered in association to the District Council's provision. The trustees also referred to recreation grounds owned by the Beeston and Stapleford Urban District Council which were located between Bramcote village and the Derby Road. This, however, only covered 12 acres and was inadequate to meet the District's expanding population.

The County Surveyor, R.A. Kidd, gave evidence in support of the District Council and extolled the public benefit to both citizenship and the wider social geography of the community, stating that, "the value of pleasant environment and healthy recreation towards healthy well-being is obvious. Comradeship on the playing field can forge as strong a social bond as any community centre of brick or stone". With specific regard to the particular benefits of the Bramcote landscape Kidd added that, "these hills possess features and resources the preservation of which was essential to the well-being of the public. Especially attractive features of the land offer children scope for rambling freely and safely. What children need is not so much ready made amusement as the means to make amusements for themselves. The woodland features of this land offer to meet the preferences and requirements of all tastes and all ages whether quiet reflection, study of nature, rambling or organised games or cultural pursuits such as outdoor theatricals".<sup>145</sup>

In backing this up, Kidd was armed with minimum standards set out by the Ministry of Town and Country Planning for provision of public open space. In a ministerial circular of 1943, the stated values were for 4 acres per thousand population of “permanently dedicated playing fields”, with an additional 1 acre per thousand for dedicated parks. With an optimum population of 73,000 for the district so this required a minimum of 386.5 acres.

Furthermore, the proposed new use illustrated the conflict within the ministerial support that was courted and subsequently reiterated by both the trustees and the Urban District Council. With a significant proportion of the national workforce still in military service increased attention within the Ministry of Labour had been given to encourage and enable the training of disabled people (Ince 1960). The owners considered that the public interest would be better served by the provision of a hospital for the blind than by the provision of an open space.

#### **iv The estate house at Bramcote Hills and public recreation**

In considering the designation of land as a public open space the solicitors representing Drury-Lowe and his trustees questioned the necessity of the estate house, illustrated in figure 10, both within the town planning scheme and the CPO currently under inquiry.<sup>146</sup> Indeed, as is illustrated above, it did not feature in any initial argument proposed by the Council for public open space. This point of contention, however, prompted the Council to draw the house into its scheme. Should the inspector deem that the estate as a whole had not been considered and that the Royal Midland Institution for the Blind could offer a more comprehensive proposal then this might not result in a decision that favoured the District Council.

They determined that the south west wing which consisted of living quarters, loggia and bedrooms would be converted as refreshment rooms or a kiosk. In addition though the Council also stated that they “reluctantly came to the conclusion that the north wing comprising of kitchens, pantries and servants quarters was of no practical value by reason of its planning and general condition and should be demolished”.<sup>147</sup>

In spite of the opposition, Mr. Joll recommended in favour of the Compulsory Purchase Order and this was confirmed by the Minister of Health on the 1 March 1948 as the Beeston and Stapleford (Bramcote Hills) Compulsory Purchase Order, 1947. The area totalling 79.49 acres was accordingly sold for £11,600, the price recommended by the District Valuer. The solicitors and advisors acting for Drury-Lowe expressed resigned disappointment. The Secretary of the Royal Midland Institution for the Blind was reported to be “disgusted at the lack of support of the various ministries with whom he had previously had very hopeful negotiations”.<sup>148</sup>

Once the District Council had taken possession of their portion of the estate Bramcote Hills house was not converted to offer facilities that complemented provision as a public open space, nor was the north wing demolished. Instead the first floor was divided into two flats for employees of the Council which, at different times, included the head gardener and the chief public health officer. With only minimal investment made on the house it still remained in a poor condition as can be seen in figures 6.29 and 6.30. One resident recalled that in the harsh winter of 1962 to 1963 the gas pipes blocked, the water pipes froze, and a

health worker who visited his new born son was appalled at the sanitary condition of the property.<sup>149</sup>



**Figure 6.29:** The southern elevation of Bramcote Hills as photographed for the National Monuments Record in 1967 prior to its demolition.<sup>150</sup>



**Figure 6.30:** Front entrance hall of Bramcote Hills used for the storage of one of the District Council's park benches awaiting repair. Photograph taken NMR in 1967.<sup>151</sup>

In 1968, following years of neglect and with the building becoming increasingly unsafe, the Bramcote Hills was demolished and families were relocated to other council owned properties within the district.

**v Hemlock Stone, the extension of public open space provision and the final break-up of the Bramcote Hills estate**

Whilst there had been provisional agreements for the sale of portions of the Drury-Lowe estate as early as 1939 the bitter fight over the sale of the immediate parkland of Bramcote Hills between the owners and the District Council triggered a succession of sales soon after the confirmation of the compulsory purchase order, as illustrated in figure 6.20 and 6.21. These, however, followed the death in 1949 of John Alfred Edwin at which point the estate passed to his son, John Drury Boteler Packe-Drury-Lowe. It has been suggested that he had to pay estate duty at 65% amounting to a six-figure sum and this necessitated the resultant sales.<sup>152</sup>

Tied into arguments regarding public recreation provision was a natural stack of Bunter Sandstone and hard crop rock called the Hemlock Stone which is situated on high ground just north west of Bramcote Hills on land owned by Drury-Lowe. This feature had historically prompted excitement within the County antiquarian society who had denied suggestions that it had been a Druid ceremonial site. Despite firm suggestions that this was not the case the striking presence of the stone and key local landmark was regarded with geological, if not mystical, significance.

In presenting the evidence in favour of the compulsory purchase at the public inquiry, the County Surveyor, R.A. Kidd referred to the Ministry of Town and Country Planning report of 1947 into the *Conservation of Nature in England and Wales*.<sup>153</sup> In drawing upon a list of geological monuments proposed by the Geological Sub-committee of the Nature Reserves Investigation Committee as

worthy of protection the authors highlighted 42 such features. The only one in Nottinghamshire was Hemlock Stone (Ministry of Town and Country Planning 1947:105). The three-acre field within which the Hemlock Stone stood had been let to the District Council on a 21 year lease for a nominal fee up until the summer of 1951.<sup>154</sup> In March 1952 the District Council purchased the land together with Stapleford Hill, which had previously been in hand, from Drury-Lowe's trustees for £750, thereby extending the area of dedicated public recreation provision with the Hemlock Stone as a central focus.

In total there were eleven further sales which raised a total of £18,000, and, despite still owning some mineral rights and titles, this ended the Drury-Lowes' interest in the estate. The majority of the holdings were sold to tenant farmers and this included the two farms on the estate – Moor Farm and Deddington Farm. Elsewhere the National Coal Board expressed interest in land, west of Moor Lane for use as a tipping site for Trowell Moor Colliery. In November 1950, the Urban District Council purchased further land on the estate west of the estate. Whilst a private developer was in the process of building housing on the Bankfield Farm site, this parcel of land was bought to extend the Council's Ryecroft housing estate which had been under development since before the Second World War. The last piece of land to be sold off was the quarries that had been leased to J.S. Cooke and Sons and General Refractories. The remaining 21 acres were purchased by the latter for £3400 in about February 1953.

### **6.3.6 The local state involvement at Bramcote Hills: concluding comments**

In discussing the state involvement at Bramcote Hills it will have become apparent that there is no mention of any preservation organisation, whether local amenity groups or associated to the state, who fought to save the estate house. For the central state to have been interested in the future of Bramcote Hills it would have required a proven association deemed of national importance. Unlike Rufford Abbey's medieval rarity and Ossington Hall's association to the celebrated architects James Gibbs and John Carr, there were no such architectural associations at Bramcote Hills.

It was photographed by the National Buildings Record and it did receive two lines in Pevsner's *Buildings of England* for Nottinghamshire (Pevsner 1951). Neither of these attributes, however, provided any legal protection from demolition. The house did however, appear on the supplementary list of buildings of architectural importance published by the County Surveyor and compiled by the Ministry of Town and Country Planning in 1964 (Nottinghamshire County Council 1964). Supplementary listing did not provide the protection that being on the statutory list did.

The involvement of Nottinghamshire County Council and Beeston and Stapleford Urban District Council at Bramcote Hills illustrates both the changing responsibilities of local authorities and their legal powers over land within the planning system. The heightened demand for land within the District meant that

pressure would be placed upon privately owned open areas and attention was brought upon Bramcote Hills.<sup>155</sup> Despite the Director of Education mourning the unavailability of large estate houses such as Welbeck Abbey and Stanford Hall, it was the smaller houses, often those perceived as less architecturally important, which the Council considered most suitable for educational demands.

Such houses offered an ideal means by which increased responsibilities placed upon local education authorities could be promptly implemented. The variety of educational needs, rapid demand for new institutions, building restrictions together with economic constraints meant that country houses were viewed as highly acceptable, if not ideal, options. The differences between the purchase costs of estates compared to that of later extensions is testament to this.

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<sup>1</sup> Photograph taken by author.

<sup>2</sup> [www.thepeerage.com](http://www.thepeerage.com) Accessed August 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Sir Aston Webb was later commissioned to design the chapel at Worksop College, Nottinghamshire between 1907 and 1911 (Pevsner and Williamson 1979:389).

<sup>4</sup> Report of the Attendance and Welfare Sub-Committee to the Education Committee. 7 November 1950. Col. Frank Seely had originally permitted the use of the roof at Ramsdale and this arrangement was continued under later ownership by the County Council.

<sup>5</sup> NAO XBD 2/2L.

<sup>6</sup> Figure includes the costs of the adaptation and extension of existing schools, new building programmes, land for building, special boarding arrangements and playing fields.

<sup>7</sup> Burke's Landed Gentry (1969) 18<sup>th</sup> Edition

<sup>8</sup> Nottinghamshire Countryside. Hopwell Hall Special School (1946) 9(4) pp12.

<sup>9</sup> NA ED 32/1867

<sup>10</sup> Nottinghamshire Countryside. Hopwell Hall Special School (1946) 9(4) pp12.

<sup>11</sup> Reported in Nottinghamshire Countryside. April 1952 13(4); April 1955 16(4).

<sup>12</sup> Report of the Attendance and Welfare Sub-Committee to the Education Committee. 5 February 1946.

<sup>13</sup> PTP NCCW000294

<sup>14</sup> NA ED 32/1867. Letter from Dowson Wadsworth and Co. to Clerk of Nottinghamshire County Council. n.d.

<sup>15</sup> NA ED 32/1867. Plan of the Nottinghamshire County Council (Ramsdale Park) Compulsory Purchase Order, 1947.

<sup>16</sup> NA ED 32/1867. Letter from Miss M.M. Lindsay to Nottinghamshire County Council. n.d.

<sup>17</sup> NAO CC 7/8/1/779. Deeds of sale. F.J.W. Seely to Nottinghamshire County Council. 17 May 1949

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- <sup>18</sup> Report of the Education Committee. 1 February 1949
- <sup>19</sup> Report of the Education Committee. 1 February 1949
- <sup>20</sup> NA ED 32/1867
- <sup>21</sup> Report of the Attendance and Welfare Sub-Committee to the Education Committee. 7 November 1950.
- <sup>22</sup> Comment by Diana Barley.
- <sup>23</sup> Emphasis in original
- <sup>24</sup> Report of the Education Committee. 5 February 1956.
- <sup>25</sup> Report of the Higher Education Sub-Committee to the Education Committee. 1 May 1945.
- <sup>26</sup> NAO XB 2/1L. Designs for the new estate house at Ramsdale illustrate a house four times as large with a pitched roof and four cupolas instead of the one which was eventually built.
- <sup>27</sup> Report of the Education Committee. 5 November 1946.
- <sup>28</sup> PTP NCCE001550.
- <sup>29</sup> Ministry of Education Circular 77. December 1945
- <sup>30</sup> Emergency Recruitment and Training of Teachers. Ministry of Education Circular 106. 22 May 1946.
- <sup>31</sup> Alnwick Castle (Northumberland), Wall Hall (Watford), Newland Park (Bucks.), Wynyard Park (Co. Durham), Trent House (Enfield) and Bletchley Park (Buckinghamshire).
- <sup>32</sup> [www.alnwickcastle.co.uk](http://www.alnwickcastle.co.uk). Accessed September 2003.
- <sup>33</sup> Ministry of Education Circular Number 11. 7/11/44. Acquisition of sites.
- <sup>34</sup> Ministry of Education Circular Number 11. 7/11/44. Acquisition of sites.
- <sup>35</sup> Section 62 of the Education Act, 1944.
- <sup>36</sup> Report of the Training of Teachers Sub-Committee. 31 July 1945.
- <sup>37</sup> Report of the Training of Teachers Sub-Committee. June 1945.
- <sup>38</sup> Report of the Development Sub-Committee. July 1946
- <sup>39</sup> Report of the Development Sub-Committee. July 1946
- <sup>40</sup> NA ED 78/145. Letter from J. Edward Mason (Director of Education) to G.N. Flemming (Ministry of Education). 17 September 1945. Stanford Hall became the Co-operative College and Welbeck became a secondary Army College.
- <sup>41</sup> NA ED 78/145. Letter from J Edward Mason (Director of Education,) to G.N. Flemming (Ministry of Education, London). 17 September 1945.
- <sup>42</sup> NA ED78/145. Letter from J Edward Mason (Director of Education) to G.A.S. Atack (District Valuer, NCC) 31 October 1945.
- <sup>43</sup> In contrast to providing temporary accommodation for foreign refugees, in March 1948 the property was used to house British citizens repatriated following the decolonisation of India.
- <sup>44</sup> PTP NCCN002027
- <sup>45</sup> NA ED 78/437. Handwritten note by E.A. Parkes on letter from C.C. Bell (MoE) to E.A. Parkes (MoE) 9 April 1946.
- <sup>46</sup> NA ED 78/437. Letter from G.N. Flemming (MoE, London) to J Edward Mason (Director of Education) 1 January 1946.
- <sup>47</sup> Development Sub-Committee of the Education Committee. 6 December 1945
- <sup>48</sup> NA ED 78/145. Letter from J. Edward Mason to Secretary Ministry of Education. 39 August 1946.
- <sup>49</sup> Baily's Hunting Directory. 1932-1933. pp111-112.
- <sup>50</sup> PTP NCCN001312.
- <sup>51</sup> Details courtesy of Mrs. Angela Farrer.
- <sup>52</sup> PTP NCCN001429
- <sup>53</sup> Eaton Hall was built by either John Bridgeman-Simpson or his son Henry Bridgeman-Simpson who inherited between 1828 and 1830 (Jacks 1881; Piercy 1828).
- <sup>54</sup> Walford's County Families of the United Kingdom (1895). In 1880, before inheriting, Denison had named his first son Edward Bridgeman in honour of the owner of the Babworth estates.
- <sup>55</sup> Green Hammerton Hall was demolished 1952 (Worsley 2003).
- <sup>56</sup> [www.mfha.co.uk/hunts/grove\\_and\\_rufford\\_hunt.html](http://www.mfha.co.uk/hunts/grove_and_rufford_hunt.html). Accessed 16 September 2004.
- <sup>57</sup> Much of the information regarding the history of the estate during the Second World War was obtained in an interview with Angela Farrer
- <sup>58</sup> Report of the Maternity and Child Welfare Committee 1 May 1945.
- <sup>59</sup> Nottinghamshire Countryside 1942 6(1). Mrs. Bray worked as matron throughout the Second World War and remained at Eaton Hall when it became the Nottinghamshire County Training College.

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- <sup>60</sup> Figures for the dates 1 January 1945 to 24 March 1945.
- <sup>61</sup> Figure estimated by Mrs. Angela Farrer.
- <sup>62</sup> Report of the Education Committee. 30 July 1946
- <sup>63</sup> NAO ED 78/437.
- <sup>64</sup> NAO ED 78/438.
- <sup>65</sup> NA ED 78/437. Letter from Mason to G.N. Flemming. 24 June 1946.
- <sup>66</sup> NAO CC 7/8/1/661. Conveyance; C.W. Kayser to Nottinghamshire County Council. 11 October 1946.
- <sup>67</sup> NA ED 78/437. Letter from J. Edward Mason (Director of Education) to G.N. Flemming (MoE) 24 June 1946. It is commented that minimal structural work was required at Ordsall Hall.
- <sup>68</sup> NA ED 78/438. Memo from J.A. Humphreys to Miss Nicholls. 25 August 1947.
- <sup>69</sup> NA ED 78/438. Memo from J.A. Humphreys to G.N. Flemming. Date unknown c1947.
- <sup>70</sup> NA ED 78/437. Letter from Mason to G.N. Fleming. 14 February 1946.
- <sup>71</sup> NA ED 78/437. Letter from Mason to C.C. Bell. 20 March 1946.
- <sup>72</sup> NA ED 78/437; Report of the Education Committee, 6 November 1945.
- <sup>73</sup> Report of the Education Committee. 30 July 1946.
- <sup>74</sup> NA ED 78/437. Letter from J Edward Mason to C.C. Bell (MoE, London) 23 October 1946.
- <sup>75</sup> NA ED 78/437. Work was reported to have stopped three times between August and October 1946.
- <sup>76</sup> NA ED 78/438. Proposal for adaptation submitted to the Ministry of Education. September 1947. It is most likely that the additional walls installed on the first floor were to divide the principle bedrooms.
- <sup>77</sup> NA ED 78/437. Letter from J. Edward Mason to Secretary, Ministry of Education. 29 August 1946.
- <sup>78</sup> NA ED 78/438. Letter from Mason to Secretary, Ministry of Education. 23 May 1947.
- <sup>79</sup> The importance of adequate natural light was witnessed in the development of Ordsall Secondary School which was constructed in a highly wooded area. This is discussed later in this chapter.
- <sup>80</sup> Photograph by author.
- <sup>81</sup> NA ED 78/437.
- <sup>82</sup> Report of the Education Committee. 29 July 1947.
- <sup>83</sup> Photograph by author
- <sup>84</sup> PTP NCCN000284.
- <sup>85</sup> NA ED 78/145. Letter from Mason to C.C. Bell. 12 October 1946.
- <sup>86</sup> County Council Notes, Nottinghamshire Countryside, January 1949 11(7); NAO C/QAH/30/251.
- <sup>87</sup> NA ED 109/9499. Report of first inspection undertaken between the 25 and 27 June 1963.
- <sup>88</sup> NMR AA51/2444
- <sup>89</sup> PTP NCCS001740.
- <sup>90</sup> George Gregory of Harlaxton Manor in Lincolnshire was a distant relative of John Sherwin. In 1860 the latter succeeded to the Gregory estate.
- <sup>91</sup> Much of the early family history is courtesy of Mr. M.A.B. Mallander.
- <sup>92</sup> William Drury assumed the name William Drury-Lowe.
- <sup>93</sup> Copy of 1919 sale catalogue in the possession of the Bramcote History Group.
- <sup>94</sup> Information courtesy of Mrs. V. Bird.
- <sup>95</sup> TSM GT. Lease dated 6 January 1936. Henry FitzHerbert.
- <sup>96</sup> Burkes Landed Gentry (1969) 18<sup>th</sup> Edition.
- <sup>97</sup> TSM GT A calculation for probate drawn up in November 1938 details the value of the estate as £108,159.
- <sup>98</sup> TSM GT. The ownership and location of certain holdings was determined through the inspection of a valuation for probate and conveyances.
- <sup>99</sup> Photograph courtesy of Mrs. V. Bird.
- <sup>100</sup> NA WO 166/9571. Chilwell Central Ordnance Depot. Diary entry October 1942.
- <sup>101</sup> The Northern Command consisted of Derbyshire, Durham, Lancashire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Northumberland, Rutland and Yorkshire.
- <sup>102</sup> TSM GT. Referred to in letter from Richardson and Linnell to Taylor, Simpson and Mosley. 21 February 1947.
- <sup>103</sup> [www.broxtowe.gov.uk](http://www.broxtowe.gov.uk) Accessed August 2005.
- <sup>104</sup> Photograph courtesy of Mrs. V. Bird.

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- <sup>105</sup> PTP NCCS001725.
- <sup>106</sup> NAO CC/CD/1/14/3
- <sup>107</sup> NA MAF 32/350/128. National Farm Survey records. Beeston and Stapleford.
- <sup>108</sup> TSM GT. Letter from Mr. Inglis to solicitors Taylor, Simpson and Mosley. 6/1/44
- <sup>109</sup> TSM GT
- <sup>110</sup> TSM GT. Letter from Mr. Inglis to Taylor, Simpson and Mosley, 15 July 1943.
- <sup>111</sup> TSM GT. Letter from Bromley, Cartwright and Waulsley to Taylor, Simpson and Mosley. 11 July 1944.
- <sup>112</sup> Town and Country Planning Act, 1932
- <sup>113</sup> The Primary Zoning Proposals did not include Stapleford Hill and Hemlock Stone to the west or the Ryecroft housing estate extension to the south. These, however, were both purchased by the District Council at a later date.
- <sup>114</sup> TSM GT Brief to counsel for Ministry of Health public enquiry. October 1947.
- <sup>115</sup> TSM GT Letter from E. Vincent Brown to Taylor, Simpson and Mosley. 8 July 1943.
- <sup>116</sup> TSM GT Letter from Taylor, Simpson and Mosley to E. Vincent Brown. 28 July 1943.
- <sup>117</sup> TSM GT Letter from E. Vincent Brown to J.A.E. Drury-Lowe. 11 December 1945.
- <sup>118</sup> In 1948 Nottingham General Hospital purchased Ruddington Hall, four miles to the south of Nottingham, and converted it for use as a convalescent home.
- <sup>119</sup> Section 11(i) of the Education Act, 1944. Nottinghamshire County Council required a “comparatively considerable” extension to the one year deadline, and published their report in 1947.
- <sup>120</sup> NAO CC/7/8/2/862 Deed of sale.
- <sup>121</sup> TSM GT. Letter from Clerk (Beeston and Stapleford Urban District Council) to J. Edward Mason. 29 November 1947.
- <sup>122</sup> TSM GT. Letter J. Edward Mason to G.C. Hardy (Surveyor Beeston and Stapleford Urban District Council). 27 October 1947.
- <sup>123</sup> TSM GT. Letter from J. Edward Mason to J.A.E. Drury-Lowe. 15 November 1944.
- <sup>124</sup> Report of the Development Sub-Committee. 24 May 1945.
- <sup>125</sup> TSM GT. Letter from Taylor, Simpson and Mosley to Richardson and Linnell. 26 November 1945.
- <sup>126</sup> TSM GT. Letter from Richardson and Linnell to Taylor, Simpson and Mosley . 28 September 1945.
- <sup>127</sup> TSM GT. Letter from Richardson and Linnell to J. Edward Mason. 4 April 1946
- <sup>128</sup> TSM GT. Letter from D.M. Newton (MoE) to Nottinghamshire Education Authority. 14 September 1946.
- <sup>129</sup> TSM GT. Letter from Mr. Inglis to Taylor, Simpson and Mosley. 4 May 1949. Conveyance dated 25 March 1948.
- <sup>130</sup> TSM GT. K. Tweedale Meaby to Taylor, Simpson and Mosley. 20 June 1950.
- <sup>131</sup> Photograph courtesy of Mrs. V. Bird.
- <sup>132</sup> [www.bhts56.force9.co.uk](http://www.bhts56.force9.co.uk) Accessed October 2004.
- <sup>133</sup> NA ED 432/2271.
- <sup>134</sup> NA ED 109/9499.
- <sup>135</sup> NAO CC/ED 5/7/4. Campus schools in Nottinghamshire. The Philosophy of the Campus. February 1963.
- <sup>136</sup> TSM GT. Brief to counsel for Ministry of Health public enquiry. 31 October 1947
- <sup>137</sup> Information supplied by Mrs. Val Bird.
- <sup>138</sup> TSM GT. Letter from Richardson and Linnell to Taylor, Simpson and Moseley. 21 February 1947.
- <sup>139</sup> TSM GT. Letter from Taylor, Simpson and Mosley to J.A.E. Drury-Lowe. 24 February 1947.
- <sup>140</sup> TSM GT. Letter from Gerard Hamilton to Taylor, Simpson and Mosley. 25 February 1947.
- <sup>141</sup> TSM GT. Brief to counsel for Ministry of Health public enquiry. 31 October 1947.
- <sup>142</sup> TSM GT. Letter from Whitworth and Eccleston to Richardson and Linnell. 26 March 1947
- <sup>143</sup> NAO DC
- <sup>144</sup> TSM GT. Brief to counsel for Ministry of Health public enquiry. 31 October 1947.
- <sup>145</sup> TSM GT.
- <sup>146</sup> TSM GT. Brief to counsel for Ministry of Health public enquiry. 31 October 1947
- <sup>147</sup> TSM GT. Statement of evidence from the Beeston and Stapleford Urban District Council to the public inquiry. Undated.
- <sup>148</sup> TSM GT. Letter Mr. Eccles to Taylor, Simpson and Mosley. 18 February 1948.

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- <sup>149</sup> Letter from Keith Brownhill to Mrs. V. Bird. 12 June 2002.
- <sup>150</sup> NMR BB70/337
- <sup>151</sup> NMR BB70/345
- <sup>152</sup> Comment made by Mr. M. Mallander of Taylor, Simpson and Moseley
- <sup>153</sup> Cmd. 7122. Members of the committee included Dr. J.S. Huxley (Chairman) and Professor A.G. Tansley (Vice-Chairman)
- <sup>154</sup> TSM GT. Valuation for probate (J.A.E. Drury-Lowe). 25 July 1951.
- <sup>155</sup> TSM GT Letter from J. Edward Mason to Taylor, Simpson and Mosley. 17 August 1945.

## 7 Conclusion



**Figure 7.1:** Montage of the country houses discussed in chapters 5 and 6 as photographed in the early twenty first century. Clockwise from top left, Ossington Hall, Winkburn Hall, Eaton Hall, Rufford Abbey, Bramcote Hills and Ordsall Hall.<sup>1</sup>

This thesis has considered the preservation and use of country houses and their surrounding parklands in Nottinghamshire during the mid-twentieth century. It has been argued that the erosion of private landownership opened up new debates on estate space. Firstly country houses were considered as of

national cultural importance worthy of preservation through state legislative and financial support, and secondly, as a functional space where new and expanding state responsibilities for social welfare, health and education could be implemented. Both these aspects have been considered in depth within the case study chapters featuring the houses illustrated in figure 7.1.

Since the late nineteenth century the ability to govern, which had successfully been maintained by estate landowners for over four hundred years, had declined significantly. In Nottinghamshire, the County Council became a central focus of local landed representation, though by the inter-war period landed influence was here also in decline. Economic security, political authority and social deference within the County had traditionally helped to assure and sustain landed influence. Increasingly this authority waned and governing responsibilities were assumed by the state. The increased activities of the local and national government, reflected within Ministerial departments and County Committees, increasingly contested the governing responsibilities of landowners. This became most noticeable in considering estate space itself, where the country house and its parkland offered new productive opportunities.

The consideration of the total number of estate houses within Nottinghamshire during the period of study has facilitated a deeper understanding as to the particularity of both opportunities for new uses and preservation concerns. The various sizes of estates, including the house and parkland, the significance of ownership and architectural histories and the

location of country houses within the County reveal important insights regarding the purchase and adaptation of estate houses. Within Nottinghamshire the change in ownership and use between 1937 and 1967 has been considerable. Country houses under private residential ownership fell from a maximum of 81% down to 53%.<sup>2</sup> Correspondingly those adapted for institutional purposes, whether owned by the state or privately, increased from 15% to 43%. Nottinghamshire County Council owned the largest proportion of country houses adapted for new uses, totalling fifteen within the County together with an additional two in Derbyshire. Country houses have been used for a variety of purposes. Private residential estate houses proved highly flexible in meeting the different demands of private and public institutional users. The adaptability of country houses is proven by their reuse for successive different state and institutional purposes, including, since 1967, the return of estates to private residential ownership.

1937 marked the initiation of government proposals for the mass state requisition of country houses in preparation for the Second World War. This state intervention within a private landscape was central in initiating the widespread transition of estate houses from private residential to institutional and public uses on the scale witnessed in the post-war period. Firstly, requisition temporarily removed owners' responsibilities for, and control of, an estate house, following which many did not have the financial means or desire to undertake maintenance, or equally were restricted by the state in their attempts to do so. This ensured the supply of estate houses within the post-war market. Secondly, enforced changes of use during the War,

especially those allied to the local social welfare and education functions of the County Council highlighted the successful adaptation of properties and emphasised the variety of opportunities which could exist for estate space. This was clearly evident at Eaton Hall where the property was initially recommended as a council maternity home, prior to being redirected for use as a teacher training college. Equally, military billeting at Rufford during the Second World War anticipated later requirements for the County Council to provide civil defence training.

This thesis has demonstrated that most uses had considerable longevity, sometimes beyond that of many private residential owners during the mid-twentieth century. This was especially the case with regard to those owned by the County Council. Post-war investment in social welfare and education provision focused upon long-term change and premises purchased in haste immediately following the Second World War later played a fundamental part in implementing provision. Therefore, just as with hereditary residential ownership, continued state ownership and use enabled the successful maintenance of many estate houses within Nottinghamshire.

For architectural historians and amenity organisations, the adaptation of country houses was a regretted, but increasingly accepted, form of preservation. Necessary internal conversion and the construction of modern additions were, however, often sympathetic to historic architecture. Traditional brick-built developments undertaken by the County Architect, as witnessed at Hopwell, Eaton and Skegby were constructed to complement

established architectural forms rather than compete. Even modern CLASP additions were kept to a minimum and were either erected separate to the country house or only as single storey extensions. Many of the country houses converted were not highly regarded architecturally and, despite wider concerns that new uses would threaten architectural preservation, when it came to specific local proposals there was little expressed concern, which further aided successful and prompt conversion.

At the heart of these changes, therefore, is a difference in the way that country houses have been perceived during the mid-twentieth century. In some instances houses were considered solely as a functional space enabling immediate provision. Such examples include the provision of hostel lodgings at Winkburn, Trowell and Kirklington which were deemed appropriate because of their proximity to local industrial activities in the construction of Staythorpe power station, Trowell service station on the M1, and finally in the drilling of oil at Eakring. In contrast, the County Council placed greater emphasis on site suitability. Whilst country houses were considered partly for their functional value, the implementation of provision within the County was undertaken equally with an understanding of country house architectures and an appreciation of the topographical arrangement characterised within designed parklands.

The reorganisation and modernisation of the Council's social welfare and educational responsibilities were reflected in the new opportunities within estate space. Provision had progressed away from more formal or corrective

institutions and it was enthusiastically considered that country houses, together with modern architecture, offered great prospects for new models of care, education and training. The more modestly sized country houses were highly suited for the establishment of new special education provision and the Principal of the Nottinghamshire County Education College considered that the opportunity for its creation within a country house atmosphere promoted a model learning atmosphere ideal for the training of new teachers within a modern education system. Additionally, where there was no emphasis upon the country house, as at Bramcote Hills, the campus plan for the parkland replicated the arrangement of a villa development. The individual schools were carefully arranged in order to ensure the maximum opportunity was derived from the local topography

Other forms of continuity between private and public ownership can be emphasised following the nationalisation of the mineral rights and subsequently coal mines themselves. This political move removed control from landowners placing it within the newly established National Coal Board. Organised by coal mining region a number of central offices were created to ensure the successful management of local colliery workings. In Nottinghamshire, the National Coal Board purchased Sherwood Lodge as its headquarters for the East Midlands Division. Originally the home of Sir Charles Seely who established the family in Nottinghamshire as wealthy colliery owners, the country house became once again the centre of administrative management for nearby coal mines, albeit transferred from being under private control to a state nationalised industry.

New responsibilities awarded to County Councils required greater legislative provision, particularly with regard to planning functions, which would enable successful implementation. As such the desires of private landowners and the responsibilities of the County Council were often in opposition. With control of more rigorous and expansive planning functions in the post-war period, implemented through the County Development Plan, local authorities could impose restrictions upon development and more easily create opportunities for the execution of its own proposals for local planning policy, housing development, education provision and social welfare care. This was further enabled through the depressed price of land and the imposition of a charge on permitted development within the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947, which significantly suppressed private development. Finally, compulsory purchase powers offered the greatest opportunity to secure land and property and were often used to threaten country house owners who either did not wish to sell or who considered that the Council's value for their property was less than they could achieve on the open market.

At Ossington, however, the demands of W.M.E. Denison in securing the preservation of amenity land, both for recreational enjoyment and economic stability, did not conflict with any other state desires for the property. Thus, whilst the state presented various options, Denison retained the authority as landowner to accept or reject as he saw fit. Ironically, Denison's refusal to consider "borstal boys or lunatics" contributed to the eventual demolition of the property, whereas the County Council's purchase of other estate houses

largely ensured their maintenance throughout the period of study considered within the thesis.<sup>3</sup>

Histories of the twentieth century country house have largely focused upon the demolition and loss of nationally important architecture. Commentators have argued that such destruction was not prevented by the central and local state due to weak preservation policy, inadequate financial support and insufficient political will (Strong et al 1974; Cornforth 1974; Cornforth 1998; Worsley 2002; Harris 1998; 2002). Whilst accepting that a large number of country houses were indeed lost, especially during the second half of the last century, this thesis has demonstrated the opportunities which country houses and their parklands offered to local authorities, nationalised industries and private companies (Girouard 1974; Strong et al 1974). The thesis argues that country houses were important sites at which local authorities fulfilled their expanded responsibilities acquired within a modernising national agenda. Whilst there has been increasing interest in twentieth century histories of the country house and landowners, these have remained national in focus (Mandler 1997a; Cannadine 1990; Clemenson 1982; Beard 1989; Cornforth 1998). Such studies have not, therefore, considered in significant depth the preservation and use of country houses from a local perspective. This is regarded as especially important because it is often the national and local state which have been most criticised for the destruction of country houses within England (Harris 1998; Sherborn 2003). In order to achieve this, the thesis has focused upon the administrative county of Nottinghamshire, with detailed attention to the County Council and the formal and informal

relationship it held with other local authorities, Ministerial departments and amenity and preservation groups.

The English country house during the twentieth century has received little attention within cultural and historical geography (c.f. Clemenson 1982). However, research on estates during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have significantly informed the approach progressed within this thesis. This has especially been evident in understanding how landowners exerted authority and control through the design of their country houses and parklands. These have been compared with modern twentieth century plans, and the thesis has demonstrated the extent to which the County Council preserved and mirrored earlier modes of landscape organisation.

Further to this, greater interest within cultural geography has been given to understanding modernity in Britain during the twentieth century and this thesis makes links to this literature (Short et al 2003; Matless et al 2003; Matless 1998; Nash 2000). Matless (1998:222), for example, discusses the planner, Thomas Sharp's, design of 1940 for a modern block of flats within a country house parkland – "Corbusierian structures in a Brownian landscape". This was announced as a democratising vision which enabled many to share in a parkland view which only one family once enjoyed. This was clearly mirrored at Bramcote Hills, Eaton Hall and Ordsall Hall where the functionality of modern design and the attractiveness of a parkland landscape was considered by the County Council as encouraging a productive education

environment. In these examples the modern was incorporated successfully within a traditional, designed landscape.

In such examples, however, the amenity of the landscape principally focused upon the functionality of the country house and its immediate parkland. In contrast, the state gave greater consideration when making decisions in support of preservation and aesthetics. At Rufford Abbey it was widely accepted that any new use for the property would be welcome, with no concern for any modern additions should these be deemed necessary during adaptation by the new owner. However, in considering the aesthetic qualities of the Abbey within its parkland setting, once it was accepted that the Abbey would indeed be partially demolished there was very careful consideration of its future appearance. Firstly, the complete levelling of the Abbey leaving solely the undercroft, its surrounding walls and flat roof was considered by the Ministry of Works and the County Council as being unsuitable in the landscape. The final approach, as illustrated in figure 7.1, was to present the Abbey as a noble ruin.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, the County Council made efforts to use and secure the future of other features including the coach house, orangery, stables and west gates. Finally, the Council considered that any additional development should reflect the architecture of the Abbey. In proposals for the demolition, the Clerk of the Council requested the County Architect to devise a scheme which considered, “the erection, using material from the building, of a pavilion in character with the existing building”.<sup>5</sup>

Despite changes in the ownership and use of country houses in Nottinghamshire during the period of study it is worth remembering that, by 1967 at least 36% (maximum of 51%) remained in private residential ownership. Some were new owners but many were families who had survived the various pressures discussed within the thesis and elsewhere (Cannadine 1990; Mandler 1997a). Predominantly these were those tied to agricultural incomes, especially east of Nottingham and many still remain as discussed in the final section.

### **The Nottinghamshire country house today: a legacy of the past**

The legacy of positive modern uses for estate space during the mid-twentieth century is in evidence within the estate landscape of today. Since 1967 continued re-evaluation as to the importance of the historic environment, new residential and institutional requirements and market factors have all impacted upon the opportunities and financial viability of adapting and maintaining country houses.

Since 1967, rural planning demands and requirements have changed markedly. The acceptance of environmental considerations has given rise to the conservation of species and habitats. Development pressures within rural areas have never gone away, but recent changes in planning guidance have withdrawn solely protectionist claims replacing them with an agenda that promotes careful management and an acceptance of the need for closely supervised change. For example, restrictions on rural development had prevented the construction of many new country houses. Those that have

been permitted within the last forty years have confirmed to a well-established and accepted Georgian model. A recent government policy statement, however, has considered that this should be broadened in order to accept new forms of country house architecture which will challenge established design ideals and arrangements.

In Nottinghamshire new programmes of estate architecture have been rare although one recent example includes the latest Thoresby Hall. Built in a Palladian style, the fourth hall to be built within the estate, is now the home of the descendents of the Manvers of Thoresby Hall. The Victorian Thoresby was sold to the National Coal Board, and although threatened with demolition as a result of subsidence concerns, it has now become a successful hotel. Like many estate houses threatened in the late twentieth century huge support for the preservation of the property developed and was chiefly orchestrated by the SAVE Britain's Heritage campaign. The Manvers family retained the estate and the new house is now the central focus of a twenty first century estate landscape.

There are other examples in Nottinghamshire where the private family ownership of a country house and parkland has successfully been maintained. The extensive list includes the Hildyards of Flintham Hall, the Stauntons of Staunton Hall, the Buchanans (formerly Mellish) of Hodsock Priory, the Chaworth Musters of Felley Priory (formerly of Annesley Hall), the Vere-Lauries of Carlton (on-Trent) Hall and the Starkeys of Norwood Park. As with many estate houses which have remained in private ownership

opportunities for securing other incomes from the estate have been explored. Many of these estates remained economically stable during the mid-twentieth century and thereby highly private. Only most recently have owners accepted the economic necessity of such enterprises and harnessed public demand for estate visiting and special events. Hodsock opens its gardens during February and March every year with its snowdrops proving a highly popular local attraction. Other owners have opened up their houses for inspection by arrangement and furthermore cater for organised events including conference and wedding receptions.<sup>6</sup>

Elsewhere estate land has been maintained at the expense of the principal estate house. The Foljambes sold Osberton Hall and successfully held on to the estate, and the Masons demolished Morton Hall and rebuilt a new house upon the site. Such intentions for retaining estate land at the expense of the principal house were initially witnessed at Ossington Hall, as discussed in chapter 5. In addition Winkburn Hall has been heralded as the success story of the County. Originally sold out of familial ownership in the 1930s and threatened with demolition, in the late 1970s it was repurchased by the Craven-Smith-Milnes family. Although in a state of disrepair it has been carefully restored and is now once again a private home at the centre of an established agricultural business estate.

In comparison, however, some Nottinghamshire country houses are still considered as under threat of demolition. Whilst many new uses have enabled the successful maintenance of properties, changing social and economic

demands have resulted in some functions now being redundant. A problem therefore exists concerning the need to achieve new and imaginative uses for houses that were formerly institutions. Firstly, whilst modern development was viewed as harmonious with country house architecture and designed parkland landscapes in the establishment of institutional uses, this is not equally true in considering opportunities for the re-conversion of institutions back to estate houses. The aesthetic judgments made of estate houses are not reflected within opinions of CLASP structures. Secondly, continued institutional use of a country house since the mid-twentieth century, whilst ensuring its preservation, has not necessarily guaranteed expert maintenance, in part owing to the restrictive funding of charitable organisations and the state. Following the adaptation of many country houses, as recorded in 1967, and their subsequent maintenance, real challenges exist for the successful preservation of these properties should specific institutional requirements change. As discussed below this is beginning to be experienced within Nottinghamshire.

In 2005, Nottinghamshire County Council published for the first time their *Buildings At Risk* register. Updated annually since the 1980s, the County Council, in association with English Heritage, have continued to monitor listed monuments and buildings within the County. Publicly available in printed and digital form, the document represents the County Council's commitment to ensuring the preservation of the historic environment and serves, it is claimed, to facilitate the process by which new uses are found for redundant buildings. The approach of the County Council is to monitor,

advise upon and promote the local historic environment without – as was the case during the period considered by this thesis - being drawn into questions of ownership. Principally the responsibilities of the County Council focus upon the maintenance of the Historic Environment Record (HER) and the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) which contains historic and cartographic data for listed buildings and scheduled sites within the County.

Following its peak in the immediate post-war period, the Council's estate holdings have subsequently diminished, or have certainly become less pronounced, as the direct responsibilities of local authorities have declined, being replaced by external contractors and tenders. Estate houses have, in some instances, maintained similar uses, albeit now transferred to the private sector. Edwinstowe Hall, for example, is now a private children's nursery school and Ramsdale Park was sold to a private company specialising in the provision of care of mentally ill children. The CLASP extensions built by the County Council in the post-war period at both premises continued to be used as essential care, recreation and accommodation space.

Largely the institutional use of estates during the mid-twentieth century has ensured their maintenance up until the present day. Despite this there have been some casualties. Ramsdale Park, having been vacant for a number of years, was demolished in 2004, as can be seen in figure 7.2. The house became increasingly unsuitable and expensive to maintain and the company owning the site now wish to construct a purpose built specialist institution, but as yet the site remains vacant.



**Figure 7.2:** The south-east elevation of Ramsdale Park during demolition in 2004.<sup>7</sup>

Ramsdale was never listed, but elsewhere some estate houses considered as of importance and which were converted for institutional purposes, appear on the *Buildings at Risk* register. These include Epperstone Hall, which until last year was still retained by the County Police as a training facility. Originally purchased as the County Headquarters this function ceased when the local forces amalgamated and set up a new control office on the site of the demolished Sherwood Lodge in the late 1970s. A detailed planning brief for the property was commissioned and it is believed that developers were interested in converting the property to flats, however it remains unsold and empty. Others include Hempshill Hall, Berry Hill Hall and Ollerton Hall, all of which were used for institutional purposes during the post-war period. Newark and Sherwood District Council purchased the latter for £1 from the

Sue Ryder nursing home group. The property has remained vacant for a number of years and is in an increasingly dangerous state of repair. The Council recommended that with no use for the Hall it should be released with a number of expressions of interest currently being considered.

With reference to the case studies presented within this thesis, Eaton Hall has been added to the *Register* for the first time. Following its closure as a teacher training college, it reopened as a private conference venue before becoming an Islamic secondary boarding school. The extensive site, including post-war additions and redundant former glass houses to the north are beyond the use of the school. The Hall itself, just as when it was a training college, now provides private accommodation for staff members. A combination of years of over use and a lack of specialist care have now caught up with the property as stated within the Register.

Serious maintenance issues such as damp to ground floor level and rotten and broken windows haven't been tackled yet. One to watch (Nottinghamshire County Council 2005).

Despite this, there have been more positive developments elsewhere with some threatened properties being removed from the register. Both Clifton Hall and Colwick Hall, houses extensively remodelled by John Carr, had been empty for a number of years before being sold to developers. Clifton was divided into expensive flats following the removal of all the unnecessary CLASP additions. This provides the most significant example where a

country house converted to institutional use, covering fifty years, has successfully been returned to private residential use. Colwick Hall is located at the end of a bleak road that navigates around the perimeter of Nottingham Racecourse and has now become a premier restaurant within the county. Figures 7.3 and 7.4 demonstrate the recent changes at this country house.



**Figure 7.3:** North-west elevation of Colwick Hall in 2001 prior to its sale to a local developer.<sup>8</sup>

Taste for country houses and the emergence of new demands in the twenty first century have continued to contribute to the preservation of country house architecture, even following the recent redundancy of some modern state uses established during the mid-twentieth century.



**Figure 7.4:** North-west elevation of Colwick Hall following renovation.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> All photographs by author taken between 2001 and 2005.

<sup>2</sup> As within chapter 4 figures represent the maximum percentages for private residential ownership. It is considered that most of the country houses where ownership details were unknown were most likely to have been residential.

<sup>3</sup> NA HLG 126/582. Letter from Denison to Mrs. .M. Phillips (Secretary of the Historic Buildings Council for England). 20 November 1959.

<sup>4</sup> NA WORK 14/3148. Letter from David Nye (SPAB) to A.R. Davis (Clerk of Nottinghamshire County Council) 30 June 1954.

<sup>5</sup> NAO CC/CL1/MC01 R1/Vol1. Letter from the Clerk of the Council to the County Architect. 5 March 1952.

<sup>6</sup> These include Norwood Park, Thrumpton Hall, Sutton Bonington Hall, Holme Pierrepont Hall and Carlton (on-Trent) Hall. Newstead Abbey, owned by Nottingham City Council, also caters for civil ceremonies and receptions.

<sup>7</sup> Photograph by author.

<sup>8</sup> Photograph by author.

<sup>9</sup> [www.colwick-hall.co.uk](http://www.colwick-hall.co.uk). Accessed September 2005.

# Appendix one

The Ministry of Town and Country Planning submitted the first statutory list of buildings of architectural or historic importance to Nottinghamshire County Council in June 1951. Below is the full provisional list covered by statutory protection for the Rural Districts within Nottinghamshire. (NAO CC/CL1/PG01).

## **Municipal Borough of Worksop**

Worksop  
Priory Gatehouse

## **Rural District of Newark**

Barnby in the Willows  
Dovecote  
Coddington  
Old Manor Farmhouse  
and Dovecote new  
cottage  
Windmill  
Elston  
Old Chapel  
The Hall  
Holme  
Village Cross  
Langford  
Manor House  
North Collingham  
Village Cross  
South Scarle  
Old Parsonage  
Old Dovecote  
Staunton  
Staunton Hall  
Winthorpe  
Village Cross

## **Rural District of Bingham**

Bingham  
Rectory  
Car Colston  
Boursell Hall  
Thoroton's House  
Colston Hall  
Colston Bassett  
Colston Basset Market  
Cross  
Brunsell Hall  
The Hall  
East Bridgeford  
Manor House  
Elton  
The Manor House  
Manor House  
Holme Pierrepont  
Hall  
Langer-cum-Barnstone  
The Rectory  
Orston  
Village Cross  
Scarrington  
Dovecote at the Manor  
House  
Manor House  
Sibthorpe  
Old Dovecote  
Thurgarton  
Dovecote near Hall  
Upper Broughton  
Village Cross

Wiverton Hall  
Ancient Gatehouse  
The Hall

### **Rural District of Basford**

Annesley  
Hall  
Barton-in-Fabis  
Dovecote  
Bradmore  
Radcliffe Farmhouse  
Rebdale Farmhouse  
Brinsley  
Brinsley Hall  
Bunny  
Bunny Hall including  
barn and outbuildings  
The Old School  
Building  
Rancliffe Arms  
Clifton-with-Glapton  
Clifton Hall including  
Lodge  
Old School and  
Almshouses  
Dovecote  
Cossail  
Willoughby  
Almshouses  
Costock  
Hall Farmhouse  
Manor House  
East Leake  
Globe Farmhouse  
Post Office  
Felley  
Felley Abbey  
Greasley  
Castle Farmhouse and  
outbuildings  
Beauvale Priory (ruins)  
Lamb Close House  
Watnall Hall  
Hall Farmhouse  
Kingston-on-Soar  
Manor House

Linby  
Village Cross  
The Watermill  
Newstead  
Newstead Abbey  
Nottingham  
Shire Hall  
Papplewick  
Papplewick Hall  
Selston  
Hall Farmhouse  
Stanford-on-Soar  
Stanford Hall  
Strelley  
Hall  
Sutton Bonington  
Hobgoblin Farmhouse  
Repton Grange  
Thrumpton  
Hall  
Willoughby-on-the-Wolds  
Cottage and Farmhouse  
south of Church (Old  
Manor House)

### **Rural District of Southwell**

Bilsthorpe  
Old Hall remains  
Caunton  
Manor House  
Edwinstowe  
Edwinstowe Hall  
Fiskerton-cum-Morton  
Watermill  
Gonalston  
Manor Farmhouse  
Old Rectory  
Halloughton  
Manor Farm  
Kelham  
Bridge  
Kirton  
Home Farmhouse  
Lowdham  
Lowdham Old Hall  
North Muskham

Village Cross and  
Stocks  
Ollerton  
Hop Pole Hotel  
Southwell  
Many including  
Brackenhurst Hall  
Upton  
Hall  
Winkburn  
Hall  
Old School house

### **Rural District of Worksop**

Blyth  
Bridge  
Hall  
Old School  
Rose Cottage  
Old Vicarage  
Serlby Hall  
Hodsock  
Gatehouse to Priory  
Welbeck  
Welbeck Abbey  
Welbeck Abbey  
outbuildings

### **Rural District of East Retford**

Askham  
Almshouses  
Babworth  
Hall  
Rectory  
Barnby Moor  
Bell Hotel  
Clayworth  
Manor House  
Darlton  
Kingshaugh  
East Markham  
East Markham Hall  
The Manor House  
Rectory  
Elkesley  
West Bridge

Finningley  
Horse and Stag Inn  
Gamston  
Old Manor House  
Gringley-on-the-Hill  
Village Cross  
Grove  
Hall  
Haughton  
Ruined chapel  
Hall farmhouse  
Mattesley  
Bridge  
Priory  
Misson  
Windmill  
North Leverton with  
Hubblesthorpe  
North Leverton  
Windmill  
North Wheatley  
Manor Farmhouse or  
Hall (including  
Dovecote and Barn)  
Old Hall  
Ragnall  
Ragnall Hall  
Rampton  
The Hall Gateway  
Scrooby  
Brewster's House  
Manor House  
Farmhouse  
South Leverton  
Priory House  
Tuxford  
J.W. Martin, Grocer,  
Eldon Street  
Mail Hotel  
Old Grammar School  
Newcastle Arms Hotel  
Tuxford Hall  
Chantry House  
West Drayton  
Merriel Bridge

# Sources

## Archive, photographic and documentary reference abbreviations

### *Archive office*

DA	Doncaster Archives
NA	National Archives (formers Public Records Office)
NAO	Nottinghamshire Archives and Southwell Diocesan Record Office
NBR	National Buildings Record (now National Monuments Record)
NUMD	University of Nottingham, Manuscripts Department
P RIS	Private, Robert Innes-Smith
PNP	Picture the Past (photographic archive for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire; <a href="http://www.picturethepast.org.uk">www.picturethepast.org.uk</a> )
TSM GT	Taylor, Simpson and Mosley of Derby (Solicitors to the Drury-Lowe family of Locko Park), Gregory Trust papers

### *National Archives Ministerial file references (used in addition to NA)*

AIR	Air Ministry
ED	Ministry of Education
COAL	National Coal Board
FO	Foreign Office
HLG	Ministry of Housing and Local Government (absorbed files of Ministry of Town and Country Planning)
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture (and derivatives)
T	Treasury
WO	War Office
WORK	Ministry of Works (and derivatives)

### *Other footnote abbreviations; employment and affiliation*

CPRE	Council for the Preservation of Rural England
HBC	The Historic Buildings Council for England
IAM	Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments
MHLG	Ministry of Housing and Local Government
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoW	Ministry of Works
MTCP	Ministry of Town and Country Planning
NCB	National Coal Board
NCC	Nottinghamshire County Council (never Nottingham Corporation)
SPAB	Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings

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ODNB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. Oxford University Press
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