



Lancashire Gardens Trust

HULTON PARK, WESTHOUGHTON

Statement of Significance

This Statement of Significance has been prepared by Lancashire Gardens Trust in January 2017 in view of the impending submission of a major planning application for development at Hulton Park, Westhoughton, BOLTON.

The criteria for assessing the significance of Historic Designed Landscapes have been devised by The Gardens Trust with reference to the Conservation Principles written by Historic England. Reference is made also to the *Planning System in England and the Protection of Historic Parks and Gardens*, published by The Gardens Trust, 2016.

Four categories of significance are used:

Evidential value – physical remains; archaeology (below-ground remains); documentary evidence. Included here are intactness or survival, age, and species or habitat value.

Aesthetic value – design, style, materials, planting features, sensory response.

Historical value – illustrative links with the past, local connections and distinctiveness;

- Associative links with a famous period or persons, designer or society.

Communal value – the meaning of a place to the people who relate to it.

EVIDENTIAL VALUE

a) Physical remains.

The essential structure of the park is little changed since the first detailed plan of 1772.ⁱ The approach from the east, the tree belts which provide privacy, the grouped plantations arranged among pasture, the winding stream and two curving lakes, all survive intact. High significance.

b) Archaeology.

A rich layer of industrial heritage lies below ground, connected to the Hulton family's 400-year coal-mining activities. Former coal-pits are dotted throughout the park, their entrances sealed with concrete caps. The Ordnance Survey map, 1909, has been annotated to show the pits in work during that period, and was completed during studies by the Parish Clerks Online Project, researched by members of the Westhoughton Historical Societyⁱⁱ Some of these have been disguised by copses of trees and others which have flooded appear as ponds. There are remains of a mineral track crossing the southern part of the park which carried coal from Park End to the Bolton & Leigh railway, whose position is visible as a line of trees to the west of the parkⁱⁱⁱ. The rope-walk railway, by George Stephenson, pre-dated his Manchester to Liverpool line by 2 years^{iv}. High significance.

c) Species and Habitats

The several flashes and ponds support the Great Crested Newt, a European Protected Species. The woodland contains Sites of Biological Importance for native flora and fauna. (end note ix)

d) Documentary evidence.

When Lancashire Archives, Preston, purchased the Hulton Archive in 2015, an in-depth study was undertaken, and several documents reveal important new evidence about the park.

A plan in colour, pen and ink on paper, no scale, (early C19) is in the same style as some by Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown and bears two initials; these are in a different handwriting from the plan of 1808 prepared for John Webb. Webb is credited with the design of Hulton Park in the Historic England description ^v. This description, HE reference number 1001581, was written before the discovery of the Emes bill, transcribed below.

A layout plan, not dated, early C19, of the park and surrounding area shows the location and depth of pits, roads and railways used to haul coal ^{vi}.

A plan dated 1854, pen on paper, appears to show the park with at least 7 hatched areas of coal workings ^{vii}.

A scrap of paper circa 30 cm x 30 cm is an invoice addressed to William Hulton Esq. ^{viii}.

The following is the author’s transcript –

<i>William Hulton Esq.</i>	<i>Dr. to Wm. Emes</i>	<i>£ s d</i>
<i>To finishing the Pleasure Gardens agreeable to the estimate</i>		
<i>Del.d to Mr. Hulton, Sept 3rd 1763</i>		<i>72 14 0</i>
<i>To Extra work from Oct 23rd 1763, to Jan 7th 1764</i>		<i>7 0 1</i>
<i>To D^o. from March 5th to May 2nd 1764</i>		<i>2 1 3</i>
<i>To my foreman Raffolds attendance on business done by the day</i>		
<i>From Jan 2nd to Feb 21st 1764. 7 weeks at 10/-</i>		<i>6 6 0</i>
<i>To my foreman being kept in suspense by Mr Hulton</i>		
<i>From May 7th to June 2nd 1764. 4 weeks which I pay'd him for</i>		<i>3 12 0</i>
<i>June 1st 1764 To a Journey myself to Hulton Park</i>		<i>1 1 0</i>
<i>2nd 4th & 5th Taking a survey of the park and gardens and forming a rough plan</i>		<i>1 11 6</i>
<i>Sept 15th To a Journey to Hulton park & setting out clumps</i>		<i>1 1 0</i>
<i>To making a fair general design of the park & gardens</i>		<i>6 6 0</i>

	<i>£</i>	<i>101 13 6</i>
	<i>Revd. On acc.</i>	<i>74 0 0</i>

	<i>Due to self, Bolton</i>	<i>27 13 6</i>

The reverse states –

March 20th 1765 *Mr Hulton’s Bill. £ 27 – 13 – 6*

Recv.d then of Wm. Hulton Esq. the contents
In full of all Demands,

Wm. Emes

The significance of this document cannot be emphasised too greatly. It is a rare survivor in an archive of 100 large boxes and is one of the most important pieces of evidence one could have for an Historic Designed Landscape.

AESTHETIC VALUE

The design of this landscape is in the Picturesque style, also known as the English Landscape Park; this is considered to be England's major contribution to European art. It emerged in the first quarter of the C18 as a reaction against the stiff, geometrical style previously in fashion, notable examples of the latter being Levens Hall in the north and Hampton Court in the south. The most famous designer of the English Landscape Park was Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, gardener to King George III and designer of over 250 parks. His work was so skilful that we find it difficult to differentiate between his parks and natural countryside. The style's other name, Picturesque, underlines the aim to create a landscape which was as beautiful as a picture of the countryside.

The essential components are few: the house is set at the heart of undulating pasture; the boundaries are hidden by ribbons of trees, whilst the park is dotted with single trees and clumps, or copses, in curving shapes; there are usually one or two decorative buildings, such as a bridge, a summerhouse or a conservatory; a winding stream and lake were considered essential, so that paths for promenades could be created beside them. Hulton has all these. It also has the 'shrubbery walk,' a circuit within the Pleasure Grounds (within the sheep-fence, or 'haha') and it has the 'wild walk' which explores further, beyond the sheep fence and into the valley and woodland, through Mill Bank Plantation and on to Mill Dam, still a lovely lake. The walker would enjoy the light, open pasture before entering the shade of the wooded ravine, and then encounter the long lake as a surprise. Characters in Jane Austen's novels experienced these sensations.

Plantations are mostly made up of native, deciduous species such as oak, beech, field maple, ash, with some lime and horse-chestnut within the Pleasure Grounds. Any elm would have been lost to disease; exotic species occur in the walled garden – *Sequoiadendron giganteum* and *Cedrus deodar*. There is harmony and integrity in the groups of trees, which, although lacking management, could be re-invigorated with renewed planting. Their placement takes the eye around the open pasture, in and out of the copses and on to the ribbons of trees on the perimeter.

A Landscape Character Appraisal of Bolton ^{ix}, places great value on the remnant woodland in Hulton Park and emphasises the Sites of Biological Importance within it as wildlife assets; the Blackrod / Hulton Ridge within this zone of Agricultural Coal Measures is described as – *poor farmland having lost hedgerows but with remnant deciduous woodland (in three places including Hulton Park). Some of the largest remaining areas of open rural land in Bolton are located within this zone.*

In Bolton's Local Plan, 2011, in the section COMMUNITY AND LIVING, there is the possibility for Nominated Assets of Community Value and Listed Assets of Community Value. Hulton Park and its surrounding agricultural area qualifies for this status. Under Conservation, it is difficult to find Registered Parks and Gardens because they are subsumed under Listed Buildings.

HISTORICAL VALUE

a) Illustrative values have visible links with the past. The park retains its integrity as a landscape commissioned by a Hulton and maintained, unchanged, for its original purpose by each succeeding descendant of the same family, until the death of the last heir in 1993. This continuity gives it the highest significance in this category.

b) Associative values demonstrate links with famous people. It was known that the landscape designer John Webb came to work at Hulton in 1808 and that he may have built the new house, using the core of the old one. Plans in Bolton Archives show his designs for the house, stables and new plantations^x. Webb designed several parks in the north west, notably for Astley Hall and Heaton Hall; the ‘wild walk’ at Astley follows the river Chor along a well-contrived serpentine course and in spring-time is a delightful array of wood anemones, celandines and English bluebells.

In terms of famous personalities, an exciting development has emerged due to closer study of the Hulton Archive in 2015. The Bill (1765) from William Emes is a very rare document. It is from a landscape designer who has many well-known parks to his credit and may be considered ‘the northern Capability Brown’ because his designs are equally attractive and extensive. Emes (1729 – 1803) worked in the natural style, practising chiefly in the northern and midland counties and the Welsh borders (Powis Castle, Erddig and Hawkstone are among his sites). (op.cit.) An abstract from the MA thesis *The Life and Work of William Emes* is appended to this Statement, which emphasises the stature of Emes as a leading exponent of the English Landscape Park, and is written by P. Keely Davies.^{xi}

Webb was his foreman and then, after Emes’s death, continued the practice, returning to sites where he and Emes had worked together; the most interesting for us is Heaton Hall, Prestwich. Sir Thomas Egerton and his wife Eleanor were friends of William Hulton and his wife Anne; there is an entry in Sir Thomas’s diary *We rode over to Hulton Park and stayed*. The Emes landscape at Heaton was restored 8 years ago, and the buildings by James, Samuel and Lewis Wyatt repaired. Unfortunately, we cannot take Emes’s ‘wild walk’, through the old deer park and down to Blackfish Pond, because a golf course now covers it. One of Emes’s signature features is out of bounds to the heritage visitor.

Writing of south Lancashire in the Buildings of England series, Pevsner and his fellow authors state –
(*apart from Heaton Park*) *Hulton Park, Westhoughton, is the only other substantial park to survive.*^{xii}

The Emes provenance connects the two best north western parks, giving them group value and high significance.

The meaning of a place to those who relate to it.

Hulton Collieries were some of the most productive in Lancashire, and only recently land close to Hulton Park, Cutacre, was re-worked for open-cast mining. Many local residents had family members who worked in the coal-pits here, and remember with sorrow the Pretoria Pit explosion in 1910, when 344 men and boys lost their lives underground. The location was in the south-east corner of the park, and for the centenary in 2010 two polished granite tablets bearing all the names were placed at the entrance of the former pit.

The significance of this emotional link is high.

The Park was frequently used, with the permission of Sir Geoffrey Hulton, by Bolton scout groups for their activities, and a website displays many photos bearing appreciative comments by the scouts. The communal value of the park is high for these people.

APPENDIX 1

P. Keely Davies, 2015, *The Life work of William Emes*, University of Buckingham, thesis abstract.

COMPILED BY

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ⁱ *A Plan of the House and Demesne of Hulton Park, the Seat of Wm Hulton Esq, 1772*, Bolton Archives & Local Studies (BALS) BN/ZAL/379.

ⁱⁱ OS map 1909, annotated to show pit workings in Hulton Park, www.lan-opc.org.uk/Westhoughton/Pretoria.

ⁱⁱⁱ Greater Manchester Archaeology Unit, 1991, *M6-M61Link, Wigan, Hindley & Westhoughton*.

^{iv} L Basnett, 1953, *The History of the Bolton & Leigh Railway*, Transactions of the Lancashire & Cheshire Antiquarian Society, 62.

^v *Plan, pen on paper, coloured, no scale, early C19*, Lancashire Archives, DDHU/ACC8410/249.

^{vi} *Layout plan of Hulton Park and surrounding area, showing depth of pits, roads, railways and field boundaries, 6"* to 1 mile, Lancashire Archives DDHU/ACC9350/X42.

^{vii} *Layout, pen on paper, 1854*, Lancashire Archives DDHU/ACC9350/E48.

^{viii} *Bill from Wm Emes, landscape gardener*, Lancashire Archives, DDHU/42/25.

^{ix} *A Landscape Character Appraisal of Bolton*, Pub. Bolton BC, 2001 and adopted as a Supplementary Planning Guidance document.

^x Plan, 1808, *Rough Plan for Wm Hulton Esq Demesne Land in the township of Over Hulton, drawn for Mr Webb to lay out new Plantations*, BALS, BN/ZAL/373.

^{xi} P Keely Davies, 2015, *The Life and Work of William Emes*, MA thesis, University of Buckingham.

^{xii} Hartwell C, Hyde M and Pevsner N, 2004, *The Buildings of England, Lancashire: Manchester and the South East*.