# Baysgarth Park Tree Trail

**300 Years of Baysgarth Park Through The Most Important Trees**

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The following selection of 12 trees that are planted both individually and in groups chronicle how the land south of Baysgarth House expanded between approximately 1690 and 1970 to become the Baysgarth Park we know today. They also show how a number of different owners between circa 1700 and the present day have shaped the park through tree planting.

We have utilised a range of field work and desk-based investigation methods to do this. This has included taking girth measurements of the largest tree trunks for each species across the whole site, detailed scrutiny of aerial footage (both historical images held by Historic England and a recent drone survey carried out by 2B Consulting), We have also used LiDAR terrain and archaeological feature analysis, as well as an extended comparison between various editions of the Ordnance Survey map database, held within the National Library of Scotland, By combining these approaches we have been able to positively identify trees which relate to almost every owner from the Nelthorpe family onwards.

The results of this work are threefold. Firstly, used in conjunction with *"The Evolution of Baysgarth Park"* by Richard Clarke (2017), we now have a far more detailed picture of how the tree planting within the park came about. Baysgarth Park has had an unusually high number of planting phases (at least 11), several in rapid succession in the late 19th century. From an aesthetic viewpoint, the best results were seen in the 1940 to 1960 period when planting diversity and complexity was at its peak. Since then, the park has undergone substantial simplification,

Secondly, the history of both the tree planting, as well as the park generally, can be told through a relatively small sample of representative trees, either singly or as groups of trees. A trail or walk around these does not need to take an extended length of time.

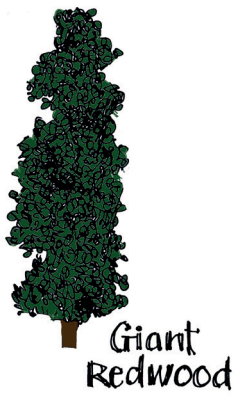
Thirdly, it is clear that the narrative of how the site developed can be substantially broadened. Future historical interpretation material could acknowledge the contribution of those who came between the Nelthorpe and Taylor families, as well as those who have managed the site since 1930. In particular, the contributions made by Mary Lunn (1861-83) and Hannah Embleton (1883-9) deserve highlighting. Mary Lunn was almost single-handedly responsible for converting the enclosure pasture into parkland, whilst having the foresight to integrate her new planting (albeit mainly the now lost conifers) with the historic trees. Hannah's chief contribution was creating what we may call the Jubilee Avenue in the centre of the park. Both are critical figures to the development of the upper park, which remains a work in progress.




**Tree 1** is one of Barton's finest beech trees and certainly the best example of an enclosure tree in Baysgarth Park. This is an early 19th century tree from approximately 1800. Common Beech (Fagus sylvatica) is not a native to this region. It was introduced into the landscape on both banks of the Humber between 1790 and 1830, primarily for use as a field boundary marker when the common land was enclosed by Act of Parliament, as occurred in Barton upon Humber in the 1790s. It is likely that this tree was planted by either William Graburn who purchased Baysgarth House in 1792 (just as the enclosure of land was gathering pace), or by Thomas Marris, who followed between 1806 to 1818. Both of the above transformed the former arable land to the south of the ancient park into enclosed pasture. There are pictures of grazing animals dating from the early 1920s which show this use continued for at least a further 100 years. By the time the estate was sold by Thomas Nicholson in 1825 the area of the lower park was around 14 acres, not far from its size today. A rolling programme of tree planting would have created a uniform appearance, with beech gradually becoming dominant over the horse chestnuts planted along the re-sited Brigg Road Turn-pike, as well as around the field elms which have long since disappeared. An 1854 Board of Ordnance map (unknown scale) and an 1886 Ordnance Survey map (1:2500) shows that boundary planting was prioritised over the creation of a park. The single trunk and great height of the canopy are due to the tree growing in the centre of a dense copse of trees located northwest of the house. This is recorded on almost all of the Ordnance Survey maps, most noticeably on the 1886 edition. Aerial images between 1934 and 1952 show tree planting so dense that the ground cannot be seen.




**Tree 2** is both the oldest Lime tree and the oldest tree in Baysgarth Park. It has not changed in appearance for almost 100 years. A postcard from the 1890s suggests that the tree was fully mature at least 30 years before the picture was taken. It appears on almost every Ordnance Survey map from 1886 onwards. We have calculated that it dates from the early 18th century, circa 1690 to 1720. It was therefore planted by either the 2nd or 3rd Baronet Nelthorpe, probably not long after the timber framed house had been rebuilt around 1685. European Lime (Tilia x europaea) can form as a naturally occurring cross between Small-Leaved Lime and Large-Leaved Lime trees which are both native to Britain. In the early 18th century, it was almost universally produced by grafting and often imported from the Netherlands as part of the booming North Sea trade between the Humber and Dutch ports such as Antwerp. This tree appears to have been grafted due to the large amount of swelling around the base that is substantially larger than the tree trunk above. Around Baysgarth House the oldest lime trees seem to have been used (or were inherited as part of long-lost hedgerows) as roadside markers. Looking southwest towards the lower car park, several lime trees mark the route of the old Brigg Road before it was moved westwards to its current position when it was made into a turn-pike in 1760. The lime trees, valley and gate pillars all align to suggest that the main road passed immediately east of Baysgarth House, which at the time Tree 1 was planted, would have been strategically located close to the centre of a busy junction with Whitecross Street. An extract from an 1835 Map included in the most recent Heritage Statement clearly shows this arrangement.




**Tree 3** is the only example of an ornamental evergreen conifer in Baysgarth Park. This is an early-mature example from the second half of the 19th century, planted approximately 1860 to 1870. Giant Redwood (Sequoiadendron giganteum) is not native to Britain or this region. It was introduced into the landscape from seeds collected in California by Patrick Matthew, a Scottish merchant, in 1853. This species became almost instantaneously popular with the Victorian public who were fascinated by pictures of its extreme dimensions. It soon became fashionable to plant it as a statement specimen tree in parks and gardens across the country, There are now more of these trees in the UK than in their native habitat. However, what does stand out is Tree 3's location. Study of aerial images from 1934 to 1948 shows dozens of conifers around the house and clustered between the old and new roads, but they do not reveal any other redwoods. Whilst the historic Ordnance Survey maps only show generic coniferous symbols, between 1886 and 1956 it is possible to identify this tree. On the earliest survey it does appear to have the company of other conifers, but from 1908 it stands alone. Since this tree is individually positioned so close to the house and given the rather narrow planting timeframe, it is tempting to suggest that the tree was planted as a memorial to someone of importance at the time. There are two credible explanations; firstly, in the 1860s the owner was Mary Lunn, whose husband John had recently died (1861) after purchasing Baysgarth House in 1857/8. The tree may be a memorial to this recent loss. Equally plausible since the tree is also known as Welligtonia, is that it was planted in commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the death of the Duke of Wellington in 1852. Whoever it was planted for, it is a remarkable survivor. A series of postcards by Raphael Tuck and Sons Ltd. show that by 1920 many of the conifers were struggling with the cold winters in 1944 to 1947 pushing them into severe decline, yet Tree 3 could ultimately end up being the longest-lived tree in the park and town.




**Tree 4** is the oldest complete Horse Chestnut in Baysgarth Park. It is a middle-to-late 18th century tree from around 1740-1780. Horse Chestnut (Aesculus hippocastanum) is not native to this region. It was introduced into the landscape from Greece at the very end of the 16th and early 17th centuries, between 1596 and 1616. Primarily used as an ornamental tree, it was a popular choice for creating driveway avenues, as well as for planting in small groups to form picturesque backdrops from circa 1660. We know that trees planted in the earlier period did exist at Baysgarth House until quite recently as the remnant trunks can still be seen as valuable wildlife habitat in the children's playground. It is likely that this particular tree was planted during either the later years of the widow of the 5th Baronet's administration of the Baysgarth estate (between 1746 and 1768), or by Sir John Nelthorpe (6th Baronet) between 1768 and 1792. We cannot see any aging features such as a hollowing trunk or dead-wood in the tree crown, but a postcard image from the early 1900s shows T4 in the background and it was not significantly smaller than we see it today. The lack of physical growth is probably due to the same photograph also showing how several new trees were being planted closely around it which would have restricted the amount of light to the tree and space to grow. This tree and other horse chestnuts nearby which are a similar size form a quarter to half-circle arcing to the south west on the 1886 Ordnance Survey map (extract shown below). This is definitely a deliberate arrangement which

strongly indicates a historic boundary or ride around the emparked land attached to the House before enclosure of the common field (which the drive to the Leisure Centre now runs across) in the 1810s.




**Tree 5** is by far the largest group of trees in the park. It aligns with the former boundary with the post-enclosure Eastfield allotments, as well as on a smaller scale, framing the historic Horse Chestnut (T4 in the trail). It consists of more than 60 middle-aged trees planted in two avenues. These are arranged at a right angle to each other at the base to form an "L" which is immediately east of Tree 4. One avenue is formed of 27 Hybrid Black Poplar trees and extends east to west, another of 25 Common Lime trees extends north to south. As the individual trees are not very large, it would be easy to dismiss these trees as being only recently planted. This would be a mistake! We know that trees in avenues grow far slower than trees grown individually or in smaller groups. As the lime trees are very closely planted their roots have always had very little space to grow. Aerial pictures from 1946 to 1948 clearly show that the lime trees were more-or-less the same height as we see today. Given the time it would have taken for the trees to reach this height, we calculate that they would have been around 40 to 50 years old at the time the photographs were taken. When the average trunk girths are adjusted to take into account the restricted availability of moisture and light, the planting date moves to around 1880 to 1890 when Hannah Embleton briefly owned the estate from 1883 to 1889. Further research of Ordnance Survey maps shows neither of the avenues appear in the 1886 edition, but by the 1905/1906 update, a quadruple avenue runs east to west to Caistor Road. By 1968 this had been reduced to three lines of trees, with the northern-most row taken out. Today the Poplar Avenue has only two broadly spaced rows of trees. The poplar trees are not the original trees as they date from the early 1980s, making them between 40 and 50 years old. They are replacements for the four rows of elms seen in the aerial images that were removed because of Dutch Elm Disease in the 1960 and 1970s. Sometime between 1920 and 1940 an extension of Common Lime was planted, possibly by Barton UDC. Strangely, the two very large Eastern Cottonwood trees next to Caistor Road. never appear in any maps until 1968, but photographs suggest they pre-date even the Elm Avenue. The purpose of the avenue is most likely to be a celebration of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee (1887), with the 'L' symbolising 50 years reign. It may subsequently have been added to a decade later in 1897 for her Diamond Jubilee.




**Tree 6** is the only tree which has been significantly reduced. The canopy is now only 1/10th the size seen in aerial images from 80 years ago. We do not know exactly how the tree came to be so much smaller, but using the trunk girth to calculate the trees age, we know this is a mid-19th century tree from around 1840 to 1860. It is a Sycamore (Acer pseudoplatanus), another species that is not a native to this region. Sycamores were once thought to have been introduced by the Romans, but recent research suggests that their introduction into the British landscape was not until the 16th or 17th centuries. It is likely that Tree 6 was planted by John Preston who purchased Baysgarth House in 1825 from Thomas Nicholson. It appears that Mr Preston also brought the last remaining arable field into the surrounding pasture which now extended from Brigg Road to Baysgarth House. It is possible to determine that this field was the

last to be converted as the rigg and furrow surface texture can be seen with the naked eye, but is really most clearly seen by using LiDAR. In addition, there are no trees older than middle-aged within the plot, except those close to the roadside boundary. Even these are at least 30 years younger than the beech planted further north, so it is possible to speculate that all of the trees around this corner of the park should be attributed to John Preston and William Graburn (between 1846 to 1857). Tree 6 formed part of new tree planting along a north-east facing fence-line which appears in the 1886 OS map but had disappeared by 1905. The whole estate was often in flux. For instance, John Preston appears to have claimed the stub of the former lane from the turn-pike to Whitecross Street as a private drive and then created an entirely new road (Preston Lane) in its place. Lastly, the current appearance of Tree 6 also reminds us of how the long-lost Field Elms would have looked. In 1895 a visitor remarked on the magnificent 200 year old elms alongside Brigg Road. A very basic map of the same year shows six large tree shapes, their historic presence confirmed with well-established root suckers. Tree 6 not only chronicles the expansion of the park south, but is also a window into the ancient landscape.




**Tree 7** is a middle-aged Silver Maple (Acer saccharinum) which is not a native species to this location. It was introduced to Britain from North America or south-eastern Canada in 1725. The tree is planted on land that was never part of the historic estate. The area now occupied by the playing field was formerly enclosure allotments allotted to Eastfield House. These were orientated east to west from Caistor Road. Several were purchased by Fred Hopper in the 1950s and subsequently sold to Barton U.D.C. shortly before the creation of Humberside County Council in 1974. Calculating the tree's age from the trunk girth with a US formula indicates it to be well over 150 years old. A Wild Cherry to the southwest is at least 100 years old, so perhaps these are the last remnants of some long-forgotten garden scheme on one of the former enclosure plots. It is impossible to pick Tree 7 out in any of the available aerial photographs from 1934 to 1948 which simply show hundreds of small canopies so dense that not a single individual tree stem can be seen in parts. The same problem with identification applies to practically every map, though the 1968 edition may show its general placement as this indicates that the surrounding trees have been heavily thinned or removed completely post-WW2. All editions of the Ordnance Survey maps are mis-leading, each plot filled with neat rows of symbols which show no correlation to the conditions on the ground. The plot which is east of the Leisure Centre and forms the connection to the upper park was similar in appearance until it was cleared as part of the redevelopment of the site in the early 1980s. Tree 7 illustrates that the park continued to expand after the local authority took ownership and how, under constant pressure to accommodate increased facilities and infrastructure, only the most resilient trees survive to tell their story in the development of the historic landscape.

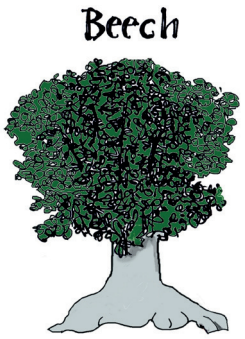



**Tree 8** is many visitors' favourite tree. Due to its massive size, it is often assumed to be over 250 years old and therefore easily the oldest tree. The tree has the appearance of a great old pollard (a tree with its top regularly cut off for firewood or to use in rural crafts), with many branches sitting on top of a great trunk like a wonderfully fluted column. This fantastic appearance is not the result of natural growth, but rather by design. It is not a single tree, but a collection or "bundle" of at least a dozen trees planted in the same hole, usually fastened together with a giant iron collar, chain or pin. This was a Victorian obsession with creating the biggest trees with the most extreme forms. It wasn't always successful, but this one is spectacular. It appears that the trees to the left and right also show unnatural growing habits, as if the beech trees have been deliberately manipulated, though the tree which is furthest south seems to have been untouched. Each tree deserves careful study. T8 is actually only a little over half the age that both the stem calculation and visitor perception suggests. The best clue to the tree being middle-aged is the great reach of the tree canopy which continues to expand, whereas a veteran or ancient beech canopy would have started shedding branches and have the outer edges dying back. Most of the older beeches in the park have hollowing stems and at least a few have signs of basal swelling caused by fungi inside the lower trunks. None of these features have been identified in this tree. Aerial photographs taken in 1946 and 1947 show the tree as being rather unremarkable in size compared to those alongside Brigg Road, or to the north-east of the house itself. In addition, neither this tree, nor any of its almost as impressive three sisters, appear on the 1886 Ordnance Survey six inch/1:2500 map. This suggests that even if they had been planted when the survey was undertaken in 1885, they were probably only around 10 years old at the time of the surveyor's visit. This would indicate that this is another tree planted by Mary Lunn in her relatively long ownership of the estate and whose significant contribution deserves more recognition. Its position has no relation to historic boundaries, roads or footpaths. While it is not possible to observe this tree from the house due to the Leisure Centre built in the 1980s, it was certainly planned to have been visible from the upstairs at least, a trick to extend the park into the open arable landscape beyond. Along with the other diagonal lines of Common Ash and Sycamores, it was planted purely for aesthetics, a role it now duly provides as a magnificent welcome to the upper park.




**Tree 9** is unusual within the Tree Trail for several reasons. Firstly, as a Common Ash (Fraxinus excelsior), it is the only example of a genuinely native species at this location. Secondly, it is difficult to age accurately, but in a way which is completely opposite to Tree Group 5. This time around, the tree's calculated age from trunk girth could be double its actual age. Trunk age conversion methods agree that the tree is just over 240 years old, but this is doubtful. Common Ash does not live so long, particularly when it is grown in the open. This is a maiden tree which shows no signs of ever being used for firewood or timber production, nor the basal disfigurement caused by cattle grazing as readily seen around the bases of the other ash trees. Tree 9 first appears on the 1906 Ordnance Survey map, suggesting planting or establishment not much earlier than the mid-late 1880s. Aerial images between 1934 and 1948 show it is not much larger than some nearby younger trees. Thirdly, regardless of Tree 9's chronological age, it is the only example with a full range of veteran

tree features. These are: a large diameter trunk, a hollowing trunk with large opening—in this case caused by the loss of the south-east facing co-dominant stem which previously made up a double canopy (as seen in the image from 1934) - an opening canopy and readily observable wood decay fungi. It therefore has a much higher ecological value than the more complete Common Ash nearby. Fourthly, it marks the estate's southern boundary no earlier than the 1860s and up to 1906 to 1907. It is approximately the mid-point of the pre-enclosure South Field. Now mature, it appears to stand at the south-eastern edge of a couple of acres of genuinely ancient parkland, with specimen trees casually dotted throughout. However, this is landscape theatre and deception. Despite the size differences, almost all of the mature ash, beech and sycamores were planted within the last years of the Victorian era. There is no trace of a pre or post-enclosure hedge separating this area from the deep rigg and furrow to the south from which the trees could naturally have arisen. Their placing is neither through evolution, nor random distribution. It is highly organised, verging on geometric. This designed layout can clearly be seen on the 1906 and 1908 OS map editions. The above maps, the 2B drone footage and Google Earth all show Tree 9 is the westerly point of a deliberately planted triangle of trees enclosed within the corner of the field formerly known as the Cow Park. By 1956 the fencing around these trees had long gone and the Cow Park planting had increasingly grown into the central tree line as the tree planting in the upper park became established.




**Tree 10** is a late-19th century Common Beech from approximately 1880 to 1900. Although the tree appears to be rather randomly sat in the middle of the upper park, it is the centre tree of three remaining beeches which indicate the locations of the former allotment strips that were created when the eastern portion of the South Field was enclosed. These strips were initially apportioned to different land owners, but were later permanent pasture purchased and consolidated into one parcel of land by either Hannah Embleton and/or Robert Wright Taylor. These trees were planted 20 to 30 years after the land to the north-west had been emparked and planted with specimen trees. This shows how the upper park was assembled and planted in stages. It is unlikely that all of the other trees (such as the Willow) are part of the original planting, but we can be certain that this tree is one of the central tree symbols in the line of trees running approximately north to south on the 1956 OS 1:10,000 map. This is the only block of planting within the upper park which runs in this direction and which has a regularity that is not seen in the other planting. The purpose for this is quite clear through the use of LiDAR (see below), as each tree aligns with the slightly elevated southern boundary of the now amalgamated six allotment plots which were orientated east to west from Caistor Road. Aerial imagery from 1947 in particular shows these trees to be both uniformly spaced and well established, being easily three to four times the size of the youngest trees along the park's south-eastern boundary. Further, the age difference between this tree and T1 indicates that after a period of approximately 50 years the planting of beech once again became common in the second half of the Victorian era, though the style and purpose of its use had been transformed. It was no longer required as a boundary marker, since practically all of the common land had been enclosed in the first half of the 19th century. Both Common and Copper Beech were increasingly used as an ornamental tree instead, being

a popular choice as a specimen garden tree in particular. Its use here was most likely as a combination of both old and new uses; to proclaim new ownership while providing landscape continuity with the beeches around the perimeter of the lower park




**Tree 11** relates to George Robert Marmaduke Stanbury Taylor who was born in 1895. He was the only son of Robert and Clara Taylor and was heir to Baysgarth House. Educated at Eton School and Trinity College, Cambridge he was commissioned into the Army as a Second Lieutenant, Royal Field Artillery in February 1915. On September 30 1917 a gas shell hit his dugout in the battle for Passchendaele. He died at 7pm the same day, aged just 22. In 1928 his mother died at their London home, followed on March 19 1929, by his father. By this time, Stanbury's sister, Ermyn was married and living in Norfolk. She gifted the house and adjoining parkland to Barton Urban District Council as a lasting memorial to both her parents and her brother in July 1930. This mixed group of Common Beech and Common Ash trees has been included in the Historic Tree Trail because it has an unusual composition in comparison to every other group of trees in the park, even the beech immediately to the west which superficially make up the other half of the small copse. These trees are middle-aged and have been calculated to be a little over one 100 years old. This has been confirmed by an aerial photograph from 1934 that shows the trees were already planted prior to the grounds of Baysgarth House becoming a public park, suggesting that they were planted around a decade after the end of the First World War. They have not been randomly distributed or naturally arranged, but almost regimentally placed in short lines, very similar in appearance to rows of military headstones. There are 18 trees that make up the group and LiDAR images appear to show the most prominent trees now form a large capital G or S. These trees are almost certainly the final private planting contribution to the park, but they may have even greater significance as a living memorial to Stanbury and the other Bartonians who did not return home.




**Tree 12**, The Redoubt Copse was planted by Barton Civic Society and other groups in March 2016. This project was spearheaded by Laurie Robinson and supported by sponsorship from many local organisations and businesses. It consists of 17 young English Oak trees in memory of each of the 17 Barton men who gave their lives on the last day of the Battle of Loos on October 13 1915. The Battle of Loos (Loos-en-Gohelle) in France was fought between September 25 and October 13 1915, By the end of the first day British forces had broken into the German positions who had occupied the higher ground. Unfortunately, the 12 attacking battalions suffered 8,000 casualties out of 10,000 men in just four hours of fighting on September 26 and they fell back to their starting positions. On October 13, 'E' Company 1st/5th Battalion Lincolnshire Regiment were part of a final attempt to capture the Hohenzollen Redoubt. The Redoubt was taken. However, the attacking troops were beset by misfortune, including having to advance through a cloud of poison gas from British shells which had settled over no-man's land and being ambushed by machine gun fire once they had reached the opposing trenches. Individual trees in the Copse have a small plate showing the name, rank and number of each of the Barton men who were part of the total number of 59,247 British casualties. These young oak trees are likely to have a lifespan of at least 300 years

and will hopefully remind many generations of visitors of the sacrifice and steadfastness of the Barton Company in The Great War.

Lance Corporal 3161 **William Herbert Barley**
Private 1514 **Henry Burgess**
Sergeant 1767 **Frederick William Clayton**
Private 2120 **Harry Clayton**
Private 3168 **George Clipson**
Private 1918 **Herbert Cook**
Private 3177 **John William Coupland**
Private 1920 **Fred Curtis**
Sergeant 1453 **Walker Dinsdale**
Lance Corporal 3190 **Albert Franklin**
Private 3191 **Edward Franklin**
Sergeant 1858 **George Gilfoy**
Private 3203 **Jonathon Thomas Jubb**
Private 2819 **Fred Nicholson**
Lance Corporal 1724 **Harry Seddon**
Corporal 545 **George William Thompson**
Lance Sergeant 1053 **George Tonks**