

# **ESHTON HALL, GARGRAVE North Yorkshire**



## **Desk Based Assessment**



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## SUMMARY

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Following a proposal by Dare Northern to convert Eshton Hall, Gargrave, North Yorkshire (SD 9382 5611) into residential apartments an archaeological desk-based assessment of the building was carried out in July 2002, as recommended by English Heritage in support of the planning application. Eshton Hall is a Grade II\* Listed Building. The desk-based assessment examined primary records relating to the hall held in the County Record Office (CRO) in Northallerton and the University of Leeds, as well as secondary sources in the local studies collection of Skipton Library.

A brief outline of the local archaeological and historical backgrounds, as well as the surrounding geology and topography, was produced, spanning the prehistoric period to the building of Eshton Hall. The Wilson family purchased the estate in the late seventeenth century and held it until the beginning of the twentieth century.

The hall was built between 1825 and 1827 by the Kendal-based architect George Webster, a pioneer of the Elizabethan and Tudor revival style and architect of some local standing, under the patronage of Mathew Wilson and Frances Richardson-Currer, who then owned the estate. It is known to have replaced an earlier, Georgian house, which possibly stood on the site of an even earlier house, and was famous for its huge library, created by Miss Richardson-Currer.

Mathew Wilson inherited the whole estate in 1861, and died in 1891. During this time he became an MP several times and was knighted in 1874; Eshton Hall was widely regarded as the most impressive home in the area, not only because of its architectural qualities but also because of its collection of fine art and antiquities. Following his death, however, the estate gradually collapsed, the Wilson family moved out of the hall and the lands were gradually sold off. The hall was subsequently used as a school, and most recently as a nursing home.

The hall itself is remarkably well preserved, the entrance hall, reception rooms and library, in particular, retain many original features, and the exterior has been largely untouched. There is some evidence in the courtyard to the rear that parts of the earlier building are still *in situ*, and it is likely that more survive elsewhere in the hall's fabric.

As part of the process of developing the hall it is recommended that a Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments (England) (RCHM(E)) Level II-type survey of the building be carried out, as well as a watching brief during any actual building work, to establish the condition and extent of the surviving fabric, and record any earlier fabric that may be exposed.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Oxford Archaeology North would like to thank the staff at Northallerton Record Office, the West Yorkshire SMR and Skipton Library for all their help and advice. Particular thanks are due to Malcolm Davies of Leeds University Brotherton Library Special Collection for his help and patience. Thanks are also due to Tony Stubbs for his original information on Eshton Hall, to Jim Brosnan, the current owner of the hall, for his helpfulness on site, and to Peter Lowe for his advice and references.

The desk-based assessment and site visit were carried out by Daniel Elsworth. The report was written by Daniel Elsworth and edited by Alison Plummer, who also managed the project.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1 Following a proposal by Dare Northern to convert Eshton Hall, Gargrave, North Yorkshire (SD 9382 5611), currently a private nursing home, into a number of residential apartments, English Heritage advised that an archaeological desk-based assessment of the building should be carried out. Eshton Hall is a Grade II\* Listed Building and so it was considered necessary to carry out the assessment in order to inform the planning process. In the absence of a written brief, Oxford Archaeology North (OAN) produced a project design based on similar projects (*Appendix 1*) undertaken in the North West. The assessment was carried out in July 2002.
- 1.1.2 The desk-based assessment concentrated on the development of the hall itself, with a limited amount of background information outlining the archaeology of the surrounding area. It consisted of a search of both published and secondary sources, held in the local studies collection at Skipton Library, original documents and maps, held on microfilm at the County Record Office (Northallerton), and the extensive Eshton Hall Archive, held in Leeds University Brotherton Library Special Collection. The Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) was briefly assessed but held no additional information to the Listed Building details (which had already been supplied by the client). Aerial photographs were also not consulted, as they were considered unlikely to add any further information.
- 1.1.3 A brief site visit was made to assess which parts of the hall were of particular architectural interest, and to compile a photographic record of them.
- 1.1.4 The results of the assessment are presented in the form of a short report outlining the findings, followed by a statement of the hall's archaeological potential, and the likely impact that the development will have on this.

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## 2. METHODOLOGY

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### 2.1 PROJECT DESIGN

2.1.1 A Project Design (*Appendix 1*) was submitted by OAN in response to a request by Dare Northern for an archaeological desk-based assessment of Eshton Hall prior to proposed conversion of the building into residential apartments. OAN was then commissioned by the client to undertake the work. The project design was adhered to in full, and the work was consistent with the relevant standards and procedures of the Institute of Field Archaeologists, and generally accepted best practice.

### 2.2 DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT

2.2.1 Several sources of information were consulted, in accordance with the project design. Only the hall itself was investigated in any detail, concentrating in particular on any known phases of alteration and development to the current building, and earlier buildings on the site.

2.2.2 *Sites and Monuments Record (SMR)*: a brief consultation with the SMR in Northallerton revealed that there was no further information available, other than the Listed Building details, which had already been supplied by the client. The Northallerton SMR is a database of all archaeological sites within the North Yorkshire area and is maintained by the County Council.

2.2.3 *County Record Office (CRO) (Northallerton)*: the County Record Office was visited primarily to consult any original documents relating to Eshton Hall, particularly the relevant maps. An investigation of historic maps is able to give an indication of the development of the landscape around the hall (map regression analysis), in addition to illustrating changes in the plan of the hall itself.

2.2.4 *Leeds University Brotherton Library Special Collection*: Leeds University acquired the Eshton Estate archive in 1976, and has held it in its Special Collection library ever since (University of Leeds 1978a; 1978b). It primarily consists of hand-written ledgers, daybooks and accounts, although there are several loose papers, letters, receipts and so forth included in the collection. Unfortunately there were no estate plans, architects plans, or other visual media within the archive, although references to the existence of such documents are made.

2.2.5 *North Yorkshire Library Service, Skipton*: numerous secondary sources were consulted, ranging from literature contemporary with the early life of Eshton Hall to more recent reports and research.

### 2.3 SITE VISIT

2.3.1 A preliminary site visit was carried out as part of the initial assessment. This was intended to identify areas of particular architectural interest and make a

photographic record of these. As the hall is currently in use, it was not feasible to examine the vast majority of the interior, which is currently occupied by private bedrooms and service areas, and so examination concentrated on the main public rooms at the front of the building and the exterior.

- 2.3.2 The hall is orientated lengthways, roughly north/south, with the entrance (front) to the east. For the purposes of this report the front elevation is east, and all other elevations are named accordingly.

## **2.4 ARCHIVE**

- 2.3.1 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with the project design (*Appendix 1*), and in accordance with current IFA and English Heritage guidelines (English Heritage 1991). The paper and digital archive will be deposited in the County Record Office (Northallerton) on completion of the project.



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## 3. BACKGROUND

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### 3.1 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 3.1.1 Eshton Hall lies on the east edge of the small village of Eshton, approximately 1.5km north of Gargrave and 5km north-west of Skipton (Fig 1). It is within the modern parish of Gargrave, in the historic West Riding of Yorkshire. It is situated within the former parkland of the Eshton estate, on a slight rise, at 130m OD, overlooking Eshton Beck.
- 3.1.2 The solid geology essentially consists of millstone grit, in alternating strata of grit and shale or mudstone (West Yorkshire Metropolitan Council 1981, 34). The overlying drift geology is made up of glacially derived boulder clays, which demonstrate that the ‘last interglacial period was marked by valley cutting and erosion’ (*op cit*, 36), with the majority of the more recent deposits being formed by alluvial activity (*ibid*). The topography is characteristic of the Yorkshire Dales, with walled meadows and small villages and farmsteads in the more sheltered areas giving way to sparse woodland, scree and fast flowing streams on the higher fells (Countryside Commission 1998, 77).

### 3.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.2.1 The more general historical background consists entirely of information from secondary sources. Direct references to Eshton Hall itself do not occur until the later medieval period at the earliest, and for this reason the historical background outlined prior to this point is very generalised, and incorporates the wider area around Eshton Hall.
- 3.2.2 **Prehistory:** although Yorkshire is famous for its cave sites, such as Victoria Cave and Kirkdale Cave, which have revealed evidence for the existence of animals such as the hyena, lion and hippopotamus during the previous interglacial period, the first human activity is more likely to date to around 10,000 years ago (Rawnsley and Singleton 1995). In West Yorkshire there is little evidence for activity this early, and it is difficult to establish to what extent ice covered the area at this time (West Yorkshire Metropolitan Council 1981, 75). By the Mesolithic period, however, especially the later Mesolithic, the level of activity increased dramatically (Rawnsley and Singleton 1995) and there was intensive settlement within Yorkshire, which is well represented in west Yorkshire (*op cit*, 75).
- 3.2.3 By the Neolithic the level of settlement is difficult to establish, the majority of the evidence consisting of single stray surface finds, with few structural or burial remains (West Yorkshire Metropolitan Council 1981, 90). There are, however, enough finds to suggest that activity was by no means minimal during this time, with finds of polished stone axes being particularly common (Rawnsley and Singleton 1995). Some of these are likely to have been found in the vicinity of Eshton Hall, as there were several on display at one point, which had been discovered ‘in the progress of draining works in the neighbourhood’, and added to the Hall’s collection (Anon 1885, np).

- 3.2.4 It is a similar story during the Bronze Age, although the number of monuments across Yorkshire increases in both number and size (the Devil's Arrows at Rudston for example, and the carved stones at Rombolds Moor) (Rawnsley and Singleton 1995; West Yorkshire Metropolitan Council 1981). Funerary remains also become more common, although these give only a limited insight into the nature of settlement activity at that time (West Yorkshire Metropolitan Council 1981, 100). Fragments of a funerary urn found in Airedale also used to be in the Eshton Hall collection, but were lost some time ago (Raistrick 1929, 362). During the Iron Age the area would have been under the control of the Brigantes, a loose confederation of tribes, which controlled most of Northern England (West Yorkshire Metropolitan Council 1981, 115). Unfortunately, 'apart from major earthworks such as the hill-forts... there is little positive evidence for the Iron Age in West Yorkshire' (*ibid*). Several small earthworks from the general area between Gargrave and Settle may be Iron Age in date, although this cannot be easily confirmed (Raistrick 1939, 126).
- 3.2.5 **Roman and Early Medieval:** compared to other parts of the country, and indeed the county, Roman West Yorkshire is not well understood (West Yorkshire Metropolitan Council 1981, 141). The Iron Age Brigantes were recognised by the advancing Romans as a client state, for a while, and allowed to act as a buffer to more hostile groups to the north (*ibid*). Forts and villas are known in West Yorkshire, and at Kirksinks near Gargrave a villa was excavated first in the 1760s (Allen 1831, 47) and then in 1912, when it was found to consist of several phases of building, destruction and rebuilding, dating from the second to the late fourth centuries (Radley 1970, 241). There is some evidence for a period of disturbance during the fourth century when wealthy landowners, possibly including those at Kirksinks villa, buried their wealth in underground hoards (Richmond 1924, 213). A bronze sword, thought to be Roman, was also found during quarrying in Flasby, and found its way into the Eshton Hall collection (Anon 1885, np).
- 3.2.6 Following the collapse of Roman authority several small kingdoms grew up across England, West Yorkshire being in the heart of the kingdom of Elmet (West Yorkshire Metropolitan Council 1981, 171). This was a time of continual political and military instability and Elmet was eventually swallowed up following the unification of the neighbouring Anglian kingdoms of Deira and Northumbria to the east (*ibid*). The place-name evidence suggests that Eshton has its origins during this time, coming from the Old English for 'farmstead by the ash trees' (Gambles 1995; Metcalfe 1992; Smith 1958), and was probably peripheral to early Scandinavian interests (West Yorkshire Metropolitan Council 1981, 187). The discovery of Anglian cross fragments at Gargrave (Parez 1893; Collingwood 1915) would suggest that there was indeed settlement here at that time, and the further discovery of 'Saxon' cross fragments near St Helen's Well to the north-west adds further evidence to this suggestion (Whitaker 1878, 240). The arrival of the Vikings proper probably had little impact in West Yorkshire until after AD 867, when Halfdan took York and redistributed the lands of Northumbria amongst his followers, but even then they appear to have lived side by side with their English neighbours (*op cit*, 203).

- 3.2.7 **Medieval:** the Norse administration most probably established the majority of the current county boundaries, and defined the east and west ridings following the capture of York. This became the chief city of the Danelaw (Rawnsley and Singleton 1995) and began to play a major part in the events that would shape the whole country. There were more than a dozen kings between 875 and 954 when Eric Bloodaxe lost the kingdom and it was absorbed back into England, although the evidence from York shows that life continued much as it always had (*ibid*). In 1066 King Harold controlled York, but life was far from peaceful; he was forced into open conflict with his brother Tostig, who had allied with Harald Hardrada, King of Norway, and only Harold's victory on the battlefield at Stamford Bridge brought the conflict to a conclusion (*ibid*). No sooner had he resolved this struggle, he was forced to face William, Duke of Normandy, who defeated him at Hastings and took control of the English Crown. Following the Norman Conquest, the north of England was in a state of constant rebellion and it took several years of military activity to bring it under control, the result of which was large areas of 'waste' being recorded in the Domesday Book (*ibid*). The village of Eshton is recorded in Domesday as 'Estune, Archil and Vetred had six carucates to be taxed' (Whitaker 1878, 230), and so must have been spared from the worst of the damage. New land divisions were established at this time, some based on earlier boundaries, and the area around Upper Airedale was controlled from Skipton by the Romilles (Rawnsley and Singleton 1995). In the relative peace of the following centuries agricultural land was improved and expanded, and large parts of the county came under the control of powerful abbeys, two of which, Fountains and Jervaulx, are within close proximity to Eshton (*ibid*) and are likely to have had an influence on the area.
- 3.2.8 The following centuries were a period of decline as not only did the plague devastate large areas, but Scottish raiding, which had begun in the twelfth century, intensified during the Wars of Independence from the late thirteenth century (*ibid*). These culminated in the great raid of 1322, which led to the looting of both Rievaulx and Bylands Abbey and widespread destruction (*ibid*). The fifteenth century saw further conflict with the War of the Roses (*ibid*) in which Yorkshire, inevitably, played a large part. It was the culmination of several personal and dynastic struggles, which came to a head at this time, and was not resolved until Henry Tudor took the Crown in 1485 (*ibid*). Several nobles lost seats and power at this time, which thinned their ranks considerably, reducing rivalry (*ibid*). The dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII further consolidated royal power and it was at this point that Eshton Hall was probably first established.
- 3.2.9 **History of Eshton Hall:** although Eshton was recorded in the Domesday Book (as Estune) and in the following centuries (Smith 1958), it is not clear when a hall was first created. The family of De Essheton is mentioned as early as 1186 (Anon 1885, np), although the Lordship had passed to Sir William de Rillestone by 1391 (Whitaker 1878, 238). A chapel is recorded as standing at the nearby St Helen's Well to the north-west in 1429 (*op cit*, 239; Anon 1885, np), and by 1450 Henry de Preston held the manor (*op cit*, 238; Cudworth 1895, 162). During the mid-sixteenth century the manor was held by the Morton family before passing to the Clifford family, Earls of Cumberland, late

in the sixteenth century (Langdale 1822; Whitaker 1878, 238; Anon 1885, np; Cudworth 1895, 162). In 1597 it was purchased by Robert Bindloss of Borwick Hall (Langdale 1822) before being purchased by John Wilson, a London merchant, in 1648 (*ibid*; Whitaker 1878, 238). The village of Eshton appears on several maps during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and was evidently a well-established settlement at this time (Rawnsley 1970). It seems likely that a hall also existed on the site, and Speight goes as far as to say that ‘It is a very ancient manor-house, dating back to Norman times’ (Speight 1895, 34), although it seems likely that he is referring to the manor itself, rather than the hall.

- 3.2.10 By the beginning of the eighteenth century the Wilson family were referred to as ‘of Eshton Hall’ (Burke’s Peerage Limited 1975, 2848). In 1798 there was a messuage (dwelling with land) and other belongings, plus 38 hectares of land and numerous farms (SCMS 417/34/4), to which 32 other pieces of property were added between 1761 and 1798 (SCMS 417/34/3). The hall passed through the hands of three Mathew Wilsons between 1717 and 1802 (Burke’s Peerage Limited 1975, 2848). The last of these, who was described by the agent of the Lord of Malham as ‘more disliked than ever I saw a man in my life’ (Raistrick 1967, 130), left no heir and the estate ended up shared between cousins Frances Mary Richardson-Currer and Mathew Wilson (Cudworth 1895, 163; Burke’s Peerage Limited 1975, 2848). The hall that existed at the turn of the nineteenth century was very different to the present one: ‘a large oblong building, utterly devoid of architectural ornamentation, the only relief to the blank walls and plain cut staring windows being a long narrow portico or porch over the principal entrance supported by four columns’ (Anon 1885, np), and warranted little description in contemporary guides (see Hargrove 1812, for example). This is illustrated by two prints in Whitaker (1878), presumably of the same building (Plates 1 and 2), although Cudworth suggests that Eshton Hall had already been rebuilt once by this point (1895, 163).
- 3.2.11 The building of the current hall began in 1825. On the 28<sup>th</sup> February Mathew Wilson recorded in his daybook: ‘stones delivered at Gargrave by John Midgely for rebuilding Eshton Hall’ (SCMS 417/7), and several more boatloads are recorded over the following months, as well as a boatload of brick, presumably all arriving at the warehouses on the canal (Gargrave Civic Society 2000, 51). The hall was designed by George Webster of Kendal (1797-1864), an architect of some renown whose classically inspired buildings became common throughout South Westmorland and the neighbouring areas of Northern England during the 1820s (Haworth and Taylor 1973). He appears to have been on familiar terms with Mathew Wilson (*ibid*), and in rebuilding Eshton Hall he created one of the earliest examples of the Jacobean revival style, which he pioneered (Colvin 1995, 875). Examples of Webster’s work include Rigmaden and Underley Halls, near Kirkby Lonsdale, Broughton Hall near Skipton, the Trustees Saving Bank in Ulverston, and the market hall in Kendal (*op cit*, 875-76).
- 3.2.12 Miss Richardson-Currer had her own unique impact on the development of the hall by assembling a huge library of historical and topographical works, housed in two large rooms on the south side of the building (Montagu 1838,

186; Anon 1885) (Plate 10). She was evidently closely involved in the design of the new hall, not only creating the library, but also adding fireplaces (Anon 1885). These were evidently also designed by Webster, as the ledger for 1828 to 1836 (SCMS 417/29) ‘under Miss Currer’s Payments’, states: ‘Feb 3<sup>rd</sup> 1831: Paid Mr Webster of Kendale the balance of his bill for Marble fireplaces, Marble Table, a slab...’ (Plate 9). Further work was carried out on the hall between 1835 and 1839, and, although it is not clear how extensive this was, it included ‘alterations at the back part of the house’, as well as the entrance ‘pillars and walls’, and work on the garden and roads (SCMS 417/15/10-11).

- 3.2.13 Mathew Wilson inherited the whole estate following Miss Currer’s death in 1861 (Burke’s Peerage Limited 1975, 2848), and went on to great things. Having already twice been an MP for Clitheroe between 1841 and 1853, he became MP for North Yorkshire (1874-85), and then Skipton (1885-86), and was knighted in 1874 (*ibid*). By the time he died in 1891 Eshton Hall had become a place famed for the beauty of its architecture and quality of its contents. Not only was there the vast library (although the majority of this was sold off shortly after Miss Richardson-Currer’s death (Cudworth 1895, 163), but a large collection of antiquities and paintings, including works by Rubens, Van Dyke, Rembrandt, and Turner, praised by many contemporary writers (Montagu 1838; Anon 1885; Speight 1895, 34). It was widely regarded during the nineteenth century as ‘the most beautiful hall of the district’ (Jackson 1891, 353). The Ordnance survey maps of the time, and the Tithe apportionment, show how the grounds also developed between 1841 and 1909 from a simple park to a complex estate with a rookery, ice house and pump, and that there were some minor alterations to the rear courtyard, although it is not clear exactly what (Figs 2-4) (Ordnance Survey 1853; 1896; 1909).
- 3.2.14 The death of the powerful and influential Sir Mathew Wilson in 1891 led to the demise of the fortunes of Eshton Hall. By the beginning of the twentieth century the family were no longer living there, having moved to the nearby Eshton House (Scott 1902, 162), although the family remained in the area (Burke’s Peerage Limited 1975, 2848). In 1910 the hall and estate were still referred to as owned by Mathew Wilson (NG/V), and it is not clear in any of the sources what the hall itself was used for at this time. Certainly, by the mid-twentieth century, it was being used as a school (Hartley and Ingilby 1956, 66), before becoming a nursing home during the 1970s (J Brosnan pers comm).

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## 4. SITE VISIT

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### 4.1 THE HALL

- 4.1.1 A brief site visit to the hall immediately following the desk-based assessment revealed several features of potential historical significance. As the building is still in use it was not practical to examine the majority of the rooms, particularly those on the first floor, which are almost entirely private bedrooms (Fig 6). The entrance hall, saloon/staircase, library and dining room were investigated and selected photographs were taken. The courtyard to the rear was also visited and further photographs were taken.
- 4.1.2 The five main front rooms of the entrance hall, main staircase, two library rooms, and dining room are in a remarkably good state of repair. The decorative pillars on the walls of the entrance hall, the bookcases in the library (Plate 10), the decorative plaster ceilings and cornices and the marble fire surrounds (Plate 9) are all still intact, as is the main staircase (Plate 5) and glass dome above. The adjoining rooms were not examined, but it was clear on the first floor that numerous modern partition walls had been added to form smaller bedrooms.
- 4.1.3 Externally there was little evident alteration to the building. The main block still retains all of its original features, the projecting porch, strapwork parapet and even the five-light windows (Plate 3). The service wing on the north side has also been left virtually untouched, with only minor cosmetic alterations visible (Plate 4). The courtyard to the rear is more revealing as some of the outbuildings have evidently been heavily modified, with several doorways being blocked, and parts being added at a later date (a blocked window on the east side has an outbuilding butting onto it). The north elevation of the main block, visible from the courtyard, has a very evident scar from a gable wall visible, with brick blocking what is probably a former flue (Plate 8). It is not clear whether this is a former gable, which has been extended into a taller, flat topped wall, or the mark from a gable roof that butted against this wall, although the stonework around it is of a very rough, non-ashlar, finish.
- 4.1.4 Although it was not possible to examine the cellars, there are apparently the remains of probable mullioned windows evident within them (J Brosnan pers comm). The roof structure, which was accessible in the service wing only, consists of a tie beam truss with a king post strapped to it. There are two purlins in each pitch, and the king post is trenched to meet inclined bracing struts and the principal rafters.

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## 5. DISCUSSION

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### 5.1 DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT

- 5.1.1 The description of the historical and archaeological background of the area outlines a relatively large amount of archaeological activity in the general area, most of which is not well understood but has the potential to reveal further information. There has certainly been a hall on the site since the eighteenth century, and there was possibly an earlier building before that, although it is presently impossible to discern what form it took. The second, eighteenth century hall, appears to have taken a very plain, Palladian form with little decoration. References to medieval Eshton demonstrate that there is also some potential for even earlier phases of activity, although not necessarily on this site.
- 5.1.2 The majority of development of the site took place in the mid-nineteenth century, when George Webster rebuilt the earlier hall in a pioneering mix of Elizabeth and Tudor revival styles. At this time the contents included an enormous library, several important works of art, a collection of antiquities, and extensive decorative features. The historical significance of the connections to the library collection and the architectural style make Eshton Hall an important building particularly locally, but also nationally.

### 5.2 SITE VISIT

- 5.2.1 If the generally good condition of the main reception rooms is any indication of the condition of the rest of the building, then its significance is further increased. It would be a remarkably well-preserved building of its period, especially given that it has been used for commercial purposes in recent years. Until full access to the rest of the building is available, it is impossible to comment further about the building as a whole.
- 5.2.2 The site visit revealed only one area where remains of an earlier building were evident. However, the large-scale of this one piece of evidence might suggest that other parts of an earlier building survive within the fabric of the current hall. It may, in fact, be the case that the ashlar stonework of the main hall block is simply cladding parts of an earlier building. The reference to possible mullioned windows in the cellar further suggests that the remains of an earlier building may be present within the fabric of the current hall.

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## 6. IMPACT

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### 6.1 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

- 6.1.1 As no precise details of the development proposal were available at the time of compiling the desk-based assessment, it is difficult to make an accurate assessment of the potential impact on the building. The plan of the hall (Figs 5 and 6), particularly the first floor, shows that the majority of the rooms are relatively small, having been bedrooms, many of which have probably also been sub-divided to make smaller rooms. However, on the ground floor there are several large reception and public rooms, which have not been divided and contain numerous original fixtures.
- 6.1.2 The conversion of Eshton Hall into individual residential apartments would inevitably have a major impact on the character and fabric of the building. It is probable that a significant amount of damage has already been done to the first floor rooms when they have been subdivided into bedrooms, although this is not necessarily catastrophic. A more complete examination of the first floor would be required in order to assess how extensive any existing alterations were, which could only feasibly be carried out once the building was empty.
- 6.1.3 For the same reasons it was also not possible to examine internally the north wing or rear service wing, although the plans of the building make it clear that these are already divided into relatively small rooms, which would perhaps be easier to convert without the addition of major, and potentially damaging, structural elements.
- 6.1.4 It is considerably more difficult to appreciate how the large public rooms on the ground floor will be incorporated into any development, primarily because their large size would presumably make them uneconomical to retain in their current form. Any sub-division of these rooms would not only be detrimental to their character, but would inevitably have the potential to badly damage features such as the plaster ceilings, decorative wall finishes, and built-in bookshelves, which are protected by the Grade II\* listing (DoE 1994, Sections 3.31 and Appendix C.60).
- 6.1.5 There is no apparent need for extensive alterations to the exterior, aside perhaps for minor repairs, and so it should be possible to keep damage to the original external build to a minimum.



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## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

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### 7.1 THE HALL

- 7.1.1 Prior to any of the development work taking place, it is recommended that at least a Level II-type survey be carried out of the hall (RCHM(E) 1996, 4). This could only take place once the building was vacated, and consists of descriptive text, photographs and ground plans created by hand annotations made to existing architect's plans.
- 7.1.2 Following the survey it may be necessary to maintain a watching brief during any initial stripping of soft furnishings, wall coverings and partition walls, in order to identify any features concealed within the fabric of the building. The initial survey can be used at this stage to inform subsequent work by highlighting areas of particular importance, in particular places where elements of the earlier building are identified.
- 7.1.3 Should the development require any extensive excavation, for the construction of new services for example, or rebuilding or demolition of original fabric, then a permanent presence watching brief should again be maintained. As it is unclear what the extent of the earlier hall (and associated buildings, if any) was, a watching brief would be useful in establishing the existence or lack of structural remains. Similarly, the surrounding area has several archaeological features within it, and the site of the hall could potentially hide others.
- 7.1.4 The development should, where possible, include mitigation strategies to avoid damage to the existing fabric, especially that in the main front public rooms.
- 7.1.5 It would be useful to include in any further work a limited amount of further research to locate original architects' or estate plans, which could not be accessed during this assessment, assuming these exist.

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Figure 3: Ordnance Survey 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 1876

Figure 4: Ordnance Survey 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition 1909

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Figure 6: First Floor Plan

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Plate 6: South External Elevation, Looking North

Plate 7: Back, West, External Elevation, Looking North-east

Plate 8: Detail of Courtyard, Showing Gable Scar, Looking South

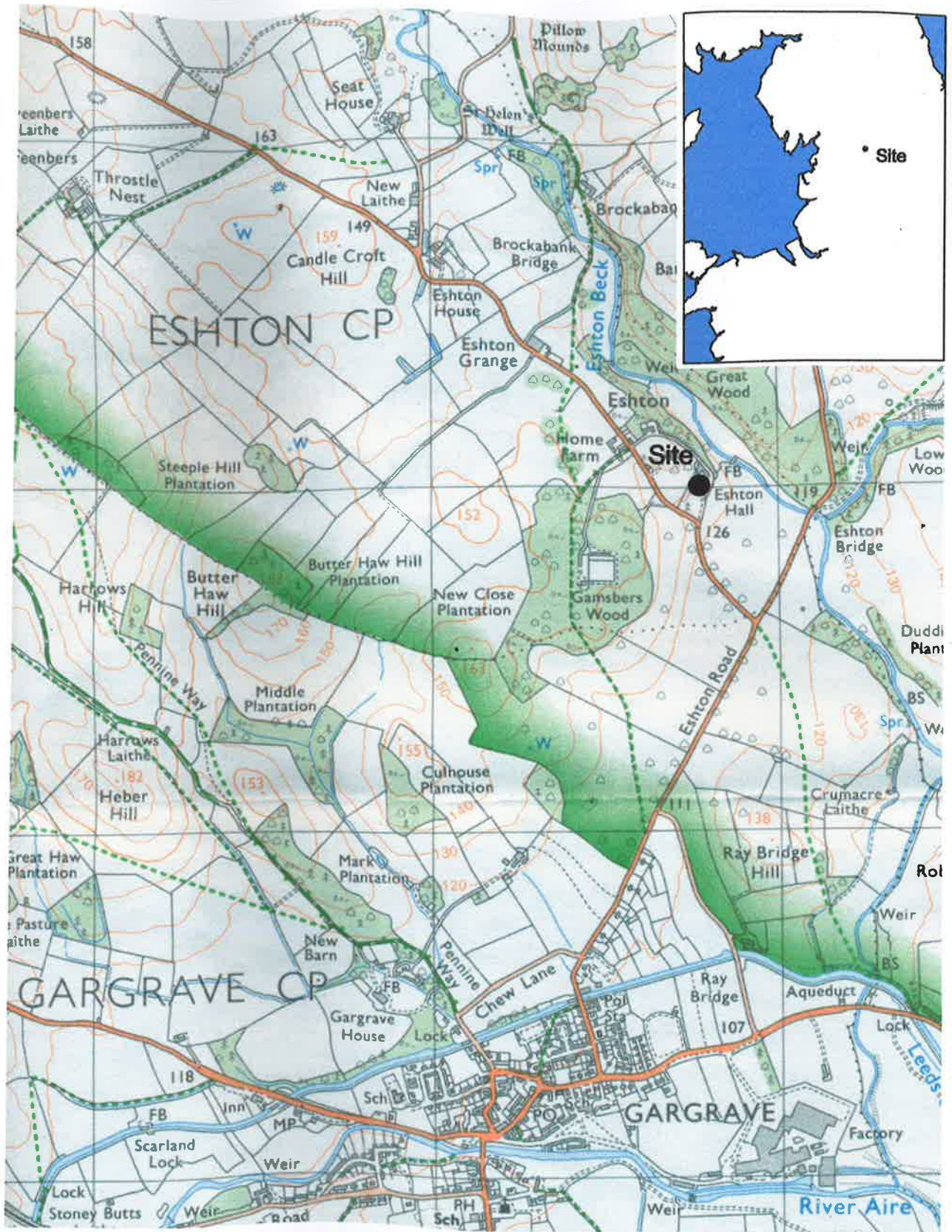
Plate 9: Marble Fireplace in Entrance Hall, Looking North

Plate 10: East Room of Library, Looking West

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## APPENDIX 1: PROJECT DESIGN

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based upon the Ordnance Survey 1:10000  
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Figure 1: Location Map

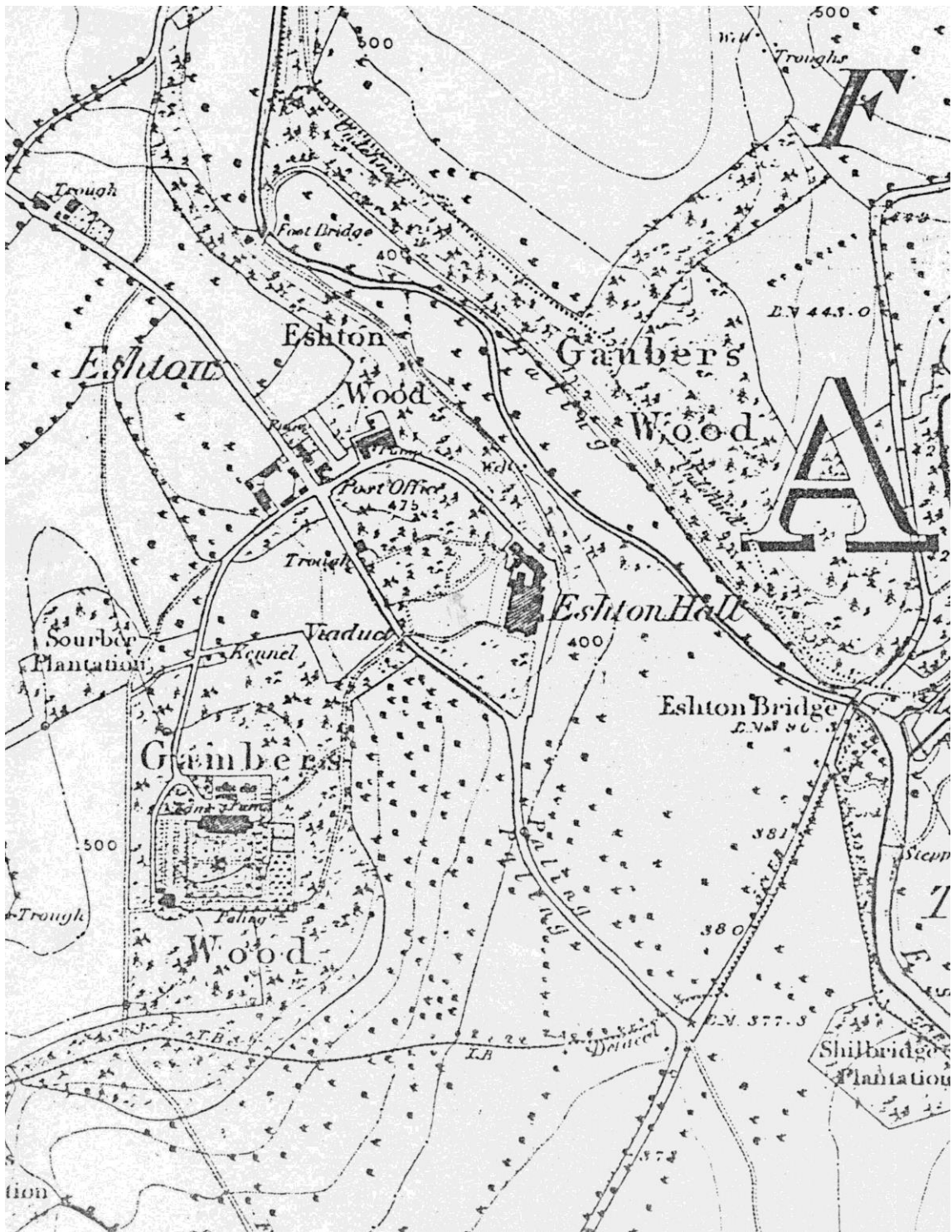


Figure 2: Ordnance Survey 1<sup>st</sup> Edition 1853



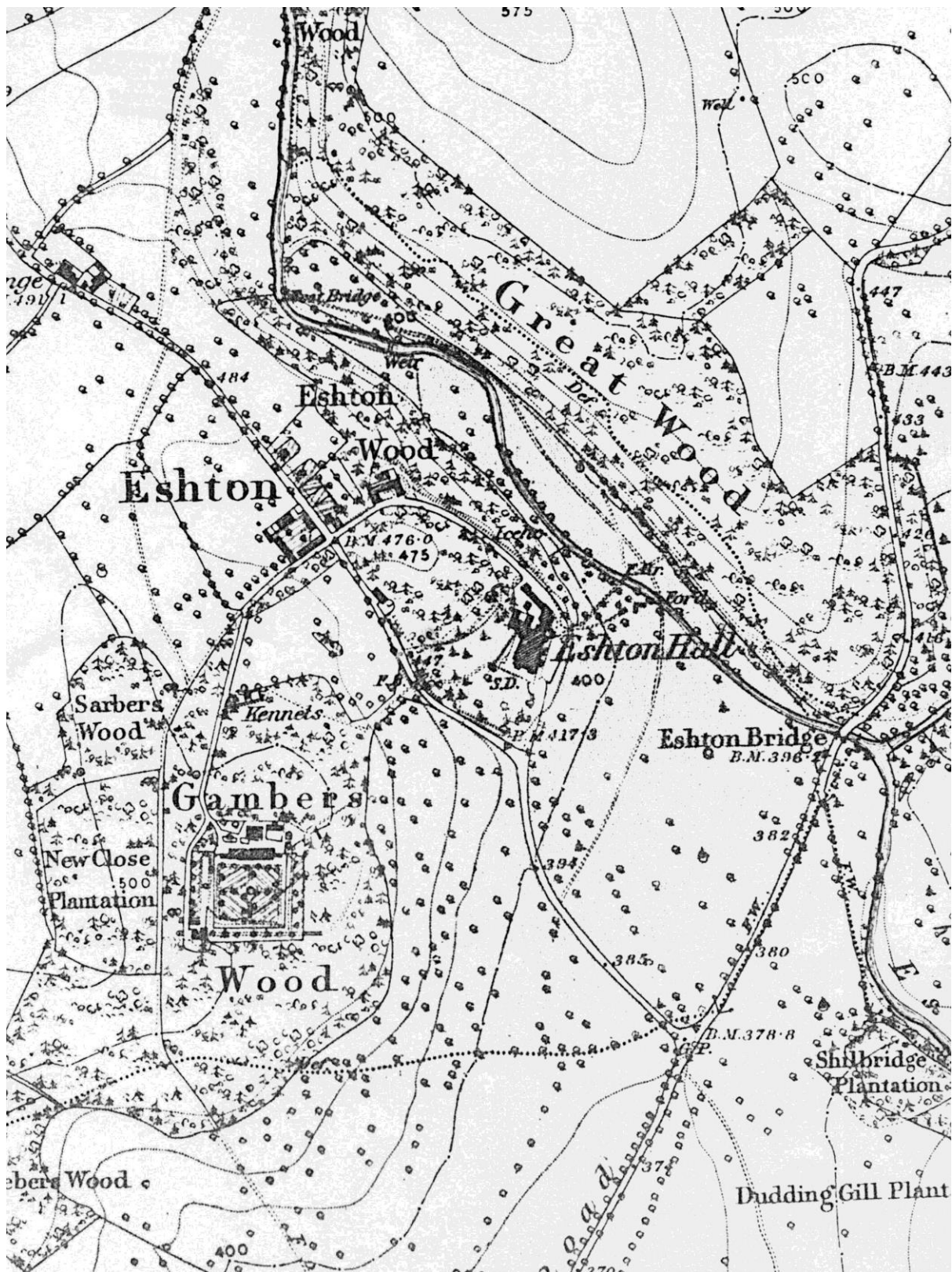


Figure 3: Ordnance Survey 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 1876

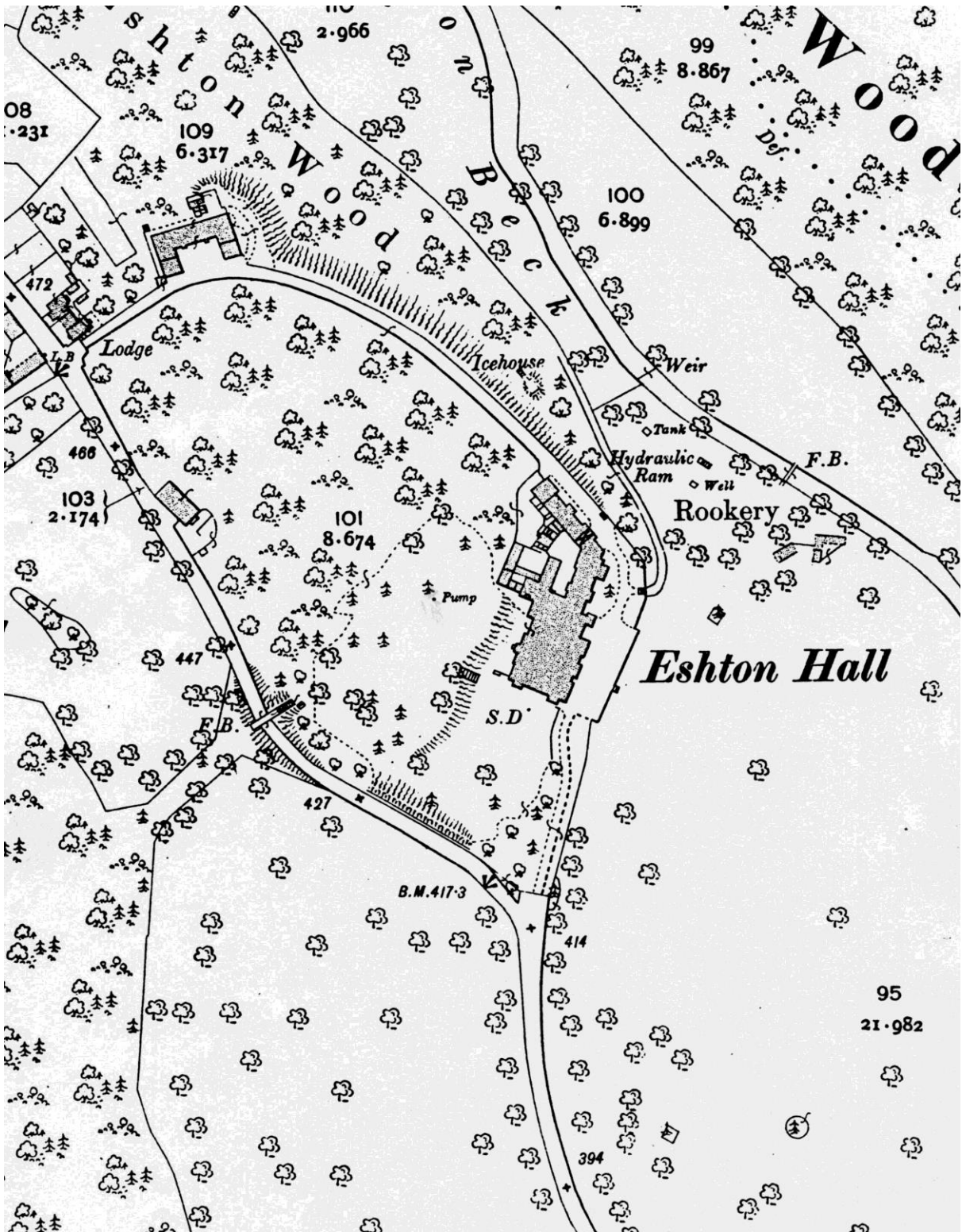


Figure 4: Ordnance Survey 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition 1909



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PROJECT:

Eshton Hall

DRAWING No:

2

0 10m

Scale 1:500

DRAWN BY: ELC/DWE

DATE: July 2002

LOCATION:



KEY



Well

TITLE:

Ground Floor Plan

COMMISSIONED BY:

Dare Northern

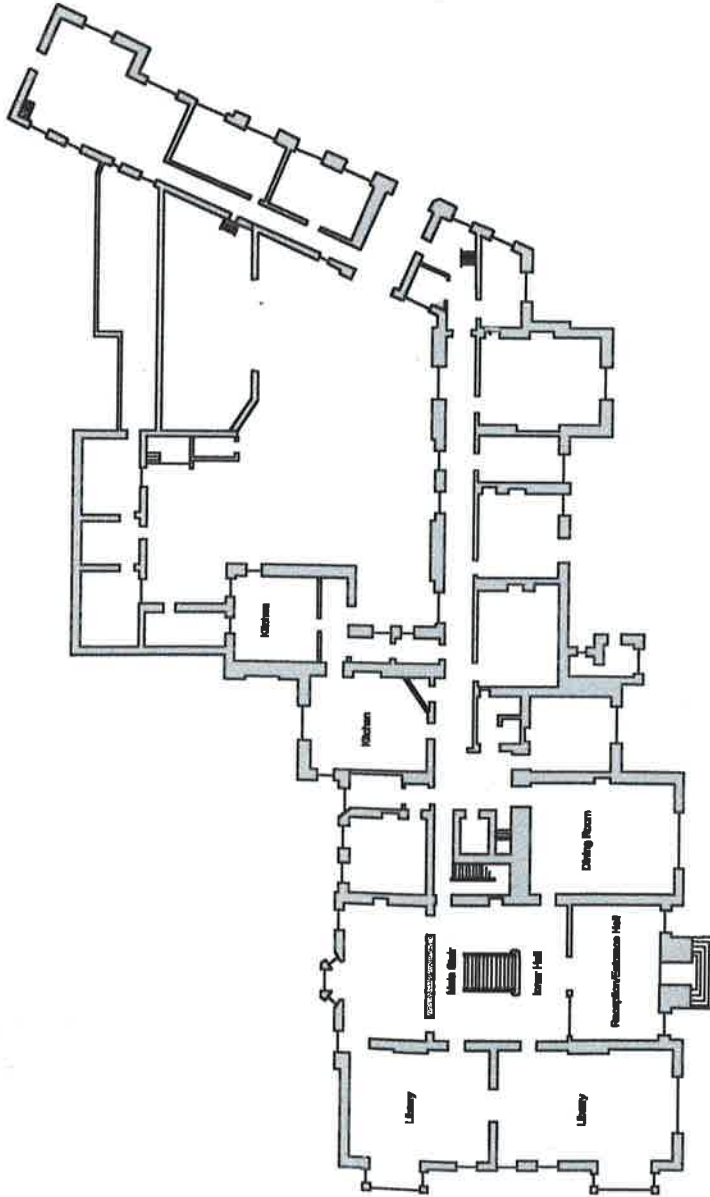


Figure 5: Ground Floor Plan



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PROJECT:

**Eshion Hall**

DRAWING No:

1

0 10m

Scale 1:500

DRAWN BY: DWE

DATE: July 2002

LOCATION:



KEY



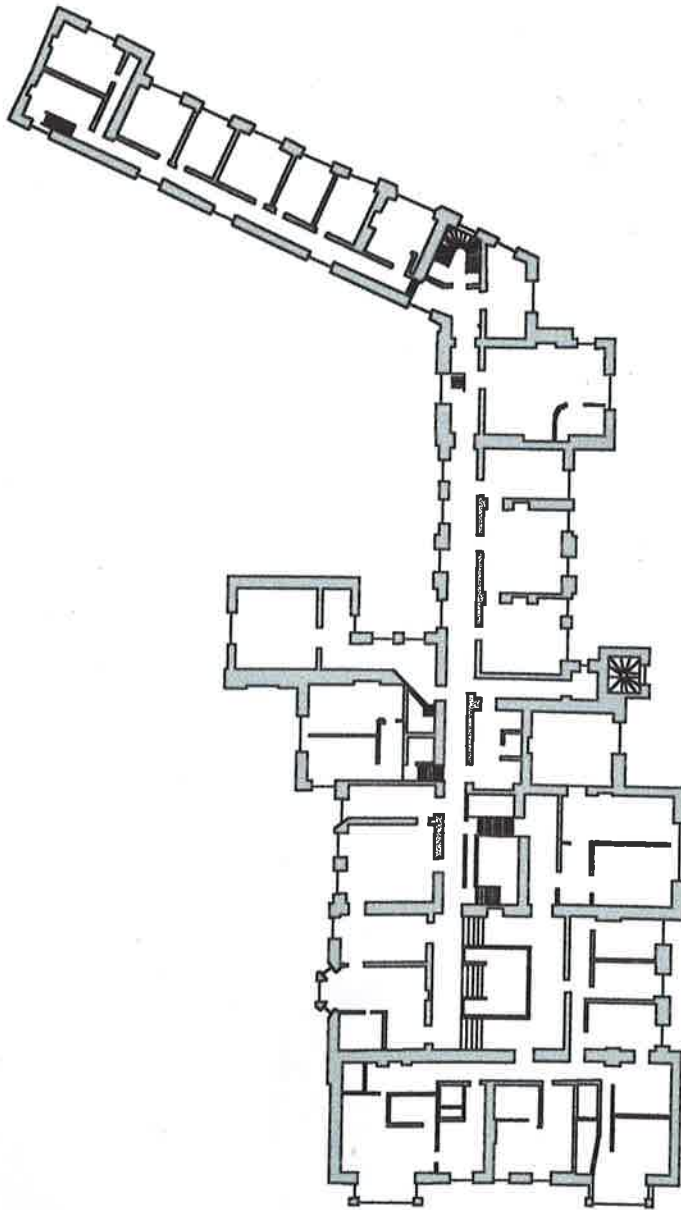
Wall

TITLE:

**First Floor Plan**

COMMISSIONED BY:

**Dare Northern**



**Figure 6: First Floor Plan**

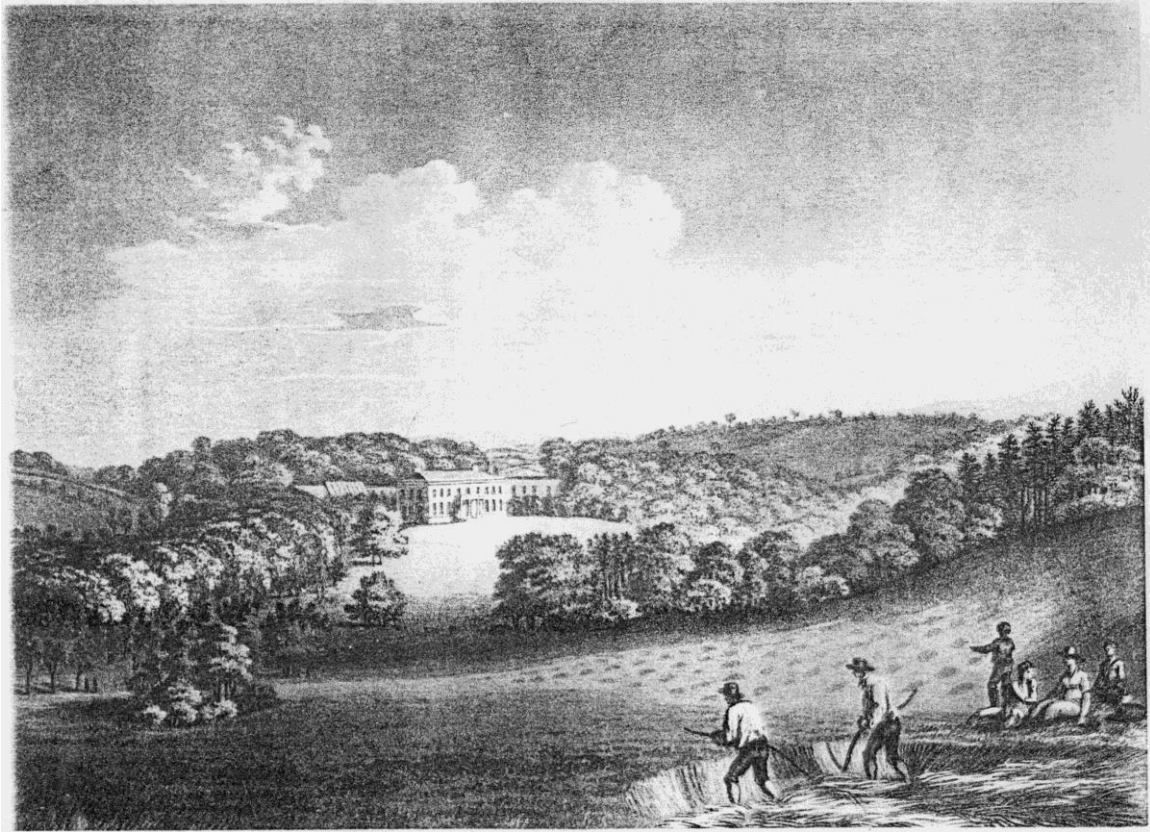


Plate 1: An Early View of Eshton Hall, Probably Eighteenth Century (After Whitaker 1878)

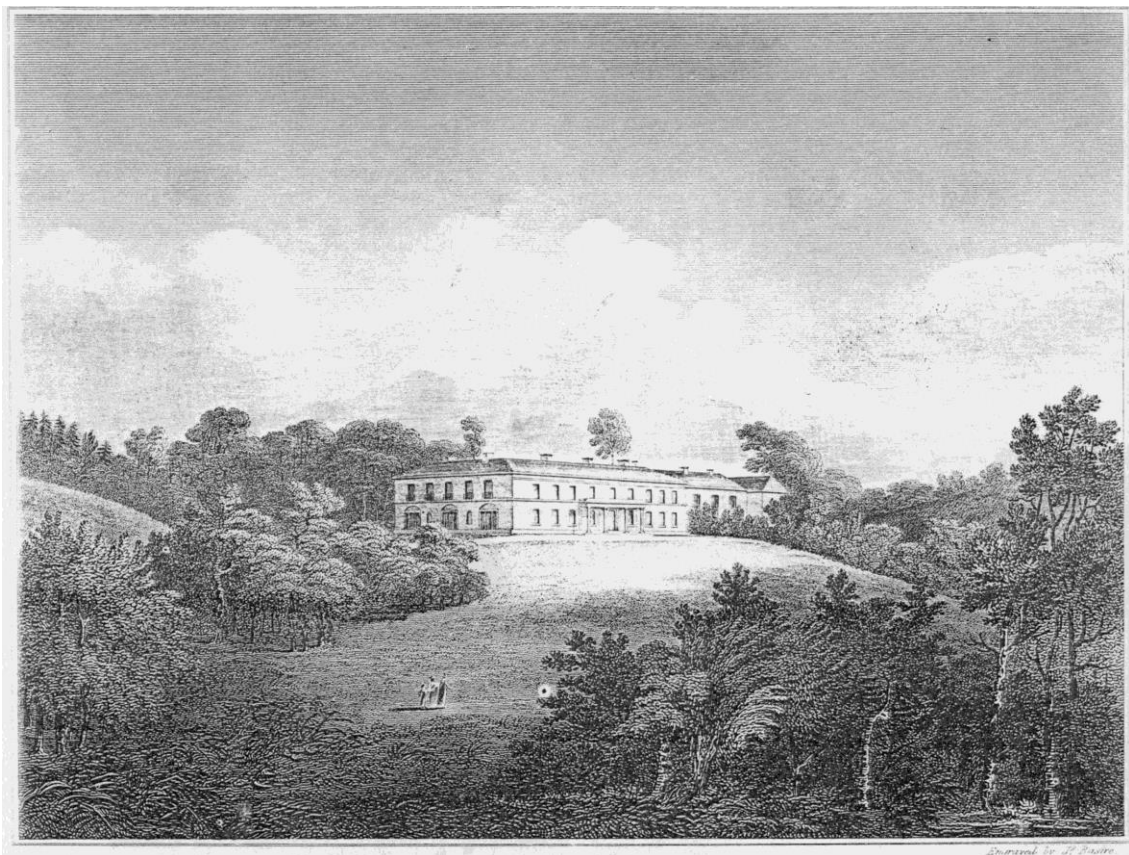


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