

Hungarton's Heritage

Early Settlement in Hungarton Parish

Hungarton parish is a community of considerable antiquity. The first definite evidence of settlement in the area is from the Roman period, with Roman finds and possible structural remains discovered west of Village Farm.¹ Settlement in the Anglo-Saxon period is evidenced by the discovery of Anglo-Saxon barrows at Baggrave and Ingarsby containing a number of artefacts - notably the 'Ingarsby Broach'.² Documentary evidence of continuous settlement in the parish begins with the 1086 Domesday Book.

The Deserted Medieval Villages

At the Domesday Book there were four villages in Hungarton parish: Hungarton itself (Hungretone), Ingarsby (Inwaresbie), Quenby (Queneberie), and Baggrave (Badegrave). Ingarsby, Quenby and Baggrave, however, were all deserted in the late medieval period. The land at Ingarsby, a grange of Leicester Abbey, was enclosed in 1469 as the Abbey switched from arable farming to sheep and cattle. Ingarsby village, apparently already struggling economically and from the effects of the Black Death, soon became depopulated.³ The smaller settlement of Quenby (close to the present Quenby Hall) disappeared soon after as the Ashby family similarly enclosed the land and converted it to pasture between 1485 and 1489.⁴ The hamlet of Baggrave, also owned by Leicester Abbey, was 'desolate and laid waste' in the early 1500s as the same transition occurred; by 1563 only two families remained.⁵

Both Ingarsby and Baggrave are Scheduled Monuments.⁶ Most important is Ingarsby, described by Pevsner as 'one of the outstanding deserted village sites in Britain' for the quality of its surviving earthworks, and also valued by historians for 'the clarity of its history' resulting from its unusually good documentation – a very rare combination.⁷

The land around the Halls at Baggrave and Quenby (including the deserted village sites) was subsequently converted to parkland: both are listed in Historic England's Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.⁸

¹ Historic Environment Records, MLE1680.

² *The Victoria History of the County of Leicester*, vol. I (London, 1907), pp. 236-8 and fig. 1 facing p. 222.

³ W.G. Hoskins, *Essays in Leicestershire History* (Liverpool, 1950), pp. 75-9; W.G. Hoskins, 'Seven Deserted Village Sites in Leicestershire', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, 32 (1956), pp. 36-51, at pp. 46-7; R. Millward, *A History of Leicestershire and Rutland* (Chichester, 1985), pp. 60-2.

⁴ Hoskins, 'Seven Deserted Village Sites', pp. 50-51.

⁵ Hoskins, *Essays*, pp. 80-1; Hoskins, 'Seven Deserted Village Sites', pp. 38-9.

⁶ <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1009236> (Ingarsby), accessed 18/7/16; <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1012125> (Baggrave), accessed 18/7/16.

⁷ N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Leicestershire and Rutland* 2nd ed. revised by E. Williamson (London, 1984), p. 186; Millward, *History of Leicestershire and Rutland*, p. 60.

⁸ <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000482> (Baggrave), accessed 18/7/16 ; <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000965> (Quenby), accessed 18/7/16.

Medieval Hungarton

Hungarton village predates the 1086 Domesday Book. It contained 72 taxpayers at the 1377 poll tax and 27 households in 1563.⁹ Only one building now survives from medieval Hungarton, however: the Grade II* listed Church of St John the Baptist, built in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In 1351 it was appropriated to Leicester Abbey.¹⁰ The church is built mainly in the Decorated style (c. 1290-c. 1350) with Perpendicular additions (c. 1335-50 to c. 1530); the tower is fourteenth century.¹¹

Ridge and Furrow

Medieval ploughing in the open fields system produced the distinctive wave-like pattern known as “ridge and furrow”. Hungarton’s early shift from arable to pastoral farming has left the parish rich in ridge and furrow, especially around the three deserted villages and around Hungarton village itself. A 2001 English Heritage study of the east Midlands identified Hungarton parish as one of only forty parishes in the region retaining outstanding examples of ridge and furrow.¹² It has been noted that such examples are of national, not merely regional, importance.¹³ The field south-west of the church has been placed on the Selected Heritage Inventory for Natural England (SHINE).

The Three Halls

Historically, Hungarton parish has been dominated by the three ‘great houses’ of Quenby (held by the Ashby family and their descendants from the thirteenth century until 1904), Baggrave (held by the Burnaby family from 1770 until 1939), and Ingarsby. Ingarsby Old Hall (Grade II* listed), on the site of the medieval moated grange, dates mainly from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.¹⁴ The single most historically significant building in the parish is Quenby Hall, described by Pevsner as ‘the most important early C17 house in the county’ and Grade I listed. It was built for George Ashby, who inherited in 1618, c. 1618-30, on an H-plan in brick with stone dressings.¹⁵ Baggrave Hall (Grade II*

⁹ *The Victoria History of the County of Leicester* vol. III (London, 1955), p. 163, p. 167.

¹⁰ *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1350-1354*, p. 146.

¹¹ Pevsner, *Leicestershire and Rutland*, p. 182; <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1074823> accessed 2/8/16. See also A. Chinnery, *The Church of St John the Baptist, Hungarton* (Wyndham, 1983).

¹² D. Hall, *Turning the Plough. Midland Open Fields: landscape character and proposals for management* (English Heritage and Northamptonshire County Council, 2001); see also T. Catchpole and R. Priest, *Turning the Plough: Update Assessment 2012* at https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/turning-the-plough-updateassess-2012/6468_TTP2_report_v3_FINALDec2012.pdf accessed 18/7/16.

¹³ M. Anderton and D. Went, ‘Turning the Plough: loss of a landscape legacy’, *Conservation Bulletin* 42 (2002), pp. 52-55, at p. 54.

¹⁴ Pevsner, *Leicestershire and Rutland*, p. 185; <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1074820>, accessed 18/7/16.

¹⁵ Pevsner, *Leicestershire and Rutland*, pp. 351-3; <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1295060>, accessed 18/7/16.

listed), of sixteenth century origins, was largely rebuilt in the 1750s by John Edwyn.¹⁶ For much of its history Hungarton village was mainly part of the Quenby estate, though some buildings (including the Black Boy inn, named after the Burnaby crest) were owned by Baggrave.

The Eighteenth Century Enclosure Act

After the medieval enclosures, much of the rest of the parish remained as open fields until the mid-eighteenth century. In 1762 Shukbrugh Ashby of Quenby Hall, as Lord of the Manor and major landowner in the parish, received parliamentary approval to enclose 'several Open Fields ... of Arable Land, and Meadow, and Pasture Ground' amounting to 900 acres.¹⁷ The enclosure of Hungarton parish was now completed.

The Eighteenth Century Rebuilding of Hungarton Village

A few years after Hungarton's enclosure act, and in the context of this change of land use, Hungarton village was rebuilt. Between 1766 and 1775 Shukbrugh Ashby (on 'a principle laudable and truly disinterested' according to his monument in Hungarton church) rebuilt most of the houses in the village in chequer brick. Pevsner notes that Hungarton is the 'most complete' example of eighteenth century estate building in Leicestershire.¹⁸ Though Hungarton still retains some earlier buildings, as Harborough District Council Conservation Area statement notes 'it is this rebuilding which gives the village its special character'.¹⁹ It is likely however that the new houses were rebuilt largely on the footprints of older buildings, retaining the pre-eighteenth century village plan.

Contemporary observers were impressed both by the extent and the quality of Hungarton's rebuilding. The agriculturalist Arthur Young, viewing the work in progress, noted that Ashby had

erected three new farm-houses [there would eventually be four], and a parsonage, in a neat and substantial manner, of brick and tile; and some cottages in the same manner; and placed them at the entrance of his village, - in such a manner that they have a most agreeable effect: These works are very noble; they ornament a country, encourage industry ... and are sure to acquire that fame, which is due to so just a species of patriotism.²⁰

John Throsby, visiting in 1790, admired the completed effect: 'This is a village of beauty ... enriched by the goodwill of Shuckburgh Ashby, Esq. who has made the habitations of his tenants comfortable with bricks, &c; even a blacksmith's shop has form and studied usefulness'.²¹

¹⁶ Pevsner, *Leicestershire and Rutland*, p. 88; <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1295080>, accessed 18/7/16.

¹⁷ *An Act for Dividing and Inclosing the Open Fields in the Parish of Hungerton [sic], in the County of Leicester* (1762). Also named in the Act as landowners are the Vicar of Hungarton, the Rev. George Ashby, and Mary Edwin, widow, of Baggrave. The *Victoria County History of Leicestershire* vol. II (London, 1954), p. 261, gives the date of award as 1 July 1763.

¹⁸ Pevsner, *Leicestershire and Rutland*, p. 44.

¹⁹ HDC, *Conservation Area Character Statement – Hungarton* (Sept. 2001).

²⁰ A. Young, *The Farmer's Tour Through the East of England* vol. I (London, 1771), p. 81.

²¹ J. Throsby, *The Supplementary Volume to the Leicestershire Views containing a series of Excursions in the Year 1790, to the Villages and Places of Note in the County* (London, 1790), p. 132.

As Young noted, one feature of Ashby's model village was paired gatehouses at the entrances to the village. Hungarton remained a gated village until the 1920s.²²

Victorian Hungarton

The nineteenth century brought no major changes to Hungarton. Reflecting the strength of Wesleyan Methodism in Victorian rural Leicestershire, a Wesleyan chapel was built in Chapel Yard in the 1840s; it was replaced in 1893 with a larger chapel in Gothic style slightly further up Main Street.²³ With the Education Act of 1870, Hungarton acquired a village school. The railways reached the parish with the opening of the spur line from Leicester (Belgrave) to Marefield Junction in 1882; Ingarsby Station opened early the following year.²⁴ It closed in 1953 except for a workman's special which was withdrawn in 1957.

²² <http://www.leicestershirevillages.com/hungarton/52105.html> accessed 2/8/16.

²³ J. Gill, *The History of Wesleyan Methodism in Melton Mowbray and the Vicinity, 1769-1909* (Melton Mowbray, 1909), pp. 215-17; *Leicester Chronicle*, 27 May 1893.

²⁴ *Leicester Chronicle*, 30 Dec. 1882: 'on Monday next the stations at ... Ingarsby ... will be opened for traffic'.