

BYLAUGH HALL

There are at least two folk stories about this building. One is that the estate was originally acquired from Richard Lloyd by the Lombe Family (subsequently known as Evans-Lombe) as the result of a card game, when the Lloyd's butler drugged his master's wine. The other is that when the Hall was originally built it had a curse put on it by the Lloyd's nursemaid to the effect that it would only stand for one hundred years. Whatever the truths involved in these tales, it is certainly the case that within one hundred years of its construction it was, as Sir Niclaus Pevsner described it, "a conspicuous ruin".

Sir John Lombe died in 1817, and left money to be held in trust with the instruction that a mansion be built on the highest part of the estate. Towards the middle of the century, nothing had been done, and so the Court of Chancery instructed the family to get on with it!

The house was built by Charles Barry jnr. (son of Sir Charles of Houses of Parliament fame) and R.Banks, and is reputed to be one of the first steel framed buildings in Europe. Evidence of this frame is visible today and presumably explains why so much of the house remains. Despite lavishing money on the construction of the Hall, there were still funds remaining which were ultimately spent on the building of three lodge houses (Elsing, Swanton Morley and Bawdeswell) and some eight miles of estate walls. Regrettably, much of these walls are now in a sad state of repair.

The Hall was the Headquarters of 100 Bomber Group in WWII. They specialised in counter-measures against enemy radio and radar.

In the 1950s it was stripped of its fittings and roof lead for builder's salvage. In recent years it has been bought by an entrepreneur and is being restored for use as a centre for events including weddings.

Before you reach Bawdeswell you pass again the poultry farm at the top of Elsing Lane.

Here they specialise in breeding day-old chicks for a worldwide market and manage to deliver them by air anywhere in the world within 24 hours of hatching.

As you near the village you can see the spire of the modern church above the roofs of the houses.



Soon you are back in civilisation and there is welcome refreshment at the Garden Centre, Bawdeswell Store or the Old Workhouse Bar.

Take care in crossing the busy main road as before.

For more information on Bawdeswell see separate leaflet or visit www.thereevestale.co.uk



Muntjack deer

Bawdeswell Heritage Group

A CIRCULAR WALK FROM BAWDESWELL

Sparham Hole

Approx distance: 2 ½ miles

Approx time: 1 ½ hours



Highlights: Public Footpaths and back roads, fine rural views with a good chance of seeing some wildlife, including deer.

Head along the Street towards the former Bell Inn and turn down the old Dereham Road, at one time the coach route to London. There was a Common here according to old maps. Before you cross the busy Bawdeswell by-pass there is a pond on the left – Adam's Pit. Legend has it that a coach and horses fell into it and sank never to be seen again!

Across the by-pass, just past the first house on the left is Jotts Lane, signposted Public Footpath. Follow the footpath signs which lead you first down a farm track and then across two fields through a gap in a hedge to Elsing Lane. Turn right towards the poultry farm. Though a minor road, it is quite busy at times so keep an ear out for cars.

Immediately past the poultry units, take the Public Footpath signposted Sparham Hole. The start of the footpath is overgrown at some times of the year, but it is well worth fighting your way through this initial barrier because it opens out into a most pleasant grassy track heading downhill through hilly ground and outcrops of woodland including Douglas Firs. The area is maintained as a conservation area, so please keep dogs under control and keep to the path.

