Cultural and Historical Assets at Pye’s Hall/Somercotes Haven

WWII - The Defence of Britain Project databases were created from field and documentary work carried out between April 1995 and December 2001. The purpose of the Project was to record the 20th century militarised landscape of the United Kingdom, and to inform the responsible heritage agencies at both local and national level with a view to the future preservation of surviving structures.

Geograph TA4100: Pillbox inside the sea wall near Donna Nook – adjacent to proposed breach site

Pillbox inside the sea wall near Pye’s Hall at Donna Nook - 53°28’59.9”N 0°07’29.7”E
Listed as "Plate 4 WW2 brick blockhouse NS17, North Somercotes" in "RAPID COASTAL ZONE ASSESSMENT, YORKSHIRE AND LINCOLNSHIRE, Donna Nook to Gibraltar Point, English Heritage Project 3729, PHASE 2" - Link (Archive Link)
Cultural and Historical Assets at Pye’s Hall/Somercotes Haven

Next to TA4100: Entrance tunnel to Observation Post, under the sea wall near Donna Nook.

**Former Anti-Aircraft Pillbox, Somercotes Haven**

Lincs Archive - Reference Name MLI99401

**Name:** Former Anti-Aircraft Pillbox, Somercotes Haven

**Summary:** The ruinous remains of a former anti-aircraft pillbox of the Second World War Coastal Crust, at Somercotes Haven.

**Location:** NORTH SOMERCOTES, EAST LINDSEY, LINCOLNSHIRE

**Description:** The remains of a ruinous concrete structure was recorded in this location, in 2008. The structure may possibly have been a former pillbox. {1}

Type 23, three-bay concrete anti-aircraft pillbox. Faces north and stands in front of a non-standard camouflaged pillbox (see PRN 43255). {2}{3}

**Sources:**
1 Photograph: Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust. 2008. Photographs of Pillboxes. No.8
3 Digital archive: Council for British Archaeology. 2006. Defence of Britain Archive. 5122

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**Observation Post, on the sea wall near Donna Nook- 53°28'59.5"N 0°07'32.5"E**

WW2 observation post NS15, North Somercotes, see "RAPID COASTAL ZONE ASSESSMENT, YORKSHIRE AND LINCOLNSHIRE, Donna Nook to Gibraltar Point, English Heritage Project 3729, PHASE 2"
Cultural and Historical Assets at Pye’s Hall/Somercotes Haven

Entrance tunnel to Observation Post, under the sea wall near Donna Nook

Entrance tunnel to Observation Post, under the sea wall near Pye’s Hall, Donna Nook

Listed as "Plate 5: Entrance tunnel to WW2 observation post NS15, North Somercotes" in "RAPID COASTAL ZONE ASSESSMENT, YORKSHIRE AND LINCOLNSHIRE, Donna Nook to Gibraltar Point, English Heritage Project 3729, PHASE 2"

Site of Pye’s Hall and extant 1868 Sluice Bridge, with WWII heritage assets

Somercotes Haven, Donna Nook
Pye’s Hall and Claribel.

The foundation stone for Louth railway station was laid in July, 1847, by the railway solicitor’s daughter, Miss Charlotte Pye, then aged sixteen. Her father, originally named Henry Allington, came from an old, respected, Lincolnshire family, and had added the name of Pye, after inheriting an estate.

As a solicitor, he was entrusted with the money of rich clients, and became County Treasurer. As befitted his status, he built the Cedars, on St. Mary's Lane, Louth, where Charlotte was born in 1830, when he was 30 years old.

Louth Railway Station 1848

Charlotte began writing poetry at the age of nine. Her work was very popular, and as “Claribel” she later became famous for writing popular songs of the time, including one called “Come Back to Erin”. When she was twenty-four, she married Rev. Cary Barnard, and moved to London.
Henry Pye invested money in reclaiming 400 acres of marsh near Grainthorpe, in 1843, and also speculated in grain. He built a large house overlooking the North Sea, north of Donna Nook, in the mid 1850’s, known as Pye’s Hall.

However, his lavish life-style, and inability to distinguish between his own, and public money, resulted in bankruptcy in 1868. In order to escape the wrath of his clients, he fled from Louth by horse to Pye’s Hall, intent on getting a boat. As none was available, he rowed himself out to sea, and was picked up by a ship bound for Hull. From Hull, he sailed to Southampton, and then to the Continent.

Charlotte went to join her father, but on a visit to Dover, in 1866, she was taken ill, and died. Her disgraced father died in poverty, on the Continent in 1883. Pye’s Hall was demolished during the 1960’s.

Reference Name MLI98130

Name: Pye’s Hall, North Somercotes
Summary: A Victorian house built by Henry Pye of Louth and now demolished.
Location: NORTH SOMERCOTES, EAST LINDSEY, LINCOLNSHIRE
Description: A house built by Henry Alington Pye (1800-83), solicitor of Louth, and later Mayor of the town and County Treasurer. He was involved in land reclamation in North Somercotes and built a house there by Somercotes Haven and the sea bank. Henry Pye suffered from financial problems in later life and lost his reputation in 1868 when he was found to have stolen money to ward off his creditors. The house is present on the 1888 OS map and survived until at least the 1960s. His daughter was Charlotte Alington Barnard (who used the pen-name ‘Claribel’) the Victorian poet and song writer. {1}{2}{3}
Pye's Hall, North Somercotes was the home of Henry Pye, a Louth solicitor who was involved in a financial scandal and escaped to Belgium. The house was abandoned and finally demolished about 1972. A photograph of the south front of the house shows a large Victorian house of two storeys and attics built of red brick with slate roofs. It has an eight bay arcade across the whole ground floor frontage with a balustraded balcony above, accessed from the first floor. This arcade appears to be stone, but may be stuccoed, each bay is a Tudor-arched opening. The dominant features of the facade are the two, tall, flanking, coped and rendered gables with narrow sliding sashes that light the attics. The gables front two double-pitched roofs that run parallel to each other at right angles to the house front with a gap between them. Between gables on the roof is a short section of balustrade that is probably part of a flat viewing-platform between the two roofs that allowed the occupiers to view the North Sea from one side of the house and the reclaimed saltmarsh inland on the other side. The eastern roof has a central ridge chimney stack while the western roof has a side stack on the left side of the house. {4}

A newspaper article, probably from the Grimsby Evening Telegraph, perhaps in the early 1980s, traces the rise and fall of Henry Pye. Within the article Pye's Hall is described as built in about 1851, close to the sea bank and with allowance made for flooding with the main rooms supported on iron pillars. It was built in red brick with terracotta urns, balconies and bathrooms attached to bedrooms which was an innovation at that time, and a range of outbuildings including one to house the Donna Nook lighthouse. {5}

Correspondence from a former resident of the house included several photographs of the house. These show that the arcade on the south elevation of the house was mirrored on the north side although with a later, single-storey, roofed passageway on the eastern end linking the house to the outbuilding. This passageway blocks off the eastern two openings of the northern arcade. The northern arcade is brick which would suggest that the southern arcade was also brick, but rendered, rather than being built of stone. The eastern elevation had a large two-storey bay window, partly blocked by the later passageway. These photographs also show a passage across the flat roof between the two double-pitched roofs, linking the attic rooms, and with doorways on both sides to provide access to the two roof viewing platforms to the north and the south of the house. {6}

In 1856, in White's Directory of Lincolnshire, the author notes under North Somercotes that 'Henry Pye, Esq., one of the chief landowners, has lately erected here a handsome "marine residence", which he visits in summer'. {7}

The site of the Hall was visited on 31 May 2011. There are no surviving remains above the ground surface of the grassed field in which the hall stood. {8}

A letter from a sergeant of the 5th Reserve Battalion of the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire (Sherwood Foresters) Regiment and, perhaps later, in the Granthorpe Volunteer Training Corps, states that he was billeted at Pye’s Hall. It therefore seems likely that the house was used during the First World War to house soldiers who were protecting the east coast from enemy attack. [The Voluntary Training Corps was a volunteer home defence militia during the First World War. The 5th Reserve Battalion of the Sherwood Foresters was stationed at Granhorne, Louth and Saltfleetby from 1916 to 1918.] {9}{10}

Site of (Pye's Hall), North Somercotes. Demolished 19th century farmstead. Regular courtyard of L plan. The farmhouse is attached to a range of working buildings. Isolated location. {10}

Sources: 1 Map: Ordnance Survey. 1884-1888. 6 Inch Ordnance Survey County Series Map - First Edition. XLI.NW
2 Map: Ordnance Survey. 1902-1906. 25 Inch Ordnance Survey County Series Map - Second Edition. XLI.1
A Sluice Bridge has been present on this site for over 150 years, and the current Sluice Bridge dates back to 1868 (Sales Particulars for the Hall dated 1868 show and list the ‘New Sluice’). Although parts of it have been added to or refurbished since then, eg the wooden gate mechanism, dated 1959 above, which was removed in May 2017, this has exposed the original brickwork, see below.
Pye’s Hall Sluice Bridge landward side after gate (above) removed and sea defence breached 15 May 2017 and clearly showing original brickwork which dates back to 1868 - 53°29'00.9"N 0°07'17.2"E