



by mature woodland, tree belts, beech clumps and ornamental lakes. By contrast, the surviving gardens of Easton Hall, though dating to the 1840s, were laid out with highly formal elements including a dramatic, French-style terraced garden and a large, walled kitchen garden possibly on the site of an earlier such garden. Known as Easton Walled Gardens, the site is being restored by the Cholmeley family which has owned the Easton estate since purchasing it in the early 1600s (see www.parksandgardens.org/counties).

Complementing the idealised English countryside is the architectural legacy of centuries of building in limestone, which is used almost universally for older buildings in the Upper Witham valley. In addition to church and village architecture, most landed estates employed it for gatehouses, walls and cottages as well as for their grand houses.



Cringle Brook is the longest of the tributaries of the Upper Witham, rising west of Sewstern Lane in Buckminster parish (Leics). It is fed from limestone springs and is ecologically important for native crayfish and trout, having relatively good water quality. Downstream, its incised valley provides the setting for Stoke Rochford park and village, forming one of Lincolnshire's most picturesque landscapes. The present hall and its terraced gardens date to the 1840s, when many of the estate cottages were also built. However, there was a succession of houses on the estate prior to this. The park was extended and landscaped in the 18th century when Medieval ponds were enlarged to form ornamental lakes along the brook.

TOP LEFT & FACING PAGE: **Stoke Rochford Park**

LEFT: **Cringle Brook, Easton**

