

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

**MUNCASTER CASTLE**

Auteur(s) : Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/>

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|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| Name:               | MUNCASTER CASTLE  |
| County:             | Cumbria   |
| District:           | Copeland (District Authority)   |
| Parish:             | Muncaster   |
| National park:      | LAKE DISTRICT   |
| label.localisation: | Latitude: 54.355753<br>Longitude: -3.3861177<br>National Grid Reference: SD1001596466<br><a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a> |
| label.overview:     | Heritage Category: Park and Garden<br>Grade: II*<br>List Entry Number: 1000669<br>Date first listed: 01-Jul-1985                              |

## Details

Gardens with C18 or earlier origins including a prospect terrace of C18 date, C19 and early C20 pleasure grounds with a rhododendron collection, and parkland of C16 or earlier origins. The gardens include features designed to take advantage of views of the Esk Valley and the mountains.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Land at Muncaster was granted to Alan de Penitone of Pennington, Lancashire in 1208. The family moved to the area c 1240. With the exception of a break after the death of the first Lord Muncaster and acquisition by the Ramsden family in the early C20, the Castle and park have been in the ownership of the Pennington family since that time. The Castle remains (1997) in use as a private residence.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** The Muncaster Castle estate is situated to the east of Ravenglass and to the north and west of the River Esk. The land rises to the east and north from the river valley and coast. The c 100ha site stretches from the banks of the Esk which forms the boundary on the south and east sides, to the A595 and Fell Lane, which form the northern boundary. The northern boundary is largely fenced and the western boundary is marked by the Barrow/Carlisle railway line. The setting is rural with the Esk estuary area and Ravenglass to the west, and the Esk valley, with mountainous areas beyond, to the south and east.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** There are four entrances with lodges. Running clockwise from the west side of the site they are as follows: the principal entrance to the site from Fell Lane (A595), where a drive runs east and south to the Castle from West Lodge, a lodge and gateway with an arched head (early C19, listed grade II). Also on the A595 is North Lodge, a stone-built lodge and gate piers with a drive running south to the Castle. On the east side of the site Eskholme Lodge is situated on a minor road leading east from the A595. South of this, on the A595, stands Hirst Lodge, a stone-built lodge from which a drive runs south-west to the Castle. At the north-west corner of the site a drive, called Walls Drive, leads south from the access

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road to Ravenglass. The drive divides, one branch leading north-east to West Lodge and the other running south-east around Newtown Knott before turning north to the Castle. There was formerly a road which crossed the Esk at a ford called Steps, c 400m east of the Castle. The road, which is shown on a county map of 1774, ran westwards through a steep valley called the Ghyll, immediately north of the Castle. The road continued northwards on the line of the drive from North Lodge. The road was realigned c 1850 and the bridge over the Esk was built by the first Lord Muncaster c 1810. There are a number of other drives, tracks and footpaths through the estate.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Muncaster Castle is situated on a platform high above the Esk where it forms a prominent local landmark. The oldest part of the building is a pele tower of C14 date. The building was enlarged and modified on a number of occasions, most notably in the 1780s when it was remodelled for the second Lord Muncaster. Another major campaign of work was undertaken during the later C19 by Ferguson of Carlisle and by Anthony Salvin (1799-1881), who built a new tower mirroring the pele at the north end of the west front and undertook extensive internal remodelling and refurbishment.

Some 40m north of the Castle is a stables and service block with a double courtyard plan which is entered through an archway at the south-west corner of the complex. Attached to the outer, southern wall is an ornamental dairy.

On the east side of the north drive, c 200m north of the Castle, is the church of St Michael and All Angels (C16 and C19, listed grade I). This is set within a walled churchyard, with an entrance on the west side leading to the drive and another on the east side, in the form of a gabled gateway of stone (listed grade II), leading into the pleasure grounds.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** Gardens are situated on all but the south-east side of the Castle where there is a level walkway along the edge of a scarp which drops steeply as a grass slope, called Cannon Bank, with long-distance views over the Esk valley to the mountains beyond. A path leads south-west from this walk around the outer edge of a walled formal garden which lies below the symmetrical garden front. At the end of the garden, c 40m south-west of the Castle, there is a gateway with ornamental cast-iron gates aligned with the centre of the Castle. Steps lead down from this to the path. The gateway is not shown on a photograph of c 1870 (private collection), which illustrates a layout of formal beds of which traces survive in the form of parch-marks and uneven surfaces in the lawn. A wash drawing of 1810 (private collection) shows the area as informal lawns with a shrubbery or flower bed around the house. South-west of the formal garden, between Lily Bank Wood to the west and Croft Coppice to the south, there is an open grassed area now (1997) called the Wild Flower Lawn. It is shown as a clearing on the 1st and 2nd edition OS maps (surveyed 1867 and published 1900 respectively). The path around the formal garden leads to the north-west side of the Castle where an area called Back Lawns consists of lawns with specimen trees. A fenced pond is situated in this area c 120m north-west of the Castle. The path branches, taking various routes through wooded areas on the west side of the Castle. On the east side the walkway from the south-east front continues and turns northwards around the side of the Castle, overlooking a steep-sided valley called the Ghyll which is planted with ornamental shrubs. Ornamental planting in the Ghyll and along its steep sides is shown in photographs of c 1860, c 1890, and a watercolour of c 1910 (private collection). A set of brick gate piers on the north side of the Ghyll, c 30m north of the Castle, leads to The Terrace, a terraced walk which runs north-east along the side of the valley for a distance of c 600m. It falls into two sections separated by a ravine, and the part nearest the Castle probably dates from the C18 though no specific reference to its construction has been found amongst the estate papers. The section beyond the ravine is described as the 'new' terrace on a drawing dated 1810 (private collection). The walk is grassed and the outer (eastern) edge is planted with a box hedge punctuated by yew and golden yew bushes, as shown in photographs of c 1920 (private collection). A photograph of c 1866 from the same collection shows the hedge did not exist at that time. This terrace commands long-distance panoramic views of the Esk valley and the mountains beyond to the east. Some 220m north-east of the Castle a rustic timber summerhouse, dated 1861, is situated on The Terrace. Some 320m north-east of the Castle The Terrace crosses a ravine by means of a stone bridge. A wash drawing dated 1810 (private collection) shows that at that time it was of rustic timber construction. The walk curves slightly to the north c 100m from the bridge and views of an eyecatcher called the Shepherd's Tower (probably late C18, listed grade II), some 900m distant, are obtained from this part of the walk though the building probably predates the extension of The Terrace. The walk curves westwards at a point c 200m from the bridge and terminates with a second summerhouse, also dated 1861, of similar but not identical design to the first.

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The remaining pleasure grounds consist of areas of woodland with curving paths leading through them on the north, west and south sides of the Castle. The woodland contains a collection of rhododendrons which was begun in the mid 1840s by the fourth Lord Muncaster who planted species collected by Sir Joseph Hooker in Sikkim during the period 1847-51. The collection was extended by Sir John Ramsden, who subscribed to many of the plant-finding expeditions between the wars. Species collected by Frank Kingdom Ward, Frank Ludlow and George Sherriff were represented, and some of these survive.

PARK Muncaster Castle is surrounded by parkland on all sides. West of the Castle is an area called the Deer Park, which is enclosed on all but the north-east side by a stone wall. This is mainly open grassland with areas of scrub and occasional trees on land which slopes down to the south-west. There is planting along the northern, southern and eastern boundaries as suggested on a county map of 1823 and as shown on the 1867 OS map. Mention is made of a park at Muncaster, probably in reference to this area, in records of 1528 and 1554. Edmund Sandford described it as 'a brave parke full of fallow deer down to Ravenglass' in 1675 (quoted in LUC 1994). Repairs to the wall are documented in accounts of 1770.

To the south-east of the Castle there is an area of parkland called Hags Park which slopes eastwards down to the Esk. Woodland on the southern and eastern sides of this area probably relates to planting in 1793-4 by the first Lord Muncaster who planted almost 50,000 trees during this period. The record of this enterprise mentions various parts of the park, including this area (quoted in LUC 1994). North of this is a similar area of parkland called Hirst Park, with scattered mature trees. Both these areas are overlooked by The Terrace, and both are shown as parkland on the 1823 county map. North-west of the Castle, on the north side of the A595, the land rises northwards as grassland in an area called Muncaster Fell. Paths lead through woodland on the east side of the fell to an area called Chapels where a folly called the Monument is situated. This is shown as part of the parkland on the 1867 OS map, and it was included in the campaign of planting of 1793-4.

West of the Deer Park is an area of land which falls westwards towards Ravenglass and the Barrow/Carlisle railway line in an area shown as enclosed fields on the 1867 OS map, and as open parkland on that of 1900. A belt of trees, called Walls Plantation, runs along the western boundary. On the east side of Walls Drive, c 1.5 km south-west of the Castle, is the site of the Roman fort of Glanaventa (scheduled ancient monument), which includes a bath house which is said to be the best-preserved military bath house in the country (Pevsner 1967). This was described as 'the ancient dwelling place of the Penningtons' by John Denton in 1610.

In the extreme south-west corner of the site is Newtown Knott, where the land rises to form an eminence, on the top of which are the remains of a beacon tower which was demolished during the 1940s. This structure can probably be identified with a reference to 'the light-house erecting on the high ground in the Park' mentioned by Thomas Gisborne in a letter dated 1798 (quoted in LUC 1994). The wooded slopes of Newtown Knott overlook, on the east side, land which falls eastwards to the Esk. The wooded banks of the Esk are known as Barrill Bank in an area which runs north-eastwards to Hags Park. Several thousand trees were planted here in 1793-4. Along the northern bank of the Esk, from a point at the extreme south-west corner of the site as far as the northern part of Barrill Bank, there is a riverside walk with views up and down the river. There is a wall between path and riverbank for part of its length. A late C18 sketch shows part of the walk, and there are wash views of the river valley from the walk which are dated 1810 (private collection). The path leaves the riverbank at a point c 400m south of the Castle where it links with a network of paths through the pleasure grounds.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** There are two walled kitchen gardens. That known as the Old Kitchen Garden is situated in woodland c 200m north-east of the Castle. It is of brick with some parts of the outer west and south walls in stone. The curving northern wall is greater in length than the straight southern wall, and the two are linked by splayed east and west walls. It is probably of C18 date and may relate to references in estate papers of 1769 to a Summer House Garden. It is currently (1997) used by the British Owl Breeding and Release Scheme.

Another walled kitchen garden is situated c 70m north of the Castle, on the west side of the north drive. It is built of rubble with a flat stone parapet, and is in the shape of a slightly irregular elongated hexagon, with longer east and west walls. There is an entrance with stone gate piers with ball finials on the east side. The outer face of the north-east wall has a range of brick-built potting sheds, a boiler house and other ancillary buildings. There is a range of glasshouses along the north-east and part of the east wall.

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REFERENCES

F O Morris, A Series of Picturesque Views 3, (1866-80), pl 17 Country Life, 87 (8 June 1940), pp 570-4; (15 June 1940), pp 592-5; (22 June 1940), pp 612-16 N Pevsner, The Buildings of England: Cumberland and Westmorland (1967), pp 165-6 Muncaster Castle Restoration Management Plan, (Land Use Consultants (LUC) 1994)

Maps Reproduced in LUC 1994: County Map of Cumberland, 1774 C Greenwood, Map of the County of Cumberland, 1823 OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1867 2nd edition published 1900

Archival items Wash drawings, sketches and photographs (private collection) Details of photographs from 1866 onwards, estate papers and their repositories, and selected extracts from these papers are given in LUC 1994.

Additional information from John Borran

Description written: July 1997 Amended: July 1998 Register Inspector: CEH Edited: March 1999

## Legal

This garden or other land is registered under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 within the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens by Historic England for its special historic interest.