

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

SIZERGH CASTLE

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

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Name:	SIZERGH CASTLE
County:	Cumbria
District:	South Lakeland (District Authority)
Parish:	Helsington
National park:	LAKE DISTRICT
label.localisation:	Latitude: 54.283501 Longitude: -2.7709704 National Grid Reference: SD 49904 87815 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000673 Date first listed: 01-Jul-1985

## Details

Gardens and parkland with features of C18 or early C19 date and ornamental gardens of 1926 by T Hayes & Son.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Sizergh was the principal residence of the Strickland family from 1239. A licence for enclosing the park was obtained by Sir Walter Strickland in 1332 and a further licence to impark woods was obtained in 1361. The area is now disparked, but it remained stocked with deer until the C18. The Castle remained in the family until 1950 when the Hornyold-Stricklands gave the estate and the Castle to the National Trust, in whose ownership it remains (1997).

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Sizergh Castle is situated c 4km south-west of Kendal in a setting which is predominantly rural and agricultural. The c 6ha site is situated on land which slopes from west to east down towards the River Kent some 900m distant. The boundary is formed by fencing along the edge of the A591 on the east side of the site, a mixture of hedges and walls on the north side, a wall on the west side, and a ha-ha on the south side.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** There are two entrances. The main entrance is situated on the southern tip of the site where a drive leads through C20 gates from a minor road between Sedgewick and Levens. It formerly entered the park from the A591 at Low Sizergh, at a point c 200m to the north, and is shown in this position on Greenwood's county map of 1824, but this entrance fell into disuse following the construction of a dual carriageway in the late C20. The drive, which has the remains of the avenue planting shown on the large-scale OS map surveyed 1857-60, curves through the parkland and leads westwards and northwards to the stable yard and the west courtyard of the Castle. The 1857 OS map shows that this drive divided c 150m south-west of the Castle, one branch leading to a set of stone entrance gate piers (listed grade II) and on to the east front of the building. This entrance was blocked in the late C20. The second entrance, which has a C19 lodge, is situated at the north-east corner of the site. A drive, now a track, runs south-west from the A591 through C20 gates and leads along the north side of the walled kitchen garden to join the drive from the south on the west side of the Castle. This approach is shown on Jeffreys'

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county map of 1770 and as an avenue on the 1857 OS map, but little planting survives. A farm track, called Ashbank Lane, enters the site on the west side opposite the stable courtyard.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Sizergh Castle (listed grade I) originated as a pele tower during the C14, on the site of an earlier building. A great hall of c 1450 survives, and other alterations, including the addition of two wings to the west, were carried out during the C16. This arrangement created a courtyard on the west side which has gates and gate piers (listed grade II).

The Castle was altered during the C18 with the partial refenestration of the east front. It was probably at this time that the flight of steps was constructed leading from the first floor of the east front down to the garden. A stable yard is situated to the south-west of the Castle with stables (listed grade II\*) to the east and a barn (listed grade II) and cottages on the other sides.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The gardens are on the north, east, and south sides of the Castle. The garden on the south side of the building is enclosed on the west and south sides by walls. The western wall, called the Hot Wall, is of brick, and the southern wall is of stone. A terraced walk, reached from an entrance in the south side of the Castle, runs along the Hot Wall and terminates at an arched garden shelter (probably C18, listed grade II) c 70m south of the Castle. The ground sweeps down eastwards from the terraced walk as a grassy bank. The southern wall has at its east end a pair of gate piers which form a secondary entrance to the Castle and lie c 100m south-east of it.

The second, lower terraced walk leads north-eastwards from the entrance gate piers, and continues along the Castle's east front. A flight of steps, which widens as it approaches ground level to give an exaggerated appearance of depth, leads down to the top of the terrace from a first-floor walkway on the east front. This feature forms a focus for the gardens on this side of the Castle, and a further flight of steps leads down the terrace to a bastion projecting into a lake situated at the base of the terraces. The bastion is walled and photographs of c 1926 (private collection) show that the walls were crenellated at that time and that there was a fountain in the centre. The terrace steps, lake and bastion were laid out by T Hayes & Son in 1926, replacing a ramped grass walkway, aligned with the steps from the Castle, which led down the slope to the semicircular bowed edge of a ha-ha or fence running along the base of the terrace. This is illustrated on a view by Buckler of 1822 (guidebook) and conforms with what is shown on the 1857 OS map and on undated postcard views probably of the early C20 (private collection).

At the base of the lakeside steps a walkway leads north and south along the edge of the lake, forming, with the bastion, a formal edge which gives way to informality as the lakeside curves away in a naturalistic manner. There is a small island in the northern part of the lake. The northern lakeside walk terminates at a stone wall with a door in it which is shown leading to a small building, possibly a boathouse, on photographs of mid C20 date (private collection). The wall runs westwards to the top of the terrace and returns for a distance of c 10m along the edge of the terraced walk. In the angle of the walls is a building used for storage, which can also be reached from the other (northern) side of the wall where the ground drops away and there is a basement storey with windows and a door. This feature may be the remains of a wall and building shown in approximately this position, c 20m east of the Castle, in the 1822 view.

Immediately to the south of the southern lakeside walk is a levelled area separated from the terraced walk above by a stone retaining wall. This is called the Dutch Garden and was laid out by Hayes & Son in 1926. A pavilion situated c 100m south-west of the Castle faces north along the terrace at the head of a walled enclosure c 50m long. The ground within steps down in three stages, marked by grass banks, and at the northern end a flight of stone steps leads up to the top of the terrace and down to connect with the lakeside walk. Photographs of c 1926 (private collection) show that this garden had a central paved pathway lined with rectangular formal beds. The grass banks mark the position of walls which divided the garden into compartments. Correspondence dated 23 September 1926 mentions an estimate from Hayes of £2250 for 'making a Formal Dutch Garden at Sizergh Castle' (private collection). The figure quoted and absence of reference to the lake and fountain suggests that the sum would have covered all the works on this side of the garden.

A garden has been created (late C20) in the area immediately south of the entrance gate piers at the garden (north) end of the main drive, where the truncated end of the drive survives. This area is now enclosed with walls and hedges forming a triangular plot known as the Rose Garden. The line of the drive has been newly (1990s) planted with a yew avenue, replacing a beech avenue extant in the 1940s which was itself replaced first by limes then by rowans.

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On the north side of the Castle, in an area which forms a small valley, is a rock garden. This is surrounded by a crenellated stone wall on the south and east sides and is entered from an opening at the north end of the east terraced walk. It occupies an area of c 0.1ha and is formed from weatherworn local limestone slabs arranged in terraces, steps and banks which slope downwards from the highest point on the east side, which is wooded, to an area of pools and running water at the lowest point, in the centre of the area. The water runs through the garden from the west side and drains via a culvert into the lake. The garden was designed by a local architect called Waring and was laid out by Hayes & Son. A letter dated 25 September 1926 mentions an estimate of £1750 for creating the Rock Garden (private collection). The garden is planted with a collection of hardy ferns and dwarf conifers which was started in the 1920s. It replaced a walled orchard shown on the 1857 OS map.

Immediately north of the Rock Garden there is a grassed area bounded on the north side by a herbaceous border along the stone outer wall of the kitchen garden. To the north-east of the Rock Garden, c 70m north-east of the Castle, there are tennis courts and a pavilion. Both these areas are on the site of walled gardens shown on the 1857 map.

On the east side of the Rock Garden is an area enclosed by hedges with a grassy slope leading down to a walk overlooking the lake. On the north-east side of the lake, amongst the ornamental shrubs and trees planted on this side, is a C19 pump house.

On the west side of the Castle the drive from the north-east divides the Castle and stable courtyard from a large informal pond, c 40m north-west of the buildings. This was constructed in the early C20 to give a head of water for the supply to the Rock Garden and lake. Overlooking the pond on its north side is a bank planted with ornamental trees.

**PARK** There is open parkland with scattered mature trees on the north, east and south sides of the Castle. A shelter belt which runs along the whole of the eastern boundary with the A591 represents an extension of, and addition to, planting shown in this position on the 1857 OS map. There is also planting on the south-west side of the park, along the south and west side of the main drive. The south side of the park is divided from agricultural land by a substantial sunken fence. The parkland is shown at approximately its present extent on the county map of 1770 when an avenue ran directly south from the Castle to the park boundary.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The kitchen garden is situated c 100m north-east of the Castle. It consists of a walled triangular area with a gardener's house against the north wall, and the remains of bothies and boiler houses at the west end of the area. The gardener's house, which is shown on the 1857 OS map, appears to be a building of C18 date extended in the C20. There is a glasshouse at the west end of the garden and a free-standing Crital metal greenhouse of 1930s date. The west side of the garden area is used for propagation and cultivation and the east side is planted as an orchard, as shown on the 1857 OS map. There is currently (1997) a programme for replanting the orchard with varieties from a list of 1850. The 1857 map shows that the area of walled gardens was more extensive and included the whole of the area between the present garden and the north side of the Castle where the Rock Garden and tennis courts are now situated.

#### REFERENCES

N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Cumberland and Westmorland* (1967), pp 289-91 Sizergh Castle, guidebook, (National Trust 1979) *Country Life*, 173 (5 April 1983), pp 768-70 Sizergh Castle, guidebook, (National Trust 1986) *Cumbria*, (April 1990), pp 21-7

Maps T Jeffreys, *The County of Westmorland, 1770* C & J Greenwood, *Map of the County of Westmorland, 1824*

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1858 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1857-60

Archival items Correspondence between Hayes & Son and Sir Gerald and Lady Strickland covering a period from 1926 to 1928; photographs and postcards (private collection)

Description written: September 1997 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.