

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

ROKEBY PARK

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

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**ROKEBY PARK**

Name:	ROKEBY PARK
District:	County Durham (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Brignall
District:	County Durham (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Rokeby
District:	County Durham (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Westwick
label.localisation:	Latitude: 54.520763 Longitude: -1.8768722 National Grid Reference: NZ0806813948 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000733 Date first listed: 07-Oct-1986

## Details

Pleasure grounds and park of mid to late C18 with early C19 entrance lodges.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The site was owned by the Rokebys from the early medieval period until its sale c 1610 to William Robinson, a London merchant. It remained in the Robinson family until 1769 when it was sold to J S Morritt. An undated map of the park by W Wildon was drawn up for J S Morritt, who died in 1791. His son, J B S Morritt, was a close friend of Sir Walter Scott and a noted collector and connoisseur. The estate has stayed in the family and remains (1998) in private ownership.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Rokeby lies c 3km south-east of Barnard Castle, immediately north of the hamlet of Greta Bridge. The site is in an angle formed by the River Greta running along the east side and the River Tees on the north side. The precincts of Mortham Tower and a band of woodland on the east side of the Greta is included within the boundary. A by-road from Barnard Castle to Greta Bridge forms the northern part of the west boundary, and the old course of the A66 the south-west and south boundary. Included in the boundary is a path leading west through a band of woodland called Church Plantation from the junction of the Barnard Castle road and the A66 to St Mary's church. The A66 was diverted to bypass Greta Bridge during the late C20 and now cuts across the park north of the village. The c 48ha site is on land which slopes down to the valley of the Greta to the east in a rural and agricultural setting.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The main entrance is from the Barnard Castle road where there is an early C19 neoclassical lodge and entrance screen with gate piers surmounted by sphinxes (listed grade II). A drive leads east and north-east before branching, with one route leading to the rear of the house and the other to the front (south side). An entrance with

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stone gate piers (formerly dated 1725, listed grade II) and a railed screen, probably of early C19 date, lies immediately north of the junction of the Barnard Castle road and the A66. A third entrance, with Greek Revival style screen walls and a lodge (early C19, listed grade II), lies at the southern tip of the site in the hamlet of Greta Bridge in a part of the park cut off from the remainder by the new line of the A66. The drive which led north to the house is an avenue between the entrance and new road, and this part is shown as an avenue on the late C18 map. The artist J S Cotman mentions in a letter that he had made suggestions to J B S Morritt about the lodges, which Morritt intended to take.

At the north-eastern tip of the site there is a cottage, called Dairy Bridge Cottage, which is described as a lodge on the 1854 OS map. It lies at the east end of Mortham Lane and a drive leads from it running south-east to Mortham Tower.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Rokeby Park (listed grade I) was built 1725-31 by Sir Thomas Robinson. The building has a symmetrical three-storey central block flanked by pavilions which are set back and have attached blocks, also set back, so that the composition forms a pattern of receding cubes when viewed from the south front. The house is in use as a private residence (1998).

Immediately north of the house is a late C19 detached gunroom (listed grade II), and c 200m to the south-west there is a complex of buildings including C18 stables (listed grade II) and a gardener's house (listed grade II) which are ranged with ancillary buildings around the north and east sides of the kitchen garden. A group of early C18 farm buildings (listed grade II) lie to the north of the gardener's house.

The family home of the Rokebys, built in the C14 following destruction of a previous house by raiding Scots, was Mortham Tower (listed grade I). This lies c 300m east of Rokeby Park on high ground overlooking the River Greta. It acts as an eyecatcher on the horizon when viewed from the garden and park and is a feature of axial views marked on the late C18 estate map. The Tower is in use as a private residence (1998).

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** There are lawns on the east and west sides of the house. A line of C18 urns (all listed grade II) is ranged along the west side of the house, and items of antiquarian interest are disposed around the lawns in this vicinity. These include a Roman milestone and a number of Roman altars (all listed grade II).

On the east side of the house there is a scarp at the edge of the lawn where the land falls steeply away to the Greta, and paths lead down to the riverside. The river is overlooked by cliffs on its eastern bank, and the river banks have been strengthened using revetment walls, shown on an C18 painting (guidebook). Paths lead to the north and Dairy Bridge (C18, listed grade II) which crosses the Greta c 50m south of its confluence with the Tees and frames views up and down the river. The walk continues southwards on the wooded side of the river from which there are views of the house and parkland. The paths lead to an artificial cave (listed grade II) cut into the limestone cliffs c 300m south-east of the house, which is called Scott's Cave or Scott's Grotto. Sir Walter Scott's epic poem Rokeby, published in 1813, was inspired by the dramatic scenery and romantic stories of the Rokeby family. South of Scott's Cave, and c 350m south-east of the house, there is a rustic C18 bridge (listed grade II) crossing a stream. This was the subject of a painting by Cotman.

Paths continue through the woodland, and the river can be crossed via footbridges linking an island c 600m south-east of the house. The late C18 estate map does not show the woodland and paths on the east side of the river and they were probably laid out by J B S Morritt in the late C18 or early C19.

**PARK** There is parkland on all sides of the house consisting of open pasture land with scattered trees. A ha-ha runs from the riverbank next to the island and footbridges, c 600m south-east of the house, to a point south of the kitchen garden, c 300m south-west of the house. The remains of an avenue, shown in similar form on the C18 estate map, lies c 400m south-east of the house. The park is sheltered by belts of trees much as shown on the C18 map, which shows axial rides cut through the woodland and dotted lines representing views. From the entrance at the junction of the Barnard Castle road and the A66, rides through woodland were aligned with the house, Mortham Tower, and Stainmore Hill to the east. Rides in a block of woodland alongside the Greta c 200m east and south-east of the house were aligned with Mortham Tower and Stainmore Hill. The woodland belts have been thinned and no evidence for the rides appears to survive.

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On the north side of the house the parkland overlooks the Tees to the north and there are views over the river to open land to the north. In the north-east corner of the parkland there is a group of tombstones and a cross base (all listed grade II) on the site of a church.

A path leads west from the junction of the Barnard Castle road and the A66 through a band of woodland to St Mary's church (listed grade II) which was built c 1765 probably to Thomas Robinson's own design. The church stands on high ground overlooking Rokeby Park and may have figured in views from the house before tree cover reached full maturity.

Sir Thomas Robinson enclosed the park with walls in 1725 and planted it during the period 1730 to 1737. In a letter of 1734 Robinson thanks Lord Carlisle for beech and Spanish chestnut trees sent from Castle Howard.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The kitchen garden lies c 250m south-west of the house and consists of a rectangular, brick-walled enclosure. It is shown on the late C18 map subdivided into small compartments.

**REFERENCES** *Country Life*, 42 (22 September 1917), pp 276-82; (29 September 1917), pp 300-5; 117 (19 May 1955), pp 1302-5 *Rokeby Park*, guidebook, (1986)

Maps W Wildon, *A Plan of J S Morrill Esq.'s Park Rokeby*, nd, late C18 (reproduced in guidebook)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1854

Description written: May 1998 Amended: March 1999 Register Inspector: CEH Edited: September 2000

## 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.