

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

NUN APPLETON HALL

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

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Name: NUN APPLETON HALL

County: North Yorkshire

District: Selby (District Authority)

Parish: Acaster Selby

County: North Yorkshire

District: Selby (District Authority)

Parish: Appleton Roebuck

County: North Yorkshire

District: Selby (District Authority)

Parish: Bolton Percy

label.localisation: Latitude: 53.856852
Longitude: -1.1565940
National Grid Reference: SE 55573 40399
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1001069
Date first listed: 10-May-1984

Details

Park probably developed in the C18 with C17 or earlier origins and pleasure grounds with mid C19 features.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The property originated as a nunnery which received a foundation charter c 1150. There is no record of the house in the Valor Ecclesiasticus but it was valued at £29 2s 1d in 1522-3 (VCH 1913). Following the Dissolution, the property passed to Sir Thomas Fairfax (1521-99), whose mother, Isabel Thwaites, had been brought up at the nunnery in the care of the Abbess. In the late C17 it was owned by Thomas, third Lord Fairfax, who as General Fairfax, commander of the Parliamentary forces from 1645 to 1650, gained the nickname 'Black Tom'. In 1650, at the age of thirty-eight, he retired from active military service and retreated to his gardens at Nun Appleton (Webb 2001). Andrew Marvell was tutor to Fairfax's daughter Mary from 1650 to 1652 and his poem, Upon Appleton House, is dedicated to Fairfax. The poem emphasises the natural beauty of the site, and mentions a formal garden laid out by Fairfax. The estate passed to the Milner family in the early C18. It remains in private ownership (2000).

DESCRIPTION

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LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Nun Appleton lies c 12km south-south-west of York in a setting which is rural and agricultural. The c 172ha site is on level land on the north side of the River Wharfe. Shelter belts and woodland divide the park from the surrounding agricultural land on the north, east, and south-east boundaries. The boundary on the south-west side is formed by a short stretch of the Wharfe and a track leading to Mote Hall (outside the registered area). On the west side, the drive from Oak Lodge, at the north-west tip of the site, extends to the southern part of Stone Bridge Plantation, forming the western boundary to this point. The remaining boundary on this side is formed by fences.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The principal entrance to the site is from the north-west where Oak Lodge stands beside the byroad from Bolton Percy. From this point the drive runs south-east for c 500m as an avenue and then continues towards the Hall. The drive divides c 250m north-west of the Hall, with one section leading south to the kitchen garden and the other running east over a bridge called Stone Bridge to the stables and then south to the Hall. This arrangement conforms to what is shown on Jefferys's county map of 1771. On the north side of the site, a road called Damfield leads to Red Lodge where it divides, with one branch leading south as Jew Leys Lane to cross the main approach from Oak Lodge and the other running east as a drive through woodland and then turning south at White Lodge on the edge of woodland c 800m north of the Hall. The drive continues south to the Hall on the line of a drive shown on the 1771 map. On the east side of the site, a byroad called Acaster Avenue leads to an entrance and continues as a drive which runs south-west across the park to the Hall. The eastern part of this approach seems to conform to a path running through woodland shown on an undated C16 map. There are various other informal entrances to the site.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Nun Appleton Hall (listed grade II) stands on the south side of the site overlooking the River Wharfe, near the site of a Cistercian nunnery founded in the C12. The Hall is of brick with stone dressings and the garden elevation is distinguished by a central bay with two giant Tuscan columns brought from Kirkham Abbey carrying a balcony. Sir Thomas Fairfax began work on the building in the late C16 and it was completed by his grandson, General Thomas Fairfax in the mid C17. The C16 map has a drawing of a gabled house on the site of the present building showing the south and west elevations divided into square panels, possibly suggesting a pattern of timber framing. The wording of Marvell's poem (c 1652) suggests that at the time the building was simple and unpretentious. The Hall is shown in two mid to late C17 views by Daniel King (reproduced in Dixon Hunt 1978) with wings on each side of the main range and a cupola. Alterations were carried out c 1710 for the Milner family. E B Lamb made various additions and alterations in the C19 but these were demolished. More additions followed in 1920 by B Chippindale of Bradford, including a tower attached to the west end and a porch. A stable block lies c 100m north of the main building.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens and pleasure grounds lie on the south and south-east sides of the Hall. Immediately south of the building there are lawns which slope gently to the south. These are fringed with mature trees and a path leading to the entrance in the garden front is lined with topiary evergreens. The 1849/51 OS map shows a less formal arrangement, with lawns studded with scattered trees, while the 1908 OS map shows a rectangular lawn planted with conifers. Paths lead off to the east to a less formal wooded area where a serpentine lake, called the Fishpond, runs east to west c 50m south-east of the Hall, much as shown on the 1849/51 OS map. The edges of the pond are lined with fragments of medieval masonry. The pond does not appear on the C16 map or on Jefferys's county map of 1771. A winding path continues east through a band of woodland which forms the southern boundary of the site and continues to Sicklebit Wood at the south-east corner of the site. It divides at this point, with one branch leading south into the wood and the other running north through woodland known as Walnut Grove. The path continues north through Acaster Belt and joins with Acaster Avenue, the principal approach to the Hall from the east.

Lord Fairfax is credited by Andrew Marvell with creating gardens in the mid C17: 'In the just figure of a fort / And with five bastions it did fence / As aiming one for every sense' (Upon Appleton House, stanza 36). This part of the poem is a reflection upon war and Fairfax's military career so it is possible it is not an accurate description of the garden. Marvell mentions alleys (stanza 37) and a profusion of flowers (stanzas 37-9). It is not known where the garden was sited and no visible trace of it appears to survive. One of the mid to late C17 views by Daniel King (Dixon Hunt 1978) shows a formal pattern of rectangular beds and paths on the south side of the Hall.

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PARK Parkland lies on the north side of the Hall. It consists of grassland which rises gently to the north and is planted with scattered trees. A winding stream called The Fleet runs approximately north to south through the western part of the park, continuing past the Hall and draining into the Wharfe. Parkland in the north-west corner of the site to the west of The Fleet is called Longthwaite, with an area of woodland to the south called Stone Bridge Plantation. This part of the park is as shown on the 1845 OS map, while the 1771 county map shows the park surrounded by a pale and confined to the east side of The Fleet. Most of the perimeter of the park is planted with shelter belts and woods. A circular lake lies c 750m north-east of the Hall beside Home Farm. This is shown on the 1771 county map but not on the C16 map. The latter shows the park occupying much the same footprint as the county map, but most of it is shown as woodland, while in 1771 grassland is shown with an informal pattern of trees. A late C17 view of the River Wharfe and the Hall beyond it by William Lodge (reproduced in Dixon Hunt 1978) shows what look like fences separating the park from low-lying water meadows or ings to the south (outside the registered area). The park appears to be well wooded in this view. Another late C17 view of the Hall across the river (YAS MS 338) shows it separated from the ings by an arcaded wall.

Marvell describes the site in stanza 10 of Upon Appleton Hall thus: 'But Nature here hath been so free / As if she said 'Leave this to me' / Art would more neatly have defaced / What she had laid so sweetly waste / In fragrant gardens, shady woods / Deep meadows and transparent floods'. Subsequent verses describe woodland with mature trees. C R Markham describes the park at the time of Fairfax's residence thus: 'a noble park with splendid oak trees, and containing 300 head of deer, stretched away to the north, while on the south side were the ruins of the old Nunnery, the flower-garden, and the low meadows called ings extending to the banks of the Wharfe' (quoted in Dixon Hunt 1978). This account appears to be partially based on observations made by Ralph Thoresby who visited in 1711 and described a 'spacious' park with '300 head of deer' (YAS MS 24 ff 272-3).

KITCHEN GARDEN A rectangular walled garden lies c 300m west of the Hall on the west side of The Fleet. It is reached from a path leading from the south-west corner of the garden which crosses The Fleet via a bridge, as shown on the 1908 OS map. The kitchen garden is shown on the 1845 OS map when it was reached from the main approach to the Hall over Stone Bridge. It is not marked on the 1771 county map. Marvell's poem of c 1652 mentions stoves for tender plants (Upon Appleton House, stanza 43) though it is not clear where these were situated.

REFERENCES

C R Markham, *Life of the Great Lord Fairfax* (1870), p 365 *Victoria History of the County of York III*, (1913), pp 170-3 H Macdonald (ed), *Andrew Marvell* (2nd edn 1956), pp 99-107 N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Yorkshire the West Riding* (1959), pp 382-3 A Dixon Hunt, *Andrew Marvell: His Life and Writings* (1978), pp 80-110 G Webb, *Fairfax of York The Life and History of a Noble Family* (2001), pp 15-17, 26

Maps Estate map, C16 (copy held at IOAAS, York) T Jefferys, *County Map of Yorkshire, 1771*

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1845; 6, published 1849 1st edition surveyed 1845; 7, published 1851 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1908

Illustrations Daniel King, *Nun Appleton House, c 1655* (reproduced in Dixon Hunt 1978; Webb 2001) *Arms and Monuments in Churches of the West Riding* (MS 338), (Yorkshire Archaeological Society archives) [includes drawing of Nun Appleton House]

Archival items *Diary of Ralph Thoresby* (MS 24), (Yorkshire Archaeological Society archives)

Description written: March 2000 Amended: April 2000, October 2004 (CAA) Register Inspector: CH Edited: October 2004

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.