

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

BEESTON HALL

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**BEESTON HALL**

Name: **BEESTON HALL**

County: Norfolk

District: North Norfolk (District Authority)

Parish: Ashmanhaugh

County: Norfolk

District: North Norfolk (District Authority)

Parish: Barton Turf

County: Norfolk

District: North Norfolk (District Authority)

Parish: Neatishead

label.localisation: Latitude: 52.744368  
Longitude: 1.4548693  
National Grid Reference: TG3329121903  
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden  
Grade: II  
List Entry Number: 1000551  
Date first listed: 18-Sep-1987

## Details

A late C18 landscape park designed by Nathaniel Richmond between 1774 and 1778, set around a late C18 Gothic-style flint house.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Prior to its purchase by Thomasine Preston in 1640, the Beeston estate had been owned by the Hobart family. By 1756 the Prestons had created a park of some kind (Castle Museum Deposit, NRO) although its size is unclear. The Hall was extensively rebuilt by Jacob Preston between 1773 and 1777 and he gave it a new front in the Gothic style. At the same time he began to modernise the landscape, commissioning Nathaniel Richmond to produce a design which included the relocation of the walled garden and the creation of a serpentine lake. The new Hall and its surroundings were illustrated by Booth in 1780 and by Repton in 1781. The Hall was completely rebuilt in a similar style but a little to the north in the 1780s, and Humphry Repton (1752-1818) records in his accounts a visit to Beeston in 1788, although it is not clear whether he provided any formal advice on the landscape at this time. Jacob died before the works were completed and it was left to his sister Elizabeth to finish the work. The first maps to show the new park in its entirety are Faden's county map of 1797 and an undated estate map of a similar

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date. Elizabeth's son Thomas inherited in 1815 and took the family name of Preston, continuing to carry out planting in the park up to the mid C19. The results of this work are recorded by Grigor in his *The Eastern Arboretum* published in 1841. By the end of the C19, when Thomas' son inherited, the park had expanded slightly to the east and north to cover c 100ha and it remained like this, its character little changed until the 1950s and 1960s when much of it was put under the plough. The site remained with the Prestons until the 1990s when the estate was broken up. The Hall and park remain (1999) in private ownership.

#### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Beeston Hall lies on the east side of the A1151, midway between the towns of Wroxham and Stalham Road on the northern edge of the Norfolk Broads. It sits in a rural part of the county which is characterised by a farmed landscape of large fields with few hedges. The registered site, which covers c 120ha, is square in shape with the Hall located at its centre. To the north the boundary is formed by blocks of woodland along Barton Turf Lane, while to the west a hedge runs alongside the A1151. Scattered plantations along the south boundary become more dense along the east boundary where the site meets the edge of Neatishead village. The northern half of the site is virtually level with a slight fall from west to east, while to the south the land falls away to the lake before rising again gently towards the southern boundary. The main views from the Hall are north-west, towards the church at Beeston St Lawrence, c 1km away; north-east from the garden front towards St Michael's church, Barton Turf, c 2km away; and south over the lake and park. The Hall can be glimpsed from the western boundary, with a particularly fine view looking south-east from the Beeston St Lawrence church.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The main entrance is from the west off the A1151. The gate is marked on the north side by a single two-storey, cream brick and tile lodge with stepped gables facing west and south. The c 1km approach drive is lined with oak (planted mid C20) and crosses a bridge over the lake, built as part of the late C18 landscaping of the park, c 150m west-south-west of the Hall. Just before the bridge it is joined by a second drive, now a grass track, which enters the park in the east in Neatishead village and runs through Street Plantation past the red-brick and tile Keeper's Cottage. Beyond the bridge the drives arrive at a grassed forecourt on the north-west front of the Hall.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** The present Beeston Hall (listed grade II\*) is a rectangular, two-storey 'gothic'-style brick building faced with coursed knapped flint. The slate roof is crenellated, has stepped gables on the north-east and south-west fronts and three clustered chimney stacks. The entrance front on the north-west has a three-bay projecting centre with arched porch and is flanked by two bays either side, each with arched windows. Attached to the north-east front is a low two-storey red-brick service range, beyond which lies the carriage house (listed grade II) and stable court (listed grade II), linked to the service range by a brewhouse (listed grade II). The Hall and the stable courtyard were built between 1784 and 1787, probably by Sir William Wilkins the Elder, for Jacob Preston, whilst the low service range which links the two was added in the early C19.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The gardens at Beeston lie on the south-east front and comprise a simple lawn edged with a late C20 rose bed. On the south-east face of the service wing and c 50m to the north-east of the Hall stands the Orangery (listed grade II), of gault and red brick with five glazed bays and a hipped roof. The building is linked to the Hall by a shrubbery border which has recently (1999) been extended beyond it to the north-east. The Orangery was built between 1784 and 1786 as part of the major landscape works, and the gardens planted with specimen trees in the early years of the C19. At this time a ha-ha boundary between the garden and park was constructed east of the Hall but this was filled in c 1980 and the new division between the two takes a different line. Some yew, holm oak, and oak survive in the gardens from the early C19.

**PARK** Beeston Park covers c 115ha of open parkland, arable land, and scattered groups of trees. An oval-shaped core of grass surrounds the Hall, beyond which the land has been put under the plough. Few old trees survive but those which are left include some fine veteran oaks and sweet chestnuts, particularly on the south bank of the lake. The park is bisected from north-west to south-east by a c 1km long serpentine lake, which passes some 200m south and west of the Hall. It was created by Nathaniel Richmond and is divided into upper and lower lakes by a weir, on top of which runs the bridge carrying the main drive to the Hall. At the western end of the lake is the Home Farm complex, screened by trees, which currently (1999) comprises a range of modern farm buildings together with the late C18 brick and pantile farmhouse, now known as *The House by the Lake* (listed grade II). The main area of woodland, known as Street Plantation, lies at the eastern end of the lake, to the east and south-east of the Hall, screening the boundary with Neatishead village. To the north, some 250m from the Hall, lies the walled kitchen garden

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completely enclosed by a plantation known as The Shrubbery. Beeston St Lawrence church stands c 1km from the Hall in the north-west corner of the park, backed by Church Plantation, and together these form a visual element in the landscape scheme. The park and its main features, including the lake, bridge, and boundary plantations are the work of Nathaniel Richmond who was a contemporary of Lancelot Brown and a mentor of Humphry Repton. Richmond worked at Beeston between 1774 and 1778, laying out a landscape to complement the new hall being constructed at the same time.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The walled kitchen garden lies c 250m north of the Hall, surrounded on all sides by a plantation of mixed deciduous trees with yew and box known during the C19 as The Shrubbery. The red-brick walls of the garden are complete but it has lost all its associated gardeners' stores and workshops. Internally the garden is laid out in a single compartment, currently (1999) cleared of all vegetation apart from a few trees at the western end and used to house animal pens. The walled garden was constructed during the 1770s at the direction of Nathaniel Richmond.

#### REFERENCES

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Maps Estate map, c 1790 (private collection) W Faden, A new topographical map of the county of Norfolk, 1797 (Norfolk Record Office) A Bryant, Map of the county of Norfolk, 1826 (Norfolk Record Office)  
OS Surveyor's drawings 1816 (British Library Maps) OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1889 2nd edition published 1907  
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Illustrations Booth, Hall and its surrounds, 1780 (Castle Museum Deposit, Norfolk Record Office) H Repton, Hall and its surrounds, 1781 (Castle Museum Deposit, Norfolk Record Office)  
Description written: May 1999 Register Inspector: EMP Edited: February 2001

## 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.