

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

PARCEVALL HALL

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**PARCEVALL HALL**

Name: PARCEVALL HALL

County: North Yorkshire

District: Craven (District Authority)

Parish: Appletreewick

National park: YORKSHIRE DALES

label.localisation: Latitude: 54.046048  
Longitude: -1.8952745  
National Grid Reference: SE 06955 61125  
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden  
Grade: II  
List Entry Number: 1001589  
Date first listed: 11-Feb-2002

## Details

An early C20 garden laid out by the architect Sir William Milner with formal and informal elements, and further developed by him during the mid C20.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The Manor of Appletreewick belonged to Bolton Priory before the monastery was dissolved in 1539. Persevell's farm was subsequently acquired by Peter Yorke, who left the property to his second son, Thomas, in 1589 (guidebook). Parcevall Hall was little altered until it was bought in 1927 by Sir William Milner Bt (1893-1960), whose godmother, Queen Mary, became a frequent visitor to the Hall. Sir William greatly extended the original stone farmhouse, constructing a courtyard behind it by blasting out large quantities of stone. The blasted stone was used to construct a formal terraced garden below the Hall, on the site of a former walled enclosure (OS 1853, 1909) and meadow. At the same time an extensive rock garden was created behind the Hall, using large stones brought from the nearby moor and placed around the exposed bedrock. The garden was initially laid out over three years from c 1930, supervised by a Mr Cross (Makin 1989). The garden was further developed during the following decades, including the construction of a fourth terrace in the 1950s, until Sir William's death in 1960. Up to thirteen gardeners were employed, and a fine collection of plant introductions was made. Sir William knew other contemporary garden-makers including the Hon Robert James of St Nicholas (qv), Richmond, North Yorkshire (to whom he was related by marriage via his cousin, Lady Serena James), and he obtained plants introduced from expeditions to Western China and Tibet by George Forrest and Reginald Farrer (ibid). The garden design and planting is thought to have represented an allegory of world religious faiths (Makin pers comm, April 2002).

On his death in 1960 Sir William left the Hall and gardens to the Walsingham Trust, who subsequently leased the property to the Diocese of Bradford as a retreat house, in which use it presently remains (2002).

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Parcevall Hall lies 1km north of the village of Skyreholme and 2km north-east of the village of Appletreewick in a remote valley which runs south into the north end of Wharfedale. The

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approximately triangular, c 9ha site is bounded to the north by Middle Hill, to the west by Skyreholme Beck, and to the south-west, south-east, and north-east by pasture. The site occupies a shoulder of land bounded by the Skyreholme Beck valley to the west and by a valley to the south-east through which a tributary of the Beck, Tarn Ghyll Beck, flows south-west, close to the south-east boundary of the site. The ground slopes steeply down from the northern tip of the site, above Trollers Gill Cave, to the lowest point at the southern tip, at the main entrance to the site where the two becks meet. The setting is rural, and very isolated at the heart of the Pennines, with long views extending south-east to Simon's Seat and Little Simon's Seat on Barden Fell, and south-west down the valley towards Barden Tower, a ruin standing several kilometres south in Wharfedale. A woodland called Tibet Wood, or Little Tibet, including Ruska Plantation, stands c 400m south-west of the Hall (outside the area here registered), planted by Sir William to shelter the site from the south-west winds (P Nelson pers comm, Jan 2002), and also creating an essential frame for views into and out of the site. It was planted with Douglas firs and silver firs together with some deciduous species. Access was via a ride flanked with flowering cherry trees which were removed in the 1980s (Makin pers comm, April 2002).

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The main approach enters the site 300m south-west of the Hall, at the north end of the lane from Skyreholme. A wooden bridge stands at the end of the lane, marking the entrance to the site, straddling the Skyreholme Beck. From here the drive runs north-east between two stone estate cottages, continuing north, carried across the Tarn Ghyll Beck by a small stone bridge standing 250m south-west of the Hall. From here it runs up the steep hillside flanked by wooded lawns, with glimpses of the Hall and terraces above to the north and the Skyreholme Beck valley below to the west. The drive turns east, flanked by low stone walls, 50m west of the Hall. The drive passes to the south of a motor house and yard, and then Sir William's chapel and its associated small formal garden (from which it is separated by a clipped beech hedge), to arrive at the outer court on the west front of the Hall. The court is bounded by a stone wall on the west side, the central entrance being marked by a gateway flanked by stone piers topped with tall lantern fittings. The court is bounded by an exposed rock alpine bed on the north side, by Sir William's northern extension to the Hall to the east, and to the south by the south wing of the Hall, from which a stone wall with a doorway projects westwards to meet the west wall of the court. The doorway gives access to the garden terraces and the front door on the south front of the Hall. From the outer court the garden is hidden, only being revealed, together with the extensive view south, upon opening the wooden garden door. A carriage arch in the northern extension on the east side of the outer court gives access to the service wing of the Hall and beyond this, to the east, to the inner courtyard. This enclosure is bounded to the north, west, and south by buildings, with a high stone wall on the east side. An exposed outcrop of stone occupies the northern end of the inner court, planted with alpine species.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Parcevall Hall (C16, extended 1928-30, listed grade II\*) stands towards the north-east boundary of the site. By the early C20 it had become a farmhouse which, when the architect Sir William Milner bought it in 1927, was extended significantly by him to the north in similar vernacular style. The two-storey building is built of local ashlar and faces south, overlooking the formal garden terraces below.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The gardens and pleasure grounds are divided into two main sections: a series of formal terraces adjacent to the south front of the Hall, and informal largely wooded pleasure grounds enclosing the Hall and terraces.

The front door of the Hall, at the centre of the south front of the earliest wing, leads out onto the stone-flagged path which runs the length of the top terrace and is flanked by a narrow strip of lawn to the south and a border to the north. The east boundary of the top three of the four terraces is formed by a stone wall, stepped down to the south to follow the terraces. At the east end of the top terrace, set into the wall, is a large doorway with a stone roof, with stone steps up to it giving access to woodland walks beyond. The west end of the top terrace widens to accommodate two beds surrounded by stone flags, with, to the north, the doorway in the north wall to the outer courtyard. This area is bounded to the west by a stone wall and to the east partly by the Hall. The south side of the top terrace is bounded by a buttressed stone retaining wall, at the centre of which a flight of shallow stone steps leads down to the second terrace. The steps are flanked by two small bastions protruding from the retaining wall, providing viewing points from the top terrace. Long panoramic views extend south from all the terraces towards Simon's Seat and down the valley to the south-east towards Wharfedale.

The steps lead down to the centre of the second terrace (also known as First or Round Pond Terrace), which is somewhat broader than the top terrace and divided by clipped yew hedges into three main compartments, all approximately square and of the same size. This terrace is bounded to the south by a further stone retaining wall. The central compartment is laid largely to stone flags with a central circular pool, encircled by beds set in the flags. The flanking compartments are laid largely to lawn encircled by stone-flagged paths and borders. At the east end of this terrace stands a pergola with square stone pillars and wooden cross members, running alongside and protected by the east terrace wall. At the south end of the pergola is a further doorway set into the east wall, smaller than the one on the terrace above, again giving access to the woodland garden beyond.

From the central compartment on the second terrace a double flight of stone steps leads down to the third terrace (also known as Second or Long Pond Terrace) which is again divided into three compartments by clipped yew hedges. The steep steps descend around a rectangular pool set into the retaining wall and covered by a semicircular arch, to emerge on a flight of broad stone steps leading down to the lawn which runs the length of the terrace, through each compartment. The western compartment contains a rectangular stone pool at the centre of the lawn. The lawn is largely enclosed by borders. The east end of the eastern compartment rises up several steps to a raised lawn enclosed on the west side by a clipped yew hedge.

From the central compartment on the third terrace a further double flight of stone steps leads down to the fourth terrace (known as Bottom Terrace), enclosing a seat in a stone-arched alcove. The fourth terrace is laid to lawn and divided by lines of stone setts into three compartments which step down to the west. A long border runs along the bottom of the buttressed retaining wall, containing to the east agapanthus and to the west nerines. Steps lead down to a broad lawn which extends south flanked by the Red Borders (herbaceous), these in turn flanked by clipped hedges. Beyond the hedges, to east and west, lie rectangular areas of orchard known as The Ploughings, and beyond these to the south is a further informal lawn bounded by mature trees. The top three terraces were laid out by Sir William in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The 1909 OS map shows that before his work a terrace ran along the south front of the Hall, with a roughly square compartment adjacent to the south of this, probably a kale yard. Sir William retained and embellished the top terrace and created the two below in his initial campaign. The fourth terrace was laid out during the 1950s, also under his direction (Makin 1989). The Ploughings were ploughed up during the Second World War for vegetables.

From the outer courtyard the rest of the gardens are reached via the Chapel Garden. The Chapel Garden is a formal enclosed compartment laid out with a cruciform pattern of stone paths dividing beds to the east of, and overlooked by the small chapel built by Sir William when he bought the site which stands 30m west of the Hall. A formal, stone, stepped cascade runs down the bank from the north, into a semicircular pool (known as Half Moon Pond) set in the paving. At the north-west corner of the Chapel Garden a flight of steps leads up the bank to the extensive Rock Garden which occupies the hillside immediately north of the Hall. The Rock Garden is laid out with a series of pools around which paths wind northwards, and occupies an area of limestone which was stripped of its top soil and exposed by Sir William in order to create conditions suitable for alpine plants. The water is piped from a nearby spring and supplies the Hall and water features in the gardens below. At the north end of the Rock Garden a path continues northwards up the steep hillside through woodland to the northern tip of the site, to reach the Cliff Walk. This Walk overlooks Skyreholme Beck in the valley to the west and Trollers Gill to the north. The path returns south through the orchard, lying 50m north-west of the Hall, which is planted with mature fruit trees. To the south-east lies the Rose Garden, a series of rectangular rose beds divided by gravel paths, laid out by Sir William and remodelled in the 1990s. On the north side of the compartment stands a stone garden pavilion with a stone roof, overlooking the Rose Garden.

South-west of the Rose Garden and west of the drive is The Wilderness, a wooded area through which the drive winds.

From the Rock Garden a path winds south-east through a shelter belt of conifers and deciduous trees, passing the east wall of the garden terraces, to Tarn Ghyll Wood. The walk encircles the Wood, which is bounded by a paddock on the north side. Tarn Ghyll Beck runs through the Wood and is dammed 200m south-east of the Hall. The stone dam now (2002) leaks, but formerly held a pool to the north-east of it, around which the woodland walk extends. North-east of the pool (currently empty) the woodland walk turns south-west to run parallel to the site boundary to the south, arriving back at the point where the drive is carried across the Tarn Ghyll Beck north of the estate cottages. Formerly a circle of conifers stood to the south-west of the

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dam, encircling a group of rhododendrons in which stood a seat. The seat overlooked the dam spillway which was constructed to look like a natural waterfall. This feature has largely disappeared (Makin pers comm, April 2002).

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The rectangular kitchen garden lies in a sheltered position 175m south-west of the Hall, adjacent to the south end of the west boundary. It is bounded by stone walls and given over to several uses including lawn at the northern end, vegetable beds along the west and south sides, and car parking on the east side. At the north end stands a lean-to glasshouse. The walled garden was erected during the 1930s for Sir William.

**REFERENCES**

Country Life, 132 (25 October 1962), pp 1039-41 M Allen, Fison's Guide to Gardens in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales (1970), pp 255-6 K Lemmon, Gardens of Britain 5, (1978), pp 101-4 J Makin, Parcevall Hall Gardens, (dissertation, IoAAS, University of York 1989) Parcevall Hall Gardens, guidebook, (c 1990s) English Heritage Register Review: North Yorkshire (1995)

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1853 3rd edition published 1909

Description written: January 2002 Amended: April 2002 Register Inspector: SR Edited: May 2002

## 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.