

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

HARDWICK PARK

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Name:	HARDWICK PARK
District:	County Durham (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Sedgefield
label.localisation:	Latitude: 54.656096 Longitude: -1.4641790 National Grid Reference: NZ 34667 29132 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000730 Date first listed: 07-Oct-1986

Details

Pleasure grounds laid out for John Burdon in the period c 1748-60, with a range of garden buildings designed by James Paine mostly now (1998) missing or ruinous. Parkland of C18 or earlier origin.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

A manor house with a domestic chapel is recorded on the site in 1449, and the Hebborne family owned the land at the beginning of the C16. The estate was confiscated from the Hebbornes for their part in the Rising of the North and subsequently awarded to George Frevile. It remained in the Frevile family until 1748 when it was bought by John Burdon. Burdon began laying out the grounds and engaged James Paine c 1754 to design a series of garden buildings which were executed by Durham architect John Bell.

The site remained in private ownership until 1923. After various changes in ownership part of the site was acquired by Durham County Council in the 1970s and the Hall and part of the garden by an hotel group. The remaining areas are farmed and are in private ownership (1998).

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Hardwick Park lies immediately west of Sedgefield in an area which is otherwise rural and agricultural. The A177 to the east of the Hall divides parkland from the pleasure grounds. The c 80ha site is on rolling land bounded by tracks dividing it from agricultural land on the south-west, west and north sides. On the north side the main entrance drive continues westwards behind the Hall from which point it forms the northern boundary. It continues west and north-west to Low Hardwick Farm, and was formerly a road leading to Nunstainton which is shown on a county map of 1768 but not on the 1858 OS map. The gardens of houses backing from Station Road and from a housing estate west of Durham Road are on the eastern boundary, and the remains of a belt of trees, shown on the 1858 OS map, divides parkland from open land between the blocks of housing.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main entrance to the site is from the A177, which was built across open countryside and through the park during the C20, from which a drive runs north-west to the Hall. The 1858 OS map shows that this was a secondary entrance into the pleasure grounds, with the main entrance on Durham Road in Sedgefield, c 900m to the east. The western part of this drive survives as a track which has the remains of an avenue, shown on the 1858 map, at its west end.

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Inventory of Great Britain
HARDWICK PARK

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Hardwick Hall (listed grade II) is a house of 1634 which was remodelled, probably by John Burdon, in the C18. It is a relatively modest L-shaped building with pebble-dashed walls and a hipped roof. The interior was remodelled in the early C20. The Hall lies on the north side of the site overlooking falling land to the south. Immediately north of the Hall there is a stable block, probably of C18 origin, ranged around a courtyard. The Hall is currently (1998) in use as an hotel.

John Burdon commissioned a design for an ambitious new mansion from James Paine (1717-89), and this was to have stood in a commanding position to the west of the present building. It would have had axial relationships with, and views of, the various garden buildings.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The pleasure grounds occupy a sub-rectangular area south of the Hall. The area immediately to the south and east of the Hall acts as car parking and is tarmacked. There are lawns on all sides but the north. A brick wall is attached to the west wing of the Hall and this extends westwards for a distance of c 110m. At its midpoint there is a pedimented C18 garden pavilion (pavilion and wall listed grade II) overlooking lawns which slope down to the south, and there are views to the south and south-west over rolling land. The lawn immediately in front of the wall was to have been the site of the new mansion. A garden pavilion designed by James Paine in Gothick style stood c 200m south-west of the Hall, overlooking a circular pool. The pool survives, but the pavilion was demolished in the mid to late C20.

A serpentine lake, c 3km in length, describes an arc from a point c 100m south of the Hall to a point c 600m south-west of it, running through an area of woodland and scrub. There is an island c 500m south of the Hall on which is a plinth which formerly supported a statue of Neptune, removed late C20. The water can be glimpsed from the south front of the Hall, and the 1854-7 OS map shows open lawns with scattered trees between the Hall and Serpentine shore, with a band of woodland running along the eastern edge of the pleasure grounds. Paths lead around the wooded eastern and southern sides of the lake, much as shown on the 1854-7 OS map. On the hillside east of the lake, c 200m south-east of the Hall, a platform marks the site of Paine's Banqueting House which lay overlooking the Serpentine, with views beyond to the west. Some 400m south-east of the Hall, overlooking the Serpentine, is a folly (listed grade II*) in the form of a ruined castle, also designed by Paine, which incorporates medieval masonry from Guisborough Priory.

The lakeside path leads to a bridge, called the Serpentine Bridge (Paine, restored 1990s, listed grade II), across the lake, and runs north-west across open grassland to a tree-covered platform c 450m south-west of the Hall. Stone steps lead up onto the platform where there are the ruinous remains of a neoclassical temple designed by Paine and called the Temple of Minerva. This structure was lavishly decorated by the Italian stuccadores Cartesi & Bornesi with paintings by Hayman. There are long-distance views over rolling land on the north and west sides, and across arable and pasture land to the north-east to the proposed site of the new house, and the existing Hall beyond. The views are partially obscured by trees; C19 accounts describe long-distance panoramic views. The low-lying area between the Temple and Hall was occupied by a large lake shown on a county map of 1768, but is now (1998) under arable cultivation. The platform was probably constructed using spoil from the digging of the lake. The 1854-7 OS map shows the lake, with the Serpentine curving around its east and south sides. It was drained in the late C19, and boggy areas at its south-east corner are all that survive. It was described in 1794 as 'the finest sheet of water in the north of England' (Hutchinson) and covered an area of c 15ha. The lake was the central unifying feature of the landscape, and the structures ranged around it would have been seen in the context of a large expanse of water.

Some 400m south-west of the Hall, on the wooded west side of the former lake, the ruinous remains of Paine's gothick summerhouse, called Bono Retiro, are situated at the head of a rectangular pool which connected with the lake by means of a cascade (demolished late C20). Paine's bath house, demolished C20, was situated north of Bono Retiro, at the north-west tip of the lake, and was aligned with the tower of St Edmund's church in Sedgfield (medieval, listed grade I), which lies c 1.5km to the east and would have been visible as the terminus to a vista along the north side of the lake, across the circular pool, and on through a clearing in the woodland immediately north of the Banqueting House, which is now (1998) overgrown but is shown on the 1854-7 OS map. This was described in 1794 as a 'grand terrace, a gravel walk about 24 feet in width ... at this point of view (looking over a circular bason of water) the bath-house terminates the prospect at one end, and the tower of Sedgfield church at the other' (Hutchinson). The north-west corner of the site is wooded, as shown on the 1854-7 OS map, and the former northern shore of the lake, now obscured by scrub, was open to view.

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
HARDWICK PARK

PARK The park lies on the east side of the site. The remains of a ha-ha are visible for a short distance on the north side of the entrance, and the 1854-7 OS map shows this extending northwards around the kitchen garden. The parkland consists of open grassland with scattered mature trees. Bands of perimeter planting and clumps shown in the southern part of the park on the OS map have largely disappeared. Part of an area on the north-east side of the park which is shown as open parkland on the OS map has been built on.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden lies c 200m north-east of the Hall and consists of a rectangular brick enclosure which is now (1998) used as commercial nurseries. Immediately north of the gardens there is a house which may have been a gardener's house. Garden and house are shown on the 1854-7 OS map, when there was a range of buildings along the north wall and trees within the garden. Garden and house were divided from parkland on the east side by a ha-ha, traces of which remain, this feature continuing around the north and west sides although here little of it survives.

REFERENCES

W Hutchinson, *History of Durham* (1794), pp 65-7 Anon, *A Walk through Hardwicke Gardens* (1811) R Surtees, *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham* (1823), pp 34-5 G Fordyce, *History of Durham* (1855), pp 437-40 Victoria *History of the County of Durham* 3, (1928), p 322 B Jones, *Follies & Grottoes* (1974), p 297 N Pevsner and E Williamson, *The Buildings of England: County Durham* (1983), pp 301-2 P Leach, *James Paine* (1988), pp 75-7, 115-6, 138-40, 187-8
Maps T Jefferys, *County map*, 1768

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1858 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1854-7

Description written: May 1998 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.