

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

LAMBTON CASTLE

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Name:	LAMBTON CASTLE
District:	County Durham (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Bournmoor
District:	County Durham (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
District:	County Durham (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	North Lodge
label.localisation:	Latitude: 54.866250 Longitude: -1.5437721 National Grid Reference: NZ 29380 52481 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001438 Date first listed: 07-Oct-1999

Details

An extensive parkland with central pleasure grounds, accompanying the C18 Hall, extended in the early C19 when a new country house was built.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The Lambton estate has belonged to the Lambton family since the C12. General John Lambton (1710-94) called in Joseph Bonomi to build a new mansion on the site of, and incorporating the core of, the C18 Harraton Hall, which had been purchased by the Lambtons from the Hedworths in 1688. The General's sudden death in 1794 brought a halt to the project, but his heir, William Henry (1765-97), retained Bonomi as architect and a new house was designed. The Hall was burnt down in 1797 and the new work commenced. John George Lambton, later first Earl Durham, on inheriting the estate commissioned Bonomi's son Ignatius to embellish his father's work and convert it into a 'castle'; extensions to the imparked area were also undertaken. The mansion was affected by subsidence caused by coal workings and John Dobson was called in to, at great expense, stabilise the building. By 1860, part of the Castle had been taken down and remodelled with a Great Hall, porte-cochère and reception rooms designed by Sidney Smirke, Dobson's son-in-law. These were demolished in 1932. The site remains (2000) in private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Lambton Castle stands to the north-east of Chester-le-Street. The c 350ha site lies to north and south of the River Wear which flows through it, the river valley becoming increasingly narrow and steep-sided towards the east side of the park. The ground the park occupies is uneven, with a number of steep-sided dens. Although some of the agricultural setting of the park remains, the surrounding areas are increasingly urban.

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The boundaries of the park are marked by the South Belt and park wall along Chester Road to the south; a belt of woodland known as Picktree Quay to the east of the A1(M) to the west; the North Belt south of Bonemill Lane and Weardale Way to the north; and a broad belt of woodland, Scorer's Wood, dividing the park from the farmland beyond to the east.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main entrance from Chester-le-Street is via the early C19 Newbridge gates at the ashlar arched gateway (listed grade II) which stands, with its accompanying lodge, Chester Lodge (listed grade II), on Chester Street to the north of the ancient Chester New Bridge, just back from the public road. Both lodge and gateway are by Bonomi, 1815. This drive leads across the park to the Lamb Bridge (listed grade II*), a single arch of ashlar sandstone, built in 1819 by Ignatius Bonomi, which carries the drive over the River Wear. From here the drive climbs through a cutting before turning south to meet the north-west edge of the pleasure grounds. This point is marked by a large elaborate gateway (listed grade II*), standing c 175m north-west of the Castle, with carriage and pedestrian entrances through wrought-iron gates set between serpentine-plan railings. It is of c 1820 in date and is possibly to the designs of Bonomi.

Passing through the gate, the approach continues for 150m to pass between a pair of piers surmounted by carved stone lions holding spears, which mark its entry into the court on the north front of the Castle. The lions, by Beale of Newcastle, c 1862, originally stood on the gables of the Great Hall and were moved to this position when it was demolished c 1932. The court is enclosed by two arcaded ashlar garden walls (both sections listed grade II) of mid C19 date, the western half running westwards for c 70m, that to the north being L-shaped, running north from the lion's pier for c 15m then turning a right angle to run eastwards for c 55m.

Another main drive (disused) enters the north-west corner of the estate at Picktree. Some 700m to the west of this lies the site of the late C18 North Lodge (Bonomi, now demolished) and its accompanying gateway, on the east side of the North Road. From here, the remains of the North Drive, a straight road now lined with houses but formerly passing through a strip of woodland leads eastwards to the A1(M) trunk road. The North Drive continues on the east side of the A1(M), here retaining its flanking woodland, to cross Picktree Lane just to the north of Picktree Farm, so entering the park (and the area here registered). From here it continues north-east through Rickleton Wood, turning south-eastwards to join the approach which leads south off Bonemill Lane, 50m to the west of Harraton Lodge. A fine pair of early C19 gate piers by Bonomi (listed grade II) mark this entrance, these having been moved to this site from the former entrance west of Picktree as a result of road alterations. From here the drive continues across the park to meet the south drive at the gateway leading in to the pleasure grounds.

From the south-east, a track leads from The Lodge (listed grade II), c 1875 and in polychrome brick, and matching gateway (listed grade II) which stands on the Chester Road at Bournmoor, west of the church of St Barnabas, north-west across farmland to the site of a pair of early C19 lodges (now demolished), known as Sunderland Lodge or Twin Cottages, which stood on the eastern edge of the east shelter belt, 850m south-east of the Castle, marking the entrance of the eastern drive into the park.

There are also entrances from Fatfield Lodge, 600m north-east of the Castle on the lane west from Chartershaught; the buff brick Penschaw Lodge (c 1875, listed grade II under East Lodge) 600m to the east of the Castle; and Houghton Gate Lodge on Chester Road, on the south side of the site.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Lambton Castle (listed grade II*) stands to east of centre of its park, immediately to the north of the River Wear which flows through the steep-sided valley below, the far, southern bank, known as River Drive Wood, as with much of this stretch, being well wooded. The Castle was built c 1820-8 by Ignatius Bonomi for John George Lambton, and incorporates the core of the C18 Harraton Hall. In 1862-5, Sidney Smirke was called in to implement the designs of John Dobson. West of the Castle the ground is levelled as a grass terrace, this having been the site of the mid C19 extension, demolished in 1932.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS To the south of the Castle is a terrace, laid to grass, supported by a substantial, buttressed retaining wall (listed grade II) of ashlar sandstone, with embattled parapet and turrets above each buttress, the wall being part of Ignatius Bonomi's work and hence c 1822(8). A flight of steps at its eastern end lead down to the lawn which runs to the river's edge. To the north of the north court, arcing round to the west of the west terrace, is an area of pleasure grounds. Within this area, 100m to the north of the Castle, is the former dairy (listed grade II), built in the mid C19 in the form of a Romanesque chapel. East of the Castle, walks, including the Dairy Walk, the High Walk, Rock Walk and Gashouse Drive, lead

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along the valley side towards the New Bridge across the Wear, and to the kitchen garden. In the mid C19 the kitchen garden area included a flower garden with central pool surrounded by rockwork. To the west of the walled garden are a series of grass terraces, these being the site of an extensive area of bedding out and flower gardening undertaken in the 1860s (J Horticulture and Cottage Gardener 1873).

To the west of the Castle, a walk, Wear Walk, leads along the bank of the river through an area known as The Bottoms which lies at the foot of the steeply rising Welsh's Bank. Closer to the Castle, the east end of this bank is known as Greenhouse Bank, which was formed in the mid C19 (Gardener's Mag). A 'suspension bridge' (OS 1862) spanning North Drive links Greenhouse Bank with the Castle to the east. Greenhouse Bank formerly contained a flower garden and a conservatory with banqueting room, and also an enclosed area with plant pits and frames, these features being clearly shown on the 1st edition OS map along with others including a summerhouse.

There are also drives, the main one known as the Black Drive, along the wooded southern bank, linking the two bridges and continuing through the eastern boundary belt. A description of the estate of 1834 describes the Black Drive as being 'most delightful' (Mckenzie and Ross) and the 1st edition OS (1862) shows this ornamented with features including a waterfall, footbridges, two summerhouses and several wells.

PARK Areas of park lie to both north and south of the river. The 1819 survey by John Bell suggests the park was extended to the west around this date to take in the area of Rickleton Wood west to Picktree, and that east from Houghton Gate Lodge drive and park wall to the already planted belt, the intervening fields too already bearing some planting.

The northern park is defined by Rickleton Wood to the west, the North Belt to the north, and the woodland surrounding the kitchen garden to the east. Within this area, c 250m north of the Castle, is the mid C19 stable block (the castellated stone centrepiece listed grade II). Also within the park are two main stands of wood, the Three Acre Clump, now forming part of North Belt, and Virginia Wood to the east. Within the latter is a pond known as the Lady's Pond.

To the south of the Wear, c 600m south-west of the Castle, stands the stud farm, formerly the site of the kitchen gardens of the old Lambton Hall and now (1998) used as loose boxes. Some 150m to the north-east of this complex are Brewery Cottages (early C17, altered 1884, listed grade II) which stand in the vicinity of the former Hall. The land at the western end of this part of the park, lying within the bend in the river, is known as The Raceground from its use as such in the early 1820s. To the south of the west drive are open areas known as Ayrie's Bank and Kennel Field, divided from one another by bands of woodland. Within Kennel Field lies Kennel Pond, the names coming from the kennels which formerly (OS 1862) stood north-west of the pond. The south-east corner of the site, between the wooded bank of the river to the north, the South Belt to the south, and defined by Scorer's Wood to the east, is an area of former park. Towards the east side of this ground, just to the north of the east drive, stands a dower house, The Grange. Much of the land south of this was developed as a wildlife park in the 1980s, and evidence of this use survives in the landscape. East of the drive which runs north from Houghton Gate Lodge, between this line and the eastern shelter belt, is an area known as The Paddocks, which appears to have remained divided into large fields at least from the 1820s (estate map).

Few of the parkland features which are indicated on the early editions of the Ordnance Survey survive in either the northern or the southern parts of the park. Few parkland trees and little mature woodland remain. Many areas are under the plough, and the structure of the park has been greatly altered through the extensive increase in forestry during the mid and late C20.

KITCHEN GARDEN The brick-walled kitchen garden stands c 500m to the north-east of the Castle. To the north and north-west of the walled enclosure are a series of terraces on which much of the extensive range of glass stood, a little surviving still, the now (1998) grass slopes in between being used in the C19 for flower gardening and bedding out. The central square garden was laid out in 1819 'on the most approved plan' (Gardener's Mag 1834), the gardener's house and bothy being considered at the time as being of particularly high quality. Additions were made, particularly to the east, in the 1860s.

REFERENCES

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P Meadows, Joseph Bonomi Architect 1739-1808 (1988) P Meadows and A Waterson, Lost Houses of County Durham (1993), pp 48-9

Maps John Bell, Survey, 1819 (private collection) Estate map, 1821 (private collection)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1862 2nd edition published 1898 3rd edition published 1921

Description written: March 1998 Amended: February 2000 Register Inspector: SR 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.