

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

NUNNINGTON HALL

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| Name: | NUNNINGTON HALL |
| County: | North Yorkshire |
| District: | Ryedale (District Authority) |
| Parish: | Nunnington |
| label.localisation: | Latitude: 54.206283 Longitude: -0.97353220 National Grid Reference: SE6705079435 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF) |
| label.overview: | Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001070 Date first listed: 10-May-1984 |

Details

Walled gardens of the late C17 or early C18 which are divided into compartments and have raised lawns and a terrace walk.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Nunnington Hall is situated on land leased in the early medieval period from the Abbey of St Mary in York. It was owned by Sir Walter de Treys in the C15 and subsequently by the Grene family. It passed to the Parr family through marriage, but reverted to the Crown in 1553 after the abortive attempt to place Lady Jane Grey on the throne, in which William Parr, Marquess of Northampton, was implicated. A sub-lease was granted in 1583 to the Norcliffe family, who lived at Nunnington for sixty years. Following the Civil War, in 1655, the freehold of the estate was purchased by Ranald Graham whose son, Richard, was created Viscount Preston and Baron Esk in 1681. The estate passed through the female line, eventually coming into the ownership of Sir Bellingham Reginald Graham, seventh baronet, of Norton Conyers (qv) in the early C19. It was sold to William Rutson in 1839 and passed by marriage to the Fife family who bequeathed the Hall and part of the garden to the National Trust in 1952, in whose ownership it remains. The part of the garden not included in the bequest remains in private ownership (1998).

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Nunnington Hall lies immediately to the east of the village of Nunnington on the south bank of the River Rye. The c 2.5ha site is on land which rises gently to the south. The Rye forms the northern boundary, and walls divide the gardens from the village on the west side, and fields on the east side. On the south side, a bank within a field immediately south of the south garden wall marks the line of a former drive which is within the registered area.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The entrance to the Hall is off The Avenue in Nunnington, where gate piers with bulgy rustication and attached walls (late C17, listed grade II) lie at the end of a short drive running east from the road. Another entrance at the south-east tip of the site has gate piers with attached walls (listed grade II) which lack the bold rustication typical of other gateways on the site. This entrance is at the west end of a footpath from Nunnington Mill, and a path runs west from it into the village.

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The approach to the village from the south is via a minor road which runs as an avenue from Caulkleys Bank, c 1km south of the village. The Avenue, which is outside the registered area, is composed largely of sycamore, with a few mature lime trees within the village itself.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Nunnington Hall (listed grade I) is on or near the site of a medieval house first recorded in 1249. The present building probably originated in the mid C16, and was remodelled c 1600 by Thomas Norcliffe. The building was extended and refronted on the south side by Richard Graham, first Viscount Preston. The five-bay south front is flanked by projecting wings. A central entrance has an architrave with a broken pediment, and above this on the first floor there are double doors within an architrave with a broken pediment. The double doors lead to a balcony with a wrought-iron balustrade from which the gardens can be viewed.

One of the distinctive architectural features of the late C17 building work is the use of an unusual type of bulgy rustication for the east entrance of the Hall and for gate piers and gateways of the garden and main entrance. This feature probably derives from C17 French pattern books and gives a possible clue to the identity of Lord Preston's architect. York master mason, Robert Trollope, used similar rustication at Capheaton, Northumberland (qv), in 1667, and John Etty, who used French design elements at Spotborough (demolished), is another candidate.

Walter Brierley undertook a major restoration of the building in the 1920s when the balcony on the south front was restored.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The entrance on the west side of the site leads to a gravelled forecourt surrounded by a C20 hedge. Attached to the south-west corner of the Hall is a set of stone gate piers with attached walls (listed grade II) which lead into a walled garden on the south side of the Hall.

The garden falls into a series of compartments articulated about a north/south axis which centres on the central entrance in the south front of the Hall. Aligned with the front of the Hall there is a lawn flanked by raised lawns to the east and west which are planted with fruit trees. Immediately south of the lawn the land rises, and a grassed terrace walk runs east to west across the width of the garden, c 40m south of the Hall. Short flights of stone steps lead up to the walk at each end. A broad grassed walk, which slopes to the south, is aligned with the entrance in the south front of the Hall. It runs south from the lawn, over the terraced walk, to a gateway with a broken pediment (late C17, listed grade II) in the south wall of the garden, c 110m from the Hall. A drawing by Samuel Buck of c 1720 (reproduced in NT guidebook) shows that this was close to the site of a clairvoie with a low wall surmounted by railings, flanked by piers with finials. It is not known when this was removed, but the gateway was moved to this position in the 1920s by Walter Brierley. There are views from the gateway across rising pasture land (outside the registered area) to a ridge planted with pine trees on the southern horizon.

The borders of the grassed walk are planted on each side with shrubs, and on the east side there is a raised platform in use as a vegetable patch. To the west there is an area, also on a raised platform, formerly used as tennis courts and now (1998) in use as a nursery. Immediately south of this there is a formal garden of rectangular shape, surrounded by low walls with a paved path around a central flower bed, which was probably laid out in the 1920s. At the north-west corner of this area, stone steps lead down to a terraced walk.

Buck's drawing shows a formal garden in the western half of the garden with a statue of Neptune in a circular pond, and a geometric garden lined with trees and shrubs with a central statue. There is no obvious sign of any of these features, but the walls surrounding the garden, and the subdivisions within it, conform broadly to what is shown in the drawing. The garden was probably laid out in the late C17, but it is possible that Guillaume Beaumont, who visited Nunnington in 1702, and was gardener to Viscount Preston's cousin, Colonel James Graham of Levens Hall (qv), advised on the layout.

On the east side of the Hall there is an enclosure within the curve of the river which is divided from the rest of the garden by a stone wall with an entrance with a broken pediment attached to the south-east corner of the Hall. The gateway in the south wall of the garden originally stood opposite this entrance, attached to the north-east corner of the building. The enclosure is grassed and in use as a picnic site (1998).

At the north-east corner of the garden there is a gateway at the east end of a gravel path which runs along the south front of the Hall. This leads to a walled enclosure which is planted with trees, including some fruit trees. A path, called Lady Graham's Walk, leads alongside the river.

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OTHER LAND A field to the south of the garden walls has a scattering of mature trees and a line of pines planted along the skyline, suggesting it may have been part of the designed landscape, and may be related to an extension of landscape features, such as The Avenue, into the surrounding countryside. The lack of documentary evidence makes the role of this area uncertain and it therefore remains outside the boundary of the registered area.

REFERENCES

Country Life, 63 (4 February 1928), pp 148-55 N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Yorkshire the North Riding* (1966), pp 274-5 Nunnington Hall, guidebook, (National Trust 1996)

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1912

Description written: September 1998 Register Inspector: CEH Edited: January 2005

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.