

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

OLD DURHAM GARDENS

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Name:	OLD DURHAM GARDENS
District:	County Durham (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 54.771367 Longitude: -1.5549589 National Grid Reference: NZ 28729 41918 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001396 Date first listed: 28-Jul-1998

Details

Walled gardens and a gazebo of the early to mid C17, with mid C18 modifications.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

References to the area appear in the early medieval period and a manor is first mentioned in the C12. The estate was appropriated in 1443 by Bishop Neville and passed into the possession of Kepier Hospital until 1569 when it was bought by John Heath. It remained in the family, passing by marriage to the Tempests in 1665, and to the Vane-Tempests in 1794. It is thought that the fourth John Heath constructed the gardens during the period 1630 to 1650 (DAJ 1994). The Tempest family moved away from the site in 1719 but kept the garden and house for their personal use. Archaeological excavation suggests that there was a period of abandonment, probably in the mid C18; in 1787 however William Hutchinson stated that the gardens were a place of 'public resort, where concerts of music have frequently been performed in summer evenings ... The gardens are open all summer for rural recreation' (DAJ 1994). The Pineapple Inn, on the north side of the site, had been established as a public house serving the upper (eastern) gardens by the 1820s. Most of the estate was sold to the Hopps family in 1918, and part of the land was acquired by St Hild's College, but the Pineapple continued to operate, although the license to serve alcohol was lost in the 1920s and from this time until the 1940s it was refreshment rooms. By the later C20 the site had become derelict and in 1985 part of the gardens and some adjoining land was sold to Durham City Council. An archaeological investigation of the south-eastern and western compartments took place during the period 1989-92 and restoration of these areas followed and is still (1998) in progress.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Old Durham Gardens is situated in a small settlement called Old Durham c 1.5km east of the centre of the City of Durham and the c 1ha site lies on the west-facing slope of the valley of the River Wear close to its confluence with Old Durham Beck. The setting is rural and agricultural with views westwards across open land to the east end of Durham cathedral. The boundary is formed by the walls of three garden compartments, and the lines of the walls where they have disappeared along parts of the west side, at the north-east corner, and at the south-west corner where a disused railway line cuts across the site.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES There is an opening with a C20 gate at the south-east corner of the upper, eastern gardens. The entrance to the lower, western garden is in the south wall at the head of the slope, leading to a terraced walk. This has a

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Tudor arched opening with a label mould above it and is a late C20 reconstruction of the original, which collapsed during the 1990s. Entrances on the north and north-east side of the site are from privately owned land.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING The exact position of the medieval manor house has not been established, but it is thought to have been situated in the north-eastern garden aligned with the east end of Durham cathedral. It was demolished between c 1720 and 1787 (DAJ 1994). The former Pineapple Inn, now (1998) a private residence, lies on the north side of this part of the gardens. A building is shown in this position on an estate plan of 1776, and it is thought that the present house incorporates part of it (guidebook).

There is a range of buildings on the east side of the site and outside the registered area which consists of a barn (late C17/early C18, listed grade II), farm buildings and cottages.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS Old Durham Gardens consists of three walled compartments. To the east there are two compartments on level land and to the west there is another compartment on land which slopes down to the west.

The south-eastern garden has a gazebo (listed grade II) of early C17 date in the angle of the west and north walls which was remodelled c 1720-30 and restored during the 1990s. The building is square in plan and has a pyramidal roof with doors in the east and south faces. An account of 1840 describes a lintel with the initials 'J H' over one of the doors, which probably related to the fourth John Heath who inherited in 1630. The garden is rectangular in shape and was grassed and planted during the 1990s with a formal pattern of shrubs. The north and west walls are of stone, and those to the east and south have stone bases surmounted by brick. Excavation showed that the eastern wall was rebuilt c 5m to the west of its earlier line, and the southern wall rebuilt c 10m to the south of its original line to give the present rectangular enclosure. This probably occurred during the C18, perhaps when the gazebo was remodelled. A formal pattern of tree holes and flower beds, with a pond in the south-west corner, was revealed during the 1989-92 excavations. This layout had disappeared by the mid C19 when a bowling green, shown on the 1857 OS map, was constructed, probably for the use of the patrons of the Pineapple Inn.

The north-eastern compartment is grassed and a wall probably of C20 origin runs east/west dividing the area into two unequal areas of which the smaller, northern part is the private garden of the former Pineapple Inn.

The western or lower garden consists of a terraced walk on the east side, a steep slope to the west of this, and level land at the bottom of the slope. The garden is overlooked by the gazebo which is flush with the wall dividing this area from the upper gardens, which are at a higher level, so that it acts as a retaining wall. A flower bed flanked by the terraced walk runs along the base of the wall and views to the west are dominated by the east end of Durham cathedral. The gazebo is centrally placed on the walk and it has an upper-level window giving views to the cathedral, and a lower-level alcove from which stone steps run down the slope in a series of five short flights of ten steps linked by sloping ground. The steps, terraced walk and flower bed were exposed during the excavations of 1989-92 and subsequently restored. The investigation showed that the slope down from the terraced walk had been modified and the upper gardens levelled by the introduction of more than 7000 tonnes of cobbles and rubble. The remains of revetment walls, which may have formed terraces relating to the intervals between the flights of steps, were found at various points down the slope. Pottery and clay pipe finds amongst the rubble were consistent with an early to mid C17 date for construction. The level land at the base of the slope was planted with trees in 1997, and the 1857 OS map suggests that the whole of this part of the garden was in use as an orchard at that time. The 1776 plan shows all the garden areas with a schematic representation of regular patterns of planting.

The restored southern wall of the garden is stepped and descends the slope for a distance of c 90m to the edge of the disused railway line. The north end of the west wall survives as a c 50m stub.

REFERENCES N Pevsner and E Williamson, *The Buildings of England: County Durham* (1983), p 370 *Old Durham Gardens a Guide*, guidebook, (City of Durham c 1992) *Old Durham Gardens, Conservation and Restoration*, (City of Durham nd, c 1993) *Durham Archaeol J* 10, (1994), pp 69-92 M. Roberts, *Durham* (1996), pp 101-2

Maps [reproduced in City of Durham c 1993] Estate plan, 1776

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1857

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.