

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

**BOWES MUSEUM**

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Name:	BOWES MUSEUM
District:	County Durham (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Barnard Castle
label.localisation:	Latitude: 54.542014 Longitude: -1.9155428 National Grid Reference: NZ 05562 16309 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000728 Date first listed: 07-Oct-1986

## Details

Park and gardens of 1869-76 created to outline plans by Jules Pellechet and laid out and planted by owner John Bowes. A parterre, planned in outline by Pellechet, was laid out in 1981-2. The parterre and park were designed as a public amenity and to provide the setting for the Bowes Museum.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

John Bowes (1811-85) was the illegitimate son of the tenth Earl of Strathmore. He spent many years living in France where he met and married Josephine Benoite, Countess of Montalbo. The couple amassed a large collection of objets d'art before returning to England and the Bowes Museum was designed to receive this collection and display it to the public. Bowes acquired land for the museum in 1869-70 in an area immediately east of Barnard Castle shown on the 1856 OS map as open fields. The project included the construction of a chapel on the site but this was never completed because of a dispute over access, and a new chapel was ultimately erected in the south-west corner of the site (outside the registered area) in 1926. Both Bowes and his wife died before completion of the project, but work was continued by the trustees and the museum was opened in 1892. The park had been open to the public during the construction of the building, and it remained open when the museum closed in 1898 due to lack of funds. The museum reopened in 1909 but severe financial problems continued in the years which followed, culminating in the trusteeship being transferred to Durham County Council in 1956. The site remains (1999) in the ownership of Durham County Council and is open to the public.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** The Bowes Museum lies on the eastern edge of Barnard Castle, on the north side of Newgate, the principal approach to the town from the east. The c 8ha site is on land which slopes gently down from the north. The boundary is formed by a stone wall (listed grade II) which follows the line of Crook Lane to the north, former field boundaries to the east and continues along Newgate on the south side.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The principal entrance to the site is from Newgate where there is a gateway flanked by lodges (gates and lodges listed grade II\*) framing views of the museum. The single-storey lodges, of stone with low roofs and balustraded eaves, were erected to Pellechet's design c 1885. Between them a low wall is surmounted by railings and pedestrian entrances flank the main gates which have stone piers surmounted by lamps. The gates were supplied by Singers of Frome in 1907. A tarmac drive leads from the entrance and divides, with two arms curving around the oval parterre and leading up

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to each side of a terrace in front of the museum. A track from the eastern lodge leads east as a lime and sycamore avenue, following the site boundary and turning north to the site of a chapel (see below) on the east side of the museum.

A pedestrian entrance on the north-west side of the site from Crook Lane has stone gate piers (listed grade II with the wall) and a utilitarian ironwork gate. A path leads south from it to join a perimeter walk.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** The Bowes Museum (listed grade I) was built by J E Watson of Newcastle upon Tyne to designs by Jules Pellechet (1829-1903) during the period 1869 to c 1885. It is in the style of a French chateau of the C17, with a symmetrical front in which a central entrance block is flanked by ranges with attached pavilions. It is positioned on a platform cut into rising land at the centre of the site. The terrace and parterre in front of the building are integral to the design. The building remains in use as a museum open to the public (1999).

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The park and gardens consist of a grand terrace and parterre on the south side of the site, immediately in front of the museum, and less formal areas of grassed mounds on each side. The perimeter of the site is planted with trees which frame views of the building from the road.

A broad balustraded terrace (listed grade II) runs along the full length of the front of the museum and flights of stone steps at each end lead to a parterre below. The retaining wall of the terrace has niches and blind arcading, and a recessed arch in the centre backs a semicircular pool. A fountain-head feeding the pool is in the form of a bronze mask which is a replica of an original French C17 example on display in the museum. The parterre is laid out on a large oval plot with a central rectangular pool with apsidal ends containing fountains, a reinstatement of the original which was infilled and used as a base for a bandstand in 1912. The area is gravelled with red stone and raised shaped beds are laid out with simple fleur-de-lys and scallop motifs with clipped yew bushes, box hedges and white gravel edging. This design was created in 1981-2 by Durham County Council architectural and landscape teams. Mass bedding had been introduced in 1898, and an account written in 1911 describes this area with geometrical flower beds 'laid out as an Italian garden' (Gardeners' Chronicle 1911). The parterre was subsequently grassed over and used for community events, with the bandstand forming the focal point.

On the east and west sides of the parterre there are grassed mounds formed from the spoil produced by levelling. Some 40m north-west of the museum there is a substantial mound which has been levelled on the top and laid out with paths and an informal planting of shrubs with statues ranged around the perimeter. This area was laid out in the 1980s incorporating statues representing heads of church and state acquired from the Houses of Parliament in 1970 when original stonework was being replaced.

A bowling green lies c 80m north-east of the museum, laid out c 1908 as part of a programme of alterations and additions to the park designed to provide more amenities for the public. It is overlooked from the east side by a rustic pavilion (c 1908, listed grade II). Immediately east of the green, and divided from it by a band of trees and shrubs, is a tennis court. A levelled area to the south of the bowling green was the site of a chapel which was started in 1875 but never completed and finally demolished in the 1920s. The area is in use (1999) as a picnic site.

On the south side of the site, beside the parterre and entrance drives, there are lawns with some clumps of trees. A First World War Memorial (listed grade II), in memory of men of the Durham Militia, lies c 32m west of the west lodge beside the drive. It is in the form of a plinth surmounted by a stone cross. Another First World War Memorial (listed grade II) c 32m east of the east lodge is a simple obelisk erected in memory of the fallen of Barnard Castle.

The north and west parts of the site are wooded, and there is an understorey of shrubs including holly and snowberry, species itemised in the original plant lists. A winding path leads through the trees around the perimeter of the site, joining with the avenue leading to the chapel site on the east side of the park. John Bowes purchased more than four thousand trees and shrubs from various suppliers during the period 1870 to 1876. The original plant lists include a wide range of trees including several varieties of ash, oak, pine and yew as well as exotics such as Wellingtonia and Auracaria. Much original planting survives and some of the lost trees were replaced in the 1980s by species mentioned in the plant lists.

#### REFERENCES

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Gardeners' Chronicle, ii (25 November 1911), p 368 N Pevsner and E Williamson, *The Buildings of England: County Durham* (1983), pp 87-8 Country Life, 179 (30 January 1986), pp 258-62 *The Bowes Museum, A Walk Through The Grounds*, guidebook, (Durham County Council nd, c 1995)

Maps Plan, nd, c 1980 showing design of parterre

OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1856 2nd edition published 1897 1927 edition

Archival items The Bowes and Strathmore Collections, held at Durham County Record Office, include the following: General preparatory works in the 'New Park' and bills for the carriage of trees 1869 and 1870, repairs to vinery (D/BO/E7); a/c from John Roe re gardening at the 'New Park', a/c for building east and south park walls, invoices for supply of trees 1870, bill for lifting and transplanting trees and shrubs, invoice for lifting trees, invoice for paving flags and gateposts (D/BO/E8); bills for planting and levelling, invoice for supply of trees (D/BO/E9); invoices for plants, shrubs and trees 1871 and 1872, (D/BO/E10); invoices for trees and shrubs 1874 (D/BO/E12); invoice for trees and shrubs 1876 (D/BO/E14); bill for trees and shrubs (D/BO/E15).

Description written: October 1999 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.