

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

BRANCEPETH CASTLE

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BRANCEPETH CASTLE

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| Name: | BRANCEPETH CASTLE |
| District: | County Durham (Unitary Authority) |
| Parish: | Brancepeth |
| District: | County Durham (Unitary Authority) |
| Parish: | Greater Willington |
| label.localisation: | Latitude: 54.730210 Longitude: -1.6484710 National Grid Reference: NZ2273637304 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF) |
| label.overview: | Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000729 Date first listed: 07-Oct-1986 |

Details

A park with C14 or earlier origins. A scheme of 1783 by Adam Mickel may have been partially executed. Pleasure grounds have early C19 elements but originated in the C16 or before.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The site was owned by the Bulmer family in the C12, and had passed to the Neville family through marriage before the end of the century. In the C13 it passed to the Fitzmaldred family, who changed their name to Neville and were created earls of Westmorland in the C14. Brancepeth was confiscated by the Crown in the C16 as a consequence of the Nevilles' part in the Rising of the North and eventually came into the possession of Robert Carr, Viscount Rochester and Baron Carr of Brancepeth who was a favourite of James I, but reverted to the Crown soon afterwards. After several changes of ownership it passed to the Russell family and thence by marriage to the Boyne family in 1850. The estate was sold to the Duke of Westminster in 1948, and was subsequently divided and sold in 1959. The estate remains (1998) in divided private ownership and part of the park is owned by a golf club.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Brancepeth Castle lies immediately south and east of the village of Brancepeth in a setting which is otherwise rural and agricultural. The c 250ha site is on land which slopes down to the south and east and rises again on the south side of the Brancepeth Beck which runs east and south through the western part of the site. The boundaries are formed by the A690 and part of Whitworth Lane to the north and north-west, Scription Lane to the east, and fencing dividing the park from agricultural land on other sides. Part of Whitworth Lane runs through the south-west side of the park and this stretch has a cast-iron pale along the north-east side of the road.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The principal entrance is from Brancepeth village where the village street runs south-east from the A690 past a lodge (mid C19, listed grade II) to an entrance screen with stone piers, gates and railings (mid C19, listed grade II). The road branches, with one route leading south-east to the former stables and on to the kitchen garden and the

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other branch leading through the entrance screen to the north-east side of the Castle. A path runs south-east from the Castle to St Brandon's Church. An entrance on the east side of the site from Scription Lane has a later C19 lodge called Tudhoe Lodge (listed grade II), from which a track runs westwards to join with other drives leading to the Castle. On the north side of the site an entrance with a lodge, called Scription Lodge, on the A690 has a drive leading south and south-west to the former stables. The configuration of drives and lodges is much as shown on the 1898 OS map. There are a number of other entrances leading to private residences within the grounds.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Brancepeth Castle (listed grade I) is mentioned in 1216 and was rebuilt in c 1398. Extensive remodelling by John Patterson for Matthew Russell took place c 1818-21, and Anthony Salvin carried out internal alterations later in the century. The Castle stands on a platform and consists of a succession of towers and linking ranges around a central courtyard with a gatehouse on the north-east side. It is in use as a private residence (1998).

St Brandon's Church (listed grade I) lies c 100m south-east of the Castle in a churchyard surrounded by trees. The church dates from the late C12 with a succession of later alterations and additions. The interior was largely destroyed by fire, 1998.

Some 300m east of the Castle the stables, shown on the 1857 OS map, have been converted and are in use as a golf clubhouse (1998).

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The platform on which the Castle stands is grassed, as is the central courtyard. A view of c 1728 (in Merrington 1985) shows a formal garden on the south side of the building with tree-lined alleys radiating from a rondpoint with a central fountain or statue. Early C19 views (ibid) suggest that this was replaced by informal planting with lawns and shrubs, and lawns and a rose garden are shown on the south and east side of the building in later C19 photographs (ibid).

A terrace on the south-west edge of the platform, c 40m south-west of the Castle, has bastions linked by a retaining wall with a crenellated parapet (early C19, listed grade II) which runs along the edge of a steep drop giving views to the south-west over wooded pleasure grounds alongside the Stockley Beck. A path on the west side of the Castle leads down stone steps to a walk alongside the Beck, which is crossed by an ornamental stone bridge c 80m south-west of the building and by stepping stones c 60m east of the bridge. A system of paths leads through wooded grounds alongside the Beck, as suggested on the 1857 OS map. The Stockley Beck runs south-east through the pleasure grounds into the park and joins with the Brancepeth Beck c 300m south-east of the Castle. The pleasure grounds north of the Castle and Stockley Beck are now private gardens (1998). Private houses of late C20 date have been built on the west side of the pleasure grounds.

A survey of 1569 mentions a gardener at Brancepeth whose duties included cutting hedges and arbours, and in 1614 Thomas Emmerson stated that the arbours, hedges and walks had 'grown ruinous and out of all good order' (quoted in Merrington 1985). Extensive walled gardens are shown on a painting of c 1680 (Harris 1979) to the south-east of the Castle, extending south and east of the church.

PARK The Castle lies in the north-west corner of the park. To the south, where the land falls to the Stockley and Brancepeth Becks, there is open grassland with scattered mature trees. This is part of a golf course which extends to the south and east and was laid out in 1924. Some elements of mature planting with scattered trees and clumps survive over the remainder of the course, which also has some C20 planting. The north-east and east side of the park is a mixture of arable and pasture land with a scattering of mature trees. Two large fishponds lie c 1km south-east of the Castle, and a smaller pond, called Skating Pond, lies c 700m north-east of the Castle. The ponds are shown on the 1898 OS map but not that of 1857.

An undated map, probably of the early to mid C18, shows an enclosed park to the south and east of the Castle planted with shelter belts and trees alongside the Beck. A design of 1783 by Adam Mickle (1747c -1810) shows a system of tree belts and clumps and the Beck diverted and dammed to form an elongated lake with a sinuous outline. It is possible that some of the planting around the church and in areas to the east and south of the Castle dates from this period, but there is no obvious sign that the Beck was ever dammed to form a lake.

The park probably reached its present extent in the mid to late C19, the date of Tudhoe Lodge which is not shown on the 1857 OS map. This shows that the parkland extended south of the line of the drive from Tudhoe Lodge on the east side of the site, which is the extent of the park on the early to mid C18 plan and on Mickle's drawing. The 1898 map shows it at its present

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size apart from land to the south-west of Whitworth Lane and outside the registered area which was used as an army camp and has since reverted to agricultural uses.

There has been a park associated with the Castle from at least the C14, when permission to take fallen timber from it was given to John de Lodge. A survey called the Humberstone Survey of 1569 describes the Castle as standing 'in playne countrey betwene two parkes' (quoted in Merrington 1985). These are shown, marked East Park and West Park, on a county map of 1611. West Park occupied an area to the west of the A690 which is now (1998) agricultural land outside the registered area. In 1593 thirty-five deer were sent by Queen Elizabeth I from Brancepeth to the King of Scotland, and a survey of 1596 records the remains of a herd of wild cattle in the park. Timber was taken from the park for ship building in 1635 when 1400 oak trees were felled. The c 1680 painting shows the park to the south of the Castle with extensive tree cover, and a view published in 1818 (Neale) shows mature trees on the slopes immediately south-west of the Castle.

KITCHEN GARDEN The walled kitchen garden lies c 500m east of the Castle. It is of elongated polygonal shape with a terraced walk on the outer west and south sides. Immediately to the north-east the Garden House (listed grade II) is probably of early C19 date. The kitchen garden is shown on the 1857 OS map. It is in divided private ownership (1998).

REFERENCES

J P Neale, *Views of the Seats ... I*, (1818), pl 14 J Harris, *The Artist and the Country House* (1979), pl 39 D Jacques, *Georgian Gardens* (1983), p 116 N Pevsner and E Williamson, *The Buildings of England: County Durham* (1983), pp 113-21 J and M Merrington, *Brancepeth 900* (1985)

Maps John Speed, *County Map*, 1611 *Map of Brancepeth*, nd (early/mid C18), (D/BR/P6), (Durham Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1857 2nd edition published 1898 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1897

Archival items The Humberstone Survey of 1569 is quoted in Merrington 1985 who give the repository as the Durham Record Office.

Description written: September 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.