

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

SHIBDEN HALL

Auteur(s) : Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/>

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**SHIBDEN HALL**

Name:	SHIBDEN HALL
District:	Calderdale (Metropolitan Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 53.728731 Longitude: -1.8377847 National Grid Reference: SE 10800 25827 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001470 Date first listed: 27-Jun-2000

## Details

A landscape park with formal and informal gardens and pleasure grounds, surrounding a C15 and later manor house. The grounds were laid out for the owner in the 1830s by a Mr Gray of York incorporating structures designed by the architect John Harper. Joshua Major and Son designed the layout for the main terrace in 1855, which was laid out by William Berry of Halifax, who also laid out a lake in the park.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The timber-framed Shibden Hall was built c 1420 for a cloth merchant, William Otes, who is recorded as living in Schepdene (guidebook). The Shibden property passed through several owners during the succeeding centuries, it being occupied by the Lister family, also cloth merchants, from the early C17. In 1826 James Lister died and his niece, Anne (1791-1840) took over the management of the Shibden Hall estate, although she did not actually inherit it until after the death of her father, Jeremy, and aunt, also Anne, in 1836.

By the 1820s the estate was largely agricultural, with a modest garden on the south-east side of the Hall (Sheeran 1990; Garden Hist 1997). In 1836 Anne Lister employed the architect John Harper of York to remodel the Hall and provide proposals for structural works in the grounds (drawings and watercolour sketches, WYAS). She employed William Gray of York (who also worked at Clumber Park, qv) to lay out the grounds using Harper's building designs. A large stone terrace was constructed to the south and east of the Hall, together with a further terrace above to the west. A new approach was constructed from the north-west, a park was laid out in which a lake was constructed, and a substantial kitchen garden was walled. Anne wrote a detailed journal in which the works to the Hall and estate were recorded (WYAS). Following Anne's death in 1840 Dr John Lister (1802(67) inherited the estate. Lister employed William Berry of Halifax to lay out beds and a fountain on the south terrace to a design by Joshua Major and Son (Joshua Major c 1787-1866) of 1855 (Garden Hist 1997).

Following Lister's death his son, also John (1847-1933), inherited the estate, but in 1923 was declared bankrupt. His friend Mr A S McCrea, a Halifax councillor, bought the Hall and presented it and 90 acres (c 37ha) of parkland to the people of east Halifax as a public park, which was opened by the Prince of Wales in 1926. John Lister lived out his life at the Hall, which upon his death was handed over to Halifax Corporation who opened it as a museum. The site remains in use as a public park and museum (2000).

### DESCRIPTION

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**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Shibden Hall stands 2.5km east of Halifax, physically separated from the town by a steep ridge called Beacon Hill. The 25ha site is bounded to the south-west partly by Shibden Hall Road and partly by agricultural land, and to the south-east by the Leeds to Halifax railway, formerly the Manchester and Leeds Railway, which stands upon a tall embankment at the east end. To the north-east the park is bounded by the Leeds Road and to the north-west partly by Godley Lane, sunk in a cutting, and partly by Godley Gardens, a C20 development. The Hall stands on a south-facing promontory half way down a hill falling from south-west to north-east, surrounded by the park and gardens. The hillside runs north-east down to the valley bottom, in which runs the Red Beck. The south-west section of the site is divided from the rest of the park and Hall by Shibden Hall Road along which the estate is bounded by stone walls. The setting is partly rural, with C20 development standing close to the north-west and north-east sides of the site. Views extend north-west and east along a curving steep-sided valley, on the sides of which are scattered groups of C20 housing.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The main approach enters the site 350m north-west of the Hall, off Godley Lane at a mid C19, gothic stone gate arch, and tall flanking screen walls constructed in chequerboard pattern. A three-storey, now roofless (2000), stone lodge, castellated and with a prominent chimney, stands on the east side of the entrance, dividing the archway from the wall to the east (lodge and gateway John Harper c 1836). From here the north-west drive extends in serpentine fashion south-east, through Troughabolland Wood, cut into the steep hillside which extends down from the north, following the contour. The drop to the north of the drive is precipitous in places, and a tall stone bridge carries the drive across a steep clough c 175m from the Hall. Long views extend north and north-east from the drive across the park and the valley to the hillside beyond. Some 10m north-west of the Hall the drive enters the west side of the forecourt between massive stone piers surmounted by ball finials, arriving at the north front of the Hall. The forecourt is bounded to the north by a stone barn and service buildings, and to the west by a tall stone retaining wall.

A second, west drive enters 140m west of the Hall, off Shibden Hall Road, at a gap in the stone boundary wall, descending east for 75m before turning north to join the north-west drive 50m north of the Hall. Views extend north and north-east from this drive across the park to the hillside beyond.

A third drive (mid C20) enters 100m north-east of the north-west entrance, close to the junction of Godley Lane with Old Godley Lane, 300m from the Hall. From here the drive extends east down the hillside below Troughabolland Wood, giving access to the northern park and lake.

The drive system was laid out in the late 1830s by Anne Lister (OS 1854), replacing an approach directly from Shibden Hall Road to the west. The main entrance and approach to the Hall before the 1830s appears to have been from the south (watercolour, John Horner c 1815, WYAS). At about the same time as Anne Lister laid out the drives, the course of Shibden Hall Road was altered, softening its line into a sweeping curve (Sheeran 1990).

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Shibden Hall (C15, altered C16 and 1830s, listed grade II\*, scheduled ancient monument) stands towards the centre of the site, on a south-facing promontory projecting from a steep hillside. The original C15 timber framing of the hall house has been augmented by some later stonework, including a three-storey west tower in Norman style with a pyramidal roof (John Harper c 1836). The entrance front lies on the north side, with the garden front to the south, this latter formerly having been the main entrance to the Hall. The Hall is now (2000) a museum.

An early C17 aisled stone barn (listed grade II\*) and associated outbuildings stand to the north of the Hall, from which they are separated by the forecourt. The barn is occupied by a museum of rural life (2000).

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** Formal terraced gardens lie close to the Hall to the west, south, and east. To the south of these lie informal wooded pleasure grounds, extending east in a belt to the lake, and west beyond Shibden Hall Road into Cunnery Wood.

The Hall stands on the north side of the substantial south terrace (Harper c 1836), bounded to the south and east by massive stone retaining walls. The terrace is approached via the door at the centre of the south front, or from the south-west corner of the forecourt along the west side of the Hall. A three-arched stone loggia in Gothic style is set into the east half of the south front overlooking the terrace. At the south-east corner of the terrace projects a tall bastion, in which a staircase leads down to the park below. Tunnels are let into the terrace behind the retaining wall. Several large urns stand on the raised terrace walls to

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the south and east. The terrace is laid to lawn inset with several rose beds in a simple pattern (mid-late C20), surrounded by a broad perimeter path. A stone wall projects east from the south-east corner of the Hall to the north-east corner of the terrace, in which a gateway gives access down a flight of steps to the east terrace below. The south terrace overlooks the pleasure grounds to the south and south-west, and is itself overlooked by the west terrace.

The narrow east terrace lies below the east front and is bounded by an extension north of the stone retaining wall of the south terrace. Laid with stone flags it provides views over the park to the east and north-east, and to the distant hillside beyond.

To the west of the south terrace a grass bank leads up to the west terrace. From the south-west corner of the south terrace rises a flight of steps flanked by stone balustraded walls, leading up the bank to the west terrace above. This terrace is itself terraced into three low levels, laid largely to lawn with a central, rectangular stone pool, and surrounded to the north, west, and south by a stone wall. A bastion is set into the south-west corner, overlooking the pleasure ground and cascade to the south. The west terrace overlooks the south terrace to the east, and beyond this the park and hillside beyond.

The terraces were laid out for Anne Lister by William Gray incorporating structures designed by John Harper in 1836. The south terrace which was laid out at this time overlies the former southern approach (watercolour, John Horner c 1815, WYAS). In 1855 Joshua Major and Son provided a Drawing of the proposed shawl garden on the [south] terrace of Shibden Hall (WYAS); this was executed but was grassed over in the mid C20, although archaeological evidence remains (Garden Hist 1997). The shawl refers to the intricate pattern of beds designed in the Paisley pattern commonly used on shawls at the time. The internal terraces of the west terrace seem to have been remodelled during the mid C20 (OS 1933), at which time the central pond may have been created.

From the south-west corner of the south terrace a stone path descends via several flights of steps to the pleasure grounds below to the south and south-west. On the west side of the steps, close to the flight leading up to the west terrace, stands a stone springhead set into the hillside and flanked by stone walls. An intricately carved spout emerges from beneath a stone arch to throw water into a small rectangular pool below.

The pleasure grounds are divided into two sections: the west half at the west end of North Wood, and the east half running east down the hillside through North Wood to the lake. South of the west terrace lies a small valley with a broad stone cascade from which a stream leads down to a pond 50m to the east. The valley is planted with ornamental shrubs including rhododendrons. From the upper, west side of the cascade a wide stone tunnel leads south-west beneath Shibden Hall Road to an extension of the pleasure grounds set into Cunnery Wood, in which two further ponds ascend the valley.

A path cut into the hillside leads north-east from the cascade into the narrow body of North Wood, down the hillside parallel to the south-east boundary, overlooking the park to the north and Hall to the west. Some 400m east of the Hall, at the south-east end of the lake, the path meets the outflow of the lake which leads down a serpentine stone cascade to a stone channel. The channel leads into the Red Beck to the east, which is itself confined in a stone channel before leaving the estate via a culvert beneath the railway embankment on the south-east boundary.

The garden and pleasure grounds, including the cascade, were laid out initially for Anne Lister c 1836 with additional features being added for John Lister in the 1850s.

**PARK** The park surrounds the Hall to the west, north, and east, falling from high ground to the west to the lake close to the east boundary. It is laid to lawn with scattered clumps and single trees. A steep slope at the west corner is occupied by Troughabolland Wood. The lake (1836(8)), formed from damming the Red Beck, dominates the park. It is bounded to the north-east by woodland rising up the hillside, and is overlooked by the park and Hall to the west. A boathouse stands towards the south-east end of the south-west bank. The park, including the lake, was laid out by Anne Lister in the later 1830s, incorporating trees which marked former field boundaries (OS 1854), and was further planted up during the rest of the C19 and C20.

Since the purchase of the estate in the 1920s by the local authority, and its subsequent use as a public park, various features have been incorporated amongst the C19 elements, including a playground, a small golf facility and associated building, the conversion of the lake to a boating lake, and the construction of playing fields.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The kitchen garden (c 1836) stands 150m south-west of the Hall, south-west of Shibden Hall Road, on the north side of Cunnery Wood. Much of its wall has collapsed and the interior is uncultivated. A path from the curved south-

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east corner extends south-east down the hillside towards the lowest pond in Cunnery Wood, giving access via the tunnel beneath the road to the Hall and pleasure grounds beyond.

#### REFERENCES

G Sheeran, *Landscape Gardens in West Yorkshire 1680-1880* (1990), pp 129(34, 136 *Garden History* 25, no 2 (Winter 1997), pp 219-29 *Shibden Hall*, guidebook, (Calderdale Leisure Services 1998)

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1849(50, published 1854 2nd edition surveyed 1905, published 1908 OS 25" to 1 mile: 3rd edition published 1907 1933 edition

Illustrations John Harper, Drawings and watercolour sketches of proposals for structural works in grounds of Shibden Hall, 1836 (SH: 2/M/2/5(30), (West Yorkshire Archive Service) Joshua Major and Son, Drawing of the proposed shawl garden on the [south] terrace of Shibden Hall, 1855 (SH: 2/M/2), (West Yorkshire Archive Service) [reproduced in *Garden Hist* 1997]

Archival items The extensive Shibden Hall archive contains many relevant items and is kept by the West Yorkshire Archive Service, Calderdale (WYAS) at Halifax.

Description written: May 2000 Amended: September 2000 Register Inspector: SR Edited: November 2001

## 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.