

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

NEWSTEAD ABBEY

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

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
NEWSTEAD ABBEY

Name: NEWSTEAD ABBEY

County: Nottinghamshire

District: Gedling (District Authority)

Parish: Linby

County: Nottinghamshire

District: Gedling (District Authority)

Parish: Newstead

County: Nottinghamshire

District: Gedling (District Authority)

Parish: Ravenshead

label.localisation: Latitude: 53.076586
Longitude: -1.1971880
National Grid Reference: SK5388053563
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II*
List Entry Number: 1001082
Date first listed: 01-Jan-1986

Details

A deer park of C18 origin surrounding formal gardens of the early C18, early C19, late C19, and C20. One of a series of lakes has mid C18 features.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Newstead Abbey was founded as a priory between 1163 and 1173. After the Dissolution the Abbey was surrendered to Henry VIII in 1539 and acquired by Sir John Byron in 1540. The fifth Sir John Byron was created Lord Byron in 1643 by Charles I. In the early C18 the gardens and ponds were laid out for the fourth Lord Byron. William, the fifth Lord Byron (1722-98), known as the Wicked Lord, who succeeded to the title in 1736, had two castellated forts built in the early C18 but neglected the estate towards the end of his life. The woodland was stripped of its trees to raise money to pay debts (Pevsner and Williamson 1979). His great-nephew, the poet George Gordon (1788-1824) became the sixth Lord Byron but due to remaining debts on the estate had to sell the Abbey. Colonel Thomas Wildman purchased the Abbey in 1817 and called in John Shaw to make additions in the period 1818-c1830 when the gardens were also altered. On Wildman's death in 1860 the Abbey was sold to William F Webb. More building and laying out of gardens took place during the Webb family's ownership. The Abbey was

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
NEWSTEAD ABBEY

sold by Mr Webb's grandson to Sir Julian Cahn who presented it to the City of Nottingham in 1931. The Abbey, together with its gardens and Garden Lake and the land west of Upper Lake, remain in local authority ownership. Lower or Sherwood Lake is in separate ownership. There are also a number of private dwellings in Newstead Park.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Newstead Abbey is situated between Nottingham and Mansfield, 1.75km south-west of Ravenshead and 3.5km north-east of Annesley Hall (qv). The 10ha of gardens are surrounded by c 273ha of park and woodland. The site is approximately circular with a finger-like extension of woodland, Jack o' Sherwood, to the south, and a continuation of Swinecotte Dale as an avenue in the north-east corner off the A60 in Ravenshead. The site is bounded by agricultural land on three sides with Abbey Wood forming part of the eastern boundary. Newstead Abbey is set in the valley of the River Leen, now (1999) a chain of lakes. The land rises steeply to the north and more gradually to the south, east, and west. The setting of the Abbey and its parkland is rural despite the urban sprawl of Kirby-in-Ashfield to the north-west.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main, east entrance is off the A60 in Ravenshead, opposite the Pilgrim Oak, 1km north-east of the Abbey. Passing through the gates (C A Buckler 1862, listed grade II with gate piers and flanking walls) built in Renaissance Revival style of dressed stone, and past the dressed stone East Lodge (C A Buckler 1862, listed grade II), the drive runs west for 740m along an avenue between shrubs and trees. It continues south-west as Swinecotte Dale for 900m, then curves south for 350m to arrive at the forecourt on the west front of Newstead Abbey. A further approach enters at South Lodge (C A Buckler 1862, listed grade II), now a private dwelling built of rock-faced sandstone with carved bargeboards which stands 850m south-east of the Abbey; from here the south-east drive extends north along the west side of Abbey Wood to join Swinecotte Dale. The path from West Lodge (1862, listed grade II), which stands 900m south-west of the Abbey, leads north-east to the west front of the Abbey. Paths entering the site 200m north and 1.1km north-east of the Abbey allow access to the stables, the west side of Upper Lake, and to a house known as Knightcross and Knightcross Cottage 550m north of the Abbey. A network of further paths covers the site including a public footpath which runs from South Lodge north across the site, to Knightcross Dale.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Newstead Abbey (listed grade I), built of coursed and squared rubble and ashlar with plain tile and slate roofs, was founded as a priory between 1163 and 1173, the present building being largely C13 and later. The Abbey is built around a central courtyard in which now (late C20) stands, at the centre of the cloister garden, a conduit seen on a painting by P Tillemans of the early C18. The C13 facade of the old priory church abuts the west, entrance front to the north of the Abbey. The east front overlooks the gardens and has at its south end a C17 doorcase moved from the west front.

The stable range (M E Hadfield 1862, listed grade II), now (late C20) divided into private dwellings, stands 230m north-west of the Abbey. Built in Gothic Revival style, it is of coursed and squared rubble with gabled and pyramidal slate roofs.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The formal gardens extend to the north, north-east, east, and south-east of the Abbey, and are all enclosed, the walls being in part monastic or C16, but mostly C18 (listed grade I with the Abbey). Immediately north of the Abbey is the Monks Garden laid out by Colonel Wildman in the early to mid C19 (Jacques 1983). The Garden is edged by low walls to the west and laid out with trees and shrubs divided by rectilinear paths. North-east of the Abbey is a lawn on which stands the Boatswain monument (listed grade II*), a round plinth, square chest and on the top a classic urn erected in 1808 to Lord Byron's dog, Boatswain. There is an inscription on the east side of the monument. To the north is a small fountain (now disused). South of the monument and set on the east front of the Abbey is the Spanish Garden on the site of a garden terrace of the early C19. The Garden was laid out as a flower parterre by W F Webb. Laid out in the early C20, the Garden has stone balustrading on its eastern boundary with steps at each end down to the Garden. A shaped yew hedge separates the Garden from the lawn to the north. The Garden is laid out with compartments edged with box and filled with annuals. In the centre is a wellhead brought from Spain (Anthony 1979). A view of the garden in the 1830s shows the balustrading of the terrace. South of the Spanish Garden is a garden edged with flower beds around a lawn set with flower beds. This was the site of the French Garden put in by Colonel Wildman, described in 1877 as 'opposite the semi-detached part of the building ... a small space enclosed by low balustrade and laid out in quaint-shaped beds edged with box (JHCG 1877).

Immediately south of the south front lies a lawn inset with quatrefoil scalloped flower beds edged with stone which were described in 1884 (JHCG 1884). A path leads from the south front to the west front. South of this path is a lawn which extends

to the edge of Garden Lake lying 150m south of the Abbey. From the south front of the Abbey, the path extends eastwards to the gardens to the east and south-east of the Abbey. Immediately south of the path is the rectangular Stew Pond, 50m from the Abbey, with a well to the north. Yew walks lead around the Pond returning with steps back up to the path. This Pond may have its origin as a monastic fishpond but was probably reshaped as a canal in the early C18 (Jacques 1983). Immediately to the east is the triangular Tropical Garden with palms and other tropical plants which probably dates from the late C19 (Wheeler 1988). South of here, through metal gates and 180m from the Abbey, is a children's playground set among ornamental trees. From the playground a path leads east into the walled former kitchen garden, now (late C20) a Rose Garden (see below). The playground was set up in the 1960s and was built on the site of the kitchen garden outbuildings. To the north of the Rose Garden lies the Iris Garden, formerly the fruit garden. From the Iris Garden a path leads between ornamental gateposts back into the Tropical Garden. From the Tropical Garden, a path leads north between metal gates through a tunnel to the Eagle Pond. Devil's Wood lies to the east of Eagle Pond.

Walls (listed grade II with the seats and tunnel) on the north, south, and east sides enclose the Great Garden comprising the Eagle Pond and Devil's Wood, with flower beds between the wall and grass edging. Inside the grass edging an upper, gravelled terrace leads around the three sides. On the north and south sides, semicircular clairvoie are let into the walls and on the south side seats are set against the wall allowing views over the park. The middle terrace path which goes around the rectangular Eagle Pond can be reached by steps from the east side of the Wood. A further, lower terrace has the water's edge as its base. Walnut trees are planted at the top of the lower terrace. To the north and south of Devil's Wood are shaped yew hedges broken at the centre by stone steps leading down from the upper terrace to a grass lawn. To the west of Devil's Wood steps lead onto the lawn. The Wood is sparsely planted with late C20 birch. To the north of the Wood is the statue of a female satyr (J Nost early C18, listed grade II) and to the south is a statue of a male satyr (? J Nost early C18, listed grade II).

Devil's Wood was described by Washington Irving in the 1830s as being 'a mystic grove within which stood the ancient statues overshadowed by tall larches'. Irving also found the elm on which Lord Byron and his half-sister Augusta carved their names (Irving 1830s). The Great Garden, enclosed by a buttressed stone wall and containing terraces, parterres, a pond (now the Eagle Pond), and a grove (now the Devil's Wood), was probably laid out in the late C17 or early C18 (Jacques 1983). It is said that Eagle Pond got its name from a lectern that was found in the Pond, hidden there by the monks at the Dissolution (JHCG 1884). A painting of 1758 by R Byron, one of the sons of the fourth Lord Byron, shows the east front of the Abbey from the parkland. The Eagle Pond is shown with a statue at each corner (now gone). To the west are two gardeners cultivating the soil and to the east is a high wall marking the boundary between the parkland and the garden. A horseman rides in the park and two ladies promenade in the garden. A view by Tillemans of 1724-30 also shows statues in the Eagle Pond Garden.

South of the Rose Garden, the former kitchen garden, and 300m south-east of the Abbey, are the Heather Garden and the Rock Garden. These are approached from a path south of the Abbey. South of the Rock Garden is the Japanese Garden which lies to the south of Garden Lake. The Heather Garden, laid out in the 1970s, is on the site of the American Garden laid out by Wildman, which was described in 1884 as being planted with rhododendrons (ibid). The Rock Garden was reworked in the 1880s (ibid) but may have been laid out earlier in the century (Wheeler 1988). The Japanese Garden was laid out in the early C20 by Miss Ethel Webb (ibid).

PARK The parkland around Newstead Abbey is now (1999) confined to the area south-west of the Abbey, the north-west part of which is known as Hawk Lawn. The park was described in 1790 as being 'once richly ornamented with 2700 head of deer, and numberless fine spreading oaks, now divided and subdivided into farms' (Throsby 1790). Around the enclosed formal garden areas the Forest Pond, 200m north-east of the Abbey, is now (1999) silted over. To the east, Hall Lawn leads across to Abbey Wood. To the west, south-west, and south, a chain of three lakes have been formed by damming the River Leen: Upper Lake, Garden Lake, and Lower or Sherwood Lake. The Upper Lake, now c 12ha, is of monastic origin and was greatly enlarged by the fifth Lord Byron in the late 1740s. He built the Fort (c 1770 and mid C19, listed grade II), a mock fort now (late C20) converted into three dwellings. Built of stone, it stands on the eastern shore of the Lake, 200m north-west of the Abbey. Cannon Fort (c 1750, listed grade II*), a mock fort standing 450m north-west of the Abbey on the western shore of the Upper Lake, is built of ashlar with a semicircular central bay with single triangular bastions topped with circular towers

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
NEWSTEAD ABBEY

with a dock at the north end. It was used by the fifth Lord Byron for mock naval battles (CL 1985). A gothic tower of similar date has gone. The 2ha Garden Lake, south of Upper Lake, was dammed in the mid C19 by Colonel Wildman. South again, the Lower or Sherwood Lake was dammed in the mid C18. Two hunting paintings by Tillemans of c 1724 show the Abbey observed from the parkland to the west of Upper Lake. On the survey by Sanderson of 1831, the Upper and Lower Lake are shown with, in the middle, Garden Lake named as River Leen.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden lies 150m south-east of the Abbey. It is now (late C20) known as the Rose Garden and the fruit garden to the north is now the Iris Garden. The Rose Garden has rose beds and beds of shrubs and small ornamental trees set in a lawn quartered with paths. To the north, a fountain (late C19, listed grade II) standing in a scalloped stone basin with a wide dish set on a pedestal stands on an axis with the entrance to the Iris Garden. Climbing plants are grown on the walls and conifers are grown on the boundary between the Iris and Rose Gardens. The Gardener's Cottage (late C18 and mid C19, listed grade II with the kitchen garden walls) stands in the south-east corner of the Rose Garden. Gates in the north of the Garden lead to the Iris Garden which is also walled. There is a path around the Iris Garden with fruit trees on the east (west-facing) and north (south-facing) walls with an herbaceous bed below the west wall. The Garden is divided into two halves each edged by a low box hedge indented around a circular gravel area with a sundial in the centre. In the centre of the hedges on the east and west and at the north and south ends are arches of trained pears. Within the box hedges each half has a pattern of beds set into lawn, currently (1999) undergoing replanting.

REFERENCES

J Throsby, *Thoroton's History of Nottinghamshire* republished with large additions (1790) [facsimile edn 1972] W Irving, *Crayon Miscellany* (1830s), pp 354-62 J Horticulture and Cottage Gardener, (4 January 1877), pp 9-12; (31 July 1884), pp 101-2 C Holme, *Gardens of England in the Midland and Eastern Counties* (1908), pp 188-9 B Jones, *Follies & Grottoes* (1974), p 219 J Anthony, *Gardens of Britain* 6, (1979) N Pevsner and E Williamson, *The Buildings of England: Nottinghamshire* (2nd edn 1979) D Jacques, *Georgian Gardens: the reign of nature* (1983) *Country Life*, (1 August 1985), p 332 P T Wheeler, *The grounds of Newstead Abbey*, (unpub ms 1988) [copy on EH file] K Train, *Nottinghamshire Families* (nd)

Maps Plan of Newstead Abbey Estate, Nottinghamshire, Sale particulars 1815 G Sanderson, Map of Newstead Abbey and Park in the County of Nottingham with the Woods immediately adjoining, belonging to Lieut Col Thos Wildman, 1831 (in Wheeler 1988) Plan of the Abbey with the surrounding Gardens Pleasure Grounds and Shrubberies, Sale particulars 1860

OS Old Series 1" to 1 mile, revised 1832-8 OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1887 3rd edition published 1920 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1900 3rd edition published 1915(17 1939 edition

Illustrations P Tillemans, View from the west, 1724 (private collection) P Tillemans, View from the west, c 1724 (private collection) P Tillemans, Newstead Abbey from the west, 1733-4 (private collection) P Tillemans, Newstead Abbey from the east, c 1726 (private collection) W M Fellows after R T Buttery, Southwest View of Newstead Abbey, 1827 (private collection) D Buckle after T Allom, Newstead Abbey, Nottinghamshire, 1836 (private collection)

Archival items Sale particulars, 1815 (private collection) Newstead Abbey, in W Linley, *Summer Rambles in 1825* (private collection) Sale particulars, 1860 (private collection)

Description written: December 1999 Amended: February 2000 Register Inspector: CEB Edited: January 2002

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.