

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

LYVEDEN NEW BIELD

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LYVEDEN NEW BIELD

Name: LYVEDEN NEW BIELD

District: North Northamptonshire (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Aldwinckle

District: North Northamptonshire (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Benefield

District: North Northamptonshire (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Pilton

label.localisation: Latitude: 52.457633
Longitude: -0.55402190
National Grid Reference: SP 98349 85392
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: I
List Entry Number: 1001037
Date first listed: 25-Jun-1984

Details

Earthworks and moat of a large formal garden begun in the 1590s by Sir Thomas Tresham, the focal point of which was the New Bield; a banqueting house whose plan and decoration proclaimed its owners Catholic adherence.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The earliest settlement at Lyveden dates to the C10 or C11, and consisted of at least two villages, apparently deserted in the course of the C13. The earthworks of one of these can be seen on mid C20 aerial photographs to the north-east of Lyveden House, the gardens of which were laid out over the ridge and furrow of the open fields. The manor of Lyveden was acquired by Thomas Tresham (d. 1471) of Rushton in about 1468. In the later Middle Ages the practice of law and service at Parliament brought the family wealth and prominence, and over the following century the Lyveden estate was gradually extended. In 1540 a licence was granted to Thomas' grandson, also Thomas Tresham, to impark 120 acres of wood, 250 acres of pasture and 50 acres of meadow, bounded to the north by Harley Way. A well preserved section of the park pale defines the boundary to the south of Lyveden New Bield. It seems that Lyveden House, known as Lyveden Old Bield, had been built by this date, replacing the moated medieval manor house. Linked moats oriented north-north-west, are visible on aerial photographs to the north-west of the later moated orchard, the southernmost of which straddles the line of its unfinished west arm. Lyveden Old Bield, listed at Grade I, is an L-plan building of two storeys with attics, of ashlar with a stone-slatted roof, and with large mullioned and transomed windows. The house incorporates a fragment of a C16 building with a very substantial south range added by Lewis Tresham (1578-1639), who inherited the estate on the death of his brother Francis. The early-C17 house was U-plan, facing west. It was reduced in size in about 1700, and again in the early C19.

In 1559, on the death of his grandfather, the family estates passed to Thomas Tresham (1545-1605). Tresham had been brought up in the devoutly Catholic household of the Throckmorton's, and it seems probable that he was a lifelong Catholic, suffering a succession of fines and periods of imprisonment for the cause throughout his life. His first arrest, on the grounds that he had received mass from and given shelter to the Jesuit missionary Edmund Campion, took place only six years after he was knighted in 1575, and he was almost continuously imprisoned between 1581 and 1593. In 1584 he entailed the greater part of his estate to safeguard it from financially punitive penal laws, reserving only Lyveden for himself and his wife.

In 1593 Tresham was released from house arrest, returning home to Rushton. During the ten months of freedom that followed he began planning the lodge at Lyveden (Lyveden New Bield), one of two buildings that he designed as both an expression and a proclamation of his faith. Rushton Triangular Lodge, begun in 1594 and completed in 1597, is a richly symbolic conceit on the Trinity, while the lodge at Lyveden represents the Passion of Christ and the Virgin Mary. It takes the form of a Greek Cross, and is decorated with inscriptions, emblems and complex numerology. Work began on this building in 1595, and by 1597 part of the ground floor was complete. The plan of the gardens was drawn up according to Tresham's instructions by George Levens, Tresham's steward, surveyor, and clerk of works. In 1596 Tresham was again imprisoned until 1600, and correspondence between himself and his keeper John Slynn in 1597 describes the work then begun on the moated orchard, and refers to elm, sycamore, and walnut walks. In a long and detailed letter Tresham gives instructions for the gardens and landscaping around the Lodge, and shows considerable knowledge of the cultivation, grafting and care of fruit trees in his nurseries, as well as their planting out and staking. The planting of the moated orchard and its circular beds is also mentioned, and discussed again in December 1604 in a letter from Slynn to Tresham. In August of 1605 Robert Cecil described Lyveden as 'one of the finest orchards in England'.

Thomas Tresham died in September of that year, and work on the lodge and gardens ceased. In December his son and heir, Francis, died in the Tower of London, a month after his arrest for his part in the Gunpowder plot. Francis' brother, Lewis, inherited the Tresham estates, gaining full possession of Lyveden on the death of his mother in 1615, when he began the transformation of Lyveden Old Bield. He was succeeded by his son William who died childless in 1643. Lyveden passed to William's wife. In 1649 she married another devout Catholic, John Gage. Because of the family's recusancy the estate was sequestered in 1649, and c1657 Major General Boteler, granted responsibility for Northamptonshire by Cromwell, removed the timbers from the roof of the lodge to build his house in Oundle.

In the following centuries the Lyveden estate changed hands several times, and in 1922 the lodge and 11 ha of land were acquired by the National Trust. Following the publication of the survey of the gardens by Chris Taylor and A E Brown, in 1972 efforts were made to improve the gardens, including the reinstatement of the grass plinth around the lodge. In 1995 work began on clearing scrub, restoring the moat and replanting the lower orchard.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, SETTING, LANDFORM, BOUNDARIES, AND AREA The lodge known as Lyveden New Bield stands c 8km south-west of Oundle in a commanding position on the crest of the Lyveden valley, a landscape of arable clayland now virtually empty of settlement apart from a few isolated farmsteads. The Harley Way, a minor road from the village of Brigstock to Oundle, runs along the valley bottom.

The north boundary of the gardens is c 260m to the south of Harley Way, and follows a historic internal boundary to the garden of Lyveden Old Bield. To the east it follows the access track from Harley Way for c 422m before turning to travel east for c 158m to enclose the field shown on the 1886 OS map, the area of the bowling green and 'warden quincunx hills'. To the south it follows present boundaries to the fields south of the moated orchard, turning north to follow the field boundaries that curve eastwards to the west of the moated orchard, turning north again at the west pyramidal mound to form the west boundary of the lower orchard. The area enclosed is c 26 ha.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The garden remains lie alongside a track which leads uphill to the New Bield from the Oundle to Brigstock road.

Probably as part of the building works at Lyveden in the 1590s an ornate stone gateway, with archway and niches, was built on the open west side of the Old Bield's courtyard. This was moved to Fermyn Woods Hall, the chief house of the adjoining estate, in the C19, where it remains. Another gateway stood further west up the valley, presumably on the approach axis.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING At the north end of the garden landscape is the Old Bield, the Treshams' house at Lyveden, while at the south end is the New Bield, a late C16 banqueting house.

The Old Bield (listed grade I), which stands outside the registered area, is an L-plan building of two storeys with attics, of ashlar and a stone-slatted roof. Its windows, the most striking feature of the house, are large, mullioned and transomed. The house incorporates a fragment of a C16 building, with a very substantial south range added to the house by Lewis Tresham (1578-1639; cr bt 1611) who inherited the estate on the death of his brother Francis and gained full possession on the death of his mother in 1615. As reconstructed in the early C17 the house was U-plan, facing west. It was reduced in size c 1700, and again in the early C19.

The New Bield (listed grade I), called by Sir Thomas Tresham a 'garden lodge' (see below) but in modern terminology better named as a banqueting house, was a proud and visible statement of the family's adherence to the Old Faith, its theme the Passion and Faith of Our Lord. Of stone, and with a Greek cross plan overall c 21m square, it is of two storeys above a service basement. The quality of the masonry is high, and the whole building is extremely decorative: deep bay windows project from each wing, two-tone stonework emphasises detail, while inscriptions and symbols proclaim the building's religious symbolism. The building, begun in 1596, was designed (probably to a concept supplied by Tresham) by Robert Stickells (d 1620), Clerk of the Works at Richmond Palace, and was constructed by a local family of masons called the Grumbalds. Left unfinished on Tresham's death, it was despoiled c 1655 by Major Butler of Oundle, a Cromwellian officer, who removed the timber floors and other structural elements.

North-west of the New Bield is a stone cottage (listed grade II) already present in 1721, and in the later C20 occupied by the site's custodian.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS Lyveden New Bield stands on a level plateau c 200m south of the crest of the south side of the valley, with panoramic views to the north. The associated formal garden remains rise up the side of the valley from Lyveden Old Bield in a series of compartments. Walks through the gardens took the visitor on a journey through the gardens, where plants associated with the Passion are known to have been used, may also have been seen as a metaphorical pilgrimage culminating in Lyveden New Bield, listed at Grade I, called by Sir Thomas Tresham a 'garden lodge' and intended as a statement of the family's adherence to Catholicism.

The gardens represent surviving elements of an original scheme orientated from north to south with Lyveden Old Bield at the north-west corner. The sequence of garden compartments is as follows: the lower terraces, the lower orchard, and the moated orchard. To the south-east and east of the moated orchard are the gardens immediately surrounding Lyveden New Bield, as well as the bowling green and the geometric planting of fruit trees. To the south of Lyveden New Bield and the moated orchard is an area of pasture defined by the park pale of 1540, described in the Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record as the 'one of the finest preserved pieces of park pale in the county'. The registered area begins to the south of Lyveden Old Bield, and includes some of the scarps (now eroded by C20 ploughing) interpreted by Taylor as the main divisions of an unfinished formal garden. The northernmost scarps are not included in the registration. Tresham intended the terraces to be planted with trees and it seems that they may have been connected to the upper gardens by tree lined walks.

To the south of these minor scarps is a steeper one, 2m high, which returns south at its west end, probably forming the remains of an unfinished terrace to the west of the lower orchard. This is a rectangle about 170m x 160m which aerial photographs show contained rows of pits, about 300 altogether. These have been interpreted as the planting pits for fruit trees, and the orchard has been recently restored, with late C16 varieties of fruit trees planted to either side of a central, walnut lined walk.

The lower orchard is divided from the moated orchard by three terraces, the highest of which forms a walk with pyramidal mounds at either end, eroded but recognisable as two truncated pyramids, one above the other. From here there are views across the water-filled moat to Lyveden New Bield. The view is obscured by trees on the island, a square bounded to north-east and south by the completed arms of the moat. The west arm, where a fragment of the earlier moated complex survives, was left

unfinished. The pyramidal mounds to the north are mirrored by the snail mounds at the south-west and south-east corners of the moat, which sweeps around and encircles them. Spiralled paths travelling respectively clockwise and anti-clockwise climb to the top of each mound, from where there would have been views south-east to Lyveden New Bield, south across pasture to the park pale and Bradshaw Wood and north over the concentric rings of beds on the moat island, designed to be planted with standard roses alternating with raspberries. Tresham also intended cherry and plum trees to be included in the planting here, and the moat itself was to be used as a fishpond. The moated orchard and Tresham's lodge, Lyveden New Bield, immediately to the south-east, are scheduled as NN69.

Lyveden New Bield, also listed at Grade I, stands close to the boundary between the formal and the natural landscape, raised on a slight mound, a square grass plinth defined by a ditch. This ditch was dug in 1978, designed to replicate the sunken walk or alley specified by Tresham to surround the lodge gardens, which were to be 108 yards square, and to contain eight arbours. A fragment of the alley appears to be visible on the first edition OS map of 1886. Before the present ditch was dug the area immediately around the lodge had been ploughed. A deep communications trench runs from the centre of the south side of the ditch to the door into the building's basement kitchen. Viewed from the south, the lodge is silhouetted against the skyline. The concept for the building and its detail was Tresham's, although Robert Stickells (d 1620), Clerk of the Works at Richmond Palace, seems to have been consulted. It was constructed of stone by a local family of masons called the Grumbalds, of two storeys above a service basement. Its plan takes the form of a Greek cross with deep bay windows projecting from each wing. The quality of the masonry is high; two-tone stonework emphasises detail, and the richly decorative scheme proclaims the building's religious symbolism.

Tresham also gave orders that there should be a bowling green to the north of Lyveden New Bield, immediately to the north of which the 'new gardening quarter' was laid out, a geometric pattern, defined by gravel paths visible on aerial photographs, to be planted with 'quince, peach, damson trees etc'. The area to the north of this and east of the moated orchard has been identified with Tresham's proposed orchard of warden pears, called by him 'my warden quincunx hills', the hills being the mounds on which the pear trees were planted. Tresham also planned the planting of walnut trees in this area, as well as roses underplanted with strawberries.

North-west of Lyveden New Bield is Lyveden Cottage, listed at Grade II, already present in 1721.

PARK A licence to impark at Lyveden was granted in 1328. In 1540 the Treshams acquired a like grant to impark 420 acres (170ha) of land around the Old Bield. In the 1580s and 1590s there were several lawsuits arising from unlawful hunting there. REFERENCES Brown, A E, and Taylor, C C, *The Gardens at Lyveden, Northamptonshire*. *Archaeological Journal* Vol 129 (1972) 154-160 Eburne, A, and Felus, K, (for the National Trust) *Lyveden New Bield Conservation Management Plan (Draft)* (Oct 2008) Heward, J, and Taylor, R, *The Country Houses of Northamptonshire*, (RCHM 1996), 277-82

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION Lyveden New Bield, a C17 garden designed by Thomas Tresham, is designated at Grade I for the following principal reasons: * Date: The garden at Lyveden New Bield is of exceptional interest as one of the best preserved sites of its date and type in England. * Historical interest: Thomas Tresham was a figure of national importance and a talented designer, whose work, particularly at Lyveden and also at Rushton Triangular Lodge, reflects his religious beliefs. Its construction and the abandonment of the project following his death is also a reminder of the political upheavals of the C17. * Group Value: It has strong group value with Lyveden Old Bield, and most significantly provides the setting for the Lyveden New Bield, both listed at Grade I. * Documentation: Its preservation in conjunction with the surviving correspondence between Tresham and his keeper, John Slynn, provides a significant insight into the process of garden design and construction in the late C16 and early C17.

Description written: 1998 Register Inspector: PAS Edited: January 2000 Upgraded: October 2010

Legal

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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.