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Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

WORKINGTON HALL

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Name:	WORKINGTON HALL
County:	Cumbria
District:	Allerdale (District Authority)
Parish:	Workington
label.localisation:	Latitude: 54.645036 Longitude: -3.5341668 National Grid Reference: NY 01096 28851, NY 01471 28165 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001262 Date first listed: 16-Oct-1992

Details

A landscape park laid out by Thomas White in the 1780s to accompany a country house.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The property was the ancestral home of the Curwen family, who obtained a licence to crenellate an existing house in 1380. Accounts in 1675 refer to a park for fallow deer adjoining the demesne lands at Workington, which included a mansion house, courtyard, gardens, orchards, groves and woods (Sanford 1675).

The existing deer park and grounds were greatly extended by Thomas White of Retford (1736-1811), whose plan for the estate is dated 1783. The work, for which good documentation survives (see Coates 1992), was carried out for John Christian and Isabella Curwen, John having married Isabella, the sole heir of Henry Curwen of Workington Hall, in 1782. Improvements in the grounds continued until John's death in 1828.

The Curwens also owned Belle Isle (qv), Windermere, and White's commission included a plan for this property also. In 1789 J C Curwen commissioned one hundred watercolours from J Smith, amongst which were scenes of the two estates.

In 1945 Lady Chance bequeathed Workington Hall and Curwen Park to Workington Borough Council. The Hall passed to Allerdale District Council (now Borough) in 1974, who still own and manage it (1990s).

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The Workington Hall estate, c 106 ha, lies on the eastern edge of Workington, between the town and the village of Stainburn. The Hall stands to the western side of Curwen Park, formerly Low Park, on the edge of a steep scarp, Hall Bank, from which there are extensive views out over the parkland below. To the south of the Cockermouth to Workington road (A66) is a second, visually and physically distinct area of park, the Upper Park. Curwen Park is bounded by open land to the north-east, by Hall Brow and the River Derwent to the north-west; and by Stainburn Road and the gardens of houses on it, to the south. The Upper Park is bounded by Stainburn Road to the north, open land to the south and east, Stainburn School to the north-west and buildings and gardens to the west.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

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The main approach to the Hall is the short drive from the lodge and single gate pier, surmounted by an armorial carved stone unicorn head, on Bridge Street at the western point of Curwen Park. A new building (late C20), the Court House, has been erected on the opposite side of the drive to the lodge, on the site of the former stables. The drive passes the south-west front of the Hall, then joins with a road known as Ramsay Brow, which forms the southern boundary to Curwen Park, at a pair of ashlar gate piers (listed grade II), also surmounted by unicorn heads. The lodge which accompanied this entrance has gone.

The main approach from the east, as laid out in the late C18, branched south off the Cockermouth to Workington road, into the northern perimeter belt of the Upper Park, continuing west before passing over the public road via Cuckoo Arch. From here it passed along the top of Hall Bank to the south-west front. The bridge over the road was demolished when the public road was upgraded.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Workington Hall (listed grade I) was originally a mid C14 fortified tower house. The building was altered and added to in the C15 and C16, and then was almost entirely rebuilt for the Curwen family between 1783 and 1789 by John Carr of York (1723-1807). The Hall, now a ruin, consists of a three-storey tower with an adjoining three-storey L-shaped wing. Adjoining these is a C15 two-storey hall range, which together enclose a courtyard on two sides. The other two sides of the courtyard are completed by a medieval gatehouse tower and a late C18 wing. Workington Borough Council reduced the building to a controlled ruin in 1972, after problems of vandalism.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS On the north-east front of the Hall is a terrace, immediately beyond which is a steep drop down to the floor of the park. The terrace is shown on a watercolour by Smith dated 1789, which also shows a low wall continuing east round the curve of the top of the bank. If this feature ever actually existed, there is now (1990s) no trace of it. To the south-west of the Hall is an open area of grass, formerly the site of conservatories and an aviary of the mid C19, and a hedged garden enclosure.

PARK From the Hall a drive leads east along the top of Hall Bank, across a bridge over a sunken track, to the site of Cuckoo Arch. A path leads from the drive to the public road at a point near to a back lodge c 550m east of the Hall. Originally the ride led over the bridge into the Upper Park, forming part of a longer ride which led round the circumference of both parts of the site, Curwen Park and the Upper Park. Much of this route survives.

The northern park is ringed by a woodland belt within the park wall, through which the circumferential path runs. The park appears never to have been completely enclosed, but there was once a greater length of walling than there is now, the section along Ramsay Brow for instance having been demolished and other parts having collapsed.

Having descended the slope to the north of the Hall, past the remains of a mid C19 brewery, the path runs alongside the mill stream, crossing the water where it leaves the park to enter the River Derwent via a low stone bridge. It continues round the western half of the park to Workington Hall Mill, then leads eastwards to the foot of a steep wooded bank. Here it follows alongside Scale Beck, formerly known as Henning Beck, then runs up through the pleasure ground on Hall Bank, and so back to the Hall. Prior to White's involvement at the site, the beck ran directly north across Low Park and, like the mill stream whose course was also altered, was re-routed round the park's edge on his recommendation. Both streams are crossed by a number of simple stone or brick bridges.

The Upper Park was also surrounded by a continuous belt of trees, the form of which mostly survives. Here the land rises as a hill towards the centre of the enclosed area. Before the late C18 alterations the area was divided into a number of small fields. White's plan shows the removal of the field boundaries and also the planting of park trees, but in the event it appears that this half of the park was only planted with two large clumps which stood on the highest land. It is now (1990s) farmed and has lost its parkland trees.

The perimeter ride runs down the east side of the park above the Scale Beck, which forms the boundary at this point, before leaving the belt to cross the park to Schoose, a model farm complex (listed grade II). This experimental farm with its castellated gatehouse was built around the turn of the C18/C19 by Curwen, well known for his interest in agricultural improvement, on the site of an earlier farm. A map of 1810 shows the eastern ride continuing southwards in the perimeter belt before exiting the estate at Castle Lodge on the public road (A596) south of the park. On White's plan the Castle Lodge site marks the start of his south drive which joined with the western perimeter belt then crossed the centre of the park to connect with the north

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park. Castle Lodge was built in 1795-6, but White's drive was never laid out as intended, presumably because at the time of his involvement Schoose was seen as the southern limit of the park and the perimeter belt was intended to run immediately in front of the farm buildings. In the event, the park was extended further south as far as High Wood, so incorporating the farm buildings and Schoose Field, an additional 10ha.

From Schoose the ride continues back down the western side of the park to cross the public road and re-enter the northern half of the site. A school and associated playing fields has been inserted into the north-west corner of the Upper Park (outside the boundary here registered), and there has been a limited amount of housing development along its northern edge (outside the boundary here registered).

KITCHEN GARDEN The walled kitchen garden stands to the south of the Hall. White had recommended that this be removed from such a dominant position and a new walled garden erected in the north-east corner of the Upper Park. This alteration was not implemented and instead, in the 1790s, the existing garden was extended.

REFERENCES

E Sanford, A Cursory Relation of all the Antiquities and Familys in Cumberland (1675) William Hutchinson, History of the County of Cumberland I, (1794), p 138 F O Morris, A Series of Picturesque Views 5, (1866-80), p 187 E C Coates, Curwen Park: Historical Assessment (for Cumbria County Council Planning Department 1992)

Maps Plan by Thomas White, 1783 (D/CU/2), (Cumbria Record Office) Plan of the Schoose Farm from a survey by L Cash, 1807 (Helen Thompson Museum, Workington) Plan of Schoose and Moorclose Farm, 1810 (D/CU/5/8), (Cumbria Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1861-5 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1888 OS 10' to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1864

Illustrations Watercolours of Low Park and the Hall by J Smith, 1789 and 1791 (private collection) Two lithographs for Hutchinson's 'Map of Workington', 1793 (published in Hutchinson (1794) Lithograph, J Mordy, c 1850 (private collection)

Description written: February 1999 Register Inspector: CB Edited: April 1999

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.