

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

CASTLE HOWARD

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

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**CASTLE HOWARD**

Name: CASTLE HOWARD

County: North Yorkshire

District: Ryedale (District Authority)

Parish: Bulmer

County: North Yorkshire

District: Ryedale (District Authority)

Parish: Coneysthorpe

County: North Yorkshire

District: Ryedale (District Authority)

Parish: Henderskelfe

County: North Yorkshire

District: Ryedale (District Authority)

Parish: Huttons Ambo

County: North Yorkshire

District: Ryedale (District Authority)

Parish: Slingsby

County: North Yorkshire

District: Ryedale (District Authority)

Parish: Terrington

County: North Yorkshire

District: Ryedale (District Authority)

Parish: Welburn

label.localisation: Latitude: 54.127448  
Longitude: -0.90779726  
National Grid Reference: SE7147370728

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[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden  
Grade: I  
List Entry Number: 1001059  
Date first listed: 10-May-1984

## Details

Gardens, pleasure grounds and park with a mixture of geometric and less formal features developed c 1698-1738 by Charles Howard, third Earl of Carlisle and Sir John Vanbrugh (1664-1726 ) possibly with some advice from Stephen Switzer (1682-1745). The monumental scale and conception of the landscape with structures designed by Vanbrugh and Hawksmoor make Castle Howard an outstanding example of what Christopher Hussey has described as the Heroic Age of English landscape architecture, and the adoption of an informal design, possibly by Switzer, for Ray Wood has been seen as decisively important for the development of the 'natural' style in England.

NOTE This entry is a summary. Because of the complexity of this site, the standard Register entry format would convey neither an adequate description nor a satisfactory account of the development of the landscape. The user is advised to consult the references given below for more detailed accounts. Many Listed Buildings exist within the site, not all of which have been here referred to. Descriptions of these are to be found in the List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest produced by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The estate was acquired by the Howard family in 1571 when it was the site of Henderskelfe Castle and village. Henderskelfe was described by John Leland in 1540 who estimated that the park was '4 miles yn cumpace, and hath much fair young wood yn it' (quoted in Antiqs J 1979). Charles Howard, third Earl of Carlisle rejected a scheme of c 1698 by George London (d 1714) with canals, avenues and circular lawns. Vanbrugh was consulted and visited the site in 1699, continuing to work on it until his death in 1726. Works to Vanbrugh's designs continued after his death, probably supervised by his assistant Nicholas Hawksmoor (1661-1736) who was responsible for the design of some of the park structures.

Later C18 works included the creation of the Great Lake on the north side of the Castle. In 1850 the south parterre was remodelled by W A Nesfield (1793-1881) and the Atlas Fountain (Nesfield with figures by J Thomas, listed grade I) was installed. Nesfield also undertook works to the South Lake and designed a cascade (listed grade II) at its east end. Nesfield's parterre proved expensive to maintain and it was replaced by the ninth Countess in the early 1890s with the present (1998) grass terrace and yew hedges. At the same time the banks of the South Lake were remodelled to give less rigid outlines.

Horace Walpole is one of the better known of the many commentators on Castle Howard and following a visit he described it in 1772 as presenting 'the grandest scenes of rural magnificence' which allowed him to see 'at one view... a palace, a town, a fortified city, temples on high places, woods worthy of being each a metropolis of the Druids, the noblest lawn on earth fenced by half the horizon, and a mausoleum that would tempt one to be buried alive' (quoted in Jellicoe et al 1986).

The estate is in private ownership (1998).

### SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Castle Howard lies c 20km north-east of York in a rural and agricultural setting. The c 1240ha site is on high rolling land and the boundaries are fenced and walled.

The principal entrance to the site is from a beech and lime avenue c 6km in length which runs approximately north/south on the west side of the Castle extending both north and south of the park. At the south end The Monument (F P Cockerell 1869-70, listed grade II\*) is a tall stone column, and c 1.4km to the north of this the pedimented Carmire Gate (Hawksmoor c 1720, listed grade I), is flanked by crenellated walls. Aligned with the Carmire Gate and visible from it at the top of a hill, the Gatehouse or

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Pyramid Gate (Vanbrugh 1719 with flanking wings of 1756 by Sir Thomas Robinson, listed grade I) has a central arch capped by a pyramid and is flanked by walls extending to the east and west along the top of the slope. The walls are punctuated by a succession of towers of different designs (walls and towers by Vanbrugh c 1723, listed grade I). The drive continues through the Gatehouse's central arched opening to The Obelisk (Vanbrugh 1714, listed grade I) from which an avenue leads east to the Castle. The main avenue continues northwards terminating at Sheep Walk. This route was laid out by Vanbrugh and completed c 1723. From the south it is one of the grandest approaches to a country house in England with the succession of structures contributing to a mounting sense of anticipation as the visitor draws closer to the Castle. The approach from the north is chiefly notable for outstanding views of the Castle overlooking the Great Lake.

Castle Howard (listed grade I) lies on an elevated site close to the centre of the park and enjoys long-distance views from the north and south fronts. It was designed by Sir John Vanbrugh (with assistance from Nicholas Hawksmoor) and was his first country house commission. Charles Howard initially consulted William Talman but rejected his designs and instead adopted Vanbrugh's proposals, though these were not fully executed and the west wing is the work of Sir Thomas Robinson executed in the years following 1756. Castle Howard is a private residence (1998).

The stables (listed grade I) lie c 300m south-west of the Castle. They were designed by John Carr in 1781-4 for the fifth Earl of Carlisle.

On the north side of the Castle there are extensive views over parkland and the Great Lake, which was constructed 1795-9. Broad Walk is one of the principal axial routes running east/west along the south front of the Castle, continuing alongside the kitchen garden and terminating at the west end with a clairvoie called Victoria Gates (early and mid C18, listed grade I). The vista on the east side is terminated by an urn (C18, listed grade II) in Ray Wood. The South Parterre is aligned with the south front of the Castle and at its southern edge there is a ha-ha. Views to the south are dominated by a large folly called The Pyramid (Hawksmoor 1728, listed grade I).

South-east of the Castle a terraced walk, called the Temple Terrace (formerly Henderskelfe's village street) runs south-east and below this, to the south, South Lake dates from the 1720s. The east end of the Lake is connected to New River by Nesfield's cascade, basin and waterfall. Temple Terrace continues along the southern edge of Ray Wood and leads to the Temple of the Four Winds (Vanbrugh 1724-8, listed grade I), an imposing porticoed pavilion with a central dome, which stands at the head of a valley and has views to the south and east of the bridge over New River (attrib. Daniel Garret c 1740, listed grade I). Also visible on a bluff c 1.2km east of the Castle, The Mausoleum (Hawksmoor and others 1729-40, listed grade I), is a massive domed monument more than 30m in height encircled by twenty columns. This structure is one of Hawksmoor's best-known and most striking provincial works and is a prominent landmark.

North-east of the Castle is Ray Wood, for which London had proposed a geometrical pattern of rides. Instead a system of serpentine paths was instituted but these fell into disuse later in the C18. The wood has an important collection of Rhododendrons which was retained when the trees were felled in the 1940s, and when the trees were replanted in the 1960s, and a system of winding pathways was reintroduced. On the east side of Ray Wood there is a walkway between the Temple of the Four Winds and the site of Hawksmoor's Temple of Venus which collapsed in the 1940s.

The park to the south and east is sheltered by woodland, and in Pretty Wood, in the south-east corner of the site, a pyramid (Hawksmoor 1720s, listed grade I) and a sculpture called the Four Faces (Hawksmoor 1720s, listed grade I) are linked by a system of rides.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The kitchen garden lies c 100m south-west of the Castle. The walls and gateways (listed grade I) were designed by Vanbrugh and extended to the west in the mid C18.

**REFERENCES** C Campbell, *Vitruvius Britannicus*. 3, (1725), pp 5-6 Society of Gentlemen, *England Displayed* 2, (1769), pp 144, 147 A Young, *Six Month's Tour Through North of England* (1771), pp 60-2 W Angus, *Seats of the nobility and gentry* (1787), pl 3 Duke of Rutland, *Journal of a Tour to the Northern Parts of Great Britain* (1813), pp 101-7 E A Brooke, *Gardens of England* (1857), pls 33-4 *Gardeners' Chronicle* 2, (1890), pp 321-2 *Country Life*, 16 (1 October 1904), pp 486-95; 20 (6 October 1906), pp 492-4; 61 (4 June 1927), pp 884-93; 62 (6 August 1927), pp 200-8; (13 August 1927), pp 230-7; 156 (12 September 1927), p 694; 173 (17 March 1928), p 636; no 2 (11 January 1929), pp 62-5 C Holme, *Gardens of England in Midland and*

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Eastern Counties (1908), pls 25-8 G Jekyll, Garden Ornament (1918), pp 241, 244 Lady Rockley, Historic Gardens of England (1938), pp 180-1 L Whistler, The Imagination of Vanbrugh and his Fellow Artists (1954), pls 19-20 J Evelyn, Diary 4, (1955), pp 593-4 K Downes, Hawksmoor (1969), pp 47-51, 173-4, 190-206 M Binney & A Hills, Elysian Gardens (1979), pp 15, 37 Antiqs J 58 (part 2), (1979), pp 358-60 J Summerson, Architecture in Britain 1530-1830 (revised and enlarged 1983), pp 280-3 G Beard, John Vanbrugh (1986), pp 31-7, 83-93 G & S Jellicoe et al, The Oxford Companion to Gardens (1986), pp 98-9 Castle Howard, guidebook, (1997)

Maps [all held in a private collection] Estate map, 1694 Estate map, 1727 N Hawksmoor, Plan of Henderskelfe, nd, c 1700 [See also Whistler 1954]

OS 6" to 1 mile: 3rd edition published 1912

Description written: September 1998 Amended: October 2004 Register Inspector: CEH Edited: October 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.