

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

RYDAL MOUNT

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

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Name:	RYDAL MOUNT
County:	Cumbria
District:	South Lakeland (District Authority)
Parish:	Lakes
National park:	LAKE DISTRICT
label.localisation:	Latitude: 54.447404 Longitude: -2.9826245 National Grid Reference: NY 36379 06223 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000672 Date first listed: 01-Jul-1985

Details

A garden created by the poet William Wordsworth which demonstrates both his adaptation of Picturesque ideals and his interest in historical continuity and vernacularism. This, along with his wider aesthetic theory, can be seen as a link between Picturesque theory and the historical revivalism which dominated mid and later C19 artistic taste.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The site was owned by John Knott in the C18. Knott laid out a garden and also planned various landscape improvements, such as pyramids and obelisks on neighbouring hilltops, which were unexecuted. William Wordsworth (1770-1850) moved from the Parsonage at Grasmere to Rydal Mount in 1813, leasing it from the Flemings of Rydal Hall (qv), and lived there until his death in 1850. The house and grounds are now (1997) maintained by a trust.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Rydal Mount is situated on high ground on the north side of the village of Rydal and is reached from a by-road which runs north from the A591. The garden is set into the hillside overlooking land which slopes westwards down to Rydal Water and southwards to the River Rothay. The boundary of the garden is formed by a wall on the north side and by a mixture of walls and fencing which divide the garden from private gardens to the south and a wooded slope to the west. Dora's Field, the southern part of the site, is bordered by St Mary's churchyard wall on the east side, and by fences and walling on its other sides.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The entrance to the garden is on the north-east side where a drive leads to a gravelled area in front of the house. The other entrance to the site is from a gateway on the west side of St Mary's church (listed grade II) which leads to a path running north-west through Dora's Field and on into the garden area. Access from the field to the garden is now (1997) restricted.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Rydal Mount (listed grade I) originated in the C16 and was extended in the C17 and C18. In c 1750 John Knott reorientated the house so that the principal rooms gave views to the south-west and Lake Windermere. The older

parts of the building have vernacular features typical of the region, including large circular chimneystacks. Some 15m south-east of the house is a barn and coach house. The land drops sharply so that the upper part of this building, used as a shop, is entered from the main drive and the lower part is approached by a separate drive c 20m south of that leading to the house.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The garden at Rydal Mount is situated to the south and west of the house. It is characterised by the sloping terrain and by terraces running from east to west on the steepest part of the site, to the north. The terraces give way to a series of areas to the south of differing levels of formality, though the whole is executed from roughly finished local materials. Wordsworth was influenced by Uvedale Price, and the principle of creating a transitional effect from the formal and artificial around the house to the landscape beyond is put into practise at Rydal.

Immediately south of the house is a semicircular gravelled area, from which paths lead off. On the southern edge of this area stone steps lead down to an irregular U-shaped area which is walled. On the inner side of the western wall there are pet graves of early C20 date. A mound called The Mount occupies the centre of this area and a path lined with a mixed hedge of box, laurel and beech leads up to a viewing platform from which Lake Windermere can be seen in the far distance to the south. The origin of this feature is unclear; some sources identify it as the site of a beacon of early medieval date (guidebook) while John Knott is thought to have laid it out in approximately its present form (Murdoch 1984). A C19 photograph shows the stone steps and part of The Mount much as they appear today.

A path leads westwards from the north-west corner of The Mount enclosure and joins with a path leading down from the gravelled area. These paths divide and form a perimeter path around a grassed area, in the shape of an inverted D, called the Main Lawn. The ground continues to slope downwards to the west and paths lead from the Main Lawn down to a formal rectangular area called the Croquet Lawn, c 70m south-west of the house. The general disposition of this part of the garden is suggested on the 1st edition OS map surveyed 1859, but the Croquet Lawn is not shown. The west side of the garden is wooded and paths lead down the slope past several artificial rock pools formed from a spring running south-west through this part of the site.

On the northern side of the site there are terraced walks reached from stone steps leading up from the north-west side of the house. The terraces are defined by rubble retaining walls with slates laid flat along the top. The higher (northernmost) terrace is divided into two parts; that nearest the house called Sloping Terrace was probably laid out by John Knott and was extant when Wordsworth arrived. It is divided from its continuation, Far Terrace, by a simple rustic summerhouse. Running parallel and to the south is Isabella's Terrace, closest to the house, which is divided from its continuation, Dora's Terrace, by stone steps leading down the slope from the summerhouse. Dora's Terrace was restored in 1994. At the north-western edge of the garden stone steps connect the terraced walks and lead down, southwards, to join with paths leading through the woodland on the west side of the site. Views through the trees of Rydal Water, c 300m to the west, can be obtained from the west side of the garden. J C Loudon visited the gardens in 1831 and wrote: 'Rhydal Mount is a pastoral cottage, many of the walks being of turf. There is a terrace walk, with some scraps of natural rockwork planted by art; and displaying at the same time the taste of the painter in the arrangement of the colours, and the science of the botanist in choosing the plants' (Loudon 1988, 80).

A gateway, now (1997) blocked, leads from the south side of the Main Lawn, c 100m south-west of the house, into a field, called Dora's Field, which the poet bought for his daughter in 1826. It is of irregular shape and has a perimeter path and other paths leading through it, including one which links the gateway from the garden to the gateway in the churchyard wall. There is woodland on the northern boundary where a stone wall divides it from private gardens to the north. Wordsworth records in 1830 that he was 'making a Green Terrace that commands a beautiful view over our two lakes Rydal and Windermere' in the field. These views are partially obscured by mature trees to the south and west. Wordsworth planted the slopes of the field with daffodils in memory of Dora, who died in 1847.

REFERENCES

J Murdoch, *The Discovery of the Lake District*, (Victoria and Albert Museum Catalogue 1984), pp 83-7 B Elliott, *Victorian Gardens* (1986), pp 26-7 J C Loudon, *In Search of English Gardens* (1988), pp 80-1 *Guide to the Garden at Rydal Mount*, (nd, c 1995)

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1859 2nd edition published 1920 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1857-60 2nd edition published 1897

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Description written: August 1997 Amended: June 1998 Register Inspector: CEH Edited: March 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.