

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

BLAGDON

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| Name: | BLAGDON |
| District: | Northumberland (Unitary Authority) |
| Parish: | Stannington |
| label.localisation: | Latitude: 55.086157 Longitude: -1.6604601 National Grid Reference: NZ 21772 76910 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF) |
| label.overview: | Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001043 Date first listed: 01-Jan-1985 |

Details

The remains of early C18 gardens with early C20 additions by Sir Edwin Lutyens accompanying a country house. These, together with late C18 pleasure grounds with C19 additions and early C20 additions by Gertrude Jekyll, are set in an early C18 park with mid C18 work by Francis Richardson.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The name Blagdon derives from Blakedene, a black dingle or valley, the valley of the stream running through the site. Lionel Fenwick of Blagdon lived at Blagdon until 1558. The property was sequestered during the Civil War in the mid C17, but afterwards the Fenwick family regained Blagdon. William Fenwick sold Blagdon to Matthew White, merchant and Sheriff of Newcastle in 1692 who rebuilt Blagdon Hall in c 1700-10 (Harris 1979). Matthew White's son, also Matthew, had the south front added c 1750 (CL 1952). Francis Richardson (fl 1740s-50s) prepared a plan in 1755 (ibid). Matthew White III (d 1763) was created a baronet in 1756. The baronetcy passed to his nephew and son-in-law, Matthew White Ridley (1745-1813) who succeeded in 1763, and he made additions to the Hall, built new stables, and made improvements to the grounds. His son, the third Baronet, made further alterations to the Hall in 1820 and 1826. The fifth Baronet was created Viscount Ridley of Blagdon and Blyth and Baron Wensleydale in 1900. The second Viscount (d 1916) made improvements in the gardens and pleasure grounds c 1914. The third Viscount married Miss Ursula Lutyens whose father, Sir Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944), laid out the gardens from 1926 to 1938. Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932) designed a quarry garden and border in 1929. After a fire in 1944, alterations were made to the Hall. The Hall and grounds remain (2000) in private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Blagdon lies c 13km north of Newcastle upon Tyne, immediately west of the A1 and 2.5km south of Stannington village. A roughly rectangular, rural site comprising c 175ha, it is bounded on all four sides by unclassified roads, the eastern boundary road running parallel to the A1. The site is mainly flat but slopes to the west.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES There several entrances and approaches to the estate, some of which are now disused. Standing 1.2km south-east of the Hall is South Lodge (James Wyatt 1786-7, listed grade II*). The Lodge consists of a pair of single-storey octagonal lodges, built of tooled ashlar with slate roofs, which are connected by a Doric screen. The gate piers at the centre of the screen which flank the entrance to the south-east drive are each surmounted by a large white bull, the crest of

the Ridleys. From here the south-east drive runs north-westwards, before turning south-west to reach the east front of the Hall. A grass turning circle with a central Coade stone urn (listed grade II) designed by Lutyens (CL 1952) lies immediately below the east front. The south-east drive was constructed at the same time as South Lodge (*ibid*).

North Lodge together with an entrance screen (Lish 1887, listed grade II) stands c 550m north-east of the Hall. The lodge and screen mark the north-east entrance, now (late C20) disused. From here the north-east drive runs south-west for 200m then divides. The western branch of the drive continues over Stone Bridge (1860, listed grade II) standing 160m north-north-east of the Hall, with statues (J C Lough 1869 and 1871, listed grade II) which stand on a bank on the south side of the stream, 150m from the Hall. The western branch continues for 80m to a circle, on which stands a central Coade stone urn overlooked by the east front of the stables, and then continues south to the east front of the Hall. The eastern branch of the north-east drive is a grass track which leads over White Bridge (late C18 or early C19, listed grade II), a pedestrian bridge which lies 150m north-east of the Hall also giving access to the stables and the Hall.

An earlier approach gave access from the east, as seen in a painting of c 1735 attributed to Mauthias Reade (information supplied by the owner). This painting shows a drive which led westwards along an avenue to a small set of gates flanked by entrance screens then continued a short distance beyond to the larger entrance gates and screens of the forecourt. North of the forecourt entrance was a further gate flanked by gate piers which gave access to the drive west to the stables. Remains of the eastern approach are marked by a path off the eastern unclassified road. A house, possibly a former lodge, stands on the east side of the road (outside the area here registered), c 850m south-east of the Hall. From here the path leads north-westwards through North Wood, disappears in the parkland and cricket pitch then reappears 200m east of the Hall as a straight drive. The gates to the forecourt were removed in 1786 and a sunk fence was made to the east (CL 1952). The smaller gates have also gone. The remains of this axial approach can still be seen as grass paths.

The present (late C20) entrance enters at the north boundary off a private road running from west to east towards the A1. It lies opposite Home Farm (outside the area here registered) standing on the north side of the road. The north drive, which may formerly have been the service drive to the Hall, runs south for 300m to cross a stream, a tributary of the River Blyth, carried by the Iron Bridge (1881, listed grade II) by J N Cresswell, and J A Somerset of St Nicholas Iron Works, Newcastle. From here the drive continues south for 150m to the stables standing north-west of the Hall.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Blagdon Hall (listed grade I) stands towards the centre of the site, and is built of ashlar with a slate roof. The three-storey, seven-bay building has a single-storey extension abutting the west end of the south front. The Hall was rebuilt in c 1700-10 (Harris 1979) incorporating an earlier house. The south front was added c 1740-50 (CL 1952). Alterations were made in 1778-91 by James Wyatt for Sir Matthew White Ridley, including the kitchen wing (listed grade II), now (2001) a house and garages standing north-west of the Hall. The north wing was added c 1820 by John Dobson and additions were made by Ignatius Bonomi in 1826 and 1830 (Pevsner and Richmond 1957) for Sir Matthew White Ridley II. After a fire in 1944, parts of the C19 house were removed and alterations were made in 1948-9 by Robert Lutyens.

The stable block (James Wyatt 1791, listed grade II*) stands north-west of the Hall, and is built of ashlar in a Palladian style with Lakeland slate roofs. The east, entrance front has a central carriage opening surmounted by a pediment with a clock. Ranges run west from the north and south ends enclosing a central courtyard. The Seed House, an outbuilding and attached wall (listed grade II), stands south-west of stables. It is an early C19 building incorporating two small C18 structures in Gothick style.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens and pleasure grounds surround the Hall in the northern half of the site. The formal gardens lie to the south and west of the Hall. The informal pleasure grounds including the lake and quarry garden lie to the north of the Hall.

The formal gardens designed by Lutyens between 1926 and 1938 can be divided into two parts, the canal and pool south of the Hall, and the ornamental walk and lime avenue leading to the kitchen garden west of the Hall.

A narrow herbaceous flower bed abuts the south front of the Hall with wooden benches. Beyond the flower bed a paved terrace walk (Lutyens 1926-38, listed grade II) runs east to west and beyond this a lawn stretches southwards. Set in the lawn, enclosed with hedges, is a 150m long (north to south) canal with a circular basin terminating the south end (Lutyens 1926-38, listed grade II*). The stone-edged canal has urns set on plinths placed midway on either side of it. A large beech is planted on the

east side of the canal. A circular basin lies at the southern end of the canal. To the south of the basin and lawn a stone-capped ha-ha marks the southern boundary of the garden.

The canal garden is shown in photographs in *Country Life* (1952) and in *The English Garden* (Fleming and Gore 1979), which show a much more elaborate scheme than is now (2001) in place. On either side of the water between the lawn and the urns an inner row of alternating squares of flower beds and turf was laid out, each turf square planted with a small apple tree. An outer row of small apple trees ran parallel to the inner row on either side of the canal. On either side of the north end of the canal three square flower beds alternated with the outer row of apple trees. The beech tree is shown in the photograph but not the Ridley Bulls (CL 1952; Fleming and Gore 1979).

In the early C18 the garden south of the Hall was formal in layout as shown in the c 1700-10 painting. The garden was walled and laid out with parterres. This formality was swept away in the late C18 as shown in a plan by F Richardson in 1755 (CL 1952). A Victorian garden scheme included a large round pool at the south front with shrubberies and elaborate flower beds (ibid) as well as a terracotta balustrade (guidebook). This was replaced by the Lutyens canal garden.

The paved terrace walk which runs from east to west below the south front of the Hall continues westwards between an opening in the western yew hedge, which is a continuation of the western yew hedge enclosing the canal. The opening in the hedge is marked by flanking obelisks (Lutyens 1926-38, listed grade II) on bases and continues down a short flight of steps. From the bottom of the steps the path is laid out with stone-edged squares containing brick surrounding stone with a square core of edge-on slate. To the north of the path, masked by a late C20 wooden fence, is a swimming pool and a three-arched stone changing room. To the south, hidden in the trees is a tennis court, 120m south-west of the Hall, on the site of the sunken garden, walls and pergolas (all now, 2000, gone). The path continuing westwards down a further flight of steps is constructed of plain stone slabs, flanked by an avenue of cherries, and runs to two obelisks with a balustrade between them. A pair of shallow steps leads westwards down on either side of the obelisks with the paving of the steps being marked out in alternate squares of stone and edge-on slate. On the east side of the obelisk feature a shell set in the wall, which may be the remains of a fountain, is now masked by a large clump of hostas. This feature marks the end of the formal path. From this feature, a grass path leads westwards along a lime avenue to a circular pond (Lutyens 1926-38, listed grade II) 300m west of the Hall. The pond, surrounded by narrow segmental stone walls flanked by urns set on plinths and with stone benches between them, is edged with concentric circles of stone then edge-on slate, set with alternating stone circles and diamond shapes and an outer stone circle. The kitchen garden lies west of the pond.

The pleasure grounds lying north of the Hall are cut by a stream running from west to east, which is crossed by three bridges, Iron Bridge, Stone Bridge, and White Bridge.

Some 150m north-east of the Hall, east of Stone Bridge and the north-east drive leading to North Lodge, lies a former quarry laid out as a garden. The quarry garden is entered at the east end through a gate in an arch underneath the White Bridge. A path leads westwards through the quarry with shrubs and trees, ash, beech, willow, and acers, planted on either side. To the north of the path, the garden slopes towards the stream and side paths lead down towards the water.

The quarry was used in the C18 and C19 as a source of stone to build the Hall and other buildings. In 1860 soil was brought in to form a garden and trees were planted. In 1914 the second Viscount began to replant the garden but died in 1916 before completing it (guidebook). By 1928 Lady Ridley (Lutyens' daughter, Ursula) began planning a garden in the quarry to designs by Gertrude Jekyll (Brown 1982). Miss Jekyll said in a letter to Lady Ridley when discussing the mass of rock rubble, 'They should look as if it was a sort of moraine of debris and pieces of rock fallen from a cliff to be planted with gentians... saxifrages and campanulas' (quoted in Brown 1982). A plan of the north part of the quarry shows drifts of peonies and iris among *Olearia haasti*, *amelanchier*, *cistus*, and *Sorbaria tomentosa* (*Spiraea lindleyana*) (Brown 1982). Not all Jekyll's designs were implemented (guidebook). Since 1964, when the fourth Viscount succeeded, shrubs and climbing roses have been planted in the quarry garden together with many varieties of acers (ibid).

Shrub and tree planting along the stream has been extended since the 1960s westwards beyond Stone Bridge, to the north-west corner of the site, this area being known as the Dene (guidebook). Paths criss-cross the stream over small wooden bridges.

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An icehouse (late C18, listed grade II) stands 20m south-east of the south end of Stone Bridge, to the south of the quarry. A boathouse (probably late C18, listed grade II), possibly contemporary with date of the lake (1783), lies east of the north end of White Bridge.

Part of the stream was dammed for Sir Matthew White Ridley in 1783 to form a lake north-east of the Hall (CL 1952). The serpentine lake, 400m long, extends eastwards from the quarry garden within North Wood. A walk runs eastwards through the plantation on the north bank of the lake, planted with rhododendrons and mature sweet chestnuts and beeches. A series of follies or ruins have been placed in the wood around the path. The first, the Folly, a gothic ruin (early C19, listed grade II) stands 200m north-east of the Hall. In woodland near the gothic ruin are the remains of a medieval cross (C13, listed grade II) reputedly Shotton Market Cross brought to Blagdon in the early C19. Nearby stands a stone arch with 'MWR 1953' and 'AR 1993' engraved at the top of the arch on either side of an engraved Ridley Bull. The path continues to a smaller ruin commemorating Laura Ridley. Further along the path the Summer House, (probably late C18, altered C19, listed grade II) stands 400m east of the Hall. This is stone built with a slate roof and has three arched recesses with plaster medallions on the inside wall. Nearby is a Temple (listed grade II) standing on the bank of the lake, designed by William Newton in 1783 and moved from Heaton Hall (qv) c 1930. A sandstone urn (listed grade II) set on a plinth is located 20m north of the Temple.

Grove Pond with, to the west, rusticated gate piers with carved finials (c 1914, listed grade II) is located 260m south-south-east of the Hall. To the east of the Pond is a summerhouse (c 1914, listed grade II) built of square tooled stone with ashlar dressings. **PARK** The park lies north and south of the Hall and its encircling pleasure grounds. The perimeter woodland of North Wood extends the length of the eastern boundary, broadening north of the lake from a belt into a piece of woodland, also known as North Wood. This wood forms part of the pleasure grounds east of the Hall. The park in the north of the site is divided into two by a strip of woodland known as Chicken Wood which extends between the northern boundary and the stream. Other woodland lies along the southern boundary with a tongue of woodland stretching into the southern parkland. Further perimeter woodland abuts the southern part of the western boundary.

Some 60m north of North Lodge is Cale Cross (1783, listed grade II), a conduit head by David Stephenson. Originally situated on The Side in Newcastle it was moved to Blagdon in 1807. One storey and three bayed, it is built of ashlar in Roman Doric style. The park was probably laid out during the rebuilding of the Hall in c 1700-10 as illustrated in the painting of that date and may have been relandscaped by F Richardson in the mid C18 (CL 1952).

KITCHEN GARDEN The brick-walled kitchen garden (late C18 or early C19, listed grade II) lies 300m west of the Hall. The entrance to the garden is from the north approached over the stream via Cascade Dene. An ornamental gate in the wall links to the path from the Hall. The garden consists of two enclosures, the eastern one quartered with cross paths and the western one planted with trees. Within the eastern enclosure outbuildings are built against the north and east sides. Glasshouses stand in the north-west quadrant together with a pergola with brick pillars which was part of Lutyens' garden scheme (1926-38). The garden is planted with vegetables with herbaceous borders on the east/west path.

REFERENCES

The Garden 49, (15 February 1896), pp 112-13 Country Life, 112 (18 July 1952), pp 188-91; (25 July 1952), pp 260-3; (8 August 1952), pp 396-9 N Pevsner and I A Richmond, The Buildings of England: Northumberland (1957, reprinted 1974), pp 97-8 L Fleming and A Gore, The English Garden (1979), p 228 J Harris, The Artist and the Country House (1979), p 126, pl 127 J Brown, Gardens of a Golden Afternoon (1982), pp 46, 48-9, 50, 151-1, 196 M and R Tooley, Gardens of Gertrude Jekyll in Northern England (1982), p 55 Blagdon, guidebook, (nd, late C20)

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published c 1860 3rd edition published 1924

Archival items Jekyll plans held at Reef Point Gardens Collection, California; microfilm copies are available at National Monuments Record, Swindon, folder 221.

Description written: September 2000 Amended: July 2001; March 2003; August 2003; March 2004 Register Inspector: CEB Edited: June 2003

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.