



# YORKSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

## Hackness Hall park and garden

### Statement of Significance

This statement of significance for Hackness Hall park and garden, created by the Yorkshire Gardens Trust, is derived from research carried out as part of Historic Designed Landscapes project.

#### 1. Heritage Values Summary

The current designed landscape at Hackness was laid out within the space of only a generation at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries. It is an almost complete example of a landscape design executed on a modest scale after the fashion of the day and drawing on the beauty of the surrounding landscape. Most features survive, as well as some of the historic planting, and there is continuity of use in many parts of the landscape. Hackness is the only place within the North York Moors National Park where a medieval village was removed to make way for a landscape park. With the undisturbed remains of the earlier manor surviving within the park, the late eighteenth century designed landscape offers the potential to understand the development of the landscape over a long time period. The historic designed landscape now represents a significant characteristic of this part of the National Park. Features close to the hall make an important contribution to the modern streetscape, and the park and surrounding wooded dales create the scenic beauty which has been enjoyed by visitors for well over 200 years.

#### 2. Historical Value ('Narrative')

Evolving from a profitable medieval manor owned by Whitby Abbey until the Dissolution, the first hall, park and gardens at Hackness were created under the ownership of Elizabethan diarist, Lady Margaret Hoby and her husband Sir Thomas Posthumus. After a hiatus in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries during which time the estate was sold to John Vanden Bempde, remodelling of the landscape began with Richard Vanden Bempde Johnstone (later Sir Richard) after he inherited his grandfather's estate in 1792. In the space of less than ten years, Sir Richard had built a new country house surrounded by pleasure grounds and landscaped park, with associated ancillary buildings and a walled garden. All traces of the medieval village and former manor house were removed, leaving only the church, with the public road being diverted to make way for a lake. A new estate village was built out of sight of the hall and its grounds.

The designed landscape was developed further by Sir Richard's widow, Lady Margaret, who extended the hall and added a new entrance gateway and a park lodge, and subsequently by his son, Sir John, who became MP first for York and then Scarborough. Sir John was a philanthropist known to have been the patron of sculptor Matthew Noble, son of the estate's stonemason. The geologist, William Smith, whose recognition for his pioneering work was received while he was employed as the estate's agent, was partly a result of Sir John's support.



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Although some features are disused or no longer used as originally intended, the landscape as a whole continues to be managed today for the same or very similar purposes.

### 3. Evidential Value ('Research')

The structure and features of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century designed landscape survive largely intact, including the remains of extensive water management works and rides created within the surrounding woodlands. It is a fully legible landscape which demonstrates the association between a country house, its service and ancillary buildings and the estate village, within the context of the surrounding parkland, and it is a good example of the development of a country estate in this area. It is also the only place within the North York Moors National Park where a medieval settlement was removed to make way for a designed landscape.

Earthworks of the Elizabethan manor house and its probable medieval predecessor survive in the park and offer the potential for research into the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century gardens and park, and the remains may also preserve evidence of pre-conquest monastic occupation. Non-intrusive survey methods would increase the understanding of these earlier features and geophysical techniques might also help to identify below ground survival of former layouts and features within walled garden and pleasure grounds. There is scope also to extend the understanding of the surrounding woodlands which were enhanced as part of the design, including through examination of high resolution Lidar which might reveal the extent of the rides.

Although much of the planting has changed since the late eighteenth century, it is clear that some historic planting does survive, especially specimen trees in the pleasure grounds and including an ancient ash tree which is probably a relic of the seventeenth century landscape. Botanic survey would provide more detail on the survival of historic planting and add to the understanding of how the designed landscape changed over time.

### 4. Aesthetic Value ('Emotion')

The designed landscape around Hackness Hall takes advantage of the natural topography and beauty of the surrounding landscape producing a design which is both carefully planned and executed and gives the impression of being entirely natural. The design 'borrows' the surrounding natural woodland to give the impression that everything in view is part of the park and it produces the appearance of a seamless transition between different areas by including devices such as the sunk fences dividing the slope to south of the hall and setting the road at a lower level than the gardens on either side.

The elegance of the hall, the orangery, the stable block and associated service buildings designed by John Carr and Peter Atkinson complements the landscape design. The landscape is at the core of the North York Moors National Park's Limestone Dales landscape character area which is significant for its quiet wooded valleys and dark skies and overall gives the impression of seclusion and tranquillity from both the perimeter of the park and at its heart.



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### 5. Communal Value ('Togetherness')

Broadly the same today as it was 200 years ago, the designed landscape around Hackness Hall has been enjoyed by visitors since the early 1800s, with carriage rides (and later charabanc trips) through the park being a notable tourist attraction. The road between the villages of Suffield and Hackness forms the main thoroughfare running through the park and is an important characteristic of the landscape from which all users can experience the designed landscape.

The buildings and structures in the centre of the designed landscape, such as the walls of the walled garden and pleasure grounds and the stone-lined channel running alongside the road, form a significant and characteristic part of the modern streetscape in the village of Hackness. Although most of the modern village of Hackness is outside the landscape park, the church and school are at the centre of it, with the school having access to the walled garden and other areas of the hall's private grounds for school activities. In addition to the public road, rights of way run through most of the woodland around the edges of the park and offer walkers many fine views into and across the park, echoing some of the views the original landscape design would have intended.

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