



YORKSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

Thwaite Hall Gardens

Statement of Significance

This statement of significance for Thwaite Hall Gardens, created by the Yorkshire Gardens Trust, is derived from research carried out as part of the East Riding Historic Designed Landscapes project.

1. Heritage Values Summary

Thwaite Hall (formerly Thwaite House) is important as a rare survival of an impressive 19th century villa garden in an urban setting at Cottingham, East Riding of Yorkshire and is recognised as such by its inclusion on the Historic England Register of Historic Parks and Gardens (NHLE: 1000137). In the mid 20th century the hall was extended and the gardens developed as botanic and experimental gardens by the University of Hull.

2. Historical Value ('Narrative')

John William Hentig, a Hull merchant, built Thwaite Hall in 1803-7 and by 1839 had created a garden. The ship owners David and Charles Wilson (later Lord Nunholmburne), whose wealth came from the expanding port of Hull, subsequently bought the estate and during 1870-80s developed the garden, pleasure grounds and small parkland. Cottingham was a favoured rural retreat, located away from the city of Hull, where the wealthy had space to build villas and lay out gardens.

Albert Rollitt, a solicitor and Mayor of Hull, bought the estate and during his ownership, as President of the Hull Botanic Garden, the gardens were well maintained. He sold it on to Colonel Goddard, who by 1928 sold it to University College, now the University of Hull. They extended the house renaming it Thwaite Hall and established a botanic and experimental garden. This almost certainly resulted in its survival as many contemporary villas and gardens at Cottingham were built over in the 20th century.

While most of these villas had relatively small gardens (1 to 2 acres), Thwaite House was considerably larger (31 acres), which gave more scope for the initial layout of a formal garden, with parkland containing a spring fed stream, surrounded by shelterbelt plantations. The design was meant to be a miniaturised view of the larger landscape gardens associated with more substantial properties that designers such as Humphry Repton was working on at the time. The second phase of landscaping during the 1870-80s, particularly the sinuous lake, shows influences from the more informal style as advocated by William Robinson at the time.



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3. Evidential Value ('Research')

Initially natural springs were harnessed to create a narrow ribbon stream, but then redesigned to form a sinuous lake. Water management systems were introduced, with drains and sluices to control the flow and further survey and research can document this complex engineering.

4. Aesthetic Value ('Emotion')

The 19th century villa garden was a sign of social status. It reflected the owner's taste and influences and this makes them unique. Few were designed by professionals, but influenced by garden design at the time and mostly consisted of a lawn and specimen trees. Occasionally they would have quirky buildings, winding paths and shrubbery to create the idea of a larger space. The sense of space, within the encroaching urban scene, is still an important aspect of the current garden layout.

Today Thwaite Hall Gardens is an important green oasis in an increasing urban environment, as Cottingham is now enveloped within the suburbs of Hull. The gardens are a significant component of the Cottingham Conservation Area, which enhances its beauty and environmental quality. Its woodland and lake provide an important wild life habitat. Establishment of the botanic gardens added further interest to the setting, by introducing rare species of plants, shrubs and trees and those surviving are documented.

5. Communal Value ('Togetherness')

Thwaite Hall Gardens is valued locally as evidenced by the Cottingham Civic Society having been a driving force in getting it listed (Grade II) on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. Under the tenure of the University of Hull it provided a valuable environment for students living in the halls of residence, those studying and advancing research in biological science and horticulture, also a stimulating environment for school teachers and children.

Friends of Thwaite Gardens are an active group, who now help maintain the gardens; they encourage an interest in the site, through their newsletters, talks for members, open days and events to engage with the wider community.

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