



YORKSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

President: The Countess of Harewood

Vice-Presidents: Lady Legard, Peter Goodchild, Nick Lane Fox

www.yorkshiregardenstrust.org.uk

Mrs Val Hepworth

Trustee

Conservation and Planning

Ms Emma Hosker
Project Officer
White Rose Forest
And Matthew Snelling

conservation@yorkshiregardenstrust.org.uk

Emma.Hosker@kirklees.gov.uk

Matthew.Snelling@kirklees.gov.uk

28th November 2023

Dear Ms Hosker and Mr Snelling

RE:– Tree Planting at Swinton Castle, Masham – White Rose Forest.

Thank you for consulting The Gardens Trust (GT) in its role as Statutory Consultee with regard to any proposed development that could affect a site included by Historic England (HE) on their Register of Parks & Gardens – Swinton Castle at Grade II*. The Yorkshire Gardens Trust (YGT) is a member organisation of the GT and works in partnership with it in respect of the protection and conservation of registered sites and is authorised by the GT to respond on GT's behalf in respect of such consultations. And thank you for responding to my queries about the species that you are intending to plant.

The area for tree planting lies within the Registered Park and Garden boundary to the north/north-west and near Quarry Gill Wood; an important part of the historic design. Also, south-east of Stew Pond that lies between the chain of lakes to the north of the park and the more southern chain of lakes with Lake Superior/Top Lake/Great Pond at its western end, that was begun in 1765 – all altered later to become ruggedly Picturesque. A linear area of parkland tree planting – wood pasture - near the northern boundary and connecting with North Wood is also proposed.

We understand from your enquiry that the planting has been designed to mirror the woodland already within the park, replace dying veteran ash trees and to avoid major sight lines. It is the final piece for an imminent EIA submission to the Forestry Commission.

Swinton Castle is what we would describe as a significant example of the 'Rugged Picturesque' designed landscape developed at the latter end of the 18th Century and into the first quarter of the 19th Century. The designed landscape was laid out initially in the 1750's and 1760's for William Danby I (d.1781) but made ruggedly Picturesque by his son William Danby II (d.1833), especially from 1796-1815. William Danby II was influenced by the paintings of Claude, Poussin and Salvator Rosa and following his tour of the Lakes, with his wife, his sister and her husband General Harcourt, he was influenced by the wild and dramatic landscapes of the Lake District which he then transposed to form his ideas for Swinton.

The estate records indicate that in the woods, alders, willows and birches were planted around the lakes and in March 1803 900 oaks were planted in a single day and by the end of March 30,000 larch and Scotch firs had been planted. Beeches and oaks were frequently planted in the woodland

gardens with alder and willow in the damper areas. In 1815 Danby was working on Quarry Gill where he also planted young Whins [Gorse], Thorns and Hollies.

We understand from your note that one of the estates main objectives for the woodland creation is to improve biodiversity, resilience for climate change and for succession particularly as there are many trees with ash dieback. A variety of species have been included to fit with the existing woodland and parkland trees already in the landscape whilst also ensuring longevity against disease and temperature increases. Larch will not be planted because of *Phytophthora ramorum*.

I hope that my brief explanation of the background to the historic design at Swinton Castle is helpful and I've appended fuller notes from my research below – see References.

Virtually all the woodland and shrub areas – apart from possibly a small area in the north of Quarry Gill Wood - that are indicated for new planting, were not treed but open grassland with some scattered trees as shown on the *Plan of the Gardens and Pleasure Grounds of Wilm Danby Esq, Mashamshire 1820*, (North Yorkshire County Record Office collection ZS Swinton), and the OS 1st Edition 6 inches:1 mile map published 1856. However, in terms of Stew Pond and its water course planting was in place to its west by the OS 25 inches:1 mile map revised in 1908 but the area proposed now was open.

Assessment: 1. The linear area of parkland tree planting – wood pasture - near the northern boundary and connecting with North Wood -25/ha: Small leaved lime, Pedunculate oak, Sessile oak, Beech should be a valuable feature and continues the historic designed landscape feature of boundary planting and parkland views.

2. Stew Pond – Mixed Native Broadleaves -1600/ha: Downy birch, Field maple, Wild cherry, Pedunculate oak, Sessile oak, Beech, Rowan, Hornbeam. Would Bird Cherry also be suitable? Presume care will be taken with the water course. This area has been open ground, but in view of the estates current objectives I don't think that there is a problem with planting it up now and note the footpath/desire line through, which should give some pleasing experience.

3. North/north-west and near Quarry Gill Wood - The photographs are very helpful. Photograph 2 shows a mature oak tree with its roots embedded in boulders which I would say is one of the features of the Rugged Picturesque style. Again, this area has been open ground with some scattered trees since the time of the Danby's and could be argued to have not been part of their Rugged Picturesque design intention but to have distant more pastoral views along the Burn Valley. The south-west portion is proposed to be Mixed Native Broadleaves as in 2. above. As this area is near Danby's Quarry Gill would you please check whether there are Scots pine as they are a picturesque tree and Danby planted 'scotch firs' which we call Scots pine. Bearing in mind Danby's planting I also wonder about Whin and Holly and maybe Blackthorn in addition to the Hawthorn?

The Shrub Areas and Wet Woodland Low Density should not impede the extended views. Shrubs with low density broadleaves - 1600/ha: Hawthorn, Dog rose, Guelder rose, Beech, Pedunculate oak, Downy birch.

Shrub areas -1600/ha: Hawthorn, Dog rose, Guelder rose, Spindle, Elder, Hazel.

Wet woodland - 1089/ha: Alder, Willow, Downy birch.

As Swinton Castle is Grade II*, it is a particularly important site of more than special interest. It is one of only about 28% of registered sites at that grade and of which there are only in total around 1700 registered sites in England, so we advise great care and that new planting follows as far as possible the design intention. We appreciate that landscapes do not stand still and that there are current objectives including resilience to climate change, diseases etc.

We hope our advice is helpful in understanding the importance of Swinton Castle and any impact of the proposals. Overall, and on balance, we don't consider that the work will adversely impact the registered park and garden and the Gardens Trust and Yorkshire Gardens Trust have no objection.

Yours sincerely

Val Hepworth
Trustee Conservation and Planning

cc. Historic England e-yorks@historicengland.org.uk; Conservation@ the Gardens Trust

REFERENCES:

Cornforth, John, Swinton, Yorkshire, The Home of the Earl and Countess of Swinton, I, II, III, *Country Life*, 7 April, 14 April, 21 April 1966.

Some Research Notes on Swinton Park History, 1750-1833

William Danby I improved his estates & the way of life of those who lived in it. He reclaimed & brought into profitable cultivation much of the moorlands.

Improved the house at Swinton, making alterations in 1767 - John Carr of York.

Built stables in 1752-3 (£867 8s 5d) & gates in 1754 (designed by William combining his own ideas with those of a Mr Ward, a local joiner whose father had constructed the wooden cupola on the stables, & Robert Doe, the gardener at Studley Royal. Cost £422 6s 5d1/2, including a section of park wall.)

In 1760's he laid out a chain of lakes in the park (1764-9 with aid of a Mr Jones), but these were considerably altered by his son. (Home Lake/ 'new river in Swinton Park' begun 1765. Lake Superior/ Top Lake/ 'Great Pond' begun 1765, altered c.1810 with rockwork arch & Druidic arches at N end, bridge to S. Coffin Lake/Boathouse Pond/Old Pond altered c.1810 with rock bridge 1813-15 by John Foss.)

6,000 fir trees were purchased in 1762.

1781 William Danby died. Succeeded by his eldest son William II who was then 29.

William Danby II was made High Sheriff of N Riding in 1784

William II set off late in 1786 on a Grand Tour with his wife (n[■]e Caroline Seymour). They travelled in a secondhand travelling coach bought for the journey for £112 18s 6d. They returned to Swinton in October 1790 with a large number of works of art bought on the tour.

In 1791 William started building onto his house & improving the grounds. He spent 20-30 years making Swinton into a rich expression of Picturesque ideas.

Work on Swinton began in 1791 under direction of John Foss of Richmond. Foundations laid on March 20 1791.

His first extension to Swinton was a wing to W which included the drawing room designed by James Wyatt.

Also built a large wing to N to connect house to the stables.

In 1813-14 he built on another wing to W of drawing room consisting of a library to house his books & a museum for his geological, botanical, archaeological & other collections. He consulted Robert Lugar over the building of the museum & was persuaded by him to turn the house into a castle - carried out 1821-24 when a massive tower, turrets, battlements & a new billiards room & library were added to N & S side of the original house. (Altered c.1890)

He also continued the improvements to park & grounds at Swinton. Work is recorded in the regular letters from the Head gardener, John Shields to William Danby.

Mr Mickle visited and supervised the improvements. In the woods, alders, willows & birches were planted around the lakes.

1802: “Mr Mickle & all the labourers, altering the island, he gave them 4s to drink to encourage them to work hard, which they did but could not finish.... There are three pretty deep hollows made ... the great stone that laid near the old rocks is placed in the hollow opposite the Mount so that the water will wash its foot.”

1803: 900 oaks planted on a single day in March & at end of month, “Mr Telford finished putting in the whole of the 30,000 larch & Scotch firs this day.”

Scotch firs, larches, alders & birches were bought by the 1,000 from nurseries at York & Pickhill (Telfords & Thompson’s)

Beeches & oaks were often planted in the woodland gardens with alder & willows in the damper areas.

April: Planted Scotch firs, elms, laurels, laburnums, hazels & box as well as ivy & honeysuckle & transplanted yews & hollies to the front drive.

1805: 2 liquidambers, 4 *R. ponticum*, 4 Allspice plants; sowing of beech & “Burgundy acorns”.

1805: “100 Alders were planted by the Black Hole”[probably ‘Shoulder of Mutton’ pond], which was dug out in the woodland gardens. Gravel walks had to be rolled, One day in May spent in planting rushes in tufts on the edge of the pond by Storth Wood..

On 12th May Head Gardener, Shields wrote “The rocks are nearly complete except three stones to be placed in the water & a little more planting to shade the stones, this last is rather difficult on account of the lateness of the season.”

1810: The finishing touches to the Boathouse & Great Ponds. The garden staff etc. made “inlets & a projection upon the south head of The Boathouse Pond” & painted the boat. They were also reported to be “siting the new built rock in the northwest inlet of The Great Pond...assisting to load & lay stones in the water, also planting among the stones.” Shields told of moving “a large stone in the great island - which stone with earth & 2 Alders & a Birch composed a small island in The Great Pond.”

[Danby had more or less finished his improvements to southern chain of lakes & a start was made on the northern lakes. Rocks were set at top edge of Top Lake [Lake Superior] & a projection made in Boat House Pond/Coffin Lake.] Massive embankments were needed along one side of Top Lake & at ends of Coffin Lake. In 1811 work was started on Quarry Gill Bridge. Lower part was built by Mickle II (1747-c. 1810), & upper part designed by John Foss. It took 8 years to build & cost £11,000. Each stone is numbered with Roman numerals.

Home Lake was further altered in 1814-15.

30,000 larch & Scots pine were planted in the park.

1811 Quarry Gill begun.

1813 Letter from Henry Banks to Danby. “I quite envy you the Happiness of being so far in the Country and surrounded by all the unsophisticated Beauties of Nature and at the same time a sufficient

stocke of materials for the Employment and gratification of an elegant and cultivated taste...Enjoy the Peace of Innocence which is only to be found in the Country and in your groves hold high converse with the Gods with whom you will associate hereafter.”

1813-15 John Foss rebuilt the bridge on Coffin Lake – latter is also called The Old Pond or Boat House Pond.

1814-15 Foss altered Home Lake.

1815 Letter from Shields (Head Gardener) to Danby when he was building “a stone and turf cam against the bank in Quarry Gill to keep it from mouldering down...” and had “also planted Young Whins, Thorns and Hollies, Foxgloves, Primroses, etc. all along the cam and upon the projecting parts of the great Quarry...”

William Danby was also a great patron of the arts & in c.1804 Julius Caesar Ibbetson who had been given an introduction to him by Stavely, a York carver and guildler, was commissioned to paint some pictures of Swinton & Masham. [These are a very useful record.]

William Danby built the Druid’s Temple at Ilton c.1800. At this time there was a great interest in druids & Danby having seen a similar but original temple on his tour of the Continent, decided to build a copy at Ilton in one of the enclosures he had just been granted & was planting up.

He was also an accomplished scholar with a great knowledge of literature, science, geology & mineralogy & an excellent player of the violincello - he had a complete set of stringed instruments for the use of his friends.

Another artist who came to live in Masham was George Cuit. He did a series of etchings of the Abbeys of Yorkshire as well as many other old buildings & castles. He also painted a number of views of Masham & Swinton – also a very useful record.

1820 *Plan of the Gardens and Pleasure Grounds of Wilm Danby Esq, Mashamshire 1820*, (North Yorkshire County Record Office, collection ZS Swinton)

1832 Stone seat in alcove overlooking the valley of the Burn, near Quarry Gill Bridge engraved with “This Seat Overlooks some of the Beautiful Works of the Creator was built with a Grateful Mind by William Danby Esq. AD 1832”

1833 Danby died aged 82 - greatly mourned.

1865 Fisher’s *History of Masham*, “ The peculiar formation of the lakes studded with islands present wild and rugged banks, bold projecting rocks, rustic bridges of huge rough stones apparently thrown together as if by accident... the whole being closely hemmed in and darkened by thickly wooded plantations of forest trees...produce on the mind a deep sense of solitude and seclusion, with at the same time a feeling of awe and admiration.”