



YORKSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

Carlton Towers park and garden

Statement of Significance

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

1. Heritage Values Summary

Carlton Park is the setting for Carlton Towers, a listed Grade I country house, dating from the early 17th century with later remodelling to designs by Edward Welby Pugin. The designed landscape at Carlton Towers has been developed over 400 years by its owners, the Stapleton family. As Catholics, the Stapletons had economic restrictions placed on them but this meant they devoted much of their time to the management of their estate. This included the parkland around the house, the productive kitchen garden and also gardens for pleasure. They used designers to improve their estate, most notably Richard Woods in 1765 and Thomas White, about 1773. The current parkland is now at its largest extent and provides an important green space for the local area.

2. Historical Value ('Narrative')

The estate has been owned by the Stapleton family since the late 13th century. In 1394, Carlton passed to Brian Stapleton (c.1385-1418) who was the first of the family to live there. The current Hall dates from 1614 and was built by Elizabeth Stapleton. Sir Miles Stapleton succeeded to the estate in 1656 and was an enthusiastic manager of his estate for over sixty years.

Thomas Stapleton's long tenure (over seventy years) largely shaped the landscape that we see today. Between 1765 and about 1784, he created the landscape park, lake and walled kitchen garden, employing the designers Richard Woods and Thomas White. The parkland around the hall was further expanded by Miles Thomas Stapleton in the 1840s. Henry Stapleton rebuilt the Hall in the 1870s and the park increased to its present proportions, with a new formal garden next to the house.

Detailed records of the Carlton estate dating from the early 17th century provide an interesting insight into the crops that were grown for the household in the kitchen garden, glasshouses and vinery. These included the fashionable fruits of the time, such as melons, pineapples, peaches and nectarines. The Stapletons hired able head gardeners, who stayed for long periods of time and were recognised by their peers for their skill in what was, by comparison, a relatively modest estate.

3. Evidential Value ('Research')

We have documentary evidence of gardens made in the 17th century, following the construction of the house. In particular, for the 'Great Garden' made in 1672/3, we have a detailed



YORKSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

description and a potential location from the two improvement plans submitted in 1765 and c1773. This area, while remodelled in the 1770s and again in the 1840s, has not been built over, so there is potential for further research to evaluate any surviving remains.

The documentary research undertaken so far has been able to establish a timeline of features created following the improvement plans of Richard Woods (from 1765) and Thomas White (from c1773). However there is still some uncertainty over the extent of the Woods plan that was implemented prior to Thomas White being called in and so further survey work is required here to establish whether the water feature proposed by Woods was implemented. More could also be learnt about the dating and structure of the icehouse through survey and excavation, as it does not appear on either plan but records show it in operation from 1771.

4. Aesthetic Value ('Emotion')

The landscaping of an estate by a well-known 'professional improver' was quite common in the second half of the 18th century. However Carlton is especially interesting, as it allows garden historians to compare the work of two of the leading improvers, Richard Woods and Thomas White, who were called in within a few years of each other. The two main elements of their respective designs remain: the kitchen garden and landscaping around it from Woods and the lake ('Fishpond') from White.

There have however been further developments to the designed landscape, most notably in the 1870s when the parkland was extended to its present boundaries, to a design by Charles Craigie-Halkett-Inglist. This provides a grander setting for the enlarged and 'Gothicised' Carlton Hall that was then renamed Carlton Towers.

5. Communal Value ('Togetherness')

Carlton Towers and its associated park and garden are an integral part of Carlton village and have been so for over 400 years. It provides a valuable semi-wooded green space in an otherwise flat, mainly farmed landscape. Schoolchildren are encouraged to visit the estate to observe wildlife and see the environmental and ecological benefits of conservation. Students from Askham Bryan College also visit the estate regularly to help with various elements of game keeping as part of their work experience.

Its historic kitchen garden, after many years of neglect, is now being returned to productive use by the current owner. He will plant fruit trees again on its walls and in the interior have outdoor vines. This will complement the Cookery School that is now run in the main building.

June 2016