



YORKSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

Kilnwick Percy Hall park & garden

Statement of Significance

This statement of significance for Kilnwick Percy Hall park and garden, 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

The designed landscape at Kilnwick Percy has its origins in the early 18th century, although its design was modified later in the century and the estate expanded in the early 19th century, incorporating a medieval settlement and associated fields of ridge and furrow. The first half of the 18th century was a period of transition as shown by the remnants of straight tree avenues contrasted by the more informal planting around the house. What remains today is significant areas of mature woodland, with three ornamental lakes in an attractive parkland setting. Whilst the former pleasure grounds and kitchen gardens are a shadow of their 19th century glory, they continue to provide a suitable setting for Kilnwick Percy Hall, which has public access.

2. Historical Value ('Narrative')

Thomas Wood had surveyed the land at Kilnwick Percy for Queen Elizabeth I and purchased the estate from her in 1563, which increased his widespread landholdings in Yorkshire. However, the hall he began building in 1574, to replace an earlier Tudor manor house, was never finished. It lay derelict for 100 years and all that survives is a date stone. By 1720 the house was completed by the Anderson family and by 1740 was portrayed in a well-wooded parkland setting.

Robert Denison, a wealthy West Yorkshire clothier, bought the estate in 1784. He rebuilt the house in front of the old hall and developed the estate. He surrounded it with ornamental and working gardens, installing hot water systems for fruit and a pinery. An icehouse (listed Grade II) with a pond dates from the early 19th century. Denison was an agricultural innovator, establishing a successful estate with a home farm and other periphery farms; he was instrumental in founding the Yorkshire Agricultural Society and Great Yorkshire Show.

Arthur Duncombe bought the estate in 1840, enlarging and embellishing the house with a portico and surrounding it with formal and pleasure ground. He fashioned a grander entrance to the estate with a new lodge, built with ornate Ionic porticoes to mirror the design of the house and created a new drive through the expanded parkland.



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3. Evidential Value ('Research')

Kilnwick Percy may be the site of a former deer park, but evidence for its park pale boundary and extent are yet to be determined.

Little is known of the Tudor and Elizabethan phases of building and any associated gardens. Although the footprint of the hall has changed and moved over time, there is still potential to reveal elements of these earlier phases.

Documentary evidence, Ordnance Survey maps and the 1840 estate sale particulars record some elements of the landscaped park and gardens. Further survey and research may corroborate where these features are located, their survival, extent, phasing and dating. For example, the location of a hermitage (perhaps one of the summerhouses in Jenny Firkin pond) noted in the 1840 sale particulars is yet to be discovered and if extant, would be a fairly rare survival in the East Riding of Yorkshire.

The place name evidence 'Green Drive' on the northern periphery of the estate suggests the location of a two mile 'terrace drive', but the form and full extent of the circuit is yet to be traced.

The formal gardens adjacent to the house have good survival of earthwork terraces, ruined conservatory buildings and heating structures with mature tree plantings. There is potential for elements of the planting layout to survive particularly on the grassed terraces east of the house and below the terrace south and west of the house in the area of the former pleasure grounds.

Botanical survey has potential to reveal surviving elements of the plantings, particularly as the parkland retains extensive woodland. South American plants mentioned in the 1840 sale details are hinted at on early Ordnance Survey mapping labelled as 'Flame Bushes'.

4. Aesthetic Value ('Emotion')

The parkland provides the setting for Kilnwick Percy Hall (listed Grade II*) and St Helen's Church (listed Grade II), which forms a focal point in the parkland, surrounded by mature trees and ornamental lakes. The well-wooded perimeter belts and tree clumps within the parkland enhance the undulating Wolds landscape with extensive views beyond to the Vale of York and York Minister.

5. Communal Value ('Togetherness')

The house and 42 acres of the gardens and parkland are open to the public. Run as a retreat for the Buddhist community, it attracts a wide range of people to experience meditation in this peaceful and tranquil setting.

The place holds memories for those that served during the First and Second World Wars and their families, as Kilnwick Hall and its grounds were used for army training, glimpsed by remnants of zig-zag practice trenches in the parkland.

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