



YORKSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

Monk Fryston Hall park and garden

Statement of Significance

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

1. Heritage Values Summary

Monk Fryston Hall park and garden was designed in the late 19th and early 20th century by the Hemsworth family and form an important element of the village and its Conservation Area. The Hemsworth's Christian influenced philanthropy probably influenced the design, which included a boating lake, private zoo, Concert Rooms and playing fields, which are features more often found in public parks. Newspaper archives and the Duke family papers describe the many social and sporting gatherings that took place in the grounds by invitation from the Hemsworths. The site has a long history and archaeological excavations carried out between 2012 and 2016 on the site uncovered several road surfaces, buildings, pottery and some high status artefacts, dating from the medieval period, some of which are now on display at the Hall.

2. Historical Value ('Narrative')

Monk Fryston Hall and most of the medieval manor of Fryston were owned by the Hemsworth family from the late 17th century until the mid 20th century. They were a land owning family that maintained their wealth through farming, quarrying and marrying wealthy heiresses. However it was not until the second half of the 19th century that the landscape we see today was developed. The current building and gardens overlie the medieval footprint of the manor managed by the monks for quarrying and farm produce for nearly 450 years until the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1538.

The last members of the family to occupy the Hall, the Reverend Benjamin Hemsworth and his wife Mary Constance, expressed their faith to the benefit of their tenants and villagers by supporting all kinds of infrastructure, social and cultural initiatives. This included opening their private pleasure grounds of the Hall to an invited public for enjoyment and fundraising. There is an extensive written record of social activities that took place at the Hall at the time in local newspapers.

The layout of the grounds may have also been influenced by Mrs Hemsworth's travels to Scotland and her paintings on the Lucerne Bridge, in the Alpine hall and Bonnie Scotland quarry garden. The opening of the Alps in the 19th century enabled tourists like Sir Ernest George to sketch the famous bridge and adapt it to his design at Monk Fryston.

3. Evidential Value ('Research')

The monks were the amongst the first to exploit the natural assets of the site, quarrying the magnesian limestone and damming the spring fed streams to create fishponds and water flows



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for sending the stone down dykes to the Abbey. Medieval records tell us that large quantities of stone were sent from the village and that there were watermills, windmills and fulling mills in the village. The medieval roads discovered during the 2015/16 digs bear witness to the scale of this activity and the importance of the manor amongst the Abbey's many assets in this part of Yorkshire. There are records kept at Hull History Centre and the Borthwick Institute to look at for this period and so further archaeological investigation on site could reveal more information on the medieval occupation.

Records relating to the development of the designed landscape by the Hemsworth are sparse but the early 20th century photographic record of the key elements such as the 'Bonnie Scotland' quarry garden give us some clues. Given it was a popular public venue, then more information may come to light from private archives as the history of the village is promoted by the Monk Fryston Time Team.

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

The conservation area at the core of the village is seen as a distinctive place that is attractive to look at and to live in. The adjacent Grade I listed Church and 8 other listed buildings within 500 metres of the Hall give residents and local people a strong identity that is readily acknowledged by visitors who have passed through the area as they are all unique and memorable buildings.

The Hall and its grand entrance are readily seen from the main road as it slows traffic streaming through the bend of Monk Fryston Square and thus it enhances everyday commuter journeys. Since the lowering of the stone perimeter wall and the night time floodlighting of the building the historic setting of the village centre is readily appreciated by the public.

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

Monk Fryston Hall Hotel has been operational since 1946 and many famous people have stayed there. The Hall, park and garden have therefore featured in many people's lives as the backdrop to milestone events, as well as being the venue for regular meetings of local organisations such as the Rotary Club and the U3A (University of the Third Age).

Following the Heritage Lottery Funded project 'Finding Fryston' to discover the village's heritage, several noticeboards have been installed in 2017. Their aim is to increase communal ownership of the cultural heritage and help people to interpret their surroundings, including the Hall and its estate. The current owners of the hotel have an open gate policy for villagers and dog walkers to use the park and woodlands although there are no public rights of way. The grounds form an important green space for local residents where there are otherwise limited outdoor private spaces available for recreation.

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