RED HOUSE AND ITS GARDEN
Red House, Hall Lane, Moor Monkton, N Yorks
SE 52949 57085
HE ID 1315358, Grade II

Red House stands on the S bank of the river Ouse, in the parish of Moor Monkton, nr York. Previously a school (1902–2001), it is now a private home, equestrian centre and small caravan site, owned by Jill and Robin Gordon. (See http://redhouse.orpheusweb.co.uk for history, recent photos, and plan of the site.) To the NW, on the N bank of the Ouse, stands Beningbrough Hall (an earlier house was replaced by the current one by 1716), and to the W, The Priory, Nun Monkton (current house built c. 1660).

This historical account of Red House and its garden draws in particular on 2 main sources: first, *The Diary of Sir Henry Slingsby of Scriven, Bart*., published in an edited form, with some additional related material, in 1836 by Rev. D. Parsons. This Diary has become a valued and celebrated source of information regarding the social, political, and military events of the first half of the C17, as recorded by Sir Henry, the last Royalist to be executed for his support of King Charles I. The events and privations of the Civil War and its aftermath, so dramatically described, impacted on the future of the Red House estate, and go some way to explain why the bones of this Jacobean-early Stuart garden can still be recognised today.

The second piece of evidence that informs this account is a painting, undated, but post-1638 and most likely depicting the house and garden as they were at the outbreak of the Civil War.

Red House
A moated site 50m NW of Red House is thought to have been in existence in 1342, at the time when Sir Thomas Ughtred, Lord of the Manor of Moor Monkton, obtained a licence to impark his woods and crenellate the 'Rede House' (scheduled monument, see HE 1020887). By 1560, Francis Slingsby is described as 'of the manor of Redhouse and Skagglethorpe', and in 1598 the purchase of the manor by Henry Slingsby is recorded (YAS DD56/G3, Moor Monkton).

This Henry, Sir Henry Slingsby of Scriven (c. 1560-1634), father of the Diary author, married Frances Vavasour of Weston Hall. He was MP for Knaresborough (1601-25), was knighted in 1602, and held numerous public offices, including Receiver for Duchy of Lancaster lands in Yorkshire, and Vice-President of the Council of the North (see *History of Parliament*). With the resulting substantial income, he embarked on major improvements to his estate: these probably included the abandonment of the moated site, and certainly involved the building of a chapel, the construction of a new house, and the laying out of a walled garden.

Some of these improvements, and his own later changes and additions, were recorded by his second surviving son Henry (b. 14 Jan 1601/2), in his Diary.

The Chapel (HE 1190840 Grade II*) was apparently an early priority: it was built in about 1602 (Parsons, p.3), but its completion and fitting out continued for some years. In a letter written in April 1621 to her father, Sir Henry snr, Anne Slingsby observes that the pulpit for

the chapel is still not finished (Parsons, p. 314) – indeed, the joiner had died. The painter-stainer Edward Horsley of York was paid for work at the chapel in August 1630 (Parsons, p. 281). The chapel remained unconsecrated in January 1638/9, but was in use: there were 30 people in the household at that time, including 16 men servants and 8 women (Parsons, p. 19).

A contract with a brickmaker for 200,000 bricks + '12 thacke tiles'[1] and 8 score ridge tiles, recorded on 14 November, 1606, indicates that house building was in progress. One thousand bricks were bought at Clifton, York, in May 1628: these might have been for the summer house and/or dovecote (see later section on the garden).

Sir Henry senior died in 1634, and his son inherited an estate worth £1,500 p.a. (*History of Parliament*). By this date, Henry junior had succeeded his father as MP for Knaresborough (1625), had spent time travelling abroad (1626), and married Barbara Belasyse of Newburgh Priory (1631; *History of Parliament*). At the races at Acomb Moor in 1633, with King Charles in attendance, Henry's horse won a race (Parsons, p.187), and it is said that the King was entertained at Red House at this time (Hargrove, p.377). In 1638 Henry purchased a Nova Scotia baronetcy and began his famous Diary.

Sir Henry continued his father's building works and improvements to Red House. In 1637, he commissioned John Gowland (of Poppleton) to make the principal staircase supporting heraldic beasts (Pevsner, W Riding), and Andrew Kearne to cast a lead blackamoor, holding candlesticks, for the staircase – a section of this, with the blackamoor and heraldic beasts, now stands in the chapel. In 1638 Edward Horsley was painting the lodging chamber above the 'new parlour' (Parsons, p. 5). Sir Henry writes in his Diary of 'a conceit of making a thorough [sic] house in part of Red-house which now I build' (28 June 1640; Parsons, p.51), an idea inspired by a visit to Lord Holland's house in Kensington: 'by placing the dores so one against another and making at each end a Balcony that one may see cleare thro' the house'. This idea of a view enjoyed through the length of the house out into the garden seems to appeal to Sir Henry: it is a 'conceit', a framed view that brings the garden into the house. Whether this was ever realised is not known. In July he records that building at both Red House and Scriven Hall, Knaresborough, was making progress (Parson, p. 53).

However, in September 1640, the political situation deteriorated and building work may have been put on hold: after the Scots had occupied Newcastle and further advances into Yorkshire were threatened, Sir Henry took his family to find temporary refuge at Worlaby Hall (Lincs.), staying with his wife's brother, John Bellasys. In the following months, his wife's health deteriorated, and in late 1641 they left Red House again to seek treatment in London, where she died in December. The children were taken to relatives.

In 1642, at the outbreak of the Civil War, Sir Henry was expelled from the Commons for royalism (*History of Parliament*). As troop movements were getting underway, he records in his Diary that he invited Scots officers to stay at Red House overnight, on their way to Skipton and Lancashire (Parsons, p.81); and in December he was commanded to raise a

[1] Thackstane = stone used for covering roofs instead of slate or tile; or stone projecting from a chimney stack covering the upper edge of thatch

regiment of Volunteers in York (Parsons, p. 87). After fighting at the battle of Marston Moor (July 1644) – just a few miles from Red House – he was forced to leave Yorkshire, not daring to see his house or family (Parsons, p.116). With their mother dead and an absent father, his three young children were in such dire straits that in August 1645 they petitioned the Lord Mayor of York for assistance (Parsons, p.332; YAS DD149/52), and part of Red House was set aside from sequestration for their habitation.

When the King surrendered at Newark in May 1646, Sir Henry returned to Red House, where he found his presence had been proscribed (Parsons, p.180). In his Diary he records in November that he is living in just one room to avoid capture. By maintaining this self-imposed imprisonment, and despite suffering deteriorating health, he managed to evade capture for over 4 years, spending much of the time in his garden, hunting within 5 miles, and educating his children (Parsons, p. 344).

Failing to agree with the terms of the Parliamentary Committee for Compounding with Delinquents, his estates were confiscated (1651). Relatives raised the funds to purchase his estates, to be held in trust for his children. But in 1655, he was arrested and accused of continued complicity in Royalist plotting – the story is that he was arrested at the door of the peach walk in the garden of Red House, on his way out to the deer park. He was imprisoned in Hull, and subsequently sent to London and charged with treason. He was executed on 8 June 1658.

His son Sir Thomas Slingsby of Scriven (d. 1688) inherited the Slingsby estates, holding a number of public appointments as his father and grandfather had done. Hargrove (1809) states that the Duke of York visited Red House in 1665, but it is not clear if Red House was Sir Thomas's principal residence. The house had barely been occupied as a home since 1640, and it would have harboured painful memories. By 1728, Scriven Hall was being remodelled by William Wakefield, and Parsons states that Red House ceased to be the family residence in the mid-C18 (p.187). The eastern section of Red House was demolished by 1821 (Pevsner, W Riding), leaving the chapel unattached. Allen (1828) described the house as being in 'a sad state of decay', and for several decades in the 1800s, it was the residence of the Hops family. In the 1860s, the building was refaced in Tudor Gothic style (Pevsner; plans of proposed alterations YAS DD56/ADD/1966/?15).

The garden at Red House

Sir Henry's entries in his Diary refer only briefly to Red House itself and its garden, and we have little idea of their general appearance. An undated, unattributed and rather primitive painting provides an overall view of house and garden in c. 1640.

Visual evidence: the undated painting

The large oil painting depicts the house, garden, part of the park to the W, and part of the deer park S of the house, viewed from the south. The size of the painting suggests it was commissioned to demonstrate the elevated social status of the family, but without any knowledge of the artist's credentials, and his obvious desire to show as much as possible of the estate, a certain amount of artistic licence must be allowed for. In addition, the current condition of the painting means a great deal of detail is lost.

The red brick house, with stone detailing and Dutch/Flemish gabling, is typical of the Jacobean-early Stuart period; so too is the geometric layout of the garden: house and garden as a single, coherent unit, with the walled garden axially aligned with the house. It is divided into 2 compartments: in the first, in front of the house, four grass plats are separated by gravel walks. Simple grass plats became very fashionable in the early 1630s for the 'Best Garden', under the windows of the house, replacing earlier more intricate parterres (see discussion by David Jacques, p. 69). These are planted with clipped evergreens (perhaps junipers or cypresses) at the corners; a stone statue stands at their centre (possibly Hercules, since the figure appears to hold a club aloft). A small and indistinct built structure, perhaps a seat or fountain, can be seen towards the corner of the NE quadrant. A balustrade divides this compartment of the garden from a second, which is perhaps at a higher level, linked to what appears to be a raised walk, or terrace, along the eastern side of the garden (which still survives). Beyond this wall the paint has darkened to such an extent that it is difficult to interpret an apparent mass of trees: possibly a wilderness, or there was an orchard there at the time of the 1st edn OS map. The terrace walk, planted with shrubs, possibly evergreens (perhaps yews, as today), leads from the house to a gazebo, giving views over the garden and park; a dovecote stands in the opposite SW corner, and another building, perhaps another summer house or game larder, stands nearer the house, along this W wall. At the midway point along the S wall, ornamental gate piers mark a way into the deer park. Outside this wall, small trees and indistinct planting may mark the line of the water course, which survives, and is still referred to as the fish ponds.

In his *History of Knaresborough* (1809, p. 372), Ely Hargrove records the fine view of York, its Minster, and the surrounding country, from the terrace at Red House, and views through avenues in the park to Beningborough, Nun Monkton, and Allerton Park and 'tower' (presumably the Temple of Victory). The painting shows a view through the park to a house, to the NW; but from the standpoint of the artist, this could only possibly be the early house at Beningborough, and is more likely to be artistic licence to demonstrate the vistas through the Red House estate.

Although the painting is undated, one significant feature is the prominent stone statue of Sir Henry's race horse in the foreground: this was the horse that won the race on Acomb Moor in the presence of King Charles in 1633 (when the King is said to have stayed at Red House). This suggests that the painting could show the garden as it was in the years immediately after 1638, and before the outbreak of the Civil War. Sir Henry records that the statue was sculpted in 1638 by 'Andrew Karne, a Dutchman', and that it was placed 'in the garden' (Parsons, p.7). The artist clearly shows the statue just outside the formal garden, in the park. Parsons states in 1836 that the statue was originally 'placed within the site of the old mansion of the Oughtreds',[2] and that the 'recumbent' stone horse marked the spot where it had been buried: a 'small representation of shoes and a saddle, all cut in stone, were placed over the horse at its death' (p. 187, note). This detail of the shoes is possibly significant: it was a mark of honour shown to a horse that it should be buried with its shoes on, and Sir Henry was clearly very proud of his race horse and its statue.

[2] Does this mean the site of the old house at the moat? Or might it mean the site of the manor of Moor Monkton and Scagglethorpe, the latter being located S of Red House?

Hargrove (1809, p.373) maintains that the life-size statue was placed at the site of the medieval moated house, and describes it as 'mutilated', with a stone placed recording the victory at the race at Acomb. It is only the painting that shows the statue in the park, but this would not be an unreasonable burial location for such a large animal, perhaps more suitable than at a moat. It is possible that, as years passed, and with memories of the horse having faded and the significance of the park location lost, the statue was moved away from the burial site to another historically significant location, as recorded by Hargrove and Parsons. And some 40 years on, the stone shoes and saddle, and much 'mutilated' horse had, according to Parsons, been removed to outside the chapel, where the torso lies today.

Had the statue's position always been at the moat, the artist would have been deprived of the opportunity to record the famous horse, and so perhaps this very large degree of artistic licence was ordered by his patron. However, the Diary entry recording the statue's commissioning, and the ensuing years of misfortunes for Sir Henry, still suggest that the painting dates the gardens to their appearance c. 1640. If it was commissioned by Sir Thomas (d. 1688), after his father's death, it can perhaps be assumed that the gardens had changed little during Sir Henry's prolonged absence 1641-46 and his years of concealment there before his final arrest. A date in the late 1600s would seem very unlikely, since the house by that time would have been very old-fashioned, and less worthy of record.

The commissioning of Andrew Kearne to work at Red House is significant. Although little is known about Kearne, he is likely to have been one of the extensive Kern dynasty of German sculptors, originating in Franconia, and active throughout Europe, including Italy and the Netherlands, C16-C17. Kearne was the brother-in-law of Nicholas Stone, who worked for the Bellasys family at Newburgh Priory and Coxwold church. Kearne worked with Stone on a number of sites in London, eg the River God companion to Stone's figure of Nile, at Somerset House Stairs, and the lioness at York Water Gate, designed by Inigo Jones (Chantrey). Kearne is also credited with a statue of Charles I at the Royal Exchange (Roberts; statue destroyed 1648). Kearne also worked at Sheriff Hutton for Sir Arthur Ingram, Sir Henry's brother-in-law, sculpting amorini statues (HE Grade II) and casting lead pots (see Gilbert; Roberts, pp.290, 400; cf also the lead blackamoor statue at Red House, Diary, 1638).

Only one other image of Red House from an early period survives: a very rough and indistinct sketch (c. 1720) by Samuel Buck, 'A Distant View of Red House belonging to Sir Tho Slingsby' (4th bt). This shows the house with a cupola, pointed gables, and very tall window frames, and it is difficult to relate this to the house shown in the painting. Considerable alterations would need to have taken place in preceding decades to account for this; but the rough lines in the foreground may indicate that the view is from the river. Evidence can be seen on the river bank of early wharves, and 'landing' is shown on C19 OS maps and survives today, all indicating earlier access by water. An approach from the river would also account for the absence of gardens in Buck's sketch.

Diary evidence

The planting of fruit trees would have been an early activity in the creation of a new garden, and a record of their purchase in 1614 by Sir Henry senior is included by Parsons from the household account book (p.279). These were obtained from 'the basket maker in Tuttle St'.

This very early nursery business was run by the Banbury family at Tothill St, Westminster (Harvey, p.42). The trees, mostly approx. 2s each, are listed in detail: 3 winter muske pears, 1 winter bergamote, 2 portugal quinces, 2 barbary quinces, 1 russet peach, 2 Romaine peaches, 2 currant grapes, 1 muscatel grape, '1 dble musk rose naturall', 2 apricots, 1 Duke cherry, '1 dble musk rose grafted' (Parsons, p.277). In the same accounts for May 1628, wages for the gardener, William Hinkes, are paid (p.279).

Other than these details, Diary entries describing the garden and gardening activities are disappointingly sparse, perhaps a result of editing by Parsons. But Sir Henry clearly valued his garden design, as evidenced by his enthusiasm for building a 'conceit' of the view through the house out into the garden (1640); whether finally realised or not, this demonstrated how the design of house and garden should coalesce.

On his return to Red House in 1646, Sir Henry's main concern was inevitably not advertising his presence, and scant details of work in the garden are given. In 1648 he writes that since his return, he 'did pare off the swath and gravell' on the walk on the side of the W orchard and set it with trees – ash and sycamore (p.185). The following year, the gardener Adamson set the 'Grove of sycamores by the Green' (p. 186).

Other details of the garden are provided by Parsons (p.187). In 1836, the summer house remains, as do 2 pillars of the gateway out into the park, each with an elegant ornament on top – these are attributed to a design by Inigo Jones (an oft repeated but unsubstantiated claim); another pair have been removed and stand (in 1836) at the entrance to Scriven Park. It is not clear if the gate piers at Red House today are the ones referred to by Parsons.

Map evidence: OS maps 1848 →

The 1st edn OS map (surveyed 1848) shows that the basic structure and hard landscaping of the C17 walled garden, as depicted in the painting, survived for c. 200 years, as did the deer park (although its overall extent cannot be compared). The gazebo ('summer house') survives, with 'steps' leading to/from the raised terrace, but the dovecote has gone, as has the structure further along that wall towards the house. On a visit to the garden in 2019, below-ground remains of the dovecote and gazebo were detected. A very small, unnamed feature is marked in the NE corner of the garden, terminating the walk along the S front of the house: this might be a remnant of the stone feature shown near here in the painting (and this is still shown on the 1892-3 25" OS map, as is the footprint of the gazebo). No gravel paths, planting, balustrade and statues are shown. There are orchards on the E side of the terrace wall (but no orchard to the W, as recorded by Sir Henry in c. 1646), and NW of the house (not visible in the painting). 'Fish ponds' are marked, as are 'pillars', but these are now shown just outside the enclosed garden (and there are gate piers at this location today). A bridge appears to cross over the ponds, leading through the pillars to a partially tree-lined avenue or drive, across The Rookery and Deer Park, past the Deer Hovel, to the Keeper's House, on Hall Lane. No statue is shown in the location of Kearne's horse, but 'statue' is marked within the moated 'Site of a Hall' (cf Hargrove, above).

Just over 40 years later, the OS 25" map, surveyed 1892, shows the layout of the formal garden, orchards, Rookery and deer park little changed. Beyond these elements, Red House

Wood, to the W of the house and Park Fields (shown on OS 1st edn and 25" OS, 1892), was clearly part of a larger designed landscape, and judging by the names of the avenues and tracks, related to hunting activities. This wood is not specifically mentioned in the Diary, although it would have been within the 5-mile radius in which Sir Henry was able to hunt (cf letter from Sir Henry, 1650/1, Parsons, p. 344). So far no earlier evidence of the wood has been identified; but is possible that it remained a significant feature for a later owner of the Red House estate, Sir Charles Slingsby of Scriven Park, who was Master of the York and Ainsty Hunt in the 1860s.

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