



YORKSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

President: Countess of Harewood

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

www.yorkshiregardenstrust.org.uk

Planning Officer
North Yorkshire Council
Ryedale Office
Malton
North Yorkshire YO17 7HH

Mrs Val Hepworth
Trustee
Conservation and Planning

Planning.rye@northyorks.gov.uk

conservation@yorkshiregardenstrust.org.uk

5th November 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

Application number: ZE24/05791/FUL Formation of 1no. pond including alterations to existing Iris Garden. Nunnington Hall, The Avenue, Nunnington, North Yorkshire YO62 5UY.

Thank you for consulting the Gardens Trust (GT) in its role as Statutory Consultee with regard to any proposed development affecting a site included by Historic England (HE) on their Register of Parks & Gardens – Nunnington Hall 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.

Nunnington Hall is serenely situated near the banks of the river Rye on land leased in the early medieval period from the Abbey of St Mary in York. It was owned by Sir Walter de Treys in the 15th century and subsequently by the Grene and Parr families but reverted to the Crown in 1553 after the abortive attempt to place Lady Jane Grey on the throne, in which William Parr, Marquess of Northampton, was implicated. Later the Norcliffe family lived at Nunnington and probably gave the Hall (listed grade I) its present shape. Following the Civil War, in 1655, the freehold of the estate was purchased by Ranald Graham whose son, Richard, was created Viscount Preston and Baron Esk in 1681. The formal layout of the walled garden to the south – and the further land in separate ownership - dates from this period. (See Samuel Buck's View of Nunnington from the south (Lansdowne Ms.914, British Library.) It is possible that Guillaume Beaumont, who visited Nunnington in 1702, and was gardener to Viscount Preston's cousin, Colonel James Graham of Levens Hall, advised on the layout. We also note that this was a recusant house, with links to the 1715 Jacobite uprising with perhaps Jacobite landscape associations – see note below. Nunnington remained in the Graham family until sold to Mr William Rutson of Newby Wiske in 1839. It was his granddaughter, Margaret, who having adored Nunnington when still a child, had married Colonel Ronald D'Arcy Fife and together they carried out the renovations in the 1920's. The well-known Yorkshire architect, Walter Brierley prepared a scheme for the house, but we do not know whether this included proposals for the gardens. However it was the Fife's ownership and repair of Nunnington, that made it once more a family home between the Wars, after a number of years of being uninhabited. In the 1920's Nunnington's Iris Garden was laid out by Mrs Fife.

The Iris Garden lies to the south-west, a small garden area within the bounds of the garden on the south side of the Hall. It is west of the broad grassed walk that is aligned with the entrance in the south front of the Hall and runs south uphill to the gateway with a broken pediment (late C17, listed

grade II) in the south wall of the garden. The photograph c.1943, Planning and Design and Access Statement p2, shows the Iris Garden's thickly planted iris borders in a formal geometric layout with paving, central urn on a plinth and small fastigiate conifers. Iris gardens were fashionable in the 1920's and 1930's although the shortness of the flowering period was always a consideration in the design and planting. The Nunnington Hall Iris Garden was re-laid by the National Trust in 1989 and is now in a poor state not helped we think by the high beech hedge along its south side which must reduce the light and also prevent the iris rhizomes from being baked by the sun in the summer, important for good flowering.

We understand that the pre-application advice for the proposal stated that the only element requiring consent is the proposed pond as an engineering operation. However, it is pleasing that the National Trust has provided much more context information to assist in the determination of the whole proposal.

Although the proposals are a clear departure from the original layout, having visited Nunnington Hall recently, we broadly agree with the concept to improve the design, planting and access to the Iris Garden and noted that there has been an archaeological survey. The Iris Garden in its original concept by Mrs Fife does represent a garden design of the 1920's period and therefore does have some historical value. As such we think that it is important to have aspects in the new design that acknowledge the past such as iris cultivars of the period.

The design involves a new central pond, stone benches and plinths for sculpture and self-binding gravel paths. A new step free path taking a sinuous route from the main axial grassed walk opposite the Lion's Den play area and through the bounding shrubs and trees will enable the Iris Garden to become an area that is more easily accessed. Although we wonder how easy it will be for wheelchairs going up the grass lawn to reach the new path with the increasing rainfall that we experience now.

The current York stone path that skirts the Grade II listed west wall and also leads on to the vegetable/cutting garden we think could be retained in something like its present form although we understand that the path as proposed would give continuity of surface for wheelchair users. The existing path delineates a planting bed against the stone wall which supports climbing roses and continues in this linear form along the wall from the east-west terrace below to the vegetable/cutting garden. The path is not apparent on the early 25":1mile OS maps (1890's and 1910) as the whole area was orchard. We have not been able to see later 25":1 mile OS maps but perhaps the path was constructed by the Fife's to access their new garden areas?

The YGT appreciates the planting proposals and offers the following comments:

We commend the provision of plant interest throughout the year but query whether there may be too many species making the design generally rather 'busy' for the area.

Some of the later flowering herbaceous plants are tall and will need staking. In terms of labour this is an extra job and can look unsightly particularly in a formal area. eg Vernonia 'Mammuth', Campanula 'Crystal', Veronicastrum virginicum 'Album'.

The garden is still formal which we appreciate but we wonder whether the four trees might be of the same species to hold the garden together.

We wonder if the 1980's urn would continue something of the National Trust's reworking in that period and also echo the urn on a plinth during the Fife's time.

We suggest that as the garden is an enclosed area perhaps more scented plants might be pleasing eg Daphnes in the Spring. Iris 'Jane Philips' has good scent so will be lovely.

Lamium orvala which is a useful groundcover we think of more as a woodland plant to use under trees where little else grows. We also suggest that plants like Hesperis matronalis seed all over the place and could be a problem. Campion is perhaps more a meadow plant and maybe not suitable for such a formal area –it's also a very successful self seeder.

The Gardens Trust and Yorkshire Gardens Trust have no objection to this application, and the Yorkshire Gardens Trust hopes that their comments and advice are helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Val Hepworth

Trustee Conservation and Planning

cc. Yorkshire & the North East, Historic England; Kristof Fatsar; conservation @ The Gardens Trust

References:

Sheeran, George; *Nunnington Hall, Yorkshire: Living Quietly in Defeat?*; pp113-120; in 'Wentworth Castle and Georgian Political Gardening: Jacobites, Tories and dissident Whigs'; ed Patrick Eyres; Wentworth Castle Heritage Trust; 2012.

Early Bearded Iris and dates of introduction:

Iris floescens 1813

Iris flavescens 1813

Iris florentina 1500

Iris variegata – historically important, one of only 2 wild types.

I Gypsy Queen pre1859

I Indian Hills 1935

I mexicana 1859

I pallida 1789 (Jean Baptiste Lamarck)

I Queen of May 1859 (John Salter)

I Jacob Sass 1934

I Sable 1938

I Salac 1929

I Susan Bliss 1922