



# YORKSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

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6th January 2026

Dear Sir/Madam

**25/014341/LB Listed Building Consent for the partial rebuilding and structural work to listed stone seat, North East of Swinton Park, Adjacent to Bridge Over Beck Draining into River Burn, Swinton, GR: E 419652 N 479965 and for work to the unlisted Grotto.**

Thank you for consulting The Gardens Trust (GT) in its role as Statutory Consultee with regard to any proposed development that could affect a site included by Historic England (HE) on their Register of Parks & Gardens, (RPG) in this case Swinton Castle 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.

This listed building application response is from the Yorkshire Gardens Trust.

The designed historic park and garden of Swinton Castle is a significant example of the 'rugged picturesque' incorporating extensive rockwork, grottoes, rustic bridges etc. It is a wild and dramatic landscape and Quarry Gill at the northwest corner of the RPG continues this rugged picturesque nature and even further west to Speculum Plantation which includes Speculum Pond. Speculum Plantation is outside the RPG but clearly continues the designed landscape qualities developed by William Danby II up to his death in 1833 at the age of 82. (*The Plan of the Gardens, Deer Park and Pleasure Grounds of William Danby Esq. Mashamshire 1820* – NYCRO ZS Swinton MIC2023/73-75 - does not include Quarry Gill, even though work started on Quarry Gill Bridge in 1811 so perhaps the work in the Spelaeum/Speculum Plantation was post 1820.) The 1<sup>st</sup> Ed OS map pub 1856 gives the spelling 'Spelaeum' which means 'cave, cavern, grotto'. The 'Grotto' is marked just south of 'Spelaeum Pond' which fits with the current unlisted structure.

The detailed Heritage, Design and Access Statement is very helpful and having done some research on Swinton Castle and Park many years ago and having visited the site, we support this planning application which we hope will ensure the future of the Seat and the Grotto and this significant part of the historic designed landscape. We appreciate that there may be different interpretations of the designed landscape but looking at the Grotto and the position of the yews each of which is above the side 'pillars', the yews' position looks intended. They symmetrically frame the main bulk of the seat and give the whole structure a picturesqueness, a shady Grotto leading to a mysterious underground

cave. The roots are picturesquely rambling down the structure at the rear which may well have been the intention. (At another RPG, The Temple Grounds at Richmond, North Yorkshire, this is the case above the grottoes.) There aren't any other yews in Spelaeum Plantation now apart from the evidence of a yew stump nearby, but William Danby II was a considerable tree planter and he had a large nursery and orchard immediately west of the walled gardens shown on the 1820's Plan at No 30, (NYCRO ZS Swinton) so he may have been growing trees for the designed landscape. He did have trees from Telford's (of York) and Thompson's (of Pickhill) Nurseries, eg 1803 April, Planted Scotch firs, elms, laurels, laburnums, hazels and box as well as ivy and honeysuckle and transplanted yews and hollies to the front drive. There are many yews in the designed landscape that Danby laid out but whether he planted the yews at Spelaeum may be conjecture, although it would fit with his interests. Careful examination of the OS maps (1<sup>st</sup> Ed 6":1mile and later 25" Yorkshire C1.1 and C1.2 surveyed 1890, pub 1892 and revision 1908, pub 1909) indicates conifers in the Spelaeum/Speculum Plantation.

We consider that the Register entry for Swinton Castle should be reviewed and the boundary revised to include both Danby's stone Seat and the Grotto in the area of the Spelaeum/Speculum Plantation. We also suggest that the Grotto be assessed for listing.

Yorkshire Gardens Trust support this Listed Building Consent application and have no objection.

Yours sincerely,

Val Hepworth  
Trustee Conservation and Planning

Cc. Cc Kristof Fatsar, Historic England, [e-yorks@historicengland.org.uk](mailto:e-yorks@historicengland.org.uk); Conservation@ the Gardens Trust.