

NORTHUMBRIA GARDENS TRUST

Conserving and Promoting the Parks and Gardens of North East England
An intending charity



JOURNAL 6

WINTER/SPRING 2011/12

Editorial

I am delighted to welcome you to the Northumbria Gardens **Trust's** sixth journal. Members have again visited a variety of places during the year, some of which are documented in this journal. The AGM in 2010 was held in the new Visitor Centre in Hardwick Park and this modern setting has been used as the backdrop for an 18th century tour of the Park.

It is never too soon to solicit articles and pictures for the next Journal to be published in spring 2013. Contributions are welcome at any time during the year. They can be emailed to:
northumbriagardenstrust@hotmail.com.

John Fitzpatrick

The Northumbria Gardens Trust is an intending charity

The 2010/11 Committee is as follows:

Fiona Green	Chair
Tom Yellowley	Treasurer
John Fitzpatrick	Publications
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Nick Owen	
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Hardwick Park: Past and Present

Words: Michael Rudd
Pictures: Tom Yellowley

The 2010 Annual General Meeting of the Northumbria Gardens Trust was held in the new Visitor Centre at Hardwick Park, near Sedgefield. After the formal meeting had ended the attendees were treated to a guided walk round the Park by Tony Smith and Catherine Grezo who were intimately involved with the restoration project from its start in 2003. In this article Michael Rudd has found some words, written in the 18th century, which take the visitor round the specially designed Circuit Walk. This is the same Circuit Walk that Tony and Catherine followed in 2010. The article is illustrated with photographs, taken by Tom Yellowley, of the modern Park with the AGM attendees as they tour the Park.

Hardwick: The Circuit Walk

This description of the Circuit Walk in the 1780s is based largely on William Hutchinson's account published in 1794 (but written earlier, perhaps 1781), an article in The Town and Country Magazine of May 1770, and A Walk through Hardwicke Gardens of 1800. Other descriptions have been used to fill in details. The eighteenth century text has been retained as much as possible. [Details of the interior design of buildings have been omitted]

To the west of Sedgefield, about half a mile, lies Hardwick, the seat of John Burdon, Esq.; one of the most beautiful places in the county; where, as Pope says, 'Gods might wander with delight.'¹ The pleasure-grounds are laid out with exquisite taste, and the ornaments are supremely elegant. The walks and plantations are formed on an easy inclination, facing to the west; and a fine bason of water covers the hollow between the rising grounds. Mr. Burdon shows a distinguished liberality to the public by the free admission of all visitors.



On entering the gardener's gate beside the gardener's lodge, a serpentine walk through the wood leads to the **Grand Terrace**, a gravel walk about 24 feet in width, and upwards of 560 paces in length. On the right is a seat; at this point of view you can see a circular bason of water, while the bath-house terminates the prospect at one end, and the tower of Sedgefield church over a ha-ha at the other.



in ruins³. A serpentine canal runs through the grounds into the lake by a cascade under a rock bridge thickly clothed with foliage.⁴

Advancing a little further, you pass the wood, and come instantly to a view of the finest sheet of water in the north of England, consisting of 36 acres² in the midst of which a ship is seen floating, margined with smooth grass slopes, plantations of flowering shrubs and ever-greens, thickened with forest trees behind; all kept in the greatest order and exactness. From this station you have the dome of a temple to the right; and to the left, the top of an old castle

Further along the grand terrace, and behind a circular bason of water, an elegant **Gothic Seat**, with steps in front and protected by a porch, shaded by thick groves and open to this scene, invites the visitor to its cool recess. This alcove is divided into five niches, the floor is laid with black and white marble, and commands a beautiful prospect of the lake and the temple built on an eminence beyond it.

From thence you go to the **Bathing House**, a small neat stone building of the Doric order, with a yew hedge on each side of it. It has an open portico in front leading to the bath, two rooms beside it for the purpose of undressing, and two others, one on each side, to breakfast and repose in. The bath is small, surrounded with iron pallisades and has steps to descend into it; over it is a cupola with windows, which give light to the bath, and being placed in this manner, the water by means of the reflection has the appearance of being very deep.



Leaving this place you pass through more serpentine walks through groves of sycamores and elms, with the violet, the ranunculus, the hyacinth and a hundred other fragrant odours, to reach the **Bono Retiro** or pleasant retreat, a building in



the rude Gothic style. It is a stuccoed castellated structure of rubble and brick with a sham tower at each end and with yews behind it. In front of this kind of hermitage is a small lake, bounded on two sides by hedges and fed by a fine cascade which tumbles over 6 or 8 different rocks⁵; this is seen to the greatest advantage in a looking-glass, placed for that purpose in the porch of the building.

You quit this building by a door at the back of it, and are conducted through a wilderness by a serpentine walk, with trees of every size and shade, from the mock-orange to the stately spreading beech, and under these a profusion of flowers. This walk terminates with a striking view of the lake, the tower of the mock ruin and many other pleasing objects.

From the borders of the lake you then approach the **Temple of Minerva**, erected on a round eminence at a little distance from the skirts of the plantations, and surrounded with a dry ditch and palisades. It is of a quadrangular form, with an open colonnade round it, the entablature of which is supported by twenty columns of the Ionic order, and in eight niches are placed the busts of Homer, Virgil, Horace, Milton, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Dryden and Pope. The temple has glass doors to it, and is paved with



a very fine marble mosaic. The interior is eighteen feet square, having an octagonal dome above. The colonnade commands an extensive view of the surrounding country as well as much of the pleasure-grounds, the Gothic Seat, banqueting house, ruin, and Sedgfield church.

Soon after leaving the temple, you enter a shaded walk, terminated with a stone seat in the rustic style, within which are two excellent busts of Lycurgus and Lucretius. Turning from this you approach a handsome **Gothic Bridge** of one arch across the Serpentine River, the extremities of which are lost amongst the surrounding plantations. From here is seen a statue of old bearded Neptune raised upon a pedestal in a fine attitude, with a gilded trident in his hand and a dolphin under his feet, as rising from the waves.⁶



Proceeding forwards we arrive at a rising ground, on which is the **Gothic Ruin**, designed to represent an old castle in ruins. This consists of a small central apartment above a pointed arch, and flanked at three of the corners by fragments of walls and towers, and at the fourth by an entire circular turret.

This building is ornamented with sculptures brought from the ruins of Guisborough Priory; among them is a delicate piece of many figures, which, it is to be lamented, is exposed to the weather. The tower of the ruin commands an extensive prospect, not only having the scene described at the colonnade, to the west and north, but also a prodigious tract of country eastward.

As you leave the ruin, you come to a very fine point of view⁷, where the serpentine river makes a swift turn, takes a deep channel, covered thick with wood on each side, and forming a long canal, is crossed at the extremity by a beautiful

bridge, which intercepts the further view of its course; and indeed it is so contrived, that there the water should die away from the sight.

You then proceed by the margin of the **Serpentine River**, opened by a spacious and inclining lawn on one side, and closed on the opposite by a shrubbery and plantations, which run close upon its brink.

You now advance to the **Banqueting House**, built on an artificial mount, having a spacious lawn in front and surrounded by an amphitheatre of wood. The style of building is superb: the front is adorned with six pilasters of the Corinthian order, a Venetian door of glass, and a window on each side in the Ionic order, with a





pediment over each, a circular arch above, and finished with an open balustrade. There is also a handsome bow window at each end of the building, both of which are finished with balustrades, similar to those in the front. Strangers are introduced at the back entrance, in order that they may be the more

struck with the magnificence and splendour which everywhere prevail in this noble apartment. The dimensions are 50 feet in length, 25 feet and a half in width, and of an equal height. This is a noble building, from whence you have a delightful prospect over all the gardens.

After leaving the banqueting house, you are conducted through a serpentine walk to the upper end of the grand terrace, nearly opposite to that by which you first entered it; quitting with regret **those charming scenes which never fail to leave a lasting impression on the memory.**



1. Perhaps a reference to Alexander Pope's translation of Homer's *The Odyssey*, Book V:
"A Scene, where, if a god should cast his sight,
A god might gaze, and wander with delight!"
2. All the accounts exaggerate the size of the lake; the actual size was about 17 acres.
3. This was apparently still under construction in 1770.
4. Two of the early accounts describe the Serpentine flowing into the lake, but this may not have been visible at this point to the visitor following the completed circuit walk.
5. "in the stile of the last age" (1794); "a pleasing picture of the taste of former ages" (1800)
6. Painted white in the earliest account.
7. This was described before the Serpentine Bridge was constructed; visitors would have been walking from the Banqueting House, ie in the opposite direction, and this viewpoint might not have been obvious in the 1780s.

'A cunning arrangement' – Alfred Backhouse, Alfred Waterhouse and the building of Rockcliffe Hall

Nick Owen

Introduction

This description of Rockcliffe Hall was written in 2004, at a point in time when the house and its designed landscape were about to undergo the most radical alterations in their long history. My involvement ended with the completion of the report on which this article is based and the last time I was there the hall was covered in scaffolding (an encouraging sign) and a worrying number of JCBs scurried about the landscape (cause for concern). My involvement was meant to identify and protect what was valuable in the landscape during this transformation and from what I can gather, I was only partially successful; an important house – long empty and at risk of vandalism – was saved, and some parts of the landscape were restored to their late 19th century layout. On the other hand, if you agree with me that a golf course (and football pitches for that matter) are almost never an acceptable substitute for parkland, then all the ground between the house and the Tees has been damaged.

Rockcliffe Hall, Hurworth on Tees, near Darlington, is now (2012) an exclusive hotel, winner of several of the prizes awarded in this field. Middlesbrough Football Club Training Headquarters occupy the ground to the east of the hotel and a golf course has been laid out on the park to the south. The history that follows concentrates on the period in which the hall was owned by the Backhouse family of Darlington, famous seedsmen, garden designers, arboriculturists, botanists etc. While I have concentrated on Rockcliffe, three other notable houses enter into the story – Dryderdale; this stands amidst the fells near Hamsterley and was built – like Rockcliffe – to designs by Waterhouse, as Alfred Backhouse's shooting lodge (and, much later, had a minor role in *Get Carter*); Hurworth Grange; across the road to the north of Rockcliffe, another house built for Alfred Backhouse by Waterhouse; and Dukes House, Hexham; this was built (architect unknown) for Alfred Backhouse's brother Edward (who, with his wife Katherine, kept a Journal, which is referred to later) – the house is now in divided ownership, the landscape largely gone to woodland, some of the Backhouse Wellingtonias survive.

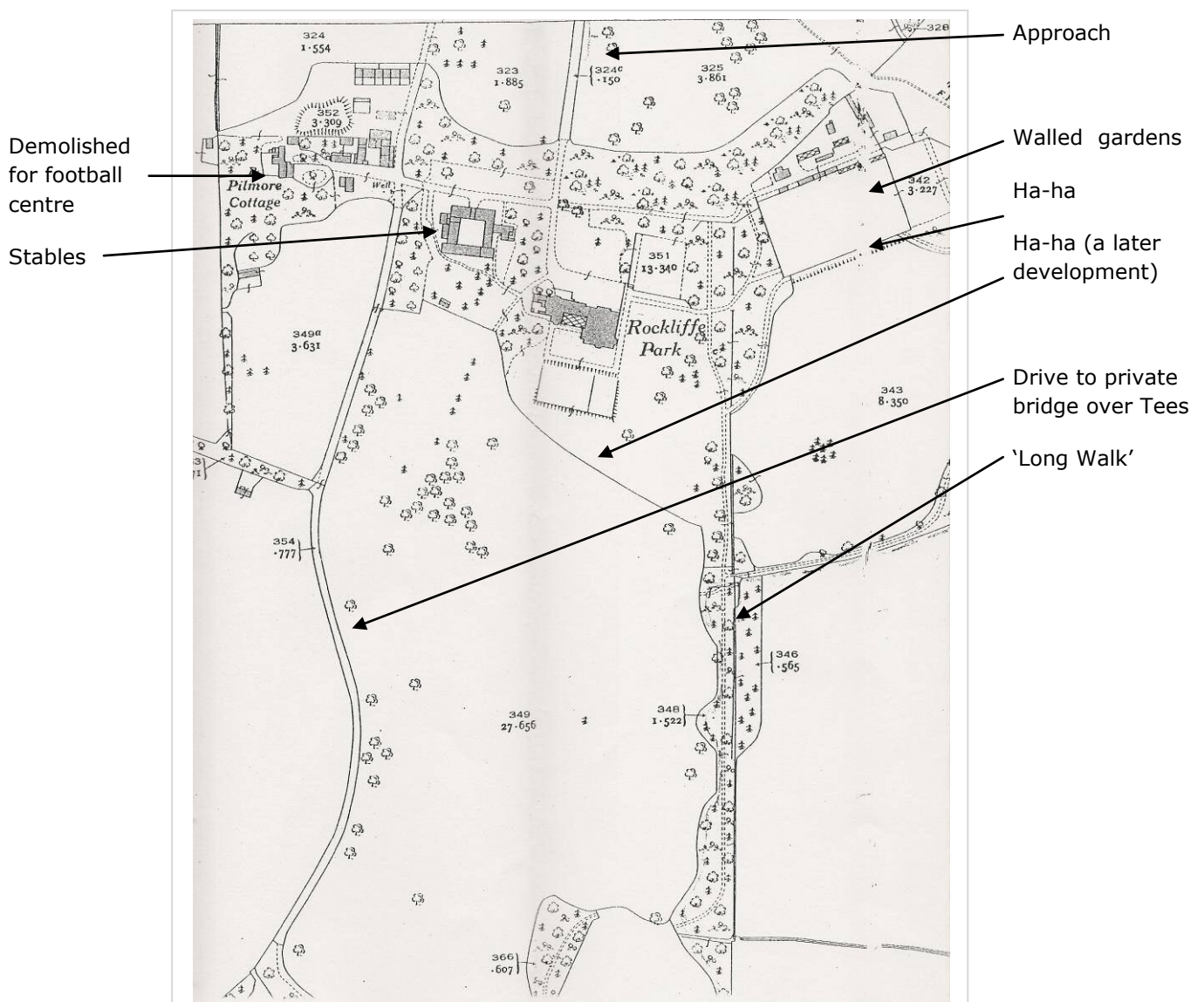
Nomenclature

There is some (!) confusion as to names – the house now known as Rockcliffe Hall was, before c1900, known as either Pilmore Hall or Pilmore House. Both names are used in this article (Pilmore is generally used when the pre-1900 house is referred to). The house over the road from Rockcliffe and now known as Hurworth Grange was built in 1875; this house is now the Hurworth community centre. However, before 1875 'Hurworth Grange' was the name of a villa on what is now the site of the Middlesbrough Football Club Training Headquarters; after 1875 this villa was renamed Pilmore Cottage and the name Hurworth Grange transferred to the house now used as the community centre Clear?!

A History of the Landscape

- 1774 James Backhouse of West Lodge, Darlington, started the family bank.
- 1815 James and Thomas Backhouse bought George Telford's nursery in York.
- 1822 Alfred Backhouse was born, to Edward and Mary Backhouse of Sunderland.
- 1838-9 Work was underway on the railway at Croft and on the Tees Bridge.
- 1860 Alterations to J.C. Backhouse's house at Shull carried out by Alfred Waterhouse at a cost of £460. Blackwell House built for E. Backhouse to designs by Waterhouse.
- 1861-4 Waterhouse worked on Pilmore House, clerk of works G.G. Hoskins; cost £14,335. Waterhouse was also working on Darlington Market and Public Offices during this period.
- 1864 Hurworth Temperance Hall and Reading Room built to designs by G.G. Hoskins.
- 1864-7 Backhouse Bank, Darlington, built by Waterhouse, cost £12,185.
- 1869 James Edward Backhouse, nephew of Alfred, came to live at Pilmore.

- 1870 Alfred Backhouse bought the Shull estate – house, lodge and 477 acres (and shooting rights) – from Eliza Barclay for £15,000.
- c1870 Pilmore Bridge built over the Tees by the Skerne Ironworks of Darlington.
- 1872 Dryderdale – mansion, stables and lodge - built at Shull for Alfred to designs by Waterhouse.
- 1872 Alfred Backhouse bought 92 acres of Hurworth Farm for £16,000.
- 1873 Extensive alterations to Rockliffe carried out by Waterhouse, cost £15,000.
Marriage of James Edward Backhouse; the present Hurworth Grange, also by Waterhouse, built for him by Alfred, cost £15,000.
- 1881 Pilmore Bridge washed away in the 'Great Flood'. It was rebuilt with different piers.
- 1885-6 Alfred was High Sheriff of County Durham.
- 1886 Wing designed by Waterhouse added to Hurworth Grange, cost £1,500.
- 1888 On the 3rd September, Alfred died suddenly at Dryderdale.
- c1890 Rudyard Kipling visited James Edward Backhouse at Hurworth Grange.



Rockliffe Hall in 1940; the main elements of Alfred Backhouse's designed landscape are shown here – note the predominance of exaggeratedly sinuous lines in the wood boundaries and the drive. However, recently there have been major changes; the hall is now a hotel, the park south of the hall a golf course, the park south-west of the hall (west of drive) football pitches. 'Pilmore Cottage' has been replaced by a large, modern complex serving Middlesbrough Football Club. Some areas of the landscape have been replanted to the late 19th century layout.

Shortly after his marriage to Rachel Barclay in 1851, while they were living at Green Bank in the centre of Darlington, Alfred Backhouse bought the small Pilmore estate near Hurworth-on-Tees. The Pilmore estate had belonged to Robert Surtees of Redworth (the historian of County Durham) and the main house had been either rented out or lived in by his cousin, the landscape painter, Thomas Surtees Raine. The estate consisted of a mansion (Pilmore House), Pilmore Farm (immediately to the west of the mansion) and Hurworth Grange (immediately west of the farm, where now the Middlesbrough Football Club headquarters stands) - a sketch, perhaps by Raine, of this first Hurworth Grange, shows a typical Regency villa in a garden overflowing with flowers.

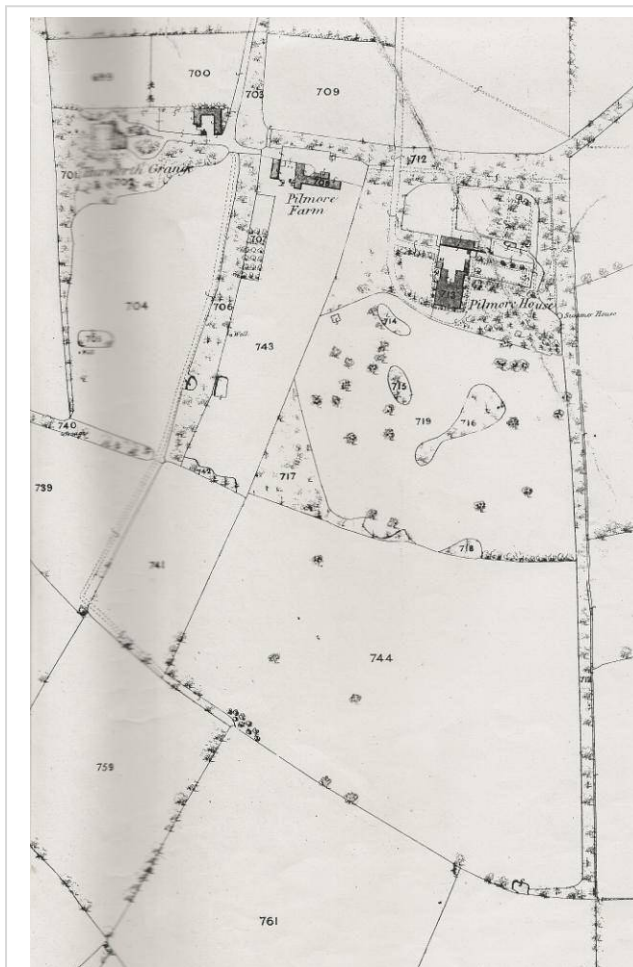
On the 1856 O.S. plan, the three houses, together with their outbuildings and gardens, were separate properties - Hurworth Grange and the farm shared an approach but Pilmore House had its own approach, and a belt separated the farm from Hurworth Grange - but, as well as being linked by a single owner, it is likely that at some time in the past, the three were more closely linked - as mansion, home farm and dower house (T. S. Raine moved from Hurworth Grange to Pilmore House in 1836).

Hurworth-on-Tees was convenient for the Backhouse bank in Darlington and for the railway (the Backhouse bank had invested heavily in the early development of the railway). Pilmore House was beautifully positioned within a loop of the Tees; there were fine views down across the fields to the woods on the far bank and distant views of the Cleveland Hills. Judging from early plans, the old house was a square, faced south and had its entrance in the centre of the south front. The stables or coach house were immediately behind the house with walled gardens behind that, the whole - house,

stables and walled gardens - enclosed within a rectangular pleasure ground covering about nine acres.

Immediately to the south of the carriage sweep off the south front there was a small park, planted with single trees (the 1856 O.S. shows about twenty five) and three (amoeba-like) clumps, the whole almost completely enclosed within a belt. The approach was from the north, and straight, roughly following the present drive, and a belt was planted on the eastern boundary of the fields to the north of the house. This landscape layout had been planted by 1839 (when it is shown on the tithe map of that year) and, to judge from the size of the surviving trees, may date to c1800.

The old house was perhaps too small and was pulled down and the commission for its replacement given to Alfred Waterhouse. A fellow Quaker and related by marriage, Waterhouse had already worked for the Backhouse family at Shull (where Dryderdale was to be built) and Blackwell House and, in 1861, was currently working on two public buildings in Darlington. The new house was built partly on the

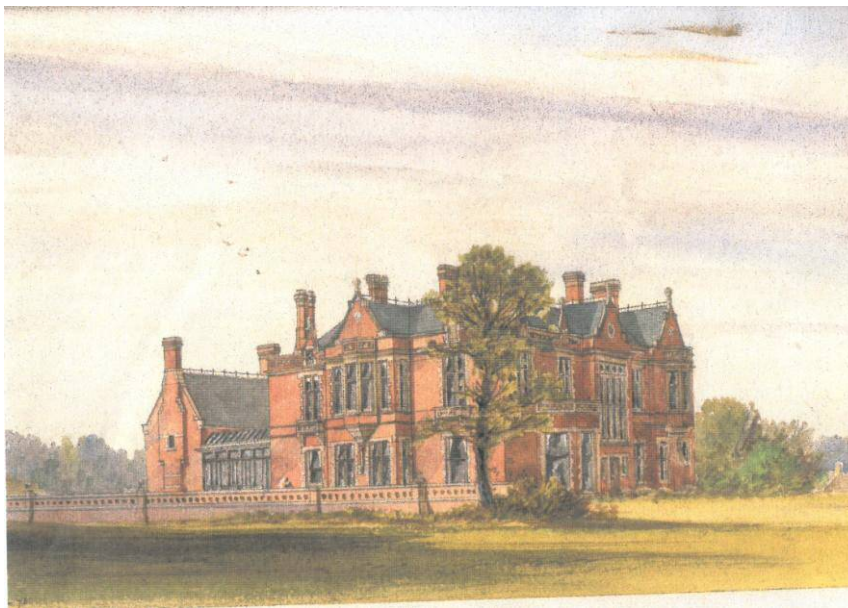


'Pilmore House', 'Pilmore Farm' and 'Hurworth Grange' in 1856 (1856 OS plan)

footings of the earlier house (some elements of which survive in the cellars of the present building) and adopted the same orientation, facing south to catch the views of the Tees. The entrance was put in the north front – while the earlier house had had a door in the north front, its principal entrance was to the south – and, like the earlier house, the east front gave onto the garden where the old summerhouse was retained (the only building to survive the wholesale demolition, this was still there in 1940, though no trace of it survives today). Pilmore Farm was also pulled down, and stables – three sides of a square, open to the south and also designed by Waterhouse – put up in its place. The stables were a reflection of Alfred Backhouse's interest in field sports and, as well as a home for his wife and himself (Alfred and Rachel never had children), Pilmore was intended to be a base for fishing, shooting and hunting.

The new house needed a new setting, however, here too some elements of the earlier design were retained. The lawns and shrubberies off the east front of the house had been the heart of the earlier garden and, as well as the summerhouse, the existing path system and many of the old trees were retained in the new design – several Oaks and Yews from the pre-1860 garden still grow on the lawns and shrubberies to the east of the house today. Beyond the pleasure ground, other elements retained from the earlier design include the narrow belt running north-east from the pleasure ground, the approach and the two belts on either side of the parkland south of the house (where some Oak and Ash survive today).

A terrace with ornate balustrading (Waterhouse's favoured method of linking a house to its site and therefore probably his design), overlooking the spectacular views south to



'Pilmore Hall' in c1870; the first Waterhouse design. The terrace was removed sometime before 1914, replaced by a ha-ha.

the river and to the railway, was constructed on the old carriage sweep to the south of the house and, to the north, the old walled gardens were removed and new walled gardens (with heated walls and a ha-ha on the south boundary), also probably designed by Waterhouse, were built on the field to the east of the old pleasure ground. Linking the new walled gardens to the house, a rock garden was made to the east of the summerhouse, and

North Barn Close (the field to the south of the walled garden) was surrounded with a belt with a path running around the outside of the field, extending the pleasure ground out to High Rawcliffe Farm.

The pleasure ground was extended to the west too, enclosing the new stables which, in the new arrangement, looked out onto a lawn dotted with conifers (a single Cedar survives). Other conifers, particularly Wellingtonias, but also Cedars, Scots and Corsican Pines, were added to the pleasure ground and to the parkland to north and south – Wellingtonias were only introduced to England in 1853 but by 1858 were offered for sale by the York nursery of Alfred's cousin James Backhouse (one guinea a tree, at about a foot high) and the Rockcliffe Wellingtonias almost certainly came from here. The giant

conifers newly imported from the west coast of America were very popular in the 1860s and 1870s and, as well as planting them at Pilmore, Alfred donated two to Darlington's new public park and planted them extensively at his shooting lodge, Dryderdale Hall (where a magnificent avenue survives today). His brother Edward had bought Wellingtonias, for planting on his Dukes House estate near Hexham, from the Backhouse nursery in York as early as 1858 (and Minsteracres has another magnificent avenue dating to this time).

The new design made use of the earlier approach to the house. This had run through farmland, with a wood on its west side near the junction with the Hurworth road. A lodge was built at the entrance – photos show it to have been a simple, half-timbered design in Waterhouse's picturesque style – and the existing straight line of the approach was modified into a slight serpentine. The wood was felled and replanted, and a new wood added to the east so that the approach, with its new serpentine line, now ran through ornamental woodland, with Rhododendrons and other flowering shrubs in the understorey and occasional small shrubberies beside the approach. The farmland between the wood and the pleasure ground was converted to parkland – hedges removed, retaining some of the old hedgerow trees, clumps and single trees planted and a lake of just under an acre in area floated on the east side of the park (water was piped from the lake to the walled gardens). The whole area was enclosed within a belt planted to the north, along the Hurworth road, and to the east, where the existing belt was extended, partly as a way of covering up the spoil from the excavation of the lake.

The same process of converting farmland into parkland was carried out south of the house. Here, two fields had already been planted as parkland sometime before 1839 and this layout was adopted as the basis for the new design. As happened to the north of the house, the existing belt along the east side of the park was extended and a clump, based on two existing field boundaries, was planted in the middle of the view, about midway to the river. On the west side of the new park, the old farm drive, leading from 'Pilmore Farm' to the riverside fields, was modified – its line converted into graceful, sweeping curves – to provide a drive (the Back Drive) down to the newly-built Pilmore Bridge, an iron bridge over the Tees connecting Rockcliffe to Alfred's land on the south bank (as well as giving access to woodland walks on the south bank of the Tees, the bridge, and the drive that led from the house down to it, acted as an approach from Dalton upon Tees and the south).



Pilmore Bridge, Alfred's private bridge over the Tees (demolished in c1950)

The Journal kept by Alfred's brother Edward shows that he and his wife Katherine were responsible for planning the layout of the landscape at their Dukes House estate; it describes them setting out a pond, planting a rock garden, plotting the line of the approach, building summerhouses and seats and opening views through the woods from them, making paths and, above all, planting trees. And when Alfred and Rachel visited, they too were recorded planting trees – the entry for 1870 reads 'Alfred Backhouse planted a *Picea Magnifica*...at the corner near the West Fruit Garden, on the

lawn...Rachel Backhouse planted on the lawn on the same day...a Pinus D with long leaves, the only specimen at Dukes House...'. After Edward's death, Alfred seems to have taken over the management of the Dukes House woods, marking trees for thinning and advising his sister-in-law ('He considers the woods in a satisfactory state now...').

It seems likely therefore, that the landscape at both Pilmore and Dryderdale (where the emphasis was heavily on forestry) was Alfred's own creation. The result (at both places) was a successful and imaginative example of a mid-19th century design. The landscape created at Pilmore during the years of Alfred's ownership is most clearly shown on the 1897 O.S.; dominated, on the plan, by strongly sinuous boundaries to the belts and the woods, echoed by the outline of the lake, and on the ground today by evergreens - Wellingtonia, Cedars, Corsican Pines, Yews, Rhododendrons and Laurels. The broadleaved trees planted in the parkland and the woods were generally ornamental species - Horse Chestnut, Turkey Oak, Walnut, Lime - and the fencing was metal park railings. Laid out over an intense 20 year period, the landscape is of a piece - the house sat at the centre of a unified and carefully composed design that focussed attention on the house while making the most of a series of distant views from it.

However, Alfred's construction of his new house and the creation of parkland and gardens around it were only the beginning; he continued to extend his estate, both to protect and improve the outlook from his house and as an investment - his agent during the negotiations for his purchase of 'Hurworth Farm' (the fields to the east of the park) in 1873 advised him that;

'The farm as I have viewed it, is a most desirable property and would undoubtedly bring a fancy price, if offered for public sale - the road frontage being admirably suited for better class terraces and semi-detached villas such as will ere long be sought after by the Darlington tradesmen, as that Town becomes unwieldy, and the inner north fields give sites for superior villas etc. enhanced by shelter afforded by your plantations....There are, as you will know, many ornamental trees in the hedgerows, and some young plantations, which with a little extra care will soon make an impression on the landscape. I do not know whether Mrs. Wilkinson [the owner] is to ask you a price, or you are to make a bid -But to the resident at Pilsmoor [sic] the acquisition is very important.'

Although the correspondence between architect and client in the Waterhouse papers in the R.I.B.A. library (W.1865) suggests a man careful with money - with one exception, the letters are all replies by Waterhouse to Alfred's queries about costs;

'Those [tiles] used in the passage were Wooliscrafts or Peaker costing about 4 per square yard at the works and I therefore think that 8/6 is not an extravagant price for them. At any rate it was the contract price and the price that is always paid in this neighbourhood for such work. With regard to the other changes - I myself am at a loss to understand them and I have accordingly complained to Taylor...'

Nevertheless throughout the 1870s Alfred was spending heavily; 'Hurworth Farm' eventually cost him £16,000 (his agent Seymour Bell had reckoned on £12,500); the Shull estate, bought from his relative Eliza Barclay in 1870 as a shooting estate, £15,000, and the house (and lodge and stables) - to be called Dryderdale - he had Waterhouse build there perhaps another £14,000. Pilmore was also improved; Alfred Waterhouse was called back in 1873 to carry out alterations so extensive that they cost £15,000, more than the original cost of building the house. 'Hurworth Cottage', a small, gentleman's villa across the road from Rockcliffe (this is now Hurworth Grange) was also purchased, pulled down and a new house built, again by Waterhouse. This was apparently Alfred's wedding present to his nephew James Edward and cost another £15,000. A third commission, for more alterations and extensions to Pilmore - apparently including the addition of a tower to the house - was given to Waterhouse in c1876, but these perhaps proved an expense too far and were never implemented.

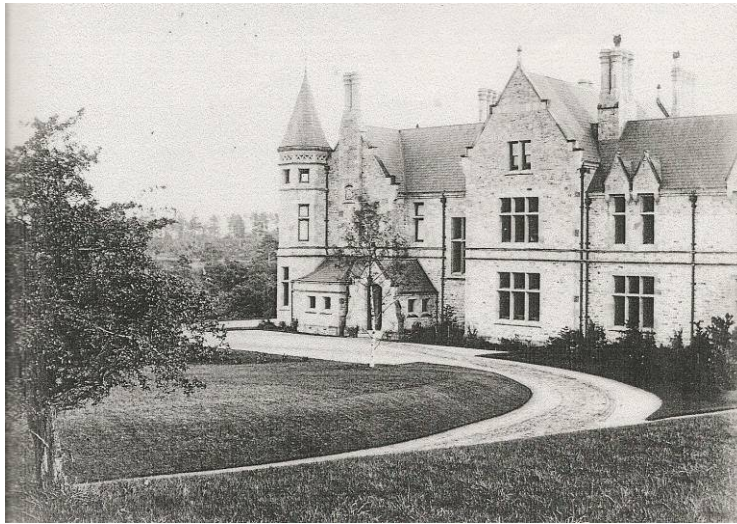
In early September 1888, while staying at Dryderdale, Alfred was suddenly taken ill and died, apparently from a heart-attack - his sister-in-law Katherine received the news by

telegram during a house party at Hexham and recorded the occasion in her journal; 'On the 3/9 mo. (2nd day) a telegram was received ..telling us of the very sudden decease of our brother Alfred Backhouse at Dryderdale. On the 6th I went with Edward & Emilie [Mounsey] to attend the funeral at Darlington, returning on 7th day the 8th...' A newspaper report notes that 'several members of the family, including the father of the present Mr. T. W. Backhouse, also died suddenly. Mr. Alfred Backhouse appeared to be in excellent health on Sunday, and had intended to go to London on business in connection with the Society of Friends...'. At his death, Alfred left an estate valued at £386,750; he had no children and under his will Rachel his wife was the main beneficiary followed by his nephew James Edward. £1000 each was bequeathed to Darlington Hospital and the 'British and Foreign Bible Society'.

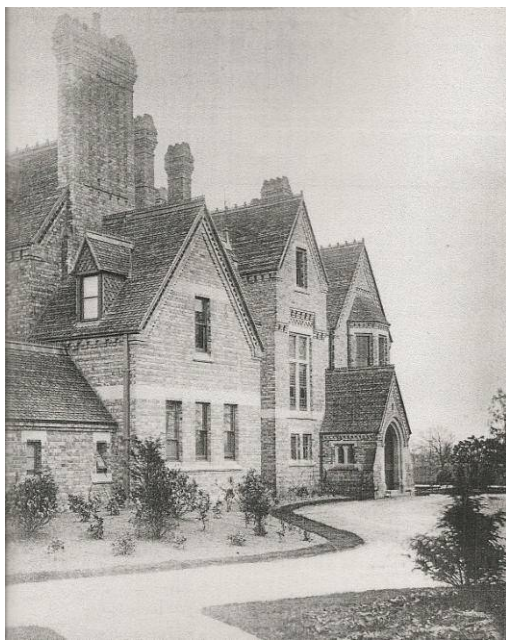
As so often happens, the death of the estate's most influential owner marked the beginning of a period of uncertainty and change. As set out under the terms of Alfred's will, Rachel lived on at Pilmore until her death in 1898. The house and park were then rented out by the trustees appointed in Alfred's will to Captain Forrester, the first of a series of army officers who may have taken the house for the opportunities for field sports offered by the area (Captain Forrester may have changed its name to Rockcliffe). In 1905 the estate was sold to Colonel Clayton-Swan but in 1913 the house was rented out again, this time to Lord Southampton, an officer in the Green Howards and master of the Hurworth Foxhounds. Lord Southampton bought the estate – mansion, lodge, stables, cottages, farms and 659 acres – in 1918 and lived there off and on (his address was also given as White's Club in London) until 1948. A keen cricketer as well as sportsman, Lord Southampton formed the Rockcliffe Park cricket club (still thriving), to play on the pitch in the park to the north of the house.

These successive owners made some alterations and improvements to the house and landscape, some forced on them by circumstances; on the evening of 15th September 1903, while Captain Forrester was fishing in the Tees, a fire broke out in the roof on the south side of the house and, by the time the flames were under control, five bedrooms had been completely burnt out and, on the ground floor, the dining room, drawing room, library and hall were all damaged by water. By 1914 Waterhouse's three-sided stable block had been converted into a hollow square with the addition of a fourth wing, the terrace to the south of the house had been removed and the garden boundary (a brick ha-ha) moved south to allow a croquet lawn and tennis court to be laid out. To the north of the house, the lake was enclosed within a shrubbery. Pilmore Bridge was by now unsafe although it was to be another 40 years or so before it was pulled down. However, these were minor changes and the landscape drawn on the 1948 Sales Particulars plan is little different to that shown on the 1897 O.S. plan.

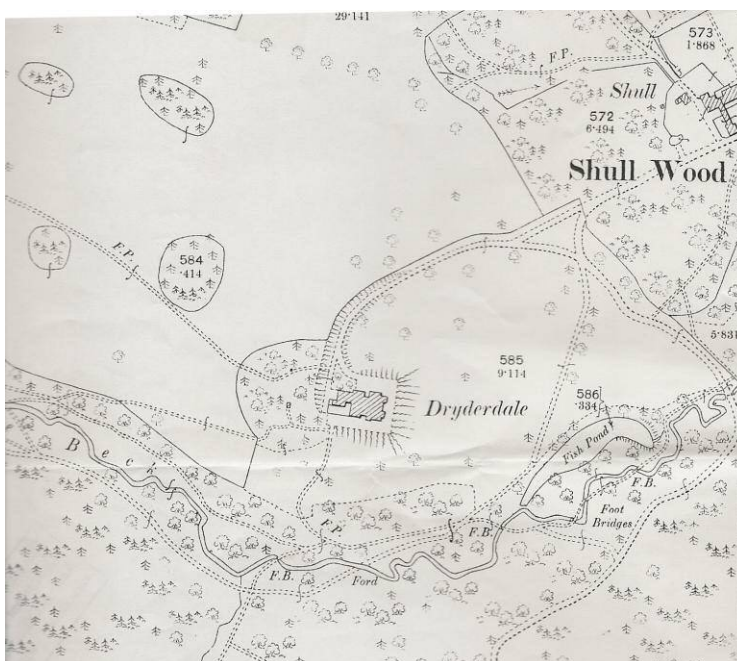
The second half of the 20th century has not treated Rockcliffe so kindly and, in common with many parks that once depended on an army of gardeners to maintain them, the landscape bears the scars of the inevitable neglect. When I wrote this (in 2004) Birch, Sycamore and Ash were spreading into the Pleasure Ground and across the lawns, and paths were blocked by fallen trees and overgrown shrubs. Hedges and fences had proliferated across the parkland north of the house, while to the south, the park had been converted to arable. These signs of neglect have been remedied but some of the other works carried out since 2004, as briefly referred to at the start of this article, can perhaps be characterised as something of a curate's egg; Alfred Backhouse's 'cunning arrangement' is today more easily discovered on paper than on the ground.



Dryderdale in c1885 – built in 1872 by Waterhouse as Alfred's shooting lodge. Many of the trees planted by Alfred survive. Dryderdale is still a private house.



Hurworth Grange in c1885 – built in 1873 by Waterhouse for Alfred, who gave it to his nephew James as a wedding present. The stones from a massive Backhouse rock garden survive in the grounds; a similar one in the gardens at Rockliffe was unaccountably destroyed during the recent renovations. Hurworth Grange is now Hurworth Community Centre.



Extract from the OS of 1897 showing the landscape created by Alfred at Dryderdale. Shull, the original house on the site, on which Waterhouse also worked, is visible NE of Dryderdale.

The Designer

Alfred Backhouse's obituary read; '*His residence at Pilmore is famous for its wooded beauties and the cunning of its arrangement*'.

While I have supposed above that Alfred Backhouse was his own designer, the sophistication of the design may suggest that he employed professional advice for the pleasure ground and the parkland planting. The lake floated NE of the hall is another feature that called for skills that Alfred probably did not have.

Firstly, Alfred may have consulted his cousin James Backhouse – owner of the nursery in York and famous for rock gardens; he almost certainly would have bought the Wellingtonias (and other trees) from James – the two branches of the family were close (occasional social visits from James Backhouse are recorded in Edward's Journal). The fact that both Rockliffe and Hurworth Grange had large rock gardens, both using similar kinds of rock and both given the prime location in the pleasure ground, may point to a link with the Backhouse of York firm.

Secondly, Alfred Waterhouse may have supplied a design - on a commission for a country house such as Rockliffe, it was his standard practice to design not only the house but the estate cottages, lodges, stables, terraces, walls, steps, walled gardens, fencing and occasionally the furniture and internal fixtures for the house (a letter from Waterhouse to Alfred Backhouse during the finishing off of Pilmore House asked – 'Do you wish my purpose-made bar fenders supplied for your tiled hearths?'). His 1867 planting plan survives for the Fellows' garden at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge and some of his perspective drawings of proposed or completed houses are set in a garden with trees, shrubs and paths. In Waterhouse's accounts, 'garden works' is a frequent addition to the cost of many of his houses – though these may, of course, refer to terraces or other hard landscape features immediately around the house. There is some evidence to suppose that Waterhouse designed fencing and garden bridges for Alfred's house at Dryderdale.

Thirdly, one of the professional designers may have been called in by Alfred or Waterhouse. On some of his country house commissions, Waterhouse collaborated with one or other of the famous 19th century landscape designers, such as Edward Kemp (his book *How to Lay Out a Garden* appears in a ledger of book purchases and he collaborated with Waterhouse on at least three country house commissions) or Robert Marnock or Edward Milner, used by Waterhouse at Mowden Hall, Darlington in 1886 and for his own house at Yattendon. However, although the layout at Rockliffe has many of the hallmarks of a professional commission, so far no direct evidence has been found.

The Design

The house

An early influence on Waterhouse was J. C. Loudon, a man who was both architect and landscape gardener; Waterhouse's early style has been described as aiming at comfort and solidity, his decoration as Gothic-picturesque. Traditionally, Quakers frowned on extravagant display and disapproved of field sports, though the generation that included Alfred Backhouse and Alfred Waterhouse had begun to throw off this restraint – Waterhouse ended his life an Anglican and Backhouse employed Waterhouse to build him a shooting lodge (while fox *hunting* was banned on Edward Backhouse's Dukes House estate, *shooting* foxes earned the woodman 5s).

Waterhouse is known for the careful attention he paid to the skyline presented by his houses from the principal approach to them and at Rockliffe the planting in the park north of the house seems to have been particularly carefully designed to control these views. His normal pattern, found at Rockliffe, usually placed the entrance on the north

front of the house, leading into a hall from which stairs, lit by a great window on a half landing above the entrance and overlooking the drive, led up to the first floor; the main rooms were wrapped round this core of porch and hall in an L. Where possible, the setting for the house was a terrace (the Rockcliffe terrace was removed sometime before 1914).

The landscape

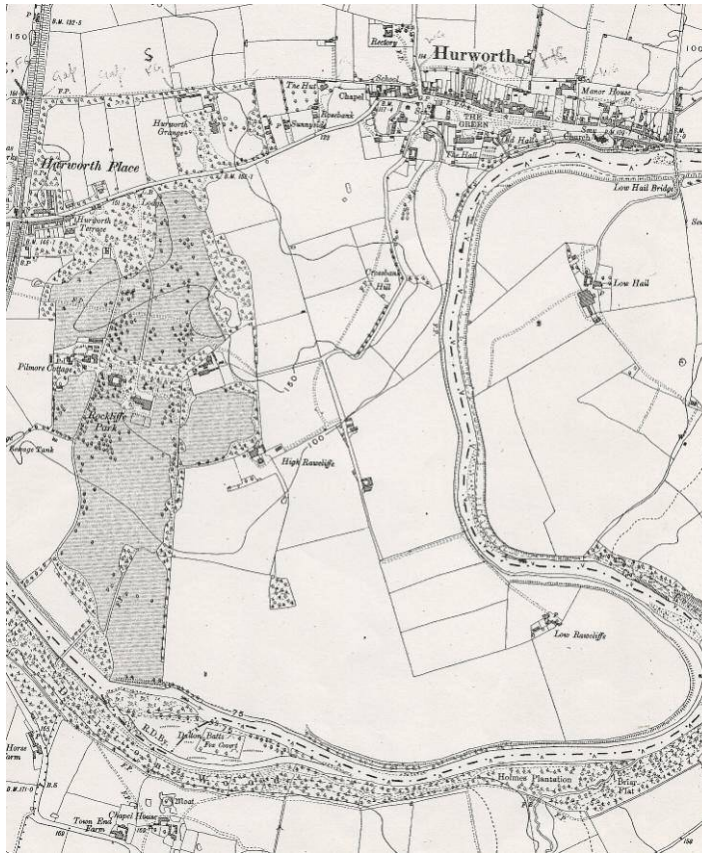
The style can be characterised by extensive use of conifers, particularly Wellingtonias but also Corsican and Scots Pines and of ornamental broadleaved trees - with prominent flowers, or scent or with unusual or striking leaves (for example, with good autumn colouring) - particularly Limes, Horse Chestnuts and Turkey Oaks (and other varieties of Oak).

The landscape would have been maintained to a very high standard – ‘high polish’ was the term used and it was sometimes said that of all the rare plants found in such a garden, a weed was the rarest. Straight lines were almost exclusively confined to buildings (the terrace, walled gardens, the garden wall etc.), while boundaries in the landscape (clumps, belts, lake edge) or paths and drives were all given a graceful curving line (the exception is the Long Walk, which was retained from the earlier layout). Metal park railings, painted black, were the preferred fence for clumps, woods and fields within the core of the parkland; these were attractive, neat and marked out the area where they were used as a sort of enhanced landscape, set aside from the surrounding farmland with its more mundane hedges and post and rails.

The whole estate, but particularly the parkland stretching from the lodge in the north, to Alfred’s Pilmore Bridge on the Tees, with the house at its centre, would have been stamped with its own unique character, instantly recognisable as Rockcliffe Park; not only were the same species of trees used throughout the landscape but the ways they were used were consistent – Wellingtonias were in the foreground of all views from the house (and were planted on pronounced mounds), Turkey Oak was the dominant species in all the clumps. The landscape had a balance – it is the same distance from the house to the wood on the north boundary, as it is from the house to main clump in the park to the south; the two areas of parkland are very similar in size – 36 acres for the north park, 33 acres for the south park.

It would be a mistake to think that this landscape was planted for the benefit of future generations – Alfred was creating a garden and park for his own, and Rachel’s, enjoyment. Where he could, he made use of existing trees, either those planted as part of the earlier ornamental landscape or hedgerow trees retained from the fields that were converted to parkland after his purchase of the estate, and, where these were not available and he needed to plant new trees, there is some evidence that semi-mature trees were sometimes planted, to create an instant effect (Edward Backhouse’s Dukes House Journal records successfully moving trees as tall as 50 feet and I suspect the same techniques - the trees were prepared at least 2 years in advance of the move - were used at Rockcliffe).

The same sure hand is seen in the design of Dryderdale. Rockcliffe and Dryderdale presented widely different challenges to the landscaper – the one an intimate, enclosed, farmland landscape, the other dramatic, open moorland cut by deep, heavily wooded valleys. The success with which Alfred handled these two extremes and the wide range of techniques and approaches he applied at each, demonstrates his sympathy for landscape and his skill. At Dryderdale, the ambition and scale of Alfred’s landscaping matches the huge scale of the upland landscape, while at Rockcliffe the design is detailed, complex and ornate. Considered together, the two places can be seen as two halves of a whole, united under the ownership, and influence, of one man. In this sense, although Rockcliffe is a coherent and self contained design, it has lost (lost over 100 years ago) its contrasting twin, its wild and rugged shadow.



1924 6" O.S.

ICE HOUSES

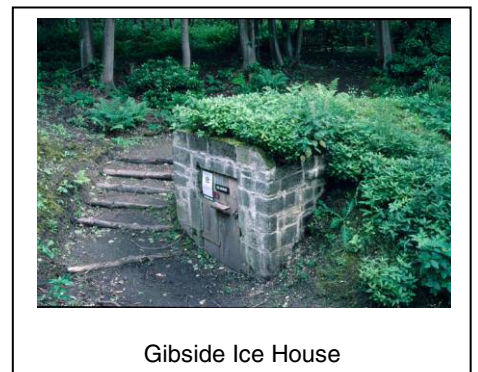
If you shudder at the prospect of lemon and liquorice Battenberg, 18th century ice cream recipes may not have been for you! Asparagus ice cream was not unheard of and the following recipe for orange ice cream, from Wallington Hall, included the use of spinach juice.

'Squeeze the juice of eight sweet oranges in a bowl, add to it half a pint of water, and as much sugar as will sweeten it; strain it through a sieve, put it into an ice well, and freeze it 'till it is stiff; put it into a lead pine-apple mould, wrap it well up in paper, put it into a pail of ice, and salt under and over it, and let it stand for three hours. When you want it, dip your pine-apple in cold water, turn it out on a plate, green the leaves of the pineapple with spinage juice, and garnish it with leaves. You may put this cream into melon and pear moulds. If a melon, you must green it with spinage juice; if a pear mould, you must streak it with red.'

The Wallington ice house (Grade II), located in West Wood under the customary shade of a yew tree, was built in the late eighteenth century, when ice house construction was at a peak. The first ice houses were built in this country during the seventeenth century, with examples recorded at Greenwich in 1619 and Hampton Court in 1625. One pioneer of the use of ice for preserving food was the philosopher Francis Bacon (1521-1626). Bacon supposedly succumbed to pneumonia in 1626 having become chilled while experimenting with packing a dead hen with snow; he believed the effect of ice would halt putrefaction. The winters at this time were considerably colder than they are now.

By the mid eighteenth century ice houses were a popular feature. Ice was a bonus to the inventive chef. Not only could it be used for preservation and chilling but made into receptacles such as goblets or edible, decorative table features. After a heavy meal, ice was prescribed to alleviate indigestion, although in the case of Sir Francis Delaval (1727-1771) it was not efficacious. He died in London having consumed a large meal and quantities of ice. ¹

Mary Bowes (d.1781) instigated the ice house at Gibside (Grade II). ² Ice was sent to Gibside from Ravensworth Castle in July 1747 and the following year a payment to Thomas Hope was recorded for *building up the arch at the ice house*. A drawing in the Strathmore archive shows that the building was thatched. The door was installed with a rebate in the stone to help with insulation. It opened into a stone flagged, brick arched, tunnel which led to the chamber of the Ice House. There was a second inner door, which was a common feature added to increase insulation. The ice house chamber was cylindrical and constructed with a brick vault. The bottom of the chamber was built with a ledge on which the timber frame for the ice would have rested. Residual water would drain away below this. The water table had a considerable impact on the drainage of waste water and the drainage point had to be above it. This is why some ice houses are partially above ground, covered by a mound or built into a bank and always with the entrance facing north.

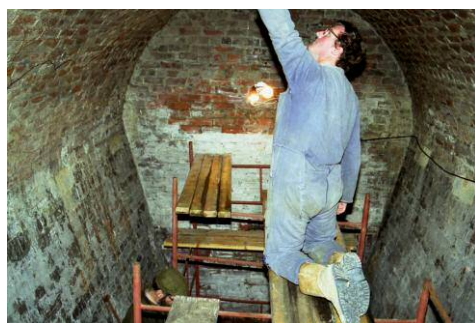


Gibside Ice House

J. C. Loudon described *'The ice-house'* in 1824, *Ice is kept on the continent in cellars, at a greater or less depth from the surface according to the climate. These cellars are without windows, surrounded by very thick walls, and entered by double and treble doors, sometimes placed in angular or circuitous passages, and always with intervals of several feet between them. Sometimes precautions are taken to carry off any water which may arise from a partial thaw, by forming gutters across the floor, and covering it with a grating of strong lattice-work, leading to a cess-pool in the passage, whence the water can be taken out by utensils without opening the inner door; but very frequently full confidence is had in the coolness of the situation, especially of the surrounding soil be dry. Where the surrounding soil is moist, a frame-work or cage of carpentry, grated at bottom, is constructed in the cellar, so as to be from one to two feet apart from the floor, sides, and roof, and in this the ice is as perfectly preserved as in a dry soil. Ice is kept in the cellars of*

¹ Sweetland Dallas, E (1865) *Once a week* V.13 p.206

² Mary Bowes was the second wife of George Bowes (1701-1760). *Dictionary of National Biography*.



Urpeth Ice House

*confectioners, and also by some of the market gardeners, in heaps, with a very thick covering of straw or reeds.*³

Maintenance of ice houses was generally the responsibility of the head gardener and staff. The inside of the ice house would be lined with straw, which allowed drainage, and the ice was rammed down on top of it. When snow was used instead of ice it had to be rammed sufficiently to resemble ice.

As food consumption became more extravagant during the 18th century the supply of ice in towns was also important. In Durham City there are the remains

of at least four ice houses on the banks below the Bailey gardens. The icehouses date from the late 18th or the early 19th century. The survival of ice houses in town gardens is unusual as they generally succumb to being overlaid by development. There is a possibility that the group on the peninsula were not all built for domestic purposes and one or more of the ice houses may have been used by ice merchants. In Newcastle Isaac Cookson rented a building in Newcastle known as White Friar Tower in 1776 and converted it to an ice house.⁴

The majority of estates in the region have ice houses, which are usually, but not always recorded on the first ordnance survey maps. So consider the cold, dark dripping ice houses, lead moulds and vegetable colouring slapped onto sweet ices, the gardeners and cooks with chilblained fingers and celebrate the ease with which we consume the ordinary ice cream today. I do, as the last ice house tunnel I explored was crawling with cockroaches!

Ice houses in the region include;

County Durham

Auckland Park
Barningham Park
Beamish Hall
Burn Hall
Burnhopeside Hall
Brancepeth Caste
Durham Riverbanks
Eggleston Hall
Elemore Hall
Greencroft Estate
Hardwick Hall
Raby Castle
Rokeby Park
Rudland House, Etherley
Seaham Hall
Selaby
The Grove, Hamsterely Forest
Urpeth Hall
Walworth Hall
Whitehill Hall

Northumberland

Beaufront Castle
Belford Hall
Biddlestone Hall
Blagdon Hall
Blenkinsop Hall
Close House
Coupland Castle
Felton Park
Greenchesters
Haggerston Hall
Harbottle Castle
Howick
Kirkley Hall
Nunwick Hall
Seaton Delaval Hall
Sandhoe Hall
Stagshaw House
Wallington Hall

Tyne and Wear

Benwell House
Dunston Hill
Gibside
Gosforth Park
Hetton Hall
Bradley Hall
The Limes, Whitburn

Please note that the majority of these sites are private and not accessible to the public. The sites which are open to the public do not necessarily allow access as ice houses by nature can be extremely dangerous. Photographs kindly supplied by Tom Yellowley.

Fiona Green 2012

³ Loudon J.C. (1824) *an Encyclopaedia of Gardening*

⁴ Mackenzie E (1827) *A Descriptive and Historical Account of the Town and County of Newcastle upon Tyne* V.1 p.107

Two steps forward, one step back – the NGT's visit to Northumberlandia May 2012

A cold wind blew in from the nearby (but unseen) North Sea, bringing drizzle that waxed and waned but never stopped, mist and low cloud (low enough to leave only the bottom half of the slowly turning Cramlington turbines visible) as 20 or so hardy members of NGT gathered for our 'spring' visit to Northumberlandia (when we planned the visit, an evening in May seemed promising – some early summer warmth, evening birdsong, early swallows...).



First view - the head framed by the two entrance mounts

This was a first in several ways: the coldest, the foggiest, the muddiest of all our visits (and the mud was the slipperiest and stickiest); and Northumberlandia, not yet finished, was the most contemporary landscape that we have visited. We were guided round by Mark Simmons, the landscape architect in charge of implementing Charles Jencks's design. Mark, who has so far spent 10 years working on Northumberlandia, was the perfect guide, informed (he gave us

some impressive statistics – cost creeping over the £2.2m budget; 3 miles of paths, at 400 metres long the largest sculpted human figure on earth and so on – all these statistics can be found on various websites), but more than that, Mark's enjoyment of, and absorption in the project, shone through and brightened up our damp and cold visit! Working with Charles Jencks is clearly a stimulating experience.

Land art like Northumberlandia works on at least two levels; most obviously, as a visually striking landform; but also, if it is to pull its weight as a piece of art, then Northumberlandia must also tell us something important about landscape, or about our relationship with the landscape, with nature. And also, if you are a member of the NGT, whose primary interest is in historic landscape, then a massive earthwork like Northumberlandia will have other resonances and should throw a new light on 18th century earthmoving – the amphitheatres, terraces, ramps, viewing mounts that seem to have been felt obligatory in landscapes laid out before c.1750, when 'levelling' and earthmoving generally were synonymous with gardening; at Gibside (the Long Walk running between column and Chapel), Hardwick (the beautifully conical hill on which the Temple stands looks too regular to be natural), Wallington (the great ramp running off the south front of the house known as 'Fenwick's Gallop'), Barningham (terraces/amphitheatre) etc.

As with all Jencks's works, Northumberlandia has a solid philosophical base; it goes something like this - we humans are hardwired to recognise and read faces; furthermore, we have a tendency to search for and to find order in the chaotic forms of nature; these

instinctual responses to landscape often come out as finding faces (eg. Christ), or the human form, in natural formations – clouds, rocks, mountains (burnt toast, cornflakes...). Naturally, this tendency has a long tradition – in 1746, the poet James Thomson (partly to tease and provoke Shenstone) described the views from The Leasowes in just these terms – ‘You have nothing to do but to dress Nature. Her robe is ready made.....Clent and Wawton (Walton) Hill as the two bubbies of Nature: then Mr Lyttleton observed the nipple....’ (and then his description descended further into the bawdy...). On which subject, there is also the example of West Wycombe and the Hell-Fire Club.



The two entrance mounts, with spiral paths to top

At Northumberlandia we were assured (on an evening with a cloud base of about 50 feet and visibility of about 100 yards) that the Cheviots closed the view to the north, and particularly Hedgehope, which from here resembled a reclining nude. So that, standing on a man-made reclining nude, you look to a natural landscape that looks like a reclining nude.

To Jencks, the rounded hills of the distant Cheviots are reflected in ‘the similar curves and shapes of [Northumberlandia’s]... body’, and this draws (‘pulls’) the Cheviots to

Northumberlandia. This effect he describes as ‘borrowing landscape’ – a slightly different twist to the expression, which more conventionally means to make use of a view into someone else’s landscape to benefit one’s own. This ‘borrowing landscape’ plays with our sense of scale; Northumberlandia is huge – the hands are bigger than a tennis court – but

is a molehill compared to Hedgehope; but standing on Northumberlandia and looking north, the two appear close in size.



The right hand

So these were the ideas that are played out on the slopes and lakes of Northumberlandia. And so, in one sense, Northumberlandia is a joke; rather than our minds forming the vast earthwork into a recognisably human figure (as it apparently tends to do with Hedgehope), it is one already, so that we are forced to reverse the process and to read the human form as abstract planes, as pure landscape.

As with any potent art work, Northumberlandia brings other images to mind; its scale pushes it into the world of fairy tale and fantasy – The Time Bandits, Gulliver’s Travels (both Lilliput and Brobdingnay), the ancient chalk figures in the south of England, even the Buddhas of Bamiyan (55m high - destroyed by the Taliban in 2001); and Mark told us of an

oddly fairy tale incident at Northumberlandia; a colony of mice have taken up residence in the nose (the highest point). Inevitably the Angel of the North also comes to mind, though we were assured that there was no conscious intent to emulate, compete or contrast.

As with other Jencks's land forms, the materials are few – grass, gravel, stone-walling and water (and, while the NGT were there, mud) – the effect sparse and simple to emphasise the pure shapes. Unlike his other land form works, the grass of Northumberlandia will be allowed to grow longer (mowed perhaps only twice a year, or possibly grazed by sheep) and a wider range of species, including wild flowers, will be encouraged to spread into the sward, creating a rougher, richer texture.

How you first see Northumberlandia has been carefully orchestrated by Jencks, in a way that again brings the 18th century designers to mind; entering through the Beech wood, the landform is hidden until you pass between the two spiral mounds. These frame Northumberlandia's head and, from the top of either mound, or from the path as it passes through the mounds, the first view of the whole figure is seen.

There are many threads linking Northumberlandia with the designed landscapes, and designers, of previous centuries. The viewing mounts, with their spiral paths leading to the top, are close copies of the mounts raised at many gardens in the 17th and early 18th centuries (there was a good example at Warwick Castle); the delayed first view is something like one of Repton's 'bursts'; the paths on the body closely follow the contours and take you to a view-point, where a particular piece of scenery is seen (one sense of the term 'Picturesque'); the ponds are close to the famous examples at Studley Royal.



Head on far left, other body parts in the normal order to the right

Water, in the usual Jencks' sweeping curves, is confined to the south side, emphasising the flowing curves of the body and presumably, on a still day, giving reflections of it. The water also acts as a barrier, preventing access to the southern slopes and guiding visitors to the feet, where the paths begin. There are seats at the body's high points – hips, knees; these are stone-walled enclaves at the end of a spur off the main path circuit, the seat positioned for a particular view, either of different parts of the

body or of distant surrounding scenery. The paths are a vital part of the landform, again emphasising the shapes and contours (defining its shape in the same way that the chalk figures are delineated), cutting the slopes into a series of terraces (that have strong echoes of the lynchets or cultivation terraces of a medieval landscape), and of course taking you round the sculpture and revealing it in a constantly changing series of views. The paths – 3 miles of path packed into a relatively small area – are therefore perhaps, after the

landform's shape, Northumberlandia's main feature and they define how it is intended to be used – it was to be seen in motion and, as you progress around the body, climbing and descending and always following a curving line, a complex series of interlocking cones, crescents, disks, slopes and peaks unfolds before you. This aspect of the path system is another link to the ancient chalk figures, which it is thought may have been walked in a processional ritual.

Once Jencks had stumbled upon these flowing earth sculptures and crisply delineated water bodies, he has returned regularly to explore the possibilities of these forms –

Northumberlandia (once you lose the sense of the body) is very like Portrack, which is like the Museum of Modern Art in Edinburgh – but Northumberlandia's links to the human form brings a new dimension, both populist and thought-provoking and Northumberland is very lucky to have Northumberlandia. We saw it under possibly the worst conditions and were only able to walk about half of it (we couldn't go to the head, which is the highest point on the body and presumably the climax of the circuit); and still we saw enough to grasp some of its great visual potential.

Land art is a kind of gardening and, like gardening, it uses natural materials in an unnatural way to make something beautiful or meaningful. It strikes me that it may work in the same way that standing stones and stone circles do (which marked sunrise at significant times of the year), or indeed, more prosaically, like cultivation terraces (producing food); that is, they all make and mark a point of contact with the natural landscape and draw attention to some vital aspect of our relationship with it.

Finally, I should explain the title; firstly, it's a fairly accurate description of our progress around Northumberlandia – at one point, we found ourselves having to retrace our steps up a steep, and particularly muddy slope. But, more than that, it seemed a title in search of an article; whether the title has other, more meaningful connections with Northumberlandia



I'm not sure; but finding meanings in a Charles Jencks' landscape is half the point – the other half is a very beautiful, visually pleasing, intellectually stimulating assembly of interlocking shapes, contours and slopes.

Nick Owen May
2012

SNIPPETS FROM THE ARCHIVES, PART 2

Introduction

In 1999, the Landscape Section at Durham County Council organised several events in recognition of the fact that 50 years had elapsed since the first Landscape Architect had been employed there. Among the items prepared was a document entitled, "*Durham County Council : Landscape Golden Jubilee : 1949 – 1999 : A Potted History.*" This, the second article, dips further into that publication to reveal more items which may be of interest, gleaned from the County Council's records, often in the form of long forgotten Committee Reports. Along the way, a few anecdotes have been added to keep the reader awake.

For ease of digestion, rather than being organised chronologically, this article is split into the following twelve sections :-

Introduction; Planning, Administration and General Snippets; Deep Coal Mining; Opencast Coal Mining; **Quarrying; Iron & Steel Production; Land Reclamation;** The Durham Heritage Coast; The North Pennines Area of Outstanding Landscape Value; Transportation; Trees & Woodlands; Parklands and Designed Landscapes.

Since the complete article extends to over eleven thousand words, only those sections shown in emboldened type above are included in this year's Journal. It is intended that the Introduction will be repeated and remaining sections covered, dependent upon space, in subsequent publications of the Journal.

Quarrying

An application for a proposed Cement Works, at Eastgate in Weardale, was presented on the **14th. July, 1964.**

On the **7th January, 1991**, it was reported to Committee that, to comply with various new Planning Acts, a comprehensive review was required of all operative and dormant mineral workings in the County. It was agreed that the formal commencement date for the review should be the **1st April, 1991**. The provisional number of sites needing to be covered was 299, consisting of just 73 coal sites (10 deep mines, 18 drift mines and 45 opencast sites) and 226 non-coal sites covering the working of limestone, dolomite, sandstone, ganister, moulding sand, whinstone, sand & gravel, brick clay & shales, fluorspar and barytes.

Iron & Steel Production

On the **11th. July, 1967**, the Benson Report on the steel industry was considered when it was reported that prospects for the future of Consett were '*very gloomy*'.

In **September, 1980**, Consett Steelworks closed with the loss of 4,000 jobs. It brought to an end a tradition of iron and steel-making in the area which stretched back to 1841, when the original Consett Iron Company was formed. Prior to that, in 1690, sword makers from Solingen in Germany had set up a works at Shotley Bridge. The subsequent reclamation of the steelworks site was undertaken jointly by the County and District Councils. A proposal by a private coal company to extract extensive coal reserves which lay beneath the site, by opencast methods, was supported by the County but rejected by the District and NCB. Had it been endorsed by all three bodies, the reclamation

could have been undertaken at no cost to the tax payer and would have removed any threat of future large scale disruption to the Consett landscape.

On the **4th January, 1993**, Derwentside District Council gave County Council members a presentation on Project Genesis, a plan to develop further land reclaimed on the former Consett Ironworks site. One of the principal objectives was to make the area self-sustaining in terms of its energy requirements.

Land Reclamation

The first land reclamation project to be tackled in County Durham was at Thrislington around 1952, where a pit bing (or heap) was 'rehabilitated'. This appeared to lay the foundations for a national approach to reclamation which was then embraced by Lancashire County Council, quickly followed by many other local authorities.

Following a report presented to Committee on the **3rd June, 1955**, when it was recognised that much still needed to be done to address the problem of derelict land in the County, the first pit heap to be tackled was that at Croxdale. At this stage in the development of the reclamation programme, waste materials were simply left where they had been deposited during the mining process and the surface planted with trees – principally conifers. In a ceremony to mark this auspicious occasion, the Chairman of the County Council planted a commemorative tree on the site, flanked by two burly policemen who were there to ensure no damage was done by local youth. One commented dolefully to John Holliday, the landscape architect responsible for the scheme : *'Wi'v bin over t' tip an canna find enny trees!'*. What damage may have been done to the young transplants during their earlier reconnaissance

mission was hard to assess, but John could not help but notice, at that very moment, four size twelve boots continuing to despatch tiny trees in every conceivable direction. Today, the well established woodland which rises above the River Wear at Croxdale, bears testimony to the fact that not even the most thorough search techniques for which the modern police force is renowned, were able to eliminate every tree.

Fifteen months later, it was reported that difficulty was being experienced in sourcing trees for reclamation projects. It was noted that this appeared to result from three factors : A crash in the rabbit population, presumably due to myxomatosis, had led to a significant increase in the planting up of odd field corners; tree stocks were scarce due to the disastrous spring frosts of 1956 followed by a prolonged period of drought and finally, investment in new woodlands was then becoming popular. Out of 85 acres which the County Council had planned to plant up at the time, only 60 acres were possible, incorporating 120,000 softwoods and 50,000 hardwoods.

On the **9th February, 1965**, a report on the reclamation of derelict land was tabled. A recent survey had shown that some 8,000 acres of derelict land existed in the County, of which 5,600 acres required treatment. By this time Government grants had improved enormously and while not yet at 100%, the County Council was prepared to provide those Districts which were prepared to participate in this work with a full grant, irrespective of the level of Government grant available. Two months later it was reported that, due to the recent closure of several collieries, the area of derelict land had risen to 8,474 acres while 5,406 acres were still in need of reclamation. Three years further on, with collieries continuing to close, the Council heard on **12th March, 1968**, that the area of derelict land had now grown to 9,951 acres, 4,612

acres of which justified reclamation, 2,593 acres required landscaping and 2,756 acres were not then considered to be in need of any treatment. By 1976, when 100% Government Grants were introduced, the clear up annual target rate over the previous three years had been 700 acres. With the availability of a full grant it was proposed that the target be increased to 978 acres per annum until 1979.

The Prime Minister had visited the region on **13th October, 1967** where he indicated that he wished to see faster progress made on the reclamation of derelict land. Two months later, T. Dan Smith, then Chairman of the Northern Economic Planning Council, met with representatives of all County Authorities in the region to discuss the problem before reporting back to London.

One of the first campaigns in which Vera Baird, later Member of Parliament for Redcar & Cleveland, became involved, came to a head on **21st September, 1976**. Then known as Vera Taylor-Gooby, she successfully fought off the County Council's proposals for flattening the former waste heap at Ludworth Colliery which had been partially reclaimed by tree planting and had developed colonies of orchids. Had Vera not been a rather striking redhead and trainee barrister, it is doubtful if the Press would have paid the matter more than scant attention. As it was, the column inches of publicity which the spat generated probably exceeded the number of orchids saved by some margin.

It was announced, on the **20th September, 1977**, that the Joint RICS and Sunday Times competition for innovative reclamation schemes across the Country, had resulted in Dr. Ronald McFadzean of Spennymoor and Dr. Susan Luther Davis of Sheffield being awarded first prize for their "*Elizabeth Jubilee*

Park" proposals for the Spennymoor Slag Heaps site, one of twelve sites used in the competition. The Slag Heaps reclamation was one of many such innovative projects undertaken by the County Council during this period. They resulted, in **April, 1983**, with the reclamation programme receiving two prestigious awards :- The Europa Nostra Awards Scheme 1982 Diploma of Merit for '*the excellent reclamation of large areas of industrial wasteland*' and a Commendation in the Royal Town Planning Institute's Silver Cup Competition of 1982 which noted that, '*over the last twenty years, this reclamation programme has achieved a dramatic improvement of a landscape previously dominated by enormous pit heaps, railway lines and disused collieries.*' This was followed in **October, 1985** by two further awards. The RICS / Times Conservation Awards for that year included a Commendation for the reclamation of Littleton and Pitlington Collieries. The major accolade received however was first prize in Group One of the same competition for the reclamation of the Deerness Valley, presented through a booklet entitled, '*The Greening of County Durham*'. Later, on the **7th December, 1989**, this same presentation was Highly Commended in the Association of County Council's Centenary Environment Awards Scheme. It charted the cleaning up of more than 16.5 square miles of derelict land and industrial eyesores and the planting of more than 2 million trees over a 30 year period. As a result, the County's appearance had been transformed and its image improved to such an extent that many new businesses had been attracted to the area to replace the once dominant industries of mining, steelmaking and shipbuilding. It also revealed that the number of tourists visiting Durham was increasing annually. A second 'Highly Commended' Award for this project was received by the County Council during the first annual European and Regional

Planning Awards ceremony in Brussels on the **20th September, 1991**. The Jury's citation concluded: *'County Durham demonstrates that, by a determined and steadfast approach, seemingly insurmountable problems and environmental hardship can be overcome, given time and no weakening of resolve.'*

On the **19th June, 1986**, the reclamation of Horden Colliery was proposed, heralding the beginning of the end for Durham's remaining deep mines.

The next month it was announced that the Department of the Environment had allocated £1,085,000 in **1986/87** for reclamation work in County Durham.. Among the schemes to be undertaken in addition to Horden were Fishburn Colliery and the Randolph Colliery and Cokeworks at Evenwood. Almost eight years later,

on the **22nd. March, 1994**, it was reported that English Partnerships, who had taken over responsibility from the DOE for financing land reclamation, had confirmed their support for a programme of reclamation in the County in **1994/95**. At least £1,782,472 was available with the possibility of a further £1,199,701 being released, provided resources in the northern region were not diverted elsewhere. It was anticipated that this would allow reclamation to be completed along the disused Barnard Castle to Middleton-in-Teesdale Railway line and at Sacriston Colliery, Bishop Middleham Quarry, Fishburn Colliery and Bearpark Colliery. It would also enable works to be started at Quarrington Hill Quarry, Barnard Castle Gasworks, Bowes Railway and the wholesale reclamation of Dawdon Colliery and its surrounding lands. Most of these schemes were later achieved, although this award proved to herald the beginning of the end for large-scale reclamation projects in County Durham.