

UNITED KINGDOM

Studley Royal Park including the Ruins of Fountains Abbey

Brief description

A striking landscape was created around the ruins of the Cistercian Fountains Abbey and Fountains Hall Castle, in Yorkshire. The 18th-century landscaping, gardens and canal, the 19th-century plantations and vistas, and the neo-Gothic castle of Studley Royal Park, make this an outstanding site.

1. Introduction

Year(s) of Inscription 1986

Agency responsible for site management

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2. Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria C (i) (iv)

Justification as provided by the State Party

Studley Royal is one of the few great 18th century 'green gardens' to survive substantially in its original form and is arguably the most spectacular water garden in England.

The abbey ruins were not added to the estate until some 50 years after the gardens were first planned, but formed a key element in the scheme from the first, providing the spectacular culmination to the principal vista. However, although part of the garden layout, the abbey ruins are of outstanding importance in their own right, representing one of the few Cistercian houses surviving from the 12th century and providing an unrivalled picture of a great religious house in all its parts.

The Tudor Studley Royal mansion has been demolished, but Jacobean Fountains Hall, acquired at the same time as the abbey ruins, survives intact and is itself an outstanding example of a building of its period. St Mary's Church likewise formed no part of the original garden scheme since it dates from the 19th century, but it also has been successfully

integrated into the scheme and is a building of importance in its own right as an outstanding example of High Victorian architecture by one of its leading exponents.

Garden landscape, water gardens, abbey ruins, Jacobean mansion and Victorian church are all of exceptional merit and together justify the inclusion of Studley Royal in the World Heritage List.

UNESCO Criteria: i, ii, iv, v and vi.

As provided in ICOMOS evaluation

The Fountains site owes its originality and striking beauty to the fact that a humanised landscape of exceptional value was constituted around the largest medieval ruins of the United Kingdom. In the definition of this cultural property it is essential that the small Fountains Hall Castle, the landscaping, the gardens and canal created by John Aislaby in the 18th century, the plantations and vistas of the 19th century and finally Studley Royal Church, as an additional element of the site, all be expressly included.

Committee Decision

Bureau (1986): The Bureau recommended inscription of this property on condition that the British authorities redraft the proposal in such a way as to include expressly in the definition of this cultural property the Manor House of Fountains Hall and various landscape improvements carried out in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, since the medieval ruins of the abbey and their landscaped surroundings together form a striking whole. The redrafted nomination could be entitled 'Studley Royal Park including the ruins of Fountains Abbey'.

- A Statement of Significance was developed for the management plan. The State Party will discuss and agree to a statement of outstanding universal value which will be submitted in due course for consideration by the World Heritage Committee
- No change required to UNESCO's official description of the site

Boundaries and Buffer Zone

- Status of boundaries of the site: inadequate
- Buffer zone: no buffer zone has been defined
- Although the World Heritage site boundary covers the core area of the designed landscape, some significant features lie outside. There is a need to review the boundary to ensure that it includes those areas that are essential to retain the site's outstanding universal value. There is also a need to develop a formal buffer zone

- Harrogate Borough Council, English Heritage, and the National Trust are in consultation with adjoining landowners to develop a proposal for the creation of a buffer zone (see attached map). The State Party will submit proposals for consideration by the World Heritage Committee in due course

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- World Heritage site values have been maintained

3. Protection

Legislative and Administrative Arrangements

- The site is protected from intrusive development by several statutory and non-statutory designations, by strict planning control from Harrogate Borough Council, and by the inalienable status of National Trust land. The National Trust was given the unique power to declare its land inalienable (cannot be sold or mortgaged) by Act of Parliament in 1907. A compulsory purchase is not possible without the consent of Parliament.
- The protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective

Actions taken/proposed:

- Revision to the boundary and creation of a buffer zone
- National level of action. Timeframe: not known

4. Management

Use of site/property

- Visitor attraction, religious use, rural landscape

Management/Administrative Body

- Steering group (National Trust and English Heritage staff) formally set up on 01 January 1999 to supervise the production of the WHS management plan. The group now meets quarterly to review progress on conservation projects and discuss key management issues
- No site manager but none needed
- Both the National Trust and English Heritage are involved in the management of the site. The National Trust owns the Fountains Abbey & Studley Royal estate and How Hill. St. Mary's Church is owned by the State. The High Stables, the Pheasantries and the freehold sporting rights are in private ownership. The ruins of the Abbey itself are in the guardianship of the Secretary of State whose responsibilities as guardian are exercised by English Heritage

The National Trust is responsible for the overall management of the estate (visitors, conservation of the designed landscape, garden buildings, Fountains Hall, maintenance of the infrastructure). English Heritage is responsible for the conservation of the abbey ruins, Fountains Abbey Mill, St. Mary's Church and the monastic artefacts in store at Helmsley. Both organisations have worked closely together at Fountains Abbey & Studley Royal since 1983

The National Trust has a planning framework based on a National Strategic Plan covering three years, cascading to regional and property levels. The current property strategic plan covers the period 2001-2004. The WHS management plan has a six year life span to fit within this framework

- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: national (DCMS; English Nature; The Environment agency; English Heritage), regional, local (North Yorkshire County Council; Harrogate Borough Council)
- The current management system is sufficiently effective

Actions proposed:

- Re-definition of the World Heritage site boundary: (as explained above)

5. Management Plan

- Management plan is being implemented (to define the boundaries and buffer zone)
- Implementation commenced: December 2001
- Very effective
- Responsibility for over-seeing the implementation of the management plan and monitoring its effectiveness: the National Trust and English Heritage

6. Financial Resources

Financial situation

- The estate is treated as a 'Special Trust in Credit' by the National Trust - all surpluses generated on the estate are retained for use at Fountains Abbey & Studley Royal. This is in contrast to other National Trust properties which are supported by a central 'General Fund'. Support from the general fund, if found to be necessary, is only given on a loan basis
- Over 80% of operating income comes from visitors (via admission fees, membership recruitment, catering, retail, events, donations)

etc.). The endowment, which is by far the most sustainable source of income, currently produces an annual income that is insufficient to provide protection against market forces

- English Heritage funding of the site is directed towards the following: the annual maintenance of the abbey ruins and St. Mary's Church; large scale, first time consolidation of the abbey ruins and St. Mary's Church; grant aid towards specific conservation projects
- Other sources: European funding (ERDF) for conservation of Fountains Hall. Interregional IIIB Program 'Converting Sacred Spaces' funding awarded in 2005 to be used for interpretation and conservation of Fountains Abbey
- A draft Five Year Business Development Plan was completed in December 2004, reviewing current operations, performance, conservation needs and other projects
- insufficient

7. Staffing Levels

- Number of staff: 57
- Also access to: rural surveyor and land use adviser, land use planning adviser, territory archaeologist, curator (gardens and parks), nature conservation adviser, learning and interpretation officer, community and volunteering officer

Rate of access to adequate professional staff across the following disciplines:

- Very good: management, education, visitor management
- Good: conservation, promotion
- Staff resources are inadequate
- Over 300 regular volunteers each year: leading guided tours, stewarding the historic buildings and gardening, assisting with conservation work, carrying out research into various aspects of the site's history. A volunteer research group has operated for the last 5 years and disseminates the information it collects to staff and volunteers through a talks program and in the site's library and archive

8. Sources of Expertise and Training in Conservation and Management Techniques

- Staff training: Landscape, building craft and nature conservation training are available within the National Trust. Some training is sourced externally including dry stone walling and

machine shop training. Staff are also encouraged to gain experience at other properties and to share their skills.

- Training on site management for stakeholders.

9. Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics: 475,000 visitors in 2004
- Visitor facilities: interpretation, visitor centre, small shop, tea room, refreshment kiosk, lavatories, refreshment kiosk, 3 car park provisions designed to minimize the visual impact of cars in the historic areas of the estate, 3 admission points with provision for visitors with disabilities. The visitor centre was opened in 1992 and was designed to cope with 350,000 visitors a year and through-put of 700 visitors an hour at the busiest times. It includes a large restaurant, a tiered lecture/meeting room seating 100 people, shop and admission area, lavatories and the estate office.
- Visitor facilities are adequate
- There is no tourism/visitor management plan for the site

10. Scientific Studies

- There is no agreed research framework/strategy for the site
- Risk assessment, monitoring exercises, condition surveys, archaeological surveys, visitor management
- Monitoring exercises for St. Mary's Church are conducted by English Heritage (St. Mary's Church Conservation Plan was produced in 2001). The National Trust conducts landscape condition surveys twice a year. The water features are surveyed annually. English Heritage carries out condition surveys annually of the abbey and St. Mary's Church. The National Trust carries out condition surveys on the historic buildings every 5 years. Also: study of the signage and welcome to Fountains Abbey & Studley Royal, natural history surveys, visitor management surveys, etc.
- Studies used for management of site: the studies and research programmes have been used to inform the parks and gardens plan. The plan is due for completion in summer 2005. The surveys have also influenced day to day management practices, and interpretation of the site (e.g.: production of self-guided trails). However, the studies have also increased the need for financial resources as they have highlighted areas where conservation is required and added to the site's project list

11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- An adequate number of signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem used on publications
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage among: local communities, businesses, local authorities. Inadequate: visitors
- There is an education strategy for the site
- Need for awareness raising: the National Trust uses the WHS logo on the property literature but more use could be made of it on regional and national literature. More interpretation is needed at the property about the World Heritage site status and what it means, to increase awareness amongst visitors
- Heritage days and education strategy: the National Trust and English Heritage organise an annual Restoration Weekend where visitors can come along and watch traditional craftsmen at work and try their hand at some traditional skills. Sculpture workshops have been held for schools for the last three years. Local people who volunteer for the National Trust are invited to talks by specialists in conservation as they are arranged. Groups of volunteers on residential conservation holidays have worked alongside skilled staff on conservation projects including dry stone walling. The learning program provides activities for school groups based on natural history, the value of the site and visitor care
- Website available
- Local participation involved during the development of the WHS management plan. Volunteers from the local area are involved in the practical management of the property through residential conservation working holidays, and a volunteer gardening team who meet three times a week. There is open access to the deer park and on permissible footpaths

12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

Reactive monitoring reports

- N/A

Conservation interventions

Studley Royal: restoration of garden statues, restoration of Aislabie's outdoor kitchen, restoration of Tent Hill, restoration of Rustic Bridge, dredging of Half Moon Pond, stabilisation of foundations, construction of new platform and

fence at Octagon Tower, conservation of piers and urns at the canal gates, decoration of Banqueting House and roof repairs, refurbishment of Surprise View and reinstatement of statue known as Anne Boleyn, conservation of Temple of Fame and Temple of Piety, restoration of flanking walls and Lemonade House at Canal Gates, regilding of Canal Gates, restoration and conservation of Fishing Tabernacles, conservation of Galand Bridge, consolidation of Drum Fall and Upper Canal walls, dredging of Upper Canal to Rustic Bridge, conservation of Cortese Roundel, Temple of Piety, conservation of Robin Hoods Well, obscured vistas in the garden re-opened.

Studley Deer Park: conversion of Choristers House from estate office to holiday cottage, restoration of fords and consolidation of retaining walls in Seven Bridges Valley, conservation of Studley Royal Gates.

Fountains Hall Area: repairs to hall roof, repairs to stone work, walls and windows, conservation of Judgement of Solomon fireplace, complete internal and external decoration of hall, refurbishment of heating system for hall, development of function facilities, conversion of wings of Fountains Hall into two holiday flats and two staff flats, conservation of Orchard Bridge and rebuilding of parapets, refurbishment of summer house in Elizabethan tea garden.

Fountains Mill: restoration and conservation of Fountains Mill, conservation of Dairy Buildings on Kitchen Bank.

Fountains Abbey: base of Huby's Tower cleared enabling tower area to be opened to visitors, archaeological survey of West Green, repairs to Nave west wall and Galilee porch, Cellarium, Lay Brothers Range, Gate House, repointing of south aisle, Chapel of Nine Altars and Presbytery, South Transept, North Transept, monuments Room conserved and opened to visitors.

Other: ongoing consolidation of monastic precinct wall, ongoing consolidation of deer park wall. Visitor centre built to relieve visitor pressure at West Gate and Studley entrances, repairs to How Hill Tower, Swanley Grange Farmhouse renovated for staff accommodation. Swanley Grange farm buildings converted into an education centre

- Present state of conservation: adequate

Threats and Risks to site

- Development pressure, environmental pressure, natural disaster(s), visitor/tourism pressure, agricultural/forestry regimes

- Specific issues: 1- Natural disasters: the site is at threat from extremes of weather i.e. storms, droughts. The high winds in January 2005 have led to a number of veteran trees being damaged or destroyed. The water gardens are subject periodically to flooding, leading to the closure of affected areas and detrimental impact on the landscape. 2- Agricultural/forestry regimes: there is a high proportion of run off from land leading to siltation in the water channels. 3- Noise pollution from air traffic. 4- Visitor/tourism pressure: there are certain times of year when there is increased visitor pressure on the site, namely Boxing Day and bank holidays. 5- Features and buildings are at risk due to lack of adequate funding for conservation work. 6- Third party freehold interest held by Studley Royal Shoot: there are two bodies with freehold interests on the estate, the National Trust (which owns the estate freehold) and Studley Royal Shoot (which owns the freehold shooting rights and imposes constraints on the NT in terms of public access (woodlands closed to visitors)) 7- Sourcing traditional materials and craftspeople for building work. 8- Area of high employment therefore difficult to recruit staff for all facilities.
- Emergency measures: the threat of flooding has been brought to the attention of the Environment Agency. A catchment study is required. An on site management plan has been produced with the Studley Royal Shoot which has helped to control the impact of the shoot on the property.

13. Monitoring

- Formal monitoring programme
- Key indicators are used in the following fields: Physical Condition and conservation of historic features, Landscape Protection, Nature Conservation, Environmental Quality, Visitors, Learning and Interpretation, Access and facilities, Impact of visitors and capacity
- Future indicators to consider: The National Trust and English Heritage are developing conservation key indicators

14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: conservation, social, economic, management
- The status has encouraged a sharing of ideas between the National Trust, other World Heritage Sites and important heritage sites

- Strength of management: conservation
- Weaknesses of management:
Landscape management: there is poor sequential tree management in all areas. This is partly due to the constraints placed on the property by the third party freehold interest.
Lack of financial and human resources: this imposes constraints on the amount of conservation work that the National Trust can achieve on the property.

Future actions:

- English Heritage has successfully acquired funding for conservation of river walls within the abbey precinct. Studley Gates and Mackershaw Lodges have been prioritised for conservation work. Funding is available for work on these structures. Funding has also become available for conservation of Robin Hood's Well. Adequate and sustainable financial and human resources are needed to conserve the 18th century designed landscape and maintain the infrastructure of the estate. This applies to both annual maintenance and capital works. The completion of capital works has a long term maintenance and resource application.
- No WH Funding is sought