

HACKFALL

Conservation Area Character Appraisal



Working for you

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1 Introduction

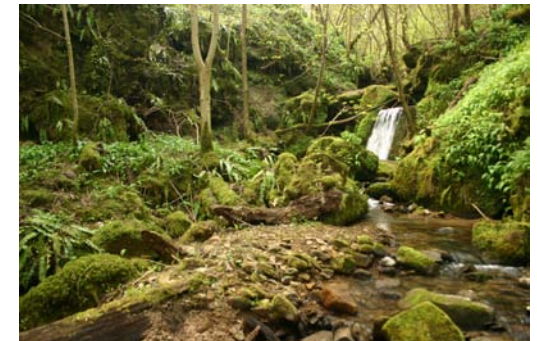
- 1.1 conservation area Appraisals aim to define and analyse the special interest which constitutes the character and appearance of a place. It is these qualities which warrant the designation of a Conservation Area. This Appraisal was approved by the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Economic Development on 14 December 2011 and forms an “evidence base” for the Local Development Framework (LDF). Consequently, it is a material consideration when determining applications for development, considering planning appeals or proposing works for the preservation or enhancement of the area. It also forms the basis for a subsequent management strategy, which will contain proposals and policies for the conservation and enhancement of the area.
- 1.2 The Appraisal provides information and guidance to those wishing to carry out works in the Conservation Area whether or not they require planning approval. So, it is a useful source of information for property owners, applicants or their agents, and members of the public who enjoy the area.
- 1.3 The main function of the Conservation Area Appraisal is to ensure that any works in the Conservation Area have regard to the special qualities of the area and to devise a strategy to protect these qualities.

The Appraisal will help us understand the impact that development proposals would have on the Conservation Area and whether these are acceptable and/or appropriate.

- 1.4 The assessment of the area's special architectural or historic interest is based on a careful and objective analysis of the area, using a method of analysis recommended by English Heritage. Various qualities are reviewed including: historical development, building materials, and relationships between buildings and open spaces. Appraisals aim to be comprehensive but the omission of any particular building, feature or space should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.
- 1.5 Hackfall Conservation Area was originally designated in April 1993 and was amended on 14 December 2011. This Appraisal aims to describe Hackfall as it is today and identify the special character and distinctiveness of its setting, buildings and open spaces. Having identified those special qualities, the Appraisal examines

whether opportunities exist to protect and enhance its character.

- 1.6 By identifying what makes Hackfall special or distinctive it is suggested that any future change, whether to individual buildings, features or the area as a whole, will be based on this understanding of the past and the present character of the settlement. In this way, we can manage future change to ensure it makes a positive contribution towards preserving or enhancing its special character.



Objectives

The principal objectives of the Appraisal are:

- to define and record the special character and interest of the area;
- to raise public awareness of the aims and objectives of the Conservation Area designation and stimulate involvement in the protection of its character;
- to identify what is worthy of preservation to aid understanding;
- to assess the action that may be necessary to safeguard this special interest; and
- to identify opportunities for enhancement.

2 Planning policy framework

- 2.1 Local authorities have a duty to designate “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance” as Conservation Areas under section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The same Act also requires local planning authorities periodically to review Conservation Areas.
- 2.2 Government guidance on all development affecting Conservation Areas is set out in Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (PPS5) and the accompanying PPS5 Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide. The Practice Guide advises local authorities to compile conservation area character appraisals as a means of gaining a better understanding of the significance of their conservation areas. PPS5 advises that these character appraisals should in turn be consulted in determining planning applications which affect conservation areas or their setting.
- 2.3 In determining planning applications for development within conservation areas and applications for conservation area consent, the council will give considerable weight to the content of conservation area character appraisals. The consideration of proposals in the context of the description contained in these appraisals will be an important factor in deciding whether a proposal has an adverse affect on the character and appearance of a conservation area and, therefore, whether it is contrary to saved Local Plan Policy HD3 (which is the key policy for the control of development in Conservation Areas). The scope of Policy HD3 also covers development proposals outside a conservation area which would affect its setting or views into or out of the Conservation Area.
- 2.4 Hackfall is in the Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). In 1994, in recognition of the quality of its landscape the former Countryside Commission designated the Nidderdale AONB. Saved Policy C1 from the Harrogate District Local Plan, provides that priority will be given to the conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape and any development should reflect the local distinctiveness of the area.
- 2.5 The Nidderdale AONB Management Plan (2009-14) is a spatial strategy that addresses the need to manage change. The Nidderdale AONB Heritage Strategy, approved April 2009, identifies the objectives, policies and actions required for the sustainable management of heritage in the AONB.
- 2.6 Hackfall is a Grade I Registered Historic Park and Garden, this designation recognises its exceptional interest. Historic parks and gardens constitute an important part of England’s cultural heritage. The purpose of the register is

to identify important historic parks and gardens to increase public awareness of them and to encourage their protection and preservation. Inclusion on the register does not provide statutory protection, but is nevertheless a material consideration and Saved Local Plan Policy HD7A states that development will not be permitted where it would adversely affect the character or setting of registered parks and gardens. PPS5 defines a Grade I Park and Garden as an historic asset of the highest significance which should be appropriately protected from harm. The relationship of Hackfall with Studley Royal and Fountains Abbey World Heritage Site is particularly significant.

2.7 Hackfall was notified under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 as amended in 1985) as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1989. When notified, landowners and occupiers receive a list of operations likely to damage the special interest, and the legal obligations require them to consult Natural England before undertaking any of the listed operations. The citation describes Hackfall as a largely undisturbed example of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland with a wide range of plant communities, which reflect the varied geology of the gorge. The citation and the list of operations likely to damage the special interest of the site are available on the Natural England website (see Appendix C) .

2.8 Planning Policy Statement 9 (PPS9) states that Sites of Special Scientific Interest should be given a high degree of protection under the planning system. PPS9 also states that local planning authorities should not grant planning permission for any development that would result in the loss or deterioration of ancient woodland unless the need for and benefits of the development outweigh the loss of woodland habitat.

2.9 Hackfall is listed in the Invertebrate Site Register (ISR), is classified as Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW); and it includes key habitats in the United Kingdom's Biodiversity Action Programme (BAP). The BAP aims to ensure our habitats and species are conserved and enhanced.

2.10 The site supports many protected species some of which, such as bats and otters, are European Protected Species, protected under the Habitats Regulations (2010). Other species, such as nesting birds, are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

2.11 There is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) on Magdalen Hill on the other side of the river from Hackfall. This SAM does not lie within the boundary of this Conservation Area, however it is further evidence of the importance of the wider landscape at Hackfall.

2.12 Involving the community and raising public awareness is an integral part of the appraisal process and needs to be approached in a pro-active and innovative way. Community involvement helps to bring valuable public understanding and 'ownership' to proposals for the area. A report, included in the appendix, details how the local community was involved and the contribution it has made to this Appraisal.



View from inside Mowbray Castle.

3 Historic development and archaeology

- 3.1 Extensive archival research work has been carried out, which together with field survey provides a wealth of information on how the garden was developed and was enjoyed by visitors in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Much of what is known about Hackfall comes from the various diary works and sketches. Painters and poets, including Turner, visited Hackfall for inspiration. Today Hackfall is on the Turner Trail. See Appendix C for suggested further reading. Here follows a brief history of the development of this important garden.
- 3.2 Hackfall Wood was purchased in 1731 by John Aislabie for its timber; it is known there was a lime kiln still functioning here at this time. There were coal pits and probably quarries in the wood and it is possible that there was a water-driven sawmill. The wood south of the Grewelthorpe beck was apparently common ground.
- 3.3 John Aislabie, a politician whose reputation was ruined by his involvement in the South Sea Bubble scandal, laid out the very formal water garden at Studley Royal (1716-1742). His son, William, who also owned Kirkby Fleetham, carried on with the development of Studley Royal by adding the wilder Seven Bridges Walk and in 1768, in order to control it, he purchased Fountains Abbey which had previously been enjoyed purely as an important focal point for views from the water gardens.
- 3.4 William Aislabie recognised the potential of the land at Hackfall and from the mid eighteenth century the untamed, yet dramatic ravine was skilfully exploited to form the garden. The objective was to confront visitors with the untamed, romantic, picturesque and sublime facets of nature. Aislabie gently manipulated the landscape to enhance its natural features and vistas.
- 3.5 The eighteenth century tourist actively sought stimulation; to stand in awe of a precipice, to hurry beneath a towering crag, muse upon imagined tales of romance in a ruined castle, to enjoy tranquil pools and to wonder at the power of water. All this Hackfall provided, and the garden became an important place to visit. In the eighteenth and nineteenth century visitors were shown around, and commonly by the gardener who lived in Hackfall House. Hackfall Farm also formed part of the estate, and the Aislabies kept an apartment there circa 1770.
- 3.6 During this period scenes of the garden were recorded by the artists Turner and Gilpin, and described by writers such as Arthur Young and Rev Richard Warner. So important was Hackfall, that several scenes were depicted on a Wedgewood service, known as the Frog Dinner Service, made for Catherine the Great in the 1770s.
- 3.7 Hackfall was owned by Lord Ripon in the nineteenth century, who expanded the system of paths. Hackfall was still a popular resort until the 1930s when it was again sold to a timber merchant. The merchant felled many of the trees and replanted areas with conifers. Further damage to the garden occurred in the 1980s when Dutch elm disease struck.
- 3.8 The gardens almost returned to nature, and a number of features were lost. These include The Tent, Sentry Box, two summerhouses, various seats and benches, small cascades and weirs. However this loss was stemmed in 1988, when the Hackfall Trust was established and Hackfall was acquired a year later by the Woodland Trust under a 999 year lease. Mowbray Point (recently named 'The Ruin') was leased to the Landmark Trust, who repaired and reinstated the building, and put in a new access track in order to convert it into a holiday dwelling.
- 3.9 In 2006 The Woodland Trust and Hackfall Trust were successful in securing a Heritage Lottery Fund grant to restore key features and enable people to learn about this important heritage site. Because of the need to conserve the SSSI's delicate woodland habitats, the garden underwent only partial restoration. Its key features can be discovered by the visitor in a more natural woodland setting. In 2011 the Garden won the prestigious Europa Nostra Award.
- 3.10 Early settlement at Hackfall is evidenced by earthworks on Magdalen Hill and in place names like Camp Hill (indicative of Roman settlement) and Grewelthorpe ('thorpe' is a Danish word).

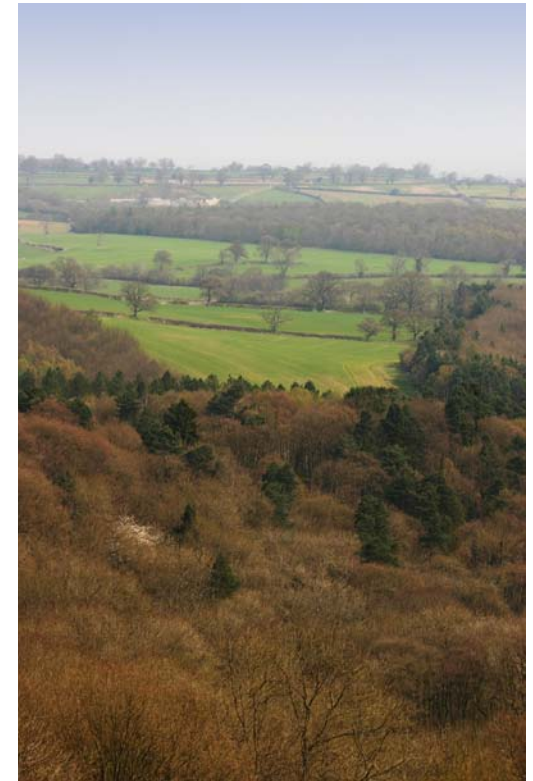
4 Location and landscape setting

- 4.1 Hackfall is in the Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, less than 10 miles northwest of Ripon and less than three miles south of Masham, and just at the edge of the village of Grewelthorpe. The wood, which covers 47 hectares (117 acres) occupies the steep north and east facing slopes of the Hackfall Gorge, along the River Ure.



View down the River Ure valley from The Ruin's balcony.

- 4.2 After leaving Wensleydale the Ure turns south eastward towards Ripon. Here between Masham, Grewelthorpe and West Tanfield the river enters a steep-sided rocky glacial gorge. In places the sides are precipitous (more than 100 metres high) and lined with crags, now largely invisible beneath a dense canopy of trees. The river passes through the gorge in a series of sweeping bends lined with narrow beaches of sand or gravel.
- 4.3 To the east of the Ure the riverbank also rises abruptly from the water in a dense canopy of trees to a height of 100 metres (above sea level) at Magdalen Wood. This land then falls away and leads eastwards to the Vale of Mowbray and towards the North York Moors.
- 4.4 The underlying rocks are Brimham grits, coarse grained, massive sandstones, exposed on the upper slopes and along the river bank. The middle slopes lie on the Ure Shell Beds. Beds of coal seams are commonly found in this geology and historical accounts refer to old coal pits near Limehouse Hill.
- 4.4 Stone outcrops provided Aislabe's principal building material and stone quarried here was carried down river to Ripon Cathedral. A series of calcareous springs emerge along the base of the very steep upper slopes giving rise to a number of small streams.



View directly across the valley from The Ruin's balcony.

5. Landscape character

- 5.1 The Landscape Character Assessment shows Hackfall is at the junction of a number of different character areas. Some of the areas have common features; landform is undulating grassland, fields are small to medium size bounded by hedges and the area is well wooded with deciduous/mixed woodland. The area to the north is a transitional area from the upland fringe at the west falling to the Ure corridor at the east.



View from Mowbray Point.

- 5.2 South of Hackfall, the landform falls northwards to the river. Here there is a distinct pattern of thin early enclosure fields, and beyond the village the countryside is more open and moderately well wooded. East of Mickley the Ure valley is broader but still intimate.
- 5.3 North of Hackfall around Masham, the River Ure corridor area is a broad shallow valley and gradually undulating sides. The River Ure meanders in a southerly direction and is joined by the River Burn south of Masham. Here the land is mixed arable and grassland.

- 5.4 Hackfall Farm to the west of Hackfall Wood is in the Grewelthorpe Moor Grassland Area, which falls to the east and in which land use is improved grassland and meadow for grazing stock. The area is unique having both stunning views and an interesting variety of landscape elements.

- 5.5 The field system at the farm seems to have been established by 1701, at which date an Indenture gives names and land uses for the fields. The field boundaries are hedges (with many hedgerow trees) and although there is a considerable length of stone boundary wall facing the road from the southern end of the Conservation Area, much of it has been lost.

- 5.6 The wooded valley containing Hackfall garden has steep slopes with rock outcrops. At its greatest extent Hackfall measured 1,100 metres north-south by 1,200 metres east-west but from the sinuous shape of the landscape the area is less than might be expected. Much of the site is inaccessible due to the fall of the ground.

- 5.7 The natural central axis for Hackfall is provided by the Grewelthorpe Beck (known as the Hutts Beck further up) which leaves Grewelthorpe at its north-west end and flows steeply downhill in a north-east direction to meet the River Ure. In so doing it has cut a narrow and steep-sided ravine lined with springs, which includes the Alum Spring. This spring has yielded



The Alum Spring.

tufa which was enjoyed as a natural feature in Hackfall, and was also used as a cladding and building material on some of the buildings.

Special significance of the Garden

- 5.8 The special significance of Hackfall arises from it being a rare and outstanding example of the picturesque garden style of the mid-eighteenth century. Albeit somewhat faded and neglected, it continues to reflect the taste and intentions of its creator, William Aislabie, to a considerable degree. This combines with Hackfall's designation as an Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland with valuable wildlife habitats and a variety of important plant communities. Hackfall has remained as woodland for centuries, its rich and diverse natural flora is evidence of this continuity and gives it a direct link at least back to the start of the sixteenth century and may even be mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086.

- 5.9 Hackfall is unusual in the sense that, having been laid out as a designed landscape in the mid eighteenth century, its subsequent owners have added very little to contribute to the significance of the site in terms of landscape design. What remains still reflects the Aislabies' design. Hackfall celebrates the beauty of nature, but idealised by the careful placement of follies, ponds and cascades as eye catchers in a series of views to be discovered during a walk through the site.
- 5.10 Although affected by timber clearances circa 1912 and in the 1930s, and its subsequent neglect as a designed landscape, Hackfall remains intact within a single ownership, its territorial integrity largely unaffected by loss of land or unsympathetic development.
- 5.11 Hackfall contains valuable wildlife habitats and a variety of important plant communities arising out of the fact that it has remained a semi-natural ancient woodland for more than four centuries. Its rich and diverse natural flora is evidence of this continuity and a direct link at least back to the start of the seventeenth century and well before.

Main approaches

- 5.12 The conservation area is approached from the North via Masham on Thorpe Road. The latter part runs alongside Nutwith Common woodland to the west and the modestly sized fields to the east. Near the end of the woodland is the access into the Woodland Trust car park, marked by a significant tree on the corner. From here one can follow the path to the west down towards the river before entering the woodland.

- 5.13 Hackfall is also approached from the North on a popular public footpath known as the Ripon Rowell Walk, which follows the river and joins with another footpath from Nutwith Cote. Both paths pass through the woodland known as Nutwith Cote Wood north of Hackfall and enter the garden at higher level than the riverside at Limehouse Hill.
- 5.14 A main approach to Hackfall is through Grewelthorpe, an attractive village boasting a school, an inn, a duck pond and fine examples of vernacular housing. The village can be bypassed to link up with the road to Masham at the small hamlet known as Wapping (which appears as the northern part of Grewelthorpe). Early maps show a public house known as the Royal Oak facing the small green at the road junction and Hackfall Inn south of the junction. From the road junction, the driver passes the fields of Hackfall farm to the car park, and the pedestrian passes into the wood opposite Hackfall House. Either route is quite enclosed and does not hint of any views across to the Vale of Mowbray.
- 5.15 The road from Grewelthorpe to Mickley passes steeply down beside the wood on the approach into Mickley village. The Ripon Rowell passes through Mickley village and enters the woodland of Mickley Barras climbing up from the riverside before dropping more gently into Common Wood at the western end of Hackfall Conservation Area.

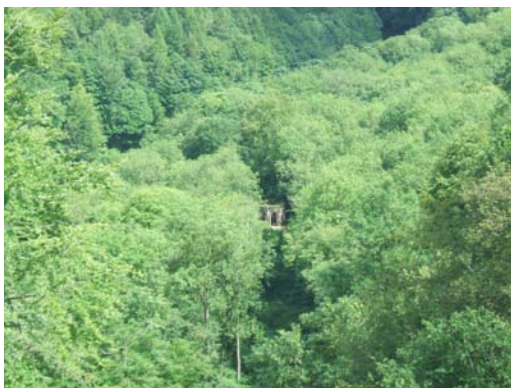
Key views

- 5.16 The woodland garden design relies very much on views, both to natural assets and

to man-made assets. Eighteenth century garden design incorporates a number of different types of views and vistas, and these are discussed at length in the Hackfall Conservation Management Plan.

- 5.17 Some of the views at Hackfall were contrived by judicious removal of understorey growth, trimming of branches and wholesale felling of trees that were on the axis of a particular view or vista. For example, the view from the terrace of Mowbray Point (The Ruin) down to Fishers Hall and the view out of the wood across the Swinton Estate to the spire of Masham church. Aislabe's neighbours accommodated this famous vista because they admired the garden design. Other views are panoramas, principally those from Mowbray Castle and Mowbray Point.
- 5.18 The positioning of certain features was designed to afford 'sight-lines'. A sight-line implies that two structures or features are inter-visible. For example, Mowbray Castle can be seen from Mowbray Point. The importance of views is also implicit in some of the architecture: the semi-circular room at Hackfall Farm which had even more open views in the eighteenth century. Usually, though not always, a sight-line is associated with a view and advantage of inter-visibility was taken to create a pleasing picture from both.
- 5.19 Composed views are common at Hackfall (often from buildings) underpinned by geometry. For example, the Forty Foot Fall and the fountain in Fountain Pond are symmetrically placed about The Grotto.
- 5.20 Views from Mowbray Point remain the most spectacular of the gardens, and

were described by almost all visitors and commentators. The experience of passing through (or around) the building, which hides the open aspect, to see the wonderful panorama opening out before oneself is very pleasurable. The views over the vale of Mowbray to the east extend as far as York and Durham. Recently, some of the vistas were reopened by the felling of trees that had been self sown and planted in the twentieth century, e.g. Fisher's Hall, which can be seen from the terrace of Mowbray Point. Also, whilst there are few views of the water itself, one can clearly see the sinuous curves of the river and the pleasing form of the woodland on the other side.



View down to Fisher's Hall.

5.21 Similarly, the panoramic views from Mowbray Castle are remarkable, and second only to those from Mowbray Point. As well as the panorama from the terrace in front of the castle, the three arched openings provide three, more confined, framed views; ahead to Masham (the castle is visible on the skyline from the road south out of town), seen over the

wood and the valley of the Ure, and east down the valley of the Ure to the Vale of York.

5.22 Fisher's Hall, an octagonal building, was built on a mount and each of the openings on the eight sides provides a view. Recently, the felling of trees and removal of under-storey, which had been self sown and planted in the twentieth century, have reinstated views. Views have been reopened from the Rustic Temple and Grotto, from which the visitor can enjoy a view of the Forty Foot Fall.

5.23 Seats were positioned in the garden for people to rest and enjoy views. Earthworks were carried out to maximise views too. For example, the ground between Sandbed Hut and the river was scooped out such that, down river, Weeping Rock, Fisher's Hall and Mowbray Castle were all visible. This is one of the locations from which Turner sketched.

5.24 The principal view from Kent's Seat is directly ahead to the Alum Spring, but oblique views were structured so as to provide pleasing compositions utilising garden features. Young and Gilpin were amongst many visitors to have admired the views from this point.

5.25 It is still possible to stand in many parts of the garden, particularly in winter, and see the same views as those sketched and painted. For example, Gilpin's sketch of the view from The Tent was dominated by Raven Scar and the view down river. However, the Woodland Trust continues



View up to Mowbray Point (The Ruin).

to carry out clearance work in the woods, which will allow further historic views and vistas to be opened, and also to maintain those that have already been cleared.

Earthworks

5.26 Earthmoving work was carried out in the mid-eighteenth century. There are several apparently artificial hills (or at least, modified natural hills) including the hill on which Fisher's Hall stands, the Tent plain and the top of Limehouse Hill. Also the scatter of old spoil heaps was presumably smoothed and grassed over. The whole northern wall of the Hackfall valley is largely artificial, having been extensively quarried and worked to provide viewing platforms. The creation of the path system required considerable earthmoving, in particular where the paths ran through cuttings or were cut into the side of the hill. In addition, there are at least three 'scoops' (or openings) made to open up a particular view, the largest of which is north of The Grotto.

5.27 Hackfall is littered with giant boulders, and it seems likely that some have been moved to their present position, such as the Wishing Stone on Fountain Plain and those beside the middle walk and the riverside walk. Also, it is likely that rocks were also manoeuvred to create cascades and pools in the various watercourses.

Woodland

5.28 Today, the wood is dominated by oak regrowth from the 1930s felling. There are some pockets in the wood where oak regrowth is not found, notably in the valley running up to Mowbray Hall Farm, which is almost purely self-seeded sycamore. A single surviving eighteenth century beech suggests that this valley may have been planted by William Aislabie as a beech wood and that this was felled around 1930 and not replanted.

5.29 Large areas have oak coppice, with some lime, ash, hazel and sycamore regrowing from the stumps of the 1930s felling. Self-sown ash, sycamore, alder, and birch have invaded all but the most densely shaded or badly drained areas.

5.30 Recent clearing of the wood has restored some original design features that are discussed at length in the Hackfall Conservation Management Plan. For example, Fountain Plain is now an open area within the woodland. The eighteenth century definition for a managed clearing in the wood, or glade, was “lawn”. These areas provide openness to break up the monotony of dense woodland, allowing light and sunlight to maximise certain features or effects. For example, the fountain would be very ineffectual in an enclosed wooded area and the

highlighting of certain cascades (whilst others are not so well lit) maximises the variation of scenes, and hence interest, in the garden.

5.31 Certain trees were planted to deliberately conceal features, such as the rear of structures and particularly one path from another. There are areas that would benefit from additional planting where trees, hollies or shrubs have been lost.

5.32 Another interesting feature is that trees are found growing on mounds or boulders, examples of which can be seen at Fisher’s Hall, on the river bank south of the Sandbed Hut, and beside the walk to Kent’s Seat.



Landmark trees

5.33 Unlike village conservation areas, it is impractical to identify many individual trees of significance within the Historic Park and Garden. However, a number of individual trees at Hackfall Farm contribute to the landscape setting.

5.34 Most of Aislabie’s planting has now gone, but those examples of trees coppiced in the late eighteenth century that survive today are significant, including those in the far east of Common Wood. There are at least two limes that appear to be eighteenth century on the Rock Walk at the base of the cliff. Other ancient trees include the small leaved limes behind Fisher’s Hall and the pollarded beech under Mowbray Point.

5.35 The Aislabies carried out little ornamentation of this farmland; some beech were planted in the field boundaries, and also the sycamores along the road boundary are thought to have been planted at that time. These trees are shown on the Conservation Area Landscape Plan.

Water features

5.36 The River Ure passes through Hackfall gorge in a series of sweeping bends lined with narrow beaches of sand or gravel. Into the river flows Grewelthorpe beck, which flows from the vicinity of the village steeply downhill in a northeast direction to meet the river. In doing so, it has cut a narrow and steep sided ravine lined with springs, including calcareous springs, which have yielded tufa. The river can be heard from most areas in the wood and, surprisingly, occupants of Mowbray Point can hear its faint roar.



The River Ure.

- 5.37 Not all of the original pools have been retained, originally there was a series of pools at the Grewelthorpe entrance to the wood, as shown on nineteenth century plans. This ability to control floodwater, by regulating the rate at which it was fed into the Grewelthorpe beck, would have given the Hackfall gardener an important check on erosion. Since the system of pools fell into disrepair, flooding caused considerable damage (particularly at Kent's Seat).
- 5.38 Considerable repair work has been carried out at the south end of Grewelthorpe beck (known as Hutts Beck at the top end) to reinstate the dam. This top pool is the only one of at least three that remains. A new timber bridge passes across the dam. The water in the pool is quite still, but the area is far from silent due to the rushing of water over the dam and as it passes around the corner, dropping quite steeply at a weir. Again, the water turns to run northeastwards.

5.39 The position of the former ponds can be seen clearly because the remains of the breached stone wall dams provide historic evidence. They also disrupt the flow of water giving more visual and aural interest. The drop in ground levels causes the stretch of the beck above Kent Seat to be wilder.

5.40 The Forty Foot Fall is a skilful exploitation of the springs that occur in the valley. Some sections of the falls consist of stone retaining walls. Originally, at least two ponds were made above the waterfall as collection pools, both to feed the waterfall and the fountain in Fountain Pond. Both the fountain and the waterfall could be shut off and turned on when required. This ensured that the falls were more than the trickle that is fed by the spring issuing from the crag to the northwest.

5.41 It is presumed that Fountain Pond is man-made, it might have been remodelled from a smaller natural pond. The irregular pond is the centre-piece of Fountain Plain and the fountain is a remarkable sight, particularly when one considers the engineering of the eighteenth century. It was recently restored and new pipework replaced the original elm pipes. The fountain is gravity fed, filled from a natural spring on the hillside above. Once a certain water level is achieved in the system, a valve opens and water flows to the fountain. This happens every 10 to 20 minutes.



Fountain.

- 5.42 The cascades from the pond, known as the Fountain Plain Cascade, whilst not spectacular, create considerable interest as the water flows over and around boulders, some covered with moss. Sunlight from the plain and passing through the tree canopy lower down makes the water sparkle and the noise of the water is calming compared to the water rushing over the dam at the south of the wood.



Fountain Plain Cascade.

5.43 The Alum Spring is not one spring but several issuing from the base of the crag above the beck. In running over the face of the rock, the streams of water have laid down substantial deposits of tufa. There are rock-cut steps in the area around the spring leading to the walk to Mowbray Castle. Alum Spring is principally viewed from Kent's Seat on the opposite side of the beck. The spring covered in mosses and ferns has a picturesque quality, which drew such interest in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

5.44 A number of natural watercourses give interest to the woods, some were culverted under paths, and provide an interesting sink hole feature. Now many are channelled across the path between slim stone blocks, not very attractive, but an essential utilitarian method of preventing water running down the paths. In any event after rain, many of the paths become muddy and some, particularly in the south east side, are heavy in clay.

5.45 The Weeping Rock is a large rock outcrop with deposits of tufa which overhangs the river. Water was channelled through underground culverts to a channel bringing water to the edge of the rock. The Weeping Rock was one of the most popular features for artists (including Turner) and there are several interpretations of the Rock in the historic illustrations.

5.46 Raven Scar waterfall is the most 'natural' waterfall at Hackfall. It is visible from the west end of the Raven Scar Rock Walk

and from the walk and steps leading up to the Rock Walk.

5.47 Hidden in the south east corner of the woods is the Dropping Well, which is a shallow cut into the side of the hill covered by a segmental stone vault. The stone at the rear of the alcove and under the vault is covered in petrifications; it is understood that objects were deliberately hung there to form these.

Pedestrian routes and steps

5.48 There are only two designated public footpaths in the Conservation Area: the Ripon Rowell Walk, a long distance/ national trail; and the path down from the main road near the car park that meets the Ripon Rowell. The Ripon Rowell runs north-south on a meandering line along the riverside. Alongside part of this walk is a drystone wall, and just inside the northern entrance are two stone gate posts, unfortunately standing isolated from any boundary wall.



Dry stone wall alongside Ripon Rowell.



Walk down from the car park.

5.49 There are a number of paths within Hackfall, the most popular of the undesignated paths is the footpath that enters the wood at the south-western end near Grewelthorpe. This path quickly splits at the beck providing a main path down the west side of the beck, which leads to Kent's Seat and on to Fisher's Hall where it joins the Ripon Rowell. The other path follows the east side of the beck, leads to Mowbray Castle and then meanders down to meet the Ripon Rowell at Ling Scar. Thus, these two paths form a loop with Ripon Rowell allowing the visitor to see many of the features of the garden quite easily, no matter whether the wood is entered from the north, southwest or east.

5.50 The path from beside Fisher's Hall, alongside the cascade to Fountain Pond and Rustic Temple is important - from here one can continue up to Tent Plain and pass out of the wood to meet the public footpath down from the car park, or turn to walk along the top edge of the wood to Mowbray Point and back down into the southwest of the wood.

- 5.51 There were a number of routes passable with a carriage, but now some paths are wider than others because vehicular access was made for contractors to carry out the restoration works. The access drive to Mowbray Point provides access to holidaymakers staying here.
- 5.52 Most eighteenth and early nineteenth century visitors were conducted round the wood by the gardener who presumably used his preferred circuit (apparently about four miles in length or two hours), so that most descriptions record the same sequence of incidents. From the accounts, the most common route began at Hackfall Farm, followed the Grewelthorpe beck valley down to Kent's Seat, then to Fisher's Hall; up the valley to The Grotto and Fountain Plain and the Rustic Temple; then the Coal-Pits Walk to the Weeping Rock and the Sandbed Hut; up Limehouse Hill to the seat on the knoll on the top; then the Rock Walk, Quarry Bank and the High Walk to Mowbray Point which was the climax of the visit; finally, the New Walk back to Hackfall Farm. Later, by 1845, the two most dramatic walks (Common Wood and Raven Scar Rock) had been recognised as highlights of the tour.
- 5.53 Wherever possible Aislable's paths follow the contour, climbing at a gentle rate, (Quarry Bank or New Walk). Steeper slopes were negotiated by zig-zags (in the Grewelthorpe beck valley) or steps (on the New Walk south of the Mowbray Point kitchen) or both (Limehouse Hill). Their route is usually direct, although constrained by the topography, and where possible took in whatever features were of

interest. Many of the paths are narrow and steep and have an element of danger, and run close to the edge of a steep drop.

- 5.54 An important characteristic of the paths is that they were designed so that it was not possible to see the surface of one path from another or from any viewpoint. Concealment was achieved, by sinking or raising the path out of the line of sight, by dishing it into a slope, by using the spoil of the slope to make a slight bank (often some distance away) to lift the eye over it (by planting beside the path) or by keeping it in grass or moss.
- 5.55 Further information on the paths is available in the Woodland Trust's Conservation Management Plan.



- 5.56 The Woodland Trust have positioned a number of path and viewpoint markers, which are particularly helpful to the visitor because it is easy to become disorientated on paths meandering through woodland. The framed view out to Masham Church from the Ripon Rowell at Limehouse Hill could easily be missed if not pointed out.
- 5.57 Probably because of the failure of the wood's drainage system, the paths tend to get boggy with heavy use in wet weather. Some areas have had gravel laid over, which is helpful to the walker, but even those areas are covered in mud after heavy rains. However, improving the path surface would result in them appearing less natural and might encourage too many visitors, which would detract from the wilder characteristics of the garden.

Wildlife and nature conservation

- 5.58 Hackfall Wood is important as a largely undisturbed example of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and it contains a wide range of plant communities. Such ancient woodlands are a diminishing resource in England. Local variations in the geology within the gorge are reflected in the variety of plant associations: there is acidic woodland where the underlying Brimham Grits are exposed as cliffs; the more gentle middle slopes of Ure shell beds support woodland communities that favour less acidic conditions; and the steep rocky stream sides support an abundance of ferns.

5.59 Hackfall is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), hence it is of national significance; it is classified as Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW);



and it includes key habitats in the United Kingdom's Biodiversity Action Programme (BAP).

5.60 "Ancient" woods are those considered to have been in continuous existence since 1600. Prior to that date historians believe that the planting of new woods on open ground was rare, so any wood that was present in 1600 is likely to have been in existence for centuries. The term "semi-natural" is used to indicate woods that do not obviously originate from planting. The area of SSSI woodland in the region is

not large, which means that Hackfall is an important component of a scarce resource.

5.61 Hackfall Wood is a Grade C site on the Invertebrate Site Register (ISR) maintained by English Nature. The ISR records list several rare and scarce species and the rarest of these is the beetle, *Calosoma inquisitor*. Other rarities include *Limax tenellus*, lemon slug, and two species of soldier fly. These and the other locally-distributed species are indicative of a very extensive and diverse invertebrate fauna. The fact that Hackfall has been included in the Register is evidence of its importance; and the recording that has been carried out certainly appears to confirm that the site is outstanding.

- 5.62 There are a number of different habitats at Hackfall:
- woodland
 - grassland
 - wetland
 - dead and decomposing wood
 - cliffs, rocks and boulders
 - buildings, walls and structures
 - paths
 - sand, shingle and flood debris

5.63 The broadleaved, mixed and wet woodland is generally considered to be largely semi-natural but there is clear evidence of some amenity planting (beech, horse chestnut and probably lime), and significant areas of conifers were planted in the first half of the nineteenth century. There are very few trees older than 200 years; and only some individuals and small groups older than 100 years. The majority of trees are 70 years or younger, including significant numbers

of ash and sycamore saplings. beech saplings, mostly in the range five to 10 years, are scattered throughout and oak regeneration is evident in areas.

5.64 The wetland areas comprise several heavily-shaded and partially-silted ponds, springs, flushes and streams. Some of the springs and streams are tufa-forming, which are a scarce and threatened habitat nationally, support a very specialised fauna and flora, and are very vulnerable to damage by, for example, pollution and physical activity.

5.65 A significant amount of dead and rotting wood is present in most areas. Relatively little of this is standing, reflecting the generally young age of the trees. Most of the fallen timber is either elm (killed by disease), windblown or the product of recent 'safety fellings'.



- 5.66 Cliffs and scattered rocks occur in many parts of the site. Being mainly heavily shaded because of aspect and tree cover, they support a great many mosses, liverworts and ferns.
- 5.67 There are small sandy beaches and areas of shingle at the margins of the river where timber and other debris is deposited by floods.
- 5.68 A total of 202 mosses and liverworts have been recorded at Hackfall. The list includes several rare or notable species and is indicative of the moist, shady, conditions, the exposed rock habitats and the presence of decaying timber. These shade-loving plants are undoubtedly one of the special features of the site.

Fauna

- 5.69 The visitor is constantly aware of birdlife, and there are excellent records including all three native woodpeckers which are indicative of high quality woodland habitats. The presence of the river adds considerably to the diversity of the avifauna, with dipper, grey wagtail, common sandpiper and even breeding



oosander.

- 5.70 Fox, badger, brown hare, rabbit, grey squirrel and mole are recorded, as are pipistrelle and noctule bats. A small population of roe deer is reported and no doubt they circulate widely in the general area. However, there are few signs of any damage to trees. Voles, mice, rats, stoats and weasels are all likely to be present too and it is possible that there are otters in the vicinity. The common frog breeds in considerable numbers at the Fountain Pond.
- 5.71 One of the very important attributes of Hackfall is its diversity. The range of habitats is exceptional and is illustrated by the very wide range of plants and animals present.

6. The form and character of buildings

6.1 The buildings at Hackfall were built between 1749 and 1767 by William Aislabie, as part of his grand scheme for Hackfall. Few of the garden buildings at Hackfall can be considered great architecture or even unique, for the ideas used here had been well rehearsed in pattern books of the day and in earlier gardens. By the time that William came to design Hackfall, there were numerous pattern books for follies from which he was able to pick designs. Most of the buildings are not unique and little of their design is outstanding. However, part of the significance of the buildings are their association with the Aislabie family and represent the continuing involvement of the family in garden and garden building design outside their estate at Studley Royal. Also it is the combination of the buildings in relationship to the garden that give them their outstanding character.

6.2 The buildings were constructed from materials found within the woods and tend more to the vernacular and Gothic than any classical form of architecture accentuating the primitive and romantic appeal of Hackfall. The massive and rough nature of the masonry, Gothic forms and use of tufa all punctuate and define a landscape. Thus the buildings are a crucial part of the design of this important eighteenth century sublime landscape, enhancing the sublime aspects of it.

6.3 The buildings in Hackfall act as

punctuation to the garden, marking important points in the Garden where spectacular views had been opened up and as such act as guides through the Garden. Visitors walked from one building to the next, stopping at each building to enjoy the scene.

6.4 Buildings outside the woodland are of very different character, they are robust, functional and reflect the local vernacular.

6.5 There are five buildings in Hackfall included on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest (all, except Mowbray Point, are Grade II):

Mowbray Point

Mowbray Castle

Fisher's Hall

Rustic Temple by lake

Hackfall Farmhouse

6.6 Mowbray Point, now commonly known as The Ruin, is Grade II* listed as a folly and banqueting house. Built around 1750, it is sited on a field edge at a point where the land falls very sharply away to the east. This point offers extensive views to the east over the Vale of Mowbray (from which it takes its name). The views over the Vale extend to York and Durham and the Ruin was very carefully oriented to look directly across to Roseberry Topping in Cleveland.

6.7 The most intriguing aspect of the building design is its duality: wild and tamed; Gothic

and classical. The field side, constructed of ashlar, is classically arranged being symmetrical and having five bays, of which the central three break forward under a pediment, and the two end bays are set back with hidden roofs. The central part is given further emphasis by the use of Gothic pointed arched openings with narrow piers between, whereas the smaller single windows to end bays are square headed and set in a generous unbroken area of wall.



Mowbray Point from the west.

6.8 In contrast, the rear, or east facing side is an apparently ruined building. It is of three bays, the central and tallest is semi-circular in plan topped by a half dome pierced with three roundels. The outer bays are tunnel vaulted with round-headed niches to each side and lunette niches above them. The lower stonework around the doors is ashlar, and rubblestone is used in the "ruined" areas. At the top roughly hewn blocks hang seemingly at the point



The ruinous face (as designed) of Mowbray Point.

of collapse, and the locally sourced tufa is used to great effect appearing as strangely eroded stone having been in place for centuries.

- 6.9 Whilst preparations were being made for the recent restoration, the building archaeologist spotted an uncanny similarity between the terrace elevation and a "Capriccio of Ruins" (Design for a Roman Ruin) by Robert Adam, an eighteenth century architect, and it is considered that his watercolour inspired the design of Mowbray Point.
- 6.10 The east facing side, the dramatic ruin, perched on the edge of the cliff is used to good effect as an eye catcher from various parts of the garden.
- 6.11 The building provided, and still provides, a dramatic experience for the visitor passing through the well ordered domestic front out onto the terrace standing amid an apparently ruined building, beneath a domed apse of roughly hewn blocks hanging seemingly perilously above, with the ground falling sharply down in front of the cliff edge and a spectacular open view.

6.12 This sublime experience was initially enjoyed only by Aislable, his family and invited visitors, but in the nineteenth century the building did service as one of most spectacular tea shops in England. Part of the field outside was used in conjunction with the tea shop to provide a restful sunny area to take tea away from the frightening precipice.

6.13 There is a gap between the building and mature trees of the woodland on either side. New trees have been planted, which are crucial to prevent the visitor seeing the view without stepping through the building, or alternatively passing through the trees on the cliff edge, to the terrace.

6.14 Mowbray Castle was also built around 1750 as an apparent fragment of a Gothic castle. It is two to three storeys high and is an irregular nine sided building



Mowbray Castle seen from Mowbray Point.

which roughly equates to an oval. Similar to Mowbray Point it is built of local coursed rubble sandstone, with tufa embellishments to the south doorway. There are ruins of flanking walls to four corners to allude to a larger structure. It is the effect of Mowbray Castle set high up above the majority of the wood and used to good effect as an eyecatcher, rather than its inherent qualities, that made it so special.

6.15 Each wall has either lancet or cross-shaped openings, and the large central north facing doorway has a pointed arch. This provides the frame to spectacular views over Hackfall to the east, north and west. It appears that a stair once provided access to first floor level to allow better views across the woodland from well above the canopy level.



The view from inside Mowbray Castle.

6.16 Fisher's Hall, also built 1750, was probably named for William Fisher, Aislabie's chief gardener. It was set on a little hill to be prominent in the layout of the garden. This building, at the heart of the garden, provided a viewpoint - the most important (with the greatest range of different views) - in the lower part of the wood. It was used by the Aislabies for dining.

6.17 The building is roofless and of rubble and ashlar lined with tufa and with an octagonal plan. Artists' sketches show it had a thatched roof of ling (heather). Evidence suggests the thatch was placed, unusually, on top of stone slates with substantial overhanging eaves and a domed ceiling in tufa. Seven of the elevations have a pointed arched head window, some with remnants of joinery in oak showing a Y tracery pattern. The north elevation has a doorway with a moulded stone doorcase with pointed arch. The doorway does not directly face the raised path which provides access, but the orientation of the octagonal form is designed to maximise the viewing potential from its pointed arched windows.



Fisher's Hall.

6.18 The Rustic Temple has five sides. It is built of large blocks of local sandstone so massive and rough in character as to evoke the primitive. The top of the wall, formerly a parapet when the roof was in place, is crenellated. The square-headed door and window openings have massive stone lintels over, and opposite the door is a round-headed niche. The extreme plainness of the rear of the building suggests close planting to screen all views from the north. The building faces Fountain Pond and enjoys a southerly aspect.



The Rustic Temple.

6.19 Hackfall Farmhouse is a mid to late eighteenth century residence, probably built for William Aislabie, and was extended in the twentieth century. Hackfall Farm was used by the Aislabies as their base while visiting Hackfall. A semi-circular projection on the south front is, internally, a completely circular room with domed ceiling. Its three windows gave a triptych; a view south-west along the upper pool near the entrance, a view straight ahead where the Grewelthorpe beck was dammed into a series of pools and a view north-east in which Mowbray Castle was almost certainly seen.

6.20 The building is of coursed squared stone with quoins, and has a hipped pantile roof with a central stack. Typically, buildings in the area have simple pitched roofs, so although the architectural detailing is not ornate, the building would have stood out from other farmhouses. The building is of three bays, having a central six panel door with a bracketed hood mould. The windows are mainly Yorkshire sliding sashes of six panes each.



Hackfall Farmhouse from the dam.

Buildings and features of interest and merit

6.21 There are a number of unlisted buildings, structures and features, which make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Given the significance of the Historic Park and Garden, all buildings, structures and features of the garden are of historic interest and many are of some architectural merit. These buildings and features are recorded on the concept map. There is a general presumption that they will be protected from demolition and the

Borough Council will be especially vigilant when considering applications for their alteration or extension.

- 6.22 The Grotto seems to have been built specifically for a single view ahead to the Forty Foot Fall (and Mowbray Point above the falls). The structure of The Grotto, and its surrounding trees, formed a view from shade into light. The Grotto is little more than a covered seat. It is rectangular masonry building with no roof (it once had a barrel vault in tufa, possibly with a single pitched roof over it). The remaining stonework is of two leafs, the outer of coursed rubble sandstone and the inner of tufa. The opening to the west elevation is an arch following the Gothic theme.



The Grotto.



Forty Foot Fall viewed from The Grotto.

- 6.23 The kitchen to Mowbray Point was built of local ashlar sandstone. It is a roughly square building, the design of which mimics the central bay of Mowbray Point, with three arch-headed opening on the west elevation. These openings are mirrored on the east side. Originally, the building was partially two storey, with a lower level built into the hillside, but is now ruinous.
- 6.24 Hackfall House was the home of the principal gardener, hence it is important by association. The House is built against the highway on the road from Grewelthorpe

to Masham. The main element is three bay and symmetrically arranged about the front door. The walls are of a warm stone and there are quoins at the corners. The roof is finished in Welsh slate and has pointed verges (no tabling). The original vertically sliding sash windows have been replaced with PVCu windows that are top hung (pseudo Georgian) and the door is fully glazed in similarly sized panes. To the north side, an element that appears as a separate cottage is of the same stone, but is roofed in pantiles with a stone eaves course. The windows are similarly not original, but are of different proportions to those of the main house, and may have been Yorkshire sliding sashes.

Farm buildings

- 6.25 The farm buildings are in the main good examples of the vernacular, and contribute positively to the setting of the listed farmhouse and the rural scene. However given the significance of the other buildings and structures, the farm buildings are not designated as being of particular significance to the Garden. The buildings are of local coursed stone, have pantiled roofs and have a robust agricultural character.

Landmark buildings

- 6.26 Whilst Hackfall House, the barns against the road, and the roof of Hackfall Farmhouse are buildings that immediately identify one's location, only Mowbray Point and Mowbray Castle can be identified clearly as landmark buildings by virtue of their prominent locations.

7. Character area analysis

7.1 This section examines the spaces in the Conservation Area in greater detail to identify the special character of the area. The wood, unlike village or town conservation areas, does not lend itself into sub-division into smaller areas of very different character. However, there is clear distinction between the woodland and the remainder of the Conservation Area outside the wood. Additionally, there are discreet areas of particular character, for example the open area of Fountain Pond or the riverside, but all are set within this compact woodland, which has a very strong sense of place.

Farmland

7.2 The area outside the woodland comprises the fields of Hackfall Farm, the house and barns, and also Hackfall House across the Masham Road. As above noted this area is included because of the historic association with Aislabie, however it is an attractive rural area in its own right. The road rises from the south to the north, and the area falls gently towards the river. The modest fields of the farm, the woodland to the south and east and the rising land to the north and west provide protection to the area and prevent extensive views in any direction.

7.3 The road is quite enclosed due to the boundaries and adjacent higher land levels. However, the length of road at the southwest end of the Conservation Area is particularly enclosed by Hackfall

House and nearby barn, the edge of the woodland opposite and the modest barns of Hackfall Farm built on the boundary, which continues up the hill as a dry stone wall.

7.4 The new dwellings south of Hackfall House do not reflect the vernacular and are detrimental to its setting but, fortunately, are set back a little from the road and hence do not impact significantly on the area.

7.5 Hackfall Farmhouse and the main barns are set well back from the road, are at a lower level and are seen against the woodland. The barns particularly make little visual impact, but register as a small group of modest agricultural buildings well placed on the site.

7.6 The topography, modest fields, hedgerows and mature large trees all contribute to a very attractive rural scene west of Hackfall Wood. The trees at the vehicular entrance at the north of the site particularly contribute to the area, and the walk down to the Ripon Rowell passes gently from an open setting containing hedgerow trees, through an area of trees that are well spaced before dropping down more steeply into woodland.

The wood

7.7 The Landscape Agency has described 25 Historic Landscape Character Areas within the Hackfall Conservation Management

Plan. However, many of these cannot be easily distinguished on site because the character differences between some areas are not significant. The following is a brief description of the character of specific areas, which is derived by topography, sense of enclosure or particular features.

7.8 The changing of the seasons particularly affect the character of the woodland; the lack of leaves allows greater daylight in and also views through to areas that will not be seen in the fullness of summer. Early spring brings snowdrops, and as the season progresses so appear bluebells and other delicate flowers, whilst the early vivid leaf buds develop to gradually transform the wood. Autumn similarly brings a transformation and the colouring of the leaves of different trees contributes to the beauty of this special place.



Autumn at Hackfall.

7.8 The Clifftop is a narrow strip between the fields and the escarpment edge, dominated by the panoramic views

to the east and along which the High Walk led. It is more open than other areas of the wood with more brambles and bracken here, but the bluebells in dappled sunlight provide considerable visual interest in the spring. The area links to the terrace of Mowbray Point, which, being clear of trees and with an open aspect, has a unique character.

- 7.9 The Hillside below Mowbray Point is the area of very steep, inaccessible slopes that provide the backdrop to the gardens below or the foreground to views to Mowbray Point. This area has more beech trees than others.
- 7.10 Quarry Bank and Rock Walk - as both names suggest, are dominated by rock surfaces: whilst the Rock Walk may be a natural outcrop, Quarry Bank is of two man-made quarries. This was the principal walk overlooking the main bowl of the Hackfall valley and the perpendicular rock is a striking feature of the garden here. Evidence suggests that in parts the trees near the Rock Walk were thinned to let in views of the rock faces from Fountain Plain and from the riverside walk.
- 7.11 Limehouse Hill has a roughly rectangular platform on top, presumably the area of a lime kiln. It is likely that before it was incorporated into the garden it may therefore have been rough grazing. Archival evidence points to planting of oaks by Aislabie on the slopes but, today, a higher proportion of conifers than elsewhere in the wood has given it dense shade and the character of a

conventional forestry plantation, whilst some areas are characterised by, presumably self seeded, birch.

- 7.12 Much of the Ripon Rowell passes through the riverside area. The path winds along a terrace above the river, but drops down a little to the Strand; historically, this was an almost treeless river bank, where self-sown alder and sycamore all but blocked views of the river. Some clearing has allowed views of the river here at the low level, where the visual interest of the moving water, the light and sounds define the character of this area.
- 7.13 The area between the riverside and the steep hillside is an area of wood where views are internal, dominated by small natural glades and woodland. There is some variety of tree cover and species, for example the vicinity of Tent Plain is dominated by sycamore, which casts dense shade and has little understorey, but the Coal Pits area has elderberry and ash too, which subtly change the woodland character. In this area is The Weeping Rock, a popular feature for artists.
- 7.14 The core area of the garden (an area roughly bounded by Kent's Seat to the south, Mowbray Point to the west, Fisher's Hall to the east and the Tent Plain to the north) contains Fountain Plain and Pond, Fisher's Hall and The Cascades, The Grotto and Forty Foot Fall. These are the ornamental highlights of the Hackfall landscape. For some the pool and fountain is too formal and, together with the small carefully placed Rustic Temple,

looks particularly contrived. However, there is no doubt that the clearing around the pond provides considerable relief from the narrow enclosed woodland paths. The calm pond provides reflected light and images, a peaceful area in which one can enjoy the warmth of the sun and views of the other garden features. The occasional burst of the tall fountain remains quite awe-inspiring in this tranquil space.



Fountain Pond.

- 7.15 The walk leading down from Fountain Plain to Fisher's Hall alongside The Cascades is winding and shaded by trees. It passes into a cutting, the banks partially constructed with tufa, which helps to delay the views to nearby features. This is a fairly gentle walk and dominated by the water feature and the movement of water over and around the rocks. Additionally, the tufa, the mosses and ferns all contribute to a feeling of wellbeing.
- 7.16 Fisher's Hall is on a hillock and is approached on an almost level path from the west, which is on the line of the vista



The Cascades.

from Mowbray Point, or via the steps to its south. The slopes are covered with a thicket of trees, but these are not so dense that the Hall cannot be seen from the surrounding paths.

- 7.17 The south west part of the wood contains Grewelthorpe beck in the ravine, which dominates its character. The area between the ravine and The Cascades is dominated by a series of (apparently) natural ridges or terraces that cross from west to east. These ridges separate the valley of Grewelthorpe beck from the main arena of the wood and force the path through a series of cuttings, which enable

the views to be controlled, delaying the first sight of Fisher's Hall and the valley of the Ure.

- 7.18 Grewelthorpe beck is in a deep wooded glen and is in a series of little cascades. North of Kent's Seat, the character of the valley becomes wilder and the cascades more 'natural' and the descent is anyway steeper here. The wooded area west of the beck is quite dense, containing much holly, and the path is quite enclosed, whereas Kent's Seat is in a more open area. This compartment was referred to as the 'Rhododendron Grove' and some rhododendrons, with hollies and cherry laurels, survive here today.

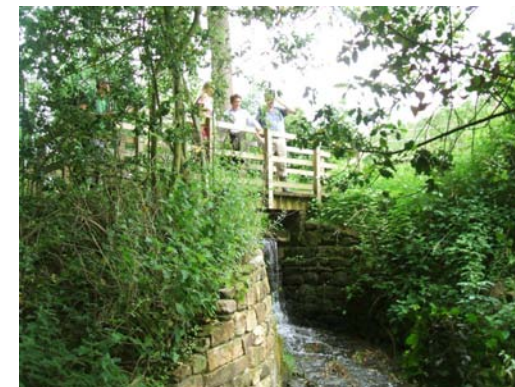


Kent's Seat.

- 7.19 West of the beck there are a number of paths, whereas there is only one on the east side. Some beech, oak, elm and lime survive here but today, sycamore, ash and hazel dominate the woodland on the west side, whilst the east side is dominated by oak regrowth, occasional eighteenth

century beech standards (particularly near the boundary with the field) and dense swathes of holly.

- 7.20 There were a series of ponds, which may have had their origins in waterworks associated with a mill. The remaining pool at the top of the wood is outside the Historic Park and Garden boundary. The pool may have been "improved" as ornamentation for the semi-circular room added to the east front of Hackfall Farmhouse, although now the Farmhouse is not highly visible from beside the pool. The bridge over the dam is quite new and provides an interesting entrance to the wood proper. The sound of the water over the dam temporarily obliterates other noises.



The bridge over the dam.

- 7.21 The site of the former ponds lower down can be easily recognised by the gladed area, the surface of which evidences the extent of winter flood, and the broken stone dams, over which the water cascades.

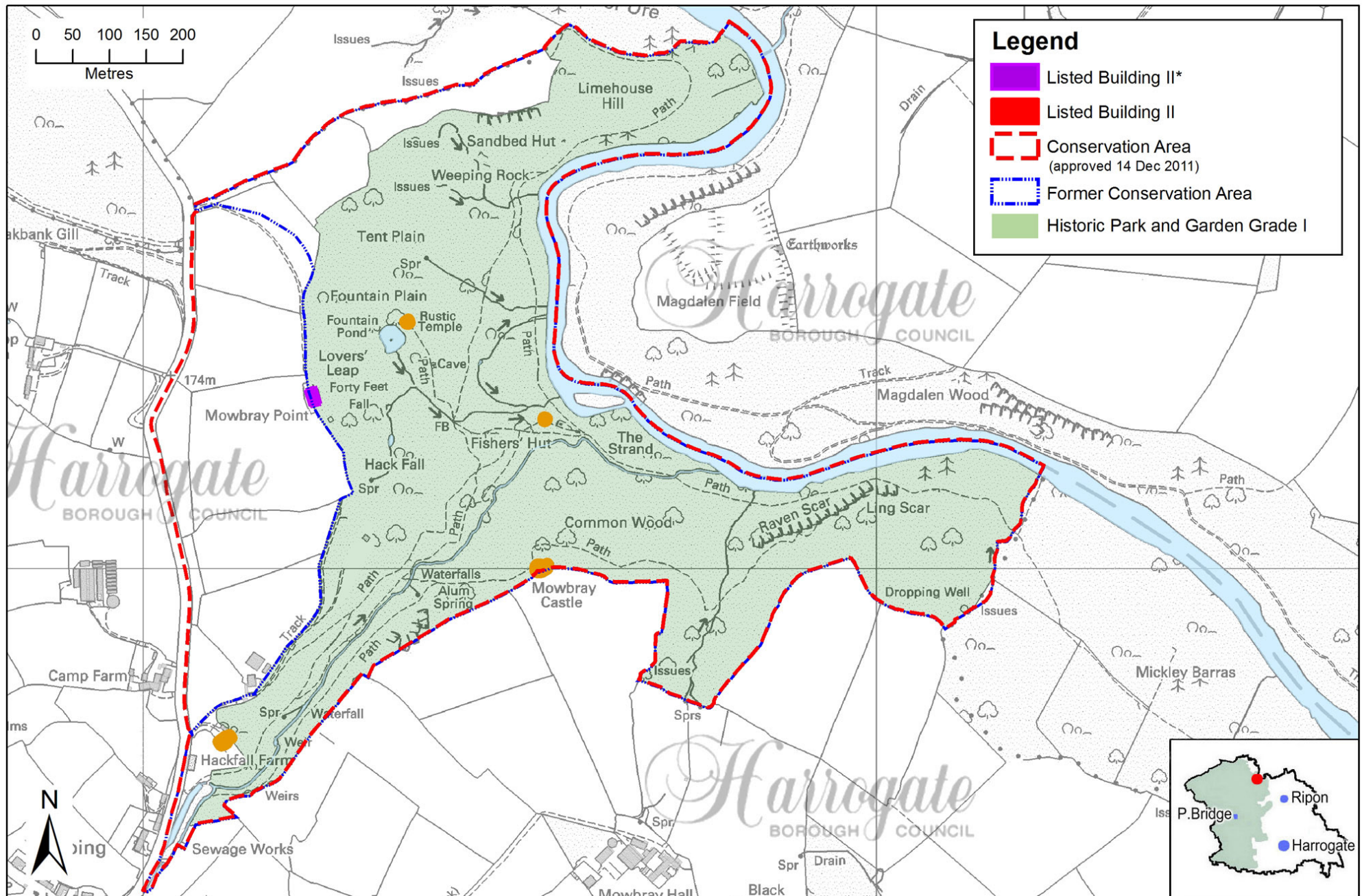
7.22 The south east area of Hackfall is known as Common Wood. The lower path through the wood apparently follows the old public track to Mickley. Other than the wooden Green Seat, the Aislabies built no seats or follies in this area, although the Dropping Well appears to have been “improved” to create something with greater visual interest. The wood is quite dense and is dominated by oak regrowth from the 1930s felling. There are some pockets in the wood where oak regrowth is not found, notably in the valley running up to Mowbray Hall Farm, which is almost purely self-seeded sycamore. Raven Scar Rock Walk provides visual interest and views can be had of the river through the trees from the upper level.

7.23 The walk up past the Alum Springs is steep, but has considerable visual interest due to the shape and form of rocks, the movement of water, mosses, ferns and other flora. Then one passes up into an area of denser woodland before rising up steps to Mowbray Castle. The Castle is on the edge of the wood, and views southwards over the Mowbray Hall Farmland are pleasant, although not dramatic. However, to the north and east side there is a fine panoramic view to the Vale of Mowbray above the trees of Hackfall and Magdalen Wood. Recently, some trees here have been topped, which, unfortunately, has resulted in very unnatural regrowth that threatens to spoil the view.



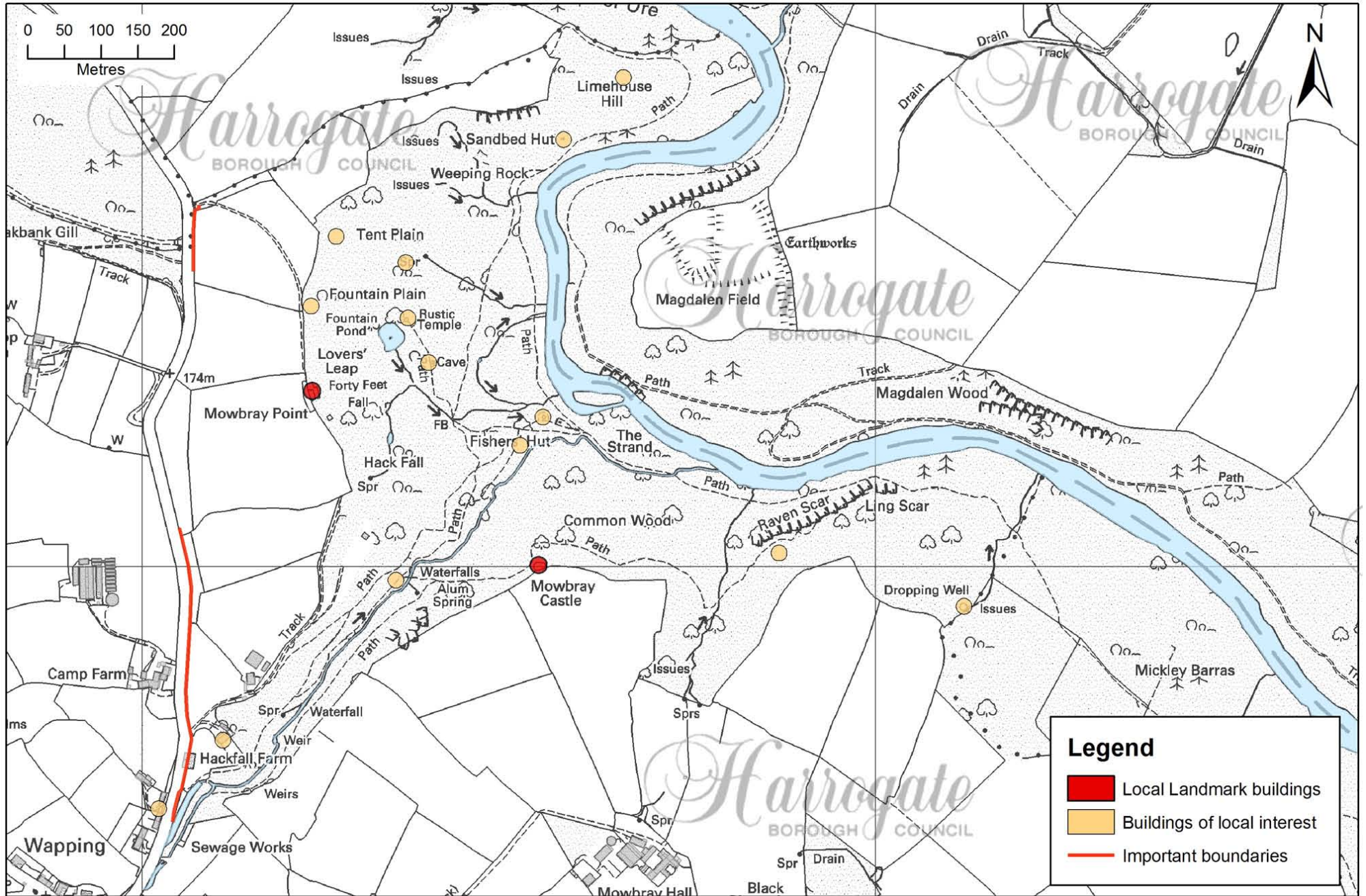
A view from Mowbray Castle.

Map 1: Hackfall Conservation Area boundary



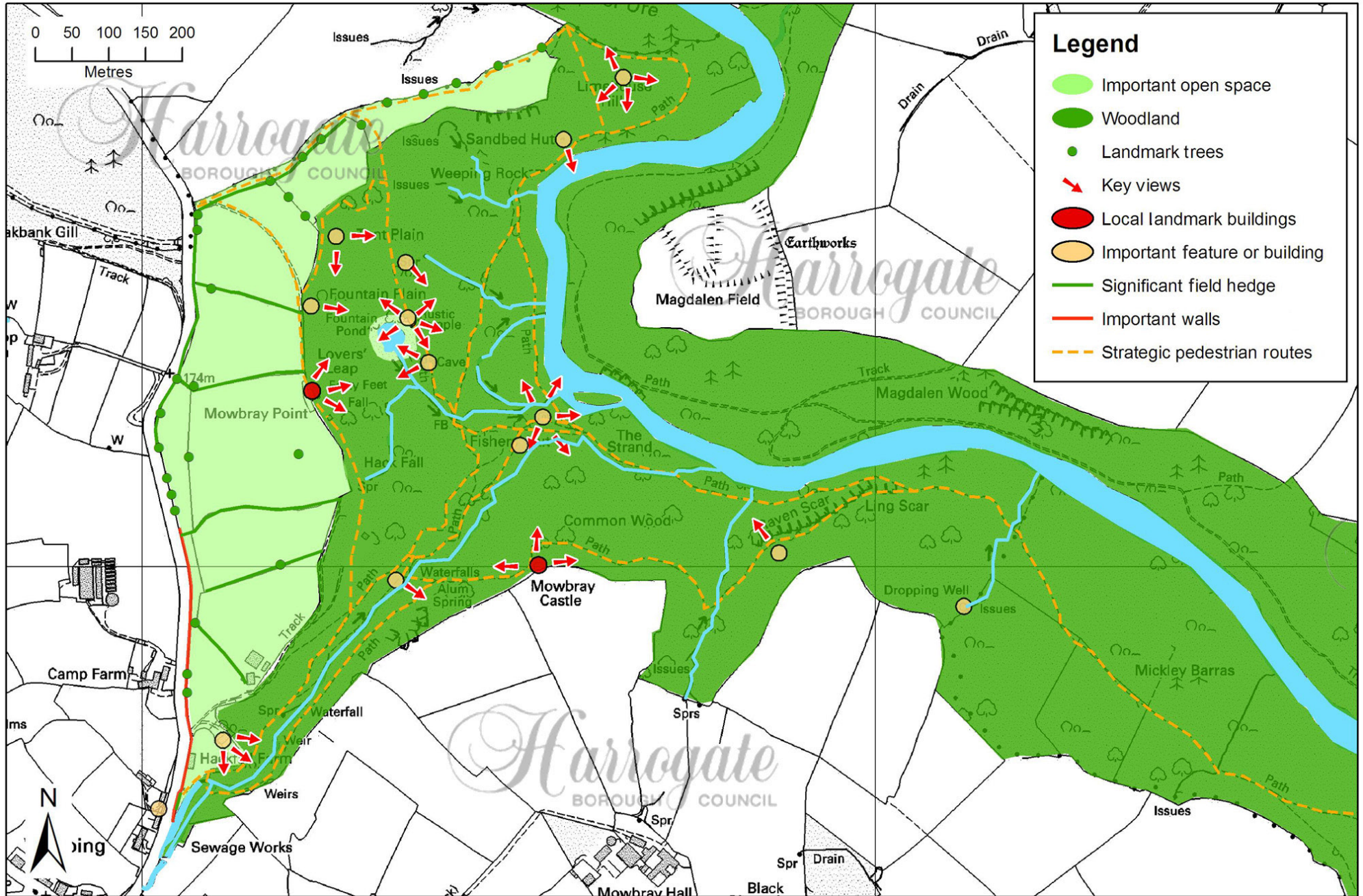
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Map 2: Analysis and concepts



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Map 3: Landscape analysis



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Appendix A

1. Management strategy

The purpose of this Conservation Area Appraisal and management strategy is to provide a clear and structured approach to development and alterations which impact on the Hackfall Conservation Area. The special qualities, “which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”, have been identified in the Appraisal.

Although Hackfall is very attractive, it does not follow that all buildings and spaces within the Conservation Area necessarily contribute to that attractiveness. Ultimately, the aim is to:

- (a) explore whether there are any buildings or areas which are at odds with or spoil the character of the Conservation Area; and
- (b) consider how the special character or distinctiveness, as defined in earlier sections of this document, might be best preserved or enhanced.

Clearly, some of the ideas or suggestions will relate to buildings or land in private ownership. It is important to note that individual owners and/or the local community will not be under any obligation to make the changes or improvements suggested. However, they may be encouraged to think about suggestions made, and once the Appraisal has been adopted, the findings and recommendations will be considered by the Borough Council in response to any applications for planning permission, listed building consent, conservation area consent or requests for grant aid.

2. Monitoring and review

The Borough Council is required to review its conservation areas on a regular basis. This may involve the designation of new conservation areas, the de-designation of areas that have lost their special character, or the extension of existing Conservation Areas. The special character of Hackfall has been re-evaluated as part of the process of preparing the Appraisal and this contributes to the overall review.

Part of the review process involves the maintenance of a comprehensive and up to date photographic record to establish a visual survey of buildings of local interest in the Conservation Area. This record was compiled with involvement of the community at the public consultation event.

3. Maintaining quality

To maintain the recognisable quality of the Hackfall Conservation Area and to ensure the highest quality of design, the council will:

- from time to time review the Appraisal and management strategy, which will act as a basis for development control decisions and the preparation of design briefs;
- require all applications to include appropriate written information and legible, accurate and up to date, fully annotated scale drawings;
- keep under review a list of buildings and features of local interest that positively contribute to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area;
- where appropriate, prepare supplementary planning documents including design guidance and development briefs;
- expect the historic elements that are an essential part of the special architectural character of the Conservation Area to be preserved, repaired and reinstated where appropriate.

4. Conservation area boundary review

As part of the process of producing the Appraisal, the existing conservation area boundary was reviewed. The outcome of the consultation event identified adjoining areas as being of positive interest in ways that directly relate to the special character of the existing Conservation Area. The future inclusion of these areas has been determined on the basis of whether they have special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve and enhance.

Three extensions to the Conservation Area were proposed: the inclusion of Magdalen Wood and Scheduled Ancient Monument over the other side of the river; the inclusion of Hackfall Farm; and the inclusion of Hackfall House.

Magdalen Wood is very important to the setting of Hackfall Garden and the earthwork at Magdalen Field is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, in

the past accessed via a Roman ford. However, the area is over the boundary, which is the centre of the Ure, and is in Hambleton district. Hambleton District Council was approached in order to determine whether the area could be designated as conservation area. The local Ward Member was not open to a joint Conservation Area, and the landowner strongly opposed the proposal, feeling that the Forestry Commission provided sufficient governance in the matter of woodland management. For these reasons, the extension of the Conservation Area to include Magdalen Wood will not be possible.



Magdalen Wood across the river.

The owner of Hackfall Farm requested that the house, barns and fields be included within the Conservation Area. It was all Aislabie property, the woodland and farmland being divided into two ownerships in 1937. The Aislabies were known to have stayed at the Farmhouse and the garden room was built specifically to enjoy views over Hackfall garden. Additionally, early Ordnance Survey maps show the area had a more parkland feel, although a good number of trees are now missing, which would have provided a parkland setting to Mowbray Point. Some trees remain that are of a date such that they are probably Aislabie planting. It is considered that the fields afford an important setting to Mowbray Point, and the historical connection of the land and house with Aislabie is such that the farm is in the Conservation Area.

Aislabie's chief gardener lived in Hackfall House, hence it has a strong historical connection with Hackfall garden. Unfortunately, the orchard and greenhouses next to the house no longer exist. Also, whilst the house is typical of the vernacular, it is not of high architectural quality and has non-traditional replacement door and windows. The appearance of the house and attached cottage is not sufficiently special to merit inclusion in the

Conservation Area. It is considered that any further development under permitted development rights would, in any event, not affect the strong historical association with Hackfall. The buildings affect the setting of the Conservation Area and are a heritage asset and, as such, some protection is afforded by saved policy HD3. Further protection will be provided by the proposed policy EQ5 in the unlikely event of an application to demolish the building and erect a replacement. Consequently, the Conservation Area was not extended to include Hackfall House and Cottage.

5. The management of change

The special character and appearance of Hackfall Conservation Area is vulnerable to erosion and significant harm through often well intentioned, but misguided alterations and inappropriate change.

Whilst there is scope for enhancement, there are no sites in the Conservation Area that could be considered to have a wholly negative impact on its character.

It should be noted that whilst planning permission or listed building consent would not be required for enhancements (as listed in 6, below), proposals to remove trees must be agreed by the council and may, together with other proposals, require license from Natural England under the Wildlife Act.

6. Opportunities for enhancement

Hackfall is an attractive area and most of the buildings are in good condition. There are, however, a number of opportunities for the enhancement of some areas as follows:

- reinstate windows to their former pattern and detail where use of PVCu windows has undermined the character of the historic buildings;
- repair window frames and architraves of Fisher's Hall;
- replacing timber stock proof fencing with hedge, or where appropriate stone walling;
- replacing post and wire fence to the west of Mowbray Point with iron estate fencing;
- improving the condition of the footpaths;

- where appropriate, culverting to divert streams under footpaths rather than the narrow open drains formed with kerbs;
- planting in areas between paths that should be concealed from one another;
- removal of trees just north of Mowbray Castle and replacement with other plantings that when mature will not impact on the panoramic view;
- repair of boundary wall alongside the river;
- Addition of more signs to enable visitors to find features of interest and see certain views (e.g. the viewpoint to Masham Church is not clear);
- removal of certain trees along the riverside to open up more glimpses of the river from Ripon Rowell;
- removal of trees around Fisher's Hall to reinstate views from the windows;
- de-silting of pond at base of The Alum Spring;
- any works included within the Woodland Trust's Conservation Management Plan not yet carried out.

Existing buildings

The survey of the existing buildings within the Conservation Area outside the Garden clearly identified that a distinctive character exists, although to some extent this has been eroded by subsequent alterations, which have not always recognised that distinctiveness. Over the past 30 years, public awareness and expectation of the planning system to protect the "familiar and cherished scene" has increased substantially. Additionally, there now exists a greater understanding of the impact which incremental change can have upon the distinctive character of historic areas.

Some buildings have been altered, which has changed their architectural form in a way which conflicts with the settlement's distinctive character. The introduction of standardised twentieth century door patterns and PVCu windows and porches has undermined the character of many historic areas. The use of non-traditional finishes such as staining for joinery is detrimental to the character and appearance of the village and controls or guidance

to encourage painted timber and traditional details and materials should be introduced. Non-sympathetic alterations should be resisted.

Grant schemes - from time to time the Borough Council operates grant schemes to help maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Objectives:

The Woodland Trust's Hackfall Conservation Management Plan provides the basis for the restoration and management of the Historic Park and Garden. The following objectives relate both to the historic garden, the farm and buildings outside the wood:

- conserve and maintain Hackfall as a historic landscape in which the flora and fauna, water features, walks, paths, vistas and built features and structures are of particular merit in their own right, as well as combining to form a superb woodland;
- conserve and strengthen wherever possible such patterns which have been weakened or lost on the basis of historical precedent where this does not compromise the ecological interests;
- use, as a basis for conservation a philosophy that respects the achievements of, and at the same time conserves the work of the Aislabie family, retaining, repairing and consolidating original features and components of the garden;
- give unity to the whole designed landscape, whilst positively managing the stock of trees and maintaining important historical views and vistas through the woodland;
- ensure sympathetic management beyond the English Heritage registered boundary and the SSSI boundary as defined by English Nature (now Natural England);
- promote the repair and reuse of the farm buildings;
- ensure any new development does not impinge on the character of Hackfall, by promoting design that reflects local architectural style in terms of form, materials and external appearance;
- repair and retain important boundary walls and hedges.
- consider whether The Grotto, the gate piers and Kent's Seat should be designated as listed buildings.

Appendix B

Public Consultation

The Borough Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out the requirements for public consultation. To meet these requirements, and to inform a review of the Conservation Area, a consultation event was held on Tuesday 29 June 2010. This consultation took the form of a public meeting including a walkabout and a workshop session.

Because of the peculiar characteristics of this Conservation Area, the consultation was held in a different way to those held for towns and villages. All parties that have an interest in Hackfall Wood and Farm were invited to attend a meeting. These included the owner of the Farm, members of the Parish Council, the Ward Member, and representatives of the Hackfall Trust, the Woodland Trust, The Landmark Trust, English Heritage, the AONB and a Local Interest Group.

Prior to walking around the site, attendees were given a short explanation of why the Conservation Area is being reviewed, and the purpose of the Appraisal and management plans. The attendees then stayed as one group to walk around the wood. They were encouraged to make notes and take photographs to identify what makes Hackfall special to them.

Following the walk, the group went to the Crown Inn in Grewelthorpe in order to discuss the boundary of the Conservation Area, any changes to the area and to identify key features of interest and enhancement proposals.

The outcome of the consultation event and the information gathered directly contributed to producing this Appraisal. Key issues raised at the event included:

- whether the Garden should be included within the World Heritage Site;
- suggestions for changes to the extent of the Conservation Area;
- the preservation of important views; and
- the management of trees.

Every effort has been made to take into account and give due consideration to the views of the people who attended the meeting (and to represent those views in this Appraisal document).

Local involvement is an essential aspect of the consultation process - stakeholders and local people were encouraged to comment on the draft document during the consultation period 31 May to 13 July 2011. Following consultation, minor amendments were made to the text and the Conservation Area boundary. The Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Economic Development approved the Appraisal on 14 December 2011 and it is published on the council's website.



Appendix C

Further reading

Publications:

The Landscape Agency "Hackfall, Grewelthorpe Conservation Management Plan"

The Landmark Trust's leaflet "The Ruin"

The Hackfall Trust's leaflets

Edward Harwood's article in the Journal of Garden History Vol.7 No.4 entitled 'William Aislalie's garden at Hackfall' (W.1987)

Russell and Owen Price's England Displayed of 1769 (W.1769b)

Rev. Warner's description of 1802 (W.1802)

The Vyner family archive held at the West Yorkshire Public Record Office, the British Library and the National Monuments Record in Swindon.

Information is held on the following websites:

www.sssi.naturalengland.org.uk/Special/sssi/sssi_details.cfm?sssi_id=1002423

www.yorkshire.com/turner/trails/hackfall-woods

www.hackfall.org.uk

The Woodland Trust website: <http://bit.ly/pzkl6Q>

Paintings, watercolours and sketches:

Nicholas Dall's two pencil and watercolour sketches of 1766

John Swete's watercolour of Fisher's Hall (P.1784)

Antony Devis's two beautiful paintings (P.1770a,b)

William Gilpin's drawings (P.1772a-m) together with his painterly analysis of the Hackfall landscape provide invaluable visual clues to the Aislabies' design.

JMW Turner 1816 Watercolour Mowbray Lodge, Ripon: Mowbray Castle, Fisher's Hall, Weeping Rock

Maps:

Estate Map of c1832 and OS map of 1852