



SAMPLE PAGES

The 40-page, A4 handbook for Country Houses of North-East Yorkshire, with text, photographs, maps and a reading list, is available for purchase, price £15.00 including postage and packing.

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Country Houses of North-East Yorkshire

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interesting breaks with interesting people

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Castle Howard: view from the Pyramid Gate to the Obelisk

In the grounds, stretching along Ryedale towards Rievaulx Abbey, are a series of artificial terraces. Duncombe Terrace, nearer the house, is historically significant because it is one of the first such features to ignore formal geometry and follow the contour: it is fully ten years earlier, for instance, than the Castle Howard approach to the Temple of the Four Winds. The terrace walk from the east front of Duncombe Park House is punctuated by two temples dating from around 1730, an Ionic rotunda which closely resembles Vanburgh's Rotondo at Stowe (1721), and a circular Doric temple, which may be by Sir Thomas Robinson, the gentleman-architect who finished off Vanburgh's Castle Howard in a contrasting Palladian manner, though it also relates both to Nicholas Hawksmoor's Mausoleum at Castle Howard (designed 1728-9) and to William Kent's Temple of Ancient Virtue at Stowe (1734), all three of which are based on the Temple of Vesta at Tivoli.

The terraces at Rievaulx are rather later, dating from about 1758. The pattern is the same, with a temple at either end, and the Rievaulx temples follow the same classical orders as their companions at Duncombe, but in this case a circular Doric Temple is paired with a rectangular Ionic Temple, the latter decorated with painting by Giovanni Borghis, known as 'Burnici', who similarly embellished West Wycombe Park, Buckinghamshire.

There are instructive parallels to be drawn with the landscaping going on in the same period at Castle Howard, and with the evolving fantasy at Stowe, Buckinghamshire. The Rievaulx Terrace has the advantage, however, of the vistas, carefully enhanced by planting and cutting, of the abbey ruins below. Only at Studley Royal, where the financier John Aislabie's gardener William Fisher was making similarly advantageous use of another great Cistercian ruin, Fountains Abbey, is there an eyecatcher to bear comparison. Sir Nikolaus Pevsner's comment [*The Buildings of England: Yorkshire: The North Riding* (Penguin 1966)] on Rievaulx Terrace sums up the breathtaking assurance of the eighteenth-century handling of natural and man-made beauty:

The whole composition...is a superlative example of large-scale landscape gardening and of that unquestioning sense of being on top of the world which the rich and the noble in England possessed throughout the Georgian period.

The two sets of terraces are some three miles apart, and it is probable that they were meant to connect by means of a scenic ride. Large worked stones found in the intervening river-bed could have been the basis for a viaduct.

The two most authoritative accounts of the history of the Duncombe Park estate, including the Rievaulx Terrace, are –

- Christopher Hussey, 'Duncombe Park, Yorkshire', *Country Life*, Vol 122 (1957), pp 1198-1202/1328-1331
- Giles Worsley, 'Duncombe Park, Yorkshire', *Country Life*, Vol 184 (May 24th 1990)

Countryside Commission and the English Tourist Board to develop Nunnington into a more prominent tourist attraction.

This initiative included the installation of the Carlisle Collection of Miniature Rooms in the attics of the Hall. Mrs F M Carlisle was born in Calcutta in 1891 and during her Indian childhood was given a collection of miniature silver toys. As she became older she began to accumulate, in addition to manufactured miniature furniture, antique miniatures that were probably made originally as travellers' samples and items that she commissioned from selected craftsmen. She applied her own needlework skills to creating upholstery, carpets and other miniature textiles. Ultimately the collection amounted to more than ten thousand pieces,

To display her collection at her home, Pyt House in Berkshire, she commissioned a series of carefully researched period room-interiors, all but one at one-eighth scale, starting with the Queen Anne Room in 1933. The twenty-two miniature rooms that she gave to the National Trust in 1970 ranged in date from the Chippendale Library (1934) and the Post-War Living Room (1951) to the Palladian Hall (based on Hatch Court, Somerset, at one-tenth scale, 1966) and the Victorian Picture Gallery (1969).

The collection was initially displayed at Greys Court, Berkshire, near to Pyt House. Mrs Carlisle died in 1979, and the transfer to Nunnington took place the following year.



Nunnington Hall: south front



Castle Howard: *Clockwise from top-left:* Bastion Towers and Wall; column to the memory of the 7th Earl; bust of Lord William Howard (1563-1640); Pyramid

the Yorkshireman, Samuel Carpenter, and a Frenchman, M Naduald, whose accounts are delightfully rendered:

For carvaing the Corniche in the dinain romme.
94 foot at 3 shellin per foot com to..... 14-2sh.

The ironwork is thought to be by John Girdam, a Derbyshire man who worked under Tijou at Chatsworth. The paintings of the hall, dome and high saloon were by the Venetian Giovanni Antonio Pellegrini and the Huguenot Jean Herve: these were largely destroyed in the 1940 fire, and were recreated by the Canadian Scott Medd in 1962-3.

There is a superb, beautifully illustrated guidebook, *Castle Howard* (Castle Howard Estate Ltd 1997), and a more extensive history of the estate: Venetia Murray, *Castle Howard: the life and times of a stately home* (Penguin 1994).

There is as much to see outside the house as there is in. Around the grounds of Castle Howard are some of the finest architectural designs of the early eighteenth century and some of the most bizarre structures ever to ornament a country estate. The sheer scale of the place is calculated to impress, rather like the grand approach of the slightly later Holkham Hall, or – with a slightly different impact – the drama of the approach to Blenheim Palace. The main avenue from the York road, for instance, is all of five miles long. It is punctuated by such uncompromising features as the mock-castellar **Carmire Gate** (apparently after 1725), and the **Pyramid Gate** (1719, with wings added in 1756). The crossing of the axes between the entrance drive and the house front is marked by a hundred-foot **obelisk** which announces –

IF TO PERFECTION THESE PLANTATIONS RISE
IF THEY AGREEABLY MY HEIRS SURPRISE
THIS FAITHFUL PILLAR WILL THEIR AGE DECLARE
AS LONG AS TIME THESE CHARACTERS SHALL SPARE
HERE THEN WITH KIND REMEMBRANCE READ HIS NAME
WHO FOR POSTERITY PERFORM'D THE SAME.

CHARLES THE III EARL OF CARLISLE
OF THE FAMILY OF THE HOWARDS
ERECTED A CASTLE WHERE THE OLD CASTLE OF
HENDERSKELFE STOOD, AND CALL'D IT CASTLE-HOWARD.
HE LIKewise MADE THE PLANTATIONS IN THIS PARK
AND ALL THE OUT-WORKS, MONUMENTS AND OTHER
PLANTATIONS BELONGING TO THE SAID SEAT.
HE BEGAN THESE WORKS
IN THE YEAR MDCCII
ANNO D:MDCCXXXI



Castle Howard: Mausoleum interior