



**KEY**

- CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY
- SUB - AREA BOUNDARIES
- LISTED BUILDINGS
- GROUPS OF TREES
- INDIVIDUAL TREES
- HEDGES
- STONE WALLS ABOVE EYE HEIGHT
- STONE WALLS BELOW EYE HEIGHT
- BLOCKED VIEW
- STEEP SLOPE, RISING IN DIRECTION OF ARROW
- WIDE VIEWS, WITHIN & OUTSIDE THE C.A.
- IMPORTANT OPEN SPACE
- FORMAL GRASSED AREA
- TERRACE OR RETAINING WALL
- PARKLAND
- GARDEN ORNAMENT

Thornbridge Hall Training College

Thornbridge Hall Training College

Sewage Farm

Churchdale Farm

Churchdale Cottage

Taxa Hill



## **THORNBRIDGE CONSERVATION AREA**

Historical evidence for Thornbridge is sparse until the mid nineteenth century. A house is known to have been in existence by 1790 and an 1805 sketch shows it overlooking a sloping site planted with trees and shrubs. Neither house or garden are reminiscent of what remains today which is an excellent example of the trends in architecture and garden design at the turn of the century. The grounds contain a good collection of ornamental trees, plants and structures.

Successive nineteenth century owners have left their mark, but the most significant was George "Jobson" Marples, a barrister from Sheffield. During his period of ownership (1896-1929) the Hall and its estate were completely redesigned. Marples commissioned the Backhouse nursery of York to landscape the grounds and Charles Hadfield, a Sheffield architect to alter the house and design estate buildings. The house lost its pitched roof and gained a profile similar to Haddon Hall and was set in a newly created parkland. The gardens to the east of the hall were reconstructed making full use of the sloping site to form terraces. Several new service buildings were built such as the Gardener's House and the private station at Woodlands and a new driveway constructed, access having previously been gained from Longstone Lane.

Charles Boot bought Thornbridge in 1930. Head of a firm of Sheffield public works contractors his contribution was to introduce statuary and ornaments to the grounds. Boot acquired a lot through architectural salvage and much came from Clumber and Harlaxton. Most of the collection was sold off in 1946 after Boot's death what remains is a tiny fraction.

Since 1946 the Hall and its estate have been in the ownership of Sheffield City Council. The only properties within the conservation area in private ownership are Thornbridge Manor and Downside (the former public station.) The Hall obviously dominates the conservation area and each elevation relates to a separate sub-area. The boundary takes in all the designed landscape, which is clearly identifiable. Most of the buildings historically associated with the estate have been included, with the exception of farm buildings.

The grounds themselves are included on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens at Grade II. All the buildings, walls and structures within the grounds of Thornbridge should be assumed to be listed Grade II even if not marked on the plan. Most are listed in their own right and all are within the curtilage of a Grade II listed building. In cases of doubt the listed building record cards in Built Environment should be consulted.

### ***Area A - The Park and Drive***

The park provides an important buffer between the Hall and the outside world. Mixed tree planting on steeply sloping ground emphasises the estate's boundary when viewed from outside. The tree belt also acts as a shield giving privacy to the Hall and its grounds. When viewed from inside, the planting makes the boundary less distinct. It merges the parkland into the surrounding countryside. At its southern extremity, to the west of the drive the boundary planting is omitted presumably because a very steep grassy slope blocks inward views. On the edge of the tree belt to the east of the drive are two sinuous lakes, which have become silted.

The parkland itself is rolling in character and gently rises uphill towards the hall. The landscape is dotted with clumps of trees and individual specimens. The positions of these trees were carefully planned to create a naturalistic landscape. At its northern edge it is cut by the Monsal Trail but it continues to the north east in a similar style. It is possible that several fields in this vicinity formed part of the parkland but most have reverted to agricultural use.

The drive runs uphill through the park from the South Lodge (1) to the courtyard (2). The gradient increases towards the top of the drive and reaches a plateau just before the courtyard. This area becomes more densely wooded as the Hall is approached. The effect is

to merge this area into the planting at Woodlands and the boundary of the park. It is difficult to identify where the sub - area division occurs at this point (3).

The entrance gates (4) and (5) at either end of the drive are unusual in that they were originally water operated. The few structures in this large area, are concentrated at entrance points, namely the South Lodge with its associated gates, piers and urns. Another cluster occurs at the top of the drive at the entrance to the courtyard. There are also gates at the 'dummy entrance' to the north east of the park (6). All these items are listed Grade II.

### ***Area B - Garden Shelter Belt***

This is a densely wooded area extending downhill from the eastern end of the Rose Garden and curving north, uphill to meet the Monsal Trail. There is a rockwork cascade (7) at the point where this change of direction occurs. This is an important feature being part of the Backhouse rock garden. The woodland separates the east gardens from the parkland and gives shelter to them.

### ***Area C - The Courtyard and North Lodge***

The main entrance to the Hall is through the courtyard. All the spaces in this area are small and tightly enclosed by walls and trees. Balustrade and numerous urns add extra height to some sections of the walling increasing this sense of enclosure. A high proportion of Grade II listed urns and statues are concentrated in this area. Although the Grade II North Lodge (8) is set in a raised garden above the courtyard, it too is tightly enclosed. There is a high boundary wall to its west, (9) a small woody rock garden (10) to the north and the stable block (11) to the east.

This area has lost its former grandeur as the Winter Garden's neatly clipped lawns and shrubs have been lost to a twentieth century extension and car parking (12).

### ***Area D - Woodlands***

As the name suggests this area is thickly planted with trees. It is physically separated from the main Hall by Longstone Lane. The division is disguised by planting and walls on either side of the drive, which encourage the eye to focus on the station building beyond the Lane. Woodlands is surrounded on three sides by trees which makes the open plateau location of the playing field (13) to the south all the more striking.

The Grade II Woodlands building (14) was formerly the Hall's private station. The ground floor was a waiting room and the upper floor a staff social room. It is now used as a base for an education centre. The round Wyedale building (15) Grade II, was formerly the Gamekeeper's house. The original plans for the building included a tower to overlook the estate. This was not constructed but explains Wyedale's unusual shape. Around the time of the First World War it was converted to agricultural use and became known as Home Farm. It is now used for educational purposes. There are several brick and pre-fabricated buildings in this area which are of no architectural significance (16) and (17).

### ***Area E - The South Garden***

The South Garden is a large open space with wide views across the parkland and beyond. The area consists of two terraced lawns providing a solid green base to the south front of the Hall. The south garden is partly shielded from the drive to the west by trees at the top of the drive. The lawns have always been used for games such as croquet, bowls and archery.

All the structures in this area are listed Grade II. The steps and walls are original, but the majority of ornaments were added in the 1940's by Charles Boot. The dominant structure is the baldachino (18) (Grade II) from Clumber at the western side of the upper lawn.

### ***Area F - The East Terraces (6)***

The terraces take full advantage of the sloping ground to the east of the house and give good views out to the east and south. There are three distinct linear levels separated by slopes planted with shrubs.

The top terrace (19) below the house and overlooking the Italian Garden has a high quality gritstone path with circular motif set in. At the southern most end of this terrace is a large beech tree surrounded by a stone wall. (This is one of the few significant individual trees in the formal garden.) At the northern end is the Grade 11 rockwork tunnel (20), leading into the productive garden. The middle terrace is the Italian Garden (21), which is the largest space in this section. The Italian Garden is enclosed by box hedging and contains 35 Grade II listed structures including urns, statues, shrub boxes and a small fountain. The lowest level is a simple gravel path (22).

The terraces have changed considerably since the nineteenth century. They were originally planted with ivy giving the impression of a tiered green slope. The Italian Garden, originally known as the Dutch Garden, contained turf panels and topiary. High maintenance costs may explain the change.

### ***Area G - The Rose Garden and Summer House***

The Rose Garden is a small sunken space enclosed on three sides, to the north and west by limestone walls and to the east by the trees in area (B). To the south is a lower wall allowing views across the park. The garden contains panels of rose beds and is overlooked from the North by a circular summerhouse (23), which is a Grade II listed building. Access to this garden can be gained from the middle terrace, and the south garden. There is also an exit at the south east corner into the park.

### ***Area H - The Water Garden***

The slope below the bottom terrace walk is planted with berberis, and this provides a backdrop to the Grade II bench (24) in the Water Garden. The bench overlooks a lawn and an ornamental pond. The eye is guided, by graduated planting behind the pond, across the park and to the countryside beyond. Although the Water Garden is secluded and sheltered the feeling is not one of enclosure.

### ***Area I - Alpine and Rock Garden***

This is a very important part of the garden as it contains the Backhouse rock garden (25). The rock garden is characterised by winding paths and flowing water. The planting is dominated by conifers under planted with low growing shrubs, bulbs and alpine plants.

The paths lead to a Grade II stone grotto (26) which, on the basis of map evidence may be a survival from an earlier garden at Thornbridge. Although it occurs in the centre of this area, it isn't actually placed amongst the rock or alpine gardens. It provides clear views across the Water Garden (H) and wider views from its roof. At this point there is a choice of direction. To carry on would mean following the path known as Lover's Walk, past a second grotto (27) (also Grade II) through more evergreens and rock garden. The alternative would be to climb the steps of the stone grotto to reach Alpine Walk. The name comes from the Grade II retaining wall (28) which is planted with alpinas. The walk gives access to the Productive Garden to its north west end and the Wild Garden (J) to its south east.

### ***Area J - Wild Garden and Orchard***

The Wild Garden is characteristic of late nineteenth century gardens. It contains plants and bulbs left to naturalise, giving different flowers for each season. Gently sloping upwards from south east to north west the Beech Walk separates the Wild Garden from the orchard.

Parallel to the path are the Grade II Four Seasons statues (29) added in the 1940's by Boot. These are set amongst Beech trees, hence Beech Walk. Beyond this is the orchard which contains mature fruit trees which surround a fountain (30) and a baldachino, (31), both purchased from Clumber (both listed Grade II). At its northern edge the orchard is screened from the productive garden by a tall conifer hedge planted in the 1970s (32).

### ***Area K - The Productive Garden and Thornbridge Manor***

This area appears neglected. It contains the Grade II Gardener's Cottage (33) and the remains of the greenhouses (34). The former terraced orchard has been replaced with tennis courts (35) which are now derelict. To the west the vegetable garden (36) is now grassed over for low maintenance. At the eastern edge is another Grade II baldachino from Clumber Park (37). The Productive Garden is screened from the formal grounds by the trees in the rock garden.

Thornbridge Manor (38) is included in this area because of its historical links with the Hall. Although physically separated from it by the railway line it formerly belonged to the estate and was used as an extension to the productive garden.

### ***Area L - The Railway Line and Station Buildings***

The small piece section of former railway line at the northern edge of the conservation area includes the Hall's private platform (39) and the former public station buildings (40) (Grade II). The walk along this former railway line provides some good views into the Park when the trees are not in leaf.

## **DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

The following considerations will be taken into account by the Peak Park Planning Authority when assessing any proposals for development in the Thornbridge Conservation Area.

(a) In accordance with the Peak Park Authority's approved Structure Plan (Policy C4) development which would not preserve, and where possible, enhance the valued characteristics of the Thornbridge Conservation Area will not be permitted, other than in exceptional circumstances. However, to the rear of the greenhouses and abutting the railway some limited enabling development could be permitted, subject to satisfactory proposals and detailing.

(b) Alterations and extensions should take into account the building materials and details of the property concerned and be designed appropriately to maintain the character of the original buildings in particular and the Conservation Area in general in accordance with the Peak Park Design Guide.

(c) Normal high standards for Listed Building Consent will be maintained, including the impact of any proposal on the appearance of the area as a whole, as well as the individual building concerned.

(d) Careful management of trees and hedges should be encouraged, especially those identified on Drawing No: A4185/3 as having particular landscape importance.

(e) Stone walls should be retained and where necessary repaired or reconstructed throughout the Thornbridge Conservation Area.

(f) Open spaces identified on Drawing No: A4185 as being of particular significance should be protected from development. However, failure to indicate land on the drawing should not

be interpreted as implying development potential. Intensification of building anywhere within the Conservation Area would need careful consideration and in many places could be inappropriate. All proposals will be assessed on their merits at the time of application.

(g) The Peak Park Authority's Archaeologist should be consulted where a proposal may affect the archaeological remains (these include the ponds, walls and trees as well as the open fields).

(h) Any proposals which include the restoration of the gardens should be based on thorough historical research. English Heritage should be consulted.

(i) The Peak Park Board's grant-aid schemes should be used to promote/maintain the identified features of the available Conservation Area as appropriate and as finances permit. (Only environmental grants would be available to Sheffield City Council).

(j) Assessment of any development proposals will take place within the context of approved Development Plan policies and this Thornbridge Conservation Area analysis.

(k) All features identified on Drawing No: A4185/3 and/or the accompanying notes should be accepted as being of importance and value within the Conservation Area.

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