



ENGLISH HERITAGE

# HERITAGE AT RISK

## PARKS & GARDENS

Hackfall Wood, near Ripon, North Yorkshire – laid out in the 18th century by William Aislabie, Hackfall is a fine example of the 'picturesque' approach to landscape design. In 2002 English Heritage funded a conservation management plan to help the Hackfall and Woodland Trusts to better understand the neglected site and how to bring it back to life. In turn, the Heritage Lottery Fund was able to support major repairs and the development of an education and volunteer programme.

We are all justly proud of England's historic buildings, monuments, parks, gardens and designed landscapes, battlefields and shipwrecks. But too many of them are neglected and decaying. Heritage at Risk is a national programme to identify these endangered places and then help protect them for the future.

Historic parks and gardens are some of the best-loved features of our towns and countryside. They are valued for their beauty, diversity and historical importance but in comparison with listed buildings they are relatively few in number, and for that reason all the more precious.

### HISTORIC PARKS AND GARDENS

England's most important historic designed landscapes are recorded on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest, which is maintained by English Heritage on behalf of the nation. Most of the private gardens, public parks, country estates and cemeteries recorded on the register are in good condition and carefully maintained by their private and public owners. Others are more vulnerable to neglect or damaging development.

In 2008 we estimated that a third of the sites on the register were at medium or high risk from decay or development pressures. In June 2009 we will for the first time be publishing a definitive list of parks and gardens we know to be at high risk. Before doing so, however, we will be contacting their owners to explain our concerns and talk about how we may be able to help them resolve their conservation problems.

ENGLAND HAS

# 1598

PARKS AND GARDENS REGISTERED FOR THEIR SPECIAL HISTORIC INTEREST

IN 2008 WE ESTIMATED THAT SOME **65%**

OF THESE SITES WERE SHOWING SIGNS OF **NEGLECT**

OF SITES WERE AT **7% HIGH RISK** FROM NEGLECT AND DECAY  
25% AT MEDIUM RISK  
68% AT LOW RISK

**13%** OF PARKS AND GARDENS INCLUDE BUILDINGS AT RISK





## MEASURING RISK

The first purpose of the Heritage at Risk register is to identify historic places that are in danger of losing some or all of their value as a result of decay or development. Its second job is to find out whether their condition is stable, getting worse or starting to improve.

We recognise that development is often vital to the long-term sustainability of a park or garden. But insensitive and cumulative change can unintentionally undermine the very essence of the historic design. As well as measuring the impact of change within registered sites, Heritage at Risk also tries to identify external threats to their special qualities and setting.

Registered parks and gardens vary enormously in size but nearly all involve many different features, and sometimes several owners. Often neglect is localised and easily dealt with; in other situations it can be much more serious and lead to irreversible damage.

The identification of sites at risk begins with a desk-top appraisal of each registered park and garden. This allows them to be provisionally categorised according to the level of risk. These rankings are then checked by our regional expert advisers and adjusted to reflect, in particular, steps already taken by owners to address problems.



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## WORKING TOGETHER

English Heritage is committed to securing a year-on-year reduction in the number of registered parks and gardens at risk, focusing first on those at highest risk.

As well as confirming which properties are priorities for our own advice and grants, the Heritage at Risk register will also help us identify other sources of support for which owners may be eligible, such as the government's Environmental Stewardship programme.

Above all, we want to work with individual owners to find the best ways of ensuring the survival of these glorious but fragile components of our shared heritage – both for the benefit of our own generation and of those who will come after us.

## For more information

Advice on registered historic parks and gardens can be obtained from English Heritage's team of landscape architects:

- **North East, North West and Yorkshire & the Humber**  
Andrew Wimble, telephone 01904 601 970
- **West Midlands and the South West**  
Kim Auston, telephone 0117 975 0696
- **East Midlands and East of England**  
Deborah Evans, telephone 01223 582 754
- **South East**  
Charlotte McLean, telephone 01483 252 043
- **London**  
Jane Wilson, telephone 020 7973 3473

For details of the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England go to:

- [www.english-heritage.org.uk/ropag](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/ropag)

To learn more about parks and gardens at risk go to:

- [www.english-heritage.org.uk/pagar](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/pagar)

Other free documents on Heritage at Risk and practical advice can be obtained through:

- Heritage at Risk website  
[www.english-heritage.org.uk/risk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/risk)
- Historic Environment Local Management website  
[www.helm.org.uk](http://www.helm.org.uk)

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