THE CASTLE & GARDENS OF LOWTHER
CUMBRIA

CONSERVATION PLAN

The Landscape Agency
St James Lodge
Picks Lane
Thirsk
North Yorkshire YO7 1PS

July 2002

LOWTHER

Lowther ! in thy majestic Pile are seen
Cathedral pomp and grace, in apt accord
With the baronial castle's sterner mien
Union significant of God adored,
And charters won and guarded by the sword
Of ancient honour; whence that goodly state
Of polity which wise men venerate,
And will maintain, if god His help afford.
Hourly the democratic torrent swells;
For airy promises and hopes suborned
The strength of backward-looking thoughts is corned.
Fall if ye must, ye Towers and Pinnacles,
With what ye symbolise; authentic Story
Will say, ye disappeared with England's Glory!

Wordsworth

'Nothing can be imagined more strikingly beautiful than this assemblage of towers. The gradation in height is so pleasing, and the intermingling of the numerous turrets so picturesque, that nothing could be added to increase its magnificence, nor anything omitted without impairing its beauty.'

Lonsdale Magazine (1821)

Acknowledgements

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Thanks are due to Cumbria Record Office for their assistance in gaining an acquaintance with the Lonsdale Estate Papers and to the members of staff at the record office in Kendal for access to further material. Other sources of information for which thanks are due include the RIBA Library, the British Library, the London Library, the National Monuments Record, Swindon, and the Soane Museum.

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Finally this report could not have been completed without the help, patience and considerable hard work and efforts of Sara Pancot who acted as the team's point of contact at the estate. She completed much of the initial research particularly at the Record Offices in Carlisle and Kendal and in sourcing many other references in London and Swindon.

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Patrick James of The Landscape Agency in association with John Martin Robinson (Architectural Historian), Charles Blackett-Ord (Structural Engineer), Antony Gibb (Architect), Hilary Taylor and Peter Vickers (Hilary Taylor Landscape Associates) John Thompson (Ecologist) and David Taylor (Arboriculturalist) were commissioned to prepare a Conservation Plan for Lowther Castle and Gardens. The Plan has been prepared to a brief drawn up with the full assistance of English Heritage and aims to support future conservation and management of the castle and its immediate grounds. It provides a record of the development of Lowther to the present day and aims, via site survey and analysis, to provide direction for its future conservation and management.

Lowther Castle stands as a ruin, is Listed Grade II* and is included on the Buildings at Risk Register. The gardens at Lowther, along with the park, are Grade II on English Heritage's *Register of Parks and Gardens of Historic Interest*. By way of further recognition of the significance of the site, Lowther lies within the boundary of the Lake District National Park.

This plan has researched all known sources for documentary evidence, in particular the Lowther family archive held at the Public Record Office in Carlisle, the British Library and the National Monuments Record in Swindon. A comprehensive structural and architectural survey has been completed on the Castle. In the gardens a detailed field survey has been completed assessing the current condition of the gardens and including a survey of the older trees and an ecological overview of the site.

On completion of the research and survey work, an analysis of the site was undertaken from which a series of policies which relate to the future conservation of Lowther Castle and Gardens have been listed.

This Conservation Plan has comprehensively demonstrated that Lowther Castle is a significant landmark of English culture of international and not just regional significance. From the late 17th century onwards the house, gardens and park at Lowther were the most substantial in the far North West of England and something of a regional capital for Cumberland and Westmorland. The architectural, landscape, dynastic and historical significance of Lowther Castle is therefore substantial.

Lowther Castle and Gardens is now dominated by a large Broiler Unit to the south of the ruin and by a number of conifer plantations. However despite its neglect as a designed landscape and place of historic significance, Lowther remains intact within a single ownership, its wider landscape largely unaffected by loss of land or unsympathetic development.

On the basis of the analysis of the Castle and Gardens, including archival research and field survey, and given the significance of Lowther, it is suggested that an approach to the future conservation of Lowther should be as follows:

- To open the Caslte and gardens as a visitor attraction.
- To conserve, repair and maintain the existing shell of Lowther Castle and its key historic components in order to secure its future for the benefit of the Lowther family, future visitors and to protect this national asset
- To conserve repair and maintain the gardens immediately adjacent to the Castle in order to secure their future for the benefit of the Lowther family, future visitors and to ensure its protection
- To improve the profile of Lowther Castle as a building and garden of international significance, to increase public awareness of its significance and recognise the importance of the house, gardens and the park as an historic entity
- To ensure that the resources are managed as effectively as possible, within defined cost limits, to achieve high standards in all aspects of management, particularly with respect to the conservation and presentation of the house and the gardens

- To achieve a consistent and sympathetic approach to the future management and husbandry of the house and gardens

- To protect and enhance, where practical the nature conservation potential of the grounds

It is anticipated that this document will help to support an application to English Heritage and other funding bodies for works which will help to conserve Lowther Castle and its gardens in the future. As funding opportunities and management systems change, this plan should be reviewed and updated periodically.

This plan should be read in terms of providing those who manage the site in the future with a good understanding of its significance and how that significance should be conserved.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Location and Topography (See Figure 1 Site Location Plan; Figure 2: Site Boundary Map)

Lowther Castle lies six miles south of Penrith and is located on the eastern side of the Lowther Valley on the north eastern edge of the Lake District National Park. The castle and gardens make up approximately 36 hectares (90 acres) in an area of gentle sloping, undulating limestone terrain which is dominated by a series of north/south limestone scarps.

The Castle and its immediate grounds occupies the central position of a substantial agricultural estate which has been the seat of the Lowther family since the 12th century.

The area included in this Conservation Plan (See Figure 2: Site Boundary Map) belongs to the Lowther Estate. The Castle is a Grade II* Listed building and the gardens lie within the boundary of the Grade II registered park and garden. The site lies within the boundary of the Lake District National Park.

The qualities of Lowther Castle even as a silhouette continue to make it one of the most imposing early 19th century buildings in Britain and it is entirely worthy of its Grade II* listing. Nikolaus Pevsner noted of Lowther Castle in 1967, 'It is regrettable, though understandable, that the house was abandoned. Yet what pain must it be to the owners to live so near this memorial of past glories. The shell must be safeguarded. The county can ill afford to lose so spectacular a ruin.'

In reviewing the status of the Castle this Conservation Plan has also considered the immediate grounds in which it stands. The entire area of land surrounding the castle between the River Lowther and the A6 is of outstanding landscape and historical importance. There are few other places in this country where there is a better example of successive layers of land use that have built up against the backdrop of such an exceptional natural landscape. This core of castle and garden lies within the Lake District National Park and the combination of archaeological, historical, cultural and both manmade and natural landscape make this area an outstanding part of the national heritage.

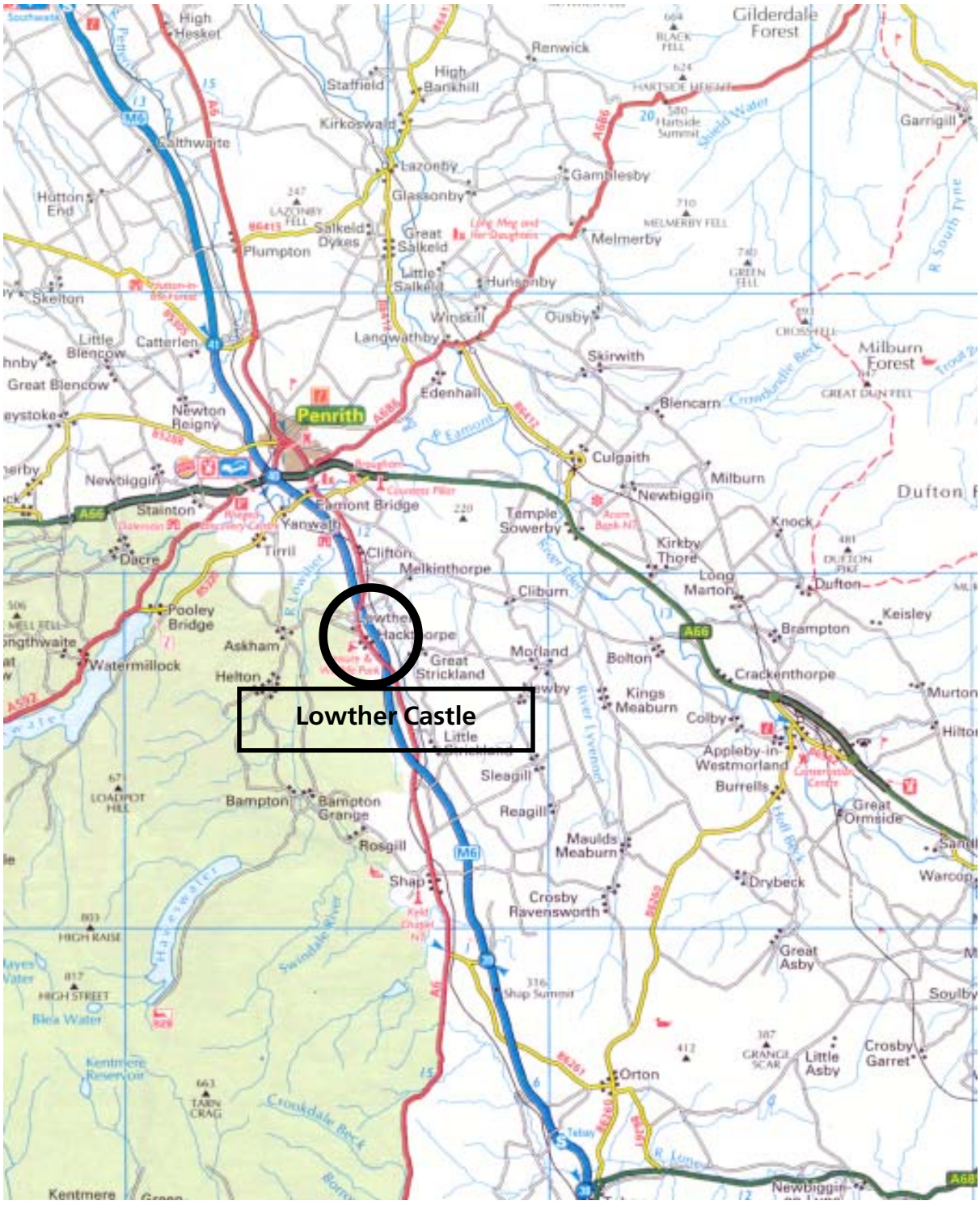
At present Lowther Castle and its gardens are closed to the public. However the estate is considering options for the future which would include opening the house and the gardens to the public for many months of the year. Given the historic significance of the house and its estate, its proximity to the M6 and the Lake District National Park, opening the site to the public would be the most appropriate way to secure this heritage asset.

Lying immediately to the south of the Castle is the remnants of the formal garden. Although overgrown and covered in trees, it is still possible to make out its layout which includes old avenues, paths and individual gardens.

Adjoining the more formal layout of the garden, and positioned on what used to be extensive lawns due south of the Castle, is an intensive Broiler Unit consisting of eight large sheds, producing more than one million birds per annum. Its smell, intensity of farming and position would make it totally incompatible with the restoration of the garden and castle as a site of national heritage significance. If the castle and gardens are ever to be opened successfully to the public, this broiler unit must be removed from its present site.

2.2 Previous Reports

In 1995 Capsticks prepared a Historic Landscape Survey and Management Plan of the park at Lowther. This report was funded via the Countryside Stewardship Scheme but did not include an assessment of the Castle or the gardens. In March 1997 the Archaeological Unit at Lancaster University completed a desk-top archaeological survey of the Park at Lowther funded by the Lake District National Park Authority and the Lowther Estate. The study area did not include the gardens. In 1999 Rural Solutions completed a feasibility study looking at future options for developing the Castle, Stables and grounds at Lowther. This report built on a previous report prepared by Land Use Consultants in 1993.



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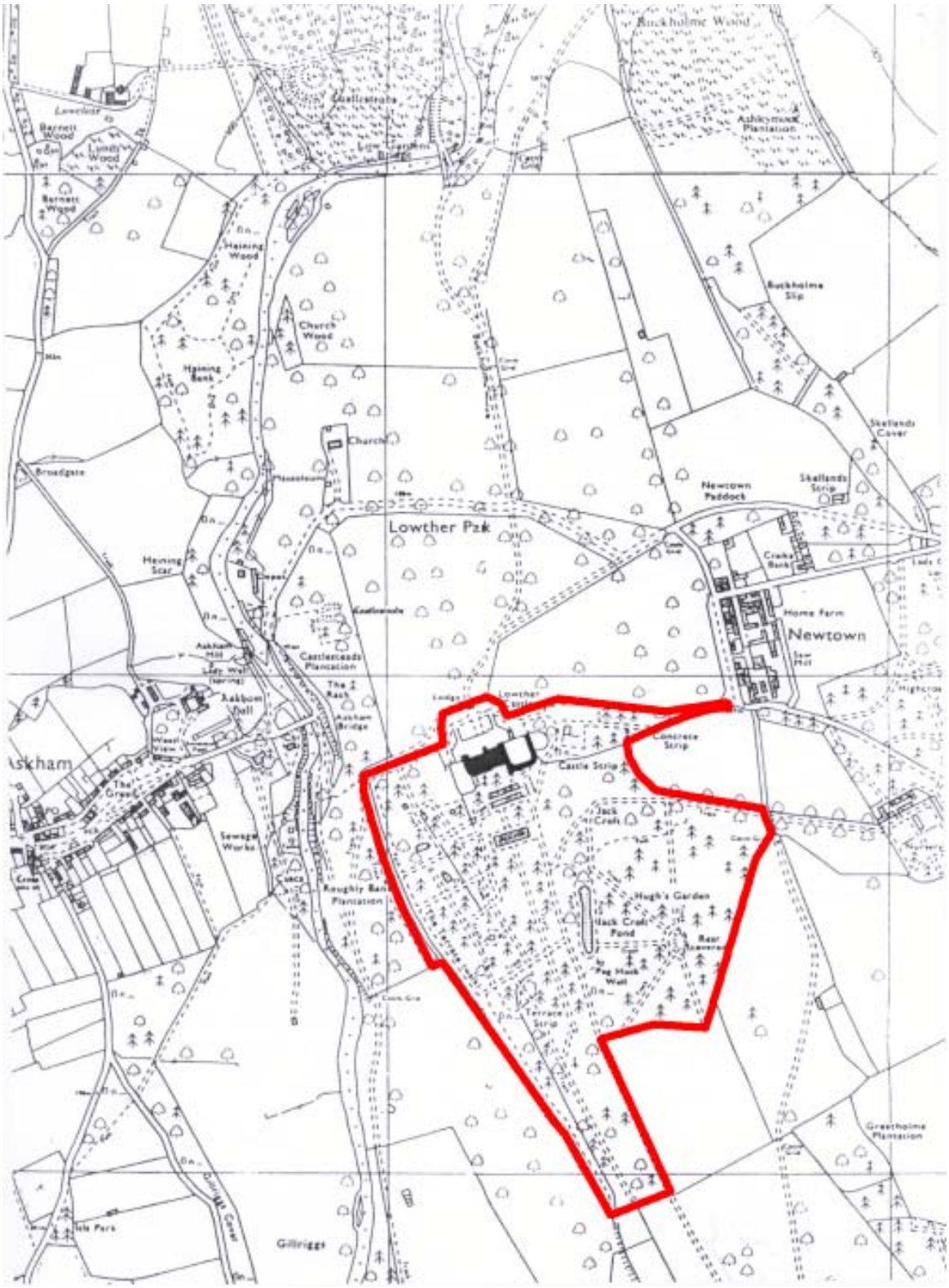
project: **Lowther Castle and Gardens: Conservation Plan**		**The Landscape Agency**	
file ref: lowther/drawings/pagemaker/A4figures	scale: **NTS**	The Landscape Agency, St James Lodge, Picks Lane, Thirsk, North Yorkshire, Y07 1PS. Tel: 01845 527729	



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project: **Lowther Castle and Gardens: Conservation Plan**		**The Landscape Agency**	
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3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Architectural and Landscape History

Lowther Castle and its gardens are regularly referred to in literature about the history of English country houses. However to date only a small amount of serious documentary research by architectural and garden historians has been undertaken. This conservation plan has extended the existing research both in terms of its architectural as well as its landscape history. Documentary sources have been checked in the RIBA library in London, the County Record Office in Carlisle, the Royal Commission on Historic Manuscripts, the Lindley Library (the library of the Royal Horticultural Society) the *Country Life* Picture Library, and the Witt Library at the Courtauld Institute in London among others. This is the first document to have assembled all known documentary sources that relate to the history and development of the Castle and Gardens.

3.2 Condition of Castle and Structural Survey

The buildings were inspected over a number of days in March and April 2002, by Antony Gibb (Architect) in conjunction with Charles Blackett-Ord (Structural Engineer), in order to assess the condition of as many parts of the structure as were accessible on foot or by hydraulic hoist ('cherry pickers') and to determine the types of repair that typically might be required to arrest further decay and allow the structure to be opened to the public.

Unfortunately no original or recent measured drawings have been available, so a certain amount of site measuring has been undertaken, but not so as to constitute a full measured survey, which is a prerequisite for further work.

Previous reports by Rural Solutions (1999) and Blackett-Ord & Nash (1988) have been seen. The latter refers to structural movement in the Staircase Tower and is particularly relevant.

The cherry pickers were able to access the south elevation within the security fence. The south porch is blocked by fallen masonry so access to the inside of the building was gained through the double doors in the north west corner of the perimeter wall. On the north elevation the security fence is aligned close to the building, so the largest machine that could travel on the terrace was parked outside the fence.

The parapets and free-standing walls, and the central staircase tower have been subjected to structural analysis to establish their stability and to enable repairs to be designed.

3.3 Condition of the Gardens

An outline topographical survey plotting all the most accessible features was undertaken as part of this report. This survey has been used as the base survey. A condition survey of the gardens has been completed incorporating a survey of the most historically significant trees.

3.4 Ecology

A walk-over survey of the garden was carried out in good weather on 17 and 18 April 2002.

Trees, shrubs and ground flora were listed (omitting only a few cultivars that could not be identified with certainty) and their frequency recorded on the DAFOR scale. The most abundant mosses were also noted. An assessment was made of the relative importance of the most diverse areas.

Observations of birds and mammals were noted but no records of other fauna were possible.

The Castle itself could not be examined, for safety reasons, but all the garden buildings were briefly inspected for signs of bats.

4.0 UNDERSTANDING LOWTHER CASTLE AND GARDENS

This section of the Conservation Plan presents a detailed description of the site in all its aspects, including history, architecture, landscape, ecology and management. This description forms the first step in defining the significance of Lowther Castle and Gardens.

4.1 The Lowther Dynasty

The Lowthers are a medieval knightly family whose descent at Lowther can be traced back to the original pattern of sub-infeudation after the Norman Conquest. Their arms – *Or Six Annulets Sable* – are a variation on those of their overlords, the baronial Vetripont (or Vipont) family of Appleby Castle (*Or Six Annuluts Gules*). Both the arms and the family tree are documented from the late twelfth century making the Lowthers one of the oldest of recorded English armigerous families. The name is mentioned in grants of land from the time of Henry II. In the reign of Henry III, in the early thirteenth century, Thomas de Lowther was witness to the foundation charter of a chantry at Great Strickland. Gervase de Lowther (a younger brother) was archdeacon at Carlisle at that time. Sir Hugh de Lowther, Attorney General to Edward I and a Justice of the King's Bench, was the first of the family to be knighted. His successful legal career under Edward I firmly established his family, like other English aristocratic dynasties, notably the Howards of Norfolk (whose first knighted ancestor was Chief Justice of the Common Pleas under Edward I).

Every successive head of the Lowther family through the Middle Ages was knighted, often fighting for the King in Scotland, representing Westmorland in Parliament, serving as Sheriff of Cumberland, intermarrying with other great Northern families such as the Lucys of Cockermouth or the Cliffords of Appleby. In the seventeenth century various branches of the family were created baronets including the Lowthers of Lowther, the Lowthers of Whitehaven, and the Lowthers of Marske in Yorkshire. Sir John Lowther of Lowther in the late seventeenth century was a strong Whig and supporter of the Glorious Revolution, being suitably rewarded by William III under whom he served as Lord Privy Seal and was granted an annuity of £2,000 per annum. He was created 1st Viscount Lonsdale in 1696. He greatly increased the family estates buying the feudal barony of Burgh in Cumberland (a former Greystoke and Dacre fief) from the Duke of Norfolk in 1685, as well as enlarging and improving the Lowther estate itself. He established his family as the leading resident landed dynasty in Cumberland and Westmorland, and rebuilt Lowther Hall (as it was then called) on a palatial scale to demonstrate his economic, social and political pre-eminence in the region.

He was succeeded as 2nd and 3rd Viscount, by his sons Richard and Henry, neither of whom married. The latter, like his father, served as Lord Privy Seal, as well as Lord Lieutenant of Cumberland and Westmorland. On his death in 1751, the viscounty became extinct but the estates were inherited by his cousin and male heir Sir James Lowther of Maulds Meaburn. Known as 'Wicked Jimmy', he wielded enormous political influence controlling nine parliamentary boroughs in the North West – the 'Lowther Ninepins'. He married Lady Mary Stuart, daughter of George III's unpopular prime minister, the Earl of Bute, whose Tory politics he supported. Much of the hostile contemporary criticism of him was no doubt dictated by party political interest. He was a patron of the younger William Pitt whose first parliamentary seat in 1781 was the Lowther borough of Appleby. As a reward for this, 'Wicked Jimmy' was created Earl of Lonsdale.

The 1st Earl of Lonsdale (of the first creation) inherited three fortunes, making him one of the richest men in eighteenth century England. From his father, who was Governor of Barbados, he inherited the Maulds Meaburn estate and a West Indian fortune, from his cousin, the 3rd Viscount, he inherited Lowther and large estates in Cumberland and Westmorland, but the key inheritance was that from another cousin Sir James Lowther of Whitehaven who died in 1755 leaving to him that town, and harbour with its flourishing trade with Ireland and the American colonies, and rich coal mines, as well as the enormous sum of £2,000,000 (equal to about a quarter of the annual value of British exports at that time). This made the 1st Earl vastly rich. He spent much of his new fortune on politics, getting heavily embroiled in election expenses, and also commissioned various unexecuted designs for a vast new palace at Lowther to replace the 1st Viscount's house which had burnt down in 1718, but failed to fulfil his potential, and died

without legitimate children, the Earldom becoming extinct. To his contemporaries he seemed uncouth, mad, miserly and bad:

> Even by the elements his pow'r confessed/
> of mines and Boroughs Lonsdale stands possessed/
> and one sad servitude all alike denotes/
> the slave that labours and the slave that votes.'
> (The Rolliad).

He was succeeded in 1802 (in the Viscounty and the estates, but not the Earldom), by his distant cousin William, descended from the grandfather of the 1st Viscount Lonsdale, and eldest son of Sir William Lowther, Bt, of Swillington in Yorkshire. William, 2nd Viscount Lowther, was recreated Earl of Lonsdale (of the second creation) in 1807. William, Earl of Lonsdale was the founder of the modern family. He spent £200,000 on improving the Lowther estate including building the new Lowther Castle (the ruins of which form the subject of this study). He established the pattern which lasted for nearly a century, of Tory allegiance in politics, landed pre-eminence in the North West, and rich coal magnates, with an almost vice-regal position in Cumberland and Westmorland. He was a patron of painters and writers, including Wordsworth, and 'did good on reflection'. He reigned at Lowther for over 40 years, dying in 1844.

His eldest son, also William, 2nd Earl of Lonsdale, was a confirmed bachelor who collected china and was keen on ballet, forming a splendid art collection to adorn the castle. He was caricatured by Disraeli in his novel *Coningsby* as Lord Eskdale. The 2nd Earl was also a sharp businessman who promoted the railways in Cumberland and Westmorland, further increasing the family fortune, and had an active political career, serving as 1st Lord of the Admiralty. On his death in 1872 he was succeeded by his nephew Henry as 3rd Earl of Lonsdale, but Henry died only four years later. His eldest son, in turn, St George Henry, then succeeded but was incapacitated by ill health (and probably alcoholism), dying in 1882; whereupon he was succeeded by his younger brother Hugh as 5th Earl. Hugh Lonsdale, known to posterity as 'Lordy' or 'the Yellow Earl' was Earl of Lonsdale until 1944, the longest lived of the Earls of Lonsdale. As a wayward younger son he was badly educated and brought up chiefly among grooms and pugilists, which gave him a lifelong taste for showing off to social inferiors. As a penniless younger son he sold his birthright (it was bought by the family trustees who allowed him, as Earl, to live at Lowther) but his personal extravagance, combined with lack of foresight and bad management wrecked the family fortune, bankrupted the coal mines in Whitehaven, and led to the closing of the castle in 1936. He was chiefly notable as a sportsman, patron of the Turf and instigator of the Londsale Belt for boxing. Under the 'Yellow Earl' in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century Lowther enjoyed an extravagant swansong, with the redecoration of the house and expansion and elaboration of the garden, as a setting for lavish entertainment and royal visits. Even then the castle was not lived in all the year round but mainly in the summer and autumn. The garden, but not the house, was opened to the public up to the outbreak of War in 1939.

The Yellow Earl organized the horses and carriages for the Delhi Durbar in 1910 but apart from that the Lowther family played a relatively limited role in public life in the twentieth century, though a younger son, James Lowther, created Viscount Ullswater, was Speaker of the House of Commons from 1905 to 1912 and is remembered for the remark 'Like the Pope, I am infallible.'

On the death of the 'Yellow Earl' in 1944 the title and estates were inherited by his (by then aged) youngest brother who sold the majority of the family collections in 1947 in the largest of all English twentieth century country house sales, spread over several weeks. Nearly 8,000 lots including significant works of art from Stowe and Hamilton Palace, were dispersed between April and June that year and fetched the paltry sum of £144,000 in total. The 6th Earl died in 1954 and was succeeded by his grandson. James, the present and 7th Earl of Lonsdale, who since inheriting has expanded the Lowther land holdings and developed the forestry and agricultural side of the estate which remains the largest in the North West of England. He dismantled the castle and sold the materials in 1957, retaining the shell as a landscape feature and focus of the park.

The Lowther family played a prominent role in Cumberland and Westmorland for centuries as landowners, politicians and patrons of the arts. Successive members served in parliament as MPs and later as peers for 600 years from the thirteenth century to the nineteenth century, a

remarkable tradition. As patrons they helped to introduce 'regular' classical architecture to the North West in the late seventeenth century, were Fellows of the Royal Society and at Whitehaven laid out the first planned town in England since the Middle Ages. Their eighteenth and nineteenth century industrial development at Whitehaven, and agricultural improvements at Lowther were among the most impressive of the age. From the seventeenth century onwards they were collectors of pictures, silver, sculpture and books. They were also keen sportsmen, being closely associated with the Cottesmore Hunt in Rutland in the nineteenth century, racing and carriage driving. The latter tradition continues in the annual Lowther event in the park. The parks, church with its memorials and tombs, and the ruin of the castle are therefore the reflection of remarkable dynastic history, of both local and national significance.

4.2 Architectural History

The architectural history of Lowther Castle is exceptionally fully documented and well-recorded, especially the 17th and 18th century history of the previous houses (Lowther I and Lowther II) on the site.[1] The hitherto published history of the 1806-1814 Smirke Castle, (Lowther III), however, has been hampered by the fact that his detailed, working, designs for Lowther castle were not available until the 1990s (when they were deposited in the County Record Office at Carlisle). The later 19th century history of the castle, notably the work in the interior for the 2nd Earl in the mid-nineteenth century, and the redecoration of the house, and remodelling of the stables for the 5th Earl in the 1890s (in preparation for an expected royal visit) have not been researched or published, hitherto. Neither the house nor garden was ever published in *Country Life*, an unusual lacuna for an establishment of this scale and importance, especially considering the 'Yellow Earl's' lust for personal publicity.

4.2.1 Lowther I

The Lowthers were recorded at Lowther from the 12th century, and the first park was enclosed in 1337. The old house itself (Lowther I), as it survived until the late 17th century, dated from the later Middle Ages and had the characteristic North Country plan of a narrow central range flanked by a pair of square towers. (See Levens, Sizergh, Hutton-in-the-Forest, Blencow). It was extended in the 1570s, and remodelled, and further extended between 1628 and 1634 by Sir John Lowther (d. 1637), and by his son in turn, Sir John Lowther, 1st Bt (d.1675). Sir John the elder, rebuilt the central range in 1628-30. His son, John, the 1st Baronet, extended the house with projecting wings flanking an inner court on the north side in the 1640s and 1650s and rebuilt the front porch. (The appearance of the two Sir John's houses is recorded in a late 17th century sketch by Thomas Machell in one of his notebooks.) The centerpiece was a decorative gable with the date 1630, and a crowning cupola.

Sir John, the 1st Baronet, was a remarkable man who developed the estate by purchase and improvement, and doubled the income between 1637 and 1672. He was an excellent businessman who kept methodical records. Among these is a unique set of 'Memorable Observations and Remembrances' of the house and grounds from 1640 onwards (CRO D/Lons/L3/1/2) which record the architectural development of old Lowther Hall.

The pele tower at the east end was of medieval date. It 'is not knowne which of our ancestors builte, there beinge noe mention thereof.' The central range between the towers was 'new built by my father 1630, being annciently manie sevearal low owlde roomes, viz a Halle, a greate Chamber, and several other rooms.' The brewhouse, bake house etc were 'new built likewise by my father.' The materials of the roof over the new central range, 'betwixt the two Towers', (both lead and timber) were brought from the great hall at Kirkoswald Castle which was then being demolished by Lord William Howard (ancestor of the Earls of Carlisle) of Naworth.

The 1st Baronet recorded that in 1640, he erected the 'Gatehouse and Clostered Walke' and the stables. In 1642 'I butified the Hall Porch with Pilasters and other cutt work' by the 'expert and skillfull' mason 'one Alexander Pogmire.' His building programme was then interrupted by 'the great trobles and civill warr betwixt the Kinge and the Parlement.' Building work resumed in the

[1] See M. H. Port, 'Lowther Hall and Castle,' *Transactions, C.W.A.S.*, lxxxi, 122-136, lxxxiv, 191-204; and H. M. Colvin, J. M. Cook and T. Fiedman, 'Architectural Drawings from Lowther Castle,' *Society of Architectural Historians* (1980).

1650s, once peace was restored. In 1655 he noted: 'This yeare I contracted with Alexand. Pogmire for the new buildinge the Gallery and roomes under and above it on the east side of the court.' Faced in ashlar stone, it stood on the site of the old stable. It was completed the following year. This new east wing contained a chapel and gallery at first floor level and matched the 1640 Cloistered walk 'to form a symmetrical pair of flankers to the main house.' Sir John wrote: 'I have built three parts of the hous, viz. the tow sides and the front where the walke is.' In the middle of each wing was a projecting bay window, and the gallery and cloistered walk must have been similar to the surviving wing at Hutton in the Forest, which was built by Alexander Pogmire.

4.2.2 Lowther II

The 1st Baronet was succeeded by his grandson, also John, born in 1655. Elected MP for Westmorland in 1676 he took an active part in local and national affairs, and assured the regional political ascendancy of the Lowther family in 1688 by supporting William III and securing Cumberland and Westmorland for the Glorious Revolution. He was rewarded with a prominent role in the government, successively as Vice-Chamberlain of the Household (1689-94), First Lord of the Treasury (1690), Lord Privy Seal (1699). He was created Viscount Lonsdale in 1694. After 1694, however, he spent much time in the country 'leading a retired and easie life,' and embarked on replacing the central block with a new Lowther Hall on a palatial scale: the frontage extended for over 300 feet. He had already built the stables and created the very large outer court, soon after inheriting in the 1670s. The new stables were built *circa* 1678 on the east side of the new outer court and set the scale for Lowther II. They were in a regular classical style with symmetrical elevations, central three-bay pediments, red stone quoins and cross mullion windows.

Like his grandfather, John the 1st Viscount meticulously recorded his building work in a summary of expenditure which he drew up in 1697 for the benefit of his son. In that, the list of works is headed by 'My stables', followed by 'The Square and other Courts with the statues' and 'My Offices', i.e. the kitchen range echoing the stables on the west side of the forecourt. These were probably designed by an unidentified London architect who visited Lowther in 1677. The completed layout of the outer court is shown on the 1683 estate map which gives a *terminus* for that phase of work. This first phase of the 1st Viscount's programme created a baroque approach layout, on the French model, with inner and outer courts on different levels.

The 1678-83 outer court still underlies, and to an extent dictated the large scale of Smirke's replacement castle; the remaining portion of the 1678 stable wing, incorporated within the east end of Smirke's castle, is the oldest part of Lowther to survive today. The original appearance of these two flanking outer court ranges with their whitewashed rough-cast walls and red stone architectural trim, is recorded in survey sketches by George Dance (the younger), in the Soane Museum, as well as in the Knyff & Kip and *Vitrivius Britannicus* engravings.

The 1st Viscount's new main block followed in 1692-3. The expenditure was fully recorded by Viscount Lonsdale (published in *Architectural Historians Journal* (1980), Appendix A). The work is also described in a series of letters from Lord Lonsdale to his steward. The old house was demolished in 1692 (except for Pogmire's wings), and a new 13-bay 'palace-like fabric' of red standstone erected by the mason Edward Addison (who had rebuilt the classical frontispiece at Hutton-in-the-Forest *circa* 1685). The new façade was based on designs by Robert Hooke and William Talman, but modified by Sir Samuel Morland (a fellow member of the Royal Society) and Viscount Lonsdale himself. He claimed that the design was 'principallie my own.' This was similar to the evolution of several other of the great baroque country houses where designs were obtained from leading London architects and then executed by a local mason under the owner's direct control. 'What I have done was, it is true, Principallie my own thought becaus the inequallitie off Ground and many other circumstances made it impossible to be judged off at a distance. But for my hous after I had directed Mr Talman the King's Comptroller off his works to draw me a design such as I thought convenient ffor me, I had the correction and approbation of Sir Samuel Morland, a man surpassing most if not anie of the Age in Mechanicall and Mathematical knowledge.'

The shell was completed in 1692. The interior was fitted up in 1693-4. The rooms were lined with oak, cedar and walnut, as well as painted and gilded wainscot. The best Carved marble

chimneypieces were sent from London. (Though lesser ones were made locally by the mason Garrett). The hall was painted by Antonio Verrio (as at Windsor and Hampton Court). Great looking glasses and rich textile hangings were also sent form London such as Lady Lonsdale's bed with red mohair curtains (D/Lons/L/3/4). The new Lowther was a palatial showpiece, the Chatsworth of Cumbria. It was visited and commented on by such indefatigable tourists as Celia Fiennes who left a characteristically breathless description in 1698.

The new house was short-lived, being gutted by fire in 1718. An echo of its metropolitan, baroque style, however, can be found in Viscount Lonsdale's magnificent tomb with marble effigy by William Stanton in Lowther church.

The 2nd Viscount, who undertook a Grand Tour of Italy in 1710-12, had ideas for rebuilding Pogmire's old-fashioned inner wings (an unexecuted plan for these is shown in the Second Volume of *Vitruvius Brittanicus* (1717), but his premature death prevented anything being carried out. His brother and heir, the 3rd Viscount, turned to James Gibbs who made designs for extensions in 1717.

Following the fire in 1718, the office wing was fitted up as a temporary house, a function it fulfilled until the end of the 18th century. Various unexecuted schemes for rebuilding the ruined main block and Pogmire's wings were commissioned from both James Gibbs and Colen Campbell (described in the *Architectural Historians Journal*). None was adopted.

In 1751 Lowther was inherited, as has been seen, by a cousin, Sir James Lowther of Maulds Meaburn (later 1st Earl of Lonsdale of the first creation). Like his predecessor he was unable to get his designs beyond the drawing board. His first scheme was a design from Matthew Brettingham for a palladian house on the model of Holkham in Norfolk.

'Capability' Brown, who was consulted about the park in 1763 also produced a design for a new house similar to that which he designed for the Earl of Coventry at Croome Court in Worcestershire, but that too, was not executed.

Probably as a result of the influence of his father-in-law, the Earl of Bute, Lord Lonsdale next turned to Robert Adam who produced a series of schemes on a megalomaniac scale – some classical and some castellated. The latter sowed the seeds for a new 'castle' at Lowther. Though his plans for the main house were not adopted, Adam did reconstruct Whitehaven Castle, and designed the little model village at Lowther for Lord Lonsdale. Adam also designed a dairy for Lady Lonsdale at Lowther (Drawings at the Soane Museum), but this too was not executed. Though Lord Lonsdale failed to rebuild the house, the series of designs which he commissioned from leading architects are of interest in their own right.

Towards the end of his life, Lord Lonsdale seems to have abandoned schemes for replacing the lost main block, and concentrated on extending and remodelling the *circa* 1680 (west) kitchen wing (in which he was then living). Drawings for this were commissioned *circa* 1800 from the Websters of Kendal. Substantial building works to the latter's designs were in progress when Lord Lonsdale died in 1802.

4.2.3 Lowther III

In 1802 the 1st Earl was succeeded in the estate, and as Viscount Lowther (but not the earldom), by his cousin Sir William Lowther of Swillington in Yorkshire. He was created 1st Earl of Lonsdale (of the second creation) in 1807. Civilized, genial and of gentle manners he was a contrast to his predecessor. An active politician and supporter of Pitt, he was also a friend and patron of writers and artists. He was a close friend of Sir George Beaumont of Cole Orton in Leicestershire, an amateur painter, promoter of Constable, and a founder of the National Gallery. Beaumont had employed George Dance, the Younger, to design his house at Cole Orton, and he recommended him to the new Lord Lonsdale for Lowther. Dance began to make designs for the new Lowther, visiting the site in 1803, and he worked on the project until 1805. A symmetrical pile with a varied Gothic silhouette was the preferred option, in a scenic response to the Romantic Lakeland landscape.

Dance evolved a design for a large castellated principal block with a central tower, and flanking lower turrets – creating a dramatic, varied skyline – on the site of the destroyed main house, but retaining the old outer courtyard and 17th century flankers. He computed the cost at about £80,000. Lowther was to change its name from Lowther Hall to Lowther Castle. Dance's plans and sketches (including surveys of the surviving office ranges) are preserved in the Soane Museum (D/2/8, 11-14). On one of the drawings he noted the distance (306 miles) from London, and such a distance was a deterrent for somebody his age. With Lord Lonsdale's concurrence he handed the scheme over to a younger man, Robert Smirke, whose first great project, at the age of 25, Lowther was.

Smirke 'adopted principally the idea of Dance', but revised the scheme in a number of ways. Smirke kept as the core of his design the central staircase hall rising into a tall square tower, to serve as the focus of the composition, flanked by lower symmetrical wings with corner turrets. This was a composition developed at Ashridge (Hertfordshire) and the short-lived Kew Palace by James Wyatt. Dance's and Smirke's Lowther was greatly influenced by Wyatt's Kew design for George III.

Smirke while maintaining Dance's towering composition, symmetry, and overall plan, made several changes. His façades were detailed in a more scholarly gothic manner, drawing on castle precedents for the entrance front (north) and ecclesiastical sources for the garden front (south). His principal change, however, was to move the house forward on to the site of the outer forecourt and to incorporate the stable range and the kitchen ranges into his rambling new structure. As a result of this, the central axis of Lowther III is several yards eastward of that of the 17th century house (which explains, perhaps, why the north avenue was felled and replanted in the early 19th century, on a parallel line to that shown in the 18th century views).

Smirke's house was built of mixed rubble stone, faced in beautifully executed pink-grey sandstone ashlar. The quality of the design owes much to this fine masonry skin, but more to the masterly silhouette and the grouping of the masses and turrets, an architectural impact which has survived the dismantling of the interior.

The new castle was built to Smirke's design between 1806 and 1814. The stables being for practical reasons the first part to be erected in 1806. Though vast, the project was relatively economical (£77,000, half the full estimated price of £150,000[2]), as much use was made of old and estate-produced materials, and Lord Lonsdale's own workforce under the efficient eye of his land agent at Lowther, R. Lamb, and Smirke's clerk of works Mr. Johns. Lamb's letters to Lord Lonsdale (who was mainly resident in London and at his hunting box in Leicestershire), and Smirke's to Johns give a good idea of the progress of work. (D/Lons/L13/81; D/Lons/L1/3/102, 103, 113). The ground was levelled in 1806, the foundations laid that year, and the stables begun on the site of the old ones at the east end of the house. The ceremonial foundation stone was laid on 31 December 1806 (at the north west corner of the site).

The dates of Smirke's drawings plot the course of construction. The west part of the house, incorporating Lord Lonsdale's own rooms and the new dining room, together with the stables at the east end, were the first works to be undertaken. The battlements on the north end of the east wing (the remodelled old stable range were fixed in January 1807). Progress was rapid on the western, family rooms. On 25 December 1807, Mr Lamb reported to Lord Lonsdale that 'no time has been lost at the building', and that the west range was expected to be 'covered in by Monday next.' The family rooms were habitable by the end of 1809.

Work then proceeded on the structure of the main block containing the entrance hall, main staircase and saloon. By January 1810 the extensive work of creating level lawns on the site of the old house before the new south front, and the well-contrived terraced entrance forecourt and outworks on the north front (where Smirke made good use of the falling levels to create an impressive impact) were underway. On 20 January 1810 Lamb wrote: 'The levelling in the South front is about a third done, I mean so far as was pointed out by your lordship and Mr Smirke.' The estate's own labourers were employed to remove stone and spread soil round the house as well as for fetching ashlar from the quarries.

[2] Lord Lonsdale kindly insisted on paying Smirke commission on the full £150,000 rather the actual cost of the work.

Work continued into the Spring, on the outer and inner terraces of the north front with their connecting steps and ramps. The south front, and outer terraces were completed by February 1811 and the stable yard half-paved with freestone, as required by Lord Lonsdale. In July 1812 the foundations of the porte cochére were underway, while the windows were being installed in the south front of the main block. The interior fitting of the main rooms continued until 1814, when Smirke's campaign was completed. Parts of the interior were still, however, unfinished. The drawing room was fitted up and furnished in 1820 and the proposed 'chapel' was only completed as a billiard room in 1828.

Simpsons of Kendal were employed for the plain plasterwork, but all the decorative plasterwork was by Francis Bernasconi of London, who was responsible for all the similar stucco at Windsor, under George III and George IV. The same two tier system applied to the painting. Cornelius Dixon from London was used to decorate the main rooms, while local men from Penrith painted the less important areas. The masons were Webster & Proctor who were paid £14,560.13.4 for their work. Webster's also provided 'Kendal marble' chimneypieces for the study and elsewhere at a cost of £1,293.4.4.

Bernasconi's detailed bills survive enumerating the dozens of 'quoins, crockets, pinnacles, arches, soffits, and roses' that he modelled. The west wing and dining room were plastered in 1808/9. The rooms of the principal floor next to the staircase in 1809/10, the staircase hall itself in 1810/11, the saloon and state bedroom 1811/12, the library and east wing in 1812/13. The 'cloister' (the still surviving sculpture gallery on the south east side) was Bernasconi's last work to be completed at Lowther in 1814.

The construction of the new Lowther Castle, formed only part of a massive investment in the estate by the 1st Earl, which also included relandscaping the parks, building new roads and drives, tree planting, model farm building, and other improvements. Between 24 May 1802 and 30 June 1840 he spent £254,436.13s.10 ¼ on 'Building and Improvement at Lowther', of which – as we have seen - £77,000 was spent on the castle itself. It was an heroic achievement.

The interior when first completed was described in the *Lonsdale Magazine* XXI, September 1821 Vol. II, 321. The hall and staircase hall were painted to look like stone. The staircase bannisters were of patinated bronze with rosewood and brass handrails. The upper walls had coloured heraldic shields of Lowther family alliances and the mouldings of the vault were gilt. The 12 windows lighting the staircase tower were fitted with stained glass. Bernasconi's tabernacled gothic niches contained statues of King Edward I, Queen Philippa and Henry VIII. Bernasconi's plaster vaulted ceiling eighty feet above, was dated in an abbreviated Latin inscription in the centre: 'Edift. Cul^{s}. Com. de Lonsdale an^{o} Regni Lo. R^{s} Geo^{i} III A^{o} D^{i} MDCCCX: cur^{e} Rob^{o} Smirke.'

The family rooms in the west wing were hung with crimson and grey silk and contained a good collection of Dutch and Flemish pictures and family portraits. The cornices were gilt. The chimneypieces were Webster's Kendal marble.

The drawing room (south east of the hall) was hung with pink silk, the chimneypiece was of white Parian marble, and the furniture of brass inlaid rosewood was supplied by Gillows of Lancaster. The dining room (to the south west) was 'fitted up in the Gothic style' with a chimneypiece of Verde Antique marble and the ceiling grained to resemble oak. The curtains were of Crimson velvet trimmed with black. At one end was a large gothic buffet to display the family plate.

The library (north east of the hall) was 'extremely elegant' with fitted oak gothic book cases round the walls, an oak grained ceiling with gilt cornice, and family portraits round the top of the room above the bookcases. The saloon (in the centre of the south front) was considered the most splendid apartment, being hung with crimson and gold silk, and the ceiling and joinery all being grained to resemble oak with gilded mouldings, bosses and other details. The State Bedroom, over the saloon, had a Gothic Four Poster bed with a frieze of carved and gilt angels. The *Lonsdale Magazine* was particularly impressed by the view from the top of the tower which it considered to be the best in Westmorland.

4.2.5 Later 19th Century Alterations

The 2nd Earl of Lonsdale was a notable collector who acquired sculpture at the Stowe sale in 1848. He added to the picture collection and formed a large assemblage of classical statuary (much of it now at Sledmere, Yorkshire), as well as pursuing his great interest in old china – especially Sévres. He carried out various works at Lowther in the 1860s to display his expanding collections, converting the south east 'cloister' into a sculpture gallery for his Roman statues, modern busts and archaeological relics from Hadrian's Wall, and making a large top-lit picture gallery in the west wing.

The rooms in their High Victorian form were described in Jewitt & Hall's, *Stately Homes of England* (1877). The staircase walls were by that date, enlivened with 'arms and banners.' The ante-rooms and passages displayed 'a valuable collection of Ceramics arranged in glass cases'. The State Bedroom (above the Saloon, in the centre of the South front) was now hung with 'remarkably fine Gobelins tapestry.' The billiard room (in the south east wing) contained a collection of portraits of 'Westmorland Worthies' – local historical celebrities – collected by the 2nd Earl of Lonsdale. Throughout the house, the picture hang was much enriched by the 2nd Earl's additions including a series of 'Hogarths', from Vauxhall Gardens, and 10 large canvases by Snyders in the new Picture Gallery for which they provided the *raison d'être*.

The 'Yellow Earl' carried out a sweeping redecoration in 1893 in preparation for an expected visit from the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII). This did not materialize at the time (because of the death of Prince Albert Victor) but the effort was intensified and completed in readiness for the German Kaiser's visit to Lowther in 1895. The fashionable Mayfair firm of Mellier & Co. was employed for work which included rehanging the drawing room with gold figured silk (now in the dining room at Helbeck hall, Brough). Joseph James of Penrith (the local firm) also provided new furniture, including a large oak sideboard. The rooms were overfilled with additional 'treasures' and trophies including French furniture from the Hamilton Palace sale, and stuffed animals and such like relics of Lord Lonsdale's Rockies and polar expeditions) and other mementos of his travels. This is all recorded in the family photograph albums.

The preparation for the Kaiser's visit were described at length in the local newspapers. The stables were completely remodelled internally to provide accommodation for 50 horses, with oak woodwork and lacquered brass and nickel fittings, and the central coach house rebuilt with a gable containing a clock and the Lowther arms impaled with Gordon. (The 5th Earl's wife, Lady Grace Gordon, was the daughter of the Marquess of Huntly). The 1st Earl's Riding House at the back was demolished. The major new construction on the estate was the new South lodge to the park, called the Emperor's Gate, at Thrimby, the last stone of which was ceremonially laid by the Kaiser on 12 August 1895 (now cut off from the park by the M6 motorway).

This was designed by the 'Estate Architect', J. Bardgett, who supervised all these 1890s works. Inside the castle, as well as 'extensive' redecoration of the main rooms, the columns in the staircase hall were refaced in stone, again under the direction of Mr Bardgett. The mason was W. Grisenthwaite of Penrith, the painters and gilders were Messrs J. & W. Scott of Penrith. Their work included the ceiling where the centre was re-coloured in 'royal purple' and gold. The interior as it was at the time of the Kaiser's visit is described in detail in a special supplement to the *Penrith Observer*, 13 August 1895. In gratitude for Lord Lonsdale's hospitality the Kaiser presented his own bust in marble to Lowther (sold for £24 in 1947), and a set of stained glass windows with the Hohenzollen arms which were installed above the staircase. (They were bought back by Prince Frederick of Prussia when the castle was dismantled).

After the First World War, the straitened finances prevented further major alteration, though electricity was installed in 1926; and the house was closed in 1936, eight years before the death of the 'Yellow' Earl in 1944.

During the Second World War, the wings of the house (but not the main rooms) and the estate were occupied by a top secret department of the army, for night-time tank training. Concrete slabs and the pillbox-type roofs on the 'sentry boxes' punctuating the forecourt perimeter wall remain as a witness to the wartime history of the castle.

Though the government paid some compensation at the end of the war, the money was not used to rectify the damage. Most of the contents (nearly 8,000 lots) were sold in a marathon series of sales held over 7 weeks, between 15 April and 19 June 1947, conducted by Maple & Co. with Thomas Wyatt, a local firm (not Christies or Sotheby's). The pictures and sculpture fetched only £21,000, and the total for the whole series of sales was a mere £140,000. The Regency state bed failed to reach its reserve. The crimson silk on the bedroom walls found no bidders. A stuffed bear fetched £1, and the copper coal skuttles – eagerly bid up by local farmers' wives – made more than many valuable pictures. (After the first week London dealers like Partridge gave up attending as it was so far away).

The dispersal of the contents made it impossible to open the house to the public as a tourist attraction (although Chatsworth, Longleat and Arundel Castle all opened in 1947 – thereby securing the future of even larger houses – and more locally, Levens Hall was opened to the public in the same year. The empty shell soon deteriorated, and attempts by the 7th Earl after inheriting in 1954 to let the place as a police college, forestry school, or special council institution came to nothing, and the Historic Buildings Council was unable to recommend financial aid for preservation of Lowther. The reluctant decision was therefore taken to sell the house for demolition, but to retain the outer walls 'as a familiar and well-loved feature of the beautiful parkland in which it stands'.

The stables were used after the War as granaries and piggeries for the Home Farm, and this use continued in the 1950s. The old grooms' quarters in the east wing of the castle (facing the stable yard) were now converted into staff flats. The interior of the main part of the castle was sold in November 1956 to Thomas Oakley (Luton) Ltd who dismantled it and sold the fittings on the site in three sales in 1957. For the next 20 years the shell of the castle formed a stable landscape feature at the heart of the park.

In 1977 listed buildings consent was applied for, but refused for the demolition of the stables. Though still roofed, the buildings round the stable yard have stood empty and decaying since then. The shell of Smirke's castle has also begun to decay rapidly in recent years. In the winter of 2001 there were substantial collapses of masonry on the south front including the top of the central gable smashing the carved tabernacle work there and part of the porch parapet below; the upper storey of the south west link has also recently fallen down.

4.3 Landscape History

(The figure numbers referred to in this section are illustrated in Appendix IV and should be looked at in conjunction with this section)

Hugh Lowther was given a licence to enclose 200 acres of land for a park in 1337 and since at least the early 17th century the landscape has been an important focus of attention. The gardens have been developed during the 16th, 17th, 18th and 19th centuries and enjoyed a final burst of activity during the time of the 5th Earl of Lonsdale, who inherited in 1882 and lived until 1944, some eight years after the Castle closed, in 1936. Thereafter, the gardens have declined into their current state, where the occasional remnant of earlier planting and ornament looms out of the encroaching vegetation.

4.3.1 17th Century

The mediaeval manor house was extended in the 1570s, and then transformed between 1628 and 1664 by the rebuilding and extending that took place under Sir John Lowther (d.1637) and his son, John (cr. Baronet 1639, d.1675). The former rebuilt the central range of the house in 1628-30. To the north of the Hall, he created an inner court, framed by new wings, and beyond, a wider, outer court, flanked by stables, and closed by a gatehouse[3].

The latter, the 1st Baronet, dramatically enlarged the house and gardens and left a remarkable account of his activities, or 'Memorable Observations and Remembrances of the House and Grounds at Lowther', starting from the 1640s, which provides fascinating evidence of the contributions made by different generations to the layout of the landscape[4]. He notes, 'My greate Grandfather Sir Rich. Lowther walled the low Orchard aboute, and my father and I the high Orchard'. Sir Richard's son, Sir Christopher Lowther, repaired the wall 'about the new parke, and was a great lover of the Deare, and made the parke stanch'.

It was the 1st Baronet's father who 'repaired and new walled most part of the owld parke', and who also 'walled Jackcrofte aboute, and felled the wood'[5].

In 1640-1, shortly after coming into the estate, the 1st Baronet built the 'Gatehouse and Clostered Walke', which must have formed part of the courtyards to the north of the house. He also 'translated the garden, which was in 2 parts, made the garden at the Pidgen Cote, and that adioyninge to the high Ct., which was nothing but netles and quarie'.

In 1658, Sir John, 'planted the Pidgen Cote Garden, and the high end of the Brodegards with frewte trees, which I had from one Peter Hardcastle at Burrow briggs, a Gardener that planted with most Gentlemen in the north parts, beinge of the best sort of frewt the north afforded; which cost me 2/- a tree besides his waiges of cuminge and goeinge out of Yorkshire, and planting them'.

In 1669, a new kitchen garden was walled in, 'all other places proper for that use being converted in Orchards, and Plantation of Trees for shelter and ornament, since the house stands soe exposed to winde and wether, and that beinge low, and the soyle most of it deepe is fitt for rootes and for the Kitchinge, and freest from shade, and best for the sun, and neare for manureinge.'

The 1st Baronet lived at Lowther for almost forty years. Under his care, the estate flourished, despite the problems and economic difficulties experienced during the civil war. He paid particular attention to enlarging his property and enhancing the productivity of his land. As he recorded, he surrounded new enclosures with walls and thick hedges, cleared the land of stones and bracken, planted oak, ash and birch to provide shelter from the winds, created and expanded the orchards, limed and manured his fields and, above all, brought water to irrigate areas that had hitherto remained dry.

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[3] M.H. Port, 'Lowther Hall and Castle Illustrated', *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, 1981, p.191.

[4] Carlisle Record Office (CRO), D/LONS/L3/1/2.

[5] The Baronet noted that the crop of oak trees brought in nearly £400. He also indicated that both he and his father had set more acorns, for the future 'use and orniment' of the estate.

A rather schematic survey of the house and park was drawn up in 1683, just a few years after the death of the 1st Baronet (Fig.1/1). There is ample evidence of the splendour of the Hall, the gardens and the park by that date. The courtyards of the house extend to the north and, to the south, there is a sequence of garden enclosures. Close to the Hall, there are formal lines of trees, possibly evidence of the kitchen gardens. To the south-west, are two highly ornamental enclosures. One clearly features a simple parterre, characteristic of a layout which might have been found fifty years, or so, before[6]. The most southerly is a much more elaborate parterre, possibly a more recent, fashionable, development. There is also a small fish pond to the south-east of the house, just at the edge of the 'old park' that had been walled by Sir John, the elder, in the first half of the 17th century.

The most significant aspects of this survey is that the southern gardens are apparently surrounded by an enclosure or wall erected to provide shelter. Today the whole of the western side of the gardens is contained by a sharp escarpment, emerging as a high, rocky cliff along the south-western edge. Along the whole length of the gardens, the cliff has been supplemented by a monumental stone wall – the Terrace which acts as a retaining wall for the gardens (Fig.1/2). The appearance of the edifice – which displays different styles of stone construction – might suggest that it has been built up over a long period. This is certainly not conclusive, however, as recurrent rebuilding and enhancing must have gone on over many centuries, and continues today. Whether constructed all as a piece, or – more likely – over several generations, the result of this massive piece of engineering is that, to the south of the house, a platform has been built, which facilitated the creation of extensive gardens. To the south-east, the gardens are built into the side of the hill. To the south-west, from the edge of the garden platform, the land falls dramatically down to the River Lowther. This means that the panoramic views afforded from the top of the escarpment, across the countryside to the west, were always remarkable. This escarpment wall remains one of the most striking aspects of the gardens today and it was a feature that was exploited in a variety of ways over the centuries.

By the 1680s, the 2nd Baronet, another Sir John, had become dissatisfied with what had been left to him, and set about enlarging the house and grounds.

> 'I came therefore into the Country, and finding noe garden nor house to tempt my Posteritie to live at, as is most assuredly their Interest, I formed my design therefore of beautifying the Seat, and making it so convenient, that those that should come after might have no excuse in seeking their ruin by seeking out another habitation.'[7]

This commitment to rebuilding and planting was not unusual in men close to the court at this time. The King had a passion for gardening. Daniel Defoe remarked that, the 'King began with the Gardens at Hampton-Court and Kensington, and the Gentlemen followed every where, with such Gust that the alteration is indeed wonderful thro' the whole Kingdom'[8].

The gardens were extensively developed. At the start, there was considerable remodelling of the ground, where the 'mighty irregularities' and 'all that rock' were removed and levelled[9] – perhaps a suggestion that yet more work was undertaken to extend the garden platform. Thereafter, the landscape was laid out on a palatial scale; Sir John recorded that the cost of planting was, by 1697, £1,500[10].

Some elements of the earlier layout remained. For example, the inner and outer courtyards to the north of the house were still extant towards the end of the 17th century. A description of these courts by Celia Fiennes, who visited Lowther in 1698[11], notes that she approached the house 'through fine woods, the front is just faceing the great road from Kendall and looks very nobly, with severall rows of trees which leads to large iron gates, into the stable yard which is a fine building'[12].

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6 This area might also have included kitchen garden produce.
7 *Lowther and the Lowther Family*, n.d., p.4.
8 Laurence Fleming and Alan Gore, *The English Garden*, (1979) 1986 ed., p.64.
9 M.H. Port, 'Lowther Hall and Castle', *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, 1981, Vol. LXXXI, p.123.
10 This compared to some £300 spent on rebuilding the church.
11 Fiennes rode 'through England on a Side Saddle in the time of William and Mary'.
12 Ed. C. Morris, *The Journeys of Celia Fiennes*, (1949), 1982 ed., p.170.

The stable yard, or outer courtyard, was quartered by walks, framing four grass platts, each adorned with 'a large statue of stone in the midst … and 4 little Cupids or little boys in each corner of the 4 squares'. The inner court was approached via yet more steps, and was transected by paths leading to the various doors. Again, the grass platts were embellished with statuary[13].

Despite the retention of some elements of the earlier layout, however, there was a transformation of the house and gardens. There is no doubt that the 1st Viscount devoted much attention to forming an appropriate setting for his new mansion. He wrote in 1688 that, of all trees, 'the Eugh … is the most excellent', 'in walks and groves that are ever Green in everie fine day one sees a Resemblance of Summer, you will find the help it is to Contemplation, the walks, the solitude, the trees, the plants, the birds, the open air, for Gardens have charms indeed that to me exceed all the sensible pleasures of Life'[14]. We can apprehend something of his delight when we examine the view of the 1st Viscount's creation in the remarkable topographical engraving, published by Knyff and Kip in 1707 (Fig.1/3)[15].

The house, in this engraving, appears relatively modest – in height, if not in extent[16]. The gardens extend for many acres to the south. However there is evidence that Viscount Lonsdale's ambitious vision had not been fully realised when he died, in 1700. In 1701, Lord Egremont noted that, though there was 'much gardening about', 'my Lord had he liv'd would have greatly improved them, for he had great designs that way'[17].

Notwithstanding such contemporary reservations, one cannot but be impressed by the scale of the gardens illustrated by Knyff and Kip. These illustrations, of the most notable estates in the land, are – generally speaking – fairly accurate and there does not seem to have been anything misleading about these views. Thus, when we study the gardens shown in the engraving, we must assume that it conveys an accurate account.

The courtyards, on the north side of the house, are elegantly disposed. Sculptural figures and basins of water, as described by Celia Fiennes, ornament these areas. In every other direction, the gardens have been dramatically expanded, well beyond anything associated with Lowther Hall in earlier years. Stretching south, west and east, there is a series of enclosures, flanking several long, axial, north-south avenues. The enclosures are variously planted, some with formal rows of trees and others with denser plantations. From extant yews on the site, it seems that the principal north-south paths, as well as several of the enclosures, were framed with the yew trees that the 1st Viscount so admired (Fig.1/4). A couple of the western enclosures are shown as highly decorative; one *parterre de broderie* lies within a sheltered garden, easily accessible from the house. The other grander parterre might even be the same as illustrated on the 1683 plan. There is a clear distinction between the broadleaf trees, and conifers, as well as between areas such as the kitchen gardens, to the west of the house, and the wide bowling green to the south. Altogether, in scale and in detail, there is a relationship between this expansive layout and that of other great, contemporary northern estates, such as Chatsworth[18].

However whilst the landscape composition at Chatsworth reveals the extent to which every opportunity to exploit the dramatic potential of the Pennine setting[19] – with lavish use of water, fountains, cascade, statuary, variations in scale and level – at Lowther there appears to be a much more constrained vocabulary.

John, the 1st Viscount Lonsdale, seems to have been a man who made a principle of thoughtfully consulting the requirements of his own particular environment. Defending his house, he wrote,

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[13] Ed. C. Morris, *Op.cit*., p.171.
[14] *Lowther and the Lowther Family*, nd., p.7.
[15] L. Knyff and J. Kip, *Britannia Illustrata*, Vol.1, 1707.
[16] For a mansion of this scale and significance, the two stories, plus sub-basement, is a storey lower than might have been expected.
[17] Carlisle Museums and Art Galleries, *A History of Gardens in Cumbria*, 1985.
[18] As at Chatsworth, William Talman - Christopher Wren's deputy as Surveyor-General to the King's Office of Works – was called in to advise on the design of the Hall. Lowther, however, claimed that the design was 'Principallie my Own thought'.
[19] Also illustrated by Knyff and Kip in *Britannia Illustrata*, 1707.

> 'I have consulted strength as well as ornament, suitable to the coldness of our Climate, and necessarie to defend us from the Rigour off the Winters. Some Object that tis too lowe, but when tis considered that this is Westmerland not Italie or France, and that nothing is handsome but what is convenient, perhaps it will not be thought an objection.'[20]

Accordingly, it could be argued that the 1st Viscount recognised the difficulties of maintaining an elaborate garden layout in the face of cold and gales, and concentrated, instead, on providing himself with relatively modest garden enclosures, nestling behind a shelter-belt. However the 1st Viscount was manifestly ambitious and successful, who had determined that he would leave to his successors so splendid an estate that they need never feel the need for further expenditure.

It is clear that the wall around the gardens, probably begun by 1683, was, by the early 1700s, extensive. There can be no doubt that the wall performed not only an important function in differentiating park from gardens and providing shelter, but was also a significant ornamental feature in itself. Moreover, along the top of the western terrace, retained by the wall, Knyff and Kip describe a broad path, to which access was available from the gardens, and via a substantial gate from the northern park. It must be reasonable to conclude that the Viscount, having provided comfort and shelter, understood that the most dramatic landscape effect that Lowther could afford was the magnificent panorama available from the top of the western escarpment.

There is some confirmation of this supposition in an account of the gardens published in 1709. Of Lowther, the Reverend Thomas Robinson wrote that it was,

> 'so much below and at such a distance from the mountains, that all those fierce and rapid blasts of wind, occasioned by the declivities of the mountains, are either spent or strike a level before they reach it. Yet this situation hath so much advantage from the mountain winds, as that they brush and fan the air, and preserve it from stagnation and corruption. It is not only fenced from violent winds by all kinds of forest trees and winter greens as are raised by human art. It hath by nature such a gradual ascent to the house, as makes the avenue to it most noble and magnificent. Its situation is upon a limestone rock, which doth not only secure the foundation, but so fertilizes the earth and soil, as to make it proper for gardens, orchards, terras-walks, and other most delightful conveniences. … the elevation of its situation gives it a most curious landskip of woods, waters, mountains, rocks, towns, churches, and castles, which entertain the eye with a delightful prospect.'[21]

Thus, we find that, at the beginning of the 18th century, Lowther had become of one of the major estates of the north, with house, gardens and park a fitting reflection of the family's status. Already, some of the principal attributes of the gardens had been created. After 1700, the character of the gardens was considerably modified, but it was never fundamentally changed.

4.3.2 18th Century

The 2nd Viscount inherited the estate in 1700. In 1713, he, too, died. His younger brother, Henry, became the 3rd Viscount and displayed his father's enthusiasm for building. Despite this, Lord Lonsdale spent much time at Court and, after a fire gutted the Hall, he merely adapted the west wing of what had been the outer courtyard as his residence[22].

Nevertheless, the family continued to make plans for rebuilding on a grand scale. Lord Lonsdale busied himself collecting 'stone and timber in quantities for the purpose of rebuilding'[23] and commissioning designs for a new layout from major architects. One of the first of these was included in Colen Campbell's *Vitruvius Britannicus*, in 1725 (Fig.1/5). This 'Plan of the Garden and Plantations of Lowther Hall' offers a grandiose, new hall, more-or-less on the footprint of

[20] M.H. Port, *Op.cit*., Vol.LXXXI, p.125.
[21] Nicholson and Born, *Op.cit.,* pp.440-441.
[22] Various dates are given for this catastrophic fire. 1718 is given by J.M. Robinson, A *Guide to the Country Houses of the North-West*, 1991, p.280. Other sources give either 1720 or 1725.
[23] Bernard Burke, *A Visitation of the Seats and Arms of the Noblemen and Gentlemen of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol.I, 1855, p.28.

the old. More startling is the recommendation for the gardens. The layout immediately to the south of the house makes some changes to that shown by Knyff and Kip. The simple geometry of the latter has been enriched with a little *broderie*, and the bowling green has been elaborated. At the southern end of a long, wide walk, there is a 'green house', presumably to accommodate the ornamental trees in tubs distributed through the garden. Interestingly, the gardens to the south-west of the house are not shown at all; perhaps an acknowledgement that they required little improvement. It is to the south-east that significant change is made.

The plantations depicted by Knyff and Kip to the east and south-east of the Hall were in the area described as 'Jackcrofte'. Here, the trees had been felled, in the 1630s, and a new plantation started with acorns, protected by new walls[24]. It is probable that the trees shown by Knyff and Kip were the very ones planted three-quarters of a century before. In the plan of 1715, however, the Jack Croft plantations are transformed by the introduction of formal walks, leading to a grass platt at the centre, and a triumphant stone figure atop a plinth. Further to the south, is drawn a long, rectangular canal, adjacent to a wilderness, traversed by diagonal paths. This canal was obviously on the site of the small pond depicted in 1683. Interestingly, analysis of the topography of the gardens today reveals that the canal would have been built on the top of a steep bank, and would have required extensive engineering. Taken altogether, the new plan for the landscape offers grandeur and fashionable sophistication, suitable for one of the most significant estates in the country.

Is there any indication that these gardens were, in part or in whole, laid out at Lowther? There are some texts which seem to take it for granted that this was so[25]. In order to check this, we need carefully to investigate views and surveys made at a later date. One painting, by Matthias Read, dating from c.1725, presents a view of Lowther from the north (Fig.1/6)[26]. While this conveys a powerful image of the grand entrance approach and the newly refurbished and classicised church, as well as the courtyards to the north of the Hall, it gives little information about the layout to the south, except to reveal the dense, wooded back-cloth that provided a handsome setting for the front elevations of the house.

More informative is a survey dated 1732 (Fig.1/7). This includes the layout to the south of the house, showing the wide shelter-belt of trees along the western escarpment, protecting a series of rectangular, garden enclosures, open lawns and plantations to the east. There is, however, little evidence that the 1725 plan published by Colen Campbell had been effected. The main impression is that the grounds appear to be overwhelmed with trees, and perhaps even neglected[27].

The next survey dates from 1754, and was undertaken by Francis Richardson (Fig.1/8). It implies that the strictly geometric character of the gardens was beginning to be overlaid by something more informal – though, again, possibly nothing more than the informality of encroaching woodland and further neglect.

The neglect might well have been a mark of the fact that, in 1751, Lord Lonsdale had died, leaving the estate to his great-nephew, Sir James Lowther (cr. Earl of Lonsdale and Viscount Lowther, 1784, d.1802). The latter soon set about commissioning plans for the recovery of the grandeur of the Hall and grounds at Lowther. It is likely that he first had improvements made to the old west wing of the house, and then turned his attention to the landscape. For the next fifty years, or so, he seems to have searched for inspiration and an ideal solution.

Richardson's survey of 1754 was followed by striking proposals for a new layout (Fig.1/9). The axial distribution of lawns extending to the south of the house and ornamental gardens flanking

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[24] See footnote 3.

[25] For example, Dorothy Stroud notes of Capability Brown's 1763 plan for Lowther that it showed 'the canal being recast as a long pool of irregular outline'. *Capability Brown*, 1975, p.115.

[26] Illustrated in John Harris, *The Artist and the Country House*, 1985, p.153. In the collection of Mr. and Mrs. R. Cavendish, Holker Hall, Cumberland.

[27] A Survey of Lowther and Adjoining, July 1732, CRO Carlisle.
It is also worth noting that, in 1715, 'Sir Henry Lowther "left Penrith and Lowther in possession of (Jacobite) rebels ... the Rebels were rude, in defacing some Statues, and spoiling the Garden and Trees"'. Carlisle Museums and Art Galleries, *Op.cit.* Not long thereafter, of course, much of the house and immediate grounds were destroyed by fire.

to the west and the east still reflected the earlier layout. In every other way, however, the proposed change was dramatic. At either side of the central lawns, the shrubberies 'seem to sweep forward like the motion of waves on the seashore'[28], with graduated rows of flowers, shrubs and trees lining the front edge of the 'waves'. To the east of the shrubberies, a body of water was clearly depicted, taking on a much more informal character than the long canal proposed by Campbell. To the west, the rectangular enclosures that had remained a distinguishing feature of the Lowther gardens for perhaps a century or more, were to be replaced with a wilderness cut through with meandering walks, leading to open glades scattered with specimen trees, probably evergreens, such as cypress or juniper.

Beyond the lawns, shrubberies, dense woods and groves, the open landscape, to both north and south of the house, was scattered with copses and belts of trees, replacing the formal avenues that marked the northern park and the continuous drifts of woodland to the south.

The majority of Richardson's recommendations remained on the drawing board. Jeffrey's *County Map of Westmorland*, dated 1770 (Fig.1/10), is not detailed, but it does indicate that the formal avenues to the north and rectilinear garden enclosures to the south of the Hall still remained[29]. Richardson's proposals, however, do mark something of a watershed, in the insistent removal of the rectilinear enclosures, formal paths and long avenues that had characterised the gardens for so long.

Lord Lonsdale continued to commission plans from leading architects, including Matthew Brettingham, 'Capability' Brown, and Robert and James Adam. Despite his vast wealth, this notoriously tyrannical and parsimonious man could not bring himself to embark upon the colossal expense of a new home and grounds. The collection of plans is, in itself, an significant witness to the various debates about style that were raging during the second half of the 18th century.

In 1763, 'Capability' Brown produced a set of at least six plans for 'remodelling the grounds and park at Lowther'[30] and for a new house. The latter was developed in some detail and the design is very similar to that for Croome Court, Worcestershire, built under Brown's direction in 1751-2. For the landscape, Brown's approach was even more dramatic than Richardson's (Fig1/11). Instead of the emphasis being just on the southern layout, the full extent of the gardens and park to the north and south of the house are embraced within Brown's vision. To the south of the house, the geometry of the late 17th century has been overwhelmed by a tidal wave of a design which carries all before it. It is a far more dynamic creation that the prim, orderly waves of the shrubberies proposed by Richardson.

To what extent was this layout realised? The only pictorial evidence remains Jeffrey's 1770 survey of the county, described above. This seems to reveal that Brown's proposals might have commanded a little more response than those of his predecessors. However the ornamental gardens and park still appear to be dominated by the rectilinear patterns of a previous age – and, thus, certainly not by Brown's comprehensive vision. However a large, serpentine lake, possibly inspired by Brown now lies at the south-east of the house.

Excellent records of several years' 'Disbursements on account of Garden's Plantations and Nurseries', the first of which dates from 1762[31], still survive. For example in 1762 the blacksmith was paid over £3 'for Ironwork, for new Wheel Barrows and mending Do., some repairs at Garden Cart, Sharping Mattocks and Wedges, Iron Teeth for new Harrows Mending Scythes Forks and Rakes, and for some plates and nails in repairs at Stove Shutters etc.'.

Over the next few years, extensive landscaping and gardening work was being undertaken. In 1762, £213 0s. 7d. was paid to 'Labourers about the Gardens and Nurseries planting Trees at the Head of Buckholme Flatts, in the Park and by Greenriggs pond'. Seeds and 'flower roots' were brought in. Rope was bought 'to take up young Oaks in Yanwath Wood in order to replant them in Buckholme Flatts'.

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[28] Mark Laird, *The Flowering of the Landscape Garden. English Pleasure Grounds, 1720-1805*, 1999, p.121.
[29] British Library.
[30] CRO, C129.
[31] CRO, D/Lons/L3/4/1.

In 1763 roses, lime and willow trees, fruit trees and 'Quicks and Thorns' were brought in and planted for ornament and use. The latter were sited near Greenriggs Pond and were carefully weeded and thinned in 1764. The majority of the plants and equipment was brought in from northern towns, including Pontefract and Sheffield. In 1764, however, some 'Italian Tuberose Roots' were bought, a reflection of the fact that many of the owners of the great estates were forging strong links with gardens and nurseries overseas.

The accounts continue until 1767 but despite the clear evidence of great effort and expense, the layout of the park and gardens did not undergo the massive changes suggested by Capability Brown in 1763.

Brown returned to Lowther in about 1771, after which he produced another drawing for 'remodelling the grounds', which focused on 'an area some way to the south of what had by then been accomplished' (Fig.1/12)[32]. This was associated with yet another proposal for a new house. Brown's charge for the journeys and proposals was £200, a sum which was eventually paid in 1780, and does not indicate that Brown himself spent significant time supervising works at Lowther[33]. Nonetheless, this is an interesting plan and a comparison between the proposals of 1763 and 1771 reveals something of the characteristic development of Brown's style.

This collection of plans, produced over twenty years or so, probably did promote some, albeit modest, changes in the landscape. If nothing else, the persistent repetition of recommendations for greater informality in the landscape, a more flowing approach to the house and more curvilinear designs in the southern gardens and the removal of the old-fashioned style of previous ages, must have altered the way in which the landscape was managed. Thus, changes might have been gradual, but a new 'Plan of the Park and Demesne lands of Lowther, the seat of the Right Honourable Earl of Lonsdale, with some alterations by John Webb, 1807' (Fig.1/13), produced some five years after the death of Lord Lonsdale, does imply that Brown, the dominant figure of the 18th century English landscape style, had made his mark at Lowther.

4.3.3 19th Century:1800-1844

On Lord Lonsdale's death in 1802, Lowther passed to a distant cousin, Sir William Lowther (cr. Earl of Lonsdale, 1807). By 1806 work had begun on Smirke's new castle.

In any comparison of Robert Smirke's design for what was now Lowther Castle, and John Webb's 1807 plan of the park and gardens, the latter comes out a poor second. The landscape layout is, in many ways, much less resolved. The plan reveals that, by 1807, the gardens represented an eclectic mix of the old – though slightly modified – rectilinear layout of the western half of the gardens, and a more dynamic and informal vocabulary elsewhere, especially to the north of the Castle, where the approach avenues have been replaced by open parkland (probably the result of Brown's intervention).

The plan shows a layout to which change had happened, piecemeal, over a number of decades, after which it had had a new building imposed on it, the style, scale, character, and even the footprint, of which was altogether bolder, larger and more flamboyant than anything that had appeared there before.

Webb was a capable and, at times, impressive designer and was usually responsive to the local character of a landscape, as is demonstrated in the rolling, pastoral layout he created at Maer Hall, Staffordshire. Even though Webb's 1807 plan of Lowther is probably a survey, with a few modifications, there is a suggestion that he was conscious of the site's distinctive topography. The grain of the sharply-contoured land-form is shaded in, and it seems clear that Webb wished

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[32] Stroud, *Op.cit.*, p.115.

[33] Evidence that might contradict this assumption, and imply a close connection between Brown and his patron, is the fact that, in 1774, Lancelot Brown's son, having determined to enter politics, 'chose to seek the patronage of Sir James Lowther'.

> 'Sir James's influence was by now enormous, and the notoriety attached to his electioneering methods in proportion, Alexander Carlyle describing him as a 'madman too influential to be locked up' and one who 'used every species of threat, fear, menace, and all the engines of distress and persecution' to gain his ends'. Stroud, *Op.cit.*, p.174.

the thrust and detail of the design to highlight the shapely, sculptural quality of the topography. Nevertheless the composition is unresolved. It does include the central elements of the Lowther gardens – the terrace walk in front of shelter-belt planting along the western escarpment, the plantations and lake to the east and the open lawns stretching southwards from the house. The addition of individual, freely-flowing shrubbery beds, appear as incidental, and somewhat fussy, manifestations of a passing fashion.

Despite the disappointment of this plan, the landscape successfully provided a fitting setting for the new Castle. Views to and from the Castle, and the panoramic prospects of the surrounding scenery, were central to the experience of Lowther and were the focus of contemporary commentary.

> 'The north front, which contains eight lofty turrets, is four hundred and twenty feet long; the prospect from it opening to Penrith beacon-hill – to Saddleback, which rises three thousand and forty eight feet above the level of the sea – and to the mountains of Scotland. … The park and the pleasure-grounds that environ this noble mansion are of very great extent, commanding a variety of prospects, certainly not surpassed, and perhaps hardly equalled in any other part of England. The great terrace is nearly a mile in length, running along the edge of a deep limestone cliff, which overlooks some portion of the park, with its immense forest trees, and its herds of antlered deer'.[34]

This is an immensely Romantic vision of the relationship between man-made building and gardens and the 'natural' landscape. In 1789, William Gilpin published his *Observations, relative chiefly to picturesque Beauty, made in the year 1772, on several parts of England; particularly the Mountains, and Lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland*. This proved immensely influential, and visitors began to flock to the remoter areas of the country, in order to celebrate a landscape that was seen to connote pure, brave – and specifically native – qualities, the importance of which was heightened in the early 19th century, when Napoleonic wars excluded British travellers from foreign fields[35].

This contextual understanding of the development of both Castle and landscape of Lowther, in the early 19th century, is essential. It helps to illuminate the ambitions of Sir William, later Lord Lonsdale, who was 'as beloved by all as his predecessor had been hated'. It underlines the extent to which the most powerful incident in the Lowther gardens at this time was the panorama that was made available by the western Terrace. It also explains the warmth of friendships that existed between the Lowther family and Wordsworth, or Thomas Wilkinson, Quaker, poet, and owner of a small plot of land at Yanwath, that lay between Lowther and Penrith.

There is a record of Wordsworth and Wilkinson walking along the banks of the river Lowther, and visiting Lord Lonsdale together. Wordsworth's poem, written in c.1806, was a reflection on this occasion.

> 'Spade! With which Wilkinson hath till'd his lands
> And shap'd these pleasant walks by Emont's side,
> Thou art a tool of honour in my hands;
> I press thee through the yielding soil with pride[36].

A letter from Wordsworth to Wilkinson, dating from c.1806, asks for assistance in recommending his brother-in-law to the Lowther estate[37].

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[34] *Ibid.,* p.29.

[35] To some degree, the same motives inspired the creation of magnificent, castellated mansions such as Lowther Castle, replete, as it was, with evocations of the ancient authority of English warlords. It is unlikely to have escaped Lord Lonsdale's notice that the proud front of the Castle faced Scotland, from which country had issued Jacobite rebels, who threatened Penrith in 1715, less than a century before.

[36] Wordsworth's poem – perhaps not surprisingly – inspired some mockery. Nonetheless, in his honourable pursuit of manual labour, Wordsworth was manifesting the same attachment to robust simplicity that had informed his love of the Lakes.

[37] 'My Brother in law Mr. George Hutchinson, who is now staying with me, tells me that he has reason to think probable that a person who overlooks some of the husbandry proceedings at Lowther will quit his place; and he tells me that it is a place in which he himself would like to be employed, and for which he

Wilkinson described Lord Lonsdale as a 'man of taste', 'fond of planting and rural improvement'. Doubtless as a consequence of this shared taste, Lonsdale asked Wilkinson to open up a walk, two to three miles long, along the banks of the River Lowther as it passed through his estate. In 1805, Lonsdale wrote a letter of appreciation to Wilkinson for having completed this task. Further works were undertaken in following years. The purpose of these walks was to create and exploit opportunities for seeing and appreciating the natural countryside, highlighted by the sound of a stream or birdsong, and by dramatic contrasts of dark, enclosed paths, suddenly illuminated by sunshine and prospect. For example, along one of Wilkinson's walks through the woods shrouding the river, the Castle was abruptly revealed, framed by one of the openings, where 'the morning sun shone bright on some of the towers, throwing the main masses of the building into deeper shade'[38]. A visitor to Lowther, Samuel Rogers, described his delight in another path that Wilkinson had created along the river: 'on one side hanging woods feathering into it or retiring to make way for gigantic docks and other water plants and on the other side noble beech woods now open, now shut and now discovering a lawn or two … it is more unspoilt by man than anything I ever saw'[39].
Wilkinson's influence was not only manifest in walks through the Lowther park. He also entreated Lord Lonsdale to create a route linking Lowther with Ullswater, which poets valued 'over all our English Lakes'. From this path would be afforded 'a most sublime scene the solemn majesty of Patterdale mountain and the deep stillness of Ullswater'. The creation of such a walk would serve three, equally valuable, purposes: it would open 'communication between villages', employ the poor and would 'be the greatest accommodation to those of Taste and Intelligence in this kingdom who annually visit the Lakes'[40].

At the turn of the 19th century the dramatic prospect afforded from the western Terrance was seen as one of the most remarkable landscape creations. At this time it was enriched and appreciated more than ever before.

Evidence of planting still extant on the site, confirms that much careful attention was devoted in this period to enhancing the Picturesque[41] character of the terrace walk. A run of handsome beech trees – remarkable for their height in such an exposed environment – lines the northern edge of the terrace, the boughs encouraged to hang over and frame the walk (Fig.1/14). Further to the south, the skyline is articulated by the dark and jagged silhouettes of Scots pine and silver fir, planted in the first half of the 19th century. From the terrace, the contrast between the close, textured greenness of the sheltering vegetation, and the views afforded across the open countryside for miles around, must have been compelling, then, as they still are today (Fig.1/15). It seems to have been at this time, too, that the Terrace was extended, so that it ran well beyond the gardens to the south.

During the early years of the 19th century, the Lowther gardens and landscape benefited from some of the most sensitive interventions. A sequence of delightful, pen and ink drawings of the Castle, from various aspects, by J.C. Buckler, dating from 1814-15 is a good example . One view, of the north-east elevations, shows the dramatic outline of the building, embowered in trees to west and east; another portrays the southern elevations of the house from the gardens (Fig.1/17)[42]. The same artist produced a water-colour painting of the landscape panorama, as viewed from the Terrace, in 1817 (Fig.1/18)[43].

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deems himself qualified. I understand that Mr. Luff has already mentioned to you this his wish, and that you were so kind as to say that you would make enquiries into the business, and if you found the person in question did quit his situation that you would do all in your power to further Mr. G. Hut … I was pleased to hear this, and trouble you with the present letter, in consequence of my knowledge that Mr. George H is very anxious to be employed in such a situation, in preference to farming; and I beg leave to add my opinion that as far as I am entitled to judge, I deem it likely that he would give satisfaction to his employer; as he has much experience, and is judicious and steady.'
British Library, Wilkinson Papers, Letter of c.1807, Add 38198, f36.

[38] Mary Carr, *Quarterly Examiner*, Vol.16, p.334, Society of Friends, quoted by Percy, *op.cit*., p.223.

[39] P.W. Clayden, *Samuel Rogers and his Contemporaries,* Vol.1, 1812, p.99.

[40] British Library, The Wilkinson Papers, *Op.cit*.

[41] The terms 'Picturesque' and 'Romantic' are not precisely interchangeable. The Picturesque taste for detail, contrast, intricacy, and strongly-defined views, undoubtedly initiated a growing appreciation of the Lakes. When the quality of that appreciation became intensely emotional, then the Lakes, in turn, were invested with Romantic authority.

[42] British Library, Add 36390.

[43] British Libray.

Without question, in the 19th century, even more than in earlier years, it is not possible to divorce an appreciation of the gardens in the immediate vicinity of the Castle, from the wider landscape that lay beyond. It was the attention to the emotional experience of the landscape, rather than to the masterplan of the gardens, that characterised developments in these decades.

The more practical and economic functions of the gardens continued to develop. Two icehouses were in place by 1821, as was the decoy pond, designed to assist in the pursuit of duck shooting[44]. At the same time, there are accounts of drains being dug, fences and gates being mended. In February, 1822, 652 trees were blown down, in the Jack Croft plantation, the park, the gardens, and elsewhere on the estate[45]. In the following month storms had damaged two or three of the ancient yews, as well as the 'best oak tree in the jack croft, always called the king', and the,

> 'fine cedar tree in the terrace garden which your Lordship will remember as having for a long time been (there), .. covered with lead, is so much shaken at the root that it must of necessity either be taken down or permanently supported by pillars of iron, this accruance is greatly to be lamented on account of the rarity of so ornamental and stately a tree.'[46]

As well as dealing with damage, new planting was taking place. In February, 1822, 'judas trees' were planted. The introduction of plants such as these, *Cercis siliquastrum*, is evidence of richly ornamental planting in the gardens at this date.

The gardens at Lowther did not command universal acclaim. In 1831, in the *Gardener's Magazine,* J.C. Loudon, acknowledged that the 'grassy terrace, not connected with the house', was 'one of the finest things of the kind in Britain'. He also admired the noble park, and the 'extensive prospect' from the entrance front. But he was damning of the 'great error' of creating 'no prospect at all, not even of the home grounds', from the southern front. Still worse was the 'lamentable fault' of the fact that the building was too low, and therefore 'totally deficient in dignity' and 'the surface of the ground on the garden front is peculiarly unfortunate in sloping towards the house, instead of from it'. Moreover, the lawn was not 'ornamented with flower-beds'. Instead,

> 'an ash tree and a thorn .. neither of them possessing the least beauty, are left upon it, perched on conical heaps of earth; at once actual deformities, and standing monuments of the diseased feeling, as to trees, of whoever ordered them to be retained.' (Fig.1/19).

At about this time, however, flower beds do seem to have been created in the southern lawns (Figs.1/20)

There is no doubt that the land does slope down towards the southern elevation of the house. It is likely that this had always been a characteristic of the site, but it might have been exacerbated by the fact that the principal range of Smirke's Castle had been built somewhat to the north of the original. To the south, under the direction of Smirke and Lord Lonsdale, some levelling was undertaken. On 20th January, 1810, the 'levelling in the South front is about a third done' and by February of the following year, it was finished. Despite the attempt to mitigate this problem, however, it is true that the relationship between the southern elevation of the house and the open lawns was not entirely satisfactory[47].
Elsewhere in the gardens, the dramatic differences in level have been dealt with more sensitively. In 1840, to the west of the Castle, and sunken well below the level of the adjacent wing of the house, lay a 'beautiful flower garden'[48]. The footprint of this enclosure had changed little since

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[44] It is possible that these were in place in the 18th century. The latter appears on John Webb's plan.
[45] CRO, letters to William Nicholson.
[46] CRO. Letter from Lowther, March 23rd, 1822.
Damage from severe weather was not unusual. From another source, *Martineau's Guide to the English Lakes*, 1868-70, p.223, we learn that in 1839, there had been a severe hurricane, 'which broke its way straight through, levelling everything in its path'.
[47] It is a relationship which is now obscured by the imposition of the broiler units
[48] A garden that Loudon had described as ' a small flower garden, in a hollow, shaded by high trees, where fine flowers can never grow'. *Ford's Guide to the Lakes*, 1840, pp.135-137, was a good deal more complimentary.

the gardens were depicted by Knyff and Kip. Though the extension of the Castle had squeezed the garden enclosure, it remained largely intact since the end of the 17th century, despite the plans of designers such as Richardson and Webb, who had recommended its removal.

4.3.4 19th Century:1844-1882

The same pattern, of modest change and adaptation, characterised the latter half of the 19th century at Lowther. At this time the 2nd Earl once again reinforced the family fortune, partly by the opening up of railways establishing closer links between the outside world and the Lake District. He also had a great love of the arts and built up a substantial art collection which enriched the Castle. William was succeeded, in turn, by Henry, the 3rd Earl, in 1872, and George, the 4th Earl, who died in 1882. At the same time, the gardens began to attract more attention from the gardening press. For example, in 1876, the southern lawns were still criticised for being 'broken up by walks that cross each other at right angles, and to a certain extent interfere with the continuity of green surface'[49]. Yet the alternative attractions of the 'magnificent timber'; the 'massive structure' of the conservatory, filled with tree ferns, palms, myrtles, variegated New Zealand flax and a 'number of very large uncommonly well-managed Fuchsias', trained as tall pyramids; and the remarkable feats achieved in the seven acre kitchen garden, 'reached by a broad walk 1000 yards in length', to the east of the Castle; all managed under the direction of the head gardener, Mr. Shand, did much to make up for any deficiencies.

There was also, in 1876, another description of the sunken flower garden to the west of the Castle, now entitled the 'Countess's garden'.

> 'The deep sloping sides of this garden are planted with laurel, kept clipped low; the centre is occupied by a number of geometrical beds, a portion of which are planted in the carpet style. The plants … (were) very effective collectively, the ground being well-clothed, without any irregularity…. To relieve the otherwise too even surface a number of moderate-sized stone vases are used.'

Elsewhere in the gardens, the writer appreciated, too, the 'broad walk, overhung by rows of yews that meet overhead, forming with their dense foliage a shady canopy'[50]. Indeed, apart from the fact that, within the shelter belt to the west of the gardens there were trees that had 'unfortunately suffered for want of timely thinning', the quality of the tree cover is much admired. Imposing 'Scotch Firs', larch, Douglas fir, 'Abies Menziesii' (probably a distinctive clone of Douglas fir, *Pseudotsuga menziesii*), 'Picea cephalonica' (Greek fir, *Abies cephalonica*) , Abies canadensis (Eastern hemlock, *Tsuga canadensis*), 'Picea Pinsapo' (Spanish fir, *Abies pinsapo*), a 'beautiful avenue of Beeches', very large ash trees and 'majestic oaks' are all described.

From the size of many of the trees mentioned it is evident that they had been planted at various times over the previous centuries including the yews that probably date from the 17th century. In contrast, many of the exotic conifers were of much more recent introduction, and must have been planted in the middle years of the 19th century.

The description of the garden published in 1876 also commented on the Terrace:

> The terrace .. consists of an open stretch of closely shaven turf three-fourths of a mile in length, and broad enough to admit a cavalry charge …. No description can do justice to the charming prospect over the distant country, enhanced by the beauty of the immediate surroundings. Here at a glimpse is brought under the eye an immense broad expanse over which are dotted numerous homesteads with sufficient timber at intervals to vary the scene. … Broad grass drives extend for miles through the park, from which at every turn something attractive, not before seen, meets the eye.'

[49] 'Lowther Castle', *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 1876, pp.496-498. The following quotations are taken from the same source.
[50] 'Lowther Castle', *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 1876, pp.534-536. The following quotations are taken from the same source.

This is the Terrace which had earlier seemed the sublime epitome of the Romantic landscape in the early years of the 19th century. Now, it is the 'closely-shaven turf' and the 'charming prospect' which inspire admiration.

This is not to say that the Terrace had substantially altered, rather that the perception – and, consequently, its management – had altered. This is a Victorian appreciation of well-tended, domestic beauty. The enthusiasm for the great variety of trees – both British and newly-introduced – reflects a Victorian taste for collecting and understanding elements of the natural world. The neatly-clipped laurel and the 'well-clothed' flower beds in the Countess's garden – devoid of 'any irregularity' – offer a picture of a well-polished, well-presented garden; just the kind of achievement that *The Gardeners' Chronicle* – the most influential of all gardening journals in the final quarter of the 19th century – was recommending.

In sum, the persistent themes represented in the gardens of Victorian Lowther were industry, native pride and nature refined and managed by man. As a testament to this, in1873, the Earl replanted 'a very wide avenue, commencing at a distance from the north front of the Castle, and extending southwards from it across the park some 2000 yards'.

4.3.5 1882-1944: The 'Yellow Earl'

In the closing years of the 19th century, Lowther gathered a reputation for being 'the fairest seat in Westmoreland', of which there was nothing more delightful 'north of the Trent'[51]. In the gardens, the taste for enrichment continued, this time under the eye of a new head-gardener, a Mr. Clarke[52]. By the early 1880s the south face of the Castle was wreathed in creepers, 'deep-stained Ampelopsis, gay Pelargoniums, Roses, and the Clematis montana and C. Jackmanni'. Outside the conservatory, there was extensive bedding-out, including an image of the Earl's coronet, depicted with *Sedum*, *Mesembryanthemum*, *Echeveria glauca* and 'the Brighton Blue Lobelia'. An expansive Rose Garden was laid out and a comparison between the first edition OS map, published in 1859 (Fig.1/21), and the second edition, of 1898 (Fig.1/22), reveals that a sizeable, rectangular garden had been cleared of trees and quartered with paths. The southern part of the garden was laid out over what had been, in 1732 (see Fig.1/7), the dog kennels. This was the rosery, further enriched with carpet bedding on one side, and dahlias, ivies and herbaceous plants, including, delphiniums, on the other. As well as the roses, clematis of various sorts were trained on poles or pillars.

The picture that is conjured in *The Gardeners' Chronicle* of 1884, is of a garden that was, once again, the focus of great attention. This was now the responsibility of Hugh, the 'Yellow Earl', who succeeded his brother, George, in 1882. The longest-lived of all the earls, he was the last to impose his mark on the Lowther gardens.

The 'Yellow Earl' was tireless in his elaboration of the gardens. In 1893, that influential journal, *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, again included a report about a visit to Lowther, then undergoing 'many alterations'. The Rose Garden, 'surrounded on all sides by lofty deciduous and coniferous trees'[53], was being worked on by Mr. Clarke, and was now more lavish than ever. At each corner, there was a '"bell-tent" of Roses climbing up chains, and each tent contains a seat'. Beds of dwarf roses were augmented by 'masses of herbaceous plants' and 'festoons' of climbing roses, clematis and Virginia creeper. Fountains played at the centre of the gardens and, most striking of all, the display was overlooked from the west by a new 'rustic summer-house', and from the east, by a '"marquee" of climbing Roses'. Here, indeed, there must have been an enchanting and colourful environment, its brilliance enhanced by the fact that the approach was through the 'dark avenue of ancient English Yews'. This description of the Rose Garden is useful, as it helps to date precisely when the garden was being developed. The same journalist returned to Lowther in 1897, to describe the Rose Garden. This time, we have a little more

[51] 'Lowther Castle', *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 1884, pp.455-456. The following quotations are taken from the same source.
[52] Followed, in 1912, by Mr. Jeffrey.
[53] 'Lowther Castle', *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 1893, p.334. The following quotations are taken from the same source.

information about what was planted. In 1897, the report noted almost 500 beds of roses, most of which included 'but one variety'[54].

> 'The Crimson Rambler is trained to poles, and in this way is very effective. The old Rose Vivid is grown as a pyramid, and Madame Plantier was well to the front. Lord Penzance's Sweet Briars are also planted freely.'

As one might imagine, over the following years, there were many photographs of the Rose Garden. One or two seem closely to reflect the 1890s reports, and probably date from the turn of the century (Fig.1/23). This was the largest of the garden enclosures and, in many ways, the triumphant conclusion of the sequence of designs. There is no doubt that it was subject to many changes and renewals over the following thirty years. The bones of the central fountain feature are all that remain today (Fig.1/24).

The Gardeners' Chronicle report of 1893 is also valuable is its revelation that a summer-house was erected in the Rose Garden by this date[55]. As indicated on the 1898 OS plan, there were, in fact, three such summerhouses. The smallest was situated to the south of the Countess's Garden (Fig.1/25). Backed by dark, coniferous trees, and framed with flowers and shrubs, it faced northwards, and commanded a view towards the curtain wall of the Castle's northern terrace, against which the sunken garden was built, much of it below the view-line of anyone sitting in the summer-house.

Another summer-house was built half-way along the Terrace. It was positioned so that it commanded magnificent views across the valley and to the hills beyond (Figs.1/29).
At least three summer-houses had been built by the date of the 2nd edition OS. The third edition, published in 1915 (Fig.1/31) included a fourth such pavilion, situated at the southern end of the Jack Croft Pond, to which direct access, across the garden and up the side of the hill, had now been created from the Terrace summer-house (Fig.1/32). Once again, the introduction of this feature makes clear that, in the early 1900s, the pond was another focus of attention. There was doubtless much new planting, and it was probably at this date that the elegant ironwork, accompanying the steps both to the Countess's Garden and to the Jack Croft Pond, was introduced (Figs.1/33)[56].

The condition of the summerhouses is poor; but the fact that they have survived at all, however, is testament to the quality of their original structure (Figs.1/34).

It is likely that some of the work undertaken by the 'Yellow' Earl was in anticipation of visits to Lowther by the German Emperor, in 1895 and, again, in 1902. Between 1898 and 1915, the publication date of the third edition OS plan, there had been further changes, including the creation of more feature gardens. No names are attached to those gardens depicted along the western side of the garden platform. A 1911 publication, however, lists a 'sweet-scented garden', a 'topiary garden, a lawn with clipped yew-trees on either side; Japanese garden; and a Japanese iris garden'[57]

Although the whereabouts of some of these gardens remains uncertain, we can start with the Scented Garden. The remnants of this garden, laid out just to the north of the Rose Garden, reveal a mysterious circle of piled, rustic stones, each reminiscent of a primitive cairn (Figs.1/36). Attached to the base of every one is a simple, stone bowl, designed to receive the water that must have dripped from the mouth of the lead spout which emerges near the top of each cairn.

In 1911, after the Scented Garden, we find mention of the Topiary Garden (Fig.1/38), which lined one of the west-east paths that linked the garden enclosures. Little evidence of this remains. Somewhat easier to identify, in 2002, are the Japanese Garden and the Japanese Iris Garden. The former, to the north of the Scented Garden, was a riot of bonsais, dainty stone bridges over miniature pools, pavilions, pots and rocks and Japanese lanterns (Figs.1/39). Its

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[54] 'Lowther Castle', *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 1897, pp.307-308. The following quotations are taken from the same source.
[55] This summer-house survived until it was removed in the late 1990s.
[56] The ironwork on the estate, probably produced during the early years of the 20th century, is high-quality, being both robust and elegant. Estate railing, gates, piers and railings survive.
[57] Charles Holme, *The Gardens of England. The Northern Counties*, 1911, p.xxix.

remnants today are barely discernible beneath moss and scrub (Figs.1/40). It is a good example of the many Oriental gardens that were built at this time.

The Japanese Iris Garden lay to the south of the Rose Garden. It later became better known as the Lily Garden. Here, small, ornamental pools, lined with cement, were distributed, to be encrusted with rustic stone and planted with water lilies and irises (Fig.1/41). Yet again, very little remains to hint at what was once there (Figs.1/42).

One of the most striking gardens included on the 1915 OS plan is excluded from the 1911 account of the Lowther gardens. This is 'Hugh's Garden'; it is probable that this was built before the war, and so we can ascribe to it a date of about 1912-13. This vast, new layout, 'created in the image of the gardens at Versailles'[58] was, like everything else undertaken by the Yellow Earl, almost breathtaking in its extent, its complexity and what appears to have been its extraordinarily high standard of maintenance (Fig.1/44). At its centre, lay the covered reservoir that fed the Jack Croft Pond. Today nothing remains except the line of the rides that emanated from the reservoir.

After the First World War despite a return to the old way of life, economic pressures gradually eroded the lavish lifestyle and the vast sums spent on many aspects of Lowther, including the gardens. On January 11th, 1936, *The Cumberland and Westmoreland Herald* reported,

> 'After spending the New year holiday period at Lowther castle, the Earl of Lonsdale left for London on Monday and thus brought to a close, at any rate for the present, his use of the Castle as his Westmorland home. As already recorded in the "Herald", the decision of the Earl of Lonsdale to close down the Castle is due to financial reasons….
>
> Most of the principal rooms in the castle are closed and only a skeleton household staff remains. Similar drastic economies have been effected in reference to the gardens ..'.

Some three years later, the gardens were open to the public. Doubtless, the gardens were reasonably maintained during this time, but they were not renewed or extended. Finally, in 1946, after having been occupied by the army during the war, the Castle and its grounds were closed. On June 14th, 1947, *The Cumberland and Westmoreland Herald* reflected on the end of a long piece of history.

> 'The lovely gardens at Lowther … will now be but a memory…. Sixty acres of smooth green sward made up the spacious lawns and these were broken up by banks of flowering shrubs and forest and ornamental trees and gemmed with beds and borders of brilliant colour. Mr. Jeffrey has been the head gardener at Lowther since 1912, and in Lowther's heyday, he had between thirty and forty gardeners under him. The phlox border, 600 yards long, was filled with 15,000 phlox plants in special varieties ….
>
> Hugh's Garden, by Jack Croft's Pond, was a sight in itself, for here were eleven acres laid out on a plan which the late Lord Lonsdale .. brought back from Versailles.
> The Rose Garden was always a great sight at Lowther, for in extent it was one acre and a third, and 20,000 roses were planted here. It was kept up at considerable cost, for it had been replanted five times in Mr. Jeffrey's day, which means in 85 years…
>
> In addition .. there were the Japanese gardens with still, silent, lily-covered pools, and water plants of all kinds .. (where) Shinto temples and bronze wading birds held a Pelican-like court under Japanese bridges and by willow-patter plates. …
>
> In the springtime daffodils made the lawns into Fields of the Cloth of Gold, for the bulbs were put in by the hundredweight year after year..'.

[58] Douglas Sutherland, *The Yellow Earl*, p.193.

4.3.6 Summary

For almost four hundred years, the gardens at Lowther have reflected the tastes and aspirations of the different Lowther generations. If we read the changes that have taken place in the last fifty years, then we must assume that no-one has any further use for ornamental gardens associated with the remains of the enormous pile that was once Lowther Castle. The sequence of aerial photographs which sum up these years reveals first, the imposition of the broiler sheds on the south lawns and then the outline of the individual gardens disappearing beneath conifer plantations (Figs.1/50).

But although they are almost completely subsumed beneath vegetation, the southern gardens still display much of the character revealed by Knyff and Kip in 1707. The long, axial walks, the sequence of enclosures, the yews, the central lawns, the western plantation called 'Jack Croft', and the Terrace walk, are all, essentially, derived from the 17th century, even though considerably modified and refined in subsequent centuries. Only the lake, which started as a small fishpond, has been subject to significant change. This remarkable survival is one of the qualities which gives the Lowther gardens a claim on the future.

4.4 The Castle: Current Condition and Assessment

The following sections provide a brief description of the current condition of the site. This starts with the Castle and Stables followed by the Gardens.

4.4.1 The Castle

The removal of the roofs and floors on the main building together with the controlled demolition of internal walls has resulted in a structure which is inherently unstable. The action of weather on parts of the building intended as internal work only has weakened the structure over the years: mortar and pointing has decayed, bonding timbers have rotted and vegetation has infiltrated masonry. Although a remarkable quantity of the structure remains in reasonable condition, there is evidence throughout of collapse. A substantial part of the south gable of the central portion of the castle fell during the winter of 2001/02, as did a section of wall to its west, and there is movement in parapet walls elsewhere. Clearly the building is in a dangerous state and access to the public cannot be allowed without proper stabilisation.

4.4.2 The North Forecourt

i) Architectural Assessment

This is an architectural *tour de force* on Smirke's part, which makes clever use of the fall in the ground and contributes to the impressive impact of Lowther Castle as seen from the North Park. Such a terraced 'baroque' layout is unusual in the early 19th century, and has few English parallels. It shows a respect for the previous 17th century layout (and avenue) which inspired it. Though it repeats the shaped outline of the 17th century outer forecourt (as shown in Knyff and Kip), it incorporates none of the old fabric and projects further north than its predecessor, and also has a slightly different, more easterly, central axis (made necessary by the incorporation of the 17th stable range in the east wing of the house, and the now demolished 17th kitchen range and its Georgian domestic extensions in a concealed sub-layout to the west of the new west wing). The present forecourt was constructed in 1810 and comprises two deep terraces connected by a central staircase and two flanking carriage ramps. The semi-polygonal lower terrace is separated from the park by a battlemented retaining wall (like a toy curtain wall) punctuated by 6 small square towers or 'sentry boxes' and with a central, battered, toy fort, gatehouse with machicolated battlements, which forms the principal entrance. This lower terrace is wider than the house and extends in recessed form at either side to provide access to the stables on the east and through a tall gabled gateway on the west to the former kitchen quarters (all now demolished, except for their outer screen wall). The retaining walls of the terraces are constructed of rougher ashlar than the house itself; each large block being marked with herringbone tooling to give an impression of strength.

The solid parapet walls of the two ramps and central staircase originally terminated in pedestals carrying tall circular stone urns carved with fluting and swags, re-used from the previous layout. Only the pair at the foot of the east ramp still survive *in situ*. (If these *are* the only survivors, it would make sense to move them to the central staircase).

The sentry-box towers were originally open to the sky. Four of them now have war-time (*circa* 1940) flat concrete pill-box-type roofs (constructed – like contemporary air raid shelters – of corrugated iron and rough mix concrete). Though an ugly intervention in the original design, these are of some historical interest in their own right.

The upper terrace is narrower than the lower, and admirably frames the north front of the house. It echoes the same half polygonal form as the outer terrace, but with four small circular bastions at the corners, and the enclosing parapet walls are flat-toped, not battlemented. The surfaces were all originally gravelled.

Despite 50 years of little maintenance, the terraced north forecourt of Lowther survives in its entirety and is easily capable of full-scale restoration as a scenic architectural set-piece. (Where a few merlons have fallen the stones are still there and could be reinstated.)

ii) Condition

The masonry of the outer curtain wall is herringbone tooled. At higher levels this tooling remains in good condition, although stones have weathered elsewhere. Stones have been populated by lichens and mosses (which should be protected during any repair work) and there is some ivy infestation, particularly of the forts, which should be kept under control in order to avoid large roots displacing stones.

The higher ground level inside the wall has resulted in its lower portion bulging outwards in various positions – particularly near the plant nursery to the west of the entrance gate - and there is some decay of mortar and loss of stonework at the base of the wall where ashlar turns to rubble. Some reconstruction and piecing in of new stone will be required to ensure the long-term stability of the wall.

To the west, as the curtain wall turns towards the bottom of the gardens, rubblework replaces ashlar below the internal ground level. The condition of the rubblework should be monitored to ensure its integrity. There are some slight signs of loss of fabric already.

Some of the merlons from the wall along the west side of the outer forecourt lie on the ground below. The wall is heavily covered with moss and ivy, and its stability should be established before the garden below is opened to the public. This fall of stonework might be deliberate – the merlons seemed remarkably stable when pushed. The stonework of the entire wall should be checked for stability.

Past repairs to the wall, some of brick, should be removed and the substantial drainpipe run through the east side of the wall, presumably draining the stable yard, could also be treated to be less visually intrusive.

The central gatehouse appears to be in sound condition, although there was no access to the interior. The lead bays of the roof may be oversized, and this, together with past repairs of varying quality, suggest that re-roofing will be necessary. Some stone repair could be carried out to prevent further decay, and missing and broken window glass should be repaired if a future use is to be found for the building. The original inner entrance doors survive and should be retained.

The intermediate towers of the curtain wall have a coarse rubble inner wall to approximately chest height and it is possible that a wall plate and floor ran round the inside of each tower for use as viewing platforms. Four of the towers have flat roofs of the 1940s, which could be removed without damaging the original stonework, as could the brick infill of the embrasures.

Where present, ivy is damaging the stonework of the towers. Tower 6 (counting from east to west) has lost part of its superstructure. Fallen masonry inside this tower could be reinstated, dependant on a decision on how to approach the reuse of fallen stone. Irrespective of this all high level stonework should be checked for stability and re-fixed as necessary.

Tower 8, although apparently the same as others when viewed from the north, is in fact substantially larger. It has an east facing central entrance door with a window on either side with a label mould above, and three window openings face west. It appears to have had a timber suspended floor and may have been panelled at least up to window cill height, as timber grounds still exist in the wall structure. A later brick wall has been inserted to divide the room. It is substantially overgrown with ivy and there is some structural movement evident in the building.

Inner Curtain Wall

The inner curtain wall is of ashlar with intermediate buttresses and has a simple coping. Some coping stones are missing and there is decay of the stone work generally and some stones have lost their faces. Others are being forced outwards by ground pressure. Vegetation is also affecting masonry and it must be controlled, particularly ivy. In general the wall appears to be in worse condition than the outer curtain wall and more heavily overgrown with vegetation, and would benefit from consolidation work. Decay is more noticeable to the west of the central steps than to the east.

The two carriage ramps had ornamental urns at the bottom. These survive in situ only on the west side, and even then it appears as if a top feature is now missing. One of the east ramp urns is dumped behind the north wall of the stable yard, to the west of the entrance gate. The north eastern point of the east coach ramp is now missing.

The central steps are in sound condition. Some later mortar repairs have been carried out and these should be replaced with stone. A modern drainage channel has been inserted along the back edge of the half landing. A margin of paving stones runs the length of the curtain wall between the steps and the carriage ramps.

To the east of the inner curtain wall, adjacent to the entrance to the stable yard, a modern brick and concrete vehicle platform (?) has been constructed. It is visually intrusive and should be removed.

4.4.3 The North Front

i) Architectural Assessment

The north front is the most important surviving feature of Smirke's original design, and is a splendid architectural composition, beautifully executed in excellent pink-grey ashlar stone, typical of English masonry of this period which reached a peak of almost mechanical perfection in the early 19th century. (See Alec Clifton-Taylor, *The Pattern of English Building*).

As a virtuouso demonstration of English masonry alone, this façade is important, but the dramatic silhouette of Smirke and Dance's composition makes it an architectural masterpiece of the Picturesque. It remains almost completely intact apart from the removal of the wooden traceried window frames and large plate glass panes, and, more seriously, the collapse of the upper storey of the 3-bay east link. The oak doors still hang in the main entrance though their bronze handles have been removed.

The symmetrical elevation is divided into seven sections. In the centre is the three-storeyed three-bay entrance-hall block flanked by thin octagonal turrets and crowned by a machicolated parapet, with the porte cochére projecting in front. Behind rises the 90 foot high central staircase tower with circular corner turrets. On either side are three bay, two-storeyed ranges terminating in circular turrets, which originally contained the state rooms. The whole of this central block repeats the Kew Palace format, and survived in Smirke's revised scheme from Dance's original concept. (As Lord Lonsdale told his friend, Sir George Beaumont, Smirke had 'adopted principally the idea of Dance.')

It is one of the key works of English Picturesque architecture, and ideally should be re-roofed to secure its long-term protection. The lower wings to either side mark Smirke's own revision to the design, with flanking links and projecting three-bay rectangular blocks at either end. The east projection disguises the end of the 17th century stable range. The west (originally Lord Lonsdale's rooms and now a façade only) was the first part to be built in 1806 and contained the foundation stone. The recession and scale of these flanking wings contribute substantially to the Picturesque character of the composition of the north front.

The links still fulfil their architectural role in the composition despite being unroofed and partially collapsed; and if consolidated could continue to do so, even without any structure behind them. The east pavilion is still roofed and windowed (though now derelict). The west pavilion is currently an empty three-sided shell. It is capable of reconstruction as a small independent building. This would help to consolidate its structure as well as restoring the symmetry of the front. This was an important ingredient of the Dance-Smirke design which aimed at achieving a Picturesque effect within a symmetrical framework by means of recessing planes and varied heights.

The build-up of masses from the east and west pavilions and links through the state room block, to the central halls and crowning staircase tower is masterly, and retains its intended impact even as a ruin. The long-term preservation of the north front and central tower must be the core aim of the conservation plan. Any further collapse of the fabric would be seriously detrimental to the special architectural interest of the building.

ii) Condition

The original oak front doors, now without their handles, remain in situ and should be preserved. At present they add to the air of desolation within the ruined entrance hall in which a shattered statue lies.

The only other surviving joinery appears to be the doors to the kitchen court at the west end of the north front. These will also undoubtedly be repairable in spite of their age and apparent condition.

4.4.4 The South Front

i) Architectural Assessment

This has a different, less dramatic, character, partly because it overlooks level (former) lawns and lacks the awesome terraced and embattled foreground of the north front, but also because Smirke here eschewed the Kew Castle mode and adopted an 'abbatial' character, more in the manner of Wyatt's Ashridge, and which was considered a more suitable backdrop for the peaceful pursuit of gardening. The main house is deeply recessed on this front, between the stables (on the east) and the former kitchens (on the west). The stables and kitchen were concealed from view by projecting, Gothic, single-storeyed 'cloisters' that on the east later converted to the Sculpture Gallery, and that on the west serving as a conservatory. A further Gothic Greenhouse which once formed a screen along the south side of the kitchen offices has disappeared. The two projecting 'cloisters' make an excellent frame to the main block.

The centre block is symmetrical and two storeyed, with decorative octagonal and circular turrets at the corners. The chief difference from the Entrance front is the central gable, originally with a large traceried ecclesiastical window (which lit the State Bedroom) flanked by two large pinnacles and (until winter 2001) a central spiky, tabernacled, niche carved after a model prepared by Bernasconi, all above a shallow projecting Gothic porch. The central crown of the south gable collapsed in 2001, smashing the porch parapet below. The west link upper storey has also collapsed recently. Most of the windowless shell still survives, however, and forms the essential backdrop to the gardens. (A function difficult to appreciate at present with Sitka spruce planted right up to the walls and broiler units covering the lawns). The projecting Sculpture Gallery on the east side of the front retains its original windows and roof with wooden cusped tracery and round mullions. The windows still retain some of the original large plate glass panes which were technically innovative in 1814 when they were installed.

The shell of the west conservatory survives, but has lost all its glazing (including the glass roof). This should be restored as the conservatory is an important component of the gardens, and a link between them and the castle.

ii) Condition

The inner south wall on the west side of the central tower and the inside of the west link wall were inspected by hoist. The inspection allowed an assessment of decay on these typical sections of wall. A fuller inspection of the structure as a whole was carried out by Charles Blackett-Ord and his observations should be read in conjunction with the comments below.

The wall heads are being affected by weather. Wind and rain is removing core fill between brickwork and stonework and some stones are precariously balanced as a result. Some wall heads will require deconstruction and reconstruction in order to ensure long-term stability. An oak lintel on the west link wall is decaying at its centre, a small timber ground has rotted above and this combination has resulted in stones above being dislodged. Further collapse of the stonework will result in time.

Timber grounds in the wall construction appear to be approximately 2x2 inch in section. Except in instances as noted above, where they have decayed and fallen out, the wall remains stable. Larger bonding timbers, of approximately 4x2 inches in section, have been used where floor joists have been bedded into the wall. These timbers will require replacement as they rot, being

large enough generally to destabilise the construction. Lintels will all need inspection and replacement where decayed.

Inner walls were almost entirely demolished in 1957, although some were partially left to act as buttresses. Two of these support the west wall of the central tower. Some of the stones on the end of these walls, originally intended as core work, will need to be rebedded. It appears that some exposed core work was pointed at the time and there may have been subsequent repairs, however the cementitious mortar is no longer adequately protecting the walls from the action of weather.

The collapsed south gable now lies on the ground in pieces, together with the sections of the porch damaged in the fall of masonry from above. The question of reconstruction should be judged once an approach to the reuse of fallen masonry generally has been determined. Reconstruction is technically possible but in any event the masonry should be left in place and removed archaeologically in order to identify the gable's constituent parts.

4.4.5 The Stables

i) Architectural Assessment

These are the only substantial portion of Smirke's building still to be roofed, their condition, however, has deteriorated during the last twenty years. They date from 1806/7 and were part remodelled in 1893. They occupy the site of the late 17th century stables, though with a different three-sided U-shaped layout (open to the north, apart from a wall). The west range (or east range of the house, such is the ambiguity of Smirke's design) contains some of the 17th century fabric (Smirke's plan L11/10/49 shows which old masonry was retained). It can be seen in a former light-well visible from within the now unroofed section of Smirke's east wing of the house. This back wall is rough cast with red stone window jambs.

The 1st Earl of Lonsdale, who was a keen horseman, Master of the Cottesmore Hunt, and the possessor of substantial hunting stables in Leicestershire, took a close interest in the design of the Lowther stables layout – as is demonstrated in the contemporary correspondence with his agent Mr Lamb, where he gave directions on the siting of the Riding School, the levels and the detail of the paving in the courtyard.

The U-shaped layout is unusual and derives from the late 18th century interest in 'practical' geometrical plans for farm and stable buildings. The stables are finished in the same fine pink-grey ashlar as the house and form an essential part of the overall spreading composition. Nothing survives of the 1st Earl's internal fittings, because they were substantially reconstructed *circa* 1893 by the 5th, 'Yellow', Earl of Lonsdale in preparation for the Kaiser's visit. (50 horses were brought from the hunting stables at Barleythorpe, specially for the occasion and Lord Lonsdale's famous carriages – all painted in the yellow family livery, hence his nickname – were lined up for inspection by the imperial German visitors).

The interior of the stables were then refitted expensively in oak with brass and nickel fittings. The central coach house was enlarged and reconstructed for the carriages and the central gable with clock rebuilt. The work is 'dated' by Lord Lonsdale's impaled arms (Lowther and Gordon) in the centre. These alterations were carried out under the supervision of the estates' own architect J. Bardgett.

The 5th Earl's interior fittings, however, survive only in mutilated condition – thanks to wartime occupation by the army and subsequent use as a pig farm. The original freestone paving has disappeared and been replaced with concrete. The 1st Earl's Riding school on the south side was demolished *circa* 1893 when the coach house was constructed.

The interest of the stables today lies in their external architecture, their historical association with a family of prominent horsemen, and their importance as part of Smirke's overall Lowther composition, and also their unusual U-shaped plan. They retain none of their original internal fittings, and the 1890s interiors are only partially preserved.

ii) Condition

The buildings of the stable yard are substantial, with stone facades and details which respond to the architecture of the main house. The buildings remain roofed and slates run to parapet gutters on the west side and to eaves gutters on the east, north and to the rear of the buildings. The rear of the buildings are rendered and lined as ashlar.

The stables are decaying. The original entrance gates are now missing. Windows have been boarded up. Glass is broken and missing. The yard itself has been laid in concrete which is cracked with plants growing through in places. Rainwater goods are leaking or missing, having not been maintained. Original lead downpipes have been replaced with plastic. Roofs are leaking and water penetration is affecting internal plaster and timber. On the east side, a carriage house roof has collapsed to the floor below. As with the curtain walls, ivy is starting to populate the walls and in some instances is moving masonry apart.

The high quality materials from which the stable buildings were constructed will allow repair, however, existing materials should be reused wherever possible. The slates of the collapsed coach house roof, for instance, are very substantial and of good quality. Oak joinery dating from the 1893 refurbishment remains and should be retained. Some original paving slabs remain within the line of the building. Two lengths of lead downpipe currently lie on the ground adjacent to their partners, which remain in place. They should not be lost. In general, the ashlar remains in good condition.

Stables: East Side
The southeast square tower in the stable yard has collapsed on its north and south sides and should be repaired. Merlons over entrances have fallen inwards and should be refixed. Where downpipes have fallen away, water is soaking stonework and will be rotting internal timber. Temporary repair of the rainwater disposal system should be considered and plant growth removed where it affecting the structure.

Stables: South Side
Two of the seven arched openings on the south side have been partially blocked with stonework. Pintles for the original doors still exist in all openings. The principal beams have been strengthened with iron ties, presumably connected to roof trusses above. This work may date from the 1893 remodelling carried out by the estate architect, Bardgett.

To the rear, render is decaying and will need repair. On the ground storey - where the Riding House was demolished - a modern render has been applied and this is failing in the corners. Elsewhere random ivy growth is damaging the structure and failed rainwater goods are soaking what parts remain. An apparently redundant electricity supply cable is pinned along the rear of the building and terminates at high level.

A single storey quadrant block connects the coach house to the west side of the yard. A modern tubular steel animal gate has been fixed across the inside of the opening through the building, although the original double gates remain on the south side. These require repair, and would provide a suitable model for any replacement joinery within the stable block. The first paint colour on these doors is a maroon. The soffit of the arch has been overboarded and the board material should be checked for the presence of asbestos. The rear of the block has an ogee moulded iron gutter, which is blocked with grass and earth where it abuts the sculpture gallery.

Stables: West Side
The west side of the stable yard reflects that of the east, except that the two towers are substantially larger, with octagonal turrets out of each corner. Rather than an iron gutter as on the east side however, there is a stone parapet gutter, lead lined. The lead is failing and water penetration is visible through the stone, leaving green damp streaks on the stonework below. As on the east side, merlons over entrances have fallen inwards and will require repair. The roof leaks and is affecting internal lath and plaster finishes, floors and remaining internal joinery etc. Re-roofing and timber repair will be required.

Stables: North Wall
The stable yard is enclosed on its north side by a wall, which is decaying. Lean-to structures have been erected against it in the past, further damaging stonework. To the west of the entrance gate, face work has fallen away to reveal the brick and rubble core, and repair will be needed. Immediately below, stones have been dumped. Barbed wire on angle iron brackets has been fixed to the top of the wall to the west of the entrance. It should be removed to prevent rusting iron damaging and staining the stonework.

Stables: Interior & Services
Structural timber has been affected locally where there is water penetration. Plaster and lath and floorboards have also rotted in the same locations and in some cases entire sections of ceiling - joists included - have fallen to the floor. Nevertheless the greater part of the buildings remain in good, if neglected, condition. Repair using established methods will bring the buildings back into sound and useable condition and will preserve the majority of the historic fabric.

The bells and clock mechanism exist and should be preserved. Similarly some of the fine late 19th century stable fittings survive remarkably intact. A stone fireplace has been stored in a room on the ground floor of the west range of the stable block. If it is a survivor of the main house it should be preserved and possibly re-fitted.

Later cast iron soil and vent pipes have been introduced to service facilities in the buildings, one on the east, one on the south and one on the west side. New drainage, if installed, could be more sensitively located at the rear of the stable buildings to better display the architecture. An overhead electrical cable spans the yard from the northeast corner of the square tower to the southeast corner of the stable yard. During any refurbishment, this and other services should preferably be placed underground.

4.4.6 Kitchen Court

i) Architectural Assessment

The very large area occupied by the kitchen, servants' rooms and 'out offices' at the west end of the site was entirely demolished in 1957. Though this involved the loss of historic fabric, including the largest survival of Lowther II, it had little visual impact on the external views of the castle, as the area was entirely surrounded and disguised by tall screen walls and the two south front conservatories, as part of Smirke's early 19th century remodelling. The entire screen wall round the site survives and is of particular interest because it incorporates sections of masonry from Lowther II. The north wall, facing the forecourt – and balancing the stables – is by Smirke, faced in ashlar stone, to match the main block, and terminating to the west in a circular turret. In the centre is the old tradesmen's entrance, a large arch under a gable of steped up battlements. It retains its solid wooden gates. The long west side wall is the most interesting as it contains the rear wall of the 18th century kitchen block extension to second floor level, of rough, rubble stone with square jambed windows now blocked.

The corner buttresses and two blank arched niches were inserted by Smirke in a half-hearted attempt at gothicisation. To the south is the long western wall with buttresses and crowning battlements, all convincingly medieval looking. It is interrupted in the centre by a taller square tower-like structure with corner buttresses and battlements. In a blank niche is an important ancient carving of a seated god, the sole survivor *in situ* of the important collection of carved stones which once adorned Lowther.

The second, lesser, conservatory on the south return elevation has been demolished leaving its back wall as a continuation of the stone screen wall, as far as the gabled and turretted south end of the gabled conservatory. This is not a major loss.

The 'out office' walls require little apart form general maintenance (such as they have not received for 50 years), and they provide a useful screen for whatever future use the area within may be put.

ii) Condition

The screen wall around the now demolished kitchen, servants' rooms and out offices survives. The quality of stonework, particularly on the west wall, is noticeably different to that elsewhere and underlines its greater age. It is of coarse rubble construction with ashlar buttresses and battlements and should be repointed to prevent decay. Some window openings – originally to the second floor of the kitchen block, have been blocked with brickwork. A number of window openings with iron grilles offer intriguing views of the castle from the west. Some of the wall has been capped with a modern concrete coping – it seems that there may have been lean-to structures internally, now removed.

The ancient carving in a niche on the west wall should be inspected by a conservator. It is of interest as a remnant of Lowther's collection of ancient carving (see also 'Stone Platform' under 'Garden Structures').

Ground level within the kitchen court has been raised substantially and slopes up gently from the double gates to the level of the floor on the ground floor of the main house. Below is a mass of demolished masonry and represents the an archaeological record of the former buildings. The question of the reuse of stone is discussed in section 4.

To the south of the kitchen court stood an orangery. The mosaic tiled pavement still exists below moss, but it is otherwise is completely lost.

The east side of the kitchen court is now formed by the back of a cloister which matches the sculpture gallery on the other side of the south lawn. The building is now roofless. Some re-pointing and repair will be necessary on its north wall and the existing timber structure at the north end should be recorded before it is lost. Stone repair will also be necessary if the building is to be re-roofed.

4.4.7 Castle Interior

i) Architectural Assessment

Apart from the Sculpture Gallery nothing remains of the interior of Lowther Castle. The 1957 dismantling was staggeringly thorough, with even the stone flagged floors and stone stairs removed. The internal demolition was comprehensive. The whole of the kitchen area at the west end has vanished and the site was filled up with rubble bulldozed there from the rest of the site, to raise the ground level at that end, forming a gentle slope. (The kitchen and out-offices were a storey below the main rooms, at the basement level of the Smirke design). In the main block all the party walls have gone, as well as the floors, as has Smirke's west cross wall. Only in the centre, does the shell of the axial sequence of the entrance hall, staircase hall and saloon survive, but with none of their surface finishes. In the staircase hall all the stone mouldings were stripped from the columns, and the cantilevered stone staircase itself completely demolished. Only the rough masonry arcades round the staircase tower remain. Otherwise the structure has been picked clean like a dead animal's skeleton, leaving the unstable rubble insides of the outer walls exposed to the weather with serious long-term results[59].

ii) Condition

The interior there a few sparse reminders of the finishes within. Some plaster and corner beads remain to the east of the central tower on the north side and on the south elevation opposite remnants of leather packing for timber window jambs exists.

[59] Despite this thorough internal demolition, one option could be to reconstruct at least some of the missing cross structure to secure the Smirke outer shell for the future. One solution would be to re-roof the main central block and tower, and even to reconstruct the Staircase which was always the principal internal feature of Lowther. (The recent work at Windsor shows that it would not be impossible). The shell of the link buildings could perhaps be treated as open courtyards with their outer walls strengthened and repaired, and the site of the kitchen at the west end converted to a walled garden. The still structurally intact sculpture gallery, and the conservatory (if reglazed and restored) would make splendid visitor attractions, in connection with the restored garden when they are opened to the public, and they would help to give some impression of Regency Lowther.

4.4.8 The Sculpture Gallery

i) Architectural Assessment

This one survival of a principal interior at Lowther is especially valuable as a memento of what has been lost. The plaster vaulted ceiling with moulded bosses by Francis Bernasconi to Smirke's design is particularly good of its type and was the last to be executed in 1814. It is comparable with Bernasconi's plaster vaults at Windsor or Wyatt's Cloisters at Wilton (Wiltshire).

ii) Condition

The sculpture gallery is currently used as a general store for building materials and junk, although a niche opposite the large double doors on the west side hints at its former use. The vaulted ceiling is formed of timber, lath and plaster, and although substantial proportions remain in good condition, at one point the leaking roof has rotted timberwork and removed plaster from the ceiling. There is severe damp penetration of the masonry of the east wall of the room where the quadrant block rainwater goods are soaking the wall on the other side. The room is stone floored and the walls are plaster lined as ashlar. Lumps of Bernasconi's decorative plaster mouldings lie on the floor. These should be set aside for reuse during any conversation or repair work.

The south door to the long gallery has been altered, but the western leaf is likely to be the original.

The east side has a gutter with interesting ornamental brackets, which no longer functions, and a fine lead hopper. The brackets should certainly be kept during any refurbishment and the pointing and condition of this protected east wall is acceptable.

On the west side, the stonework in general is in acceptable condition, although there is low level plant growth and general dampness, which has turned the stone green. Some small wall loving plant species have started to invade. The number of old nails in joints between the stones suggest that there were always climbing plants over this building. One piece of parapet has fallen over the double entrance doors to the west elevation, and lies on the ground beneath and two finials have lost their tops. All could be reinstated during a repair programme. The removal of some of the trees closest to this building will undoubtedly assist in drying the stonework.

To the north of the sculpture gallery is a connecting passage, with a flat roof with skylights. The roof is in a very poor state and should probably be removed and reinstated. The plaster walls have been badly affected by water penetration from the failing roof. Further again to the north, a passage between the west side of the stable block and the castle proper has been propped with timber shores to prevent collapse of floor and ceiling joists which have rotted away completely. At one point it is possible to see up to the underside of the roof structure through two floors, which have collapsed on top of one another.

4.5 Structural Appraisal of the Castle

When Lowther Castle was stripped to its bones nearly fifty years ago it was intended to stand as a ruin for the benefit of future generations. The retention of its external walls and turrets was planned so that these remaining parts should have sufficient structural integrity to stand on their own, without the assistance of all the internal walls, floors and roofs which completed buildings enjoy. That so much still stands today is a testimony to the foresight exercised at the time, but there have nevertheless been significant collapses.

Structural decay over time follows an S-curve by which very little decay occurs initially, followed by a period of accelerating deterioration which levels off into a long tail of gradual decline into oblivion. Lowther has reached the stage of accelerating decay, so there is no time to be lost if its impressive silhouette is to continue to be a major feature in the landscape.

There are two main areas of deterioration of concern today which could not have been obvious in the 1950's. One is the structural instability of the central staircase tower, and the other is the corrosion of iron cramps which is affecting the parapets and battlements. The former could result in a sudden catastrophic collapse, while the latter is a progressive degeneration.

4.5.1 Foundations and Ground Floor

There are no signs of any foundation movement or failure, which would be readily apparent in cracking on the fine ashlar masonry. The foundations have not therefore been examined and no site investigation has been carried out to investigate ground conditions. In fact it is surprising in a building of this size that there are no signs at all of differential settlement, which is a testimony to the integrity of the design and construction.

The site slopes towards the north so the north terrace is some 2 metres lower than the south terrace, which itself is 500mm below ground floor level. The ground floor in the central block was the same level throughout, with internal steps leading down to the north porte-cochére.

The ground floor under the central staircase is built directly on the ground, but there appears to have been a basement at least under the south part of the building on each side of the central block. The evidence for this can be seen in the basement light wells which occur under each of the windows in the south elevation, but there are no corresponding openings in the north side. The ground floor in these areas was presumably suspended timber rather than the more usual vaulting. It appears that the floor itself was removed and the basement filled in using fallen masonry from the internal walls. This has left level ground over which turf has formed which is suitable for public access without much further treatment other than provision for access for the disabled.

Rabbits have taken up residence in the north part of the central hall. They are not a danger to the structure but rabbit holes could be a hazard for visitors on foot.

4.5.2 Walls – Overall Stability

The arrangement of walls and turrets that were left standing after the partial demolition have sufficient mutual buttressing to ensure their stability, notwithstanding the absence of roofs and floors. The main internal cross walls were left as buttresses where they meet the external walls. The building is symmetrical on plan, which is precise about a north-south axis, and in many respects it is also symmetrical about an east-west axis, and many of the details on the parapets and turrets are repeated. This means that structural weaknesses are also likely to be repeated in different parts of the building, and distress in one part can be used as a forewarning of problems in other parts.

For instance the collapse some decades ago of the link between the main block and Lord Lonsdale's room on the north elevation has been followed recently by the collapse of a corresponding section in the south elevation, and the mode of failure is the same. The wall has tipped outwards where it narrows in thickness about halfway up the first floor windows

The collapse of the south-west square turret makes one look at its opposite number in the south-east corner, where it can be seen that the upper part of the turret is supported at ground level on two parallel walls, with a passage running between. In the case of the east turret it is still buttressed by adjacent buildings, so the risk of collapse is substantially reduced.

The central gable on the front elevation has also collapsed recently, probably as a result of excessive wind loading during the very strong gales which occurred early in 2002. This gable is structurally unique in that it is the only free standing, unsupported gable in this building, so it is particularly vulnerable to wind loading. It also had a large statuary niche at its apex which could have contributed to instability. It was noticed that there was poor bonding between the outer faced ashlar and the rubble backing. If the two leaves of the wall separate the strength of the two leaves acting independently is considerably less than their strength when acting together. The mechanism of collapse was therefore probably started by slight movement which sheared any remaining connection between the two leaves, followed by rocking and overturning of the outer leaf shortly followed by the inner.

4.5.3 Staircase Tower – Overall Stability

The parapet of the staircase tower is some 22 metres above the ground floor, and the corner turrets are 4 metres higher still. The walls of the tower are pierced by substantial openings which were originally glazed, so the main structural elements are the circular corner turrets. The turrets do not however start at ground level, but they are founded on, and corbelled out from an intersection of walls 12 metres above the ground. From their bases the turrets are 14 metres high. Three of them carry chimney flues, but that on the north east corner provided an spiral access stair to the roof, as well as at least one flue within the thickness of the wall. Although based on sound masonry the position of the turrets is off centre in relation to the wall structure below so that unless restrained by the tower walls they would fall outwards, in a rotating movement about the corbelled supports. Such movement is occurring and it can be seen in the cracking between the turrets and the walls, and in cracking in the upper parts of the north and south walls in particular. This movement has been documented before, and in 1988 some repairs were carried out on the upper part of the south wall, and two first floor doorways below the corbelling were blocked up. It is clear that movement is nevertheless continuing, and further repairs must be carried out as a matter of urgency.

4.5.4 Turrets

There are thirteen turrets (as distinct from pinnacles) in the roofless part of the building, namely four circular turrets on the staircase tower, two octagonal ones in the centre of the front elevation, four large circular turrets symmetrically placed, and three small octagonal turrets to Lord Lonsdale's Room. The latter are matched by identical turrets in the stable block, but these are not covered in this report which is confined to the roofless parts of the castle.

The four staircase tower turrets have been discussed above.

The two south staircase tower turrets were just out of reach of the cherry picker to be able to confirm the number of flues in each, because the vegetation growing on them obscured their tops. The woody vegetation must be removed, which leaves the questions of the treatment of the turret tops and flues. As they stand the bulk of the masonry is saturated most of the time, which makes them susceptible in the long term to frost damage. If some of the flues were cleaned out some ventilation and drainage would be provided, which would prevent permanent saturation, but there would still be a risk of future blockage from birds nests. We therefore propose that the three turrets are capped with lead on concrete, covering over the flues. The north east turret, which carried a staircase should also be covered in a similar way.

The three turrets to Lord Lonsdale's Room have stone roofs still in place. Each roof is made up of eight triangular stones, the outer edges of which form the corbelled string course. As this much survives we propose to put back the waterproof covering in lead.

The large circular turrets and the two north elevation octagonal turrets had flat lead roofs on timber, none of which survives. We propose that these roofs are not reinstated.

The narrow merlons to all the turrets are loose and move to light pressure. In many cases the stones were simply bedded in mortar, and not fixed down, which due to the exposure has now disintegrated. In most places elsewhere there has been extensive use of iron cramps, which although originally leaded in are now starting to corrode.

4.5.5 Internal Elevations – Structural Defects

There are a number of defects causing distress to the inside faces of external walls and to the remaining internal walls. These include rotting timber lintels over doors and windows, thin panels of brickwork over fireplaces, walls weakened by chimney flues built within wall thicknesses, and built-in bonding timbers.

Most of the main windows on both elevations have masonry arches on the internal face, but some have timber lintels all of which are in poor condition. Most of these are on the central part of the north elevation and in Lord Lonsdale's Room.

The cross walls bounding the central block have suffered most from the weather and water saturation. On their outer elevations extensive pointing is required, as well as some rebuilding, particularly around the base levels of the staircase turrets and the north side square turrets. The reason of these walls being in poor condition is possibly because they were originally wholly internal walls, and so both faces are random rubble which was intended to be covered up and protected. It is noticeable in how much worse the condition of the west part of the building is in comparison with the east part.

The chimney flues are lines of structural weakness, and they take long and tortuous routes from fireplaces to chimney stacks, as can be seen by the large number of soot boxes sprinkled around the walls of the central block. The flues are of greatest concern where they run along the tops of internal walls. The flue coverings are collapsing leaving the thin side walls unstable and causing a risk of small stones and bricks falling off.

4.5.6 Parapets and Wall Heads

All the external walls of the main building are surmounted by machicolated parapets. Originally there would have been lead lined gutters behind the parapets, but these and the roof structure have of course now disappeared. The parapets are a single stone in thickness, built off a string course which in some cases, but not all, comprises large stones that straddle the whole wall. The string course oversails the wall below by varying amounts according to the location.

Because the parapet walls are only one stone thick they are held together with iron cramps and dowels. The problems caused by corroding ironwork have been described above, but whereas with turret machicolations individual stones or small areas of masonry may be affected, in the case of long runs of straight parapet a few corroding cramps can overturn long lengths. This is clearly occurring on the south elevation to the west of the central gable where a section of parapet is falling forward. The corresponding length on the north side is not leaning over as yet, but there are signs of a problem where the corners of stones are bursting off.

The inner part of the wall heads, behind the parapet wall is unprotected rubble masonry. This would originally have been covered by the lead gutters and roof structure and so is now vulnerable to water saturation and vegetation growth.

The corbelled parapets at the top of the staircase tower and around the northern perimeter of the central block have the greatest overhang and are at risk of overturning now that the counterbalancing effect of the roof structure has been removed.

4.5.7 Pinnacles

The pinnacles on the south elevation are solid stone. The central niche has collapsed and will require extensive bonding and doweling to fix it together again. The other four pinnacles on this elevation are sound.

On the north elevation there are two octagonal pinnacles on the porte-cochére. These are built of stone panels, about 75mm thick, infilled with rubble. The panels and those on the front and sides of the porte cochére are fixed with iron cramps, and some of the ribs are loose. Repairs can be carried out using small stainless steel dowels and carefully cutting out the ironwork.

4.5.8 East Corridor

The east corridor runs north/south and linked the Sculpture Gallery to the central corridor of the main building. It passes beneath the south east square turret. The corridor still has the remains of a flat roof with roof lights, but these are in very poor condition and are dangerous.

4.5.9 West Boundary Wall

The wall that now bounds the west side of the site was originally the outer wall of various domestic offices and earlier buildings, all of which have now disappeared. The wall has some small areas of bulging masonry, but it is generally sound.

4.5.10 Sculpture Gallery

The Sculpture Gallery was in the projecting wing on the east side. It is still roofed but much of the plasterwork vaulting is in very poor condition due to water penetration.

4.5.11 West Projecting Wing (Conservatory)

This area mirrors the Sculpture Gallery but it has no roof. The walls are generally sound.

4.6 Lowther Gardens: Condition Survey (See Figure 3 for description)

Nearly all of the detailed planting and hard landscaping in the gardens has now disappeared, however elements of the framework of the gardens, which began in the 17th century and which is so well depicted in the Knyff and Kip plan 1707 does still remain and can be made out.

The Condition Survey of the gardens has been annotated onto the attached plan (See Figure 3). This includes references to the main extant areas of the gardens

4.6.1 Garden Structures

i) Terrace and Steps
From the south west corner of the main house, steps lead down to the garden. They have stone piers, lost and decayed in some instances, and the steps themselves are overgrown with moss.

Iron railings, both cast and wrought, form hand rails along the west side of the erstwhile lawn and down the steps to the garden below. The railings along the edge of the lawn have a top flat D shaped section, which appears to have expanded and snapped at fixing positions. Any repair should be suitably detailed to cope with movement. The cast iron gothic arched sections below can be removed, repaired, repainted and replaced over time. A number of stone cappings to the intermediate and main pillars are missing. Where present, the cappings appear to have had decorative finials of some sort, now missing, as there is a recess in the top with a drainage channel leading from it.

A second set of steps moving south along this terrace is very decayed and damaged, with the lower steps entirely missing. The rubble wall below the cast iron balustrade is also decaying and stones are missing in some places. Stone replacement and repointing is required. Ivy growth has been cut back but this will need to be a continuing process and some roots remain in place.

ii) Stone Platform

An intriguing stone platform immediately to the west of the gothic orangery appears to be made up of parts of an earlier building. It may also have to do with the Lowther collection of carved stone. It is significant and should be preserved, and its stones catalogued.

iii) Granite Columns

At the end of this terrace walk substantial granite columns stand. The top of one has broken away and another stands freely in the centre of the garden. They remain upright and in good condition.

iv) Rustic Cottage

Within the gardens stands a small cottage with clay tiled roof and rustic timber balustrading and posts in the late 19th Century manner. The walls are of stone rubble construction with light blue painted trellis fixed to the outside, designed to take creepers grown from a bed between the stone terrace around the outside, and the wall itself. Casement windows are now missing as are some paving slabs on the north elevation. The timber floor appears reasonably sound, although the roof is clearly leaking and daylight is visible through the ridge. The building is repairable.

v) Bath House

Further west, a massive granite bath stands before the remains of a brick enclosure. The single skin brick structure to its north is rendered both sides and is decaying badly and will almost certainly need complete reconstruction.

vi) Rock Garden

To the west again is a sunken rock garden. At each corner is a simple three-sided hut. The walls are of massive stone blocks apparently constructed dry. The stone is ancient and pitted limestone and its use is significant. (Possibly taken from a limestone pavement?)

The northeast hut has softwood rafters housed in an iron lintel running across the front of the building. The lintel is very rusted and will need replacement. The roof is finished with stone slates on battens. The southwest hut is also of three sides only but has a simple pitched roof on rustic unfinished timber rafters and ridge. Although the roof is heavily populated with grass, this has probably helped to preserve the structure. The northwest hut's roof has collapsed completely, although the walls remain in sound condition and the stone slates on the ground below will almost certainly be useable. The southeast hut has also collapsed completely and the iron beam has completely failed.

vii) Jubilee Summerhouse

At the south western corner of the garden stands another hut with three open gables pointing south west supported on simple timber pillars. The hut has been repaired in recent times and has new clay ridge tiles of similar (but not the same) pattern as the original. Replacement scallop clay tiles are not exactly the same it seems as the original (although this may just be that they are unpatinated as yet). New sliding timber double glazed doors have been introduced. Ivy over growth is significant on the south face (side) elevation of the building and this should be cut back to prevent damage. Ivy is already penetrating below the roof tiles. The interior pine panelling and side windows appear to be original. This building also has a trellis attached to three sides to encourage creeper growth, which has now been completely cut back. The chimney is capped and no longer functions.

Directly in front of the Jubilee Summerhouse the Terrace is protected by a chicken wire and timber post fence. Some magnificent giant masonry steps have been constructed to give access to the field below and an iron gate is fixed at the bottom, the lock is broken but it would be a simple job to repair it. The chicken wire fence should preferably be removed at some point. It is clearly not the intention to break the uninterrupted view from this point over the river valley below.

Stone carving (Shap Abbey remnant?) built into Gothic niche on east wing wall overlooks the Sunken Garden. Feature is shown on early 20th Century photograph.

Countess's Garden - also referred to as the 'Sunken Garden' and My Lady's Garden

The site of the Sunken Gardens now covered with self-seeded scrub and trees.

The north and east retaining walls appear in fair condition although c.5 self-seeded trees are established against the wall.

The east bank of the sunken garden now enlarged to dominate the entire north east garden. It is likely that the bank comprises rubble from the demolished service buildings which ran along the east wing of the Castle.

Historic carriage and vehicle service entrance to Gardens marked by utilitarian timber gates hung on historic dressed stone piers.

The wall is in fair condition except for c.15 metres of renewed wall. The original was damaged in a storm in c.1990. Stone clad on north face. South face shown as concrete blockwork structure.

Historic estate railing with strap horizontal members is set along side the perimeter track.

The north-east pedestrian entrance to the gardens comprises a panelled door set into the c3.5 metre high stone boundary wall. On the north (park) side the entrance door is framed by a marble classical porch with ornate frieze. Both porch and door in fair condition.

Remnants of stone edged steps from sunken garden to raised tennis court.

South end of garden shown as tennis court on early 20th Century Photograph. Location still discernible on site.

Remnants of informal stone edged steps and platform for garden seat. Steps and seat shown on early 20th Century photograph. No hand rail shown on photograph.

North end of Terrace retaining wall

Line of yews on bank against the Terrace

Gravel path shown on top of south and east banks of Sunken Garden on early 20th Century Photograph. Paths now gone.

Grass Terrace path along historic line - fair condition.

Summer house from c.1890 - poor condition.

One oak and three beeches overhanging the Terrace.

Roman Bath

The Rock Garden

The Rock Garden is submerged under self seeded saplings.
The pond structures and stepping stones remain in situ.
Early 20th Century photographs of the Rock Garden provide a glimpse of a small pavilion/shelter and the remains of four rough hewn stone structures remain albeit in a derelict state.
Non of the original rock garden planting survives except for pockets of shuttlecock ferns, Matteuccia pensylvanica

Pool basins and feature stepping stones remain in situ.

A number of small features remain including:
Stone troughs
Remains of fountain head.

The Japanese Garden

Very little of the Japanese Garden exists, only a rough stone cairn which formed the cascade and the pool's concrete basins.
Remains of rough stone built pavilion.

Concrete pool basin
Rough stone fountain cairn
Formal concrete basin

Line of beeches form the east margin of the terrace walk and overhang the walk to provide contrast, shade and shelter along the Terrace walk.

On the OS plans and the 1939 Garden guide plan the west-east path continues to the Terrace. Line of the path now gone.

The Scented Garden is overgrown with well established trees. Only the stone cairns from which the fountains played and their stone basins remain.
Remnants of lead pipe work and fountain heads remain. The path indicated on the Lowther Castle Gardens guide plan is gone. Nothing remains of the planting.
Early 20th Century photographs show rustic furniture, arbours and formal stone features. None remain.

The Rose Garden is also referred to as the Fountain Garden Only a few stones from the fountain remain of the Rose Garden. All the rose beds have been removed and none of the hundreds of roses remains. The area is now fenced and used as a plantation and pheasant rearing facility.

Remains of the rustic rock fountain and fountain basin.

Boundary of named gardens

Broiler Units

Buildings/Structures

Works boundary

The trees shown are in the Arboretum and along the Terrace. All the site is now covered with timber plantations or self-seeded, regenerated woodland. The only exception being the lawns to the south of the Castle, which are set out with the eight broiler units and hard standing.

Lowther Castle:
Garden Condition Survey

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Scale: NTS	
June 2002	**Figure 3a**

The Landscape Agency

Stable courtyard

Site of the Conservatory.
Remnants of historic, mosaic pattern, floor tiles remain.

Dressed stone steps remain although in poor condition. Balustrade shown on early 20th Century photograph now missing.

Stone retaining wall in fair condition steps remain although in poor condition. Cast iron gothic pattern balustrade remains in situ although in poor condition.

Layout of lawns and paths from the Third Edition OS, published in 1915.

7No. chicken sheds set on hard standing on site of the South Lawns.

SOUTH LAWNS
Now hard standing

SOUTH LAWNS
Now sitka spruce plantation south of the chicken sheds to east - west path

The Beech Avenue leads to the Walled Kitchen Garden in the east.

ALPINE GARDEN

The Alpine Garden
The Alpine Garden is overgrown with scrub and trees. The pond structures remain in situ albeit in a derelict state.

HUGH'S GARDEN

Jack Croft Pond

Peg Huck Well

Formal stone steps with cast iron 'Gothic' balustrade

West-east yew walk. The 1915 OS map indicates that the east end of the path terminated in a flight of steps which gave access to the lawns south of the Castle. This is confirmed by photographs dating from a similar time. The steps are no longer visible but may remain underneath an earth bank.

Hugh's Garden
Hugh's Garden was laid out in the manner of Versailles. Nothing now remains of the topiary, hedges, lawns and statuary. The area is now a timber plantation and although the paths remain on the plan they are no longer surfaced with gravel.

Stone faced recess in the bank overlooking Jack Croft Pond - possible location for garden seat.

Jack Croft Pond
The pond is constructed with stone edges which remain and appear to be in fair condition. it is recommended a detailed survey of the pond is undertaken.

Steps between Jack Croft Pond & the Emperor's Drive
Rough stone steps and historic wrought iron balustrade and handrail remain.

The raised formal centre of the garden is overgrown although fragments of the stone steps and wrought iron balustrade and handrail remain.

Formal stone steps with cast iron 'Gothic' balustrade

Summer-house at the south end of Jack Croft Pond

Peg Hook Well

Boundary of named gardens

Broiler Units

Buildings/Structures

Works boundary

The trees shown are in the Arboretum and along the Terrace. All the site is now covered with timber plantations or self-seeded, regenerated woodland. The only exception being the lawns to the south of the Castle, which are set out with the eight broiler units and hard standing.

Lowther Castle:
Garden Condition Survey

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Scale: NTS	
June 2002	**Figure 3b**

The Landscape Agency

SOUTH LAWNS
Now sitka spruce plantation south of the chicken sheds to east - west path

oft Pond

Peg Huck Well

IRIS GARDEN

SOUTH LAWNS
Now open sycamore plantation.

SOUTH LAWNS
Now open sycamore plantation.

survey of the pond is undertaken.

Steps between Jack Croft Pond & the Emperor's Drive
Rough stone steps and historic wrought iron balustrade and handrail remain.

The raised formal centre of the garden is overgrown although fragments of the stone steps and wrought iron balustrade and handrail remain.

Formal stone steps with cast iron 'Gothic' balustrade

Summer-house at the south end of Jack Croft Pond

Peg Hook Well

The Emperor's Drive
Stone surfaced track

Line of South Lawn Central Path is now virtually lost in the sycamore plantation.

Steps and path from Emperor's Drive to South Summer-house
Remains of rustic stone steps and historic wrought iron balustrade and handrail.

South Lawn Summer-house
The Summer-house terminates the principal north-south path which ran through the centre of the South Lawns. It is set on stone steps and would have provided a view of the Castle.
The Summer-house is in a poor state of repair although the rough stone walls are still standing and some stone slates remain on the roof. No decorative features remain.

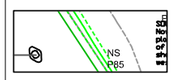
Traditional c. 1.7 metre high estate deer fence to protect the gardens.

The plantation at the rear of the Terrace principally comprises yew to provide:
an all year shelter belt for the land to the east;
a dark silhouette to highlight the limestone escarpment and wall;
a dark backdrop to set off the ornamental trees and shrubs planted along the Terrace.

Planting of lilac and cherry along the Terrace, in front of dark yew planting to provide spring fragrance and blossom.

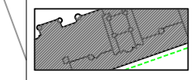
Approximate site of Summer-house remains.
The Summer-house is constructed in a cross formation and is clad internally and externally in rustic timbers. Although the structure is collapsing many of the decorative features remain intact and would provide excellent models for restoration and renewal. Summer-houses of a similar pattern are shown on photographs dating from the early 20th. Century.

Traditional estate gate in good condition.

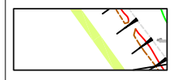


Boundary of named gardens

Broiler Units



Buildings/Structures



Works boundary

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Lowther Castle:
Garden Condition Survey

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Scale: NTS	
June 2002	**Figure 3c**

The Landscape Agency

Concrete pool basin
Rough stone fountain cairn
Formal concrete basin

Line of beeches form the east margin of the terrace walk and overhang the walk to provide contrast, shade and shelter along the Terrace walk.

On the OS plans and the 1939 Garden guide plan the west-east path continues to the Terrace. Line of the path now gone.

The Scented Garden is overgrown with well established trees. Only the stone cairns from which the fountains played and their stone basins remain. Remnants of lead pipe work and fountain heads remain. The path indicated on the Lowther Castle Gardens guide plan is gone. Nothing remains of the planting.
Early 20th Century photographs show rustic furniture, arbours and formal stone features. None remain.

The Rose Garden is also referred to as the Fountain Garden Only a few stones from the fountain remain of the Rose Garden. All the rose beds have been removed and none of the hundreds of roses remains. The area is now fenced and used as a plantation and pheasant rearing facility.

Remains of the rustic rock fountain and fountain basin.

Site of the Rose Garden Summer-house
A Summer-house similar in style to the one near the Sunken Garden was demolished in the second half of the 20th. Century.

New fence to protect pheasant rearing area.
Woodland to the west of the terrace stops at this point to afford views of the valley and the fells to the west. The views are maintained from here along the Terrace and escarpment to the Lime Kiln c. 1300 metres to the south.

The Iris Garden also referred to as the Lily garden
The paths remain delineated on the ground with edging stones, some of which display carved elements which may well have come from the demolished Shap Abbey. A number of hard structures remain although no evidence of the planting remains.
Four concrete basins remain from the Lily Garden.

The Summer-house on the terrace, known as Jubilee Hall, overlooks the principal valley and fell views. The structure is maintained although the work has not been undertaken to conservation standard.
Remains of rough hewn stone pavilion in the Lily Garden. Derelict condition with roof missing. A marble pilaster capital lies at the against the base of the structure.

Limestone paving steps integrated into the terrace escarpment/retaining wall. The very distinctive and bold steps link the Terrace with the valley tracks and paths.

SCENTED GARDEN

ROSE GARDEN

IRIS GARDEN

SOUTH LAWNS
Now sitka spruce plantation south of the chicken sheds to east - west path

SOUTH LAWNS
Now open sycamore plantation.

SOUTH LAWNS
Now open sycamore plantation.

Jack Croft Pond

Peg Huck Well

CS

Boundary of named gardens

Broiler Units

Buildings/Structures

Works boundary

The trees shown are in the Arboretum and along the Terrace. All the site is now covered with timber plantations or self-seeded, regenerated woodland. The only exception being the lawns to the south of the Castle, which are set out with the eight broiler units and hard standing.

Lowther Castle:
Garden Condition Survey

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Scale: NTS	
June 2002	**Figure 3d**

The Landscape Agency

4.7 Ecological Overview [60] (See Figure 4)

The Castle and garden lie within Lowther Park, an area noted for its old trees and the lichens that they support. A 1974 survey by Dr Francis Rose, a leading national authority on the lichens of parkland trees, found a large number of species including all those that had been recorded there by Martindale the 19th century Westmorland lichenologist. The total number of species recorded by 1974 was 87, a very high figure for a park in northern England.

The existence of the old trees and their unusually rich lichen flora led to the inclusion of the Park as a Grade 2 site of national nature conservation importance in "A Nature Conservation Review" (NCC 1977). However despite that accolade the Park has not been accorded the status of SSSI.

One of the rarer lichen species, *Lobaria amplissima,* was in danger of becoming even rarer in 1980 when one of the two Ash trees on which it grew had to be felled for safety reasons. But with the support of Lord Lonsdale, NCC arranged for the lichen to be "transplanted" to other host trees. This was one of the first such transplants to be attempted. Progress after 10 years was reported by Oliver Gilbert in a paper in *The Lichenologist* (Gilbert, 1991); and after 20 years in an unpublished report commissioned by the NCC.

Although the Park itself is not a SSSI it is bordered on the west by the River Lowther, one of the several components of the River Eden and Tributaries SSSI and Candidate Special Area of Conservation.

The garden is thus surrounded by features of considerable ecological importance.

4.7.1 <u>The Habitat</u>

The area surveyed comprised the surroundings of the Castle, stables and outbuildings and the former landscaped gardens, as outlined in green on the attached plan. It is now mainly woodland, including plantations of Spruce, Beech, Sycamore, Ash and Pine dating from the 1950's, as well as frequent self-sown Ash and Sycamore. There are a few older Beech and Oak, and a group of pollarded Limes, but the large former parkland trees survive only as rotting stumps.

In several areas there are dense groves or avenues of Yew; and some parts have a variety of maturing ornamental conifers.

Open habitats are represented by the The Terrace Walk, on the western boundary, some grassy slopes running through the central area, and some of the less-shaded rides.

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[60] Protected Species

N.B. The notes in this section are for general guidance only. The laws are complex and liable to change. English Nature should be consulted for specific advice.

The possibility that legally protected animals such as bats, badgers, reptiles and amphibians may be present should be taken into account when planning and carrying out any works. The most likely species are bats, at the Castle itself, the stables and outbuildings, and some of the garden buildings and structures. A specialist survey of such features should be commissioned as part of the planning of any repairs or alterations, and the relevant licences applied for; otherwise serious delays could occur if bats are found whilst works are in progress.

Any proposals to dredge or interfere with the pond should also be preceded by a survey of the amphibians to check for the presence of Great Crested Newts. If they are present a licence would be required to interfere with the habitat or the animals themselves..

Similarly a licence would be needed if disturbance to Badger sets is involved.

It is desirable to avoid disturbance of the heronry during the breeding season, which normally begins in February.

Jack Croft Pond is the only open water. There is no running water apart from the spring that emerges at Peg Huck Well and feeds the pond. The various former garden water features are all dry.

The numerous garden buildings of stone and/or wood are mostly abandoned and ruinous but some are still reasonably weather-proof and have the potential to support bats. An Ice House is shown on the early maps but it could not be located.

4.7.2 The Flora

A total of 156 species of ferns and flowering plants were recorded. This is a reasonable number for an area of this size, reflecting the diversity of habitats present.

The ground flora of the wooded areas varies mainly according to the type and density of the canopy. Under the dense shade of Yew and Spruce the floor is often completely bare. Where some light penetrates, a few shade-tolerant species may occur; and in some areas these include woodland indicators such as Wood Sorrel, Dog's Mercury and Bugle. The mixed and broadleaved plantations have a more continuous ground vegetation, especially where they have been thinned, but this is species-poor and often includes abundant nettles and frequent Raspberry. Brambles are locally plentiful.

More diverse and representative woodland communities occur only rarely. They can include a scatter of bluebells and some violets in addition the Wood Sorrel, Bugle and Dog's Mercury mentioned earlier. A restricted area, on the eastern side of the pond, has a quite different flora with Primrose, Betony, Barren Strawberry, Honeysuckle, Wood Anemone and Great Wood-rush. A small amount of Wood Speedwell was found near there.

Woodland mosses are frequent in many areas. The most abundant species appear to be *Plagiomnium undulatum, Mnium hornum, Thamnobryum alopecurum and Brachythecium rutabulum. Thuidium tamariscinum* is often present but does not achieve the dominance often seen in more mature woodlands.

Grasslands in the central parts of the site are generally coarse and species-poor. However there are a few patches of finer grasses, sometimes with Pignut and a few other herbs. A single plant of native Lady's Mantle was found there but could not be identified to species.

Quite the best grassland communities are found on the Terrace, particularly in the southern half. Communities of mainly fine grasses, including Crested Dog's-tail, Red Fescue and Sweet Vernal Grass, are heavily grazed by rabbits, and support frequent drifts of Cowslips, together with Field Woodrush, Pignut, Barren Strawberry, Yarrow, White Clover and occasional Lady's Bedstraw. Hoary Plantain is present in a few areas; and there is one group of Early Purple Orchids. Dense drifts of Moschatel are present under light shade at the sides of the Terrace. The extreme edge, on the top of the retaining wall, evidently gets very dry in summer and supports mainly Stonecrops and Parsley Piert.

The pond margin has extensive beds of Yellow Iris, some Reedmace and a Reedbed, but no submerged flora could be seen. The mosses *Plagiomnium* sp (probably *P. affine*) and *Calliergon cuspidatum* occur at the margins.

A variety of native ferns are present in several areas but the most impressive communities are present on the vertical rock faces at the Rockery near to the site of the Ice House. They include Hart's-tongue, Polypody, Maidenhair Spleenwort, Brittle Bladder-fern and Soft Shield-fern.

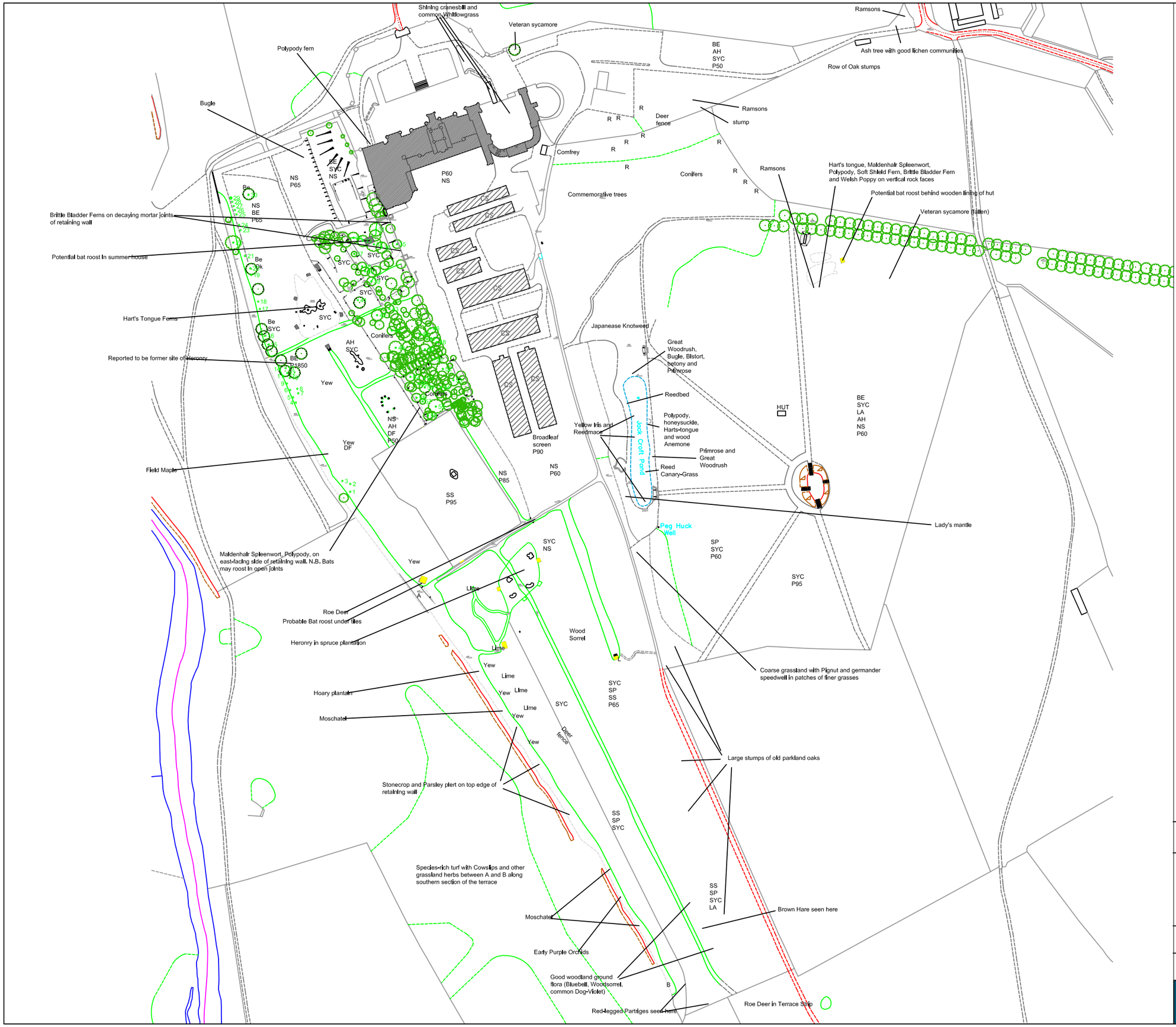
4.7.3 Fauna

The following were noted during the survey:

Birds	**Mammals**	**Insects**
Jackdaw	Roe Deer	Peacock butterfly
Pheasant	Rabbit	
Wood Pigeon	Brown Hare	
Chaffinch	Mole	
Stock Dove		
Starling		
Heron		
Rook		
Robin		
Song Thrush		
Garden Warbler		
Chiff-chaff		
Blackbird		
Great Tit		
Blue Tit		
Coal Tit		
Red-legged Partridge		
Greylag Goose		
Nuthatch		
Fieldfare		
Dunnock		

In addition to those animals listed, signs of Badgers were seen but no active set was found. Red Squirrels were reported but not seen. Bats are likely to be present but could not be confirmed.

A small heronry is present in Spruce trees near the centre of the site. It was impossible to count the nests accurately due to the density of foliage but there appeared to be only five or six.



	Broadleaved Trees >100 yrs old
P	Estimated Planting Date
R	Rhododendron
BE	Beech
SYC	Sycamore
LA	Larch
AH	Ash
NS	Norway Spruce
SS	Sitka Spruce
DF	Douglas Fir
OK	Oak
SP	Scots Pine

Lowther Castle: Ecological Survey

H . T . L . A
Hillary Taylor Landscape Associates Ltd
Historic Landscape Consultants

Scale: NTS

June 2002

Figure 4

The Landscape Agency

29 28 Tree survey reference numbers

Lowther Castle: Tree Survey

H . T . L . A
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Historic Landscape Consultants

Scale: NTS	
June 2002	**Figure 5**

The Landscape Agency

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This section assesses the significance of the Lowther Castle and Gardens Conservation Plan area with reference to the wider landscape. The background of statutory and other protection is examined and proceeded by an analysis of the significance of the various aspects of the site described under 4.0 'Understanding'.

Significance is essentially a hierarchical concept using ascending levels of value. These follow guidelines established by James Semple Kerr (The Conservation Plan, 1996) and adopted by English Heritage and others. The levels of significance are:

Exceptional	importance to national and international levels. Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Grade I and II* Listed Buildings and equivalent national-graded sites would normally fall into this category.
Considerable	important at regional level or sometimes higher eg Grade II Listed Buildings
Some	usually of local value only but possibly of regional significance
Little	of no more than local value.
Negative or intrusive features	those which actually detract from the value of a site.

5.1 Statement of Key Significance Factors

5.1.1 Statutory Designation

Designation provides an important reference point because a site can only be granted protection (especially at the statutory levels of Scheduled Ancient Monument, Listed Building or Site of Special Scientific Interest) if it meets certain criteria. All of these relate to importance in some way, usually at a national level. Statutorily protected sites are therefore inherently among the most significant examples of a type. Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Registered Historic Parks and Gardens, and Conservation Areas, can be designated for a variety of reasons but the criteria are usually subject specific and do not take account of other matters.

All listed buildings are of national importance but Grade II* and Grade I buildings are of outstanding national importance. One site may be designated in different ways (e.g. a registered historic park may also be a SSSI) but the different management requirements of that site may not all be compatible. The assessment of significance undertaken for a Conservation Plan has the advantage of being able to use all relevant criteria across many specialist disciplines rather than concentrating on just one of them.

Lowther Castle and Gardens enjoy a comparatively high level of statutory designation which is in itself a measure of the significance of the site. The ruin of Lowther Castle is a Grade II* Listed building. The garden and the vast park that surrounds the garden, particularly to the north and south of the castle is registered Grade II on the English Heritage *Register of Parks and Gardens of Historic Interest*. (Primary research undertaken during the preparation of this Conservation Plan, however, makes an excellent case for raising the registration to at least Grade II* - see policy section below.) The total number of registered gardens is very small and it is worth noting that Lowther is one of only nineteen registered historic landscapes in Cumbria and one of only 123 in the North West region. The entire site including the park lies within the boundary of the Lake District National Park further confirming its status as a site of great natural beauty.

5.1.2 Dynastic Significance

Lowther Castle and its surrounding estate has enjoyed an exceptional continuity of patronage in that it has belonged to the Lowther family since at least the 12th century. The Lowthers, who emerged in the twelfth century as feudal subtenants of the Vetriponts, the Norman over-lords of Westmorland, were a family who rose to national prominence in the late seventeenth century in

the person of John, 1st Viscount Lowther, and they continued to play a role in national as well as local affairs for nearly two centuries.

As well as serving as the leading resident landed dynasty in Cumberland and Westmorland since the 12th century, successive members have served in parliament as MPs and later as peers for more than 600 years. Members of the family have acted as Attorney General (to Edward I) and Lord Privy Seal (to William III). As patrons they helped introduce classical architecture to the north west and at Whitehaven laid out the first planned town in England since the Middle Ages. Their eighteenth and nineteenth century industrial development at Whitehaven and agricultural improvements at Lowther were among the most impressive of the age. Since the 17th century they have been collectors and patrons of the arts. Thus the castle, gardens, park, church, buildings and estate as a whole are a reflection of a remarkable dynastic history of exceptional national significance. The continuing presence of the Lowther family greatly adds to the considerable historic significance of the site.

5.1.3 Archaeological Significance

At present Lowther Castle and Gardens are of little archaeological significance. However whilst only outline archaeological research has been undertaken as part of this report there exists the potential to greatly enhance the archaeological significance of the site through further fieldwork and research.

For example, as described below, the 17th, 18th and 19th century layout of the gardens is still apparent, even if only in outline hidden beneath 20th century conifer plantations. And when considered in relation to the number and range of contemporary maps, plans and descriptions, further archaeological investigation could significantly increase the understanding of the development and history of the landscape. Potentially this provides the gardens with considerable added significance in the way it could reveal the development of a single garden, and its adjoining park between the early to mid 17th century and the mid 20th century. Further archaeological fieldwork could also significantly enhance the importance of the gardens in comparison with other sites within Britain and Europe.

It is well recorded that the site of the original house lies a short distance south of the existing ruin(See Architectural Significance below). Detailed archaeological investigation was not undertaken as part of the preparation of this Conservation Plan. This area is currently planted with conifers and partly covered by Broiler Units and until they are removed further archaeological works would not be possible. However future archaeological investigation of the original house could further enhance the significance of what is already a site of national and arguably international importance.

5.1.4 Public or Educational Potential

The value of the site as an educational and recreational resource is of little significance at present other than as an impressive ruin in the landscape. A visitor may view the ruin of the Castle from various Public Rights of Way, particularly from the banks of the River Lowther and the road that runs between Askham and Lowther villages but otherwise the site is closed to the public.

Despite being immediately cut off from the public, however, there still remains a sense of discovering a special place, even if from a distance, as a visitor makes an approach into the park from Askham or the Lowther village road. The approaches to the Castle are quite extended and the Castle only becomes visible on entering the park. The castle sits as a massive and unexpected structure within the landscape. Views to the Castle from the public road to the north are particularly striking.

Lowther village remains an active local community and on arrival at Lowther there is a feeling of a place that is still very much alive and thriving as part of a working estate. It is only when the visitor realises that the ruin, the core of this historic estate, is shut off from all other activities that there is a feeling of estrangement.

However the potential of the site as a place to visit for the public and as a educational resource is very great. If Lowther Castle was developed and interpreted in a way that would benefit the

public then the gain in cultural significance could be considerable. The history of the family, the development of the estate, the collection of drawings relating to the architecture of the castle, the development of the landscape and involvement of many of the great contemporary landscape designers, the remaining collection of pictures, silver, sculpture and books are all of considerable significance in their own right, but combined as a whole there is the opportunity to develop an exceptional educational and recreational resource. It could provide an excellent focus for a range of historical studies and provide immense public benefit. Those features that currently detract from the overall significance, in particular the Broiler Unit and the conifer planting within the area of the gardens should be removed.

5.1.5 Architectural Significance

i) Lowther I

The first house to stand at Lowther, formerly known as Lowther Hall, dates from the later Middle Ages and had the characteristic North Country plan of a narrow central range flanked by a pair of square towers. This house was remodelled and extended on several occasions between 1570 and 1650 until it was almost entirely rebuilt in the 1670s. Thus the existing ruin of Lowther Castle is of little significance as a pre 17th century building although there may be potential for enhancement of significance through further archaeological fieldwork and/or research. It is known, for example, that the original house stood a little further south than the present structure and further archaeological investigation could enhance the significance of this original structure.

However Sir John Lowther, the 1st Baronet (d.1675), kept meticulous records of his tenure at Lowther Hall between 1637 and 1675. His 'Memorable Observations and Remembrances' record in detail the architectural development of Lowther Hall during this time. It is a record of exceptional and unusual significance as a description of the development of a mid to late 17th century building (and landscape).

ii) Lowther II

The 1st Baronet was succeeded by his grandson, John Lowther, born in 1655. He was created 1st Viscount Lowther in 1694 and had already embarked on creating a new and more palatial Lowther Hall. He had already built new stables and a very large outer court. The new Lowther was a palatial showpiece, the Chatsworth of Cumbria. However having been completed in the 1690s it was gutted by fire in 1718. The buildings associated with the 1st Viscount (Lowther II) retain some significance. The outer court (1678 – 83) still underlies and to an extent dictated the large scale of Smirke's replacement castle of the early 19th century; the remaining portion of the 1678 stable wing incorporated within the east end of Smirke's castle and is the oldest part of Lowther to survive today. Lowther II as a building is therefore of local significance but with further archaeological investigation there is an opportunity to enhance its significance.

As with the 1st Baronet, the 1st Viscount kept meticulous records and accounts during his ambitious building works and these documents, held at the Record Office in Carlisle are of unusual and exceptional significance as a record of building work and estate management during the late 17th century.

iii) Lowther III

The present castle ruin, built between 1806 and 1814, is the successor to the medieval house which as Lowther I and Lowther II was altered and reconstructed in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but finally burnt in 1718.

The existing shell of Lowther Castle, completed by Robert Smirke in 1814 is not on exactly the same site as the medieval and seventeenth century house, but occupies the space of the outer forecourt of the latter, between the sites of the late seventeenth century stable and kitchen wings which were retained and incorporated in Robert Smirke's new design in 1806.

The former was part incorporated as the refaced west wing of the Smirke stables (still roofed) while the extended Kitchen wings were retained to serve the new house and screened to the

south and west by two gothick conservatories (the shell of one of which survives) and high castellated walls. The Kitchen range itself was totally demolished in 1957 when the Smirke main block was reduced to a scenic outer shell.

The structure which still remains, therefore, incorporates only small parts of the older house at the east end and a section of eighteenth century wall in the west perimeter. The site of the previous main block is beneath the south lawn between the castle and the Broiler sheds. Otherwise the castle now comprises solely the outer walls and stables only of Smirke's 1806-1814 castle. It was his first and arguably his finest commission (others include Eastnor Castle and the British Museum). Lowther Castle, even as a ruin and silhouette, is of exceptional significance and it continues to be one of the most imposing early 19th century buildings in Britain.

The exceptional significance of the ruin of Lowther Castle owes much to the quality of the design. Smirke's house was built of mixed rubble stone and faced in beautifully executed pink-grey sandstone ashlar. The quality of the design owes much to this fine masonry skin, but more to the masterly silhouette and the grouping of the masses and turrets, an architectural impact that has survived the complete dismantling of the interior. It remains, even as a ruin, a building of exceptional national importance. All of Smirke's original working drawings for the Castle still survive and are in themselves of exceptional significance but in combination with the surviving ruin they combine to enhance the national importance and significance of the castle. (Smirke's drawings are held at Carlisle Record Office.)

The loss of the interior has not, therefore, detracted too much from the exceptional significance of the building. Records of the interior would benefit from further research but enough detail is already known to gain a reasonable understanding of how the interiors were completed. With the exception of one piece of plasterwork, however, Lowther Castle retains no significance in terms of its interior but retains national significance in terms of the history of its interior.

All the decorative plasterwork within the house was by Francis Bernasconi of London who was responsible for the similar stucco at Windsor Castle under George III and IV. Bernasconi's detailed bills survive of everything that he modelled between 1808 and 1814. This included the west wing and dining room, the staircase hall, the saloon, the state bedroom, library and east wing.

His last piece of work to be completed was the ceiling of the sculpture gallery on the south east side of the building. Some of this plasterwork still survives, albeit in a perilous state, but it has gained added significance as the last remaining piece of the original interior of Smirke's building. It is thus of considerable significance.

In addition to the surviving shell, and the potential archaeological significance of the site of the previous house, Lowther Castle is also of exceptional significance because of the surviving unexecuted designs by a succession of prominent eighteenth century architects for rebuilding the house, after 1718. These (in the family archives on loan deposit at the Record Office in Carlisle) are one of the finest groups of architectural drawings relating to any English country house, and they enhance the significance of what remains on the ground, as the culmination of the century-long gestation of a new house at Lowther in the Georgian period.

Lowther Castle and the documents and drawings associated with it make up a site which is indisputably of exceptional significance and a building of national importance.

The significance of the stables mostly lies in their association with the main house as part of Robert Smirke's design. However they were completely overhauled by the 5th ('Yellow') Earl of Lonsdale in preparation for the visit of the Kaiser in the early 1900s. The elaborate fittings still survive within the stables and are themselves significant in that they are one of the few remnants of the 'Yellow Earl's' renowned expenditure.

5.2 Landscape Significance: The Gardens

5.2.1 Pre-17th Century Landscape

A member of the Lowther family was first given a licence to enclose 200 acres of land for a park in 1337 and the park and gardens have subsequently been developed and adapted by the same family for the following 700 years. At present, as a pre-17th century landscape, Lowther gardens are of little significance. However further archaeological research may enhance this significance.

Beyond the garden, the park is of considerable significance as a pre-17th century landscape. An archaeological survey of the park was completed in 1997, identifying a number of archaeological sites, and recommending further research and work. However the park and wider landscape has not been considered as part of this Conservation Plan. Nevertheless the presence of the park, as well as views looking west towards the Lake District adds considerably to the exceptional significance of the site, and taken as a whole adds greatly to its public and educational potential.

5.2.2 17th Century

The gardens have been an important focus of attention between the late 16th century and the start of the Second World War. However what is of exceptional significance is that although after 1700 the character of the gardens has been modified, its broad layout as it lies south of the present Castle has not been fundamentally altered. This alone contributes to a garden of considerable significance and there is great potential to enhance this significance through further research and fieldwork.

The first known plan of Lowther house and gardens, dated 1683, is very broadly recognisable as the outline of Lowther gardens in the present day. It depicts a garden standing to the south of the house dominated by a surrounding enclosure or wall. The whole of the western side of the gardens is still contained by a sharp escarpment and a monumental stone structure known as the Terrace. This massive structure in itself is of exceptional significance.

5.2.3 18th Century

At some point between 1683 and 1707 (the date that Knyff and Kip published an engraving of the landscape at Lowther) a garden on a vast scale was then laid out. These illustrations are fairly accurate and it depicts an elaborate garden, enclosed to the west, recording a number of compartments separated by a line of paths leading north south. The compartments that it depicts, particularly those shown south west from the house can still be made out. Even as they exist, buried beneath overgrown scrub and conifers they are of considerable significance. But further research could enhance their status as gardens of exceptional significance within Britain.

During the 18th century a number of nationally-known landscape designers were invited to Lowther. Plans and maps drawn up by Colen Campbell, Francis Richardson and most significantly 'Capability' Brown all exist. As a record of changing tastes in landscape design through the century they are in themselves of considerable significance.

To the extent that these designs contributed to the overall layout of the gardens their significance is not considered to be as great. It is unlikely that either Colen Campbell or Francis Richardson's proposals were implemented. Even following the visits of Capability Brown in the 1760s and 1770s the gardens still appear to be dominated by rectilinear patterns of a previous age and not Brown's comprehensive vision. A large serpentine lake could be Brown inspired but to what extent the gardens were altered during the 18th century is an element of the development of the garden that requires further research.

It would appear that during the 18th century, any changes that were made were gradual. A new plan of the park and demesne drawn up by John Webb in 1807 seems to reveal that the formal gardens of the 17th century had begun to be replaced by the typical English landscape style typified by 'Capability' Brown.

5.2.4 19th Century

Robert Smirke completed his new Castle in 1814. It was a time when the gardens were being considered more in terms of a place from which to admire the immensely Romantic scenery beyond than anything man-made surrounding the house. Views to and from the Castle, and the panoramic prospects were the focus of contemporary commentary. The site was visited and described by the likes of Gilpin and Wordsworth. One commentator noted, 'the park and pleasure-grounds that environ this noble mansion are of very great extent, commanding a variety of prospects, certainly not surpassed and perhaps hardly equalled in any other part of England.'

That description, when standing on the Terrace today, would still apply. But during the early 19th century it was noted as one of the most remarkable landscape creations in the country. As a Picturesque landscape of the early to mid 19th century, Lowther Gardens are of exceptional significance.

The planting that was completed at this time is of equal significance. Despite many 19th century trees having been felled shortly after the Second World War, about 60 still stand some of which in particular enhance the Picturesque character of the Terrace. During the 19th century, therefore, it was not possible to divorce an appreciation of the gardens in the immediate vicinity of the Castle from the wider landscape beyond.

This appreciation of garden and wider landscape continued at Lowther until the end of the 19th century with the arrival of the 5th or 'Yellow Earl' in 1882.

5.2.5 20th Century

In the late 19th century and early 20th century the 'Yellow' Earl undertook the most elaborate transformation of the gardens in terms of the style in which it was planted. He appears to have been tireless in his elaboration of the gardens. He created a number of named gardens including a Rose Garden, Japanese Garden and Hugh's garden which was broadly influenced by Versailles. There was a mass of colour and the introduction of a number of small buildings and summerhouses. Despite this, the garden enclosures that had been laid out in the 17th and 18th centuries, as well as the massive Terrace to the south west, continued to survive. As a garden of a flamboyant and extravagant Earl, these gardens are of some significance and the most visible remnants of the garden to survive date from his tenure. However this period is not the most significant in terms of the development of garden or its overall status as a site of national importance.

During the mid to late 20th century the gardens were completely abandoned and neglected. Most of the area has been buried beneath conifers and a large Broiler Unit.

5.2.6 Summary

Thus for more than five hundred years the gardens at Lowther have reflected the tastes and aspirations of different Lowther generations. It is only during the past fifty years that the imposition of the Broiler sheds on the south lawns and the planting of timber crops that the fabric and structure of the gardens has started to diminish - but it has by no means disappeared. Some of the avenues, the compartments, Jack Croft pond and, most significant of all, the Terrace have all survived. These features, together with a number of surviving late 18th century and 19th century trees that still stand around the site ensure that the gardens retain their status of national significance. When taken in conjunction with the castle and the immense designed landscape that surrounds them, the contribution of the gardens adds exceptional significance to a site of national importance.

5.3 Ecology

Lowther Castle has enjoyed an exceptional continuity of patronage in that the estate has belonged to the Lowther family since at least the 12th century. This greatly adds to the historic significance of the site.

On the whole this is not a particularly significant site in terms of its native flora. Likewise the fauna is only of local significance. The reasons for this are clear, since the long history of garden construction and upkeep will have had a profound impact throughout the whole area.

However some sections appear to have remained relatively natural, and that is reflected in the presence of woodland and grassland indicator species where they occur.

Forestry plantings in the second half of last century may have helped to restore some elements of the woodland flora, especially under Ash, though pure Spruce has had a negative effect.

However the central stand of Sitka Spruce has provided a site for the heronry, which is understood to have moved from elsewhere as a result of windblow or felling.

The few large stumps may represent the remains of a scatter of large parkland trees that formerly existed and one can only speculate at the possibility of significant lichen communities having existed there in former times.

At the present time the areas of greatest significance are:

- The grasslands on the southern half of The Terrace.
- The woodland edge along the eastern side of the Pond.
- The fern communities on the vertical rock faces near to the site of the Ice House.
- The heronry.

5.4 Summary

Lowther Castle, its garden and surroundings, and the considerable surviving archive combine to form a site of **exceptional heritage significance**. From the late seventeenth century onwards the house, gardens and park at Lowther were the most substantial in the far North West of England and something of a regional capital for Cumberland and Westmorland. The architectural, landscape, dynastic and historical significance of Lowther Castle and its landscape is therefore unparalleled in the region.

The longevity of many aspects of the landscape at Lowther makes a notable contribution to this wider context. The Castle and its gardens are obvious features but there are many important elements that contribute to the significance of this exceptional landscape that exist beyond the immediate area that has been considered as part of this Conservation Plan. These include the immense extent of the park and designed landscape, the River Lowther, the parish church, Lowther Newtown, and several other buildings within the parish.

Lowther Castle is a place of exceptional beauty and peace. It is a strikingly beautiful place which seems far removed from the modern world. Noise and light pollution are minimal. With the obvious exception of the broiler unit and immediate conifer plantations the visual intrusions within the surrounding landscape are minimal.

The overall picturesque landscape composition of the shell of Lowther Castle, its gardens and extensive park form the major surviving architectural expression in the Lake District of the Pictuesque Aesthetic that parallels the literary achievement of Wordsworth and the Lake Poets. Lowther Castle and its landscape is thus a significant landmark of English culture and of international and not just national or regional significance. It is closer in spirit to the contemporary Gothic palaces and castles of Eastern Europe than to the average English country house. With further documentary research and archaeological fieldwork, its status could be even further enhanced, and its potential as a place of public and educational potential fulfilled.

6.0 ISSUES AND POLICIES

A positive and co-operative approach is required on all sides if the significance of a place like Lowther Castle is to be retained and enhanced. The site and its significance are vulnerable in a number of areas, some of great urgency. These issues have been grouped together under generic headings in the following pages, and these then follow through into relevant policies here and in the subsequent section.

6.1 Background to the Site

6.1.1 Ownership and Management

Lowther Castle and its immediate grounds stand at the centre of an active family estate and community. In the future the castle has the potential of being an exceptionally important resource. At present there is the immediate threat that the main structure could collapse. A high level of statutory designation affords the standing structures a degree of protection and local planning controls reinforces this protection. However statutory and non-statutory instruments cannot account for people's strength of feeling for a place. In addition these instruments are often viewed with suspicion as unnecessary and unjustified infringements on their freedom. A positive and co-operative approach to the issues at Lowther Castle is therefore required on all sides if its exceptional significance is to be retained and enhanced.

The site and its significance, meanwhile, continues to be vulnerable in a number of areas, over and above the condition of the Staircase Tower within the castle which is danger of complete collapse. That is a very serious and urgent issue in terms of the physical structure of the Castle. From a broader point of view there are two main issues which must be considered to be intrusive and substantially detract from its overall significance of the site: the Broiler Unit and the conifer plantations that exist throughout the gardens. The Broiler Unit consists of eight individual structures that stand on the site of the lawns immediately to the south of the house. Connected with this Unit is an unsightly bungalow that stands to the east of the Castle ruin.

The extensive plantations of conifers were mostly planted in the 1950s and have reached a semi mature to mature state. The imposition of both features within the past 50 years has significantly detracted from the overall effect of the Castle standing as a ruin in the landscape. There remain some strong differences of opinion as to the correct future of the Castle within the estate and difficulties in terms of management in that differing members of the family own and manage the site

Policy A1: Ownership and responsibility for the maintenance and repair of all parts of the site must be agreed within the estate. A unified plan defining this responsibility should be produced and agreed.

Although management is not usually an appropriate area of study for a Conservation Plan, at Lowther it is significant as current arrangements underline the lack of a co-ordinated approach to the running of this particular aspect of the overall estate. There is presently a lack of common purpose as to the estate's interests and responsibilities as they relate to the area covered within this plan. There is an evident desire to improve the situation and the commissioning of this Conservation Plan is a positive step which needs to be built on for the future.

Policy A2: The Lowther Estate should develop a positive and sustainable strategy to enhance, restore and repair Lowther Castle and Gardens in the future.

There is an urgent need for co-ordination within the estate regarding the management and conservation of Lowther Castle and its surrounding gardens. The condition of the Staircase Tower is the most obvious and urgent problem. But all future aspects of the management and conservation of the site and how this will be funded needs to be considered in the near future if the site is to be protected and ultimately conserved.

Policy A3: The Lowther Estate needs to address its responsibility for funding a programme of maintenance and conservation work, in consultation with English Heritage, and through grant applications to appropriate funding bodies.

Management of the site. At present the site is managed as an intensive broiler unit and a site for commercial timber production. This has clearly not been beneficial for the overall condition of this historic site. If there is to be a radical change in the way that the site is managed then this needs to be carefully considered, planned and organised.

Policy A4: The Lowther Estate should work towards prioritising, funding and implementing repair and conservation work across the site to include works to the Castle, gardens as well as its surrounding landscape.

6.2 Archaeology (for more detailed policies see sections related to the Castle and Gardens)

Policy B1: A programme of archaeological fieldwork relating to the study and investigation of the development of the gardens and the earlier houses should be undertaken as part of a programme of enhancing the understanding of the site.

Only outline archaeological research has been undertaken as part of this report and the exists the potential to greatly enhance the archaeological significance of the site through further fieldwork and research.

In relation to the gardens this particularly applies to its development during the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries.

In relation to the Castle this applies to further investigation of the earlier houses in particular those of the 1st Baronet in the early to mid 17th century and the 1st Viscount during the late 17th and early 18th centuries. The area of greatest archaeological potential is currently planted with conifers and archaeological works must wait until they have been removed.

In both instances any subsequent findings are likely to influence the future conservation and development of the site.

6.3 Public or Educational Potential

Policy C1: The Lowther Estate should consider opening the castle and its gardens to the public as the most appropriate means of retaining and enhancing the significance of the site and developing its public and educational potential.

Policy C2: The collection of papers, documents, drawings, maps and plans relating to Lowther Castle and Gardens is one of the most significant in this country. Greater public awareness of this archive should be encouraged and its use as an educational resource considered.

The ruin of Lowther Castle and its adjoining gardens could become a major regional even national visitor attraction. The site is currently shut off from the public but given its cultural significance, covering so many potential interests, there is an opportunity to develop an exceptional educational and recreational resource.

Lowther Castle and Gardens offers a rare and, within the region, unparalleled combination of attributes which make is an exceptionally valuable asset and potential public resource. The Castle is one of the most important early 19th century structures in Britain and its significance has already been stressed. The gardens are at present under appreciated and not fully recognised as much as they should be in terms of significance. In addition the site could focus on a whole range of historical studies covering the history of the family, the development of the estate, the collections of drawings relating to the architecture, the development of the landscape and gardens, the remaining collection of pictures and silver (currently on loan to the Victoria and Albert museum). The potential of the site as a place of interest for the public and as an educational resource is therefore very great.

Lowther should be seen as a resource for public, private and academic use and enjoyment. This is true both the place itself and the collections associated with it. At present it is, to put it mildly, an underused resource. Although the immediate condition of the castle and the presence of the broiler unit makes public access difficult to achieve within the next year or two, public access within the next two to five years as a policy should be adopted.

Physical access to Lowther must be addressed in relation to a decision to open the site to the public. Lowther is not directly accessible by railway and so the majority of visitors will come by car or coach. Walkers are an important group, though probably not so numerically. Tourism is expected to be an increasingly important factor in the local/regional economy given the desperate problems faced by the farming industry in the past few years. Thus access to Lowther must be fully addressed.

The roads into Lowther may have to deal with disproportionately large loadings. The parking facilities will need careful consideration although a disused tank park standing to the east of the stables may be an ideal site. Existing footpaths could be extended to introduce a number of routes around Lowther. Visitor numbers are not likely to affect local residents but numbers should be carefully considered in any strategic plan to ensure that there are no adverse effects on the place in the future. Disabled access must be considered and an access audit to improve the accessibility of and facilities for disabled visitors to Lowther should be commissioned at the appropriate time.

All other infrastructure issues affecting access to and enjoyment of the site such as lavatories and the availability of refreshments, must be included in any strategic access plan.

If this policy of public access is developed then a site of Lowther's importance deserves the best interpretation so that visitors can enjoy and appreciate it. Intellectual as well as physical access to and participation in the site and its collections (by remote means if necessary) for the widest possible constituency is important to its success in the future. The most appropriate means of engendering outside interest in and support for Lowther must be to develop integrated forms of presentation.

For example discreet signage should be considered at a number of points within the wider landscape. Options for opening access up between the Castle and gardens, and the designed landscape beyond should be considered. A guide book would be needed covering the whole site. Suitable display and interpretation panels could be erected possibly within a restored Sculpture Gallery.

Lowther Castle as an educational resource should have several functions: to engage the imagination, to clarify old and pose new questions, and to convey a sense of reality of the past. Interpretation will need to recognise an educational dimension and link the historic evidence for the castle and gardens both to the wider historic context and to the surviving fabric at the site.

6.4 The Castle

6.4.1 Lowther I and Lowther II

It is known that the original site of the house stood a little further south than the present Castle and further archaeological investigation could reveal significant remains.

Policy D1: Take such opportunities as arise to enhance historical and archaeological understanding of all remnants of 16th and 17th buildings at Lowther. Where appropriate commission archaeological fieldwork aimed at establishing the presence and nature of the pre 1710 buildings within the site.

6.4.2 Lowther III

Policy D2: Lowther Castle, even as it stands as a ruin in the landscape, continues to be one of the most imposing early 19th century buildings in Britain. The ruin should be conserved and repaired and any further deterioration prevented urgently.

The standing remains of Lowther Castle have been surveyed in great detail and structural defects have been identified which have become apparent and which may develop in the near future.

In general the Castle is soundly built but it is suffering from exposure to the weather over the half century during which it has stood as a ruin. This has led to instability in the central staircase tower and progressive stonework deterioration due to the corrosion of iron dowels and cramps.

The instability of the central staircase tower is a matter of concern and should be addressed as a matter of urgency. Elsewhere if the structural defects are not attended to there will be more major collapses of masonry, which will be increasingly expensive to repair.

The structure of Lowther Castle as it remains, incorporates small parts of the older houses. In the main, however, the castle comprises solely the outer walls and stables of Smirke's 1806-1814 castle. It was his first and arguably his finest commission (others include Eastnor Castle and the British Museum).

Smirke's house was built of mixed rubble stone and faced in beautifully executed pink-grey sandstone ashlar. The quality of the design owes much to this fine masonry skin, but more to the masterly silhouette and the grouping of the masses and turrets, an architectural impact that has survived the complete dismantling of the interior. It remains, even as a ruin, a building of exceptional national importance.

6.4.3 Condition of Fabric

Some parts of the various structures of Lowther Castle remain in sound condition, while others are in need of urgent repair, stabilisation or reinforcement. The initial approach has been to address the preservation of the main house in its ruinous state. Items needing attention are:

6.4.4 Programming and Implementation of Repairs

Policy D3: Initiate immediate works to the Staircase Tower

The most urgent work, which should not be delayed, is the strengthening of the staircase tower. If this was to collapse the major element of the silhouette would be lost, much of the overall significance of the site would be threatened and it would be prohibitively expensive to rebuild. Movement was noted prior to 1988 and it has continued ever since, and although it is not possible to say with any accuracy when collapse may be initiated any continuation of movement increases the risk and shortens the time available.

There are a number of options for repairing the staircase tower which require urgent discussion.

Policy D4: Repairs to remainder of building should be instigated in the short term to prevent further decay and collapse.

Following the staircase tower the rest of the work could be tackled progressively by area, starting with the south elevation west of the central block, and progressing clockwise ending up with rebuilding the south central gable.

There are several approaches that could be taken to implementing the repairs that are proposed. We envisage for the purposes of the cost estimates that the work would be carried out over three years, but stopping for each winter. The period available for working in such an exposed site and using lime mortar is limited to about eight months in the year.

An alternative approach would be to carry out the work slowly over a much longer period, possibly using an estate team for the more straightforward tasks. In this case the stabilisation of the central tower should be carried out in the first season, probably by an appropriately experienced contractor, followed by work to walls, turrets and parapets in sequence.

6.4.5 Inspection and Maintenance

Policy D5: Permanent access should be provided for future inspection and maintenance. Anchorage points for use by 'wall walkers' or walkways should be considered.

Policy D6: A programme of long term maintenance must be considered. At least 5 yearly programme of inspection to be instigated with associated maintenance and repair.

It is a requirement of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 1994 that 'designers' ensure inter alia that maintenance of the building can be carried out safely. There is no doubt that when the repairs are carried out these regulations will apply, but in addition if the public are to be admitted in or near to the building the level of maintenance and inspection must be to a much higher level than hitherto. It is of course possible to inspect most of the building using high level access machines, but these are not readily available on site, and are likely only to be called in for a specific problem. It is strongly recommend that sufficient ladders, platforms and safety fixings are provided for most of the building to be inspected by the estate staff. If means of access is readily available it is likely to be used, whereas if obstacles are placed in the way of inspection it is much less likely to be carried out.

Clearly the provisions must be unobtrusive, and they must not be easily accessible to those not authorised to use them. For this reason permanent ladders, for instance, should not start nearer than 4 metres from the ground.

It is proposed that the spiral staircase that originally gave access to the staircase tower roof within the north east turret should be reinstated, with an extension down to a landing at first floor level. A walkway around the tower at parapet level should be incorporated into the structural repairs. In addition a narrow walkway could be provided at second floor level. It is believed that these interventions will be sufficiently unobtrusive.

The north east turret which we propose will house the access stair should also be re-roofed in timber and lead, and doors fitted at top and bottom to keep out birds.

What is not quite so easy is providing access to the external parapets on the north and south elevations. The walls within the parapets are sufficiently wide to allow an access walkway. Originally the wall heads would have been approached from rooflights, rather than from the turrets. So the only way to reach most of the wall heads now would be by ladders. It is only proposed to provide these where they can be partially hidden from view.

6.4.6 Recent Structural Collapses and their Rebuilding

Policy D7: The two recent falls (the central south gable and a section of south elevation) are rebuilt, and the stone should be collected and sorted at the earliest opportunity before it is lost.

Policy D8: Rebuild the collapse on the north elevation because it forms an essential part of the composition.

Since the building was abandoned as a ruin there have been several significant collapses of masonry. The first was the top section of the link wall on the north elevation between the main central block and Lord Lonsdale's room. This probably occurred thirty years ago.

Within the last two years there has been the collapse of a square two-storey tower at the west corner of the south elevation. Of greatest concern, however, are the two falls of masonry which occurred in January 2002. One of these was the central south gable with its statuary niche, and the other a section of the south elevation corresponding in location to the earlier fall in the north elevation.

It is assumed that all the stone still remains where it fell, but this has not been verified. Any shortfall would need to be made up from new stone or reclaimed from other fallen masonry on the site. Both of these collapses, should be rebuilt with additional strengthening. The other two corresponding sections on the east side should be strengthened similarly to prevent future deterioration and collapse.

Do not propose to rebuild the south west square turret which has suffered a total collapse down to ground level. This turret is not such an integral part as the other collapsed areas and its loss is not critical to the building. The stone could be re-used for repairs elsewhere.

The central gable on the south elevation should be rebuilt, but with additional bonding between the two leaves, and some steel restraint struts in addition to stabilise the whole structure.

The south porch was also damaged by the fall, and we propose that this too is repaired.

6.4.7 Turrets

Policy D9: All the masonry of each turret above the string course needs to be carefully dismantled and rebuilt using stainless steel dowels and cramps.

The rusting of ironwork causes a virtually irresistible expansion which has the effect of opening up the bed joints, allowing in moisture and encouraging vegetation growth. The corrosive forces also act outwards, bursting and spalling the stone. For visual completeness a number of machicolations which are missing should be replaced. It is likely that some of the original stones may be lying on the ground, but otherwise new stones will have to be cut.

6.4.8 Internal Elevations – Structural Defects

Policy D10: Window lintels should be replaced in oak with a lead tray over them to prevent saturation. The same applies to door lintels, many of which are in the turrets at each floor level.

Policy D11: Where fireplaces have unsafe masonry above them we proposed that they are blocked up in brickwork.

Policy D12: All the internal wall heads must be consolidated. As with the parapets a grass 'soft topping' may be acceptable in some places where access is available for maintenance and for removal of woody plants.

Below window openings, water penetration has washed out and decayed pointing. Re-pointing will be required and a suitable detail developed to control water in these areas in the future. The problem is more noticeable on the north elevation, than on the south.

Most of the main windows on both elevations have masonry arches on the internal face, but some have timber lintels all of which are in poor condition. Most of these are on the central part of the north elevation and in Lord Lonsdale's Room.

6.4.9 Parapets and Wall Heads

Policy D13: Parapets and Wall Heads must be made safe to prevent further collapse.

Policy D14: Masonry originally intended as internal work only must be adequately protected from the weather.

The embattled parapets appear to be placed on the structure, although there is evidence of iron lugs encased in lead being used in some instances.

For long term security all the parapet walls should be dismantled and rebuilt using stainless steel cramps and dowels. It would however be possible to leave some of the eastern side parapets where there is no sign of corrosion at present, to be repaired at a later date, say in ten years time. (In the cost estimates, Appendix III, an allowance has been made for all the parapets to be rebuilt.)

Internal walls now acting as buttresses have core work exposed to the elements and wall heads once below parapet gutters are also decaying.

Where the wall top is sound and there is a growth of grass and herbaceous plants only it is safe to leave well alone. In other cases where the wall heads need consolidating it is proposed to cap the wall with specially made pre-cast concrete copings.

Propose that the corbelled parapets are tied back into the wall with stainless steel anchors drilled into the masonry. Elsewhere drilled in anchor bars will be used to improve the stability of slender parapet walls.

6.4.10 Sculpture Gallery

Policy D15:The plasterwork within the Sculpture Gallery, by Bernasconi, is the last surviving piece of plasterwork of the original interior of Lowther Castle. Everything else has been lost. This surviving section should be conserved.

The Sculpture Gallery was in the projecting wing on the east side. It is still roofed but much of the plasterwork vaulting is in very poor condition due to continued water penetration. There is sufficient left for this building to be restored.

A budget cost for re-roofing, repairing the plaster ceiling and re-glazing has been included in Appendix III.

6.4.11 East Corridor

Policy D15: Unless this corridor can be given a use as part of development proposals for presenting the castle to the public, that all this roof is removed, as well as that of the turret.

The triple arch entrance into the main building has been blocked with concrete blockwork so the corridor does not lead anywhere. As the space in the corridor is rather confined it should be closed with a door at the south end.

6.4.12 Unprotected Timber

Unprotected timber is prone to rot. Bonding timbers in the walls were introduced for a) finishing lifts and to tie the structure together, b) as grounds for panelling and other fixings. Smaller timbers may be left in place without there being potential further damage to the structure. Larger timbers should be inspected throughout. They may need to be replaced, in particular below window cills and other openings where they have been affected by damp, in some instances having rotted away completely. Lintels will also need inspection and should be replaced where necessary.

6.4.13 Plant Growth

Plant growth, particularly at high level involving deep rooting species will be de-stabilising the stonework. It must be removed and the stonework reconstructed as necessary and a suitable weathering introduced to prevent further colonisation. Grasses, ferns and smaller wall loving species should be left in place where they are doing no harm as they will continue to protect the existing stonework and will arrest decay.

6.4.14 New Walls

Policy D15: Where considered necessary, further strengthening or new walls should be introduced.

The remaining structure is of one build and the introduction of new supporting walls need not confuse the archaeology.

6.5 The Gardens

It is understood that the Castle building takes priority in that significant parts of the castle are in a dangerous and unsecured condition whilst much of the garden detail is not necessarily under immediate and urgent threat. However if the Castle is to be used as a visitor attraction it is critical that the gardens and wider landscape are restored to an appropriate and manageable level to create:

- E1 A safe environment;
- E2 An appropriate garden and landscape context to present the Castle to its best advantage;
- E3 A garden sufficiently legible to convey something of its remarkable history;
- E4 A visitor attraction in its own right.

None of these four central policies can be adopted until the issues of the Broiler Unit and the conifer plantations within the site have been resolved. If the gardens are ever to become a visitor attraction in their own right then the Broiler Unit must be removed and most of the conifer plantations felled. Both issues severely threaten the significance of the gardens and the whole site as well as severely limiting the potential for realising the recreational and educational value of the site.

Policy E6: The Broiler Unit must be dismantled and removed from the site.

PolicyE7: The conifer plantations should be felled and the timber extracted.

6.5.1 Historic Significance

One aspect to emerge from the preparation and research of this document has been the relatively unrecognised historical significance of the gardens and designed landscape at Lowther. There is an impressive and reasonably comprehensive documentary record of the development of the landscape from c1650 until the present day. A number of named designers have been approached at one time or another including Colen Campbell, Francis Richardson, 'Capability' Brown and John Webb. It has been recorded by Kip and Knyff and described by the likes of Celia Fiennes, Gilpin and Wordsworth. The significance of this documentary evidence is therefore enhanced by the surviving evidence on the ground of a garden whose main structural layout has not been fundamentally altered since 1700.

Policy E8: Lowther gardens and park are currently listed Grade II on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of Historic Interest. English Heritage should review the current listing with a view to upgrading this listing to at least Grade II.*

6.5.2 Pre- 17th Century Landscape

At present, as a pre-17th century landscape, Lowther gardens are of little known significance.

PolicyE9: Take such opportunities as arise to enhance historical and archaeological understanding of the pre-17th century landscape at Lowther

Beyond the garden, the park is of considerable significance as a pre-17th century landscape. An archaeological survey of the park was completed in 1997, identifying a number of archaeological sites, and recommending further research and work. However the park and wider landscape has not been considered as part of this Conservation Plan. Nevertheless the presence of the park, as well as views looking west towards the Lake District adds considerably to the exceptional significance of the site, and taken as a whole adds greatly to its public and educational potential.

Policy E9: Incorporate the wider designed landscape as part of the management of the historic core of the estate

6.5.3 17th Century Landscape

The development of the garden during the 17th century and the early 18th century was the most significant in terms of its surviving layout. Further research is now needed to increase the understanding of the garden particularly from this time through archaeological fieldwork. The results of this work, particularly a detailed study of the garden enclosures as depicted on the Kip and Knyff plan could help define how to approach the restoration of the most historically significant areas of the garden.

Policy E10: Commission archaeological fieldwork of the south gardens aimed at significantly enhancing the knowledge of the development of the gardens during the 17th and 18th centuries.

Since at least 1683, the whole of the western side of the gardens have been enclosed by the massive stone structure that is referred to as the Terrace and that still dominates the garden today. It is the most important individual feature within the gardens.

Policy E11: A structural and condition survey is required of the Terrace and repairs implemented if and where necessary

6.5.4 18th Century Landscape

Although a number of leading 18th contemporary designers were consulted in relation to the landscape at Lowther, and in particular 'Capability' Brown, comparatively little is known or understood about the extent to which any of their designs were implemented or were to influence the overall layout of the site.

Policy E12: Encourage further archaeological fieldwork relating to the 18th century landscape in order to enhance understanding of this period in the gardens' development.

6.5.5 19th Century Landscape

At the height of the Picturesque movement Lowther was considered one of the most remarkable landscape creations in the country. Its role as the epitome of the Picturesque is still relatively unknown

Policy E13: To commission further research about the role of Lowther Gardens within the Picturesque Movement.

6.5.6 Future Repair and Conservation

Policy E14: It is recommended that some restoration of the gardens, south and north of the Castle, should be undertaken prior to its opening to the public. This should entail the following works:

- Remove broiler unit;
- Remove plantation immediately to the south of the Castle;
- Remove of all hard standing immediately south and south-east of the Castle and that associated with the broiler houses;
- Remove sitka spruce plantation to south of existing broiler houses;
- Undertake detailed level survey of land south of the Castle;
- Investigate gradients to accommodate disabled/pushchair access along the South Lawns central path;
- Reinstate the South Lawns with associated paths;
- Restore the Terrace balustrade and steps to the Countess's Garden;

- Reinstate, in an appropriate manner, the visitor car access from the north on line of historic route;
- Reinstate lawns to north of Castle;
- Renovate and improve hard standing area to produce visitor parking.

Policy E15: Phase 2. It is recommended that the restoration of the gardens immediately to the west of the Castle should be undertaken as the second priority and that the major earthworks in the Countess's Garden and the making good of paths should be completed before the site is opened to the public.

- Undertake structural survey of walls around the Countess's garden and undertake restoration as required;
- Remove self-seeded trees against the north and east retaining walls;
- Undertake archaeological investigations of spoil tip in the Countess's Garden;
- Undertake detailed level survey of the Countess's Garden;
- With care remove spoil tip and dispose – maintain an archaeological watching brief;
- Reinstate the Countess's Garden;
- Reinstate paths to Terrace;
- Restore, in an appropriate manner, the Jubilee Summerhouse;
- Commence work on Terrace trees and shrubs management regime.
- Resurface the principal west-east axial path with appropriate surface to facilitate public access;
- Resurface Emperor's Drive in appropriate material to facilitate public access;
- Restore steps to Jack Croft Pond;

Policy E16: Phase 3. The following works should be instigated and in progress when the site is opened, as a demonstration of a major garden restoration.

- Clear the plantation following selective archaeological investigations, and reinstate the Rose Garden to historic model;
- Reinstate Rose Garden features including central fountain and summerhouse;
- Undertake surveys on Jack Croft Pond edges, lining and water quality in preparation for future works.
- Initiate management regime for Jack Croft Pond and environs
- Undertake restoration of appropriate archaeological investigation of the remaining garden enclosures between the West Terrace and the South Lawns;
- Throughout, maximise opportunities for interpretation, to emphasise the importance of the survival of the landscape that has remained fundamentally unchanged for at least 300 years.

6.6 Ecology

Probably the most significant ecological issues in association with this site concern the river corridor and the wider landscape which are beyond the remit of this study. However there are a few matters within the area of study that do merit consideration from the point of view of ecology.

Policy F1: In view of the importance of old broadleaved trees at Lowther, it is desirable that all surviving Ash, Oak, Sycamore and Beech over 100yrs should be retained. This would also apply to the row of old Limes to the south west of the heronry. Competing conifers less than 50 years old, younger broadleaves and Yews less than 50 years old should be removed or cut back to admit light and air in order to encourage lichens to colonise the bark of the old broadleaves.

Policy F2: A management scheme should be adopted on the Terrace walk which will conserve and maximise the floristic diversity there and promote attractive plants such as Cowslips and Early Purple Orchids.

At the present time the intense rabbit grazing is probably achieving the desired effect. But if the rabbits were to be reduced it might be necessary to introduce an appropriate mowing regime. This could involve a broad close-mown path through areas cut only occasionally, at different times, to allow flowering and seeding of the different species.

Policy F3: When carrying out any work on the rockery areas near to the site of the Ice House care should be taken to conserve the fern communities growing on the vertical rock faces along the southern and western margins.

6.7 New Development and Alterations

The policies set out below are intended to guide future changes, such as the adaptation of the stable buildings or the introduction of new visitor facilities. Whilst new development will be formally controlled through the planning process these general policies are intended to guide the formulation of these development and management proposals.

Policy G1: New development or buildings must not damage the significance of the asset, as identified in the Conservation Plan.

Policy G2: Any changes should be additive and reversible; the demolition or removal of historic structures and features within the site should only be considered as a last resort after all other options have been considered.

Policy G3: Any alterations to features or buildings within the site should be carefully justified as part of the overall management and conservation of the site, and respect the significance of the asset.