

Gibside Estate

Acquisition of the walled garden, garden cottage and outbuildings, the monument, the remains of the Hall and some 340 acres of woodland, of which 220 are designated SSSI. The National Trust had owned The Chapel (the grandest building on the estate) and covenants over the land and buildings that impinged on The Chapel, since 1965. This was the opportunity for the Trust to acquire the remainder of the landscaped park, which is listed Grade II* in the register of parks and gardens. [Information from the National Trust: Gibside's character closely reflects the achievements and the tribulations of successive owners whose combined history is a barely credible mixture of enterprise, wealth and taste laced with tragedy, vanity, indulgence and cruelty. The great landscape created for George Bowes, one of the outstanding achievements of the Georgian era in the north, was enlivened rather than obscured by extensive mid-Victorian planting of exotic trees. Yet neglect played an important part in forming Gibside's present character. Formal ponds became silted and lost their regularity but emerged instead as important wetlands encouraging a rich variety of species, amphibians, invertebrates, and birds. The woodlands, too, although their character was altered by extensive commercial forestry, provided shelter and habitat. Almost everywhere the Georgian balance between woodland and open country was maintained, though deep ploughing and spraying caused serious damage to the native flora of the parkland. There is a consequent tension between the defiant remains of man's attempt to control the landscape and the relentless incursions of nature. The buildings themselves, many of them ruinous, are important in their own right, and also as features providing interest and focus to the landscape. Most still come, however, because Gibside provides (close to home for very many) natural beauty, as well as man-made wonders, a variety of uncrowded walks, open space, peace and quiet, a chance of solitude, and water still and running. It is a place that retains something of the air of having been forgotten, a place with the charm of secrets yet to be revealed.]

Nation/region

North East

Grant awarded

£309,000

Award date

22/10/1992