



Belsay Hall Quarry Gardens



What will I see?

Fantastic rock gardens created from an old quarry which was the source of the sandstone used to build Belsay Hall and the nearby village. The scale of the garden is monumental and goes back to the 19th century aristocratic fashion for classical romanticism and paying homage to “awesome nature”.

How old is it?

The sandstones are about 325 million years old from the Carboniferous period. The quarry was active between 1810 and 1817 when the hall was being built. English Heritage restored the quarry garden to its former mid-19th century glory in the 1990s.

Did you know?

The shelter of the high rock walls of the quarry and the damp location provide a perfect site for several plants, many of them alien species. Look for one in particular, called gunnera from Chile. It looks like giant rhubarb, is 2.5 metres tall, grows leaves up to 2 metres across and looks prehistoric.

Why it is here?

The sandstone, one of many in this part of Northumberland, is more than 10 metres thick and shows “cross-bedding” really well – that’s where the layers in the sandstone are at an angle, so the sand was laid down on a sloping surface and that is evidence that it was formed by water, or wind.

And wildlife?

On the rock faces grow broad-buckler fern, hart’s-tongue, ivy-leaved toadflax, foxglove, wood-sorrel and wood speedwell. Elsewhere are golden-scaled male-fern, lady fern and pink purslane, with occasional royal fern (once native in Northumberland).

Where is it?

Part of English Heritage Belsay Hall and Castle estate. Close to Belsay village [NT085784]. There is a bus service from Newcastle to Belsay.



Want to know more?

- **Virtual tour**
- NNP Geodiversity Audit
- Onshore GeoIndex
- iGeology
- Geological history of Northumbria

