



## Yorkshire Gardens Trust AGM Saturday 6 April 2024

### Introduction

I was somewhat surprised when it was suggested that we hold the 27th YGT AGM at Askham Bryan College, as in my time as a member of the Yorkshire Gardens Trust, the AGM has been held at one of the large country houses which meant that the afternoon could be spent on a tour of the designed landscape.



*Jane Furse's flowers beautifully arranged*

*Image © Rosh Childs*

However, a little delving into the list of past events revealed that the very first AGM had been held at

Askham Bryan in September 1997 with a lecture given by Trevor Rogers of the Northern Fruit Group. Indeed, the second AGM, when YGT had just become a registered charity, was also held there in February 1998, so it must have proved a successful venue.

It was not very easy to find, but there was plentiful parking and comfortable chairs in the spacious conference centre.

The AGM began promptly at 10.30, after members enjoyed restorative mugs of tea or coffee and possibly a huge home-made cookie, with a welcome to everyone from the Chairman Nick Lane Fox, one of our Vice Presidents. The minutes of the previous year's AGM held at Sledmere were quickly approved and it was onto the Treasurer's report.

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## Treasurer's report

Maddy Hughes told us that financially YGT was in a healthy place. Most of our income comes from our subscriptions, interest from our financial reserves and from events, but the expenditure incurred by commitment to primary schools and student bursaries this year and the on-going annual expenses including the administrator's salary, printing, postage and accounting costs meant our expenditure was greater than our income. This means that at this rate our capital would only last for another eight years. To accommodate the School's Committee's wish to involve more schools and needing a bigger annual grant to do this, the Trustees had decided to increase the membership subscription after several years of no increases. The audience voted in support of the Treasurer's report and thus the membership increase.



*Members at the AGM. Image © Rosh Childs*

## Committee reports

After this a representative of each of YGT's committees gave a short report. Val Hepworth, speaking for the Conservation and Planning committee, said they were having to respond to two to three planning applications for parks and gardens every week, as well as woodland and forestry consultations. There is cause to celebrate as Waterton Park has been given Grade II listing by Historic England.

Gillian Parker read Louise Wickham's report for Research and Recording. The team have now completed 75 site reports which are available to everyone on our website.

Vicky Price, reading the report for Membership and Engagement, said there had been 12 events and six on-line Zoom talks organised for the year, as well as accepting an invitation to create and man a stand at the Harrogate Autumn Flower Show. She also announced a special extra event: an invitation to visit the garden at Gray's Court Hotel with Julie Fern, the Head Gardener, who is the recipient of a YGT Student Bursary.

In the School's report Sue Lindley told us that the number of primary schools YGT supported had risen from 53 two years ago to 80 today, and the help

and gifts we give encourage young schoolchildren to appreciate being outdoors, growing plants and the interaction with wildlife. The next gift will be watering cans.

Christine Miskin, who edits the Newsletter and e-Bulletin, thanked all the contributors and her hard-working typesetter Cathryn Preston, and added that any articles for future newsletters would be gratefully received.

Brendan Mowforth told us that there had been no small grants awarded, but he had had applications from Northern Fruit Trees for Ledston, and Dark Star Plants for information boards about Rounton Grange, where the nursery is based in the walled garden.

Chris Beevers gave updates on students who had received bursaries: Rachel Higgins had completed an RHS Level 2 course and was looking for employment, Sarah Collings, after her success designing a border at the RHS Tatton Show, is now in her second and final year of her Masters in Landscape Architecture degree and Julie Fern, the current Bursary Student, has used her award to support doing a RHS Level 3 course. Unfortunately, Rory Piper is still seeking placements which meet the YGT bursary criteria where he can develop his knowledge of heritage fruit production and management, but these are scarce. We need a new round of publicity and promotion for our Student Bursary.

## Chairman's report

Finally, our Chairman Chris Webb gave his report and thanked everyone, as we all support YGT by buying tickets for events and paying our subscriptions. He thanked both Chris Beevers and Gail Falkingham who had resigned as Trustees, though Chris will still look after the Student Bursary and Gail adds to our Instagram account. He also talked about the YGT Conservation Committee's decision not to approve the National Trust's planning application to build a new visitor centre at the Canal Gates at Studley Royal, which has been approved by the Gardens Trust. In the view of our Conservation team the NT proposal is vastly flawed; their report about traffic flow is inadequate; and the footprint of the proposed building is three times larger than currently whilst the NT say it is only one and a half times larger. Chris has been in contact with the Gardens Trust, as in their recent publications they have not said that there is a fundamental disagreement between the Gardens Trust and YGT about the plans. YGT members will be kept up to date with news about this by Chris, as it is of concern that we do not agree with the view of the Gardens Trust.

All the various reports were voted on and accepted. Maddy Hughes then proposed UHY Calvert Smith



as the Independent Examiner of the Company which was passed unanimously.

### Trustees

Next on the agenda was the re-appointment of Trustees who were retiring by rotation: Penelope Dawson Brown, Madalyn Hughes and Roger Lambert, who were all re-appointed. There were two nominations for new Trustees: Dr Camilla Allen, a lecturer in landscape architecture at the University of Sheffield, and Trevor Nicholson, Head Gardener at Harewood House. Both were elected unanimously by the assembled members.

### Any Other Business

Peter Goodchild raised the topic of how YGT might be able to help with the lack of expertise of people involved in planning, with collaborations like the Training Day held at Lotherton last year and the Study Day we organised at Burnby Hall. He suggested that YGT should become part of a network of like-minded organisations, and was writing a report based on the discussions of the Working Group on Education and Training to be submitted to the Council of Management.

David Rhodes returned to the concerns about the planning application for the visitor centre at Studley Royal and raised the question about its continuing status as a World Heritage Site. Liverpool lost its WHS status when it chose to rebuild. David informed us that the Stable Block in Studley Deer Park was for sale, and the new visitor centre and car park could be sited there. He said an appeal should be started to create a fund to buy this.



*Front of house showing current wide road*

Marilyn Elms asked what the concerns about the application were. Chris Webb said the National Trust

had based its application on very poor information and the new building would be intrusive. Val Hepworth said it would disfigure the Aislaby view across the lake. Peter Goodchild added that it goes against the WHS management plan to 'identify, protect, conserve, present and transmit'. David Rhodes concluded the discussion by saying that the NT had not grasped the historical issues of their application or the intellectual interpretation of the site, and they should buy the stables. After that somewhat heated discussion, Nick brought the AGM to a close.

### Harewood's Garden and Grounds – 'Reimagined'

However, his duties as chairman were not over as he introduced Trevor Nicholson, our speaker for the day. Trevor entitled his talk Harewood's Gardens and Grounds – 'Reimagined'. He has been the Head Gardener at Harewood for nearly thirty years.

Changes have already started as the twice annual bedding in the parterre in front of the house has already been replaced with perennial Mediterranean planting of lavender with the occasional variegated sage, but now Trevor was about to unveil the new vision for the entire garden and grounds of one of the best known English country houses, which will both protect and enhance, and improve the visitor experience 'all with the aim of healing the landscape'.



*Parterre showing perennial planting*

The key projects, which are design-based rather than horticultural, were to improve the car park and the visitor arrival areas, as at present there is no central visitor centre. To re-imagine and relocate the playground, reduce the tarmac road to the Stables and its courtyard, and improve the landscape setting of the Stables. As the Bird Garden has now gone, this site would be changed. The gardens and the plant collection, which has historic importance, would be upgraded. The Walled Garden would be restored and redeveloped to become a heritage education centre. All this within a ten-year timeline!



## Car Park



*Current view of car park showing wide road*

Starting with the carpark, the plan is to increase its size as well as making the roads within the park less intrusive by reducing their width and introducing passing places. The leylandii hedge beside the main pathway to the Stables will go, revealing the railings that he had discovered on a 1796 map, which were once a boundary. In the future walking from the Stables would reveal a new view of the house and terrace. The Grade II-listed Bakehouse will be converted into a Visitor Centre, with an added family activity space and a timber-built extension would give views out to the landscape.



*Railings showing leylandii hedge which will be removed*

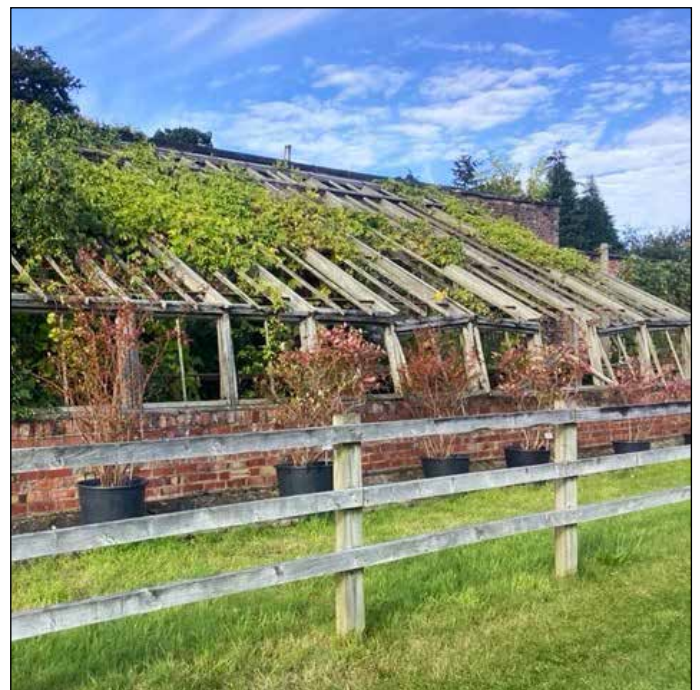
## New Playground

There will be a new playground created to the west of the Bakehouse and the existing playground will be absorbed back into the western pleasure grounds beyond the car park. The new play area will be much more naturalistic, sustainable and created in a real wood which already contains Sylvascope, a tree house viewing platform designed by Sebastian Cox and built from oak, Douglas fir and larch all supplied from the Harewood Estate. The intention is to build another similar building which will be linked to Sylvascope by a boardwalk. The historic path through the western shelter belt would be reinstated.

On the previous site of the Bird Garden a new garden of 'contemporary biodiversity' would be created as a haven for wildlife and insects. There will be better access with a new route to both the Himalayan Garden and the Walled Garden.

## Walled Garden

Here the old glasshouses will be restored and there will be a new garden café. The plan is to rejuvenate the soil in the walled garden after 200 years of digging and adding chemicals, with a no-dig scheme, utilising small beds to protect and preserve the plant soil microbiome, the dynamic community of micro-organisms associated with plants and soil. Here both food and flowers will be grown.



*Current view of dilapidated greenhouses*

Horticultural apprenticeships will be offered plus training for the many volunteers who help the staff gardeners with all the garden tasks. Friendly interpretation boards will explain to visitors how the walled garden is now gardened and why. All green waste will be made into compost and mulch. Another change will include the use of electric robot mowers



which are much lighter and do not compact the soil, especially round trees. Habitats will be created around the lake to attract insects and amphibians.

Trevor finished his talk by telling us about two plans which are obviously close to his heart as a gardener. He has joined the Global Consortium for Rhododendrons which was formed by Edinburgh Botanic Garden to address the problem of species critically endangered in the wild. He plans to identify and then propagate the rhododendron collection of over one hundred species growing at Harewood, which was damaged by drought in 2022 and also by honey fungus. He wants to set up an academy where heritage gardening skills will be taught, and indeed the Chartered Institute of Horticulture is holding a 'Grow Careers Day North' at Harewood. This will be a day for students to discover the range of horticultural careers and opportunities available to them. It is so important for the future of all gardens, parks, cemeteries and designed historic landscapes that the gardeners who

will look after them are fully trained,

It was time for lunch, and a moment to relax after a very busy morning before heading off with the teaching staff at Askham Bryam on a tour of the glasshouses.

#### Footnote

Brendan Mowforth, Gillian Parker and I manned a hastily put together Yorkshire Gardens Trust stand at the 'Grow Careers Day North' day which was held in the Stables at Harewood in May. We were surprised by the interest shown by the students who crowded round our table wanting to know more about the YGT and especially about our Student Bursary. We handed out several leaflets, so we are hoping for more applications.

*Vicky Price*

*Images of Harewood © Roger Lambert*

## New Nursery Opens in South Yorkshire

Hooton's Walled Nursery

HOME ABOUT PHOTOS PLANTS LOCATION PRESS

The Specialist nursery in an historic Rotherham Walled garden

About us

Hooton's Walled Nursery promises to be a place to inspire, both gardener and amateur alike, looking to buy hardy, garden worthy perennials.

Thanks to Jules Fern for information about this exciting new nursery opening here in South Yorkshire.

"I learned about this nursery through one of my classmates on the Level 3 course, who is based in South Yorkshire, and my husband (who grew up near

Rotherham) and I went to visit this nursery a couple of weeks ago.

It is a very ambitious, charming, and I think important project breathing new life into the derelict walled garden at Hooton Roberts". (Jules Fern)

<https://www.hootonswallednursery.co.uk/>

# From the Chair

I have two rather big things to write about this month: the AGM of the Gardens Trust (GT), held two days ago, and the National Trust's revision of its application for a new building inside the Water Garden at Studley Royal. I will begin with the Gardens Trust AGM.

## Gardens Trust AGM

As you will know from our letters to members in August, YGT Council of Management were worried by two of the proposed changes to the GT's Articles of Association. To summarise, we felt that these articles would be damaging to County Gardens Trusts' (CGTs) partnership with GT. As well as seeking your opinions on our course of action, we also circulated GT and all the CGTs to let them know that we would vote against these articles at the forthcoming AGM, and why. All the comments we received from YGT members urged us to pursue this course, and we received a number of messages from CGTs saying that they, too, would object.

Before the meeting GT issued a circular to say why they wanted to change the articles (which Lynn circulated to members). Council of Management were unpersuaded by their reasoning, and we issued a further message to say so, why we believed the changes would be damaging, and what we hoped would happen to prevent this. We received further messages of support from CGTs following this second message and, shortly before the AGM, GT issued a note saying that the problem article changes would be withdrawn from the meeting, to our immense relief.

Several Council of Management members attended the AGM (on Zoom), together with members of the Conservation Committee in their capacity as members of GT. YGT Conservation member Geoff Hughes had asked to speak at the meeting as a member of GT. In the event, the AGM did not follow the advertised agenda. My account draws on reports from YGT attendees as well as my own observations.

The meeting, after a welcome by Peter Hughes, the retiring Chair, began with an unadvertised series of videos by GT staff and volunteers, hosted by Linden Groves (GT's Head of Operations and Strategy), showcasing the work of GT in the last year. The tone was positive, as were the activities

and real achievements in a difficult year on several fronts. Throughout, the videos emphasised the importance of working with CGTs: Linden said, for example 'many CGTs want us to work more closely [with them], and this is a super-positive vision for the future', and there were further instances where working together was the dominant theme.

Peter Hughes, as Chair, then gave his own address in his last act as the retiring Chair of GT, followed by a move to voting. Peter was followed by Geoff Hughes under any other business. Geoff gave an able address calling for GT to consider, with CGTs, the construction of a protocol to help us navigate through circumstances where GT and a CGT disagree on their responses to a planning application, drawing, of course, on our experience with Studley Royal.

Geoff advocated for an open process that GT should:

1. State to GT's members, at the earliest opportunity, that the local County Gardens Trust has a different view from itself,
2. Describe to GT's members the reasoning by which it has decided to proceed with a view that is contrary to that of the local County Gardens Trust,
3. Allow the County Gardens Trust to explain its position to GT members at the earliest opportunity, e.g. by an email to GT members and/or by an article in the immediately following GT Newsletter

The need for such a protocol has been discussed at Council of Management and Conservation Committee throughout the course of the Studley application, and up until the summer of this year, we had thought that a joint article on the application, originally suggested by Peter Hughes in January, would be written. We very much hope that we can work with GT to draw positive lessons from the failure to do this so far in the case of Studley.

Linden followed up the AGM with a welcome letter to CGTs to say that, in response to requests from CGTs for closer working, GT are 'putting together a plan of action to take forward this important but complex piece of work, for those CGTs who would like to be involved.' In the same letter,



Linden writes that ‘following representations from Yorkshire Gardens Trust it was decided to remove the Resolution to update the GT’s Articles of Association, which it had been proposed to update to make it easier to recruit new trustees and maintain a resilient Board. This work of course still needs to be done, and we will be in touch in the coming months to seek your thoughts on appropriate further amendments.’

Council of Management has not had time to consider either of these developments, but, given our stance on the importance of our partnership with GT, it would be surprising if there was anything other than enthusiastic and active participation in the development of these proposals by YGT.

### **Studley Royal Planning Application**

And now to Studley Royal. As many of us already know, the application was roundly condemned by ICOMOS, the body that assesses the condition of World Heritage sites for UNESCO. The National Trust (NT) have responded by issuing an amended proposal. In essence this reduces the size of the proposed new building (NT have ceased calling it a visitor centre, as they did in the first application), and makes some landscaping changes that would reduce the visibility of the building from the north. These changes do mitigate the visual damage the building does to the World Heritage site.

However, the fundamentals are unchanged. NT have declined to address the problems of the likely increase in traffic entering the Deer Park, they provide visitor projections that are out of line with current trends, and argue that the new, reduced café will be adequate (quite against their original reasoning for an increase in its size). Again, the new data they provide are inadequate to support their case. We have continued our objection, therefore.

GT, on the other hand, have continued to base their response on visual impact, and conclude that the harm to the World Heritage site is outweighed by the public good resulting from the proposal. YGT thinks that this is a limited response to a proposal that has multiple effects reaching far into the future.

By the time you read this, or shortly afterwards, the local planning authority should have reached its determination. Whatever the result of that meeting, YGT will have much to consider.

As a footnote, members might be interested to learn that a very similar argument is going on at Morston Quay in North Norfolk. Not a historic park or garden, but there NT want to erect a new, larger visitor centre with expanded facilities using very similar arguments to those in play at Studley. It seems as inappropriate in that tiny fishing village as it is in our World Heritage site.

*Chris Webb*





# Notes from the Editor

After a period of delightful weather, it looks as if Autumn may be on the way. Our last event of the 2024 season, which was a visit to Levisham Heritage Mill and Hall, including its designed landscape, took place earlier this week. It was an excellent way to end the season.

The draft programme for the 2025 season appears in the Events Committee report. It promises to be another year of interesting and rewarding events. For those of you who experienced difficulties with the Eventbrite booking website, the normal booking form will also be included with the programme when it is sent out in late January.

This issue contains a detailed report of our AGM and the subsequent lecture given by Trevor Nicholson entitled Harewood's Gardens and Grounds Reimagined. There are very ambitious plans to improve huge areas of the estate and just today an email has been sent out:

## **Planning permission granted for our new play area**

*We are thrilled to let you know that we've been granted planning permission by Leeds City Council to create our brand-new play area. Work will begin this winter, and we hope to have the new play area open in Spring 2025.*

Following lunch, we heard from Steve Batsford about the history of the College and its current courses and were then taken on a tour of the grounds. Gillian Parker provided this report for us

In June, Val Hepworth attended a visit organised by the Northumbria Gardens Trust to both Ravensworth Castle, a Grade I listed 14th century castle ruin not far from Richmond, and Gibside where, although the Hall is a roofless ruin, the surrounding landscape is amongst the finest in the North of England. She has produced a detailed and interesting report about her visit.

Following the visit to Ray Wood and the Yorkshire Arboretum in May, Jane Furse has produced a scholarly report, which contains some wonderful photos of the rhododendron collection taken by Rosh Childs.

Niki Torrance tells us about the Summer Picnic held at Littlethorpe Manor, which took place in July. The gardens appear to be kept in immaculate fashion, as evidenced in the photos accompanying Niki's report.

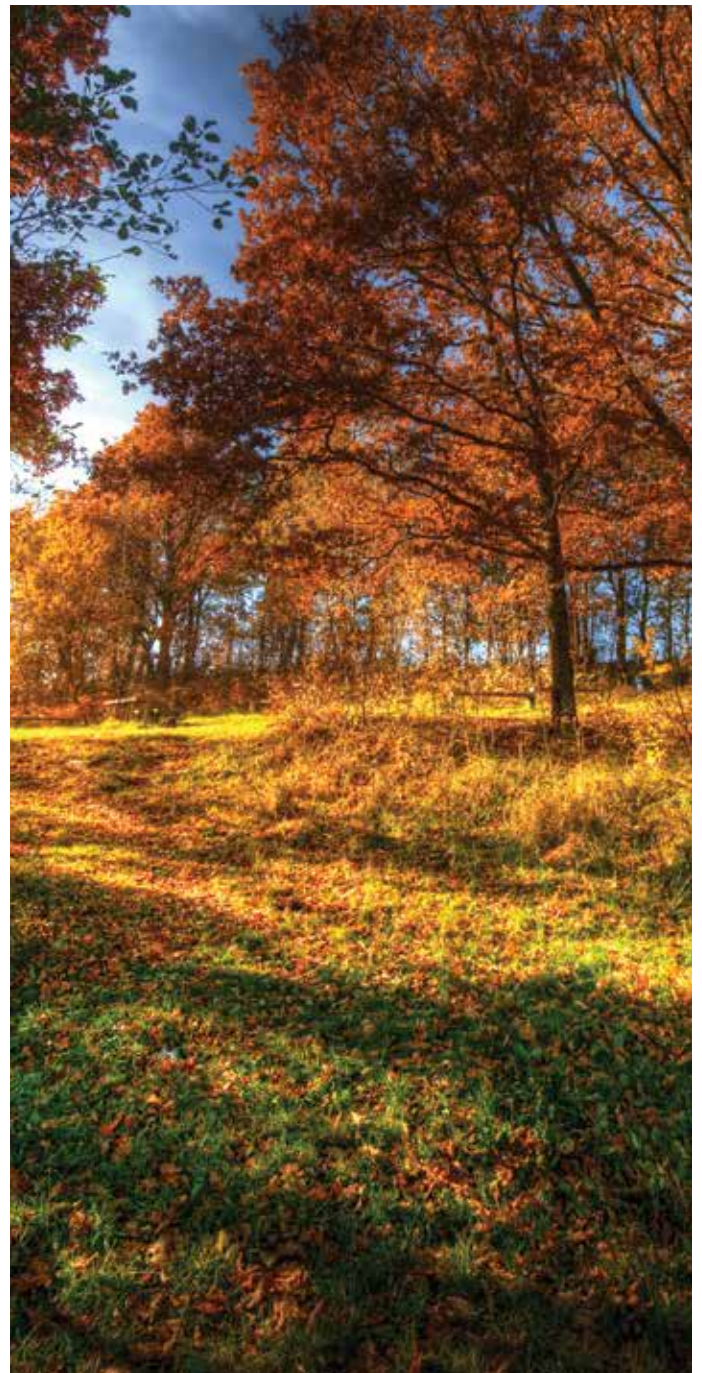
Paul Fearnley was persuaded to write about our visit to Dark Star Plants Nursery, which is situated in the Walled Garden at East Rounton near Northallerton.

"The historic house, formal gardens, glasshouses, lawns and woodland are gone, never to return" but the nursery was well worth visiting, and Shaun Passman, who runs the nursery with Jenny Gaunt, gave the group an interesting talk on the history of Rounton Grange.

The reports from each of our Committees - Conservation and Planning; Research and Recording; Events; Schools and the Bursary Scheme also appear as usual, evidencing the huge amount of work which goes on behind the scenes by our dedicated volunteer members.

**Christine Miskin**  
**Editor**

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# Introduction to Askham Bryan College and tour of the grounds

## Askham Bryan College

Before starting our tour, we heard from Steve Batsford about the history of the college and its current courses. Steve began with thanks to YGT, in particular to Maddy and Chris Beevers for fostering the link with the college in its anniversary year. He also commented on how much he and his colleagues had learned from the morning's meeting and presentation. The learning was entirely mutual, as Steve then took us on a brief 'tour' of the college's establishment in 1938 and its subsequent development.

The college grew significantly in the 1960s, with a substantial building programme that saw conference and residential facilities, teaching blocks, workshops and laboratories added to the site. The development of the arboretum also took place in this decade, under the direction of PA Helmsley, who had been a student at the college and returned after a period at the Edinburgh Botanic Garden, before moving on in 1978 to the Museum Gardens in York. Current plans for the site include upgrading the glasshouses, something we heard more about during the second part of the afternoon.

Steve acknowledged that, over time, horticulture had become a smaller part of the college curriculum but that plans were underway to change that within their higher education teaching. We learned about the move into T-levels, an initiative of the previous government targeted exclusively at 16- to 18-year-olds; a focus that seems unfortunate given the numbers of career changers that horticulture attracts. The T-level will be a post-GCSE qualification and the equivalent of three A levels. Steve told us that these new courses will put more emphasis on landscape, including heritage landscape and gardens. Level 2 and 3 RHS courses continue, with around 100 learners, most of whom are on Level 2, so this will remain the main route into horticulture for those who want to change careers later.

The college also offers 12-week courses for employees of Johnsons of Whixley, one of the largest commercial nurseries in Europe (and – Backhouse geek information from me - which still occupies most of the footprint of the Backhouses of York Cattal nursery site!).

We heard about other developments too: the college has ambitions to bring floristry, horticulture and arboriculture closer together, is establishing a new campus at Stewart Park, Middlesborough, and is adopting and developing various technological solutions to horticultural challenges. Raspberry Pi microcomputers are used to track the growing

environment for plants and sensors and computer-controlled systems direct automatic feeding and watering; virtual and augmented reality systems for identifying pests and diseases are being developed with the Yorkshire Arboretum; and there are experiments with column hydroponics. Sustainability and responses to climate change have seen the use of animal waste to generate biogas, peat-free growing media, and as little chemical use as possible. Hot composters in corridors encourage students and staff alike to compost anything vegetable-based, and rainwater harvesting is a project for the future. Another future project is to return to having a significant collection of rhododendrons. There had once been 102 species on the college site, but this has reduced over time with lapses in their management. Everyone at this session learned much that was new and interesting and I am sure all of us wish the college success in its exciting plans.

## Site tour



*Part of the 'Hampton Court' border*

After Steve's talk we embarked on the second part of the introduction to the college and moved outside for a tour of the site, led by Harry Johnson-Firth, the college's course manager and very enthusiastic horticulturalist! In an excellent walk we learned about the college's rock garden and alpine house, its RHS vegetable garden, the 'Hampton Court' border which had been designed for the eponymous show and recreated on the college site afterwards, and the challenges of maintaining them all. As for all horticultural colleges, summer vacations pose a particular problem when there are no students on site during a key part of the weed-growing season. The college is trying to increase its volunteer workforce to help solve this issue. We were intrigued to hear that the college previously held the National Collection of Rhubarb. The site had subsequently been used for growing chrysanthemums for the cut-flower market and what had been the forcing sheds were used for packing them. It now hosts the horticultural department's car park.



*The limestone rock garden*

### **The Glasshouses**

Stacey Smales then took over and introduced us to the glasshouses. Glasshouse 2 is heated and the main site for propagation, but also houses the British Cactus and Succulent Society collection of over 3000 plants, including some very rare species. These plants attracted a lot of attention from YGT members and there was an interesting discussion about whether such planting could be an adequate response to climate change, especially in the light of the exceptionally wet winter just passed. We visited the cool glasshouse next, mostly used for hardening off, where Stacey told us that there had been a deliberate policy not to use any winter heating in 2023/4. The temperature was carefully monitored and had managed to stay just above freezing point. However, during the very wet winter the glasshouse had been flooded to a depth of 30cm, an issue that the college is currently attempting to address for future years. Several of the beds had experimental crops of green manures. The temperate house was the final large glasshouse we saw, with its fish-filled pond and its loquat tree. Thanks to Steve for providing samples of the latter for one or two members to enjoy.



*The rhubarb forcing sheds*

### **The grounds**

Moving outside again, though we lost one or two members to the college's plant stall, we saw the National Sweet Pea Society trial site and learned that three new varieties grown at Askham Bryan have been brought to market in the previous two years.

For the final part of the walk Harry showed us the limestone rock garden and its pond, which is maintained to help students learn how to manage heritage rock gardens. Harry also explained the considerable problems with maintenance that they experience with it including tree roots cracking the concrete liner, equisetum taking up residence, and the inevitable challenges of weeding in rock gardens.

I wish them luck in rethinking this area, especially as rocks in gardens seem to be a 'thing' again.

Examples include Tom Stuart-Smith's rethinking of the Paxton rock garden planting at Chatsworth (James Alexander-Sinclair, 'A Change of Course', *The English Garden*, September 2003, pp.22-30) and the creation of modernist rock gardens elsewhere (Tony Spencer, 'Set in Stone', *Gardens Illustrated*, November 2023, pp.38-45).

The tour was an excellent end to a stimulating day of formal business, fascinating presentations, and much learning for everyone. I am sure that all who were there would thank the college for hosting the AGM and wish them another 75 years of high-class horticultural training and innovation.

*Gillian Parker*

*Images © Chris Beevers*



# Visit to Ray Wood Garden, Castle Howard Tuesday 14 May 2024

## Introduction



*Looking down at Castle Howard  
from the edge of Ray Woo*

YGT members gathered in the Café of the Yorkshire Arboretum on a cool damp morning for a lecture by John Grimshaw, the Director of the Yorkshire Arboretum, on the history of Ray Wood and its current incarnation as a 'Plantsman's Paradise', a collection of rare shrubs and trees under a canopy of mainly beech, oak and sweet chestnut. Both sites are now cared for by the Castle Howard Arboretum Trust (CHAT) which also has the responsibility for maintaining the wood in its current form. The Trust is thankful for the aid of a Ray Wood volunteer group who manage the weeds and the paths and help with labelling as well as clearance when damage or disease necessitates minor removal.

John started our lecture by showing the old maps of both the Arboretum's place within the Castle Howard Estate and that of Ray Wood. The Arboretum, which sits within the ancient parkland boundary, lies to the west of the huge Obelisk whose main east west visual axis still runs through it, opposite to Ray Wood. A dry bank of lighter soil also runs east to west along this axis and is present in both places, whilst the heavy

clay soil in the rest of the arboretum is less in evidence in Ray Wood. The original curved boundary of the emparked land can still be picked out in the ditch and bank on its southern and western sides.

Ray Wood has provided timber from as far back as the early 17th century, when it was important to the upkeep of Henderskelfe Castle, except for the dramatic clear felling after the Second World War. It has had several incarnations of its understorey, although surviving historic records are few. One recent find by Sally Jeffreys was drawings by Hawksmoor at Wilton House, for water courses, rockwork and cascades and Switzer is also known to have been involved in designs for the area. During the 19th century an ornate circular reservoir to supply the tall fountain in the lake was built and this still functions today although it is prone to algal build up.

Surviving 18th century stone fragments, such as the stone pyramid which has now been reassembled, and a statue plinth with detailed carvings of water flora and fauna are exquisite in their scientific detail. The statue plinth now sits in the centre of the circular reservoir basin. At the far southern edge of Ray Wood two later stone temples, the Temple of Venus and the Temple of the Four Winds were built looking out over the ha ha. The latter still stands, and John showed us a dramatic photograph from the 1940s after the wood had been clear felled showing it greatly exposed without its sheltering backdrop.



*The 18th Century stone pyramid with the unique weeping "Prince Albert's Yew" in the background*

Thankfully for posterity, the land agent of the time insisted on a complete replant with hardwoods, choosing oak, sweet chestnut and beech as the future valuable timber crop. Also crucial to the survival of Ray Wood was the presence of James Russell (JR), a great plantsman, garden designer and erstwhile owner of Sunningdale Nurseries who needed to find a new



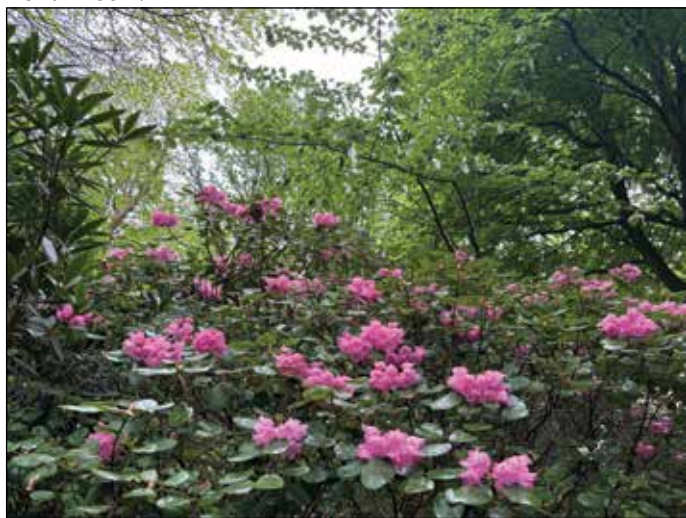
home for himself and his nursery stock in the late 1960s.

An exact contemporary of Castle Howard's then owner George Howard, the schoolfriends agreed that JR could plan and plant up Ray Wood amongst the new timber trees and move all his nursery stock up north in the meantime.

### **Sunningdale Nurseries**

John Grimshaw has a useful copy of a late Sunningdale Nursery Catalogue from the year 1959-60 showing the old prices and range of rare Rhododendrons, shrubs and unusual trees the Russell family grew. It is interesting to note that Graham Stuart Thomas, who went on to become Garden's Advisor to the National Trust, was JR's nursery manager.

John then filled us in on the history of the Sunningdale Nurseries in Surrey, as it is important in establishing the provenance of so many of Ray Wood's rare trees and shrubs. From 1846 John Standish and Charles Noble occupied the site in Surrey, germinating and growing on rhododendrons and other exotic hardy species brought from Sikkim by Josph Dalton Hooker (JDH) whose father William Hooker was the director of Kew Gardens (1841-1865). A catalogue from 1852 still survives which John has been able to see, as well as JDH's famous and commercially very successful Rhododendrons of Sikkim Himalaya illustrated by Walter Fitch published in three volumes 1849-1851.



*Caption Please*

Standish and Noble dissolved their partnership in 1856 but the stock remained, and so when JR's father bought the Nursery in 1939, they were still able to propagate from the original Hooker collections, one of the most well-known being *Rhododendron thomsonii*, an original clone still growing in Ray Wood some 50 years later. After JR and his sister Jane had settled at the Dairies, his nursery stock was heeled in behind the house and then George Howard and JR worked out a plan for the design and planting of Ray

Wood as an ornamental collection.

John then briefly touched on his own horticultural education, starting with his local library and a book by Laning Roper on the Gardens in the Royal Park at Windsor with a foreword by David Bowes Lyon.



*John Grimshaw leading our tour*

### **Tour of Ray Wood**

After a welcome lunch the group set out for Ray Wood to see the collection for ourselves. JR was known for not only his garden designs but also for his excellent eye for new plants. The famous *Pieris* 'Forest Flame' an important plant commercially for Britain, was his introduction and in Ray Wood it is planted next to *Rhododendron loderi* 'King George'. This *Pieris* is the British Champion i.e. the largest specimen known to be growing in Britain. A *Rhododendron* 'Butterfly' was also looking its best, a very relaxed and elegant cultivar. John showed us several more rhododendrons including a *R. triflora* that JR grew from seed and a *R. calandulaceum* which is deciduous. Members who visit in July will be able to enjoy its bright and very late flowers. One notable conifer was a 'Prince Albert's Yew' named after Queen Victoria's husband aka *Saxegothica conspicua*. This is such a rarity, being pendulous when all other known plants are not, that John is proud to have it in the collection.

### **Castle Howard Arboretum Trust (CHAT)**

After JR retired in 1992 little skilled maintenance was available and so in 1996, after he died, the CHAT was set up. Ray Wood and JR's fledgling Arboretum languished until 2010. Richard Storey and Arabella Lennox Boyd, as Trustees, were successful in finding money from a Sainsbury Trust and Aboretum Wespelaar from Belgium also helped to contribute money.

### **Labelling**

Regular labelling takes place within Ray Wood now,



courtesy of financial support from Kew Gardens and JR's records have proved outstandingly helpful in this respect. John has also been able to access JR's diaries and accession lists which are full of horticultural detail including snippets of gossip.

As a result, plants from Reginald Farrer's collection in Burma 1918-19 after WWI (*R. mallotum* Farrer 815) and Kingdon Ward's *R. lanatoides* KW5971A from Lang Po have recently had their provenance identified.

Old labels, written on zinc with an acid pen are still legible 50 years later. Modern equipment such as punched labels and, of course, computer databases have allowed the CHAT to build up a good resource and now labelling volunteers can even add a GPS reference which helps considerably in locating specimens. The Yorkshire Arboretum website now has an interactive map of both areas for public use.

### **Maintenance of Ray Wood**

Finally, some tree surgery also became possible, and work began on the most urgent cases. The Arboretum is about 20 acres in extent and would need six professional gardeners to keep it as pristine as the Royal Parks and National Arboreta do. Instead, John manages with a couple of full-time gardening staff, trainees and a dedicated team of Ray Wood volunteers who come once a week. The canopy in Ray Wood is now 70-80' tall and the varied and unusual understory of rhododendrons and rare trees and shrubs is suffering from too much shade, but benefitting from their shelter. There is a balancing act between light and frost pockets, shade and exposure to strong winds.

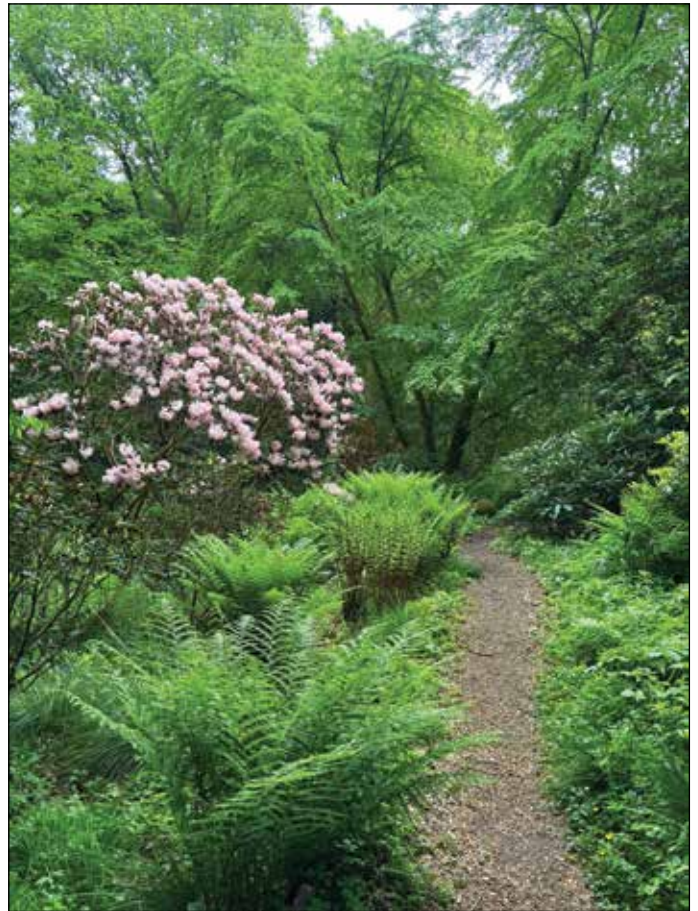
Ash die-back amongst the self-seeded trees, and a mysterious, unidentified disease in the Sweet Chestnuts are complicating the issue further. The CHAT is dependent on storms and health and safety issues to support clearance works, as they are not responsible for the overhead canopy and do not have the finances to commission the skilled arboriculturists who could reduce the diseased or dying canopy systematically.

### **Climate change**

The very real effects of climate change, including the long-term damage caused by June 2023's hot dry weather are sobering, and we were able to get a very clear understanding of the issues facing us all. New shrubs such as *Cephalotaxos sinensis*, *Daphniphyllum macropodum* and *Heptapleurum taiwanianum* x *gracile* which is very hardy as well as *Neolitsia pinnatinervis*, *Quercus lamellosa* and *Podocarpus matudae* are deliberately being tested here in the hope of establishing a reservoir of new resilient plants up north as well as at southern sites such as Kew Gardens.

As a valuable advertisement of Ray Wood's treasures,

the new leaves of species rhododendrons as well as the rare shrubs and trees, have been gathered for several of the Harrogate Shows and John recently won a prize for the highest points awarded in competitive classes at one event



*Caption Please*

In Ray Wood ground covering plants were much in evidence below the rare shrubs, and although plants like *Gentiana asclepdioides* can no longer survive the increased shade, *Shortia soldanellifolia*, *Mianthemum bifolium*, drifts of *Leucojum aestivum* and *Cornus canadensis* meant there was much to enjoy.

For autumn interest and colour *Enkianthus perulatus*, *E. campanulatus* and *Disanthus cercidifolius* are well worth seeking out as are the *Cornus* species and smaller *Acer*s.

### **Conclusion**

Our especial thanks to John, an acknowledged expert in his fields for sharing some of his extensive knowledge about Ray Wood and its history with us.

*Jane Furse*

*Photos © Rosh Childs*



# Summer Picnic at Littlethorpe Manor Wednesday, 3 July 2024



*Littlethorpe Manor - a white rendered Georgian house with nineteenth century additions*

## Introduction

Early in the morning of 3rd July, the weather was not promising for our visit and summer picnic at Littlethorpe Manor. However, despite threatening clouds, we had some intermittent sunshine and, more importantly, it stayed dry.

Littlethorpe Manor is a Georgian house situated in the small, rural village of Littlethorpe on the southern edge of Ripon. The oldest part of the house was built in 1720 and was extended in two further sections in the 19th century. It now comprises 11 acres of grounds including four acres of formal gardens and lawns on the upper level surrounding the house and seven acres of parkland below a large retaining wall. In 1985, the property was bought by Mr. & Mrs. John Thackray who spent their early years there upgrading the house itself.

The started work in the garden in 1998, when our guide for the day, Eddie Harland, was appointed as Head Gardener.

The Thackray family business was started by Mr. Thackray's grandfather who opened a chemist shop in Leeds in the early 1900s. The business continued to grow and develop into a larger concern designing and selling surgical equipment and, more recently, became renowned for the development of the first successful hip and ball joint.

Eddie and his wife, Michele, have been gardening at Littlethorpe Manor for 26 years and were involved in the original planning when Mr. Thackray described his brief for the garden as 'to create a mini-Arcadia'. There has been further re-planning since then and the gardens today are tended by Eddie and Michele, along with gardener, Tina Kendall, and Andrew Welford

who designed and installed all the wooden structures in the garden and constructed the pavilion.

On arriving at Littlethorpe Manor, our group was guided to a small marquee and welcomed with tea/ coffee and cake. After a brief introduction, Eddie took us on a tour of the garden with Michele as back marker to ensure no-one was left behind!



*The Walled Garden*

## The Walled Garden

The tour began in the oldest part of the garden. The Walled Garden was completed by the mid-1700s using bricks from Littlethorpe brickworks, with an old brewhouse constructed in one corner. When Eddie and Michele arrived, the garden contained fruit trees and much gravel. Eddie worked on the current plans during the winter of 1998 and contractors were brought in during 1999 to rip everything out and start again.



*The immaculately tidy vegetable garden*

Immediately to the left as you enter the garden is an immaculately neat vegetable patch – not a weed to be seen! The rest of the Walled Garden now features four main patio areas dedicated to the four seasons. The Thackrays commissioned four bronze statues, one for each season, and each area is screened off by unusual and attractive bespoke metal railings. In the centre is a bespoke arbour festooned with headily



fragrant roses (rambling Frances E Leicester) and honeysuckle, with a tree-like metal structure in the middle representing the cycle of life. The arbour is surrounded by 12 oval-shaped clipped dwarf box plants which, on first sight, resembled the petals of a flower, but in fact are four groups of three for each season. Beneath the ring of box, purple thyme was spilling onto the path. The spring border, gone over now, had contained tulips, poppies and alliums in reds and purples which, along with the statue under a fountain, expressed the youthful exuberance of the season. The whole garden is full of perennials, with a few annuals, including late-flowering plants like echinops, sedum, eupatoriums and grasses to ensure that there is something of interest all year. The whole garden has a strong structure of dwarf box which has suffered recently with box blight. Eddie explained that dwarf box is the most susceptible to blight but, rather than dig it all out, they have been applying a fungicide recommended by the RHS and, to date, they have seen some success with it.



*In the Sunken Garden*

### **The Sunken Garden**

Walking past the brewhouse and through a door in the wall we entered the circular Sunken Garden which was laid out in 2000. Previously, it had been a lawned area with a circular border in the middle and a sundial. It had originally been planned as a white Yorkshire rose garden, featuring a dwarf white lavender parterre with box edging linking into the manor house. All the box had to be removed due to blight and, although Japanese holly had been

recommended as a replacement, Eddie realised that it would be hard to grow in this location. Instead, it is now a scented Mediterranean garden in only nine inches of topsoil after the area had been dug out to sand and gravel. Structural planting includes standard Portuguese laurels and fruit trees including kiwi growing against the wall and several medlars which thrive in the sheltered conditions, sometimes producing as many as 300 fruits each season! The circular borders, interrupted by steps going down to the centre of the garden, are full of perennials, roses and lavenders in softer shades of pinks, blues and mauves than elsewhere in the garden, peppered with white daisies and a few stipa giganteum. In the centre, an armillary sphere has replaced the original sundial. The sphere is set to the latitude/longitude for Littlethorpe manor house and the Thackray's house at Lillehammer in Norway, the land of Mrs. Thackray's birth.

### **The Old Courtyard**

Climbing the few steps up from the centre of the Sunken Garden towards the house, we proceeded through a gate to the Old Courtyard, a private patio area used for leisure and entertaining. The gate was installed to prevent the Thackray's sweet-natured but very large dog from bounding through the gardens and causing mayhem! There was a pool in the middle of the Courtyard, which was filled in, and a new orangery was added in 1995 replacing an ugly 1960s structure which was not appropriate to the house. The Courtyard was laid with new riven paving, supplied by a local firm, and inlaid with traditional bricks. Some trees were hurriedly planted in large wooden boxes just in time for a Millennium party, but they were such a success that they have since become a permanent feature. The area can also be lit at night, a feature in the garden that Mrs. Thackray always desired, and now lighting is woven throughout the garden from the house to the pavilion.



*Approaching the Natural Pond down an avenue of lime trees, opposite the Classical Pavilion*



## The Terrace

Turning the corner, we entered the main Terrace bordering the front of the house with magnolia grandiflora climbing up the wooden trellises against the house walls. The Terrace was enlarged in 2002 along with further development of the fountain lawn below. The Terrace was extended out from the house and a new balustrade, made from Cranbourne stone, was installed above a 1.8m high retaining wall with steps down to the fountain lawn. The lawn area was more formally laid out with a shaped oblong pool and fountain, flanked by pillars of Irish yew leading the eye from the Terrace, beyond the lawn to the small lake and classical pavilion in the distance. The lawn is now kept tidy by another member of the gardening team named Hildegard: a robotic lawn mower described by Eddie as “constantly clipping the lawn like an electronic sheep”!



*The turning circle on the front drive*

## The Front Driveway

The Front Driveway was once steeper, but it was levelled off to make it more car-friendly and the level drive now leads to a turning circle in front of the house. A pond in the centre of the circle includes a mesmerising aqua lens water feature designed by Alison Armour Wilson of GPEauball Ltd: a glass ball where water is pumped from below through a hole in the top and then cascades quietly and evenly down the outside of the ball. The pool is surrounded by two box-headed hornbeams clipped into semi-circles framing a view of the front door as you approach up the drive. Borders on either side of the drive are

filled with a grass-like plant, lazula sylvatica, for good textural context, with roses and agapanthus in borders against the house wall.

Turning away from the driveway back into the main garden, we are greeted by the joyful fragrance of flowering lime trees overhead.



*Take in jpeg Physic Garden*

## The Physic Garden

The Physic Garden was commissioned by Mrs. Thackray following the unfortunate death of her husband in 2018. She wanted a garden to commemorate both him and particularly the family business in surgical equipment. The garden is also influenced by Mrs. Thackray's interest in the German abbess, Hildegard of Bingen, who was a medical writer and practitioner in the Middle Ages, as well as a musical composer, again, another interest shared by Mrs. Thackray. (You will recall that the abbess has also been remembered in the naming of the robotic lawnmower!)

In a very modern style, the oblong garden is dominated by a long steel rill with porcelain edges running up the centre flanked on each side by a series of oblong borders planted with medicinal herbs and crisscrossed with resin-bound gravel pathways. On each side are large, weathered, corten steel raised planters containing plants that are used as herbal remedies for the ailments of parts of the body. Each planter bears the name of its medical specialism: ENT,



cardiology, analgesia, gynaecology, rheumatology, urology, dermatology (included stinging nettles!), allergy, gastroenterology, respiratory and two planters for nervous disorders (for use, no doubt, by the small gardening team tasked with the care of such a huge garden).



*The Physic Garden looking towards the 'hip & ball joint' sculpture*

## Conclusion

We are very grateful to Mrs. Thackray for allowing us to visit her wonderful gardens for our Summer Picnic and special thanks are extended to Eddie and Michele for our most informative tour round the gardens.

## Note

Littlethorpe Manor garden was first opened to the public in 2002 through the National Garden Scheme (NGS), helping to raise money for charity. It continues to work with the NGS, but also provides pre-booked private tours for parties of 20 people or more. For further information, visit <https://littlethorpemanor.com>

**Niki Torrance**

**Photos © Lindsay Dodgson**

# Bursary Report

## Julie Fern – YGT Bursary Award 2023-4

Congratulations to Jules on successfully completing her RHS Level 3 course at Askham Bryan – passing with Merit. Here are some key points from her end of Bursary Scheme feedback:

*“My motivation for embarking on the RHS Level 3 course was largely based on personal development: I wanted to improve my knowledge and expertise in horticulture, specifically as a Head Gardener. Combined, I have been Head Gardener at Gray’s Court and the National Trust’s Treasurer’s House for twenty years, but have had no sustained gardening mentors or colleagues other than those I was managing. ....*

*I partly wanted to engage in the course for the joy of expanding my horizons and textures of experience with garden visits and learning alongside other gardeners. I also hoped to come away from the course with a stronger sense of legitimacy in my own horticulture expertise, as well as to improve my job prospects, as the RHS Level 3 is the industry standard most Head Gardener positions require. “*

*At YGT’s AGM In March this year, at Askham Bryan, a presentation was given on the RHS’s restructuring of the courses they offer, which was*

*still at the early stages at this point. However, there were some significant teething problems in this initial year of the teaching and delivering of the RHS Level 3 course. Jules reported that the disorganisation of the RHS and resource issues at Askham Bryan were a constant challenge.*

*“I was very fortunate to have an inspiring, high-energy and experienced gardener, Harry Johnson-Firth, teaching the course. However, the RHS did not provide a complete prospectus (only a draft was available) until half-way through the academic year... There was a vast discrepancy between what we covered in class and what was on the RHS’s OCA (Online Competence Assessment) exam..... and the necessary resources were not always available”*

*The key things I learned from taking the course are:*

- I have more expertise as a gardener than I was perhaps prepared to give myself credit for.
- The bursary has made a profound difference to my professional development because it has enabled me to achieve the industry standard RHS Level 3 required for any future positions
- I think it could be incredibly valuable for

YGT to set up a forum for students (and indeed gardeners working in historic gardens) to make a few visits to historic Yorkshire gardens through the course of the year, but with a specific focus on how those gardens are managed, and depending on the features of that garden, “

End of Bursary Scheme feedback is invaluable to YGT as a funding body to gain insights into the initiatives we are funding.

### **Rachel Higgins - YGT Bursary Award 2022-3**

Rachel Higgins has sent YGT an update on her progress with horticultural career change. She

is pleased to report that she is still employed in the horticultural industry. She has completed the first unit of the RHS Level 3 theory online and is starting her RHS Level 3 practical course in September.

### **Current Bursary Applications for 2024-2025**

There have been three YGT Bursary applications over the summer. Lotte Inch has been awarded a bursary to part-fund her RHS Level 2 training to develop her horticultural knowledge and skills for a variety of community -based initiatives.

*Chris Beevers*

## **Gardens Trust News**



### **Gardens Trust AGM**

This was held at 6pm at the Gardens Trust offices and by Zoom on Tuesday 17 September. In his Chair's column at p.XXX Chris Webb reports on the proceedings.

### **Linden Groves and the London Marathon, 2025**

Linden Groves, the Head of Operations and Strategy, is training hard for the 2025 London Marathon in aid of the Gardens Trust. She is running around parks all over the UK, meeting the people who help to look after them, and finding out how and why they are important to us all. We can follow her progress on social media.

## **St Peter's No-Dig Edible Garden at Gray's Court**

At the same time that Jules was working on her RHS Level 3 course at Askham Bryan, as Head Gardener at Gray's Court Hotel in York, she continued to develop her plans and aspirations for the gardens with the St Peter's No-Dig edible Garden Project.

This was created on land that was leased from the Minster, which also houses a statue of St Peter, and is between the hotel and the Minster.

Jules was responsible for devising the project and planning for the garden, which will breathe new life into the area by providing stunning planting with year-round interest for tourists and locals, with sustainably managed and organically grown edibles and a space for community engagement. Produce grown in the space will be used within the kitchens at Gray's Court Hotel's restaurant, The Bow Room. It is proposed that any surplus produce be donated to local food banks.

This was a truly collaborative project, not only supported by Gray's Court and Minster staff but also by community organisations - Brunswick Organic Nursery and Beacon Alpaca Farm.



*Minster gardeners Kate Wilkinson, Daniel Mihill; Gray's Court Head Gardener Jules Fern; Gray's Court Proprietor Helen Heraty; Gray's Court Director Morgan Heraty-Wells.*

*Photo ©Daniel Easton*

The project began in the Autumn of 2023 when Jules began constructing the no-dig garden.





*Photo © Jules Fern*

The garden was prepared from autumn through to spring ready for the delivery of seedlings from the Brunswick Organic Nursery in Bishopthorpe.

Kate Davy and workers Ben and Phil from Brunswick Organic Nursery delivered vegetable seedlings in Spring

Jules has an invaluable working relationship with the nursery:

“ Brunswick is a wonderful nursery, employing adults with learning disabilities.

I work with them to grow seedlings for the garden as I do not have a greenhouse for propagation at Gray's Court.”

Beacon Alpaca Farm in Husthwaite also donated alpaca manure .



*Photo © Kate Davy*

Jules' aim was to use cover cropping and companion planting to use the growing space effectively, but also to ensure against a monoculture. This would increase biodiversity, and keep the ground covered

to help retain moisture and discourage weeds.

Looking back on the progress of the St Peter's No-Dig Edible Garden project Jules reflected:

“Making this garden beside the beauty of the Minster and getting to create something fresh to further enhance this heritage space is a great privilege. Growing produce that will be enjoyed right on the premises within hours of harvesting is incredibly gratifying, as is getting to bring in new planting that will greatly enhance the beauty and the biodiversity of the garden.”



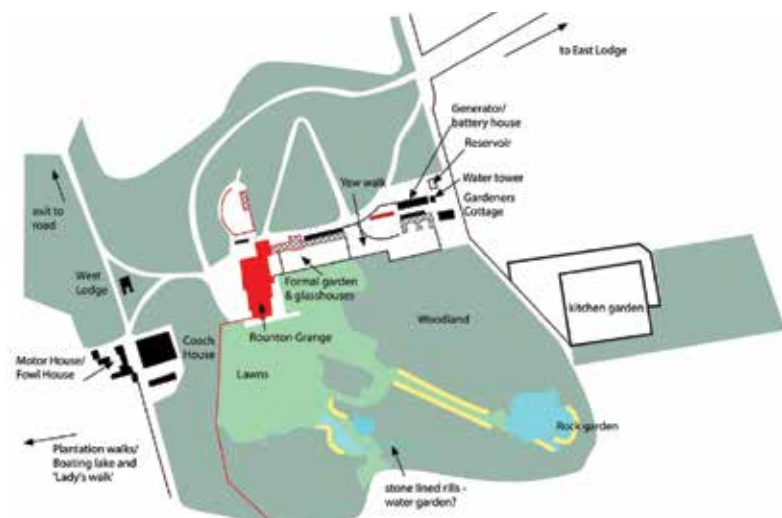
*Photos © Julie Fern*

**Chris Beevers**



# Dark Star Plant Nursery, The Walled Garden, Rounton Grange

Friday 19 July 2024



## Introduction

Summer had finally arrived, as we gathered in the sales and business end of the outer walled garden at Dark Star Plants. The site is a long way down a drive from the small road leading off the A19, with signs to encourage you to continue. The trip was organised by Vicky Price, who distributed plans and a short description of the family, house and gardens of Rounton Grange, then introduced us to Shaun Passman who runs Dark Star Plants with Jenny Gaunt. He spoke to the group about the creation and nature of the business, the walled gardens and the history of the estate



*Members gathering for the talk*

## The Walled Gardens

The main rectangular walled kitchen garden dates from 1878, soon after Sir Isaac Lowthian Bell, the wealthy County Durham and Teesside ironmaster and industrialist, started the rebuilding of Rounton Grange. The attached L-shaped garden, itself walled, was added in about 1909 after his son, Hugh, had inherited the estate on his father's death.

When Shaun and Jenny first took on these gardens in 2010, it had been 50 years since they had been cleared for any purpose; the most recent use had been for rearing pheasants. About a year was spent in clearing and restoring the ground and walls before the proper activity of planting and growing could begin. In the meantime, they traded through farmers' markets, plant fairs and open gardens, which is still an important part of their business.



*Plant sales area. Long L-shape, with mature borders*



Jenny has always had an interest in dark plants, so they have maintained a specialist range of dark flowers and foliage for sale alongside the traditional annuals, biennials, hardy perennials, bulbs, herbs, shrubs and climbers. My eye was caught by a most tempting set of sturdy chocolate cosmos plants which, unfortunately, it turned out were already reserved for a buyer.

The long part of the L-shape is an area of plant sales in pots, with borders to showcase the flowers and shrubs in their maturity. There are special iron brackets high on the wall which had been found in the overgrowth and replaced in position; they would have held glass screens with a wooden top to protect the fruit trees planted along the wall. (Shaun noted that the brackets were stamped 'Darlington', so the firm of glasshouse builders William Richardson & Co. may well have been involved). The short L-shape has an area for a cutting garden which was evidently very popular, judging by the numbers constantly arriving to cut their own flowers, while we were there.

The rectangular kitchen garden is divided into quadrants. Two parts laid to grass, one part wildflower meadow, with marigolds shining brightly, and the final quarter having a section for cutting, but also stock plants and fruit and vegetables, all looking strong and healthy. The central feature is a four-foot wide, brick-lined dipping well, covered at present while stone restoration work is taking place. The south wall of this area, facing over farmland, has clearly had structural problems and has been lowered relatively recently.



*Commercial planting in the quadrant of the Kitchen Garden*

### **Shaun and Jenny**

Shaun started as a YTS (Youth Training Scheme) at Wilton Castle, formerly ICI owned, before moving to Parcevall Hall, the renowned historic plantsman's garden at Skyreholme. He worked for the National Trust dividing his time between Ormesby, Benningborough and Nunnington, before taking on private house gardens.

Jenny has worked for the Camphill Village Trust, in garden therapy and design before specialising in plant fairs.

### **The House at Rounton Grange**

Lowthian Bell was a patron of the Arts and Crafts movement and arranged for Philip Webb to design his new house: five stories high, it had some gothic revival and Continental features and was more vertical than horizontal. There was no doubting the Arts and Crafts interior, though, with William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones provided fittings for the interior, as they did at the more directly Arts and Crafts Bell house at Mount Grace Manor, restored in 1898.

It seems a strange paradox that a man who has spent all his efforts on industrialisation and efficient mass working practices, should commission his houses from a movement that wished to put craft practices on the level of the arts; a movement that espoused socialist politics and valued each person's involvement with what that were creating. At some point the movement seemed to move away from its anti-industrial stance and became a style that mainly only the rich could afford.

From 1905, Hugh made several developments to the estate, constructed a Generator and Battery House for power and a Gardens House and Lodge. There was a Palm House and a formal garden with glasshouses adjacent to the Grange by 1911. Hugh's daughter Gertrude, the explorer and Arabist, had a strong interest in the garden and its development, even though she was often away travelling. She sent back Japanese cherry and plum trees for planting by 1903, took charge of the gardens, directed the Head Gardener James Hanagan (who worked on the gardens from at least 1881 to 1921) and designed the rock garden round the great fish pool, having met Reginald Farrar in Japan in 1903. The rock garden was constructed by the Backhouse Company.

As happened to many families in the post-war slump, the Bells moved out of the house in 1926. The gardens may have been maintained for some years, but the house was requisitioned in the Second World War and demolished

in 1956. The Palm House and glasshouses adjacent to the house were also removed, leaving a long section of glass against a high brick wall. The family retain the estate, though seem to take interest only in the farmland.

### **Tour of the Estate Gardens**



*View of derelict glasshouses*

Shaun led the group on a tour of the former house site and the remains of the glasshouses. We struggled through head-high Himalayan Balsam, Japanese Knotweed and nettles to find a small, angled footing, 'the back door entrance', and a distant view of derelict glass and wood. No hope for restoration there.

Returning towards and passing the walled gardens, we found a wide stretch of water covered in weed and algae surrounded by higher ground. By scraping a nearby mound, it was clear we were standing on the old rock garden, viewing the fish pool from the southeast. The rock was fine-grained sandstone, rich brown in colour, presumably Carboniferous coal-measure sandstone from the West Riding as was. This pond and rock garden looked as though it could be rescued, if there were the will and the money.

We were then left to wander as we wished, through the cutting and Kitchen Garden, like children in a sweetshop. Toilets were halfway down the drive and coffee or lunch was available at Roots Farm Shop and Café on the other side of the small road on a continuation of the drive.

### **Conclusion**

The historic House, formal gardens, glasshouses, lawns and woodland are gone, never to return. A few of the Estate houses remain in use, but the focus and interest for me is in the lively and attractive business run by Shaun and Jenny: the use they have made of the brick features and separate rooms of the Walled Gardens. The planting is a showroom of the best they can display for sale, not a formal garden.

But I will certainly return with my wife to buy plants and enjoy the setting and the views across the farmland. Thanks to Shaun and Jenny for being such attentive and knowledgeable hosts.

***Paul Thornley***

***Photos © Paul Thornley***

### **Notes**

Margaret Mathews Report on East Rounton Grange 2018 is at  
<https://www.yorkshiregardenstrust.org.uk/research/sites/east-rounton-grange#info>

Lost Heritage Online, East Rounton Grange is at  
[http://www.lostheritage.org.uk/houses/lh\\_yorkshire\\_rountongrange.html](http://www.lostheritage.org.uk/houses/lh_yorkshire_rountongrange.html)

Dark Star Plants website  
<http://www.darkstarplants.co.uk/>

Plants and Gardens, The Backhouse Nursery  
<https://www.parksandgardens.org/knowledge/historical-profiles/the-backhouse-nursery-of-york-1815-1955>

The Mining Institute, Isaac Lowthian Bell  
<https://mininginstitute.org.uk/about-us/past-presidents-of-the-institute/sir-isaac-lowthian-bell-bart/>

Gertrude Ball Archive, University of Newcastle  
<https://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/>



# Events Committee Report

It has been a hard three days manning the YGT stand at the Harrogate Flower Show with kind and helpful volunteers, but I will write about this for the next Newsletter. Meanwhile the Events Programme for 2025 is almost ready, but please do not be surprised if there are last minute changes.

## MARCH

In March we hope to be holding a series of on-line Zoom talks with the Gardens Trust

### Saturday 29th March

We will be holding our AGM at West Tanfield Memorial Hall, followed by a talk by Dr Jan Harding, one of the chief archaeologists involved with the three Thornborough Henges, which have recently been taken under the care of English Heritage.

## APRIL

### Saturday 12th April

There will be a visit to Raby Castle with Northumbria Gardens Trust. We will be able to see the ambitious new development - The Rising - with the Walled Garden reimaged by renowned designer Luciana Giubbilei, alongside Lady Barnard, and with a new garden, café and entrance area designed by Alistair Baldwin.

### Saturday 27th April or Saturday 4th May

We will be paying a visit to the historic landscape of Hornby Castle near Bedale. Hornby Castle is a very old site with many overlays and significant figures connected with it, including William Mason and 'Capability' Brown; much will be revealed on this visit.

## MAY

### Tuesday 20th May

Whinfell Quarry Garden and Whirlow Brook Park are two parks run by Sheffield City Council on the west edge of Sheffield. Whinfell belonged to Samuel Doncaster, a Quaker and one of the important steel masters. The Backhouse family laid out the very impressive quarry garden at the end of the 19th century and Clarence Elliot laid out a small alpine garden some years later. Backhouses also worked at Whirlow Brook, although whether just on the rock gardens or across the whole landscape is not clear.

## JUNE

### Thursday 5th June

A visit has been organised to Parcevall Hall Gardens, situated in a secluded valley in Wharfedale. This is a plantsman's garden created by Sir William Milner nearly a century ago. Our visit to the woodland walks, rock garden and terraces will be led by the Head Gardener, Phill Nelson.

### Thursday 19th June - Summer Picnic

We will hold our Summer Picnic at Skipwith Hall near Selby, with our traditional strawberries and cream, and with many thanks to Ros Forbes Adams. There are four acres of gardens around the Queen Anne manor house, including the Italian Garden and the shell grotto as well as the large walled garden/potager to be explored.

## JULY

### Tuesday 1st July – Summer Evening Drinks

To be held at Helmsley Walled Garden. June Tainsh, who has been the garden's director since 2018, wonderfully upholds the ethos of the late Alison Ticehurst who rescued the walled garden: 'We aim to enhance the physical and emotional health and wellbeing of everyone who uses the garden. Our emphasis on therapeutic horticulture is central to our way of working'. Come and enjoy.

In either **July** or maybe in the **Autumn** we hope to make a visit to the newly restored South Cliff Gardens at Scarborough.

## AUGUST

### Tuesday 19th August

A visit to see the designed landscape of York University.

## SEPTEMBER

### Tuesday 16th September

A study day entitled 'Managing the Estate', discussing the challenges faced at Yorkshire Sculpture Park, with Mark Chesman, Head of Estates and Projects.

Please put these dates in your 2025 diary. The programme will be sent out in late January, with a booking form for those who do not want to buy tickets online through Eventbrite.

*Vicky Price*

# Planning and Conservation Committee Reports

## A day in the life of a member of the Conservation Committee...

### Planning consultations in respect of RPGs

As you probably already know, planning law requires every planning authority in England to consult with The Gardens Trust when considering any planning application which affects the setting of a Registered Park or Garden of Special Historic Interest (RPG). I like to think that the legislator's sentiment behind this recognised that, although the planning authority will be well versed in the myriad of national and local planning directives, their knowledge of the significance of a specific registered landscape, its history and its sensitivities, etc. is likely to benefit from site specific expert input. This is precisely what is provided by consultation with The Gardens Trust and its county branches. In the case of planning applications in all four Yorkshires, TGT recognises that YGT's expertise is available to more than fulfil this legal burden, and thus we at YGT Conservation Committee provide that local expert commentary on behalf of TGT in most cases. We continue to liaise with TGT Conservation Caseworker, Alison, about the detail of our planning responses.

The valuable part of our contribution is the opportunity to summarise the history and significance of the park in question and to give our opinion of the appropriateness or quality of the proposal in that context. However, the current planning system requires any commentator to declare one of two alternative positions, either "support" or "object". Thus, whilst we might support an application in principle, we might see an opportunity for improvement. In such cases we are likely to register our position as "object", perhaps providing the misleading appearance of "an awkward bunch", which we are not! Let us have a look at a currently active site ...

### ...Chevin Park, Leeds

I will compare our inputs (consultations) with the planners' outputs (decisions) for a handful of applications affecting Chevin Park, historically known as High Royds, a Grade 2 listed park in

outer, western Leeds, HE ref 1001469. The park comprises the grounds of the one-time High Royds Hospital, itself Grade II Registered. The hospital was built as a mental hospital by West Riding County Council, and it was opened in 1888. It had been designed by the County Surveyor, Vickers Edwards. Edwards adopted an "echelon" (ie sloped at an obtuse angle, not right-angled) layout for the wards, only the second such building in England. Constructed around the centre of its 100ha site the Hospital enjoyed a generous boundary of fields and trees. It closed in 2003, and it has been progressively converted to residential use from 2007 to the present. The site now consists of a carefully managed mix of original hospital buildings, converted to residential use, and groups of new dwellings.

The 12 applications under review were submitted between nominally mid-2021 and mid-2023. The planning officer in nine of the applications, in possession of our comments, either concurred exactly with our comments, or a revised design to accommodate our comments resulting in subsequent approval, or our comments became planning conditions. In one case the applicant even took the planning refusal to appeal, but the inspector not only upheld the planning decision but also included our comments in his report. What about the other three?

We objected to one which proposed the addition of large dormer windows to the front roof. The house in question was one of a group of new buildings designed in "farmhouse style", closely grouped together and sharing a common theme in the landscape of the park. The applicant was persuaded to move the dormers to the back roof and to make them significantly smaller, leading to the approval of the application. Another application was to build a small sports pavilion. In our view this harmed a substantial hedge, threatened a badger sett, presented very disappointing elevations, etc. However, the pavilion was a requirement under a Section 106 agreement deriving from several years earlier, and there was a real risk that the s.106 requirement might otherwise never be delivered.



Each of our concerns was individually addressed in the planning officer's report and approval was conceded. The third one concerned the retrofitting of PV panels to a house roof.

Well, PV panels! Do I really need to accept that "the public" likes lumpy, asymmetric, discontinuous disfigurements retro-fixed to the front roof of their houses when, for the loss of one or perhaps two panels, commonly they could be rearranged in a tidy rectangle, or similar?

### **...in conclusion**

Since mid-2023 planning applications in Chevin Park have continued to be submitted to Leeds City Council, but oddly our further consultations have not been sought. We, jointly with TGT, are currently seeking an explanation from Leeds and hopefully it will turn out to be no more than an administrative error. We note that the new government is keen to remove impediments which are currently perceived to impede new housing. As a Trust we are keen to ensure that the historic inheritance of our Registered Parks and Gardens is not put in jeopardy. We are striving to work together with TGT to the same goal.

*Roger Lambert*

### **.... And now the more prosaic part of our work!**

Following Roger's thoughtful piece 'A Day in the life of a member of the Conservation Committee', I am continuing with a more prosaic effort to give a taste of what has been happening at YGT Conservation and Planning over the past months.

We are delighted that Historic England (HE) have a new landscape architect for the North following Chris Mayes becoming National Landscape Advisor for HE in 2022. Dr Kristof Fatsar, who lives in Manchester, was Senior Lecturer in Landscape Architecture at Manchester School of Architecture and has already attended one of our meetings via Zoom. It was great to welcome him to our patch. Our links with HE has been strengthened too, with a wide-ranging meeting (including about HE's response to the Canal Gates, Studley Royal, planning applications) which Chris (Webb), Peter Goodchild and I had with Tom Frater, the newish Regional Director - Northeast and Yorkshire in August.

### **Consultations from HE for Listing/Registration**

We have recently had two consultations from HE for Listing/Registration. In June an invitation to comment on HE's report for possible listing of **Bishophthorpe Walled Kitchen Gardens** and then in August for **Gillingwood Old Hall** near Gilling West. I am delighted that this site has had so much expert research/investigation in recent years as I have known it since doing a desk-based survey of OS maps of Richmondshire for my MA thirty years ago, when despite my little knowledge it struck me as a possible early designed landscape. This consultation is focused on the interest of the designed landscape for Gillingwood Old Hall, destroyed by fire in 1750, with possible registration for the grounds, and reassessing the listing for three garden structures associated with it: 'Entrance to Old Gillingwood Hall'; 'Summer house approximately 150m south west of Gillingwood Hall' proposed for renaming as 'Temple folly at Gillingwood Hall'; 'Bell Park Pavilion approximately 100m south of Gillingwood Hall' proposed for renaming 'Gazebo at Gillingwood Hall', and assessing the currently unlisted 'bastioned wall at Gillingwood Hall'.



*Entrance to Old Gillingwood Hall (old doorcase)*



*Terracing with Summerhouse*



*Bell Park Pavilion from Northwest*



*Bastion Wall with Bell Park Pavilion just visible*

At the request of Peter Lamb, Principal Planner (Design and Conservation) and David Shore of the City of Doncaster Council, Jane (Furse) and I had a very interesting visit to Cusworth Hall Walled Garden in July. David Shore, Head of the Cusworth Estate and the small team are keeping the gardens and designed landscape looking very well despite all the various problems. We were really pleased to see the fine new parterre-style garden and to hear plans for the southernmost section of the walled garden. It will be quite a project but should enable the walled garden to be enjoyed and appreciated much more than has been possible to date. Having new access and a well-signed route will be key. I was reminded that many years ago YGT funded a leaflet to set up the Friends of Cusworth Park. It was instigated by our long-time member Jenny Tiptaft. Maybe in due course David Shore and the Team might like to apply again to our Small Grants Scheme for some funding to help with signage/interpretation.



*Peter Lamb, David Shore and Jane Furse looking at plans for lower walled garden*



*New garden in middle section of walled garden*

### **Consultations from Forestry Commission and Woodland Trust**

Over the past three years we have often responded to consultations for advice from the Forestry Commission and the Woodland Trust regarding felling and restocking in Registered Parks and Gardens. I have been greatly helped by retired archaeologist Linda Smith, but as she is now unable to help, the load is becoming untenable, and the Gardens Trust (GT) similarly do not have the capacity. Equally, when we are consulted about Woodland Management Plans, I do not feel that I have sufficient knowledge and skills. So, if there are readers of this article who have woodland experience and can help, I would be very grateful to hear from you. Tel: 01748 822617 [val@hepworthskeeby.co.uk](mailto:val@hepworthskeeby.co.uk)

However, a consultation on a felling licence for Park House, part of the Gilling Castle registered park and garden in July was straightforward and we had no objection.

We have recently had an enquiry from a White



Rose Forest Project Officer as to whether there is any need to consult the GT for woodland creation in the setting of a registered park and garden (RPG) and, as the site is not far from my home in Richmond, I am going to meet the owner and the Project Officer. I hope this site meeting near Hornby Castle will be generally helpful as I have explained that the consultation requirement is triggered by any development proposal which affects a registered site, and this could be at some distance and have no physical connection with the registered site. It should be easier on site to find out if the woodland creation will have any impact on designed views into, as well as from, the designed landscape and setting. The plan is for wood pasture/parkland style planting. It sounds an interesting case, so I hope to continue learning as well as give advice. The White Rose Forest is the community forest for North and West Yorkshire, working in partnership with local authorities, landowners, businesses and communities to plant trees across the region and improve our natural environment.

### Planning Consultations

Liaising with Alison Allighan, Conservation Case Worker at the GT, we have responded to eighty planning consultations between early January and the end of August this year with Alison responding to a small number when we were unable to do so. The most significant of these was a large proposal for change of use at **Gilling Castle** to include apartments, new dwellings, leisure and sporting facilities, access and parking etc. We welcomed the reuse of Gilling Castle and landscape and had no objections to most of the proposals. We objected to the construction of the fourteen dwellings in the proposed location and considered that the harm to Grade II RPG Gilling Castle and the setting of Grade I Listed Gilling Castle itself would not be outweighed by the public benefit.

Unfortunately, the GT does not have the officer/financial capacity to respond to planning applications for non-registered parks and gardens but if we think that it is a locally important site and we have the research, often from Louise and the Research and Recording team, then we will advise. This has been the case for **Owston Hall**, Doncaster, where we have been consulted over the

past year or so for the extensive redevelopment of the Hall with additional hotel bedrooms, swimming pool, hard landscaping and a new car park. Then in June we received a listed building consent application for the erection of 30 one-bedroom serviced apartments within the walled garden. Thankfully Louise has researched Owston as part of the YGT Doncaster project, so she and I went out on site last November and met the new manager. The completed historic report and statement of significance for Owston is on our website - <https://www.yorkshiregardenstrust.org.uk/research/sites/owston-hall#info>



*Owston Hall drive to front and car park*



*Owston Hall Walled Garden*



*Owston Hall stable block and yard*

The historic designed landscape around Owston Hall was shaped by Bryan Cooke (1756-1821) and his son, Philip Davies-Cooke, between 1785 and 1853. Bryan consulted the landscape designers Thomas White in 1785 and Humphry Repton in 1792, after making plans to build a new hall in the centre of his landholdings in Owston. These had been consolidated through enclosure and purchase since the Cooke family acquired the estate in 1698. While positioning the new hall where there would have given him space to create a large park and gardens, he decided instead to put the building next to the existing hall to the east. Although this partly negated White's and Repton's proposals, some of their suggestions for improvement were adopted by Cooke over the next thirty years. These included a new kitchen garden, parkland, pleasure grounds, flower garden and extensive plantations. Repton's advice in his signature Red Book 'Ouston Hall', (should be Owston Hall, it was an error by Repton) is dated 1793. It is now held by Doncaster Heritage Services, (copy in Eyres and Lynch 2018, 35-47).

We find that we are now occasionally consulted at the Pre-Application stage which is helpful in that we can give early advice before the applicant has formulated their plans. We have had two Pre-Application consultations for Wentworth Woodhouse; one for the redevelopment of Home Farm and the other for use of the Bedlam Wing and South Pavilion. Wentworth Woodhouse and the Fitzwilliam Estate is such a remarkable heritage asset and requires very special development treatment to secure its future, so

we were pleased to note that the early proposals appear to have minimal effect on the registered park and garden.

As you know, all our planning responses are uploaded by Geoff onto the YGT website and can be found in the Research and Recording section under the particular historic park and garden.

Finally calling at **Brodsworth Hall** recently I took this photograph of the Summer House now that the works are complete.



*From the south*



*From the southwest*

*Val Hepworth*

## Cumbria Gardens Trust visit to Bolton Castle and Hall Tuesday 10 September 2024

Val Hepworth writes about the above visit by Cumbria Gardens Trust. "They were hosted at Bolton Hall in the afternoon by Lord Bolton: Karen Lynch spoke about the folly, "Polly Peacham's Tower"; Vicky helped keep the group together; and Val led the tour. It was like herding cats – one of the most chaotic that I've ever led.....!!"

However, it appears that a very good time was enjoyed by all.



*Members visit Bolton Castle and Bolton Hall*



# Historic Designed Landscape Contrasts South of the Tyne with the Northumbria Gardens Trust

June 2024

## Introduction

You may have heard of Yorkshire's Ravensworth Castle, a Grade I Listed 14th century castle ruin not far from where I live at Richmond but there is another Ravensworth Castle, also now a ruin but this one is near Gateshead, Tyne and Wear. It is in stark contrast to its near neighbour the Gibside Estate cared for by the National Trust and of course open to the public.

The Northumbria Gardens Trust under the auspices of three of its expert members, Fiona Green, Harry Beamish and Martin Roberts organised a very memorable day visiting both sites and I am grateful to them for their notes to write this short account.

## Ravensworth Castle

Ravensworth Castle now lies hidden in woodland with much of its gardens overwhelmed by rampant nature and the park is farmed. It is a private estate and there is no access unless you have special permission to visit as we had, and this must be respected. We were expertly guided by Fiona and Martin who revealed both the development of the designed landscape and the built structures.

The castle was built in the late 13th or early 14th centuries and underwent several phases of development. The licence to enclose the park was given in 1359. Its early owners were the Lumley's, Boyntons and Gascoignes and then from 1607 it came into the ownership of the Liddell family.

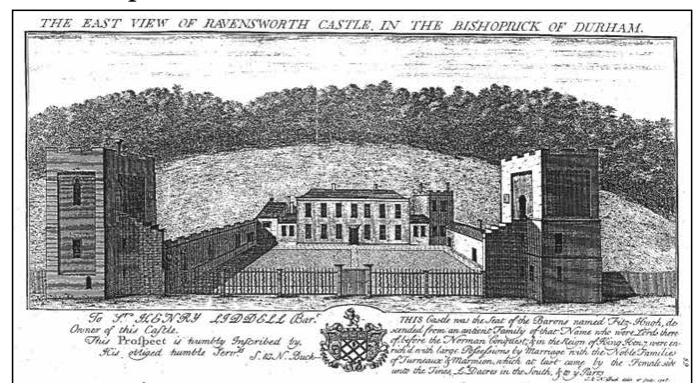
## Liddell family ownership

Thomas Liddell was a wealthy Newcastle-upon-Tyne merchant whose son, also Thomas, became 1st Baronet of Ravensworth. Much of the family fortune came from coal mining and the family became fabulously wealthy, enabling them to develop Ravensworth Castle into their grand mansion and estate. They engaged nationally important architects, James Paine and later John Nash. The Duke of Wellington was entertained there in September 1827. As occurred for so many estates, the 20th century decline began with death duties after WW1; the family seat moved to Eslington Park, Northumberland, and mining directly below the castle from 1935 eventually led to its demolition by the 1950s, apparently due to subsidence caused by the coal extraction. The stable court survived but after years of vandalism it is in a fragile condition. Although much of the designed landscape has become overgrown, many mature trees

remain and several features are still visible, including areas of parkland, ponds, sections of woodland, the walled garden and garden terrace.

In 1967, the medieval Towers, Nash House remains and the Stable Block, plus other elements, were listed Grade II or II\* and the medieval castle and associated land were scheduled in 1976. In 1990 an estate-wide conservation area was designated and the entire park plus some buildings were locally listed in 2004. Ravensworth Castle featured in the Restoration TV programme in 2003.

The 18th century pleasure grounds and park were developed for Sir Henry Liddell during the 1720s. The house was flanked by the battlemented curtain walls and towers of the old castle. Samuel and Nathaniel Buck's 'East View of Ravensworth Castle in the Bishoprick of Durham' (1728),



## Samuel and Nathaniel Buck's 'East View of Ravensworth Castle in the Bishoprick of Durham' (1728)

showed the mansion overlooking an austere enclosed court, a central path led to gates and ornate railings flanked by the medieval towers. Sir Henry Liddell's correspondence suggests that there was a garden terrace, but there are no surviving plans, engravings or descriptions which substantiate that the works were executed. They would also have been obliterated by the Nash house.

There were further improvements, possibly by James Paine for Sir Henry Liddell's grandson George 4th Baronet in the 1750s.



Ravensworth Castle - James Paine Stables from the East (Image ©Val Hepworth 2024)

James Paine (1716-89) was a prolific Palladian English designer. He designed the nearby Gibside Chapel so it is possible he could have worked for George Liddell at Ravensworth at a similar time.

There is a later view by Bailey from the southeast, published in 1787, which suggests that the Ravensworth courtyard was more verdant by this time and an SH Grimm sketch, undated but made during this era, (BL 15540, f.44) shows a parterre in the forecourt with shrubberies on either side.



*Ravensworth Castle – Ruins of John Nash House from West (Image © Val Hepworth 2024)*

In 1834 the *Gardener's Magazine* described an extensive terrace at Ravensworth, flower beds on the lawns, a gravel walk and shrubberies against the castle walls. The 1861 OS map shows an arrangement sounding similar to the description, but also includes decorative parterres and grassed terraces, one of which incorporated a fountain. The earliest known description of the conservatory on the Nash house was also published in the *Gardener's Magazine*.

The pleasure grounds were developed after the landscaped park, probably in association with the rebuilt Nash castle early in the 19th century and as a feature linking the castle gardens with the walled garden. The castle was the subject of an article in the *Illustrated London News* in 1846. Changes to the landscape during this phase of alterations are difficult to decipher without plans or surveys, but probably included a new walled garden, arboretum, ponds and a shift away from the parkland landscape approach to the castle, in preference to the drive from South Lodge (c.1826). The stable block and gatehouses northeast of the house were added c.1840. In 1841 there was a staff of 27.



*View of Ravensworth Castle from South Park late 19th Century Benjamin Fawcett.*

Although Ravensworth became arguably one of the



*Ravensworth Castle John Bailey 1782 published in William Hutchinson's The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine, of Durham, v.2 1787.*

In 1787 Hutchinson described Ravensworth Castle 'The castle is shut in to the north and west by a fine forest of oaks... In 1815 the Durham County Advertiser commented 'The castle is placed on the rising ground of a vale ...which is embosomed with noble trees, backed with rising ground, which is clothed with an extensive mass of hanging woods'.

The 18th century improvements were supplanted by John Nash (1752-1835) for Sir Thomas Liddell 6th Bart. during the early 19th century, when the castle was altered to comprise 'the most splendid and picturesque monument of the romantic medieval revival in the country' (Pevsner 1983).



*Ravensworth Castle – Ruins of John Nash Kitchen Block (Image: © Val Hepworth 2024)*



finest examples of a picturesque gothic country house in England, reaching its political and social peak in the late 19th century, it was demolished by the 1950s. The subsidence from coal extraction played a major part in its demise... an irony as its magnificence was built on great wealth from coal.

## Gibside

The contrast with Gibside where we were expertly guided by Harry in the afternoon was very marked. There are similarities in that James Paine designed the iconic estate Chapel which terminates the LongWalk/ Avenue, and in 1759 he completed the Column of Liberty (a splendid symbol of Whiggery) probably designed by Daniel Garrett, after Garrett's death in 1753. Paine was also involved with exterior and interior changes to Gibside Hall. The other interesting similarity lies with Gibside Hall itself, now a roofless shell and last fully inhabited by the Bowes family in 1885. The house was gutted in the 1920s and partly demolished in 1958. Finally, coal money was also involved at Gibside.

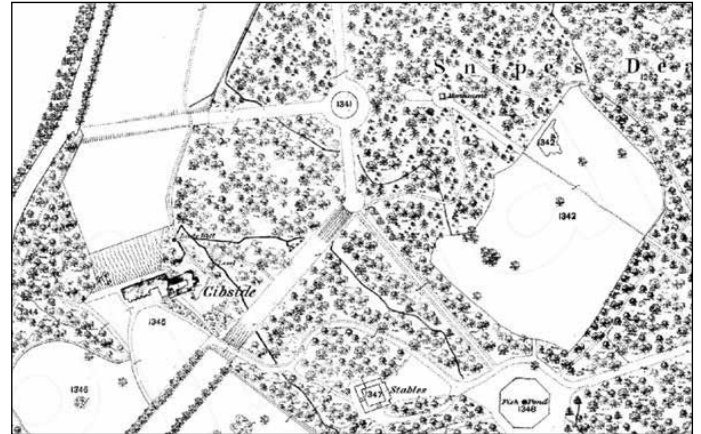
However, Gibside has had a happier fate than Ravensworth Castle. The quality and survival of the landscape was increasingly recognised from the 1950s and it has undergone a gradual restoration since the 1960s, with increasing pace since the National Trust acquired the core of the old estate from the 1990s onwards. The combination of an enlightened local authority, national designation for both built and natural heritage and teamwork by conservation bodies, matched by successful fundraising, has resulted in a remarkable restoration.

## Landscape

The Gibside landscape, amongst the finest in the North of England, has 17th century origins, and is largely the creation of George Bowes (1701-60). It is a remarkable survival of an early 18th century design. George Bowes's father, Sir William Bowes (1656-1706), received the estate in 1693 through his marriage to Elizabeth Blakiston. George took possession in 1722, after the death of his elder brothers. In 1724 he married the heiress Eleanor Verney, then only fourteen, but she died months later. Grief-stricken, Bowes was also burdened by the repayment of the £15,000 dowry. Three years later he moved from Streatlam (near Barnard Castle) to Gibside, and the same year he became an M.P. and one of the Grand Allies, an influential cartel of coal producers.

By 1729 Bowes was planting out new woodland. In 1731 and in 1732 the English writer and garden designer, Stephen Switzer (1682-1745) put forward new estate plans, the second of which proposed straight walks and rides with more sinuous subsidiary

paths and, as the major feature an octagonal basin with amphitheatre-like ramps above it, behind which a wide *allée* rose to a platform for a future building. (For what became the Banqueting House.) Switzer did not oversee any of the work; instead, William Joyce, a Gateshead nurseryman and head gardener was a key figure in laying out the site.



1st ed OS Map 1857 showing Hall, Octagonal Pond, Column of Liberty and Old Basin.



2nd ed OS Map 1896

Switzer published *The Nobleman, Gentleman, and Gardener's Recreation* in 1715, the first volume of his major work *Ichnographia Rustica*, and argued that a whole estate was to be the subject of design, to be achieved by establishing one or two axial lines (his 'boldest Strokes'), which would link the house and estate in the grand manner. The key to the design at Gibside is the axial vistas through the pleasure ground woodland which are intended to lead the eye to architectural or other features, with further incidents, such as the Bath House, accessed by a series of walks taking advantage of the natural landscape of the Derwent valley.

George Bowes's first parkland building was in fact the Bath House (1733-6), on a new walk set on a steep slope above the River Derwent. Demolished c.1854, its terrace survives west-northwest of Gibside Hall. The impressive Column to Liberty, intended as a

statement of George Bowes's political allegiance, still dominates this part of the valley.



*Gibside Column of Liberty with axial avenue  
(Image: © Val Hepworth 2024)*

A brick Walled Garden was built in 1734–5, about 500 yds southwest of the house. It has Gibbsian entrance doorways, a head gardener's cottage, and, on the north wall, the foundations of a 100 foot (30.5-metre) long curvilinear vinery of the 1830s. About 200 yds southwest of the house, is the icehouse of 1747–9.



*Gibside Banqueting House with Octagonal Pond in foreground (Image © Val Hepworth 2024)*

The Gothick Banqueting House (c.1740) and Palladian stable block (1746-51) were the work of Daniel

Garrett, with the beautiful estate Chapel begun in 1760 terminating the Long Walk/Avenue, by James Paine.



*Gibside Chapel (Image © Martin Roberts)*

The Green House/Orangery was a subsequent addition (1772-4) by Bowes's daughter, a keen botanist. The early nineteenth century saw a re-modelling of the old Jacobean Hall by Alexander Gilkie for the 10th Earl of Strathmore, who also recovered the landscape from a period of decline and, in the 1830s the hundred foot curvilinear vinery range was added to the walled garden and an orchid house followed, sadly now gone.

In the mid-19th century, the Orangery aka Greenhouse was reconstructed as a Conservatory with a ridge and furrow glazed roof.

The ornamental planting at Gibside reflects the interests of later members of the Bowes-Lyon family, notably John Bowes (founder of the Bowes Museum at Barnard Castle) and William Hutt (later Sir William, Member of Parliament). The late Queen Mother was an occasional visitor to Gibside in the 20th century and Harry was able to guide King Charles, then Prince of Wales, on his visit during the restoration.

As Harry writes 'Although now a ruined shell the hall remains as a focus for the landscape. The original layout and the wooded valley and parkland, which still has the feel of relatively undeveloped countryside close to Tyneside, makes the site a popular "green lung" for the district.'

## Conclusion

If you have never been to Gibside, then I thoroughly recommend a visit and bring your stout walking shoes/boots as there is much to see and explore. Alternatively, the Banqueting House is available as a holiday rental so you could enjoy the beauties of the site when the public have left. [It has the most beautiful painted interior – Ed.]

My thanks to Fiona, Martin and Harry for a most memorable and insightful day... and the sunshine was a very pleasant accompaniment!

**Val Hepworth**



# Garden Stories from YGT Member Schools

This summer we offered our schools two £50 Gardening Tokens in return for photos showing how they had developed their garden during the school year of 2023/24. We were particularly looking for innovative use of recycled materials, how they had used any YGT resources they had received, and how they dealt with this year's climate challenge of a lot of rain! Or, if they just wanted to share a garden success story with us, they could do that. A written explanation had to accompany the photos.

Here are excerpts from three applications:

## **Garden Success Story – New Park Primary Academy, Harrogate**

In May this year, New Park Primary Academy collaborated closely with the Harrogate Army Foundation College. A platoon of young soldiers from the college dedicated 13 hours of work to the garden as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Over the weekend, they transformed an overgrown, neglected, and unusable area of the school which had become a dumping ground, into a beautiful and functional space. This rejuvenated area can now be utilised by pupils and classes across the school.

The soldiers established three allotment beds and a greenhouse, enabling the pupils to grow their own flowers and herbs on site.

We will be incredibly excited to see this space continue to develop in the coming years and which will continue to be enjoyed by students year after year.



*Before*



*After*

## **Early Years Support – Allerton CE Primary School, Leeds**

“This year my role has been to develop the Year

1 outside area and the curriculum offered to our children. I have worked with groups of children in Year 1 who need additional support with their personal, social and emotional needs and language development. The activities have been planned to support the Year 1 curriculum, but also to encourage children to explore and enjoy nature. Throughout the year we have hopefully encouraged the children to connect with and take care to protect, our wonderful world.

Here are some of the activities from this year that have inspired our children with photos attached:

Sowing sunflowers in pots made from newspaper and planting out in the newly dug out bed outside Year 1. Our wildlife will love them as well as providing foods for the birds in autumn.

Our veg beds have not been used for many years, so our children planted potatoes, peas, and pumpkins. We also sowed cornflower mix to help the wildlife.

We made a pond by recycling a disused water tray and burying it in the grass. This has been visited by so many children in our school, including the 2YO Nursery.



*Disused water tray pond*



*Watering sunflowers in newspaper pots*

I know that £50 will be well used to resource our area and provide seeds to grow, as well as gardening tools and gardening gloves for our groups. Thank you for the opportunity to share our work”.

### **Enthusiasm and ambition – Oak CE Primary School, Huddersfield**

“We would like to apply for one of the £50 gardening tokens being offered to schools please. We were fortunate to receive a £300 grant award from YGT which has been used to help transform a very overgrown allotment into something that is more manageable for the children. Much of the funding received has been used to purchase raised beds, top-soil/compost and wood chippings. We have negotiated reduced costs from suppliers which has helped our funding go a bit further. We have recycled cardboard from deliveries to school and used this as a base for our “no dig” approach and plan to use pallets from deliveries to create a bug hotel.

Staff have donated planters and other bit and pieces which were destined for landfill. The gardening team have worked together with caretakers to ensure that the water butt in the allotment was secure and able to collect rainwater which can be easily accessed by the children for watering their plants. The next step for us is to create a compost area using waste from the school kitchen (if possible), the school fruit scheme and from the staff kitchen.

I have attached some of the photographs shared with yourselves which show the transformation

of our allotment garden. With added funding the gardening club can expand on what has been achieved already.

We remain forever hopeful and always thankful”.



*Allotment Garden Before*



*Allotment Garden Before After*

## **Research and Recording Team Report**

### **Annual Training Day**

On July 8th, the Research and Recording team held their annual training day at the delightful surroundings of Goldsborough Hall, near Knaresborough. Now a luxury country house, we were the guests of the owners, Mark and Clare Oglesby, who kindly provided the meeting room for the start of the day. The theme was improvement plans, including what they were, how to interpret them, and what they told us about the history of the designed landscape.



*Goldsborough Hall viewed from park  
(Photo © Jim Godfrey)*



Goldsborough was chosen as it had no less than eight examples of (possible) improvement plans. Two are well-known as they are the drawn plans produced by Richard Woods in 1763 and Thomas White in 1766. However, during Louise Wickham's recent research, she uncovered four drawn plans dating from c.1692 to 1738 and one from 1871 that was partly an architectural drawing. In addition, there was Woods' written 'Memorandum' to his foreman, William Stones, c. 1764.

### **Here is Jim Godfrey's view of the day:**

"We all arrived well equipped with Louise's emailed plans and documentation relating to our venue at Goldsborough. Some of us were probably well prepared on the basis of this, but not me! As something of an outlier in the research group, being a male of an engineering research and training background, for me these plans were very much a mystery world. We entered the salubrious surroundings of Goldsborough, with its handsome rooms, immediate flower planting and near distance trees.

In our comfortable meeting room, Louise led the programme of interpretation of the 18th century plans and other material. This could be summed up as who did what and when, both on paper and on the ground. All the time we were looking at the problem of missing dates and attributions, so circumstantial evidence and context was everything. The mystery, to a degree, was therefore minimised.



*18th century walled ha-ha on edge of western pleasure grounds designed by Thomas White  
(Photo © Jim Godfrey)*

Before lunch, we headed for the park in search of features that were on the plans but now seemingly lost. This demonstrated how difficult the recovery of lost evidence can be and the virtue of having a gathering to debate what could be viewed now

on the ground. There was much reference to the aforementioned plans, although a help at times, they were often a hindrance if what they showed was not clear. There was no problem though viewing the very substantial remains of the ha-ha.

After a very agreeable picnic lunch break on the flower bordered sunny terrace, we went off to follow the very extensive remains of the old walled kitchen garden. This has been much broken into by housing development, but plenty remains as a reminder of the grandeur of this feature. For me one of the highlights of the whole day was to see, in a suburban garden, the remains of an elegant garden building inset in a remaining wall. Dating probably from the construction of the garden c.1764-6 and therefore designed by Richard Woods, it is now a delightful summerhouse for the owners.



*Terrace outside the west side of the Hall  
(Photo © Jim Godfrey)*



*18th century garden building in wall of Kitchen Garden (Photo c.Jim Godfrey)*

In all this was an enjoyable and instructive experience, all the better for dealing with a general problem by making use of a particular site".

If you are interested, you can see most of the improvement plans on the YGT website in the entry for Goldsborough Hall on the database - <https://www.yorkshiregardenstrust.org.uk/research/sites/goldsborough-hall#info>

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## Forthcoming YGT Publications

Publication	Copy deadline	Publication date
December e-Bulletin	1 December 2024	21 December 2024

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