



Yorkshire Gardens Trust AGM Saturday 29 March 2025

West Tanfield Memorial Hall, West Tanfield, North Yorkshire followed by a talk by Dr Jan Harding and visit to Thornborough Henges



The AGM

*Gillian Parker, Nick Lane-Fox and Chris Webb
prepare to open the meeting*

The Yorkshire Garden's Trust's AGM chaired by Nick Lane-Fox, Vice President, took place on a bright and fresh Saturday in the charming village of West Tanfield. The Memorial Hall provided a very comfortable venue for the meeting, and members were welcomed with coffee, tea and biscuits before the proceedings began. West Tanfield had been chosen due to its proximity to Thornborough Henges, which was the subject of Dr Jan Harding's lecture and the afternoon visit.

Treasurer's and Conservation Reports

Proceedings started promptly with the Treasurer's report from Maddy Hughes which expressed thanks for the ongoing support for YGT's activities and the dispersal of funds to schools, grants and last year's refugee visit to Castle Howard. YGT's active role in generating funds and supporting activities was emphasised. This was followed by Val Hepworth's Conservation report that highlighted three key areas of interest: firstly, the Government's proposed changes to the planning system and the removal of the role of statutory consultee from the Gardens Trust; second, work at Lotherton to restore the garden and the role of the YGT in that; and thirdly, the development of new challenges to woodlands and forestry in historic designed gardens and landscapes as a result of climate change.

Other Committee Reports

Louise Wickham's Research and Recording report was followed by Vicky Price's report on Membership

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that highlighted the development of new networks in South Yorkshire through the addition of Colin Merrony, an archaeologist from the University of Sheffield to the group. The Schools report from Sue Lindley highlighted activities in over one hundred schools in the county, and which reflected a growing understanding that outdoor space is important and forms an invaluable part of the learning environment. Christine Miskin's Publications report focussed on the *Newsletter* and *E-bulletin*, and thanks were given to our authors and an invitation was extended for unsolicited contributions. Notice was also given of a forthcoming poll to establish interest and uptake for Events, as well as the future format of the Newsletter.

Brendan Mowforth gave an update on Grants and Bursaries, and highlighted the challenge of supporting horticultural bursaries as the costs increase. The point was made that there is the opportunity to identify areas of crossover and collaboration with other professional horticulture groups.



The audience waiting expectantly

Chair's Report

Lastly, Chris Webb shared his Chair's report which reinforced the picture painted of the YGT as being active, scholarly, strategic and constructive, and operating at a higher and broader level than could be expected of many County Gardens Trusts. The challenges of the last year were addressed, with the issue of the National Trust's proposals for Studley Royal being framed as one in which we can find 'success in failure' after Ripon's planning committee approved the proposed extension and remodelling of the Water Garden's entrance and Visitors' Centre. The consequences of the YGT's advocacy on the matter was highlighted as the catalyst for changes to the Gardens Trust's constitution, and to the relationship between the central Gardens Trust and the County Gardens Trusts.

Furthermore, the election of John Watkins as the new GT Chair was welcomed, as it faces new challenges and opportunities in relation to changes in the planning system. Updates were shared on the argument and campaign being developed by Linden Groves and her colleagues at the Gardens Trust on the value of the expertise offered by the Gardens Trust to the planning system of above £30 million, as well as

the need to create three hundred new planning roles across the country to deliver on the Government's development agenda.



More of the audience

Reappointment of Trustees

After the various reports were voted upon and approved, Maddy Hughes proposed that UHY Calvert Smith be reappointed as the Independent Examiner of the Company which was passed unanimously and this was followed by the reappointment of those Trustees who were retiring by rotation: Val Hepworth, Brendan Mowforth and Gillian Parker, and who were all re-appointed.

Any Other Business covered the announcement of the proposed creation of digital-free garden space by John Foley from Thwaite Nurseries, Peter Goodchild shared an update on the Education and Training Working Group and put forward the idea that the YGT contributes to the Heritage Open Day scheme in September 2025, and the re-election of Committee members was unanimous.

The meeting closed at 11.17am.

At the end of the lecture, see p.3, the Memorial Hall was swiftly rearranged to accommodate lunch, with the tables beautifully decorated with Jane Furse's flower arrangements (still going strong in Sheffield a week later, despite the train journey home!) and then the departure of two convoys of cars to visit the Henges.

Conclusion

I wanted to close by saying how welcome I was made to feel and how kind and hospitable the YGT is. This account has been written from the perspective of my first attendance at a Yorkshire Gardens Trust AGM as a new Trustee and I look forward to many more to come.

Camilla Allen

Photos © Maddy Hughes

Thornborough Henges – a talk by Dr Jan Harding

Introduction

After the AGM, Dr Jan Harding gave us an excellent talk about the group of prehistoric henges which are nearby at Thornborough. Jan Harding is a senior lecturer in Prehistory at the University of Newcastle. He is a specialist in Neolithic and Bronze Age Britain with over 50 publications to his name, including the book *Henge Monuments of the British Isles*. Dr Harding is a natural speaker, and he held his audience in rapt attention throughout the talk, which is just as well, as the sunlit hall sadly made his extensive slides quite invisible.

After the talk we had lunch, and then we drove off to see the henges in the field. For the field experience see p. 4.



Dr Jan Harding talking to Peter Goodchild after the lecture

The Three Henges and their construction

Dr Harding explained that these three enormous circular henges are spread across approx. 2 km. Each one is essentially a circular earthen construction, each measuring approx. 250 m diameter. To help you get a sense of that size, they are each almost exactly the same size as the main part of St Peter's Square in Rome built 5,000 years later! All three henges were constructed at nominally the same time and thus they constitute a single project which was undertaken in the Late Neolithic period. This means that construction commenced approx. 3,500 BCE (late Stone Age).

Archaeological investigation has established that

these henges were not the first religious/ceremonial structures to be built at this location. The site appears to have already established a status appropriate for this type of activity and earlier ceremonial avenues, each called a *cursus* (plural *cursa*?), had been built here and the *cursa* were then apparently built over. The status of the site appears to have also continued for a further period of time after the henges, with later ceremonial structures being added e.g. ditched barrows, mounds, tumuli and a further later Bronze Age *cursus*.

Each henge consists of a central, levelled platform, encircled by a principal ditch. The ditch is made even more impressive by an enclosing circular bank. The whole is further encircled by an outer ditch followed by an outer bank. The principal banks have been approx. 4 m high, and the main ditches about 2.5 m deep. Over the millennia, the banks have partially eroded, and the ditches have naturally become partially filled. Archaeological investigation has established that the principal banks had been originally plastered with crushed gypsum, providing a shocking, unnatural white appearance.

The banks to each henge are interrupted twice, providing ceremonial entrance points. These access points align with each other on an approx. NNW to SSE line. However, the three henges are not quite on a single axis, depending on whether you consider them from the south or alternatively from the north, either way the furthest henge is slightly out of line with the other two.

What was the function of the Henges?

Now we get into conjecture as to why they are cranked, and indeed what was their function? Dr Harding put forward the possibility that the ceremonial entrances align with the rising sun at the mid-winter solstice, and this phenomenon would also make an alignment with Sirius, the brightest star in the sky, as it rises into the firmament of the night. To find Sirius before it has risen, you take the line presented by the three stars of Orion's Belt which align exactly with Sirius as and when it appears above the horizon. The three stars which constitute Orion's Belt are themselves mutually cranked just like the three henges! Is therefore the arrangement of the three henges at Thornborough a copy on earth of Orion's Belt? When mankind had no idea what stars really were, and the sun was the one and only source of all light, warmth and life and, apart from nuclear power, it still is, then I can understand these phenomena being worshipped.

Further investigations needed

Dr Harding made sure that we recognised that many aspects of these monuments remain unknown,

perhaps awaiting further investigative work or perhaps forever lost to the mists of time. He noted that whilst the cursus under the central henge had been 1.2 km long, another cursus at nearby Scorton, had been 2.1 km long. The cursus which is found near the North Henge is of unknown length, as it appears to pass under the modern village of Nosterfield. He said that although the henges should be considered as a single coherent monument, there is evidence that they were

individually repaired and/or altered over time. In fact, there is evidence that the North Henge was used as a sheep enclosure into relatively modern times. For more discussion about the setting of the henges and their adjacency to the River Ure, etc. we went to the site. This is reported in the following article.

Roger Lambert

Thornborough Henges Site Visit

Introduction

Following the AGM at West Tanfield Community Hall, we had enjoyed our lunches, especially the indulgent sweet course. The afternoon was to be dedicated to a site visit to Thornborough Henges, located hardly a mile from the village hall as the crow flies. But, my goodness, the local roads and lanes do not route themselves as the crow flies, and signage was not making itself apparent! However, after one or two three-point turns, we gathered on the roadside adjacent to the central henge.

English Heritage's involvement at the site

The sites had been owned by a gravel quarrying company until recently, and whilst the quarrying has not damaged the henges themselves, much of the adjacent archaeology has been destroyed. English Heritage now owns the sites of all three henges, plus various parcels of adjacent land. They had kindly arranged for several of their volunteer guides to be present and, after we had broken into an appropriate number of groups, we set off. The henges are so huge, and there is so much to talk about, that our first hour only covered the Central Henge. We subsequently drove half a mile or so to the North Henge where we re-met with Jan Harding.



English Heritage explanatory board at the site

The Central Henge

At the Central Henge, we could readily see the two outer henges now segregated by various modern fences and hedges. Despite these modern interventions, the site does have a sense of unity and as we viewed distant hills, we realised that we were locally slightly elevated above much of the adjacent landscape. One might sense that this has been a “special place”.



Members assemble at the Central Henge

The principal bank of the Central Henge remains a substantial feature in the landscape despite extensive erosive damage. The erosion wounds reveal that the bank has been made from the gravelly glacial till which have been thrown up from the excavation of the adjacent ditch(es). We were reminded that the henges were constructed during the late Neolithic period, so that all the excavation and earthmoving will have been carried out using stone and timber tools, antler picks and human hands – no metal! This raises big questions about the number of people who must have been involved, how these people were collected to the site, where did they live during the project, provision of food, tools, etc. Detailed archaeological investigation across the site has revealed virtually no stone tools and no debitage (waste from tool making and re-sharpening). This is surprising for a site of this date, and it suggests that it was respected, a special

place perhaps comparable to the interior of a modern religious building.

Similarly, evidence of dwellings perhaps for workers, etc. is not found in the henge area. Comparing this site with a modern religious building is an interesting concept, as the purpose of a building is largely to create a controlled inner space, separating the inner space from the busy outer world and perhaps that is essentially the purpose of these henges. The boundary banks, defended by ditches, perhaps create a safe inner space cut off from the outer world, to enable some form of controlled ceremony to take place.

Plastering the boundary mound with white gypsum was discussed. There is none to be seen today, but the mineral is the local bedrock and readily found beneath the glacial till either in the nearby River Ure or by shallow mining. Groundwater dissolves gypsum over time and this leads to apparently spontaneous sinkholes. Perhaps these sudden caverns into mother earth were given a holy reverence and considering that one's ancestors have been buried in the ground for untold millennia, the fact that the gypsum itself has an appearance of old bones perhaps played into this holy narrative.

The North Henge

As noted above, we secondly visited the North Henge. This one is covered in trees, which ironically have protected the earthworks from much of the erosion which has afflicted the others. Consequently, the remains of the inner ditch and the boundary mound are spectacularly more dramatic, but the enclosure effected by the trees blinkers one's imagination/perception of the henge in its original open setting.



We walk across the central platform of the North Henge

There were numerous questions such as how many people constructed the henges, how many visited them, how did they travel to the site, how were meetings/ceremonies called, etc. We noted that the adjacent River Ure has been navigable by minor boats and, in Neolithic times, much of England's undrained rural landscape was a series of bogs, so that rivers were vital communication routes.

There is archaeological evidence that the site sits on an east-west trade route across the country. Westmoreland stone axes appear to have been transported through this site from the west, and flint tools appear to have travelled similarly from the east.

Conclusion

I remain gobsmacked at the conceptual challenge that these henges manifest. For someone to have visited this location 4,500 years ago, and to have weighed up its accessibility and its holy potential followed by conceiving three circular earthen henges of 250 m diameter, arranged so that they pay homage to the geography of the celestial heavens. I find a single sheet of white paper frightening enough, never mind the unbounded landscape of what would become North Yorkshire!

Thornborough Henges are Scheduled Ancient Monuments, but they are not Registered Parks or Gardens. They were designed as part of the huge surrounding landscape, and they need to be appreciated today in the context of that mega-landscape. But what protection does the current planning system offer these henges? Is the setting of a scheduled monument protected as it would be for a listed building or a listed park/garden?

None of us seemed to know the answer. Again, more investigation is needed.

Roger Lambert

Images © Roger Lambert

Snowdrop Visit to Tudor Croft, Wednesday 12 February 2025



House with ford in foreground

Introduction

I set out from York to drive north under leaden skies, though battleship grey would probably have been the description at the time Tudor Croft was created in 1934. Always, as I drove, the North York Moors were in my sights, to the north-east as I drove north, then, gradually to the east and the south as I grew nearer to my object. Throughout I was accompanied by a thin, scudding drizzle that coated my windscreen. After an hour or so there I was, greeted by stewards who found me a convenient parking spot by the side of the road.

On my first visit here, I could not find the house, driving past twice before I spotted it, set back modestly from the roadside. Then, I wondered how I had missed such a distinctive and lovely building; now, I emerged from the car, relishing the cold, but not the sharp, biting rain that settled on my face. The sight of the house, with its glorious Thompson door and door case, beautifully coloured and modelled Crossley Tudor bricks and its elegant, comfortable proportions, miraculously drove the rain away, at least for a time,

and I joined the company at the back, by the fern cave, looking out over the all-important sight of the Moors that had, in some sense, travelled with me.

The House

Tudor Croft is unique. Rather than a late Arts and Crafts creation, it is a much rarer survival of an emerging inter-war style. It is a suburban garden and associated house built in 1934 by a successful industrialist (Crossley) in a style that is seeking to transition away from established full-blown Arts and Crafts towards a less formal style more appropriate to the economic and social realities of the years after the Great War. The development of this new style was cut short by the declaration of war in 1939, and so few examples now remain of this significant inter-war movement.

The Garden

Tudor Croft Garden remains intimately associated with the house it was designed for. It invites comparison with Goddards, the Terry house and garden in York (1927) designed by Walter Brierley and with Winterbourne in Birmingham. Both are earlier, much bigger, and more firmly Arts and Crafts; but both are for industrialists (the latter also moving his home away from the smoke), there are water and rock gardens, and engagement with the landscape beyond.



Beck and stepping stones

The site passed into the hands of the Heagney family in 1952, at which point the garden had become overgrown and neglected, after the death of Ron Crossley, the builder. The rose pergola was impassable, and many features were lost in the undergrowth. The Heagneys embarked on an ambitious 10-year programme of conservation and restoration, employing two full-time gardeners and including all the members of the family, to bring the garden back to its previous condition: lost paths, steps and features were discovered and restored.

The Snowdrops

We were 24 altogether on the day of our visit, using the snowdrops as our cause but wanting to see everything. We did, hosted by Mike Heagney and Gel, his sister. We were mostly YGT members, but we had welcome newcomers who were not, including visitors from the Northumbria GT.

Snowdrops were everywhere, mostly flowering, some just going over, in clumps, in specimen plantings and in drifts. Mike reckoned he has about 200 varieties; asked if this was a national collection he told us, gently, that with more than 2,000 varieties available, and more coming along because they hybridise so readily, he had some way to go. Some of us have only two! Everything was labelled and catalogued and recording envy struck more than one visitor, and many of the less usual varieties were pointed out to us by Mike, as he led us round, and by knowledgeable visitors, of whom there was more than one. The astonishing prices some bulbs fetched provoked discussion of the tulip fever of the 17th century, but above all, they were just beautiful, especially under our forbidding sky, as they lightened the darkness of February fill-dyke.

The time of year gave us the good fortune of being able to see and understand the structure and layout of the garden as we walked round at a lovely, leisurely pace. Different groups of us lingered, parting and coalescing again in alternative groupings, all the while chatting to Mike and our other companions as thoughts occurred, which occur they did.

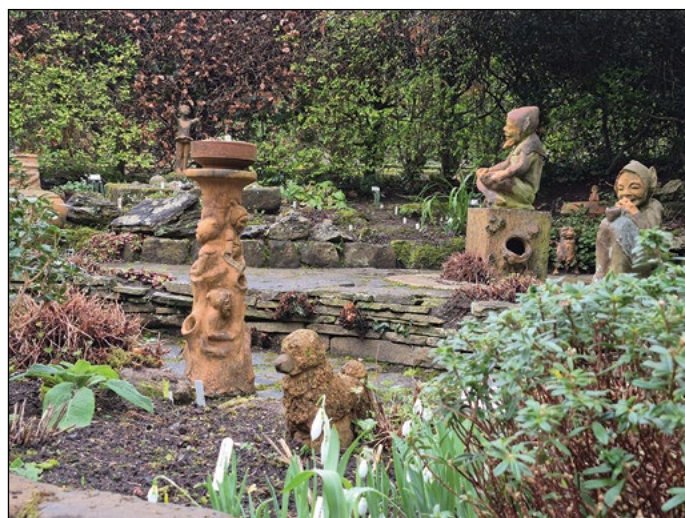


Beck and rock garden with the house in the distance

Tudor Croft is such a stimulating place, not just for its structure, its setting, its planting, but also for the obvious high skill, care and love that has been invested in it for so many years.

As we walked, the scent of distinctive Daphne drifted on the breeze, catching us unawares. At each turn

there was a new vision, and new colour palate, new textures and associations, new sounds - the beck and its falls, and a goldcrest and a mistle thrush stood out. We saw the original gardener's house, where Gel now lives, and its associated garden, the disused air raid shelters commandeered for garden use, the gardeners' workplaces, including potting out sheds and yards utilising the foundations of former hothouses, would we call them slips? The highlights were two summer houses, both unusual survivals. The first is a rustic house by Henry and Julius Caesar, which has much in common with the Tea House at Backhouse's Pittencreeff Park; the second is a working, revolving model by Boulton and Paul, demonstrated by Mike at the helm and four mostly unsuspecting YGT'ers inside.



Comondale pottery garden figures

There are Comondale Pottery figures, gnomes and animals, and stones reused from Guisborough Priory all catalogued by Historic England – cue more recording envy - artfully and cleverly placed across the garden. Quite centrally, there is a long rose pergola made of all varieties of Crossley bricks to show off the products and western red cedar beams. Here, we had pruning envy.

Backhouse rock work



The lawns, house and fern cave in the distance

Last, but not in significance, nor in fact in order of discovery, we had the rock work. Gillian Parker has determined that, despite the lack of a Backhouse archive, they are indeed by Backhouse, along with much of the rest of the garden. Partly this is because few businesses had the staff, knowledge and skill to put together such a creation at this date, but mostly, and this is diagnostic, because of the signature animal rock that the Backhouses used to sign their work. The fern cave is nationally important, an example of a form that is almost extinct. It has similarities with that at Southport Botanic Gardens. Water pipes feed a fountain that falls to a grotto and pool, and along a rill to a second pool and grotto. Fountain and grottos are decorated with Commondale Pottery made for the garden and the grottoes suggest that filmy ferns were grown. Historic England's website lists only two filmy fern caves: one by Backhouse at Ellen Willmott's Warley Place (collapsed), and another at Penjerrick (Cornwall).



Fern cave interior showing Backhouse signature rock, a komodo dragon head

Conclusion

As our tour came to its end we were shepherded into the house drawing room, where the scent of Gel's soup pervaded. She often makes more than 100 litres at a time to feed garden visitors, and we were treated to two kinds, which made a homely and welcome contrast with the headier scents of the winter blossoms outside. The fire was lit, and its flames sent gleams along the Thompson panelling and the furniture by him and former journeymen, who had set up their own businesses. The room soon filled with the sound of animated and contented chat, along with the beat of spoons against bowls.

At last we had to go, leaving our grateful thanks for a splendid, stimulating and friendly visit; and I think nearly everyone bought a plant or two to take with them.

I left reluctantly, but all the same rejoicing that I now have three varieties of snowdrop: James Backhouse joins the wild *nivalis* and S. Arnott in my modest suburban garden in York, 400 metres from the site of the former Backhouse nursery.

Chris Webb

Photos © Chris Webb

About our two new(ish) Trustees

Dr Camilla Allen



Camilla is a Lecturer at the University of Sheffield School of Architecture and Landscape, where she undertook her training in landscape architecture and a PhD supervised by Dr Jan Woudstra. Camilla's research and practice centres around her

interest in the cultural and social dimensions of the planting and protection of trees, and she uses specific places, people and events as the lens through which she explores that. Originally trained in illustration and having worked in children's books publishing, Camilla was drawn to landscape architecture as an environmental design discipline but became fascinated by the ideas and narratives that underpin the practice.

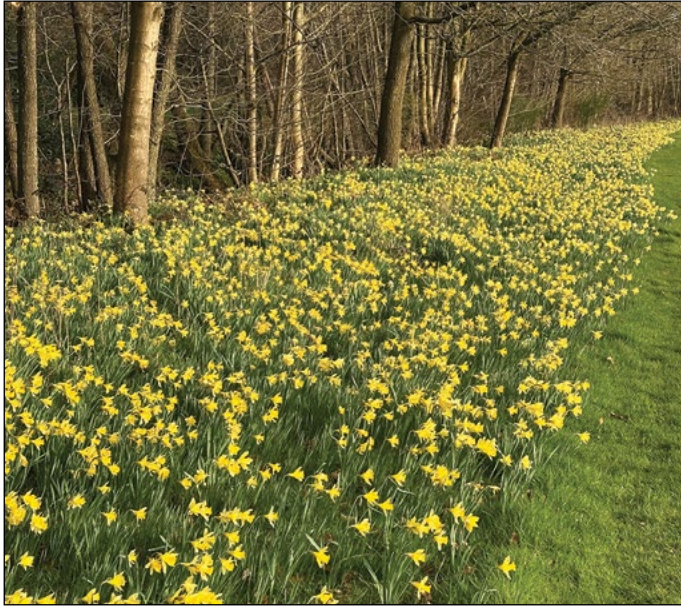
Following her doctoral research on Richard St. Barbe Baker (1889-1982), Camilla edited *The Politics of Street Trees* with Jan Woudstra which brought together over 40 contributors from varied sectors and perspectives to explore the issue that had rocked Sheffield between 2012-18.

Prior to her current role, Camilla was Research Associate on the AHRC-funded research project 'Women of the Welfare Landscape' that celebrated the legacy of pioneering landscape architect Brenda Colvin. Her current research projects include an enquiry into the aesthetics of tree equity and the history of Britain's tree cathedrals.

Trevor Nicholson

Trevor is Head Gardener at Harewood House and is currently heavily involved in the recently opened brand new play area project – the Playscape.

Vernal Equinox – the Awakening of a Garden



Wild daffodils at Low Askew

Introduction

As most attuned to the natural world will know, the Equinox is the point in the calendar when day and night are precisely equal. This happens twice a year, once in Spring and once in Autumn.

For us in the Northern Hemisphere, the Vernal (Spring) Equinox occurs around the third week of March, a time when we look forward to more daylight hours and the emergence of garden treasures, long since forgotten during winter months. The Autumn Equinox occurs around the third week of September when of course daylight hours get shorter.

My garden delights and excites me throughout the year, yet it is now, in later years that I sense the love which I have poured into it, has been reciprocated. It is the place I look out to when I open the bedroom curtains and thank my blessings. I know every single plant and welcome its coming like a newborn child. I love the changing seasons, especially the time around the Vernal Equinox, when I sense the ground quivering beneath my feet as nature's time clock energises new growth, which will transform the garden into a paradise. I felt it most acutely this year.

Spring 2025

It was as if the plants and trees were communicating with one another, like musicians in an orchestra, interacting in perfect harmony with me the conductor, for we gardeners are conductors, channelling our strength and imagination into creating a work of art, using nature's forms and colours to achieve perfection.



Salix helvetica

I have always felt an affinity to my plants, as I am sure many of you will too. I have physically planted them, divided them, drenched them in manure, watched them grow and hesitantly cut their blooms to display in the house or church.

The Vernal Equinox announces Spring and the myriad tasks ahead. It is a time for sowing seeds which can be precarious. There are some gardeners today who swear by moon planting (sowing their seeds according to the waxing and waning of the Moon), an ancient practice dating back thousands of years to the peoples of the Nile and Euphrates River valleys. The power of the moon, which controls the tide and moisture levels, stimulates germination; those who garden according to its laws achieve success.

Photoperiodism

Few of us are fully aware of the individual needs of our plants other than that they require water and sunlight to flourish, yet a plant's ability to measure day length and respond accordingly, is both important and fascinating. This process is known as photoperiodism. It places plants into three categories: short day plants (need long nights to flower); long-day plants (need longer daylight hours to flower) and day-neutral plants which are not affected by day length at all. Understanding the science behind it is hugely beneficial to gardeners especially at this time of the year.

The Vernal Equinox brings forth many of my favourite plants and shrubs. There are times when I will go into the garden at night to admire an individual bloom by torchlight. Cherry blossoms are especially lovely. If I am lucky, I may witness its pollinator which may be a moth or the tiniest of insects.



Pink Pussy Willow

Willows

March is a time when buds are fully formed. I rejoice in their individual beauty as much as the bloom itself. Amongst the choicest is a willow named *Salix fargesii*, a native of the mountainous regions of China whose rich ruby-red buds produce elegant, pointed shoots tinged the same.

I have other special willows in the garden and one, which is most unusual is *Salix gracilistyla* 'Melanostachys', an exciting large shrub which bears spectacular red-anthered black catkins appearing in late winter and early spring. I pick stems for the house as they look wonderful in flower arrangements until the pollen drops. My specimen is over twenty years old and now needs to be hard pruned to restore its shape. Propagating by layering is an easy way to produce new plants.

If you have a small garden, *Salix helvetica* is a charming little shrubby willow native to the Swiss alps which bears oval grey-green leaves, white-hairy beneath and produces silvery-pink pussy willows, much loved by the bees.

Another beauty, yet slow growing, is *Salix gracilistyla* 'Mount Aso', the Japanese pink pussy willow with fluffy powder-pink catkins which you feel you just must stroke!



Daphne laureola

Shrubs

My love of evergreens places *Daphne laureola*, the spurge laurel, as a star performer at the Vernal Equinox, when its limey-green flowers pervade the air with scent: strong, musky and soporific, it draws both humans and bees to seek it out. This is native to Britain and has been a harbinger of our garden since we came to Low Askew in 1983. It seeds abundantly yet I rarely move saplings as they always find the perfect spot.

The only other place I have seen it growing in the wild, is in the woods around the Thornborough Henges. Perhaps those who joined the tour there after this year's AGM at West Tanfield noticed it then?

Cornus mas, the Cornelian cherry, is a European native belonging to the Dogwood family which thrives in my garden. I have at least five specimens including the variegated variety. It can be grown as a shrub or small tree and deserves artistic pruning to keep its shape. It is usually in full bloom at the Vernal Equinox, producing abundant buttercup-yellow pompom-like flowers, much beloved by insects. In Autumn, vibrant scarlet fruits, rich in Vitamin C smother its branches. They have been used in medicine and for making jams and syrups for centuries.



Cornus mas

Flowers

My favourite flower at this time of the year is, without question, the wild daffodil, *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*, native to our valley and a few other areas in North Yorkshire (Farndale being the best known). It is that 'flash upon the inward eye which is the bliss of solitude' and which I keep deep within me through winter months until it re-appears in multitudes, carpeting our riverbanks and advancing its territory into old pastures where long ago they flourished.

The daffodil-walk we created, without introducing any new bulbs, has exceeded all expectations. It is carefully managed with Martin's regime of mowing. Blooms are usually at their best at the time of the Vernal Equinox. There really is nothing more

rewarding than naturalising native plants, but with daffodils this cannot be hurried. It takes five years from seed to flower but only in the right habitat.



Dog tooth violet
(*Erythronium dens-canis*)

Little gems which suddenly pop up in the garden currently never fail to surprise, such as the fairy-like dogtooth violet, *Erythronium dens-canis* with its cyclamen-type flowers and deep blue stamens. A bonus are its mottled leaves. Incidentally, despite its name, it does not belong to the Violet family.



Spring snowflake (Leucojum vernal)

Another beauty is *Leucojum vernal*, the spring snowflake or St Agnes' flower, first described by Carl Linnaeus in 1753 and related to the snowdrop family. This little treasure with its pure white nodding flowers, tipped with tiny splashes of yellowy-green, is a joyful little plant which thrives in my garden in shady places, intermingling with *Arum italicum* 'Pictum', a handsome relative of Lords and Ladies which I am happy to let loose because of its glossy

marbled foliage. It was one of Beth Chatto's favourite groundcover plants that I bought from her nursery many years ago.



Double white hellebore

I have been blessed with abundant hellebores whose seeds diversify in abundance. They are happiest during the Spring Equinox, soon fading in colour with warmer days. Finally, the queen of early Spring, *Fritillaria meleagris*, the aptly named Snake's Head Fritillary, patterned accordingly. I treasure the white ones.



Fritillaria meleagris

Conclusion

On reflection, I believe I discovered another depth to my garden this year, which came about through the magic of the brilliant night skies at the time of the Vernal Equinox, a time when I felt the planets, stars and moon moving in symmetry across the heavens, bringing life to the soil and ultimately my garden. Was it on one of these starlit nights when a young otter came into the garden, and I saw it clearly beneath our bedroom window in the early hours? I am sure it was!

Penelope Dawson-Brown

Photos © Penelope Dawson-Brown

Notes from the Editor

Welcome to the *Spring 2025 Newsletter*. This issue is appearing slightly later than usual, largely because it was decided that it would be sensible to include a report of the AGM proceedings. This is kindly provided by Camilla Allen at p1. The following lecture is by Dr Jan Harding, who is closely involved in Thornborough Henges, the destination of our afternoon visit. Roger Lambert was delighted to be asked to supply both the report of Dr Harding's lecture and of the very interesting visit to the Henges, at p.3 & 4.

Prior to the AGM, at the end of March, our now annual snowdrop visit took us to the delightful home and garden of Mike and Gel Heagney at Tudor Croft in Guisborough. Judging from the report of the visit by Chris Webb, it was hugely successful, due largely to the exceptional hospitality and knowledge of our hosts, Mike and Gel Heagney, who have lived here and managed the garden for many years. Additionally, Mike is an enthusiastic galanthophile and holds over 200 varieties of snowdrops. Read Chris's report at p.6.

Once again Penelope Dawson-Brown has provided us with a delightful essay entitled the "Vernal Equinox – the awakening of a garden, which is a personal view of her favourite Spring trees, shrubs and flowers, which live in her beautiful garden in the North York Moors near Lastingham. They include the wonderful wild daffodils, *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*, which are native to her valley and are particularly famous in nearby Farndale. See p.9

I am grateful to Margaret Mathew, who has given us an insight into the work of a member of the Research and Recording Team, by sharing with us her investigations into the designed landscape of Clifton Castle which is "perched above the steep riverside banks around a loop in the River Ure" near Masham. She concentrates on the work of Timothy Hutton, who lived at Clifton Castle between 1802 and his death in 1863, and was entirely responsible for the creation of the landscape, as he did not employ a garden designer. The garden is open under the NGS on Sunday 6 July and I can thoroughly recommend a visit see p.22.

This issue includes the reports from our committees. As usual Val Hepworth has produced a detailed account of the work of the Conservation and Planning Committee. Roger Lambert has also contributed with a personal perspective on Architecture in Landscape.

Vicky Price, chair of the Events Committee, has

provided an account of the work that is undertaken by the committee in planning the excellent programme of events each year. She would be delighted to welcome any member who reads the account and would like to join the team. We also include our regular columns, with thanks to their authors.

In our *December e-Bulletin* we mentioned a book by Tim Richardson entitled *The English Landscape Garden: Dreaming of Arcadia* in which describes what he considers to be the twenty greatest surviving landscape gardens in this country which are now conserved and can be visited by the public. He states in his Introduction that this is the first ever large-format book to be published on the topic of eighteenth-century landscape gardens. Alison Brayshaw has pointed out that four of the 20 are in Yorkshire: Castle Howard, Bramham Park, Studley Royal and Hackfall. The only other county to have more than one entry is Surrey which has two. Indeed, the owner of Bramham Park is of course our esteemed Vice President, Nick Lane-Fox.

By contrast the recently published Gardens Trust book entitled *Unforgettable Gardens: 500 Years of Historic Gardens and Landscapes* See p.27 under Recently Published Books, mentions only four Yorkshire gardens out of a total of 56 gardens. They are Bramham (in the seventeenth-century section); Castle Howard and Studley Royal (in the eighteenth-century section) and Sheffield Botanical Gardens (in the nineteenth century section). It is of course organised in an entirely different way and has sections covering each century starting with the sixteenth century and working through to the twentieth century.

I wonder which century Nick considers Bramham should fall within?

Christine Miskin
Editor

Apology: the Editor apologises unreservedly to Helen Caffrey for the gremlins which disfigured Helen's excellent article on the Knaresborough Castle visit in the *December e-Bulletin*, and for which the Editor takes full responsibility.

From the Chair

Studley Royal

Members will know by now that one of the most important planning applications relating to Yorkshire landscapes in the last decade was determined on 25 February 2025. I have written and spoken about our concerns arising from the National Trust's application to extend the villa at Studley Royal's Canal Gates several times. Those concerns focus on NT's case for need, and the impact that the changes at Canal Gates might have on visitor numbers accessing the World Heritage site through Studley Roger and the Deer Park. The Planning Authority, considering the extensive conservation planting and other welcome conservation and restoration measures, decided that NT's revised plans should go ahead. Although this is disappointing, because we still have doubts about the validity of NT's case, we should nevertheless recognise that the built outcome is not as bad as originally planned. Café seating inside and outside will now be less than previously planned (and less than currently exists). The building itself has been reduced in size from the original plans and there will be more screening planting than originally planned. NT has made an upward revision to its visitor increase to the World Heritage site, from 5% to 6.5% by 2028, and asserts that the new café, more efficiently laid out, will cope with demand. Partly, they hope that the new, permanent food kiosk which will sit alongside the car park toilets will absorb some of the previous use made of the café. We can share the hope that these radical changes do indeed relieve the pressure on this end of the site, rather than exacerbating it.

Proposed changes to relationship between Gardens Trust and County Gardens Trusts

In *Gardens Trust News*, members will remember that YGT opposed constitutional changes to the relationship between GT and the County Gardens Trusts proposed at GT's last AGM in September. Those changes were abandoned, but the crisis facing GT (and hence the CGTs) has not gone away. GT's grant, which enables GT and the CGTs to respond to planning applications (like Studley Royal) has not been increased for a decade, and GT's finances are under great strain. Since September, GT has embarked on a welcome programme designed to revive and reinvigorate the relationship between us. There is a series of county chairs meetings (the latest held on 25 March in Birmingham) looking at ways to tackle the crisis; and a series of regional meetings aimed at refreshing the links between CGTs in the regions. The first of the Northern Region meetings was in Manchester in January, and further meetings are planned. There is a long way to go, but there is every reason to think we are moving in a positive direction.

Gardens Trust/CGT role in planning

GT is also embroiled in a proposed consultation about the GT-CGT role in planning. Val has more to say about this in her Conservation column at p16. It is a new development, and there is much uncertainty, but YGT will play its full part in responding to the consultation when it comes, and in supporting GT through the process and outcomes.

Chris Webb

Bishopthorpe Walled Garden

Thanks to determined effort and detailed research by the Bishopthorpe Local History Group, the walled kitchen garden at Bishopthorpe, which formed an element of the Archbishop of York's estate, has just been listed at Grade II.

The Pleasure grounds and walled kitchen gardens adjacent to the Archbishop's Palace were completed in 1767, under Archbishop Robert Hay Drummond; the kitchen gardens being situated across the road from the palace and main gardens. A pinery, for growing pineapples, and a heated flued wall was added by his successor. By 1818 the kitchen gardens occupied over seven acres and had extensive hothouses, fruit walls, store ponds for fish and more.

In 1827 Prince Hermann von Puckler-Muskau visited and described the kitchen garden as 'remarkably fine'.

Today the walled gardens are leased to a local organic nursery who work with people with learning

disabilities. The boundary walls, a flued hot wall and associated buildings and a garden canal all survive today. The gardens are occasionally open for visits. The local history group is continuing research and adding further detail to our understanding of the history of the site.

List Description: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1490863>

Historic England Drone Images of the site: [Archive Search Results](#) | Historic England

Research by Bishopthorpe Local History Group : <http://www.bishopthorpe.net/bishnet/history/2024/05/17/bishopthorpe-walled-garden-early-history-and-historical-importance/>

*Dr Margaret Nieke
with support from the Bishopthorpe Local History Group*

Conservation and Planning

A personal perspective from Roger Lambert Architecture in Landscape

Introduction

My training and career as an architect appeared to have set me in good stead to contribute constructively as a member of YGT's Conservation and Planning Committee, and offer considered responses to the planning applications which concern registered parks or gardens, for which the Gardens Trust is a statutory consultee, at present but see p.16.

My training had encouraged me to analyse problems in the built environment with an open mind, so that a proposed solution might involve bricks and steel, or perhaps arranging external spaces, but in many cases the answer may be provided by other disciplines. In some cases it may be conceptual or managerial and require no actual physical intervention. Invariably one was working for a client who would do their best to define the question, but part of my professional duty was also to always question the question.

Imagine my shock when my extremely learned and reasonable fellow YGT colleague, Peter Goodchild, spluttered in frustration regarding the Studley Royal Gates planning application "...the trouble with architects is that they are trained to believe that there is always an architectural solution!" So, how assured can we be that landscape projects in the public realm and/or those filtering through the planning process would not only enjoy the contribution of an architect, but would also pass the test of the court of public opinion?

Piccadilly Gardens

A related problem arose in Manchester in the recent past. In the retail heart of the city there is a large open space called Piccadilly Gardens. This space has not inherited any of the polite formalities of, say, a London square, but Piccadilly Gardens is an immensely thriving, busy space teeming with competing buses, trams, humans and commerce. The three splendid late 19th century statues set in its midst are individually statutorily listed, but the Garden is not registered, nor is it in a Conservation Area. The super-human bronze statues on their granite pedestals are now surrounded by extensive areas of hard, urban landscaping materials. They appear to be trying to hold back the loss of human/green space caused by the persistent edge-nibbling of commerce and bus and tram tracks, interspersed with passenger refuges and transport engineering. Historically these Gardens had provided a cherished green oasis, but that tranquillity was being progressively eroded, so in the early 21st century the City Council decided that this urban landscape challenge would benefit from the advice of world-renowned architect Tadao Ando.



Piccadilly Gardens approx. 1961

(Geoff Hughes – source <https://www.flickr.com>)

Several of Ando's award-winning previous projects have incorporated exquisite, gently curving concrete walls, often softened by climbing plants. Therefore, it was not surprising that he devised the introduction of a long, gently curving concrete wall as a contribution to the landscape of Piccadilly Gardens. It would act as a defensive screen between the remaining green space and a substantial adjacent area of bus/tram infrastructure. However, in practice, the wall sliced off a substantial proportion of the volume of the Gardens, allocating the lost space instead to transport infrastructure. Perhaps Mancunians subsequently visiting the now reduced gardens disliked the loss of the dynamic vibrancy previously contributed by the passing buses/trams etc, but certainly they disliked Ando's brutal, even if exquisite, raw concrete

As a result of public anger, the *Manchester Evening News* collected over 20,000 signatures seeking to have the wall removed in its entirety! The court of public opinion had reached its verdict, and the City Council awarded itself planning approval to demolish Ando's wall which, as noted above, was not listed! In practice, at today's date, approximately one third of the centre of the wall has been neatly cut out, but the remaining wings still stand, as they continue to provide the backs to two café/restaurants. The remaining wall has also acquired a threadlike filigree artwork which perhaps provides an alternative to the missing climbing plants.



Looking west across Piccadilly Gardens today

(Image © Roger Lambert)

The yellow buses are visible through the demolished section of the wall. The Brutalist surroundings would be a challenge for any landscape designer.



Looking north at the rear of the wall at Piccadilly Gardens today (Image © Roger Lambert)

The lacework mural has been added by the Council to reduce the impact of the otherwise brutal concrete.

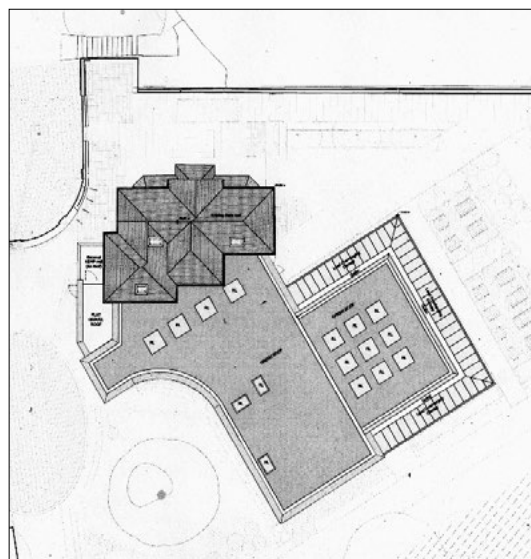
Studley Royal

I wonder whether there may be a parallel here with the National Trust's proposed new building at Studley Royal? Planning approval has now been granted for the NT's planned new visitor facility, due to be constructed inside William Aislaby's designed landscape. In the case of Studley Royal, the NT appear to have briefed their architect to design a modern heritage building which, despite being located at the very front door of the 18th century UNESCO protected landscape, might meld unobtrusively with its landscape setting. (Can a concrete wall sit unobtrusively in Piccadilly Gardens?). The NT's faith in architecture has assured them that a well-designed modern construction will not offend, but YGT had argued that NT had not considered visitor data sufficiently to quantify the size and scope of the new building and its terraces. Considering the front door location of the new facility, it is imperative that it should be no larger than essential.

In the opinion of the YGT, there is an unquantified risk that the new building might prove to be excessively large, creating an unnecessarily substantial and intrusive blot on this 18th century landscape or too small, necessitating a further rethink! How should the public be protected against this potential problem? It would be unreasonable to expect members of the general public to have followed the technical ins and outs of this planning application. Their interest is necessarily protected by the skills of the Planning Committee and its allocated officer, combined with the expert input/advice of various consultees including the Gardens Trust. If the new building does indeed turn out to be unreasonably large, then can

we realistically expect the court of public opinion to rescue the situation by raising a Piccadilly Gardens style of insurrection against the new café? The public interest should be safeguarded by a well-informed planning process, and that can only be delivered if there are expert/educated contributors to it which is where YGT's Conservation and Planning Committee contributes as a statutory consultee. However, as the ink dries on this publication, the Government has set in motion a rapid consultation to review whether the planning process indeed needs the GT as a statutory consultee, or are we just an impediment to progress?

As demonstrated at Piccadilly Gardens, the court of public opinion is prone to express its opinion retrospectively, so we will have to wait and see. Maybe the Piccadilly activists will still have their placards!



(Plan © Feilden Fowles Architects)

Roof plan of approved new building at Studley Royal, showing existing 19th century cottage in darker pen. Terraced picnic areas and other areas of hard landscaping extend beyond the roof line.

Roger Lambert

Images – further information

The full citation for the 1961 image is

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/manchesterarchiveplus/5390375764>

The Feilden Fisher plan is from the planning approval – North Yorkshire Council, app. Ref. ZX23/02883/FUL

Conservation and Planning Committee Report

Introduction

When I am looking at submitted documents for planning applications which have the potential to impact on our historic parks and gardens, the issue of seeking “balance” is always at the back of my mind. By this I mean comparing the value of one thing such as making a new car park, new visitor centre or building a housing development, with another such as losing some of the aesthetic and historic integrity of a historic park or designed landscape and its setting. In my view life is all about trying to balance the inexorable pressures of the 21st century and our increasing population with retaining our quality of life, our culture and heritage, and our happiness... and for many of us that means having quality green space where we can unwind, allow our children to freely play and to recharge our batteries. See End Note re National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Chapter 16 *Conserving and enhancing the historic environment*.

These thoughts have been the bedrock of my continuing voluntary role in conservation and planning for YGT and The Gardens Trust since gaining my MA in conservation thirty years ago. Although it seems to be getting tougher and the pressures greater, we must continue to fight our corner and get good solutions.

Statutory Consultees

On 10th March the Government announced their intention to make changes to the statutory consultee system and I quote from *Bureaucratic burden lifted to speed up building in growth agenda* - GOV.UK:

- Review of statutory consultee system to promote growth and unblock building
- Consultation on limiting the scope of statutory consultees and removing a limited number of them, including Sport England, Theatres Trust and The Gardens Trust in planning decisions, while ensuring necessary community facilities and needs continue to be met
- Will also establish a new performance framework with greater ministerial oversight
- Reforms will reduce delays and uncertainty on planning proposals, demonstrating the government's *Plan for Change in action*, [milestone of delivering 1.5m new homes.]

This was a few days before the government's flagship *Planning and Infrastructure Bill* was published

Such a change would be a major reduction in our planning influence where we work hard and

thoughtfully to ensure that our heritage is passed on to future generations. The Gardens Trust (GT) and the YGT are ever mindful of the impact that our responses to planning might have on the applicant and the wider scenario. We endeavour to take a balanced view of proposals, give well-thought through advice and deliver our responses in a timely fashion. The types of responses that we write vary from a ‘No comment’ e.g. where the application may be for architectural changes about which we do not have the expertise and where it will not impact on the historic park and garden; ‘No objection’ because again we do not envisage any harm; ‘Advice’ and this is the main type of response that we make; finally an ‘Objection’ where we consider that the NPPF is not being followed and where there will be substantial harm or loss of significance.

If the GT is not a statutory consultee within the English planning system, then developers will potentially be able to push through projects without the knowledgeable and professional advice that we can give that could lead to a better solution for everyone.

Currently the Gardens Trust is a statutory consultee for all planning applications that may affect a site nationally designated on the *Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest* (RPG). There are over 1700 RPG's, split into Grades I, II*, II. Historic England (HE) generally only has resource to look at Grade I and II* RPG's i.e. c.37% and the remainder at Grade II fall to the GT alone. In this respect GT is doing the work that in theory should be done by HE if it had sufficient resources. GT receives some 1800 planning application consultations each year and provides local planning authorities with many hundreds of constructive advice recommendations to support positive change.

I have to say that we do not recognise ourselves in the government's recent characterisation of statutory consultees. GT only rarely misses the 21-day response deadline and last year objected to less than 10% of our consultations, with the remainder of our responses being simply supportive advice.

The Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) have told GT that this proposal is due to the Government's view of what it sees as niche areas of focus within the planning system, rather than our actual performance. Thankfully DCMS have referenced the brilliant work of the County Gardens Trusts (CGTs) and are wanting to find other ways to continue working with us, if the statutory role is removed.

As I write on 21st March, we have been told that

there is to be a consultation on the role of statutory consultees and the proposal to remove some of them from the planning system. We think that the consultation will also include narrowing the statutory consultees remit. However, we have learnt that DCMS, HE and MHCLG (Ministry of Housing and Local Government) appreciate the value of historic parks and gardens so we hope that a way forward can be found that benefits from GT-CGT expertise. We expect to make a robust response to the public consultation.

Edwardian Study Day at Lotherton Hall, 2022

Turning to brighter matters you may remember that in 2022, YGT with Leeds City Council organised an Edwardian Gardens study day at Lotherton Hall, near Aberford. We managed to make a surplus and YGT Council agreed to donate the funds generated to a particular garden project at Lotherton. This would follow the recent conservation management plan for the gardens by SouthernGreen. Jane Furse and I met with Maria Akers, Senior Estate Manager along with garden and estate officers Phil Stevens and Tom Harrison in February and we are going to assist with the replanting of part of the Formal Gardens (the square parterre) laid out by Gwendolen Gascoigne in the early 20th century.

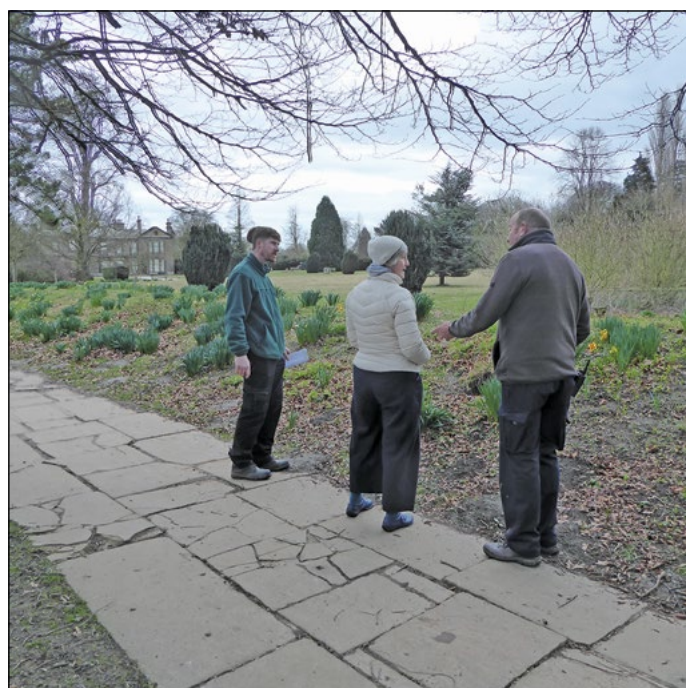
When Jane and I walked round the gardens in February it struck us that there were areas with very little colour, so we have started a project with the staff at Lotherton to plant early spring bulbs in the informal areas, developing a Spring Walk and starting with snowdrops and species crocus. Budgets are tight so I have taken a carload of 23 different snowdrop cultivars and species wonderfully donated by Mike and Gel Heagney from their vast collection at Tudor Croft along with several from my garden in Skeeby. Crocus vernus which are everywhere in my old garden are also going to Lotherton.



*Mike and Gel Heagney at Tudor Croft with their gift of snowdrops for Lotherton Hall
(Image © Val Hepworth)*



*Boundary of the Rock Garden: Maria Akers, Phil Stevens, Tom Harrison and Jane Furse deciding places for snowdrop planting
(Image © Val Hepworth)*



*Southwest Walk looking towards the Hall: Phil, Tom and Jane deciding places for snowdrop planting
(image © Val Hepworth)*

Planning matters

Returning to Planning matters, in the past five months we have responded to 32 planning consultations and nine consultations connected with forestry and woodland.

Solar panels and farms

Not unexpectedly we are seeing more consultations re solar farms near Registered Park and Gardens (RPG). The application (Ref: 23/02397/FUL) for land at Haigh Lane and Woolley Edge Lane across the motorway from **Bretton Hall/Yorkshire Sculpture Park** returned with additional analysis and a Visual Impact Assessment. We received the consultation directly

from the developer/agent rather than Wakefield Council. As a result of the additional information, we agreed with the applicant that the degree of harm would be less than substantial and that mature trees would contribute to the screening. We recommended that the Council investigate whether further screen planting would be helpful and that a planning condition be imposed to replace trees during the life of the array when any trees fall or die.

On a much lesser scale we have had consultations for solar panels on existing agricultural buildings at **Kirklees Park** (Calderdale, Ref: 25/00030/LBC) and at **Harewood Yard, Harewood Estate** (Ref: 25/00416/FU). Kirklees Park, (Grade II) consists of park, pleasure grounds and gardens associated with Kirklees Hall and is also associated with the legend of the death of Robin Hood. We had no objection. However, we noted that the Harewood RPG (Grade I) had not been referenced by the applicant, despite this being the most significant heritage asset that could be affected by the installation of solar panels. We agreed with HE that the application did not follow the requirements of NPPF para 207.

North Yorkshire and York

My heart sank when we received yet another consultation relative to **Allerton Park** (NY/2025/0016/73). This was for the landfill site north of the park for the continuation of importation and placement of non-hazardous soil, amend the approved landform and the date for final restoration. However, it was not as bad as I feared. The landscape architect, Jane Winter, who wrote the Landscape Management Plan for Allerton Park, helped me with advice relative to the RPG.

In addition to all our consultations for the proposals at Canal Gates, Studley Royal, we have recently responded positively to three other consultations at National Trust Properties and were pleased to be consulted for alterations to the existing Iris Garden at **Nunnington Hall** Registered Grade II, (ZE24/05791/FUL). In essence the only elements requiring planning consent are structural changes such as in this case the proposed pond. It was pleasing that the National Trust provided much more context information to assist in the determination. Fortunately, I visited the Iris Garden on the day that Nunnington was closing for the season, or so I found out when I got there! We broadly agreed with the concept to improve the design, planting and access but we suggested that it is important to have aspects in the new design that acknowledge the past such as plant cultivars of the period. I am grateful to YGT member Caroline Kernan for her historic horticultural expertise which helped me to offer comments

and a list of Early Bearded Iris with their dates of introduction.



*Nunnington Hall Iris Garden looking west
(Image © Val Hepworth)*

By contrast **City of York Planning Authority** has provided two concerning proposals.

For **Museum Gardens** Registered Grade II, we were consulted for the siting of a temporary structure (tipi bar) for a period of up to 14 weeks a year (24/01660/FUL), and for five years. The Museum Gardens were laid out by Sir John Murray Naysmith for the Yorkshire Philosophical Society in 1844. They were designed as pleasure grounds to provide a setting for the Yorkshire Museum (Listed Grade I), the many ancient monuments in its vicinity and to incorporate botanical gardens. The Tipi is sited immediately in front of, and blocking access and vision towards, the City Walls (Grade I) and the Multangular Tower (Grade I). Walking the principal routes in the Museum Gardens shows that the Tipi and associated van is visible from them in many views in both directions. We did not find any evidence that the applicant had even considered that Museum Gardens are an RPG and there was no evidence that NPPG para 207 had been followed. It was not clear to us why the applicant considers that a Viking-themed tent with its damage to the gardens should be appropriate in a 19th century designed landscape next to, and blocking access to, structures erected either several hundred years before or several hundred years after the Viking occupation of York. We made a very full and reasoned response and objected.



*Area of Museum Gardens after Tipi etc removal
(Image © Chris Webb)*



Tipi installation in Museum Gardens near Multangular Tower, November 2024 (Image © Chris Webb)

We have recently been consulted about the proposed demolition of buildings, University House, University of York (PP-13790975). The GT and YGT would not normally respond to a demolition notice but we have made an exception in this case because University House is in the **University of York RPG** (Grade II) and one of the original buildings on campus. University House is part of the University of York masterplan and makes a direct contribution to the significance of the RPG and to the setting of the nearby listed buildings. We are concerned also, that the demolition notice lacks a clear and convincing justification, including any evidence that no viable alternate use can be found for the building. We question whether University House is redundant in the normal meaning of that word. It is not at present used as a home for the Vice Chancellor, but there is no exploration of why the University believes this might continue to be the case. Moreover, demolishing a house in a time of national housing shortage, when housing in York itself is a scarce resource, is hard to understand - University House could be repurposed as part of a package to attract visiting scholars, for example.



University House, University of York, March 2025 (Image © Chris Webb)

There have been three other notable cases in North Yorkshire and York. In February the Dean of Ripon withdrew the planning application (22/04808/FULMAJ) for the construction of the annex for **Ripon Cathedral**.

The planning application to reuse the York Retreat hospital building and grounds has been determined by City of York Planning. The Retreat is perhaps the most significant institution in the history of psychiatric care, dating from the 1790s, with buildings and grounds to match. The developers have put much time and effort into designing a new use for the site, over several years and with several iterations, informed by stakeholders including YGT. Now, as the work to convert the building begins, a group has been set up to monitor and inform the development of the grounds, leading possibly into a group of volunteers to help maintain them. YGT has two members on the group, Gillian Parker and Chris Webb, and York Civic Trust is also represented.

Regarding **Studley Royal**, on 4 February 2025 the Skipton and Ripon Area Planning Committee (for North Yorkshire Council) approved NT's revised application for an extension to the villa at Canal Gates and for conservation planting and other restoration work close by. Although YGT failed in at least pausing the development, we can take heart from the fact that the revision is, undoubtedly, less harmful than the version first proposed. The extended villa will lose some unfortunate twentieth century additions and will (surprisingly given the case for need presented by NT in version 1) provide fewer catering seats inside and out than now: 156 compared with 214 now (and 246 as first proposed), on a projected visitor increase to 2027 of 6.5% compared to 5% originally.

Throughout this case, we have worried about the impact this will have on visitor numbers using the Deer Park entrance and car park, and the consequences this will have for the Deer Park, the new café and its surroundings. We will need to watch the unfolding of this intervention in the heart of the World Heritage Site carefully.



Studley Royal view across Lake to Cascade and Canal Gates, May 2022 (Image © Chris Webb)

In January Nick Mason, Archaeology Officer for North York Moors National Park Authority contacted YGT about a planning application for **Raithwaite Hall** just west of Whitby, unregistered but close to the Mulgrave RPG which is Grade II*. We were able to help him with more information. Louise Wickham and Mags Waughman of YGT's Research and Recording Group checked their records and I did a brief analysis of the early OS maps. I also remembered that Gail Falkingham had done some research in 2017 for John Buglass who had been commissioned to do an archaeological assessment of the Raithwaite Estate for previous owners. Nick did not know about this, so the YGT memory can be very helpful!

South Yorkshire

Good conservation work to repair and restore Wentworth Woodhouse continues (RB2024/1595) with a Listed Building Consent application for re-roofing and stonework repairs to the west front façade. The work should not have any effect on the garden and will ensure the safety and longevity of the building.



*West elevation of Wentworth Woodhouse
(Image © R.Lambert)*

Following Jane Furse and my visit to **Cusworth Hall Walled Garden** last July, we have had the application for works to the south wall of the Hall Garden, (24/02327/LBC). This wall dates from the 17th century with a new entrance and gate will make the garden totally accessible. We have no objection in principle to such a good proposal, but with documents lacking in detail, we have requested further information.

West Yorkshire

In November we were pleased to see a positive resolution for the historic public toilets against the eastern wall of Canal Gardens at **Roundhay Park**,

Leeds Registered Grade II, (24/06153/FU). In 2022 we responded to the previous application for demolition and expressed our concerns that the poor condition was due to lack of upkeep. We queried whether all alternatives for this attractive building had been explored and regretted the proposal. This new application is a very laudable renovation and extension by Leeds Civic Trust to develop a new use as business space.

Another public park, this time **Crow Nest Park at Dewsbury**, Registered Grade II, (2024/93411/E LBC) also involved improving the public toilets and we strongly advised the retention of the York stone paving slabs instead of the proposed tarmac. Crow Nest Park was laid out in the early 1890s by the Borough Surveyor, incorporating features from the grounds of an earlier country house. The Crow Nest Mansion (early 18th century Listed Grade II) stands towards the southern end of the site, possibly on the site of the late 16th or early 17th century house. It commands important views to the south with the public conveniences in an adjacent building.

Woodland and Forestry Management

In the *Autumn Newsletter* I wrote of consultations from the Forestry Commission and the White Rose Forest Project. We have had several from White Rose Forest for tree planting within a 1km radius of an RPG: **Hunslet Cemetery, Beckett Street Cemetery, Valley Gardens, Harrogate, The Long Walk, Knaresborough and Shroggs Park, Halifax**; all would enhance the local environment without impacting the setting/design of the RPG. For the consultation that I mentioned last time; woodland creation on land at Hornby Old Vicarage, near Hornby Castle RPG Grade II, I had a look at the area for wood pasture and orchard planting on south-facing land northwest of the RPG; a nice site and planting which I thought would enhance the aesthetic environment and biodiversity.



*Hornby Old Vicarage. September 2024
(Image © Val Hepworth)*

Last autumn we were consulted about the Wharnccliffe Estate Woodland Management Plan (WMP). This includes the **Wortley Hall** RPG at Grade II. I had very interesting discussions with Darryl Stubbs, Senior Forest Manager at Tilhill who manages the woodland at Wharnccliffe and recently responded to a felling and replanting licence consultation. Although my knowledge of the Wharnccliffe Estate is limited I analysed the early OS maps and noted that High Wood forms a central spine of the RPG and is important in views. I suggested that these compartments would require perhaps a little more assessment of the historic nature of the planting bearing in mind that Wortley had links with the landscaper WS Gilpin, and that within High Wood and alongside High Wood Dyke are paths in those compartments and there were seats in place when the OS 1891 survey was done. Darryl confirmed that High Wood still displays some ornamental plantings. I found the WMP document interesting and was pleased to note:

‘To maintain and improve the aesthetic and landscape values of the woodland over the long term’

‘The woodlands are managed under coupe/selective felling as opposed to clear-felling. This retains woodland boundaries and softens the impact of harvesting works.

Many of the Estates woodlands can be seen across the landscape from various vantage points owing to the topography of the area.’

In December we gave advice for a Felling Licence for **Allerton Park Estate**.

What is clear from these consultations is the difficulty that woodland and forestry is facing with our changing climate. It was interesting talking with Darryl about which trees we now cannot plant, and which trees Forestry England have modelled to be suitable until 2080. Maybe YGT should organise a lecture on e.g. ‘Woodland and forestry in historic parks and gardens and planting for the future with our changing climate’.

Finally, my thanks to our YGT planning team of volunteers without which we would not achieve so much. We are always delighted to have more help!

Conclusion

Do please have a look at our responses that are uploaded by Geoff onto the YGT website and can be found in the Research and Recording section under the specific historic park and garden.

End Note re National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Chapter 16 *Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.*

The current NPPF was published in December 2024 and Chapter 16 covers paragraphs 202–221. Paragraph 202: ‘Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance, such as World Heritage Sites which are internationally recognised to be of Outstanding Universal Value. These assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.’

Paragraph 215: ‘Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.’

Val Hepworth

P.S. 21st March: York City Council has refused the demolition of University House, University of York.



Researching Clifton Castle

Introduction

Over the last few years since lockdown, I have been researching the history of the designed landscape at Clifton Castle, as part of the work of the Research and Recording group. The property lies between Thornton Watlass and Masham, located on a bend of the River Ure. The garden was the creation of Timothy Hutton, who developed the landscape himself, without employing a fashionable garden designer. He took ideas from his own experience, probably also from his friends and created what can be described as a rustic picturesque landscape. Thorp Perrow, nearby Swinton, the Druid's temple and possibly Hackfall, as well as places visited on his travels in Scotland and the Lake District, may have given him ideas for his own grounds.



*View of the riverside walks at Clifton by
George Cuitt the younger dated 1844*

(Reproduced by permission of Lord Downshire)

The Castle and the views

The castle in the name existed as a ruin when Hutton took possession of the estate on attaining his majority in 1802. He demolished it and used the stone to build other buildings and the walls of the Kitchen Garden. However, the most notable feature of the landscape at

Clifton is the situation. The mansion is perched above steep riverside banks around a loop of the River Ure.

Hutton was keen to exploit the magnificent views along the river towards Masham and develop walks through the riverside planting. A grotto or tunnel was made through the rocks along the river's edge and rustic summerhouses placed along the paths.

Hutton was proud of what he had created around his home, particularly the riverside walks, when first created in 1819 and 1820. He enjoyed showing them off to his visitors:

'Mr Danby and a party of gentlemen arrived. I went round the walks with them'

'Went round the walks with the young ladies after dinner'

'Visitors much delighted with the House and Grounds'.

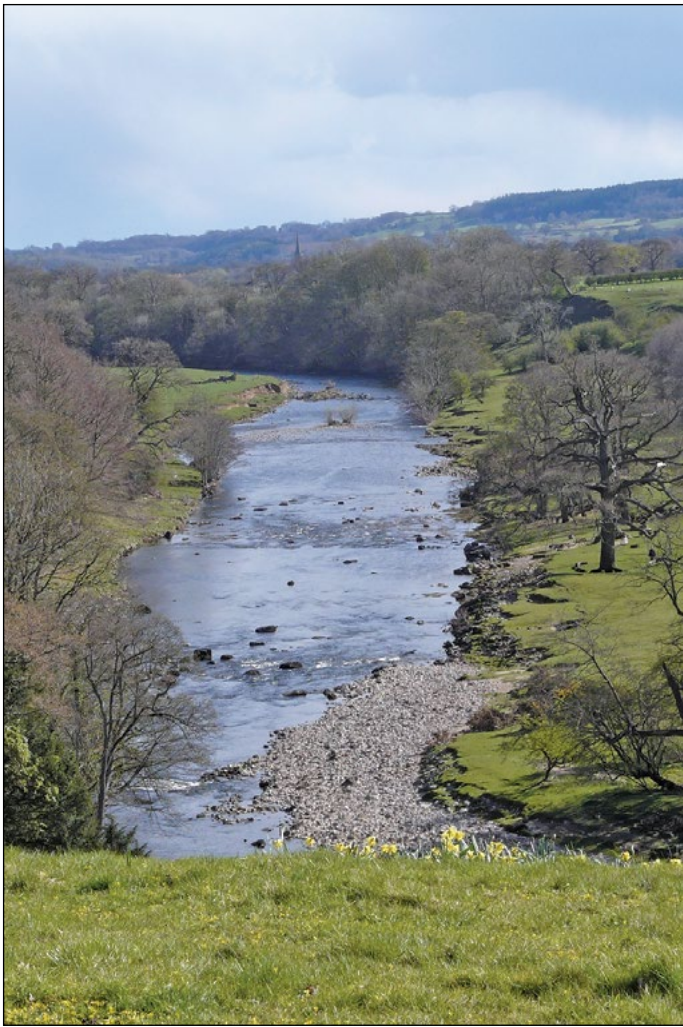
Another visitor was Robert Hird, the Bedale shoemaker, who visited in 1836 and described the grounds and the Kitchen Garden in his doggerel verse 'Annals':

*The woods all round, I did admire,
And all the laid out ground!
That Hutton's made to his desire,
We soon the coach road found.*

*The ground was high, that we stood on,
The river runs below,
The pleasant walks we saw anon:
To them we did not go.*

Jane Hatcher's book on Timothy Hutton (2020) was a useful starting point for research but it is always worth going back to the primary source material. Hutton kept a daily diary for more than 50 years. I was unable to trace the current location of these, but a large number were microfilmed by the North Yorkshire Record Office, along with accounts and other documents. I confess I have not read all the diaries but concentrated on the years when the main elements of the designed landscape were put in place.

Hutton's handwriting was not always easy to read but with practice I could skim through, rejecting any mention of who came to dine (one of his chief pleasures in life), and pick out the words 'with the labourers'. If Hutton was at home at Clifton, he was often out somewhere on the estate with his employees, overseeing work on the gardens, farm or in the woods. The activity and location were frustratingly not always mentioned, but sometimes he specified work in the gardens and mentioned where this was taking place.



*The view towards Masham from the environs of the house.
The church spire is visible in the distance
(Image © M. Mathews)*

Timothy Hutton

The diaries paint a picture of Hutton, detailed by Hatcher, as a sociable landed gentleman. He was not too grand to count his architect, John Foss, a friend. Foss often came to dine, stayed the night and went on to Swinton Park where he was working for a time. Another of Hutton's friends George Cuitt, the artist, was also a frequent visitor, sketching speculative ideas for gateways and gate lodges. John Foss, as well as being the architect of the mansion and other estate buildings, was often involved with landscaping activities as in June 1821,

'Mr Foss and I were in the Wood with the labourers making waterfalls in the Haness Ing Gill'.

One is often lured down interesting byways during research, which are not strictly relevant for completing the YGT 'designed landscape' proforma, but which could provide material for Newsletter articles. One such theme I am looking at is Hutton's 'servants book' in which he records the people he employed, including his gardeners, giving details of what he paid them and where they had previously worked.

Nurseries used

Both diaries and accounts give some details of where he bought his supplies. He bought fruit trees from Lee's at Hammersmith but also patronised local nurseries. William Jackson's at Cross Lanes, Scruton was the main one, as in November 1836: *'returned by the Cross Lanes and stopped to look at Jacksons trees'*.

May's nursery near Theakston was another: *'walked to see May's nursery and I got some shrubs there'*. Shrubs were also obtained from Thompson's nursery at Pickhill and he bought trees from a family called Mason at nearby Burrill. I would be interested to learn if anyone has any information about these businesses in the early 19th century.

But he was also not averse to digging hollies out of the roadside verges and transporting them to Clifton, as in 1812 *'got some hollys in the Masham Lane which were planted in front of the house'*.

Later owners

Timothy Hutton died childless in 1863, and the property passed to a relative and thereafter down through the female line. In the later 19th century Sir John Cowell, Master of Queen Victoria's Household, managed the estate for his wife and kept a detailed memorandum book, another useful source of information about work on the site. However, no major changes were made to Hutton's landscape, but the grounds were maintained, and some changes were made to the service areas. The distinctive 'Moon Gate' in the walled garden dates to this period.

Clifton was sold in 1963 to Robin Hill, later Lord Downshire, who remodelled the front entrance of the house and created a cascade as a millennium feature. His son, Nick Downshire, continues to maintain the gardens and add touches of his own while preserving the main structures of Hutton's vision.

The report on the historic garden at Clifton Castle, near Masham, has recently been completed and is available online on the YGT database. The garden is to open for the National Garden Scheme on Sunday 6 July 2025.

Margaret Mathews

Schools Report

Introduction

In November 2023 YGT had 79 member schools and now we have 119. That is a tremendous increase. The Covid effect does not seem to be diminishing, and outdoor space really does seem to be recognised as something very important.

Themes for each year

Over the last year we have been encouraging our schools to be more aware of the needs of their gardens. During the school year 2023/24 our theme was *Climate Proof Your Garden!* This current year's is *Be Good to your Soil!* We have therefore used your money to provide climate-resilient plants, water butts, watering cans, and compost bins to interested schools. We are planning to give wormeries in the forthcoming Summer Term.

In connection with the theme, informative leaflets written by our team are uploaded to the Schools' section of the website and attached to emails.



School veg beds ready for planting

Grounds Development Awards

One major aspect of what we do is to offer Grounds Development Awards every year. This involves a detailed application process and we require information about children's involvement in planning, using and caring for the new space, plus a proper commitment from the school to the garden's future. This year we had the highest number of applicants ever and it was quite a job sifting through them. Thanks to Val Hepworth's donations to the Schools' group, we are pleased to have been able to give a fifth award. Donations are always welcome!

Conclusion

I will finish with an email from one of last year's award winners but first would like to say a big thank you from Christine Wood, Nicola Harrison and myself – Sue Lindley – for the Council's continued support. We are making a difference!

The following email came from Oak C of E Primary School in Huddersfield. This school is in a deprived area and 48% of its children have free school meals. The school is working very hard to improve the lives of their children. Here is the email:

"Thanks for your continued interest in our gardening club project. The funding we received has been put to good use so far. We have been able to purchase compost, raised beds and some wood chippings all of which have helped transform our small allotment area, so it is easy for the children to manage. The gardening club team have cleared the area of weeds and are adopting a "no dig" approach to the area. They have been busy this week distributing the wood chippings throughout the area. Children have planted beans, squash, tomatoes, soft fruit and salad - they've been able to observe nature, as spiderlings hatched on one of the plants - see attached photo. We also have an area of the garden where a plum tree was planted in memory of a former pupil - it's all part of learning about the history of the school too!

We have also been busy asking other businesses for donations/recycling where we can, trying to make the most of our small budget.

We're hopeful that the sun will eventually shine for more than just an hour and that the children will see the fruits of their labour before the slugs eat everything! Autumn's project is to build the bug hotel!

Thanks again,

The Gardening Club!"

Sue Lindley

Photo is not attributed in order not to identify the school



New Chair

The GT is pleased to announce that it has a new chair. GT's Board has co-opted John Watkins DHE, M. Hort (RHS), FCI Hort. as its Acting Chair. Currently working within the Curatorial Department of the English Heritage Trust, John leads the Gardens and Landscape Team, which provides specialist advice and technical guidance on the maintenance and management of historic gardens and designed landscapes to the English Heritage Trust. He is a professional horticulturist with some 47 years' experience, awarded the RHS Associate of Honour in 2016. He was Senior Lecturer at Hadlow College in Kent and has worked at the Royal Botanic Gardens at Edinburgh and Kew, the National Trust for Scotland and the Royal Horticultural Society at Wisley and Hyde Hall. He was on the management board of Plant Network, and the Kent Gardens Trust and whilst Chair of the Great Dixter Charitable Trust secured £7M (including HLF funding) to enable the Trust to be independent and secure.

He both writes and lectures on plants and historic gardens and their management, including *the Glasshouse Garden* published by Conran Octopus, and jointly edited and contributed to the *English Heritage Manual: The Management & Maintenance of Historic Parks, Gardens & Landscapes*. He has served as an examiner for the RHS examinations. Working with partners across the horticultural sector he established and secured HLF funding to establish and run the Historic and Botanic Gardens Training Programmes, which place young people in historic

gardens to receive practical training in gardens across the UK. He has been closely involved with several high-profile restoration projects including Kenilworth Castle, Boscobel House, Audley End Kitchen Garden and Mount Grace Priory. He has recently completed major projects at Marble Hill in London, and Belsay Hall in Northumberland.

In 2023 he initiated "The King's Meadows Project" to celebrate and create 100 meadows at English Heritage Trust sites over ten years. He has been a member of the Gardens Trust and the Garden History Society since 1996.

Gardens' Trust Role as a Statutory Consultee

On the 10th March, very shortly before the new *Planning and Infrastructure Bill* was published, the government announced its intention to make changes to the Planning system in relation to the role of statutory consultees.

One of the recommendations was that the Gardens Trust should no longer be on the list of statutory consultees. This will have major implications both for their and our work on planning applications which may affect any site on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest.

For further information on this very unwelcome proposal see p.16 of Val Hepworth's Conservation and Planning Report.

Proposed changes to the relationship between the Gardens Trust and County Garden Trusts

Further information on this proposal can be found at p.13 of Chris Webb's *From the Chair* column.



What the Events Committee does

Introduction

At the last Council of Management meeting, it was suggested that I write about how the Events Committee works, so here goes. This is the time of year when we hold the AGM, and the Events Committee also starts thinking about possible events for the next year. As the co-ordinator for the Events Programme, I chair the Events Committee meetings which are mostly held on Zoom, write up notes of the meetings and write a report for each Council of Management meeting. One of the things that concerns all the Events Committee members is that, over the past year, we have lost two members and unless we can find new ones, it will be a struggle to provide the same number of events each year, currently about ten with the AGM, plus additional lectures and talks.



Visit to Dalton Hall

What does being a member of the Committee involve?

Meetings

We hold about six meetings a year which last approximately two hours, when we put forward and discuss any ideas for visits. These meetings tend to be on Zoom as committee members are based all around Yorkshire. Maddy Hughes, who is also the YGT Treasurer, is in Huddersfield, Tricia Sharp is in Beverley, and in North Yorkshire, Joanna Pavey lives in Richmond, Val Hepworth, who is also heavily involved with the Conservation Committee, is in Skeeby just outside Richmond and I live in Bellerby, a village near Leyburn. We do try to make sure that

we organise events all over Yorkshire and for this reason it is very useful if the committee members live in different places, and that they have some idea of the parks, gardens, cemeteries, and plant nurseries in their area. Fortunately, we have just been joined by a new member who lives in Sheffield.

Potential places to visit



Visit to Mulgrave Hall

We start by putting together a list of all potential places to visit. Suggestions for this list come from everyone. Val has an amazing memory for all the past events, and we do keep a list covering the 25 years of our existence, of all the different places YGT has visited. For some events like the AGM, the Summer Picnic and the Summer Evening Party we know roughly when the event will happen, dates for other events may depend on the venue's availability or perhaps when the garden is looking its best. Apart from a visit in February to see snowdrops, our events are organised to fall between late March, after the AGM and late September. Sometimes, especially when the visit is to a historic landscape, we would try to organise the visit when the trees are leafless and it's easier to see what remains of the landscape gardener's design. August tends to be avoided as there is more traffic around during school holidays.



The Walled Garden at Mulgrave Hall

Visits to places

After this the list is 'divvied' up amongst us and we contact the venue. This may be the owners, a trust, a Friend's group etc and we ask whether they would be happy for us to organise a visit. If the answer is 'yes', then the next step is to organise a visit. (We call it a "recce"). If possible, it is better if two committee members can go together on a preliminary visit and, if you choose to join us, initially we would make sure that you were accompanied by another committee member until you felt confident to go alone.

This visit would involve talking to the hosts about what we would like to see: this could be a walk through a historic landscape, or a private tour by a Head Gardener. We would also talk about things like parking, loos, refreshments, and possible dates. The owner may say that "the best time to come is" ... We also discuss whether we need to pay a fee or give a donation. This additional expense will be needed for us to work out the ticket price.

Descriptions

We then write a "Description" which will be a short paragraph giving details about the visit including some history about the garden, when it was designed, by whom and for whom, where it is and what will happen on the visit. There may be an introductory talk and a tour with the Head Gardener, or it will be much more of a walk through the landscape looking for what remains of the original design. It is this description that will be used in the programme to entice members to book for the event. This may all

sound like a lot of trouble, but we have a form we use to fill in the details and it really is not too onerous.

In fact, the "recce" is really like making a private visit, as you will have the owner's sole attention.

We also need to fill in a YGT pre-printed risk assessment form, which has boxes for such details as difficult vegetation and terrain, so we can suggest that waterproof coats and sensible boots are worn, and that there will always be the need to be careful.

At subsequent Committee meetings, we try to juggle events to put together the programme and eventually it is up to the co-ordinator, using all these details, to write the programme that will be sent out to our members. Then we wait for you to buy tickets!

Conclusion

If you have time to spare, enjoy going to new places, meeting new people and talking to them, you might find joining the YGT Events Committee worthwhile and satisfying.

As someone who has only lived in Yorkshire for ten years, I have really enjoyed this time organising events and it has proved a wonderful introduction to the designed landscapes of Yorkshire, both historic and modern. Even if you feel you do not have the time to go on recces, but could join the Committee with ideas for visits, this would be a great help.

You can contact me at dvickyprice29@gmail.com

Vicky Price

Recently Published Books



Unforgettable Gardens: 500 Years of Historic Gardens and Landscape Gardens Trust.

Edited by Susannah Charlton

London, Batsford Books, 2024

Hardback, 255 pages

Illustrations

ISBN: 9781849949033

£30

This book was launched at a reception at the Gardens Trust offices in Farringdon in October 2024 and a full account of the launch can be found in GT News Issue 26, Winter 2024 at p.18.

It was described as "a glorious celebration exploring 60 of the greatest gardens, parks and landscapes in Britain. Arranged chronologically, our beautiful book charts an insightful historical overview of British garden design ranging from the 1500s all the way into the 21st Century. With breath-taking photography showcasing each garden's unique curation as well as perceptive text from leading garden historians and conservators, Unforgettable Gardens is a stunning voyage into historical and contemporary gardening innovation".

The Gardens book is a delight... Very well illustrated, the book somehow encapsulates the genius of British gardeners"

Review by James Stevens Curl, The Critic

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Events	Vicky Price, Maddy Hughes and the Team
Membership/Engagement	Vicky Price
Newsletter/e-Bulletin	Christine Miskin
Research and Recording	Louise Wickham and the Team
Schools	Nicola Harrison
Small Grants	Brendan Mowforth
Webmaster	Louise Wickham

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Forthcoming YGT Publications

Publication	Copy deadline	Publication date
July e-Bulletin	1 July 2025	21 July 2025
Autumn Newsletter	15 September 2025	21 October 2025
December e-Bulletin	1 December 2025	21 December 2025

Please send items for inclusion to Christine Miskin: cemiskin22@gmail.com

Letters to the Editor are welcome; please send them by email to cemiskin22@gmail.com

YGT Contact Details

For general and membership queries: email secretary@yorkshiregardenstrust.org.uk.

Or, if you are already a member, use the 'phone numbers on your membership card to give us a call.

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