



*Bramham Park west elevation. Image © Gail Falkingham.*

## Bramham Park – Restoration Update

This is a brief account of the recent restoration work which we have been doing at Bramham Park and when I say ‘recent’, I mean over the last ten years, which is but the blink of an eye in the history of the designed landscape.

Our Landscape Conservation & Management Plans (the last completed in 2013 by Land Use Consultants), contain the historical research which provides the justification for our sometimes quite radical interventions, and they are also our ‘how-to’ guides.



*Detail of the Masterplan from Bramham Park Conservation Management Plan LUC 2013*

## Parterre Design

Detmar Blow designed an Edwardian rose garden around 1910, as a feature within the old parterre walls, to be seen from the piano nobile of the restored the House

The engineering works to restore the parterre pond in 2013 required its removal and we decided we needed a more historically correct parterre design.

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*The Rose Garden c.1910, Frith*



Robert Benson, the creator of Bramham, advised his friend, Thomas Wentworth, on the designs for his house at Wentworth Castle and the engraving in *Vitruvius Britannicus* Volume 4 (1739) shows a very similar design of parterre walls below the House, but containing water



*Detail of Stainborough and Wentworth Castle, Yorks (W.R.): bird's eye view of entrance front, by Thomas Badeslade, from Vitruvius Britannicus Volume 4 (1739)*

There is a culvert opening in our parterre wall, which may indicate that there was the same at Bramham, but as the House is downstream of the parterre (unlike Wentworth Castle), I am relieved that this is no longer the case.

The only pictures we have show a shrubbery, within the walls, at the beginning of the nineteenth century



*Bramham Park, view south down the Broadwalk, H.B. Ziegler c.1825, from a watercolour in the House*

and subsequent early photographs show the area grassed down, so it was essentially a blank canvas. We were looking for an historically correct design, which would be low maintenance and after several designs were put in front of the family committee, we settled on a parterre de gazon coupé with a design inspired by the Parterre de l'Orangerie at Versailles



*Versailles, the orangery parterre, Wikimedia Commons, June 2017*

We drew this out on the plain lawn in April 2015



*Parterre design marked in paint, April 2015*

but then found that the mini-digger couldn't start until August, requiring something more durable than water-soluble tennis court line paint. We found that marking the design with Roundup weed-killer worked well. Once the design was dug out, we

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installed 810m of metal edging to make the parterre easier to maintain and keep sharp.

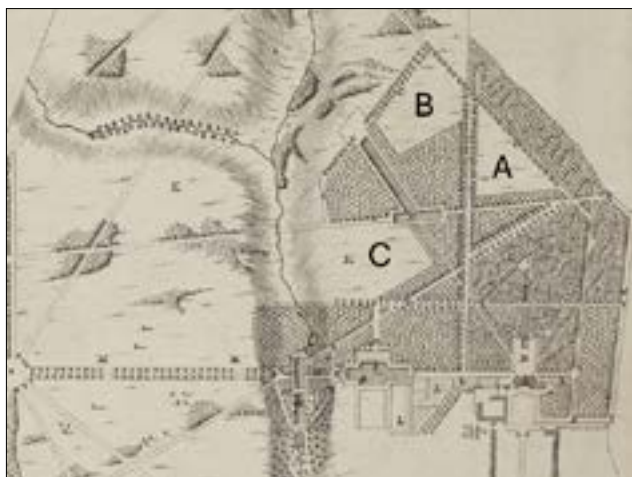
Since then, we have experimented with plants in large terracotta pots placed within the design, but have decided that we like it better without. We think it makes a fitting setting for the House and we like a feature that looks good from space on Google Maps!



*Bramham Park parterre on Google Maps, August 2017*

## Meadow Restoration

We are fortunate that John Wood the elder was employed by Robert Benson (by then Lord Bingley) just before he began work on Bath and he drew a map of the Bramham landscape in about 1728, a copy of which is in the British Library. This gives us an excellent record of the design from just before the end of its creator's life and we have, therefore, used it extensively to inform our restoration. Amongst other things, this map shows that there were three areas of meadow within the garden



*Meadow Areas Detail from "The Plan of Bramham Park, In the County of York, the Seat of the Rt. Honble. The Lord Bingley", by John Wood the elder c.1728, The British Library*

but which had been planted up with trees by the time that the next map of the landscape, which we have, was made in 1817.

Faithful to Benson's intentions we applied to the Forestry Commission in 2016 to remove the trees and since this was in our 2013 Landscape Management & Conservation Plan, they raised no objection. In early 2017 we began the felling work, grinding out the stumps and preparing the ground. We used the 'stale seed-bed' method and sprayed off all the volunteer growth. We took advice from John Chambers Wildflowers, who made up a calcareous soils seed mix of 60% grasses (8 different species) and 40% wildflowers (25 different species). However, that autumn was so dry that we decided to hold off sowing and kill-off the seed-bed for a further year. The delay had no adverse effect on the seed and the three areas established well.

In a further small area, near the Gothic Temple, known as the Dog Graves (on account of the 18th, 19th and 20th century monuments it contains to faithful friends). My grandmother employed Jim Russell to do some planting in the 1970s, but only a few of his individual trees remained and Patrick James of the Landscape Agency, in our first Landscape Conservation & Management Plan, described the planting in the area as 'domestic': can there be any more damning an indictment in an 18th century Landscape?

John Wood showed this area, too, as meadow, so we took out all the remaining poor trees, leaving only a flanking avenue and a couple of large and handsome beech trees. Once the stumps had been removed, since there had been much more groundcover under this thinner woodland, we just let nature do its stuff and a marvellous tapestry effect of wildflowers has resulted. In particular, there are drifts of purple aquilegias in the spring.



*The Gothic Temple, seen over the aquilegias in the Dog Graves area, May 2022*

Five years of cutting the meadows for hay are paying dividends and we are now getting a selection of wild orchids (including bee orchids) in them. The effect of light and dark adds more interest to the tour around the landscape than we ever imagined it would. The views into the Garden and outwards from the Park are much enhanced. We are now planning in due course to cut arches into one of the flanking hedges to provide an arcade.

### Fountain Garden

My great-grandparents, before they embarked on the rebuilding of the main House, established a fashionable Edwardian herbaceous border beside the Broadwalk to the south of the House either side of an older fountain.



*The House from the South, showing the herbaceous border, c.1910, Frith*

The following three generations maintained it and we even gave it a full restoration in 2004, but it was not really in keeping with an 18th century landscape and John Wood showed it as an orchard anyway. The herbaceous border was backed by a 2m high yew hedge, behind which was a collection of jerry-built sheds and the garden visitors' toilets.

Our idea was to put something in this area which recalled the orchard but was formal enough for its proximity to the House. We came up with an arrangement of ornamental pears (*Pyrus calleryana* 'Chanticleer') and dwarf cherries (*Prunus Kojo-No-Mai incisa*), which we will trim to shape as they grow. We started in Spring 2019, pulling out the hedge and razing the sheds, before removing the border the following winter. After COVID we completed the installation with the tree planting over the winter 2021/22.



*The Fountain Garden newly completed, April 2022*

Two and a half years later it is settling down nicely and provides a suitable setting for the House.

### Colonnade

The flanking colonnades on the House might not be considered part of the landscape, but Christopher Hussey suggested that the House at Bramham was merely another incident to look at on the tour. The unusual tall design of Bramham's colonnades also allows picturesque views between the gardens and park. By 2022 the asphalt on the colonnade roofs had lasted more than a century, but was showing its age and leaking, with the inevitable damage to the plaster ceilings. We bit the bullet, reroofed them and replastered the ceilings. Whilst the scaffolding was still up, we tried out a number of different paint colours finally settling on a yellow, which reminded us of West Wycombe Park.



*The South colonnade flood-lit, February 2023*

### Black Fen Rides

Black Fen is the formal woodland around the obelisk and rotunda; described as "a fine oak wood", much of it was felled and sold for shipbuilding before 1800, by Mary Goodricke, George Fox-Lane's illegitimate daughter, who was left in charge until the legitimate heir, a nephew, reached his majority. She and her

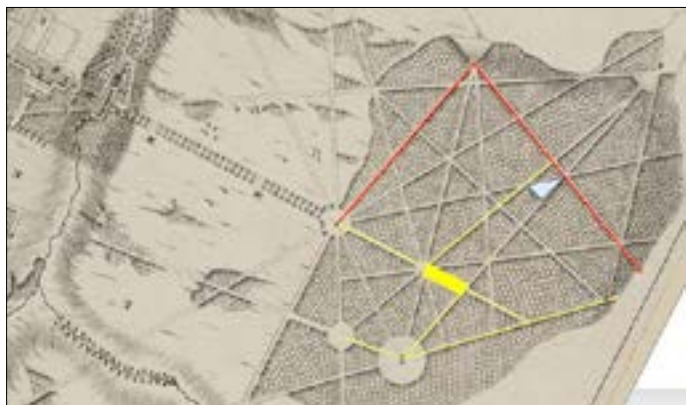
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husband, who owned Ribston Hall, near Wetherby, supposedly also removed a fine set of Sheraton furniture from the House and all the garden statuary. Charlie Dent, the current owner of Ribston kindly let me look to see if any of it was still there, but sadly it is not!

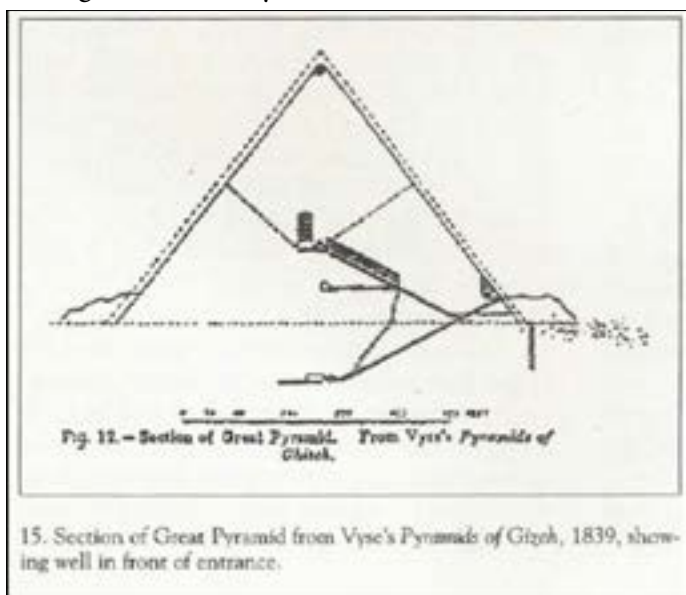
Black Fen was replanted in 1847 by Augustus Pitt-Rivers (born Augustus Lane Fox, younger son of a younger son, who changed his name to inherit from Lord Rivers. He later founded the Pitt-Rivers Museum in Oxford and was the first Inspector General of Ancient Monuments.) Where previously there were probably simple allées through woodland, he added avenues of two species of trees, many of them recent introductions.

It always struck us that two of the allées shown by John Wood, marked in red had disappeared over the century to the next map we have.



*Black Fen rides detail with possible pyramid references,  
John Wood the elder as per Figure 8*

The layout of Black Fen was very carefully drawn, and one hypothesis is that, as both Benson and Wood were Freemasons, the design was symbolic. On this theme, the layout may represent a section through the Great Pyramid at Giza



*Section of the Great Pyrami  
from Vyse's Pyramids of Gizeh, 1839*

Compare the yellow lines on the map to the tunnels and chambers of the Pyramid.

It may be that one sees what one wants to see, but whatever the truth, the forestry work to remove all the trees affected by ash die-back disease gave us the opportunity to re-cut the allées, marked in red and clear the triangular area, marked in light blue. You cannot immediately replace trees, so one errs on the side of caution when taking them out. You must then go back two or three times to develop the opening to the correct width.



*Development of the re-cut ride in Black Fen to the Round House,  
May 2022, May 2023 & October 2023*

The avenues in Black Fen and the Garden are mostly 42' wide, so we have mirrored that here. The first view of the Round House rotunda from the south east for more than 200 years was thrilling and the view down four diverging allées from their source was worth the effort.

### Future plans

One of the problems of restoring features is the additional maintenance burden that they then give you: something that nobody tells you, when you embark on restoration. Despite this, one needs to keep the forward momentum, so what is next on our to do list?

John Wood shows a number of serpentine 'wilderness walks' in the Garden



*Serpentine walks detail, John Wood the elder as per Figure 8*

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At present these are either meadow or woodland compartments, with no such embellishment. Over the coming winter we plan to mark these out and consider how to re-establish them.

In 2020, supported by Natural England, we commissioned a scoping report from landscape consultants, Southern Green on four future projects:



*The Whittle Carr Grotto, May 2008*

1. The Whittle Carr Grotto – where the water for the T-Pond rises (Image 17).
2. The T-Pond – the unrepaired cross piece of the pond is still leaking.
3. The Queen's Hollow and cascade - above the parterre.
4. The Ha-ha – where it has disappeared or is ruinous at the southern end of the Garden.

The aim was to be 'shovel-ready' when any more grants were forthcoming, but to-date nothing has materialised.

Most recently we have been looking at Batty Langley's Gothic Temple



*'Gothick Temple', Plate LVII, Ancient Architecture Restored, by Batty Langley, 1742*

which my great-grandparents repurposed as a water tower, when they rebuilt the House before the First World War, truncating the top of the internal gothic decoration. The roof has started to leak, and we have drawn up full restoration plans from architect Chris Cotton.



*Restoration Scheme for the Gothic Temple, by Chris Cotton, September 2023*

However, currently budgets will not allow this and we will only carry out preventative repairs.

### **Conclusion**

Managing an extensive landscape such as Bramham's is always a juggling act: the competing priorities change with weather or aging. However, it is a pleasure to see the effect our on-going restoration efforts produce and always exciting to look forward to the next project.

**Nick Lane Fox**

**Images © Nick Lane Fox**



# Notes from the Editor

Once again, I feel compelled to start this column with commiserations to our readers on the continuing poor state of this so-called summer! Fortunately, the weather was clement for the Summer Evening Party at Ness Hall in mid-June, as kindly reported on by Moira Fulton at p.15, but other visit reports mention the less than summery weather that they encountered.

We have several interesting reports of events which have taken place so far during our 2024 season. We start with Nick Lane Fox who very kindly agreed to supply us with a fascinating article based on his excellent recent lecture in the GT/YGT Spring series entitled *Restoration in Action*. The huge extent, and cost, of the work needed to conserve these beautiful extensive parks and gardens is laid bare in his article and it makes very impressive reading at p1.

In late April Gillian Parker led a tour entitled the *Lost Nurseries of Central York*, which concentrated on three famous families of nurserymen: Riggs, Telfords, and Backhouses. Roisheen Childs has written the report of what she describes as “an informative and educational event”. See p.9.

There were two visits and a lecture at the York Philosophical Society in May. Michael Horsley has provided the report on the day’s visit on the 8th May to Sewerby Hall and Gardens in East Yorkshire, led by Val Hepworth and Caroline Kernan, who had both been involved in the extensive research that the YGT has done here in the past. The Hall has had a chequered history and is now owned by Bridlington Corporation. See p.11.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue and, as usual, I would like to thank all our contributors.

**Christine Miskin**



# From the Chair

Again, I must write about the planning application for a new Visitor Centre inside the Canal Gates at Studley Royal. There is positive news: ICOMOS, the International Council on Monuments and Sites, has provided its technical review of the application. ICOMOS is one of three advisory bodies supporting UNESCO in its implementation of the World Heritage Convention, advising specifically on cultural and mixed (possessing both cultural and natural features) properties put forward for inscription on the World Heritage List and providing reports on the state of conservation of inscribed sites. The final two paragraphs of its review are quoted in full:

“Interpretation is needed but buildings to achieve this should not impact on the asset. Visitor facilities are necessary, as for many properties, but they must not impose on or adversely impact on the very thing that visitors come to appreciate, and which is being protected for its Outstanding Universal Value.

In conclusion, ICOMOS cannot support the Canal Gates project that is presented. A small tearoom and small nearby garden can be accommodated in this area as has traditionally been the case but developing a 100-seater restaurant with ancillary service buildings and a large open-air seating space will mean the area can no longer be seen as part of the grand Water Garden design. Visitors entering the Canal Gates expecting to see a water garden will be faced by a huge visitor centre complex. The project will impact adversely on the authenticity and integrity of the Water Gardens, on their link to lake and park, and overall on Outstanding Universal Value of the property”.

The review supports YGT’s view of the application and represents a powerful critique of the National Trust’s plans. At the time of writing it seems that NT’s reaction to the review is to continue with its planning application. The responsibility of deciding on the application therefore rests with the Planning Committee, and we can expect it to be tabled for the Committee’s September meeting. YGT continues to hold that the application should either be withdrawn by NT or turned down by the Committee.

Elsewhere, I have been fortunate to play a part in the construction of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for York and North Yorkshire. LNRS is a statutory duty for local authorities under the 2021 Environment Act; I became involved in the York and

North Yorkshire strategy as a trustee for York Civic Trust, and I quickly found that it could have positive benefits for historic parks and gardens.

As you might expect, our strategy rests heavily on the principles propounded in the Lawton Report, *Making Space for Nature* (2010): bigger, better, more, joined up. What I discovered in the workshops I attended was the general lack of awareness of registered parks and gardens among the nature professionals across the two local authorities, and of the potential of such parks and gardens to play a role in nature recovery, not least through historic planting in providing habitats for native wildlife, from healthy soils to mature trees.

We can expect to see the publication of LNR Strategies for the whole of Yorkshire in the autumn.

Finally, the outcome of the general election is likely to impact upon our planning and conservation work quite quickly. In planning, there will be a renewed focus on development, especially for housing, and the NPPF (revised in December 2023) will probably be rewritten in favour of this policy goal. The Environment Department seems newly committed to biodiversity net gain and Health to a new focus on mental health and general wellbeing. All these new frameworks present opportunities for gardens trusts, but with risks attached, too.

The new government’s ambition for a faster pace of change than we seen in the recent past will be challenging.

**Chris Webb**





# Visit to the lost Nurseries of Central York

## Wednesday 24 April 2024

### Introduction

This tour was led by Gillian Parker and Peter Hogarth. The group met at St Lawrence's Church in York, which was where the history of, and our journey to hear about, the lost nurseries of central York would begin. Gillian Parker was our first and main leader. The tour ended in Museum Gardens with Peter Hogarth giving an account of how the Museum Gardens had developed and the input of the Backhouse nursery.

Several handouts were distributed with pictorial scenes and maps of central York from around 1700 to the 1850s. This link shows one of them - the site of the Rigg nursery, bought in 1835 by the Backhouse nursery <https://yorkmaps.net/1852/#17.31/53.951914/-1.074308>

### The scene was set

The three main dynasties who helped forge and develop the reputation of York nurseries started with the Telfords, then the Riggs and the Backhouses. This overview will focus mainly on the latter two families. The Telfords laid the foundations for nursery sites in and around central York, notably the site in Tanner Row.

### Telford family



*The start of New Walk, York.  
Might any of these trees be Telford originals?*

The Telfords began to develop their nursery at Tanner Row in York at the end of the 17th century and by 1815, when Thomas and James Backhouse bought the business, they had developed and grown their horticultural business, most notably supplying fruit and other trees to the large country estates in and around the area. The most noteworthy of these are, perhaps, Studley Royal and Harewood. Telfords planted the limes and elms along New Walk along the River Ouse, which, over time, were replaced with trees from the Backhouses.

### Rigg family

St Lawrence's Church had been the parish church of the Rigg family. John Rigg was the third generation of the family to tend their long established and successful nursery and seed firm in the local area. Gillian pointed out the memorial stone in the church grounds. This commemorated the tragedy which had beset the Rigg family. A boating trip on the River Ouse in 1830 resulted in the loss of seven lives, six of those being Rigg children. This event made national news and more detail can be found on York Civic Trust website. John Rigg died not long after and although his widow, Ann, kept the business going for a time, she sold it in 1835 to the Backhouse nursery, which was looking for a new home, close to the city.

Gillian told us that the nurseries in and around central York were well known both locally and nationally as providing a wide range and diversity of plants. Their success and achievements were well known. One notable product was the best York early cabbage seed from the Rigg nursery!

The group moved onwards towards Walmgate, stopping to take note of a street name - The Tannery. The area was significant because several other businesses and trades operated there with beneficial results for the nurseries. There had been a regular cattle market plus tannery, the waste products of which were helpful in the production of plants that needed heat, the most famous of these being pineapples, produce which at the time gave status to those who possessed such exotic fruit. The nurseries also showcased their plants by competing in local and, in the case of the Backhouses, in national horticultural shows. The Backhouses were also known for their opulent flower displays and especially at the railway station when Queen Victoria stopped off for lunch on her way to and from Scotland.

### The Backhouses

As mentioned earlier, in 1835 the two brothers, Thomas and James Backhouse, purchased the Riggs nursery. This included substantial horticultural land

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at the top of Fishergate, backing onto what is now Heslington Road, and a site further down Fulford Road. Their own successful nursery which was based in Tanner Row (Toft Green) and originally owned by the Telfords had to make way for the arrival of the railway system in York. Although the brothers were partners in the business it was Thomas who appeared to be the driving force in establishing and developing it. Thomas had been influential in helping to bring the railway network to York and was also a director of the glassworks on St George's Field, a good move for a business that relied on glasshouses.

James was heavily involved in his duties as a minister for the York Quakers and spent long periods abroad with missionary work, although he also spent time botanising and sent and brought specimens to the nursery, which further enhanced the nursery's expertise in diverse plant selection.

The group walked along part of the city walls and to Tower Street, to hear about the destruction of almost 100 young trees in Matthew Wharton's nursery, and then to Skeldergate Bridge to look at the top of New Walk whose trees were mostly planted by the Telfords.



*As in life, so in death – Thomas Backhouse not remembered*

At Bishophill Senior, Gillian pointed out a former Quaker burial ground which contained the remains of Thomas Backhouse. Sadly, there is no remaining headstone and the plaque at the gate did not reference Thomas.

At St Martin's Lane the group stopped outside the church of St Martin-cum-Gregory, now redundant. This had been the parish church of the Telfords. We then walked up to what is now 92 Micklegate, which had been the family home of the Backhouses. There is a blue plaque outside which identifies the former residents. The plaque includes a motif of the spring *Gentiana verna*. In the UK this species grows only in Upper Teesdale, an area well known to the Backhouse family from their original beginnings in Darlington. The only other known area is The

Burren in Ireland. The plaque was commissioned by Yorkshire Gardens Trust and York Civic Trust in 2016.



*The tower of St Martin-cum-Gregory, Micklegate, York, the Telford family's parish church*



*The plaque commemorating James and Thomas Backhouse at 92 Micklegate, York*

In 1853 the Backhouses closed the Fishergate site and took all their business to the Holgate site, where they had also been operating since the early 19th century. This allowed further development of their significance and reputation in horticulture, particularly in relation to alpine plants and rockeries. At West Bank Park in York a few remnants of what was once a huge rockery remain within the park grounds. By the 1920s the nursery faced financial difficulties and was sold in 1922, although it retained the Backhouse name, which lingered in horticultural circles until the 1950s when the Holgate nursery was sold completely.



## Museum Gardens

The walk ended at Museum Gardens and Peter Hogarth spoke about the history of the gardens. The land on which the museum and gardens are located was purchased by Yorkshire Philosophical Society in 1830 to become a botanic garden. Henry Baines, originally employed by the Backhouse firm, became the sub-curator of the museum and, effectively, the head gardener and set about acquiring a smorgasbord of varying plants and trees. Over 500 trees and shrubs came from the Backhouses and many other donors. One such specimen was the pear bark beech. Henry Baines also introduced orchids to Museum Gardens, but sadly these have not survived.

## Conclusion

I thoroughly enjoyed this event organised by YGT. It was both informative and educational and gave a snapshot of the period in which these families pioneered horticulture in York. They indeed showed their worth compared to their contemporaries in Oxford and London. I was also fortunate to attend the Sheldon Memorial Trust Lecture *Known*

*Almost the World Over as Backhouses*, presented by Gillian Parker. It has sparked my enthusiasm and deepened my knowledge of the Backhouse Nurseries. Although not a Yorkie myself I am proud to have heard this story about some of the people who have shaped York.

I feel a TV drama is necessary: move over *Gentleman Jack* and get Sally Wainwright, an alumnus of York University, on the case, with Monty Don in a starring role!

## Roisheen Childs

Photos © Roisheen Childs

## Notes

Gillian's paper, published in the *York Historian* and available in a preprint version at <https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/202227/> gives more detailed information about the specific horticultural sites in York.

The 2018 book by Peter Hogarth and Ewan Anderson tells the full story of the Museum Gardens: *'The Most Fortunate Situation': The Story of York's Museum Gardens*, published by Yorkshire Philosophical Society in 2018.

# Visit to Sewerby Hall Park and Gardens Wednesday 8 May 2024

## Introduction

The day started with a haar typical of the east coast. This was already lifting as a group of about 20 assembled at the entrance ready for our briefing by Val Hepworth and Caroline Kernan. By the time we reached the Orangery for the introductory presentation, the sun was shining and the welcome heat increasing. We were fortunate that Janette Ray, who had co-authored the management plan, was able to join us to add a hands-on perspective to the research available on the YGT website.

## History of Sewerby Hall and Gardens

Sewerby Hall has been well researched by the YGT and we had been directed to the resulting reports on the YGT website prior to the day. Additionally Val provided comprehensive notes on the day. These covered the chronological development of the landscape through its early history; ownership by the Graeme family, who had the biggest influence; and the transfer to Bridlington Corporation, who added features to appeal to a wide audience. Maps were included to provide context (see OS Map 1854).

The presentation went through the development of the landscape starting when the house was

surrounded by village houses. Over time the area was increased from 6 acres to an eventual 843 acres under the Graemes after enclosure. This included the removing of the road from in front of the house to a new route to the north. Janette took us through the preparation of the lottery funded management plan in 1998 which considered, among other things, maximizing the parkland features. It was implemented in part and was reviewed in 2013, when further work was recommended. As always funding is an issue.

## Tour of grounds

Well briefed we moved outside. We had already approached the house



*Sewerby Hall south front*

along the main drive, although not starting where it continued along the line of the main Sewerby street entering the park under an arch flanked by lodges

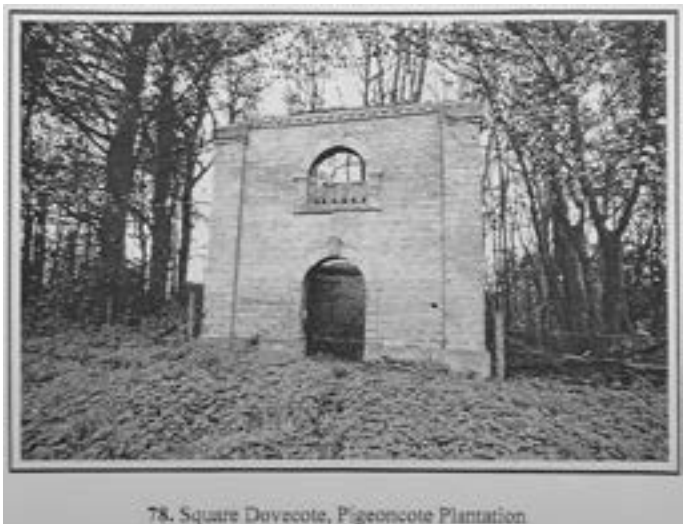


*Entrance to Park via arch flanked by lodge houses*

We were there to appreciate the landscape so I will not refer generally to the municipal additions.

Looking from the front of the house beyond the substantial stone balustrade the view extends across parkland to the sea and Bridlington Bay. On the day it was hard to see where the sea ended and the sky started. The view was only interrupted by the wall along the ha-ha which bisects the park. Supplemented by younger trees there are still some impressive trees in the park including a fine sycamore and two horse chestnuts at their best sweeping close to the ground in full flower. The parkland above the ha-ha is now becoming crowded with trees. This is in contrast to that below (now the cricket field) which is devoid of trees.

Next, we followed the line of the ha-ha and from a distance could see the square dovecote (currently surrounded by a Heras fence) at the home farm.



*The Square Dovecote, Pigeoncote Plantation – taken from Management Plan*

Returning to the house we followed our own devices for lunch. Some retired to the tearoom in the Stables, now much altered and sadly dominated by two large bow windows.

Led by Caroline, in the continuing sunshine, we headed past the Orangery to the gardens beyond.

The rear of the house has little presence and viewed from the dining room has a jumbled foreground garden. Sadly, the view of the parkland from here to the north across an early curving park fence is restricted by trees to the left and dominated by an overlarge central clump of trees in the park.

Following a path through a shrubbery containing some ancient yews, which prompted much interest, we emerged in the formal Victorian garden. Our attention was immediately caught by the monkey puzzle trees, some original and some more recent, lining the central path.



*Monkey Puzzle Tree in formal Victorian garden*

There were seats in alcoves arranged to advantage, and further mature trees. A highlight was the Staphylea in full flower with impressive long racemes. We were a little early to see a pair of weeping beeches at their best.



*The group admire the magnificent weeping beeches*



Looking back between the beeches to the house shows some of our group enjoying the vista.

### **Walled Garden**

Passing out through a shrubbery and crossing Leys Road, the lane re-aligned to the north of the park, we entered the Walled Garden. We initially followed the unusual slip gardens set between the two sheltering outer walls of the garden. Here the path currently wanders between a variety of shrubs before emerging into what was the orchard, now with beds edged by box. Some of these are being replaced by more resistant *lonicera*. The Walled Garden proper is laid out with a grid of paths and a mixture of planting making it a very pleasant place to enjoy



*Walled garden with immaculate topiaryed yew hedges*

the sunshine. Of particular note is the pair of neatly trimmed topiary yew hedges

All in all, the gardens are a real achievement, considering the limited resources available. In the late 19th century records show there were six full-time gardeners.

From here we followed the sunken Leys Road to re-enter the park on High Sewerby Road. The park further north is dotted with trees and is contained by perimeter planting. This northern area does contain a small golf course fortunately not marred by bunkers. We then returned through the park for further refreshments and the opportunity to visit the house itself.

### **Conclusion**

In Sewerby park and gardens we had been able to see a fine example of a modest early 19th century landscaped park with walled kitchen garden and formal gardens all still visible, although now under municipal ownership.

So overall an excellent day based on comprehensive YGT research, preparation for the day by Val and with thanks to such able leaders Val, Caroline and Janette.

***Michael Horsley***

***Images ©. Michael Horsley***

## **Gardens Trust News**



### **Volunteer of the Year Celebration 2024**

This was held at the Sheffield Botanical Gardens on Monday 15 July when the new Volunteer of the Year will be named.

### **A History of Gardens Part 2 - Early 17th-Century Plants and Gardens**

This online course from the Gardens Trust will be suitable for anyone curious about gardens and their stories – whether absolute beginners or those with some garden history knowledge. Running from April 2024 to April 2025, the course aims to help participants recognise important eras, themes and styles in mainly British garden history from the earliest times to today, grasp something of the social, economic, political and international contexts in which gardens have been created and find greater pleasure in visiting historic gardens. You can sign up for the whole series or dip into individual talks. There will be opportunities to discuss issues with speakers after each talk, and short reading lists for further exploration.

This is the first set of lectures in the second part of the online Gardens Trust series which started with Part 1 in April this year.

It takes place on Tuesday 10th September at 10.00am

For booking details, please see <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/a-history-of-gardens-2-tickets-904336473737>

### **Notice of the Gardens Trust Tenth Annual General Meeting**

This meeting will be held on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> September at 6pm, online via Zoom. To be sent the Zoom link please book at <https://thegardenstrust.org/events-archive/>

# Identifying and Protecting Historic Parks and Gardens in England: Celebrating Forty Years of the Register - Dr Victoria Thomson

## Yorkshire Philosophical Society/ Yorkshire Gardens Trust Biennial Lecture

### Introduction

This lecture was a biennial event hosted jointly by YGT and Yorkshire Philosophical Society. It took place in the Temple Anderson Lecture Theatre in the Yorkshire Museum, on the evening of 21 May 2024. The speaker, Dr Victoria Thomson, was introduced by Val Hepworth.

Readers will recall Jenifer White's article in the *YGT Newsletter Spring 2024 Issue* p.54 "A new Register is launched – looking back at 1984". Jenifer's paper provides a detailed summary of the numerous initiatives, and subsequent workload, undertaken both in preparation for the new Act and because of its arrival.

Dr Thomson's paper, on the other hand, took the opportunity to cast a little perspective on the history of the protection of parks and gardens and she commented upon the success of the Act in practice, leading to considerations for the future. Her professional background is in town planning and historic conservation. Her personal and research interests are very much focused on historic parks and gardens, and particularly on their protection. She is a member of the Gardens Trust's Conservation Committee.

### Threats to RPGs and the role of the Gardens Trust

Twenty-twenty four marks the fortieth anniversary of the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England. The Register now identifies over 1700 historic parks and gardens, which consequently benefit from a high degree of protection through the planning system. However, what now seems like a self-evidently necessary mechanism for ensuring the survival of these widespread and much-loved elements of the historic environment had a difficult emergence, the Register appearing around a hundred years after monuments first received protection, and forty years after similar measures for buildings. The story did not end with its introduction, either. There have been a few ups and downs in the ensuing decades.

The key issues which threaten RPGs include neglect

and inappropriate development. Dr Thomson emphasised the importance of the explicit inclusion within the Act of the role of The Gardens Trust as a Statutory Consultee. This ensures that the Trust's knowledge and expertise is made available "at the coal face" in the day-to-day operation of the Act.

Unfortunately, Dr Thomson's research appears to reveal that the Trust is not consulted on all the occasions when they should be. This highlights the importance of ensuring that the planning profession is better alerted and informed about conservation of RPGs. Whilst The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 puts a duty on the planning system to preserve and/or enhance RPGs, Dr Thomson's research reveals that many local authorities appear to not know whether they have RPGs in their area!

From the audience, Peter Goodchild made an impassioned appeal for better conservation education to be made available to the planning profession, and to illustrate his point, he alerted the audience to the current controversial planning application at Studley Royal.

Dr Thomson's talk was well received, and she was thanked by Maddie Hughes.

**Roger Lambert**





# Summer Evening Party at Ness Hall, North Yorkshire Tuesday 18 June 2024



*Walled Garden. Image © Geoff Hughes*

## Introduction

After several days of cool, unsettled weather YGT members were fortunate to have a warm, sunny evening for our visit to Ness Hall. The event was planned as a fund-raiser towards the cost of the Trust's student bursary. Ness Hall is a Grade II listed, gentrified farmhouse, adjacent to it is a 17th century, 2.5 acre walled garden, which had originally belonged to a now demolished, earlier house, nearer the River Rye. The walled garden, which has been maintained by three generations of the Murray-Wells family, all keen and knowledgeable gardeners, was the focus of our tour.



*Another view of Walled Garden Image © Geoff Hughes*

## History of Ness Hall

The original Ness Hall was owned by the Crathorne family from the fourteenth century until 1788 when it was sold to the Kendall family. The Crathornes, as staunch Catholics, were subject, post the 1605 Gunpowder Plot, to various penalties, one of which

stated that they could not use their front drive. The original drive would probably have run through the present farm buildings, to the east of the site, down to the old house. The Crathornes, like the Murray-Wells, were keen gardeners. Ralph Crathorne (died 1755), in his will of 1752 left Ness Hall to a nephew, Thomas Crathorne, on condition that he looked after the water garden, the walled garden, fruit walks and pleasure gardens. Ralph was painted, in 1740 by Philip Mercier (1689/91-1760), seated at a table with grapes, peaches, a hammer and a pruning knife, gesturing towards a vinery wall, most likely the south facing wall of the walled garden.



*Ralph Crathorne painting © Bridgeman Images*

By the early 19th century, Ness Hall, which had been let to tenants was in poor condition and Thomas Kendal, who had recently inherited, decided to demolish it and build a new house to the north of the walled garden. He seems to have converted a windmill and existing farm buildings into the present house, adding a smart new front on the west face. His initials TK are on the gable-end of the house. It is recorded that he sold double gates and a statue of Diana to Castle Howard. The Kendalls were very keen on hunting and Thomas is said to have allowed his sons, both Masters of the Sinnington Hunt, to use the walled garden as fox covers. Ness Hall was sold to the Murray-Wells family in 1950, since then the gardens have once more been carefully maintained and cherished.



## Tour of the Gardens

The evening began with introductions to Harriette Murray-Wells and her gardening team: Alan Richardson, who has worked at Ness for nearly 30 years and, though officially retired, still works there two days a week and Katie who is now Head Gardener. Before we started our tour, we enjoyed a glass of sparkling wine and a copious supply of delicious canapés, prepared by the YGT Events Committee. Harriette, who is an interior designer, explained she had taken over the care of the garden 12 years ago, from her mother-in-law, Mary Murray-Well, a dedicated plantswoman. During this time, Harriette has completely transformed the layout of the walled garden, dividing it up into a series of rooms, in the style of Hidcote, but with a more relaxed, informal planting in some areas. Hedges of yew have been used extensively to make these divisions. There was so much to see and admire, that our tours in two separate groups, led by Harriette and Alan took well over an hour.



*Gates out of Walled Garden - Image © Moira Fulton*

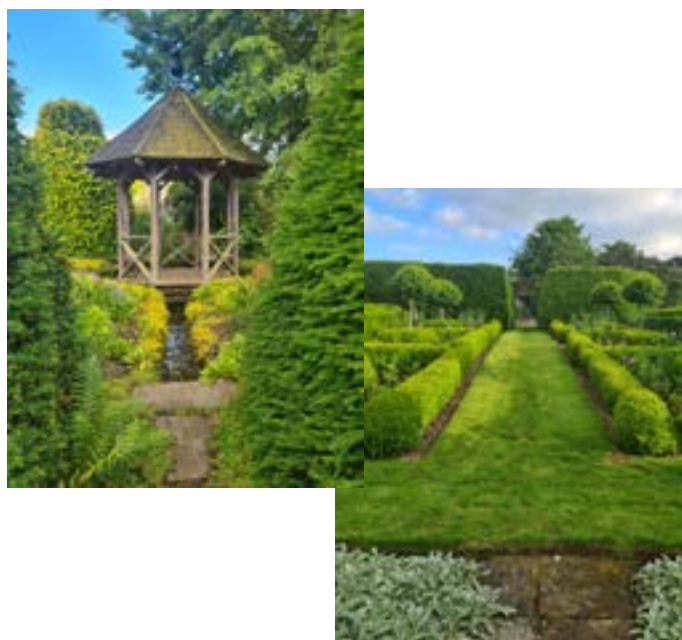
The rectangular shaped walled garden is divided into four smaller rectangles by more formally planted, vertical and horizontal enclosures, with a round pool in the centre enclosed with circular hedges. Above the pond, also on the central axis, is a charming wooden summer house, surrounded by a stream.

Each enclosure has a different theme and appearance, one is very informal, with plants allowed to self-seed abundantly. The health and vigour of all the plants in the garden can be attributed to liberal dressings of farmyard manure each winter. Another rectangle is more formal with a lawn with a central sundial, surrounded by flower borders. The modern sundial is on an older base, possibly the plinths for the statue sold to Castle Howard.

Throughout the garden, roses and clematis are planted onto the finely cut stone walls, which are edged with borders of flowers, plants and in the southwest section fruit and vegetable beds.



*Pond - Image © Moira Fulton*



*Summerhouse - Image © Moira Fulton*

## Conclusion

It was a thoroughly enjoyable event, which combined the opportunities to meet fellow-members in a relaxed way, while sampling delicious canapés and then visiting a beautiful garden led by the people who had created and maintained it to a very high standard.

Information on the history of the earlier house was kindly supplied by Mary Murray-Wells, who has researched the property. This was supplemented by the entry in Christie's sale catalogue written when the painting of Ralph Crathorne by Philip Mercier was sold for £43,750 in 2015, by another vendor.

***Moira Fulton***



# Events Team News



*Dark Star Plants Nursery*

It is already July, and we are past the longest day and heading towards autumn, but I am sure we all hope before then that we have some warm sunny summer weather! For those of us who are gardeners, it has been a strange and difficult year and now we are hoping that the beans will all grow, and we will have a good harvest, though I have to tell you that my sweet peas are just about to flower and looking good.

After our visit to Dark Star Plants on July 19th there are only two other events.

Our visit to **Knaresborough** with David Rhodes, who will introduce us to the Ancient Royal Forest of Knaresborough and the Castle on Friday September 6th.

Then on Tuesday September 17th a visit to **Howsham Mill** on the River Derwent and the designed landscape of Howsham Hall. Please note that Val Hepworth has written a scholarly article about the history of this landscape in the *Spring Newsletter* 2024, No. 54, page 8.

Both will be fascinating events, so please think about coming. Tickets are still available.

## **Harrogate Autumn Flower Show**

In September we are hoping to have a **YGT stand at the Harrogate Autumn Flower Show which is held at Newby Hall near Ripon**, and this year we will be in the Floral Marquee. If you are free on any of the days from 12 – 15th September and could spare a few hours to volunteer and man the stand that would be really helpful, and you will get a free ticket to the show. Let me know [dvickyprice29@gmail.com](mailto:dvickyprice29@gmail.com)

## **2025**

We are already planning next year's events programme.

**We hope that the AGM will be held at Ripley Castle near Harrogate.**

**A joint visit with Northumbria Gardens Trust to Raby Castle** is planned for April, followed by visits to **Hornby Castle** where the medieval hunting park was re-designed as landscaped pleasure gardens and park, possibly by Capability Brown and William Mason

Later in May we go to **Whinfell Quarry Gardens and Whirlow Brook, Eccleshall, Sheffield.**

We have already arranged for the **Summer Picnic to be held at Skipwith Hall near Selby.**

Later in the year there will be a tour of **York University grounds**, where the modern landscape was designed to complement and enhance the **17th century garden and canal of Heslington Hall.**

There will also be a visit to the **Yorkshire Sculpture Park.**

The Events Committee is always hoping that new members will come forward to join us especially as some of us have been organising events for nearly ten years. We meet, usually by Zoom, about every two months and between meetings we carry out "recces" of potential places to visit. If you are at all interested, please contact me at the email address above.

***Vicky Price***

# Recently Published Books

## **Conversations in Garden History *The History of Gardens and Landscapes Seminar at the Institute of Historical Research***

London, IHR, 2023

Paperback, 142 pages.

Illustrations

To order contact:

[ihrgardenhistory@gmail.com](mailto:ihrgardenhistory@gmail.com)

A new collection of papers written by scholars and practitioners and published in the Seminar's 20th year.

"This publication is very much also a celebration of the multidisciplinary nature of the current approaches to the study of gardens and designed landscape. Crossing continents, cultures and centuries, they consider a range of diverse and remarkable places and spaces as well as the individuals and communities who designed, made and/or used them".

Papers include English attitudes to plants and bees in the 17th century and comparisons between the use of gardens and plants of Aztec Mexico with Hapsburg Spain in the 16th century



## **Tudor and Stuart Royal Gardens**

**David Jacques**

London, Windgather Press, 2024

Paperback, 288 pages

Illustrations

ISBN 9781914427350

£34.95

Also available digitally

"Explore how these unique landscapes played key roles in international diplomacy and as expressions of authority and cultural achievement. Garden history from this perspective has been neglected hitherto; neither have the royal gardens been assessed as a collection in which monarchs favoured chosen sites for indulging their stylistic passions. Research on their forms and designs have in the past



been accumulated piecemeal, without any sense of overview. This book contains a new analysis enabled by gathering information from numerous archaeological investigations, historic texts and the available visual material, together with extensive original research in the National Archives and elsewhere. Reconstruction

drawings flesh out the narrative in the early years when maps, drawings and prints were so very scarce and are reproduced alongside the available material".

## **Prints and the Landscape Garden: Image, Illusion and Illumination Michael Symes**

London, Boydell & Brewer, 2024

Hardback, 250 pages.

Illustrations

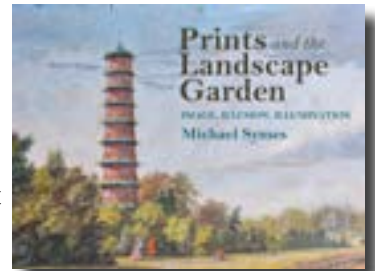
ISBN 9781739822972

£50.00

"This book considers what prints tell us about the development of the landscape garden in 18th- and early 19th- century Britain. They formed a significant part of the expanding machinery of mass communication and could thus influence taste and spread ideas. This could lead to propaganda, or at least creation of an image the owner of a property found desirable, and reality was consequently often compromised. The illusion of actuality could be achieved by adjustments and techniques employed by artists generally. Even if not entirely representational, a print may reveal much about fashions and attitudes towards the landscape garden. At their best they powerfully convey the atmosphere of a garden as well as the perception and possible idealisation of it.

The book breaks new ground, including discussion of techniques of producing a print, marketing, categories of print, and studies of the greatest engravers and a few select gardens that prints illuminate particularly well. Changes can be observed both in the developments in printmaking and in the journey of the landscape garden.

With 220 prints of the period to illustrate the text, all aspects of the subject are brought to the reader's attention".



## **The Georgian Landscape of Wentworth Castle**

**New Arcadian Journal 79/80, 2024, 3rd ed.**

Paperback, 186 pages

Illustrations

£25.00

Order online via [www.NewArcadianPress.co.uk](http://www.NewArcadianPress.co.uk)

"Following a decade of

restoration 2005-2014, Wentworth Castle Gardens

came under the care of the National Trust in 2019. This

third edition complements discussion of the design and symbolism of the Earl of Strafford's South Yorkshire mansion and landscape with new and updated material"





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## Forthcoming YGT Publications

Publication	Copy deadline	Publication date
Autumn Newsletter	15 September 2024	21 October 2024
December e-Bulletin	1 December 2024	21 December 2024

**Please send items for inclusion to Christine Miskin: [cemiskin22@gmail.com](mailto:cemiskin22@gmail.com)**

Letters to the Editor are welcome; please send them by email to [cemiskin22@gmail.com](mailto:cemiskin22@gmail.com)

## YGT Contact Details

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

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