



Duncombe Park Visit Thursday 23 April 2026

Introduction

Our party of 28 YGT members and three guests first assembled at 10:30am in the magnificent Stone Hall of Duncombe Park for coffee and a welcome by the owner Jake Feversham. We were fortunate to have as our guides to the landscaped grounds, Craig Ralston of Natural England, who manages Yorkshire National Nature Reserves, and Peter Goodchild who has made an in-depth study of the evolution of the house and grounds. The historical importance of Duncombe is emphasised by its inclusion in Christopher Hussey's seminal book: *English Gardens and Landscapes 1700-1750*, published 1979. He states that:

"The grass terraces of Duncombe and Rievaulx are unique, and perhaps the most spectacularly beautiful among English landscape conceptions of the 18th century."

Historical Background

The Helmsley estate of the Duke of Buckingham was sold after his death in 1687 to Sir Charles Duncombe, a wealthy banker/goldsmith for the unprecedented sum of £90,000. The sale was rather waspishly recorded by Pope:

*Helmsley once proud Buckingham's delight
Slides to a scivener or a City Knight*

Sir Charles did not build a house on his new estate, which was left on his death in 1711 to his nephew Thomas Browne who changed his name to Duncombe. Thomas must have decided very quickly to build a new house at Duncombe Park, as it is illustrated in the first volume of *Vitruvius Britannicus*, pub.1713, which subsequently, in 1725, records that it was designed by William Wakefield, a local Yorkshire architect in 1713. As Castle Howard was under construction at that date, it has been suggested that Vanbrugh influenced the design of both the house and the Ionic Temple at the north end of the Terrace. The house was destroyed by fire in 1879 but was rebuilt in 1891-4, essentially following the basic form of the old house with some modifications. The original linked pavilions had already been replaced by Charles Barry, 1846-51 with Italianate quadrangle wings which escaped the fire.

The Duncombe family continued to live at Duncombe Park until 1925, when

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double death duties, after the death of the first Earl of Feversham in 1915 and the death of his heir, the second Earl in 1916, in the first World War, led to the house being leased to a girls' school until 1985. To everyone's surprise the house was then taken back into family ownership by the 6th Baron Feversham who meticulously restored the interior, necessary after years of institutional use.



The South Front with parterre

Our Tour

We started our tour on the steps of the West Front. Here rusticated pillars, railings and courtyard now separate the house from the surrounding landscape while previously, as Peter explained, a lawn had come right up to the main building. We then went into the North Wing, originally the kitchens, but which was lived in by the family during the rebuilding of the main house. The North Wing was gutted by another fire in 1894, fortunately after the completion of the rebuilding of the main house. It was restored with the addition of a lavishly decorated chapel by Temple Moore in 1896.

We then walked to the garden front where a levelled lawn, enclosed with the vestiges of yew hedges, extends eastwards to the edge of the bank, along which a broad grass terrace stretches north and south in a gentle concave arc, half a mile long. In the centre axis of the lawn is a figure of Father Time watching a sundial, probably by John Nost. The view from the bank down to a cascade of the River Rye, much admired by Arthur Young, has recently been restored thanks to the efforts of Margare Nieke, with funding from Natural England. Arthur Young in his *Six Months Tour through the North of England*, Vol II, 1770, described the view as truly romantic and picturesque.

Hussey considers the gently curving terrace following the natural contours unique to Duncombe. As probably dating from the siting of the house in 1713, it predates the Wray Wood walk to the Temple of the Four Winds at Castle Howard c.1724. The north end of the grass terrace terminates with an Ionic Rotunda, very similar to the one designed by Vanbrugh for

Stowe in 1719. As Vanbrugh was in Yorkshire in 1718, it is possible that the Rotunda at Duncombe is the earlier. Built on a fortified bastion it allows views towards Helmsley, the Castle and the later Walled Garden. The Ionic Temple, which had been on English Heritage's Buildings at Risk Register, was restored after a grant of £200,000 in 2013.



The Rotunda or Ionic Temple c. 1718

A veteran oak, which must predate the Temple, is enclosed on the adjacent curved bastion and seems to have been deliberately preserved. Craig Ralston explained the importance of the medieval deer park at Duncombe as an SSSI.

It contains a significant number of ancient and veteran trees, many of them oaks which show signs of pollarding. We then skirted the northern end of the Wilderness to join the broad terrace walk back to the house for an al fresco lunch.



The East Front as rebuilt in 1894

After lunch we assembled on the steps of the portico of the East Front when, after admiring the views across the lawn, we walked along the broad terrace which runs north-south in front of the house, passing the South Wing, designed by Charles Barry in the 1840s. On the grass among the trees the comparatively rare parasite, common toothwort was noted. The South Wilderness, roughly triangular, has several winding paths which lead to an Orangery

Conservatory designed in 1851 by Charles Barry junior and R.R. Banks. Originally with three glazed domes, the central part was adapted after 1985 for use as a summer house with the wings on either side converted into courtyard gardens with central ponds, now protected by metal mesh to prevent wedding guests falling in.



The Conservatory/Orangery 1851

The walk, at right angles to the broad terrace, leads to the second of Duncombe's temples, the Tuscan Temple, on the southern promontory of the curving grass terrace. Probably designed by Sir Thomas Robinson, who had family connections, it stands on a base of three steps, with a peristyle of Doric/Tuscan columns circling the domed room inside. Its semblance to a scaled down version of the Mausoleum at Castle Howard can be explained by the role played by Robinson in the modification of Hawksmoor's original designs for the Mausoleum. We then followed the curved terrace with its partial views down to the river back to the great lawn in front of the house and the end of our tour.

Conclusion

It would be odd in a description of the temples at Duncombe not to mention the more famous Rievaulx Terraces which were created after 1745. Here a wide grass lawn, with temples at each end, sweeps in a sinuous curve, with views down to the ruined abbey of

Rievaulx. It is possible that an unbroken scenic drive from Duncombe to Rievaulx was planned and never completed. At the time of our visit unfortunately Rievaulx Terraces, which have been managed by the National Trust, and only opened sporadically, are now closed for essential maintenance before English Heritage takes over the site and hopefully, opens it on a more regular basis. (See **Editor's Notes a** below)

Our thanks go to Val Hepworth for organising such an interesting day and Jake Feversham, who accompanied us during much of our visit, and contributed some useful insights into what we were seeing.

Moirra Fulton

Images © Maddy Hughes

Editor's Notes:

a. Rievaulx Terraces

The Terraces were reopened by English Heritage on 17th July and are free to National Trust members. They are open from 9am-5pm daily.

b. National Nature Reserves

Following this visit several people asked for further information about National Nature Reserves, both nationally and locally, which follows:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-nature-reserves-in-england>

Craig Ralston's main site is the Lower Derwent Valley (LDV) which has a reserve base which is currently being extended at Bank Island, Wheldrake. The LDV has a particularly active friends and volunteers' group if anyone is interested. Through them Craig has also just published *Birds of the Lower Derwent Valley: a Historical, Migration and Conservation Review* which is a fabulous new resource for any keen birders. Details can be found on their Facebook page: -

[Lower Derwent Valley & Skipwith Common NNR | York | Facebook](#)



Challenges and Opportunities for Conserving Historic Parks and Gardens in the 21st Century

Introduction

This **Biennial Lecture of the Yorkshire Gardens Trust and Yorkshire Philosophical Society** hosted jointly by the YGT and the YPS was held in the Temple Anderson Lecture Theatre at the Yorkshire Museum on the evening of Tuesday 28th April 2026. Our speaker for the evening, John Watkins, was welcomed by Gillian Parker.

John is a professional horticulturist with over forty-five years of experience across several varied and esteemed institutes. He was a 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 for the Royal Horticultural Society at both Wisley and Hyde Hall. He has held positions on many boards including Plant Network, Kent Gardens Trust and the Great Dixter Charitable Trust. His work has seen him closely involved in several high-profile restoration, conservation and interpretation projects including Chiswick, Kenilworth Castle, Wrest Park, Bolsover Castle and Mount Grace Priory, to name just a few. Recently he initiated *The King's Meadows Project* with the ambitious aim of creating 100 meadows at 100 English Heritage sites over a 10-year period. Having been a member of the Gardens Trust and Garden History Society for three decades, the Gardens Trust was delighted to welcome John as the new Chair of Trustees last year.

After a brief introduction to our speaker, the audience knew that there was really no one better qualified to present the evening's lecture on the *Challenges and Opportunities for Conserving Historic Parks and Gardens in the 21st Century*.

John introduced his lecture with a list of the threats which he perceived posed the greatest challenges to our historic designed landscapes. The list was lengthy and seemed to point towards a gloomy future. Many of them were well known and probably expected by the audience, including climate change, the drive for more housing and commercial developments, removal of statutory consultees in the planning process, lack of investment and the impact of economic stress. Others were perhaps more surprising, such as a decline in a skilled environmentally qualified workforce and the acknowledgement that perhaps later generations may view our heritage differently. Will the army of volunteers who currently help support many of our treasured historic parks and gardens be there in the future?

Climate Change

The first challenge to be identified, and perhaps the greatest, was the impact of climate change on our green environment. Evidence for the shift towards our winters being milder and wetter is compelling, whilst our summers are hotter and drier. This places plants under significant stress, with some gardens in the south, such as Kew, no longer able to grow native oaks. Potential solutions include searching for substitute species or alternatively looking at those trees growing in southern Europe, and selecting strains that might thrive in a potentially warmer, drier climate.

With unpredictable weather patterns come more extremes. Heavy rainfall and flash flooding poses its own risks. Westbury Court Garden in Gloucestershire is the only Dutch water garden in Britain, but it has been repeatedly flooded and suffered damage as a result. With the installation of effective drainage, the impact could be mitigated. Looking positively at our changing climate, there might be the opportunity for an increase in the diversity of plants being grown across England leading to a possible rise in garden tourism with visitors seeking more exotic plants.

Arrival of new Pests and Diseases

We are all familiar with the devastating effects of imported plant pests and pathogens on our green environment with the introduction of Dutch Elm Disease in the 1970s. John showed data describing the arrival of new pests and diseases in the UK. A few decades ago, these unwanted visitors arrived once in every year or two but, since the millennium, these importations have increased dramatically, with multiple entrants being detected every year. Cheap furniture items or wooden transport pallets are simple means by which some of these pests hitch a lift into the UK. John gave an example in Europe where infestations of the oak processionary moth were not only devastating the young growth of oak trees but causing allergic reactions and skin irritations in those individuals living in the area.

During the summer months, when the tiny hairs from the caterpillars peak in concentration in the environment, children are having to wear protective clothing.

Planning and Development

In a further example, the impact of planning was discussed. With the increasing need for housing and commercial developments, our green spaces can be lost to construction. An example presented was the garden of the Commonwealth Institute in Holland Park. This building is considered by English Heritage to be the second most important modern building in London, after the Royal Festival

Hall. In contrast, the modernist landscape around the Institute designed by Sylvia Crowe has been completely lost, replaced by housing during the period 2012-15. Despite being one of only a handful of post-war designed landscapes to have been added to the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens, it has disappeared. Through the combined effects of removal of the statutory consultee system, in an apparent quest to streamline the planning process, and a decline in the skilled workforce of specialist planners, other designed landscapes may be lost.

Urbanisation

Increasing urbanisation and the preservation of historic designed landscapes are in growing conflict as cities and towns expand. Not only are the green spaces at risk of fragmentation and significant views being destroyed, but the threat of vandalism is on the increase. The rustic cottage at Blaise Castle was restored after the award of a Heritage Lottery grant, only to be severely damaged by vandals, shortly after completion. Ironically, efforts to protect these structures from vandalism can also be damaging. John gave the example of a garden building at Temple Newsam being enclosed within an ugly metal fence.

Conclusion

Despite the many challenges, John was able to identify many instances where these had been overcome, or good news has been forthcoming, providing the audience with the opinion that, despite the immense difficulties that lay ahead, there was still scope to be optimistic for the future. To protect our landscape and cultivated spaces, people need to work together, engage wider audiences and importantly inspire younger generations. Finally he reminded us that, despite the challenges, we should enjoy the assets that we have because we will be the poorer for their loss.

From the audience, Val Hepworth reinforced the view that our historic designed landscapes were reliant on future generations and highlighted to the audience the work that YGT is doing in supporting many primary schools across our region in their endeavours to engage the young in gardening.

John's talk was well received, and he was thanked by Gillian on behalf of the audience for his thought-provoking presentation.

Sue Lang

Visit to Clapham and the Ingleborough estate - the legacy of Reginald Farrer Friday & Saturday 8/9 May 2026



*Reginald Farrer from a photograph in the
Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh archives*

Introduction

After heavy rain overnight, it was a delight to arrive in Clapham, a beautiful village off the A65 in the heart of the Yorkshire Dales National Park. The central Clapham beck running down from Ingleborough provides the village with its distinctive character. It was heartening to see that the Old Sawmill Café, close to the entrance to the Ingleborough Estate, was almost full before 10 am. After being derelict, a four-year restoration has seen the sawmill's heritage and history beautifully preserved. Upstairs, in the Reginald Farrer room we gathered for welcoming coffee. Reginald Farrer was to be the focus of the day. The main visit with 25 YGT members had been the previous day and had attracted a lot of interest so that the opportunity to attend the following day had been added. The Saturday 9 May event was a joint one and several YGT members met with around 20 members of the Northern Branch of Chartered Institute of Horticulture. We were all welcomed by YGT Trustee Trevor Nicholson, Head of Gardens & Grounds at Harewood House, and by Andrew Jarman, the Managing Director of the Ingleborough Nature Trail. The visit comprised a talk by Trevor entitled *The Rhododendrons of Ingleborough: rediscovering Reginald Farrer's living legacy*, and then a walk led by Trevor and Andrew into the estate to view the landscape and the rhododendrons.



View of the cliff from across the lake

Clapham, the Farrers and the Ingleborough Estate

Clapham is an ancient settlement and home to the Farrer family since the eighteenth century. The family gradually acquired property and land establishing the Ingleborough Estate. They re-ordered the northern part of the village and created Ingleborough Hall as their home. In effect Clapham became an estate village.

The damming of Clapham beck just above the village in the 1830s resulted in the ornamental Ingleborough lake, enabled the powering of turbines and provided a piped drinking water supply for the village. In the 1890s the turbine was adapted to generate what was probably the first hydroelectricity in Yorkshire and provided electricity to the Hall and street lighting in the village.



View to the north of Ingleborough dam from the 1830s dam

The current Ingleborough Hall was built on the site of an earlier shooting lodge in 1814 by James Farrer. Subsequent extensive landscaping of the area around the Hall and church, including an embankment, provided privacy for the Hall whilst tunnels enabled hall access. Although the Hall cannot be easily viewed today the tunnel entrances to the east of the church can still be seen and explored.

The 14,000-acre Ingleborough Estate is still owned by the Farrer family but, in the middle of the twentieth century, the Hall was bought by West Riding County Council and was operated as an outdoor education

centre until being sold on in 2024. Today the estate contains the Ingleborough Nature Trail that leads alongside Ingleborough lake and Clapham Beck gorge to Ingleborough Caves, Trow Gill, Gaping Gill and Ingleborough. The extensive and dramatic cavern system was discovered in 1837 and opened to visitors that year by James Farrer.

The geological fault line of the Craven fault passes across the Ingleborough Estate, and the valley of Clapham Beck has cut through the limestone and into the underlying rocks which produce soils that are acidic, not alkaline like those on the limestone. This is beneficial to the many species of rhododendron planted around the lake and gorge, which would suffer in alkaline soils. James Farrer's great-grandson Reginald would become one of Clapham's most celebrated residents through his landscaping of the estate, his gardening and extensive plant collecting. He made Ingleborough's rhododendrons famous.

‘.....every green thing in nature must hide its head and cower before the daffodil and rhododendron’ – the enthusiasms of Reginald Farrer



Attendees admiring and photographing a Rhododendron species

Talk by Trevor Nicholson

Trevor brought *his* enthusiasm to bear and led us through an excellent talk on the fascinating life, plant-hunting travels and rhododendron collecting of Reginald Farrer (1880-1920). Farrer spent his childhood at Ingleborough Hall, developed an interest in plants and gardening very early and had a significant impact on the gardens around the hall and Ingleborough lake. His encounter with the rare sandwort *Arenaria gothica* on the slopes of

Ingleborough at the age of fourteen led to his interest in alpine plants and his first publication. At around this time he also began building his celebrated rock garden at the hall having limestone rocks brought down from Ingleborough. His book *The English Rock-Garden* was instrumental in popularising the cultivation of alpine plants and creation of rockeries. The site of his rock garden is today in the grounds of a private house south of Ingleborough Hall near the village car park. He also established the Craven Nursery in the village in 1901.

Due to being born with a harelip and cleft pallet leading to speech difficulties he was educated at home during his school years. After Oxford, and not being successful in entering politics, or becoming a novelist, his interests focused largely on plants and gardening, and he travelled frequently and widely across European mountain ranges collecting alpinists.

His first venture to the far east was to Japan in 1903. His major collecting expeditions and collecting trips included to the Chinese-Tibetan border with William Purdon in 1914 and to Burma with Euan Cox in 1919. Plagued by troubles with his *insides* throughout his life he died whilst on this latter trip, probably of diphtheria, and was buried in Burma in 1920. He is the odd man out amongst the plant hunters of the classic period of nineteenth/early twentieth century plant collecting in that he was not trained in botany or horticulture. He was clearly fired by his immense energy and wide interests and enthusiasms. Reginald Farrer was a prolific writer with a flamboyant style and author of many books which are still in print today. He is a well-remembered character with resonance today for both those with general and academic interests and through many stories and anecdotes.



Old specimen viewed from the Rhododendron Walk

Afternoon visit along the Ingleborough Nature Trail

After an excellent sandwich lunch provided by the Old Sawmill Café, Trevor and Andrew led us up into the Ingleborough estate. We entered through the gates behind the Old Sawmill and walked up to the dam at the base of Ingleborough lake. We then progressed along the wooded ravine on the path at the west side of the lake. We could look across the lake at the limestone cliff that was a famous focus for Farrer's planting. As part of his landscaping around the lake, he had members of his team of gardeners dropped on ropes to scatter seeds and plant specimens in crevices. Seeds were even fired from shotguns to spread them randomly across the cliff face and other areas around the lake. Farrer was not interested in the creation of ordered gardens or landscapes but aimed for wild planting through spreading seeds and plants and then letting them fend for themselves. The aim was that the gardens would appear not to have seen a gardener. The cliff garden is now quite overgrown with bushes and trees, but a few plants introduced by Farrer survive.



Attendees crossing the gorge via the castellated stone bridge

Rhododendrons

The northern part of the lake as it narrows spectacularly into a steeply sloped gorge was selected by Farrer as a suitable site for rhododendrons. Today, rhododendrons are confined to this relatively small area at the head of the lake. As we approached the gorge, a side path looped closer to the lake and gorge to make a short rhododendron viewing walk. We were lucky, relative to those on the previous day's visit, in that conditions allowed us to venture from the public path. Andrew removed some fencing allowing us to leave the trail and venture down into the gorge and cross a stone bridge to look at older rhododendron specimens on the eastern slopes. The rhododendron specimens at Ingleborough present a complex mix of original pre-Farrer specimens, his plantings and subsequent 1960s and 1970s planting by Charles Graham of Giggleswick.

However, they have been neglected since the inputs of Graham and the area is now overgrown with larger bushes and trees. It is a highly attractive and dramatic ravine walk but for the rhododendronophile it requires the spotting of rhododendrons between the overcrowding vegetation. After viewing some large toppled over specimens thought to have been planted by Farrer, we returned to the main path where our group had options to walk further north to visit Ingleborough cave or even further on into Clapdale or return to the village.



A toppled over Rhododendron on the eastern side of the gorge

Farrer's legacy and conservation issues

Today the Ingleborough Estate has no trained gardeners and over the last decades it has fallen into neglect from a gardening perspective. Trevor is helping rescue Farrer's legacy and aiming to bring the history of his planting, and particularly of rhododendrons, to life. Trevor volunteers on the estate (in addition to his full-time role as Head Gardener at Harewood House and volunteering at Muncaster Castle!). He has long been fascinated by the rhododendrons at Ingleborough and in some ways they have similar issues of uncertainty around identification and planting history to the rhododendron collections at Harewood House. He is trying to raise awareness and sort out identification by measuring the girth of specimens with the aim of ring-fencing Reginald Farrer's original plantings that have been crowded out by subsequent plantings. Some specimens are now quite large, and several may have toppled over around 50 years ago. Identification is also tricky due to the presence of many hybrids. Trevor has now designated a provisional collection and started to tag them.

Additionally, drier years ahead may lead to problems for rhododendrons and understanding the nature and origin of the collections may help in relation to this. Policy towards a conservation management plan is being developed with the aims to document

and to preserve, together with getting Ingleborough better known as a garden and not merely a route to its famous cave.

Conclusion

It was an excellent day leaving us with much to consider having learned about a fascinating and influential life and the enduring relevance of this most interesting individual. With nicknames such as *Patron Saint of Alpines* or *Father of the Rock Garden* his legacy is clear and moreover many of his plants still exist at Ingleborough.

Many thanks to Trevor Nicholson and Andrew Jarman for ensuring it was such a memorable and enlightening day.

Paul Knox & Malcolm Pickles

Images © Paul Knox



Visit to York Gate, Adel

Wednesday 3 June 2026

Introduction

As I write this report in mid-July it seems increasingly likely that the YGT visit to York Gate at Adel on 6th June took place during the last significant rainfall of the summer of 2026, when a few hardy YGT members visited. We were given a comprehensive tour of the one-acre garden, with its fourteen garden rooms by Head Gardener, Jack Ogg. My photographs reflect the dampness and darkness of the day, but I hope, nonetheless, give a flavour of some of these different areas. As it was impossible to make notes in the rain, I am grateful to Jack for checking my text, based on notes made from memory. I also acknowledge Val Crompton's book, *Heritage of York Gate* (2nd ed. 2024) for some of the historical details included below.

The Victorian farmhouse, farm buildings and six acres of land that became York Gate were bought in 1951 by Sybil (1908-1994) and Frederick (1906-1963) Spencer. In a process of almost continual development until 1994 they and their son Robin (1934-1982) created this Grade II listed garden, now in the ownership of *Perennial*, the charity previously known as the Gardeners' Royal Benevolent Society. The garden is influenced throughout by the principles of Arts and Crafts garden design and, in some places, directly from gardens of this type, Hidcote and Kiftsgate in particular, visited by family members.

Sand Garden

We started our journey in the newest area of the garden, the Sand Garden, put in place after a building next to the Spencer's house was converted into a café and meeting rooms. This building was originally created after the Spencers sold some of their land, as well as the old farmhouse and yard, in 1958 to a local builder. He demolished the old buildings and used the stone to create a modern house, York Gate Cottage, on the same footprint but with a higher roof. *Perennial* bought this back after the garden was gifted to them on Sybil's death and it now houses a café and the room where we had coffee and some very wicked biscuits before beginning the visit. The clever conversion makes this relatively modern building look entirely in keeping with older buildings in the area. Other buildings have been repurposed, again respecting the vernacular style of this part of West Yorkshire, to house the ticket

entrance and an exhibition space that tells the story of the garden and its development.

The Sand Garden was created in 2010 to replace lawn and topiary and is described as an ecological experiment, with a thick layer of sand to encourage plants otherwise used to basking in Mediterranean sunlight, to root deeply into the underlying clay. The sand, of course, keeps them from rotting off in the less than Mediterranean conditions of a Yorkshire winter, although Jack did admit to the judicious use of fleece for some of the more tender inhabitants. As at Beth Chatto's dry garden in Essex, the plants get no water once they have been settled in, so it will be interesting to see later how well they have done this summer. The four 'sides' of the circular garden, of course, receive different amounts of sun so Jack explained that the planting had changed as the garden matured, removing some plants that were not happy and replacing them with others that were.



Edge of the Sand Garden, showing buildings created as an entrance area and exhibition space

Pavement Maze and Orchard Garden

Moving past the gated, pedestrian entrance to the garden we came to the Pavement Maze, created in 1978-9 to replace an area of gravel at the entrance that Robin felt was not in scale with its surroundings. Its design was inspired by a turf maze at Hilton, Cambridgeshire and was created with stone setts in pink, grey and black. At its centre there is an inscribed compass that records the garden's annual rainfall at that time, and height above sea level, along with Sybil's and Robin's initials and a York rose (Crompton 2024, p.67). At the edge of this area, we saw and drooled over a stunning *Cornus x elwinortonii* 'Venus', showing the characteristic pinkish turn of the mature bracts that start out as a pure white (£260 for an 18 litre pot on a well-known plant supplier's website, in case you were wondering).



Cornus x elwinortonii 'Venus', on the edge of the pavement maze

The Maze Garden leads into the Orchard Garden, one of the first areas that the Spencers developed in the 1950s, with its pond and a semi-circular hedge of copper beech that provides a punctuation mark for this garden room. A culvert runs under the orchard and feeds the pond and water elements in other parts of the garden. The very large Victorian cast iron flower basket was placed at one end of the pond by Robin in 1972 and was planted up. It is now kept empty to emphasise its structural nature and provides an interesting contrast to the lush water edge and aquatic planting. *Saracenia flava* was very happy flowering in the middle of the pond.



Head gardener, Jack Ogg, explaining the development of the pond in the Orchard Garden



Saracenia flava flowering in the Orchard Garden pond



The Victorian flower basket in the pond in the Orchard Garden

We took the path round towards the garden's border with the road and through the Arbour, a hefty construction of four stone pillars, topped by roof trusses rescued by Robin from a burned outbuilding in Leeds. Going through the arbour, with its stone seat and circular paved area made from setts and re-used roof tiles set on edge, we came to the Pinetum with its dramatic dry riverbed of stones, again an idea implemented by Robin. Large cobbles under the trees, at least three deep, largely do away with the need for weeding but the odd intruder does find its way in, no doubt encouraged by pine needle drop.

The Dell

The Dell was the next stop, exhibiting brilliant use of a small space to give the illusion of being deep in a woody glade with water at every turn; the use of supplementary paths as well as the main one made for a sense of adventure, only slightly tempered by finding the beautiful gate that leads to the greenhouses.



Gate leading from Dell to greenhouses and frame-yard

Emerging from the Dell we came to the carefully placed folly and its eyecatcher, a repurposed water hydrant, apparently from Glasgow. From higher up the garden, inside the potting shed with its circular window, this is the longest vista of several that Robin created around the garden based on the seventeenth century woodland garden of Thomas Kirke at Cookridge Hall (Crompton, 2024, p.57). This also brought us close to two of the iconic images of York Gate, Sybil's horizontally trained *Cedrus atlantica glauca* planted in 1977 and Robin's Six Sail yew hedge planted in 1959.



View down and through the Folly to the white pump



The horizontally trained cedar and the Six Sail yew hedge

Yew Hedge, Herb Garden and Sylvia's Garden

A small canal with a dolphin fountain runs up to the left of the yew hedge and was added in the early 1970s after Sybil had seen a raised pool at Hidcote. Although she wanted a moon pond, there probably was insufficient room left in the garden and Robin came up with the idea of a (very) mini canal. Its construction required repositioning an existing fern garden to the path up to the Herb Garden, which itself is lovely, with an open porticoed summer house at its top that Robin designed for Sybil's evening entertaining and which houses tender plants and lovely seating. Recent replanting has used herbs that Sybil enjoyed, and a gravel mulch has been added both to improve drainage and to provide reflected heat. A door from the side of the summer house leads to a paved path through a beech *allée* also modelled on Hidcote, running across the back border of the garden and to a 'wobbly' sundial.

To the east of the Herb Garden is Sybil's Garden and Jack told us that redesign of this area has divided opinion several times. After Robin's early death in 1982 Sybil created this room from the existing kitchen garden. The ground was levelled; a beech hedge was planted and what sounds like conventional planting was put into place. The garden was remade in 2005 to a design called *Earth and Moon* by Alistair Baldwin, with a circular copper bowl in the middle, thus providing a version of the moon pond that Sybil had wanted three decades previously. There have been further changes and a box hedge in the 2005 design was replaced with yew around 2017. In a garden that was created by continual rethinking and change it is inevitable that this process must continue, but maintaining the bones of a listed garden, and public trust in the process, is a challenge that Jack and his team repeatedly encounter and deal with successfully.



The re-positioned Fern Garden running up to the Herb Garden and summer house

White and Silver Garden

At the back of the house is the White and Silver garden, inspired by another of the gardens that Sybil admired, this time Kiftsgate. She is said to have seen images of the white garden there in a book and been smitten (Crompton 2014, p. 45) although it could as well have been a book about Vita Sackville-West's Sissinghurst, which only goes to show that there is rarely anything 100 per cent innovative in garden design. This part of the garden had been a double herbaceous border, but in 1968 Sybil took out anything down one side that did not have white flowers or silver foliage, and later the other side received the same treatment. The path of millstones that Robin had laid earlier were allowed to stay and they lead very effectively up to the 'wobbly' sundial, which joins up with the *allée* described above, although the view (or, at least, my photograph) is slightly spoiled by the roofs of cars in the new car park beyond.



Millstone path through the Silver and White Garden, leading to the 'wobbly' sundial

Paved Garden

The final part of the garden that we explored in detail was the Paved Garden, created in the 1960s, and complete with a mini-rock garden, bonsai garden and small glasshouse that leans-to the potting shed. The house wall that backs this garden room has

another horizontally trained tree that adds some welcome knitting together, given that York Gate is mostly about difference. Robin used many pieces of what we would now call architectural salvage, as indeed he did throughout the whole garden, to create what was Sybil's favourite part (Crompton 2014, p.39).

I would agree with Crompton's assessment that this 'is still a lovely place' where 'stone mullions from the original [house] windows, stone slabs and sink, and interesting corner seats, help make this into a magic puzzle room' (ibid).



The entrance to the Paved Garden

We finished the tour at the front of the house, in an area that Jack told us is scheduled for redesign soon, and close to the loos which were a welcome sight after such a damp visit! Here we talked about the garden team: there are three in the garden itself, two in the plant nursery and two trainees who follow a two-year programme. Additionally, there are ten garden volunteers, although many more support the operations of the café, the plant centre and the car park. The garden is fortunate to have such generous staffing and volunteer involvement influenced, as one would expect, by *Perennial's* realism about the demands of important gardens.

Conclusion

Jack gave us two hours of his time for the visit, for which we were extremely grateful. He provided

a perspective that covered not only the historical development of the garden but also the challenges that significant gardens experience in adapting to changing tastes in garden design and planting, while maintaining an historical core and, in this summer of all summers, adapting to a changing climate that throws down torrents for weeks on end and then fries the garden to a crisp.

On that note, we peeled off to the café to steam gently and enjoy the choice of good food for lunch. Some of us (ahem) were beguiled by the plant sale area before we left.

Many thanks to the events team who organised the visit, to Brendan for the Perennial perspective, and to Jack, again, for his generous gift of time.

NOTE: The history of the original site as well as the garden is fascinating and those who are interested can find out more from Val Crompton's book *Heritage of York Gate* (2nd edition, 2024). First published in 2017, the second edition has benefited from the research done by volunteers, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund between 2016 and 2019, to create a digital archive of the site, gardens and Spencer family.

The archive can be accessed freely at York Gate Digital Archive - <https://www.heritageyorkgate.org.uk/homepage>

Gillian Parker

Images © Gillian Parker

Gardens Trust News



Statutory Consultee Status

The following is an extract from the text of a letter received by us from the Gardens Trust on 17 August where they are informed by the Government that they have lost their status as a Statutory Consultee on any planning applications relating to listed parks and gardens:

“Dear County Gardens Trusts Chairs, Main Contacts, Planning Volunteers

You may see in the media that the Government is today announcing that the Gardens Trust's role as a statutory consultee in the English planning system is being removed. Thanks to our collective efforts over the past year, some protection for historic parks and gardens will still be provided by our being notified of planning applications within parks and gardens but it is of deep concern that this will not include applications affected the setting of these special places.

You can read a full statement on our website at <https://thegardenstrust.org/removal-of-statutory-consultee-role/>. The Government announcement will be published later today at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reforms-to-the-statutory-consultee-system>

We understand the intention is for legislative change to take place over the autumn and be in place by end-2026 to achieve the notification requirement.

This is of course a deeply unsettling and disappointing development for us all. Over the coming days, weeks and months we will be discussing how to make the new system work operationally with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government; the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and Historic England. As you will appreciate, this will be an extremely complex piece of work, but we will keep you updated as much as possible. Please rest assured that we have absolutely no intention to stop fighting to protect historic parks and gardens, and that county gardens trusts will continue to be key to this.

The past year has been an incredibly difficult one, and more challenges lie ahead. Today's news is disappointing, but much has been achieved, not least of which is the unprecedented profile and support that the Gardens Trust movement now has, and the unity and determination with which we go forward.

We simply cannot thank you enough for all that you do, and all the support that county gardens trusts have shown us. ‘We could not be a stronger team to take next steps together.

We realise that you will have lots of questions but at this stage we simply do not have the answers so will be working hard to get these. We will be back in touch as soon as there is more to share”.

Linden Groves

Director, The Gardens Trust

Goose Beck Vineyard & Bilton Grange, Summer Evening Party Wednesday 24 June 2026



View of the new vineyard

Introduction

On the hot, sunny evening of Wednesday 24 June, YGT members and guests assembled at Goosebeck Vineyard for a tour and tasting.

Hosts, Paul and Lisa Chasney and their daughters, Antonia and Felicity have hand-planted approximately 14,000 vines since 2021 on former grassland around Bilton Grange, their home between Wetherby and York which they moved to in 2018. The site is open and vulnerable to late spring frosts whilst the soil is light and free draining. The majority of the 13 grape varieties here are PIWIs (an abbreviation for the German word *Pilzwiderstandsfähig*), meaning that they have been bred and selected for high resistance to fungal diseases. The varieties include Bacchus, Muscaris, Solaris, Divico and Seyval Blanc, all planted on SO4 rootstock (*Vitis berlandieri* x *Vitis riparia*), this being the standard rootstock used in Yorkshire.

The Tour

Lisa led the group around numbered rows of both newly planted, and slightly older, plantings,

explaining both the method of training rows of vines against long support structures and the approach to cultivation. Vines are planted in lime-enriched soil, with the later addition of NPK fertilisers and, in a typical year, four applications of sulphur as a fungicide against mildew. The vineyard follows organic principles but has not formally applied for organic certification.

The grapes were welcoming the late June heat and looked ready to start swelling soon. Harvest is undertaken manually by family and volunteers, usually in late September and October. The first substantive harvest was in 2025, and production should increase substantially during the next few years.



Members inspecting newly planted vines

The Winery

Antonia then showed the group through the gleaming new machinery in the winery and explained the processes of pressing, settling, fermenting, sediment removal and filtration, all performed separately for each grape variety. Subsequent expert sampling each winter then leads to choices for blending to produce the vineyard's wines for bottling and sale.

The Tasting Room

We then entered the smart new Tasting Room, which has been converted from former piggeries and was refreshingly cool in the hot summer evening. Felicity led us through tasting four of the estate's current five wines to the accompaniment of generous nibbles, prior to the group also enjoying member-baked treats.

We tasted four wines: three white and one rose:

- *Bacchus* - made from the Bacchus grape which is the 4th most planted grape in England. The wine was described as 'herbaceous with a taste of candied fruits and greengages'.
- *White* - a Solaris and Orion blend. Both grapes are cool climate varieties which are bred to be more fungus resistant and have a shorter growing season. The wine was described as having "a hint of pear drops on the nose and fresh conference pear on the palate".
- *Hatchling* - a blend of Sauvignier Gris and Solaris grapes. This was described as having "aromas of orchard fruits with a soft palate of subtle acidity and rich mouth feel". It was fermented in the winery's egg-shaped fermentation vessel, hence the name 'Hatchling'
- *Row 19* - Although totally different, Phoenix and Rondo vines were accidentally planted together in Row 19 instead of in their varietal block rows. Phoenix is a green grape with white flesh and Rondo is a red with red flesh, this giving the overall rose colour. Blended with Hibernial grapes these give a wine described as being "with good mouth feel and a taste of red currants and raspberry leaf on the palate".



Label for White wine

The Gardens

The social evening then continued with Lisa leading a tour of her adjacent Bilton Grange gardens. These, along with the gardens of its nearby holiday cottages, have been designed by 'Plants by Design', Chris and Fiona Royffe of Newton Kyme. The gardens include a ha-ha, rill, patte d'ole*, rose garden, vegetable garden, and an avenue of Liquidamber trees. They also incorporate some trees from an earlier house which stood just to the east of the current building.

Conclusion

This was a most enjoyable event and we all learned much more about growing grapes in this country, especially in the north of England. We would like to thank the Chasney family for their hospitality and for giving up an evening to our entertainment. Additional thanks are extended to Val Hepworth and Joanna Pavey for organising the event.

*This means a conjunction of pathways from which they radiate out into the landscape and is from the French word meaning "animal's foot"

Geoff Hughes

Images © Geoff Hughes



Summer Picnic at Clifton Castle, Masham, Thursday 9 July 2026



Clifton Castle (Image © Paul Knox)

Introduction

On 9th July, mid-heat wave, about fifteen of us were tempted by the prospect of refreshing views and promenades beside the River Ure, as well as strawberries and cream, to join the visit to Clifton Castle's gardens and grounds.

From the avenue, now lime trees, we arrived at the working area behind the house: a handsome building but not a 'castle' in the defensible sense. Passing through the dog-guarding yellow door we convened in the intriguingly-named swimming pool kitchen. This turned out to be one of the few noticeably modern features with its blue surface glaring in the sunlight and being meticulously groomed by a robot pool cleaner. While we enjoyed coffee and caught up with old and new friends, we settled informally to listen to Margaret Matthews' talk on the site. Margaret has written the Report for the YGT website, and if you missed the visit or now want to pursue it further, do read it for yourself. The following is a brief outline history highlighting features to look for on our subsequent walk.

History of the site

While what we see now is a largely unaltered 'rustic picturesque' landscape, essentially the creation of one generation, there was originally a medieval castle here. This was built post-Conquest in the form of a tower house in a commanding position on the scarp slope above a bend in the Ure and became the property of the Scrope family. Remains of this building were still visible by the late-eighteenth century when they were mapped on the land survey of 1792, standing amidst pasture.

The Hutton Family

In the auspicious year of 1789, John Hutton, whose main seat was at nearby Marske, acquired the property. John was soon succeeded by his two sons, the elder inheriting Marske while the younger, Timothy, took on Clifton Castle which became his lifetime project. He was clearly the driving force, but another significant contribution was made by John Foss from Richmond who was already involved

in remodelling in the spirit of the time at Swinton Park and elsewhere in the area. It was therefore possible for Timothy to get some background on Foss's style and working methods, and convenient for him to accommodate recurring visits. He was certainly involved in planning and building the new house from 1802-1810, and a hazy painting by George Cuitt (sometimes spelt Cuit) in 1803 gives a suitably picturesque image of a modern home emerging alongside the extant high walls of the ruin, dramatically poised above the river.

What else do we know of the site before the new layout? Underlying rock is a mixture of mudstone and sandstone on the plateau with limestone and more sandstone by the river, with alluvium on the lower ground and well-drained slightly acid loamy soil above: important for later planting. No evidence has been found of a village, though some ridge and furrow can be seen by Lidar to the north of the buildings. Four streams run down to the river, later to be incorporated into the landscaping, while medieval property rights included warren (rabbits), fish from the Ure and its exploitation by a water mill. Leland briefly mentioned the remains as a 'pile or castelet' in the mid-sixteenth century, but otherwise it seems the site was ripe for a new vision.

Timothy Hutton and John Foss

I should like to know just what part John Foss took, and to what extent his suggestions and interpretation of Timothy's ideas were what took shape on the ground. What was his status, should we envisage some sort of 'consultant' role, with the two men sitting at the table after dinner, poring over plans and sketches, interspersed with comments that 'so-and-so has one of those and we could go one better'? Foss was clearly involved in designing outbuildings such as the Coach House and probably Stables in 1806, with a clock added later, as well as setting out the walls for the essential Kitchen Garden with later hot house.

Margaret bemoaned some of Timothy's missing Diaries, but compared with many sites we are lucky to have a surviving archive, including mundane documents such as Accounts and Wages Books, all in the North Yorkshire Records Office. I would have liked to know about the input of 'Mrs H' as Timothy mentions walking in the garden with her. Did she contribute ideas, choose plants, edible or as flowers for the house or consider the garden she wished to show off to visitors? Only imagination or a novelist can tell us that.

However, Timothy recorded purchases in 1811 for both kitchen and flower garden. Jackson's nursery at Scrutton and Thompson's at Pickhill were reasonably local, and that in itself is a reminder of the extent to which the landscape was being rapidly transformed at this time. Trees were ordered from the specialist Lee and Co. at Hammersmith, which would have involved some logistical considerations, probably the job of John Foss. There were orchard trees for

the sheltered kitchen garden, plums, apricot and cherry, and a large vineyard offered further scope. These purchases might be considered decorative or domestic, but Timothy also noted the less sustainable treatment of yew and holly pulled from the hedgerows by labourers to be set around the house. This was separate from woodland planted for its functional and commercial value to supply bark and fencing materials, as well as providing shelter belts along the boundaries.



View of Riverside Walk (Image © Maddy Hughes)

Walking Tour

Our walking tour took in gardens and grounds and the riverside, a visual feature both as a prospect from above and a walk in its own right. I will return to the gardens and more recent contributions later on, but now the route to the river on this very hot day beckons the YGT visitors. Margaret led us, pointing out features en route. The path was broad, effectively a track in width so sociable, no doubt as intended then as now. This shady walk led diagonally downhill through mature trees, and surely its designers would have been happy with the realisation of their planting, though I would have liked to know a little more about the choice of trees, certainly thriving.

A pause could be made at the first structure, called either a summerhouse, or shelter or bothy. There are four of these, and a reference in 1891 to re-thatching after about seventy years dates them as an integral part of the layout. There must have been more maintenance as well as some apparently during the 1960s, which included concrete walling on the three damper and lower ones. The thatch is heather, and the upper one may or may not be a recreation of the original construction: a truly beautiful instance of the woodsman's skills.

The Artist Cuitts

Once we were down on the level, and following the line of the river, we could enjoy the view upwards which was painted by George Cuitt the Younger in 1844. As you might assume, the artist was indeed the son of the former recorder of the site, but although both are looking from the river upwards at a dramatic angle, towards the now complete house,

more detail is apparent in this painting. Now it is my turn to make a slight diversion, as the name Cuitt rang a bell with me, but in a different connection. So here is a little of their biography, and this is also relevant for the way in which the image of picturesque landscape was disseminated and made a living for the artist other than portrait and narrative scenes.

The elder artist, born 1743, was lucky in having his talent spotted and was sent by his patron on the essential education of a trip to Italy. He was sufficiently successful to become a Royal Academician, but then left London and returned to Yorkshire, hence his son was born in Richmond in 1779. This George followed in his father's footsteps, but then took a more modern route, making technical developments in the etching and printing process. He was drawn to the romantic hovel as an attractive subject for those who did not need to live in one and notably produced a large body of work in rural Wales. It was the collection and recent exhibition of these at the Grosvenor Museum in Chester which I had encountered before. You can see more on the Art UK website as well as a discussion (2024) of his position as an artist who deserves to be better known, but then he chose to work and teach in Wales and Yorkshire!



View of Riverside Walk (Image © Maddy Hughes)

Riverside Walk

But now we are enjoying the riverside walk. We might expect some more features on the way, and Timothy did mention making various piles of rocks, but perhaps these were the sort of project one intends to get back to but never has time, although one does remain. This was supposedly a grotto but was in fact a short stretch of high and reasonably wide tunnel, adjacent to the path. One of our more intrepid members immediately set off through here whilst others hurried to await him at the exit! But the tunnel was relatively tame, with light clearly visible from one end to the other. The current scene offered a fairly low and quiet summer river, with sheep grazing on land beyond, not part of this

estate. Fencing and gates continued as metal park railings until we reached a wooden farm gate and here turned more steeply back uphill. As with our predecessors, we had enjoyed a peaceful stroll with conversation or one's own thoughts, unaffected by war in Europe, Napoleonic and later, which would have had so much personal and economic impact on much of the population.

There were further points of interest. As we were outside the garden walls, we could see the difference of levels and the large buttresses, possibly indicative of reuse by this noticeably curved stretch of wall of earlier medieval foundations. More of these had been seen during work in the cellars, noted one of the Cowell cousins who succeeded Timothy. Other losses include an ice house and dovecote, while a tree in the walled garden may mark the former dipping pond. Timothy had admired the Danbys' Druids' Temple, but perhaps fortunately we have been spared! There was still plenty to be seen, with the impressive vinery now enhanced by solar panels on the conveniently angled glasshouse, and a modern item to entertain guests in the form of a tennis court. The vegetable garden, cared for nowadays by only one gardener, clearly produces a large crop, and as always, it was satisfying to see quantities of good food (as our picnic still lay ahead.)

The Gardens



The Walled Kitchen Garden (Image © Maddy Hughes)

Modern History

Before we return to our starting point, a few details of a more recent nature should be included. Clifton Castle was, from a historian's perspective, fortunate in having relatively few owners, and other properties may have received more of their time and resources, resulting in little change. Jumping to the mid-twentieth century, during World War II, it was requisitioned, then sold in 1963 to the present owners, the Hill family, Marquess of Downshire, with other estates in Northern Ireland. At Clifton Castle, they employ two estate workers caring for the grounds, while the land contains seven tenant farms. The millennium was an occasion to mark, but in a restrained manner, by a low dome with family crest of a deer and date centred to the front of the building and a couple of sculptures; Pevsner names local slate sculptor Joe Smith. An obelisk may reference the Rudston monolith with added

directional markers. Another older feature was revisited: the cascade. John Foss had created one and more recently a double channel has been installed to run down the grassy ride to a pond. The weather having been near-drought conditions before our visit, it was difficult to imagine this with a lively flow of water. But impervious to weather were the gateways. The Ordnance Survey mapping of 1853 recorded the imposing entrance gateway, as directed by John Foss and constructed not from reused earlier stone, but quarried especially from the quarries of neighbouring Mr Danby of Ripon. More charming is the Moon Gate between the gardens and the woodland walks. This may be a rare contribution by John Clayton Cowell after visiting Scotland in 1891, where he admired gardens at Logie, Elphinstone, and Carbery, Musselburgh. The shape suggests ultimately an oriental model, but without getting sidetracked here, its appeal has continued with the introduction more recently of a Half Moon Gate at the southern end of the garden.



Moon Gate (Image © Maddy Hughes)

Conclusion

Now we have walked far enough in the July heat, so it is time to regain the loggia by the swimming pool kitchen and eat our picnics, followed by the strawberries and cream generously provided by YGT and served up by Maddy and helpers. So thank you Vicky and Maddy for organising the day, and thanks to the present owners and staff to whom the gardens and grounds are a credit and a continuing delight.

Helen Caffrey

Notes from the Editor

We are probably all heaving a sigh of relief that the summer heatwaves are a thing of the past. Here in Yorkshire we fared much better than our friends and relatives in the south who endured week after week of scorching weather, plus hosepipe bans which we have mercifully avoided.

Probably the most important event of the period covered by this e-Bulletin was the decision taken by the government in August to remove the statutory consultee status of the Gardens Trust (and by implication the YGT) on planning applications affecting listed parks and gardens. Full details are available in the Gardens Trust News at p.13 plus commentary by Val Hepworth in the Planning and Conservation Committees report on p.27

We have held our Council meetings as usual in April and July, chaired by different Trustees and the business of the YGT continues as usual. Sadly, Camilla Allen has resigned as a Trustee due to the pressures of her academic work, and we are grateful to her for her contribution.

Our Committees have continued there sterling work and we have reports from most of them in this issue.

Once again, the Events team put on a packed season of interesting and varied visits over a large geographical spread of the county. Following our AGM at Lotherton Hall in April we travelled to Duncombe Park in North Yorkshire where we were welcomed and accompanied to great effect by Jake Duncombe the current owner. The tour of the pleasure grounds which are “a landmark in the development of the English landscape style” was led by Peter Goodchild and Val Hepworth, with Craig Ralston from Natural England joining us as it is a National Nature Reserve and SSSI. Moira Fulton wrote the report on the visit at p.1.

Also in April, the YGT and Yorkshire Philosophical Society's Biennial Lecture was delivered in York by John Watkins, the new Chair of the Gardens Trust, and entitled *Challenges and Opportunities for Conserving Historic Parks and Gardens in the 21st Century*.

Sue Lang has kindly written it up at p.4

In May we had visit(s) to Clapham and Ingleborough featuring a talk by Trevor Nicholson on the rhododendron collection of Reginald Farrer and a tour of the Ingleborough Estate Nature Trail. A second day was arranged due to the popularity of this visit. Paul Knox and Malcolm Pickles contributed our write up.

In June we again went to West Yorkshire and thoroughly enjoyed a visit to the delightful gardens at York Gate in Leeds originally designed by the Spencer family in the Arts and Crafts style. Gillian Parker reported on the visit at p.9.

Very unfortunately our planned visit to Baldersby Park at Topcliffe was unexpectedly cancelled at the last minute and we are planning to go in 2027.

Our Summer Evening Party was held at Goose Beck Vineyard and Bilton Grange near York. This is a new vineyard, and members were treated to a wine tasting. Geoff Hughes was our reporter on this occasion. See p.14

On a very hot day in July, we held our Summer Picnic at Clifton Castle the home of Lord and Lady Downshire situated on the banks of the River Ure. This is a largely unchanged rustic picturesque landscape. Margaret Mathews, a member of the Research & Recording team who has done a great deal of research on this site gave an introductory talk on the landscape and the write up was contributed by Helen Caffrey at p.21

Two further visits will take place in September to cemeteries in Bradford and Harrogate to be reported on in our new annual printed *Newsletter* due at the end of this year.

Christine Miskin
Editor

Recent Articles of Interest

Parker, Gillian, Cannell, John, Woudstra, Jan

The Backhouse Nursery of York and the Alpine Gardens of Ellen Willmott (1858-1934).

Garden History, Vol.54(1), 2025 pp.113-135

This article concentrates on the rock garden designed by Ellen Willmott at her home of Warley Place in Essex, which she is thought to have started around 1887 when she was only 21. It is believed that the alpine garden was created in the rockwork ravine or gorge to the southwest of the Warley Place estate constructed by the Backhouse Nursery of York. The latter company is the subject of Gillian's PhD research at the University of York which is nearing its completion.

Ridgway, Christopher

Vanbrugh at Castle Howard.

GT magazine, Issue 29, Summer 2026 pp.31-33

This year, 2026, marks the tercentenary of the death of Sir John Vanbrugh, polymath and architect. In addition to designing the magnificent building at Castle Howard, he also had a huge role in creating the designed landscape that surrounds the house, together with Lord Carlisle, the owner, and Nicholas Hawksmoor.

Christopher Ridgway, the Head Curator, kindly showed us around Ray Wood in 2024. See YGT Newsletter, Issue 55, Autumn 2024 pp. 11-13. He has written a book entitled **Castle Howard, a Grand Tour of England's Country Houses published in 2025.**

There is currently an exhibition running at Castle Howard until October 31, entitled *Staging the Baroque*, which includes a large model of the landscape as laid out in the 18th century, plus a special installation in Vanbrugh's temple by theatre designer Es Devlin running until 27 September.

Thompson, Philip

Saltburn Valleys CIO.

GT magazine, Issue 29, Summer 2026 pp.45-46

[Editor's Note: The Gardens Trust awards Community Grants for up to £8,000 "which are intended to help seed-fund volunteer projects that will support historic designed landscapes" and the following article by

Philip Thompson describes how Saltburn Valleys CIO has put their grant to good use].

Saltburn-by-the-Sea has three steep-sided valleys and towards the end of the 19th century Henry Pease, a Quaker industrialist, realised that there was potential for tourism using the topography of the valleys and the presence of a mineral spring of great quality. Gardens were created including an Italian Garden, a major feature of the Valley Gardens.

Many thousands of tourists came by railway to enjoy the gardens and woodland but, like so many similar gardens, a lack of investment by the local authority led to a huge decline in the state of the gardens. This was the impetus for the formation of the Saltburn Valleys Community Interest Company in 2017. They are shortly applying to the Heritage Lottery Fund for money to start a programme of heritage reclamation and have already received a grant from the Gardens Trust which is offering funding support for a project entitled *Reawakening Hazel Grove* which is hidden valley containing many species of flora and fauna and totally overgrown.

Crawley, Louise

Picture Perfect.

English Heritage Magazine, Summer 2026, pp.37-39

Louise Crawley is English Heritage's Curator of Gardens and Landscape History and this article starts with a photograph of Rievaulx Abbey as it is followed by the reproduction of a splendid painting in 1745 by John Wootton as it was then. It discusses how in the 18th and early 19th centuries wealthy people started taking tours around this country, rather than taking the Grand Tour, largely attracted by the great treasures of landscapes, gardens and picturesque ruins available in the English countryside. It also considers the meaning of "picturesque", "beautiful" and "sublime" in the context of landscape.

Research and Recording Training Day, Duncombe Park, Wednesday 29 June 2026

Introduction

Our annual training day was held at Duncombe Park on the 29 June with the theme *Buildings in the Designed Landscape and how they affect its design*. This was chosen as buildings and structures had been the focus of the shorter training sessions during our quarterly online meetings this year. While much attention is given in our research and reports to the 'green' elements (e.g. gardens, pleasure grounds, plantations and water), the built landscape is equally important in the design. While the main house often plays a prominent role in the overall layout, we were interested in other buildings and structures that could range from the purely functional such as a farm building to purely aesthetic like an obelisk. Many though lay somewhere in between with some practical purpose but also serving perhaps as an eyecatcher or a point to stop and view.

Recognising that these buildings are regularly listed in their own right and sometimes determine whether a park or garden is listed, we invited Val Hepworth and Roger Lambert from the Conservation Group to share their expertise in this area with us. The morning was spent with a series of talks, first with Louise Wickham discussing the types of buildings in the landscape and how they have influenced landscape design.

Louise Wickham on the history of buildings and structures in the landscape

Their purpose was considered with forming a view, both to be looked at and from, a key determinant. We discussed how they may also provide a counterbalance to the natural landscape and be part of what makes it a garden, i.e. a managed space. Their use to make a political or social comment in what they represented both literally and figuratively, was also considered. Whatever their purpose though, they still appeared to follow the trends in landscape design styles.

Buildings were probably present in the earliest gardens in Mesopotamia, Persia and Egypt and provided a blueprint for later garden designs. They were an important part of the English landscape garden movement. Influenced by Versailles and Italian gardens, the peak period for buildings or structures in the landscape was between 1700 and

1760 with Chiswick, Stowe, Wentworth Castle, Wentworth Woodhouse and other 'political gardens' leading the way. The temples at Duncombe with its associated terrace was an early example, with the Ionic Temple dating from c. 1718-24. In the later 18th century, the style of buildings changed, with more rustic ones favoured in increasingly naturalistic or picturesque landscape designs. The popularity of buildings increased again in the 19th century where their design reflected their surroundings, in particular the Arts and Crafts houses and gardens from late that century and into the next.

Discussion led by Roger Lambert on Group value and its Role in the Designed Landscape

Roger Lambert looked at how buildings influence the listing of historic parks and gardens, specifically the ideas of group value and settings and their impact on planning. Although buildings are individually listed, they are often part of a wider group defined perhaps by location or ownership. The former may include an estate with a designed landscape that could be listed in its own right. In this case, the entry for each element may have the term "group value" applied as any change to one may affect the others in the group. This is often a main consideration when a planning application affects historic parks and gardens. In the case of Duncombe, the Tuscan Temple is listed as having group value with the Hall and other buildings, but curiously the Ionic Temple does not. This highlights a key problem that applying group value is down to the judgment of the individual inspector of buildings following general principles laid out over 40 years ago.

Individual studies by volunteers

Four of the volunteers then presented specific examples from their research, leading to a wider discussion of the relative importance of these buildings and structures to the historic designed landscape. **Gail Falkingham** first talked about the mid-18th century 'summerhouses' at **Kirkby Fleetham**

<https://www.yorkshiregardenstrust.org.uk/research/sites/kirkby-hall#info>

built by William Aislaby, echoing his father's work at Studley and his later work at Hackfall. Although they have long since gone, the evidence comes from paintings, estate accounts, visitor reports, maps and plans. Set on a natural ridge to the west of Kirkby Hall, they were built between 1742 and 1755. In a painting attributed to Nebot c.1750s, three of the

Later paintings showed they were also visible from neighbouring estates, highlighting that their influence may have extended far beyond the boundaries of their estate. However, their design remains difficult to see in the paintings and Gail asked AI (Chat GPT) to focus in on the buildings as an experiment



As an aside, this led to much discussion about the interpretation of images, given historic artistic licence has to be borne in mind, but this latest technology brings a whole new level of complexity! The image created though did bear a striking similarity to a building on Limehouse Hill at Hackfall in another painting by Nebot dated to the late 1750s.

(<https://www.yorkshiregardenstrust.org.uk/research/sites/clifton-castle#info>) as part of the picturesque landscape there. Three of them were built on the eastern section of the pleasure grounds on the banks overlooking the river, with a fourth on the western side. The earliest reference to them is in the owner's diary on 31 May 1821 when he (Timothy Hutton) was supervising the final construction of 'the thatched house near the Low Ness'. As all were constructed in a similar way with a curved stone wall open for the view to the river and a roof thatched with local ling or heather. They were probably built at the same time in the early 1820s.



Sue Lang's presentation was concerned with the early 19th century bridge and earlier dam at Woolley Park (<https://www.yorkshiregardenstrust.org.uk/research/sites/woolley-hall#info>).

[illegible]

The rerouting to the east of the Wakefield and Sheffield turnpike that opened in 1818 allowed the owner, Geoffrey Wentworth, to build two bridges to take the road across the ends of the lake, allowing visitors to view this feature. The southern (East Lodge) bridge had a dual purpose as it also provided an eyecatcher from the woodland walk and ornamental stream to the west. It then allowed those on foot to cross the water from the woodland walk to the path south of the lake to the boathouse.

The latter, built between 1914 and 1920, is the imposing entrance from the main road that includes

a tower or belvedere, from which the parkland to the west and the grounds of the hall could be viewed. Also in the Arts and Crafts style is the Garden House dating from 1914-23 in the northwest corner of the remodelled kitchen garden. With a small courtyard and planting around it the building changed the area from a utilitarian space into a decorative one.



Garden House at Hooton Pagnell Hall (Photo © Jim Godfrey)

Visits at Duncombe Park

In the afternoon, we visited the two temples at Duncombe where we reflected on their design, location and how they shaped the designed landscape around them. Built not long after the Hall in the early 18th century, they sit on either end of a natural terrace to the east. We started at the Garden Front or east side of the hall, which although open to the central part of the terrace and views beyond, both the temples were obscured by trees. We discussed that 300 years ago the planting would have been more formal and clipped, probably allowing at least a partial view of the buildings. Unfortunately, no plans or pictures survive from this period, so the planting and who designed the terrace is the subject of debate with candidates being John Vanbrugh, Charles Bridgeman, Stephen Switzer and Thomas Knowlton.

We then turned north towards the Ionic Temple, which finally came into view.



Ionic Temple at Duncombe Park (Photo © Jim Godfrey)

Thought to have been built between 1718 and 1724, it has been attributed to Vanbrugh. Its open structure allows 360-degree views through to the landscape beyond, most notably Helmsley Castle and the medieval park, indicating it was clearly designed to be a place to view *from*. We discussed its design and whether there was any meaning to it being in the Ionic style. The columns in the Garden Front of the hall are in the plainer Tuscan and Doric styles, so perhaps the designer (or owner?) wanted a more decorative or eye-catching building? What is interesting is that the later southern temple of c.1730 had returned to the plainer Tuscan style at least on the exterior.



Tuscan Temple (Photo © Sue Lang)

Retracing our steps back along the terrace, we noted the views down to the river that again were largely obscured by planting, although a few parts have been cleared. A description from 1770 by Arthur Young indicated that it was previously more open: '*as you walk along the terrace, towards the Tuscan temple...fresh objects breaking upon the eye as you advance*' (*A Six Months Tour through the North of England*. London, W. Strahan, 83). As we headed south, the Tuscan Temple came into view. This is an enclosed building with four windows giving more limited views out. However, the wonderful interior, which we were able to see thanks to Jake Duncombe opening it for us indicated it was more a place to stop and linger.



Interior of the Tuscan Temple (Photo © Sue Lang)

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To the southeast of it was a path down the steep slope where a summerhouse was marked just over 100m away on the 1st edition 6" OS map, surveyed in 1853. Perhaps the latter, about which little is known, added to the experience of visiting this designed landscape.

Conclusion

This was a very successful day, and we were most grateful for the hospitality provided for our visit by Jake Duncombe. We were also helped greatly with our research by the contributions from Val Hepworth and Roger Lambert on group value of buildings and

its effects on designed landscapes. Finally, many thanks to our four members who presented their case studies to us all.

Louise Wickham

(Chair of Research and Recording Group)

Boy with a Dove



Boy with a Dove (Image © Valerie Greaves)



Introduction and history of the siting of this Sculpture.

The image is of the sculpture entitled Boy with a Dove which now sits in Weston Park Sheffield. The history of its siting there is that in 2023 we were consulted by Emma Gregory, a planning officer with Sheffield City Council, on the proposal to instal it in Weston Park, which is a Grade II listed park.

On behalf of the Conservation and Planning Committee Val Hepworth responded as follows "Weston Park covers an area of 5ha and includes Weston Park Museum and Mappin Gallery. The park was modified by Robert Marnock from a mid-19th century garden and opened to the public in 1875; the first park was bought with public funds for the people of Sheffield. There are several sculptures and memorials in the park.

The proposed sculpture Boy with Dove by Anthony Padgett, is for a life-size bronze figure of a child sitting on a bench of the same design as all the other benches in Weston Park. It will commemorate Sheffield as a place where the people of Sheffield welcomed child refugees, gave their lives to fight unjust wars and hosted the Second World Peace Congress (1950).

Situated to the east of the southern entrance nearest to the Museum, alongside the path, it will be an interesting and we hope thought-provoking addition to the existing sculptures in Weston Park. It is unlikely to have any adverse effect on the Park and the Gardens Trust and Yorkshire Gardens Trust have no objection".

Schools Report

It was decided that the Schools report in this issue would be devoted to Ben Palmer's extremely thought-provoking presentation to the AGM on the value of outdoor learning in children's education, with an emphasis on schools with high SEN and deprivation. Ben works in Keighley which is a highly deprived area. The following is an abridged version:

How Outdoor Learning and Nature Influence Wellbeing in Primary Schools with High SEN and Deprivation

- **The Challenge: SEN, deprivation and wellbeing in Primary Schools**
 - **Disproportionate barriers**
Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and those in deprived areas face significant barriers to wellbeing and academic success. These challenges compound, creating cycles of disadvantage that impact on their entire educational journey.
 - **Rising mental health crisis**
Mental health issues and social-emotional difficulties are rising dramatically, exacerbated by limited access to enriching environments. The pandemic has intensified these vulnerabilities, leaving many children struggling.
 - **Limitations of traditional approaches**
Traditional classroom settings often struggle to meet these complex needs effectively. Rigid structures and indoor-only learning can fail to engage vulnerable learners or address their holistic development needs.
- ### Outdoor learning: a proven pathway to social-emotional development
- **Research-backed benefits**
Research from Canadian primary educators demonstrates that outdoor learning (OL) actively promotes social and emotional learning (SEL) competencies through unstructured, emergent play. This child-led approach allows for authentic skill development.
 - **Building essential skills**
OL fosters self-confidence, creativity, and social skills that are critical for children with SEN. The outdoor environment provides unique opportunities for risk-taking, problem-solving, and relationship-building in ways classrooms cannot replicate.

- **Forest Schools impact**

Forest Schools across the UK report remarkable improvements in physical skills and nature appreciation, especially beneficial for vulnerable learners who thrive with hands-on, sensory experiences.

Academic gains through outdoor learning in deprived contexts

- **Newcastle University trial**
A controlled trial of 'Wilderness Schooling' revealed significant improvements in reading, writing, and maths for primary pupils from deprived backgrounds. The structured outdoor curriculum proved highly effective.
- **Lasting cognitive benefits**
Gains continued to grow even after outdoor sessions ended, suggesting profound and lasting cognitive benefits. The learning didn't stop when children returned indoors and it compounded over time.
- **Closing the gap**
Outdoor curriculum integration can help close attainment gaps linked to socioeconomic disadvantage, offering an equitable approach to raising standards for all learners.

Nature's role in supporting wellbeing for SEN pupils

- **Stress reduction and pro-social behaviour**
Outdoor time significantly reduces stress and improves pro-social behaviours such as sharing and cooperation which are vital for children with social, emotional, and behavioural needs.
- **Duration matters**
Research shows longer, less frequent outdoor sessions yield better social outcomes than short bursts. Quality immersive time in nature creates deeper impact than brief, rushed visits.

Outdoor learning encourages independence, problem-solving, and negotiation skills, enhancing inclusion and engagement for all pupils, particularly those who struggle in traditional settings.

Barriers and solutions: making outdoor learning work in challenging schools

Common barriers

- Teacher confidence and training gaps

- Curriculum constraints and time pressures
- Weather concerns and seasonal challenges
- Limited access to natural spaces
- Lack of systemic support and resources

• **Proven solutions**

Successful Bradford district initiatives such as Forest School programmes in Keighley demonstrate that teacher-led outdoor learning can thrive with the right training and support.

Training providers like Get Out More CIC equip teachers with practical woodland learning skills, enabling schools to run regular outdoor sessions that build confidence, teamwork and environmental awareness.

Additionally, programmes such as Grow to School support Bradford schools in creating food-growing spaces and curriculum-linked outdoor learning activities within school grounds.

Equity and access: why outdoor learning matters most in high-deprivation schools

• **High Deprivation Areas**

Twenty-four percent of schools in high deprivation areas embed outdoor learning fully (WWF-UK, 2024)

• **Other Areas**

Thirty-five per cent of schools elsewhere embed outdoor learning. This reveals a significant equity gap

• **Critical Reality**

Children in deprived urban settings often lack safe, accessible green spaces outside school hours. School-based nature connection becomes their only opportunity. Integrating nature-based learning during school hours offers a vital, equitable route to wellbeing and academic success for those who need it most. It is not just beneficial: it is essential for social justice in education.

Conclusion: a call to action for schools and policymakers

• **Evidence-backed impact**

Outdoor learning is a powerful, evidence-backed tool to support wellbeing and learning for SEN and deprived primary pupils. The research is conclusive and compelling.

• **Systemic support required**

Systemic support, comprehensive teacher training, and curriculum flexibility are essential to scale these benefits across all schools, particularly those serving vulnerable communities.

• **Universal entitlement**

Every child deserves regular, meaningful connection with nature to thrive so let us make it happen. Nature-based learning must become a right, not a privilege.

Ben Palmer

Assistant Head of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Keighley



Conservation and Planning

Introduction

On the 18th of June 1705 Blenheim Palace's foundation stone was laid, along with that of the garden wall and four days later Sir John Vanburgh optimistically wrote to the Duke of Marlborough,

'...The whole gardens will be form'd & planted in a year.'

It took rather longer for Henry Wise and his team to lay out the gardens but some two hundred and sixty years later it was the replanting of the Great Avenue at Blenheim which received the first Countryside Commission grant in 1978. Fourteen years before this conservation milestone, Peter Hunt edited *The Shell Gardens Book* and the following year with Miles Hadfield, Mavis Batey and others founded The Garden History Society (GHS) when practical concern for the future of our designed landscapes and historic gardens had gained a good deal of momentum. There was a broadening realisation that the historic designed landscapes that we all take for granted will not last forever. A watershed moment took place in 1970 when a road was proposed across the landscape at Levens Hall in Cumbria. This was the first conservation case for the GHS and they won!

Early history of Designed Landscape protection

As the decades passed, interest in our historic parks and gardens grew and County Gardens Trusts (including YGT at a meeting in York in December 1995) were founded and brought together in 1992 under the national umbrella of the Association of Gardens Trusts (AGT). By 1995 the undoubted expertise and research knowledge of the GHS had become well-known to those working in the historic environment and resulted in the charity becoming statutory consultee for all planning applications affecting registered (the then English Heritage *Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest*) sites (RPG). The Getty Trust awarded the GHS £10,000 a year for three years to facilitate casework and advice for individual gardens at risk.

When I was AGT chairman in the early 2000s we worked closely with the GHS to help with conservation and planning, amongst other things. Earlier, in c.1996, as a very inexperienced YGT volunteer and GHS member I accompanied David Lambert, then the GHS Conservation Officer, to look at the area of the Harewood Estate proposed

for the TV set Emmerdale. Something of a coincidence thirty years later as this month we have just confirmed to the Leeds City Council planners that we have no objection to the continued use of the infrastructure for the Emmerdale Village Production Set.

Although we all love to explore and enjoy our heritage of parks and gardens, in our twenty first century world without knowledge, understanding and care, many of our unique parks and gardens are at risk of damage or even partial loss. This is where the Gardens Trust (GT), the successor to the GHS and AGT, has such a significant advisory responsibility continuing the GT's planning role as the statutory consultee for all Registered Parks and Gardens in England, the only national amenity charity with such expertise and knowledge.

Removal of Statutory Consultee status of Gardens Trust

So, it pains me to write about the latest revisions to the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which were announced on the 17th of August 2026. These include removing the GT as a statutory consultee. We all understand the need for more housing, particularly affordable housing, but this decision will erode certain checks within the planning system. It will leave Grade II sites, around 63% of RPG's which includes most public parks, cemeteries and smaller historic parks and gardens, of which there are c. 80 sites in Yorkshire, vulnerable to inappropriate developments and possible destruction. GT and YGT made it clear in their response to the Government's consultation on planning earlier this year, that in the year 2024-5, 29% of GT responses were offering detailed expert advice in favour of the application; only 5% were substantive objections and virtually all our responses were provided within the 21-day deadline.

As you will know from my report in *Newsletter* Issue 57 our advisory work is much supported by YGT's contacts in Yorkshire's Local Planning Authorities and by owners/managers. As David Hornsby of Doncaster City Council wrote to me, *'... the loss of the Gardens Trust as a Statutory consultee is a retrograde step which will lead to harm to the historic environment which is a shared asset enjoyed by all. Such a measure ignores the depth of knowledge and expertise which the Trust is able to provide adding to*

the value that can be gained in planning decisions and negotiations.'

However, working on the positive GT will continue to receive planning notifications within RPG's, providing some form of safeguard, although their settings and views will not be afforded any such protections. Between the middle of January and the end of August, this year we have responded to c. forty Yorkshire planning applications of which sixteen have been for the setting, so this gives a good idea of where our advice will be lost.

You can read a full statement on GT website at <https://thegardenstrust.org/removal-of-statutory-consultee-role/>. The Government announcement is published at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reforms-to-the-statutory-consultee-system>

There is more information at Gardens Trust news later in this e-Bulletin. PageXXX

It feels as though the determination of the GHS to protect our valuable and irreplaceable park and garden heritage, starting in 1970 with Levens Hall, has had a kick in the teeth in 2026. Of the total of 1,392 respondents to the consultation, it was noticeable that the limited support (6%) to the removal of the GT as statutory consultee mainly came from developers and landowners, which may not be so surprising. Opposition to the proposal was widespread across most other sectors, with particularly strong opposition from amenity societies, members of the public, the voluntary/charitable sector and statutory consultees.

The GT understands the intention is for legislative change to take place over the Autumn and be in place by end-2026 in order to achieve the notification requirement.

The Chairman of GT, John Watkins has said '... that over the coming days, weeks and months the GT will be discussing how to make the new system work operationally with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government; the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and Historic England. This will be an extremely complex piece of work but please rest assured that the GT have absolutely no intention to stop fighting to protect historic parks and gardens.' The day after John gave the YGT/YPS lecture in York this April we had a very happy day walking the Aske Hall designed landscape near Richmond.



*GT Chair John Watkins visiting The Temple at Aske Hall
(Image: © Val Hepworth)*

Whilst all this unfortunate national news has been in gestation, in Yorkshire we have continued our conservation support. You may remember that some years ago YGT gave grants to **Ripon Workhouse Museum** for their garden restoration. On Monday afternoon 20th July the Grand Reopening allowed guests, including Ian and I, to walk in the footsteps of Victorian vagrants and paupers at a special preview event to celebrate the new visitor experience funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and other funders. Ripon's workhouse is a very poignant and a now rare reminder of the conditions of the poor until workhouses faded out in the 20th century as the first pensions were introduced and labour exchanges set up to help people find work. Ripon's workhouse has survived because it became Council Offices until 2017 when the group which became the Ripon Museum Trust bought it. Everyone should visit this new museum to understand the stories of real people, adults and children, who lived through extraordinary hardship. Alexa Vernon, director of Ripon Museums Trust, noted that "this was the Victorian solution for poverty: you worked 10 hours a day for no pay and were separated from your family in the hope that you would prefer to live a fine upstanding life outside". However, we could also say that most had no choice having fallen on hard times with no safety net at all, unlike today. The independent trust also runs the Police and Prisons Museum and the Courthouse Museum in Ripon, forming a unique triumvirate of museums that tell the story of poverty, crime and punishment. A visit is a must.



Alexa Vernon, Director of Ripon Museums Trust and
Richard Taylor, Vice-President at the Grand Reopening
(Image © Val Hepworth)

Armley House and Park Conservation Management Plan

In July we were invited to be involved with the work to develop the **Armley House and Park Conservation Management Plan**, (RPG Grade II), initiated by Leeds Museums and Galleries on behalf of the Council and funded by Wade's Charity. Wade's Charity owns the house and park (golf course) and leases them to the Council. It is a long term and ambitious project that encompasses Benjamin Gott's Armley House and Park (the golf course) as well as the late Victorian Armley (public) Park. Armley experts, Dr Patrick Eyres and Peter Goodchild are representing YGT. Patrick writes:

"The proposals for the house will require substantial fundraising and include rebuilding the pair of demolished pavilions. As for the landscape, I arranged to take a data stick with three key views from the Red Book. Through these, I emphasised the national importance of Repton's commission and its local significance as the only one of his three Red Books for properties in and around Leeds whose landscape proposals were realised. I showed how Repton highlighted the interrelationship of the house, park and Gott's Armley Mill, which is now Leeds Industrial Museum. His principal view from the house, which encompasses the park, canal and mill, could be enjoyed into the late 1980s, when it became blocked by tree growth. There was an unanimously positive response to my proposal that the view should be reopened, especially as this will visualise the modern perception of the house, park and mill as a heritage landscape, which is already linked by public footpaths. I also pointed out that Repton's sylvan wall could be replenished with new tree planting, and that this should compensate for any trees removed in re-opening Repton's view to the mill. There was similar enthusiasm for identifying a viewing point for Repton's vista of Kirkstall Abbey, which was originally to be seen from the north pavilion.

There were many other proposals. The landscape architect from Historic England proposed planting grasses to edge the belts of trees and to help restore the lowest and boggy part of the park (golf course). The community representatives proposed fitness exercise features at unintrusive points in both parks. The woebegone state of the public park was stressed, and the restoration of key features was recommended, such as the bandstand and the tiered terrace walks on the steep hillside above the canal. The latter are notable aspects of the Victorian park's design. The terraces are linked by the lengthy flight of steps adorned with archways at the top and bottom. The terraces continue to be a dramatic series of walks. Though now engulfed within a hillside wood, the terraces overlook the marina for canal barges in the former coal staithe of Kirkstall power station, which was demolished in the late 1970s. Consolidation of the stairway, arches and terraces and the opening up of views would have the significant benefit of retrieving an almost vanished and little-known part of the Victorian park".



The park front of Armley House from the south in 2015
(Image © Dr Patrick Eyres)



Gotts Park from Armley House facing south-east towards the Aire valley beyond the trees in 2015. The view downhill across the park to Armley Mill could be enjoyed from the terrace and the upper windows
(Image © Dr Patrick Eyres)



*Gotts Park golf course and Armley House now the clubhouse.
The view to the north-west from the edge of the Victorian Armley
Park in 2015 (Image © Dr Patrick Eyres)*

Whirlow Brook Park

On 20th May last year there was a YGT visit to Sheffield's Whirlow Brook Park and Whinfell Quarry Garden. Whinfell Quarry Garden became a Registered Park and Garden more than twenty-five years ago but somehow **Whirlow Brook Park**, which lies close by has not been assessed for the Register. Thanks to the tireless work of the Friends this is about to change. [For Chris Beevors fascinating report of the visit see YGT Newsletter Issue 57, Autumn 2025 pp. XXX]. The Friends have done an amazing job of gathering material together for their submission to Historic England (HE) for possible Registration which they hope to do soon. Earlier this year after his first visit to the site, Dr Kristof Fatsar, Regional Landscape Architect at Historic England said how very impressed he was with the good retention of spatial layout, the planting and built features. The rock/alpine garden complete with its two ponds is a magnificent structure. He particularly noted the planting which is a rather rare survival. In February this year the Friends were honoured with the King's Award for Voluntary Service. So, to have the park registered we hope would be the icing on the cake.



*Whirlow Brook Park, a view of the lily pond
from the main drive, 2019
(Image © Shelagh Woolliscroft)*



*Whirlow Brook Park, the alpine slope in the rock garden, 2019
(Image © Shelagh Woolliscroft)*



*Whirlow Brook Park, upper pond, 2020
(Image © Shelagh Woolliscroft)*

Temple Grounds Richmond

Other positive conservation news for Yorkshire's RPG's is the ongoing work at **Temple Grounds at Richmond**. There had been a gradual erosion of this small historic designed landscape during much of the 20th century but, since 1992, the Lawson family have been repairing and conserving the estate beginning with a Countryside Stewardship scheme in 1995. This adds to the work carried out by the Landmark Trust who rescued the Culloden Tower in 1981. Countryside Stewardship and Higher-Level Stewardship working to a Conservation Management Plan have continued now for more than thirty years with seminal conservation work for the land, trees, hedges, walls and buildings. A long-term ambition for Temple Grounds has been the conservation and repair of the wonderful classical stone columns (piers) and the large 18th century iron gates that front onto the public road at the end of Newbiggin, Richmond. These are now in a very poor state but may have been designed by Daniel Garret and linked to his likely work at the Culloden Tower in the 1740s. Their significance has been underpinned by HE who have upgraded their listing to II*. Following this upgrade, there is to be some public funding for the conservation of the piers and gates, resulting in a planning application for the work in May, which of course GT/YGT supported. Since then,

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the Natural England adviser for Protected Sites and Nature Recovery, Olivia Mann, with her colleague Paul Mortimer and HE's Dr Kristof Fatsar held a meeting with Dr Lawson, to gather information to inform management advice for a new Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier agreement.



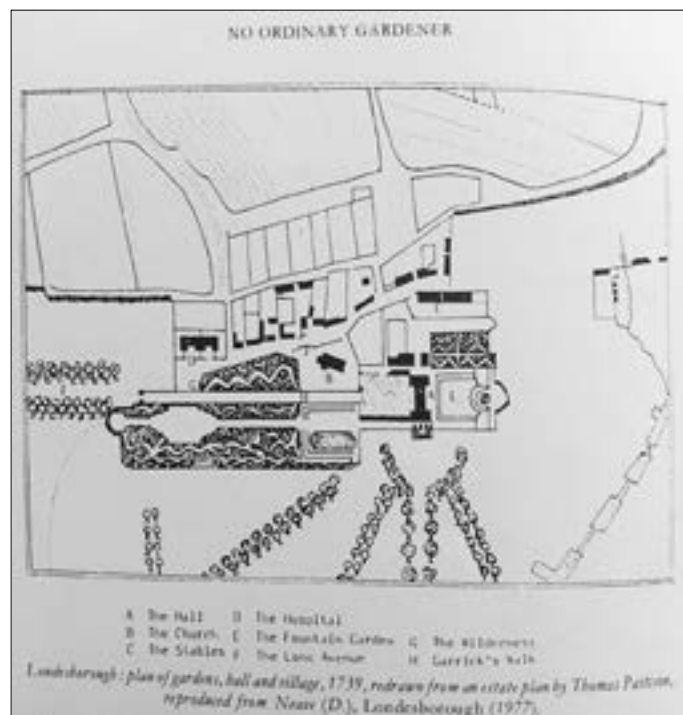
Temple Grounds L-r: Paul Mortimer, Richard Lawson, Olivia Mann, Kristof Fatsar examining the condition of Riverside Walk (Image © Val Hepworth)

Felling and replanting trees in RPGs

Whilst responding to the many local authority planning consultations, YGT has also given advice to the Forestry Commission and the White Rose Forest projects regarding felling and replanting in RPG's or their setting. Early in the year Susan Kellerman, responding to an enquiry regarding an area of the RPG at **Parlington**, sent historic material about the site. In the spring we had a confidential request for comment on a woodland creation proposal near an RPG and a consultation for a felling licence for three compartments at **Londesborough Park** in the East Riding which is registered Grade II*.

Londesborough Park is a significant early garden and designed landscape laid out in the late 17th century wholly or partly by Robert Hooke (1635-1703) for the first Lord Burlington in the formal style of the period. (Shown in Birds Eye View c. 1700 by Leonard Knyff, engraved by Johannes Kip). Alterations and additions were made by the third Lord Burlington, (inherited 1704), from the 1720s until the mid-18th century. There is an estate plan drawn up by Thomas Pattison in 1739 showing the park and garden seemingly in a state of transformation from the formal to a more natural style. To the east of the hall (demolished 1818/19) the gardens remained unaltered but to the west they had been transformed. It is this area of the consultation that we were concerned about; the 'Wilderness' area planted in the 1720s, later than the Knyff & Kip Birds Eye View. When I did some work there, c. 20 years ago many of the original yew trees remained and the design could still be discerned

although there were many self-sown trees and shrubs. We advised that the trees in this compartment should be carefully assessed and the original planting scheme enhanced rather than simply restocking and not to use the tree mix that was proposed.



Londesborough Park: plan of gardens, hall and village, 1739, redrawn from an estate plan by Thomas Pattison, reproduced from Neave, D. Londesborough 1977.

With my thanks to Dr David Neave. Turnbull, D. and Neave, D. Landscaped Parks and Gardens of East Yorkshire, 1992 pp. 48-54, 82

The consultation on the proposed Woodland Management Plan 2027-2037 for the **Castle Howard Estate** came to us in June. We wrote that we support the overall long-term vision that includes resilience to the changing climate and noted that biodiversity, ecological functioning, quality timber, access and low impact silvicultural activities are to be at the core of all management decisions. However, we also noted our surprise at not seeing any explicit mention of the 18th century parkland, nor Castle Howard's significant pleasure grounds, apart from Ray Wood. We understand that HE submitted similar comments, and we hope to hear that the 18th century parkland and the pleasure grounds are to be incorporated into the Plan.

We have had several planning applications for **Middleton Lodge** (RPG Grade II) this year and recently a Felling Licence consultation for the woodland compartment where vehicular parking is incorporated as part of the high-end hotel and leisure business. As it is so close to me at Richmond, I went to take a look. It is always good to go on site if we

can and relate that to previous knowledge and map analysis before responding with advice. Historically in the 19th century, the compartment was part of the wooded pleasure grounds of Middleton Lodge with walks and a drive and views across the north-eastern parkland. This changed gradually, probably until the period between the two World Wars or during the Second World War, when replanting and planting of the northeast parkland took place largely with conifers. The compartment has probably been felled

and replanted in more recent times, but it seems likely that some of the hardwood trees still present now are from the much earlier period. We advised on the tree and shrub/understorey planting and recommended a plan incorporating the old hardwood trees and which would locate the new trees relative to the parking areas, pedestrian routes and views.

So, we press on!!

Val Hepworth

Events Committee Report

EVENTS IN 2026

By the time you are reading this it is possible that the Events Programme for 2026 will be over. In September there have been visits to Undercliffe Cemetery, a Grade II Registered Park and Garden, originally laid out in 1853-4; and Lister Park, which had belonged to Samuel Lister, both in Bradford. Our final visit of the year was to see Stonefall Cemetery in Harrogate which is a Commonwealth War Graves Commission burial ground for the dead of the two World Wars. Neither is a visit to a named garden but still important for us to include as historic designed landscapes.

We will also have had our stand, ss19 between the National Chrysanthemum stand and Dahlia Show tables, at the Harrogate Autumn Flower Show which is held at Newby Hall. Helped by volunteers from Perennial and our own Trust, we hope to deflect the attention of passers-by from dahlias and chrysanthemums to designed, historic landscapes.

EVENTS IN 2027

Already the Events Committee members have been busy organising a programme of events for next year. We hope the AGM will be held on Saturday 13th March in the Conservatory at Scampston, which is in

the Walled Garden, but run as a separate charity. As usual there will be the AGM business, a talk, lunch and a visit to the garden.

Val Hepworth will lead a visit to Aske in April. In May we are going on a visit to Hooton Pagnell, near Doncaster, organised by member Jim Godfrey, who has researched the garden for YGT.

On June 20th Janette Ray will be taking a group around gardens in Hull, starting at North Ferriby allotments and visiting Hull's Garden Village, either Pearson Park or Victoria Park, and possibly the Waterfront area if there is time, all of which sounds like a fascinating day.

We hope to reinstate the visit to Baldersby Park, which was cancelled last year. The Park has been shaped by its owners over 200 years to reflect their desire to provide a suitable setting for the House built between 1718 and 1730 for Sir William Robinson. Nurserymen, London and Wise provided trees, and George London may have advised on the design.

The Events team is also trying to organise the Summer Picnic and a Summer Evening Party and hopefully a couple of events to take place in September.

The full Events Programme will be sent out to members in the New Year.

Vicky Price

Yorkshire Gardens Trust

President	The Countess of Harewood
Vice Presidents	Caroline Legard, Peter Goodchild, Nick Lane Fox
Chair	Vacant
Treasurer	Maddy Hughes
Company Secretary	Gillian Parker
Trustees	Val Hepworth, Maddy Hughes, Roger Lambert, Brendan Mowforth, Vicky Price, Gillian Parker, Trevor Nicholson, Sue Lindley, Sue Lang.

Committees and Groups

Conservation	Vacant
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	Sue Lindley
Small Grants	Brendan Mowforth
Webmaster	Louise Wickham

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Forthcoming YGT Publications

Our final publication this year will be the new Annual Newsletter 2026. It will be published in hard copy with an option to be received in electronic format only.

We will be emailing members about their preferences later this Autumn.

Please send items for inclusion to Christine Miskin: 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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