

## Conservation and Planning May 2019

YGT's conservation and planning work continues to be wide reaching with an enthusiastic team who have met twice since Christmas using the National Trust's meeting space on the top floor of Treasurer's House. We are very grateful for this free facility where we can catch-up, debate, plan, brew coffee and tea and eat considerable amounts of home-made cake. Our team has been joined by retired architect, Roger Lambert adding a further dimension to our professional expertise which covers archaeology, conservation, garden design, horticulture, landscape architecture, research and most importantly a passion for and in-depth knowledge of parks and gardens. Although the work that we do may sometimes be seen as difficult it actually can be quite fun as we tackle issues and learn together... and it is a very important contribution that YGT can make to the future of our parks and gardens. What we do runs alongside our national body, the Gardens Trust.

The Gardens Trust (GT) is the statutory consultee regarding proposed development affecting a site on the Historic England Register of Parks and Gardens and as a member organisation of the GT, YGT works in partnership with it in respect of the protection and conservation of registered sites, and is authorised by the GT to respond on the GT's behalf in respect of such consultations. This we do most weeks via a national weekly list that the GT sends to County Gardens Trusts. If YGT cannot respond for whatever reason, then Margie Hoffnung, Conservation Officer of the GT (which covers the whole of England and Wales), will write to the planning authority in our stead. We progress the consultations as a team, using our members' particular knowledge relative to the site and issues. I then write and sign the letters and e-mail them to the relevant local authority planner, copying the Gardens Trust and Historic England. With some planning applications, particularly grade I or II\* registered sites or where there are similarly listed buildings, we liaise with officers at Historic England's York office. Neil Redfern who is Principal Inspector of Ancient Monuments is the Development Advice Team Leader, North East and Yorkshire for Historic England and his team's officers normally respond to applications where there are grade I and II\* buildings and parks and gardens but not to the vast majority which in fact are grade II, so here our advice is particularly important. Overall, we get an interesting picture of development in Yorkshire... and in the time-span between early December last year to mid- May this year we have been consulted on forty-five planning applications and responded to them all. This is an increasing number and a reflection of the pressures on our historic environment at the present time. Fortunately, a fair number of these are for minor changes often to properties on the boundary of the park or garden but within the 'setting' and about which we have few or no concerns. As your Conservation and Planning sub-committee – the 'Team' - we are very grateful for the expert support and advice that we get from Chris Mayes who is Historic England's landscape architect covering the whole of the North of England and Yorkshire.

This year we thought that we should develop our planning knowledge and skills so we asked the Gardens Trust to run two training days in Yorkshire. The first at **Bramham Park** in March was an excellent introduction to planning in a wonderful historic park and garden loaned to us by Nick Lane Fox who also spoke about the challenges of protection, conservation and planning for the Bramham estate. Gail writes of the day elsewhere in this newsletter. The follow-up on mastering planning responses is being held at the **Ripon Workhouse Museum** on 27<sup>th</sup> June. This should give us additional skills to assess the impact of a proposed development or change on a historic park or garden, to develop a recommendation to the local planning authority, and to frame this in an authoritative and persuasive planning comment letter.

In the last newsletter I wrote about two major planning applications involving large 4/5 storey apartment blocks; one on the boundary of **Sheffield General Cemetery** and the other extending The Mount, a Victorian villa, on the boundary of **Peel Park**, Bradford. Both sites are grade II\* on the Register and deserve a more sympathetic setting. It is particularly galling when the area for the proposal, which had always been included within Sheffield General Cemetery's registered boundary (former stone-mason's yard), was removed as a 'minor change' last autumn. We have not heard the outcome of these applications but it seems likely that there will be more proposals for large apartment blocks on the boundaries of our historic parks and gardens as developers see the potential – and large financial gain - of demolishing or extending an older single dwelling and building a massive unsympathetic structure.

As I write in May we have just responded to another demolition and large apartment block proposal. This time in Ilkley, where the proposal is to demolish Limegarth, 27 Kings Road, in the Ilkley Conservation Area and immediately to the east of one of (Sir) Edwin Lutyens finest house and garden designs; grade I listed

**Heathcote**, its several grade I and II\* listed features and its garden registered Grade II. It is one of only two Lutyens designs in Yorkshire. Heathcote is especially important and of arguably international significance as a complete unity of design of buildings and garden (1906-9) where Lutyens worked entirely in a classical manner (with references to the Italian architect Michele Sanmicheli, 1484-1559), following his earlier designs in the vernacular and Tudor mode. The quality of the design and execution of the hard landscaping within the gardens is outstanding and far superior to that of other well-known and most respected landscape designers of the period. He is well-known for his collaboration with the important late 19C/early 20C garden designer Gertrude Jekyll who was responsible for the planting scheme at Heathcote. Heathcote can be considered a precursor to Lutyens later civic work eg in New Delhi and the Cenotaph, Whitehall. Working with his client J T Hemingway, Lutyens designed Heathcote to command its plot, with its design and scale and its situation on somewhat elevated ground.



Heathcote, south front. The apartment block would be visible on the right above the hedge. Image: Anne Tupholme

Although we agreed that Limegarth is of no architectural merit, it is of only two storeys with a relatively small footprint within its plot bounded by trees, and it has no impact on Heathcote, its neighbour. The proposed ten apartment building will essentially be four storeys and the massing will impact on the views both from within Heathcote itself and its setting, particularly from the north and east.



Heathcote, entrance court from the west. The apartment block would be visible just beyond the right gate pier with its finial. Image: Anne Tupholme

We think that the evidence points to the proposed development causing harm to grade I and II\* listed buildings and a grade II registered park and garden; such a significant site that it should be given the best protection. We have objected and have asked the Council to consider a more sympathetic proposal.

We have been pleased to support some applications including for the new Tree Health Centre at **The Arboretum, Castle Howard**. This was a particularly well - documented application and a pleasure to read. In January we were delighted that the National Heritage Lottery Fund bid had been successful for **South Cliff Gardens at Scarborough**. South Cliff is a designed seaside landscape of national importance within the Scarborough Conservation Area and its condition has been of much concern for some time. Scarborough South Bay was probably the country's first seaside holiday resort.

Perhaps as a foretaste of summer we have had two applications for children's play facilities; one at **Castle Howard** and the other at **Nunnington Hall**. Although we feel that it's very important to encourage and engage children with our beautiful parks and gardens, we did have some reservations about the location, and also in the case of Castle Howard, the height of the equipment, however these have now been resolved. Castle Howard wants to extend the children's adventure play area and erect a boardwalk and rope bridge over the Great Lake. In the end Jane Furse represented YGT at a site meeting where she also raised concerns about the only surviving specimens from the original woodland for Henderskelfe Castle before the early C18th bastion wall was built. Since the rest of the woodland (Ray Wood) was substantially felled during the mid C20th, we were concerned that no reference had been made to this important group in the documents submitted, particularly since the proposed playground is specifically intended to result in much greater footfall through this vulnerable area. This concern was also raised by Chris Mayes and we asked for amelioration measures.

At another grade I registered park and garden; this time at **Harewood House** we were very concerned that a proposed new timber fence and another secondary fence to the eastern perimeter of the bird garden/zoo would cause harm. The site is immediately to the south of the House (listed grade I). We wrote that nationally important landscape designers have been engaged by the Lascelles family; from the 18C designers, Richard Woods, Thomas White and Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, followed by alterations and additions c 1800 by Humphry Repton and then in the mid 19C Charles Barry and William Andrews Nesfield. The designs by Brown which developed and formed the landscape to the south of the house are of particular significance as they intentionally complement the other highly graded heritage assets. The landscape was intentionally composed with trees located to create uninterrupted, framed views of the stables, lake and parkland as seen from the house and is very significant. It was painted many times by J M W Turner and others and is shown in many views of Harewood from the south and south east. Similar concerns were expressed by Historic England prior to a site visit and the application was withdrawn.

We have also responded to planning applications submitted by the National Trust for **Wentworth Castle and Stainborough Park**, another grade I registered park and garden, this time in South Yorkshire. We are very supportive of the National Trust's bid to reopen the park and gardens to the visiting public and look forward to that event in the summer.

In the East Riding of Yorkshire, we have commented upon two applications. The first where we had no real concerns is to make changes to the stable block at **Sledmere House**, developing the café, making a function room and a self-contained flat. The pleasure grounds and park of Sledmere House – another grade I site - were laid out by Sir Christopher Sykes 1771-1800 with advice from Thomas White (1736-1811) and Lancelot 'Capability' Brown (1716-83). Sykes was improving the 'wastes' of the East Riding with model agriculture and farms acting as eye catchers. The stable block, listed grade II\*, is within the registered area, and was built by Richard Sykes after he inherited the estate in 1748. Sir Christopher Sykes undertook major building works to the stables in 1775 and 1777. The main façade of the stables, with pairs of coach houses flanking the impressive pedimented entrance with its Tuscan columns and cupola, was an addition to the original building around 1818. The entrance front is now attributed to the York architects, Watson and Pritchett.

The second application is for **Thwaite Hall**. Thwaite Hall (formerly Thwaite House) is important as a rare survival of an impressive 19th century villa garden in an urban setting at Cottingham, and is recognised as such by its inclusion on the Historic England Register of Historic Parks and Gardens (NHLE: 1000137). In the mid-20th century (c,1948), the hall was extended and the gardens developed as botanic and experimental gardens by the University of Hull. This application is for a total of ninety-five dwellings; the conversion of the

existing building into flats and town houses and further flats and town houses in the grounds following demolition of some buildings. In March we conferred with the Friends of Thwaite Gardens and wrote that we welcome the retention and re-use of Thwaite Hall and its later sympathetic extensions. However, we have serious concerns regarding the impact of the proposed new buildings and the associated hard landscaping and car parking on the registered park and garden and the Cottingham Conservation Area and we think that the proposal is over-development of the historic site. Historic England wrote in a similar vein and there are to be further discussions in June.

Following our planning letter to Harrogate DC last summer we wrote again in February to support **Ripon Workhouse Museum's** objection to an outline application for the development of 9 residential dwellings on land immediately to the north of the Workhouse garden. The new Ripon City Plan identifies the field which was the subject of the outline application, and the Workhouse garden, as protected green spaces. We noted that the proposed development would harm the significance of Ripon Workhouse Museum and would be contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework and the Ripon City Plan.

We much appreciate being consulted for advice prior to any works at our historic parks and gardens, so it was a pleasure for Jane and I to visit **Cusworth Hall and Park**, Doncaster MBC at the invitation of Pete Lamb, Principal Planner (Design and Conservation) to discuss new path proposals with Cusworth Estate Manager David Shore, Nick Stopforth, Head of Doncaster Museums and Libraries and Emma Sharpe from Historic England.



View to the south east front of Cusworth Hall from near Middle Fish Pond. Image: Val Hepworth

The grounds are an important example of Richard Woods work and his three plans and accompanying memoranda survive. We suggested that the production of a landscape management plan would greatly assist in the long- term development of the site to build on its use by the public without impacting negatively on the landscape. It is an important first step in planning future proposals.

Jane Winter, a landscape architect with extensive experience of historic designed landscapes came to our planning day at Bramham and suggested that we made a site visit to **Allerton Park** where she manages the repair and restoration work. This was particularly useful as I had never been and we have been responding to a number of planning applications on the edges of the designed landscape and also for the North Yorkshire County Council landfill site. David Rhodes, Malcolm Barnett and myself had a most

interesting day and I was very struck by the quality and topography of the park, and the associated lakes and eye-catchers, although dismayed to see the impact of the landfill site and incinerator.



View to the incinerator and landfill from northern area of Allerton Park. Image: Val Hepworth



View from Lady's Cave to The Temple, Allerton Park. Image: Val Hepworth



View across Lower Fish Pond and Boathouse towards the incinerator, Allerton Park. Image: Val Hepworth

On January 3<sup>rd</sup> we heard that the proposed development at **Parlington** had been deleted from the Leeds CC Site Allocation Plan by HM Inspectors. Since then Susan Kellerman has written on behalf of YGT and the GT to support the relevant Main Modifications and the deletion of the site.

You may have read in the media, 'National Scandal at the National Lottery Heritage Fund' describing the destruction of countless – well probably in the region of 2,000 – Conservation Management Plans and associated project documents relating to that number of grants given for the restoration of public parks since 1996. The archive cost the lottery-buying public fifty million pounds to create and is a complete and unique record of the parks, their history and design, the trees that are growing in them, their ecology and the way that they are used by the public today. This completely thoughtless and wanton destruction was raised by John Phibbs in The Times and follows his and David Jacques enquiries over recent years as to what was happening to the archive. Several members of YGT signed the letter to The Times and I signed it as YGT Chairman. Since then the issue has been raised in the House of Lords and there have been questions in the Commons. It also seems that Historic England has 'lost' Conservation Management Plans. Let us hope that ground rules can be established for retaining such important documents as remain.

Finally ending on a nice positive note, YGT is working with officers of Leeds CC to hold a special event at **Lotherton Hall** next year. In outline this will look at Lotherton's Edwardian gardens, the wider world context of the late nineteenth century in terms of plant introductions and leading figures in garden design, and the challenges and successes of restoration using the Edwardian garden at Dyffryn near Cardiff as a case study. We have invited Chris Flynn, Head Gardener for the National Trust at Dyffryn to be a guest speaker.

*Val Hepworth*

*YGT Trustee and Chairman Conservation & Planning*