

YGT Website December 2013

Small Grants Scheme

In July 2013 we gave the Friends of **West Bank Park, York**, £1,000 to go towards the repair and replanting of the rose garden. As many of you will know West Bank Park is significant in Yorkshire's horticultural history as the site of the famous Backhouse nursery which included the legendary rock garden constructed in the 1860s; a major influence on Victorian rock gardening. West Bank opened as a public park in 1938 and the original rose garden dates from this time. Following our grant we are pleased that Penelope Dawson Brown has joined the steering committee of the West Bank Park Heritage Centre and Café. This will be situated in the old Park-Keepers House and is currently supported by York City Council. Its primary objectives are to engage the local community in celebrating West Bank's exciting horticultural history. It is an ambitious project which will need major funding but is now gaining both local and national support.

The remaining grant from 2011-12 scheme year is to Todmorden Civic Society for the **Garden of Remembrance in Centre Vale Park, Todmorden**. We understand that the work to restore the memorial wall – to which we are contributing – the tablets, statue and dedication should be almost finished. Anne Tupholme and I hope to see the completed work soon in order to pay the grant of £1,000. The memorial will be rededicated on 12th October 2014; a fitting tribute at the centenary of the start of the First World War.

From our 2012-13 Small Grants Scheme we have given funding for a new park bench at **Sherburn-in-Elmet**. We have also paid £600 to the **Gledhow Valley** Conservation Group to assist with the production of an interpretation board on the history of Gledhow Hall, park and designed ornamental landscape. To quote from the board: 'Allerton Gledhow' was made up of land that by the early 14th century had been gifted to Kirkstall Abbey by its medieval owners. Gledhow was purchased as part of the Manor of Chapel Allerton in 1601 by the Thwaites family, who built the first Hall and developed the estate. By the mid to late 19th century, mill owners and merchants developed other grand houses and lodges near the artery route of Gledhow Lane, renting and buying property from each other.' Getting this and its 'sister' board produced has taken some time but we congratulate Christine and the Group for their tenacity and patience.

Caroline Kernan and I have had several visits to **Friarwood Valley Gardens**, Pontefract this past year. Caroline had managed to gather together suitable plants from a friend who was retiring from her nursery and in July, Liz Clayden of the Friends of Friarwood Valley Gardens, came over to collect them. When we visited in November to hand over our cheque for £1,000 it was just so heartening to see the great improvements to the park. We really admire the Friends group who have made such a difference and just keep going – even when the local authority arranging the Liquorice Festival managed not to include the park in the literature or on the signage. [A bed in Friarwood Valley Gardens has liquorice plants and these were grown in the Valley from the 1600's to the early 1900's.] Despite this little set-back, the gardens are very well-used with people doing ad hoc litter picking and with events from Yorkshire Day to a Lantern Festival in October. This Festival organised by the Lionesses had paper lantern making workshops and then a lantern procession to the park starting at Pontefract Castle. It must have been quite magical; glinting and glowing lanterns in the dark, followed by hot drinks made by the Friends – perhaps an idea to be 'borrowed' by other voluntary groups. We also understand that the park is to be used for part of the NVQ horticultural practical qualifications.

You may have caught a news story in August where our small grant contribution for the restoration of the **Ionic Temple at Duncombe Park** was listed alongside major contributors. The Grade I listed temple designed by Sir John Vanbrugh and built in about 1720 has been considered "at risk" since 1985 due to water causing extensive erosion to the soft sandstone columns. Two hundred thousand pounds has been raised and restoration work is beginning, so we expect to pay our grant soon.

We are waiting to hear from our other 2012-13 grant approvals. The tree planting at **Peasholm Park, Scarborough** is being carried out this autumn/winter and the management plan for **Boston Park, Rotherham** is currently being finalised.

This year – 2014 - we have made some minor changes to the format of our application form which we think makes it easier to use. We also moved the closing date to the end of September to enable time for visits to the applicants before the worst of the winter weather ... perhaps because of that we've not yet had any snow! We have had four applications: Plumpton Rocks, Knaresborough for parkland trees, Scampston Conservatory, Malton, for exhibition materials particularly connected with the Richardson's who built it, Abbey House Youth Hostel Physic Garden, Whitby to improve the planting and labelling and The Sunken Gardens, People's Park, Whitby to restore the stone walls, seating and planting. They are all worthy projects and quite contrasting. Both Plumpton Rocks and the walled garden and landscape at Scampston Hall are Grade II* on the English Heritage Register meaning that they are of exceptional historic interest whereas neither of the gardens in Whitby are on the Register but do have an interesting history, are locally/regionally significant and are supported by local volunteers. Members of the Conservation sub-committee have been to see all the applicants and at our meeting in January the grant applications will be discussed in order to put proposals to the Council of Management for a final decision.

Plumpton Rocks, is also the site of some memorial tree planting for Edward de Plumpton Hunter and Helen Lazenby. In 1996 Edward was one of the (signatory) subscribers to the Yorkshire Gardens Trust Memorandum and Articles and Helen was the documents witness, so although The Rocks are sublime, a wonderful landscape that I love, they are for me also tinged with sadness. We held our first Midsummer Picnic there on a rainy Friday evening, the 20th June 1997. Helen and I made a pre-picnic visit with Edward to work out the logistics of the event and I have a lovely photograph of them both standing gazing across the lake from the 'Lovers Leap' view point. In their memory twenty six Scots Pine trees (called 'firs' in the 18th century) and two yew trees were planted last March to replace trees lost over the last century. The yews have done very well but some Scots Pine trees on steep slopes have died, probably due to the prolonged cold/freezing conditions and then water run-off later on, resulting in insufficient water. These are to be replaced probably in slightly different locations. It is good to think that Edward and Helen's love of The Rocks will live on in the new tree planting and that this will be a small contribution to the enjoyment of visitors for many generations to come.

Val Hepworth