



Whirlow Brook Park and Whinfell Quarry Gardens, Sheffield YGT visit 20 May 2025

Introduction

On a hot sunny May day in south-west Sheffield, a group of about 20 YGT members and guests enjoyed a visit to not one but two adjacent gardens, with markedly contrasting landscapes and histories.

Whirlow Brook Park and Whinfell Quarry Garden share a significant historical context. Both have evolved from private ownership into public access spaces now owned and managed by Sheffield City Council and supported by the tireless work of their respective Friends and Volunteer groups. Historically both also share interesting links with the Backhouse Nurseries of York.

Armed and prepared with detailed notes provided by Gillian Parker and the informative guided tours by the Friends groups we had a full and fascinating day. Each garden certainly deserves its own individual visit report and therefore the visit write-up will be in two parts: Whirlow Brook Park in this YGT Autumn 2025 *Newsletter* and Whinfell Quarry Garden in a later YGT e-Bulletin.

Whirlow Brook Park

Our day began with a welcome and introduction by

Shelagh Woolliscroft (Chair of the Friends of Whirlow Brook Park) and Andy Mumford (Area Park Manager for South Sheffield). They outlined:

- The structure of the Council and volunteer group partnership and how it works e.g. for the non-statutory aspects of parks maintenance, the Council creates the schedule for Whirlow Brook Park, with the list of key tasks for the volunteers to work through. The Friends group provides the volunteers and raises funds via social events, grants etc and recruits support from corporate groups for some of the heavy large-scale projects e.g. clearing the old orchard
- The challenges and successes of the respective groups e.g. the dramatic changes in local authority park staffing levels from 750 gardeners down to currently

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112. The Friends of Whirlow Brook Park was created in 2021 following a U3A group project in 2011 to restore the Rock Garden. It now has about 100 members and 20 active volunteers.



Whirlow Brook Park House

The Tour

Our excellent guided tour of Whirlow Brook Park began on the terrace of the surviving house and was led by Sue Turner, who researches the history of the park and gardens, which is recorded in detail in the history section of the Friends website <https://friendsofwhirlowbrookpark.org.uk/history>

In 1908, five acres of land, formerly owned by the Duke of Devonshire, were bought by Percy Fawcett (chief engineer at steel manufacturers, Thomas Firth & Sons, Sheffield), and he built Whirlow Brook House here. He purchased a further eight acres in 1913 to create a drive with a lodge at the park entrance, providing the landscape for garden designs, including a rockery, ponds and an extensive tree collection.

Between 1919-1938, Percy's sister Madge Fenton Jones, a keen gardener, lived at Whirlow Brook Park and added her contribution to the gardens. In 1946 Sheffield City Council bought the now 39-acre site to create a public access park which opened in 1951. Whirlow Brook Park is open all day and every day throughout the year.



OS 6 inch map of Whirlow Brook revised 1914; published 1924 ; National Library of Scotland , detail created by author

The Tree Collection

One of the earliest principles of the Friends group was to consult those by whom Whirlow Brook Park is intended to be used, the general public, as to what they wanted for the park. The responses included “not a lot of change” and to have a “nice, quiet secluded place”. Guided by these principles, development plans aim to maximise the park's existing assets via creative and relevant ways to interest people (of all ages) with the site's past, present and future.

The tree collection is the park's greatest asset and is considered the second-best tree collection in South Yorkshire. A giant *Cedrus deodara* near the terrace exit is part of the Tree Trail created by the Friends group.

(<https://friendsofwhirlowbrookpark.org.uk/tree-trail>)

This guides visitors round 34 trees of the 50-strong collection of specimen trees, many planted by Percy Fawcett between 1902-1919, with additional information provided by QR codes on posts. Tree planting on this scale was a feature of Backhouse landscape designs, but unfortunately no records have survived for the tree planting at Whirlow.

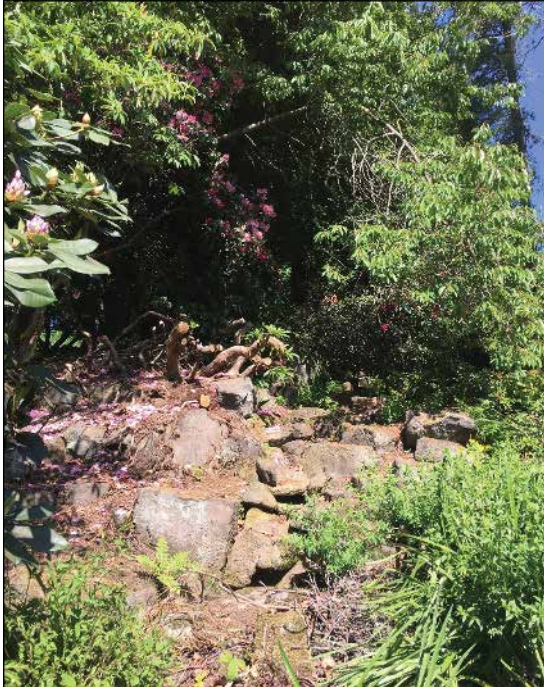
In the area behind the house, marked on the historic OS map as Rough Standhills, thousands of larch trees had been planted. Unfortunately, in 2021 the plantation became infected with *Phytophthora ramorum* – water mould. As a notifiable disease, all the trees had to be felled, which created further problems. With water no longer being absorbed by the trees, it now ran freely down into the garden and to the back of the house. A dip in the ground had to be dug to create a channel to direct the water towards the rockery. This currently rather wild section of the landscape has now been re-planted with mixed woodland species.



The Rockery

Gillian Parker gave an overview of the Backhouse links to the Whirlow Brook Park Rockery. It is identified as a Backhouse garden/landscape on stylistic grounds since no documentary evidence has been discovered to date. Gillian reported that the jury is still out on some Backhouse aspects of the Whirlow Brook rockery.

It is thought to be the work of Richard Potter, the Backhouse Alpine Manager and an experienced creator of rockworks. The tumbled cascade is a typical Richard Potter feature, although due to the drought, there was no water tumbling at all. Some members of the group noted evidence of pitting on the rocks, similar to that at the Burnby Gardens rockery at Pocklington, which was created by the Backhouse Nursery before 1911.



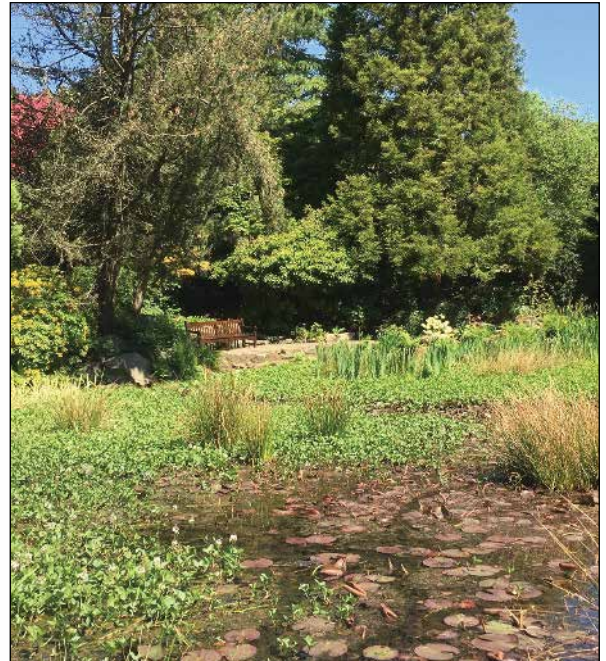
The Rockery tumbling cascade, possibly by Richard Potter



Cornus controversa variegata and azaleas in the Rockery

The Rock Garden is a relatively small part of Whirlow's 39 acres. Its winding paths, trajectories and changes in levels make it feel bigger than it is. Rhododendrons have survived from the original planting. *Cornus controversa variegata* and azaleas were in full bloom.

The Pond in the centre of the Rock Garden's lower level still had water in it but presents another challenge in terms of its management. On this visit much of the pond's surface was covered with hummocks of moss, creating an attractive almost sculptural effect. However, the prospect of any clearance work on the pond would be daunting and above all it needs to be within the staffing capacity of the volunteer group.



The Pond in the centre of the Rock Garden

Progressing down the drive away from the Rock Garden, Whirlow's topography changes level, dropping steeply away down to the Limb Brook running along the bottom of the valley creating an open stretch of water. This links to an earlier phase of the site's history. This was a mill pond, built to store water for the Whirlow Mill lower down the valley. Originally a corn mill, by 1802 saws and later scythes were manufactured there, but it had become redundant by 1935.

The Orchard

Further down the drive to the right is the site of the latest project of the Friends group, the restoration of the orchard. Oral history evidence had suggested that an orchard existed somewhere at Whirlow Brook Park, but its exact location was unknown.

An overgrown and very neglected area had been cleared, revealing at the far end of a rectangular strip, six apple trees, suggesting that this could be the lost orchard. Recently two visitors were making a nostalgic visit to the cottage at this same spot, and they were able to confirm that their father had planted fruit

trees there in the 1960s when it was the family home. The large-scale restoration of the orchard is now well underway, with 17 new fruit trees being planted, sponsored by individuals and families, as well as the Sheffield Fruit Company.



Restoration of the orchard

The Woodland

The tour then crossed over to the east side of Whirlow Brook Park to explore the Woodland. There are several options for walks of varying lengths through the woods. The Blue Trail is designed to engage the interest of children not only in wildlife but also imaginatively through sculptures and story-making. <https://friendsofwhirlowbrookpark.org.uk/blue-trail/> The lovely Story Chair in the Dell created by a young person as part of their Duke of Edinburgh's award was too tempting even for YGT members to resist.

A wildflower meadow has been planted in the lawned area at the beginning of the Blue Trail as it winds its way down to the Cascades.

The Cascades



The Cascades

The history of the Cascades at Whirlow is unknown and rather puzzling. Whilst their origins are unclear, they were obviously built for a purpose, being a

significant stone structure with water from the Limb Brook spilling over. Various suggestions were made by the group. Did they have some kind of hydro-electric purpose being quite close to the house? Were they built for leisure purposes, such as swimming? Did they relate to fishing? The mystery continues.....



The formal gardens

The Formal Gardens

The conclusion of our Whirlow Brook Park Tour returned to the personal history of the garden as a private garden created by Percy Fawcett's sister, Lady Madge Benton-Jones. She designed

- The paved terrace and border in front of the house
- The formal areas east of the house accessed by steps, including the Rose Garden

Lady Benton-Jones chose to be buried in her favourite formal gardens after her death in 1938, as Whirlow Brook Park's life as a private garden came to end.

The borders and circular beds in 'Madge's Garden' with soft pastel planting against a background of trees leading into the woodland, was an ideal place to sit and reflect on all we had seen and learned.

Long standing YGT member Roz Ellis used to live near Whirlow Brook Park and her family visited often during the 1960-70s. She had arrived for the YGT visit uncertain of how she would find it compared to her childhood memories - but she was not disappointed.

When asked what was special for her about Whirlow, Roz replied "it's gentleness and ambiance, a delight to wander round with its contrasting areas – a sense of place".

A perfect summing up of our visit, with our thanks and congratulations to everyone at Whirlow Brook Park for all their hard work and creativity in maintaining the gardens and park and engaging the interest of the people who visit it.

Chris Beevers

Images © Chris Beevers

Visit to South Cliff Gardens, Scarborough

Tuesday 15 July 2025



The Miniature Garden today

Introduction

South Cliff Gardens are nestled into the steep cliffs above the golden-sanded shoreline of Scarborough and offer a surprisingly captivating blend of former Victorian elegance, varied horticulture and tranquil natural beauty just a few steps away from the bustle of the town.

On Tuesday, 15th July 2025, members of YGT gathered at Beeforth's Hive, a small community venue in South Cliff Gardens used for a variety of events including workshops, talks and performance. The building was designed to produce much of its own energy and be as sustainable as possible. It is made of natural materials that blend into the heritage setting and adds little weight impact on the cliff itself.

We were treated to coffee and delicious homemade cake, after which we were introduced to our host for the day, Adrian Perry. Adrian is Chair of the Scarborough Civic Society and a long-term member of the Friends of South Cliff Gardens, a local volunteer group which plays an active role in maintaining and promoting the site. During the morning, he gave us a comprehensive and informative slide presentation on the history of the gardens and details of the restoration.

Historical Context

Next year, 2026, will be the 400th anniversary of the discovery of the spa waters at Scarborough, but it was during the early 19th century that it became fashionable to take the waters for health reasons, and this encouraged the development of tourism at Scarborough, almost exclusively for the Victorian elite. The Cliff Bridge was opened in 1827, but it led only to the rudimentary building and bare grounds of the Spa. Horse racing on the beach was a popular pastime, and

spectators could get a clear view by standing on the bridge.

Thereafter, the Cliff Bridge Company (CBC) started to develop its grounds with walks, trees and gardens designed by George Knowles, and between 1839-1858, they replaced their original wooden structure with more elegant stone buildings designed by Henry Wyatt and Sir Joseph Paxton. By 1840, sixpence would get you a ticket that allowed you "to pass along the Pleasure Grounds, Promenade Gallery, Spa, and the use of the Mineral Waters". Southwards from these pleasure grounds, however, the cliff face was still bare, windswept and unvisited.

By 1845, the railway had come to town, and this changed the visitor demographic so Scarborough was no longer the exclusive haunt of the wealthy upper classes: businessmen could now visit with their families in tow. In addition, the first Valley Bridge was opened in 1865, and this provided a level access route for traffic, further stimulating the expansion of buildings south along the esplanade.

Unfortunately, Paxton's building was all but destroyed in a fire in 1875, but this led to the rebuilding of the Spa much as we know it today. The façade of the older building was rescued, and the pinkish hue of the fire is still discernible on the stonework. The rebuilding of the Spa encouraged the development of the elegant, terraced buildings at the top of the hill, creating an 'island' remote from the town.

CBC bought eight acres of land to the south of the Spa, although two acres were subsequently sold to the South Cliff Tramway Company for the erection of their steep, water-powered cliff lifts, of which two of the original five remain.

With all this development proceeding apace, it soon became evident that the bare land of the undercliff offered opportunities for more gardens to complement those of the Spa grounds. Holbeck Gardens were thus laid out by the Corporation in the 1880s and were the only gardens then open to the public free of charge.

Thirteen acres of land in the centre belonged to prominent Scarborough bookseller and art dealer, George, Lord Beeforth, who was also responsible for many of the houses along the South Esplanade. He had built a house for himself, The Belvedere, with a large garden that extended onto the undercliff. He agreed with the Council that the esplanade road could continue through his land, past his house. He planted many roses and trees to screen them and developed a cultivated vista from the seaward end of a subway tunnel under the road which linked his home with his private garden and stone summerhouse. During World War II this was commissioned as a public air raid shelter. The tunnel is still there but is no longer open to the public.



View over Scarborough from Beeforth's Hive

In 1912, Beeforth sold all 13 acres to the Council as did the Cliff Bridge Company who sold them all the land south of the tramway. The Council Borough Engineer, Harry W Smith, then set about devising the wonderful gardens we see today.

In place of two of Beeforth's rose gardens, Smith started work in 1914 on the Italian Gardens which were laid out high on the cliff above a bathing pool dug into the rock at the bottom of the cliffs to stabilise them. The Italian Gardens occupied a previously boggy area which needed all of Smith's engineering skills to overcome. The gardens comprised two classical pavilions at each end, terraces, seating, formally laid out flower gardens and an ornate lily pond, complete with a statue of Mercury, donated by wealthy businessman and friend of Smith's, Alfred Shuttleworth. Shuttleworth also gifted the Clock Tower which stands close to his former summer residence, Red House. An apocryphal tale claims that he found the many clocks in his house to be too noisy, so he rid himself of all of them and referred to the Clock Tower instead!

Unfortunately, Scarborough was bombarded by German planes during World War I which resulted in some deaths and damage to houses nearby, but the Council decided to carry on with the completion of the Italian Gardens whilst shells whistled over the heads of the workmen!

The further development of Holbeck Gardens with a putting green and pavilion had to wait until 1925. Meanwhile, from Red Court, Shuttleworth's view south-eastwards was impaired by another house. He eventually bought that house and demolished it in order to enjoy the unbroken view! In its place, he built Red Court Garden, which he was to present to the town in 1917. Eighteen months before the outbreak of the Second World War, the Council created an attractive miniature garden within it.

With the acquisition by Scarborough Corporation in 1957 of the Spa and its grounds, all the cliff face

from Aquarium Top to Holbeck Ravine came under municipal ownership, save for the tiny private garden opposite The Belvedere.

Restoration

Over the years, the gardens fell into disrepair and became overgrown. Many of the famous original shelters were in a terrible state and covered in graffiti. An air of neglect fell over the whole place and areas were under threat of closure due to dangerous conditions.

In 2006, several local people got together and, with the help of the local council, formed the Friends of South Cliff Gardens. Since then, significant restoration efforts have been undertaken to preserve the gardens' historic character whilst enhancing their accessibility and ecological value. The Friends raised funds amongst local people and, with the support of the local council, gained external funding from organisations such as DEFRA and the Heritage Lottery Fund. More than £7m in total was raised to fund projects such as:

- Soil nails to stabilise the cliffs
- Careful renovation of stonework
- Restoration of paths and retaining walls
- Railings, drainage and lighting improvements
- A new operational centre
- A play area with toilets and changing rooms
- Improvements to access in the garden by the opening of the tunnel under the Cliff lift
- Pruning, restoration and replanting of traditional flower beds
- Creation of new habitats for wildlife
- Repaired/reinstated/replacement traditional shelters.



Planted borders along the pathway leading to the Clock Tower

YGT also gave a grant to the gardens to pay for some new railings and helped restore one of the shelters. Information boards dotted throughout the gardens

tell the story of these restorations, offering insights into both the challenges and triumphs of the ongoing work. The major works were due to be finished by 2022, but the Covid pandemic pushed that deadline to 2023. Even today, member of the Friends and other volunteers meet every Wednesday at 10am in the Rose Garden to help the gardening team with pruning, weeding, tidying up or planting.

Exploring the Gardens

South Cliff Gardens today comprise six gardens: the Spa Gardens, Prince of Wales Gardens, the Rose Garden, the Italian Gardens, Holbeck Gardens and the Shuttleworth Gardens, and together cover some 52 acres.

The Clock Tower

After a break for lunch, we reassembled at the Clock Tower on the esplanade next to the putting green to start our exploration of the gardens as they are today. Unfortunately, the weather was less kind in the afternoon, and we were accompanied by steady, but gentle rain.

The Clock Tower was built to commemorate the coronation of George V in 1911 and was gifted by Alfred Shuttleworth on condition that there was no fuss or ceremony attached to its unveiling, but a plaque on the tower acknowledges his generosity. The designer of the Tower is unknown, but it was constructed in the Wren style. The clock itself was manufactured by Leeds clockmakers, William Potts & Sons, and had to be wound regularly. It was eventually upgraded to an electric motor in the 1960s when the Council employee tasked with winding it became stuck in the Tower overnight when his ladder slipped!

Shuttleworth's Red Court Garden

From the Clock Tower, we crossed the road to enter Shuttleworth's Red Court Garden. The area is pleasant and tranquil, mainly laid to lawn with borders around and a shelter which has been repaired. The miniature garden is still intact and charming.

The Putting Green

Back across the road, we wandered past the Putting Green, opened in 1925 and still a main attraction, partly due to its beautiful sea view. The Putting Green also features one of the gardens' famous shelters which was added in 1928. Under one of the Civic Society's grant projects, the windows were restored to make the most of the sea views. Indeed, some of the views are painted on the glass and are far better than the view had the glass remained clear! From a distance, the eye is easily fooled.

The Star Map

Below the Putting Green is a viewing point for the Star Map which also has magnificent views out to sea and of local landmarks such as Scarborough Castle and

the lighthouse. The Star Map occupies the site of the former tidal bathing pool which closed in the 1970s.



The former bathing pool is now the Star Map

The Italian Gardens

The Italian Gardens are one of South Cliff's most outstanding and best loved features and are now Grade II listed on the English Heritage's Register of Historic Houses & Gardens.

Much of the stonework used to make the features in the Gardens came from the excavation work on the tidal bathing pool. They have been restored to their former design, although the original statue of Mercury, which was cast in lead, has now been replaced by a resin copy, and some of the urns on the terraces had weathered badly and have also been replaced.

The terraces draw the visitors down to the flat, central area dominated by the pond and formal flower beds. There is ample seating for visitors to sit and enjoy the tranquillity of the area and a rich diversity of wildlife that inhabits it. I failed to spot the sign that said 'Do Not Feed the Squirrels' but, no matter, the squirrel found the remains of my cheese sandwich unpalatable anyway!

Gardens, Wooded and Wild Areas

The formal layout of the Italian Gardens gives way to more naturalistic areas, where wildflowers grow in abundance and the landscaping is wilder and more wooded. The thin, rocky soil in some of the more natural gardens can be difficult to tend and the gardeners frequently plant far more plants in an area than necessary as they know many will not survive. Plants are raised by the gardeners in a polytunnel provided by the Friends of South Cliff and the gardens benefit from regular donations of plants from retailers such as B&Q.

Much to Adrian's surprise, many people favour the wilder, wooded areas of the gardens where, apart from maintaining the pathways, the gardens are left to their own devices. Walkers and runners can be seen here,

and the gardens are also dog-friendly, with many visitors bringing their pets for a stroll.



*Statue of Mercury atop the Lily Pond
in the Italian Gardens*

The Rose Garden



The Rose Garden

After falling into disrepair, the Friends of South Cliff Gardens raised funds from the Heritage Lottery Fund to restore the Rose Garden to its former glory – well, almost. Over 15 months this dedicated team of volunteers transformed the site including adding new drainage and topsoil, and planting nearly 11,000 new rose bushes. They also pruned back growth from overhanging trees and shrubs to improve light and added an information board for visitors. Despite all this effort, the Friends have been disappointed to find that they cannot grow roses very successfully here. They know it cannot be due to poor soil, drainage or light, so an alternative theory is under consideration: they suspect the young, new growth on the roses is being browsed at night by visiting deer and rabbits, thus inhibiting the roses' growth. The Friends are still pondering this problem, but they have discovered that some rose varieties are tastier than others!

The Spa and Spa Bridge

South Cliff Gardens are thoughtfully designed to be accessible to all. Paths are well maintained and clearly signposted, and we noticed that the asphalt of some paths is colour coded to indicate where there are gentle gradients that are manageable for wheelchair users and those with mobility challenges (known locally as the 'yellow brick road!').

The network of paths leads visitors towards the Spa Bridge, an imposing iron structure linking the gardens to Scarborough's historic Spa complex. Along the way, our attention was drawn to some of the just visible soil nails that were driven into the cliffs to stabilise them. Photographs show that the soil nails were very prominent when first put in place by the contractor (whose staff had to abseil down the cliffs to complete the job), but nature has played its part in growing over and disguising them. In all, 40kms of steel rods went into the cliffs, but they are now hardly noticeable.

At the Bridge and Spa complex the view opens dramatically, with the North Sea stretching away to the horizon. Although access to the spa waters has long ceased, the Spa building is now a Grade II listed venue used as a conference and entertainment centre. Tucked behind the Spa's famous Sun Court are the Italian Steps or, as they were once known, the Italian Terrace, a place where wealthy Victorian residents of Scarborough once gathered to promenade. The Italian Steps are one of very few of the original parts of Sir Joseph Paxton's design that remain visible today, following the fire of 1875.

At sea level there is a row of multi-coloured, Grade II listed bathing chalets which the Council restored with a justifiable financial case as they are now rented out to generate revenue.

As we traversed the meandering pathways, Adrian was keen to point out some of the shelters that have been

saved for visitors to retreat from inclement weather. Some were beyond repair and were removed, but others were restored and repainted in colours thought to reflect the originals. We paused to admire one of the shelters and noticed a lady who seemed to have moved in – one of the ‘issues’ they sometimes face, according to Adrian!

We finished our tour at the north end of the gardens where the path approaches the road into town. There we bid farewell to Adrian Perry and thanked him heartily for a thoroughly uplifting day.

Conclusion

Those of us who had not visited Scarborough for many years were pleasantly surprised by the variety and complexity of the gardens and their history. We owe a great debt of gratitude to Adrian and the Friends of South Cliff Gardens for their considerable

time and efforts in saving and continuing to maintain the gardens for us all to enjoy. They are very proud to report that the gardens were nominated for the European Garden Awards 2025 under the Management or Development of a Historic Park or Garden category. Unfortunately they did not win, but were very happy to share second prize with Raby Castle for ‘comprehensive restoration and partial redesign of garden and park architecture’.

For those planning a visit, I would recommend allowing at least half a day to explore the gardens fully. Take time to wander the paths, discover hidden corners and lovely viewpoints. Bring a picnic to enjoy on the lawns or simply sit and watch the world go by.

Niki Torrance

Images © Adrian Perry and Lindsay Dodgson

From the Chair

Our statutory status in planning applications

Last time I wrote about the anticipated consultation on whether the Gardens Trust (and the County Garden Trusts) should retain our statutory status in planning applications. Then, I noted that the consultation had been delayed several months from its potential beginning. Now, we have more certainty that it will appear soon, possibly before you receive this *Newsletter*.

The proposed change to our status is almost certainly the most important issue we have faced since we were founded. Unless local planning authorities continue to be obliged to notify GT about applications affecting registered parks and gardens, or some other mechanism is implemented to do this; unless GT is properly financed to notify the CGTs, and unless GT is properly financed to respond to, and support county trusts in constructing responses, then the statutory protection that registration offers will become meaningless, except for Grade I and II* designed landscapes. If we lose our statutory status a great deal of the work we have already done to protect all Yorkshire’s registered parks and gardens will be threatened, our future responses to planning applications will become patchy and piecemeal rather than comprehensive, and our future effort in adding parks and gardens to the national register will be weakened. Removal of our statutory status poses an existential threat to parks and gardens already on the register and to gardens of quality that ought to be added to the register. Everyone who values these special places will be affected, and generations to come will have fewer opportunities to appreciate

our distinctive contribution to artistic creativity over centuries. **It is important that we all respond to the consultation when it begins.** We have only this chance to influence the debate, and we should seize it.

Future of the relationship between GT and CGTs

The other high-level matter on our radar is related to the statutory consultation: the future of the relationship between GT and the county trusts. We have had national meetings over the last 12 months, and the time to draw conclusions is getting close. There is a national meeting in November, and I expect firm proposals to emerge at, or from, that event. I am not sure what those proposals will be, but they will probably include a strengthening of our links, and a recognition that the ‘subscription’ we pay to GT for its support, without which we could not function at the required level, will have to increase.

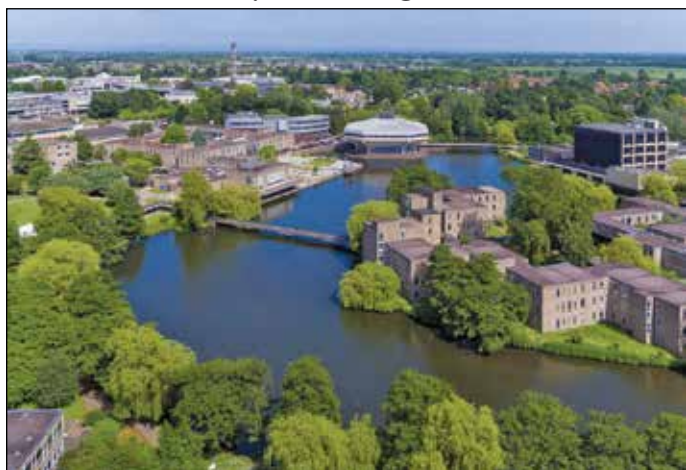
New Chair

Finally, another matter I have written about recently. From the end of March next year YGT will require a new Chair. As you can see from this and previous *Newsletters* and annual reports, there is a lot going on; it is interesting, absorbing, important and valuable work, with a Yorkshire focus and national dimensions. The Chair is supported by a whole range of expertise and experience freely and generously given. I have found it a fulfilling and demanding role, from which I have gained an enormous amount.

Please contact us if you are interested.

Chris Webb

Visit to University of York Campus West Tuesday 19 August 2025



Aerial view of campus (Image © University of York)

Introduction

“We in the north have been looked on as a rude and barbarous people and a university would be a means of washing from us the stain of rudeness and incivility”. Thus begins the chapter on York in *Building the New Universities* by Tony Birks and Michael Holford published in 1972. The quote is from an unsuccessful petition of 1641 and the authors note that it was not until 1960 that approval was finally given for the city to have its first university.



*Diagram showing original layout design
(©Tony Birks & Michael Holford/David & Charles)*

The chosen site at Heslington comprised 190 acres of mainly low-lying and marshy land as well as the 16th century Heslington Hall and its associated gardens. The opportunity was taken to design a university from scratch. The development plan of 1962 was devised by consultant architects Robert Matthew, Johnson-Marshall and Partners (RMJM) working with landscape consultant Frank Clark, co-founder of the Garden History Society, now the Gardens Trust. The marsh was to be drained and replaced with a

sinuous 15-acre lake around which the new buildings would be placed in four broad arcs radiating west of Heslington Hall. Footbridges and covered walkways would allow access between them.

A collegiate model was chosen to give a focus for loyalty, and faculty buildings were generally to be avoided. Two-thirds of students were expected to live on site as were many of the staff. The design allowed for maximum interaction between students and academics of different disciplines. Eighty percent of the area was to be maintained as greenspace and buildings were to be generally no more than four storeys in height allowing the landscape to dominate. The result was hailed as a model of 20th century university planning in a designed landscape and was to set an example for others.



Contrast between the old and the new buildings

Buildings

As twenty or so members gathered in front of Heslington Hall we had been hoping for another sunny day so typical of this summer. But the weather was overcast, and this was destined to take the shine off our visit. It also brought home the contrast between the mellow Heslington Hall, and the 1960s buildings constructed mainly of steel frames clad in lightweight concrete panels. As we walked round it became apparent that the party was split in its appreciation of the site. Some felt that here was a bold and inventive approach producing modern buildings in a contemporary landscape. Others, and I count myself as one, preferred the warm brick of the Hall and longed for what we felt was a more human approach.



Chris Webb addressing us in front of the lake

Landscape

There was general appreciation of the soft landscaping which gave a green setting to the buildings and some relief to their starkness. Trees are now well-established, especially the willows around the lake. Some of the areas close to the water are attractive to ducks and geese which provide them with an inviting habitat but are less so for humans negotiating the copious droppings. There were mixed views about the hard landscaping, especially the recent revamp of the piazza at Vanbrugh College. It is now styled as Greg's Place in honour of the broadcaster and university alumnus Greg Dyke, who served as Chancellor from 2004 to 2015.



Mature lakeside planting gives these residential blocks an arcadian setting

The visit was very ably put together and led by YGT Chair Chris Webb who has known the site for a long time and is clearly attached to it. We were fortunate too to be shown round by Gordon Easton, the grounds manager at the University, who was due to retire shortly after our visit. Gordon could draw on his years of experience to explain how the site had evolved and say what had worked well and not so well. A member of the Campus Development Team was also with us and could give the wider picture and talk about future plans.



Central Hall and footbridge by the lake- a contrast of dramatic structure and soft planting

The western campus is very much a child of its time. The pioneering nature of the designed landscape is recognised by its inclusion by Historic England in the Register of Parks & Gardens at Grade II. The entry gives a full and informative description and is well worth the read. Some of the buildings are Grade II listed.

The Future

So, what of the future? The landscaping is now well-established and if the 80% green space rule is maintained then the open quality of the site looks to be secure. Less certain is the future of the buildings. Erected in the most part using the CLASP system of construction when speed and low cost were the priorities with little thought for energy efficiency or durability, there must come a time when they will need to be replaced by more sustainable structures. That would give an opportunity to introduce brick to the site to blend more harmoniously with the Grade II* listed Heslington Hall.



Greg's Place and Vanbrugh College

Conclusion

More could be done to celebrate the Hall and its historic gardens. Many of us noted that the former walled garden was not accessible. We suggested that here was an opportunity to make better use of an historic feature perhaps by opening it to the public. The University of York does not have a botanic garden so might that be a good use?

This was a stimulating visit to a rather different type of venue for YGT. It certainly stretched my horizons and thanks to Chris and all involved for an excellent day.

Richard Taylor

Images © Richard Taylor unless otherwise attributed

Visit to Yorkshire Sculpture Park

Tuesday 16 September 2025

Introduction

The last visit of the year by YGT was on 16th September to the Yorkshire Sculpture Park (YSP), housed within the beautiful, landscaped garden laid out in the 18th century around Bretton Hall in West Yorkshire. Founded in 1977 by Sir Peter Murray, the YSP continues to grow and today as it approaches its 50th birthday, the site is the largest sculpture park of its kind in Europe.

History

The estate is said to date from the 14th century, with the Wentworth family acquiring the property through marriage in 1407. The Palladian mansion that is seen today was built c. 1730 by Sir William Wentworth, 4th Baronet, assisted by the architect Colonel James Moyser. It is acknowledged that Sir William had a new chapel built in the park and was growing pineapples, but little else is known of the gardens around this time. When Thomas the 5th Baronet, a confirmed bachelor with a colourful life, inherited Bretton on the death of his father in 1763, he immediately set about remodelling the park and gardens. The renowned landscape designer Richard Woods was brought in to dam the River Dearne and create a new lake (Upper Lake). Despite a raft of construction issues, another lake (Lower Lake) and the Cut (the canalised River Dearne running parallel to the two lakes) was soon added



Central area of the Bretton estate with the hall (centre) and Upper and Lower Lakes (bottom). OS 25-inch, revised 1904, published 1906 map (National Library of Scotland, CC-BY).

Ornamental structures were built to augment the water features, including cascades and bridges, that endure to the present day. Along with developing various plantations, a plethora of decorative buildings were constructed to further enhance the lakes. These included a rustic grotto, root house, menagerie, Greek summerhouse, semicircular temple, boat house and possibly a bath house. Embracing the fashion for

the gothic, a temple was built on one of the artificial islands in the centre of Upper Lake and Bella Vista, an eye catcher positioned on the northern edge of the park, were built in this style.

Cutting his son out of an anticipated inheritance, Thomas left Bretton to his eldest of three daughters, Diana Beaumont, in 1792. It is believed that the mother of these children was Thomas's mistress Betsy Wordsworth, though she remains somewhat of a mystery despite openly being with Thomas and the children at Bretton. Described by some as proud and vain, others recognized Diana as being a caring and generous employer, but she was, nonetheless, a passionate plantswoman. Growing many rare and unusual plants, she moved in elite horticultural circles, receiving plants and seed from the Botanic Garden in Calcutta and submitting specimens to meetings of the Linnean Society. Robert Marnock, the famed landscape gardener and later curator at Sheffield Botanical Gardens, spent his formative years at Bretton. Joining first as foreman of the kitchen garden in 1825 he was quickly elevated to head gardener in 1834. Years later, Marnock would write fondly of Diana, his employer.

While Diana's father is credited with enhancing the landscape of the Hall, her contribution to Bretton was the construction of numerous hot houses, glasshouses and conservatories that held her extensive collection of exotic plants. The Camellia House c.1812 is the only significant structural legacy from her four decades as custodian of Bretton. Whilst impressive even today, this building would have been outshone by the magnificent, free standing, circular domed glasshouse built by Baileys in 1827 for Diana. Measuring 60 feet in diameter, 45 feet in height and topped with a gilt coronet it would have been a spectacular structure. On her death in 1831, this fine building was sold by her son for a fraction of its original cost along with much of her horticultural collection. After a brief period of revitalisation achieved using funds raised through the auction, the estate entered a prolonged gradual decline. The Beaumont's association with the Hall finally ended in the 1940s following the requisition of the Hall and grounds by the War Office during the Second World War.

In 1946, when the military vacated the hall and the West Riding County Council purchased the mansion house set within 260 acres of park, the idea of establishing a teacher training college devoted to the arts was initiated. The doors were opened to the first cohort of 56 students in 1949 and within 10 years student numbers had increased dramatically to 300. Initially affiliated to the University of Leeds, ties between the two institutes grew leading to them merging in 2001. Whilst the YSP flourished, the

University of Leeds campus encountered financial difficulties and finally closed in 2007 with the Sculpture Park taking over the estate including the lakes.

It was during the 1970s that Peter Murray, a lecturer at the college, conceived the idea of establishing an outdoor exhibition space in the grounds. Working with the sculptor Michael Lyons, Peter oversaw the first exhibit the 'Heights of David' (1977) installed and the fledgling YSP created. Since then, the park has hosted over 1000 artists from around the world including bronzes by Henry Moore and Elizabeth Frink, collections by Barbara Hepworth and pieces by other leading contemporary artists, among them Damian Hirst, Andy Goldsworthy and David Nash.

The Visit

For the YGT visit, the day was divided into two halves with presentations in the morning focusing on the park as a canvas for the exhibition of sculpture and the management of the estate to support the display of these works of art. After lunch a guided walk through the grounds allowed us to see many of the landscape features, both historic and modern, that had featured in the morning's talks.

Dr Alex Hodby, Head of Programmes

First, Dr Alex Hodby, Head of Programmes, introduced us to the site and the work of the YSP. The 500-acre site welcomes 250,000 visitors each year and a further 40,000 attend through education programmes.

Clearly passionate about her work, Alex explained how she liaises with the curatorial, archival, learning and production teams, and world-leading artists to display innovative sculpture, not only to enthusiasts, but also to make the art form accessible to members of society who may not otherwise be familiar with it. The lengthy process underpinning the staging of a sculpture, starts with the development of a relationship between the artist and YSP. There is extensive consideration of what form the artwork will take and where within the expansive grounds the sculpture may be located to its best advantage. The 18th century estate offers a great variety of backdrops, from formal gardens to open meadow, lakeside to woodland, with the final siting bringing together an historic landscape with contemporary artistic practice.

A recent installation by Laura Ellen Bacon, *Into Being* (2025), brought visitors into an immersive experience combining her willow sculpture with the renovated St Bartholomew's chapel within the grounds. Over an 8-week period, visitors could watch the piece being created as it climbed three meters up the chapel wall. Alex proceeded to discuss the fate of pieces after an

exhibition closed, with some pieces being moved back to an artist's gallery, a few being gifted to the YSP and others being dismantled or allowed to naturally degrade - the probable fate of *Into Being*, with the willow being returned to nature.

Other pieces are on long-term loan, including a complete collection of *The Family of Man* (1970) from the Hepworth Estate



Two pieces of Barbara Hepworth's 'The Family of Man' (1970) displayed on hillside. Each of the nine abstract forms appear, as Hepworth wanted, as if they had 'risen out of the ground'. (Image © Sue Lang)

Alex concluded her presentation with an overview of the learning programmes running at YSP. Continuing the legacy of Bretton Hall College, YSP works with a range of partners to engage both the young, the not-so young and community groups in programmes designed to inspire creativity.

Mark Chesman, Head of Estates

Next, Mark Chesman, Head of Estates, spoke of the challenges encountered when protecting a Grade II registered historic park and garden with its fauna and flora whilst creating a leading international destination for sculpture. A team of eight manage the complex mix of habitats, from grassland and formal garden to woodland and lakes, to paths and bridges. In addition to the historic woodland planted with many native species, including oak, ash, beech and hornbeam, some of which are veteran trees, the team closely monitor the 1,700 parkland individuals. Tree management accounts for a large portion of the estates department's costs. Whilst the team are grateful for the support given by Wakefield Council in the maintenance of the water bodies, the estates team are responsible for the aesthetic features of the two lakes and the cascade. Around the lakes they have worked to remove invasive willow and alder and open the

views of the lake. Climate change and unpredictable weather events are increasingly challenging for the team. Storms damage can bring down trees and algal blooms are increasing in frequency, particularly in the upper lake. Perhaps a more unusual aspect of the team's work is the installation of plinths on which to display exhibits and the challenge of manoeuvring large heavy moving equipment with minimal damage being incurred to the historic landscape. Among the more mundane tasks are repairs to turf around popular sculptures, such as those of Frink. On Mark's wish list of future projects are improving paths, particularly in wet areas, improving access to Bath Wood and restoring the pedestrian foot bridge, redecoration of the Cut Bridge and repairs to the deck, and restoration of the terrace.

Tour of the Grounds

After lunch, Mark and Will Grinder, the Head Groundsman, led the group on a tour around the park. From the YSP Visitors Centre we entered the semi-circular walled garden where fruit trees of some age adorned the walls whilst sitting cheek by jowl with contemporary art works (Figs. 3 and 4).



Mark and Will led the group on a tour of the historic park, starting at the Bothy Gallery (left), once the grade II listed gardener's cottage [list entry 1135500] in the walled garden. It is likely that Marnock once lived here. (Image © Sue Lang)



Three artworks within the walled garden by William Kentridge that feature in his current exhibition 'The Pull of Gravity', which runs until April 2026. (Image © Sue Lang)

From here we crossed the formal terrace and headed to Hepworth's *The Family of Man* (1970). A group of young school children were clustered around one of the pieces, one of several groups that were seen visiting that day. We continued past the YSP Learning Centre now occupying a building that once housed the hall's kennels and continued to the Camellia House c. 1817 which still houses shrubs planted when the building was first constructed



The Camellia House, Grade II listed building c. 1812 [list entry 1313229], was designed by Jeffry Wyatt for Col. Thomas Richard and Diana Beaumont. (Image © Sue Lang)

Whilst the plants can be viewed through open doors, the building is unfortunately considered unsafe to enter.

Separating the Upper and Lower Lake, Cascade Bridge and weir gave fine views over the picturesque bodies of water and one of the artificial islands within Lower Lake. Herons are said to have bred on the island for hundreds of years, returning to the same trees each spring to raise their young.



View from Cascade Bridge c. 1777-1782, Grade II listed [list entry 1135468] over Lower Lake and the island (centre) which hosts the heronry. (Image © Sue Lang)

Grazing Highland cows have been assisting in vegetation management in the area of Menagerie Wood and have proven to be a popular attraction for visitors. The discovery of ragwort has unfortunately led to their temporary removal. Walking alongside the Lower Lake, Bretton Hall could be glimpsed through the trees. Separate to the YSP and the subject

of various current planning applications, it remains to be seen what the future holds for the Grade II* listed building. On reaching the weir, Will kindly unlocked the Pump House, which is not usually open to the public, for us to experience a rare glimpse of the restored 18th century structure and water wheel. Whilst the Pump House has benefitted from recent restoration work, Mark explained how he hoped to secure additional funds to restore the nearby bridge over the Cut.



Grade II listed bridge over the Cut [list entry 1135466], probably mid-19th century. The original vases remain, but the stone balustrade has been lost, replaced by steel railing. It is hoped that funds can be secured to restore this historic feature of the park. (Image © Sue Lang)

Leaving the Lower Lake and towering Damian Hirst installation *The Virgin Mother* (2005) behind, we headed back to the Visitors' Centre and completed a very enjoyable afternoon tour of the Sculpture Park and the historic landscape of Bretton Hall (Fig. 8).



*Damian Hirst's *The Virgin Mother* (2005). This 10m installation joined YSP as part of Yorkshire Sculpture International (YSI), a partnership between YSP, The Hepworth Wakefield, the Henry Moore Institute and Leeds Art Gallery. (Image © Sue Lang)*

Sue Lang

Acknowledgements

YGT would like to thank YSP and specifically Dr Alex Hodby, Mark Chesman and Will Grinder for hosting the group throughout the day.

If you would like to read more about the historic development of Bretton Hall, papers by Karen Lynch and Jan Woustra are available through JSTOR in *Garden History*.

Lynch, K. (2013). *'Happily situated, in an elegant style': the development of the Bretton Hall landscape, c. 1760-1830*. *Garden History*; 41, 1:75-95. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24636005>

Woudstra, J (2013). *The influence of Robert Marnock on Bretton Hall, 1825-1834*. *Garden History*; 41, 1:96-115. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24636006>.

Also visit the YSP website, <https://ysp.org.uk/about-ysp/heritage>

Skipton Heritage Day



Maddy Hughes, Val Hepworth and Tricia Sharp manning our stand at the 4th Yorkshire Heritage Summit (Image © Val Hepworth)

This meeting and exhibition was the 4th in a series of events organised by the Yorkshire Society. It is a forum for heritage organisations across Yorkshire for member organisations to gather and exhibit their work. The 4th Summit took place in Skipton on May 13th 2025, and YGT took a stand.

“The Yorkshire Society is a membership organisation for people who love Yorkshire, and any individual or organisation can join for free, or pay a subscription for additional member benefits. The Society unites a region divided into North, South, East and West under the one name they all use with pride – Yorkshire – and we exist to bring the people of Yorkshire together, wherever they are, because ordinary people, especially Yorkshire people, can do extraordinary things when they work together”.

Notes from the Editor

Our 2025 visits programme has now finished and what an excellent year it has been! We all owe a debt of gratitude to the Events team who work hard behind the scenes organising all our trips.

Our reports begin with Chris Beevers writing about the visit to Whirlow Brook Park in Sheffield earlier in the year. A report on the visit on the same day to Whinfell Quarry Garden will be published in our next *e-Bulletin*. This is an example of a private garden being taken into public ownership and which also has a very active Friends Group.

In mid-July, on what turned out to be the end of a spell of glorious summer weather, we visited the restored South Cliff Gardens in Scarborough. They were initially established in 1837 as private gardens and are also now in public ownership. The Gardens have received over £7m including £4.6m from the Heritage Lottery Fund to restore them. There is a very active Friends Group. It was a fascinating day, led by Adrian Perry, Chair of Scarborough Civic Society. I am indebted to Niki Torrance for her detailed and interesting article.

Our visit in August aroused differing reactions from the group of members who attended the tour of York University Campus West, which is an important Grade II listed designed landscape. We were ably led by Chris Webb, who knows the site intimately. It incorporates the physical remains of the early 18th century gardens and planting associated with the 16th century Heslington Hall and it was laid out between 1963 and 1980 to designs by RMJM.

As Richard Taylor states in his report some members of the group felt that “it was a bold and inventive approach to producing modern buildings in a contemporary landscape whilst others preferred the

warm brick of the Hall and wanted a more human approach”. I am indebted to Richard for producing two of our reports in 2025.

Our final trip took place in mid-September and was a day’s visit to the Yorkshire Sculpture Park at West Bretton. The time was divided into two halves with talks in the morning and a tour of the grounds in the afternoon. The talks were given by Alex Hodby, Head of Programmes and Mark Chesman, Head of Estates. My thanks to Sue Lang for the report on what sounds like an outstandingly successful day.

This issue also contains reports from the Conservation and Planning Committee, the Research & Recording Group and the Events Team plus some interesting news from the Gardens Trust.

Future Publishing Programme

With effect from 2026 it has been decided to change our publishing programme. For the past six years members have been receiving two *e-Bulletins* and two printed *Newsletters* a year. To try to reduce our printing costs, which consume a large portion of our membership subscriptions, we will still produce two (or three if we have had an extremely busy year) *e-Bulletins* each year but only one printed *Newsletter*. The latter will appear after the end of the year and will be a compendium of all the material contained in the *e-Bulletins*. It will serve as our “document of record”. If members would prefer to also receive the annual *Newsletter* in digital format this will be possible. Further details of how this system will work will be disseminated to the membership in early 2026.

Christine Miskin
Editor



Are you stuck for thinking of an original gift for the friend or relation “who has everything”?

Have you considered a YGT Gift membership? It is ideal to introduce those who have an interest in Yorkshire history and landscapes to our visit programme, plus giving access to our wonderful Newsletter and *e-Bulletins* which are always jam-packed with so many informative articles.

Gift Membership costs £25 individual, £35 for two people at one address and will be accompanied by a seasonal card and message from YGT.

For further details please contact Lynn Watkinson on Lynn Watkinson <lynn.ygt@gmail.com>

Research & Recording - Annual Training Day – Baldersby Park

Tuesday July 8 2025

Introduction

On July 8th, the Research and Recording team held their annual training day at Baldersby Park, formerly known as Newby Park, near Thirsk. The grand Palladian mansion house was designed by Colen Campbell and built between 1718-1730 for Sir William Robinson. Today the Hall retains approximately one fifth of its original land (c.50 acres) and is home to Queen Mary's School. Over a 200-year-period, successive owners shaped the gardens and park. London and Wise, leading nurserymen of the time, supplied many of the trees in the park and plants for the parterre garden whilst the prominent designers Adam Mickel and later Joseph Paxton offered guidance on the layout of the main park, kitchen garden and possibly the garden to the front of the Hall.



Baldersby Park (© Sue Lang)

The theme of the training day was the use of letters, diaries and travel journals as sources of information when deciphering the history of a designed landscape. Louise Wickham opened the morning session with a presentation on *Research using contemporary written sources*. Period newspapers and magazines can frequently yield a wealth of information, but personal materials such as diaries, notebooks, letters and travel journals are often overlooked. Louise highlighted the reliability of these first-hand accounts whilst pointing out potential pitfalls. These sources tend to express the opinions of those creating gardens, or of visitors interacting with a designed landscape. In these instances, caution is required in their interpretation. Despite the possible difficulties encountered when using sources of this type, valuable information that may fill gaps in archival material can be gleaned.

The role of owners in the development of their gardens and parks can be understood, whilst some insight into why a landscape was developed at all

can be obtained. Similarly, the thoughts of visitors contemporary with a landscape can help with our understanding of the sense of importance a site held at that time, a perception that can be difficult for later generations to comprehend.

Jemima Hubberstey talk

After this introduction our guest speaker, Dr Jemima Hubberstey from Historic Royal Palaces, gave an engaging and often entertaining talk on her research using 18th century diaries, letters and travel journals, principally those of Philip and Jemima Yorke of Wrest Park, Bedfordshire. Dr Hubberstey explained how these valuable sources gave a voice to women such as Jemima Yorke, the 2nd Marchioness Grey, whose opinions are often overlooked by history. In one example, Jemima explained how her namesake after visiting Stowe, the nationally renowned and politically charged estate of Lord Cobham, found '*neither much taste or genius in the forming his works*'. Marchioness Grey exclaimed that new buildings were continually being added whilst what was already there was neglected and really Cobham was just projecting his own vanity through his creation!

Concluding the morning session, two members of the YGT Research and Recording team, Chris Beevers and Margaret Mathews, gave presentations illustrating how personal written records had helped them with their own research. Chris explained how an accidental online discovery of a transcribed notebook belonging to the Quaker and prolific journal writer Joseph Wood gave her invaluable information on the designed landscape of Frickley Hall, Doncaster. Two short, simple entries described the '*gravel and grass walks*' and '*reservoirs of water, and seats and harbours [sic]*', providing the first description of many features of the garden and a revelatory moment in Chris' research.

In discussing her time in the archives and the value of personal materials, Margaret spoke of Timothy Hutton, a prolific diarist and owner/designer of Clifton Castle, Clifton-on-Yore. Bordering on the obsessive, Hutton documented the minutiae of his daily routine, and this of course included his creation of a garden. The detail extended, for example, to the quarry from which stone was used and the number of cartloads of ice required to stock the icehouse. Whilst the sheer number of volumes and the ever-present challenge of reading his handwriting were an obstacle, the diaries proved to be a treasure trove of those small, often overlooked, details typically absent in more traditional archive material.

Tour of Baldersby Park

After lunch, the group was shown around Baldersby Park by Tim Webster and his daughter Rachel, who currently farm the land within the historic park.

Principal extant features in this area are canalised water and an obelisk that align with the south front of the mansion house. The canal had once formed the central of three radiating features of a *patte d'oie* (goose foot) design with avenues of trees projecting out on either side c.1704. This formal design was irregularised in the late 1840s with further naturalising modifications being undertaken during the late 19th century when two islands were created. The date of construction of the obelisk positioned at the southern end of the canal is unknown but may have been 1708 when payment was made for 'pillars'. During recent restoration work, evidence relating to the construction of both features was revealed. This led to discussion between the Websters and members of the party in relation to the original design of the canal and the date of construction of the obelisk. From the obelisk we walked towards a deer shed through a belt of trees located at the head of the canal along a path that may have been designed by Mickle c.1780s.



*The canalised water viewed from the North end
(Image © Jemima Hubberstey)*



*South end of the canalised water with the obelisk
(Image © Sue Lang)*



Image 4 - The obelisk at the south end of the canalised water (Image © Sue Lang)

The pleasant afternoon spent within the park concluded at the Deer Shed where we were greeted by Bob and Glynis Clark with an unexpected and most welcome table of refreshments. Available to view was a framed plan of the estate and some photographs taken during restoration work. Glynis had also kindly brought along a photograph album dating from the time of the First World War during the period the Hall was requisitioned for use as an auxiliary hospital and convalescent home for wounded soldiers. This treasured family heirloom held photographs of Mr Hathaway, a past head-gardener at Baldersby, and relative of Glynis, surrounded by his family standing outside one of the glasshouses.



*Image 5 - Refreshments in the Deer Shed
(Image © Sue Lang)*

Conclusion

This concluded a most enjoyable and informative day. Armed with a new avenue of research, I am looking forward to the next opportunity to view some notepads and a letterbook that I have since located in my local archive.

Sue Lang

Acknowledgements

The Research and Recording team would like to thank Queen Mary's School for the use of the school's library for presentations; Dr Hubberstey for her thought provoking lecture; the Websters for allowing the group access to their property and for the interesting and informative tour, and the Clarks for the kind provision of refreshments and sharing family documents at the end of what was a most pleasant day.

If you would like to read more about the historic development of Baldersby Park, a report is available within the database of sites on the YGT website - <https://www.yorkshiregardenstrust.org.uk/index.php/research/sites/baldersby-park>

Bringing Garden History into the Digital Age

The Gardens Trust has announced in its *GT magazine Issue 27 Summer 2025 p.17* that this Autumn it is launching on its website a brand-new digital hub containing materials on garden history. It is part of a year long Historic England funded project, aimed at those new to garden history and will contain a wide selection of articles about topics such as key figures in garden history, and garden design through the centuries. It will attempt to answer questions such as What is a historic designed landscape?

One of the drivers for the project is that the GT will be helping to deliver on one of its charitable aims of encouraging the study of garden history. They also hope that by hosting a freely accessible online resource the GT will establish itself as the place to go to for informative and interesting garden history content

It will be populated by a team of GT volunteers who will research and write the articles, hopefully in a style that will "inspire the next generation of garden historians". It is currently under construction, and it is hoped that the first articles will be published early this Autumn.

Frankie Taylor, GT Engagement Officer, is asking for anyone who is interested in contributing in any way to the hub to please contact her:

frankie.taylor@thegardenstrust.org

(As of 15 October, I could find no trace of it on the website – Editor, but it sounds like a most interesting project).



Conservation and Planning Report - Trees

In our Spring 2022 Newsletter (*Issue 50*) I was, as so often, somewhat preoccupied with trees; past present and into the future. I reflected on Alfred Joyce Kilmer's short poem published four years before his death by a sniper's bullet aged 31 at Seringes-et-Nesles, France on 30th July 1918 during the Second Battle of the Marne. Yet another cherished and talented soul dispatched by war well before his time.

Kilmer was born in New Brunswick, New Jersey on 6th December 1886, and was considered to be the leading American Roman Catholic poet and lecturer of his generation.

TREES by Joyce Kilmer

I think that I shall never see

A poem lovely as a tree.

A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;

A tree that looks at God all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;

A tree that may in Summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.

I cannot remember when I first heard this poem, but its simplicity and truth have stayed with me, even now as I am thinking about historic landscape and its future, having negotiated the drought conditions in Yorkshire (and elsewhere) this year. Twenty twenty-five has been a challenge for our trees but we may only know the repercussions in 5, 10, 20 years hence. I do hope that our veteran trees, and indeed our younger trees, keep going. It will be a terrible loss if many trees succumb to our changing climatic conditions.

Chatting with various folks whose work relates to trees, I have also been struck that so many of us, particularly the younger generations, are unable to identify different tree species. In simpler times oldies like me learned to identify trees at primary school and we had a Nature Table. I think that it is a concern that we have generations where swathes of folks have little knowledge of the natural environment and even some of those whose day job relates to trees are not very familiar with identifying different species. Maybe it is

just so easy to use an app. However, I am heartened by the environmental passion of many groups and of course our own YGT Schools team who work to connect youngsters with the natural environment.

Unfortunately, the Gardens Trust (GT) does not have the capacity to respond to consultations from the Forestry Commission and many other tree-connected consultations, such as from White Rose Forest. YGT has similar problems of volunteer capacity, but we give advice if we can, as felling and planting will have long-term effects on our historic designed landscapes and could potentially radically alter their historic significance in the years to come, loss and alteration of views and vistas immediately come to mind. I can think of registered parks where young *Sequoiadendron giganteum* (Wellingtonia/Giant Redwood introduced from California in 1853) and undoubtedly majestic trees, are now scattered in the 18th century parkland and, if allowed to grow to maturity will erode the historic and aesthetic design significance for future generations. Always a case of 'right tree in right place' is what we should be achieving. Research from Cambridge University and Forestry England has shown that we have 50 years to prevent the collapse of our woodland ecosystems, with threats that we are all aware of: climate challenges, pollution, disease, invasive species (eg *Rhododendron ponticum* in woodland in our historic parks), and inappropriate development and fragmentation of habitat.



River Nidd at Knaresborough – The Long Walk on west (left) bank of this photo. (Val Hepworth)

We have recently been consulted about the felling of two groups of dead trees on the western side of the River Nidd, part of The Long Walk registered park and garden (RPG) at Knaresborough. As this is a public area, we understand the need to fell. Glimpses of the river from the Walk are important but overall, the riverbank should be populated with trees. The Walk was described by Dr Adam Hunter in 1807 as

a 'beautiful and romantic walk' and it has remained valued. We suggested replacing the dead trees with standards but allowing for some natural regeneration.



Roundhay Park - (Jane Furse)

Another enquiry came from Leeds City Council Woodland Creation Scheme wanting to plant 61 standard trees at **Roundhay Park**, Connaught Field which includes Prince's Avenue. We consulted early OS maps (the National Library of Scotland, NLS, is a fine on-line resource for doing this), and Jane Furse carried out some research on the history of tree planting in this part of Leeds from its origins as a deer park. The major reason Leeds City Council purchased the parkland with its mansion in the early 1870s was to provide much needed recreational space for its citizens with pure, clean air as evidenced by the many native trees surviving there in 1873 (English Oak - *Quercus robur*, Wild cherry - *Prunus avium*, Holly - *Ilex aquifolium*, Pear - *Pyrus domestica*, Ash - *Fraxinus excelsior*), whilst none could cope with the pollution

in the City centre. Pollution in Leeds continued over decades which is probably why Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), an alien but very pollution tolerant tree, was chosen by the council in the 1890s for this part of Roundhay Park. After debate, we suggested that instead of planting more Sycamore (with few associated wildlife species), English Oaks with their extensive associated wildlife and historic precedent could be planted. This would address environmental as well as historic issues.

We have also given advice to the White Rose Forest project for low density woodland using standards near the eastern registered boundary at **Temple Newsam** and in May for trees in **Rowntree Park**, as part of York City Council's Green Streets programme. We conferred with Janette Ray who wrote the Conservation Plan for Rowntree Park and her advice was that the trees proposed for the northern edge of the park are well located but that the two proposed on the central axis should not be planted and she suggested an alternative location. However, we were told that the alternative planting site did not fit with the funding stream and that due to a tight timeline to plant trees this year they would go ahead with the inappropriate location. We despair! Wrong place and a complete waste of taxpayers' money.

Planning consultations



Mount Grace Priory Orchard where Play Area is to be carefully inserted (Courtesy English Heritage)

As I write this at the end of September, we have responded to more than 40 planning consultations since the 1st of April. This includes two pre-applications that came to us from English Heritage and three for unregistered sites. At **Mount Grace Priory**, English Heritage propose a play area in the orchard to the east of the Scheduled Monument. Having lots of family experience of play areas, and many happy hours spent in them, we were able to comment practically and were pleased to note that there would be a Written Scheme of Investigation and an archaeological watching brief. At **Whitby Abbey**

the proposal is for a new ramp along the front/north elevation of Cholmley House/Banqueting House/ Visitor Centre. This would replace a c.20-year-old timber ramp with no handrail, as it is a trip hazard and does not meet accessibility requirements. We agreed that improved access is required with a low-key intervention.



Whitby Abbey Cholmley House/Banqueting House/ Visitor Centre with scaffolding for roof replacement. (Courtesy English Heritage)

In April a planning application for the unregistered **Ripon Spa Gardens** was brought to our attention by members of YGT. Although we appreciated the charitable donation focus for the proposed Wishing Well, we thought that it would be inappropriate immediately north of the listed statue of the Marquess of Ripon (d.1909) and contrary to the overall historic design of the Spa Gardens. The description on the monument notes with dry humour “The Marquess, who lived at Studley Royal, was not just Viceroy of India, but also Mayor of Ripon.” Proposals for the two other unregistered sites were sent to us by planners at North York Moors National Park Authority. The first proposal was for a large grain store ie an agricultural notification, in the undesignated designed landscape at Grade II listed **Kingthorpe House**, near Pickering. YGT’s Research and Recorders, Louise Wickham and Mags Waughman were able to help with further insights particularly with the siting of the lost village. When it came to the enquiry about unauthorised works to the Valley Footpath between Merricks East Wood and Northfield Wood at Hackness, YGT had researched the site and again Mags was able to relay the evidence that historically the Valley Footpath as in the planning application did not exist.



Hackness – (Mags Waughman)

Not unsurprisingly the greatest number of planning consultations come to us from North Yorkshire, York and West Yorkshire with the few from South Yorkshire often focused on the great designed landscapes and gardens of Wentworth Castle and Wentworth Woodhouse. Recently we have only had **East Park, Hull** from the east of the county.

East Yorkshire and Hull

East Park lies 6km east of Hull City Centre covering an area of 36ha. It was laid out by the Kingston upon Hull Borough Engineer, Joseph Fox Sharp, in the late 19th century and has 20th century additions. A largely flat public park, except for the 1880s rockwork (known as the Khyber Pass), with terracing and mounds to the west of the site. The parkland includes mature tree lined paths, ornamental gardens, sports fields, bowling greens, valley garden to the south of the Khyber Pass, model yacht pond, small zoo, boating lake with Grade II listed Water Chute and Children’s playground. The proposal was for an upgrade and extension as part of the existing Woodford Leisure Centre immediately beyond the park’s south-east registered boundary. We supported the Principal Conservation Officer’s report that hedge screening would mitigate the three and four m high fencing but had further concerns about the effect that eight m tall LED floodlights would have on the park and the Conservation Area.



*Bishopthorpe Palace Walled Garden
(Courtesy Design, Access, Heritage Statement.)*

We welcomed the recent listing at Grade II of the **Walled Kitchen Gardens of Bishopthorpe Palace**, (residence of the Archbishop of York) and have recently commented on Full and Listed planning applications for repairs and repointing of walls and the addition of stabilizing piers. The construction of the two walled kitchen gardens, their associated brick lean-to buildings and canalised stream were begun by Archbishop Drummond (1711-1776) and further work of improvement was undertaken by Archbishop Markham (1777-1807). Archbishop Markham built an 18ft heated wall dividing the gardens to protect blossom and assist in fruit-ripening. A particular feature of the walled kitchen gardens, answering the practical need for water, was the canalising of the stream that runs the length of the larger garden, before being culverted under Bishopthorpe Road to become a pond in the Archbishop's pleasure gardens. This is an unusual feature.

We thought that the proposals follow much good conservation practice which we support but we have concerns about the introduction of piers on the inside of the walls and the potential impact on the old fruit trees during the work. Walled gardens are designed to be seen and appreciated from the inside. The proposal introduces modern interventions on the inside of the garden, obscuring the historic piers,

thereby devaluing the visual, constructional and historic significance of the listed structure, including the nationally significant pear wall and the historic flues.

In 2023 **Helmsley Walled Garden at Duncombe Park** submitted a planning application which we had concerns about. It was withdrawn. We were pleased to see the recent application, the result of pre-application discussions, utilises traditional brickwork, a slate roof and timber windows to form east and west wings to the central buildings behind the conservatory (Orchid House). The Orchard House rebuild will also be a beneficial improvement. Helmsley Walled Garden is a remarkable charity and many members enjoyed the YGT's Evening Party there in early July and much admired the beautiful gardens rescued from dereliction c.25 years ago.



Helmsley Walled Gardens (Val Hepworth)

We have had three more consultations relative to **Allerton Park**: to increase the height of a unit to 18m in the Business Park (we noted that the unit had already been built to 18m high when we received the consultation); workers cottages and manure store at Allerton Grange Farm; and further consultation on the landfill site (thankfully an improvement). The little building in the park at **Moreby Hall** (see Issue 50 Newsletter Spring 2022, p10) now with subterranean extensions, returned, and we have had four further consultations on the proposed changes at **Rudding Park** for leisure activities.

We have been told by the National Trust (NT) that during the construction period for the development at Canal Gates, **Studley Royal**, the water gardens will remain open for visitors. The NT plan to have a marquee adjoining the Visitor Centre café to cover two winters while the construction work takes place at the Canal Gates entrance. We have suggested that the colour of the marquee could be toned down to blend better into the background and the shape adjusted to be less assertive against the Visitor Centre.

I included consultations on solar panels and farms in our *Newsletter* Issue 56, Spring 2025 including the land at Haigh Lane and Woolley Edge Lane across the motorway from **Bretton Hall/Yorkshire Sculpture Park** in West Yorkshire. This has been approved even though at some distance it will be visible from the registered park at Oxley Bank and Dam Head Bridge.



*View south across Bretton Park with Lower Lake in middle distance. Oxley Bank on left. Site of solar array will be off this photo further to the left ie east.
(Val Hepworth)*

However, a full application for ground mounted solar panels for **Swinton Castle** are well-designed and in a much better location than the site suggested in the February 2023 scoping proposal. The GT noted that ‘as solar farms go, that is one of the better designed ones that we have seen.’

South Yorkshire

The submitted documents and the comprehensive Heritage Statement were very helpful for our assessment of a replacement waterplay area at **Clifton Park, Rotherham**, a registered grade II park opened in 1891, and we had no objection. Similarly, we had no objection on registered park and garden issues to development proposals at Home Farm **Wentworth Woodhouse** and for repair and rebuilding of collapsed battlement walling at **Wentworth Castle**.

West Yorkshire

Notable consultations have been for **High Royds, Ledston**, Home Farm at **Harewood, Thornes Park**, Wakefield, and a solar array at Weeton which was the most difficult and time-consuming application.

But first: shipping containers for classroom and storage at **Thornes Park**, which is an interesting Grade II registered public park consisting of three historically distinct areas and this application related to a neglected area without public access and adjacent to a historic listed wall. We concluded that the public benefit of the proposal outweighs any minor degree of temporary harm that might be caused by the siting of the cabins.

If you are interested, I recommend that you view our response to the proposal for a ground mounted solar farm, battery storage system etc at Juniper Farm, Weeton, Ref:25/02219/FULMAY (North Yorkshire Council.) Although we accept that climate change is an existential threat to the future of our historic parks and gardens it is important that green developments are planned sensitively and with respect for the impact they have on landscapes that are unique and irreplaceable.

Harewood House at Grade I is among the most important designed landscapes in England. Chris spent a good deal of time going out on site twice, checking the views and vistas and going out with Trevor Nicholson who, as a key member of staff for the Harewood House Trust for 30 years, knows the RPG intimately. Their conclusion was that the documents are inadequate with the Historic Environment Assessment failing to consider Harewood RPG, or any heritage assets within the RPG contrary to National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) para 208.

I have not included all the planning applications where we have been consulted. If you are interested in a particular historic park and garden in Yorkshire, then all our responses for the past few years have been uploaded by Geoff Hughes onto the YGT website and can be found in the Research and Recording Section under the specific historic park and garden.

YGT's Other Conservation Topics

We have not heard any more news on the submission for registration and listing for **Gillingwood Hall** nor for **Tudor Croft**, but the sites seem to be progressing through the Historic England system.

In the summer we were delighted to learn that **Wentworth Woodhouse** has won a Europa Nostra Award for the restoration of the **Camellia House** and that **South Cliff Gardens at Scarborough** (see p.5) came joint second with Raby Castle, ‘The Rising’, in the ‘Management and Development of a Historic Park or Garden’ section in the European Garden Award 2025. Our heartiest congratulations to all involved with both these historic gardens/designed landscapes.

Statutory Consultee Status

We have no further news on the public consultation regarding the **GT Statutory Consultee Status**. However, the GT has been actively gathering information, meeting with the officers at the Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government (DHCLG) and the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS), and campaigning for the retention of our Status, during the Summer. To help with the GT campaign YGT put together a report to help prove our impact on the planning system. Yorkshire, as the largest English county by

area, has about 130 RPG's and many unregistered sites which are significant for their local and regional designed landscape and garden heritage. We worked out the amount of volunteer time that YGT donates to the planning system. It makes interesting reading:

Statutory Casework – an average of 25 hours/week.
(Plus occasional site visits which because of the size of Yorkshire take a day.)

Non-statutory casework – an average of 2 hours/week.

Research and Recording – an average of 26 hours/week.

Running YGT organisation relative to helping with planning system – an average 20 hours/week.

Our contacts in Yorkshire's Local Planning Authorities, Owners/Managers and Developers that we have worked with gave us some very positive feedback on the value that they place on our advice, such as:

David Hornsby at Doncaster City Council:

'The Gardens Trust makes a most valuable contribution to the planning process particularly concerning applications which relate to very specialist areas of interest concerning designated Parks and Gardens. However, the role of the Gardens Trust is not solely in relation to these designated areas. The trust has a varied and unrivalled knowledge of matters relating to the history and archaeology of gardens in its widest sense to include graveyards and isolated gardens which have no formal designation. Some of these smaller gardens can have significant heritage interest particularly if intended to be gardens for the working class or were small gardens developed within urban areas. Sometimes these gardens become lost in a changing urban world, and it is possible to overlook past uses which if included within a scheme of development could add to the quality of the scheme. An increasing trend in recent years has been the subdivision of large houses, with schemes for conversion seldom giving any consideration for the preservation or enhancement of the former pleasure grounds and surrounding parkland. Without proper consideration of the significance of the gardens or parkland to the heritage asset, significant loss of heritage value to the whole can be permanently lost. The Gardens Trust through being a Statutory consultee can provide invaluable advice which assists the local planning authority in terms of negotiating the best conservation outcome for a heritage asset. By removing the Trust from the list of statutory consultees there is a real risk that less than optimum outcomes are reached in planning negotiations and the public at large suffer. To sum up therefore 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 can provide adding to the value that can be gained in planning decisions and negotiations.'

Simon Mackaness, owner of Rudding Park, Harrogate:

'Thank you for your email concerning the Gardens Trust being removed as consultee on planning applications. I feel this is a retrograde step as I believe the Gardens Trust offers a constructive commentary on planning matters compared to the more parochial local authority conservation officer.

I would make the following comments for you to pass on:

'Over the last 20 years we have worked on three major planning applications. These relate to work done at Rudding Park, which has a Grade I House and a Listed Grade II Park. On each application we have respected the advice given by the Yorkshire Gardens Trust on landscape matters. The Yorkshire Gardens Trust has always replied in a timely manner, they were approachable to discuss matters, and they were constructive with their advice. Local authority landscape and conservation officers are very time restricted, and I always thought they did everything at the last minute to achieve deadlines without necessarily reviewing the decisions they have made.

The local Gardens Trust organisations, in our opinion, are similar to regional offices of Historic England. I do hope that the authorities will carefully reconsider their decisions before making their final decisions. Historic England will remain a statutory consultee so what is the reason for removing the Gardens Trust as statutory Consultees?'

Keir Mather MP's visit to Ledston Hall



*Keir Mather MP's visit to Ledston –
outside the chapel l-r Val, Jane, Mark Granger trustee,
Keir Mather MP, Chris, Philippa Atkinson Carter Jonas
(Jane Furse)*

Through the GT we were asked by Keir Mather MP for Selby and Kippax if he could visit an RPG in his constituency. We were delighted to organise this with the trustees of **Ledston Hall**, The Wheler Foundation, and Carter Jonas who manage the site. The visit took place on 28th August which was a lovely day. Keir was very engaged with the history, development and rescue of Ledston from decay in the past few years. As you will remember if you came on the YGT visit in September 2023 the Grade I house has been converted to residential homes all within Grade II* gardens and park. He said that he really enjoyed his visit and appreciated how change can be managed to secure the future of heritage.

And finally, two more comments on our part in the planning system:

Maria Akers, Senior Estates Manager, Temple Newsam and Lotherton, Leeds City Council:

“Having Yorkshire Gardens Trust as the statutory consultee has brought benefits to the Estates of Temple Newsam and Lotherton through the ability to discuss proposals and obtain advice at the planning stage. Early advice ensures that applications are appropriate, accurate and comprehensive, which avoids wasting time and resources both for the applicant and for the planning authority. The in-depth knowledge that YGT has built up because of this more collaborative approach has gone on to prove invaluable in terms of ongoing management of historic landscapes.”

Tony Wiles, Design and Conservation, Barnsley MBC

“As you know, we’ve had many useful discussions

over years on the merit of a wide range of application proposals that affect our Registered Park and Gardens (RPG’s) in Barnsley. In this regard, I’m particularly thinking of Wentworth Castle RPG – the only Grade I RPG in South Yorkshire where we work closely with the National Trust, as well as Cannon Hall, Wortley, and Bretton Hall Parkland amongst others. As an expert body on the heritage significance of these important designated places, I feel the loss of the GT and YGT as a statutory consultee will reduce our ability to assess the impact of proposals in these places. I also feel we will lose a useful resource that helps LPAs negotiate changes to schemes that respect what is special about these places whilst finding solutions for applicants. I feel the YGT in our patch has always endeavoured to provide balanced and timely responses and I’m unaware of situations where consultation with the YGT has unduly held up the determination of applications. In summary, I feel losing the GT as a statutory consultee will potentially force LPAs to lean more on applicants to provide proportionate detail over significance (as per NPPF 207) and may ultimately result in proposals being of a lesser quality.”

Val Hepworth

Harrogate Autumn Flower Show 19-21 September 2025



For the third year in succession YGT had a stand at Harrogate Autumn Flower Show held at Newby Hall. Our aim was to raise awareness of Yorkshire Gardens Trust and our wide range of activities.

This year we had a superb position in the Grand Floral Marquee and were able to use the space available to portray a landscape garden using a backdrop of Bramham Park with an ornate table and chairs on a plinth to create a three-dimensional effect.

On an adjoining table a range of past copies of *YGT Bulletins* created an attractive and colourful display which encouraged a few attendees to browse and gave us the opportunity to strike up conversation and provide information to a good number.

Thanks are due to Nick Smith, Director, North of England Horticultural Society, which runs the show and facilitated our attendance. To YGT volunteers, those from York Gate who helped on the stand, and to Dark Star Plants, for their donation of a colourful bunch of flowers for the stand.

Madalyn Hughes

The Events Calendar for 2026

I hope that those members and their friends who came on visits this year have found something to enjoy. Our team of Val Hepworth, Maddy Hughes, Tricia Sharp, Joanna Pavey, and myself meet regularly to talk about possible places we can visit and then try to organise these visits. We try to make the calendar as varied as possible. It is not easy!

We have nearly got the bones of the 2026 calendar sorted and it is as follows:

FEBRUARY 2026

Tuesday February 13th

We will start the year with a visit to Burton Agnes, near Driffield in East Yorkshire, to see their display of snowdrops. As I assume that members will come from far and wide, we will start and finish in good time for people to make their journeys.

MARCH 2026

Saturday March 21st

Our AGM will be held at Lotherton Hall, with, we hope, a visit after lunch to see the Edwardian Gardens which were designed as a series of enclosed gardens by Mrs Gwendolen Gascoigne between 1893 and 1914, with few changes made before her death in 1949.

APRIL 2026

In April there will be a visit to Duncombe Park led by Val Hepworth and Peter Goodchild. A largely unaltered designed landscape created for Thomas Duncombe in the early 18th century, the terraces at Duncombe Park sit atop a steep wooded escarpment overlooking the Rye Valley. At either end of the main east terrace, there are Ionic and Tuscan Temples, and vistas looking out over the surrounding parkland and down to the River Rye.

Tuesday 28th April

The biennial Lecture held with the Yorkshire Philosophical Society in the Tempest Anderson Lecture Theatre, The Yorkshire Museum, Museum Gardens, York will be given by John Watkins, the newish Chair of Trustees of The Gardens Trust. John has chosen as his title:

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

He will explore the theory that, because we are in a period of such flux in the world, there are now so many complex factors that need to be considered to ensure the continued conservation of historic gardens and landscapes and how these may be overcome.

We hope YGT members who live in York and nearby will come and support him.

MAY 2026

Friday 8th May

A visit is planned to Clapham, at the Reginal Farrer Room in the Sawmill Café, near Ingleton organised by Trevor Nicholson. We will be celebrating Reginald Farrer's historic collection of rhododendrons which he brought back from his travels in the Far East, with a talk by Trevor followed by a walk to see the rhododendrons.

JUNE

We are visiting Perennial's York Gate Garden at Adel near Leeds. The bones of the garden were laid down by Frederick Spencer but, after his death in 1963, it was his son Robin who took over the development and design of the garden. Inspired by some of the outstanding gardens of the Arts & Crafts movement such as Hidcote, he created in just one acre, a garden which by the early eighties was regarded by many as one of the best small gardens in the world.

JULY

Thursday July 9th

Our Summer Picnic will take place at Clifton Castle. Margaret Mathews, who has researched the history of the gardens for YGT, will give an introductory talk before taking us on a tour which will include the picturesque

Pleasure Gardens created in the steep wooded banks of the River Ure by Timothy Hutton the owner in the early nineteenth century. A garden to be compared with Duncombe Park created a century earlier.

SEPTEMBER

Tuesday September 8th

We are visiting Bradford, City of Culture 2025. In the morning, we go to Undercliffe Cemetery, now a charity. The original 26 acres were purchased in 1851. The main feature of the elevated site was the great promenade running right through the cemetery with a terrace at the Western end giving panoramic views over the town and hills beyond. The total cost of the landscaping, building and planting at the time was £12,000.

After lunch a visit has been planned to Lister Park, a public park run by Bradford City Council. The park has been successfully renovated in recent years; the lake has been re-opened for boats and a Mughal Water Garden constructed.

Tuesday September 22nd

There will be a tour of Stonefall Cemetery, Harrogate, run by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

SUMMER EVENING PARTY

We are trying to arrange a visit to Goose Beck Vineyard, Bilton Grange near York, for our Summer Evening Party. This family-run organic vineyard has 14,000 vines in 13 different varieties.

Baldersby Park

In late July we hope to have a visit to Baldersby Park, situated between Ripon and Thirsk. The designed landscape has been shaped by its owners over 200 years to reflect their desire to provide a suitable setting for the main house. Built between 1718 and 1730 for Sir William Robinson, this early Palladian mansion replaced the existing hall that had been set in a walled park with adjacent formal gardens and a wilderness.

The nurserymen, London and Wise, provided many of the trees in the park and beyond, as well as plants for the parterre garden and it is possible George London advised Sir William on the design. In the park aligned to the hall, the extant canal and obelisk at its southern extent were put in c. 1704-9.

(Description with thanks to Louise Wickham who has researched the site for YGT. Please also see the article elsewhere in this *Newsletter* about the R&R training day in June which took place at Baldersby Park p. 17)

The complete programme will be sent out to members in the New Year, and we hope you will buy tickets for these varied visits.

One final request, we are always hoping that members will volunteer to join the Membership and Events Committee which finds and organises all the visits. If you are interested, please contact me

dvickyprice29@gmail.com

Vicky Price

New Exhibition at the Garden Museum

Karen Lynch has drawn our attention to a new exhibition of Rory McEwen's botanical art, which is being held from the 8 October 2025 until 25 January 2026. She has visited and says it is a wonderful exhibition if any of our members wish to see it:

Rory McEwen: Nature's Song

"Discover the Scottish artist and musician Rory McEwen (1932-1982), one of the 20th century's greatest botanical painters.

McEwen's luminous depictions of flowers, leaves, butterflies, and decaying vegetables breathed new life into the genre. Infusing modern creativity into the centuries-old genre with his distinctive use of light and space, McEwen blurred the boundaries between botanical illustration and modern art"

<https://gardenmuseum.org.uk/exhibitions/rory-mcewen/>

Gardens Trust News



Pending Government Consultation on the GT's Statutory Consultee Role



John Watkins, new Chair addressing members about the GT's Statutory Consultee role

We now expect that within the next couple of weeks the Government will launch the consultation into their proposal to remove the Gardens Trust's statutory consultee role. We have put together an expert specialist group to draft the Gardens Trust response and aim to publish this swiftly so that it can guide others' responses if appropriate. We will email all GT members and our wide supporter network once the consultation is live, and then again once our response is published. We encourage everyone to respond, if only with a very minimal response.

In the meantime, we have been busy over the summer raising awareness and building our network of supporters. Thanks to support from Andrew Turner PR we have received considerable press interest, including articles in the *Financial Times*, *Country Life*, *Horticulture Week*, the *Daily Express*, *I-Paper*, 143 regional papers, SKY News radio, and hundreds of local radio stations.

A huge thank you to everyone who has been so supportive, including those who have donated to the Fighting Fund and to those who have written letters of support over the summer.

Harnessing Parks and Gardens in the 21st century

On 2 October we were delighted to welcome distinguished guests from organisations ranging

from government departments to fellow charities to the launch of our report *Harnessing Parks and Gardens in the 21st century: how historic landscapes can support and enhance our today and tomorrow*.

The report emphasizes that:

Parks and gardens are at the heart of our communities and national story but are often taken for granted or undervalued;

These historic designed landscapes have a key role in meeting the challenges of today, particularly around meeting the need for growth and housing whilst not sacrificing the health of communities;

Historic parks and gardens have a critical role to play in nature recovery and helping combat the effects of climate change, by providing established habitats and being highly effective for carbon capture and sequestration.

GT AGM 2025

At the recent AGM, the Gardens Trust Director Linden Groves gave a presentation compiled with the staff team, showing our work over the past year. Chair John Watkins spoke about the difficult times in which we are operating. Three volunteers generously stepped forward to be co-opted by the Board as Trustees to support the Gardens Trust through the coming challenges. The Trustees were subsequently co-opted and are Sergio Jovele, Christopher Weddell and Jenifer White MBE.

We would like to offer sincere thanks to Dr Clare Hickman, who stood down as Trustee, and to Dr Rachel Savage, who remains as a Trustee but has stepped down as Chair of the Audience Development, Management and Communications Committee after many years of extraordinarily hard work.

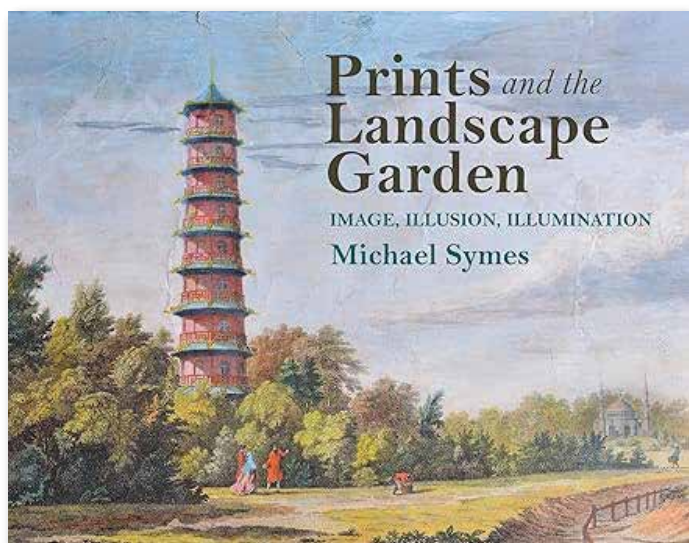
Deadline extended for Gardens Trust Community Grant

Applications are welcome for the GT Community Grant, which is for volunteer projects supporting historic parks and gardens. We are delighted that this year the total grant pot is £8000, thanks to the generosity of GT members Rosy and Peter Gent. The application form is intentionally very simple as we are keen to support projects that perhaps normally would lack the confidence to apply for grants. The deadline is now **14 November** – do apply!

Recently Published Book Reviews

Prints and the Landscape Garden: Image, Illusion, Illumination

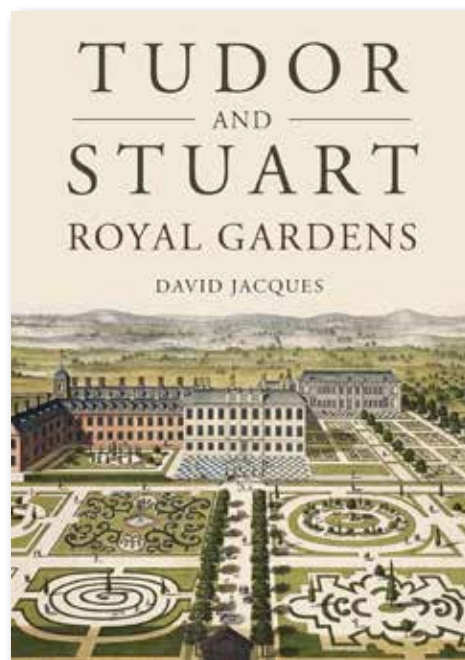
Michael Symes



This book was mentioned in YGT *e-Bulletin* July 2024 p.18

For a recent full review by Tim Richardson see *Garden History* Vol.53(1) 2025 p.125

Tudor and Stuart Royal Gardens *David Jacques*



Oxford, Windgather and Havertown: Oxbow, 2024

This book was also mentioned in YGT *e-Bulletin* July 2024 p.18

For a recent full review by Paula Henderson see *Garden History* Vol.53(1) 2025 p.126



Yorkshire Gardens Trust

President	The Countess of Harewood
Vice Presidents	Caroline Legard, Peter Goodchild, Nick Lane Fox
Chair	Chris Webb
Treasurer	Maddy Hughes
Company Secretary	Gillian Parker
Trustees	Penelope Dawson-Brown, Val Hepworth, Maddy Hughes, Roger Lambert, Brendan Mowforth, Vicky Price, Gillian Parker, Chris Webb, Camilla Allen, Trevor Nicholson

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	Nicola Harrison
Small Grants	Brendan Mowforth
Webmaster	Louise Wickham

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Forthcoming YGT Publications

The schedule for the 2026 issues of the *e-Bulletins* and *Newsletter* is not complete and will be communicated to members early in 2026. In the meantime if any members wish to have material included in our next *e-Bulletin*, which will appear in Spring 2026, please do not hesitate to contact me below.

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

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

YGT Contact Details

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

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

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