



## Burnby Hall Gardens YGT Study Day Wednesday 3 May 2023



### Introduction

Burnby Hall gardens have been called “a jewel in Yorkshire’s crown” and visitors usually come to see the National Collection of Hardy Water Lilies which bloom on the Upper and Lower Lakes. Our Study Day consisted of three lectures focussing on the history of the gardens, which were created by Percy and Katherine Stewart in the early twentieth century; the Backhouse Rock Garden which they had built, and its recent restoration.

After lunch we explored the gardens in small groups led by members of the Burnby Hall Gardens team.

Our visit started well with bright sunshine and the re-assuring figure of Geoff Hughes, in his yellow jacket, directing us into the Cricket Club car park. After coffee and some excellent cheese straws the official proceedings started promptly with Burnby Hall Trustee Peter Williams in charge.



*Members in the Rock Garden*

### The Backhouse Nursery

Our first speaker was Gillian Parker, whose present research Ph D is based on the internationally renowned York based Backhouse nursery, so she was well placed to also talk about the rock gardens they designed.

A map of 1906 illustrated the many sites throughout the country where the Backhouses were known to have been involved. A brief history showed that by 1815/16 Thomas and James Backhouse had bought local nurseries, Telfords, and Riggs. They consolidated all their nurseries onto a

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single site in Holgate, York in 1853. By the 1860's they were one of the most important such businesses in the country, offering not only plants but also a design and supply service. The first Backhouse catalogue was issued in 1816 and showed that the nursery was already supplying alpine plants at this early stage.

James Backhouse's son, also James, was involved in the nursery from about 1845 and was responsible for the construction of a large rock work on the Holgate site. An 1889 map showed the position of the rock work and we also saw some early photos of it. However, in 1914 the firm went into receivership from causes which are largely unknown. It was bought by James Hamilton in 1921 and the firm finally closed in 1955. Part of the nursery land became West Bank Park in the 1930s. Unfortunately, the rock work no longer exists.

Moving on to the history of rock gardens, Gillian pointed out that they go back a long way; the 1773 example at Chelsea Physick garden, usually quoted, was not the first. Examples of rock work and alpinists growing on them can be seen back in the 16th century. William Robinson and Reginald Farrer, who are generally regarded as the initiators of the enthusiasm for alpine plants and rock gardens, were carrying on the tradition into the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

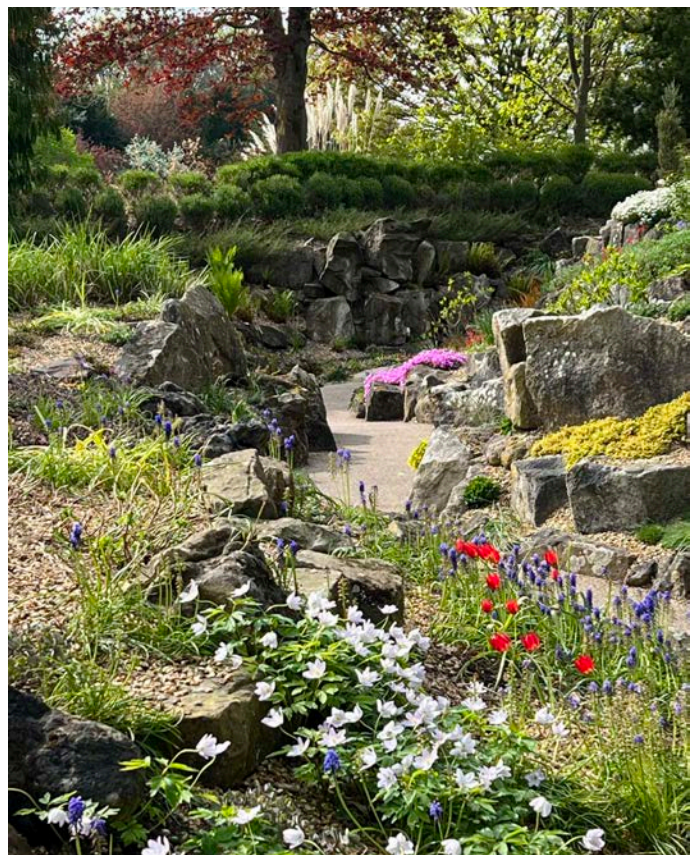
John Claudius Loudon published influential advice about rock gardens in the early 19th century, but there continued to be much controversy and disagreement over whether rock gardens should be obviously artificial or naturally enhanced features. Cultural implications were involved with Robinson later disagreeing with Loudon's writings over issues such as "mini mountains" and the type of rock from which rock gardens should be created. Articles in *The Gardeners Magazine* and *The Gardener's Chronicle* provide evidence of the disagreements that ensued.

James Backhouse the second was an innovator in rock garden design, and the nursery created many rock gardens, mainly supervised by Richard Potter, (examples being Warley Place, Friar Park, Icombe). William Angus Clark was responsible for the famous Aysgarth garden. There is a lack of written records about the amount of work undertaken by the Backhouses although research is ongoing. The first alpine plant catalogue from the Backhouse nursery that has been identified so far was published in 1873, but there may be earlier issues.

In the 1890's F W Myer, of the Veitch nursery in Exeter, wrote many articles about rock garden construction, showing how popular the form had

become. Concrete began to be used for stabilising slopes and creating ponds and caves. The invention of Pulhamite, an artificial rock, made rock gardens possible when natural rock was not available. As 19th century knowledge of geology developed, how closely rock gardens should copy geological formations became a source of debate, and influenced how rocks were used in private gardens, public parks and botanical gardens. The question of taste also pre-occupied many of the debates about rocks in the garden and small, suburban rock gardens became the subject of jokes, gnomes even crept in at Lamport! The growing interest in mountaineering probably also helped to increase the popularity of rock gardens, giving owners some illusion of fresh air and healthy exercise and, for some, power over nature.

In conclusion, Gillian highlighted the long history of rock gardens, the place of art and nature within them, the use of alpine plants, and the relevance of scientific and theological issues. Finally, she emphasised the extremely important position of the Backhouses in this type of gardening in the 19th and 20th centuries.



*Spring in the Rock Garden*

## **The Adventurous Stewarts**

Our next lecture, with the above title, was from Peter Rogers, assistant estate manager. He has written a booklet about the members of the Stewart family who owned Burnby Hall from 1901. The Reverend James Stewart and his wife Lucy had fourteen

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children, who all grew up in a strongly Christian environment at Little Stukeley. Despite good connections they had little money so had to go out into the world.



*Water channel in Rock Garden*

Percy Marlborough Stewart is the most important family member for us. He was born in 1871, became another gifted scholar and, after studying Hebrew, he became a tutor at Pocklington School. In 1901 he married Katharine, daughter of a wealthy Durham coal magnate. They leased Ivy Hall, and then were able to buy it and renamed it Burnby Hall. After four years of changing the Victorian house into the existing rather undistinguished Edwardian house, they moved on to the garden, creating the Upper and Lower lakes, fishing pools and shelters. The couple travelled extensively and brought back trophies which form the Stewart Museum collection. The rock garden was created by the Backhouse nursery, the work being supervised by their foreman, Richard Potter, who was paid for the design and construction, using local labour. In 1935 Amos Perry was asked to create a lily collection, which later became a national collection.

In 1914 Percy was too old for active service, so he spent the war in administrative roles, becoming a major, a title he retained for the rest of his life. Katharine died in 1939, but as they had no children they had already agreed to leave their estate in trust for the people of Pocklington. Major Percy died in

1962 and the trust came into being. The house was sold to fund the gardens and is occupied by the local authority but has an uncertain future. The garden, however, is a cherished local asset.

### **Restoration of the Backhouse Rock Garden at Burnby Hall Gardens**

The third session was introduced by Ian Murphy, the estate manager. He deals with a garden which is now 10 acres, greatly reduced from the Edwardian era, with a rock garden of about a third of an acre. The stone came from Bramley Quarry near Leeds and most pieces weigh 1.2/2.2 tons which had to be manhandled. The first lake was dug out, puddled, then finished with good quality concrete, but the second lake was not so good, and remedial work was needed. Ian, supported by the Trustees of the Stewart Trust, applied to the Heritage Lottery Fund and obtained enough money to replace the existing Stewart Museum by a bespoke building in 2007. The HLF also funded an extensive Golden Jubilee Restoration Project of the Upper Lake, Rock Garden and Edwardian Summerhouse between 2016 and 2019. Additionally, £750k was given, mainly for the renovation of the lakes, undertaken by a local firm, with £57k being allocated for restoring the rock garden, which was overgrown and infested with ground elder.

It was decided that drastic action was needed but there was much local opposition. A compromise led to a survey, but no significant Backhouse plants were found. Hand weeding was largely used to expose the rock formations without disturbing them, with glyphosate as a last resort. The lottery fund required better disabled access so bonded resin paths were laid up to the rocks with no edging.

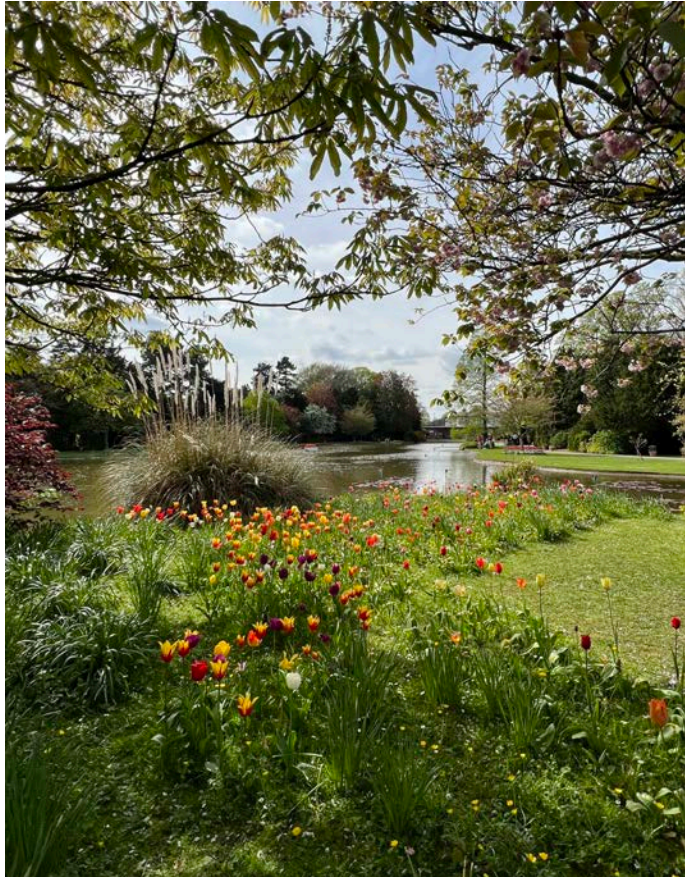
Jill Ward, who started work as Head Gardener in 2018, then took over to tell us of her work during the restoration. To implement the scheme she had to resort to a scorched earth policy, using flame guns and glyphosate in difficult areas for a couple of years. However with advice from a local Landscape Architect, then with much work from Stella Rankin of Kevock nursery near Edinburgh who listed the 20,000 plants which were needed, restoration started. Jill emphasised the work of local volunteers, up to 30 of them split into groups of 5. Stella brought the plants in numbered sequence so they could be laid out on Friday and planted on Saturday but the volunteers were so keen they were asked to mulch as well to slow them down! A small area was kept for school children to get involved. 12 volunteers still come twice a month and, as well as general maintenance, they record labels which are put out when something is in flower but removed when they fade so it does not look like a botanical garden.

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Jill then gave a summary of the plants used, with some unexpected successes and failures. Ferns flourished, but some moisture loving plants suffered from lack of water as the water channels have a concrete lining. *Pulsatilla vulgaris* is so happy it will soon need restraining, and *Sedum* spreading up cracks has become very prolific.

A five year plan has been drawn up for further development, including items such as a national *galanthus* collection.



*Lake and Tulips*

In the afternoon we were split into three groups for a guided tour of the gardens. Although our primary interest was the rock garden, we admired the spectacular planting of the tulip festival, with mixed colours in beds and single colours in large pots. Progressing along the birch walk, it was explained how the area was being planted for winter effect, with bulbs, including many snowdrops and plants such as *Hamamelis*.

The next area is a stumpery where dead elms have been replaced by *Davidia*, *Parrotia*, *Acer*s and others. A Hobbit house was intriguing but proved to be only a facade. Bluebells are mixed with a naturalising yellow tulip.

We circled round to the lakeside and the rock garden where the planting is maturing nicely, with good colour from plants like *Phlox douglasii* Crackerjack. *Libertia* stems give an orange glow in winter, while *Euphorbia* gives a different form and colour and

white *Leucojum* pop up in places. The multitude of rock plants is too extensive to be listed here. Laurels have been cut down low and are intended to eventually provide a backdrop to the dry slope.



*The Lake*

On to the walled garden where Jill has done a complete revamp, with wide circling borders full of tulips with herbaceous plants growing through for later in the year, and white stemmed birch. An interesting feature is the rebuilt 1900s potting shed in one corner, complete with vintage tools.

We then retired to the marquee where tea and very good cakes were provided before we set off for home.



*The group enjoying tea and cakes*

**Win Derbyshire  
Images © Gail Falkingham**



# Visit to the Valley Gardens, Harrogate

## Wednesday 26 April 2023

A group of around twenty members met at the centrally located Magnesia Well Café in the Valley Gardens on a beautiful spring morning. Our guide was Jane Blayney, co-author of a book entitled *A Guide to the Trees of Valley Gardens, Harrogate*. Written alongside co-author Simon Hill the book details 30 special trees found within the garden.



*Jane Blayney talking to the group*  
Image © Maddy Hughes

A meandering course allowed us to view many of these trees, some of which were not fully in leaf so Jane's descriptions were helpful in creating a picture. Alongside her, Maddy Hughes did a great job of helping to illustrate Jane's talk with pictures from her book showing the relevant trees as we went along. The Weeping Golden Cypress, *Cupressus macrocarpa* 'Coneybeanii Aurea' was bought as a seedling by arborist, Dr Coneybear and found by Woolich Nursery, Victoria, Australia but named for himself. It is a large and eye-catching specimen with bright green foliage and narrow foliage falling from weeping branches. We saw the eye-catching bark of the Tibetan Cherry, *Prunus serrula* var. *tibetica* which is planted on the north side of Elgar Walk. This was one of the first Asian cherries to arrive in this country in 1922 where it soon became popular although it has now largely been superseded by the many other varieties of cherries available.

A grand specimen of *Aesculus hippocastanum* may be viewed from the south side of Elgar Walk at the main East Entrance to Valley Gardens and this tree is I think a familiar site to us all. A fine specimen of the Atlas Cedar, *Cedrus atlantica* is situated near the main entrance to the gardens: this cedar was originally found along the snow line of the forests of the Atlas Mountains in North Africa. The bark is a dark grey and leaves are whorled: the Atlas Cedar is one of only four true Cedars. *Tilia x europaea*, the

Common Lime is planted to create a walkway and is otherwise known as Lover's Walk because of the heart-shaped leaves of the trees and interestingly, Jane mentions in her book that Carl Linnaeus, born Carl Ingemarsson chose the name Linnaeus as his family name when he went to university after a giant Common Lime Tree on his family homestead in Rashult, Sweden. The Valley Garden is home to a magnificent Tulip Tree, *Liriodendron tulipifera*. Of the Magnolia family, this tree originated from North America and is situated here to the north east of the Japanese Garden. To the west of the bandstand stands a row of Willow-leaved Pear, *Pyrus salicifolia* 'Pendula'. This pretty tree is covered with creamy-white flowers in spring and has grey foliage, the gentle colour belying the fact that it has sharp thorns!



*Maddy holding Jane Blayney's Book*  
Image © Karen Lynch

The Valley Gardens were opened in 1887 in celebration of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee and during the ensuing years a mixture of native and ornamental trees including some from other continents have been planted to enhance the gardens and commemorate special occasions. The 17 acre park is sited on a volcanic fault and 36 medicinal springs may be found on an area called Bogs Field. The Friends of Valley Gardens was established in 1986 and works in partnership with Harrogate Borough Council for the benefit of the local community and visitors to the town. Jane was Chairman of the Committee from 2010 to 2018 and now devotes her time to writing and delivering

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presentations and tours about Valley Gardens: there is much that can be learned historically from reading her book, with co-author Anne Smith, *A Souvenir Guide to the Valley Gardens, Harrogate*.

On behalf of us all, we would like to thank Jane for her illuminating talk which we all enjoyed: it must have been quite difficult for her to manage our group, answer questions and cope with the background noise of mowers cutting the grass. We did in fact run out of time towards the end of our walk and so add that it would be interesting to re-visit the Valley Gardens another time and learn more about its history and featuring people and landmarks and perhaps a few more trees!

**Jean Pick and Jill McCandlish**



*Image © Maddy Hughes*

## Gardens Trust News



### GT Volunteer Award and Celebration Day

Would you like to say thank you to a very special volunteer? You have until the 31st July to nominate them for our relaunched Volunteer Award, which recognises those who have made an outstanding contribution to the Gardens Trust or a County Gardens Trust in the last two years.

The award will be presented on Thursday, 7 September at our Volunteering Celebration Day. Book now for this very special event, in which we celebrate the amazing work of volunteers from County Gardens Trusts, the Gardens Trust, and beyond. This event is part of our season of Historic Landscape Assemblies, which in 2023 looks at the theme of designation and historic designed landscapes. Sessions will include an overview of the pioneering Suffolk's Unforgettable Gardens Story, an introduction to a research and recording project with Nottinghamshire Gardens Trust, and news from Friends groups and County Gardens Trusts whose work links conservation and research.

### Gardens Trust Annual General Meeting

The Volunteering Celebration Day will include the Gardens Trust's [Annual General Meeting](#), so we would encourage every CGT to send a voting representative if possible. The AGM will run from 1.30-2pm and all attendees are very welcome to attend the AGM, though only GT members and

County Gardens Trust voting representatives will be able to vote. Booking deadline: 31 August 2023.

### News from our neighbouring County Gardens Trust - Lancashire

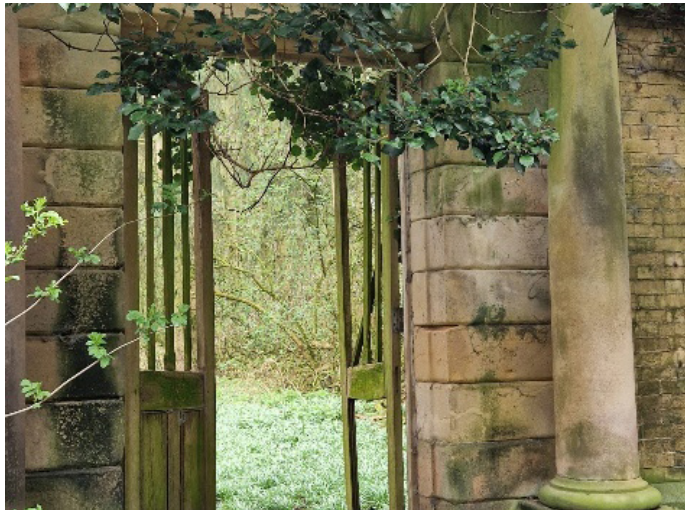


*Engraving of Woodfold Park by Edward Twycross, 1846*

[Lancashire Gardens Trust](#) operates across fourteen local authorities in post-1974 Lancashire County. Additionally, it covers significant portions of Greater Manchester and north Merseyside.

In the past year, we have considered several planning applications at Woodfold Park, approximately 175 hectares of parkland, spanning three local authorities west of Blackburn. It has [Grade II status](#) and is currently on Historic England's At Risk register. About twenty years ago the mansion of 1790, probably by J Wyatt, was restored through enabling

works which included the development of an incongruous stud farm. LGT objected to the further enlargement of this and other applications which so far have been refused.



We also raised objections with St Helens Council to a proposed residential development on former playing fields, situated adjacent to the Grade II Registered Park and Garden at the late twentieth-century former Pilkington Headquarters. Permission for this development was refused.

## **GT Survey of Friends of Parks and Green Spaces**

We want to get in touch with Friends of Parks and other Green Spaces, to find out more about their volunteering experience and explore ways we could work together to support the historic parks and gardens we all care about.

In June, with the [National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces](#) we launched a national survey of Friends groups and we're delighted that we have already had a good number of responses. If you volunteer with a Friends Group, and haven't yet completed our survey, we need to hear from you! Please fill in or share our survey to help us find out what support we could offer Friends groups. The survey closes at the end of July.

## **An introduction to Garden History in 10 Objects**

Join us on Saturday 7 October for an interactive day of discovery, in partnership with the Garden Museum in London. Using ten garden-related objects, and guided by two experienced garden historians, we'll explore the development of garden design, horticulture and landscape architecture, ending with ideas to continue your reading and research. Booking opens in July via the [Garden Museum](#).

This event will also be held in November at Winterbourne House and Gardens, Birmingham - details to follow online.

## **Historic Landscapes Designation Conference**

This conference, our main Historic Landscape Assembly, will take place on Thursday 12 October. The programme is still being finalised, but will include a look back to the origins of the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest from those who were there, a briefing on the current designation system, and a panel discussion on designation as a conservation tool today. Speakers will include Peter Goodchild, William Hanham, Deborah Evans, Jenifer White and Chris Blandford. This will be a hybrid event, available both in-person and online.

## **Online events**

### **Autumn lecture series**

Our online programme will start again in September with a series on World Heritage Landscapes on Tuesday mornings and a series on Head Gardeners of Historical Sites on Wednesday evenings.

### **[Browse and book events](#)**

## **Public Parks**

In the *Gardens Trust News* Spring 2023 issue 21, Paul Rabbitts, who is currently Head of Parks and Open Spaces at Southend-on-Sea City Council and a Trustee of the Gardens Trust, has written an important article about the dire state of many of our public parks entitled *People's Parks, Public Parks in Peril?* He had visited Liverpool and discovered that News-ham Park which had been built following the raising of £500,000 in 1865 after a cholera epidemic is, due to lack of funding for maintenance, now "grim, dirty, lacking any sign of investment and bereft of any perceived care".

He then moves on to consider Halifax, where he had recently given a lecture on the history of public parks to the Arts Society of Halifax. Afterwards he visited People's Park in Halifax which had been designed by Joseph Paxton. This was his response:

"[the] most upsetting visit. Graffiti and vandalism were prevalent, the bandstand boarded up, fountains and water features empty and I had that sense of unease, of not wanting to be there because I didn't feel safe".

He continues the article with a call for us all to campaign for our parks and offers ways in which we can do this.



# Harrogate Autumn Flower Show

## **Plea for volunteers to help with stand!**

Maddy has recently sent round an email to members to ask for their help with the above. This is just a reminder, as it is a large project, and we will need lots of help. We are hoping we can attract lots of interest from non-member visitors to the Autumn Flower Show:

“In the last *YGT Newsletter* Vicky Price described how YGT intends to be present and involved at the Harrogate Autumn Flower Show this year.

Since then, Vicky, Gail Falkingham, Peter Goodchild and Brendan Mowforth have worked hard with the show organisers to develop and design our installation and stand. There is still much to do behind the scenes - but essentially this is a request for volunteers to assist with manning the stand and installation over the show period.

We have broken each day into three sessions and are seeking volunteers to work on the stand in teams of three, largely to engage visitors in conversation and introduce them to YGT. There will be “prompt” material provided and an “activity” given to us by the Gardens Trust to engage discussion - a ‘Lucky Dip’ bag of everyday objects (like a brick, toy cow, packets of seeds etc.) that we can display and invite people to guess what the garden history story behind them is, (again prompts will be provided).

I am seeking volunteers now, (please reply by Monday 31 July), so that we can spread the load between us - based on the following sessions:

Friday 15 September 9.30 - 12.00

Friday 15 September 12.00-14.30

Friday 15 September 14.30-17.00

Saturday 16 September 9.30 - 12.00

Saturday 16 September 12.00-14.30

Saturday 16 September 14.30-17.00

Sunday 17 September 9.30 - 12.00

Sunday 17 September 12.00-14.30

Sunday 17 September 14.30-17.00

Don't worry, support will be available.

Familiarisation “training” will be provided beforehand (by Zoom), and each session will be “manned” by at least one Council of Management member. On the day of volunteering, each volunteer will receive a complimentary ticket to the show, Newby Hall Gardens and part of the house (worth £24.50).

[The garden at Newby Hall is delightful! Ed.]

I look forward to hearing from you - and, indeed, if you would prefer a “backstage” role we are also seeking volunteers to help with putting together the display material and assembling the stand on Wednesday 13 September/Thursday 14 September

**Maddy Hughes**

***madalynhughes@aol.com***





# Council News

## Notes from the April 2023 Council Meeting

It was so good to be able to meet up in person in the imposing surroundings of the York Guildhall for our April meeting. Some of us continued to participate via Zoom and the process worked well. The meeting's proceedings are recorded and then transcribed by Lucy Bennett, our Administrator.

We began by reviewing the AGM held in March at Sledmere House, a full report on which will appear in our Autumn Newsletter. It was generally agreed that it had been a very successful day and the facilities at Sledmere were very good. The talk and tour of the grounds, both given by David Neave, were excellent in their scope and depth. Sledmere sits in the most wonderful rolling parkland and the sunshine set it off beautifully. The venue for 2024 was discussed and it was provisionally agreed that we would consider using the University of York's facilities. Askham Bryan was also suggested as a potential venue.

The subject matter, date, and venue for the Strategy Meeting this summer were discussed. Temple Newsam was considered as a venue. It now seems likely that the Strategy Meeting will take place this Autumn. The recently published Gardens Trust Market Research Report would be considered, and a discussion took place as to whether we should undertake our own survey, as the results of the GT survey did not appear to have huge relevance to our own situation.

The Events Programme is going well so far this year with some visits being fully booked and there is now a focus on events on the new website. Gail Falkingham's Instagram collaboration with the Gardens Trust has also been posted and there is a report about this project by Gail at page 18 of this e-Bulletin.

Preparations are underway for our stand at the Harrogate Autumn Flower Show to be held at Newby Hall between 15th and 17th of September.

The Schools Committee is pleased to report that membership has increased 20-fold in the last 12 months, up by 38%. "Great to be supporting more schools!"

The Research and Recording Group has a full caseload of sites to be reported on and has acquired a new volunteer, Sue Lang, who is researching Hawksworth Hall in West Yorkshire. The completed report on Gisborough Hall/Priory has recently been posted on the website. The Group held its annual training day at Kiplin Hall on 26 June and details will be published later.

The Conservation and Planning Committee has been extremely busy, as always. A new Chairman has not yet been appointed and Chris Webb continues to ably chair the meetings. Between January and April 25 planning applications were responded to, seven responses were submitted on Forestry Commission licence applications and five site visits took place.

Chris Mayes who was English Heritages Landscape specialist for the North has returned from paternity leave but will be taking up a new post in the national EH team. His loss will be significant as he has always worked very closely with us. His replacement is being recruited.

The meeting ended with a demonstration by Gail of our Instagram account together with some very impressive statistics on its usage and reach. We were left speechless with admiration for all the work Gail has done in putting this account together and running it so brilliantly.

Our next meeting will take place on 25 July.

## Farewell from Lucy

"It is with great sadness that I am letting you all know that I am stepping down from the role of YGT Administrator after receiving an exciting job offer working as the Volunteer Administrator at St Leonards Hospice in York. Just to say a brief thank you to everyone at Yorkshire Gardens Trust, both members and volunteers. It has been a truly great experience, one which has taught me a lot and opened new and exciting opportunities for me. I wish you all the best for the future."

We are extremely sorry to lose Lucy. She has been a great asset to us, especially in bringing her youthful experience to bear in helping us with long overdue IT tasks such as tidying up the membership list. We will miss her and wish her all the best in her new role at St Leonards.



# Notes from the Editor

With Summer now firmly upon us, we have enjoyed an excellent series of visits during the last three months and our thanks must go out to the Events Team for all their hard work in organising such a special programme.

We begin with a report on the Study Day held at Burnby Hall, East Yorkshire, at the beginning of May, ably organised by Maddy Hughes and Gillian Parker. This was a particularly significant event in our 2023 calendar as we welcomed a good number of non-members who work within the gardens, parks and landscapes professions. The day has been written up for us by Win Derbyshire, who would like to acknowledge the help she received from Gillian Parker, who was one of our speakers and who gave a paper on the Backhouse nurseries, and the rock gardens they created, including the rock garden at Burnby.

Interestingly, in a recent note in *The Times*, Anne Treneman reports on her visit to the Hampton Court Flower Show held earlier this month under the heading “**Rock Stars** .... many gardens here continue to blur the lines between gardens and landscape. The big takeaway is rocks – the larger the better. It seems you cannot go wrong sticking a large rock along the edge of your pond, path or border..... they look pretty fab, setting off the planting perfectly giving the flowers a rugged edge. Remember rock gardens? This is more like rock’ n’ roll. Are we seeing the beginning of the revival of an ancient fashion”?

In April we visited the remains of the rural retreat of Lord Burlington at Londesborough Park near Market Weighton, also in East Yorkshire, and

the report of this visit will appear in the *Autumn Newsletter*.

Also in April we went to the Valley Gardens in Harrogate and the write up is by Jean Pick and Jill McCandlish at page 5. The tour was led by Jane Blayney, who has recently written a book on the trees in the gardens.

In May we went to the Thirsk Hall Sculpture Garden and the report of this visit will also be published in our *Autumn Newsletter*.

Our Summer Evening Party was held at Sion Hill Hall on a rather overcast evening in June. We were accompanied throughout the evening by the resident peacock. We enjoyed a delicious and very generous series of canapés and Michael Mallaby, who is the custodian of the house and garden, was a most generous host, inviting us to wander at will around the immaculate gardens. Sylvia Hogarth compiled the report at page 11, with Sylvia writing the text and Peter supplying his usual excellent photos.

Gail Falkingham, who is not only a trustee and member of our Events team, but also single-handedly manages our Instagram page, recently collaborated with the Gardens Trust on “A Tour of Yorkshire’s Hidden Gardens”. Gail has written up the results of the experiment in this -e-Bulletin at page 18.

We also include our usual round up of Gardens Trust news, Council meetings and other items which we hope will be of interest to you all.

**Christine Miskin**  
**Editor**





# Sion Hill Hall

## Wednesday 7 June 2023

### Summer Evening Party

Yorkshire Gardens Trust members did not allow the cool, overcast weather to spoil the pleasure of our visit to this very lovely house and garden where we were warmly greeted by Michael Mallaby. As we enjoyed prosecco and canapes on the rear terrace, Michael explained something of the complex 800-year history of the site to the current 1914 Neo-Georgian house and his own transformation of the neglected, five-acre estate into the current series of gardens.



*Michael Mallaby introducing members to the Hall and Garden*

### The historic site

Sion Hill Hall, part of the Manor of Kirby Wiske, is situated a little north-west of Thirsk, close to the River Wiske. The site was owned by a branch of the Lascelles family from the early 13th century. Several subsequent changes of ownership, including that of Joshua Crompton of Esholt Hall, occurred until George Edwin Lascelles, son of the 3rd Earl of Harewood bought it back into the extended family in 1850. In 1911 the estate was sold to Percy and Ethel Stancliffe who found the then house unsound and had it demolished. The Stancliffes commissioned Walter H. Brierley of York to design the new house in a 'Neo-Style-Georgian' style as Sion Hill Hall, which was completed in 1914.

The Grade II Listed Hall was subsequently purchased, in 1962, by Herbert William Mawer, a businessman and collector of fine art and antiques. To preserve his large collection and the house and gardens, he established The Herbert William Mawer Charitable Trust. Michael Mallaby, Trustee and lifelong friend of Herbert and Elsie Mawer has been the resident and custodian since 1999.

### The Hall

The low, many windowed house is positioned to provide maximum internal light, while a varied roof line and tall chimneys offset the simplicity of the long range of the building. Behind the restrained frontage lie the magnificent gardens leading down a gentle slope to the river and offering a long view across fields to the Hambleton Hills

Gail Falkingham, a Trustee of the Yorkshire Gardens Trust and member of staff of North Yorkshire County Record Office, has written a detailed and fascinating account, based on extensive records at the Record Office, of the commissioning and building of the Hall, with some references to works in the garden and grounds:

<https://nycroblog.com/2023/06/03/the-building-of-sion-hill-north-yorkshire-a-late-edwardian-country-house/>

### Transforming the garden

When Michael arrived in 1999 the gardens to the rear of the house were very neglected. A displayed 'before' photograph shows the area as an empty and unkempt field. The ground was slowly cleared out including diseased hornbeam hedges. An 1850's Wellingtonia tree remains. Michael explained that there had been no initial grand plan but rather the several components of the garden had developed slowly.



*View through the Brierley Wall*

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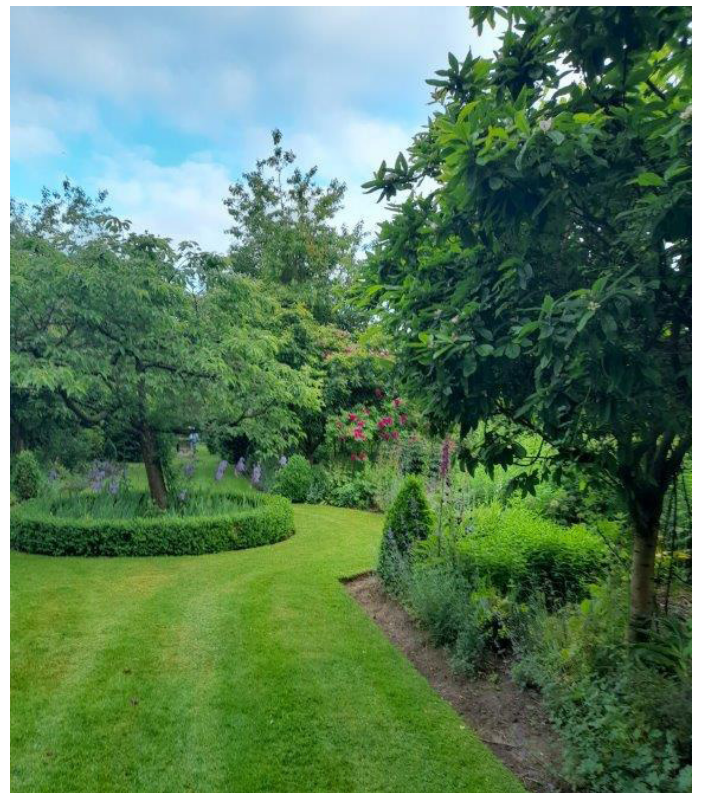
Access to the gardens is via a short path through a narrow archway in the Brierly wall, to the rear terrace, which opens up dramatically to reveal the restrained, elegant Parterre. So different from many Yorkshire gardens. Separated from the house by the terrace, this area spans most of the width of the house with an elegant, large lawn, low box edging, four short pyramid shrubs and rows of ball-shaped trees on three sides. The Parterre is extended with gravel paths and enclosed by two more rows of ball-shaped trees to left and right. The immediate effect is both striking and calming.



*Parterre Garden and rear of house*



*Parterre Garden view of one side*



*Centenary Rose Garden*

To the left of the Parterre is the Centenary Rose Garden created to celebrate 100 years since the Hall was completed in 1914. This presents a softer enclosure including a central lawn, curved-edged herbaceous borders, trees and, of course, roses. Turning right the gravel path leads past the Half Moon Garden parallel to the back of the main Parterre Garden and on to the stunning *Gunnera* Garden. One passes through one of two gaps in a six-foot high, rectangular hedge to see a central stumpery, planted with tall ferns and hostas.



*Stumpery with ferns and hostas in the Gunnera Garden*



Either side, in their own arenas, are two enormous (possibly seven foot) *Gunnera*) standing proud and dramatic. They are normally associated with streams and low ground but this particular spot in the site proved to be damp and thus suitable.



*One of the two Gunnera*

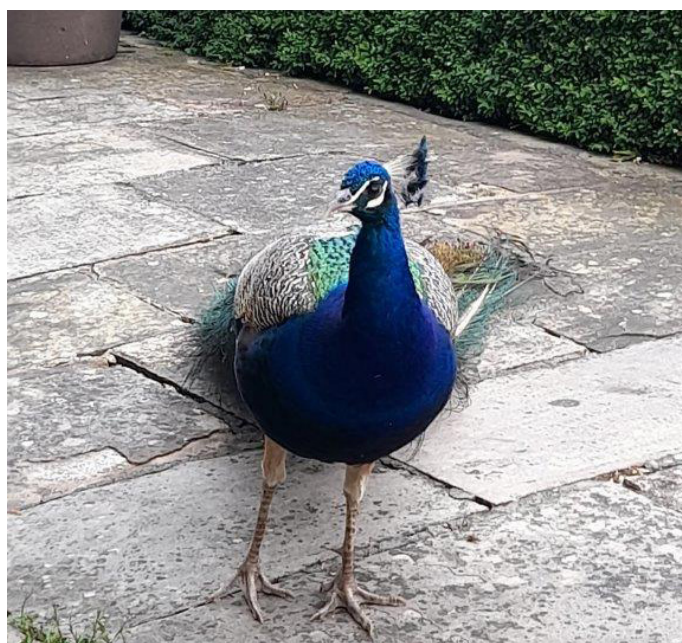
Beyond the *Gunnera* Garden three pathways lead towards the River Wiske and less formal areas. To the left is a long, thin kitchen garden which is currently rented out and therefore not accessible to visitors. The Hall has its own kitchen garden elsewhere. To the right the wooded Long Walk and the even longer Lower Walk. The Long Walk was laid out in the 1850's for Lady Louisa Lascelles, daughter of the 4th Earl of Mansfield, and since restored. Underplanted with double herbaceous borders and provided with seating, the walks offer gentle strolling with views of the river. [Take in photos of Long Walk and Lower Walk] The two paths circle back to join the gravel path alongside the *Gunnera* Garden and then return to the house alongside the Parterre lawn, past two classical statues of Pan playing his pipes. A secondary loop of the Gardener's Path takes one behind two rows of ball-trimmed trees and other shrubs and trees. Presumably designed to allow the gardeners access to the further areas of the garden without disturbing individuals enjoying the Parterre Garden.

A resident peacock, drawn by the prospect of canapes, joined our group from time to time and

displayed his skills by strutting about the terrace and then flying up to the roof.



*Statue of Pan alongside the Parterre*



*Peacock joins us for canapes.*

### **Thank you!**

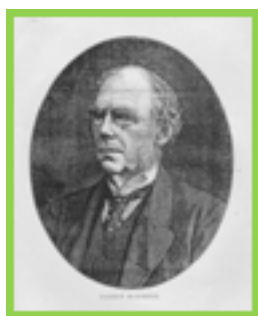
It is a pleasure to thank Michael Mallaby and the Sion Hill Huse Trust for a delightful and inspiring evening in such a special garden. We are also grateful to the YGT members who provided a delicious and generous selection of canapes.

**Sylvia Hogarth**

**All Images © Peter Hogarth**



# Celebrating Marnock Sheffield Botanical Gardens June 2023

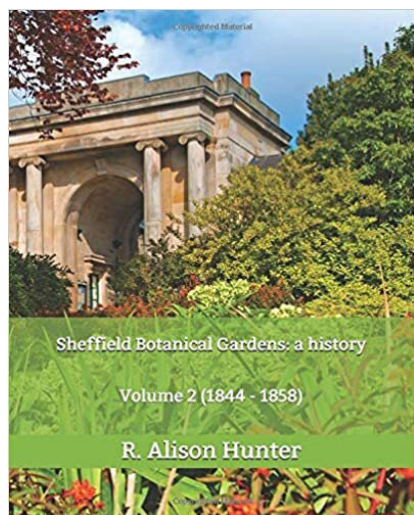


The month of June offered visitors to Sheffield Botanical Gardens a varied programme of events celebrating the life and work of their creator Robert Marnock (1800-1889).

The programme for Saturday June 17 provided a fully immersive 'Marnock

Experience' starting with a guided tour of the gardens in the afternoon, followed by an evening lecture by Dr Jan Woudstra exploring in more detail the achievements of this highly regarded landscape designer, curator, nurseryman, writer and editor.

## The Tour



A group of about 25 people assembled at the Dorothy Fox Education centre to meet Alison Hunter, Sheffield Botanical Gardens historian, the author and co-author of a two-volume history of the gardens.

Alison began with a brief history of the creation of the 19-acre site which opened in 1836 and an introduction to Robert Marnock's arrival in Sheffield from his previous role as head gardener at Bretton Hall, after winning the design competition for the proposed Botanical Gardens.

A copy of a painting in the Sheffield Museums Collections "View of Sheffield from Sharrow Moor" clearly shows the newly completed Botanical Gardens with their impressive pavilions and glasshouses, as a significant feature in the Sheffield landscape.

The route of Alison's guided tour was planned to highlight specimen trees and planting features which Robert Marnock would have known or used in Sheffield or in his long career elsewhere. Alison provided information and illustrations about aspects of the gardens development and evolution which really brought their history to life – with some memorable 'did you know' facts along the way.

## Tour Highlights - Trees

The tour began with an exploration of the *Conifer Collection*. The group was invited to feel the soft spongy bark of the *Sequoia sempervirens* (below, the Coast Redwood) nature's ingenious way of protecting the tree during the coastal fires of its native sites in California and Oregon.



*Taxodium distichum* (below, the Bald Cypress) also has a fibrous bark. This tall deciduous tree has small cones and was recorded in Marnock's catalogue as *Cupressus distichia*.



## The Rose Garden



Diverting from the tree collection for a moment, the lovely rose garden was in full bloom, seen at its best in a year that has provided perfect growing conditions for roses.

Robert Marnock designed rose gardens at Warwick Castle and Hagley Hall.



His design for the Botanical Gardens rose garden was altered when it became an Italianate Garden in the period 1952-2009 but it is now restored to its original design principles.

### The Pavilions and Glass Houses

A competition was held in 1834, to design a glasshouse for the Sheffield Botanical Gardens. Sir Joseph Paxton (1803-1865) was one of the competition judges, but Alison corrected any suggestion linking Paxton to the final design.



Robert Marnock won the first prize of £10 but his structurally complex design was discarded in favour of the glasshouse designed by Benjamin Broomhead Taylor a Sheffield architect, the winner of the £5 second prize. It was opened in 1836.

Alison pointed out the *Musa Cavendishii* – the Cavendish Banana – which is recorded in Marnock's catalogue of 1838. This plant descends from a plant that had been grown in a Chatsworth hothouse since the 1830s. The Cavendish banana fills today's supermarket shelves and makes up almost the entire global export market.

### Final Highlights of the Tree Collection

Leaving the glasshouse, the tour returned to a route which visited more trees of interest which included:

- ***Ginkgo biloba*:** also known as the silver apricot from the Japanese words 'gin' meaning silver and 'kyo' meaning apricot. Only the female trees bear fruit. This disease-resistant tree is used in Sheffield's urban setting to replace older trees recently removed.
- ***Euonymus europaeus*:** the European Spindle tree has very hard wood, which was used in the past for making wool-spinning spindles and butchers' skewers. Charcoal produced from burning its wood generates superior quality artists' charcoal.
- ***Ostrya virginiana*:** the American hophornbeam

is an understory tree found across North America, famous for its hard wood, also known as 'ironwood'. This wood played a key role in Sheffield's famous tool-making industry where it was used for making tool handles. A more modern-day use is for patios and decking.

Our afternoon walk ended, and we thanked Alison for her fascinating tour of the gardens and for sharing her extensive knowledge of their history. Leaving by the Clarkehouse Road exit we had one final reminder of the period in which Robert Marnock lived, the traditional formal Victorian bedding with curving borders and numerous plants creating a riot of colour.



### Conclusion

"Celebrating Marnock" is an excellent initiative. It promotes the importance of Robert Marnock, locally, nationally and internationally with a superb collection of on-line material available at <https://www.sbg.org.uk/celebrating-marnock>

More information about Dr Jan Woudstra's talk on Robert Marnock will appear in the Autumn Newsletter.

In the meantime, other Marnock sites to visit in Sheffield include:

- **Sheffield General Cemetery.** The original landscape was designed by Robert Marnock, with work beginning in 1836, and further suggestions by him in the late 1840's. However, the late 19th century saw significant changes to Marnock's original designs.
- **Weston Park, Sheffield's first municipal public park.** Robert Marnock modified the grounds of the earlier privately owned Weston Hall to transform the site into a public space c.1873.

A trail has been devised to take a journey through the three Marnock sites with an accompanying audio guide accessed via a QR code. An ideal follow up to the day.

**Chris Beevers**

**Images © Chris Beevers**



## Historic Gardens Foundation to Offer Grants

We have received the following communication from Louise Vale the Grants Co-ordinator of the HGF:

“I am writing to let you know that The Historic Gardens Foundation is now offering grants towards publications on historic parks, gardens and designed landscapes. Charities, public interest organisations and, in exceptional cases, individuals working in this field are eligible to apply. Preference will be given to projects with an international dimension and to applicants who have worked with us in the past.

Further details can be downloaded from our website [www.historicgardens.org/grants](http://www.historicgardens.org/grants).

Please forward this information to your committee and, if possible, share it with your members in your next Newsletter.

We hope you will be interested in the grant scheme and look forward to hearing from you”.

## New Master's Degree in Garden History

The University of Buckingham's Master's programme in Garden History offers the opportunity to pursue research at Master's level in any one of a wide range of garden- and landscape-related topics: from explorations of individual sites; their designers, gardeners and owners; to studies of the social and political use of gardens, or aspects of their conservation, botany, ecology, horticulture, archaeology, buildings – and much else besides.

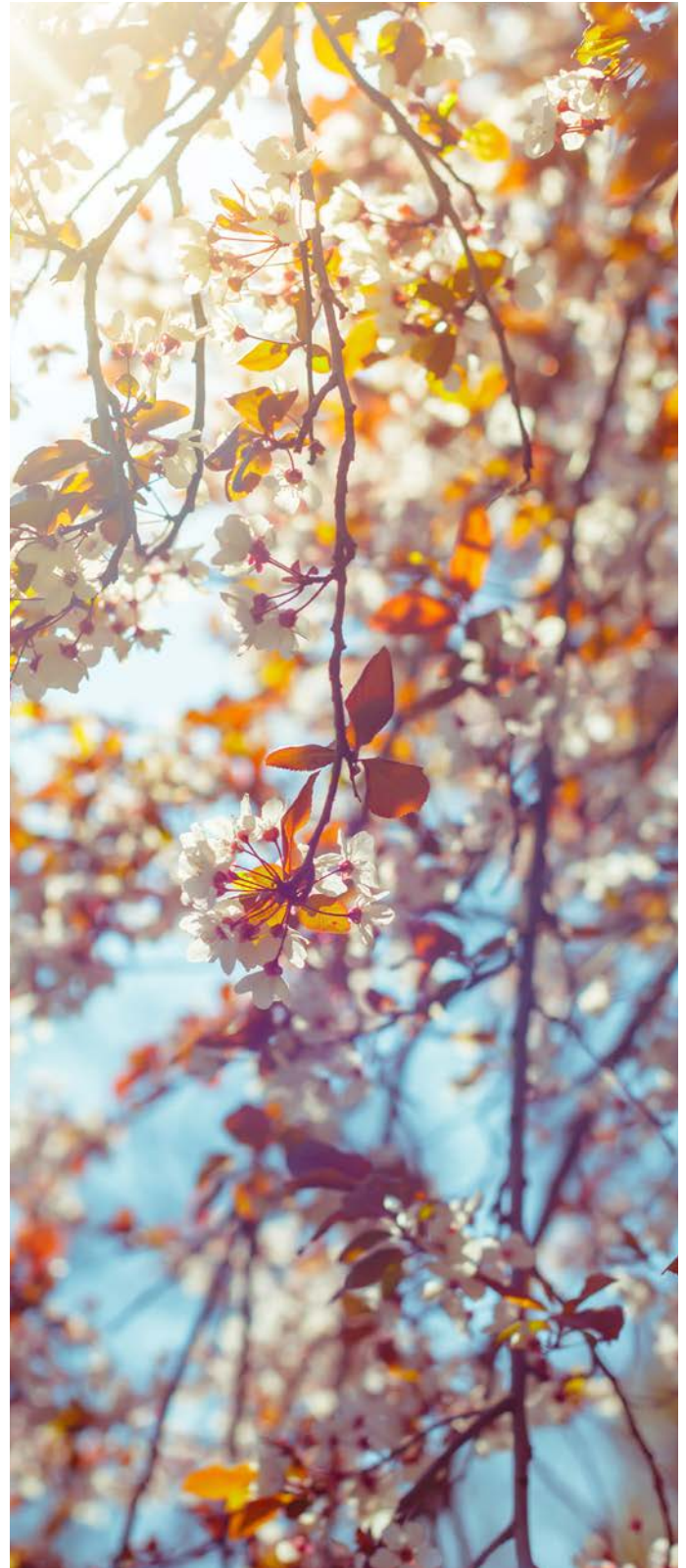
While individual research topics are closely focused, the approach of the course is to encourage students to take a broad view of the links between gardens and landscape, and of history and culture more generally.

Recent papers on these themes have included a survey of travellers' accounts of garden-visiting in the eighteenth century; gardeners as philanthropists in the nineteenth century; the links between garden sculpture and imperialism; horticultural knowledge in seventeenth-century Holland; men's fashion and flowers; and the choice of subject area is ultimately the student's own.

The MA is awarded solely based on the dissertation (there are no exams), and the relationship between you and your supervisor is therefore at the heart of the course. The maximum length for the MA dissertation recommended by the School of Humanities is 25,000 words (or approximately 75 pages at a line-spacing of 1.5), excluding notes and

references. Student and supervisor meet regularly on a one-to-one basis to discuss, plan, and review the dissertation as it develops through the year.

The Course Director, David Marsh, is available to offer advice to prospective students who would like to discuss possible subjects for their research before they apply. He can be reached directly by email at [david.marsh@buckingham.ac.uk](mailto:david.marsh@buckingham.ac.uk).





# News from the Events Team

A quick reminder that we have two further events in September:

## **Brodsworth Hall and Gardens Brodsworth, Doncaster DN5 7XJ**

Brodsworth Hall and Gardens survive as a remarkable example of a mid-Victorian country estate of historic importance beyond the boundaries of South Yorkshire. The current Hall replaced an older structure. It was built in the Italianate style in the 1860s with newly created pleasure gardens overlooking the historic park and wider designed landscape of the original Brodsworth Hall, accompanied by spectacular formal Victorian flower beds with an evergreen backdrop of manicured topiary. Managed by English Heritage since 1990, our visit will be hosted by Dr Michael Klemperer, Senior Gardens Advisor North/Midlands for English Heritage and Daniel Hale, Head Gardener. An in-depth summary of the history of the site followed by an extensive garden tour over 14 acres with features of interest such as the newly restored Target Garden, the Alpine Bed, The Grotto/Quarry Garden, a Summerhouse and eyecatcher promises a day full of colour, history and surprises.

**Cost: £17.90 for non-EH members, £16.60 for non-EH members concessions, £5.00 for members.**  
Organiser: Chris Beevers



*Image © English Heritage*

## **Ledston Hall Ledston, Castleford WF10 2BB**



There has been a building on the site of Ledston Hall, Grade I, since the thirteenth century. Enlarged in the sixteenth century, the hall was modified by Lady Betty Hastings when she inherited it in 1704. She also employed Charles Bridgeman, the then Royal Gardener, to redesign the gardens to the east of the hall in 1717 for which a set of plans survive. Unfortunately, these were destroyed in 1818 to make way for gardens to feed racehorses. The present owners of the Hall, the Wheler Foundation has recently announced a £10 million restoration of the house, the gardens and pleasure grounds. Join us for an introductory talk covering the history of the site and a guided tour. Please bring picnic lunches.

An article in the *Yorkshire Post Property* section on Saturday 15th July is devoted to the restoration of the Hall and it looks fantastic – a wonderful building. The restoration is now complete, and the new accommodation will be let and not sold. The income will be devoted to maintaining the estate for the future.

[It is also being hailed as the first Grade I listed building in the country to have gained permission to replace many of the metal windows with double-glazed equivalents to increase the energy performance of the building – hurrah! - Ed]

Organiser: Val Hepworth

*Images © British Listed Buildings*



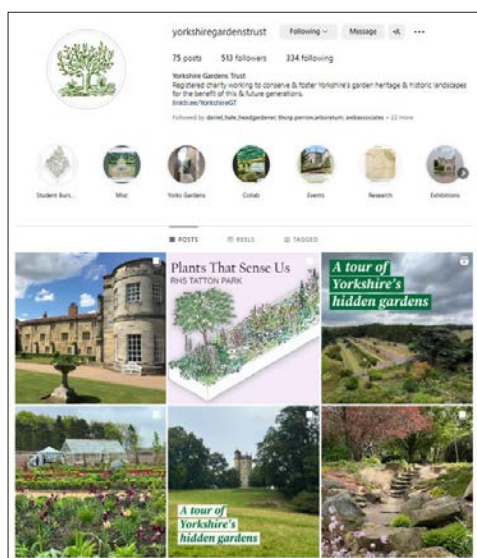


# A Tour of Yorkshire's Hidden Gardens

## A social media collaboration between YGT & The Gardens Trust

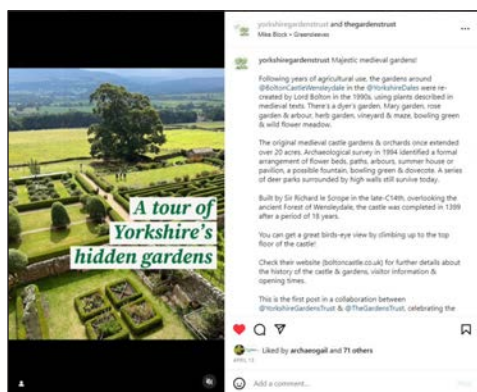
In the Spring of 2023 we tried something a little different with the YGT Instagram account. Bolstered by the success of a collaboration with Alistair Baldwin Associates on a short video of the garden he designed at Linton House, Richmond for our former treasurer Nigel Tooze and Chris Shaw, which has had over 17.3 thousand views, we partnered up with The Gardens Trust for a similar collaboration.

The idea for this arose following discussions with Frankie Taylor, Audience Development and Engagement Officer at The Gardens Trust, who has been holding sessions for County Gardens Trusts to promote wider use of social media.



Screenshot of part of the YGT Instagram profile grid showing some of the 'Yorkshire's Hidden Gardens' collaborative posts

The theme for the collaboration was 'A Tour of Yorkshire's Hidden Gardens', based on the five historic designed landscapes around Richmondshire that we visited as part of The Gardens Trust's Yorkshire Weekend event in early September 2022.



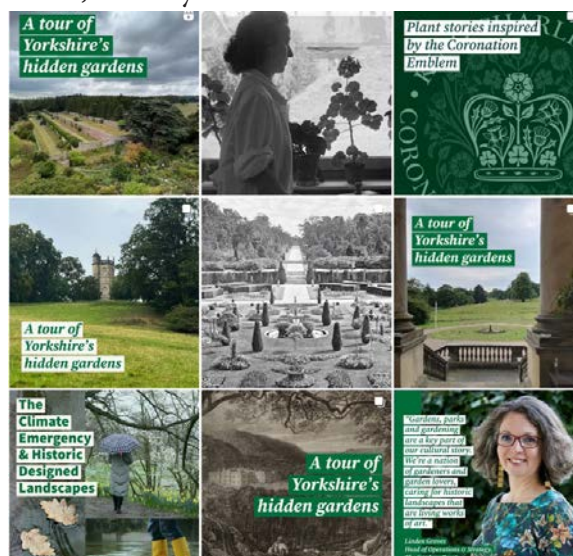
Screenshot from our first post about Bolton Castle – a reel video showing the reconstructed medieval gardens viewed from the top floor of the castle

During our visits to Bolton Castle, Aske Hall, Constable Burton, Temple Grounds and Bolton Hall, I had taken numerous photographs and short videos. The delegates' handbook for the September event contained detailed articles about each site, written by YGT members, who had also helped to organise the site visits (the Bolton Castle text was taken from their website: <https://boltoncastle.co.uk/yorkshire-gardens/>)



Screenshot of part of the article on the history of Constable Burton Hall and its Gardens from the YGT Research blog

So, we came up with a combined approach: weekly Instagram posts about each site at 5pm on Thursdays for 5 weeks over April-May 2023, plus a related blog that was released on the YGT website with the article content from the September weekend delegates' handbook, which we directed people to from the Instagram posts. The Gardens Trust was invited by YGT to collaborate on each post, meaning that once they pressed the button to accept, each post appeared jointly on both the YGT and GT Instagram accounts, in both of our names, reaching both of our audiences, and beyond.



Screenshot of part of The Gardens Trust Instagram profile grid showing some of the collaborative posts, appearing identical to those on the YGT Instagram site





Screenshots from two of the YGT Instagram stories promoting the blog on the Bolton Hall designed landscape with a link to the related page on the YGT website, and the reel video taken from the viewing tower

Each post contained either a carousel of up to ten photographs and other images, including historic maps and paintings/engravings, or a short video set to music (known as a reel), as well as associated Instagram stories. There was lots to consider before posting, including notifying each landowner and seeking their approval (most of the sites are on private land), and obtaining consent for the use of the images and articles. Huge thanks to everyone involved for their support in making this happen.



Screenshot from our second post about Aske Hall's designed landscape, a carousel post, which features images of an historic engraving, painting, map as well as current photographs

From the statistics available via Instagram, whilst we did not reach the 17k+ views of the Linton House reel, we did reach a total of 3721 people, 1391 of whom were not already followers of our accounts, and we had 376 likes. This is a far higher number of people than are members of YGT, and we know we are reaching a more diverse audience, in terms of location, not just Yorkshire, but also as far afield as Europe and the USA and Canada, and age range, from 18 to 65+, the largest percentage falling within the 35-54 age group.

So, all in all, a resounding success, and one that we hope to repeat in future collaborations. If you would like to see the research blogs on our website, follow this link: <https://www.yorkshiregardenstrust.org.uk/research/blog>

If you are on Instagram, do follow us on @yorkshiregardenstrust and The Gardens Trust on @thegardenstrust

**Gail Falkingham**

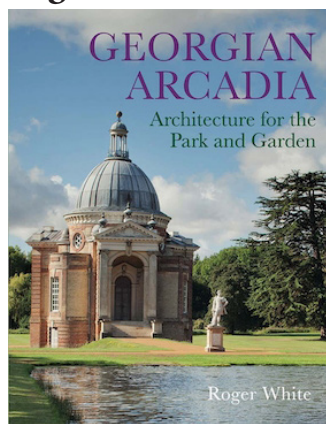




## Recently Published Books

### Georgian Arcadia

Roger White



New York, Yale University Press, 2023, Hardback, 352 pages, illustrations. £40

ISBN: 9780300249958

“An exploration of the origins and evolution of Georgian landscape architecture, a period of innovative and diverse garden structures in which some of the era’s

greatest architects experimented with form, style, and technology.

One of the leading authorities on Georgian landscape architecture, Roger White explores a genre in which some of the era’s greatest architects experimented with different forms, styles, and new technology. Covering not just the obvious adornments of parks and gardens such as temples, summerhouses, grottoes, towers, and “follies,” the book also explores structures with predominantly practical functions, including mausolea, boathouses, dovecotes, stables, kennels, deer pens, barns, and cowsheds, all of which could be dressed up to make an architectural impact. White examines these structures not only architecturally but from a functional and cultural viewpoint, considering questions of

stylistic origins and development. Focussing on the contributions of Britain’s leading eighteenth-century architects-Vanbrugh, Hawksmoor, Gibbs, Kent, Adam, Chambers, Wyatt, and Soane-Georgian Arcadia provides a richly illustrated account of a period of innovative and diverse garden building.” (Waterstones)

### Sissinghurst: the Dream Garden

Tim Richardson, Dan Pearson (Foreword)

London, Frances Lincoln, 2020, Hardback, 224 pages, illustrations. £30. ISBN: 9780711237346



“Drawing richly from Harold and Vita’s writings, Richardson’s text conjures up the fleeting moments in each of the spaces, the transcendent experiences and disorientations that, for him, make this a great garden” – Annie Gatti, *Gardens Illustrated*.

“Step inside the world’s most famous garden and understand the strength of its attraction in this beautiful and fascinating study” – Amazon

[Is this a somewhat overblown description? Either Sissinghurst or Kew are listed as the most visited, rather than famous, gardens in the UK, but certainly not in the world! Ed.]

## Forthcoming YGT Publications

### Publication

### Copy deadline

### Publication date

Autumn Newsletter

1 September 2023

21 October 2023

December e-Bulletin

1 December 2023

21 December 2023

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

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

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