



**Raby Castle Gardens and Park
Saturday 12 April 2025
Joint Visit by Northumbria GT
and Yorkshire GT**



*Multi stemmed amelanchiers in full flower
(Image © Dick Knight)*

Introduction

On a glorious sunny April day, our joint group of 29 YGT members and 11 NGT members met for the visit, organised by Martin Roberts, of Raby Castle Gardens and Park. This was an opportune time for a tour and a fresh look at Raby as the ambitious redevelopment project, named The Rising, has recently been completed after 6 years of major

restoration. Extensive work has been done to make both the Castle itself and its gardens more accessible to a wider range of visitors, while the estate buildings such as the Coach House, the Stables, the Riding School, and the Dutch Barn have been sensitively adapted for tourist facilities and commercial purposes.

The purpose of our visit was firstly to explore, in the morning, the mid-eighteenth landscaping of the Deer Park and its pleasure buildings, such as the Bath House and Temple, followed in the afternoon with guided tours of the remodelled Walled Gardens and Formal Gardens.

History

Having been supplied online by Martin with copious notes, a timeline, and copies of historic maps, we were given a brief introduction at the start of our tour to the complex history of the mid 18th century landscaping by Martin and Richard Pears, who has done an extensive trawl through the rather patchy Raby archives.

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Martin explained that the Park was essentially an 18th century creation started in 1723 by the 2nd Lord Barnard and continued by the 1st Earl of Darlington (3rd Lord Barnard) 1754-1757, who commissioned Thomas White to landscape the grounds. The park was completed by the 2nd Earl, 1770-1792.

The Deer Park was enclosed in 1743; the High and Low Ponds were created in 1746 and the new Walled Garden was built by 1755. Joseph Spence advised on improvements including the relocation of the medieval village of Raby, which had been uncomfortably close to the Castle and the re-siting of the walled garden further from the Castle.

Tour of Deer Park landscaping and its pleasure buildings

We were divided into two groups and then visited the Bath House and Temple. It is not certain who was the architect for the 1752 Gothick Bath House, though possibly it was designed by Thomas Robinson, the amateur architect. Situated in Bath Wood, beside a stream, it was especially opened for our groups as it is not generally accessible to the public. It consists of two separate rooms, divided by a central arched passageway with a dressing room with a fireplace on one side and a tiled room with a stream fed sunken bath on the other. The bathhouse overlooks a grassy area and a stream with two bridges. It seems to have been laid out as a picnic area. Plans were also produced by John Carr for a menagerie on the site which were never executed.



Bath House
(Image: © Moira Fulton)

Leaving Bath Wood we then walked across the park to the Temple. Built in 1740, it has been attributed on stylistic grounds to Daniel Garrett. It is situated on high ground with fine views over the parkland. It was described by Martin as rather more a Gothick seat than a temple.

Having visited both sites, we then had a break for lunch. Some of us had a sandwich lunch in the

attractive restaurant, the Vinery, built on the site of a former glasshouse.



Temple
(Image © Moira Fulton)

Tour of remodelled Wall Gardens and Formal Gardens

After our lunch break we again divided into two groups, one to have a tour of the Walled Gardens, the other to visit the area open to the wider public. This was led by the landscape designer, Alistair Baldwin, who has been responsible for the transformation of a collection of disparate buildings into a visitor hub, event, retail and exhibition spaces.

Standing beside the newly built Round House, he explained that the masterplan to develop Raby had begun in 2018 and had involved close collaboration with Durham County Council to get permission for the major redevelopment of the site, which was done without grants from public money.

His aim was to recreate a village atmosphere, making a link to the former settlement which had existed there, with the Dutch Barn acting as the marketplace. The Riding School has been adapted so that the large space can be divided up into smaller units for conferences and meetings, while the area around the impressive Dutch Barn has been meticulously laid out with reclaimed cobbles in a carefully selected mortar mix. The planting throughout this area is an interesting mixture, though as it only took place in April 2024, some plants have yet to mature. The less usual shrubs such as *stachyurus praecox* made an impressive display.

Walled Gardens

Unfortunately, I had to leave early because of car problems (Moira Fulton), so the description of the walled garden was written by Jane Furse, with photos supplied by Dick Knight. When I last visited Raby three years ago, the five-acre walled garden looked like a First World War battle site as extensive bull dozing was necessary to create its remodelled plan by the renowned Italian garden designer Luciano Giubbilei. All traces of construction work have now disappeared,

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though some planting is still taking place.

Jane Furse's Report

We were taken around by the Estate Manager/Head Gardener who has the tied cottage, designed by John Carr. The walled garden is divided into 12 sections, seven to the south and five northern. Through the middle, running north to south is a new, delightful stone rill with running water at ground level fed from a raised tank to the east of the entrance. At the centre is the original dipping pond with a simple jet fountain. These gardens are flanked by 200-year-old yew trees which are cloud pruned.



Maze looking towards the Castle Garden

(Image © Dick Knight)

We were guided in a clockwise direction so looked down on the first of the four maze gardens with new yew hedges and multi stemmed amelanchiers. The next area had dwarf hedges of *Osmanthus delavii* which perfumed the air for us, interspersed with lots of herbaceous plants only just coming into leaf. The easternmost section has a magnificent old tulip tree and what appeared to be the great white cherry *Prunus Tai Haku*.

New multi-stemmed cherry trees, underplanted with woodland species including martagon lilies and perennial honesty led us down to the lower level. A unique grass amphitheatre has been created below, south of the herbaceous garden. On our left, in the shade of a north facing wall were many hydrangeas, most looked to be lace caps.



Amphitheatre looking towards Castle and Stables

(Image © Dick Knight)

The view up the rill garden is equally impressive and turns what used to be a quiet and uninteresting area into something charming, reminiscent of Italy. As we proceeded westward, we passed the third maze garden and then a large sweep of lawn with six magnificent multi-stemmed magnolias one of which had frost damaged flowers. This plant, a recent replacement, had been brought from Belgium and was caught by the severe Raby climate, the other specimens were still in tight bud.

On the left -hand side, carefully trained against the north facing wall were a whole line of 'Raby' redcurrants, a famous, vigorous variety bred here that can be trained up wires and kept netted from the birds.



West Garden planted with mature imported magnolias & ornamental grasse

(Image © Dick Knight)

The westernmost section of the walled garden has been laid out with many formal beds for cut flowers. Through the centre runs an apple arch flanked by more *Osmanthus delavayii* hedges. This does not line up with the original gardener's front door, a point noticed by many of the party. Already there were groups of daffodils, tulips, crown imperials and grape hyacinths in bloom with clumps of Paeony, thalictrum and cardoon to follow. Iron obelisks, perhaps for sweet peas were set along the edges.

At the top of the slope, past the 1770 gardener's house was a long line of restored cold frames with double U cordon pear trees trained to the south facing old wall. The gardeners now have a completely replaced glasshouse by Alitex, using the original footprints, paving and drainage grilles nearby. A loquat has been planted in the eastern corner against a south facing wall.

Further on, next to the entrance is a newly replaced conservatory which currently houses an exhibition about the Vane family.

I should also mention, though not visited, the famous fig house, outside the walled garden. This is now

known to be the variety “White Marseilles”, rather than “White Ischia”, mentioned in the literature. This glasshouse has been thoroughly restored, and the gardeners said the fig tree had been properly trained for its new shelter. When I last visited the wood was rotting, no windows were open, but wasps were gorging on the magnificent, unpicked fruit inside.

NB There used to be more stone urns, possibly from the 18th century, I believe, in the walled garden. I

only saw one left, up at the top under a new wooden pergola.

Conclusion

Our grateful thanks were extended to Martin Roberts, Richard Pears and Tony Smith for organising such an excellent and most interesting visit to this wonderful remodelled park and gardens.

Moira Fulton and Jane Furse

Notes from the Editor

We have enjoyed an excellent series of spring and summer visits, starting with a trip over the border to Durham to visit Raby Castle and Gardens to see the results of their project *The Rising* which involved remodelling of much of the Castle itself and its gardens. We concentrated on the gardens where Italian designer Luciano Giubbilei and Lady Barnard and our local designer, Alistair Baldwin were instrumental in shaping the new gardens and their buildings,

In recognition of the magnificent work undertaken by them, the European Gardens Association, in its 2025 awards, in the Management and Development of an Historic Park or Garden section, has awarded them joint second place with South Cliff Gardens in Scarborough. (See forthcoming report in the Autumn Newsletter). My thanks to Moira Fulton and Jane Furse for their write up and Dick Knight for his photos.

Our next trip was a repeat of our visit to Hornby Castle in 2017. Thanks to Richard Taylor for his excellent report and photos. There have been enormous strides in the excavation of the site since 2017 and, amongst others, a 17th century garden has been discovered which we visitors then knew nothing about. Evidence has also been found of a chapel, a kitchen, a tower which was burnt down and some mediaeval buildings. Erik Matthews, our guide, was a fount of knowledge having worked at Hornby for many years now.

In early June we visited Parcevall Hall Gardens by which time the spell of hot weather had finished, and we were met by grey skies. They are tucked away in the Yorkshire dales and only reached by

narrow and winding roads but are well worth the journey. We were guided by the Head Gardener, Phill Nelson who has worked there for many years and has been very involved in their renovation and revival. Thanks to Paul Knox and Malcolm Pickles for the write up and photos.

Later in June we enjoyed our Midsummer Picnic at Skipwith Hall, having been kindly invited by its owner, Ros Forbes Adam, who is heavily involved in the wildlife approach to gardening, which is reflected in some of the planting. Our thanks to Peter and Sylvia Hogarth for both the report and the photos.

The last trip to be covered in this *e-Bulletin* was in early July to Helmsley Walled Garden where we held our Summer Drinks Party. It was a most enjoyable evening, and the rain held off. The Director of the Garden, June Tainsh gave us a detailed talk about the history of the garden, its planting and most importantly about its charitable activities. Thanks to Karen Lynch for her report. Our particular thanks should go to the Events Team who produced a wonderfully generous spread of drinks and delicious canapes!

We do not carry any reports from Committees in this issue, apart from an article by Louise Wickham on her research into a less well-known Yorkshire designer, Adam Mickle II (1747-1811).

The regular columns will reappear in the *Autumn Newsletter*.

Christine Miskin

Editor

Visit to Hornby Castle

Saturday 26 April 2025



Hornby Castle from the south-east

Introduction

I write this report of our visit to Hornby Castle near Bedale with some trepidation. Not only was the site new to me but on hearing our excellent guide Erik Matthews say 'don't believe all you see in the listings, guides or maps' it may be that what follows may not be quite right. I hope however that the spirit of the visit comes through.

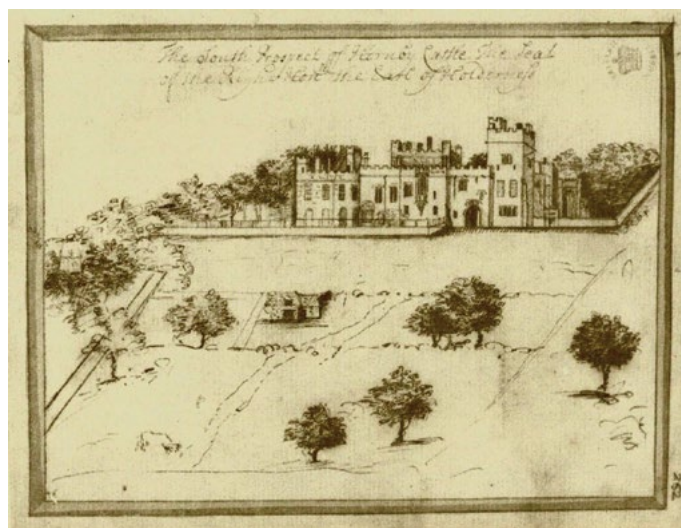
Hornby Castle sits atop a hill commanding the rolling countryside west of the Great North Road and a few miles north of Bedale in the Vale of Mowbray. Owned today by the Clutterbuck family, the castle and estate have passed through many hands, most notably the Nevilles and the Conyers.

On a bright, breezy day at the end of April twenty or so YGT members drove up to the castle where we were met by Erik Matthews, Fieldwork Officer of the Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland. He is leading a team of volunteers researching and excavating the land around and has been involved with the site for nearly twenty years. Erik's daytime job is with the City of York Council, but he spends most Saturdays at the castle. The hope is that the extensive collection of artefacts that the team have unearthed will one day be on display in York.

History of the site

Already much has been revealed that was discovered only relatively recently. This includes the 17th century garden which Erik said was unknown when YGT members last visited the site in 2016. He was able to provide us with helpful notes setting out a timeline to try to make sense of what is quite a complicated history. Structures and features have come and gone resulting today in a landscape showing overlapping traces of change - what archivists refer to as a palimpsest.

Evidence suggests that the site has pre-Conquest origins. Erik believes the castle itself is 15th century (not 14th as Pevsner has it) and owed most of its appearance to William Conyers. Robert Conyers Darcy, 4th Earl of Holderness, inherited the great medieval seat of the Conyers family in 1722 as a boy of three. He was to rise to high office but after the accession of George III in 1761, he became out of favour and turned to the improvement of his estates. (cf John Aislabe and Studley Royal).



*The 1806 survey plan showing Brown's remodelling with its sequence of three lakes giving the appearance of a river
(Image © Yorkshire Archaeological Society)*

18th century landscape

We began our visit by gazing over the largely 18th century landscape spread out below. There is now firm evidence that this remodelling of a former medieval hunting park was in large part the work of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown. The Reverend William Mason, a friend of the 4th Earl, may also have been involved. The most notable features from this period are the typical Brownian device of a string of lakes designed to be read as a river and the three eye-catcher farms.



*Our party crossing John Carr's rustic bridge
(Image © David Winpenny)*

Our walk began by descending to the main lake, Long Pond, reached by crossing Bowling Green Bridge, a 'rustic' structure made largely of tufa and

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attributed to Brown. Erik said there was evidence that this had once been topped with a metal handrail. We made our way along the 'river' bank to the remains of a dam and sluice from where a fine view of the castle could be enjoyed. We were delighted to find that Hornby's owner Roger Clutterbuck had kindly arranged for the lake to be refilled for our visit.



Erik in front of the Garden House

The great York architect John Carr had been commissioned by the 4th Earl to build a series of model farms in the 1760s. Retracing our steps we could see the first of these, Home Farm, positioned as an eye-catcher when viewed from the castle. From here we picked our way to the Garden House, now derelict, but with sufficient remaining to appreciate its Gothick beauty. Identified as Museum in the listing (Grade II) and alternatively as Bowling Green House, its main purpose, in addition to exhibiting items from the Grand Tour, appears to have been as a banqueting house. Erik's work has put a revised date on it of 1783.



*Kevin in the main area of excavation
(Image © David Winpenny)*

Current excavations

Beyond and to the north lie earlier remains many under active archaeological investigation. We met Kevin, Erik's associate, and the team of volunteers

who have already found evidence of a chapel, a kitchen, a tower which burnt down, a rose garden, a 15th century vicarage and a much earlier medieval moated castle built on a late Saxon timber hall, fishponds and a moat infilled in the early 19th century. Many of the remains are protected from the weather with sheeting. A more detailed (and accurate!) report can be found on the Hornby page of the Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland website aasdn.org.uk.



Entrance to the subterranean icehouse

The tour concluded with a walk back up to the castle, noting the subterranean icehouse of peculiar design in that its entrance includes a right-angled bend. Here frozen water from the lakes was stored before the advent of refrigeration.

Passing through the castle courtyard is a reminder that much of the building was lost in the 1930s after the sale by the then owner, the Duke of Leeds. An idea of its former grandeur can be had from the elaborate entrance doorway now displayed in the Burrell Collection in Glasgow.

Conclusion

Erik was thanked for giving generously of his time and knowledge. He accepted a donation from YGT to be shared by the archaeological project and the nearby St Mary's church (not least for their making their toilet available to us!)

Several of us rounded off the day by looking at this fine church with its Saxo-Norman tower. Inside there was much to admire, most notably the fine painted screen-panelling depicting birds in thick foliage which was reminiscent of William Morris's work.

This had been a very successful visit and one that I shall certainly remember. It will be fascinating to hear what further discoveries are made at Hornby and perhaps YGT might have a chance to visit again to enjoy this wonderful location.

Richard Taylor

Images © Richard Taylor

A delightful wonder in Wharfedale: YGT visit to Parcevall Hall Gardens, Thursday 5 June 2025



Parcevall Hall gardens viewed from the North

Introduction

When approaching from the North, and viewed from a road off the B6265, the gardens at Parcevall Hall are seen as a darkly wooded valley bottom in a fold of the Wharfedale hills. The gardens are broadly triangular and lie between the Skyreholme and Tarn Ghyll becks that merge at the southern end of the garden and then flow into the River Wharfe around 3 km away. The gardens are a significant feature of the landscape and were a creation of the interwar years by Sir William Milner, who was an architect and keen horticulturalist with strong religious leanings. Today, Parcevall Hall is a retreat house of the Anglican Diocese of Leeds. Its renowned gardens are open to the public attracting over 12,000 visitors a year.

Around 20 YGT members and guests gathered near the carpark and tearoom at the base of the gardens on a day that was ideal for garden viewing being bright and dampened with rain. Indeed, the heavy rain that had been forecast did not arrive. Our guide for the day was Head Gardener Phill Nelson. Before we set off on our tour, he provided an excellent overview of Sir William's biography and the history of the hall and the gardens. Sir William Millner, 8th Baronet of Nun Appleton, (1893-1960), was very tall (6'7") and very well connected (Queen Mary had been his godmother). He bought the 300-acre Parcevall estate in 1927 which at the time comprised a dilapidated 17th century Dales long house and farm land. The estate had been part of the manor of Appletreewick and therefore in the possession of Bolton Priory. He restored and enlarged the house to be his home, along with architectural partner Romilly Bernard Craze (1892-1974), in a manner typical of the Arts and Crafts style of architecture and gardening of the period. The creation of the gardens involved restructuring and earth movement,

introduction of terraces and garden compartments, and the incorporation of plants from remote corners of the world and, most notably, introducing trees to a treeless landscape.



Head Gardener Phill in the Long Border

Sir William Millner

With strong horticultural interests and links to significant horticulturists Sir William was an avid collector of species new to English gardens, notably from China and the Himalayas. He was one of the founder members of the Northern Horticulture Society which established the gardens at Harlow Carr. His religious interests had an influence both on certain design features of the garden and the subsequent use of the hall. The estate was bequeathed to the College of Guardians of the Shrine at Walsingham in Norfolk where he had been a significant figure in the restoration of the shrine. Although the hall opened as a retreat house in 1963, the gardens fell into severe neglect from the 1960s to 1980s due to lack of staff and investment. A resurrection was begun in the 1980s when Jo Makin carried out much historical research and began to bring care and order back to the gardens.

In 1990 Phill Nelson became head gardener and continues this work to the present day with the help of only two or three gardeners. On our tour we would learn much about the restoration work, its challenges, successes and failures. Phill's vigorous approach to restoration and clearance over 35 years has resulted in a significant achievement transforming a severely overgrown neglected estate into a delightful garden in its surprising location.

As the gardens form a triangle of steeply rising land from the junction of the becks and visitor amenities, some members took the shorter route by car to the top near the formal gardens and the Hall. The rest of us set out on a longer walking route and accompanied Phill along the banks of Tarn Ghyll Beck. The gardens are now heavily wooded in most

areas with surprisingly large trees that must be no more than 100 years old.



The Tarn

Emerging from a heavily wooded area we came to the tarn. At this point we learned about the struggles to remove the overgrown vegetation and the restoration of the dam, which required reinforcements, and which was finally completed in 2007. We then turned towards the open area of grass called the Ploughings, so-called due to this area being turned to food production during the war. Phill was an excellent guide and, as indicated, eager to tell us of failure as much as success as he outlined how he had introduced a range of experimental plantings as he led the rescue of the gardens. For example, at the north side of the path running along the Ploughings a recent strong showing of *Camassia leichtlinii* Blue was in full evidence. At the other side of the path many *Camassia quamash* had been planted a few years previously but these have proved a severe failure to date.



View to Simon's Seat

The Hall and formal gardens

From this point we had a first view of the Hall and more formal parts of the garden. In front of us were the Red Borders, so called because the original planting with red plants and flowers, represented blood at the foot of the of the Latin cross design laid out in front of the Hall. Although the cross design is very clear from maps of the grounds (and from Google Earth) it is not a feature that is particularly apparent when walking the gardens and upper terraces. The Red Borders had originally been planted with dahlias. For ease of management, and to resist deer which have become a major problem, the borders were now a mixed planting of shrubs, although still aimed at a general theme of red. The Red Borders are flanked by two apple orchards that provide fruit for a range of local uses.



Terrace

We then progressed up to the lower terrace in front of the Hall and crossed to the Old Camellia Walk, where we had just missed a particularly good show of blossoms, and onto the Rose Garden. Paths below the Rose Garden originally covered heated pipes to ensure growth of tender plants. Again, we heard about the considerable work that had been needed to bring the Rose Garden back to life, involving earth moving and trial plantings. It had been originally conceived with a Moghul influence by Sir William including a central region, now lawn, which had been planted with thyme to provide an impression of flowing water.



Rock Garden

Silver Wood and Rock Garden

Leaving through the shelter at the back of the garden we walked up towards Silver Wood where we heard about, but did not hear, the howl of the Barghest, the spectral hound said to haunt Troller's Gill that can be viewed from the northern tip of the garden. We moved on to the impressive Rock Garden where we saw evidence of the gardens being over the North Craven fault where limestone abuts the millstone grit that dominates the lower parts.

The garden had been created by soil removal and exposure of the limestone bedrock, and it is this area that probably suffered most during the garden's decline. Renovation had begun in 1984, and the pond had to be dredged, and the rock exposed again. It is now one of the most delightful compartments of the garden with a wide variety of species and notably fine examples of the slow growing *Picea glauca* 'Conica' (Alberta Spruce), a naturally occurring dwarf discovered in Canada in the early 20th century. The large examples we could see must have been some of the earliest planted in the UK and are now alongside more recent plantings of this dwarf spruce and all appear to be thriving. Just below the Rock Garden was a fine example the paperbark maple (*Acer griseum*) native to central China.

Chapel Garden

Our tour continued back through the Chapel Garden and on to the side entrance to Parcevall Hall. The limestone bedrock was now visible once again, outlining the entrance to the Hall and indeed continuing under it. Much earth had to be removed to expose this dramatic feature. From

the Hall's courtyard we experienced the garden's *coup de théâtre*, as we passed through a delightful arched doorway to the top terraces and took in the borrowed landscape of the views beyond, including the millstone grit outcrops of Simon's Seat. Only occasionally on our walk had we caught glimpses into the surrounding hills. The sole sculpture of the gardens, with a theme of Jesus meeting at the well in Samaria, in the round pond at the centre of the upper terrace, is by Christopher Hall and was gifted by the Guardians of Walsingham in the 1970s. With the top terrace's spectacular view before us Phill summed up and after thanks all round, we were able to wander the gardens on our own and explore further.



Chapel Garden



Through the Garden Door

Conclusion

Parcevall Hall Gardens are varied and delightful and currently beautifully maintained. During our tour there had hardly been a moment without bird song. It was a particularly insightful visit and for

many of us who had visited before it had allowed an extended appreciation of the original creation of the gardens in the 1930s and the extensive renovations and restoration that had begun 50 years later. Many thanks to Phill Nelson for his time and his thoughtful and deep understanding of the history and nature of the site and his insistence that the gardens are still in development. He leads his team maintaining

things in the spirit of the original gardens, but also experimenting with varied plantings to enhance and lead Parcevall Hall Gardens in new directions.

Paul Knox and Malcolm Pickles
Photographs by Paul Knox

Midsummer Picnic at Skipwith Hall Tuesday 17 June 2025

A Garden in Transition

This well attended event started with leisurely coffee and biscuits on the lovely terrace at the rear of the Hall. Behind us we had diverse climbers on the house walls and facing us the main lawn, now a colourful wild meadow, surrounded on three sides by a variety of fine trees of differing heights and ages.

Gillian Parker welcomed members and guests to the event and Vicky Price introduced Kath Hargreaves, the senior, part-time gardener who had joined the team in October. Kath explained that Ros Forbes Adams is the guiding decision maker in the development of the garden supported by her son Harry (Hal) who is a professional landscape architect.

Members may remember that Ros has been an early advocate of a wildlife approach to gardening, having initiated the development of the nearby Three Hagges Woodmeadow Trust in 2013. This is now overseen by the Plantlife Trust <https://www.plantlife.org.uk/our-work/three-hagges-woodmeadow-nature-reserve/>



Skipwith Hall Rear meadow, formerly lawn

History and development of the garden

Kath described a little of the history and early development of the garden. Initially a Jacobean farm, the manor house was developed in the symmetrical Queen Anne style around 1700. A second storey was added, for the servants, in the late 18th century. The mulberry tree on the front lawn is thought to have been planted in 1770 at the time of the house enlargement. The current layout of the house and four-acre gardens was largely developed when the Hon. Irene Forbes Adams downsized from Esrick Park in 1929. She further enlarged the house with wings to the east and west and an extension on the north.

The formal gardens, typical of that period, were created with guidance from the architect and gardener Cecil Pinsent (1884-1963) and most likely Irene's cousin Marchesa Iris Origo of La Foce gardens in Tuscany. These changes included a sunken Italian garden and Richard's Garden in memory of a grandson. When Irene's son Nigel took over in 1996, he set up a small arboretum with many specimen trees including *Davidia*, *Halesia* and *Hamamelis* as well as replanting the Italian garden. Charles and Rosalind came to live in the house and garden in 2002 and invited Miranda Holland-Cooper to re-design the kitchen garden and many of the borders. She restored the Italian Garden and placed ornate metal structures in various positions around the garden. More recently there has been a steady transition following Ros's major concern for encouraging wildlife.

Garden tour

As we set off on the tour, Kath distributed helpful guides with descriptions, an overall map, a secondary map of individual plant locations and photographs. Starting at the front of the house we saw the new parterre, the mulberry tree centred in the partially mown lawn, and the mixed borders of lavender, hellebores and euphorbias close to the house.



Skipwith Hall, lawn, borders and mulberry tree.

Returning to the back of the house, we skirted the wildlife lawn vibrant with yellow bird's foot trefoil, clover and swaying grasses and walked through the thick woodland area, underplanted with spring bulbs. Several beautiful *Cornus* trees were in full flower



Cornus kousa chinensis blooms in the woodland walk

The woodland pathway then turned towards the corner entrance of the walled kitchen garden. Adjacent to the arch is the delightful summer house with a shell wall created by local artist Linda Fenwick.



Entrance to the walled, kitchen garden with the Shell House on the left



Shell House with statue of Blind Homer, shell rear wall and easy chairs

Kitchen Garden

Once through the garden entrance, the pathway passes alongside standard and low espaliered pear trees on to the maze with central pond. Four concentric rings of narrow planting beds between crushed shell paths surround the pond. These flower beds are in turn edged with low privet hedges which were, in parts, suffering from box blight. Kath explained that her first task when she started at the Hall was to pull out the box. Two interesting loose twigged dry hedges have been inserted in the maze using living supports of espaliered Malus Red Sentinel to provide animal shelters. Flowers are interspersed throughout the maze garden, including cosmos, ferns, gooseberries, *Alchemilla mollis*, peonies and poppies with lavender in the inner circle. The pond contains water lilies and has already hosted newts.



Part of the circular maze showing box edging and topiary, crushed shell path ways, a dry hedge shelter and the central pond

Spaces external to the maze are used for vegetables (courgettes, leeks, lettuce, onion, cabbage, herbs and strawberries, etc.) and cutting flowers. The aim in the kitchen garden is to mix the formal with the informal using no dig methods and no watering. Rainwater is collected in tanks and there is a bore hole on the estate.

Orchard

The orchard that lies beyond the kitchen garden is being replanted with young fruit trees such as crab apple, plums, white fleshed peaches and almond with honeysuckle climbing through the branches. Underneath the area is also developing as a further natural wildlife meadow.



*Meadow orchard with amorous cock
and less interested hen*

Italian Garden

Beyond the orchard is the small, sunken Italian Garden where the old dry-stone walling has recently been repaired. Summer flowering is achieved with the planting of roses and lavender with the addition of tulips, ferns and alpines to extend the season. The native sweet woodruff, *Galium odoratum*, was accidentally introduced along with the ferns but was welcomed.



The Italian Garden

Following Kath's tour, we had free time to revisit areas of particular interest before finding places to enjoy our picnic lunches and YGT strawberries and cream.

Conclusion

We would like to say an enthusiastic thank you to Ros and her several far-sighted associates for an inspiring visit to this remarkable garden. Thank you also to Maddy Hughes and Vicky Price for co-ordinating the event.

Sylvia and Peter Hogarth
Photos © Peter Hogarth



Summer Evening Party Helmsley Walled Garden Tuesday 1 July 2025



View of castle from the garden
(Image © Maddy Hughes)

Introduction

After a few days of intense heat, it was a relief for members to arrive at Helmsley Walled Garden on a cooler evening, and the vibrant planting made up for the sun having gone into hiding.

Members assembled in front of the Orchid House, with the stunning backdrop of Helmsley Castle, for an introductory talk given by June Tainsh. June has worked at the garden for eight years, and for the last two she has been Director.



June Tainsh
(Image © Karen Lynch)

History of the Walled Garden

June gave a brief history of the walled garden. It started life in the middle of the eighteenth century as the kitchen garden for Duncombe Park, the seat

of Thomas Duncombe. It continued to supply the estate with produce until the early twentieth century. The First World War saw many of the gardeners and estate workers called up for national service, and the garden was no longer maintained. A commercial grower then took over the space and until 1984 the townsfolk could buy their vegetables fresh from the garden. Meanwhile the house had been leased to a school, but in 1985 Thomas Duncombe's descendant, Lord Feversham, returned to the family home.



YGT audience
(Image © Karen Lynch)

Alison Ticehurst

In 1994, with the garden abandoned for a decade, Helmsley resident Alison Ticehurst pushed open an old wooden door and found herself in the tangled greenery of the overgrown garden (it is impossible not to think of Mary Lennox). Alison was a firm believer in the healing power of horticulture, and in gardening as a community activity, and quickly decided to restore the garden. Her enthusiasm was infectious, and she soon had a team of volunteers bringing the five acres back to life. Sadly, Alison died suddenly in 1999, but the garden is her legacy.



Wonderful display of canapes
(Image © Karen Lynch)

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Volunteers

Today around 100 volunteers look after the garden, working companionably in the quiet and relaxing garden. They are guided by a small paid staff and a board of volunteer trustees, and the simple aim is to nurture 'people and plants'. The garden is open to the public a few days each week with ticket prices, shop sales and cafe takings providing a valuable source of income to supplement grants and donations from public and private sources. If you could not be present for the YGT Summer Drinks Party, do try and visit to support this important charity and enjoy the lovely herbaceous borders and gardens rooms.



*Beautiful herbaceous borders
(Image © Karen Lynch)*

Conclusion

After the talk members were served prosecco and non-alcoholic fizz, and delicious canapés made by the Events Team and friends, before wandering off to enjoy the gardens and quiz each other on plant names and characteristics. Many thanks to everyone involved for a most enjoyable evening.

You can read more about the work involved and how to visit on the website www.helmsleywalledgarden.org.uk

Karen Lynch



The Gardens Trust celebrates its 10th birthday



This year, we are celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Gardens Trust, the nationwide umbrella body through which Yorkshire Gardens Trust has a voice that echoes beyond our county borders. In this article the Gardens Trust's Head of Operations & Strategy, Linden Groves, describes its work over the past decade.

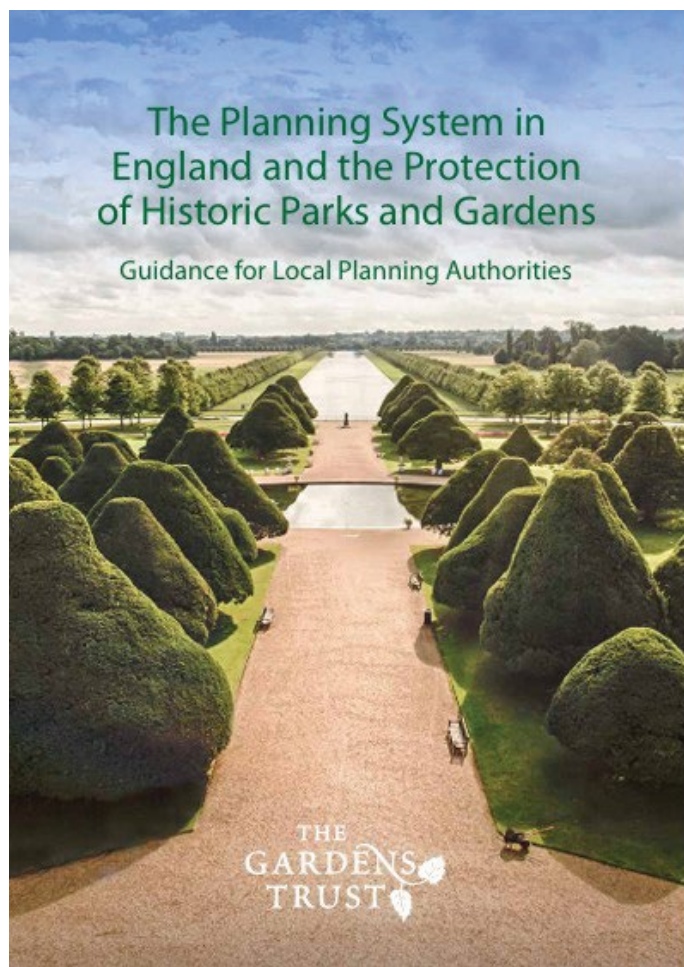
Statutory Consultee

One of the Gardens Trust's most important roles is as the statutory consultee in the English planning system for planning applications that may affect sites of all grades on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. The Gardens Trust was formed by merger in 2015, and the statutory consultee role was carried over from one of its two predecessor organisations, the Garden History

Society. Since 2015, the Gardens Trust has been consulted on some 12,000 planning applications and has put in detailed responses to over 3000 of them. Cases have ranged from seemingly dramatic ones such as housing developments, car parks or solar farms, to tiny ones such as new kiosks or fences. They all need to be considered carefully, as our team know that a seemingly major proposal can in fact have a minor impact on a historic designed landscape, or a seemingly insignificant one can have a large impact if, for example, it is in a particularly sensitive location. This demonstrable impact on the conservation of historic parks and gardens has been possible only thanks to the immense support of volunteers in County Gardens Trusts such as the YGT, who generously provide local expertise to support the statutory consultee role. You may have

[CLICK HERE TO RETURN TO FRONT PAGE](#)

seen that earlier this year the government announced a proposal to remove the Gardens Trust's statutory consultee role – we are working closely with the CGTs to contest this and will keep you informed.



The GT is a statutory consultee in the English planning system, receiving some 1,800 consultations each year.

Research and recording of designed landscapes



Volunteer Support Officers from the GT train and support volunteers in the CGTs to undertake activity such as researching and recording landscapes in their counties.

Planning casework is only one of the many ways in which CGT volunteers have worked hard to

contribute to the wider landscape and heritage sectors. Incredible efforts have also seen a veritable army of researchers in each county working to research and record designed landscapes of national and local importance and make this work publicly available, most especially through the Historic Environment Records. These important repositories link directly to the planning system, so are an important way to help conserve historic parks and gardens. The importance of the contribution of local County Gardens Trusts has been recognised over many years by funders such as Historic England, who have given grants since 2010, when they began to give local volunteer capacity building grants to the GT's other predecessor organisation, the Association of Gardens Trusts. Sadly, very recently the vital sequence of grants from Historic England to support CGTs has been broken, but the GT continues to employ Volunteer Support Officers to help the CGTs, and is forcefully making the case for ongoing funding for this important work.

Lottery funding

Capability Brown project

Lottery players funded one of the GT's earliest projects in 2015, when it brought together CGTs across the country to celebrate the tercentenary of **Capability Brown**, who designed so many of the nation's landscapes. In Yorkshire a special exhibition of his work was mounted in the Mercer Gallery in Harrogate entitled *Noble Prospects: Capability Brown and the Yorkshire Landscape*. Working with lead organisations such as the Landscape Institute, National Trust and Historic Houses, the national and local Gardens Trusts researched hundreds of Brown landscapes, ran a flotilla of celebratory events, and published a report into the vulnerability of historic landscapes such as Brown's. Over the past decade, other themed national projects have followed, such as the celebration of **Humphry Repton** in 2018, and *Compiling the List*, in which post-war landscapes were researched and recorded, with the result that 24 were added to the National Heritage List for England.



The GT's 'Sharing Repton' project saw it work with CGTs to find ways to introduce new people to historic parks and gardens, thanks to funding from Lottery players.

Parks Charter

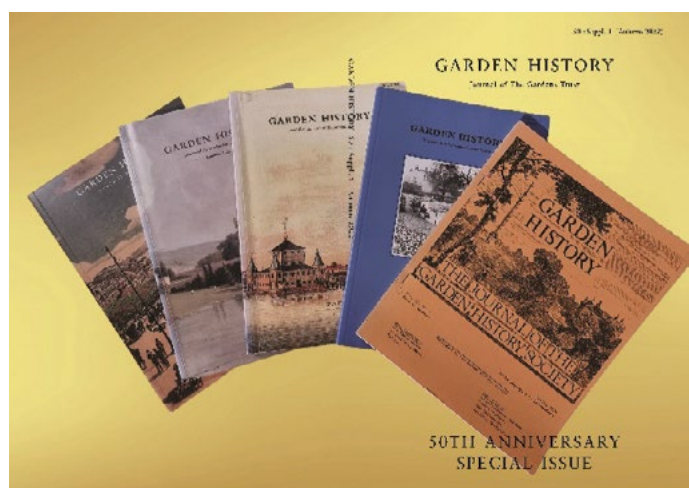
The GT also strived to raise awareness of the dreadful struggles facing public parks, being one of the founding organisations of the Parks Charter, which calls on government to protect parks because of the serious long-term damage caused by budget cuts and lack of investment; giving evidence at the 2016 government inquiry into the state of public parks; and producing the campaigning publication *Uncertain Prospects: Public parks in the age of austerity*. Most recently, the Gardens Trust has led the Unforgettable Gardens campaign to raise awareness of the value of historic parks and gardens, the ways in which they can be vulnerable, and the immense role of volunteers such as those in the YGT.

Sharing Repton

As part of the Repton celebrations, the GT ran an aligned project called '*Sharing Repton*', which was designed to help CGTs and others to find ways to share the joys of historic parks and gardens with new, more diverse audiences. Since then, a second National Lottery Heritage Fund project has enabled the embedding of the drive to reach more people, including with the recruitment of an Engagement Officer. Over the past decade this work has seen all kinds of exciting projects from working with the RHS Lindley Library on an online exhibition about a couple of young American landscape architects touring British gardens in the 1920s (<https://thegardenstrust.org/the-bicycle-boys-an-unforgettable-garden-tour/>), to helping inner city enthusiasts learn how to make terrariums.

Inevitably though, one of the best ways to reach large numbers of people is via social media, and over the past decade the GT has built a thriving presence on Facebook, X (previously Twitter), Instagram, LinkedIn and even TikTok! Do look us up on these platforms, as @thegardenstrust

Garden History



The Garden History journal celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2023 with a special issue.

One of the Gardens Trust's oldest and most important strands of work is in supporting high-quality research. Its world-class *Garden History* journal celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2022, revisiting and refreshing some of the hundreds of groundbreaking academic papers published since 1972. The Trust also helps share research on a variety of other platforms, such as the unique annual New Research Symposium, in which up-and-coming researchers can present papers to a sizeable international audience.

The GT is determined always to support the next generation of historians, and new researchers are additionally celebrated by the annual Mavis Batey Essay Prize, with winners over the past decade looking at topics as diverse as the functions of Public Parks in the British Concessions of China, 1842–1937, an Arts and Crafts style garden store of 1909, and John Ruskin's gardening at Brantwood.

Conclusion

I hope you will be as proud as I am of everything that the GT has achieved over the past decade. This is thanks to the support of members and volunteers such as you in YGT, its own individual members and volunteers, a sequence of dedicated Chairs and Trustees, and ever-determined staff. Together, we are an increasingly formidable national movement, and I cannot wait to see what is brought by the next decade, during which I am sure that we will work even more closely and productively.

There are challenges, of course, not least of all in proving what we can do, and what historic parks and gardens offer, in a political environment where economic growth is everything. In this 10th anniversary year, we are not only battling to retain our role in the planning system but also producing a report to demonstrate the role that historic parks and gardens play in addressing some of the key issues of our time, from the climate emergency to economic growth to social cohesion and health and wellbeing. This will be freely available on the GT's website. The support of local groups such as YGT is invaluable in making sure that the GT's national voice reaches every corner of the land – thank you.

You can read more about the GT's work at

www.thegardenstrust.org

Notes from the Chair

By the time of our next AGM at the end of March 2026 I will have been YGT's chair for six years and, for YGT and me, it is time to take a break. I will reflect on my time in due course, but the most important task now is to find a successor. Could it be you? It is an absorbing, purposeful and interesting role, with lots of dedicated and knowledgeable support, freely given across the whole scope of our activities. You can contact me for a private chat; otherwise, go through Lynn who will put you in touch with the small group of our trustees (not including me, obviously), who have agreed to handle shortlisting and other formalities.

Since my last column YGT has been busy assisting with the campaign to persuade the government that we should not be removed from the list of statutory planning consultees. We coordinated a support letter from nearly all the county trusts, which now sits on GT's website, and provided GT with much Yorkshire-based evidence showing that planners and developers appreciate our positive role in the planning system. The consultation that was due to start in early summer, which was moved back to the first part of July, has not yet emerged; we now think it might do so in the autumn.

One excellent measure of how important and positive our work can be was the news of two international successes for gardens we have advised on: in the European Gardens Awards Scarborough South Cliff Gardens came joint second with Raby Castle for *Management and Development of a Historic Park or Garden* and the Camellia House at

Wentworth Woodhouse won a Europa Nostra award for its sensitive and appropriate conservation and restoration. Congratulations to both gardens, their success is well deserved, sets a standard for the rest of us, and will continue to give joy to all their garden visitors over many years.

Earlier in the summer I attended another meeting of the county gardens trusts Chairs' Group, hosted by GT in London. We had an interesting session exchanging ideas about how our relationship might be nurtured and strengthened to our mutual benefit. Some common areas of concern were aired (as they have been on previous occasions), and we talked about ways in which they might be addressed. Nothing will be easy in a rapidly changing economic and political climate, and I expect there will remain differences, particularly between the large and more active county trusts and those trusts that struggle to cover the whole range of matters that come before us. Meanwhile, at GT finance remains a serious problem. It is clear to me that the counties have to help in some way or other; we will always need a strong national organisation championing the interests of registered landscapes across England and Wales, extolling their benefits and pleasures, and increasing their numbers and area. This is especially so when, as now, development pressures of many kinds have the potential to disrupt precious and irreplaceable landscapes and their contexts. This is a subject that will continue to occupy YGT for some time.

Chris Webb



Researching the work of Adam Mickel II (c.1747 – 1811)

Introduction

Although the Research and Recording team have now researched nearly 100 sites, there are many more for us to look at across the historic county of Yorkshire. Trying to choose which one to do next is sometimes difficult and over the last few years I have chosen ones that I looked at for the book on Thomas White that I co-authored with Deborah Turnbull. Now only Kirkleatham Hall remains from the list of his known sites and Mags Waughman has taken up the challenge of researching this. I therefore turned my attention to Adam Mickel II, who ranks alongside White, Lancelot Brown and Humphry Repton as an important figure in the creation of the designed landscapes of Yorkshire in the late 18th century.

Sites where Mickel was known to work

I first wrote a short blog about him for the YGT website just to highlight the sites where we have reasonable evidence that he worked there – Adam Mickel. Quite a few are well-known and on the Historic England Register such as [Sandbeck Park/Roche Abbey](#), [Mulgrave Castle](#), [Cannon Hall](#), [Harewood House](#) and [Swinton Castle](#).

However, most are not on the HE Register and need further research. Some had already been done by other volunteers. Margaret Mathews has detailed the work he may have done at [Thirkleby Park](#) c.1785 and late in his career at [Thornton Park](#) c.1809. Marie-Anne Hintze, and Liz and John Barker looked at [Sutton Park](#) where there was an extant undated improvement plan (c.1784 – 1801) but his proposals were not carried out.

From c.1792, Mickel had moved to Rand House as a tenant. This was part of the [Bedale Hall](#) estate and Tony Robinson, in his report for Bedale, has identified some possible landscaping by Mickel.

Some sites that I have examined, such as [Coppgrove Hall](#) and [High Melton Hall](#), just mention Mickel visiting it in letters, although for the former he does say that he was asked to give a plan of alterations.

Evidence that he remodelled the grounds at Skelton Castle following an earlier improvement plan by Thomas White is more tenuous. In a letter to the author, a clergyman recalled: *'I well remember viewing their destruction [of Skelton Castle] with tears in my eyes. The person he employed, and urged him on to the work of destruction, was a Mr. Mickel, whom I afterwards met at Farnley Hall'* (Ord, J. W. 1846. *The History and Antiquities of Cleveland*, 253). So far, no further link to him has been found for Skelton. The



Skelton Castle from Graves, J. 1808. The History of Cleveland, in the North Riding of the County of York. Carlisle, F. Jollie and Sons. Public Domain, Google-digitized.

reference to Farnley Hall is intriguing as it could refer either to the one in Leeds or its namesake near Otley. Neither are on the HE Register and so more research, as ever, is required.

Some of his improvement plans have survived and this determined where I went next, looking at Kippax Park where Mickel provided a plan in 1787 (West Yorkshire Archives Services Leeds, WYL292/29).



Title from improvement plan for Kippax Park by Adam Mickel, 1787. West Yorkshire Archives Service, Leeds (WYL292/29).

www.wyjs.org.uk/archive-service

There are a good series of surviving estate plans, which is useful to get a sense of a) what Mickel was proposing as opposed to what was already there and b) to see if the plan was implemented either in full or part. In this case the owner, Thomas Davison Bland, did not carry out Mickel's proposals. These included a new lake formed by damming Sheffield Beck and extensive plantations. Did Bland not like the ideas or was it a question of cost? We will probably never know.

While there is no surviving improvement plan for [Kirby Hall](#), a letter Lord Grantham of Newby Park wrote to his brother, Frederick Robinson, on 7 July

1784 confirmed that *'Mickle is going to work at Kirby, I believe at the Entrance'* (Bedfordshire Archives L30/15/54/231). He may have been working on the grounds as early as 1780 for the owner, Henry Thompson. In a letter to her mother, Lady Grantham, noted on 21 September: *'We have also had an improver of ground over, a Mr Miguel (Mickle)...originally a foreman of Mr Brown's, now settled in this county & recommended by a Mr Thompson (a gentleman some miles from hence, who had visited here) as having done well at Ld Scarbrough's'* (Bedfordshire Archives L30/9/81/5). He was certainly living nearby as his son, Adam, was baptised at Little Ouseburn church, adjacent to the Kirby estate, on the 4 March 1781.

The archive material for the estate is limited with only maps from 1766 and 1815 to see what changes were made to the designed landscape during this period. Was Mickle responsible for the alterations? There is a possibility that Thomas White provided an improvement plan as there was a payment to him from a 'Thompson' on 23 Sep 1775 for £50 (Natwest Archives, DR/427/71 folio 952), a typical amount he charged for plans. There was a further payment to White from 'Thompson' on 13 October 1777 for £60 (Natwest Archives, DR/427/75 folio 887) that may have been for supervising initial groundwork or the supply of trees. In the Little Ouseburn parish records for the baptism of his son, Mickle is described as a 'planter' so perhaps had been carrying out White's plans for the new plantations around the new northern entrance.

One of Mickle's longest commissions was for [Baldersby Park](#), then known as Newby Park (not to be confused with Newby Hall). Owned by the Robinson family since the late 16th century, the hall in the Palladian style was built between 1718 and 1730. By 1780, there was a walled park, canal or fishpond, extensive avenues of trees and plantations in the wider landscape. Thomas Robinson (Lord Grantham) was renting it from his cousin, Sir Norton, and as his heir expected to inherit it. However, he was restricted by the terms of the 21 year lease his father had negotiated with Sir William, Sir Norton's brother and prior owner, in 1762 that did not allow any felling of healthy trees.

Grantham was a keen amateur architect as well as a budding landscape designer judging by the improvement plans he produced from 1764. Following his marriage in 1780, he was determined to carry out his plans and needed help with the practicalities. So, he turned to Mickle to act primarily as a foreman, a role the latter was happy to fulfil. Indeed, following Grantham's death in 1786, Mickle recognised his subordinate role, acknowledging that he had *'made great improvements from his Lordship's hints'* (Bedfordshire Archives L30/14/254/3).



Survey plan of Newby Park c. 1792. West Yorkshire Archives Service, Leeds (WYL5013_2406 [M_7]).
www.wyjs.org.uk/archive-service

The letters written by Grantham, his wife and his brother in the Wrest Park archive (Bedfordshire Archives L) provide a fascinating and detailed account of the work that was undertaken at Newby Park between 1780 and 1788. Unfortunately, Grantham died in 1786, while never achieving his dream of owning the estate as his cousin outlived him. His young son did inherit finally in 1792, however by this point he also owned the valuable Newby Hall estate. Having both possession of the Newby Park estate and the means, this may have prompted the improvement plan by Mickle (West Yorkshire Archives Services Leeds WYL2013/2406 [M 7]) the following year, but it was not implemented. Lady Grantham, his mother and guardian, preferred to live at Newby Hall and the estate was rented out until its eventual sale in 1845 to George Hudson.

His last known improvement plan was for Walkington Lodge, a small estate near Beverley in 1803 (Hull History Centre DDJL/3/1) and Jim Godfrey is currently researching this. The last site on my list to look at for the moment is Esholt Hall.



Esholt Hall (1821) from J P Neale's *'Views of the Seats, Mansions, Castles...'* (London: 1818-1823, Volume V, Plate 36). © The Trustees of the British Museum.

As more information is uncovered from the archives detailing the history of Yorkshire's designed landscapes, further evidence may come to light about other places where Mickle may have worked during his long career.

Louise Wickham

Yorkshire Gardens Trust

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Forthcoming YGT Publications

Publication	Copy deadline	Publication date
Autumn Newsletter	15 September 2025	21 October 2025
December e-Bulletin	1 December 2025	21 December 2025

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

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YGT Contact Details

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

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