

Lincolnshire Gardens Trust Newsletter

March 2016

Registered Charity Number: 1050884

Inside this issue • Events 2016 & Booking Form, pages 2 & 3 • The Gardens Trust Historic Landscape Project, page 4 • AGM Lecture, page 5
• Steffie Shields publishes book on Capability Brown, page 5 • Two Gardens – Two Naturalists, pages 6-8



► *Chairman's Letter*

As you are reading this, it is more than likely you are a member of the Lincolnshire Gardens Trust already and that you are aware of the good work and splendid opportunities the Trust offers its members. If, by any chance you are not already a member, please consider supporting the premier gardens conservation and education charity in the county by becoming one. Instructions on how to do so are listed below, along with evidence in every part of this Newsletter of the extraordinary benefits the Trust offers its members and the work it is doing in the service of gardens great and small throughout the county.

If you are a member, please make the most of your investment by ensuring you take part in some of the many events your council has

arranged for your delight this year (and please bring along a friend – potential new members are especially welcome). 2016 is an extremely important year in the landscape gardening almanac as it marks the 300th anniversary of the birth of that great genius of landscape design, Lancelot 'Capability' Brown. We will be joining the celebrations of this happy event by visiting all four of the major landscapes that Brown created within the county of Lincoln. These are special visits, not least because we are blessed in the Lincolnshire Gardens Trust to have one of the greatest scholars of Brown's life as one of our members. Steffie Shields has been studying Brown and his work for many years and 2016 sees the publication of her long awaited biography of the creator of many of the most beautiful and best-loved landscapes of rural England. Steffie will be on hand for each of the

visits to add to our enjoyment and increase our understanding of the work of this great man; a unique opportunity not to be missed!

Your Trust looks to your support to continue its good work, spreading the word through lectures, talks, visits and publications. In particular we are keen to encourage new members from amongst the garden-loving – or just garden-curious – public of Lincolnshire. If you have friends who you feel might share your gardening interests and who have not yet become members of the Lincolnshire Gardens Trust, please do make a point of inviting them to accompany you this year to one of the events listed below. You (and they) will not regret it, I promise!

As Spring appears to be struggling out from under a Winter reluctant to leave, I wish you joy of the warmer weather and delight in the unfolding season. *Andrew Barber*

In the footsteps of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown

There is still time to book any of the events for this fantastic year 2016.

Our visits will take us all over the county and beyond, following in the footsteps of Lancelot "Capability" Brown and we hope to bring you enjoyment and understanding of landscape gardens from a different perspective.

We have already met with some of the county's NAFAS volunteers who will help you interpret the landscape on your way around these properties.

There appears to have been some misunderstanding over the way to book the events, but it is quite simple. The full list is printed on the inside cover. There is a booking form available to download on our website or alternatively please see the enclosed simplified booking form if it is easier.

If you wish to go on either the Burghley or the

Belvoir visits and still haven't booked please email or call me before sending your money – just to ensure there are still places available.

At the time of going to press we only have one person booked on the coach trip. PLEASE consider this outing – which should be just as exciting as the others. I do appreciate that an 8.30 am pick up in Grantham is early but we need to get to Cambridge by 10.30 am

All events (see next page) will need to be pre-booked. There will be no opportunity to turn up on the day. Some events require a £10 deposit to reserve a place. All bookings will require full payment two weeks at the latest before each event.

Any queries to me:
Email: elizabeth_ab@btopenworld.com



The Ostler Ltd

Address: Mrs E A Bowskill 3, Sandcliffe Road, Grantham NG31 8DT

Phone: 07840 240854 (mobile so text messages acceptable too)

Elizabeth Bowskill

To join go to www.lincolnshiregardenstrust.org.uk then click on Membership and then the link to the Membership Form

Events 2016
Postcodes, directions & updates will be on the website: www.lincolnshiregardenstrust.org.uk

Wednesday 20th April
Burghley House Stamford PE9 3JY
Capability Brown – the Burghley Legacy
10am Assemble for tea / coffee at Loggia (room beyond Orangery)
10.30am Welcome and introduction
10.45-12pm A guided walk with Head Gardener around PRIVATE SOUTH GARDENS (exclusive access) taking in views and features
Weather dependent: BRING a PICNIC – or lunch in Restaurant
1.00pm Special feature: Take a ride in a horse-drawn Victorian Omnibus through Brown’s landscaped parkland; commentary by Steffie Shields. (Point of departure & 4 departure times every 45 mins (tbc) please specify preference at time of booking)

Ticket includes self-guided access to the Gardens of Surprise & Sculpture Garden; access to new Capability Brown Exhibition (in the entrance to the House). State Rooms will be open but, please note, an extra £5 will be payable to Burghley House
£25 for talk/guided walk £10 for Carriage Ride booked separately
Numbers limited. Deposit £10 to reserve a place; balance by 6 April 2016



NB: All cheques should be made payable to Lincolnshire Gardens Trust
All bookings to Elizabeth Bowskill via email: elizabeth_ab@btopenworld.com
or by post: Mrs E A Bowskill, 3 Sandcliffe Road, Grantham NG31 8DT

Please cut out and keep as a reminder of the dates throughout the year

Thursday 5th May
Belvoir Castle NG32 1PE
Discovering Capability Brown at Belvoir
1pm Assemble at Castle
(Allow time before to picnic at the main car park – on the grass area / picnic tables or beyond. Wonderful views!)
1.30pm Welcome and introduction by Nikki Applewhite, Belvoir Gardens Advisor
Visit will be in three parts (about 1 hour each) divided in three groups:
I. Cream tea in the castle (display of facsimiles of Brown’s plans)
II. Gun bus guided tour of estate/restored CB landscape
III. Duchess Garden / Spring Garden

£35 all inclusive – tea, view and tour
Numbers limited. Deposit £10 to reserve a place; balance by 21 April 2016
ARRANGEMENTS CAN BE MADE FOR THOSE WHO CANNOT WALK FROM THE CAR PARK TO THE ENTRANCE OF BELVOIR CASTLE.
You will be contacted just before the event with what arrangements have been made – this may be car sharing to minimise the number of vehicles parked at the castle. Please advise if you need to park at the top of the hill.



Sunday 19th June
Hainton Hall LN8 6LX
A Brownian Midsummer Garden Party
11am-4pm by kind permission of Christopher Heneage
11am Assemble at Heneage Arms (pub opposite entrance gates to Hainton Hall)
Tea and coffee. Introductory talk by Steffie Shields: ‘There wants a Good Plan’. Picnics to be set up in Walled Kitchen Gardens; cakes for sale and raffle. Free access to explore garden walks; Guided tours with owner and Steffie Shields. Both CHURCH and CHAPEL open & Brown’s unique Hainton Plan (1763) on display
LGT members £5; Non-members £7; Children under 15 £1
Please reserve your place.
No deposit required; full payment by 6 June 2016

Thursday 7th July
Coach Trip To Cambridgeshire
In the Footsteps of Capability Brown...
8.30am Coach pick-up (to be confirmed, likely GRANTHAM)
10.30am Arrive MADINGLEY HALL coffee/talk and walk with Richard Gant, Head Gardener
12pm Depart for FENSTANTON; manor house / visit Brown and Bridget, his wife’s memorial in St Peter & Paul Church
1pm Arrive WIMPOLE HALL; bring picnic lunch or use restaurant
Entry allows access to Hall, Farm and Gardens (as well as the Park)
National Trust members – remember to bring NT cards
£35 all inclusive
Numbers limited to 46; pre-booking essential.
Deposit to reserve a place £10; balance by 23 June 2016



Tuesday 13th September
Grimsthorpe Castle PE10 0LZ
A Guided Walk by Brown’s Lake
2pm Assemble on castle terrace. Guided walk to causeway bridge, lake circuit to great dam taking in park and castle views. Refreshments included.
LGT members £15; Non-members £18
Pre-booking essential; no deposit required, full payment by 1 September 2016

Sunday 9th October
Brocklesby Estate
Walking Brown’s Ridings in Brocklesby Park
1pm Meet at the Mausoleum car park, Great Limber (DN37 8JN)
We hope the Mausoleum will be open to visitors. Walk to the grotto, hermitage and temples.
(Refreshment not included: Bring a picnic lunch or book your lunch at New Inn, Great Limber, DN37 8JL T: 01469 569998)
Open to all-comers: Adults £5; Children under 15 £1
Pre-booking essential. No deposit required; full payment by 26 September 2016

Saturday 19 November 2016
AGM & LECTURE: LGT CELEBRATING 21 YEARS!
Bishop Grosseteste University, Lincoln, Longdales Road, Lincoln, LN1 3DY (car parking on site)
1.30pm Assemble
2pm AGM followed by Guest Speaker, Michael Symes, writer / garden historian ‘Modern Observations on Gardening: the English Landscape Garden as seen in 1770 and today’
3.45pm Tea and Coffee; Raffle;
LGT members £8; Non-members £10
Pre-booking essential. Full payment by 5 November 2016

Lincolnshire Gardens Trust Events 2016
Booking Form

BURGHLEY HOUSE Wednesday 20th April
Assemble at 10.00am for walk and talk
Carriage rides from 1.00pm
Name (s)
x £25 for talk and walk
x £10 for Carriage ride

BELVOIR CASTLE Thursday 5th May • Assemble 1.00pm
Name (s)
x £35 each (all places)

HAINTON HALL Sunday 19th June from 11am
Name (s)
x £5 LGT Members
x £7 Non-members
x £1 Children under 15

Coach trip to Cambridgeshire:
In the Footsteps of Capability Brown
Thursday 7th July • Departure pick up from Grantham TBC
Name (s)
x £35 each (all places)

GRIMSTHORPE CASTLE Tuesday 13th September
Name (s)
x £15 LGT Members
x £18 Non-members

BROCKLESBY ESTATE Sunday 9th October • Meet at 1.00pm
Name (s)
x £5 Adults
x £1 Children under 15

AGM: LGT Celebrating 21 years
Saturday 19th November • Bishop Grossteste College Lincoln
Assemble 1.30pm
Name (s)
x £8 LGT Members
x £10 Non-members

Contact Details
Name:
Phone Number:
Email:

All cheques should be made payable to Lincolnshire Gardens Trust.
All bookings to Elizabeth Bowskill via email: elizabeth_ab@btopenworld.com
or by post: Mrs E A Bowskill, 3 Sandcliffe Road, Grantham NG31 8DT



Members will be saddened that Mrs Suzie Dean passed away in November 2015. She was a great champion of gardening in the county, for many years the county organiser for the yellow-book National Gardens Scheme. Her dedicated organisational skills, together with her warmth and enthusiasm, encouraged numerous garden owners to open their gardens, resulting in a great deal of pleasure for garden visitors as well as raising huge sums for charity. Suzie was also a great supporter of LGT events and will be much missed.



LGT's Dr Beryl Lott answering queries from the floor at The Gardens Trust workshop for members of County Gardens Trusts on planning issues.

The Gardens Trust ran a workshop in London on March 10th to launch its new leaflet aimed at Local Planning Authorities: 'The Planning System in England and the Protection of Historic Parks and Gardens'

The purpose of the leaflet is to maximise awareness of the position of County Gardens Trusts in the planning system and the statutory status of The Gardens Trust.

Although Dr Lott wasn't a scheduled speaker, she was called forward on several occasions to clarify points relating to the current status and practices of the planning system nationally.



Historic Landscape Project (HLP) County Gardens Trusts and the Statutory Consultee role

The Gardens Trust now holds the statutory consultee status previously attached to The Garden History Society. County Gardens Trusts are not themselves statutory consultees, but as members of an umbrella organisation (The Gardens Trust) that is a statutory consultee, they may wish to contribute their expertise and skills to the planning process. This could take the form of commenting on planning applications affecting historic parks and gardens or by feeding their research into Historic Environment Records.

Beryl Lott, Sue Barlow and I attended an HLP event last November at Derby Arboretum, where we met other CGT members, including Nottinghamshire Gardens Trust who we are pleased to hear are getting going again. HLP officers Linden Groves and TGT conservation staff Jonathan Lovie and Margie Hoffnung and Dr Ian Varndell, Chairman, TGT Membership Committee & Chairman of Devon GT, gave useful presentations re the merger and the way

ahead for conservation and planning. Michael McNaught, Derby Arboretum Park Manager at Derby City Council then gave an excellent guided tour around the oldest public park in the country, designed by J.C.Loudon, with his design still very much intact. We hope we might arrange a future visit for LGT members, for there is a fascinating array of veteran trees, and the engaging park, last year celebrating its 175 years' anniversary, is well-used and cherished by local residents.

Steffie Shields

Historic Landscape Project –

Two Spring Events in the East Midlands – Open to all members:

- **20th April 2016 'Designation and Historic Landscapes' workshop, 9.45am-5pm, at Nottinghamshire County Hall, West Bridgford, Nottingham NG2 7QP**
A free workshop hosted by Nottinghamshire Gardens Trust with the Historic Landscape Project to explore the Designation system, how CGTs can use it and contribute to it, with particular reference to First World War memorial landscapes. Site visit to the riverside Memorial and Embankment Gardens, Nottingham. Details or booking from: lindengroves@thegardenstrust.org
- **12th May 2016 'The Significance of Historic Parks and Gardens', 10am-5pm, at Burghley House, Stamford, Lincolnshire PE9 3JY.**
A day of fun and learning to look at the significance of historic designed landscapes, with particular reference to that of Burghley

House, in celebration of the Capability Brown Festival. Free to CGT and TGT members, the day will include a tour of the Burghley 'Gardens of Surprise' by Head Gardener John Burrows, lunch in the Loggia, and an introduction to ways of assessing Significance by Historic England's Andy Brown. (Priority booking for those in the East and Midlands, but expressions of interest welcome from all!) Details or booking from: lindengroves@thegardenstrust.org

For more details or to book a place, please contact lindengroves@thegardenstrust.org or carolineikin@thegardenstrust.org and keep an eye on www.thegardenstrust.org for details of other events.

'There wants a good plan!'

► **Thursday 1 - Sunday 4 September**
Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust in association with The Gardens Trust
A Tercentenary Conference on Lancelot 'Capability' Brown/Annual General Meeting of The Gardens Trust/New Research Symposium

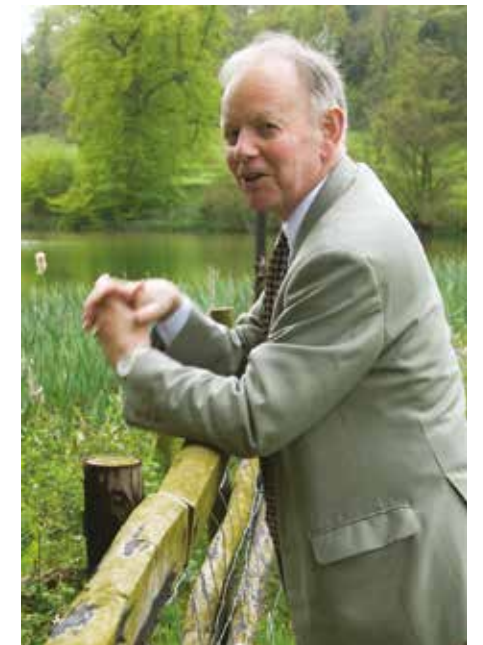
Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust and The Gardens Trust are pleased to welcome all gardeners & historians to a Special Conference on Lancelot 'Capability' Brown 300 years on: a celebration of his life and work in Cambridgeshire. 'There wants a good plan!' – a weekend of lectures, guided tours and a conference dinner, for members and guests of The Gardens Trust, at Robinson College, Grange Road, Cambridge CB3 9AN.

AGM Lecture Sat 19 November 2016 Bishop Grossteste College, Lincoln

Michael Symes is an author, lecturer and garden historian. His interest stemmed originally from a higher degree in literature, looking at the theme of the garden in Milton, Marvell and Spenser. He now specialises in the eighteenth century in Britain and on the continent. He has taught for many years and established the MA Garden History at Birkbeck in 2000. He has written numerous scholarly articles and several books: two more are due out this year in connection with CBF300. He is an active member of the Education and Publication Committee of the Gardens Trust (merged GHS and AGT) and the London Parks and Gardens Trust and President of the lively Birkbeck Garden History Group.

His talk 'Reflections – The English Landscape

Garden as seen in 1770 and today' will review, with a 21st-century sensibility, the observations of writer and politician Thomas Whateley (1726 –1772). The first to provide the most comprehensive work on the theory and practice of English landscape gardening in the naturalistic taste, his book, *Observations on Modern Gardening*, illustrated by descriptions (London, 1770), assessed the works of Charles Bridgeman, William Kent and Lancelot 'Capability' Brown and was translated into French and German a year later. The talk, the final highlight of the LGT's Capability Brown Tercentenary Festival celebrations, will put Brown into perspective in comparison with other great garden designers.



Steffie Shields Publishes Book on Capability Brown

Members who enjoyed reading Steffie's article on Brown in November's Newsletter will be delighted that her book on Brown, 'Moving Heaven and Earth, 'Capability Brown's Gift of Landscape' has been published just in time for his tercentenary year.

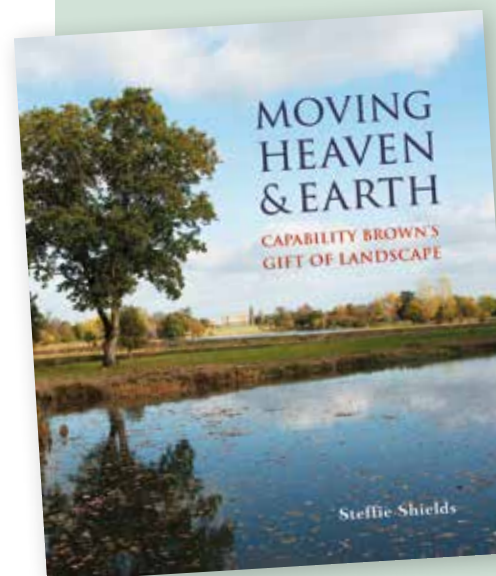
Steffie is a nationally acknowledged expert on Brown and the book is the result of over twenty five years of research.

Published by Unicorn Press and coming out in May, the book costs £30. Ever generous, Steffie, a long-time stalwart of the Lincs Garden Trust and a Vice President of the national body, The Gardens Trust, is keen to acknowledge the help and encouragement

she has found in Lincolnshire:

'Coming to settle in the county in 1995 helped me to make the like-minded garden enthusiast friendships and connections that led me to discover more pieces in his family life and extraordinary career' The Capability Brown park owners and managers who have allowed her access over the past twenty years have also played a part in enabling her study.

Steffie also very warmly thanks Shervie Price, who has just retired from distinguished service on the LGT council, for her sustained encouragement and editorial help along with many other LGT members. The help given by staff of Lincolnshire Archives is also credited.



Family Fun at Hainton!

A day out for all the family awaits at Hainton!

Come along and enjoy the beautiful landscape created by the wonderful 'Shakespeare of Gardening', Capability Brown but also join in with your grandchildren / children on a special trail to guide them to see some of his key garden aspects around the landscape.

Sit and enjoy a picnic and refreshments. If you like things for the children please keep an eye on the website as I am developing some children friendly quizzes that you might like to print off to keep them busy this Spring (and we hope to offer some quizzes for Big Kids too!).

Meet members of the Council

An important new member of the Lincolnshire Gardens Trust Council – Fiona Barton – has taken over from Frances Carr as secretary.

Fiona originates from the North West of England, Cheshire to be precise. She arrived in Lincolnshire 10 years ago via France where she lived with her family for 2½ years in the French countryside, renovating a collection of farm cottages and buildings.

On returning to these shores, she was keen to find a piece of England that would offer her the open countryside and warm friendly welcome she had become accustomed to across the waters. Our very own beautiful county fulfilled all of those wishes and more.

Feeding a love of gardens which was ignited more than 25 years ago, Fiona embarked on a course in garden design at Riseholme College, Lincoln, where she had the good fortune to

design a show garden for the 2008 Harrogate Spring show, which was awarded a Silver Gilt medal. She continues to design domestic gardens in her spare time and helped design and implement elements of the award winning gardens at Boston West Academy where she works in the school offices.

In her spare time she likes to visit gardens, both large and small, along with historic properties. She is keen to see more of what this wonderful county of ours has to offer, but as she says, between family and work commitments, 'there are just not enough hours in the day!'



Two Gardens – Two Naturalists

Watching a BBC1 TV Countryfile programme based in North Warwickshire one Sunday evening last springtime was the catalyst for what follows!

The feature which took my eye was the restoration of **Middleton Hall** and its gardens, which is closely associated with a much overlooked but amazing naturalist and botanist, **John Ray**. A few weeks later with a farm cottage booking for a short break and a relatively easy drive away, Nic and I were set to discover this key landmark in middle England that had escaped our notice until then. Located just off the M42 close to Tamworth on the Staffs border, it is regarded as a unique Grade II listed building spanning seven centuries of English domestic architecture from 1285, and set in 42 acres of land. But nuggets of historic interest such as visitations by Queen Elizabeth I and later, Gertrude Jekyll to the formal gardens did not prevent it from falling into disrepair and becoming derelict until a skilled posse of volunteers in the 1980s formed the Middleton Hall Trust to bring it back to life in the most spectacular way.

The heated garden walls made from bricks handmade on site date from around 1720. Designed to extend the growing season, they are one of the earliest examples of this in the country that still show original support features for fruit trees and bushes, and the hollowing of the wall between the large and small walled gardens to incorporate a fire and a chimney. The two-storied 19th century gazebo with a restored hipped roof was built to give a wonderful view over the garden, and from its second floor, an uninterrupted vista of Middleton Pond, a 9-acre man-made lake, the oldest in Warwickshire, which is now a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Walking and relaxing amongst the Georgian-style gardens today, brimming with everyone's favourite cottage garden plants in the decorative borders – a profusion of crocosmias, lavenders, campanulas, achilleas – is a delight, especially when you realise that the beds and paths are laid out in a union flag shape around the central fountain. Cool colours are at the front of the garden through to darker shades and hot colours at the back. The walls are planted with roses and fruit trees and we saw the pergola draped in stunning red roses and clematis with signs of earlier wisteria. This is where we espied the Head Gardener, John Ward, late of English Heritage, who was about to lock us in! His warm personality shone through and he was soon extolling the virtue of identifying 350+ species of moth attracted into the warm enclosure, especially the very rare 'olive crescent' moth. His mission to showcase



Middleton Hall

the heritage of John Ray was to start with the restoration of the sunken garden outside the south frontage of the Hall. We walked there with him through the Glade and pretty orchard, including a black mulberry tree said to be over 200 years old, and discovered that this garden was dug out originally as a flood prevention plan. This project – intended to trumpet John Ray's own roses and other plant species identified by him in his books – will now be in the hands of a workforce numbering over 70 volunteers. These are now headed up by Ruth Springer, following John's recent departure. Six rose plants still survive in the walled gardens, believed to be the only ones in the country, and due to their historical significance, a propagation programme is currently underway, meticulously described in the Hall Blog.

John Ray (1627-1705), the great botanist, who is also known as the Father of English natural history, lived here from 1660 until 1673 and where he compiled the first significant catalogue of British plants called '*Historiae Plantarum*', published in 1682. The original sheets had dried plants hand-sewn on to them and are now in the Natural History Museum. This is considered to be his greatest work and is in three magnificent folio volumes which have contributed materially to the development of systematic botany until it was gradually superseded much later by the Linnean method and the work of Charles Darwin. He was certainly the first person to introduce the scientific method into the study and examination of plants with his '*Methodus Plantarum Nova*'. He described and classified 700 specimen plants (but only 24 found on the estate) using the differences at first amongst

their seeds and distinguishing flowering plants by their flowers, seeds, fruit and leaves. He had separate categories for fungi and lichen, mosses and herbs, the natural families that are recognised today.

He was ably supported by Francis Willughby, the first Baron of Middleton who actually established the walled gardens to supply produce for the house. Ray tutored him originally but they became friends and close collaborators, travelling together within Britain and abroad in the 1660s whilst developing the taxonomical system of plants and animals. Following Willughby's early death, Ray published, posthumously, their first ever scientific treatise on ornithology in a bid to classify the whole natural world, including mammals, fish and insects, especially butterflies. This philosopher and cleric became a prolific author with long periods of productive activity – botanical & zoological, theological & literary – at an exciting time when science started to develop in the Age of Enlightenment. Anna Pavord in her scholarly book '*The naming of names: the search for order in the naming of plants*' was a huge fan of this 'under-appreciated British forerunner of Linnaeus'.

Inside the John Ray Building his work is illuminated for us by displaying a set of pressed flower books and photographs of some of the significant local wild flowers. Especially highlighted are the 'umbelliferers', a name he introduced for that family of plants which take their name from the Latin for 'umbrella'. Other fascinating insights are in the Still Room where the family made perfumes of the distillations from their own flower gatherings and in the Gallery above the Great Hall of Tudor origin, a

collection of stunning needlework tapestries of cultural and social activities set within the natural world over the centuries. All this and more is supported by a marvellously illuminated timeline and archival materials on open display in an active research centre based above the kitchen. Outside across the moat by the jettied Tudor timber-framed building, there is a flower meadow circular walk and nature trail alongside the 'Pond' that passes a restored Victorian pump house with water wheel which provided electricity to the Hall and assisted with the irrigation of the greenhouse & gardens, plus a Courtyard of local artisan traders.

The official Guide to Middleton Hall ('this place of discovery') and a booklet about John Ray produced by the Trust are both excellent sources of further well-researched and fascinating reading material.

Middleton Hall and grounds are open 10am – 4pm every Wednesday from 28 March to end of September and every Tuesday & Thursday during school holidays, Bank Holiday Mondays 11am – 4pm, and on designated History & Nature Days, Special Event & Charity Days identified on the website: www.middleton-hall.co.uk

Serendipity led to our discovery of another garden gem heralded by another famous naturalist, this time **Gilbert White's House at Selborne**, near Alton in Hants just off the A3. En route from West Sussex before the norm of Easter opening, we were delighted to find our stop-over in the village included this welcoming house and garden accessed directly on the main street. Known as 'The Wakes', it was the home of this 18th century clergyman, regarded as the first British natural ecologist. Like John Ray before him, he recorded the living creatures and plants in the area, many now very rare, and referred to '*the excellent Mr Ray... who conveys some precise idea in every term or word, maintaining his superiority over his followers and imitators*'.

White published his findings in 1789 in one of the most popular books in the English language – 'The Natural History (and Antiquities) of Selborne' which has never been out of print and is in fact a collection of correspondence referring to his observations and theories. We could not resist buying a copy there which is remarkably newly published with an introduction by James Lovelock, the celebrated environmentalist & Gaia pioneer, and with illustrations by Eric Ravilious, the famous wood-engraver & print-maker. Magnanimously, Charles Darwin claimed that he '*stood on the shoulders of White*' underlined by Richard Mabey, today's naturalist and biographer, who believes that he '*more than any other*



'The Wakes', Selborne, showing part of the 'Six Quarters'



Tenby Daffodils at 'The Wakes'

has shaped our everyday view of the relations between humans and nature'.

Gilbert White (1720-1793) was also a great gardener and admired the work of garden designer, William Kent. His studious approach to observing species and his avid recording of his gardening exploits, the weather and local wildlife ably demonstrate his different approaches to man's relationship with nature. He was definitely experimental, keen and enthusiastic which can be witnessed today by discovering his wine-pipe seat, his cut-out carved statue of Hercules and his grand garden plans. He grew a wide range of traditional and experimental fruit & veg, including melons and cucumbers. Indeed, he was the first person in the area to grow potatoes, and the first person to describe the harvest mouse and the noctule bat.

Today, David Standing, the Head Gardener since 1979 and his team with a cohort of committed volunteers -called the Weeders! – are managing the 30 acres of extensive

grounds, including parkland and carefully restored 5-acre gardens, which David originally uncovered through studying White's journals, correspondence, household accounts, books and a diary called 'The Garden Kalender'. Indeed, the original garden had only been a narrow strip at the back of the house, added to by shrewd purchases and supported by his wealthy brother. David enthusiastically discussed his historical researches with Nic, whereas Rose, his Deputy, was very engaging about the tackling of the workload with me as I accompanied her plus wheelbarrow up Baker's Hill. The gardens are still being returned back to White's original layout followed on by the garden designer, Kim Wilkie, in 1993 and working to the mantra that no plant be it not an 18th century variety is allowed a spot in the re-creation.

A set of 'Six Quarters' or borders, representing the different seasons, boast dark, rich soil and attractive hazel wigwams

for the climbing plants to come. Here, on this first day of spring, the primroses and lungwort were already in flower, with our first bumble bee hanging under a pale green hellebore flower! An ordered herb garden parterre and a fully-fledged kitchen garden surrounded by a neat, sheltering hedge are well-articulated in the publicity and clearly explained on interpretation boards in the centre of the garden. Our photographs highlight the terracotta rhubarb forcing pots with judiciously placed wheelbarrow, watering can and splayed-out garden tools! Gradually, other aspects of Gilbert White's original plans have been re-established – his ha-ha has been rebuilt, a sundial like the original installed, and two oil jars provide focal points for the vistas.

The beauty and tranquillity of these spaces can also be appreciated from welcome wheelchair-adapted picnic benches throughout the grounds. Further afield White's Zig-Zag Path progresses through to the hanging beech woods and another path adjacent to his 63ft well may be extended up the hillside. More authentic planting of wild flowers at the base of hedges and shrubberies is planned and Rose has designed beautiful tripods this season for the sweet peas. Currently, visitors have been admiring the Selbourne snowdrops and Tenby daffodils on either side of the orchard walks and we are told the crown imperials are just showing through. It is possible to keep in touch with David and his team called 'The Wakes Weeders' via his gardening Blog, because everything is meticulously recorded there, including helpful monthly notes on the vegetable garden.

It all looked marvellous in the sunshine and the birdsong, especially in the Tulip tree by the Herb Garden, was absolutely deafening! No wonder that the great choice of sale plants, including the original species of gladioli, was too tempting to ignore! Inside, the downstairs rooms in the House extended since White's time partly comprise The Oates Collection Museum to honour those pioneers and explorers of the natural world, the Library of the owner, Professor Bell, dating from 1850, The Great Parlour which was added in 1777 for the purpose of entertaining family and friends, and The Little Parlour, the oldest room dating from 1610. The Tea Parlour, previously a dining room added by White's brother just after he inherited the house, is a good reviver after walking the gardens. It has the added incentive of serving delicious goodies for lunch and tea – homemade on the premises using the kitchen garden produce, and is in-keeping with the traditions of such a wonderful slice of past and present glories.

The Field Studies Centre in the grounds hosts families, schools and lifelong learning customers with workshops, courses, talks and walks on nature themes which are very appealing for the community as well as we visitors. Ones that stand out for me are the subject of herb gardens, the 18th century gardener & his tools and a wine enhanced summer 'rose' evening in the heritage garden!

A well-illustrated Trail around Selborne gives a flavour of the village in White's time as a number of the original timber-framed and stone-built houses still exist. The 267-acre surrounding ancient pastures, meadows called

'the Lythes' and beech woodland – whose hillsides overlook his gardens are protected and managed by the National Trust, with an added aim of restoring and maintaining the Selbourne Common's native plants and wildlife.

David Standing in collaboration with Prof Phil Foster, University of Chichester, has published a well-researched garden guide called 'Landscape & Labour: Gilbert White's Garden 1751-1793' – part 1 outlines the purposes and achievements of his overall conception of the garden, part 2 gives a detailed analysis of his gardening practice and plantings.

Gilbert White's House is open 10.30am – 4.30pm Tuesday to Sunday from mid-February up to Christmas Eve, and Bank Holiday Mondays and Mondays in July & August as per website: www.gilbertwhiteshouse.org.uk

We have resolved to return when the developing Selbourne garden is in full summer flower and we have time to experience more of those attractive village landmarks. I hope this overview may also tempt some of our LGT readers to discover for themselves these wonderful houses & gardens. Both are run by independent charitable trusts, both are inextricably linked with our greatest naturalists and both have passionate gardeners who are inspired to utilise their rich researches in re-creating gardens for us all to appreciate.

Laraine D. Cooper

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