

Lincolnshire Gardens Trust Newsletter

November 2017

Registered Charity Number: 1050884

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► *Chairman's Letter*



We have had some splendid events this year. The visit to Sedgebrook Manor, way back in April, was greatly enjoyed by all those who attended. At Harpswell Farm

the archaeological dig underway in July, finding a road and attendant building platforms was a fascinating prelude to the main event of the day looking at the remains of the Tudor Garden, as yet unexcavated, and then the glories of the garden created by the present owners.

Revesby Abbey is one of the great houses of Lincolnshire, in a state of dilapidation but with new hope now as the Hollis family set to work on its restoration. The remains of its pleasure ground sit nearby with specimen trees of great and exotic interest – the cut-leaf beech is a fine figure of a tree, as is the cedar of Lebanon and the redwood, but the Chinese necklace poplar remains a mystery, unless those intrepid members last seen beating a way into the undergrowth can tell us differently?

The greatest opportunities of the year have undoubtedly been offered by Linda Tilbury's generous bequest. Your Council has narrowed the options from many raised to funding one long-term project from the bequest, which is the publication of a gazetteer of all of the gardens of note of the county, and one more immediate, which is to investigate ways of increasing the reach of the Trust and of its membership. If either of these arouse your interest and you would like to know more, or become involved, please feel free to discuss with any member of the Council.

As this is my last letter, I feel the need to say a few 'thankyou's'. As your Chairman, I have been incredibly well served by a Council of hard-working individuals, generous with their



Sedgebrook Manor

time as with their skills and their enthusiasm. The Council is slightly below strength at the moment; work is falling in even greater quantity on those who remain (so I am particularly grateful to Louise Jennings for agreeing to join to help with planning matters). Thus my thanks are particularly due to Emma Schofield who works as a primary school teacher and whose work with schools and gardening has been recognised by the RHS, but still has time to make sure we remember younger gardeners; Beryl Lott, whose knowledge and contacts as County Archaeologist have been invaluable in tackling planning issues; David Would who understands numbers, accounts and interest rates – and without whose warning voice from time to time we would not be as financially buoyant even as we are; Heather Slater who edits and produces this beautiful Newsletter with such great efficiency; Elizabeth Bowskill without whose tireless effort and ingenious invention none of the splendid events that go to make up our social calendar would happen and Steffie Shields who, despite her great tasks recently accomplished of bringing about the successful merger of the Association of Gardens Trusts and the Garden History Society to create The Gardens Trust (of which we are an affiliate organisation) and publishing her magnum opus on 'Capability' Brown still has had time to carry on research locally, act as the academic 'heft' at

our visits to Brownian sites, and chair meetings in my occasional absence.

Of those who have retired from the Council recently, I would like to thank William and Mandy Fitzaden-Gray whose work on publicity and the photographic competition is greatly missed, Shervie Price who started and then for many years edited the Newsletter – we await the return of Mrs Ghistleigh-Gardner to our correspondence columns with anticipation – and Frances Carr who, as Secretary is proving a very difficult act to follow; we all miss her calm, efficient understanding of the mechanics of meetings and the logistics of membership. Our President, Annetta Turner, fills (blessedly) a far more active presidency than many societies are fortunate enough to enjoy. Her skill as a gardener and her interest in young people have combined happily in the Trust's Schools competition of which Annetta has been a great supporter.

My thanks goes to all of them. My job as Chairman has been made pleasant, easy and, indeed, possible, by the efforts of others for which I am enormously grateful. I wish the Trust well in its endeavours and will continue to support it, from the wings, as a member and a friend.

With Best Wishes to you all

Andrew Barber

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

RHS East Midlands in Bloom Best School Garden Award

This Summer saw 18 schools enter the East Midlands in Bloom schools garden Awards category. I was delighted to be asked to be part of the judging panel who roamed over the whole of the East Midlands to view these worthy gardens. Of the 18 schools, I am pleased to say seven gained an overall gold award in recognition of their hard work.

All across the East Midlands there are many young, green-fingered gardeners gardening in their school grounds, and I know from my own experience of working in a school committed to the outdoors, the impact it can have not only on curriculum to enhance it but to the well-being of all children and staff involved. To inspire these young people now will ensure that gardening and its associated benefits, careers, enjoyment, future of green spaces is in safe hands. It was great to have the opportunity to, along with my fellow judges, all RHS Master Gardeners, to visit the variety of schools who entered across the East Midlands during the Summer term and meet the children. At the Awards Ceremony held at Boston Stump in September I was asked to announce the awards along with Libby Goodacre, the Midlands community outreach manager for the RHS. While there I actively encouraged all Bloom groups to promote any schools in their area to get involved and put themselves forward for individual recognition for their hard work. It is a valuable experience for all schools whatever their speciality and age range and provides them with the recognition, encouragement and advice to keep on growing! Each visit for the judges was a delight, particularly in the case of those schools who re-enter each year we as judges love to revisit to see how they are developing.



The group winners were:
For **Best Fruit and Vegetable school garden** (of which I was the fortunate judge) was **Spalding St John the Baptist Church of England Primary** in Lincolnshire.

For **Best Ornamental school garden**, (judge, Judith Warner), was **Desford Community Primary School** in Leicestershire.

For **Best Wildlife school garden** (judge, Joyce Slater), was **Holy Trinity Catholic Academy in Newark**, Nottinghamshire.

Finally, the overall winner of the East Midlands in Bloom **BEST SCHOOL GARDEN** was a school not new to this yearly celebration of

gardening but was a well-deserved recipient. The winner of the **East Midlands in Bloom Best School Garden** was **Blidworth Oaks Primary School** in Nottingham.

At the Awards Ceremony, all the schools that entered were given recognition for their green-fingered endeavours.

It was an experience I thoroughly enjoyed being part of and hope to be part of again, so if you know of any local schools, primary or secondary, who do work in their garden tell them about this celebration – who knows they too may receive an accolade for their efforts from the RHS.

Emma Schofield



The Gardens Trust Annual Conference 31 August - 3 September 2017 *'Blest Elysium' – Sustainable?*

Hosted by Devon Gardens Trust, at Plymouth University, was a splendid, well-organised and very friendly affair. Mike and I joined delegates for a stimulating boat trip in glorious sunshine around Plymouth Sound, taking in memorable sights of the iconic Hoe, including Smeaton's Tower Lighthouse, the Art Deco Lido below, and historic naval docks together with views to Drake's Island. However, the most affecting and intriguing views were towards our destination, Mount Edgcumbe, a designed landscape on a peninsula, one of only two Grade I landscapes in Cornwall. After four hundred years of development and extension it offers 'a thousand prospects'. The battery survives to underline that its location was of strategic military importance. The next day we toured Saltram, a fine Georgian house, orangery and pleasure ground overlooking the Laire estuary, and cared for by the National Trust. Two couples in early nineteenth century dress walked by in polite society fashion, almost as if characters from a Jane Austen novel had joined us. We then walked up through Devonport Park, a Grade II public park (1857) including a Swiss Lodge and terracotta fountain. Restored with modern amenities in 2006, the park has an active Friends Group.

Later, at the AGM, it was reassuring to hear the Gardens Trust continues to make sound

progress after the merger, including excellent training programmes in research and planning for county gardens trusts. The high point was Charles Boot's amusing, and moving, Oscar-like acceptance speech after winning The Gilly Drummond 'Volunteer of the Year' Award! In early evening we explored the Hoe park and garden on foot, and paid our respects to both Sir Francis Drake and the Naval War Memorial poignantly decked with a striking wave of red poppies, the installation organised as part of the UK-wide tour organised for the First World War centenary. Then after heading down to the Civic Square designed by Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe (1900-1996) as part of the post war-development of Plymouth, we were treated to a delicious conference dinner at the Guildhall. Sunday began in a deluge, but most of us took refuge in one of two Ford Park cemetery chapels that had been converted by the Friends into a very welcoming coffee shop. Later, with the rain thankfully easing, Endsleigh Hotel gardens and arboretum, shrouded in romantic low cloud and mist, were quite simply a 'tour de force', enlightened by an enthusiastic talk by John Phibbs. Well worth a visit! Head Gardener Ben Ruscombe-King showed us the parterre with encircling rill for children to sail their toy boats, then led us through the early rockery, down the romantic Dell walk, the cascades gushing after the rain, past the Dairy and rustic seat and up to the Terrace Garden, the lawn and long border, as if a colour-rich tapestry, set off by a 'pierced and planted parapet wall' with charming stone arches leading towards the Shell House. All in all - and just in time - I am completely won over to Humphry Repton! Thank you Dianne Long, and Devon Gardens Trust!

Steffie Shields

Events 2018

Postcodes, directions, updates and final costs will be on the website: www.lincolnshiregardenstrust.org.uk

Saturday 24th March 2018
Humphry Repton Anniversary Walk
at SCRIVELSBY COURT, and view one of his earliest Red Books

Wednesday, 18th April 2018
CHERRY BLOSSOM visit
Ashfield House, Branston

Thursday 21st June 2018
Midsummer visits to BABWORTH HALL
(another Repton Red Book!)
followed by **THORESBY PARK, Notts**

Please Note:
26-30th September 2018
Grantham's GRAVITY FIELDS event, Grantham:
Likely to include - exhibition / talks on Joseph Banks. Details tbc

Thursday 12th July 2018
GRANTHAM HOUSE & WYNDHAM PARK:
inside house and garden tour;
followed by visit to multi-award winning
Wyndham Park
newly restored with HLF grant

Saturday 17th November 2018
LGT AGM:
Speaker Karen Lynch,
Yorkshire GT/ Repton Bicentenary
Venue to be confirmed.

Historic Landscapes Assembly

An Historic Landscape Project Discussion and Networking Day

28th November 2017
10.00am-5.30pm

With evening lecture and
book-signing, 5.45-8.00pm

The Dickens Room, Birmingham
and Midland Institute, Margaret
Street, Birmingham, B3 3BS

The second annual, national
networking forum from the
Gardens Trust, attracting
delegates from across the
heritage and landscape sector,
with County Gardens Trusts
right at its heart.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

SUBSCRIPTIONS: please remember
to renew your subscription in January
2018 (or now!).

Subscription details can be emailed if
you prefer especially if you have already
have a **STANDING ORDER** set up.

Please check Standing Order amounts
are correct and that you do not have
two set up in error.

NEW MEMBERS: please ensure all
details are completed in full - and these
can be emailed if payment is electronic.



CB300 legacy

Visit the www.capabilitybrown.org website for useful information including downloadable maps of many significant Brown sites, thanks to Brown's 2016 Tercentenary, and new research mainly by gardens trust researchers nationwide. These highlight walks and surviving Brown features, and are the perfect impetus and tool to plan further visits further afield, perhaps taking children or grandchildren on explorations.



LGT Celebrating Humphry Repton (1752-1818)

As seen in forth-coming events, we, together with other county gardens trusts, will be marking the 200th anniversary of the last great landscape designer of the 18th century. Humphry Repton followed Brown's footsteps in Lincolnshire with advice at Scrivelsby Court (with Repton's Red Book surviving) and Brocklesby.



Duncan Wright directing Harpswell dig, July 2017

The Prophet in his own Country: 3 Repton Gardens in Norfolk

A Gardens Trust Repton Festival 2018 Event
Friday 1 June and Saturday 2 June 2018
Register interest/book by email to Karen Moore moore.karen@icloud.com
or by mail: Karen Moore, Norfolk Gardens Trust
Organiser, Point House, Back Street, Litcham,
Norfolk PE32 2PA

More info <http://thegardenstrust.org/event/prophet-country-3-repton-gardens-norfolk/>

BEDFORDSHIRE GARDENS TRUST Repton in Bedfordshire: A Study Day at Moggerhanger Park

Friday 27th April 2018

The programme will include an overview of Repton as a landscape artist by Kate Harwood, a lecturer and writer on garden history, who will be helping to coordinate research produced for the bicentenary on behalf of the Gardens Trust. Details about the Repton sites in the county, researched and collated by volunteers from Bedfordshire Gardens Trust, will form the basis of the second talk. Guided tours of the landscape with reference to the Repton proposals will follow the Head Gardener's presentation on his plans for Moggerhanger. Enquiries to treasurer@bedsgardenstrust.org.uk.

Layers of History Project Update

Recently, as the day of the LGT visit to Revesby Abbey dawned, with 2017 marking Jane Austen's bicentenary, we were all as excited with anticipation, much as Catherine Morland in 'Northanger Abbey' Austen's first Gothic satire novel (1803). Walking the ground helps members to understand fascinating, different layers of garden heritage and design. That is why LGT are supporting a 3-year Heritage Lincolnshire landscape archaeology project funded by the HLF. During the last few months it has become clear that there has been a lack of investigation of the Cistercian abbey site over the years and no full scale geophysical survey.

This autumn our volunteers will be involved in the geophysical survey of the site. They will be trained in the use of magnetometry and resistivity equipment to survey the Scheduled Ancient Monument and will be mentored by expert geophysicists. Volunteers have also started to research Freiston Shore while progressing their work at Revesby, helped and inspired considerably by the new Static WWI museum, open to the public 10.00am - 4.00pm Friday to Sunday. Also a 'mini study site' in South Kesteven activities will be carried out for the Square Hole Club, a gathering of people with early onset dementia, or members in the early stages of the illness, and their carers. See www.heritagelincs.org/layers or layers@heritagelincs.org for more information and if you wish to get involved.

Small Grants Scheme 2018

We have seen schools and community orchards benefit from LGT's Small Grants Scheme. This is a reminder to all members to spread the word that LGT have a small budget to assist in the restoration or creation of new gardens, or school garden projects. The form is available on our website. We are very keen to hear from community groups, charities and organisations that we might be able to help.

Planning

Every week, Alison Allighan, The Garden's Trust Conservation Casework Manager and Conservation Officer Margie Hoffnung, send through a list of Planning Applications which might impact on historic designed landscapes and gardens in Lincolnshire. Where possible, LGT committee members discuss and research these applications, and endeavour to comment on behalf of LGT when necessary. This year, to date, they have commented on planning issues regarding the former Rauceby Hospital Grade II; Caythorpe Court, Grade II; Kettering Rd Development, Stamford (Burghley House). All comments are logged in a casework-log held by The Gardens Trust.

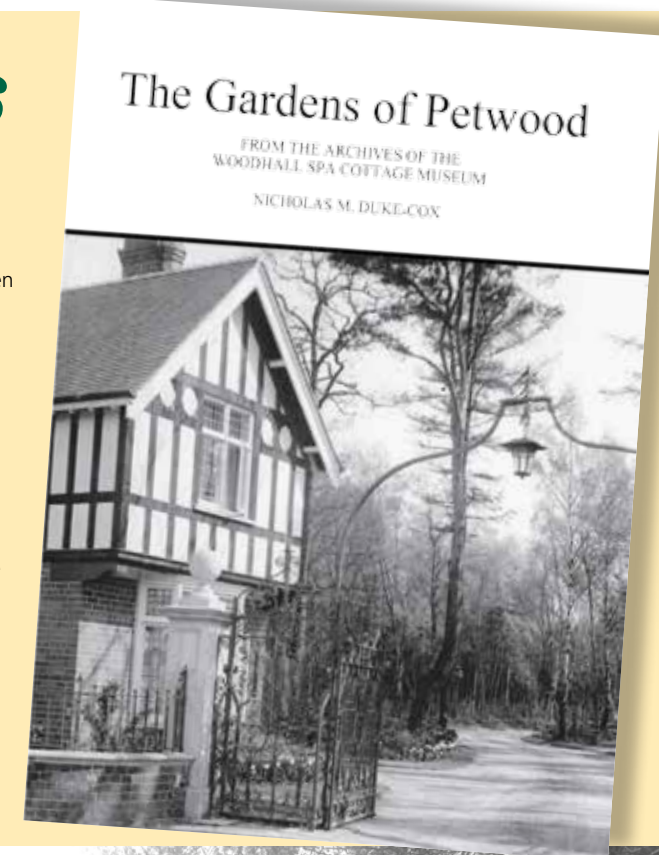
Mid to Late C20 designed landscapes: Overlooked, undervalued and at risk?

A message from Virginia Hinze, Gardens Trust Board Member and Chair of Events Committee
PLEASE HELP THE GARDENS TRUST TO IDENTIFY NEGLECTED MID TO LATE C20 DESIGNED LANDSCAPES. Are there late C20 designed gardens, landscaped housing areas, major civic and industrial sites or cemeteries, hospitals and country parks in your local area that are, or might become, at risk of change or loss and that you think worthy of recognition through being added to Historic England's National Heritage List? Contact me if you have any suggestions or concerns.

The Gardens of Petwood

Dr. Nicholas Duke-Cox of the Cottage Museum Woodhall Spa has written "The Gardens of Petwood", the result of four years intensive research, covering the history of the Gardens from their genesis to the current restoration, together with further chapters on the possible origins of the garden ornaments and that which has left Lincolnshire. It is prodigiously illustrated with views never seen before, the vast majority of which have come from the archive of the Cottage Museum. Steffie Shields, Chairman of the Association of Garden Trusts, has commented "My view is that the Petwood gardens are nationally significant. The photographs that have come to light add much valuable information to the unique story of the garden and the key Edwardian designers William Goldring and Harold Peto. What is more, these gardens were, and are still, much enjoyed by the local Woodhall Spa community, and, in particular gave great solace and respite to serving airmen during WWII".

Copies can be purchased at the Cottage Museum.



The restored cherub fountain in the Round Pool



The Japanese Garden looking west



Margaret Hollingsworth died very unexpectedly in October.

Margaret took part very successfully in the LGT photographic competition. Her friend **Elisabeth Morris** shares some memories and a recent photograph.

As children we lived next door to each other in Barton although she was several years younger. She was widowed very young and fortunately met Richard at our Choral Society and they were very happily married for 21 years. She has two lovely children and four grandchildren. She loved her big family gatherings. Her talents were many, ranging from music and singing, cooking, painting, calligraphy and many hand crafts, especially knitting, teaching groups with any problems. You have seen evidence of her photography which shows her love of nature whether it was flowers, birds, animals or butterflies. It would take a book to say how generous she was to everybody she knew. She was one of a kind.

Revesby Abbey Visit

We arrived at Revesby Abbey in bright September sunshine. The stone clad Grade I building took on a honey glow in the sunlight and the tall barley twist chimneys thrust upwards into a clear blue sky. Along the south aspect a terrace ran along the length of the building although the decorative wall which bounded it has disappeared. There were steps leading up to the terrace at each end with a larger set in the centre. Below was a large grassed area where the formal gardens once stood. The only vestiges of its past are a circle of bricks where the fountain once stood and a number of stone bases where long lost statues rose above the flowers and shrubs.

Our visit was hosted by the owners Linda and Malcolm Hollis and their son James. A number of old photographs and three copies of coloured pictures depicting the garden in pristine glory were on display. These generated a discussion about the general layout of the Victorian garden designed by an Italian-born British architect Alexander Roos (c. 1810 - 30 June 1881) and

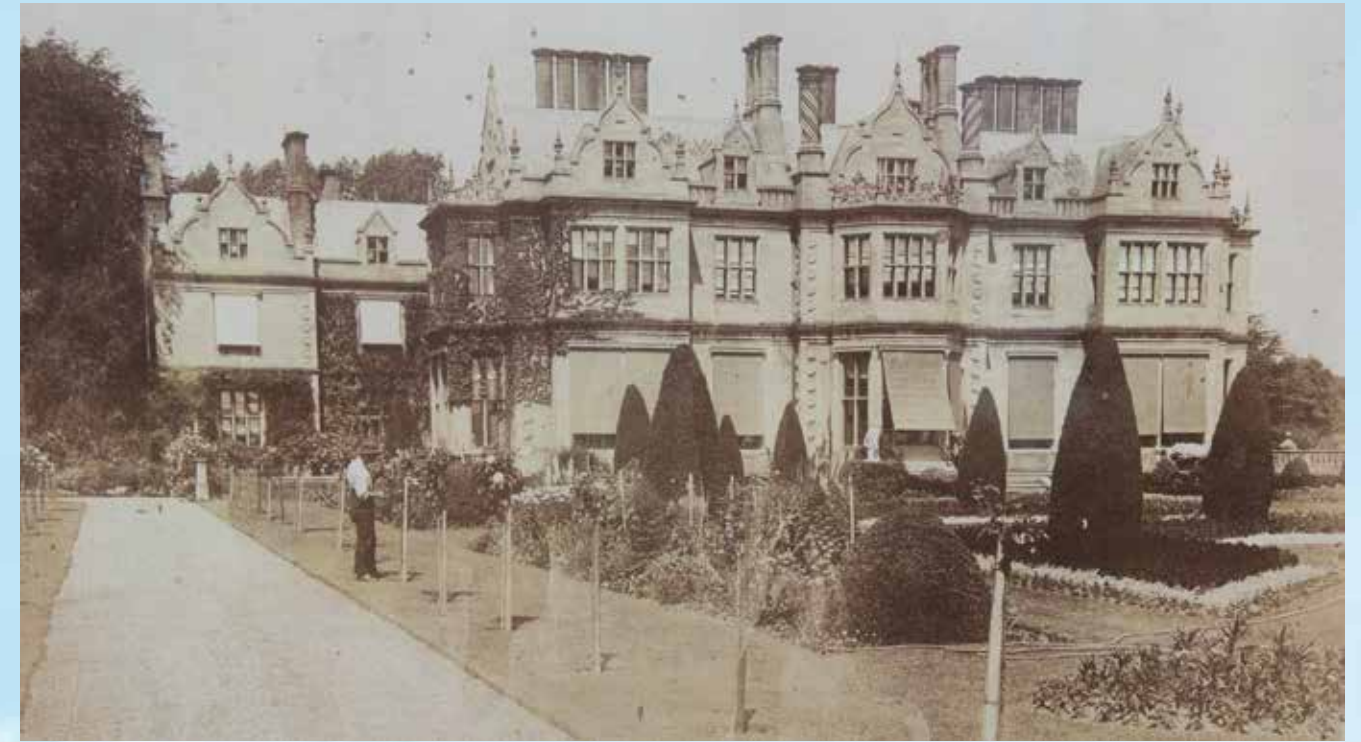
the location of Sir Joseph's home. This was demolished by the Stanhopes who inherited Revesby Estate following the death of Lady Dorothea in 1828.

Our hosts kindly let us wander round designated areas which enabled us to see the outside of the building and discover trees and plants. One large tree created a lot of excitement: as it was believed to be a fern-leaved cut-Leaved beech *Fagus sylvatica* 'Aspleniifolia' (first introduced to England 1806). Nearby, across the path another significant tree, a Turkey Oak, *Quercus cerris*, widely planted in the 18th century. These two trees, together a little further on, with a fine old Cedar of Lebanon and a veteran Oriental Plane tree, may have been part of a designed grove of the original Banks house, which we now believe was just south of the 'Kangaroo Pond' in today's park. This water feature may have been naturalised from the canal featured in a garden design (1749) for Joseph's father William Banks by Edward Gardener.

It was interesting to see how the rear working areas of the Victorian house designed by Scottish Architect William Burn (1789-1870) had been finished in brick rather than the stone of the main house. From the rear a brick turret containing a spiral staircase could also be clearly seen. Here the magnificence of the front entrance and south aspect disappeared and took on the appearance of a working environment.

The owners have successfully restored most of the stable area and they propose to commence work on the formal ground floor rooms in the grand house. They also hope to clear and refresh the Arboretum with appropriate new planting, where some fine conifers mostly date from the Stanhope improvements. Despite all its troubles and faded glory the mansion can still seduce the visitor and generate the desire to see her stand proud and glorious once more.

Jean Shaftoe



Members examining plans during the September 2017 visit

Lincoln Arboretum

The newly-formed LGT was an interested party in the immense undertaking of the restoration of the neglected and overgrown Arboretum. It is, of course, the *raison d'être* of the Garden Trusts to identify and support the renewal and maintenance of historic parks and gardens. LGT was represented on what became the Arboretum Advisory Group by Victoria Jarvis, the then chairman, and me. (I am still a member and attend the thrice-yearly meetings.)

In March 1999 came the announcement of the City Council's successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund's Public Parks Programme to restore the Arboretum to its Victorian splendour. Between then and the official re-opening in September 2003 there was extensive work on the ground and many, many meetings. The outcome, the park we have today, is essentially as originally laid out in the nineteenth century.

The idea for a public park, a place for seemingly recreation for Lincoln's fast-growing population, was aired in the early 1860s as the public parks movement was gathering momentum. Until 1863, when they were sold, the city had the open space of Temple Gardens on Lindum Hill, though for private subscribers only. Lengthy negotiations for a site resulted in the purchase of land from the Freeman of Monks Leys Common. Previously this land had been held by the Benedictine Abbey of St. Mary of York.

Edward Milner (1819-84), a well-established landscape architect, was approached for a design for Lincoln's new park. Milner knew something of the area having earlier done work at Hartsholme Hall. Among larger projects he had designed parks for Preston and Buxton. As a young man he had served an apprenticeship with the remarkable Joseph Paxton at Chatsworth and went on to study at the Jardin des Plantes in Paris.

"The natural situation of the ground here selected, commanding widely extended views over the country to the south and west possesses great advantages for the purpose of recreation. Its southern aspect sheltered by the high land on the north and east, is eminently favourable to the growth of choice trees and shrubs; whilst among other advantages, not the least important is facility of access, owing to its proximity to the city." So begins Milner's proposal, dated 1868. The original plan illustrating the design has not been found. It may have been destroyed along with many of his papers in bombing in WW2. The estimate for the cost was £4,500. The eventual cost was well over £7,000.

Much of the overspend was caused by the steep fall of the land on the upper part of the site. Work started in 1870 and almost immediately the contractors encountered

difficulties with water and slippage. Heavy rain during the construction of the main upper terrace walk exacerbated the problems. Milner wrote of the "springy and treacherous character" of the land. As early as 1873 a portion of the wall adjoining houses on Lindum Terrace collapsed because of insufficient foundations. The retaining wall of the terrace walk continues to cause costly problems.

By 1872 work was complete. The opening on 22 August was a grand affair. The bishop, Christopher Wordsworth, and the mayor, William Harrison, were present together with numerous other dignitaries. Huge crowds flocked to the park accompanied by brass bands. The opening ceremony was held in the Glass Pavilion (sadly lost either before or as a result of bomb damage in WW2). Milner's proposal suggested a "light and elegant structure" at the centre of the upper terrace walk facing steps leading to the lower terrace and grassed areas with curving paths, shrubberies and flower beds.

What was built appears to have been a large, imposing conservatory containing a pool and fountain. In its heyday tropical plants, ferns, orange and banana trees flourished there.

Though it was never planned as a true arboretum, Milner allowed £300 for trees and shrubs. Pennell and Son and J. Harriss of Nettleham Road tendered to supply these. Limes lined the upper terrace walk: it was further enhanced by pools and fountains. At over 300 metres long the walk was once considered one of the finest in Europe. Elsewhere, by "judicious grouping of trees and shrubs" the hope was to achieve a "picturesque effect". Yews, yew hedging, hollies, rhododendrons are listed as appropriate.

Today the Arboretum has a great variety of mature trees and young replacements. Among the larger trees are limes, ash, plane, sycamore, horse chestnut and walnut. Included in the small tree category are cherry, almond and mulberry. Some years ago Lincoln Tree Warden scheme



produced a tree trail leaflet. Shortly, oak posts with identifying information will be in place.

Milner's plan referred to a "circular light building", a "pretty object in itself" to be placed on the lower level. This was to be the bandstand, installed in 1884 with much ceremony and an evening firework display. Another favourite feature of the park is the "ornamental water", the pond in the south east corner. The strange-looking fountain, described by Pevsner as Gaudi-esque, was placed there in 1911, the year Lincoln's water supply started to come from Elkesley in Nottinghamshire. It was constructed from sandstone cores taken from the boreholes.

One of the most photographed features of the park is the Coade stone lion, the gift of Alderman F. J. Clarke. This massive creature, on a plinth, was taken to the site for the opening ceremony on a Clayton and Shuttleworth trolley, drawn by a Robey and Co. traction engine. It was so heavy the wheels sank a foot overnight.

Over the years he has many times been daubed by paint but he cleans up well!

By the late twentieth century the part was an uninviting, neglected and overgrown place. In some ways the lack of investment was a blessing as most of Milner's layout and features were still there, awaiting renewal. Work on the restoration plan started in 1999. Major work was needed to repair the upper terrace and the retaining walls. At some point the pools at either end had been filled in to become flower beds. These, with their fountains, were reinstated. Paths were resurfaced, steps replaced or restored, the massively overgrown yews and shrubberies were removed or severely cut back. The whole park was lifted and lightened. One of the most interesting projects was the research to discover the original paint colours of the bandstand. I remember the consternation when we heard it was to be repainted purple, pink, red, gold and white. However, the consensus is that it's a joyful sight. The maze had become a rose garden,

perhaps in the 1930s. The new hornbeam maze is quite mature, a pleasing sight from the terrace walk.

I regard the Arboretum as one of Lincoln's jewels – a modest one but nonetheless a jewel. It surprises me that so many longtime residents have yet to visit it. A walk along the upper terrace is always uplifting with its views over the park and to the country beyond the city. Considering the financial constraints of recent years the City Council is to be congratulated on the way it maintains and cares for the park.

Practicalities – The park is best approached from Lindum Terrace, where parking is usually available. (This upper north west part is the extension designed by Milner's son, H. E. Milner, in 1885 when the land became available.) Gates are open during daylight hours. Dogs permitted. Drinks, cakes and light lunches are served Monday to Friday in the Abbey Café by the main Monks Road entrance.

Margaret Hatfield

Seasonal Surprises in four Open Lincolnshire Gardens



Cherry Blossoms, Doddington Hall

More and more gardens are offering added value when opening their grounds to the discerning public. These are just four open gardens in Lincolnshire which enchanted and surprised Nic and I when we visited them in the spring, summer and autumn of 2017.

With an annual season ticket in hand, we vowed to capture the more unusual high spots at **Doddington Hall**, just five miles west of Lincoln. This year we were drawn to an article in the Radio Times about *'Springwatch in Japan: Cherry Blossom Time'* which cited Doddington's 80m **Cherry Blossom Walk** as one of four 'Blossom Hotspots in the UK', quite an accolade! So, we couldn't resist the temptation to see the short bloom for ourselves - catching the beautiful and delicate shocking pink blossom - at its best in mid-April - which for the Japanese is the ultimate symbol of the start of spring. In the event, the heritage narcissi were still looking proud in their wild surroundings, and the apple blossom in the kitchen garden and the crab apples in the main garden were also stunning in their pinky-white freshness. Everywhere else in the cultivated garden was looking terrific, especially the tulips and wallflowers in the West Front, the magnolias and azaleas in the main garden. However, with spring early this year, the advertised time for the cherry blossom had been changed to start a week earlier, so we missed the boat for the main flourish. Nevertheless, we still found gorgeous blooms to photograph and to marvel at the origami

and paper sayings hanging from the branches. In my Hall guide book notes, I have noted the cherry tree varieties, the majority of which were planted some 57 years ago, with one recent addition. The website encouraged we visitors to practice part of the ancient Japanese tradition of 'Hanami' by sitting on the Croquet Lawn and gazing at the cloud-like blossoms in the trees above and behind us. We were not alone!

Visiting an NGS garden in early July at **Dunholme Lodge** just off the road to Welton from the A46 was an unusually expansive and surprising experience. Firstly, it is in the middle of fields surrounded by beautifully cultivated gardens but secondly, it is close by an original runway on the airfield which was pivotal in the

last world war and boasts a dedicated **Aviation Museum and War Memorial** in the grounds. The garden borders are filled with huge varieties of colourful mid-summer shrubs and flowers, set off by the most wonderful topiary honed to represent interesting shapes as well as animals, which flank the walkways in the walled garden. We could not resist taking photos of ourselves with them! This area was also hugely productive with veggies and also enclosed a small orchard, with much to admire. We also marvelled at the rose gardens at the back of the house and the wildflower and wooded areas alongside with views across the fields. A large natural pond at the front was a focal point from the entrance route and looked very inviting on this



Aviation Museum and War Memorial

gloriously hot summer's day! It would appear that this venue is very popular if the number of helpers in the tea barn was anything to go by. A surprise entertainment for visitors taking a break was The Lincoln Ukulele Band who sang and played in a gazebo, seemingly without a break! We were so pleased to have made time to visit the Cottage Museum on site and its fascinating collections of RAF memorabilia, some very poignant and all very illuminating, especially the photographs and scrapbooks. The Memorial outside is dedicated to those who left in Lancaster Bombers but did not return. Sadly, the Museum only opens twice a year when the gardens are open, as the collection has to be packed away due to extreme damp in the building. I was told it takes 8 hours to pack it up and another 8 hours to display it again - surely, there must be a better way, which would allow relatives of those who served there and research workers ease of access? In any case it is an important tribute run by the brother of the farmer who owns the Lodge and creates the splendid gardens. Next year it will doubtless play an important part in the RAF birthday celebrations during its two NGS openings in spring and summer. Altogether, a very satisfying and enjoyable afternoon on which we mused for a long time.

Our regular haunt at **Doddington Hall** took on a new, surprising significance during August when we discovered the *'Summer of the Imagination'*. Taking its lead from an Albert Einstein quote - "Logic will get you from A to B...Imagination will take you everywhere else", this was realised with a herd of galloping unicorns, a dragon's lair, fairy dells, talking trees supported by the Woodland Trust for the Tree Charter Campaign and haiku poetry on the wall and wishes on luggage labels hanging from yew trees. Doubtless these 'secret' places in the magic gardens were geared largely to families but we were still absorbed by the sheer wealth of grown-up diversions, including artists in residence on land art and on creative writing, and watching rehearsals for an Aerial Dance Performance by ArtNK & CircusMASH just outside the 'Temple of the Winds'. Many parts of the gardens had been re-named on an accompanying map to take visitors on their imaginative tour, so for us, we made a beeline for 'The Garden of Mindfulness' in the Walled West Garden where sayings were posted on each of the garden seats - I particularly resonated with: Do not dwell in the past-do not dream of the future-concentrate the mind on-the present moment (Buddha). The herb garden had become 'magical' with their medieval qualities explained for many of the plants in their summer profusion, and the water garden had become a wishing well. On this very hot day in Bank Holiday week we met a local artist who was inspired by the many green transformations around him but wished he'd set up stall away from one of the talking trees! Last summer,



Unicorns at 'Summer of Imagination' Doddington Hall

sculpture took centre stage, but doubtless there will be more future surprises at this time of the year to engage our senses.

Hackthorn Hall Gardens, seven miles north of Lincoln, are a regular slot on our calendar for its early autumn opening to enjoy the fruits of the magnificent walled expanse of apple trees, veggies, flowers, pot plants and greenhouse delights. I always remember our splendid LGT visit a few summers ago when, in glorious sunshine, we appreciated the 15 acres of formal and ornamental gardens surrounding the Hall - with some input by Bunny Guinness, and the woodland glade opposite St Michael & All Angels Church, which is often the recipient of the open afternoon fundraising. As always, the ducks and Canada geese waddled around the waterway grounds and Keith, the industrious Head Gardener, introduced us to his topiary-hugging paths, although, sadly the unctuous herbaceous border on the path alongside the lake has since been grassed over to reduce the workload. Nonetheless, on this September day of sudden horrendous showers and thunderstorm, we were not disappointed to find a marvellous mix of kitchen garden produce, from the red glow of the Katya apples, to the huge bouquets of brightly-coloured and freshly-cut flowers, including stasis, dahlias and chrysanthemums, and some of its high summer vegetable harvest. But for us the 'icing on the cake', (as well as the delicious scones and apple cake for afternoon tea in the Village Hall!), was discovering that the grapes from the stupendous Black Homburg vine, reputed to be second only in size to the one at Hampton Court, were fully ripe and absolutely delicious. This was a genuine surprise for us, as over the last few years, the autumn opening had been a week earlier and we were always disappointed that the grapes were not ready for sale. But being postponed until after the new Scampton Airshow, the grapes had matured over the longer period with sufficient additional sunshine to avoid any tartness. This reminded us of our smiley photographs taken over many past years when the hotter summers produced a gorgeous glut of grapes being weighed by Don, the previous Head Gardener and grape-growing expert, who in retirement was there again, this time to assist Keith with cutting the overhanging bunches!

Gunby Hall Gardens provide us with another regular slot for us to marvel at the autumnal bounty in the flower & herb borders, the apple & pear-laden arches, the greenhouses & walled kitchen areas, and the canalside & adjoining grassy greenery. The colours all around are simply dazzling, from yellows and golds to oranges and reds, with all the shades in between. We noticed plenty of gasps as visitors rounded a corner and espied the sheer abundance of the flora in huge drifts and tall swathes of such glories as asters, dahlias and late old-fashioned roses in their various colourful guises. The pinky-reddish hydrangeas on masse were a sight to behold as were the ginormous bright orange pumpkins nestled together for drying out in the late sunshine. This was a gentle, hazy early October afternoon but the Hall and eight acres of Victorian gardens, nestling at the foot of the Wolds, had been open since mid-morning to process the huge crowds for *'Apple Day'* celebrations hosted by the National Trust. For us there were many apple-related surprises to stumble across with apple pressing, apple identification and apple jams & chutneys. Naturally, all manner of different apples were for sale from the 50 varieties growing in the garden and also from other local suppliers who had set up stalls around the grounds. The epitome, however, was the exhibition of apple varieties on show in the Orchard Barn overlooked by an engaging display of paintings from local artists - some as colourful as the plates of apples below, which all had clear descriptors of their provenance. These were especially interesting when hailing from Lincolnshire, such as the Allington Pippin, originally grown by Thomas Laxton. Earl Grey tea, a towering slice of Victoria sponge, a plant pot of hyssop and a bookshop 'find' on apple desserts, were extra delights on this lovely afternoon in what was once *'Tennyson's Haunt of Ancient Peace'*. Then, I talked to a new volunteer garden tour guide who, extraordinarily, is the great niece of William Peacock - head gardener at Gunby Hall in the 1930s and 1940s! She told me that there will be more opportunities to enjoy these glorious gardens on other special open days in the Hall's calendar.

Laraine D. Cooper



Photo by Margaret Hollingsworth – Rose at Harpswell

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