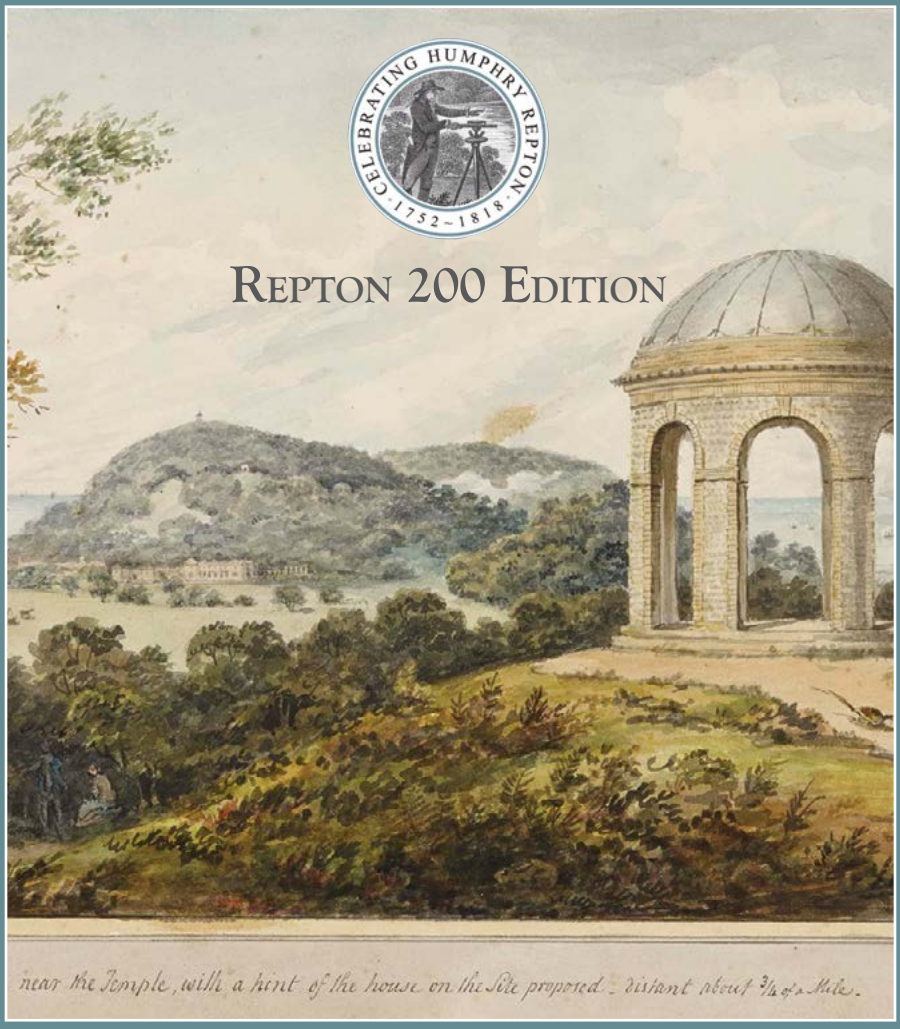
Norfolk Gardens Trust



Repton 200 Edition

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Back cover: Sheringham Park *Photo: Roger Last)*

Chairman's Report - Spring 2018

There are two reasons for the Norfolk Gardens Trust to celebrate 2018. First, this is Repton200 – 200 years since the death of one of this country's greatest landscape designers, adopted by Norfolk as one of its own. This issue of our magazine is therefore a Repton Special. To coincide with this anniversary Tom Williamson of UEA, our vice-chair Sally Bate with members of our research group have been working very hard on our latest publication – Humphry Repton in Norfolk. The book will appear in the spring, liberally illustrating Repton's association with our county. Details of the launch can be found in this issue.

The second cause for celebration is that the Norfolk Gardens Trust is 30 years old and we are holding a party to celebrate. This will be on Friday July 6th at Sheringham Hall by courtesy of Paul Doyle and Gergely Battha-Pajor. This will be an exciting chance to see one of Repton's finest creations – Sheringham Park – where we will enjoy drinks and canapés. Entry is by ticket only and you will find details of how to buy tickets in this edition of the News. The Committee hope to see as many members as possible but note that numbers are limited to 150 so please do buy your tickets early; first come first served.

Over the last 30 years the Norfolk Gardens Trust has grown to over 500 members. There are 36 County Garden Trusts in England but in terms of the size of membership our Trust is the second largest to London. This allows us to organise a significant number of activities. We do not want to disadvantage any member who does not use the internet but, as will be appreciated, it is much less expensive to communicate our activities to members by email so may I urge you to let our Membership Secretary Tony Stimpson know your email address if you have not already done so. Please.

To mark the importance of 2018, the Committee have commissioned a new logo for the Trust and it appears on this edition of the News. The selection of logos is never easy but we have been greatly assisted by Karen Roseberry, our very talented professional designer. Karen is also responsible for the design and artwork of the News. She does this work pro bono and we are indebted to her.

Another development is the creation of a new website. The Trust has been most fortunate to have had Brian Ellis and David King as our webmasters for many years, again free of cost to the Trust; I would like to thank them for all their skilled work and assistance.

I hope you enjoy this edition of the News – expertly edited by Sue Roe and Clive Lloyd. In turn they are always on the lookout for contributors for articles for future editions. As they will tell you, articles can cover a range of gardening matters both in Norfolk and further afield. Do contact them with ideas about gardens big or small.

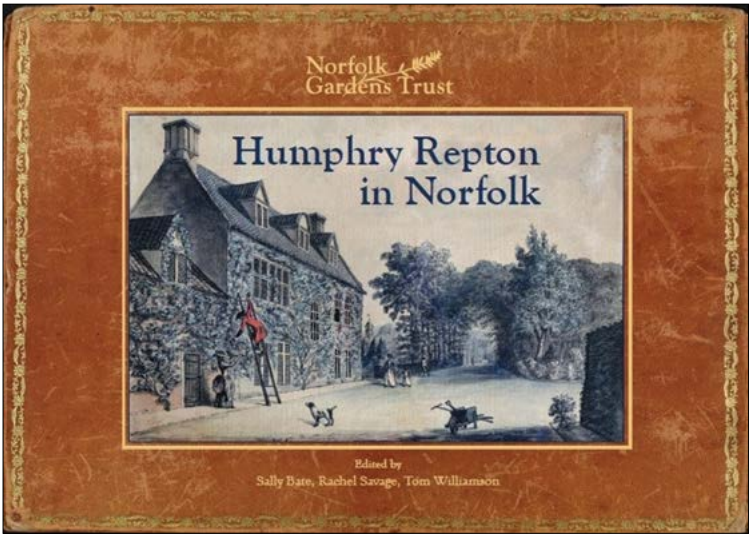
Finally, as this is the Spring issue I wish you an enjoyable time in your garden and visiting others. Don't forget to take time to stand and stare.



Matthew Martin

A Preview of Humphry Repton in Norfolk: Norfolk Gardens Trust's new book

by Sally Bate



Late May 2018 will see the publication of Humphry Repton in Norfolk and as you read this article it should be making its way through the design programmes and printing presses of Barnwell Print in Aylsham. As soon as Capability Brown in Norfolk was released into the community, the Norfolk Gardens Trust Research Group rolled up their sleeves and set about their new target of interest. Suffolk claim Humphry Repton by birth (Bury St Edmunds in 1752) and Essex claim him through his working years as a landscape architect from his home in Hare Street near Harlow. But it is his formative years in Norwich and Sustead, along with his eventual resting place at Aylsham's St Michael's Church, that underline Repton's wish to be considered a Norfolk man. The research group therefore felt that the bi-centenary of his death in 1818 should not go unmarked in his own county, and that a book describing all his work here was a fitting tribute.

This new book looks at all the sites known to be connected with Repton, whether they were full commissions detailed in one of his now famous Red Books, or where he gave advice in



Fig. 1. Detail from Family and Friends at Sustead, watercolour by Humphry Repton dated 1782 (Credit: Private Collection, Photo: Roger Last)

the form of drawings, plans or written instructions, or even where there was just a brief mention in his accounts book or a single image from his pen or brush. Once the researchers had trawled through archives and arranged visits to the sites concerned, they submitted reports, references and images to the book's editors. This information has been skilfully woven together by Tom Williamson of UEA into a chronological account of Repton's life and career in Norfolk and shows how this mirrors his career nationally: he worked on over 400 sites in his lifetime. To put Repton's work in context the book also includes some of his contemporaries' work, in the county, for comparison.

After Repton's parents died he set himself up as a country gentleman in Sustead, a few miles north of Aylsham. Repton enjoyed farming and making improvements to the lands around the house he rented off his good friend William Windham of Felbrigg. He also used his time here to hone his painting and drawing skills, writing plays, reading widely from Windham's library and acting as his friend's secretary while he worked for the government. Repton's family grew at Sustead and we were lucky enough to be given permission to photograph three of his paintings from his time there (from a private collection). Fig. 1 is a delightful detail of a painting showing, we think, Humphry facing the viewer and gesturing with his hand, with his wife Mary seated, in red. The child at her knee is possibly Humphry junior but according to the inscription on the back,

the boy playing with the ball is John Adey Repton, aged about 7. John Adey was born in 1775 and though profoundly deaf from birth he went on to have a very successful career as a talented architect.

Repton's funds began to dwindle and in 1786 he moved his family nearer to London where he hit upon the idea of filling the void left by the death of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown (in 1783): he started to advertise himself as a landscape gardener. The drawing skills, visits to country estates and valuable connections made while he lived at Sustead all helped to further this new career. His first commission in 1788, for Jeremy Ives at Catton, saw some of the trademark watercolours (now in Norwich Castle Museum, Figure 2) that may have been part of, or additional to, his first example of a Red Book. We heard of the possibility of this book existing in the 1950s, after Catton Park was taken over by Norfolk County Council, but there is no knowledge of its whereabouts now.

Repton's Red Books, bound in red Moroccan leather, were a new development in the field of landscape design. Not only did they contain a plan of the estate or garden, but lengthy descriptions in beautiful copperplate handwriting informed the clients of Repton's proposed changes and his reasoning behind them. Accompanying the text were Repton's watercolours, often furnished with a lifting flap to enable the viewer to appreciate the 'before' and 'after' views. There are seven Norfolk Red Books that have survived the intervening two centuries since Repton's death. Four are in private hands, one is in the Colman Collection (The Forum), one is owned by the National Trust and the seventh resides in the USA at the University of Florida. From the start it has been the ambition of the NGT researchers that all the Red Book images would be in our book and this we have achieved.

Repton was a prolific artist who often produced drawings for publications



Fig. 2. View of Catton by Humphry Repton, 1788. Credit: Norfolk Museums Service



Fig. 3. Tiny engravings (approx. 3 x 5 cm) of Witton and Rectory at Lyng, from Peacock's Polite Repository, based on drawings by Repton Credit: David Clarke Collection. Photo: Roger Last)

by other authors. These include the drawings from which engravings were made to illustrate Mostyn Armstrong's The History and Antiquities of the County of Norfolk (1781), and the tiny Norfolk country house engravings which appeared in Peacock's Polite Repository (taken from drawings by Repton at sites where he is said to have worked [Figure 3]). Three of Repton's paintings were collected by the Walpole family and we are very grateful to Lord and Lady Walpole for giving us permission to reproduce them. All three are views of Aylsham Market Place and one records the Festival of Peace in July 1815 when 1200 people dined at tables in the square, listening to a band perched up high on a platform (Fig. 4).



Fig 4. Detail from The Festival of Peace in Aylsham Market Place watercolour by Humphry Repton
Credit: Lord and Lady Walpole. Photo: Roger Last

All in all, it has been a huge task to pull together so quickly such a large amount of research and material to illustrate our book. This could not have been achieved without a great deal of time and help from others. Roger Last has been willing to travel to all corners of the county, sometimes at short notice, to take marvellous photographs in often less-than-perfect conditions. The extensive collection owned by David Clarke of Norwich's City Bookshop has provided a lot of valuable material for the book and can be seen in the exhibition he will be holding. No matter how many items we requested, the staff of the Norfolk Record Office and the Norfolk Heritage Centre in The Forum unflinchingly supplied them and freely shared their specialist knowledge. Finally, we are so grateful to the many owners of private collections of Repton's work and his Red Books – you know who you are - who were so willing to share their precious items. To all these people above, and the phenomenal NGT researchers (Janet, Kate, Bob, Marcia, Peter, Anita, Tom, Rachel, Sally and Rebecca) the editors (Tom, Rachel and Sally) and Barnwell Print, an enormous THANK YOU for making Humphry Repton in Norfolk happen.

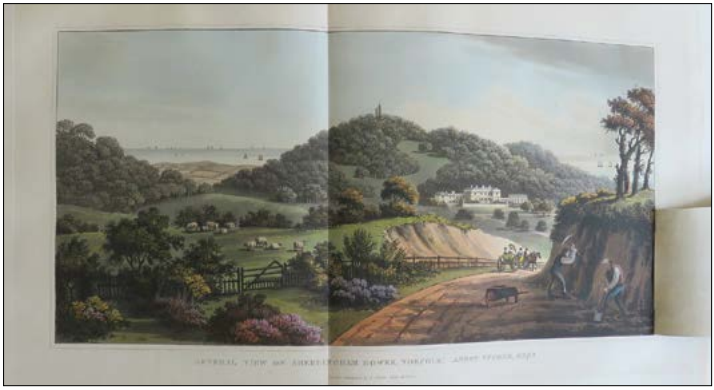
You are invited to the official book launch

'Humphry Repton in Norfolk' will be launched on Tuesday 29th May at St Michael's Church, Aylsham from 7 - 9pm. The book is edited by Tom Williamson (NGT Vice President and UEA) with NGT's own Vice Chair, Sally Bate, and Rachel Savage (NGT Committee and UEA). Members and non-members are welcome so please come along with friends to see this major new work, which includes 280 colour illustrations.

A special exhibition of Repton's printed works at The City Bookshop, Norwich

To coincide with the launch of 'Humphry Repton in Norfolk', the City Bookshop is holding an exhibition of Repton's printed works and of those for which he contributed illustrations. The exhibition will include his three major landscape gardening volumes, facsimile Red Books, his minor works and original copies of Peacock's 'Polite Repository'. Amongst much other material is Abbot Upcher's own copy of the manuscript plan of the Sheringham estate.

This free exhibition will take place for 2 weeks from May 29th in the upstairs exhibition room at The City Bookshop, 10 Davey Place, Norwich, NR2 1PQ.



Repton's view of 'Sheringham Bower' for Upcher, the open flap revealing the proposed carriage drive.
Courtesy David Clarke

Humphry Repton: whose parks and pleasure grounds cheer the hearts of all By Linden Groves

It is charming that Humphry Repton, a man responsible for such prestigious landscapes as Sheringham, Woburn and Russell Square chose to end his book on the theory and practice of landscape gardening with his own intimate cottage garden: 'I will conclude these Fragments with the most interesting subject I have ever known; it is the View from the humble Cottage to which for more than thirty years I have anxiously retreated from the pomp of palace, the elegancies of fashion, or the allurements of dissipation ... in improving places for others I must consult their inclinations; at Harestreet I follow my own.'

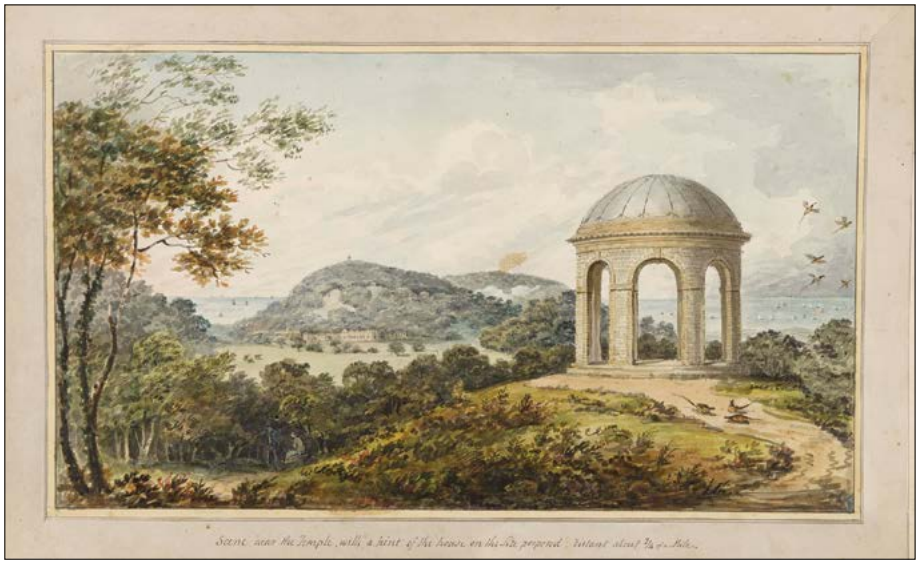
Professionally, Repton was prolific and



Top: Humphry Repton, 'View from my own cottage, in Essex', with the overlay down (Before improvement).

Bottom: Humphry Repton, 'View from my own cottage, in Essex', with the overlay up (With improvements).

From Humphry Repton, 'Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening', London 1816. From a print belonging to Peter H. Goodchild.



Sheringham Park *Copyright The National Trust, Sheringham Park*

acclaimed, enjoying the buzz of building a successful career. Personally, he enjoyed family life, and was driven by the need to provide for his children.

Humphry Repton was born on 21st April 1752 in Suffolk, into the well-to-do family of a tax collector. Whilst a child, his family moved to Norwich, where he attended grammar school before being sent aged twelve years old to the Netherlands to prepare for a career in commerce. But as he grew into a young man it became increasingly clear that he did not have a head for business. In 1773 he married Mary Clarke, with whom he was to have a much-loved family. When his parents died in 1778 he used the small legacy to abandon business and move himself and his family to a small country estate at Sustead, near Aylsham he approached his social contacts to ask for work improving their estates. Much of his work included improvements to existing landscape schemes at the estates of aristocratic clients like the Dukes of Bedford and Portland but at a time of economic instability his designs also included designs for much smaller properties. His first two landscape jobs were at Catton Hall for Jeremiah Ives, textile merchant and mayor of Norwich, and for Thomas Coke of Holkham Hall in Norfolk. Both estates survive today: Catton as a public park run by the Catton Park Trust, and Holkham Hall as a privately-owned home open by ticket and for events. Other commissions were to include Blaise Castle in Bristol, Dyrham Park in Gloucestershire, Endsleigh Cottage in Devon, London's

in Norfolk; here he was able to live the life of a country gentleman whilst growing his social contacts. Finances continued to dwindle however, prompting a mid-1780s downsizing to Hare Street Cottage, near Romford in Essex.



Catton Hall and Park Copyright Broadland District Council

Repton's next venture, in 1788, was to set himself up as a landscape gardener; to get himself launched Russell Square, Stoneleigh Abbey in Warwickshire, Tatton Park in Cheshire, Uppark House in Sussex, Valleyfield in Fife and Woburn Abbey, Bedfordshire.

Repton desperately wanted to be recognised as the successor to Capability Brown, even coining for himself the title 'landscape gardener'. His work did, initially, follow Brown's landscape style but he came to adopt and develop other ideas, such as those of the picturesque movement. In this way Repton became important in linking the landscape design of the eighteenth century and the gardenesque movement of the early Victorian years. One of Repton's most notable achievements was to restore the terraces, gravel walks and flower beds around the house that predecessors like Brown had discarded in favour of Arcadian lawns sweeping right up to the building. Repton also designed separate flower gardens, with more elaborate ornamental or themed planting, a style which became popular in the nineteenth century. However, unlike Capability Brown, Repton only provided designs and left the client to implement the work with another contractor. As a result, many of his designs were never realised, to his frustration, and he never became wealthy.

The way Repton presented his landscape designs was key to his success. He produced 'Red Books' of his plans, drawings, maps and a description of the improvements he proposed to make. They famously include watercolour paintings with overlays showing 'before' and 'after' views. He also guaranteed himself posterity by outlining his approach to landscape gardening in three books: Sketches and Hints on Landscape Gardening (1795), Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening (1803) and Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening (1816). In the closing pages



Kenwood, the 2nd Earl of Mansfield employed Humphry Repton to remodel the grounds at Kenwood in 1793
Copyright English Heritage

of Fragments Repton urged: "For the honour of the Country, let the Parks and Pleasure-grounds of England be ever open, to cheer the hearts and delight the eyes of all, who have taste to enjoy the beauties of Nature."

Unfortunately, in 1811 Repton had a serious carriage accident, after which he often had to use a wheelchair and rely on his children for site visits. He died in March 1818: now, two hundred years later we are looking freshly at his life, work and legacy. The Gardens Trust is encouraging and supporting County Gardens Trusts, sites and other organisations to pool energies and organise hundreds of Repton-inspired activities, from research projects to special garden openings and conferences, meaning that the spotlight is on Humphry Repton like never before. It is particularly fitting that the Gardens Trust has also been awarded a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to help ensure that parks and pleasure-grounds really can cheer the hearts and delight the eyes of all, working with local volunteers to pilot activities in five Repton landscapes that are designed to welcome wide communities.

For details on the Repton celebrations, visit humphryrepton.org; facebook.com/humphryrepton; or twitter @humphryrepton

The Humphry Repton Memorial Rose Garden

by Peter Woodrow

In the late 1960s the Aylsham Association undertook the restoration of the Repton Graves at St. Michael's Church, Aylsham. The three memorial stones mounted on the south wall of the church were taken down and sent to monumental masons in Norwich. At that time the inscriptions on the stones had almost disappeared but after a bucket of water was thrown over the stones they dried out and the inscriptions became more clear. The lettering was therefore recut and blacked-in and the iron railings were restored. In addition, the soil in the garden was lowered as damp was penetrating the church walls and roses and dwarf box-hedging were planted, surrounded by a path of York stone. To commemorate this renewal a stone at the east end of the garden was inscribed 'Restored by the Aylsham Association MCMLXIX'.



Bill Le Grice doing January 2018 planting. Photo courtesy Andrew Beane, Aylsham PCC.

Some years later, it was brought to the attention of NGT that the rose bushes on Humphry Repton's grave were 'straggly and unattractive'. The Trust responded and replanted the garden with Duchess of Portland roses – a repeat-flowering shrub rose introduced in 1790. The event was recorded in the local press (December 2004), with a photograph of the then Chairman, Peter de Bunsen, doing the replanting. Now, in preparation for the bicentenary of Repton's death in 2018, NGT have funded a new planting with advice from



rose expert Ken Grapes. In January 2018, soil has been replenished and 'Rose of the Year 2018' - rosa 'Lovestruck' planted. This floribunda, bred by Dickson's, Northern Ireland is well-tested with excellent disease resistance, producing an abundance of lightly scented red flowers from May-October. Additional planting of Lavandula 'Hidcote', together with the Triumph tulip 'Arie Hoek' for spring colour, completes the scheme.



Repton Memorial Stones. *Photo courtesy Toby de ville Shaw*





HELP!
We are seeking volunteers to help serve tea at our garden events. Any help supporting the NGT would be welcome!

Please contact Karen Moore at: moore.karen@icloud.com

The Old Rectory, Kirby Bedon

By Peter de Bunsen



All photographs: Tessa Hobbs

When we came here in 1998 the garden had been maintained with little coherence so we did not feel inhibited in making changes that have continued over the last 30 years. This evolution has been carried out in collaboration with the garden designer Tessa Hobbs. George Carter has contributed a 'mansion house' bird table and trellis work and the Norwich-based sculptor Ros Newman designed for us a flight of birds.

The house is early Georgian (c 1725) in mellow red brick with five bays with white stone keystones on two and half floors, as Pevsner has it. Over the years there have been additions and subtractions but not to the south-facing facade that provides a formal focal point for the southern part of the garden.

The garden – which is flat and the soil of light loam over clay – is about 2.3 acres. Set on the top of a ridge at a safe Norfolk height of 110 feet above sea level it enjoys a pleasant rural view over a gentle valley running down to the river Yare. The site is enclosed on three sides by good old red brick walls and has some fine mature trees, notably three evergreen oaks and a good sycamore.



Originally the main entrance to the house was by a short drive off the Bramerton road leading to the front door. However, the turning was too dangerous so in 1995 we laid a six-foot-wide stone path edged on either side by box balls and lawns enclosed by yew hedging to the dimensions of the front of the house. A magnificent mature copper beech prevented us gardening to about thirty yards from the house but, miraculously, after being away in February 1996 we came back to find it had blown down. This allowed us to extend the paving and to create a transverse section with a central roundel. This transverse section is edged by a stilted double hornbeam hedge set in squared box in gravel. To the south of this hedge the extended paving is again edged with box balls. Providing a backstop is a bronze peacock on a plinth, behind a Mathew Colman white garden bench backed by clipped yew. We think that this formal part of the garden satisfactorily complements the formal facade of the house.

In contrast to the formal garden is an area of rough grass to the south-west where we have concentrated snowdrops and planted daffodils, some unsuccessful tulips and shrubs and trees (mostly birch) chosen for their bark. The character of this area is enhanced by the two mown paths and by giving the shrubs room to





develop. In the shade of two evergreen oaks we are establishing cyclamen, both coum and hederifolium and in a recently cleared area *Anemone blanda*. We are also encouraging aconites. To the north-west of this area we inherited an enormous box ball 20 x 30 ft that is now cloud pruned, exposing its light grey contorted stems and providing the opportunity of clipping fanciful shapes at the end of the branches.

Immediately to the west of the house is a York stone terrace 48 x 24 ft leading to an oval lawn – a most satisfying shape. This lawn is bounded by a high brick wall and hedges that – to the west – are scalloped down to about five feet where a four-foot-wide central opening leads the eye to a focal piece of statuary at the far side of the croquet lawn.

The view over the valley is framed by two fastigiate oaks (*Quercus robur* 'Koster') and a 40 yard long bed of agapanthus runs along the low containing wall. At the northern end of the lawn is a structurally decorative summer house (we call it the 'summer palace') painted a pale grey, set between two box-hedged beds; both beds contain a central olive tree standing in lavender 'Vera', grown for its pale grey leaf rather than its flower. To the west is a large and productive fig and to the east, on a small paved area, is an interesting grey polished stone sculpture of an orca or killer whale. To the north is the borrowed landscape of C12th St Andrew's Church.

One of our first developments was to halve the size of the kitchen garden by digging a small cruciform pond with a

fountain of three bulrushes set amongst four symmetrical beds of 'Macmillan Nurse' roses. This garden room is structurally enhanced by eight now rather large box balls and, in each corner, fastigiate golden yews. The remaining kitchen garden is down to permanent asparagus, rhubarb and autumn fruiting raspberries, all comparatively maintenance free. The remainder is to be given over to cutting flowers for Alex's flower arranging, principally dahlias and foliage provided by *Pittosporum*.

What I think we have achieved over 30 years is a harmonious garden that – through the creation of garden rooms and judicious plantings – complements its fine house. Certainly it has been a satisfying and rewarding experience and will continue to evolve new ideas, perhaps gained from other gardens.



We enjoy showing the garden and in 2018 will be opening it for small parties, by appointment, for the Norfolk St John's Ambulance.

Walsingham-based garden designer Tessa Hobbs can be contacted at www.tessahobbsgardendesign.com



Crete Lodge: Putting an exotic garden to bed

By Clive Lloyd



All photographs: Clive Lloyd

At the edge of Old Costessey, up a track past the old brickfields, stands Crete Lodge. Somewhat unusually for our supposed flatlands the house and garden stand at the top of a hill with a fine view over a shallow valley to the south west. Although 'Crete' is named rather prosaically after the previous owner's concrete business, the garden itself more than lives up to the Mediterranean name for it is now home to a magnificent collection of plants more usually associated with warm, if not hot, climates.

When Melissa and Keith Scott came here 24 years ago they acquired a site of just over an acre, on the side of a hill, facing south through to south-west. Gradually, they began to replace their existing fruit and vegetable gardens with something less vulnerable to muntjac and rabbits. Even though rabbits would chew (then rather unsportingly spit out) the European fan palm (*Chamerops humilis*), the spiky agaves proved more resistant and so began the Scott's venture into exotic plants, part of, "a hunt for things to be different".

Back in the early 1990s the Urban Jungle, just down the road, had yet to start although its predecessor Botanicus was in business where some plants were obtained. At the time the internet was not widely available, so much knowledge was gleaned from a growing library of plant books; Melissa recalls in particular being guided by Martin Gibbons' books on palms and exotics. The couple also remember travelling far and wide to find plants. The Palm Centre in London was a source of hardy palms and other

exotics, and Mulu Nurseries in Evesham provided banana trees as well as other plants. Angus White had only just started Architectural Plants in Pulborough West Sussex and provided, in their own words "the tropical and the jungly". Nearer to home, the late Will Giles' exotic garden in Thorpe provided inspiration as did Alan Gray's Old Vicarage at East Ruston – both demonstrating that exotic plants can thrive in this dry and often windy climate of ours.



On entering Crete Lodge, one of the first signs of the garden to come is the 10 metre tall Asian variety of fan palm, *Trachycarpus fortunei*, that dominates the front of the house. Through the gate to the Side Garden, which was originally a cottage garden and lawn, the visitor is now faced with a profusion of plants: palms, ferns (including the soft tree fern *Dicksonia antarctica*), bamboos and a very tall *Schefflera impressa*. This exotic, lush planting creates an air of mystery as that visitor decides which path to take to the top garden. These imaginatively created spaces make the site appear to be larger than its one acre or so. The rooms evolved naturally: first a boundary wall at the front, then another to divide off 'the jungle' and to create a microclimate out of the wind that whips across the valley to this high point on the hill. This sheltered part of the garden is populated by what Melissa calls the "fluffies" as opposed to the "spikies" to come: broad-leaved foliage plants like banana, *Tetrapanex papyrifera* 'Rex', described by Architectural Plants as, "A *Fatsia japonica* on steroids"as well as fatsias – plain and variegated – and the smaller *Arisaema* and *Alocasia*.



The spikies have their place in the sun – a large, south-facing bank below the house. The soil is sandy and full of stones and such well-drained ground has proved ideal for a range of cacti and succulents, including various agaves. Since starting to plant the arid areas, Melissa joined the local branch of The British Cacti & Succulent Society which proved useful for acquiring plants and information on growing them. The US hardiness rating also provided a rough guide as to what might grow. But trial-and-error played an obvious part and over the years the planting evolved as the Scotts came to know what did or didn't survive the winter. Another factor was the practical consideration of transporting an increasing number of often very heavy plants into the conservatory. So over time the range of plants stored over winter was reduced to a manageable number.

We arrived on a late October afternoon when Keith and Melissa were in the middle of the lengthy process of putting the garden to bed (but, fortunately, the owners had photographs of sunnier times). Melissa was clipping plastic sheeting to a custom-made frame around a *Yucca filifera* while Keith had just placed tubes of clear, corrugated, plastic roofing around metre-high cacti, capping them with a plastic cloche. The winter of 2010 took its toll of several exotic plants but, as Keith explained, it may not have been the air temperature as such that killed them but the direct exposure of growing points to ice and snow and being continually wet. Cacti close to the ground therefore had these



clear plastic cloches pegged around them. Potted plants would be moved into one of the six greenhouses or the conservatory.



We had already visited the lower edge of the garden where the large pool is shielded from the valley by bamboo that serves to break the south-westerly wind. In this sheltered area a tall *Yucca faxoniana* obviously thrives. Keith described this as perhaps his favourite plant: "It's bomb-proof".



A garden like this is never finished; just before we left we were taken to the highest point of the garden where Keith is digging out a long trench. Here, a fernery will be planted ... along with a tower that will overlook the valley.

Blake and Emma's allotment garden

by Sue Roe



An important and historic, but somewhat hidden, part of Norwich's horticultural landscape are its allotment gardens ... this is an account of one of them.

Allotments have their roots in the subsistence economy of medieval strip farming. Later, when land began to be enclosed, villagers were allotted land to make up for the loss of common land and the present-day allotments still reflect those early ideals of self-sufficiency. During the First World War local authorities began buying land specifically for allotment gardens and after the war, when there were agricultural strikes and rioting in Norwich, the Corporation Committee set up the Bluebell Allotments in 1924*.

Norwich's influential Parks Superintendent Captain Arnold Edward Sandys-Winsch – who laid out the nearby Heigham and Eaton Parks – recommended the purchase of land at the junction of Earlham and Bluebell Roads; the resulting Bluebell Allotments North and South remain popular with city gardeners today.

Among the individual plots cultivated in Bluebell Allotments North is a garden that exemplifies the ideals of the early allotment movement of thriftily providing food for families. The allotment belongs to Blake and Emma who live in a Victorian terraced house off Earlham Road with their two small children, Ruby and Isaiah. The house has a tiny garden so its residents in the



1920s were exactly the target audience for the brand new allotments, as are the Blakes.

Blake learned his gardening skills in his native Grenada where growing your own food is a given for those with enough land, as is the concept of repurposing materials. In the three years that Blake and Emma have held their allotment they have got to grips with some of the challenges that an old plot brings, such as depleted soil and the usual pests and diseases that go with it. As a result, much of their produce is grown in raised beds constructed from found pallets and corrugated iron. Now they have better control over the quality of the soil, which is improved and fed using home-made compost.



Blake and Emma have also come to realise that most crops are better grown under netting, not least to prevent pigeons from helping themselves. The nets are held up by recycled tent supports, which Blake helps to clear from the Glastonbury Festival site where he sometimes works. Recycled materials are used wherever possible: the greenhouse was given to them as a bequest when an elderly allotment neighbour passed away; the paving was reclaimed from a friend; and fencing was made from bits and pieces either found or donated. The summer-house, which is an attractive as well as useful addition, was given by a friend while the door was donated by a neighbour during a house renovation.

This allotment isn't just highly productive and low cost, it also provides relaxing garden space for the whole family to enjoy. In the summer the family often spends whole days there cooking food on a picnic stove; while Blake and Emma work on the vegetable garden, the children play in the tree house that

their parents have built for them – again from recycled materials.



The photographs show the wide range of vegetables that Blake and Emma grow in their well-maintained beds. Blake's favourite crops are peppers, aubergines and melons. These and other vegetables are so abundant that friends who helped provide materials are generously repaid in produce; we went away with arms full of Blake's generosity. In the following autumn Emma – and her friends – would get together to make chutney and pickles, which also make great gifts.



The Bluebell Allotment Society provided a generous number of fruit trees in the 1920s, some of which came from the well-known Daniels nursery on Newmarket Road. So, thanks to the Society's foresight, Blake and Emma have a share in a plum and an apple tree.

The allotment doesn't just provide the family's food and space outside, flowers are also part of the garden's design. Emma in particular likes to grow flowers with bees in mind helped by five-year-old Ruby who grows plants from seed and has her own small plot. The garden has the feel of a highly productive cottage garden and an aesthetically pleasing one. It is a space that the whole family loves to be in and a place where the next generation of gardeners can begin to understand nature and learn their gardening skills.

The Superintendent would approve.

**Source. The Bluebell Allotments. The Norwich Society 2015.*

David Pulling.
Horsford Hall Garden (or Paul and David's Garden)



How big is your garden?
Two acres with 2/3 acre of woodland on a lease.

How long have you lived here?
Since March 1987

What was it like when you arrived?
After Charles Jewson's death Horsford Hall was divided into four and the main garden into two. We purchased 'The Hall Flat' in March 1987; our plot was just under 2 acres divided between south-facing garden, a 2/3 acre section of the parkland and a small portion of woodland. Planting consisted of the sweet chestnut planted in the 1770s, three enormous clipped yews, 90 hybrid tea roses in one bed, a couple of hibiscus in another, some general shrub planting and a few struggling perennials in an island bed.

What is the garden like now?
Mostly, the garden is as we designed it in 1988 – inspired by Sissinghurst and many trips to Italy. 'Norfolk Gardens and Designed Landscapes' wrote: "The main axis of the garden, in a largely Italianate manner, comprises a long vista from the house over a raised circular pond ringed with tall Italian cypress ... beech and yew have been used throughout the design to create a series of garden rooms to flank the central vista. The formal elements are softened by relaxed planting of herbaceous borders, shrubs and fruit. The garden contains many unusual plants including a small collection of cornus".

What is your favourite part of the garden?
I love the formal main lawn with its Italian references but as a plants person I prefer the shrubbery and the various planting areas.

What are your favourite top 10 plants?
Cornus kousa (in variety), *Hydrangea macrophylla* 'Ayesha', tree peony 'Joseph Rock', *Brousonettia papyrifera*, citrus (in variety), *Ficus carica*, *Rosa banksiae* 'Lutea', *Drymis lanceolata*, *Orixa japonica*, *Tetrapanax papyrifera*.

Which parts of the garden have you found a challenge?
Herbaceous borders. I tend to ignore the practised principles of tall plants at the back and small plants at the front. I have yet to learn how to make them look 'stunning'... I've still not got it right !

What plans to do you have for the garden?
We really want to buy the remaining woodland to enable us to create a more managed environment with shade and drought tolerant plants – something that a largely south-facing garden denies us.

Is it open to the public?
Individuals or small groups by appointment.

The Blickling Walled Garden Regeneration

by Michael Owers



Michael Owers is the Walled Garden Project Manager at Blickling Hall. He is undertaking the regeneration of the walled garden as part of a five year project to bring the garden back into productivity and get visitors interested in where their food comes from.

It was on a cold morning on the 19th November 2014 that I walked through the gates of Blickling, knowing that I was about to undertake something very special. The story really began back in 2003 when as a newly recruited trainee gardener I came through the same gates with the same sense of expectation about what I would learn over the three years I was to be based at Blickling. The intervening years after Blickling were spent working my way around the country, very much in the style that a journeyman gardener would have done a hundred years before. With time spent at Clumber Park, Doddington Hall and Gunthorpe Hall. This helped me gain the experience of managing gardens, all in the knowledge that the Walled Garden at Blickling would one day be restored, and that I would be able to offer the National Trust the range of skills that would hopefully secure me the job.



Of course the time spent on my journey back to Blickling pales into insignificance when compared to the history of the garden I would be bringing back to production. Some of the earliest records I have seen suggest that a wooden bridge was created to gain access to the working gardens in 1612. This will have predated the current hall and have related to Dagworth Manor, on which the present house is built.

One of the key early documents that show the estate in 1729 is the Corbridge Survey. This gives an overall view of the estate and gives a fairly detailed layout for the walled garden. Looking at this plan it shows a clear division with half of the garden planted as an orchard and the second as a garden with rows of plants.

Interestingly at this point there are also two dwellings shown within the walls, which only partly surround the orchard section. The next document that shows the progression of the garden is a tithe map of 1840. It is clear that the estate has grown considerably by this time and that the garden has been enlarged. Records suggest that a patch of land was taken back from Samual Sayers in the 1740s to enable the walls to be extended on the north west corner of the garden. With this work completed, the garden grew to the 4.5 acres that it covers today.

The 19th century saw the development of the garden, with the inclusion of a seventy metre long south facing range of glasshouses, two free standing glasshouses and a pineapple house. Several of these



structures can be accredited to Boulton and Paul. Records suggest that these would have contained orchids, citrus, peaches, and vines. Unfortunately by the mid-1950s the south facing range which was probably in need of renovation was demolished. At this time key parts of the garden including the pineapple pit, boiler house and range of buildings on the north facing wall were also removed.

There followed a period over the next 50 years which saw the walled garden have a number of uses. The National Trust having been bequeathed Blickling in 1940 needed to cover the huge costs associated with maintaining the estate. This meant that along with the demolition of key structures, there was a reduction in the cultivated space to just one quarter of what had been. In the 1960s slightly blurred photographs show rows of Christmas trees planted in the other three quarters, which by the 1970s had been replaced with orchard trees some of which are still in place to this day. The remaining quarter during this time continued to be cultivated, although all this changed in the 1980s when the National Trust in collaboration with Alan Bloom created a garden centre in the space. This was fairly short lived and after this, aside from the odd Easter Fair and Shakespeare play the garden was no longer used.

All this changed in November 2014 when I was employed to 'Regenerate' Blickling's walled garden and to bring it back to cultivation. Consultation with our Curators followed about how we would do this. Our major challenges were that we now welcome almost one hundred and eighty thousand visitors to the gardens each year. This meant that the nice narrow pathways of old



would need to be enlarged and more accommodating. With the garden being open 363 days a year, this also meant it needed to be accessible throughout. Our next area to consider was that the original four acre garden was now only just over an acre although we still wanted to fit everything in. Several meetings later we had come up with a plan. The garden would be a regeneration creating a garden for today's audience whilst incorporating the path layout of the old garden albeit enlarged. It would incorporate a large quantity of fruit trained using traditional methods (to date we have planted over 160 trees). Some of these fruit varieties can be linked back to HG Oclee Head Gardener till 1908. Interestingly Oclee is mentioned in RHS records as exhibiting 35 varieties of apple at their Apple Conference in 1883. The other varieties we have used are mainly East Anglian varieties predating 1940 in their introduction date.

Vegetables and fruit now make their way across to our restaurant each week and we are now indirectly supplying the estate in much the same way as the gardens would have done back in the day. We now grow a wide range of produce using the greenhouses we have. Although I think the whole team who have been involved in bringing the garden back to life would hope one day to see the range of glasshouses returned to the south facing wall. As we reach the end of the third year of bringing the garden back into production I wonder how what we have created will be viewed by the gardeners in another hundred years.

Creating a wildlife garden

by Cath Saunt



This meadow, tucked off a main road in a village near Norwich, was used to grow Christmas trees and before that it was a strawberry field until Alasdair Fraser, with his partner Caroline Fernandez and son Tomas, moved here 10 years ago. Now the Christmas trees have gone the oaks and other native species have thrived, dotted throughout Tomas's Pightle. It was Tomas who influenced the kind of garden they wanted: "Bringing up a son we wanted him to have space to run around and enjoy pond dipping and looking at life somewhere near the house."

There's also a vegetable and fruit garden with a long Dutch greenhouse set back behind their house. Rustic home-made benches are placed around the garden and by the nine metre wide pond for, as Alasdair says,"It's all joined up by places where we can sit and enjoy it." In order to gain planning permission for the pond Alasdair and Caroline provided evidence of a previous ditch system and pond that had been filled in. Fortunately, the pond had won a Broadland Green Award in 2010.

Now, the pond margins are planted with bog and marsh species designed to provide a constant source of nectar and pollen throughout the summer, beginning with marsh marigold and ending with water mint. There's purple and yellow loosestrife and the nodding, graceful great burnet, as well as many grasses.



Even though it's not a formal garden there are still set jobs to do throughout the year and it's very important for Alasdair to feel a part of the annual cycle. It's still a work in progress so, when traditional rough hedges failed to attract nesting birds, Alasdair coppiced instead, tackling a different section every year.

The birdsong on this crisp February morning is loud and varied - a male dunnock stands sentry on a hedge that's been allowed to spring up after a savage cut some years ago. A robin competes for our attention. There are the pigeons, blue tits and great tits that inhabit most gardens but, in the summer, visitors like whitethroats, blackcaps, chiffchaffs and a colony of gregarious house sparrows have begun visiting. Alasdair is delighted: "They never used to come here but as soon as the hedges grew up they moved into the garden and it's one of the main feeding sources for them".

Butterflies are Alasdair's indicator species for measuring the success of his grassland. He takes part in the UK British Butterfly Monitoring Scheme. Last year the Common Blue and Small Copper were lost here, reflecting a national decline. But others like the Ringlet, Meadow Brown and Essex Skipper have done very well. The Six-spot Burnet moth breeds here – emerging from chrysalises in the long grass of mid-summer.

Alasdair has had to be adaptable in managing the environment."It took



two or three years ... but having habitat right is one of the key things for their success". Caterpillars hatch and feed in the grass in the summer and hibernate in the winter and come back out in mild weather in the spring. But, "If you cut (the grass) very tight you effectively take off those caterpillars and compost them. So being able to leave untidiness in your grassland is important over the wintertime because all the caterpillars are in there."

I'm intrigued by bamboo canes topped with a tiny black flag of duct tape: "It came out of my initial cutting hard - doing the wrong thing for the butterflies. I was using a brushcutter to cut grass and I was unaware we had a healthy population of meadow ants and I was cutting straight through their nests, so now I mark them up with little canes". Alasdair values ants as natural predators that control pests.

Alasdair has scraped back and removed the top soil here several times to create the right habitat – a "poorer" soil is, in fact, just the thing for this grassland. Indeed, I can see the dried heads of last year's teasels in the tall grass. There's also knapweed, wild marjoram; soon, thousand of cowslips will flower here.

There's a feeling of great harmony here in Tomas's Pightle. Although Alasdair is an RSPB warden he is convinced that everyone can create wildlife friendly spaces, conserving species and the environment in which they thrive.



Alasdair, Caroline and Tomas welcome visitors. Email: marshman.fraser@gmail.com

Recommended reading :

Chris Baines' " How to Make a Wildlife Garden" now republished as the RHS Companion to Wildlife Gardening

Links:

UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme http://www.ukbms.org/. Visit Cath's food website: http://vegankitchengarden.com/

Alasdair Fraser's top five tips for creating a wildlife rich garden:

Create a woodland edge or grassland habitat – it mimics garden shrubbery and lawn but adds value for wildlife.

Choose an indicator of success – not just birds but butterflies and bees. Do an annual count and monitor the variety of species.

Design, manage and tend – but accept some unruliness e.g. enjoy dead stems.

Buy the best seeds and plants you can afford and position boldly in groups of 3 or 5.

Have a wet area at least 0.5m deep, lined with the thickest liner you can afford. Feed it from your roof down-pipe or top up with rain water from a water butt.



Saturday 28th April Annual General Meeting,
The Abbey Conference Centre, Unilever, Bracondale, Norwich

Thursday 17th May Visit - Gunton Park *(pre-booking only)*

Friday 25th & Saturday 26th May Visit - Melton Constable Hall *(pre-booking only)*

Friday 1st & Saturday 2nd June
The Prophet in his Own Country : Repton in Norfolk 2-day Conference

Thursday 14th June Garden Visit - Litcham Hall, Litcham

Friday 6th July NGT 30th anniversary celebration drinks party, Sheringham Hall

Saturday 18th August Garden Visit - Corpusty Mill Garden

Saturday 6th October Reverend Thomas Birch Freeman, Victorian Botanist & Plantsman *Illustrated talk by Advolly Richmond*

Saturday 17th November The Secret Life of the Georgian Garden
Illustrated talk by Kate Felus

Entry for garden visits is £4 for Members and £5 for Guests.

Charges for other events will be advised individually.

ADVANCE NOTICE 2019

March Annual Tate Talk

Saturday 27th April Annual General Meeting

Annual General Meeting
The Abbey Conference Centre, Unilever, Bracondale, Norwich NR1 2DD

Following the AGM, Norwich historian, Rod Spokes will talk on the history of Carrow Priory, and the Colman family who lived on the site from 1850s to 1890s. After tea Rod will take us on a walk around the ruins of the priory, the garden which contains some fine trees including a weeping birch believed to be the second largest of its type in the UK; a mulberry believed to be the oldest in Britain; and the gardens of adjoining Carrow House. **2pm** Teas.



Thursday 17th May 2018
Gunton Park & Gunton Park Sawmill, White Post Road, Near Hunworth NR11 7HN

A return visit to the historic working Sawmill followed by a tour of the designed landscape (Bridgeman, Repton and WS Gilpin) of Gunton Park with Kit Martin. View the historic plans and learn something of the history of the Park and its restoration. Visit the restored William Teulon garden, courtesy of Colin and Helen David. The tour finishes with tea and cakes on the colonnade of the Robert Adam church of St Andrew, which stands in a wooded glade beside the classical splendour of 18th century Gunton Hall.

Meet at the Sawmill for a 2pm start. Minibuses will be used in the park.

Tickets £12:50 (Pre-booking only)

Friday 25th May and Saturday 26th May 2018
Melton Constable Hall, Fakenham, Norwich NR24 2NQ

Meet at Melton Constable Hall at 11am for a rare opportunity to join a guided walk around the former pleasure gardens, kitchen gardens and take in views across Lancelot 'Capability' Brown's parkland – home to the Astley family for 700 years, with our guide, Sally Bate. Numbers are limited to 50 on each day.

By kind invitation of Mr Roger Gawn

Tickets £12:50 includes refreshment (Pre-booking only)



Friday 1st and Saturday 2nd June 2018

'The Prophet in His Own Country' Repton in Norfolk

To mark the bi-centenary of the death of Humphry Repton, the Norfolk Gardens Trust in association with the Gardens Trust is offering a two-day conference focused on Sheringham Hall and Park, Aylsham Parish Church, Honing Hall and Barningham Hall.

(Fully booked)

Thursday 14th June 2018

Litcham Hall Litcham PE32 2QQ

Situated on the edge of a conservation village in the centre of Norfolk, this fine listed 18th Century house is set in three acres of garden, designed and planted by the owners over 50 years. Yew hedges provide a dramatic backdrop for mixed borders and the framework for a sunken area with a little lily pond and fountain. Behind the house the swimming pool is sheltered in part of a walled garden with a brick-arched veranda loggia down one side. Mown paths through the wild garden open out to a pergola covered in climbing roses. The walled Italian garden was inspired by the wish to put to best use some beautiful inherited stone urns which are now artfully positioned in a parterre of lavender-filled, box-edged beds; the urns make an elegant finishing touch to a formal composition entirely suited to the period of the house.





Open 2-5pm. Teas

Entry £4 for Members; £5 for Guests

By kind invitation of John and Hermione Birkbeck

Norfolk Gardens Trust

Friday 6th July

NGT 30th anniversary celebration drinks party.
Please see next page for details.

Saturday 18th August

Corpusty Mill Garden, Corpusty, Norwich NR11 6QB





Situated in north Norfolk on the River Bure, the garden, a romantic and formal mix of plants and buildings, was designed, built and planted by John and Roger Last between 1963-1990 and further enlarged and developed from 1990 by Roger Last. One of its chief elements is the series of buildings and follies - a grotto, gothic arch, gothic tower, classical pavilion, contemporary stainless spire which form focal points and design features. There is an abundant use of water, in ponds, streams, small lake and fountains and the varied planting throughout is lush and informed. The five acre garden is in three distinct parts. The main and more complex layout on an intimate scale near the house and there are two landscapes meadows. Each area has its own character and atmosphere.

The garden has appeared in numerous books, magazines and newspaper articles.

The garden at Corpusty is never open to the public, and usually can only be seen as part of a select group visit.

Last open for the Trust ten years ago, this is a perfect opportunity to see one of Norfolk's most remarkable gardens. Don't miss it!

Open 1-5pm. Teas

Entry £4 for Members; £5 for Guests

By kind invitation of Roger Last

An invitation to celebrate our 30th birthday party

Friday 6 July 2018
Norfolk Gardens Trust's 30th Anniversary Party
Sheringham Hall Upper Sheringham Norfolk NR26 8TB

This year is doubly auspicious, marking both the Norfolk Gardens Trust's 30th anniversary and the 200th anniversary of Humphry Repton's death in March 1818.

Our own Gardens Trust is one of the first and the largest outside London. The very first Gardens Trust was set up by Gilly Drummond in Hampshire in 1984 prompting several enthusiasts to try to form a Norfolk equivalent. In October 1987 a steering group chaired by David Mawson (grandson of the famous Edwardian gardener and landscape architect Thomas Mawson (1861-1933)) organised a meeting at UEA at which Gilly Drummond was a speaker. She remembered the date of her visit only too well for, after returning home, her garden designed by Capability Brown was to be devastated that night in the Great Gale. On the 3rd of November 1988, at a meeting at UEA, it was formally agreed to launch the Norfolk Gardens Trust with Viscount Edward Coke of Holkham Hall as President.

Now, thirty years on, our own 'Pearl' anniversary falls in the bicentenary year of Repton's death so it is most fitting that The Norfolk Gardens Trust's 30th Anniversary Party is being held at Sheringham Park, which was designed by Repton and which owners Paul Doyle and Gergely Battha-Pajor have generously made available to us.

Originally, it was proposed that Sheringham Park be given to the family of Horatio Nelson in commemoration of his achievements, in which case the estate would have been renamed 'Trafalgar'. The government, however, was unconvinced of its suitability and it was ultimately sold to the Norfolk Upcher family; it was Abbot Upcher who commissioned Repton to prepare a design for Sheringham Park. In 2008, Repton's gardens were restored by Arabella Lennox-Boyd and further developed by Paul Doyle with planting by Margaret Glendon-Doyle. The walks that Repton set out in the Red Book have been reopened – all with vistas over the garden and park.

This unique event at Sheringham Hall, with evening drinks, canapés and music, is likely to be very popular; tickets are limited and we urge Members to apply early.

Tickets £20 (pre-booking only)











Saturday 6th October 2018
The Reverend Thomas Birch Freeman, Victorian Botanist and Plantsman

Blake Studio, Norwich School, The Close, Norwich NR1 4DD



An illustrated talk by Advolly Richmond on Thomas Birch Freeman (1809 - 1890) a British Missionary of Anglo-African descent, who trained as a botanist and became head gardener at an estate in Ipswich, Suffolk. In 1838 he travelled to the Gold Coast as a Wesleyan Methodist missionary founding churches and schools in Nigeria and the Gold Coast. However, his contribution to botany and horticulture has been overshadowed by his religious legacy. A patient and skilled diplomat, he was the first Christian missionary to be admitted into the Ashanti Kingdom in 1839 and this gave him unrestricted access to large areas of specimen rich regions where he studied and collected plants.

Birch Freeman became part of the international network of correspondents and plant collectors relied upon by the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew. When Birch Freeman sent the seeds of Coffea liberica to Kew Gardens, the resulting plants attracted a great deal of attention and proved to be a turning point in the production of coffee in many parts of the British Empire.

Talk starts at 2pm

Entry: £5 Members; £6 Guests

Saturday 17th November 2018
The Secret Life of the Georgian Garden

John Innes Centre Norwich NR4 7UH

An illustrated talk by Kate Felus on her ground-breaking social history book of the same name.



Georgian landscape gardens are among the most visited and enjoyed of the UK's historical treasures. The Georgian garden has also been hailed as the greatest British contribution to European art, seen as a beautiful composition created from grass, trees and water – a landscape for contemplation. But scratch below the surface and history reveals these gardens were a lot less serene and, in places, a great deal more scandalous. Kate will reveal previously untold secrets from early morning rides through to evening amorous liaisons explaining how by the eighteenth century there was a desire to escape the busy country house where privacy was at a premium. She will also discuss how these gardens evolved aesthetically, with modestly-sized, far-flung temples and other eye-catchers, to cater for escape and solitude as well as food, drink, music and fireworks.

Talk starts at 2pm

'Christmas' style tea

Entry: £5 Members; £6 Guests

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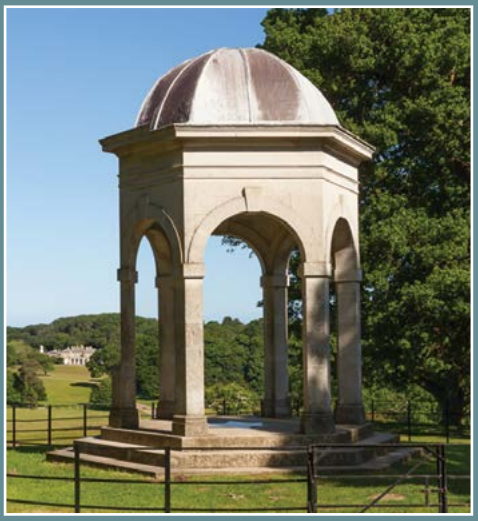
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Call For Articles

We welcome suggestions for articles to be included in future issues of the NGT News. These could be pieces you are prepared to write or just thoughts about articles you would like to see in the News. We are interested in ideas about gardens in Norfolk (or further afield), historical research, gardening, plants, people in gardening etc. In the first instance send us an email at:
sueroe8@icloud.com
Clive Lloyd and Sue Roe, Editors



Readers' Gardens
If you would like your garden to be featured in the NGT News please contact us. We welcome hearing about all gardens big or small, town or country and whether you are open to the public or not.
Contact: sueroe8@icloud.com



Norfolk Gardens Trust

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