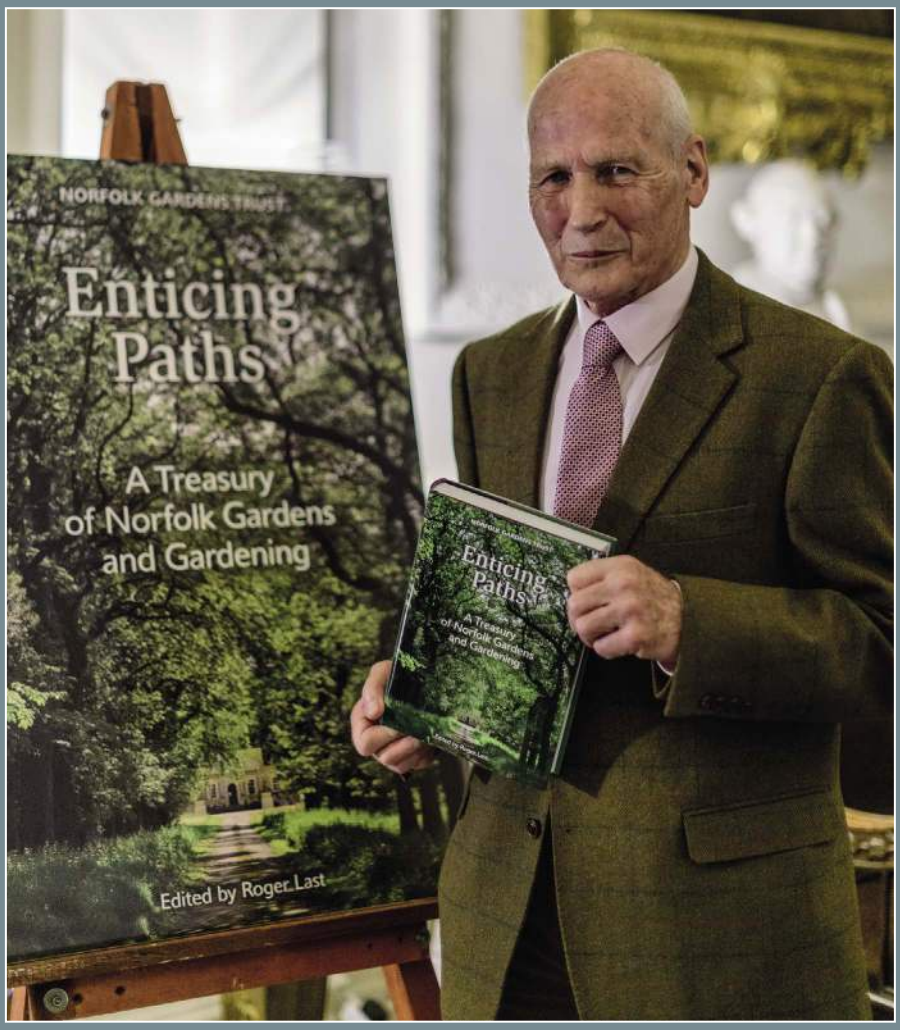
Autumn 2021
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NGT Magazine



Norfolk Gardens Trust

norfolkgt.org.uk



900 years of Norwich botanists - page 33

Cover: Roger Last launches the NGT's new book
Back Cover: Kett's Villa. Ladbrooke's initials in Cosseyware bricks

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Magazine Designer, Karen Roseberry

Report from the Chair - Autumn 2021

We were truly sorry to hear of the passing of our President, Lord Walpole, in May. His Lordship had been our President for many years and was most supportive. He chaired our Annual General Meetings on a number of occasions and involved himself in many of our activities. He will be sorely missed.

I am delighted to report that the Marquess of Cholmondeley has kindly agreed to become our President in succession to Lord Walpole. Anyone who has visited Houghton Hall or indeed Cholmondeley Castle in Cheshire will know that Lord Cholmondeley has a deep interest in parks and gardens. Indeed he wrote an article for the Spring 2017 edition of this Magazine entitled 'Art in the Landscape'. We hope to welcome him to some of our events.



It would be remiss of me not to mention the death of Sir Timothy Colman KG in September. Sir Timothy had developed a magnificent arboretum at Framingham Pigot which our members were invited to see in 2016. Wearing another hat, I was instrumental in initiating the gift of some American species trees to Sir Timothy for his arboretum on his retirement as Lord Lieutenant of Norfolk. These trees were paid for by surviving American veterans who were stationed in Norfolk during the Second World War in appreciation of his support of their American Memorial Library in Norwich over many years



Houghton Hall from Full Moon Circle by Richard Long - from Lord Cholmondeley's article in Autumn 2017



American species trees that were presented to Sir Timothy Colman. Photo: Thegardengateisopenblog
Left: Sir Timothy Colman wearing his robes as a Knight Companion of the Order of the Garter. Photo: Philip Allfrey

The publication of the Trust's fourth and latest book called Enticing Paths is heralded on the cover in this edition of the Magazine. We are one of the few Trusts to publish books and certainly of this quality and size. It is no mean feat for a relatively small organisation to fund and organise these publications. And, although I say it, we reach a professionalism that is to be admired. I wish to pay tribute to Roger Last, a former Chairman of this Trust, for all his hard work in editing this. The book will make a marvellous Christmas present for anyone with an interest in Norfolk parks and gardens.

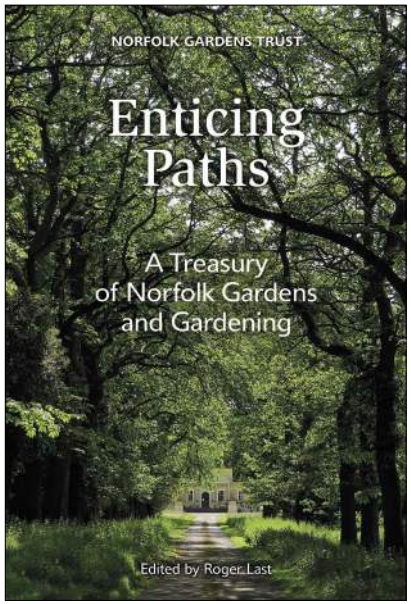
In September, The Norwich Botanists' Garden at St Martin-at-Palace Plain in Norwich was officially opened by one of our members, the Sheriff of Norwich, Caroline Jarrold. Our Trust had made a grant towards the cost. Led by another member, George Ishmael, this project was the seventh of the 'Heavenly Gardens' created in medieval churches in Norwich and is a joy to behold.

Finally, I wish to record our appreciation to our past Treasurer Peter Woodrow. Peter was nominated for an award entitled The Gilly Drummond Volunteer of the Year Award run by the Garden Trust in London and was congratulated by the Trust for his remarkable industry



Matthew Martin

Enticing Paths
A Treasury of Norfolk Gardens and Gardening



'I have the book in front of me now. It is absolutely beautiful and so interesting. It's like being led through the gardens by astonishingly well-informed friends.'
Rowan Mantell, EDP feature writer and Norfolk Magazine Assistant Editor

We are delighted that our latest NGT publication has been launched.

In hardback, with 480 pages and over 500 illustrations, Enticing Paths, edited by Roger Last, presents a huge and fascinating range of Norfolk gardens and garden related topics and is a worthy successor to our three other NGT publications. Now available in bookshops at the recommended price of £30, it can be purchased until Christmas exclusively by NGT members for

the special price of £26, including free delivery by post.

Non Members £30

To obtain a copy: please either send a cheque for £26, payable to Norfolk Gardens Trust, along with your address, to R Lloyd, 57 St Leonards Road Norwich NR1 4JW.

OR email Roger Lloyd at rogerlloydngt@gmail.com giving him your address and confirming that you have paid £26 by BACS, NGT bank details:

sort code: 206253
Account number: 70659096
Reference: EP

Your book will be posted to you immediately or, if you are buying it as a gift, we can post it to another address. Enticing Paths is highly recommended to anyone interested in Norfolk Gardens and Norfolk, and will make a perfect Christmas present.

The Norfolk Gardens Trust's new book, Enticing Paths, edited by Roger Last, was launched on the 30th of September in the Marble Hall at Raynham Hall, seat of the Marquesses Townsend.
Frederic Landes © photographed the event.













East Dereham town gardens

by Susan Grice *(member of the NGT Research Group)*

The parks, gardens and nurseries of East Dereham offer a fascinating glimpse into the Norfolk market town as it was 200 years ago. Research on Norfolk town gardens, by Anthea Taigel in the mid-1990s, focussed on 24 sites and form the basis of this article.

By the mid-18th century Dereham was both a 'genteel' place of residence and a thriving commercial centre. Around this time, St Withburga's Well was converted into a cold bath and the George Inn sported a bowling green – innovations suggesting that the town's residents *'were not without fashionable recreation'*, as Taigel put it.

The Enclosure Acts of the early 19th century had allowed the well-heeled middle and upper classes to take advantage of the enclosure of open fields and common land. Small landscape parks were established around the town's perimeter. Several were extensions of smaller sites: Moorgate to the south, Quebec House to the north, Vicarage Park to the west and Elizabeth Watts Park closer to the town centre. By 1815 there were three significant nurseries: Dereham Nurseries, Littlefields Nursery, and Norfolk Nurseries. Accounts also point to *'numerous gardens and orchards'* in and around the town.

East Dereham expanded rapidly in the 19th century. Successful manufacturers and traders used their new-found wealth to build houses with large gardens (Highfield, Milfield, Whitehall), though the less wealthy had to make do with the ornamental grounds of the public cemetery, there being few public walks or parks.

Many of Dereham's Victorian parks and gardens are now lost or degraded. All



1.Extent of Vicarage Park on 1884 OS map.

the private landscape parks and nurseries are at least partially covered by post-WWII housing or commercial development. Even Vicarage Park, which retains the largest planted remnant, is a shadow of its former self and important views have been lost. Norfolk Nurseries' grounds now lie under the tarmac of a supermarket car park.

Vicarage Park (Figs 1-3) was the home of the celebrated diarist, Rev. Benjamin Armstrong, who chronicled his life and times as a country parson for 40 years. When he arrived at Vicarage Park in 1850 it was a significant property with pleasure gardens, parkland, farmstead and plantations. The first record of gardening on the site is in 1706 when a moated garden of one acre is mentioned. An orchard was added in 1755. The incumbent vicar, Charles Hyde Wollaston demolished the moated vicarage in 1807 and built a new residence north east of the original vicarage. He took full advantage of enclosure, as evidenced by the Tithe Award assessments of 1838 which record over 100 acres, a substantial increase from the living's 15 acres in 1806.

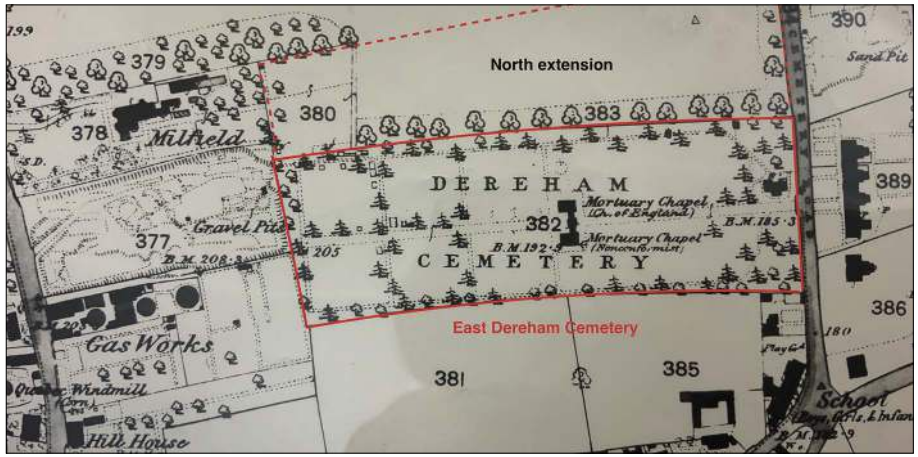
Shortly after his arrival, Rev. Armstrong noted in his diary: *'The garden and grounds are exceedingly pretty and extensive, one chief feature being a shrubbery walk to the Church,*



2. Dereham vicarage in the C19. Home to Rev Armstrong for 38 yrs.



3. The young Rev. Benjamin Armstrong, shortly after arriving in East Dereham



4. Dereham Cemetery 25 inch:1 mile OS map 1886

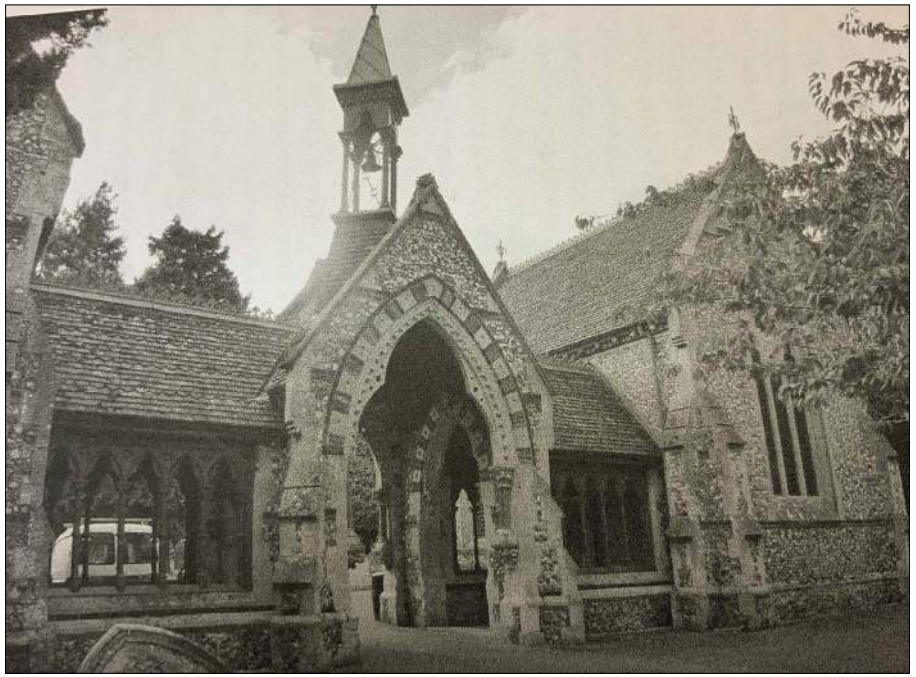
well-timbered and admitting occasional peeps of the beautiful church through the foliage. A pretty drive goes up to the door, and a park-like meadow is spread before the drawing room windows. The kitchen garden is extensive and in good order ...'

In 1860, the reverend sold his flock of sheep because of their frequent incursions into the garden and his *'dread of their destroying the bedding plants'*. Gardening was *'an occupation of which I am very fond'*. But his gardening interests extended beyond Vicarage Park. He declared the *'bath house'* at St. Withburga's Well a *'vile modern structure'*, ordered its demolition and planned a garden with roses and creepers surrounded by railings. With the help of his gardener, he planted the area in the spring of 1858 and it survives in a form close to that restored by Armstrong.

Mid 19th century Dereham was something of a horticultural hot bed. In May 1862, the Dereham Horticultural Society was founded with Armstrong as vice-president. He records that a *'fine exhibition'* was held in the Corn Hall in June 1863 and was *'crowded all day'*. Lord Sondes sent flowers, peaches and melons, with Armstrong noting that *'Dereham is celebrated for the number of glasshouses, fine gardens and interest taken in gardens'*.

In 1983 the Church of England sold the vicarage to private owners; the parkland to the south was partially developed for housing, with a coniferous belt screening the two. A school, children's playground and some low-density housing were later built north of the vicarage grounds. The southern part of the park remains undeveloped with mature freestanding oak and ash trees, and is accessible to the public.

Dereham Cemetery (Figs 4,5) has fared better, surviving with remnants of the original landscaping as well as two chapels, covered gateway and lodge. In 1868, a committee was set up to *'enquire into the best way of providing a burial ground*



5. East Dereham Cemetery chapels with linking arch.

adequate to the requirements of the parish' and a Burial Board was appointed to secure the site on what were Crown lands; £1500 was set aside for building the chapels, lodge, fencing, layout and planting of the grounds. A road through the site divided the cemetery into northern and southern rectangles – Church of England to the north and non-conformists to the south – with linked, symmetrical ornamental chapels. The north area was planted first, with William Moore of Norfolk Nurseries contracted to supply and plant beech hedging on the west, north and south and holly at the east boundary.

Records show that between 1870 and 1885, trees and shrubs *'for the further decoration of the cemetery'* were purchased from another local nurseryman, Mr. Barkaway. By 1907, planting on individual graves was getting out of hand and the Board decided to exert greater control, pruning and removing plants where needed. Two years later negotiations commenced to acquire four acres of the Quebec estate, a response to pressure on burial space.

Today, little of the 19th century planting remains but the patterns of the original can be seen with mature *Taxus baccata*, *Thuja plicata*, *Ilex*, *Pseudotsuga douglasii* and *Fagus sylvatica* along the paths and boundaries, as well as mature specimens which were no doubt planted



6. 1906 OS map. Elizabeth Watts park outlined

on individual graves with the original intention to be kept pruned low.

Anthea Taigel's survey of town gardens includes an intriguing site shown clearly on the 1889 OS map which has since fallen victim to commercial development and postwar housing. The 1757 map of Dereham shows a prestigious house belonging to Mr William Donne fronting the Market Place, which by 1815 had passed to Elizabeth Langley Watts. The layout on the 1889 map shows the house backed by a long narrow garden opening to 12 acres of roughly square land which was *'unmistakenly a designed landscape'* with open lawn, free-standing coniferous and deciduous trees and a perimeter belt with circuit walk. A seat on the west side overlooked a small pond and an entrance at the north west corner was flanked by a lodge – perhaps suggesting public access. The design is that of a much earlier period.

Although most of the 24 town gardens in Anthea Taigel's East Dereham survey have disappeared, or are shadows of their former selves, there are some exceptions. One such is the wonderful plantsman's garden at Dale Farm on the south-west edge of the town. The present owners generously opened their gates to give the NGT a guided tour recently: a profile of their garden will be featured in our next issue.

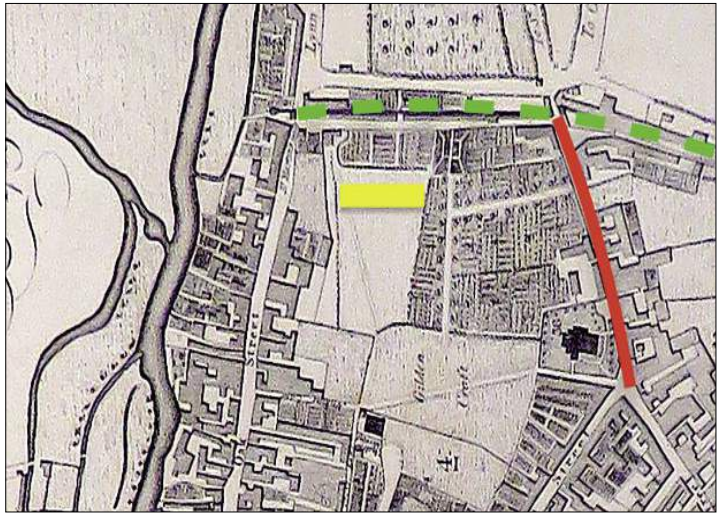
Garden History

Ebenezer Terrace Garden Competition

Marilyn Taylor - *Member of the NGT Research Group*

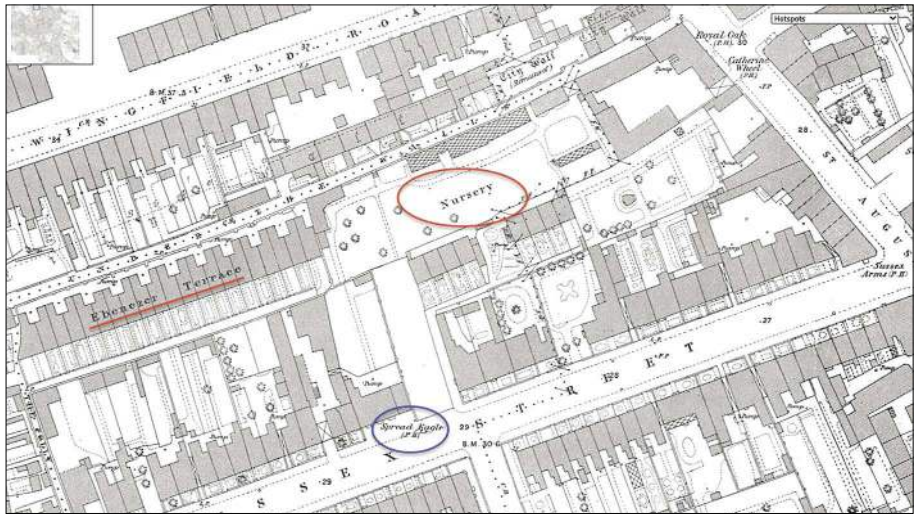
Norwich was once famous for being a City of Gardens. Waves of immigrants, arriving from the Low Countries and Northern France from the sixteenth century and, known as 'Strangers', brought weaving skills and a love of horticulture. All classes gardened: from the Duke of Norfolk's great Pleasure Gardens off King Street, designed by John Evelyn, to the cramped spaces where hand-loom weavers grew flowers for show. This article focuses on a famous garden competition that shows how important gardening was to Norwich's working class.

"Nothing beautifies a locality like a trim and well kept garden and if Ebenezer Terrace should change its name, it might be dubbed Paradise Row," wrote a reporter for the Eastern Evening News in 1903, about an annual gardening competition that had been taking place since 1886. The row of 21 terraced houses built in the late 1860s was located in the crowded, industrial north of the City, tucked between remnants of the city wall and the elegant houses of Sussex Street. These streets had been built on what is thought to be the site of the Norwich architect Matthew Brettingham's (1699-1769) great garden with its avenues and ornate grounds as seen on Hochstetter's map of 1789. At a time when many were crowded into insanitary 'yards', Ebenezer Terrace boasted 'two up, two down', an outdoor privy and, most important, a south-facing 20 feet long front garden. Early tenants worked as brush makers, crepe finishers, labourers, carpenters etc. but by the late 1800s the majority worked in the shoe industry.



1. Hochstetter's map 1789. City Wall (green), St Augustine's Street (red); site of Ebenezer Terrace (yellow)..

The first record of the garden competition in 1886 described a society with George Forrester, Manager of the Estate of the Earl of Kimberley, as President. The competition took place each year until 1911. Eight residents entered the first year but numbers increased over



2. OS map (1885) showing the nursery and Spread Eagle pub.

time. Mr Wainwright, Head Gardener to the Earl of Kimberley was the first judge and was later joined by Mr Bradbrooke, Head Gardener to Sir Maurice Boileau of Ketteringham Hall.

In the early 19th century, gardening had been promoted as a healthy activity for the working classes – and one that kept them out of public houses. However, by this date there was a genuine desire by supporters such as J.J. Colman, and Henry Trevor of the Plantation Garden, to alleviate the harshness of life for the poor. Gardens came to be seen as therapeutic and a respite from the daily grind of life in a noisome urban environment.

The gardeners used geraniums, calciolarias, lobelias, stocks, coleus, feverfew, nasturtiums, astors and thrift in what was described as, *"a bewildering, glorious mass of bloom relieved with a miniature terrace of carpet bedding"*. Nearby was a long established nursery garden where Clarke's shoe factory was later built.

Reporters were still eulogising the gardens in 1906. *"All the work of the citizens or their wives would be a credit to professional gardeners. Visitors who pass through an uninviting loke are astonished at the sight of floral beauty that meets their eyes"*. The loke lay next to the Spread Eagle Public House on Sussex Street where the Norwich Canary Breeders Club met: Mr Drake the landlord sometimes donated canaries to the floral competition (fig 4). Other prizes included items such as a cruet set, silver teaspoons, box of cigars, ornaments, children's shoes, a timepiece and highly-prized cucumbers. Local businessmen also donated cash, and the first prize of one guinea would have been a great incentive to enter. In 1903 the average wage for a man working in a shoe factory in Norwich was £1.5s a week.



3. Ebenezer Terrace 1959 with conservatory outside No.19 and Clarke's shoe factory behind. ©georgeplunkett.co.uk

In the evening, Japanese lanterns loaned by J.J. King would be suspended between the gardens and fireworks lit. A reporter described the scene as *"a picture of peaceful suburban life. Even dwellers in this 'City of Gardens' used to evidence of horticultural taste on every hand can hardly repress exclamations of surprise on viewing the pretty scene"*.

But even in this urban oasis, life was fragile. On the eve of the 1893 competition, Sydney, the 3 year old son of William Johnson at No.9, was put to bed after having had severe diarrhoea all day but died during the night. At his inquest a bin at the back of the house was blamed for its offensive insanitary condition. On a happier note, by the time of their Golden Wedding Anniversary in 1927 Mr Gurney a coal merchant from No.3 and his wife, had been living in the Terrace for 45 years.



4. William Drake, publican and canary breeder. Courtesy Norfolk County Council at Picture Norfolk.

The Benn family lived at No.20. Hilda and Willie can be seen in the photograph taken in 1911 when their garden came 10th in the competition (fig 5). Their two eldest brothers Walter and



5. Willie and Hilda Benn in 1911. Courtesy John Sayer.

Bertie would be tragically killed during WW1. Bertie had been a Parks Gardener and had worked on the Lutyens-style rose garden at Earlham Hall before the War.

No mention of the competition can be found after 1911; perhaps accounted for by the high turnover of tenants that year although other Bank Holiday amusements, such as football and excursions to the sea-side, were becoming increasingly popular.

Ebenezer Terrace was demolished in the 1960s along with much of historic Norwich Over the Water. Flats now occupy the site – Ebenezer Place. Front gardens that had enthused the community dispelled the idea that a plot need be extensive to bring enjoyment.

John Sayer and Stuart McLaren are thanked for help with photographs.



6. Bertie Benn, gardener, killed in WWI. Courtesy John Sayer.

Ketts Castle Villa: Still Lives

By its owner Karin Reenie Elliot

When I first arrived at the villa my initial experience of the garden was an assemblage of framed views, connected by spatial sequences designed to transport you from one picturesque moment to another. Each threshold I passed had been curated by artist John Berney Ladbrooke, son of co-founder of the Norwich Society of Artists, Robert Ladbrooke. It seemed that little had changed since he built the house in 1856 and, as you lifted the ivy up from old walls and noticed the hidden fragments, a cast of characters and histories were revealed. (Fig 1).



Fig 1. Gothick gateway

Entering the gardens of Ketts Castle Villa, a high brick wall enclosed you from the street. Next, through a medieval-Revival flint and stone gateway into the 'green tunnel' – with its overhead foliage – that propelled you from street to garden. Medieval fragments, plaques, gates, and kiln liners from the nearby gasworks jostled for space in the narrow laneway. And chickens rustled and squawked in the woven willow fence that had been built up over the years.

The lawn opened out onto a spectacular view over the city of Norwich. (Fig 2) The panorama spanned the ruins of St. Michael's Chapel on Ketts Heights to the right, the cathedral spire, the cube-shaped Castle on its hill, the slope of Prince of Wales Road, and the river snaking past the Cathedral Close down to the railway station to the left.

Below was Gas Hill behind, on a bank, was the red brick house. A cannonball staircase led up to a neo-Gothic doorway with alternating stone patterned architraves and stone scrolls. Higher still was the turret room with small gargoyle faces decorating the eaves of the attic. (Fig 3).



Fig 2. Winter panorama, cathedral in the distance

It was a second generation painter from the Norwich School who designed the gardens and assembled the architectural sequences of Ketts Castle Villa – his initials, JBL, sculpted into the house. John Berney Ladbrooke was apprenticed to John Crome and became known for his rendition of trees. (Fig 4).

When I applied to get the house and gardens listed, Gaynor Roberts of Historic England recounted the Norwich School exhibition in Tate Britain, which included works by John Berney Ladbrooke. It was thought that the Norwich School – the first provincial society of artists – would have been better known but for the fact that paintings avidly collected by the Colmans were rarely exhibited in London where these working class artists had few connections amongst the upper echelons of English society.

St Michael's Chapel saw the last scenes of the rebellion of 1549, in which Kett's army fled their camp. It became a popular spot amongst painters of the Norwich Society of Artists and



Fig 3. Ketts Castle Villa

appears in many paintings, combining architecture and landscape. Indeed, fragments of medieval buildings were scattered around the gardens of Ketts Castle Villa, re-purposed for a garden folly here, or built into a garden wall there. Other signs of previous lives can be seen in the kiln liners from the old gas works, used to build garden walls. Gas from the gasworks would have been used to fill the hot air balloons that

Garden History



Fig 4. Rustic scene by John Berney Ladbrooke, courtesy of John Allen of Mandell's Gallery.

took off from Ketts Heights. One of the earliest flights took off from there, and St. Michael became the patron saint of pilots as a result of this heritage.

Maps and old photographs (Fig 5) reveal further gardens and architectural structures that have since disappeared, including a windmill, a glass house, a vineyard, and an orchard. The former owner of Ketts Castle Villa, Mrs Brigid Everitt who lived here for 50 years, explains that the gardens used to be four times the size. It is thought that much of the garden was sold by the 'Gambling Major' in the 1920s or 1930s to pay off his gambling debts.

Brigid gave us a book of paintings, including many by John Berney Ladbrooke. In this book, we found further painters in his family: his more illustrious father Robert, brother Henry, and his niece Maria Margitson who painted still lifes. In her honour, we have started to plant the same vegetables and fruit from her paintings: figs, pears, apples, plums (and an over-ripe courgette makes an excellent marrow). Grapes are the only remaining challenge. Brigid had cultivated most of these fruits before we had even arrived. She also cultivated living hedges, espaliered apple trees, wildflower and picturesque miniature landscapes, banks of daffodils – and a modernist sculpture collection! She walked us around these sculptures, listing their names as she went: melting butter, mother earth, a metal bird, and some abstract metal pieces assembled in Anthony Caro's workshop.

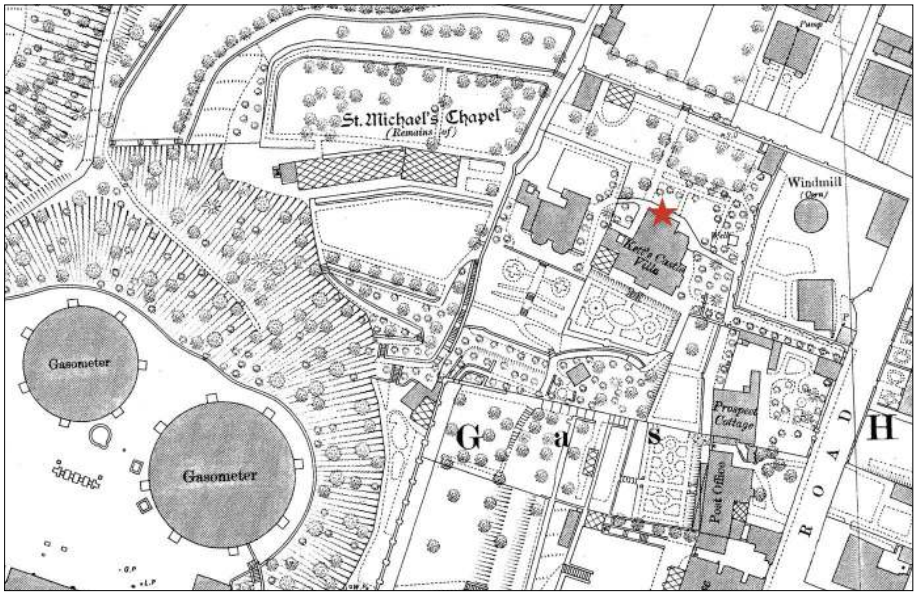


Fig 5. Ordnance Survey map of Kett's Heights, 1880.



Fig 6. Sculpture

Every couple of years she bought a sculpture from the Art School end-of-year show and placed it in her garden. (Fig 6) In her first years at the house, she hosted a group of lecturers who were about to teach on the first academic programmes for the University of East Anglia. Brigid's husband Michael had worked on the new buildings, following Denys Lasdun's extraordinary designs for housing in the shape of a ziggurat, and a library around a piazza.

Each of the characters we've encountered in the history of this garden has played a part in curating this living landscape across the centuries. Their stories can be found in the flowers and fruits, the stones and paths, and the walls and monuments of Ketts Castle Villa.

Lexham Hall

by Neil Foster



South-west view of Hall and Formal Gardens – mid C19

Originally, on a moated site south-west of the present day hall, was a manor house called Rouse's. John Wright of Weeting, who acquired the manor in 1568, rebuilt the hall in the 1630s to form the core of the present-day house. The north front is the earliest of the facades. In 1673 the manor was conveyed to Sir Philip Wodehouse, 3rd Baronet, MP, of Kimberley, who was a *"man of great learning and a skilled musician"*. Sir Philip's grandfather and namesake, the 1st Baronet had acquired East Lexham Manor, (not to be confused with Rouse's) almost a century earlier.

Significant remodelling was carried out in the early years of the 18th century by Edmund Wodehouse and in the 1770s by John Wodehouse, son and heir of Sir Armine Wodehouse, 5th Baronet, who had completed the rebuilding of Kimberley Hall. *'The History and Antiquities of the County of Norfolk'* (1781) describes Lexham as a, *"handsome seat of the Wodehouses and has been much improved by the present lord"*.

Lexham Hall remained in the ownership of the Wodehouses until the beginning of the 19th century. In 1806 the Keppels purchased Lexham followed by the Jessops and Keirs. Two World Wars and adverse economic conditions caused a slow but steady deterioration until the renaissance brought about by Mr William Foster and his wife Jean following their acquisition of the estate in 1946.



Hall from the south, across the lake



Dome borders in Walled Garden, 2021

Garden History

To restore the Hall, the Fosters called in the distinguished Norwich architect James Fletcher-Watson, a disciple of Sir Edwin Lutyens who, between 1947 and 1949, demolished the west wing and removed the Victorian accretions to produce a stylish and handsome four-square house. Seventy-five years later, it is by no means easy to tell which is 18th century and which is 20th century work.

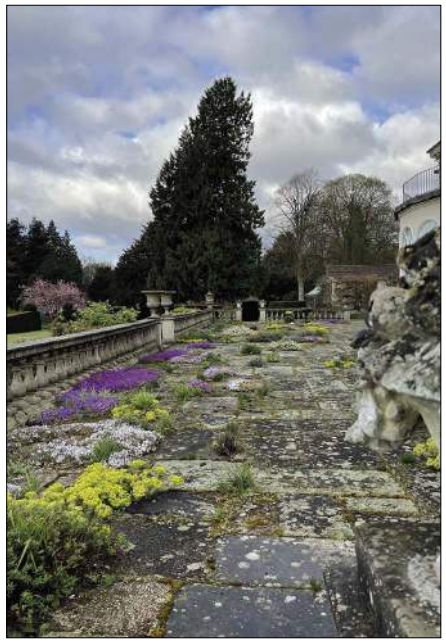
THE PARK

The 200 acre Park was enclosed in 1776 and the layout is believed to have been influenced by Capability Brown who was employed at this time by Sir John Wodehouse to improve the park at his other residence, Kimberley.

It was extended in the early 19th century to the northeast and at the same time the watercourses were dammed to form the Broad Water. The Litcham road bridge and the Park bridge over the Broad Water, on the line of the original east driveway, were also constructed during this period. The East and West Lodges were constructed in the 1850s in Repton's 'cottage orné' style. The West Lodge remains but the East Lodge was demolished in the 1950s. Some of the windows from the East Lodge can be seen in the tennis pavilion. The east and west drives were superseded by the present-day driveway, constructed by the army during the Second World War and the fine avenue of lime trees was planted by Mr. William Foster.

The Lake, which is on the course of the River Nar, was created between 1950 and 1960 when further bridges were built over the Nar.

There are many fine tree specimens to be found in the Park, some well in excess of



Sylvia Crowe terrace looking west, 2021

300 years old. However, the major storms of 1895, 1947, 1953, 1976 and 1987 accounted for the loss of a significant number of important trees. A planting programme of renewal has been progress since 1950.

THE GARDENS

The layout of the original garden is unknown but some of the early to mid-18th century walls in the Kitchen Garden, which include a rare example of a 'crinkle-crankle' wall on the north side, may have enclosed a formal garden. Some of the 19th century woodland and the American Garden immediately to the south of the river Nar still exist. These were almost certainly planted in the 1840s, a creation of Mrs Frances Keppell, wife of Rev. W.A.W. Keppell. Kew Gardens are known to have supplied 32



East-facing facing border in Walled Garden, 2021

hardy and half-hardy trees and shrubs be planted in the gardens in 1855. A large conservatory, to south-west of the Hall, was demolished prior to 1911.

After the deprivations of the inter-war years, the 2nd World War and army occupation from 1939-1946, only the Kitchen Garden remained. Mr and Mrs William Foster were able to redesign the formal gardens from scratch. For this purpose, they called in the landscape architect Dame Sylvia Crowe to advise on a new garden, one that would cope with the climate and a reduced labour force. Her main contributions were the yew hedges, and the terraces built out of the rubble from the demolished west wing. Jim Russell, of the formerly renowned Sunningdale Nursery, advised on the replanting of the Woodland Garden with rhododendrons, azaleas, magnolias and other acid-loving plants. Richard Beales (of Peter Beales) redesigned the rose borders, below the terrace, in 1997.

Neil and Anthea Foster inherited the custodianship in 1989 and their main contribution has been to redesign the walled garden. The Swimming Pool garden was created as well as new east-facing borders with 'swagged' miniature box hedging at the front. The double central border was doubled in width and a central wrought iron wisteria-clad dome and trellising were added. The north half remains a productive kitchen and cutting-flower garden with an orchard of apples on dwarf rootstocks, for ease of harvesting.

The 9 acre formal and walled gardens are designed for all-year-round interest but peak between July and October.



1950s Woodland Garden bridge designed by William Foster, 2021

The Threat to Rackheath Hall

by Nicola Kerr, resident.



Rackheath Hall c 1900. Courtesy of Sutton Archives, David Knights-Whittome collection.

Rackheath Park lies a few miles north east of Norwich. There are three Grade II buildings: Rackheath Hall, the bridge over the lake by the Hall, and the 'Golden Gates' at the north entrance to Rackheath Park on the Wroxham Road. The gates were shown at the Great Exhibition in the 'Crystal Palace' in Hyde Park in 1851. But now our historic parkland is under threat from planning development.

Rackheath Hall is late Georgian, substantially remodelled and extended in the 1850s. An earlier building reportedly burned down, with some of the materials being recycled, including a beam in the rafters inscribed 1777. Brickwork exposed during recent renovations suggests that the three-storey elevation is Georgian and the two-storey southern section probably a Victorian addition.

Rackheath Hall was owned by the Pettus then the Stracey families until the death of Sir Edward Stracey, whose daughter – the sculptress Rosalind Stracey – reportedly moved out when her father remarried within 10 weeks of her mother's death. There are suggestions that one of the Pettus family emigrated to America after being accused of murder and may have married a daughter of Pocahontas. Current residents are

less exotic, although one of my immediate neighbours did ask to be buried on the estate in a red telephone box and now occupies an unmarked grave just outside our gates.



Rackheath Hall today.

Rackheath airfield was built in 1943 – the most easterly RAF base during World War 2 – which was operated by the US Air Force. Dotted around the estate are a number of abandoned brick buildings which housed the Americans and there are a couple of substantial craters in the grounds, possibly caused by stray bombs. The airforce took over the former ballroom (not, sadly, for dances) and certainly made use of the lake and tennis court for recreation..



Rackheath Bridge (listed).

Alas, our rural seclusion is now under threat. Earlier this year the neighbouring farm, which owns a significant portion of the former parkland, applied for outline planning permission for a modern housing development in the grounds near the Golden Gates. Rackheath Park is a 'green infrastructure buffer' on the local plans and we had assumed we were safe, given that it's heritage parkland. But, regrettably, that's not the case. Fortunately, lockdown meant the community had more spare time and we had regular Zoom calls to discuss our response to the proposals. We engaged an excellent planning expert who guided us through the best points to make and, crucially, also alerted us to a consultation on the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP).

We were shocked to discover the actual extent of the proposed housing

Garden History

developments nearby: 3,400 houses immediately to the north at Beeston Park; 4,000 to the east near the former airfield; and a proposal for a further 1,200 immediately to the west, adjacent to the golf course at Sprowston Manor. The GNLP submitted to the Secretary of State in July 2021 stated, *'the Greater Norwich housing growth locations show an impact to the north east of the Norwich city boundary centred around Rackheath with an estimate of some 13,000+ dwellings'*. Compare this with Rackheath's population of 2000 in the 2011 census.



The view from the bridge.

The planning process has been a roller coaster. We now monitor planning applications every week, having learnt the hard way that we won't be told automatically about proposals nearby. I certainly have a much greater appreciation of the personal time and effort expended by parish councillors in assessing hundreds of planning applications each year. In the face of proposed developments, the retention of Rackheath Park as green space, with landscaping kept intact, is even more important. Tellingly, when the local Parish Council asked the landowners if they would offer a covenant that there would be no change of use over the rest of the land, they didn't get a response. So we are concerned, naturally, that if permission is granted for the current proposal that it will set a precedent and more applications will follow in the future and, bit by bit, the historic parkland will be carved up into blocks of housing estates and the beautiful landscape will be lost forever.

At the time of writing, the farm has submitted an amended planning application, and now we'll have to see what Broadland District Council has to say. As the Heritage Officer said in his comments on the planning application, it's the principle of development on this site that is the key issue at this stage. The



Parkland near Rackheath Hall.



Looking towards the proposed development site.

Gardens Trust, Norfolk Wildlife Trust, the Countryside Charity and Historic England have all been incredibly helpful. With so many housing developments planned in the locality, the risk to this historic parkland – with its listed buildings, lakes, tree groves and grand entrance drive leading to the big reveal of Rackheath Hall – feels like a loss we could, and should, avoid.

STOP PRESS

On the 29th October, Broadland District Council refused planning permission on multiple grounds, including the impact on the historic park and its setting.

The Norwich Cabmen's Shelters

by Lesley Kant Cunneen

Anyone familiar with London might have stumbled across the occasional green wooden structures, sometimes functioning as a basic café. They are cabmen's shelters, survivors from the days when a hansom cab meant a horse and carriage; most are listed Grade ll by Historic England. They evoke a time before trams, buses and Ubers and provided shelter and refreshment.

Norwich also hosted cabmen's shelters, although sadly none remain. By the end of the nineteenth century there were five, stationed at prime points in the city, including Tombland and the Market Square. The shelters followed a different pattern to the London model: smaller, black, constructed of wood and possibly iron. Most of the London shelters were funded by a charity, but the Norwich cabmen may well have used their own resources. In 1911, when the city established the Parks and Gardens Committee to manage its burgeoning green spaces, it agreed to oversee the floral baskets which decorated the shelters. In the busy city, the presence of these attractive small structures, generously decorated with flowers, undoubtedly brought cheer to the Norwich citizenry. In this way they became a minor part of the city's twentieth-century parks and gardens programme.

The Parks Committee provided the cabmen with a regular supply of plants,



Cabmen's shelter with hanging baskets, in Tombland. Permission of John Tydeman. Photo from www.picture.norfolk.gov.uk



A restored cabmen's shelter manufactured in Norwich by Boulton and Paul, now in Ripon, Yorks. Photo: Clive Lloyd

many of which would have been propagated at the Oak Lane glasshouses. The department's horticultural expertise was such that at the outbreak of the First World War the corporation glasshouses contained thousands of young plants: 'five thousand geraniums, two thousand begonias, a very large number of wallflowers'. In return the cabmen were expected to ensure that the floral baskets were floriferous and to keep them well watered. The councillors took their duties very seriously; evidently some cabmen were less committed to the city's beautification programme than others and encouragement was required. A formal inspection scheme was instituted, with remuneration and bonuses dependent on the quality of the baskets. One year the Tombland shelter received no money, as a punishment for floral neglect.

By the time Captain Sandys-Winsch was appointed as Superintendent of the City Parks in 1919, the St Giles Gate shelter, at the western city entrance, was the sole survivor. The now redundant shelter was offered to the Parks and Gardens Committee, with the suggestion that it could be placed in Eaton Park. Sandys-Winsch was unimpressed; he already had to contend with a large army tank in Chapelfield Gardens, a commemoration of the recent war, and had his sights set on far grander projects. The offer was refused and the last remaining cabman's shelter in Norwich became a distant memory.

Restoring a 19th Century Parkland Landscape

by Thomas Day, National Trust Area Ranger, Oxburgh Hall

We may not be able to travel to the future, but how about returning an estate to its former glory so we can experience the past?



1.Photograph from the RAF showing how the wider estate once looked from the air. Photo: Historic England Archive, Sarah Rutherford Copy.

As with many large estates in 20th century, the post WW2 era saw Oxburgh Hall's fortunes dwindle and the once 3000+ acre estate broken up and sold to the highest bidder. The house and gardens were saved by the family but they couldn't afford to buy it all back; the once extensive parkland was replaced with arable crops and for 70 years the face of the land changed. This is a familiar story nationally, which resulted in the wholesale loss of one of our nation's richest and most diverse habitat – wood pasture. The wildlife that thrived in them is now isolated to a few, relatively small sites across the UK and with them, a loss of the traditional methods that sustained these beautiful and peaceful green spaces.

Restoring rare habitats and conserving the character and beauty of our landscapes is at the forefront of the National Trust's objectives, so when 175 acres of the historic parkland came up for sale in 2017, we jumped at the opportunity to take it back. In doing so, we more than doubled the size of the remaining estate and we began working with our regional and local teams, consultants, Natural England and Historic England to sort out how we would restore the landscape to its heyday, but as is the normal problem with such projects, no-one alive usually remembers what it used to look over 100 years ago. So how then are we to restore it to its zenith? (Fig 1)



2. Veteran Oak Trees provide important parkland habitat. Photo: Red Zebra Photography

We commissioned the services of some external consultants, including Dr. Sarah Rutherford, to work out what the Parkland's zenith would have been. Through careful research, this was worked back to the early 1900s and through a combination of historic Ordnance Survey maps, aerial photographs taken by the RAF and records of timber sales from the financially struggling family, we managed to accurately map the location and species of every one of the 227 open-grown parkland trees that were lost (Fig 2). Now we had our baseline we set about planning how we would restore the parkland to its heyday. Working with Historic England, Natural England and our teams of nature and history conservationists we began investigating what we would do through by creating our 10 year Parkland Management Plan and the vital step of how we would bring it about and how we would fund it. We entered into a Countryside Stewardship agreement to cover most of the funding which we estimated would be around £200,000 and started the agreement at the beginning of 2020 giving us 2 years to complete the capital works (all the physical installation) of our first phase. Just as we started lining things up, however, the world stopped – but the timeline on our agreement until very recently, did not.

Landscape History



3. Typical, non-diverse flora of arable reversion and wasteland will be enhanced with a diverse seed mix. Photo: Clive Lloyd

Working feverishly in the background, I and our project team did our utmost to line up contractors and suppliers in a world turned upside-down and in nothing short of a miracle, managed to start the capital works in earnest in December 2020 – almost 12 months behind schedule. Momentously, we started by reversing some of the 1960s drainage works in the blue clay of "The Golts" and began installing 5km of stock fencing. Later in 2021 we will be completing the drainage works with the restoration of ponds in several areas and replanting 137 trees in their original locations.

Having worked out where the trees were and what the ditches and other big physical features looked like, we needed to work out what would have been in between the trees (Fig 3). Prior to ploughing, these fields would have been a diverse, insect-friendly mixture of wildflowers and grasses but experiments with re-cultivating and grazing – perhaps predictably after a 70-year change of use – showed that this diversity has been lost from the seed bank. We had been left with a high-nutrient-loving mix of agricultural grasses and weeds typical of arable reversion, so it was now obvious that reseeding was necessary. At the time of writing, we have cultivated the central 50% of our fields, opting to leave a 25m margin around all edges. Imminently, we will be sowing these areas with a



4. A view across the South of the parkland which will soon contain dozens of trees. Photo: Red Zebra Photography

species-rich seed mix appropriate to each field's soil type, containing around 25 different plant species that have been lost (Fig 4). To get the mix to flourish they will need some management and we will be doing so with a rotation of extensive grazing with rare breed cattle and hay cutting to slowly lower the high nutrient levels caused by chemical inputs. The lack of ploughing will then encourage the regeneration of fungal networks, soil microbes and invertebrates that will form the backbone of this habitat for the future.

This project is ambitious and is currently the largest in-hand wood pasture restoration in the National Trust. It will do great things for nature, restore a healthy, historic landscape and preserve it for future generations. Our existing Parkland Management Plan looks at the first 10 years, but it is likely that it will not reach any form of maturity for at least 100, then serve as an immersive experience to link us to our history and endure for everyone, for ever.

Thomas is an Area Ranger at Oxburgh Hall and Peckover House



Readers' Gardens
If you would like your garden to be featured in the NGT Magazine 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

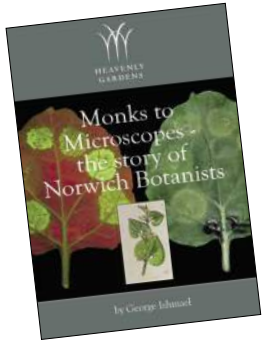
Remembering 900 years of Norwich Botanists

by Peter Woodrow

In the NGT Magazine, Spring 2020, George Ishmael wrote about the Norwich Botanists' Garden planned for the churchyard at St. Martin-at-Palace Plain. Now a reality, it was designed and constructed by George, with help from the Heavenly Gardens volunteers, and part-funded by a grant from NGT. Sixteen vertical plinths commemorate people from Norwich who, over 900 years, have played an important role in Botany. On a wet September afternoon the garden was formally unveiled by Caroline Jarrold (Sheriff of Norwich). George has written a short account in a publication, *'Monks to Microscopes - the story of Norwich Botanists'*, which will be available from the church.



George Ishmael and Caroline Jarrold



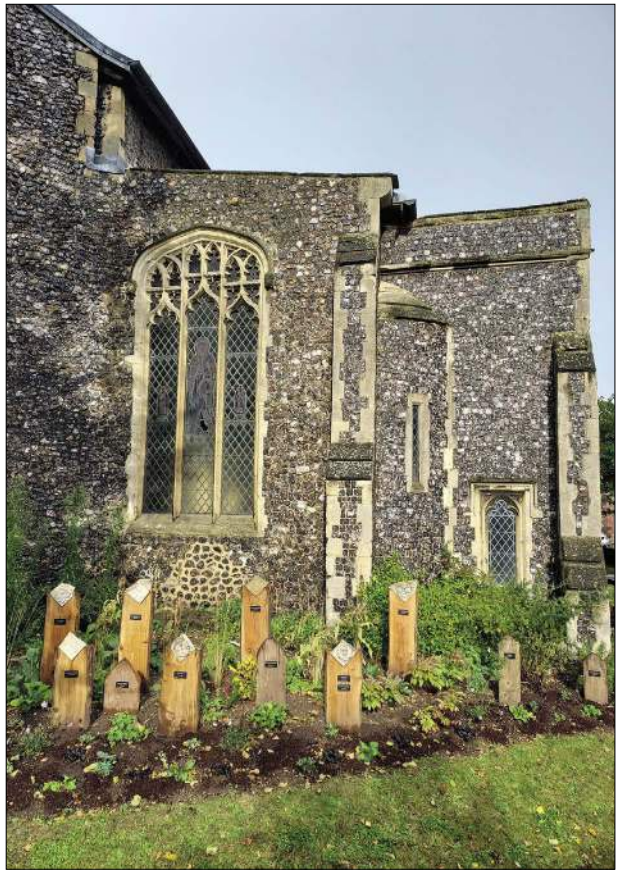
The garden commemorates Benedictine Monks in the 1100s, Solomon a C13 Jewish physician and Sir Thomas Browne in the C17. However, Norwich became prominent in the C18-19 as the birthplace of three well known botanists: Sir James Edward Smith (1759-1828); Sir William John Hooker (1785-1865); and John Lindley (1799-1865) from Catton.

Smith purchased the entire Linnean collection of books and specimens to found the Linnean Society of London. When he brought the collection to Norwich the city became the mecca for visiting scientists.

Hooker, educated at the Norwich Cathedral School, was the first non-medic to become Professor of Botany at Glasgow. He became the first director of Kew at the age of fifty-seven. He was succeeded by his son Joseph Dalton Hooker, a great plant hunter but, alas, born in Suffolk.

John Lindley, also educated at the cathedral school, campaigned to save the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew. The first Professor of Botany at London, he produced over two hundred publications. Lindley constructed the Horticultural Society's Garden at Chiswick, planned the first annual flower show, and donated his vast collection of books to found the RHS Lindley Library.

Others followed, including Mary Kirby (1817-1893), Rev. E F Linton (1848-1928) and Alice Mary Geldert (1862-1942), an authority on East Anglian Botany who assembled the herbarium at Norwich Castle Museum. Arthur Roy Clapham (1904-1990), an old boy of City of Norwich School, was famous for authoring *Excursion Flora of the British Isles* and coining the word 'ecosystem'. Ted Ellis of Surlingham was a writer and naturalist of national repute and after 28 years as Keeper of Natural History at Norwich Castle Museum developed his own nature reserve. Dr Joyce Mary Lambert (1916-2005), educated at Norwich High School for Girls proved that the Norfolk Broads weren't natural features but entirely man-made.



In the twenty first century, botanical research is alive and well in Norwich, at the world-renowned John Innes Centre for plant and microbial science.

The NGT and Mr Repton

by Sally Bate

Norfolk Gardens Trust was approached in April by the Norwich Festival of Learning's *Inspiring Norfolk* team, to produce a short video introducing landscape designer Humphry Repton to primary school children and their families. With school trips drastically reduced during the pandemic the *'Inspiring Norfolk'* project sought to bring people and places into the classroom and homes by enlisting the help of local individuals and organisations.



The idea of making a film was daunting but we decided to give it a go as it would extend our normal audience demographic as well as spreading the word about Humphry Repton and Norfolk garden history. We were fortunate that a new member, Stuart Beard, had volunteered to help us set up our recent Facebook and Instagram pages. Stuart had a background in education before setting up as a school and wedding photographer. Importantly, he also had a drone for taking aerial films and photos. Our vice chair Sally volunteered to stand in front of camera for films shot in both Catton and Sheringham Park, as well as presenting some slides using a Zoom recording.

Flying drones over National Trust land is not permitted and we thought we could also have a problem filming over Catton Park because it is so close to Norwich Airport. This was solved by a phone call to the airport the day before to get permission and again, 30 minutes before filming, to check for any unexpected aircraft in the area. Stuart had to contact the manufacturer to suspend for a day the drone's inbuilt no-fly-zone setting for Catton, which meant we were able to get aerial footage of at least one park. After filming, Stuart kindly edited the different sections together adding some music for the aerial shots – we could not have done this without his knowledge and expertise.

We were one of the first to submit our video to the *'Inspiring Norfolk'* website: https://www.inspiringnorfolk.co.uk/, which resulted in a brief appearance on BBC Look East to announce the beginning of the project, alongside more

famous faces such as Stephen Fry and Ed Balls. It was exciting to see a short clip of a class of children having a go at designing their own landscape pictures after watched our film on Repton and we hope this is being repeated across many more of the county's schools.

We so enjoyed flying the drone that Stuart is now filming over other public parks and adding them to our social media accounts as part of our contribution to the Gardens Trust's *'Unforgettable Gardens'* campaign.

NGT Planning Update

The Gardens Trust (GT) is consulted on planning applications for development likely to affect registered parks and gardens in England. The Norfolk Gardens Trust assesses those applications and, in most cases, responds on the GT's behalf. We are also consulted on some applications affecting parks or gardens which are not formally registered but are nevertheless of historic or landscape interest and importance. Our representations are taken into account by the Council in making its decision.

On average we are notified of one or two applications each week. Many of them are for small scale developments which we find to be acceptable subject to appropriate planning conditions. In a few cases, repair and reinstatement work is required, as at Kimberley Hall where a large tree fell onto the back wall of Capability Brown's greenhouse. At Barningham Hall a section of the walls around the kitchen gardens collapsed and needs to be rebuilt. We have asked that the original detail is replicated as far as possible.

In a few cases we have objected to proposed development. They include proposals on parkland at Rackheath (43 houses). Revised proposals are now subject to further consultation and we have sustained our objection. We also objected to 4 proposed houses near Hilborough Hall. That application was later withdrawn.

One increasing area of work is consultation by Councils on emerging Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans. Our concern here is to ensure that development land allocations in these documents would not be harmful to registered or unregistered parks and gardens. We also check that policies towards development in the plans are appropriate to conserve these special places. I am grateful to Susan Grice, our Conservation Officer, for the sterling work she has done in assessing these documents, which can be lengthy and not always an entertaining read.

Keri Williams

NGT Planning Officer.

Sarah Scott, Unthank Road, Norwich

How long have you had your garden?
We moved to Norwich in 1997. Our previous terraced house in north London had a postage stamp-sized garden, and we were thrilled to have more space. Initially our young daughters were intimidated by the length of the garden (60 metres) and would only play in the bit near the house ... but they soon built up courage to explore further.

What was it like?
Ours is a classic urban garden – long and narrow – and the previous occupants had been good if unimaginative gardeners. The local area is known for its beautiful, mature trees and the garden slopes gently down to a borrowed vista of beeches, maples and a large cedar. The garden had different segments, but they all followed the rectangular form, and most beds were dominated by rather dull shrubs. The central part of the garden had a sunken area with a scruffy rectangular brick pond. We think this marked the location of an air raid shelter; in fact, the old concrete Anderson shelter was still at the end of the garden, where it served as a log store. There were some elderly apple trees at the bottom of the garden, but no veg patch.



How did you change it?
We made few changes in the early years as we focussed on the house and work. The garden was primarily a play space for the children; I managed to grow some potatoes but that was pretty much it.

Once started, however, we changed lots of things: first, we created a vegetable patch in the area furthest from the house and put in a series of 4m x 1.5m beds, a fruit cage, an asparagus bed, a shed, a greenhouse, and three, block-built, compost heaps. Next, we tackled the parts of the garden nearer the house,

creating a terrace with benches and an outdoor eating spot. Recently, we revamped the sunken middle section of the garden, creating an ornamental pond with a circulating water system using some old clay water-chutes that we found in the garden. Down the years we have also overhauled most of the borders in a rather piecemeal fashion, when time and energy allowed.



Were there any particular challenges?
We have very dry, sandy soil so deciding to go 'No-Dig' has really helped with water retention, particularly in the veg plot. Ground elder romps through all the gardens in our neighbourhood but we are winning the battle, if not the war. There is also 'something' (possibly honey fungus) which has taken out apple trees and a privet hedge at the end of the garden. However, I have come to realise that unexpected losses in the garden often turn out to be useful catalysts for new projects.



Autumn News 2021 : Dates for your Diary

NB. All talks must be pre-booked. Booking forms are sent to members before each event.

Saturday 20th November 2pm
Bawdeswell Village Hall, Reepham Road NR20 4RU

"Botanical Gardens: A Grand Tour"
(pre-booking only)

An illustrated talk by Jim Paine of Walnut Tree Gardens Nursery, Attleborough

From the sixteenth century to the present day, botanic gardens have been the epicentre of plant research and horticultural excellence. Set aside for science and education, botanic gardens are also places of great beauty, from magnificent avenues of flowering trees, huge glasshouses filled with exotic tropical giants to the tiny and exquisite mountain-side plants in the cool alpine house. This talk first explores the history and purpose of botanic gardens, illustrated with beautiful images throughout, and then takes a closer look at a handful of gardens, from far distant continents to the easily accessible Cambridge University Botanic Garden.

Walnut Tree Garden Nursery is a specialist hardy garden plant nursery in Norfolk,that propagates and grows almost all their own plants, which include hundreds of varieties, many of them are rare and unusual.



Kirstenbosch Botanic Gardens with Table Mountain in the background

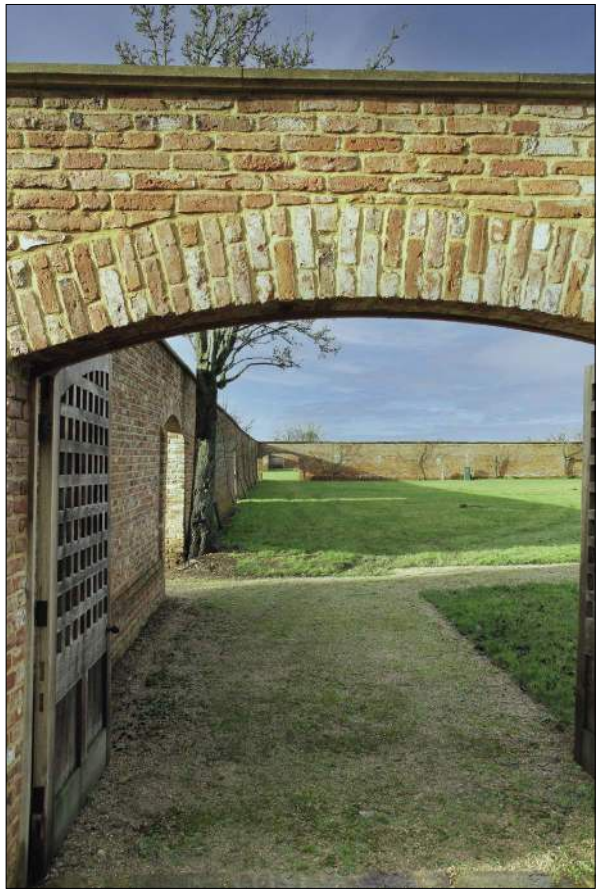
Looking ahead to 2022 we start the year with the Annual Tate Talk in March. This talk is open to all - members and non-members - and is supported by a bequest from Mr & Mrs Tate.

Saturday 5th March 2022 2pm
Bawdeswell Village Hall, Reepham Road NR20 4RU

Tate Talk *(pre-booking only.)*

'The Walled Kitchen Garden Restoration and Garden Creation project for Burghley House'

An illustrated talk by Joe Whitehead, Head Gardener, Burghley House



Burghley gardens cover an area of 46 acres of Capability Brown's wonderful landscape. Within this is a formal rose garden and topiary, wilder woodland plantings, water gardens, wide borders and lots more in between. At the top of the estate - a mile from the great house - is a secret, lost walled garden which has sat quietly for many decades, but is soon to be woken up! Joe's talk will take us thorough what is cared for now, a little history and the plans for what is behind the forgotten walls of the kitchen gardens.

A visit to Burghley House and a tour with Joe Whitehead will be arranged during summer 2022.

Refreshments
ADVANCE BOOKING ONLY

Call For Articles

We welcome suggestions for articles to be included in future issues of the NGT Magazine. These could be pieces you are prepared to write or just thoughts about articles you would like to see in the magazine. 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



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