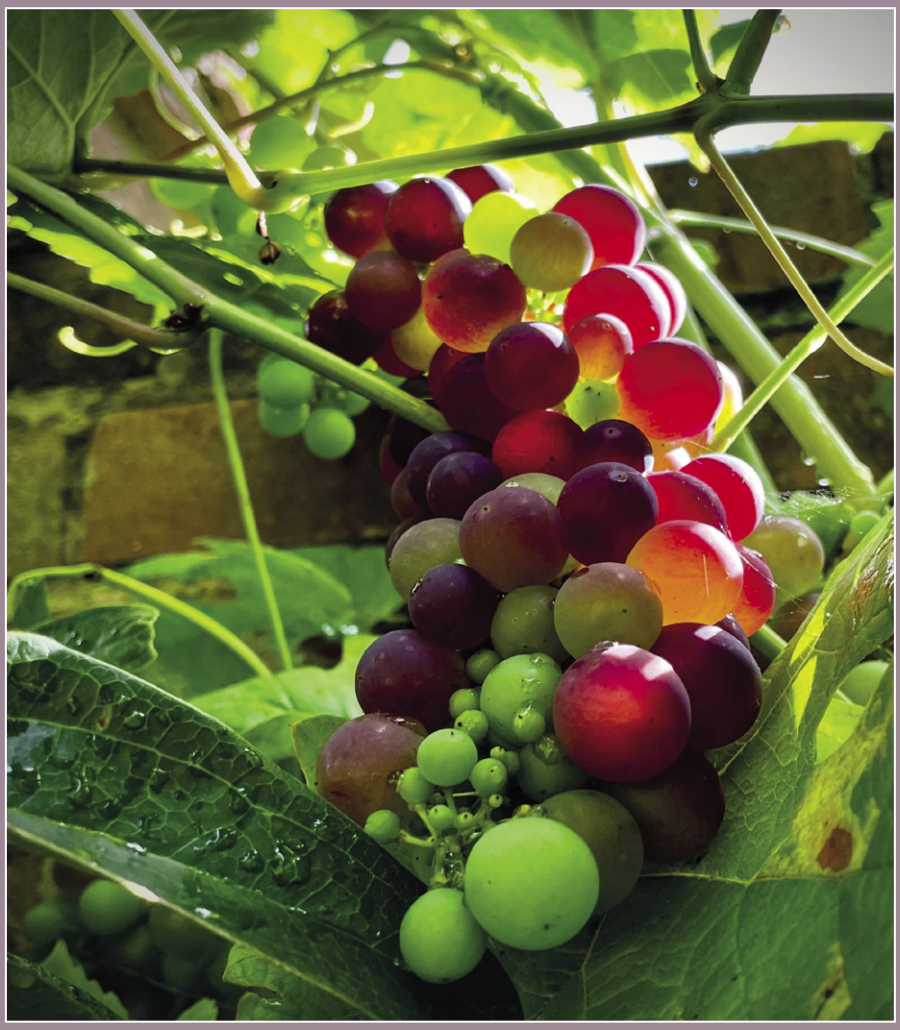
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Contents

From the Chair....1
Norah Lindsay at Blickling. Ed Atkinson....2
Sir Thomas Browne's Garden House. Clive Lloyd....6
The Gardens at Priscilla Bacon Lodge. Hugo Stevenson....10
Bolwick Hall Gardens. Kenny Higgs....14
Beck Farm Garden. Bridget Diggens....18
Community Gardening in Norwich. Sue Roe....22
The National Collection of Muscari. Richard Hobbs....26
Who is Salvia? Graham Watts....30
Planning Matters. Keri Williams....33
Reader's Garden. Selwyn Taylor....34
NGT at the Norfolk Show. Hilary Talbot....37
Events. Karen Moore and Penny Coombes....39

Cover: Reader's Garden, Selwyn Taylor. See page 34.

Back Cover: Beck Farm . See page 18



Congratulations to Roger Last

Report from the Chair Autumn 2023

The wet weather this summer has certainly been beneficial for many gardens. But weeds will have also enjoyed the rain, to the frustration of gardeners.

The Garden Trust in London hold an annual national competition entitled The Volunteer of the Year Award. I am delighted to report that Roger Last, a former chairman of our own regional Trust, has been awarded this accolade for editing and producing Enticing Paths, the Norfolk Gardens Trust's latest publication. So our warmest congratulations go to Roger for this justly deserved recognition. This has been a most successful book but there are still some copies available for purchase. The cost is £30 including postage and you can buy a copy by emailing our secretary, Roger Lloyd. His email address is at the back of this publication. Or you can write to him at 57 St Leonard's Rd, Norwich NR1 4JW. It makes a marvellous present for anyone interested in gardens and parks in Norfolk. You can either send him a cheque in favour of the NGT or email him for the bank details.

By way of reminder, Enticing Paths is a rich tapestry of gardens in Norfolk. It explores how and why many came into being, who commissioned and designed them, embracing horticulture, art and design, manufacturing, buildings, ornaments, vanity projects, their commercial exploitation, the beauty they presented, the pleasure they gave, and continue to give. It is lavishly illustrated with more than 500 pictures. From the grand estate to the modest plot, Enticing Paths encompasses 300 years of Norfolk garden development and change

The Committee of the Norfolk Gardens Trust is heavily engaged in succession planning for the various roles. Having successfully appointed Penny Coombes to take on responsibility for the talks (part of our Events programme) our next change involves our Membership Secretary, Lyn Burroughs. Lyn is standing down at the end of this year and, all being well, we welcome Louise Rice to take on this role. Louise spends part of her week in London and part of her time at her home at Hanworth in Norfolk. She is a retired publisher and her passions are gardening, art and books.

I want to pay tribute to Lyn for her contribution to our endeavours. Our membership has increased dramatically over recent years, during which time Lyn has discharged her responsibilities with unfailing good humour and with immaculate attention to detail. On behalf of the whole membership I would like to thank Lyn for all she has contributed to our Charity.

Our next vacancy is caused by our hugely talented Events person, Karen Moore, wishing to stand down next year. There is an advertisement for this role in this magazine. If you are interested please do get in touch with me and we can discuss what's involved. Again, my email address is at the back of this edition.

Matthew Martin



Future-proofing Norah Lindsay's designs at Blickling

Ed Atkinson, Head Gardener



The Terraces (1910) ca. 20yrs before Norah Lindsay began redesigning the gardens.

The formal parterre, Temple Avenue and raised terrace beds at Blickling Estate are wonderful examples of the inter-war garden design of socialite Norah Lindsay. We are restoring these original designs; stabilising the underlying hard landscaping; researching and protecting original planting; and returning the upper terrace to Norah's concept of lawn, small borders and cherry trees to frame the iconic view of the parterre, house, lake and parkland beyond.

Covid, the effects of climate change and awareness of sustainability have had long term impacts on the structure of garden teams across the National Trust. One example is the transition to a 'no-dig' method throughout the Walled Garden, resulting in the need for much larger compost bays and improved composting equipment. This allows us to keep the entire garden in cultivation for visitors, encourages regenerative growing and responsible waste management – all linking to the National Trust's commitment to climate action. Through this work we are committed to educating visitors about soil health



Norah Lindsay's vision for the gardens framed by the Hall and Parkland (early 1970s). Arrow, upper terrace wall. Photo P. Bailey

and climate-friendly food production. Using the right equipment to support 'no-dig' has freed up time to research and develop the formal parterre and associated areas.

Major faults appeared in the upper terrace wall during Covid lockdown. The retaining wall supported both the 'Black Garden' and the 'Hot Beds' at the eastern end of the south terrace, inspired by Norah's design concepts but not part of her original work at Blickling. A structural engineer's survey revealed it was imperative to prop and support the upper terrace wall immediately, remove the yew hedge planted against the wall and reduce the soil level by 70cm, back to its original historic level. This would relieve weight, reduce pressure on the wall, preventing full collapse of the historic structure.

Although rapid action prevented collapse it was not possible to save the entire upper terrace wall; the weight of history had pushed it off its foundations along most of its length. Re-grading soil on the upper terrace, along with years of mulching, rotational planting and compaction, had put at risk the lower terrace walls supporting the three north-facing terrace beds. We decided to remove excess soil to 50cm



Galanthus and early-flowering cherry tree border that ran full length of terrace at back of garden.



Terrace Gardens looking east

in depth. This was done very carefully, hand digging as well as removing over 300 tonnes of soil with lightweight machinery. This action prevented the devastating collapse of the lower terrace.

The popular 'Double Borders' were to the west of the 'Black Garden' and 'Hot Beds'. This large and ambitious design was planned and created at the beginning of the 21st century. This trio of gardens represented different elements of Norah's designs and replaced her original planting. The borders were enclosed by clipped 50cm box hedging at the front and yew hedging of 300cm behind. Their dramatic scale and complexity made fascinating spaces for visitors with clear inspiration from Norah's work but impacted on her designed views across the landscape; they also threatened the structural stability of the terrace. The main terrace-retaining wall is not the north-facing wall viewed from the Parterre but one set further back directly under the modern yew hedging. Structural engineers, National Trust Curators and the Regional Gardens Advisor agreed that this heavyweight, unsustainable design needed to be re-considered.

Restoring Norah's original vision will re-open the views, provide a unified design across the space (linking to the parterre and Temple Walk as originally conceived) and allow essential maintenance to be undertaken to the retaining wall and drainage system below.

Rebuilding the new upper terrace wall is almost complete. It was restored to its original design using handmade bricks (from Bulmer Brick and Tile Company, Sudbury); black mortar has been carefully matched along with the detailed coping. This re-built wall is protected to the rear by a new drainage system that links to two underground water storage tanks. These irrigate Norah's azalea borders on the Temple Walk, safeguarding them from the droughts we have seen in recent years as a result of climate change.



Norah's borders under a canopy of cherry blossom. Photo P. Bailey

Flanking the Doric Temple to the east of the Parterre, the azaleas were purchased from Stody Lodge in the 1930s. Stody was formerly owned by Philip Kerr, the 11th Marquess of Lothian, Norah's close friend and employer who bequeathed Blickling to the National Trust in 1940. The survival of these azaleas, many of them planted under Norah's instruction, if not by her own hand, makes the Temple Walk highly significant – a space retaining Norah's characteristic use of broad swathes of colour graduating from hot to cold.

Our proposed design for the new upper terraces will accurately reflect Norah's original, informal vision, under an avenue of cherry trees. Norah wrote to her sister, Madeleine Whitbread, describing this part of the garden at Blickling she loved:

"A half shady walk on the top terrace which in spring is all polyanthus and that forget-me-not border now a mass blue and pink hydrangeas, then comes a six-foot turf walk and a wide border of great blocks of mixed purples, pinks and lilac phloxes, between great blocks of iris which come on earlier".

We will celebrate Norah's contribution to garden design by reinstating this terrace as originally intended, in time for the centenary of its creation.

Sir Thomas Browne's garden house

by Clive Lloyd. Magazine co-editor

Thomas Browne was probably Norwich's most famous resident of the seventeenth century. Born 1605 in London, to a 'family of position', he came to Norwich in his early thirties, married Dorothy Mileham from Burlingham and lived in the heart of the city until his death in 1682. After attending Winchester College Browne embarked on a peregrination medica in which he, like other enquiring young minds of the time, visited foreign universities to learn about clinical medicine and human physiology. In his case he studied at Padua and Montpellier before receiving his medical degree from the University of Leiden.

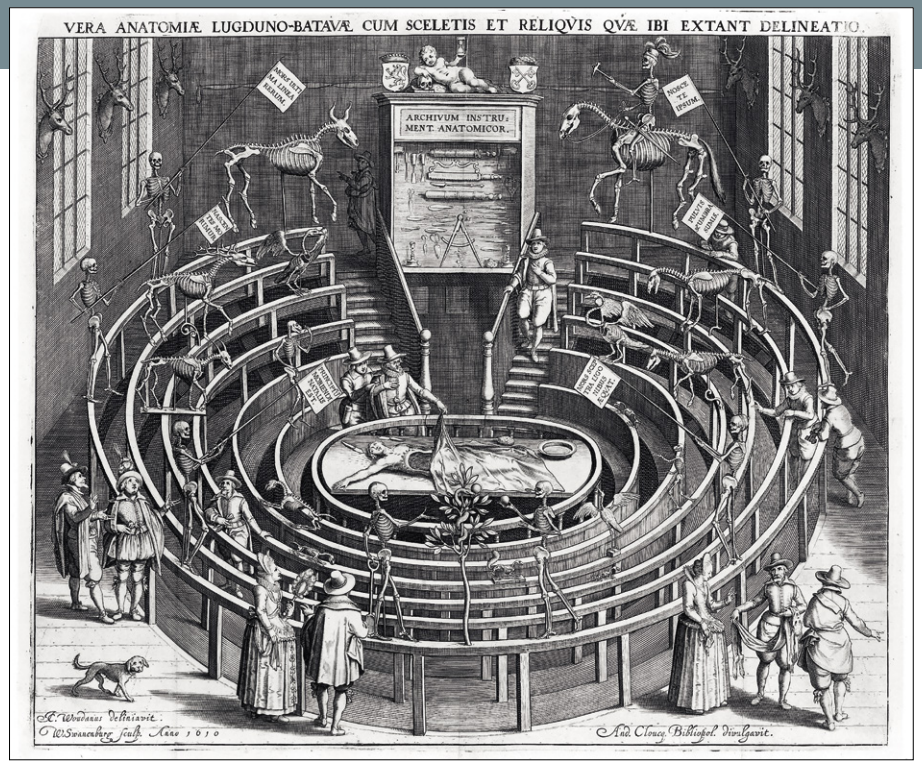


Sir Thomas Browne. Courtesy of St Peter Mancroft

In the sixteenth century, thirty 'Douchemen' and their families were invited by Queen Elizabeth to help revive the city's ailing weaving industry. By the 1570s several thousand 'Strangers' from the Low Countries had sought refuge in Norwich as a result of the Spanish Duke of Alba's bloody repression of Protestant 'dissent'. In the following century Browne was to benefit from the free-thinking atmosphere of Leiden University, which placed no religious barriers on its students. Here, Browne would have studied the workings of the human body in its famous anatomical theatre.

Thomas Browne was famed for writings that were translated into several languages. He was at the forefront of the scientific revolution that flourished in the space vacated by the relaxation of religious orthodoxy. In Religio Medici (1642) he examined the relationship between his medical training and his Christian faith. His belief embraced some unorthodox ideas, such as the extension of tolerance to unbelievers and those of other religious persuasion.

Browne was a devotee of Francis Bacon's empirical method in which general principles were derived, not through logic or dogma, but through a sceptical interpretation of direct observations and experiment. In his book Pseudodoxia Epidemica (1646) Browne can, however, appear to be teetering along the fault line between science and mysticism as he examines whether a carbuncle gives off light in the dark or if dead kingfishers make good weathervanes. Browne also attended the trial of two women for witchcraft in



The Anatomical Theatre, Leiden. 1610. Public domain

Bury St Edmunds where his reference to a similar trial in Denmark may have contributed to the women being hanged. This is frequently cited as evidence against Browne's rationalist status but we shouldn't forget the intellectual climate of the time: the Royal Society was still a decade or so from forming and even the great Sir Isaac Newton was tainted with superstition by his alchemical experiments to turn base metal into gold.

Browne's book Hydriotaphia, or Urne Buriall (1658) is a lyrical examination of funeral rites, prompted by the discovery of Anglo-Saxon funerary urns at Brampton, north of Norwich. And it is with broken urn in hand that we see Browne's statue in Haymarket, half-way



Frontispiece of Religio Medici (1642). Public domain

between his house and his bones that lie in St Peter Mancroft, Norwich.

Browne, then, was a proto-scientist. He was the first to attempt a listing of Norfolk birds and in the coming centuries would be followed by a network of Norfolk botanists who did the same for plants. In 1671, King Charles II and his court came to Norwich and stayed at the Sixth Duke of Norfolk's damp and sinking palace on the site of present-day St Andrew's Car Park. John Evelyn, a member of the royal entourage, had corresponded with Browne and now paid 'the learned doctor' a visit. The diarist and gardener wrote: 'His whole house and garden is a Paradise & Cabinet of rarities, & that of the best collection, especially Medails, books, Plants, natural things ...' It was at this time that Browne was knighted by the king in the New Hall (St Andrew's) at a banquet costing the corporation £900.



Sir Thomas Browne, Haymarket, Norwich. Sculptor Henry Pegram, unveiled 1905.

We have a good idea of where Evelyn saw Browne's collection: a green plaque informs us that the house stood near the site of Pret A Manger in Haymarket Chambers, Norwich. The house itself was demolished in 1842. Some 60 years later George Skipper remodelled the corner when he designed the curved building that allowed the new electric trams to turn the corner into Orford Place.

The doctor's garden house, however, survived until 1961. Photographer George Plunkett confirmed that this timber-framed structure was separate from the main house – the 'peak of its tall attic gable (was) visible above the roof of the adjacent Lamb Inn'. This places the building in the vicinity of Green's the Outfitters whose premises once stretched from the main entrance on Haymarket to a smaller frontage facing Orford Hill behind.

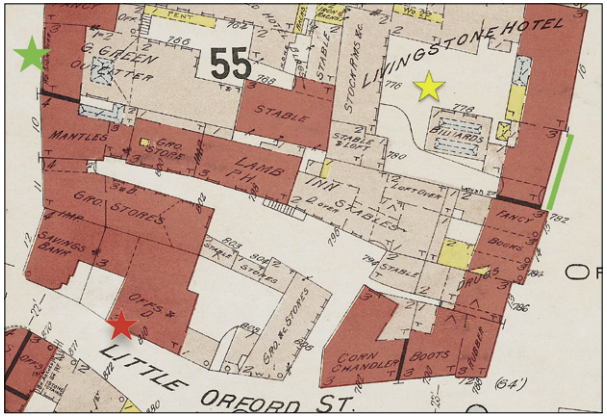
In 1961 Greens was demolished, along with the garden house, to be replaced by Littlewoods department store and latterly Primark. Browne's main house was lost before modern ideas of preservation but the demolition of the garden house in the 60s now seems inexcusable. Admired by Sir John Evelyn this was the botanical garden to which fellows of the nascent Royal Society made their long pilgrimage. What a loss to garden history. Fortunately, when shopping in Greens in 1950 the Principal of the School of Art, Noël Spencer, 'noticed an ancient building in the yard behind' so at least we have a drawing of it.

We may also mourn the plot of land known as Browne's Meadow, which the learned doctor leased from the Cathedral. After he died, the ground was used to produce vegetables for the Cathedral, then used as allotments for residents of Cathedral Close. Now it is a car park.

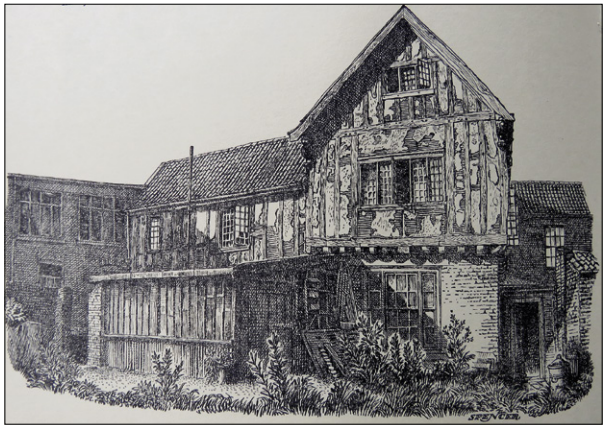
This article was adapted from a chapter in 'Back Stories: Further Adventures in Colonel Unthank's Norwich' by Clive Lloyd, available from Norwich bookshops.



Browne's house, off the Haymarket. By AW Howlings 1900.



Goad insurance map 1894. Green's the Outfitters stretched from Haymarket (green star) to the Orford Hill entrance (green bar). All now Primark. Garden house in yard marked by yellow star. Main house near the red star. Courtesy of Aviva.



Browne's house by Noël Spencer, 1950. © Estate of Noël Spencer

The gardens at Priscilla Bacon Lodge

Hugo Stevenson. Head of Fundraising and Communications, Priscilla Bacon Hospice Charity

For over 40 years Priscilla Bacon Lodge delivered specialist palliative and end-of-life care for the people of Norfolk at the Colman Hospital site, on Unthank Road in Norwich.

However, in 2019, the Priscilla Bacon Hospice Charity launched a £12.5 million fundraising appeal to build the new Priscilla Bacon Lodge, to replace the existing facility. The new facility is home to a state-of-the-art palliative care unit, with an increased number of inpatient beds, a larger day unit and a wellbeing centre. The Lodge will also act as hub for community-based services, enabling people to receive care in their own homes. The new Priscilla Bacon Lodge will support a greater number of individuals and families affected by terminal or life-limiting illness, and will provide increased choice about end-of-life care.

Thanks to the remarkable generosity of fundraisers and organisations from Norfolk and beyond, construction work started on the new Lodge at the eight-acre site adjacent to the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital in February 2022. The new Priscilla Bacon Lodge welcomed its first patients in September 2023.

The Priscilla Bacon Hospice Charity remains committed to enhancing the experience of patients and their loved ones in the Lodge, by supplementing the core services, which will continue to be funded and delivered by the NHS. Dame Cicely Saunders, the founder of the hospice movement believed in *"a good death for all"*, and the eight-acre site has given the Charity the unique opportunity to deliver a hospice that has been designed to work in harmony with the landscape and garden, to realise this vision.



James Alexander-Sinclair artist's impression looking towards the Chapel



James Alexander-Sinclair artist's impression looking towards Priscilla Bacon Lodge

The Charity hopes that the gardens at the new Priscilla Bacon Lodge will function as an exemplar for hospices nationwide. There is an urgent need to bring together the best clinical care within an inspirational landscape and wellbeing garden to ensure that patients, and their families, can be at one with nature at this critical time.



Priscilla Bacon Lodge July 2023 © Mike Page

Lady Priscilla Bacon, who led the first county-wide campaign for the first hospice for Norfolk, was a great plantswoman, transforming the gardens of Raveningham Hall where the family has lived for 300 years. Susan Bacon, her daughter-in-law, and Patron of the Priscilla Bacon Hospice Charity, carries on this passion, bringing plants and flowers into the hospice throughout the year.

For the new Lodge, award-winning landscape designer James Alexander-Sinclair worked alongside Lady Bacon to conceive the gardens. The location of the new hospice was identified in the Greater Norwich Green Infrastructure Strategy as a priority link wildlife corridor. Prior to development, the site was an arable field, so consideration was given to ensure the planting would enhance existing field boundaries and provide new habitats for a range of



Priscilla Bacon Lodge from the gardens



Priscilla Bacon Lodge looking from the Chapel

species, including bats and breeding birds thereby increasing biodiversity.

James has created gardens that will enrich the experience of patients, families, visitors, and staff. A number of independent studies, including one by the King's Fund, have linked increased wellbeing and happiness with spending two hours a week outside in a green environment; just 10 minutes of quiet time, sitting in a manicured garden or wildflower meadow can reduce general levels of stress and anxiety.

Furthermore, the building has been designed such that patients confined to a bed are not restricted, as beds can be wheeled into personal patio areas for private family gatherings, allowing patients to maintain a connection with nature.

The site gives the opportunity to include the outside environment within the building. Communal areas such as the café, lounges, and chapel lead onto and overlook a central courtyard, enjoying views over the wider landscape; throughout the building, landscape-inspired design motifs echo the garden themes.

The shrub and ground flora planting defines each of the key areas within the landscape scheme, which include individual inpatient gardens, a Nurses' Garden, and a Physio Garden.



Priscilla Bacon Lodge looking towards the wildflower meadow.

Ornamental planting primarily consists of low-level shrubs and herbaceous plants: these create colour and interest in all seasons; inspire and excite visitors; and distinguish the different key areas within the garden and wider landscape. These areas also feature species-rich planting of differing character, which support a range of invertebrates and flowers that attract pollinators at various times of the year.

A broad range of tree species provide greatly increased biodiversity, as well as a wider range of habitats and resilience to climate change. The trees have been specially selected to create visual interest, structure, focal points, and seasonal variation of species for flowers, fruit, texture and shape.

The expansive areas of perennial wildflower meadow will have a mix of ornamental and native species, including grasses and the species-rich swards of differing character will support invertebrate larvae and flowers that attract pollinators as well as create visual interest.

To ensure that the gardens and extensive grounds are maintained and developed, the Charity will support the role of a Head Gardener, who will be assisted by a team of dedicated volunteers. Future plans for the garden include garden buildings, a play area for children, garden furniture and additional trees in the wider landscape.

(The PBL was only opened this September and planting has not had sufficient time to establish itself but we hope that artists' impressions convey the importance of planting to the project)

For more information, to donate or to volunteer, please contact the Fundraising Team: 01603 331166, enquiries@priscillabaconhospice.org.uk or Fundraising Office, Priscilla Bacon Lodge, Century Place, Colney, Norwich, NR4 7YA

Bolwick Hall Gardens

by Kenny Higgs, Head Gardener



Although the present Bolwick Hall in Marsham was constructed around 1800 it is mentioned as far back as 1086 and there is still evidence of Saxon and Tudor architecture. The 52 acres of grounds are attributed to Humphry Repton; there is no direct proof of his involvement but there are several hints: the gravel paths, the tree-lined floral gardens, the abundance of conifers, the shape of the lake – wider at the front than the back to give the impression of great distance – not to mention Repton's connections with the area and his burial place in St Michael's church in nearby Aylsham.

Our job is to try to be sympathetic to the past, while also making the grounds manageable and open to the needs of the current owners. Now, it is managed by two gardeners (Joel and me) instead of the squadron of workers there would have been in the 1800s.

In front of the main hall is a vast rewilded area (valuable to wildlife, but also necessary due to time constraints) and a horse manège (the hobby turned profession of the daughter of the family) on what – according to a map from 1834 – would have been the main lawn. These days the main lawn is to the side of the hall, overlooked by a large, reclaimed stone terrace. The lawn, around two acres, is enclosed by the lake on one side while on the other is a gravel garden containing yew teardrops, *Cephalaria gigantea, Helichrysum italicum, Paeonia lutea*, a selection of sedums, and a shrub border full of rhododendrons and azaleas of various size and colour. Features of the lawn are the 100 foot plus wellingtonia, a perfectly formed liquidambar and a rotating summer house (sold off when the TB hospital in Mundesley closed), which is overshadowed by a *Magnolia grandiflora.*



To the side and back of the hall is a walled garden. A modern box parterre containing striking *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Annabelle' is the main attraction, leading to a terrace with a swimming pool, surrounded by wall-climbing scented plants including *Trachelospermum jasminoides*, honeysuckle and various roses. An archway through a tall hornbeam hedge takes us full circle around the hall and back to the lawn.

At the far end of the lawn a yew avenue with arched cut-outs leads to the working kitchen and cut-flower garden, and a double herbaceous border. A visitor on one of our annual NGS open days once remarked that the planting here was idiosyncratic. I gladly took the unintended compliment. The border is loosely based on a rainbow, with warm colours leading to cooler ones, although the statuesque *Verbascum chaixii* 'Album' is dotted around the whole border (more its decision than mine!).

Past the tennis court and beyond another yew wall is a wildflower meadow and the first sight of a stream named





the Mermaid, which is a tributary of the River Bure and a recurring feature in the garden. Over a bridge and we're into the more natural part of the garden. A long grass meadow is dotted with feature trees such as a *Ginkgo biloba*, a tulip tree and a field maple. Surrounding this meadow are various oak and ash trees and an impressive number of Scots pines (another Repton favourite).

Features of the lake include three islands bridged where possible by oak from fallen trees, for we recycle as much as we can. Where the Mermaid meets the lake sits the former boathouse, now fully decked to provide a peaceful seating area.



The Old Barn is situated at the furthest point of the lake, the sole survivor of what was once a thriving mill. Production stopped in 1920s as the sluggish flow of the Mermaid made it uneconomical.



A visitor once told me that their great grandfather worked here and after a morning's milling the lake would run dry and take a day and a half to fill again. The remaining buildings were demolished in 1965.

To the west of the barn is around 25 acres left for nature to do with as she pleases, the only concession being a mown path either side of the Mermaid as it works its way back to the Bure. Through a gap in another wall of yew we're back to the main lawn.

When considering legacy I wonder how this particular time in this garden will be remembered. In the ten years I've been here the garden has changed enormously, as I'm sure it did in the ten before that and no doubt will again in the coming years. The current owners have a passion for roses. There are close to 100, mostly old, scented varieties that scramble up every available wall and tree. They have a similar passion for Japanese flowering cherries – the bank of the lake is dotted with mature and young 'Shirotae 'and 'Tai-haku',



and several others that are meant to be those but aren't (a common problem in the prunus-buying world). Future custodians, both owner and gardener, may have different passions, which is why the job is daunting but ultimately simple: I must keep one eye on the past but my priority is to make a garden to suit the family who use it today. It is cared for by those of us lucky enough to work on it and loved by all those who see it.

Beck Farm Garden

by Bridget Diggens, garden owner and designer

May 1989, a perfect spring day, green and white countryside, a wonderful time to be looking for a house – until I encountered the bumpy track. The particulars for a secluded farmhouse on the edge of Brisley Common were enticing but they did not mention the bumpy track – not so much bumpy as virtually impassable. My trusty VW Golf ground its way through the stones somehow avoiding a puncture. Just as I felt the car could take little more, we rounded a corner and there it was, Beck Farm.



Beck Farm July 1989, the day after we moved in.

The newly renovated house was perfect, with scope for future improvements.

Garden? Well there was no garden, just a greenfield site with a small natural pond close up to the south gable end. The biggest joy – as I walked the plot through knee high grass, thistles, nettles and cherry saplings – was the discovery of a pair of semi-mature walnut trees. My childhood was spent climbing walnut trees in my parents' garden, so this sealed the deal; it was clearly a message. The garden was an exact acre, bordered to the northeast by arable fields, and to the south west by a substantial ditch draining the common to The Panford Beck. A further natural pond connected the ditch to the pond in the garden providing another facet to be explored. To the north was a young half-acre plantation which we obtained during the pandemic.

Two months later we were in with our 17 month old son and a black labrador who felt she had arrived in paradise. So began a life's work, an acre and a half with a bit of this and a bit of that.

Following a City and Guilds Garden Design course at Easton College, I was able to draw a proper plan for the plot. Aside from the terrace, which required a significant quantity of earth shifting and beating back of nettles and thistles, limited funds meant a huge amount of the structure for the garden would be created with planting rather than hard landscaping. Consequently the bones of the garden are hedges and trees rather than walls or fixed structures.

Initially, with two children needing space for ball games, bikes and much damming of the ditch, I could only manage small borders containing plants donated by friends and family. I did make a small



14 Holm Oaks planted Spring 1999.



Aerial view, 2015.

and productive vegetable plot in a lovely part of the garden over the little bridge, blocking out a compost area with a yew hedge. But my plan promised a division of space and more adventurous planting ideas so I finally took the plunge. After all, I was beginning to design a few planting schemes for other people.

The big transition was in 1999 when – whilst building an extension – I planted 14 *Quercus ilex* bang across the middle of the lawn. I had seen them at Hatfield House, beautiful mop head evergreens, which of course love Norfolk. My mother-in-law thought I was mad, but I could see it and knew it would work. Not



Spring plants with underplanting, 2015

long afterwards I planted a box hedge underneath and then had to straighten all borders along the south-facing hedge because, of course, curved edges did not sit right with this rigid line. This led to the possibility of creating another space; so, using the mower, I experimented with a square for laying a beech hedge to provide a microclimate for little meadow areas and a small orchard. Set into the beech hedge are six *Crataegus lavallei* kept as lollipops, providing incredible nectar for our bees and wonderful berries in autumn.

The addition of more yew hedging and trees provided the bones for developing the planting. The Common dictates the need for a gradual shift from garden to pasture and scrub and so the banks leading to the ponds are very wild and mostly unkempt; it is fair to say we have hugely diverse habitats in a very small area. The joy of 33 years in the same place is watching our garden companions: a pair of swallows come every year to the garage; three pairs of swifts nest in the roof along with house sparrows and starlings. The Common anchors the seasons. Migrants such as blackcaps, chiffchaffs and willow warblers come and go; winters are marked by the rooks, morning and night, while fieldfares and redwings chat in the scrub.

Plant fashions also come and go. I am always experimenting: grasses, perennials, shrubs, roses, vegetables in borders have all been tried, some successfully but if a plant is not thriving it does not last long here. I have steeled myself to dig out and burn yards of blight-ridden box hedging from the front of the borders rather than resort to chemicals and frustration. Invariably the alternative has been pleasing and it is good for the soul to make changes.

My ethos is to live with nature and whatever the climate throws at us. Adapt, change, be excited by new plants, new colour combinations and challenges. Do what we can to mitigate against climate change through organic methods, reducing plastic, saving water, growing plants that will withstand the pressures of prolonged wet or dry, hot or cold spells and keep searching for improvements.



Summer 2023



Summer 2023

Although Beck Farm garden aims to provide year-round interest, it peaks in early spring and autumn. I endeavour to provide help for wildlife, food for the table and pleasure for all who visit it at any time of the year. It is not perfect but as a visitor in May said, 'we can see your garden is very much loved' – that is good enough for me.

Community Gardening in Norwich

Sue Roe, Co-Editor and volunteer gardener

Once upon a time, Norwich's green spaces were lovingly tended by trained Norwich City Council (NCC) gardeners. These days the council supports an army of volunteer gardeners. Now, about 66 groups across the city enthusiastically work in their communities, turning green spaces into productive and beautiful places. Louise Curtis, one of the four NCC Community Enabling Officers, explained how they get groups started, providing volunteers with advice and practical support.

As a Gardens Trust interested in the history of gardening we feel sure that future garden historians will recognise this as a turning point in our approach to civic gardens and open spaces. Groups are diverse: they grow food, tend our parks and simply make the City a nicer place to be. There are less tangible benefits: gardening in a group is a positive and cheerful way to feel more connected to your community while making a difference.

Here, we sample Norwich's contribution to this growing movement and would love to hear from volunteers in other parts of Norfolk (contact sueroe8@icloud.com).

The Sustainable Living Initiative (SLI) is a Norwich-based charity. Members grow fruit and veg organically, share resources, food and recipes, learn about and support the natural environment and enjoy each other's company.



The Marlpit

They have two sites: council allotments at Bluebell Road south while at Marlpit community garden (off Hellesdon Road) garden strips are rented out to members. They supply basic seeds, tools and provide information on growing organically using the no dig method. Produce is shared among volunteers and there are monthly communal lunches when volunteers cook their produce at the community centre. Excess harvest is shared at a local school.

In a small estate south of the city **the Tuckswood initiative** focusses on vegetables. The project began when parts of the central green were converted to wildflower meadows. In addition, four raised beds were made, containing a variety of vegetable seedlings; now there are nine raised beds with another four pending. The aim of this NCC initiative was to enhance social cohesion by encouraging the community to grow plants. Using seed provided by the council, 50 local residents now grow their own produce: tomatoes, courgettes, salad leaves, cavallo nero … In a separate volunteer project, beds outside Tuckswood branch library demonstrate to the community what can be grown within a year.



Tuckswood

Volunteer gardening in **Eaton Park** began in 2009, under the auspices of the Friends of Eaton Park. Now, more than twenty volunteers meet for two hours every month. They maintain the four flower beds around the bandstand and beds at the end of the lily pond while two raised beds in the café garden provide herbs for the café. Council staff are responsible for other areas but volunteers help with mulching or dead-heading the roses in the ornamental garden. They see themselves as providing 'the icing on the cake'.



Eaton Park

Due to the number of visitors (and their dogs), plants in Eaton Park need to be robust. Also, the bandstand beds are in full sun and are very dry and so the volunteers stick with tough plants like hardy geraniums and salvias.

Although the primary role is to care for the flower beds, the group also provides



Waterloo Park

a friendly support system; they always go for coffee after monthly sessions.

There is a similar story from **Waterloo Park** in north Norwich where local residents enhance the beautiful site with the aim of enriching community spirit. Part of a registered charity with an open membership, the volunteers manage thirty large flower beds in Waterloo Park where they work every Saturday. In response to climate change they are experimenting with planting drought-resistant plants and, to reflect the local history of weaving and dyeing, are developing a wlldflower meadow and dye beds.

History is to the forefront of **The Oasis**, a small garden developed by Norwich City Council in 2005. Situated alongside the river the aim was to recognise the historical significance of Fye Bridge as the first wooden crossing to have spanned the Wensum, linking the Anglo-Danish settlement on the north of the river (the original North Wic) to the Anglo-Saxon settlement around Tombland in the south

By 2021 the garden was past its best and local residents were invited to take over its upkeep. A small team successfully replanted and restored the garden's initial vision as a place to sit, chat and play. Visitors will note that the wooden bridge in the children's play area reflects the importance of Fye Bridge in the city's history.

In 2015, when the rose bed outside the Rail Station was looking unloved, and offering a poor welcome to visitors, the **Norwich City Centre Volunteer Gardeners** offered their services to Greater Anglia. They restored the large rose bed which is maintained every fortnight by about half of its 15 members. To increase wildlife the bed now contains native wild flowers.

Volunteer Gardening

The 'front garden' of City Hall is also maintained by the NCCVG. In the 1970s, landscape architect George Ishmael designed the two beds with non-traditional sizeable perennials and the volunteers maintain his bold planting. The group gardens organically and composts green waste at both sites. Social interaction is important but the larger aim is to give pleasure to locals and visitors to Norwich.

I thank Sarah Scott, Rose Baulcombe, Simon Bloom, Jean McCormick, Lynda Baxter and Louise Curtis of NCC for contributing. Visit lumi.org.uk for information about Norwich communities.



The Oasis



City Hall

The National Collection of Muscari

Richard Hobbs, Norfolk plantsman



The garden

In 1978, when Plant Heritage was formed to safeguard garden plants, one of the first National Collections to be established was Muscari (grape hyacinths). It was held in Boxford, Suffolk by the late Jenny Robinson who had a wonderful garden stuffed full of interesting bulbs. In the late eighties I rang Jenny to see if I could visit her collection. She produced a delicious lunch and told me that I was the only person to have ever visited the collection. We became good friends and when visiting one July found an array of boxes and pots of grape hyacinths by the garage.'You shall have them', she said. You didn't say 'No' to Jenny so into the car they went and without being asked I had the National Collection – then of 27 taxa, now grown to 185.

What does a National Collection look like? Most of our plants are in the open garden and are accompanied by a sheep's numbered ear tag; long-term labelling in the garden is a bit of a nightmare but this method has stood the test of time. Dead-heading is essential to keep the patches of cultivars pure. We also have about 50 pots in the greenhouse, including the more precious plants and some slower-growing species. These get re-potted every year in July.



M. comosum

There is also a spare back-up set in a raised bed on our allotment. Another important part of the collection are the photographs and voucher specimens housed in the herbarium at RHS Wisley.

Muscari are much more varied and interesting than you might think; of the 70 species or so species, only two are well-known thugs. *M. neglectum* is a rare British native of the Breckland and is sadly extinct in Norfolk though it thrives in Suffolk largely thanks to the American Air Force. The air base is part of the extensive Lakenheath Warren, which is one of the best sights for nature conservation in the Brecklands. The exclusion of people and the occasional singeing by aircraft create the right conditions for it to thrive. Curiously, this plant is beautifully scented.

If you go to a rural market in Greece you may well find bulbs of the tassel hyacinth *M. comosum* for sale – not for the garden but to eat. They are pickled, like onions, and are served classically with rabbit. They are also grown commercially in Morocco. We have a patch in the garden purchased from Chania market in Crete and they do very well.

The name Muscari was first ascribed by Karl Clusius in 1601 and comes from the Greek *muschos* meaning 'musk'. This refers to the scent of some of the species, though *M. macrocarpum* smells rather surprisingly of bananas.

The taxonomy of this group is still in a muddle. While I have had the collection it has belonged to three different families, but they are now in the Asparagus family. The genus can be split into three distinct groups that some authorities (but not the RHS) regard as three separate genera: *Muscari, Pseudomuscari* and *Leopoldia*.

The collection is made up of species, wild variants and cultivars. Most of the cultivars are bred in Holland where they are an important cut flower and forced pot-plant. One of the first I grew



M. ambrosiacum



M. inconstrictum

was *M. ambrosiacum* – the beautifully-scented musk grape hyacinth, which is easy to grow. This is a big plant with bulbs almost as large as tennis balls. The flowers are greyish white with a blue tinge and the teeth, where the largely fused perianth segments meet, are brown. Native to southwest Turkey it grows in rocky places but all it needs in the garden is sun and good drainage. Unlike some members of the genus, it produces little seed and has never seeded around our garden. It is closely related to *M. macrocarpum*.

Another large and interesting plant is *M. comosu*m – the tassel hyacinth. The flowering spikes are 30cm tall and distinguished by an erect tuft of long-stalked, sterile flowers in deep purple/blue. The fertile flowers are blue and brown with yellowish-brown teeth. In the wild it is widespread and variable.

We grow plants that originated in Greece, Turkey, Croatia, Iran and the Negev desert. The white form, *M. comosum* 'Album', is a wonderful plant with greenish-white sterile flowers. All forms do well in a sunny well-drained site and will flower in late May and early June after most other species have flowered. This group, the Leopoldias have perennial thick white roots that, in most species, have shrivelled away by the end of May.

M. inconstrictum is darkest blue with delicate flowers that is good in a hot, sunny, well-drained spot where it is one of the first to flower, soon followed by the large, turquoise *M. chalusicum*. Many grape hyacinths seed around too much, which makes the sterile hybrid *M. 'Saffir'* rather attractive. It has pale blue-grey flowers that never quite open. Three very good strong garden plants that have been bred for the cut-flower trade are 'Peppermint', 'Lyndsay' and the glossy 'Big Smile'. There are a number of winter-flowering cultivars and 'Winter Amethyst' – from well-known nurseryman Bob Brown – is one of the best; good in the garden but outstanding in a cold greenhouse.

Our collection is large and varied and continues to grow; only a month ago I returned from Nottingham with eighty pots in the back of the car, but that's another story.



Muscari 'Lyndsay'



Muscari 'Peppermint'

Who is Salvia?

by Graham Watts Plantsman and Assistant County Organiser for the National Garden Scheme in Norfolk

It started on a wet afternoon in June 2016 when 20 members of the Kew Guild visited us at Dale Farm in Dereham as part of a weekend event, touring nurseries and gardens in Norfolk. The Guild members are a mix of current and retired staff and ex-students from the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew. Despite having been a student myself at Kew in the late 60s we at Dale Farm were quite anxious about the visit as scrutiny by your peers in horticulture can be quite daunting. John Sales, retired gardens advisor to the National Trust, was in the group and was a man of clear and often forthright opinions. In the event John told us,"This is just my sort of garden. It's an absolute delight." Phew!



Dale Farm Rose

However, during the visit one of the group came running towards us waving his camera. "You have a different colour *Salvia forsskaolii*" he exclaimed excitedly. "I specialise in salvias and have never seen another colour in this species." Sure enough, when we looked at the flower bed with a large planting of blue *S. forsskaolii* with the white lip there was a single plant with white lips and rosy pink flowers. We immediately put a plastic bag over the flowers and planned to collect seed to see if they maintained the new colour.

As with *S. forsskaolii* there was good germination and to our delight all flowered rosy pink. So over the next three years we built up a stock of 30 plants and noted they were all consistent in colour, form and vigour. The foliage was a slight yellow colour which was also different to the parent species.

What to do next? We decided in 2019 to take a few of the plants to John Tuite at West Acre Gardens as John had long experience of developing new cultivars of plants and could advise. John agreed that our cultivar was distinctly different and worth selling.

He suggested calling it 'Dale Farm Rose' and we decided to donate the rights of sale to John as we were keen to support one of the terrific range of small specialist nurseries that we are really fortunate to have in Norfolk.

After 2019, Covid intervened so we just kept building up stock and checking consistency. However, in late September 2021 John phoned, "There is an RHS (Royal Horticultural Society) trial of shrubby salvias starting in April 2022 and your salvia is worth entering. I know the national-collection-holder of shrubby salvias and if she agrees we can ask her to put it forward as an entry." Of course we readily agreed and took five of our best plants to John so he could liaise with the collection holder.



Field trial, RHS Wisley 2023

No more was heard until Sue Roe, a fellow committee member of the National Garden Scheme in Norfolk, and a Norfolk Gardens Trust committee member, contacted me to say, "I am a member of the trials committee for the RHS trial of herbaceous salvias and there is a *Salvia forsskaolii* called 'Dale Farm Rose' in the trial, is that anything to do with you?"



Dale Farm Rose in the trial plot

The RHS trials hundreds of plants to see if they perform reliably in the garden; they look for: foliage and flower quality, habit and overall impact, vigour and persistence, and pest and disease resistance.

The three-year trial began last year at RHS Wisley and in July this year the flowers were described as elegant and airy on substantial basal foliage. We shall wait until the trial concludes next year before finding out if our pink salvia obtains the RHS seal of approval.



Assessing the salvias

Planning: Heacham Park

Keri Williams, NGT Planning Adviser

Norwich City Council has granted permission for the redevelopment of Anglia Square on the basis of a revised scheme. Regeneration of this part of the city has long been sought. This decision is perhaps not surprising, notwithstanding our concerns about harm to views from St James Hill, Kett's Heights and Waterloo Park.

Proposals at Gunton Park include restoration of the walled garden, reinstating a historic greenhouse and the substantial extension of a building to create a "Stewards House". There would be a conservation management plan for the whole Park. Our comments were supportive subject to occupation of the Stewards House being linked to the Park's management, a phased programme for the walled garden restoration and legal underpinning for the management plan. No decision has yet been reached.

Nor is there a decision on proposals at Raynham. They envisage nine boathouse-lodges, providing holiday accommodation along the edge of the lake. A barn would be used for parking and a woodland and ecological management plan is proposed. Visual impact would be mitigated and there could be benefits to the estate's viability. Nevertheless, there are also some concerns. This is the earliest estate lake in Norfolk, created in 1724. It is an important element of the Park's historic character. The lodges would be a substantial built development, resulting a significant change to the lake's character and to its ornamental role.



The lake at Raynham, courtesy of Roger Last

A Reader's Garden

Selwyn Taylor

Where?

Elm Grove Lane in north Norwich has been my home for 47 years.

When we bought the 1920s house it was in a neglected state, the garden very unloved. Over the years the property has grown into a family home and a place for me to work as a designer and associate lecturer at Norwich University of the Arts.



Studio viewed from second garden

How has it evolved?

A plot of land was purchased from a neighbour in the 1980s, which increased the garden by fifty per cent. Extensive alterations and a large studio/flat in the garden came later. The garden is an extended living/working space in which I endeavour to redefine a suburban garden and to provide inspiration from my studio window.

Initially, aesthetic values took precedent over gardening know-how, but over the years a more balanced approach has resulted in an eclectic array of informal planting rich in colour and form and, I hope, full of surprises.



Kahili ginger. Hedychium gardnerianum



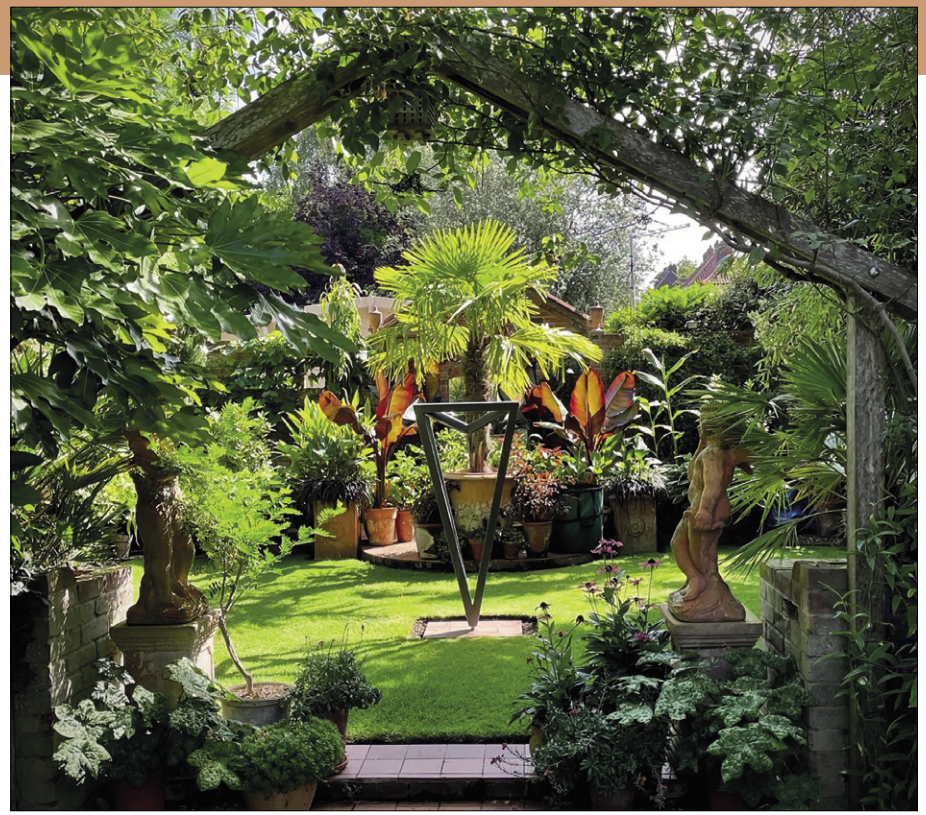
Dicksonia antarctica with 8ft giant Himalayan lily

Influences?

Taking the lead from my friend, the late Will Giles, the garden is filled with unusual and exotic plants: tree ferns, palms, red and green cordyline, tetrapanax, Abyssinian red and Basjoo bananas, fatsia, yucca, datura, pink silk tree, Indian bean tree, evergreen *Magnolia grandiflora* and *M. delavayi*, varieties of lilies (including the giant Himalayan) canna, ginger and dahlia as well as purple *Angelica gigas*. In addition to many succulents and ferns I have the bog plants (gunnera and the giant leopard plant); grapevines and climbers campsis, star jasmine, *Clematis x cartmanii* 'Avalanche' and *C. armandii.* There are others.



Cockspur coral tree Erythrina crista-galli



Second garden viewed through wooden arbour



View from garden looking towards house

Successes and failures

Sadly, some plants fail to survive hard winters, and some outgrow their space. Sometimes an exciting new species just has to be acquired; there is always room for a new plant somewhere in the garden.

Garden opening?

For over 10 years the garden was part of the NGS Open Gardens Scheme. Now, it is open by appointment: selwyntaylor@btconnect.com

NGT at the Norfolk Show

By Hilary Talbot



Lady Dannatt at the Norfolk Show.

The Norfolk Gardens Trust's stand at the Royal Norfolk Show attracted a record number of visitors this year and there was a buzz of excitement in the air. The reason was the visit of Lady Dannatt, the Lord Lieutenant of Norfolk, to meet children from the Drake primary school, Thetford, and to see the display of the inspirational project the pupils had undertaken. All was achieved with the prize money we awarded this winning school in the Paint a Posy competition last year.

The NGT's stand showcased the ground-breaking work all 430 Drake school pupils had undertaken to create a permanent nature trail through the wetlands near their school, then map it

and put it online. The children used and improved their knowledge of flora and fauna, geography, maths and IT and also, importantly, raised their awareness and appreciation of the environment around them.

It was thrilling that last year's art competition was such a success, with over 5,000 children across the county taking part, but the creation of this walking trail is a legacy we could never have imagined.

The children were delighted and proud to see their work displayed at the Royal Norfolk Show and it was moving to see their rapt attention as Lady Dannatt congratulated them on their achievements.

Executive Head Louise Clements McLeod, and Art Lead Emma Booth, were also there to support and applaud their pupils. Louise Clements McLeod was keen to give credit to the Norfolk Gardens Trust for inspiring the venture, "The Posy project was a real turning point for us."

Drake primary isn't the only school in the county to benefit from the work of the NGT. Our volunteers work hard to raise awareness of the environment among the younger generation by giving small grants to schools to fund their green projects. Across Norfolk, there are ponds and vegetable plots, sensory gardens and wildflower patches, all flourishing because of funding from the NGT.

See more photos and video of Lady Dannatt and the Drake School pupils at the Royal Norfolk Show on Instagram @ norfolkgtrust

We would like to thank Sophia Loyal, 18 year old UEA student, for the social media reporting she did for us from the Royal Norfolk Show and for taking photographs.

EVENTS ORGANISER

We are seeking someone to take over the summer events programme from Karen Moore who is standing down next year

Please get in touch with me if you wish to know more (mtmartindairy@aol.com)

Full support will be provided

Matthew Martin
Chairman

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

Talks are held at Bawdeswell Village Hall, Reepham Road NR20 4RU

Please return booking forms to the Talks Organiser, Penny Coombes at 68 West End Street, Norwich NR2 4DP, by post or email norfolkgtrust@gmail.com

Payment by Bank Transfer preferred:
Sort Code 20-62-53 NGT General a/c 70659096 Ref: Oct 2023 Talk
OR
Payment by cheque made payable to 'The Norfolk Gardens Trust'

Saturday 14th October 2pm

'Constance Villiers Stuart : In Pursuit of Paradise'

An illustrated talk by Mary Ann Prior from her book on Constance Villiers Stuart.

A chance encounter with one of Constance Villiers Stuart's granddaughters in 2017 gave Mary Ann access to Constance's archive (1876-1966) of original sketchbooks, paintings, photographs, diaries, correspondence, magazine and newspaper articles, scrapbooks and ephemera.

After the destruction of the family home in Norfolk by fire in 1903, Constance and her mother redesigned the house and garden. This inspired Constance to learn how gardens were laid out and planted. Following her marriage to Patrick Villiers Stuart and a posting to India in 1911, Constance's admiration of Indian garden design culminated in her first book, *Gardens of the Great Moghuls* (1913).

Having gained an M.A. in Cultural History from the Royal College of Art, Mary Ann Prior was appointed Curator to the Wilson Centre for Photography in London. She was awarded a Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship to study photographic collections at George Eastman House Rochester, NY, the Peabody Museum, Harvard, the Museum of Modern Art, NYC and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC. Subsequently, Mary Ann worked as an Associate Curator of Photographs at the Getty Museum in Los Angeles and, later as Art Advisor/Curator to two American companies, Pfizer Inc and Bank of America, as well as Camellia PLC, a British-based global agricultural conglomerate. She is currently working as an art adviser/curator for Bank of America (EMEA).

Her book entitled 'Constance Villiers Stuart : In Pursuit of Paradise' was published in 2022.



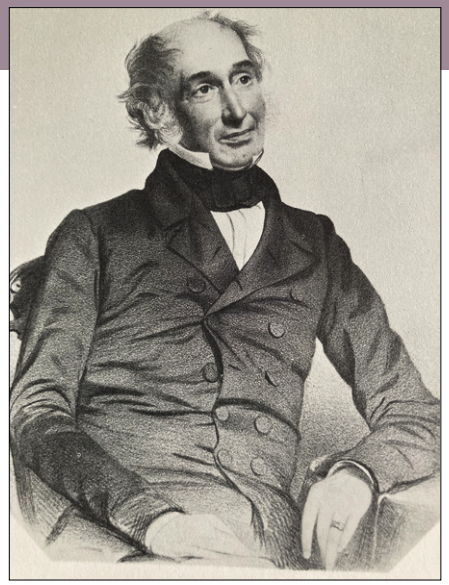
Saturday 18th November 2pm

'Sir William Hooker, protégé of Sir Joseph Banks and the first director of Kew Gardens'

An illustrated talk by Andrew Sankey

Born in Norwich in 1785, William Hooker cultivated his love for botany from an early age, managed a brewery in Halesworth, became a plant hunter for Sir Joseph Banks, worked at the Horticultural Society gardens in London and became Professor of Botany at Glasgow University. The pinnacle of his career was his appointment as Director of Kew Gardens in 1841. At Kew his drive and enthusiasm rebuilt the reputation of the greatest botanical gardens in the world, after they had suffered such a massive blow from the twin deaths of Joseph Banks and George III in 1820. He opened the gardens to the public, created the great lake, sent out Kew plant hunters again, employed women gardeners for the first time in Britain, and had two of the world`s most iconic glasshouses built – the Palm & Temperature Houses. The story of this Norfolk man is simply spell-binding.

Andrew Sankey was a teacher of Engineering Drawing and Graphic Design before starting a garden design/ landscaping business and a small specialist nursery in Lincolnshire in 1991. He became a passionate advocate of the cottage garden style, opening his own cottage garden under the National Garden Scheme. Andrew is chairman of the Lincolnshire branch of the Cottage Garden Society and in 2021 published his book 'The English Cottage Garden'.



Andrew has lectured widely on cottage gardens, medieval gardens, women gardeners, plant hunters and Arts and Crafts gardens, both in Britain and the USA, and has designed many cottage-style gardens throughout the East of England. He has written booklets on Companion Planting, Cottage Favourites, and Sayings and Superstitions. He continues to design gardens and lecture widely on a range of gardening topics.

NEXT YEAR

Looking ahead to 2024, we start the year with the Annual Tate Talk in March. This talk is open to members and non-members and is supported by a bequest from Donald and Yvonne Tate.

Saturday 2nd March 2024 2pm

Tate Talk (pre booking only)

Caroline Holmes - an illustrated talk on Gertrude Jekyll

Trained as an artist Gertrude Jekyll was our Impressionist gardener and

her legacy encapsulates the notion of an 'English Garden'. Apart from her partnership with Edwin Lutyens she was also on good terms with William Robinson, Reginald Blomfield and Harold Peto – the latter two designing magnificent architectural gardens. Using her own research in the archives of the French nurseryman, Joseph Bory Latour Marliac, Caroline will examine the correspondence between him and Jekyll at Munstead Wood.

The Annual General Meeting.
Date: Saturday 20 April 2024.
Venue to be confirmed



Membership Matters

Committee

President
The Marquess of Cholmondeley KCVO DL

Chair Matthew Martin
mtmartindairy@aol.com

Vice Chair Sally Bate
sallybate@thegardenstrust.org

Membership Secretary Lyn Burroughs
norfolkgtrust@gmail.com.

Secretary Roger Lloyd
rogerlloyd@talktalk.net

Treasurer James Warren
jameswarrenngt@gmail.com

Events Garden Visits Karen Moore moore.karen@icloud.com

Events Talks Penny Coombes
penny.coombes1@gmail.com

NGT Magazine Sue Roe
sueroe8@icloud.com

Planning Keri Williams
keriwilliams9@icloud.com

Grants Tina Douglas
tinadouglas@btopenworld.com

Website Caroline Keene
carolinekeene4@gmail.com

Press and Media Hilary Talbot
hilary.talbot@ntlworld.com

Members

Graham Innes
yareval@yahoo.com

Roger Last
rl19@btinternet.com

Nick Sandford
nogsandford@gmail.com

NGT Magazine Volunteers Editors Clive Lloyd and Sue Roe
clivelloyd2@icloud.com

Designer Karen Roseberry
karenroseberry@me.com



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