

R A B Y

Newsletter April 19



Restoration of the Duchess's Room in Raby Castle

In early 2018 we began a search to find a suitable area to host lunches for shooting parties at the Castle. Despite the size of the building it proved to be quite a difficult task to locate a suitable space with heating and lighting that could also be accessed directly from the Castle terrace.



The office spaces in the lower part of Bulmer's Tower were felt to be an appropriate area and as a result work began to convert the two offices into a lunch room and boot room.

Until recently these offices were used by the Curator and Marketing Supervisor, but they were previously known as the Red Bedroom and the Dressing Room. They sit at the base of Bulmer's Tower which is located at the South East corner of the Castle. The lower part of this tower, dating from the 12th century, pre-dates the Castle and stood here at the time when the land was owned by the Danish King, Canute.

The tower is reputed to be the only remains of a manor house King Canute possessed near Staindrop, although it has to be said that there is little existing evidence to support this.

The tower was increased in height some time later with John, Lord Nevill adding the battlements in the 14th century.

The conversion involved repairs to internal walls ready for decoration. It was also essential that the open fire in the Lunch Room was re-instated and as a result a considerable amount of work was required to lower a liner down the chimney from the roof some 76 feet above. Once all wiring had been replaced the rooms were decorated and furnished with guidance from Lady Barnard and a large collection of taxidermy from the Castle was restored and placed on the walls. Shooting parties can now enjoy lunch in a visually stunning and comfortable room in the most historically significant tower at Raby Castle.

Alan McKerchar,
Raby Castle Custodian

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Tenant Farmer Spotlight

Tom and Kay Hutchinson



The Hutchinson family came to the attention of many people outside of the farming community in 2015 when the documentary “Addicted to Sheep” premiered at the Sheffield Doc/Fest in October 2015 and then later in early 2016 when it was aired on the BBC.



Filmed and directed by Magali Pettier, the film provided a compelling insight into the lives of Tom, Kay and their three young children Jack, Esme and Hetty. The film was an intimate portrayal of what it was like living and working as tenants on a small hill farm and highlighted how important farming is to our upland communities, both socially and economically.



“Bad weather is normal up here and we can usually deal with whatever the weather does and plan around it, but on this occasion there wasn’t a lot we could do.”



Tom and Kay met at Askham Bryan College and after achieving their qualifications Tom worked as a farmhand while Kay set up a gardening business. In those days they only had ten Swaledale ewes which were part owned by Tom’s father.

Keen to develop farming their business they managed to secure a tenancy on a smallholding in Northumberland on the edge of Kielder Forest in 1999.

It was here they started to expand their Swaledale flock and began to establish their Limousin herd. In 2005 they were successful in securing the tenancy of the Raby Estates 96 acre Bail Hill Farm in Upper Teesdale.



Since then they have worked hard to expand the business and now run a flock of Swaledale ewes and 18 pedigree Limousin and Hereford cattle on the in-bye land surrounding the farm, as well as on 22 acres of land near Middleton-in-Teesdale.

With the tenancy they have 98 ewes on stints over on Harwood Common, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and managed under a Countryside Stewardship Agreement.

This area is part of the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and as a result conservation and farming go hand in hand. Upper Teesdale in particular is well known for its traditional upland wildflower hay meadows and like many farms the Hutchinson’s have some land managed under the Higher Level Stewardship Agreement (HLS). Kay tells me that a recent plant survey in one of their fields identified some 66 species of flowers and grasses. Under such agreements land use is of course limited and there are restrictions on how intensively they can be farmed and when the fields can be cut for hay.

As Tom explains “this does affect how productive we can be and as things stand we can only succeed up here because the farm is a mixture of HLS and none HLS land. If it was all HLS we simply couldn’t do it.”

At an altitude of 1,350ft the farm enjoys wonderful views out over the valley towards Cronkley Fell. At this altitude the weather can be pretty harsh and in 2013 heavy snow and strong winds in April caused them some serious problems at lambing time when they lost a lot of lambs and several ewes to the freezing conditions.



As Tom explains “bad weather is normal up here and we can usually deal with whatever the weather does and plan around it, but on this occasion there wasn’t a lot we could do.”

It was a setback but since then they have been able to invest in a livestock polytunnel and are now able to do much of their lambing under cover.

Sitting here in the warmth of their living room during the warmest February on record it is hard to imagine such conditions, but as Kay points out, at this time last year the ‘Beast from the East’ created snow drifts so deep they reached almost to the top of the window we were looking out of.



“We’d like develop the business, but also provide the children with a base to start their own farming careers.”

Showing their sheep is an important part of their year and as Kay highlights, “showing our animals is a good way of promoting what stock we are producing.”

With four consecutive wins at The Great Yorkshire Show for their Swaledale sheep and twice Hill Breed Champions among many other awards at various shows, their stock is clearly of a very high quality.

This quality of course is also reflected in the good prices they receive at livestock sales.

Bail Hill is a true family farm in every sense of the word and their children, Jack now 17 and at Newton Rigg College, Hetty 15 and Esme 16 who are both still at school all have their own sheep from which they breed from as well. Hetty it has to be said has strayed a little from the family flock as it were and rather than just breeding Swaledales also breeds Herdwicks. Just like their parents they have enjoyed a number of wins with their sheep at various agricultural shows.

Young people taking an interest in farming is of course key to the future of upland communities such as this and Tom says they would like to be able to add more land to farm so that they can not only develop the business, but also provide the children with a base to start their own farming careers.

At a time when there is a level of uncertainty over how farming will develop in the UK, it is heartening to chat to such a hard working family with such an optimistic outlook on the industry and we wish them well as they continue to develop their business.

David Forster.

Images: Kay Hutchinson

Shropshire Cressage Park Oak

Cressage Park woodland is a 55 hectare lowland woodland split into 12 compartments. The woodland grows good quality oak timber and coppice hardwoods.

The Shropshire Estate once had an operational sawmill and the timber grown in Cressage Park was used to make agricultural timber products such as cow stalls, hay racks and gates. In later years picnic benches and sheds were also made from the timber.

Thanks to previous good management it allowed the team to fell a compartment in early autumn 2018. The result was 35 high quality oak stems and a large amount of hardwood firewood.



The product was sold and collected at the roadside with the oak stems being sold to a sawmill where it will be used for producing furniture and oak framed buildings. The team are now working on planting the site with oak trees so that another product can be taken in 80-100 years as previous managers of the Estate did for our benefit.

Cressage Park is being managed under a management plan to enhance the environment and important ecology in the woodland and maintain a healthy woodland structure. Pest control is key to the re-establishment of new coppice and recently some areas have been fenced to promote this new growth.

The Estate will continue to manage the woodland in a sustainable manner for future generations, producing certified high quality timber while improving the woodland environment for the important species that live within it.

Tom Birtles, Shropshire Land Agent

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Cicely Vane Photography Project



There has been a long tradition of recording life in Upper Teesdale through photography. Desmond Collinson in particular did much to celebrate life past and present through his volumes titled Teesdale of Yesteryear. Continuing that great tradition, Lord Barnard's daughter, Cicely Vane undertook a photographic assignment in Upper Teesdale last summer recording activity on many of the farms.

A collection of those photographs is now being assembled and is to be published later this year. Cicely wanted to pass on the following message to all those who assisted her with this project:

“Thank you so much for your co-operation for what was a hugely gratifying project. It was a pleasure meeting everyone and gaining an insight into the unique world of Upper Teesdale.”

Cicely has just started an Art Foundation Course at Manchester University.

Duncan Peake, Chief Executive



ELMS Test and Trial Upper Teesdale

In September last year, Michael Gove introduced the new Agriculture Bill that is due to replace the current legislation which has held the UK under EU rules for nearly half a century.

A new Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS), which is due to replace the current Basic Payment Scheme, aims to incentivise farmers to achieve environmental enhancement and protection and to restore and improve natural capital and rural heritage.

The Government has stated that the new scheme aims to keep bureaucracy to a minimum as well as eliminating principles from the current system that pays farmers for the amount of land they occupy, rather than the outcomes they achieve. The benefits that the programme aims to deliver include improved air, water and soil quality, increased biodiversity, climate change mitigation, cultural benefits and better protection of historic environments.

Raby is now working with partners in Upper Teesdale to develop an ELMS programme which is designed specifically for the uplands. We aim to work with DEFRA through their Test and Trial programme and lay the foundations for a resilient, profitable and environmentally sustainable agricultural sector in Upper Teesdale, Lunedale and Baldersdale.

The programme will be applied at a landscape scale and will be farmer-led through Upper Teesdale Agricultural Support Services (UTASS) working collaboratively with Raby, Strathmore and Wemmergill Estates, Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust, North Pennines AONB and Natural England.

The area covered by the proposed ELMS Test and Trial is an extreme upland environment, rich in biodiversity, heavily designated for its biodiversity value at a variety of levels (local, national and international) and nationally designated for the quality and character of its landscape. Upper Teesdale played an important part in establishing agri-environment schemes in the UK, having been one of the small number of early ESA pilots 30 years ago so it is fitting that it is helping to pioneer this new approach. The Test and Trial will build on long-standing collaboration between farmers, land managers and conservation bodies to model how we might best create a locally configured and locally delivered agri-environment programme as part of wider rural development and business support schemes.

Our initial ELMS proposal was submitted to DEFRA in early March and we hope to receive approval in the spring so that we can develop the Test and Trial further in consultation with the farming community. We will keep you posted on progress.

Duncan Peake, Chief Executive

Employment Survey

In June, it will be two years since we conducted a staff survey across Raby Estates covering such topics as how Raby is perceived as an employer, leadership and management, communications and training and development.

Over the summer of 2019, we will once again conduct the survey and ask our staff for their views and feedback. As we have engaged in much change over this time period, it will be interesting to hear the results. One of the core strategic objectives for Raby is around our people and the desire to develop, recruit and retain high achieving people.

In addition to the employment survey, over the last two years we have recruited a number of impressive individuals with strong backgrounds in their fields who are already having a positive impact on the way Raby operates.

We have introduced annual appraisals for staff and volunteers to contribute to the management

and development of our employees and reviewed many processes that affect our staff across the board to make their Raby life a good and fair one. This is an ongoing process as we strive for excellence for Raby and those who work here.

Katrina Appleyard,
Operations Manager

New Appointments

Rachael Bell – Receptionist/Administrator



I joined Raby in January having previously worked as Reception Manager at The Morrith Hotel. Living locally, I was aware of the Estate however I have been amazed how vast and varied Raby is.

I am enjoying meeting the tenants, both agricultural and residential, and feel excited to be involved with the many changes within the Estate.

Laura Peters – Property Operations Assistant, Shropshire



After eight years with a building company I have brought my office experience and building knowledge to a new career with Raby.

It has been amazing to learn about all the different tenants and I am looking forward to some exciting projects coming up in Shropshire this year. Despite being a local, finding all the different areas of the Estate was a challenge initially. I am also enjoying being part of a small team in Shropshire but having great support from Durham.

Julie Biddlecombe-Brown – Curator



I've had a passion for history from early childhood and after a brief spell as an archaeologist, I trained as a curator; a role I have enjoyed for over 20 years. Brought up in Durham, I returned to the North East in 2006 and have spent most of the last nine years as Exhibitions Curator at Durham University's Palace Green Library, with a responsibility for exhibitions varying from Lindisfarne Gospels to the Battle of the Somme.

I am delighted to have been appointed to this post; it offers an unrivalled opportunity in my home county to share more stories of County Durham's amazing history. The biggest challenge I think I face? Well ... if you will permit me two. Firstly, getting to grips with the Castle's history and collection as quickly as possible ... secondly finding my way around the Castle without getting lost!

Bare Peat Restoration Project



Conservation has always been at the heart of the Raby Estate philosophy. Holding extensive areas of moorland, farmland and forestry provides a unique opportunity for the Estate to participate in landscape scale projects to aid the preservation and restoration of the natural environment.

In an effort to boost food production after the Second World War, government funded incentives led to the extensive drainage of large areas of blanket bog habitat across the North Pennines. This unfortunately had a negative impact on the overall condition of the bog habitat through the lowering of water tables and the drying of the peat layer. Raby Estates, in conjunction with its tenants, Natural England and The North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership was one of the first landowners in the country to help reverse this damage by blocking open moorland drains.

In recent years the peatland restoration initiative has continued with large projects currently underway on several of the Upper Teesdale Estate fells. Working alongside our tenant farmers and the AONB Partnership, the Estate has participated in a large scale peatland restoration project which is being funded by the EU LIFE programme.

Large areas of bare peat are known to accelerate peat erosion resulting in the loss of carbon and downstream water quality issues. In the winter of 2017/2018 over 1,900 bags of heather brash was cut on the Monk's Moor and airlifted onto Valance Lodge Fell. This enabled the restoration of approximately 12.5 hectares of degraded bare peat. The project has also involved planting over 6,000 sphagnum plugs, which are known as a peat building species, into the degraded areas.

Work has continued through the 2018/2019 winter where over 1,500 bags of heather brash have been cut on the lower fells to be used on both Valance Lodge and elsewhere beyond Raby Estates. The Estate is committed to restoring and maintaining fully functioning blanket bog ecosystems with bare peat restoration a critical part of this objective.

Alongside the bare peat initiatives, the Estate also continues its work on helping raise the water table where appropriate. Some land forms, such as gullies and hags have sides that are too steep for heather brash to stay in place. One way of tackling this is to re-profile hagg sides and where appropriate install stone and peat dams.

Blocking gullies and grips by installing dams can help reverse peat run off by trapping water and sediment, thus slowing the flow of water and storing more of it in the peat. In turn, this helps raise the water table providing the conditions necessary for bog species to develop.

With the help of the EU LIFE program, the North Pennines AONB Partnership and our tenant farmers, the Estate continues to lead the way in upland conservation through blanket bog restoration and protection.

John Wallis, Estate Manager

Tenant Farmer Spotlight

Jonathan Hotchkiss

Tom Birtles, Land Agent for Raby Estate (Shropshire) met up with Jonathan recently for a quick chat about his business. Jonathan is a third generation farmer and runs his business from Bowling Green Farm on the Shropshire Estate. The farm is situated on the most southerly point of the whole of Raby Estate in the Shropshire Hills on a ridge between the Wenlock Edge and Shrewsbury plain. Jonathan's mother, Marian and father Brian have an active role in the management of the farm and it's very much a family run business.

How long has the family been here?

Grandfather arrived following a farm sale of the outgoing tenant in 1935. The farm required a lot of work and the tenancy was rent free for some time while grandfather worked with Raby Estates to put the farm into good order.

What do you like/dislike about the farm and being a tenant of Raby Estate?

I am very much looking forward to the future and feeling part of the Raby family again. It's great to be working with an in house management team and it was a pleasure to meet Lord Barnard and Duncan Peake recently. I like the history which goes with Raby Estate and the family community that is built with us all working towards a common goal. I don't like the 'Beast from the East' or similar weather as it usually hits around lambing time. It also causes damage to buildings and it makes life a little more challenging!

What does your farming business comprise of?

Sheep and beef animals with some arable used as home grown feed. The farm is about 155 acres and we have a suckler herd of pedigree Limousin cattle and a mixture of lowland sheep breeding ewes. I am very proud of the quality of the livestock and strive constantly to maintain strong bloodlines.

When did you start farming?

I started farming when I could walk and as with most other farmers it's in the blood. It's great to have a job somewhere you love and call home. I studied at the local agricultural college around 1984 and began to become much more involved in the farming business soon after that.

How do we attract the next generation to farming, what upcoming difficulties or opportunities do you see in farming and what is the chat down the livestock market?

Usual chat down the livestock market – weather, jobs for the day and prices! I think market trading may be difficult in the future and commodity prices are likely to rise dependant on Brexit. Agriculture is a robust and resilient industry and everyone will continue to need food so I am positive about the future.

There are a lot of barriers to new entrants principally those struggling to find a farm and secure cash to run a business. As an industry we should remain open to all. Locally a young lad without a farming background has taken an interest in farming and the local community is helping him. As a result he now works for several farms in the area, including us at lambing time. This has now enabled him to establish his own small sheep flock. I think this is important.

What is your favourite job on the farm?

Hedge cutting and shearing – both jobs are reasonably quick and you gain instant satisfaction. The benefits also last for a while. I really enjoy having a diversity of tasks to complete and take pride in making the farm better and caring for it.

What do you do in your down time?

Sleep! and a little shooting.

How is the new Land Agent at Shropshire?

Tom's ok! It's great to feel part of the wider Raby family and I really appreciate having an in-house management team down the road I feel I can work with. I am looking forward to being part of the future of Raby Estates.

Tom Birtles, Shropshire Land Agent

High Force Hotel – Update

It is just over five months since we took over the management of High Force on behalf of Raby Estates and it really has been an exciting and interesting time for us all.

We have met some lovely people from both the local community and from further afield and we hope that people from all across the Estate will also pop in to say hello; you will certainly be made most welcome.



We have all kinds of events and activities planned for the months ahead, so why not come and see what's going on?

If you have been in during this period you will have noticed that the ground

floor has been updated and looks beautiful with our newly installed open fires in the lounge along with the stunning settle that has given the room a completely different feel. Here you can sit quietly by the fire reading the paper, or join friends for a spot of lunch, or afternoon tea.

Our new chef has brought a great food dynamic to the hotel, offering a fantastic selection of menu choices that are set to be expanded even further when our new menu is launched on the 1st April. Our Sunday lunches have really taken off and this is thanks to those local people who have been in and then spread the word in the wider community – thank you to everyone who has supported us. It really is appreciated.

The bedrooms have had an extensive refurbishment to reflect our aim of providing high standard comfortable, accommodation. If you are passing why not call in and ask – if you can have a peek upstairs to see just how nice they are?

We are both looking forward to a busy season ahead, not only with the day visitors that flock to High Force Waterfall in their thousands, but also the local visitors who we hope will come and utilise this lovely venue for socialising, family events and whatever else we are able to host for you. One thing you can always be certain of is great hospitality and a welcoming smile from our committed team who aim to make the High Force Hotel a lively welcome hub for friends and visitors from far and wide.

Andrew & George, Managers of High Force Hotel

Tel: 01833 622336 Email: info@thehighforcehotel.co.uk Web: www.thehighforcehotel.co.uk

New Raby Website – www.raby.co.uk

We were delighted to launch the new Raby website in early March.

The new site is much more image-led than the last and therefore shows the magnificent landscapes of Raby Estates at their best. The Shropshire Estate is featured for the first time and offers an opportunity to showcase some unique properties and hidden landscapes.

The site also provides more information about our diverse departments including farming, forestry and land management. Of course, our well known visitor attractions are included within the new site, along with booking links to tickets and events.

The High Force Hotel is now part of the Raby site and can take on line bookings.

The site is still being developed and we hope to add further photography and video in due course. If anyone would like to submit images for inclusion within the site we would be delighted to receive them.

Please sign up to our newsletter to keep updated on our plans.

Claire Jones, Head of Leisure and Tourism

Tees-Swale: Naturally Connected

The North Pennines AONB Partnership and the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority are working with partners to develop a major natural heritage project that focuses on the landscape and communities of Upper Teesdale and Upper Swaledale. Working across an 829km² area, the project aims to sustain the low-intensity High Nature Value (HNV) farming systems that are rich in wildlife and typical of these upland areas. Raby Estates land in Upper Teesdale lies at the heart of our project area.



Through Tees-Swale, we will restore peatland and upland hay meadows, expand and enhance woodlands, manage rush for the benefit of wildlife and farming, create new, small-scale wetlands and work with partners to reduce the impact of diffuse pollution from sites associated with former metal mining. We will also enable new audiences to discover, explore, enjoy and understand this landscape and how it is managed.

A particular emphasis of the project will be support for farmers to enable them to continue and expand their role as HNV farmers. Amongst other things, we will train farmers in straightforward and repeatable habitat assessment techniques and will work with our finest HNV farmers to showcase their approaches to farming and land management and the benefits society derives from these. We will also develop case studies and trial sites to inform the development of national land management policy.

Thanks to funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Tees-Swale is currently in an 18-month development phase. Subject to a successful 'stage 2' application next year, this £8.5 million project will run for five years from autumn 2020.

For further information please visit our web page:

www.northpennines.org.uk/tees-swale-naturally-connected

or contact Rebecca Barrett,
Tees-Swale Project Manager
(rebecca@northpenninesaonb.org.uk)

We have a Facebook group where team members are posting images and updates from their work across Teesdale and Swaledale. Join us and keep up to date with the development of this project (www.facebook.com/groups/teeswale)

Rebecca Barrett,
Tees Swale Project Manger



Raby Castle, Park and Gardens Development Plans

Raby is embarking upon an exciting phase of development and plans are really coming together for what will be an expansion of the visitor attraction at Raby Castle, Park and Gardens. We feel there is huge opportunity to extend the visitor facilities at Raby and to offer larger, more suitable spaces for the café, shop and admissions departments.

There are a range of beautiful buildings which are currently unused within the park and we have a duty to restore and repurpose these wonderful spaces. We hope that over the coming years these can accommodate a wide range of uses which will make a visit to Raby even more special and provide fantastic meeting spaces for the local community.

Claire Jones, Head of
Leisure and Tourism

Share Farming Arrangement

Historically the Estate let the grassland within Raby Park under short-term Farm Business Tenancies. However, due to a change in strategy the Estate has established a Share-Farming Agreement with the Ward family from Cragg Top, Langleydale to farm the 390 acres of grassland within the Park walls.

With a greater focus on the tourism opportunities around Raby Castle the Estate were looking to find a solution where the grassland within the Park walls was farmed well whilst allowing the Estate to retain a strong degree of control.



It was decided that a Share Farming arrangement was the obvious solution.

Under this agreement the Estate provides the land, buildings, fixed equipment, on-going maintenance of the land (fences/drainage etc) and insurance of the property. The Wards for their part provide the labour, livestock expertise and the machinery required to undertake the day to day management of the livestock. With regard to livestock both parties own a proportion of the breeding stock.

Under such an arrangement, no rent is received by the Estate and no payment is made to the Share Farmer. As a result there is no guaranteed income for either party, however each will receive an agreed share of the income generated and pay an agreed share of the costs incurred. This allows both parties to thrive in the good years, whilst proportionately sharing any losses in the poorer times.

The Share Farming Agreement is initially going to establish a flock of around 1,000 Lleyn breeding ewes, lambing outside and will also take over the management of the Longhorn herd. The aim is for the agreement to provide home-grown beef and lamb to the catering outlets elsewhere on the Estate over time. The majority of the livestock will be sold through normal marketing outlets. There are benefits to both parties from this agreement. For example the Estate will be able to influence the management of the land within the Park for the benefit of the environment, the shoot and the tourist enterprises. Being actively involved in beef and sheep production will also give the Estate a greater understanding of the issues faced in this sector both financially and physically.

For their part the Ward family will be able to expand their business without incurring the significant up front financial cost of taking on a Farm Business Tenancy, as well as providing a future for their son and daughter within their family business. This also gives them an opportunity to showcase their skills to the Estate which may generate further opportunities in the years to come. This is an uncertain time in farming and this arrangement will hopefully provide all parties with the flexibility that is needed to be able to quickly react to changes in the marketplace and government policy without penalising one of the parties. If successful such arrangements may well become more common across the Estate over time.

Robert Sullivan, Farm Consultant

Raby Kaiserchief becomes a father!

For those who follow us on Facebook you will already know that Raby Kaiserchief is our stock bull for the herd of pedigree Longhorns that can be seen grazing in Raby Park over the summer months.

He was actually born at Raby some years ago and was sold with his mother whilst still a calf. After a number of years he returned to the Estate in the spring of 2018 and obviously took to life back home quite quickly!!!



The first calf has just been born and is a little heifer. **To date it has not been named. All calves born in 2019 will be named Raby xxx with the first letter being "T".** Each year we move up one letter in the alphabet so last year's calves have names starting with "S".

Robert Sullivan,
Farm Consultant



Spring and Summer Events

For further information on any of the events listed below, and to keep up to date with future events held across the Raby Estate, visit www.raby.co.uk/whatson



Opening Times

Stables Café, Stables Shop, Park, Walled Gardens and Woodland Play Area. **Open 7 days a week from 10am.**

Castle – open Wednesdays to Sundays, April to September (plus Tuesdays in July & August). **Open Bank Holidays 11am to 4:30pm**

Miniature Growing Castle Gardens – 12th April, 16th April and 23rd April

Come and join Bright Woods Forest School CIC at Raby Castle to create a miniature growing castle garden that you can take home and watch grow.

Trail in the Park – Saturday 8th to Sunday 28th April

There will be a children's 'Where is my baby?' Trail in the Walled Garden. **FREE** with a Park and Gardens ticket, the Trail sheets will be given out when the ticket is purchased. There is also a prize for completed Trail sheets.

Children's Tours of the Castle – selected dates throughout April

History comes to life as our Friendly Footman will host interactive Children's Tours of Raby Castle. Find out what it was like to be knighted and how the Castle was defended from enemy attack. Tours will run throughout the school holidays and tickets should be booked in advance online, to avoid disappointment. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Young Farmers Horse Ride – Sunday 28th April

We're pleased to welcome back the County Durham Federation of Young Farmers Clubs for their annual pleasure ride, helping to raise funds for their organisation.

20th Anniversary Orchid Show Sunday 5th – Monday 6th May.

Raby Castle will be hosting the 20th Anniversary of the Orchid Show which will feature fabulous displays of orchids including many exotic and rare species. We will be welcoming back the North East of England and Darlington Orchid Societies who will be joined by orchid growers and sellers from all over the country. Admission is included in the price of a Park and Gardens ticket.

Teesdale Athletics Club – Raby Races, Sunday 12th May

10k, 5k, 3k and 1.2k routes approx. Children welcome on 1.2k route.

Zog's Dragon School Tuesday 28th May

We are recruiting new students for the Zog's Dragon School. You must be keen to learn new skills such as breathing fire, understanding the science of flying, wild roaring, capturing a princess and of course the very useful Dragon First Aid.

NEW outdoor family theatre

This year Raby Castle will be hosting a production of Gangsta Granny on Saturday 13th July – David Walliams' much-loved tale of a bored boy who discovers his kindly grandma was a former jewel thief. This promises to be a fabulously fun experience for all ages. Other outdoor theatre events include Noel Coward's Private Lives on Saturday 6th July.

The hugely popular Handlebards theatre returns with The Tempest on Sunday 11th August and Much Ado About Nothing on Tuesday 20th August.

More Fun at High Force

The spectacular High Force Waterfall is one of Upper Teesdale's most breathtaking natural sights. Children can enjoy testing their knowledge with fun and educational trails along the woodland walk to the Waterfall every school holiday. There is also a human sundial.

Bookings are now being taken for Easter Sunday Lunch.

Call 01833 622336 to reserve your table.

Dog friendly

Dogs (on leads) are welcome year round in the 200 acres of Parkland and Walled Gardens and also now in the Stables Café. For those really muddy four legged friends there is a covered area to enjoy take away drinks located in the Coach Yard. The newly refurbished High Force Hotel is now fully dog friendly. Also keep a look out for our popular monthly dog walks.

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