

R A B Y



Welcome

I can hardly believe that Christmas is just around the corner but this time of year does nevertheless provide an ideal opportunity to look back and reflect on the last twelve months.

Despite the wider political and economic uncertainties, Raby has, like so many other organisations, businesses and individuals, just got on with it and has, I believe, taken some significant steps forward. In particular this year has seen the emergence of a masterplan for new visitor facilities at Raby Castle and proposals for the restoration of heritage properties in the Park and Gardens and at Gainford Hall. This newsletter also highlights the benefits that have already flowed from the appointment of a full-time curator at the Castle.

I would like to thank our energetic and dedicated staff and volunteers at Raby Castle and on the wider Estate. I realise that for those who work on the land it has been a particularly challenging “back end”. I am genuinely grateful to all those who have played their part in helping us achieve so much this year.

Please accept the good wishes of my family for Christmas and the New Year.

Lord Barnard



R A B Y

CASTLE

Spotlight

Discovering Untold Stories

Since joining the Raby team as Curator in March, Julie Biddlecombe-Brown quickly realised that she needed to get to grips with almost 1,000 years of history, the creation and development of over 120 rooms and the background to 5,000+ collections and items - not to mention around 400 linear metres of archives!

“Thankfully I’m not on my own, and would like to say a sincere thank you to everyone who has welcomed me with such generosity and continues to share their time and knowledge to make my job so enjoyable,” says Julie.

For those who wonder what a curator does, Julie explains that the role takes many forms.

“As a newcomer I realise that these principles of curatorship are already integral to the team at Raby – I have the opportunity to build on firm foundations.”

“In recent years the term has been somewhat hi-jacked by fashionistas to describe anything that requires organisation; “Curating a Festival” would previously have been known as Programming, and those that “Curate their appearance” ... presumably are simply getting dressed! For me, the two sides of the role link directly to the core and origin of the word. It was first used in Ancient Rome where curatores were the senior civil servants responsible for municipal facilities and public works; the most senior of whom (Procurators) were unfortunately immortalised by Pontius Pilate. By the medieval period, curatus, were priests devoted to the care (or ‘cure’) of parishioners, like today’s curate. So here, curatorship relates to responsibility and care. The word ‘curious’ – comes from the same Latin core and exemplifies the other side to the role. It is essential for a curator to have an inquisitive mind and a thirst for learning. As a newcomer I realise that these principles of curatorship are already integral to the team at Raby – I have the opportunity to build on firm foundations.”

Whilst she has been settling in, Julie has been looking at opportunities for research and development both in managing the collection and opening up new stories to our audiences. By the end of 2019, our aim is to have introduced a computerised collection management system, building a database of the collections which will link to other research into the castle and its previous inhabitants. The archives are a key area of priority and with the support of Judith Phillips and Minna Trotter, Julie has started work on a computerised catalogue and begun planning improvements to storage and access.

This summer, two postgraduate interns from Durham University on placement at the Castle allowed us to make headway in two areas. Stephanie Balk has a background in textiles and has supported work on the costume collection, picking up on work that had been started by Lady Barnard. This summer we have documented over 120 items of historic costume, now packed in acid-free boxes and tissue.

Our second intern, George Kenyon, a former teacher, has worked with our Guides and volunteers to refresh the children’s activity trail of the castle. The old trail has served us well for many years and it will be good to introduce the new one next year.

Alongside this, Julie has been learning more about the Castle and its history, not only to answer the many enquiries we receive, but also to build our information bank for new interpretation, tours and events. In this area, many hands make light work and a call to our volunteer team to get involved elicited an outstanding response. This means that over winter when the Castle is closed, work will continue and will include a newly formed Raby Research Group. Watch this space for future updates - it isn’t going to be dull!



Master Plan Update

We are embarking on an exciting period of development at Raby Castle which will see our visitor facilities within the Park and Gardens expand, along with housing developments at Gainford and Staindrop.

Raby holds many nationally and internationally important heritage assets, both within Raby Park and on the wider Estate, the future of which is threatened by the high cost of maintenance. In many cases there is an urgent need to find a new use and purpose for some of the buildings and there is certainly a strong desire to make the Castle, Park and Gardens more accessible to the wider community and visitors to County Durham.

The master plan sets out to add value to our local community and make it much easier for people to enjoy Raby in a way they haven't been able to before. Removing the pay kiosk from the entrance last year has had a hugely positive impact on visitor numbers and we are keen to introduce more facilities for families and to allow further interpretation of the wonderful stories Raby's rich history has to offer.

Opportunities for housing development have been identified at Staindrop and Gainford to support the continued safeguarding of these areas for the benefit of future generations. We have been working closely with these local communities as our proposals emerge and are looking forward to engaging with them as part of a local consultation.

A full account of the proposed development plans are available to view on the Raby website: www.raby.co.uk/about-us/development

New Defibrillator

As one of County Durham's premier visitor attractions, not to mention a key part of the local community, we were delighted to see the installation of a defibrillator in the Coach Yard.

We hope we never have cause to use the equipment but the statistics speak for themselves when it comes to making the case for having it close to hand, just in case. Using an Automated External Defibrillator like ours within 3-5 minutes of cardiac arrest increases survival rates from 6 to 74%. They are easy to use and can even be operated by untrained bystanders.

The defibrillator is mounted to the wall of the toilet block next to the Stables Café, making it accessible 24/7. It can also be accessed by the Emergency Services or any member of the public between 7am and 7pm daily.





Unique Waterfall Weddings

Book your wedding at one of the North of England's greatest natural sights. High Force Hotel and Waterfall is a relaxed and unique setting for your special day, surrounded by some of the most stunning scenery in the country

High Force Hotel is licensed for civil wedding ceremonies and our team have a wealth of experience hosting all manner of wedding receptions. We will tailor make your dream celebration to ensure that every element of your special day is perfect.

Start planning your day by calling us on 01833 622336 or email us at HighForceHotel@raby.co.uk

Spotlight

Weddings at High Force

Whether you're popping the question or tying the knot, these days it's all about creating experiences – and what better backdrop for that Instagram moment than the magnificent High Force Waterfall?

With our Civil Ceremony licence now in place and our first wedding on the horizon, we are very excited about the future.

Summer Rainfall

Wet weather can cause problems for many attractions but at High Force it often has the opposite effect. People love to visit after heavy rainfall when the River Tees rages over the whin sill and the Waterfall roars in full flood. This summer's unseasonably wet weather provided visitors with plenty of photo and video opportunities.

The High Force Hotel tempted some of these visitors in after a damp walk and our decision to combine new dishes alongside classics such as pies and monkfish scampi meant the summer menu was very well received.

Our regular guided Dog Walks also proved to be weatherproof. The August event had an excellent turnout despite the rain as we explored the route to Bleabeck Force, returning just in time to dry out at the Hotel and enjoy our famous Sunday lunch.

Locally Sourced

Over the summer we teamed up with a local Raby tenant farm in Upper Teesdale to put their Belted Galloway beef on the menu. We are also currently featuring our own Raby Longhorn beef which has proved popular for Sunday lunch. With so much fantastic produce on our doorstep we plan to make the most of local partnerships to reduce food miles and support regional suppliers.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

We are very proud to have had something of a green revolution at High Force, cutting our plastic use by 85%. We no longer use plastic lined coffee cups, drinking glasses or straws. Instead these have all been replaced with vegetable based alternatives, made mainly from corn starch. Our milk - and believe me we use an awful lot of milk - now comes in fully recyclable cardboard boxes. Our vegetables are delivered in returnable crates, we are phasing out single use soft drinks cans and have stopped stocking drinks in plastic bottles. Instead we are using newly installed carbonated post mix machines which dispense into completely compostable cups and lids (or reusable glasses inside the hotel). Should any of these items find their way into the environment they will safely and completely degrade within a year. We will of course continue to look at other ways to further reduce our impact on the environment.

Finally, managers Andrew and George would like to say a big thank you to everyone who has supported them. If you haven't been in yet, a warm welcome awaits.



R A B Y
CO. DURHAM

Spotlight

Dr Margaret Bradshaw MBE PhD

Upper Teesdale is one of the UK's top 5 botanical sites and is world renowned for its remarkable flora, including unusual arctic and alpine plants and those which are growing at the northern or southern limit of their range. The area is home to around 100 rare and noteworthy plants, of which 20 or so - the Teesdale Assemblage - are exceptionally rare.



This detailed systematic search will provide a base line for future monitoring in key locations. So far this has mainly concentrated on Widdybank Fell and has been highly effective: covering 3,676 10m² plots very thoroughly, with additional records made in more than 50 further areas so far.

The number of records of the Teesdale rare species entered into the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland database were notably few but have now been hugely increased by John. For example, to the existing 200 records for False Sedge (*Carex (Kobresia) simplisiuscula*), John added 1,007 1m² records in 2017 alone. For the hybrid Teesdale Violet x Common Dog-Violet (*Viola x burnatii*) he has added 236 1m² records to the previous 13.

Sadly, many of these plants are in decline but fortunately they have a highly dedicated friend in botanist Dr Margaret Bradshaw MBE, PhD who for over 70 years has observed, recorded and defended this special and unique flora with a passion.

Growing up on a farm herself in the Yorkshire Wolds she recognises the valuable relationship between farming and conservation and how difficult it can be for a balance to be struck so that both can thrive.

Trying to draw the attention of the wider population to the importance of this flora can also be difficult and as Margaret highlights, tourism organisations tend to focus on one or two plants such as the Spring Gentian and the Birds-Eye Primrose. Margaret says we need to do more to publicise the other plants to be found here. Part of the problem is that "plants don't have fur or feathers so don't attract the same interest", she says.

Margaret used her personal funds to set up the Teesdale Special Flora, Research and Conservation Trust to learn more about why this flora is in decline and how future land management and conservation can help it survive. Highly respected botanist John O'Reilly has carried out detailed plant surveys within the Tees catchment to the west of the Balder-Eggleston Burn.

This is a long-term project, estimated to take around 5 years to complete and to further fund this work she is aiming to raise £100,000.

Margaret says the Trust is currently developing a website which will go live in the spring. In the meantime, if you would like to support the work of the Trust they can be contacted at mebhilltop@btinternet.com

Margaret jokes that although an incomer, she is "hefted to the Teesdale Fells". Now aged 93 she does find getting to the more remote fells much more difficult. Fortunately her other passion in life, horses, has come to her aid and her friend's Dales pony helps her access the remote Cronkley Fell.

Such dedication has been widely recognised and as a result she has received a number of awards, perhaps most notably an MBE for services to conservation, as well as the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership, Pendlebury Award.

With such dedication it's fair to say that the flora of Teesdale could not have a more devoted champion and friend than Margaret.



Superfast Broadband Project

Wireless broadband can be a lifeline to communities and a partnership between Raby Estates and Alncom is set to bring superfast fibre connections to parts of Upper Teesdale that currently have little or no service.

One of those looking forward to the local broadband revolution is the High Force Hotel and many other homes and businesses will soon be enjoying the benefits as the service is rolled out in the area.

Phase two will explore solutions for other parts of Raby's County Durham and Shropshire landholdings where broadband connections could be improved. Alncom is interested in hearing your broadband experiences and needs. **Please contact them on 01665 604 816 or at info@alncom.co.uk, quoting "The Raby - Alncom Project"**.

No-Till Project

Over the last 12 months, Raby Farms has established a "No-Till" project on one of the in-hand farms at High Carlbury near Piercebridge.

"No-Till" is also known as direct drilling or conservation tillage, which means sowing the crop directly into the residues of the previous crop without any prior topsoil loosening.

The objective is to reduce production costs, whilst maintaining or increasing yields, along with improving the overall soil health.

While the economic benefits are obvious, the main reason that Raby has entered into this project is to study the impact on soil health and the environmental benefits.

"No-Till" can dramatically change the soil environment, with organic matter accumulating near the soil surface which improves the structural stability of the soil, reducing the likelihood of soil erosion and nutrient losses.

The increased biological activity in the soil can reduce the requirement for nitrogen, improve water permeability through the soil and increase bulk density of the soil which enables it to carry machinery for longer, enabling faster work rates.

Other environmental benefits include higher earthworm populations and reduced greenhouse gas emissions due to less fuel being used to establish the crop.

However, the system relies more heavily on the use of glyphosate and there is potential for increased grass weed and volunteer cereals. Rotations and cover crops can reduce weed problems and dependence on glyphosate, which means more care is needed to manage crop rotations under this system.

Harvest 2019 was the first year of this project and encouragingly the yields achieved from the "No-Till" wheat was 4.5 t/ac compared to 4.6 t/ac from a conventional field adjacent to the trial site. For year 2, half the trial site is to be sown with a cover crop that will be grazed off with sheep, followed by spring barley, whilst the remaining land will be re-sown with second wheat.

This is a 3 year project, at which point it will be decided whether it will be rolled out over a wider area across the Estate.

Social Committee

This year saw the launch of the Raby Estate Social Committee to bring together staff, volunteers and their families.

The first two events, an Estate Tree Planting and a Summer BBQ at High Force, were a huge success and the committee has also helped establish an Estate Charity of the Year for Durham and Shropshire, which will be in place until the end of 2020. In County Durham we will be supporting the Teesdale and Weardale Search and Mountain Rescue Team and in Shropshire the Lingen Davies Cancer Fund (Shrewsbury & Telford Hospital).

At the staff summer BBQ in July a raffle was held to support these two charities and one of our Castle Guides, Nick Auty, won Bed & Breakfast for two at High Force Hotel.

Climb of Life

Raby Estates climbed to great heights again this year to raise funds for the Institute of Cancer Research (ICR) by putting a team forward for Climb of Life.



Each year businesses across the North take part and have raised more than £1.6 million in the last 32 years. Last year's climb raised over £103,000 and we made one of the largest single team contributions of £7,000. This year's walk took place on November 8th at Crinkle Crag at the head of the Langdale Valley.

You can still support the Raby team by donating online at www.justgiving.com/fundraising/RabyTeam2019 or by speaking with the Estate Office.

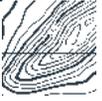
Open Farm Sunday

Open Farm Sunday is the farming industry's annual open day, giving the public a chance to discover real farming at first hand. We were delighted to take part this year for the first time, opening the doors at Raby Home Farm on June 9th to over 900 visitors. Farm manager Robert Sullivan hosted the main attraction - tractor & trailer rides around the farm passing arable fields and young Longhorn cattle before returning to watch some sheep shearing.

Other attractions included a crop discovery zone and children's crafts. Feedback was excellent and we will definitely be taking part again in 2020.



RABY
SHROPSHIRE



Spotlight

Investment in Grange Farmhouse

Improvements are being made to properties across the Estate to improve compliance, energy efficiency and cyclical maintenance and provide homes to maintain the local village community.

One such project is the refurbishment of a principal farmhouse in Uppington which is now well underway and will create a unique 5 bed family home with en-suites and a great ground floor living space. Many historic features have been uncovered during the restoration, which are being incorporated into the new design.

After a competitive tender process, Shropshire-based Randle Building Solutions was appointed principal contractor and the scheme is being administered and run by Tom Birtles, Raby Land Agent, and Laura Peters, Raby Property and Operations Assistant. Completion is imminent and it is hoped the property will be let before the end of the year.

New Era for Charlton Hill

For over 50 years, number 4 Charlton Hill has been the home of the Stanhope family. Now Mrs Stanhope and the house at Charlton Hill are embarking on a new era.

Mrs Stanhope's family has lived on the Raby estate in Shropshire for generations. After moving to 4 Charlton Hill, they renovated the property and operated a smallholding, milking cows and growing fruit, bringing up their family here.

Last year Mrs Stanhope moved to a newly renovated and more manageable cottage in Wroxeter, still on the Shropshire estate, where we are delighted to say she has settled in well and enjoys spending time with family and friends.

Meanwhile, the house on Charlton Hill has been sympathetically renovated by the Shropshire Estate team, with the help of carefully chosen local contractors, to create a modern, energy efficient home.

The end result has attracted a lot of interest and the property has now been let to a new estate resident who can look forward to enjoying all that Raby Shropshire has to offer.

New Appointments



Mandy Welland-Taylor
Retail Assistant – Stables Gift Shop

Mandy has lived in the North for over 30 years and has worked in the financial sector for more than 16 years, providing administration, data imputing and office management services. For the last five years she has focused on design and events, managing her own Wedding Décor and Events business.



Ellis Plews – Apprentice Joiner

Ellis was appointed apprentice joiner with the Building Department in August 2019. He will be studying at Darlington College alongside his role which will see him develop his skills experience while working on the Raby Estates property refurbishment programme under project manager David Charlton. During his two year apprenticeship with us he will be studying towards his Level 2, Site Joinery qualification.



Emma Robinson – Trainee Chef

High Force has welcomed trainee chef Emma Robinson who has joined the Hotel's busy kitchen. Emma has an incredible drive for personal development and shares the team's passion for delivering excellence within the Hotel.



Join us on New Year's Day



R A B Y
CASTLE



The Deer Park and Terrace at Raby Castle will be open for the first time on New Year's Day. Join us for a stroll in the Park, enjoy a warming drink and snack in the Stables Café and browse the Christmas sale items in the Stables Shop

Visit www.raby.co.uk



Christmas Trees on Sale – Daily from November 28th

Select your Christmas tree from our extensive range grown on the Raby Estate by our special team of Foresters. You can choose your own tree from an impressive selection of Nordman Fir and Norway Spruce trees. Trees will be available in the Coach Yard and accessories including tree stands, wreaths and foliage will also be on sale.



Festive Afternoon Tea in the Castle 6th, 11th, 12th, 18th and 20th December **Some dates now SOLD OUT.**

Enjoy a classic British tradition with friends and family this Christmas with a limited edition Festive Afternoon Tea at Raby Castle. This special event will be a celebration of all things sweet and festive and will take place in the magnificent setting of Raby Castle's Grand Entrance Hall.



Fireside Stories with Father Christmas – Saturday 30th November until Tuesday 24th December

Father Christmas will be returning to his favourite fireside chair in the beautifully decorated Grand Entrance Hall at Raby Castle this festive season. Join the fun as he recounts a Christmas classic with the help of the sparkly Mrs Bauble the Castle Groom, Elvis the cheeky Christmas pony and his friendly Footmen. The Grand Entrance Hall will be adorned with twinkling Christmas trees and a roaring log fire where Father Christmas will meet each child and give them a special gift to put under the Christmas tree.

Families visiting Father Christmas will be able to see him from Saturday 30th November and for the first time he will stay right up until Christmas Eve, before heading off on his sleigh. Also new for this year will be evening sessions at 6pm where the Castle's candlelit Grand Entrance Hall will really bring the magic of Father Christmas to life.

This was an extremely popular event last year so early booking is advised.

The Hall will be transformed with beautifully decorated Christmas trees, grown on the Raby Estate, and there will be a roaring log fire. Crisp, white tablecloths, seasonal table decorations and candlelight will also help to ensure this a truly indulgent treat. You will be served three tiers of seasonal delights which will include a selection of sandwiches, homemade cakes, scones and cream with freshly brewed tea. Why not add extra sparkle to your celebration by ordering a glass or bottle of Prosecco too?

Christmas Market – Saturday 7th & Sunday 8th December

For unique gift ideas and inspiration head to Raby Castle's Christmas Food and Gift Market which will be packed with seasonal produce and presents for all the family. Entry is FREE and this is a perfect opportunity to buy stocking fillers, delicious food and drink, and to source traditional gifts for friends and family. Some of Father Christmas' reindeer will be making a special visit to Raby for two days during the Festive Market with their keepers where you can learn about the reindeer and their care. Last year's Festive Market attracted over 10,000 visitors and this year's will be even bigger and better with extra food concessions and more stalls.

Festive Wreath Making – Thursday 5th, Sunday 8th & Tuesday 10th December

With expert guidance from our visiting florist and using fresh foliage from the Raby Estate, along with seasonal flowers, berries and accessories, learn how to make your own decorative festive wreath to take home. Taking place in our new Gardener's Workshop space, you will be shown how to add moss to a wire frame before decorating it in your own unique style.

Thursday 5th December, 5-8pm
Sunday 8th December
(morning and afternoon sessions)
Tuesday 10th December, 5-8pm

Make your own Willow Reindeer Friday 6th, Saturday 7th & Saturday 14th December (full day)

Make your very own enchanting willow Reindeer guided by our expert tutor. Learn the basic skills and techniques used to create this festive favourite and enjoy creating your own Reindeer that you can take home and adorn with fairy lights to decorate your house or garden for Christmas. The evening session will make a Reindeer head.



Enchanted Festive Forest – Weekends in December

Families can explore a new path through the Christmas trees in the Riding School which will be transformed once again into an Enchanted Festive Forest full of magical scenes to discover. Take the Trail through the trees, collect your prize and settle down at the craft tables.

The Enchanted Festive Forest will be open at weekends during December. Tickets are £4.50 for children (adults go free).

Late Night Christmas Shopping – Thursday 5th, 12th and 19th December

The Coach Yard will be open until 7pm for late night shopping and a FREE glass of fizz or mulled wine. Come after work and browse our selection of locally sourced traditional gifts, decorations and gift wrap in the Christmas Shop. Christmas Trees will also be available.

Castle Terrace Winter Opening

The Deer Park and Castle Terrace will be open in November and December (until 23rd December) between 10.30am and 3.30pm, Tuesday to Sunday. **Ticket prices are Adults £4.50, Children £2.50, under 5s free.** Annual pass holders can visit for free. Please note the Castle will be closed for the winter.



Night Photography Workshops

Night skies photography expert Gary Lintern will be running a series of his popular Night Sky Photography workshops at Raby Castle in November and December. Enjoy exclusive access to Raby Castle for night photography, both inside and out. The Castle will be open after hours and the lakes at Raby Castle which are usually very still, make it the perfect location to capture reflections of the night sky. Parking and refreshments are included. Please check the website for dates and availability.

New Year's Day

The Deer Park and Terrace at Raby Castle will be open for the first time on New Year's Day. Join us for a stroll in the Park, enjoy a warming drink and snack in the Stables Café and browse the Christmas sale items in the Stables Shop.

All gate proceeds will be donated to local charities, suggested donation £1 per person.

Enquiries

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