

A large, historic stone castle with multiple towers and battlements, situated behind a high stone wall. The castle is reflected in a body of water in the foreground, which is covered with green lily pads. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

R A B Y

Welcome back!

Raby gears up for reopening with an exciting Summer programme

Sustainable Forestry

Read how Raby Estates woodlands are sustainably managed under long term forestry plans

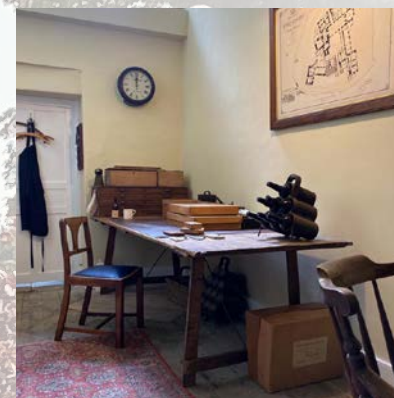
Plus

Curlew Habitat and Population Project

Restoration, Restoration, Restoration – work begins to restore iconic County Durham properties

Welcome back!

Raby Castle gears up for reopening, with new spaces on show for the first time.



Each year during the winter months, many historic buildings close their doors to visitors. Raby Castle is no exception and after a busy festive period, the castle closes before opening again in the spring.

While the doors have been closed, this period has been anything but quiet for the castle team, as work to care for and maintain the collection has continued behind the scenes. Traditionally, these months see the winter deep clean with conservation work and collection checks taking place, as the castle prepares to welcome visitors in the year ahead.

Some of the furniture originally supplied for the Octagon Drawing Room by the Bond Street company G. J. Morant has been returned to display after being rested for a couple of years. It is a reminder of how the room would have looked, and how it would have been used in the past.



A new beautiful gilt and gesso mirror has also been installed in the Small Drawing Room. Dating from around 1865, this lovely piece decorated with scrolls and leaves shows the room at it's finest. Positioned opposite another fine mirror means that the reflection creates the optical illusion of infinity – an endless line of sparkling chandeliers.

New for Raby Castle in 2021, the castle team are delighted to open the doors of The Butler's Pantry which has been recreated in the original setting.

The Butler's Pantry was the personal office space of Raby Castle's Butler. A hub of activity, it was from here that the Butler managed different aspects of the household, rather like a conductor keeping an orchestra in perfect time.

In 1900 the post was held by a Mr Thomas Barker. His Annual Salary was £75, making him the highest paid member of staff in the household. The average wage in the UK at the time was just over £42 per annum.

As the most senior servant in the household, Mr Barker was responsible for the management of the male servants and for overseeing the smooth day-to-day running of the house. His job centred around a daily meeting with the Henry de Vere Vane 9th Baron Barnard where he took the orders for the day and then saw that they were carried out by his team of footmen as well as the Housekeeper and female servants. He advised Lord Barnard on wines and spirits and he kept a meticulous record of the valuable contents of the wine cellar, selecting the appropriate accompaniments to the dishes being prepared in the kitchen.

Mr Barker's role was very visible, he would announce dinner and carry in the first dish. He would be on-hand throughout the meal to attend to the family and their guests. The Butler also held special responsibility for the valuable china and silver. He would ensure that cutlery was polished before laying the perfect table, and that there were no finger prints on the sparkling crystal glassware. After use, he would check that every piece was accounted for before it was locked away for the night.

The Butler's Pantry at Raby Castle includes the original knife cleaning machine, the bell system by which members of the family or their guests could summon the servants and the original Butler's desk, used by a generation of men who kept the castle working like a well-oiled machine.

The Castle reopens on Wednesday 19th May – visit www.raby.co.uk/raby-castle to book tickets.



Spotlight

Restoration of Spring Hill and Unthank Cottage

Work has begun to carefully restore one of Upper Teesdale's landmark properties, Unthank in Harwood. Unthank overlooks spectacular scenery across the dale, with views down Harwood Beck and the River Tees.

The renovation is one of the biggest residential refurbishment projects in the estate's history and it is hoped the completed three-bedroom property will be available for let next spring.

The derelict farmhouse has been undisturbed for over 40 years and we have been working closely with an ecologist to protect the wildlife habitats in the area. A barn owl box has been put in place in one of the barns for nesting, and great care is being taken to minimise disruption to the natural environment.

The teams' skills and dedication have already seen the successful renovation of another property in Upper Teesdale, Spring Hill Cottage, another previously derelict property with impressive views across the dale. Spring Hill Cottage has undergone complete renovation with new timbers, plasterwork and interiors. It has been a fantastic experience for our whole team, including our apprentice who is learning his trade in a unique and very rewarding environment.

At Spring Hill our challenge was to retain the original character of the building whilst introducing modern infrastructure to the property. Compliance was a major part of the refurbishment work, and rather than installing traditional methods for heating and hot water we fitted an air source heat pump as a sustainable renewable energy alternative. Air source heat pumps have been fitted to four other estate property refurbishments currently underway.

The roof timbers and floor joists will be replaced, having been exposed to the elements for many years, and there is currently no mains drainage or electricity. The task ahead is significant, but it is one that our small in-house project team feels very privileged to be tasked with.

The refurbishment of Spring Hill Cottage also included the conversion of an adjoining byre to create a full height living space with a vaulted ceiling. This beautiful property is now the home to our High Force managers Andrew and George, who moved there in April.

Karl Hankey, Compliance Manager



Local artist reimagines rural locations at Raby

Over the last 12 months local artist Steve Messam has been working on a new project, The Architect of Ruins, where site-specific installations were undertaken in Teesdale and Weardale, including on the Raby Estate.

The project included transformation of two sites on the Raby Estate into unique visual landmarks. Bespoke and unique tensile textile forms were used to fill and wrap the structures, adding form and colour that imagines them in new ways, and were photographed to capture the moment when the landscape was changed by their presence. Images of the installations will be featured in an outdoor exhibition at Ushaw College until early July.



Update Raby recruits for an Estate Ranger

In Upper Teesdale, situated in the North Pennines AONB, (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), Raby Estate manages some truly unique landscapes.

At the heart of this area of the estate is High Force Hotel and Waterfall. The waterfall attracts tens of thousands of visitors each year, and is one of the most natural, iconic visitor attractions in the North of England. Raby Estate also manages the surrounding areas on the North banks of the River Tees, including the falls at Low Force, which are incredibly popular with visitors.

Sharing these incredible landscapes with visitors is a real privilege. We take our social and community responsibilities very seriously, and as part of our commitment to safeguarding these spaces we are recruiting an Estate Ranger to join us working in this spectacular area. The newly created Estate Ranger position will help enhance the experience for visitors, providing information, support and guidance to help people experience and appreciate the natural environments in Upper Teesdale safely and respectfully. This is a community customer focused role, and as well as monitoring and maintaining the local environment the post holder will also lead guided walks, educating the public about this unique area. We look forward to sharing further details of this appointment in the next newsletter.



Creative competition winners enjoy Raby Castle's Easter Trail

Young artists from across the region got creative last month as part of our Easter Egg competition to design the eggs for our Easter trail.

The top 12 designs were included in our Easter trail at Raby Castle, Park and Gardens, with the winners receiving entry to the trail during the Easter holidays and a prize.



Peat restoration in Upper Teesdale

The first phase of the newest tranche of peatland restoration work has been undertaken by the AONB Peat Partnership on Valance Lodge in Upper Teesdale.

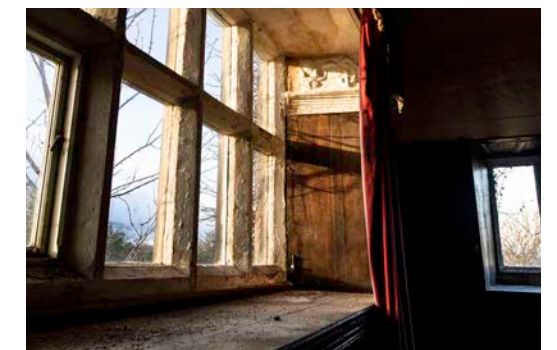
When peatlands are healthy and vegetated, they help to filter water, store carbon, and reduce flooding by slowing the flow of water. Coir rolls and stone weeping dams have been installed to reduce water excess and stabilise the peat resource. Work will continue later in the year, to further restore this area of peatland.

Update Restoration of Gainford Hall

Gainford Hall on the outskirts of Gainford in County Durham, is an impressive Elizabethan manor house, built between 1600 and 1603 for the Rev John Cradock, vicar of Gainford. This striking Grade I listed building has a double-pile plan form (two rooms deep) and is believed to be one of the earliest examples of this type of building in the North East.

Gainford Hall has not seen any major restoration for over 100 years and as a result, has fallen into a state of disrepair. Gainford Hall is on Historic England's Heritage at-risk register, reflecting its need for significant and extensive repairs before any of its fabric is lost.

Gainford Hall recently came back under the management of Raby Estates and its removal from the at-risk register is a priority for the Estate. The repair and renovation of this remarkable building will begin in the coming weeks, and we look forward to sharing further progress as we restore Gainford Hall and secure its future.



Update Business Support

Work has continued over the last few months to further enhance our Human Resources, Health and Safety and IT support. In recent weeks we have begun rollout of a new HR system to support our teams across the estate.

Join the Estate Team

There are several exciting opportunities to join the Estate Team as we approach an exciting period of development for the estate.

For our latest recruitment opportunities visit
www.raby.co.uk/recruitment

The introduction of this new system supports the estates' objective to operate in a more effective and sustainable way, moving us closer to becoming a paperless environment.

Staff and visitor safety remains at the heart of everything we do. We have been carrying out estate wide H&S visits ensuring, even in these difficult times, all areas of the business are continuing to comply with HSE regulations.

Raby has made significant investment in technology and the Business Support team continues to work closely with Bondgate IT to provide the whole estate with the most up to date IT infrastructure, ensuring secure access to Raby's systems and data. We have updated our WiFi infrastructure, enabling free WiFi across the estate for our visitors.

Lesley Renteurs, Estate Administrator

New Faces and Fond Farewells

We are delighted to welcome some new members to the team at Raby.

Harry Ellison joins Raby as Grouse Beat Keeper joining the keepers in Teesdale, Gabriel Damaszk joins the Castle team as our Archivist, and Bertie Bainbridge will be working as a Gardener at Selaby Hall. Sophie Brown has been promoted to Events Manager, Alan McKerchar has taken on the role of General Manager at Raby Castle, Park and Gardens, and Beverley Heslop has joined the finance team permanently as Purchase Ledger Administrator.

We also look forward to welcoming Lisa Wilkinson who will join Raby as Retail Manager later this year.

We bid a fond farewell to Nicky Witchell, Chris Bond, Michael Raine, Mandy Welland-Taylor and Hannah Fretwell. We thank them for their contribution during their time with us and wish them all the very best for the future.

We were deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Liam Foster in April this year. Liam will be sadly missed by his friends and colleagues at High Force, and the wider Leisure and Tourism Team. We extend our deepest sympathies to his friends and family.



Spotlight Sustainable Forestry

The health and environmental benefits of trees have rarely been in the spotlight as much they are right now.

Trees help to sequester carbon and support wildlife, providing a sustainable timber resource, as well as contributing to sense of place and well-being that many of us take for granted.

The Raby Estates woodlands are sustainably managed under long term forestry plans which are independently certified under the UK Woodland Assurance Standard. Management objectives are to produce sustainable, high quality timber in a responsible manner that safeguards the biodiversity of the woodlands and the landscape in which they are situated.

Sustainability is key to the management of trees across the Estates and replanting is a significant element, whether this is large-scale planting in the tree plantations, parkland or changing individual specimens where aging trees adjoining the highways can be replaced with new planting in more appropriate locations.

The past winter has seen the Estate's Forestry and Maintenance Team work to replant over 15,000 saplings to ensure that areas in which mature trees have been recently felled are fully stocked and ready for the spring growing season. The Estate's woodlands are a rich mixture of broadleaf and coniferous crops and the restocking work reflects this with species including oak, birch and alder being planted in addition to timber producing conifers including Scots pine, Sitka spruce and Douglas fir. Planting is just the beginning of the establishment of woodland and individual trees, many of which can have a life cycle of over 100 years. A lengthy period of tending and maintenance is required to allow the young plants to develop, without excessive competition from weeds and invasive species, helping them to develop into the mature trees which characterise and contribute to the beauty of the landscapes in Teesdale and Shropshire alike.

Geoff Turnbull, Head Forester



“Planting is just the beginning of the establishment of woodland and individual trees, many of which can have a life cycle of over 100 years.”

First house to be built on the Shropshire Estate in over 50 years



5 Dryton was a dilapidated cottage which required extensive repair works to rejuvenate it back to a former glory.

The Cottage had sat vacant for a few years since the latest occupier, Keith, had left. Keith had worked for a farming tenant on the estate for many years and knew everything about the area and estate he lived and worked in. He was an entrepreneur and once charged for parking race goers' cars on the garden at 5 Dryton for £5 per car.

Due to the cost involved in repairing the property it was decided more value would be created and a better final family home if the current property was demolished and a new one built in its place. Planning was awarded in 2019 and due to COVID a slight delay in the start of the project was seen. The project has now started in earnest and is moving quickly.

The floor plate for the new property is in and you can see the fantastic view from the family room bay window. The Shropshire team are working with one of our trusted contractors, Randle Building Solutions to deliver this project, and look forward to sharing further updates as the project progresses.



Night time bird surveys, baseline year completed

Following the installation of ecology margins to the equivalent area of over 200 football pitches on the Home Farm the team wishes to understand if these works are successful.

It's important that the farm continues to produce food and productive profitable agriculture the team are analysing how they do this and are working towards more regenerative farming techniques to improve the environment for both better food production and soil, air and water quality. A recent example of one of the techniques we are using is the planting winter cover crops amongst cereal stubbles.

An important method for the estate to assess the impact of these techniques on the environment is by utilising bird surveys. Bird life is a good key indicator species for habitat and environmental health due to their habitat needs and position in the food chain. Thanks to the hard work of James Bellingham a local BTO (British Trust for Ornithology) enthusiast and professional who completed the surveys we have a baseline figure to work from and some great results were seen.

The estate team works closely with our contract farmer Heal Farms and their team. Thanks to Heal Farms and previous farm management we have a strong baseline bird population and new environmental focus areas to build upon. Annual surveys will continue to be undertaken to track trends.

Tom Birtles – Shropshire Land Agent

An important method for the estate to assess the impact of these techniques on the environment is by utilising bird surveys.

High Force prepares to welcome guests back to the Hotel this month

We are looking forward to opening the doors on the latest refurbishments at High Force Hotel on Monday 17th May, when the next stage of lockdown easing comes into effect.

Guests will notice a stylish new look in the bar and communal areas, bringing the interiors in line with the beautiful restoration of the Garden Room restaurant and function room, which was unveiled last year. The bar refurbishment is the final phase of work, which began with the redecoration of the original bedrooms and saw the creation of additional rooms. The hotel now has 11 individually designed en-suite bedrooms, offering luxurious guest accommodation.

We are looking forward to welcoming guests back to the hotel and restaurant this month and we are delighted that bookings for weddings and other special occasions have continued throughout lockdown, which means an exciting year ahead.

We caught up with Hotel Managers Andrew and George to find out what they are most looking forward to as they prepare to reopen the Hotel.

What are you most looking forward to when the Hotel reopens?

Andrew: Welcoming our guests back and providing our usual great service, working in our newly refurbished hotel. It will be lovely to have all the team back together.

George: Being busy, I love the fast pace of the hotel when its busy and I am looking forward to serving from our new bar which looks stunning.

The Hotel has been transformed over the last 12 months – do you have a favourite room or feature?

Andrew: It's really hard to choose just one area as the Hotel has undergone such a transformation. I do love the new Garden Room, with its beautiful hand painted mural, especially when it is set for a wedding or an event. It's just the most stunning room with lots of character and charm.

George: I love it all, but I really do like the new bar, which was the final area to be redesigned. I love the wood that it's made from and the feeling of warmth the space has – it's like it's always been like this. The tiles set into the back of the bar are really special – they were reclaimed from the Cooks Pantry in the Fish Yard at Raby Castle. The tiles are beautiful and will be a great talking point when we're up late with residents chatting by the fire.

What can guests expect when they visit High Force this year?

Andrew: We want our guests to feel like they are staying home from home with attention to detail and the little luxuries that make a stay at High Force memorable. The food is also a big part of visiting High Force, we guarantee that only the best local and responsibly sourced food will be served which will have been lovingly created by our passionate team.

George: Friendly, relaxed service in a comfortable and luxurious setting – our guests often leave as friends who will likely return time and time again.

The new Garden Room looks like a great place to enjoy a meal – which dish on the summer menu would you choose?

Andrew: That's a difficult question as I really love everything on the menu at the moment. The Raby Longhorn Steaks are just amazing though, so I would probably go for the Rib Eye.

George: The Moules Frites, just lovely with warm bread, it's my absolute favourite.

Raby High Force Hotel and Waterfall are open daily.

For further information visit www.raby.co.uk/high-force



Environment

Curlew Habitat and Population Project

In partnership with the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT), Raby are participating in a large-scale project to estimate the population size of breeding curlew in Upper Teesdale by extrapolation from a habitat-stratified sample survey. The findings will then be used to continue and build on a north of England Uplands Curlew Recovery Project.

The breeding population of Eurasian curlew is declining across almost its entire range, with estimates suggesting a 20 to 30% decline in the last 15 years. For this reason, curlew are identified as a “Globally Near Threatened” species and on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

The UK population represents about a quarter of the global breeding population, with larger populations only found in Finland and Russia. The rate of decline in the UK, estimated at a halving of the breeding population in the last 25 years, is amongst the highest recorded, and as a result, the curlew is now regarded as a bird of conservation concern.

In Britain, the curlew was historically a common species, breeding in marshes, meadows and arable fields as well as on moorland, the extent and quality of which have probably declined. Poor breeding success, often attributable to clutch and chick predation, typically by foxes, stoats, crows and gulls, is accepted as the principal reason for decline.

In Europe, over half of published studies involving measured breeding success, quote less than the 0.5-0.6 fledglings per pair per year required to offset adult mortality and to maintain a stable population (Grant et al. 1999).

Unpublished recent estimates by the British Trust for Ornithology suggest a UK population of 58,000 breeding pairs. Of these, approximately half occur in England and Wales and half of those, circa 14,000 pairs, occur in the area of the Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership (NUCLNP) making it a stronghold for curlew. This area covers five protected landscapes; Northumberland National Park, Yorkshire Dales National Park, North Pennines AONB, Nidderdale AONB and the Forest of Bowland AONB.

Within the upland parts of the NUCLNP decline rates are thought to be much lower than in much of the rest of the UK, and even suggest a stable population. One contributing factor to this is the way the uplands are managed for grouse shooting and conservation, which has a pivotal role in conserving curlew in the UK.

This link between management associated with grouse moors and sustained populations of breeding curlew was demonstrated by the GWCT’s Upland Predation Experiment on moorland in North Northumberland. Here predator control led to a three-fold increase in the breeding success of curlew and other waders and annual increases in their breeding numbers (Fletcher et al. 2010).

The moors and marginal farmland of Upper Teesdale, situated within the North Pennines AONB component of the NUCLNP, are widely renowned as a stronghold for several species of breeding waders, including curlew. Upper Teesdale forms part of the internationally designated North Pennines Special Protection Area, which is classified for, amongst other things, breeding golden plover.

The proposed study will build on recently collected moorland bird survey data in Upper Teesdale by conducting a random sample survey across the array of upland curlew habitats present. These data will be used to make a habitat-based extrapolation to an estimated population size for Upper Teesdale. For this purpose, Upper Teesdale is defined as the watershed of the River Tees and its tributaries upstream of Cotherstone Village.

The proposed survey area of Upper Teesdale lies upstream of the village of Cotherstone and contains 471 1-km OS grid squares of potentially suitable curlew habitat either on moorland or within 2 km of the moor boundary. This total includes 30 squares of mainly inbye fields situated more than 1 km from the moor boundary wall but excludes five squares of predominantly coniferous forest and one square consumed by the village of Middleton-in-Teesdale.

A randomised survey of 1-km grid squares, stratified by habitat, is underway. All squares will be assigned to one of five main habitat types; blanket bog, shrub heath moorland, white grass heath, rough grazings and inbye fields.

Mean curlew abundance in each of the five surveyed habitat types, together with the number of squares predominantly containing that habitat type, will be used to extrapolate to the number of birds within each habitat category.

These habitat-specific totals will give an overall curlew population estimate. Such calculations may also be considered for other species such as golden plover for which the SPA is designated.

We eagerly await the survey results and look forward to supporting such a significant conservation project of this iconic upland bird.

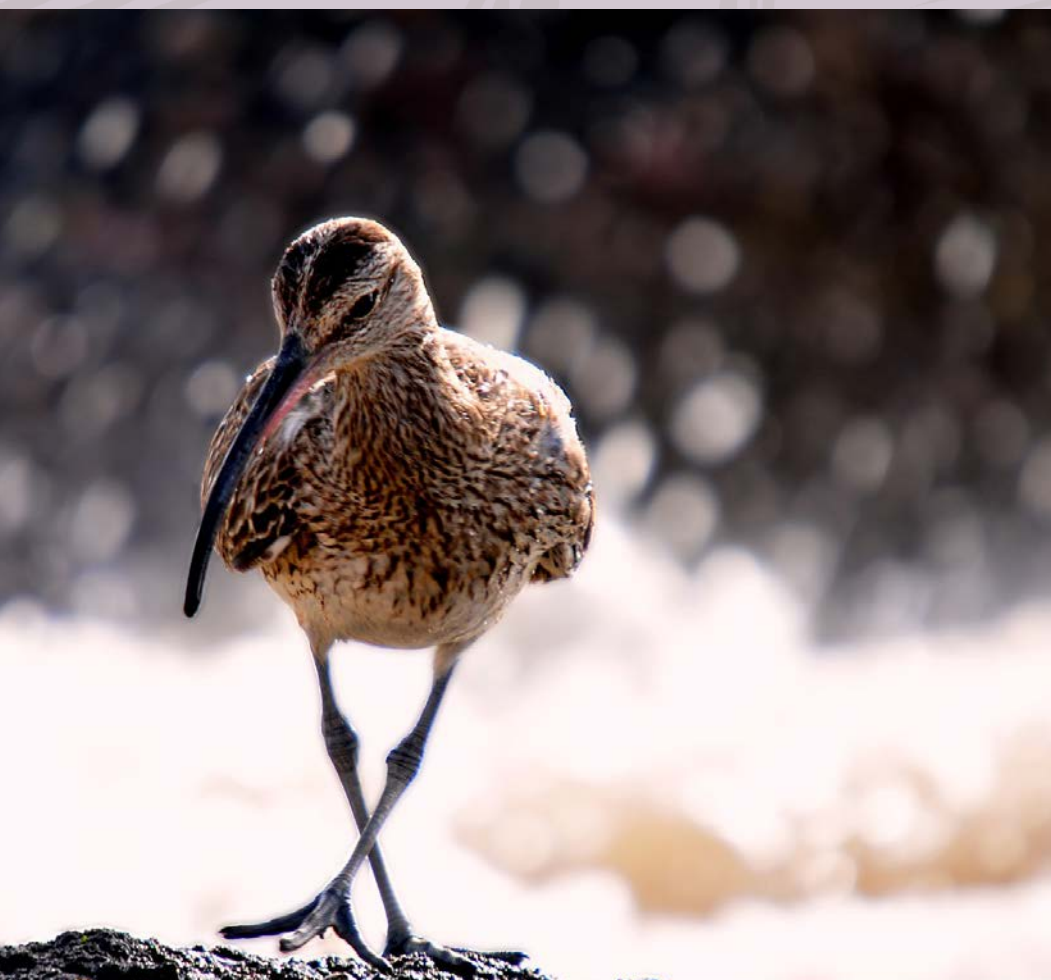
Joe Robinson, County Durham
Land Agent

Key Objectives:

To estimate the size of the breeding population of curlew in Upper Teesdale

To estimate curlew densities across differing upland habitats and altitudinal ranges within Upper Teesdale

To consider the same for golden plover





An exciting Summer line up

As we look forward to the reopening of the Castle this month, we are busy putting the finishing touches to an exciting summer events programme that will see the welcome return of our hugely popular outdoor cinema and outdoor theatre experiences.

Here is just a taste of what you can expect at Raby this Summer.

Raby Castle Reopens Wednesday 19th May

The Castle will reopen to the public on Wednesday 19th May, in line with the easing of government restrictions. Restoration work has been carried out throughout the winter and visitors will be able to see some of the furniture originally supplied for the Octagon Drawing Room by the Bond Street company G. J. Morant, which has been returned to display in the room. For the first time, the Butler's Pantry will also be open to the public.

Serene Sundays – Wellbeing in the Walled Gardens Selected dates throughout summer

What better way to finish the weekend than at a private restorative relaxation session in the Walled Gardens at Raby Castle.

The guided sessions start with a short mindfulness activity, followed by a slow, gentle restorative movement practice and closing with an extended guided deep relaxation practice.

May Half Term Teddy Bears' Picnic Trail

Saturday 29th May to
Sunday 6th June



This May Half Term families can explore our Teddy Bears' Picnic themed trail in the grounds of Raby Castle. The trail is included with general admission. **Our popular Tractor and Trailer rides will return for half term.**

Summer Seasonal Market Saturday 5th and Sunday 6th June



Our popular seasonal markets will return this year with our first event being held over the first weekend in June. Come and browse the stalls and discover lots of delicious treats, seasonal produce and beautiful handmade products from local suppliers.

Father's Day Ploughman's in the Park

Father's Day weekend
19th and 20th June

Our popular Picnic in the Park is back with a twist for Father's Day. **Pre-order a Ploughman's Picnic Box** to enjoy in the Deer Park on Saturday 19th and Sunday 20th June. Picnics can be booked online when you order your admission tickets.

Open Farm Sunday Sunday 27th June

We are delighted to be opening up Raby Home Farm to the public once again this year as part of the national LEAF Open Farm Sunday event. On Sunday 27th June 2021, we will join farms up and down the country, giving people a chance to experience everyday farm life first hand and learn more about how the food on our plates is produced.

Auto Italia Saturday 10th July



Auto Italia returns to Raby Castle this year, featuring Italian cars of all eras displayed against the magnificent backdrop of the Castle. In an exciting collaboration between Raby and Auto Italia Magazine, visitors can expect to see a stunning selection of Italian cars from Fiats to Ferraris and everything in between. **The event will be held from 10am onwards on Saturday 10th July.**

Outdoor Theatre Saturday 17th July and Saturday 28th August

We are delighted to present two fantastic open air theatre productions this summer. The Great Gatsby will be a glittering occasion, with picnics and prosecco available to pre-order and enjoy during the performance. For families, we will be bringing you David Walliams' hilarious tale Mr Stink.

Enquiries

Raby Estates, Office Square, Staindrop,
Darlington, County Durham, DL2 3NF

Open Air Cinema Friday 13th, Saturday 14th and Sunday 15th August



This Summer will see the return of Outdoor Cinema at Raby Castle. Last year's events in the Walled Gardens were a huge success and this year we will be bringing you big screen favourites; 1917, part of which was filmed on the estate, A Star is Born, Dirty Dancing, Trolls World Tour and Disney's Moana. We will also be screening The Greatest Showman – back this year due to popular demand!

Harvest Seasonal Market Saturday 28th and Sunday 29th August

The second of our seasonal markets will be held over the August Bank Holiday weekend and is another chance to browse some of the best local produce and gifts.

This summer will also see the return of our popular Summer Lates evenings in the Park and Gardens, and we'll be announcing further events soon.

For further details and
to book tickets visit
www.raby.co.uk/whats-on

Further details can be found across
our Social Media pages.



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