A scenic landscape photograph featuring a stone wall in the foreground, with rolling hills and a white building in the background. The text 'RABY' is overlaid at the top, and 'Spring 2025' is overlaid at the bottom. A list of topics is at the very bottom.

RABY

Spring 2025

Farming | Forestry | Land Management | Buildings | Sustainability | Leisure & Tourism

A close-up, high-contrast photograph of a cow's face. The cow has a dark brown coat with a prominent white blaze running down its forehead and muzzle. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of the fur and the cow's eye. The background is dark and out of focus.

RABY

Farming

Spotlight

Farming Update

After a very wet Autumn at Raby Home Farm and the sketchy establishment of winter beans, it is amazing how well the farm now looks. The team have worked incredibly hard to achieve significant improvements.

We are now almost in a drought situation- what a difference a few months make. The fodder beet has been sown, but with no sign of rain it is sitting in very dry soil. It is a shame we are unable to direct drill this crop. We are once again growing Barley and Peas together as well as Oats and Peas. Once combined this crop should make a high protein livestock feed, with the straw also having a good feed value.

The recently planted hedges are starting to show signs of life. It is great to see the hedges laid with such skill. Many thanks to all the volunteers who have been busy assessing our hedgerows under the guidance of Victoria, our Sustainability Manager. It is also good to see Lapwings nesting in the wheat fields, and it is noticeable how carabid beetle numbers are increasing across the farm- we are working to see how we can record their numbers over time. We now have 150 hectares of dedicated wildlife areas on the farm. Some of these areas are just coming into flower, and these provide food and cover for our native wildlife.

There has been an influx of new lambs and calves born over the recent weeks. You will be able to see the lambs enjoying the sunshine in the grass parkland around the estate. Twenty per cent of our calves were born in one week, so it kept the farm staff busy! These are all now doing well, grazing the farm grass meadows. Last but not least our new long horn bull, Winchester, is settling in well. He was bought from the Fishwick Herd in Berwick Upon Tweed in February 2025. The Fishwick Herd has a long history with the breed and several prestigious show winners. They are also members of the Premium Cattle Health Scheme. Winchester is by Fishwick Philanderer and his dam is Fishwick Queen of the Ring. His mother (Dam) was bred by the bull Fishwick Lords of the Rings who was Longhorn bull of the year in 2012 and 2013.

We look forward to welcoming you to Open Farm Sunday on June 8th.



RABY

Forestry

Spotlight

Forestry & Estate

Maintenance Update

Woodland forms an integral part of the Raby Estates, providing a variety of habitats, landscape, and also a sustainable timber resource. The last season has been one of the most productive for timber harvesting on the Estate in many years, with thinning and felling work undertaken in Durham and Shropshire.

One such area that has seen significant works is Ladywood, which lies to the south and west of Raby Castle. Here, an area of mature conifers has been felled in a mechanised operation carried out by contractors Scottish Woodlands, working with the Estate. Having been slow grown for many years, the timber produced has been of a very high quality, providing sawmills in County Durham and the North East with sawlogs for use in the construction, fencing, pallet and wood fuel sectors.

As we go into Spring, attention will turn to site preparation in readiness for replanting and promotion of natural regeneration, particularly in areas where native tree species and ground flora have the potential to thrive. Where practical, selected trees have been retained to provide a seed source and some shelter for the areas to be planted. Being just outside the park boundary, the felled area at Ladywood will be replanted with a mixture of native broadleaves to complement the pine, firs and spruce within the plantations, providing a diverse, sustainable woodland resource for the future.

The Forestry and Maintenance team have also seen a busy Winter with the ongoing upkeep of the Estate's infrastructure. A key project was undertaken in February this year to replace a dilapidated timber footbridge, crossing the Hudeshope Beck in Snaisgill Plantation, north of Middleton in Teesdale. Despite it being a challenging location for access and installation, the Estate team carefully removed the remnants of the old structure before assembling and lifting a new 14 metre bridge into place. The project, funded under the Farming in Protected Landscapes Scheme, has provided the opportunity to formalise the permissive use of the routes within the woodland and provide links to the wider footpath network including the King's Walk and Beck Road, with a bridge that will be usable by local residents and visitors for many years to come.



RABY

An aerial photograph of a rural landscape in Raby. The scene is dominated by rolling green hills and fields. A winding road, bordered by a stone wall and trees, curves through the middle ground. In the foreground, a large white stone building with a dark roof and several chimneys is visible, surrounded by trees and a stone wall. A red tractor is parked in a field to the right of the building. In the background, another white building is visible on a hillside. The sky is blue with a few clouds.

Buildings



Brass Sides Farm

Refurbishment and letting

Over the winter period, the Estate has been breathing new life into a residential property that hasn't been modernised for many years. Brass Sides is located in the north east corner of the Estate at Woodland village. A couple of generations ago it was a fully functioning farm and latterly, had been occupied by a long-standing Estate tenant, and has now been given a complete overhaul. The team have carried out a modern refurbishment, meeting the latest compliance standards and market desirables.

The refurbishment unearthed a plethora of subsurface timber repairs that weren't envisaged at the commencement, but this was par for the course for the team, used to dealing with our traditionally built properties with all their quirks. Mid-project, storm Eowyn also hit and created more problems for the team, damaging a number of the outbuilding roofs, but as always the teams rallied together to complete the welcomed refurbishment.

The property is now a fully refurbished family home offering country living with three bedrooms, two reception rooms, a new enlarged kitchen, a downstairs bathroom and a courtyard complex of traditional buildings. A new local tenant has been found and will be moving in shortly.

After





Rough Rigg in Harewood



Laneside Forest

The Project Team

The projects team have been focused on tenancy repairs recently, including 3 Front Street, 47a Market Place, and Brass Sides, which have all been completed whilst Raby Hill and Burfoot Leazes are currently in progress. Next, we will move on to Howgill Farm and Keeverstone Grange Farm, so there will be plenty to keep us busy right through to Autumn.

Sadly, Billy Ward has moved on from the team after 13 years, but we have recruited two new tradespeople to the team – Clifford Cox and Andrew Graham, who we wish all the best in their new roles.

The Maintenance Team

2025 is a limewashing year, so we will be supplying materials for external decoration along with undertaking an extensive external decoration programme with our in-house team. Storm Eowyn caused a lot of work, and we are still working through the damage it caused with several roofs lost.

The maintenance team also continue to make great progress with compliance works in a bid to complete everything within the 10-year plan, which was started in 2020.





Shropshire Team Profile

Neighbourhood Matters and West Mercia Police

In February, Raby Shropshire held an Open Morning with the help of the West Mercia Police Rural and Business team, welcoming local farmers and people from the local community to the Shropshire Estate Office. There was tea, coffee and even cake for everyone to enjoy upon arrival.

The morning was certainly a success and allowed many to engage with the Police regarding their concerns, thoughts and ideas. The Police gave good advice and information, including steps to keep our rural community safer as well as giving out free Smart Water Kits, signs and padlocks, all of which were very well received.

Lots of local farmers signed up to the Neighbourhood Matters Newsletter as well as joining a 'Rural Farmers Watch' WhatsApp group, in which they can communicate with each other as well as offer help and assistance to those who may need it.

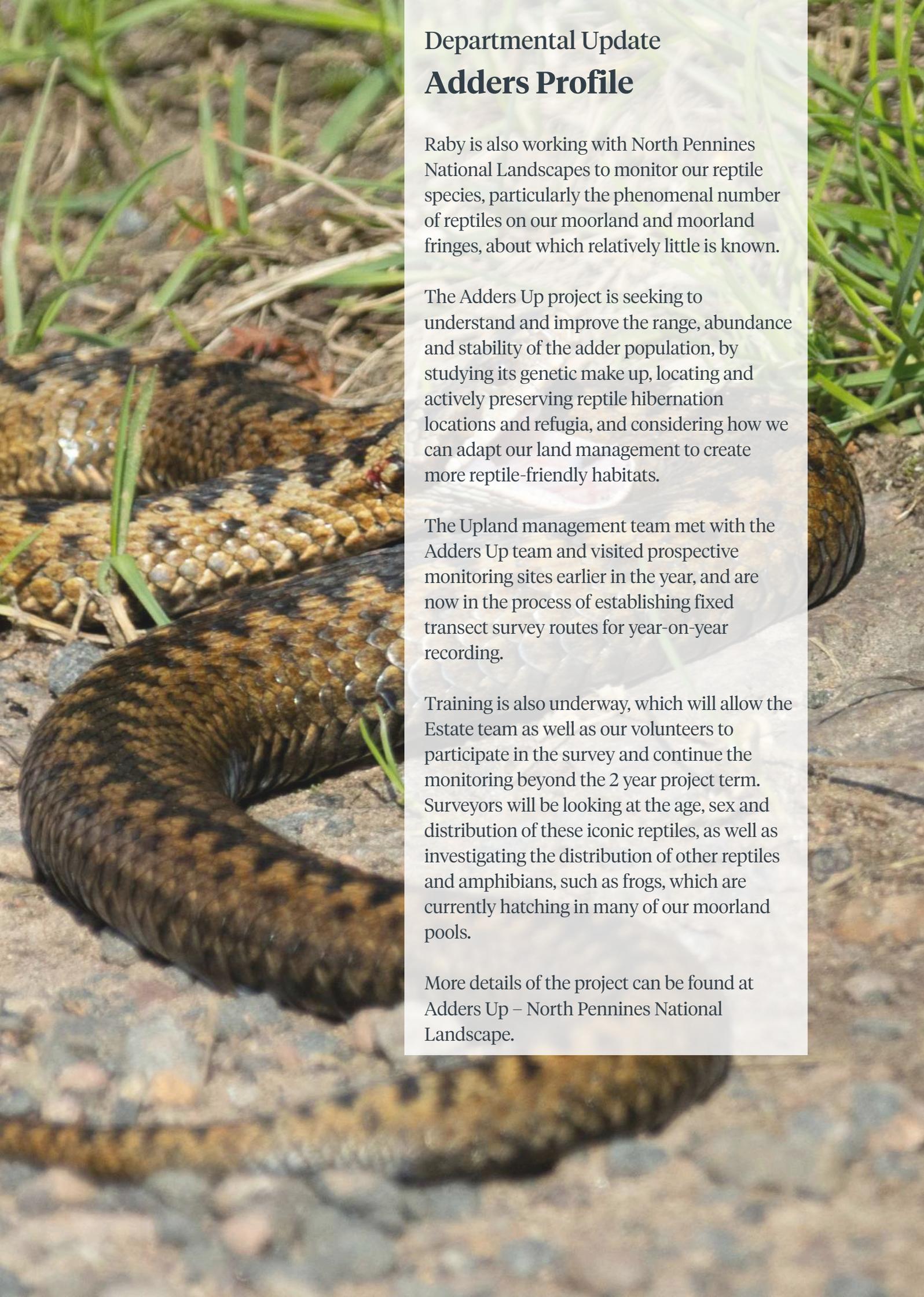
This event had a positive community spirit and brought together many people who have lived upon the Shropshire Estate for many years, as well as those from the surrounding areas, all of whom have a wealth of information regarding our rural communities and the local area. Some of the suggestions and ideas were very practical and we have certainly benefited from brainstorming together, along with discussing deterrents to help us fight crime in the community that we love.

A really big thanks to the West Mercia Police and to all of the people that visited; it has given us a great foundation to build upon going forward in the fight against Rural Crime.



RABY

*Land
Management*



Departmental Update

Adders Profile

Raby is also working with North Pennines National Landscapes to monitor our reptile species, particularly the phenomenal number of reptiles on our moorland and moorland fringes, about which relatively little is known.

The Adders Up project is seeking to understand and improve the range, abundance and stability of the adder population, by studying its genetic make up, locating and actively preserving reptile hibernation locations and refugia, and considering how we can adapt our land management to create more reptile-friendly habitats.

The Upland management team met with the Adders Up team and visited prospective monitoring sites earlier in the year, and are now in the process of establishing fixed transect survey routes for year-on-year recording.

Training is also underway, which will allow the Estate team as well as our volunteers to participate in the survey and continue the monitoring beyond the 2 year project term. Surveyors will be looking at the age, sex and distribution of these iconic reptiles, as well as investigating the distribution of other reptiles and amphibians, such as frogs, which are currently hatching in many of our moorland pools.

More details of the project can be found at [Adders Up – North Pennines National Landscape](#).

RABY

*Natural England
Landscape Advisory Panel*

Natural England Landscape Advisory Panel (NELAP)

Visits Upper Teesdale – 7th to 9th April 2025

NELAP was established by Natural England in 2022 to help deliver stronger landscape leadership and rise to today's challenges around climate change, nature recovery and access to the countryside. The Panel provides independent expert advice and assistance to Natural England's Board on the discharge of its landscape functions. The Panel also provides Natural England's Board with a standing expert group to support, challenge and advise on ambitious and innovative ways to deliver its role on shaping the future of English landscapes.

In early April, Raby hosted a visit by the Panel who stayed with us for 2 nights at High Force and Langdon Beck Hotels. Raby extended the invitation to NELAP to ensure that policy makers have an opportunity to understand the challenges faced by the farming and land management community in the Uplands, and the opportunities that exist for Government through closer collaboration with those who live and work on the ground. The purpose of the visit was therefore to consider the future role of the English uplands within the emerging post Brexit policy framework for farming and the environment.

11 members of the Panel plus officers from Natural England, National Landscapes and members of the Raby team gathered at Langdon Beck hotel on the evening of 7th April for dinner followed by an early morning tour of lekking sites in Upper Teesdale. The conditions could not have been more favourable, and the group was treated to a stunning display by the Black Grouse around Langdon Beck and Harwood.

After a hearty breakfast, NELAP toured the Estate to view peatland restoration works at Valence Lodge, hosted by John Bell of Valence Lodge Farm, who provided the group with an insight into how climate change is impacting the peat, livestock and moorland drainage. We then moved to Herdship Farm at the top of the dale, where Paul and Jen Johnson explained their farm management approach which was recently recognised through the National Landscapes High Nature Value Farming Awards. Paul made the vitally important point that those who have always cared for nature through their farming practices should be recognised by Government through agri-environment support just as much as those who have not.

We then moved onto moorland management practice with a discussion led by Raby Land Agent, Joe Robinson, and Upper Teesdale Head Keeper, Andrew Hyslop, followed by a visit to Great Egglesthorpe to view the work undertaken to reduce pollution arising from historic lead mining.

At the formal meeting of NELAP on the following day, it was clear that the tour of Upper Teesdale had made an impression, with the overwhelming sense in the meeting that the English uplands are working landscapes that should be supported and allowed to prosper for the benefit of nature and the communities that work there. The need to listen to those working and managing the land was also a recurring theme throughout the meeting.

I'd therefore like to thank Jane Coates and the team at Langdon Beck Hotel and Andrew Lindsey and the team at High Force Hotel for providing such a warm Upper Teesdale welcome to NELAP. Thanks also to John Bell and Paul and Jen Johnson for hosting part of the visit and for sharing their thoughts and experiences. Thanks also go to the wider Raby team for helping to arrange the visit. It was certainly a worthwhile investment of time that will hopefully help decision makers in Government make the right choices when considering future policy affecting our precious upland landscapes.



RABY

Sustainability

Hedges

Following our hedgerow surveys of 2024, when over 10 km of hedges across Raby were surveyed by staff and volunteers, we established a new management plan. All the hedges we manage in-hand are now cut on a three year cycle, unless road safety requires more frequent intervention. We also laid some 800 m of hedges, and are aiming to lay, coppice and gap up more, as well as link up more hedges, this autumn. In line with our commitments to enhance biodiversity, our hedges are also being progressively reshaped, and allowed to grow higher and wider, providing more habitats and food sources for invertebrates, small mammals and birds, many of which have suffered significant declines in the latter part of the twentieth century. The Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT), for example, reports that the UK has lost 73m wild birds since the 1970s, with farmland birds showing the steepest decline in numbers.

Big Farmland Bird Count

To support initiatives to combat this decline, volunteers turned out in February as part of GWCT's 'Big Farmland Bird Count', returning to habitats including hedges, ponds, ditches, grassland and scrub across the Estate which we surveyed last year. The results showed that corvids and pigeons continue to be plentiful, along with a healthy supply of pheasants, but there were also numerous finches, including chaffinch, goldfinch, bullfinch and linnets, along with lapwing and even a couple of snipe – both under threat - spotted in selected sites of lowland grassland.

National Nest Box Week

As part of our commitment to support biodiversity, the Gardening and Forestry teams joined forces to build and erect bird nest boxes as part of National Nest Box week in mid-February, with the Gardening team putting up around a dozen in and around the walled gardens- one of which is already occupied. The initiative will continue into 2025, with the Forestry and Green Teams, as well as volunteers, helping to build and erect nest boxes for a range of species at other sites later on in the year.

Soils

Soils are the foundation of our ecosystem, and a key focus in 2024 has been to understand the state of our farm soils. Initial results show positive indications, with chemical analyses on fields sampled so far demonstrating significant improvements in soil health since the introduction of regenerative agricultural techniques at Raby. Physical indicators, such as soil structure and density, also suggest that our soils are responding to efforts by the farm team to reduce soil disturbance and compaction. We will continue this work throughout 2025, in collaboration with Durham University, with more results anticipated from both the Durham and Shropshire Estates shortly.

More Monitoring!

Our focus in 2025 will continue to be on soils, hedgerows and field margins on the farm, along with habitat conservation and restoration, most notably peat, working with National Landscapes in Upper Teesdale. As part of these initiatives, we are keen to recruit volunteers to help us with ecological monitoring, including studies of ground flora, beetles, bees and pollinators in and around our hedgerows, woodland edges and field margins. There is also the potential to join wider studies, such as Adders Up!

If you are interested in hearing more, please contact our Sustainability Manager, Victoria.cadman@raby.co.uk in the first instance.

RABY



Leisure & Tourism



Raby Castle joins prestigious group of Historic Homes

Raby Castle has been invited to join the Treasure Houses of England, a small group of the country's finest houses, palaces and castles.

The Treasure Houses are a collection of ten important houses across the country dedicated to bringing their history and collections to a wider audience, and Raby Castle is now the eleventh member.

Lord Barnard is delighted that Raby has been invited to join and said: "The castle has a long history – these walls have seen the plotting of the Rising of the North, acted as a Parliamentary stronghold in the Civil War and were the birthplace of the mother of Richard III and Edward IV.

It is the centre of the largely intact estate of the former Dukes of Cleveland, who built up a significant collection of works of art, and we are determined to make that collection even more accessible. It is a tremendous privilege that our family home is now part of the Treasure Houses of England and we look forward to working with and learning from the other ten forward-looking owners and their teams."

Regarding the Treasure Houses of England invitation, Lady Barnard said: "I'm immensely proud that we are standing side by side with such notable houses and collections. My husband's forebears assembled a wonderful collection within the castle and deeply loved the surrounding countryside. I think it is a worthy feather in the cap for the North East of England."

Victoria Howard, custodian of Castle Howard and chair of the Treasure Houses Group said: "The Treasure Houses work closely together to benchmark and share best practice as visitor attractions and custodians of natural and built heritage. The properties cover the length and breadth of Britain and we are delighted that Raby has joined this group, following their significant recent developments and investment in their offer to visitors."

Raby Castle re-opened to the public on Saturday 1st March, following its annual winter maintenance and conservation programme, to showcase its collection to visitors for the 2025 season and is now welcoming visitors seven days a week for the first time in its history.



Volunteering at Raby Castle

‘Excellent knowledge. Very friendly Volunteers’ | ‘Lovely, informative room guides.’ | ‘Great, knowledgeable staff who are happy to explain and answer questions.’ | ‘Outstanding Volunteers.’

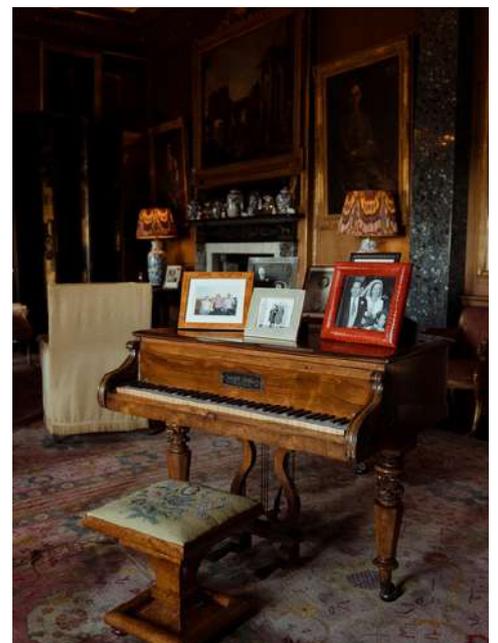
These are all recent entries on the ‘Comments Book’ in Raby Castle and they speak for themselves. Raby’s Volunteers are at the very heart of the castle experience for our visitors. From students to retired, our team come from all walks of life but are united in the goal of learning about our incredible castle, the people who have lived and worked there, and engaging with the public to impart their knowledge.

As a Raby Volunteer, you are assigned a Senior Guide as a mentor and receive training for the role. As well as your mentor group chats (often allowing access to areas of the castle that few get to see), there are monthly meetings with a variety of speakers. A Raby Volunteer card allows access to the castle, park and gardens as well as food, drink and retail discounts. Opportunities to hear guest speakers for free and access to the Volunteer library help expand knowledge. At the end of the year, an invitation from Lord and Lady Barnard to the staff party starts the festive season off in style.

If you are looking for a new opportunity to learn, engage and enjoy and can give a day of your time per week there is a free lunch and complimentary hot drink at the end of your shift in The Vinery Café as a perfect way to end the day. If you are interested in volunteering, please email admin@raby.co.uk.

“This is my eighth season volunteering at Raby Castle as a room steward. I still get a sense of achievement and satisfaction on imparting the fascinating history of the Neville and Vane families to our many diverse visitors. It is a continued honour and a privilege to be part of the Raby team.”

Sandra Phipps Raby Castle Volunteer





Volunteering in the Walled Gardens

Volunteers are also welcome in our beautiful gardens, and we have recently started recruiting with great success, finding that people from all walks of life are interested in helping our team garden in such a significant place.

So far, we have been joined by retirees, young learners and even the chairman of the Chartered Institute of Horticulture's Northern Branch!



Work is varied as the gardens are so extensive. The historic 18th century Walled Garden has just been extensively remodelled with Luciano Giubbilei, an internationally renowned designer who has brought a contemporary, understated beauty to the space.

Beyond the Walled Garden, designer Alistair Baldwin has created a stunning landscape filled with wonderful plants that our volunteers help to keep looking their best throughout the year.



Our Volunteers all seem to enjoy the camaraderie – joining us in our lunch room for shared breaks – although they're welcome to grab a complimentary coffee from the Vinery!

If the weather is bad, there is often work to be done indoors within our new greenhouse, propagating, for example.

It's a great opportunity to make friends and improve your gardening knowledge, working with experienced Assistant Head Gardeners Becky Crowley and Jeremy Shaw who have a wealth of knowledge they are only too happy to share.



Castle Encounters

Did you know?

Raby Castle has a dedicated Curation and Archives team who look after the historic collections. From muskets to manuscripts, paintings to porcelain, research is always taking place to learn more about the castle and its fascinating history.

This year there are even more opportunities for visitors of all ages to find out more about their discoveries. Every 2pm on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, visitors can meet a member of the team for “Castle Encounters”, exploring a different aspect of our collections and history. For art lovers, our new ‘Slow Art’ session provides an opportunity to press pause in your busy week and spend some quality time learning and reflecting on Raby’s nationally significant fine and decorative art collection.

Our new exhibition programme also launched this year, with a fascinating insight into the history of the walled garden displayed in the Conservatory, and from July onwards, visitors can learn more about Raby’s links to the railways as part of national celebrations for the bicentenary of the opening of the Stockton to Darlington Railway. Keep an eye on our website for weekly exhibition talks by the team. Younger visitors are not forgotten and our lively programme of family activities change throughout the year with some very special events being added this summer linking to Raby’s rebellious past!

To find out more about our exciting castle engagement events, visit www.raby.co.uk.



VOTE for Raby Castle, Park and Gardens

We are delighted to announce that we have been shortlisted for the Historic Houses Garden of the Year Award. This is down to a public vote, so your votes for this magnificent attraction are greatly appreciated.

Raby Estates

Warm Welcome and Fond Farewells

At Raby, our people are at the heart of everything we do. From the historic grounds of Raby Castle to the sweeping beauty of the wider Estate, our team continues to grow and evolve, bringing together individuals with a shared passion for heritage, nature, and excellence.

We are delighted to welcome several new starters who have recently joined us across a variety of departments. Each new team member brings their own experience and enthusiasm, and we are excited to see the fresh ideas and energy they will contribute as we continue to move forward.

Over at Durham Buildings, Andrew Graham and Clifford Cox have joined as Skilled Tradespeople, bringing valuable experience and expertise to the wider Estate team. At Raby Home Farm, we are pleased to have Angela Turnbull on board as Administrator, supporting the continued success of our agricultural operations. Within the Raby Estate Office, we have been joined by Deborah Thompson as Property Administrator and Jodie Tack as Accounts Administrator—both already making a fantastic impact. Leisure & Tourism has also seen several additions including Chloe Reed as a Housekeeper, as well as Becky Crowley stepping into the role of Assistant Head Gardener. Christopher Parkinson has joined as Marketing Executive, while Daphne Tomkins brings her experience to the team as Senior Guide. The events team has expanded with Emily Hancock as Events Executive and Philip Bastow as Events Assistant. In retail, we have welcomed Lisa Johnson-Richards and Lisa Hoggart, and the friendly face at Estate Reception is now Sarah Forster. Over at The Vinery Café, we are thrilled to have Morgan Close join as the Food & Beverage Operations Manager, with Nathan Day and Sukhjeet Wason supporting as Food & Beverage Supervisors. The team also includes Lisa Rickaby as Team Leader, Zoe Bennett as Food & Beverage Assistant, and new baristas Millie North and Neive Hinder.

As we welcome new faces to the Estate, we also bid a fond farewell to a number of colleagues who have moved on to new chapters. From the Finance team, we thank Abigail Rothery for her contributions as Management and Project Accountant. At Raby Home Farm, Alexander Pressley leaves us after being a valued part of the team. Reception and Events say goodbye to Anne Richardson and Loraine Pickering, both familiar and friendly faces to many. From Durham Buildings, we bid farewell to Ben Glendinning and Supervisor William Ward, while Caroline Douglas moves on from The Coach House Shop. The Vinery team has said goodbye to Emma Dodgson, Café Supervisor, and Johannes Van Biervliet, who managed Food & Beverage Operations. In Housekeeping, we thank Emma George and in Property, we would like to wish Judith Burt a well-earned retirement with over 20 years of dedicated service. Laura Evans departs from her role as Business Development Executive.

From across the wider Estate, we also say goodbye to Charlotte Marrison, Land Agent for Shropshire, Wendi Blair, our passionate Senior Guide, and Rosanna Riches, who completed her apprenticeship as a Business Administrator. We're grateful to each of them for their contributions and wish them every success in the future.

RABY

What's
coming up

It's time to open the doors on a packed Summer programme across the Raby Estate

Leisure & Tourism

Upcoming Events



Slow Art at Raby Castle

Raby Castle, Park & Garden
10th June | 7th July | 5th August | 2nd September
7th October



Behind the Scenes Tour of Raby Castle

Raby Castle, Park & Gardens
14th June | 5th July | 26th July | 2nd August
16th August



Deer Park Safari

Raby Castle, Park & Gardens
25th June | 30th July | 20th August | 17th September
22nd October



Landscape Painting Workshop

Raby Castle, Park & Gardens
Saturday 14th June



Open Farm Sunday

Raby Castle, Park & Gardens
Sunday 8th June



Special Tour: Raby and The Royal Family

Raby Castle, Park & Gardens
Saturday 21st June

Leisure & Tourism

Upcoming Events



Women of Raby Tour

Raby Castle, Park & Gardens
Saturday 28th June



Philippa Langley MBE The Princes in the Tower

Raby Castle, Park & Gardens
Tuesday 8th July



Classic Car Show

Raby Castle, Park & Gardens
Sunday 29th June



Open Air Theatre – The Most Perilous Comedie of Elizabeth I | Three Inch Fools

Raby Castle, Park & Gardens
Saturday 12th July



Open Air Theatre: The Castle Players Shakespeare in Love

Raby Castle, Park & Gardens
Saturday 5th July



Adventure Cinema – Grease Sing-A-Long

Raby Castle, Park & Gardens
Friday 18th July

Leisure & Tourism

Upcoming Events



Auto Italia Car Day
Raby Castle, Park & Gardens
Sunday 27th July



Open Air Theatre | Much Ado About Nothing | Handlebards
Raby Castle, Park & Gardens
Thursday 14th August



The story of Raby and the Railways
Raby Castle, Park & Gardens
Sunday 27th July



Harvest Seasonal Market
Raby Castle, Park & Gardens
Saturday 23th - Monday 25th August



Shrub & Fruit Tree Pruning Workshop
Raby Castle, Park & Gardens
Sunday 3rd August



Stargazing Suppers
High Force Hotel & Waterfall
Selected dates from August 2025 - March 2026



Enquiries

Durham Office

01833 660888

reception@raby.co.uk

Raby Estates, Office Square, Staindrop

Darlington, County Durham, DL2 3NF

