

Friends of Valley Gardens

Newsletter September 2020

No 19

Work Parties

All work parties will meet under the bridge by the small pond.

Wednesday September 2nd – 7pm
Sunday September 13th – 10am

This Wednesday will be our last evening session for the summer. We will probably work on the long border above the pond. If we hoe it now while the weed seedlings are small it will save a lot of hard work later in the year. We also have a number of perennial plants to fill in some of the gaps in the border. If we have a lot of volunteers turn up some could finish tidying up the shrub borders.

In our August evening session we finished weeding the corner border below Woodend, cut back some sycamore saplings, started weeding the shrub borders and put in a number of perennial plants near the front of the borders.

Recently the gardening team strimmed the area of brambles below Londesborough Lodge. This certainly tidied it up but exposed a lot of rubbish. In our last work session we removed many barrow loads of vegetation to the skip and filled seventeen bags of rubbish from that one small area. The rest of the team collected litter from the rest of the park and continued tidying up the shrub borders.

Around the Park

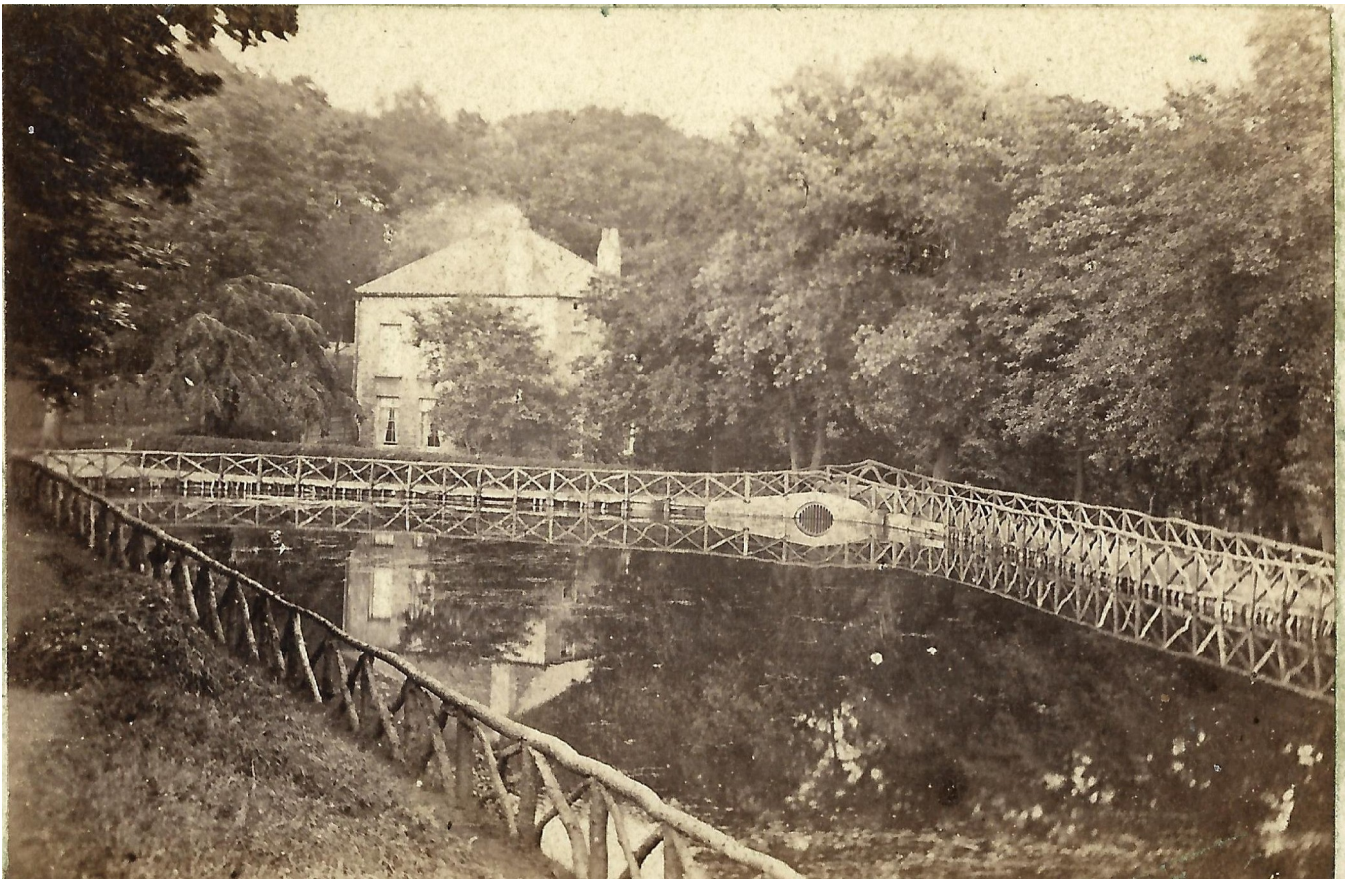
The circular beds looked especially good this summer. The simpler design was very effective and eye catching. Unfortunately the recent wet and cold weather has knocked them back and I think they are unlikely to recover their earlier splendour.

Our border below the Woodend tower has performed well with lots of spring colour and later a superb display by the penstemons. A slightly surprising success has been the white hydrangeas below the art gallery. They really should not have flowered that profusely in that amount of shade.

The shrub borders that we planted are filling out and there has been a smattering of colour all spring and summer. However the blue flowered Hibiscus is looking terrific at the minute.



The group reflect on a job well done – 17 bags of rubbish, two shopping trolleys, a dozen trips to the skip and a relatively rubbish free area.



1860 photograph of the pond

I was very fortunate to pick this photograph up on e-bay. It is a ***Carte de Visite*** and measures only four inches by two and a half inches. A French photographer called Disderi patented a method of taking more than one photograph on a photographic plate in 1854. It resulted in smaller, but cheaper photographs and once they were being produced commercially they became very popular. Victorians would collect them and stick them in albums rather like we used to do with PG tips tea cards. This one is early, probably dating from around 1860/61. It was produced by John Inskip a photographer with a number of studios around Scarborough. He was active from about 1860 until the late 1880's and his son, also John, was a well known landscape artist. His Queen Street studio was badly damaged in the great storm of November 1861, when the house next door collapsed.

The photograph shows Plantation House, originally the mill owner's house. It is called Plantation House on the 1850 map of the area but Theakston's Guide to Scarborough of 1845 calls it Mill Cottage. It was demolished to make way for the bridge which opened in 1865. There is no sign of the mill but records indicate it was probably pulled down some time in the 1850's.

Early drawings of the area show the pond as being unfenced and I would suspect that the council erected the fencing as an early health and safety measure before the park opened in 1860. The beautiful garden of Plantation House is mentioned in many of the Georgian guidebooks of Scarborough which all describe a pleasant walk from the Spa following Mill Beck up to the ancient village of Falsgrave.

The Fallen Tree

The large fallen tree which is currently lying on the bank above the upper pond in Valley Gardens came down in the gales of early spring. Unfortunately, at that time much of the area immediately below the bridge was occupied by the company repairing and painting the bridge metalwork. The Parks and Gardens Department, who are responsible for dealing with this problem, then discovered that a moorhen had created a nest on one of the branches which was lying on the surface of the pond, so were unable to take action even when the industrial units were removed. Then – we were all hit by Covid-19 and the resulting lockdown. So the saga of this fallen giant has rather dragged on.

Now it has become apparent that in order for the men with the chainsaws to work safely the tree will have to be dragged further up the bank away from the water's edge. This will mean the use of a tractor which will result in quite severe damage to the grassed area. The Department feel that this very heavy work would be best undertaken in the early Autumn when most of the town's visitors will have gone home. The damage can then be repaired and the area re-seeded ready for next year's influx of tourists.

