

# Decree Special Workhouse Garden Issue 1

Ripon Museums

The Yorkshire Law and Order Museums



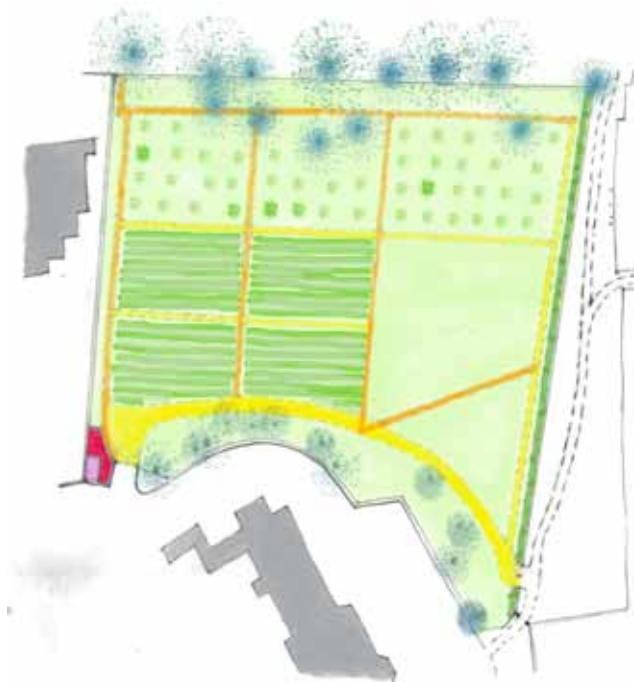
The Courthouse, Workhouse and Prison & Police Museums

## What's the plot?

Workhouse gardens are rare survivals. An exciting Ripon Museum Trust project is now underway to bring back into use the garden of the former Ripon Union Workhouse at Sharow View. The Ripon workhouse garden is about an acre in size on a north facing slope behind the Workhouse Museum and Community House.



The restoration of the garden will re-establish features based on good conservation practice and on sound research, some already undertaken and with more to follow including on site investigation as work gets underway.



The project will introduce a planting scheme that is appropriate for the site and its historical context (1890 workhouse garden) including vegetables grown in four allotment style rectangles and fruit trees in meadow grassland. The site will be made as accessible as possible to maximise participation both from volunteers and visitors. The unofficial footpath locals use to walk to town will be retained with a fence and hedge separating it from the garden.

## The plot so far

We have secured about £100 000 so far through fundraising including grants from Yorkshire Forward through the Rural Target Fund for North Yorkshire Programme and Yorventure to enable us to make this project happen.



In June we advertised for our one paid employee - a part time Garden Coordinator. Following interviews Ray Blyth was appointed and started in August. Ray's job is to shape the development of the garden in line with the vision and liaise with volunteers and contractors.

The first part of the project was to clear the site. This was easier said than done as it is many years since the land has been cultivated. The whole area was an impenetrable mass of brambles and elder. Invaluable help has come in the shape of Dan Clarke and his team at DTMS who brought in machines to clear the bulk of the undergrowth away.



On Saturday mornings during September and October, an enthusiastic band of volunteers have attacked the garden under Ray's direction. Bushes have been cut down, rubbish collected up, litter picked and a temporary fence erected. Sadly no treasure was found in the undergrowth but enough scrap metal and tyres to fill the back of a truck from Keith Anderson the scrap metal merchant.



## The plot thickens

Now the site has been cleared of undergrowth and paths pegged out we are ready, subject to planning permission, for our contractors to move in. Saplings and scrubby trees that have sprung up will be pulled out. Chestnut paling fencing will be constructed and hedging planted to secure the site. Hard landscaping will reinstate long lost walkways and a new 21<sup>st</sup> century access path. The historic north boundary cobbled wall will be restored. This will hopefully be completed in February when gardening proper can begin. Anyone interested in helping us digging then?

Meanwhile our volunteer researchers will be busy developing our knowledge of the history, archaeology and geology of the site. Helpfully we can link with the Ripon Local Studies Research Centre which has recently moved in to become near neighbours at Sharow View. Things we need to find out include:

- Is our cobbled wall on the site of a medieval boundary?
- What were the features of the Georgian garden that predates the workhouse garden?
- What varieties of vegetables were grown on this site a hundred years ago?



One of the most exciting things that happened recently was when one of our neighbours gave us some photos taken more than a decade ago of the garden when it was unofficial allotments. Have you some information that could help us understand our garden better? We'd love to hear from you .....

## An introduction to some of the plotters

The “Garden Group”, as they have become known for obvious reasons, first met together in 2004 to discuss the possibility of restoring the workhouse garden. Founder members include Ray Blyth, Alison Brayshaw, Anne Carrick, Rob Gooderidge, Richard Taylor, Nick Thompson and Mandy Whitehead.



Our volunteers are our most important plotters. They include all sorts of people who share a common interest in restoring this site to an authentic historic workhouse garden. We have enjoyed help from neighbours, the community police, museum volunteers, local children, CVS, allotment holders and people who have had just heard about the project and offered a hand. Enthusiasts are always welcome and the project is developing fast so there are always ways to involve new people in some way or other.

### Want to contact any of us?

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Rob Gooderidge and Nick Thompson are leading our research into the horticultural history of the workhouse garden and developing our planting plan using authentic varieties of vegetables, herbs and cut flowers.



Our project architect is John Witherick who gives so generously of his time and professional expertise and who helps us through the joys of planning permission and contract tendering.



Ray Blyth  
Garden Co-ordinator