

Welcome to our Summer newsletter

This Newsletter marks something of an end of an era. After twenty-seven years, the Estate is saying a fond farewell to its Director, Robert Sword. Although an Estate can sometimes seem like a swan serenely gliding down a river, nowadays its management involves the delicate balancing of a plethora of tricky social, financial and environmental issues. This Robert has achieved with great success. As such, he leaves the Estate in robust good health and we all wish him every happiness in his retirement near Hovingham.

The Viscount Downe

A warm welcome to our new Chief Executive, David Steel



David Steel has passed the Estate's door countless times, driving from property managers Savills' York office when managing the Duchy of Lancaster's estates north of Scarborough. Now his commute will be a little shorter, living and working in Wykeham village.

From a Durham family farming background, David has now lived in North Yorkshire for nearly two decades. He has worked with a wide variety of estates and organisations, across both the north east and north west of England, which has encompassed a wide range of rural projects.

"I'm really looking forward to putting down roots and focusing my attention on one Estate," says David. "I've always admired the business diversity of the Dawnay Estates, and reading about its progression in this very newsletter. I now can't wait to be a part of it myself."

The Steel family is made up of David's wife Georgie, daughter and son Izzy and Harry, and two cocker spaniels – Pigeon and Toast. He is a keen road cyclist and enjoys shooting game and clays. Please say hello if you see him out and about!

Welcome

We welcome Liz Bryant who takes up the role of Financial Controller.



...and welcome to "Dawnay"

Last year's 3rd Charity Clay Shoot raised over £25,000, and one of the organisations that benefited was Support Dogs, a Yorkshire based charity that provides well-trained dogs for those living with autism, epilepsy and disability. The dogs go on to form strong bonds with their new owners, literally transforming their lives.

Established in 1992 Support Dogs provides its services free of charge across the UK. The charity relies entirely on donations for the two years and £20,000 it takes to train a Support Dogs' partnership. Once created there is ongoing support throughout the following eight-year working career.

As a special thankyou the Estate was invited to name a dog – so welcome to "Dawnay", a Yellow Labrador puppy. With Dawnay spending the next two years in training, supported in part by the Estate, we will receive regular updates and, we hope, the odd visit. www.supportdogs.org.uk



A fond farewell to Robert Sword

As the snowdrops bloomed in 1993, Robert Sword became the Estate's Director. After starting as a junior assistant agent at Hatfield Park and Badminton Estates, he joined estate management company Humberts, going on to establish their York office.

He first came across Wykeham when he was asked by the late Lord Downe, playwright Sir Alan Ayckbourn and Charles McCarthy CBE of McCains to advise on the acquisition of the old Odeon cinema, as a new home for the Stephen Joseph Theatre in Scarborough.

After this successful deal, he was lured to Wykeham full time. "I have relished the challenge of managing this magnificent and beautiful Estate," says Robert. "Consultants only dip in and out of a project. In this role you live with your successes and failures; there is ultimately only one option – sort them out." Creating and nurturing a growing business can take many years, and although Robert would be the first to recognise the huge contribution from an exceptional group of general managers, he has been instrumental in many of the Estate's recent successes, culminating in the award of the Bledisloe Gold Medal. The rest of the newsletter touches on some of his achievements.



Robert handing over VN8 to his successor David. VN was the original code for Yorkshire (North Riding 1929–74) Various vehicles on the Estate carry the plates VN 1 to VN 12.

A bouquet of bubbles, bulbs and barks



1974 was the year ABBA won Eurovision, Richard Nixon resigned as U.S. President, a military coup in Ethiopia deposed Emperor Haile Selassie and perhaps even more importantly St Helen's Caravan Park in Wykeham opened its gates. Founded on the flowing contours of a former sand quarry, the aim was to give the park a rural atmosphere with the shower blocks being specifically designed to resemble traditional farm buildings. It proved a very popular decision and St Helens went on to win numerous accolades including the AA's best

overall campsite of the year. If eyebrows were initially raised at the site's large size given most caravans were only around 10 feet long, the much larger descendants of the Opal Topaz, Ace Pioneer and Sprite Alpin, are now very grateful for the generous pitch sizes.

"Caravanning is a far cry from the Veritas gas mantels and manual water pumps of the 70s and 80s," says manager, Andrew Backhouse. "Nowadays we offer free Wifi, hair dryers and a

launderette. We also hold the AA's 5 Pennant Gold standard, awarded to only the very best camping parks with a Quality Score of 90% and above."

This year sees a new dog and bike wash area and more fencing to keep little ones and four-legged friends safe. The old café area is being converted into a suite of private bathrooms. These include disabled facilities, a spa bathroom complete with a corner jet jacuzzi bath and two new family bathrooms, with play pens and baby-changing areas to make bath time easier and more fun.

"We're also saying it with flowers," adds Andrew. "We've planted 2,500 bulbs of crocuses, daffodils and tulips for a true 'welcome back' bouquet for guests returning next spring."



‘Udderly’ different more than 15 years on

For decades, cowsheds and a grain dryer stood in the heart of Wykeham village. The inexorable pressure to improve efficiency meant that by the 1980s the old, but beautiful, buildings no longer had a place on the modern farm and they fell into disuse. In 2004 they were transformed into the Wykeham Business Centre, as part of the rural business centre movement. Recently extended, the offices are a successful, sustainable example of rural regeneration and diversification giving the buildings a second life that their original designers could not even have dreamt of.

“Back then it was an alien concept for offices to be located away from town centres,” says Katrina Shamel, Lettings Manager. “However, businesses soon realised the benefits of a tranquil countryside location with free parking, fast internet connections and good road and rail links. Wykeham Business Centre continues to be one step ahead, having recently extended the number of offices, upgraded the internet connection by a factor of ten to 1,000Mbps and installing electric car charging points to the enlarged carpark.”



Pheasant or phoenix?

When living on flat land, pheasants, which are not the most aerodynamic of birds, tend to fly slowly upwards into the sky. But if they fly from the top of a hill, they will fly straighter and quicker, making for a much more exciting and challenging target.

Hills are in rather short supply at the bottom of the valley, so some years ago the centre of gravity of the shoot moved to higher ground north of Wykeham village.

This move has gone hand in hand with a significant expansion in the shoot. In the 1950's there would have been around seven days of pheasant shooting a year, now the Estate can offer up to 85 days with bags of around 200 birds for this classic pheasant shooting. A typical shoot day starts with a briefing, and a bacon roll, in Wykeham Abbey's former Tack Room. The four varied drives are punctuated by a picnic break in the field and a lunch served in the magnificent Old Kitchen. Although the shooting provides a welcome dose of adrenalin, the days are still relaxed, and as much about good companionship as testing one's skill against the noble pheasant.



From little acorns...

In 1975, the late Lord Downe set up ‘Wykeham Trees’ in about 50 acres adjacent to Wykeham Abbey's walled garden. Initially trees were sold by the hundred to local authorities' amenity departments. However by the turn of the millennium it was evident that this market was in terminal decline, and the business began to successfully move its focus to selling to landscape architects, commercial developers and private individuals.

“I began working in the newly-renamed ‘Wykeham Mature Plants’ in 2003,” says General Manager, Adam Smith. “Trees were grown in fields, and we advertised through catalogues. Now our trees are container-grown and we have an e-commerce shop.”

Over the last ten years, turnover has more than doubled. The business now covers 150 acres, which includes the two restored walled gardens and the bothy. Demand for the team's skills and expert advice has never been higher. Their transformative instant hedging service using plants such as laurel, yew and beech is now particularly sought after.



From ‘gee up’ to GPS

Satellites may seem a world away from the “green and pleasant land” of North Yorkshire, but they have proved a valuable tool in the farm's efforts to become more productive and ecologically responsible. To make use of this technology, the Estate has invested in soil type analysis to create digital maps which can divide a field into similar soil types. This determines the amount of seed or fertilizer to be spread, depending on how much nutrition is already in the field.

“We can now programme tractors when ploughing or drilling seed, to drive in a straight line to an accuracy of 2cm and return on a set parallel track to avoid overlapping,” explains David Edwards, Farm Manager. “Sensors on tractor cabs, measure the light reflected from a crop, indicating how much nitrogen has already been absorbed. Combine harvester sensors measure the quantity of grain harvested to produce a yield map of the field. All this helps reduce costs, improve yields and minimise the quantity of chemicals that need be sprayed; meaning the farm can be both efficient and environmentally friendly.”

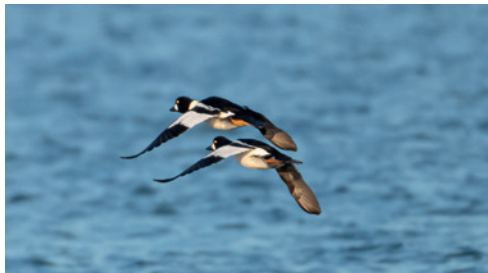


Making it real in wood and steel

It used to be that every village had their own builder, carpenter and blacksmith. In the 21st century, Wykeham's Farfield Business Park is the home of our very own 'Makersmith'.

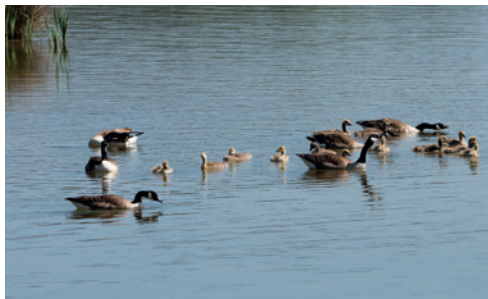
"In construction, industry, architecture and interior design some projects need more than a joiner or shopfitter or welder to bring them to life," says Makersmith's founder, Gareth Davies. "With more than 20 years' experience in product design and manufacturing, we can create a quality product from the vaguest of concepts." Through laser cutting, 3D computer-aided design and computer wood-cutting tools, the company has produced everything from secret doors to sliding screens, garden fountains to humidity controls for museums.

Gareth's business has now expanded into two industrial units after establishing a new company: Two Green Leaves. This new enterprise focuses on the domestic market, selling sustainable furniture and storage such as wooden toy boxes, stools and log stores online. www.twogreenleaves.co.uk



Taking flight online

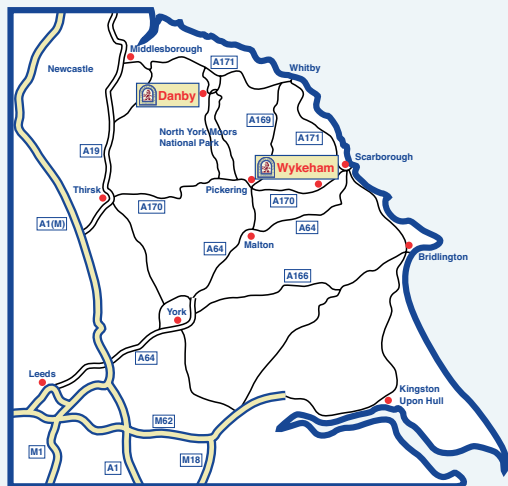
Encouraging and supporting our native wildlife is an important concern on the Dawnay Estates. Now the breadth of nature on our doorstep can be enjoyed by everyone via the Estate's website www.dawnay.co.uk/gallery/estate-wildlife/ which showcases some wonderful photography, including these pictures taken by Farm Manager David Edwards. The Estate welcomes any submissions of pictures of local wildlife (contact Katrina Shamel). All Photographs will be credited, and the photographer will retain full copyright.



Coping with Co-vid

This newsletter would not be complete without some mention of Covid-19, which has wrought more changes to the Estate and our communities, than any other event since WWII. A number of the Estate's enterprises, Wykeham Mature Plants, St Helen's Caravan Park and North Yorkshire Water Park, have been forced to temporarily close; others have managed to battle on, Wykeham Farms and Wykeham Game. The Estate Office and maintenance employees have kept essential services running by working from home or social distancing. Whereas Makersmith and Class Engineering, two businesses based on the Estate, have gone further and have helped produce vitally needed supplies of PPE.

As this Newsletter goes to press there seems to be light at the end of the tunnel enabling the Estate and the business based here to gradually open up, as and when it is safe to do so. Our thoughts go out to all those affected by this terrible virus.



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St Helen's In the Park Caravan Park:
www.sthelenscaravanpark.co.uk

Forresters Lodge:
www.forresterslodge.com

Wykeham Mature Plants:
www.wykehammatureplants.co.uk