



## ITALIAN FORMALITY

The ha-ha (concealed ditch) allows views across the south lawn

Francis Place's bird's-eye view of Middlethorpe shows Thomas Barlow's garden shortly after he had completed work on the house. He seems to have wanted a formal baroque layout of the kind he would have seen ornamenting the villas of Rome, but the flat terrain of the Vale of York made this difficult. In front of the house was an oval pond in the centre of a sunken parterre surrounded by borders. To the west of the house were two terraced walks edged by trees that had been clipped into pyramids. Statues of Barlow eagles sat on top of the gates, which were set into the south garden wall. To the south east were two walled gardens - one planted as an orchard, the other containing the dovecot built in 1681 for £105 for a previous owner, Sir

Henry Thompson. The dovecot was rescued from dereliction in 1980, and a new cupola was added, based on that shown in Place's drawing.

In the mid-eighteenth century, Francis Barlow deformalized the garden following the taste of the



A view of Middlethorpe from the south-east about 1705; drawing by Francis Place (York City Art Gallery). It shows the formal garden created by Thomas Barlow around his new house



White Garden



The Rose Garden



## A PIONEER GARDENER AT MIDDLETHORPE

Fanny Wilkinson (1855-1951) was the eldest child of Dr Matthew Wilkinson, a leading Manchester physician and the second husband of Frances Barlow (see p.16), from whom he inherited Middlethorpe. As Fanny explained, 'When my father died [in 1878] we went to live at our own place, near York [Middlethorpe], and there I began to devote myself to gardening in a practical way'. Fanny

Wilkinson was one of the first women to make a professional career as a landscape gardener. She laid out Vauxhall Park in London for the Kyrle Society, a 'Society for the Diffusion of Beauty' among the urban poor. The Society was founded by Octavia Hill's sister, Miranda, and was an important forerunner of the National Trust.

time. He replaced the south garden wall with a ha-ha - a concealed ditch which allowed views out over the sweeping lawns to the countryside beyond. He seems to have also built the ice-house, the remains of which were revealed to the north-west of the house in the 1980s. Although the house was tenanted during much of the nineteenth century, the garden seems to have been well maintained. Certainly, there were regular campaigns of tree-planting. We can enjoy the results in the cedars and North American red oak, which are now reaching maturity.



Head Gardener Andrew Leighton in the Rose Garden

In the 1980's the garden was restored to suggest something of its original formality. Walks were re-created with urns providing eyecatchers. Trees were planted to screen the main road. A new lake was dug at the south-east end of the garden

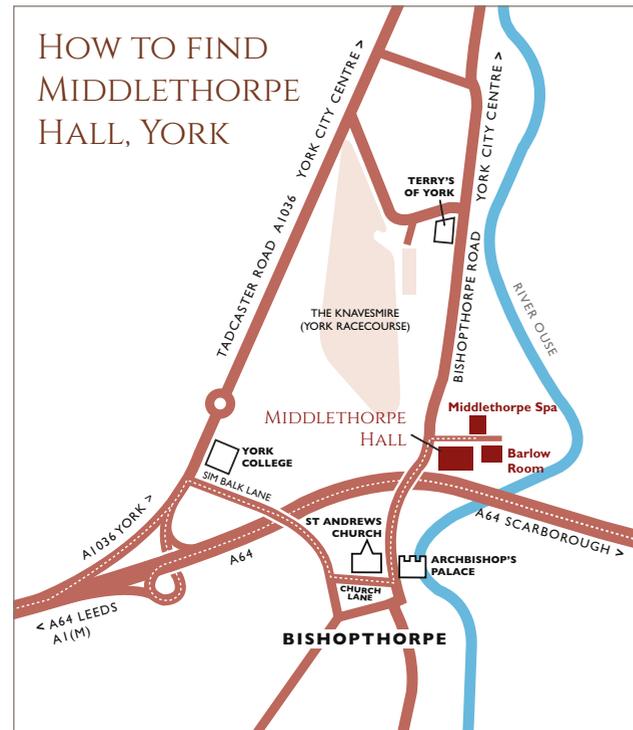
to mitigate the periodic threat of the Ouse flooding. The ha-ha was repaired, the dovecot rebuilt and the walled gardens replanted with fruit trees, herbaceous plants and herbs.

(text by Oliver Gamett - 2015)



## NATIONAL COLLECTION OF CARDAMINE

The fascinating Cardamine Collection can be discovered by walking around the walled garden and the sheltered woodland area of parkland. Best time to view: April - May.



## TRADITIONAL AFTERNOON TEA

This perfect treat of dainty finger sandwiches, home-made scones with clotted cream and strawberry jam, a selection of home-made seasonal pastries and slices of assorted cakes is served every day.

Served between 2.30 pm and 5.30 pm, in the 18th Century Drawing Room, in front of the fireplace or facing the south lawn.



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# THE GARDENS AND TREES OF INTEREST AT MIDDLETHORPE HALL



National Trust

£1



The Park

**DEODAR CEDAR - A**

*Cedrus deodara*  
One of the most beautiful cedars, with greyish-green young foliage, darkening with age, and pink-brown new shoots. Trees are conical in shape, with a narrow, pointed tip which droops elegantly, as do the ends of all shoots and branches, to give a weeping appearance. This magnificent specimen situated on the south lawn was planted around 180 years ago. Deodar Cedars were introduced into the United Kingdom from 1831 onwards and originate from the Western Himalayas and Afghanistan.



The Dovecot

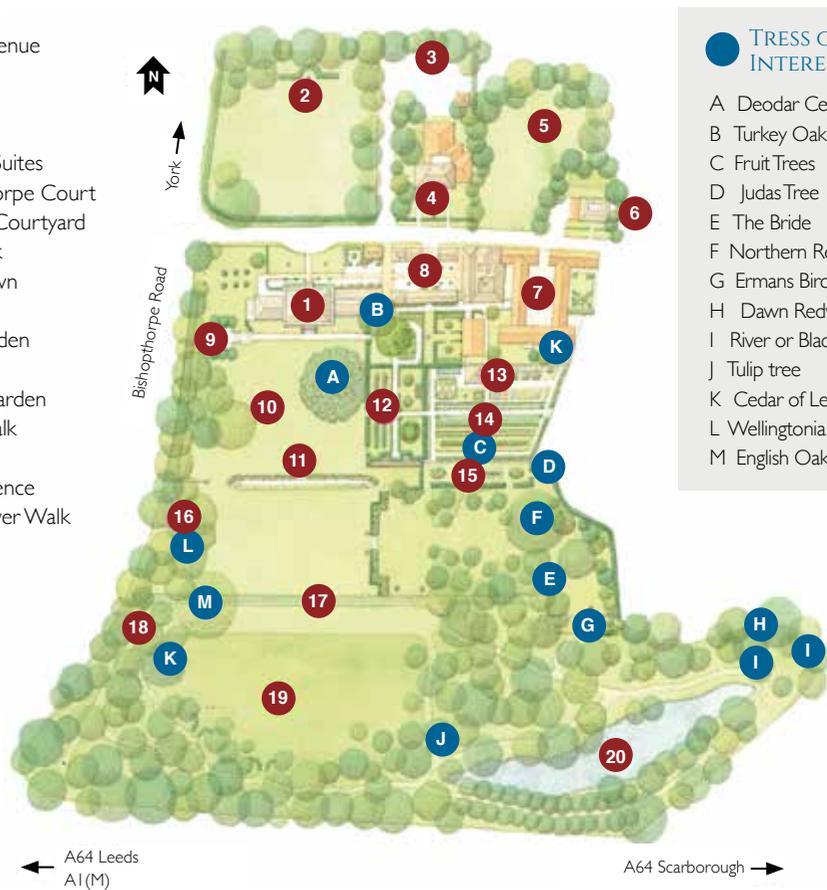
**TURKEY OAK - Quercus cerris B**

Turkey Oak is a fast-growing deciduous tree capable of reaching 35 metres in height. Six-to-eighteen centimetre long leaves are covered with a fine fuzz on both upper and lower surfaces. The one-inch long acorns are set into big woolly cups, and ripen in October. The attractive, ridged and furrowed bark reveals an orange colour within its fissures. This specimen was planted around 170 years ago. This tree has a characteristic 'mossy' cup and wonderful deep fissures on the bole. The Turkey Oaks were introduced into this country in 1735 and originate from Southern Europe and South Western Asia.



The South Lawn

- 1 House
- 2 Beech Avenue
- 3 Car park
- 4 Spa
- 5 Meadow
- 6 Cottage Suites
- 7 Middlethorpe Court
- 8 Classical Courtyard
- 9 Wall Walk
- 10 South Lawn
- 11 Ha Ha
- 12 Rose Garden
- 13 Dovecot
- 14 Walled Garden
- 15 White Walk
- 16 Yew Walk
- 17 Sunken Fence
- 18 Wild Flower Walk
- 19 Park
- 20 Lake



- TRESS OF INTEREST**
- A Deodar Cedar
  - B Turkey Oak
  - C Fruit Trees
  - D Judas Tree
  - E The Bride
  - F Northern Red Oak
  - G Ermans Birch
  - H Dawn Redwood
  - I River or Black Birch
  - J Tulip tree
  - K Cedar of Lebanon
  - L Wellingtonia
  - M English Oak



**FRUIT TREES IN THE 'WALLED GARDEN' C**

The Walled Garden contains a row of espaliered apples and pears. In the spring, their pink and white blossoms are beautiful. The walls also give shelter to Greengages, Plums, Cherries and Peaches. Most of the fruits are used by Chef to make wonderful dishes. Hidden in the North Eastern corner are two Medlar trees with wonderful pinky-white flowers in May, and a most unusual fruit looking like a small pomegranate, ready for harvesting

in autumn (best to make jelly or jam). Two fine specimens of Azara Microphylla adorn the south wall of the Dovecote. The small yellow flowers fill the air with a vanilla scent in spring. It originates from Chile and Argentina and was introduced in 1861 to this country.

**JUDAS TREE - Cercis siliquastrum D**

Leaves appear late on this spectacular flowering tree, after the startling clusters of pea-shaped blooms which can smother the tree and burst

from the new young shoots, the surface of the bare branches and even the main trunk of the tree. To flower well it needs full sun and a long warm summer the previous year, and it is not so impressive in cooler gardens. From late summer onwards, large bunches of rich purple pods deck the branches and last well into winter, while the pretty foliage turns light yellow and chestnut in autumn. The Judas Trees were introduced from Southern Europe and Western Asia in the 16th century.

**'THE BRIDE' E**

*Exochorda x macrantha*  
There are several Exochorda species, all very beautiful Chinese shrubs when clothed in the paper white flowers. They need some shelter from late spring frosts, which can scorch the young foliage, and most cannot tolerate a lot of lime in the soil. E x macrantha is a garden hybrid between two of the best species, and is usually grown in the form 'The Bride', a more compact and shapely plant than the hybrid. The Royal Horticultural Society have judged it to be a plant of outstanding excellence, giving it their prestigious Award of Garden Merit (AGM).

**NORTHERN RED OAK - F**

*Quercus rubra*  
A giant of an oak from North America, capable of topping 30m (100ft), though you will have to wait decades for it to get that high. The leaves are greenish on the top side with a bluish tinge below, but they really flare up in the autumn when they turn red before falling. Our tree is around 100 years old. With a tree this age, the autumn colour is variable with some leaves being yellow and brown, some cigar brown. The Red Oaks were introduced into the United Kingdom in 1724 from Eastern Canada and North Eastern America.

**ERMANS BIRCH - G**

*Betula ermanni* 'Grayswood Hill'  
A rarely-grown but beautiful birch which makes a medium-sized specimen tree. Its snowy white bark often has a tinge of pink and stands out well at all times of year but especially when leafless in winter. Long catkins appear with the green leaves in spring and the foliage often turns golden yellow in the autumn. The Ermans Birch was introduced from North Eastern Asia and Japan in 1890.

**DAWN REDWOOD - H**

*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*  
The Dawn Redwood is a deciduous conifer with a lovely conical shape. The soft, bright green foliage turns a delicate reddish pink before falling in autumn to

reveal the fluted orange bark. There are several Dawn Redwoods around the lake, but the best tree showing the sinuous form is at the east side of the lake planting. This tree was only discovered in China in 1941 and introduced to England in 1948.

**RIVER OR BLACK BIRCH - I**

*Betula nigra*  
River Birch normally grows with a central leader and small-diameter; dark-coloured lateral branches. It has a narrow, oval-to-pyramidal crown when young, spreading wider with age as several branches become dominant. It lacks the white trunk bark associated with other Birches, but is distinguished by reddish, brown bark peeling off in film-like papery curls, providing interest all year round. In autumn the foliage is vivid yellow. As its common name suggests, this tree does well in damp ground and hence its location in the lake planting. Though not widely grown it was introduced in 1736 from Central and Eastern United States.

**TULIP TREE - J**

*Liriodendron tulipifera*  
Liriodendron tulipifera is an unusual tree grown for its curiously shaped leaves and stately shape. Its common name, tulip tree refers to the small, pale green tulip-shaped flowers which only appear on mature trees, usually over twenty years old. It is still a beautiful tree to grow as the saddle-shaped, glossy dark green leaves smell strongly of eucalyptus when crushed. In autumn, they turn brilliant yellow or rich brown in some years. This specimen was planted by David Barker our Head Gardener in 1985. The tulip trees were introduced from east North America in the 1860's.

**CEDAR OF LEBANON - K**

*Cedrus libani*  
This is a large stately evergreen, with a massive trunk when mature, and wide-sweeping, sometimes upright branches (more often horizontal) which originate on the lower trunk. Dark green needles and cones, which are held upright above the foliage, add to the impressive appearance. Young specimens retain a pyramidal shape but the tree takes on a

more open form with age, and some have the characteristic flat table-top shape. There were three Cedars of Lebanon in the park originally but two blew down in winter 1984. To celebrate the Millennium a young Cedar was planted in the position of one of its predecessors.

**WELLINGTONIA - L**

*Sequoiadendron giganteum*  
Wellingtonia grow up to one metre per year in their native habitat. They live to be many hundreds of years old; some live to several thousand years. Bark is particularly beautiful, turning a bright orange on older trees. This tree is about 185 years old and stands in the south-west of the main lawn. It is also framed in a view from near the Betula Ermanii near the lake. It grows on the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada and California where it reaches a great size.

**ENGLISH OAK - M**

*Quercus robur*  
This is a stately and very unique oak that will reach a height and spread of 10 to 12 metres. The crown often appears open with large branches dominating the round crown. It is low branching and pyramidal with a short, grey trunk. The main trunk is normally straight up or slightly bent up through the centre of the crown. This magnificent specimen located in the north-west corner of the parkland is still young and was planted 90 to 100 years ago.



There are many other trees in the gardens and park not mentioned here, but that are still worth investigating during your visit to Middlethorpe.