

THE LAST TREE OF INGLEWOOD



The Tree, an engraving by Thomas Bewick

This is an extract from *The History and Antiquities of Cumberland Vol I* written by Samuel Jefferson in 1840.

'On Wragmire moss, until the year 1823, there was a well-known oak, known as the last tree of Inglewood Forest, which had survived the blasts of 700 or 800 winters. This "time-honored" oak was remarkable, not only for the beauty of the wood, which was marked in a similar manner to satin-wood, but as being a boundary mark between the manors of the Duke of Devonshire and the Dean and Chapter of Carlisle, as also between the parishes of Hesket and St. Cuthbert's Carlisle; and was noticed as such for upwards of 600 years. This "gnarled and knotted oak," which had weathered so many hundred stormy winters, was become considerably decayed in its trunk. It fell not, however, by the tempest or the axe, but from sheer old age: this happened on the 13th of June, 1823.

If not of late years, as beautiful in its foliage, - nor presenting such a goodly assemblage of wide-spreading and umbrageous branches,- as some other celebrated oaks, yet it was an object of great interest, being the veritable last tree of Inglewood Forest. Xerxes, who cared not for the sacrifice of human life, would not suffer his army to destroy trees, and halted his mighty host for three days that he might repose beneath the Phrygian plane; and yet, probably, that tree had not numbered half the years of this relic of Inglewood, under whose spreading branches may have reposed the victorious Edward I. who is said to have killed 200 bucks in this ancient forest; and perhaps, at a later period, "John de Corbrig, the poor hermit" of Wragmire, has counted his beads beneath its shade.'

PINE CONE

The Newsletter of The Friends of St Mary's Church, Wreay
Issue No20 May 2020



My Pinecone Ritual
The Last Tree in Inglewood
A Wild Apple
The Beauty of Mathematics Garden
Sarah Portrait Mystery

DEAR FRIENDS,



The Friends of St Mary's Church, Wreay

c/o Wreay Syke Fold, Wreay CA4 0RJ

Website: www.stmaryswreay.org.uk

Chairman: Raymond Whittaker 016974 73687

Secretary: Janet Madden

Treasurer: Mike Jones 016974 73744

Pinecone 20 has something of an arboreal theme. It started with Anthony Fitzherbert donating another tree to us and, rest assured, Anthony's trees always come with a story attached!

That led me to thinking about the number of times I have come across references to the pinecone - I guess that I am particularly sensitive to them. Back in 2016 there was a splendid garden at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show based on the intriguing Fibonacci ratio found throughout nature from the pinecone to the structure of DNA and the spirals of galaxies.

A year earlier the garden writer, Susie White, had written an article in the Guardian Nature Notes about her autumn ritual of collecting pinecones and she kindly allows us to reproduce it here.

When there is so much talk about deforestation abroad it is an appropriate time to recall that Wreay was once surrounded by the mighty Inglewood Forest that stretched from the boundaries of Carlisle to Penrith. An extract from Samuel Jefferson's 1840 *The History and Antiquities of Cumberland* recalls the last tree of Inglewood - a salient reminder that it is important to teach our children about how fragile our world is - or perhaps they are teaching us.

Which takes me nicely to the Friends Open Day 2020 on Saturday 19th September which is a celebration of education in Wreay through the ages. *For the Advancement of Learning* will explore education from the 18th century to the present day with an afternoon of talks, dramatic sketches and music from the award winning Wreay School Choir. An exhibition in the Village Hall will feature archival material and memorabilia and if you have any memories of the school or perhaps an old exercise book, report or photo then I would be delighted to hear from you. To bring things up to date, the school will be open for you to look around. Would Sarah still recognise the school she built in 1830?

Raymond Whittaker

SARAH PORTRAIT RESTORED



A very big thank you to Chris Bull and his team at The Fine Art Restoration Co for the magnificent work they have carried out, free of charge, restoring the portrait of Sarah (Spencer) Losh and its frame. The Friends will be contributing towards the cost of the gold leaf for the frame. It now hangs at the back of church in pristine condition. The process has been recorded and will soon feature on the company's website.

It has revealed a new mystery. You can now read the artist's signature at the bottom right hand corner and it appears to be Linsset or Linsser. But we can find no trace of an artist of this name. Assuming that it is a portrait of Sarah Spencer Losh at the time of her marriage (Chris confirms that the wedding ring is original to the portrait) then it dates to 1831 when she married her cousin, William Septimus Losh, in Paris where she was living. So is Linsset a French portrait artist? But the landscape is very Cumbrian so perhaps Linsset is English.

Have you ever come across this artist? Can you throw any light on the origins of the portrait? We would love to solve this mystery.

A WILD APPLE by Anthony Fitzherbert



Richard Dixon with Anthony Fitzherbert planting the apple tree.



The parent tree in Blewbury, Oxfordshire.

You may recall back in 2015 Anthony Fitzherbert donated and planted two Afghan pines in the churchyard to replace the original one that Sarah Losh planted. In October last year we welcomed Anthony back, this time bearing a gift of a species apple tree which we planted within the grounds of the Sarah Losh Heritage Centre. This tree also came with a history which Anthony explains.

'*Malus niedzwiezykana*:- is a species of wild apple from Central Asia - found in scattered groves and as individual trees from the mountains of eastern Afghanistan, through the Central Asian Republics of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, southern Kazakhstan, to western China. It is an attractive tree with reddish leaves, deep red blossom and deep red-maroon medium sized fruit. It has been used for cross pollination and fruit tree breeding and is probably best planted for its interest and as a decorative tree like a species crab. The species is now very rare in its native region and the organisation 'Fauna and Flora' is supporting a special propagation programme in Kyrgyzstan where only a few specimens still survive.

The sapling that we planted is a graft onto MM106 rootstocks that I made in March 2018. The scions from which I made the grafts were taken from a tree in the garden of the mother of a friend of mine in the village of Blewbury in Oxfordshire, where it had been planted by a previous owner of the house, a Dr. C.S.Owin. Dr Owin was an agricultural historian and the first director of the Oxford University Institute of Agricultural Economics. It is not known from where he obtained his tree, but as an agricultural historian it must have been of interest to him.

The species is named after the person who first identified it scientifically. Vladimir Niedzwiezki was a Polish lawyer and amateur botanist, who was exiled to the newly conquered territories in Turkestan (roughly the present republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) by the Russian Czar Alexander II, for his part in the Polish rebellion against Russian rule in January-June 1863. Although Niedzwiezki was not able to return from exile he managed to send seed back to a German botanist / horticulturalist friend of his who was able to propagate it and also send some to the USA where it was used for cross pollination and variety improvement. Some examples of this species must have found their way to Britain where there are a few specimens scattered about.'

Our thanks go to Anthony for this fascinating gift. We are in good company as Anthony has donated other specimens of *Malus Niedzwiezki* to Lowther Gardens, Helmsley Walled Garden and RHS Wisley.



The Friends of St Mary's Church, Wreay Open Day 2020

Saturday 19th September 12.30 - 5.00pm

Wreay Village Hall, St Mary's Church & Wreay School

For the Advancement of Learning



A day celebrating the history of education in Wreay and its link with St Mary's & Sarah Losh

Talks, dramatic sketches, exhibition, memories, open school, music by Wreay School Choir

Tickets £12.50 (children under 11 £5.00) incl. lunch & tea, available from Bookends, 56 Castle St, Carlisle
or Wreay Syke Fold, Wreay CA4 0RJ or 016974 73744 or 016974 73687 or visit www.stmaryswreay.org.uk

MY PINECONE RITUAL by Susie White

Susie is a freelance garden writer, photographer and author. A lifelong and passionate gardener, she spent 23 years at Chesters Walled Garden on Hadrian's Wall making it a place much loved by visitors. She writes for the Country Diaries column of the Guardian on a regular basis and this item was first published in December 2015. It is reproduced courtesy of Susie White and Guardian News and Media Ltd.

'East Allen river, Northumberland The four Scots pines are taking on the softness of dusk as I pick my way towards them. The light is already leaving the valley on this December mid-afternoon, though it lingers on the larch tops in the hillside wood to the north. Beyond that, the high fields are suffused with a rosy glow. The four Scots pines by the river are taking on the softness of dusk as I pick my way towards them through sodden rushes. A half-detached limb sweeps down to rest on the grey drystone wall and I've come to pick its cones in a personal annual ritual.

The cones, closed and pointed, have a rough solidity under my fingers, their overlapping plates rhythmical in their Fibonacci arrangement. It takes some tugging from the springy branches to stuff my pockets. Once home, I fill a terracotta dish and set it by the wood burning stove, a small celebration of hearth and winter. By spring the tough cones will have expanded, loosening their papery seeds, which I will sow in a nursery corner of the vegetable garden.

My pen moves across the thick white paper of the sketchpad as I draw the cones, learning about their spiralling form as I do so. The pine cone is sacred to many cultures and represents renewal and eternal life. Thirty miles to the west of here is the Victorian church of Wreay, shaped like a Roman basilica, decorated in carved stone, bog oak and pierced alabaster. Filled with exuberant plant and animal motifs, it was designed by Sarah Losh, part memorial to her sister Katherine, whose claustrophobic mausoleum stands in the graveyard.

Energetic natural forms ornament this compact stone church: snake and crocodile beneath the eaves; caterpillar, owl, vines, fossils, dragonfly and a spread-winged bat inside. And everywhere there are pine cones, in finials by the nave, door handles, on the window surrounds; indeed Jenny Uglow's biography of Sarah Losh is entitled *The Pinecone*.

Now, as I draw and study the cones from the riverside Scots pines, I think of their symbolism, of regeneration and enlightenment, in this turning time of the year, and of the strange and beautiful church at Wreay.'

BEAUTY OF MATHEMATICS GARDEN



*The cone bearing *Pinus sylvestris* within the Mathematics Garden*

The Winton Capital Beauty of Mathematics Garden was one of the outstanding gardens at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show back in 2016. It was designed by Nick Bailey, the Head Gardener of the Chelsea Physic Garden, and built by Gardenlink to highlight the beauty of mathematical principles in nature.

Nick Bailey, Head Gardener at Chelsea Physic Garden, was inspired by the expertise of Winton, the garden sponsor, in financial mathematics and empirical scientific research and his design celebrates the beauty found in the mathematics and algorithms which underpin all plants, growth and life.

The garden's layout was based on the mathematical symbol for infinity, with further well-known mathematical expressions and concepts evident in the central area of the garden's path and planting layout. The proportions of the garden and the structure of the belvedere were based on "the golden ratio" and the closely related Fibonacci sequence (0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, ... the next number is found by adding up the two numbers before it). The etched glass panels on the belvedere's upper and lower decks showed the radial spirals created by asteraceae plants. Equally, the elegant water bowl (based on a pinecone) represented potential life and showed the Fibonacci sequence in a physical form that complemented the nearby pine trees.



Water bowl based on the form of the pinecone

Flowing through the centre of the garden was a beautiful copper band symbolising germination and growth of a seedling. The band emerged at one end of the plot, rising in height to become first a bench, then a stair banister and finally a planter that swept around the top of the belvedere which overflowed with trailing plants. This planter represented leaf emergence and was richly planted with verdant trailing species. Etched into the copper band was a series of plant growth algorithms and equations.

Spiraling copper band



The Belvedere



Aloe polyphylla



Leucospermum cordifolium



Asteraceae - Sunflower

Visitors experienced a fresh dynamic garden bursting with plants of the Southern Hemisphere and Mediterranean, whose delicate leaves and wiry forms epitomised nature's mathematical patterns. Of particular significance were species such as *Aloe polyphylla* from Lesoto in Southern Africa with its perfect Fibonacci spiral leaf pattern, *Leucospermum* a South African shrub related to the protea family with its cone-like flowers, plants from the Asteraceae family with their spiralling disc leaves and of course *Pinus sylvestris* or Scots pine.