

# Teacher's Information Pack



Burnby Hall Gardens are located on the edge of the Yorkshire Wolds in the pretty market town of Pocklington and are home to a National Collection of over 100 varieties of Hardy Water Lily which bloom on the lakes there between June and August each year.

The Gardens have a rich local history and are home to a wide variety of trees, plants, insects and birds. This Teacher's Guide will provide you with information on the historical background of Burnby Hall Gardens, a historical timeline, a site map and cross-curricular ideas in order that you can get the most out of your self-led educational visit to this fascinating location.



# Historical Background

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## The Stewarts

Between 1901 and 1962, Burnby Hall was the home of Percy and Katharine Stewart, who lived there following their marriage. Percy Marlborough Stewart was born in Little Stukeley in Cambridgeshire on 28th August 1871 and was the son of Lucy Parker and James Stewart, a rector.

Through his father, Percy was related to the Earls of Galloway and to the Marlboroughs, and was a second cousin of Winston Churchill, although Percy's family line was somewhat impoverished when compared with the grandeur of Blenheim Palace in which his distant relative was raised.

Percy was a lively boy and grew up in a big family with several brothers and sisters in the Cambridgeshire countryside. When Percy was ten years old, he skipped Sunday School to go bird's-nesting with friends. During this escapade he found an adder and put the dormant snake into his pocket. It later came around and gave his mother a fright, much to the amusement of his younger siblings.

Percy went on to study Semitic languages at Cambridge University and was awarded a first-class degree. Although well connected socially, his branch of the Stewart family was not wealthy, and this ultimately meant that a man in Percy's situation could expect to go into a career in public service, the armed services, academia, or the church.



Percy Stewart



Katharine Stewart



# Historical Background

After graduating, Percy was invited by the Reverend Charles F. Sutton, the newly appointed headmaster of Pocklington School, to teach Hebrew as a school subject. Charles had previously taught Percy at Daventry School and this, together with his Cambridge degree, must have impressed Charles enough to offer him the post at Pocklington School.

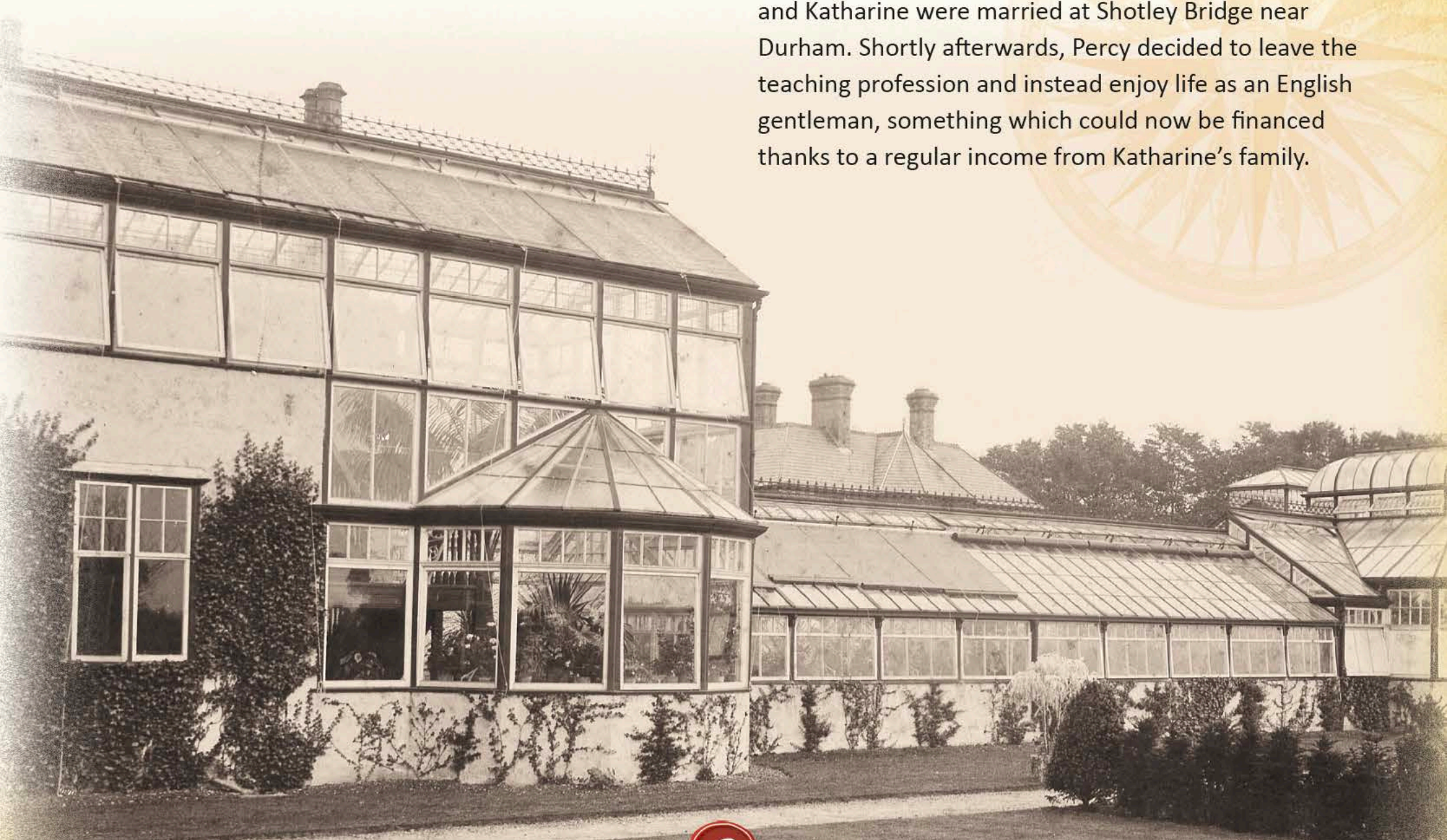
It was during his time at Pocklington School that Percy would go out hunting during his leisure time. On one such occasion, he accompanied the Braes of Derwent Hunt, it was here that he met his future wife, Katharine Priestman. Opposite Percy recounts riding with Katharine, who he refers to as 'Kate' on one of these expeditions:

*'The best day or at any rate the most enjoyable by far was when I rode Dick with the Braes of Derwent. The country was essentially new to me and I have ne'er been so well mounted. Kate piloted me excellently during a run of an hour, though she set me some stiff jumps including a five-barred gate and some strong rails. The first I had ever attempted, though I have jumped one gate before.'*

Katharine was the daughter of Jonathon Priestman, the wealthy owner of several coal mines in the Durham area. She had recently become a widow at 26 years of age, after the death at the age of 34 of her first husband James Bridges, a curate at Ryton near Durham.

## Burnby Hall Conservatories

It was through their shared passion of hunting and horsemanship that love blossomed and, in 1901, Percy and Katharine were married at Shotley Bridge near Durham. Shortly afterwards, Percy decided to leave the teaching profession and instead enjoy life as an English gentleman, something which could now be financed thanks to a regular income from Katharine's family.





# Burnby Hall and the Gardens

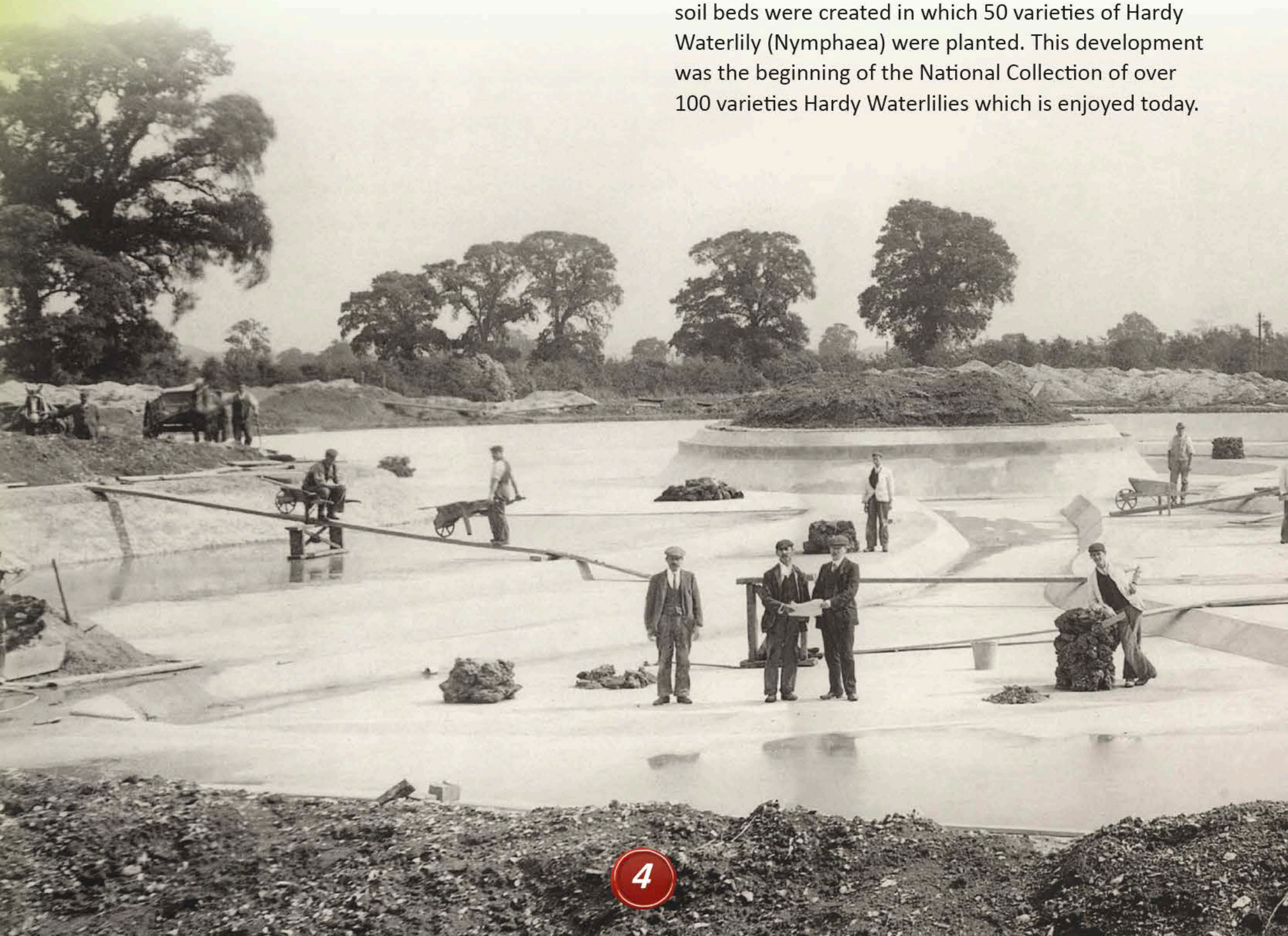
## The Lakes

In 1901, Percy and Katharine leased Ivy Hall (later to be renamed Burnby Hall), which they purchased in 1904. That same year, they embarked on an ambitious building scheme for the house and gardens, the former involving the building of a new central staircase in the house, relocating the front entrance, adding new bay windows and constructing a large conservatory.

They also employed a local Pocklington firm, Allison's, to construct an impressive lake which would hold three million gallons of water and would be known to them as the Upper Water. This lake was built by hand, using an army of labourers equipped with wheelbarrows, horses and carts and it would provide the centrepiece of the gardens where guests could enjoy fishing for trout during social occasions. Two years later, the Stewarts purchased two brick ponds at Willow Waters, one mile from Ivy Hall. Major Percy in his fishing record outlines how Willow Waters was developed:

*"Two channels were dug connecting the two ponds and so the land between them became an island. This was planted with larch and scotch, also willows and some berberis, stenophylla and aquifolium. The sides of the ponds and ends were planted with oak, chestnut, willow, larch and spruce. A path was made all round the water and a fishing hut erected."*

A second smaller lake, the Lower Water, was added to the Gardens in the 1920's. Katharine had always had a keen interest in horticulture and, in 1935, she and Percy decided to create a water lily collection in their Gardens. They employed Amos Perry, a renowned water lily horticulturalist, to undertake the work. The lakes were drained and brick-walled soil beds were created in which 50 varieties of Hardy Waterlily (*Nymphaea*) were planted. This development was the beginning of the National Collection of over 100 varieties Hardy Waterlilies which is enjoyed today.





# Burnby Hall and the Gardens

## The Rock Garden

In 1910, Percy and Katharine Stewart employed the renowned horticulturists the Backhouses of York to design a rock garden. Rock gardens were a 'must-have' garden fashion accessory in the Edwardian era and the Backhouse Nurseries had an extensive portfolio, building a variety of rock gardens for other wealthy families far and wide.

The Nurseries were established in 1815 by brothers James and Thomas Backhouse and, over the decades that followed, their business prospered. Between 1861 and 1890, the Nurseries were at their height and were based in Holgate in York on an impressive 100-acre site which at the time was larger than Kew Gardens! During this period, the nursery imported plants from all over the world and had forty greenhouses, an underground fernery and an impressive rock garden, which included a ravine.

The Backhouses provided extensive plant catalogues to their customers and often supplied a foreman to ensure that each rock garden had an attractive arrangement of alpine plants. The Rock Garden at Burnby Hall Gardens was built using 300 tonnes of sandstone, brought from Bramley Quarry in Leeds. The stone would have been transported by train to Pocklington and then hauled into place using horses, ropes and pulleys. Once completed the Rock Garden would have been one of the centrepieces of the estate, intended to impress the Stewarts' visitors.



*The Lakes (below) and  
The Rock Garden (right)*





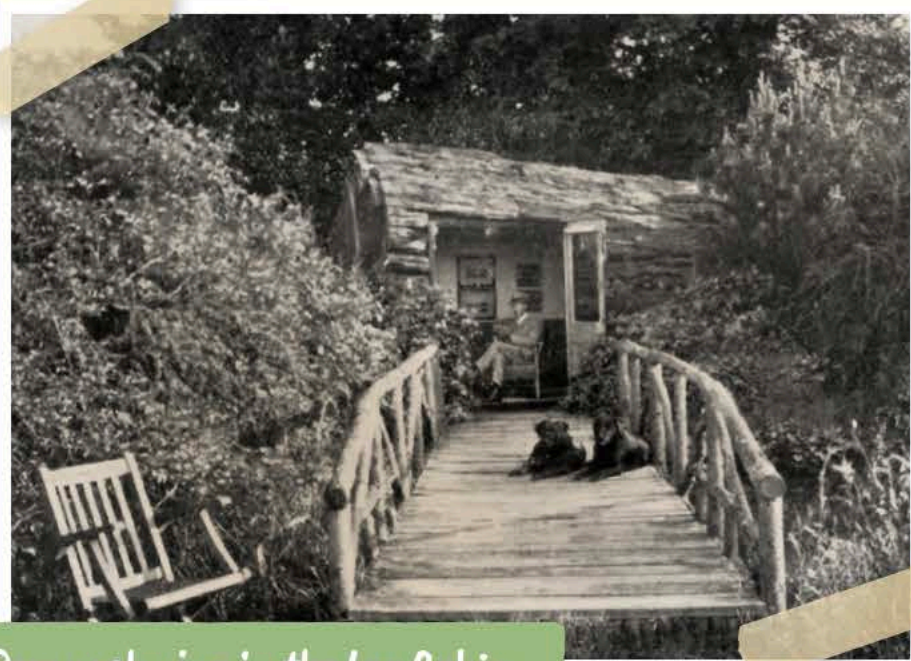
# Burnby Hall and the Gardens

## The Log Cabin

This feature is located next to the Lower Lake, with the only remnant of it left in existence today being a section of the tree trunk which was once one of the outer walls. When Percy and Katharine resided at Burnby Hall, they would have used this log cabin to relax in and enjoy the scenery of their beautiful Gardens.

It was during a visit to the Seattle Exhibition in 1909 that Percy spotted the redwood Log Cabin which had been created from a tree brought down during the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. He immediately saw the potential of the redwood and bought it for \$100, shipping it back to Britain at great expense and with some difficulty. As Percy wrote in his diary:

"...[I] had it carried by sailing ship round Cape Horn to Hull. From thence it travelled in a special railway truck to Pocklington and now serves as a summerhouse in our garden. This tree, a comparatively small one, was 200 feet high and 40 round, and the log measures 15 feet in length and nearly 12 feet in diameter at the thicker end."

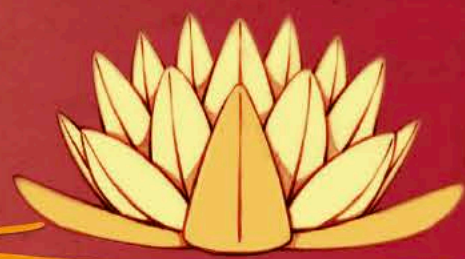


Percy relaxing in the Log Cabin





STUMPERY



# BURNBY HALL GARDENS AND MUSEUM

GIANT TREE  
STUMP

JAMIE'S  
BRIDGE

ROCK  
GARDEN

VICTORIAN  
GARDEN

AVIARY &  
EDWARDIAN  
POTTING SHED

SECRET  
GARDEN

PLAY  
AREA

W.C.

THE STEWART  
MUSEUM &  
LILYPAD CAFÉ

BAND  
STAND

GIFT SHOP  
AND VISITOR  
INFORMATION





# The Travelling Years

## The Travelling Years 1906 – 1926

Percy and Katharine were living at Burnby Hall during the height of Britain's colonial empire and, like many upper-class families of the period, they divided their time between the estate and exploring the far-flung corners of the world. It was after one particularly tedious dinner party that Percy turned to his wife and said:

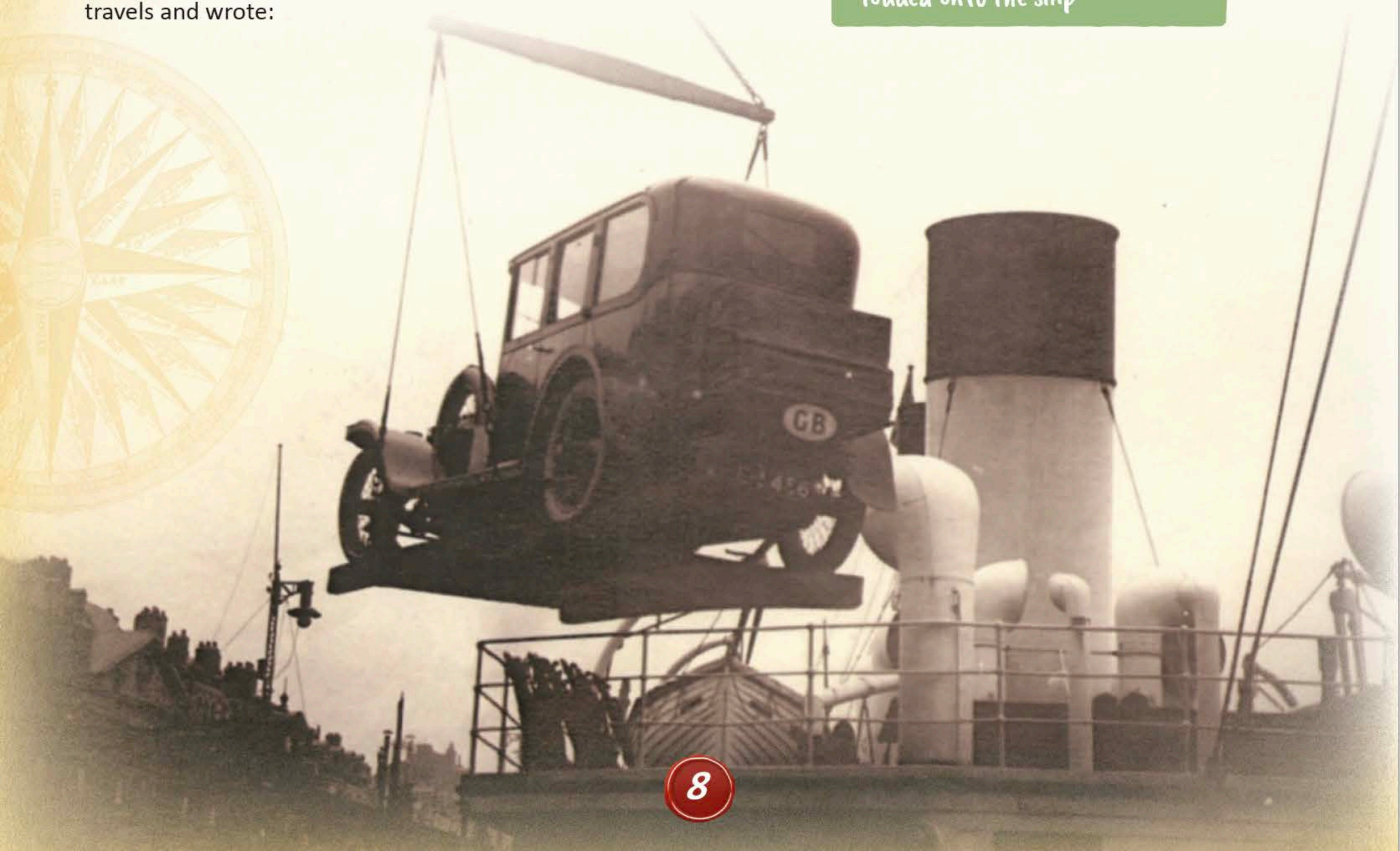
**"We're terribly dull people, let's travel around the world and then we shall have something to talk about."**

In 1906 they planned their first adventure. Setting sail from Marseilles, they went on an extensive sightseeing tour of Egypt, Ceylon, India, Malaya, China, Japan and the USA, which lasted seven months in total. This was one of eight tours which Percy and Katharine completed during the first 25 years of their marriage. They travelled mostly by boat at a time when newly well-equipped steamships and railways were widening the travel horizons for prosperous travellers. Writing a quarter of a century later, Percy reflected upon his travels and wrote:

**"There is no doubt that there is nothing like travel to sharpen the wits and broaden the mind, and it gives one delightful memories – something which can never be stolen or lost."**

Percy and Katharine enjoyed planning trips together, spurred on by Percy's love of unusual hunting opportunities and Katharine's interest in natural history and gardens. In addition, they both had a passion for learning more about the lives, cultures and religious beliefs of the countries which they visited, and Percy was to publish three books about their travels entitled *Round the World with Rod and Rifle* (1924), *Travel and Sport in Many Lands* (1928), *Tales of Travel and Sport* (1930).

Percy and Katharine's car being loaded onto the ship





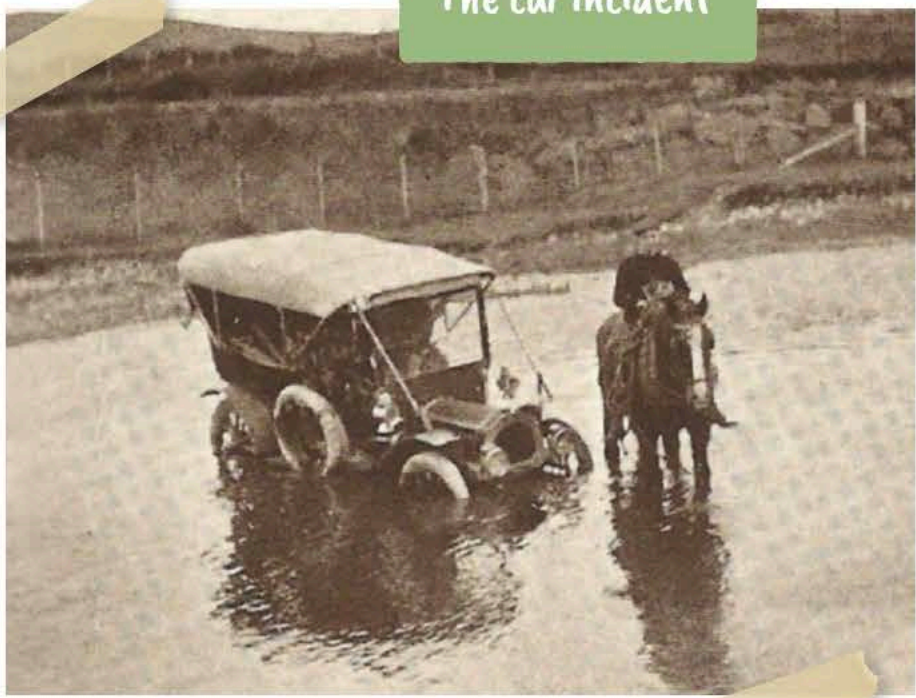
# The Travelling Years

Travelling during this period did not come without its risks, with many of the places they visited being remote and far from any assistance should they have required it. In 1911, during a hunting expedition in India, Percy inadvertently sat down on a branch of acacia thorn. Some of the thorns were not removed and became infected resulting in Percy narrowly escaping blood poisoning.

Motor vehicles were in their infancy during the early 1900s and, coupled with the fact that the road surfaces were often uneven, they were often temperamental and prone to breakdowns. The Stewarts had their fair share of incidents involving their cars on their travels. In Perugia, Italy their car broke down and they had to wait six days for the necessary parts to arrive before the car could be fixed!

Another incident involved the car getting stuck in the middle of a fast-flowing river in New Zealand, with Katharine being left stuck in the vehicle as the water levels rose whilst Percy went to get help from a nearby village.

The car incident



The objects which Percy and Katharine were given by indigenous peoples during their travels can be seen in the Stewart Museum. Given our modern understanding of conservation and environmental issues, it can be rather difficult for us to view some of this collection today, but during the early 20th century hunting for enjoyment was a practice that was expected of an English gentleman and was interwoven into the social tapestry of the era.

Percy with his latest catch, a sailfish





# Timeline

**1871**

Major Percy Stewart born.

**1872**

Katharine Priestman born.

**1906**

The Stewarts go on their first world tour, the first of eight world tours in total.

**1909**

Percy purchased the giant redwood at Seattle Exhibition and turned it into a summer house for the Gardens.

**1914**

The outbreak of World War I. Percy was first based at Catterick as 2nd in command of 105th Battalion and then later sent to France with the Royal Fusiliers.



**1901**

Percy and Katharine marry and move to Ivy Hall, Pocklington.

**1910**

The Rock Garden was designed by the Backhouse Nurseries of York for the Stewarts.

**1919**

The Stewarts extended their estate further to create the Burnby and Hayton Estate, comprising of 3000 acres and sixteen farms. The hall was then renamed Burnby Hall.

**1904**

Construction of Upper Water which Percy used for trout fishing.

**1911**

The Stewarts extended their land and purchased Willow Waters.



# Timeline

**1924**

The Stewarts published  
*Round the World with  
Rod and Rifle.*

**1935**

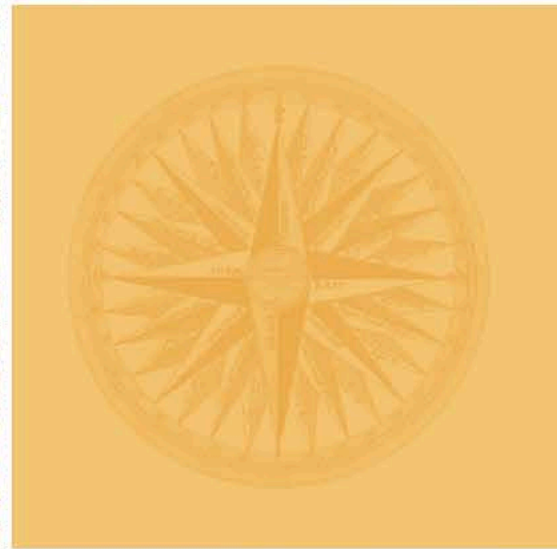
The Stewarts started to  
grow water lilies in their gardens.  
The lakes were drained and beds  
were installed for 50 different  
varieties of water lily.

**1940**

During World War II Percy acted as a  
chief air warden for Pocklington  
and also provided Burnby Hall  
as a residence for officers from  
RAF Pocklington.

**1952**

Now in the twilight of  
his years, Percy still enjoyed  
fishing and caught one of his  
largest pike.



**1926**

After a series of coal strikes in the  
1920s the General Strike led to a  
decline in the Stewarts' income,  
which was funded through the  
Priestman and Ashington trust.

**1939**

Katharine Stewart  
dies from a stroke and  
suspected lung cancer.

**1962**

Percy Stewart dies leaving  
Burnby Hall Gardens to the  
people of Pocklington in Trust.  
The Stewarts Trust, the charity  
which looks after the Gardens  
today was established in 1964  
to ensure the lasting legacy of  
the Stewart family.



# Cross-Curricular Ideas

## History

- Ask the students to work in groups to debate different topics, for example: Percy and hunting and then encourage students to form for and against arguments and then feedback. Create a class vote – who will win the debate?
- Look at the modes of transport which Percy and Katharine used to travel the world. How have our transport networks changed?
- Local history study – look at maps of Pocklington between 1901 and 1962. How did the town develop and what significance did Burnby Hall have on the local community?
- Choose an object within the museum, study it and create a case-study profile for it. If your object could speak, what would it say?
- Percy and Katharine's wealth came from the coal industry in Durham. Look into the life of a coal mining family in Durham, how did this compare to the lifestyle of Percy and Katharine?

## Geography

- Ask students to plot on a map the different countries which Percy and Katharine visited, identifying the different continents.
- Using the collection in the museum, zoom in on one location and create a case-study profile. For example, Percy went hunting along the Azu River in modern-day Zimbabwe, find out more about the river, including its course and the impact it has on human development.
- An exercise focused around identifying the flags of the different countries and then work in groups to create their own flags. Create a travel brochure for one of the destinations which Percy and Katherine visited.

## English

- Like Percy, write a diary entry about their visit to Burnby Hall Gardens.
- Create a newspaper article about one of the exciting encounters which the Stewarts came across on their travels.
- Ask the students to imagine they are either an animal hunted by Percy, or an indigenous person meeting the Stewarts for the first time. Create a story associated with your character.
- Write a poem inspired by the trees, plants and nature in the Garden.



## Art

- Study and draw the plants, flowers and trees in the Garden.
- Create a museum or garden collection collage.
- Design a mood board for the Gardens, get the students to think about the different colours and textures which they might find in the Gardens.
- Percy loved to take photographs. Why not get the students to take their own photographs of the Gardens?
- During the autumn, collect fallen leaves and create a colourful display.
- Use the bark on easy to reach trees to create your own bark rubbing.



# Cross-Curricular Ideas

## Science

- Study the pollination of plants and look at the role of bees.
- Write a list of the different birds and insects you see on a visit and choose either a bird or insect to create a profile.



- Burnby Hall Gardens once had conservatories that were 50 metres in length. Using a variety of different materials, such as paper straws or pipe cleaners – can you create your own conservatory structure? Then as a group run tests using different weights to find out who has built the strongest one.
- Look at the different types of transport: steam trains, boats and motor vehicles. Identify how they worked and what different types of forces were needed to make them work. Students can also create their own boats and float them in a large bowl, placing marbles as a test of their strength until the boat sinks.
- Choose a plant or tree in the Garden. Label the different parts and then, starting with a seed, draw each stage of the plant or tree's development.

## Religious Education

- Use the museum collection to research a society and their religious beliefs.
- Percy was a Hebrew teacher during his time at Pocklington School. Introduce the students to the Hebrew alphabet and encourage them to write their own sentences. This could be used as a platform to look into the religious practices of Judaism.
- Percy's sister, Flora, was a Christian missionary in China. What did missionaries do? Research the ethical issues behind this.

## Maths

- Ask students to identify the different shapes they can see in the Gardens.
- Percy and Katharine developed their Gardens whilst travelling and this meant they needed to manage their finances carefully. Provide each student group with a budget and ask them to design the Gardens and travel abroad successfully with their budget.
- Introduce students to the Fibonacci series to discover the number sequence of nature.
- Make a survey of the plants and trees in the Garden and use this data to create graphs.





# The Legacy

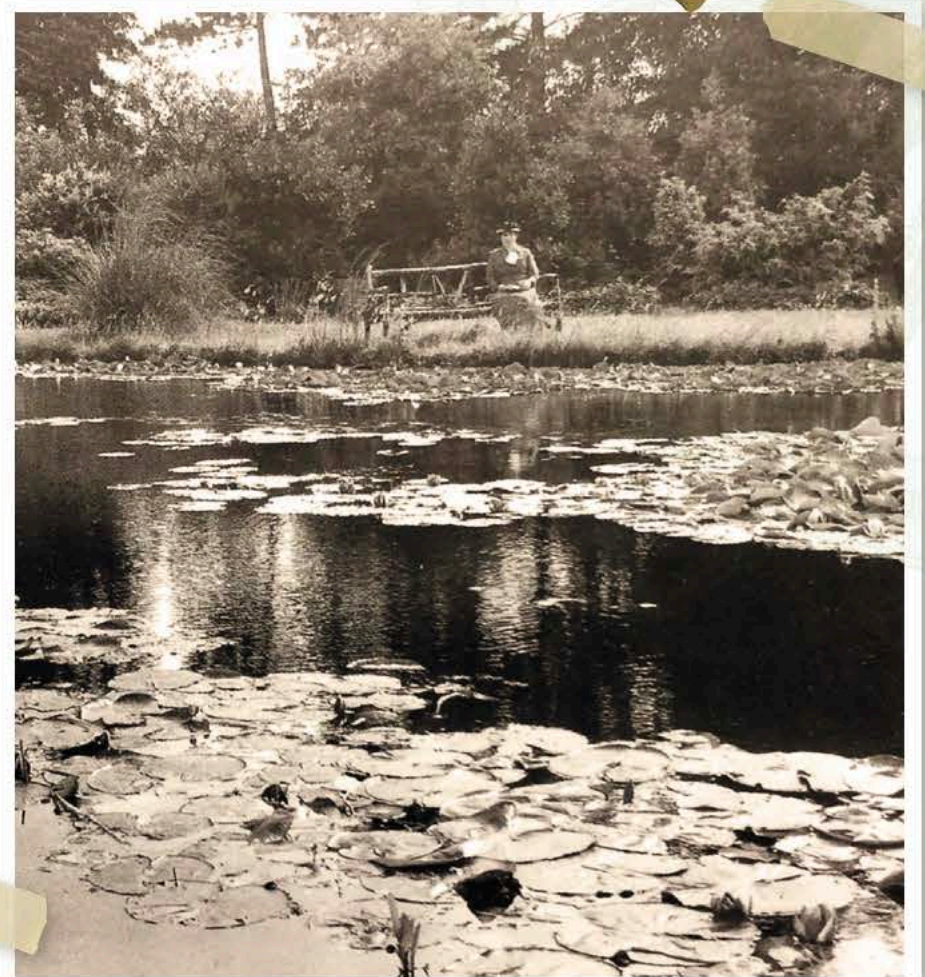
## The later years and the legacy of Burnby Hall Gardens 1926

By 1926, the fortunes of the Stewarts were starting to reverse, largely due to an economic collapse in the coal industry. This depression led to various strikes throughout the 1920s and as their main income stream was through Katharine and her family's coal mining interest the collapse of this industry had a significant negative impact on their finances.

In 1927, the Stewarts had to make the difficult decision to try and sell Burnby Hall and the Hayton Estate, initially as a single lot. When this failed to sell, the Stewarts reverted to selling their land piece by piece until they were left with an estate that they could financially manage. The Burnby Hall estate was further decreased following Katharine's death in 1939, as Percy's income from their marriage essentially dried up. Katharine's death had a massive impact on Percy. They had been married for 38 years and had travelled the world together, and her passing robbed Percy of not only his wife but his best friend.

Percy continued to live at Burnby Hall until his death in 1962, at the grand old age of 90 years old! Throughout his life Major Percy Stewart was a familiar figure in Pocklington, particularly in his later years. Tim Slater, who was a boy at this time, recalls:

*"As he passed through the town he would periodically call upon a passive boy and ask him to repeat the Lord's Prayer. If he could do so (or make a brave attempt) then the lad would be rewarded with a sixpence. Imagine how his carriage was followed and how well the Lord's Prayer was learnt!"*





# The Legacy

Percy took much pride in the Gardens which he and Katharine had worked so hard to create. On one visit to the Gardens, his niece, Daphne, recalls:

*"Together we would explore the lakes and gardens, the rockery and the beautiful rose garden. He would talk about it being built. The garden in spring was magnificent full of flowering shrubs and trees bursting into leaf. There were hundreds of bulbs, daffodils and narcissus in beds and small daffodils, crocuses and snowdrops in the grass. Uncle Percy would say 'wait until you see the water lilies'; they were his favourite. It was said he had the best in Europe; they were magnificent, all colours and masses of them. The lakes also had many fish and water birds."*

Very early into their marriage, Percy and Katharine had realised that they could not have any children. In 1912, Percy wrote a letter to Katharine which was only to be opened in the event of his death. He suggested that, like him, Katharine should make a will in which she would leave the money to the people of Pocklington to maintain the Gardens. He wrote:

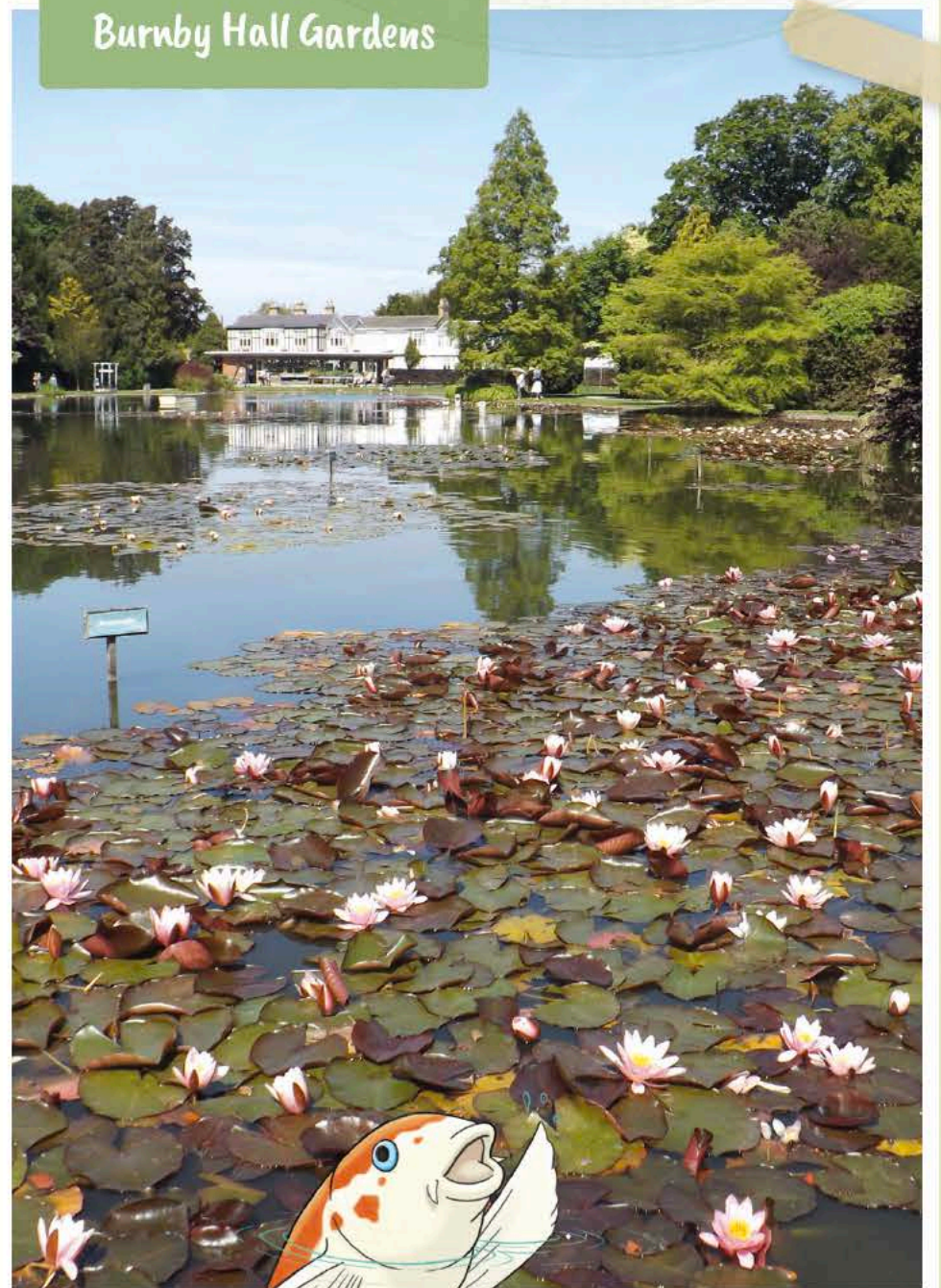
*"We may both then feel that we have not lived in vain in further beautifying the countryside and giving much pleasure and profit to the present and future generations."*

After his death in 1962, and in keeping with Percy and Katharine's wishes, Burnby Hall Gardens was left in trust to the people of Pocklington. The Stewarts Trust was established in 1964 and now manages the Gardens that you see today.

Over the ensuing years, the Gardens have continued to flourish and, in addition to the National Collection of Hardy Waterlilies, are home to around 28 species of garden birds, including herons, kingfishers and moorhens. The water lily collection has been expanded and developed over the years and, most recently, an annual tulip festival has been introduced in the spring.

The Gardens provide a huge variety of colour throughout the seasons and have won the Royal Horticultural Society Yorkshire in Bloom Gold Award for seven consecutive years. Burnby Hall Gardens remain at the heart of Pocklington's community and will undoubtedly provide enjoyment and special memories for future generations to come.

Burnby Hall Gardens







## BURNBY HALL GARDENS AND MUSEUM

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