

Lindsey U3A Garden Group

Visit to John Dawber Garden at The Lawn, on Tuesday 25 August 2026.

We were welcomed to the garden by Lynn Ritson, organiser and volunteer for the Dawber Garden Community Trust, which is a registered charity.

The garden was originally the kitchen garden for the inmates of the asylum. The garden is named after John Dawber, a wine merchant and public house owner, who set up a charitable trust for the people of Lincoln and Bracebridge Heath.

It is a public garden, of under an acre. The Trust have a 3 year lease from Lincoln Council. Entry is free, so it is funded only by donations from visitors. Other donations have been from Tesco and The Bishop's Fund.

The garden, though small, is divided into different sections with firm paths weaving through the borders. The volunteers added a narrow cobbled path with a water feature, which, during our visit was enjoyed by a visiting dog, who lapped up the water. The garden contains a variety of trees and shrubs, bulbs and perennials. In recognition of Sir Joseph Banks there is an Australian-themed area which contains plants from that country, including a eucalyptus and a Banksia rose climbs up the arbour. Some plants still survive from the original planting, but many have been added such as a fig tree which was in fruit on the day of our visit and a new lavender hedge is in progress.

The garden aims to interest different visitors and there are two topiary: a dog and a bird. Children enjoy stepping on the stepping stones, made from the trunk of the original eucalyptus. Volunteers planted a willow tunnel for the children to crawl through. Among the many donations are an apricot bush, memorial benches, mosaics and a new donation of ceramic faces, fixed to poles, which bring a smile to the viewer.

The large pond underwent extensive renovation when The Trust took over. It contains water lilies and approximately 100 fish. One border at the pond's edge is planted with alliums which had gone to seed on the day of our visit, but would be a lovely sight when in flower.

A Chinese-inspired garden is found behind two 'moon gates' in a long brick wall, which now houses a variety of plants and trees such as the Snake Bark Maple and a peanut butter tree (Clerodendrum) whose leaves when crushed smell of peanut butter.

Our guide, Lynn, gave a very interesting tour with explanations of the garden's progress. Since The Community Trust took over its management, the garden has been transformed from weeds and overgrown trees and shrubs, to an interesting and organised walled garden.

Continuing John Dawber's idea of the local community benefiting from his legacy, community events are held in the garden throughout the year. After our visit, during the bank holiday weekend, the Simcha Klezmer Band gave a free concert.

I recommend a visit to this delightful garden and to support The Trust so they can develop the garden further for the benefit of us all.

Louise Kevill