

## **Plants growing in Tickhill Castle grounds in the 1980s**

When a team of archaeologists surveyed Tickhill Castle in 1984-5, the interim report produced by Charles Hippisley-Cox included a brief note on 'Some plants of historical interest' by team member Elizabeth Fowler. She recorded that a number of plants growing in the castle grounds had been grown in the medieval period for their herbal qualities. The plants found in the mid-1980s could be 'the direct descendants from the medieval herb gardens of Tickhill Castle'. These are the plants listed with their uses:

### **Aarons Rod**

The tiny white hairs on the leaves were scraped off and made into candle wicks in the days before cotton was introduced to this country. The flowers could be dried and made into a tea to relieve colds and chills.

### **Arum (Lords and Ladies, Cuckoo Pint)**

In Elizabethan times the starch in the roots was used to stiffen the pleated linen ruffs then fashionable, while bruised leaves could treat boils or sores. Earache was eased by the juice of arum berries mixed with oil of roses.

### **Belladonna (Deadly Nightshade)**

Essentially a poisonous plant associated with witchcraft.

### **Butchers Broom**

The young shoots are similar to asparagus and can be eaten as a vegetable. The name comes from the use of bundles of branches by butchers to sweep their blocks, according to tradition.

### **Feverfew**

Apart from the belief that this plant could drive away fevers, its other uses included being a remedy for headaches and 'feminine complaints'. A tincture could ease insect bites and when made into a lotion with distilled water could protect against insects.

### **Garlic**

Garlic is an antiseptic and the juice diluted with water can be applied to wounds. Garlic also has a natural antibiotic which is taken for colds, coughs and asthma

### **Mulberry Tree**

The bark and fruit are laxative. A syrup made from the berries helps inflammation or sores in the mouth while the juice of the leaves is a remedy against snake bites.

### **Opium Poppy**

Apart from the plant's narcotic properties, the opium poppy's seeds, which are not narcotic, can be crushed for cooking oil or for burning in lamps, for example.

### **Restharrow**

If eaten by cattle, restharrow could taint milk, butter and cheese and so was disliked by farmers. However, its medicinal properties were used to treat kidney disorders, gallstones (the outer part of the root was taken with wine) and the powdered root could be applied externally to ulcers.

### **St John's Wort**

The Knights of St John used this to heal crusaders' wounds. Its properties also reduce swellings and can treat snake bites. It was credited with the power to drive away devils and evil spirits. A plant found by chance, not design, was once thought to ward off bad luck and sickness when worn under the left armpit.

### **Solomon's Seal**

This plant was used to heal wounds and mend broken bones. Powdered root made into a poultice was used to cure black eyes.

Further information on how plants were once used for medicinal purposes can be found in:  
Culpeper, N., *Culpeper's complete herbal and English physician*, Magna Books, 1993  
Walker, J., *How to cure the plague and other curious remedies*, The British Library, 2013