

For immediate release

A new home for Parks & Gardens UK with Hestercombe Gardens Trust

Parks & Gardens UK is entering an exciting phase in its development at its new home with the Hestercombe Gardens Trust. In September 2016 Parks & Gardens UK (P&GUK) with Hestercombe Gardens Trust received £97,900 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to secure the future of the P&GUK database and website of historic designed landscapes.

The P&GUK archive has records of over 9100 historic designed landscape sites and over 2400 biographies of associated people and organisations. The Hestercombe archive contains a significant collection of documents, photographs, plans and manuscripts relating not only to Hestercombe itself (with its 18th-century Landscape Garden and also its Jekyll/ Lutyens gardens) but to other parks, gardens and designed landscapes in the United Kingdom. The combination of the two databases, by offering economies of scale and ease of access between them, will offer a powerful research resource unmatched elsewhere. It will also allow for its expansion by maintaining and developing the existing close relationship between County Gardens Trust and The Gardens Trust, as well as the development of new relationships with like-minded organisations. Hestercombe, near Taunton, is readily accessible and has a range of conference rooms for seminars, summer schools and workshops that will make the study of gardens and landscapes available to a wider public.

Dr Barbara Simms, chair of P&GUK said: “Both organisations have worked hard over the past months to secure the successful transfer of Parks & Gardens UK to Hestercombe Gardens Trust. It is very exciting that Parks & Gardens UK has a new home that will allow its expansion as the leading on-line resource for historic parks and gardens.”

Philip White, Chief Executive of the Hestercombe Gardens Trust said: “I am delighted that Hestercombe will have the opportunity to develop and expand on the considerable work achieved by P&GUK over more than ten years and look forward to working with the County Gardens Trusts and others in realising the database's considerable potential.”

Explaining the importance of the National Lottery support, Drew Bennellick, Head of Landscape & Natural Heritage at the Heritage Lottery Fund, said: “This project offers a unique opportunity to bring together two incredibly important sources of data and research for the very first time. Whether it’s someone just wanting to find out more about our rich history of landscape design, or a researcher delving into the history of an early park or garden, these databases are an important and accessible resource for all. Having supported the Parks & Gardens UK database since its inception, we’re pleased to offer this support so that it can transition into a new chapter in its existence.”

ENDS

Notes to editors

About Parks & Gardens UK

P&GUK was established from 2005 to create an online database resource of material relating to historic designed landscapes using technology to process and distribute information in order that it should be readily accessible. Database and website information provide key legacies for significant projects, including the Capability Brown Festival, World War One Memorial Landscapes and the Inventory of Conservation Management Plans. Through working closely with volunteers in the Country Garden Trusts, NADFAS and individual researchers throughout the UK, the database now contains records of over 9100 sites, over 2400 biographies of associated people and organizations, over 2200 references, 90 archives and nearly 6000 digital images. This powerful, interactive, comprehensive and searchable database is used by national historic and natural heritage organisations, heritage professionals and academics, as well as tourists, teachers, schoolchildren and amateurs, such as family historians, both within the UK and worldwide. www.parksandgardens.org.

About Hestercombe Gardens Trust

The Hestercombe estate in Somerset is a unique combination of three gardens that cover three centuries of garden history and design: the famous Edwardian formal garden, designed by architect Sir Edwin Lutyens and planted by Gertrude Jekyll; the Victorian Shrubbery and Terrace originally laid out by the 1st Viscount Portman in 1878; and the eighteenth-century Landscape Garden designed by Coplestone Warre Bampfylde between 1750 and 1791. Hestercombe Gardens is managed by the Hestercombe Gardens Trust, established in 1996 as an independent charity. The Trust oversees the restoration and development of the gardens, house and archives to protect them for the future for public benefit. Attracting over 100,000 visitors a year it is now 25 years since founder, Philip White MBE discovered the historic gardens and made it his life's work to restore Hestercombe. Hestercombe House, which was previously the headquarters for the Somerset Fire Brigade, was acquired by Hestercombe Gardens Trust in 2013 and is now home to a contemporary art gallery which showcases some of the best examples of modern art. www.hestercombe.com.

About the Heritage Lottery Fund

From the archaeology under our feet to the historic parks and buildings we love, from precious memories and collections to rare wildlife, we use National Lottery players' money to help people across the UK explore, enjoy and protect the heritage they care about. www.hlf.org.uk.

For further information, images and interviews, please contact

Dr Barbara Simms, Chair, Parks & Gardens UK on 07887 680884 bs@gardentales.co.uk

Philip White, Chief Executive, Hestercombe Gardens Trust on 01823 413923

philipwhite@hestercombe.com