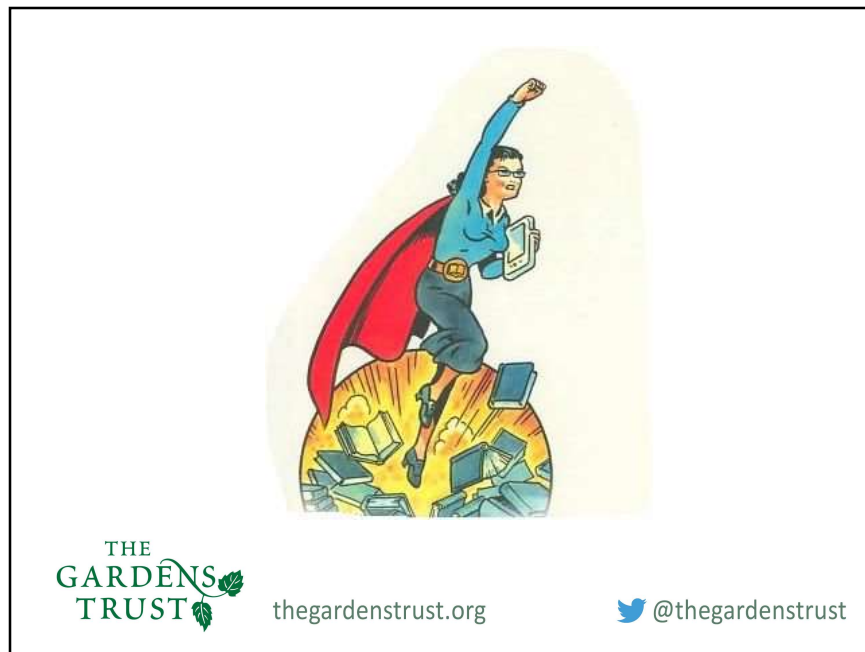


Conservation through research and recording



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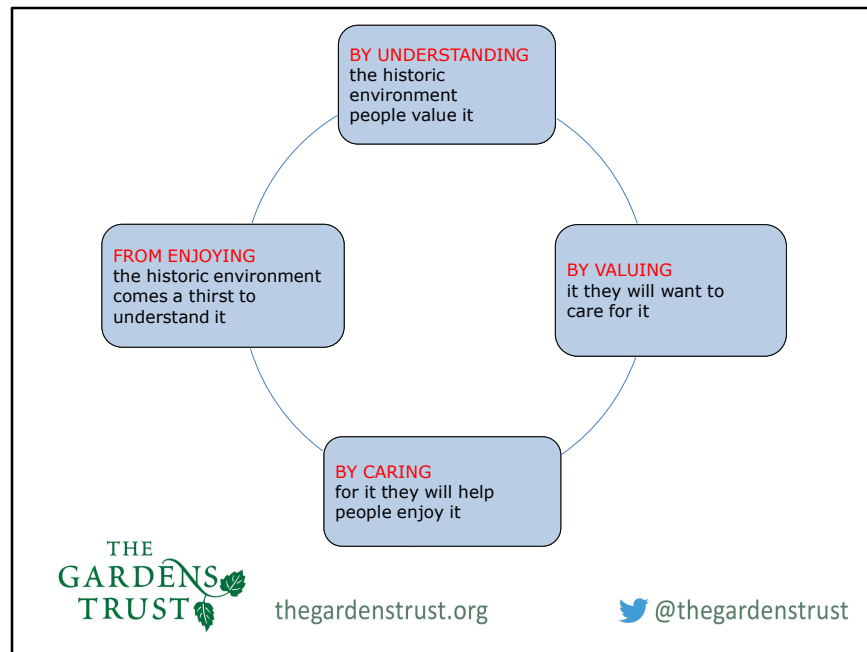
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So, as we've seen, historic parks and gardens are very vulnerable from poor management choices, development, or simply neglect. Don't totally panic – there are lots of things going on that manage and reduce these threats, from things called conservation management plans (documents that set out a site's history and how to look after it), to volunteers and professionals available to offer advice (including the Gardens Trust).

All of this protection is based on understanding and knowing about a site though – it's not appropriate to simply say no to all change, so we need to make informed decisions. You can imagine, research is obviously key to this. It is important that the sites and their histories are properly understood so we make good decisions.

One of the most helpful things you can do is to make sure that your research doesn't just talk about the history of the site, but also recognises and records what is there now. This is so that people can use it to assess ways to look after the site today. It's why we tend to talk not simply about research, but rather about 'research and recording'. This session is based on the assumption that you are not only researching but also recording, which you are because we learnt how to do that when we walked around the site and surveyed.



This is a lovely diagram from Historic England, demonstrating the value of understanding to the conservation cycle.

Research is fun and interesting, but it is also really, really useful if used in the right way.



So all research is great – we love it when it’s used for books, leaflets, tours, lectures.

But there are certain things you can do with it which converts it into a really powerful conservation tool.



So, one of the main ways in this country that historic parks and gardens are offered some kind of protection (not enough!), is through the planning system. It can cover them at least a little for development (houses, visitor facilities, roads, quarrying), but not neglect or mismanagement.

In order to trigger the planning system, the historic park or garden needs to have some level of Designation – it needs to be categorised in some official way. (You are probably most familiar with Designation in hearing buildings referred to as ‘listed’.)

This slide is dull, but it sets out the very basic structure of the Designation system for historic parks and gardens.

Let’s start at the bottom. In order to have a basic level of recognition within the English planning system, a site needs to qualify as a ‘heritage asset’. In order to qualify as a heritage asset it must be included on the Historic Environment Record (local records kept by each county authority). If a site is on the HER, it will then get at least a small amount of recognition and consideration.

Next tier of protection is if the local authority has also decided to include it on a Local List of sites – it has recognition as being important at a local level, and some protection as a result.

Highest tier is if it is recognised as being on national importance and is therefore on the national Heritage List. This is what buildings are on when they are described as ‘being listed’. In the case of historic parks and gardens, they are specifically in a grouping called the ‘Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest’, or ‘the Register’ for short. The Register is kept by an organisation called Historic England - (Historic England is an executive non-departmental public body of the British Government sponsored by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. It is tasked with protecting the historical environment of England by preserving and listing historic buildings, ancient monuments and advising central and local government.)

National Heritage List for England



399,472 Entries:

- 377,839 Listed Buildings
- 19,851 Scheduled Monuments
- 1,664 Registered Parks and Gardens
145 Grade I - 454 Grade II* - 1,065 Grade II
- 46 Registered Battlefields
- 53 Protected Wrecks
- 19 World Heritage Sites



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Here's a breakdown of the Heritage List, and you can see how the Register fits in for historic parks and gardens.

On the Register, there are lots of big gardens in the countryside ('stately home' type places), but also cemeteries, public parks and institutional landscapes created for hospitals, asylums and even 20th century university campuses.

The Register is a growing list, compiled and written by 'experts'. Getting things accepted onto it is however a reasonably public-facing process so that anyone who knows enough can apply for something to go on the Register (an extremely selective acceptance process though), or indeed make amendments.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000383>

FLITWICK MANOR

Overview

Heritage Category:

Park and Garden

Grade:

II

List Entry Number:

1000383

Date first listed:

01-Jul-1989

Location

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

District: Central Bedfordshire (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Flitwick

District: Central Bedfordshire (Unitary Authority)

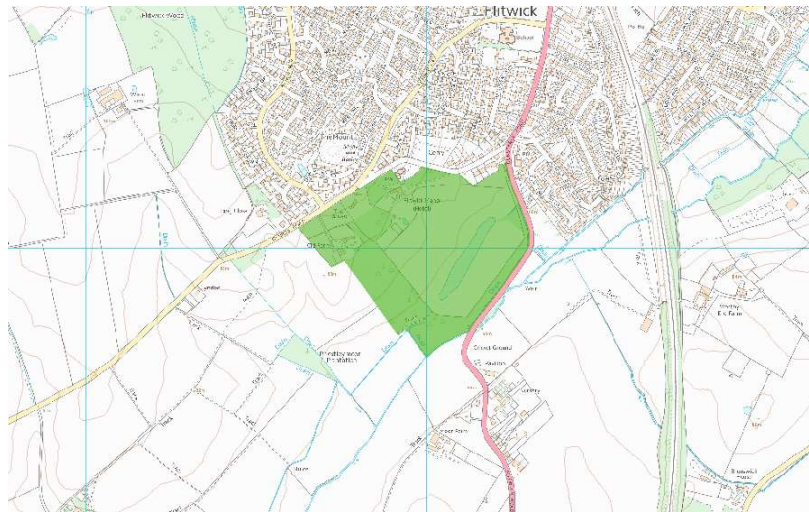
Parish: Westoning

National Grid Reference: TL 02961 33974



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Details

Late C18 and early C19 pleasure grounds and park, praised by J C Loudon, the setting for a small country house.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Edward Blofield purchased the manor in 1632 from the Crown and built the C17 manor house. The estate passed by inheritance and marriage through the Rhodes family in 1669, and then the Dells in 1735. The early C18 estate consisted of The Elms, a plantation to the west of the house, with a kitchen garden and orchard to the south, beyond which were Warren Close and Little Warren Close, and further south, beyond a ditch, Church End Mead which led down to The Flit.

Anne Fisher inherited the house on a marriage settlement with George Hesse and following his death she married George Brooks in 1783. Brooks was responsible for various late C18 improvements. John Thomas Brooks (1794-1858) inherited in 1817 and carried out extensive improvements to the estate. The pleasure grounds were praised by Loudon in the 1820s and 1830s, especially the high level of maintenance, the treatment of the wider estate as a ferme ornée and the exemplary arboretum, planted in a 'Natural Arrangement' (Loudon 1838). The property remained in the Brooks family until 1932 and was occupied by the Lyall family until the late 1950s. The house is now an hotel and much of the land to the north of the site is now under modern housing.



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DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Flitwick Manor, 22ha, is located at the southern end of Flitwick, a small town in mid Bedfordshire, c 16km south of Bedford and 3.5km east of the M1. It is bounded by Church Road to the north, Westoning Road (A5120) to the south and east, and open farmland to the west. Shelter belts and plantations screen the boundaries to the west, north and south. The ground slopes gently from north-west to south-east.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main approach to Flitwick Manor is from the east, along an C18 lime avenue. This approach runs from Church Road, at the southern end of Flitwick, directly to the east front of the house. Further approaches from the south and north are no longer used. The northern approach from Church Road was served by Upper Lodge and the southern approach from Westoning Road was marked by the Lower Lodge, both built in 1831 but no longer extant.



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GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS To the west of the Manor is a walled garden marked as a courtyard on the late C18 and early C19 maps. Pleasure grounds lie to the south of the Manor, occupying the site of a C17 or early C18 kitchen garden which was removed in the C19. To the west of the pleasure grounds and 50m south-west of the Manor is an C18 grotto bridge (listed grade II), constructed of clinker trimmed with red brick. The top of the bridge is grass and the west face is Gothick, the east face classical. An archway room underneath is decorated with simple pebble work, with a pebble floor. The Grotto links the pleasure grounds with a plantation, marked on an estate plan of 1717 as The Elms and known by the end of the C18 as The Grove.



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Local Lists



The Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens
for Tunbridge Wells Borough



Broomlands, Speldhurst



February 2009



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If a site is not nationally important, the next best thing is for it to be on a local list. A list held by a local authority of sites of local importance, giving them some protection in the planning system.

Local lists are often populated by volunteer groups.

For example, in the early 1990s, Kent Gardens Trust in association with Kent County Council produced a register of significant parks and gardens within the county (The Kent Gardens Compendium). This compendium has been of considerable benefit to the various planning departments in Kent in enabling them to identify sites which will need to be protected. This is common to many CGTs.

But KGT since felt that this register needed to be updated and formalised in greater detail, so embarked on the Kent Compendium Review Project. Since 2009, a group of volunteers have been trained to systematically research and record gardens identified as being of significant historical or social interest. Major gardens in the care of bodies such as the National Trust and English Heritage were excluded as they are already well documented, but all the reports are written up in an HE approved format and lodged with the HER. Volunteers have now looked at parks and gardens in the areas covered by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Sevenoaks District Council and the

reports have been presented to the two councils and should provide valuable source material to the respective planning departments. They have also done some reports for Thanet District Council and are now engaged in a major project for Medway Council. They are very grateful to all the councils they have worked with for their support (which has often extended to finance).



Conservation management plans

In caring for, or managing change in, historic parks, gardens and other landscapes, there are often many features, historic layers and diverse interests to consider. Conservation management plans have been developed as a tool to help pull together an understanding of what matters and why, and how to conserve and manage it. From this informed basis, plans are then used to develop programmes of repair, restoration or to draw up proposals for change.

Conservation Management Plans (CMPs) are valuable tools for developing informed management strategies for historic designed landscapes, helping to avoid ad hoc poorly informed decisions, management and development.

CMPs typically include research on a site's history, development and surviving state, and taken together they form a sizeable body of material on the UK's historic designed landscapes.

Conservation management plans don't need to be lengthy documents but large and complex historic parks and gardens may require a range of research and survey information. The best plans are structured to meet the needs of the specific property and designed to be used for every day reference by staff managing the site. Plans not only pull together and analyse the history of a landscape, they are also an important record in their own right.

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