

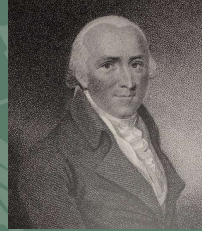


So, quick recap as to how this project came about and what it has amounted to. In 2016 we all came together to celebrate the Capability Brown Festival. For me the Festival was exciting because it offered quite a lot of new fresh ways of presenting garden history and offered us the keys to make the subject interesting to people outside of our existing garden history niche.

2018 was the bicentenary of landscape designer Humphry Repton and the GT came forward to spearhead a collaborative festival called Celebrating Repton. This was a lovely success with hundreds of CGTs, organisations and sites getting involved - overlooking the fact that we could offer nothing other than enthusiasm, support, and a bit of linked branding.

This was incredible, but it was a bit sad to see that almost everyone had returned to their comfort zone of talking about it to those of us already in the garden history bubble in a way that we found interesting – there were lots of study days, conferences, adult-focussed publications, lectures etc.

At the same time, there was a cacophony of people, perhaps most urgently the CGTs, bewailing that so few people were getting involved, that we were all so short of volunteers and members.



“For the honour of the Country, let the Parks and Pleasure-grounds of England be ever open, to cheer the hearts and delight the eyes of all, who have taste to enjoy the beauties of Nature.”

Humphry Repton,
Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening (1816).



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This made me particularly sad when I read these Humphry himself: “For the honour of the Country, let the Parks and Pleasure-grounds of England be ever open, to cheer the hearts and delight the eyes of all, who have taste to enjoy the beauties of Nature.”

Admittedly, I believe Repton was really talking about not having fences or walls that you couldn't see through as a passer-by, but the essence of inclusion, sharing and welcome is still there.



So we applied for a Lottery grant for a sister project, called Sharing Repton: Historic Landscapes For All.

This specifically sought to pilot 5 easy activities designed to engage new audiences with historic parks and gardens, and then to harvest and share the experiences so that others could have a go at doing similar things. Sharing Repton is about getting ourselves out of our niche and upskilling ourselves to reach new people.

For the pilots we worked with very specific multicultural target audiences, but they have all been designed to be super-generic so that they can be repeated with almost any group of people you can think of!



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Sharing Repton is coming to an end next month, so today is very much about sharing the adventure.

We've had amazing partners amongst County Gardens Trusts and sites across the country, and I cannot thank them enough.

As you will hear, we've done a family excursion, a garden history themed social event, a public open day (HOD), a small research and recording project for entirely new volunteers, and a super-introductory conservation workshop to show local people that they are stakeholders in historic parks. CLICK And we accidentally ran a 6th pilot which taught garden history to school children.

These pilots have blown me away. All of them have exceeded their targets, most of them have been repeated. I've had an Afghanistani gentleman ask me to stop offering coffee when he was trying to learn about Humphry Repton, I've seen 600 people listening to African drumming and learning to belly dance in an 18th century landscape, I've seen 90 10 year olds get to grips with heritage values, and I've heard refugees describe how visiting Kenwood made them finally feel so part of British society.

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We now have models that can be used to attract any demographic, and all of the materials from these are available for free download on our online Resource Hub at our website – we really hope that you will all delve into these and reuse them for your own benefit.



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