

East Midlands Regional Gardens Trusts

A conservation-based community research and recording project pilot

- Partnership project including the region's county gardens trusts, heritage professionals working in the public sector and the Gardens Trust's Historic Landscape Project Officer.
- Maintaining a close working relationship with Conservation Officers.
- Includes a National Trust property.
- Working mainly with Friends groups and local history/archaeological societies.
- Initial pilot project running 2018-2020.
- Seeking "Our Heritage" HLF funding.

The project seeks to build on existing strong regional bonds within the heritage sector, with both the County Gardens Trusts and heritage professionals (or recently retired ex-professionals) working for the region's Local Planning Authorities. In particular the project seeks to develop a solid Historic Environment Record representation in the area of historic designed landscape conservation. (NB. consideration might be given to renaming the project so as to give it a more conservation-led theme.)

Funding will be required essentially to employ a part-time manager/administrator, to run training events, pay volunteer expenses and cover IT support and development.

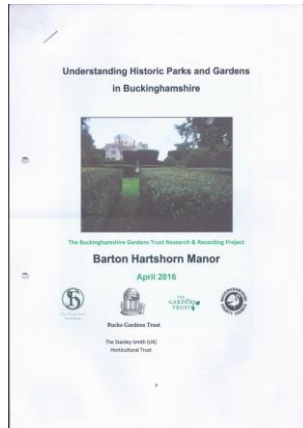
East Midlands Gardens Trusts Research and Recording Project

Why?

- Actively engage communities, helping them to learn about the significance of historic parks and gardens in their local area, and the conservation issues affecting them.
- Build future-skilled volunteer capacity to ensure the continued study, protection and enjoyment of designed landscapes.
- Produce standardised research and recording output for the use of planning and conservation based professionals, including Statements of Significance, to better inform the management of individual parks and gardens.
- Help counter austerity measures which have resulted in a decline in local authority funding for the management of public green spaces (thus prioritising public parks for the pilot project).
- Re-energise the region's County Gardens Trusts.

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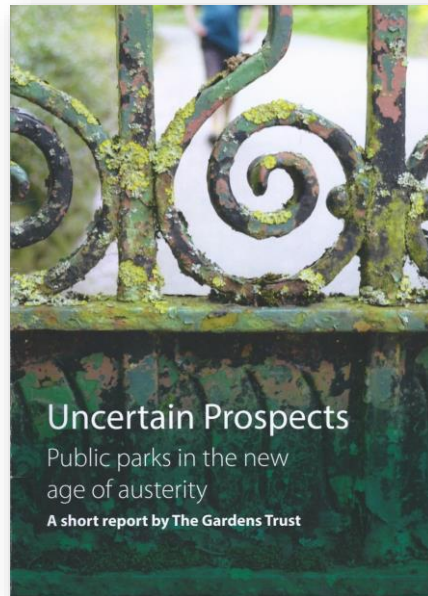
***Learning from excellent work
elsewhere in the country***



SoS work by other counties, including Buckinghamshire, Yorkshire, Sussex and Kent.

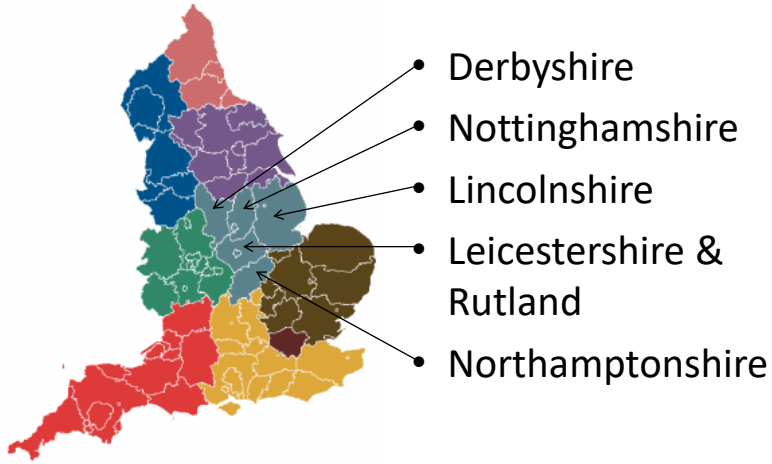
Thanks in particular to Clare de Carle for her support.

East Midlands Gardens Trusts Research and Recording Project



The pilot project will focus on the region's public open green spaces which contain conscious design elements (these might include municipal parks, gardens, cemeteries, country parks etc). These will be particularly pertinent because: They are openly and easily accessible for both study and social activities. They already have popular appeal within their local areas, which should generate public interest and involvement in the project. The landscapes will already hold a high level of familiarity to many participants. Conservation issues within our public parks and gardens are the subject of a recent and timely publication by The Gardens Trust. These are of special concern now because of recent cuts in funding by the local authorities who manage them; they are seen as relatively soft, uncontentious targets.

East Midlands Gardens Trusts Research and Recording Project
Project Area



There are approximately 1,600 historic parks and gardens recorded by the Historic Environment Records (HERs) within the East Midlands region, of which less than 10% are currently designated by Historic England as Registered Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. Although most of the region's resource of designed landscapes is already recorded on HERs the quality of these records varies considerably and significant enhancement is required to efficiently and effectively inform local planning processes.

East Midlands Gardens Trusts Research and Recording Project
Project Working Group

- Flexible and open approach to group membership.
- Representative(s) from the county gardens trusts within the region.
- Historic environment management professionals from local planning authorities (eg. Historic Environment Officers, County Archaeologist, Historic Buildings Conservation Officer).
- Historic Landscape Project staff.
- Taking a collaborative approach to maximise specialisms and expertise within the wider region.

The composition of the current working group is very flexible, open to representatives from all interested parties and potential partners in the project. The project will in particular seek to develop strong relationships with colleges and universities.

Each of the region's county gardens trusts has its own distinctive character, strengths and weaknesses; it is anticipated that a collaborative approach to the project will help to address weaknesses and build on strengths.

One strength of the group is enthusiastic representation by historic environment professionals (or ex-professionals) who have over many years proactively worked on planning and conservation initiatives for parks and gardens (eg. Natural England's Stewardship Schemes).

East Midlands Gardens Trusts Research and Recording Project

Abington Park, Northampton



Abington Park in Northampton is a relatively good example of a public park, previously a private estate bequeathed to Northampton Corporation in the late 19th century, and commemorating Queen Victoria's Jubilee. It is not included on Historic England's Register, but it contains several Listed Buildings, and is now also designated as a Conservation Area. It also already has a Friends Group. (However there are still management issues to resolve in relation to the historic elements of this landscape.)

The project will seek to prioritise those significant (but un-Registered) designed landscapes which are considered most under threat. Whether prioritised or not, examples like Abington Park will make excellent training grounds for research, survey and recording.

East Midlands Gardens Trusts Research and Recording Project

Allestree Park, Derby

(image copyright Derby City Council)



At 320 acres Allestree Park is the largest open space in Derby.

In 1947, Derby Corporation purchased the hall and estate intending to build houses on the southern edge of the park. Some were built in the West Bank Road area.

That same year a nine-hole golf course was opened, and extended to eighteen holes in 1955.

East Midlands Gardens Trusts Research and Recording Project

Bestwood Country Park, Nottingham

(image copyright Nottinghamshire County Council)



Bestwood Country Park was once a medieval hunting park of some 3,711 acres, and part of Sherwood Forest.

In 1863 a new Bestwood Lodge was built to replace the medieval hunting lodge, and the estate owners established the Bestwood Coal and Iron Company. In 1967 coal mining ended and the iron foundry was closed, and the two sites and their associated waste areas were re-landscaped by Nottinghamshire County Council. In 1973, the lodge, gardens and nearby parkland were handed over to Gedling Borough Council, and it was then that the two councils came together in partnership to set up a country park of 650 acres. The lodge is now a hotel. The park has a strong Friends Group.

East Midlands Gardens Trusts Research and Recording Project
Billing Road Cemetery, Northampton



Northampton's non-denominational Billing Road Cemetery was opened in the mid 19th century and is rumoured to have been designed by Robert Marnock. It was previously called Northampton General Cemetery, but has now become disused, and the sense of abandonment is very apparent. Traces of the original design are clearly visible on the 1940s aerial photograph on the left, however the recent photograph on the right shows that many of these have since disappeared.

Over the past decade there has been increasing local concern about the future of this green space, concern which could be shepherded into a more positive and proactive conservation force by our regional project.

East Midlands Gardens Trusts Research and Recording Project
Holbeach Cemetery, Lincolnshire

(images copyright of Hobeach Cemetery Chapels Trust)



Holbeach is a 6 acre cemetery thought to be strongly influenced in layout and planting by James Claudius Loudon. The cemetery chapels (one CofE and the other non-conformist), were built in 1854 to the designs of James Piggott Pritchett Junior .

In 2010 a Steering Committee was set up with the aim of attracting funding to refurbish the buildings and find a use for them that would benefit the whole community. By 2013 a Limited Company and Charitable Trust had been formed.

In 2016, in partnership with Heritage Lincolnshire, the chapels trust was awarded £49,000 of HLF funding to undertake a Stage One/Development Phase and a Project Officer was appointed. Activities currently include cemetery trails.

East Midlands Gardens Trusts Research and Recording Project

Jubilee Park and Petwood House Gardens, Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire

(image copyright of Jubilee Park Woodhall Spa Ltd)



In 1811 a wealthy developer spent thousands of pounds, digging ground to establish a coal mine, but his plans were scuppered as the waters of the village spring rose and the works were abandoned. However a little over 20 years later the value of the mineral rich spring water below was recognised and the lord of the manor spent a small fortune of his own spa baths and accommodation. Visitors flocked to the new resort, including the builders of Petwood House in 1905. It is now a hotel.

Jubilee Park was recently rescued from closure and is now run by Charitable Trust and Company Limited by Guarantee.

East Midlands Gardens Trusts Research and Recording Project
Langold Park, Nottinghamshire

(image copyright of Bassetlaw District Council)



Originally laid out in the mid C18th, the area around was developed for mining in the 1920s. The Firbeck Colliery Company purchased the park in 1927 and it became a leisure facility for the Langold miners principally for fishing. In 1946 the coal mining industry was nationalised and the National Coal Board expanded recreational facilities in the park. In 1968 the mine closed and the park was taken over by the local authority. It has recently come to light that the park has a Humphry Repton link...

East Midlands Gardens Trusts Research and Recording Project
Stoneywell Cottage, Leicestershire

(image copyright of The National Trust)



Stoneywell Cottage was designed by Leicestershire local Ernest Gimson, who became one of the most inspiring and influential architect-designers of the British Arts and Crafts Movement. The surrounding gardens are thought to be later in origin.

East Midlands Gardens Trusts Research and Recording Project

Delivery

- Regional workshops on Public Parks and Planning Processes. Two events.
- Identify and mobilise local community groups for each site within the pilot project (building foundations of “Friends” groups where they do not currently exist, using Friends groups where they do exist). Launch event for each site.
- Run education and training programmes on garden history, desk-based research, in the field survey and recording, report writing (including Statements of Significance), conservation processes such as responding to planning applications, contributing to local and neighbourhood plans. Two training sessions per site.
- Organise fun activity days. Two activity days per site.
- Community based review event. Celebration of achievement, what next?

It is anticipated that our project will be delivered using both professionals and local volunteers. Many members of the region’s county gardens trusts already hold a wealth of knowledge and experience between them which will prove useful.

Previous experience of research and recording projects has emphasised the importance of maintaining local interest and involvement by creating and developing social activities around and about the sites, enhancing a sense of community cohesion and ownership.

East Midlands Gardens Trusts Research and Recording Project

Outcomes

- Helping to establish active and informed Friends groups for cherished public parks and gardens where they do not yet exist.
- Increasing active and appropriately skilled and informed volunteers, including new membership of county gardens trusts.
- Production of Statements of Significance for individual sites which will be widely available via website(s).
- Feedback of structured data and SoSs to HERs and P&GUK.
- Enhancement of key local and national datasets.
- Curriculum-based education packs for the use of local schools etc.
- Further HLF bid(s) to extend future research and recording events other designed landscapes, such as private estates.

Successful pilot project will hopefully lead to an HLF funded full recording project throughout the East Midlands (and beyond?).