

Development of the Essex Gardens Trust Research Group



Hello, my name is Megan and I'm a Historic Environment Consultant at Place Services. My colleague Maria is Senior Historic Environment consultant. We're here today to talk a bit about the work we've been doing with the Essex Gardens Trust, and to show you some of the things we've found with the volunteer research group.

Who we are



Before we talk about the project and the research team, I'll just tell you a bit more about who we are and our role in the Essex Gardens Trust

So, who are we?

Place Services is a traded company within Essex County Council. We're made up of the environmental services which traditionally sat within the Council, so the Built Environment, Natural environment, and us, the historic environment. About 5 years ago, these services parted from the Council and set up as Place Services.

We work on a lot of projects involving historic gardens and landscapes, recently working at Hatfield Forest, Northey Island and St Osyth's Registered Park and Garden in Essex.

One of the projects we've been involved with this year is with the Essex Garden Trust. Maria and I have been working with the trust to help research gardens in Essex and train up a team of volunteers to produce the Colchester Garden Inventory.

ESSEX GARDENS



For those of you who don't know Essex or are only familiar with the stereotypes I thought I would give you a very brief idea as to the range of gardens and garden history we have in the County.

- 1) The reconstruction of the Tudor gardens at Cressing Temple, based in part on the excavated evidence
- 2) The medieval or early post-medieval turf-maze on Saffron Walden common
- 3) The Capability Brown remodelling of the landscape at Audley End, one of many phases of garden layouts on the site
- 4) Miss Willmotts Ghost, a tangible reminder of one Essex's greatest gardeners, Ellen Willmott, the remnants of her garden is now a Nature Reserve

MORE ESSEX GARDENS



- 1) Beth Chatto's Dry Garden outside Colchester
- 2) Another Dry Garden at RHS Hyde Hall
- 3) Brita von Schoenaich re-working of the Walled Garden at Marks Hall

The Essex Gardens Trust



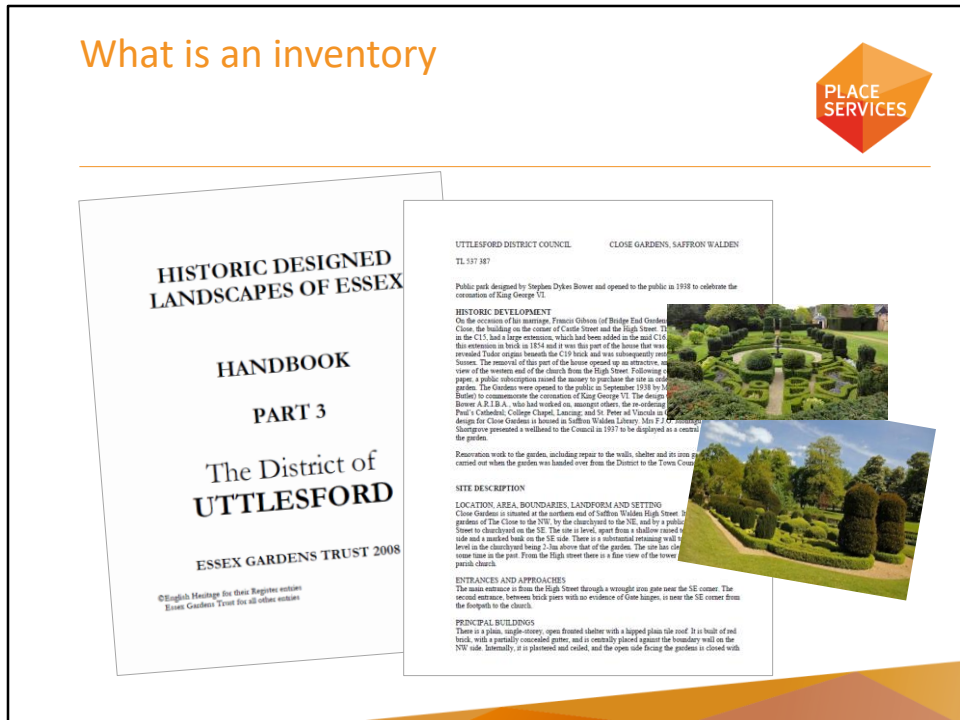
With all these sites in Essex it's really no surprise that the Essex Gardens Trust is always busy!

The Essex Gardens Trust has around 150 members, all from a range of backgrounds and all with different interests and experiences that have led them to love gardens. The EGT runs a syllabus of talks and courses. They also have close links with Writtle University, who run garden history and garden design courses, which many members are familiar with.

As well as running these events, courses, tours, and publishing journals, the EGT also produce inventories of Historic Designed Landscapes of Essex, which is why we're here today.

To date there have been six inventories completed. These are Braintree, Chelmsford, Epping Forest, Maldon, Uttlesford, and most recently Brentwood. So far these inventories have all been completed by one of the volunteers, Jill Plater, who actually was joint winner of 'volunteer of the year' in 2018 for her work on the inventories.

What is an inventory

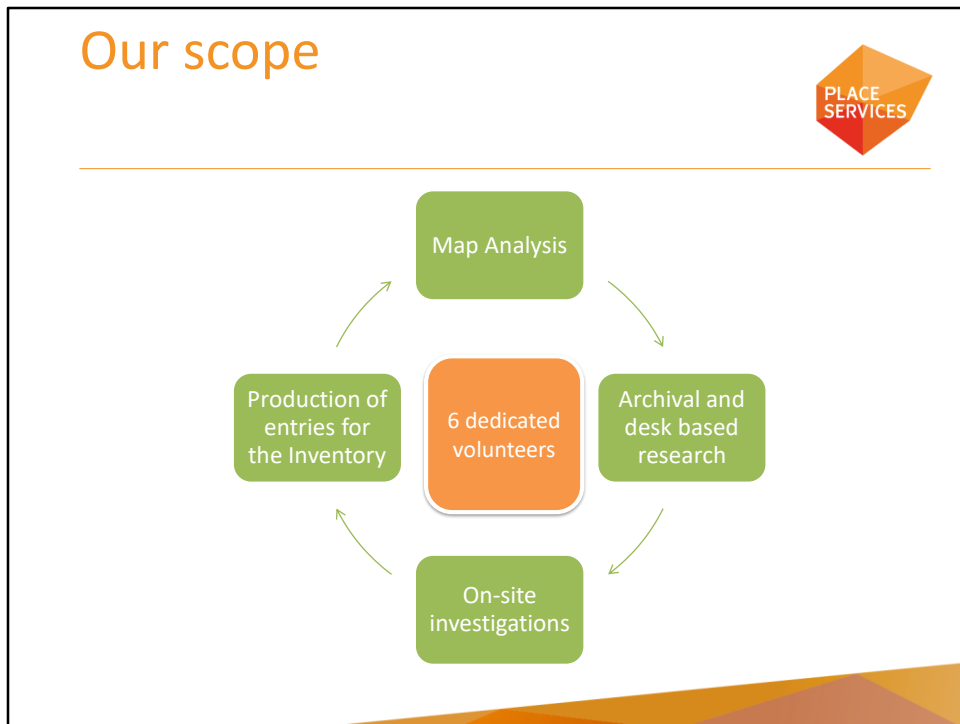


The inventories are a hugely important resource when it comes to looking at historic gardens and open spaces in Essex. In a nutshell, each one is a collection of entries which assess the historic development and significance of garden sites across the six districts that have been completed so far. They aim to capture key information on each garden, to grow our understanding of the gardens in our area and also to inform future research and help guide potential future planning and development.

Each one follows a methodology to assess garden sites, using a combination of map analysis, archival research and site visits to provide a short report of each one. Any that are considered to be of enough value to include in the inventory are added in, and those which are worth mentioning but perhaps didn't have enough information available on them, or were found to have lost a lot of their historic features, are still mentioned in a list within the appendix of the inventory.

Here is just a snapshot of the Uttlesford Inventory, which was completed in 2008 I think, to give you an idea of the level of detail for each entry. They cover the historic development, location, area, boundaries, setting, approaches, principal buildings, gardens and parks, and a bibliography for each entry.

The Uttlesford Inventory includes 21 full entries, 7 of which are Registered Parks and Gardens. It also a list of a further 16 sites which were partially researched, however not included in the final inventory.



The research team's core aim is to identify sites which still retain sufficient historic elements and integrity to make a valuable contribution both to the county's contemporary landscape and environment, and to its heritage.

As I mentioned, so far these inventories had all been completed by a small volunteer group, and predominantly by Jill. So to support Jill in this quest, the Research Team was set up for those interested in the research of historic gardens to produce historic garden inventories. Volunteers were recruited to be dedicated to the inventory project, with a volunteer coordinator to oversee the team.

The process was outlined to generally follow this cycle here.

I began by meeting with Jill to go through the earlier processes for completing the previous inventories and to pool all our resources into one place, to create a welcome pack for the new volunteers. This pack included things like the criteria for including gardens, methods for researching them and using the Essex Record Office, key contact details, a bibliography, and the templates we'd be using. This pack aimed to cover the tools and information that each volunteer would need when they were going through each of the stages shown here.

After the approach, methodology, and templates were approved with the team, it was time to meet all the volunteers and kick off our research.

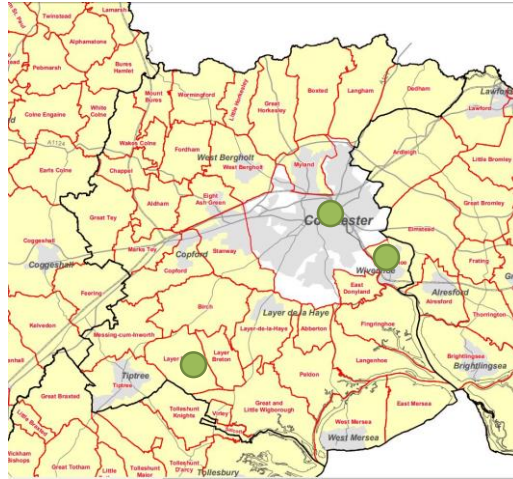
Who we are



Our team is made up of at least 6 volunteers, although we currently have 8. Here we all are at various gardens across Colchester, and at the Record Office.

Everyone on the team has joined first and foremost because of their passion for historic gardens and landscapes and their drive to understand more about them. This is really what comes across in all our meetings. We're all from a mix of backgrounds, with a variety of experience in historic gardens and researching them. It's this variety that enables us to uncover as much as we can in Colchester and leave no stone unturned.

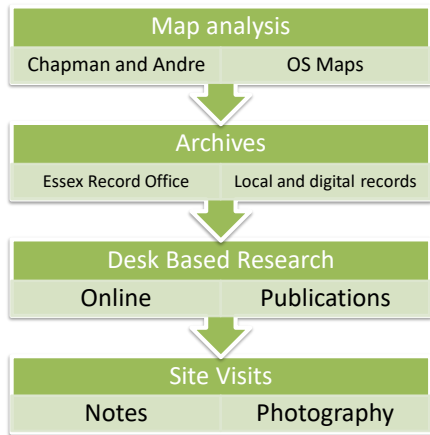
The Colchester Inventory



So to start, we had no idea what we might find. There are three Registered Parks and Gardens in Colchester, Castle Park, Layer Marney and Wivenhoe Park, which is always a good place to start, but otherwise the level of information we already had on gardens in Colchester varied. We initially got in touch with the District Council to see if there were any sites already on their radar, and notified the EGT membership of the project to request that anyone with any information on sites sent that across to the team to aid our research.

Then to establish a list of all potential sites in Colchester, we would need to consult maps. As Colchester district is fairly sizeable, we started by dividing up the parishes between the team. This meant that everyone was able to take ownership of their area, and we could avoid duplicating our efforts.

Methodology



Underpinned by

- Regular face-to-face meetings
- Review of findings against criteria for inclusion
- Email and telephone contact
- Shared folders for collaborative working and information sharing

Our methodology has been created using Historic England guidance, the Essex Garden Trust's existing methods, guidance from the Historic Environment Team, particularly those who are closely involved with the planning process, and through discussion with the research team.

We began with a map analysis, utilising the 1777 Chapman and Andre map, online OS Maps and satellite imagery to get a broad understanding of historic gardens and landscapes and comparing them to current maps to find where there was potential for features to be retained.

Between us, we compiled a database of roughly 300 potential garden sites across Colchester during this stage. We then narrowed our list down by undertaking further research and reviewing what we found against the criteria for inclusion. For example, if on closer inspection the site had been developed, or if there were no associated records in the archives, it would likely be of less value within the inventory, and could be omitted. This allowed us to select sites to take forward to further research and a site visit, and hopefully through to completion of an entry.

The Criteria we used allowed each garden to be considered for its predominant era, or rarity as an example of a recognised style or design, for its association with a particular designer or nursery, its historic, archaeological or communal value, and its current condition.

* Clicker *

We have been meeting face to face roughly every 6 weeks to discuss what we find and share how we've been getting on. This is a useful time to raise any concerns with particular sites or methods of research, and also to support each other along the way, as researching can feel fairly solitary otherwise. We also are in regular contact over emails and calls.

We've also created a shared google drive, where all our volunteer packs, resources, photos and research can be uploaded. This has been useful in capturing research from members outside the research team as well, as we've been able to gather resources and updates as we go and make sure nothing gets lost in email chains.

Methodology training

'What to look for on a site visit'



Maria

Building on Twigs Way and other lectures of EGT we did a 'What to look for on a site visit' at Layer Marney Towers.

Here we are undertaking a comparison between the historic documents, including maps and drawings of the site and what actually survives on the ground.

We looked at the planting and made estimates as to the age of trees in particular and other planting.

We also looked at means of identifying earthworks, including the tried-and-trusted methodology of closing your eyes and shuffling along.

Informal training/support



Alongside this targeted training day, the team have also received training in how to use the Essex Record Office. This was run by the team at the archives to kick the project off, and then we have also run informal Essex Record Office drop in days. These are mainly a chance for the team to all be in the record office at the same time, so that anyone who has any questions as they go can ask me or the other volunteers, and I can be on hand to help those who need some initial help finding records to get them started.

Our regular meetings, emails and calls are also an opportunity for the volunteers to highlight training they feel they need, and for me to support them in any queries as we go. This can be things like verifying or discussing a particular site, checking the resources we have at County Hall, or just talking through elements of the research that could do with bouncing ideas off each other.

What have we found?



EGT Garden History Research Team
List of potential garden sites

Yes/No	Comment	Parish	Site	Record Ref	Research by	Grid Reference	Reasons for Inclusion/Exclusion from the Inventory	Size (m ²)	Use	Included?	Summary of site	Source	Reviewed	Author	Date
No	No	Stanning	Stanning Hall	Plagen											
Yes	No	Thornington	Thornington Hall	All Place		TL689197					CAA XV				
Maybe	No	Tiptree	Two Cottages	Plagen	NA	TL670143	Planting								
Yes	No	Tiptree	Tiptree Hall	All Place	NA	TL670147	Gardens visible on historic mapping and google earth				CAA XV				
Maybe	No	Tiptree	Tiptree Priory (now Tiptree House)	All Place	NA	TL670145	Modern development on site								
Maybe	No	Vidley	Pharos Farm	Plagen	NA	TL646144	etc								
Maybe	No	Vidley	Ructon	Plagen	NA	TL646138	Extensive gardens, very modern as not shown on OS?								
Maybe	No	Vidley	Vidley Hall	Plagen	NA	TL646137	Gardens related to seat of house								
No	No	Watres Colne	Whitewater Farm	Linda Knightley		TL 613287	Clint - no apparent historic remnants	1.5 acres	building	building	edges	Map		LK	4
No	No	Watres Colne	Whitton	Linda Knightley		TL 611302	importance	0.5m	Cottage	building	Street cottage garden	Map		LK	4
Yes	No	Watres Colne	Whipping Hall	Linda Knightley	NA	TL 602024	include archaeological connections (site View family)		Medieval	building	ancient trees, formal garden on southern	Map		LK	4
No	No	Watres Colne	Clones Hall	Linda Knightley	NA	TL609089	importance		Early C19	002019	Small garden	Map		LK	4
Maybe	No	Watres Colne	Watres	Linda Knightley	NA	TL 607306	undecided		late house	1070100	lawns, mature trees	gardens in 1925		LK	4
Maybe	No	Watres Colne	Watres	Linda Knightley											
Maybe	No	Watres Colne	Watres Farmhouse	Linda Knightley											
Maybe	No	Watres Colne	Great Loney Hall (Middle Green)	Linda Knightley	NA	TL607313	undecided		house	building	lawns and mature trees				
Maybe	No	Watres Colne	North House	Linda Knightley	NA	TL606308	undecided - impossible to tell from aerial photo		house	building	lawns and trees	Map		LK	4
Maybe	No	Watres Colne	Watres Farmhouse	Linda Knightley	NA	TL 601000	undecided		C17 house	Grade II				LK	4
Maybe	No	Watres Colne	Lane Farmhouse	Linda Knightley											
Maybe	No	Watres Colne	Little Loney Hall	Linda Knightley	NA	TL 606313	?		on a	1260100	Formal garden/beam enclosure within moat	perforators		LK	4
Maybe	No	Watres Colne	Hammonds Hall	Linda Knightley	NA	TL606303	undecided	0.5m	house	building	mature trees and shrubs	Map		LK	4

- Halls
- Farmsteads
- Rectories
- Lodges
- Cemeteries
- Priors

As I mentioned earlier, we've already been busy finding sites across Colchester. The database we've created, which was originally at 300 potential sites, is now down to 82 definite 'yeses' and around 140 that have potential for inclusion but will need further research.

These sites range from registered parks and gardens, manorial grounds, halls, farms, rectories, lodges, and heaths. So far, the variety of sites we've found highlight a few interesting things about Colchester. It's got a huge range in landscape character, which can be divided into roughly four including the modern urban area surrounding Colchester itself, heathlands, river valleys, and coastal marshes. These areas lend themselves to the range of gardens that we're uncovering. We've highlighted a few sites as case studies to show the range of gardens we've investigated so far.

Layer Marney



Layer Marney Towers was built in the 1520s in the reign of Henry VIII by Henry, Lord Marney, on the site of the medieval hall. The Tower is a gatehouse range with ornate terracotta decorations of Italian design for what would have been a statement house, with three additional wings built round a grand central courtyard, but he died before it was finished and his only son died two years later. We do not know whether there was a Tudor garden to go with the Tower, but there are a number of earthworks that may represent ornamental water features. The Marney family continued to live on the site, on a rather less palatial style, with their gardens reflecting the changes in garden fashions over the years. Surviving structures include the late Victorian glasshouses and early 20th century terracing.

Castle House, Dedham



The value of this site lies with its association with Sir Alfred Munnings, celebrated twentieth century landscape and equestrian painter and President of the Royal Academy in the 1940s. Munnings is renowned for his works on rural East Anglian scenes, and Castle House was his from 1919 to his death in 1959. Munnings actually described this as “the house of [his] dreams”, and we know he loved the garden as he refers to it in his autobiography, and it was frequently the subject of his work.

The gardens are now made up of terraced lawn and border planting which surround the house, with the remains of an orchard to the north, and lawn with mature scattered trees. The gardens afford views into paddocks, where horses still graze.

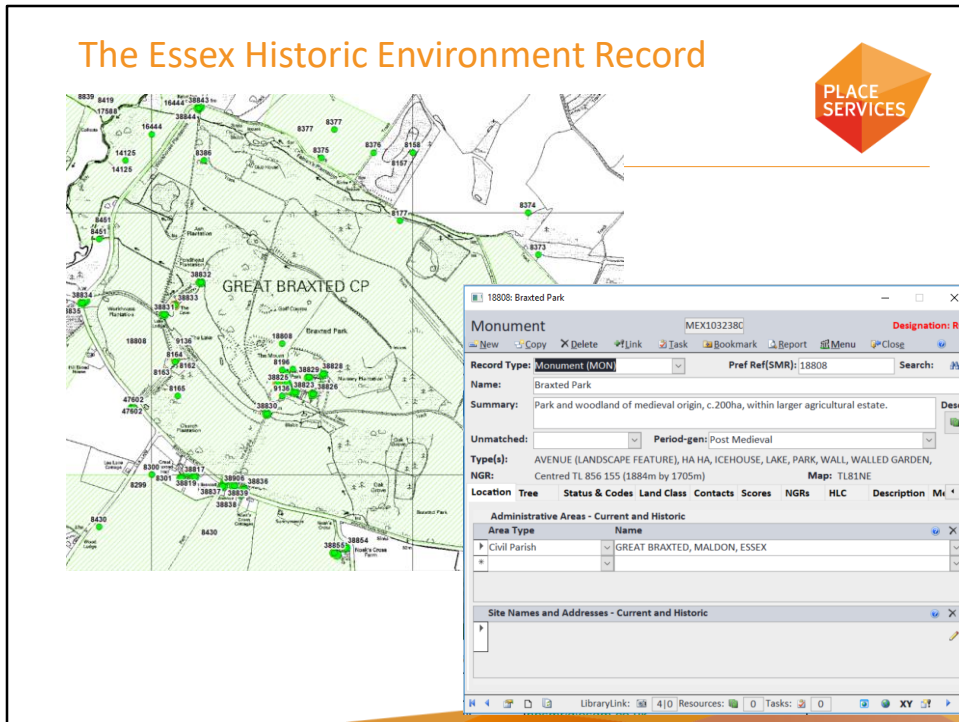
There are some outbuildings to the south of the House, and a conservatory with etchings made by Sir Alfred Munnings on the exterior wall. The former stables to the south of the garden were converted into his studio in the twentieth century, and are now an exhibition space. The whole site is open to the public as a museum and exhibition of Munning’s work.

Castle Park, Colchester



Castle Park, Colchester is a Registered Park and Garden . It is A late 19th century public park incorporating a mid 18th century house and its grounds, set around the remains of a Norman castle, on the site of a Roman Temple. . A plan was drawn up by Backhouse and Co who also constructed and supervised the layout of the park, which was opened in 1892. The original part is formal in layout with ornamental flower beds and a cast iron band-stand and benches. In 1893 the land north of the river was bequeathed to the Council as an extension of the park, this area is laid out as a more informal open country-house parkland with mature trees, the river and a very small boating-lake.

The Essex Historic Environment Record



The Essex Historic Environment Record comprises some 40,000 archaeological records, ranging from a Palaeolithic hand-axe to a Cold War bunker. It also includes all of the registered parks and Gardens as well as other historic parks and Gardens (not all of which are still surviving) that have been identified either through the Essex Gardens Trust inventories or by other means. In addition there are numerous records for individual garden features, such as statues, ornamental bridges, ice-houses, obelisks, hunting-lodges, warrens, etc.

The example here is of Braxted Park, first recorded as a deerpark in 1342 and remodelled in the landscape style in the late-18th century.

What are the inventories used for: Planning



Agricultural storage barn.

Land South West Of Broadfield Farm Braxted Park Road Great Braxted Essex

Ref. No: 19/00871/FUL | Received: Wed 07 Aug 2019 | Validated: Wed 07 Aug 2019 | Status: Pending decision

Change of use of land to a Lorry marshalling area, additional car parking and associated landscaping.

The Commodity Centre Braxted Park Road Great Braxted Essex CM8 3EW

Ref. No: 19/00561/FUL | Received: Fri 17 May 2019 | Validated: Tue 04 Jun 2019 | Status: Pending decision

Agricultural storage barn

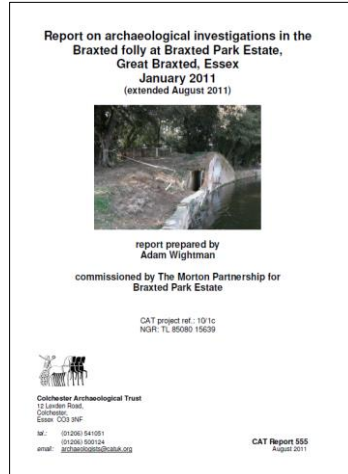
Land South West Of Broadfield Farm Braxted Park Road Great Braxted Essex

Ref. No: 19/00470/FUL | Received: Wed 17 Apr 2019 | Validated: Thu 09 May 2019 | Status: Application refused

Retention of Pavilion at Braxted Park

The Pavilion Braxted Park Braxted Park Road Great Braxted Essex

Ref. No: 18/01425/FUL | Received: Wed 28 Nov 2018 | Validated: Wed 28 Nov 2018 | Status: Application approved



Part of my job as historic Environment Advisor is to monitor the impact of planning applications on the Historic Environment. Here are a sample of the planning applications that have involved Braxted park in one way or another. When an application comes in we check it against the HER and make recommendations, these can range from recommendations for refusal to historic building recording, as happened here with the Braxted Folly and icehouse to excavation.

Where does the Research Team fit in?



We've done a range of things in the research team to make sure the Colchester Inventory will fit in with the planning system, and be a useable report once completed.

We have tailored our entries to mirror the language used throughout guidance and Historic environment records, allowing for our findings to be uploaded to the HER once complete. All complete entries are sent through to the volunteer coordinator to review for consistency, and I am then creating a GIS layer with all our sites included to supply to Colchester District Council at the end of the project. This should mean that all the gardens and designed landscapes that we identify are on one layer for the council to use in future planning, to support the details within the inventory.

Looking Forward



Looking forward we are heading into a great stage within the project. Volunteers are now able to take on sites from our database and work autonomously on their research, using our meetings as a chance to discuss specific sites and findings.

We are continuing to welcome new volunteers. Now that we have our list of sites to take forward to research, new volunteers will be able to choose sites to research based on their own interests or location, and research their site in their own time. By using the shared folders and meeting regularly, we are always looking to create a team approach to researching, and to make sure all volunteers are supported throughout the project.

Ultimately, we aim to uncover historic gardens and landscapes that are worth preserving into the future, and to share our journey along the way. As one of the volunteers said to me, it's people that bring gardens to life, so we're hoping that this research will champion people of the past and also future, by protecting these sites for future generations to enjoy.



Thank you. Any questions?

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