



For us, 2018 has been a year dominated by a 200 year old landscape gardener called Humphry Repton.

In Spring 2017 we put our heads above the hedge to see who amongst our immediate friends – CGTs and the like – would be interested in some low key celebrations of his bicentenary in 2018. The answer was ‘lots’, and things quickly spiralled so that we ended up with almost 200 people, organisations, sites, voluntary groups organising visits, study days, books, exhibitions, and other jolly things. Frankly, we struggled to keep on top of this amazing volcanic eruption, but it was the best and most exciting struggle and we were delighted to be part of it. Massive thanks to HE for a £10k grant of seed money, which allowed us to set up a Repton events calendar, hold some networking meetings, create a Celebrating Repton logo, and other small but critical parts of a structure.

We cannot thank everyone enough for throwing themselves behind this endeavour, so strikingly low on resource, but so very rich in goodwill and enthusiasm.

Humphry's Legacy

- Collaborating
- Knowledge
- Impact
- Sharing

THE GARDENS TRUST
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CELEBRATING HUMPHRY REPTON
LOTTERY FUNDED

Sure, there were things that would have liked to have done better – getting our ducks in order well in advance of the year would be a key one for me – but mainly there is just a marvellous blur of success, that we are so proud of. So what are the best things to have come out of the year?

Everyone will have their own opinion, but I'd like to suggest these 4 things:

- 1) We've all got a lot better at working together. I have been repeatedly bowled over by how so many have swung into action, worked together, turned a blind eye to the lack of central resource, and just pitched in. I hope we'll continue this mindset in future, and look forward to hearing from you.
- 2) We all know a lot more about Humphry Repton than we did 18 months ago! We have all those fantastic books, and also lots of other resources, and over the net year I'm going to be finding time to curate as much of this as possible into a sensible and accessible home at humphryrepton.org. Obviously we're also encouraging everyone to add their research to their local Historic Environment Record, PGUK and also Historic England's Enriching the List.
- 3) I'd like to think that we've all got a bit better at understanding how to put together a campaign, or celebration, to have a real impact. Let's have at least a year off to look at lessons learnt and gather steam again, but I'd love to hear from you all with thoughts on what we could campaign or celebrate next. Perhaps

another anniversary, or perhaps just a timely issue? Personally, I'd love to choose an low key person (eg a woman weeder) and tell some stories around them. Put your thinking hats on.

- 4) For me personally, the highlight of the year has stemmed from feeling that my favourite thing about Humphry is the way that he understood how to sell the story, or market parks and gardens, and also the way he persevered and pushed his way through good and bad times to ensure that he endured. Taking this as inspiration, the GT used the bicentenary year as a hook for a project called Sharing Repton: Historic Landscapes for All. This has been inspired by realising that we should all get better at sharing historic landscapes, at engaging people outside of our lovely garden history bubble. In fact, I think that this is essential if we and historic parks and gardens are going to remain relevant and thus survive.

Sharing Repton: Historic Landscapes for All



- The Gardens Trust is working with volunteers and sites to share our passion with diverse local communities and create new friends and supporters for these heritage assets.
- 5 pilot activities, based around Repton sites across the country.
- Skill sharing, guidance materials and training workshops so others can offer similar local community events in the future.


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Sharing Repton: Historic Landscapes for all, shamelessly uses the Repton celebrations as an excuse to learn how to engage bigger and more diverse audiences with historic parks and gardens, and then to help others – including those of you in this room - to benefit from our learning curve.

We are super-proud to have achieved a Heritage Lottery Fund grant for it of almost £100k, which demonstrates how the HLF see the importance of engaging wider audiences, but also our potential to do this. The project is funded until the end of 2019.

Through this autumn and into next year we have been running 5 achievable and eminently repeatable pilot projects with volunteer groups and Repton sites across the country. In HLF-style, they have been targeted at very specific audiences, but they have all been designed to work with other audiences also.

So, let me run through the pilots with you.



Early September – family excursion of Wicksteed Park in Nantwich, with Nantwich Gardens Trust.

Victoria Community Centre.

Coach

Picnic, cake, lollies, tree measuring, views, photography, paper boat making.

Adults as well as children loved it, interested to hear about Repton!

Feedback was that they wanted repeats, and some even offered to volunteer!

Extremely cheap to run – just the cost of the coach.



Public Open Day at Catton Park in Norfolk. Organised by Broadland DC, with Friends of Catton Park, and Norfolk GT.

Heritage open Day.

I had imagined 60 people, they laid on an extravaganza and got 600. Could be repeated in a low key way though.

Invited stall holders from temples, ethnic community groups, and they came with lots of helpers and friends.

Tailored the marketing to be culturally and financially inclusive – translated into different languages, prayer tent, multicultural food, African drummer.

Brought in new people from ethnic communities and also less well-off economic areas.

Also more traditional activities such as painting a Repton landscape, NGT design your own garden competition.



Warley Woods in the Black Country. Have hired engagement consultant Suzanne Carter to help us.

R&R project for people completely new to the subject, in 4 workshops – how to read landscape on ground, using archives, writing up in Statements of Significance and a leaflet, and public presentations.

Tried to attract people by working with a local school in the hope of attracting the parents. Actually we ended up getting plenty of participants simply from the local community who enjoy their park and want to know more, and the school part has ended up as a very welcome bonus.

Going better than I could have dreamed and we will end up with a very achievable structured R&R training programme that can take complete newbies to being eager garden history researchers, and also a fab project for working with schools to teach them not so much about gardening – I think the RHS have that nailed these days - but actually about garden history.

This project is about half way through now and will run till next Spring – if anyone wants to hook in then we'd love to have you.



Finally, London Parks & Gardens Trust with English Heritage at Kenwood have been working on a fantastic super-introductory conservation workshop, designed to help people understand that they are stakeholders in historic parks and gardens and can be empowered to help look after them.

We have been working with refugee groups, who enjoyed themselves to the point that we all felt quite emotional about the event, but the structure is such that the workshop could be run for more mainstream communities also.

This workshop involved welcoming the invited participants to Kenwood, talking a little about Repton's work, walking the landscape and talking lightly about things like views, tree management, development threat and volunteering. We had an exhibition of plants from across the world.

We will be reconvening in Spring in Russell Square, where the participants will be planting a Bangladeshi garden and a refugee garden, and when we will talk more about other parks near them, and how they might get involved.

THE LAST PILOT IS A SOCIAL EVENT THAT WILL BE HELD AROUND BLAISE CASTLE IN BRISTOL WITH AVON GARDENS TRUST, DESIGNED TO OFFER AN ACTIVITY THAT COULD BE RUN AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE TRADITIONAL GARDEN HISTORY LECTURE AS A WAY OF ENGAGING NEW PEOPLE. IT'S GOING TO BE A VARIATION ON 'GARDEN

HSITORY IN 10 OBJECTS' THAT GRAPEVINE RUN, AND WILL BE DESIGNED AS AN EASY
TEMPLATE SO THAT OTHERS CAN REPEAT IT.



The key is that they are all intended to reach and inspire new audiences who don't come with an existing interest in historic parks and gardens. So those are the pilots. I think that it is so important that we get better at doing this, rather than constantly talking simply to those of us inside our garden history bubble. We need to do this to step up to the plate of social responsibility, rather than letting ourselves slip back into Repton's world of parks and gardens being for the socially privileged, and in order that historic parks and gardens and our own organisations remain relevant and thus survive in the 21st century. It's not so much charitable outreach, as improving our resilience for the future. The project runs on until the end of 2019 and in that time I'm going to be focussing on sharing the learning curve that we had for the pilots, so that others such as yourselves can repeat them – not necessarily in their entirety, but cherry picking and adapting them to your own needs. We'll be harvesting all the materials – case studies, method statements, shopping lists, posters, risk assessments – and making them available for free online. We can also run training events, if you're interested. Do please drop me a line if you'd like to hook into all of this.

Just before I finish, we also have a competition – Sharing Landscapes competition is running until the end of March 2019 and will present a bust of Repton, thanks to

Haddonstone, to the individual/organisation/site/voluntary group that has the best proposal for allowing as many people as possible to see the bust. Could be a special open day, a stand at a local fete, taking it to a supermarket with an exhibition about a site – you name it. Details all on our website.



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