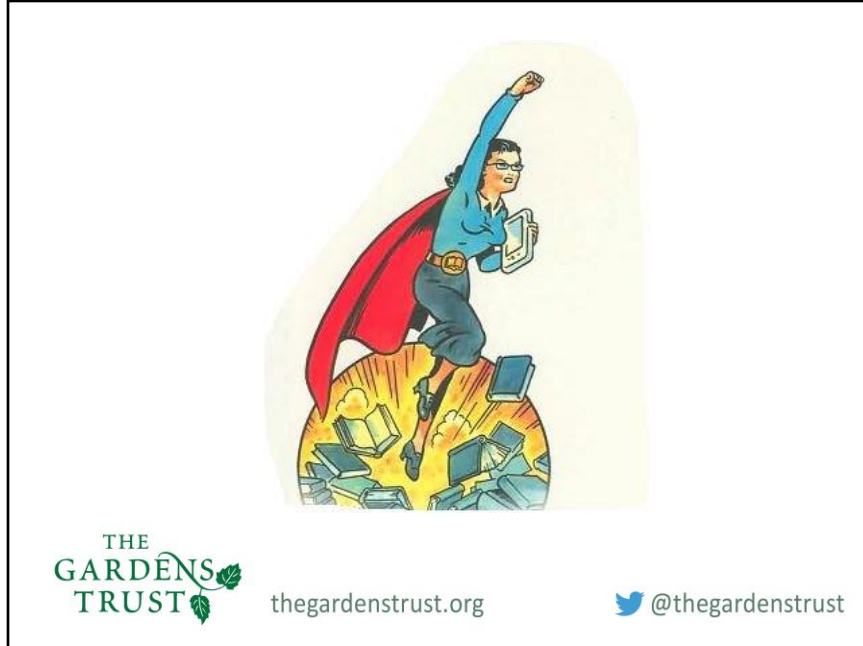


# Conservation through research and recording



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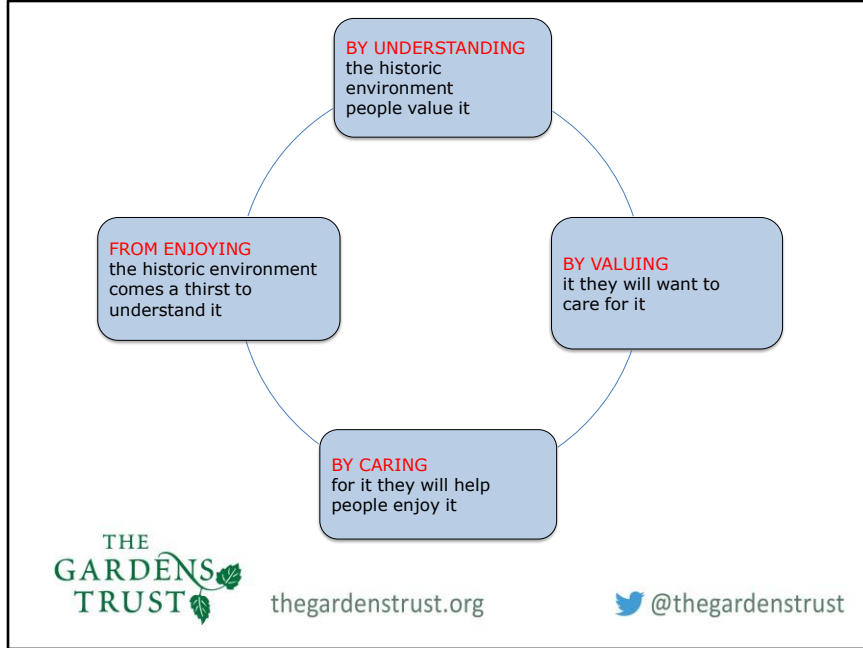
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As you probably know, historic parks and gardens are very vulnerable from poor management choices, development, or simply neglect. Don't totally panic – there are lots of things going on that manage and reduce these threats, from things called conservation 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).

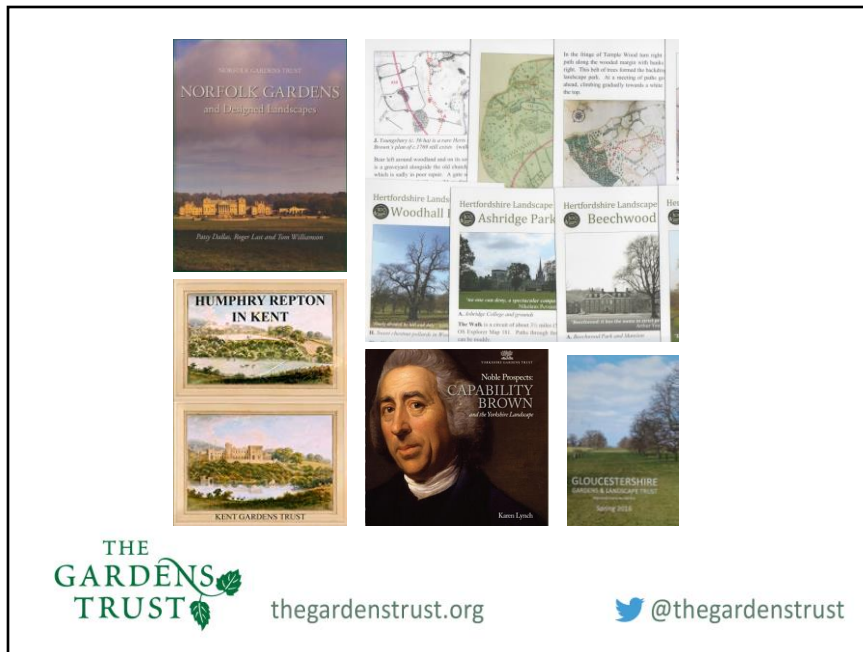
All of this protection is based on understanding and knowing about a site though – it's not appropriate to simply say no to all change, so we need to make informed decisions. You can imagine, research is obviously key to this. It is important that the sites and their histories are properly understood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



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 convert 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 of 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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

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### Overview

Heritage [Category](#) Park and Garden

[Grade II](#)

List Entry Number: 1000383

Date first listed: 02-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: [JL 02961 33974](#)

### Details

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

#### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Edward [Blodfield](#) purchased the manor in 1632 from the Crowns and built the C17 manor house. The estate passed by inheritance and marriage through the Rhodes family in 1669, and then the Deles in 1735. The early C18 estate consisted of The Elm, 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 Pit.

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 (1794-1834) inherited in 1817 and carried out extensive

#### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Flitwick Manor, 23ha, is located at the southern end of Flitwick, a small town in east Bedfordshire, c 10km south of Bedford and 3.5km east of the M1. It is bounded by Church Road to the north, [Wintonham Road](#) (A1120) to the south and east, and open farmland to the west. Shallow 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 lane 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 [Wintonham Road](#) was marked by the Lower Lodge, both built in 1833, but no longer remain.

#### PRINCIPAL BUILDING

The manor house (listed grade II\*) is located in the northern portion of the site and was built in the early C17, remodelled c 1736, extended late C18 and at various dates in the C19, then to some extent remodelled again in 1936 by Sir Albert Richardson. The Manor consists of a red-brick T-shaped block of c 1736, enclosing the C17 structure, and with late additions mostly in red brick.

**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 green bridge (listed grade II), constructed of clinker tumbled with red brick. The top of the bridge is grass and the west face is gashack, the east face classical. An archway runs underneath in decorated with simple [architraves](#), with a pebble floor. The Green links the pleasure grounds with a plantation, marked on an estate plan of 1717 as The Elm and known by the end of the C18 as The Grove.

To the east of the Manor is the main entrance and the C18 lane avenue approach from Flitwick. The parish church of St Peter and St Paul (listed grade I) stands c 50m north-east of the Manor, substantially outside the area here organised. The northern boundary of the estate ran between the Manor and the church until 1829, when it was diverted to the north of the church. The line of the old road is still visible.

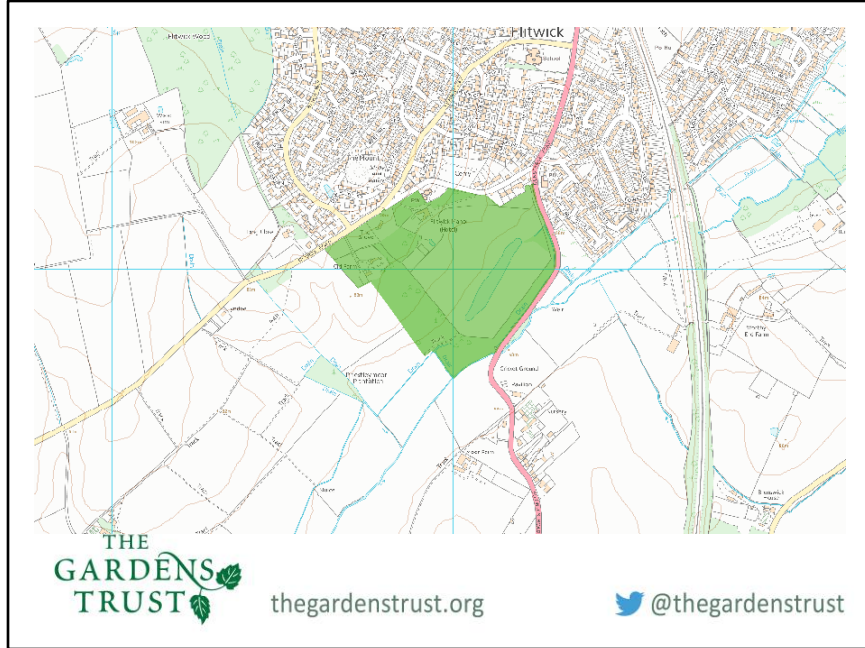
**PARK** The 17ha park lies to the south-east of the Manor, the land falling gently towards the lake, Fit Water, and a shelter belt which screens the A5120 beyond. The existing layout, boundaries and planting of the park remain largely as it was laid out by George Brooks in the



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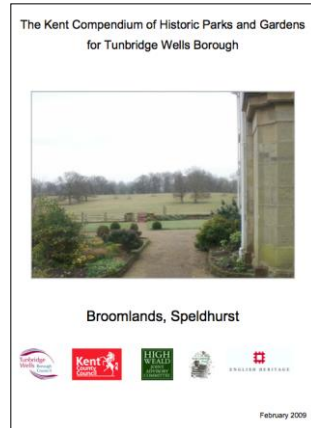
This is part of the Heritage List entry for Flitwick Manor in Bedfordshire, on the Register, at Grade II. You can read this online – just google ‘Heritage List Flitwick Manor’. It was written in 1998, and there will already be things that people know now that they would have liked to be included all those years ago.



Each Register entry has a map showing the extent of the surviving designed landscape.



## Local Lists



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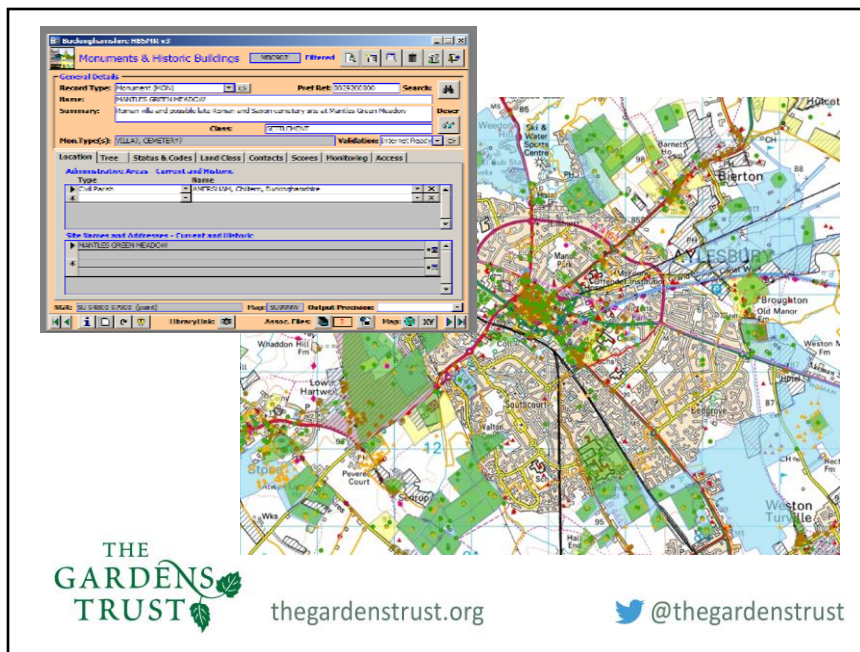
If a site is not nationally important, the next best thing is for it to be on a local list. A list held by a local authority of sites of local importance, giving them some protection in the planning system.

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).



OK, so let's move onto the Designation layer at the bottom of that boring slide – Historic Environment Records. Every HER is different.

What are HERs?: A county-based collection of information, textual and mapped, covering thousands of archaeological sites, fieldwork and other elements of the historic environment of the county. This picture is a screen grab of part of an entry, and I show it just to demonstrate complexity and layering! They will attempt to gather all the different designations and features of the heritage asset. The material comes from lots of different sources, including specific research groups such as those of CGTs, results of archaeological digs etc. They then pull all this material together so if you search on a particular location it will bring up all the material for that location.

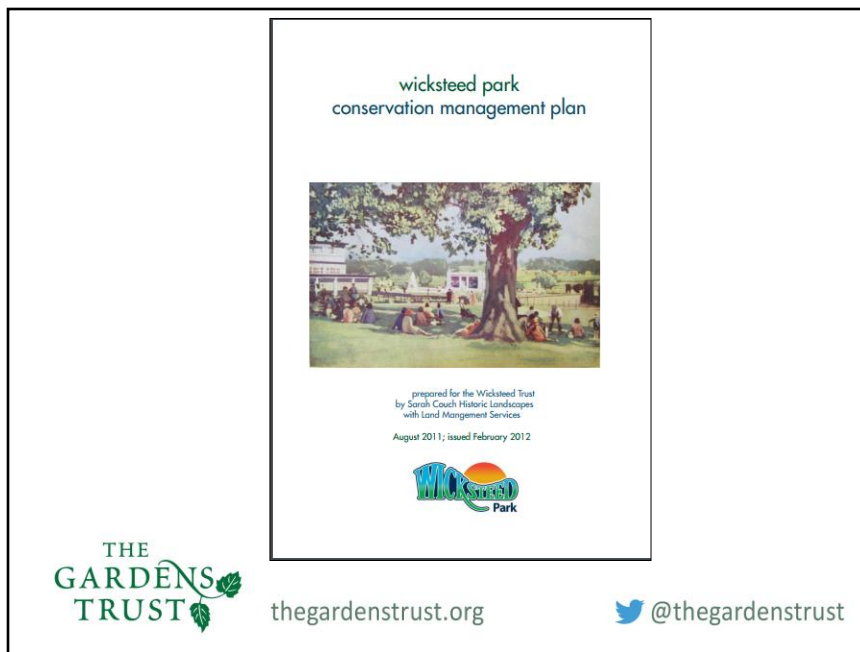
There are two main uses – as material for academics, researchers etc, but also to inform planners and planning decisions.

So, when a planner receives a planning application that may affect a historic site, the system (National Planning Policy Framework) requires them to assess it using their knowledge of that site. (Just to give you an idea, the kind of planning application that might come up could range from a historic property owner trying to build 12 houses in the corner of the site in order to raise money for a new clubhouse, to an application from a developer to build a tower block 0.5 mile away that would dominate one of the key historic views. They will need to know more about the heritage site in a hurry, and will go to the HER as their main port of call.

If we have ensured that the very best information is in the HER, then we will have armed our planners with the tools they need to assess and perhaps reject that application.

But this isn't just a matter of piling everything you have and know onto the HER. Planners are busy, stretched, under-resourced and usually historic designed landscapes aren't their specialist subject. They will not have the time to read a dissertation or dozens of separate bits of research and then digest it, so it is much better if you can also do the digesting and give them a short 'executive summary'.

This summary tends to be called a 'Statement of Significance' these days – we've looked at that in one of our earlier training packages.



## 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.



Gardens Trust Presentation prepared 2019, revised May 2020.

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