

Unforgettable Gardens 2020-23



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Hello everyone.

I'm Linden Groves, the Strategic Development Officer at the Gardens Trust.

I am so grateful to you all for taking the time to join us today, as I fill you in on Unforgettable Gardens, our theme for the next few years.



We chose this theme because of our desire to have a real impact on the understanding of the issues of historic parks and gardens. As you will know, we've all had heaps of fun celebrating Capability Brown and Humphry Repton over the past few years, but now it's time to turn the spotlight on just how precious yet vulnerable historic designed landscapes are. We want to use Unforgettable Gardens to talk about the work that ourselves and others do, and the ways that everyone can get involved.

I hope you don't mind, but to illustrate this slide I've chosen a picture of Wicksteed Park in Northamptonshire, where I am a Trustee. This Grade II registered public park has been owned and run by a charitable trust for 100 years. In June this year it went into administration, due to income loss from COVID-19. I won't go into details, but the park workforce has been slashed and now scrapes by at 10% of its previous employee numbers. We've been incredibly fortunate with emergency grants and local fundraising, but nonetheless if things don't change soon, we will have run out of options and the park will close.

I tell you this to unashamedly get your attention. HPGs have been under threat forever, and we're all pretty preoccupied at the moment, thanks to this pandemic, but I cannot emphasise enough - a team effort to draw attention to the importance and fragility of historic parks and gardens has never been more needed. Please, let's gather our energies and do this.



It is about what they mean to us, the threats they face, and ways you can help save them for future generations.

My notes from last year tell me that I said:

“We envisage a slow, quiet calm start in 2020... “! Well, 2020 has not looked anything like we had imagined, but one thing is for sure, the messages of Unforgettable Gardens have never been more apposite, and we have never needed it more.

Let me just run through its key messages. I’m going to illustrate them with posts from our own social media over the summer – a little Lottery funding allowed us to carry out some additional social media specifically to highlight the messages of Unforgettable Gardens, and we were delighted to work with interested sites, CGTs, and volunteer groups in order to do this.

Parks and gardens are part of our **shared history**



Photo: 2019

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Message Part 1: The parks and gardens you love are historic, and a key part of our national story. We here all know that parks and gardens can have amazing histories and be culturally very important, but many visitors simply don't. Let us share those stories.

Incidentally, this is my local park, Alexandra Palace Park in North London. It is also run largely by a charity rather than the local authority. Here's a quote from the Chief Executive from my local paper last week, about its situation due to the pandemic: 'it feels like we will be going back five to ten years to when there was only a very small operation in the park and palace [it's a People's Palace], when we weren't keeping up with the maintenance and the repair, and the park wasn't in the condition it is today. So I think that there is a very real risk that we will not just be going backwards a few years, we could be going backwards many years...I think there's a very real risk that the palace could be closed"

Historic
parks and
gardens
are
valuable



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Message Part 2: Historic parks and gardens are really precious and valuable. This could be because of the part they play in our national story because they are cultural icons, or because we love to visit them. This value became acutely obvious this spring, when people either flocked to public parks for their 1 hour of exercise or pined for the historic gardens who had had to shut their gates.

This tweet from Devon Gardens Trust celebrates Queen's Crescent Garden in Exeter, and how its proximity to the city centre has made it very important open space for residents and visitors.

Historic parks and gardens are **vulnerable**



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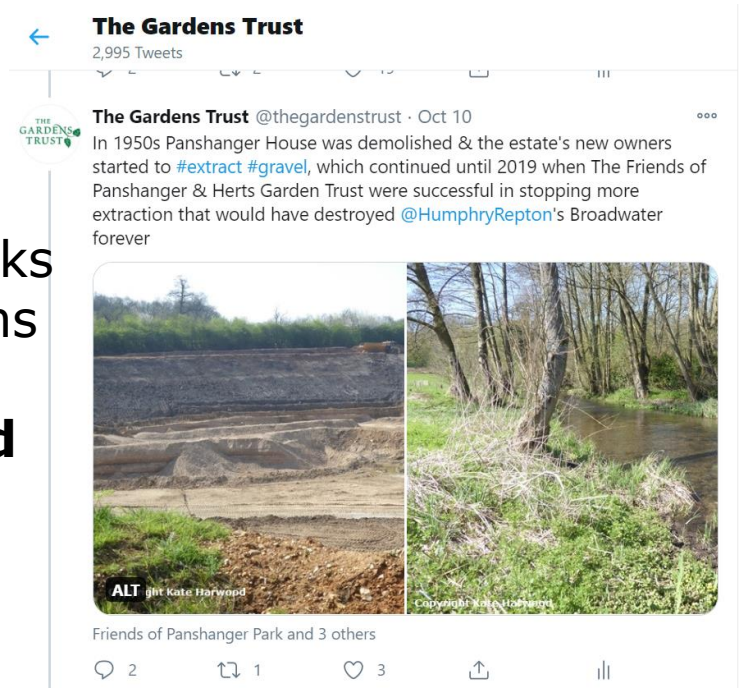


Message Part 3: Historic parks and gardens are vulnerable.

As we know, they are threatened by all kinds of things – development, neglect, mismanagement, funding. Some have been lost already. We, as a sector, definitely need to get better at highlighting this vulnerability, as open space is so taken for granted.

This is Victoria Tower Gardens, which London Gardens Trust is currently fighting to protect from a huge new memorial building and education centre.

Historic parks
and gardens
can be
protected



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Message Part 4: The good news, is that there are ways to protect historic parks and gardens. Fighting planning applications, research and recording, campaigning, restoration, public awareness.

This is a post we ran on Panshanger in Hertfordshire, which talked about how the Repton and Brown landscape was decimated by quarrying until 2019 when groups including Hertfordshire Gardens Trust were able to successfully campaign to stop it.

We can
all help.
Volunteer!



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Message Part 5: This is not a job for someone else to sort – everyone has a part to play. Particularly by becoming a volunteer. (Or by joining the GT...)

This pic is of the volunteer team at Rivington in Lancashire, that we highlighted on social media for Volunteer's Week back in the summer. In the yellow jacket is Elaine Taylor, Chair of Lancashire GT, right at the front!

Collaboration is key!

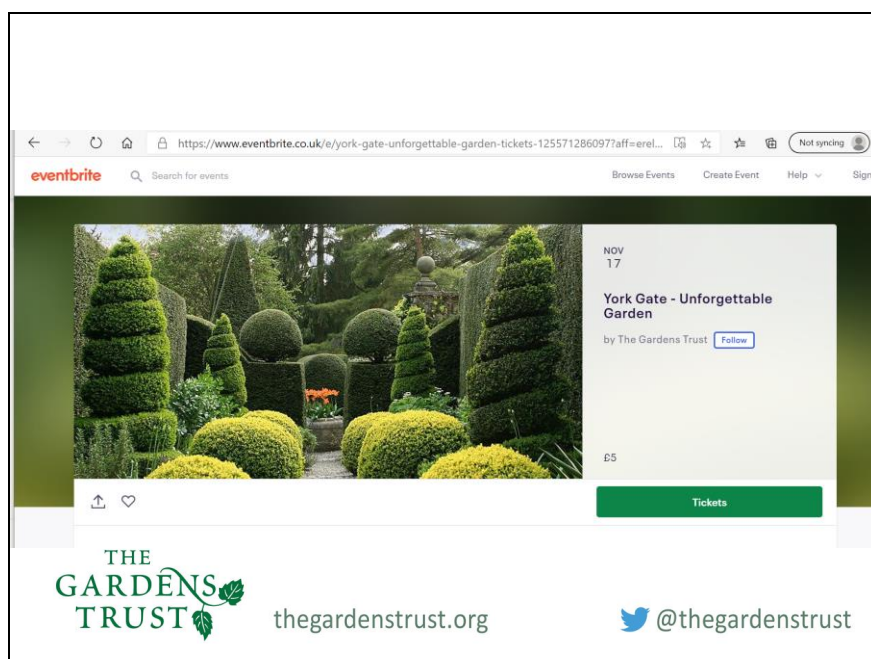


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Please get involved.

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Our intention is that the GT will support and cheerlead anyone who would like to organise an activity and badge it as Unforgettable Gardens. More on that in a minute.

At the GT itself as well as masterminding this collaboration, we are organising our own contributions too. This is evolving, and we intend that it will continue to evolve through the whole project. Already though, we are planning:

- A series of online lectures about Unforgettable Gardens – we have already launched this with the first 4. This picture is for the 3rd in the series, on York Gate near Leeds, by Ben Preston, who is the Head Gardener there. Our events team are on the lookout for new subjects and speakers for the coming years – do get in touch if you have an idea for a site or a speaker, or if you could be one yourself
- To continue our social media efforts (even though we have come to the end of the specific Lottery project that got it rolling this summer). Social media is such an important way to reach new and existing audiences, especially whilst other ways of coming together are so limited.
- To move up a gear in delivering Research and Recording training so that we can support volunteers to ensure that landscapes really are unforgettable, by recording them and their history. We are working on an extremely exciting plan to make a real difference to the amount of information recording historic parks and gardens in conservation-based places such as the Heritage List and HERs.

[This talk is the third in our series which will explore four of our best Unforgettable Gardens: Westonbirt, Dyffryn, York Gate and Strawberry Hill.

This ticket is for this individual session and you may purchase tickets for other individual sessions via the links above, or you may purchase a ticket for the entire course of 4 sessions via the link here.

Attendees will be sent a Zoom link 2 days prior to the start of each session, and a link to the recorded session will be sent shortly afterwards.

Week 3. 17th Nov: YORK GATE with Ben Preston.

When Frederick Spencer bought York Gate in Adel near Leeds in 1951, it was nothing, but a house surrounded by farmland. He laid down the bones of the garden, but after his death in 1963, it was his son Robin who took over the development and design. Inspired by some of the outstanding gardens of the Arts & Crafts movement such as Hidcote, he created in just one acre, a garden which by the early eighties was regarded by many as one of the best small gardens in the world. York Gate was given to Perennial in 1994 and has just been granted Grade II national heritage status in a list of post-war gardens and landscapes for England.

Ben Preston is the Head Gardener at York Gate and write a beautifully illustrated blog about the garden - which you can find at <https://perennial.org.uk/garden/york-gate-garden/from-the-head-gardener/>]

What are County Gardens Trusts up to?



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I am thrilled that County Gardens Trusts are also moving into action, despite the challenging circumstances. Here are some examples.

Essex Gardens Trust has won a grant, funded by the Land of the Fanns Community Action Fund produce a historic parks and gardens inventory for Thurrock. (This pic is of the volunteers from a previous project that the GT ran, that has inspired this new one.)

Bucks Gardens Trust:

Already ran a small scheme at the beginning of the first lockdown to get members to share photographs of their beautiful gardens, be they big or small. These photographs were to remind us that all gardens begin at home whether a few square feet, a window box, or hundreds of acres.

They are also running a project called 'The public parks of Buckinghamshire', with volunteers doing online research during the pandemic. Once it's possible to do so, they will scale up the project and produce a guide either online or possibly printed depending on the health of their finances!

Claire de Carle, Vice Chair: 'Our aim will be to ensure that 'the green lungs' that are our local public parks will be 'unforgettable' in the future, and continue to provide the much-needed relaxation and recreation areas to urban dwellers.'

Sussex Gardens Trust:

Starting a Twitter campaign to highlight Sussex's Unforgettable Gardens, SGT is teaming up on each tweet with a garden owner/manager/ Friend/local etc. Doing this by "sending an email and invitation to join in is currently going out to a couple of dozen owners etc., mostly ones we know at first. They have set up the Twitter account and the first tweets have gone out just last week, and if they get lots of stories/too much for twitter, they will use their FB

page also. “This is a new venture for us, but we think it’s a great way of bringing the Sussex community of all garden lovers, owners and managers together to celebrate our terrific garden heritage.”

Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire Gardens Trusts: looking to work together to run a small community engagement programme to help new people to research and appreciate their local HPGs, based in Bestwood Park (Notts) and Sutton on Sea and Mablethorpe (Lincs). These sites have been chosen partly because they are in sites of high deprivation, so the team are hoping to engage with people who would not normally get involved in CGTs.

Northamptonshire Gardens Trust: developing several ideas, including.

- 1) The first is around Billing Road Cemetery Northampton, which has been seriously neglected. NGT is hoping to develop a holistic approach to include Research and Recording work coupled with a community outreach programme and the development of a volunteer 'friends' group' to maintain momentum of community support.
- 2) Exploring the loss of wildflower meadows within Northamptonshire, perhaps partnering with sites that include meadows and helping school groups to visit.

Slide 12



So, there is some inspiration from the CGTs.

The beauty of this theme is that it is what you make of it. It would be lovely to see people thinking outside the box and coming up with inventive and inclusive ideas to engage with new audiences. But if you want, you can simply deliver your usual walks and talks and research and just choose to tactically badge some of it as Unforgotten Gardens so that collectively we can demonstrate just how much we do.

And I really hope that you will use these activities as a trigger to get more people to support your work or even volunteer.

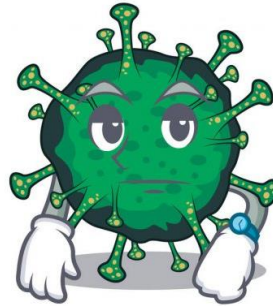
Here are some ideas, whether you are a CGT or a site or an individual, but I can't emphasise enough that this is a shared theme, for you to make of what you will.

- Heritage Open Day or 'Fete'
- Share research on a 'lost' garden
- School workshop on a little-known site
- Exhibition at a public park
- Conservation or research & recording training for new volunteers

Any idea at all is welcome!

Don't wait for Covid to go!

- Social media is a miracle!
- Self-guided tour leaflets
- Online lectures
- A research and recording project using online materials
- Training for local volunteers
- Distanced visits?



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Quick note, please do not feel that you need to wait for COVID-19 to go away before you can commit to things. There is plenty to be done even if we are stuck in this pandemic forever (hopefully not!).

Here are some suggestions:

- Social media is a miracle!
- Self-guided tour leaflets
- Online lectures
- A research and recording project using online research
- Training for local volunteers
- Distanced visits?



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<http://thegardenstrust.org/campaigns/unforgettable-gardens-saving-our-garden-heritage/>



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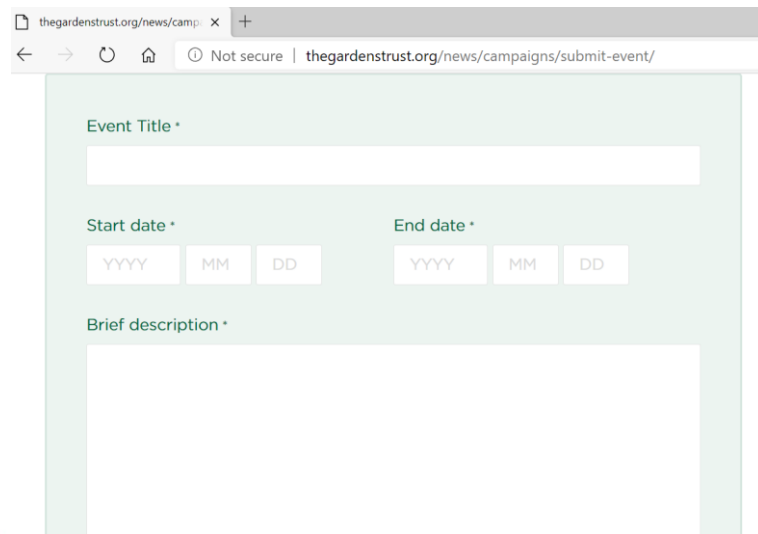
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So, what can the GT offer you by way of support?

Firstly, a logo. This is free to download from our website. Go to the Unforgettable Gardens page of our Campaigns section, or the Unforgettable Gardens part of the Campaigns section of our Resource Hub, and you will find it.

This shared branding and publicity is key – the more we can link it together, the greater the legibility for the public, and the greater the impact.

Unforgettable Gardens online Events Calendar



A screenshot of a web browser showing the submission form for the Unforgettable Gardens online Events Calendar. The browser's address bar displays the URL thegardenstrust.org/news/campaigns/submit-event/. The form itself is light green and contains the following fields:

- Event Title ***: A single-line text input field.
- Start date ***: Three separate input fields for Year (YYYY), Month (MM), and Day (DD).
- End date ***: Three separate input fields for Year (YYYY), Month (MM), and Day (DD).
- Brief description ***: A large, multi-line text area.



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We would also love you to add any Unforgettable Gardens events to our online events calendar. If you go the Events section of our website, you will see there is an online form for you to add it yourself.

Online Events Calendar – everyone's UG activities welcome, not just GT or CGTs

#unforgettablegardens



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We would also love you to use the hashtag #unforgettablegardens on your social media, and we will do our best to post and repost if you tag us in.

If you do not have your own social media, then do get in touch and we will do our best to post material for you. We also have a monthly E-News and a regular printed News, and we are happy to include your items in there as best we can.

A small but important note – it massively helps us to spread the word if we know what everyone is doing. Don't be shy to drop us a line.



Finally, I am very keen to get everyone together so that we can see how we each fit into this growing jigsaw, and perhaps we can help you to build some useful partnerships.

Scenarios:

- Site wanting to host event but needing volunteers
- Individuals or CGTs wanting to do something but not knowing what site to focus on
- Organisation wanting to highlight a site near them, perhaps for being particularly unforgettable, or for being under threat, and that site desperately needing help
- Organisation wanting to collaborate on a project, perhaps an exhibition

As you will remember, we were going to have held a physical brainstorming event all together back in April. Sadly, that was not to be!

I think it might be good however to hold some Zoom meetings where we can all share ideas. Watch this space.

So, please, please keep in touch. Do email sallybate@thegardenstrust.org if you would like to be added to the Unforgettable Gardens mailing list for people wanting to get involved, or if you want to let us know what you're thinking of.

Let's seize this opportunity



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I will just end by returning to Wicksteed Park. As I said, Wicksteed Park has been on its knees, and really continues to be so. But on the other hand, the local community now finally understands that it is run by a charity, and that its survival is not guaranteed. The community has rallied and done incredible fundraising work, and there is now a Wicksteed Wednesday army of volunteers keeping the park going with essential maintenance work.

This is a really challenging time to be trying to run a national collaborative campaign like Unforgettable Gardens. But there is also a huge opportunity in COVID-19:

- Value of HPGs like never before
- New audiences have turned their attention to HPGs, and many of them are stuck at the end of their smartphones, desperate for new material.
- Willingness to volunteer
- Sense of community

We need to ride this wave – let's go for it!

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