

Fifty Fabulous Features: Building Foundations for Garden History in Thurrock and Havering



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Research Consultant*

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Not Just 50 Fabulous Features!

- For the last two years I have been working with and on behalf of Land of the Fanns Landscape Project, The Gardens Trust, the Essex Gardens Trust, and a simply amazing group of volunteers to develop and deliver three (soon to be four!) different projects focussed on the historic designed landscapes of Thurrock and Havering, in south Essex.
- This is a VERY brief outline of those projects, their aims and methods, their successes, and the difficulties we overcame, . .

Project One:

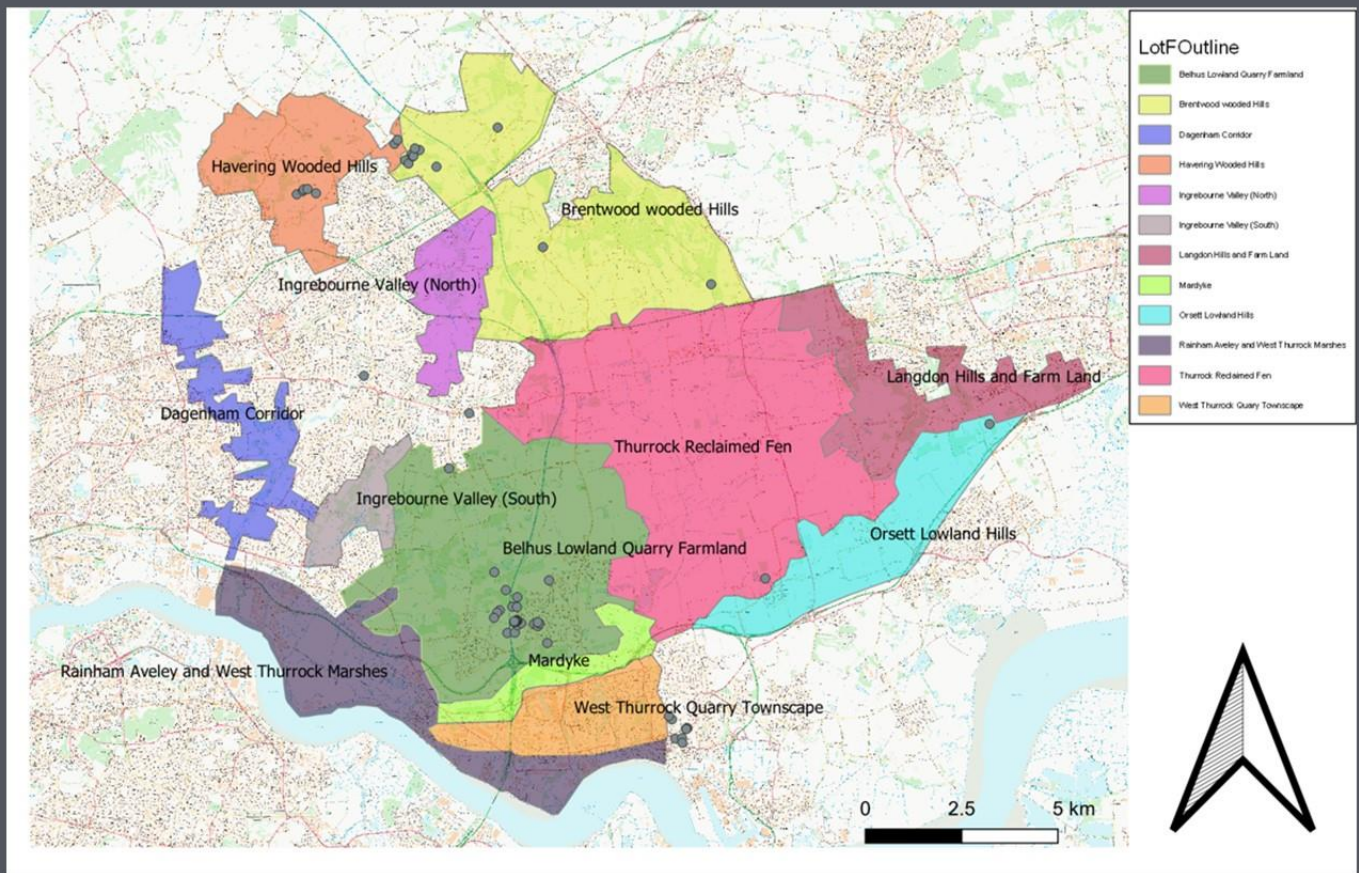
Know It Love It



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25 minutes is far too short a period to cover all these in any detail at all, and so this is very much a bullet point overview of what the projects were about and how we went about them with some visual treats of some of the fun we had to tempt you to do the same, and also to alert you to the amazing largely unrecognised landscapes of Thurrock and Havering!

'Know It Love It' (and the subsequent '50 Fabulous Features') were focused in the area covered by the Land of the Fanns Project in the south of Essex



Much of the area is almost Un-recognisable in comparison to the late 18th century and it has often been assumed little survives



'Know It Love It' (Autumn 2019-Spring 2020)

delivered for the Land of the Fanns Landscape Project in association with the Gardens Trust

- To bring together a wide range of local people and representatives of community groups etc to engage with historic designed landscapes and features.
- To deliver a series of inter-active training sessions both in-class and on-site (using sites within the Land of the Fanns) over a relatively short period. Introducing not only concepts around designed landscape history but also planning and conservation (Significance, Values etc)
- To enhance existing knowledge and skills and work with local communities to foster a greater knowledge and appreciation of the features and sites within their areas.
- To build a core group of volunteers who wanted to go on to 'the next stage' . . of undertaking research.



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Spreading the 'garden history' word and skills ..
on site and in the classroom using local sites



Including representatives of Local Friends Groups



Helping 'up-skill' people with an existing historic interest



Understanding the threats to local sites and how these might be addressed and protected through greater understanding and local involvement and through conservation and planning routes

Project Two: 50 Fabulous Features

(Winter 2020-Spring 2021)

- Having included approximately 50 people in one or more of the *Know It Love It* sessions, people were now encouraged to continue on to work on the *55 Fabulous Features Project*.
- We retained about 15 people for this (pretty good retention for going on to undertake focused research across a variety of sites with words like 'significance' and 'planning' floating around by this stage).
- The aim of this part was to encourage people to become active in recognition and conservation and research of their own 'landscapes'
- and to provide further specific training in conservation including the role of the Historic England Register, and the writing of Significance Statements, etc
- The Outcome was to be a printed document resulting from their research and conservation studies of 55 (50 due to Covid) individual features across the designed landscapes of the area AND a volunteers Handbook of research Sources

So whats new about that?

- Where we departed from most research group studies in historic gardens is that we asked them to nominate and research an **individual feature rather than an entire site.**
- **This meant that this first experience of research could be tightly focused,**
- **It emphasised the heritage on their doorstep (literally),**
- **It valued the local area and did not 'compare it' to the Stowes and Blenheims,**
- **It could be accomplished relatively quickly,**
- **and one person could take on a variety of types and periods of feature.**
- **We did not ask them to tackle say an entire 18th century landscape that was a huge thing to research, was unusual for the area, and that had less relevance for them. . . although in some instances features were chosen from that type of site.**
- **We asked THEM to find and research one or more individual features . .**
- **No-one gave up!**

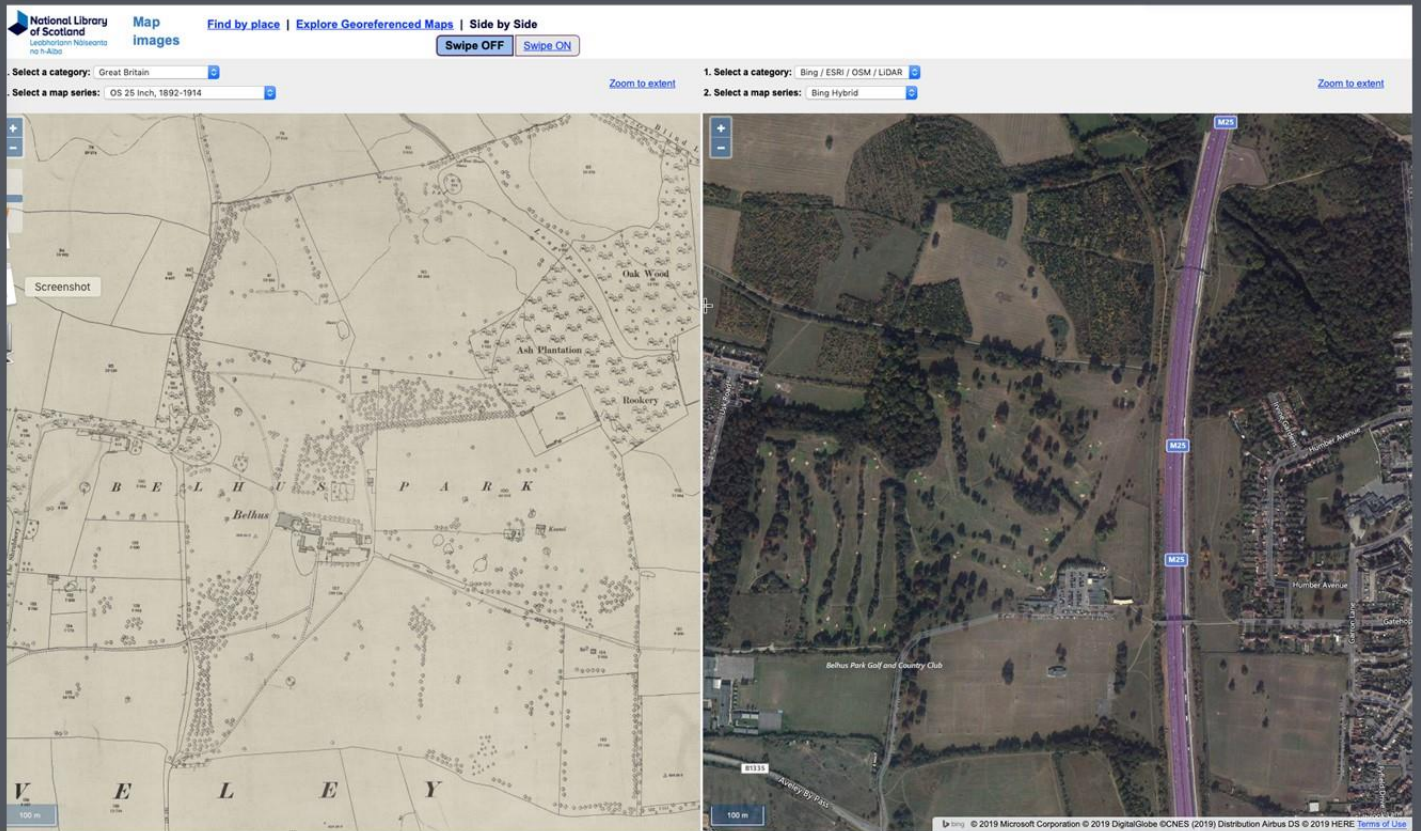
- **We also incorporated into our definition of historic designed landscapes those types of landscape or isolated feature which often get pushed to one side in the scramble for 18th century parks but are vital open spaces and relict features commonly encountered in built up areas:**
- *Old Ponds, rockeries and shelters so typical of Amenity parks features on 1950s estates;*
- *Relict trees abandoned in private gardens long after their associated Tudor park has been built over;*
- *a Kissing Gate abandoned in brambles originally part of a route around a larger garden;*
- *as well as the usual relict walls of old walled gardens, re-purposed carriage drives, abandoned spa gardens and the infamous 'stench pipe'.*
- **We also immediately focused on producing an attractive written documents by them which had an immediate practical use**



Cash's Well Spa Building



Veteran Sweet Chestnuts . . once associated with Belhus Park but stranded by the M25 and building of housing estates. They were specifically retained in the estate planning but are now becoming yet more fragmented as private gardens encroach.



National Library of Scotland digital mapping allows side-by-side or overlay of historic and modern mapping etc which is invaluable in research:
 Here the Belhus Veteran Trees at Humber Avenue can be located on the late 19thC OS 25inch map . .
 fortunately for us all of these research could be done at home on-line!

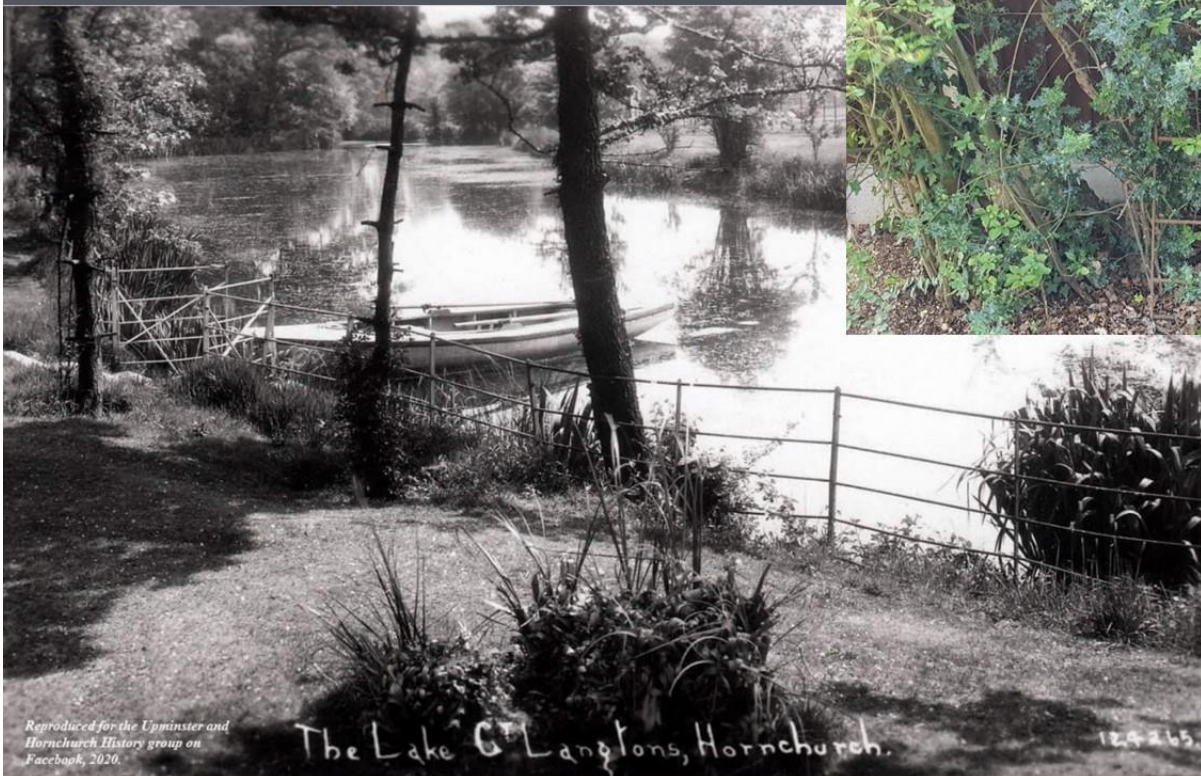
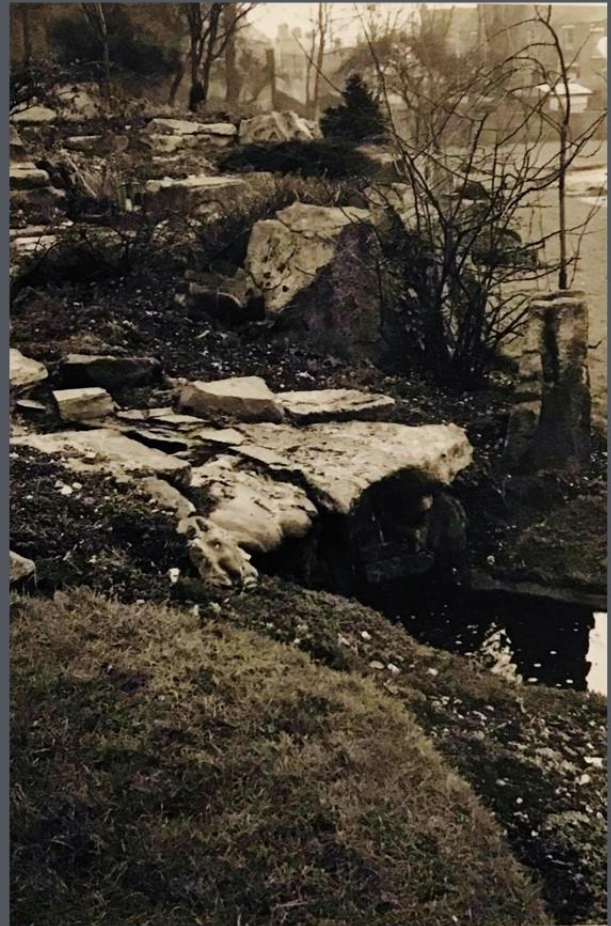


*Playground: Equipment erected by: T.U.D.C.
 Tarmac surface by: M. Maxwell Hart
 Ltd.*



1950s park layouts were examined for relict features

Grays Town Park
Waterfall forming part of the
rockery in the 1950s



Research on the Kissing gate led to
new information about a circuit around the site



As lockdown started and we moved to 'zoom' everyone (we had a team of about 15) was focused on their features and writing them up. We had a clear deadline and a set way of writing that everyone adhered to based on the concepts of Significances.



'Fifty Fabulous Features'

*Statements of Significance for Fifty Features of
Historic Designed Landscapes within the
Land of the Fanns
2020*



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(Ancient Monument – not an historic landscape feature)	



**Creating an Inventory of
Historic Designed Parks and Gardens
for Thurrock, Essex**

**Volunteer Handbook
(Version 2: January 2021)**

We also produced
a Volunteer
Handbook which
everyone
contributed to as
we went along

Other EGT teams have worked
on Inventories before -and we
have drawn on these and added
very considerable updates of
new digital resources which will
now go forward for use in other
EGT research teams.

Unexpected Outcomes . .

Notable during this period one of our volunteers was able to assist in fighting off planning application for new houses on one of the amenity open spaces originating from a Tudor deer park

Another discovered LiDAR markings that resulted in Historic England undertaking a massive study and re-evaluation of the Tudor and 18th century garden at Belhus Park (At Risk)

Another started to assist in the recording of one of the sites we had visited in training

and . . by the end were all trained to such a standard akin to an MA in Garden History Research and passed with flying colours!!



Project Three: Unforgettable Gardens 'The Thurrock Inventory'





A finely honed team . . alert to every landscape feature . .

- By now we had a group of people who were fully trained in research and sources
- They knew how to access and use a wide range of digitalised and digital resources, including LiDAR, mapping overlays, and so on GIS.
- They also knew all about the importance of recording and understanding features and sites if they were to be protected.
- They had also undertaken research on individual features - often of features across larger sites which could not be combined.
- So . . this time grant funded by a combination of Essex Gardens Trust and the Land of the Fanns, . . we embarked on a 'more traditional' site based Inventory, (this time focussed on just Thurrock).

- We went 'back to basics' did a map and sources 'sweep' of the area, also did a thorough search of the HER, and LiDAR and all the sources we were now familiar with - and contacted the local history groups and Museums
- We found lots of possible new sites (at one stage in beyond a hundred), and whittled them down to the Inventory criteria of a site of historic designed landscape of local/regional significance .
- Many of the sites were new to us so we set about visiting . .

Our Table of possible sites was constantly updated to keep everyone in the loop

	(England on C&A)											garden
Bulphan	Blankets Farmhouse	TQ 62101 85540	1337086	mid-18th Century house	y	y		y	PL		N	Site fairly built up with various buildings, gardens around house modest
Bulphan	Little Tillingham Hall Farm	TQ 61692 87352	SMR 1874 Grade 2: 1111629	18 th century house. Moated? Known as New Hall on OS		y		y	PL		N	Working farm with some private garden but nothing special
Bulphan	Manor House/ Wick House on maps	TQ64515 86120	SMR 49004	Post medieval farm complex. Need to see Colchester Arch. Trust report					PL		N	New houses being built in grounds
Bulphan	Bulphan Manor	delete		Duplicate of Manor House Farm?					PL		N	
Bulphan	Bulphan Hall 	TQ637 858		SEAX 1916 photo, sale catalogue Doubtful if there is a historic garden but worth a second look	y	y		y	JP			
Bulphan	Bulphan Manor Hall	delete		Excursions in the County of Essex					PL		N	Think this is the same as Bulphan Hall
Bulphan	Brandon Hall former Rectory 			https://www.thurrock-history.org.uk/bulphan.htm Parsonage on C&A. 1.8 acres Probably nothing left of earlier gardens but worth a 2 nd look	y	y		y	PL			
Bulphan	Garlesters moated house	TQ6429486440	1111648	https://www.thurrock-history.org.uk/bulphan.htm	y	y		y	PL		N	Some of the moated site remains but new houses built in the grounds around original house
Bulphan	Barnards Farm	TQ6349487853	1166226	18th Century house and modern sculpture garden. National Malus collection	y	y		y	PL/J P	Jill	Y	Jill has ¼ written this up when working on the Brentwood inventory

By now we were able to actually meet up again . . and we started to have day outings every month to sites as well as continue with Zoom mtgs to discuss research





Visiting as a group meant
we could have fun doing things like
lining out on the great pond at Belhus

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Identifying medieaval earthworks in a 1950s amenity park

Drawing on, and sharing,
existing skills within the group

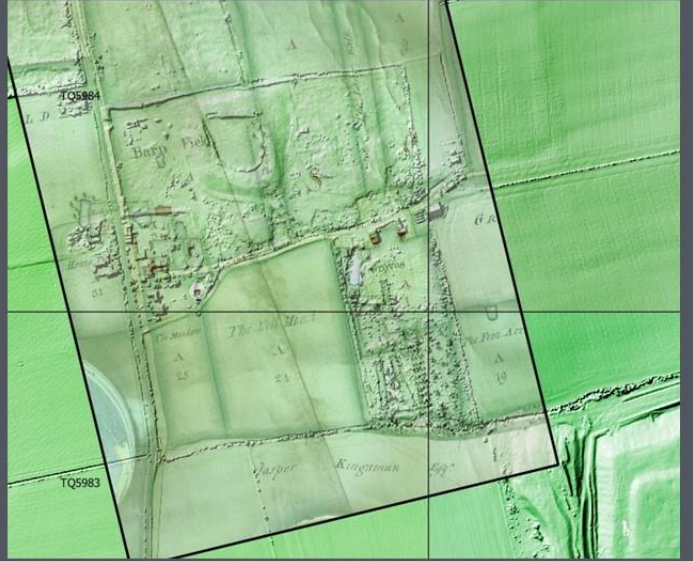
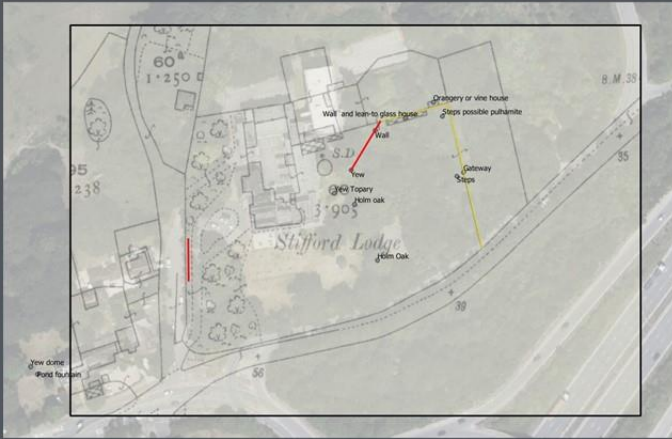


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Our sites were amazingly varied and the Inventory will be unusual for Essex in emphasising the impact of the urbanisation and industrialisation of the 20th century and the designed landscape elements that came with it:

From Eastern European factory estates to cemeteries, artificial beach gardens of the Edwardian period, gardens in old quarry sites, a newly created sculpture garden (old enough to represent the late 20thC!), plus memorial gardens to cement makers, and a sprinkling of suburban villa or manorhouse style gardens re-purposed as hotels: and even a mortuary re-purposed as a toilet (now derelict!).



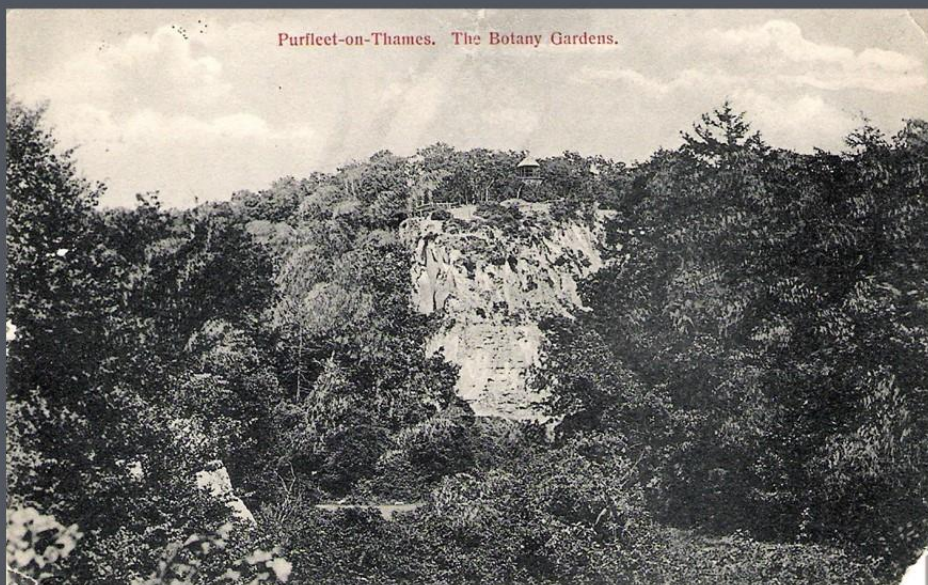
Other than the Inventory itself . . what other positives came from this Thurrock Inventory Project?

- The Inventory integrated the groups research into an established pattern of research within the Essex Gardens Trust and Gardens Trusts.
- This also more firmly embedded the Thurrock group within the wider EGT community and gave them a recognised county and national value to the 'local' work:
- This was also emphasised by the EGT chair and other existing EGT members always came to visits and Zoom mtgs .
- Updates and progress featured in the EGT journals - highlighting this too often neglected part of Essex to other EGT members and also demonstrating the on-going role of research and planning to members generally.



- As I write . . the Inventory is being copy edited by two of the group - with maps produced by another.
- It will be printed (17 sites in all) and passed to Essex County Council, Thurrock Council, HER etc to provide valuable information to inform conservation and planning.
- AND it has already been instrumental in providing information in support of conservation at two sites threatened by the Thames Gateway and associated development.
- However rather than resting on our laurels . . we now have a new project!

Many of the sites we discovered during research for the Inventory no longer exist (and could not be included within it) . .
so . . aided by grants again from EGT and
Land of the Fanns (Co-op Grants) we will be researching these
and themes associated with them.



and PUBLISHING *Lost Gardens of Thurrock* sometime in 2022!
To be available through the EGT and at sites and venues in Thurrock!

- This project will highlight the heritage of the area that has been lost
- It will provide context for the sites that do survive and are within the Inventory
- The publication will be available locally and regionally
- It will be written and illustrated in an accessible and interesting manner . . engaging the local community with stories about these lost sites . . (the other projects have really been focussed on planning and conservation rather than the general public)
- And in doing this will provide yet more writing-style skills for our band of researchers , not to mention learning about the editing and publication process!



*Project Four:
Unforgettable Gardens
Part Two! Lost Gardens of Thurrock*

Coming soon