

The Gardens Trust
Reports from Committees (2022/2023)
AGM 2023



Audience Development Marketing and Communications Committee (ADMC)

Over the past twelve months ADMC has seen the completion of the NLHF funded *Engaging with our Future* project, which included the production and adoption of both an audience development plan and fundraising plan. These two strategies include activity plans for the next three years which are on track and being closely monitored by the committee. ADMC worked with Phyllida Shaw (the project's evaluator) to complete the evaluation and members attended a celebratory event at Kenwood House to celebrate the success of the project. Earlier this year Tara Hamdi was appointed as the GT's first Fundraising and Development Officer. Over the coming year she will be working on establishing a Benefactors scheme as well as pursuing other fundraising opportunities.

As a result of the NLHF project ADMC completed a review of the membership proposition and membership benefits in order to strengthen these and encourage more people to join the GT. As a consequence a members' welcome pack has been produced and a 10% discount of online events has been introduced as a new benefit of membership. A pilot campaign on social media for membership recruitment was completed and learnings from that are feeding into future membership marketing activity.

Integral to the NLHF project has been the piloting and roll out of a Community Champions scheme to encourage local volunteers to engage with their networks and spread the word about the GT through light touch and entertaining garden history activities. This activity goes from strength to strength and has been complimented by other community outreach work and recruitment of new volunteers. In addition to the above activities ADMC worked closely with Frankie Taylor and Susannah Charlton on helping to develop a digital engagement plan and on discussing and feeding into a website development project. Initial changes to the website are now complete and as a consequence the website now provides an enhanced user experience through better navigation and organisation of information.

Lastly, ADMC supported a vital piece of work to oversee the migration of data management from our former database held and managed by Lavenham to the Beacon CRM system. This new CRM system is working well and has made significant improvements in our ability to manage membership and supporter data as well as being able to create more bespoke and relevant communications. This year ADMC has been joined by Charlotte Casella who edits the GT e-bulletin and also by Jill Sinclair and Sally Jeffery, representing the Events Committee. ADMC is delighted to have their contributions.

Rachel Savage, Chair, ADMC

Conservation Committee

Committee Membership and Meetings

Following Sarah Dickinson stepping down, Chris Blandford (CB) took over as Chair of the Conservation Committee (CC) in October 2022. Other Committee members who also stepped down in 2022 included Marion Harney, Peter Waine, Kate Harwood and Wendy Stott. CB thanked all of them for their very valuable service over the years. Early in the year CB welcomed two new members to the Committee: Deborah Evans who is an experienced consultant landscape architect who specializes in conservation and historic landscapes, and Paul Rabbitts, who is a writer, chartered landscape architect and Head of Parks at Watford Borough Council.

The Committee now has 10 “core” members with a range of heritage, conservation, landscape and planning experience relevant to the GT’s mission. The meetings are also attended by “sit in” attendees drawn from other parts of the GT. These include those supporting the GT Engagement and Volunteer Support activities. Jenifer White, as an “observer”, has also been a valuable contributor to the Committee bringing regular updates from Historic England (HE) but is retiring in mid-2023. CB thanked her for her many years of service and expressed the hope of the Committee that she would remain involved with the GT. Erika Diaz Petersen has been appointed as Historic England’s National Landscape Adviser and has been welcomed as an observer to the Committee representing Historic England.

Since September 2022 the Committee has met 5 times alternatively on zoom and face to face in London.

Statutory Consultee Role

The Conservation Committee continues to oversee and support the essential work of the GT as a statutory consultee reviewing and responding to planning applications that may impact on historic designed landscapes both those on Historic England’s Register of Parks and Gardens and where possible those that are not. In doing this the GT continues to work closely with and supports the County Gardens Trusts (CGTs).

The total number of consultations received in 2022 (2021 figures in brackets for comparison), comprising all planning applications, preapplications, Forestry Commission, Historic England, Local Plans, National Policy, Neighbourhood Plans and General Correspondence for England was 2,073 (2,389) and for Wales 28 (14). Of these 1,320 (1,533) were statutory consultations for England. Although the figures were lower than the previous year, which was exceptionally busy, they still demonstrate an overall upward trend since the formation of the Gardens Trust in 2015.

Responses (to all types of consultations) were as follows: GT written responses submitted 208 (255); CGT written responses 452 (588); GT no comments submitted 565 (551); CGT no comments 59 (84), reflecting the drop in consultations received compared with 2021.

Planning Casework Logging

The GT staff Conservation Team, including Alison Allighan (Conservation Casework Manager), Margie Hoffnung (Conservation Officer) and Daniel Bowles (Assistant Casework Manager) continue to monitor, manage, respond and log on to the database the consultation requests from the local authorities. Some necessary prioritization allows the team to resource the continuing increase in the numbers of consultations and to respond within the prescribed consultation periods.

The GT casework log has been the key operational tool for the recording of consultations and the distribution of these to the CGTs and other volunteers to assist in formulating GT responses to the local authorities. However, the database platform is now over 20 years old and needs to be upgraded. Over the last 12 months the GT has therefore been working with the other National Amenity Societies (JCNAS) to explore the feasibility of integrating the GT log in to the more updated logging system used by the six other members of JCNAS. The latter have had some grant funding to assist in facilitating this transition. During 2023 the GT has been working with JCNAS on a “pilot” stage to test the practicality of integrating the more complex spatial landscape data (ie for Parks and Gardens) into the upgraded JCNAS log. Despite some initial hurdles, the GT data is now successfully

being logged on to the JCNAS logging system. The GT's own log will be withdrawn in late 2023 and once final testing is complete it is expected that the GT's logging will be a permanent and effective part of the JCNAS case work log by mid-2024.

The impact of the increasing numbers of consultations received by the GT and the limited GT resource available for processing them remains of concern to the Committee. However, it is hoped that the completion of the integration of the GT logging into the JCNAS system will release some GT staff time during 2024 to in part address this.

For the GT the JCNAS system will provide a more accessible, updatable and maintainable database which will be well matched to the future demands of digital planning consultation processes (in accordance with likely planning reforms). Aligning GT casework with that of the other Amenity Societies will also enable closer working with other JCNAS members and the strengthening of our joint voice.

Major Planning Cases

In 2022 the Conservation Team and the volunteers who assist them considered over 1300 planning applications in England and Wales that were considered to have some impact on Registered Parks and Gardens (RPG). These included major and high-profile cases where potential change or proposed development could result in a significant impact on the heritage value of the designed landscape. Such cases are often the most complex, controversial and require more detailed assessment and time commitment by the Team to investigate and enable them to explain potential adverse impacts and offer comments which seek to achieve more informed and balanced conservation.

As can be seen from the examples below the opportunities for the GT to influence the planning process decisions concerned with the RPG are variable and continue to reflect an imperfect statutory consultation system. The GT is too often dependent on the willingness of promoters to involve them at the pre-application stages. Once applications are lodged, local authorities have varying approaches and expertise to guide their statutory duty to consult the GT. Regardless of the statutory process, the GT endeavours within its limited resources and assisted by CGTs to give priority to the most challenging major cases.

The Committee has "Major Cases" as a fixed agenda item at its meetings and the Conservation Team provides an update on these cases. Some have long running planning histories and require constant monitoring by the team.

The brief summaries below include an update of major cases that have been prominent and addressed by the team during 2022/2023.

Victoria Tower Gardens (VTG), London

Victoria Tower Gardens is a small urban park listed as Grade II on the RPG, adjacent to the Houses of Parliament and in the setting of the Palace of Westminster and Westminster Abbey World Heritage Site. It provides invaluable green space in the heart of London and contains three important listed memorials.

In 2019 a planning application was submitted for the development of a large National Holocaust Memorial structure in this relatively small park. This has resulted in a long running planning issue which has also become politicized. Both the GT and the London Parks and Gardens Trust (then LPGT, now known as London Parks & Gardens, LPG) objected to the original application which was also refused by Westminster City Council. The GT and LPGT fully endorse the principle behind the creation of the Memorial but not on this site. Notwithstanding refusal of the application, it was called in by the Secretary of State for the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and given permission to proceed. In 2021 the Save the Victoria Gardens Campaign led by LPGT appealed to the High Court who overturned the earlier grant of planning permission. However, during 2022 the Secretary of State for DLUHC asked the Court of Appeal for permission to appeal against this decision. Their appeal was refused on the grounds that an Act of Parliament (of 122 years ago) imposes an enduring obligation to retain the use of the garden as a public space. In mid-2023 the Government declared that they intend to repeal the legal protection afforded for VTG to allow the Memorial to be built putting the final decision outside of the planning system and now in the hands of Parliament.

LPGT continues to campaign and garner support to secure the future of VTG. The GT continues to support the case for finding a more suitable and alternative site for a national monument to commemorate the suffering of all those who lost their lives in the holocaust.

Wimbledon Park, London

Wimbledon Park is a large metropolitan open space and public park listed Grade II* on the Register of Parks and Gardens. Originally designed by Capability Brown, the historic character of the park is now somewhat degraded and is on the Historic England "At Risk" register. The original area of the historic park is also now fragmented into different ownerships including primarily the London Borough of Merton, the Wimbledon Club, and the All England Lawn Tennis Club (AELTC). The AELTC land (bought from the Wimbledon Golf Club) within the park lies to the west of the lake and adjacent to the existing national facilities of the AELTC to the southwest. By way of an extension to the latter, AELTC submitted a planning application in 2021 for the development of 38 additional grass tennis courts and an 8000 seater Parkland Stadium which would be part of the overall commercial offer of AELTC. The application also includes the creation of a new 9.4 hectare public park along the west side of the lake (with permitted access for 10 months of the year) and a substantial historic landscape and lake restoration scheme. The application has not yet been determined.

In commenting on the application in 2021 and 2022 the GT's Conservation Team remained concerned at the commercial nature of the Parkland Stadium in relation to which direct public benefit is open to question. However, it was also acknowledged that the new public park and historic landscape restoration will provide other significant public benefits. Discussions with Historic England, Capability Brown experts and the London Parks and Garden Trust (LPGT) and others were undertaken to consider this balance. The GT and LPGT jointly determined that the likelihood of finding an alternative to funding the significant heritage improvements and subsequent long-term maintenance of the newly create parkland was unlikely and therefore has in principle with some reservations supported the scheme.

There continues to be considerable and well-informed campaigning in opposition to the scheme. Apart from the continued concerns over the loss of heritage assets the campaign is currently focused on two issues. Firstly, the inability of the primary land owners to engage with each other particularly in relation to an access corridor not owned by AELTC but which splits their ownership; and secondly a covenant on the AELTC land which calls in to question the legality of the 1993 sale of the land by Merton Borough Council to the Wimbledon Golf Club in relation to its status as Metropolitan Open Space.

During 2023 the GT and LPGT met with some of the campaigners for an update, but the GT/LPGT position remains the same.

Hampton Court/Cigarette Island, East Molesey

The grounds and gardens surrounding Hampton Court Palace are listed Grade II * in the RPG and managed by Historic Royal Palaces (HRP). The Palace itself is a Grade I Listed Building. The visual setting of both includes an area to the south and on the other side of the River Thames which is the subject of redevelopment. A planning application was submitted in 2019 to build 97 dwellings, some retail units, an 84 bed hotel, and car parking in clear view of the Palace and its grounds was submitted in 2019. The GT reinforced HRP's actions seeking a refusal for the application on account of the adverse impact of the development on the visual and historic landscape setting of the Palace and its gardens. The GT supported the preparation of an Historic Impact Assessment undertaken by a leading historic landscape specialist – Dr Sarah Rutherford.

Elmbridge Borough Council (EBC) refused the application in 2021 but the developer lodged an appeal. Dr Rutherford represented the GT 's case at the subsequent Inquiry in 2022. The Inspector at the Inquiry allowed the appeal. EBC have challenged this outcome with the support of a stronger statement from Historic England and continued support of the GT. The case appears now turns on a point of law relating to Section 49 of the South Western Railway Act of 1913 that seeks to protect railway land within half a mile of royal palaces from any building with a height of over 50 ft. The proposed development exceeds this.

Elmbridge Council has drafted a new Local Heritage Assets list (due to go to Committee July 2023), and if adopted it will become a material consideration in planning decisions and will be absorbed into a Draft Local Plan that may emerge before the end of 2023. Meanwhile the planning application remains on hold.

The GT has written to DLUHC stating *'We believe that in your consideration of this case you should be made aware of these emerging designated locally significant Heritage Assets which are significant "as part of the wider historic landscape on either side of the river Thames", thus providing the immediate and as we have previously noted, essential setting to Hampton Court Palace.'*

The attention to the case appears however to now focus on a point of law relating to Section 49 of the South Western Railway Act of 1913 that seeks to protect the railway land within half a mile of royal palaces from any building with a height of over 50 ft. Clarity on the actual height of the proposed development is currently being considered.

Blenheim Palace and Park, West Oxfordshire Landscape

Blenheim Park is listed as Grade I in the RPG and is also inscribed as a World Heritage Site. There are numerous listed properties in the wider landscape to the northeast and southeast of the Park. The Palace and Park is managed by the Blenheim Palace Heritage Foundation and much of the surrounding land beyond the designations is owned by the Blenheim Estate.

In collaboration with the Blenheim Estate (primary land owner) a partnership of developers (Photovolt Development Partners GmbH / Solar Five Ltd) are proposing to submit an application to install and operate up to 840 MW of solar generated electricity on three zones totaling some 1400 hectares of agricultural land in West Oxfordshire. Two of these zones are adjacent to Blenheim Park. Known as the Botley West Solar Farm, the project would be the biggest solar farm in Europe. Since it will generate well over 50 MW of electricity, the project is classified as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) under the Planning Act 2008. This means a Development Consent Order (DCO) from the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) will be required before the project can proceed. While stages of consultation and evaluation will be part of it, the NSIP is not subject to the usual local planning processes and policies. As a result, the GT will not be automatically consulted for comment.

The developers aim to submit an application in early 2024. The project is currently in detailed design stages and will be embarking on a stage 2 consultation with local communities and stake holders later in 2023. An Environmental Scoping Report (an initial assessment of the perceived impacts of the scheme) was produced by the developers in June 2023 and is currently being reviewed by the GT. The GT has written to the developers seeking their cooperation for including the GT as a direct consultee but have had no reply to date.

Once the necessary research and evaluation is done over the next few months, the GT is intending, in any case, to prepare a statement on the impact of the project on historic designed landscapes. It will collaborate and share this with the local authorities (West Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, and Cherwell Districts) and the developers themselves. The GT is also in touch with some of the local campaigners opposing the scheme.

Studley Royal Park/ Water Gardens, Yorkshire

Studley Royal is listed as a Grade 1 historic park and garden on the RPG and is also inscribed as part of the Studley Royal Park and the Ruins of Fountains Abbey World Heritage Site (WHS).

The National Trust owns and manages most of the site and is proposing the "Studley Revealed" project. This is focused on improvements to a busy visitor area of the water garden and proposes the creation of new visitor facilities at the Canal Gate area. It is intended to be a compatible counterpart to the current visitor center to the north of the site. A new building will provide a more accessible café, reorganized admission point and toilets as well as space to tell more expansively the story of the garden and the World Heritage Site. The project aims to deliver conservation benefits through improved interpretation and by restoring historical vistas that have been lost over time.

The project was first presented in 2019 but paused during the Covid period and is still at a pre planning application and in the process of consultation. As part of the latter in early 2023, the GT and the Yorkshire Gardens Trust (YGT) met with the NT who explained the concept of the project. The site visit and discussion were wide ranging including the desirable conservation outcomes,

heritage assessment methodology, potential impacts on the garden heritage assets and the Outstanding Universal Value of the WHS, the impact on visitor numbers and the need for and nature of interpretation facilities.

The NT are currently finalizing the Design and Access Statement and refining the draft Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) as part of a comprehensive planning application potentially to be submitted in late 2023. In the light of the WHS inscription, it is possible that the NT will make a pre application submission to UNESCO alerting the World Heritage Center to the forthcoming application. This could result in an additional evaluation mission by (ICOMOS) and delay the application further.

The NT is committed to continuing to work with both the GT and YGT providing pre-application material as it becomes available. In addition to the pre application discussions with the NT, TGT will be consulted by Harrogate Borough Council once the application is submitted.

The proposed development is in a sensitive area of the garden and the proposals attempt to balance visitor management and heritage conservation needs. Once the full package of information is to hand a careful evaluation (in particular the HIA) will be undertaken by the GT (in collaboration with YGT) to form a view on the proposals.

Thornbridge Hall and Garden, Derbyshire

The designed landscape and gardens surrounding Thornbridge Hall are listed Grade II on the RPG and are privately owned.

In 2021 the Peak District National Park (PDNP) became aware of new non consented development that had been implemented including a new half mile access road, new car park and café all built during Covid lockdown. All these elements have a significant impact on the value of the historic setting to the Hall and the listed designed landscape. PDNP issued an Enforcement Notice for the removal of these interventions. The owners challenged the notice with an Appeal and following a Public Inquiry in late 2022 the appeal was upheld in early 2023 by the Planning Inspector on the grounds of *“the increase in opportunities for the general public, the various community groups, schools and other organizations to experience the Hall and its grounds”*.

During the process the GT and others strongly objected on the grounds of adverse impact of the development resulting in the fragmentation of the historic landscape and the intrusion of vehicle movement into it. The case was lost essentially through a lack of appreciation that the historic landscape value of the Hall and its setting are fundamentally derived from a holistic design composition that includes both hall and landscape.

This disappointing case highlights that there is much more to be done in raising the understanding of the value and significance of designed landscapes amongst owners of private properties and even amongst some planning inspectors.

Luton Hoo, Bedfordshire

Luton Park surrounding the Luton Hoo Hotel Golf and Spa are in part a Capability Brown landscape and listed as Grade II* on the RPG.

A private owner, the Arora Group, has ambitions to create a suitable destination to host the Ryder Cup in 2031. In 2022 they submitted a complex planning application to accommodate this. The proposal seeks to build a large new club house and increase the size of the golf course from 76 ha to 155ha across the majority and northern part of the Registered Park and Garden. The Heritage Impact Assessment for the proposal claims that the Brown landscape will *“remain unaltered”* and that *“the majority of key views will remain intact”*. However, an initial evaluation by the GT suggest that some harm will be caused.

The GT in its 2022 comments on the application points out that there is insufficient information in the Design and Access Statement (DAS) to fully assess the impact of changes to the historic topography caused by the golf course design proposal and how sympathetic this will be to the historic landscape character. The GT also noted that the DAS refers to *“an intended comprehensive restoration scheme of the Brownian Park and Garden”*. Given the significance of the site and the complexity of the proposal it would be reasonable to expect this to have been included in the application package in order that such mitigation measures and potential benefits could be evaluated.

The GT have requested further information from the applicant. As of mid-2023 the planning application had not been determined.

Norris Castle, Isle of Wight

Norris Castle is in private ownership (Norris Castle Estate Group (NECG) and is a Grade I Listed Building. The surrounding estate and shoreline is listed Grade I on the RPG and lies within the Isle of Wight AONB. The castle has been unoccupied since 2015. Recent research has shown that Repton was involved in the design of the Norris Castle Estate. The significance of the Castle is heightened by its group value of interrelated castle, model farm and designed landscape which together create an extremely fine example of the Picturesque landscape style which crucially has remained unchanged since c1799.

In context the broader tranche of land and setting which includes both the Norris Castle Estate and the adjacent Springhill Estate (unregistered) represent a substantial area of virtually untouched historic landscape especially when viewed to and from the Solent and Spithead.

Following a number of years of considering options, an application was submitted in 2022. It proposes to turn the estate into a “*heritage and natural environment led resort*” centered on a 74 bed hotel and spa with a range of other market residences (55 no) split into separate development packages across the estate, the RPG, and shoreline. The majority of the housing would be located on the Springfield Estate. This housing is intended to cross subsidize the wider resort development and conservation works. However, a recent independent viability report requested by Historic England suggests that the economic viability of the current proposal is questionable.

The GT, The Isle of Wight Gardens Trust, The Georgian Group, SAVE and Historic England amongst others have all strongly objected to the scheme. The GT considered that the proposals are an overdevelopment of the site and would have a substantial adverse impact on an extremely valuable heritage assets and irrevocably change alter the character of the landscape and the existing spirit of place that is Norris Castle and Springhill.

At mid-2023 the planning application remains undetermined.

Marston Park, Somerset

Marston Park is listed as Grade II, the RPG forming the setting for the Grade II listed building, Marston House, which is in separate ownership.

Over several years and in various iterations there have been proposals and an application to put 20 holiday lodges and other associated buildings (to house reception/café /spa/gym etc) adjacent to the lake in the RPG. The proposed holiday village lies at the heart of the WS Gilpin picturesque landscape around the lake which acts as the eye catcher /vista form the elevated position of the house.

The position of the Somerset Garden Trust and the GT who have objected a number of times remains that the development would bring about a permanent irreversible and detrimental change to this valuable picturesque landscape.

Over 3 years a masterplan went through several amendments. The current planning application for the final version of this remains undetermined. At the end of 2021 the applicant changed tack and applied instead for a Certificate of Lawful Use (CLU) citing that the land had been used for fishing and shooting round the lake for many years and that this had necessitated various large structure beyond the temporary ones used by fisherman. During 2021 numerous tent-like structures appeared around the lake without the appearance of a planning application or consultation. The GT submitted another objection to Mendip District Council (MDC) opposing any facilities that would commercialize holiday activity /glamping at Marston. Fortunately, MDP turned down the CLU application in 2022 quoting the GT’s objections.

The case is likely to be ongoing and will need to be monitored by the GT.

Elvaston Castle, Derbyshire

A large part of Elvaston Park is listed Grade II * on the RPG. Centered on a Gothic castle the surrounding 200 acres are a public Country Park owned and managed by Derbyshire County Council (DCC).

Various options for its future have been considered over the last few years but the GT has not been involved in these pre application discussions. A planning application lodged in April 2023 includes a proposal for short term restoration of some of the core buildings, a new café building and a new

access road. Proposals for the restoration and conservation of the castle itself and the historic designed landscape are to be considered for a later phase.

The GT's objection to the application arises from the apparent lack of appreciation for the impact the proposals will have on the RPG listed landscape and its setting. In particular, a large new car park and new drive which would cross the RPG in two areas. In addition, the drive would also cross a large area of parkland known as Oak Flat whose significance as part of the ornamental grounds was unappreciated when Elvaston was originally listed in 1984. It is likely that this area would have been included within the RPG had its historic value been appreciated then.

In June 2023 South Derbyshire District Council Planning Committee refused the current DCC planning application.

Influencing Government Planning Policy

The GT strives to influence decision makers at all levels of Government to protect historic designed landscapes. Periodically the GT participates in Government "round table" discussions and consultations either directly or through their membership of JCNAS or the Heritage Alliance.

Most significantly during 2022/2023 the Government's Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill which includes major planning reforms has been passing through Parliament. As part of this, the Dept of Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) have invited comments on the contents of the Bill and also proposed modifications to the National Planning policy Framework. In its detailed response in 2023 to the latter, the GT generally supported the objectives of the Bill to achieve an improved plan led system that can guide growth with a stronger voice for communities but emphasized the need for a greater recognition of all aspect of all cultural heritage assets, particularly historic landscapes.

Regarding the Bill, the GT's response strongly supports the provision that the statutory duties with regard to Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas contained in the *Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* will be extended. The proposition in the Bill is to introduce a statutory duty for local planning authorities/Secretary of State when assessing planning applications to ensure special regard for preserving or enhancing designated heritage assets that are not already included in the 1990 Act. The latter include Scheduled Monuments, World Heritage Sites, Protected Wreck Sites, Registered Battlefields and **Registered Parks and Gardens**. This provision would a legislative underpinning to these heritage assets, for the first time and would be a major step forward for the strengthening of the preservation of historic designed landscape through the planning process. The Bill has completed its stages in the House of Commons and is currently (July 2023) moving through the Report Stage in the House of Lords. The Bill is complex and as well as planning reform it deals with many issues including local democracy, community infrastructure, environmental outcome reports for consents and plans, regeneration, compulsory purchase, environment and heritage data and recording. As a result, it may be 2026 before it becomes law.

Collaborative Working

In addition to planning knowledge, the GT Conservation Committee membership includes considerable historic landscape conservation expertise which where possible is made available to assist owners in site research, management and monitoring. Some CGTs also undertake a similar role to assist the GT. A case in point is the collaboration between the GT and the National Trust at Lodge Park in Gloucestershire.

In 1987 the Grade I Registered Park and Garden of Sherborne in Gloucestershire, including Lodge Park was given to the National Trust (NT). In 2018 the the GT's Conservation Officer, along with representatives from Gloucestershire Gardens & Landscape Trust (GGLT) were invited by the NT to visit Lodge Park and comment upon their plans for restoration of the Bridgeman landscape.

The Lodge itself, with its adjoining paddock course and deer park was first constructed in the early C17th as a banqueting house and grandstand from which to view coursing of deer by greyhounds. The Lodge was modernised c1725 in part by William Kent, and at the same time the owner, Sir John Dutton, commissioned Charles Bridgeman to design a new parkland. Bridgeman's work was not fully completed by the time of Sir John's death in 1743. But from this time onwards, although the park

was largely neglected it has survived as an almost untouched Bridgeman landscape, a rare survivor of this important phase of landscape history.

In 2016 the NT commissioned Conservation Committee member Chris Gallagher, and Dr Sarah Rutherford to produce a focused parkland Conservation and Management Action Plan (CMP) to inform and shape the long-term management strategy for the property. Research and evidence including LiDAR scans demonstrated that the vast majority of Bridgeman's planted design had originally been implemented (although his proposed buildings in the park and serpentine canal were not). The CMP gave the NT confidence to undertake replanting and recreation of the parkland design. Following extensive research to support choice of tree species the initial replanting programme (limes and elm) along the lines facing the Great Avenue began in 2019 in two phases. Due to Covid, a follow up visit by the GT was not possible until 2023. In the intervening time, the NT has worked on combining aerial imagery of surviving trees with ancient and veteran tree locations. Cross referenced with old maps and LiDAR, it was possible to overlay this information onto Bridgeman's drawing and a CAD drawing was produced which incorporated GPS data.

In 2022 additional funding was secured to allow the NT to begin a further three-year phased delivery to replant the dogleg avenues, woodland blocks, ha-ha avenues and various individual trees within groups as well as repairing the north wall of the parkland. There is still a lot more planting to be done as well as repairs to the historic estate walls, and opening up of the terrace walk behind the ha-ha to re-establish the link between the Lodge and the landscape. For all this, the CMP with its thirty-year timescale, is the guiding principle in the recreation of a 300-year-old designed landscape in our modern world.

In early 2023 the GT's Conservation Officer revisited Lodge Park and was updated by the National Trust.

Engagement and Volunteer Support Activities

Volunteers Save Space! Project

The need to look at ways to engage supporters from a wider audience led the GT to redevelop the Gardens Trust's "Historic Landscape Project", which had run successfully for many years but focussed largely on the County Gardens Trusts (CGTs). In April 2022, with funding support from Historic England, "*Volunteers Save Space!*" (VSS!) project was launched, which not only helps to continue crucial volunteer support for the CGTs but also broadens the GT's reach to engage with new volunteers.

The aims are to provide a new audience (some of whom already have a stake in historic designed landscapes and others who have a more casual interests) with opportunities to learn about the heritage and conservation of designed landscapes; to help them network with others working to protect historic parks and garden; and to empower them to make a difference themselves. As a result, there will be new support for historic parks and gardens; and new audiences, including potential volunteers, for the Gardens Trust and the County Gardens Trusts.

VSS! is now over halfway through its 2-year period. Initially led by Volunteer Support Officers (VSO) Tamsin McMillan and Sally Bate, the team grew in December 2022, with the addition of GT Audience Development and Engagement Officer, Frankie Taylor, whose expertise is invaluable in delivering our three regional engagement activities. Progress has been good and is summarized below:

- With Nottinghamshire Gardens Trust, the GT's team are recruiting volunteers who will be trained to research historic green spaces that are significant to them, then share their discoveries via platforms such as Historic Environment Records and Local Lists, making this information accessible to all. Recruitment is focused at three landscapes and have already met a wide range of people who engage with these places in different ways, from casual visitors to Friends group volunteers. The project's training and volunteer opportunities will

offer a variety of ways to get involved, from research in the archives and on site, to recording landscapes in other ways, such as photography, tree measuring or collecting memories.

- During the year online training for volunteers from Norfolk, Northamptonshire and Sussex Gardens Trusts was completed. Those who took part in a digital engagement activity, learnt how to create compelling content on Instagram to attract new audiences. After attending training online, volunteers were rewarded with a final session at the stunning landscape of Painshill, Surrey, where they consolidated all they'd learned and practiced taking photos and recording short videos for social media use. The learning was shared with other CGTs via a webinar in June and the materials are available to all on the GT Resource Hub.
- The team are supporting Cheshire Gardens Trust as they organise and deliver a Heritage Open Day (HOD) in September 2023, sharing all learned with other volunteer groups to inspire them to organise a similar event in future. 'HODs' are enjoyable opportunities to tell people about organisation and to help bring landscape history to life for park and garden visitors. The GT's Team have been working with the National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces (NFPGS) to survey Friends groups across the UK, to gauge their volunteers' current interest in landscape heritage and conservation and whether they would like to learn more. At July 2023 there have been over 100 responses to our questionnaire. The results will be useful for both GT and NFPGS and key to helping us engage new supporters who already care about designed landscapes but may not be aware of their history and threats.

The legacy of the pandemic continues to impact many CGTs and is compounded by the cost-of-living crisis. This is particularly noticeable in CGTs' ongoing struggle to find active volunteers. In the first year of Volunteers Save Space! 23 out of the 37 CGTs were given individual or small group support with a range of issues, including a workshop on finding and supporting volunteers, at Highbury Hall, Birmingham, in October 2022. This was followed up with a volunteering-themed Regional Meet Up at Hestercombe, Somerset, in May 2023, which attracted seven CGTs. Other, one-to-one, support for CGTs ranges from helping with project and event promotion; to queries about technical issues; and helping with charity management.

The Unforgettable Gardens Campaign

The campaign activities this year included working with the RHS and CGTs on the successful "Bicycle Boys" online exhibition and highlighting a monthly Unforgettable Garden – nominated by CGTs.

Suffolk's Unforgettable Garden Story, led by Volunteer Support Officer Karina Flynn will continue to run until autumn 2023. Since completing the research training programme, delivered by the Gardens Trust and Historic England, Suffolk volunteers have been researching and making site visits, as well as attending monthly meetups at community sites across the county, and drop-in support sessions in Ipswich.

Historic England created a list of their Top 10 sites which might be suitable for registration. These became the focus for research being carried out by volunteers. 20 volunteers have selected Suffolk historic parks and gardens to research and record, with 17 applications now submitted to the National Heritage List for England; 8 of the top 10 sites identified by HE are included in this list of applications. An additional 4 research reports have been completed on local historic parks and gardens in Suffolk, chosen by volunteers. A wealth of existing research was contributed to the project, by experienced local researchers and Suffolk Gardens Trust members. Any successful registrations will be announced in September 2023.

Celebrating 40 years of the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Interest

The GT's Unforgettable Gardens project will continue to the end of 2024, when it will transition into a two-year GT project to mark the 40th anniversary of the Heritage Act and Register of Parks and Gardens, in which it is planned to raise awareness of issues around designation and ways in which CGTs can get involved.

In September 2023 the team will be holding an Historic Landscape Volunteering Celebration Event in London. The event is part of the GT's Historic Landscapes Season which, this year, focusses on the important role that designation plays in the conservation of historic designed landscapes and marks the initiation of the GT's celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Heritage Act and the establishment of the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest.

Chris Blandford, Chair of the GT Conservation Committee with contributions for Conservation Team and Volunteer Support Team

Education & Training Committee

The year 2022 saw the country emerging from the restrictions imposed by the pandemic. At the Gardens Trust, we continued our very successful online courses but also began to offer live events again. David Marsh was chair until January 2023, when the chair was taken by Sally Jeffery. Jill Sinclair will take over in September 2023.

Garden History, under the editorship of Barbara Simms, was published regularly with a wide range of articles and book reviews. In addition, and to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first publication of *Garden History*, a special anniversary issue was published in the autumn of 2022, with a selection of important articles from the five decades of the journal and scholarly responses to them from garden historians of the present day. The printed *GT News* was edited by our GT News Panel whilst our monthly *e-Bulletin* has gone from strength to strength under Charlotte Casella's editorship and has become a key mode of communication with both members and non-members.

An annual conference in the Yorkshire Dales had been planned for the autumn of 2020. It was cancelled that year and had to be cancelled again in 2021. In September 2022 it finally took place, based around Wensleydale and the picturesque Georgian town of Richmond. The organisers were delighted to have the local knowledge and assistance of the Yorkshire Gardens Trust, and Val Hepworth in particular, in both planning and in guiding activities over the weekend. The event was well attended and much enjoyed. A similar weekend of visits in North Wales is planned for September 2022, organised by Sandra Pullen.

Robert Peel and David Marsh led a packed garden tour in the Loire Valley in September 2022. The theme was the evolution of French garden styles from the late 15th century onwards and went from the grotto at Fontainebleau and the first orangery in France at Chateau Gaillard to the recently finished new gardens at Amboise and Chambord, via the water filled gardens of Courances, the national tomato collection at Bourdaisière, the 18th pagoda at Cantaloupe and the garden festival at Chaumont. It finished with a wine tasting in the cellars of Valmer, a small chateau with a enormous walled garden. Despite some poor weather and problems with Eurostar on the way home everyone seemed to enjoy themselves immensely.

In November 2022 in London we held our seventh Historic Landscapes Assembly on the theme of 'Our Landscape Heritage At Risk: climate change and development'. The programme included the presentation of the 18th Mavis Batey Essay Prize. There were a number of very strong submissions this year, so the judging panel decided to award a joint first place to Caroline Ikin for her essay: 'Force, Fortitude, and Fortune': John Ruskin's gardening at Brantwood' and to Henry Jacob for 'An "Imaginary Landscape": Bentham's Botanical Vision for the Panopticon'. Caroline was there in person to receive the award, while Henry joined online.

The New Research Symposium is an important feature of the Gardens Trust's annual programme. Launched in 2011, it has previously hosted papers from more than fifty researchers. This year there were so many interesting proposals that it was decided to run it in two parts. The first day concentrated on nineteenth-century topics, while the second group of papers covered the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The two symposia took place online in November and December 2022 and we are grateful to the eight participants for their interesting papers.

The Trust's online programme organised by David Marsh continued this year, usually offering four talks each week on a great variety of topics and reaching a wide audience in this country and abroad. Ticket sales remained buoyant and reached a total of £44,572 in 2022.

Our popular garden history series reached the nineteenth century at the beginning of 2022 and ended in March 2023 with twentieth century gardens. The long-running *Unforgettable Gardens* series organised by Sandra Pullen in partnership with the County Gardens Trusts also continued

throughout the year. Other topics included forgotten women gardeners, the history of cemeteries, spa gardens, garden archaeology, garden technology, plant hunting, plant illustration and two series on roses. We are grateful to our splendid team of volunteers who made booking arrangements and organised the online technology.

Two particularly noteworthy series were 'The Fabric of Flowers' and 'Paradise on Porcelain' which explored the way gardens and flowers have influenced and inspired other arts and crafts. The first series focused on textiles and some of the historical and technical aspects of embroidering, weaving and printing using floral designs on fabric. The second explored the history of porcelain as a background for painted decoration, and showed how botanical designs and landscapes provided a rich source of inspiration.

Claire Scales, our newly-appointed Voluntary Archives Officer, has been gathering information about the Gardens Trust archives which are held in a number of different locations, including York and Bath universities. In particular, she is writing an article on Mea Allan, a founder member of the Garden History Society, Honorary Freeman of the Worshipful Company of Gardeners, garden writer and restorer of an Arts & Crafts garden, and whose slide collection is held at York. William Gilpin's sketchbook on Painshill, which is part of The Gardens Trust archive, is held at the Surrey History Centre. The beautiful illustrations can be viewed on their website. We are at present seeking an appropriate repository for John Harvey's garden history papers which were left to the Garden History Society when he died.

The committee was re-formed in January 2023 and a number of live events were taken place over the summer months of 2023. Our annual weekend conference in collaboration with the University of Oxford Department of Continuing Education was held in June 2023 at Rewley house, organised by Jill Sinclair for the Gardens Trust on the subject of Women Gardeners. Other events included a London lecture and a visit to Chiswick House Gardens to learn about new research on the old walled gardens, a visit to Chevening House, Kent, to explore the extensive remains of its old formal gardens, a London walk near the Strand to hear about the development of the nineteenth century gardening press, and a visit to the grounds of the old homeopathic hospital in Bristol.

Sally Jeffery, Chair, Education & Training Committee