

Nottinghamshire's Garden Story

Introduction to Beginners' Research Project

Tamsin McMillan
GT Volunteer Support Officer

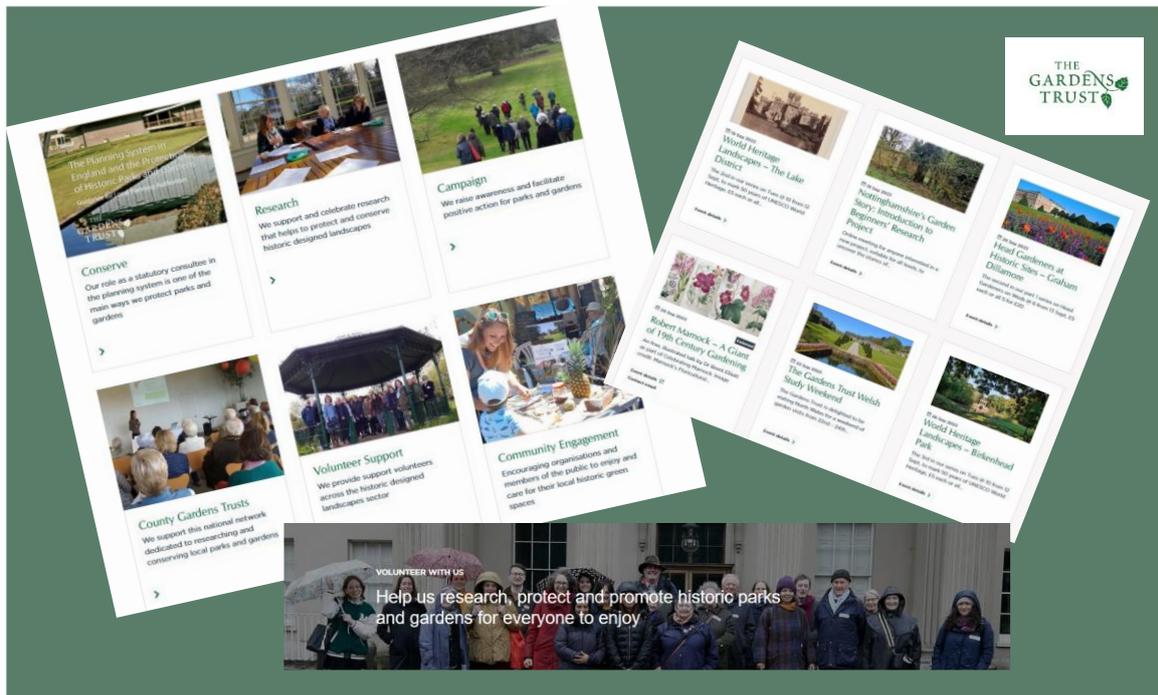


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Thanks everyone for coming.

I'm Tamsin McMillan. One of the Volunteer Support Officers at the GT. Helping me to run this session is Frankie Taylor, our Audience Development and Engagement Officer.



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For those of you who aren't familiar with the Gardens Trust and CGTs:

The Gardens Trust is the only UK national charity dedicated to protecting and conserving our heritage of designed landscapes. We campaign on their behalf, undertake research and conservation work, and encourage public appreciation and involvement.

And through the national network of County Gardens Trusts in England and Country Garden Trusts in Scotland and Wales, we have access to people and local expertise throughout the UK.

The GT's Volunteer Support Officers are currently working on a two year project called Volunteers Save Space!, part funded by HE. This aims to

- continue helping to support, train and build skilled volunteer capacity for the GT and County Gardens Trusts.
- But also to broaden our reach to get new people engaged with their local parks and gardens heritage
- And then to encourage active participation in conserving these landscapes.

Nottinghamshire's Garden Story is one of three regional activities we're running as part of VSS. And I'm working on it with two hats on, as GT Volunteer Support Officer, and also in my voluntary role, as Secretary of NGT.

Today's Meeting

- Project aims
- Importance for historic landscapes
- Sites
- Timetable
- Volunteer roles
- Next steps
- Questions and discussion



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Today's meeting will give an introduction to Notts Garden Story, looking at the

- Project aims
- Its Importance for historic landscapes
- Potential Sites to research
- The Project Timetable
- Ways in which Volunteers can get involved
- Next steps
- There'll be time for Questions and discussion at the end.

Who are we speaking to?

Anyone with an interest:

- New researchers – local sites
- New volunteers, exploring sites in other ways
- Experienced researchers
- Other County Gardens Trusts



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So who is this meeting aimed at?

Absolutely anyone with an interest in historic designed landscapes, of all kinds. This could include

- New researchers – who are keen to find out about their local park or garden but aren't sure where to start
- New volunteers, who want to explore and celebrate local landscapes in other ways
- Experienced researchers who might want to take part in this project, or just work on their own
- And other County Gardens Trusts who may or may not already have a research team.

The project will include something for everyone to enjoy, whether you're an experienced researcher, an absolute beginner, or somewhere in between.

Why Nottinghamshire?

- Youngest CGT
- Smallest CGT
- Volunteer recruitment delayed by pandemic
- Keen to attract wide audience
- Local GT support



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So why Nottinghamshire?

Notts GT became dormant for several years, due to a severe shortage of active volunteers.

In 2015, with support from the GT, it re-started, with a small committee, and began to run occasional events and respond to planning applications.

They have only 4 committee members – and we're all here today – Jason Mordan, our Chair, Stephan Green, Treasurer, Andy Wimble, Trustee, and me, Secretary

We're keen that NGT should appeal to people of all ages and so our activities include family-friendly events, often at weekends or in the evening, and evening talks, so people who are working during the day can come too.

Because we're a small team, we don't have much time to build our membership. We have a mailing list of around 70 "Friends of Notts GT", but we don't yet have any paid-up members. We're hoping that this project will help more people to find out about us.

Aims

- Share knowledge
- Increase enthusiasm for conservation
- Learn about locally-important landscapes
- Train new volunteers
- Create and share new records
- Promote and build Notts GT



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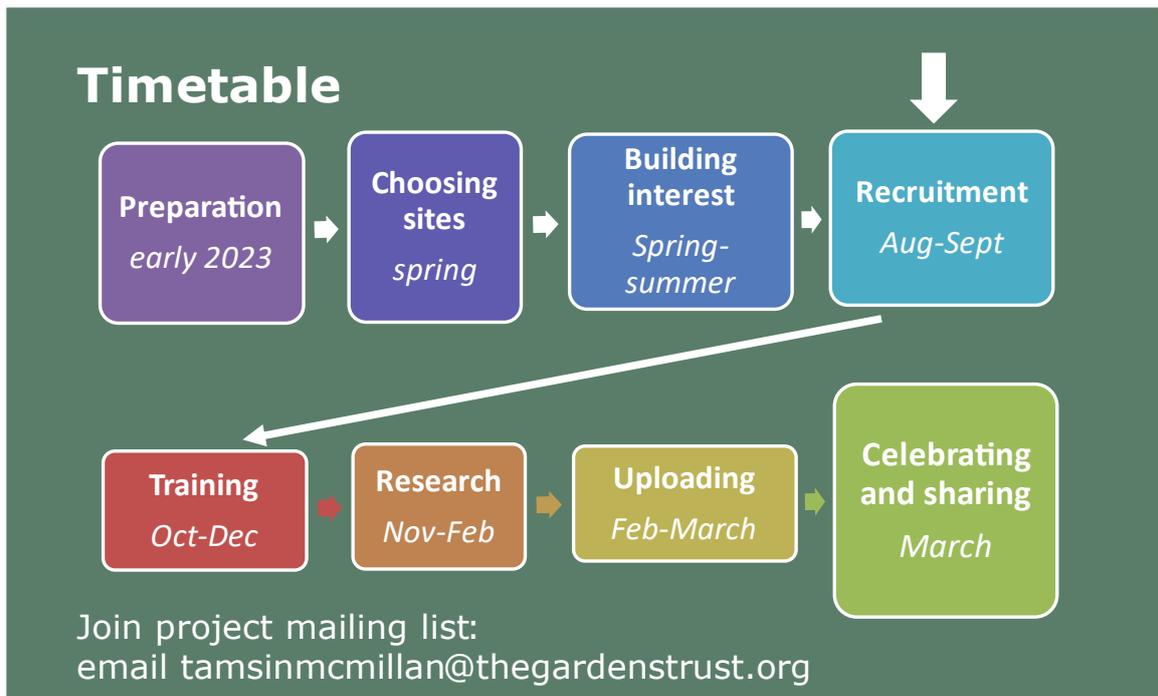
So, what's do we hope to get out of this project?

Although it is very much about researching less-known landscapes so that they can be better understood and protected, its primary aim is to recruit new volunteers, most of whom don't have a background in landscape heritage, to build their connection to local designed landscapes, through research, or in other ways.

- We want to tell more people about all kinds of historic parks, gardens and other landscapes, highlight the fact that they were deliberately designed, have evolved over time, and have many significances worth protecting
- This will help people to enjoy and treasure their local landscapes and to want to look after them
- We want to ask people which sites are of value to them that they would like to research. This is a great opportunity for us to learn about heritage from the people who use it, rather than always focussing on sharing our existing knowledge with others.
- We want to train at least 10-20 new volunteers to research and record 4-8 sites, preferably more.
- and then place the research onto publicly-accessible databases, so that by understanding their significances, the sites will have a degree more protection from threats.

- We also want to tell everyone about Notts GT and encourage them to support it by taking part in activities, joining, and actively volunteering
- Notts GT will benefit by gaining outreach skills; hopefully some new, trained volunteers; and more diverse supporters, who can help us to become an organisation that appeals more widely.

And we'd like to share our progress and lessons learned with anyone else who is interested and who might like to do something similar where they live.



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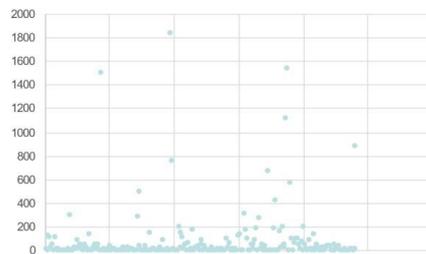
There's been a great deal of planning and promotion of the project and we're now at the recruitment stage. Where the chunky arrow is.

We'll be training, mostly via webinars, but some in person, from Oct-Dec, researching and recording on site over late autumn and winter, then uploading finished research in Feb and March.

Anyone can come to our online sessions, even if you're not part of the Notts project, or a member of the GT or CGTs – we want to share our training as widely as possible. There may even be room to attend some of the in person sessions too. Volunteers can contribute whatever time they have available, but wouldn't be expected to give more than a few hours each week.

Identifying Sites

	Area (square km)	Area (hectare)
Registered	57.24	5,724
Non-designated	169.35	16,935



Registered:

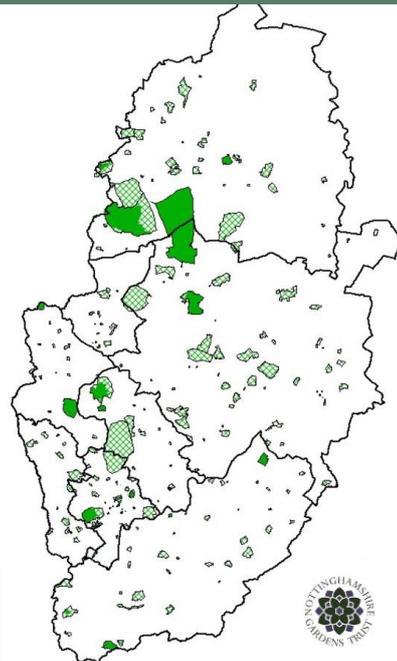
Largest: Clumber Park = 1500 hectares
 Smallest: Newark Castle = 1 hectare

Non-designated:

Largest: Bestwood = 1500 hectares
 Majority: 90% smaller than 50 hectares



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County Council



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So what landscapes do we want to focus on?

We'll start with what we know about Notts parks, gardens and other kinds of designed landscapes. The Notts Historic Environment Record, which is maintained by the local authority, has records of over 25,000 archaeological sites and finds, historic buildings and historic landscapes. Only 269 of these records are historic designed landscapes. That's 1%. So you can see that parks and gardens are pretty overlooked, compared to other historic sites.

This useful plan from Jason shows all the historic designed landscapes on the HER. Ranging from the very large Clumber Park (with Welbeck to its west) to small sites like Newark Castle.

Only 36 of these 269 sites are Registered (almost the landscape equivalent of being a Listed Building), so have some protection in the planning system. These are the solid green sites.



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You'll probably have heard of many of these, like the big landscape parks at Wollaton Hall, Clumber Park, Newstead, Highfields (at Nottm Uni), public parks like the Arboretum,

And some more unusual ones, like:

- The grounds of Papplewick Pumping Station
- Thurgarton Workhouse
- The allotments at Hungerhill Gardens, Bagthorpe and St Ann's.
- The General Cemetery and Church Rock Cemetery in Nottm

Every time a planning application goes in that may affect one of these Registered sites, the Gardens Trust and Notts GT have to be consulted by the local planning authority. These sites status as 'designated heritage assets', gives them as much protection in the planning process as Listed buildings or scheduled monuments.

Photos:

Wollaton <https://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/5921935>

STAA https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction_Review-g186356-d7912916-Reviews-STAA_St_Anns_Allotments-Nottingham_Nottinghamshire_England.html

Church Rock <https://www.visit-nottinghamshire.co.uk/blog/read/2019/10/church-rock-cemetery-stories-of-remembrance-b6060>



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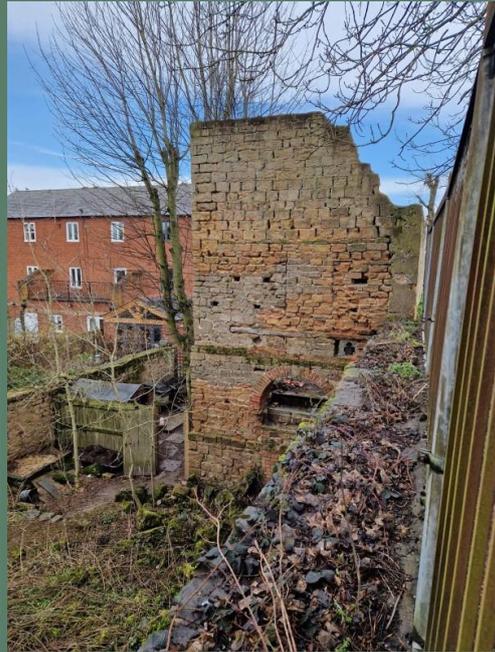
Nearly 90% of the historic designed landscapes we know about are not Registered but, as they are on the HER, they do have some protection in the planning process by being “non-designated heritage assets”. Planners are required by law to consult HERs, Local Lists and Local Plans to understand how heritage may be affected by their proposals, and to make an effort to protect their significances.

Some of the non-designated sites on the Notts HER are Radford Recreation Ground <https://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/5768407> (left); the Georgian courtyard garden at Bromley House Library in Nottingham (middle); and the landscape parkland at Worksop Manor (right).

Local lists are particularly important. They identify heritage assets which are valued by the local community as distinctive elements of the local historic environment, and may certainly include parks and gardens. The inclusion of parks and gardens in a local list raises their profile and also brings the benefits of national and local planning policy.

As well as the sites on the HER, there will be many others that have not yet been identified as heritage assets, and this is where people’s local knowledge can help us to find and understand what’s important about other historic designed green spaces. Do think about your local historic parks, gardens, cemeteries, hospital grounds, allotments, school and college grounds, shopping centre and office landscapes, and many more. Perhaps they are something that’s worth looking after?

Identifying Sites Sutton Lawn



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Although we would like volunteers to choose the sites they'd like to research, to get things going, we identified four sites as hubs, around which to promote the project and start recruitment. We hope at least one of these will be researched during the project.

We selected sites in areas of high park use and generally with low existing historic landscape volunteer activity. As a bonus, some have existing volunteer or other groups associated with them, which has been really useful for promotion.

This is Sutton Lawn, in Sutton in Ashfield, west Notts – formerly the 18th century parkland and millponds of prosperous textile mill owner, Samuel Unwin, and donated to the people as a public park in 1903. You can see extensive remains of the mill buildings at the edge of the park.

Sutton, as a former mining town, is a financially deprived area, with low educational attainment. The park is extremely well used and there is a small existing group of volunteers who help to keep it maintained. It's been really useful to team up with Emma Hancock, Mill Waters Ranger, who co-ordinates volunteer projects, mainly caring for and learning about the site's natural and industrial heritage. She's been able to help us promote the project to park users and local organisations.

Promotion



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Some of you here today may have met us at one of the two promotional events in the area, in the spring.

At Sutton Lawn, a kids' activity day

Promotion



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And at Mansfield Library, we took part in a Hands-On Heritage Day in May, sharing a stall with Emma, who ran a build your own park landscape event for young children.

Identifying Sites



Bestwood Country Park



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- Our second hub site is Bestwood Country Park, on the northern edge of Nottingham, in the 4th most deprived ward of the City.
- Originally a medieval royal deer park, it was famously frequented by Charles II and Nell Gwynne, then later had a coal and iron mining component of which some striking buildings survive, such as this Winding House. The mansion house is now a hotel and popular wedding venue.
- It has an active Friends group who have recently formed a heritage sub-group – we'd love to get them involved.
- *Photo Friends of Bestwood Country Park, Winding House Engine*

Identifying Sites



Ossington



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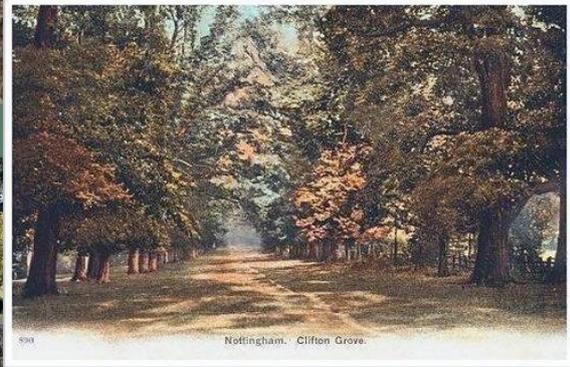
Ossington Park is our only privately-owned site. Located in rural E Nottinghamshire

Ossington Hall, home of the Denison family since 1775, reached its heyday in Victorian times under Evelyn Denison, Speaker of the House of Commons. The house was demolished in 1963, and now the owner, who remembers the demolition, lives just outside of the designed landscape.

A ha ha with views across the lake survives, edging the terrace on which the house once stood. The extensive parkland, with large lake and crumbling kitchen gardens, is an enticing prospect for any garden detective.

We are in touch with local historians in Norwell Parish Heritage Group, who are happy to help spread the word and suggest some exciting directions for research.

Identifying Sites



Clifton Hall



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Clifton Hall sits on top of a bluff overlooking the River Trent, a couple of miles south of Nottingham city centre. Once a fortified medieval tower house, it was owned by the Clifton family from the 13th to mid 20th century.

The house was remodelled in the Georgian style in the late 18th century and, in the 19th century, the grounds were well known for their grass terraces overlooking the river and for the celebrated Clifton Grove, a 2 mile double avenue of elms running along the Trent to neighbouring Wilford. After the death of the elms, the Grove became a woodland area, which is now important for recreation and wildlife, though its heritage value is largely overlooked.

At Grade II, this is the only Registered site we've selected. We wanted to research one registered landscape, to facilitate discussion about how understanding community stories/significance relating to a heritage asset could potentially help to inform our planning application responses.

Clifton Grove is potentially threatened by gravel extraction and it would be very useful to have a statement of significance for the site, to flag up its importance in cases like this.

Images: top left from Thoroton's 1676 'The Antiquities of Nottinghamshire'

Left: Clifton Grove - near Nottingham : circa 1905

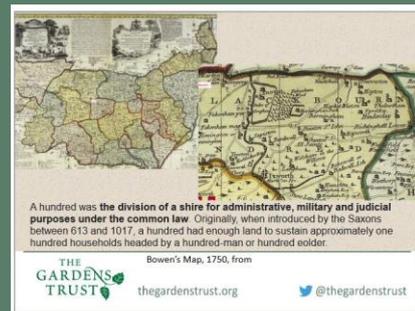
https://www.flickr.com/photos/lenton_sands/2176098223

Training

Online workshops:

- Introduction to garden history
- Threats and conservation of historic parks and gardens
- How to research landscapes and record what survives today
- Using archives, including a visit to county record office
- Overview of where to deposit research

Access training materials via our Resource Hub
<https://thegardenstrust.org/conservation/vs-hub/>



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So what's coming up next?

We'll be holding 5-6 online workshops, each 1 to 1.5 hours long, over Oct, Nov and December. Mostly held in the evening, so that people who are busy in the day can take part. Anyone can come, and recordings of these will be available to anyone to watch afterwards.

These will be suitable for absolute beginners, but detailed enough to enable volunteers to start their research straight after, and GT staff and NGT Trustees will be there to support you, as you get started.

We'll be covering:

- A whistlestop tour of garden history, from Roman times to present day
- Threats and conservation of historic parks and gardens, including a discussion of sites that the volunteers have an interest in and how they are at risk
- How to research landscapes by using maps, documents, books and images, and where to find these, both online and in libraries and archives.
- How to record landscapes on the ground, by making a site visit.
- a visit to Nottinghamshire Archives, to show you how to use them

- How to write up your research, including a summary of how your site is important.
- And an overview of where to deposit research, so that it can be accessed by others.

The training materials will available for anyone to use, via the GT's online resource hub.

Volunteers can then either work alone, or "buddy-up" with others, to start their research.

Other ways to take part

Helping to research and record landscapes by:

- photographing the sites
- collecting memories
- recordings sounds and sights in the landscape today
- measuring trees
- sharing what's being discovered, via social media, leaflets and displays
- other suggestions?



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We recognize that this fairly formal training, albeit for beginners, is not for everyone and so we're developing other activities more likely to appeal to a wide range of people, of all ages. These will include:

- Taking photos – we want to record what survives today + get some lovely images we can use in promotion
- Collecting memories – written or recorded – eg via a memory café at Sutton, and from a former gardener at Ossington
- Record what's special about the park today – activities, sights, sounds
- Measure the trees and work out age
- Help us to share what we find out – SM, leaflets, displays

And we're very open to other suggestions of how else you might like to take part – wither as a one-off event or a more regular commitment

Next Steps

- Volunteer roles form
- GT eBulletin
- Project mailing list, email tamsinmcmillan@thegardenstrust.org
- Social media @thegardenstrust @nottsgt
- End of project webinar in March



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If you think you might like to take part, please could you fill in the short form I'm putting in the chat box now? If you'd just like to stay in touch, hear how we're getting on, and perhaps join in with some of the training,

- sign up to our eBulletin
- Follow us on social media @thegardenstrust and @nottsgt
- email me to join the project mailing list
- come to our end of project webinar in March, when we'll hopefully be able to inspire you to repeat this project in your own area!

It's never too late to join – so do share with others you think may be interested.

Thanks very much. And now time for questions.