

# THE GARDENS TRUST



Research Conserve Campaign



The Gardens Trust  
Impact Report 2024



For 2024, the Gardens Trust year started with a bang when we were asked to contribute to a government review of statutory consultees. This required a lot of work but proved that we deliver an exceptional service advising local planning authorities, with woefully little resource.



Our statutory consultee role is a privilege and an important way to deliver the conservation of historic designed landscapes, but it is also a huge responsibility, and a weighty workload.

Our conservation work would look very different without the support of the County Gardens Trust volunteers, and we're grateful for their unstinting understanding and determination.

County Gardens Trusts face challenging times as the nature of volunteering changes, with the Cost of Living crisis putting an immense strain on the ability to share time and energy for unpaid work, and fewer people retiring early. We have begun to discuss with County Gardens Trusts ways in which the relationship between us could be strengthened still further to make our organisations more resilient, and I look forward to seeing the results of this in coming years.

Volunteers are at the heart of the Gardens Trust's mission: the dedicated band who make our events happen; the experts who sit on our committees; those in the County Gardens Trusts; the early career volunteers who help with all kinds of things from our social media to outreach; to those who use our Community Grant to make positive changes on the ground in historic parks and gardens. Our Trustees are incredibly hard-working, and bold in their vision for the Gardens Trust. Our Chair of Trustees Peter Hughes KC stepped down at the end of his term in 2024, having brought crucial and exciting progress to the Gardens Trust over recent years. We owe him a great debt of thanks.

The Gardens Trust is exceptionally ambitious for a small charity. Between us all – members, supporters, volunteers, Trustees and staff – we are always pushing to be even more impactful for historic designed landscapes and the people who benefit from them. Thank you, everyone, for all your generous support, energy and enthusiasm. The back of this report includes a note on our fundraising efforts because none of our ambitions could be fulfilled without the help of our members and supporters. I do hope you will consider making a donation.

**Linden Groves**, Head of Operations and Strategy

Cover image: **Volunteers on the Suffolk's Unforgettable Garden Story project**, with thanks to volunteers from **Suffolk Gardens Trust**.

Published 7<sup>th</sup> January 2025

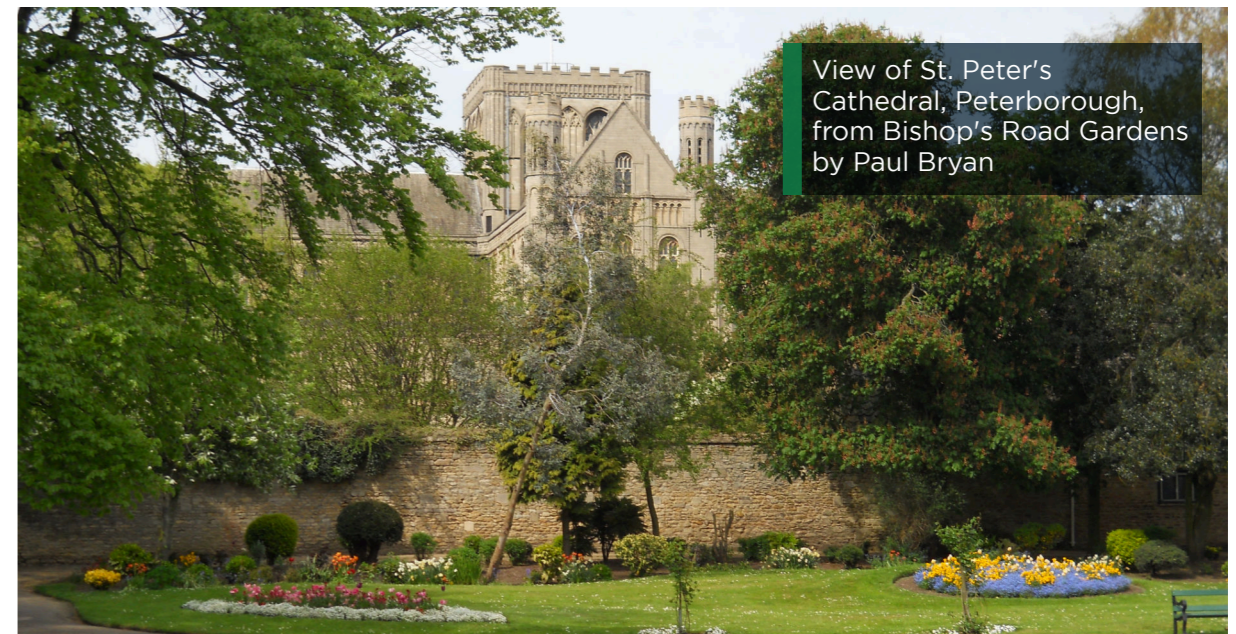
## Statutory consultee casework

The Gardens Trust is a statutory consultee in the planning system, which means that local planning authorities must consult us, and we must respond, on any planning applications that may affect sites on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. The workload involved is immense, and whilst Historic England are only statutory consultees for Grades I and II\*, we are additionally consulted on Grade II, carrying a unique responsibility. In 2024 we received 1427 planning consultations as a statutory consultee, 795 of which were for Grade II sites. Our statutory remit required us to respond to all of them, and for 534 these were full written responses.

Much of our workload has involved complex ongoing advice, for which the outcome will not be seen until future years.

### 2024 cases have included:

- › **Luton Hoo in Bedfordshire**, where we worked through multiple consultations for the development of spa buildings, sports facilities, and play equipment. Whilst we are supportive of the scheme's aims to restore areas of the parkland, we expressed concern about how the increased built form would alter the feel of the historic landscape, impacting 'Capability' Brown's naturalistic design of the parkland. We will continue to work closely with Central Bedfordshire Council to provide constructive advice on how harm can be mitigated across the site.
- › As this report goes to press, we are working on a case within **Peterborough Cathedral Gardens**, Grade II, whereby a former residential site would be developed into housing. We were concerned at the heights of these buildings and their impact on the relationship with the other buildings in the cathedral landscape, whilst the Local Planning Authority worked with Historic England to agree a reduced number of houses on the site. Whilst we still remain concerned, working closely with the Local Planning Authority has enabled us to accept that the public benefit the housing would bring clearly outweighs any potential harm the new buildings would cause.



View of St. Peter's Cathedral, Peterborough, from Bishop's Road Gardens by Paul Bryan

CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=133226792>

- › **Gilling Castle (Grade II) in Yorkshire** where we welcomed the change of use from the former school to residential units. This included extensive conservation works to the castle and outbuildings, together with the removal of educational buildings and sports facilities from the front of the castle. However, we were disappointed that this newly-cleared, sensitive, prominent location was then classed as 'brownfield' and identified as the location for six new dwellings. We are currently discussing with the North Yorkshire Council and the developer as to how this development can be improved to reduce the impact on the historic landscape and listed castle. Discussions are ongoing regarding the proposed new housing and we are hopeful that an improved layout can be achieved with less visual impact on the outward views from the castle.



The Avenue, Gilling Castle by Gordon Hatton

CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=139920039>

- › **At Annesley Hall, Nottinghamshire**, following objections from both the Gardens Trust and Historic England to two applications for large-scale industrial sites development immediately west of the Grade II\* site, we were disappointed when the first of these received permission in November. We have received amended plans for the second application in which the industrial units had been lowered in height and sunk into the ground, the screening bunds widened and increased in height and the proposed tree planting strengthened. Whilst we welcomed these improvements, as did Nottinghamshire GT, we did not consider they offered sufficient mitigation to reduce the harm to the significance of the Registered landscape and maintained our objection to the proposal. The outcome of the second application should be known soon.
- › We continue to discuss the ongoing application by the National Trust at **Grade I Studley Royal** for the remodelling of the interior and exterior of Canal Gates tearoom including landscaping, demolition of single storey extensions and ancillary structures, and extension to Studley tea-room with external alterations. Although the GT chose not to object to the original plans submitted in 2023, whilst Yorkshire GT did, we have welcomed the resubmission of the application, amended to reduce the size of the Canal Gates tearoom and interpretation area extension, with improvements to the soft landscaping. We considered these changes would reduce the visual impact on views towards the tearoom, across the lake from the north.

## We are also increasingly seeing Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).

- › In 2024, these have notably involved applications for very large solar arrays - by combining various smaller parcels together, solar providers can make the project so large that it becomes a National Infrastructure project, so decided nationally not locally. We have continued to be involved with the Botley West Solar Farm proposal that affects the setting of **Blenheim Palace and Park in Oxfordshire**, which is Grade I Registered and also a World Heritage Site, and more recently 'Lime Down', affecting **Badminton in Gloucestershire**. The nature of NSIPs is that the premise has already been agreed, so our potential impact is to influence the detail so as to reduce the impact on historic designed landscapes.

## We've enjoyed some positive updates on earlier cases:

- › The refusal for a proposal to create a 74 bed hotel and spa with 55 other market residences split into separate development packages across the estate across the **Grade I Norris Castle estate on the Isle of Wight**, following our objection alongside Isle of Wight Gardens Trust, Georgian Group, SAVE, Historic England and others. The Gardens Trust considered that the proposals were an overdevelopment of the site and would have a substantial adverse impact on an extremely valuable heritage asset and irrevocably alter the character of the landscape and the existing spirit of place.
- › The approval given for the All England Lawn Tennis Club proposal to build new courts and a stadium at **Grade II\* Wimbledon Park**, London. This had been a contentious case as it involves large-scale commercial development in a Registered landscape. The Gardens Trust and London Parks & Gardens came to the view that the likelihood of finding an alternative to fund the significant heritage improvements such as the promised historic landscape and lake restoration scheme and subsequent long-term maintenance was unlikely, and therefore in principle but with some reservations we supported the scheme.
- › Over many years the Gardens Trust has been commenting on planning applications affecting **Marston Park in Somerset**, mainly relating to commercialised leisure activities around the lake, which is in separate ownership to the rest of the landscape. Most recently, a 2017 application to build holiday lodges, café, bar and restaurant that we objected to was finally turned down in 2023. This year we were delighted to hear that the owners of the main Marston Park house have now been able to buy the lake and surrounding land, which should mean better management decisions in future. We look forward to working collaboratively with the owners to secure the best possible outcome for this important historic designed landscape.

‘Each year our statutory consultee cases increase, demonstrating the juxtaposition of historic parks and gardens and development growth. We are determined to rise to this challenge and continue to offer specialist advice to these applications, working closely with County Gardens Trusts, but the Gardens Trust faces an increasingly daunting workload as whilst the consultations have increased the government grant still has only gone down. Any donations to support this work are hugely useful’.

[thegardenstrust.org/support-us/donate-online/](https://thegardenstrust.org/support-us/donate-online/)

**Deborah Evans**, Chair of the Gardens Trust Conservation Committee

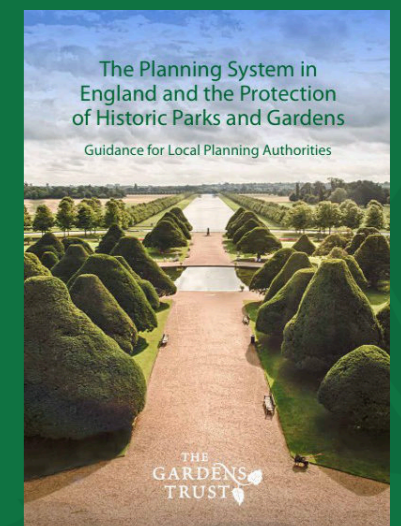
## Collaboration with the National Amenity Societies

In Spring 2024 we migrated the Gardens Trust Casework Log to the database of the Joint Committee of the National Amenity Societies (JCNAS). This platform is now shared by all the National Amenity Societies for their casework. With the help of funding from Historic England, the migration project took place over a three-month period at the beginning of 2024, with the Gardens Trust becoming fully active on the database on 1st April. This presented challenges because of the different position of the Gardens Trust, the only statutory consultee amongst the JCNAS members, plus our very close working relationship with the County Gardens Trusts, but these were satisfactorily resolved. The previous casework log, which records over 35,000 cases spanning 2000 to 2024, has been safely archived by York University for future reference. The benefits of the new database include the release of much-needed staff administration time to allow more involvement in actual casework, plus closer working with our JCNAS colleagues, which will result in better-informed and more efficient consultation responses to the local planning authorities.

## Planning system

We have updated the Gardens Trust publication explaining the position of parks and gardens in the English planning system, and the process of consultation with the Gardens Trust. We sent it to over 300 Local Planning Authority contacts, and it can be downloaded for free from:

[thegardenstrust.org/planning-system-2024](https://thegardenstrust.org/planning-system-2024)



## National Policy

The Gardens Trust welcomed the opportunity to respond to last year's consultation on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Whilst the consultation proposals did not directly address heritage matters, there were, nonetheless, a significant number of proposals with implications for historic parks and gardens.

Key issues raised in our response included support for the use of design codes to maintain character and setting alongside the delivery of new development, and a call to exclude glasshouses from the definition of previously developed land. The response also addressed the proposals regarding the identification of 'grey belt' land, highlighting the need to consider the historic environment alongside the natural environment, and took the opportunity to promote the recognition and protection of parks and green spaces - including in relation to climate change. The Gardens Trust was generally supportive of the proposed changes to the NPPF, but also made a number of suggestions to ensure that the stated priorities for driving growth did not compromise the protection and conservation of the core areas and settings of historic parks and gardens.

The changes subsequently made largely reflect the Gardens Trust's comments, though it was disappointing to see that the contribution made by historic parks and gardens to the delivery of so many Government objectives was not fully recognised or utilised.

## Influencing

### The Richards Review of Statutory Consultees

In early 2024 the Gardens Trust was included in the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' 'Rapid Review' of Statutory Consultees by consultant Sam Richards.

The data we gathered has proved very useful to chart our work, shining a light that between 2008 and 2023 our statutory consultations increased from 860 to 1302 per year. In 2024 it was 1,427 consultations. In stark contrast, over the same period our statutory consultee grant has decreased from £45,000 and is currently £43,000, a situation which clearly cannot be sustained. Data also shows that we almost always respond within the statutory 21-day deadline, and that fewer than 10% of our responses are objections, with many instead offering constructive advice: we are certainly not a blocker in the planning system.

The results of the Richards Review were never published and were eventually overtaken by the change of government. However, the experience has given us the data and confidence to set up an Advocacy Working Group, which is now putting together a compelling case to the new government about the value of historic parks and gardens to the government's mission and the work undertaken by the Gardens Trust to support this. In November 2024 we were approached by the Think Tank LabourTogether with more questions about our work as statutory consultees, and we continue to seize these opportunities to share the importance of this role.

The inadequacy of government funding for our statutory consultee work against the increasing spotlight on the quality of our delivery of this role means that in Summer 2024 we had to make some changes to our way of working. We can currently only undertake our statutory remit, which is to respond to planning applications which impact on Registered parks and gardens. We are currently unable to offer wider advice on non-registered sites, Forestry Commission consultations, approaches from consultants seeking pre-application discussions, and most wider policy and strategic consultations. We have also had to lean heavily on the goodwill and understanding of the County Gardens Trusts in continuing to support our planning application work despite the difficulties. Depending on future funding, we very much hope this is a temporary situation.



National  
Trust

We're proud that the Gardens Trust is now an official Appointing Body to the National Trust Council, after securing an impressive 54,220 votes in their 2024 AGM, demonstrating the value that National Trust members place on historic parks and gardens and the role that the Gardens Trust can play. As an Appointing Body, the Gardens Trust will be better placed than ever to support the work of the National Trust in caring for historic parks and gardens and championing their protection.

## Historic Environment Overview 2023-2024

We're pleased to be featured in the Historic Environment Overview 2023-2024, published each year by the Historic Environment Forum. The report outlines significant achievements for the sector. The Gardens Trust's work, particularly around how we manage planning application casework, our survey of Friends groups, and our volunteer support activity, features heavily in the report so that other sector organisations can learn from our experiences and be better informed of activity around historic designed landscapes.

[historicengland.org.uk/research/heritage-counts/historic-environment-overview/](https://historicengland.org.uk/research/heritage-counts/historic-environment-overview/)

## Playing a role in mitigating the climate emergency

The GT is now Certified Carbon Literate, following staff and volunteer training on the impacts of climate change on both our personal lives and in the workplace.

Delivered by Historic Buildings & Places over two morning sessions, we undertook training that improved our knowledge and increased our confidence that we can create a positive shift in how we live and work in response to climate change. The Gardens Trust is committed to minimising its environmental impact, inspiring others to do the same, and playing an active role in demonstrating and supporting the contribution that historic designed landscapes can make to managing the climate emergency. So far, actions have included printing less, switching off our phones and laptops at night, making different food choices for events, and thinking harder about how we travel. This is just the beginning!

Certified Carbon Literate



## Research excellence

### Garden History journal

The Journal continues to offer a range of papers furthering understanding of garden history, under Dr Barbara Simms' editorship. Papers this year have been: "Gardening...has now happily become the delight of all classes": fifty years (1832-83) of horticultural comment and advice culled from the writing of Victorian gardener Alexander Forsyth' by Jonathan Pointer; 'Heralding Modernity: innovation, internationalism and artistry in Robert Furber's Twelve Months of Flowers' by Margaux Shraiman; 'New Light on the Chiswick Gardens of Spencer Compton, 1st Earl of Wilmington (c.1674-1743)' by Sally Jeffery; 'A Park in Which Beauty and Pure Air could be United': South Shields' marine park and the nineteenth-century conception of health and wellness' by Abigail Carr; 'The fountains of the Fugger family's gardens in sixteenth-century Augsburg' by Davide Martino; 'The Mithraic Altar, the Shepherd's Monument and the Temple of Ceres: contextualizing the inscriptions' by Michael Bevington; "Collegiate plantings": the University of Oxford's experiments in 'theatrical shrubbery', 1740-1820' by Toby Parker and Mark Laird; "I looked out for my materials in case I should want them for another day": 'Alexander Forsyth (1809-85), gardener and prolific contributor to the nineteenth-century horticultural press' by Jonathan Pointer; 'Sir Reginald Blomfield (1856-1942): a maker of 'fine gardens'' by Sara Tenneson; 'The Tale of the Garden: Beatrix Potter (1866-1943) and the development of Hill Top' by Alice Burns. The full contents list from 1969 to 2024 has been updated and is now available and searchable at:

[thegardenstrust.org/resources/journal/](https://thegardenstrust.org/resources/journal/)

In the Spring we ran a webinar on ways to share garden history research, including how to submit papers to the Journal, as we're keen to encourage as many people as possible to get involved. 110 people attended, joining us from Italy, Switzerland, the US, China, Ireland, Australia and Canada as well as across the United Kingdom. The submissions guide has been updated, and is on our website:

[thegardenstrust.org/garden-history-submissions-guide/](https://thegardenstrust.org/garden-history-submissions-guide/)

'It was a great idea to reach out to researchers and actually meet the people involved with publications'

Garden History webinar attendee

## New Research Symposium

Our annual New Research Symposium is an opportunity for researchers and scholars to share new and unpublished interdisciplinary research relating to garden history. Since its launch, the symposium has hosted cutting-edge research from more than fifty researchers.

This year we received a high number – and high standard – of entries, and hosted two free online sessions on Saturday afternoons in November to showcase the chosen presentations. The speakers were:

**Kitty Edgerley:** Embodying the Garden - Mihri Hatun's Poetry and Performance

**Ellie Lewis:** Productive Plants and Wasteful Weeds in Early Modern Literature

**Grace Murray:** Pomegranates and Gillyflowers - A Seventeenth-Century Welsh Garden

**Aideen Herron:** By the Bishop's Design: An analysis of the designed landscape of Georgian Armagh

**Kealey Kennedy:** Colonial Landscapes - The Unique Phenomenon of Garden Cemeteries in Malta

**Georgia M. C. Russell:** Chester Zoological Gardens - Recreation and Hope in Wartime Cheshire (1935-1945)

**Zohar Shvarzberg:** Rooted Traditions - Exploring Thai Migrant Gardens in Israel and Viveca Mellegard: Troubled Paradise.

The speakers' academic backgrounds included the universities of Bristol, York, Dublin, Western Ontario, Durham, King's College London, the Israel Institute of Technology and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

We look forward to welcoming submissions again in 2025 from researchers approaching garden history and conservation from various academic disciplines and vocational backgrounds. A full list of researchers featured and topics covered in the symposia over the past 13 years is available on our website:

[thegardenstrust.org/new-research-symposium/](https://thegardenstrust.org/new-research-symposium/)

The impact of the symposium on our work has been significant: as well as showcasing their new research, speakers have subsequently written full scholarly articles for our journal, contributed to our online talks programme, organised garden history events and even become trustees of the Gardens Trust!

## Mavis Batey Essay Prize

The winner of *the Gardens Trust's 2024 Mavis Batey Essay Prize* is **Emma Poynter** for her essay on 'The production, use, and significance of the Hortus Malabaricus (1678-1693) in the creation of colonial botanical knowledge.'

Emma, who recently graduated with an MPhil from Cambridge University said "*I am delighted to have won the Mavis Batey Essay Prize 2024. Researching the Hortus Malabaricus has uncovered a rich intersection of colonial encounters, economic drivers, and contemporary curiosity in botany and the natural environment. I hope that this paper contributes to ongoing historical conceptions of how botanical knowledge has been gathered and made within the seventeenth-century context.*"

Emma was presented with her award, a year's free membership of the Gardens Trust and £500 prize at our *Unforgettable Gardens* book launch in October.

Two more essays were highly commended by our judging panel, including an essay on the Sculpture Garden at Denham Place by Oxford University student Struan Bates and 'Self-fashioning in the Theatre of the Early Modern English Garden' by University of London student Anna Brueck Seeley.

[thegardenstrust.org/what-we-do/prize/](https://thegardenstrust.org/what-we-do/prize/)





## Garden history at the University of Buckingham

There's been a catastrophic dearth in recent years of places to study garden history, so the Gardens Trust is delighted to partner with the University of Buckingham on postgraduate degree courses. This gives the opportunity to pursue research at Master's level in any one of a wide range of garden and landscape-related topics. The course was set up by Dr David Marsh, previously a Gardens Trust Trustee, and this year he will be working with Dr Twigs Way as co-director. We are delighted that many of the students on the course are positioned to make practical use of their learning in the conservation of historic parks and gardens. In the 2024-25 academic year there are eleven new MA students. These include two professional horticulturists - one with a background from the National Trust and English Heritage who's looking at possible uses for walled gardens, and one from Hawaii who is looking at how to make the garden she cares for sustainable and relevant in the context of climate change. One has a professional museum background in Pakistan and wants to look the relationship between British and Mughal influences on public gardens there and how to conserve them when she returns to Pakistan. Another is a landscape architect who lives on a historic estate and is researching its history to better manage its maintenance with a Conservation Management Plan in future. Two National Trust volunteers are looking at specific aspects of the places where they volunteer - one at Sissinghurst and the other at Cliveden.

Eight part-time MA students are carrying on from last year. One is a park manager and is looking at the restoration of a Japanese garden in a public park. Another is examining Gertrude Jekyll's commercial business and working closely with the curator at Munstead Wood. There are also three PhD candidates! Details at:

[buckingham.ac.uk/courses/research/ma-garden-history](https://buckingham.ac.uk/courses/research/ma-garden-history)



## Suffolk's Unforgettable Garden Story research project: the designation of historic designed landscapes

Over the past two years, more than twenty volunteers have been busy researching and recording at-risk historic designed landscapes in Suffolk. The project, delivered by the Gardens Trust in partnership with Suffolk Gardens Trust and funded by Historic England, has helped tell the stories of the county's parks and gardens and brought attention to the value of its historic designed landscapes.

The hard work of volunteers has resulted in the research of more than twenty historic parks and gardens and seven new additions to the Register of Parks and Gardens, giving these sites a better level of protection in the planning system. Over the coming months, the research compiled by volunteers will be published on the Suffolk Gardens Trust website:

[www.suffolkgardenstrust.org](https://www.suffolkgardenstrust.org)

Volunteers working on the Suffolk's Unforgettable Garden Story project are the proud recipients of a Heritage Champion Award from the Suffolk Preservation Society, which recognises the work of local people and communities who are dedicated to looking after Suffolk's historic places and buildings. They liked being part of the project, with one saying "I've had an enjoyable time exploring the history of various Suffolk parks and gardens and meeting other volunteers...The training offered was excellent and it has been interesting learning about the complexities of the listing process that is intended to protect these important Suffolk sites for future generations." They are now keen to carry on researching more historic parks and gardens in Suffolk and are welcoming others to join them.

Historic England landscape architect Christopher Laine said: "I'm delighted that we have such fascinating research and newly protected designed landscapes as a result of this project." One of the biggest successes of the project was to attract energetic new volunteers for Suffolk Gardens Trust, some of whom have since become committee members. Edward Martin, chairman of Suffolk Gardens Trust, says: "The Suffolk's Unforgettable Garden Story project has been a wonderful opportunity to focus new attention on Suffolk's rich garden heritage and to involve volunteers in actively researching and reporting on sites to make them truly 'unforgettable'."

[thegardenstrust.org/campaigns/suffolks-unforgettable-garden-story/](https://thegardenstrust.org/campaigns/suffolks-unforgettable-garden-story/)

## The Suffolk's Unforgettable Garden Story project has resulted in 7 new sites being added to the Register of Parks and Gardens:

- **Abbot's Hall** in Stowmarket – the pleasure grounds of an early 18th century house
- **Thorpeness Meare** – the vibrant and adventurous landscape of Britain's first purpose-built holiday village
- **Crow's Hall** – an early country house landscape with stunning views
- **Staverton Park** – once owned by royalty
- The **Walled Garden** at the **Royal Hospital School** in Holbrook – featuring a distinctive 'crinkle-crankle' wall.



Volunteers on the Suffolk's Unforgettable Gardens Story project

We are delighted to have secured grants from the Finnis Scott Foundation and the Worshipful Company of Gardeners that will allow us to deliver three compact research and recording workshops for County Gardens Trust volunteers in the coming years. Watch this space!



The Finnis Scott Foundation



## Unforgettable Gardens book

In November 2024 the Gardens Trust was proud to publish its first book – *Unforgettable Gardens: 500 Years of Historic Gardens and Landscapes*. It covers around 60 individual gardens, specially selected to give a broad historical overview of British garden design from the Early Modern Period up until the Millennium. Each chapter also includes an essay exploring the wider changes in social context, taste and style in each period.

The launch provided an inspiring opportunity for established and new garden historians to come together, just as the book includes a range of voices from those working in gardens to those studying them. Polly Powell, owner of publisher Batsford, opened proceedings, reflecting on how the importance of gardens, squares and parks was recognised during the Covid lockdowns. Polly said that we have a beautiful book which she thinks will do very well, and help share the



Garden historians Brent Elliott and Advolly Richmond at the launch party.

message about what the Gardens Trust does, which is exactly the aim. Certainly that seems to be the case so far: it has been reviewed in a wide range of publications including *The Flora Journal*, *The Critic*, *Horticulture Week*, *Blackwell's weekly newsletter*, *Frost Magazine*, and *Gardens Illustrated*. Sales are looking good, with almost 1,200 copies sold globally in the first few weeks of its publication.

We have received a grant from the National Archives, with thanks to Lottery Players, as part of their Archives Revealed programme. This will enable us in 2025 to scope the contents of the Gardens Trust's sizeable archive of papers to assess its significance and potentially apply for a further grant in order to make the collection available to researchers in future.

ARCHIVES REVEALED

Made possible with  
Heritage Fund

Pilgrim Trust

The Wolfson\* Foundation



## Reaching communities

### The Gardens Trust Community Grant

In 2024 two community garden projects in historic designed landscapes were able to progress thanks to our Gardens Trust Community Grant, supported with the generosity of members Peter and Rosy Gent.

**Friends of Brunswick Square & Terrace in Hove, East Sussex**, received £2500 to help restore the garden not only for the mental, physical and social benefits of the volunteers who go every Saturday, but for the many local residents and tourists that appreciate the Square too. The Friends of Brunswick Square & Terrace is a gardening group working to restore the Regency square and engender an increased sense of community spirit and engagement. The Square is a peaceful public garden in a densely populated area, where most residents live in flats. Completed around 1830, it is in a Grade I-listed conservation area designed by the architect Charles Busby with Amos Wilds. Originally the square was laid out with railings, stone pavements, flower beds and trees to provide a suitable setting for the elegant town houses around it. After the Second World War the square became run down and neglected, but since then the gardens have been re-landscaped and the pavements replaced using the same Caithness stone flags.

The Friends have researched the designs and flowers, trees and shrubs that would have been there 200 years ago. They have had advice, tours and help from the

Brighton Pavilion gardeners, whose knowledge has been invaluable, and have plans from elderly neighbours who successfully reinstated features in the square. They are also working with Southern Water and the council to restore the historic drinking fountain as a water source. Most recently, they have been conducting a plant audit and comparing it to plans from 1992, so they can maintain the existing planting as well as planting new Regency varieties.



**Dawber Garden Community Trust, Lincoln**, received £1000 for a project around the restoration, ongoing maintenance, and significant improvement of the garden to ensure long term survival. The Dawber Garden became a public garden in the late 1980s, in an area that had been the walled vegetable garden of the Lawn Hospital and then used for council greenhouses. Over the last few years, it had become almost derelict due to council funding cuts, with little maintenance from contractors, apart from a 'short back and sides' to some shrubs.



'The transformation of the garden in the space of a little over a year is remarkable but we could not have achieved it without our volunteers and supporters. We set out to rescue the garden so that the public could continue to enjoy it, both now and for generations to come. We have reached the stage where we are maintaining rather than restoring the garden, but the work continues. We are looking at creating a living willow tunnel leading to the mound where children like to hide in the trees. As the Garden is open every day to the public the work is much appreciated by our many visitors, who tell our volunteers they cannot believe the transformation, thanks to the Gardens Trust.'

**Lynn Ritson**, Chair of the Dawber Garden Community Trust

We look forward to seeing work progress on the projects awarded GT Community Grants in autumn 2024, which are: Arnos Vale Cemetery in Bristol; Broomhill Community Library Garden in Sheffield; a still-used historic mental health hospital garden known as 'Warneford 200' in Oxfordshire; and biodiversity plantings in historic parks as part of the Your Park Bath project. We are delighted to be able to offer this grant again in 2025, with an increased total grant pot of £8000, thanks to the generosity of GT members Peter and Rosy Gent.

[thegardenstrust.org/community-grant/](https://thegardenstrust.org/community-grant/)

## Raising awareness

We're particularly excited to have the help of 6 volunteers under the age of 30 to help with our social media. It's a win-win as they find out about historic parks and gardens, and we get help spreading the word!



TikTok is a fantastic way to reach new audiences of people who wouldn't otherwise hear about historic parks and gardens. In the autumn we recruited tv star Caspar Todd, a contestant on Married at First Sight! Caspar is a professional gardener in a historic garden and made a sequence of videos for our social media, which have been viewed over 17,000 times.

In the summer, we made a video about playgrounds at Wicksteed Park in Kettering that has had over 44,000 views!

## eBulletin

To complement the *GT News* magazine for members, we are proud to also have a popular eBulletin covering sector highlights, edited by volunteer Charlotte Casella, which goes out monthly to over 2,100 readers, with an extra edition for non-GT members.

## Social media

Our social media is proving to be a superb way to share messages around historic parks and gardens and their conservation with as many people as possible across the world. Here are some highlights from our platforms in 2024:

### X (previously Twitter)



Our posts viewed over 30380 times

### Facebook



48 new followers  
Our posts have reached over 32,000 users

### Instagram



300 more Followers  
Our posts have reached over 126,000 users

### LinkedIn



200 new followers  
Posts so far have been viewed 10,000 times

### TikTok



We've posted 19 videos which have been viewed over 75,000 times this year

## World-leading events

In 2024 we ran over 85 events (online and in person), with almost 9000 tickets sold, to attendees from all across the world.

Online highlights included a roundtable on 'Why Garden History', the first half of our new 6-series programme A History of Gardens, sponsored by Wooden Books, a new partnership with the County Gardens Trusts exploring Restoration in Action, and popular series on People's Parks, Community Landscapes, Roman Gardens, Gardens & the Written Word and Head Gardeners Working at Historic Sites. In-person events included successful trips to the MERL and Forbury Gardens in Reading, Dorneywood in Buckinghamshire, Exbury Gardens in Hampshire, Charlton House and Garden in southeast London, Gravetye Manor in Sussex, a multi-day study trip to Suffolk, and partnership sessions with the Royal Horticultural Society exploring the archives at the Lindley Library.



**One of the purposes of our events programme is to raise funds for our work and this year ticket sales contributed over £30,000 to the cause - thank you to everyone who has attended!**

## Feedback from GT events shows that they hit the spot with attendees:

*'Fascinating talk, a real eye-opener!'*

***'Way better than what I was taught as a trainee landscape architect.'***

*'The choice and range of talks was really good.'*

*'The talks are very wide ranging and informative.'*

*'I am very grateful to the Gardens Trust for these lecture series.'*

*'Both were fantastic. I loved the voluminous amount of information. I watched each twice, they were that good.'*

***'I appreciate the expert, interesting, and affordable resources you offer.'***

*'I am impressed and most grateful for the very high standard of almost every lecture I have seen.'*

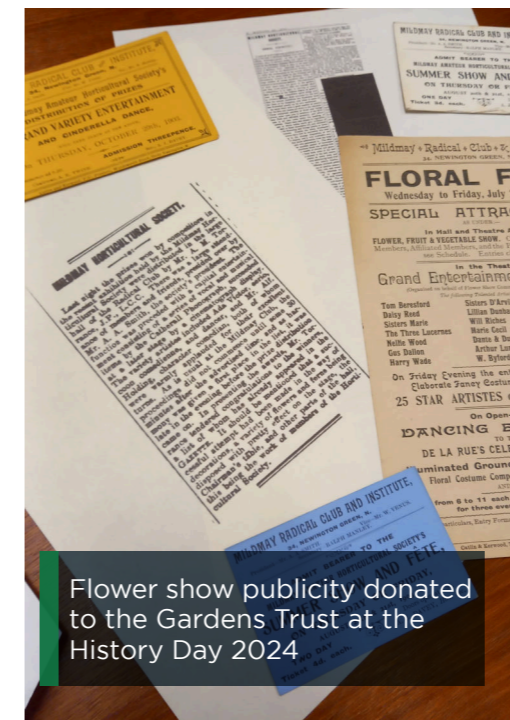
***'Learning about gardens that I can visit in the UK and further afield. All of the talks gave a good overview of the subject and motivated me to find out more.'***

We have also partnered with other organisations, such as the Garden Museum for an Introduction to Garden History course, and Oxford University for another of our annual study weekends.

We are fortunate to have a team of long-standing volunteers making our events programme possible – **thank you!**

In 2024 we welcomed around 30 delegates to our annual study weekend arranged in partnership with Oxford University, this year with the theme New Perspectives on Botanical Gardens. The weekend included a guided trip to Oxford Botanic Garden, the oldest such site in the country.

[thegardenstrust.org/events/](https://thegardenstrust.org/events/)



Flower show publicity donated to the Gardens Trust at the History Day 2024

## Out and about

Whenever resources allow, we love to take a Gardens Trust display to events and fairs to talk about garden history, conservation, and our work. In November 2024 we spoke to almost 100 people from garden owners to managers to volunteers at the Historic Buildings, Parks & Gardens Event in Westminster, and at the History Day at the Institute of Historic Research met around 50 people of all ages, with a mix of undergraduate and postgraduate students, including international students, professionals working across the sector and local organisations and groups. We even received a donation of archive materials!

## Volunteer support - How Volunteers Saved Space!

With funding from Historic England, the Gardens Trust's two-year volunteer support project, *Volunteers Save Space!* enabled us to run multiple training, networking and support activities, all aiming to tell more people about our country's designed landscape heritage and to build capacity in the volunteer organisations working to understand and protect these landscapes.



By the time it ended in March 2024, **Volunteers Save Space!** had:

- Provided support for nearly all of England's **36 County Gardens Trusts (CGTs)** as well as more in-depth training to *Cheshire, Nottinghamshire, Norfolk, Sussex* and *Northamptonshire Gardens Trusts*, via three regional activities.
- Trained seven young students from University College London, half of them from overseas, who then went on to volunteer with the Gardens Trust and London Parks & Gardens, using the Suffolk and Nottinghamshire projects' learning materials.
- Run 28 online or in-person training sessions, **reaching 545 people**, roughly half from County Gardens Trusts, the rest from other audiences, in garden history, research methods, social media, volunteer recruitment and audience development.
- **Talked to over 650 people** about the Gardens Trust, County Gardens Trusts and the heritage of designed landscapes at outreach events in Nottinghamshire, Cheshire, London and at the Gardeners' World's Autumn Fair, in Audley End, Essex.
- **Gathered 18 new, trained project volunteers contributing to our regional activities:**
  - Run a Heritage Open Day in Queen's Park, Crewe, with Cheshire Gardens Trust, as a platform to share our love of garden history with new audiences.
  - Trained Northamptonshire, Norfolk and Sussex Gardens Trusts to use Instagram to share conservation messages with new people. This has helped them all grow their Instagram audiences.
  - Trained 9 new volunteers to research and record 8 non-designated historic landscapes, with Nottinghamshire Gardens Trust.
- **Seen 247 people attend our annual networking events:** the Historic Landscapes Assembly and Volunteering Celebration.
- **Engaged with 116 volunteers** in Britain's fantastic green space Friends groups, via our survey of their current activities and heritage knowledge, and were delighted to learn that 58% of them would welcome more knowledge of their site's history and development and think it could help them to protect their landscape.
- **Reached nearly 5,000 people** through views of the 'Bicycle Boys' online exhibition, comparing landscapes recorded by 1920s garden visitors Loyal Johnson and Sam Brewster to their state today, as researched by County Gardens Trusts. This was one of our biggest outreach successes, working with the RHS Lindley Library, under our "Unforgettable Gardens" campaign.

*Volunteers Save Space!* has helped over 1600 people, many of them from new audiences, better understand historic designed landscapes, the threats they face, and how volunteers can help to protect them.

A huge thank you to everyone who took part or supported the project.

"I've recently moved to the county and taking part in the project has helped me to find my tribe"

"I enjoyed meeting a whole new group of people during the visits and online. It is always a benefit to keep my brain active such as undertaking new kinds of research in this way."

Nottinghamshire's Garden Story project volunteers



We are also grateful for the grant from the *Swire Charitable Trust* that supports our work with our volunteers.

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## Volunteer Awards

Each year we invite nominations to recognise and celebrate the outstanding contributions of volunteers who make a difference to the day to day running of their County Gardens Trust or the Gardens Trust, are involved in research and conservation or who have reached new audiences to encourage interest in garden history.



Winners of our Volunteer Awards 2024  
**Barbara Moth and Claire de Carle**

Barbara Moth won our Volunteer Award 2024 for her outstanding contribution to all of Cheshire Gardens Trust's activities, management, research and leadership over a period of more than 20 years. Barbara has made a huge impact, through her involvement in activities including organising conferences and study days, leading the Caldwell Nurseries Project, writing articles and delivering outreach events which have engaged new audiences. Due to the outstanding calibre of nominees, we created a new award this year so Claire de Carle was given the brand new award for Exceptional Contribution, recognising her achievements in reaching out and engaging new audiences with garden history, including the setting up of the Buckinghamshire Gardeners' Network, leading Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust's audience development strategy over the next five years and delivering activities like a Heritage Open Day and sessions for the Chiltern Young Archaeologists' Club.

During the ceremony the Gardens Trust Chair Peter Hughes also gave special mention to Zhixin Zheng, for her work helping to publicise our events to a wider audience. Zhixin is one of the youngest volunteers ever nominated and in light of this we are exploring ways we recognise the achievements of our new and younger volunteers in the future.

## Nominees for 2024 Volunteer Award were:

Dr Sarah Rutherford, Buckinghamshire GT  
Joanne Mirzoeff, Buckinghamshire GT  
Suffolk's Unforgettable Garden Story Volunteers  
Claire de Carle, Buckinghamshire GT  
Barbara Moth, Cheshire GT  
Zhixin Zheng, the Gardens Trust  
Sally Miller, Hampshire GT

The Award was presented at the annual Gardens Trust Volunteer Celebration, held in July at the Sheffield Botanical Gardens. This celebration is a valued milestone in the Gardens Trust calendar as an opportunity to thank and celebrate the volunteers caring for historic designed landscapes.

## Supporting early careers

Many volunteers working in the heritage sector are retirees and their work is vital. However, it is important to also engage with people earlier in their working lives: we invest in recruiting and supporting early career volunteers and benefit hugely from their contributions. In 2024 we benefited from the help of Delia Manga-Wessmann as an intern, working on our communications and marketing.

## Gardens and NSIPs project

We have just started a two-year volunteer training project - 'Gardens and NSIPs', with thanks to Historic England funding. Working with the six East of England County Gardens Trusts - Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire - but sharing the free, online learning nationally, with the other CGTs and beyond, we'll train volunteers to understand NSIPs (Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects); to know how to assess and engage with an NSIP application; and how to research, record and understand the significance of historic designed landscapes that may be affected by them.

By adding this research to the historic record, via platforms like Historic Environment Records and the National Heritage List for England, so that it is available to all, we can help developers, planners and statutory consultees like Historic England and the Gardens Trust to take into account the effect of NSIPs on historic parks, gardens and other designed landscapes, so that their most important aspects are protected wherever possible.

## Support for County Gardens Trusts

The 36 County Gardens Trusts and the Welsh Historic Parks & Gardens Trust are critical to our work, supporting our statutory consultee role as well as delivering vital research and recording activity and helping to engage with communities across the country.

As well as ongoing availability to all CGTs, in 2024 our Volunteer Support team were able to give specific support to 21 CGTs, helping them to continue their vital local work. This ranged from the GT's Chair and senior staff member supporting Kent GT's strategy day, to the Lead Volunteer Support Officer and Engagement Officer speaking at Hertfordshire GT's research team kickstart meeting, to hosting Heart of England group meetings for the West Midlands CGTs, to training Gloucestershire GT to use Zoom.

In October we welcomed Chairs from 21 County Gardens Trusts to a Chairs Meet Up at our offices in London, where we discussed ways in which the CGTs and GT could work more productively together. This was the first step in what we expect to be a multi-year project to review and refine the GT-CGT relationship that was first established in 2015, so that we can together be fit-for-purpose for another ten years and beyond.

## The County Gardens Trusts have achieved so much! Here are some examples from 2024:

- Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust's new Mission Statement project includes a focus on audience development. The team has worked hard to introduce new people to garden history with least six public events over the summer.
- Sussex Gardens Trust began a new research project based on Marine Gardens, West Sussex. The team supplemented its archival research with oral histories, collected during a drop-in day in May, in partnership with the Friends of Marine Gardens.
- Yorkshire GT managed to get 3 previously non-designated sites onto the Register of Parks and Gardens, including Waterton Park (Grade II), thought to be the world's first nature reserve.
- The southwest County Gardens Trusts have reinvigorated their research groups with a kick-off event at Wiltshire Record Office in April.

- Gloucestershire Gardens & Landscapes Trust is partnering with Gloucestershire Orchards Trust to identify, research and map historic orchards.
- Hertfordshire Gardens Trust has restarted its research group with a walled kitchen garden project.
- In September, Devon Gardens Trust celebrated the addition of two sites to the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest at Grade II: Larkbeare House in Exeter – probably the only surviving British villa garden by James Veitch; and Peamore Park, which developed from an 18th century picturesque landscape.
- The Essex Gardens Trust provided a grant to restore two paintings of now vanished allotments at Grays - rare early examples of allotments being used as the primary focus of a painting.
- London Parks & Gardens worked with the Gardens Trust and two young students from University College London who identified an amazing twenty parks, gardens and other green spaces that were either missing from the London Inventory or had incomplete entries.
- Lincolnshire Gardens Trust's Committee member Elizabeth Bowskill was integral to developing the Grantham Green Spaces Forum (GGSF), which will champion the value of the town's parks and green spaces, ensuring they are preserved and maintained to standards that befit their intended purpose – community health and recreation.



The Western Terrace at Larkbeare House, added to the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest thanks to a submission by Devon Gardens Trust.  
**Photograph: Devon Gardens Trust**



## Fundraising

In 2024 our fundraising efforts focused on diversifying and strengthening our income streams to ensure greater financial stability.

We proudly launched a new Patrons Scheme, welcoming 19 patrons in its first year and raising over £10,000. This marks a strong start, and we plan to grow the scheme, including by offering exclusive events to our supporters.

We also expanded our funding portfolio, securing £17,500 from four Trusts and Foundations, demonstrating the value of our work. Additionally, we've invested in five London Marathon places, aiming to raise an impressive £12,500 in 2025 to further support our mission.

Together, these achievements lay the foundation for sustained growth and greater impact in the years to come.

## Thank you to our Patrons for their generosity in supporting the Gardens Trust's work.

Ms Helen R Auty

Dr James Bartos

The Duchess of Bedford

Mr Richard Broyd CBE

The Duke of Devonshire

Mrs Sarah Dickinson

Mr John Entwistle

Mr Jeremy Garnett

Mr Peter Gent

Lady Hart of Chilton

Mrs Caroline Holmes

Mrs Barbie Moul

Dr Adam Naylor

Sir Hugh Roberts

Caroline Scaramanga

Jill Sinclair

Miss Peggy Stemberidge

Dr Ian Varndell

## Support the Gardens Trust:

### Help Protect Our Historic Gardens and Landscapes

The Gardens Trust works tirelessly to conserve and promote the rich heritage of gardens and landscapes across England. By supporting us, you'll help protect these vital spaces for future generations, ensuring they remain places of beauty, history, and community. With your help, we can continue our vital work, from championing historic gardens to delivering education and conservation programmes.

### How You Can Make a Difference

**There are many ways to support the Gardens Trust and become part of our mission:**

**Become a Member:** Join a network of passionate garden history lovers and enjoy exclusive benefits while supporting our work.

**Make a Donation:** Every contribution, big or small, helps us continue our important work.

**Become a Patron:** Patrons are key supporters who enjoy tailored benefits and closer involvement in our projects.

**Leave a Legacy:** By leaving a gift in your will, you can help protect our shared heritage for future generations.

### How to Donate or Get Involved

**Donate Online:** Visit [thegardenstrust.org/donate](https://thegardenstrust.org/donate)

**By Post:** Send a cheque payable to the Gardens Trust to:  
The Gardens Trust, 70 Cowcross Street, London, EC1M 6EJ

**Discuss Your Options:** For information on becoming a Patron or leaving a gift in your will, contact our Fundraising Development Officer at:

[tara.tanjga@thegardenstrust.org](mailto:tara.tanjga@thegardenstrust.org)



Your support makes everything we do possible. Together, we can ensure the legacy of gardens and landscapes endures for generations to come. Join us today in making a lasting impact!

## Key stats from the Gardens Trust's year:

**1,427** planning consultations relating to Registered Parks and Gardens

**1,329** responses to planning application consultations

**545** people upskilled through 28 online or in-person training sessions

**7** sites added to the National Heritage List for England

**9,000** ticket sales to our online lectures and in-person lectures, visits and conferences

**10** new papers published in 2 issues of the *Garden History* journal

**£3,500** of grants given to community projects

More than **273,380** people reached through our social media posts

**1,179** copies of the GT's Unforgettable Gardens book sold globally in its first month of publication

## Please join or donate!

Our work relies on the generosity of our members and supporters. Please consider joining, donating, or volunteering via:

[thegardenstrust.org/support-us](https://thegardenstrust.org/support-us)



enquiries@thegardenstrust.org  
thegardenstrust.org

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