

Conducting a Site Visit and Recording your Landscape

©Gardens Trust



THE
GARDENS
TRUST

thegardenstrust.org
Find us: @thegardenstrust

Today's Talk:

- Why visit your site?
- Getting access
- The recording form
- Before your visit
- What you'll need on the day
- How to record your park or garden
- Volunteer support

Why make a site visit?

- To understand the history and development of the landscape - comparing what is seen now to what we know from our desktop research.
- To make a record of what the site looks like today and note its condition.
- To identify the most significant elements of the landscape.



©Gardens Trust

What you are going to do during your visit

- Checking the features you've noted during your desktop research – are they still there? What condition are they in?
- Picking up extra details which haven't shown up in maps, reports etc. Ask if there are records or images in the house.
- Look for planned views. Are they still there?
- Understanding setting – how the landscape fits into its surroundings.

Getting Access

- Public park, cemetery or pay-to-access garden
- Private garden or landscape park
- Our project introduction letter



Recording Form

Section 1



Gardens Trust Green Futures Project, 2025-2026: Site Record	
<i>NB: * Indicates information required by Historic Environment Record (HER) Please make sure this is included</i>	
Section 1.	
Site Name*	
Location*	County: * District or Borough: * Find your local council - GOV.UK Parish: * Find your Parish – PARISH.UK Network
Type of Survey*	Desk based / site visit
Surveyed by:	Volunteer's name/s
Reported completed:	Date
Heritage Assets	
NHLE Names and Numbers*	Any Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments within the landscape or relating to it. See Historic England's National Heritage List for England: https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/ , <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abbot's Hall, Grade II* Listed Building (LB), no. 1195859 • Abbot's Hall Fishing Lodge, Grade II LB, no. 1195860
HER (Historic Environment Record)*	To find any existing HER records (archaeology, buildings, designed landscapes etc.) within your site, search your county's Historic Environment Record (sometimes called a Sites and Monuments Record): HeritageGateway - Historic Environment Records . <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px;"> List them, e.g., Abbot's Hall (P/Med) Suffolk HER Number MSF12840. Monument: Canal/Garden/Garden House </div>
Is the designed landscape listed locally?	Check the Local Planning Authority website.
Is it in a Conservation Area?	Check Local Planning Authority website or search yellow-shaded areas on your county's HER map.

Recording Form

Section 1 continued

Landscape Summary and Description (for the HER record)	
Summary*	1-3 lines briefly comprising name, type, period and designers (if known)
Description*	More in-depth summary with reference to the items in the description section of the form.
Statement of Significance (brief notes, as bullet points) For a large or complex landscape, consider dividing into character areas NB. Complete this section <i>after</i> Section 2.	

Owner Information (if multiple owners, please provide all known)	
Name	Owners may prefer someone else to be the main contact, e.g. land agent
Address	
Telephone	
Email	
Main contact for the site (if different from above)	
Name	Who did you communicate with and/or meet?
Address	
Telephone	
Email:	
Owner/Occupier notes	
Any extra information not given above	Keep polite! Research is open to freedom of information requests.

Recording Form

Section 2

Section 2. Outline History of the Site	
Key Dates*	Principal phase(s) of development
Key People*	Any important designers or historical figures associated with the site (this could contribute to a registration application)
Events:	Was the site associated with any important historical events or movements? (this could contribute to a registration application)
Influence:	Did the site change fashions? Is it a good example of its type? Does it appear in art or literature? (this could contribute to a registration application)
Documentation*	Archival records or published sources relating to the site's history may add to its interest. Is it well documented?
Major changes	Have there been any major losses to the landscape, or incursions from other development? Is it intact as a designed landscape?
List of sources*	Follow your local HER format. Probably similar to this: (1) Published document: Thoroton Society. 1939. TTS. P. 73 (2) Personal comment: Woodhouse WC. 1959. Pers Comm.
	(3) Monograph: Cantor LM. 1983. The Medieval Parks of England: A Gazetteer. pp58-59 (4) Map: Sanderson G. 1835. 20 miles around Mansfield – 2 in. (5) Map: OS. 1920. 1:2500, County Series 1920

Recording Form

Section 3

Section 3. Site Visit	
Date/s*	
Site Contact	Person you met there
Site visit by*	Your name(s) and name of the project (Green Futures)
Are there any threats to the preservation of the site?	Have you noticed anything during your desk-based research. E.g. neighbouring construction, quarrying, swimming pool in the walled garden etc.?
Are there any other issues and/or vulnerabilities that could potentially affect its preservation?	e.g., divided ownership, conflicting uses (internal to site), unsympathetic development (internal to site), lapsed maintenance, features/structures in poor condition etc.
Are there any Stewardship Schemes relevant to the site?	Ask the owner. Maybe Higher Level Stewardship – consult the MAGIC website . Once you click 'get started' a new window opens with interactive mapping and you can search for live stewardship agreements by ticking the 'Land Based Schemes' and 'Agri-Environment / Environmental Stewardship' options.
Is there a management plan in place?	Ask the owner and/or consult existing lists of Conservation Management Plans on Parks & Gardens UK www.parksandgardens.org/conservation/conservation-management-plans
Constraints encountered	Anything that made visiting difficult?

Recording Form

Section 4

Section 4. Description of the Site	
Ordnance Survey 8-figure grid reference – site centre	E.g., AB 1234 5678 Use Grid Reference Finder website https://gridreferencefinder.com/ (Right click in the middle of your site or on a particular feature to find the 8-figure grid reference)
Postcode:	Use Grid Reference Finder, as above.
Type of Location	Include location in relation to settlements, roads, rivers etc. Area of the site in hectares (use a free app like Google Maps Area Calculator https://www.mapdevelopers.com/area_finder.php) and how the parts relate to each other. What forms the boundaries? What sort of land is adjacent?
Entrance points and pathways*	Where? Main dates, features and changes. What was the view as people approached?
Main component areas	Just a list of main character areas (this helps when compiling your report on site)
Views and vistas	Record direction and features. Any changes, through different phases of development?
Landforms and earthworks*	Location, brief description including size, mark on maps if not obvious. Archaeological features will probably be on the HER.
Water features*	Such as lakes, ponds, rivers, channels, moats, fountains. Location, brief description including size, mark on maps if not obvious.

Recording Form

Section 4 continued

Tree species and specimen trees	ID species. Estimate how old from the girth, or just say young/semi-mature/ mature/veteran or ancient. (Look on Woodland Trust Ancient Tree Inventory map Ancient Tree Inventory - Woodland Trust for any recorded individuals)
Structural planting	E.g., lime avenue, clipped yew hedges, clumps of trees, rose gardens etc.
Buildings, constructions and ornaments*	Statues, aviaries, summer house, ice house, temples, seats etc. Check the NHLE for Listed buildings Search the List – Find listed buildings, monuments, battlefields and more Historic England . Check local authority websites to see if they are locally listed. Mark on maps.
Pleasure grounds/gardens	Location and brief description
Parkland	Extent and character
Land beyond the boundary that makes a contribution to significance	Near and distant views and vistas, other elements of setting e.g., sound of neighbouring stream, ‘borrowed’ landscapes, neighbouring historic buildings etc. which adds to the character.
Kitchen gardens and productive/service areas*	Description. Are the paths still evident? Are there remains of glasshouses, dipping pools, boiler houses, bothies etc.
Modern features	Anything added in later? Swimming pools? Tennis courts? Modern glasshouses, housing etc.
Boundaries*	Describe the boundary walls/fences/ha ha etc. Any parts missing? Been replaced?
Other descriptions or features not covered above	

Recording Form

Section 5

Section 5. Concluding	
Final comments:	
Site map attached?* (Please indicate ownership boundaries where known)	Yes/No May an historic OS map you have drawn on, in the field, or later, then photographed/scanned. Could do separate maps for planting, statues etc.
Labelled photographs*	Yes/No Essential to label each photo, preferably including direction you took photo in, plus date
Photo permission attached?	Please ask owner to sign photography permission form provided by GT, if including in your report any photographs of the landscape <i>not</i> taken from public viewpoints/rights of way.
Drone images	If using your own or others' drone images/footage, ensure that this is legal. Adhere to restrictions on no-fly zones; ensure operator has correct license; follow guidance on where to fly, according to size of drone. Check restrictions here Flying remotely piloted aircraft UK Civil Aviation Authority
Copies of useful source materials attached and labelled?	Yes/No E.g. online articles, or clear photos of documents, maps etc.
Sensitive information	Ensure that you have asked site owner/manager to list any features not to be included (as photos and/or text) in final report. List these separately.

Before you go

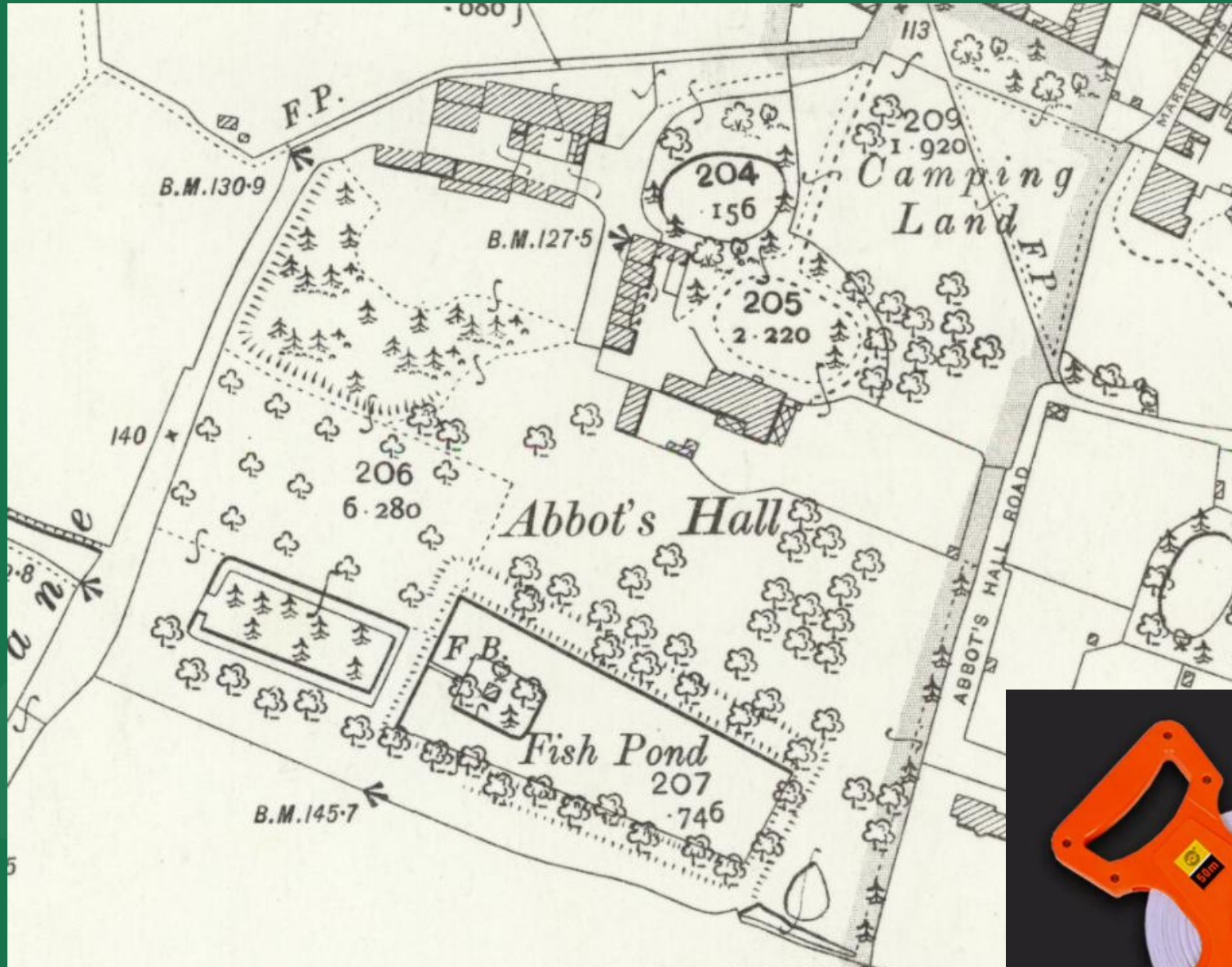
- Start researching history – make a timeline
 - Collect key maps, images
 - List features to look for

©Gardens Trust



What to bring

- Map to mark up
- Other key maps or images
- Notebook
- “Shopping list” of features
- Tape measure
- Appropriate clothes
- A research buddy
- Snacks!



Detail from OS 25-inch map Suffolk LVI.7. National Library of Scotland website:
<https://maps.nls.uk/>



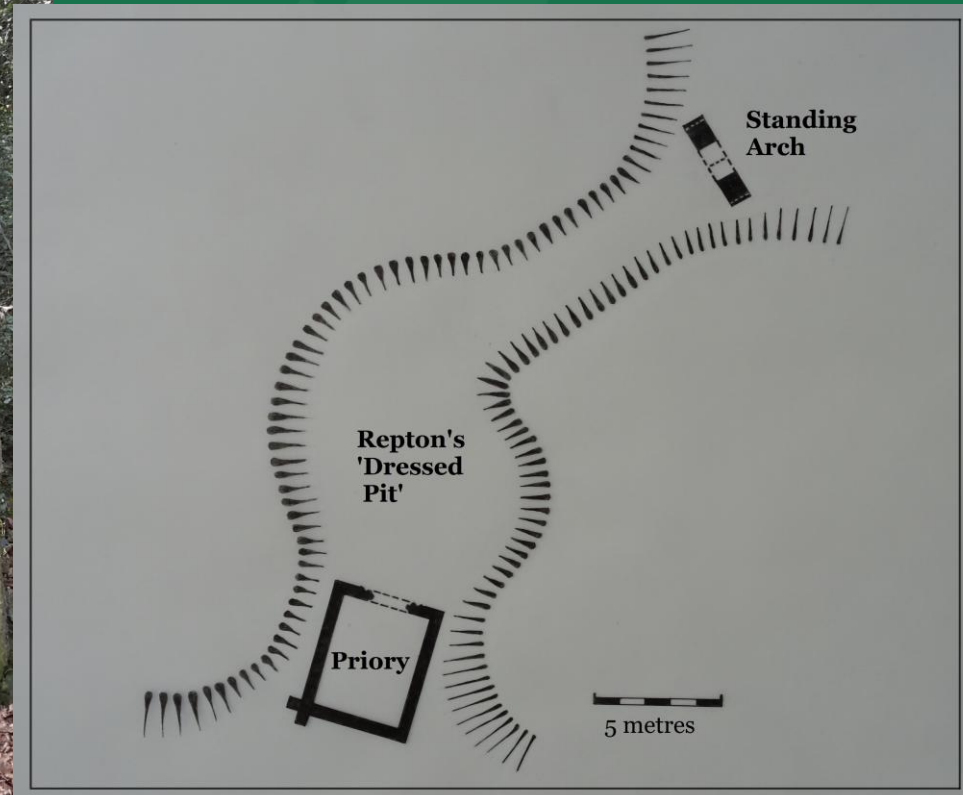
Recording Methods



Garden 'Chapel' foundations (known as The Priory) and standing arch at Bracondale Lodge: ©S. Bate



Sketch plan of Repton's dressed pit at Bracondale Lodge: ©S. Bate



Recording Methods



©Gardens Trust

THE
GARDENS
TRUST



©Gardens Trust

Volunteer Expenses

- Help with travel costs
 - Archive costs
 - Contact ?

Project timetable

- **26 August:** Volunteer meet up at The Food Museum, Abbots Hall, Stowmarket
- **25 September:** webinar by Caroline Skinner (HE) 'Understanding Designation'
- **October 2025:** volunteer visits to county archives
- **October 2025** (tbc): webinar on uploading reports to heritage platforms
- **From now to April 2026:** volunteers research and record their sites and submit forms by end of April. Online and in-person meetings to share news and queries
- **May – October 2026:** travelling exhibition, end of project webinar and in-person volunteer celebration.



**Thank you for taking part in
Green Futures and undertaking
such an important role – we
look forward to hearing about
all your discoveries.**

Have fun!