Gardens Trust Green Futures Project, 2025-2026: Site Record	
Section 1.	
Site Name*	Bressingham Gardens
Location*	County: Norfolk District or Borough: South Norfolk Parish: Bressingham
Type of Survey*	Desk based / site visits
Surveyed by:	Scilla Latham, Lizzie Billett
Reported completed:	Date: 29.03.2026
Heritage Assets	
NHLE Names and Numbers*	Bressingham Hall: NHLE no. 1049648 Grade II
HER (Historic Environment Record)*	Bressingham Hall: NHER No 14706, Monument
Is the designed landscape listed locally?	No
Is it in a Conservation Area?	No
Landscape Summary and Description	
Summary*	Bressingham Gardens, in the grounds of Bressingham Hall, cover around 15 acres of former meadowland. They chart the development of post war garden design and planting in the creative and innovative use of island beds, introduced by Alan Bloom and further developed by his son Adrian Bloom. These beds vary in size and shape, to display alpines, herbaceous perennials, grasses, shrubs and trees to their optimum with planting bred, raised and grown at Bressingham Gardens. The gardens are an example of mid-20th century style of gardening, within a domestic landscape and nursery business.
Description*	Bressingham Hall, is a late-18th-century house of two storeys to the front and three to the rear, at the same height. Originally built in yellow brick, fashionable at the time, the house is now covered in ivy. The house was owned by three generations of the Martin family, Robert Martin died 27.1.1831, his wife Elizabeth died 18.8.1844. 1842 Tithe map/apportionment (The Genealogist website) shows the Hall and grounds were owned by Thomas Chenery, and occupied by Richard Wilmore and family. It was sold in 1877 by Mr. Henry Wells, with 168 acres of arable, pasture and marsh land, with stables, cow sheds, piggery, large slated barn and other outbuildings. A walled garden (now grassed) and Victorian conservatory (now replaced). A small landscape park occupies the land north of the house. The hall was purchased by Alan Bloom in 1945/6.

	Bressingham Gardens are two distinct gardens, The Dell Garden and Foggy Bottom developed from pastureland surrounding the hall. **The Dell Garden**, so called because of the natural declining topography of the garden, comprises 9 acres of land, formerly pastureland, is bordered on two sides by mature planting of trees and shrubs to screen the garden from the A1066 to the north and west. Within the garden are varying sizes and shapes of some 60 island beds. The Garden Railway, (bordering the north and west boundary within the screening) is an integral part of the garden allowing visitors to view the garden from different perspectives not available on foot. To the north is the Winter Garden, with three/four beds of varieties of conifers, Acers, Cornus and grasses, provide winter colour, shape and contour, developed in 2001. The Summer Garden with three beds of shrubs, grasses and herbaceous perennials of summer interest, was developed in 2006 To the south a grass way leads to Bressingham Hall and ancillary buildings in front of which is a smaller area of island beds, the original area planted, which is now closed to the public. The land naturally slopes down to The Dell away from the Hall to the west. Leading the way down there are two island beds linked by a flint bridge with an underpass, excavated and built by Alan Bloom, as a former boundary to grazing cattle. An informal ornamental pond with seat and walkway around the water is bounded on one side by a raised flint wall for planting. Further west is a thatched summer house and nearby is a dry circular well covered with railings. Continuing west is a naturally screened area concealing the circular return track for the Garden Railway which borders the garden of three sides. The Dell Garden is planted with many hardy perennials and trees bred by Alan Bloom. Standing dramatically alone in the middle of the garden is a mature pine, Picea omorika 'Pendula Bruns', planted by the family in memory of Robert Bloom, Alan Bloom's son, who was tragically killed in a car accident in 1995 Leaving the Dell Garden southwards, are fragrant island beds. There is hedging to the west and mature trees and shrubs to the east, leading to the Horse Lake over which there is a timber bridge on the left and Adrian's Wood to the right, (planted in 1964 featuring plants from North America, Canada and Mexico and seeds of Sierra Redwoods grown from seed, now over 100ft). A walkway through the wood leads to a path that borders the entrance to Foggy Bottom. **Foggy Bottom,** named after an area in North America visited by Adrian Bloom on his travels, compromises of 6 acres developed from former pasture land. At the entrance to Foggy Bottom to the left and right are mature trees and shrubs with herbaceous perennial under planting

	bordering an unmade track and field know as Gap Meadow which is used as an overflow car park for the Steam Museum. Foggy Bottom is designed to be viewed, (as Adrian Bloom describes in this book, Foggy Bottom, A Garden to Share) from Crossways Corner in the centre of the garden offering views to the north, south, east and west. Generous island beds and wide grass walkways give a restful feel as you explore the garden. From the Crossways Corner Eastward, beds are planted with contrasting shrub stems and foliage including varieties of Cornus, Cotinus and Hydrangea. Southward, the grass divides into two pathways with island beds planted to show specimen trees and shrubs to their optimum. Northward, three mature grey spruce and other pines dominate the skyline, under planted with varieties of grasses which blend with dwarf conifers and Cornus stems. Westward, mature specimen trees with a weeping giant redwood form a backdrop to lower planting. A winding island bed leads towards a large informal pond with a central island planted with a stunning mature Metasequoia glyptostroboides. A timber framed bridge over the pond leads to Rosemary's Wood, developed in memory of Adrian Bloom's wife. Within the wood is a natural sculpture of oak, made from a fallen tree in the garden by one of Rosemary's son. Leaving the wood, (which is closed for safety reasons to the public at present) is an open fronted summerhouse. The boundary on the west side is planted with screening trees and shrubs. Within Foggy Bottom there are 39 island beds of varying shapes and sizes. Situated within the garden is a private 1970s house which is screened from the public garden by mature trees and shrubs.
Statement of Significance	
Archaeological interest	A Lidar image shows a rectangular shape, said by Alan Bloom to be a former brick kiln in The Dell Garden
Architectural and Artistic Interest	The development of 'island beds' in horticulture in post war Britain, which influenced gardening and garden design in the late 20th Century to present day.
Historic Interest	• Horticultural impact of innovative island beds designed by Alan Bloom, now widely used throughout the gardening world. • Alan Bloom and Adrian Bloom are the only father and son to receive Victoria Medal of Honour (RHS)
Summary Statement of Significance	Bressingham Gardens comprises of two linked informal gardens, of around 15 acres, The Dell Garden and Foggy Bottom, developed from former pastureland in the grounds of Bressingham Hall.

	The innovative style of gardening of island beds, begun in 1952 by horticulturalist Alan Bloom further developed by his son Adrian Bloom, were a major influence in post-war British gardening to the present day. The gardens offer a series of island beds varying in shape and size, planted with shrubs, hardy perennials and grasses in such a way that allows viewing on all sides, with no staking, so the planting may be fully appreciated. Many varieties of plants bred by Alan Bloom and Adrian Bloom can be found within the gardens. Integral to The Dell Garden is the Garden Railway which borders it on three sides. Alan Bloom and Adrian Bloom's contribution to horticulture is recognised in the award to both of the Victoria Medal of Honour by The Royal Horticultural Society, the only father and son to receive the medal. The gardens are an example of a post –war style of gardening, within a domestic landscape and nursery business which are open seasonally to the public.
Owner Information (if multiple owners, please provide all known)	
Name	Adrian Bloom
Address	Bressingham Gardens, Low Road, Diss, IP22 2AA
Telephone	n/a
Email	REDACTED
Main contact for the site (if different from above)	
Name	n/a
Address	
Telephone	
Email:	
Owner/Occupier notes	
Any extra information not given above	Jason and Matthew Bloom to be included in any correspondence Both are company directors of Bressingham Gardens

Section 2. Outline History of the Site	
Key Dates*	1945–6: Bressingham Hall purchased by Alan Bloom **The Dell** Created from pasture land to the front and side of Bressingham Hall 1952–3: First 7 island beds developed 1955: Development of lake known as Horse Pond 1957: Bridge built for cattle to underpass 1957: Development of The Dell with more island beds 1958: Horse shoe shaped pool with flint wall 1958: Shrubbery added close to nursery beds 1960–61: More island beds added 1961–62: long flint wall added to raise the natural level

	1970: Steam museum developed 1970: Adrian and Robert Bloom become managing directors of Blooms' Nurseries Ltd. 1971: Adrian's Wood planted 1994: 10¼ gauge Garden Railway added later replaced by 9½ gauge 1964: track extended to make a round trip possible along the north and west side of the garden 2001: Summer garden developed 2006: Winter garden developed **Foggy Bottom** 1966–1985: created from 6 acres of pastureland to the rear west side of Bressingham Hall predominantly conifers and heathers 1986–1999: change of character and redesign to reflect changing tastes of planting 2001: Development of entrance to the Dell Garden, from Adrian's Wood a new pathway was developed connecting the Dell Garden to Foggy Bottom avoiding walking through the steam museum. 2001: Development of Rosemary's garden in memory of Adrian's wife 2001: Summer garden added to the Dell Garden 2005: Alan Bloom dies 2006: Winter garden added to The Dell Garden 2007: Blooms of Bressingham acquired by Wyevale Garden Centres, the Bloom family retain steam museum and gardens. Adrian Blooms sons Jason and Matthew Bloom Managing Directors of Blooms of Bressingham 2025: The Dell Garden was looked after by Alan's son-law, curator Jamie Blake until his retirement in 2025
Key People*	Alan Bloom 1906- 2005 and his son Adrian Bloom 1940-
Events:	Gardens open to the public seasonally Private garden opening Bressingham Hall and Gardens venue hire for weddings and events
Influence:	Alan Bloom, Adrian Bloom
Documentation*	*Prelude to Bressingham*, Alan Bloom, Dalton Limited (1975) *The Story of Bressingham*, Bloom, Alan, Alan Bloom (1986) *Come You Here, Boy!* Bloom, Alan, Aiden Publishing (1995) *Foggy Bottom, A Garden to Share*, Bloom, Adrian (2023) *Norfolk Gardens and Designed Landscapes,* Dallas, Patsy, Last, Roger & Williamson, Tom, Norfolk Gardens Trust (2013)
Major changes	1952 **The Dell Garden** developed 1957–1958: garden extended 1961–1962: garden extended 1994: Garden railway added 1964: Garden Railway extended 2001: Summer Garden added 2001: Adrian's Wood developed 2006: Winter Garden added

	1966–1985: **Foggy Bottom** developed 1980: Major replanting and updating 1986–1999: redesign
List of sources*	Bressingham Gardens Website https://www.thebressinghamgardens.com/ Obituary Alan Bloom The Guardian Rosemary Atkins https://www.theguardian.com/news/2005/apr/06/guardianobituaries Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alan_Bloom Norfolk Heritage Explorer Historic Environment Record Alan Down Blog https://down-to-earth.co.uk/gardens-visited/the-dell-garden-at-bressingham-gardens/ Maps: Ordnance Survey, maps courtesy of National Library of Scotland Map: Norwich to Tilbury Pylons, interactive map

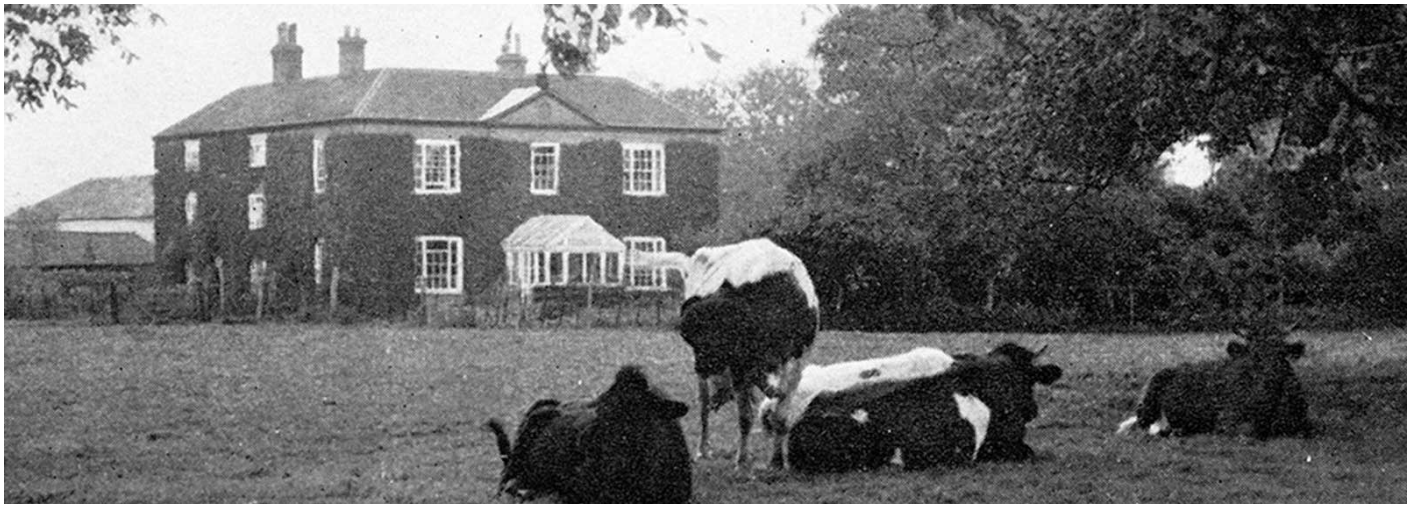
Section 3. Site Visit	
Date/s*	9.10.2025, 21.10.2025, 5.11.2025
Site Contact	
Site visit by*	Scilla Latham, Lizzie Billett
Are there any threats to the preservation of the site?	The proximity of the gardens to the proposed Norwich to Tilbury line of pylons to the north-west across fields, approximately 1000meters.
Are there any other issues and/or vulnerabilities that could potentially affect its preservation?	Unknown
Are there any Stewardship Schemes relevant to the site?	Unknown
Is there a management plan in place?	Probably but not seen.
Constraints encountered	Did not visit with the owner or directors.

Section 4. Description of the Site	
Ordnance Survey 8-figure grid reference – site centre	TM 0790 8058
Postcode:	IP22 2AA
Type of Location	Rural
Entrance points and pathways*	Northern access to the garden from A1066 to a designated car park area, through a shop/building leading to the steam museum and Dell Garden. From The Dell Garden leading to Adrian's Wood crossing a pedestrian path which runs alongside the entrance to Foggy Bottom
Main component areas	The Dell Garden, Foggy Bottom, Garden Railway
Views and vistas	Both gardens offer gently unfolding views of varying features of different island beds drawing the eye to

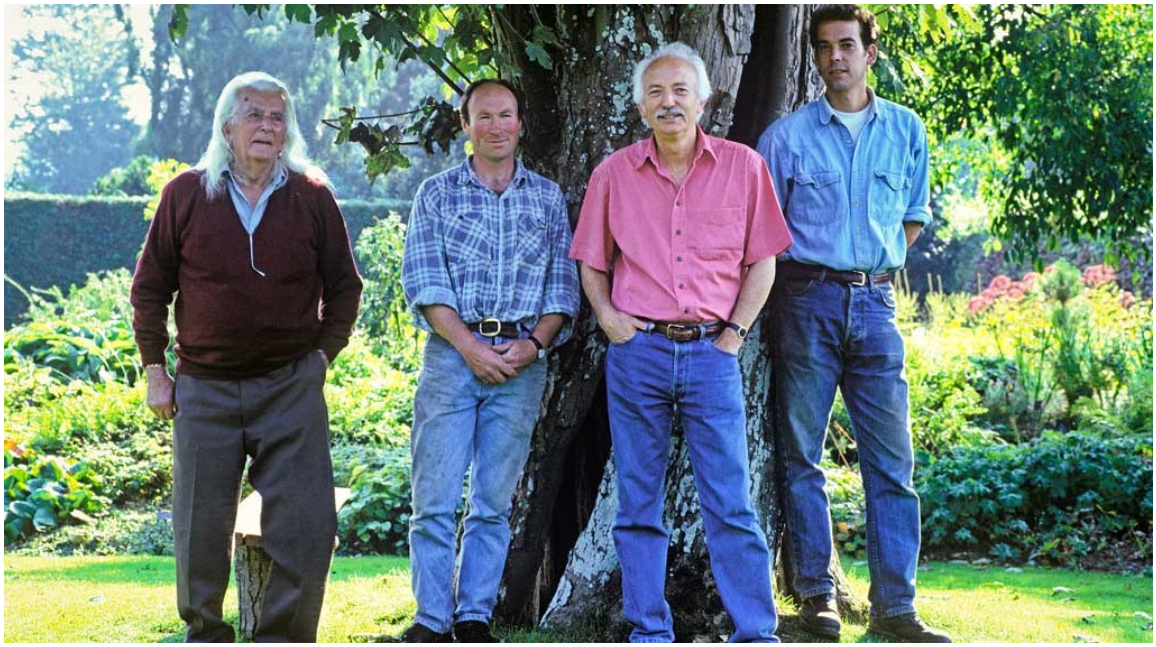
	specimen trees, shrubs and under planting, with strategically placed built design features. Former views from the house now blocked for privacy.
Landforms and earthworks*	**The Dell Garden** – a depressed dip falling away from the Hall to the south west
Water features*	**The Dell garden** - ornamental pond, The Horse Lake **Foggy Bottom** – informal pond
Tree species and specimen trees	**The Dell Garden** Original planting: Two Quercus oak trees, 300 hundred years old One Quercus oak tree, 500 years old Pinus omorika 'Pendula Bruns' planted in memory of Robert Bloom 1939-1995, Alan Bloom's son **Foggy Bottom** Abies procera 'Glauca' Betula nigra Calocedrus decurrens 'Berrima Gold' Catalpa bignonioides 'Aurea' Cupressus semperivens 'Green Pencil' Metasequoia glyptostoboides 'Gold Rush' Nyssa sylvatica Picea pungens 'Enrich Frahm' Picea pungens 'Koster' Pinus contorta 'Frisian Gold' Sequoiadendron giganticum 'Pendulum' Sorbus thibetica 'John Mitchell'
Structural planting	Internal hedging to screen and divide areas in The Dell Garden of Prunus lusitanica, Fagus sylvatica, Leylandii and Ilex aquifolium
Buildings, constructions and ornaments*	Bressingham Hall, High Barn and out buildings. **The Dell Garden**, ornamental pond, flint bridge with underpass, thatched flint summer house, cigar shaped raised bed with flint wall, circular flint well four feet wide and twenty feet deep, timber bridge over the Horse Lake **Foggy Bottom** – thatched summerhouse, 'henge' stacks, timber bridge over pond, Rosemary's Spire, (a towering wooden oak sculpture made by Matthew son of Adrain Bloom in memory of his mother, Rosemary Bloom)
Pleasure grounds/gardens	Adjacent to the gardens are the Steam Museum, Garden Railway, Dad's Army Museum, café, The Gallopers, a traditional circular funfair ride, miniature railway, and locomotive collection
Parkland	Gap meadow, to the south of the Dell garden and east of Foggy Bottom is used for events overflow car park
Land beyond the boundary that makes	Southward to fen land and river Waveney

a contribution to significance	
Kitchen gardens and productive/service areas*	1880 map shows two glass houses, the west wall of which has an opening containing a circular ventilation fan. These areas are not open to the public
Modern features	Rosemary's Spire
Boundaries*	To the north A1066 to the east Bressingham garden centre (owned by British Garden Centres is a separate business. The steam museum which adjoins the gardens is part of Bressingham Gardens. To the west Church Lane leading to a footpath leading southward bending and leading to the overflow car park
Other descriptions or features not covered above	A narrow gauge Garden Railway of 750 yard looped round trip bordering three sides of the Dell Garden

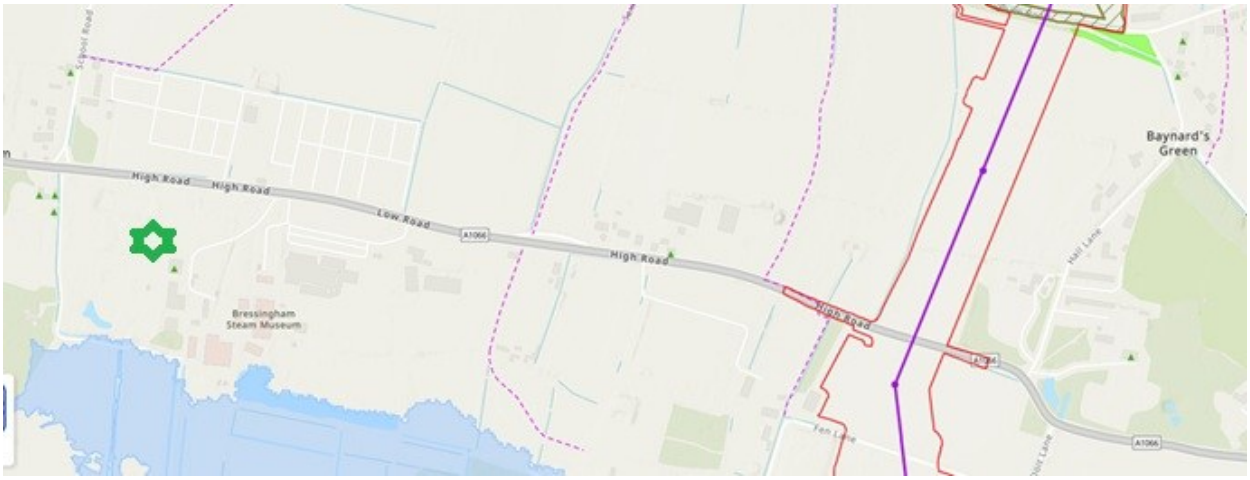
Section 5. Concluding	
Final comments:	Bressingham Gardens are an exceptional example of the development of post war garden design and planting of island beds, begun by Alan Bloom and continued by his son Adrian Bloom. Over the years the gardens have been redesigned and updated reflecting changing public tastes in planting. The garden enables the gardening public to see plants grown in a variety of settings, displayed to their optimum, where ideas gained can then be used in the visitors own gardens and purchased at the nursery.
Site map attached?* (Please indicate ownership boundaries where known)	Yes
Labelled photographs*	1. Bressingham Hall prior to development of The Dell Garden, *Bressingham Gardens website* 2. Alan Bloom, Adrian Bloom, Jamie Blake and Jason Bloom, *Bressingham website* 3. Site of Pylons in relation to Bressingham Gardens, *Norwich to Tilbury Pylons, interactive map* 4. Bressingham Hall and land from Norfolk Tithe Map (1842), *Norfolk Historic Map Explorer* 5. 1884 OS Map, *National Library of Scotland* 6. Separate File: Bressingham Gardens The Dell Garden Photographs courtesy of Scilla Latham, photos taken autumn 2025 7. Separate File: Bressingham Gardens Foggy Bottom Photographs courtesy of Scilla Latham, photos taken autumn 2025
Photo permission attached?	No – photos taken over several days when the garden was open to the public
Drone images	No
Copies of useful source materials attached and labelled?	
Sensitive information	



1. Bressingham Hall prior to development of The Dell Garden
Taken from Bressingham Gardens Website (copyright)



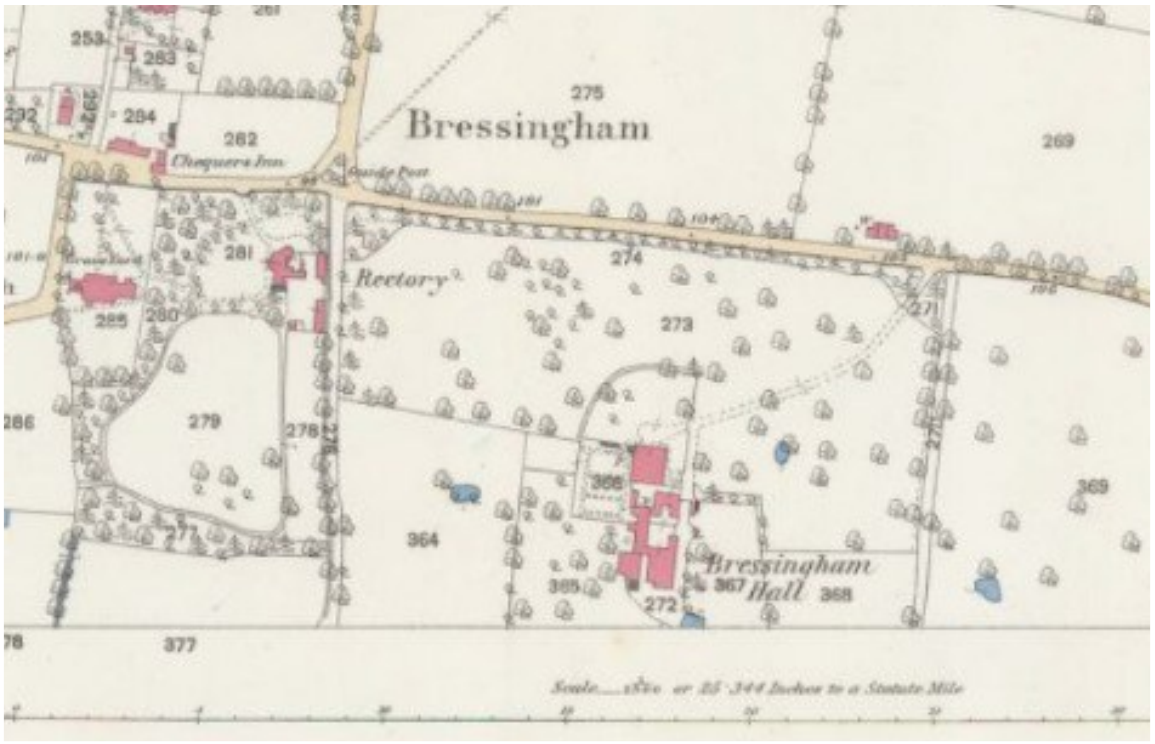
2. Photograph taken in 2003, showing 96 year old Alan Bloom on the left with son in law Jaime Blake, curator of the Dell Garden, Adrian Bloom chairman of the family business, Blooms Nurseries Ltd. (and gardener) and Adrian and Rosemary's eldest son Jason Bloom, Managing Director and nursery grower and manager. *Taken from Bressingham website (copyright)*



3. Norwich to Tilbury Pylon Route (Bressingham Gardens marked with green star)



4. 1842 Tithe Map of Bressingham. Source: Norfolk Historic Map Explorer



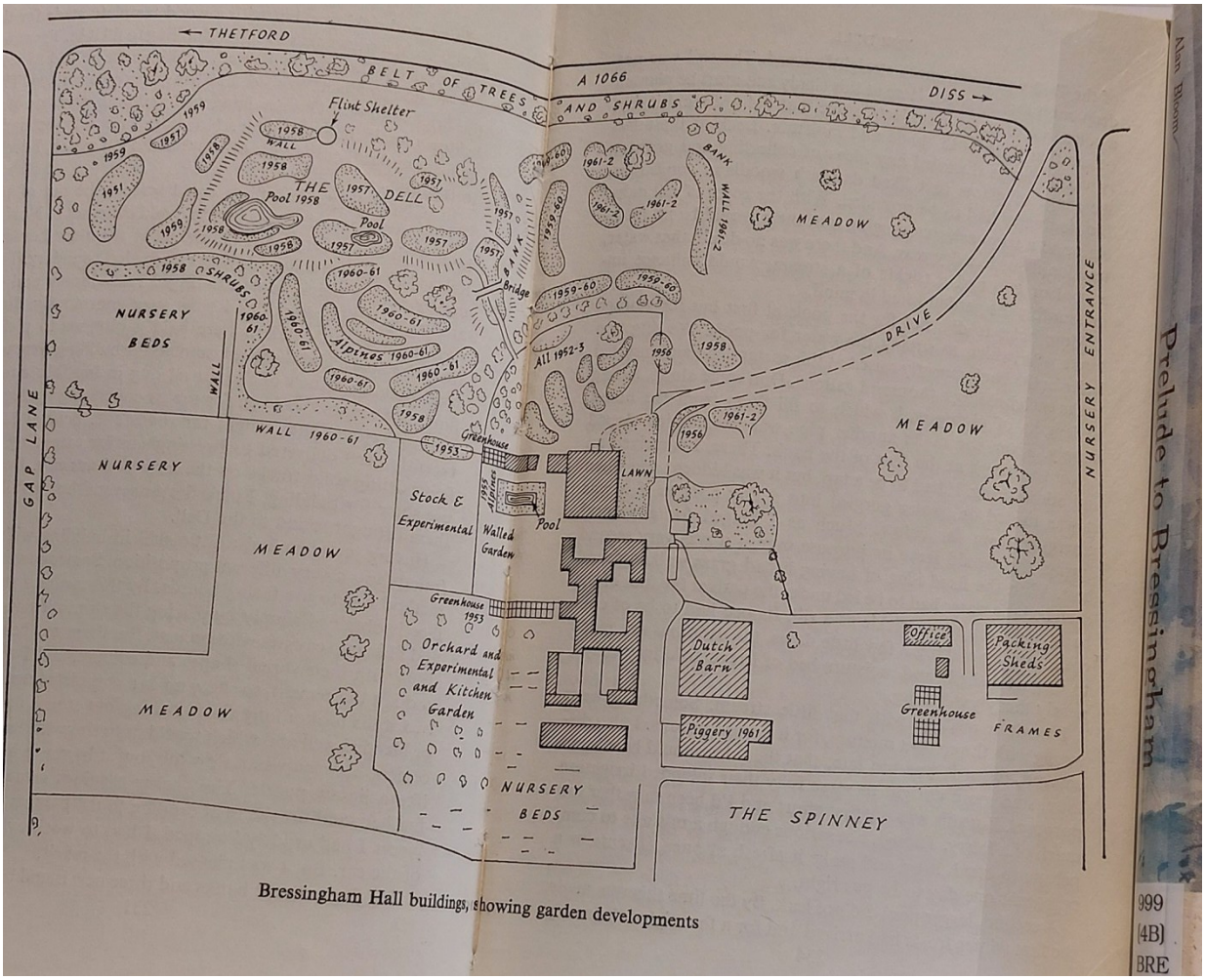
5. 1884 25-inch OS Map, *National Library of Scotland*



6. Bressingham Gardens Map
Taken from Bressingham Gardens website



7. Boundary of Bressingham Gardens from Google Earth



8. Bressingham Hall buildings showing the Dell Garden development. Taken from *The Story of Bressingham*, Alan Bloom, 1986 (copyright)

Bressingham Gardens - The Dell Garden
Photos courtesy of Scilla Latham

1.



Bressingham Hall – looking south from the Dell Garden

2.



Two original Quercus robur south-west of hall

3.



Undulating island beds with Bressingham Hall in the distance looking south-east

4.



Island beds looking south-west

5.



Renewing and replanting an island bed looking south-west

6.





Flint bridge and walkway
Looking westward

7.



View from Island beds to flint bridge and hall southward

8.



View through flint bridge south west to island beds

9.



Flint thatched summerhouse and flint circular well, looking south west

10.



Looking southwest updating and replanting an island bed

11.



Pinus omoriks “Pendula Bruns”

Planted 19th March 1996 in memory of Robert Bloom (1939-1995) Alan Bloom’s son

12.



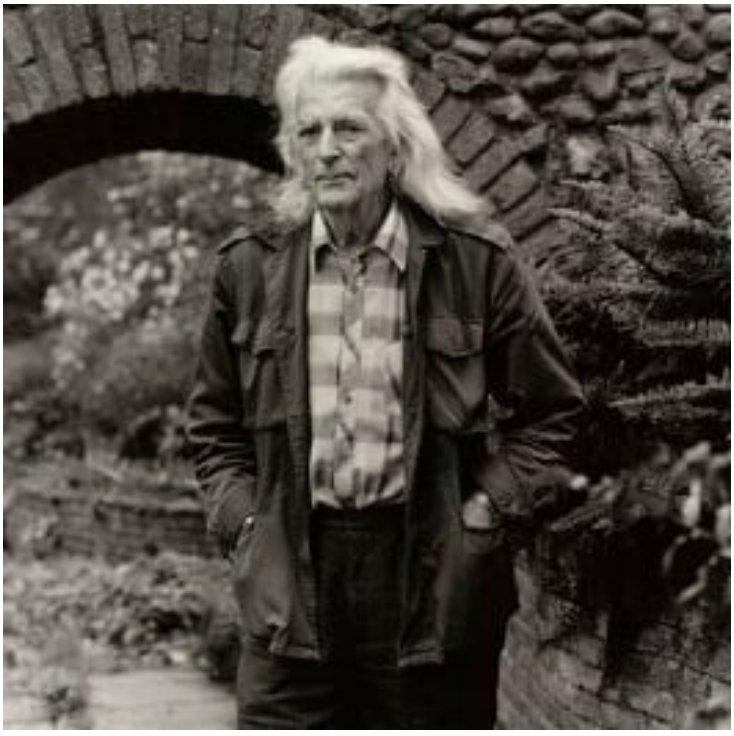
Garden railway on the western boundary

13.



Looking southeast from the entrance to the Dell Garden to the steam museum

14.



Photograph of Alan Bloom by Lucinda Douglas-Menzies
bromide fibre print, 1990
NPG x35121
National Portrait Gallery
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