



Newsletter

Berkshire Gardens Trust



CHAIR'S WELCOME

Welcome to the first edition of our revived Newsletter.

Since our last newsletter in 2020, we have had the benefit of our website to stay connected with members. I am pleased to introduce the first edition of our new look newsletter.

We shared recent Berkshire Gardens Trust (BGT) news at the Annual General Meeting (please visit our website for the Trustees' Report and Chair's Update.) Since then, we have had two interesting and very different events: first, the illustrated panel discussion between garden owners, Willie Hartley-Russell DL, owner of Bucklebury House, Bucklebury; Niamh Kendall, owner of Kidmore House, Kidmore End; and Bruce Ginsberg, owner of Earlestone Manor, Burghclere.

Also we held a Zoom talk with Elena Saggiaro, a Research Fellow at the Walker Institute, University of Reading.

VOLUME 1
JANUARY 2024

Newsletter Highlights

A Message From the Chair,
Bettina Kirkham - Page 1

Future Events by Month -
save the date! - Page 4

The Manor House, Upton
Grey - Page 12

Our Favourite Plants, Trees,
and Parks - Page 20

Enjoying Historical
Landscapes - Page 24

Our Aim

To identify, understand,
appreciate, and promote
the conservation of
historically significant
designed landscapes in
Berkshire...

*"enjoying and caring for
our garden heritage, now,
and for future generations"*

Elena explored the effects of climate change which generated a lively well-informed debate. We now have a varied programme of events coming up for 2024.

Our first targets for 2024 are to complete and share the research into the Public Parks, to undertake an updated survey of the membership's views on the work BGT undertakes and how we can best inspire you, and to gain closer working relationships with like-minded organisations and new audiences.

Our two new trustees Sian Thomas and Michelle Leek have taken on new responsibilities for us and Deborah James has handed over her social media role to them since resigning as a trustee. Hugh Simon has been working with Fiona Hope to hand over secretarial responsibilities to him which is working well.

Our historic parks and gardens matter to us, we have fond memories of visiting them and feel a strong connection to them. One such for me is Grey's Court near Henley. The ancient wisteria is not only beautiful but recalls my parents pushing my young son through the fronds; of my children, and now my grandchildren, chasing each other and cheating around the maze; and the quiet white garden, which is perfect for a G&T and a good book.

Thank you to the trustees for suggesting we revive the newsletter, for putting 'pen to paper' and providing us with photographs.

Particular thanks to our trustee, Sian Thomas for coordinating the articles and working with freelance copywriter, Olivia Cal, whom we have appointed to design and edit it.

I hope you will like the new look of our Newsletter and enjoy the range of different articles which span the work that BGT is involved in. We would be very pleased if you would like to contribute a short article for the next edition, please contact

BerksGTenquiries@gmail.com



Bettina Kirkham, Chair

How to Join Our Trust

Berkshire has a rich heritage of parks and gardens of national significance, many of which have splendid designs and plant collections.

Membership of the Berkshire Gardens Trust gives you the opportunity to visit these parks and gardens.

You may be able to participate in researching their history or contribute to their conservation and restoration. Become a member of the Trust and enjoy helping us preserve the garden heritage of Berkshire.

[Download an application form](#) or email BerksGTmembership@gmail.com.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Future Events by Month</u>	4
• January: Flowers and Gardens in Historic Portraits	4
• February: Bramshill, Hampshire: the mystery of its historic gardens and botanical paintings	4
• March: Happy Birthday Perennial: Celebrating 185 years of helping British Gardeners	5
• April: Private Tour of Chiswick House	6
<u>Conservation</u>	8
• Imagining Berkshire’s Historic Landscapes in the 21st Century: What climate science says about changes to come and how to respond	8
• How Do We Go About Responding to Planning Matters?	9
<u>Research</u>	12
• The Manor House, Upton Grey	12
<u>Report on Historic England’s 2024 Annual Historic Assembly</u>	15
<u>Our Favourite Plants, Trees, and Parks</u>	20
• The Champion Trees of Berkshire	20
• Peonies	23
<u>Enjoying Historical Landscapes</u>	24
• Kelmscott Manor, the home of William Morris, April 2023	24
• Lower Bowden Manor, 31st May 2023	26
• Visits to Old Camps Garden, Hampshire, July 2023	27
• Late Summer Visit to Englefield House September 2023	29
• The Opportunities and Challenges of Restoring and Creating New Gardens Within Private Historic Settings	31
<u>Appreciations</u>	32
• Edward Golton	32
• Veronica Suffield-Jones	33

FUTURE EVENTS BY MONTH

JANUARY

Flowers and Gardens in Historic Portraits

Zoom event, 22nd January 2024 @ 19:00 - 20:30

Price: £7

Flowers appear in historic portraits in various ways. They might be embroidering the silk clothes worn by fashionable women in the Tudor and Jacobean periods, ornamenting the hair of elegant ladies in portraits from 17th Century France, or held as a sprig or single flower in the hands of a woman or child, their identities often unknown.

We are very pleased to welcome Anne Haworth, an independent scholar and historian with extensive experience as a lecturer in art history. Anne delivered three popular lectures last year for The Gardens Trust series, *Paradise on Porcelain*. In this talk, Anne will bring to life the subject of gardens through a viewing of some historic portraits. Anne has worked for more than two decades within some of the world's greatest museums and most prestigious collections of art. She offers a range of lectures, study days, courses, and museum tours.

Anne was formerly a senior ceramics specialist at the head office of Christie's Fine Art Auctioneers in London and has lived in Shanghai, China. She is a lecturer and guide for private tours at the Victoria and Albert Museum in South Kensington and participates in the public education programme of gallery talks and study days at the British Museum. Join us for this wonderful [Zoom talk for January](#), bringing together the best of art, flowers, and historic gardens.

FEBRUARY

Bramshill, Hampshire: the mystery of its historic gardens and botanical paintings

Zoom event, 12th February 2024 @ 19:00 - 20:30 Price £5.00

Dr Ann Benson FSA FRHistS is a writer and lecturer on designed landscape history, specialising in the Tudor and Stuart periods within the United Kingdom. Ann is best known for her research on the ancestral homes of the Dukes of Beaufort; namely Troy House and Raglan Castle, Monmouthshire.

More recently, Ann was awarded Leverhulme Emeritus Fellowship funding for researching the garden history of the Cambridge colleges founded in medieval and Tudor times for which she also holds a Beaufort Fellowship at St John's College, Cambridge. Her research on architecture and garden history commenced on retirement from being an academic in science education at Oxford, Bristol and the Open University and serving as a consultant on assessment for the Cabinet Office. Bramshill House, in north-east Hampshire, is one of the largest, surviving Jacobean mansions in England. A house from the

1350s was largely demolished by Edward la Zouche, 11th Baron Zouche (a favourite of James I in 1605 when he began to build the Bramshill House of today.

Its design shows the influence of the Italian Renaissance. The formal gardens and parkland were also first laid out by Edward la Zouche in the early 1600s. This lecture traces the creation of those beautiful gardens and designed landscapes. Their subsequent modifications, including the significance of Edward as a horticulturist and creator of a botanic garden and employer of the eminent Flemish botanist, Matthias De L'Obel—are also covered.

One room overlooking the walled garden at Bramshill is entirely lined with panelling containing unique botanical paintings; Ann presents her exciting new research on identifying the date and source of these images.



Image courtesy of Ann Benson

Booking an Event

If you would like to come along to one of our upcoming events, please book online by visiting our website and clicking “2024 Events”. For Zoom events, we will send you a link for the lecture a few days beforehand. Some Zoom events will be recorded for those who book and are unable to attend.

Happy Birthday Perennial: Celebrating 185 years of helping British Gardeners

Purley Barn, Goosecroft Lane,
Beech Rd, Purley on Thames
Reading RG8 8DR

19th March 2024 @ 19:00 - 21:00



In the wonderful old surroundings of Purley Barn, Francesca Murray, gardener and garden history enthusiast, will give a talk on Perennial as it celebrates 185 years of helping people in horticulture.

We will hear about the work of Perennial, its history, and what it does in the 21st century to help gardeners. We'll also explore the gardens Perennial has been gifted such as Sir Roy Strong's gift this year of The Laskett Gardens in Herefordshire to Perennial to mark his 85th birthday.

Francesca is studying for a PhD at Queen Mary University of London on Nineteenth-century gardeners, nurserymen, and the associations that came to their aid. She has a Masters in Garden History from the University of Buckingham and is a contributor of garden history articles and guest speaker for Perennial,

the modern-day Gardener's Royal Benevolent institution, and a trustee of the Gardens Trust.

She has co-written a history of Exbury Gardens with Lionel de Rothschild, [The Eighth Wonder of the World: Exbury Gardens and the Rothschilds](#), published in 2022.

Francesca's talk will address her research on the Gardeners Royal Benevolent Institution and destitute gardeners of the 19th century.

This is not as depressing as it might sound but relates to Exbury and other gardens that we all enjoy and visit. Many of the Charity's recipients worked as head gardeners and nurserymen supplying these gardens and many of the garden owners supported the Charity, and still do today.



"Exbury Gardens, Hampshire, England. November 2007" by Charlesdrakew, Public Domain

Private Tour of Chiswick House

Burlington Lane, Chiswick, London W4 2RP.

25th April 2024 from 10:30

This is an exclusive opportunity to discover Chiswick House and Gardens' long, exciting, and varied history with a private tour and the possibility to stay for the whole day to experience the house and gardens in Spring.



"This is a photo of [listed building number 1000111](#)" by Michael Coppins, CC BY-SA 4.0

The award-winning café was designed by the architect firm Caruso St John. Its contemporary space looks out on the magnificent gardens and neo-Palladian villa. In 2011, the Café received three Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) awards including London Building of the Year.

This will be a memorable Berkshire Gardens Trust event for 2024 and places are limited so book early. It is always a special experience to be guided around the house privately by people who know it best. Here is what some people have to say about their visit.

Great tour around Chiswick House. The tour guide was out of this world with his knowledge. The grounds are magnificent. Visit interesting, historically, architecturally, and artistically.

Ways to travel to Chiswick House will be communicated after booking .It is easy to get to by rail bus and car and we will try to car share where possible. Turnham Green Tube station is only 20 - minute's walk. Ways to travel can be found [here](#).



"William Kent's cascade was inspired by Italian sources" by Patche99z, CC BY-SA

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Booking an Event

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CONSERVATION

Imagining Berkshire's Historic Landscapes in the 21st Century: What climate science says about changes to come and how to respond

In November we held a fascinating and thought-provoking [Zoom talk on climate risk and the Berkshire landscape](#). The talk was given by Dr Elena Saggiaro, an interdisciplinary Research Fellow on climate change adaptation at the Walker Institute, University of Reading.

Man-made climate change is already affecting peoples' and plants' lives in Berkshire. Warmer and drier summers, unprecedented torrential rainfall events, and sudden cold spells are becoming common features of the local climate. Climate change is a threat to our heritage such as our buildings, nature and landscapes including our biodiversity – all in danger of being lost.

So, what more can we expect to come as the planet keeps warming? And what can we do to support our nature and gardens to transition into the new climate of the 21st century?

In this talk, we explored what science says about the changing climate in Berkshire, and what we can do to support our landscapes and gardens to thrive (or survive) in the new climate era we are entering. We also explored the concept of “climate storylines” and how they can help visualize risk and start conversations about climate adaptation. We were shown a UK example of this on the New Forest. One theme of our discussion was the need for us all to adapt to protect our parks and gardens and to create more green spaces. Here were some of Elena's insights...



New Forest Plan

- Plant new heat and drought-tolerant plants
- Flood control via tree planting (e.g. on moorlands where appropriate)
- Water butts and tanks to capture and store excess (winter) rainfall for later irrigation (keep in shade, clean regularly to avoid algal growth)
- Reuse domestic wastewater (“grey water”) for watering plants, if not using strong cleaning products (but use readily, not store)
- Plant in Autumn so roots can develop in the wetter winter.
- Improve soil humus levels and reduce the need for watering by adding organic matter either as a top dressing, mulch or digging it in.
- Monitor and eradicate promptly old and new pests.
- Monitor trees at risk of falling due to heavy winds/storms.

Our takeaway from this talk was our own personal responsibility and how communication could inform our own work at Berkshire Gardens Trust. Watch this space!

How Do We Go About Responding to Planning Matters?

By Bettina Kirkham, Chair and Helen Parvin, member

To most of us, planning only becomes an issue when some development affects us directly. However, many planning authorities often do not have the experience or expertise to interpret the effect that a development proposal might have on our beautiful and much-loved public and private historic parks and gardens. This is where Berkshire Gardens Trust (BGT) and the Gardens Trust can step in to help.



Image 1: View of Druids Temple from the north-west

We work closely with the Gardens Trust, a statutory consultee (i.e., they must be consulted on certain types of development affecting parks and gardens). They will comment on the bigger schemes in Historic England's Grade I, II* and II Registered Parks and Gardens. We act on their behalf mainly in looking at development in Grade II*, Grade II and unlisted parks and gardens. Those unlisted are locally valued parks and gardens. Historic England will also comment on the larger schemes affecting Grade I and II* Registered Parks and Gardens. In the last year, we looked at and sent comments on over 26 planning issues. Since our records began in 2014, we have

looked at 168 cases, some several times as changes are made to the design. These were mostly planning applications but included emerging local plans and neighbourhood plans. Each week the Gardens Trust send us a list of planning issues, county by county. It is a relief when nothing is happening in Berkshire, but more often than not something needs looking at. Sometimes we are contacted directly by a planning officer and thus build up a relationship with them. This works very well as we may be alerted to something that is in the pipeline but not yet formalised.

A good example of this is James Corden's new home at Templecombe at Park Place (Grade II), Remenham. We were invited to meet on-site to discuss emerging ideas, to recommend studies that needed to be undertaken to identify historic value and the need for long-term plans to manage the landscape. Over time, through consultation, the main house was re-sited and a pool house removed to protect the setting of the Druid's Temple (Grade II listed see image 1). Proposals to conserve, restore and recreate the historic parkland were submitted and a long-term conservation management plan was produced.*

A quick look at the planning documents which are found on the

Council's website tells us whether the development is likely to affect the historic landscape. Most useful are the site plans, heritage statements, elevations, viewpoints, and landscape proposals. We generally leave any concerns about the impact on listed buildings to others – either Historic England or the Council's own Conservation Officers – except listed parkland structures which are an important part of the design of historic parks and gardens.

Planning applicants and local plans have to meet certain requirements as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). These are key to ensuring the conservation and enhancement of our historic assets and have been encapsulated in the recent Levelling Up Bill.



Image 2: Caversham Park

These apply, to various degrees, whether the site is in a World Heritage Site (such as Kew Gardens), Registered Park or Garden (such as Home Park Windsor) or a locally listed park (such as Whiteknights in Reading/Wokingham). The Local Plan Policies also set out policies for conserving our heritage.

We share the responsibility of making comments, helping each other, and having site visits together where needed. Where possible, it helps enormously if we are

invited to go on-site with the planners or the developers as many proposals are on private land. This has worked for Caversham Park (see image 2) where we have been three times, invited by the developers and have a working relationship with both them and the planners. Revisions are being discussed.

We will then submit our comments to the planning authorities, usually electronically by letter, which will be uploaded onto their website. We keep a record of all our cases, which anyone is welcome to see, and try to post the most interesting ones to the website regularly.

Most recently, we were asked to comment on a hotel-led development comprising the conversion, extension, and alteration of the existing Ditton Manor House and associated buildings (North Gatehouse, East Gatehouse, South Gatehouse, Chapel and Granary) to a flexible hotel and wedding/conference venue with associated ancillary facilities.

Facilities would include a bar, restaurant and gym/spa; additional two storey hotel accommodation block; erection of a marquee for wedding/conference use; demolition and erection of a new one storey community building; car parking; landscaping; and other associated works at Ditton Manor (see image 3).

Ditton Park is a Grade II Registered Park and Garden containing several listed buildings and structures. BGT’s comments, in summary, were:

‘These proposals fail to demonstrate how they preserve or enhance the character, appearance and function of the Registered Park and Garden and the settings of listed buildings with respect to the significance of the historic environment. There is conflict here between the provision of public benefit, securing optimum viable use and conservation of the heritage assets (NPPF 2021 16 p202).’

We know that we can make a difference in helping to get unsuitable development rejected or help to develop revisions which avoid harm to sensitive historic assets.

You might like to get to know the RPGs or locally important parks & gardens in your local area (the [search map for Registered P&G at Historic England](#) is useful). If you hear of any development applications let us know.



Image 3: Ditton Manor

RESEARCH

The Manor House, Upton Grey

By Richard Bisgrove, Berkshire Gardens Trust member

I have been asked, as a member of Berkshire Gardens Trust, to reflect on my connection with the Gertrude Jekyll garden at Manor House, Upton Grey, near Basingstoke in Hampshire.

The Manor House was bought by John and Rosamund Wallinger in 1983. When Ros discovered it had been set in a Gertrude Jekyll garden she was determined to recreate the garden as authentically as possible. Advice came from several directions, and I was asked by Gilly Drummond of Hampshire Gardens Trust to visit.

In matters of garden history, I think I am more 'garden' than 'history'. I developed an interest in gardening very early in my life and earned my pocket money by gardening for others before I reached my teens. My interest in garden history, however, only developed in my mid-twenties, a mere fifty years ago.



"Upton Grey Manor (2012)" by Hugh Chevallier, CC BY-SA 2.0

I was able to confirm that Upton Grey was a Jekyll garden and provide a list of her plans (I then held the



Gertrude Jekyll, William Nicholson, National Portrait Gallery, Public Domain

microfilm copies of the Reef Point Collection sent from California to England thanks to Mavis Batey). I seem not to have provided print-outs of the plans or provided help in transcribing Miss Jekyll's spidery writing on them. However, the Wallingers had the excitement of receiving copies of the original plans from the Berkeley and the adventure of deciphering plant names with the help of Michael Tooley and various plant dictionaries.

Instead, my contribution in the early days was largely to offer horticultural advice, informed by some knowledge of Miss Jekyll's work, to a self-professed (but highly intelligent and enthusiastic) novice gardener.

My first memory of visiting Upton Grey in 1984, forty years ago, is of standing on the level ground by the house (now the terrace)

and looking across a waist-high ‘lawn’ with the ground dropping away before us: no sign of the terracing and walls which now form the all-important bones of the garden. I suggested Glyphosate (Roundup) for weed control and we discussed the garden and the way forward.

For Ros (and it was largely her project while John continued to work in London) progress must have been painfully slow – it is beautifully catalogued in her *Gertrude Jekyll’s Lost Garden* (Garden Art Press, 2000) – but in my intermittent visits the change was spectacular. The ‘level ground by the house’ became a paved terrace, the pergola was built, walls were rebuilt, lawns were tamed and, because the planting of the garden was largely of roses and herbaceous plants, the garden quickly took on an atmosphere approaching maturity.

Indeed, within a few years the viburnum tinus which terminated the colour borders needed to be hard-pruned and re-restored because they were smothering adjacent plants.

For those not familiar with the garden, it is especially notable in being entirely designed by Gertrude Jekyll, with no architect involved, and it combines a formal garden to the northeast of the house with a wild garden to the southwest.

Although designed by Miss Jekyll alone, it dates from 1908 when she had been working with Edwin Lutyens at Hestercombe, where a terrace in front of the house and twin wings of herbaceous borders and rills

enclose a sunken square garden, the Great Plat, a pattern repeated at Upton Grey albeit on a much smaller scale. The big difference between the two gardens is that the central axis at Hestercombe is visual. It is necessary to descend via the two flanking wings into the Great Plat.

At Upton Grey one can descend from the terrace, through the pergola directly into the Rose Garden but I much prefer to use one of the two wings accommodating the colour borders, turning to the side at the end down the steps, turning again at the landing and turning back at the second



“Jekyll’s restored long border at Upton Grey Manor House, Hampshire” by Aquilineyes, CC BY-SA 3.0

landing to arrive at the bowling green, a wonderful piece of garden choreography.

The entrance to the Wild Garden involved a rather sharp incline at a mini

amphitheatre of grass. Miss Jekyll's plan showed three very shallow grass steps.

The steps were installed despite some concern about increased maintenance and the effect was transformational.

Lastly, Miss Jekyll's walls and terraces replaced the existing grass banks, banks that William Robinson repeatedly criticised as 'railway embankment gardening', but her plan to replace the lowest and smallest bank with a low dry wall had been rejected by her client, Charles Holme.

Ros decided to side with Miss Jekyll rather than Charles Holme and the wall was built. The effect of underscoring the series of descents from the terrace, through the rose garden to the bowling green and finally to the tennis lawn with this firm line of wall and plants was magical. Charles Holme definitely missed a treat.

My latter visits to Upton Grey were as a consumer as much as an adviser. I took many groups of mainly American participants in my garden history summer courses in Oxford to visit the garden. They were all enchanted with the garden but amused, first, by going round the end of the house from the coach to the garden, to be met by a small crowd of bantams. My first recollection of Upton Grey is of waist-high 'lawn'. One of my last is of a bantam with its beak encased in whipped cream having flown onto the table where tea and scones had been set out for our refreshment.

Some people have questioned the dedicated search for authenticity in this restoration. Is it not limiting? (I have never heard this criticism levelled against the

patient daubing of a Rembrandt to remove old varnish and the touching up of damaged parts).

As I write this, Berkshire Gardens Trust will shortly be holding a meeting to discuss creating new gardens in historic settings. Ros has argued repeatedly that she is not a designer but is bringing back to life a very important garden. In that, she has succeeded. However, in thinking about Upton Grey, my mind often harks back to the photograph of an elderly Miss Jekyll, Lutyens's 'Aunt Bumps', progressing slowly around her garden, a picture very different from Ros Wallinger – a slim and energetic figure more like a female Lutyens – energetically pushing a mower or beavering into the night deciphering plant names. The atmosphere of the garden is quite different from the studied perfection of a Munstead Wood.

After forty years of effort, The Manor House garden at Upton Grey is definitely a Jekyll / Wallinger garden. BGT has a visit planned for June 2024.

REPORT ON HISTORIC ENGLAND'S 2024 ANNUAL HISTORIC ASSEMBLY

By Bettina Kirkham, Chair, November 2023

In October 2023, Fiona Hope and I went to The Gardens Trust's annual Heritage Assembly. The main topic was the history of the designation of Registered Parks and Gardens. Although this sounds a bit dry, it was a wonderful day catching up with like-minded souls and friends. We learned so much from our colleagues, so I thought I would share some thoughts of the day, with thanks to the Gardens Trust.

How parks and gardens came to be registered

The story does not go that far back – just to the 1970s when a list of known country houses was drawn up. This led to the exhibition 'Destruction of the Country House 1875–1975' at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1974, commissioned by V&A Director, Roy Strong.

The day began with a conversation between some of the key figures involved in setting up the Register back in the 1980s: David Jacques, English Heritage's first Inspector of Historic Parks and Gardens; Peter Goodchild, one of the original advocates for protection and a national register; and David Lambert, the Garden History Society's Conservation Officer. The Gardens History Society (now the Gardens Trust) were also involved almost from the beginning.

In 1982/83 a Gardens committee was set up to advise on what gardens and parks to include and the first country lists were started. At the time the Committee had to reassure the owners that designation would not interfere with what they wanted to do with their



Lower Pond, Bridge and Summerhouse in the Dell, Summer 1900

properties.

Parks and Gardens (P&G) were initially assessed on their historical and horticultural interest but have since expanded to include aesthetic, artistic and cultural value.

The 1980s and 1990s saw the addition of many parks and gardens onto the Register which continues to expand. It's been at least 30 years since P&G's creation and new ones are being added all the time. Twentieth Century properties were added in 2020 (including Beth Chatto, John Brookes, and Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe's gardens for Shute House and the Spencer family's



*"Vista at York Gate Garden in 2020" by
Paul A Hardy, CC BY 2.0*

York Gate Garden in Leeds. Landscapes include the John F Kennedy memorial at Runnymede).

P&G can also be found on the [Parks and Gardens UK site](#). The Heritage Gateway includes these sites but also those which are locally of interest and listed by a local authority (for example, The Dell, Bucklebury Place, West Berkshire and Whiteknights, University of Reading in Reading and Wokingham). Group value (for instance, a park with listed structures and a listed main house) gained importance. Public parks were added in 2013.

The need to protect historic sites through the planning system has been driving registration. Model planning policies and local lists were created in the 1990s. The Gardens History Society/Gardens Trust became a statutory consultee, remarkable as no other amenity society has that status.

Erika Diaz Petersen, Historic England's Principal National Landscape Adviser, spoke about how the Register was further developed, the current approach to the assessment of parks and gardens for registration, and how the toolbox of other designations can be used to protect sites and their settings. Erika talked about her own work in looking ahead at changes such as Biodiversity Net Gain, green infrastructure, and the role of historical designed landscapes in nature recovery and climate change adaptation.

The idea of Biodiversity Net-Gain is gaining traction and will be included in the forthcoming Levelling Up Bill. Historic parks and gardens may be the beneficiaries of new ecological opportunities arising from development proposals but, as with development proposals, care needs to be taken to conserve and enhance the historic character and significance of a property.

Historic England are revisiting the grades of parks and gardens and their extent. They wish to raise awareness of non-designated parks and gardens. Only 50% of local authorities have local lists but they are incomplete (in Berkshire, this includes West Berkshire and Wokingham, Bracknell Forest and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and Reading only include buildings).

The work of county volunteers

We all really do matter – whether we are commenting on planning applications, researching sites, extending our influence, or holding events. Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust volunteer, Claire de Carle talked about the community’s role in using the Buckinghamshire Local List pilot project.

The Gardens Trust shared some wonderful examples of work currently being undertaken across the counties, among others: Gibside, Gateshead; Skegness Esplanade and Tower Gardens; Sutton-on-Sea War Memorial Gardens; Belvoir Castle Park and Gardens; Ashridge, Herts and Bucks; Belle Isle, Windermere; Croome Court, Worcs; Bramshill Park, Hampshire; Belhus Park, Essex; Victoria Tower Gardens, London; Spa Gardens, Leamington Spa; and Mendip Hospital Cemetery.

Gardens Trust Volunteer Support Officer, Tamsin McMillan, talked about the other contributions made by community groups to designation, such as providing material to the Historic Environment Records.

Deborah Evans, a historic landscape consultant and Gardens Trust trustee and Conservation Committee member, shared her user experience of the Register, focusing on two Derbyshire planning cases to illustrate the challenges of protecting historic designed landscapes in practice.

It was clear that good research, consensus on the total value of a site, and a well-informed planning inspectorate were key to successful protection of heritage value.



“Belvoir Gardens” by Craigy 144, CC BY-SA 3.0

And in other news

In Nottinghamshire, local people are being encouraged to put forward parks and gardens they value through a Gardens Trust project.

Historic England has launched the new project ‘Missing Places’ inviting people to share their pictures and stories of the unique, significant, and memorable places on the National Heritage List for England. Buckinghamshire GT, in collaboration with Bucks County Council, has published a useful set of criteria for assessing sites for inclusion in local listing. The inclusion of a site within an area of Landscape Value (which may be an AONB, local authority designation, or a Neighbourhood Development Plan) adds weight to its historical value. In writing Conservation Principles for historic parks and gardens, we need to think about climate change – such as the effects of flooding, changes to designed lakes and watercourses, effects

on parkland trees, types of more sustainable planting, and so on.

At National Trust's Wimpole Hall in Cambridgeshire, serious consideration is being given to removing and replanting the parterre to be more drought resistant. Conservation Principles should also cover botanical history as well as the design evolution.

LIDAR, where available for your area, can be a very useful tool as well as Google Earth.



"Blenheim Palace" by Dreilly95, CC BY-SA 4.0

World Heritage Sites

Chris Blandford, Gardens Trust Vice-Chair and President of World Heritage UK, talked to us about World Heritage Sites (WHS). These are monuments to cultural landscapes across the globe (1093 at present), set up post-war by the UN, now UNESCO. Europe has dominated the list, but other countries are now being added. The UK signed up in 1984 and today, it has 33 designated sites in the UK (parks include Blenheim Palace, Kew Gardens, and Studley Royal). Unlike our listed buildings, WHS is surprisingly not a statutory designation.

Almost all of our private parks and gardens are inhabited by their owners, with desire to maintain the long-term survival of their properties. Key threats are degradation, taxation, and lack of resources to tackle expensive restoration work.

There are 1,450 individual properties on the Historic Houses (HH), a cooperative, not-for-profit association of independently owned and operated houses, castles, and gardens of major historical importance. Membership gives you free entry to 300 properties across the UK. HH say that P&G registration and designations can be a double-edged sword.

On the one hand, it restricts necessary changes and on the other, it helps to conserve and restore an asset where expertise is lacking in public authorities. Seed funding (such as the agri-environment schemes) is a real help for private owners.

The value of parks and gardens to us all

We all remember the value of open green spaces during lockdown, but more needs to be done to engage with the general public on the historic value of parks and gardens.

Rather than seeing it as a separate issue, look at it holistically – a park or garden

is a combination of its historic value together with its natural, architectural, aesthetic and landscape value, with great opportunities for climate mitigation, inclusion and diversity, and better health and wellbeing. Our parks and gardens are part of the wider environment, connecting physically, culturally, and visually with their surroundings.

Responding to the day's discussions, all agreed on the value of being prepared to seize opportunities to enhance the conservation of historic parks and gardens, as happened in the run-up to the 1983 Act.



"Kew Gardens Temperate House from the Pagoda" by David Hawgood, CC BY-SA 2.0

OUR FAVOURITE PLANTS, TREES, AND PARKS

The Champion Trees of Berkshire

*By Sian Thomas, Trustee of Berkshire
Gardens Trust*

Every tree has its own story, and they are like treasures of our historic and natural world. I love them not only for their beauty and character but also because each tree gives us a narrative; a story through the ages of how central to human existence trees have been.



*Swinley Forest, photo by [Frances Synge](#) on
[Unsplash](#)*

We are fortunate in Berkshire to be surrounded by historic woods, forests, and landscapes which abound with remarkable trees. These trees act as a direct link to our history, exerting a powerful influence over our imagination and memories. The most common botanical description of

a tree is a plant that has a self-supporting perennial woody stem. It is surprisingly open to interpretation and many descriptions are often used.

What is a champion tree?

Champion trees are trees which are either the tallest or the widest in girth – or both, of a specific species.

Every tree has its own story, and they are like treasures of our historic and natural world. I love them not only for their beauty and character but also because each tree gives us a narrative; a story through the ages of how central to human existence trees have been.

They are recorded by county and for the UK and Ireland, by [The Tree Register](#). Some champion trees are recorded because of their historic significance or because they aren't Champion Trees but are still 'Remarkable'. The Tree Register of Britain and Ireland also works alongside the [Ancient Tree Inventory](#) to record our Ancient Trees.

What is an ancient tree?

There are more Ancient Trees in the UK than in most other European countries. An Ancient Tree is in its



English: The 2500+ year old yew tree at Ankerwycke, Wraysbury, Berkshire. Witness to the signing of the Magna Carta at Runnymede in 1215. Said to be where Henry VIII courted Anne Boleyn in the 1530s.

third and final stage of its life, which will depend on its species. For example, Oaks, Chestnuts, and Yews are long-living to over 1,000 years. These Ancient Trees are being mapped in the UK on The Ancient Tree Inventory.

We often hear the term ‘Veteran Tree’ and a Veteran Tree has some of the features of ancient trees but are not as old. They are in the second or mature stage of their life and are still important for our wildlife and landscape.

Back to the recording of our Champion Trees in Berkshire on The UK Tree Register. There are a total of 1,343 recorded trees for Berkshire and here are just some of the species listed: Fir, Maple, Horse Chestnut, Alder, Birch, Cedar, Cypress, Southern Beech,

Redwoods, Oak, Tulip Tree, Hemlock, Lime, Yew, Elm, Rowan, Pine.

So where are these trees? Well, a great many of them as you would expect are in well-known historic landscapes across the county such as Windsor Great Park, Englefield Park, and Silwood Park.

Many others are in public parks, playing fields and gardens, such as Baylis Park, Caversham Playing Fields, and Lily Hill Park as well as Slough cemetery, for example. So, we may walk past these trees in our day-to-day travels or see them in a private garden from a public place.

Of these county champions we have 177 champion trees of England. These are the tallest or widest in the country by species. They are in fourteen locations around the county including car parks, recreation grounds as well as places such as Eton College, Reading University, and Windsor Great Park.

Two of my personal favourites of the champions in Berkshire are placed in historic public parks. There is something of a wow factor about an old cedar. There are only four true cedar species in the world: the well-known cedar of Lebanon (*Cedrus libani*), the Atlas cedar, native to the Algerian and Moroccan mountains

(*Cedrus atlas*), and the Himalayan cedar (*Cedrus deodara*) which is the national tree of Pakistan. Finally, the Cyprus cedar (*Cedrus brevifolia*).

We have many of all four of these cedars listed on the UK Tree Register. The tallest Lebanese cedar in the county was recorded at Lily Hill Park, Bullbrook, Bracknell at 33m in 2007. It is a majestic architectural tree.

These trees are easy to spot. Lebanese cedars have horizontal branches that spread wide into the space around them. They have long held a special place in human history and the cedar of Lebanon appears many times in the Bible as a symbol of beauty and might.

The oldest Cedar of Lebanon in the UK is believed to date back to 1638 when Sir Edward Pococke, an Arabic scholar brought back seed from Syria. They became very popular trees in the 1800s in the UK. At Lily Hill Park there are eight trees listed on The Tree Register and as well as this cedar there are pines, oaks, and a special county champion snake bark Japanese maple. The history of the park is written on our website.



Tree at Lily Hill Park

In the early 1900's its links to famous Knapp Hill Nursery Waterers resulted in many interesting trees and plants being planted there. Another of my favourites there is a north American Red Oak, the tallest in Berkshire.

Hamstead Park, west of Newbury has been recognised by Historic England as a landscape of national significance and it is Grade II registered. For more information about its history, visit our website.

I decided to research the champion trees there as I was sure there would be some and there are ten trees here on the register. Five of these are very old oaks and one of them is the Turkey Oak (*Quercus cerris*) a fast-growing oak which was reintroduced as an ornamental tree in the UK in the eighteenth century, its history going back 120,000 years. The girth of this tree measures more than 5m and it is an ancient tree.

There will be more about our historic and remarkable trees in future newsletters.

Peonies

*By Fiona Hope, Trustee of
Berkshire Gardens Trust*

I bought this paeony while dancing in celebration of the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee at the Crocus Garden Centre, Dorney Court in May 2022, so it comes with royal associations (for me)!

I love peonies, although they tend not to flower for very long and can take up rather a lot of space with attractive leaves that appear sometime before any buds form. It will be exciting to see whether it performs as well next Spring. I have lost any label that came with this purchase although it looks as if it may be called Sir Edward Elgar (I would be interested in suggestions from BGT website visitors /newsletter readers).

Dorney Court lies on a gentle rise, surrounded by meadows, in the flood plain of the River Thames, with very fertile peaty soils underlain by gravel. Berkshire Gardens Trust visited Dorney Court for a guided tour in September 2022, following an online Zoom talk kindly given by Claire de Carle, chair of the Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust.

The Garden Centre used to be the Bressingham Garden Centre, a branch of Bressingham Gardens in Norfolk. As well as being a 'retail opportunity' it is a pleasant place to visit, being situated in part of what was once the Kitchen Garden for Dorney Court and separated from this Grade 1 registered property by a brick wall. The Garden Centre includes a formal, semi-sunken garden and some 'botanical' beds including a good selection of paeonies.



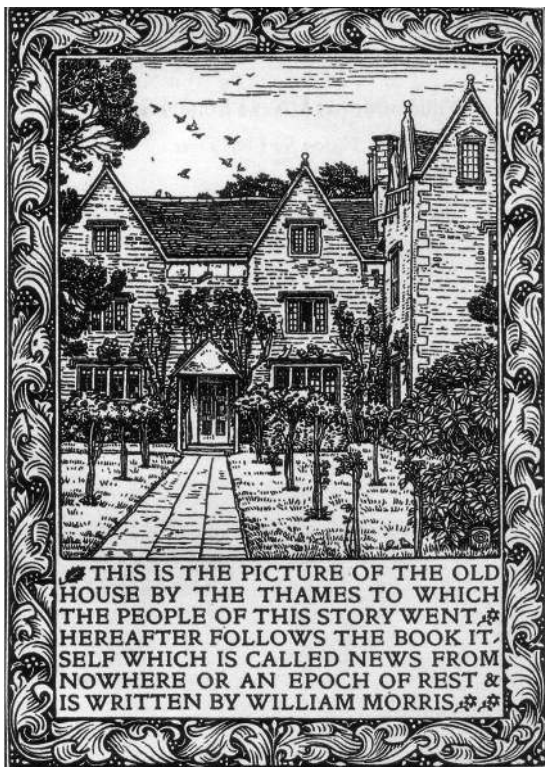
Image courtesy of Fiona Hope

ENJOYING HISTORICAL LANDSCAPES

Kelmscott Manor, the home of William Morris, April 2023

On a bright sunny day, surrounded by a display of spring bulbs and flowers, we visited Kelmscott Manor in Lechlade. It was built in around 1600 and was the home of William Morris who once described it as ‘a heaven on earth’.

Following a major restoration project, the house and garden opened in 2022 and are now owned by The Society of Antiquaries of London. It is the most preserved of all the buildings associated with William Morris and he considered the garden inseparable from the house, and we could see why. The garden at Kelmscott, though not large, is full of all the elements of nature we see in his interior designs.



*“The Manor in News from Nowhere” by
William Morris, Public Domain*

He had a sense of nature’s beauty and out of every window in the house from where he worked, we saw the landscape which inspired him. The willows inspired the 1887 design of Willow Boughs and the birds inspired Strawberry Thief – the moment Morris caught a fruit-pinching thrush in the kitchen garden.

All near to the beautiful stream of the River Thames with barns, meadows and a dovecote nearby – all still idyllic, unspoilt and a source of inspiration.



Kelmscott

Morris moved into the house in 1871, signing a joint lease with Pre Raphaelite painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti who also lived there. In 1877 he emerged as an activist, delivering lectures on social equality and his vision of post-revolutionary Britain was inspired at Kelmscott. As a businessman and manufacturer, he worked to inform and inspire the local agricultural workers.

The simple, small Grade I listed manor house is beautifully decorated with many of his original prints and visiting is a moving experience with historic pieces from the Arts and Crafts movement on display.

There are outstanding collections of ceramics, carpets, original textiles, pictures, and furniture spanning the 300 years of all those who lived in the house alongside many of William Morris's own works.

A visit to Kelmscott allows one to experience and respond to the landscape in the same way that Morris did during his twenty - five years of living there. A tranquil, rural, and domestic natural landscape, with artistic, natural, and archaeological sources of inspiration. An unspoilt harmony with its human past. A wonderful Berkshire Gardens Trust visit.

Lower Bowden Manor, 31st May 2023

On a warm, sunny day in late May, a group of us assembled at Lower Bowden Manor, a house and garden in Upper Basildon. We were met by the owners, Robert and Juliet Cox-Nichols, along with their gardeners, Phil and Ian. Robert explained that he and Juliet had moved here from Paris in 2016 and had immediately got to work re-designing the garden which had originally been established in the 1920' by Gertrude Jekyll, but experienced a period of neglect during the last 30 years.

Juliet enjoyed a successful career as a garden designer in France, training with topiary legend Christian Coureau and it is those principles that dominate the design at Lower Bowden Manor with strong structure and form created by neatly clipped hedges, balls and drums, along with cloud pruning and a wide range of beautiful specimen trees, many of which were transplanted here from Robert and Juliet's previous garden in France.

These transplanted trees, including Jacquemontii birches and hornbeam spheres, complement those already established including Wellingtonia, copper beech, tulip trees and weeping beech. The overall result is a garden for all seasons but which is especially striking in winter with the structures and textures of the shrubs, including Euonymous and Cornus, along with the great variety of trees and their bark.

From the terrace garden at the front of the house, we admired the view across to The Chilterns and here Robert explained that the main lawn represents a raised terrace created by the importation of 160 tonnes of soil. Here the vista is characterised by a lush green lawn bordered by stepped hedges of yew and beech.

The lawn is interspersed with holly and yew balls, and beech trees shaped into cones, cushions and drums to break up the linearity. The overall effect is one of striking texture and form.



Lower Bowden Manor's main lawn



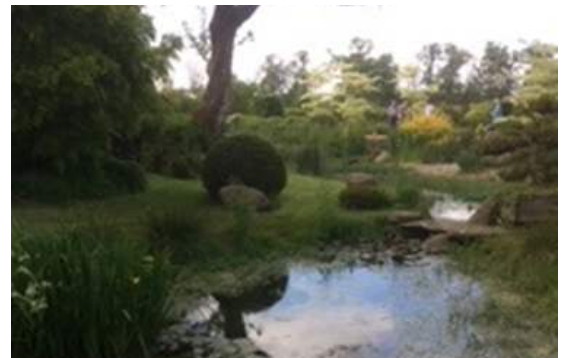
Lower Bowden Manor's main lawn

As we moved to the back of the garden, we saw a pergola which supports a huge wisteria and several roses which are possibly remnants from the original garden planted in the 1920s so maybe around a hundred years old.

At the very end of the garden, we were in for a big surprise. Hidden away sits a landscaped water feature in the style of a sunken Japanese water garden – a series of interconnected ponds support water lilies and are fringed by yellow flag irises and a variety of other marginal plants.



Lower Bowden Manor's main lawn



Lower Bowden Manor's water garden



Lower Bowden Manor's water garden



Lower Bowden Manor's wisteria arch

Finally, we were shown the old orchard area, a little distance from the house, where very old fruit trees (apples, cherries etc) were full of character and still productive, share the space with a newly planted 'wave' of 300 hydrangeas, jacquemontii birches and some upright slate structures, previously used as field boundary markers in Brittany.

Visit to Old Camps Garden, Hampshire, July 2023

Adam and Heidi Vetere welcomed us into their private two-acre garden which has panoramic south-facing views of Watership Down and the microclimate conditions to grow some wonderful shrubs and plants.

A piece of the Roman encampment wall greeted us as we listened to Adam tell us the story of how the garden evolved from when they first purchased the house in 2007.

Their newly designed house works perfectly with the entrance to the garden and ‘outside meets inside’ so that all works in harmony. With terraces and garden rooms, Old Camps is a ‘designer dream’, Adam being an award-winning garden designer.



Old Camp

The desert garden, filled with drought tolerant plants such as Agave ‘americana’ is a wonderful planting scheme in crushed aggregate and gravel with Sedum which pops out and gives a feel of a hot dry landscape.

There is a real sense of a journey as you walk through the garden. The prairie border was designed in the style of Piet Oudolf with perennials and grasses in block planting and echinacea and salvias in full glory and vivid colour. Here we saw the Chinese grass

(*Miscanthus sinensis*) in all its glory. One aspect of the garden design is how the central axis of the house works well with the paths, lawn, and avenues with the orchard at the bottom filled with fruits and vegetables of Italy. You can find figs, aubergines, tomatoes, olives, as well as peppers, courgettes, leeks, and onions in the greenhouse and potager.

All the landscape is framed with hedging and benefits from a sloping bank. A favourite part of the garden for many of us was the ravine. A combination of ferns, woodland plants and moist-loving plants including primula, as well as grasses and alliums to the south face of it.

With an impressively sustainable approach to planting, Adam shared how he sourced old / for sale plants. For example, he managed to find 100-year-old olive trees in the wholesale supermarket on offer and buy orchard plants from Lidl at £1.99 each. Old Camps is a garden with lovely places to dwell and reflect including a knot garden and wisteria pergola. Adam and Heidi are continuing to design and play around with new ideas and planting schemes in their garden and this garden will certainly evolve and change.

Finally, we were treated to delicious cakes and refreshments while seated in the garden and soaking in the atmosphere of this amazing place.

Late Summer Visit to Englefield House September 2023

It was an exceptionally warm day when a group of us arrived in the village of Englefield for our tour. We were met in the kitchen garden by Sue Broughton, the head gardener who explained that this part of the garden, not normally open to the public, was used to produce fruit, vegetables & cut flowers for the house.

The old walls that border the garden are covered in many varieties of fruit including pears, plums, and peaches. At the centre of the area is a herb garden with radiating paths bounded by many old apple varieties grown as espaliers. The remainder of the kitchen garden comprises several fruit cages with soft fruits and flower beds containing many varieties for cutting, notably roses and dahlias - the gardening team uses their creative skills to arrange bouquets for the house.



St Mark's Church, Englefield

In the sweltering heat, Sue then led us up to the main garden around the house, past the charming little church. We began here on the terrace in front of the house which enjoys amazing views across the estate and down towards Reading.

Here the garden is very formal in design with a series of terraces rising up towards the less formal woodland garden. The planting comprises colourful herbaceous borders edged with low box and euonymus hedges. The beds have all round seasonal interest, starting with a riot of tulips in the spring and moving into drifts of mainly pinks and blues in the summer with the roses and delphiniums being particularly striking.



Englefield House

By this stage of our visit, our energy levels were flagging a bit so we concluded by the stream, which runs down through the woodland area - Sue explained that this area had undergone renovation in the last year or so to restore it back to its origins in the 1930's and open up the stream once more. Some of the azaleas in this part of the garden are very rare so it's hoped that opening up the area will assist their longevity. We concluded our lovely visit at the village tea shop for much-needed refreshments!



The Opportunities and Challenges of Restoring and Creating New Gardens Within Private Historic Settings

This was a new endeavour for us and was a great success. We invited the three garden owners whose lovely gardens we had visited in 2022 – Niamh Kendall from Kidmore House, Willie Hartley Russell from Bucklebury House and Bruce Ginsberg from Earlstone Manor to discuss their approaches to garden design. Adam Vetere from Old Camps, which we visited in 2023, kindly agreed to chair the discussion.

After a short introduction from Adam on his garden, all three briefly described what they had inherited when they took over their properties and how they had approached their gardens, showing us photographs of before and after and their favourite areas.

Bucklebury House

Willie Hartley Russell inherited the family house which had stood empty for 130 years and was a blank canvas. This gave him free rein to create his monastic garden; the spring garden with its statue and animal graves; the clever use of yews; a formal layout within the kitchen gardens walls; a woodland garden which he has filled with snowdrops; and extensive herbaceous borders.



Kidmore House

Niamh and her husband bought Kidmore House from the Bonner family and, upon inheriting their gardener and the remains of a historic garden, brought it to life again. Hers is a personal journey, inspired by her market gardening father and her RHS training. She designed it to meet the needs of a growing family as well as restore a garden to complement the Queen Anne house. She has introduced rose gardens, a lake, wildflower meadows, and planted a vineyard.



Earlstone Manor

Bruce also had the benefit of a blank canvas to the 700-year-old farmhouse, creating an eclectic garden ('a place where your feet take you'). He was inspired to create a garden of delight; where symmetry and stillness are complemented by movement and energy in all the different parts of the garden. Some parts are inspired by Italian and French styles, chinoiserie; others are recreations of parterres and a maze.



APPRECIATIONS

Edward Golton

06/10/37 – 31/10/23

Edward Golton was born in Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire on 6th October 1937. He attended Cheshunt Grammar School and quickly demonstrated that he was a scientific prodigy, building first a radio and then a television. Unsurprisingly, he won a scholarship to Imperial College, London, to study for a BSc in Physics. On graduation, he joined the Civil Service at the Radio and Space Research establishment at Ditton Park, later moving with it to the renamed Rutherford Laboratories outstation at Culham, Oxfordshire. Early in his career, he was selected for a two-year posting to Singapore, where he met and married his wife; they were subsequently divorced. Edward retired from Culham in 1995.

Edward moved to Upper Basildon in the early 1980s, and he quickly became an expert on the Planning system. He joined CPRE and became a Trustee of the Berkshire Branch and Chairman of the Bradfield District subcommittee. His deep love for the Berkshire countryside led to his involvement in many of CPRE's campaigns on Quiet Lanes, Dark Skies and Litter and Waste Management the latter being championed in 2008 under the leadership of then CPRE national Chairman, Bill Bryson.

Edward gave evidence and presented cases at many planning inquiries and appeals and his expertise and fluency with the Planning system could not be faulted. He was instrumental in many inappropriate developments being rejected, and without his work, there is no doubt that the countryside in West Berkshire and right across the County would be in a far worse condition than it is.

One of his greatest achievements was the foundation of the Trust which purchased a portion of mixed woodland, Emery Down Wood, in Upper Basildon, saving it from becoming an infill development site. The campaign involved setting up the Trust, raising the money to purchase the site and organising the work necessary to maintain it.

Edward became an active member of Berkshire Gardens Trust, attending many of its visits and lectures. He was very proud of his own garden which combined wild areas where fauna such as adders and grass snakes made their habitats, and more formal plantings where, for example, magnificent rhododendrons flourished -unusually in the heavy flint and clay soils of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape.

Edward's health was poor in recent years, with declining hearing and eyesight and other problems. He died in the Royal Berkshire Hospital on 31st October 2023 and his Memorial Service was held at St Stephen's Church in Upper Basildon on 27th November 2023. Our thanks go to Edward for his work and service to the environment, to the countryside, and to gardens. May his legacy live on.

Veronica Suffield-Jones**16/04/41 - 12/12/23**

Veronica Suffield-Jones nee Stafford was born in 1941, the daughter of the High Sheriff of Surrey. Veronica and Nigel joined the Berkshire Gardens Trust in 2013 and are remembered as active garden enthusiasts attending many of our events each year. Veronica loved gardens, especially wildflowers and was friendly and welcoming to members, especially new faces. She last attended our visit to Old Camps in September 2023.

She married Nigel Suffield-Jones, a Cambridge graduate and school-master (modern languages) who taught at both Bradfield and Pangbourne Colleges.

They have 2 daughters, Chantal and Siobhan who are both married now with children.

Living in Upper Basildon and later Pangbourne, Veronica was very actively involved in local charities and organisations, such as the Berkshire Cambridge Society and of course Berkshire Gardens Trust, attending many events organised by these and other bodies. They were due to attend the Berkshire Cambridge Society annual week away in the Yorkshire Dales, in June 2023, but sadly had to cancel their participation owing to Veronica's illness.

Veronica developed her love of gardens and gardening in both her garden at The Orchard House in Upper Basildon and later at the much smaller garden in Pangbourne (off Horseshoe Road). Veronica sadly passed away just before Christmas and our thoughts are with Nigel, her family, and friends.

She is remembered by us as a quiet, gentle person, a

lover of gardens and garden history and being devoted to supporting Nigel and her family.

A Service of Thanksgiving was held at St James the Less, Pangbourne on the 13th January 2024 and was very well attended.