



# The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust Newsletter

## Brilliant News! Campbell Park, Milton Keynes recognised as one of the finest post-war parks in the country Registered Grade II listed by Historic England as a Park of Special Interest.

Very good news, many thanks. It will help keep Campbell Park and the other elements of Milton



Light Pyramid by Liliane Lijn (2012) Parks Trust)

Keynes landscape (the labyrinth of freedom) secure for more and more people to enjoy. Thanks for the excellent work of the trust which contributed so much to this recognition. (Neil Higson, Chief Landscape Architect of Milton Keynes Development Corporation from 1977)

*On behalf of all of us at the Parks Trust, please thank all of those at the Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust who have raised awareness of Campbell Park and nominated it to the 'Compiling the Record' project. (Philip Bowsher, Head of Environment & Volunteering, Milton Keynes Parks Trust)*

*Good result for the project in 3 new listings according to the announcement. Well done. Sarah (Tricks), Bucks GT member and Research Volunteer*

Yaaaaay! Hot off the presses. Well done Gill and Jill, thanks for all your hard work which I am sure was the catalyst for it being nationally recognized. Brilliant work. (Dr. Sarah Rutherford)

*Well done for the input which got that result. (Laurette Read, Life member, Bucks GT)*

... there is brilliant news that HE has listed Campbell Park. (Margie Hoffnung, Conservation Officer, The Gardens Trust)



Head by Allen Jones

Parks Trust

This is really good news ... (Jill Stansfield, Bucks GT member and Research Volunteer)

**Great news! It's so wonderful that Campbell Park has been listed, I hope it continues to be so highly valued long into the future. Such a great place to take a lunchtime walk from our office. Thanks for sharing the press release. (Ellie Broad, Community Engagement and Activity Coordinator, The Parks Trust)**



Cave by Ivan & Heather Morrison

Parks Trust

Excellent! Well done to all. (Jug Parmar, Bucks Gardens Trust Treasurer and Council Member)



Onwards & Upwards by Robert Koenig (2011) Parks Trust

*Well done for all your hard work and research and I hope that you feel suitably rewarded. (Tim Skelton, formerly Milton Keynes Development Corporation)*

Great news – it's on page 3 of today's Guardian as well. (John O'Dwyer, Bucks GT member)

Brilliant news, at long last a result. (Claire de Carle, Vice-chair, Bucks GT and Research Co-ordinator)

Great News re Campbell Park. I visit there from time to time, it has some fine trees. Regards, Michael. (Bucks GT member)



Gnomon (Shadow Caster) Peter Bowker (1994)  
Parks Trust

**Photographs: Campbell Park Public Art & Sculptures**

**Welcome** to our Autumn Newsletter. Post-war parks have finally been recognised and given Grade II listing by Historic England. Buckinghamshire has two new listings: Campbell Park in Milton Keynes and the Business Park, Broadwater Park, Denham.

In 2017 an exciting new national project 'Compiling the Record' was launched at the newly refurbished Garden Museum. The conference highlighted the "overlooked, undervalued and at risk" post-1945 designed landscapes and called on all County Gardens Trusts and other interested parties to submit nominations.

A total of 112 were submitted with six from Bucks GT. The sites were Central Milton Keynes (Civic Spaces), Campbell Park MK (Parks), Chilterns Crematorium (Cemeteries), Bledlow Manor & The Lyde (Garden), High & Over, Amersham (Garden) and Bekonscot Model Village (Garden).

The inclusion of the Milton Keynes dossiers was important as they marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Milton Keynes' foundation. The dossiers produced by Jill Stansfield and Gill Grocott set out the importance of Campbell Park as one of the largest and most imaginative to have been laid out in Britain in the later C20. It is a key part of the Milton Keynes Development Corporation's planned cityscape, linking urban Central Milton Keynes to a swathe of naturalistic parkland down the Ouse Valley. It has been little altered over time and has been well looked after by the Milton Keynes Parks Trust.

Historic England has recognised these qualities and calls it a "swaggering performance" and in addition singles out the early encouragement of biodiversity and how the Park has group value with the Shopping Building, which shares its sense of scale and generous use of space. Well done Bucks GT.

[https://bucksgardenstrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Campbell\\_Park-rvsd1.pdf](https://bucksgardenstrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Campbell_Park-rvsd1.pdf)

<https://www.theparkstrust.cm/blogs/campbell-park-recognised-as-one-of-the-finest-post-war-war-parks>

**Editor: Gwen Miles**

**Sub Editor: Clare Butler**

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### Gill Grocott and Jill Stansfield Milton Keynes Research and Recording Team

Two of our Research and Recording team have largely been responsible for the Milton Keynes dossiers that have been published. These include Campbell Park, Central Milton Keynes, Hanslope Park, Newlands Tree Cathedral, Ouzel Valley Park, Wavendon House, Weston Park and Willen Lakes. Their research of Milton Keynes' post-war landscape has meant that Campbell Park has been recognised as one of the finest post-war parks in the country and given registered Grade II status by Historic England as a Park of Special Historic Interest. Brilliant!

#### Gill Grocott

Gill has had many jobs in her career, starting and ending in retail, the last in a garden nursery. Her career also included periods working in banking and schools. She has also spent a great deal of time doing research, for her degree in History, whilst growing her family tree and now for the Research and



Recording Group. In fact, the combination of gardens, history and research was what first attracted Gill to the project. During lockdown, since choir and dancing are not allowed and access to Archives

has been online only, her focus has been on her garden, two allotments and online research for the family tree and now she is back volunteering at Stowe as well.

#### Jill Stansfield

I moved out of London to Milton Keynes in 1996 for a job in the new unitary authority and, despite job moves, have lived there ever since in an estate planned by Milton Keynes Development Corporation on the edge of the Ouzel Valley Park. So both my husband and I are supporters of Milton Keynes and its original ambitions.



On retirement I was looking for something to combine both love of gardens and history (my first degree) and the Gardens Trust publicised the Buckinghamshire Research and Recording Group and I got in touch.

### Research and Recording Update: Adapting to the challenge of covid.

As the Research and Recording project enters its eighth year, we are having to look at new ways to research and move the project on into its second decade!

The most difficult problem we face is the challenge of site visits. Several of the researchers had site visits booked when the pandemic intervened, and with no end to social distancing rules in sight it may now be necessary to finish these sites as desk-based reports.

Our research has become totally confined to the internet, with access to archives only slowly starting to resume: Buckinghamshire Archives are now making a limited number of appointments available. There is now so much available through the internet that research at home can be quite enjoyable: you can shut yourself away for a couple of hours without having to battle through traffic with all the comforts of home to hand.

We have enjoyed researching Buckinghamshire's public parks from home: see the extra newsletters for the results! I am now starting to re-engage with the Artists' Gardens project with help from Clare Butler we hope to gather the research already completed by volunteers in the last couple of years and standardise this ready for uploading to the new website. This will then create a body of work that can be easily edited and added to as new artists come to light.

We are just missing our social interaction, so perhaps we will soon be able to organise a Zoom meeting for our volunteers!

**Claire de Carle**, Project co-ordinator

**Notes from the Chair:** *Dear Members and Friends, This is a truly 'bumper' issue, and great thanks to our Editors, Gwen Miles and Clare Butler and to all the contributors!*

*Milton Keynes is certainly to the forefront with a warning note sounded by Joanne Mirzoeff against ill-considered changes to the planning system.*

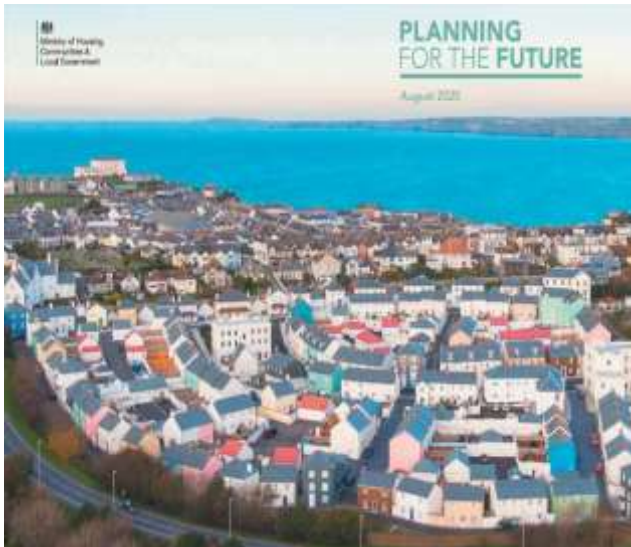
*The new Chair of the Gardens Trust, Peter Hughes QC, also raises legitimate concerns regarding the National Trust's draft paper 'Towards a 10-year Vision for Places and Experiences'.*

*And Richard Wheeler, the National Trust's Garden Historian, gives a lively account of Stowe in its various incarnations!*

*We have exciting postcards from Florence and Rome, glimpses of another 'Secret Garden' in Milton Keynes, not to mention a Gertrude Jekyll Garden ascribed now to Bucks rather than Sussex. Further questions surround King George V Park in Princes Risborough and we have three additional photographs of The Lyde, Bledlow.*

*As Claire de Carle so rightly says, 'We are just missing our social interaction', so if we are not able to plan a 'face to face' talk in the near future, perhaps we will be able to organise one by Zoom. With my best wishes and thanks for your support of the Bucks Gardens Trust.*

**Rosemary (Jury)**



Front cover of White Paper

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future>

### Planning Co-ordinator Report

Unusually, August was rather quiet for the BGT Planning Team so we don't have much to report on other than a few revised applications which, we are happy to say, appear to have listened to comments from the Gardens Trust.

Brewers Yard at Wotton Underwood have made welcome alterations to mitigate the impact of glazing in the landscape in their design for a replacement outbuilding and, following a visit from our Planning Adviser to Blackpit Farm, Stowe in early 2019, we recommended that they engage a Historic Landscape Consultant. They did so and we are delighted to see that they have incorporated the advice the Consultant gave in their report into the revised application.

As a statutory consultee, it is wonderful to see when our comments via the planning system are making a tangible difference. However, Bucks Gardens Trust are greatly concerned about the Housing Minister's proposals to reform the existing planning system. While we all might agree that it can be mind-numbingly cumbersome at times, any change needs careful consideration to ensure permanent protection is guaranteed in the face of development pressures and we are perturbed by what we read.

From a quick scan of the 'Planning for the Future' document, statutory consultees barely get mentioned; listed buildings, conservation areas, SSSIs and National Parks have occasional references but there is no reference to historic designed landscapes. The consultation proposes "*new development to be beautiful, and to create a 'net gain' not just 'no net harm', with a greater focus on 'placemaking' and 'the creation of beautiful places' by making it easier for those who want to build beautifully through the introduction of a fast-track for beauty*". A lot of

'beauty' there but we all know it is in the eye of the beholder – many of the applications we consider may offer 'beautiful' designs but development in the wrong place or that has a major impact on a registered park or garden is still inappropriate development.

The paper also advocates a more digitally-based system, but the end of the lamp post notice may mean that people have to actively search a website to find proposals in their area. Permitted development rights will also be expanded.

We are also concerned by the consultation process in this paper which asks the reader to rank in importance what matters to them – we would all agree that matters such as affordable housing and supporting the local economy are crucial, but we wonder how many respondents will rank the poorly described "Protection of existing heritage buildings or areas" in their top three priorities?

The paper goes on to propose a "*National Model Design Code to supplement the guide, setting out more detailed parameters for development in different types of location*" along the lines of traditional 'pattern books'. But any architectural historian will tell you that 18th/19th century speculative builders threw up pattern-book housing everywhere and much of it was unsuccessful. New development must respect and respond to the local vernacular and landscape, whereas homogeneity rather than the vernacular already runs rampant if you look at new housing developments.

We are particularly concerned about the proposals to explore "*whether suitably experienced architectural specialists can have earned autonomy from routine listed building consents*" – this is a dangerous game where private property, money and ego are involved and no one should be exempt from the process.

Here at the BGT, statutory consultees will "*have to transform the way they operate in response to these reforms, given their critical role supporting the preparation of Local Plans and decision-making. They too will need to be more responsive and outward looking, and have the necessary skills and resources to undertake their new roles*". Yet many statutory consultees are charities with volunteers doing the actual individual application casework – does the government propose to support us as we develop the skills and resources so that we can be more responsive when we still have to fit it around the day job?

And, finally, we are extremely concerned about the proposals that the cost of operating the new planning system should be principally funded by the beneficiaries of planning gain.

*Joanne Mirzoeff*



10<sup>th</sup> September 2020

### **The National Trust's 'Reset' and the Gardens Trust's unique conservation role**

Gardens Trust and County Gardens Trust members will have been reading with grave concern the recent comment and analysis in the media following the leak of a draft National Trust paper, *'Towards a 10-year Vision for Places and Experiences'*. The exposure of this apparent new direction for the National Trust has rung alarm bells through the heritage sector. The glaring lack of reference to conservation as a guiding principle and clear suggestion that landscapes should be free from *'existing styles and expectations'* has worrying connotations for future protection.

The Gardens Trust has written directly to the Director-General, Hilary McGrady, expressing profound concern at the proposals which will manifest themselves in the loss of a significant number of curatorial and expert roles, regionally and centrally, taking with them the essential knowledge and understanding of the significance of the landscapes they are charged with protecting.

The Gardens Trust (GT), as the statutory consultee for in excess of 1700 registered historic parks and gardens in England and Wales, plays a key conservation role in the heritage sector, actively monitoring and responding to planning proposals for development, strongly objecting to those which will have a detrimental impact on the significance of these valuable and irreplaceable heritage assets. The GT supports sustainable future development and management that respects and illustrates a clear understanding of the significances of each place and embodies explicit conservation objectives and management of the unique qualities of each landscape so that these are preserved for future generations.

The National Trust (NT) is custodian of in excess of 200 of these nationally important registered landscapes (just a part of its wider portfolio of over 250 parks and gardens) and the largest number of historic parks in single ownership in Europe. The continued evolution of these extraordinary landscapes over many years has resulted in close engagement between the GT Conservation Officers, supported by local County Gardens Trust planning experts, and the NT local conservation specialists and expert management teams. A shared ethos that the conservation of these 'brightest jewels' in the NT's

crown will always be the overriding principle, while embracing a 21<sup>st</sup> century desire to open historic space to all, has underlined constructive and effective debate and helped to formulate sustainable solutions.

In recent years, the GT has, however, found it necessary to object strongly to proposed development within these landscapes where it is apparent that it is designed principally to extend visitor attraction while detrimental to the aesthetic and cultural impact and reading of the historic designed landscape. One particular example has been the objection to the proposed installation of cycle trails, introducing routes across central views in the numerous parklands affected. When diverted to existing historic tracks originally designed to enable enjoyment of the designed landscape some of these trails went ahead with minimum impact, others were withdrawn when the detrimental impact on the general and desired enjoyment of these landscapes was acknowledged, but we continue to monitor alternative proposals. Another example, live before the Covid crisis, involves discussions with the NT regarding the World Heritage Site of Studley Royal Park including Fountains Abbey, Yorkshire, a Grade I landscape, where an additional development and renovation/enlargement of the Café Building & Lodge facilities at Canal Gates is proposed. While we agree that better interpretation at Studley Royal would be an improvement, in the GT's opinion the new building/development of additional visitor facilities at the location proposed would be contrary to the original Aislabie vision and represents a very unwelcome addition, harmful to the significance of this World Heritage Site affecting adversely one of the great set-piece historic garden views in the UK. ICOMOS-UK are also engaged in this debate. There are numerous other examples of the proposed inappropriate siting of visitor infrastructure, play areas and car parks.

The GT will continue its essential work as statutory consultee. Our response will continue to be on a case by case basis, but we will robustly defend our ethos. With much reduced resource in the NT, we would ask our members and those of the County Gardens Trusts to engage with their local NT contacts to ensure that we do everything that we can to help keep the essential curatorial research-based understanding of the significance of these treasured places high on the agenda in this debate. This is important in relation to NT parks and gardens of local interest and significance as well as those which are on the National Heritage List Register of Parks and Gardens. Conservation is the careful management of change. It is about revealing and sharing the significance of places and ensuring that their special qualities are protected, enhanced, understood and enjoyed by present and future generations. [conservation@thegardenstrust.org](mailto:conservation@thegardenstrust.org)

*Peter Hughes QC*  
Chair, the Gardens Trust

**Stowe Gardens:** Some Olla Potrida (1) from a Furloughed Garden Historian.



Muses standing on the underground before arriving at Fimmere Station!

RRW

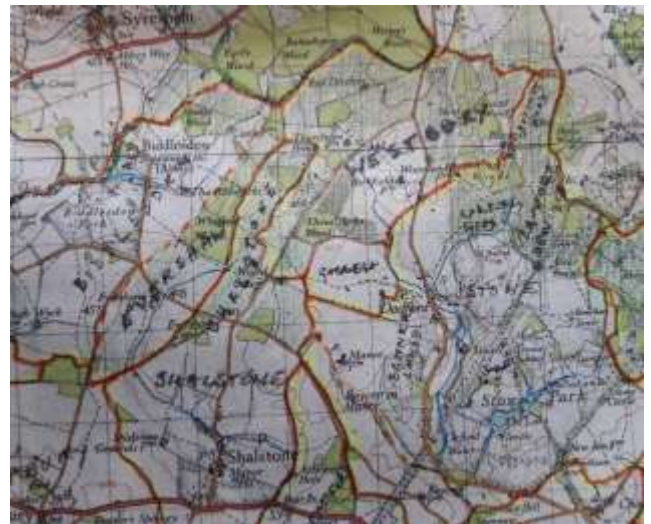
After some 30 years working on the restoration of the gardens at Stowe, I thought it might be quite instructive to draw together a number of themes, to give an anecdotal tour of the place. This seems particularly appropriate, since in the words of John Wilkes, the MP for Aylesbury in the 1760s (and an intimate of both Sir Francis Dashwood of West Wycombe and Earl Temple of Stowe) I am now entering my anecdote...

First then, medieval Stowe: Twenty-five years ago, I was doing a lot of work transcribing the medieval and post-medieval charters and of Osney Abbey and the early papers of the Temple family when they were buying in their leases from the Crown, the owner of all the former ecclesiastical lands after the Dissolution of the Monasteries. Amongst these documents, were numerous 'terriers' (records of land, rather than members of the canine variety), and amongst the terriers were numerous references to the *Bannerlands* on the borders of the parishes of Shalstone and Stowe. What on earth were banner lands? In the parish of North Marston where I then lived, not too far from Stowe, we had the *Clocklands* – land given in the eighteenth century to provide an income to maintain the church clock, but banner lands to maintain the banners or hatchments in the church? Improbable. However earlier this summer, working on the history of Bodiam Castle, I strayed into the next-but-one parish of Battle, the town founded by William the Conqueror around a new Abbey – where the altar stone was laid on the spot where King Harold was slain in 1066. Appurtenant to the Abbey the King gave to the monks a roughly circular area of land 1 league in diameter. The league was, and is, an uncertain measure, but is based on how far a man (and I guess a woman) could walk in one hour. This varies over the country – and indeed varies in France as well, but at Battle it was 3 miles. And outside the town and its closes and open fields

was the *Banlieu*, or Banlieu lands ... or perhaps *Bannerlands*?

Interestingly, many of the parishes around Bodiam all seem to follow this same pattern or variations of it. So Battle, Mountfield, Salehurst and Ewhurst are basically circular parishes 1 league in diameter, then half circles of Westfield and Brede and then little parishes squeezed in between these circles including Bodiam, Whatlington and Catsfield. I would love to have seen all the negotiations going on in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries that resulted in these very distinctive parishes.

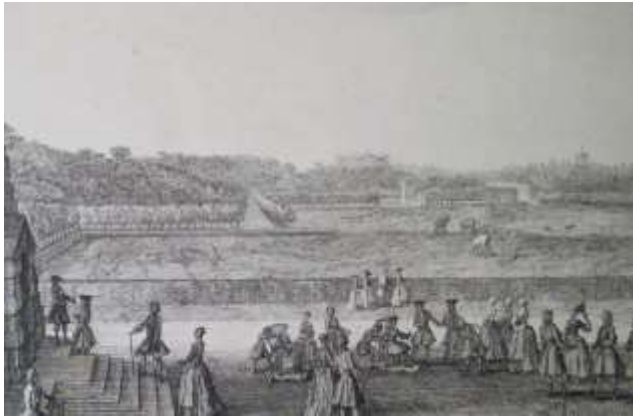
And we then find very much the same thing going on at Stowe, Lillingstone and Biddlesden, with *Leuga* parishes one league in diameter, and in between the parishes strips of assarting (2) fingering into the remains of Whittlewood forest. These assarts were divided between the parishes of the forest edge and those bordering on the diminutive River Ouse. So one finds strips of assarted land belong to Biddlesden, Evershaw, Shalstone, Westbury and Stowe lying adjacent to each other and running north-east towards the boundaries of the Crown freehold parts of Whittlewood, together with isolated woods for the hamlets of Gorrell, Lamport and Boycott. And then as the wild card we find Catesby Abbey in Northamptonshire with its own little park squeezed in as a part of Westbury parish(3) and covering most of what is now Parkfields Farm.



Stowe and adjoining parishes

Next is a moving story about Stowe. And here although the earth didn't move for us, the Golf Course did. After 30 years of very amicable disagreement Stowe School's little golf course around the gardens has broken free and moved out to the Lamport fields, where it is twice the size, and although still only nine fairways and greens, it now has 14 tees - so twice around and a new angle on every green. And the subsequent transformation of the gardens has been spectacular. The combination of Barry Smith and his new paling fences on the one

hand, and dear old nature on the other, has brought back the Home Park as an area of delightful *ferme ornée* with sweeping grass paths encircling and crossing it.



“Stowe pupils coming out of the clubhouse to play on the Old Golf Course”  
RWW

Then the Queen’s Theatre with Venus’s Rotunda at the one end and the amphitheatre of the (very) late Queen on the other (4) freed from the (one has to say, excellent) mowing regime of the greenkeepers, is in the early stages of returning to a landscape version of one the secret *cabinets* that are Stowe’s riposte to those overworked and gaudy extravaganzas at Versailles. Concurrent with this will be the (at last) completion of the last quarter of the Sleeping Wood with its labyrinthine maze of paths leading to *La Belle au Bois Dormant* – the Beauty in the Sleeping Wood.(5)

Finally with the golf course, is of course the vista from the South Front of the house. Originally called the Great Avenue (and perhaps we should return to this nomenclature) it was a double avenue of Abele Poplars under Bridgeman and Lord Cobham, which



View through the Doric Arch F Piper

grew too big and blocked up the view. Earl Temple initially felled the inner rows then upon moving the Lake Pavilions further apart, felled the outer rows as well. The idea of the Great Avenue was again emulating Versailles with the Via Regia, the King’s Road, leading straight from the Palace to the garden gate, and like Versailles

was delineating our path through this earthly life, where we have free will and can follow our own *mores* – or not. But, of course, the straight and narrow path is really rather tedious, so all the action takes place in little theatres or stage sets among the bosquets on either side. At Versailles these are grandiloquent and very French, whereas at Stowe they divide between virtue on the one side and vice on the other – all with a good leavening of satire and some with quite heavy and very alarming (and indeed un-woke) humour. Then at Versailles one leaves this earthly life by the garden gate into eternity, represented by a great cruciform lake, whilst at Stowe the hereafter was represented by a near direct view of spire of Buckingham Church. In either case one leaves free will behind and is subject to the Divine. So with the Catholic faith represented by the formality of Versailles, the more libertarian Protestantism is represented by the landscape garden of Stowe. Indeed, in our Father’s house are many mansions.

Iconology aside, one has to admire the perspicacity of the second Duke of Buckingham when, in his remodelling of the paths in the gardens for the visit of Queen Victoria, he opened a new route across the South Front from the Sleeping Wood to the Doric Arch. This sweeping path allows the visitor to see Princess Amelia’s Arch on the other side of the avenue as he they leave the wood, but not until they are exactly on the axis between the South Front steps and the Corinthian Arch on the hillside opposite, do they get the view of the Palladian Bridge and Stowe Castle framed by the Doric Arch as a picture ‘...more perfect than any of Albano....’(6)



“...Apollo and his tuneful Maids  
Who range their lov’d Aonian Glades....”  
RWW

This then takes us neatly on to the statues of the Nine Muses and the (not quite yet) statue of Apollo. And here one must pay huge tribute to the team that has been working on this project. They are Gillian Mason our intrepid curator who has examined and analysed in close detail every muse-y statue in England and come up with an extraordinarily convincing set of stony-faced women. In the eighteenth century they were mocked as a set of nine cook-maids – which Gillian, quite correctly, suggests was because they all had their sleeves rolled up; the alternative suggestion might be that they are cross

that Apollo is late in joining them and is in for a bad time when he finally arrives. Then there is Fred Markland, the poacher turned gamekeeper, building surveyor who seems to have worked in the past for most of the contractors doing the building restorations at Stowe over the last 30 years. His work at Stowe has been exemplary, thoughtful and always humorous. And of course, Barry Smith and his team. I have a picture of Barry and his gang from 1991 – little has changed except for one or two faces going and one or two coming. But the enthusiasm shines out from every one of them. What a bunch – I love them all.

Well – that’s enough Olla Potrida for now. More next time if your wonderful chairman – Rosemary and your glorious editor – Gwen will indulge me.

**Richard W. Wheeler.**

(ploughing a lonely furlough in Alvescot...)

#### References:

1. Olla Potrida is usually described along these lines: *In medieval times soup was made in the Great Kitchen by gathering together all the still edible scraps of meat, vegetables, fat, and bread, boiled up for an hour or two, and then sieved and served at the High Table. More water was then added to the remaining detritus in the pot and boiled up again for two or three hours, sieved and served up in the Servants Hall. That which still remained in the pot was then mashed (if necessary but not essential) and fed to the scullions and stable boys. This was called Olla Potrida, and was just edible but barely nourishing.*
2. Assarting: clearance of waste land and conversion to arable or pasture, usually of a set width and then laddering close by close into the waste.
3. Just to confuse the whole issue, now a part of Biddlesden Parish.
4. Queen Caroline, not only late and lamented, but also moved to the site of the Gibbs Building which moved to the Grecian Valley
5. *La Belle au Bois Dormant – the Beauty in the Sleeping Wood*, often mistranslated as the Sleeping Beauty, one of the transcriptions by Charles Perrault of European folk tales, published in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Perrault also designed the labyrinth at Versailles, where each of the crossings depicted one of Aesop’s Fables -with lead statues of the animals and water spouts to represent their words.
6. Horace Walpole.

#### The Lyde, Bledlow

In the July edition we wrote about the history of The Lyde Garden in Bledlow (Church End, Bledlow, HP27 9PD) recently reopened. The Princes Risborough Heritage Society has found the following three photographs – not dated.



The Lyde Cress Beds, Bledlow



The Lyde



The Lyde Path, Bledlow

#### Villas through the Letterbox (1) Monday 15 April 2019



Dear Bucks GT

*Our last day of the gardens of Florence, so we’re on our way back to the airport via Villa Gamberaia, which is often cited as one of the most perfect examples of C18th garden architecture and has a beautiful water parterre. After this, just Villa Reale near Lucca. Thank goodness for some sun – our day in the centre of Florence yesterday was very wet indeed, which rather spoilt the views over Florence from the Bardini and Boboli gardens. But we’ve been very lucky that kind owners of private gardens have given us tours and in one case even provided refreshments while we dripped all over his antique-stuffed rooms! As usual Robert Peel’s itinerary has been packed, but has covered all manner of gardens from the C15th to the C20th, with a huge amount of background information provided should we want it – the tours are run for the sake of garden history students at the Institute of Historical Research, but fortunately for us he’s happy for others to make up the numbers. Regards to all, Clare and Claire*



## The Secret Garden Wolverton, Milton Keynes



In 1999 members of the Wolverton Society for Arts and Heritage wondered whether it would be possible to acquire a small, overgrown piece of land next to the Grand Union Canal, to the south of Stratford Road, and turn it into a garden.

The long thin site had been occupied by four villas built by

the London and Birmingham Railway Company in the 1840s as houses for local management, and demolished in the 1960s.

The Wolverton Secret Garden Society was formed to pursue the project. The name was inspired by *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett in which children discover a magical overgrown garden.

The landowner, Railtrack (now Network Rail), agreed to sell it to the Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council for £1, provided that it remained a garden in perpetuity. Funding was raised from a number of sources, including the Countryside Agency and the Community Foundation.

Landscape architect Neil Higson, then of Landscape Town and Country but formerly the Chief Landscape Architect of Milton Keynes Development Corporation, was employed and drew up three schemes which were presented to the public.

The most popular design featured a path that wound through the site from north to south. To the north a formal 'Villa Garden' was planned on the site of two of the villas and, to the south, a less formal wooded area where wildlife could be encouraged and where there might be more 'mystery', including a stone



Ring stones

JS

circle. On the approach from Stratford Road an iron sign "The Secret Garden" on tall pillars marked the entrance. The plan envisaged a footbridge to the other side of the canal, though funding never materialised.

excavated the former Stationmaster's House. The footprint of the Stationmaster's Villa and its neighbour, the Works Accountant's Villa, was then marked with reclaimed bricks for inclusion in the design. An interpretation panel of the children's research and finds was installed overlooking the site.

The contractors started work in spring 2004,



Planting around the villas JS

establishing the path network and the Villa imprint. Neil Higson provided a detailed planting plan and in the autumn of 2004 planting started. This included feature tree planting round the villas, including conifers and pines, and a small orchard marking the link with the wooded area.

Artists Jill Kitchen and Cathy Ebbels were employed to create mosaics. Three of the designs were based on household objects - and these were located appropriately in the villa imprints - the mangle in the scullery, the scales in the kitchen and the cat on the mat in the lounge. Two tiled doorsteps were made in the local style, with a train for the Stationmaster's House and a quill, account book and money for the Accountant's house. The Secret Garden officially opened on Sunday 17 July 2005.

In 2007 Bill Billings (who created the Triceratops



Two People Seated

JS

at Peartree Bridge) worked with Paul Smith and pupils at Radcliffe School, Wolverton, to create a sculpture for the garden. This is of a couple on a sofa watching television and is located in the wooded area on the site of the other set of villas.

In 2017 and 2018 Garden hosted Winter Illuminations events featuring the work of light artist Ulf Pedersen.

The garden retains its air of secrecy and is recognisable from the original plan. It continues to be cared for by community volunteers

<http://www.wolvertonsecretgarden.co.uk.btck.co.uk/en>  
<http://wolvertonpast.blogspot.com/search/label/Villas>  
<https://www.facebook.com/wolvertonsecretgarden>

*Jill Stansfield*

In 2003 children from the local Bushfield Middle School compiled the history of the villas and

## Looking for Pollards Wood – new Gertrude Jekyll site in Buckinghamshire



Inland Rev. Valuation Map 1912/13

BA

Why was I looking for Pollard's Wood in Fernhurst? It is one of the sites in Sussex where, it is thought, Gertrude Jekyll was commissioned to create a planting scheme in 1908. Sussex Garden Trust's research volunteers are currently involved in a project to audit the Jekyll commissions in the county and I had offered to investigate Pollard's Wood, believed to be in Fernhurst, Sussex.

A search of the archives held by the West Sussex Record Office and Fernhurst Archivists found no evidence of a Pollard's Wood in Fernhurst, or the surrounding area of Surrey, while the Internet identified a Pollard's Wood, not at Fernhurst, but at Chalfont St. Giles, Buckinghamshire.

In one of Jekyll's notebooks held at Godalming Museum there is an entry for Pollard's Wood, but no mention of Fernhurst. However, the Reef Point Gardens Collection at Berkeley includes nine plans, five by Jekyll and four by the architect, J. E. Forbes. Labels on the 1908 drawings name Mr. J. E. Forbes as the owner of the property. Researching the Chalfont St. Giles History's website I found that several high-quality houses were being built in the Pollard's Wood area during the first decade of the 1900s, some of which were designed by the architect James E. Forbes, a partner in Forbes and Tate. Forbes lived in one of these houses called The Sheiling. In the list of Jekyll's commissions compiled by her nephew, Francis Jekyll, a Mr J. E. Forbes is named as the owner and J. E. Forbes as the architect of Pollard's Wood, Fernhurst, 1908.<sup>1</sup>

Chalfont St. Giles History then referred me to a photograph on their website from *The Architect* of 7 June 1909 showing the south elevation of The Sheiling. The loggia and window layout of the south wall of the house appeared to match that shown on the outline plan of the south elevation of the house on one of the Pollard's Wood, Fernhurst drawings (File IV Folder No 76 Item 4 of 9) in the Reef Point Collection.

Although Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust's website lists known Jekyll schemes in the county The Sheiling and Pollard's Wood are not included. However, my research, and that of Chalfont St. Giles History, suggested that the Pollard's Wood, Fernhurst drawings in the Reef Point Gardens collection are of The Sheiling, Pollard's Wood, Chalfont St. Giles, Buckinghamshire.

I contacted Dr Sarah Rutherford of the Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust and she agreed with my research findings that Pollard's Wood, originally listed as being in Sussex, is in fact The Sheiling and is situated in Buckinghamshire. BucksGT thanked me for returning it to their county!



SOUTH ELEVATION.

HOUSE AT CHALFONT ST. GILES, BUCKS, FOR J. EDWIN FORBES, ESQ.  
DESIGNED BY JAMES FORBES & TATE, ARCHTDS.

The Sheiling south elevation

BA

Why Fernhurst was connected with Pollard's Wood on the Reef Point Collection drawings remains an unanswered question, but it is known that after his aunt's death Francis Jekyll compiled the original list of sites from her diaries and plans kept at Munstead which he then included in his memoir. This original list continues to be revised as new research emerges.

**David Bridges,**  
Sussex Gardens Trust

#### References:

1. Jekyll, Francis, *Gertrude Jekyll, A Memoir* (J. Cape 1934) [http://www.chalfonthistory.co.uk/pollards\\_wood\\_recent\\_history.html](http://www.chalfonthistory.co.uk/pollards_wood_recent_history.html)  
[archives@socrates.berkeley.edu](mailto:archives@socrates.berkeley.edu)  
<http://www.ced.berkeley.edu/cedarchives/>

#### Editor Notes taken from website of Chalfont History:

The Sheiling: Built 1909 to a design by James Forbes, architect, for his own use. Occupied until just before his death in 1955. Image is from *The Architect* 7<sup>th</sup> June 1909. It was offered for sale in *The Times* 1 April 1952, described as The Sheiling with three reception rooms, seven bedrooms and three bathrooms with 9 acres. In 1986 it was owned by a Mr and Mrs Grove. In 1994 the owner was a D. Reuben. It was bought in August 1997 by the singer Noel Gallagher.

Buckinghamshire list of Gertrude Jekyll sites:

<https://bucksgardenstrust.org.uk/research-and-recording/gertrude-jekyll-in-historic-bucks/>

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**Villas through the Letterbox (2)**

Saturday 21 April 2018



Dear Bucks GT,

Well, where to start with this whirlwind tour of the gardens in and around Rome, led by Robert Peel? If it's Saturday this must be Frascati, where we are staying, and here is a view of the marvellous Villa Aldobrandini as seen from our hotel. It's been lived in by the Aldobrandini family since 1598 and is the most famous example of early Italian Baroque style. Its early C17th axial water garden was the inspiration for others throughout Europe. Yesterday we had to fit in the Vatican (because the Pope decided to close it on Monday, his Saint's name-day) as well as the scheduled visits to the Villa Medici, Villa Borghese and Villa Giulia (fabulous ceiling frescoes of exotic animals). Already they're starting to blur and our legs are distinctly tired... Still to come are the renowned water gardens of the Villa d'Este at Tivoli with Hadrian's Villa just down the road, and the Villa Lante at Bagnaia. After that, the mysterious sculptures in the wood at Bomarzo promise a complete contrast, and we're ending up at the beautiful romantic wild gardens of Ninfa which were created around the ruins of a medieval village. An English gardener is in charge – what a job to have! Best wishes to all, Clare and Claire

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**King George V Park, Wellington Avenue, Princes Risborough update**



In the June and July editions we discussed the establishment of the King George's Fields Foundation 'for the enjoyment of the people' throughout the UK. (1)

According to the Fields in Trust website, the 'first field' was in Sonning, Berkshire which received formal

protection on July 16<sup>th</sup> 1938 (2) However recent research has discovered contemporary newspaper articles which reveal that the King George V Memorial Playing Field in Princes Risborough, was

the first. (3) This research is supported by the Princes Risborough Heritage Society in *Princes Risborough Past* Sandy Macfarlane & Chris Kingham (Phillimore 1997).

1. Bucks Gardens Trust newsletter, June 2020
2. As identified by the Final Report of King George's Foundation, 1965
3. The Bucks Advertiser & Aylesbury News/Bucks Examiner/Bucks Free Press, all dated Friday June 25<sup>th</sup> 1937

**Reply from Fields in Trust**

Bucks GT contacted the Fields in Trust with their evidence and the following reply was received:



**Richard McKeever**

Fields in Trust

Communications & Marketing  
Manager

0207 427 2117

07940072832

[www.fieldsintrust.org](http://www.fieldsintrust.org)



Many thanks for your message – and for passing on your interesting articles.

I passed on your message to colleagues who have looked at our records. It appears that the Deed for Princes Risborough was formally signed/sealed in 1938 around a year after the "opening ceremony" you have identified from local press.

However the KGV Field in Sonning is listed as the first to be approved by the Trustees of the King George V Fields Foundation. Sonning is identified as the "First Field" in the final report of the King George Fields Foundation from 1965 (cited in your article). On (I think) page 22 of the report there is an image caption which reads

FIRST AND LAST 4. above entrance to the first 'King Georges Field' to be approved, Sonning, Berkshire, 8.5 acres. Village field, simple oak gate posts with bronze Heraldic Panels.

So the Trustees of the Foundation identified Sonning as the "First Field" to be approved during the process of establishing the KGV playing fields across the UK.

As you know, we recently marked the 95<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Field in Trust – but in very unusual circumstances, we hope when we return to a more "business as usual" approach, to be making more references to the history of our organisation and the legacy of the protected green spaces which have been so vital this year. If I may, I'd like to follow-up with your research once we are back in the office.

Thank you and very best wishes. Richard McKeever

We shall be following this up with the Fields in Trust. Editor

## News Snippets

### Buckinghamshire Heritage Portal

<https://heritageportal.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/>

An amazing new research tool – try it! The Heritage Portal includes the Historic Environment Record for the county of Buckinghamshire. The database contains over 35,000 records, not only of traditional archaeological sites, earthworks and stray artefacts, but also historic buildings and landscapes, and covers periods from the earliest humans to the end of the Cold War and beyond.

You can search the records with text searches or by using the digital map. You can explore what is in the database about your parish or read a period overview of archaeology for the whole county.

This online version of the Historic Environment Record is not authorised for commercial re-use of the information and should not be used for legal or planning purposes as it's not the complete Historic Environment Record. Some information has been withheld for reasons of confidentiality or protection of sensitive sites. It has also not been possible to digitise all the images and reports in our extensive collections.

*Julia Wise*

### Events Update:

See website for more details [www.bucksgardenstrust.org.uk](http://www.bucksgardenstrust.org.uk)

### Online Winter Lecture Series 2020/21

**The Gardens Trust and The London Gardens Trust**  
12 lectures from 5 October 2020 to 22 March 2021

#### 2020

**5 October:** Hyde Park: A History of Trees – Greg Packman, Senior Tree Inspector, London Borough of Islington and former Tree Officer, Royal Parks

**19 October:** George London and the Brompton Park Nursery – Dr Sally Jeffery, garden & architectural historian

**2 November:** The Use of Plants in the Home in the Seventeenth Century – Margaret Willes, former publisher and author

**16 November:** ‘To promote his Majesties purpose’: Joseph Banks and his Global Botanical Projects, 1770-1820 – Professor Jordan Goodman, University College, London

**30 November:** Pulhamite in London, 1820-2020 – Valerie Christman, Direct descendant of the Pulham Family

**14 December:** Wentworth Castle and Wentworth Woodhouse: Georgian rivals – Dr Patrick Eyres, Editor, New Arcadian Journal

#### 2021

**11 January:** Biodiversity & the Wild West End Project: Encouraging Birds, Bees & Bats into the Heart of London – Tom Gray, Senior Ecological Consultant, Arup

**25 January:** The Integration of Derek Jarman's Garden – Professor Michael Charlesworth, University of Texas

**8 February:** Too Young to be Loved? Post-war designed landscapes of London and environs – Karen Fitzsimon CMLI, landscape architect and garden historian

**22 February:** Transatlantic slavery's long reach: The impacts of direct and indirect slavery connections on eighteenth century estate gardens and parks – Professor Susanne Seymour, University of Nottingham

**8 March:** Dinosaurs, Italian Terraces and Future Sustainability: Crystal Palace Park – Kathryn Whitmore, Associate Landscape Architect, AECOM and others tbc

**22 March:** What is Wild? – Dr Kim Wilkie, Landscape Architect

**Booking:** All lectures and booking online. Season tickets for 12 lectures: £40/£60 Tickets for individual lectures: £4 for Gardens Trust/all County Gardens Trusts members, £6 for non-members;

<https://bookwhen.com/londongardenstrust#focus=ev-sg7x-20201005180000>

### Institute of Historical Research

**Online Autumn Seminar Program 2020 - Rus in Urbe**  
Responses to Crises and the Catastrophes 1590s-1990s  
Thursday, 6:00 pm via Zoom

**Joining** instructions will appear shortly. Free seminars  
Website: <https://www.history.ac.uk/seminars/history-gardens-and-landscapes>

Email: [gardenhistory.ihr@gmail.com](mailto:gardenhistory.ihr@gmail.com)

**1 Oct** Dr David Marsh -Famine, War, Plague & Fire: London's "green" responses to the Four Horsemen of the long 17th century Apocalypse.

**15 Oct** Dr Carole O'Reilly- 'Dark Pleasures: The Public Park as a Response to the Crisis of Urban Life'

**29 Oct** Tom Turner - John Claudius Loudon's 1820s proposals for London to grow into a garden City with green infrastructure

**12 Nov** Dr Jan Woudstra - Germany and the Garden City: a green response to social, political and economic upheaval after World War I

**26 Nov** Dr Katrina Navickas --Greening London: the impact of the crisis of the Second World War on the open spaces in the capital

**10 Dec** Dr David Jacques - Success or Failure - what was the point of Country Parks?

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Gwen Miles

**Editor's Note: Please forward to friends if you have enjoyed this Newsletter.**

Christmas Newsletter copy deadline 14<sup>th</sup> November

The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust is a Registered Charity number: 1099674 and a member of The Gardens Trust. It is a Company Limited by Guarantee registered in England and Wales: 4828124. Registered Office: c/o Vine Cottage, Thame Road, Longwick, Princes Risborough. Bucks HP27 9TA Website: [www.bucksgardenstrust.org.uk](http://www.bucksgardenstrust.org.uk)  
*The Newsletter:* edited by *Gwen Miles & Clare Butler.*