



At last Committee can meet face to face Social distancing protocols strictly observed



A letter from the Chairman

Dear Gardens Trust Friend,

This year, to put it mildly, has been full of surprises in all sorts of ways. The weather, as usual, is confounding our expectations with the seasons all topsy-turvy. More important is the impact of Covid 19 and the lock-down of normal life, which unfortunately, has now been extended for Leicester. The impact of the virus has meant that the Trust has had to curtail its activities for this year. We have been in touch with this year's speakers and they have all indicated that they would be happy to come and speak to us next year.

The Committee is monitoring the situation and will be in touch when we believe it will be safe for us to meet again. As a Committee, we have addressed the subject of the annual subscription, as we are aware that the lectures and events for this year have been cancelled. We are, therefore, happy to refund the subscription for this year to those members who wish to receive it, but for those who do not wish for a refund, the Trust will be most grateful and will treat your subscription as a donation. I am happy to assure you that the Trust is in a financially sound position.

Earlier this year, I was contacted by Irene Jones, who notified me that she wished to stand down from the Committee. Irene has been a stalwart member of the Trust from its earliest days, serving as Membership Secretary and working for many years to get the Education Group up and running. As Chairman, I have been very grateful for Irene's support on the Committee and to the Trust. On behalf of all of us, I would like to thank for everything that she has done. I am pleased to say that Irene will be continuing as a member and will be attending lectures and coming on trips.

I look forward to seeing you all again but, in the meantime, I wish you all well
Take care of yourselves.

Stephen Barker
Chairman

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Events

This was supposed to be an annual report for the cancelled AGM in March. Life was more or less normal then, when it was taken for granted that one could travel on coaches, attend lectures, visit gardens, and have teas, coffees and pub lunches. All of these things now, have receded into a distant past and we can just hope, that one day, in the not too distant future all these things can be rearranged for 2021? Back then I don't think any of us could have imagined just how different life is now.

There were 3 presentations for the Friends Evening in November, which we dedicated to the memory of John Oakland founder member of The Trust and Peter Rawson long-time member of The Trust and our unofficial photographer. Janet Lee spoke about John's garden, Long Close, in Woodhouse Eaves, her association with John and the garden. From Leicestershire we went to Newfoundland with John Crooks and then Svalbard with Mary Campbell. They both showed slides of the landscapes and some of the flora. It was really fascinating, and of course, a contrast to Long Close. Seems some of the Friends are very intrepid travellers.

I think I must point out something about the food. The idea is that it is bring and share, but judging from the amount left over, most of the Friends feel they are feeding the 5,000. We appreciate your generosity but, perhaps a little less for our next one whenever that maybe.

When I realised that I was going to miss the only showing of the Piet Oudolf, film, Five Seasons, in Leicester, in June 2019 I was determined that we would include it in our programme at some point. The winter lunch seemed a good opportunity, as it was to be held in Hoby Village Hall with Mrs Bridges as caterer. After some difficulty Steve managed to get hold of it, not easy. It was shown very successfully before our delicious lunch provided by Kristian. What better way to spend a winter's day. It did work well and I have been looking for another film for 2021 but nothing seems quite to fit the occasion. So if you have any ideas let me know.

The only other event we have had was our winter trip to **Chippenham Park** in Cambridgeshire. This is a garden in winter which is well worth seeing, it has been said to have the best display of snowdrops in East Anglia, I can vouch for that, and there are many other species of plants and shrubs with winter interest. A good lunch at a nearby pub, tea and cake before we went home made it a perfect winter day out. Seems like heaven now. One of the interesting things about this visit for me, was the fact that a friend invited me to join her on a visit there, by The Friends of the Botanic Garden years ago. I found out, when we were all established members of the



Trust, that also on that trip were a certain Sue Blaxland and a certain Debs Martin. We did not know each other then, a nice coincidence.

From then on all events for the Trust have been cancelled with one exception, The Friends Evening. Judith Hibbert was due to give the Autumn Lecture in October, but by postponing it until November there is more of a chance of it being held, we can just wait and see what happens. Chris Beardshaw was booked for the Celebrity Lecture 3 years ago, for 2021 (9th Sept) so am not quite sure what will happen to Janina's lecture at this point. I was so pleased to have Marcus Chilton Jones, curator of the new RHS garden, Bridgewater for the Hoby tea, followed by a visit to Bridgewater in September. The visit will take place next year but it is unlikely that we can get Marcus for the Hoby tea. All other events will be replicated, circumstances allowing.

So that's it for now, I wish I could tell you when we are likely to meet again or at least when we can safely arrange another event. I enjoyed the lockdown at first, as the weather was so good and I could watch Spring emerging in the garden now however it's just all so uncertain and we do not have much of an idea of how things will function in the future. Just all keep well and I hope that some sort of programme will be arranged for L.R.G.T in the foreseeable future.

Elizabeth.Bacon

Research Group

This update on the activities of the Research Group was written as a report for the AGM, which, of course, had to be cancelled. First of all, some statistics showing the current position regarding the walled kitchen garden research project:

Total sites identified (with 4 more possible sites in Rutland)	86
Sites where research is completed	31
Published on website	29
Awaiting approval from owner	2
In progress	7
Access denied or no response from owner	4

When I look at these figures, it does sometimes feel that our progress is slow and for every site that we finish researching, another new one is identified. However, the depth and

breadth of information that we uncover in our research takes time to uncover and we take great pleasure in the process. It is hard to convey the excitement that we experience when we resolve a mystery or an unexpected piece of information comes to light.

The West Group have completed an excellent piece of research on Whatton, but are still awaiting approval from the owners for it to be published on our website.

The South East Group is focussing on some walled kitchen gardens where little remains. However, on a walk, Gill Knight found a new walled kitchen garden in Gumley which belongs to the Vicarage. The Group have just had a socially distanced visit where they viewed the garden from the neighbouring field!

The North-East Group has completed research on Leicester Frith and this has now been published on the website. Leicester Frith is the former walled kitchen garden on the Glenfield Hospital site – and is being developed as The Secret Garden project. There is a separate article in this newsletter sent to us by the hospital with an update on their very exciting progress.

It was a complex and fascinating site and has taken a long time to research. One of the features that we record is water in the garden: wells, ponds, tanks and towers. There was anecdotal evidence only of two wells in the garden which had been covered over. In February this year (after we had completed our research) a number of the gardening volunteers were clearing an area in front of the lean-to greenhouse and 'unearthed' one of the wells. This is how they described it:

"The discovery of the well was a chance event as we began clearance of the area in front of the currently derelict greenhouse. Beneath what appears to be a self-set cut down old tree, there is a substantial concrete cover, itself enmeshed in the roots of the tree. Debris falling into the small gap beneath the concrete cover resulted in the sound of water splashing and the well was rediscovered"

The Walled Kitchen Garden talk has been given several times in the previous year and this has produced not only funds for the Education Fund but also some snippets of information about gardens that we are researching.

The group was sorry to have lost two members: Keith Aldridge who had been working in Rutland but was

unable to find time for research and Karen Gimson, who is doing more work as a journalist. As always, more research members would be made very welcome.

Sue Blaxland

Leicester's Hospitals Secret Garden

As a reminder the Secret Garden, Glenfield Hospital, which is now included in the Leicestershire and Rutland Garden Trust Register of walled kitchen gardens (fascinating read), is an acre of Victorian walled garden in the grounds of Glenfield Hospital, Leicester. The Secret Garden Project is taking this green space and creating a garden of reflection and remembrance, sensory gardens, an organic growing area and providing open spaces for people to gather.

The Secret Garden Project is ambitious – not only will it create a beautiful garden, it also aims to build a Learning Centre, Café and Shop, transform an old apple store into a Heritage Centre, provide a community hub and work with our communities, partners and beneficiaries to develop and deliver a programme of therapeutic activities.

The update that follows informs on some of the progress made to date and gives an insight in to The Secret Garden short term plans and projects.

Quick Update

The garden now has four lovely garden rooms created by Channel 5's Great Garden Challenge programme situated in the middle of the acre. Each garden room has been sympathetically designed to enhance the visitor experience.



The Friday morning volunteers have been very busy and have created a new thriving herb garden in what was once a 'hard to grow area' of the garden and a beautiful new summer cut flower bed in front of the original peach house. All plants, bulbs and seeds were donated by the Friday morning volunteers.



In the area which has been dedicated to organic growing, the Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust have built some new raised beds for growing vegetables. This project was funded by the Midlands Co-op. In addition to the raised beds, the organic growing area now also has composting corner built from recycled waste materials.



In early May, Phase 1 of the Garden of Reflection and Remembrance got underway with the support of Bowmer and Kirkland Ltd, McDermotts Civil Engineering, Harrowden Turf, Leicester Hospitals Charity and volunteers from The Wildlife Trust and the Friday Morning Volunteers. On 26th May the new 520 square metre lawn was laid in readiness for all to use late June.

What's on the horizon?

Phase 2 of the Garden of Reflection and Remembrance – Phase 2 has been designed and costed. The Project team are currently working hard to secure the funding to deliver this final phase of the Gardens of Reflection and Remembrance.

Phase 3 Outdoor Courtyard - Following the increase in visitors to The Secret Garden during the COVID-19 pandemic mainly by staff, it was quickly identified that there was a need to increase the amount of outdoor seating especially on warm sunny days. The outdoor courtyard has been designed and the area has been cleared in readiness for the new paving to be laid once the funds have been raised. The funds to install privacy fencing have been secured and the new fencing should be in place by mid June. A new planted bench and green wall for the courtyard area has been donated by Bowmer and Kirkland Ltd.

Upon reflection

Whilst research has proven that time spent in natural environments can provide a range of health benefits, in the current difficult and challenging times we now find ourselves, the opening of the garden gate to the Secret Garden for Leicester's Hospitals staff and a number of patients during the COVID-19 pandemic, has only served to emphasise the true value of this garden.

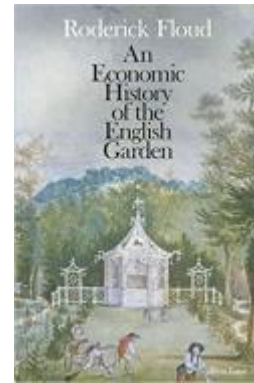
There is still much to be done but, with the support of volunteers, with corporate involvement and with a number of personal donations, the garden is slowly taking shape – and the project team can't help but get excited.

For more information please e-mail thesecretgarden@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

Book Review

An Economic History of the English Garden.

Sir Roderick Floud 2019



Sir Roderick Floud is an eminent economic historian who just happens, like millions of others, to enjoy visiting other people's gardens and National Trust properties. Whilst enjoying all the obvious delights which gardens offer, he does have one question, how much do they cost to make and maintain, and where did the money come from to create the gardens..

The book tries to answer these questions. There must be hundreds of books about all aspects of gardens, plants, designers etc but little is said about the actual cost of gardens and gardening. This book shows, to quote "that spending money on gardens has been one of the greatest and most conspicuous, forms of expenditure on luxury in England since the 17th century or earlier: it has employed hundreds of thousands of people at a time, given rise to foreign trade and created a whole new industry of nurseries, garden centres and landscape contractors whose current turnover is over £11 billion a year"

I have to admit that the title gives the impression of being a very dry read but it is quite fascinating and interesting full of information which will surprise many gardeners. It has the added advantage that all costs are in the present day values. For example not many of us will be aware that Capability Brown and other great gardeners' made millions and some head gardeners made large amounts of money. The Paxton glasshouse at Chatsworth cost £25 million. I was rather amused to read that he discounts the received wisdom that walled kitchen gardens produced enough food to feed the families of our great houses and all their employees. Crops did not always work out as planned and visits to the equivalent of the supermarket were often necessary.

This book, which is beautifully researched brings together all aspects, personalities and cost involved in the creation and maintenance of the country's gardens whether they be great or small. A different sort of garden history.

I have learned such a lot and do recommend it.

Elizabeth Bacon.

SELF-ISOLATION

By Paul Knight

I'll continue to self-isolate
Till the pandemic starts to abate.
We've got plenty of gin
And odd things in a tin,
Though well past their 'best before' date.

At our government's solemn insistence
I'm maintaining a safe social distance.
I avoid crowded shops
And steer clear of the cops
When going out walking, for instance.

I shall exercise strict bowel control
Now we're down to our last toilet roll.
Still, there's no need to stint
While we still have newsprint,
Self sufficiency should be our goal.

I do crosswords, read books, watch TV
Weed the garden, and prune the odd tree.
Contact friends on WhatsApp,
Then emerge for a clap,
Stream an NTL show, all for free!

To comply with official demands
I am diligently washing my hands.
A crash helmet in place
Stops me touching my face,
Though I'm not sure my wife understands.

Times like these require a cool head
To help us sleep safe in our bed.
Someone great, to inspire us
While we battle the virus,
Butwe've got Boris Johnson instead!

So stay safe now, my much treasured friend.
On the NHS we must depend.
It's the doctors and nurses
Not some humorous verses
That will see us all through to the end.

Education

Megan Summers was the recipient of the 2019 **LRGT Brooksby Melton College Horticultural Award**. Megan, 19, was chosen for her contribution as an ambassador of countryside education. She received a cheque for £100, which she chose to spend on books..

Megan told the *Melton Times*, "Having completed level three horticulture, achieving a distinction, and now undertaking level three countryside management, I feel so lucky, privileged and proud to have been chosen to receive this award"



Liz Hammond, Megan's Brooksby tutor, Megan, Judith and Sue at the presentation

Good News

Earlier this year, the late **John Oakland's wild flower meadows** (Johnson's Meadows), attached to **Long Close**, his home, in Woodhouse Eaves, were designated a **Site of Special Scientific Interest**, SSSI. The meadows are considered to be of special interest for their species-rich lowland neutral grassland.

Many of you will remember Long Close and the wild flower meadows from Trust events there. John had long wanted the meadows designated an SSI to protect them from future development. DEFRA is carrying out a post designation consultation, but apparently this should only be a formality, so this is good news indeed.



Members of the Research Group admire the meadows in 2011

Useful Contact Numbers

Chairman	Stephen Barker	07977923631
Membership	Steve Horsfield	
Events	Elizabeth Bacon	0116 2705711
Newsletter	Deborah Martin	0116 2707525
Research/ Secretary	Sue Blaxland	0116 2609748
Education	Judith Hibbert	