

Hestercombe: A Unique Heritage Landscape

When Philip White discovered Hestercombe in the early 1990s it was nothing more than an overgrown valley; its unique treasures hidden beneath years of neglect. A leap of faith, vision and determination over the last 28 years has seen a large portion of the historic landscape and formal gardens transformed and restored to their original glory.

Three centuries of complete period gardens, and the recently discovered rare seventeenth century water garden, make Hestercombe a truly unique estate and an internationally important site of landscape and garden heritage.

The estate itself was first acquired by Sir John Warre in 1391 and considerably developed in the 1680s under the ownership of Sir Francis Warre. A dramatic transformation took place in the 1720s when Sir Francis's son-in-law, John Bampfylde, took down most of the medieval part of the house and re-fronted it with the typical Georgian façade that largely survives today. Following John Bampfylde's death in 1750, the highly picturesque and important romantic Landscape Garden at Hestercombe was created by his son and heir, Coplestone Warre Bampfylde.

In 1872 the estate was purchased by the 1st Viscount Portman, who gutted the house's interior and gave it an expensive Victorian facelift. In 1895 an extensive servants' wing was added and, in 1904, the Formal Garden designed by Edwin Lutyens, with planting schemes by Gertrude Jekyll, was created – a feature for which Hestercombe is justly famous, and has received worldwide acclaim.

After the death of the Hon. Mrs Portman in 1951, the house became the headquarters of Somerset Fire Brigade and remained so for almost 60 years until it was reunited with the gardens in 2013.

Now, attracting over 100,000 visitors a year, Hestercombe is owned and managed by the Hestercombe Gardens Trust and in 2017 celebrated its 20th year of the gardens being open to the public.

Hestercombe continues to evolve, just as it has throughout history as the Trust endeavours to ensure that Hestercombe remains relevant in the 21st century.



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Chairman's Report

Our annus mirabilis is not too strong a description of 2018 in the story of Hestercombe's continuing restoration.

Following the decision of the Crown Estate to sell Hestercombe and the surrounding estate, the Hestercombe Gardens Trust was delighted to have the unique opportunity to reunite the historic gardens, house and other buildings close by with the freehold of all the surrounding grade 1 historic landscape. This exciting opportunity will enable the Trust to secure the setting of Hestercombe House and Gardens and ensure that this extraordinary place will be preserved in perpetuity for the benefit all.

I am tremendously grateful to all our donors and individual benefactors over the years, including my fellow Trustees, and in particular to the Ripple Trust, the Richard Broyd Trust and the National Heritage Memorial Fund who enabled us to acquire the freehold of the 320 acre estate.

Sir Peter Luff, Chair of the National Heritage Memorial Fund which granted £1,462,000 towards the cost, said: "On a par with Stourhead, Castle Howard and Blenheim, Hestercombe is an exquisite landscape with such an important story to tell in the history of English garden design. This was a once in a generation opportunity to restore it in full and one that we at the National Heritage Memorial Fund felt had to be seized."

The size and importance of this acquisition, and such a generous public recognition of the exceptional national importance of the Hestercombe landscape, for which the Trust is tremendously grateful, has prompted Trustees to review and update their responsibilities and governance procedures in line with the Trust's new Strategic Plan and the Large Charities Code of Governance. The Trust has carried out a full audit of our governance, and an action plan has been produced to ensure we fully comply with contemporary standards of good governance in the charity

sector. A review of all Trust policies, including the its risk register, has already been carried out; and, together with a new pattern of individual Trustee appraisals, an updated skills audit of Trustees is also being undertaken.

The policy of the Trustees is to remunerate all their staff fairly in accordance with good practice, observing appropriate legislation e.g. regarding the minimum wage, diversity etc at the same time ensuring the health, safety, and personal advancement of all staff, while operating in a financially prudent and sustainable way.

All Trustees of Hestercombe Gardens Trust serve as volunteers and are unpaid; some claim travel expenses when attending meetings. A Remuneration and Nominations Committee, composed of at least two Trustees, meets twice a year to consider senior executive pay and reports to Trustees at each full meeting of the Trust. Remuneration for the Chief Executive is set by the Committee with advice from the Trust's financial advisor and is benchmarked against comparable roles as far as this is possible.

The Trustees are very conscious of their duty to promote public access to Hestercombe, to manage the heritage assets in a socially inclusive way and to continue to grow Hestercombe into a site of national and international importance and an economic and cultural driver of regional prosperity. The recent land and property acquisitions open up a dramatically new range of options and possibilities which the Trustees are actively examining with their dedicated and enthusiastic staff.

Having revived the gardens and restored the heritage of this gloriously beautiful and therapeutic landscape under the visionary leadership of our Chief Executive Philip White, the Trustees are determined to support him in the next phase of opening up the estate to ever greater public enjoyment, education and benefit.

SIR ANDREW BURNS KCMG

"Hestercombe is an exquisite landscape with such an important story to tell in the history of English garden design..."



Chief Executive's Report

Work continued throughout 2018 on refining the designs for the future development of Hestercombe House in order to apply for planning permission in 2019. The Trust's aim is to open as much of the house to public access as possible, in a number of ways. A new 200 seat multi-purpose performance and function space is envisaged together with a second gallery and creative workspaces. Combined with a café at the rear of the house overlooking the Mill pond, these developments will both reconnect the house and the designed landscape and support Hestercombe's ambition to be a cultural centre for Somerset and the region, bringing together arts and landscape.

The restoration of Sandilands Wood and the Victorian Portman drive continued with the planting of sixty Chinese crab apples donated by the Friends of Hestercombe, allowing the recreation of the original avenue of flowering fruit trees first planted in the 1890s by the Hon EWB 'Teddy' Portman.

In the gardens the creation of Sibyl's Temple, a Bath stone rotunda, was commissioned, funded by the Leader Project, the Richard Broyd Trust and Mrs Ruth Adams. An exact copy of an original C18th rotunda at Batheaston Villa, a building well known to Bampfylde, the structure will provide a focus for visitors at an important point in the garden and help articulate the circuit's change of direction.

A long-planned addition to the gardens was the recreation of a lost Sundial recorded in a watercolour from the 1860s. The pedestal, carved by Harry Brockway, is a copy of a design by James Gibbs published in 1728. It supports a unique sundial dedicated to John and Margaretta Bampfylde, and was specially created for Hestercombe by Harriet James. Installed during summer 2018, the sundial was generously donated by two Friends of Hestercombe.

2018 was the 175th anniversary of garden designer Gertrude Jekyll, creator of the Formal Garden's planting scheme. An exhibition in Hestercombe House, incorporating objects from the Hestercombe collection together with works borrowed from the Garden Museum in London, created much interest among visitors. This was reinforced by coverage of the exhibition in Country Life, West Country Life and Gardens Illustrated magazines.

September saw the launch of 'Constance', a superb recreation of a lake punt by The Beautiful Boat Company of Lyme Regis. A copy of the Portman's original punt, it will animate the lake and lead future visitor events.

Thanks to a number of significant grants and donations, the Trust has acquired the freehold of virtually all of Hestercombe's historic landscape from the Crown Estate*, which includes gardens, woodland and the adjoining 220 acre Hestercombe Farm.

We are delighted that the Parks and Gardens UK Database is once again open for public use as a major national research resource and receives considerable web traffic. Improvements to its development are ongoing and, with the assistance of a small team of committed volunteers, we are now, once more, in a position to upload new data submitted by County Gardens Trust surveyors.

Overall, 2018 proved an energising and forward-facing year in which we achieved much, and laid substantial foundations for Hestercombe's next phase of development. We are incredibly grateful to the Hestercombe Gardens Trust, the Management Team and dedicated staff and volunteers, without whose ongoing support and dedication we would not be in the strong position that we are today.

PHILIP WHITE MBE

*described more fully in the Fundraising section.

"...2018 proved an energising and forward-facing year in which we achieved much, and laid substantial foundations for Hestercombe's next phase of development..."



Financial Review - 2018

The undoubted highlight of a most positive year for the Trust was the success in raising £2.3m to acquire from the Crown Estates the freehold of virtually the whole of the original estate and surrounding land including Hestercombe Farm. This was achieved through the generosity of the National Heritage Memorial Fund and other donors including the Ripple and Richard Broyd Trusts, the Garfield Weston Foundation and Mr B S and Mrs Christina Ong in recognition of the exceptional importance of the historic landscape. Securing the freeholds of property formally held under long leases has significantly strengthened the Trust's balance sheet, which now reflects fixed assets in excess of £10m. The acquisition of the estate freeholds enables the Trust to consider ambitious plans for the future details of which are set out elsewhere in this review.

In total the Trust raised £2,722,743 in grants, donations and legacies taking the Trust's total income (including trading and other charitable income) in 2018 to £4,615,185 – more than double that of the previous year. In addition to the grants and donations raised, the Trust received loan funding from Triodos Bank in support of the purchase of Middle Lodge, a charming Victorian gatekeeper's cottage in the centre of the historic estate which is to be refurbished and used initially as accommodation in support of events for those visiting Hestercombe.

The Trust's trading operations, carried out by its subsidiary Hestercombe Gardens Limited, also recorded an excellent year, with turnover increasing by 18% to £1.22m in 2018. This improvement reflected the consistent popularity of Hestercombe with more than 100,000 visitors again visiting the gardens and also the celebration of more than 60 weddings on site during the year. The Column Room Restaurant has also grown in popularity as visitors come to enjoy afternoon teas, or fine dining, overlooking the formal gardens.

Overall the Trust reported a surplus for the year of £2.42m reflecting the donations raised for the purchase of the estate freeholds – the surplus for 2017 was £217k. This has led to a major increase in the Trust's net asset position which rose from £6.91m in 2017 to £10.39m in 2018. In total over the last five years the Trust's trading and charitable activities have allowed it to invest just short of £8m in the maintenance of the Hestercombe Estate.

GEOFF METCALF, FINANCE ADVISOR TO THE TRUST



Summary of Accounts

CASH FLOW STATEMENT	Last 5 Years	2018	2017
	£	£	£
Charity Income			
Grants Donations & Legacies	3,591,265	2,722,743	528,892
Admissions & Membership	2,354,492	532,190	507,085
Education, Arts & Other	723,470	126,306	168,648
Total	6,669,227	3,381,239	1,204,625
Trading Income			
Catering, Retail, Functions & Events	5,170,446	1,233,946	1,043,859
Trading Expenses	(3,943,753)	(955,648)	(839,000)
Net Trading Income	1,226,693	278,298	204,859
TOTAL DIGOLOG	7.007.020	2 (50 525	1 400 404
TOTAL INCOME	7,895,920	3,659,537	1,409,484
Charity Expenditure			
Restoration of Gardens	(1,986,188)	(436,713)	(501,213)
Hestercombe House	(778,641)	(133,461)	(169,337)
Visitor Centre & Marketing	(1,396,334)	(293,564)	(253,926)
Support Costs	(1,208,925)	(254,747)	(268,257)
Add Back Depreciation	617,523	62,135	161,117
1	(4,752,565)	(1,056,350)	(1,031,616)
Surplus	3,143,355	2,603,187	377,868
Capital Expenditure	(3,407,841)	(2,828,191)	(109,185)
NET CASH FLOW	(264,486)	225,004	268,683
1,22 5,1622 126 ()	(201,100)		200,000
FUNDED BY:			
Net Loan Advances	364,310	(289,073)	(160,178)
Working Capital	(99,824)	(64,069)	(108,505)
Torking Suprim	(//,021)	(01,007)	(100,000)
TOTAL	264,486	(225,004)	(268,683)

The Trust's balance sheet can be summarised as follows:

BALANCE SHEET TABLE	Year Ended	Year Ended
	31st December	31st December
	2018	2017
	£000	£000
Tangible Fixed Assets	11,740	8,043
Current Assets	286	319
Current Liabilities	(349)	(446)
Long Term Liabilities	(1,288)	(999)
Net Assets	10,389	6,917

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The Gardens

In 2018, considerable work was undertaken in Sandilands Wood in preparation for the planting of the avenue of Chinese crab apple trees, Malus hupehensis, with over 1,000 tonnes of topsoil brought in to restore the 10 metre wide verges. Cheddon Fitzpaine Primary School and individual sponsors were invited to join in the planting of the trees on 22 February. The Gardens team and volunteers were understandably delighted by this outcome, as it took a great deal of time and energy to achieve. By the autumn, the grass on the avenue had grown well and the crab apple trees were successfully producing fruit. Work continues on improving the wood, particularly for the benefit of wildlife, and essential understory planting is to be undertaken.

In collaboration with Senior Archivist Kim Legate, we have designed new circular pathways around Rook Wood, to create an extension of the Victorian shrubbery that will take in the Golden Sebright bantams and the Army Barrack Hut. It is envisaged that by concentrating on plants with autumn interest and spring colour, the garden's seasonal interest will be extended and the visitor experience enhanced. A mixture of native shrubs will also be incorporated to provide additional feeding areas for Hestercombe's population of rare Lesser Horseshoe bats.

The Delphinium Society kindly agreed to sponsor the replanting of the delphiniums in the Great Plat, and working with growers Blackmore and Langdon we have propagated varieties Blue Nile and Pericles to match those found in Henry Moon's painting of delphiniums in the Jekyll's garden at Munstead House, held in the Hestercombe collection. The heated propagation bench in the glasshouse, funded by the Tesco 'Bags of Help' scheme, will allow for seed sowing and the capacity to successfully take many more cuttings in the future.

The dry summer in 2018 resulted in the Great Cascade drying up for almost six months – a great disappointment for many of our visitors. Having investigated the issue we

were relieved to find the water flowing well at the source, and are working with local farmers to clear their parts of the stream to help ensure the flow remains strong all year round.

Whilst we aim to maintain the gardens to a high standard, we also look to the future and ensure our skills are continually developed. Within the last year, team members have completed RHS2 and RHS3 qualifications (funded by The Merlin Trust and the Devon Gardens Trust respectively), and we welcomed a new member of staff as part of the Work and Retrain as a Gardener Scheme (WRAGS), partly funded by the National Garden Scheme. Other qualifications being undertaken include PA1 and PA6 spraying certificates, plus wildflower identification skill training.

Additionally, our Landscape and Formal Gardens teams have visited both Stourhead, Upton Grey and the wildflower meadows at Goren Farm to further their understanding of their craft. We were also delighted to welcome Munstead Wood's Head Gardener, Annabel Watts, to share experiences of the maintenance of our respective Jekyll gardens.

Knowledge exchange with the wider community plays an important part in our own development. In 2018, two Bridgwater and Somerset College (Cannington) students completed their studentships with us, and gained valuable horticulture experience. Two American students joined us from the TRIAD scheme, which links gardeners from the UK, USA and Japan. We are incredibly lucky to be a part of this initiative and find it both inspiring to work with, and learn from, students with experience of other horticultural traditions.

CLAIRE GREENSLADE, HEAD GARDENER

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Hestercombe Gallery

The year began with the Symposium 'Photography, performance and the historical imagination', supported by and held at Plymouth University. This event responded to Trish Morrissey's Hestercombe gallery exhibition *a certain slant of light* which ran until the end of February. Fascinated by images and stories of Elizabeth Maria Tyndale Warre, (1790-1872), who inherited the country estate in 1819, never married and lived here alone; and The Hon Mrs Portman (1854-1951), who resided over Hestercombe for forty years after the death of her husband, Morrissey developed her own interpretation of these women in photographs and films that combined fact, fiction and fantasy.

'Cultivation: Points of Vantage' continued a strong gallery programme. Supported with loans from Arts Council Collection it showed the work of eight well-known artists working with a wider brief of landscape. Abandoned landscapes linked the work of George Shaw, Mariele Neudecker and Mikhail Karikis, who use Humbrol enamel paint, sculpture, video and sound respectively to mine landmarks from the UK to Devil's Valley in Italy. Mary McIntyre and John Brown use photography in differing ways to present notions of Romanticism, beliefs and landscape. John Newling manipulates the land and horticulture itself to explore time, currency and value; and traces of time and materials linked Anna Barriball and Mary Griffiths.

In summer we were delighted to work with internationally acclaimed artist Helen Sear on her most ambitious exhibition in the UK to date *Prospect Refuge Hazard 2*. Sear was the first female artist selected to represent Wales in Venice at the 56th Venice Biennale in 2015. This show incorporated photography, sound and video works together with a new site-specific photographic work filling the staircase wall in Hestercombe House. Supporting events included a cross university MA students day, curator and collectors lunch and the seminar 'Disrupted View', featuring French academic Dr Laurent Châtel, Professor of British Art, Culture and Visual Studies at Lille University and London-based writer, editor, film and event producer Gareth Evans.

We also hosted our first international resident artist Gilles Bruni, who was drawn to the Landscape Garden and the potential restoration of an eighteenth century 'Hermitage'. For two weeks in July he became Hestercombe's own 'Hermit'; building a shelter and reacting with daily visitors. Not only did this work relate to the history of Hestercombe but for the artist it also resonated with the wider migrant crisis. In September one of our volunteers, Daniel McCarthy, used The Long Gallery, our community exhibition space, to show photographic portraits of Hestercombe dogs and their walkers, whilst Bristol based Oliver Sutherland began his artist in residence research.

Since 2015 artists Sarah Bennett, Megan Calver and Philippa Lawrence had been directly engaged with Hestercombe developing new site-based artworks that have developed from material investigation and research. The results of these interrelated enquiries were presented firstly through cross-disciplinary dialogue sessions then in the winter exhibition *Materiality: Provisional States* through new sculpture, objects, drawing, text and photography.

A busy year, not only on site but also offsite in, for example, local schools, and at such events as the symposium 'Scaling the Sublime', at Lakeside, Nottingham. None of this would have been possible without the support of our volunteers; funders, including Arts Council England and Taunton Deane Borough Council; those who kindly loaned us works; and the many artists who engaged with us.

TIM MARTIN, ART DIRECTOR/CURATOR



Helen Sear, Diviner 6 (Persephone), 2018



Volunteering

This has been a significant year for volunteers at Hestercombe, as many have been with us since the opening of Hestercombe House nearly five years ago. Encouragingly, former volunteers still visit Hestercombe, in particular the Second-hand Bookshop, which continues be popular with visitors. In 2018 a significant contribution of £26,000 was raised from the Bookshop, the annual book sale and internet sales - Hestercombe has its own shop on the Amazon website. This is a tremendous tribute to the commitment of the backroom and shop volunteers who work tirelessly to provide an excellent range of books and to our many donors from the wider community.

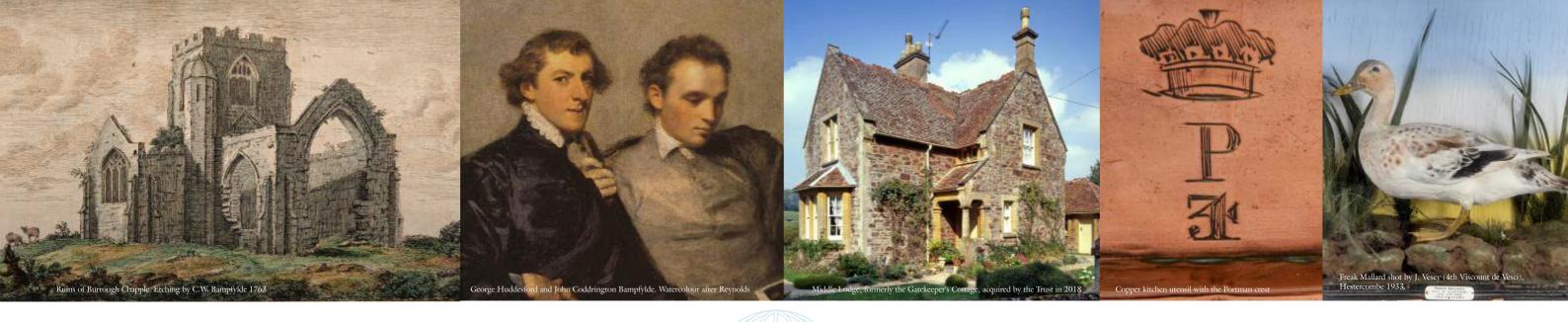
Volunteers continue to be vital to all areas of Hestercombe, including the main Gardens Shop, helping our Events Team with activities and supporting administrative staff. Throughout the seasons they may also be seen working in the gardens, providing indispensable help to our Head Gardener and her team both in the Formal and Landscape Gardens.

In total, Hestercombe's volunteers currently number 102, and they receive regular updates on the future development plans for the House and Gardens. Many have gained knowledge of the history of the estate, and a deeper understanding of contemporary art. A group of volunteers enjoyed a memorable outing in autumn 2018 to visit Spike Island and the Arnolfini Gallery in Bristol, which provided not only an enjoyable day out, but a chance to watch and learn from other cultural organisations.

We have continued to offer opportunities for Duke of Edinburgh Award students and work experience placements across the site and art gallery invigilation for local art students at weekends. These duties give participants an insight into the world of work and nature and more mature supporters a time to engage with our younger volunteers.

The dictionary definition of a volunteer is someone who 'gives freely of their time without looking for reward' and that embodies the attitude and commitment of all our volunteers. We are immensely grateful for their continuing and invaluable assistance across the Hestercombe family.

GILL CROSTON, VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR



Archives

The Archive continues to function well as an internal resource, helping, for example, to inform several 2018 exhibitions in the Hestercombe Gallery, in particular Gertrude Jekyll: An Artist's Eye, and Reflections on Chippendale at Hestercombe.

During the year, digital images of all known artworks of Coplestone Warre Bampfylde have been inventoried and uploaded for use in planned tercentenary celebrations of his life and work and research is under way to inform a commemorative booklet by Philip White.

The Bampfylde Lecture in March benefitted from research into the early history of the property and the 2018 Summer Members' Newsletter featured an account of Teddy Portman's recently discovered fishing lodge in the Laerdal region of southern Norway. To aid the ongoing restoration of the gardens, in-depth surveys have been completed, describing the historical development of the Portman Drive and C17th Water Garden, and the history section of the revised estate masterplan, Hestercombe Parkland Management Plan Feasibility Study by Cookson & Tickner Landscape Architecture, has been given greater clarity and depth.

An increased online presence was achieved in 2018 with a blog, 'From the Archives', describing the intriguing history of the estate. The first in the series, 'Hestercombe in the First World War', was well-received on both our website and social media platforms.

Long a means of improving access to our holdings, the transcription of key documents continued with the help of volunteers. Recent projects include the revealing 1901-02 diary of Thomas Eustace Vesey (1885-1946), the Hon. Mrs. Portman's youngest son, by Jane Cook; and the exhaustive last Will and Testament (with sixteen codicils) of Constance Mary Portman (d. 4 May 1951) by Jill Strobridge of The Arts Society Taunton.

A recently formulated Three-year Plan for the Hestercombe Archive has among its main objectives the creation of an online catalogue, regular Archive-led exhibitions, and a dynamic reshaped nationally recognised Parks and Gardens UK website. The last is once again live and accepting data and the appointment of a manager to oversee its day-to-day operation is imminent.

The catalogue of the Conservation Management Plan Archive now contains over 600 titles, having received large contributions in 2018 from several prominent landscape architects.

KIM LEGATE, ARCHIVIST

Fundraising

A long anticipated scheme to improve visitor interpretation was made possible by a grant from HOTSW and a further Transition Funding grant installment of £6,803 was received from the Heritage Lottery Fund in respect of the continuing development of the Parks and Gardens UK database.

A total of £4,663 was received towards the restoration of the Victorian drive avenue in sponsorship of individual trees from Friends of Hestercombe and members of the public. Generous unrestricted grants were also received including £5,000 from the Chalcroft Charitable Trust.

The main focus of fundraising in 2018 was to enable the acquisition of the freehold of Hestercombe's historic landscape from the Crown Estate. In July 2017 the Crown Estate offered to sell the freehold of the 94 acres of gardens and woodland previously let on long term leases to the Hestercombe Gardens Trust. In November 2017 the Trust made a formal offer for the land together with the adjoining 220 acre Hestercombe Farm. The farm, which includes virtually all of the remaining registered grade 1 historic landscape, encompasses a number of important historic features including: an early C17th century Water garden; two C18th serpentine lakes; the remains of the medieval and later Edwardian parks; ha-has and the further extent of the Formal gardens, together with a model Dairyman's cottage in the Chinese taste and a group of Victorian farm buildings. The farm links all of the Trust's holdings and secures the

setting of Hestercombe House, enabling us to improve the sense of arrival to the site and greatly expanding visitor engagement. Linked with footpaths and, eventually, cycle access, the purchase will make Hestercombe more accessible to the local population as no public transport currently exists. The acquisition, which was completed in September 2018, also constitutes a major contribution to the local council's plans for Taunton as a Garden Town and will greatly support our proposed future developments which are very much aimed at finding new audiences and increasing local engagement.

This once-in-a-lifetime opportunity was made possible following magnificent initial donations from the private Ripple and Richard Broyd Trusts of £300,000 and £500,000 respectively, which in turn facilitated a stunning £1,462,000 grant from the National Heritage Memorial Fund. These were supported by further generous grants and donations including £200,000 from the Garfield Weston Foundation.

Earlier in the year an important eyecatcher, Middle Lodge, part of the Edwardian design of the park came up for sale. Originally designed as the gate keeper's cottage the lodge was acquired with a generous grant of $\pounds 100,000$ from Mr B S and Mrs Christina Ong together with a loan from Triodos Bank.

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Trustees & Management Team

Trustees:

Sir Andrew Burns KCMG (Chairman) Godfrey Davis, FCA Dr Marion Harney FHEA Cllr Marcia J. Hill Jo Matthews, MSc Kate O'Sullivan, MSc Catherine Pease, MA (Cantab), AADip, RIBA Annie Prebensen, BSc, MBA, CFA Rupert Taylor, BSc Hons, FCCA Cllr Gemma Verdon, F.Inst.Pa Josephine Waley-Cohen

Management Team:

Philip White MBE, Founder and Chief Executive Claire Greenslade, Head Gardener Tim Martin, Art Director/Curator Geoff Metcalf, Finance Director Richard Mira, General Manager Christopher White, Marketing and Communications Manager Julie White, Functions & Business Sales Coordinator

As at 31 December 2018

Funded by:





Funding raised by The National Lottery and awarded by the Heritage Lottery Fund LOTTERY FUNDED





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