Site Research and Survey

A Brief Introduction
Getting Started

UK Parks and Gardens database
www.parksandgardens.ac.uk
Getting Started

• Get to know the site through study of archive material
  – Consult main bibliographies and listing for potential sources
  – Make enquiries to main repositories
  – Order photocopies of maps, photos etc

THEN

• Walk the site - field survey
  – Record the site features in notes, sketches and photographs
Archival Research

• Catalogue searches:
  – county record office
  – local history libraries
  – national archives and libraries

• Set up system for recording, referencing and storing material
Essential Sources - Maps

County maps
• Variable quality but often earliest
e.g. Andrews & Drury, Rocque

Ordnance Survey maps:
• OS Surveyors’ drawings from around early 1800s
• 25” surveys begun in 1854 – colour with individual trees recorded
• 6” surveys (now 1:10,000) run to present day
EXAMPLE

• Insert slide(s) of county or OS map/features of your chosen site here

**Suggestion:** trainees have hard copies of map and trainer puts up list of features to find

**Or**

*Trainer puts up slide of map and trainees all point out features showing*
More maps...

- Tithe maps + apportionment
- Enclosure maps
- Road diversions and closures
- Estate maps
EXAMPLE

• Insert slide(s) of Tithe map/apportionment of your chosen site here

**Suggestion:**

*Trainer puts up slide of map and trainees use hard copy apportionment to pick up core areas owned by one owner or similar*
Estate / Family Papers

Estate maps and plans
• Account books, bills, claims
• Planting plans, lists, suppliers
• Sales particulars

Personal and family papers:
• Letters
• Diaries
• Amateur research
• Sketchbooks
• Photographs and paintings
EXAMPLE

- Insert slide(s) of interesting document relating to your chosen site here

**Suggestion:**

Trainer puts up slide for discussion about what can be gleaned from document – possibly depending on level of experience of trainees and time available

**Or**

At this point run through the archive documents that are being made available to trainees on the selected site
Illustrations

• Topographical prints
• Drawings
• Photographs
• Postcards
• Aerial photos
EXAMPLE

• *Insert slide(s) of image relating to your chosen site here*

**Suggestion:**

*Trainer puts up slide for discussion about what can be gleaned from image, relating it back to maps or use it to verify (or discredit!) written accounts – depending on level of experience of trainees and time available*
Other Sources

- Topographical and landscape descriptions
- Social histories of house, owners, visitors
- County histories: Victoria County History
- Academic theses, research notes held by county archive
- Pevsner guides
- Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
- Contemporary newspapers
- Catalogues and specialist books
Planting

Horticultural and landscape journals eg

- *The Gardeners’ Chronicle* (1841 –1983);
- *The Gentleman’s Magazine* (1826 – 44)
- *Country Life* (1897 -)
- *Journal of Garden History*
- *Landscape Design* 1934 – 2003
- *The Builder* (1843-1966 when it became Building)
- *The Architectural Review* (1896-)
- *Journal of the Royal Forestry Society*

- Research papers, eg John Harvey’s ‘Availability of Hardy Plants in the late C18’
- Designer’s own writings and plans
Current Designation Descriptions

- Historic Environment Record for relevant county (HER, formerly SMR)
- Listed Building descriptions
- Scheduled Monument descriptions
- Existing Register entries – can need additional information
Site Survey

• RECORD in a quick note/sketch form as much detail as you can of the designed landscape:
  – Different character areas (garden, park etc.) and the boundaries between them
  – Site topography
  – The main buildings and any garden buildings, structures; include ‘outliers’
  – Hard landscape design, its form, details and materials
  – Main planting areas, types, significant trees/collections
  – Views in and out of the site/main house and any landmarks
Site Survey cont’d

• Entrances and drives: How is the site approached? Which drives are in use now and for what purpose? Is there evidence of an earlier pattern of use? Lodges?
• Any archaeological features (humps and bumps)?
• Site boundaries – how are they marked? Have they changed over the course of time?
• Note the character of the site’s setting and surrounding landscape; is there public access? and/or fragmented ownership?
• Record the condition of all major features
Analysis: Combining Research and Survey

- Using the documentary evidence you have, consider when features might have been constructed – note what the evidence is for your analysis.
- What conclusions might you reach about the evolution of the garden and park?
- How far does the original design and its features retain its original integrity? Have features been lost?
- Do you need additional information?
Analysis: Significance and Local Listing

- Decide what you consider the significance of the site – ie what makes it important? What design approach or link with historic events or people does it demonstrate?

- Does it meet published criteria for local listing? Which of its attributes make it worth adding to a list of locally-important designed landscapes, and why?
Compile

- Site description with bibliography
- Key maps: boundary; views; designations
- Copies of key documents used and notes of conversations
- Photographs taken on site survey
## Examining the Materials

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Preparing for Site Survey

• In groups/pairs
• Take
  • modern OS map
  • checklist (Handout 5)
  • old OS maps (as a minimum)
  • Biro/pencil
  • (compass / tree guide)
• One hour – come back for tea!