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The Gardens of Rothamsted Manor - Management Plan

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Rothamsted Research

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B2 Key Values

The key values of the site that should be recognized, upheld and taken forward into the future:

a) Continuity

- ***Of ownership*** - The Manor House and Gardens stayed in one family from 1623-1934. Since then they have been owned by a Trust set up by a member of the family to run the rest of the estate. There has therefore been considerable continuity of ownership over a long period, and the House remains attached to its historic estate, which has been almost unchanged in extent for 400 years or more.
- ***Of development*** - To arrive at their current form, the Manor Gardens have been changed and developed over centuries. Their basic structure has remained little altered over this time. Although there have been periods when major alterations were carried out, these have fitted into a gradual evolution of existing features (eg walled garden, Manor Wood, forecourt, Dirce Avenue), rather than any dramatic 'overnight' transformations. This sense of continuity and gradual development is of considerable value, and contributes subtly but powerfully to the experience of the place.
- ***Of management*** - There have been few radical changes in the day-to-day management of the gardens. Even when the site passed from private hands into those of the Trust, the care of the gardens seems to have continued under a comparable regime. Having a long-term full-time head gardener on site has helped to keep a sense of continuity in the management. However the site is managed in the future, this experience will be of great value.
- ***Maturity*** - As a result of the above the gardens and woodland exhibit a maturity - of trees, features, design, and atmosphere for example - that is essential to their character. This should be cherished, but renewal (of planting, features etc) will also be needed to ensure this maturity is retained into the future.

b) Strong Connection with the Manor House

- ***Visual connection*** - The House and Gardens have developed in parallel throughout their history, and each relies on the other to form an integrated visual whole. The role of the gardens as a setting for the House is of fundamental importance.
- ***Practical connection*** - The gardens play an important role in providing for uses and activities that extend and complement the uses of the House.
- ***Historical connection*** - The story of the gardens is inextricably tied up with that of the House, and of the people who occupied it. In particular, the gardens played a key role in the lives of Rothamsted's most significant residents: Sir John Wittewronge, and Sir John Bennet Lawes, whose earliest experiments were carried out in the walled garden.

c) Relationship with the research institute

- ***Historic role*** - Sir John Bennet Lawes' first experiments were carried out on plants grown in pots and in the kitchen garden, although they were soon extended to the Home Farm. Thus the history of the Rothamsted Research Station (and arguably also modern 'conventional' farming and scientific agriculture) began within the precinct of the Manor House and Gardens.
- ***Clover bed*** - This classical experiment continues on the main garden lawn. The Gardens are therefore still tied into the practical work of the Institute, if only in this small and vestigial way.
- ***Soil archive*** - The historic archive of experimental samples remains on the Manor site.
- ***Contemporary role*** - The Manor House and gardens retain an important role within the Institute, for accommodation, conferences and events, and as a general amenity.

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d) Strong and simple design

The gardens' design is simple and comprehensible, with a series of well-defined but connected spaces of differing character. There are few jarring features; generally the design is harmonious. This straightforward but satisfying design is the result of centuries of considered and evolutionary development and is of great value. It is important that the basic design structure is understood and respected, and that ad-hoc or radical alterations are treated with caution.

e) Survival of historic features, fabric and layout

The surviving historic features and fabric have a value in their own right, and contribute to the overall value of the gardens. Their conservation wherever possible should be a priority.

f) The Gardens illustrate the human relationship with plants in complementary ways to those pursued in the Research Institute

Within an estate devoted to the study of particular characteristics and dimensions of plant life the gardens have a unique ability to illustrate and celebrate many other aspects of our relationship with the Plant Kingdom. These include: delight in plants for their beauty, their flowers, scent, form and growth; the changes over history, such as the change from sustenance combined with beauty (eg. 17th Century orchard and kitchen garden) to the modern split between aesthetics (eg bedding) and pragmatics (eg clover bed); plant introductions from around the world; and the experience of gardening itself. In contemporary culture, increasing importance is placed on 'holistic' thinking and approaches as opposed to greater specialisation. In this context, the Manor gardens and designed landscape may provide a key resource for the institute in the future, both in terms of engaging and presenting its work to the public, and possibly even adding a dimension to the scope of the research.

g) A high quality environment and amenity for the site

Within the Rothamsted Estate the Manor gardens are a unique and high quality environment for staff and visitors alike. They are an important resource that provides opportunities and amenity not otherwise available. To have an environment of this quality on a site enhances the value of the whole.

h) Ability to engage wider interest in Rothamsted's history, scientific work and significance

The Manor House and gardens have great potential to spark interest and enthusiasm in Rothamsted as a whole. They could therefore play key roles both in attracting visitors (if considered desirable), and in interpretation of the site. Their appeal was already recognized in the Gardeners Chronicle in 1875:

"*... among a hundred that would appreciate the charm of this fine mansion and its surroundings, there would probably be not more than one who could appreciate at anything like their value the extensive series of experimental researches which have made Rothamsted famous.*"

In addition, they are well placed for access to the most celebrated classical experiment fields, Broadbalk and Park Grass.

i) Ecological importance within the Rothamsted estate

See Section B1 above.