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The Gardens of Rothamsted Manor - Management Plan

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Rothamsted Research

Rothamsted Research (2003) *D1 General Management Objectives ;* The Gardens Of Rothamsted Manor - Management Plan, pp 33 - 38

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PART D MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

This section sets out proposed objectives aimed to achieve the Vision set out in Part C. Part D1 covers objectives as they apply to general issues across the site. Part D2 covers objectives for specific areas.

D1 General Management Objectives

Site Management

- Develop landscape strategy for the whole estate.
- Integrate management objectives for the Gardens with objectives for the House and institute.
- Set up a unified management group or committee to develop holistic strategies for the site and to oversee their implementation.

Gardens Management & Staff

- Develop, adopt and work to a 20-year Management Plan for the gardens and surrounding landscape.
- Adopt a wider remit for garden management, to include: developing a Management Plan; new projects; developing access; revenue generation; fund-raising; presentation; interpretation. Spread these responsibilities between garden managers, overseeing committees and other institute staff as appropriate.
- Include a Modern Apprenticeship or other trainee position within the Grounds Maintenance team.
- Retain management and maintenance of the gardens in-house as far as possible. Try to avoid contracting out on grounds of cost reduction alone. If it is necessary, aim for a long-lasting contract and high quality work, with specific staff devoted to the Rothamsted site.
- Retain storage, and a base and/or depot for gardeners on the Manor site. Consider refurbishing the outbuildings to the north of the walled garden for this purpose. If all gardening equipment and facilities are relocated to the main research campus the Manor gardens will become perceived as more peripheral and less convenient to manage. Consider the future potential of the gardens when planning provision of gardening facilities. There might, for example, be an opportunity to attract a corps of voluntary gardeners specifically for the Manor site.
- Estimate the man-hours necessary over the year to maintain the Manor gardens to the required standard. Work towards devoting resources and staff accordingly. Clarity over the quantity of work expected across the site will help greatly to establish appropriate staffing and budgets. Consider adopting 'Confirm' or a similar system to quantify, organise and monitor routine maintenance work.
- Commission a condition survey of the architectural fabric of the gardens, to include outbuildings, walls, fences and gates, ha-has, statuary and garden ornaments. Use this to identify priorities for conservation and repair and to clarify the resources likely to be needed.
- The best maps of the gardens remain the OS maps of 1884 and 1924. Aim towards commissioning a new topographical survey of the Manor site and gardens to inform management and development over the coming decades.

Ownership

- Endeavour to ensure that the Manor site continues in integrated ownership with the rest of the estate.

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Finance

- Recognize the gardens' contribution to the quality and marketability of the House as a business, and their potential to add further value. If the gardens play an essential role for a function booked at the House (eg a summer wedding), ensure that this is recognised in the distribution of the hire charge.
- Identify a realistic maintenance budget for the Manor gardens alone (and for other areas of the estate), allowing for routine tasks, winter work, renewal and new work, downtime, management etc. Undertake this exercise for maintenance at both current and desired levels. This exercise will provide a very useful benchmark for assessment. 'Ring-fence' this budget as far as possible within the overall maintenance budget.
- Add fund-raising and revenue generation to the aims of the gardens' management.
- Seek ways to generate revenue from and for the gardens: events, hire, paying visits, weddings etc.
- Investigate the potential for grant funding, including Lottery grants.
- Set up a 'Rothamsted Gardens Restoration Fund' or similar and seek donations, sponsorship, and ideas for fund-raising.

Connections

- Revive and strengthen existing connections, and aim to forge new links where possible:

Connection to House

- Integrate House and garden management objectives more closely and develop a unified strategy for the future of the Manor site.
- Improve physical connections between the House and gardens. For example:
  - Aim to use the inner courtyard for occasional meals in summer, thus encouraging residents and visitors to explore and enjoy the gardens.
  - Encourage access from the western ground floor rooms to the gardens wherever possible, subject to security precautions and protection of floor surfaces.
  - Consider re-opening the 'Arches' as an open loggia - as a long-term objective.
- Market and develop the House and gardens as a single entity for hire and events.
- Present and interpret the House and gardens together - see 'Presentation & Interpretation' below.

Connection to Institute

- Encourage staff visits and use, through staff induction visits, team lunches, departmental events etc. (see also 'Use' & 'Access' below).
- Develop means to present and interpret the gardens, Manor and their history to the institute (see 'Presentation & Interpretation' below).
- Aim to develop the potential of the Manor, gardens and Soil Store as major assets for the life and work of the institute.
- Integrate a vision for the gardens and landscape within the management of the estate as a whole.

Connection with local people

- Increase opportunities for access - eg. open days, events, tours and talks, a 'Rothamsted path'.
- Increase opportunities for involvement - eg. through a Friends' group or volunteering.
- Develop links with local schools and groups.

Connection with the wider public

- Consider a significant increase in public access to Manor and/or experimental fields, possibly associated with a Lottery bid.
- Increase the profile of the Manor in publicity material.
- Consider media opportunities - eg. national and local press articles, a TV documentary.

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Education

- Aim to develop educational opportunities at Rothamsted. This will require facilities and staff support, but may be eligible for funding and offer synergistic benefits. Investigate precedents, sources of funding, possible partners, and general feasibility. Approach the local education service and schools to establish interest and available resources.

Presentation & Interpretation

- Develop a strategy to encourage a wider interest and delight in the gardens, the Manor and the estate as a whole.
- Make information (historical, scientific, general interest) more widely available to visitors, staff and any other interested parties.
- Display key information in the House. Include copies of the 1623 map, sketch and description, extracts from Sir John Wittewronge's Weather Diary and Jacob Wittewronge's notebook, views, later maps, information on Sir John Bennet Lawes and the early experiments, and brief histories of the Estate, House and Gardens.
- Display this material in 'digest' form on the research campus (eg. in canteen) to encourage wider interest and visits.
- Make a leaflet (or leaflets) available in a simple format. The booklet *'Welcome to Rothamsted Manor'* produced for the 1997 open day is an excellent basis and can be built on. Subjects to be covered may include:
  - The Gardens;
  - The House;
  - The Classical Experiments;
  - Wildlife and ecology on the estate (building on the Biodiversity Study);
  - Plant Life at Rothamsted and the significance of the research (a subject that could cover everything from Knott Wood to Park Grass and the bedding displays);
  - Rothamsted People - Biographies and connections between significant figures including Sir John Wittewronge, Sir John Bennet Lawes, Sir Henry Gilbert and Sir Charles Lawes-Wittewronge. Also include later scientists as appropriate.
- Use this information and presentational material to support tours and other activities.
- Establish a path or paths through the estate designed both for pleasure and to increase understanding and interest. Promote their use.
- Increase appreciation of the unique history, significance and treasures of the site as part of the 'corporate identity' of the Institute through promotional material and the website.

Involving People

- Bring more people into contact with the gardens, and offer them a stake in their future.
- Volunteers - Consider setting up a volunteer corps for the gardens. Evidence suggests that there is potential interest amongst both staff and local residents. There is a wide range of possible activities:
  - Gardening - specialist (eg. roses), or general (eg. digging in walled garden).
  - Garden Projects - eg. planting new hedging and shrubs, walled garden, path restoration in Wood.
  - Woodland management - in coordination with work of Woodland Advisory Group. Including tree planting, clearance etc.
  - Wildlife monitoring.
  - 'Deskwork' - Historical research, production of presentational material etc.
  - Guides - for tours and visits.
  - Fund-raising.

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- 'Friends' Group - consider setting up a 'Friends of Rothamsted Gardens' (FRoG) group, or similar. This could draw on the interest, energy and enthusiasm of people within and beyond the Institute. Friends' groups have proved valuable in both public parks and privately-owned gardens, and can play an important role in developing successful management plans.
- Management Plan process - involve as many people and different groups as possible in the development of the management plan. This might involve surveys of staffs' views, presentation of proposals, and consultation events. This would not need to cover all the details, but might focus on key issues like the future of the walled garden.
- Set up an overseeing committee or steering group for the gardens including representatives of diverse interests and groups (see Part E below).

Access

- Encourage public access:
  - Have open days at least once a year, through the National Gardens Scheme and/or independently.
  - Consider public 'garden parties' with refreshments, music, events etc. These could be run in-house, or by local groups for a fee.
  - Consider other public events such as music, theatre, visual arts. Approach local artists, groups and organisations to investigate the potential.
  - Develop occasional guided tours and visits, which may cover any combination of House, Gardens, Experimental Fields, Temple, and Knott Wood.
  - Invite special interest groups to visit (and support), eg. Hertfordshire Gardens Trust, local horticultural societies, the Garden History Society, wildlife groups, art societies.
  - Consider raising the gardens' profile in local media and communities.
  - Look into feasibility of larger scale public access.
- Encourage staff and Institute access - as for public access, and see also 'Use' below.
- Aim for the gardens to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

Use

- Manage to encourage use of all of the gardens. Enhance pathway connections to encourage access into and around the wood from the formal gardens. Improve access to the pond. Bring the walled garden back into use.
- Manage to encourage more use by residents and visitors to the House (see 'Connection to House' above).
- Encourage more visits by staff.
- Encourage events, such as staff lunches or teas, open days and arts events. Aim to provide support facilities for events, such as appropriate WC's, power supply for lighting, overflow parking, location and infrastructure for a marquee.
- Consider an occasional shuttle bus from the campus to encourage staff visits, on Friday lunchtimes in summer for example.
- Add benches to encourage visitors to linger and appreciate new areas. Locations might include the Dirce circle and the south side of the pond. Also aim to refurbish the summerhouse.
- Promote connections to experimental fields, Knott Wood, the Roman Temple and the rest of the estate, possibly by establishing a 'Rothamsted Estate Path' or a series of routes, following up on the 'Golden Jubilee Walk' idea. This would help staff and visitors alike to appreciate the full fascination, history and significance of the site.

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- Include the Manor gardens in scientific visits wherever possible. For instance, visitors can pass through and see the clover bed and learn something of the site's history on their way between Broadbalk and Park Grass.
- Promote the greater use of the Soil Archive.
- Aim to bring the derelict buildings north of the walled garden back into use. For instance, when new uses are found for the walled garden, these may form the basis for a new gardeners' compound.
- Develop educational use.

Security

- Work towards improving perimeter security, with new fencing and gates as necessary. All access points should be securable with gates, and fences and walls should be appropriately robust.
- Photograph, record and insure all remaining garden statuary and ornaments.
- Check fixing of any remaining 'removables' and install secure fixings where necessary.

Traffic & Parking

- Keep parking at the front of the House to a minimum - ie. special occasions, and key staff only.
- Restrict parking to the eastern yard. Investigate alternative layouts in yard to increase capacity and/or lessen visual impact.
- Control contractor and site vehicle access and routes to minimise damage to adjacent lawns etc. Consider low bollards or similar at inside corners to protect grass edges.
- Consider providing additional parking immediately to the north of the Soil Store.
- If there is to be increased access in the future, consider provision for overflow parking along the western approach.

Entrances & Approaches

- Review feasibility of occasional (or regular) use of western approach.
- Review the visibility, presentation, clarity, and information provided by site signage - at estate entrances, and at the Manor site entrances.

Wildlife & Ecology

- Increase organic techniques - avoid use of pesticides and weedkillers as far as possible.
- Mowing - Review mowing regimes to maximise variety and quality of grassland and 'meadow' habitats. This is already working well at the north end of the formal parterres, where close-mown lawn givwes way to wildflower meadow. Consider further development of this hierarchy of mowing lengths and frequency. For example, the grass along the approach drive (areas 1&2) and around the outbuildings (area 7) might be cut less frequently. The former 'west lawn' (area 6b) might be cleared more regularly of brambles and undergrowth to encourage a semi-shaded flora - this was the area where Violet Helloborines flourished until recent years, when mowing regimes were altered.
- Woodland management - develop and implement a management policy for the Manor Wood that will enhance both its ecological and landscape value. Develop the spectrum from principally ornamental and/or formal parts (eg. the eastern edge facing the formal garden and the edges to Dirce Avenue) to areas primarily managed as native woodland. The internal woodland walks should fall between these two extremes. The enhancement or establishment of distinct character areas in the wood will extend the range and quality of habitats - eg. clearings, woodland 'rides', dense undergrowth, daffodil glades, graded woodland edges. Clear overgrown laurel and other introduced species where they are out of control or suppressing other species. Where appropriate undertake coppicing, felling, new planting, clearance, and leave deadwood. See D2 Area 6 below for proposals for particular areas.

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- Pond management - aim to increase quality of the pond as a wildlife habitat. This will need careful consideration, but may entail clearance, dredging, cutting back overhanging trees, marginal planting, or other measures.
- Wildlife corridors - The Countryside Stewardship work includes the reconnection of the Manor Wood to Knott Wood, and improved hedgerows. This valuable work should be continued and extended wherever appropriate.
- Seek expert ecological advice.

Trees

- Aim to undertake a tree survey of the Manor site within the next 5 years. Ideally coordinate this with a topographic survey. If there is a previous tree survey in existence use this as basic information.
- Develop priorities and an ongoing programme for treework.
- Ensure that there is an allowance for treework every year in the maintenance budget.
- Agree an integrated tree management policy for the Manor site. This should aim to maximize both wildlife and horticultural/garden benefits as appropriate for different character areas. Maintain a balance between these interests.
- Take a long-term approach to ensure the renewal of important features such as shelter belts, avenues and structural planting. Aim to achieve a mix of ages in the tree stock.
- In areas of landscape value, ensure that management allows for:
    - Replanting, inter-planting and new planting for the long term;
    - Careful species and tree selection;
    - Aftercare and formative pruning;
    - Removal of unhealthy trees, unsuitable trees, poorly located trees;
    - Adequate thinning;
    - Felling and replacement of over-mature stock where appropriate.

Archaeology

- Adopt a policy to protect and record archaeological material uncovered during excavation or other construction work on the Manor site, and especially near the House. Seek advice from the county archaeological service to develop the policy.