



PlantNetwork

Connecting gardens, sharing skills

Play & Engagement with Gardens

9th October 2019

Walmer Castle and Gardens

In conjunction with:



Step into England's story

@PlantNetwork

@EnglishHeritage



PlantNetwork

PlantNetwork is a charity and membership organisation that provides training and network support to gardens and gardeners throughout Britain and Ireland.

Through its work, PlantNetwork contributes to maintaining and developing the horticultural and plant conservation skills for which our gardens are renowned. The goals of PlantNetwork are:

- Supporting gardens and plant collections for conservation, knowledge and enjoyment.
- Providing networking and professional development for the plant network community.

Since being formed in 1996, PlantNetwork has brought together both institutional and private members and now represents over 300 gardens including all the major public horticultural and botanic gardens in the countries.

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Introduction

Gardens are multifunctional spaces with the potential to offer a range of facilities and services beyond but linked to their main horticultural focus. Finding new ways of engaging visitors, local communities and schools that also fulfils learning and health/wellbeing purposes can be challenging but play, aimed at both children and adults, can achieve this. This event, in partnership with English Heritage and the Walmer Castle and Gardens Team, explores how play can be used in gardens and other designed landscapes.

Alongside the English Heritage team, including English Heritage's Family Interpretation Manager Sarah Shaw, will be a number of other speakers providing a perspective from other projects and gardens. Speakers include Linden Groves who specialises in helping children enjoy landscapes and Dr Liz O'Brien from Forest Research who has evaluated a range of engagement programmes in gardens and arboreta. The National Trust will also highlight lessons learned from their agenda-setting '50 things to do before you're 11 ³/₄'.

Programme

From 09:30	Registration opens	Coffee/tea available
10:00 - 10:15	Welcome and outline for day including background to Walmer Castle project	Speaker: Christopher Weddell, Senior Gardens Advisor, English Heritage
Session: Play in gardens		
10:15 - 10:45	Playgrounds in Historic Gardens: Fabulous or Fob-Off?	Linden Groves, Independent Landscape Historian
10:45 – 11:15	Play and family interpretation at English Heritage	Sarah Shaw, Family Interpretation Manager, English Heritage
11:15 – 11:45	50 things to do before you're 11 ^¾ : encouraging play and engagement	Anita Stevens, National Trust
11:45 - 12:00	Discussion of play: successes and challenges	
12:00 – 12:45	LUNCH & networking	
12:45 – 14:30	Introduction to & tour of project with Mark Brent and the Walmer Castle team	
Session: Play as part of other engagement activities		
14:30 – 14:45	Tea/coffee available	
14:45 – 15:15	Community Engagement and accessibility	Hannah West, Walmer Castle
15:15 – 15:45	Evaluations of engagement programmes and interventions focused on sustaining or changing behaviours.	Dr Liz O'Brien, Forest Research
15:45 – 16:00	Discussion of wider engagement: successes and challenges	
16:00	Close	

Speaker information

Play in gardens

Christopher Weddell

Christopher is a Senior Gardens Advisor at English Heritage, which encompasses the setting and monitoring of standards of garden presentation and curation at English Heritage's garden sites, advising and supporting garden teams and property staff, and leading on support for plant recording, garden volunteers and garden health and safety. Christopher has also spent time working for the National Trust, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, and the Royal Horticultural Society amongst others.

Linden Groves



Linden Groves has a passion for conserving the historic environment, be it through direct conservation work, or winning hearts and minds. She is particularly interested in children - be it researching the history of how they experienced historic parks and gardens in the past, advising on ways to engage them today, or running a small business, Hahahopscotch, allowing children to play traditional games in historic settings.

Linden is currently writing a book on the history of playgrounds – all examples gratefully received!

More and links at lindengroves.co.uk
@linden_groves

Sarah Shaw

Sarah's career has ranged from formal learning programming at the British Library to engaging hard to reach visitors for the National Trust. She is currently the National Family Interpretation Manager for English Heritage – working across sites as diverse as Roman forts in Northumberland to Osborne House on the Isle of Wight. Through working with a diverse range of play sector leads, Sarah has been improving access to play in all its shapes and forms across the English Heritage portfolio.

Anita Stevens



Anita Stevens has worked for England's National Trust for eighteen years. She is the Experiences Programme Manager and a specialist on play, having created the original concept for the award winning '50 things to do before you're 11 3/4'. Anita has worked on the transformation of experiences at National Trust places from developing new interpretation programmes to re-designing cafes. For the past decade, Anita has led in developing the National Trust's natural play offer.

Notes:

Play alongside other engagement activities

Mark Brent

Mark started his career with the National Trust in Buckinghamshire prior to undertaking the Diploma course at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew. He has 34 years experience of working in Amenity Horticulture in both private and public gardens and has been Head Gardener at Walmer Castle (English Heritage) for the last 4.5 years.

See “Walmer Castle and Gardens’ section below for some of the garden highlights.

Hannah West



Hannah West is a Community Engagement Coordinator for English Heritage. She splits her time between Walmer Castle & Gardens, Dover Castle and Richborough Roman Fort, working to involve and engage local people with the sites. This includes supporting and developing a range of new volunteering opportunities, building community involvement through social action and participation, creating assisted visiting opportunities for disadvantaged local

people and working with community partners to improve physical and mental access to the site. Hannah has been with English Heritage for nine years, with a background in Site Management, and also spent time working for the Royal Borough of Kingston as a Museum Learning and Engagement Officer.

Liz O'Brien



Liz O'Brien is Head of the Social and Economic Research Group at Forest Research. Her research explores well-being and the cultural ecosystem benefits of trees and woodlands including a strong focus on the health benefits of engagement with trees and woodlands – physical, mental and social.

Liz was previously involved in two European COST Actions: 1) Forests and human health, 2) Urban forests and green infrastructure, as well as the UK National Ecosystem Assessment Project on shared, social and cultural values. She is involved in two European expert groups: one on forests and human health, and the other on mental wellbeing and greenspace. She has researched groups that are excluded and disadvantaged and their engagement with woodlands and wider nature. She has been involved in a large number of evaluations of projects and programmes including the current Active Forest Programme and the Westonbirt Community Project (both led by Forestry Commission England), and the Grow Wild Programme (led by the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew). She has collaborated with a range of countries in her research including Norway, Sweden, and Australia. She spent 14 months in Defra in 2012 in its Centre for Expertise on Influencing Behaviour.

To find out more about her research see: <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/staff/liz-obrien/>

Notes:

English Heritage

English Heritage cares for over 400 historic buildings, monuments and sites - from world-famous prehistoric sites to grand medieval castles, from Roman forts on the edges of the empire to a Cold War bunker. Through these, we bring the story of England to life for over 10 million people each year. We want to create inspiring visitor experiences that bring the story of England to life.

Walmer Castle and Gardens

Originally a Tudor fortress, Walmer Castle evolved into a stately-home for the Lords Warden of the Cinque Ports, and became the residence of famous names from the Duke of Wellington to Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. There are 8 acres of award-winning gardens, including the breath-taking Broadwalk and the serene Queen Mothers Garden. The gardens include the newly-opened Glen, a planted former chalk quarry accessible for the first time in over 100 years, which includes new interpretation and tactile displays telling the story of Walmer's landscape as never before as well as a new natural play trail including hollow tree trunks and wobbly bridges.

For more information about the history of the garden, please visit the Walmer Castle website: <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/walmer-castle-and-gardens/history-and-stories/garden-history/>

Re-Discovering Walmer's Lost Pleasure Grounds

In a £2.3m National Lottery Heritage Fund project now completed at Walmer Castle, action was taken to revive and reunite gardens begun by William Pitt the Younger, assisted by his niece, Lady Hester Stanhope. The wild flower meadow known as the Paddock and the planted former chalk quarry called the Glen were once part of a delightful 19th-century garden landscape that nature, over time, partially

reclaimed. The Glen and Paddock have now been reclaimed and has been opened to visitors.

In addition to the rejuvenation of the historic pleasure grounds, the project afforded an excellent opportunity to improve visitor facilities. The following work was undertaken during the course of the project:

- Paths throughout the woodland have been restored according to historic plans
- Natural flora, fauna and habitats were reinstated
- The Paddock is being managed to support the vulnerable and distinct chalk grassland flora and fauna
- The Glen has been revived, inspired by evergreen plantings mentioned in letters written by Lady Hester Stanhope
- The 'keyhole' view created by the 7th Earl Beauchamp has been reinstated
- The gardeners' compound has been re-developed to improve facilities for the care and maintenance of the garden
- A new Glasshouse Café has been created in the Kitchen Garden
- Installation of new tactile interpretation panels, and introduction of a free family trail leaflet, updated multimedia guide, volunteer led tours and activities along with new toilet facilities
- Creation of a hub for community and educational activity through a new purpose-built learning room.

Completed this spring, today's event will explore the work undertaken in the Glen and Paddock, emphasising the new interpretation and natural play trail designed by Studio Hardie.

Resources for 'Play in Gardens'

Play is defined as:

“*verb.* engage in activity for enjoyment and recreation rather than a serious or practical purpose”

“*noun.* activity engaged in for enjoyment and recreation, especially by children”

The definitions indicate that playing need not be restricted to children but serves no other purpose than to be enjoyable. Yet, play for children is understood to help develop key life skills such as enhancing creativity and problem-solving ability, improving dexterity, and supporting physical, cognitive, social and emotional strength (Ginsburg et al. 2007¹). It is considered so important for optimal child development that it is recognised by the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights as the right of every child. Play is increasingly being found to exert positive impacts across the life course, with the most recent research showing the importance of play to dementia sufferers (Swinnen and de Medeiros, 2018²). As such 'play' can also be a form of learning.

Outdoor play is particularly valuable as it encourages physical activity in an increasingly sedentary world, provides a connection to the natural world which boosts mental wellbeing and stress-relief at all life stages, and also helps improve immune response (Bento and Dias, 2017³). Gardens and other designed landscapes can help contribute to outdoor play, providing safe places to play and explore while also minimising environmental impact. A value can be placed on play in gardens through

¹ K. R. Ginsburg and the Committee on Communications, and the Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health (2007). The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bonds. *Pediatrics* 119. <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/119/1/182>.

² A. Swinnen and K. de Medeiros (2018). "Play" and People Living With Dementia: A Humanities-Based Inquiry of TimeSlips and the Alzheimer's Poetry Project. *Gerontologist* 58: 261-269. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28329857>

³ G. Bento and G. Dias (2017). The importance of outdoor play for young children's healthy development. *Porto Biomedical Journal* 2: 157-160. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2444866416301234>

the application of the cultural ecosystem services concept, helping to demonstrate the wider benefit of gardens and designed landscapes to local communities and the wider economy. See resources from Forest Research (below) for more information.



Reflecting the importance of play across the life course but particularly for children, there are a number of very useful resources and organisations providing guidance and information. A list is provided below of some of the more relevant resources – this is not comprehensive.

Institute of Outdoor Learning: the professional body for organisations and individuals who use the outdoors to make a difference for others. They are driven by a vision of Outdoor Learning as a highly valued form of development, education and employment in UK society. Services offered include training and accreditation, CPD, and good practice guidelines.

<https://www.outdoor-learning.org/>

<https://www.outdoor-learning-research.org/>

English Outdoor Council: an umbrella body for organisations involved in the provision of outdoor education, recreation and development training. Promotes the benefits of outdoor learning and play, with a range of useful resources.

<https://www.englishoutdoorcouncil.org/>

Council for Learning Outside the Classroom: champion learning outside the classroom. Provides resources, training and CPD, and raises the profile of outdoor learning.

<https://www.lotc.org.uk/>

Education Scotland: Support for Professional Development in Outdoor Learning. A range of resources and guides to support outdoor learning including the Curriculum for Excellence through outdoor learning.

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources> - search for 'outdoor learning'

<https://education.gov.scot/Documents/cfe-through-outdoor-learning.pdf>

Woodland Trust: provides an outdoor learning pack to support Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence in outdoor learning.

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/get-involved/schools/curriculum-linked-resources/outdoor-learning-pack/>

Outdoor Classroom Day in UK and Ireland: 07 November. A movement that encourages schools to take lessons outdoors for at least one day of the year.

<https://outdoorclassroomday.org.uk/>

National Trust – Our Best Gardens for Children: pick of the best gardens to enjoy some family fun.

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lists/our-top-gardens-for-children>

Outdoor Children: Linden Groves' has created a website resource which gathers her latest projects together to explore how children interact in and with the historic environment.

<https://www.outdoorchildren.co.uk/>

Forest Research – children & young people: explores and summarises evidence about how children and young people experience nature, including trees and woodlands. It looks at how this contact with nature, whether through school activities and learning or in leisure time, can potentially lead to a wide range of health, wellbeing and learning benefits. It arises from an increasing concern that children are not directly experiencing nature and that this could lead to children missing out on the benefits provided by these interactions.

Publications: <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/research/children-and-young-peoples-engagement-with-nature/publications/>

Forest Research - cultural ecosystem services, values and benefits: one of the four key components identified in the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and United Kingdom National Ecosystem Assessment, along with provisioning, regulating and supporting services. Cultural ecosystem services are identified as the benefits people gain from their interactions with different environmental spaces, such as woods or parks, and the activities, such as walking and cycling, they undertake in these spaces. These interactions give rise to a variety of wellbeing benefits that are wide ranging and can be valued in numerous ways, via monetary, qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods.

Cultural ecosystem services and benefits can include health, learning, social connections, sensory experiences, cultural and symbolic importance and identity. Our work in this area includes reviews, primary research, the monitoring and evaluation of programmes or interventions that aim to realise these benefits for different sections of society.

Publications: <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/research/cultural-ecosystem-services-values-and-benefits/publications-and-relevant-work/>

Sourcing play equipment:

There are a number of companies specialising in the design and build of outdoor play equipment. An internet search turns up a large number of play equipment providers. Talking to peers about their experiences of installing play gardens is invaluable.

Examples of 'Play in Gardens' - list not comprehensive:

- **Children's Garden, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew:** Based in a natural setting the size of 40 tennis courts, children can explore all the things plants need to grow; earth, air, sun and water. Includes over 100 mature trees, there is a 4m high canopy walk wrapped around a 200-year-old oak in the heart of the Children's Garden.

<https://www.kew.org/kew-gardens/whats-in-the-gardens/the-childrens-garden>



- **The Back to Nature Garden, RHS Garden Wisley** (*above*): includes features from the original garden at Chelsea, including the hollow log and boulders from the waterfall, as well as the wildflower meadow, hidden burrow and rolling hill from the Hampton Court design. New play elements include a 'bouncing forest', where visitors can jump on trampolines surrounded by

trees, two treehouses linked via a walkway with slides, & a living willow pod.

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/wisley/Articles/rhs-back-to-nature-garden>

- **The Magic Garden, Hampton Court Palace:** Come face to face with mysterious mythical beasts, storm the battlements, besiege the towers and explore the secret grotto in this magical children's playground. The Magic Garden represents myths, legends, stories & even real objects that can be found at Hampton Court. <https://www.hrp.org.uk/hampton-court-palace/whats-on/the-magic-garden/#gs.768ruv>
- **The Garden of Cosmic Speculation**, nr Dumfries: rather than designed for play, it is nevertheless a playful garden which challenges the senses. <https://gardenofcosmicspeculation.com/>
- **The Alnwick Garden**, Alnwick: a range of garden areas designed for family interaction, education and fun including Forgotten Garden Golf, Bamboo Labyrinth, & Poison Garden. <https://www.alnwickgarden.com/educational-visits/>
- **Zip wire, The Eden Project:** offers a different perspective on the biomes – the longest zip wire in England. <https://www.edenproject.com/visit/whats-here/zip-wire-adventure-activities>
- **Newby Hall and Gardens**, Ripon: a family experience in one corner of the garden, with adventure playground, bear collection (*opposite*), doll's houses and miniature railway. <https://www.newbyhall.com/adventure-playground/>
- **Adventure Cove and Wild Woodland, Culzean Castle and County Park:** set within the country park, the area includes soaring towers, treehouses, slides, climbing walls, a mazehouse and zip slides. <https://www.nts.org.uk/visit/places/culzean/highlights/adventure-cove-and-wild-woodland>



Notes and contacts

Will this meeting change how you manage your garden?
If so, we would like to hear from you. Let us know what you are planning to do: office@plantnetwork.org or @PlantNetwork.

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PlantNetwork Events 2020

**PlantNetwork Annual Conference and AGM with Sibbaldia:
Promoting Horticultural Excellence**

22- 23 April 2020

<https://www.rbge.org.uk/science-and-conservation/sibbaldia-conference-april-2020/>

#PEH2020

Training Days

- Winter Gardens
- Herbarium Techniques
- Glasshouse Forum
- Plant Records Group
- Exotic Gardening
- Tourism & Gardens
- Tree Forum
- Plant Health

And introducing.... **The Sustainability Programme** with in-depth analysis of topical issues concerning growing media, plastics, herbicides, water use and many more issues.

If you have suggestions for training days or discussion topics, or would like to host an event, please contact us.

PlantNetwork Events 2019

**Climate Change & Gardens: PlantNetwork Annual Conference
and AGM**

08-09 May, Abbotsbury Subtropical Gardens, Dorset.

Training days:

Plant Records, 15 May, Chester Zoo.

Arboreta and Woodlands: Tree Forum at RHS Rosemoor, 04 June, RHS Rosemoor, Devon.

Garden Masterplans and Management, 12 September, Trewithen Gardens, Cornwall.

Conservation, Preservation and Demonstration: the What, Why and How of National Plant Collections, 26 September, Upton House & Gardens, Warwickshire.

Play & Engagement in Gardens, 09 October, Walmer Castle & Gardens, Kent.

Tree Forum at Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, 22 October, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh.

More information and online booking at the PlantNetwork website:

www.plantnetwork.org



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