

# Garden & Historic Landscape Restoration



The Arcadian Thames boasts more historic parks and gardens than almost any other location in the UK. These range from the vast former hunting grounds associated with the Royal palaces at Bushy and Richmond, formal gardens surrounding grand houses at Ham, Hampton Court and Twickenham to Victorian pleasure parks at Kingston, Richmond Hill and Brentford. In addition the area includes the world famous Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew and the magnificent Capability Brown landscape of Syon. Set within this landscape are a succession of open spaces including the towpaths, public parks and avenues that link the great historic gardens with each other and make the Thames Landscape the largest single connected open space in London.

Many of these wonderful historic places have unfortunately been neglected over past decades and are now in need of restoration. The Thames Landscape Strategy has been the catalyst for an ambitious garden restoration programme across the Thames Landscape for a range of different open spaces including formal gardens, historic parkland, grand avenues and informal public spaces.

## The Restoration of Ham Avenues

The Ham Avenues provide the structure to the most complete surviving Carolean landscape in the UK and one of the most interesting and diverse public open spaces in London. The Avenues form the backbone to the View from Richmond Hill that inspired the English Garden Movement and are central to the recreational use of the Arcadian riverside for walkers, riders, cyclists, school children and wildlife. Above all, Ham epitomises those most special of English values – ‘man in nature’ and ‘the countryside in the city’, a true Arcadia where cows, people and wildlife coexist, rather than the more American concept of an impenetrable wilderness from which people are excluded.

The ravages of gravel extraction, bomb rubble disposal and Dutch elm disease have reduced the Avenues from their former glory but importantly their lines remained largely unobstructed. Since the 1970’s however, the avenues have deteriorated markedly as trees have died and rides have become overgrown. Public access has been reduced and established wildlife habitats changed.

The publication of the Ham Avenues Management Plan in 2004 followed much public consultation and proposes a way forward for the avenues and surrounding landscape. The first stage in restoration has been achieved through the TLS ‘London’s Arcadia’ scheme and has concentrated on improving the day-to-day management of Melancholy Walk and the Great South and Petersham Avenues. New native hedges have been planted, footpaths repaired and historic fences restored. The next stage saw lime trees planted to fill the gaps along the Great South and Petersham Avenues, many of which were planted

and cared for by local school children. The link between Melancholy Walk and Hammertons Ferry was restored in 2007 and in 2008 the riverside car park at Ham was landscaped to a design by Kim Wilkie.

## The Landscape Of Syon

Syon Park is a living landscape containing many elements of British landscape history from prehistoric times to the present day. Its many changes reflect the wealth and power of its owners and have expressed the latest trends in fashion and garden design. The present Duke of Northumberland, aware of the need for change and improvement during the 1990’s instigated a major redevelopment plan for the estate including the reinstatement of the historic Capability Brown landscape.

The first stage in the plan was to reconnect the House with the river as proposed by the Thames Landscape Strategy. Lost vistas were opened up and in 1996 the link between Kew Gardens and Syon was revealed for the first time in generations. Current works include the reinstatement of the lakehead in the pleasure grounds restoration of the C18th oval carriage drive and landscaping of the unsightly car park. This exciting project will continue to make Syon a remarkable survivor of a privately owned country estate yet set within Greater London.

## The Restoration of Orleans House Gardens

One of the most interesting restoration projects has been at Orleans House. Originally laid out in 1702 as a formal garden with orchards, the original terraces were removed in the late C18th when good taste implied natural landscape gardening. The garden reached its heyday in the Regency period when Louis Philippe, Duc d’Orleans lived there and the house became known as Orleans House.

Gravel digging in the 1920’s destroyed the gardens that can be seen on in outline on early OS maps but the general woodland effect we see today, although somewhat milder than intended is very much in keeping with a Regency garden. For this reason, it was decided to restore the garden in the ‘spirit of a Regency Garden’ rather than as an exact replica of the original. A restoration plan was put in place by the TLS based on historic research carried out by Mavis Batey of the Garden History Society and survey work carried out by Joy Lee and Ray Desmond of Kew Gardens.

The restoration plan will re-establish the woodland walks shrubberies and glades of the period without the need to rip out much of the C20th tree growth. Before any work was carried a full ecological survey was undertaken to guide the process. In the more formal areas, lawns and flower beds have been laid out in the picturesque manner and the connection between the Grade I listed Octagon Room and the Thames re-opened.



The restoration is being carried out by volunteers from the Garden History Society, Friends of Orleans House and Friends of Marble Hill House working towards the TLS Conservation Management Plan. Today, the delightful woodland garden between Orleans and Marble Hill House serves to remind that this stretch of the Thames was occupied by a succession of villas set in large grounds which blended harmoniously into the river landscape.

## The Hampton Court Long Water Restoration

King Charles II commissioned the Long Water Canal and double row of lime trees as a compliment to his new bride Catherine of Braganza in 1661 and is seen as one of the great moments in English garden history introducing the formal style from France for the first time.

This magnificent feature survived remarkably intact to modern times un-compromised by successive changes in taste and design. The avenue however, was in serious decline due to the great age of the trees and a failure in the policy to ‘gap up’ trees that had sadly perished. This policy left a legacy of trees that were out of line, of the wrong species and specimens that were unable to compete with older trees for light, nutrients and water, and was often damaged by branches falling on them from more mature specimens.



By 1997 it was clear that the status quo was no longer sustainable and the decision was taken to clear fell and replace the avenue. Less than half of the 544 trees remained and of these only 14 were from the 1661 planting. Most specimens had serious growth defects and many were unstable and dangerous. A full ecological audit was carried out and measures put in place to mitigate the effect of removal of the trees on the ecology of the park. Bird and bat boxes were placed in nearby trees and dead wood was kept close by in order to conserve lichens, fungi and invertebrates. In December 2003, 544 magnificent new lime trees were planted in their original positions. The original clones of lime were used: *Tilia Europaea koningslinde* (‘The Kings Lime’) that were grown in the historic style of the period – on their own roots.

## Other Garden Restoration Schemes

Ham House – the finest C17th gardens in the UK, Terrace Gardens – a magnificent Victorian formal pleasure garden, Strawberry Hill House – the home of Sir Horace Wallpole, Canbury Gardens Kingston – an Edwardian riverside promenade, Queen Elizabeth’s Lawn Kew Gardens – at present a large car park, Marble Hill Park – a classic C18th landscape park, Bushy Park – a former Royal hunting ground.



Information Leaflet No. 6

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A Message from Sir David Attenborough  
Patron of the Thames Landscape Strategy

Thames Landscape Strategy Leaflet No. 6

**THAMES LANDSCAPE STRATEGY**  
HAMPTON to KEW

THAMES LANDSCAPE STRATEGY  
Hampton to Kew



“The Thames Landscape Strategy is that very rare animal: an organisation with real popular appeal and an imaginative sense of what it is about landscapes that fires people’s imagination. We need to take active steps now to ensure

that we maintain a varied wildlife habitat, support traditional river activities, and manage the landscape to complement the marvellous historic buildings, nature reserves and parks that line this stretch of the Thames. The ideas proposed by the Thames Landscape Strategy are truly groundbreaking and really moving forward. We should rejoice in having such an enthusiastic and committed organisation to guide this process and I look forward to continued success throughout the coming years”.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, Arcadia, an idyllic pastoral landscape was created along the Thames between Hampton and Kew. Magnificent royal and aristocratic palaces, gardens and parks were constructed and linked by a series of avenues, set within a framework of meadows and woodland.

Today this stretch of the Thames is recognised as one of the world’s great urban landscapes, allowing Londoners to escape the hustle and bustle of modern day city life.



The Thames Landscape Strategy is one of three sub-regional partnerships for the Thames in the greater London area, whose focus is the remarkable river corridor between Hampton and Kew. Launched in 1994, the strategy is a 100-year blueprint for the Thames, whose vision is to conserve, enhance and promote for the future, one of the world’s great urban landscapes. To achieve its aims, the strategy brings together a partnership of statutory and non-statutory organisations, local groups and individuals to inform strategic policy and to implement a broad range of projects and management proposals.

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## Garden & Historic Landscape Restoration

The Thames Landscape Strategy in Action

DISCOVER THE ARCADIAN THAMES



Thames Landscape Strategy Leaflet No. 6

‘Conserve, promote and enhance for the future, one of the world’s great urban river landscapes between Hampton and Kew’