

Roots and Records: It's November



Hello! and welcome to the musings of the Parks & Gardens UK Data Manager (PGUK).

Welcome to November!

November is here, and with it comes the whirlwind of Christmas preparations! All around, markets are setting up, trees and lights are being put up, and festive parties are getting those final touches. It is all wonderful—yet, if I'm honest, it can feel a bit overwhelming, especially with 43 days still to go until Christmas Day!

Don't get me wrong—I love the holiday season. But sometimes, the early build-up can leave me feeling ready for a long winter nap by the time the big day arrives. Not trying to be a Grinch here, just wishing the magic could unfold at a slightly slower pace!

The Challenge of funding applications

I have come to realise that writing funding and grant proposals is truly an art form—almost a kind of wizardry! Completing these forms takes careful strategy, and after working on three applications, I now understand just how intense the process can be, especially with a small team (me). Despite watching all the YouTube tutorials and guidance videos, I found myself feeling pretty overwhelmed at times. However, while it has been a steep learning curve, I am proud to have tackled it. Whatever the outcome, I hope the applications clearly convey our vision for Parks & Gardens UK and how important the archive is.

An interesting project

While browsing the second-hand bookshop at Hestercombe, I started wondering how many other heritage sites have hidden gems like this. These bookshops are often overlooked, yet they are a perfect fit for today's focus on reuse and recycling—a meaningful way to get involved and support sustainable practices. After purchasing a book and mulling it over at my desk, I realised this could be an exciting feature for the Parks & Gardens UK archive!

So, I have started my research and already found 20 heritage sites with second-hand bookshops. The plan is to compile a list for the archive, highlighting each location for our followers. I am eager to see just how many we can find, and I hope the PGUK community will lend a hand.

This project not only enriches our archive but also shines a spotlight on these charming bookshops nestled within historic sites—a win for both heritage and sustainability!

The Parks & Gardens UK Volunteers

Thanks to our dedicated volunteers, the Parks & Gardens UK archive is improving every day. Whether they are working in the PGUK office or remotely, their efforts and support are invaluable.

Here's a snapshot of some of the crucial tasks they are currently undertaking:

- Updating contact and visitor information for various locations
- Ensuring consistent formatting across the archive, including headings, paragraphs, and links
- Researching and updating biographies of notable figures
- Identifying and removing duplicate entries
- Enhancing records for historical locations and categories
- Adding detailed features to records, such as ponds, temples, cascades, fountains, and Ha-Ha's
- Verifying and updating latitude, longitude, addresses, and postcodes
- Locating and capturing photographs of locations in the archive

There is still a lot to update and improve, and our volunteers are doing an incredible job bringing the archive to life!

2024 and Beyond

PGUK's social media presence is on the rise! Our platforms are essential for sharing the mission of Parks & Gardens UK and keeping our followers in the loop. Maintaining visibility for our archive is an ongoing effort, especially given the current challenges facing the heritage sector. Thank you for your support as we continue to grow and share the beauty and history of our parks and gardens.

November is a busy time

November is a busy time for me and not just at PGUK. I may not have mentioned it, but I am a bit of a crafter and model maker—and I also enjoy painting in my spare time. Even better, I get to combine all these creative skills in an incredible tradition that goes back over 400 years: the Bridgwater Guy Fawkes Carnival, held every November.

I am a Life member of Wills Carnival Club, one of the oldest carnival clubs in Bridgwater, Somerset. We are a tableaux club, which means we design and build a 100-foot-long carnival cart where we are standing completely still. It may sound unusual, but in person, the synchronised music, stunning lights, and artistry create a truly breath-taking spectacle.

Alongside us, other carnival clubs construct moving entries with intricate engineering, adding parts that move while their members sing and dance. If you ever get the chance to experience it, you will understand why we are so passionate about preserving the unique art of carnival and of course Tableaux.

Fiona Baker

