

# RECORDING A SITE

## Before the visit:

1. Maps, Location, Size
  - Find on both modern and historic maps if possible, compare.
  - Note grid reference. <https://gridreferencefinder.com>
  - Try to find size of site (in hectares)
  - If it is on Historic England Register, there will be a detailed description, map and grid reference available.
  - If it is on PGUK, there will be some information, a map, grid reference and size available.
  - If it is on Devon Gazetteer, a sheet of information and old maps may be available
2. Basic research
  - Check basic site and family history- watching for different ways of spelling
    - PGUK , DGT, files at DHC/DGT Office, index, directories, sales catalogues, Devon Heritage Centre – visit or online, Local History Societies.
    - Cherry, Bridget and Pevsner, *'Devon'*
    - Todd Gray, *'The Garden History of Devon'*
    - Hugh Meller, *'The Country Houses of Devon'*
    - Pugsley *'Devon Gardens'*
  - Try to produce a short chronology so you have an understanding of the history of the site and how it has changed.
  - Make a list of features to look for or ask about; mark them on your map
  - For other information sources, see *'DGT Information Sources'*
3. Obtain permission to visit
  - Fix date, time and number of recorders. Don't go on your own unless you have a personal connection.
  - Ask directions and note carefully; the correct drive is often not clear on a map. Allow plenty of time to get there and check if there will be a time limit.
  - Have questions ready- who are the gardeners, any old photographs, plans, family records, Conservation Management Plans, guides, old photos, paintings, drawings.

## During the visit:

1. Practical information
  - Take wellies/boots and be prepared for dogs.
  - Take extra copies of information which the owners might not have – always good PR.
  - Take and use clipboard and camera(s). Ask permission to take photographs and ask for signature on appropriate form.
  - Extract tactfully as much information as possible from owner(s) but distinguish facts from hearsay.
  - Listen and make supportive comments. NEVER criticise; you are a guest in their garden.
    - Only if asked, offer positive suggestions.
  - If the owners produce new information on paper, try to obtain a copy or photograph it. Make careful notes, including source and date.

## 2. Recording information

- Walk over the site with copies of current/ historic maps, plans and illustrations.
  - Compare and mark on a map. Look for best vantage points.
  - Take a compass and tape measure?
- Identify boundaries
  - How is it marked? Perimeter tree belts, walls, railings, lodges?
  - Have they changed?
- Land
  - Is it level, broken, sloping (which direction)?
  - How is the land now used? E.g. parkland, arable, pleasure garden
- Locate the principal building and the main component areas of the site, such as a walled kitchen garden, a rose garden, or a maze.
- Look for ‘lumps and bumps’ on the ground, or ruins, which may be the remains of former features (drives, paths, buildings or water features).
- Take plenty of photographs-record position and direction of each image taken – very useful on complex sites. Number your images.
- Identify current elements of the garden, such as water features, garden architecture and ornaments, pergolas, gazebos, ha-has, trees and the remains of planting schemes. Take plenty of photographs, then afterwards, use the glossary for best terminology. Don’t be worried about asking for help should you need it. Use archival material to establish/ confirm age etc.
- Make a written note of the condition of all garden features and structures, (be careful of derogatory terminology!)
- Make note of any vistas, eye-catchers, axial lines.
- Identify major tree and shrub species, their position and condition, and estimate their age. Veteran?
- Look for signs of planting schemes, such as rows, avenues, or clumps of trees or tree pits in parkland, showing where trees once stood. New planting?
- Identify important views within or beyond the garden that may now be hidden by younger planting

## After visit:

- Write up visit ASAP.
- Any value judgements should be positive and evidence based.
- Make a reference sheet of the images with detailed labelling, including direction of view.
- If there is any serious cause for concern, pass this on only to the R&R Chairman
- Thank the owner and mention you will send a draft copy of your report for comment when available.
- Inform Tree Register if trees are worth recording.
- Discuss report with R&R Chairman

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