A HISTORY OF BRITISH GARDENS
from the Romans to the Olympics

COASTING AROUND BRITAIN
The joys and eccentricities of the seaside

DRESSING THE PART
Secrets of London’s menswear district

INSIDE
A TOUR AROUND THE GARDEN OF ENGLAND
THE GUIDES’ GUIDE TO MANCHESTER AND YORKSHIRE
SEVEN SURPRISING STORIES – LEGENDS, LIES AND LORE

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For our summer edition of *The Guide* we are celebrating two great British institutions: seaside and gardens. You are never more than 100 miles from the coast on our little island, and our shorelines have been welcoming holidaymakers for two centuries. Sophie Campbell explores these seaside stories in an article that takes us on a watery wander around the country, on a tour that peers into everything from piers to pigeons.

We take a look at Britain at her blooming best, with Marc Zakian investigating the history of the English garden. Visiting these great estates to see how the earth was literally moved so that our aristocratic class could create pastoral playgrounds is both fascinating and inspiring. A horticultural theme would be incomplete without a visit to the ‘Garden of England’, and Blue Badge Guide Dawn Blee takes us on a tour of her home county.

As a Londoner, I am inspired by the city’s rich greenscapes – from parks to pavements. One of my favourites is the community garden in Bonnington Square, Vauxhall, a peaceful island only a stone’s throw from the city’s second biggest transport hub. Here local residents have joined together to plant and maintain this lovely corner, with a community café and shop. A legacy of ‘60s London just waiting for visitors to explore.

But, as you will discover from the pages of this magazine, so many of the plants associated with beautiful English gardens that we visit today are not indigenous at all. We owe a debt to the great plant hunters of previous centuries who devoted their lives to enriching our landscapes. As I learnt from Andrea Wulf’s excellent book *The Brother Gardeners*, these specimens began their journeys as tiny plugs on the top deck of a trading ship, often the least valuable cargo on-board.

This summer edition brings a new feature with Blue and Green badge guides around the UK presenting the places they particularly love. We kick off with Manchester and Yorkshire.

Our London story features stylish Blue Badge Guide, Russell Nash and his account of the menswear history of Mayfair and St James as he explores the streets that have dressed kings and rock stars.

So, if you are inspired by these stories, take a tour. Just search www.britainsbestguides.org to find the best local guide.
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OH! WHAT A KNIGHT

This summer the historic town of Bishop Auckland in north-east England is hosting an epic outdoor show. Kynren tells the story of England though the eyes of a boy King Arthur, as he encounters 2000 years of myth, legend and history, from Roman times to World War II.

More than 1,000 volunteers in the cast and crew have been trained by the team behind the stunning choreography of the London 2012 Olympic Opening Ceremony. With an accompanying cast of animals comprising performance horses, sheep, pigs, goats, cattle and even ducks, the innovative show expects to attract nightly audiences of 8,000.

Kynren – from the Anglo Saxon word ‘cynren’ meaning kindred or family – combines pyrotechnics, lighting and water effects with a surround-sound music soundtrack, all set against the beautiful backdrop of Auckland Castle.

The show runs from July to September. For more information, go to www.kynren.co.uk

For guided tours of the Durham region, search on www.britainsbestguides.org
1066 is a key date in this country’s history and this year’s 950th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings will be marked with a series of spectacular events.

On 10 September, Hastings Pier will stage a laser light show for the opening weekend of an arts festival commemorating the Norman Conquest. Simultaneously, lasers will be beamed across the Channel towards St Valéry – where William’s Norman fleet set sail.

Over the weekend of 15-16 October at Battle Abbey and Battlefield there will be a grand re-enactment with more than 600 soldiers clashing in an unforgettable anniversary event. Visitors can also immerse themselves in Norman life by wandering through an authentic market, or watching living history demonstrations including chain mail and weapon production, as well as medieval falconry. The battle between Normans and Saxons takes place in the afternoons.

For a Blue Badge guided tour exploring 1066, go to www.britainsbestguides.org

Fit for a Queen

The exhibition for the annual summer opening of Buckingham Palace celebrates ‘90 Years of Style’ from HMQ’s Wardrobe.

Described as the largest display of the Queen’s dress ever mounted, it includes over 150 outfits displayed at all three royal residences – the content changing for each location.

Buckingham Palace – the setting for many state and family occasions during the Queen’s life – focuses on fashions from the 1920s to the 2010s.

The palace exhibition illustrates the unique requirements of royal couture; from ceremonial and military attire to ensembles worn at family weddings and christenings. It includes outfits from the Queen’s early childhood, her wedding and the coronation, as well as wardrobes created for royal tours and state visits.

Fashioning a Reign also looks at the Queen’s support of British couture and millinery, with important works from celebrated designers, including Sir Norman Hartnell, Sir Hardy Amies and Ian Thomas.

The three exhibitions are at Holyrood House, Edinburgh from April to October 2016, Buckingham Palace, London from August to September 2016 and Windsor Castle from September to January 2017. For tickets and information visit www.royalcollection.org.uk

For a guided royal tour or a visit to Windsor Castle visit www.britainsbestguides.org
1 ASHTON CANAL
Waterways were the arteries of Manchester’s industrial might. This picturesque ten-kilometre stretch is part of the popular 92-lock Cheshire Ring. Join Green Badge Guide Emma Fox for a canal side walking tour though Ancoats – the world’s first ‘industrial suburb’ – past Manchester City’s home at the Etihad Stadium and on to Portland Basin, where you can visit the canal museum and relax at the Bridge View Café.
Tue-Sun 10am-4pm tameside.gov.uk

2 ELIZABETH GASKELL’S HOUSE
Elizabeth Gaskell chronicled Manchester life during the Victorian times. The author of Cranford and North and South lived with her minister husband and daughters in Plymouth Grove. This grand neoclassical villa is now beautifully restored. Join Blue Badge Guide Kate Dibble on a tour of the villa.
4.30pm elizabethgaskellhouse.co.uk

3 MANCHESTER ART GALLERY
This superb collection includes work by British and European masters. Explore the gallery with Blue Badge Guide Jonathan Schofield who will show you exciting modern works by Hepworth, Freud, Hockney and Bacon and classic paintings by Gainsborough, Turner, Constable and Stubbs; plus the crazed but colourful creations of the Pre-Raphaelites, including Jonathan’s favourite, Work by Ford Madox Brown.
10am-5pm manchesterartgallery.org

4 MANCHESTER CATHEDRAL
In 1847 this medieval parish church became the city’s cathedral. Inside is an artistic treasure trove, with wonderful misericords (hinged seats) featuring carved images of comic morality tales – one shows rabbits roasting a human. Former Manchester Bishop John Moorhouse was previously Bishop of Melbourne, spot the kangaroos on his throne. Not the biggest cathedral in England, but one of the most interesting. Discover more cathedral secrets with Green Badge Guide Andrew Derbyshire.
8.30am-6.30pm, Mon/Fri closes 5.30pm manchestercathedral.org

5 MANCHESTER UNITED FC STADIUM, OLD TRAFFORD
The ‘Theatre of Dreams’ is home to a club with the largest fanbase in football. You can take a behind-the-scenes stadium tour, relive the great moments in the museum, eat at the Red Café, shop in the megastore, and reflect at the poignant Munich air crash memorial. Visit the stadium with Green Badge Guide Pauline Lloyd, who will show you United Trinity statue of Best, Law and Charlton, who she supported in the 1960s as a soccer-mad teenager.
9.40am-4.30pm, except match days manutd.com

6 PEOPLE’S HISTORY MUSEUM
There have always been ideas worth fighting for – is the ethos of this museum. Marvel at beautiful trade union banners, delve into the archive of the Labour Party and wonder at the mind of Tom Paine as you stand by the desk where he wrote Rights of Man. Green Badge Guide Suzanne Hindle will tell you about the wealth of artefacts on display here and bring alive the history of Radical Manchester, including exhibits on the Peterloo Massacre and the Suffragette struggle led by Manchester-born Emmeline Pankhurst.
10am-5pm phm.org.uk

7 ROYAL EXCHANGE THEATRE
In the 1970s a theatre was built inside the magnificent setting of the former Victorian Cotton Exchange. Since then, a generation of great actors has worked here, from Albert Finney to Dame Helen Mirren. Attend a theatre workshop, browse the craft shop or simply pop in for a cup of tea, lunch or pre-performance drink. Let Blue Badge Guide Jean Bailo tell you about the show-stopping architecture that makes this a must-see on any visit to the city.
10am-7pm, Sun 11am-5pm royalexchange.co.uk

8 SCULPTURE HALL CAFÉ IN MANCHESTER TOWN HALL
Cool, traditional comfort in a sumptuous Gothic setting. Relax on generous Chesterfield upholstery and enjoy local treats like Lancashire hotpot, Eccles cakes or Vimto, or treat yourself to one of the best afternoon teas in the city. Green Badge Guide Anne Beswick’s favourite statue is of engineer William Fairbairn because, as she explains, the important people in Manchester are practical people who get things done.
9am-4pm, Sat/Sun 10am-4pm thetownhallmcr.co.uk

9 THE PORTICO LIBRARY
Opened in 1806 in what was then Manchester’s most fashionable residential street, this subscription library has attracted membership from the city’s great and good; from Elizabeth Gaskell to Jenni Murray, John Dalton to Eric Cantona. Floor-to-ceiling bookshelves and a superb exhibition space under an inspiring painted glass dome. Find out more with Green Badge Guide Peter O’Grady.
9.30am-4.30pm, Sat 11am-3pm theportico.org.uk

From canals to cathedrals and theatres of dreams, our guides tell us about their favourite places in the unofficial capital of the North.
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COASTING around BRITAIN

Sophie Campbell explores the joys and eccentricities of the seaside

Every year in early summer, the PS Waverley (that’s PS for ‘Paddle Steamer’), edges out of her berth on the River Clyde where she was built 70 years ago this year, and sets off on her annual perambulation around the British Isles. She spends two months working her way down the west coast of Scotland and Wales, then follows England’s south coast eastwards, picking up day passengers as she goes and ending up on the Thames in October. People love her raked funnels and smart paddle wheels and she offers a unique offshore overview of one of our greatest guiding assets, the Great British coastline.

The coastal town of Berwick-upon-Tweed has switched allegiance between Scotland and England 13 times.
NORTHERN PLEASURES

In the northwest, the Waverley chunters past Blackpool, which grew into a holiday resort in the late nineteenth century and gives Paris a run for its money with its 518-foot Tower. When the Tower opened in 1894 it had a circus, among other things: older residents remember elephants crossing the prom – trunk to tail – to bathe in the sea each day. It still has a (human) circus and its famous and spectacular ballroom.

Further south, just above Liverpool, dawn and dusk are the perfect time to see 100 naked men on a beach; in this case the Antony Gormley’s sculpted figures at Crosby (official title Another Place) planted on the sands, gazing out to sea. After doing their own perambulation around the world, they have come to rest here.

Coastal Whitby is famous for its jet, a semi-precious stone popularised as jewellery by Queen Victoria when in mourning for Albert, and made from fossilised monkey puzzle trees.
As Cistercian monastic rules forbade the wearing of undergarments, the monks on Caldey were known for their bare-bottomed piety.

**BEACHED WALES**

Then comes Wales and the dazzling beaches of Anglesey, which so discreetly hosted the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge during their early married life. On the mainland side of the Menai Strait, separating island from mainland, are Edward I’s Caernarfon Castle and, farther east, the magnificent pier at Bangor with its Whistlestop tea room.

Farther south still, way past the Italianate tumble of Portmeirion and the coast of Snowdonia, is the blunt fist of Pembrokeshire, our only coastal National Park. This is one of the loveliest sections of the Coastal Path National Trail, including St David’s – its cathedral, the smallest in Britain, was deliberately set low in the landscape to avoid Viking marauders – right round to Tenby, with its Georgian houses perched on the cliffs. In less squeamish days they had their own ‘long drops’ (latrines) above the sea. You may see day boats puttering out to the working Cistercian monastery on Caldey Island.

**WESTWARD HO!**

The North Devon fishing village of Ilfracombe is one of Waverley’s ports. Its pregnant Verity statue by Bristolian artist Damien Hirst – he has a restaurant in town – stands looking out to sea, possibly thinking about all those Gormleys. Ilfracombe sits on the coastal path from Hartland in the west to Lynmouth in the east, aka ‘Lorna Doone Country’, on the edge of Exmoor.

The art theme continues in Cornwall. The most obvious example is St Ives, where the studios of artist Barbara Hepworth and potter Bernard Leach make up for the closure of Tate St Ives until March 2017. Rounding the Lizard Peninsula...
Sidmouth’s cliffs are packed with sea creatures millennia old

In 1800, baby Mary Anning survived a lightning strike that killed three people. After this miraculous escape she blossomed, becoming an expert fossil hunter as a teenager. At the time, fossils were thought to be shells; the tongue twister ‘she sells sea shells by the sea shore’ may refer to Mary’s activities.

In Sidmouth, it is de rigueur to play croquet with a squared, rather than rounded mallet.

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there are former tin mines and Brunel’s Royal Albert rail bridge over the Tamar connecting Cornwall and Devon, and finally the genteel world of novelists and fossils (in no way related) on the English Riviera.

Torquay’s biannual Agatha Christie Festival alternates with Agatha Christie Day each September. And the Regency resort of Sidmouth at the western end of Lyme Bay is not only famous for croquet (who knew?), but is the less-publicised end of the Jurassic Coast, its cliffs packed with sea creatures millennia old.

At the other end of the bay, Lyme Regis hogs the limelight partly because it is wildly romantic: John Galsworthy lived here (his house is now open for holiday lets) and the protective curve of the Cobb is forever associated with his novel The French Lieutenant’s Woman – and, let’s face it, actress Meryl Streep who starred in the film adaptation. It was also home to Mary Anning, a rare female star in the world of eighteenth-century natural philosophy, whose specimens can be seen on the walls of the Natural History Museum in London, as well as in the delightful Lyme Regis museum.

The Knill Monument is an eighteenth-century pyramid on a St Ives hilltop built in memory of former mayor John Knill. Every fifth anniversary of his death (25 July 2016) ten girls dressed in white dance around it, supervised by two elderly widows in black.

St Ives in Cornwall is named after St Ia, an Irish virgin who crossed the sea on a leaf.
BRIGHTON ROCKS
On east to the Solent, the five-mile strip of water separating the mainland from the Isle of Wight: here the eagle-eyed may spot the grounds of Osborne House at East Cowes. This English Heritage site has Queen Victoria’s wheeled bathing machine: she descended its steps helped by a burly female assistant.

This has its echoes – in a less grandiose way – farther east in Brighton, which was famed in its early days for the ‘Brighton Dippers’, women who plunged reluctant swimmers under the waves. The town is a wonderful example of a Regency resort, chosen by the racy Prince Regent over his father’s more sedate choice of Weymouth – luckily for us, as he spent a fortune building the Brighton Pavilion in characteristically over-the-top style. 150 years later the town became infamous for Mods and Rockers riots, spawning *Quadrophenia* tours and visits to the cells under today’s Town Hall, where rioters were held.

East of here, the coast is undergoing a renaissance, best illustrated by the Art Trail you can follow by foot or by bike from the Town Gallery at Eastbourne, with its excellent Store Art Tours, via that temple of Modern, the De La Warr Pavilion at Bexhill-on-Sea, to the Jerwood Gallery in Hastings, built to echo the tall, black ‘net shops’ for drying fishing nets.

Hastings is home to the largest beach-based fishing fleet in Europe, stunning Tudor and Regency buildings and a population of artists and musicians fleeing high prices in London and Brighton.

A SHORE THING
And so we reach the corner of England, with the Dungeness power station, the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Light Railway and the ‘concrete ears’, or acoustic mirrors – precursors of radar – at Denge. Across the peninsula in North Kent are Margate, with its Turner Contemporary art gallery and Wayne Hemingway’s retro theme park, Dreamland; little Faversham, proud possessor of a 1300 version of citizen’s charter Magna Carta; and the Isle of...
The British Guild of Tourist Guides has more than 800 guides throughout the country. For a seaside tour visit www.britainsbestguides.org.

The interior of Crossness Pumping Station in Abbey Wood is decorated with figs; this is a Victorian joke, syrup of figs being widely used as a laxative at the time.

Grain church where Pip met Magwitch in Great Expectations.

Farther into the Thames estuary are lesser known gems – the ruins of Lesnes Abbey, say, or that glory of Victorian sewage engineering, Crossness Pumping Station – or, on the other side of the Thames, Rainham Hall, once the property of an eighteen-century merchant and wharf owner.

As we follow the estuary inland to picture-postcard London, we reach the end of Waverley’s voyage: her final mooring is beside the Tower of London near Tower Bridge, HMS Belfast and More London: one of the world’s great views.

In Whitstable in Kent, on St James’s Day (25 July) the clergy and choir of St Peter’s church gather at Reeves Beach for the Oyster Ceremony Service, with fishing boats forming a watery congregation.

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In 1381 Richard II made Chelmsford the capital of England – for one week.

The 18 kings of England who ruled from 1066 to 1485 fathered more than 40 illegitimate children. Henry II is out in front with at least 20. Genealogists have calculated that every living person with English ancestry is descended from one of these medieval kings.

NUT JOBS

During the early 19th century hat makers used mercuric acid to finish off their headgear. Workers were exposed at length to this toxic chemical, causing them to twitch, jabber and lurch. Victorians thought they were insane and the phrase mad as a hatter entered the language.

WHO’S THE DADDY?

Winston Churchill had a tattoo of an anchor on his arm, while his mother, Lady Randolph, sported a tattoo of a snake around her wrist, which she slyly covered with a bracelet when desired.
Victorian fathers-of-the-bride often gave their new son-in-law a tie-pin made of badger’s penis bone to ensure a good brood.

In Newmarket there was once a law against blowing your nose in public, while ‘persons going about the street with a head cold’ were subject to a fine. This was not to prevent locals from catching a cold, but rather to protect the valuable race horses that lived and were trained in the town.

Eliza Stafford was sent to Leeds prison in 1865 for stealing 2lb of lard — a harsh sentence that turned her into a folk hero. When 10,000 people gathered to cheer her release, the authorities sneaked her out of a side entrance. Infuriated, the crowd marched into town chanting ‘Dripping, Dripping’. When the police charged the protest, a man was trampled, provoking a riot that lasted several days. Locals organised a collection for Eliza, who used the money to open a public house called the Dripping Pan.
A POTTED HISTORY OF GARDENS

Marc Zakian looks at the story of British horticulture, from the Romans to the Olympics
The Romans were Britain’s first pleasure gardeners. They settled on this island of fertile soil and ample rain and filled it with exotic new species from across their empire.

Sussex was once home to a magnificent garden. Rich in sumptuous flower beds, with vines arching across pergolas, fragrant roses, clipped geometric box hedges and rows of terracotta pots shaded by cypresses. Fishbourne sounds like a perfect English garden, but it was planted nearly 2000 years ago by the Romans.

The Romans were Britain’s first pleasure gardeners. They settled on this island of fertile soil and ample rain and filled it with exotic new species from across their empire: juniper and box for hedges; roses, rosemary and lavender to make perfumes and colourful flowers such as crocus and pansy.

Both men and women worked in Roman gardens. These skilled plantsmen fertilised with manure and lime, killed bugs with vinegar pest spray and fumigated flies by burning dung pellets. They used pruning hooks, rakes, hoes, shears and sickles – tools that would find a place in any modern gardener’s shed.

Within half a century, the Romans transformed the muddy, monotone Iron Age landscape with dashes of colour, a multitude of ornamental gardens and swathes of colourful new trees.

Lavender is derived from the Latin lavare, meaning, ‘to wash’ - the Romans used it to perfume water.
The great monastic orders exchanged seeds and plants across Europe. The cooking pear, known as a Warden, was imported from France to a Bedfordshire Abbey. There is a story that 12th century Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Becket, brought a fig tree to Ely, which was planted in an orchard that stands today.

The most important monastic garden was the cloister. At its centre was a lawn, mown to flat perfection. The monks at Norwich Abbey had to hire mole catchers to keep the grass both holy and unholy.

Medieval castles contained neither space nor place for the verdant arts. But as military fortresses were replaced by residential palaces, formal gardens became an essential element on the aristocratic estate.

Renaissance inspired gardens during the Tudor period were extravagant show pieces; resplendent with sundials, heraldic

**BACK TO NATURE**

The arrival of the Anglo-Saxons brought 400 years of Romano-British horticulture to an end. A garden was a place to grow fruit and vegetables and the new ruling elite had no time for plants they could not eat or use for cures or crafts.

These practical plantsmen left us legacy of English names we still use today:
- **Teasel** – used to ‘tease up’ (raise) the nap on new cloth.
- **Daisy** – the ‘day’s eye’ that opens when the sun rises.
- **Hazel** – from the Anglo-Saxon for ‘head dress’.
- **Broom Plant** – used for sweeping, the origin of the name of the household brush.
- **Fox Glove** – from ‘fox’s glove’. Used as a medicinal purge.
- **Cow-slip** – possibly from Old English for cow dung, where the plant often grows.

**GARDENING HABITS**

While the Anglo-Saxons ploughed for profit not pleasure, one part of England was, literally, blooming.

By the Middle Ages monasteries controlled a quarter of English land. Monks were expected to grow all their own food and their huge estates extended way beyond the main buildings – one example being Covent Garden, once farming fields for Westminster Abbey’s convent.

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**SIGN OF THE THYMES**

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Renaissance inspired gardens during the Tudor period were extravagant show pieces; resplendent with sundials, heraldic
In England the great gardener of the era was John Tradescant, who was paid an astonishing £50 a year (£200,000 in modern money) to create the park at Hatfield House. Tradescant was Britain’s first plant hunter, travelling into Arctic Russia and down to Algiers in North Africa, where he avoided capture by Barbary pirates. He kept his botanic and natural history collection in a large house in Lambeth named The Ark. When he opened it to the public – charging 6d to view – it became England’s first public museum.

The centrepiece was the knot garden, with its interwoven design marked out by box, ivy, rosemary and thyme. As nobles paraded around the knots, their clothes would brush against the plants, sending out perfumed odours – an Elizabethan air freshener, much needed at a time bathing had fallen out of fashion.

The early 1600s saw the rise of the ‘florist’. These were not shop keepers, but skilled experts who cultivated plants for their beauty. They developed many of today’s popular flowers, such as carnations and anemones. Flower frenzies made the florists fortunes, with crazes at various times for tulips, carnations, dahlias and hybrid tea roses.

In England the great gardener of the era was John Tradescant, who was paid an astonishing £50 a year (£200,000 in modern money) to create the park at Hatfield House.

In 1636, Holland was hit by tulip mania. Bulbs were doubling in value every few days and one particularly rare tulip climbed to the giddy price of 5,500 guilders per bulb. When prices collapsed, many investors went bankrupt.
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The Ha-Ha was a transformative innovation in gardening. This waterless boundary ditch separating the private part of the estate from the long landscape was introduced into England by the architect John Vanbrugh. Unnoticed until the last instance, they were greeted by promenaders with a startled cry of ‘Ha-Ha!’, giving the feature its name.

GET IN LINE

The guiding principle of the English 17th century garden was symmetry and order. Classical facades of great palaces were matched by geometric formal landscaping, featuring ornate carpets of floral designs, walls of clipped hedges, carefully-coloured gravel paths, and rows of statues and fountains.

Ham House in London was the first estate where house and garden were conceived together. It was the vision of Elisabeth, Duchess of Lauderdale, an educated and shrewd woman who somehow maintained friendships with both Oliver Cromwell and his exiled enemy, the future King Charles II.

When Charles was restored to the throne, he granted the duchess a pension of £800 (£10m in modern money) that she used to remodel her estate.

The main feature of Ham House garden is a series of eight large plats or lawns. To modern eyes these seem rather plain, but lawns were cut by hand and a park on this scale could only be maintained by a small army of gardeners.

Only a solitary formal 17th century garden has survived changing horticultural fashions. Levens Hall in Cumbria was laid out in 1692 – through fate and a lack of money, some 300 years later the original garden still remains.

Levens Hall in Cumbria was laid out in 1692 – through fate and a lack of money, some 300 years later the original garden still remains.
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The 1st Earl of Harcourt demolished an ancient village to create a more picturesque view at his Nuneham Park estate. On completing the work in 1777, the Earl went for a stroll around his new grounds, forgot about the old village well, fell into it and was drowned.

In the 1700s the clipped order of the great English garden was swept away.

Two northerners were the principal protagonists in these changes: William Kent, a carpenter’s son from Bridlington in Yorkshire and Lancelot Brown, a village boy from Northumberland, son of an estate rent collector and a chambermaid. Both left school by 16; both went on to be feted by kings, dukes and aristocrats.

Kent was an ebullient, portly Yorkshireman who revolutionised garden architecture. Taking his cue from pastoral paintings, he created the ‘English landscape garden’, doing away with the formality of the regimented European parks that had dominated the previous century.

At London’s Chiswick House, Kent ripped out the formal groves, replacing them with a grand lawn, a winding river, a ‘ruin’ and ‘rustic forest’. At Stowe, he used hundreds of labourers to create a ‘classical’ landscape of lakes, hills and temples and a Wiltshire ‘River Styx’.

Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown worked on a similarly epic scale. Nothing stood in his way. The nickname came from his custom of viewing an estate, announcing that it had ‘capability’ for improvement and then persuading the owner to move lawns, mature trees and even entire villages.

At Longleat, Brown transformed a canal into a stream; at Chatsworth House, he flattened hills to create a view of the river; at Blenheim Palace, he dammed a waterway to flood the valley and create a lake that covered Vanbrugh’s great stone bridge; at Milton, a village of worker’s cottages was demolished to free the panorama – the reluctant inhabitants transplanted to new dwellings.

The 1800s was the era of the public park. Gardens were seen as a moralising force that would improve the manners of the lower classes and discourage drunkenness and social unrest.

In 1835, when London’s Regent’s Park stopped charging an admission fee – imposed to keep out the lower classes – it became the country’s first public park. Others followed, including Victoria Park, built to reduce the death rate in London’s East End.

In Merseyside, Birkenhead Park opened in 1847. The first civic park in the world, it offered sports grounds, boating lakes and bandstands, with
In 1895, Kew employed its first women gardeners. They had a special uniform including company regulation bloomers. Their appearance drew curious and astonished crowds.

Kew Gardens, lady gardeners

Visitors forbidden from gambling or swearing. The municipal park boom led to the creation of 27,000 public parks in Britain. Birkenhead Park was designed by Joseph Paxton – a farmer’s son with little schooling who became a celebrated gardener, engineer, publisher and parliamentarian.

Paxton began work as a garden boy, but was soon put in charge of the Duke of Devonshire’s estate at Chatsworth House where he designed and built glasshouses. This led to a commission to design the Crystal Palace for Britain’s Great Exhibition of 1851 – a remarkable 20-acre glasshouse constructed from 4,500 tons of iron and 293,000 panes of glass. Yet it took 2,000 men just eight months to build.

**SOW TO BED**

Victorian gardeners were swept up in the bedding craze; a fashion followed for flower beds featuring flamboyant designs of vibrant squares, lozenges, swirls and curls. Patriotic schemes in red, white and blue were especially popular.

Known as carpet beds, they were filled with geranium, hollyhocks, chrysanthemum, dahlias, hyacinths, irises and peonies – flashes of colour that lit up residential back yards and suburban streets.

The Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew were the cornerstone of the Victorian plant boom. Much of this was the legacy of the adventurer, landowner and botanist Joseph Banks who sailed with Captain Cook on the *Endeavour* – the most daring voyage of discovery of modern times. Celebrated as a hero on his return in 1771, he brought back 1,300 new species of plants.

Banks built a hothouse at Kew for specimens that had suffered during the long sea voyages – ‘our Kew Hospital’, as he called it. Whenever a consignment arrived, he instructed the head gardener not to move anything before he became ‘acquainted with the plants’.

Fortunes could be made by discovering new flora for cultivation. Explorers crossed the planet in search of new plants and many notable names were drowned, killed by bears or cut down by malaria or yellow fever in pursuit of novelty or the rarest of blooms.

But the risks were worth it. Newcomers included magnolia and hydrangea from Asia, pelargonium from South Africa and the strange monkey puzzle tree from Chile that sold for £5 – as much as a Victorian maid’s annual salary.

**BACK TO THE FUCHSIA**

As the Industrial Revolution progressed, cities grew ever larger and more polluted. People lamented the loss of the rural idyll, a bygone bucolic world of the farm or cottage garden with old fashioned borders of mixed shrubs and herbs.

Gertrude Jekyll turned this nostalgia into a new style of English garden. Born into London gentry, Jekyll was a boisterous lady with her hair in a bun who started work as an artist – but in her 40s failing eyesight led to her to garden design. She established a partnership with the architect Edwin Lutyens and together they created some 400 gardens.

Jekyll rejected patterned carpet beds, preferring a series of garden ‘rooms’. She reintroduced the herbaceous border, planting hardy flowers in drifts and sweeping groups with restricted colour palates.

Her most celebrated project is Hestercombe in Somerset. It’s extraordinary to consider that she never actually visited the garden, but drafted her designs with an artist’s eye and sent them off to be planted. Jekyll’s ideas have endured and her influence is as powerful today as it was during her lifetime.

Gardeners who went to war

Hestercombe Edwardian formal gardens

Paxton advertised his success in inducing the giant waterlily to grow and flower by posing his daughter on one of the giant leaves.
CUT DOWN IN THEIR PRIME

The outbreak of the First World War had a devastating effect on British gardens. The Lost Gardens of Heligan in Cornwall are testimony to this crisis. Before the war, the house employed 22 gardeners, only eight of them survived the war to return to work. The gardens declined and became ‘lost’.

Life at Heligan was interrupted again during the Second World War, when it became a billet for American soldiers – one of many thousands of gardens and parks commandeered for the war effort. London’s Hyde Park was dug up for vegetable allotments as the country was urged to ‘Dig for Victory’. The public grew some three million tons of food to feed the war-torn nation.

GROUNDS FOR HOPE?

From post-war to post-crash austerity, in recent times opportunities for new public parks and gardens might have appeared limited. But as our cities grow, green space has become an increasingly essential part of our local and national heritage.

In 2001, a derelict and polluted clay pit in Cornwall was redeveloped. Domed biomes with microclimates were built where visitors can experience a tropical rainforest and a Mediterranean garden. Outside is a plant collection where this year they have planted 40 redwood trees to establish a future forest.

Since it opened, 15 million people have visited the Eden Project. Like the great Victorian public education institutions, it tells the story of botany, science and nature – but through the modern perspective of energy conservation and climate change.

And to the east of London, an even more challenging project emerged as part of the 2012 Olympic & Paralympic Games. The Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park is Britain’s largest and most ambitious urban green space of modern times – transforming a polluted, toxic, post-industrial wasteland into a sustainable and environmentally green public amenity.

At its heart is a 240-acre park, the largest in Europe for 150 years. Planted with 6,700 mature trees and 3,000 wetland plants (to help clean the polluted River Lea), the park reflects the historic traditions of English garden design with its sweeping landscape vistas and Jekyll-esque drifts of planting. The ecology responds to the challenges of climate warming and flood risk; it is both inspired by the past and looking to the future.

Blue Badge Guides offer specialist garden tours across the UK. To find a guide visit www.britainsbestguides.org or phone us on +44 20 7403 1115.
**1. FOUNTAINS ABBEY**
800 years of history set in idyllic surroundings. In 1132 thirteen monks founded what became one of the richest and grandest abbeys in Europe. Join Blue Badge Guide Nick Smith as he brings the stories of this intriguing ruin to life. Explore the ancient mill that once powered the stone masons’ workshop and the sawmill – it was even used for generating electricity.

**FOUNTAINS ABBEY**

**2. NYMR RAILWAY**
All Aboard! Travel back in time on the North York Moors Heritage Railway. Reopened by enthusiasts in 1973, the 18 mile route carries more passengers than any other UK heritage line, with trains running every hour in summer. Chuff your way through the countryside of the North York Moors in vintage carriages pulled by mighty steam engines. Blue Badge Guide Sarah Cowling suggests a stop off en route to visit the charming village of Goathland, familiar to Muggles and maa as Hogsmeade in the *Harry Potter* films.

**NYMR RAILWAY**

**3. STAITHES**
With its higgledy-piggledy cottages and winding streets, the old fishing village of Staithes has an air of a place lost in time. It is a stunning location for photographers, artists and art lovers. Blue Badge Guide Tim Barber loves bringing families here for fossil hunting, crabbing and exploring rock pools.

**STAITHES**

**4. CASTLE HOWARD**
One of England’s greatest stately homes, it has been home to the Howard family for the last three hundred years. The house shot to international fame as the main location in the TV series *Brideshead Revisited*. Blue Badge Guide Kirsty Wardle suggests a stop off en route to visit the charming village of Goathland, familiar to Muggles and man as Hogsmeade in the *Harry Potter* films.

**CASTLE HOWARD**

**5. YORK MINSTER**
The Minster is the highlight of any visit to York. Taking four centuries to build, it is one of the greatest Gothic churches in Europe, housing some of the finest medieval stained glass in the world. Visit with Blue Badge Guide David Holt, who will show you secrets of the undercroft and remains of a Roman fort, before taking you up the steps of the central tower for panoramic views of York.

**YORK MINSTER**

**6. YORKSHIRE SCULPTURE PARK**
Set in beautiful countryside, it is home to the largest open-air collection of bronze sculptures in the world. Blue Badge Guide Michele Thompson always shows visitors Antony Gormley’s looming treetop bodycast *One & Other*. She particularly recommends this year’s special exhibition, a UK first for American artist KAWS and his cartoon inspired works.

**YORKSHIRE SCULPTURE PARK**

**7. THE DEEP, HULL**
2017 will be Hull’s year, as it becomes the UK City of Culture. The Deep is the city’s spectacular award-winning aquarium with over 3,500 fish and underwater creatures, including sharks and rays, that takes visitors through four billion years of ocean history. Blue Badge Sarah Milne-Day is a big fan of the penguins and the slime exhibition, but always finishes her visits with the exciting lift ride.

**THE DEEP, HULL**

**8. AYSGARTH FALLS**
With three flights of spectacular waterfalls tumbling over limestone ledges, this is Blue Badge Guide Tess Pike’s favourite destination in the Yorkshire Dales. She describes it as an oasis of tranquillity, featuring a combination of riverside walks and a wheelchair and pushchair friendly woodland path – a perfect place to take visitors. All nicely rounded off with a visit to the tearoom for delicious fresh scones and traditional Yorkshire tea.

**AYSGARTH FALLS**

**9. BRONTË PARSONAGE MUSEUM, HAWORTH**
One of the great English literary shrines, the parsonage is at the heart of the Brontë story. There are activities for families and children, and the dressing-up box is a must for everyone. Blue Badge Guide Johnnie Briggs’ favourite area is the dining room, where the sisters met to discuss their writing. From 2016 until 2020, the parsonage is staging special bi-centenary events.

**BRONTË PARSONAGE MUSEUM, HAWORTH**

**10. ABBEYDALE INDUSTRIAL HAMLET**
Once the steel capital of the world, Sheffield’s metalworking story is told at Abbeydale. Join Blue Badge Guide Laura Rhodes as she uncovers the fascinating industrial history of this restored 18th century water-powered mill that once forged metal for the local agricultural industries. Find out about the early steel-makers and watch blacksmiths in the craft workshops.

**ABBEYDALE INDUSTRIAL HAMLET**

**From abbeys to aquatic centres, our Yorkshire guides reveal their favourite places to visit in ‘God’s own County’**
Tour de Force

Dawn Blee tells us about her favourite Kentish gardens

AROUND THE GARDEN OF ENGLAND

www.britainsbestguides.org
Up a bottleneck country road into a tiny picture postcard village near Canterbury is Dawn Blee’s favourite garden: “Chilham Castle is Kent’s best kept secret,” she says. “It’s a landscape painter’s dream, with a ruined fortress, topiary, terraces and a view through the trees to the village pub, church and square.

“It’s all very ‘English’, but there’s a story that Chilham was built by elephants. The owner made his fortune in the East India Company and shipped two beasts back to England to do the heavy lifting on the estate. Apparently they are buried among the parterres.”

Dawn is a green-fingered enthusiast. On moving to the Kent village of Weald she converted an old tennis court into a chicken run and filled her garden with hardy rhododendron and azalea: “We live on a greenstone ridge and the only things that grow really well here are stones.”

After qualifying as a South-East England Blue Badge Tourist Guide and winning the coveted Guide of the Year prize, Dawn started running garden tours. Where better to do this than in the county known as ‘garden of England’?

“It was Henry VIII who brought pleasure gardens to Kent,” she says. “In the 1530s the king stayed in hunting lodges in the local area, hoping to bump into Anne Boleyn. He set up house at Penshurst Place, where he ordered a garden to be built.

“Penshurst retains many features Henry would recognise: a knot garden, rose beds, shaded glades and secret rooms – perfect for courtly courting. The current owner, Lord De L’Isle, has extended the garden, replanting a patriotic union flag of red roses, blue lavender and white alyssum, and in summer an amazing maize maze.

“Hever Castle is just down the road from Penshurst. Once the Boleyn family home, during Anne’s time it had no great garden. But in 1903, William Waldorf Astor bought the castle. The American wanted somewhere to keep his collection of classical statues, so he built lakeside gardens filled with over a million pounds’ worth of plants – creating a little bit of Italy in the middle of the Weald.

“Knowle is another of Kent’s Tudor palaces. Its 1000-acre deer park is a story of changing fortunes. Three centuries ago the second Duke sold off all its trees to pay off his gambling debts. The woods were regrown, but in 1987 the ‘Great Storm’ devastated the trees for a second time. Undaunted, the present owners planted some 200,000 saplings that are slowly maturing into new woodland.

“Knowle will forever be associated with the writer and garden designer Vita Sackville-West. The young heiress had a passion for plants, but her family forbade her from entering the walled garden.

“Vita was denied her inheritance and Knowle passed to her male cousin. She eventually settled in Sissinghurst, where she and her husband created one of the most famous gardens in England.

“Sissinghurst is divided into a series of ‘garden rooms’, each with its own character. I am always struck by the way the plants are mixed with different shapes and forms. It all
“People are amazed that anybody would or could make a garden here. It’s terrible terrain for domestic plants and flowers”

Lullingstone Castle is a newcomer to Kent’s collection of castle gardens. It was inspired by Tom Hart Dyke’s kidnapping in the Panamanian jungle.
seems so natural, but we know that Vita would climb up the old castle tower to study the landscape and plan her garden in three dimensions.

“The white garden is Vita’s most famous creation. Its pearlescent flowers are outlined by blue leaves, in the evening it becomes a translucent paradise, sweet with scent.

“Vita wrote a gardening diary in the Observer newspaper, bringing her and Sissinghurst’s garden national acclaim. Her earthy, aristocratic style promoted one wit to describe her as: ‘Lady Chatterley above the waist, gamekeeper below’. Since her death the landscape has been preserved as a floral shrine to its creator – like Monet’s garden beyond the Kent coastline in Giverny.

“Lullingstone Castle is a newcomer to Kent’s collection of castle gardens. It was inspired by Tom Hart Dyke’s kidnapping in the Panamanian jungle. Held for nine months and threatened with death, he kept himself sane by designing a walled garden in the shape of a globe. On his release, he returned to his ancestral family home where he realised his project.

“Away from its castles and palaces, Kent has many fine domestic gardens. One of its most celebrated sits under the shadow of a nuclear power station on a windy pebble beach at Dungeness.

“Its creator was the film-maker and artist, Derek Jarman. In the 1990s he set up home in a wooden beach house called Prospect Cottage and started experimenting with ‘extreme gardening’. With no soil, no boundaries and no hedges, the plants growing among the shingle are shaped by the sea winds. Jarman added garden sculptures with the flotsam and jetsam that washed up on the beach.

“People are amazed that anybody would or could make a garden here. It’s terrible terrain for domestic plants and flowers. But it is testimony to the Kentish passion for planting that there are gardens wherever you go in the county.”

For a garden tour with Dawn Blee visit
www.southeasttourguides.co.uk

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DRESSING THE PART

Russell Nash takes us on a tour of London’s menswear district
Russell Nash is no stranger to dressing up. After training at the Sylvia Young theatre school – alma mater of several *EastEnders* cast members – he worked as an actor for two decades. Now a Blue Badge Guide, Russell needs to be noticed, so he has taken up the tradition of being a ‘modern gentleman’, and has created a bespoke tour to match his sartorial style.

“London’s menswear district covers about 20 roads either side of Piccadilly; at its heart is Jermyn Street, the only road in the world exclusively dedicated to men’s fashion,” Russell explains. It is the home of the made-to-measure shirt, most famously tailored at Turnbull and Asser, who make James Bond’s shirts for the *007* films.

“Watching over Jermyn Street is the statue of ‘Beau’ Brummell. The Regency trend-setter changed men’s clothing for ever. In the early 1800s Brummell rejected the foppish fashion for brocades and breeches and styled himself as a dandy. Wearing a simple dark jacket and trousers, he popularised the men’s suit.

“During the early 1900s, King Edward VII was considered the smartest man in Britain. As Prince of Wales, ‘Bertie’ believed it his duty to show off the best of British tailoring. A rather vain man, in his 30s he started losing his hair and so began sporting homburg hats. To accommodate his bulging waistline he wore plus fours and would leave the bottom button of his waistcoat undone – some people say he started this fashion.

“Edward’s grandson Edward VIII was regarded as ‘the best-dressed Englishman of the 20th century’. He liked clothes and they suited him. His informal fashions were much less ‘buttoned up’ than the rest of the royal family and his elegance was mimicked by Hollywood stars such as Fred Astaire and Cary Grant – soon the whole world was dressing like the king. When Edward died in 1972, the auction of his wardrobe was one of the fashion events of the era.

“Both king Edwards were customers of Mayfair’s street of suits, Savile Row. Bertie was the star client for the street’s original tailor, Henry Poole, who made his name by clothing the high society of Victorian Britain – from Dickens to Disraeli. Two centuries later, Henry Poole remains at the heart of ‘the row’, providing exclusively bespoke menswear tailoring from its reassuringly old-school, wood-panelled shop.

“By the 1960s, aristocrats’ sons were set against wearing ‘daddy’s clothes’. Savile Row was in trouble and one man saved it from extinction, Tommy Nutter. The Rock and Roll suitmaker dressed three of the Beatles on the iconic *Abbey Road* album front cover (not George, who wore denims). Elton John toured the world in Nutter suits and the
Jaggers wore the tailor’s clothes at their wedding.

“Nutter trained the first black tailor to open a shop on Savile Row, Ozwald Boateng. The son of Ghanaian immigrants, Boateng’s trademark style is bright colours – his mother dressed him up in a purple suit when he was a boy – and an Edwardian cut. Boateng has brought fashion brand marketing to Savile Row by encouraging actors and celebrities to wear his suits and has designed clothes for film and TV shows *The Matrix, Miami Vice* and *Tomorrow Never Dies.*

“The James Bond films have become a menswear shoot-out. American designer Tom Ford has paid for the rights to dress 007. But I am a purist, and much prefer the relaxed sartorial style of ‘M’ played by Ralph Fiennes, whose single-breasted suits are cut by Timothy Everest – another Tommy Nutter protégé.

“Richard James ruffled a few Savile Row collars when he opened on Savile Row in the 1990s – his background is in fashion, not tailoring. James pioneered the ‘new bespoke movement’ of suitmakers on ‘the row’, and is credited with starting the current men’s trend for skinny suits and tight-fit jackets.

“This year, Kathryn Sargent became the first woman to open a shop on Savile Row. Though there have been female apprentices on the street for a long time, traditionally the fittings have been done by the gentleman tailors who make the suits. It will be interesting to see how traditionalists of this bastion of masculinity react to change.”

So does Russell shop on Savile Row? “Ten years ago I treated myself to a made-to-measure herringbone jacket from Gieves and Hawkes. It’s expensive, but worth every penny. You can pay nearly as much for an off-the-peg designer suit, which has no individuality.

“Dressing well is cool again. Look at all the big name rappers, at Eric Clapton, or Dave Vanian from The Damned. They are rockers in three-piece suits, Beau Brummels with tattoos. The first album I ever bought was by Adam Ant, the original Dandy Highwayman. Now Dandyism is back in fashion. We should celebrate it.”
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