



ENGLISH HERITAGE

## Report for the Stanley Smith (UK) Horticultural Trust

### Marble Hill Revived – First Phase of Tree Planting



In 2019 English Heritage began a phased landscape restoration project at Marble Hill, to revive the historic landscape and improve the biodiversity of the park. During the winter of 2019 through to the summer of 2020 we set out to plant thicket and hedges, cultivate the northern woodland quarters, create tree avenues, and reseed the western meadows. By June 2020 we had planted 4,522 plants and 113 trees.

The tree avenues and woodland trees were planted thanks to the support of the Stanley Smith (UK) Horticultural Trust.

#### Newly Planted Trees

This year at Marble Hill Park we have planted tree avenues, which lead from Marble Hill House down to the river Thames. These avenues frame the view from the House as they would have done for the original owner, Henrietta Howard, in the 18th century.

The avenues comprise:

- 12 Indian Chestnuts (*Aesculus indica*)
- 14 Black Poplars (*Populus nigra* 'Betulifolia')
- 27 White Poplars (*Populus alba*)

Visitors are already appreciating the shade cast by these beautiful trees, which will be increasingly important in future hot summers. The trees will also provide important food sources and habitats for the park wildlife.



*'Snowy' – a White Poplar, which was planted with the help of local children*



*Northern woodland quarter after months of cultivation activity by staff and volunteers.*

Meanwhile, 36 Elms were planted in the woodland areas and around the edges of the park. Elms would have historically been the dominant trees in these areas until the introduction of Dutch Elm disease to the UK, however these Elms are a disease resistant variety. They are now thriving and are watered every week.

### **The Wider Landscape Works**

Our landscape contractors began ground clearance in the woodland quarters of the historic garden in autumn 2019 and continued until Christmas. The woodland quarters were then cleared of ivy and snowberry by hand thanks to our volunteers working three days a week during the whole of January and February 2020.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, our volunteers could not take part in the spring planting, and there were limited staff on site in accordance with government guidelines. During this time, Marble Hill's head gardener single-handedly planted a wide array of ferns and foliage, berry bushes and hedgerow plants, creating a rich understorey in the woodland quarters, which will feed birds and insects.

The understorey now features a host of heritage plants to represent those that Henrietta Howard herself might have seen within her grounds, including *Rosa Arvensis*, *Phillyrea* and *Genista Tinctoria*.

While the tree avenues were being planted, we also planted hedging and mixed thicket to improve wildlife habitats around the eastern park boundary, and created a path (pictured right) to increase access to the area.



Most recently, the gardening team at Marble Hill House received freshly-cut hay, full of flowering plants and delicate grasses, from the National Trust's Ham House across the Thames. The wildlife and nature-rich meadows at Ham House are now very rare and we hope that abundant grassland will now also flourish at Marble Hill.

The site gardeners, supported by volunteers, spread the 'green hay' in the south west corner of the park (picture below). To raise local awareness of the importance of wildflower meadows and the need to increase biodiversity, we gave away bags of wildflower seed and held three different sessions with nursery and school children.

### **Engaging the Community**

This project has created volunteering, trainee and job opportunities. In September 2019 we appointed both a horticulture trainee and a head gardener, who soon began recruiting volunteers. 21 fantastic volunteers took part in cultivating the woodland quarters and all have been enthusiastic and passionate about the project.

While the volunteers could not take part in planting activities during lockdown, they started a WhatsApp group to keep in regular contact discussing the progress of the gardens. Moreover, the volunteers have been involved in researching the plants they are working with and a weekly article is being published in a local newspaper (Twickenham Tribune) using their written pieces.

The local park users in general are very happy and positive about the gardens and are excited about being able to use them in future.



English Heritage would like to thank the trustees of the Stanley Smith (UK) Horticultural Trust once again for their kind donation towards the tree planting at Marble Hill, which will ensure the success of the overall project.