



Visit to Hampstead Marshall



Talk at Purley Hall



Englefield 10 year Celebration

### **BEN VILJOEN, BGT FOUNDER AND TRUSTEE 2008 – 2016**

It is great sadness that I write to tell you that Ben Viljoen died at his home on 1 August after a short illness. Ben was one of three founders of the Berkshire Gardens Trust in 2008, along with Fiona Hope and Christina Hill Williams. As a Trustee, Ben worked tirelessly for BGT during the early years, helping to set up our constitution at the time, our finances, and our programme of events. His main interest lay in the landscape gardens of the 18th century and he studied garden design under Richard Bisgrove (a member) and Tony Kendle at Reading University. He made a significant contribution to the national Humphrey Repton celebrations and published his 'Purley Red Book' in 2018. Apart from his work on Purley Hall, he also researched Purley Park, the other stately house in Purley, and he wrote a book on Humphrey Repton's visit to this property.

Key other projects of his were the setting up of a Gazetteer of historic parks and gardens across Berkshire which included both Registered sites, local non designated sites and potentially interesting gardens. The Gazetteer has been a very useful starting point for research and planning consultations, work on which continues apace. Ben was also the lead on our very successful 3 days of events on Capability Brown at Caversham Park in 2016 for the Tercentenary of Brown's birth.

Although Ben resigned as a Trustee in 2016 but continued to take a keen interest in BGT, delivering fascinating well researched talks and arranging visits to gardens. He also regularly attended our lectures and events and was a stalwart in putting out the tables and chairs at Purley Hall for us.

This last year, he said very little about being unwell although I know he had trouble with his eyes. Our thoughts are with Dorothy his wife and his family. He will be greatly missed.

Bettina Kirkham, Chair

Berkshire Gardens Trust August 2024