

## TOUR OF NORFOLK GARDENS

Cumnor Gardening Club visited Norfolk in June 2026. We were based at Knights Hill Hotel near King's Lynn, W Norfolk, a comfortable and spacious modern hotel set within landscaped gardens. Our tour manager and guide was UK garden expert, David Hurrion, who had led our tour of Herefordshire in 2022. Once again, he proved highly knowledgeable, not only of each garden and its plants, but also of Norfolk, having been brought up there. The weather was far more mixed on this tour than in previous years, but it did not detract from our enjoyment of the nine gardens.

**Elton Hall and Gardens.** This was an impressive historic country house set within beautifully maintained parkland and formal gardens, dating back to the 15th century with a blend of architectural styles from several centuries. We saw richly furnished interiors featuring collections of fine art, antique furniture, tapestries, and historic books, The gardens were a real highlight, with formal terraces, rose gardens and herbaceous borders.

<https://eltonhall.com/>

**Holkham Hall** is near the North Norfolk coast and is one of England's finest Palladian houses, set within a vast historic estate of gardens, parkland, lakes, and woodland. Built in the 18th century for the Coke family, it is renowned for its grand architecture, inspired by classical Roman design, and richly decorated state rooms. Sadly, the Hall itself was closed, so we concentrated on the 6-acre walled garden. This historic area was originally laid out by Samuel Wyatt during the late 1700s. Within its walls we visited some spectacular Georgian and Victorian greenhouses and vineries, a colourful, formal ornamental garden, an established vineyard, a working kitchen garden, an exotic garden with its large lawn, and a cutting garden for the Hall.

<https://www.holkham.co.uk/>

**Sandringham House** has been one of the Royal Family's best-known private residences since the 19th century. Purchased in 1862 for the future Edward VII, the estate has remained a private home of the monarchy for generations and is particularly associated with their Christmas celebrations, and members were able to tour the main reception rooms. The house is set within extensive landscaped gardens and a large country estate. We were particularly interested to see the changes King Charles has made in the gardens, including for instance introducing magnolia and cornus groves, more drought resistant plants, and building new topiary, rockery, royal legacy, sundial and maze gardens. Some members were able to visit the museum of historic royal vehicles and memorabilia.

<https://sandringhamestate.co.uk/>

**Mannington Hall** is hidden away in the Norfolk countryside near Reepham. It is a beautifully preserved 15<sup>th</sup> century moated manor house, but we were unable to visit as it was undergoing major repairs. However, after some welcome refreshments, the rain cleared and we were able to spend lots of time in the stunning gardens.

The Walled Garden and surrounding formal areas are some of the more recent additions at Mannington. Built in the early 20th century to provide produce for the Hall, the Walled Garden was later redesigned in the 1980s as a heritage rose garden, laid out in a series of compartments enclosed by hedges and trellising.

Although many of the original rose varieties have been lost, those that remained provided a superb display of flowers and fragrance. The planting has also been enriched with a wide range of perennial plants, extending the flowering season, and supporting a greater diversity of pollinator-friendly plants. At the edges of the formal planting, the structure softens to allow the natural landscape to take over. Members found the gardens very peaceful and that they were a highlight of the tour.

<https://mannington.co.uk/>

**East Ruston Old Vicarage Garden.** This is a beautiful, 32-acre modern garden containing many rooms with herbaceous borders, gravel gardens, sub-tropical gardens, and a box parterre. Members found there were almost too many features to explore, especially as some of the time found us sheltering from the rain. Featuring a Dutch Garden, King's Walk, Sunk Garden, Exotic Garden, Woodland Garden and Mediterranean Garden amongst many others, there was much to choose from. Those who had visited this garden previously remarked on how the hedges had grown to change the character of the garden.

<https://eastrustonoldvicarage.co.uk/>

**Bressingham Hall Gardens** are a renowned horticultural attraction on the Norfolk-Suffolk border, that combines extensive gardens with a heritage collection. Created by celebrated plantsman Alan Bloom, the gardens are designed to showcase seasonal planting, with a series of garden areas, including herbaceous island beds of hardy perennials in the Dell Garden, trees, shrubs, conifers, grasses and perennials in the Foggy Bottom garden, woodland walks, and other themed planting scheme. Some members also visited the historic Bressingham Steam Museum on an adjacent site.

<https://www.thebressinghamgardens.com/thegardens/>

**Holme Hale Hall Gardens**, near Swaffham, is a charming privately-owned garden set around a historic country house, offering a peaceful and carefully maintained countryside retreat. The gardens were laid out in a traditional English style by renowned designer Arne Maynard, and featured herbaceous borders, rose beds, and well-kept lawns, with mature trees to provide structure and shade throughout the grounds. The wider estate is a classic Norfolk country property, with views across surrounding farmland. Although the Club visited the garden in the rain, it was still possible to appreciate its character and charm. Fortunately, the owners laid on an excellent tea in a garden room, where we were able to dry off.

<https://ngs.org.uk/gardens/holme-hale-hall-ip2/>

**Oxburgh Hall**, also near Swaffham, is a very striking and atmospheric 15th-century moated manor house set within peaceful gardens and parkland. Built in 1482 for the Bedingfelds, the hall has stayed with the same family ever since. Its distinctive red-brick exterior, battlements and moat, reflect its medieval origins, while later alterations have shaped it into a comfortable country residence. Members enjoyed visiting the Hall itself as well as wandering through the surrounding gardens, including a walled kitchen garden, and into the wider estate.

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/norfolk/oxburgh-estate/>

**Fullers Mill** water garden was created and developed by Bernard Tickner, and is known for its naturalistic planting, combining rare and unusual plants with water features, shaded

glades, and lovely seasonal displays. We enjoyed exploring the winding paths that led through distinct garden areas, including pond, shaded woodland, waterside terraces, and open clearings filled with colour and texture. The garden was designed to blend into its natural surroundings, and we found it a peaceful and immersive experience.

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/gardendetails/fullers-mill-garden>