



GOOD NEWS!! SAVE OF THE CENTURY SHEERNESS ROYAL DOCKYARD RESCUED

This press release was issued on 26th March.

"The Spitalfields Historic Buildings Trust has completed the heroic rescue of one of the most important and endangered historic sites in the South East of England.



Regency Terrace, Sheerness Docks

The Trust, acting as the nominee for a group of investors, and with the help of a loan from the Architectural Heritage Fund, has successfully sealed the £1.85m purchase of a complete 1820s naval officers' residential quarter at Sheerness Dockyard. The site, on the Isle of Sheppey, Kent, contains six Grade II* and four Grade II buildings on four acres of land. It has been empty (save for one protected tenant) and on English Heritage's national at risk register for the best part of a decade. In 2009 the entire dockyard was added to the World Monuments Fund's international Watch List of endangered historic sites.

In recent years the site has been under the shadow of redevelopment proposals involving the building of apartment blocks on the historic landscape. This application was finally refused at planning last year after a strong campaign involving local people, the national amenity societies

and SAVE. Following this decision, the Trust entered into negotiations with the owner to acquire the site.

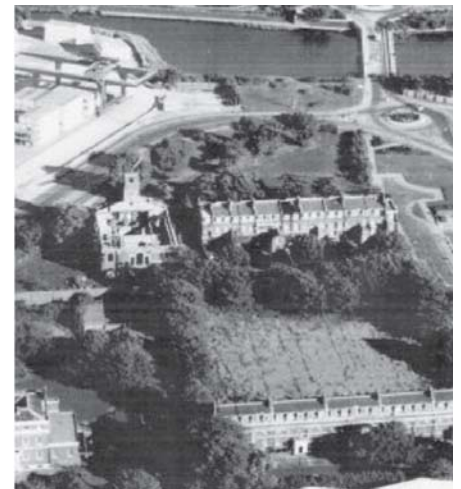
The investors - who have taken on seven of the ten available properties - will restore them as single homes. The buildings include Regency Terrace (a row of five elegant houses) and the magnificent Dockyard House, built for the Chief Superintendent of the yard and later converted to offices. The three remaining properties will be held by the Trust, to be passed on to suitable purchasers. The Trust will be responsible for submitting the necessary planning applications, will oversee the rehabilitation of the site, and will carry out the repair work to the envelope of Regency Terrace.

The Royal Naval Dockyard at Sheerness was planned and engineered by John Rennie and constructed by successive surveyors Edward Holl and George Ledwell-Taylor.

It was Ledwell-Taylor who (during the 1820s and 30s) was responsible for a majority of the residential buildings - all of which were built to exacting standards, with restrained Grecian detailing. When built, Sheerness was arguably the most advanced naval installation in the world. The dockyard closed in 1960 and since then has operated as a commercial port.

William Palin, Secretary of SAVE, says 'This is one of the greatest heritage rescues of recent years, and proof that viable conservation solutions can be found for even the most difficult historic sites. Against all the odds, the Spitalfields Trust has managed to assemble, within its expert embrace, a group of sympathetic and passionate investors who, together, will return

this magnificent site to its former glory. SAVE is pleased to have had a hand in this rescue and wishes the Trust well with this exciting project.'



Birdseye view of the historic dockyard

The Spitalfields Trust was founded in 1977 to prevent the destruction of Georgian Spitalfields in London. Since then it has taken on and repaired over 60 buildings, including a medieval manor house in Wales and Shurland Hall, a Tudor palace on the Isle of Sheppey.

For more information about the Spitalfields Trust and the remaining Sheerness properties contact: Oliver Leigh-Wood or Tim Whittaker (administrators) on 020 7247 0971."

Kent Gardens Trust made representations to the planning authority when the development proposals were considered last year. We were particularly concerned about the gardens behind Regency Terrace which the old maps show to have had quite elaborate designs. We hope that perhaps the gardens can be recreated in the Regency style as part of the restoration programme.

Elizabeth Cairns

WAR MEMORIALS TRUST

War Memorials Trust works to protect and conserve war memorials across the UK. The charity provides advisory and advocacy services and its website has a wealth of information on war memorial issues. It is seeking to raise awareness, as we approach the centenary of World War I, of our war memorials to ensure the nation takes this opportunity to ensure they are being appropriately conserved to last another 100 years.

Many war memorials are found in gardens, or have associated landscaped surrounds. You may notice them when visiting gardens or travelling around the county. War Memorial Trust encourages everyone to keep an eye on war memorials. They are such a common part of our landscape, with 100,000 scattered across the country, they can be lost with people assuming they are being cared for when in fact no one is taking responsibility. If you have any concerns about war memorials you come across please let us know.

The Trust administers grants which can assist with the repair and conservation of war memorials. An 'Expression of interest' form should be completed by anyone seeking help. Grants are offered at 50% of eligible costs and, depending on the scheme through which works are eligible, can be up to £20,000.

War memorial conservation projects have been supported through our grant schemes across Kent. The Meenfield war memorial cross, a landscape feature in Shoreham, has been carved into the chalk hillside of the Darent Valley in the North Downs. In 2005 War Memorials Trust gave £250 towards conservation of the war memorial.



Ditton War Memorial

Photo Ditton Parish Council

The inscription on the stone tablet at the head of the cross reads: "To the great creator in gratitude for all those men of Shoreham who lost their lives in the 1914-1918 war and in 1939-1945".

The Ditton war memorial is located on the junction of the A20 and New Road. The Grade II listed structure is composed of a Bath stone calvary which is within a coursed Kentish rag stone canopied structure with railings at the entrance to the memorial.

The World War I and World War II inscriptions are detailed in lead lettering on stone plaques at the base of the monument. The community has also chosen to enhance the landscape around the war memorial with planting. In 2010 War Memorials Trust gave a grant of £724 towards conservation works to the memorial. These works included re-pointing of the stone

and cleaning by hand with water and non-metallic brushes. Loose lead letters were beaten back into place and any missing letters were replaced. Further examples of grants awarded in Kent can be found on our website www.warmemorials.org/search-grants.

War Memorials Trust is an independent registered charity which relies upon voluntary income and support to undertake its work. It has members across the country many of whom take on a more active role as Regional Volunteers, acting as the Trust's 'eyes and ears' in their area.

For further information contact War Memorials Trust on 03001230764, info@warmemorials.org or www.warmemorials.org

Frances Moreton, Director



Kent Gardens Trust

Chiddingstone Castle – Volunteer Training Day

It was a typically cold, wet and grey morning in mid-February when members of the Sevenoaks volunteer research group gathered together at Chiddingstone Castle to begin a training day. In spite of the weather, we were all greeted warmly by the organizer on behalf of Chiddingstone Castle, Ali Ditzel, the chairman of the Kent Gardens Trust, Elizabeth Cairns, and the group's chairman, Hugh Vaux.

So far 22 gardens in the town of Sevenoaks, and its surrounding area, have been identified for their historical importance, and are now being reviewed under the aegis of the Kent Gardens Trust, in association with English Heritage and Sevenoaks District Council. This is the second project of its kind. The first pilot project, conducted in the borough of Tunbridge Wells, largely by volunteers, has proved to be very successful, resulting in reviews that are now included in the revised list of the Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens.

The main purpose of the day was to carry out a site survey (aided by archival maps) of what is now the 12 hectare designed landscape that surrounds the castle. After a welcome cup of coffee, we spent the morning (with the help and guidance of our project consultant, Virginia Hinze) studying the vagaries of maps and

plans spanning several centuries. Clearly, this was a necessary precursor to the day's proceedings, as sound preparatory research of such material (if available) is essential when tracing a garden's historical development.

By the end of the day, we were required to produce a written review of the garden that was both accurate and consistent in its descriptive style, so it was also important to conform to the specific requirements of an English Heritage format. Notes on precise locations with distances and compass point directions, site hectarage, boundary features, topography, and details of entrances and approaches, supported by archival evidence, were all necessary prerequisites to complete the survey. Given a limited time scale (under two hours) and wholly inclement weather, it was to become a good test of the group's abilities to survey accurately the whole garden in order to promote good practice.

Unlike a number of the Sevenoaks gardens under review, the general history of Chiddingstone Castle is well documented. Any basic guide book would tell the reader that it was once the site of an early Tudor manor house, and since 1500, home to the affluent Streatfeild family. In 1680, the manor was demolished by Henry Streatfeild, and replaced with a handsome, red-brick Carolean mansion. By the early 19th century, considerable additions

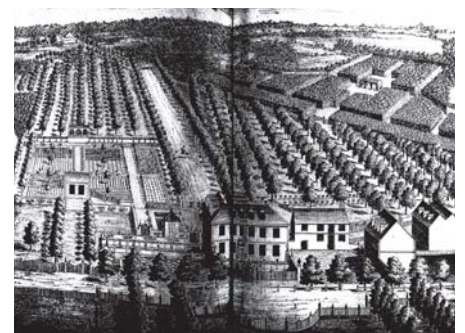
were made to the original building by the architect William Atkinson. He was responsible for the building of the Gothic-style crenellated towers and battlements that we see today, and probably designed the garden buildings such as the gazebo, well-house and orangery, linked by the limestone wall that stretches away southwards from the east side of the main building.

Our detailed studies, however, allowed us to go beyond the guide book approach.



KGT Volunteers braving the weather at Chiddingstone

Following our survey, and an enjoyable buffet lunch, we gathered together in the boardroom to discuss our findings. We agreed that Chiddingstone Castle lies in the undulating river valley of the lower greensand ridge with northerly views towards the Downs. We noted that the garden today is largely made up of parkland and woodland areas surrounding a c.1 hectare lake, and has altered significantly, as evidence shows by the first documented survey of 1702 and a detailed Badeslade engraving of 1719.



Thomas Badeslade engraving from John Harris History of Kent 1719



Chiddingstone Castle

Kent Gardens Trust

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Even allowing for possible embellishments, the latter designed 'birds-eye view' depicts expansive tree-lined avenues and formal gardens in intricate detail; arguably a small-scale interpretation of the French formal style that became popular in England at the time. By 1763, as shown on two maps by Thomas Goodhugh, the size of the estate increased to cover 50 hectares of land.



Volunteers working on their reports

From archival Ordnance Survey maps, we concluded that, by the middle of the 19th century, the main road had been diverted to the north, and that two avenues or ridings, had been created to the eastern boundaries, probably intended for travel on horseback or by horse-drawn vehicle into the park: one from the village high street (still there today but with the addition of 17th century wrought iron gates), the other from the outer reaches of the village. It soon became clear that the once formal gardens of the early C18 had been cleared away, to be replaced by what can only be described as a return to the rural idylls of the Picturesque period, so favoured by its 18th century pioneer, Lancelot 'Capability' Brown (1715-83) and his later followers, and is still in evidence today. Important elements of this period can be found, for example, in the remnants of the retaining walls and ditches of a double ha-ha that would have disguised the boundaries between the house and the parkland beyond, and the mature hornbeam and beech woodland found close to the lake. Also in evidence here, are two cave-like entrances enveloped



The Lake at Chiddingstone

by rocks and the large roots of a storm-damaged beech tree; close by, stands a mysterious hollow tree-stump, complete with pointed arch, all of which adds to a sense of Gothic fantasy. Although financial considerations may have played a part in all these developments, they are more likely to reflect the changing schools of thought and aspirations of successive owners through the centuries.

There is little doubt that the survey proved to be both enlightening and thought provoking, borne out particularly during the afternoon's discussions. Historical accuracy is often dependent upon visual evidence. We all recognized that it was equally important to describe accurately the construction of a garden wall, for example, as it was to differentiate between a gazebo and a pavilion, or to distinguish a wood from a wilderness. The latter, nuanced distinction, we found, can be particularly problematic as the formal, designed wildernesses of the 18th century Chiddingstone garden have now made way for more naturalistic woods of mixed species, yet they can still be attributed with the same name.

Clearly, garden history can be a fascinating subject encompassing a wide-range of disciplines. All volunteers bring a variety of experience and knowledge to the task, with various backgrounds in art history, horticulture, modern and social history, to name but a few. We can learn much from each other; and so it proved on the day. Going beyond the simple, guide-book approach can be both very enlightening and hugely enjoyable. As a result of the day at Chiddingstone Castle, the Sevenoaks research project is now much better placed to meet its highly important objectives.

Beverley and Paul Howarth



Chiddingstone Castle is owned by a charitable trust and houses Denys Bower's remarkable collection of Japanese armour and laquer and Buddhist and Egyptian works of art. The castle is open from April to October on Sunday – Wednesday. The delightful gardens are open all year. KGT volunteers can recommend the food!

GARDEN PARTY

With this Newsletter comes an invitation to a Garden Party on **Wednesday 29th June at 6 p.m.**

We are so very grateful to Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth McAlpine for so kindly allowing us to use their beautiful garden and so generously sponsoring the event by providing a marquee and much, much more. So rain or shine we shall be able to enjoy wine and canapés and the company of other garden lovers. I do hope that as many of you as possible will come and bring your friends and family.

The garden at the Priory is very special. The attractive tile hung house itself is very old, part dating from the C16, and it has been added to in Georgian and Victorian times. The McAlpines moved there in 1957 and although there were some interesting trees and rhododendrons the present garden is almost entirely their creation. The garden lies in a small valley and brilliant use is made of the different levels. Winding paths along the upper slopes give glimpses of the more formal parts of the garden below. Two garden houses one made of wood and the other formed from clipped yew provide a light-hearted touch. A formal lawn leads to immaculately clipped yew hedges crowned with topiary behind which lie formal compartments with seasonal plantings. A large walled garden still fulfils its traditional use as a kitchen and picking garden.

This will be a very special evening not to be missed.

Elizabeth Cairns



AGAPANTHUS 'HOLE PARK BLUE'

Visitors to Hole Park in Rolvenden may have noticed a bold, late flowering and particularly deep blue agapanthus in the garden. This plant has recently been identified as a form which is unique to Hole Park where it has been grown for about 100 years. A picture belonging to the present owner, Edward Barham, shows his great uncle standing beside the agapanthus holding a toy car which dates back to 1912. Plant Heritage (formerly known as the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens – NCCPG) has

carried out research into the plant which suggests that it may indeed be unique. It has been named 'Hole Park Blue' and is being propagated for sale later this year.

The gardens at Hole Park were designed and planted by Col. Arthur Barham who bought the property in 1911 and were developed by his grandson David Barham who took over the estate in 1959. It is now owned by his son, Edward, who continues to add to and enhance the plantings.

Kent Gardens Trust will be visiting Hole Park on 23rd May when Dr. Barbara Simms will talk about the prevailing fashions in garden design in the early 20th century when Hole Park was laid out and Edward Barham will tell us about the history of the garden. We shall also be able to see the extensive archives which illustrate the creation and development of the garden.



Hole Park with agapanthus

Kent Gardens Trust

LANDSCAPES AT RISK

protecting the historic parks and gardens of Kent

In November Charlotte McLean, the South East Regional Landscape Officer at English Heritage gave an extremely interesting and stimulating talk for our annual autumn event. The system of listing gardens, private and public parks, burial grounds and public squares began in the 1980s and is still evolving. The reason behind the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest is to raise public awareness of the value of these landscapes which reflect the social and cultural history of this country and encourage owners to protect their special character.



Somerhill

Parks and gardens are particularly vulnerable to neglect and inappropriate management because they can deteriorate so quickly and of course there is constant pressure for development particularly in the south east. Listing does not provide any statutory protection though there is a presumption in favour of conservation of a registered site. Owners cannot be forced to preserve the historic characteristics of their garden but local authorities are required to consult English Heritage on proposals affecting any Grade I or II* listed site and have regard to their views. The Garden History Society must also be consulted but in practice is only able to comment on Grade I and II* sites.

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This leaves Grade II sites particularly vulnerable and perhaps Kent Gardens Trust may be able to help by providing advice to local authorities when a planning application to change a site is received.

The Landscape at Risk strategy for Parks and Gardens, (part of English Heritage's wider work on Heritage at Risk which includes buildings, conservation areas, ancient monuments, battlefields and shipwrecks) has been going now for two years and seeks to identify listed parks and gardens which are at risk, publicise their plight and try to find solutions. Heritage at Risk 2010 reports on the current situation and it makes depressing reading. The economic downturn is certain to make matters worse. A shocking number of listed historic parks and gardens are identified by English Heritage as being at risk and even Grade I and II* sites are included. 6.2% of all listed sites are on the At Risk Register and 6.5 listed sites in the south east. The risk indicators are poor condition, vulnerability to further damage (sites in multiple ownership are particularly vulnerable) and poor management or lack of management.

A quarter of sites on the At Risk Register are in public ownership and one third are schools. This last statistic

is not altogether surprising as a large house with ample grounds makes a very suitable place for a school and the value of the historic landscape can easily be overlooked in the need to provide classrooms, sports halls and living accommodation.



Combe Bank

One example of this in Kent is Combe Bank in Brasted where the Grade II* garden and pleasure grounds dating from the 1720s have been badly affected from the estate being split up, the M25 motorway and damage from the 1987 storm. The site is considered to be highly vulnerable, suffering from extensive significant problems and its condition declining. A conservation driven management plan is a priority if the site is to be preserved.

Also on the At Risk Register are the picturesque gardens at Somerhill designed by William Sawrey Gilpin where the site is divided between the school and several other private owners and badly needs a co-



Somerhill – a C19 view

ordinated management plan if it is to be protected. The Humphrey Repton park around the ruins of Bayham Abbey is also considered to be at risk, the divided ownership having severely compromised the important early C19 landscape.

English Heritage has very limited funds to help preserve these parks and gardens but tries to work with owners and managers of sites at risk to make them aware of the value of their sites and try to find solutions which are both practical and affordable.

Elizabeth Cairns

THE NATIONAL HERITAGE LIST FOR ENGLAND

On April 4th the new online database for heritage "assets" i.e. World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Protected Wreck Sites, Registered Parks and Gardens and Registered Battlefields was launched. The database includes around 400,000 records. Each entry will describe the heritage asset and will have a map showing its location. For the first time information on all these different elements of the historic environment is available simply and easily through the Heritage Gateway on the English Heritage website. www.heritagegateway.org.uk



2011 EVENTS REMINDER

Please apply for tickets on the enclosed form

Monday 23rd May

Hole Park – Origins and Influences

Saturday 25th June at 10.00 a.m.

Two remarkable gardens: White House Farm and Emmetts

Sunday 18th September 2.30 p.m.

Visit to Chart Cottage, Seal, Sevenoaks

Wednesday 19th October 7.00 p.m.

The Conservation and Management of Historic 20th century Flower Gardens



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