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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

