Kent Gardens Trust
Newsletter
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'CAPABILITY' BROWN TERCENTENARY FESTIVAL

Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, our most famous and influential landscape designer, was born in 1716 and plans are being formulated to celebrate the tercentenary in 2016.

A planning meeting was held in June attended by representatives of county gardens trusts, the National Trust, Visit Britain, the Garden History Society, English Heritage and many other interested organisations together with owners of Brown sites, landscape architects and garden historians. Kent Gardens Trust was represented by myself, Paul and Beverley Howarth and Geraldine Moon. We heard many ideas and proposals for celebrating Brown's life and work. A steering group has been set up to plan and co-ordinate the celebrations across the country and ensure that Brown receives the recognition he deserves.

A number of ideas were proposed including exhibitions showing plans and illustrations of his work, programmes on television and radio, a celebratory postage stamp, a special edition of the Journal of Garden History devoted to his work and the creation of a special lesson on Brown for school teachers to download. The possibility of a special Heritage Lottery Fund grant scheme to help restore Brown landscapes was also mooted.

A book on Brown and his work by John Phibbs will be published to coincide with the anniversary.

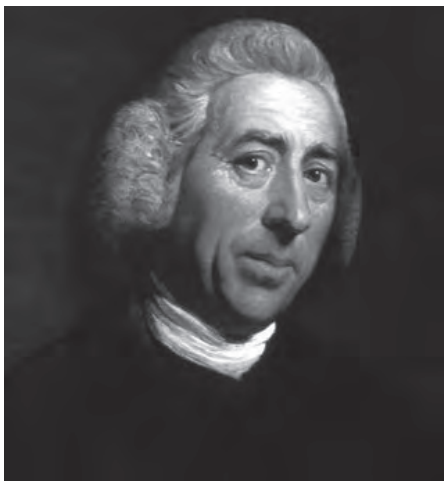
County Gardens Trusts will be encouraged to put on events and collaborate with owners of sites designed by Brown to promote wider knowledge of his work.

2016 sounds a long way off but time passes quickly and we should begin now to plan what we will do in Kent. Five sites designed by Brown have been identified in the county. These are Belmont, Chilham Castle, Leeds Abbey, Lee Priory and Valence. It would be exciting if we were able to organise celebratory events in each of these. Perhaps we could also undertake and publish some historical research into Brown's commissions in Kent.

I would like to invite all members of Kent Gardens Trust to make suggestions on how best to mark this very significant occasion. I hope that anyone who would like to be involved will contact me.

Elizabeth Cairns

Brown's lake at Blenheim Palace



Lancelot 'Capability' Brown

WELCOME

We are delighted to announce the appointment of two new trustees.

Beverley Howarth is a very active member of the research group. She was a civil servant working in the DHSS (now Department of Work & Pensions) before leaving to look after her family. She studied law and then gained a 1st class degree in History of Art at the University of Kent at Canterbury. Her interests include art, music, gardening and garden visiting.

Wendy Rogers is Senior Archaeological Officer at KCC responsible for providing heritage advice to planners, developers and members of the public. She is lead heritage adviser on countryside issues and provides specialist advice on local projects such as HLF and AONB projects. Wendy has been involved in the research group since it began in 2007.

The Trust is fortunate to have found two such well qualified people to be trustees.

Rallying Cry For County Garden Trusts

Until this year the GHS Conservation Officers supported county trusts in working to protect registered parks and gardens from unsuitable development. Cuts in funding mean that the county trusts will need to take on more responsibility for this work. ***Beverley Howarth*** *reports.*

In March this year, the Association of Garden Trusts (the umbrella organisation for county garden trusts), together with the Garden History Society (GHS), hosted a conservation workshop in London for a large delegation of county trust members from across the country.

The main message of the day was made by Jonathan Lovie, Principal Conservation Officer for the GHS. In future, English Heritage funding for the GHS was likely to be reduced considerably; this would not only result in changes to the handling of conservation casework by the GHS, but would also place greater responsibility on county garden trusts to deal with responses to planning applications for those historic parks and gardens potentially at risk in their region.

Although the GHS will remain a statutory consultee for planning applications, from now on it will deal only with registered sites considered to be of national importance.

The importance of a close collaboration between the GHS and county trusts is therefore, greater than ever, and the need to improve efficiency, foster good working relationships and spread good practice, vital.

It follows that the role of the county trust conservation officers and their committees is also vitally important. Fortunately in Kent, as with 25 other garden trusts throughout the country, we are not without members who fulfil that role admirably.

Revised planning guidance published in March, reduced from 1000 pages to a mere 50 pages, emphasises 12 core principles, and in so doing, seeks to balance the needs of conservationists and developers alike. Some conservationists (Sir Simon Jenkins of the National Trust, in particular) appear satisfied that the necessary safeguards against undesirable developments have been put in place, whilst developers seem confident that they have been given more freedom to realise their ambitions. The Government is at pains to stress that "there should be a powerful presumption in favour of sustainable development".

So the conundrum which, no doubt, will face conservationists and developers alike, is how to equate environmental, social and economic factors, including protection of our heritage, in the evaluation of "sustainable development".

It is the planning authorities, however, who will be the final arbiters of planning applications in most cases and they are likely to consider more seriously CGT planning responses that are of a good, reliable quality, citing clear evidence of the significance of an historic park or garden, based on accurately documented research. In Kent, we are better placed than most other counties. Standards set by the Trust in the Kent compendium of historic parks and gardens, and more recent projects largely carried out by a small team of hard-working volunteers, were singled out for praise at the Association of Garden Trusts meeting.

However, the number of reviews of historic sites carried out so far is only the tip of the ice-berg. Over the last three years, we have completed reviews of sites in Tunbridge Wells, and a similar project in the Sevenoaks district is nearing completion. But there are another 12 districts within the county to consider, so we can ill afford to become complacent. Funding these reviews continues to be a problem but with a renewed determination to do what we can to raise awareness of conservation issues, increase our membership and campaign to raise more funds, the additional responsibilities we now face should not be seen as a threat, but a genuine opportunity to ensure that we do everything possible to protect our heritage.

St Clere – one of the sites recently researched for Sevenoaks Council

GODINTON - Volunteers on a learning day out

In October last year nineteen volunteers and a few extras were entertained and educated on a tree identification study day.

The day began with Les Jones the Sevenoaks Council tree officer telling us about the legal side of tree preservation. We learnt that trees with public amenity value can be protected individually through a Tree Preservation Order (TPO), as a defined area or group or as woodland. For trees in a conservation area the Council have to be given 6 weeks' notice of proposed work, after which the work can be done. He emphasised the importance of contacting specialists, for example on the website www.trees.org.uk. For further information the Councils Tree Preservation Leaflet is free.

Jane Cordingley followed by describing the key items in tree identification throughout the seasons. She recommended a book that could achieve this: Tree Recognition a Pocket Manual by Ian Richardson and Rowena Gale.

Jane had collected twig, bud and leaf examples from the surrounding park and arranged an informal test at the end of the day.

The next speaker was Philip Masters who discussed the siting of trees in the landscape and how they could be used to assess the historical development of the landscape by the age and species of the tree combined with their dating. He emphasised that dating was not an exact science unless you went to the extreme of chopping a tree down! Most trees were grown for their timber but also aesthetic reasons and these also provide a clue to planting date.

Finally after an enjoyable Buffet meal we explored the Park with our speakers and Nick Sandford the Estate Manager where we saw and learnt to identify trees ready for the later test. My favourite was the Pin Oak. We also discovered why a pond shown on the early maps had disappeared.

On return to house for tea and checking out the twigs, buds and leaves – reasonably successfully and looking round the garden, we left at about 5.30. We were impressed with the speakers, the food and the house. I for one will be back to see the house and garden next summer.

Peter Cobley

A VISIT TO BOUGHTON MONCHALSEA PLACE

Some deer parks were established in Saxon times but it was the Normans who developed them for sport and as a source of meat. Successive kings ensured their exclusive use and introduced the forest laws, any infringement of which produced severe punishment. These laws became so restrictive that, although their modification and change formed a major part of Magna Carta, they continued to be a source of resentment for several centuries.

On 16th May, Dr Susan Pittman gave us a very interesting lecture at Boughton Monchelsea Place overlooking the park first mentioned in 1566 and which is still home to fallow deer. Susan completed a Ph.D on Elizabethan and Jacobean deer parks last year and this was exactly the right setting to learn more about their history in Kent.

Susan Pittman in the park at Boughton Monchalsea

Early deer parks were sited along the greensand ridge and later in the High Weald where many belonged to the Archbishops of Canterbury. Averaging 250-300 acres in size, these had to be fenced to keep the deer in and the poachers out. They were designed to allow both for the needs of the deer and the sport they provided.

The deer required open rough grassland, scrub in which to hide the fawns and large individual trees to shelter the adults. These trees were harvested for timber by pollarding, rather than felling, thus preventing the deer from reaching the new growth. This had the happy advantage of increasing the life of the trees, many of which are very old indeed.

Open areas were left for the 'chase' and bets were taken on individual hounds loosed in pursuit as to which

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would bring down the deer. There was often a mound which was useful for spectators and for picnics. More practical extras might include a stream which could be dammed to provide a lake and fishponds. Another area might be set aside as a warren for coneys for, at that time, rabbits were a luxury.

By the eighteenth century, fox hunting had become the popular sport and many deer parks had been turned over to agriculture. Others had been incorporated into the landscape surrounding the mansions which were built in place of the simpler park lodges. Gardens were created round these houses and the entire vista, further improved by planting avenues, was best viewed from the state rooms, placed on the first floor.

Following Susan's lecture, we were introduced to the deer park at Boughton Monchelsea Place by our hostess, Marice Kendrick. From the house which stands on the greensand ridge, there is a magnificent view southwards across the Weald. Directly below the house lies the 75 acre park, set in a bowl formed by the hillside, which is home to 105 deer. Susan led a party to the southern border, to where the 'great water' had been, passing an oak tree whose girth was six metres which may have been growing there when the park was first mentioned in 1566. The deer were very active but we were too early to see any fawns which are expected in a few weeks time.

Members at Boughton Monchalsea Place

After clambering back up the hillside we were rewarded with a cream tea to complete the afternoon. Our thanks to Susan Pittman for sharing her expertise and to Mr and Mrs Kendrick for welcoming us to Boughton Monchelsea Place.

Hugh Vaux

Visit to White House Farm

A group of members and guests visited White House Farm at Ivy Hatch near Sevenoaks on 12th April. We were escorted round the gardens by the owners, Maurice and Rosemary Foster, to view their extensive collection of magnolias and camellias, of which many fine specimens were still in full bloom despite a recent frost and hail storms.

Maurice (a member of the Royal Horticultural Society Woody Plants Committee and holder of the Victoria Medal of Honour) and Rosemary (a member of the Society's Camellia Judging Panel) generously imparted their extensive combined knowledge during the course of a fascinating afternoon in the garden and arboretum they have created over the course of 35 years.

Maurice Foster with members at White House Farm

The overall aim for the garden at White House Farm is to achieve year-round colour from trees and shrubs. The 'Five F's' rule - fruit, flower, fragrance, form and foliage - is a guiding principal: all plants must contribute some of these qualities. Trees providing less than optimum interest (such as old apple trees and hawthorn) are used to host rambling roses to great effect. The garden and arboretum contain a profusion of rare and unusual trees and shrubs, including specimens collected in Asia (predominantly China) by the owners and plantsmen friends.

On entering the garden we saw a lawned area edged by a collection of birch trees (their bark recently spruced up by the window cleaner!) Maurice pointed out the wide variations in *Betula utilis* across its geographic range, from the white bark of *Betula utilis* var. *jacquemontii* from Afghanistan to the dark brown peeling bark of varieties found in China.

Magnolias The gardens contain a

Magnolias at White House Farm

fascinating collection of this genus. A particularly striking yellow cultivar, *M*. 'Lois', bred at the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens, had attained a height of over 40 feet; this was backed by *M*. 'Elizabeth' with *M*. 'Yellow Lantern' nearby. Maurice favours the yellow form for its impact in the landscape. *M*. 'Star Wars' had survived the recent frost in good order but the star was *M*. 'Heaven Scent', recommended by Maurice for its frost hardiness. Maurice's number one choice was *M. dawsoniana* 'Clarke', a deep pink form with an upright growth habit.

He commented that magnolias are less exacting in their growth requirements than the textbooks say, citing an example of *M. campbellii* being planted in a former chalk pit where it is thriving.

Camellias Rosemary guided us round the camellia collection. Of particular note were a rose pink form of *C. japonica* 'Lady Vansittart', *C. x williamsii* 'Donation' another pink, flowering over a three month period, *C. x williamsii* 'Brigadoon', in flower in January, and *C. japonica* 'Emmett Barnes', white with good frost resistance. *C.* 'Royalty', a red form, was also recommended for its long flowering season.

After touring the garden, a smaller group proceeded to the arboretum. Planting of this began seventeen years ago, on the site of a former strawberry field, with collections of Sorbus, Betula, Acer, Carpinus and Quercus. The central grass avenue is planted with Prunus, which, despite being subjected to the ravages of bullfinches, were still flowering to pleasing effect. Choice specimens in the arboretum included *Salix babylonica* (from China), *Betula luminifera* with spectacular nine-inch long catkins and *Sorbus esserteauana*. Maurice pointed out a plant of *Potentilla* collected by him on an expedition to Mongolia, where it grew in such profusion that his party used it as mattresses under their sleeping bags.

The party returned to join the rest of the group to enjoy tea and cakes, bringing to an end a most enjoyable and informative visit.

Susan Roome

A DAY ON THE DOWNS

We were blessed with one of the few fine days in June when members visited two wonderful gardens in the downs near Wye. The day began at Downs Court, the home of Bay and Annie Green. A large garden set in the gentle folds of the downs around an attractive old house where we were treated to delicious cakes and coffee before we set off on our tour. Small formal enclosures near the house provide a sense of privacy. An armillary sphere is well placed in one and a water feature by David Harber provides sparkle and sound in another. Further from the house wide lawns give a spacious feel. Luxuriant plantings of shrubs, roses and trees provide colour and texture and every now and again there is a view through to the wider landscape. A magnificent spherical sculpture which caught and reflected the light provides a sensational focal point on the lawn.

A pergola lavishly planted with clematis and roses leads down to a formal garden around the swimming pool. We could hardly believe that Annie manages the garden with minimal help. It was immaculate and we were all impressed by the quality of the planting, the sensitive and naturalistic design and the overall strong sense of place.

The garden at Downs Court

Sir Charles Jessel at South Hill Farm

An excellent lunch was then eaten at the New Flying Horse at Wye which is highly recommended before we headed for South Hill Farm, where Sir Charles Jessel has gardened for fifty years. There was no garden when he arrived and over the years he has created a magnificent garden full of

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The Water Garden at South Hill Farm

interesting plants. A wide lawn opens out in front of the house and at the end a white painted gate has been carefully placed to provide a focus to the view. Narrow paths wind along each side through varied planting and roses climb strongly against the boundary wall. A ha-ha provides idyllic views over the neighbouring meadows and grazing cattle. Sir Charles' love of colour is clearly seen in his choice of plants with strong contrasts of purple and gold foliage in one border and blues and yellows in another. Rich and varied planting was a delight to see. Informal and winding paths gave way to a formal water garden where red water lilies were in full flower. The tour was made especially interesting by Sir Charles explaining how the garden had changed and developed over the years and now in its maturity it was a place of delight and interest for the amateur garden visitor and expert plantsman alike.

A fascinating and stimulating afternoon ended with superb cream teas. This was certainly a day to savour and remember.

Elizabeth Cairns

SYMMETRY AT SANDWICH

A warm summer's afternoon provided perfect weather for members to tour the lovely gardens of the Salutation, nestled by the quay in the heart of Sandwich. The house and garden, designed by Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944), with planting attributed to Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932), had suffered serious neglect until the present owners, Dominic and Stephanie Parker, took over in 2004. "When we came in through the gates, we felt as if we had stumbled upon Miss Havisham's house from Great Expectations," says Dominic. "Being completely surrounded by wall and fence and not overlooked at all, the gardens were a gem in suspended animation, heading for ruin". (Kent Life)

Fortunately, the house was rescued from ruin, and the gardens restored to their former glory, thanks in no small part to the creativity and extensive horticultural knowledge of the head-gardener, Steve Edney, who was our guide for the afternoon.

Steve Edney in the White Garden

Steve began the tour with a brief history of the main Grade I listed house. Designed by Lutyens in the Queen Anne style between 1911-12 for Henry Farrer (the first of three bachelor sons of an eminent solicitor, Sir William Farrer), it is a testament to Lutyens' remarkable architectural skills in building an early 20th century house that replicates so convincingly classical architecture belonging to an altogether different era.

Symmetry was the key theme of the day, and the symmetry of the house is clearly reflected in the 3.5 acre Grade II listed garden. There are walls of old stone, flint and brick, long borders and clipped yew hedges, all echoing the strong architectural lines of the house and softened only by the profusion of flowers so favoured by Jekyll.

Jekyll's style is very much apparent in the Long Border, reflecting her famous long border at Munstead, where the concentration is on flowers rather than foliage. Signature plants, such as verbascum, bergenia and cosmos, are included in 126 different plant groups, together with 1800

The Bowling Green Garden

bulbs, arranged in colour groups to complement each other. The tropical area of the border, however, provides a distinct contrast to Jekyll's style, where the hot reds and yellows of Mexican sunflowers and cannas jostle among the architectural exotics of melianthus, trachycarpus and the rare Wollemi Pine. These plants enjoy the micro-climate and the warm silt soil of the Long Border, sheltered by the wall and mature Holm oaks running along its length. The aim, as Steve explained, was to follow Jekyll's overall philosophy without slavishly re-creating her planting designs in every situation.

Jekyll, no doubt, would have approved of the practice of good husbandry, borne out by the quality of the plants grown throughout the garden, all of which are raised in the nursery by Steve and his team of three gardeners. It was clearly a matter of pride that the nursery provided between 7-15,000 plants a year, the majority used for planting in the garden and the remainder for commercial sale. Pests and diseases are treated organically without the use of insecticides.

In the Vegetable Garden, members learned that the companion planting of calendulas with brassicas, and nasturtiums with sweetcorn, also aids success. But only those vegetables which suited the vagaries of the British climate and soil conditions were planted. Gradually, the Vegetable Garden was being recreated to replicate the Edwardian original, with the help of old photographs found at London's Garden History Museum and the RHS Lindley Library.

A small area of woodland where some of the garden's 26 native tree species provided welcome shade from the heat of the afternoon. Walking through the woodland, there are tantalising glimpses of the exuberant planting in the main Italianate-style double borders, where distant vistas are exaggerated by the clever placing of three quarter size Lutyens-style benches. Beyond the woodland, the formality of Lutyens' avenue of Holm oaks, now forming closely clipped columns as he intended, provides a pleasant walk amongst a profusion of Munstead lavender and Constance Spry roses.

The small White Garden, tucked away in the south-western corner, pays homage to the White Garden at Sissinghurst: box parterres are filled to capacity with the whites and silvery-grey colours of cosmos, eryngium, Louis d'Arzens roses, and carpets of Pulmonaria 'Sissinghurst White'. Emerging from the White Garden into the Yellow Garden, Jekyll's distinctive style is again much in evidence, with vivid yellow robinias, and swathes of alstromeria and Rosa 'Mrs Oakley Fisher' providing a colourful late display.

The exuberant borders of the Yellow Garden, however, appear in strong contrast to the 100 feet long borders of the adjacent Bowling Green garden, newly planted to celebrate the Salutation's centenary. Here, the regimented beds of Bergenia 'Overture', Sedum 'Purple Emperor' and Panicum grasses only add to the formality already accentuated by the surrounding hedges of clipped yew, the impeccable greenery of the lawn, and the pure sculptural form of an armillary sphere, a focal point of the garden.

The garden continues to evolve and there are further plans for change and development. In the nearby Poplar Walk, where the trees have been pollarded, there are ambitions to allow the uppermost branches to grow and form arches rather like those of a cathedral.

Transforming the garden at the Salutation has not been an easy task, but the determination of the owners, the head gardener, and his team of assistants, demonstrates what can be achieved in a comparatively short space of time. Today, in 2012, the garden provides a delightful experience for any visitor: it is a fine contemporary interpretation of the famous Lutyens and Jekyll partnership.

Paul Howarth

Sculpture at the Salutation

MARGATE
and its forgotten history

Margate has recently become well known because of the Turner Gallery but it has a long and important history.

Margate was one of the earliest seaside resorts. It was relatively easy to reach by sea and became popular from1736 when sea-water bathing was advertised as a healthy recreation. It was originally patronised mainly by the aristocracy, until steamboats arrived in 1815 followed by the railway in 1846 when it also became a popular holiday destination for the lower classes and remained so until the 1970s. It has no less than 720 listed buildings ranging from the theatre which is the second oldest in the country to the Grade II* Roller Coaster at the Dreamland amusement park. It is well known that Turner frequently visited Margate but less so that Walter Sickert taught at the Art School and that T.S.Eliot wrote part of The Waste Land while staying in Margate.

Some garden squares and parks survive from the town's heyday which deserve to be better appreciated including Hawley Square (1780s) and Dalby Square in Cliftonville (1870s) both of which would benefit from more sensitive management. The fine gardens along the promenade have mostly disappeared but the Sunken Garden at Westbrook and a rock garden have survived. The 50 acre Dane Park (1896) with its listed fountain is clearly popular with local residents but only a small remnant of the Tivoli Park survives. The gardens at Shottendane, now a hospice, may be worth researching.

The mysterious Shell Grotto (Grade I), an extraordinary underground cave elaborately decorated with shells, was rediscovered in 1835 and has been a tourist attraction ever since. Its origins are obscure but it seems likely that it was part of a long lost baroque garden.

Margate also has two remarkable burial grounds. First the graveyard of a Methodist Church founded by Selina Countess of Huntingdon in the eighteenth century where now wildflowers are allowed to flourish among the tombstones and second the magnificent St John's Cemetery. This wonderfully well preserved and maintained cemetery first opened in 1856 and contains two listed chapels and several important memorials including one to the circus proprietor George Sanger.

A Your Heritage bid is being made to obtain funding for several projects designed to promote Margate's heritage. Although none of these directly concern historic parks and gardens it has been agreed that KGT should join the Margate Community Heritage Federation, a grouping of local organisations involved in conservation, and as a first step would produce a feasibility study for a research project into Margate's gardens which would emphasise the advantages this work would provide to the wider aim of protecting the local heritage and improving knowledge and understanding of Margate's history.

Margate in 1803

Turner Gallery Margate

We hope that this may be the first step towards a really worthwhile KGT research project covering the whole of Thanet.

Elizabeth Cairns

FAREWELL

Allison Wainman, a founder member and former chairman of KGT and Roly Franks, our recently retired Treasurer both stood down as trustees in the summer. The Trust is immensely indebted to both of them for all they have done to promote its work over the years.

Lord Kingsdown with Allison Wainman & Roly Franks

A party to say thank you to them was held in June in the beautiful garden at Torry Hill by very kind permission of Lord and Lady Kingsdown.

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