



THE KENT GARDENS TRUST NEWSLETTER

Working for Kent's Garden Heritage

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From the Chairman

Elizabeth Cairns

The past 12 months have been busy and successful for KGT.

We held a number of interesting and well attended events during the year. Details can be found on the website.

The research group has nearly completed the survey of parks and gardens in Medway and members of the group describe some of their work later on in this Newsletter. We undertook a commission for Dover District Council to write a Statement of Significance for the parks at Kearsney Abbey and Russell Gardens to be used for a Lottery bid. We were delighted that the bid was successful and HLF awarded £3 million to restore the parks.

Sadly our President since 1988, Lord Kingsdown, died last year. He did so much to support the Trust and raise its profile. We are honoured that Lady Kingsdown has agreed to take on this role. Lady Kingsdown is a knowledgeable and enthusiastic gardener and I am sure she will be a great advocate for the Trust in future.

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A History of Court Lodge

By Mike O'Brien



Court Lodge, Kent

Mike O'Brien found researching the history of COURT LODGE, Lamberhurst an absorbing project. A series of C19 plates painted with scenes from the garden provide a remarkable record of the garden in its heyday.

Kent Gardens Trust was recently asked if we could assist in discovering the history of the gardens at Court Lodge. Elizabeth and myself met Heather Dyke (daughter of the current owner) and her husband Ian back in October 2013 and quickly realised that this would be a very interesting garden to research.

Court Lodge was the principal dwelling house of the manor of Lamberhurst, and can be traced back to the reign of King John (1199 to 1216). The manor came into the possession of various families through marriage until by 1733 Edward Ayscough is recorded as having sold it to William Morland from Westmorland. Nine generations of the Morland family have now lived at Court Lodge. In 2012 Heather Dyke (daughter of the current owner) and Ian returned from New Zealand to assist in the management of Court Lodge estate.

Heather and Ian had already started looking into the history of Court Lodge and discovered that apart from boxes of old papers, old family photograph albums and a series of painted plates recording the garden in the nineteenth century,

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Mike O'Brien is a retired civil engineer who always had an interest in buildings and more recently in gardens. He joined the KGT research group in 2010. He is a volunteer gardener with the National Trust.

more family documents were located at the county archives in Kent and Cumbria. The archives in Maidstone included diaries written by various Morlands during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.



Court Lodge's gardens of 2.5 hectares are situated to the east and south of the house. The main lawn lies on the east front and extends eastwards to the parish churchyard boundary wall. The south and most of the east perimeters of the lawn are surrounded by a variety of trees and herbaceous bedding. A series of paths around this lawn, shown on old editions of OS maps, have disappeared but are recorded on the plates which hang on the walls of the main staircase in the house. To its north-east the lawn is enclosed by walls of the house and garages but is separated from it by paving, shaped beds and a small pond created by previous owners and known now as the Italian garden. Herbaceous beds extend eastwards from the Italian garden in front of the south wall of one of two walled kitchen gardens located north east of the house.

A formal garden is laid out alongside the south elevation of the house and consists of a parterre of nineteen shaped beds in a symmetrical pattern separated and connected by gravel paths with low clipped box hedging around the perimeter of each bed which contain spring bulbs and roses. Single clipped yew balls are located in a pattern on the edge of some beds. A sundial set in a circular lavender bed creates the central feature. One of the series of plates depicts this area of the gardens in the mid nineteenth century.

North of the main lawn a further, smaller lawn is contained on its west and north sides by the brick walls of the two walled gardens. A perimeter path runs around its west, north and east sides, the path is set back from the walls to create beds containing a variety of plants. Early twentieth century family photographs and two plates show intricate planting to these beds. Other beds containing heathers and herbaceous plants are scattered within the lawn together with rhododendrons, azaleas and specimen trees.



At the northern end of the garden, beyond the walled gardens, a grassy area extends to the boundary hedge. The western end contains a mature apple orchard with some more recent planting. A pond near the eastern boundary is now overgrown with bulrushes and only holds water following heavy rain. Family photographs and several of the painted plates depict the pond as a significant feature of the garden, with the area between it and the walled garden to the west containing a narrow lawn with a parallel path and a

herbaceous border running north to south along the outside of the walled garden's eastern wall with a summer house at the north end. Ian has recently rediscovered the old paths buried under the grass.

South of the pond a sunken area is now covered by a canopy of trees and shrubs through which a series of paths meander with steps and rockwork to a pattern shown on the 1st edition OS map. Metal grills crossing the paths may be remnants of water features, probably fed by a pipe from the pond to the north, within the rockery. This garden appears to be the rockery mentioned in William Courtenay Morland's diary entry of 1867 where he refers to his letter to "Pulham as to rockwork". A family owned photograph from the 1880s entitled 'Rock Garden' shows this area containing various plants within a sunken rockery some 20 years after construction. James Pulham in his book "Picturesque Ferneries and Rock-Garden Scenery" published c1877 includes "W C Morland Esq Lamberhurst Kent" as one of his commissions. Earlier this year Heather

made contact with Claude Hitching (author of *Rock Landscapes: The Pulham Legacy*) who visited Court Lodge and has featured it as "the site of the month" for October on his website.

There are two brick-walled kitchen gardens (both listed grade II) walls which contain the remains of greenhouses or cold frames survivors from the extensive number erected in the later half of the nineteenth century. Brick edging and brick rubble surfacing has recently been uncovered

to reveal the original path layout. Thomas H Mawson and Son (well known landscape architects) were commissioned to prepare a planting plan for the gardens but nothing has survived.

To the south, west and north of the gardens, the majority of the former parkland is laid out and managed as part of a golf course, one of the earliest in Kent. The largest area, lying immediately to the south of the house slopes gently southwards for 300m to the river Teise which provides the southern boundary of the estate and of its designed landscape. It is dotted with small clumps of trees around the fairways, sand bunkers and greens, a few of which comprise mature trees probably dating from the mid to late Victorian period. A large number of trees were lost in the 1987 storm and new trees were planted by the golf club during the 1991/92 winter.

This was a fascinating site to research because there is so much archive material and so much of the C19 garden is still intact though badly in need of restoration. Heather intends to apply for Heritage Lottery Funding to help with the cost but in the meantime has recruited a band of volunteers to assist with its maintenance.



Court Lodge Gardens, Kent



Peta Hodges recalls the research volunteers' visit to St Leonards on Sea

By Peta Hodges

The 2014 outing for the research volunteers was to St. Leonard's-on-Sea, East Sussex, the Regency Town planned and built as a seaside resort in 1828 by James Burton, father of Decimus who later extended it from 1850.



St Leonards gardens, Kent

Virginia Hinze had planned and organised our programme, and introduced the group to our first guide, Christine, from the Burton St. Leonards Society. We started in their centre in South Lodge (west), at the entrance to the St. Leonards Gardens, where an exhibition of illustrations and maps of the historical town is laid out. We then set out for our tour of the original C19 core town. Although there have been alterations or additions to some buildings, and some features and buildings demolished since the town was laid out nearly 200 years ago, much remains intact. Many residential houses were built as terraces, semi-detached, or multiple occupancy homes even if they looked like a large mansion. The gardens climb up the steep valley behind the lodge and are overlooked by a variety of such buildings in regency, gothic and cottage styles with the exception of a rather large and incongruous block of flats erected in more recent times on the site of a previous Burton residence which was allowed to fall into disrepair. Back down on the more level ground along the seafront we saw Burton's landmark hotel, once called the St. Leonards Hotel, with the Assembly Rooms in the road immediately behind it. Further to the east and tucked behind are terraces of smaller buildings. Mercatoria, the market area with the first pub called the Horse and Groom and the site of the first National School (now a mosque), is to be found here with nearby Lavatoria Square where the laundry women lived and worked.

After lunch at Azur in the Marina Pavilion overlooking the sea we drove across to Summerfields Leisure Park on Bohemia Road further to the east.

Bohemia House, a substantial mansion in the Jacobean style was built in 1818. In 1831 this became the home of the very wealthy Brisco family for about 70 years until the early C20 when the Oxford Prep School Summerfields used it as a secondary site, hence its current name. The house and secondary buildings were demolished by the council after they bought the estate in the mid-60s. The area has now become part Public Park, besides housing mainly civic services including the leisure complex with a swimming pool, the Ambulance Service, Fire Station, Courts and Police Headquarters, Registry Office, a Travelodge, and Museum.

Our afternoon guide, the very knowledgeable Bob Hart, took us into the woods where the remnants of the pleasure gardens can still be seen. A series of ponds, one nearly silted up, lie along a small valley. A mock Roman Bath, built by the Briscos above a spring in the rocks still remains and further up the valley we reached the Walled Garden. Although badly damaged in the 1987 storm and left derelict for years, the garden has been relatively recently cleared and brought back into use by volunteers, including our guide, as allotments and community space.

With all the other original Bohemia estate buildings now vanished the only other item we were able to see was the ice-house which had a last minute reprieve from being levelled into a car park.



Lunch at the Azur for the members

At the end of our visit some of us accompanied Bob to view some wood or metal organic sculptures recently installed in or near the ponds at the bottom of the site close to Brisco's Walk They were very innovative and fitted seamlessly into the landscape and we were very impressed with them. It brought our interesting day to a close and we left St. Leonard's with good memories.

KGT Research for 2014

By Hugh Vaux, Chairman Research Group

Hugh Vaux Chairman of the Research Group reports on the research work that has been carried out over the last year.

Over the past year, the volunteers of the KGT research group have continued their investigations into the parks and gardens of Medway. This work is due to be completed in March 2015 and so minds are concentrated on producing a result which will be not only interesting to read but a useful tool for Medway Council for both planning and conservation processes and for assessment of their heritage assets. The sites which the Council invited us to look at in 2013 are very different from those in Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks, not least because only a few are in private ownership but also because the gardens are relatively compact and the largest open spaces are public parks.

The Vines, originally belonging to the priory of St Andrew and, following the dissolution of the monasteries, to the dean and chapter of the cathedral, was leased to the city of Rochester in 1880 becoming a public area, one of the earliest in Medway.

There are a surprising number of parks and open spaces of which I, for one, was totally unaware. On a bright February afternoon, the whole group walked around part of the Great Lines Heritage Park visiting the Royal Naval Memorial, one of three built nationally to commemorate those who died in the First World War and subsequently extended to include those who gave their lives in the second. The origins of the Great Lines date from the Napoleonic wars and from the memorial Fort Pitt and Fort Clarence are visible on the hills to the southwest with the adjoining parks of Jackson's Field, Victoria Gardens (the latter still retaining its bandstand), Clarence Gardens and Willis Memorial Garden. These sites which were all designed and built as part of the defence system, are now today's public green open spaces and part of our remit. Our researchers are faced with a challenge to describe these large spaces, not least being the need to define the



Cathedral Gardens, Rochester

boundaries. At river level, other parks, the Esplanade in Rochester and in the centre of Chatham, the Paddock, Riverside Gardens and the Town Hall Gardens, all provide vital green spaces. The last three link up with the slopes of Fort Amherst and thus to the Lower Lines, the Inner Lines (the Garrison Gardens) and the Great Lines Field of Fire, to give its full title.

These parks in Chatham have very military connections which in turn resulted from the need to defend the naval dockyards, vital to the country's defence for nearly 500 years. Thus from the fitting out of Lord Howard of Effingham's fleet which sailed to meet the Spanish Armada to those ships which served in the Second World War, the Medway Towns have played a vital role in helping to build and maintain the Royal Navy. The Town Hall Gardens, opened in 1905, had been laid out on land donated in 1828 by the Board of Ordnance for an extension to the burial ground of St Mary's Church while the Paddock and Riverside Gardens are laid out on reclaimed marshland, one initially an area allowing a clear 'field of fire' in front of the dockyard defences and the other a wharf for unloading armaments. The Paddock was another park created in the early C20 in response to a growing demand for recreation and leisure in a rapidly expanding population although

Riverside Gardens was not laid out until after the Second World War.

These open spaces became increasingly popular as the C20 progressed. Recently the volunteers visited Gillingham Park, Edwardian in design and still retaining its original layout but minus its bandstand although still with many of its original and now mature trees.

Below this, on the banks of the Medway, is the Strand, built on land acquired in 1892 and developed as

a riverside pleasure ground, from 1921-6 it came to offer 'holidays at home' part of a national movement; it had the first swimming pool in Medway (in 1896) and later a boating lake. Caroline Jessel describes the history of The Strand later in the Newsletter.

As well as these, there are a multitude of lesser parks, Wigmore, Cozeten, Rainham Recreation Ground, Parkwood Green and Peverel Green, all created later in the C20. Our challenge is to try and assess their worth because although they are very valuable to the community, they are not historic: in 50 years they will be.

Many of these spaces are in Gillingham and Rainham but there are others in Rochester; the War Memorial Gardens

in the High Street, Church Fields above the Esplanade, the gardens around the cathedral and Broomhill Park in Strood. Only by walking through these, can one appreciate how much green space exists within the city. The Vines is linked to the east to Restoration House and to the west, to Bishopscourt; both these being in private hands but one open regularly and the other through the National Gardens Scheme. This area has so many historic associations not just with visits from Queen Elizabeth and Charles II but, even stronger, with Charles Dickens and his novels.



The Vines, Rochester

This has been a quick tour around the parks and gardens of Medway. I am only too aware that I have not mentioned every site, and we have nearly 40 to look at, but this can be continued next year. The reports will be published on the KGT website in due course and if you would like a foretaste, have a look now where you will find Eastgate House, a grade I listed house in Rochester High Street with the remains of a Dawber garden and Dicken's Swiss Chalet. This report was used by Medway Council for a Heritage Lottery bid.

It has been a busy year and promises to get busier as we complete the Medway project and prepare for the Capability Brown Tercentenary. Please can I take this opportunity to thank the volunteers for their hard work, Virginia Hinze for her guidance and the Medway Council for their support, in particular Chris Valdus and Heather Marsh.



Churchfields

Chris Valdus who until recently was Greenspace & Heritage Development Manager for Medway Council explains how the Council will use the material from the research project.

Following the work the Kent Gardens Trust undertook to review historic parks and gardens in Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks together with the support the Trust is providing to Thanet District Council at Dalby Square, in 2013 Medway Council engaged the Trust to undertake a review of historic parks and gardens in Medway.

Local history societies together with Council Officers produced an initial list of sites for consideration against English Heritage significance criteria to determine a final list for detailed reporting.

It is anticipated that there will be 3 outcomes from this project:

- 1) Statements of significance support funding applications. The final report for Eastgate House Gardens has already been utilised to support a bid to Heritage Lottery Fund for garden restoration. Whilst this bid was unsuccessful the report has helped to ensure alternative mechanisms are considered to deliver the project
- 2) Development plans. Through identification of significant features, future improvements to sites can be planned to maximise these to ensure that while updating sites, the historic character of them is conserved
- 3) Local list. A longer-term outcome will be replacement of the Kent Garden Compendium with a local list of historic sites which will be protected through planning policy.



Meeting at the Guildhall, Rochester

A riverside play ground

By Caroline Jessel

Caroline Jessel, a member of the Research Group explains the history of The Strand, Gillingham, an interesting example of an important and in many ways typical open space in Medway.

In 1996 the Strand Gillingham, a riverside lido and leisure park, celebrated its Centenary. Childhood memories of summer days at the Strand have been some of the happiest and most enduring memories for many generations of Gillingham's residents. A riverside lido in the heart of the Medway Towns has provided

a much needed and valued leisure facility for its residents. During the C21 attendance figures have continued to fall and the site is looking rather tired and in need of regeneration. Medway Council is currently wrestling with how to revive the Strand. An understanding of the Strand's history is an important factor in making decisions about the site's future.



The strand in the 1920s

Industrialisation saw an increase in river traffic on the Medway and in 1894 a long Pier was built at

Gillingham so that steamboats could make stops. A local businessman created a bathing pool on the leeward side of the pier just above the high water mark. Disused railway carriages were used as changing rooms and the pool opened in 1896.

Rising visitor numbers and greater understanding of public health and sanitation resulted in the first significant expansion and modernisation of the Strand between 1921 and 1926 with the creation of a concrete boating pool and paddling pool. Chlorination, aeration and filtration units were also installed and new changing facilities, WC's and a car park were built. In the 1930's there were as many as 12,000 visitors a day and a circular bandstand, putting green and a cafe were added.

During the Second World War the Strand became a popular destination for stay-at-home holidays, promoted by the British government to save fuel and money. In 1948 a miniature railway described as 'The wonderful Steam Miniature Railway' was opened and in 1949 swings and roundabouts,

Continued on the back page.

A new recruit to the research group

By Terri Zbyszewska

Terri Zbyszewska joined the Research Group this year and describes how she found it.

I heard about the Kent Gardens Trust through The City of Rochester Society, which advised its members that Medway Council had asked KGT to undertake a research project on the gardens of the area. I volunteered as I am a great enthusiast of gardens, especially historic ones.

As a beginner to KGT I have found the project extremely interesting. The

range of activities involved is quite diverse: study days, site visits, archive research, asking the locals about the gardens, presentations and report-writing.

I first met the group at a study day and think this would be the best way for anyone to start. The gardens on Medway Council's list were shared out and I was allocated one garden which is basically a public open space, Churchfields, and one traditional but more complex garden, Bishopscourt. Hugh kindly offered to assist me for the latter. If one is not an expert on historical research - one needs a guide!

My research began at Medway Archives. Fortunately I was accompanied by Mike as I would not have known how to begin. There is a lot of bureaucracy and form-filling which I found rather off-putting and there is no helpful Guide.

The actual research is fun but you have to be extremely well organised. I soon found that jotting down notes and references on pieces of paper was not tidy enough! I needed to be much more systematic and record the reference of every document, map, photo graph or newspaper article I looked at.

For me the best part of the project is the repeated site visits, trying to look with "KGT eyes". I must stress that this is totally different from walking round a garden simply enjoying how it looks today. For a KGT visit I had to look far more closely at design, historical features, connections with



Book Reviews

Angelica Gray: Gardens of Marrakesh

*Published by Frances Lincoln –
128 pages, RRP: £20
ISBN: 978-0-7112-3345-4*



In this first book by Angelica Gray, the author transports the reader to the wonderfully exotic gardens of Marrakesh. As one journeys through the twelfth-century Royal pleasure gardens of the Agdal, the ruins of the sixteenth century Badi Palace, and the nineteenth century riad (or courtyard) gardens of the Bahia Palace, to name but a few, it becomes clear that Marrakesh is defined not only by its architecture, but by its centuries-old tradition for gardens. Even today garden-making and garden visiting are an inherent part of the Islamic way of life.

The eight-hundred year old expansive Agdal gardens are considered by Gray to be the most important in Marrakesh. Combining “water, fruit and perfumed flowers, it took on a natural landscape.....creating lines of perspective centuries before any European garden did the same”. Beautifully illustrated, Gray’s book gives a fascinating insight into the waxing and waning of dynastic influence through the centuries, and makes clear the extent of Marrakeshi creativity and innovation which were repeated throughout Morocco and elsewhere, as far as Gibraltar and Seville.

Gray never underestimates the importance of colour and intricate geometric designs. Intrinsic to interior courtyard designs, she highlights the cultural misunderstanding of many of us who see exquisite colour and complex geometric tile patterns and mosaics as merely decorative, rather than understanding their symbolic and metaphysical meanings such as light, fire, water and earth.

For those of us who have never visited a Marrakesh garden or who know little of their important history and their relevance in the twenty-first century, Gray’s introduction should not be missed.

By Beverley Howarth

*‘A new recruit to the research group’ continued
from page 6*

famous local people and events and relationship with the community.

Boundaries! I had barely noticed them when visiting gardens before, but

now realise they provide a wealth of information. They not only show the physical extent of the property but often have remained at least partly intact since the creation of the garden. Different materials and styles are keys to the site’s history.

Tim Richardson: The New English Garden

*Published by Frances Lincoln –
328 pages, RRP £40
ISBN: 9780711232709*



The New English Garden is a very sumptuous book and will grace any reasonably sturdy coffee table. This much is obvious to any browser glancing through the book in a bookshop, but is it worth your while actually reading it?

Tim Richardson has chosen an eclectic selection of gardens. They range from the very urban and very small such as the Living Wall at the Athenaeum Hotel in Piccadilly to the gigantic such as Trentham in Staffordshire which has been superbly renovated by the surprising combination of Piet Oudolf and Tim Stuart-Smith. The descriptions of these two gardens exemplify the strengths of Richardson’s writing and the photographs of Trentham are particularly evocative.

Some of the gardens, such as The Lynn Garden at Ascott are particularly austere, with barely a flower to be seen. The contrast with Arabella Lennox-Boyd’s garden at Gresgarth in Lancashire could hardly be greater. This delightfully picturesque and profusely planted garden seems out of place among all the swathes of New Perennials and waving grasses found in so many other gardens in the book.

I very much enjoyed Richardson’s writing when he was trying as discreetly as possible to express his dislike of the over fussiness of Highgrove or trying to reconcile us to the higher pretentiousness of Plas Metaxu. Great Dixter, wonderful though it is, hardly seems a good example of the New English garden but the author’s obvious admiration for Lloyd and Fergus Garrett makes this a very attractive account.

I found the book a very good read but there was one major flaw. It would have been very helpful to have had some sort of plan for many of the more complex gardens even a rough sketch would have helped.

By Paul Lewis

Finally writing the report. The KGT is very helpful in advising on structure and giving editorial support. Even with this help, I would advise any new member who is not used to this sort of writing to work in tandem with an expert. I hope that I shall improve with practice!

'From the Chairman' continued from page 1



Chilham Castle, Kent

Finally our plans for celebrating the tercentenary of the birth of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown in 2016 are taking shape. We will hold an event at Chilham Castle (where he worked in the 1770s) over the weekend of 20/21 August 2016 by very kind permission of Stuart and Tessa Wheeler. We are also hoping to publish the results of our research into the 5 sites in Kent which Brown was definitely associated with.

I am confident that next year will be as interesting and worthwhile as 2014 and that we will welcome many of you at our events.

Elizabeth Cairns, Chairman

'A riverside playground' continued from page 6

purchased second-hand from a fairground company, were installed.

In 1988 Councillors threatened to close the Strand as it was starting to lose money. In 1989 a huge protest was mounted and, following a temporary closure and essential renovations, the Strand was re-opened in 1991 and in 1996 its centenary was celebrated. The Strand remains the only open air swimming pool in the Medway towns and continues to attract crowds on warm days during the school summer holidays. For the rest of the year it is under-utilised.

A Modern approach to work via our website

By Paul Howarth

Paul Howarth KGT website manager provides an update on how the new website is helping to provide a modern approach to our work.

Last year, I wrote about the launch of our new website to help commemorate the 25th anniversary of Kent Gardens Trust. I encouraged everyone to take a look, and I am very pleased to say that the website is proving to be very popular. Over the last 12 months, the number of visits to the site has doubled, so it is certainly attracting a lot of interest. It is becoming one of the first sites that people look at when they want to know more about the gardens of Kent. Over the past year we have been improving the website by adding new features. It is now possible to book events on-line and this has been very effective. Very soon prospective members will be able to join online, and anyone will be able to make a donation online too.

This year the Trust has been very successful in researching and recording historic gardens. We are working on an ambitious project with Medway Council, and have undertaken a number of important private commissions. As many of you know, our work focuses on the protection and conservation of historic gardens. There is much more to do and we would like to expand, perhaps into other activities such as education, as well as undertaking more research. If we are to do this, we need to be efficient as possible and keep our costs down.

Please help us be more efficient by booking next year's events online and by using the website to keep up to date with the latest news. We would like to send more information by email where possible (though you will still get a hard copy of the newsletter and events brochure). If you know that we do not have your email address, please let us know what it is. Otherwise, if our records show that we do not have an email address for you, we may contact you during the year to ask if you would be prepared to let us know what it is. Of course, if you do not have a computer or access to the internet, we will understand and continue as now. The website address is www.kentgardenstrust.org.uk. Do have another look and if you have any comments or questions do get in touch with me at paul.howarth@kentgardenstrust.org.uk

Many thanks for your help!

