



THE KENT GARDENS TRUST NEWSLETTER

Working for Kent's Garden Heritage

ISSUE 45

WWW.KENTGARDENSTRUST.ORG.UK

AUTUMN 2018

From the Editor

Hugh Vaux

2018 has been the year of Repton, yet it is surprising how many people have never heard of him. The bicentenary of the death of the self-proclaimed successor to Capability Brown has been commemorated all over the country by individual county garden trusts and our parent body, The Gardens Trust. Kent has played its part with lectures and a study day at Cobham as well as joining Sussex Gardens Trust for their very interesting and enjoyable day at Brightling.

In addition, KGT have published another book, 'Humphry Repton in Kent', a companion volume to 'Capability Brown in Kent' which appeared two years

Continued on page 2

In this edition

<i>In this edition</i>	<i>Page</i>
<i>Repton's Peep Show</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Humphrey Repton and the Art of Landscape</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>The Restoration of Cobham</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>The Spirit of Repton at Cobham</i>	<i>3 & 5</i>
<i>Spring lecture by John Phibbs</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Hever Castle and Stone Wall Park Gardens</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Edwardian Elegance on the North Downs</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Brightling Study Day</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Walmer Castle and Grounds</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Repton at Brightling Park</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>More on Repton</i>	<i>7 & 8</i>
<i>Stone Pitts Manor, Seal and St Clere</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Ruins, reclamation and reformation</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>The Garden Party</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Colour in the Marshes</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Hidden Gardens</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Book review</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Dover Project</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Humphry Repton in Kent</i>	<i>12</i>

Rosemay Dymond describes...

Repton's Peep Show



Cobham Hall from the south.

Today Cobham Hall performed its artistic magic. Silhouetted against the brilliant blue sky of a perfect autumn day and basking in the warmth of the glorious sunshine it is no wonder that Humphry Repton returned here time and again. Repeated visits were made to readjust and extend his vision for the landscape within which sits this statuesque building.

Guests sat in comfort amidst the bookshelves of the C17th library, the very room where Repton had his meetings with the 4th Earl of Darnley. There was the Earl's portrait over the fireplace; it only needed Repton himself to appear to complete the picture.

The morning of talks on Repton, the past and present development of his C19th vision was a fascinating and absorbing time, interspersed with an opportunity to view copies of the Red Book and the interesting history of the development of his plans. A delicious and robust lunch fuelled everyone for the afternoon series of walks around the Repton grounds and the challenge of a one mile trek to the Mausoleum. Here was a building few had experienced before, but thanks to the expert knowledge of the National Trust volunteer guides no stone was left unturned. All marvelled at its massive size which prints and plans had not revealed. The empty catacombs below were eerie and the altar of black marble (from southwestern Belgium) glistened in the alcove. Standing on the centre stone of the floor, voices echoed in each direction providing a most unnerving experience.

We returned to the grounds of Cobham Hall and to the garden tours led by the equally expert garden guides. Guests walked excitedly between Repton designs. From the western bastion to the restored pump house, from Reptons ponds to the ancient lime trees. Views of elderly oaks led to Repton's Seat from where

Continued on page 2

'From the Editors' continued from page 1

ago. In exploring Repton's work, the research group members have unearthed new facts about the sites as well as the whereabouts of the Red Books. As most of the landscapes no longer exist in their earlier form, this research is important to preserve the paper trail which still exists before that too is lost.

The researchers have also been investigating parks and gardens in and around Dover. Cilla Freud gives us an account of their hard work and the reports which are being added to the KGT website. Don't forget that they are there, easily accessible and a mine of information.

The trustees are very grateful to all those who have taken part in these activities and who give so much time to making them so successful. The same thanks go to those who organize the numerous events, many of which are described in the newsletter. Members of KGT are able to enjoy these events thanks both to them and to the various owners who so kindly allow us to visit their parks and gardens. We are especially grateful to Lady Kingsdown, our president, for allowing us to hold the garden party at Torry Hill on the most glorious summer's day.

The dreaded words General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) appear elsewhere in the newsletter, suffice it to say here that privacy and security concern all of us.

Repton's Peep Show continued from page 1

you could see the Mausoleum in the far distance. Lady Darnley's garden viewed in the sunshine displayed the aviary and the Greek temple at their brightest.

As with any excellent menu this wonderful day was concluded with a delicious cream tea, restorative power to the weary walkers.

Kent Gardens Trust would like to thank the Cobham Hall Heritage Trust for making the day possible, David Standen for his organisation and the Friends of Cobham Hall, the staff and the volunteers for their welcome. KGT would also like to thank the National Trust for guiding visitors around the Mausoleum and Elizabeth Cairns for chairing the Repton Celebration Group.



Visitors enjoying lunch in the Gilt Hall

A summary of Professor Stephen Daniels' keynote talk on...

Humphrey Repton and the Art of Landscape.

From the start of his talk, Prof. Daniel's immense enthusiasm for all things Repton was immediately apparent. He has found that this year of celebration has continually provoked fresh thoughts and finding new Red Books has led to new interpretations.

Repton lived through his art rather than on the ground and in contrast to Capability Brown, his legacy is on the pages of his writings. These contain a surprising amount of autobiographical detail and reflect what he felt about landscape, that it should be lived in and enjoyed. Life in its widest sense, from the appreciation of beauty to the domesticity of family life, was all important. Repton had a large family to support and it was essential to succeed financially so the Red Books were not just for his patrons but also an advertising technique, brand Repton.

He took time to bring his skills to maturity. Some early work was carried out in conjunction with John Nash for a competition for a rebuild in Bath which in the end came to nothing. At Cobham, water-colours by George Samuels were included in the Red Book and different image formats were tried such as an oval mirror shape.

In 'Sketches and Hints on Landscape Gardening' (1794), Repton describes how developing taste, using imagination and improving drawing ability are essential for those sharing his interests and wishing to elevate their profession. The cultivation of the polite arts diminished social divides and his musical talent as a flautist was especially important for him. Music, poetry and theatre were essential for society to be successful.

Prof. Daniels pointed out how often Repton included himself in his published works reflecting his view of himself as a performer for example in his sketches of Welbeck, the home of the Duke of Portland, the then prime minister, and that this led to his recommendation to the earl of Darnley at Cobham. It was social networking especially through the ladies of the families which brought more commissions. Humour was important



Sarah Morgan with Elizabeth Cairns and Stephen Daniels in the library at Cobham Hall.

and peep shows could be used as a resource; Sir Walter Scott describing the Red Book as miniature theatre.

With the publication of 'Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening' (1803), Repton showed that study of science was essential for those of serious learning in contrast to the frivolity of the picturesque. Finally, in 'Fragments' (1816), he looked back on his career in elegiac mood, regretting his decline and, as he saw it, that of his profession; despite this being the time of two of his greatest creations, Endsleigh and Sheringham Park.

Prof Daniels pointed out that we were sitting in the library where Humphry Repton had discussed his developing plans for Cobham with the earl, over a period of 20 years, and where he had exchanged poems with the Countess of Darnley on the subject of the old sycamore tree which needed to be felled. His collaboration with Wyatt at Cobham was perhaps not as he would have wished, the mausoleum was too severe and pagan for his liking and he was happier with their joint creation in Stoke Poges churchyard for Thomas Gray's tomb.

Repton was happy working at Cobham and all the recent hard work to restore the landscape here enables the visitor to feel that the great man is still here.

Prof. Stephen Daniels is curating the exhibition, 'Repton Revealed', at the Garden Museum, from 24th October to 3rd February 2019. This includes previously unseen works by Humphry Repton as well as 30 of his Red Books and considers the possibility of a new site at the Speaker's House in Westminster

The Spirit of Humphry Repton at Cobham.

A summary of Sarah Morgan's talk.

Sarah described the problems of trying to manage a significant Repton landscape which, like all landscapes, changes over time. How much should you try to reflect Humphry Repton in the gardens when successive members of the Darnley family have drawn upon other styles and influences since Repton's time? This is only one aspect of managing the gardens and grounds today with only three gardeners and ever-increasing costs, quite apart from the fact that Cobham Hall is a school with the grounds being used for facilities and events. A balance between past and present has to be reached.



The Western Bastion from the north in 1815

Humphry Repton arrived at Cobham in 1790 to five long, avenues radiating from the entrance in the West Court. His plans reduced these to one avenue and fragmented the plantings of the others, in keeping with the Landscape School style of the time. He also set about the task of diverting the entrance to the North, whilst creating personal spaces and planting around the house of flower beds and shrubberies, where the ladies could promenade and enjoy the scent and colour. Only a few of the original Lime Avenue trees survive, but trees have been planted over the years to plug the gaps, more recently by volunteers and the Friends of Cobham Hall. How to keep Repton's ideas alive has always been a problem. When the western bastion was renovated, the long weedy herbaceous border along the north side of the house was

renewed with shrubs of colour and perfume which Repton would have recognized, at the same time leaving space to attend to the historic wall against which the border lies. To reduce labour, the modern technique of planting through Landscape fabric and mulching with gravel was adopted. The western bastion leads to Repton's 'North Pleasure Ground' on which so much effort has been expended with architectural features to be maintained and the ancient trees requiring extensive winter care. Repton deer fencing has been restored only in places, leaving a burgeoning population of deer in the grounds and a problem to any new planting.

To the south of the house, yew hedges planted after Repton's time obscured the long view to the south borders. The decision to remove them has opened up the view of the Hall from the south. It has also opened up the view from the house to the south lawn bordered by large clipped mounds of shrubs that meander to Wyatts dairy, currently undergoing restoration into a holiday let. The reduced annual maintenance costs from removing the yew hedges is a secondary bonus. The fountain to the south of the house no longer works but care has been taken to protect the masonry for possible future restoration. In the meantime, the water has been replaced with free draining soil planted with low-growing alpines and bulbs with blue grasses to mimic the effect of jets of water.

The long borders running along the south wall of the house have been completely replanted after the filming of 'Tulip fever' converted the length into an Amsterdam canal. This gave opportunity to use some of the revenue from the filming to put back soft rhythms of planting along the length incorporating such plants as scented roses, Clerodendron, Pittosporum tobira and Daphne.

In the west court, Humphry Repton has had to compete with William Goldring's design of 1904 and Jane Ward's 1998 addition of box hedging. This compromise reflects the ongoing problems of presenting Cobham Hall in the 21st century, to look its best the whole year round while keeping a record of successive changes over the centuries.



The same view today. In the bottom right corner may be seen, with difficulty, Repton's invisible wire fencing to contain the deer.

The Restoration of the Historic Parkland of Cobham.

David Standen gave an all too brief but very packed 15 minutes about the story of the rescue of the grounds of Cobham Hall.

Following the decision by the family to leave Cobham Hall in the 1950's, there followed over four decades during which land sales, financial collapse and mounting vandalism led to the fragmentation and decline of all but

Continued on page 5

The KGT Spring Lecture by John Phibbs

Interpreted by Tom La Dell

John Phibbs is our leading garden historian with his unique combination of practical experience of historic gardens and landscapes and the depth of his knowledge. He also is not afraid to put forward his point of view, especially if this will encourage fruitful discussion. This is what happened at the talk he gave at Riverhill on 20 May, which was like an open ended seminar about Humphry Repton. At first it seemed odd to claim that the man who followed Capability Brown, and was known for his elaborate reports to his clients, Red Books (bound in red leather), was really influential in the change from the clear cut landforms and lakes of Brown, to the ornamental gardens of the Victorian era. John demonstrated that he did just that.

He showed it from his great knowledge of Brown (and he received an MBE for being a key figure in the 2016 Brown Tercentenary) and his huge knowledge of Repton, expanded

and fine tuned for the Bicentenary this year.

Brown worked in an era of large, wealthy estates often with ready cash from slavery. Hundreds of men could move hillsides and villages and dig lakes. Repton's clients were more often self made men and women without these huge resources. His proposals were more about embellishing what you have got, rather than reshaping the landscape. Much of Repton's life and his practice is detailed in the Kent Gardens Trust book for the Bicentenary, Humphry Repton in Kent, and John has endorsed the book with a kind review on the back cover.

John gave us a dizzying overview of the man and what he achieved, especially with the reinvention of the ornamental and pleasure garden in ways to suit his new clients. Society had changed and Repton gave shape to the new gardening for the emerging middle classes.



Hever Castle and Stonewall Park Gardens

By Andrew Wells

Fourteen members spent an enjoyable sunny day on 10 May visiting two contrasting properties, Hever Castle and Stonewall Park, both near Edenbridge and owned by the same family in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Hever, the celebrated childhood home of Anne Boleyn, was bought in 1745 by Sir Timothy Waldo. His eventual successor Edmund Meade-Waldo let Hever and in 1843 bought Stonewall Park nearby from the Woodgates (who also owned Riverhill, Somerhill and Tonbridge Castle). In 1903 his grandson sold Hever and 630 acres to William Waldorf Astor (later 1st Viscount Astor), who restored and extended the castle. Our informative guide, Steve Hayward, gave us a fascinating tour of the 30-acre garden, created 1904-07 from undeveloped marshy land by Joseph Cheal & Son, Crawley nurserymen whose designs included Victoria Gardens, Broadstairs and Polesden Lacy, Surrey. Steve showed us the different elements of the Italian Garden, with its long Pompeian wall. This sheltered a succession of distinctly planted gardens containing classical statuary collected by Astor as US Minister to Italy, and Steve drew our attention to the pungent smell (scent would be a euphemism) of the Arthur Bell Rose. Beyond this the 38-acre lake was dug by 800 men over two years.

After a substantial lunch at Hever we were welcomed to Stonewall Park by Elizabeth Fleming and her daughter-in-law Catherine, who lives at Stonewall with her husband

Rupert and family. In 1964 Elizabeth and Val Fleming bought Stonewall from the Meade-Waldos who had planted the deep valley to its north with azaleas and rhododendrons. Mrs Fleming showed us this dramatic scene in full flower, the trees and shrubs interspersed with sheets of bluebells beneath dramatic rocky outcrops, explaining how she and her husband had restored and increased the plantings. The anticipation of tea encouraged two members with a combined age of 155 to climb the most direct 1:1.5 route back to the house. They were well rewarded by a most welcome cup of tea and delicious home-made cake in the striking iron-framed camellia conservatory against the front of the house.



Azaleas and rhododendrons in full flower at Stonewall



The Italian Gardens at Hever

Edwardian Elegance on the North Downs

Mount Ephraim and Doddington Place By Lesley Dawes



Exploring the rock garden at Mount Ephraim

The visit on 31st May began with a talk from Lesley and Sandys on the history of the house and the Dawes family. The current house dated from the 1870s and was built by Sir Edwyn Sandys Dawes on the back of his very successful career as a ship owner and business man.

The structure of the garden as you see it today came later and was established by Sir Edwyn's son Willie and his wife Jeanie, starting about 1910. The tour of the 10 acre garden started on the front lawn and the vistas looking down the garden to the Lake were greatly admired. Many of the old mature trees dominate but then the view extends to Hernhill Church, orchards and the Swale Estuary in the distance.

The extensive rock garden was next with its original 100 year old dwarf conifers and acers. The water for the rock garden is pumped from the lake and trickles down through a series of pools and water falls back to the lake again. The Japanese style bridge is very striking and almost defines Mount Ephraim and was used for the Mount Ephraim logo for many years.

The lake is fed by a small stream and was dug out by hand by unemployed Welsh miners. It has wonderful reflections all year round.

From the lake a path leads through the Little Wood to the arboretum which was planted in 1995 and where the wonderful Cornus 'Eddies White Wonder' was still in bloom.

At the far end of the Arboretum there is a fine viewing point which looks down to the somewhat unusual circular grass maze which is very loosely based on the medieval 'mizmaze'.

On our way to the tearoom we walked through the Millennium Rose Garden, the herbaceous border and the quirky topiary with its mix of animals, birds, biplanes and a First World War tank. The rose garden was on the point of blooming but, unfortunately, we were just too early.

An excellent lunch with a good choice was enjoyed by all after which we made our way to Doddington Place where we were met by Lucy Adams, the young and very enthusiastic Head Gardener, who gave us a brief history before escorting us round the garden.

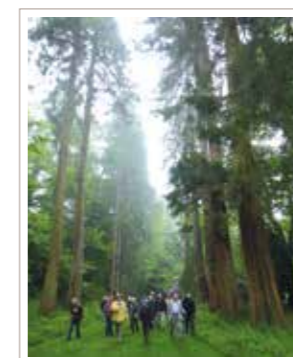
We began on the main Lawn and then to the many extensive borders which are boarded by yew hedges. The newly planted sunken garden was admired and already the borders which are undoubtedly best in high season were showing a lot of colour.

This led on to the restored rock garden which is full of interesting planting and a big improvement on the previous one.

The huge yew hedges with tall woodland trees as a backdrop looked stunning. The hedges are very high and almost look like a huge wave coming at you.

The group were then taken to the woodland garden which would usually be a highlight but this very atypical season meant that the wonderful rhododendrons and azaleas were almost over and the colours of the flowers were muted and not as vibrant as one might have hoped. However its finery could be imagined.

The day ended with more tea and delicious cakes as black clouds hung over us but fortunately there was no rain to spoil what had been yet another wonderful visit.



The avenue of Wellingtonias at Doddington

The Restoration of the Historic Parkland at Cobham continued from page 3

the main house and surrounding land which had been acquired to create a school in 1962.

Ironically, it was the decision to build the high-speed railway (HS1), concerns over the impact on the historic park and the eventual decision in 1996 to set up a management scheme endowed with £750,000 that would prove to be the saviour.

It is impossible to overstate the problems that the project faced. To the south, land had been sold as Leisure Plots but following planning intervention had largely been abandoned. Lack of management in Cobham Wood had led to increasing vandalism culminating in a major fire in the Mausoleum in 1980. Despite attempts to find a resolution, Cobham Wood and the Mausoleum ended up in the hands of the receivers. Car burning, off road vehicles, fly tipping and other anti-social activities were rife.

It was soon clear that to succeed the scheme needed to address three main issues: vandalism, confidence and a lack of cash. The potential of lottery funding provided a glimmer of hope. However, to secure funding the project had to find a long term owner for Cobham Wood and the Mausoleum, a task that would require the vandalism to be resolved.

After two years of education, enforcement and determined work, levels of vandalism had declined. As a result, Gravesham Council stepped in as short term owners with the National Trust agreeing to take on ownership following restoration. With funding of just under £5 million secured from HLF, restoration work began. However, it would require a further injection of funds from the Government to secure the final phases and conserve the legacy of Repton's work.

By David Standen

Brightling Study Day

By Peta Hodges

A shared day with Sussex Gardens Trust

Nine members of KGT attended the Sussex Gardens Trust Study Day on 16th June at Brightling, a tiny village south of Burwash and about 40 minutes from Tunbridge Wells. The event had sold out and there was a good buzz as everyone registered and took coffee and biscuits and settled into their seats. The Interim Chairman, Marcus Batty introduced Jim Stockwell who had organised the day and then Alan Starr another SGT member took the floor. His short introduction to Brightling Park and its history – the house was originally named Rose Hill until 1879 when a new owner took over – was informative and amusing and set the tone for the day. He was followed by John Phibbs, garden historian, author and lecturer. Although he personally thought that Charles Bridgeman should not be omitted from the list, he started by placing Repton as the third and last of the great C18 Landscape Designers following Kent and Brown and he took the opportunity to show us the new memorial dedicated to Lancelot Capability Brown following the latter's 2016 tercentenary celebrations. Suggested by Alan Titchmarsh, [designed by Ptolemy Dean and made by Brian Turner] this is a beautiful lead cistern fountain placed on a shaped paved base in the cloister garden at Westminster Abbey.

After the talk, we divided up into three groups for our guided walks accompanied by one of our hosts and set off into the bracing wind that sweeps across the estate. Repton shows that this is not unusual when he included two tiny wind-blown ladies fighting with their parasols in one of his sketches for Rose Hill! The weather wasn't clear enough to see the Channel but Beachy Head was just about visible on the far horizon. We were shown the route of the original drive from the west (no longer in use) running close to the north boundary wall and screened from view with carefully planted trees until the temple erected on a knoll in the middle of the western paddock burst into view.

We walked past the walled garden, a shadow of its former self once employing eight gardeners. It seems that Repton found it difficult to deal with the site, with a house patently in the wrong place, and very little of his influence can still be seen. Capability Brown had previously been called upon for advice 30 years earlier but it is not clear what he did apart from planting an area of mixed woodland, including Scots Pines, not far from the house. The latter may have been used as protection in the early years but no trace of them now remains. It has to be said that although during the Victorian era the house was considerably extended, these additions have in recent times been demolished and the house as it now stands is probably much closer to the building Repton visited. However, the tree belts he envisaged, often along traditional deep ditches forming a long used form of stock barrier in this country (predating the C18 brick-built ha-ha of French origin), have matured into billowing boundaries of mixed woodland.

The home paddock is now used as a camp site for the newly fashionable Teepee wedding reception with traditional white bell tents pitched at a distance for accommodation and semi-screened by a shrubbery! As we walked back past the house the church bells were pealing continuously in preparation for an imminent wedding.

The weather was fine enough to have lunch served al fresco at little tables in the garden of the village hall and the buffet laid out in the hall catered for every appetite, including some award winning local cheeses which were much lauded.

After lunch it was back to the hall for our last speaker Laura Mayer whose lecture is summarised by Judy Tarling (see below). To complete the day, we were offered a choice of delicious cakes with tea or coffee to fortify us for the journey home.



The audience gathering at Brightling. Several Kent members can be seen.

Walmer Castle and Grounds

By Alison Philip

On 5th July we were once again blessed with lovely weather, our group were fortunate to be guided around the gardens by Mark Brent, Head Gardener for several years of Walmer Castle and grounds. His knowledge of the history of the castle, past Lord Wardens and their respective contributions to the gardens in particular, made it a fascinating morning. We learned about the conservation and restoration of historical planting plans as well

as the more recent establishment of new gardens such as that designed by Penelope Hobhouse for Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, in 1997. The kitchen garden which now supplies the castle with produce and flowers was a delight.

We had a very good lunch in the Castle restaurant and were then able to wander the castle and grounds at our leisure during the afternoon.



The double herbaceous border at Walmer Castle

Repton at Brightling Park

Sally Ingram of Sussex Gardens Trust summarises John Phibbs' talk...

John began his lecture with two rather surprising admissions. Firstly, he confessed that in many ways his research into the life and work of Capability Brown had seemed easier than uncovering the life of Humphry Repton, in part because it was Brown who had the greater reputation. Evidence of his widespread recognition as an important figure of the landscape tradition could be seen, for example, in the recent dedication of a fountain and cistern at Westminster Abbey earlier in May to mark Brown's tri-centenary. In addition, although it is the Red Books by Repton that perhaps make his work so distinctive, John explained that this lecture would not be about all the details of the Red Book writings and sketches. He wanted to stress that we need caution when interpreting the Repton landscape because it may not exactly mirror the designs of the Red Book. Repton's work constantly changed, and every new idea did not necessarily appear in the Red Book, or the improvements described might have already happened.

John's insightful lecture examined the scheme for Brightling Park independent of the Red Book, considering the context of social and economic events, and how it must have felt to Repton following in Brown's footsteps, whilst establishing himself as a landscape artist keen to do things differently. Repton's criticism of Rosehill was its exposed position, and he advised it should be built elsewhere in the park. But, as John pointed out, his plans were crushed, and as we saw during the later tour of the park, it is the 'sensitivity' of the landscape that epitomizes Repton's designs. Thus the drive takes the visitor through darkness until the gradual appearance of the house and the avenue gives sudden glimpses through lines of beech trees and then a sudden 'burst'.

Events further afield must have also affected Repton. In 1806, when John Fuller (III) commissioned Repton to make



John Phibbs leads one group in an exploration of Brightling Park

recommendations for the site, the fall of the Bastille in France and the subsequent Revolution was still a recent experience that instilled both a sense of optimism and a fear of upheaval in Britain. John suggested that as riots began to break out in the country a new way of landscaping began to develop with buildings around the estate, and hence cottages appeared on the edges of sites. Such ornamental cottages could suggest either a benign landlord, or the presence of the militia. However, in Brightling there was no risk of rioting, and so no need for the appearance of cottages.

An unusual feature of Brightling that John drew our attention to are the meuses for a hare park that can be seen in one of walls. These were holes constructed in a brick wall, where food would be left for the hares, which when hunted by dogs would be trapped when the holes were blocked up.

In his summing-up of the day John emphasised Repton's importance to the creation of landscape style, standing alongside Kent and Brown. He was in no doubt that Repton's legacy has continued to this day, and can be seen in such designs as the garden rooms at Sissinghurst, or Jekyll's herbaceous border, and in features such as the garden terrace. Through his widely inventive style he created the English garden, and as John ended his stimulating lecture I feel sure the audience were in agreement with his sentiment that 'Repton is great!'

Judy Tarling of Sussex Gardens Trust summarises Laura Mayer's talk on...

The Prolific and Plausible Mr Repton

Laura Mayer set off in the afternoon session determined to keep us all awake with her lively delivery, positioned as it was, as she put it, in the 'graveyard' slot after lunch. Mayer opened with a consideration as to whether Repton, having 'failed' at certain other professions, might have been a little arrogant in trying to carve out his career niche by appointing himself to the role of successor to Capability Brown. She claimed that

Repton valued the social contacts with his clients as much or more than the financial rewards, and was offended by the 'coxcomber' of many of his clients, including the Prince of Wales.

During the picturesque controversy Repton was initially caught in the Brownian camp, but modified his style, rejecting Brown and becoming more in favour of rugged nature as time went on. As the century progressed,

his style needed to change yet again to accommodate the commissions he was receiving from the owners of homely villas and industrial magnates, the war with France and higher taxes being imposed on the grand estate owners leaving them without funds for improvements.

A typical 'homely' touch (for example at Holkham Hall) was the cottage,

Continued on page 8

Prolific and plausible Mr Repton continued from page 7



The Brightling Temple by Robert Smirke

with its rising smoke signalling the comfort and exercise of philanthropy for the estate workers. A few, not entirely complimentary or sympathetic, references to Jane Austen's characters led us through Eliza Bennett's knowledge of the picturesque, illustrated by a group of cows, suggesting the appropriate arrangement for a picturesque view.

With direct reference to Brightling, Mayer described several effects such as the 'burst' out of a dark wood for a surprise (which we had just experienced that very morning on the return walk to the house, described by Johnny Phibbs), and the purposes of the folly: to create employment and exert power thereby. The owner of Brightling and commissioner of Repton, John Fuller (III), known as 'Mad Jack' also built an observatory depicted by William Turner in his painting of Brightling Park. Taken altogether Mayer considered that the follies represented a fashion in the revival of Greek architecture 'collected' in the garden, as at Shugborough, to show off wealth and good taste. The Brightling temple by Robert Smirke formed part of this fashion, although the observatory seemed to form more of a tribute to the Roman mausoleum of Augustus.

Mayer included the Brighton Royal Pavilion as part of this mania for follies, describing Repton's failed relations with Nash, and how Repton's plans which were made with his sons, who trained with Nash, were stalled. Repton's Red Book for the Brighton Pavilion was eventually published in 1808 with a treatise on oriental Architecture, describing the use of new technology in the form of cast iron which suited the Indian style.

Mayer summed up the effect of Repton's Red Book working method, which meant his business model was weak, as he had no power over the subcontractors who carried out the work, sometimes decades after the Red Book had been delivered. Some of his ideas she judged to be expensive and unattainable, for example at Beaudesert. She thought he was more of a hanger-on than Brown, disliked by many for his ingratiating and obsequious manner, and that the lack of monuments for Repton spoke volumes. However, he triumphed as a writer and his influence was felt world-wide after his death, before his own invented profession of 'landscape gardener' became extinct.

Stonepitts Manor, Seal and St Clere, Kemsing

By Alison Philip

Our two-part day on 13th June began in the glorious private garden of Stonepitts Manor near Sevenoaks and our thanks go to Hugh and Angela Ellingham who allowed us to see all that they have achieved over many years in this beautiful setting. We were given a short history of the house and grounds, which have their origins in the 16th century, and were then guided through the series of garden rooms which totally surround the property; the recently restored rose garden, the swimming pool terrace and the very beautiful kitchen garden, greenhouses and orchard.



The start of a fascinating visit to Stonepitts Manor

The garden also has wonderful topiary and a natural dew pond. We were lucky to be able to see correspondence from 1925 between Gertrude Jekyll and the then owners outlining her suggested designs for terraces planting plans and herbaceous borders.

Following a delicious two-course lunch in the dining room at St Clere, Kemsing, we were treated to an entertaining and informative guided tour of the gardens surrounding the main house by Martin Platt, Head Gardener. We learned about the many specimen plants and trees and the development of the grounds over the 25 years that Martin has been at St Clere and the work involved in maintaining the rare shrubs and herbaceous borders. Martin described the challenges involved in maintaining a property which is not only a venue for special occasions but also a family home.

Two very different gardens providing a delightful day and we were most fortunate with warm and sunny weather throughout.



The afternoon was spent at St Clere

Ruins, Reclamation and Reformation

By Terri Zbszewska

A visit to Rochester

Unlike Mr Pickwick and his party of friends our group travelled to Rochester by rail and motor car rather than stagecoach. Like Pickwick we began our visit in the quaint High Street strolling past the cafés and pubs to the Esplanade gardens by the river Medway. These pleasant gardens on reclaimed land have two distinct parts separated by the Rochester Cruising Club. One part is laid out as a civic garden and the other as open green space recently reprieved from becoming a tarmacked coach park. Thence we took the steep Baker's Walk up to the Castle grounds overshadowed by the brooding castle ruins. The grounds were heavily overgrown in Victorian times but have since been cleared to provide a delightful grassed venue for events like concerts, fairground and Dickensian festivals.

William the Conqueror had shown his power by building not only the castle but also a cathedral and we next visited what remains of the cathedral cloister garth. The rose garden established by Dean Hole, founder of the first



King's Orchard

national Rose Show in 1858, no longer exists, but valiant efforts are being made to find an original Dean Hole rose.

Our cathedral guides then escorted us to a gem within the cathedral precincts,



The new garden in making at Restoration House

not open to the public: King's Orchard. This is like a secret garden hidden from view by high stone walls, an oasis of calm with mature fruit trees including a medlar. Thence we wandered through the Vines, a small shady park where the monks once had their vineyard, to Restoration House for lunch, provided by the Friends of Wisdom Hospice.

Restoration House is so-called because it is believed that Charles II stayed the night there on the way to his coronation in London the next day. The house is at least 400 years old but it is the garden which captures the visitor's imagination.

There is no firm evidence about the garden in Tudor times. The current owners have been on a mission over the last twenty years to create a stunning compartmentalised garden. We were able to admire the major sections which are already complete – yew court, lily pond garden and the magnificent recreation of a renaissance water garden overlooked by a rather bizarre gazebo. Further work is in progress to create an exotic plant section as well as an orchard to remind of us Kent's fruit-growing history.

We spent a happy couple of hours wandering freely around the garden, chatting to gardeners as well as to the owners, Robert Tucker and Richard Wilmot, and left with amazing impressions of this ambitious project.

The Garden Party

By Richard Stileman

Our first garden party for many years was held in our President, Lady Kingsdown's marvellous garden at Torry Hill which she had generously allowed us to use for the afternoon of Saturday July 21st. Another glorious summer day greeted over 100 members and other guests, including The High Sheriff of Kent, the previous Chairman of KGT, the County Organiser of the NGS, and



George Plumtre and John Brackenbury

many others influential in gardens in Kent. Not only did guests have the pleasure of strolling around the garden and grounds of Torry Hill, but they also enjoyed an amazing array of cakes and other delights prepared by the Trustees and their partners. George Plumtre, Chief Executive of the National Garden Scheme was our



Lady Kingsdown in conversation with Caroline and Paul Lewis

guest speaker who not only described and praised the vital role of the KGT in garden conservation in Kent, but also made a presentation to John Brackenbury, head gardener of Torry Hill, who has just retired after 40 years' service there.

Colour in the Marshes

By Richard Stileman

A visit to Church Farm, Warehorne and Boldshaves, Woodchurch

Although this was yet another hot day with parched lawns all round, the colour evident in both gardens was quite outstanding, helped just a little by some judicious watering. The Doyle's garden is picture perfect, both the 'soft' larger border with its blues, pinks, purples and whites, and the west 'hot coloured' border was at its peak; an object lesson from Elizabeth Doyle for anyone wanting to use yellows, oranges and reds in abundance. On the south side of Johnny's studio – which was open for us to enjoy his current



The west border at Church Farm Warehorne.

work – is a formal pond area with plantings amongst old fruit trees. A small meadow, then leads down to Johnny's secluded woodland garden

We were lucky with our lunch stop, the Six Bells pub at Woodchurch. They offer an excellent value 'small portion' lunch on Thursdays, but the portions were actually immense! Appreciated by all.



Boldshaves - South front with double borders.

Peregrine Massey started our tour at Boldshaves with a lucid explanation of the history of the house and its land, including its name. Apparently a 'shave' is an ancient term for a shelter belt, and Mr Bold hailed from Yorkshire! The current house was designed by Robert Marchant, the first pupil of Lutyens, but little is known of the original garden layout and the only clues to its likely SE facing and symmetrical character come from two surviving Magnolia soulangiana which are placed in exactly the positions one might have expected. Peregrine who has created the garden almost entirely himself over a 20 year period, took us on an anticlockwise circuit around the garden which allowed him to show many of the discrete areas, as well as a cleverly planted area where each section is devoted to just one colour – including green.

A marvellous tea rounded off of a very satisfactory day.

Hidden Gardens

By Richard Stileman

Hidden Gardens of the City of London and The Skygarden

This was a memorable day. Lucky with the weather, (predictably) lucky with our guide Diana Kelsey, and lucky to gain easy access to the Skygarden and see London from all points of the compass; from Wembley Stadium to The Olympic Stadium and from Alexandra Palace to Crystal Palace.

Meeting at the Museum of London Diana took us, via mostly new raised walkways, on a zig zag walk following the old



Part of the group outside the Salters Garden

Roman wall of London. The City Corporation has done wonders in this part of London encouraging bold and imaginative plantings in old squares and

new city corners, complementing towering new office blocks, and almost always with glimpses of the Roman fortifications. We lunched at a meze restaurant in the shadow of St Paul's, and afterwards looked at some of the new plantings around Wren's masterpiece before walking eastwards towards the Skygarden in Bishopsgate.



Looking South from the Skygarden

Most of us would have seen the 'walkie-talkie' building from our train journey into London, and most of us would have thought what an out-of-proportion monster it is! But a speedy visit to the 35th to the 38th floors quickly removes one's misgivings and replaces them with admiration for the concept of and execution of a sloping tropical garden spread over three stories with restaurant and bars, and with those amazing 360 degree views around the whole of the city.



Book Review

Head Gardeners

Ambra Edwards with photographs by Charlie Hopkinson

Published by Pimpernel Press, 2017.

ISBN 978-1-910258-74-3

List Price £35 (Amazon and other online outlets, just over £20)



This is a marvellous book. Ambra Edwards has succeeded in showing how the work of 14 head gardeners maintains and enhances the varied places for which they have become the key guardians. The book is based on extended interviews during which the author has delved into the motives, passions, preferences and prejudices of this dedicated group, exploring along the way how they work with their employer, sometimes jostling for the freedoms to express themselves as well as to honour the history and spirit of the gardens.

Kent readers will be delighted – but not surprised – that Troy Scott Smith of Sissinghurst is one the chosen few; and just over our county border, Fergus Garrett's genius at being able to follow – though not at all slavishly – Christopher Lloyd's innovative planting at Great Dixter is given loving treatment. But the selection of gardens and their gardeners elsewhere in the country is delightfully and helpfully eclectic. Whilst Broughton Grange, Packwood House, and West Dean might have been expected, it's a special pleasure to read about the head gardeners' roles in restoring the gardens at Lowther Castle and Trentham Park, and the special challenge of converting Charles Jencks' musings into sustainable garden features at the Garden of Cosmic Speculation in Cumbria. Ambra Edwards gleefully includes the work of Ned Price in developing a wildlife orientated garden at The Weir in Herefordshire, and the eccentric approaches of Beatrice Krehl at Waltham Place. At Merton College in Oxford, Lucille Savin's deft work in balancing the needs of a supreme historical setting with modern relevance is given a careful appraisal. Finally, the author emphasizes the social dimensions of gardens and gardening by looking at the work of former drug addict Paul Pulford at the Queen Elizabeth Hall roof garden in London, and that of Carol Sales in fashioning a garden best suited to the needs of damaged war veterans at Headley Court.

The chapters on the individual head gardeners are preceded by an extended Introduction looking at the role of head gardeners in the history of garden making, about their relationships with owners and garden designers, about whether they are appropriately recognised... and even whether they and their teams are paid enough! All good, pertinent, stuff.

The cover of this book – happily showing Troy Scott Smith at Sissinghurst – gives equal typographic weight for author Ambra Edwards and photographer Charlie Hopkinson. Hopkinson's work for this book is exceptional, capturing the feel of the places, and hinting at the characters of the players, in a subtle and slightly off-beam way, the back view of Fergus weaving through a damp and overgrown High Garden, the pensive Lucille at Merton College, the rubbish truck at West Dean, and then the best photograph I have a yet to see of the Snail Mount at the Garden of Cosmic Speculation. The photos and the text together make for a very successful piece of publishing.

By Richard Stileman



Privacy Matters

The Kent Gardens Trust privacy policy can be seen in full on the website.

Thank you for returning the consent forms for the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in May. We had over 80% return which was amazing. For those of you who didn't

make it, we are enclosing a letter and a further form with the newsletter. We do need your permission to contact you.

Finally, we are considering a password entry system on the website to be used when buying tickets for events. This is now standard practice and helps to prevent hackers acquiring personal details. It will add one step in the process but will help to give peace of mind.

The Dover Project 2015 - 2018

By Cilla Freud

In 2015 Dover District Council (DDC) commissioned researchers at the Kent Gardens Trust to research several private and public gardens as well as open spaces. DDC has developed a Heritage Strategy and the aim of the project was to assess and record the significance of the sites for future strategy reviews and historical records.

The team consisted of ten researchers and Harriet Jordan the editor, they were assisted by the Principal Heritage Officer for DDC, Alison Cummings, and the Historic Environment Record Manager, Paul Cuming, from Kent County Council. Six private gardens, four public spaces and one site owned by a trust were chosen.

The privately owned gardens that were recorded are not open to the public are as follows:

The smallest is in Woodnesborough and had been designed by Anthony du Gard Pasley (1929-2009). One of the many gardens he also designed was Pashley Manor in East Sussex, he was a member of the Institute of Landscape Architects and wrote several books on gardening.

Denton Court has a C17 house with extensive surrounding parkland much of which has remained unchanged.

Fredville Park is well known for its ancient oaks and sweet chestnuts.

St Albans Court dates from C14 and retains a Tudor walled garden and a C19 Pulham fernery.

Wootton Court has pleasure grounds, parkland and a kitchen garden that reflect the ideals in fashion for designed landscape of the late Georgian period.

Dane Court parkland has an existing C18 house and is now surrounded by open grassland.

The Public Parks and spaces that were recorded are as follows:

Crabble Athletic Ground is an example of an early C20 sports ground that was originally used for cricket and cycling, now used by Dover Rugby Club, the original pavilion still stands.

Connaught Park was laid out in 1884 and was renowned for its flower beds and large pond with a fountain. Although these features have not been kept up, it is still a well used public park that has splendid views over Dover Castle and the docks.

Mark Wood Gardens is a typical example given by a generous benefactor to provide recreational space for the public within new housing developments.

The Butts, Rope Walk, Mill Wall and The Bulwark make up more than two thirds of the town walls that surround Sandwich. As such, they form the major part of the most complete example of medieval earth ramparts that have survived in England to the date of this report. From the mid C19, they have been managed to provide public walks and open space.

The Pines is run by The Bay Trust and is an example of an organically run garden. It was founded in 1971 and contains many mature trees such as walnut, fig and pomegranate.

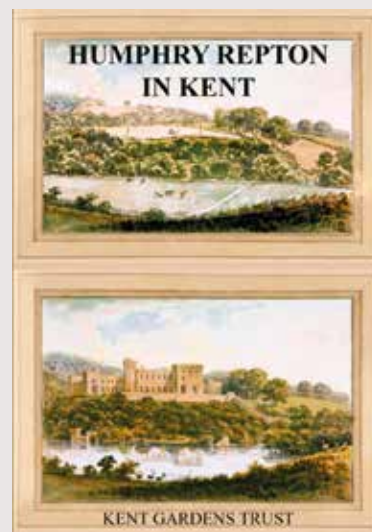
The research group met every 6 months to discuss the progress of the reports and during this time a couple of outings were enjoyed by the group, one to Connaught Park and the other to The Pines. At the end of the project we visited The Salutation in Sandwich and had an interesting tour of the gardens with Steve Edney the head gardener, we lunched at the Crispin Inn and then walked the town walls.

Many thanks to the researchers in the team whose hard work made this project possible they were Paul Lewis, Martin Meare, Michael O'Brien, Terri Zbyszewska, Barbara Piper, Peta Hodges, Jane Davidson, Elizabeth Cairns, Rosemary Dymond and Cilla Freud. Thank you also to Harriet Jordan our editor whose patience and help encouraged us all, Alison Cumming who worked with us to fulfil the Dover Heritage Strategy and Paul Cuming who formatted all our reports to make them presentable and uniform.

For more information about the reports visit the KGT website where most of the reports will soon be posted.

Humphry Repton in Kent

As part of a country-wide celebration of the work of the 19th century landscape gardener Humphry Repton, the Kent Gardens Trust research team have produced a beautifully illustrated book describing Repton's five commissions in Kent, with a short introduction to his life and artistic principles. Humphry Repton in Kent is a companion volume to Capability Brown in Kent. It is 140 pages long and will interest not only garden historians but anyone keen to know more about the social history of the county and the lives of the leading figures of the time. Our research has revealed fascinating and hitherto unknown contemporary letters and drawings and has made extensive use of Repton's famous Red Books.



Copies are available through our website www.kentgardenstrust.org.uk and all good book shops. Price £10 (Kent Gardens Trust members £8), postage and packing £3.50 extra.

KGT members may obtain a discount code by contacting our secretary Lynn Phillips at lynn.phillips@kentgardenstrust.org.uk Alternatively, a cheque for the appropriate amount may be sent to Lynn Phillips at Yew Cottage, Station Road, Eynsford, Kent DA4 0ER.

Kent Gardens Trust, Registered Charity No. 298861

Tel: 07432 633 697 | Website: www.kentgardenstrust.org.uk | Email: info@kentgardenstrust.org.uk