



Kent Gardens Trust Newsletter

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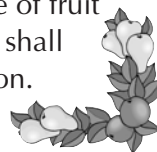
Spring 2010

FRUIT FRUIT FRUIT FRUIT



This issue celebrates Kent's great tradition of fruit growing with two articles on fruit. The first by Joan Morgan, the celebrated writer and authority on the history of the fruit and vegetable garden, is about John Bunyard of Maidstone, one of the most influential horticulturists of his time. The second is by Tom La Dell, a trustee of KGT who is closely involved with the Brogdale Collections Appeal which aims to promote and safeguard the National Fruit Collection at Brogdale, near Faversham. Kent has been the centre of fruit growing in England since at least Tudor times and still has 80% of its orchards. On 25th April we shall be visiting Brogdale in blossom time when Joan and Tom will tell us more about the fruit collection. I hope that many of you will join us and support the Brogdale project.

Elizabeth Cairns



EDWARD BUNYARD 1878-1939: NURSERYMAN OF ALLINGTON, KENT

Edward Bunyard is remembered for his book, *The Anatomy of Dessert*, a celebration of all the fruits grown in England during the inter-war years, but he was far more than a 'fruit gourmet' as he is often titled. Bunyard was a nurseryman, head of the family business at Allington, outside Maidstone, and also a pomologist, rosarian, prolific writer and pillar of the Royal Horticultural Society, a member of its Council and numerous committees. The Nursery, founded in 1796, had been set on its feet during the 1880s and 1890s by Edward's father, George, who established its reputation for fruit. Edward joined the business in 1896 and took over the reins when his father died in the influenza epidemic of 1919. He and his younger brother, Norman, maintained its pre-eminence for fruit and place at the leading edge of the trade through the wide range of varieties the Nursery sold, spectacular displays staged throughout the year at shows and exhibitions and Edward's numerous articles in the gardening press, his books and imaginative marketing strategy.

He targeted the burgeoning numbers of amateur, leisure gardeners by appealing to their aspirations, promoting fruit for the epicure who cared more about its

taste than its crops.

Luscious Kirke's Blue plum, for instance, was 'rather a shy bearer but too good to omit on that. Edward continued to sell the old varieties and re-popularised 'lost' ones, such as his favourite, Orleans Reinette. This accorded with his search for quality which often lay with the old varieties and his campaign against the reduction of choice in the market place.

Edward pushed his point home through his writings, particularly in *The Anatomy of Dessert* (1929); the term then referred specifically to the finale of fresh fruit. His epicurean approach extended even to sales of vegetable seeds through a booklet entitled '*Vegetables for Epicures*' published annually during the 1930s. Fine fruits and vegetables found a place also in *The Epicure's Companion* (1937), a compendium of ideas and anecdotes on the pleasures of the table which he produced in collaboration with his sister Lorna and additional help from sisters, Frances, the artist, and Marguerite.

Bunyard was first and foremost a nurseryman, but he always styled himself a pomologist. His position as



Edward Bunyard (1878-1939).

Britain's leading authority on fruit varieties, secured by his *Handbook of Hardy Fruits* (1920, 1925), gave prestige to the Nursery's reputation in selling trees 'true to type', but his greatest, lasting legacy in this field, aside from the Handbook, is the National Fruit Collection at Brogdale in Kent, the largest collection of temperate fruits in the world, growing on one site. Bunyard, as a member of the RHS Council, initiated and helped set up the Commercial Trials at RHS Wisley Garden in 1922. Funded jointly by the RHS and the Ministry of

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Agriculture, its aim was to evaluate fruit varieties for the commercial grower. Side by side with the Trials, at Bunyard's insistence, a collection of fruit varieties was begun as a living 'reference library' so that those submitted for trial could be checked to make sure they were not an old one under a new name. The collections moved to Brogdale Farm near Faversham in the 1950s to become the Ministry's National Fruit Trials with Bunyard's protégé, Jock Potter, as director until his retirement in 1972. The Trials closed in 1989, but the Defra Collection now comprises over 4,500 varieties of apples, pears, plums, cherries, vines, nuts quinces medlars, currants and gooseberries. This enduring tribute to Bunyard and Potter's determination and foresight forms the nation's contribution to global conservation of food crops. It is the envy of the world and has been open to the public since 1990.

During the 1930s Bunyard's collecting passion was roses and in particular old fashioned, so-called, European roses: the ancient gallicas, damasks, albas, and centifolias or cabbage roses. Bunyard was responsible in a large measure for their rehabilitation into gardens through his book *Old Garden Roses* (1935) and because he sold them through the Nursery. Bunyard fired the imagination of Vita Sackville West at Sissinghurst who planted her own garden of old roses in 1937. Her diaries record that she turned to Bunyard for advice and he came to lunch at least once at Sissinghurst. The Nursery also supplied roses to other pioneering collectors - Lawrence Johnson at Hidcote and Helen Muir at Kiftgate both in Gloucestershire and Constance Spry, who began her collection at Chelsfield, near Orpington in Kent. Through contact with enthusiasts who were welcoming old roses back into their gardens Bunyard discovered lost varieties and as with fruit, his studies to establish the identity of a rose took him to the literature and also paintings. It seems he never failed to fit in a visit to an art gallery on his trips abroad and explore their collections of Renaissance masters and the Dutch flower painters. Gratifyingly his painstaking research substantiated the genetic studies on old roses that were then being undertaken. Outside his professional life, Edward



A tunnel of pears probably grown at the Allington Nursery.

was a pianist, keen photographer, linguist of some talent and he delighted in good conversation, food and wine. His apprenticeship in Paris in the nursery trade as a young man had given him a love of France, its cuisine and wines that led to membership of London's leading dining clubs and restaurants, such as Boulestin's in Covent Garden; Marcel Boulestin wrote an introduction to one of the issues of *'Vegetables for Epicures'*.

By the late 1930s he was living the high life, visiting Florence every year and we hear of trips on the Blue Train, from Calais to Nice, to enjoy the roses and company of the Riviera gardening set. The drain on his income must have been significant and there were his hobbies of antiquarian books and fine wines, let alone expenses incurred on behalf of the RHS and the time that it took him away from the Nursery. All this may have contributed

to the terrible circumstances of his death. Bunyard shot himself on 19 October 1939 in the Royal Societies Club, his London club, in Saint James's. The explanation given for his suicide was financial trouble and he died virtually penniless. His death was all the more tragic given his immense achievements. But his enthusiasm and scholarship live on in his books, the National Fruit Collection and the National Trust's collection of roses at Montisfont Abbey made by Graham Stuart Thomas, who too acknowledged a debt of gratitude to Bunyard.

Joan Morgan



A biography of Edward Bunyard was published in 2007: The Downright Epicure; essays on Edward Bunyard, edited by Edward Wilson, published by Prospect Books; main contributors Edward Wilson and Joan Morgan.

THE NATIONAL FRUIT COLLECTION

The history of fruit growing in gardens is an ancient story. Fruit was probably cultivated around dwellings long before purely decorative plants. Fruit is produced on trees, shrubs, herbaceous perennials and annuals so they have a place in every garden however large or small.

Productive fruit plants were regarded as ornamental and an essential part of the garden until the creation of, usually walled, kitchen gardens in the 18th century. We should not think they were banished from the garden as they were considered unattractive. They did not suit the English landscape park or later flower gardens that developed in the 19th century. Owners were, though, proud of their kitchen garden both for their layout and display and their superb and sophisticated horticulture. They were an essential part of the tour of any garden and landscape and admired as much as the latest acquisitions in a fashionable pinetum or border.

Fruit was an essential part of the diet of the household and would be used to impress guests with unusual fruit, perfect specimens and out of season. Fresh fruit at the end of a meal is an Italian tradition that became the height of fashion in the 19th century. While the development of fruit varieties, new crops and cultivation developed in larger gardens fruit was grown by everyone to supplement diets of grains and green vegetables where meat was scarce. We now know that fruit is exceptionally good for you in a balanced diet. It is full of vitamins, minerals and fibres so necessary for the relatively comfortable and sedentary lives that we now lead.

The oldest surviving garden in Europe is the mosque garden in Cordoba from around 982. It is a delightful courtyard of orange trees on the same grid as the columns on the mosque. Moorish and Arab influenced gardens were also common in Sicily and this fashion spread north in Italy in medieval times. They were a major influence on the development of the Italian renaissance garden from the 1400s onwards. Those gardens were mainly formal designs with a lot of box edged formal shapes (which originated in

Roman gardens) with dwarfed fruit trees in them.

The fashion for these gardens moved north to France, the Netherlands and Britain and fruit plants were essential in their design and use. As training became more sophisticated it could be used to show off the owner's skills as espaliers, cordons, arches, baskets, tables and many other shapes. This reached its peak at Versailles where Louis XIV had relegated the fruit and vegetables to the Potager du Roi, round the corner from the main gardens. The surviving garden at Westbury Court, Gloucestershire is from the early 1700s. It still retains the Dutch influence and has espaliered fruit trees on the walls in the main garden.

With the development of walled kitchen gardens, on the Versailles model, in Victorian Britain all the walls were covered in trained fruit trees. Exotic fruits were grown in glasshouses, including peaches and pineapples.

These kitchen gardens had a great variety of apples, pears, plums, cherries and other fruits. They were developed by mainly British nurseryman to give the longest possible season of quality fruits for growers. Most of these are growing in the National Fruit Collection at Brogdale Farm.

Brogdale Farm is just south of Faversham, in the North Kent Fruit Belt, and is home to the National Fruit Collection. This is a collection of fruit varieties as living and fruiting trees and it is the most comprehensive and best documented in the world.

This is of great interest to gardeners and garden historians as the varieties go back over hundreds of years and they can be propagated for historic garden restoration and community orchards based on local varieties. The varieties for the restoration of the early 18th century garden at Westbury Court in Gloucestershire, in the 1970s, came from the National Fruit Collection and the plum stones from the Mary Rose, the Tudor warship, were identified with reference to the NFC.

The National Fruit Collection belongs to the nation and Defra (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) run it. Defra's interest is in the genetic resources of the varieties for breeding fruit crops for the future. These are needed so that we can respond to climate and environmental change, pests and diseases and develop cultivation techniques using traditional and new varieties suited to the new conditions. As a gene bank, it has international status as part of the UK's contribution to the United Nations' International Treaty on the Conservation of Plant Genetic Resources.

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The Apple Collection

The number of varieties is amazing. There are 2,200 apples, 650 pears, 320 plums, 300 cherries and smaller collections of grapes, cobnuts, cider apples and perry pears, quinces, medlars, apricots, currants and gooseberries. Within the Collections there is a great diversity of apples that are eating, cooking and cider varieties, plums that include eating, cooking, gages, mirabelles and quetsches while the cherries include sweet ones, morellos and the old, sour Kent duke cherries.

They came to the collections from many different countries and now propagation material is sent to research stations around the world.

There is a long history in Britain of collecting fruit varieties, even from the early days of the Royal Horticultural Society two hundred years ago. The collections were brought together in 1952 in a new research station at Brogdale. This is detailed in Joan Morgan's article on Edward Bunyard. When this was closed in 1990 the National Fruit Collection was kept for the nation. It is now managed for Defra by Reading University. The Collections are managed by the

charity Brogdale Collections (www.brogdalecollections.co.uk).

There are guided tours of the Collections from April to November and three fruit festivals this year, Cherry, Cider and Apple. At the festivals there are free tastings, as many varieties as possible are available to buy, local produce and crafts are sold and there are the usual family attractions. These are held over a weekend and there are also day events for the blossom, soft fruit, plums and Kentish cobnuts. The farm also has a permanent Market Place with shops selling local foods and crafts.

Brogdale Collections has plans to expand the visitor attraction to tell the story of the Collections and the history of fruit growing. It will create a series of a dozen gardens showing how fruit cultivation developed in gardens from medieval times to the present day. Cultivated fruits were developed from wild species, often originating in some unexpected countries, and we can use the old varieties in the Collections to show how modern ones have developed from them. Were the older ones better or is this just a memory? Brogdale will let people answer this for themselves. There are many ways to

grow fruit, from the big standard trees of the traditional orchards to the dwarf trees that are planted now. But these are not so new, they were known in 16th century Italian gardens!

The visitor centre will explain the Collections in depth and the wonderful stories associated with many of the varieties. Some were bred by nurserymen but many others were found in gardens or by roadsides. Brogdale is also about the future and we will explain the genetics underlying plant breeding and that the principles of the genetics is pretty much the same for humans. With so many attractive and tasty varieties the charity will work to interest people in the value of fruit in a healthy diet and the current debates about what we should eat.

This is a unique opportunity to use the National Fruit Collection to do so much more than just be a genetic resource. It is part of Kent's heritage.

More information is available on www.brogdalecollections.co.uk and on fruit generally, and the Friends of the National Trust Collection at Brogdale, at www.fruitforum.net.

Tom La Dell

VISIT BY MEMBERS TO COBHAM HALL

Thirty-eight members of the Kent Gardens Trust arrived at Cobham Hall on a very wet morning in October, 2009. We gathered in the Library where our Chairman, Elizabeth Cairns, greeted us with the sad news that our lecturer, Tom Wright, the well-known gardens expert from Wye College, was indisposed. Tom had been much involved in the work of reclaiming the gardens of Cobham Hall and some of its trees following the considerable damage by the disastrous storm of 1987.

Sylvia Hammond, one of the guides at Cobham Hall and a member of the Friends of Cobham Hall Heritage Trust, and armed with an excellent set of slides and a great love of the place, had volunteered to take over. We all enjoyed her talk on its history and the changes that had taken place. The early Cobham family had lived in the Manor House and farmed the estate. They are especially remembered by the magnificent set of memorial brasses (said to be

the best in England) in the church there, starting with Joan de Cobham who died circa 1310. In 1362 Sir John de Cobham founded a College of a Master and four priests to say Masses for the souls of his ancestors. This building, which was next to the church, was adapted in 1595 to form 20 almshouses which still exist today.

William, 10th Lord Cobham, began developing the house in 1580, first with the building of the long south wing, then the north wing of equal length. He then began changes to the central block. A year after their completion the 11th Lord Cobham forfeited his title and estate after he and his brother had plotted to put Lady Arabella Stuart on the throne. There was to be no more building at Cobham for a further 60 years.

The Dukes of Lennox and Richmond inherited the house in 1661. The centre block was built by 6th Duke and the work included the elaborate gilded ceiling of the great hall – where we later all enjoyed our lunch! We saw

there a copy of the van Dyck portrait of the Lords Bernard and John Stuart, sons of the 3rd Duke, both killed in the Civil War. The original is in the National Gallery.

In the eighteenth century the owners received the title of the Earls of Darnley, Humphry Repton being later asked to improve the grounds. His Red Book for Cobham was made in 1790. This was explained by our next speaker, Stephen Daniels, Professor of Cultural Geography at the University of Nottingham, who has written an excellent book on Repton's works. Repton had been set up as a merchant by his parents but had little financial success. On their death he expended his legacy on a small estate where he studied its landscape, noting how it could be improved. He had always enjoyed drawing and began sketching out possible improvements. When asked by landowners what was possible he used to demonstrate these skills to show the landscape as it was and then draw his suggested changes on a flap that could be placed in front

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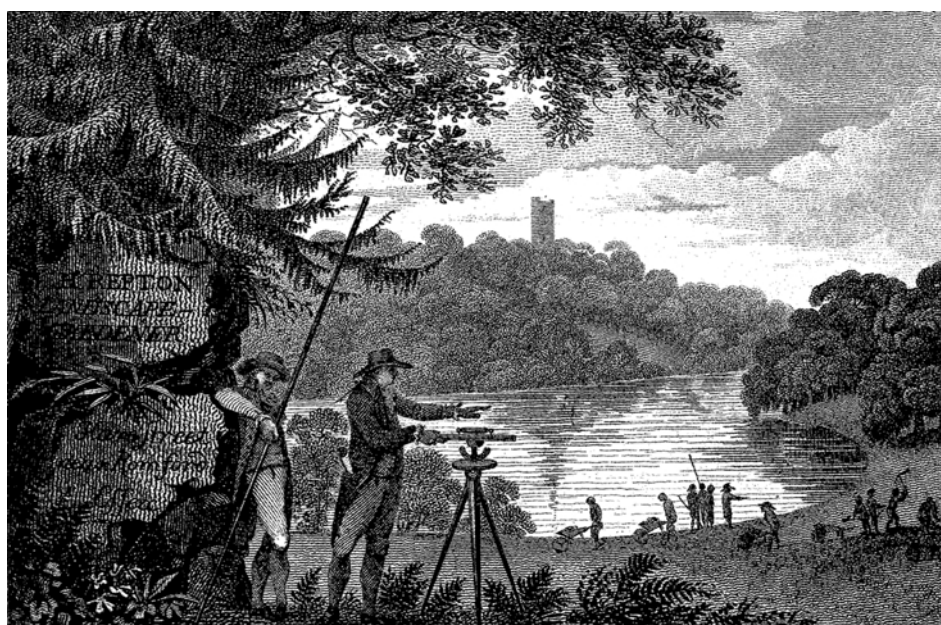
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showing how such changes would improve the aspect.

This was the basis for Repton's famous Red Books and I was most interested to see a copy of this for Cobham Hall, together with a copy of his trade card. Repton was not impressed by all the long avenues of trees that radiated from the Hall and had all removed except the one that runs SW towards the village and leading to the entrance. He advised the softening of the appearance of the house with climbing plants. Roses and clematis flourished on the Hall walls, scenting many of the rooms. Changes were made to Lady Darnley's garden, further areas of planting laid out and the pools enlarged. Many trees and a great variety of species were planted. Repton worked intermittently at Cobham for 25 years, frequently returning with further suggestions for change.

In the afternoon a small group enjoyed a garden tour with the Estate Manager, Major Terry Curran, whilst the rest of the party visited the recently restored Darnley Mausoleum. Thomas Wyatt designed this quite magnificent Mausoleum for the 3rd Earl of Darnley in 1783. (It was said that only Lord Carlisle of Castle Howard had a more magnificent one.) It contains spaces for 32 coffins but these were never used



Trade card of Humphry Repton

because of a dispute with the Bishop of Rochester when he inspected it at the behest of the 3rd Earl. It was thus never consecrated and fell into disrepair after centuries of neglect.

With the break-up of the estate in 1957 and the construction of the M2 in 1968 the Mausoleum was frequently vandalised. The worst attack was on Guy Fawkes' night in 1980 when the crypt was packed with petrol cans and tyres ignited, reducing the interior to a ruin. Compensation money came when the Channel

Tunnel Railway was built through the northern edge of the Park. This brought about the decision of Gravesham Borough Council, English Heritage, National Trust, Kent County Council, the Woodland Trust and Cobham Hall to work together. The restored Mausoleum was handed over to Gravesham Council and the National Trust in 2009 and is now open to the public on certain days. The work won the Country Life Award of the Year in 2009 and it certainly has been beautifully restored.

Mary Starbuck

TOM TURNER GARDEN HISTORY LECTURE

A big thank you goes out to Tom Turner on behalf of the Kent Gardens Trust, for a fascinating lecture on garden history from 2000BC to 2000AD.

Tom explained garden history and the development of garden design from the beginning (22000BC!!) in relation to the features of the design of Sissinghurst. He showed how avenues, orchards and garden features had their origins long ago and they have kept their basic forms throughout history.

The lecture focused on different countries and individual inputs and fashions into garden design. From Egypt and West Asia to Europe and the Americas. He traced the development of art, philosophy and the social use of outdoor space. The origins of western garden design are to

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be found in the Middle East (West Asia) with later influences from around the world. After around 1800 the influence of western garden design philosophy became worldwide, as did, in reverse, the influence of the wider world on Europe.

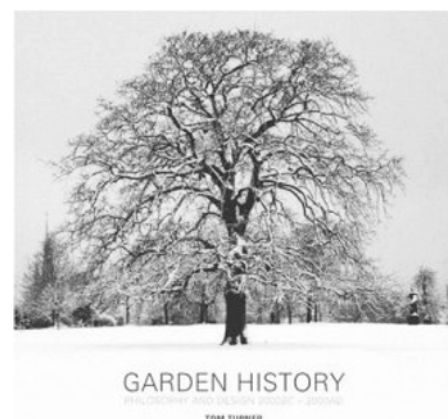
Tom Turner referred to his book *Garden History* which traces the philosophy of garden design, to Ancient Greece and Rome, and especially to the work of Plato and Vitruvius and on to the diversity of West Asian and Chinese traditions.

The lecture was held at Lenham Community Centre from 19:00 - 21:00, with a friendly atmosphere, people of all ages and interests within horticulture, from professional landscape architects to garden enthusiasts. The evening started off with wine and a home made buffet

with wide variety of nibbles, finished off with some festive mini mince pies! To read more:

<http://www.gardenvisit.com>

Lydia Wood



"Garden History Philosophy and Design 2000 BC to 2000 AD" (Spon Press 2005: ISBN 0415317487) Tom Turner's book is available to buy in paper back for £25 on Amazon.

Gardening for our Bumblebees

Listening to bumblebees buzzing around our lavenders and buddleia is characteristic of a sunny summer's day spent in our gardens. Without these beautiful endearing insects, life in our gardens would not be the same.



Short haired bumblebee (*Bombus subterraneus*) Photo Andy Tebbs

Over the last 60-70 years 98% of our wildflower meadows have been lost due to agricultural intensification. This change in our countryside has had dramatic consequences on our bumblebees. Two species have been declared extinct and many others are experiencing rapid declines. The loss of these important pollinators would not only impact our countryside and gardens, but would devastate our commercial agricultural industry which is heavily reliant upon the pollinating services provided by bees.

The Bumblebee Conservation Trust is working hard to conserve our native bumblebees. Along with project partners Natural England, RSPB and Hymettus is due to release an extinct species, the short-haired bumblebee, this summer at Dungeness in Kent. Habitat creation and restoration, along with wildlife gardening is key to the success of this reintroduction. Each individual gardener can play a vital role in conserving these furry creatures. Gardens make up over one million hectares in the UK. They provide greatly needed foraging habitat for bees and they can help to ensure their future survival.

To help protect our bumblebees please consider your garden planting schemes. Bumblebees need flowers from March to September, by planting the right kind of flowers you will be providing pollen and nectar to help our bumblebees thrive. Traditional cottage garden flowers and native wildflowers are ideal bee-friendly plants, and look superb in border displays. Plants such as bluebells, lupins, foxgloves, viper's bugloss, buddleia, catmint, delphiniums and lavender are perfect for providing our bumblebees with plenty of food.

Hazel Jackson

For more information on our conservation work and flowers for bumblebees, please visit our website: www.bumblebeeconservation.org

THE PARKS AND GARDENS UK DATABASE www.parksandgardensuk

Two years ago I reported on this ambitious project to create a website which would provide access to a database containing information on about 7,000 parks, gardens and designed landscapes. The project was initially funded by a Lottery grant of £1 million which has been used to design and create the website and to enter details of about 4,000 sites. Additional funding was found which has allowed the project to continue until June 2010 and it is hoped the money will be found to enable it to continue to develop.

The website is well worth a visit. The records of all parks and gardens which are on the English Heritage Register are already on the database and there is a steady flow of information on other gardens. In addition to information on the gardens themselves it contains details on garden designers, owners and plant collectors, articles and research and many entries on particular aspects of garden history.

Individual Gardens Trusts are invited to contribute more information to the database and some of our research volunteers participated in a training day last year to show them how this is done. I hope that we will soon get a programme of putting records of the many interesting gardens in Kent under way. Naturally owners will be consulted before details of their properties are put onto the database but those who open their gardens to the public may find that having an entry on Parks and Gardens UK will be a good way of getting additional publicity.

Anyone who is interested in having details of their garden on the database should please contact me.

Elizabeth Cairns

VOLUNTEERS

In October the Research Group put their newly acquired skills to the test at St Ronan's School near Hawkhurst. With the kind support and encouragement of the Headmaster William Trelawney-Vernon and the Bursar John Buckle the group researched the site, carried out a full survey and wrote up the results in a report which complies with the format used by English Heritage for sites on the Register of Parks and Gardens. Their efforts were given constructive criticism by Virginia Hinze and the final version will be submitted to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council for inclusion in the Kent Compendium of Parks and Gardens.



Terrace at St Ronan's

St. Ronan's, which was formerly known as Tongswood was found to have a long and interesting history going back to the 16th century. The garden was mainly created in the early 20th century with formal lawns and terraces, a large rock garden which was much admired at the time and a pinetum.

The Tunbridge Wells research project has been a great success resulting in the creation of up to date records of 28 sites in the borough, a group of trained researchers and a blueprint for future research projects elsewhere in Kent. I certainly enjoyed the training and events enormously and so, I think, did the other members of the group.

I am delighted to report that Sevenoaks Council has asked us to carry out a similar project for them and we are now waiting for information on the sites which should be researched.

Elizabeth Cairns

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