

# The Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens for Dover



## Birnam



April 2017



# **Birnam**

Woodnesborough, Kent

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## INTRODUCTION

This site description and accompanying dossier have been prepared by the Kent Gardens Trust as part of its wider review of ***The Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens***. This part of the review was carried out for Dover District Council (DDC) from 2015-2017 and covers sites within the Dover local authority area. The reports detail the historic nature, content, current state and significance of the sites currently identified in the ***Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens*** for the Dover local authority area along with others identified by DDC.

### ***Dover District Heritage Strategy.***

The Dover District Heritage Strategy 2013 (DDHS) seeks to ensure that heritage plays a clear role in shaping any future regeneration, development and management decisions. To achieve this aim the DDHS contains a series of recommendations intended to promote and enhance the protection and enjoyment of the Districts heritage assets. A heritage asset is defined as a “building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing)”<sup>1</sup>.

The review carried out by the Kent Gardens Trust supports the following DDHS recommendations:

- *Recommendation 9: Systems should be put in place to ensure that historic environment information and advice is readily accessible to local communities to help them shape the places in which they live.*
- *Recommendation 14: a Local List of Heritage Assets should be developed...gardens identified within the Kent Gardens Compendium and any enhancement of the Compendium should be included in the Local List.*
- *Recommendation 23: Opportunities should be sought and support given to local communities, groups and individuals in researching their past, develop projects with them that identify, enhance understanding of the Districts heritage assets and involve them in condition assessment, monitoring, management, promotion and interpretation of the assets:*

### ***How was the review carried out?***

The review has been undertaken using Historic England’s criteria for identifying the significance of local heritage assets to provide a consistent approach<sup>2</sup>. A template for the reports was developed by DDC, building on the experience of previous work by the Kent Gardens Trust. The heritage values of the historic

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<sup>1</sup> National Planning Policy Framework 2012

<sup>2</sup> Historic England “Conservation Principles: Policy and Guidance” 2008

park or garden subject to the report are defined within the Statement of Significance.

The extent of the area identified represents the current surviving area of the designed landscape, the boundary line generally reflecting the maximum extent of the historic gardens or parkland (although there are exceptions such as where land has been irreversibly lost to development). The boundary line takes no account of current ownership.

### ***How will the reports be used?***

- a) The revised list of sites has the potential to support development of a Local List<sup>3</sup> of Heritage Assets in Dover, should the Council progress with the recommendation in the DDHS in the future. The list of sites researched and evaluated in this review would be subject to consultation as part of any Local List development and is therefore not intended to be final.
- b) In response to recommendation 9 of the DDHS, the reports will be made publically available both on the DDC website and to the Historic Environment Record held by Kent County Council.
- c) The reports will help to inform future funding applications for historic spaces by the identification of significance.
- d) The review will help to inform future policy making, conservation and/or any development of sites, and contribute to the understanding, and where possible enjoyment, of these heritage assets by the identification of the significance of key historic character, features and association including that of setting and viewpoints.

Further information is available from the contacts listed below. The partnership would like to thank the volunteers and owners who have participated in this project and given so much of their time, effort and hospitality to complete this challenging and rewarding task.

Dover District Council  
White Cliffs Business Park  
Dover  
CT16 3PJ  
[www.dover.gov.uk](http://www.dover.gov.uk)

Kent County Council  
Heritage Conservation  
Invicta House  
County Hall  
Maidstone  
ME14 1XX  
[www.kent.gov.uk](http://www.kent.gov.uk)

Kent Gardens Trust  
[www.kentgardenstrust.org.uk](http://www.kentgardenstrust.org.uk)

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<sup>3</sup> Historic England "Local Heritage Listing": Historic England Advice Note 7 2016



**KENT  
WOODNESBOROUGH  
DOVER**

**BIRNAM**

**TR 297 564**

## **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

### **EVIDENTIAL**

A 1960's designed garden with many of the original plants still in-situ.

### **HISTORICAL**

The garden was designed by the well-known landscape gardener and author, Anthony du Gard Pasley who also designed Pashley Manor, Parsonage Farm and Old Place Farm all open to the public. Du Gard Pasley was associated with leading landscape architects, Sylvia Crowe and Brenda Colvin.

### **AESTHETIC**

The garden was designed to enhance the Colt bungalow, the view of the garden from the picture window in the conservatory gives the room a feeling of space and light and connection to the outside, as does the view of the pond from the kitchen window.

## **SUMMARY OF HISTORIC INTEREST**

A 1960s garden designed by Anthony du Gard Pasley (1929-2009). The main features of the garden, and some of the planting from the original plans, still exist. Du Gard Pasley visited the garden frequently and added features to the garden during the 1990s. Recently, other features have been put in to this well cared for garden showing how a garden can evolve to enhance an original design. It is a private garden and not open to the public.

## **CHRONOLOGY OF THE HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT**

Prior to 1912, the Birnam site was arable land (tithe map, OS maps). In 1912, the East Kent Light Railway was opened, initially to support the development of the East Kent Coalfield, then later, in 1928, the line provided some passenger services. Woodnesborough Halt, where the steam trains stopped to be filled with water, was located on the Birnam site (OS map 1929-1952; Kent Historic Environment Record TR25 NE 68).

The line was closed in 1951 and soon afterwards, Mr Douglas Miller and Mr Robert Stanford -Tuck DSO, DFC (1916-1987), a renowned fighter pilot in WW2, purchased an area of the former railway land to start a mushroom farm. Mr and

Mrs Miller bought a rectangular plot of land to the south-west of the farm so they could be near the business, and on this had a Colt bungalow built. They approached the landscape architect Anthony du Gard Pasley for his advice on the planning and planting of the garden.

Anthony du Gard Pasley was a skilled landscape designer who created private gardens in Britain, Switzerland and Southern France. In south-east England, he helped design and plant Pashley Manor, Parsonage Farm and Old Place Farm. After completing his National Service, he became a paying pupil of Brenda Colvin CBE (1897-1981), founder of the Institute of landscape Architects, and then worked in the office that she shared with Sylvia Crowe DBE (1901-1997). During the 1950s he became the first associate of Sylvia Crowe whose practice worked mainly on the design of new towns, power stations and roads, and in 1958 he became a member of the Institute of Landscape Architects. In the 1960s, du Gard Pasley set up his own practice in Tunbridge Wells. He wrote two books *Summer Flowers* (1977) and *The English Garden School* (1987). In 2013, a book based on his lectures at the English Gardening School was published called *Garden and Landscape*.

Pasley's style, which he describes in *The English Garden School*, was to make garden rooms to compliment the house and evoke a feeling of surprise and space. He did this, affording shelter for the exposed site, at the 0.4ha rectangular garden at Birnam. In his book, he discusses the idea of a 'borrowed view' and the use of circular beds to evoke the feeling of space and to disguise the rectangular shape of the garden. Pasley's ongoing interest in the garden can be seen to the south of the house where he designed a paved parterre, possibly during the late 1960s.

In 1993 Pasley redesigned the kitchen garden to the north of the bungalow, separating the area into two with a yew hedge. A new parterre was laid in the area to the east behind the yew hedge, by Keith Westcar on behalf of Saunders House Landscapes, in October 1993. During 2014, the strip of land to the north of the garden abutting the mushroom farm was grassed over and roses and lavender planted against the mushroom farm wall towards the east side of the site.

Mr Miller died in 2000 and his widow, Jean, continued to run the farm until it was no longer a viable business due to cheaper imports of mushrooms from Eastern Europe.

The property remains in private ownership.

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

### **LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING**

Birnam is situated on the west side of Hammill Road approximately 2km east of the village of Woodnesborough. The garden occupies a rectangular plot, 100m x 38m, and surrounds the bungalow. Hammill Road forms the east boundary of the



site, with, to the south and south-west, arable fields. To the north, the garden is bounded by the disused mushroom farm. The west and north-west sides of the garden are shielded by beech hedging while to the south-west there is a screen of trees. The landform is flat and without the protection of the beech hedges the garden would be exposed to prevailing winds. The soil is heavy clay.

## **ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES**

The main entrance to the house and garden is situated on the east side of the site on Hammill Road. There is also an entrance on the north-east boundary of the garden to the former mushroom farm.

## **PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES**

The bungalow is a timber-framed construction described as a "Colt". William Colt founded the factory making houses based on pre-fabricated panels, in Bethersden, Kent in 1919 and the company continues in business. The houses are made of wood and are meant to be well insulated, warm in winter and cool in summer.

## **GARDENS**

From the entrance on Hammill Road leads a wide drive with a raised flower bed on the north side and parking spaces for cars. The bungalow stands directly in front of the entrance. To the south of the is a paved parterre, laid out by du Gard Pasley, probably in the later 1960s. On the parterre are six large concrete planters surrounded by low box hedging in which lavender is planted. An obelisk stands in the western corner, as suggested by Pasley, and the statue of a dog has been added by the owner. The parterre is surrounded by a yew hedge behind which, on the southern boundary of the site, is the spring garden. Some of the original trees bordering this garden have been felled due to overcrowding.

The main body of the garden is to the west of the bungalow and can be viewed from the conservatory. The garden beds retain the curving shapes shown on Pasley's original design (1964-65) which covers the eastern half of this area. The beech hedges that were planted in the 1960s have grown up such as to divide the garden into a series of rooms and thus to preclude an overall view of the garden. In the west corner of the garden lies the secret garden with its 'borrowed view' of the fields outside the boundary of the garden, as discussed in Pasley's writings.

Pasley's garden scheme of the mid 1960s included detailed planting plans. Some of the planting from the 1960s survives including three oriental hawthorns standing to the west of the bungalow on the far lawn. Some of the roses have also survived from this time, growing in the bed next to the hawthorns, such as the variety 'buff beauty'. Many of the original shrubs can still be seen.

To the north of the bungalow lies the kitchen garden which retains the layout as redesigned by Pasley in 1993. The circular pond is placed such that it is visible

from the kitchen window, the yew hedge behind it separating the area into two. The parterre to the north of the hedge was landscaped by Keith Westcar on behalf of Saunders House Landscapes, in October 1993. The area is laid with a brick path that surrounds a triangular bed. Behind this is a raised bed and there is a statue of a man facing the entrance to this part of the garden. Recently (early 2010's), the gap between the garden and the disused mushroom farm has been grassed over and four different varieties of lavender and roses planted against the farm wall.

## **REFERENCES**

### **Books, articles**

Anthony du Gard Pasley, *Summer Flowers, Allen Lane*, 1977, London

Alexander R and Du Gard Pasley A, *The English Gardening School: A complete course in garden planning and design*. Michael Joseph, 1987.

Brookes J and Alexander R, *Garden and Landscape: The lectures of Anthony du Gard Pasley*.  
Packard Publishing 2013.

Kennet C, *The History of WH Colt and Son & Company Ltd*, Pitcairn Knowles, 2105.

Margaret Naunton Davies. *Unpublished report on Birnam garden*. Available from Kent Gardens Trust. 1991. This survey was carried out for the Kent Gardens Trust and includes photographs showing the garden at this date.

### **Plans**

Anthony du Gard Pasley, 1964-65, Plan of Garden. Kind permission of Jean Miller.

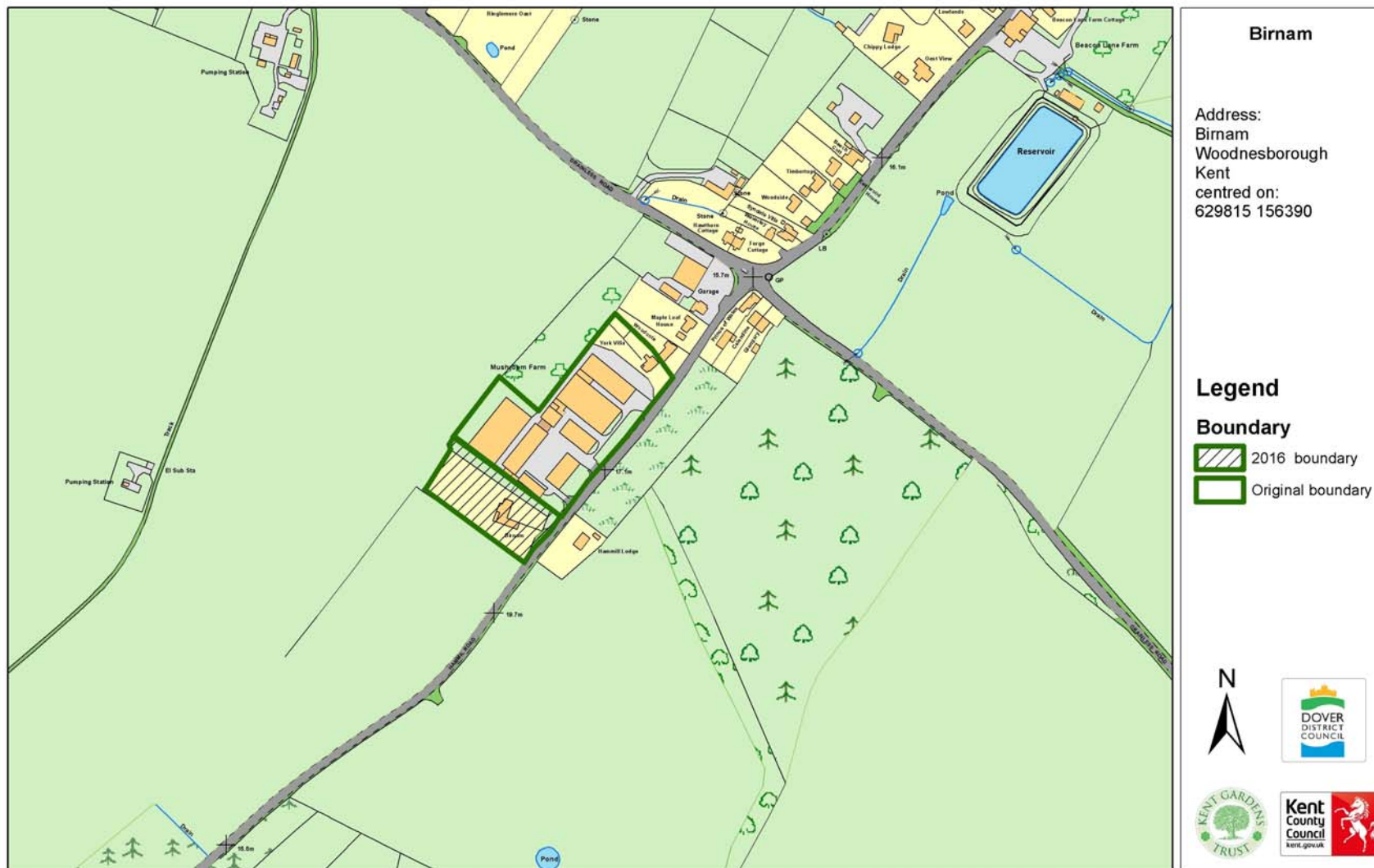
### **Photographs**

By Cilla Freud during 2016

**Research and written by Cilla Freud**  
**Edited by Harriet Jordan**

# Kent Compendium of Historic Parks & Gardens – 2015-2017 review of Dover District

Fig. 1 Boundary map



Produced by Kent County Council

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0 0.035 0.07 0.14 Kilometres



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## Fig. 2 Ordnance Survey 4<sup>th</sup> edition 25" map (1929-1952)

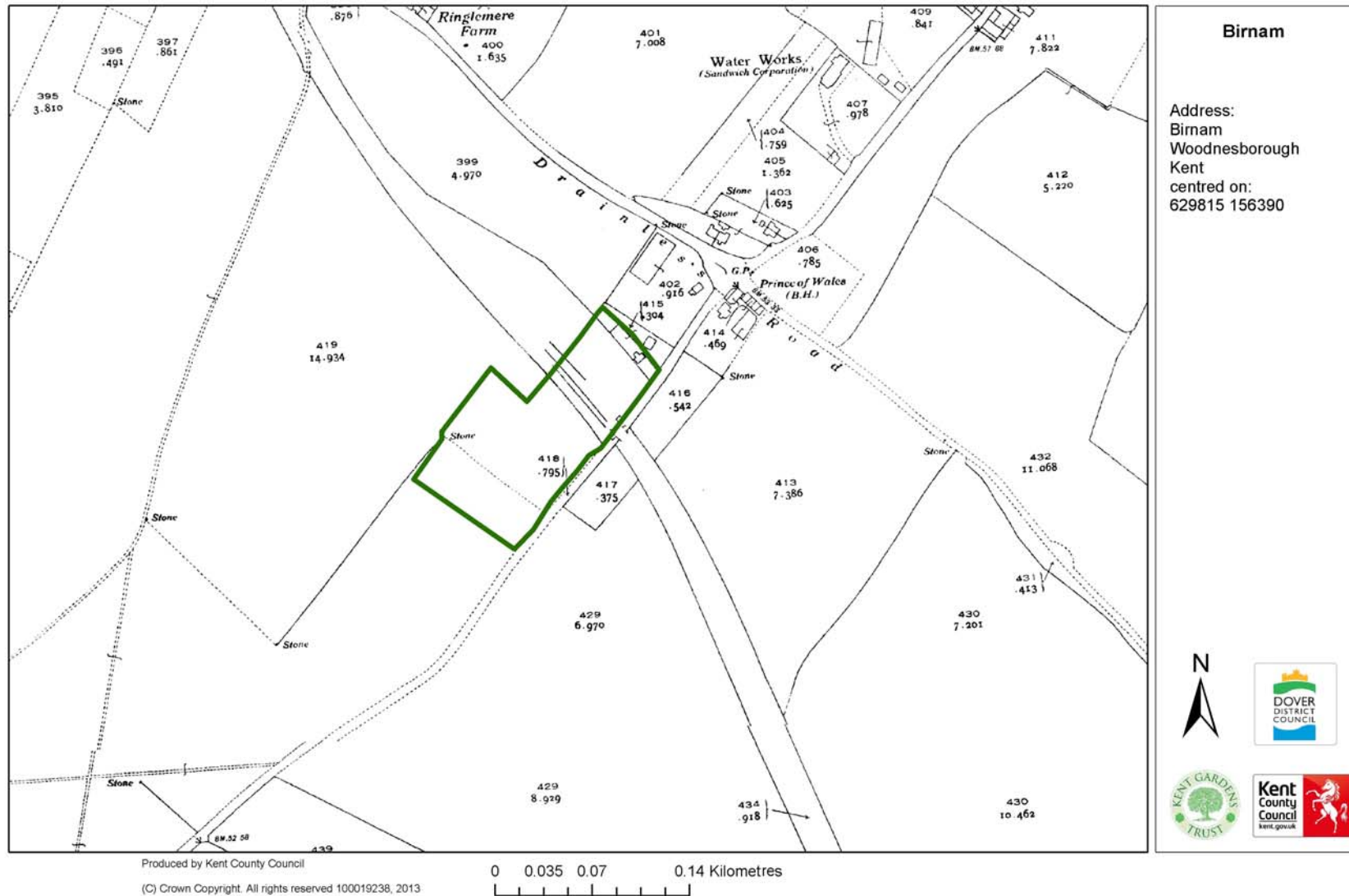
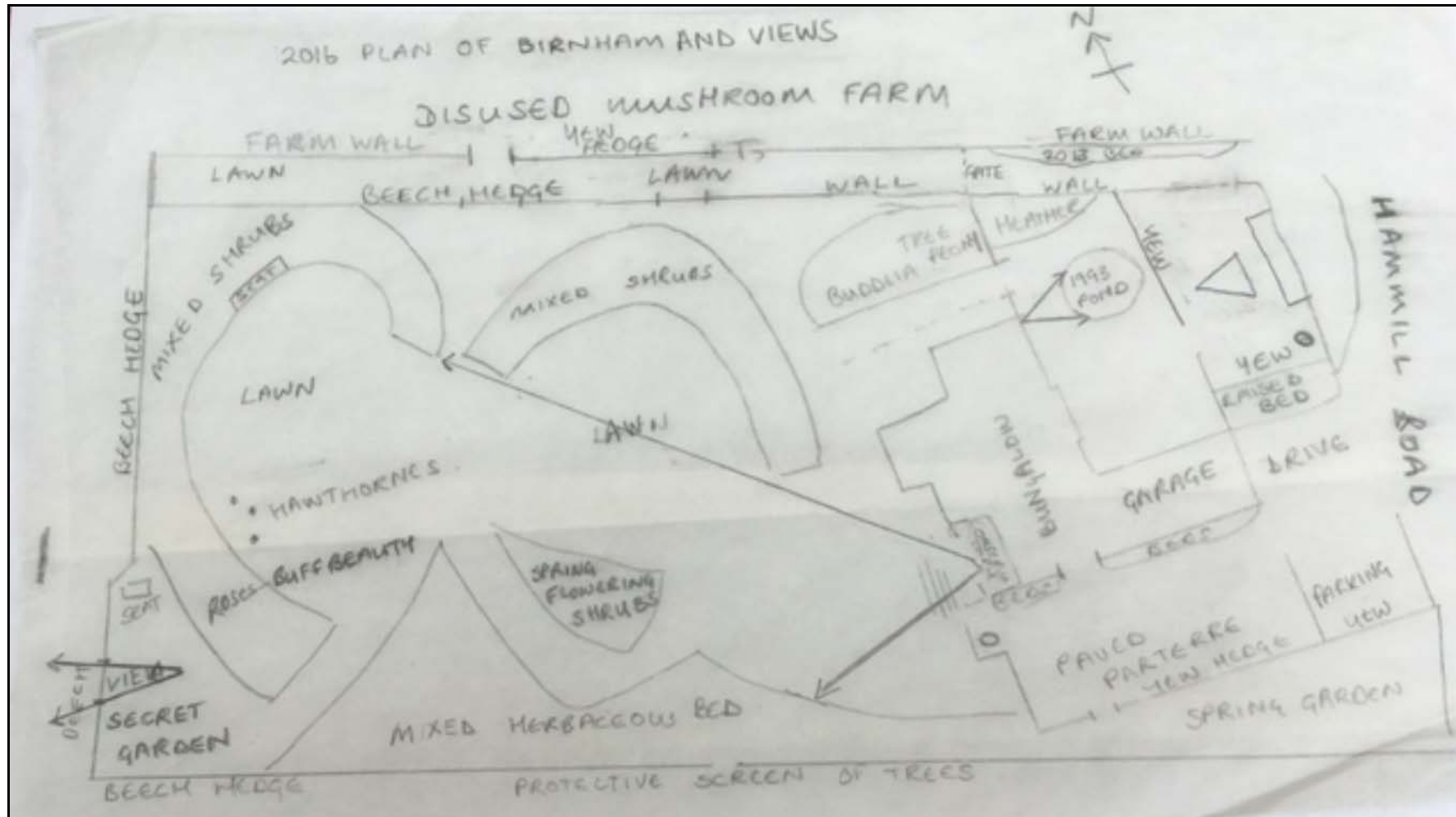




Fig. 4 Plan of garden 2016



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**Fig. 5 The Secret Garden with borrowed view**



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**Fig. 6 The 1960s parterre**





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**Fig. 7 Pasley's 1993 pond**



**Kent Compendium of Historic Parks & Gardens – 2015-2017 review of Dover District**

**Fig. 8 Three Oriental Hawthorns and Rose Buff Beauty**



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**Fig. 9 Side of the Mushroom Farm with 2013 Lavender and Rose bed**

