

Sussex Gardens Trust

Encouraging the protection, conservation and evolution of the local garden heritage

Newsletter No. 77 Summer 2020

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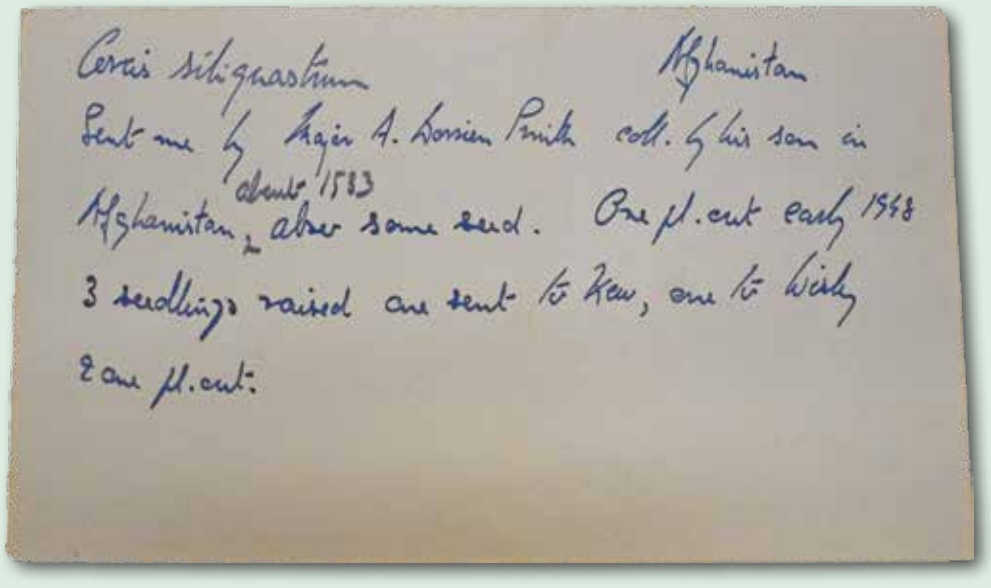
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Digging in the archives: an index card written by Frederick Stern, c1900s, founder of the chalk garden at Highdown in Worthing, describing Cercis siliquastrum, given to him by Dorrien-Smith of Tresco Abbey Gardens. Read about plant hunting at Highdown on page 20. Photo © Annelise Brilli

From the Editor

Welcome to our special edition of the newsletter celebrating 25 years of SGT. When the founders of the Trust came together for the first meeting in 1995 they were agreed that gardens and green open spaces were 'an essential part of life'; the desire to help protect and conserve the parks and gardens in Sussex lies at the heart of SGT. In this issue we highlight some of our achievements in fulfilling the Trust's aims: conservation, research, and opportunities to enjoy and learn more about our local parks and gardens. We also turn back the pages of the newsletter to recall some key moments in the story of SGT.

The slowdown in life over the last few weeks has led to a surge of interest in gardens (39% are gardening compared to 6% learning a new language according to an Ipsos Mori poll) and this issue features a mix of ideas and experiences all garden-related. Susi Batty reports on three exciting recent designs for gardens in Sussex, there's a member's encounter with her own garden during lockdown and Elaine Tyler continues her series on favourite gardens she has recently visited. Back in 2018 members enjoyed a guided tour of Highdown Gardens in Worthing and Plant Heritage Officer, Annelise Brilli, describes

her hunting journey at Highdown– in the garden and in the archives.

If you are spending a little more time at home than usual, there's a diverse selection of reading suggestions from our reviewers to offer an escape to a green open space.

Sally Ingram

From the Chair

I would like to look at the future. This newsletter celebrates our progress over the twenty-five years since our formation in 1995. We have achieved much in research, conservation and publications and we have also enjoyed ourselves. Without that essential ingredient, the enjoyment of like-minded spirits in lovely gardens and open space, life would be much flatter. Continuing the good work requires energy and enthusiasm and new ideas. There is a piece in this newsletter on interesting new garden design projects in Sussex – the garden owners have new ideas: so must we.

What will the future look like? Goodness knows. In 1995, the digital world was there, of course, but its impact across business, communications and entertainment has grown exponentially. The worldwide web was still in its infancy, 1995 seeing the launch by Microsoft of Windows 95 with its first Internet Explorer. It is hard to remember that Google came into being only around 1998. Mobile phones (often in-car) had been widely used in business in the 1980s (Ernie Wise apparently made the first public mobile phone call in 1985 dressed for the occasion in Victorian attire outside a Dickensian pub) but use exploded from the later 1990s. I could go on but the point, the inescapable point, is that the Sussex Gardens Trust has to enter the digital world. Emails and, more recently, bulletins, are sent out electronically but this is toe in the water stuff – efficient and necessary as communication but the message does not go much wider than our membership.

In Sussex we have no reliable print method of reaching that wider public. Local newspapers are fragmented and vehicles for advertising. *Sussex Life* has a very limited circulation. Gardening magazines and the weekend national newspapers are not at set at a county level and so not suitable for a county-wide society to get its message out to its county audience. We are forced to adopt social media to find a younger audience to hear of the good work we do, to engage the public in the debate over issues of wider concern (such as public parks) and to find our membership of the future – a slow build perhaps without immediate return but we need to look to see who will get things done ten years down the line whether as membership secretary, events organiser or newsletter editor. Your current committee will have retired! Someone prepared to take us down this route would be a godsend.

We have been reluctant to put our newsletter simply online – there is something about relaxing to read paper in one's hands – but, to provide value to our members during the current lockdown, we have resorted to issuing a temporary bulletin which can, for cost and time reasons, only be issued online. About 70% of our members read it which is encouraging. Many members will have become accustomed, however reluctantly, to using Skype and Zoom for contact with families and friends. If Covid-19 persists, we may have to consider using Zoom or something similar to hold our lectures rather than abandon the very popular programme. It will be new and perhaps difficult. I hope it does not come to that but other organisations have started. I listened in on a Landscape Institute webinar on Parks and Open Spaces the other day. It was an easy process.

Lockdown is easing gradually but, as I said in the bulletin, it is so disappointing that we have had to cancel this summer's garden visits. Over the ten years we have been in Sussex we have been on many garden visits but I am surprised that there are always more possibilities. Our visits programme is always turning up unexpected joys – they only need to be ferreted out and we have been lucky in our team who do this. There will never be an electronic substitute for these, I am happy to say.

Societies are social entities with a purpose. Proofreading the articles, I read somewhere that during lockdown 39% are gardening. If we only had 1% of the Sussex adult gardening population as members, that would be stunning. Spread the word about Sussex Gardens Trust amongst your friends young and old, forward the bulletin to them. Let us all add vibrancy to our Trust by getting our message out.

Marcus Batty

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF THE SUSSEX GARDENS TRUST

Sowing the seeds

By Sally Ingram

The foundation of Sussex Gardens Trust can be traced back to its precursor of the late 1970s, the Sussex Historic Gardens Restoration Society which in 1980 became the Historic Gardens Trust (Sussex) and continued until the mid-1990s. The HGT (S) was a charitable Trust affiliated to the Civic Trust, its trustees comprising private garden owners in East Sussex and several representatives from the world of horticulture and garden history. Its aims are still recognisable in those of our current county garden trust: primarily to locate, survey and classify historic gardens in Sussex, to offer grants for restoration of features and to run educational events such as study days to raise awareness with the public of the vulnerability of parks and gardens and the need for their protection. Significantly it was during this period that work began on compiling a national Register of parks and gardens and, with the East Sussex County Council landscape team, the Trust liaised with the Department of the Environment (it became English Heritage in 1983) to suggest sites worthy of being added to the Register.

The partnership at this time between East Sussex County Council and the HGT (S) was original and influential. The Council's landscape team, led by chief landscape architect Bill Mount, provided the research, design and execution of restoration projects whilst private owners, significantly the American John McCarthy, offered match funding. Horticulturally-based trustees of HGT (S) such as Chris Brickell and Arthur Hellyer raised the profile of the Trust in the professional garden world, whilst leading garden historians such as Mavis Batey supported the development of rigorous research. Mavis and Marion Waller, who was deputy head of conservation at the Royal Pavilion, both contributed their time and knowledge to the Pavilion Gardens restoration. The influence and commitment of this Trust enabled a number of successful projects to be completed, such as the repair of park buildings and tree clumps at Brightling, the ice house at Newick Park, a physic garden at Michelham Priory, the Brickwall chess garden and the first phases of the recreation of John Nash's drives, paths and Regency plantings in Royal Pavilion's Garden.

Gradually a number of county garden trusts with similar aims to protect and conserve historic gardens, but now with a supporting public membership, began to emerge, Hampshire being the earliest. Mindful of these developments happening in other counties and aware that East Sussex County Council was no longer able to support the HGT (S) with staff time, a meeting was held in early 1994 to set up a county gardens trust for Sussex. The HGT (S) had to be wound up as a charity to allow for the setting up of a newly-formed Sussex Gardens Trust, but its influence on shaping the county gardens trust movement should not be overlooked.

Two founder members who both played a significant role in the setting up of SGT and promoting its aims recall those early days of planning, organising and gathering support that would lead to its success. **Sally Walker** was the Trust's first Secretary, set up the Research and Recording group, established the Conservation Committee and was Chair of SGT from 2001 until retiring from the role in 2011. **John Bennett** was the first Chair of SGT, took on the crucial role of Treasurer until 2006 and then continued to give his support to Council until his retirement in 2015.

> "In 1994 a small group which included Marianna Hollis, Virginia Hinze, Alison Bullar, Ian Graham from Sussex Council and Barbara Abbs met to consider how best we could go about setting up a county gardens trust. It was agreed that the group would start the process by creating a membership organisation with the aim of researching parks and gardens in East and West Sussex. An initial meeting was planned and a list created to inform as many of those who might be interested in a trust of our intentions. A member of the group nobly typed a long list of all the suggestions and, to ensure a personal touch, we hand wrote envelopes to send invitations to the great and the good.
>
> "Virginia Hinze, who had worked for many years for East Sussex as a landscape architect, had been involved with the restoration of the gardens at the Royal Pavilion and we were delighted to be offered the use of the magnificent Music Room for our opening event on 16 March 1995. Lord Healey was our keynote speaker

and Lorna McRobie described her work in forming the Avon Trust and the London Historic Gardens Trust. Virginia gave an illustrated talk of important sites in Sussex that needed support. It was then decided that a steering group should be formed with twenty members and more than a hundred guests pledged their support. The Trust was on its way."

Sally Walker

"My first acquaintance with the idea of the formation of a gardens trust for Sussex was when I joined the small gathering of people pursuing this possibility in the spring of 1994. The members of the group brought a wide range of knowledge, experience and relevant professional backgrounds. Some had helped in the formation of the (then) National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens branch for Sussex some twelve years earlier. The exploratory group received much encouragement, advice and assistance from many quarters: the National Gardens Trust, County Trusts already in existence, East & West Sussex County Planning Officers and several individuals having particular expertise. After due consideration of all the factors it was decided that we should attempt the formation of a Sussex Gardens Trust and, to gauge membership potential, an open public meeting was arranged at the Royal Pavilion. It was hoped that a programme of lively and informative talks would effectively illustrate the group's proposals; numerous invitations were extended and all possible publicity obtained. The heartening response resulted in encouraging support and the generation of sufficient enthusiasm for a now much enlarged Steering Group to be formed to proceed with the creation of a County Trust for Sussex.

"Of course, there was much more to be done before it could truly be said that a County Trust was up and running. Thereafter came the need for many meetings to set down and agree the various arrangements for the management and running of the Trust, ensuring appropriate financial and legal safeguards. The first meeting of the Steering Group took place on 27 April 1995 at Wakehurst Place. Structure, aims and objectives were agreed and three sub-groups were formed to develop management and business plans for Trust activities. Advice was taken to seek Charitable and Limited Company status and, with WSCC support, a Memorandum and Articles of Association for the Company and Constitution for the Charity were relatively quickly produced. Members and guests were invited to a pleasant full day meeting held at West Dean College on 9 December 1995 when members of the Steering Group signed up as Directors of the Company and Trustees of the Charity to be known as the Sussex Gardens Trust. After many more meetings and much hard work, it became possible to say with some certainty that the Sussex Gardens Trust was finally up and running and could be recognised as the Trust we know today!

"As Chairman, I thoroughly enjoyed those early days of cut and thrust debate, careful deliberation and decision-making. It was made possible by the dedication, expertise, patience and good humour of all those who made their very effective contributions in so many different ways."

John Bennett



SUSSEX GARDENS TRUST

NEWSLETTER No.1 JULY 1995

EXPLORATORY MEETING at BRIGHTON ROYAL PAVILION

FIRM DECLARATION of SUPPORT for the FORMATION of the TRUST

On Thursday 16th March, 1995 almost 200 people were assembled under the newly restored and glittering roof of the Music Room of the Royal Pavilion. They had made the journey from throughout both East and West Sussex - from Chichester to Rye and from East Grinstead to Eastbourne. They had come to declare their interest and support for the formation of a Sussex Gardens Trust. This was greatly encouraging. As chairman for the evening, I welcomed everyone, including representatives of East and West Sussex County Councils, District Councils, garden owners, professional practitioners and many associated bodies. A particular welcome was given to the Chairman of the Association of Garden Trusts and the President of the Garden History Society.

Lord Healey opened the proceedings, stating his - and Lady Healey's - firm conviction that gardens and landscapes were an essential part of life and living and that they should be a most treasured heritage throughout our country. Revealing deep appreciation, keen knowledge and concern, Denis Healey pointed us towards the duty we so clearly recognised: the need to uphold our Sussex heritage of parks and gardens.

Lorna McRobie described her work undertaken over several years in forming the Avon and, more recently, the London Historic Gardens Trust. Lorna was able to combine this valuable experience with her professional knowledge and expertise gained in carrying out restoration and management of historic parks and gardens for English Heritage. Then Virginia Hinze, who has worked for East Sussex for many years as a Landscape Architect, gave an illustrated account of important sites throughout Sussex which need varying degrees of support - and demonstrated to us the variety and interest contained in the work our Trust can aspire to achieve.

It was agreed that a Steering Committee should be formed and soon after the meeting sufficient names were put forward for this to be constituted with 20 members. In addition, at least 100 persons pledged that they would join the Trust as foundation members and expressed their particular areas of interest. ***John Bennett***

THE STEERING COMMITTEE

On 27th April, 1995 the Steering Committee held its first meeting at The Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, Wakehurst Place at the kind invitation of the Trustees. After a most wide ranging discussion of the aims and objectives of the Trust it was agreed to form three sub-groups to further the immediate work required.

These three groups have held meetings during May and June, ...(continued back page)

• *FIRST GARDEN VISIT to CLINTON LODGE, FLETCHING* •

The Trust's first garden visit for prospective members will be to the superb garden at Clinton Lodge, Fletching. This garden combines both historical and modern elements and is an interesting example of the natural evolution of a garden over the years. It will thus provide an ideal begining for the Trust's activities. Further details are inside.

◆◆◆ ***The garden is fully described on the following page*** ◆◆◆

No. 1. The first edition of SGT Newsletter July 1995

Since the formation in 1995 SGT has been committed to the protection, conservation and evolution of garden heritage in Sussex. As a charity and in line with guidance from the Charity Commission the Trust has a duty to ensure that this core objective can be shown to have a benefit for the wider public and over the last 25 years a number of groups have been set up to initiate and develop our key aims. The **Research and Recording** group investigate historic and important sites, providing an important body of material for use in conservation, and their studies are shared through an inventory of Sussex parks and gardens as well as reports, publications and the SGT Newsletter. Research contributes to the work of the **Conservation Committee** which seeks to protect the historic designed landscape in Sussex by contributing to and influencing Local Authority planning policies. The **Small Grants Scheme** was set up in 2004 to offer help to sites of local significance and since that time a record amount of funding has been provided for projects that may not have been supported by larger funding organisations. To raise awareness of garden history, and our heritage in the county, each year a **programme of lectures**, study days and gardens visits is planned and coordinated by an active team of SGT volunteers, giving members and their guests the opportunity enjoy the diversity of parks and gardens that make up the landscape of Sussex.

In this special edition of the newsletter marking 25 years of the Trust we celebrate these initiatives that ensure the original aims continue to be fulfilled.

Research and Recording

By Jennie Starr

Researching designed landscapes has been fundamental to the work of the SGT since its inception. One of the first tasks was to identify sites across Sussex which had not been researched and recorded, but which might be at risk of unfettered development. Founder members Sally Walker and Barbara Abbs prepared a list of potential sites for West and East Sussex respectively. Over the following years many of these sites were recorded and researched and details can be found on the Trust website. Today we are used to accessing a vast amount of information instantly on the internet, but the early researchers had to spend long hours in the county record offices and record all their findings by hand. Even now, of course, research involves working through the physical archives and visits to sites. The Trust has always sought to respect the wishes of the property owner, and many owners have valued the research that has been carried out. As a result of the good relations which have been fostered, many owners have themselves become members of the Trust and enabled visits to their gardens for fellow members to enjoy.

During the last twenty-five years, the Trust's environment has changed. Sussex has seen an unrelenting pressure on land-use, with many more sites subject to redevelopment. Cultural institutions have also changed. A quarter of a century ago, research into historic gardens was carried out and supported by a large number of professionals. Now this work is carried out more often by enthusiastic volunteers, often of retirement age.

As this change took place our Trust, along with other County Garden Trusts, put even greater emphasis on mentoring for volunteer researchers. Today we are able to offer a comprehensive package on our website with links to other organisations such as the Gardens Trust. The Gardens Trust, through its Historic Landscape Project Team, offers invaluable support. All of this helps to ensure that our completed research is of a high quality and can be used by our Conservation volunteers and local planners amongst others.

Our research is available on our website and some of it is discussed in the SGT Newsletter; our aim is to make it available locally on Local Authority and County Council websites as well as nationally on Parks and Gardens UK website.

We are prompted to undertake research in many ways. The heart of the activity is, of course, that we enjoy doing it, but there are specific prompts. The reduction in budgets for maintaining public open spaces and the introduction of Local Listing led the Trust to focus on researching public parks and designed open spaces. Virginia Hinze, with her professional background and extensive experience, has been particularly helpful with the energy and passion that she has given us for this work. The newsletter has told many of the tales that have come from this in the last few years.

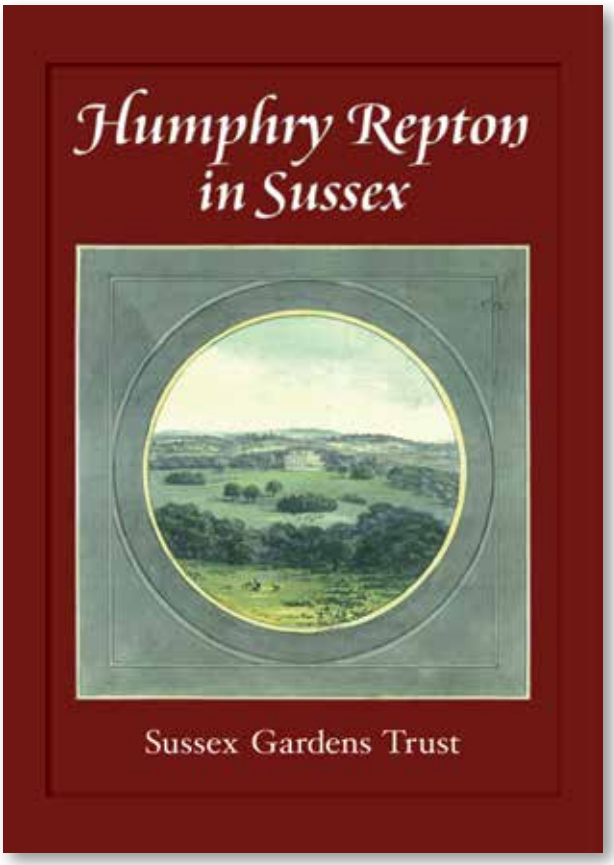
There can of course be a national interest in designed landscapes involving all CGTs. The last few years have seen anniversaries of Capability

Brown and Humphry Repton. Like many CGTs, the Sussex Gardens Trust sought to find all of the relevant sites and to research several of them. This resulted in two of our most recent publications 'Capability Brown in Sussex' in 2016 and 'Humphry Repton in Sussex' in 2018 ably edited by Susi Batty.

Some of our research is generated by our own interest. Currently there is a project to explore the designed open spaces along our Sussex coastline where we have a legacy of designed squares, parks and marine gardens. We see this as a unique feature of our Trust's landscape and it has drawn a number of new researchers into the Trust. We hope in future to offer our findings in a further publication. At times the research leads off-piste: who exactly was the young man shot in the Italian Gardens in Eastbourne in 1922?

Alongside this is the focus on Gertrude Jekyll gardens in Sussex. With the Jekyll plans for Sussex gardens now available on the internet, Sally Ingram is leading a group to explore what further we can learn about this influential designer's work in Sussex. We look forward to learning about this in the future.

It has been a very positive and productive quarter of a century and I am sure there will be new opportunities over the next twenty-five years; all members are very welcome to participate.



Conservation

By Jim Stockwell

We live in a county with a rich and diverse heritage which is at the heart of our local identity. Our heritage plays a vitally important part in making our society one of the greatest places in the world to live and work. However, there are many pressures on our environment that threaten to change things with the risk of permanent damage to our heritage. Heritage consists of many different and diverse things such as: palaces and piers, statues and shipwrecks, archaeology and archives, and moats and mills. The Sussex Gardens Trust is concerned with parks, gardens, cemeteries, memorial gardens, landscaped open spaces in our towns and cities and other types of designed landscape.

In the early years after SGT was formed a few Council members took an interest in commenting on planning applications, with support from the Conservation Officer of the Garden History Society. Gradually more members, with experience as landscape architects and knowledge of planning regulations, came on board and by 2002 a Conservation Committee was established to work with partners and encourage the protection, conservation and evolution of local garden heritage. Remarking on its successful first year, the winter newsletter in 2002 reported that the Committee had been actively involved in planning applications under consideration involving Stanmer Park, the University of Sussex and the new football stadium. Support had also been given at Frant Court, a Jekyll site, which at the time was under review for housing development.

Since its implementation, the Committee has been keen to establish links with others who have an interest in historic parks and gardens, including Local Authorities (planning officials and conservation officers), architects (especially landscape architects), developers, and heritage organisations.

Our umbrella organisation, the Gardens Trust (GT), is a Statutory Consultee for all planning applications affecting sites included on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England. Sussex has some 77 such sites, nearly half of which are Grade I or Grade II*. When, as a Statutory Consultee, the GT is notified of a planning application affecting any of these sites, it contacts SGT and our volunteers then look at the details and send comments to the Local Planning Authority (LPA).

Registered sites are only part of the story; we know there are many more parks and gardens in Sussex which deserve protection. Over the last twenty-five years a further two hundred sites have been recorded and researched by SGT volunteers and, in many cases, information from this research has been uploaded to the Parks and Gardens UK database (see https://www.parksandgardens.org/); but many sites have not as yet been fully researched and recorded. SGT volunteers are working to find out more about these from old documents and site visits. This work is crucial because it will support local authorities in developing their own local lists of parks and gardens of historic interest and help protect our heritage.

When sites undergo a radical change such as change of ownership or change of use, a series of planning applications often result. An example is the former Graylingwell hospital, opened in 1897 as a psychiatric hospital, laid out in an echelon arrangement to form a broad arrow plan, with open spaces known as "airing courts" which were used by patients for recreation and exercise. After the hospital closed in 2001 it was used for a short while for administrative offices. Since 2009 the site has been extensively redeveloped for housing in line with a master plan which recognised the historic significance of both the buildings and the park. In September 2015 a new planning application was submitted to build four further houses in one of the remaining "airing courts". In its response the Trust stressed the significance of the airing courts as part of the original hospital design and the interpretation of the locality. As a result the planning permission was refused and this important site has been preserved for future generations.

Comments submitted by SGT have always been publicly available on the websites of the Local Planning Authorities and the 90 cases reviewed since 2017 are also shown on the SGT website, along with the decision of the Planning Authority (https://www.sussexgardenstrust.org.uk/planning-casework-log). In the past year, SGT has commented on planning applications on a diverse range of sites ranging from a new amphitheatre at Knepp Castle, twelve luxury tree houses at Cowdray Park, conversion of a disused lavatory into a café at Queens Park Brighton, a new gardeners' compound at Leonardslee, and a Men's Shed at Groombridge Place.

The contacts which SGT has developed and the comments submitted have influenced the development of parks and gardens across the county over the past twenty-five years, thus providing a real public benefit for the community and helping SGT meet its obligations as a Registered Charity.



The Sussex Trust's Small Grants Scheme

By Virginia Hinze

Our Sussex Trust has always been firmly rooted in practical action to conserve our local garden heritage, right from our very first meeting held in the Royal Pavilion in March 1995. The back page of our first Newsletter (July 1995) records our objectives, one of which, in words we still use 25 years later, is *'the gathering of practical, technical and financial expertise and information to assist and support owners in the conservation and management of specific sites'*.

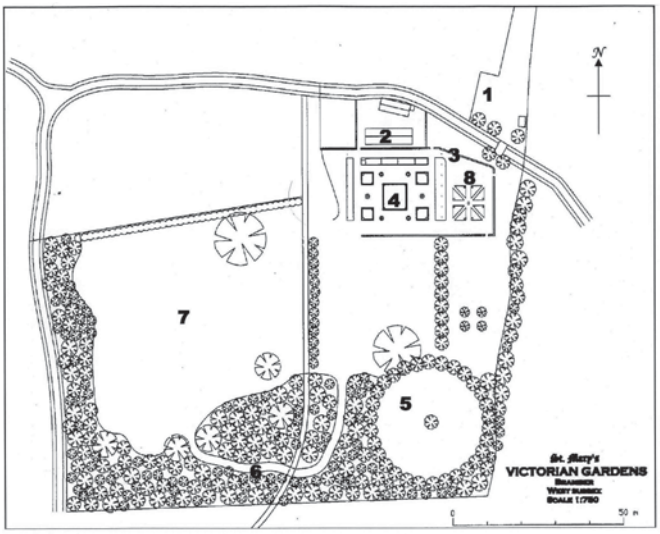
It took several years to establish ourselves as a new trust and to bring in members with professional expertise but that founding aim provided impetus in 2004 for us to set up a Small Grants Scheme (SGS) to offer financial help underpinned by technical and organisational advice. A small grants panel (SGP) processes applications and makes recommendations to Council. The process is quite rigorous: every site is visited by panel members, usually several times, to oversee progress before any payment is made.

The emphasis was – and still is – on 'small' or 'modest' grants (i.e. up to a maximum of £1,500) as the scheme is aimed at designed landscapes of local significance which generally would not qualify for national grants such as the Heritage Lottery Fund (now the NLHF), Historic England, Countryside Stewardship or even the post-great-storm 1987 Task Force trees fund (remember that one?). At a conference we hosted in 2000, themed 'The Way Forward', David Lambert, then the Garden History Society's conservation officer, made a passionate plea for a wider definition of 'best' sites to embrace those valued by local people. Such sites, which SGT has been researching and recording for 25 years, are precisely the ones we hoped would benefit from our scheme.

Which we can proudly say they have: since 2005, the SGS has given c£8.5k to a wide range of places and projects and advice on many more. The annual report for 2006 records that *'SGP has been approached by a number of owners for assistance ... projects include a school garden, restoration of a walled garden, a Regency Square, an arboretum, a Victorian avenue and an educational project introducing some important historic gardens to a wider audience'*.

From all our past schemes I have picked out three very different ones to look back on – to see why we wanted to support them and, as important, how they are surviving and being managed now. These are: St Mary's Bramber, Chelwood Vachery Forest Gardens and the Lancing Sensory Garden.

St Mary's Victorian kitchen garden and pleasure ground was only reunited with the property in 1997 (from a debt-enforced sale). The c.1450 medieval timber-framed house and its 5 acres of gardens were rescued from demolition in 1944 and then from dereliction by the present owners in 1984. The Victorian gardens were originally laid out in the 1890s by the flamboyant and dashing Hon. Algernon Bourke and his wife



Circular Orchard and Woodland Walk

The Circular Orchard is in the process of restoration, with a large number of new yew trees being planted. The woodland walk has undergone major clearance of saplings, nettles and brambles, and underplanting of primroses and bluebells.

Key:

1. *The old greenhouse*
2. *Rural Museum*
3. *Fruit wall*
4. *Terracotta Garden*
5. *Circular orchard*
6. *Woodland walk*
7. *Site of future pond*
8. *Jubilee Rose Garden*

St. Mary's House & Gardens – the Victorian 'Secret' Garden *July 2004*

Gwendolen – the inspiration for the eponymous characters in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* – and, having been 'lost' for 50 years, were overgrown with an impenetrable jungle of brambles, nettles and saplings.

However, one of the three Victorian glasshouses had survived intact as had the magnificent 140-foot fruit wall, the rare circular orchard, the heated pits with their stove-house and the Boulton and Paul potting shed with its apple store.

It was the potential for restoring some of these features which attracted us: the pineapple pits and the stove house especially were ones which best met a key aim: of restoring historic features to a state of good repair, using sound conservation-based investigation to inform that repair, which in turn would allow visitors to



Restored stove house and pineapple pits 2006 (VH)

understand and appreciate how these features actually worked.

Condition surveys were undertaken to reveal the full scope of both the desirable and the necessary repairs. Compromise is often required in restoration and this job was no exception. After lengthy discussions on site, it proved technically and financially impossible to restore the stove house to working order so the decision was made to secure the structure as it stood. Similar constraints in the end prevented the re-creation of the glass covering frames to the pineapple pits.

Work to the stove house, carried out in late 2005 by a builder with conservation expertise (Edw. Snewin and Sons Ltd), involved re-pointing brickwork using traditional lime mortar, re-laying its roof tiles (with some additional reclaimed hand-made clay tiles) and some new roof timbers and repairing and partially replacing its timber window frames. This ensured that the building would survive and allow its original



Pineapple pits planted with ornamentals 2019 (VH)

role to be explained to visitors. The pineapple pit walls were repointed and reclaimed Southwater bricks filled some gaps. As a welcome addition, several early Victorian cast-iron heating pipes (a gift from Robin Loder of Leonardslee Gardens), almost identical to the ones formerly used in the heated pits, were used to reinstate a sample section of the missing pipe-work.



Pineapple pits with remnants of glazed frames before repairs (VH)

The Trust gave St Mary's a grant of £1,000 to which they adding funding from other sources. The quality of the work was excellent. Restoration of the gardens has continued since, as has the high level of care, making the Trust's investment of time, expertise and grant extremely worthwhile.

Chelwood Vachery's Forest Garden turned out to be our first foray into a designed landscape evolved from a natural one. It was also our first multi-funded project with funds eventually sourced from HLF, Natural England (under Countryside Stewardship), the local High Weald Joint Advisory Committee and the private commercial sector.

The four stream-fed lakes and ponds, each with a weir and sluice, that form the Forest Garden were created shortly before 1910 as part of the spectacular new house and grounds built from 1905 for the banker and MP Sir Stuart Samuel. The gardens were designed by Leonard Rome Guthrie who at that time was draughtsman to William Flockhart, the architect of the house.



Waterfalls and rockwork in the gorge May 2006 (VH)



Overgrown lake edges May 2006 (VH)

The so-called 'gorge' through which the stream runs with its myriad little waterfalls and rock pools is shaped by limestone boulders and from the Cheddar Gorge in Somerset and was installed in the 1920s by Col. Gavin Jones, the well-known landscape designer, at the behest of F J Nettlefold whose family owned the estate from 1925 until 1955. In 1992 the subsequent owner British America Tobacco (BAT Industries) sold the house for private apartments but the lakes, gorge and ornamentally planted woodland were acquired by the Conservators of Ashdown Forest.



Primulas in the ornamental woodland May 2006 (VH)

No longer intensively managed as a designed landscape since 1992, volunteers had begun clearing the extensive thickets of invasive Rhododendron Ponticum and Gaultheria to reveal the ornamental species (notably R. loderi) that dot the valley landscape.

The Trust was approached in 2006 by the Conservators for a £1,500 grant to *'survey, map and identify the largely woody plantings around the lakes and gorge, assess their horticultural significance and outline both short and longer-term prescriptions to protect them'.*

We agreed with the Conservators that the landscape design was sufficiently significant historically through its designers and its picturesque qualities to warrant our support, especially as the previous year the whole Chelwood Vachery historic estate (house, garden and park) had been added to Wealden District Council's local heritage list. However we were keen to see any horticultural survey become part of wider vision for the historic design based on a long-term management and maintenance plan that would ensure the survival of both the designed and natural aspects of the landscape (recognising Ashdown Forest's designation as both an SSSI and an EU Special Area for Conservation) *and* enhance visitors' enjoyment of its unique character.

Events moved forward to secure this – and enthusiasm became infectious! By October 2007 the management plan was complete and both fund and profile-raising from national bodies was underway. The first good news was the offer of £25k from BAT Industries to dredge the lakes, work that was carried out in 2008/9. New sources of volunteers from local companies appeared; selective removal of many tree seedlings began and redundant fencing along the public bridleway – the main access to the Garden – was removed. The appearance of the site was transformed (a good photographic record is being kept). New habitats were created for birds and guided walks for influential groups – such as the Ashdown Forest Tourism Association and the Society of Friends of Ashdown Forest – which could lead to sponsorship offers for items such as the replacement of foot bridges.

Although our financial contribution was a small one, we were delighted to be in at the beginning of what has become a well-managed survival of



Stepping stones across the Millbrook with Folly bridge 2017 (Geography Creative commons)

a piece of historic design, much enjoyed through open access, by the public at large; it could so easily have been lost for good.

A leaflet for the self-guided walk through the Forest Gardens (which have open access) is available on their website, just type in Chelwood Vachery Forest Garden.

From the picturesque to the pocket park is quite a leap but high aims are vital whatever the size and scope of the space. Community-led projects can be a mixed bag too, some being well organised and funded, others needing a lot of guidance and advice to achieve their vision. Not so the Lancing Sensory Garden volunteers; led by Lydia Schilbach they had high aims for a robust and permanent community garden and planned it in an exemplary way.

The Trust was therefore especially pleased to have helped Lydia and her team of volunteers to transform, Cinderella-like, an abandoned and scruffy corner of Lancing's South Street into a haven of sheer pleasure, full of community life, lush planting, unique designs and colour (that's 'our' tree in the central island bed!).



Lancing Sensory Garden 2012 and 2013

The majority of the funding (£15k) for the expensive but necessary high quality hard landscaping was raised from Adur DC's 'Pot of Gold' (under the 'Lancing Regeneration Scheme) but in kind support local firms and artists contributed the unique pebble mosaics, the large mural and, later, the wave-inspired railings. Designs and sketches were commissioned from landscape architect David Pope (who went on to win the finalist's trophy from the Society of Garden Designers Awards 2013 for 'Designing for the Community').



David Cope's landscape plan

There is always the worry that community gardens, which rely on volunteers for their upkeep, may suffer neglect with the ebb and flow of available help. The Lancing team have solved this one by persuading Lancing Parish Council to assist with maintenance – although volunteer workdays are still part of its care.



Lancing Sensory Garden 5th Birthday, 9 June 2018 (VH)

On 9 June 2018 the garden held a 5th 'Birthday Bash' although, as their Facebook post said, *'it's grown a bit and changed a bit (and so have we!) but it is still there, bringing a bit of joy to our community'*. So, an SGT grant well-spent!

Looking back we can be proud of what our grant scheme has achieved. While our general criteria haven't changed – the overarching one being *'to help keep the physical park and garden heritage of Sussex in good repair for future generations to enjoy'* (you can find them all on our website), our focus from time to time does, to reflect the changing needs of Sussex's park and garden heritage. For the last seven to eight years we have focused on parks and gardens in public or community ownership or management, particularly in urban areas, as we were acutely aware of the pressures on local authority budgets in parks and recreation or leisure departments. This focus has not produced the interest we had hoped for, as while the need may remain, the resources of local authority staff or of volunteers to apply seem to be a stumbling block.

The current Covid-19 crisis has demonstrated not only the immeasurable necessity of public parks for everyone living in a urban area but also the fragility of privately-owned parks and gardens which rely on visitors for income and on-site staff to maintain them. Looking forward, this could be an opportunity for the Trust to look 'outside the box' at where our grants might be best directed – perhaps coupled with galvanising more of our members' energies to assist in practical ways? *If you have any ideas to share with us they will be very welcome.*

SGT Programme of Lectures

By Caroline Scaramanga

I joined the Sussex Gardens Trust in 2012 and became a member of the Council in 2016. In the previous year it had been decided that a number of lectures over the winter of 2015/16 would be an interesting way to start the year and, organised by Caroline Ikin, we held a series of six lectures as an introduction to garden history, from the medieval period to gardens of the present day. The lectures were delivered at the East Sussex Records Office and proved very popular. In 2017 the lectures were on the subject of plants in garden history, discussing the plant hunters, the garden nursery trade and the planting designs of William Robinson and Gertrude Jekyll. The following year the theme was 'Writers and their Gardens' and talks included Rudyard Kipling's garden at Batemans and William Shenstone's at The Leasowes.

In 2019 we changed the format a little by having two talks at our spring AGM, one (with musical accompaniment) presented by SGT member Judy Tarling on Humphry Repton as a musician and writer, and the other by Roderick Floud on the cost of 'Purchasing Paradise' – the real cost of past gardens in today's terms. At our Christmas events we have held a talk on a particular topic. Last year at Rathfinny Wine Estate, ecologist Richard James who works at the estate discussed the changes in the landscape brought about by the vineyard whilst Victoria Fritz talked us through the renovation of her garden, the former home of Austen Chamberlain.

This year at the Methodist Hall in Haywards Heath we have presented a series of four lectures on water in garden design, which proved very popular. Unfortunately, due to the Coronavirus issue, the last lecture by Anthony Archer-Wills had to be cancelled. However, it is hoped that he might be able to talk at our Christmas lunch this year if he is over from his home in upstate New York. Meanwhile plans are afoot for the next lecture series starting in January 2021 when, hopefully, the health problems will be a distant memory. A series of three or four lectures on sculpture in both garden and landscape, taking in Italian seventeenth and eighteenth century sculpture, contemporary sculpture, grottoes and sculpture parks is being set up. We will try and include one or two visits to gardens that will tie in with this theme.

Our members enjoy the varied programme of lectures which enhance our knowledge of the rich history of gardens and have become a highlight in the SGT calendar.

Sussex Gardens Trust Newsletter celebrates 25 years

By Sally Ingram

The first edition of the SGT Newsletter back in 1995 was just four pages, printed in black and white, with a report on the front page of the event at Brighton Pavilion in March of that year to set up a Sussex Gardens Trust. Just as the Trust has grown and developed since that meeting, so there have been milestones for the newsletter: the number of pages increased within a short time to eight, and then to twelve in 2009 with the first colour edition published a year later. Editors too have changed as has the format and the pages go on multiplying but throughout it has been supportive members who have contributed articles, whether reports of visits and study days, features on their favourite gardens, discoveries in garden history, or reviews of conferences and events, who have made the newsletter a success.

From that initial meeting the Trust has taken a significant role in research, providing a valuable source of material for historians and students of garden history. A committee for research and recording was one of the first groups to be set up, requesting volunteers to undertake this important work, an initiative that has gone from strength to strength. Throughout its pages the newsletter has shared this scholarly work with in-depth articles on garden history, researched by



SUSSEX GARDENS TRUST

Encouraging the protection, conservation and evolution of the local garden heritage

NEWSLETTER No.27

AUTUMN 2003

President: The Countess De La Warr

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Buckhurst Park
Luxford Farm
AGT Weekend Conference
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A SUMMER TO REMEMBER

We have gazed at blue skies almost all summer long. We have roasted under record temperatures and the accompanying humidity, watered for weeks and wondered how the trees have survived. Suddenly, the air conditioned supermarkets became a more desirable place to be. It is October as I write, and still the skies are blue and there is little rain yet in Sussex. An amazing year.

The Trust's visits have benefited from the sunny summer and we also managed to avoid visits at the very hottest times. You will find articles about the more recent ones in the newsletter which we hope will whet the appetites of those who have not yet joined us. Friendly, enjoyable and even educational is how we like to think of them.

The visits to Barton Pines and the rock garden at Worth Abbey were happy occasions, helped no doubt by an excellent lunch at the pub in Turners Hill. Barton Pines was as ever an extraordinary experience, though sadly looking rather overgrown, with a serious problem with encroaching bracken. This prevented us from seeing the structure of the rocks as well as on our previous visit, but the present gardeners are tackling the problem as they find time. It is a garden in a time warp, as it is being maintained but no real progress is being made with taking out over-mature trees or with new planting. It is a fascinating place and we hope that it won't be too long before a more pro-active approach comes into being.

The rock garden at Worth Abbey is very different. Maintained by Father Patrick Fludder, with a team of volunteers, it is in excellent condition and just what is needed for those who wish to understand and examine the structure. The garden was built by Lord Cowdray circa 1900, the pond having been there previously, along with a wooden bridge and a few rocks (Sales Particulars 1891). Robert Whitehead, the inventor of the torpedo, was the previous owner and there are wonderful stories to be told about torpedoes being fired across the pond from the boat house – apocryphal we think! Nowadays, it is a peaceful oasis in the busy world of the school and monastery. The rock garden is accessible to all as it is one of the many Quiet Gardens across the country, and therefore is open to the public every day.

Sally Walker

DENNE PARK AT HORSHAM A RECENT RESEARCH PROJECT

Denne Park is one of three medieval deer parks owned by William de Braose, who lived at Bramber Castle and possessed the Rape of Bramber. It became part of Washington Manor and had passed to the ownership of the Broadbridge family by 1499. In about 1605 it was sold to Sir Thomas Eversfield, who built the present house, and in whose family it remained until the 20th century (apart from a short period forfeit to the Crown). The last of the extensions and modifications to the house was in 1875, by which time it was a thriving Victorian household with substantial gardens. In the 1950s it was converted to apartments, its outhouses converted to dwellings and new houses built in the grounds.

Denne Park is on a stone escarpment above the Weald south of Horsham. Old diggings for the "Horsham" stone abound in the park. The house is tiled with it. Other large pits were dug for clay and ironstone on the crest of the escarpment along the northern boundary of the park.

No specific details exist of earlier manor houses but the Manor of Denne was recorded in a settlement in 1499. Chesworth, immediately to the north, had been disparked by 1570 and it may be surmised that a similar date applies to Denne.

A record of 1770 notes over 2000 oaks having been felled in Chesworth and Denne, leading to a suggestion by the then Surveyor General that Sir Charles Eversfield's Crown lease include a forfeit

Denne House

Autumn 2003. A research project at Denne Park

SGT volunteers who have drawn from OS maps, archives in the record offices, text books, letters, old postcards, photographs and personal memories. In the early years the newsletter carried a research feature in almost every issue: the medieval deer park at Denne Park at Horsham, Beech Hurst at Haywards Heath, Danny Park at Hurstpierpoint are just three examples. In more recent times the focus has been on particular figures in garden history: exploring the landscapes in Sussex of Brown, and then Repton, resulting in an ambitious project to publish two journals of academic research. At the same time the newsletter has developed to reflect a wide range of issues, introducing its readers to members' own gardens, sharing visits to notable landscapes abroad, hearing from head gardeners about their work, and suggesting ideas for the garden bookshelf.


SUSSEX GARDENS TRUST

Encouraging the protection, conservation and evolution of the local garden heritage

NEWSLETTER No.31

SPRING 2005

President: The Countess De La Warr

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News from the AGT

A Celebration!

Join us for the day at Standen House and Garden on Friday 9 December to celebrate the Tenth Anniversary of the founding of the Sussex Gardens Trust on 9 December 1995

We will meet at Standen for coffee at 11 am, followed by a walk and talk with the Head Gardener, James Masters, to see the new discoveries dating from the time of the the ownership of the Beale family. After lunch in the Barn, there will be talk on medieval herbs by Christina Stapley.

Standen, near East Grinstead, is not open to the public on 9 December, but the shop will open for us. See the events section for booking information.

CUCKFIELD PARK AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

Cuckfield Park is significant because its landscape originated in the late C16 as an ornamental park and garden which was further developed and modified in various phases until the C20. The resultant multi-layered landscape forms the setting for an important C16 and later country house, built and modified for successive members of the gentry. The site forms part of a series of comparable late C16 Wealden ironmasters' estates. It contains a good example of a late C16 detached, brick-built ornamental gatehouse. It was the home of a nationally important personality, Charles Sergison.

To a lesser extent, the site is also important because it was the home of various locally important personalities including the ironmaster Henry Bowyer and the later Sergisons, and is the site of a group of Wealden ironworking features which supported the Cuckfield ironworks.

It is apparent from an analysis of the various landscape layers of Cuckfield Park and their documentation that the late C16 design layer is historically the most important. These early features comprise the most important elements of Cuckfield Park, the approach and domestic core, and were set in parkland which forms the basis of today's park.

The next most important phase at Cuckfield Park occurred during the C18 or early C19 with the further landscaping of the site, remodelling the park in informal style and inserting a network of drives. The structural works carried out by Sergison in the mid C19, particularly the south terrace and lawn, generally enhanced the earlier garden design elements, but are most important for the visual contribution they made to the ensemble. Breitmeyer's work shortly after 1900 consolidated the garden structure and was important for its intensive horticultural contribution. The creation of lakeside walks, and shrub features around the upper lake, were late C20 developments which further enhanced the garden without compromising the historic character. Although these contributions are not of quite the same high level of importance as the earliest phase, contemporary with the construction of the mansion, they are important because of their accretive effect in creating an historically interesting and visually pleasing multi-layered landscape.

Cuckfield place Anno Domini 1616
By Mr Nicholas Ayling &c

Cuckfield Park comprises a succession of spaces designed for domestic garden and associated service purposes, arranged within a wider country house landscape. It is essential for the analysis of the landscape to understand that it is based on a late C16 layout, principally the arrangement of the eastern approach, the northern walled garden and the early park, and that this has influenced later phases. Unfortunately there is little documentary evidence for

Announcing the forthcoming tenth anniversary in 2005


Sussex Gardens Trust

NEWSLETTER No.47
SUMMER 2010

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PLUMPTON PLACE: A SPRING-TIME TREAT

A visit to Plumpton Place 2010, and the first colour edition of the newsletter

Along the way the newsletter has recorded particular achievements and highlights as the Trust evolved, such as the setting up of a small grants scheme in 2004 and the significant research project undertaken by SGT volunteers in partnership with Hastings Borough Council in 2014 to research parks and gardens of local importance. Special events for the Trust have been marked, including the tenth anniversary in 2005 when a lunch was held at Standen where Sir Freddie Sowrey, as the first member of SGT, gave a vote of thanks.

Ten years later the Brighton Pavilion was the venue for marking the twentieth anniversary of the Trust's work. Robert Hill-Snook gave a guided tour of the Royal Pavilion garden, also celebrating its twentieth year since its restoration, and Gilly Drummond, as President of the AGT, presented a lecture on the way forward for county garden trusts.

The Trust has something of a reputation for its fine cakes provided at the garden visits! For the anniversary event at Brighton Pavilion a beautiful cake was made by Sue Stockwell, decorated in the style of a Chinese wallpaper pattern. So many cakes have been lovingly made for our visits and lectures by a much-appreciated team of SGT volunteers.


Sussex Gardens Trust

NEWSLETTER No.63
Autumn 2015

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

THE GARDENS TRUST


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SUSSEX GARDENS TRUST

Encouraging the protection, conservation and evolution of the local garden heritage

NEWSLETTER
No.12
AUTUMN & WINTER
1998

GARDEN RESTORATION AND THE JEKYLL LEGACY

The 1999 Research and Recording Study Day will be held at the King Edward VII Hospital, Midhurst on Saturday 24 April. We will be looking at garden restoration and examining the plans and the site which was designed and implemented by Gertrude Jekyll in 1906. Fiona Bartelot who has been involved with the restoration at the hospital will start the day and then Tom Wright will talk about the practicalities of garden restoration.

After looking at the Jekyll plans and then visiting the extensive hospital garden where much of Jekyll's work survives, Richard Bisgrove will speak on the gardens of Gertrude Jekyll and Jim Buckland will talk about the restoration of the Harold Peto pergola and the kitchen gardens of West Dean.

For further information contact Sally Walker Tel. 01825 790970

Cost of Study Day £33.50 to include coffee, lunch and tea.

See back page for programme

Gertrude Jekyll

The garden was designed by the hospital architects, Adams and Holden, in consultation with Gertrude Jekyll, who prepared the planting plans.

The first garden visited by the Trust was Clinton Lodge at Fletching and, since that time, members have enjoyed countless visits and guided tours to garden and parks in Sussex and further afield. Glancing through past copies of the newsletter reveals a myriad of places visited from the private and unknown to the world-renowned, including a priory and even a prairie.

SGT made two visits to the garden at Highgrove, in 2004 and 2011, without sight of its royal owner, but in 2008 the Collector Earl's Garden at Arundel Castle Gardens was opened by HRH Prince Charles and Sally Walker, then Chairman, was invited to represent the Trust at the occasion. In the following September SGT visited these gardens newly designed by Isabel and Julian Bannerman. The Sussex Prairie Garden was also a new venture when, in autumn 2009, the Trust had a tour of the curving borders and planting designed by Piet Oudolf. In complete contrast visits continued to gardens with a long history including Kidbrooke Park, Fairlight Hall, and Cowdray. This year we begin a project looking at the sites in Sussex involving Gertrude Jekyll and hope to include a garden visit to one of her sites in our future events programme. The Jekyll history has been a recurring theme for the newsletter with accounts of a research study day in 1999 at the King Edward VII Sanatorium and visits to her home at Munstead Wood in 2002 when members were invited to a tour of the house, and again in 2018.

The newsletter has from its beginning set out to highlight the work of the Trust, while at the same time keeping an observant eye on what might be happening to the designed landscape within the county and wider afield. Success is dependent on reflecting the interests of members, so please keep contributing ideas and articles!

Beyond the Lockdown Garden Hedge: Sheep & Gilbert White

By Jennifer Parsons

Despite it being a 'time of pestilence', the spring months were enjoyable for many days of sunshine although gardeners everywhere hoped for rain. In April any exposed clay turned to crazy paving; it baked hard and snaked into fissures all around the wallflowers.

As usual at this time of the year the field adjoining my driveway is rented to a sheep farmer and so was full of ewes with honey coloured fleeces. In contrast their lambs were absolutely 'Persil' white that appeared to glow in the sunshine. In the centre of the field stands a huge solitary oak. It was pleasant to idle away some lockdown time, watching the sheep clustering for shade and the lambs dashing in and out from under the branches chasing each other. In early May the flock was moved to another pasture so the field rested and the grass grew to be useful for their return at the end of the month. By this time the lambs were fat and the colour of their coats blended with their mothers; it seemed that they also bleated more noisily and more often than when infant lambs.

The leaves of the oak tree were darker and by June the wild roses were flowering in sprays along the hedge.





Gilbert White observed sheep for their physical characteristics (Letter XVII – Ringmere nr Lewes – December 9 1773) and this is the tercentenary of his birth year, 1720. His *Natural History of Selborne* has never been out of print since its publication in 1789. The gallery at Pallant House, Chichester, has a free exhibition, currently on hold, to celebrate the man sometimes referred to as 'the father of natural history'. Their website has the following message:

Eleven contemporary printmakers and illustrators have produced new images inspired by White's Natural History for this exhibition, which demonstrate the enduring appeal of his writings for artists. Together these images encourage us to look to the nature on our doorstep that is under threat from climate change and the impact of human activity.

'Drawn to Nature: Gilbert White and the Artists' is part of a series of events across the UK, marking the tercentenary of Gilbert White's birth. For more information, visit Gilbert White's House in Selborne.

http://www.gw300.gilbertwhiteshouse.org.uk/

A Few New Developments in Significant Sussex Gardens

By Susi Batty



Photo ©Sainsbury Family Charitable Trust

Woolbeding, near Midhurst (National Trust and the Sainsbury Family Charitable Trust)

The gardens at Woolbeding have been beautifully restored and developed over the years by Simon Sainsbury and Stewart Grimshaw (Isabel and Julian Bannerman's cascade was the latest modern addition). Now the Heatherwick Studio has designed a new and very contemporary glasshouse for this significant garden. The Trust writes that it will contain 'sub-tropical flora, as one of the twelve zones that tell the journey and story of the plants that have come to Britain from along the celebrated Silk Route. Together the Glasshouse and the Silk Route garden will form an integral new part of the gardens. A grant has been awarded to Great Dixter for its student programme, to create wider expertise in contemporary Silk Route gardening, to assist with habitat design, preparation of plants and planting training'. This exciting project will cost an estimated £5.8m. It was granted planning approval in 2019 and will open to the public in 2021.

www.nationaltrust.org/woolbeding-gardens
www.heatherwick.com

Sussex Prairie Gardens, near Henfield

The owners of Sussex Prairie Gardens, Paul and Pauline McBride, are continuing their innovative plans at Morlands Farm with two new projects and Pauline kindly sent me some notes from their head gardener, Stuart Southwell, about their plans for a new potager.

Taken from 'Notes from the Potager' (Stuart Southwell, Head Gardener):

During the very wet and windy winter of 2019 we began work on our latest project, the Prairie Potager, a new space that will be as productive as it is beautiful. Taking inspiration from the traditional French ornamental kitchen garden the Prairie Potager, a grassy space, was dug up to create a productive and aesthetically pleasing garden with interesting salads and vegetables grown alongside herbs, fruit and flowers. We will be following the Charles Dowding No Dig principle.

Four 3m × 1m raised beds were constructed from modular recycled plastic and filled, ready to grow. The pieces were fixed together and secured with rods pushed through the boards.

The ground below the beds was a mixture of bare soil and grass so the grass turf was lifted and turned over before a layer of compost was spread and raked level. Next a layer of cardboard was placed on top of the compost and given a good soak (this helped to suppress the grass and weeds below as it slowly rotted).



Photo by permission of Pauline McBride

The honour of occupying the very first Prairie Potager raised bed went to the elephant garlic, started off in small pots.



Photo by permisssion of Pauline McBride



Several varieties of beans were selected, grown on and planted out in May. The Crimson Flowered broad bean is a heritage broad bean from the 1800s and had to be one choice for the ornamental potager with its stunning deep crimson flowers. This will be one of the earliest crops to harvest with young beans ready from June onward. Taking inspiration from the name, Purple Teepee Dwarf, French beans were also planted in – you guessed it – teepees (if you've got a prairie you need a teepee). Others included two from the Real Seed Company. The Cherokee Trail of Tears is an American pole bean somewhat like a climbing french bean. It is said that the Cherokee took this bean with them as they were force-marched from their homelands in Georgia by the US government. This event became known as the Trail of Tears. Greek Gigantes is a huge runner bean grown for its shelled beans rather than the pods. Each bean is as large as a butter bean and can be used fresh when harvested or dried and stored.

Next, giant planters were created from repurposed pallet crates (the type used to deliver bricks or paving slabs and hence very strong), raised up on bricks to keep the wood off the wet ground. Each planter holds one of the bulk bags the compost was delivered in and this was filled with stable manure. Even with the crate to hold the bag they have a tendency to bulge round the middle so we used steel fence rods to hold up each corner. The manure is this season's and is only in the early stages of rotting down but makes an ideal growing medium for all types of squashes, courgettes and pumpkins. A single plant was placed in each bag and the top of the bag closed around it. This helps to keep all the moisture in and, with this volume of manure, it will be necessary to water only rarely, even in the driest of summers. This method of growing squashes has some advantages: it is a great way of growing this season's crop whilst the manure is rotting down and it can be used as a top dressing for the raised beds the following winter. The first batch of these were sown in late May with further successional sowings into July.



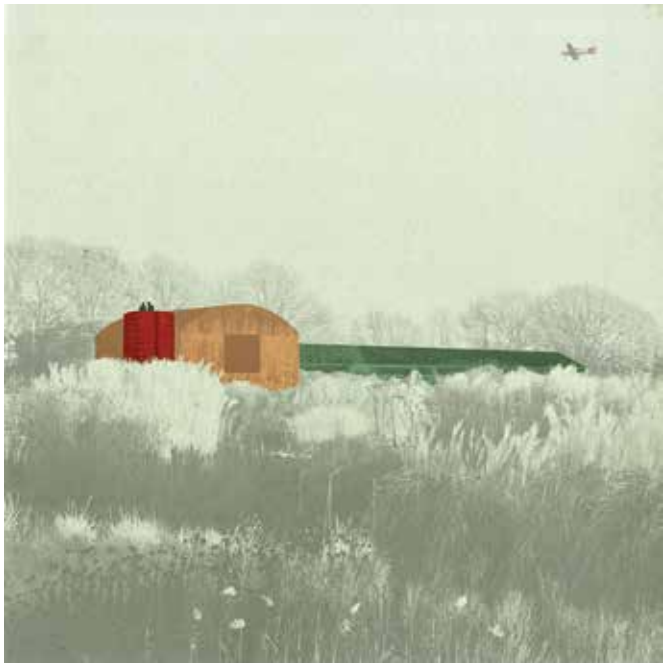
'Did someone say manure?'
Photos by permission of Pauline McBride



The Viewing Platform

In a further, very exciting project, Paul and Pauline are also planning to build a corten steel tower with two viewing platforms overlooking their biodiverse garden. The architect is Sandy Rendel and a 'bird's eye view' will allow visitors to understand the layout and curved sweeps of exquisite planting. Such a structure has historic antecedents and will be an intriguing modern twist on eighteenth century belvederes and viewing towers, appropriately, in this case, overlooking the spirals of naturalistic planting of 'New Wave' grasses and perennials. This project is being delayed because of Covid-19 but I am sure that the McBrides' enthusiasm will galvanise it as soon as is humanly possible.

The garden is re-opening, under self-distancing regulations, from 1 June and I urge you to visit and support them.



'Going Dutch at Sussex Prairies' (Pauline McBride)

The McBrides write "We were delighted to have been working with innovative architect Sandy Rendel (RIBA Grand Designs House of the Year, *Longlist* – South Street, Lewes) on our new Dutch barn conversion at Sussex Prairies last year. Visitors to the garden in 2019 were able to see our new sleek zinc clad home next to the teashop. Gaining planning permission for a Viewing Tower, as part of the same development programme was a major achievement in 2018 and in 2020 we hope we shall be making strides to fund the Tower to add to our visitor experience in 2021/22.

"The Viewing tower will be a stunning corten steel clad structure mimicking a contemporary grain silo and will add to the language and range of the farm buildings at Sussex Prairies. Imagine the excitement of seeing the prairie spread before you at a height and level never seen before. We are hoping this will certainly enhance the visitor experience!"

Sandy Rendel Architects was named RIBA South East Emerging Practice of the Year in 2017 and is a young award-winning practice founded in 2010 with a reputation for delivering well-crafted architecture and inventive design. Their work addresses the unique physical, environmental and cultural contexts of each project to deliver long-term value and enduring meaning.

Sussex Prairies: www.sussexprairies.co.uk
Sandy Rendel Architects: www.sandyrendel.com

Brighton Pavilion Gardens

The Lottery Fund has awarded initial funding of £214,400 to the Royal Pavilion Gardens to develop their plans to improve and upgrade the gardens surrounding the exquisite Royal Pavilion. This will allow the Pavilion Gardens team to apply for a National Lottery grant bid for £3.4 million to carry out the work. There has been long-term disquiet about the state of the garden, one of very few remaining Regency gardens in Britain, and this is very good news. It was opened to the public in 1849 but open access has created maintenance problems and there has been a degree of antisocial behaviour. It is hoped that this will be reduced by improving lighting, gates and boundaries. There will be access for disabled visitors, the planting will be rejuvenated and opportunities for education, horticultural therapy and archival research created.

www.royalpaviliongardens.co.uk

Many of us have been working hard in our own gardens during lockdown but how heartening it is in these very difficult times to learn of creative and optimistic projects for a post Covid-19 world!



Humphry Repton, Designs for the Pavilion at Brighton, 1806
(by permission of the Royal Pavilion and Museums, Brighton and Hove)

Tredegar House and Gardens, Monmouthshire

By Elaine Tyler

At the start of our June 2019 holiday exploring some of the wonderful gardens and areas of Wales, the spectacular new Severn Bridge welcomed us and we began our journey of discovery at Tredegar House, west of Newport, just off the M4, fifteen miles further on.

This impressive seventeenth century country mansion is described as an outstanding house of the Restoration period, also known as the *Carolean* decorative style popular between 1660 and 1680s. After the return of Charles II from the Continent in 1660 and the restoration of the monarchy, people quickly developed a taste for decoration and grander styles after the severe Cromwellian years. Buildings, and indeed gardens, were influenced by French and Dutch styles; architecture and furniture became more opulent, upholstery being covered with materials such as velvet, marquetry was favoured in interiors using walnut instead of oak to produce designs of fruit and flowers and china and glass began to be decorative instead of purely functional. Incorporating these styles enabled Tredegar House to be recognised as the grandest house in what was then Monmouthshire and one of the most outstanding houses in Britain.

For over 500 years (1402-1951) it was the home of the local powerful and influential Morgan family, sufficiently well connected to play host to Charles I. The name Tredegar derives from *Tredegar Fawr*, seat or mansion of the 'old Morgans', with 1402 as the earliest recorded date of a Morgan family member actually living at Tredegar. Later they became Lords Tredegar. The last Morgan family member was John Morgan, 6th Baron Tredegar who died childless in 1962 aged 54.

Originally built of stone (old documents calling it '*a faire place of stone*') between 1664-1672, William Morgan carried out an extensive rebuilding programme, considerably enlarging the property and surrounding gardens, helped no doubt by the huge dowry brought by his wife Blanche. He chose to use red brick on the exterior, a rare commodity in Wales at that time, a façade that now makes this house so iconic and very eye catching. Often used as a film location, the spectacular ornate gates that grace the driveway entrance will be a familiar sight to the viewers of the Antiques Road Show as they are used in the opening shots.

Having fallen into financial difficulties, many of the contents of the house were auctioned and the house and estate was sold in 1951 to the Catholic Church and used as a school. In 1974 it was acquired by the Newport Corporation becoming 'one of the grandest council houses in Britain'.

The house was listed Grade I in March 1952 and in December 2011 the National Trust signed an agreement to take on the management of the building and the 90 acres of grounds and parklands on a 50-year lease, commencing in 2012.

Although not ranking amongst the top lists of National Trust Gardens nor indeed any Grand Gardens list, Tredegar is nevertheless both delightful and surprisingly interesting.

In an 1882 publication a local historian, Octavius Morgan, shows a plan of a garden maze at Tredegar which was in place before the refurbishment of the house in the seventeenth century and probably dated back to the time of Elizabeth I. The private gardens surrounding the house now comprise of three separate areas each with its own theme, quite simplistic and all havens of peace.

ORCHARD: A layout of this area dated 1827 shows a productive area which obviously supplied the house with vegetables, fruit and flowers. Among the pathways and amongst the apple trees, there is still evidence of footings of former greenhouses and hot houses, no doubt producing exotic fruit for the house to grace the tables when grand parties were held, probably including pineapples that were highly desirable.

The main focus of the Orchard area nowadays is a working partnership with 'Growing Spaces' a mental health charity based in Newport which provides working skills and rehabilitation support for those in need.

CEDAR GARDEN: This is dominated, as the name suggests, by a giant 250-year-old Cedar of Lebanon, the only one left of six that were originally planted. The large expanse of perfectly mown lawn provides an immediate invitation to relax with intimate groups of deck chairs and the splendid house as a background. On a nearby chair is a poem by a young local writer.



The Cedar Garden. Photo © Elaine Tyler

In the garden is a stone obelisk monument to a horse, Sir Briggs, ridden by Godfrey Charles Morgan, 1st Lord Tredegar, at 'The Charge of the Light Brigade' in 1854. Buried with full military honours the horse ended its days in the tranquillity of Tredegar. It is also a resting place for the family's dogs.

Entering through splendid gateways, the garden is surrounded on three sides by impressive walls with a simple layout, with flower beds at the base of the walls set with generous planting of mostly classic herbaceous perennials, including *Acanthus mollis*, *Iris germanica*, *Polemonium caeruleum*, varieties of *Bellis perennis* and other favourites.

A central axial pathway draws one onward towards the Orangery Garden.

ORANGERY GARDEN: This is the smallest of the three gardens, again protected by the red brick walls, and designed to give the impression of how it would have appeared 200 years ago. The parterre design with its formal patterns is set out with coloured minerals: seashells, stones and sand, and even coal dust which gives a connection with the area's main former industry. Pathways are lined with potted topiary and citrus trees.

ORANGERY: This large angular room overlooks the Parterre, now rather bare and used for overwintering plants and Citrus trees prior to their summer move into the garden. Back in the 1930s, it once housed a collection of exotic birds. A temporary exhibition display gives some historical details. Worth noting is the historic Shovelboard table, forty-two feet in length and made from a single plank of oak, said to be the longest table top in Britain. It was made during the Civil War for *Cefn Mabli* House, an eleventh century property near Caerphilly, and was famous even back in the seventeenth century.

PARKLAND: Reduced now to ninety acres and just a small fragment of the former extensive estate, it is open for all to use as a recreational space for walking, jogging or a leisurely picnic and is dog friendly. The large Serpentine Lake area was especially enjoyable with its large clumps of water lilies, a family of elegant swans gliding along with the cygnets still in their grey plumage, coots calling and the ducks rushing madly to get the left over picnic pieces thrown by the children.

Once there were seven long oak avenues leading from the house and over the hill towards Ruperra Castle, built originally in 1626 for the Steward of the Earl of Pembroke and later used by the Morgan family as a summer home. Now only one avenue remains. However, there are Sequoia Redwoods still tempting people to touch their spongy bark

Very much a community favourite, there is a small charge for the car park, free for National Trust members. Events are held throughout the year, including Easter Egg Hunts, a 1930 Garden Party, and Christmas events. I really enjoyed our visit to this oasis in the middle of a very busy area.



A rather splendid Magnolia grandiflora adorns the wall by the Orangery entrance. Photo © Elaine Tyler

Plant Hunting at Highdown

By Annelise Brilli, Plant Heritage Officer

Scrambling up the chalk cliffs at Highdown Gardens, I indulge in the fantasy of being a great plant hunter. Above me towers a huge *Cotoneaster serotinus*. We think of cotoneasters as humble and ordinary garden shrubs but this one has grown into tree-like proportions. A mass of dark, sprawling limbs, it looks sinister and mysterious in a deep bowl beside the chalk face



Plant hunting in Musgrave's Corner. ©Annelise Brilli

known as 'Musgrave's Corner'. On the steep, slippery chalk it's difficult to get purchase, and I find myself dangling precariously from one of its branches whilst attempting to collect a sample with a long-reach pruner.

Last September I was lucky to snap up the job as Plant Heritage Officer at Highdown Gardens, helping to deliver an exciting new National Lottery Heritage Fund project. Over the next three years my role is to identify, catalogue and propagate our important plant collection.

Highdown was left to Worthing Council after the death of its creator, Frederick Stern. In 1989 Chris Beardsley, the Head Gardener, identified 181 plants which were original Stern introductions and safeguarded the collection by registering it as a multi-genera, National Plant Collection. However, there is a lack of comprehensive information about the collection so I have been busy verifying plants and expanding the catalogue to include those which were missed.

Whilst my explorations may not have the romance and drama of the great plant hunters of China, I still get a thrill at the prospect of discovering a long-forgotten specimen deep in the undergrowth. Despite lockdown, over the past few months I have been on a fascinating virtual journey across the world sampling the diverse flora which Stern was able to grow in the harsh chalk conditions of Highdown. My journey started in February in the Caucasus mountains, admiring species snowdrops such as *Galanthus woronowii*. During March and April I lolled around the Mediterranean, enjoying the wonderful carpet of spring bulbs provided by *Anemone pavonina*, *Tulipa saxatilis* and *Cyclamen repandum*. But by late April the tree peonies suddenly burst into sumptuous blooms, requiring a mad dash to China before their ephemeral flowers vanished.

As well as plant hunting in the gardens I have also been hunting in the archives. Many of the plants at Highdown were raised from seed collected in the wild by famous plant hunters whom Stern financed such as Frank Kingdon-Ward, Reginald Farrer and George Forrest. Much of the seed which Stern received arrived with only a genus and collector's number,



Anemone pavonina in grass. ©Annelise Brilli

which he recorded on hand-written index cards. A team of dedicated volunteers has transcribed all 3,500 cards onto spreadsheets, providing an invaluable resource for future research. Stern's visitors book, discovered in Worthing library, has also revealed much about his huge web of horticultural connections and the close friendships which he forged with some of the plant hunters he sponsored, inviting them to Highdown to see the results of their plant collecting first-hand.



One of Highdown's sumptuous tree peonies. ©Annelise Brilli

Highdown's nationally important plant collection is vulnerable. The plants are growing in a fragile chalk environment subject to drought, climate-change and devastating diseases such as Honey Fungus. The Heritage Fund project will provide two new glasshouses enabling us to propagate, preserve and disseminate our plant collection. We are also working with the Millennium Seed Bank, which is storing and preserving seeds collected by our volunteers.

More developments are underway and, with the relaxation of lockdown, our builders are now back on site building a new visitor centre, new accessible pathways and a sensory garden. The re-opening of the gardens will also see the launch of a programme of events, with volunteers and staff delivering talks, workshops and activities for adults and children.

This is the start of an exciting new era for Highdown Gardens and the Heritage Fund project will enable us to engage widely with the local community and tell the fascinating story of Highdown, as well as preserving this historically significant plant collection for future generations.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED AT HIGHDOWN GARDENS!

We are currently seeking volunteers to help us with our Heritage fund project, including plant cataloguing, practical garden tasks, assisting with interpretation and events. If you are interested, please contact:

Polly Bishop
Engagement & Volunteering Officer,
Adur & Worthing Councils
Email: polly.bishop@adur-worthing.gov.uk

Research Snippet: Gertrude Jekyll Project

By Sally Ingram

With the imposed lockdown and libraries and record offices closed to archivists, our Jekyll research project has been confined to 'working from home' but we continue to follow up individual sources and in the autumn newsletter we plan to feature several of the sites in Sussex that have some interesting context. David Bridges from the research group is investigating a commission that Jekyll had in 1908 for Pollard's Wood, which has always been documented as being in Fernhurst in Sussex. Despite extensive research there seems no evidence that this was at Fernhurst or in the surrounding area but there is a suggestion that the house may have been at Chalfont St Giles in Buckinghamshire. David is seeking further confirmation. The commission for the King Edward VII Sanatorium has been examined by SGT researchers in the past and featured in editions of the SGT Newsletter. However, a collection of letters from Jekyll to a Clerk of Works at the Sanatorium written between 1905 and 1906 has recently been shared with the research group and offers an insight into Jekyll's working practice.

Frant Court, near Tunbridge Wells, was bought in 1914 by a Miss Thornton. She asked Jekyll to provide planting plans for the formal terraced garden as well as the servants' garden and to design a woodland garden below the formal garden. The new garden was completed in 1916 and included plants such as lavender, china roses, cistus and phlomis. When in 2002 Frant Court was due to be re-developed, Wealden District Council asked SGT for their support in planning the restoration of the gardens. Research was carried out by SGT volunteers

and, during a site visit, signs were found of the five terraces that descended the hillside and an example of Jekyll's dry stone walling. The steps were in good condition and remnants could be seen of the beds although the planting had disappeared. A detailed report documented the history of the site which became a school in 1932 and in 2000 was sold for conversion to apartments. Several houses were built on the grounds and the Trust is very fortunate in that Paul Wood, a new SGT member, has recently moved into Frant Court and is finding out more about the Jekyll history.



Steps from the formal terraces at Frant Court in 2002



The terrace steps in 2020. Photo © Paul Wood



Frant Court in 2020 and Jekyll's stone walling. Photo © Paul Wood

Paul Wood writes:

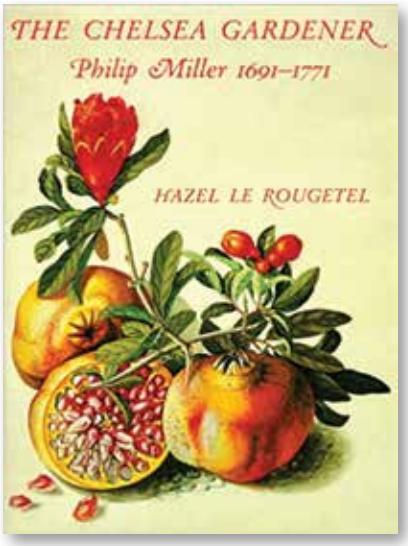
Since moving to a modern house in the grounds of Frant Court last year, we have been attempting to increase the funding for the garden here. A previous owner of Frant Court employed Gertrude Jekyll to remodel the nine-acre garden, part formal and part woodland garden. The house is now divided into luxury apartments and new houses have been built sympathetically in the grounds. All residents contribute to the cost of the garden, but our collective funds only allow us to maintain it, not fully restore it.

As a result of our approaches Ros Wallinger of The Manor House at Upton Grey in Hampshire, who has a Gertrude Jekyll garden fully restored with the original Jekyll plantings, has invited us to visit, and perhaps to acquire some historically accurate plants. So when the current restriction on movements are lifted a small group from here will be travelling to Hampshire with the intention of being inspired by an original Jekyll garden.

For more about Upton Grey see *Gertrude Jekyll: Her Art Restored at Upton Grey* by Rosamund Wallinger. The Garden Art Press, 2014.

Book Reviews

The Chelsea Gardener
Philip Miller 1691-1771
Hazel Le Rougetel
Natural History Museum Publications, 1990
ISBN-10: 0565011014, £14.95



Although this work was first published in 1990 I came across an ex-libris copy in 2000, but for one reason or another neglected it and so it has been sitting on a bookshelf, untouched, until now. Similarly, a trip to the Chelsea Physic Garden has been on my 'Gardens to Visit' list for ages. Having read this account, it's good to realise that, when the garden re-opens on 10 June, I can plan a visit having some background knowledge of the remarkable man who developed the physic garden and the practice of horticulture in the 1700s.

The Physic Garden had been established in 1673 by the Company of Apothecaries, long before Philip Miller was appointed in 1721. He was born in 1691 to a family with a nursery garden in Deptford and was encouraged by his father to accumulate horticultural knowledge by travelling around England and throughout the Netherlands. Having practical experience he established his own nursery in St Georges Fields, Southwark. The post of Hortulanus, or Head Gardener, required the annual presentation of fifty dried specimens of cultivated plants to the Royal Society. This target stimulated correspondence and exchange of seeds and specimens with a wide network of plantsmen in Europe and the Americas. Investigation of new plants for medicine and agriculture was paralleled by a demand for 'exotics' to be grown on the estates of the wealthy. So, with increased knowledge of plants and gardening techniques, in 1724 Miller produced the first of his publications, as a quarto edition, *The Gardeners and Florists Dictionary Or A Complete System of Horticulture*. By 1731 this appeared in a folio edition as *The Gardeners Dictionary: containing methods of cultivating and improving the kitchen, fruit and flower garden*. Having become a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1729, Miller became the recognised consultant at all levels of society throughout the country for all things horticultural and he continued to publish new editions of the *Dictionary* which took account of new found plants and their care until 1768.

The principal content of Le Rougetel's book is supplemented by an essay on Miller's written work, entitled: 'The Botanical Importance of Philip Miller's Publications' by the eminent botanist William T Stearn (1911-2001) in which Stearn states at the outset that:

"Both for its intrinsic merit as a comprehensive and massive repository of information and for its long-lasting influence, *Miller's Gardeners Dictionary* is the most important horticultural work of the eighteenth century."

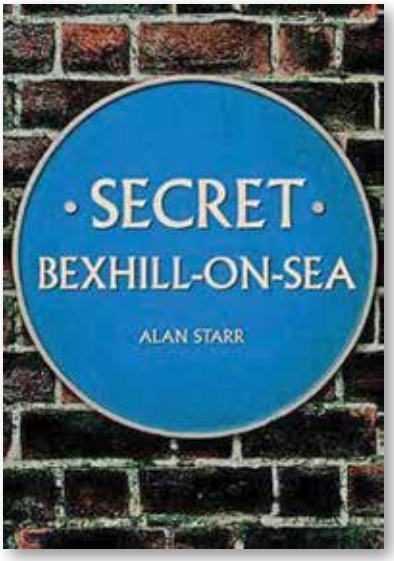
This is a very readable account of Miller's life and of his legacy as he influenced others in the creation of physic gardens and the introduction of plants from overseas into private gardens as well as by his gradual acceptance of the new system of plant nomenclature by Linnaeus. The author explains how and why the apothecaries came to choose the site in Chelsea and gives more than a flavour of the life and times of the botanists who worked, corresponded or socialised with Miller. There are descriptions of notable visitors to the Physic Garden for assistance: such as Gilbert White needing help with growing melons at Selborne. There was correspondence with, among others, John Bartram of Philadelphia over five or more years, through a London merchant, Peter Collinson, who was able to organise transport and distribution of Bartram's specimens from the Eastern states of America. The chapter headed 'Hazards of Transport' is a clear reminder of how specimens were at the mercy of sea captains' care and the weather before the invention of the Wardian Case.

Scattered throughout there are contemporary botanical illustrations, relevant to the text including some by George Ehret who became Miller's son in law. Sadly, there are very few portraits of Miller's contemporaries and of the

man himself, only a 'controversial portrait' from the 1785, French edition of the Dictionary. The text however is a very good written portrait – I can't think why I took so long to find the time and inclination to read it.

Jennifer Parsons

Secret Bexhill
Alan Starr
Amberley Publishing, 2019,
ISBN 9781445654584, paperback, £14.99



Author and SGT member Alan Starr has written a delightful book on the history of Bexhill-on-Sea, homing in on little known stories interspersed with vignettes of interesting and unusual facts about Bexhill which lead you wanting to know more. We are taken on a whistle stop tour of interesting people and places, all the quirky events that stick in your mind. The book is illustrated throughout with fascinating photographs, both old and modern, revealing the way in which the town has grown and changed during the twentieth century.

The old town of Bexhill set in the countryside north of the coast dates from 772 AD and is dominated by St Peter's Church which has Anglo Saxon origins. The ancient manor house, now demolished, was opposite the church with the lovely Manor Gardens.

The military played an early part in Bexhill's history, a camp being established in 1790 to the west of the old town with barracks for 1,000 men. The King's German Legion arrived in 1804, made up of 4,000 German soldiers who had escaped Hanover after it fell to the French and who fought in the British Army. Many of the local girls became enamoured of the German soldiers and some married.

Schools have been very prominent in Bexhill's history beginning with the conversion of the chantry chapel of the church into a school in 1597. From then on boarding schools were a major part of Bexhill, at one time housing four hundred pupils. The Augusta Victoria College had good relations with Berlin during the 1930s; one of the pupils was Bettina Van Ribbentrop, and a swastika was embroidered on the school badge. Agatha Christie's daughter Rosalind was enrolled in the Caledonian School from the age of nine in 1928 and Christie's 1936 novel *The ABC Murders* features a fictional café on Bexhill seafront.

The most iconic building in Bexhill is the De La Warr Pavilion, designed by Erich Mendelsohn and Serge Chermayeff in 1933 who were championed by Herbrand De La Warr, the 9th Earl, and a council member. £50,000 was spent on the development of the entertainment complex. The design of the building came about through an architectural competition and was one of the first in the country to be built in the modern International Style. It received some criticism on its opening. A more recent feature of Bexhill, the coastal gardens designed by Noel Kingsbury have also had a mixed reception from Bexhill residents.

Bexhill is well known for its connection to the early days of motor racing and is referred to as the 'birthplace of British motoring', dating from 1902 when speed trials were held along a measured one kilometre on the seafront. There was opposition and the course was problematical. The next trials in 1904 reversing the route were not well attended; subsequently occasional meetings were convened until the early 1920s when more suitable venues took over.

In recent times Bexhill has become popular with celebrities including the comedian Spike Milligan who was stationed in the Pavilion during the Second World War and then surprised by Eamonn Andrews at the De La Warr for 'This Is Your Life', a 1970s television programme. David Hare the playwright lived in Bexhill but disliked being a child in suburbia. Eddie Izzard was also not happy growing up in Bexhill but in recent years has tried to enhance the image of Bexhill by donating his model railway to the museum and paying for the installation of the 'Hanging Bus' sculpture by the artist Richard Wilson on the Pavilion roof in 2012.

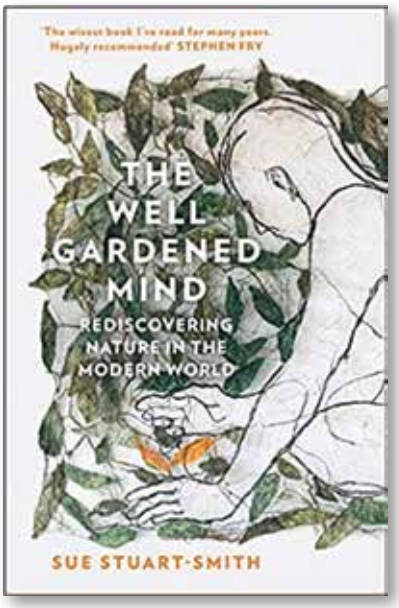
Bexhill is a favourite site with retired people, the new town being fairly flat and easily accessible.

Notable retirees have included John Logie Baird, the inventor of television, and Fanny Craddock, the eccentric TV cook.

Secret Bexhill is a fascinating book which will hopefully inspire readers to go out and about to discover the hidden history of this south-coast town.

Lynn Gausden

The Well Gardened Mind, Rediscovering Nature in the Modern World
Sue Stuart-Smith
William Collins, London 2020
ISBN 978-0-00-810071-1, £20



Oh no, not another book about our lost connections with Nature (there is always an implied capital 'N') you may be feeling; but this book is exceptional, intelligent and thought-provoking. Sue Stuart-Smith is a psychiatrist, psychotherapist and a gardener. She also happens to be married to Tom Stuart-Smith, the garden designer, and together they have created a magical garden in Herefordshire (see their book, *The Barn Garden*, Serge Hill Books, 2011, ISBN 978-0-9568640-0-0).

Sue uses the story of her grandfather's terrible experiences in captivity in Turkey during WW1, his arduous 4,000 mile journey home and his gradual, albeit partial, recovery as a springboard to meditations on the place of nature in the past and in the modern world. A loving wife began the first stage of his recovery and this continued with a year-long government-sponsored horticultural placement and then employment in Canada on arable and cattle farms. Returning to England he and his wife created a productive smallholding with pigs, hens, bees, fruit, vegetables and flowers. This sustained their family and provided a crucial income but was clearly far more than that, an example of what the author describes as 'the restorative effects of gardening and working the land'. This is one of many stories of redemption through working in, and with, nature.

From here the author trawls the millennia from the Neolithic times of hunter gatherers to the climate and biodiversity issues of today, citing philosophers, analysts, politicians, writers, painters and patients in her testimony to the healing power of the natural world. At times I felt that the book did not always flow easily but it is about as far from soft-centred Gaia mindfulness as it is possible to get. Sue Stuart-Smith is eminent in her field and she brings results from robust research on many forms of mental distress. Using case studies from diverse countries and communities, she examines the effect of our genetic inheritance, unlooked for and traumatic events in our lives, fragmentation of social groups and the emphasis on an urban, competitive and often stressful lifestyle, showing us cameo after cameo of partial recovery from grief and depression, trauma and torture, burn-out and fall-out from across the centuries.

Although her conclusions are invariably positive, she avoids the commonplace implication that re-engaging with nature is a universal panacea and supports her arguments throughout with simple statistical evidence. At the beginning of the nineteenth century 3% of the population lived in cities, in the twenty-first century more than 50% do; in urban areas there are 40% more cases of depression and 20% more case of anxiety disorders than in rural areas; every £1 spent on gardening projects saves the NHS £5; ten weeks of gardening is worth ten of CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) but infinitely cheaper. Her case studies are fascinating and numerous but I will quote just a few.

Rikers Island, New York, is one the largest penal colonies in the world, inhabited by 8,000 prisoners (90% of whom are African American or Hispanic and 40% of whom have been diagnosed with mental illness). The GreenHouse Program gives 400 men and women there an opportunity to learn how to grow and care for plants and provide food for the kitchens, flowers for the staff rooms and plants for the Parks Department. They then, in collaborative programme with the Horticultural Society of New York (HORT), work in the many green spaces of the city and create community

links. The re-offending rate after release from Rikers Island is 65% within three years but, for those on the HORT programme, it is 10-15%. Closer to home she cites HighGround, the MOD gardens in Headley Court, Surrey, where deeply traumatised patients can begin to recover from surgery and PTSD and Horatio's Garden for spinal injury patients at Salisbury Hospital. She makes it clear that such spaces are not simply 'nice places': they are carefully designed, with wide paths, safe enclosures, gently rustling leaves and borders planted in soothing blues and greens (colours known to calm the mind). Places where damaged men and women can begin to find solace.

A more down to earth project, Incredible Edible in Todmorden, West Yorkshire, has contributed to the transformation of a degraded and blighted community into something more sustainable and positive. Vegetables, fruit and herbs are grown on derelict ground, roadside verges and outside shops and residents can help themselves. With no external funding, more than seventy food-growing plots, including an 'edible towpath' re-named 'Pollination Street', have sprung up, schools and colleges are involved and there are community events about food and horticulture. Levels of antisocial behaviour have dropped, shops and cafés have re-opened, there is a thriving food market and fortnightly collective gardening days. Accurately described as 'a radical experiment in urban foraging', this movement spread across the UK and then around the world.

Sue Stuart-Smith's tenet is that 'In this era of virtual worlds and fake facts, the garden brings us back to reality' (when she speaks of 'the garden' she has any sustaining green space in mind). She advocates the Garden versus the Cloud and *The Well Gardened Mind* is a perfect title.

Susi Batty

We Get Around … a small selection from the many gardens visited by SGT during the last decade.

All photos by Jim and Sue Stockwell



September 2010. Woolbeding. The summer house and cascade. A history of the house and garden by Sally Walker featured in the 2006 Newsletter.



August 2011. Chiswick House. Members were given a tour of the eighteenth century house and garden.



May 2013. Grove Farm House. The circular maze was created from 1000 yews and completed in 2011.



Ringmer Park. June 2014. A joint visit with Friends of East Sussex Record Office.



May 2016. Selehurst. Those renowned SGT cakes!



July 2015. The Brighton Pavilion.

SGT's twentieth anniversary celebration.

At the table are Sally Walker, Chair, and the Hon. Mrs Edward Boscawen, former President of SGT.

May 2017. Petworth Park.

As well as a tour of the Park designed by Brown we enjoyed a private visit to the garden of Lady Egremont.





IN BOX



SGT Winter Event 2020 + Garden Lectures and Visits 2021

The Events Group is busy planning a programme of lectures and visits for next year, while mindful of the situation regarding Covid-19. The theme for the lectures will be sculpture in the garden and landscape and we are currently approaching potential lecturers. We hope to arrange these at the spacious Methodist Hall in Haywards Heath as this year. However, for health-safety reasons there is a chance we may be obliged to hold these as online lectures.

We plan to include our postponed 2020 garden visits in our 2021 programme, and also include some contemporary sculpture gardens. As our visits take place in the spring and summer and outside, it is likely that we can practice social distancing if necessary. We are also planning a Jekyll study day in combination with Surrey GT.

Our winter event, usually held late November/early December, is very popular and attended by a large number of members and their guests. We are looking at venues and potential speakers, to make provisional bookings. We can then review it nearer the time, in the light of current health advice.

We would welcome your views – would you be interested in lectures online? Any thoughts about holding our winter event in late November? Thoughts on garden visits? We look forward to your feedback!

Articles for the Newsletter

The next edition of the newsletter will feature reports from the SGT Research Group sharing their ongoing study of the houses and gardens connected with Gertrude Jekyll. The renowned plantswoman worked predominately in Surrey, but Sussex can claim a number of private gardens where Jekyll was commissioned, and she apparently loved trips to the seaside! We would also welcome articles from our members, perhaps how you have adapted your own garden during physical isolation, or a favourite gardening book that you have revisited in these unusual times. Please contact the editor: sallyatcoast@aol.com

The deadline for the autumn edition is Friday 2 October 2020.

Sussex Gardens Trust

Website: www.sussexgardenstrust.org.uk
email: information@sussexgardenstrust.org.uk

Research and Recording email: research@sussexgardenstrust.org.uk
Conservation Committee email: conservation@sussexgardenstrust.org.uk

SGT Council Members:

Chair: Marcus Batty
Secretary: Julie O'Hara
Treasurer: Pat Dauncey
Joint Membership Secretaries: John and Jackie Dorkings
Newsletter Editor: Sally Ingram
Events Programme: Jennifer Parsons
Research and Recording Coordinator: Marcus Batty
Research and Recording; Small Grants Project: Virginia Hinze
Joint Chair of Conservation Committee: Jim Stockwell
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