SUSSEX GARDENS TRUST



Jottings

Edition No. 2 July 2022

Welcome to our second edition of Jottings. In the month of July we focus on two of our much-loved parks in Sussex. A border in the Horsham Park Sensory Garden was recently replanted with a donation from our Small Grants Fund, and Sally Sanderson gives an update on how the garden is flourishing. SGT member, Lynn Gausden, is very familiar with Hastings Park and she writes about its early history and intriguing new visitor centre. Travelling further afield, Maggie Weir-Wilson describes her enticing visit to the colourful tulip fields of Amsterdam.

Things to do, places to be

Save the Date! Thursday 8 September 2022. SGT members and their guests are invited to a special Pop-Up event at **Sedgwick Park**, near Horsham. Starting at 2pm, with picnics in the grounds from 12noon. £12pp. Afternoon tea and cake included. More details will be on the SGT website.

The Garden Museum current exhibition
The Secret Garden 6 July – 4 September



Inside the Wonderful Garden, Lauren Child, collage on paper

The Garden Museum's summer exhibition will celebrate Frances Hodgson Burnett's beloved classic children's book *The Secret Garden*, exploring how different artists' illustrations over the past hundred years have brought the book to life and enriched readers' enjoyment and appreciation for the healing power of gardens.

Artist Juliette Losq has been commissioned to create a new immersive artwork which will offer a contemporary interpretation of *The Secret Garden* as an urban landscape.

Visitors will be invited to enter this new work as part of the exhibition. As well as celebrating illustrations from *The Secret Garden*, the exhibition will explore Frances Hodgson Burnett's keen interest in gardening in real life, including her gardens at Great Maytham Hall, Kent – famous for providing the inspiration for *The Secret Garden* – and Plandome Manor, in New York state.

Charleston Festival of the Garden 14 –17 July

Over the course of four inspiring days of live events, Charleston's Festival of the Garden explores themes of race, access, privilege, mental health and sexuality through the prism of gardening, horticulture and the natural world.

Programme highlights include:



Figurehead of the 'New Perennial' movement, **Piet Oudolf**, has changed the way we think about garden design. His own garden in Hummelo has been a hub of experimentation over the years. An 'in conversation' event celebrates Oudolf as a plantsman and garden designer, and how plants give rhythm to the seasons, from midsummer glory to the beauty in winter decay.

Piet Oudolf. Photo ©Charleston.

Pioneering landscape designers **Charlotte Harris** and **Hugo Bugg** join grower, forager and cook **Poppy Okotcha** to discuss taking back control of where our food comes from and the power of growing for ourselves and our community. They explore the question: what can kitchen gardens teach us about how to live sustainably?

Recipient of the Royal Horticulture Society's Victoria Medal of Honour in 2019, **Fergus Garrett**, Head Gardener and Chief Executive of Great Dixter House & Gardens, will discuss biodiversity, meadows and the garden habitat.

Michelham Priory & Gardens Contemporary Craft Show 29 - 31 July

This summer the Guild returns to Michelham Priory, a Grade I listed Tudor house, surrounded by England's largest water filled medieval moat, with a working watermill, and replica Bronze Age roundhouses.

Borde Hill: The Artist's Garden – Summer Exhibition
1 August – 30 September

Visitors will be able to explore the historical Garden, renowned for its rare shrubs and champion trees, where they will discover approximately 40 affordable works by established and up-and-coming artists inspired by both flora and fauna.

NGS Gardens in July

The National Garden Scheme's Publicity Officer for East & Mid Sussex, Geoff Stonebanks, has picked out some wonderful gardens opening for the charity across our county. July should be the hottest month of the year creating the perfect opportunity to get out and see some gorgeous gardens.

Geoff says: 'Most gardens allow children in free and serve delicious home-made teas. All the monies we raise goes to nursing and caring charities, notably Macmillan Cancer Support, Marie Curie, Carers Trust, Hospice UK, The Queen's Nursing Institute and Parkinson's UK. Check our website for a full list of all that's on offer'.

New for 2022: Westham & Stone Cross Trail, BN24 5DF, Saturday 16 July, midday to 5pm, entry £5.

See two adjacent gardens at 19 and 21 Rattle Road. Both have lovely herbaceous borders, mature trees and shrubs. No. 19 is planted for wildlife with roses climbing through trees; No. 21 has a pergola, a new herbaceous border and a greenhouse. Nuthatch is less than a mile (27 St Michaels Close, Stone Cross BN24 5EU) away on the same road going west and is a small unban garden with a summerhouse and borders.



19 Rattle Road

Saturday 16 July

Midday to 5 pm, entry £5.

Five Oaks Cottage: Discover an acre of delicate jungle surrounding an Arts and Crafts style cottage with stunning views of the South Downs. This unconventional garden is designed to encourage maximum wildlife with a

meadow brimming with knapweed and hogweed, set on clay, which attracts clouds of butterflies throughout July. There are two small ponds and lots of seating to enjoy refreshments.



Five Oaks Cottage, Petworth, RH20 1HD.

Friday to Sunday 22 to 24 July,

10am to 4pm, entry £5, pre-book tickets also available.

33 Wivelsfield Road, Saltdean, Brighton, BN2 8FP.

Saturday and Sunday 30 and 31 July.

11am to 5pm, entry £5.



33 Wivelsfield Road: This is a fairly new garden that was cleared in 2016, landscaped during 2017 with planting begun later that year. It is split over three levels and is filled with colourful perennials, annuals, grasses, and succulents planted both in the ground and containers. The formal garden leads onto a stunning wildflower meadow which extends right out onto the Downs, giving spectacular views of both the ocean and South Downs National Park.

Hoopers Farm, Vale Road, Mayfield, TN20 6BD. Saturday and Sunday 30th and 31st July, 11am to 5pm, entry £5.

Discover a large south facing garden with colour themed mixed herbaceous planting. Brimming with mature trees, flowering shrubs, a rose arbour, rock garden, secret garden and vegetable plot. Enjoy the new planted area with lots of late season colour developed from existing sand school. Lovely views.

Horsham Park House Sensory Garden and the Superheroes

Sally Sanderson, Chair of the Friends of Horsham Park

The Friends of Horsham Park have a Wednesday morning volunteer group who carry out gardening and conservation tasks in the park. Our WhatsApp group name is 'Priceless Superheroes'! In 2021 despite lockdown, we contributed over 1000 hours and a big chunk of our time was spent in Park House Sensory Garden on the 'Sense the Change' project for the thirtieth anniversary of this special garden (which featured in SGT newsletter No 80, Autumn). Here is an update on what we have been doing in the Garden.

In October we planted up the Winter Interest Bed at the garden's entrance – the bed supported by the generous grant from Sussex Gardens Trust. The toughest job was getting out the vine that had proved such a thug – swamping the yew hedge and growing over the iron hooped fence to the extent it was impossible to see into the garden (as shown in the aerial photo). The yew hedge is now thriving and the open view means that passers-by can enjoy the winter interest bed.



The vine swamping the hedge and hiding the garden

Although the planting is yet to bush out, the succession of flowers on show has made the garden more delightful for the early part of the year. The bed is predominantly cream, blue and pink. The *Camellia japonica* 'Volunteer' was one of the first splashes of colour, the pop of colour from the scattered *Tulipa bakeri* 'Lilac Wonder' has been fun and the *Helleborus argutifolius* and *orinetali*s have been quietly beautiful. The *Tulipa turkestanica* in this bed and the adjacent raised bed have been particularly eye catching – the planting was purposefully linked to create a visual flow between the two beds.





The Winter Interest Bed Spring 2022

Just outside the garden, on a small raised grass bank by the yew hedge, the volunteers planted 1000 *Fritillaria meleagris* mixed bulbs and also transferred lots of primroses from elsewhere in the park. We had a vision of a beautiful spring bank drawing you towards the garden, with the waft of Daphne from the Winter Interest Bed as you come around the corner, enticing you to look inside. The primroses did look stunning but sadly the contractor mowed them and the fritillaries which hadn't yet bloomed – ignoring our willow hooped railings to protect them! Such can be the frustrations of volunteering – we think the primroses will come back but are fearful for the fritillaries.

Mark Baldwin, a wonderful gardener, who over the last few years has restored the planting in the other beds in Park House Sensory Garden has decided he can no longer look after the garden. His skill and care will be much missed. Horsham District Council's Parks and Countryside team are currently arranging how to fill the gap and the volunteers will be likely to help out more than they have in the past. Everyone wants to ensure that Mark's legacy is enhanced and that the garden remains a delightful sensory oasis in the park. You can see a clip of Mark talking about the summer flowers in the Whistlestoparts Virtual Tour of Horsham Park. Scroll down and click on the Meet Mark video. Horsham Park | Whistlestoparts

In addition to the gardening, The Friends, as part of their thirtieth anniversary project to celebrate the garden, have moved a neglected kissing bench to the lawn in front of the registry office in Park House, which we hope newlyweds will use for photos. We used National Lottery Community money for this and have launched a photo competition, Love at First Seat, for the summer: Friends of Horsham Park: Friends of Horsham Park



Charlie and Emily who kindly let us take this photo on their special day

The Park House Garden project has been a major focus of our work, but our Wednesday gardeners have also taken care of the other beds in the park and completed a project to clear the ivy that was damaging the Grade II listed Estate Wall along North Street. The height and thickness of the ivy made this a good work-out for us all! As early summer starts our major focus will be on weeding and enhancing the pollinator-friendly planting in the park.

Alexandra Park Greenhouse Group: a community project

Lynda Foy, Chair of the Greenhouse Group

Hastings Round Table members have donated £5,000 to the Alexandra Park Greenhouse Group for the scheme to put concrete floor tiles in the 1930s structure. The temporary flooring in the greenhouse, situated off St Helens Road, will be removed and, with the help of a £10,000 grant from the National Lottery, it will be replaced to make the surface safer for volunteers and visitors.



Greenhouse group treasurer Ann Hodkinson received a cheque from Round Table vice-chairman Rob Lee.

Round Table chairman, Paul Wilson, said the money was raised by the Hastings Beer and Music Festival, which is organised his members. He added: 'The profits go to good causes. We look at all the requests we receive to see how many causes will benefit. This satisfies the community criteria that we have'.

He described the project, which aims to turn the greenhouse into a centre for nurturing and selling plants, talks, and courses to encourage people to grow garden plants and food, as magical.

> 'I have never been here before; it is lovely to come and see it. We will be able to see the work both before and after. We have a number of young people among us and it will be lovely to see our children come and use this space'.




The Greenhouse photographed in 1982, when it was known as the Floral Hall.
Photos ©Hastings Borough Council

Greenhouse group chairman Linda Pearson said: 'This is a really important local donation. We all feel really delighted that the Round Table has decided to support this restoration project'.

Self-employed joiner, Jason Wright, from Sedlescombe, is renovating the greenhouse's teak frame. He is cleaning and restoring most of the original wood, with any replacement beams made of sepele, a sustainable hardwood.

Linda said reinforced glass, supplied by Croft Glass, will be fitted to the roof and side panels, with zinc and insulation boards to be installed on the roof of the learning area to reduce heat. The group plans to install roof solar panels in future.

The group, which is a registered charity, launched Let's Raise the Roof, a fund-raising campaign in 2020 to fully restore the greenhouse. Thanks to a generous private donation, the campaign was boosted so that work to renovate the structure can forge ahead.

Hastings Country Park: beacons and a bale house

Lynn Gausden

Hastings Country Park lies in the High Weald area of outstanding natural beauty to the east of Hastings and bordered to the south by cliffs and the sea. It is owned by Hastings Council who began buying land in 1888 and today consists of 853 acres including farmland. The Country Park is accessible from Hasting's seafront by the East Hill lift which was opened in 1901 and is the steepest in England, or by steps up to the top. From inland the Country Park can be accessed by the road to Fairlight, where there are car parks and views of the fire hills, so called because of the gorse growing there. At the northern end of the park is North's Seat, erected in 1870, which is 176 metres above sea level and named after Lord Frederick North, who was MP for Hastings and father of Marianne North the botanical artist.



Warren Glen and Warren Cottage in 1851. The Coastguard Station can be seen on the hill behind. Illustration by permission of Steve Peak.

The beacon on the top of the cliffs at Fairlight was first erected in 1587 due to the threat of the Spanish Armada which arrived in 1588 and when beacons were lit all along the coast to warn of the threat of invasion.

During World War II a radar station and anti-aircraft batteries were installed near to the coastguard cottages and were able to pick up enemy aircraft and doodle bugs and on one day destroyed 97 doodle bugs. The radar station is still operational and the coastguard cottages were rebuilt in 1904.

Many cliff falls have reduced the Country Park along its southern edge adjacent to the sea. One landmark in particular has been lost, The Lovers' Seat, favoured in Victorian times for young lovers to meet each other and popular with photographers to take pictures of holidaymakers. It was replaced in 1948 after World War II having been destroyed by the military. Footpaths along the cliff edge have to be moved, managed and repaired from time to time to enable access.

The Country Park is used to graze animals to keep the gorse and grass in check. The bracken is broken by horses pulling heavy rollers. There are Exmoor ponies, Belted Galloway cattle and sheep. Sheep were made famous in 1852 when William Holman Hunt painted *Our English Coasts* featuring sheep on the cliffs at Fairlight.

Sport has been popular in the past, including cricket, football and golf, and a rifle range opened in 1901 in Warren Glen, but nowadays runners find it a good place to keep fit. Many other people bring their dogs for exercise and it is popular with children and walkers.

The Country Park is a haven for wildlife and the Friends of Hastings Country Park arrange many activities to show the wide variety of plants, insects and birds which make their homes there or pass through. There are wild flower walks, fungi walks, and bird watching, in particular the dawn chorus and migration. Wild flowers are plentiful and some of the varieties are bee orchid, yellow archangel and hoary ragwort. Butterflies and moths are in abundance and all are protected. Birds you may see include the yellowhammer, stonechat and jackdaw. A seabird, the fulmar, can be seen nesting in the cliffs from the beach at Rock-a-Nore to the East of Hastings.



The gorse bushes make a wonderful sight in the Country Park, and wildflowers carpet the ground. Wildflower meadows have been planted alongside the paths and drives which lead from the entrance off the Fairlight Road down to the new visitor centre called The Bale House.

The Bale House is an innovative building used as a visitor centre and cafe which opened in July 2021. It is constructed from straw bales and was built by Huff and Puff Construction with a grant from the EU. It is as eco-friendly as possible and is so well insulated with sheep's wool that it needs no heating. The building is constructed from natural and recycled materials and wood, lime, straw and sheep's wool. The only energy used is for lighting and hot water.



The Bale House has proved a great success and a welcome addition to the Country Park. There are a large number of books collected by the Friends with some specifically for children and child size furniture will soon be added to the bookcase holding the books. Many leaflets have been produced featuring the wildlife that visitors may see, and the latest is one for children focussing on wild flowers they can see in spring and summer and berries and fruits to look for in autumn and winter. The cafe is very popular and busy, with a few tables inside and others on the veranda outside.

Further Information:
Hastings Country Park – A History by Steve Peak £10.00.
This is only available in person from The Bale House in the Country Park.
Steve Peak's website will give you much more information about the history of the Hastings Country Park. https://www.hastingscountryparkhistory.com/

Friends of Hastings Country Park
https://www.friendsofhastingscountrypark.org/

All photos ©Lynn Gausden.

Tulips from Amsterdam

Maggie Weir-Wilson

Keukenhof Gardens

It was with an impulsive desire to see something different after lockdown that persuaded me to book up a five-day coach trip to Amsterdam to see Keukenhof Gardens and The Floriade. I got the last seat on the coach and was delighted; less delighted when they forgot to pick me up, but that's another story. I had been to a previous Floriade, but never to the Keukenhof Gardens which are well known for their tulip plantings. I like tulips but I had assumed the gardens would be rather formal and therefore not really to my taste, but how wrong I was.



The Park at Keukenhof

Keukenhof is just wonderful. A thirty-two hectare park filled with over seven million flowering bulbs, of at least 800 different varieties, all planted by hand in the autumn. It is open for seven weeks in the spring each year. This year it was from 24 March until 15 May, and open from 8.00 in the morning until 7.30 at night, giving everyone a nice long day to see everything. In March it is all the daffodils and crocuses, and in late April, when I went, it was all the tulips and hyacinths. The theme this year was Flower Classics, although I was none the wiser - one would have to know something more about tulips to have appreciated this.

Set amongst the gardens there were six pavilions where one could learn more about tulips, their history, the development of the black tulip, seventeenth century tulip mania, and current breeding programmes. A particularly impressive pavilion was one full of orchids. This was a surprise and I could not comprehend the amount of attention and work such a huge display would need.

Best of all however, was just wandering the paths, lakes and woodlands appreciating the different varieties of tulips, the colours, how they had been put together, and the underplanting. I was interested to see how tulips were even planted on grassy ridges in woodland, along with other bulbs and Californian poppies. One mixed bed showed forty different tulip varieties, planted among *Camassia*, *Crocus*, *Fritillary*, *Narcissus* and *Hyacinthus*. I was particularly impressed with the use of dark blue grape hyacinth (*Muscari*) as an edging and foil for the bright tulips, and then the use of a light blue amongst pale pink tulips.



Camassia and Tulips



The lake at Keukenhof

One of the pavilions had cut flower shows every week, and there were clever art installations in others. There was a lovely Dutch windmill and picnic area near one of the lakes from where visitors could go for a boat ride out to the flat fields of flowering bulbs. There were shops and cafes in all the pavilions and where you could order bulbs that had taken your fancy. I noted the names of certain varieties I liked, plus a many-headed *Narcissus* 'Sunlight Sensation' that I will look for in the autumn. It was a really inspirational visit, and I cannot believe this was the first time I had been; hopefully, it will not be the last.

The Floriade

After a rather chaotic and noisy day in Amsterdam on King's Day, when the nation all wore something orange and were seriously determined to party in the streets and canals of the city, I had a quiet day at The Floriade. This celebration of the Netherlands horticultural industry occurs every ten years on different sites each decade. This year it is set in the green town of Almere, to the east of Amsterdam. The exhibition opened on the 14 April and will run until the 9 October 2022. The theme this year is 'Growing Green Cities' and it aims to showcase innovative developments in all things green and sustainable.

The site is twice the size of Keukenhof. It has a small train running around the perimeter, and a real cable car strung diagonally across the site which give a terrific bird's-eye view of the wide canal through the middle and Utopia Island in the north. Although it is difficult to grasp at first, there are five sections to see: Urban District, Utopia Island, Green Island, Hortus Avenue and the Eco District. Each has something different to offer depending on your interests.



The bamboo garden arch at the Floriade



Dry hydroponics by TopKrop

The Urban District was where the international stands were. Countries such as Germany, Italy, Bangladesh, China, United Emirates, Qatar, Thailand, Turkey, Japan and, of course, the Netherlands were all represented by gardens and information. The China garden had a lovely bamboo garden arch and furniture along with a misty pond and planting. I was particularly taken with the lemon trees on the Italian stand. The lemons were trained against fan shaped frames in pots and so the many lemons were easy to pick.

The very large greenhouse on Hortus Avenue was full of over 100 small stands explaining new and sustainable methods of growing. One that I found interesting was the 'dry hydroponics' by a company called TopKrop. They had examples of leafy crops looking absolutely pristine and delicious growing in nutrient water with only the roots actually touching the water. In the Green Island section there was an arboretum with trees planted alphabetically and examples of tiny sustainable houses, plus a house weirdly made out of mycorrhiza and fungi.

There was so much to see it really needed more than a day, but from what I saw I found it a hopeful and inspiring exhibition. Once it closes the site will form a new district of Almere which should be a great place to live: sustainable, green and beautiful.

All photos © Maggie Weir-Wilson. www.maggieweirwilson.co.uk

Gardening in July ....

The writer in the garden, Gertrude Jekyll, offers advice in *Wood and Garden* published in 1899:

In the end of July we have some of the hottest of the summer days, only beginning to cool between six and seven in the evening. One or two evenings I go to the upper part of the wood to cut some fern-pegs for pegging Carnation layers, armed with fag-hook and knife and rubber, and a low rush-bottomed stool to sit on ... People who are not used to handling Bracken should be careful how they cut a frond with a knife; they are almost sure to get a nasty little cut on the second joint of the first finger of the right hand—not from the knife, but from the cut edge of the fern.

D. H. Lawrence describes a burst of hay-making in a letter to Blanche Jennings, from Eastwood, Notts., 30 July 1908:

From morning till night I have worked in the fields, when the willows have glittered like hammered steel in the morning, till evening when the yellow atmosphere seemed thick and palpable with dense sunshine at evening. You might have found me crawling from side to side on the horse rake, bending, then a jingle as the tines fell behind the winrow, you might have heard the whirr of the file as I sharpened the bristling machine-knife under the hornbeam; you could have seen me high on the load, or higher on the stack, like a long mushroom in my felt hat...

The journalist Robert Dash writes his gardening column for *The East Hampton Star*, 29 July 1985:

Mid-July through August the garden seems to be a thick, stodgy parade, with all of its outlines dulled and clouded. It seems to lumber along muffled in too much rich living and all of its greens begin to mature and shade like drifts of snow in January twilight. It is like the long, fat summer book whose passages one hoped would go on forever but one whose theme gets to seem a drowned or buried thing.



Photo ©Chris Dauncey

Monday 10 July 1989. Derek Jarman records in his diary:

Lazy high summer. The drowsy bees fall over each other in the scarlet poppies, which shed their petals by noon. Meadow browns and gatekeepers flutter wearily across the shell-pink brambles disputing the nectar with a fast bright tortoiseshell. The bees clamber hungrily up the sour green woodsage. Drifts of mauve rosebay and deep yellow ragwort studded with orange and black burnet caterpillars.

Christopher Lloyd writes to Beth Chatto from Great Dixter in the 1990s:

Thursday 3 July. For the month, we've recorded 16cm – more than six inches [of rain]. Main victims have been the old, once-flowering roses. I asked some American visitors who were at Mottisfont Abbey… how it had been there… The roses must have been at their peak, I suggested mischievously. They then had to admit that they were a disaster. If it isn't the wet, its heat or drought that ruins them, again and again.

We hope you have enjoyed our second edition of Jottings. Thank you to all the contributors. If you have any suggestions for future articles please email us at jottings@sussexgardentstrust.org.uk.

If you would like to be reminded every month when the next edition is ready, please use the **Ask button** on the home page of our website at https://www.sussexgardenstrust.org.uk/.

We look forward to seeing you all next month.