SUSSEX GARDENS TRUST



Jottings

Edition No. 7 December 2022

Welcome to the December edition of Jottings. It may be mid-winter but we are featuring some gardens in warmer climes, and by the coast. Two SGT members have been travelling: Maggie Weir-Wilson has visited the Amalfi coast and found gardens once enjoyed by celebrities, artists and writers, while Paul Tosey has discovered the largest shade house in the world in Lisbon. There's a date for your diary in April next year when we have a special visit to the newly restored One Garden in Brighton, where the innovative planting ideas within the old walled are inspiring to see at any time of the year. Closer to home, there's news of two recent garden restoration projects, one in Horsham and the other in Eastbourne, that have been supported by the SGT Small Grants Scheme, helping to keep the garden heritage of Sussex in good repair for the future.

Enjoy reading!

Things to do, places to be

SGT Christmas Event 13 December

There's still time to book for our special Christmas Event on 13 December! 02.00 pm – 05.00 pm at The White Hart Hotel, Lewes.



We are very pleased that Caroline Holmes, the well-known writer, garden historian and broadcaster, is giving a lecture about the many and varied hearts of oak across the High Weald.

SGT members will be familiar with her most recent book covering gardens in the High Weald: *Where the Wildness Pleases* and the series of online lectures that Caroline presented for SGT in the spring on unforgettable gardens in the High Weald.

Please join us at the White Hart Hotel in the centre of Lewes. There will be a splendid afternoon tea with sandwiches, savouries and cakes, followed by our ever-popular raffle. There's a chance to win two entry tickets to Denmans Garden, kindly donated by Gwendolyn van Paasschen, and a new book about Sussex Gardens, again presented by Gwendolyn, and two entry tickets to Borde Hill given by Eleni Stephenson Clarke.

Parking is easy at the hotel, or if that is full, in North Street behind the police station (BN7 2PA) or further down off Spring Gardens and Brook Street (BN7 2PT). **Book online**

Save the Date!

SGT Spring Visit, Lecture and AGM

22 April 2023, 2.00 pm - 4.45 pm

One Garden, Stanmer Park, Brighton BN1 9SE

In April 2023 the first SGT garden visit of the year will be to the newly-designed and award winning One Garden at Stanmer Park in Brighton.

Stanmer Park is a wonderful 300-acre open space, owned by Brighton & Hove City Council. The original manor house and estate, ornamental gardens and a walled garden were designed in 1713 by the architect Nicholas Dubois. In 2019 a restoration of the walled garden began, to a design by the landscape architect, Dominic Cole, and the garden won the prestigious Sussex Heritage Trust's Landscape Gardens Award in 2022.



Photo © One Garden

The Sussex-based garden designer, **Juliet Sargeant,** will be our lecturer for the afternoon. Juliet is a multi-award-winning garden designer with gold and silver-gilt medals from The RHS Chelsea Flower Show and The People's Choice award.

Peter Wood, the head gardener, will talk about the development of One Garden, followed by afternoon tea and the AGM.

More details will follow in the new year. This is a wonderful opportunity to explore a rediscovered garden, within the setting of a historic parkland, so save the date, bring a picnic and come for the day!

https://www.julietsargeant.com/

In the latest SGT Journal Dr Barbara Simms reveals the history of One Garden, from the eighteenth century to 2022, and Alex Waterfield, the Grounds and Gardens Manager, describes how new sustainable and technological growing methods and systems have been implemented at the Garden**.**

Gardens to Visit in December

It may be stormy outside but gardens keep their beauty whatever the season, and grasses, berries and bright stems bring colour to December days.

Many of the RHS partner gardens in Sussex are free to RHS members during the winter months –

Denmans Garden, Nr Arundel. BN18 0SU.
Free access to RHS member Thursdays and Saturdays, Oct– Dec.

Leonardslee Lakes and Gardens, Horsham, RH13 6PP.
Free access to RHS member 1 Dec – 28 Feb.

West Dean Gardens, nr Chichester. PO18 0RX.
Free access to RHS member 1 Oct – 23 Dec.

There are lots of other gardens in Sussex that remain open during the winter so take a look at our interactive county map on the website, created by SGT member Paul Tosey, and enjoy a winter walk.

Glow Wild at Wakehurst

Selected evenings November through to 1 January, 4.30 – 10 pm.

The award-winning winter lantern trail is back for its ninth year, featuring a never-before-scene route, brand new installations, and packed full of other surprises. As darkness falls, the gardens are brought to life with beautifully hand-crafted festive lanterns and captivating light installations created by leading artists. https://www.kew.org/wakehurst/whats-on/glow-wild-2022

Editor's Winter Garden Choice

Nymans Garden, is a Grade II listed garden created by the designer Leonard Messel and his wife. At this time of year the ancient woodland is full of surprising colour and textures, with burnt-orange ferns, peeling bark, lichen, and fungi. Not to be missed is a new garden within the old ruins of the Great Hall which was destroyed by fire in 1947. The small private garden is a retreat for all kinds of ferns and other rare plants, set among the rusty colours of weathered steel screens.
https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/services/media/new-garden-ruins-nymans

Gardens of the Amalfi Coast, Italy

By Maggie Weir-Wilson

At the end of October, I was lucky enough to spend a week's holiday in Sorrento on the Amalfi Coast of Italy. The weather was just beautiful all week, blue skies and temperatures around 24°. We went out every day to see such sites as Pompeii, Herculaneum, Naples, a mozzarella farm and a Limoncello maker.

Gardens of Augustus, Anacapri

One of the trips we took was a boat ride to the nearby island of Capri, beloved home of Gracie Fields, and other well-known celebrities. Once here we explored the town of Capri, before taking a small coach up into the hills, around very narrow bends, to the smaller, more intimate town, of Anacapri.

Here we were free to go shopping, have a coffee, or just appreciate the beautiful views. So, I headed to the Gardens of Augustus where at a cost of just one euro one could gain entry. The gardens were originally called the Krupp Gardens, after the German steel industrialist who established his mansion and gardens here in 1900s. However, it was renamed the Gardens of Augustus, after the first Roman Emperor, following the First World War.

The lovely terraces have gentle paths and beds filled with flowers such as dahlias, geraniums, and begonias, with cypress trees and pines. It is said to hold the most important plants on the island. The panoramic views to the sea and the rest of Capri are wonderful. There was an incredibly steep switchback path down the cliff to Marina Piccola, where Friedrich Alfred Krupp used to moor his private yacht when visiting his villa and gardens, but now these are closed due to falling rocks.



Villa Rufolo, Ravello

The second garden I visited was in Ravello, a small but affluent town up in the hills further south, and still overlooking the Amalfi coast. It was a renowned destination for artists, musicians and writers including Virginia Woolf, Greta Garbo, Tennessee Williams, and Jacqueline Kennedy.

The Villa Rufolo was built in the thirteenth century by a wealthy merchant of that name. However, over the centuries it fell into disrepair until it was rescued by a Scottish botanist, Francis Neville Reid, who bought it and turned it into a romantic nineteenth century garden and gothic villa; half ruin, half home. It was subsequently much admired by the elite of the times, including Richard Wagner, who said he had found his 'magical garden of Klingsor' and where he wrote the final act of 'Parsifal' inspired by the Villa Rufolo and its gardens.

In 1953 the Ravello Music Festival was established in remembrance of Wagner and now takes place every year in the summer. It is based in the Villa Rufolo gardens. The stage for the orchestra projects out over the sea from the lower of the two terraces, with the audience facing the orchestra, the sea and spectacular views.

The two terraces, or parterres, are planted with exotic flowers in small geometric beds which can be walked around. Umbrella pines and cypress trees add shade. The whole garden leads towards the terraces and the stunning views. There are fountains and pools, different levels and many steps with various entrances into the villa, whether arch, courtyard or hall.

Apparently, there is a team of gardeners, many descended from the original team employed by Neville Reid to create his romantic vision. When I walked around there seemed to be plants from every corner of the world: oleander, bottle brush, begonia, anthurium and bougainvillea to name just a few, and of course all were flowering in the warm sun.

Villa Rufulo





Photos © Maggie Weir-Wilson

The Estufa Fria – Lisbon's best kept secret?

By Paul Tosey

Lisbon has many justly famous, and very busy, tourist attractions; any guidebook will highlight the *Castel de São Jorge*, the *Elevador de Santa Justa,* the no.28 tram and many others. On the evidence of a recent visit, however, one site is conspicuous by its absence from any `Top 20' list.

You can probably name some of the largest glasshouses in the world, for example the Eden Project's biodome and Singapore's Flower Dome. Yet it is quite likely that you have never heard of the largest shade house in the world - that is, with no glass or equivalent and no heating. This appears to be *Estufa Fria*, which translates as `cold greenhouse'. The official Lisbon tourism website[i] does describe it, though not very prominently given that it is probably the world's largest example of its kind, as `one of the most important green spaces in Lisbon, considered an authentic living museum, with its small lakes and waterfalls, statuary, and hundreds of species of plants'.

In the early October sunshine, my wife and I took a morning bus ride from our hotel to a terrace at the northern end of Lisbon's *Parque Eduardo VII* (the same King Edward VII after whom the sanatorium in Easebourne, Sussex, which featured a Jekyll garden, is named). On its eastern side is the *Carlos Lopes Pavilion*, built for the 1922 World Expo in Brazil then relocated to Lisbon in 1932[ii]. The terrace offers a wonderful view across clipped box hedging down to the city and the river Tagus.



The view from the terrace of the *Parque Eduardo VII*

Our guidebook mentioned a hothouse on the park's western side so we decided to take a brief detour before continuing to the city centre. Initially there appeared to be nothing there beyond the railings that edged the path, but a view emerged of a curious surface stretching out into the distance. Vaguely resembling a massive roller-skate rink, this turned out to be the roof of the *Estufa Fria*, which is sunken into a former basalt quarry.



The roof of the *Estufa Fria*

Continuing down to our right, we found a lake and the main entrance where, being over 65, I had to pay all of €1.55.



The lake near the entrance to the *Estufa Fria*

Once inside, a stunning, magical, landscape opened up beneath the slatted roof.



The slatted roof of the *Estufa Fria* seen from the inside

The planting is a mass of tree ferns, rhododendrons, camellias, green bananas, colocasias, strelitzias and more. There are pools, statuary and arches intertwined with winding gravel paths and stone steps that enable you to meander back and forth and discover new perspectives. It is a tranquil and enchanting space.



A water feature in the *Estufa Fria*



Inside the *Estufa Fria*

In fact, there are three greenhouses here altogether. The *Estufa Fria* covers an area of over 8,000 m^2. As mentioned, it has no heating and the gaps between the slats are open to the outdoors. At the rear, hugging the back wall of the quarry, are two glass-roofed sections; the *Estufa Quente* (warm greenhouse), containing coffee plants and mango trees, and the *Estufa Doce* (sweet greenhouse), which houses cacti and other succulents.



The *Estufa Quente*



The *Estufa Doce*

The combined area of the three *Estufas* is some 11,500 m^2. For comparison, the Temperate House in Kew Gardens, the largest surviving Victorian glasshouse in the world, has an area of 4,880 m^2[iii].

What is the history of this spectacular structure? In 1926 the painter and architect Raul Caraphina discovered a disused basalt quarry adjacent to the park, which a local gardener had been using to shelter plants. Caraphina transformed the space into a massive greenhouse, the basalt walls forming a naturalistic setting for tender and exotic plants, water features and stone structures.

The *Estufa Fria* opened officially in 1933. In the 1940s the *Parque Eduardo VII* was developed into the form that can be seen today, adding a lake at the entrance to *Estufa* and a theatre called `The Nave' at it side, which extends beneath the park. The two smaller *Estufas*, which were the idea of Pulido Garcia, an engineer, followed in 1975.

This astonishing horticultural treasure could well be Lisbon's best kept secret. Information on the internet is scant; here, for the most part, I have relied on the leaflet and map I received on entry. If you should travel to Lisbon, please consider boosting the *Estufa Fria's* visitor numbers. I am sure you would find it rewarding.

Photos © Paul Tosey

[i] https://www.lisbonportugaltourism.com/guide/parque-eduardo-vii.html accessed 06-11-2022. See also: https://www.portugalvisitor.com/lisbon/estufa-fria

[ii] https://www.visitlisboa.com/en/places/pavilhao-carlos-lopes accessed 07-11-2022

[iii] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temperate_House,_Kew_Gardens accessed 06-11-2022

SGT Small Grants Scheme – recent projects

SGT has a **Small Grants Scheme** to help keep our designed parks and gardens in good repair so that visitors and the local community can enjoy their open spaces. Over the years we have donated around £10,000 to successful projects across the county and given advice on many more, especially those with historic interest requiring research.

Our most recent grants have been made to parks and gardens in public or community ownership or management, particularly in urban areas, as we are acutely aware of the pressures on local authority budgets in parks and recreation or leisure departments.

In April 2021 the **Friends of Horsham Park** sought funds to repair and restore their sensory garden in its thirtieth anniversary year. Visits and discussions with the Friends, Horsham DC officers and the head gardener were made and, as the Friends were able to demonstrate, they had in place both a five-year repair plan and match funding from various sources (including Horsham DC). SGT was pleased to offer them a grant of £1258, specifically to cover the replanting of a major bed for winter interest. The work was completed in November last year and since then the Friends of Horsham Park has kept SGT up-to-date with progress on the planting with articles and photographs published in Jottings.



SGT bed in the sensory garden at Horsham Park in June 2022



The SGT bed in mid-summer 2022



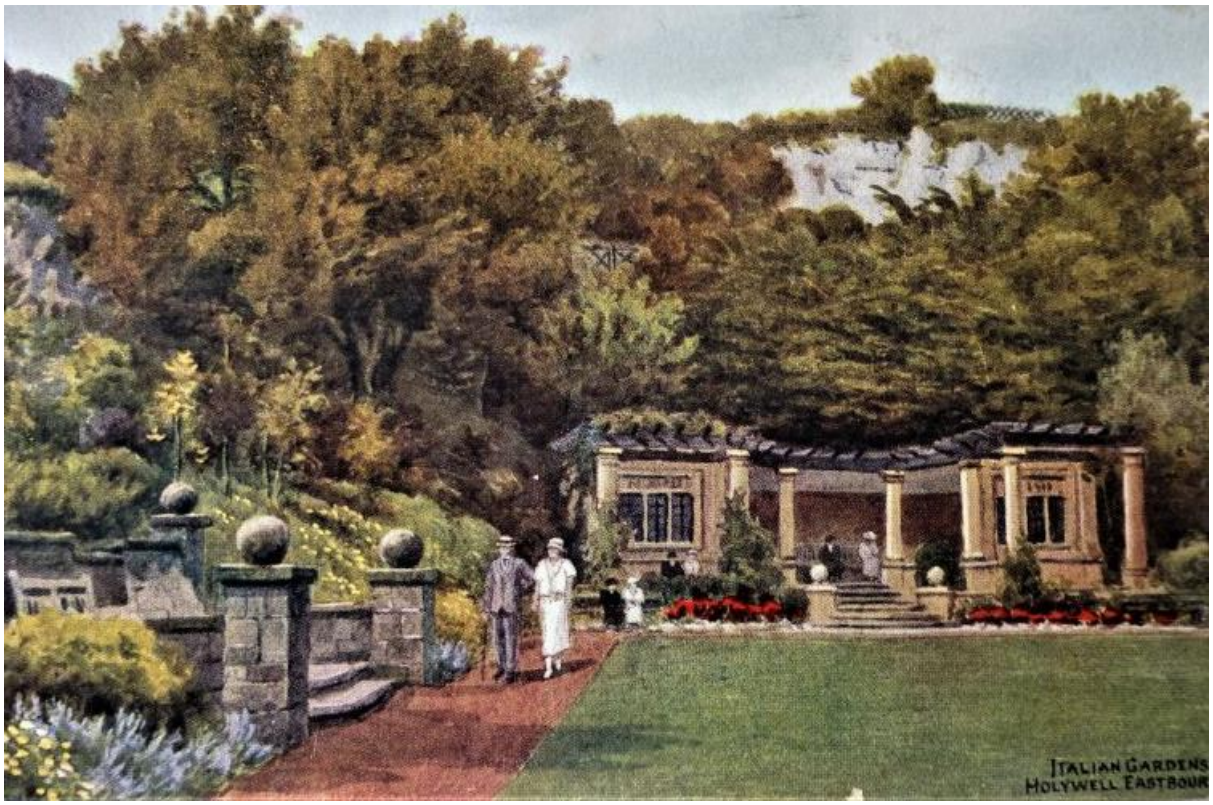
The autumn cut back – October 2022



November 2022

This year an application has been made by the **Friends of Meads Parks and Gardens** for the Italian Garden in Eastbourne, for a grant to replant the climbing roses which historically covered the garden's pavilion and pergolas. This addition will greatly enhance the buildings, restoring colour and 'romantic' character as shown in contemporary illustrations.

The Friends have persuaded Eastbourne Council to repair the structures and replanting the roses will complete the 1920s/30s appearance, as seen in the postcard view taken in the 1930s.



Postcard c1930s showing climbing roses on the pillars. (Eastbourne Operatic and Dramatic Society websitehttps://bournefreelive.co.uk/eods-are-returning-to-the-italian-gardens-thus-month/)

The site has important architectural and historic significance, as well as playing an crucial role in the community, offering a venue for cultural activity as well as a place of relaxation. The pavilion, the pergola-covered seating and the walling are all typical features of the many gardens created by municipal parks departments across the country for public enjoyment and recreation in the 1920s.

SGT was pleased to support the Friends' application for a grant, which will help to restore and conserve this much-valued garden for future generations to enjoy, and the replanting of the roses and the restoration will feature on the SGT website next spring.

The criteria for applying for a small grant can be seen on the SGT website, together with examples of recent case studies.
https://www.sussexgardenstrust.org.uk/conservation/small-grants-scheme/

Photos of the sensory garden at Horsham Park © Sally Sanderson, Chair of the Friends of Horsham Park