

In the summer of 2016 we heard that the **Heritage Lottery Fund** and **Big Lottery Fund** had approved our application for **£3.1m** to restore and improve the unique heritage, landscapes and facilities in **Kearsney Abbey** and **Russell Gardens**. **Dover District Council** and the many community groups and volunteers who supported the project worked hard to develop the proposals and we are now getting ready to deliver this exciting project.

Provisional timetable

The project will run from now until summer 2020, with activities and events taking place throughout this time. Most of the restoration and building works will take place from September 2017 until late 2018, with some preparatory works happening during the winter of 2016/17.

Know what's going on

To keep up to date please sign up for our monthly email updates at www.kearsneyparks.co.uk or follow us on Twitter @Kearsneyparks

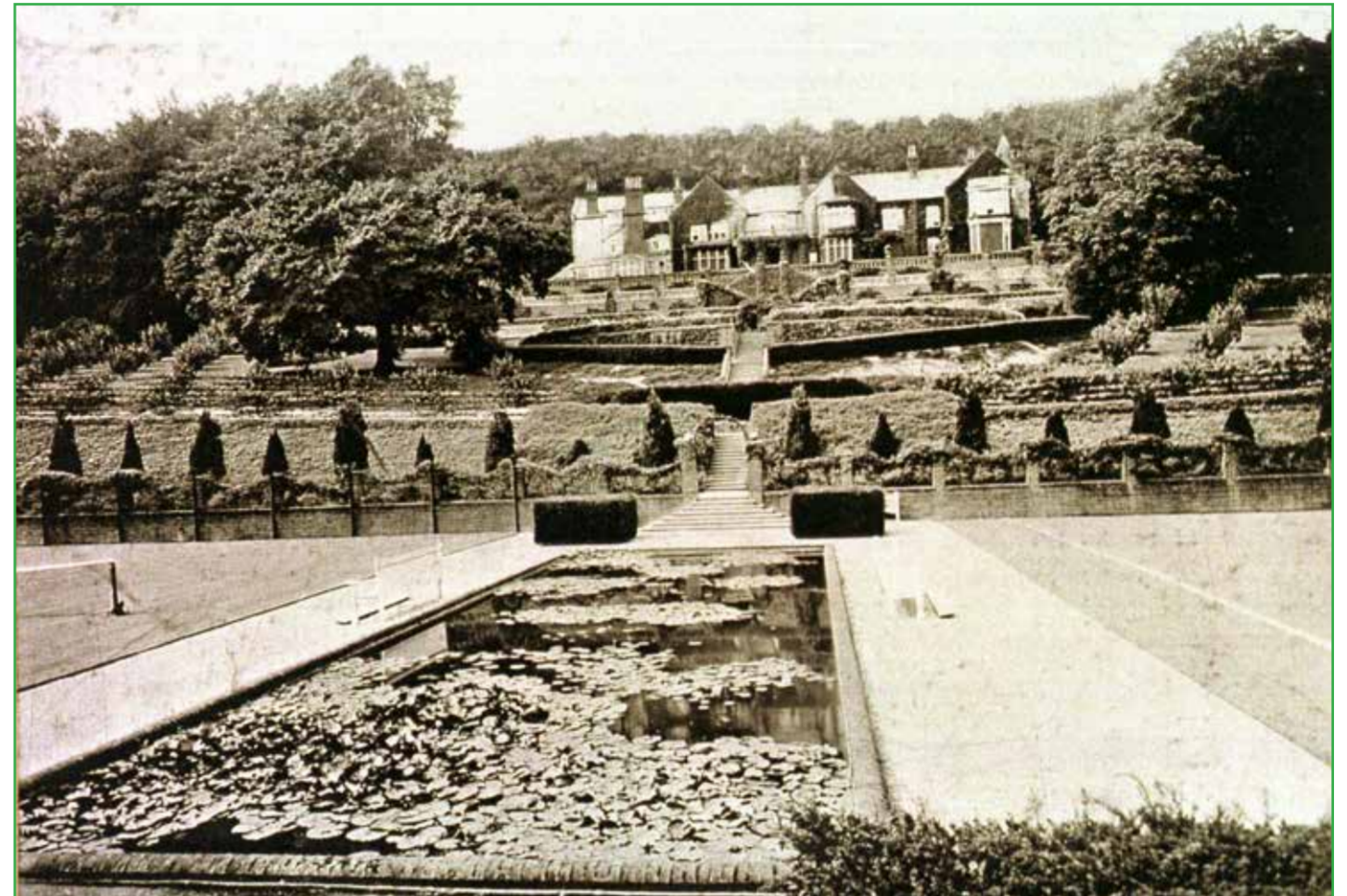


RUSSELL GARDENS

Russell Gardens was formerly part of the private grounds of Kearsney Court, a grand house built around 1900 for Edward Barlow, Managing Director of Wiggins Teape, owners of Buckland Mill in Dover.



The extensive gardens were designed in the Arts & Crafts style by internationally renowned Edwardian landscape architect, Thomas Mawson.



Today the gardens are grade II listed in the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. The structure of Mawson's original design is intact but it has become obscured by secondary woodland and scrub. A busy Alkham Road and lack of facilities also means they are not as well used as they could be.

Proposed improvements

We plan to restore Mawson's original design and improve facilities by:

- Repairing architectural features including bridges, boathouse and lily pond
- Visually reconnecting the house and garden by removing scrub and self-sown trees
- Planting new ornamental trees, shrubs and flowering plants
- Reinstating the hillside orchard
- Replacing the play area with a more historically sensitive and inclusive play space
- New toilets and extended path network.



KEARSNEY ABBEY BILLIARD ROOM CAFÉ



The grade-II-listed café is the remaining part of Kearsney Abbey, a grand country house and estate built around 1820 for John Minet Fector, one of Dover's wealthiest businessmen.

The house and surrounding estate changed hands numerous times during the 19th and early 20th century, before being requisitioned by the military during the Second World War.

After the war, the council acquired the house and grounds but extensive dry rot meant most of the building had to be demolished.

The café you see today was the billiard room of the former mansion. Many of the original features survive, including the wood panelling, stained glass panels above the doors and the roof lantern.

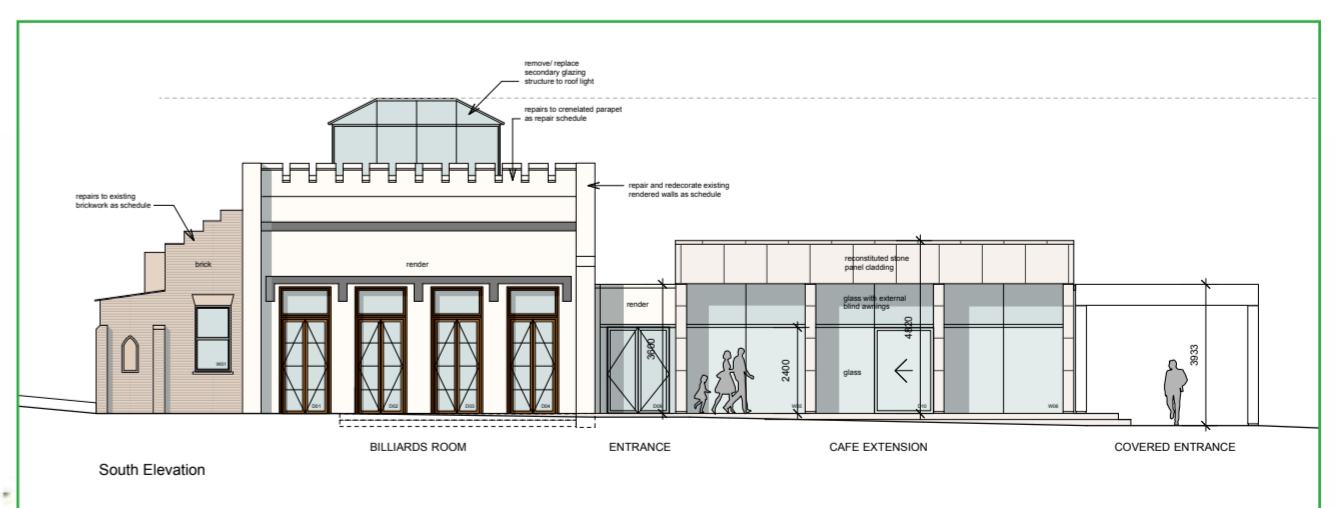
The café provides an important community resource but is too small to cope with demand on busy days.

Proposed works

We plan to restore the original features in the billiard room and create a new extension to help meet demand on busy days and provide space for community activities at other times.

Work will include:

- Restoration of the wood panelling, floors, ceiling lantern and repairs to the roof
- Removal of insensitive modern additions including catering equipment
- New extension including additional café space, a new kitchen and toilets
- Covered terrace and separate ice cream servery to the east
- Wide seating terrace to the south, overlooking the lake
- Existing toilets demolished, maintenance depot and boat club storage retained.



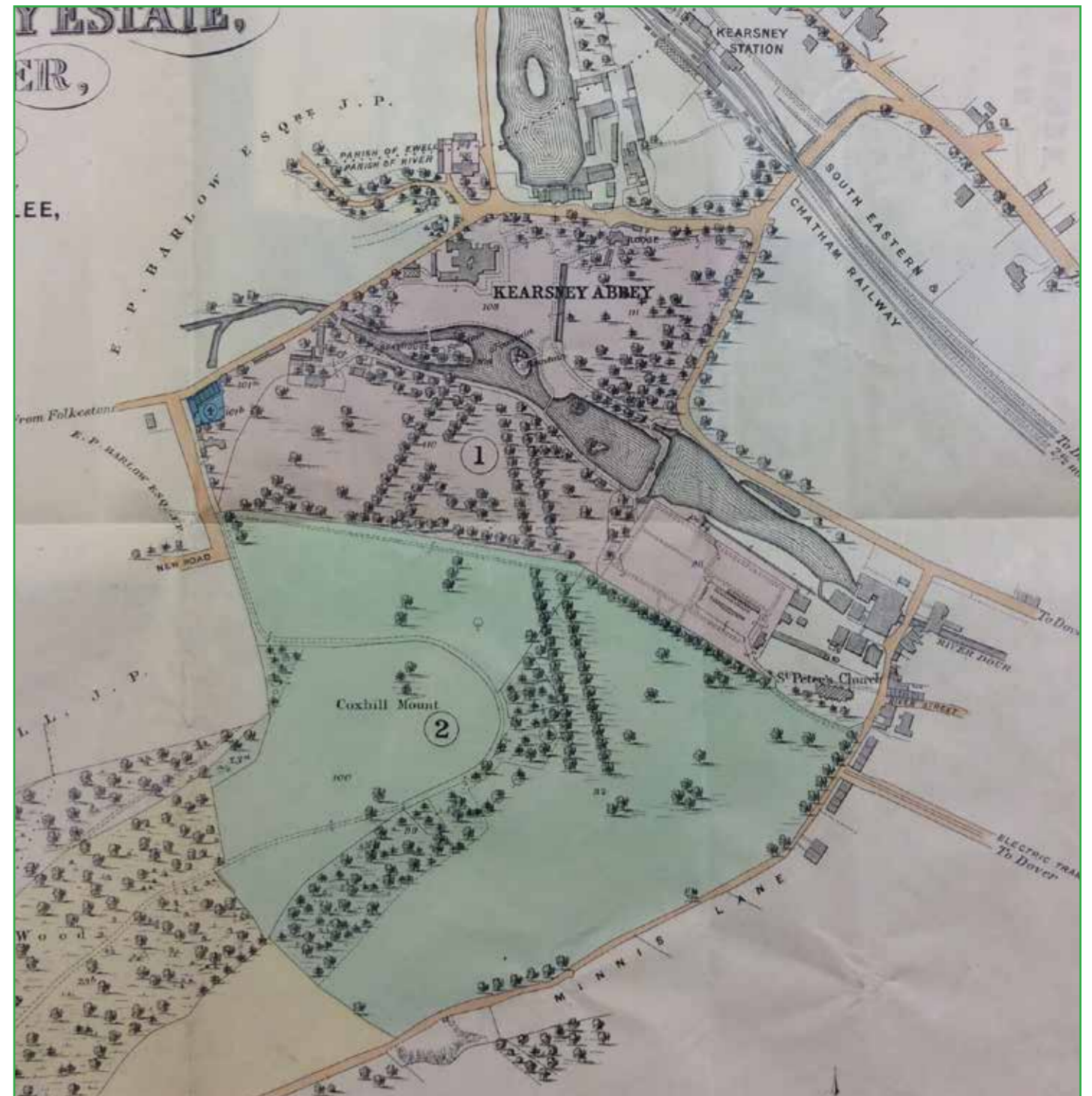
KEARSNEY ABBEY PARKLAND

Around their grand mansion, the Fector family created a picturesque landscape with open lawns, controlled views of the lake and strong avenues of trees radiating across open parkland and up to the summit of Coxhill Mount.

A number of architectural features created focal points in the landscape, including the central bridge and an 'eyecatcher' bridge at the bottom of the lake.



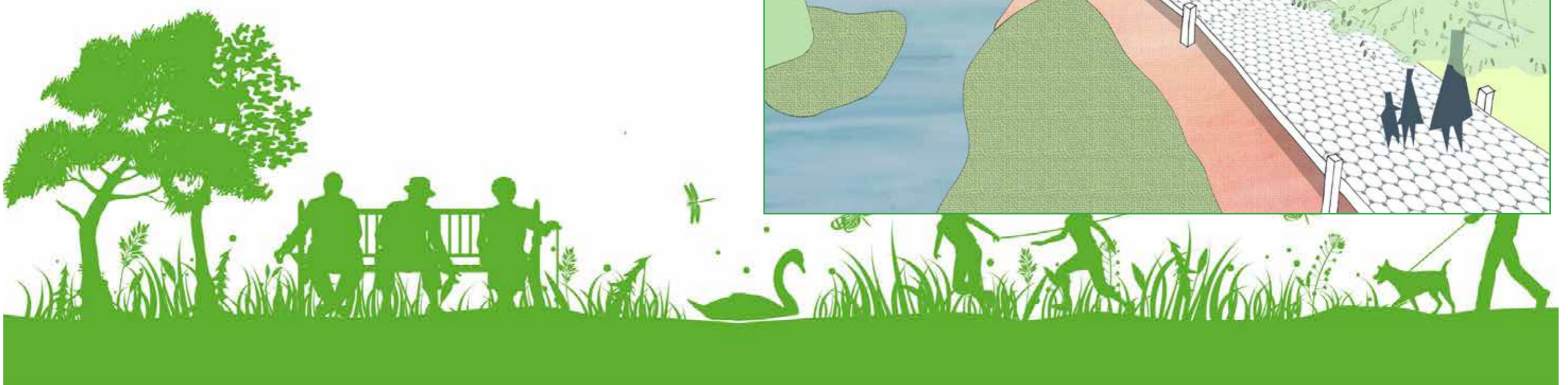
Over time the distinctiveness of the landscape has been lost as secondary woodland has developed, 200 year old grade-II-listed structures need sensitive maintenance work, and access over the former mill pond is particularly problematic in the winter.



Proposed works

We plan to:

- Repair listed structures, including the bridge and boundary wall
- Reinststate an 'eyecatcher' bridge to complete a circular route around the park
- Remove trees which interfere with the historic lime avenues
- Install a new boardwalk over the boggy area near the mill ruins
- Clear scrub woodland from the local wildlife site on the slopes of Coxhill Mount and manage as chalk grassland using livestock
- Re-open culverted sections of the River Dour:



TRANSPORT AND PARKING

Kearsney Abbey and Russell Gardens were originally designed and built as private gardens. Today they are visited by a significant number of people from Dover and across east Kent.

Around 50% of visitors drive to the parks, placing significant pressure on park infrastructure and local streets. The speed of traffic along Alkham Road also makes it difficult to move between the parks.

Disabled people have told us that they find it difficult to plan their visit and hard to use nearby pavements and crossings.



Proposed works

We plan to:

- Make park entrances more inviting and accessible
- Improve access information to help all visitors, including disabled people, plan their visit
- Increase the amount of blue badge and cycle parking around the café
- Increase parking spaces by creating a reinforced-grass overflow car park and making the western car park the main one for visitors
- Work with Kent County Council to improve the local Highway network, reduce traffic speeds and make public transport more accessible
- Continue to implement the Kearsney Parks travel plan, including:
 - park and ride for events
 - improved public transport information
 - exploring incentives, training, and more onsite facilities.



activities

Alongside the restoration and improvement works, we will be organising a range of activities, events, volunteering opportunities and training.

They will be structured around 5 key themes:

- Gathering and sharing information about the heritage of the parks
- Recreating their role as a place for community events
- Enabling schools to use the parks for outdoor learning
- Helping young people develop work-related skills and take part in training
- Promoting community involvement in management and maintenance.

PROPOSED ACTIVITIES

Events

- Theatre
- Music
- Cinema
- Story-telling
- Afternoon tea on the lawn.

Heritage information

- Volunteer research
- Oral history
- Archaeological digs
- New interpretation
- Tours and trails
- Quilting and more!

Schools

- Lessons in the parks
- Resources
 - o Rucksack packs
 - o Online lesson plans
- Teacher training.

Skills and training

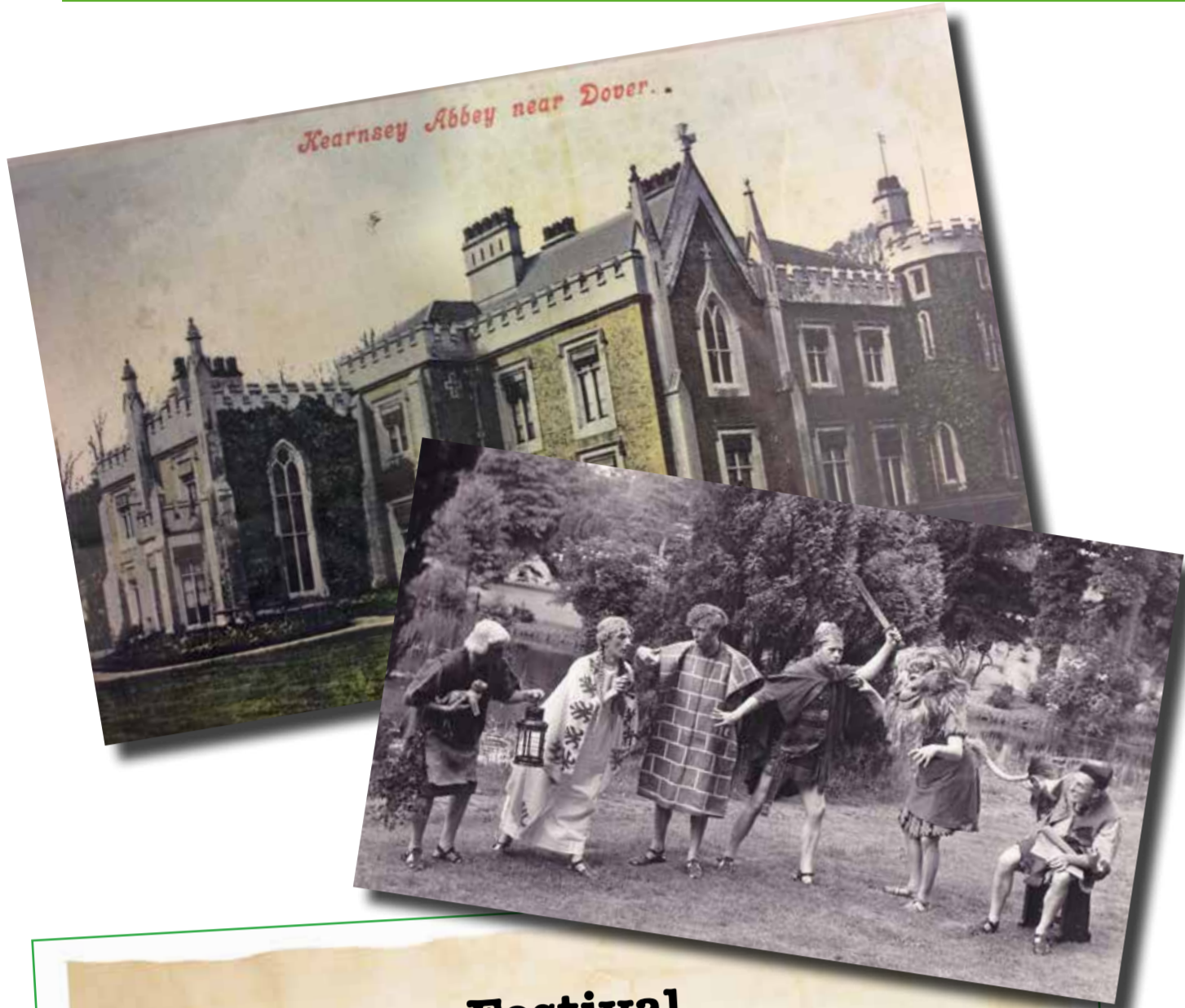
- Two 18 month horticultural apprenticeships
- Work experience placements
- Construction-phase site visits
- Gardening Club
- Training for staff, volunteers and teachers.

Community Involvement

- Kearsney Parks Forum
- Events group
- Orchard group
- Volunteering opportunities
 - Management
 - Horticulture
 - Sharing heritage
 - Events.



STORIES FROM THE PAST



Temperance Festival

Kentish Gazette, 22 July 1851

The annual rural festival of the members of the Dover Total Abstinence Society took place on Wednesday...in the picturesque grounds of Kearsney Abbey, and no site more eligible, or surrounded with more attractive scenery, could have been easily chosen in this locality.

The friends indulged in a variety of rural sports and at 5 o'clock sat down to a substantial tea, for which, among an abundance of everything needful, a monster cake weighing some 130 pounds had been provided. A quadrille band was engaged for the day, and lovers of the dance were thus indulged with a little 'tripping of the light fantastic' on nature's carpet. The explosive properties of ginger pop were to be seen on the 'white bib and tucker' of many a laughing urchin.

With trap and bat, cricket, dancing, donkey riding, kiss in the ring, music, and etceteras too numerous to mention, there was no lack of amusement; and at a reasonable hour the party, numbering probably three or four hundred, retired from the field, gratified with the rational fun in the which they had participated.

Mysterious Death

London Standard, 8 October 1841

Yesterday evening an inquisition was held at River...over the body of a gentleman who was found by the head gardener of Mr Fector, lying on his face in a ditch, in the shubbery, near Kearsney Abbey.

On the body were found a passport...from which it appeared the name of the deceased was Charles Bresler, an M.D., practising at Breslau, in Germany. ...his reason for leaving Germany was a love affair...

How the deceased came by his death cannot be ascertained...

Kearsney Abbey and Russell Gardens in the 1950s

Richard Hoskins, 2015

My two brothers and I spent much of our childhood, from about 1950 through to the early 1960s, in Kearsney Abbey.

In the spring we sometimes took out our small fishing nets and caught tadpoles - or if we were lucky and skilful - sticklebacks (the red-throated males were a special prize).

Much of the old mansion of Kearsney Abbey was still standing to begin with and one day I 'sneaked in' to the derelict building with my older brother and one of his friends. All I remember is some tall windows with long tables in front of them which were covered in old crockery and glass including the remains of an old chandelier.

Kearsney Abbey

Dover Express, 13 June 1969

Few people know more about Kearsney Abbey as it used to be than Mr. George Manton. He worked there for several years on the domestic staff of the last private owner, Mrs. Florence 'Queenie' Collier.

When Mrs. Collier eventually moved to Folkestone he helped pack the domestic silver - two tons in all. It was so valuable that the carrier refused to carry it by day and it was secretly moved at midnight.



Got a question?



**If you've got a question about
any of the plans or would like
to get involved in the project,
please get in touch**

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