

REFURBISHMENT OF THE GARTH GROUNDS June 2014

We bought the Garth in March 2010. It did not take us long to realise that there was a lot of work to be done to restore the grounds to their former glory. The work is still going on but we have enjoyed it.

The majority of the flower beds were put to lawn for ease of maintenance by the previous owners. The lawn was cut regularly. The wooded areas were very overgrown with ivy, brambles, nettles and other weeds. We have had a lot of help to clear these areas at the same time finding the old paths and areas from tarmac, brick and concrete slabs as shown below. Some paths we choose to restore so you can follow them today.



We have spent a lot of our time researching the history of this fascinating house and its grounds. From archives in Lewes and from historical materials and photos we have from the previous owners we realised that the grounds were designed by Walter Godfrey back in 1919 and much of the original design had been retained over the years. The photos and a detailed description of the sales particulars in 1957 and 1988 helped us to reinstate the Rose and Iris Gardens on the south side of the house and other flower beds around the house. The old maps and descriptions referred to a greenhouse next to the existing group of outbuildings in the centre of the garden including the area of the old stables described in the 1957 sales particulars. The greenhouse site was just an empty area of concrete covered with brambles and nettles. We have had a new orangery built on the site of the old greenhouse which contains orange, lemon and lime trees and vines. This has only recently been put up and will be completed with a tiled floor.

After clearing away the overgrown vegetation we found an area of broken up concrete suggesting the location of 3 stables described in 1957. We thought both of these areas needed some special attention. On the site of the stables we have created a small Mediterranean garden with a mock ruined ancient Greek temple, containing a sphinx. This was inspired by a recent holiday in Turkey which included visits to several ancient sites. The columns and sphinx were supplied by local stonemasons Chilstone, near Tunbridge Wells. The work was completed by the local craftsman Adrian Brockbank.

The next major project will be to restore the pond in line with the recommendations we have had from an ecology survey completed in April 2014 for the developers of the housing project next door. The ecologist found a small breeding population of smooth and great crested newts in our pond. Great crested newts are a protected species so refurbishment of the pond will require a specialist input with ongoing maintenance and measures to create a more inviting habitat for the newts and pond-loving creatures generally.

We hope the grounds will bring you the same pleasure as it does to us! David and Lana.