

FROM MILLS TO MAWSON

Uncovering the hidden heritage of Kearsney Abbey & Russell Gardens



PROJECT SUMMARY

- **Restore Thomas Mawson's original design for Kearsney Court Gardens as a major tourist attraction.**
- **Restore Festival of Britain open air theatre in Kearsney Abbey to bring new audiences to the parks, host events, and generate income.**
- **Interpret parks' heritage and celebrate their links with Dover's industrial heritage and the mills of the River Dour.**
- **Extend café to create a multi-use venue with facilities to support volunteering, training, education, and events hire.**
- **Provide opportunities for people to get involved in managing the parks through volunteering and a 'Friends of Kearsney' group.**
- **Improve sustainable travel and access to, between and within the parks.**
- **Raise standards to 'Green Flag' status.**

PROJECT RATIONALE

- **Heritage Strategy identifies country houses & estates as of considerable significance. Russell Gardens is Grade II Listed; both parks contain Grade II listed features.**
- **Heritage “at risk” including hard landscaping; canal pond (earthquake damage!); low public understanding of heritage.**
- **HLF designated East Kent as a priority development area. Test-bed for future HLF bids, e.g. Dover Town Hall, Fort Burgoyne, Western Heights.**
- **Parks & Open Spaces Strategy identifies Kearsney Abbey/Russell Gardens as strategic site based on size, historic character and level of usage. ‘Green Flag’ by 2018.**
- **Kearsney Abbey is the most popular park in the Dover district, and also attracts significant numbers of visitors from other areas.**
- **Use of open space to promote community health and well-being, and to expand opportunities to engage deprived communities.**
- **Growth agenda increases capacity pressures on parks, e.g. Whitfield urban expansion**

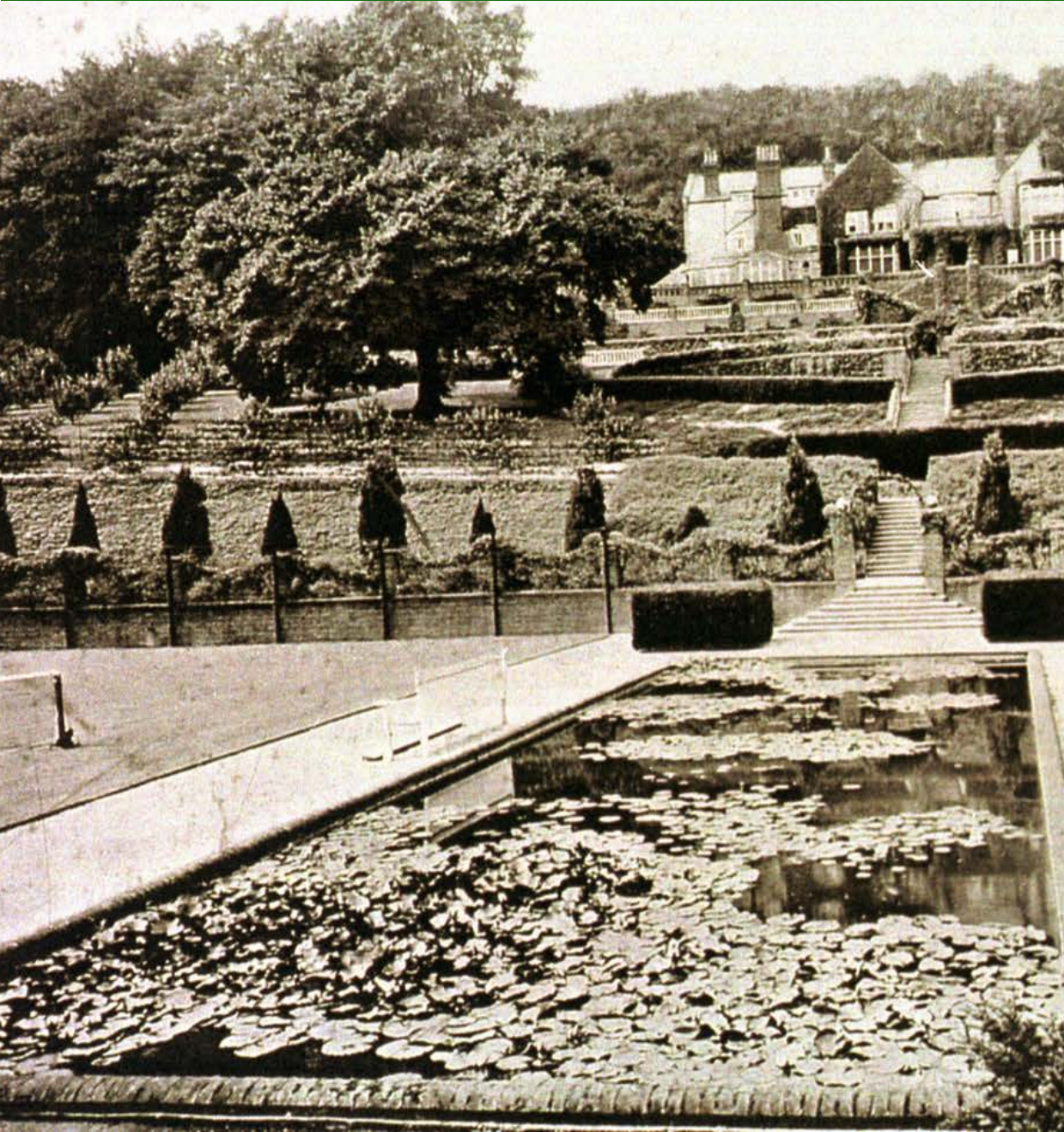
USER SURVEY & STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

- 700 surveys completed face-to-face, online (August-October 2013)
- 57% of visitors from Dover; 37% East Kent; 6% elsewhere
- 62% travel by car; 29% walk; 4% bus; 3% cycle; 2% train
- 92% Kearsney Abbey; 33% Russell Gardens; 22% Bushy Ruff
- 64% unaware of parks' heritage; only 6% mentioned Mawson
- 83% felt parks enhance quality of life; 71% a sense of community spirit

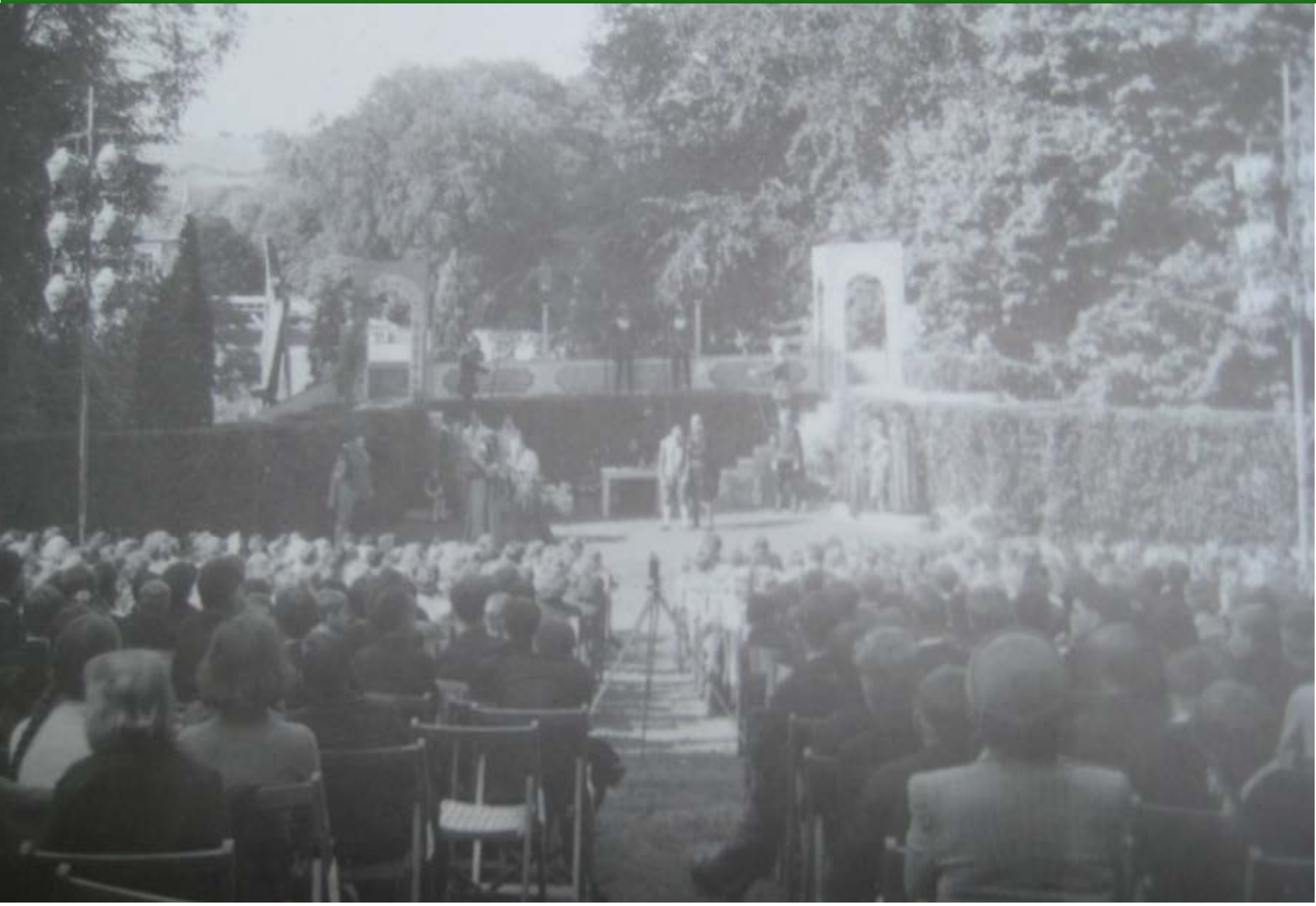


“As a rare garden designed by an internationally recognised landscape designer, in a recognisable condition after 100 years, the heritage asset is of exceptional interest. It is therefore, nationally as well as locally of considerable significance.”

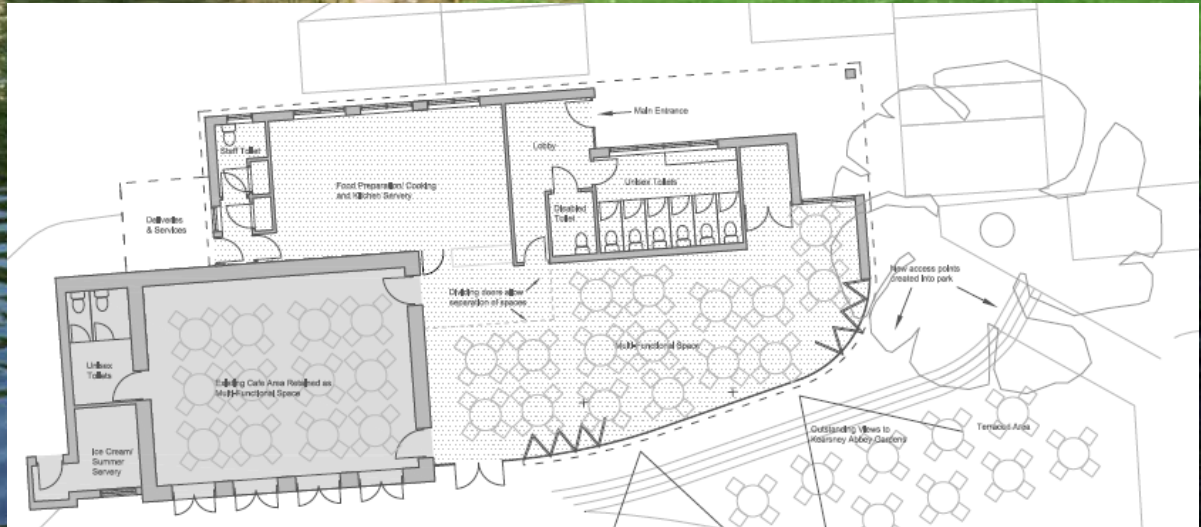
RESTORING KEARSNEY COURT GARDENS



RESTORING THE OPEN AIR THEATRE



KEARSNEY ABBEY TEA ROOM EXTENSION



BUDGET & TIMEFRAME

- Total costs £3.7m
- HLF bid £3.1m (84%)
- DDC £300k + increased maintenance
- 12 month development phase
- Project start 2015/16 for completion in 2018

PROJECT OUTCOMES

- Heritage protected, better interpreted
- Parks better managed, maintained
- ‘Green Flag’ secured, retained
- Sustainability – income generation to reinvest
- Community have greater role in parks’ management
- Opportunity for learning, skills development
- Reduced environmental impact
- Engaging wider audiences, e.g. culture, education