

THE PRIORY AND ITS GARDENS - ORPINGTON

- A brief summary - 1032 – 2014



What is there?

- “Orpington Priory, Museum and Gardens is an attraction unique in South London. It offers visitors free access 365 days of the year to listed Arts & Crafts Gardens within a setting steeped in medieval history.....”
- (1999 Bromley Council document)

Here is a reconstruction of the site and gardens as they may have been in medieval times.....



The main building is grade 2* listed...



As well as the main building the site contains Grade 2 listed walls.....



And listed outbuildings.....



A brief history

- The core of the house, dates back to the C13 when it was owned by the Church. There was some re-building in the C15 and the building was enlarged in the C 17.
- At the Dissolution of the Monasteries the manor, land, and revenue became the property of the Crown and was leased to the Hart Dyke family of neighbouring Lullingstone.
- The building became known as 'The Rectory' or 'The Parsonage' and although it had strong connections with the Church, monks never lived there.
- The building was sold in the 1860s and a subsequent owner, Herbert Broom renamed it 'The Priory'.

Herbert Broom, laid out the gardens in antique style or what we know as more formal Victorian gardens.



In 1882 the property was acquired by
“Colonel” Benjamin Greene Lake...



He mortgaged the property for £25,000

- To buy land on the North Devon coast.
- He then invested in building a railway to his land – the Barnstable and Lynton Railway.
- But he over-reached himself and was subsequently jailed in 1900 for 12 years for fraud.....!!

In 1919 the house and grounds were sold to Mr and Mrs Cecil Hughes.

Cecil Hughes was one of the founder members, and hon. treasurer of the landscape Institute, working alongside Geoffrey Jellicoe who designed the “Theatre Garden” in the Italian style.

The Hughes Family owned it from 1919 to 1947



Mrs Hughes was a keen gardener,
friendly with Gertrude Jekyll.

There is a great deal of Jekyll influence
in Priory gardens. However Mrs
Hughes was herself an accomplished
gardener, running a large staff and
growing thousands of bedding plants.

Typical borders.





The Council bought the site in 1947
And much of the garden became a
public park...





But the Council...

Was now proposing to put in bids
to the Heritage Lottery Fund for
the Museum initially

And eventually the garden, with
the aim of restoring.....

PRIORY GARDENS



The Arts and Craft Period.

In preparation for a bid to the Lottery for the House and Museum the Council said...

- “The Priory, parts of which date back to the thirteenth century is the Borough’s only Grade II * listed building that is fully accessible to the public.....
- The Museum is housed within The Priory and it plays an important role in the education of school children.....”

Heritage research.



Priority Volunteers



In 2012 Bromley museum....

-was awarded development grant funding of £186,300 from the HLF for the museum refurbishment project, which was called “Priory Revisited”.

Project objectives....

included enlarging the exhibition areas, improving accessibility and creating better facilities for the museum's education department.

The Cambridge-based architects Caroe Architecture won the competition to transform the museum.

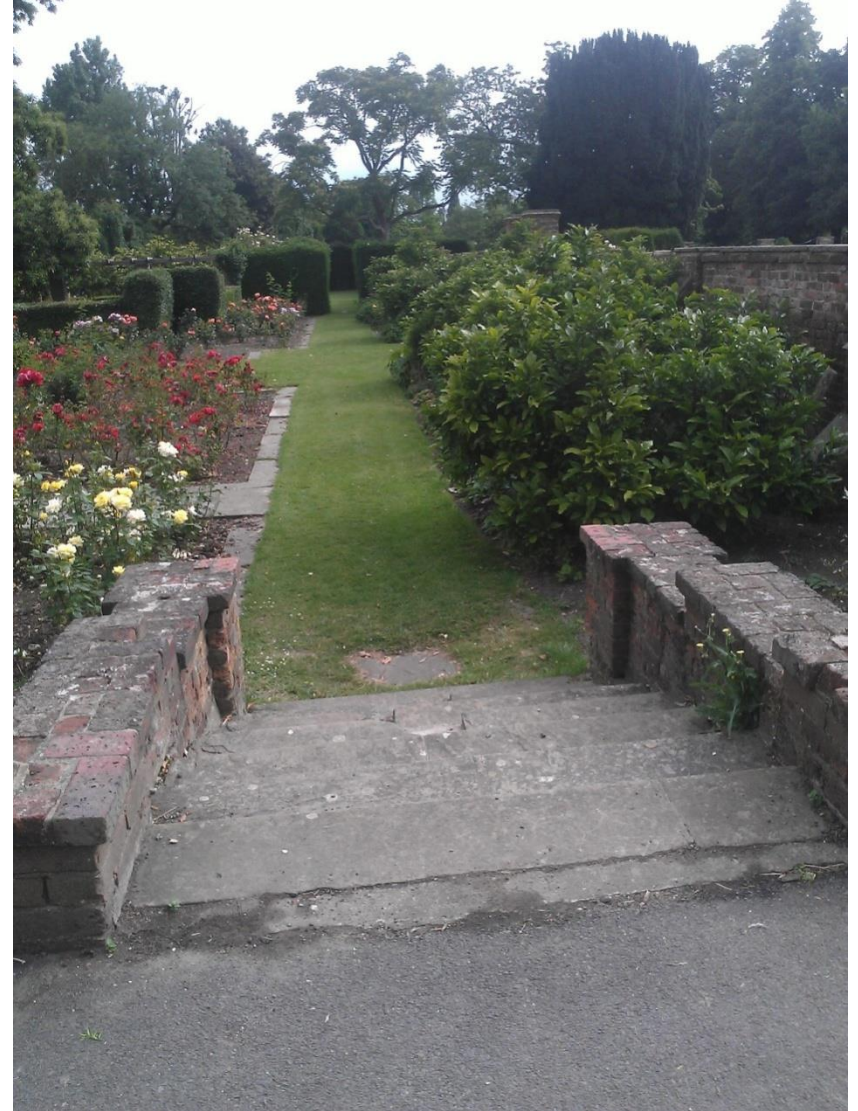
ALSO

Some improvements were made to the gardens...

...in anticipation of a bid for them in
due course



Making a difference



In June 2014, the borough requested a further grant of £2.5m

- in its second round application to the HLF.
- However in July 2014.....
-the council decided to withdraw its HLF application.

...saying.....

- “The council has consulted interested parties and residents throughout the process about the plans and different funding options and has made it clear that any decision would also need to be taken within the financial context that the council is operating in,”
- (A Bromley Council spokeswoman)

“We were unable

-

to make a significant 25-year commitment at a time of unprecedented financial pressures. The council remains committed to protecting heritage across the borough **and there are no proposals to close the museum**, and we are continuing to investigate all forms of funding to support future operations.”