

# OCTOBER MEETING

## Second Speaker Kearsney Parks Project

A talk by Jon Jon Winder

Reported by Terry Sutton

This summer a decision is expected on a major project to invest more than three million pounds to make Kearsney Abbey and Russell Gardens even more attractive than they are today.

Details of how Dover District Council, owners of both parks, propose to carry out the major work were given by project manager Jon Winder when he was a guest speaker at our public meeting at St Mary's parish centre on Monday, October 19th.

Jon explained it was time-tabled to make the application in February 2016 to the Heritage Lottery Fund, lined up to finance the project, in round two of the bidding process for the half-promised £3.3 million. HLF's decision was expected in June.

If successful work on the project could be expected to start in 2017 and continue for around four years.



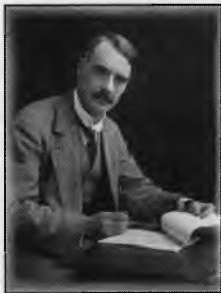
*Heritage Photo Trail*

Questioned, Jon revealed that the council's original application had included the adjacent Bushy Ruff in the Alkham Valley but that third area of parkland was rejected by HLF.

Jon, who used to play in Kearsney Abbey grounds as a child, gave a run down on the history of the two parks and how they



*Kearsney Abbey Pond*



Above: Thomas Mawson  
Right: Kearsney Court  
[Chris Mawson]



came into the ownership of the local authority. Russell Gardens were originally laid out as the private garden of Kearsney Court, at different times the home of wealthy Dover residents including Edward Barlow the managing director of a local paper mill.

He revealed that an earthquake in 2007 cracked the base of the lake in Russell Gardens but they had been advised by experts not to repair the damage for the sake of wildlife. But siltation had apparently sealed the crack damage, he said.

He reported that to help fully capture the design of the Kearsney Abbey landscape, a camera-carrying drone had been used and Jon screened a selection of the shots taken



Pond dipping - Russell Gardens

from the air.

It was planned to restore the open air theatre in the Abbey grounds and possibly make provision for an outdoor cinema. It was proposed to extend the cafe (at present in the former billiards room of the now-demolished mansion), making provision for a community area that could be used by schools and other groups.

The plan was to extend the car park (opposite Russell Gardens) to 112 spaces and an application was being made to KCC to provide a pedestrian crossing at that point to link the two parks.

The restoration of Russell Gardens to its original glory, when laid out by landscape designer Thomas Mawson, would include the provision of toilets and the recreation of a mock boat house. Negotiations were ongoing, he said, with the seven residents of Kearsney Court who still owned a slice of the gardens. Kearsney Court was now divided into seven residential units.

When our chairman Derek Leach observed it was his concern that the gardens would be maintained, Jon said the submitted scheme included the employment of three members of staff to look after Russell Gardens.