



## **Self-Guided Tour 2016**

A site map can be found on the back of this leaflet to help guide you around the site

## Introduction

Welcome to Bore Place's organically managed gardens, surrounding historic Bore Place House, which lies at the heart of our 500 acre farm and study centre.

The gardens are at the heart of what we offer here and are key to the groups who use the site. Bore Place hosts a wide diversity of visitors and students throughout the year, and the gardens attempt to meet the needs of all who visit.

Just north of Bore Place House are our expanding Soil Association certified vegetable gardens which produce fruit and vegetables for our kitchen, supply other local businesses and restaurants, and provide a resource for educational group work.

The gardens are managed organically by a small team of staff and volunteers. We strive to use sustainable, environmentally sound practices throughout.

The ornamental gardens surrounding our Conference and Study Centre are designed to emphasise our relationship with nature; some areas offering quiet, restful space, whilst others provide a platform for hands-on learning.

Managed with wildlife in mind, the main aim and approach is to give a little bit back to the environment by creating a haven for the abundant wildlife in the surrounding Kent countryside. The gardens combine beautiful nectar rich ornamental plants with proven wildlife credentials, with native and naturalised plants.

We have a native species rich wild flower meadow with plants such as yellow rattle and orchids as well as ponds, flowing lawns and shady avenues of trees.

We strive to create a relaxed setting with nature taking the lead and perfection taking a back seat. The garden spaces are often creatively used by visitors to host a range of activities such as weddings, the arts and are also used as an alternative meeting space.

***“This is not a recommended venue for the tidy garden enthusiast or fanatical horticulturist! In fact we need to re-define the word garden.”***

(Pam Lewis; [www.stickywicketgarden.com](http://www.stickywicketgarden.com))

## Around the Gardens

As you walk towards Bore Place House from the **car park**, to your left there is an avenue of pollarded lime trees which are pruned every 3 years. Along the brick path we have left the lower branches and Wendy McDonnell, one of our gardeners has been weaving them in over the years to create a living lime wall, dense green in the summer with a swirling sculptural effect in the winter.

Continuing along the drive, to your right there is a wall of magnolias with their blooms being one of the first flowers to show in the gardens, along with a carpet of *Petasites fragrans*.

Standing in front of **Bore Place House** you will see it is covered in a beautiful Wisteria and has two large Bay trees on either side of the front door. The front garden was once a large shrubbery but now has mostly been put to grass with a mixed border of perennials, grasses and shrubs with a mainly pink, purple and white theme to complement the wisteria (*Gladiolus byzantinus*, *Salvia nemorosa*, *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Annabelle', Lambs ears *Stachys byzantina*, *Hebe rakaiensis*, *Alliums*, *Spiraea Snow Mound* and pink Opium Poppy *Papaver Somniferum*).

Taking the path to the right of the house, pass through the 'Wisteria' gate, one of three wrought iron gates designed by gardener Wendy McDonnell, and realised by Medway based blacksmith, Malcolm White. Turn right (through the gap in the yew hedge) to come to the **Secret Garden**. This garden was originally designed as a quiet retreat for both people and wildlife and is managed gently to minimise their disturbance. The grass is left to grow long and is treated as meadow. Typical meadow species such as, Oxe-eye Daisies and Common Knapweed are found here.

As you follow the mown path through the garden you pass two less common fruit trees: Medlar (*Mespilus germanica*) 'Nottingham' on your right and a Quince (*Cydonia oblonga*) 'Vranja' on your left plus various trees such as Hawthorn *Crataegus* and Hazel *Corylus*. You also pass two wildlife ponds. The first is well established and largely left to its own devices and the second is used for education purposes including pond dipping. Newts are well established in both, and grass snakes are also spotted on hot summer days. The decaying, standing logs behind the pond create a mini eco-system, providing food and shelter to a wealth of insects and animals. We have plans to develop this habitat further as a stumpery, which will enhance the appearance of the area but continue to provide valuable wildlife habitats.

Pass through the rose-covered wall into the **Green Man Glade**, an area regularly used by visiting school groups for natural arts and play. The Green Man symbolises our connection with nature and is an ancient symbol found in many cultures worldwide. At the back of the glade, our Green Man looks down from the oak tree over an outdoor classroom. The various piles of logs and bricks dotted about provide homes for minibeasts and the areas of long grass with paths mown through are enjoyed by children and wildlife alike.

Following the wall on your left to the next archway you get a good view of Bore Place House and the walled garden, sitting beyond the cherry trees and the reflecting pool. The east facing borders contain a variety of double 'U' cordon apple and pear trees. At cherry blossom time the wall is covered in *Aubrietia* and the two blooms combine to create a stunning view as you walk out onto the terrace.

The four borders focus upon successional and pollinator-friendly flowering perennials and annuals that will continue to flower well into October. *Actea brunette* with its deep purple leaves and delicate white spike flowers provides pollen for our resident bats, whilst *Eupatorium*, *Salvias* and *Veronicastrum* provide rich nectar for bees and butterflies to feed on. Also incorporated are Shasta daisies, *Rudbeckia*, *Napeta* 'Six Hill Giant', *Calamagrostis* 'Karl Foerster' and *Stipa tenuissima* grasses which provide structural interest.

To combat the many diseases and pathogens now invading gardens in the Southeast we are trying to diversify our plant range. For example, where once we might have planted Box topiary to give winter structure within a border, we have now introduced Holly (*Ilex meserveae*) Blue Maid and various Hebes as evergreen alternatives to the blight susceptible Box.

At the top of the garden the **House Terrace** offers practical, outdoor work or relaxation space within an airy, romantic setting. The informal planting continues the theme of the main garden and incorporates many spring and summer flowering bulbs, pollinator friendly flowers and herbs, edible crab apples and a grape vine. We hope to develop these borders further, introducing more grasses and plants for winter structure and interest, and food and shelter for birds and other wildlife.

Following the stone pathway along the back of the house and past the old Walnut tree, you look out over the **Stream Lawn**, towards the stone memorial dedicated to Neil Wates, Commonwork founder. The mature trees (Copper Beech, Oak and Cedar) around the lawn lend it a stately air and draw the eye to the middle distance. Lawn margins are left to grow in summer, with mown paths giving access to other garden areas.

The stone path extends from the terrace to the 'Umbellifer' gate through which you can see the green wood and garden workshops. The signature plant in the beds by the gate is the beautifully mobile 'feather' grass (*Stipa tenuissima*) through which grows the drumstick onion (*Allium sphaerocephalon*). A mature fig forms the backdrop of this border, often laden with fruit in summer.

Following the line of the house, round through the small kitchen courtyard, you pass a hand pump (which draws from a Victorian rainwater reservoir) and go through the 'Germination' gate, out onto the gravel driveway.

Turn left and follow the wall under the old Lime tree. Head towards the iconic, evergreen Holm Oak (*Quercus ilex*) at the centre of the site surrounded by a woven bench built by John Waller, our on-site underwoodsman, using hazel from our coppiced woodland. The tree is significant to the founders of the organisation (Jennifer and Neil Wates in 1976) and has been used in the design of the organisation's logo over the years, representing the branches of the family and the reach out work we do. There are also four raised planters, built using wood milled from our own trees on site. These are due to be filled with a colour wheel effect combination of plants at the end of the month by a group of volunteers.

To the right of the oak tree is the entrance to the **Old Stable Courtyard**. This area serves as both a gathering place for visitors, and a quiet, reflective space for work or relaxation. In 2012, we extended the gravel garden to meet the **Large Barn Terrace**; bringing the garden together as a whole, and reinforcing the existing theme of peace and wellbeing throughout the courtyard. Many of the plants here have a medicinal use and several happily (even rampantly) self-sow through the gravel. Tall, tough plants such as Evening Primrose, Purple Toadflax, Motherwort and Fennel, combined with wispy grasses and spiky Sea Holly, lend the garden a wild, ethereal air.

The current weather patterns create a continuing challenge for the sustainable gardener, and it is a time of experimentation whilst we discover which of our favourite plants will survive the prevailing weather conditions. The gravel garden aims to contain largely self-sufficient plants, capable of tolerating some extremes of heat, cold, and wet whilst providing both wildlife and human benefit.

Passing through the gap by the Large Barn, the area to your right surrounding the greenhouse is the **Paved Garden**. This is currently under development and is used as a plant nursery and storage area by the garden team. The raised, oak lined planters are managed by regular visiting groups with learning and physical disabilities. The wood-fired pizza oven is constructed from bricks, handmade from our own clay, and all the plants are watered from butts or the well sited under the paving.

The boardwalk by the greenhouse is made of recycled plastic and will take you to the bridge. For this season, we have sown a beautiful annual *Pictorial Meadows* mixture along the boardwalk – it proved to be so popular last year, we have planted it again! We are unsure of how successful it's looking to be this year, so watch this space!

## **Organic Vegetable Gardens**

Over the bridge are our Soil Association certified vegetable gardens. They provide produce for our kitchens, as well as being a resource for educational work, vocational training and work experience. The **Kitchen Garden** is our demonstration garden for our educational work with schools and community groups. In this garden we aim to illustrate many of the 'best practices' of organic growing such as composting, attracting beneficial wildlife, companion planting and recycling. The garden continues to develop and evolve.

Despite the challenging growing conditions caused by the erratic weather patterns of the past few years, we are continuing to experiment with sustainable techniques and with productive low maintenance crops that yield a good harvest.

This garden is run by Grow2Grow, a project providing therapeutically supported placements for vulnerable young people in transition in their lives. Young people work with us to develop the social enterprise, learning about food growing, horticulture and animal care, whilst also receiving individual support from our clinical team. The project is an example of juggling the demands of a busy social enterprise and a social care initiative.

Returning to the main gardens via the bridge you can opt to extend your garden tour by taking a walk through the wildflower **Meadow**. Stepping from the boardwalk to your left, just beyond the bridge, follow the path that runs between the willow stock bed and wildlife pond to reach the entrance to the meadow. Please keep to the path along the stream edge, where you will come to a bridge bringing you into a wildlife area alongside an old pond that historically was stocked with fish for the house. Now managed as a wildlife pond, it provides a habitat for wildfowl, newts and dragonflies.

Follow the path on either side of the pond to take you back into the main gardens, and the end of the tour.

**We hope you have enjoyed your walk around our gardens.**

Please let us know if you are interested in  
**Volunteering** your help in the vegetable gardens.  
We run regular volunteer days and welcome  
Enquiries from experienced and new  
Vegetable gardeners.

Please contact Colm Warner [ColmW@commonwork.org](mailto:ColmW@commonwork.org)

# Bore Place Organic Gardens

