



### About NGS Garden Ferns Lodge - 2024

It was the lodge house to the Ferns to the west, its original garden lay to the South of the house, with the yew tree by the back door marking its boundary. There was a cottage garden and greenhouse – the brick raised beds are a remainder of this.

In the 1970s (I think) the large house was sold and divided into 2 with the drive for the south portion being built at the bottom of Ferns Lodge Garden. The second half of what is Ferns Lodge's top garden today was parcelled for building as was most of the rest of the garden and planning permission was sought and denied.

I bought Ferns Lodge Garden in 1998. It needed a lot of work. The second parcel of garden was a jungle and of course the big house garden was totally impenetrable. With the help of gardener Simon, the garden was cleared, and I discovered what fun gardening could be.

In 2010, I got very ambitious – I had a half acre garden – why not 4!?! Buying the main house garden and the drive between it and Ferns Lodge was an 18-month exercise but it became mine in 2012. The pictures below were taken after purchase in Spring/Autumn of 2012.



THE DRIVE INTO THE GARDEN FROM COTTAGERS LANE



FERNS LODGE TO THE LEFT



THE GARDEN LANE WITH THE BIG HOUSE GARDEN LEFT



PEEPING INTO THE GARDEN VIA THE TREE RHODODENDRON



WHAT IS NOW THE WILD MEADOW WITH SCULPTURE



THE BOTTOM MEADOW EARLY SPRING



THE BOTTOM MEADOW EARLY SPRING



THE BOTTOM MEADOW EARLY SPRING



BOTTOM MEADOW TOWARDS THE TREEHOUSE



A METAL GATE GROWING OUT OF A MATURE OAK



40' MOTORBOAT PLUG - WHICH HAD TO BE DISPOSED OF



ENGLISH OAK AT ENTRANCE TO THE BOTTOM MEADOW



LOOKING TOWARDS FERNS LODGE



A HOLM OAK IN THE CIRCLE FELL JUST BEFORE THE GARDEN BECAME MINE



LOOKING INTO THE GARDEN AFTER THE VERY FIRST CLEARANCE





BOTTOM MEADOW SUMMER 2012



HOLM OAK'S INCREDIBLE, NOW USELESS, ROOT SYSTEM



CLEARING LAUREL - WE HAVE CLEARED HUNDREDS (LITERALLY) OF STUMPS



FALLEN MONTEREY PINE AUTUMN 2012 MAKES A BIG MESS IN THE BOTTOM MEADOW



OUR FIRST PATH BETWEEN THE TOP MEADOW, WITH LOTS OF LAUREL STUMPS TO CLEAR

Progress is slow but it is progress. Helen Elks-Smith helped with the landscaping of the house garden, and this has improved the flow hugely.

We opened for the NGS for the first time in 2019. It was a thrill to be able to share the garden with so many lovely people and for them to be able to enjoy this special place. It reminded me of how lucky I am to live here and of how much there still is to do.



Here is some imagery of the garden as it was in 2019.



LOOKING UP TO FERNS LODGE IN THE AUTUMN



LATE AUTUMN COLOURS IN THE BOTTOM MEADOW



MAIN BED IN THE BIG GARDEN AS THE LEAVES SHOW AUTUMN COLOURS



THE TREEHOUSE IN THE BOTTOM MEADOW



In 2020 preparations were underway when Covid 19 struck, and all garden openings were cancelled. However, the work continued and here are the projects that have been undertaken since the last opening. By far the biggest and least finished is the reinstatement of the old vegetable garden, to the makings of a vegetable garden – more of an allotment really.... The project to turn the top garage into an annexe was also completed in 2020.



TAKING THE GARAGE TO BITS. THE COVID SHUTDOWN MADE THIS A LONG PROJECT!



THE BONES OF THE GARAGE  
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THE WONDERFUL NEW ALLOTMENT GARDEN SHED – WITH POTTING BENCH



RAILWAY SLEEPERS BROUGHT ON SITE TO FASHION THE RAISED BEDS



Builders' rubbish of all descriptions still litters the garden in restoration, but this area is by far the worst. A combination of builders' rubbish and the remains of the old greenhouses and outhouses filled 2 of Farwell's largest skips and there is more to go...



JUST ONE WHEELBARROW OF DOZENS – RUBBISH TAKEN FROM THE NEW VEGETABLE GARDEN



MR FARWELL'S BIGGEST SKIP!





#### DAN'S WALL WAITING FOR ITS DOULBE BAKED BRICKS TO BE LAID

This little half wall did not want to leave. Christened 'Dan's Wall' after Dan Lambert who has worked here on groundworks and tree care, we think that it was part of an old greenhouse or possibly a cold store – there were remains of a slate floor at its feet.



#### AND HERE IT IS ALL FINISHED



### OUR WONDERFUL POLY TUNNEL

Poly tunnel and vegetable cage – As we share this place with hungry creatures of all description the vegetable cage and poly tunnel is the only way to ensure that vegetables make it from ground to kitchen.



### THE VEGETABLE CAGE TAKEING SHAPE

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### AND FINALLY, THE GARAGE BECOMES AN ANNEXE

Conversion of the top garage to annexe. This project was not so interesting but has changed the dynamic of the top garden for the better



AUTUMN 2020 AND THE NEW PLANTINGS SETTLE IN, BOTTOM MEADOW



The centre section of the garden is self-sown. In 2020 we clearly back to reveal a mound of builders' rubble – left as a reminder as it was a landmark from which to get bearings when I first bought the wood. This is now covered in foxgloves and wildflowers, and we have replanted new silver birch, a beech tree and hardy shrubs and work hard on the weeding, helped by vast quantities of weed suppressing mulch.



THE BEES HAVE A NICE NEW HOME



THE BEES' OLD HOME CLEANED – JOHN THE BEEMAN TENDS THEM BEFORE THEY ARE MOVED



OUR PLANTS



SPRING IN THE TOP GARDEN



**Winter of 2021/22** saw the diggers return for 2 winter projects as well as the removal of a dead birch tree and some badly diseased ash. Fern Lodge has ash trees with die back as with everyone else and we monitor them carefully.

**Project 1** was the clearance of the area between the holm oaks and the allotment garden. Many bricks, briars, dead roots and rubbish have been cleared, leaving our 2 lovely tree rhododendrons (jolly good job as the main tree opposite the barn fell in the storms and we have left the stump to shoot again) which are joined by shade loving camellias, dogwood, more rhododendrons and azaleas. The foxgloves overwintered in the bottom meadow and were replanted for the summer.



**Project 2** was the bottom meadow with the clearance of yet more builders' rubble, briars and dead trees to increase the lawn and to be home to our 'Spring' surprise – venture into the meadow and see what I mean! Suffice it to say, that John O'Connor is a massively talented sculptor whose work I have admired for years. You will also find a giant Fern fashioned of steel outside the top garden built for Ferns Lodge by metal sculptor Peter Clark. These pieces join Waymark One, the work of Rosie Musgrave which may be found in the wild meadow quite close to our lovely Cork Oak.





**Winter of 2022/23** saw us become yet more ambitious. My plan to have a greenhouse became paramount and with our new dry summers, we wanted a water source. We also needed to tidy up our vegetable area. So, 3 projects and a fourth that we didn't expect.

**Project 1.** Life is never simple and the site for the new greenhouse had massive laurel trees and some old and sad fruit trees. These were felled and then drilled to remove the roots. It was a big job. Once done, the lovely Mr Farewell dug an enormous hole before sinking a 4,500 litre tanks for the sweet water to run into and ran piping underground so that it could be harvested from the barn and the new greenhouse that I dreamt of. A Victorian pump was also installed to bring the water to the surface.



**Project 2.** We cleared the area all around and rotavated on 2 sides to create 2 frighteningly large beds. One we have now planted with photinia, rhododendrons, camellias, azaleas, a strawberry tree, iris and more plus 2 oak trees to replace 2 old oaks behind that are far from prime – one is only a habitat stump these days. On the other side we planted an English deciduous hedge that will one day be large, with 3 oak trees within it as we gradually plant new for old to mirror the oaks on the perimeter that are very mature.





**Project 3.** The Greenhouse! Ordered last autumn from Woodpecker Joinery we waited until May for him to be built and assembled by the lovely guys from Woodpecker and he is stunning. The design is taken from the Messenger greenhouses that were the first of the Victorian greenhouses. He is built in red cedar, and he is a triumph!





Our unintended **Project 4** happened when one of the mighty holm oaks in our holm oak circle fell one quiet winter morning when we had not a breath of wind. He took with him his neighbour, so we had to get permission to have him felled because he was cracked through the trunk by the shock. 10 tons of wood, huge mess and a big drama. We have planted a new ring of holm oaks that will be a glory for those gardeners that come after us. We have also landscaped and replanted around the area with the help of Dan, a digger, 20 tons of earth and masses of grass seed. I am afraid that this area is bare this year – by 2024 it will look fab.













## Winter 2023/24

This was the winter when we decided to clear the wild area behind the treehouse. Bigger than it looked, research has told us that in the 60s likely, the area was used for growing carnations commercially. A series of greenhouses were built, and there was a water tower, irrigation and a frightening looking trap. We have great hopes of a full clearance and of using much imported earth to properly level the area. I am afraid that we failed, stumped by rain that as you will know, joined us in the autumn and just kept on going until recently. Short of building a roof over Ferns Lodge Garden, we managed 2 diggers, a bit of a mess and grass seed. We hope that you will be able to see what one day it will become.

On the upside, the bees have a magnificent new raised village at the bottom of this new meadow, out of the way and if you get close enough you will hear the contented buzzing...

Despite the rain, sculptor Lilly Henry cast our wonderful new Dancing Stone, number 3 in a series of 9 and he was delivered in April – and he is totally fab... He adorns the new meadow and can be spied amongst the fallen Monterey Pine tree, and he glistens in the sun.



**Thank you for visiting Ferns Lodge Garden in aid of the NGS.  
We very much hope that you will come again and see as we inch forward  
with the restoration of this special place.**







Ferns Lodge

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