

# A Monumental Award!

The Heritage Lottery fund has backed the Cobham Park Heritage Project with an award of £4.98m. The award is the largest of its kind in Kent and is the culmination of more than two years of hard work by the Project Team and their advisors.

CAMS Manager, Phillip Smart was jubilant at the news: "This is such a deserving project, the benefits to the Thames Gateway and the emerging regional park for North Kent, are only just starting to be realised. Cobham Park provides something for everyone interested in our heritage and environment, whether that is architecture, wildlife, garden history, social history, or just simply enjoying the outstanding countryside."

Central to the project is the aim of creating a place where people can enjoy and learn about the beautiful countryside whether by foot, horse or cycle and appreciate the buildings and landscape designed and created more than two hundred years ago. Dr Michael Houghton, Regional Manager for the Heritage Lottery Fund said "The restoration of Cobham Park, the park's buildings and wider landscape, is a worthy and exciting project for the HLF to support, and goes a long way to providing the people of Gravesend and North Kent with an example of the sheer variety of heritage in this area. The restoration will return much of Cobham

Park to its former glory so that both local people and visitors to the area can enjoy the regeneration of the Park and the historic buildings within it." Two main themes will be addressed: the conservation and restoration of the Park and the buildings under most threat, and improving physical and intellectual access to Cobham Park. Works to address the first theme, conservation and restoration, will comprise:

- ✿ The repair of buildings and hard landscapes in Cobham Hall grounds: including the Aviary and garden walls, the Pumphouse by Brewers Ponds, Repton's Seat, the West Park Bastion, and the North and East Courts.
- ✿ The reinstatement of the historic character of the North Pleasure Grounds, and the restoration of the parkland landscape in West Park.
- ✿ The reintroduction of grazing to restore the

traditional wood pasture habitat of Cobham Woods

- ✿ The structural repair and cleaning of the Darnley Mausoleum, one of the buildings featured on BBC television's 'Restoration' series.

Sophie Raworth, celebrity advocate of the Darnley Mausoleum for the series, welcomed the award

"It's fantastic news. I'm so pleased for the team who've worked really hard to save this building. It'll make a huge difference to the area and I'm really looking forward to seeing it again when it's been restored to its former glory."

*Continued on page 2*



*David Nessling, Project Team Chairman, and Phillip Smart, Project Manager, share the good news!*

## Cobham Park Open Day

On 1 June there will be a unique opportunity to visit and experience the buildings and landscapes that will be restored by the Cobham Park Heritage Project and discover the forgotten attractions of Cobham Park before work begins. The CAMS Spring Forum will be replaced with the Open Day to give everyone the opportunity to see the planned works for themselves.

The gardens and pleasure grounds of Cobham Hall will be open to explore and there will be guided tours of the Darnley

Mausoleum. Guided tours of Cobham Hall will also be available.

The Open Day will be held from 11am – 4pm, admission is free and no advance booking is needed. Car parking will be available at Cobham Hall and refreshments will be on sale.

Please note that currently access for wheelchairs is very limited.

**For further information please telephone 01474 337530.**

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*Continued from front cover*

The second theme, improving physical and intellectual access, will include:

- ❧ The appointment of a Community Warden. The warden's role will be centred on developing links with all the local communities, increasing public involvement in the project, building a programme of walks, talks, and other events, and enhancing educational opportunities in the Park
- ❧ The provision of warden's accommodation for the management of Cobham Woods and the Darnley Mausoleum
- ❧ Creating new access routes for walkers, cyclists, and riders, to enhance the currently limited rights of way network through and to the Park

- ❧ Provision of on-site interpretation, and the publication of leaflets and guides
- ❧ The upgrade of Lodge Lane and the access track from Lodge Farm to the Mausoleum

CAMS has already been working on these issues during the development of the project proposals. Much of this work has been behind the scenes including the Archive Development Project which has been laying the groundwork for intellectual access improvements and is described elsewhere in this newsletter.

The grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund will provide 75 per cent of the project costs with the remaining 25 per cent coming partly from English Heritage and CAMS. It is hoped that funding will also



*Cobham Park*

be received from central Government through the Thames Gateway Sustainable Communities Plan.

The CAMS team will now be busy instructing architects and landscape designers to produce detailed specifications and contract documents. Work

on-site is likely to start on the main buildings towards the end of this year and last for about 18 months. During this time CAMS will be organising open days and events to enable the public to see the restoration of the historic buildings and landscape at first hand.

Event details will be published on the website.  
**[www.gravesham.gov.uk/cams](http://www.gravesham.gov.uk/cams)** or via  
Gravesend Towncentric and other tourist information offices.

## Cobham Park Up Close: The Aviary



*The Aviary*

The Cobham Park Heritage Project will focus on saving and restoring the buildings and landscape elements most at risk. The history of the Darnley Mausoleum and the details of the scheme to restore it are now fairly familiar to CAMS

regulars but other buildings and landscape areas that will be included in the project are less well known. In this newsletter we are introducing the first in a series looking at the history of individual features of the Park and the proposals for their renovation and future use.

The Aviary in Lady Darnley's Garden is one of the best known buildings in the gardens and pleasure grounds around the Hall. It was built, originally as a greenhouse, in the 1750's and in 1799 was converted into an aviary with the addition of the flint façade and the division of the interior into three spaces. The central space was an area for viewing the canaries and other songbirds housed in the two enclosures at the sides. The birds provided a backdrop of birdsong intended to heighten the romantic atmosphere of Lady Darnley's flower garden. By 1900 the building had been converted again, this time into a summerhouse, with the addition of glazed doors in the three arches of

the façade. The building gradually fell into disuse and in more recent decades the roof has collapsed and the flint façade has begun to separate from the rest of the structure. The project will build a new roof carefully designed to match the 18th century original, restore the building with one large internal space, and replace the glazed doors. The original paved area in front of the building will also be reinstated. The Aviary will then be used to display several pieces of garden statuary which are becoming vulnerable to the weather, and will form an attractive backdrop to outdoor concerts and plays.

# Developing the Darnley Archive

For the past year CAMS has been funding an Archive Development Project co-ordinated by Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre. The project is now reaching completion and has provided a foundation for improvements to intellectual access that will be developed by the Cobham Park Heritage Project. When the Darnley estate was broken up in the 1950s most of its papers and plans were deposited at the archive centre and catalogued at that time, however some papers and maps remained with the family or at Cobham Hall. In 2003 the Earl of Darnley and Cobham Hall agreed to deposit the remaining papers; the development project aimed to reunite these papers with the bulk of the collection, and to catalogue these and other papers that had been deposited since the 1950s. Part of this work involved identifying requirements for conservation and correct storage of the papers and maps, some of which are very fragile.

The project also aimed to publicise and promote the use of the collection as widely as possible. This has taken the form of an exhibition hosted by the Friends of Cobham Hall Heritage Trust, articles in local and family history publications, developing contacts with the media and launching the catalogue on the Internet via Medway Archives' Cityark database.

The newly catalogued papers have been found to cover a wide range of subjects. One strong theme is the clear insight given into the lives of everybody on the estate, be they the Darnleys themselves or the plumbers and painters, and estate tenants. There is a wealth of information on their work, responsibilities, welfare and pastimes, a sense of frustration at the difficulties of keeping the estate solvent, insight into the antics of some of the pets and farm animals and frequent pleas from the Darnley children to their parents for more money, a request familiar to most parents!

The Darnley collection is a rich source of local history material, particularly in regard to how the Cobham estate was run. This includes the nursery business, the timber business, clay and gravel extraction, the farms, and ways in which they tried to maximise income from the estate.

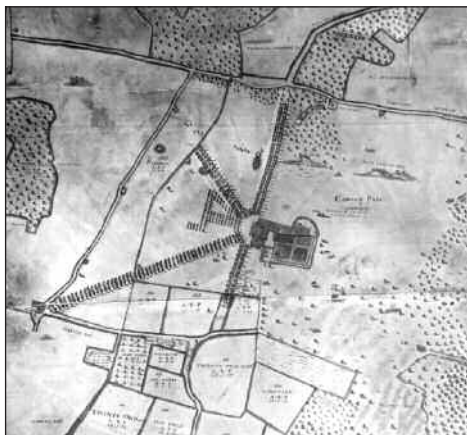
One family member, Ivo Bligh later 8th Earl of Darnley, was captain of the 1882-3 England cricket team that won the first Ashes in Australia. Some interesting cricket memorabilia survives in the



An estate worker, 1920's

archive for the period from 1882 until the presentation of the Ashes to the MCC in 1929. Ivo's wife Lady Florence Darnley was a keen collector of flowers and her diaries contain much botanical interest from the many pressed flowers she collected. Her personal correspondence also reveals details of her links with Australia and some of the background to Cobham Hall's use as an Australian Army Corps military hospital during WWI.

The collection is of potential use to researchers with a wide range of interests including local, political, social, agricultural, horticultural, botanical, cricket, genealogical and Irish history (the Darnleys formerly owned land in Ireland). The collection is also suitable for university dissertations and schoolchildren of many ages. The papers will be available in the public searchroom of Medway Archives in Strood from May 2004.



Cobham Park in 1758, C Sloane

## CAMS Website

Those who operate in the digital age will be interested to learn that the CAMS website has been revamped and greatly expanded. The new-look website includes pages on the history of the Park and Hall, and downloadable versions of CAMS leaflets, brochures and newsletters. There is also a news and events page to keep you up-to-date with the latest happenings in the



Cobham Park Heritage Project and other aspects of CAMS work.

The web address is [www.gravesham.gov.uk/cams](http://www.gravesham.gov.uk/cams)

For further information see  
[www.cityark.medway.gov.uk](http://www.cityark.medway.gov.uk) or  
telephone 01634 297060

# Fighting Fires in Cobham Woods

In a new approach to preventing deliberate fires in Cobham Woods CAMS has cleared roughly 20 acres of bracken and scrub at the heart of the wood. The clearance has concentrated on specific areas along the ridge and around the Darnley Mausoleum.

Cobham Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest has suffered from a number of deliberate fires over the years. Last spring two separate fires burnt around 12 acres of this important woodland, spoiling the scenic landscape, damaging wildlife, and destroying magnificent veteran trees. Fire engines from all over north Kent were called on to fight the fires, spending many hours in the woods before the fires were put out. This new project has removed the dead bracken and scrub that feed the fires and repaired damage caused to public footpaths. The work has cleared much of the debris that was hidden beneath the bracken, thereby enabling future treatment to control the bracken.

In the process three abandoned cars that were not spotted by last year's car clearance operation were discovered, bringing the abandoned car tally for the woods to 98 and counting!

The project is the initial stage of habitat restoration works that will enable the gradual re-introduction of traditional grazing in this part of Cobham Woods. The grazing will keep the bracken in check but until then it will need to be treated to reduce its dominance in these areas. The scrub clearance, and improvements to the public footpath along the ridge to the east of the Mausoleum, have had a significant effect and will mean that the woods will remain a peaceful and beautiful area for visitors to enjoy.

The project was funded in partnership between the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit and CAMS.



Bracken clearance around the Darnley Mausoleum

# Archaeology Update



Resistivity surveying in West Park

Since Christmas work has been underway on archaeological surveys of the North Pleasure Grounds and areas of West Park. A geophysical survey of part of West Park aimed to locate the Roman villa which was excavated in the 1950's but was not accurately plotted at the time. The geophysical survey used two different techniques, magnetometry and resistivity, to detect buried archaeology. It was anticipated that the survey would also help to reveal the relationship between the villa buildings and several pre-Park field boundaries in the area. Useful evidence was obtained by the survey and analysis and interpretation of the results is ongoing.

The North Lawn area was also the subject of a geophysical survey to trace the extent of the 16th century gardens, one of the most important in Britain at that time. The results of this survey are being analysed in conjunction with an earthwork survey of the North Pleasure Grounds conducted by English Heritage's Landscape Investigation Team. Visitors to the North Pleasure Grounds will know of the ditch and banks of the mysterious 'conduit', but the survey has revealed a complex series of earthworks from a wide range of periods throughout the North Pleasure Grounds. A report on the findings of the survey is expected later in the year and will be a useful contribution to the detailed designs for the landscape restoration of this area.



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