



# Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens



South Bucks  
District Council

The Gardens are intended for the repose of  
the ashes of cremated persons and will  
be designed and maintained in a fashion for  
which there is no existing precedent.  
In particular there will be no buildings, structures  
or monuments of any kind likely to remind one  
of a cemetery.

Edward White V.M.H, P.P.I L A.  
Designer 1934

## Introduction

“For those who would prefer a beautiful, quiet, peaceful green natural resting place away from the razzmatazz of the Cemetery or Crematorium then Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens will come as a welcome relief”.

This is the opening line of the original literature promoting the Gardens, and is as true today as it was then.

The Gardens, listed by English Heritage as Grade II, were laid out by Edward White, a highly respected and thought after landscape architect of the 1930's. He completed commissions in Ottawa, Calcutta and Europe, as well as many in this country. Stoke Poges Memorial



Gardens are considered his most prestigious and important work.

He saw the gardens as the first of its kind in the country, “*intended for the repose of cremated ashes... designed and maintained in a fashion for which there is no existing precedent. An imperative condition is, of course, that the general appearance of the garden shall offer satisfactory unity*”.

The site of the Gardens adjoins St. Giles Church made famous by Thomas Gray where he wrote his famous mid C18 poem “Elegy in a Country Churchyard”. We have a small Museum of Gray and Penn memorabilia.

## Description of the Gardens

The Memorial Gardens are mainly a spring and early summer garden, which is followed by good autumn colour. Seasonal colour can be found in the parterres, colonnade, rose garden and the rose parterre, (this latter feature added in the 1960's) but colour is always abound with the majority of White's planting scheme using evergreen species. In the planning of the

Gardens, proper respect had to be paid to the church as well as preserving the pastoral traditions of the church and its surrounds. With this in mind, the large area of ground at the entrance was retained as simple open grassland with mature trees including a large 500 year old oak.

From the entrance by the cottage and office the main path leads North West to a circular pond. Broad steps flanked by balustrade and decorated with urns showing the four seasons lead up to the main avenue. This relies for its effect not upon single trees, but on groups planted in sevens of ornamental cherries, apples and mountain ash, these trees are being planted with white Tulips and Daffodils purchased by The Friends of the Gardens. Banks of rhododendron and flowering 'spiraea' line each side of the avenue. In this area, three avenues extend left and right providing access to the yew hedged areas, which line each side of the avenue.

These smaller paths lead to some 140 formal family gardens. At the Eastern end through an iron gated entrance can be found the Mobbs family garden, while at the other side of the main avenue the path leads through another gated entrance to the Gurkha garden in memory of the 4<sup>th</sup> Prince of Wales own Gurkha Rifles. At the Western end of the formal Gardens lie four parterres which lie adjacent to the Colonnade.

The main avenue continues through a large iron gateway into a small amphitheatre. A timber archway leads into the colonnade which was designed to be the set piece of the Gardens. The colonnade features a large cloistered pergola, which surrounds a sunken water garden. The stone pillars of the pergola are linked overhead by timber beams.



Water channels fed by numerous small fountain jets run alongside the pergola walk, with water tumbling from the semicircular corner pools into diagonal channels leading to a central pond. The lower lawn is crisscrossed with small yew hedges with beds filled with pink dahlias, in summer and polyanthus in winter.

The North and South paths out of the Colonnade lead back to the broad steps. The North one passing through an intensive rock and water garden with some impressive 70 year old Japanese maples and views over the lake into Stoke Park and the recently restored Repton Bridge.

You then pass through a heath and informal garden. The South path wanders through an open grassed area before entering the extensive rose garden, which is itself surrounded by 70 individual gardens. The rose parterre, a 1960's addition, is now skirted. As is the Oak Dell where yet another masterly 500 year old oak stands before passing yet more informal gardens leading back to the steps and pool.



### **The Refurbishment Works**

2004 saw the completion of a two year refurbishment project to restore the Gardens to their former glory. The works were generously funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, The Mobbs Memorial Trust and South Bucks District Council.

The work included the complete refurbishment of the main avenue with the planting of the groups of 7's trees and the main avenue borders. The larger paths have been reinstated to their original width with the help of metal edging.

In the Colonnade, the entrance arch has been reinstated, the paved areas re-laid, while the hedges (1,400 yew and 750 small leaved privet) have been replanted. The grass lawns have been returned to their original layout. Some of the wooden beams have been replaced and the pillars repaired. Perhaps the most exciting feature has been the installation of the 32 fountains which have not been in operation for many years.

The five parterres have been replanted with in excess of 23,000 box plants, as most of them were past their best. The paving has also been re-laid.

In the rock and water area, the ten original water sources have been repaired, as have the rills themselves which have been re-lined and sealed. The original timber balustrade has now been reinstated to the small bridge.

The rose garden, which had not grown roses for over a decade due to soil sickness is now back in good health and growing roses once more, while the gates and arches have been renewed or repainted.

Generally although some trees and shrubs have had to be removed, some 360 trees have been replanted as have over 7,700 shrubs and 2,500 herbaceous plants.

### **Further Information**

For information regarding the purchase of plots, please contact the Memorial Gardens Administration on 01753 523744. for the Head Gardener 01753 537619 or e-mail [memorialgardens@southbucks.gov.uk](mailto:memorialgardens@southbucks.gov.uk)

There is an active Friends group who can be contacted via the office.

### **Directions**

From M4 J6 take A355 (sign M40) in 2m at double mini roundabout turn R B416, passed golf courses at crossroads with Church Lane turn R 200yds on R next to St Giles' Church.

From M40 J2 take A355 (sign M4) in 4m at double mini roundabout turn L B416, past golf courses at crossroads with Church Lane turn R 200yds on R next to St Giles' Church.





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District Council



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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