

Bushey Rose Garden: History and Restoration

History

Bushey Rose Garden plays an important role in the Bushey community due to its former use as an art school. It is the collaboration of artist Sir Hubert von Herkomer and landscape architect Thomas Mawson that you see in the design of the garden today.

The Art School

During the latter part of the 19th Century many notable artists lived in Bushey. From 1883 until 1904 the rose garden was the site of an art school established by Sir Hubert von Herkomer RA, an eminent Victorian artist



Herkomer's students in the cloisters

(1849-1914).

Herkomer had some 500 to 600 artists studying there before he eventually grew weary of the responsibility of overseeing the school. Lucy Kemp-Welsh, a former student of Herkomer's, opened her own art school 'The Bushey School of Painting' on the same premises in 1905. Herkomer then re-purchased the school in 1912 and demolished it.

The House

Herkomer built a house called 'Lululaund' in Melbourne Road adjoining the rose garden but all that remains of the house is part of the front elevation which is now a new development of properties. The house was designed by H H Richardson, an American architect, and was built between 1886-1894.



Sir Hubert Von Herkomer

It has been referred to as a 'Bavarian Castle' and was named after Herkomer's second wife Lulu.

The Garden

In 1912 Herkomer demolished the art school and commissioned Thomas Mawson (1861-1933) to design a garden. Mawson noted his proposals on his first visit:

'...The garden was to be separated from the kitchen garden by a brick-built pergola, with a handsome garden pavilion at one end. The centre of the panel rose garden was to be sunk two feet, with a fountain in the centre, and considerable spaces of ground were to be planted as foils against adjoining properties...'

Many of the original features of the garden still remain today such as the sunken garden, summer house, monument, column and pergola. The cloister in the lawn area were the remnants of the art school and were found by Three Valleys Water (now Veolia) at their depot in Clay Lane and re-erected in the garden in the mid-1990s.

The garden was commissioned in exchange for a portrait by Herkomer. In Mawson's autobiography he wrote:

'...Herkomer remarked: "We have still to settle your fees, and I am going to make a suggestion which I hope you will accept. I think," he said, "you ought to have our portrait painted; my price for this would be six hundred guineas. Let's swop. I'll do your portrait, whilst you design my rose garden, and we'll call it quits.'



Herkomer's portrait of Thomas Mawson

Mawson later became the President of the Landscape Institute in 1929 and has left a legacy of parks and gardens in the UK and abroad.

The Bushey Urban District Council bought the garden in 1937 from the Herkomer estate and it was opened to the public in the same year.

Recent history

During the late 1980s and early 1990s the rose garden, in common with many parks nationally, suffered from under-investment which led to the deterioration of the fabric of the garden.

In 2002 the rose garden was registered as a Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest Grade II but it had to be closed in December 2005 due to vandalism.

The Restoration

After successfully receiving funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Big Lottery Fund 'Parks for People' programme in 2008, we restored the garden to its former glory.

Work began in August 2009. Contractors Crispin & Borst worked with Land Use Consultants and architects Rees Bolter Associates to complete the garden restoration in June 2010.

The garden was officially opened on 23 July 2010 by the Lord Lieutenant, Countess of Verulam in front of 150 VIPs.



What work was carried out?

Summer house - the roof was replaced with handmade tiles; the interior work includes plasterwork and restoration of the fireplace. New doors and glass fanlights were installed. The summer house is now an information office containing a display about the history of the garden, Hubert von Herkomer and the designer Thomas Mawson.

Lululaund plaque - an artist created a replacement plaque which is the focal point at the end of the pergola. The original seven foot plaque designed by Sir Herbert von Herkomer was stolen in the 1960s

The cloisters - the red sandstone was carefully dismantled, cleaned and reassembled and now forms a backdrop for music and theatrical performances. Paving has been laid for the 'stage' area.



Potting shed and toilets - a new one-storey building was built in a similar style to the summer house with rendering, red brickwork and handmade roof tiles.



Fountain - this was thoroughly cleaned, repaired and is now a working fountain.

Pergola - new curved oak beams were fitted to the pergola.

Rose temple - the column was restored to the original design of a rose temple.

Paving - each brick was carefully lifted and as many as possible were re-used. The bricks were laid in the original basket weave pattern and yorkstone re-laid around the fountain.

Rose pillars - rose pillars similar to the original design were installed. The metal tops were made by local blacksmith Steve Rook.

Planting - over 4,000 plants have been planted, many from Thomas Mawson's plant list. The planting scheme has been designed to bring year round interest to the garden, with a focus on roses and clematis.



High street railings - new railings were fitted to the top of the existing wall and the original gate was treated and refitted.



Ami the Gardener

Other items include new gate and railings at the Herkomer Road entrance, new seating similar to the original design by Thomas Mawson, new lawn, new footpath along Rose Walk and around the lawn, CCTV, bins and benches.

Further details on Sir Hubert von Herkomer and the history and restoration of the garden can be found in the Summer House at the garden.