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## **FACILITY DRILL**

### **Blog - 2014 - February**

#### **Afternoon At Hall Place**

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13.762 x 10<sup>3</sup>

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910. 48°C 21

1.  $\frac{1}{2} \times \frac{1}{2} = \frac{1}{4}$

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Afternoon At Hall Place

Yesterday I spent a very pleasant afternoon walking round the gardens of Hall Place in Bexley, Kent. With the sun shining, it was impossible to stay indoors and the computer projects would have to wait until the evening. Although the trees are still bare, all the spring flowers are now fully open, including many of the colourful shrubs, and so there was plenty to enjoy, and no rain or wind to battle through. The river was flowing vigorously over the main weir, with a huge tree trunk wedged across one part of it, and the noise of the waterfall was very much louder than normal. I was surprised to see the turf maze full of rings of crocus flowers, planted on those parts that do not get walked on, where the grass is allowed to grow much longer. The gardeners are as usual on top of all their jobs, as every bed has been weeded, dug over, and prepared for the coming growing season. There was one tree down, after the gales, and broken branches here and there on the ground, but I think that probably most of the debris from the storms has been cleared away.

The sunken garden in the far corner, usually damp and mossy, was entirely underwater, looking like a large muddy swimming pool, and this is definitely one place where the gardeners can do nothing in the way of preparation and planting for the spring and summer bedding. Near the entrance, the Tudor fruit garden and the cut flower beds are completely bare, with new fruit canes planted and tied in, and everything looks clean, tidy and organised. I shall enjoy comparing my photo of it with one I shall take in summer, when it will be a glorious display of floral magnificence and exuberance. Sometimes cut flower gardens can look better than formal bedding, as with everything crammed into a long strip, they end up being more colourful and with greater variety. There is also the advantage that you can get to both sides of the strips to get a closer look at the blooms.

The big greenhouse is a real delight, absolutely packed with tropical plants and with long benches on every side, full of pots of brilliant coloured plants and flowers. Many of them we know as small exotic houseplants but here they grow to their true size, becoming large shrubs and tall trees. In the centre is a long goldfish pond with a waterfall running into it. As all the top windows were open, a robin had come in and was singing loudly from various high perches, proclaiming his ownership of this very luxurious and spacious accommodation, where I am sure he will be building his nest. With every sound reverberating around the glasshouse, his song was loud and piercing, and no doubt the echoes of it that were escaping to the world outside did a good job of warning off other robins from entering his territory.

I was reminded of the robin that nested in my garden shed some years ago, with plenty of space and shelter, and one hundred per cent safety. This robin was obviously thinking along the same lines, but on a truly palatial scale and with much better scenery - palms and banana trees, thick greenery for nesting in, an indoor water supply for drinking and bathing, and heating pipes under the staging to keep it all cosy on a chilly spring day. It almost makes me want to move in there as well! Unfortunately, by mid-afternoon I had to leave the agreeable surroundings in the greenhouse and make my way home, where I hope to see my own resident robin somewhere outside the kitchen window, waiting for a free meal of pellets or spare crumbs. (630 words)