

# Kells Bay Gardens

## A Sub Tropical experience

Garden Centre \* Tea Rooms \* Accomodation

*The plant collection at Kells Bay is an important and historic part of Ireland's natural heritage. Since coming under new ownership in 2006 the garden has been subject to a sensitive restoration and development plan, designed to ensure its future as an accessible part of Ireland's natural heritage.*



## History

Though there is no recorded history of the development of the gardens at Kells, 'béaloideas' (local folklore) and other anecdotal and documentary evidence enable us to outline the pertinent facts. The house is the site of a hunting lodge owned by the Blennerhassetts of Tralee a renowned merchant family. It is reasonable to speculate that the Southern Hemisphere exotics that are the unique feature of the gardens were carried as ballast on ships of the 19th century returning from Van Diemen's Land. The corollary of this assumption is that the outward cargo was made up members of the local populace convicted at the local petty sessions. However, as the proverb says 'Is olc an gaoth nach séideann mhaith do duine éigin' (It's an ill wind that doesn't do somebody good) and this tragic history has bequeathed to the present generation a horticultural treasure. The house has remained in private ownership since the original planting and each successive owner has endeavoured to preserve and protect the character of the gardens.

## Present

The current owner William Alexander is a noted pteridologist and has committed to making the gardens more accessible to the general public and ensuring a sustainable future for them. To this end he has worked sensitively and decisively to recover from the ravages of time and nature as much of the decipherable original plan as possible.



Main  
Entrance



Walled  
Garden



Waterfall



Steps to  
Tea Rooms



Gunnera  
Over Pond



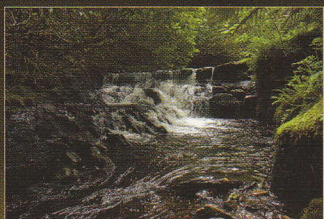
Wild  
Meadow

In 2006 the work started when a group of enthusiasts carefully began the excavation of the walled garden. In 2007 the magnificent river walk was cleared and opened and a statement of intent was made with the planting of Ireland's biggest palm tree, a 14m *Jubaea chilensis*, specially imported in a challenging logistical operation. In partnership with Coillte an aggressive clearing of the invasive *Rhododendron ponticum* was completed in 2008. Recently a number of lakes and a waterfall have been added to showcase the plant collection.

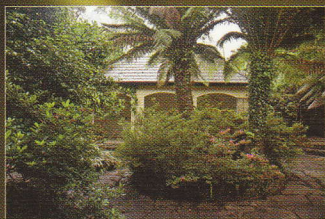
The Primeval Forest, the undoubted centrepiece of Kells Bay Gardens is a collection of tree ferns, which have adapted to and colonised their new home so completely that Antipodean visitors feel at home there. Sensitivity to the circumstance of evolution that created this area remains the keystone of any development within the gardens.



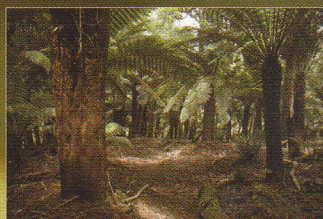
*Palm & Succulent Garden, with the largest palm tree in Ireland, Jubaea chilensis*



*River Walk*



*Walled Garden*



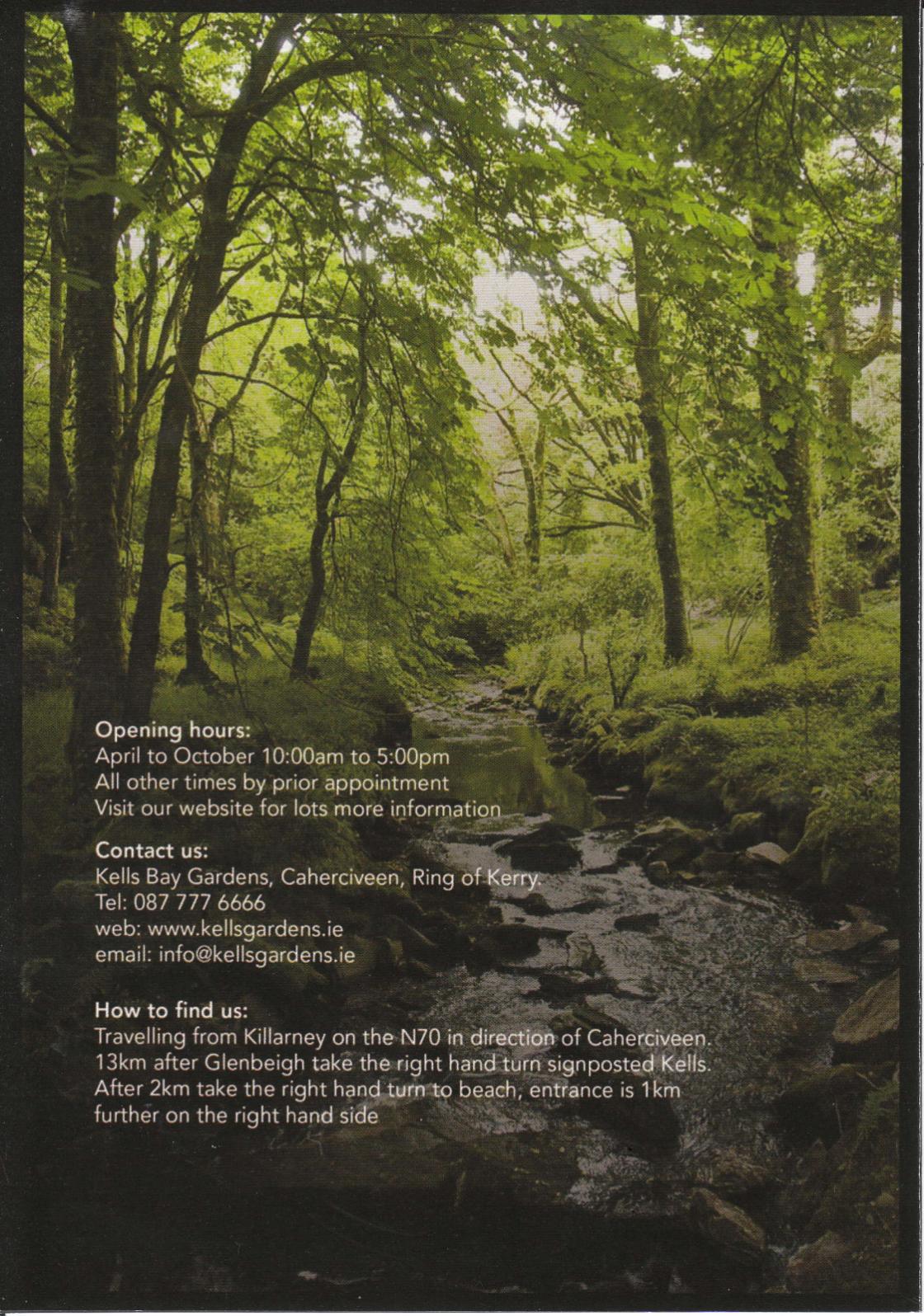
*Primeval Forest*

## Future

To complete the restoration of the original walled gardens is a key priority subject to the availability of funds. The continued development and enhancement of the Bamboo Glade will add a new dimension to the gardens. The planting of Himalayan, Chinese and Chilean woodlands has been pencilled in for one of the newly cleared areas. A two-hectare site has been set aside to host a 'trees of the world' arboretum. The future viability of the gardens and the sourcing and collection of these plants is dependent on the support and encouragement of the visiting public.

## Friends of Kells

You can become an annual member of the gardens starting from €30.00 - further details at the gardens or at [info@kellsgardens.ie](mailto:info@kellsgardens.ie)



**Opening hours:**

April to October 10:00am to 5:00pm

All other times by prior appointment

Visit our website for lots more information

**Contact us:**

Kells Bay Gardens, Caherciveen, Ring of Kerry.

Tel: 087 777 6666

web: [www.kellsgardens.ie](http://www.kellsgardens.ie)

email: [info@kellsgardens.ie](mailto:info@kellsgardens.ie)

**How to find us:**

Travelling from Killarney on the N70 in direction of Caherciveen.

13km after Glenbeigh take the right hand turn signposted Kells.

After 2km take the right hand turn to beach, entrance is 1km further on the right hand side