

# Avon Gardens Trust

# Newsletter



## ***Autumn Colours at South Kelding***

In October, Avon Gardens Trust members and their guests assembled in warm sunshine with not a breath of wind to admire the far-reaching views from the terrace of South Kelding. Our visit here was almost a year to the exact day since the Trust had to cancel their planned visit due to the very strong winds courtesy of Storm Brian.

At the start of the tour, the owners, Wendy and Barry Smale, explained to us how the planting had been adapted over the years to deal with the vagaries of the site as well as the culinary preferences of deer, badgers, squirrels and rabbits. The impressive planting schemes near the house, including a series of scree beds along the

upper slopes, now feature a variety of perennial plants and ornamental grasses that are less attractive to the wildlife.

The central part of the garden includes a series of copses with dogwoods, birches and ginkgos planted for their autumn interest, with the star of the show being a magnificent ash. In the lower area, an arboretum has been planted which comprises separate areas that represent the five continents of Europe, North and South America, Asia and Africa. Each distinct area has trees that are native to that continent. It was in this part of the garden we could all fully appreciate the autumn colour of the trees, especially the red and yellow-stemmed dogwoods, spindles, acers, rowans and liquidambars. The white, pink and coppery textured bark of different birch tree species provided a fascinating contrast to the leaf colours.

A welcome sight when we got back to the top of the slope was the refreshments with home-made cakes. These were enjoyed by all as we sat on the terrace overlooking the rill-style reflective pool enjoying the late afternoon sunshine and the magnificent view.

*Ros Delany*

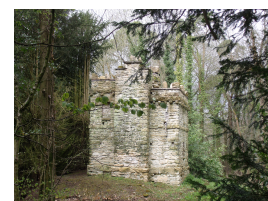


## ***Heritage at Risk Register 2018***

Historic England (HE) has just published their annual update which lists those heritage assets that are at risk as a result of neglect, decay or inappropriate development.

In Avon there are six entries that are of particular interest to the Trust. Two, Brislington House and Tortworth Court, suffer from subdivision of the original

landscape. In Bristol, the pond and two lodges, once part of the Kings Weston estate, Ashton Court mansion and Stoke Park are on the list. Finally the Ragged Castle in Badminton Park is of particular concern.



*Ragged castle*

## *Message from the Chairman*

This year has been particularly busy as the committee continues to expand the work of the Trust in the conservation area by working closely with other heritage groups. There are several new initiatives that are in their early stages and I look forward to reporting more fully on them in our next issue.

Sadly our lovely volunteer helper Martin Burnham died recently after a brave battle with illness. Since 2001,

Martin has generously given his time and expertise to helping the Trust with the layout and printing of our various publications as well as setting up and managing our website. It is a very sad and early loss of a good friend to the Trust. Our thoughts are with his family at this difficult time.

*Ros Delany*

### *Sharing Repton: Historic Landscapes for All*

This year, county gardens trusts have been at the forefront of organising a varied range of activities to celebrate the work and legacy of Humphry Repton who was responsible for some 400 landscapes across Britain.

A £99,500 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund has enabled the Gardens Trust to pilot activities intended to welcome local communities to Repton landscapes, with a long-term view of introducing a new wave of supporters to historic landscapes.

Most of these pilot activities have taken place and included a family fun day celebrating world cultures and cuisines; involving school children and their parents to

record their local Repton landscape in a fun way, and a conservation workshop for refugees. The final activity will be a Repton inspired garden history workshop and tour at Blaise Castle, Bristol with Avon Gardens Trust in 2019.

A meeting recently took place at Kenwood House in London to discuss the Sharing Repton project. After the business of the morning, the delegates were taken on a guided tour of the Repton grounds led by Humphry Repton.



### *The Drinking Fountain in Page Park*

This summer, Avon Gardens Trust awarded £1,000 towards the restoration of the Edwardian drinking fountain in Page Park in the Staple Hill area of Bristol. Most of the repair work has now been completed and the fountain is currently being re-assembled. When the fountain is installed, visitors to the Park will be able to fill up their water bottles as well as drink from the fountain.



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## ***Annual General Meeting of Avon Gardens Trust 6th October 2018 at The Jubilee Pavilion, Long Ashton***

The event was well attended by members, their guests as well as our invited guests: the North Somerset Conservation Officer, plus the owners of the house and garden at Backwell Down which happened to be at the heart of the talk given by the guest speaker, Caradoc Doy.

Caradoc Doy set the scene within the context of plantsmen and garden designers of the late Victorian era overlapping with the Edwardian era. His expertise of study is that of the Exeter based Robert Veitch nursery, and the Chelsea based nursery run by Harry Veitch.

The Veitch nurseries, both in the Home Counties and in the South West, were in the forefront of plant propagation and development; their success being a consequence of the Victorian obsession with new and ever more exotic plants. The Veitch nurseries engaged plant collectors like Thomas Lobb, Michael Pearce and George Ure-Skinner to gather new plants from the Far East, Africa and South America which they could propagate and hybridise to meet the seemingly insatiable demand. The range of plant material used in the Backwell Down garden, as for example the Mexican pine, can be attributed to the choice available from the Veitch nursery.

Although something of a sideline, and never achieving the skill or success of the Edwardian partnership of Lutyens and Jekyll, the garden designs carried out by the Veitch nurseries are indicative of their clients' conventional taste in garden design.



*The restored parterre at Backwell Down Manor*

The client at Backwell Down was Sidney Royse Lysaght (1856-1941). As a young man, Lysaght had worked at his uncle's ironworks in Bristol. By the early 1900's he held the position of Director of John Lysaght Ltd. He and his family could afford to employ Evelyn Hellicar to design and build Backwell Down Manor in the early C20. The land was conveniently close to Bristol and the size of the mansion reflected the requirement for him to socialise on a grand scale with his business and family associates.

Equally important was the need to develop the surrounding land into a fashionable gentleman's estate, and to that end he commissioned Robert Veitch & Sons' Nurseries, and F.W. Meyer to lay out the grounds to include a cricket pitch, tennis court, croquet green as well as a walled kitchen garden, parterre, rill and Meyer rockery.



*The restored glasshouse at Backwell Down Manor*

F.W. Meyer was at the height of his career in (1905-06), the date on his signed plan for Backwell Down. He had designed and built a large rock, bog and water garden for Harry Veitch at East Burnham Park before 1901; only traces of this have survived. Harry was the head of the Chelsea firm of Veitch and a very well-respected horticulturalist. His choice of Meyer from 'the other' firm says much for Meyer's skills.

When the RHS took over Wisley, Meyer was chosen in 1906 to create a new rockery there, probably influenced by Harry Veitch. Sadly, Meyer died before his plans could be implemented. Other surviving Meyer sites from this period are a rockery at Ashton Court, Bristol (1905), the public Pageant Gardens at Sherborne, Dorset (1905), part of Heavitree Pleasure Ground, Exeter (1905-06) and rockeries within the large estates of Gnaton and Newnham Park, both near Plymouth (about 1904). All these have deteriorated to some extent. His total public park design at Wellington, Somerset (1902-03), was fully restored in 2000 with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Taunton Deane Borough Council. It is included in the National Heritage List for England (NHLE) as a registered II\* park site and is an excellent example of Meyer's talents

Avon Gardens Trust are currently researching and assembling evidence for the property and garden to be protected by local listing and placed on the Bristol-based 'Know Your Place' online map which now covers the whole of the Avon Gardens Trust area.

*Anne Hils*

## ***Grow Cook Eat - Fresh from the Garden***

On a sunny day I joined in with a morning children's session at Alice Park's community garden called 'Fresh from the Garden'. In Bath the Alice Park Community Garden is hidden by a tall hedge in a corner of the Park. The Community had received funding for a summer 2018 programme of events. These ranged from Keep Growing, (a four week gardening course), through Cooking and Preserving Produce to Herbal Remedies, how to collect, identify and store herbs.

For the 'Fresh from the Garden' morning the children were between eight and ten, some with special needs. Led by



cookery teacher Lucy Holburn they settled down to learn about the salad they were going to make for their lunch. It was going to be an interesting salad with mixed textures, colours and crunchiness.

They set off with helpers to explore the garden to find and choose plants and fruit they could use with baskets brought back to base. After washing their hands they were busy cleaning and preparing their finds along with ingredients brought along by Lucy. A fire was now getting going with a hot iron pan kept busy with toasting wraps and softening some of the produce. With all the different textures and colours of the ingredients laid out to choose from the children made up delicious wraps for their lunch and none of them rejected any of the flavours. They really had spent a fun morning.

How did all this come about? Kathy Cook, a local resident and Larkhall Transition member discovered this piece of waste ground by accident while out walking her dog. She recognised its potential and obtained permission

from the Council to set up a garden on the land. After five years of hard work the garden now consists of raised vegetable beds, fruit trees, a circular social area with log seating, a wildlife pond, access path, wooden benches, a shed, a greenhouse and a wonderful hand-built green oak shelter on the approach to the garden.



Wildlife and good practice in the food growing area are a priority so the project can be maintained now and in the future. There is enough space to have been able to make a social area which appeals to the senses and less managed nature. This is much enjoyed by those resting from gardening labours or just wanting to sit quietly.

How does Alice Park Community Garden fit in with the Transition movement? Led by Kathy Cook it was set up by members of Transition Larkhall's Food Group and continues to be run by them on a voluntary basis. By sharing skills and knowledge, and encouraging volunteers and visitors to grow their own fruit and vegetables, Alice Park Community Garden gives local people the tools for self-reliance as well as being a social hub where local community members can gather.

From this very successful beginning they are looking to consolidate their achievements to enable the initiative to flourish in the years to come. We wish them every continued success.

(For Transition Movement go to [www.transition.org](http://www.transition.org))

*Wendy Pollard*

### ***Courses in Conservation and Garden History***

Conservation of Historic Gardens: Online course with Learning with Experts. In four video tutorials, Dr Audrey Gerber speaks about managing change in heritage landscapes. Start anytime and work in your time and place.

The course explains the philosophy of conservation and a full range of resources and techniques are discussed. The course covers legislation that protects heritage assets.

Book online: <https://www.learningwithexperts.com/gardening/courses/conservation-of-historic-gardens>  
[https://ihbc.org.uk/learning/cpd\\_providers/index.html](https://ihbc.org.uk/learning/cpd_providers/index.html)

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