

Avon Gardens Trust

Bulletin



SPRING 2012

Two winners in the Angel Awards

Arnos Vale Cemetery and the Orangery at Tyntesfield have each won their supporters an English Heritage Angel Award, a new scheme launched to celebrate the work of individuals and groups in saving a significant historic building or place listed on the Heritage at Risk Register. The high-profile awards ceremony held in London last October featured a shortlist of 16 local groups whittled down from over 200. Selected for their passion, perseverance and imagination in tackling such challenges, Arnos Vale Cemetery was made a joint winner in one category and Tyntesfield's Orangery was announced the *Telegraph* Subscribers' and English Heritage Members' favourite.

*Scaffolding is due to come down
at Tyntesfield Orangery in the spring*



Alan Kempton

The Grade II* Orangery at Tyntesfield, once the ornamental heart of the kitchen garden, had deteriorated so badly that it was placed on the Register in the highest priority category. Its rescue became a pioneering project for the National Trust, with training and the development of heritage craftsmanship at its core. The National Trust team worked in partnership with City of Bath College and specialist stone conservators Nimbus Conservation, completing on-site training for ten trainee stonemasons. During the year, the public and schools were given the opportunity to see heritage skills in action on a day-to-day basis.

The Angel Award to Arnos Vale Cemetery Trust and Bristol City Council marks the success of a long campaign by local community members to save the 45-acre cemetery in the centre of Bristol. Arnos Vale is now regarded as one of the best and only restored examples of a Victorian 'Arcadian' garden cemetery. Opened in 1839, it remains a working cemetery but is also a highly valued green urban space with a unique landscape and ecology, containing many listed buildings and monuments restored to their former glory. Visitor facilities and learning and interpretation resources promote the history and landscape. Volunteers and Trustees continue to give their time and support to make sure it is sustainable in the future.

www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring
www.arnosvale.org.uk
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/tyntesfield

Notes from the Chair

The New Year had barely been ushered in before we were being informed that 2012 was going to be a special year for the United Kingdom. This was because of celebrations to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and also the hosting of the Olympic Games in the summer. Likewise, 2012 is an equally auspicious year for Avon Gardens Trust, again due to two important events.

Firstly, we shall be celebrating our first 25 Years and to mark this, our Annual General Meeting will be in the Orangery at Goldney House where the inaugural meeting took place in July 1987. The second event is the organisation and hosting of the Association of Gardens Trusts Annual Conference in Bath in early September, when we shall be welcoming over sixty delegates to our area from other county gardens trusts.

To help mark out 2012 as a particularly special year for Avon Gardens Trust, we have completely revamped our website. Please take a few minutes to visit it at www.avongardenstrust.org.uk and see what has been done. The site now provides a lot more information and is more interactive, with new photographs to be viewed. I know the amount of work that Martin Burnham has put in

to developing it and on behalf of the committee and members of the Avon Gardens Trust, I would like to publicly thank him for what he has created.

Lesley Gallant has already organised our visits and lectures for this year and we have a varied programme to look forward to, ranging from a private tour of National Trust property through to a visit to a contemporary organic garden. There should be something that will appeal to all our members and I hope as many of you as possible are able to support us with at least one visit.

This is a landmark year for Avon Gardens Trust as we celebrate our first 25 years and look forward to the next 25! On behalf of the committee, I would like to wish you all the best for 2012.

Ros Delany

Committee Members NEEDED!

It seems a pity that in our Celebratory Year I need to plead for more Committee members. We meet about eight times a year and if you feel you could spare a few hours to join us, we would love to see you. No experience is necessary - just a willing volunteer. Please contact Ros Delany on 01275 371398 or email r.delany@virgin.net if you feel you can help.



Please submit items for the Summer *Bulletin* by **14th May**.

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Events



Fern Fever -

The Story of Pteridomania

Wednesday 28 March, 7 for 7.30pm

An Illustrated Talk by Dr Sarah Whittingham
University of Bristol Students' Union,
Queens Road, Clifton BS8 1LN

In the 19th century Pteridomania, or fern madness, swept through Britain. Against the background of the rise of the amateur gardener and naturalist, hundreds of books and articles encouraged a popular fascination with ferns that resulted in widespread collection and cultivation of the plant. It was so popular that from the 1850s ferns also appeared on buildings and everyday objects, from carpets to greeting cards.

Dr Whittingham will describe the story of the fern craze, from the invention of the Wardian case, through tales of fern forays, to the creation of verdant ferneries in private homes and gardens. She will also reveal the extent of the craze in mainstream Victorian and Edwardian society by describing some of the incredible variety of public places where it was considered appropriate to erect a fernery. Along the way she will introduce some of the authors, nurserymen, designers, and colourful characters such as the 'Itinerant Fern Vendor', who were associated with fern mania.

Dr Sarah Whittingham is a historian who specialises in the social history, architecture and gardens of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Her book, *Fern Fever - The Story of Pteridomania*, was published in February (see review on page 7). She is also the author of *The Victorian Fern Craze* (2009), has written many articles, lectured on the subject and appeared on TV.

Tea and biscuits from 7pm. Venue has full disabled access including lift. In association with Clifton Garden Society. Please book by **20 March**.

Clevedon Court

Saturday 12 May, 2pm

Tickenham Road, Clevedon, BS21 6QU



Home to the lords of the manor of Clevedon for centuries, the core of the house is a remarkable survival from the medieval period. The house was bought by Abraham Elton in 1709 and is still the much loved family home of his descendants today, now owned by the NT. We have been afforded a rare opportunity. Julia Elton has kindly agreed to take members on an exclusive private tour of the house and garden, and a donation will be made to the Clevedon Pier Fund.

The bulk of the house conceals the dramatic architectural quality of the garden to the rear, carved out of the hillside in a remarkable series of terraces which rise steeply back to merge with the woodland above. The basic layout of the present garden was in place by about 1730. Later in the 18th century the space behind the great pilastered wall was infilled to make the top terrace, which has wide views across the valley to the Mendip Hills beyond. The Octagon, a garden pavilion, was built at about the same time, as was the more rustic

summer house which faces it down the long grassy walk of the Petty Terrace. The garden is still largely in its 18th century form though small ponds and fountains were added in the 19th century and the once open hillside behind is now thickly wooded. Today there is a more informal style, emphasising the architectural character of the garden with its long straight sweeps of wall; it is also an easier style to maintain. In recent years, native wild plants have been allowed to mingle with rare and exotic specimen trees, such as a splendid late-leaving catalpa. An oriental plane tree dominates this part of the garden and the grass at its foot is left uncut during the spring, allowing bluebells to make a fine showing.

Access to the house from the car park is reasonably level. There is parking or drop-off in front of the house. There are four steps to the house entrance. The ground floor has small rooms, uneven floors and very limited turning space. There are many stairs with handrails to other floors. In the grounds, the patio and main lawn are fairly level. There are many steep steps and slopes to terraces, narrow and loose gravel paths, some cobbles. No accessible route for wheelchairs to terraces. Please book by **4 May**.

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/clevedon-court/



was covered locally and nationally. The *Bath Chronicle* ran a story just prior to it being opened to the public to raise money for charity through the NGS. The interesting feature of the terraced garden is that it was created from a bare field using earth-moving equipment, lots of local stone, and much hard work.

The garden paths wind their way up past the terraces, past packed flower borders and through shrubberies, over lawns and under the rose arches to the top of the garden, where there are wonderful views over Bath and the countryside beyond. Woods and fields form a backdrop that is home to all manner of wildlife. The top terrace contains a miscellany of hardy geraniums, and the terraces below are planted out annually with cottage garden plants.

The path that runs down from the summer-house is awash with clematis and roses and there is a small stretch of woodland created for ferns and shade loving plants and a vegetable garden on the garage roof. Many of the plants are grown from seed. There is a fish pond and waterfall. The one acre garden is a treat in the summer with plenty of seating areas.

Disabled access limited. There are handrails from the bottom to the top of the terraces and aids to help the less able. Please book by **28 May**.

www.sheilabatterbury.co.uk

A Summer Garden in Bathampton

Wednesday 6 June, 2pm

The owner, Sheila Batterbury, is a former cookery writer and the author of several books in the 60s under the name Sheila Graham. When she moved from south east London to Bath in 1994, she uprooted and replanted over 600 plants from her old garden in Eltham. The media found this very eccentric, and the story

The Italian Garden at Westonbirt Girls' School

Tuesday 26 June, 7 for 7.30pm

An Illustrated Talk by Dr Jane Bradney,
University of Bristol Students' Union,
Queens Road, Clifton BS8 1LN

Jane Bradney is a freelance garden and landscape historian. She completed her doctorate into the resurgence of the formal garden in the first half of the 19th century at the University of Bristol in 2008. Jane is currently researching and co-writing with Timothy Mowl the 12th volume in the Historic Gardens of England series. This explores the gardens of Herefordshire and will be published in May. She is also working on articles about the gardens of both Sir Charles Barry and Lewis Kennedy.

Tea and biscuits from 7pm. Venue has full disabled access including lift. In association with Clifton Garden Society. Please book by **18 June**.

The talk complements a visit to the Garden on **5 August**.

The Italian Garden in 1905



Please book with the enclosed forms, including a stamped addressed envelope for tickets and directions. If you would prefer to receive these by e-mail, please supply your e-mail address. Enquiries by phone to Lesley Gallant 0117 300 9727 or by e-mail to Lmggreener@aol.com.

Forthcoming Events



*Avon Gardens Trust
AGM and Garden Tour*

Sunday 22 July

We commemorate 25 years of the Trust with a welcome return to the Orangery at Goldney House, Clifton for our Annual General Meeting. This will be followed by a tour of the historic garden and tea.



*Special Plants
Nursery and Garden*

Friday 3 August, 2pm



Founder Derry Watkins has kindly agreed to give us a guided tour of the nursery and garden at Cold Ashton. Author of *The Complete Greenhouse Book* and *Sunspaces* and, for 30 years, an avid and unashamed plantaholic.

*Tour of The Italian Garden
at Westonbirt School*

Sunday 5 August

The Italian Garden, which dates from the 1840s, has been described by Sir Roy Strong as one of England's best kept secrets and "one of the most amazing and exotic built garden structures to survive from the High Victorian era".

Full details of these events in the next *Bulletin*. Why not make a note in your diary now?

Volunteer for a Conservation Workshop

Are you interested in attending a Conservation Workshop to be trained in conservation generally and how to comment on planning applications in particular? If so, we would love to hear from you.

The Garden History Society is the statutory consultee for planning proposals affecting properties on English Heritage's Register of Parks & Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England. However, due to cuts in funding from English Heritage, the GHS has decided that from April they will no longer be commenting on proposals affecting Grade II* and Grade II sites. Instead they will concentrate on campaign work, influencing planning policy at national level, and responding to proposals affecting Grade I sites and those which raise issues of principle.

Many county gardens trusts, including ours, have raised deep concerns about these changes. We believe that a letter of objection from the national GHS is essential in giving authority to similar views expressed by CGTs (which could be considered to be a 'nimby' over-reaction). Furthermore, many CGTs do not at the moment comment on planning applications because they do not have any members with the necessary skills.

As a result of these changes the GHS is going to hold workshops this year to train members of CGTs in how to assess and respond to planning applications. If you would like to attend such a workshop in our area, please get in touch with Ros Delany on 01275 371398 or email r.delany@virgin.net

School Grants

The Trust has once again invited primary schools in Avon to apply for funding to help develop their school gardens through our Small Grants Programme. Last year's process was more straightforward as we could invite applications via newsletters produced by the Healthy Schools Coordinators in our four districts. Funding cuts mean that the Newsletter is now only produced by B&NES where it is distributed electronically.

In order to let schools know about the grants, both South Gloucestershire and Bristol agreed to include information on their websites. In North Somerset the HS Coordinator offered to send out the information to contacts in the schools and it would appear that this more personal touch had a greater impact.

The closing date for applications was 16 December 2011 and nine were received. Unfortunately there were none from schools in Bristol or South Gloucestershire. Two were from B&NES, while seven were from North Somerset.

In the next *Bulletin* there will be further news about how grants were distributed.

Kings Weston Park

Following Kings Weston Action Group highlighting the need for a Conservation Management Plan, Bristol CC is now preparing a 'Historic Designed Landscape Review' of the estate and its buildings. This is the first step in securing funding for Kings Weston's future. Consultation will take place with English Heritage, the National Trust and other owners, interest groups (such as the AGT) and the public. In December more than 500 people petitioned the Council asking for the meadow north of Shirehampton Road to revert to its previous condition as short grass for children's play and picnicking. This request will be taken into consideration in the Review.



The Association of Gardens Trusts
Annual Conference 2012
 Bath 7-9 September

Polite Society

LIFESTYLES, PARKS AND GARDENS

The conference is based in the WORLD HERITAGE CITY of BATH. Accommodation will be at the *Mercurie Bath FRANCIS HOTEL*, an elegant Georgian building on QUEEN SQUARE.

The theme of *Polite Society* will be explored through visits to designed landscapes within Bath and the surrounding area. We shall visit BADMINTON, rarely open to the public, DYRHAM PARK, PRIOR PARK and SYDNEY GARDENS.

Non-residential places available.

For more information or to reserve a place contact Ros Delany at r.delany@virgin.net telephone 01275 371398 or see our website

www.avongardenstrust.org.uk



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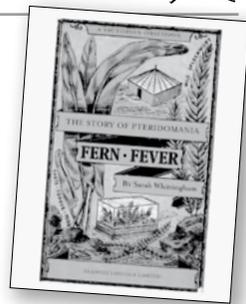


Bookshelf



Fern Fever - The Story of Pteridomania

Sarah Whittingham has made a comprehensive exploration of



this 19th century craze in gardening and natural history which was astonishingly widespread. She has explored ferneries, grottoes, contemporary writings and the influence of the fern craze in other areas, including poetry and the decorative arts, such as ironwork and pottery. There are accounts of the many people, not only botanists, involved in the various aspects of collecting, horticulture and design.

This is a large, handsome book, with splendid, unusual and fascinating illustrations, which are well labelled. There is a good list of places to visit and helpful notes. For the comprehensive bibliography and index, some may need a magnifying glass.

Published by Frances Lincoln
 ISBN: 978-0-7112-3070-5 £35

Hardback, 240pp, 150 illustrations in colour and b/w

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Dates for your Diary

Friends of the University of Bristol Botanic Garden

Flora of the Avon Gorge

Thursday 15 March 7.30 pm

A lecture by Keith Taylor, wildlife photographer, co-author of *The Secret Bristol Downs* and publisher of *Eye On Local Nature* magazine. Non-Friends will be asked for a £5 donation.

Venue: B75, School of Biological Sciences, Woodland Road, BS8
www.bristol.ac.uk/botanic-garden

Association of Gardens Trusts/Hampshire Gardens Trust

South West Education Conference

Tuesday 20 March

At Jermyns House, Ampfield, Romsey, with a visit across the garden to the Hilliers Education Centre where the Centre's leader will give a talk on their educational work. A tour of the gardens will be included. Further details: Sue Stuart admin@hgt.org.uk

Clifton Garden Society
Spring/Summer programme

Visit to Greys Court (NT)

Thursday 12 April

Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire.
Phone Val on 0117 973 4667 for details

Visit to Forde Abbey

Sunday 20 May

Chard, Dorset. Phone Gillian on 0117 973 7296 for details

Visit to Rosemoor (RHS)

Thursday 21 June

Great Torrington, Devon. Phone Christine on 0117 964 1648 for details

Visit to Eastnor Castle

Monday 23 July

Ledbury, Herefordshire. Phone Christine on 0117 964 1648 for details

Badminton Gardens

Weds 18 April, Thurs 14 June

by pre-booked ticket only, £10.

Tuesday 12 June

for the National Garden Scheme. Tickets, £10, available on the door. Estate office: 01454 218203.
www.badmintonestate.co.uk

Association of Gardens Trusts / Yorkshire Gardens Trust / Garden History Society / National Trust

Study Day at Studley Royal

Thursday 3 May, 9.45am-4.30pm

North Yorkshire. Historic Vistas, Current Perspectives, Future Prospects.

Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal Water Gardens is a World Heritage Site. It is a landscape that many will be familiar with, but 'improvement' was not, and is not, a process with a finite end point. The importance of the gardens and park means that work of all kinds is on-going: research, archaeological excavations, restoration, conservation, management, interpretation. Morning talks will take place in the Aislabie Conference Suite in the Visitor Centre; after lunch, there will be guided tours of the water gardens.

More information: co-ordinator@agt.org.uk or phone 020 7251 2610
www.yorkshiregardenstrust.org.uk

Banwell Bone Cave Open Day

Sunday 27 May, 10.30am to 4.30pm

Filled Rolls, Cream Teas and Cakes

Also **8-9 September** as part of the National Heritage Open Days. Admission free but donations towards restoration can be made in collection boxes. Well Lane, Banwell BS29 6NA
www.banwellcaves.org

Fuller details of these and other events at our website www.avongardenstrust.org.uk