

Avon Gardens Trust

Bulletin



SUMMER 2012

Difficult Times

Whenever one opens a newspaper or switches on the television there is inevitably coverage of rising prices and the effect it is having on the budgets of both people and organisations. Unfortunately, the AGT is not immune to this present economic climate.

For several years the expenditure of the AGT has exceeded our income. Since the last financial year the deficit has increased to approximately £1000 with over 70% of our costs being spent on the printing of our publications, postage and stationery. While we have financial reserves which we have been utilising, that is money that should be spent on conservation and educational grants which are integral to the objectives of the AGT.

Single membership has remained at £10 per annum for eleven years whilst costs have steadily increased. We are now only one of six out of the 35 county gardens trusts whose annual subscription is £10 per annum.

Increase in VAT, the cost of room hire for lectures, payment to speakers, rising postage and printing costs have all contributed to this state of affairs. We try and just cover our costs for garden visits and lectures but it can be difficult to gauge numbers - and the owners and lecturers still need paying. In April 2012, the Association of Gardens Trusts increased the levy they raise on every member in all the county gardens trusts from £1.00 to £1.50 per person.

Our costs are not a true reflection of the actual running costs of the AGT as the Committee and various volunteer helpers claim very few expenses. If these people claimed all they are entitled to then the costs incurred by the Trust would be considerably higher.

For our part, we will be reviewing all our expenditure including the cost of our publications and their associated expenses. The number of publications appears to be more than those produced by other county gardens trusts including many whose subscriptions are higher than ours.

The problem faced by the AGT by rising costs was raised by one of our members at last year's AGM at Harptree Court. This led to a discussion in which many members gave their views on the subject and it was agreed that the raising of subscription to £12.50 per individual and £15 per couple/household should be an agenda item at the next AGM which will be on 22 July at Goldney orangery with any possible increase being implemented in 2013.

Clevedon Court

Saturday 12 May

An enjoyable visit on a sunny afternoon. Our hostess, Julia Elton, was most generous, welcoming us in to the Great Hall, and then offering us entry to usually private areas of the house. We raised £150 for her preferred charity, the Clevedon Pier & Heritage Trust.

Notes from the Chair

This year marks the centenary of the death of a remarkable woman with a strong social conscience who was determined to improve the lives of the working poor in London in the 19th century. She helped to achieve this by being a moving force behind the growth of social housing as well as campaigning against development on many of the open spaces of London. She was one of the founders of the National Trust, set up to preserve places of historic interest or natural beauty for the enjoyment of the British public. She is, of course, Octavia Hill.



The National Planning Policy Framework has been published and has taken immediate effect. Lobbying by heritage organisations at the draft stage has at least partially been taken into account and heritage assets of designated parks and gardens are recognised as being an irreplaceable resource that makes a positive contribution to the economy and society. What is of concern is the potential reduction in protection for those sites without any such designation. For this reason, Avon Gardens Trust will continue to comment on those planning applications where there are potential implications for important local sites. It is by doing this that the AGT will best continue to advance Olivia Hill's causes.

Ros Delany

Welcome

The Trust warmly welcomes the following new members: John & Carolyn Bridge, Sue Chambers, Kate & Jerry Floyd, Peter & Anne Hills, Bridget Jeffery, Barbara Moul, Ann Osmond, Colin Osmond, Susie Painter, Peter & Jane Shannon and Tony Titchen.



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

Polite Society

LIFESTYLES, PARKS AND GARDENS

Bookings continue to go well, with 60 already confirmed - testament to the hard work and enthusiasm the organising group has put into ensuring the success of the Conference.

If you wish to attend on a non-residential basis, you need to fill in a booking form and send it with a cheque for £40 deposit to Ros Delany, Pendle House, Church Road, Abbots Leigh, Bristol BS8 3QU.
E-mail r.delany@virgin.net for more information.

A booking form can be downloaded from the Trust's website.



Badminton House

Wendy Pollard

The *Bulletin* will be back next Spring. Please send any items for inclusion to bulletin@avongardenstrust.org.uk Please submit items for the *Annual Review* as soon as they are ready, or at the latest by **22 October**.



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Events



Annual General Meeting & Goldney Garden Visit

Sunday 22 July, 2-6pm

Goldney House, Lower Clifton Hill, BS8 1BH



This year's AGM will be held in Goldney orangery where the Trust was launched 25 years ago. This exceptional Grade II* registered historic garden with its unique features, including the Grade I listed grotto, all created in the 18th century by a Bristol Quaker merchant, is not often open to the public so do come for this special occasion. There may be new discoveries to report.

We plan to celebrate with tea, birthday cake and a glass of wine in the orangery or out in the garden if the sun shines. We hope to have two small exhibitions about Goldney and about our Trust's history. Do bring photos and memories to share.

Unfortunately, the grotto and the furthest part of the garden below the terrace and the Bastion walk are reached by narrow steps, and so are not accessible to wheelchairs. Roadside parking is limited so please share cars. Bus numbers 8 and 9 stop nearby in Clifton, with a level walk. Entry to the AGM is free but there is a charge for the tour and refreshments. It would be helpful if members who wish only to attend the AGM would indicate that on the booking form. Please book by **16 July**.

www.bristol.ac.uk/goldney

Special Plants Nursery and Garden Tour

Friday 3 August, 2pm.

Greenways Lane, Cold Ashton SN14 8LA
Special Plants nursery is near Chippenham, about 7 miles north of Bath. Founder Derry Watkins has kindly agreed to give us a guided tour. Derry is the author of *The Complete Greenhouse Book* and *Sunspaces* and for 30 years has been avidly and unashamedly a plantaholic.

Her garden is a clever series of swirling crescents and pools, with apricot borders, gravel gardens, a vegetable garden, an orchard with dividing grasses and a woodland walk. These all reflect her passion for rare and unusual varieties that she has collected from her many annual plant-hunting trips to India, Chile and Ethiopia, as well as other more remote places in the world. In 1993 she won a Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship to spend three months in South Africa looking for new plants to introduce into horticulture in England. In 1995 and 2009 she returned for more plant adventures. New varieties are her particular interest and many of the plants in the garden will be unfamiliar, even to collectors.



About 20 years ago she started the nursery as a way of justifying all the plants she wanted to buy. Against everyone's advice, she began by specialising in tender perennials - plants which need frost protection in winter which was somewhat "irritating because they are some of the longest blooming and most beautiful of all plants". The nursery is organised according to the needs of the plants 'plants for damp shade' 'plants for dry sun' 'tender plants' etc. and was described by a national newspaper as "one of the best nurseries in the country".

Disabled access is limited. The garden is on a steep slope. There are steps and slopes everywhere. The nursery is fairly flat, but gravelled, so awkward though possible for wheelchairs. Tea is in the house but there are a dozen steps to get into it and a few more inside. Please book by **27 July**.

www.specialplants.net

A joint visit with Clifton Garden Society

Westonbirt School Gardens

Sunday 5 August, 2.15 pm

Near Tetbury, Gloucestershire GL8 8QG

This is the follow up to the talk by Dr Jane Bradney on the restoration of the Italian Garden at the school (see opposite). The garden, with its early herbaceous borders, rustic walks, lakes, statuary and grotto, dates from 1840.

Westonbirt has international significance, being designated a Grade I registered park and garden by English Heritage. The magnificent, ornate House by Lewis Vulliamy for Robert Stayner Holford dates from the 1860s and is Grade I listed, and the very large, formal Italian Garden, described by Roy Strong as "one of the most amazing and exotic built garden structures to survive from the High Victorian era" is Grade II* listed.

CGS members will be going by coach but AGT members may prefer to use their own transport in which case the cost of the visit will be £9 per person. This includes the entrance to the garden and afternoon tea.



The house will be open and you may arrange to join a guided tour on arrival but this is NOT included in the price.

If you wish to join the CGS coach departing at 1.15pm from Christ Church in Clifton please telephone Gillian Joseph, on 0117 973 7296 for further details. Please book by **14 July**.

www.westonbirt.gloucs.sch.uk
www.holfordtrust.com

The Italian Garden at Westonbirt School

Tuesday 26 June, 7 for 7.30pm

There should still be time to book for Dr Jane Bradney's talk at the University of Bristol Students' Union before our visit. See the spring *Bulletin* for details or download the booking form from the Events page of our website.

Tortworth Court

One of Britain's finest arboretums

Sunday 21 October, 2pm

Wotton-under-Edge, GL12 8HH

Tortworth Court is a Victorian mansion near Charfield, South Gloucestershire built in the Tudor style between 1848 and 1853 for Lord Ducie by the architect Samuel Sanders Teulon (1812-73), a notable specialist in nineteenth century Gothic Revival.

The house is set in 30 acres of Grade II* registered parkland with its own mature arboretum of over 300 trees, many of which are very rare and protected. Several are considered the best examples of their species in England. There are two 'superb' specimens of *Davidia involucrata* (paper handkerchief tree) and *Zelkova carpinifolia* (Caucasian Elm) which may be the largest in the British Isles with a girth of 6.52m and

well over 30m high. The arboretum was developed by Henry Ducie between 1853 and 1921, specialising in rhododendrons, conifers, oaks and maples, rivalling at the time the Holford collection at Westonbirt.

During WWII the Grade II listed mansion became a naval training base, but by the 1990s it was derelict and in 1991 suffered a major fire. It was afterwards restored in its original style, extended and reopened in June 2001 as a five star hotel.

After a walk round the arboretum we can enjoy a cream tea at the Court which overlooks a lake. Decorative flowerbeds and mature landscape enhance the character and grandeur of the place.

There is parking and the Hotel is fully accessible. Please book by **10 October**.

www.tortworth-court-hotel.four-pillars.co.uk



Please book with the enclosed forms and include an SAE. For trips, apart from Westonbirt School, if you would prefer to receive confirmation by e-mail, please include your e-mail address. Enquiries about them to Lesley Gallant: 0117 300 9727 or e-mail lesleym.gallant@btinternet.com

Suggestions for Conservation Grants

Since its launch 25 years ago, the Trust has been involved in many conservation projects which are fundamental to the work of the Trust. Over the years, our involvement has included the gazebo at Ham Green House, the Pebble House at Banwell Caves and the continuing participation in the restoration of the early 17th century garden at Swainswick.

The Memorandum of Association of the AGT states that one of the two 'objects' for which the Trust was established is to 'preserve, enhance and re-create for the education and enjoyment of the public whatever garden land may exist or have existed in and around Avon'. Garden land is given a wide definition and besides meaning designed landscapes it includes garden and park buildings, woodland planting and lakes.

The Trust would now like to hear about local conservation projects so that we can continue with this core objective of conservation. If you are aware of, or are involved in, a local organisation or group who are perhaps replanting woodland, restoring a garden structure or undertaking a survey of an historic site, please let us know about it. E-mail Ros Delany at r.delany@virgin.net or telephone 01275 371398.

Ham Green Gazebo



Education

Nine primary schools applied for a small grant from Avon Gardens Trust. We wanted to hear about their school gardens and what they planned to do with the grant money if their bid was successful.

Cheques for £25 have now been sent out to the schools, most of which are in North Somerset. Several of the schools have extended an invitation to visit them in early July to see what they have done with the money. At one of the schools, the pupils voted to purchase fruit trees and I have been invited to be present when the trees are planted.

Ros Delany

Keep in Touch by E-mail

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chairman@avongardenstrust.org.uk

Membership Secretary:
membership@avongardenstrust.org.uk

Journal and Annual Review Editor:
editor@avongardenstrust.org.uk

To discuss raising the profile of the Trust:
publicity@avongardenstrust.org.uk

For information about trips and visits:
visits@avongardenstrust.org.uk

Troopers Hill

Much has been happening on the hill since receipt of a £30,000 grant from the Big Lottery Community Spaces Programme. Work has been carried out to rebuild the various flights of steps, taking care not to damage important wildlife habitats. Elsewhere, scrub has been cleared from woodland paths. In accordance with the Management Plan, gorse which has spread quickly in recent years, is being cut on a rotational basis to remove the old bushes and encourage regeneration. www.troopers-hill.org.uk

Stoke Park

The fate of this important estate on the edge of Bristol has been of considerable concern to our Trust for 25 years. The latest long-awaited development is that legal agreements were finally completed earlier this year assigning the park to the care and ownership of Bristol City Council. Councillor Gary Hopkins said that he hoped for a bold and ambitious future for Stoke Park, with a growing partnership with local groups and community organisations to develop and protect the Park. One plan is to introduce some Dexter cattle to graze in the park, to become part of its sustainable future.

Accessible Gardens



Parks and gardens are meant for all, but many of us do not consider the difficulties faced by visitors with disabilities or even those from disadvantaged circumstances who are simply not aware of what is open to them. Bella d'Arcy Reed, a garden designer and former arts councillor who has in recent years had to contend with physical restrictions, has taken steps to rectify this. *Accessible Gardens* is a website providing information on accessibility to gardens for children, disadvantaged families and disabled people.

It contains a directory of gardens in England and Wales, with articles and reviews written by disabled people for disabled people, especially useful for those requiring wheelchair access. To find out more, please visit the website at www.accessiblegardens.org.uk.

Hestercombe House reunited with the gardens



Following extensive discussions with Somerset County Council, Hestercombe Gardens Trust is delighted to reveal that it will be taking over the imposing House, the centre piece of the estate, under licence early this summer.

Trust members can read the story of Hestercombe - its rescue and development over the years - in our *Journal No 5* last year, with several splendid views.

The Hestercombe Trust hopes to secure appropriate funding for the repairs and considerable refurbishment needed. Then plans are afoot to turn the house in to a national Centre for Landscape Studies hosting seminars and conferences, and providing an important research resource for the public.

Philip White, chiefly responsible for so much of the recovery and progress at Hestercombe over the years, sees this opportunity of reuniting the house with its historic landscapes for the first time in 60 years as a pivotal moment in the estate's history.

The Friends of Hestercombe Gardens Trust produce an informative Newsletter. www.hestercombe.com

Dates for your Diary

The Garden Museum

Garden Open Today: 300 Years of Garden Visiting Until Sunday 24 June

A special exhibition in the new gallery at The Garden Museum in Lambeth (see *Journal No 5*). From a travelling artist's sketch of Henry VIII's palace at Richmond, the earliest drawing of an English garden, to Vita Sackville-West's photographic albums of Sissinghurst, the exhibition explores the centuries old British tradition of opening gardens to the public. It celebrates the influence of garden visiting on style and fashion and the pleasure and curiosity that lead us through a stranger's garden gate.

www.gardenmuseum.org.uk

Wiltshire Gardens Trust

Bowood House Thursday 12 July

Guided tour, including the walled garden, not normally open to the public. 2-course lunch in the restaurant and admission to the House and Grounds: £25. Booking essential. Details: Shirley Catchpole 01225 702941 or wgtevents@googlemail.com

Bucks Gardens Trust

The Egyptian Influence in the Garden

Saturday 11 August, 9.30am-5pm
A seminar at Hartwell House nr. Aylesbury, prompted by research in to the work of Joseph Bonomi in the 1850s at Hartwell. Speakers: Chris Elliott, Dr Sarah Rutherford, Brian Dix, Michael Pritchard & Richard Wheeler. Cost £70, including coffee, buffet lunch & tea. Details: Rosemary Jury 01296 715 491 or events@bucksgardenstrust.org.uk

Wentworth Castle Heritage Trust

Diplomats, Goldsmiths and Baroque Court Culture:

***Lord Raby in Berlin and
at Wentworth Castle 1701-1739***

Friday 3 - Sunday 5 August

Wentworth Castle, Barnsley, South Yorkshire. Full conference programme lectures, meals, visits, accommodation: residential fee: £395. Details: 01226 776040 or trust@wentworthcastle.org

Wiltshire Gardens Trust

Visit to Lake House

Saturday 18 August, 2:30-5pm

By kind permission of Mr & Mrs Sumner (Mr Sumner is also known as 'Sting'). Around 70 acres, designed by Arabella Lennox-Boyd comprising pleasure gardens, an ancient lime walk, lakeside area, renovated Victorian gardens, walled rose garden and kitchen gardens. The Hampshire River Avon runs through the estate, 8 miles north of Salisbury. £7.50 - proceeds to WGT. Booking essential. Details: Shirley Catchpole 01225 702941 or wgtevents@googlemail.com

Association of Gardens Trusts / Yorkshire Gardens Trust / Yorkshire Sculpture Park / GHS

In a Most Agreeable Valley: The development of the landscape at Bretton Hall, 1720-2012

Friday 21 September, 9.45am-4.30pm

Study day at West Bretton, near Wakefield WF4 4LG traces the history of the gardens & park in late 18th and early 19th centuries. The Sculpture Park, established in the 1970s, has recently assumed responsibility for the landscape as a whole. £50. Details: 020 7251 2610 or co-ordinator@agt.org.uk
www.yorkshiregardenstrust.org.uk

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